



ULSTER  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

# Newsletter

Summer 2020

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Editor: Duncan Berryman

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School of Natural  
and Built Environment,  
Queen's University Belfast  
Belfast BT7 1NN

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newsletter.ulsterarcoc@gmail.com

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## From the Editor

This year has been extraordinary and disrupting. When I last put together a print Newsletter, I never would have thought that the world would be locked down for months, and all our UAS activities cancelled for the year. The health and safety of our members is of utmost importance to the UAS. The committee is continually reviewing current advice and guidance to assess when we might be able to resume face-to-face meetings and events. We are also bound by the guidance from Queen's University since we use their facilities for lectures.

While it hasn't been possible to produce a print Newsletter until now, we have been uploading

monthly eNewsletters to the UAS website. This print edition brings together some of the highlights from the first four editions of the digital newsletter. We have also set up a YouTube channel (accessible from our website). Here there are several lectures, including the lecture that Dr David Bell would have given to the Society this year. We also did not want to cancel our annual conference, so plans are underway to move this online.

We all hope that soon we will be able to resume face-to-face activities. Until then, please stay safe and enjoy reading the articles in this Newsletter.

**Duncan Berryman**  
Editor

### **Subscriptions were due on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020**

If you still have not paid, please send cheques for £20 (full) or £7.50 (retired/student) to:

Lee Gordon (UAS Treasurer)

135 Old Holywood Road, Belfast , BT4 2HQ

You can use PayPal on the website - [www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/uas/JoinUs/)

## Discovery! 2020

This year we are unlikely to be able to hold our Discovery! conference in the normal format. Therefore, the committee has taken the decision to organise the conference online. Details of how to register will be made available nearer the time, but registration will be essential as we are using a secure system to host the conference. Registration will also be free, so anyone can attend.

We are trying to keep as close as possible to our normal conference, so the event will still take place on Saturday 7th November. The conference will take a similar form to our usual, physical conference, with a number of sessions being made available during the day. We hope to be able to provide a live discussion forum throughout the day. We don't know what lockdown restrictions will be in place by then, but maybe members could meet in small groups to watch the lectures together and have some discussion amongst themselves.

We are still to decide on speakers for the conference, a line-up will be published on our website and social media as soon as we have it ready. However, the committee just wanted to take this opportunity to assure you that plans are in place for this year's conference and to make sure you have the date in your diaries.

## Survey Group News

As we are unable to get out and survey sites at the moment, it might be a good idea to challenge ourselves by doing a short personal project. This has been designed to make us think about surveying and researching, just as we normally do, so there should not be anything here that we are not familiar with. It is hoped that you will give it a go and have some fun in doing so. If you need any advice or help, just let me know. Who knows what you might find?

### **Brief:**

Carry out some research into the area in which you live, in particular the house that you live in, and put together a short report or presentation that you can either keep for yourself, or share your findings with the rest of the group at some point.

### **Method:**

#### Research

Describe the property in which you live:

- What are the materials of construction? (brick walls, timber and slate roof, two

floors, approximate dimensions etc.)

- When was it built?
- What is the address? Include townland and county, Irish Grid reference.
- Try to make a plan (even a sketch)

What was there before your property was built? (consult the ordnance survey maps for this and go back to the First Edition (c. 1834).

Who lived there (if anyone) before you? (for older properties, consult the census returns or Griffith Valuation). What did they do for a living?

What was the land used for in the area over time? (farmland/ industrial/ housing etc).

Try to get old photographs of the area (local history books are good if you have any)

Are there any archaeological sites/historic buildings in the area (look in the sites and monuments record/map viewer for this)

Have a look around your flower beds etc for artefacts (remember you are just gardening). You might find pottery, flints, metal items.

Clean and record these, photograph them if possible.

## Report

Put together your report or presentation (perhaps in the survey group report format). You should include:

- Introduction
- All the information/data you have been able to find
- Include any plans, sketches and photographs

## Discussion

How important is the site and how has this changed over time?

What is the bigger picture?

(development of the area/county)

Add your references

(books/websites you have used)

## Notes

- You should be able to source the information you need online, including the Ordnance Survey maps.
- If you need specific parts of these maps, let me know, as I have most of these on the hard drive and I can send you a digital copy.
- Have a look at some of our online survey reports for ideas on layout

## Websites

[www.placenamesni.org](http://www.placenamesni.org)

[Northern Ireland Sites and](#)

[Monuments Record](#)

[Historic environment map viewer](#)

[Jstor](#) (you can access some articles for free, members can get access to a limited collection of journals, contact us for details)

## **Health and Safety**

Don't forget your health and safety

- Do not spend too long at your computer screen without a break.
- Make sure your workstation is positioned correctly.
- If you are working around the house and garden (and distracted), watch out for trips and falls.
- Why don't you try a risk assessment?

