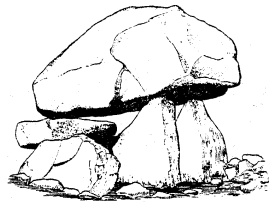


ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



Survey Report: No. 23

**Survey of Cashel at Kilhoyle
County Londonderry
UAS/10/01**



JUNE and HARRY WELSH

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1. Summary

1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at Kilhoyle, to the south-east of Limavady in County Londonderry. The site is in the Townland of Kilhoyle, in the Parish of Balteagh and in the Barony of Keenaght. The monument is known locally as The Rhellick and is thought to be of Early Christian, or Early Medieval date. The site is presently overgrown, with restricted views in all directions except to the west, as it is located near the bottom of a little valley. Approximately 30m to the south is a small stream. The site has an SMR number of LDY 017:016 and has recently been scheduled under the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. It is located at Irish Grid Reference C 7380 1600 at an altitude of 100m+OD. The survey was the first in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society during 2010.



Figure 1: Location map for Kilhoyle, County Londonderry



Figure 2: View of the overgrown site of Kilhoyle cashel

1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan and profile drawings of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and copies were submitted to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Limavady Borough Council and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Figure 3: Survey group members and interested local residents

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of a cashel at Kilhoyle was undertaken on Saturday 20th March 2010, at the request of Northern Ireland Environment Agency and also Limavady Borough Council, who were creating a Heritage Trail in the region. It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society, 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. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. It was therefore agreed that members of the society would commence a programme to survey these sites and the Kilhoyle site was subsequently chosen to be the twenty-third of these.

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

As far as it is known, there has been no previous detailed archaeological survey at this site. However, an inspection by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland (DANI) took place in 1985. In September 1996 John O’Keeffe, on behalf of NIEA, made a detailed inspection and described the site as ‘valuable, interesting and potentially extensive.’ He regretted that a fuller survey was not possible, due to the overgrown nature of the site, but he stated that this site was worthy of being scheduled immediately. In August 2009 Lorraine Bourke and Stefanie McMullen from NIEA, together with Déaglán O’Doibhlin, the Irish language officer with Limavady Borough Council, made a visit to Kilhoyle to consider the appropriateness of possible survey/excavation/conservation work at the site. Their recommendations included scheduling the site, followed by a management agreement to clear some of the scrub from the site. Déaglán O’Doibhlin hoped to include this site on the Council’s planned heritage trail: St. Columba’s Way. By 29 March 2010 the Kilhoyle site was indeed scheduled.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

