



ULSTER
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 48**

Author: **George Rutherford**

Location:

Stone Enclosures
Avish
County Londonderry

In association with:

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**



© Ulster Archaeological Society

First published 2015, revised 2016, this version 2018

Ulster Archaeological Society

c/o School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology

The Queen's University of Belfast

Belfast BT7 1NN

Cover illustration: Artist impression of Avish enclosures *Jo Magill*

Avish circular enclosures

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| List of Figures | 4 |
| 1. Summary | |
| 1. Background | 5 |
| 2. Survey | 5 |
| 2. Introduction | |
| 1. Background | 5 |
| 2. Objectives | 6 |
| 3. Location | 6 |
| 4. Previous Archaeological Surveys | 7 |
| 5. Cartographical Evidence | 7 |
| 6. Onomastic Evidence | 8 |
| 7. Archiving | 8 |
| 8. Credits & Acknowledgements | 8 |
| 3. Survey | |
| 1. Methodology | 9 |
| 2. Photographic Archive | 9 |
| 3. Description of Structures | 9 |
| 4. Discussion | |
| 1. Cashels | 16 |
| 2. Ownership | 17 |
| 3. Occupation | 20 |
| 4. Land Use | 22 |
| 5. Conclusion | 25 |
| 5. Recommendations | 26 |
| Bibliography | 28 |
| APPENDIX A | |
| Photograph Record Forms | 30 |
| APPENDIX B | |
| Petition of John Doherty to Lord Bishop | 36 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | | Page |
|----|---|------|
| 1 | Avish Enclosures (Jo Magill) | 1 |
| 2 | Location of Avish within Ulster | 5 |
| 3 | Avish upper enclosure viewed through entrance | 5 |
| 4 | Avish lower enclosure viewed through entrance | 6 |
| 5 | OS six-inch map of 1904 | 6 |
| 6 | OS six-inch map of 1923 | 7 |
| 7 | Land quality in 1831 | 8 |
| 8 | Upper enclosure, west side | 9 |
| 9 | Plan of upper enclosure | 10 |
| 10 | Plan of lower enclosure | 11 |
| 11 | Section across upper enclosure | 12 |
| 12 | Section across lower enclosure | 12 |
| 13 | Upper enclosure, stones at entrance | 13 |
| 14 | Field divisions | 14 |
| 15 | Lower enclosure from north showing lazy beds | 14 |
| 16 | Lower enclosure, interior of wall | 15 |
| 17 | Lower enclosure, width of wall | 15 |
| 18 | Lower enclosure, internal structure | 15 |
| 19 | Table of cashels in county | 16 |
| 20 | Distribution of Cashels in county | 17 |
| 21 | Lower enclosure from upper enclosure | 18 |
| 22 | Upper enclosure | 19 |
| 23 | Boulders lining side of trackway | 20 |
| 24 | Field division | 21 |
| 25 | Remains of cottage | 21 |
| 26 | Lower enclosure entrance | 22 |
| 27 | Lazy beds north of lower enclosure | 23 |
| 28 | Stell in Northumberland | 25 |
| 29 | Merrick Stone | 25 |
| 30 | small ravine to the west of the survey area | 26 |
| 31 | trackway looking west | 26 |
| 32 | Air photograph | 27 |

1. Summary

1.1 Background

Two circular drystone enclosures sit on upland grazing close to the escarpment which is the northern termination of the North Sperrins. A survey of these was suggested to supplement an earlier survey of the nearby clachan.

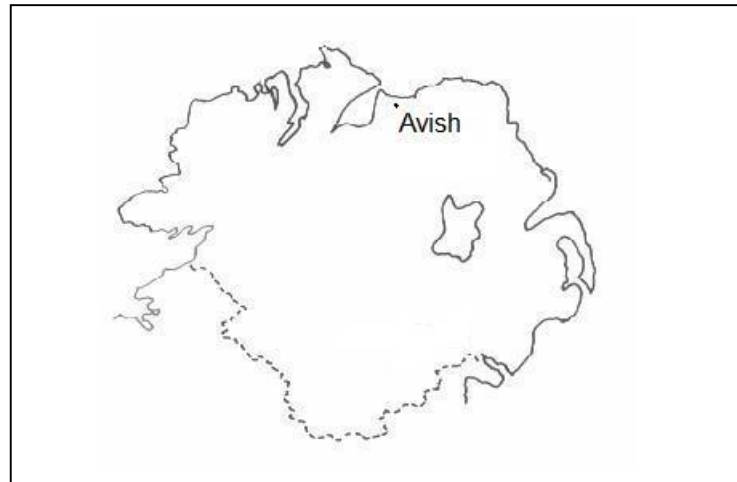


Fig. 2: Location of Avish within Ulster

1.2 Survey

A plan and section were produced for each of the two enclosures and photographs taken. It is likely that they were built in the latter half of the nineteenth century to provide shelter for sheep.



Fig. 3: Avish upper enclosure viewed through entrance (SAM_1514).

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

The National Trust acquired the upland grazing property of Avish - Eagle Hill in 1997/1999 (Conway, 1; Woodside, 1). A preliminary archaeological survey of the Avish clachan was later made. Subsequently, Malachy Conway, Archaeological Officer with the National Trust, invited the UAS Survey Group to survey the two circular stone enclosures nearby. The survey was made on 28th June 2014.



Fig. 4: Avish lower enclosure viewed through entrance (RIMG0007).

2.2 Objectives

To produce accurate plans and sections of the two features, carry out a photographic survey and compile this information into a report.

2.3 Location Irish Grid Reference C720343

Avish is a townland in the north of County Londonderry, in the civil parish of Tamlaghtard alias Magilligan, Borough of Limavady, 4 km. west of the hamlet of Downhill and 12 km. ENE of Limavady town.

Magilligan can be considered in three zones: a low sandy area bounded by the Atlantic and Lough Foyle to the mouth of the River Roe, and on the inland side by a raised beach; an area of low hills behind the raised beach backing on to the cliffs; the mountain above the cliffs. Avish lies on the mountain. On the south Avish rises to nearly 1,000 feet above sea level and at the northern tip drops to 500 feet. On the north and northwest the townland boundary coincides with the plateau edge.

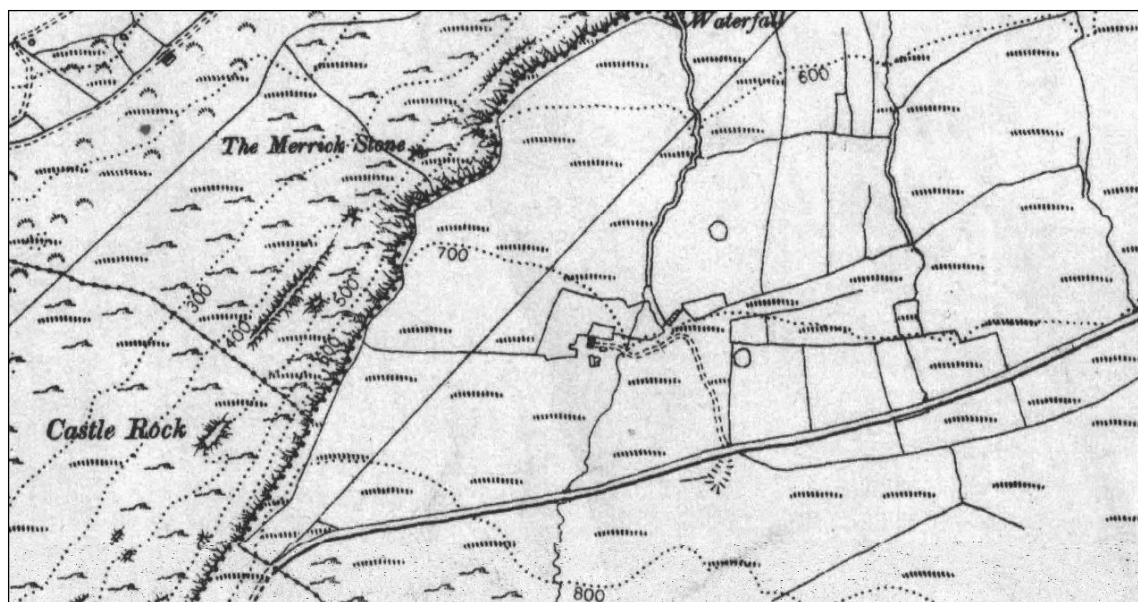


Fig. 5: The area as shown on OS six-inch map of 1904.

