



ULSTER
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 30**

In association with:

Author: **Janna McDonald and June Welsh**

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**

Location:

Cottage Ornée
Mount Stewart Demesne
County Down



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Ulster Archaeological Society

c/o School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology

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Cover illustration: Artist's impression of the Cottage Ornée at Mount Stewart,
County Down. *J. Magill*

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1. Summary

1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at a feature referred to as *The Folly* in the grounds of Mount Stewart Estate in County Down. This feature should more accurately be referred to as a *cottage ornée*. This site is found in the townland of Mount Stewart, in the Parish of Grey Abbey and in the Barony of Ards Lower. The Irish Grid Reference is J 5641 6941. The survey was one of a series undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society during 2015.

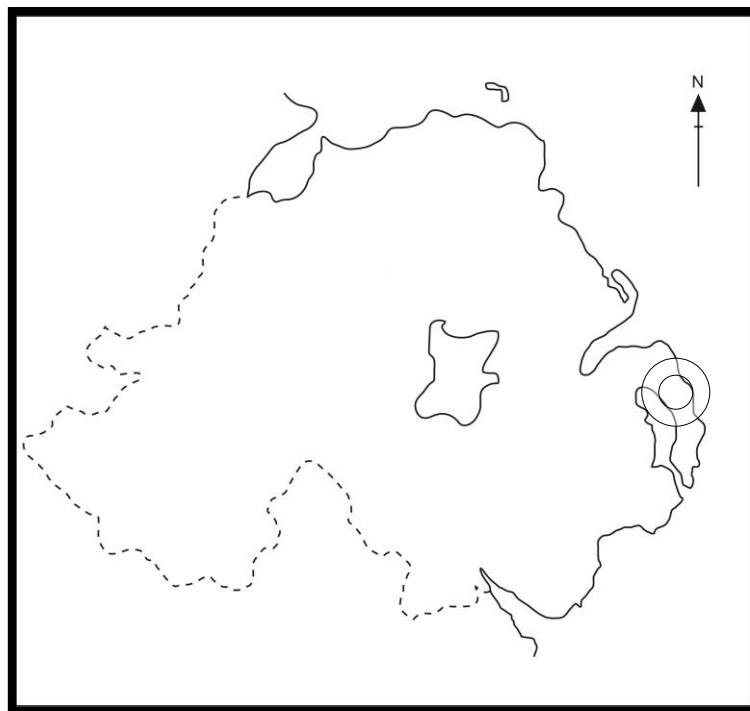


Figure 01: Location map for Mount Stewart



Figure 02: View of the monument, looking west

The cottage ruins are on an elongated, oval mound, which is located in a small river valley between two small drumlins, known as *Bell's Hill* and *Cumming's Hill* to the north and south respectively. A stream, known as the *Glen Burn*, makes its way from the north of the demesne to flow into Strangford Lough to the south. The stream valley in this area is known as *The Glen*. The stream loops around the south of the mound and a defined path runs alongside the stream. There are many tall, beech trees on both sides of this path. The trees are mature, possibly 200-300 years old. There is an estate wall located beyond the stream. This is a continuation of the estate wall on the south-east side of the stream, which is also a continuation of the wall from the Templecrone Church site.

The platform on which the cottage ornée is located has an approximate diameter of 25m on top of the mound, with 5m-6m of a slope on all sides to a lower ground level. Trees are also found on top of the mound around the cottage site.



Figure 03: Mound, looking south-east

At the top of this slope stand the ruins of the *cottage ornée*, like a small castle on a hill, surrounded by a stream, which in turn leads along a path to the Templecrone Church site to the north-east. This former church site has also been surveyed by the Ulster Archaeological Society (Scott and Stevenson, 2015).



Figure 04: The Glen Burn, to the south of the site, looking east

At the centre of the mound and to the north and west of the cottage ruins, a quarry is located. Several quarries can be found throughout the Mount Stewart estate. These quarries are marked on the demesne maps of 1834, but by 1858 all of them were disused. One quarry is remarkably and conveniently close to the cottage site. A professional geologist visiting the site confirmed that the rock here is greywacke, which is also the rock type used in the construction of the cottage (pers. comm.).



