



ULSTER  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
SOCIETY

---

# Survey Report

---

---

Reference: **Survey Report No 74.**

---

Author: **C Stevenson**

---

Location:

---

In association with:

**Robinson Family, Kilcoan Garden**

**Survey of Mound  
Kilcoan Gardens  
Middle Road  
Islandmagee  
County Antrim  
Northern Ireland**



© Ulster Archaeological Society

First published 2018

Revised 2020

Ulster Archaeological Society

c/o School of Natural and Built Environment

The Queen's University of Belfast

Belfast BT7 1NN

---

**CONTENTS**

---

List of figures	4
1. Summary	5
2. Introduction	6
3. Survey	8
4. Discussion	12
5. Recommendations for further work	12
6. Bibliography	12
Appendix	
Photographic record	13

## LIST OF FIGURES

---

<b>Figures</b>	<b>Page</b>
01. Approximate location of Kilcoan Mound on Islandmagee	5
02. Kilcoan Mound	6
03. Drone image showing contours around Kilcoan Mound	7
04. Drone Image of Kilcoan Mound	7
05. East to West profile	8
06. South to West profile	9
07. Plan of site	9
08. SMR sites in local area	10
09. UAS Survey Team on site	10
10. UAS Survey Team plotting the suspected ditch	11
11. Drone image giving general view of site	11
12. Site showing pine trees planted and view of Larne Lough	12

## 1. Summary

### 1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken of a mound at Kilcoan Gardens on Islandmagee, County Antrim, Irish Grid reference J 4675 9865, in a field adjacent to the Kilcoan Garden Centre. The survey was the seventy-fourth in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society on 28 July 2018.



Figure 01: Approximate location of Kilcoan Mound on Islandmagee, County Antrim.

### 1.2 Aims

In order to enhance the archaeological record of this site, the aims of this survey were to produce accurate plan drawings of the monument and carry out a photographic survey. This information was compiled into a report and a copy submitted for inclusion in the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Figure 02: Kilcoan Mound, looking South

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The survey of the mound was undertaken on 28 July 2018. It was carried out by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society, in response to a request from the landowner, Mr David Robinson. The work was greatly enhanced with the use of drone data capture, courtesy of David Craig, [Irsishights.com](http://Irsishights.com).

### 2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

As far as it is known, there has been no previous archaeological survey at this site, although the area is rich in Neolithic and early Bronze Age sites (see figure 03).

