



ULSTER  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

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# Survey Report

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Reference: **Survey Report No. 44**

Author: **Harry Welsh**

Location:

**Rowallane Gardens  
Saintfield  
County Down**

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In association with:

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**



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## 1. Summary

1.1 A site survey was undertaken at the National Trust's Rowallane Gardens in Creevyloughgare and Leggygowan townlands County Down, Irish Grid reference J 4100 5750. The purpose of the survey was to record several features in the grounds of the property, which had been uncovered during recent ground clearance work.

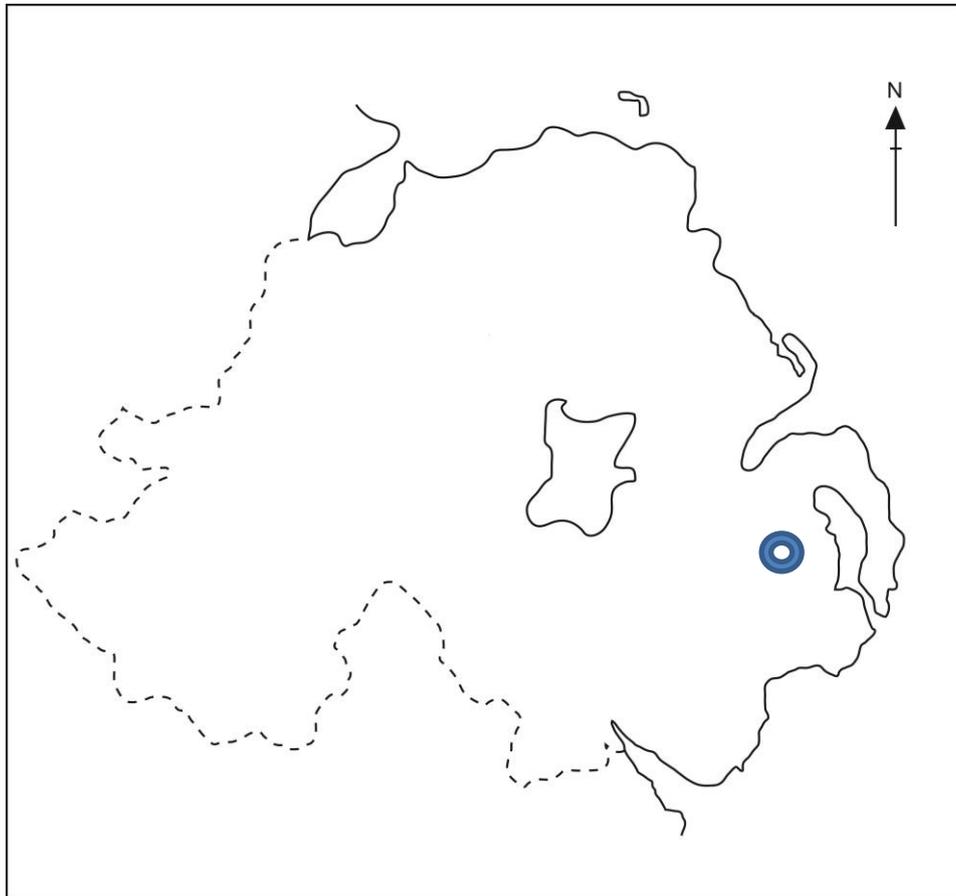


Figure 01: Location map for Rowallane Gardens

## 1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce an accurate plan drawing of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Historic Environment Division (NIEA) and the National Trust.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The survey was carried out on 28 September 2013, by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society. This was the forty-fourth archaeological monument survey carried out by the Society, whose survey programme has been running since April 2006. The programme was undertaken in response to a decision taken by the committee of the Society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments that had not previously been recorded. This decision had been prompted by a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Mr Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it had been noted that many archaeological sites on National Trust property had not been subject to a detailed archaeological survey. It was therefore agreed that members of the society would commence a programme to survey these sites.



