Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 55**

Author: George Rutherford

In association with:

THE NATIONAL TRUST

Location:

Survey of Rath
Derry More
Co.Armagh

Cover illustration: Stone arch at Derry More Rath

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Summary

1.1 Background

Beside Bessbrook village, Co. Armagh, the Derrymore estate (now owned by the National Trust) includes a rath that was planted as a garden feature and adorned with follies.

1.2 Survey

A plan and selected sections were produced, photographs taken, and a report written.
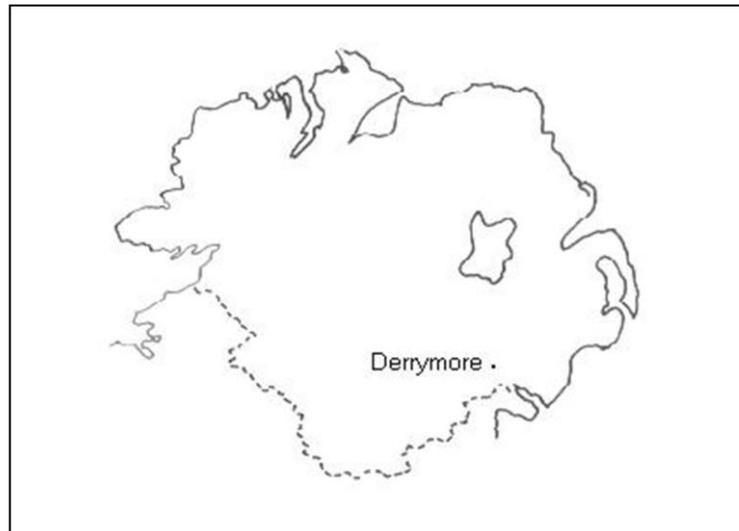
Fig. 1: Location of Derry More within Ulster

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Derrymore House and demesne became National Trust property in 1952. Several decades later, after the death of Jack Richardson The Woodhouse with a further 30 acres were acquired. The Woodhouse has been converted to apartments and the remaining ground is open to the public.

The rath which is the subject of this report lies behind The Woodhouse and was clearly treated as part of the garden, enhanced by the addition of a masonry arch and a stone chair. Reportedly, it contained a tennis court in 1940. It has even been suggested that the entire rath is a modern creation.

In consultation with Malachy Conway, the National Trust Regional Archaeologist, it was decided that the Ulster Archaeological Society (UAS) Survey Group would survey the rath. The survey was made on Saturday 25th July 2015.

2.2 Objectives

To produce a measured plan and section of the site, carry out a photographic survey, and compile this information into a report, and submit copies to the National Trust and the UAS archive.

Fig. 2: Survey group in centre of rath (DSC1635).

2.3 Archiving

Copies of this report are to be deposited with the Honorary Archivist of the UAS.

2.4 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Malachy Conway, the National Trust Regional Archaeologist. Other members of the team were Randal Scott, Christopher Stevenson, David and Connor Craig, Lee Gordon, Janna McDonald, Karine Wright, Michael Catney, George Rutherford, and Olive Campbell.

2.5 Location   Irish Grid Reference J0526 2833

The site lies in the southeast of County Armagh, in the townland of Derry More, just south of the Bessbrook/Camlough River. With an altitude of 89.2m OD it sits at the northern end of a long low hill at the beginning of the downward slope towards the river, 200m distant.

The Bessbrook River joins the Newry River, which flows in a southerly direction, 2.5 km to the east. To the south the summit of Camlough Mountain is at a distance of 3 km and rises to 423m OD.

Lissaraw Rath is 3km to the west, near the summit of the most southerly of a line of hills about 200m high running east-north-east for 7km. These hills and the Newry River delimit what may be termed the Bessbrook catchment.

