

NISMR: DETAILED REPORT

SMR NO: TYR 038:031 GRIDREF: H82337683 DRAWINGS: Y
PROTECTION: S PHOTOS: Y
GENERAL TYPE: MEGALITHIC TOMB GENERAL PERIOD: NEOLITHIC
PREHISTORIC

SPECIFIC TYPE:

COURT TOMB

SPECIFIC PERIOD:

NEOLITHIC

SITENAME:

TOWNLAND: KILLYMOON DEMESNE

COUNCIL: COOKSTOWN MAP12500: IG124 ALTITUDE: 0200+F

LAST VISIT: 4 April 1989 by: CF

Land Use on Site

Old/Mixed Woodland

Land Use around Site

Recreation

CONDITION: SOME REMAINS

Threats

NONE APPARENT

SITE DESCRIPTION:

The cairn lies on relatively flat ground, on a limestone outcrop. The cairn area is represented by a roughly oblong spread of stones, c.45m x 35m. Within this area are 12 orthostatic stones which form a horseshoe-shaped chamber 10m long x 4m wide, with 2 outlying stones at its E end, all aligned on an E/W axis. The site has been greatly disturbed by livestock.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

BRIGGS, C.S. UJA 35, 1972, 57-8

O NUALLAIN, S. 1989, MSS [SM5/108]

EXCAVATION DETAILS:

- O'Nuallain notes that -:
- 1) Killymoon court tomb has no segmentation, same court. Gallery is 6m long.
 - 2) Not marked on any edition of the 6" Maps
 - 3) O.D 200-300 / H 825 768.

Killymoon court tomb Tyr 038:031

Stephen Clarke wrote to EHS in February 2002 regarding his suspicion that this court tomb may be a Victorian folly, built to look like an ancient monument. Claire Foley visited the site in 1989 and also expressed certain puzzlement as to the nature of its construction.

Below is an extract from Mr Clarke's letter:

.....I have spent a lot of time integrating information on structure/morphology, with cartographic/landscape factors and have started visiting sites in Fermanagh and Tyrone. At this stage I've started to notice commonalties and exceptions a little better, and a court tomb in Sligo and another in Mayo look suspiciously like Victorian follies to me.

In this regard, I wondered about the court tomb in Killymoon Demesne, Co. Tyrone. The grounds for my suspicions are as follows

1. Not marked on 1813 or subsequent maps in the 19th century.
2. Its outside the general distribution area for such tombs.
3. The owners of the 'Big House' were collectors of antiquities, perhaps in competition with their neighbouring landowner who had a significant tomb.
4. No artefacts despite search for same.
5. Bore holes in the boulders!
6. No jambs and an atypical double backstone.
7. An absence of the landscape commonalties which I've been picking up for other court tombs.

The other two 'dodgy court tombs' are Rosbeg in Co. Mayo and Lecarrow in Co. Sligo are also located in the grounds of big house demesnes, though may be a case of 'improvement' rather than fabrication.

Kilgymoon Type 38131

Cont tomb?

Substantially as surveyed by F. Boniggis (UJA) 1972

Orbits 142 (cont) are doubtful cont stones

3-na good potential

no jumps makes it puzzling —

cf 4.4.89

FIELD RECORD

Td.

SITE NO	Td.	TYPE	ALT.
O.S. 6" I.G. TYR 38:31	KILLYMOON DEMESNE	Cowl tomb.	200+
PREVIOUS ACCOUNTS		GRID REF.	

... in the former demesne of Killymoon Castle, about 100m from the Killymoon Golf Club-House.
 Grid Ref. H 825768 (not shown by O.S. If really sheet 38, must be very near the N. edge).
 O'Nuallain S. (1989) MSS. [SMS/108].
 UJA 35(1972), C.S. Briggs 57-58 (note with plan).
 (is there a problem over its exact location in terms of being on sheet 38). - GR 7/3/89.

Co.