**Harry Welsh**  
**Fieldwork Co-ordinator**

## Metal detecting and Archaeology in Northern Ireland

Following some recent reports of members reporting metal detecting activity, we thought it might be useful to summarise what the law says and does not say about metal detecting in Northern Ireland.

The most universal legal restriction on metal detecting is Common Law, in so far as no one has the right to detect on any land unless they have the permission of the landowner. This applies to all land - it does not have to have any statutory protection, be a known or suspected archaeological site or have any other special status. When it comes to more specific legal restrictions, such as the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (HMAO), only one of the 45 Articles makes any reference to 'detecting devices'. This is Article 29, which makes it an offence to have possession of a detecting device and to remove any archaeological object discovered by the use of that

device from a protected place without the written consent of the Department. A protected place is defined as any monument which has been scheduled by or is in the care of the Department. As a detecting device is defined as any device designed or adapted for detecting or locating any metal or mineral, the consent applies to both metal detecting and some types of geophysical survey. It is worth noting that the simple possession of a detecting device in such protected places is an offence, with the removal of an object which it detected a further offence (as is anyone acting with written consent who fails to comply with any conditions of that consent).

The HMAO says nothing further on detecting devices. It is therefore perfectly lawful to have and use a detecting device anywhere other than a protected place if any other regulations, such as prior consent from the landowner, have been complied with.

The HMAO does, however, contain a second Article which potentially restricts 'typical' metal detecting activity anywhere in Northern

Ireland. This is Article 41, contained within Part III of the Order under the heading Archaeological Objects. The Article basically makes it an offence to search for archaeological objects, structures or 'thing of archaeological interest', if that search involves ground disturbance, without a licence from the Department and in compliance with any conditions it contains. This Article repeats a licensing requirement dating back to 1937 and hence long-predating the use of metal detectors to search for archaeological material. In effect, however, it means that while it may be legal to have and to use a metal detector in an unprotected place, it may not be legal to investigate a signal if that involves disturbing the ground surface in search of archaeological material.

On the face of it, given that almost all metal detecting activity involves ground disturbance to investigate a signal, this looks like a blanket legal control. Any successful prosecution, however, rests on the ability to prove that the detectorist was searching for archaeological material. But short of the detectorist admitting that this was

exactly what he was doing, it is extremely difficult to prove this. After all, they can argue that they have no idea what is buried in the ground, will only know that when it has been retrieved and anyway, how are they to know what exactly is an archaeological object, structure or thing of archaeological interest? If you have a spare moment, take a look at p4 of the HMAO and the definition of an archaeological object and decide if the average person could easily judge.

Article 41 is the basis for the excavation licensing procedures managed by Historic Environment Division (HED). These require potential licence holders to satisfy certain criteria to be eligible for a licence. No detectorists have applied for an excavation licence and in any case the same criteria could not be applied to metal detecting permissions as few, if any detectorists would satisfy them. If HED were ever to issue permits or licenses for metal detecting, they would have to use different criteria and standards. Some excavation licenses do, however, include an element of metal detecting within

the overall excavation programme, with the licence holder managing the detecting activity. The most notable example of a project involving metal detecting was the work on the Blackwater dredgings in the 1990s. With detectorists managed by licence holders from the Ulster Museum, this produced a wealth of artefacts including the Clonmore Shrine and the Shanmullagh Hoard.

In conversation with current detectorists, they may say that they search for military memorabilia, lost rings, coins or bits of agricultural machinery. In the only case where a detectorist was convicted of illegally searching for archaeological material, this was overturned on appeal based on his statement that he had been searching for fishing weights. There is a third Article of the HMAO which can come into play in relation to the objects – Article 42, which requires any person finding an archaeological object to report it to a relevant authority within 14 days. So anyone holding onto or trying to sell an object, including objects found by detecting, without reporting it, may be guilty

of an offence. They may even provide supporting evidence by advertising what the object is or even where they found it. The central issue here is whether the objects have been reported, which is almost always to a Museum. The object should also be theirs to keep or sell, which means this should have been agreed with the landowner.

Metal detecting and associated legislation and regulations is quite topical. There has recently been a consultation on proposed amendments to the Treasure Act, which applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the associated Codes of Practice. This has major implications for metal detecting as the vast majority of items deemed to be Treasure are found by detectorists. There is also an Historic England funded feasibility exercise underway on the proposal to establish an Institute of Detectorists which would aim to provide training, disseminate information and a clearly defined best practice methodology for detectorists. Staff from both HED and the National Monuments

Service, Ireland are Observers on the Project Advisory Board. More locally, HED has been considering the relationship between archaeology and metal detecting and would hope to present a paper for wider consultation in the coming months. Preparatory work has reminded the Department of how much variation there is legally and practically in the approaches to metal detecting, even within the UK and Ireland. It is clear that, despite any potential legal restrictions, there is more metal detecting activity in Northern Ireland than ever before and that many detectorists use HED maps and databases when researching potential locations. It is also worth noting, however, that almost all of the major metal artefacts, both Treasure and non-Treasure, acquired by National Museums Northern Ireland in recent years were found by detectorists and reported by them as required by both the HMAO and the Treasure Act.

