

2014

Ring of Gullion Archaeological Aerial
Survey



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RING OF GULLION ARCHAEOLOGICAL AERIAL SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

This Report outlines the results of the aerial survey that took place in February 2014. The aim of this survey was to discover more information about the current archaeological sites on the eastern slopes of Slieve Gullion as well as determining the potential for as yet unrecorded monuments. The outcome of this survey will form the basis for future archaeological project on the eastern slope to include field walking and a possible excavation.

THE SURVEY AREA

Through the course of our desktop research six areas of interest have been uncovered. This section will outline each of the survey areas and their merits for examination and archaeological potential. Below are two images the first (Fig 1) illustrates the potential areas for survey and the second (Fig 2) shows current information of known archaeological monuments. The surveying areas have been chosen because of their proximity to existing sites these survey points are to try and expand our knowledge of existing sites and increase the chance of uncovering new monuments in close proximity.



Figure 1: Satellite image showing areas of interest for the aerial survey (Google Earth)

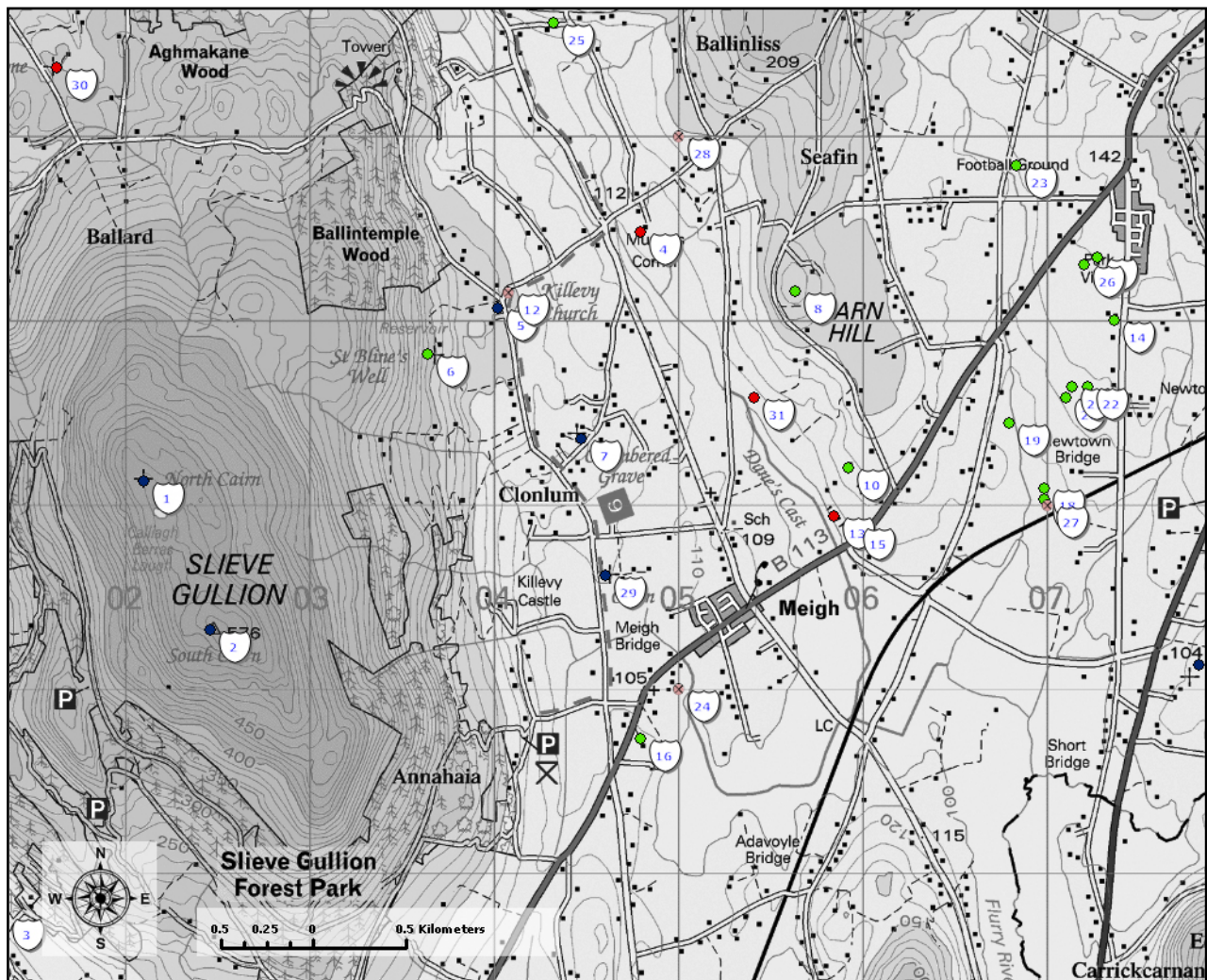


Figure 2: Sites of archaeological interest as listed in the Sites & Monuments Record (MBR NIEA Map Viewer)

SURVEY AREA 1

This survey area includes one known monument ARM 029:002 (labelled as No 5 on Figure 2) the upstanding Killeavy Church and Graveyard. There is also mention of a circular enclosure ARM 029:015 (labelled as No 12 on Figure 2) listed as Unlocated. The surveying objective of this area would be to try and locate further evidence of possible religious and secular settlement around the upstanding church sites and to determine with a close aerial survey if any evidence remains of the circular enclosure in the surrounding fields.

SURVEY AREA 2

This survey area includes a holy well ARM 029:003 (labelled as No 6 on Figure 2). There is a documented association between this site and the church ruins of Killeavy. An aerial survey of this area could indicate a physical link to the churches.