### 2.3 Cartographic evidence



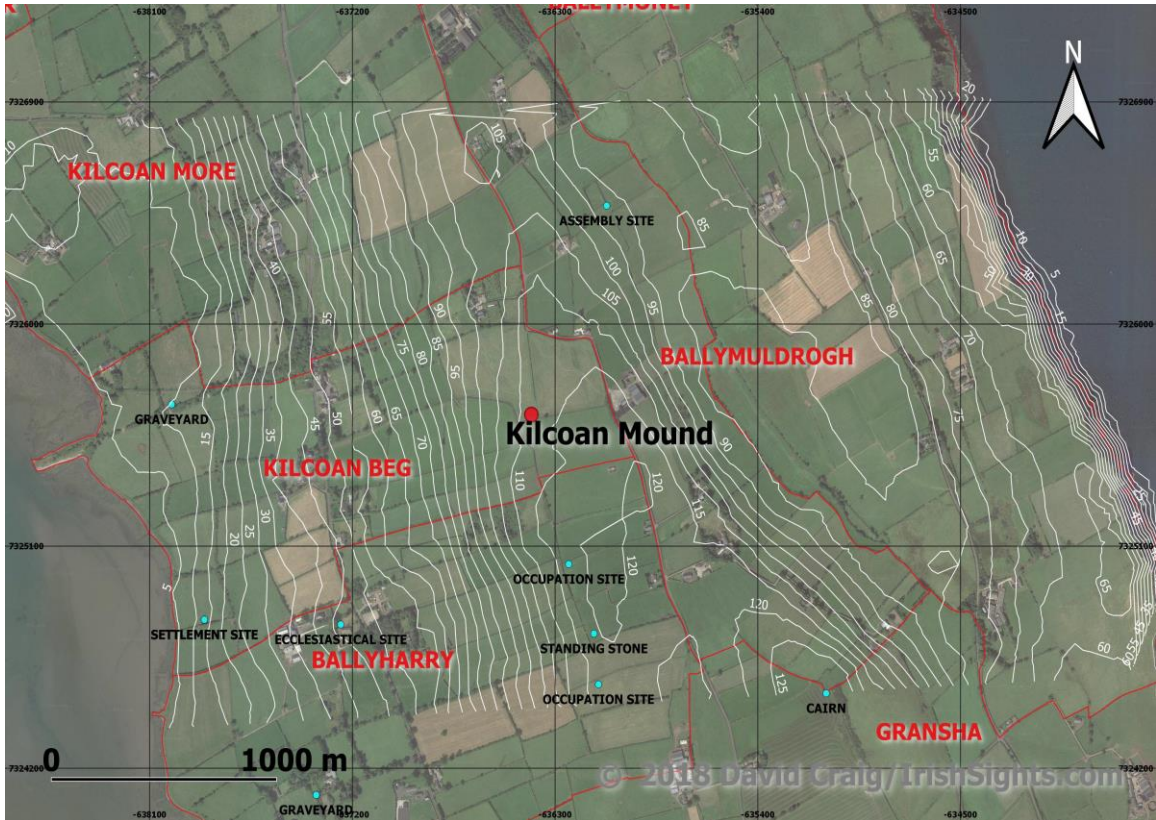


Figure 03: Drone image showing contours around Kilcoan Mound. (Irishsites.com)

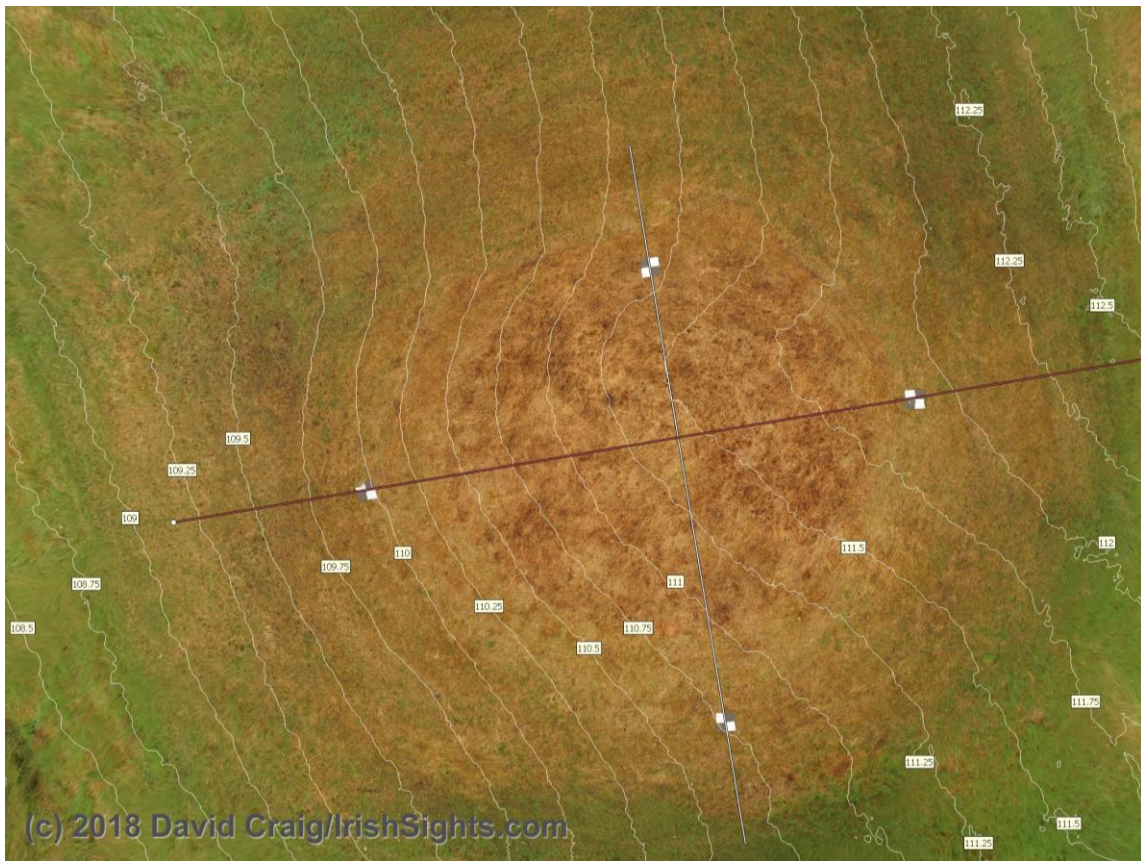


Figure 04: Drone image of Kilcoan Mound. (Irishsites.com)

## 2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the National Trust and the Ulster Archaeological Society. All site records have been archived by the National Trust at Rowallane, Saintfield, County Down.

