



ULSTER
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Survey Report

Reference: **Survey Report No. 77**

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Location:

**Survey of Avish Clachan
Avish
County Londonderry**

In association with:

 **National Trust**



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Cover illustration: UAS survey in progress at Avish Clachan 2019

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1. Summary

1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at Avish Clachan, in the townland of Avish, County Londonderry in May 2019. The area around the clachan contains several monuments, including stone circular structures, with an old castle, standing stone and prehistoric burial cairn reported in adjacent townlands. The survey was the fifth in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society (UAS) during 2019.

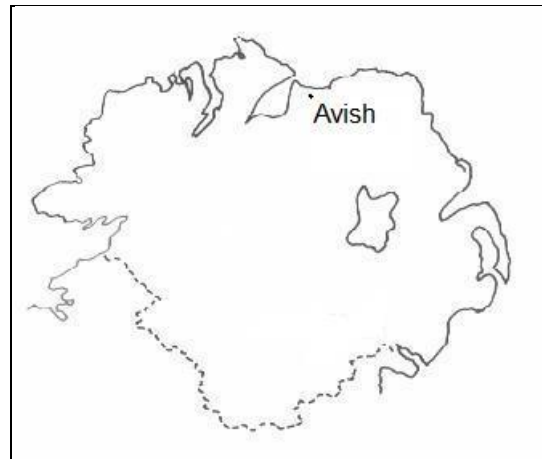


Figure 01: Location map

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 copies submitted to the National Trust and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.



Figure 02: Survey Group members at Avish 2019

1 2. Introduction

2.1 Background

The survey of Avish clachan was undertaken on Saturday 25 May 2019. 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 that had not previously been recorded. This followed a bequest to the society from the late Dr Ann Hamlin, from which the items of survey equipment were purchased. During discussions with Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust in Northern Ireland, it was 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 and Avish clachan was subsequently chosen to be the seventy-seventh of these.

2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

The property in which Avish clachan is situated was acquired by the National Trust in 1997 and was initially surveyed for the National Trust by Malachy Conway and Matthew Bailey in 2005 (Conway and Bailey 2005). The UAS carried out a survey of two stone circular features at the property in 2014 (Rutherford 2018). During this UAS survey of the clachan in 2019, two circular hut foundations were observed and photographed to the east of the clachan (see below). A possible enclosure was also observed, but not recorded due to time constraints.