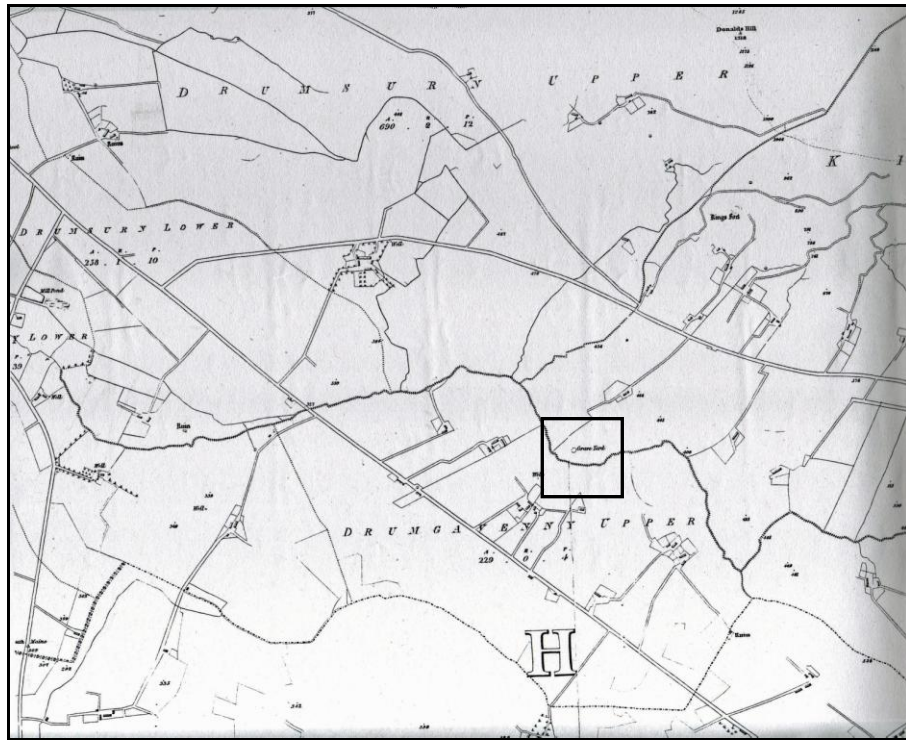


Figure 4: Ordnance Survey First Edition County Series Sheet 17 (part of) 1832

The Kilhoyle site is designated '*Grave Yard*' on the Ordnance Survey First Edition 6-inch map in 1832. It is believed that what was originally a cashel was re-used at a later period as a burial ground for unbaptised people, especially for still-born infants. This is commonly known as a Killeen. This site is still regarded by many local people as a burial ground, even though it has not been used in living memory and was not designated as such on the Ordnance Survey Second Edition 6-inch map in 1855.

