



ULSTER
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 37**

Author: **Grace McAlister**

Location:

**Survey of Island Taggart
Strangford Lough,
County Down**

In association with:

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**



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1. SUMMARY

1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at Island Taggart, Strangford Lough, County Down, on Saturday 28 April 2012. Island Taggart is approximately 1 mile in length (north/south) by ¼ mile in width (east/west), with a total area of around 85 acres. It is situated just north of Killyleagh, off the western shore of the Lough, and is accessible only by boat. It was acquired by the National Trust in 1985. The survey was the second in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society during 2012. On the day of survey, a total of 8 sites were recorded, four of these were surveyed and photographed, the other four were recorded photographically.

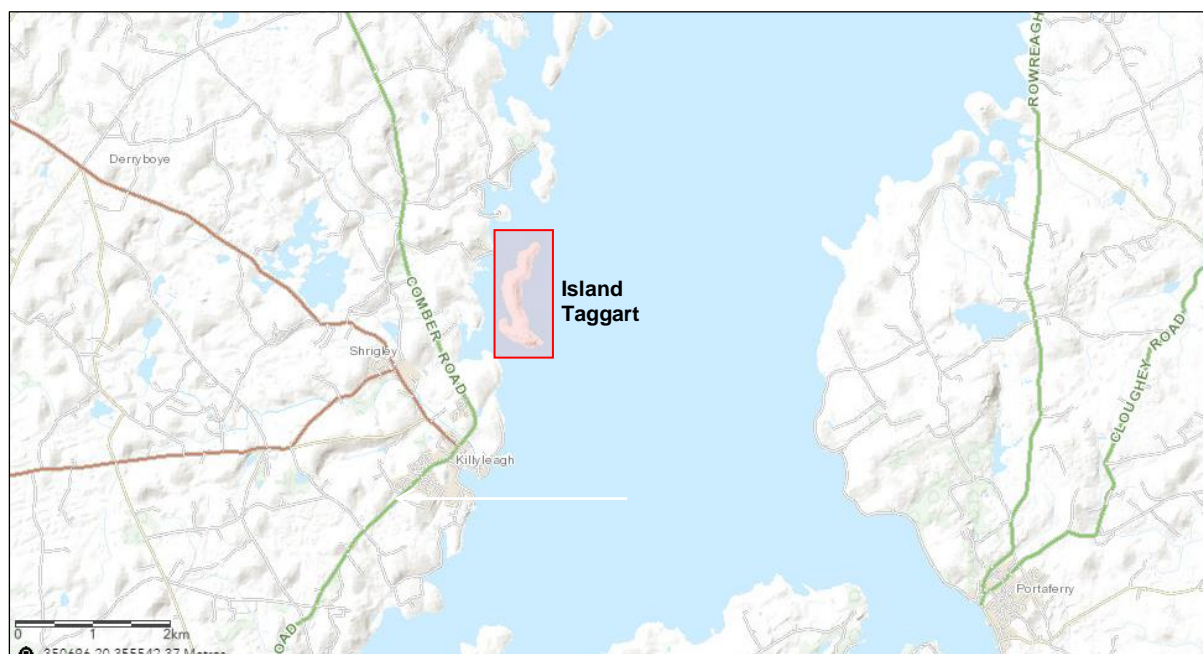


Figure 01: Location of Island Taggart (taken from: <https://www.spatialni.gov.uk/mapviewer.html>)



Figure 02: Aerial imagery of Island Taggart (taken from <https://www.spatialni.gov.uk/mapviewer.html>)

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 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.

1 2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

The survey of Island Taggart was undertaken on Saturday 28 April 2012. 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 Island Taggart was subsequently chosen to be the thirty-seventh of these.