2.3 Cartographic Evidence

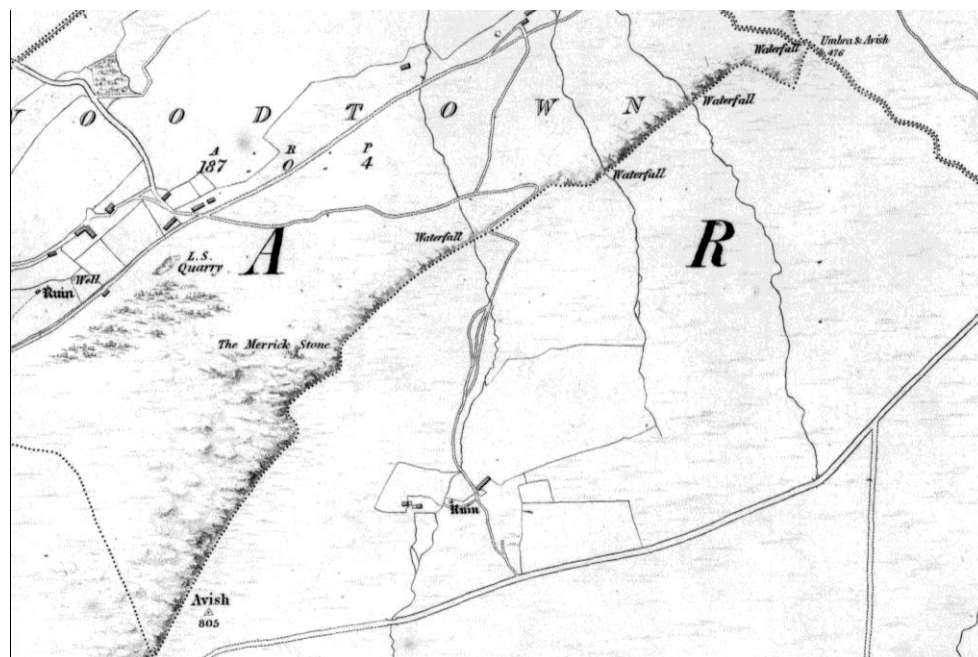


Figure 03: OS County Series, First Edition, Antrim Sheet 2 (part of) 1832

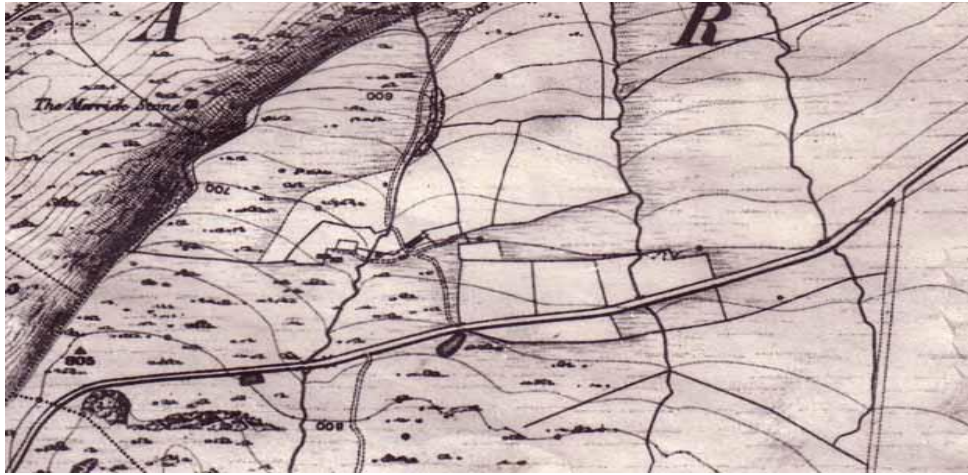


Figure 04: OS County Series, Second Edition, Antrim Sheet 2 (part of) 1852

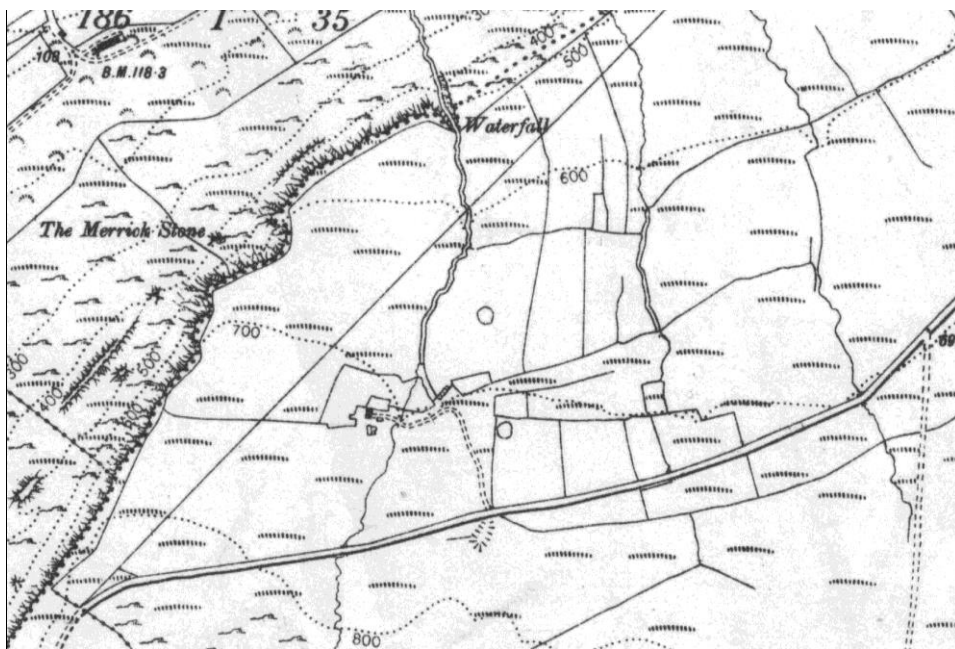


Figure 05: OS County Series, Third Edition, Antrim Sheet 2 (part of) 1925

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 George Rutherford and included Michael Catney, David Craig, June Welsh, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Liz McShane, Duncan Berryman, Hilary Boyd, Colin Boyd, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, Harry Welsh, George

Johnston, Helen Yohanis, Yvonne Gillespie and Suzanne Cameron. The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Malachy Conway, Archaeologist of the National Trust, who worked closely with the survey team in choosing the site and facilitating access and to Tom McErlane, who joined us on the day of the survey.

3. The 2019 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. 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 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.

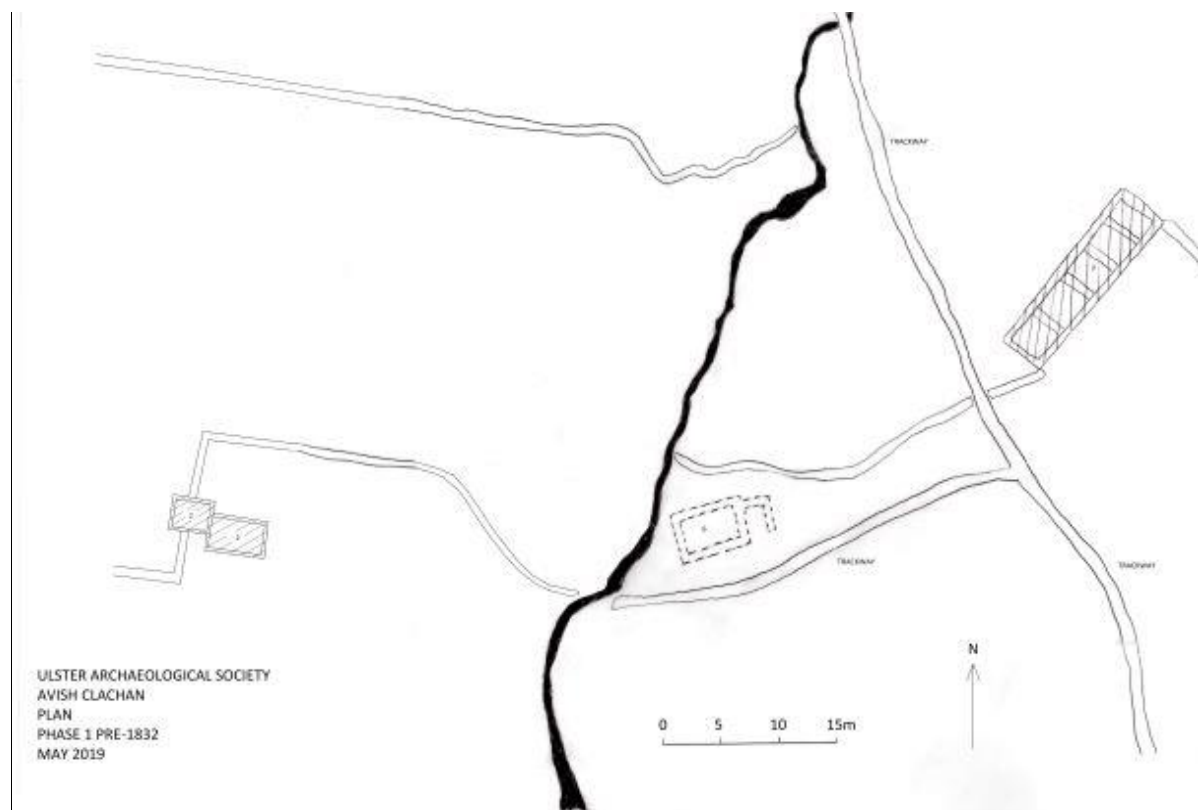


Figure 06: Avish Clachan, Phase 1 (Pre-1832)

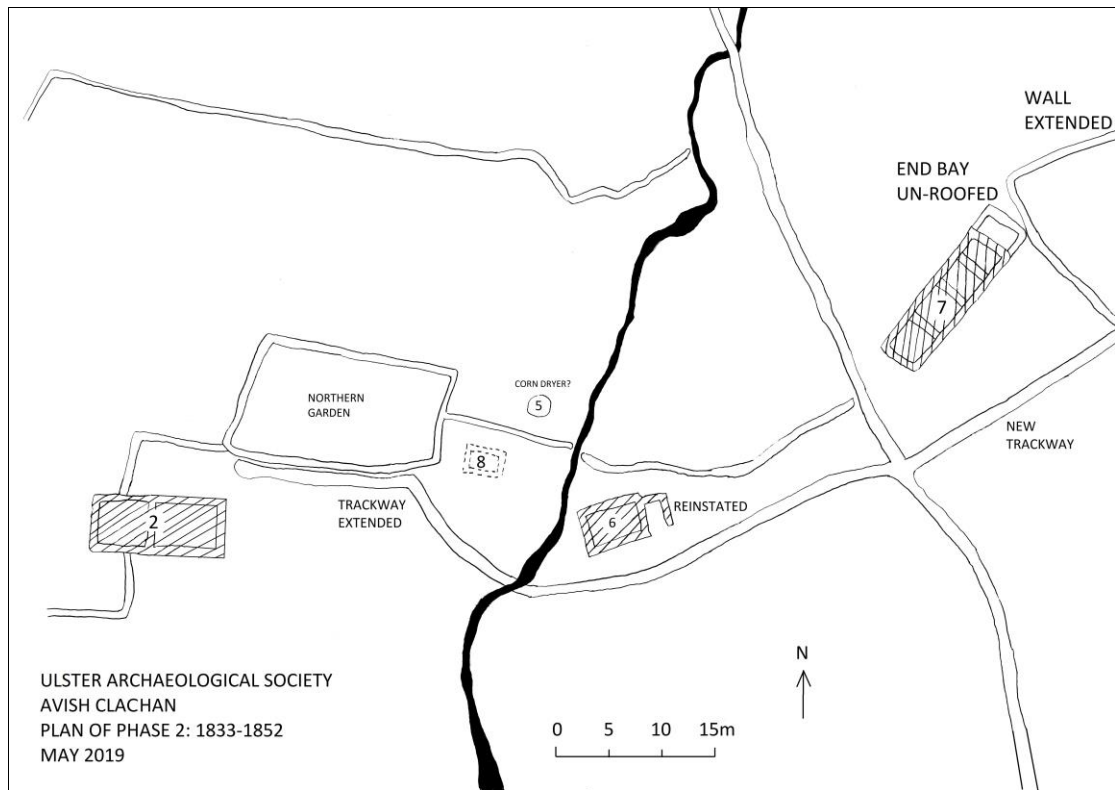


Figure 07: Avish Clachan, Phase 2 (1833-1852)