2.6 Cartographic Evidence

On the Ordnance Survey (OS), County Armagh, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 26, 1834-1835 (1st. Edition), the rath is not shown. The site is part of an area of mixed woodland (fig. 3).
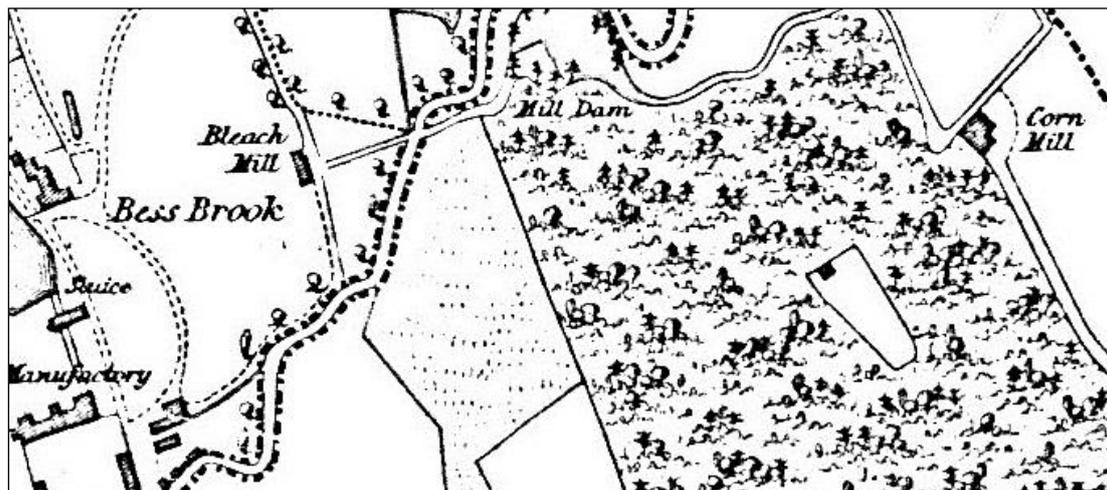
Fig. 3: Detail of Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1836.

Fig. 4: detail of Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1861.

On the OS County Armagh, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 26, 1861 (1st. Revision), the annotation "*Site of* Fort" is written against a dotted circle covered with trees within a larger area of mixed woodland (fig. 4).

On the OS Co. Armagh, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 26, 1906 (2nd. Survey), there is no annotation, but a ring of hachures and an internal path making a full circuit. No vegetation is indicated in the interior. The surrounding woodland is more open and paths have been laid.

On the OS Co. Armagh, 1:2500, 26-6, 1906, the entrance to the rath is shown as a break. The slope is shorter at south by east. No structure is shown at the entrance nor in the interior except the path, which has an exit at the NW (fig. 5).

On the OSNI Co. Armagh, 6 Inches to 1 Mile, Sheet 26, 1956 (2nd. Survey), it is annotated "𝔉𝔬𝔯𝔱". The paths and woodland are much as before (fig. 6).

Fig. 5: detail of Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1906.

Fig. 6: detail of Ordnance Survey 6-inch map, 1956.

On the OSNI Co. Armagh, 1:10 000, Sheet 26, 1981-82, it is now annotated "𝕽𝖆𝖙𝖍". The hachures are only on the eastern half.

2.7 Onomastic Evidence
The name is probably the Irish Doire Mór meaning large oak-wood. It was a detached portion of the parish of Newry insulated by the parish of Killevy. (www.placenamesni.org)

2.8 Previous archaeological surveys
The site is described in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record, maintained by the Department for Communities: Historic Environment Division (NISMR) as ARM 026:007, but no excavation nor detailed survey is recorded.

"Derrymore Fort" (ARM 026:008) lay 420m. to the south-west on a moderate slope facing north-west. It seems to have been c.50m in diameter. In 2003 four sample trenches were dug in advance of development. There was an enclosing

ditch 5m wide. A number of gullies in the interior were interpreted as evidence for as many as three structures, one circular, one rectangular. A single sherd of souterrain ware was recovered. (Neill 2009, 372).

2.9 Other Monuments

On the National Trust property are the remains of a WWII military camp (UAS Report 20) and foundations for a mansion house (UAS Report forthcoming).