SURVEY AREA 3

This area includes the remains of a Cairn, ARM 029:004, (labelled as No7 on Figure 2). An aerial survey of this site and surrounding fields could present evidence of Prehistoric habitation activity surrounding the burial site.

SURVEY AREA 4

This area contains the remains of another Cairn, ARM 029:019 (labelled as No 16 on Figure 2). Two Cairns in close proximity could point to a more ritual landscape and a survey of the fields surrounding this tomb could show more prehistoric activity.

SURVEY AREA 5

This area contains a tree ring, ARM 029:035, (labelled as No 24 on Figure 2) and a megalithic tomb, ARM 029:035, (labelled as No 29 on Figure 2). The tree ring may not be archaeological according to the sites and monuments record, an aerial survey could determine if it is archaeological and if there is any archaeology associated with it. The megalithic tomb is un-located at present but did appear on the sites and monuments record, it was observed in the 1920s but it was not properly recorded. An aerial survey could help locate this missing monument.

SURVEY AREA 6

This large area above the tree line on the eastern slope of Slieve Gullion may be an area of interest for an aerial survey. This area appears to have very little moss growth compared to the rest of the slope which could mean a good site for aerial images. No archaeology has been officially recorded in this area but this could be a good blank canvas for investigation.

SURVEY RESULTS

The Initial recommendations were for the aerial survey to last for a single day and include a community organisation, we recommended that only areas 1 to 5 were surveyed on the day. These areas had a much greater chance of yielding a positive result, Areas 1 and 5 also had the added bonus of searching for an un-located monument which would be an interesting research initiative for a future field walking and excavation projects.

Due to adverse weather conditions throughout February we were unable to schedule a convenient day for the community organisation to attend the Survey. We were instructed by the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership to go ahead with the survey and present the results of the survey to the community organisation after it was completed.

AREA 1

Area 1 indicated the possibility of four archaeological features, we have labelled these 1 to 4 in Photo 1. Number 1 appears as a dark green curving possible ditch feature. Number 2 Appears on the photo as a dark green linear feature running North-South. Number 3 presents itself as a dark green Plectrum shaped feature in the South-East corner of the field. Number 4 appears as a dark green linear feature running across the northernmost field. All of these features could be possible archaeological remains of an Early Christian settlement or Rath. This settlement was previously noted on early OS maps of the area. Photo 2 shows the targeted area from the West looking East. Photo 3 shows an aerial shot of Killeavy Churches, unfortunately the graveyard obscures any possible additional archaeological features.



Photo 1: Area 1 looking West



Photo 2: Area 1 looking East



Photo 3: Killeavy Churches from above

AREA 2

Area 2 indicated the possibility of 1 archaeological feature located approximately 200 meters north of the Holy Well. This feature appears in Photo 4 in the upper right corner and appears to be a dark green curvilinear feature. This feature could be the remains of a ditch. Photo 5 shows an area of recent disturbance associated with ground works behind Killeavy Churches, It could be advantageous to field walk this area in case any artefacts have been unearthed.



Photo 4: Area 2 looking West



Photo 5: Recent Ground works behind Killeavy Churches

AREA 3

This area included the remains of a Cairn, ARM 029:004, (labelled as No7 on Figure 2 and Photo 6). The Cairn itself is in a very bad state of repair and is covered in vegetation and looks like some of the stones may have been moved. The aerial survey indicates one other possible archaeological area in Photo 7. This area appears as two possible banks with an internal ditch running Northeast-Southwest. No other features were discerned in this area.



Photo 6: Cairn, ARM 029:004, bottom left of picture looking West.



Photo 7: Showing possible archaeological feature within Area 3 looking Southeast.



Photo 8: Showing the relationship between Areas 1, 2 and 3 looking Northwest.

AREA 4

This area contains the remains of another Cairn, ARM 029:019 (labelled as No 16 on Figure 2 and in Photo 9). This Cairn is in a bad state of repair there is evidence of cattle disturbing some of the stones around the monument. Photo

10 shows the remains of a vernacular building located to the north of the Cairn, currently in a ruined state. Photo 11 shows Killeavy Castle and the fields in front of it, no above ground archaeological remains are visible.



Photo 9: Cairn, ARM 029:019 bottom centre of picture.



Photo 10: Vernacular house looking North.



Photo 11: Killeavy Castle looking west.

AREA 5

This area was not surveyed due to worsening weather conditions and access issues.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

All of the areas we have surveyed yield the possibility of future archaeological works. **Area 1** has a great deal of archaeological potential, the features we have seen from the air could point to the possibility of locating a missing monument in the form of a Rath. Future archaeological works could include field walking, geophysical analysis and Lidar survey, these could all lead towards the goal of a future excavation. **Area 2** contained 1 potential feature it does not seem likely that this is archaeological given the steep nature of the slope, but a field walk could determine its function. **Area 3** contained a possible double banked feature, this feature could be archaeological or Glacial in nature a field walk could determine its function. The Cairn itself should be looked at and surveyed to determine the extent of its damage and a scheme of works for its restoration and protection. **Area 4** contained no new archaeological features but the Cairn and Vernacular Building should be investigated further to determine their state and what preservation methods may be used to restore or maintain them.

We recommend undertaking another aerial survey during the summer months as the growth of vegetation will better highlight the presence of subterranean archaeological remains. We would suggest a thorough field walking investigation of this entire area (with the land owner's permission) with the goal of identifying new sites and the condition of current monuments. Archaeological Geophysics and Lidar could prove useful in identifying archaeological remains for future excavation projects, however these can prove costly so we would recommend further aerial work and field walking before undertaking this cost.