The site is at an altitude between 210m and 220m above Mean Sea Level (Belfast), sloping down to the north and giving superb views of lowland Magilligan, the Greencastle area of Inishowen, the north Antrim headlands, and across the sea to the Hebridean Islands. The southern skyline is closed by conifers of Grange Park Forest, a belt of which crosses the townland. Eagle Hill forms the skyline to the east, and Gortmore picnic site to the southwest with the statue of Manannan Mac Lir.

The two enclosures lie within a relict field system with sharp drainage. The ground is grass-covered with occasional clumps of rushes and lone thistles, and grazed by sheep. There is no marked difference of vegetation at the enclosure.

2.4 Previous archaeological surveys

Malachy Conway and Matthew Bailey prepared a preliminary report on the clachan in 2005. No previous detailed survey of the enclosures has been made.

The Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Register does not contain any archaeological feature in the townland of Avish.

2.5 Cartographic Evidence

OS Co. Londonderry, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 2, 1831 (1st. Edition): The clachan has three roofed buildings and one "Ruin". Several fields, totalling 14A 3R 25P are arable. This includes the sites of the circular enclosures (fig. 7).

OS Co. Londonderry, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 2, 1852 (1st. Revision): The clachan still has three roofed buildings. The arable area has increased.

OS Co. Londonderry, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 2, 1904 (Resurvey): The clachan has only one roofed building. The arable area has decreased slightly. The two circular enclosures are shown for the first time (fig. 5).



Fig. 6: The site as shown on OS six-inch map of 1924.

OSNI Co. Londonderry, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 2, 1924 (2nd. Revision): All buildings are roofless. No trackways are depicted, but the area of rough grazing has changed little. Each of the two circular enclosures is now annotated “Sheepfold” (fig. 6).

Land Utilisation Survey of Northern Ireland, 1 Inch to 1 Mile, Sheet 1, 1938: The entire townland is coloured yellow denoting “heath and moorland”.

2.6 Onomastic Evidence

Alfred Munn gives the Irish form as *Eibhis* (Eibhis) meaning “The coarse mountain pasture”. Another suggested derivation is *Aidbeir* – A mountain glen. (Munn : 231).

More recently TS Ó Máille made a study of place-names containing the element *Avish* or *Evish* and observed “... common to all is a significant fall, which may be steep, long or precipitous ...” and concluded that it transmits the Old Irish word *aibhis* meaning “abyss” and a loan word from Latin *abyssus* (Ó Máille : 3). He offered the meaning “mountain side” for *Avish* (Ó Máille : 4).

2.7 Archiving

Copies of this report are to be deposited with the National Trust, the honorary archivist of UAS, and with NIEA.

2.8 Credits and Acknowledgements

The Survey was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the team were Lee Gordon, Alan Hope, Chris Stevenson, Janna McDonald, Philip Baxter, Jo Magill, Ian Forsythe, Colin and Hilary Boyd, Ian Gillespie, Michael Catney, George Rutherford and Ken Pullin.

UAS are grateful to Malachy Conway, Archaeological Officer of the National Trust, for arranging access and for his support. Thanks are also due to the staff of PRONI.



Fig. 7: Land quality of the northern part of Avish in 1831. Townland boundary is highlighted yellow. 1 is green mountain pasture, 2 is arable, 3 and 4 are mountain pasture. (PRONI: VAL/1A/5/2)

3 Survey

3.1 Methodology

Each enclosure was surveyed using the Society's Leica Sprinters 100. The upper enclosure was drawn on site to a scale of 1:200. The lower enclosure was drawn later from the recorded bookings.

3.2 Photographic Archive

A photographic record of the site and surroundings was made with a digital camera and record sheets compiled (See Appendix 1). Results were saved to a DVD.



Fig. 8: Upper enclosure, west side from north, dry ditch to west. (RIMG0021).

3.3 Description of Structures

3.3.1 Upper enclosure C72053434

The enclosing wall is drystone build of irregular basalt fieldstones, ranging in size from 0.1m to 0.65m maximum dimension. The wall has a present height varying from 0.1m to 0.9m. The original footing and face of the wall is much obscured by tumble. In part, especially the NW quadrant, there appears to have been an attempted repair. The thickness of the wall seems to have varied 0.60m – 1.00m.

On the eastern side is a gap, which may have been the original entrance. The north side of the gap is faced with a sub-rectangular boulder 0.7m wide (E-W), 0.35m high, and 0.38m thick (figs. 9, 13). The south side of the gap lacks definition, but *in situ* wall material begins at a distance of 2.75m from the face of the described boulder.

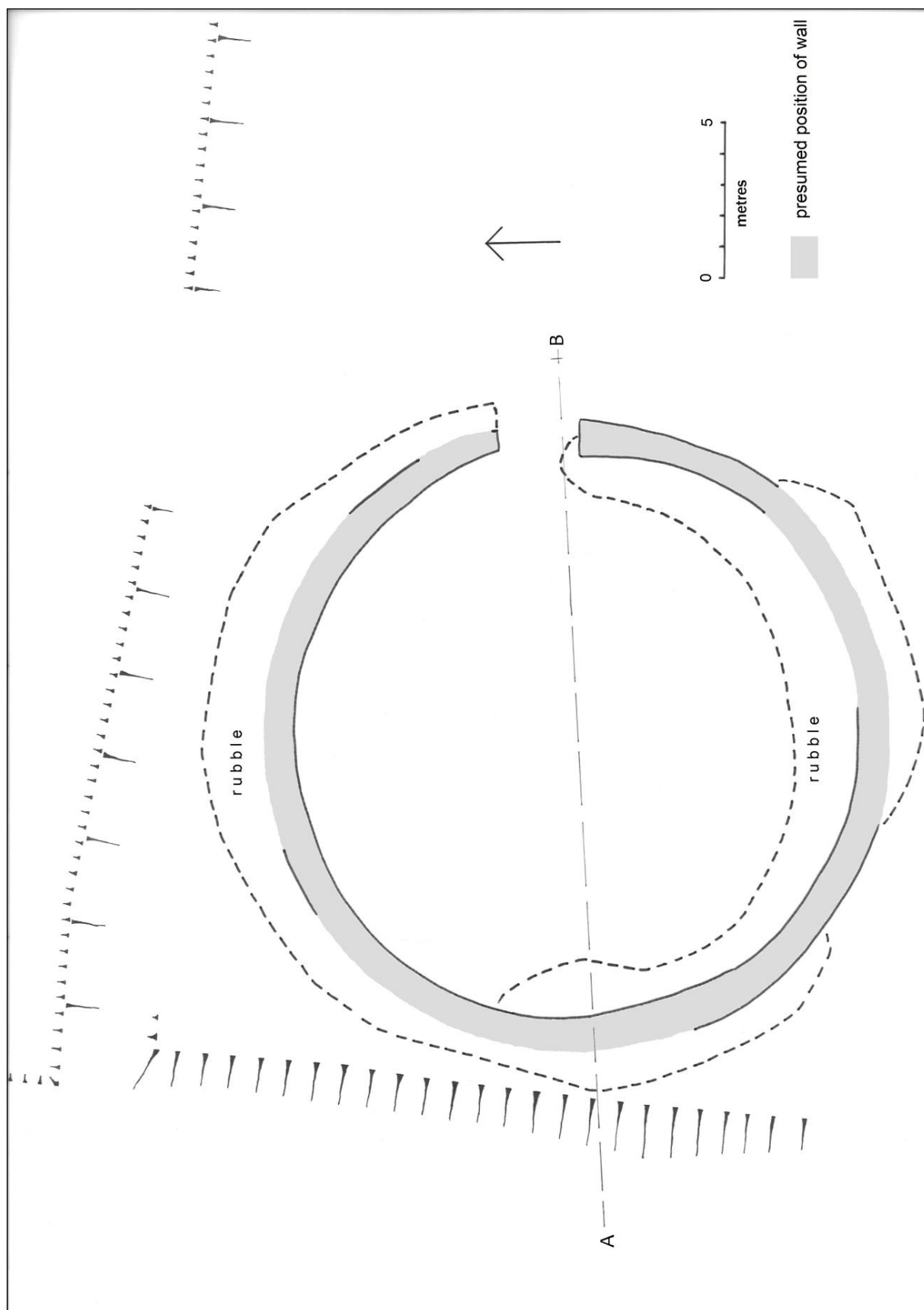


Fig. 9 Plan of upper enclosure.