A probable ringfort shows as a crop mark about 1300m to the south-south-east, still in the townland of Derry More. Another nearby rath lies 450m to the north-north-east in Mullaghglass, with a standing stone close by (figs. 13 & 14).
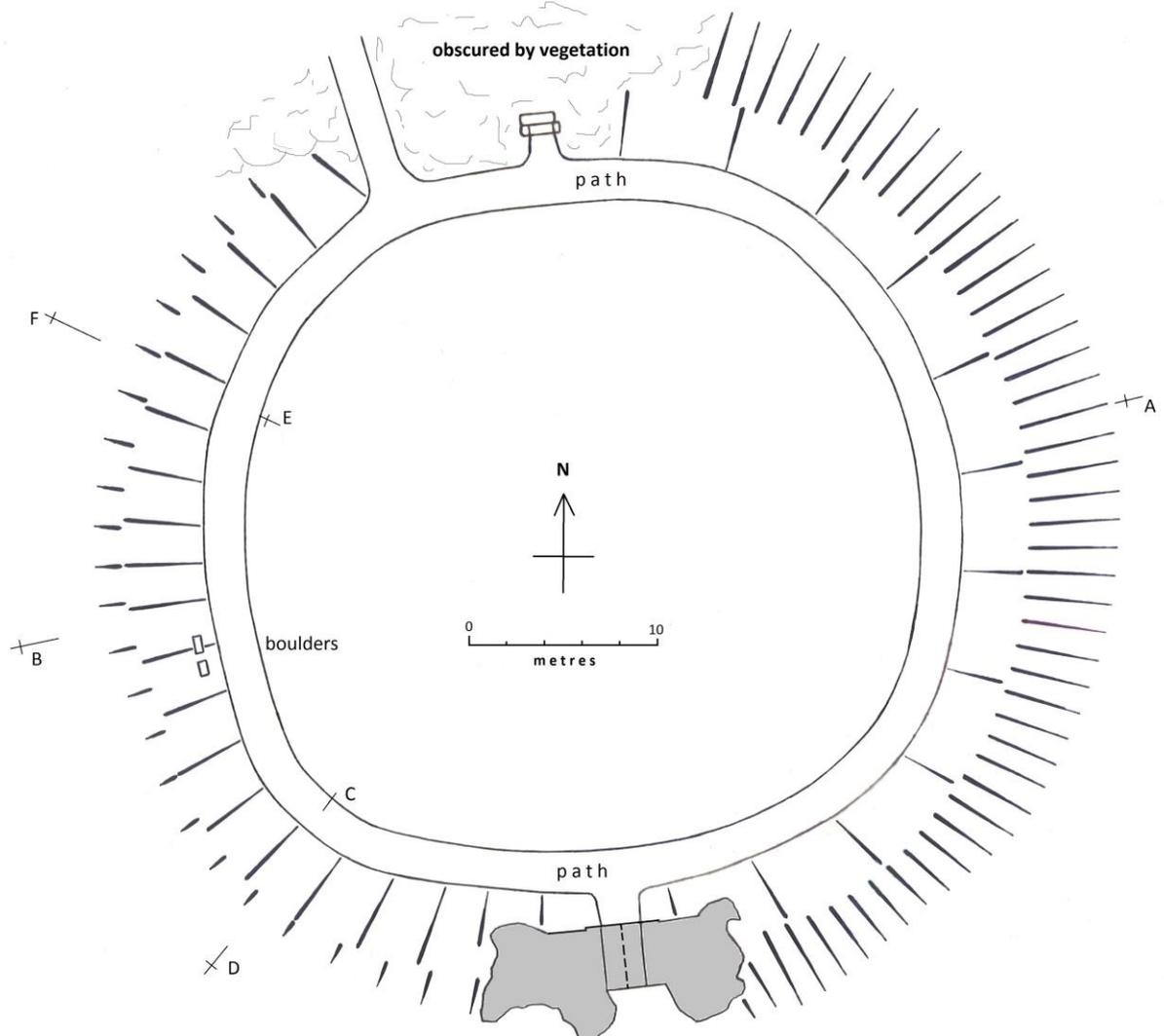

Fig. 7: Plan of rath in Derry More.
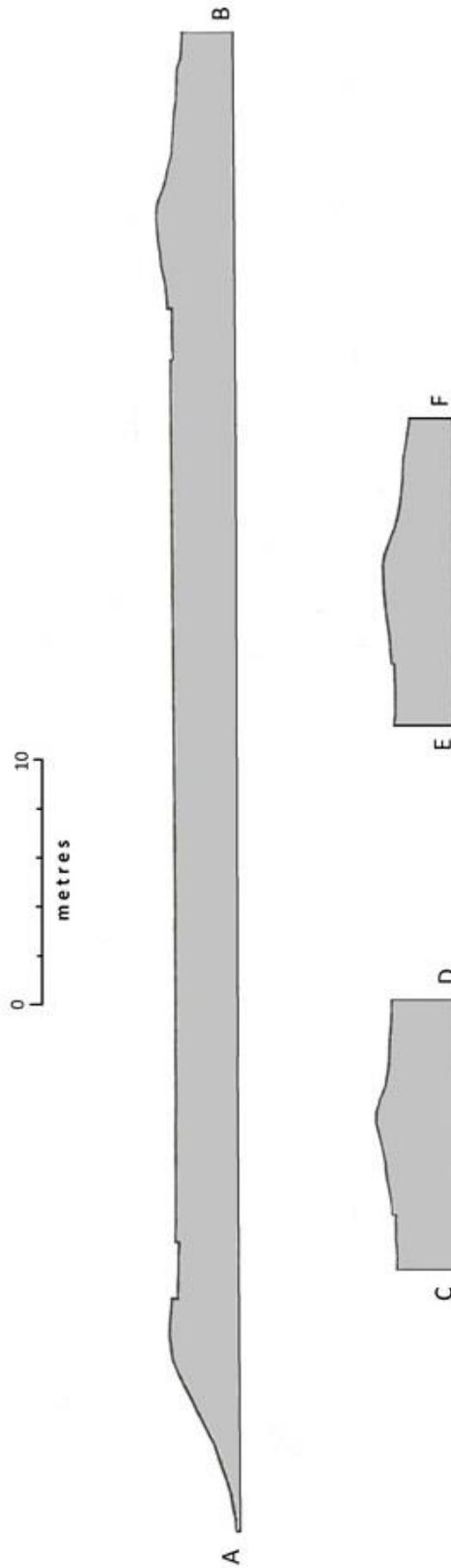
Fig. 8 Profiles of Derry More rath