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

Several archaeological features from on and around Island Taggart have been recorded in the Sites and Monuments Record compiled by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage. These are:

SMR Number	Classification	Period	Grid Reference
DOW 024:034	Occupation site	Mesolithic	J 3533 3542
MRD 187:040	A.P. Site (natural feature)	Post-Medieval	J 5316 5448
MRD 187:049	Intertidal wall	Post-Medieval	J 5369 5540
MRD 187:117	Cleared slipway	Post-Medieval	J 5364 5521
MRD 187:149	Slipway	Post-Medieval	J 5350 5528
MRD 187:150	Field boundary extension	Post-Medieval	J 5323 5493
MRD 187:151	Field boundary extension	Post-Medieval	J 5353 5487
MRD 187:153	Slipway	Post-Medieval	J 5350 5459
MRD 187:154	Field boundary extension	Post-Medieval	J 5328 5455
MRD 187:155	Field boundary extension (modern fence)	Modern	J 5328 5452
MRD 187:156	Field boundary extension	Post-Medieval	J 5331 5443
MRD 206:010	Tidal pond	Uncertain	J 5330 5435

Table 01: Inventory of monuments currently recorded on Island Taggart

The National Trust has compiled a more detailed inventory of sites and monuments that have been identified on the property at Island Taggart:

HBSMR	Monument Type	Period	Grid Reference	NISMR
132066	Farmhouse	18th-20th century	353394 354520	
132067	Outbuilding/Byre	18th-20th century	353398 354536	
132068	Outbuilding	18th-20th century	353407 354518	
132069	Horse Walk	19th-20th century	353405 354543	
132070	Kelp Drying Racks	late 18th/19th century	353511 354933	
132071	Outbuilding - ruin	late 18th/19th century	353499 354950	
132072	Farm Building - ruin	late 18th/19th century	353503 354981	
132073	Outbuilding - ruin	late 18th/19th century	353559 355292	
132077	Garden	19th-20th century	353397 354509	
132078	Well	19th-20th century	353438 354547	
132079	Well	19th-20th century	353450 354986	
132080	Kelp Kiln	18th-19th century	353464 354816	
132081	Findspot of Flints	Late Mesolithic 5500-4500	353309 354287	DOW 024:034
132082	Slipway	18th-19th century	353637 355206	MRD 187:117
132083	Intertidal Wall	18th-19th century	353686 355396	MRD 187:049
132084	Kiln	18th-19th century	353642 354091	
132620	Cleared Slipway	Post-Medieval	J5339055130	MRD 187:039
132621	AP Site	Uncertain	J53165448	MRD 187:040
132627	Intertidal Wall	18th-19th century	J5369055400	MRD 187:049
132652	Cleared Slipway	Post-Medieval	J5364055210	MRD 187:117
132661	Field Boundary Extension	19th-20th century	J5323054930	MRD 187:150
132662	Field Boundary Extension	19th-20th century	J5353054870	MRD 187:151
132663	Slipway	19th-20th century	J5350054590	MRD 187:153
132664	Slipway	19th-20th century	J53505528	MRD 187:149
132665	Field Boundary Extension	19th-20th century	J5328054550	MRD 187:154

132666	Fence	Modern	J5328054520	MRD 187:155
132667	Field Boundary Extension	19th-20th century	J5331054430	MRD 187:156
132798	Findspot of Flints	Mesolithic	J5330054300	DOW 024:034
133027	Kelp Store?	19th Century	353691 354127	

Table 02: National Trust inventory of sites and monuments at Island Taggart

NTSMR	Monument Type	Period	Grid Reference	NI SMR
Not in NTSMR	Findspot of Flints	Late Mesolithic 5500-4500	J 5350 5450	Not in SMR

Table 03: Additional feature to be added to monument inventory following the UAS survey

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

Island Taggart is shown on the 1st edition ordnance survey map (Figure 03), however there is little detail and notably there are no historic monuments included. The map does show five buildings, some of which were surveyed as part of the Survey Group's fieldwork. There is one to the northern tip of the island, two at the eastern edge (Site 1), and three buildings within a farm enclosure (Site 4) towards the middle of the island and possibly a well (Site 7). In the 2nd edition ordnance survey map (Figure 04), these buildings are still present and another is present at Site 1. Field boundary and additional laneways are also shown. The 3rd edition ordnance survey map (Figure 05), is more detailed with tree cover and additional contouring added. Another well (Site 6) located close to Site 1 is also shown. In the 1:10000 metric map (Figure 06), the same buildings are present but there is a 'Kiln (disused)' at the southern tip of the island.

