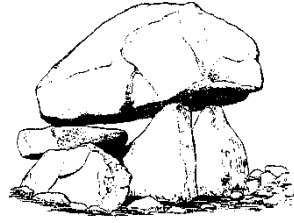


ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Survey Report: No. 16



**Survey of Divis Settlement Site
UAS/09/01**

In association with



Ian Gillespie

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1. Summary

1.1 A site survey was undertaken at the National Trust's Divis and Black Mountain site in the townland of Divis, Shankill, County Antrim, Irish Grid reference J 27476 74564.

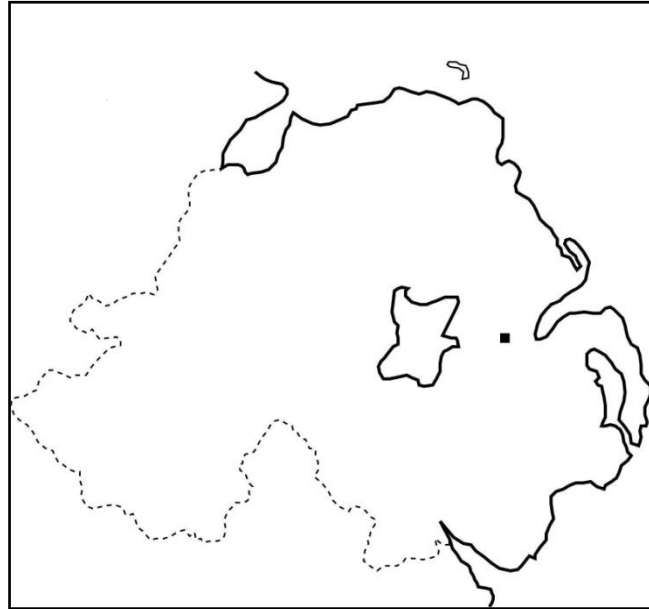


Figure 1: Location map for Divis

Divis (from Irish: *Duibhis/Dubh Ais* meaning "black back") is an area of sprawling moorland to the north-west of Belfast, Northern Ireland. It extends north to the Antrim plateau and shares its geology consisting of a basaltic cover underlain by limestone and lias clay. Between 1953 and 2004 it had been under the control of the Ministry of Defence and was used for military training. The property was acquired by the National Trust in November 2004 with funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Environment and Heritage Service of the Department of the Environment Northern Ireland.

This was the sixteenth in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society at the Divis and Black Mountain site.



Illustration 1: Divis Mountain viewed from the south west

1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce an accurate plan drawing of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and submitted to the Environment and Heritage Service and the National Trust.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of Divis Settlement Site was carried out on Saturday 28th March and Saturday 25th April 2009 by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society. This was the sixteenth such survey carried out by the Society, whose survey programme has been running since April 2006. This programme was undertaken in response to a decision taken by the committee of the Society to extend an opportunity to members to participate in practical surveys of archaeological monuments that had not previously been recorded. This decision had been prompted by a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Mr Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it had been noted that many archaeological sites on National Trust property had not been subject to a detailed archaeological survey. It was therefore agreed that members of the society would commence a programme to survey these sites.



Illustration 2: Ulster Archaeological Society Survey Team at work at Divis Settlement Site

Prior to the National Trust's acquisition of Divis and Black Mountain only 5 archaeological sites were recorded within its boundaries. This included two burial cairns, *Carn Sheaan Bhuidhe* or 'yellow Jack's cairn', from which a funerary vessel was recovered around 1840 (Rutherford 2009) and remains of a small slightly oval peat covered basalt cairn located just south of a pillar on Black Mountain. Perhaps most significant from this record was the apparent absence of any monuments particularly from the summits, when those of the surrounding hills in the wider range display prominent burial cairns or forts. One reason for the apparent absence of such features from Divis can be put down to the construction of a military base on the summit, which survives today as an unmanned communications and radar station. Theoretically this would have removed any former trace of sites or monuments from the summit that existed before the middle 20th century (Conway, M. 2005). Indeed, one of the Survey team members possesses a photograph of his brother standing on top of the Divis summit cairn, taken in 1940 (personal communication W. Dunlop) see illustration 3.