2.10 Site Description

This is an almost circular rath modified as a garden feature. The interior is a level lawn surrounded by a path 2.2m wide. The path is surfaced with crushed slate and separated from the enclosing bank by a kerb of squared granitic cobbles. In the south-west quadrant the kerbstones seem to be at their largest, up to 0.45m long, 0.05 – 0.2 wide, and 0.23 above the surface of the path.

On the eastern side of the rath, the bank rises only 0.3m above the interior, but drops as much as 2.6 m to the exterior ground level. The arc of bank on the western side rises to a maximum of 0.8m internally, but only 0.85m externally. There is no indication of an external ditch.

The main entrance is at the south. It is marked by a masonry arch 2.4m wide, maximum head space 2.7m, length of passage 3.4m. From the springing to the soffit of the keystone is a height of 1.5m. Viewed from the rath interior, the two springing stones have a massive appearance, 1m x 0.35m on the left (east) and 1m by 0.53 on the right (west). The arch is flanked by walls, which follow the bank and reduce in height with distance from the passage. These walls are composed of irregular boulders, haphazardly arranged, some display drill holes. Mortar has been used in the arch, but not on the flanking walls.

Fig. 9: Arch viewed from north (DSC1606).

An unofficial bike-scrambling track is currently in use over the top of the arch.

Set into the bank, diagonally opposite the arch, is a throne constructed from four granitic blocks. A bench 1.45m long and 0.55 wide is flanked by armrests 0.45m and 0.35m wide. These three components are backed by a taller slab, 1.9m east to west by 0.50m thick. The kerb turns to meet the throne at either side. Each turn is

marked by a nodule of flint. These nodules are the only non-granitic kerbstones seen in the circuit.

A few metres west of the throne the path is joined by another, which enters through a break in the bank.

Two granitic slabs have been placed in the bank on the west side, facing the interior. Both are 0.8m behind the kerb and are 0.3m thick. The southern one is 0.6m wide, pointed, and slumped forward. The northern is 0.8m wide. A gap of 0.4 separates them.

The banks are planted with shrubs, mature trees, and herbaceous plants – beech, cypress, holly, rhododendron, bamboo, rose bay willow herb.

Fig. 10: Arch viewed from south-west (DSC1610).

2.11 History of Ownership

An early mention of the townland was made under 31 July 1438 when the dean and chapter of Armagh 'as a reward for faithful service, to Philip McKewen, advocate of the Abp. and his Ch. of Arm., of the tithes of sheaves and other emoluments of Derremoghyr [Omee] and Dyrbroghis … during his life' (Chart 1935, 282).

In 1609 Arthur Bagnall of the Newry was 'seised of the towns and lands in Oiree, viz. Dirrymore, Dirrybegg, Ballylaer and Ballachan al' Altenfeagh, called the 4 towns of Coghall, all which descended according to the course of common law, ever since the said sir Nicholas Bagnall [Arthur's grandfather] purchased them from the O'Hanlons' (Hardiman 1829, 2).

Bagenal's rent roll of the Lordship of Newry for the year 1575 has the three townlands of Derrybeg, Derrymore, and Altnaveigh set to 'Ryce Thomas in respect of his old service' (O'Sullivan 1985, 38).

A later Nicholas Bagenal was the last in the male line and so, by his will, the estates were divided in 1715/16 between his two cousins, Edward Bayly and George Needham, (PRONI Introduction to Kilmorey Papers: 4) By a deed registered 22 July 1767 George Needham, son of Robert, transferred Derry More to Edward and Isaac Corry of Newry for £1,665. (Registry of Deeds, book 260, pp 76-77, No. 166524).

In 1810 Isaac Corry sold Derry More to Rev. John Young.