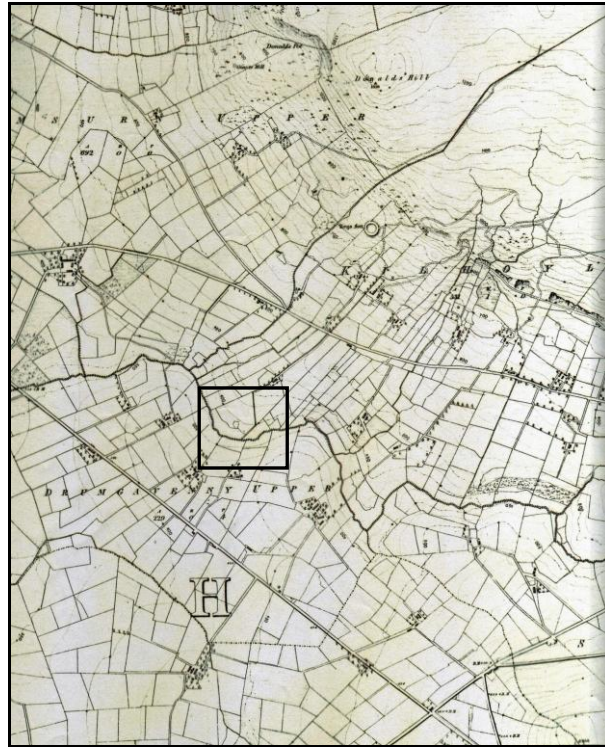


Figure 5: Ordnance Survey Second Edition County Series Sheet 17 (part of) 1855

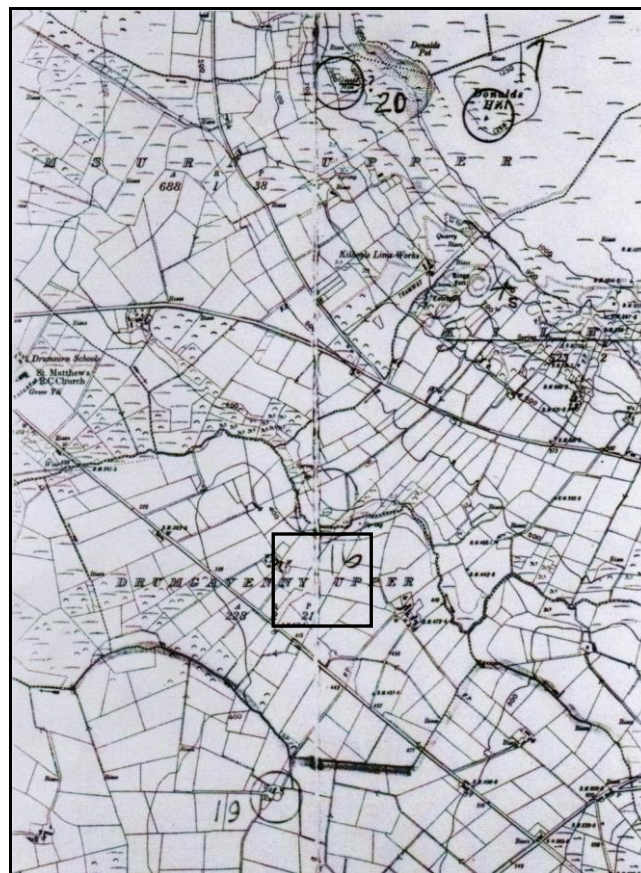


Figure 6: Ordnance Survey Third Edition County Series Sheet 17 (part of) 1937

This final map and subsequent photographs have been included to indicate the presence of a range of monuments, such as burial cairns, raths, a holy well and megalithic tombs, within the townland of Kilhoyle. It is evident that this landscape has attracted people from various time periods throughout history.

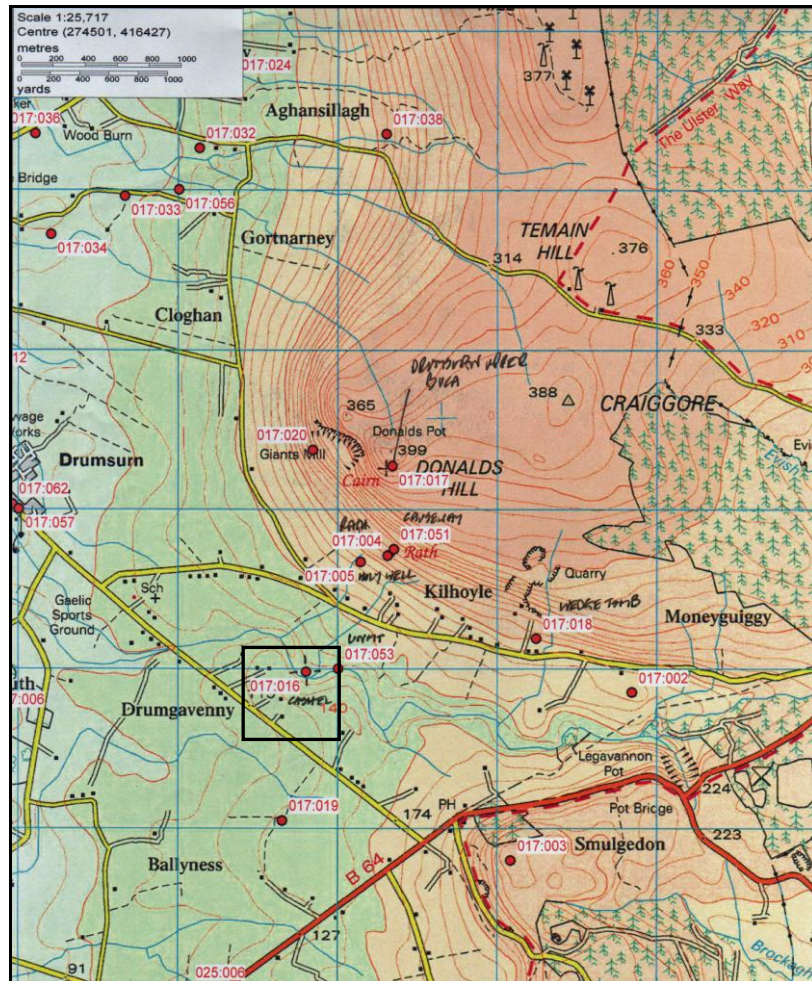


Figure 7: Sites and Monuments Record Map (courtesy of NIEA)



Figure 8: The rath known locally as the King's Fort (LDY 017:004)



Figure 9: Kilhoyle Wedge Tomb (LDY 017:018)

2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Limavady Borough Council and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been temporarily archived by the Ulster Archaeological Society.