THREATS AND/OR CHECKS	FURTHER ACTION

PAR.

SITE REPORT

CONDITION

G.R.

O.S. 6"
I.G.

29, 30
38, 39 TYR 38:31

C.S. Briggs.

NOTES

THE COURT CAIRN IN KILLYMOON DEMESNE, CO. TYRONE

The purpose of this note is to draw attention to the existence of an hitherto unrecorded court cairn within the limits of the former demesne of Killymoon Castle, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone. The megalith is situated about 100 metres from the Killymoon Golf Club-house, on land recently acquired by the Club (O.S. 6 in. Tyrone sheet 38, grid reference H 825768).

The Site

The site is approached from Cookstown by Killymoon Crescent or Killymoon Road and lies in the area to the west of the north-south lane joining them, south-west of the Club car park. Between the cairn and this road, there is an irregular scatter of massive boulders. They are invisible except to an observer within the wood in which it stands. Some of these, though not all, are of chloritic gabbro, and some bear signs of deliberate destruction in the form of cylindrical

bore holes of the sort normally associated with stone splitting. In sheer quantity they outweigh the number of stones now in the megalith and may either be derived from it, or from another monument which may formerly have occupied an adjacent site.

The cairn itself lies on relatively flat ground, at about 200 ft O.D., on a limestone outcrop. It overlooks a slight ravine in which there is a woodland marsh which stretches irregularly eastward for about 50 metres towards the north-south lane.

Being thickly covered with rhododendron bushes and hawthorn trees, little or no grass grows on the cairn site beyond the outer part of the limestone scatter which delimit its former area. Over the whole of the cairn site the soil is trampled into a thick muddy clay by cattle. No artifacts were found there during several visits to the site, and there is no local knowledge of any

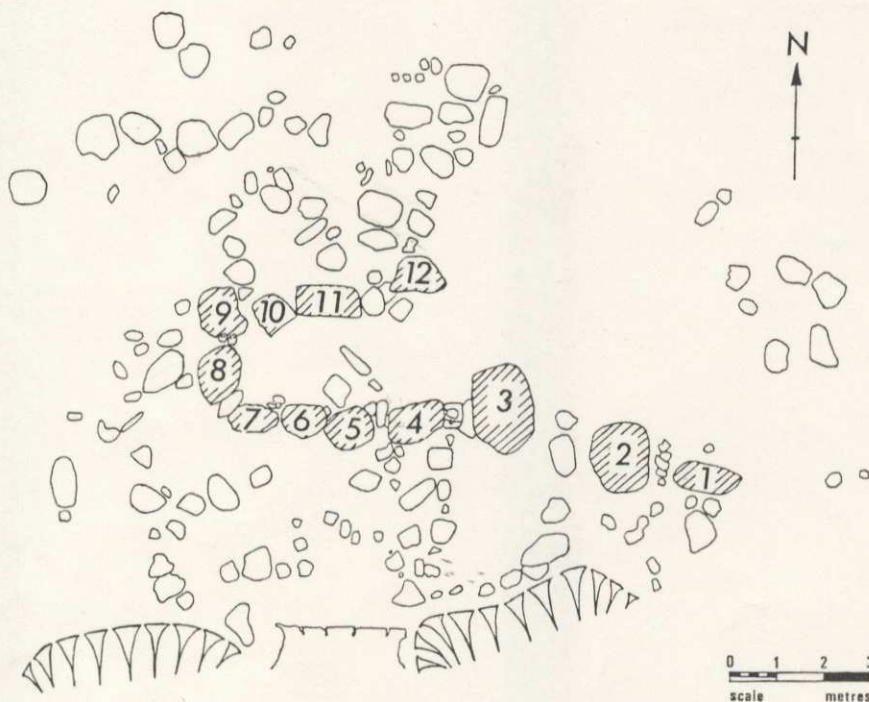


FIG. 1. Court cairn in Killymoon demesne, Co. Tyrone.

having been found. There is a standing stone about 250 metres to the west of the cairn, marked on the O.S. one-inch map, sheet 5. A further unmarked cairn in a very dilapidated state lies within the demesne, about 1 km to the south of the court cairn.