Figure 02: Members of the Survey Group at work in Rowallane Gardens

## 2.2 Known archaeological sites in the area

There are several archaeological sites recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) maintained by NIEA in the immediate area of Rowallane Gardens (Figure 03). The earliest are three standing stones, located some 1.5km to the south-west. Standing stones are generally thought to be of Bronze Age date, but Neolithic material has also been recovered from several sites. The date of the Creevyloughgare standing stones has not yet been determined. Forthill Rath, presently included in the National Trust Rowallane Gardens property, has been classified as a platform rath by NIEA and is probably of Early Medieval date, generally thought to be in use between the seventh and twelfth centuries AD.

| <b>Townland</b> | <b>Grid Reference</b> | <b>Monument Type</b>   | <b>SMR Number</b> |
|-----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| Creevyloughgare | J 4044 5764           | Mound                  | DOW 023:002       |
| Creevyloughgare | J 4075 5711           | Rath                   | DOW 023:003*      |
| Creevyloughgare | J 3996 5688           | Standing Stones (3)    | DOW 023:046       |
| Creevyloughgare | J 4004 5670           | AP Site<br>(Enclosure) | DOW 023:049       |
| Leggygowan      | J 4130 5660           | Enclosure              | DOW 023:005       |

Figure 03: SMR sites in proximity to Rowallane Gardens

\*SMR DOW 023:003, known locally as Forthill Rath, was surveyed by the Ulster Archaeological Society in 2006 (Welsh 2007).

### 2.3 Cartographic evidence



Figure 04: County Series map (part of), Down 23, First Edition 1834  
*Ordnance Survey*

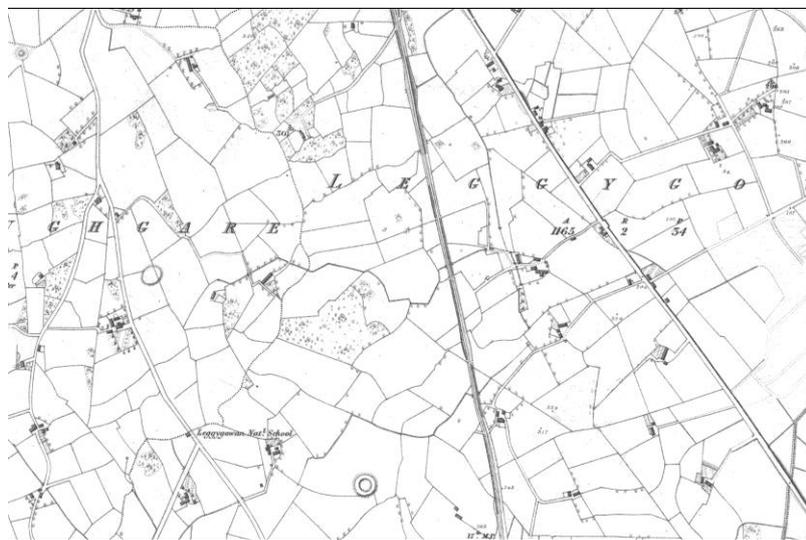


Figure 05: County Series map (part of), Down 23, Second Edition 1859  
*Ordnance Survey*

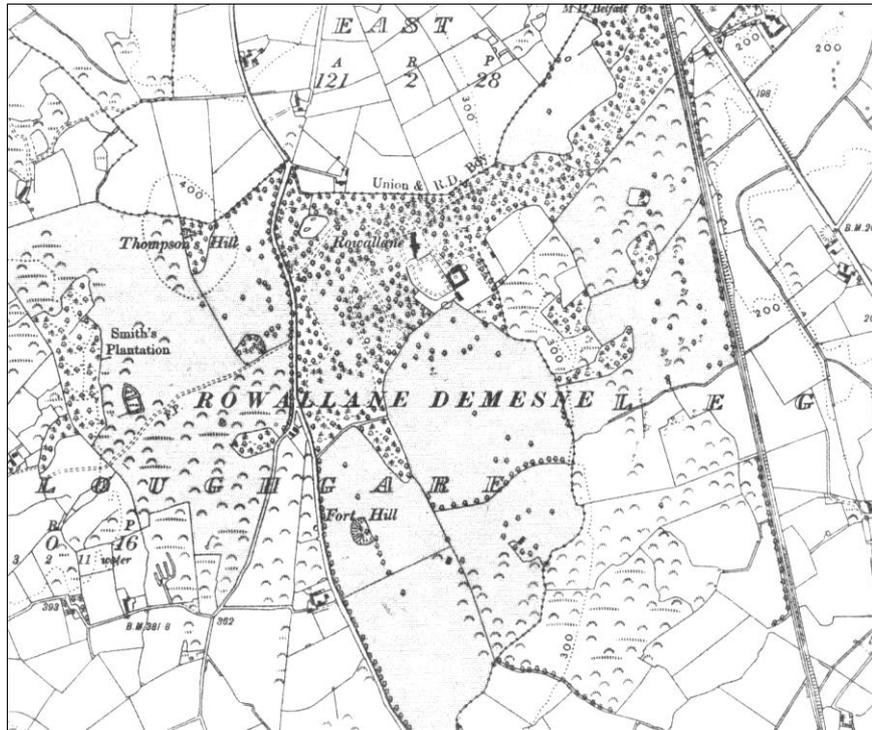


Figure 06: County Series map (part of), Down 23, Third Edition 1901-1902

*Ordnance Survey*

## 2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the NIEA and the National Trust. All site records are temporarily archived with the Honorary Archivist of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

