

# ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



**Survey Report: No. 43**

**Survey of Prehistoric Burial Site, White Park Bay,  
County Antrim  
UAS/13/04**



**In association with**



**Harry Welsh**

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## 1. Summary

### 1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken at White Bark Bay, County Antrim, on Sunday 1 September 2013 of a prehistoric burial mound, known as the *Tumulus*, or *Knocknagalliagh* (Hag's Hill). This is situated in the Townland of White Park, Parish of Ballintoy and Barony of Cary, Irish Grid Reference D 02265 44035 and at an altitude of 31m+OD. This is an area rich in archaeological monuments from almost every time period of human activity in Ulster, many of which are recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) maintained by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage (NIEA). In addition to its archaeological significance, the bay is also part of an Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI 107) and part of the Causeway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated in 1989. The survey was the fourth in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society during 2013.

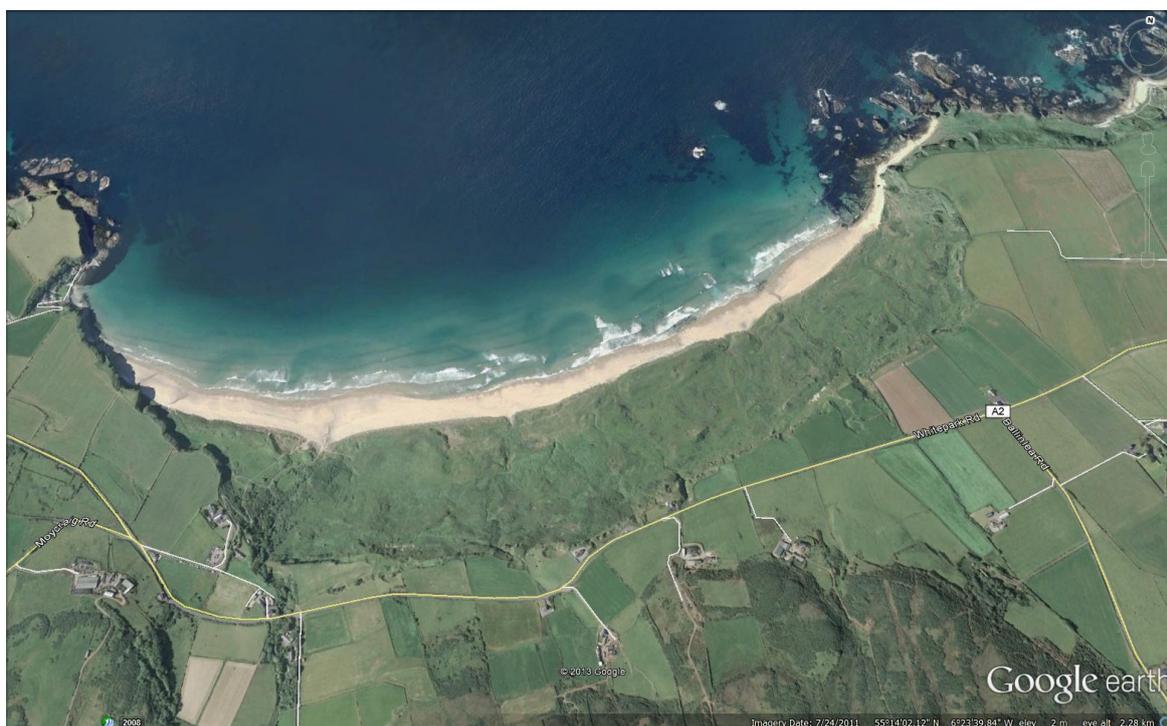


Figure 01: Aerial view of White Park Bay *Google Earth*

### 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 Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to the National Trust and to the archives of the Ulster Archaeological Society.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background

A survey of a prehistoric burial site at White Park Bay was undertaken on Sunday 1 September 2013. 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. 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 the prehistoric burial site was subsequently chosen to be the forty-third of these.

