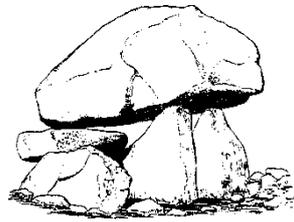


ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Survey Report: No. 38



**Survey of Rough Fort, Moneyrannel
UAS/12/04**

In association with



Ian Gillespie

© Ulster Archaeological Society

First published 2012

Ulster Archaeological Society

c/o School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology

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1. Summary

1.1. Location

A site survey was undertaken of a rath, locally known as Rough Fort, in the townland of Moneyrannel, barony of Keenaght, parish of Tamlaght Finlagan, County Londonderry, Irish Grid reference C 6586 2303. The site is a scheduled monument in accordance with the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (SMR: LDY-009-005) and is owned by the National Trust.

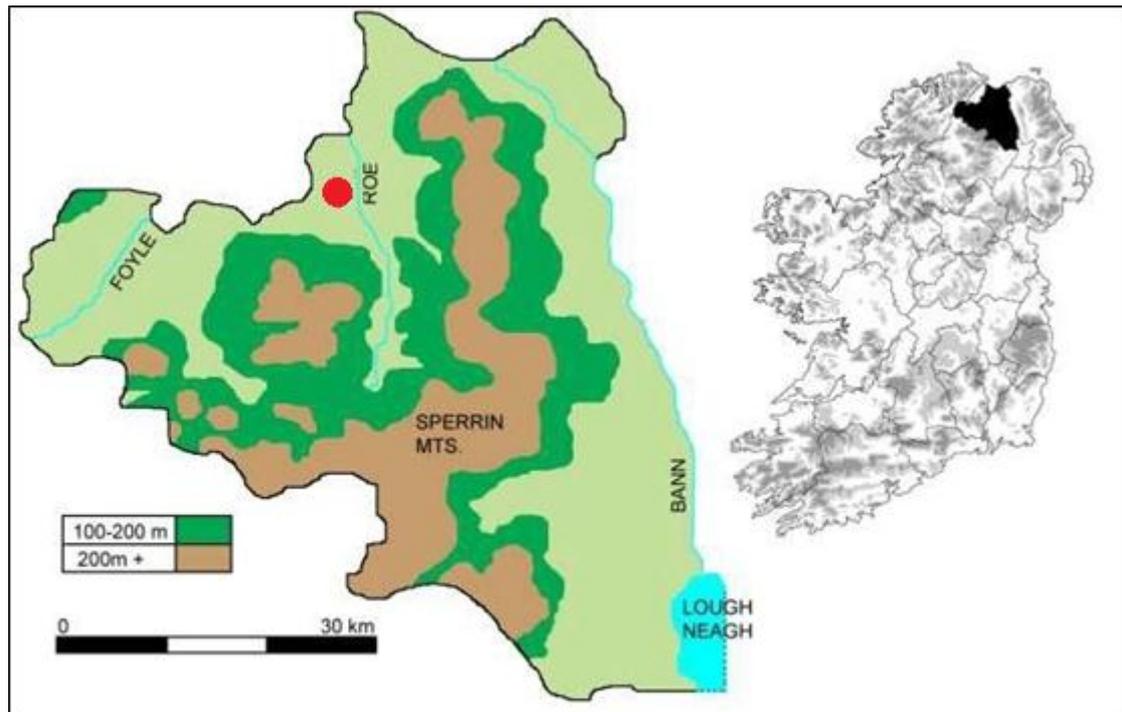


Figure 1: Location map for Rough Fort

The broad, saucer-shaped basin of the River Roe lies to the west of the Antrim basalt escarpment and to the north of the Sperrins. It is dominated by the dramatic landforms of these highlands, and in particular by the striking silhouette of the basalt cliffs at Binevenagh. Rough Fort is located on the alluvial plain, 750m west of the River Roe and 3.8 km from the present-day coastline of Lough Foyle.



Figure 2: Roe estuary ©NIEA

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 and the National Trust.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of Rough Fort was carried out on Saturday 26th May 2012 by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society. This was the 38th such survey carried out by the Society, whose survey programme has been running since April 2006. This 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, Survey 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.

2.2. Previous archaeological surveys

2.2.1 A site visit was made by an archaeologist from the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the DOENI on 16th May 1994 (SMR7-LDY-009-005.pdf). He made the following field notes and an accompanying sketch:

<p>A fine road, owned by National Trust with thin L-shaped L' Derry road to N and a farm lane to E. Prominent landmark with good views to Binscough + hills surrounding the Rye valley. Ground levels level to all sides.</p> <p>The monument consists of a large central area surrounded by a low stone bank. The area is rather open + elevated to a substantial ditch and a second bank with sloping 'lip'. Entered at E - marked by gate and masonry.</p> <p>Masonry runs to ditch edges + blue rubble. Pathways at S</p> <p>N-S = 38 m Conary = 5 m across E-W = 34.5 m</p> <p>Inner Bank - 1.2 m above exterior 5.5 m wide 3.25 m above ditch Ditch - 7 m wide 2.2m below outer bank Outer Bank - 1.7 m max above exterior. 3.1 m wide</p>			
OVER			
Visited by	KN	Date of visit	16/5/94
		SM2	Input

Figure 3: DOENI field notes (SMR7-LDY-009-005.pdf)

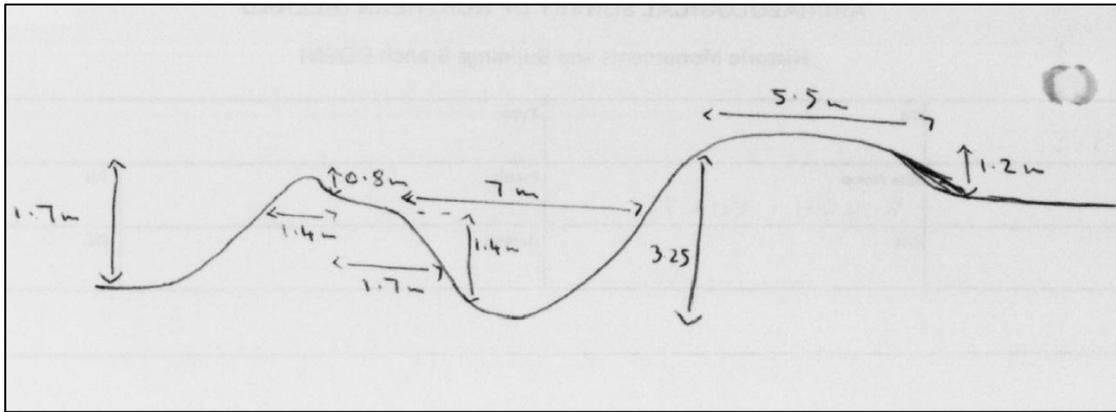


Figure 4: DOENI profile sketch (SMR7-LDY-009-005.pdf)