## 2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey of 28 September 2013 was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the survey team were Gill Almond, Michael Catney, Alexander Cupples, June Welsh, Lee Gordon, Liz McShane, Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, Pat O'Neill, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford, Janey Sproule, Randal Scott, Sapphire Mussen and Ian Forsythe. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Mr Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access.

### 3. Survey

#### 3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan and profile drawings, accompanied by a photographic survey. A report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material. The features surveyed were the remains of a horse gin; an arrangement of stone boulders known as the 'megalithic tomb'; an arrangement of stone boulders known as the 'standing stones' and two conical arrangements of stone boulders referred to here as 'stone pillar 1' and 'stone pillar 2'.

#### 3.2 Horse gin and adjacent threshing room

The remains of the horse gin are situated adjacent to the east of a range of buildings that comprise the stable yard. The remains consist of a raised semi-circular platform with stone retaining wall. This would have originally been circular platform, 10.5m in diameter, fitted with a central mechanical drive that was rotated by the horse, driving a system of gears and shafts that transferred the motion through the adjacent wall. Inside the building the rotating shaft would be connected to a corn threshing machine. The raised platform would have originally been circular to allow the horse to complete a full circuit, but has been truncated at the west by a modern gravel pathway. There are no visible remains of the central pivot or drive shafts, but an opening is visible at low level in the wall to the west, which would have accommodated the main drive shaft.



Figure 07: Surviving part of platform of horse gin



Figure 08: Stable yard with gate to threshing area

Another horse-powered gin on National Trust property was surveyed by the Ulster Archaeological Society at Greenhill, Annahilt, also in Count Down (Gillespie 2007). In this instance it was found that the mechanism operated by the horse drove a milk churn, but at Rowallane it appears to have driven a corn threshing machine. This was confirmed by the presence of fixtures on the floor of the adjacent building in the

stable yard. Similar fixtures have been noted at an extant site at Castle Ward, County Down (Ken Pullin pers. comm.).

### 3.3 ‘Megalithic tomb’

The ‘megalithic tomb’ has been designed around an outcrop of local greywacke, with boulders positioned to create the appearance of a ruined megalithic tomb. The designers have not attempted to copy one of the four typical megalithic tomb types found all over Northern Ireland (Passage, Portal, Court and Wedge tombs). Instead, they have attempted to capture the general appearance of a badly damaged example, as most of them now are.



Figure 09: ‘Megalithic tomb’ viewed from the east

The feature is aligned north-west/south-east, is 5.6m in length and 2.3m in width, with boulders averaging 0.5m in height. The boulders vary in plan from 0.5m in length by 0.2m in width, to 2.2m in length by 0.6m in width. The feature was partly obscured by plant growth.

### 3.4 ‘Standing stones’

The ‘standing stones’ is clearly an attempt to replicate the nearby archaeological site DOW 023:046, described in the SMR thus:

3 standing stones were reported to MBR in 1982, only 2 of which have been located. Stone 1. is a squat, flat-topped pillar of local Silurian rock, 1.4m high; the base is hexagonal in plan; from N, the sides are 0.55m, 0.4m, 0.3m, 0.5m, 0.6m & 0.5m. Stone no.2 lies c.20m SE of stone 1; it is a rectangular, flat-topped pillar leaning to N. It is 1m high x 0.4m x 0.5m. It stands in the line of a tumbled dry-stone wall; both stones are firmly embedded in the ground (NIEA 2015).

The designers of the features at Rowallane were aware of the presence of this monument, a mere 1.5km away to the south-west and sufficiently impressed by it to attempt to recreate it in the gardens.