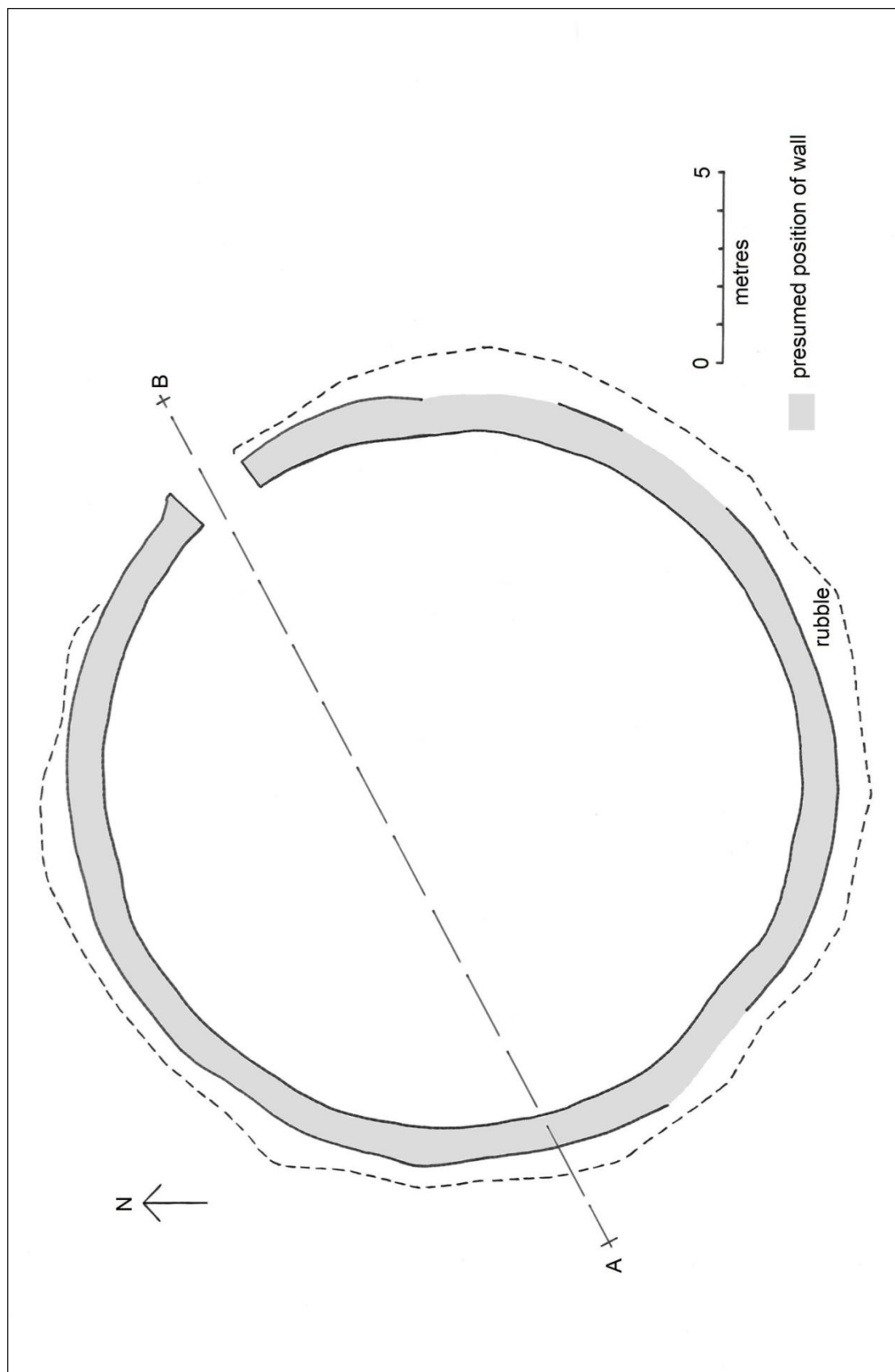
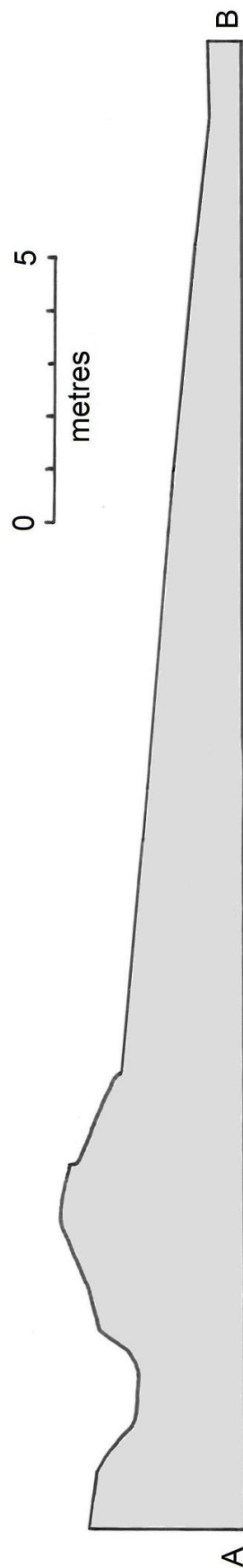


Fig. 10 Plan of lower enclosure.



vertical scale
2
0

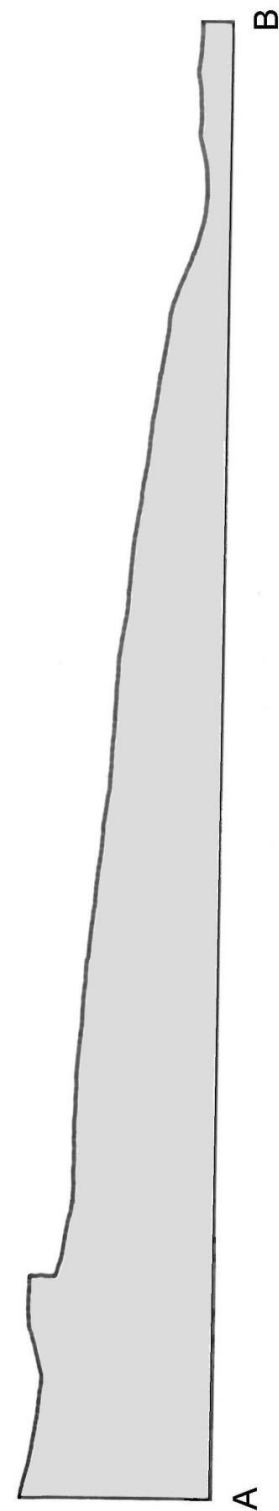


Fig. 11: Section, upper enclosure.

Fig. 12: Section, lower enclosure.



Fig. 13: Upper enclosure, stones at entrance, north side. (RIMG0029).

The limit of spread of the fallen rubble was surveyed and the outer and inner faces of the wall where they were exposed.

Outside the enclosure to the west a ditch runs in a northerly direction (fig. 8). From this a bank runs in an easterly direction, keeping north of the enclosure, and becoming part of a field system (fig. 14). This bank forms the southern boundary and the ditch the western boundary of a small field approximately 36m (E-W) by 23m (N-S). Beyond this field is a trackway, 3m wide and 43m - 46m north from the outside wall of the enclosure. The track is defined by a bank of boulders, 2m wide, on the north side and a grassy slope with cropping rock on the south side (figs. 23, 31). The track continues to the clachan in a WSW direction, almost parallel to the Bishop's Road. The clachan is divided by, but mostly beyond, a little ravine which looks like the course of a stream (fig. 30). The bed was dry and grassy although a large amount of rain had fallen two days before. Some gorse grows on the steep slopes.

3.3.2 Lower enclosure C72033447

The wall is made of basalt field stones heavily encrusted with various types of lichen (black, white, grey, orange/brown) and moss. The outside wall has patches of definable wall face with much tumble up to about 1m from the wall face. There appears to be an earth-fast alignment of stones around the base of the tumble consistently about 1m from the wall face. The inner wall is much better defined, standing 1m in places with well faced surface. Where the wall is best preserved it appears to be constructed of two parallel faces infilled with smaller rubble (figs.

16, 17). In places a certain amount of rebuilding is suggested where stones are built up without regard to the formation of a regular face.



Fig. 14: Field divisions, looking east from position just north of upper enclosure. (RIMG0030).