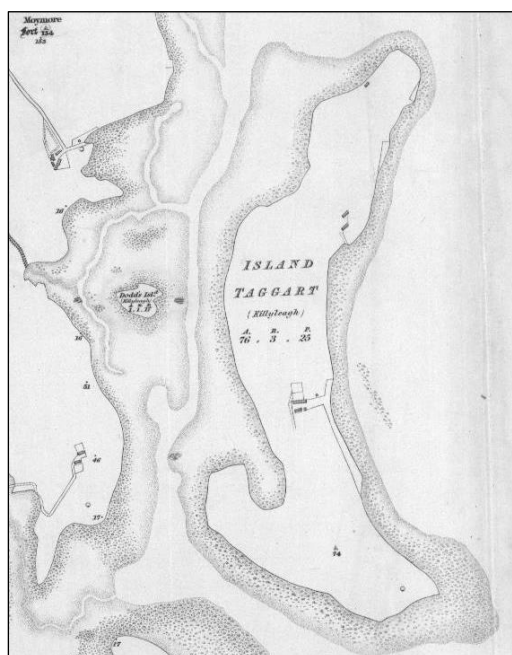


Figure 03: 1st edition ordnance survey map

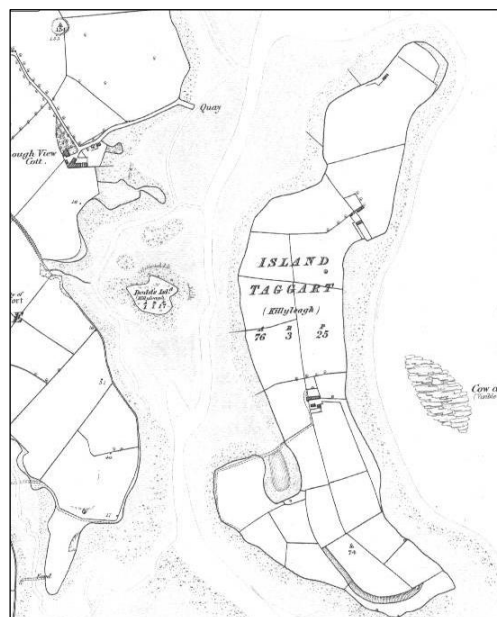


Figure 04: 2nd edition ordnance survey map

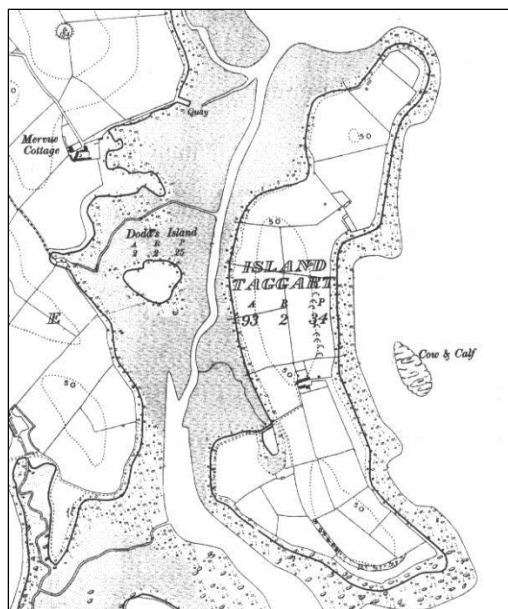


Figure 05: 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map

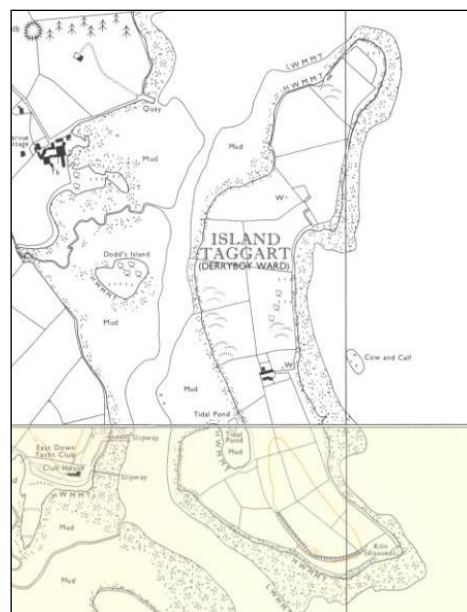


Figure 06: 1:10000 metric Irish grid map

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, County Down.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and included Michael Catney, Derek Eccles, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Julie Hanse, Grace McAlister, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, Liz McShane, Heather Montgomery, Pat O'Neill, Roisin O'Reilly, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford, Janey Sproule and June Welsh. 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.