Figure 05: Quarry face to the north-west, looking south

1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan drawings of the monument, elevations where possible and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and copies submitted to the National Trust and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Figure 06: View of the north wall, looking south-east



Figure 07: Photogrammetry image of north wall, *David Craig*

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of the Mount Stewart cottage ornée was undertaken on Saturday 27 June 2015. It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society, 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 followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it was 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 and the Mount Stewart cottage ornée was chosen to be one of these

Mount Stewart, more than any other National Trust property in Northern Ireland, is the creation by one family. 1744 began the long process, in which each generation brought its own ideas, enthusiasm, taste and resources to the house and also to the gardens. Layer by layer, Mount Stewart has been moulded and enhanced in a fascinating story, which brings us right up to the present day. This family have remained holders of the title Marquess of Londonderry since 1816.

The Stewart family bought the estate in 1744, with money acquired by Alexander Stewart (1699-1781). His son, Robert, added a temporary wing to the west in about 1800. The next owner was Robert's half-brother Charles, the third Marquess of Londonderry (1778-1854). Charles was a flamboyant, career soldier and in 1819, seven years after the death of his wife, he married the wealthiest heiress in England: Frances Anne Vane-Tempest. Together, they acquired even grander houses to accommodate their lavish collection of art and antiquities, but it is said that Mount Stewart was a particular favourite. One controversial move by the Londonderry family was to spend £150,000 on refurbishment in the 1840s, while giving only £30 to famine relief, when Ireland was in dire need of financial assistance. The present exterior of Mount Stewart was formed at this time, when the house was increased to eleven bays and porticos were added to the front and sides of the building. When Charles died in 1854, his devoted wife arranged for a number of monuments to be built in his honour, the most dramatic being the iconic tower at the summit of Scrabo Hill.

The fourth Marquess married the widow of Viscount Powerscourt and chose to live at her home in Powerscourt near Dublin. The fifth Marquess lived at his wife's ancestral home, Plas Machynlleth in Wales. The sixth Marquess lived at Wynard Hall, which is now a prestigious hotel in the Tees Valley. With his wife Theresa, the sixth Marquess took a brief interest in the gardens, when in 1903 King Edward and Queen Alexandra came to visit Mount Stewart. These long years of neglect had a devastating effect upon Mount Stewart.

Fortunately, the seventh Marquess, who was also a well-known politician, brought a new lease of life to the house and grounds, most ably assisted by his innovative wife, Lady Edith. The gardens had consisted of plain lawns with large, decorative pots, but all that was about to be dramatically transformed. With the expertise of Thomas Bolas, as head gardener, the Marchioness added the Shamrock Garden, the Sunken Garden and increased the size of the lake. She created a Spanish Garden, Italian Garden, the Dodo Terrace, the Menagerie and the Fountain Pool and laid out walks in the Lily Wood. This inspirational lady, who devoted twenty years to these stunning gardens, with their unique sub-tropical micro-climate, is owed a huge debt of gratitude for creating the very special Mount Stewart, which we have come to know and appreciate today. The ninety-eight acre garden at Mount Stewart is widely regarded as one of the greatest in the British Isles and also one of the best in Europe. In 1957 Lady Londonderry gave these beautiful gardens to the National Trust.

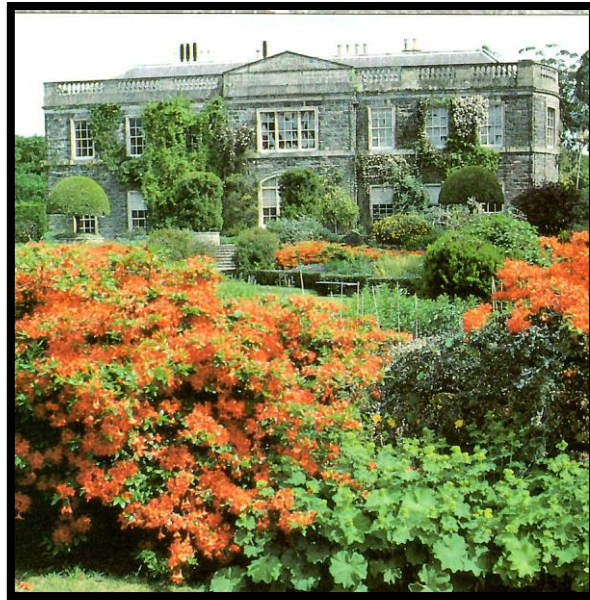


Figure 08: Mount Stewart house and gardens *National Trust*

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

As far as it is known, there has been no previous archaeological survey at this site.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