.Illustration 3 .Divis Summit Cairn 1940 W. Dunlop

Following an initial survey by the Trust's archaeologist, Malachy Conway in 2005, it became apparent that there were a number of hitherto unknown sites of archaeological interest on the property:

To date the archaeological field survey recording of Divis and Black Mountain has consisted of preliminary survey, identifying any visible landscape features or sites, recording these and locating their positions accurately. The results of this initial survey has already revealed some very interesting new discoveries, prompting a re-evaluation of the nature and significance of several sites within the property, not previously categorised in archaeological terms. Firstly there is what we knew or thought we knew through two stone walled enclosure sites, which have been marked as 'sheepfolds' on all editions of the Ordnance Survey maps from 1833. Close inspection of both sites revealed two separate and quite different circular enclosures. The first enclosure displayed opposing entranceways, was surrounded by a double stone wall and contained the foundation

remains of a rectangular house, which typologically suggested that the site could date from between the later Early Christian period (700 AD – 1100 AD) to the end of later medieval period (c.1550 AD). The second enclosure survived as a curious cellular structure consisting of an outer double stone wall containing a series of three cells or rooms along its western inner wall circuit (Conway, M. 2005).

In an update Conway comments further on this cellular structure:

Circular Cellular Enclosure, designated ‘Sheepfold’; located NE of Divis Lodge represented by circular stone walled enclosure containing 3 cells or bays along W side. Two entranceways, at S and NW (former appears original). Likely later prehistoric in date, could be later Bronze Age or Iron Age (links with Atlantic roundhouses of similar form in Scotland Bronze Age/Iron Age which developed into Brochs & Wheelhouses). This structure is so far unique in the Irish archaeological survey record (Conway, M. 2006).

2.2 Cartographic evidence

Divis Settlement Site was not captured by Conway’s 2005 survey. Its features were first noted by a UAS survey team member following a nearby survey at the cellular structure (UAS/08/02) in May 2008, and it is not recorded on any maps or plans. A number of circular anomalies were noted on the eastern bank of a tributary of the Collin River, immediately north of where the tributary flows under Mast Road, the access road to a TV transmitter and the summit of Divis Mountain. Following foliage clearance these circular anomalies were interpreted as a collection of hut sites, possibly prehistoric.



Illustration 4. Aerial view of Divis Settlement Site © 2010 Google™

Conway refers to the paucity of cartographic evidence relating to Divis:

The quest for assessing what if anything formerly occupied the summit of Divis is further exasperated by the fact that none of the cartographic sources, including 1st and 2nd edition OS 6" maps show anything other than trig points on either summit. This seems highly unusual given that Divis Mountain is the highest and most prominent peak in the Belfast Hills range and from which most of the other major mountains and peaks are visible, including the Mourne Mountains where a series of passage tomb sites survive on peaks including Slieve Donard. Closer to Divis, it has been recently speculated that a passage tomb may have existed on the summit of Collin Mountain as reflected in the type and number of artefacts recovered from around the summit (Conway, M. 2006).