### 2.2 Previous archaeological investigation

During the 1830s, archaeological sites in White Park Bay attracted the attention of surveyors from the Ordnance Survey and some details were recorded in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs that followed.

During the last few decades of the nineteenth century the bay was the subject of intense investigation by antiquarians, many of whom plundered the area of thousands of archaeological artefacts and caused irreparable damage to many of the monuments that had survived intact for thousands of years. Fortunately, some antiquarians, particularly William Knowles and William Gray, published their findings in journals such as the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* and many of their artefacts now form part of our museum collections.

In the absence of recent archaeological investigation at White Park Bay, the antiquarian accounts are essentially our only current source of knowledge for this site.

### 2.3 Cartographic Evidence

White Park Bay is recorded on two sheets of the Ordnance Survey County Series maps, Sheet 3 at the western part and Sheet 4 at the eastern Part. On the First Edition maps of 1833, no archaeological sites are recorded in White Park Bay, but Ballintoy Demesne Passage Tomb (ANT 004:013) is recorded as *Druids Stone* on Sheet 4 (Figure 02).

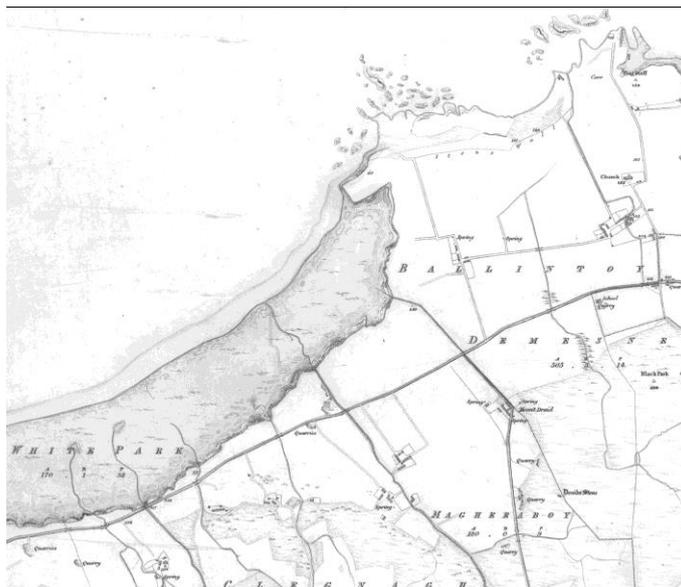


Figure 02: White Park Bay [east]: OS County Series, First Edition, Antrim Sheet 4 (part of) 1833

On the Second Edition 1859 maps (Sheets 3 and 4, Figures 03 & 04), the bay is annotated as a Rabbit Warren along its entire length. At the western end of the beach, two buildings and associated enclosures are recorded and are probably the remains of White Park House. Several archaeological sites are also recorded, including Templastragh Church (ANT 003:012), Ballintoy Demesne Passage Tomb (ANT 004:013) (now annotated as *Cromlech*), Clegnagh Passage Tomb (ANT 004:012) (also annotated as *Cromlech*) and Lemnagh Beg Passage Tomb (ANT 004:007), annotated as *Cloghaboghil*.



Figure 03: White Park Bay [west]: OS County Series, Second Edition, Antrim Sheet 3 (part of) 1859