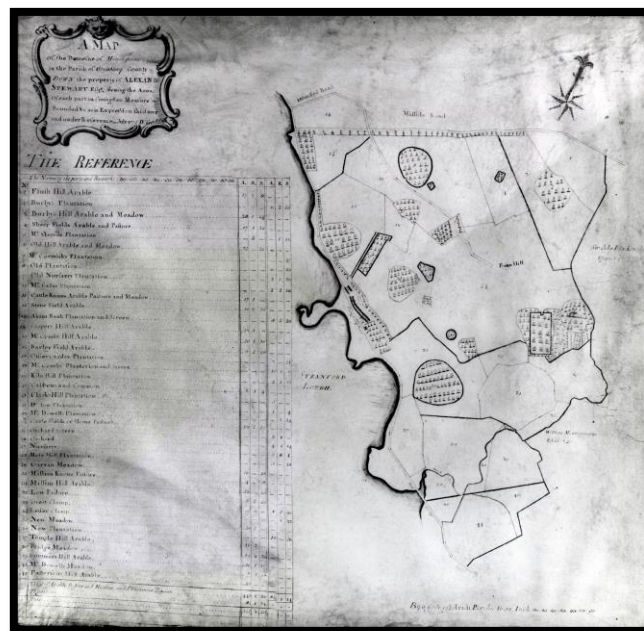


Figure 09: Estate Map (Geddes 1779)

It is difficult to be precise about the dating of this particular site, but the Estate maps and the Ordnance Survey maps do provide some useful clues. There is no indication of the cottage on the Geddes Estate map of 1779. By 1834 the OS map indicates a building, which appears to be only half-roofed. At first, this seemed to suggest a structure, which was built in two phases. By 1858 the OS map indicated a building with its roof now complete. By 1900 and thereafter, the OS maps indicated an unroofed building, which clearly suggests that the cottage had ceased to be used by the family. It seemed that its lifespan of 60+ years had finally ended. Today, only a romantic ruin survives, in this remote, rural landscape within the Mount Stewart demesne.