The Survey Group were assisted by a team of volunteers from the National Trust, who cleared vegetation from several sites in preparation for surveying. Thanks also to Craig McCoy, National Trust Warden for Strangford Lough, who cheerfully ferried everyone to and from the island, despite challenging tides.

3. UAS SURVEY OF 28 APRIL 2012

3.1 Methodology

It was decided that the survey would take the form of the production of plan drawings and elevations, 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 elevations 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 1:20 scale and 1:10 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.

Site 1: Vernacular building

This site is currently designated NTSMR 132071 by the National Trust and is thought to date from the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century. Grid reference J 53499 54950. The site is currently classified as an outbuilding and consists of an arrangement of partially-collapsed walls. It is approximately 14.6m in length (ne/sw) and 5.8m in width (nw/se). The northern and eastern corners of the building were in a bad state of repair, having largely collapsed. The northern corner is only 0.1m in height, whereas the eastern corner stands at 0.65m in height. The western end of the structure is markedly more intact, with the west and south corners standing at a height of 2.8, and 2.25m respectively. The walls are approximately 0.50m in width. There is a doorway on the NW section wall, it is 0.9m wide and positioned 1.8m from the western corner of the building. There is another stone building (NTSMR 132072) located approximately 25m to the north, however this was not surveyed on the day.



Plate 01: Southern corner of Site 1 (Vernacular building)

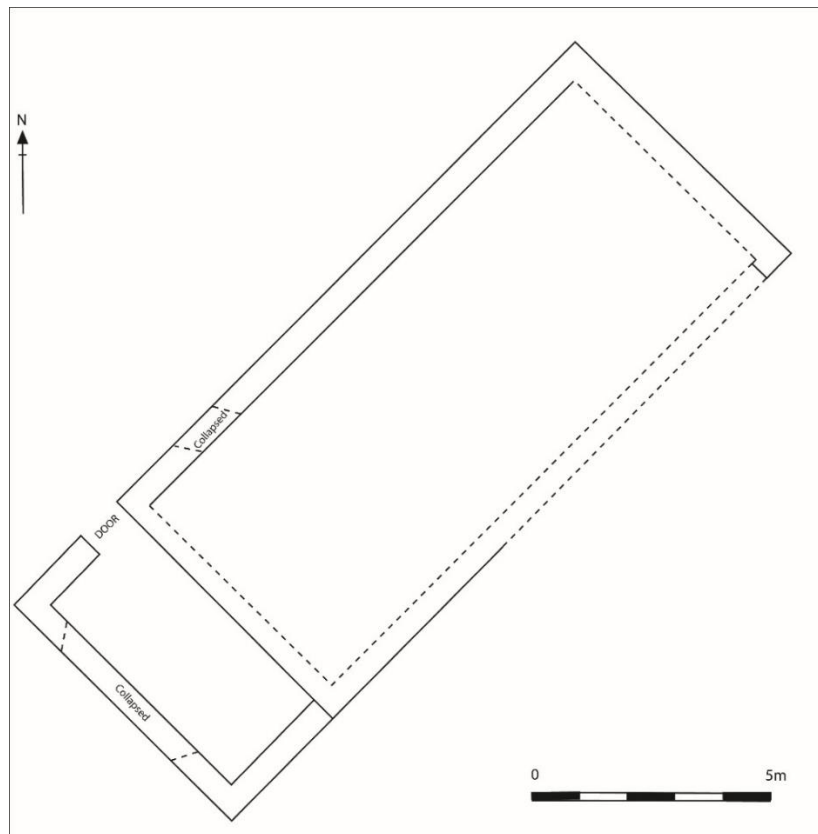


Figure 07: Plan of Site 1 (Vernacular building).