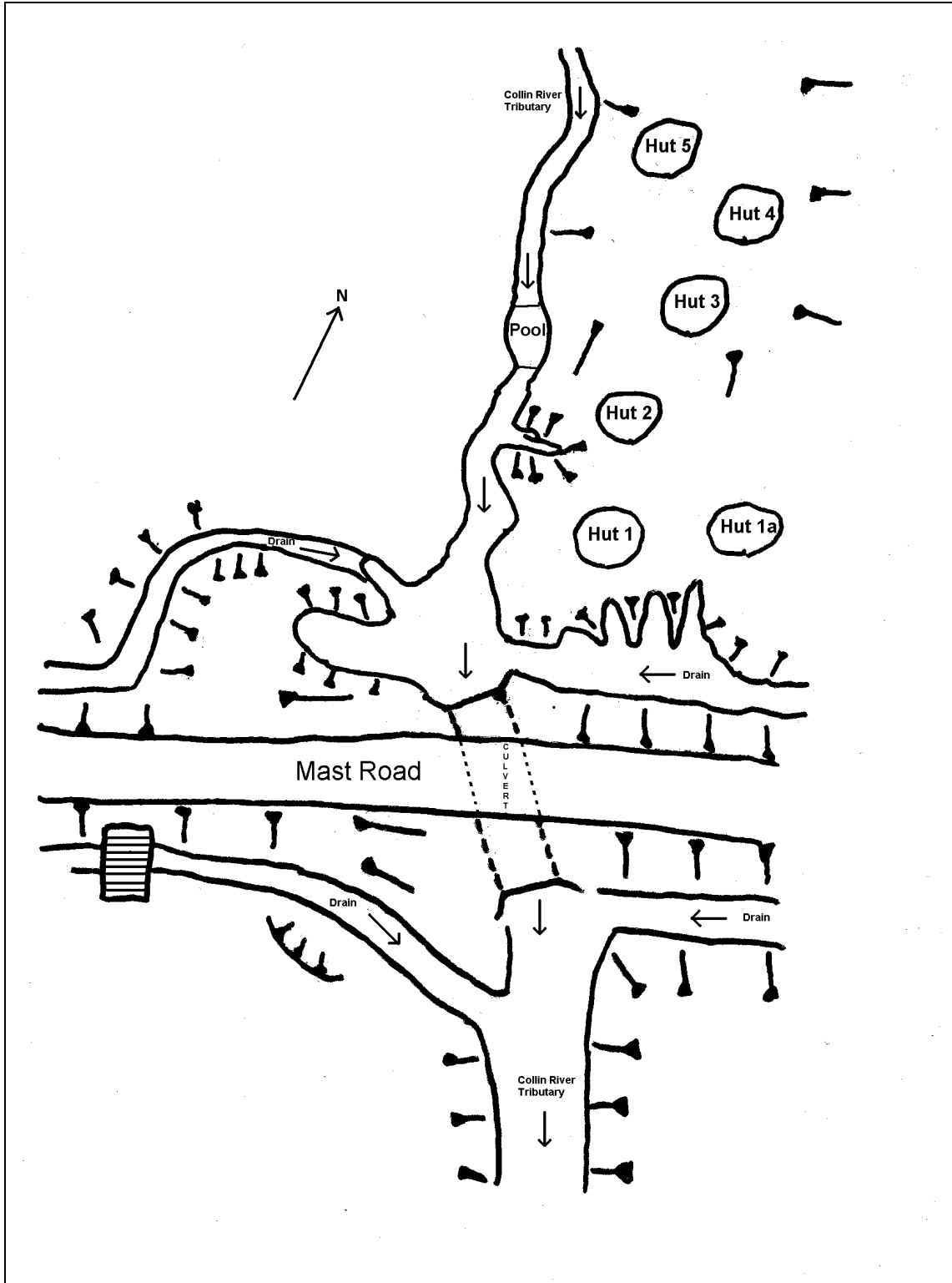


Figure 2: Schematic diagram of Divis Settlement Site

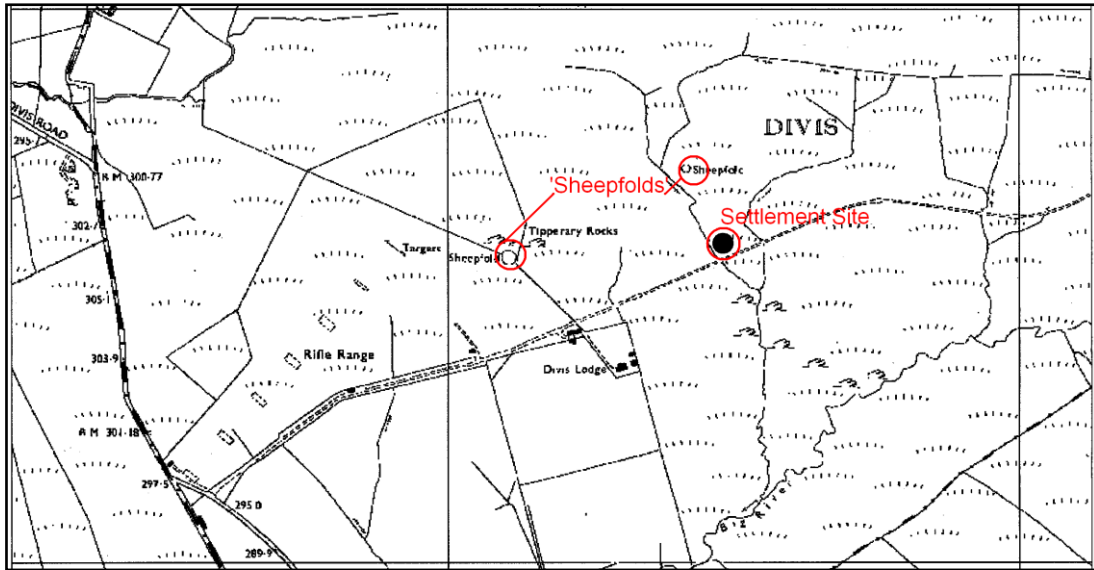


Figure 3: Ordnance Survey, First Edition, 1835 (scale 6" to 1 mile)