### 3. UAS Survey of 1 September 2013



Figure 07: View of *Knocknagalliagh*, looking north

#### 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.

#### 1.2 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.

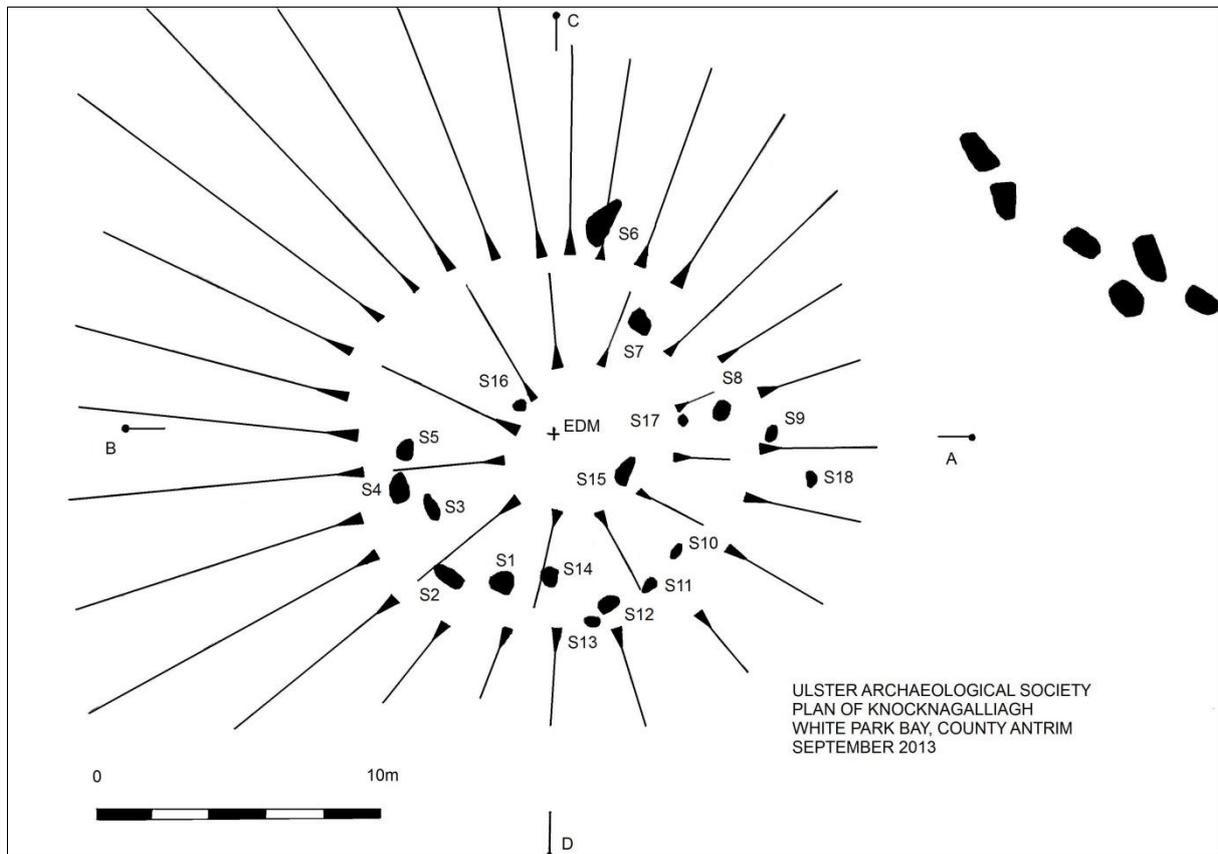


Figure 08: Plan of *Knocknagallagh* and stone row

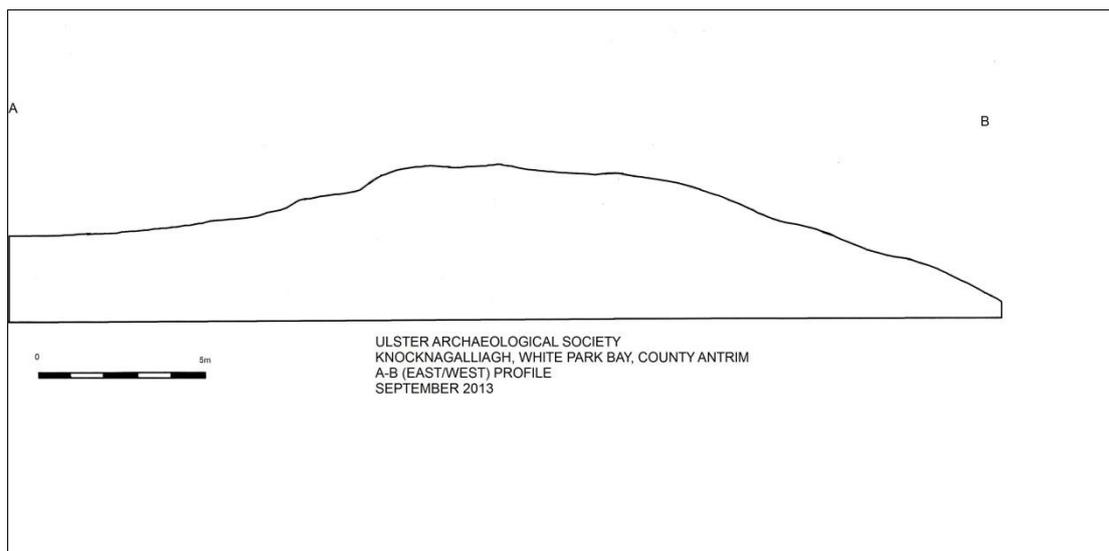


Figure 09: East/west profile of *Knocknagallagh*

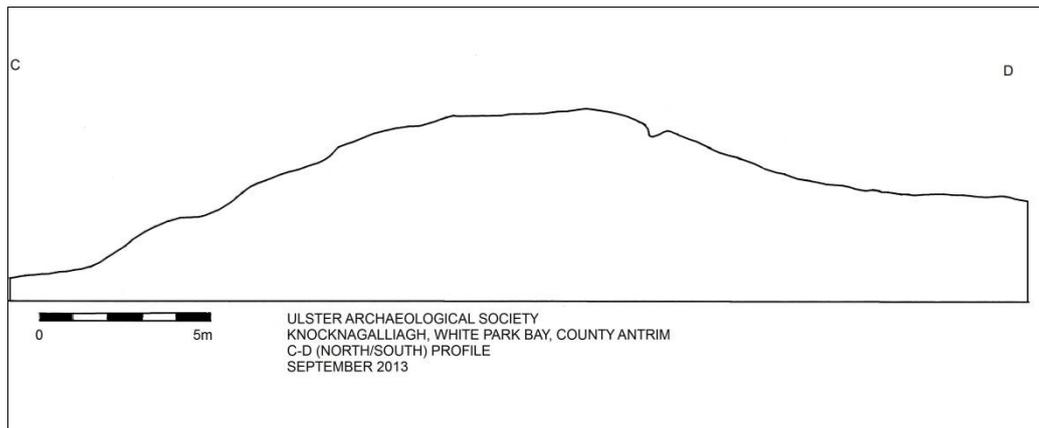


Figure 10: North/south profile of *Knocknagalliagh*

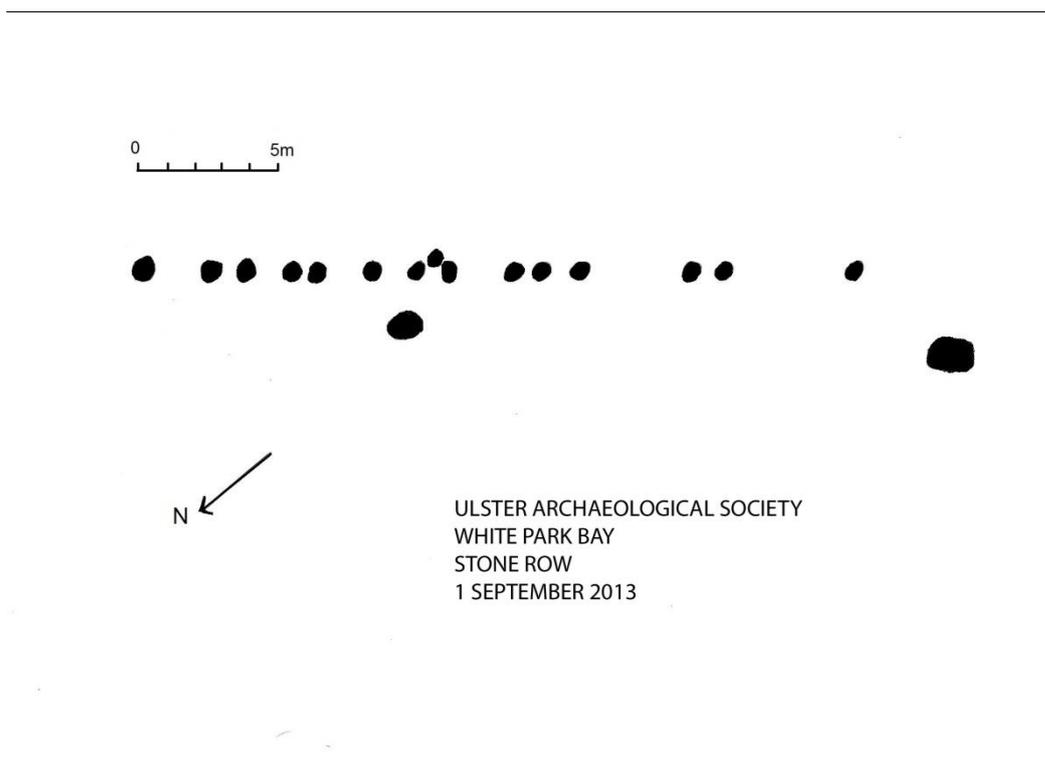


Figure 11: Plan of Stone Row to south of *Knocknagalliagh*

### 1.3 Site description

The primary monument surveyed was the mound known as *Knocknagalliagh*. This consisted of a roughly circular mound 26m in diameter. Around the base of this mound, fifteen boulders were located in an arc extending from north, through east and south, to west. Boulders were not visible between west and north. A further three boulders (two large and one small) were located around the top of the mound. These boulders were numbered S1 to S18 for the purposes of the survey (Figure 08). These were provisionally identified as dolerite (Ian Meighan pers. comm.).