Ken Neill

Heritage Advice and Regulation Branch,  
Historic Environment Division,  
Department for Communities

## What to do if you see a metal detectorist

- The HMAO can be accessed here: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1995/1625/contents>
- If a member sees detecting taking place in land/grounds owned by Councils, National Trust, Government (including State Care Monuments) then they should report it to the landowning body – ideally if there is staff available at the time directly to them, otherwise by email or phone. Also by all means forward the information to: [Historicenvironmentenquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Historicenvironmentenquiries@communities-ni.gov.uk)
- It is not recommended to approach or challenge the detectorist in case this leads to confrontation.
- If they observe it on private land again do not approach the detectorist – as explained above, it will be hard to prove they are breaking the law in any case. If they know the

landowner, perhaps speak to them at some point. Again forward any information to the enquiries inbox above.

- Photographic evidence of the activity or even the aftermath, such as the holes left behind, may be useful but only take photographs if this is safe to do so and is not likely to lead to a confrontation.

### **A future for metal detecting in Northern Ireland?**

Ken Neill and HED have indicated that there are discussions taking place about the possible future of metal detecting in Northern Ireland. This is happening alongside a UK wide consultation on the possibility of better engagement with detectorists and improved training for them. The UAS will be following these developments with interest and will provide members with updates whenever there is news and when the HED produces their public consultation. These will be communicated in the Newsletter and by email.

## **January Lecture**

The January lecture, 'Who was buried there? Funerary practices and selection in late Neolithic burial sites in Southern France' was given by Dr Mélie Le Roy, archaeology lecturer at Queen's University Belfast.

The South of France has a rich archaeological landscape with many collective burial sites. There are three types of collective burial sites in the region – caves, dolmens and hypogeum and dating evidence shows that caves and dolmens in the same geographic area were being used for burial simultaneously. Many of the dolmens were emptied in the 19th century and reused as shepherd shelters, while remains in caves were often found accidentally. Additionally, many have been excavated by professional archaeologists and regional museums. The construction of these monuments obviously required much investment in time and resources and there has been lots of experimental archaeology conducted in France researching

how these structures were built. However, there has been comparatively little research carried out on the osteological remains which could reveal rich information on who was buried at these sites. Modern anthropological studies in areas where collective burial is still practised, such as Indonesia, and Madagascar, indicates that the relationship between individuals buried within these burials is complex and not confined to immediate family groups. Dr Le Roy's research focuses on understanding how these burial monuments were used and learning about the individuals buried within.

Dr Le Roy selected 22 previously excavated Late Neolithic – Early Bronze Age collective burial sites (11 dolmens and 11 caves) and re-analysed the excavated remains and site archives. The osteological remains were studied to determine the estimated age of the individuals and their general health. This analysis showed some differences between those individuals buried in the caves and those buried in the dolmens.

Regarding age of death, the cave burial sites had an over-representation of individuals older than 5 years old, while within the dolmens there was an under-representation of individuals less than 5 years old. There was also unequal health status between those individuals within caves and those within dolmens. Those individuals within the caves were in good health generally prior to death, although there were some individuals with disabling pathologies. Those individuals buried in dolmens had poor general health but disabling pathologies were rare. Further study of other sites within the region is required to confirm these initial results.

In 2017 and 2018, fieldwork was carried out at Les Abrits 2, a dolmen in Beaulieu in the Ardèche region of Southern France. The site had been previously investigated and remains of 57 adults and 29 immature individuals were excavated, these remains were commingled and no clear distribution. The re-excavation of the chamber revealed a hard, compact, sterile deposit on the floor. This was

initially interpreted as a modern consolidation horizon, however, it was actually a purposefully prepared surface laid down prior to the construction of the chamber and analysis of the showed evidence that bodies have decayed on site. Preparation of the floor surface was also observed during excavation at the nearby Janna Cave, a cave collective burial site located close to Les Abrits 2. This indicates the care and effort made to prepare the body reception surfaces. It is hoped that another season of excavation will take place at Les Abrits later in 2020.

Grace McAllister

## The Location Of The Black Abbey In The Ards

I had promised Duncan a small article on Black Abbey and the lost Parish of St. John in the Ards, typically the laptop with 99% of my work on got fried by a power surge, so that's now out the window. I thought what I'd do instead is give you a peek inside the chaotic/non-linear way that discoveries sometimes happen.