Shortly afterwards almost 55 acres was sold to Charles Courtenay of Newry, but the remainder was sold in 1859 to linen industrialist John Grubb Richardson, who was then developing Bessbrook village. After his acquisition of Derrymore House, Richardson seems to have let it, whilst continuing to live at Moyallon, Co. Down.

The Woodhouse was a suitable family home for the Richardsons after the rebuilding, begun in 1867. When Jane Marian Richardson, second wife and widow of JG, died in 1909 she left The Woodhouse and its grounds to two of their six daughters, Anne (1859-1942) and Edith (1859-1953) (PRONI Will LR1/1305/2/C; Headstones at Friends Meeting House, Bessbrook).

Mr. John Stephens Wakefield Richardson gave Derrymore House to the National Trust with an endowment provided by the Government of Northern Ireland in 1952 (Derrymore, 6) Later the Woodhouse was also acquired.

Fig. 11: Bank east side, exterior (RIMG0020).

3 Survey

3.1 Methodology
A plan was produced using the Society's Leica Sprinter 100 and drawn on-site to a scale of 1:500. Selected sections were surveyed with the same instrument and plotted later.

3.2 Photographic Archive
A photographic record of the site and surroundings was made with digital cameras and record sheets compiled (See Appendices). Results were saved to a compact disc.

4 Discussion

4.1 Landscape Feature?
There has been speculation that this is not a true ringfort, but a modern landscape feature.

Fig. 12: Bank, west side showing internal path (RIMG0017).

Brian Williams refers to the Dublin Society paying premiums for enclosing and planting old Danish forts (Williams 1980: 100) in the late eighteenth century. About this time new tree rings were constructed and he explains how they might be recognised by their geometric precision and by each landed estate having its own standard diameter (Williams 1980: 99).
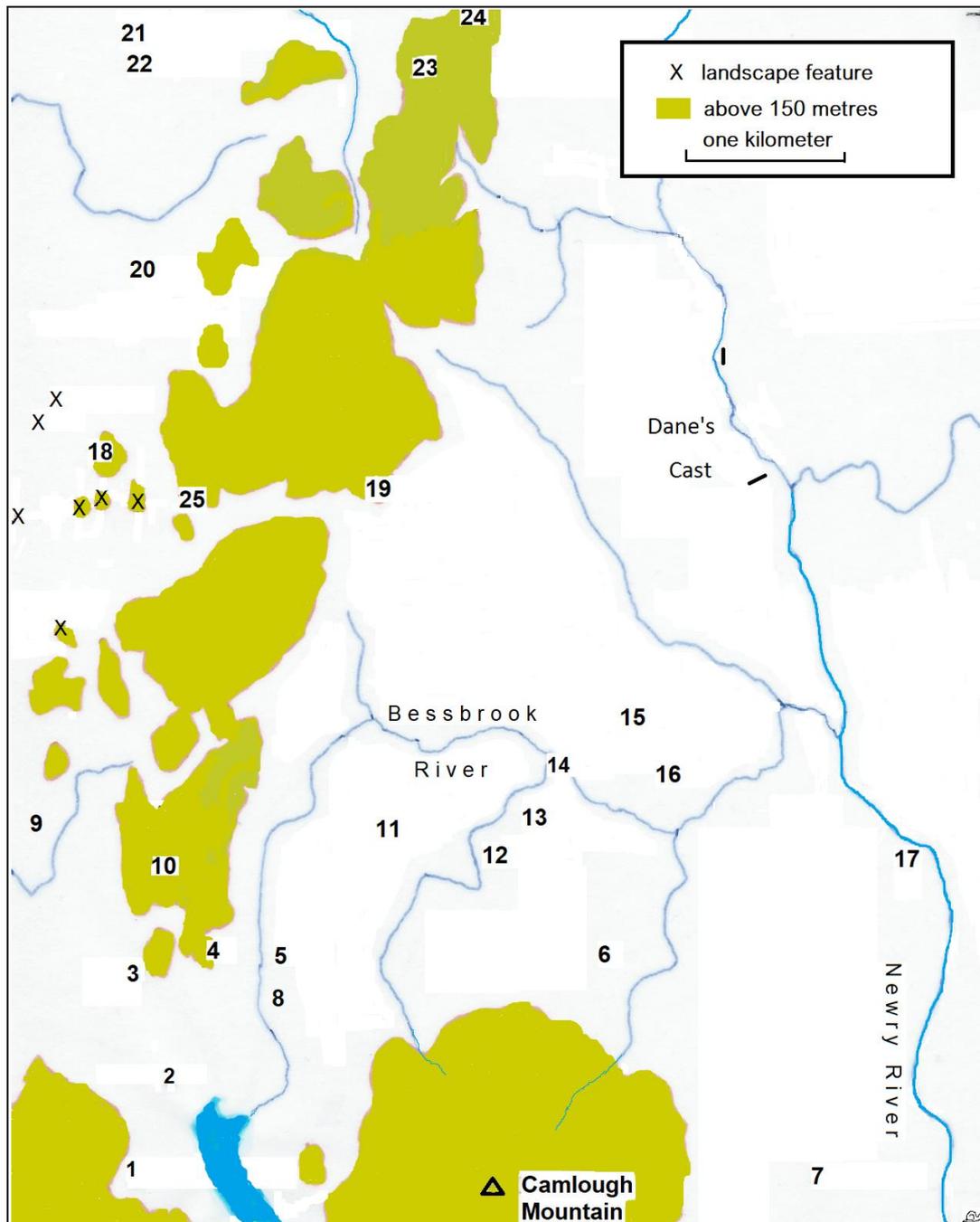
Fig. 13: Distribution of ringforts north of Camlough Mountain.