The second monument to be surveyed was a small circular mound 35m to the north-east of *Knocknagalliagh*. This was found to be 8m in diameter and 1.5m in maximum height above

the surrounding ground level, which sloped away steeply on the east to a stream bed. Probing with a survey arrow revealed that it was predominantly constructed of stones, leading to the conclusion that the mound was probably a prehistoric burial cairn.

The third monument surveyed was a row of fifteen stone boulders, aligned north-east/south-west, situated some 134m to the south-south-west of *Knocknagalliagh* (Figure 11). The north-eastern end of the stone row was located at Irish Grid Reference D 02344 43912 and the south-eastern end at D 02296 43888. This was interpreted as being the remains of a stone row.

The fourth monument surveyed was a row of at least five boulders situated on the summit of another mound 57m to the south of *Knocknagalliagh*, located at Irish Grid Reference D 02286 43966. These appeared to be aligned north-east/south-west. Adjacent to this stone row, a flat stone slab was located by probing with a survey arrow and this was interpreted as the possible capstone of a cist burial. Further investigation was not possible due to the presence of extremely thick vegetation in this area.

The fifth monument was a row of six boulders, located some 16m to the north-east of *Knocknagalliagh* (Figure 11). This row was 11.5m in overall length and aligned north-west/south-east. This was interpreted as being the disturbed remains of a stone row.

#### 1.4 Photographic archive

A photographic record of the site was taken by using a *Ricoh G600* 8 megapixel digital camera and others. A photographic record sheet was employed, corresponding to photographs taken during the site survey on 1 September 2013. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.



Figure 12: UAS survey team members at work

## 4. Discussion

### 5.1 Introduction

White Park Bay, which is essentially the same area as the townland of White Park, is delimited by cliffs to the south, the sea to the north and headlands to the east and west. It is currently approachable by a trackway to the west of the bay, which leads from the National Trust car park to the beach. The length and breadth of the bay is grazed by cattle that roam freely.