Figure 10: OS County Series, Sheet 11 (part of) 1834

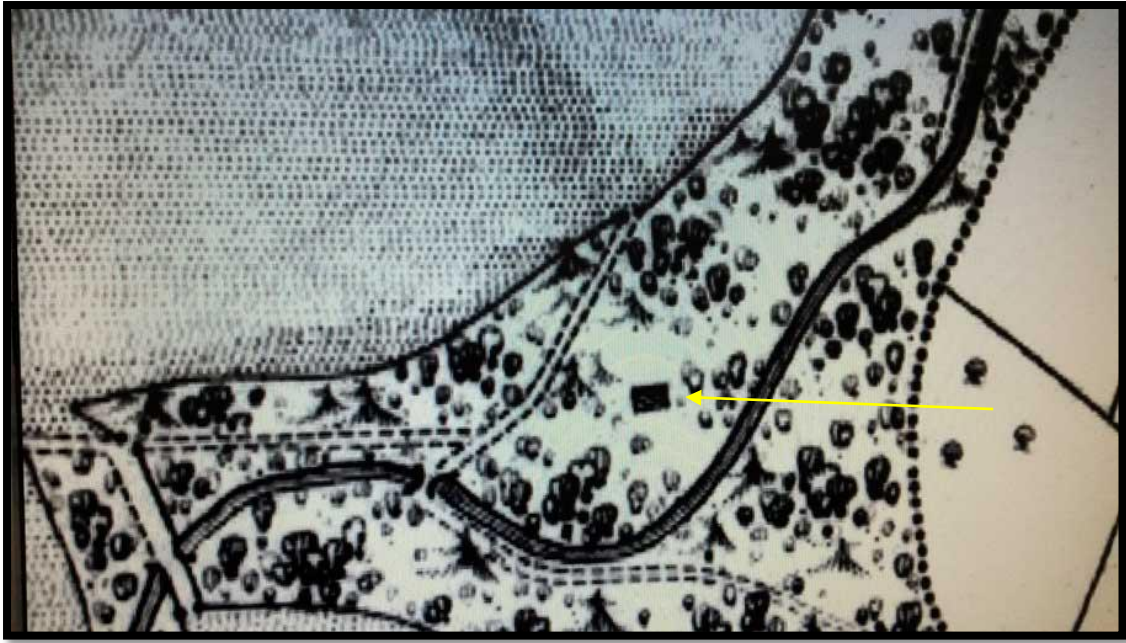


Figure 11: OS County Series, Sheet 11 (part of) 1858



Figure 12: OS County Series, Sheet 11 (part of) 1900



Figure 13: OS County Series, Sheet 11 (part of) 1920

2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the National Trust and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been archived by the National Trust at Rowallane, Saintfield in County Down.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the survey team included Philip Baxter, Duncan Berryman, Olive Campbell, Michael Catney, David Craig, Ian Forsythe, Lee Gordon, Viktorija Korola, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, Liz McShane, Jo Magill, Sapphire Mussen, Ray Preston, Ken Pullin, Randal Scott, Chris Stevenson, June Welsh and Karine Wright. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access



Figure 14: Members of the Survey Group at work, looking west.

3. 2015 UAS Survey

3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan drawings, elevations where possible and would be accompanied by a photographic survey. This report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material.