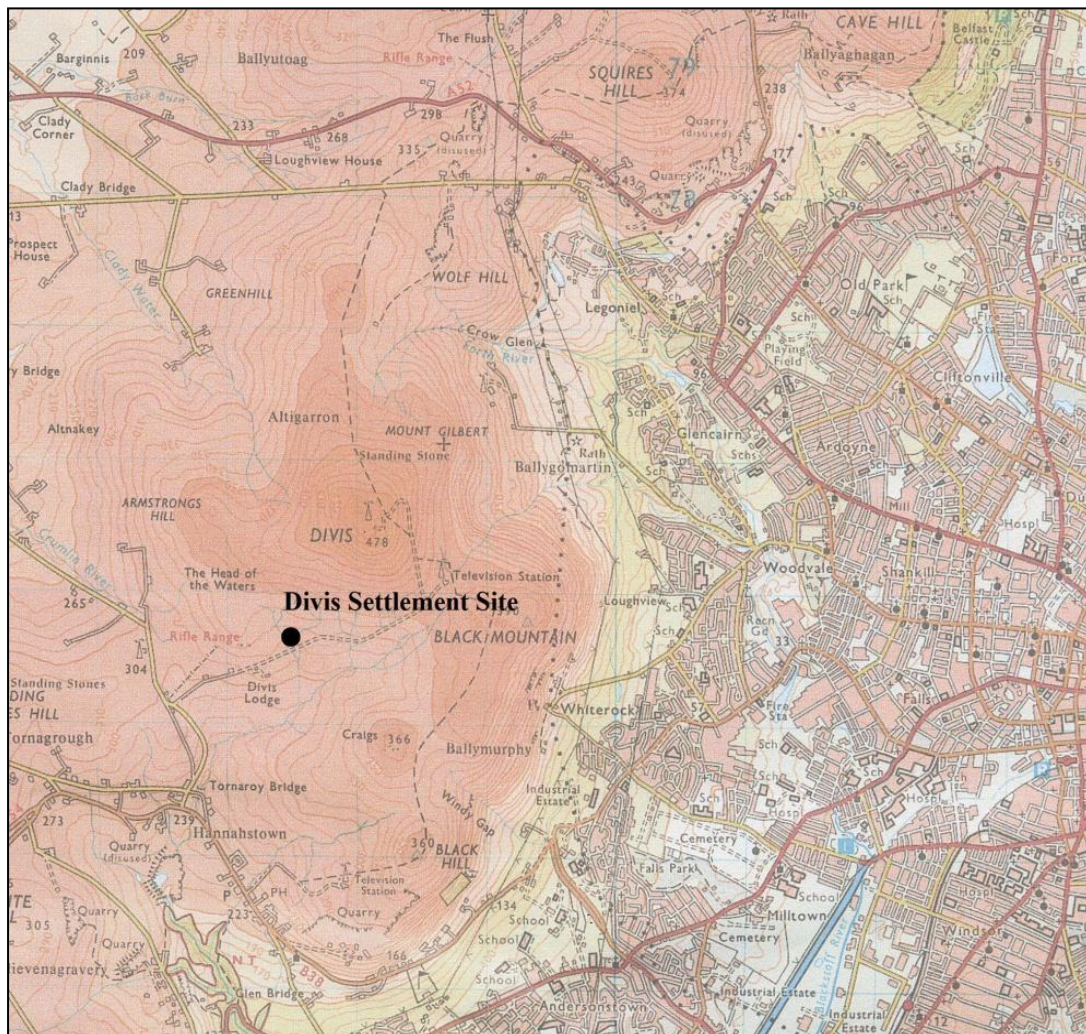


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey, Third Edition, 1903

2.3 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Environment and Heritage Service and the National Trust. All site records are temporarily archived with the Honorary Archivist of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

2.4 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the survey team were Duncan Berryman, Michael Catney, Billy Dunlop, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Yvonne Griffiths, Anne McDermott, Emma McCleary, Liz McShane, Pat O'Neill, George Rutherford and June Welsh.