2.2.2 Ordnance Survey GIS data

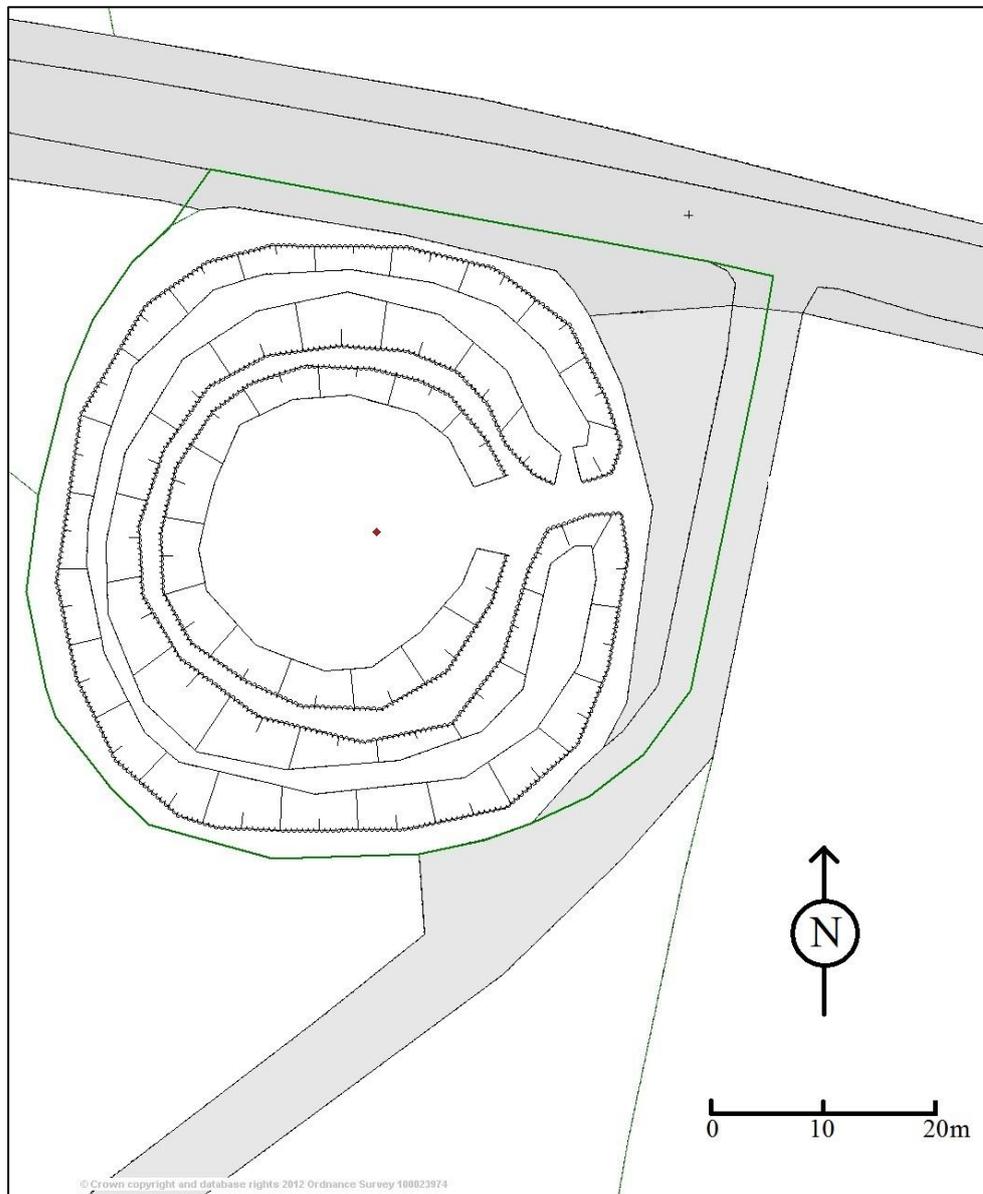


Figure 5: Ordnance Survey GIS data © OSNI

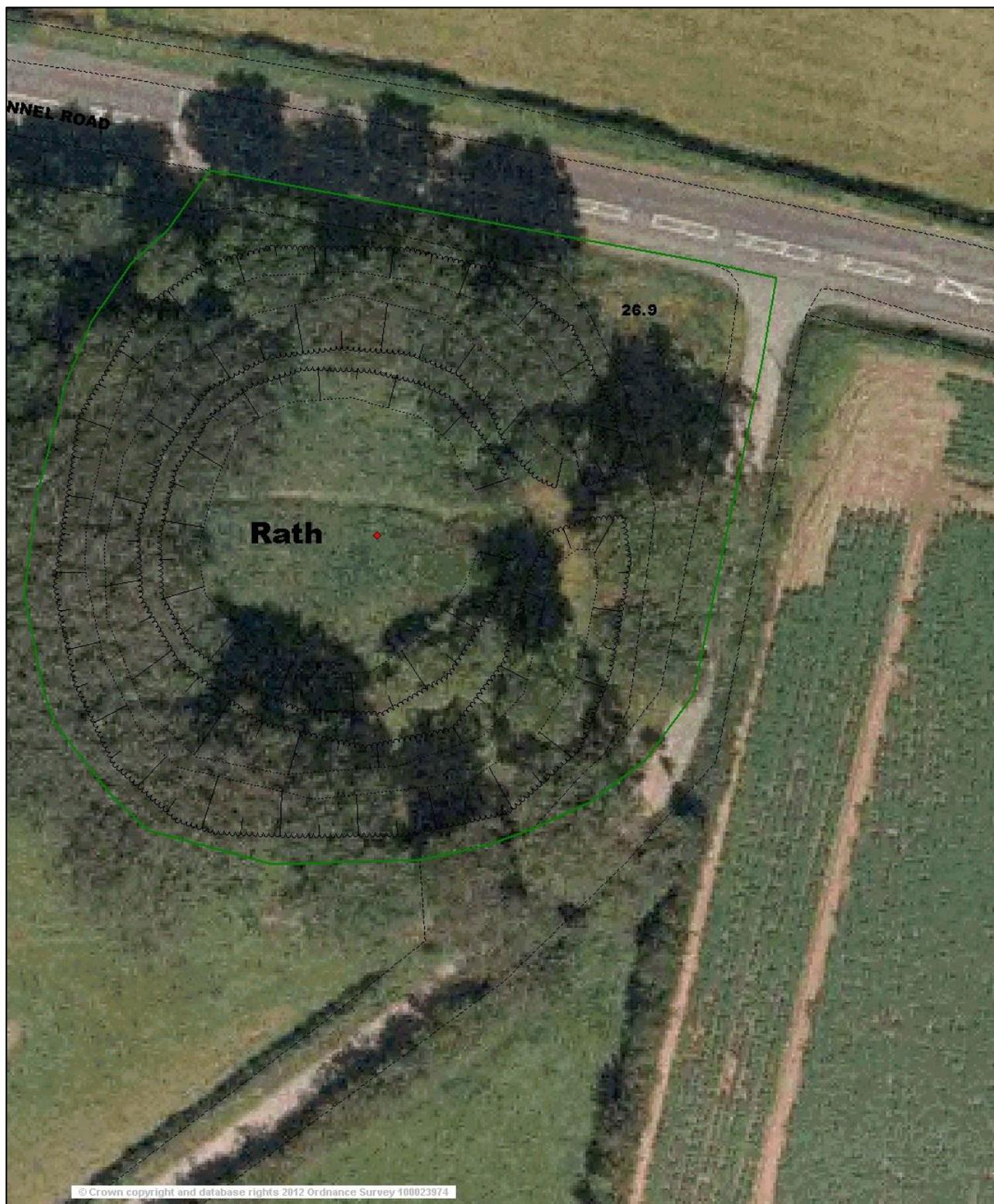


Figure 6: Ordnance Survey GIS data overlaid on aerial photograph © OSNI

2.3. Cartographic evidence

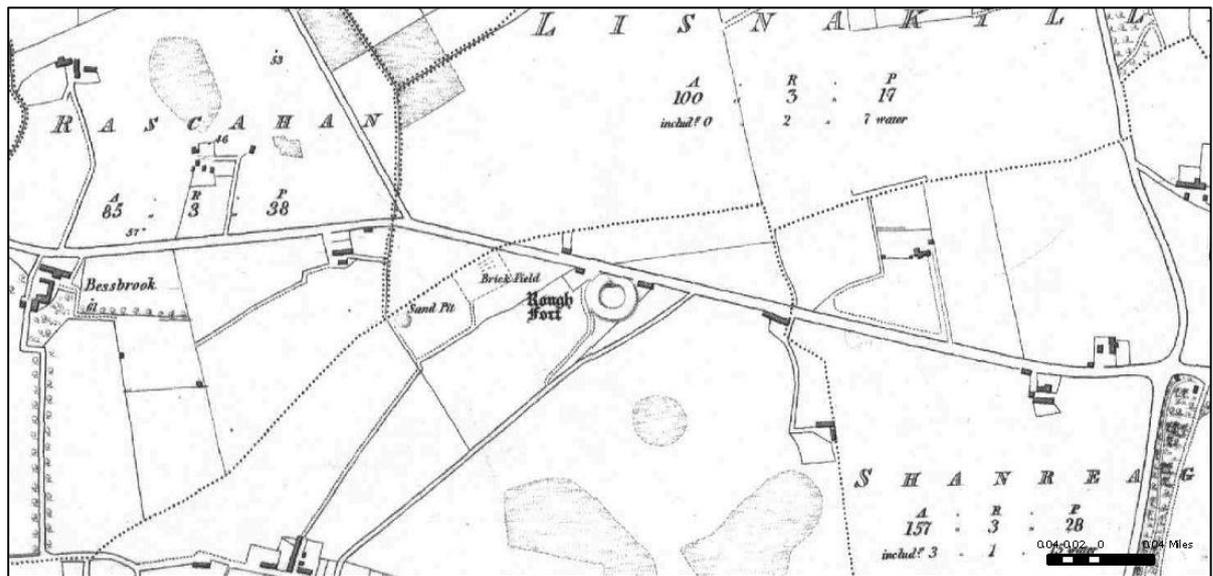


Figure 7: Ordnance Survey 1st Ed 1832 © OSNI

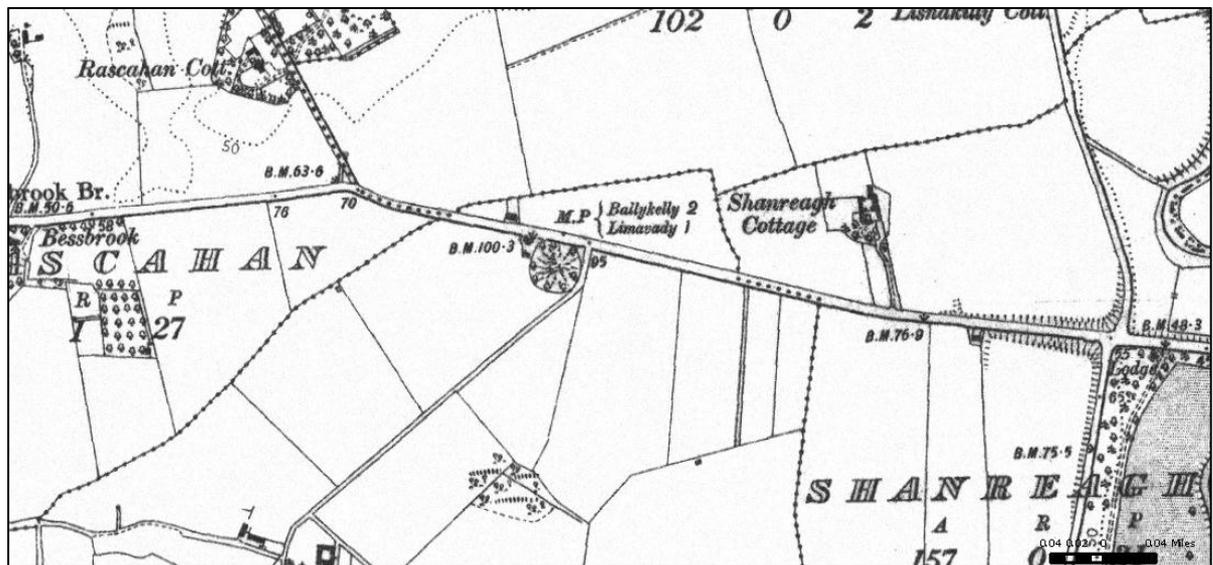


Figure 8: Ordnance Survey 2nd Ed 1857 © OSNI

2.4 Historical references

2.4.1 The monument is described in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs (Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland Volume 25: Parishes of County Londonderry VII 1834-5, North-West Londonderry) (Day, 1994):

“There stands in the townland of Moneyrannel, a very large earthen fort locally called the Rough Fort. It is planted with fir, oak, sycamore and beech. The rims are in perfect order and their faces are planted with a white thorn hedge. This fort is oval shape, 120 feet in length and 110 feet in breadth.

The first main fence or rim is 10 feet high, the outside rim is much lower. The high eminence on which this fort stands and the advanced state of the growing timber on its surface renders it most beautiful. It stands within 4 furlongs of Newtownlimavady, on the leading road to Londonderry. This fort is the property of Marcus McCausland Esquire of Fruit Hill, who not only improved it as above stated, but also gives an aged man a free house and garden for taking care of the growing timber.