3.2 Production of plan drawings

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

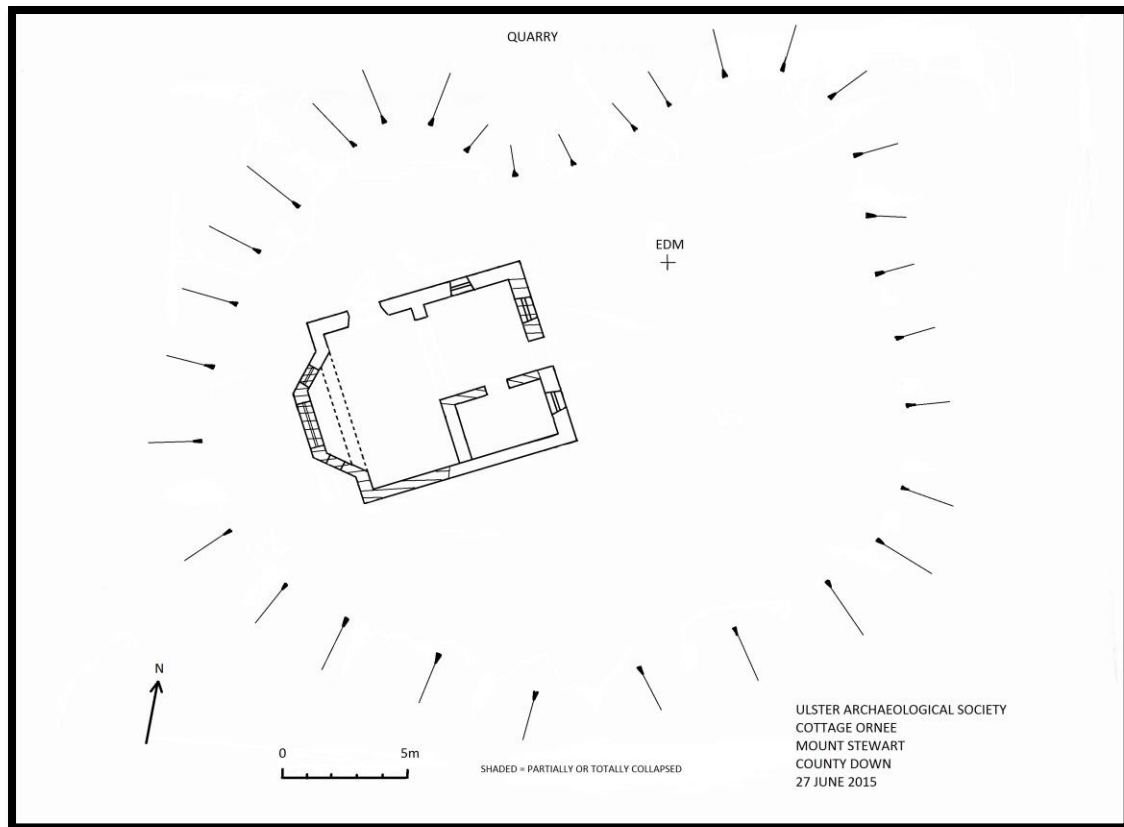


Figure 15: Plan drawing of the cottage ornée at Mount Stewart

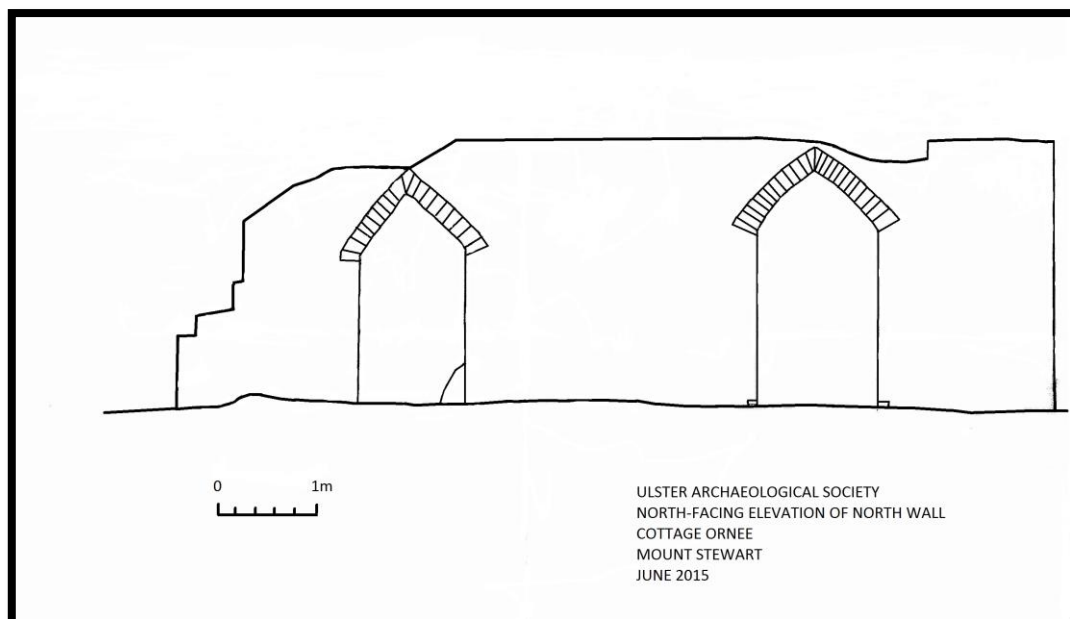


Figure 16: North-facing elevation of the north wall

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G600* 8 megapixel digital camera and others on the day. A photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on the 27 June 2015. Further photographs were taken during a return visit on 5 April 2016. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

4. Discussion

It is important at the outset to define the site as accurately as possible, based on the evidence gathered during the survey. A folly has been described as a building primarily constructed for decoration, but suggesting through its appearance some other purpose or so extravagant in design that it transcends the range of garden ornaments, usually associated with the class of buildings to which it belongs. The term folly is usually applied to a small building, which appears to have no practical purpose.

Many follies, particularly during times of hardship such as the Irish famine, were built as a form of poor relief, to provide employment for peasants and also unemployed artisans. The society of the day held the very strict view that reward without labour was misguided. One such example is The Obelisk or *Conolly's Folly*, which is located near Celbridge and Maynooth in County Kildare, Ireland. It was commissioned by Katherine Conolly to provide employment during the worst of the Famine and was erected within the Castletown Estate.