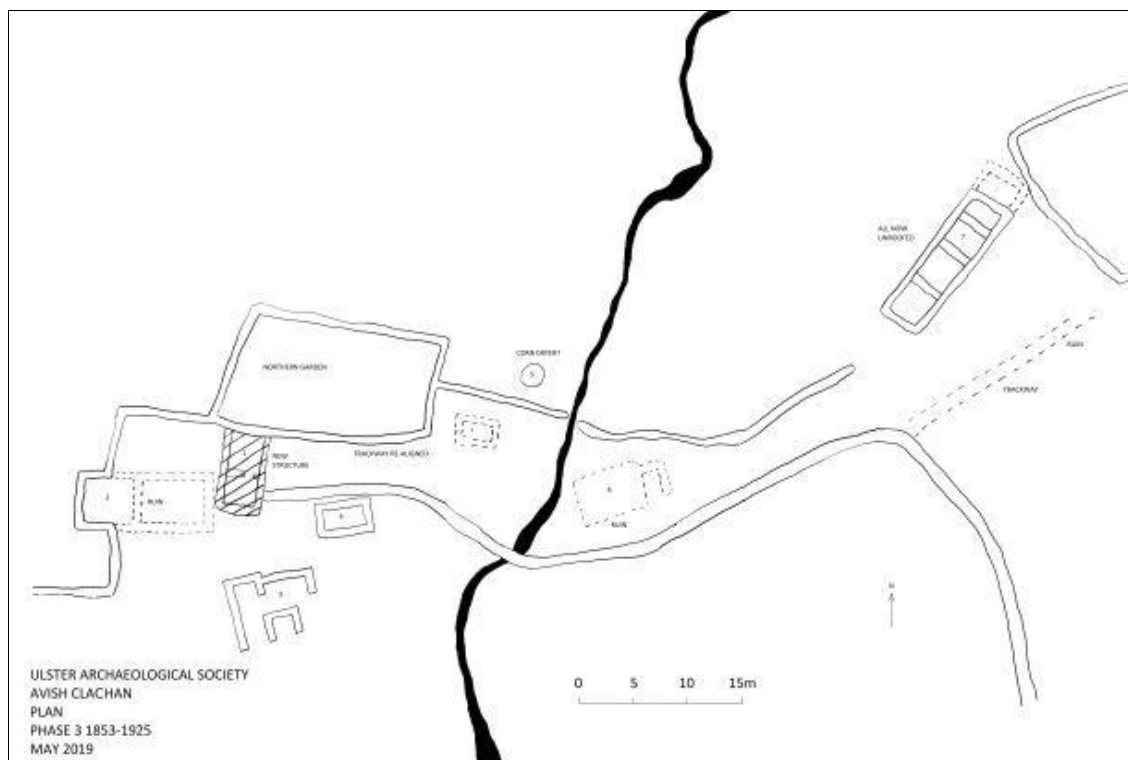


Figure 08: Avish Clachan, Phase 3 (1853-1925)

3.3 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G600* 8 megapixel digital camera and a photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 25 May 2019. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.

4. Discussion

Clachans have been described as having ‘an extreme disorder, as though the houses, in the words of one writer, had fallen “in a shower from the sky” (Otway, cited in Evans 1957, 29). This description fits perfectly in what we see at Avish, where the structures seem to be randomly placed around a stream, undoubtedly the source of their water and what was probably one of the main reasons for establishing the settlement here. The clachan itself is one of several monuments in the immediate area. Many of these have been identified and recorded in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record and by the National Trust, current owners of much of the land in the area.

1.1 Inventory of features identified at Avish and adjacent townlands

(A) Avish Townland

This is a collection of structural remains that mark the clachan has been recorded collectively in the National Trust Sites and Monuments Record as NTSMR 131293. From map evidence and survey of the visible remains it is possible to identify ten structures here:

(i) Structure 1

This is the remains of a two-bay building, 10.35m north/south by 8.8m east/west. The surviving north wall is the highest at 0.78m from ground level. Stones from the collapsed walls are visible internally and externally. A bank is present to the north, south and west, approximately 1.25m from the walls. There is no clear evidence of doors or windows, but the structure has been interpreted as a dwelling.



Figure 09: View of Structure 1, looking north-west

(ii) Structure 2

This is the remains of a two-bay building, 11m east/west by 5.5m north/south, surviving as low earth-covered banks. There may be traces of a 1.15m wide entrance at the east and an opening of 1.45m between the two bays. This structure has been interpreted as being ‘an outbuilding, possibly a byre’ (Conway and Bailey, 5).



Figure 10: View of Structure 2, looking west

(iii) Structure 3

This structure is difficult to interpret as it has few similarities to any other building on the site. It is roughly square in plan, measuring 8.7m north/south by 9.9m east/west,

with an internal U-shaped construction centrally placed to the south. It was noted during the 2005 survey that there appears to be an outshot to the north-east, suggesting that it was a dwelling. However, the whole structure was set against the hillside to the south to form the southern wall and it may be that the structure was instead used to confine stock. It was also suggested to have been shown on the 1832 and 1853 Ordnance Survey maps, but this is not the case, as it made its first appearance on the 1925 map, shown unroofed.



Figure 11: View of Structure 3, looking east

(iv) Structure 4

This is a single-room building, 4.55m east/west by 4.05m north/south, with small annexes to the east (2.18m east/west by 2.7m north/south) and west (1.5m east/west by 5.2m north/south). This was first noted on the 1925 Ordnance Survey map as an unroofed structure and was probably used as an animal pen.