There are 2 ledges on which a man can conveniently walk which are in the side of the fort and which pass from the larger entrance until they gradually conclude at the bottom of the ditch. These however, may possibly have been formed by sheep before the planting of the fort. It was planted and fenced around by Mr McCausland, and there is a man in a cabin hard by who keeps the key of the gate. According to the usual practice of the country in giving surnames from remarkable circumstances, he is called “Kane of the fort”. For an ordinary earthen work it is probably in the best state of preservation of any in the country.”



Figure 9: View of Rough Fort, early 20th century © N.I. Community Archive

The 1st edition OS map records two buildings in relation to the monument, however by the time Griffiths has surveyed the area 25 years later the building to the east of the fort has disappeared and the building to the west has been rebuilt. A laneway skirting the western side of the fort has also disappeared. Presumably ‘Kane of the Fort’ lived in one of the small buildings depicted on the 1st edition map.

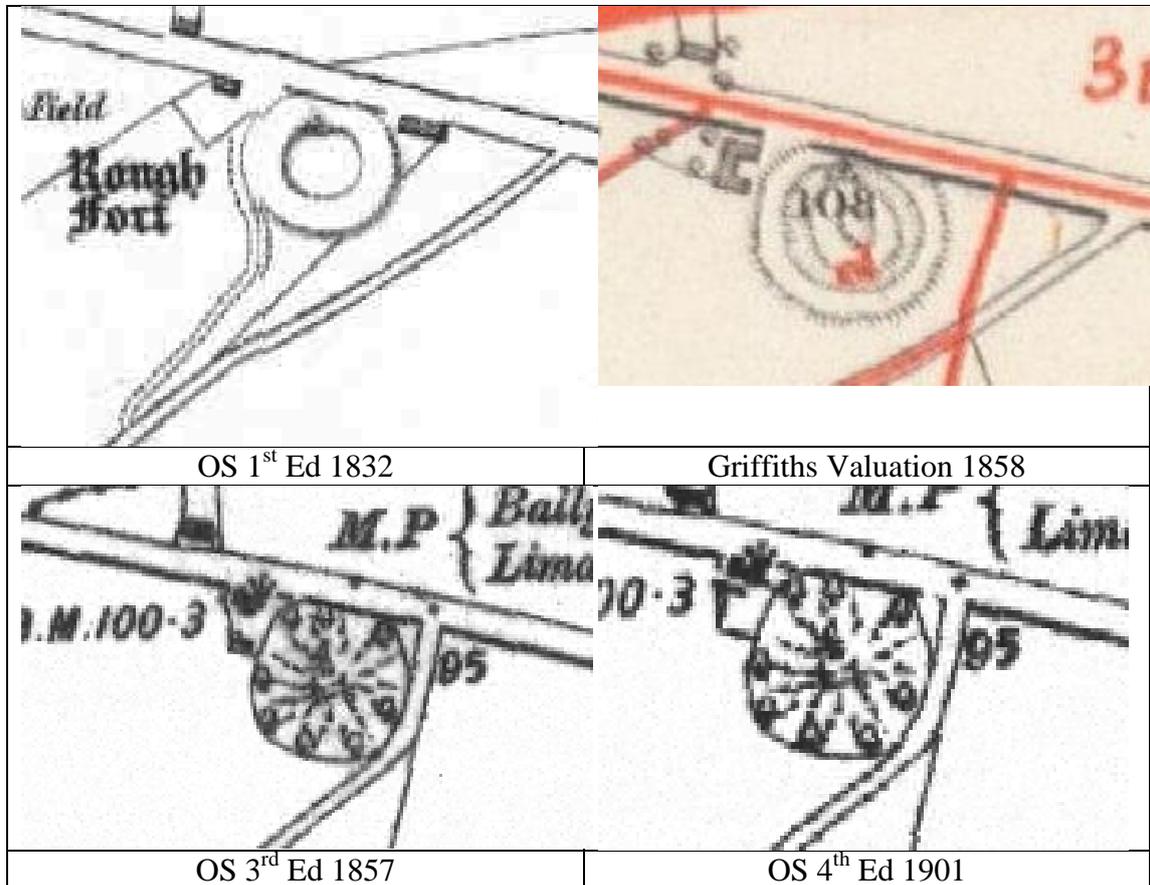


Figure 10: Comparative views of Rough Fort

By the mid-19th century the laneway to the east has been rerouted so that it borders the outer bank, presumably to increase the area of the field east of the fort.

2.3.2 Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland 1847

Under the entry for TamlaghtFinlagan, Lewis records:

There are numerous raths, of which that called Daisy Hill, in Roe Park, and another near it, called Rough Fort, are the most remarkable

2.3.3 Griffiths valuation 1858

Rough fort is recorded in the Griffiths valuation (Moneyrannel Ord S.9. 2b) as a 'plantation' owned by Marcus McCausland with an area of 3 roods and 30 furlongs. William Kane ("Kane of the Fort?") is recorded as inhabiting house, offices and land comprising 8 acres, 1 rood and 30 furlongs adjacent to the fort (Moneyrannel Ord S.9. 2a).

		MONEYRANNEL. (Ord. S. 9.)						
1	a	John Selfridge, .	Marcus M'Causland, .	House, offices, and land,	22 2 30	22 15 0	1 15 0	24 10 0
	b	John Selfridge, .	Same, .	Brick-field,	—	—	—	3 0 0
				House,	—	—	—	3 10 0
2	a	William Kane, .	Same, .	House, offices, and land,	8 1 30	8 5 0	1 10 0	10 15 0
	b	Marcus M'Causland, .	In fee, .	Plantation,	0 3 30	1 0 0	—	1 0 0
3		Sarah M'Luray, .	Marcus M'Causland, .	Land,	5 2 13	5 0 0	—	5 6 0
4		Thomas Cather, .	Same, .	Caretaker's ho., & land,	32 0 0	33 16 0	0 10 0	34 5 0
5		Hugh Boyd, .	Same, .	House, offices, and land,	14 1 0	12 5 0	1 15 0	14 0 0
6		Andrew Given, .	Same, .	Land,	5 3 35	5 15 0	—	5 15 0
7		John Boyd, .	Same, .	Land,	21 2 20	19 15 0	—	26 0 0
8		William Boyd, .	John Boyd, .	House,	6 3 0	6 6 0	—	—
	a	James M'Loughlin, .	Same, .	House,	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
	b	William Tate, .	Marcus M'Causland, .	House,	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
9		Frederick M'Causland, .	Marcus M'Causland, .	House, offices, and land,	17 3 35	12 5 0	1 10 0	13 15 0
				Water,	3 1 10	—	—	—
10		John Terner, .	Marcus M'Causland, .	Land,	28 2 20	22 0 0	—	23 0 0
	a	James M'Entire, .	Same, .	House,	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
	b	Robert Grumley, .	Marcus M'Causland, .	House & small garden,	—	—	1 0 0	1 0 0
11		Hugh Alcorn, .	Same, .	House, offices, and land,	25 3 30	22 0 0	1 10 0	23 10 0
12				House and land,	0 3 30	0 18 0	0 12 0	1 10 0
Total, .					192 0 3	173 3 0	12 7 0	188 10 0
		TANLAGHT.						