There is an apparent entrance on the east side (fig. 26). Here the wall profile can be clearly seen on the north side where it is about 1m wide, tapering slightly to the top. On the south side of the entrance, on the inner face, there is a squared stone defining a possible small niche. On the west side there may be another entrance, though the wall is more disturbed here.



Fig. 15: lower enclosure from north showing lazy beds (RIMG0013).



**Lower enclosure Fig. 16: interior
(RIMG0088)**

**Fig. 17: wall width, collapsed section
(RIMG0035)**

Inside the wall, and butted against it, are a number of “stone structures”. Though difficult to interpret, most are about 1m x 1m. One at the W/WNW is a little larger (fig. 18). In some places there also appears to be an arc of stones paralleling the wall.



Fig. 18: lower enclosure, internal structure against wall (RIMG0059).

Immediately north of the enclosure are strongly defined lazy beds, running north-south (figs. 15, 27). Generally they are narrower at the north end, but some are wedge-shaped and do not reach the south edge of the cultivated area.

4 Discussion

4.1 Cashels?

The enclosures first appear on an OS map in 1904 suggesting that they had been constructed before then, but after the previous edition of 1852. However, this is not conclusive, as minor features were not always included in early surveys.

To test the suggestion that these enclosures were cashels their dimensions were compared to all such monuments in the county recorded on the NISMR (figs. 19, 20). The two at Avish would clearly be the smallest and have walls at the thinnest end of the range.

| Cashels in County Londonderry as recorded in NI Sites & Monuments Record | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Townland | Grid Ref. | NISMR | altitude feet | internal major(m) | diameter minor(m) | wall width | circularity |
| Tullanee | C5417019500 | 015:007 | 400-500 | 33 | 29 | 3m | 1.14 |
| Gortgarn | C7281012630 | 025:007 | 600+ | 53 | 50 | 5.5m | 1.06 |
| Eden | C6040002430 | 030:002 | | 26 | 24.6 | 3.9m | 1.06 |
| Coolnamonan | C6208003120 | 030:004 | 600-700 | 31 | 29.2 | n/a | 1.06 |
| Moneyhogan | C6182003360 | 030:005 | 700-800 | 24 | 23 | 3.6m | 1.04 |
| Ballydonegan | C6200001000 | 030:069 | 500+ | destroyed | | | |
| Carn | C7568006730 | 031:002 | 800+ | 48 | 46.5 | 4m | 1.03 |
| Cashel | C7187006790 | 031:008 | 500+ | 22.5 | | 1m | |
| Gortinure | C8440005080 | 032:017 | 400-500 | 30 | | 3m | |
| Possible Cashels in County Londonderry as recorded in NISMR | | | | | | | |
| Freugh | C7793018430 | 017:001 | 900 | 74.7 | 69 | 2m | 1.08 |
| Ballyness | C7508014800 | 017:003 | 900+ | 90ft | | 2.5m | |
| Kilhoyle | C7380015980 | 017:016 | 390 | 25 | 21 | 3m | 1.19 |
| Aghansillagh | C7430019350 | 017:038 | 600+ | 16 | 18.5 | <3m | 0.86 |
| Terrydreen | C6112004290 | 030:090 | 600+ | 27 | 26 | 3.5m | 1.04 |
| Tamnadoey | H8689084480 | 046:035 | gone | | | | |
| Fincarn | C6398005010 | 030:034 | 400+ | 30 | 26 | 11m | 1.15 |
| Moneysharvan | C8457005540 | 032:016 | 500+ | 27yds. | | 7.8m | |
| Avish (upper) | | | 700-800 | 18.5 | 18.3 | 0.6-1.0m | 1.01 |
| Avish (lower) | | | 600-700 | 18.3 | 17.5 | 1m | 1.05 |

Fig. 19: Table of cashels in county, from NISMR

Apart from this they present a general appearance of being fresher or younger than the field divisions around them. The classification “Sheepfold” given in 1923 may be accepted. However, the observation of a regular stone footing or alignment around the outside of the wall is tantalising (3.3.2.1). It was not picked up by the survey, but hints at the possibility of a more ancient structure, whose site was re-employed. No similar feature was observed at the upper enclosure where the spread of tumbled stone is more extensive.

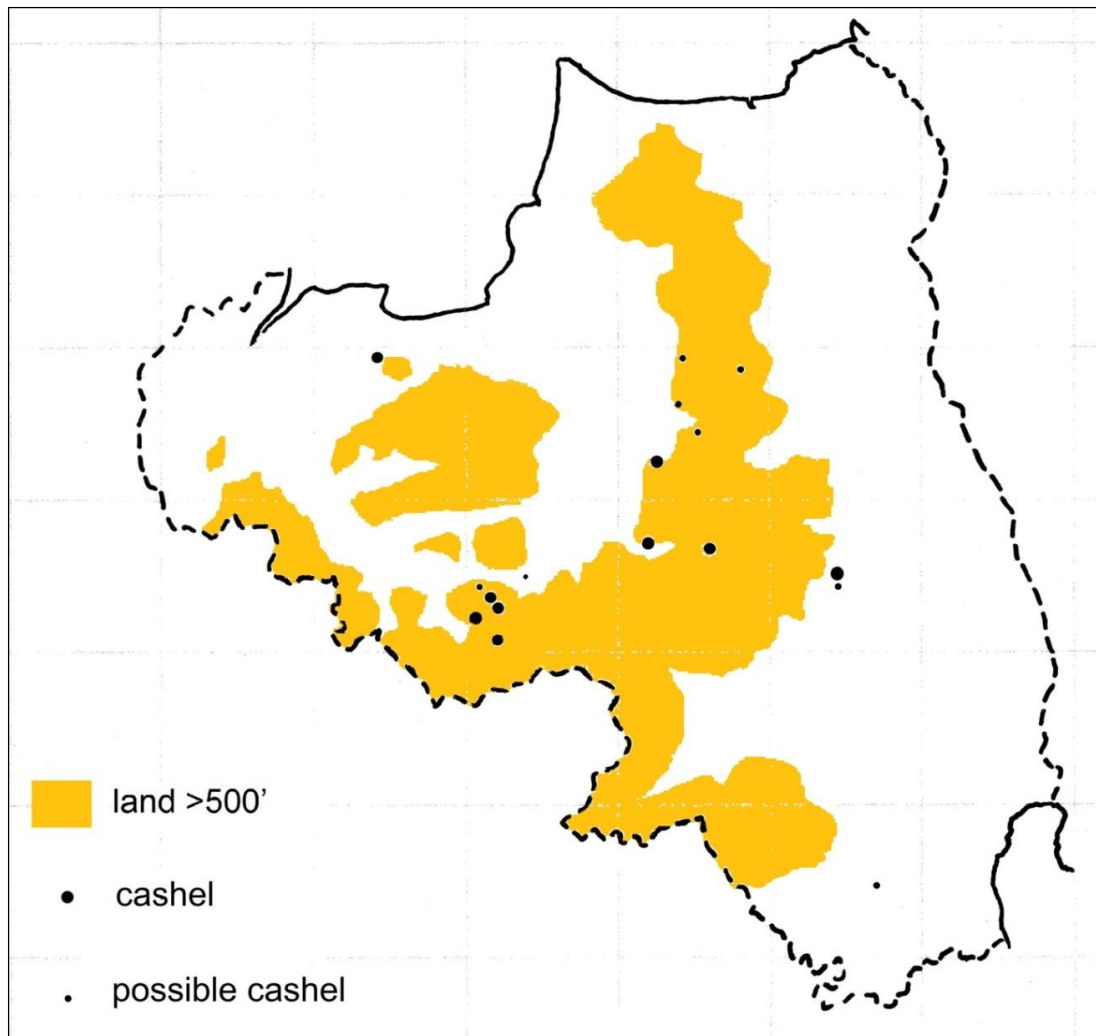


Fig. 20: Distribution of Cashels in county from NISMR

4.2 Ownership

If the enclosures are recent, perhaps the names of the builders can be found in the historical record.

The entire parish of Tamlaghtard (alias Magilligan) was churchland occupied by the McGilligans, who were the erenagh or hereditary tenants until the seventeenth century (Reeves : 39, 78).

In 1622 William Gage was named as the bishop's tenant (*Royal Visitation* : 195), and after his death his brother John Gage, an English Protestant, in 1634 obtained a sixty-year lease for all but one of the forty-one townlands from the See of Derry (Young : 289; Simington : 217). Manus McGilligan, Irish Papist, was in possession of Ballycarton (Simington : 210).

By 1659 there were four named titaladoes (persons of standing) in the forty townlands (Pender : 130).