## 2.5 Credits and Acknowledgements

The survey was led by Dr H Welsh and supported by George Rutherford, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Colin Boyd, Ken Pullen, Chris Stevenson, Ian Forsythe, David Pullen, David Craig (Drone Pilot), Hilary Boyd, Anne MacDermott, Liz McShane, Janna McDonald, Randal Scott, June Welsh, Leo Van Es, Kerry Freud and George Johnston.

We are particularly grateful to Mr David Taggart Robinson (landowner) and his family for the cooperation and assistance during, and after, the survey.

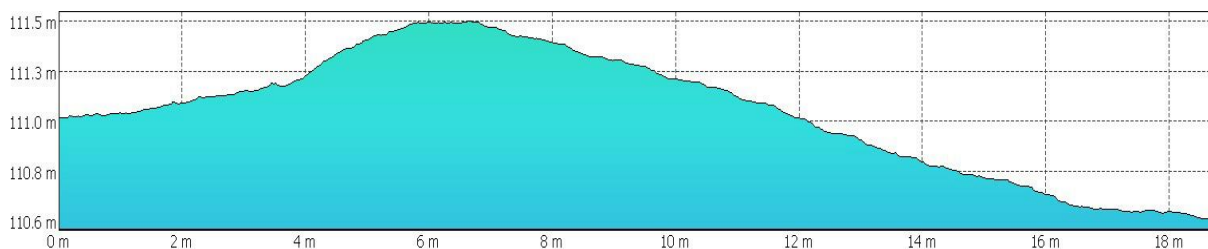
## 3. UAS Survey

### 3.1 Methodology

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

### 3.2 Production of plan drawings

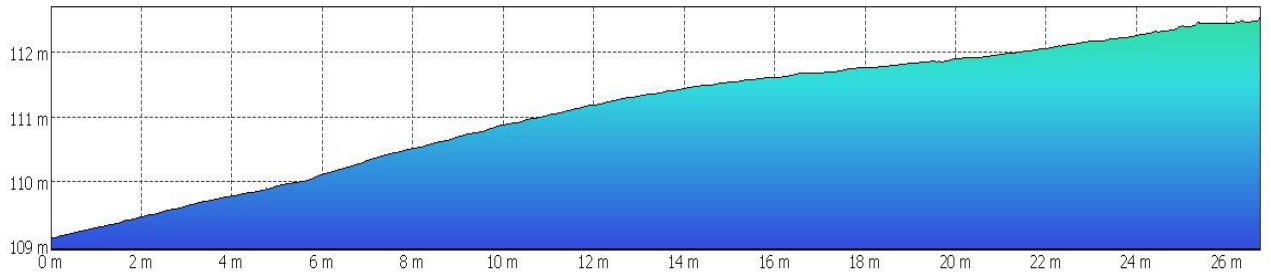
Plan drawings and elevations were completed, using data obtained from the field survey. Measurements were obtained by using the society's *Leica Sprinter 100* electronic measuring device. Sketch plans were completed on site by recording these measurements on drafting film secured to a plane table and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.