2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Harry Welsh and other members of the survey team included Chris Ayers, Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Lee Gordon, Anne MacDermott, Liz McShane, Pat O'Neill, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford, and June Welsh. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Lorraine Bourke and Déaglán O'Doibhlin, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access. We would like to thank the Northern Ireland Environment Agency for providing Ordnance Survey maps and access to additional information stored on file. We have also included a poem by survey team member, Chris Ayers, which captures the mystery and atmosphere of this place.

3. 2010 UAS 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. This report was compiled using the information obtained from these sources, in addition to background documentary material.

3.2 Production of plan 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 1:200 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.

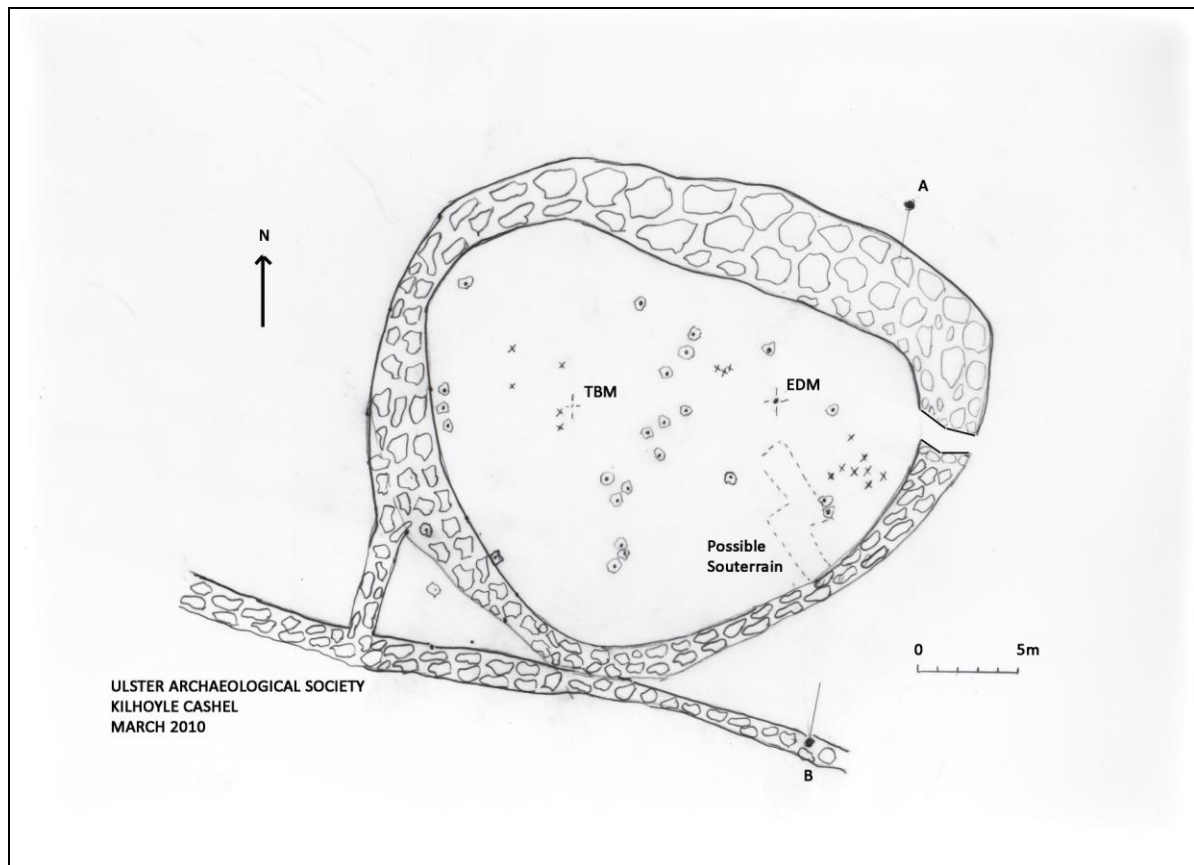


Figure 10: Plan of Kilhoyle cashel

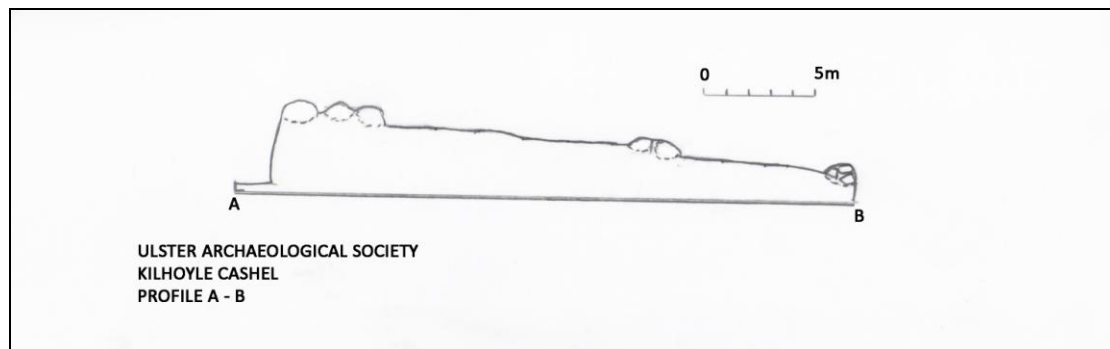


Figure 11: Profile of Kilhoyle cashel

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using the society's *Ricoh 600G Wide 8* megapixel digital camera, plus others and a photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 20 March 2010. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.



Figure 12: View of Donald's Hill in the distance



Figure 13: Fascinating 'crimson' flint found locally on Donald's Hill

4. Discussion

Introduction

This site would appear to be a cashel, an Early Christian monument, which was re-used later as a burial ground for people, who had never received the sacrament of baptism, particularly still-born infants. This type of graveyard is often referred to as a Killeen. It is presently very overgrown with small trees, especially hawthorn and blackthorn, but also with some stunted beech, ash and holly trees. It is interesting that at Caherconnell in County Clare, such tree species as those mentioned above were identified as ‘charcoal species’ in a mixed fuel economy.