Fig. 21: Upper enclosure in foreground, lower enclosure beyond, Benone caravan park beside strand (SAM_1542).

The Gage family continued to be chief tenants of the parish under successive bishops, but a division was made in the early eighteenth century. Thomas was William Gage's son by his first wife, Ann Church, and William his son by a second marriage to Ann Huston. Thomas and his descendants took the upper half and William the lower.

A generation later lower Magilligan was further divided by Ann Gage, widow of William, by marriage settlements for her daughters: Elizabeth with Daniel McNeill in 1747, and Ann with Robert Church in 1748 (D673/28, MIC311/164B). This was not a territorial division, but a share of the income from leases. Unexpired leases could be traded, used to settle debt, or sub-leased.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century Conolly Gage is resident in Bellarena in succession to his uncle Hodgson Gage and continues the practice of sub-letting fractions of townlands to tenant farmers in upper Magilligan, while Rev. Henry Hervey Bruce acts as land agent to Bishop Frederick Augustus Hervey, fourth Earl of Bristol, in setting leases for the lower half.

The Big Drain was the boundary between upper (Gage) and lower (Bruce) Magilligan: the lower, including Avish, being to the northeast and the upper to the southwest, closer to Limavady (PRONI: MIC1/86/1).



Fig. 22: recording a section across the upper enclosure (SAM_1534).

Many of the bishop's leases were set long in trust for himself and his heirs, and renewed every one or two years, thus ensuring they still had 20 or 21 years to run at his death (Proudfoot : 423). The earl bishop willed his Irish property to Bruce, and so the latter inherited the unexpired leases in 1803 and assumed the position of landlord, an arrangement later passed to future Baronets Bruce of Downhill, who continued to control these lands as personal estate, surviving the Church Disestablishment of 1870.

Mr. Eagleson held all the land in the townland in 1826, but no land elsewhere in the parish (FIN5A/252 : 8).

By 1860 Sir Henry Hervey Bruce bt. was holding the Avish land directly, but in 1874 it was let to James Duncan.

In 1878 the 739 acres of Avish were let to John, Hercules, and William H Hughes and in the following year Richard was added to the list (VAL 12B/31/5B: 23). The Hughes family had been butchers in Coleraine from at least 1852 (B&UD: 523) and were also cattle dealers (Census 1901). They had premises in Meetinghouse Street and the Shambles, but lived in the Waterside on Killowen Street (Griffith, 1859: 176, 177, 184). They also held land outside the urban centre, presumably to hold stock. (Griffith, 1859: 124, 173).

From 1924 to 1926 Hercules Hughes was the sole leasee of Avish. The property was then declared vacant until 1929 when Theobald Bryson, a sheep farmer, took the lease (VAL 12B/31/5E: 1).



Fig.23: Boulders lining side of trackway (RIMG0056).

4.3 Occupation

In the 1659 Census of Ireland Umrican and Anis (Umbra and Avish) are returned together as having 4 people (only those above the age of 15 years were counted); all were Irish (Pender: 130). There is no indication of how this population is divided between the two townlands.

At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries the Doherty family is in occupation of at least a part of Avish, but we do not know the total number of individuals (see App. B).

The 1831 census gives two households in Avish (MIC5A/6: 22). William Brown's family has 3 males and 3 females. Henry Miller's has 2 males and 1 female. All 9 are Presbyterian and they have no servants.

In the valuation map of 1831 (fig. 7) the red line weaves between the buildings of the clachan dividing it in a very particular way. It seems reasonable to conjecture this is a separation of the buildings of the two families.

In 1853 the list of seatholders for Dunboe Presbyterian Church includes residents of Avish: Andrew Morrow and Samuel Ross (MIC 1P/412). Both have two seats. Ross does not pay his arrears and disappears from the register after 1854. Morrow and his family continue to appear until 1862.



Fig. 24: field division east of lower enclosure (SAM_1530).



Fig. 25: remains of the cottage occupied by Ross and then Cummins.

In 1864 Samuel Ross had the only occupied house in Avish. A herd's house and all the land is held directly by Bruce. (VAL 12B/31/5B: 23).

Ross lived in a cottage 1.5 km southeast of the enclosures, beside a road which connected Articlave and Milltown with Limavady, but was not maintained across the deep bog, so became merely an access road for turbary. The cottage was in the ideal position for monitoring peat cutting. It did not appear on the OS map of 1852, so was presumably new when he moved in (fig. 25).

In 1874 Samuel Ross was replaced by John Cummins (VAL 12B/31/5B: 23).

At the 1901 census the house is occupied by a family of three: John Cummins, agricultural labourer aged 88 years, his wife Sarah aged 84, and their unmarried daughter Margaret Jane aged 48. This may be the John McCummins, son of William McCummins and Mary McGranahan of Tircrevan, who was baptised by the Presbyterian minister of Magilligan on 14 August 1819 (MIC 1P/215 : 65). Margaret Jane was born in Burren (immediately east of Avish) on 5 July 1849, daughter of John McCummins and Sarah Crawford of Burren (MIC 1P/215 : 479). However, on 15 April 1890 she married a widower James Brewster, who was a railway labourer in Woodtown (immediately north of Avish) (MIC 1P/215). At the 1911 census James is still living in Woodtown with his twenty-five year old daughter, while Margaret Jane is on her own in the parish of Dunboe and is entered in her married surname. She had been living there since 1904 (VAL12B/30/10E: 33).

In 1904 the family has gone and the house is declared a ruin (VAL 12B/31/5D: 24) – not a demotion to herd's house! Today, a rectangular half acre of hummocky grass, still free of the surrounding heather, defines their garden.



Fig. 26 : lower enclosure: entrance on east side, looking east. (RIMG0043)

4.4 Land Use

The name (para 2.6) and altitude (para 2.3) favour the view that the entire townland was summer grazing and without permanent habitation until modern times.

In 1950 Desmond McCourt recorded memories from old inhabitants who spoke of Duncrun and Ballyleighery having had arable land held in rundale, tenants owning land “field about”, with the brae and mountain shared in “sums” and grazed in common (Mccourt, 1950: 14,15). A sum was grazing for 1 cow or 8 wethers or 6 ewes plus 6 lambs (Mccourt, 1950: 42).

Gortmore townland, which shares a long boundary with Avish, contained 583 acres (later enlarged to 990 acres at the cost of Tircreven). Of this acreage, 364 were mountain, and 213 were farmland (Griffith: 22). In 1826 the mountain pasture had been shared in common among the seven farmers living at a lower level (Tithe: 8).

The first OS 6-inch map shows trackways running northward from Avish clachan (fig. 7). They continue obliquely down the steep face of the hill to the lower land of Woodtown. Although much overgrown these can still be seen to be 3 m. wide with a bank on the outer side – capable of use as drove roads. Another trackway winds up from Castle Lecky to Gortmore 1.1 km to the southwest and another 0.9 km beyond that, links lowland Tircreven to adjoining mountain.

At 739 acres Avish is one of the most extensive townlands in a parish where the average is 320, but it has no human inhabitants today and in recent centuries the numbers were always small. This may be why it was grouped with Benone and Ballymaclary (low lying and sandy), in the Civil Survey of 1654 (Simington: 216).

After 1785 cereal production in Ireland increased while pasturage declined driven by prevailing prices and demand (O'Donovan 1940: 140).

John Doherty's petition (App. B) testifies to tillage in the late eighteenth century, perhaps prompted by population pressure in the lowlands. The county, as with Ireland generally, was experiencing a greater use of marginal land with small holdings dependent on potato cultivation (Bell, 1999: 405-6).



Fig. 27: lazy beds north of lower enclosure – looking south.

A map which accompanies Bulter's *Survey* is dated 1824 and beside "Evish" has the note, "grain grown at 550 feet". If the beds beside the lower enclosure were used for grain (barley, oats, or rye), harvesting with hand tools would leave their shape undisturbed.

The irregular pattern of the ridges north of the lower enclosure leads to the assumption that spade cultivation was not superseded by mechanised agriculture, which requires straight, regularly spaced drills (Bell 1999 : 410), but by grazing, which has preserved the surface from the time of the last crop.

If the Eccleston in the 1802 rumour (App. B) was actually the Mr. Eagleson recorded in the Tithe Applotment of 1826 (4.2.10), then it would appear that Doherty's plea did not succeed.

After the mid-nineteenth century Irish agriculture trended away from tillage to livestock and this continued through the twentieth century (Bell, 1999: 406, 413).