Figure 10: Standing Stones, viewed from the west

The feature is aligned north-east/south-west, 15m in length and 5.5m in width. Making use of outcropping greywacke, a large boulder, 1.2m in height, 0.5m in length and 0.5m width is located to the north-eastern end of the outcrop. A similar boulder is located mid-way along the length of the feature, but this has fallen. A third boulder has been located at the south-western end of the feature, but this has also fallen. Two smaller boulders, approximately 0.3m in length by 0.3m in width and 0.2m in height are located adjacent to the standing stone and a third, of similar dimensions, is located adjacent to the recumbent stone. The area around the stones and rock outcrop has been enhanced by the addition of a layer of small stones, suggestive of cairn material. An oval-shaped shallow depression, approximately 3m in length, 1.5m in width and

0.2m in maximum depth, is located immediately to the south-west of the recumbent stone. The entire feature is covered with grass.

### 3.5 'Stone pillar 1'

This stone pillar consists of a number (approximately 120) of water-rounded boulders of the local greywacke stone, known locally as 'bap stones'. These boulders are graded with the largest examples (0.25m in diameter) at the base and the smaller examples (0.1m in diameter) at the top. A single boulder has been placed at the top. The boulders are secured in a cement matrix. The feature stands 2.25m in height and is 1.65m in diameter at the base and 0.3m in diameter at the top.



Figure 11: Stone pillar 1, looking north

### 3.6 'Stone pillar 2'

This stone pillar consists of a number (approximately 120) of water-rounded boulders of the local greywacke stone. These boulders are graded with the largest examples (0.25m in diameter) at the base and the smaller examples (0.1m in diameter) at the top. A single boulder has been placed at the top. The boulders are secured in a cement matrix. The feature stands 2.25m in height and is 1.65m in diameter at the base and 0.3m in diameter at the top.



Figure 12: Stone pillar 2, looking north

### 3.7 Production of plan and profile drawings

Plan and profile drawings were completed, using data obtained from a field survey. Measurements were obtained by using the society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device.

Sketch plans at 1:100, 1:50 & 1:20 scale and profiles at 1:100 scale were completed on site by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