Figure 11: Excerpt from Griffiths Valuation

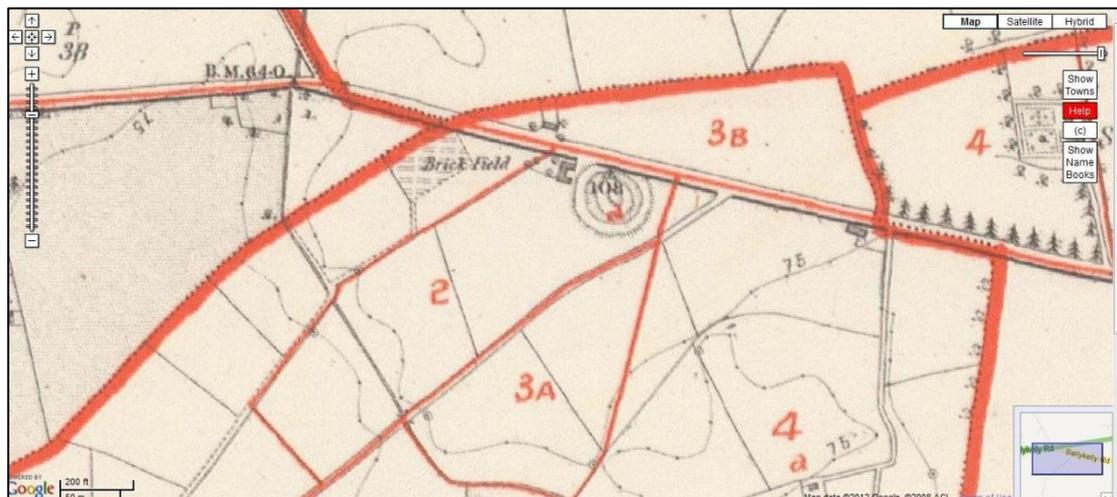
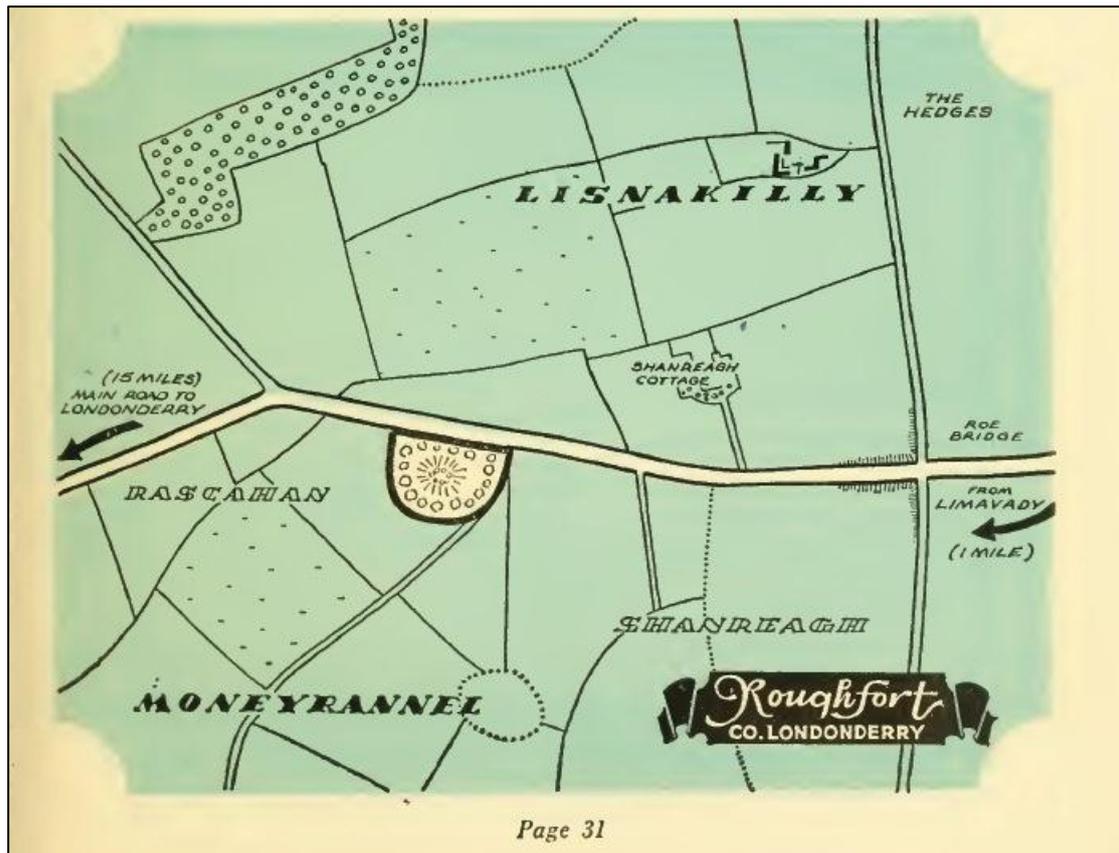


Figure 12: Map from Griffiths Valuation

2.3.4 National Trust

Rough Fort was the first property to be acquired by the National Trust in Northern Ireland. The site, totalling 0.364 hectares (0.9 acres), was acquired freehold on 9 September 1937 from Maurice McCausland. Reproduced below is an excerpt from a 1964 National Trust publication describing the site.



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THE ROUGH FORT

The Rough Fort, a mile west of Limavady, Co. Londonderry, is an old earthwork, or ring fort, covering an acre, and surrounded by oaks, beeches, and Scots pines. There are many raths such as this in Ulster, and, in the absence of archaeological evidence, it is impossible to say with certainty when or by whom this one was built. However, the probability is that it was a defended farmstead, occupied by one family or family group, into which the cattle could be driven in time of emergency; and that it was inhabited between the fifth and the tenth centuries A.D. It forms an enigmatic memorial to people who lived in Ulster long before our day.

*ACCESS: On the main Limavady-Londonderry Road (A2).
Bus 115 or 134, Limavady-Londonderry.*

OPEN: At all times.

Figure 13: Excerpt from "The properties of the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland" National Trust Committee for Northern Ireland (1964)

2.4. Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage and the National Trust. All site records are temporarily archived with the Honorary Archivist of the Ulster Archaeological Society and are available on the UAS website.