In 1802 Sampson reported, "Many young cattle, reared in the low countries, are sent up about April to the high rough pastures" (Sampson: 207). "... In the low countries, as in Magilligan, and districts where there is out-pasture, the sheep, kept at home in summer, are folded at night in enclosures called falls; these are made by building one sod almost on edge over another, whose obliquity is in a contrary direction; these folds are dug up in the after-season, and the sods and bottoms contribute to the manures" (*ibid*: 218).

In 1835 it was reported that the stock on Conolly Gage's farm included 113 black cattle and 17 sheep (Day & McWilliams: 136). This balance of black cattle to sheep seems to be typical within the parish.

It was also reported, “No regular sheep-walks in the parish. Mr. Gage has tried sheep on the mountain this year ... grazing farm exclusively in the townland of Croaghan stocked by Mr. Gage” (Day & McWilliams: 135).

In Britain, during the eighteenth century attention to breeding and experiments in farming practice identified the Blackfaced and Cheviot as hardy breeds of sheep that could be profitably kept on mountain and moorland throughout the year (Symons : 273, 331-3). In the second quarter of the nineteenth century large flocks of sheep became normal across the Scottish highlands and in the 1850s entrepreneurial Irish landlords established sheepwalks on similar terrain, importing Blackfaced sheep and engaging experienced shepherds (Dolan : 38; Mac Suibhne: 561).

A shepherd named Thomas Hastings and living on nearby Ballyleighery Mountain is mentioned in the records of Magilligan Church 1850-1855 (MIC1P/215: 498, VII). This surname, long established in Scotland, was not recorded in Magilligan earlier than this.

Writing in 1839 Martin Doyle stated “Within the last twenty years, the mountaineers of Scotland have found the advantage of making circular stone enclosures, which they term *stells*, for their sheep, ... against wind, and storm, and snow ...The stells, according to the Hon. Captain Napier’s details, in his Treatise on Practical Store-farming, should be substantially built of stone, of the diameter of 30 feet; they will hold each 75 sheep, and on an average cost only 39s.” (Doyle : 431, 432). In comparing areas, the Avish enclosures at 18m. may be expected to accommodate 290 each. As the author’s primary interest was in Irish farming we may assume he knew of no examples in Ireland.



Fig. 28: Stell in the Usway Burn Valley, Northumberland, NT8710.
©copyright Kenneth Ross <http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/326779>

William Youatt commented, “After having been once or twice driven into these inclosures, or rings, the sheep will of their own accord draw towards them on the approach of snow. The shepherd will always find his flock assembled in the rings during snow, and he will not often have to risk his life by searching for lost sheep among wreaths.” (Youatt: 28) However, he also said the height should not be less than six feet. At Avish this would not have been achieved if we judge by the tumble of stone, but perhaps the snow here did not reach the levels experienced on the Scottish mountains.

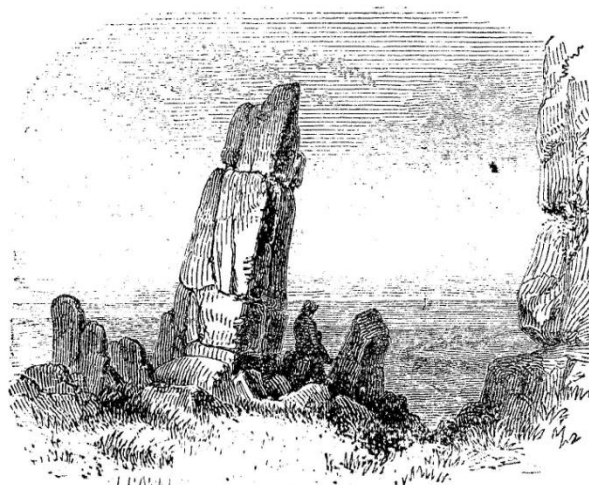


Fig. 29 : Merrick Stone – a natural feature on the basaltic cliff between Woodtown and Avish townlands (Portlock: 25).

4.5 Conclusion

For a century families did not remain in Avish for more than one generation and for most of this time are clearly landless labourers. Any structure erected during this time would have been at the direction of the landholder.

The circular enclosures may be the result of ideas on ovine husbandry coming from Britain. They may have been influenced by the “fall” already known in the parish’s lowland and been a method of concentrating animal manure. They were most probably built in the second half of the nineteenth century to provide some shelter for sheep during severe weather.

A picture emerges of Avish in the latter nineteenth century given over entirely to grazing for the meat market. One resident man deals with day to day work and lives 1.5 kilometres from the herd’s house and sheepfolds. In the severest weather this must have seemed a long distance.

5. Recommendations

The enclosures grouped with the nearby cluster of buildings provides an opportunity of conserving a ruinous clachan *in situ* for presentation to the public. This would be complementary to work done in other places where structures are fully maintained to preserve a defined period.

A limited excavation to test the earliest use of the enclosures (especially the lower), and possibly recover pollen grains to elucidate the agricultural activity, would inform a future presentation of the site.



Fig. 30: small ravine to the west of the survey area. (RIMG0069)



Fig. 31: trackway looking west. (RIMG0058)

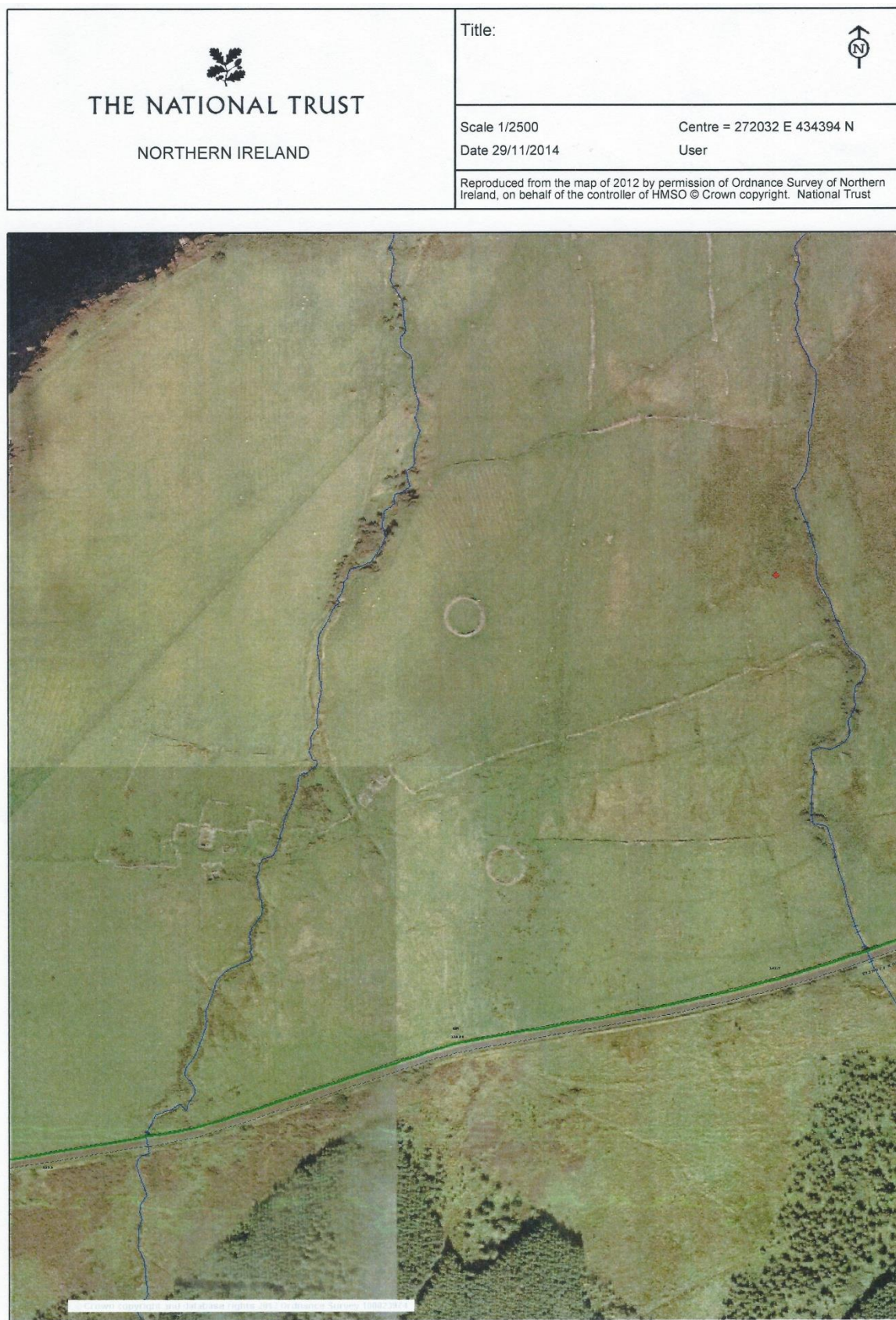


Fig. 32: air photograph showing enclosures, clachan, and lazy beds.