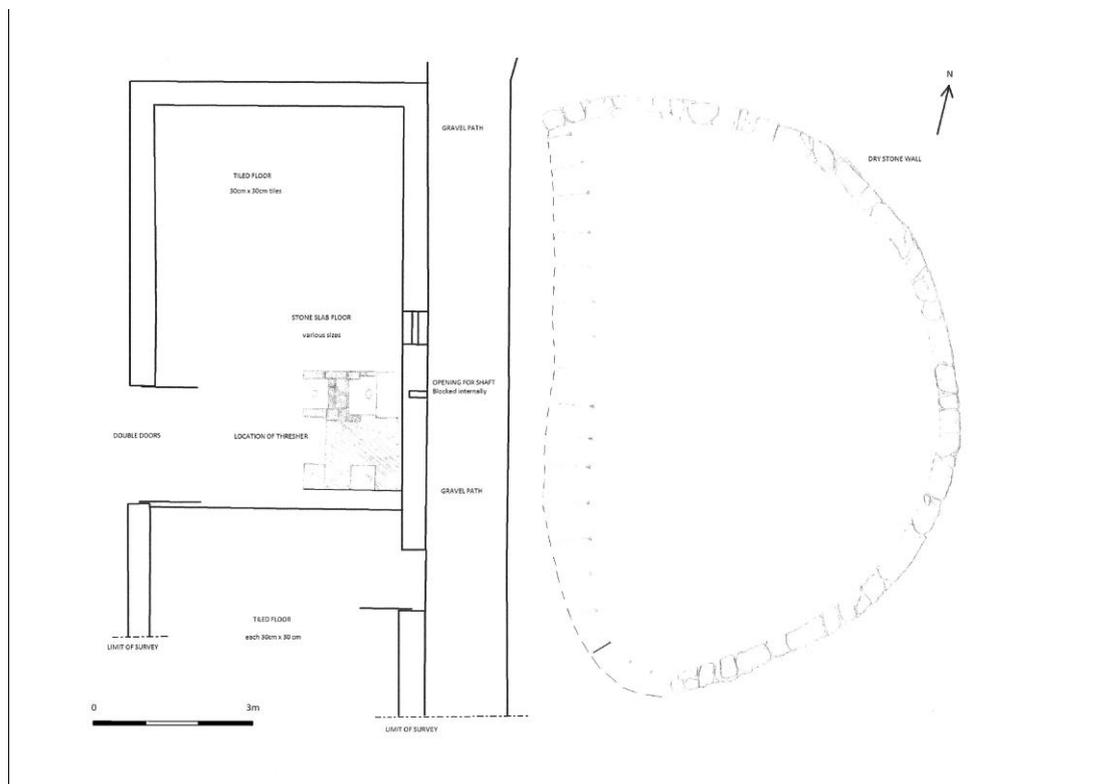


Figure 13: Plan of horse gin and adjacent buildings

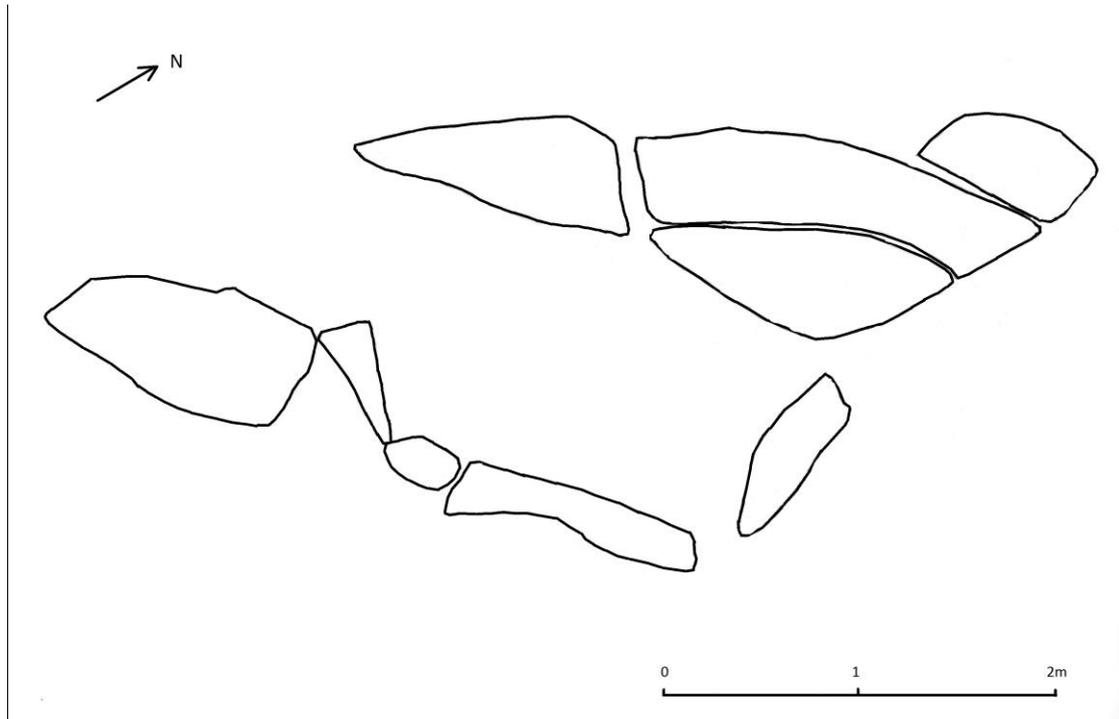


Figure 14: Plan of 'megalithic tomb'