2.5. Credits and acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and the other members of the survey team were: Duncan Berryman, Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Michael Catney, Amanda Fieldhouse, Ian Gillespie, Alan Hope, Adrian McAlenan, Grace McAlister, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, Liz McShane, Heather Montgomery, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford and June Welsh. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Mr Malachy Conway, Survey 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.

3.2. Production of a plan and profile drawings

Plan and profile drawings were completed using data obtained from a field survey. It had been intended to use the Society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device to acquire the data, however the equipment failed on-site. Measurements were therefore obtained using an extended baseline survey technique. As a consequence of the time lost due to this equipment failure it was only possible to fully survey the internal aspects of the monument however profiles were obtained from west to east and south to north across the ditches and causeway.

Sketch plans at 1:200 scale were completed on site by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and the data obtained was also recorded on a field notebook for subsequent reference.

3.2.1 Site Plan

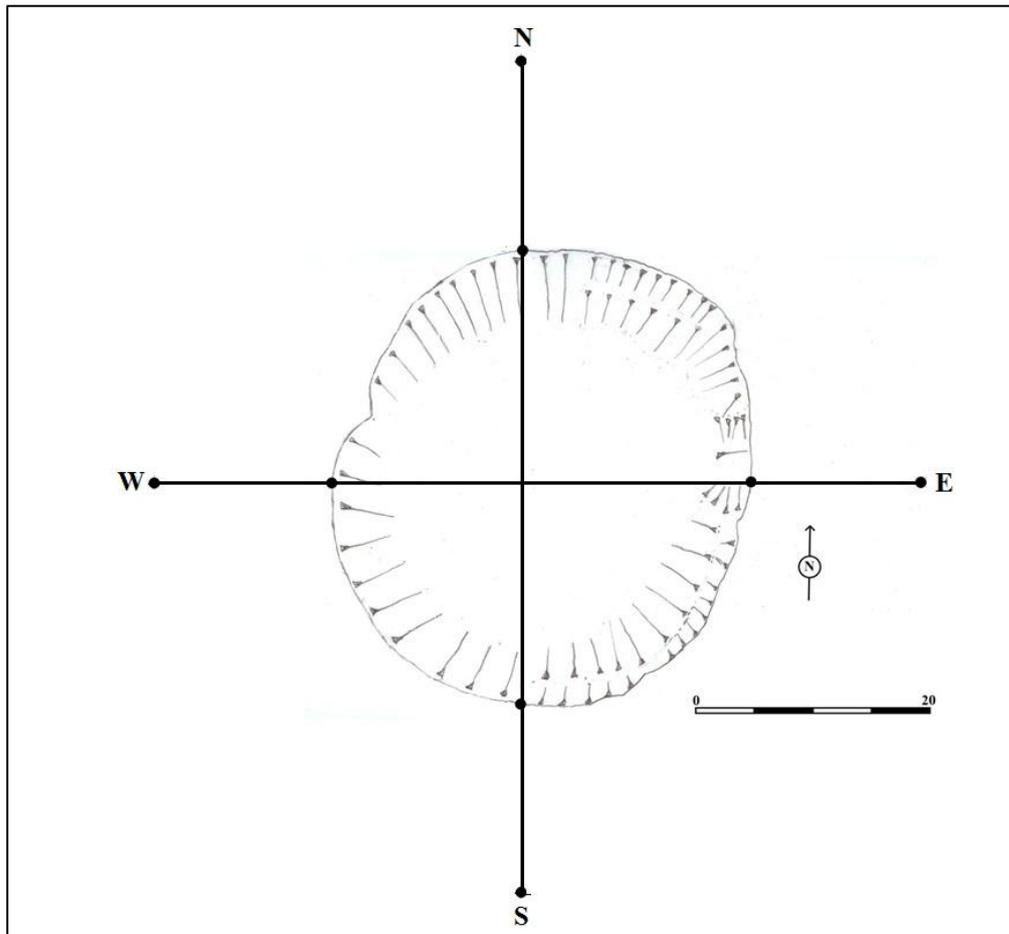


Figure 14: Site Plan

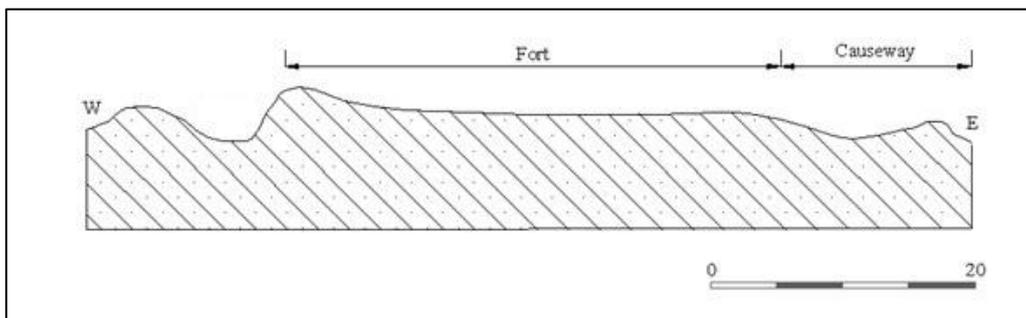


Figure 15: W-E Profile

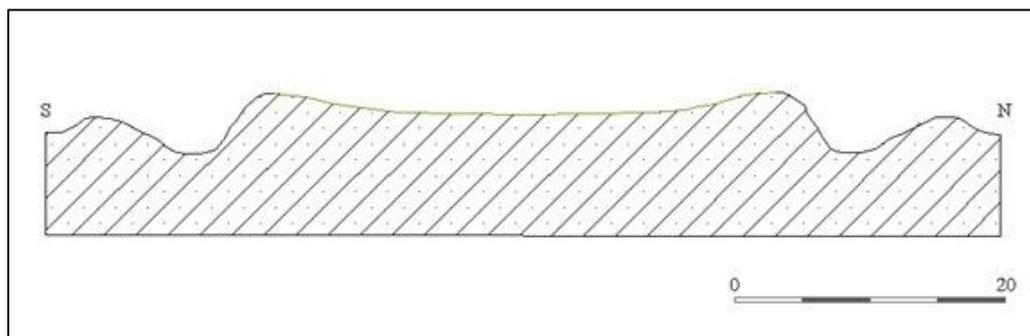


Figure 16: S-N Profile

3.3. Monument description

The monument is a fine example of a counterscarp rath (Personal communication Thomas Kerr). The site sits between a main road to the north and a laneway to the east; to the south and west are agricultural fields. It was evident that the ground level of the roads and field had been lowered. This intervention may have removed any trace of an outer ditch and so that the site may have been a bivallate rath that has lost its outer ditch.