Site 2: Kelp drying racks

This site is currently designated NTSMR 132070 by the National Trust and is thought to date from the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century. Grid reference J 53511 54933. The site is immediately to the south-west of the ruins of a vernacular building (Site 1 above). The site consists of a series of stone uprights and is currently classified as kelp drying racks. While their function has not been positively confirmed, it would be reasonable to attribute their use as racks for drying kelp before further processing.



Plate 02: Surveying of kelp drying racks

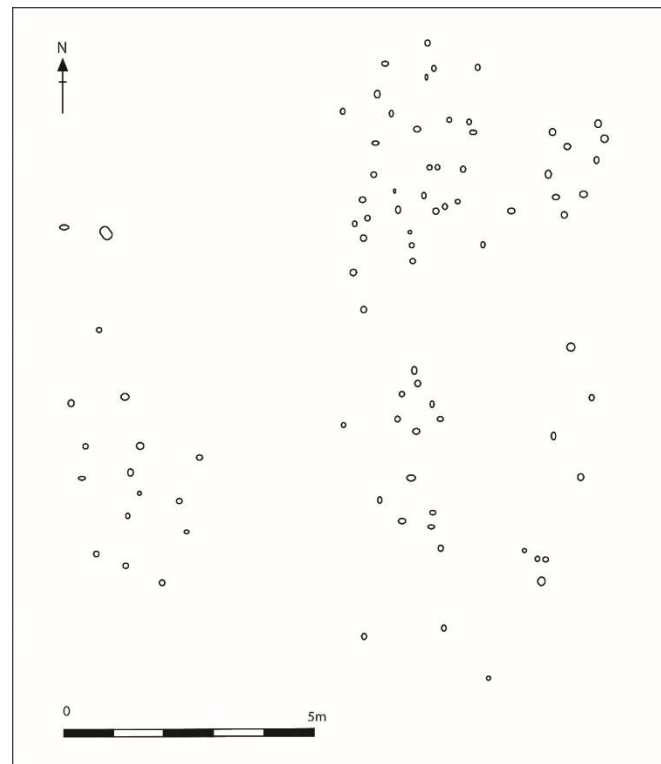


Figure 08: Plan of Site 2

Site 3: Vernacular building

The site is currently designated NTSMR 133027 by the National Trust and has been described as a kelp store. The site is on the southern end of the island, and consists of a rectangular building which measure 12.04m in length (sw/ne) and 6.71m in width (se/nw). The walls are approximately 0.8m in width and are largely collapsed. There is an entrance along the NW section of wall, it is approximately 1m wide and positioned 3.2m from the NE corner of the

building. There are two cluster of stones in the interior of the building, however these may just be associated with the collapse of the building. A small kelp kiln (NTSMR 132084) is located to the south-west of the structure, however it was not surveyed.