AEP Collins examples Lisadian townland where five tree rings approximate to 150 feet (44m) in diameter and Darkley where the two are 88 feet (26m) and 86 feet (27m) respectively (Collins 1968, 58).

The County Armagh Survey lists 39 landscaping features (i.e. tree rings), of which three are oval and a group of four in Fathom Lower are polygonal (Neill: 610).

At Derry More a simple test of circularity, by comparing diameters measured on different axes of the feature, is compromised by the difficulty of selecting precise diameters on eroded banks interrupted by masonry intrusions (arch and chair), but

a visual appraisal of the plan produced by the present survey suggests the builders had not begun their task by laying out a true circle.

map	townland	NISMR	grid ref.	alt.(ft.)	Diameter (m.)	type
1	Aghmakane	25.09	J02062526	400+	29NSx31EW	C
2	Carrickcloghan	25.08	J02332617	400+	30	R
3	Carrickcloghan	25.15	J020270	400+	60	E
4	Carrickcloghan	26.10	J02672723	500+		E
5	Carrickcroppan	26.11	J03282727	400+	36.5	R
6	Derry More	26.18	J05932723		c.30	E
7	Lisdrumliska	26.13	J07652539	300+	39.5NSx38.5EW	R
8	Carrickcroppan	26.17	J03222690		55x40	E
9	Tullywinny	25.05	J01222837	400+	30	E
10	Lissaraw	25.07	J02222796	600+	44NSx39.5EW	R
11	Maghernahely	26.06	J04172833	400+	29	R
12	Derry More	26.08	J04962804	300+	c.25	E
13	Derry More	26.07	J05262833	200+	40NSx45EW	R
14	Mullaghglass	26.04	J05522870	200+	36NSx35EW	R
15	Mullaghglass	26.02	J06082919	200+	44.5NSx36EW	R
16	Mullaghglass	26.03	J06402869	200+	54NSx53EW	R
17	Lisdrumgullion	26.23	J08352801	100-	46	R
18	Lisadian	21.27	J01763136	500+	28NSx27EW	R
19	Tullyhappy	22.11	J03983107	500+	c.30	E
20	Lisnalee	21.38	J02153283	400+	35NSx43EW	R
21	Ballygorman	21.05	J01953487	400+	39	R
22	Ballygorman	21.06	J02073463	300+	45.5	R
23	Lissummon	22.03	J04493459	600+	37NSx29.5EW	R
24	Lissummon	22.04	J04783494	500+	39x33.5	R
25	Rathcarbery	22.07	J02473104	500+	44	E

Fig. 14: Ringforts north of Camlough Mountain .
(Type: C = cashel; E = enclosure; R = rath)

4.2 The Dane's Cast

The site lies on or near, or perhaps in a gap of, an ancient boundary, The Dane's Cast. This is generally regarded as the western Boundary of the Ulaid when the Uí Néill pushed them from Emain Macha and may date from the late Iron Age.

From Jerretspass portions of this linear earthwork can be found continuing southward into Drumiller townland, Co. Down, and then west to cross the valley bottom at Steenson's Bridge into Goragh townland, Co. Armagh (ARM 022:017; Lynn 1989a, 15; Neill 2009, 170-173).

South of Camlough Mountain another stretch begins in Ballinliss and runs south-south-east to east, near to Meigh, recorded as ARM 029:001, ARM 029:014 and ARM 029:016 (Lynn 1989a, 15; Neill 2009, 153-8).