Figure 12: View of Structure 4, looking west

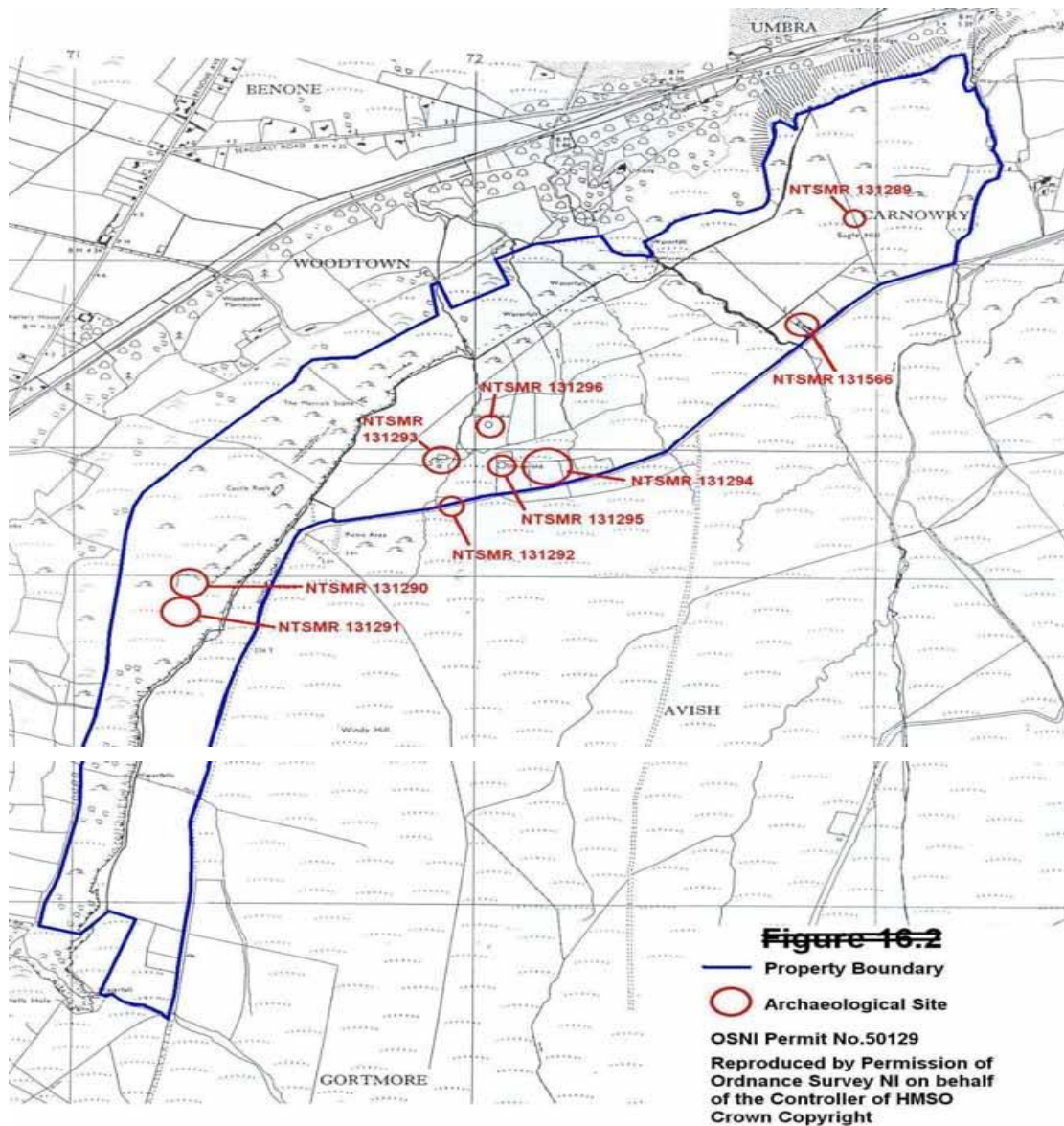


Figure 13: Monuments in Avish area recorded by National Trust

(v) Structure 5

This feature was observed during the 2005 survey (Conway and Bailey 2005, 7) and tentatively identified as a corn dryer. It is suggested that this may also be the footing for a stack or pyke, which were usually sited close to traditional farmhouses. They were built up with an expanding circumference, then tapered to a high conical point. They were usually thatched to keep out rain, while the stone beneath was a protection from ground water, drying having already been completed in the field. This feature has not been recorded on any map, so without obtaining firm dating evidence from a source such as archaeological excavation, it is currently not possible to determine when the feature was in use.



Figure 14: View of corn dryer, looking north-east

(vi) Structure 6

The remains of Structure 6 currently consist of a single-room building, measuring 7.5m east/west by 3.35m north/south, with a bay to the east, measuring 2.7m east/west by 3.3m north/south. It appears to have been open towards the south. Structure 6 has had an interesting career at Avish. It was shown on the 1832 Ordnance Survey map as a ruin, suggesting that this was the earliest building of the clachan, perhaps being constructed towards the latter part of the eighteenth century. It appears to have had a renaissance after 1832, as it was shown as being a roofed building, probably a dwelling, in 1852. However, it had again fallen out of use at some point after this, as it was again shown as a ruin on the 1925 Ordnance Survey map.



Figure 15: View of Structure 6, looking south-east

(vii) Structure 7

Structure 7 is another interesting and long-lived building in the Avish complex. The most eastern building there, it was shown as a rectangular five-bay structure, aligned north-east/south-west in 1832. No two bays are of similar dimensions and have been allocated numbers during the 2005 survey to differentiate them (Conway and Bailey 2005 8-9). Bay 1, the most westerly, measures 3.6m north-west/south-east by 4.5m south-west/north-east. Bay 2 is 4.65m north-west/south-east by 4.4m south-west/north-east. Bay 3 is 4.75m north-west/south-east by 3.85m south-west/north-east, Bay 4 is 3.9m north-west/south-east by 2.6m south-west/north-east and finally Bay 5, the most easterly, 4.4m north-west/south-east by 2.5m south-west/north-east. This gives an overall dimension of 21.4m south-west/north-east by an average of 4.26m south-east/north-west. It is well known that vernacular dwellings are limited in dimension by the length of timbers available for roof construction and that single-room dwellings, when their inhabitants have outgrown them, are usually extended along the alignment of the roof ridge, again hampered by the length of timbers available. It would appear that Structure 7 conforms to this pattern, but what is interesting is that on the 1832 Ordnance Survey map, it is shown as a five-bay roofed building, at the high point of its use. It would therefore appear that at this time, it was the principal dwelling at Avish and had been in use for many years, probably competing with Structure 6 as the earliest building on the site. At the time of the 1852 survey, the most easterly bay was shown as unroofed and by 1925, the whole structure was not roofed.



Figure 16: View of Structure 7, looking north-east

(viii) Structure 8

Structure 8 was identified during the 2019 survey as a rectangular line of stones, aligned north-west/south-east, adjacent to the east wall of the Northern Garden. It measured 4m in length by 3m in width and was interpreted as the remains of an

animal pen. Due to its proximity to the Northern Garden, which is thought to date to between 1833 and 1852, it is likely to be contemporary with it.



Figure 17: View of Structure 8, looking west

(ix) Sheepfold 1

This sheepfold is recorded as NTSMR 131295 and referred to as the southern sheepfold by the National Trust. This structure was surveyed by the UAS in 2014 (Rutherford 2018).