What is a cashel?

The complex debate about terminology and classification for monuments continues among the experts and this is discussed elsewhere (see, for example, Edwards 1990 and Mallory and McNeill 1991). However, some definition and explanation are needed to help make sense of our survey. Cashels are the stone equivalent of earthen raths, which are among the most numerous domestic archaeological monuments in Ireland, totalling over 45,000 in number (Stout 1997).



Figure 14: Stone cashel at Leacanabuaile, Kimego West, County Kerry
(after O’Sullivan and Downey 2007, 35)

According to Edwards (1990), not everyone would agree that ‘rath’ or ‘ring-fort’ is the correct term to describe the great variety of enclosed homesteads, since their defensive role is disputed and they are certainly not forts in the accepted military sense. Rathes were predominantly enclosed farmsteads, dispersed throughout the Early Christian landscape. Some may have been built as cattle enclosures or developed this purpose from original farmsteads. The management of livestock, especially cattle, was the primary preoccupation of farmers in Early Christian Ireland.

Edwards (1990) records that on the whole, stone-walled raths have received much less attention than their earthen counterparts and only a small number have been excavated. They are typically curvilinear walled enclosures of drystone construction and seldom have an external ditch. One such example is Drumena in County Down, which was excavated in the 1920s. Excavation revealed a drystone wall enclosing an oval area, approximately 40m by 33m, with a souterrain and the remnants of other drystone foundations.