An account published in 1819 stated that traces could be found in the townlands of Lett and Glassdrummon (between Goragh and Derry More) (Lynn 1989b, 18).

It is not known where, or if, the Dane's Cast crossed the Bessbrook/Camlough River.

4.3 Arch and Chair

The arch and chair do not appear on any published map and no documentation is available to date their construction. Two periods are likely possibilities: the Corry ownership when the landscape architect John Sutherland is credited with shaping the setting for Derrymore House (Coote 1804, 361); and the Richardson period during or after the building of The Woodhouse.

Years before Isaac Corry built Derrymore House, Thomas Wright (1711-1786) had spent a year in Ireland 1746-7, during which he prepared drawings for his *Louthiana or an introduction to the Antiquities of Ireland*. 'His discussions with Lord Limerick made Tollymore one of his greatest ornamental gardens' (Rankin 2010, 10). Corry and Sutherland would have been aware of the follies on nearby estates.

The absence of the rath or any nearby driveway on the first OS map suggests it had not by that time been developed as a feature or else had been overgrown and forgotten since Corry's time.

Fig. 15: View across interior from NW exit (RIMG0018).

The Woodhouse became Edith's married home. She married Dubliner George Williams in 1897 (PRONI D2826/23 marriage certificate).

'Miss Edith Richardson, The Woodhouse, Bessbrook', was included in the subscribers list of the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* in January 1895. So she probably read the account by Seaton F. Milligan in the issue of January 1898. It tells of the acquisition by the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society of the inauguration chair of the Clan-na-boye O'Neills after resting in a Sligo garden since 1832.

Her sister, Anne Wakefield Richardson, was lecturer in Classics at Westfield College, Hampstead, 1887-1913 (Women QMUL), so would only have been home out of term time. A constant correspondent was Helen Macnaghten (c. 1861-1950) of Runkerry, who excitedly told of her involvement in the Gaelic League, attending Ardh Fheis or travelling to hear Douglas Hyde give an address (PRONI D1006/3/2).

The Newry District of the Gaelic League formed a branch in Bessbrook in September 1899 (*Newry Reporter*, 15 Jan. 1900, p.3, col.5).

Francis Joseph Bigger was editor of the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* and an enthusiast for things Irish. As chairman of the Belfast branch of the Gaelic League he organised the *Irish Harvest Home* Hallowe'en festival in the Ulster Hall, providing themed entertainment with a long list of performing artists. (*Northern Whig*, 31 Oct. 1906 and 1 Nov. 1906).

In 1908 his flair for re-enacting grand spectacle was again shown in the raising of, and costumed procession to, Shane O'Neill's burial cairn at Cushendun, a demonstration that became an annual event (Carter: *passim*).

He bought Jordan's Castle, Ardglass, in 1911, repaired and furnished it in sixteenth century style as Castle Séan – a venue for celebrating traditional Irish hospitality and culture (Green: 150-153).

In this mood it would be natural to think of re-enacting the inauguration of an Irish chieftain in a suitable setting. (His special hero was Shane O'Neill.) The rath at Derry More lends itself to such a drama. Thick planting along the banks blocks sight of the interior until the procession enters through the arch, bifurcating around the circular path until coming to a halt, when everyone will have a clear view of the central performance area and the chair.

The chair of the O'Neill at Tullahog had been deliberately destroyed by Mountjoy, but the residents of The Woodhouse may have seen a print of the chair used by the Dukes of Carinthia (fig. 16).
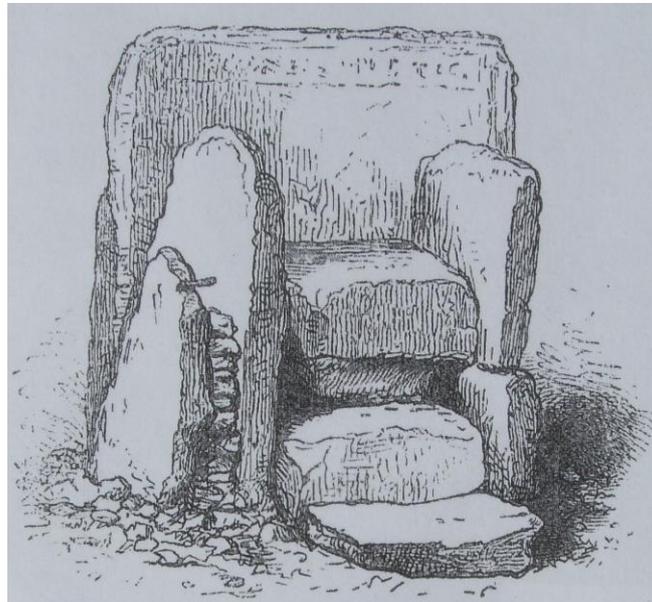
Fig. 16: Inauguration chair, Carinthia, Austria (Aitchison: 101).