The outer bank ranges in height from the road, from approximately 2m in the east to approximately 0.5m in the north. The ditch is approximately 2m deep in respect to the outer bank. There is a walk way cut into the inner face of the outer bank; this is likely to have been a later alteration.

The centre of the rath is approximately 3m above the base of the ditch. The internal enclosure is roughly circular, at 37m E/W, by 38m N/S. The overall dimensions of the monument, including the surrounding ditch and external bank are 67m E/W, by 72m N/S. The rath is noticeably concave, and there is a bank around the circumference. This bank ranges in height between approximately 0.75m in the south to 1.5m in the north. There is a 4.3m break in the bank to the east, which acted as an entrance. This matches with a causeway, the surface of which is level with the top of the outer bank and rises up to join the central mound. There are a number of other small breaks in the inner bank, in the west and south, but these are likely to be the result of recent cattle or human activity. The rath is gently slopped towards the entrance, possibly to allow water to run off and out of the living space. The bank to the south is not as well defined as that to the north, merging more with the gradient of the mound's surface.

There is a pond approximately 0.3km to the south of the rath. This is fed by the valleys to the east and south and exits into a drain to the northwest. Today this outflow is culverted, but in the past it would have been an open waterway flowing across the fields. There are a number of willow trees growing in the centre of the pond and parts are overgrown, but the landowner has partly dredged it in the past. This has been marked as standing water on past OS maps. The pond can grow considerably during the winter months, covering approx 4ha. This pond could have been used as a water supply for the rath's inhabitants and their livestock.

In the field 0.6km to the east of the rath, Google Earth showed up concentric oval crop marks. Ground truthing showed this to be represented by a circular patch of land. After prolonged dry and extremely warm weather, the soil here is dry and cracked, suggesting that it had previously been excessively wet and had recently dried out. This patch of land is in the base of a large, deep depression in the middle of this field. It is unclear whether this feature is natural or the result of past human activity. The map ref for this feature is C 6644 2285.

3.4. Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a Ricoh Caplio G600 Wide, 8 megapixel digital camera. A photograph record sheet was used, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

4. Discussion

4.1 The ringfort

The rath or ringfort is the ubiquitous monument in the Irish countryside. Matthew Stout (1997, 14) opens his monograph 'The Irish Ringfort' with the statement that 'The ringfort is such a common and simple monument, and one so familiar to Irish field workers, that a definition seems almost unnecessary'.

The introduction of the word 'ringfort' to archaeological parlance in the early 20th century gave a scientific name to the many and varied Irish native enclosed settlements. The apparent intention was to replace the colloquial Irish ráth, lios, caisel and cathair with a universally accessible descriptive term (FitzPatrick, 2009).

It is estimated that approximately 45,000 ringforts were constructed in Ireland between the 7th & 10th centuries (Stout 1997, 53). They have been interpreted as the defended settlements of landowners, enclosing houses or possibly farmyards (Lynn, 2005).

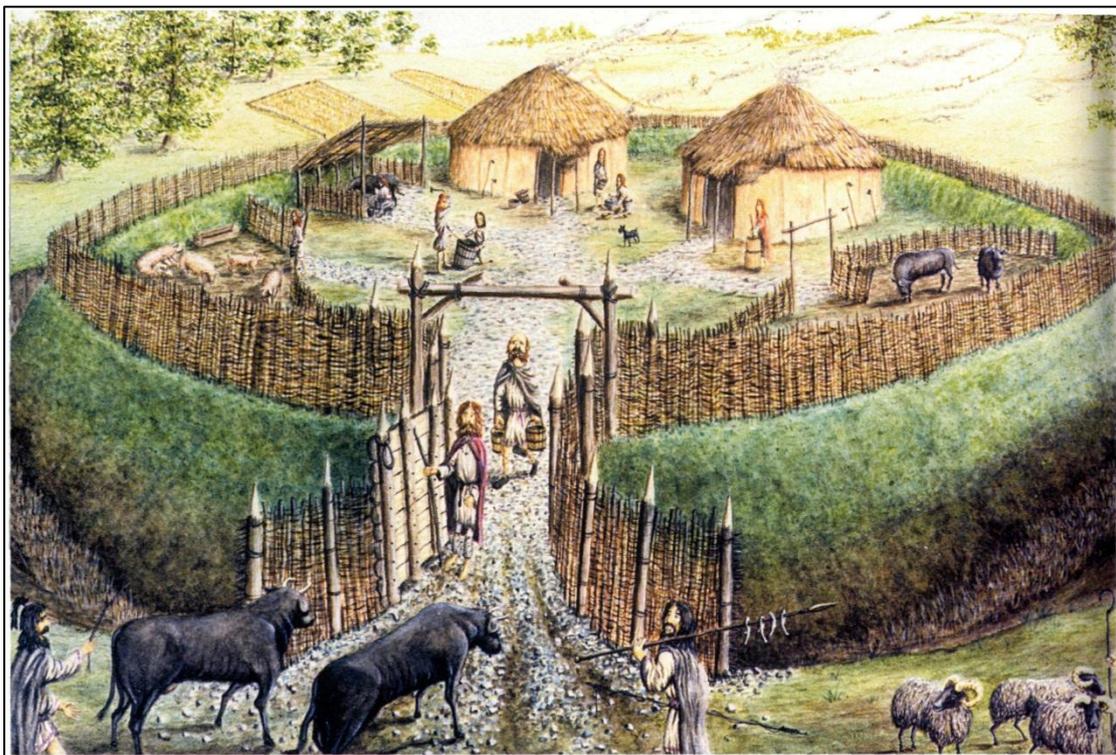


Figure 17: Artist's impression of a ringfort (After Lynn 2005)

Lynn questions why a significant proportion of the population of Ireland suddenly decided to live in isolated defended settlements of this form in the late seventh and eighth centuries, but not before and not since? This seems especially puzzling given that in other aspects of life at the same time, for example art, learning and the church, Ireland is regarded as enjoying a golden age, a beacon for Europe in the 'Dark Ages'.

He points out that there was little evidence of invasion or raiding from abroad at that time and, furthermore, the ringfort defences would not have been adequate to resist a determined attack.

He postulates that the people who built these defended settlements may have witnessed the effects of a series of plagues which may have killed up to 25% of the population in the mid sixth century, and built these ringforts to protect their families from contact with those infected (Lynn, 2005).

4.1.1. Typology

In the Archaeology Ireland series 'Know Your Monuments', O'Sullivan and Downey (2007) describe the main ringfort types and their functions:

Univallate ringforts, which are by far the most numerous (80% of the total in some areas), are circular enclosures, some 20-40m wide, with a single earthen bank and an external ditch.

Cashels are ringforts with a stone-built enclosing wall. They are generally smaller than univallate ringforts, with an average internal diameter of 25m (and in some locations much less).