Figure 17: Folly at Belleek Castle, County Mayo

The term *cottage ornée* has been defined as ‘a rustic building of picturesque design’ which often featured thatched roofs and ornate timberwork (English Heritage, cited in Wikipedia). The term was probably invented by Robert Lugar, who was the first to use it in print in 1805. Usually, these were built by the wealthy, either as retreats for themselves or as embellishments for their country estates. This cottage site is not eccentric in design, nor does it appear to have the element of fakery, which is usually associated with a folly. There does not appear to be any attempt to make it other than it is. Indeed, when these rustic, stylised cottages were built during the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they were seeking a more natural way of living, as opposed to the formality of previous baroque and neo-classical architectural styles. It is the archetypal *chocolate box* cottage, as opposed to the usual sense of the word, which often described a cottage as a small dwelling for the rural poor. A cottage in the country must surely be everyone’s dream, with the idea of a snug little retreat, far away from city grime, noise and routine. Cottage ornée have been described as:

a small house in the country, of odd irregular form, with various, harmonious colouring, the effect of weather, time and accident; the whole environed with smiling verdure, having a contented, cheerful, inviting aspect, and door on the latch, ready to receive the gossip neighbour, or weary, exhausted traveller ... a porch at entrance; irregular breaks in the direction of the walls, one part higher than another; various roofing of different materials (thatch particularly) boldly projecting; fronts partly built of walls of brick, partly weather boarded, and partly brick-noggin dashed; casement window lights (Lyll 1988, 15).

Surprisingly, these are not the words of a poet, but of a young architect, James Malton, written in 1798 in *British Cottage Architecture*. His ambition was to make that cottage dream come true. To promote their work, young architects published a collection of designs for cottages. Sketching tours, known as *Scrambles* became an essential part of the lives of young architects, as they searched among the hills, dales, villages and hamlets of the countryside looking for new ideas. As many as forty of these books with cottage designs, were published between 1790 and 1840. It is interesting to note that James Malton was brought up in Ireland and came from a family of topographical artists. Suddenly, architects experienced an extraordinary freedom. The result was that room plans would suit the individual client’s way of life and the exterior of the building would be designed to ensure harmony within the surrounding landscape.



Figure 18: The Hermitage (Hanwell), as an example of cottage ornée. *Wikipedia*



Figure 19: Derrymore House, Bessbrook (a cottage ornée) *National Trust*

One such local building worthy of this title of cottage ornée is Derrymore House in Bessbrook, County Armagh, which continues to be maintained in excellent condition by the National Trust. It is possible that there were other such buildings within Northern Ireland, which remain to be identified.



Figure 20: View of site, looking north

The cottage ornée at Mount Stewart is rectangular and aligned approximately east-west. It measures 8.84m east/west and 7.8m north/south, with the remains of a bay window at the west. The exterior wall thickness varies slightly between 53cm and 56cm, while the interior wall thickness is less, measuring just 45cm. Fragments of roofing slates, some with surviving nail-holes are present across the site, suggesting that the building was roofed with slates.



Figure 21: Slate roofing tile

The north wall

The north wall is largely intact and stands to a height of 2.65m. It has two openings. One is 2.3m in height and 1.57m in width and is probably a door opening. The other is 2m in height and 1.29m in width and recesses in the lower part of the opening suggest this was the location of a wooden sill, confirming its use as a window. Both openings are splayed to the interior to enhance natural lighting. Approximately half-way along the interior surface, the remains of an internal stone wall are present.



Figure 22: North wall internally with its two apertures, looking north



Figure 23: View of north wall, with doorway and window, looking south

The south wall

The south wall is substantially complete, but a 1.5m section to the western end has collapsed, leaving 7.3m in situ. There is no evidence for windows or doors on this side of the building. The height of the wall, where it exists, measures 2.75m from ground level to a layer of flat slates along the top of the wall, which may have acted as a damp-resistant layer.



Figure 24: View of south wall, looking north

The east wall

The east wall has evidence on the ground that it once had two windows and one doorway. Only one window remains and its missing sill is clearly indicated in the photograph below. It is possible that later the doorway became a third window.



Figure 25: Window of the east wall, looking west

The west wall

Most of the west wall has collapsed, but surviving foundations and sections of masonry in the area suggest that this was once an elaborate bay window, with three windows supported on stone piers.



Figure 26: Close-up view of bay window, looking west



Figure 27: Expansive view of bay window's location, looking east

This expansive bay window would have afforded excellent views from the cottage towards *The Glen* below. It is uncertain whether this was an original feature of the cottage or a later addition.