(c) 2018 David Craig/IrishSights.com

Figure 05: East to West Profile





(c) 2018 David Craig/IrishSights.com

Figure 06 : South to West Profile

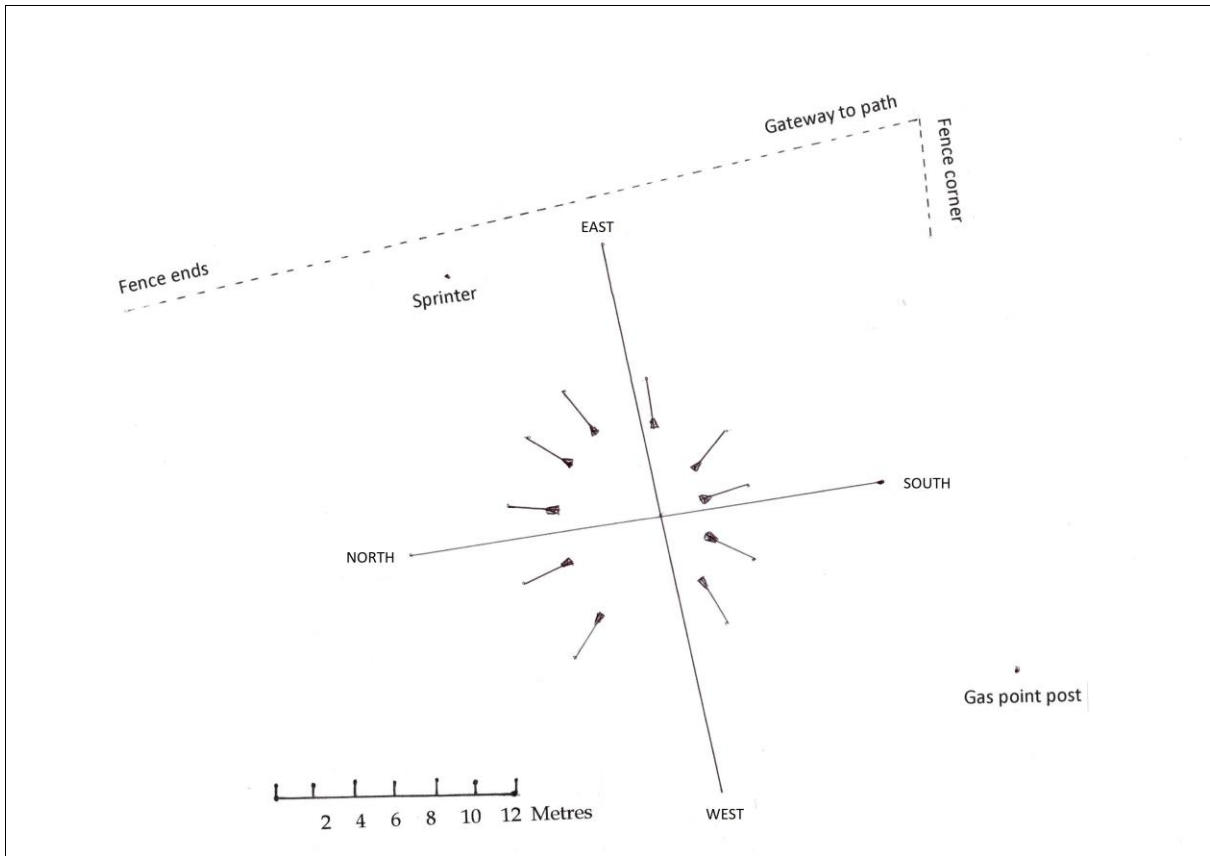


Figure 07: Plan of Site

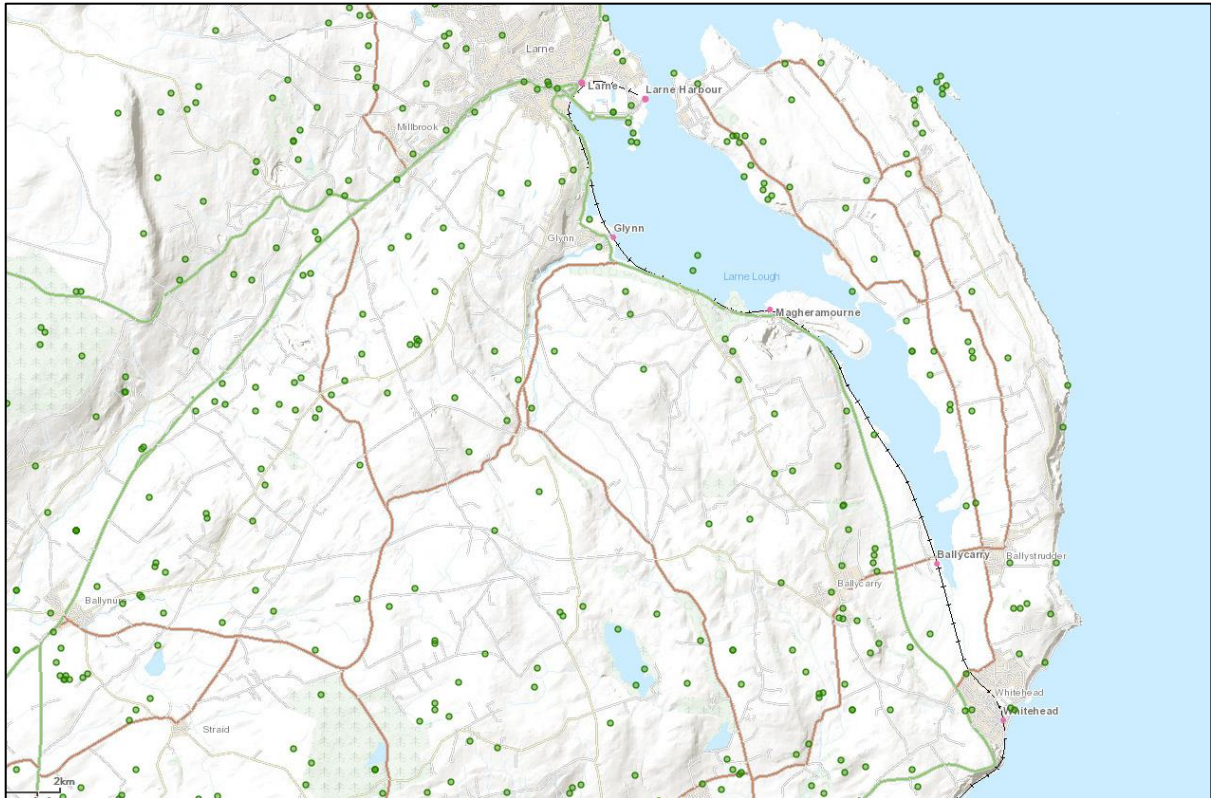


Figure 08: SMR sites in local area.

### 3.3 Photographic archive



Figure 09: UAS Survey Team on site.





Figure 10: UAS survey team plotting the suspected ditch.



Figure 11: General View, looking East (Irishsites.com)





Figure 12: Showing pine trees planted and view of Larne Lough, looking west (courtesy of the Robinson family).

#### 4. Discussion

The site is situated on the western slope of the central spine of Islandmagee peninsula, in the townland of Kilcoan Beg approximately halfway between its tip at Ballylumford and its connection to the rest of County Antrim at Ballycarry. The tumulus stands high on the ridge, with commanding views of Larne Lough to the northwest. The land is owned by Mr David Taggart Robinson, whose family operate the nearby Kilcoan Gardens. The local area is rich in archaeological sites (see Figure 08) and it is strongly suspected that this is a prehistoric ring barrow.

Burial mounds (or barrows) were common throughout Britain and Ireland from the Neolithic (c 4000 BC), Bronze Age to the Iron Age periods (c 400 AD). They often contained human skeletal or cremated remains. Some were simple single burials and some covered elaborate megalithic tombs with multiple human remains inside. Some had stone slab cists whilst others had stones piled up, covered in earth. Ditches were often dug around the mound to supply the earth needed to raise the structure so that it could be seen from afar. These sites could be used for other ceremonies and for important clan/family gatherings (not dissimilar to churches today, that can be used for weddings and christenings as well as funerals.) It is thought locally that the adjacent field was used by the local community to celebrate the ending of each of the two World Wars.