Bibliography

Butler, Samuel, Rev., *A Statistical Account of the Parish of Tamlaght-Ard*, 1824, MS, PRONI: T3239.

Census of Ireland: Benone DED, 1901; Downhill DED, 1911.
<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/>

Conway, Malachy, & Bailey, Matthew, *An Archaeological Survey of Avish Clachan, Co. Londonderry*, The National Trust, May 2005.

Day, Angélique, and McWilliams, Patrick, editors, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Vol. 11: Parishes of Co. Londonderry III, 1831-5: Roe Valley Lower*, 1991, Institute of Irish Studies, QUB, pp. 82-146.

Dolan, Liam, *Land War and Eviction in Derryveagh 1840-65*, 1980, Dundalk.

Donovan, John, *The Economic History of Live Stock in Ireland*, 1940, Cork University Press.

Doyle, Martin [pseudonym for Rev. William Hickey], *A Cyclopaedia of Practical Husbandry and Rural Affairs in General*, 1839, Dublin.

Dunboe Presbyterian Church Register PRONI: MIC 1P/412.

Griffith, Richard, *General Valuation of Rateable Property in Ireland : Union of Newtownlimavady*, 1858; *Union of Coleraine*, 1859, Dublin.

McCourt, Desmond "Traditions of Rundale in and around the Sperrin Mountains", *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, XVI (1953), 69-84.

McCourt, Desmond, *The rundale system in Ireland : a study of its geographical distribution and social relations*, PhD thesis, QUB 1950. T/ 50.H1

Mac Suibhne, Breandán, "Agrarian Improvement and Social Unrest: Lord George Hill and the Gaoth Dobhair Sheep War 1856-1860" in *Donegal History & Society* ed. William Nolan et al., 1995, Dublin.

Marriage contract between Daniel McNeil and Elizabeth Gage, PRONI : D673/28.

Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record, NI Environment Agency, Department of the Environment for NI, <http://apps.ehsni.gov.uk/ambit/Default.aspx>.

Magilligan Presbyterian Congregation Register PRONI: MIC 1P/215

Ó Máille, TS, "Avish and Evish" in *Bulletin of the Ulster Place-Name Society*, Series 2, vol. 4, 1981-82, pp. 1-5

Portlock, JE, *Report on the Geology of the County of Londonderry and parts of Tyrone and Fermanagh*, 1843, HMSO, Dublin.

Reeves, William, *Acts of Archbishop Colton in his Metropolitan Visitation of the Diocese of Derry A.D. MCCCXCVII*, 1850, Dublin.

Register of Deeds, PRONI: MIC 311.

Sampson, GV, *Statistical Survey of the County of Londonderry*, 1802.

Symons, JA, *Scottish Farming: Past and Present*, 1959, Edinburgh and London.

Tamlaghtard Parish Register (Church of Ireland), 1747-1961, PRONI : MIC1/86/1

Tithe Composition Applotment Books, Parish of Tamlaghtard, 1826, PRONI
FIN/5/A/252, MIC15AA/27A.

Valuation field books PRONI: Parish of Tamlaghtard, VAL12B/31/5A-5E, 1860–1930;
Parish of Dunboe, VAL12B/30/10E, 1899-1910.

The Royal Visitation Book for the Province of Ulster, 1622, copy MS. PRONI :
DIO4/23/1/1.

Woodside, Robert, “Avish – clachans and booleys” in *National Trust Annual Archaeological Review 1990-2000*.

Youatt, William, *The Mountain Shepherd’s Manual*, 1837, London.

Young, AI, *Three Hundred Years in Inishowen*, 1929.

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPH RECORD FORM 1

Site: Avish: Lower Enclosure

Date: 28th June 2014

Make and Model of Camera: Ricoh Caplio G600 Wide

Photographer: Philip Baxter

The compass bearing indicates the direction from which the subject has been viewed.

| | | |
|----------|------|--|
| RIMG0001 | SE | Interior |
| RIMG0002 | E | Interior |
| RIMG0003 | N | Interior |
| RIMG0004 | NE | Interior |
| RIMG0005 | NW | Interior |
| RIMG0006 | E | Interior |
| RIMG0007 | NE | General view (near) |
| RIMG0008 | NE | General view |
| RIMG0009 | N | Looking towards upper enclosure |
| RIMG0010 | SE | General view |
| RIMG0011 | SW | General view |
| RIMG0012 | W | General view |
| RIMG0013 | N | General view |
| RIMG0014 | NE | General view |
| RIMG0015 | E | General view |
| RIMG0016 | S | General view |
| RIMG0017 | S | Detail of wall (outside) |
| RIMG0018 | S | Detail of wall (outside) well built face |
| RIMG0019 | S | Detail of wall (outside) well built face |
| RIMG0020 | S/SW | Detail of collapsed wall |
| RIMG0021 | W | S wall, showing upstanding parts of face + collapse outside |
| RIMG0022 | SE | Along S wall showing alignment of stones outside wall, edge of collapse approx. 1m from wall face |
| RIMG0023 | SW | Badly collapsed wall |
| RIMG0024 | SW | Face of wall still visible in collapsed area |
| RIMG0025 | W | End of collapse/ built section, outer stone alignment still visible, possible second entrance oppose first. |
| RIMG0026 | W | Possible W entrance looking towards E entrance. Wall here less defined as visible face but inside better preserved. Outer alignment still continues around base of tumble. |
| RIMG0027 | NW | Badly damaged area before wall face continues towards N |
| RIMG0028 | NW | Wall face clearly visible and tumble to outer alignment |
| RIMG0029 | NNW | Tumbled wall looking N along wall |
| RIMG0030 | N | Well-defined section |
| RIMG0031 | N | Well-defined section |
| RIMG0032 | N | More tumbled area |

| | | |
|----------|------|---|
| RIMG0033 | NNE | Along face of wall at collapsed section |
| RIMG0034 | NNE | Towards collapsed section |
| RIMG0035 | NNE | Collapsed section, width of wall 1m looking W to E |
| RIMG0036 | NE | Towards well-built section? Rebuilt? |
| RIMG0037 | NE | Towards well-built section at highest point, N of entrance |
| RIMG0038 | E | Entrance |
| RIMG0039 | E | Looking N at N side of entrance |
| RIMG0040 | E | Tumbled wall S of entrance, outer alignment visible |
| RIMG0041 | SSE | Complete tumble |
| RIMG0042 | SE | Outer wall tumbled, inner wall face top visible |
| RIMG0043 | W | East entrance |
| RIMG0044 | W | East entrance and corner stone. Good wall face. |
| RIMG0045 | W | East entrance and corner stone. Good wall face. |
| RIMG0046 | W | S side of entrance, alignment of stones within wall |
| RIMG0047 | NW | Stone structure built against tumbled wall |
| RIMG0048 | NW | Well-faced section (2 courses of stone) |
| RIMG0049 | NNW | Stones in rough alignment inside face |
| RIMG0050 | NNW | Stone tumble or alignment? Inside wall tumble |
| RIMG0051 | N | Best section of wall face |
| RIMG0052 | N | Stone structure? against best section (further clockwise) |
| RIMG0053 | NNE | Stone structure? against tumbled section |
| RIMG0054 | E | Section south of possible W entrance |
| RIMG0055 | E | Possible W entrance |
| RIMG0056 | E | Section N of possible W entrance |
| RIMG0057 | SE | Tumbled section |
| RIMG0058 | SE | Well-built section N of rushes ? stone structure inside wall |
| RIMG0059 | SSE | Another stone structure, squarish, inside, good section |
| RIMG0060 | Sish | Well-faced (low) area of wall – two faces filled in with rubble |
| RIMG0061 | Sish | Well-faced (low) area of wall – two faces filled in with rubble |
| RIMG0062 | SSW | Collapsed area |
| RIMG0063 | SSW | Good section N of E entrance |
| RIMG0064 | S | Looking W along wall to stone structure |
| RIMG0065 | S | Cultivation ridges north of enclosure |
| RIMG0066 | S | Cultivation ridges north of enclosure with metric rod |
| RIMG0067 | S | Cultivation ridges north of enclosure with metric rod |
| RIMG0068 | NNW | Anne MacDermott and lazy beds |
| RIMG0069 | N | Stream W of enclosure |
| RIMG0070 | NW | Erosion face of lazy beds, E of stream |
| RIMG0071 | N | Cultivation ridges north of enclosure |
| RIMG0072 | N | Cultivation ridges north of enclosure |
| RIMG0073 | NE | Cultivation ridges north of enclosure |
| RIMG0074 | E | General view |
| RIMG0075 | SE | General view |
| RIMG0076 | SSE | General view |
| RIMG0077 | S | General view |
| RIMG0078 | SW | General view |
| RIMG0079 | W | General view |
| RIMG0080 | WNW | General view |