The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Mr Malachy Conway, Survey Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access. Assistance was also given by staff of the Queen's University of Belfast, particularly Mr Barrie Hartwell and Dr Chris Lynn from the Environment and Heritage Service for providing instruction on survey techniques.

3. Survey

3.1 Methodology

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

3.2 Production of plan and profile drawings

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

Sketch plans at 1:100 scale were completed on site by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

3.2.1 Site plan.

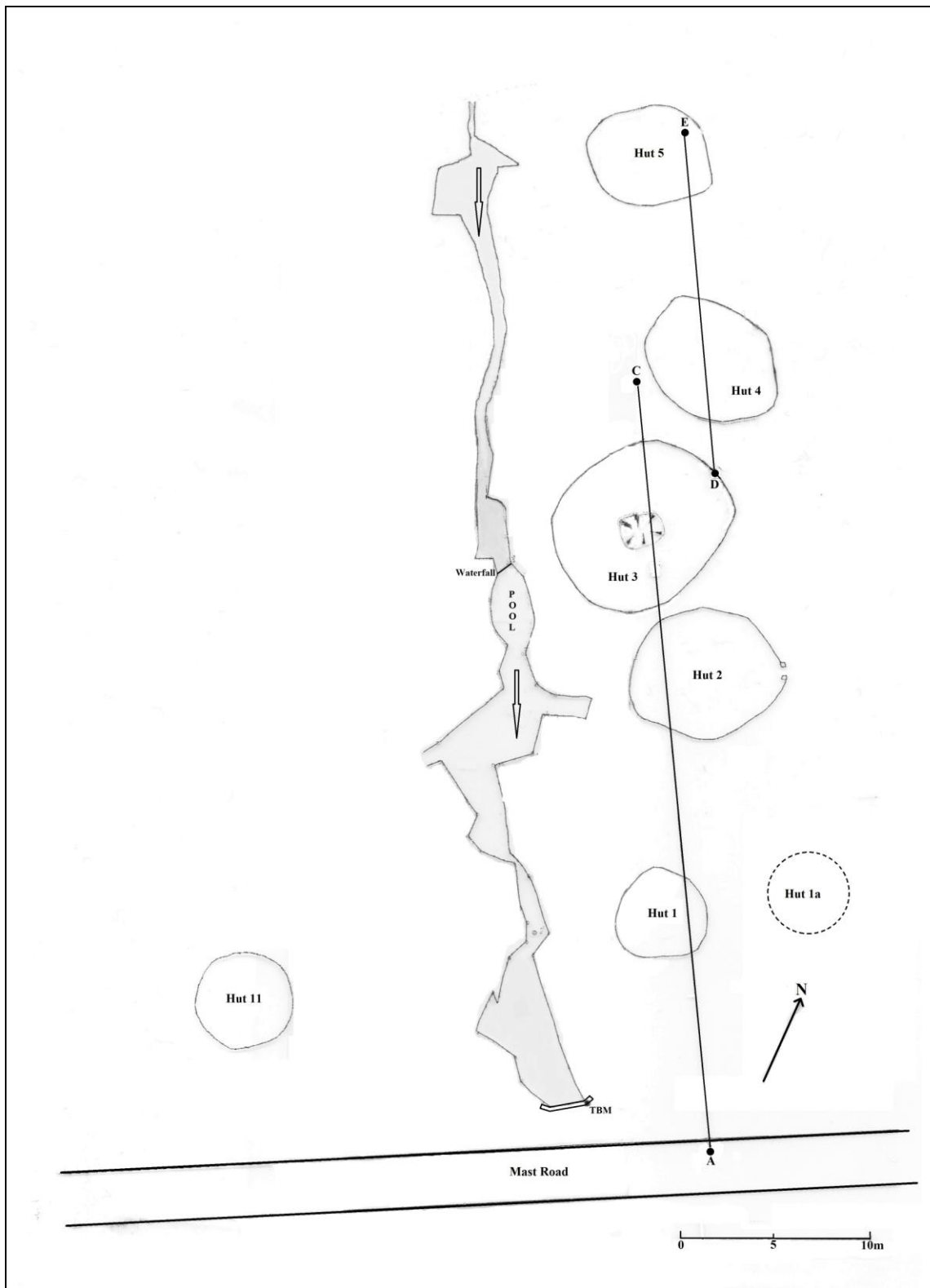


Figure 5: Plan of Divis Settlement Site 1:100

3.2.2 Profiles

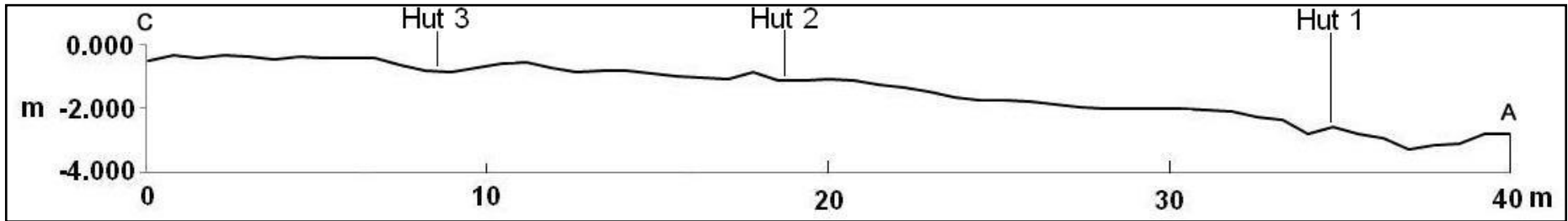


Fig 6 Profile A - C

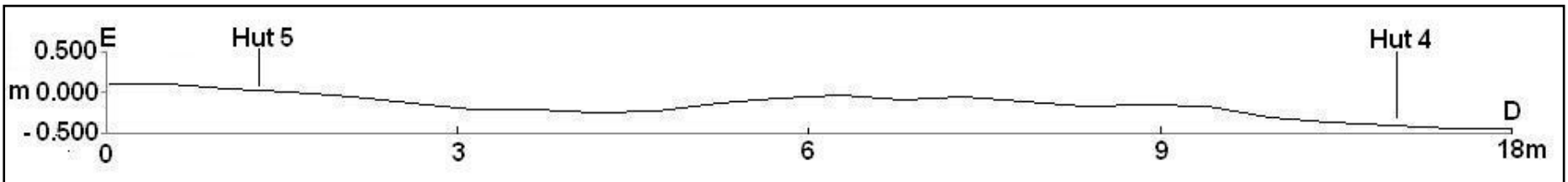


Fig 7 Profile D - E

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using the society's *Ricoh Caplio 600G Wide* megapixel digital camera and a photograph record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 28 March 2009. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

4. Discussion

The National Trust property of Divis and the Black Mountain comprises a landholding of some 599 hectares (1,480 acres) of upland grassland and heath, rich in biodiversity and archaeological interest. Divis and Black Mountain are located towards the southern end of a north-south aligned range of upland commonly referred to as the Belfast Hills. At its most northerly end this upland range begins with Carnmoney Hill and travelling southwards includes Cave Hill, Squires Hill, Divis Mountain, Black Mountain, Collin Mountain and finally Slievenacloy. Conway comments:

Geologically this range was formed about 65 million years ago by great lava eruptions that continued for millions of years. The characteristic basalt rock which resulted was worn down by subsequent ice ages and weathering into the smoother formations now seen today, though evidence for the ice sheet movement is clearly seen in natural gouging of the upland terrain and occasionally by basalt erratics which dot the property and display characteristic marks upon them left by the retreat of the ice. Within this range Divis Mountain represents the highest peak or summit at 1,562ft (477m) with a large portion of the Black Mountain up to the summit located at 1,275ft (375m) (Conway, M. 2005).

The Belfast Hills are also of considerable archaeological significance, displaying most of the field monument types common to Ulster, from prehistoric burials sites, settlement and hut sites spanning the prehistoric and historic periods, including ringforts (raths) and later activity providing fascinating insights into the industrial exploitation and defence uses of the mountains.