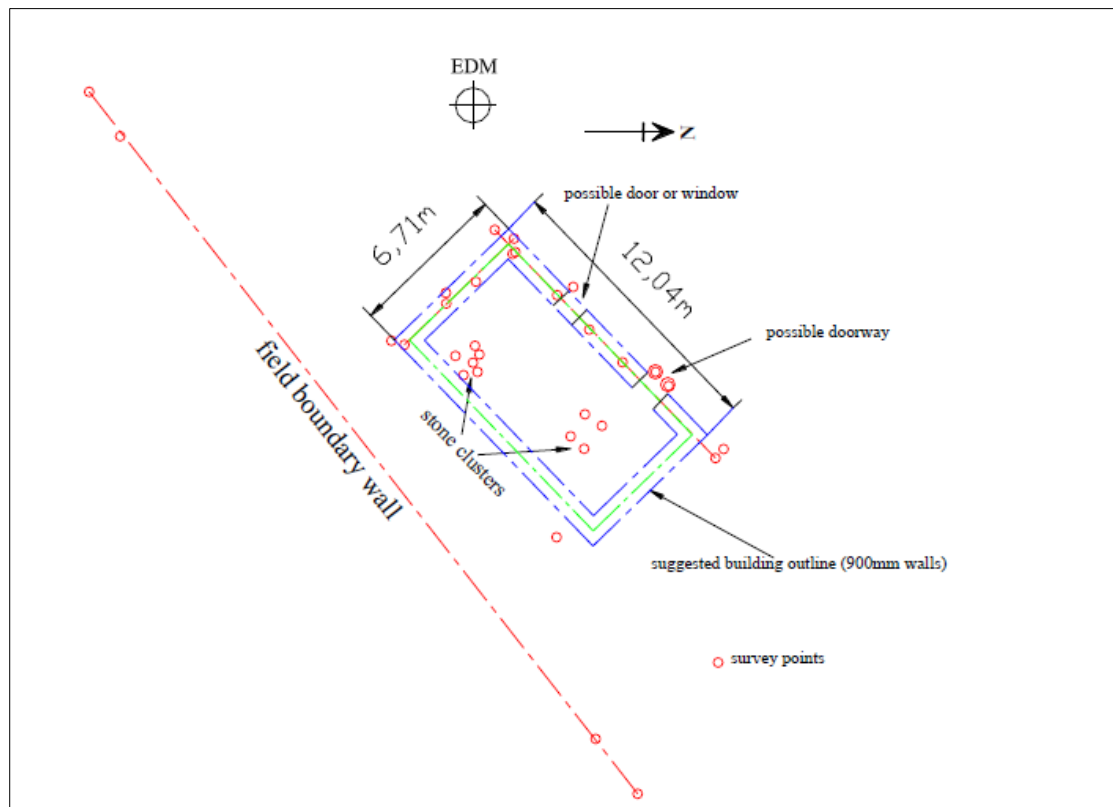


Figure 09: Plan of Site 3

Site 4: Enclosure

This site is a farmyard which incorporates two buildings – NTSMR 132066, a house and NTSMR 132067 an outbuilding. The buildings are located opposite each other. The House measures 14.2m in length and 5.6m in width with a ‘lean-to’ at the eastern end which is 3.6m in length. There are 2 chimneys, one at either end of the structure. The outbuilding is 13.6m in length and 5.4m in width and incorporates a 3.5m x 4.6m outshot to the western end of the structure. There is a window in the west end of the structure which is 0.6m in width. The enclosing yard measures 19.5 m x 37.8m and has an entrance which is 2.5m in width. The western and northern walls of the yard are abutted to the outbuilding. There is also a substantial garden, a well, another outbuilding and a horse walk which have been assigned NTSMR numbers.



Plate 03: Farm enclosure, looking south-east



Plate 04: Site 1, 'Building 1'.