History of the Site

Although the site is not marked on any editions of the Ordnance Survey 6 inch or 1 inch maps, on Sampson's Map of County Londonderry, 1813, (Sampson, 1814), the area between the site of the Golf Club-house and the north-east corner of the castle boundary wall was marked 'Cloghog', and below it, 'Rowley Hill'.

The inference to be drawn from this seems to be that although the site was known as early as 1813, it became obscured by landscape gardening, from both eye and memory before the Ordnance Survey of the 1830s. It could well have been during this landscaping that the attempted destruction took place, though it was not completed, perhaps because of superstition or even a wish to preserve the monument.*

Description of the Cairn

The cairn area (FIG. 1) is represented by a roughly oblong spread, about 45 by 35 metres, of small limestone rocks. Within this area there are 12 orthostatic stones (numbered 1 to 12 on plan). These stones form a horseshoe-shaped chamber 10 metres long by 4 metres wide, with two outlying stones at its east end and all aligned on an east-west axis. Details of the orthostats are given in an Appendix.

* The Stewarts, its owners, were collectors of antiquities, and possessed the well-known gold hoard as well as a hafted stone axe from a nearby bog. The family do not appear to have held this monument in the same regard as their neighbours, the Lindsays of Loughry, did the gallery grave which stood on their former demesne.

APPENDIX: DETAILS OF ORTHOSTATS

	<i>Height above surface (metres)</i>	<i>Width (metres)</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1.	0.40	0.60	lying partly on its side
2.	1.10	0.90	leans to south-west
3.	1.70	1.40	almost perpendicular
4.	1.40	1.20 × 0.60	stands perpendicular
5.	1.10	1.20 × 0.70	stands perpendicular
6.	0.80	1.0 × 0.90	
7.	0.90	1.0 × 0.40	leaning out from cairn
8.	0.95	1.30 × 0.80	leaning out from cairn
9.		1.0 × 0.65	lying flat
10.	0.40 (original height 0.70)	0.60 × 0.50	broken; top half, 0.30 m. high, is lying loose inside chamber, the largest stone of three on plan.
11.	1.10	1.30 × 0.60	almost flat
12.	0.60	1.00 × 0.50	

With one exception, the orthostats are of chloritic gabbro, which is found as a natural bedrock within about 3 miles to the north-west of the site (Hartley, 1933). Its common occurrence as a local glacial erratic (personal information) makes it seem unlikely that the orthostats were transported any great distance by man. Certainly, the one limestone orthostat (no. 1) may have been quarried from the outcrop upon which the cairn stands.

The Killymoon court cairn lies outside the general area of intense megalith distribution in Central Ulster (Briggs, 1973; de Valera, 1960, *passim*; Watson, 1956).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank Mr Ronnie Rankin of Moneymore for kindly bringing the site to my notice; the Killymoon Golf Club for permission to examine the court cairn; Mr Séamus Brennan for help with the surveying on a particularly frosty day; and Mr A. E. P. Collins for much useful discussion. The court cairn is one of a number of recently-discovered sites in the area, most of which have been brought to our attention by James Brennan and George Freeburn.

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- de Valera, R. (1960). 'The Court Cairns of Ireland', *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 60C(1960), 9-140.
- Hartley, J. J. (1933). 'The Geology of N.E. Tyrone and the adjacent parts of Co. Londonderry', *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 41B (1933), 218-285.
- Sampson, G. V. (1814). Map of the County of Londonderry, 1813. Published in London by G. and W. Nicol, 14 June 1814.
- Watson, E. (1956). 'Geographical factors in the Neolithic Colonisation of Northeast Ireland', *Inst. Brit. Geog.*, no. 22, 1956, 119-149.