Leaving aside the obvious problems in assessing the former nature of the Divis summit, the surrounding landscape of the property appears to have been virtually untouched, being largely unimproved grassland intermixed with heather, heath and bog covered slopes. Few buildings survive within this marginal zone in farming terms and this is highlighted by the rarity of formal field boundaries across the property. Where boundaries do survive they can be mostly related to those already depicted particularly the 2nd edition OS 6" map, which also shows a building in the location of Divis Lodge and at least two other buildings with associated fields or enclosures located close to the edge of the property east of Divis. This fossilised landscape owes its survival to a number of factors, its elevated and

exposed location, the fact that farming here over many centuries was largely restricted to rough grazing and by its later ownership by the Ministry of Defence and the access restrictions to the area which this imposed. (Conway, M. 2005)

The settlement site is located 150m south of the Cellular Enclosure described by Conway.

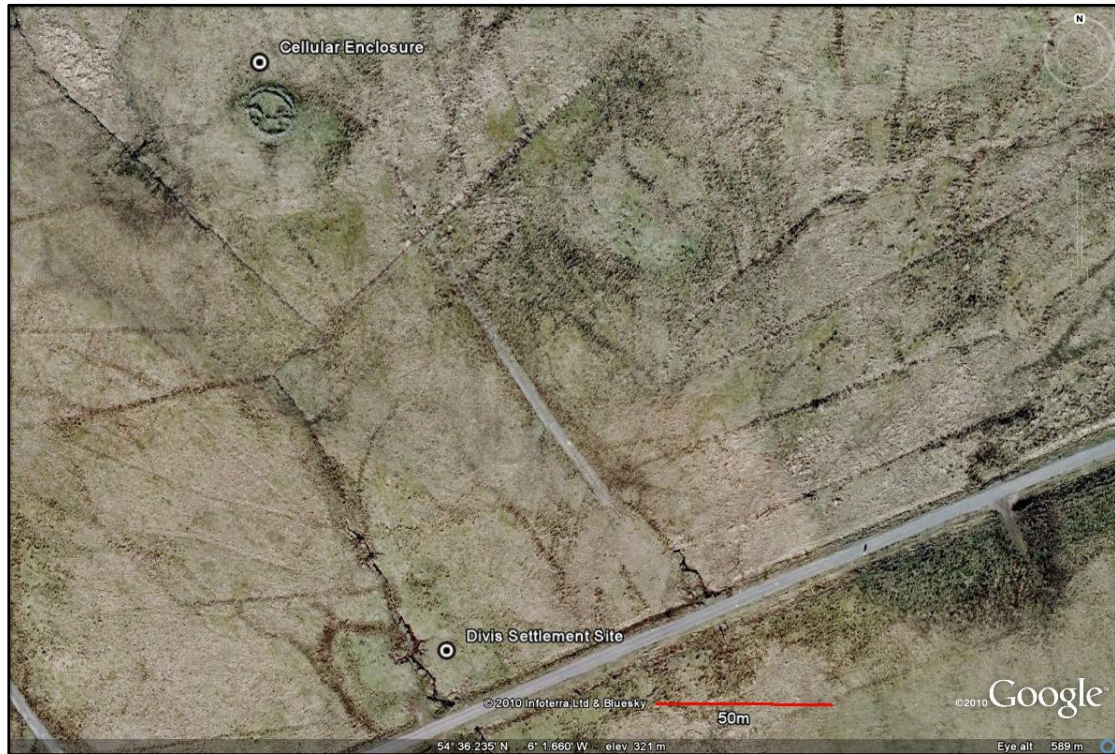


Illustration 5: Relationship between Cellular Enclosure and Divis Settlement Site © 2010 Google™

A combination of rising population and improving climate towards the end of the Neolithic period made upland areas more amenable to permanent settlement. There is much to suggest that there was a substantial community inhabiting this landscape in prehistory. The current survey included seven hut circles closely aligned along a 50m stretch of riverbank. The river adjacent to the hut sites appears to have been dug out to provide a sump or trough to store water. Numerous other possible hut sites were noted in relation to the river south of Mast Road. The proximity of the remains of a substantial prehistoric building of apparently unique design indicates this to be a site worthy of further investigation.

5. Recommendations for further work

The monument should be recorded on the Sites and Monuments register. Given its proximity to a public pathway consideration should be given to protecting it as a scheduled monument.

The monument is not protected from access by grazing animals and is therefore liable to damage from this source. The National Trust may therefore wish to consider restricting animal access to the site by the provision of a suitable fence.

A more extensive survey extending south of Mast Road should be carried out.

A quadrant excavation of one of the hut sites would establish the age and type of the structures.