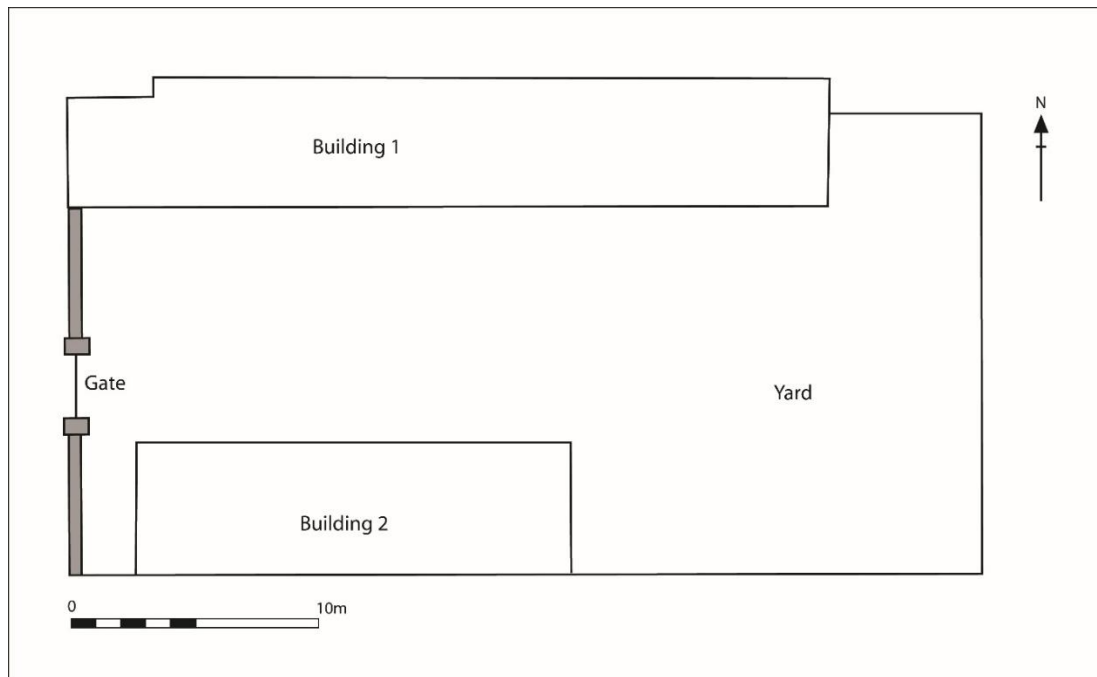


Figure 10: Plan of Site 4 (farm enclosure).

Site 5: Dry stone structure

This site is currently designated NTSMR 132080 by the National Trust and is thought to date from the late eighteenth century or early nineteenth century. Grid reference J 53464 54816. It is currently classified as a kelp kiln, but is very different to other kelp kilns in the Strangford area. The feature has been constructed against a west-facing natural bank, which probably forms part of a raised beach. The feature is constructed of angular un-mortared stones and is exposed on the western side. The remainder of the structure is obscured by vegetation and it was not possible to determine if it was built into the hillside, or was free-standing. It is approximately 4m in height and 4m in width, tapering to 3m at the top and 2m at the base. It is sub-circular at the western side. At the west, a well-constructed flue-like feature was visible, approximately 1.5m in width at the base, tapering to approximately 0.75m at the top. There was no evidence of heat damage to the interior of this feature and no soot-blackening was visible. Due to time constraints, this site was not planned during the survey but a photographic record was taken.



Plate 05: Dry-stone 'kelp kiln' feature

Site 6: Well A

A substantial dry-stone constructed well (NT132079) was observed in a field to the north of the island, approximately 100m from farm building NT132071. A series of well-constructed stone steps provides access to the water source, which is protected but not totally enclosed by stone corbelling. Other stone slabs were observed in and around the well, suggesting that the stone corbelling may once have enclosed the well, possibly with an access door to prevent animals entering and damaging the structure. Due to time constraints, this site was not planned during the survey but a photographic record was taken.



Plate 06: View of Well A, looking west

Site 7: Well B

Another well (NT132078) was located to in the middle of the island, beside the farm Site 4, the enclosure incorporating NTSMR 132066, a house and NTSMR 132067. This was found to be of dry stone construction, with a stone slab above and a covering of sods. Access from ground level was by a series of stone steps and an entrance doorway, 1m in height and 0.5m in width, which probably held a door to prevent animal access. The structure is currently protected by a metal grille. Due to time constraints, this site was not planned during the survey but a photographic record was taken.



Plate 07: View of Well B

Site 8: Findspot of Mesolithic flints

While traversing a beach on the west of the island, two worked flint flakes were observed by Janna McDonald, one of the members of the UAS Survey Group. The findspot was recorded at grid reference J 5350 5450. The flakes were later identified by Brian Sloan of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork at Queen's University as dating to between 5,500 BC and 4,500 BC, in the later Mesolithic.



Plate 08: Mesolithic flint flakes, dorsal surfaces



Plate 09: Mesolithic flint flakes, ventral surfaces

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G600* 8 megapixel digital camera and a photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 28 April 2012. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

Due to time constraints, this site was not planned during the survey but a photographic record was taken.

4. DISCUSSION

Island Taggart originates from Inis Mhic tSagairt (McIntaggart's Island). McIntaggart is an Ulster surname which means 'son of the priest' (Placenames NI). Historic and archaeological monuments were included in the Strangford volume, however further work by the National Trust has revealed more monuments which were previously unknown.