There were indications that a circular ditch originally surrounded the mound, and measurements were taken to ascertain the various depths of soft soil in the vicinity. Unfortunately, it was learned that in 2013 the landowners had planted a circle of Scots Pine

trees around the mound and uprooted them in 2018. This disturbance negated any useful information the survey team could have gained from examining the potential ditch.

Two cross sections were recorded on the North-South and East-West axes showing the various heights across the mound at these points. (Obviously the original mound would have been much higher when built, but it has weathered over time to its current size.) The land is currently used for arable farming, but has not been ploughed in living memory.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations for further work

The only way to confirm its original purpose would be to dig a trench across the centre of the mound. A non-destructive survey with a resistivity scanner could also give some indication as to what lies beneath the ground.

It should be noted that a gas pipeline traverses underground close to the site and special care will be needed if any excavation was to be undertaken.

## 6. Bibliography

Department of Communities – Map View of SMR sites in local area.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

Site: Kilcoan Mound, Middle Road, Islandmagee, County Antrim, Northern Ireland.

Date: 28 July 2018

Make and model of cameras: Ricoh G600, Olympus SZ and drone imagery.

Frame no	From	Details
P7280024	SE	UAS Survey Team members on site
P7280022	S	Kilcoan Mound
		Drone Image showing contours
		Drone image of Kilcoan Mound
P7280023	S	UAS Survey Team members on Site
		UAS Survey Team plotting the suspected ditch
		Drone Image giving general view of site
DSCF 5049	SE	Showing the Scots Pine trees and view over Larne Lough