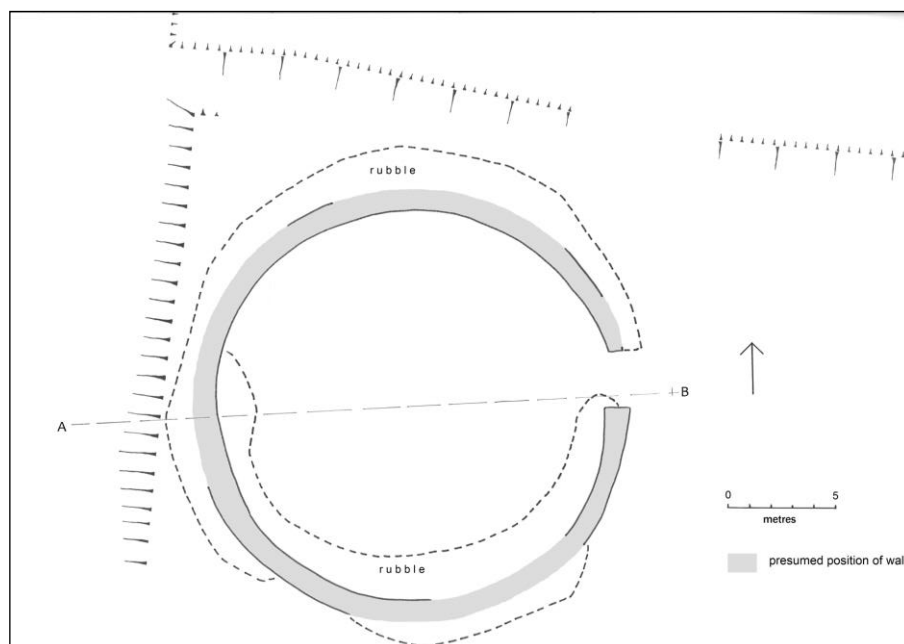


Figure 18: Plan of Sheepfold 1 (Upper Enclosure) (after Rutherford 2018, 11)

(x) Sheepfold 2

This sheepfold is recorded as NTSMR 131296 and referred to as the northern sheepfold by the National Trust. This structure was surveyed by the UAS in 2014 (Rutherford 2018).

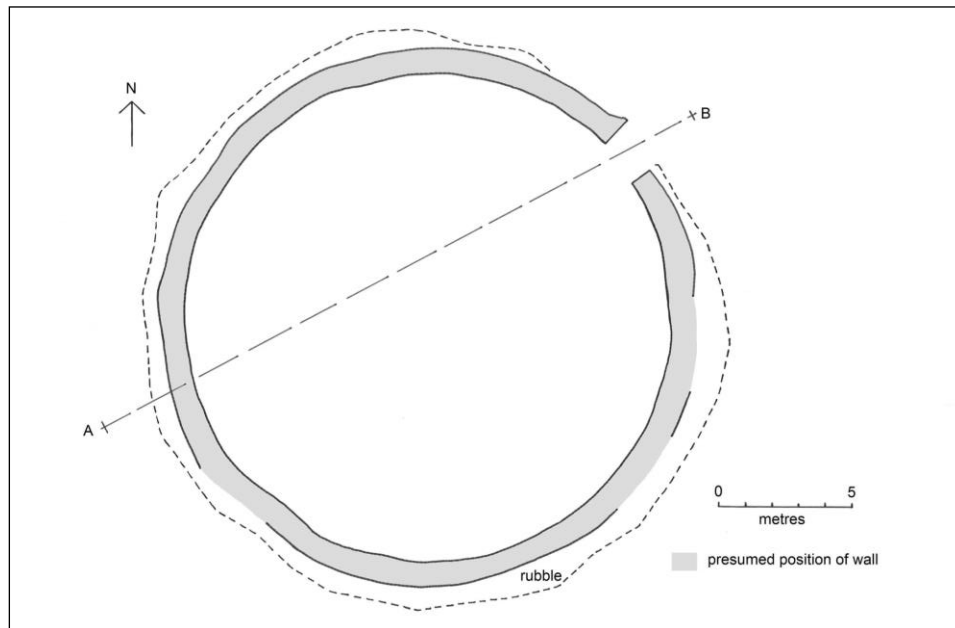


Figure 19: Plan of Sheepfold 2 (Lower Enclosure) (after Rutherford 2018, 12)

(xi) Sheepfold 3

This sheepfold is recorded as NTSMR 131566, but due to time constraints was not surveyed as part of the 2019 UAS investigations.

(xii) Field Systems

The lazy bed cultivation strips and field systems have been recorded collectively as NTSMR 131294. One small enclosure, to the northern site of Structure 1 (above), has been interpreted as being a stockyard or kitchen garden and has been given the name of *Northern Garden*, by the National Trust. There is an extensive system of field boundaries at this site, consisting of a range of construction techniques.



Figure 20: Section of field boundary wall and trackway to the right of the photograph, adjacent to Structure 7 looking north-east

(xiii) Lazy bed cultivation strips

There are several areas of lazy bed cultivation strips in the field systems at Avish Clachan. Most of these are well-defined, suggesting that no ploughing has taken place here since the time of their use. Generally, these are located to the north and north-west of the clachan, but time constraints at the time of the survey prevented accurate survey of these features.



Figure 21: Lazy bed features (after Rutherford 2018, 26)

(xiv) Trackways

A trackway, crossing the area of the clachan and aligned north/south, is recorded on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1832. The trackway entered the site directly from Bishop's Road to the south, passed to the west of Structure 7, crossed the stream to the north of this and just to the north of this, split into three individual tracks before re-crossing the stream, merging back into a single track and then descending by means of a zig-zag route some 600m down the escarpment to the north to the ground below. At the clachan, the trackway shows an extension to the west, passing to the south of the ruins of Structure 6 and stopping at its contact point with the stream. This suggests this trackway extension served Structure 6 and was therefore associated with the earliest activity at the clachan. By the 1852 map revision, the trackway had also been extended to the east, just south of Structure 7 and into the fields beyond, presumably to facilitate access to crops and livestock. At the earlier extension to the west, the trackway had been extended across the stream towards Structure 2, which, along with Structures 6 and 7 were shown roofed and now connected by the trackway system. By 1925, the trackway extension to the east had been abandoned and Structure 7, which it had served, is shown unroofed. At the time of the 2019 survey, the remains of the trackways were still visible but as they had not been maintained for over one hundred years, were in poor condition. As many sections had been cut into the surrounding ground level, surface water now drains on to the trackway, giving the appearance that it is another stream.

(xv) Hut platforms

Two conjoined hut platforms, initially interpreted as the remains of booley huts, were observed at Irish Grid reference C 72377 34762. These were located some 470m to the north-east of the lower stone circular enclosure. These were not formally surveyed during the 2019 survey, but a photographic record was obtained (see Figure 22).



Figure 22: Two conjoined hut foundations

(xvi) Second World War features

Immediately to the north of the modern gated entrance to the property are a number of concrete areas, forming part of a larger level platform. These concrete areas closely resemble those found at Second World War sites in the vicinity associated with anti-aircraft batteries provided to defend the important naval bases at Londonderry and Lough Foyle. These features were not formally surveyed during the UAS 2019 survey, but a photographic record was obtained (Figure 23).



Figure 23: Possible Second World War features, looking north

(xvii) Bishop's Road

The Bishop's Road, which gives access to the site from the south, is recorded as an industrial heritage monument and recorded as NTSMR 131292.

(B) Features in adjacent townlands

(i) Burial Cairn

This feature is in Carnowry townland, immediately to the east of Avish on a slight hill, known locally as *Eagle Hill*. It is recorded as LDY 002:005 in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record and NT 131289 by the National Trust. The site is located on a small rise in the same field as Avish Claghan at Irish Grid reference C 7290 3520. Several visual inspections have been carried out here, but no evidence of a burial cairn is visible at ground level, although the townland name suggests that there may have been a burial cairn here once.