Most of the Survey Group are aware of my work in Greyabbey Bay and on Chapel Island it was while I was in the early stages of my archaeological adventures (6 years ago) that I came across the story of The Black Abbey. Most people would have accepted what the books and everyone else say, The Black Abbey is in Blackabbey TD. Me, I wasn't so sure and began tracking down as many of the sources quoted in books etc., it was through this method that I was able to track down a copy of the founding charter in the *Monasticum Hibernia*.

In the meantime, I had been walking around Blackabbey TD, looking at maps trying to figure out where lakes and bogs once lay, reading about Innishargy on its hilltop surrounded by a lake and generally trying to figure where there was a suitable site for an abbey. The more I looked, the more I became convinced that I was looking in the wrong place. Some of the more unusual factors taken into consideration include how far the sound of bells and singing would travel, remember

that the monks' activities were controlled by bells, sites which offered a visual dominance (you want people to see what you paid for) and most importantly freshwater.

Having come to the conclusion that The Black Abbey was somewhere else, I put it to the back of my mind and continued with finding new features in the Bay.

Fast Forward two years.....

I was out with the dogs one day when I bumped into a lady who rented the field with the motte in, she was tending her vegetable beds at the time, we got chatting and it turned out she had an interest in history. A month or so later I was invited for tea, scones with homemade butter so creamy it was criminal, homemade jam and an interesting discussion about the preserved land surface at Roddens. At this point she fully introduced herself as Prof. Val Hall of QUB and told the story of how P. Patel and team excavated the site in the mid-sixties. There was however a minor niggle, she couldn't understand

why the site was called Roddens Port. It didn't take long to find out that the TD had been sold to Charles Rodden by the Montgomerys in 1615, Charles was granted a license for a port around 1618 and the port was active by 1620. The port survives as an open box at the edge of the boulder field with a raised area on its northern side, there are also the remains of a wooden feature which may be another landing place of later date.

It was during this period that I began to notice some oddities in the road and field layout at Roddens, some are linked to the bunker system in Roddens Hill and under the fields between Roddens and Ballyhalbert, others are older and suggested a settlement of some type. Then the founding charter for Black Abbey popped into my head.

If you accept that the translation of the charter in the *Monasticon* is correct then the location of The Black Abbey is fairly clear, the charter lists the townlands that the abbey is surrounded by, it does not say anything about it being in a

townland. Conversely, the charter for The Grey Abbey states that it is in Greyabbey TD then lists the additional townlands.

If you look at the townlands listed as surrounding The Black Abbey there is a curious hole, at Roddens. To me, it looks like this was the location of The Black Abbey.

A few months later I summoned up the courage to visit Roddens House, I got to have a good look around the outside and noticed a few pieces of re-worked stone but didn't see anything that screamed monastic. Unfortunately, I was refused permission to explore the surrounding fields limiting me to what could be seen from the road, which to be honest was inconclusive. The only thing that stood out was the yellow sandstone Roddens House is built from, odd pieces of it can be seen in several field walls but there does not appear to be a local source other than glacial randoms.

Meanwhile over on Chapel Island I'm still finding new features. On this particular day I'm walking the

eastern shore and spot a piece of sulphur yellow sandstone which looks worked, then another and then a door jamb. Now I must admit to being excited, I have long had doubts about the building on the ridge being the chapel, so without thinking I broke one of the protections by lifting the mullion to photograph it, the only time I have deliberately boo-boomed. In the end I found twenty or so pieces of the yellow sandstone and several other pieces which looked out of place, including a square-ish lump of marble which could have been a saddle quern, part of a WW1 bomb and some hard-white coral. There are some obvious built features in the area, some of which date from WW1&2, a couple appear to me to be standing stones, and a line of large stones which continues onto the island linking up with the revetment that runs around much of the island.

That evening I sent off a mea culpa worried about picking up the mullion, as I sat mulling it over I wondered if the yellow part was significant, Roddens House is yellow sandstone, the remains on the shore are yellow sandstone,

Grey Abbey House is yellow sandstone, the remains of The Grey Abbey are well weathered so all I can say is that it is pale sandstone.

There is still a lot of work required before I could say with 100% confidence that I have found The Black Abbey. The fact that I cannot read Latin, Irish or French means there are some big gaps in the timeline and my anxiety problems limit me to online material which denies me PRONI and the like. If somebody with the linguistic skills and patience wants to continue with this feel free, if the laptop is fixable I'll share everything I've found out so far.