6. Bibliography

Conway, M. 2005. *Divis and Black Mountain, an archaeological update*. National Trust.

Conway, M. 2006. *Update: Divis Archaeology*. National Trust.

Rutherford, G. 2009. *Survey of Yellow Jack's Cairn, Divis, Co. Antrim, Survey Report No. 9*, Belfast: Ulster Archaeological Society.

Appendix

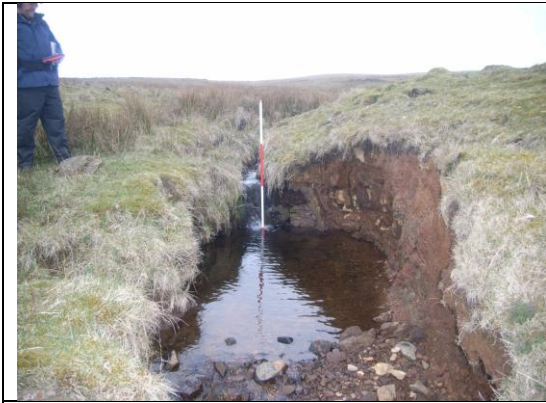
Photographic Record

Ricoh Caplio 600G Wide Digital Camera

Frame no	Direction viewed from	Details
RIMG0001	SW	Site overview
RIMG0002	SW	Hut site 1
RIMG0003	NW	Culvert, looking downstream
RIMG0004	SE	Looking upstream from culvert
RIMG0005	S	Pool beside Hut 2
RIMG0006	S	Pool beside Hut 2
RIMG0007	S	Pool beside Hut 2
RIMG0008	N	Hut site 1
RIMG0009	E	Hut site 1
RIMG0010	S	Hut site 1
RIMG0011	W	Hut site 1
RIMG0012	N	Hut site 2
RIMG0013	E	Hut site 2
RIMG0014	S	Hut site 2
RIMG0015	W	Hut site 2
RIMG0016	S	Hut site 3
RIMG0017	N	Hut site 3
RIMG0018	S	Cellular enclosure
RIMG0019	N	Settlement site from Cellular enclosure
RIMG0020	S	Hut site 1a
RIMG0021	W	Hut site 1a

RIMG0022	N	Hut site 1
RIMG0023	E	Hut site 1
RIMG0024	S	Hut site 1
RIMG0025	W	Hut site 1
RIMG0026	W	Detail of Hut site 3
RIMG0027	S	Hut site 4
RIMG0028	S	Hut site 4
RIMG0029	S	Hut site 5

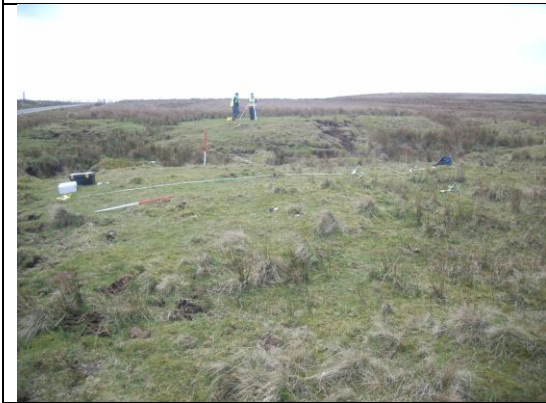




RIMG0007 Pool beside hut 2



RIMG0008 Hut site 1 from N



RIMG0009 Hut site 1 from E



RIMG0010 Hut site 1 from S



RIMG0011 Hut site 1 from W



RIMG0012 Hut site 2 from N



RIMG0013 Hut site 2 from E



RIMG0014 Hut site 2 from S



RIMG0015 Hut site 2 from W



RIMG0016 Hut site 3 from S



RIMG0017 Hut site 3 from N



RIMG0018 Cellular enclosure from S



RIMG0019 Site from Cellular enclosure



RIMG0020 Hut site 1a from S



RIMG0021 Hut site 1a from W



RIMG0022 Hut site 1 from N

	
RIMG0023 Hut site 1 from E	RIMG0024 Hut site 1 from S
	
RIMG0025 Hut site 1 from W	RIMG0026 Detail of Hut site 3 from W
	
RIMG0027 Hut site 4 from S	RIMG0028 Hut site 4 from S
	
RIMG0029 Hut site 5 from S	