The inauguration chair in Carinthia, Austria, had been discussed in an early number of the *UJA* (Hore in 1857) and more recently by Chris Lynn in 2007. The writers made comparisons between the inauguration ceremonies of medieval rulers of Carinthia at a stone chair (Herzogstuhl) and those of Irish kings.

However there is no evidence that anyone made such a use of the rath behind The Woodhouse and as Irish politics moved towards violence Unionists and moderates lessened their public approbation of a language that was becoming a weapon of revolution. Perhaps the stone chair was always intended as nothing more than what it remains – a pleasant seat on a sunny day.

5. Recommendations for further work

As a maintenance measure it may be necessary to add material to the enclosing bank and perform a partial rebuild of the arch. This may offer an opportunity to test the archaeological potential and seek dating evidence for some features – particularly to verify if the structure is an authentic rath.

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Women at Queen Mary University London, www.women.qmul.ac.uk

APPENDIX 1 : PHOTOGRAPH RECORD FORM

Site: Rath at Derrymore
Date: 25th July 2015

Make and Model of Camera: Ricoh Caplio G600 Wide
Photographer: Olive Campbell

Frame No.	Viewed from	Details
RIMG001	SSE	Survey group setting up in centre of rath
RIMG002	SSW	survey group at plain table
RIMG003	NW	stone arch
RIMG004	NE	stone arch
RIMG0005	N	stone arch
RIMG0006(2)	N	stone arch
RIMG0007(2)	N	stone arch
RIMG0008(2)	S	stone arch
RIMG0009(2)	SE	stone arch
RIMG00010(2)	S	stone arch showing motor cycle track
RIMG0011	SW	bank/ditch etc. outside arch
RIMG0012	SE	bank SW of arch
RIMG0013	W	cycle track on arch
RIMG0014	SW	bank, rath, surveyors
RIMG0015	SSW	bank, rath, surveyors, chair
RIMG0016	N	bank
RIMG0017	NE	bank, path, arch
RIMG0018	NNW	looking across rath from path entering at NW
RIMG0019	NW	bank
RIMG0020	N	bank, east side
RIMG0021	SE	bank, east side
RIMG0022	NE	bank, southeast
RIMG0023	SE	bank, southeast
RIMG0024	S	inside rath
RIMG0025	W	inside rath
RIMG0026	N	inside rath
RIMG0027	E	inside rath
RIMG0028	S	inside rath, on zoom
RIMG0029	W	inside rath, on zoom
RIMG00030	N	inside rath, on zoom
RIMG00031	E	inside rath, on zoom
RIMG00032	S	stone chair
RIMG00033	SE	stone chair
RIMG00034	SW	stone chair
RIMG00035	S	stone chair with surveyor

Site: Rath at Derrymore
Date: 25th July 2015

Make and Model of Camera: SonyRX100 III
Photographer: Lee Gordon

Frame No.	Viewed from	Details
DSC01602	NW	stone arch
DSC01604	N	stone arch
DSC01606	N	stone arch
DSC01607	NW	stone arch
DSC01609	S	stone arch
DSC01610	SW	arch, showing cycle track
DSC01612	SE	arch
DSC01613	S	stone arch
DSC01614	SW	arch, showing cycle track
DSC01616	SE	arch
DSC01618	S	stone arch with surveyor
DSC01619	W	arch
DSC01620	SW	bank, west side
DSC01621	SW	bank, west side
DSC01623	NW	bank, west side
DSC01624	NNW	looking across rath from path entering at NW
DSC01625	N	bank, east side
DSC01627	E	bank, east side
DSC01628	E	bank, southeast
DSC01629	S	bank, southeast
DSC01630	E	inside rath
DSC01631	S	inside rath
DSC01632	W	inside rath
DSC01633	NNW	inside rath
DSC01634	N	inside rath
DSC01635	NNE	inside rath with survey group
DSC01636	S	stone chair
DSC01637	SW	stone chair
DSC01638	SE	stone chair
DSC01639	S	stone chair
DSC01640	N	stone arch
DSC01641	S	stone arch
DSC01642	above	three graces under oak
DSC01643		reaction

DSC01644	S	group at centre
DSC01645	S	stone chair
DSC01646	S	stone chair
DSC01647	S	stone chair
DSC01648	S	stone chair
DSC01650	N above	stone chair