(ii) Castle

This feature was recorded in Craig townland. It was noted in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs and described as an ‘ancient enclosure on the hill behind Castle Lecky, Parish of Magilligan’, thought to be in the area of Irish Grid reference C 7130 3392. It is recorded as LDY 006:019 in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record and NT 131290 by the National Trust.

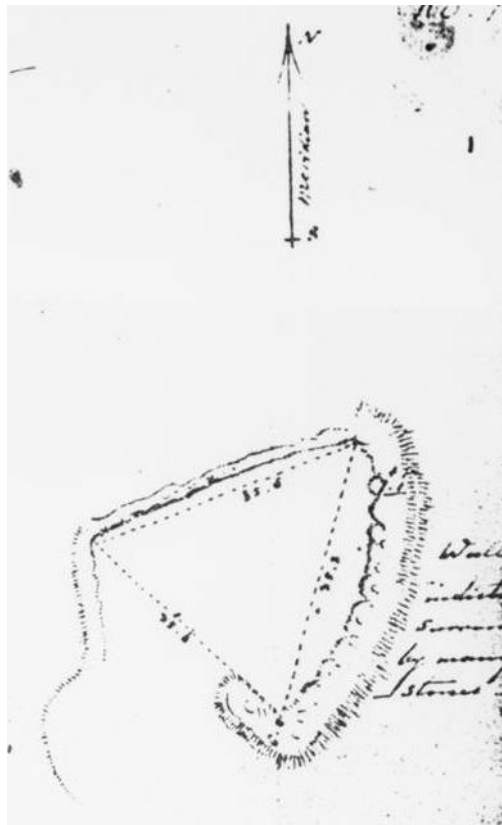


Figure 24: Plan of Craig Castle (after HED SM7 file)

(iii) Standing Stone

This feature is located in Craig townland. It is recorded as LDY 006:028 in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record and NT 131291 by the National Trust. It is known locally as the Giant’s Stone and is located immediately east of Craig Castle (LDY 006:019). It has been inspected by HED staff, who considered that it could be a natural rock formation (HED SM7 File).

4.2 Identification of phases of activity

Without the benefit of excavation and the recovery of firm dating evidence, we must look to map evidence to provide an indication of how and when Avish Clachan was in use. The earliest map available to date is held at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and was consulted by George Rutherford while researching for his 2015 report (Rutherford 2015, 9). This map and the Ordnance Survey first edition map of 1832 are virtually similar with regard to the Avish settlement and show three roofed buildings (Structures 7,8 and 9), with the ruin of Structure 6 present. A trackway was present, running across the site in a north/south alignment and connecting Bishop’s Road to the south to the Downhill to Limavady road at the foot of the escarpment to the north.

By the second edition map of 1852, only twenty years later, many changes had taken place. Structures 8 and 9 had been abandoned, but a new building, Structure 2, was in use, Structure 6 had been brought back into use and several field boundary walls had been constructed, removed or realigned. Extensions of the trackway to the east and west had also been constructed to provide access to Structures 2 and 6 to the west and 7 to the east. While there were only probably three families living at the clachan, this probably represented the period of greatest prosperity there, even though it was soon after the time of the Great Famine.

By the time of the third edition map of 1925, only one roofed building, most likely a dwelling, was left at the site, Structure 1. All the remaining structures were shown as unroofed or unrecorded and probably represented a time of terminal decline for the clachan.

4.6 The inhabitants

Rutherford (2018) has been able to identify some of the families connected to the Avish site, either through ownership of the land, or as tenants and his findings are repeated here:

(A) Land ownership

The entire parish of Tamlaghtard (alias Magilligan) was churchland occupied by the McGilligans, who were the erenagh or hereditary tenants until the seventeenth century (Reeves: 39, 78). In 1622 William Gage was named as the bishop's tenant (*Royal Visitation* : 195), and after his death his brother John Gage, an English Protestant, in 1634 obtained a sixty-year lease for all but one of the forty-one townlands from the See of Derry (Young : 289; Simington: 217). Manus McGilligan, Irish Papist, was in possession of Ballycarton (Simington: 210).

By 1659 there were four named titaladoes (persons of standing) in the forty townlands (Pender: 130). The Gage family continued to be chief tenants of the parish under successive bishops, but a division was made in the early eighteenth century. Thomas was William Gage's son by his first wife, Ann Church, and William his son by a second marriage to Ann Huston. Thomas and his descendants took the upper half and William the lower.

A generation later lower Magilligan was further divided by Ann Gage, widow of William, by marriage settlements for her daughters: Elizabeth with Daniel McNeill in 1747, and Ann with Robert Church in 1748 (D673/28, MIC311/164B). This was not a territorial division, but a share of the income from leases.

Unexpired leases could be traded, used to settle debt, or sub-leased.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century Conolly Gage is resident in Bellarena in succession to his uncle Hodgson Gage and continues the practice of sub-letting fractions of townlands to tenant farmers in upper Magilligan, while Rev. Henry Hervey Bruce acts as land agent to Bishop Frederick Augustus Hervey, fourth Earl of Bristol, in setting leases for the lower half.

The Big Drain was the boundary between upper (Gage) and lower (Bruce) Magilligan: the lower, including Avish, being to the northeast and the upper to the southwest, closer to Limavady (PRONI: MIC1/86/1). Many of the bishop's leases were set long in trust for himself and his heirs, and renewed every one or two years, thus ensuring they still had 20 or 21 years to run at his death (Proudfoot: 423). The earl bishop willed his Irish property to Bruce, and so the latter inherited the unexpired leases in 1803 and assumed the position of landlord, an arrangement later passed to future Baronets Bruce of Downhill, who continued to control these lands as personal estate, surviving the Church Disestablishment of 1870.

Mr. Eagleson held all the land in the townland in 1826, but no land elsewhere in the parish (FIN5A/252: 8). By 1860 Sir Henry Hervey Bruce bt. was holding the Avish land directly, but in 1874 it was let to James Duncan. In 1878 the 739 acres of Avish were let to John, Hercules, and William H Hughes and in the following year Richard was added to the list (VAL 12B/31/5B: 23). The Hughes family had been butchers in Coleraine from at least 1852 (B&UD: 523) and were also cattle dealers (Census 1901). They had premises in Meetinghouse Street and the Shambles, but lived in the Waterside on Killowen Street (Griffith, 1859: 176, 177, 184). They also held land outside the urban centre, presumably to hold stock. (Griffith, 1859: 124, 173).

From 1924 to 1926 Hercules Hughes was the sole leasee of Avish. The property was then declared vacant until 1929 when Theobald Bryson, a sheep farmer, took the lease (VAL 12B/31/5E: 1) (Rutherford 2015, 19-21).

(B) Land tenancy

In the 1659 Census of Ireland Umrican and Anis (Umbra and Avish) are returned together as having 4 people (only those above the age of 15 years were counted); all were Irish (Pender: 130). There is no indication of how this population is divided between the two townlands. At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries the Doherty family is in occupation of at least a part of Avish, but we do not know the total number of individuals (see App. B).