The internal room

There is evidence for one internal room within the structure. It is located at the south-east corner and makes use of one of the windows on the east wall. The internal room measures 3.68m in length and 2m in width. There is evidence for a doorway to the north, measuring approximately one metre in width. Wall plaster was used on the internal walls of this room and some of this plaster remains visible.



Figure 28: Internal room with window on the east wall, looking south



Figure 29: Evidence for doorway to internal room, looking south



Figure 30: Evidence of wall plaster within internal room, looking south-east

Possible phases of construction

The 1834 Ordnance Survey map shows the cottage with the eastern half of the roof shaded, suggesting that the western part was unroofed. This leads to speculation that the cottage was initially built in two phases, but there is no evidence for this in the existing stonework. Similarly, it was thought that the bay window was possibly a later addition, but the use of similar stone and brickwork as in the remainder of the building makes this less likely. It would also appear that an earlier stone partition wall was partially demolished to allow greater circulation in the cottage, as the broken ends were faced with decorative brickwork. It seems likely that the internal room was a later addition, as the north wall was not integral with the existing stone walls.



Figure 31: Hand-made red brick from the cottage site

It is fascinating to consider the architectural influences of the time, which contributed to the design of this cottage. The Gothic buildings between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries were a major source of inspiration to nineteenth century designers, resulting in what became known as the Gothic Revival style. Architectural elements, such as pointed arches, steeply sloping roofs and decorative tracery with its ornamental openwork, were applied to a wide range of objects. Some even appeared as buildings in miniature. Art critics, such as John Ruskin (1819-1900) advocated a return to the spiritual values of the Middle Ages, leaving the mechanised and materialistic age far behind.



Figure 32: Doorway arch at the cottage ornée, looking north



Figure 33: Window opening in north wall, looking north

The pointed arches have been utilised in both windows and doorways in other buildings closely associated with Mount Stewart, as these photographs below clearly indicate.



Figure 34: *Newtownards Lodge*, original entrance to Mount Stewart



Figure 35: A second gate lodge, beside the modern main entrance



Figure 36: Mount Stewart School

Recommendations for further work

It is clear from the survey that this feature is not a folly, but rather a cottage ornée. It is set in a remote part of the estate and would have been a welcome stopping-off point for the gentry, as they toured their estate. It would have had exceptional views down the Glen River valley, enhanced by the provision of a large bay window.

This remains a most attractive feature within the Mount Stewart estate, especially in springtime, when the bluebells and other wild flowers carpet the landscape. The National Trust may wish to consolidate and conserve the remaining structure in order to make it available to visitors in the future.

Should more information become available in the future, perhaps from Estate records at Mount Stewart, it would undoubtedly shed more light on this fascinating cottage ornée.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

SITE: Cottage Ornée, Mount Stewart Demesne, County Down

DATE: 27 June 2015

Make and model of camera...*Ricoh G600W* and others

Frame no	Looking	Details
P1100527	West	View of the monument, looking west
DSCN5681	South-east	Mound, looking south-east
RIMG0195	East	The Glen Burn, to the south of the site, looking east
RIMG0201	South	Quarry face to the north-west, looking south
DSC01477	South-east	View of the north wall, looking south-east
P1100503	West	Members of the Survey Group at work, looking west
RIMG0053	North	View of site, looking north
DSCN5713	N/A	Slate roofing tile
DSC01481	North	North wall internally with its two apertures, looking north
RIMG0210	South	View of north wall, with doorway and window, looking south
RIMG0206	North	View of south wall, looking north
DSCN5708	West	Window of the east wall, looking west
RIMG0043	West	Close-up view of bay window, looking west
DSCN5711	East	Expansive view of bay window's location, looking east
DSC01479	South	Internal room with window on the east wall, looking south
RIMG0220	South	Evidence for doorway to internal room, looking south
RIMG0218	South-east	Evidence of wall plaster within internal room, looking south-east
RIMG0229	N/A	Hand-made red brick from the cottage site
RIMG0038	North	Doorway arch at the cottage ornée, looking north
DSC01482	North	Window opening in north wall, looking north
DSCN5725	N/A	<i>Newtownards Lodge</i> , original entrance to Mount Stewart
DSCN5727	N/A	A second gate lodge, beside the modern main entrance
20160521	N/A	Mount Stewart School