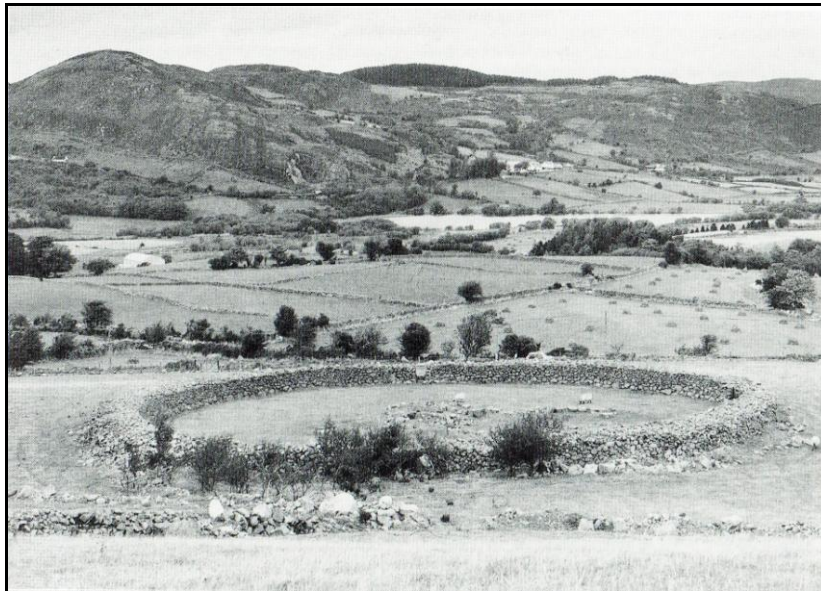


Figure 15: Stone-walled rath at Drumena, County Down
(after Edwards 1990, 15)

What is a souterrain?

Souterrains are man-made underground or semi-subterranean passages and chambers, which are frequently found within raths, but can also be found at ecclesiastical sites and unenclosed settlements. The function of these features has caused much debate, but there is both archaeological and documentary evidence to prove that they were definitely used as refuges. Most souterrains were invisible above ground and creeps and hidden chambers would have helped to provide protection, if attack was sudden. Since they are usually found close to domestic structures and are sometimes entered from the house itself, it offers a convenient storage place. According to Lynn (1981-1982), it is worthwhile noting that there is usually only direct access to the souterrain from rectangular houses and where they are an integral part of the enclosure, they are associated with rectangular structures. It has been suggested that as this space was cool, dust-free and uncontaminated by flies, it would be ideal for storing dairy products and fresh or cooked meat. Valuables may have been hidden in souterrains in times of danger. The advent of the Vikings may have increased the need for them as refuges and places of safe storage for valuables. The literary evidence records that the Vikings regarded souterrains as targets well worth plundering.



Figure 16: Souterrain at Drumena Cashel, County Down



Figure 17: Souterrain at Armoy, County Antrim

The main area of the Kilhoyle site is an irregular oval platform, raised up to 1m above the surrounding ground level. Its edge is defined by a stone bank some 3m wide, which is mostly covered in moss and lichen. The interior is generally level, but is very uneven as its surface is studded with many earthfast stones. Although some of these are possibly grave-markers, many appear to be structural, especially in the centre of this area and also in the north-western quadrant. The area to the south is also studded with stones.



Figure 18: Large stones in the enclosure wall at the north-east

To the east, rabbits and possibly badgers have been burrowing and have exposed in places what seems to be the top of a souterrain, which runs for at least 5m in a north-south direction.