The 1831 census gives two households in Avish (MIC5A/6: 22). William Brown's family has 3 males and 3 females. Henry Miller's has 2 males and 1 female. All 9 are Presbyterian and they have no servants. In the valuation map of 1831 (fig. 7) the red line weaves between the buildings of the clachan dividing it in a very particular way. It seems reasonable to conjecture this is a separation of the buildings of the two families.

In 1853 the list of seatholders for Dunboe Presbyterian Church includes residents of Avish: Andrew Morrow and Samuel Ross (MIC 1P/412). Both have two seats. Ross does not pay his arrears and disappears from the register after 1854. Morrow and his family continue to appear until 1862. In 1864 Samuel Ross had the only occupied house in Avish. A herd's house and all the land is held directly by Bruce. (VAL 12B/31/5B: 23). Ross lived in a cottage 1.5 km southeast of the enclosures, beside a road which connected Articlave and Milltown with Limavady, but was not maintained across the deep bog, so became merely an access road for turbary. The cottage was in the ideal position for monitoring peat cutting. It did not appear on the OS map of 1852, so was presumably new when he moved in (fig. 25). In 1874 Samuel Ross was replaced by John Cummins (VAL 12B/31/5B: 23).

At the 1901 census the house is occupied by a family of three: John Cummins, agricultural labourer aged 88 years, his wife Sarah aged 84, and their unmarried daughter Margaret Jane aged 48. This may be the John McCummins, son of William McCummins and Mary McGranahan of Tircrevan, who was baptised by the Presbyterian minister of Magilligan on 14 August 1819 (MIC 1P/215 : 65). Margaret Jane was born in Burren (immediately east of Avish) on 5 July 1849, daughter of John McCummins and Sarah Crawford of Burren (MIC 1P/215: 479). However, on 15 April 1890 she married a widower James Brewster, who was a railway labourer in Woodtown (immediately north of Avish) (MIC 1P/215). At the 1911 census James is still living in Woodtown with his twenty-five year old daughter, while Margaret Jane is on her own in the parish of Dunboe and is entered in her married surname. She had been living there since 1904 (VAL12B/30/10E: 33).

In 1904 the family has gone and the house is declared a ruin (VAL 12B/31/5D: 24) – not a demotion to herd's house! Today, a rectangular half acre of hummocky grass, still free of the surrounding heather, defines their garden. (Rutherford 2015, 22-24).

From all this information, can we possibly ascribe individual tenants to any of the structural remains at Avish clachan? It is possible that in 1832, buildings 8 and 9 and 7 were held by the Brown and Miller families. The ruins of Structure 6 may once have been the dwelling of the Doherty family. By 1854, these families could have been replaced by the Morrow and Ross families. All this is, of course, speculation, but it does perhaps give us an indication of the family names connected to the clachan.

(C) Land use

Having identified the structures present, along with various field systems and perhaps some of the people connected to the clachan, can we draw any conclusions as to what use these people were making of the land? Of clachans generally it has been said that:

while some had their speciality such as weaving or thatching, [they] were concerned primarily and almost exclusively with agriculture and attracted none of the elements of the true village, whether church, inn or shops. Itinerant 'tinkers and tailors' paid periodic visits and with the pedlars and beggars brought news of other districts, but the economic and social needs of the hamlet were met by periodic visits to the fairs and by seasonal gatherings of various kinds (Evans 1957, 31).

Here again, Rutherford has much detail to provide with regard to Avish:

The name (para 2.6) and altitude (para 2.3) favour the view that the entire townland was summer grazing and without permanent habitation until modern times.

In 1950 Desmond McCourt recorded memories from old inhabitants who spoke of Duncrun and Ballyleighery having had arable land held in rundale, tenants owning land "field about", with the brae and mountain shared in "sums" and grazed in common (McCourt, 1950: 14,15). A sum was grazing for 1 cow or 8 wethers or 6 ewes plus 6 lambs (McCourt, 1950: 42).

Gortmore townland, which shares a long boundary with Avish, contained 583 acres (later enlarged to 990 acres at the cost of Tircreven). Of this acreage, 364 were mountain, and 213 were farmland (Griffith: 22). In 1826 the mountain pasture had been shared in common

among the seven farmers living at a lower level (Tithe: 8).

The first OS 6-inch map shows trackways running northward from Avish clachan (fig. 7). They continue obliquely down the steep face of the hill to the lower land of Woodtown. Although much overgrown these can still be seen to be 3 m. wide with a bank on the outer side – capable of use as drove roads. Another trackway winds up from Castle Lecky to Gortmore 1.1 km to the southwest and another 0.9 km beyond that, links lowland Tircreven to adjoining mountain.

At 739 acres Avish is one of the most extensive townlands in a parish where the average is 320, but it has no human inhabitants today and in recent centuries the numbers were always small. This may be why it was grouped with Benone and Ballymaclary (low lying and sandy), in the Civil Survey of 1654 (Simington: 216).

After 1785 cereal production in Ireland increased while pasturage declined driven by prevailing prices and demand (O'Donovan 1940: 140).

John Doherty's petition (App. B) testifies to tillage in the late eighteenth century, perhaps prompted by population pressure in the lowlands. The county, as with Ireland generally, was experiencing a greater use of marginal land with small holdings dependent on potato cultivation (Bell, 1999: 405-6).

A map which accompanies Bulter's *Survey* is dated 1824 and beside "Evis" has the note, "grain grown at 550 feet". If the beds beside the lower enclosure were used for grain (barley, oats, or rye), harvesting with hand tools would leave their shape undisturbed.

The irregular pattern of the ridges north of the lower enclosure leads to the assumption that spade cultivation was not superseded by mechanised agriculture, which requires straight, regularly spaced drills (Bell 1999 : 410), but by grazing, which has preserved the surface from the time of the last crop.

If the Eccleston in the 1802 rumour (App. B) was actually the Mr. Eagleson recorded in the Tithe Applotment of 1826 (4.2.10), then it would appear that Doherty's plea to remain as tenant did not succeed.

After the mid-nineteenth century Irish agriculture trended away from tillage to livestock and this continued through the twentieth century (Bell, 1999: 406, 413).

In 1802 Sampson reported, “Many young cattle, reared in the low countries, are sent up about April to the high rough pastures” (Sampson: 207). “... In the low countries, as in Magilligan, and districts where there is out-pasture, the sheep, kept at home in summer, are folded at night in enclosures called falls; these are made by building one sod almost on edge over another, whose obliquity is in a contrary direction; these folds are dug up in the after-season, and the sods and bottoms contribute to the manures” (*ibid*: 218).

In 1835 it was reported that the stock on Conolly Gage’s farm included 113 black cattle and 17 sheep (Day & McWilliams: 136). This balance of black cattle to sheep seems to be typical within the parish.

It was also reported, “No regular sheep-walks in the parish. Mr. Gage has tried sheep on the mountain this year ... grazing farm exclusively in the townland of Croaghan stocked by Mr. Gage” (Day & McWilliams: 135).