The economy of the island appears to have been reliant on farming and kelp production. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries kelp production was a thriving economy along the Irish seaboard. Kelp, the burned ashes of seaweed was a source of impure soda which was in high demand in industries such as glass, soap and linen production. The census figures also indicate the impact kelp production had on the island with a peak population of 23 in 1821. Kelp production has also left an extensive archaeological footprint on the island, with various archaeological sites and monuments associated with this 18th and 19th century industry.

Site 1. Kelp processing building

The vernacular structure at site 1 has been interpreted as a 'kelp processing building' or 'store'. As soda is highly soluble it was essential that the kelp was stored in a dry environment to prevent the deterioration (McErlean et al. 2002). Although the Island Taggart kelp store seems to have been modified at a later date, it was a substantial stone built structure, which probably had an originally had a slate roof. Its location close to the kelp drying racks (Site 2) would have made the drying, burning and storing process more efficient, and its location, close to one of the islands mooring points, would have facilitated the transport of the product to the mainland.

Site 2. Kelp drying tables

The kelp drying racks are located close to the building interpreted as the 'kelp processing building' (Site 1). One of the stages in kelp production was to dry the seaweed to make it more combustible and to stop it from rotting. The seaweed was spread out along the shoreline, often over low stone walls or 'racks' to dry naturally in the sun and wind and then stacked in preparation to be burnt (McErlean et al. 2002).

Site 3. Vernacular house

The OS 6" County Series maps from OS6-3-24-1(1833) to the present do not show the Rectangular enclosure but do indicate the position of the Kiln some 40 metres uphill from the enclosure. Given the remoteness of the location and the presence of a Kiln nearby it would be reasonable to assume that they were linked with the Rectangular Enclosure being a Kelp Store or a Worker's Cottage or a pair of single room attached cottages. The purpose and use of the Rectangular Enclosure predated 1833 since if it had stood at any height even without a roof it would have been shown in at least outline form. Had it had a roof it would most certainly have been shown shaded to represent a habitable or usable building especially in the Griffith Valuation map of 1859. There appears to be no Ordnance Survey for Island Taggart. Killyleagh has a memoir in Co. Down - DN17 but Island Taggart is not included.

Site 4. Enclosure

The enclosure, a farmyard with a house and outbuildings, is present in the first edition map indicating that there has been a dwelling there since at least 1835 and probably before this. Census data indicates that in 1821, there were 3 houses occupied on the island with a total of 23 inhabitants, this seems to be when the island population was at its peak. By 1851 there are

only 6 inhabitants, on the island, all occupying the one house. This decline is hardly surprising given the mass depopulation in Ireland in the mid-19th century due to famine and emigration. Although derelict, the buildings in the enclosure are in relatively good condition, suggesting that this was the main house on the island, that was occupied for the longest. The Last resident to leave the island was Mr David (Davey) Calvert who left the island in 1967, it is reasonable to presume he occupied Site 4.

Site 5. Dry stone structure

Due to time constraints, this site was not planned during the survey but a photographic record was taken. This has previously been described as a kelp kiln, and although a flue-like featured was noted, the open fronted design questions its functionality as a kiln.

Sites 6 and 7. Wells

Due to time constraints, these sites were not planned during the survey but a photographic record was taken. Fresh water wells would have been a vital resource to support the community living on the island.

Site 8: Findspot of Mesolithic flint flakes

Mesolithic flints have previously been found at Island Taggart (NISMR DOW 024:034 and NTSMR 132081) Irish Grid Reference J 3533 3542. Evidence of Mesolithic activity has been recorded at many locations around Strangford Lough, with the raised beaches of the Lough a rich source of Mesolithic material. Many sites consist of scatters of flint flakes or shell middens and much of this material has been preserved at the Ulster Museum, Belfast and the National Museum in Dublin (ASNI 1966, 69). Perhaps the best recorded is at Rough Island, some 16 km to the north of Island Taggart (Movius *et al.* 1940). The Ulster Archaeological Society Survey Group also found Mesolithic material at Ballygarvan, Kircubbin during a survey and surface artefact collection in April 2012 (Welsh 2012).

Recommendations for further work

Further survey work should be carried out on the remaining structures on Island Taggart. The island is only accessible by boat, which makes organising future survey days more difficult for the Field Survey Group.

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