Figure 19: Evidence for possible souterrain at Kilhoyle site



Figure 20: A one metre long ranging pole disappears into possible souterrain



Figure 21: View of possible souterrain layout at Kilhoyle

Site Description for Kilhoyle Cashel

The site is an irregular oval, measuring 30m east-south-east/west-north-west externally and 25m internally. The boundary wall is about 5m wide from north-east to north-west, but measures only 2m-3m elsewhere. It is constructed of un-mortared rounded stones, some of which are extremely large, particularly from the north-east to north-west. This part of the cashel wall is at the bottom of a sloping field and it is very likely that additional stones have been added to the cashel wall over many years, as a result of agricultural work. However, the large size of many of the stones in this area, combined with local tradition of a 'standing stone' approximately 50m uphill to the north, suggests that this may well have been the site of the unlocated megalithic tomb (LDY 017:053) in this townland. There appears to be an entrance to the east, consisting of a 1.2m gap in the external stone wall. To the south of the cashel a small stream is located, aligned south-east/north-west. A field wall consisting of similar un-mortared rounded stones forms a field boundary between the stream and the field, in which the monument is located. The stone wall of the cashel is conjoined with this field wall, at the south. A further 6m of un-mortared stone wall is present at the south-west, which connects the boundary wall with the monument itself. This has probably been completed to facilitate ploughing.



Figure 22: View of the cashel wall at its widest part

Internally, to the south-east is a possible souterrain, aligned south-east/north-west and measuring a possible 6m in length. The tunnel appears to be staggered, suggesting turns or creeps. There are many voids in this area, some up to 1m in depth, with associated large stones, which are probably lintels. The souterrain would appear to exit to the south-east towards the nearby stream. Stone walls and other stone features to the west, south and east of the cashel were not surveyed, due to time constraints. In 2009 Lorraine Bourke had mentioned the possible trace of a ditch outside the enclosure to the north-east, but this was not observed during the survey.



Figure 23: One of several voids in possible souterrain at Kilhoyle



Figure 24: Row of mature trees and gap in external stone wall

A row of mature trees, aligned north-east/south-west, measures 13m in length across the site. Approximately 4m to the west of this line of trees, a number of stones are present in a rectangular setting, which measures 3m long by 2m wide and is aligned south-east/north-west. A small cluster of stones is present about 1m to the east of the row of trees and a further cluster of stones is present to the south-east of the cashel. These may represent grave-markers or building foundations.



Figure 25: Possible house platform inside Kilhoyle cashel



Figure 26: More possible house platform features inside Kilhoyle cashel



Figure 27: Large stones around Kilhoyle site

Folklore

According to local tradition recorded in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs, this site at Kilhoyle was chosen to be the place where the original church of the Parish of Balteagh was to be erected. Kil or Kill is often the prefix for a place with a church, but there is currently no evidence of a church here. The story is told how the masons were making all necessary preparations and spent several days building the structure, to return each morning to find all their work destroyed!! No-one could explain why this continued to happen and even a watchman left to guard the site could not prevent the demolition from re-occurring. Eventually, a meeting was arranged at the site for parishioners and masons to discuss how best to tackle this problem. Overhead, two ravens hovered and after a few moments took the plumb line from the ruins and flew with it to the townland of Ardmore!! This was regarded as a sign that this was the place to build their church instead. All materials were transported to the new site and work began. The erection of the church was completed without obstruction of any kind and the parish adopted the name: Baileagh-ein-dah-eigheagh, which apparently translates from the Irish as ‘the town of the two ravens.’ This name was subsequently changed to Balteagh. The raven tradition is considered by some to be fanciful and another derivation for Balteagh suggests that instead, it translates as ‘the townland of the deer.’