In Britain, during the eighteenth century attention to breeding and experiments in farming practice identified the Blackfaced and Cheviot as hardy breeds of sheep that could be profitably kept on mountain and moorland throughout the year (Symons : 273, 331-3). In the second quarter of the nineteenth century large flocks of sheep became normal across the Scottish highlands and in the 1850s entrepreneurial Irish landlords established sheepwalks on similar terrain, importing Blackfaced sheep and engaging experienced shepherds (Dolan : 38; Mac Suibhne: 561).

A shepherd named Thomas Hastings and living on nearby Ballyleighery Mountain is mentioned in the records of Magilligan Church 1850-1855 (MIC1P/215: 498, VII). This surname, long established in Scotland, was not recorded in Magilligan earlier than this.

Writing in 1839 Martin Doyle stated “Within the last twenty years, the mountaineers of Scotland have found the advantage of making circular stone enclosures, which they term *stells*, for their sheep, ... against wind, and storm, and snow ...The stells, according to the Hon.

Captain Napier's details, in his *Treatise on Practical Store-farming*, should be substantially built of stone, of the diameter of 30 feet; they will hold each 75 sheep, and on an average cost only 39s." (Doyle : 431, 432). In comparing areas, the Avish enclosures at 18m. may be expected to accommodate 290 each. As the author's primary interest was in Irish farming we may assume he knew of no examples in Ireland.

William Youatt commented, "After having been once or twice driven into these inclosures, or rings, the sheep will of their own accord draw towards them on the approach of snow. The shepherd will always find his flock assembled in the rings during snow, and he will not often have to risk his life by searching for lost sheep among wreaths." (Youatt: 28) However, he also said the height should not be less than six feet. At Avish this would not have been achieved if we judge by the tumble of stone, but perhaps the snow here did not reach the levels experienced on the Scottish mountains. For a century families did not remain in Avish for more than one generation and for most of this time are clearly landless labourers. Any structure erected during this time would have been at the direction of the landholder.

The circular enclosures may be the result of ideas on ovine husbandry coming from Britain. They may have been influenced by the "fall" already known in the parish's lowland and been a method of concentrating animal manure. They were most probably built in the second half of the nineteenth century to provide some shelter for sheep during severe weather.

A picture emerges of Avish in the latter nineteenth century given over entirely to grazing for the meat market. One resident man deals with day to day work and lives 1.5 kilometres from the herd's house and sheepfolds. In the severest weather this must have seemed a long distance (Rutherford 2015, 25-28).

4.7 Conclusions

From the information available from survey and research, it would appear that Avish Clachan had its origins during the latter part of the eighteenth century and was thriving during the mid-nineteenth century, despite the catastrophe of the Great Famine in Ireland. However, the inhabitants of Avish, like others in clachans throughout Ireland, saw a slow abandonment of their way of life for the remainder of the nineteenth century and the settlement was finally abandoned at the start of the twentieth century. The impact of the famine on small communities such as Avish has been expressed as a 'desire of most country people to have an isolated dwelling-house. The clachan or hamlet, once the centre of communal life and tradition, is

despised, a symbol of squabbling poverty, and it is the wish of nearly everyone to have a house where he cannot be overlooked' (Evans 1957, 11-12). Study of the Avish settlement provides us with an opportunity to understand the effects of some of the economic and social upheavals of the nineteenth century.

5. Recommendations for further work

Due to time constraints, the UAS survey did not include the recording of the lazy bed cultivation strips and much of the clearly-defined field system. Similarly, the full extent of the system of trackways across the site, including access to the coastal area to the north, was not fully investigated. It is recommended that these features be fully recorded in due course.

A prehistoric burial cairn, standing stone and castle have been reported in the adjacent townlands of Carnowry and Craig. Some efforts were made on the day of the 2019 UAS survey to locate these features, but without success. It is recommended that further investigation be carried out here, including aerial photography and geophysical survey, in order to identify possible remains of these features.

There are several areas of lazy bed cultivation in proximity to Avish Clachan. These are extremely well-preserved, suggesting that no ploughing has taken place there since their abandonment. Accurate survey was not made of these features in May 2019 due to time constraints. It is suggested that these features would be a fertile source for research on this type of cultivation technology to identify which crops were being cultivated here.

It is recommended that the National Trust provide information boards and pathways to the clachan at Avish in order that visitors to the adjacent viewpoint are made aware of its presence and can enjoy and appreciate this otherwise invisible site.

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PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM**Site:** Avish Clachan, County Londonderry**Date:** 25 May 2019 and 19 June 2019**Make and model of camera:** Ricoh G600W and others

Frame no	From	Details
RIMG0021	west	Site view
RIMG0022	South-west	Site view
RIMG0023	West	Southern boundary wall
RIMG0024	West	Southern boundary wall
RIMG0025	South-west	NE/SW boundary wall
RIMG0027	North-east	NE/SW boundary wall
RIMG0028	North-west	Northern boundary wall
RIMG0029	north	Possible gate location in Northern boundary wall
RIMG0030	East	Curve in north wall
RIMG0031	West	Termination of north boundary wall
RIMG0032	North	Termination of north boundary wall
RIMG0033	West	Possible pig-pen
RIMG0034	West	Possible pig-pen
RIMG0035	South-west	View of Garden
RIMG0036	West	View of Garden
RIMG0037	North-west	View of Structure 1
RIMG0038	North	View of Structure 1
RIMG0039	north	View of Structure 1
RIMG0040	North	Intra-mural hole in south wall of Structure 1
RIMG0041	North	Intra-mural hole in south wall of Structure 1
RIMG0042	East	Intra-mural wall of Structure 1
RIMG0043	East	Enclosure at north of Structure 1
RIMG0044	West	West wall of Structure 1
RIMG0045	East	Structure 2
RIMG0046	east	Structure 2
RIMG0047	East	Enclosure north of Structure 2
RIMG0048	East	Enclosure north of Structure 2
RIMG0049	West	Enclosure north of Structure 2
RIMG0050	West	Structure 3
RIMG0051	West	Structure 3
RIMG0052	South	Structure 3
RIMG0053	South-east	Structure 3

RIMG0054	East	Structure 4
RIMG0055	East	Structure 4, SE corner
RIMG0056	South	Enclosure at west of Structure 4
RIMG0057	North-west	Structure 6
RIMG0058	North-west	Structure 6
RIMG0059	South-south-west	Structure 7
RIMG0060	South-east	Structure 7
RIMG0061	South-east	View of upper part of site
RIMG0062	North-west	SE corner of Structure 7
RIMG0063	South-south-west	Compartment 2 of Structure 7
RIMG0064	South-south-west	Compartment 3 of Structure 7
RIMG0065	west	Intra-mural access in west wall of compartment 3 of Structure 7
RIMG0066	West	NW corner of Structure 7
RIMG0067	South	Enclosure at N end of Structure 7
RIMG0068	East	Enclosure at N end of Structure 7
RIMG0069	East	Enclosure at N end of Structure 7
RIMG0070	East	Enclosure at N end of Structure 7
RIMG0071	east	Enclosure at N end of Structure 7
DSCN8542	east	View of Structure 9
DSCN8554	south	Possible Second World War features
DSCN8556	west	Conjoined booley hut platforms