**David Irving**

## Coastal Quarrying At Dunseverick Castle

The Survey Group were invited to Dunseverick Castle by The National Trust in order to record some of the features in the 'ports', the day prior to the survey I took a swim out from Portnahooagh to the quarry camp in the next bay

west. The preservation of the camp is much better towards its western end where structures and walls survive to chest height (1.3m) the structures vary in size considerably the largest being 5x8m with internal divisions. One of the more interesting features is the loading ramp/dock which is a modified natural feature, as is the small stump just next to it.

On the return swim I spent time looking at the cliff faces leading to the stack that the castle sits on and the outer faces of the stack itself, I then swam out, around, then onto the stumps just off the downwards for a 100m or so and lying against the sides there are massive fingers of stone that must have been overburden.

Floating there looking down I was reminded of a blade core and how each blade flaked left a distinct concavity, rather like those on the cliffs.

By this time the tide was starting to run so I made one last stop on the NW corner of the stack where there is a small post quarrying platform, this was fortunate as

there is a thin layer and seam of the red stone which had been the target of the quarries. Although it doesn't show well in the pictures the material is red with multiple inclusions of what I believe are sponges and shells, to my eye it is either the same material or very similar to that used in the red pillars in Mount Stewart House.

The question about how much material was removed needs more investigation, that it was considerable can be seen in early images of the site, some of which suggest that a similar amount of material has been removed from the castle stack as the sea stack shown in an old image (see back cover).

There is something wrong with this image and it took me ages to work out what it was, if you look at the tower and building on the stack they are the wrong way around, the image has been flipped. If it had been of higher resolution I'd have spotted the reversed signature a lot quicker. With the image flipped the view makes a lot more sense, now rather than showing the western port we

have a view from above the mining camp with identifiable features. Much of what we see in this image has been changed by quarrying, the path or more probably road halfway up the cliff is gone, the large sea stack with its cave likewise. There are more subtle differences which may be down to artistic interpretation, the jagged outcrops of rocks which rise toward a sudden drop and the 'port' at bottom left match up fairly well with the western side of the quarry camp if seen from the NW (roughly under the waterfall created by the drainage ditch). The 'port' and part of the western slope above is now largely filled with tailings from the quarrying.

An image from Google Earth showing the areas with evidence of quarrying (see back cover), the line and areas enclosed in red have surviving quarry marks, remnant red stone or finger type concavities, those in yellow are areas I am less certain about. I suspect that an examination of the seabed would reveal further evidence of quarrying between the castle stack and the eastern cliff/quarried area.

The location of the small stack at the mouth of the eastern port raises the possibility of a land bridge or sea arch linking the castle stack to what is now the headland to the east, the same may apply to the NW corner and the stack just off from it.

The valley beneath the castle has not escaped the quarries either, as a print (see back cover) shows an outcrop of 'causeway' stone has been removed from the bottom of the access path.

### **Conclusion**

The evidence is clear that the stack which the castle stands on has been reduced by quarrying, the full degree of this reduction is currently unknown and may be unknowable but it should not be ignored. Further underwater investigation may reveal that the sea bed immediately off the stack has also been modified, it is exceptionally flat and the layout (with the L shaped stack complete) would make a really good harbour.

**David Irving**

## **Watermill site, probable wrack road and ford at Ballyruther Farm, near Ballygally, Co. Antrim**

The hitherto unrecorded sites of a watermill, a cutting associated with a probable wrack road and a ford, have been discovered during fieldwork by one of the authors (SC) on Ballyruther Farm, near Ballygally, Co. Antrim. This report briefly describes the sites and is based upon a visit to the site undertaken by the authors in January 2009. All three sites are located within the northern half of a field used for pasture on Ballyruther Farm. The field is roughly rectangular in shape and located on a steep slope overlooking the Coast Road. Locally known as the 'Cove Field', the field is currently used for pasture. It is bisected by the eastnortheast-westsouthwest aligned cutting associated with the probable wrack road. The area to the north of the probable wrack road, which contains the watermill site, shows no evidence for cultivation. The remainder of the field (to the south of the probable

wrack road) contains a series of relict spade cultivation ridges, set approximately 2.0 metres apart from each other and aligned down slope in an eastnortheast-west southwest direction. The southeastern corner of the field has been subject to several episodes of slope failure which manifests itself in a series of erosional scars and slumps. The line of a possible former field boundary, which coincides with a crest in the slope of the field, is represented by three thorn trees and a large recumbent stone that are all aligned on the same northnorthwest-southsoutheast axis. This possible former field boundary is not featured on either the 1857 revised edition of the Ordnance Survey 6" series (Sheet 30), or any later cartographic sources. The 1833 Ordnance Survey 6" series for Co. Antrim did not include field boundaries.