Figure 28: Ruins of Balteagh Old Church

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs have no record of the date or of the founder of Balteagh Church, but it is believed to be the first church in the parish after the introduction of Christianity and was located 6km (3.75 miles) to the north-east of Kilhoyle. It was built of sandstone. Up until 1777 this church was in a tolerable state of repair, but a violent storm that year removed many of the roof slates and sadly, repairs were neglected. It is further recorded that local residents began to steal the oak timbers from the pews and roof!!! Near to these ruins, a new parish church was erected in 1815. According to the Ordnance Survey Memoirs, the ruin (LDY 017:015) was preserved with care and as the above photograph indicates, it continues to be used as a burying place, chiefly by the Roman Catholic inhabitants. The graveyard has an uneven surface with several hummocks and raised features reflecting burials. An outline of the church is visible at the northern end of the

graveyard. Remnants of the church wall still stand at the east and south, but elsewhere the wall line is visible only as a low bank. A gap through the wall at the south is probably the doorway. No other features were recorded by Ken Neill when he inspected the site in March 1992, on behalf of NIEA.

Conclusions and Recommendations for further work

The evidence obtained from raths from survey alone is, according to Edwards (1990), severely limited and many features can only be clarified by excavation. Superficial observation can be positively misleading!! She cites the following examples: the excavation of a suspected rath at Craigboy, County Down, which revealed that it was probably a Bronze Age ring cairn, while another at Gallanagh, County Tyrone, was a tree-ring, the product of nineteenth-century landscaping.

However, we do recognise that as this is an ancient burial ground, excavation would be deemed inappropriate, but a maintenance programme could control the destructive growth of vegetation at the site.

If indeed this is a souterrain at Kilhoyle, it is in great danger of being undermined by burrowing animals, leading to increasingly hazardous conditions for anyone visiting the site.

Geophysical survey or an assessment of aerial photographs could be useful to see if this particular site was part of a larger, more extensive man-made landscape.

Megalithic tombs and standing stones are among some of the monuments, which can be no longer located within the townland of Kilhoyle. Local residents remembered a standing stone, which was removed when the slope was reduced, so that a tractor could work the field more easily. This must be a cause for concern.



Figure 29: Large stones, possibly from a megalithic tomb, at Kilhoyle

Graveyard

Blackthorn stitched walls encircle and shroud.
Interior stones jostle for position,
burrowing down, eyeholes in the thin soil.
Or erupting moss covered, tilting to glimpse the light.

What lies here? Memories, ghosts.
A child crouched in perpetual sleep,
cocking an ear to a murmur, a lullaby of a distant stream.
All the while sentinel Hawthorn guardians, watch from the
wings.
The drama of time blankets with decay, all is forgotten.

Chris Ayers

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Appendix A

PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM**Site:** Cashel at Kilhoyle, County Londonderry**Date:** 20 March 2010

Film no.	B/W Print	Colour print	Colour slide	Digital image (megapixels)
				8

Make and model of camera...*Ricoh 600G Wide 8 & others*

Frame number	Viewed From	Details
DSCN 5149		Kilhoyle Cashel
DSCN 3840		View of overgrown site of Kilhoyle cashel
DSCN 3800	SE	Survey group members and interested local residents
DSCN 3940	SE	The rath known locally as the King's Fort (LDY 017:004)
DSCN 3879	SE	Kilhoyle Wedge Tomb (LDY 017:018)
DSCN 3965	SE	View of Donald's Hill in the distance
DSCN 3972		Fascinating 'crimson' flint found locally on Donald's Hill
DSCN 3811	NE	Large stones at the north-east
DSCN 3817	W	Evidence for possible souterrain at Kilhoyle site
Image 0105		A one metre long ranging pole disappears into possible souterrain
RIMG 0056	W	View of possible souterrain layout at Kilhoyle
DSCN 3905	E	View of cashel wall at its widest part
RIMG 0061		One of several voids in possible souterrain at Kilhoyle
Image 0094	SW	Row of mature trees and gap in external stone wall
DSCN 3818	E	Possible house platform inside Kilhoyle cashel
DSCN 3925	E	More possible house platform features inside Kilhoyle cashel
DSCN 3803	SW	Huge stones around Kilhoyle site
DSCN 3808	NE	Large stones, possibly from a megalithic tomb, at Kilhoyle