Counterscarp ringforts have an additional low bank surrounding an internal bank and ditch. Kerr (2007, 3) notes that in many cases they are erroneously equated with multivallate ringforts, noting that 'the external counterscarp bank may not represent an event contemporary with the construction of the rath, but may represent maintenance of the ditch, whether during occupation of the rath, or at a later more, recent date'.

Platform, or raised, ringforts have large, flat-topped central areas, raised some 2m or more above the surrounding countryside. Raised ringforts have been defined as having 'a perimeter bank around the top area' (Jope 1966). Platform ringforts may have been built by altering the natural landscape to develop a raised profile; alternatively, they may have been created by the accumulation of debris over a long period of occupation, so as to raise the enclosed area above the water-table and alleviate waterlogging. Kerr (2007) points out that relatively few platform ringforts seem to have been deliberately constructed; a number appear to have evolved from pre-existing univallate forms.

Multivallate ringforts are larger and more complex structures, with two (bivallate) or three (trivallate) series of enclosing banks and ditches, and with central areas comparable in size to the univallate forms.

4.1.2 Chronology

As further detailed by Kerr (2007), the majority of univallate ringforts date from c. AD 600-900. Multivallate and counterscarp ringforts show a similar dating distribution but may have a slightly earlier starting date. Platform ringforts seem to date from a later period, between the mid-eighth and mid tenth centuries AD. The

construction and occupation of ringforts appear to have tapered off before the coming of the Anglo Normans (Stout 1997).

4.1.3 Distribution

There is some degree of geographical variation in the incidence of ringfort type within Ulster, for example there is a relatively high incidence of counterscarp ringforts in Monaghan, whereas raised ringforts are relatively more common in Donegal and Fermanagh as illustrated in Figure 18.

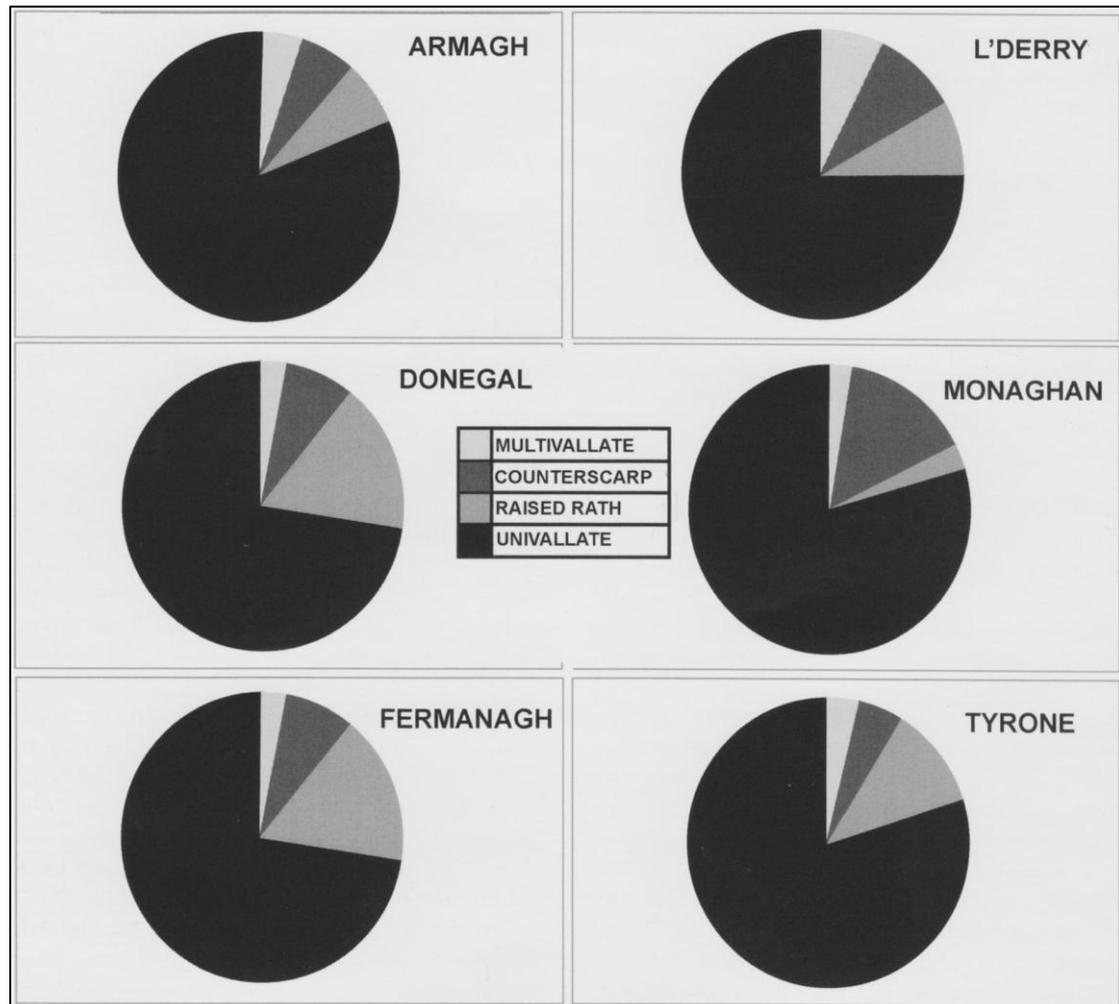


Figure 18: Ringfort types by county for north-west Ulster (after Kerr 2009)

4.2 The archaeological landscape

Rough Fort is prominent in the landscape with fine views of Binevenagh to the North. When constructed it would also have commanded views over Lough Foyle – the coastline is now approximately 1.7 km further away as a result of 19th century land reclamation.

The Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record data for Rough Fort refers to the discovery of six urns containing calcined bone and a piece of a bronze knife in a cist 100 paces south of the Fort. The discovery was made by a Mr Hawthorn in 1931, and has been interpreted as a flat cemetery (ApSimon 1969 LDY 009:045).

5. Recommendation for further work

The site is at risk from damage due to grazing animals, and should be protected by fencing.

Excavation is required to determine the date and precise subtype of the ringfort.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Photographic Record Form;

Ricoh Caplio G600 Wide, 8 megapixel digital camera

Frame no	Direction viewed from	Details
RIMG0003	NE	Looking SW
RIMG0009	E	Looking W
RIMG0012	S	Looking N
RIMG0015	W	Looking E
RIMG0016	S	Ditch at E
RIMG0018	S	Causeway
RIMG0020	W	Causeway
RIMG0031	N	Interior Looking S
RIMG0033	W	Looking E to causeway
RIMG0039	N	Interior looking S

Appendix 2. Photographs







RIMG0033 Looking E to causeway

RIMG0039 Interior looking S