#### **Site A: The watermill (Irish Grid Reference D35490999)**

The watermill is located on the edge of the field, immediately adjacent to a stream that flows west southwest to east northeast along the ditch which defines the

field's northern boundary. The stream is fast-flowing being supplied by two separate streams whose confluence is located in the northwestern corner of the field. Neither of these 'feeder' streams follows a natural course, instead they have been diverted and incorporated into the defining ditches of the local field system. Presumably, this act of diversion coincided with the laying out of the current field system and suggests that the watermill does not predate the field system.

At present, the site of the watermill consists of a denuded mound, located immediately adjacent to the stream, and a dried-up channel which diverts from the stream immediately to the west of the mound and follows a curving line around the south of the mound for a distance of about 13.0 metres. Some evidence for a stone-built structure in the stream bed immediately adjacent to the mound, and a stone-built retaining wall on the northern edge of the mound itself are observable. Apart from these, and a small cache of broken roof slates that is visible immediately adjacent to the

western end of the dried-up channel, no structural remains survive suggesting that the watermill building was comprehensively dismantled rather than allowed to fall into ruin. The absence of any watermill building on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 6" map indicates that this probable act of demolition had occurred by 1833.

The mound is made up of redeposited clay. It is approximately 10.0 metres long, and has a level summit which is approximately 2.0 to 3.0 metres wide. The mound's western end is level with the ground surface of the field, but the steepness of the field's slope makes its eastern end approximately 1.5 metres higher than the adjacent part of the field. The mound is overgrown with small trees and bushes and the area around it has been poached by stock gaining access to the stream. No grass grows over the mound and it is susceptible to erosion. Much of the mound's northern side appears to have been eroded by the stream when it has been in flood. It is suggested that the watermill building would have

been built upon the top of the mound.

The dried-up channel is about 0.5 metres wide with steep sides and a relatively flat base (maximum depth approximately 0.3 metres). It is visible for a distance of about 15 metres, but appears to run out to the east of the mound - in an area where the poaching by animals has been particularly damaging. It is probable that the dried-up channel would have formed the leat and tail race of the watermill located upon the top of the mound.

It is difficult to reconstruct the form of the mill from the surviving remains. It is reasonable to suggest that the mill's wheel was located adjacent to the mound in the dried-up channel, which would have formed the mill's leat and tail race. Given the longitudinal alignment of the mound, the wheel was presumably mounted onto the side of the building, rather than a gable end. The apparent remains of a denuded stone structure within the stream at a point opposite the mound poses a problem of interpretation. If this

was the remains of a wheel pit then either the mill had two wheels, or the stream and leat have been misidentified. Alternatively, it is possible that the apparent stone structure represents elements of the mill building that have collapsed into the stream.

A further problem of interpretation is posed by the absence of evidence for a mill pond in the immediate vicinity of the watermill. Although one of the 'feeder' streams flows through a small pond (not visited) at Laidside Farm approximately 190 metres to the northwest of the mill site, as Laidside Farm is not represented on the first edition Ordnance Survey 6" map, it is unlikely that its pond was associated with the watermill. Given the amount of water draining through the stream it would probably not have been necessary to construct a mill pond in order to guarantee a constant flow of water.

On archaeological and cartographic evidence alone, the precise date of the watermill is uncertain. Given that the stream which supplies it is integrated into

the current field system, then the construction of the mill cannot pre-date the laying out of the current field system. The date of the field system itself is unknown, although it is reasonable to assume that it does not pre-date the late sixteenth century. As the cartographic evidence indicates that the mill had been demolished by 1833 (see above), then the mill probably dates to some point between the late sixteenth and early nineteenth century. It is tempting to suggest that the watermill is one of those recorded as being in 'Ballyrather' in a 1635 Inquisition Post-Mortem as being formerly owned by a David Buthill de Glandrine and who had been succeeded by a Randolph Buthill (Inq. Ulst. Antrim Car.1 (40)). Randolph Buthill is presumably the Randle Brittle whose house and parcel of 'Ballruder' / 'Ballrudery' are respectively depicted on the extant copies of the maps of the Parish of Cairncastle and Barony of Glenarne that were prepared as part of the Down Survey c.1656-68 (NISMR No. ANT 035:087).

**Site B: Cutting associated with the probable wrack road (between Irish**

### **Grid Reference D35510997 and D35460995)**

Part of a probable wrack road passes through the field. Today, the line of this road can be traced from a point on the Coast Road (Irish Grid Reference D35541003), across the ford noted below (Irish Grid Reference D35520999), to a gate through the western field wall of the field containing the watermill site (Irish Grid Reference D35420994). The path of the road is clearly demarcated in the field by an approximately 3.0 metre wide cutting which is visible for a distance of about 60.0 metres. That the cutting is deepest where it passes through the crest of the slope suggests that it was deliberately cut in order to reduce the maximum gradient of the wrack road. Such an arrangement would ease the work of traction animals bringing loads up from the coast. The presence of a slight up-cast bank on the southern side of the deepest section of the cutting is consistent with this interpretation. Given the steepness of the route, it is considered unlikely that periodic episodes of maintenance, which might alternatively have formed

this feature, would be necessary if the cutting was a gradually-formed hollow way.