White Park Bay illustrates a range of geomorphological features. The landward slopes of the bay are made up of numerous shallow retrogressive slips overlain by Aeolian deposits to form a ‘chaotic’ landscape. The beach and nearshore area consists of a strongly dissipative domain throughout the year...Geological interest relates to the high chalk cliffs which display several exposures, from Jurassic age material belonging to the Lower Lias, some 200 m.y.o. to the Cretaceous rocks including the White Limestones which are some 80 m.y.o. The calcareous mudstones and limestones are rich in fossils. Sea-stacks and natural arches are also present. (www.doeni 2006).

Several archaeological monuments are currently recorded on the Sites and Monuments Record maintained by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage. *Knocknagalliagh* is currently classified in the SMR as a cairn and recorded as ANT 004:010 (Figure 13). While undertaking the survey, some members of the UAS Survey Group investigated the area around this monument and in the course of doing so, three other features were identified and recorded (see paragraphs 4.3 – 4.5 below).

SMR NO.	CLASSIFICATION	GRID REF.
ANT 004:008	Neolithic Occupation Site	D 0292 4468
ANT 004:009	Neolithic Occupation Site	D 0206 4400
ANT 004:010	Cairn	D 0225 4403
ANT 004:023	Possible Cist	D 0100 4300
ANT 004:091	Enclosures and possible megalithic tombs	D 0220 4400
ANT 004:094	Enclosure	D 0200 4400

Figure 13: Table of known archaeological sites in White Park townland

TOWNLAND	SMR NO.	CLASSIFICATION	GRID REF.
Templastragh	ANT 003:012	Pre-Norman, Medieval and Post-Medieval Churches and Graveyard with Cross	D 0530 4428
Templastragh	ANT 003:034	Occupation Site (Port Braddan Cave)	D 0640 4451
Ballynastraid	ANT 003:036	Possible Enclosure	D 0520 4363
Ballynastraid	ANT 003:090	Unclassified Megalithic Tomb	D 0800 4350
Lemnagh Beg	ANT 004:007	Passage Tomb	D 0223 4330
Lemnagh More	ANT 003:013	Raised Rath and Souterrain	D 1040 4368
Clegnagh	ANT 004:012	Passage Tomb	D 2491 4363
Clegnagh	ANT 004:034	Possible Barrow	D 2540 4361
Clegnagh	ANT 004:035	Possible Barrow	D 0258 4364
Magheraboy	ANT 004:072	Souterrain	D 0330 4410
Magheraboy	ANT 004:108	Enclosure and possible Souterrain	D 0300 4432
Magheraboy	ANT 004:124	Souterrain	D 0312 4391
Ballintoy Demesne	ANT 004:013	Passage Tomb	D 0371 4377
Ballintoy Demesne	ANT 004:014	Iron Age occupation site	D 0291 4487
Ballintoy Demesne	ANT 004:015	Fortified outcrop [Medieval]	D 0312 4501
Ballintoy Demesne	ANT 004:096	Habitation Site[Iron Age]	D 0320 4508

Figure 14: Selection of recorded monuments in adjacent townlands

In 1838, the mound in White Park Bay was recorded as *Knocknagalliagh* in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs and described thus:

In the White Park and on the summit of a handsome hill contiguous to the sea-shore stands the ruin of a ancient cairn or circular enclosure, 12 yards [11.1m] in diameter. It forms a convex and enclosed round the base by a row of stones, some of which still remain and stand from half [0.15m] to 3 feet [0.9m] above the surface. The interior is of earth and stones. On the top of the enclosure stand 2 stone columns at 11 and a half feet [3.5m] distance one from the other. One of these is 1 foot 10 inches [0.6m] in height, the same in breadth and 1 foot [0.3m] in thickness. The other is 1 and a half feet high [0.5m] and tapering to the top. Some of the inhabitants conjecture this hill to have been a place of public worship, others think it to have been a burial ground. However its eminence and vicinity to the sea-shore render it a delightful situation for either of the above purposes. It is locally called Knocknagalliagh – the Hag’s Hill. Round the precincts of the above enclosure are sundry traces of ancient stone fences or parapets, and in several parts of the White Park are also to be found similar traces (OS Memoir 1838, 47).