| | | |
|----------|-----|--|
| RIMG0082 | NW | General view |
| RIMG0083 | N | Possible tangential alignment of boulders |
| RIMG0084 | N | Interior view |
| RIMG0085 | E | Interior view |
| RIMG0086 | W | Interior view |
| RIMG0087 | W | Interior view |
| RIMG0088 | NE | Interior view |
| RIMG0089 | E | Interior view |
| RIMG0090 | SE | Interior view |
| RIMG0091 | SE | Interior view |
| RIMG0092 | S | Interior view |
| RIMG0093 | N | Old field division, east side of enclosure |
| RIMG0094 | S | Old field division, east side of enclosure |
| RIMG0095 | E | Old field division, looking towards enclosure |
| RIMG0096 | SE | Old field division, looking towards enclosure, from trackway |
| RIMG0097 | ENE | Trackway leading towards clachan |
| RIMG0098 | WSW | Trackway leading from clachan |
| | | |

PHOTOGRAPH RECORD FORM 2

Site: Avish: Upper Enclosure

Date: 28th June 2014

Make and Model of Camera: Ricoh Caplio G600 Wide

Photographer: Philip Baxter

| | | |
|----------|----|---|
| RIMG0001 | S | General view of interior, lower enclosure in distance |
| RIMG0002 | S | General view of interior, lower enclosure in distance |
| RIMG0003 | SW | Eagle Hill from enclosure |
| RIMG0004 | S | General view |
| RIMG0005 | S | Looking into enclosure across wall |
| RIMG0006 | W | Looking along southern wall |
| RIMG0007 | E | Looking along southern wall |
| RIMG0008 | E | Looking along southern wall |
| RIMG0009 | SW | Looking along wall |
| RIMG0010 | SE | General view |
| RIMG0011 | E | Looking through entrance |
| RIMG0012 | E | Looking through entrance |
| RIMG0013 | W | Looking through entrance |
| RIMG0014 | SE | Looking NW |
| RIMG0015 | NW | NE quadrant of wall |
| RIMG0016 | E | Along northern wall |
| RIMG0017 | W | Along northern wall |
| RIMG0018 | N | Across northern wall |
| RIMG0019 | NE | Along wall |
| RIMG0020 | NE | Along wall |
| RIMG0021 | N | Along western wall |
| RIMG0022 | N | Along western wall (closer) |
| RIMG0023 | NW | Along wall |
| RIMG0024 | W | Along southern wall |
| RIMG0025 | W | Along southern wall |
| RIMG0026 | E | Along southern wall |
| RIMG0027 | E | Survey team at work |
| RIMG0028 | | |
| RIMG0029 | SW | Stones at entrance. Average size 30 x 37 cms |
| RIMG0030 | W | Field divisions, from position just N of enclosure |
| RIMG0031 | W | Field divisions, from position NE of enclosure |
| RIMG0032 | E | Field divisions, from position ENE of enclosure |
| RIMG0033 | S | Field divisions, from position ENE of enclosure |
| RIMG0034 | N | Field divisions, from position NE of enclosure |
| RIMG0035 | SE | Lower enclosure |
| RIMG0036 | N | Field division and ditch, west of enclosure |
| RIMG0037 | N | Drainage channel |
| RIMG0038 | SE | Distant view |
| RIMG0039 | N | Drainage channel |
| RIMG0040 | S | Drainage channel |

| | | |
|----------|-----|---|
| RIMG0041 | N | Drainage channels |
| RIMG0042 | NW | Drainage channels |
| RIMG0043 | SE | Drainage channels |
| RIMG0044 | S | Drainage channels with field division on right |
| RIMG0045 | SSW | Field division looking towards enclosure |
| RIMG0046 | N | Enclosure wall from within |
| RIMG0047 | E | Enclosure wall from within |
| RIMG0048 | S | Enclosure wall from within |
| RIMG0049 | W | Enclosure wall from within |
| RIMG0050 | | Enclosure wall |
| RIMG0051 | NW | Field wall (corner) north of enclosure |
| RIMG0052 | N | Field wall (corner) north of enclosure |
| RIMG0053 | W | Field wall (corner) north of enclosure |
| RIMG0054 | S | Field division between enclosures |
| RIMG0055 | W | Field division |
| RIMG0056 | S | Side of trackway: 90 x 57 x 50 cms, H x W x D |
| RIMG0057 | W | North side of trackway |
| RIMG0058 | E | Trackway towards clachan. Stones generally larger than in walls of enclosure. |
| RIMG0059 | SE | Lower enclosure from trackway |
| RIMG0060 | | Stones: average size 25 x 20 x 15 cms |
| RIMG0061 | | Large stones: average size 45 x 40 x 20 cms |
| RIMG0062 | | Across 1m 10cm Stones on W |
| RIMG0063 | | Across 60cm Stones on W |
| RIMG0064 | | Across 1m Stones on S |
| RIMG0065 | | Plane table: plan in progress |
| RIMG0066 | | Sprinter: booking in progress |
| RIMG0067 | E | General view |
| RIMG0068 | S | General view |
| RIMG0069 | W | General view |
| RIMG0070 | N | General view |

Site: Avish: Additional images

Date: 28th June 2014

Photographer: Malachy Conway

| | | |
|----------|-----|--|
| SAM_1514 | E | Upper enclosure |
| SAM_1515 | SE | Lower enclosure |
| SAM_1516 | SE | Lower enclosure: entrance and northern wall |
| SAM_1517 | SE | Lower enclosure: northern half |
| SAM_1518 | NE | Lower enclosure: SE half |
| SAM_1525 | S | Lower enclosure: northern wall with lazy beds beyond |
| SAM_1527 | SE | Possible clearance cairn |
| SAM_1528 | E | Possible clearance cairn |
| SAM_1530 | NNE | Field division east of lower enclosure |
| SAM_1534 | SE | Upper enclosure: surveying section |
| SAM_1538 | S | Upper enclosure: along eastern wall |
| SAM_1539 | S | Upper enclosure: along eastern wall |
| SAM_1543 | SSW | Upper enclosure: general view |

APPENDIX B

D2790/4/55

The humble petition of John Doherty of Avish to the Right Honble. The Earl of Bristol

Showth

That the ancestors of your suppliant lived for many years in the town land of Avish, where they made many improvements in building and in dividing and enclosing the farm in expectation that your Lordship would order [sic] them the same tenure granted to the other tenants, they having always preserved a fair + honest character, and regularly paid the Rent, which can be attested by the most respectable men in the neighbourhood on the death of your suppliants parents he was left the charge of a numerous and helpless family which, by his industry and care he has brought to be useful members of society. Your suppliant has heard with much concern and greif that a person of the name (Ecleston) has made application to your Lordship for a lease of suppliants farm under what circumstances and statements your suppliant is ignorant of, he has already a large farm in Mr. Jacksons Estate and is wanting the farm of Avish as a grass farm which has been under tillage for many years, by the means of suppliants ancestors and himself making lasting and beneficial improvements which suppliant humbly hopes your Lordship will allow him to reap the advantages by directing your Agent to make him a Lease. Your suppliant is well satisfied from your Lordships humane and tender protection of your tenants that you will order your suppliant to be done justice to for which he will be ever bound to pray.

I have read the within statement and believe it to be true, Averill Leckey

[The above is addressed to London, forwarded to Rome, and bears a Foreign Office postmark which seems to be **Jan. 1802.**]

[Averill Leckey was a landlord, whose residence was Castle Leckey in the adjoining townland of Woodtown, although his estates were elsewhere.]