### **Site C: The ford (Irish Grid Reference D35520999)**

Where the probable wrack road crosses the stream that defines the field's northern boundary, a ford of large stone slabs had been built. Although the area around the ford is now overgrown it was possible to take some photographs of the feature. The ford consisted of at least six or seven large flat slabs neatly laid as lintels over a channel with an estimated depth of at least 0.15 metres. During the course of the site visit it was not possible to ascertain how the lintel slabs were supported, or whether the base of the channel also consisted of laid slabs.

Dating the ford is difficult. It is first marked on the 1906 edition of the Ordnance Survey's 6" map, but undoubtedly, significantly pre-dates the early twentieth century. Discussions of the ford's date are inextricably linked to considerations of how and when the current field system was laid out. The path of the stream, and

by extension the line of the field boundary, becomes irregular towards the lower, eastern end of the field where the ford is located. As the stream's natural course has been diverted elsewhere to, in part, define the field boundary, it could be argued that it is unlikely that the ford predates the laying out of the current field system. However, the irregularity of the stream's course at this point raises the possibility that, if only in this part of the field, the line of the boundary deviated from its straight alignment to incorporate a pre-existing natural stream. If the ford pre-dated the laying out of the current field system then it may have been perceived as a feature worth incorporating into the field system when it was laid out. Consequently, no great confidence can be placed upon the date of laying out the field system as a terminus post quem for the construction of the ford. As previously noted, the date of the field system itself is unknown, although it is reasonable to assume that it does not pre-date the late sixteenth century.

## Conclusions

The three sites described above form an important element of the post-medieval landscape of Antrim and are deserving of a more accurate survey than that performed by the authors in 2009 – perhaps, in due course, they could be tackled by the Ulster Archaeological Society's Survey Group. With or without further survey, it is desirable that the sites are incorporated into the Sites and Monuments Record and a copy of this report has been submitted to the Historic Environment Division of the Department of the Communities to facilitate this. The discoveries themselves represent an excellent example of the potential for discovering hitherto unrecorded archaeological sites within the Ulster landscape. It is the authors' hope that the account of the watermill, probable wrack road and ford at Ballyruther, as well as being of intrinsic interest to the wider archaeological community, will inspire members of the Society, once the current restrictions are lifted, to put on their boots and explore the countryside with a view to discovering sites themselves.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Rathcroghan Visitor Centre – Presenting the Iron Age royal landscape of Cruachan Aí**

Rathcroghan Visitor Centre, Co. Roscommon was established in 1999 as a community-run social enterprise, to act as the interpretive facility and resource hub for the UNESCO World Heritage Site-nominated Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape. The idea of a heritage centre devoted to the Rathcroghan Landscape arose from a series of successful remote sensing investigations which were conducted over the principal monuments of the landscape between 1994 and 1998 by the National University of Ireland, Galway, with funding from the Heritage Council.

The Rathcroghan Landscape comprises a collection of at least two hundred and forty archaeological sites, sixty of which are designated as National Monuments, located on the limestone-rich fertile plains of mid-Roscommon. The majority of the core of this landscape is contained in an area above the 120m OD contour line, providing extensive

views over much of the province of Connacht. This landscape retains evidence of human settlement from at least as early as the early Neolithic Period (c.3,500BC), through to the later medieval period, with a period of particularly pronounced activity dateable to the late Iron Age.

The archaeological character of the landscape is multifaceted, with a substantial collection of Bronze and Iron Age funerary monuments, numerous ringfort settlement sites of early medieval or medieval date, standing stones, a cashel (stone fort), large-scale linear earthworks, and a matrix of later medieval field boundaries.

The focal points of this landscape are the large earthen mound of Rathcroghan Mound, and a natural limestone cavern known as Oweynagat, which possesses very strong associations with the mythological and folkloric narrative that also grips this landscape. Rathcroghan Mound was the most extensively investigated of the monuments as part of the aforementioned NUI, Galway ArchaeoGeophysical Imaging Project. These surveys uncovered a deep complexity to the mound and

its environs, which showed close parallels with the excavated and upstanding remains found at other of the Irish Iron Age royal sites, such as at the Hill of Tara, Co. Meath, Dún Ailinne, Co. Kildare, and particularly, Navan Fort (Emain Macha), Co. Armagh. This was a multi-period ritual monument, and it has been theorised that this served as the location for ceremonies and events linked with prehistoric sacral kingship.