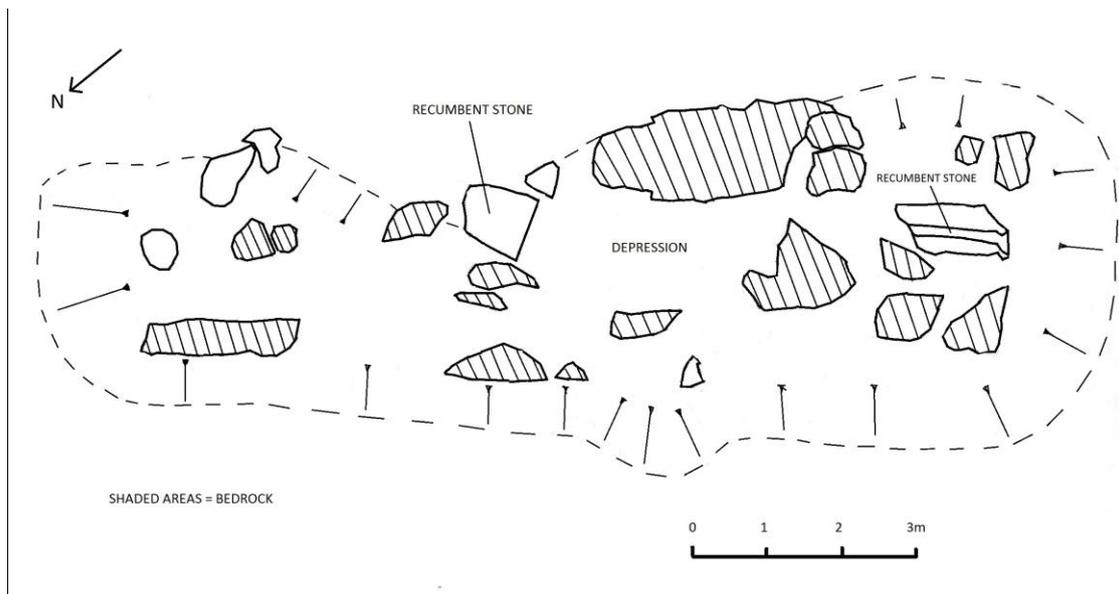


Figure 15: Plan of 'standing stones'

### 3.8 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using the society's *Ricoh Caplio 600G Wide* megapixel digital camera and a photograph record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

## 4. Discussion

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The story of Rowallane gardens began in 1858, when the Reverend John Moore purchased the townland of Creevyloughgare. In the early 1870s, he bought the adjacent townland of Leggygowan and named it Rowallane, or *Beautiful Clearing*, after his Scottish ancestral home. It was Moore who laid out the gardens in the nineteenth century as a naturalistic Irish gentry garden surrounding a working farm. The earliest parts of these gardens were the Pleasure Grounds and the Avenue Ground. The Gothic style was used for prominent estate structures such as the tower and gate piers. This complements the antiquarian interests evident in Reverend Moore's primitive cairns and seats, which reflect the archaeological and historic monuments that are evident in the Irish countryside. The local smooth, round bap stones are rarely used for garden ornament and their use at Rowallane is unusual as their primitive character is unrelated to modern architecture.

In 1903, Hugh Armytage Moore inherited the property from his uncle, the Reverend John Moore and continued to develop the gardens, particularly with a range of Far Eastern wild plant species and it is this collection that makes the gardens of international importance today. Of particular importance were rhododendrons, which Moore imported from Western China, Tibet, Upper Burma and Assam. These thrived in the acid soils at Rowallane and Moore became an authority on these plants, writing articles for the *Gardeners Chronicle*, *Gardening Illustrated* and the Rhododendron Society. His expertise was rewarded by being accepted as a member of this society. The property was acquired by the National Trust in 1955 and the mansion house is currently the headquarters of the National Trust in Northern Ireland.

## 5. Recommendations for further work

There are many follies within the Rowallane Demesne, some of which appear to be unique to this property. It is recommended that further survey and recording is carried out here in order to catalogue these features, provide a photographic and plan record of them and add these to the archaeological inventory of this impressive property.

## 6. Bibliography

Gallagher, L. and Rogers, D. 1986. *Castle, Coast and Cottage, The National Trust in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Blackstaff.

Gillespie, I. 2007. *Survey of Greenhill, Annahilt, Co. Down*. Survey Report No. 5. Belfast: Ulster Archaeological Society.

Welsh, H. 2007. *Survey of Forthill Rath, Creevyloughgare, Saintfield, County Down*, Survey Report No. 1, Belfast: Ulster Archaeological Society.

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## Appendix

### Photographic Record

*Ricoh Caplio 600G Wide Digital Camera*

| <b>Frame no</b> | <b>Direction viewed from</b> | <b>Details</b>                     |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| RIMG0001        | WEST                         | East wall of stable yard           |
| RIMG0004        | WEST                         | Lean-to to north of stable yard    |
| RIMG0005        | EAST                         | Stable yard courtyard              |
| RIMG0008        | EAST                         | Horse gin platform                 |
| RIMG0009        | EAST                         | Horse gin platform                 |
| RIMG0010        | WEST                         | Horse gin platform and stable yard |
| RIMG0011        | SOUTH-WEST                   | Standing stones                    |
| RIMG0011        | WEST                         | Interior of stable yard            |
| RIMG0012        | SOUTH-WEST                   | Standing stones                    |
| RIMG0014        | EAST                         | Survey Group at work               |
| RIMG0017        | NORTH                        | Gravel path at horse gin           |
| RIMG0021        | WEST                         | Stone column 2                     |
| RIMG0022        | WEST                         | Fittings for threshing machine     |
| RIMG0024        | EAST                         | Megalithic tomb feature            |
| RIMG0034        | EAST                         | Megalithic tomb feature            |
| P1080565        | WEST                         | Stone column 1                     |