Oweynagat, for its part, is deemed to be a portal or door into the Irish Otherworld, a place deliberately linked with the seasonal gathering of Samhain, modern Halloween, and a place of initiation or warrior testing. It survives today as a manmade souterrain-like passageway which then attaches onto a sinuous limestone cavern. Its modern humble appearance belies its place in Irish mythology, and both it, and the Rathcroghan landscape as a whole, are very well represented as a central place in the Ulster Cycle of Tales. These tales relate to the epic clashes between, particularly, the Ulaid and Connachta, and a cast of characters which included Queen Medb (Maeve), Ailill, Cú Chulainn,

Conchobar Mac Nessa, Fráoch and so on. The many tána ('cattle' raids) of the Ulster Cycle all begin at Cruachan Aí (Rathcroghan), and the central tale of the cycle, the Táin Bó Cuailnge (Cattle Raid of Cooley), which surrounds Queen Medb's quest to take a monstrous bull, the famed Donn Cuailnge, for herself, begins and ends at the royal site for Connacht.

It is from this extensive source material of archaeology, history and mythology that the interpretive centre has drawn on in order to share the story of Rathcroghan. The centre operates on a year-round basis, providing a museum and interpretive exhibition, specialist bookshop and gift shop, mythologically-themed Táin Café, and our guided tour offering of the Rathcroghan landscape. The centre currently employs 11 staff members, who on top of the day-to-day running of all things to do with the centre, are actively engaged in a wide range of projects relating to Rathcroghan. These include some of the following:

- The writing of Rathcroghan: The Guidebook (2018) [available

through our online shop at [www.rathcroghan.ie](http://www.rathcroghan.ie)]

- Acquisition of funding and successful installation of a bespoke artefactual display connected to the material culture of mid-Roscommon, in association with the National Museum of Ireland (2018)

- New tour bus acquisition (2019)

- Children's museum workbook (2019)

On top of this, all of our tour guides are academic researchers in their own right, with numerous peer-reviewed publications on areas which interest them under their belts. The centre also offers an annual forum through which community groups, societies, individual researchers and academics can present and debate on aspects of research in their own locales. Known as the Rathcroghan Conference – Archaeology Above & Below, it is Ireland's only annual community archaeology conference, and has been operating under this theme since 2014. The conference schedule for the upcoming, hopefully rescheduled, 2020 conference is available at [www.rathcroghanconference.com](http://www.rathcroghanconference.com).

The most recent positive development at Rathcroghan has been the development of a five-year Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (DAFM) funded agri-environmental project for Rathcroghan, entitled 'Sustainable Farming in the Rathcroghan Archaeological Landscape'. Known as 'Farming Rathcroghan' for short, this is a European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project designed to trial measures that would lead to more sustainable livelihoods for the farming community of Rathcroghan, while focussing on the maintenance, preservation, and enhancement of this archaeological and cultural landscape. At time of writing, the project has recruited thirty project farmers, and 2020 will see the trialling of the first set of measures. It is hoped that the successful delivery of this project will have positive implications for future agricultural schemes, both in Ireland, and throughout Europe, linked to preservation of our archaeological heritage. More information on the Farming Rathcroghan project is available at <https://www.rathcroghan.ie/history/farming-at-rathcroghan/>

Rathcroghan Visitor Centre is open six days a week (Monday to Saturday), 9am to 4.30pm throughout the year. Sunday opening (12pm to 4pm) occurs from May to the end of August. Tour times are available through our website.

## New Books

The following are a selection of recently published books that are likely to be of interest to members of the UAS. The first five are directly relevant to Ulster, with two focusing directly on Ulster and the others containing significant discussions of the region. The final three are of a more general interest, but two of them have an Irish focus.

*The Kings of Aileach and the Vikings, AD 800–1060* - Darren McGettigan

[Four Courts Press](#), €24.95

*Irish Houses and Castles, 1400–1740* - Rolf Loeber

[Four Courts Press](#), €24.95

*Con O'Neill, Last Gaelic Lord of Upper Clannaboy* - Roy Greer

[White Row Press](#), £14.95

*Journeys of Faith: Stories of pilgrimage from Medieval Ireland* - Louise Nugent

[Columba Books](#), €26.99

*Partnership & Participation - Community Archaeology in Ireland* - Edited by Christine Baker

[Wordwell Books](#), €35

*The Alliance of Pirates: Ireland and Atlantic piracy in the early seventeenth century* - Connie Kelleher

[Cork University Press](#), £27

*Early Irish Sculpture and the Art of the High Crosses* - Roger Stalley

[Yale University Press](#), £40

*Communities and knowledge production in archaeology* - Edited by Julia Roberts, Kathleen Sheppard, Ulf R. Hansson and Jonathan R. Trigg

[Manchester University Press](#), £80

# Coastal Quarrying at Dunseverick