William Knowles visited White Park Bay in 1871, focusing his attention on a potential prehistoric occupation site (now recorded in the SMR as ANT 004:009). Knowles records that ‘it was necessary for me to make haste, as others were on my track; but I was in time to get several good hauls at this place before I was seriously disturbed’ (Knowles 1885, 106). He did, however, provide good written records of his finds, which included flint tools, stone tools such as hammer stones, bone tools and a wide range of fish and animal bone. William Gray also investigated sites along the Antrim coast and recorded that ‘the extensive sand dunes along the beach at Whitepark Bay have been extremely rich in worked flints and other implements, of almost every variety’ (Gray 1879, 136). Gray also excavated into Knocknagalliagh and recorded finding human remains. A few years later, another excavation was carried out by Canon Greenwell. Around the same time, Alexander M’Henry also recorded the results of his ‘extensive excavations and researchings...in the dark-brown sand deposits, capping the raised beach, resulting in the finding of numerous Palaeolithic remains’ (M’Henry 1879-1888, 463).

#### 4.2 Mound (*Knocknagalliagh*)

The term *Tumulus* first appears on the Ordnance Survey County Series map of 1904 and presumably this is where the term for the monument originates. It is not a term that appears to be in general use for the monument, even in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs, where it appears to be known by its local name of *Knocknagalliagh*. In the Memoirs, the mound is described as being ‘12 yards [11.1m] in diameter. It forms a convex and enclosed round the base by a row of stones, some of which still remain and stand from half [0.15m] to 3 feet [0.9m] above the surface. The interior is of earth and stones. On the top of the enclosure stand 2 stone columns at 11 and a half feet [3.5m] distance one from the other’ (OS Memoir 1838, 47). The UAS survey identified two large boulders at the top of the mound and a further fifteen boulders in an arc 11m in diameter around the mound some 1.5m below the summit. These are most likely the features described in the Memoirs. If there were two standing stones located at the top of the mound, as described, they may have been a stone pair, although there are only fourteen examples of this type of monument in Northern Ireland, with only three examples in County Antrim and none in coastal areas. The exact nature of the stone feature at the summit of the mound may only be revealed by further investigation, such as by ground-penetrating radar or excavation.

William Gray records that during his excavations in the sand dunes along the north Antrim coast, he visited the mound at White Park Bay (which he refers to as Ballintoy) in 1879. He records that;

there is a stone circle perched on one of the talus heaps on the slope from the cliffs above the sand dunes of Whitepark Bay (*see* fig. No. 21 [Figure 15]). I had this opened, and found the remains of a skeleton laid on a rude pavement of flat stones: as the remains were found within about two feet [0.6m] of the surface, I consider that this may have been a secondary burial; and the mound contained other remains of the primary burial (Gray 1879, 138).

In 1885, William Knowles also referred to the mound, which he described as a ‘natural conical mound of rock chalk (Knowles 1885, 125). He describes the archaeological features on the mound as ‘a stone circle about 30 feet [9.2m] in diameter, within which is a barrow

about 3 feet [0.9m] high’ and goes on to say that the barrow ‘was dug into and examined by Canon Greenwell F.R.S., a few years ago, when on a visit to the North of Ireland. He says there had evidently been the burial of an unburnt body in the grave at the centre, which had been disturbed before’ (*ibid.*, 125). This was probably during Gray’s excavation of 1879 and suggests that the burial may have been examined and then re-buried. The ‘stone circle’ described by both Gray and Knowles was probably the kerb stones, set around the base of what Knowles refers to as the barrow, to prevent its collapse, rather than being a stone circle located at the summit. This suggests the barrow was man-made, rather than a natural feature, as the builders were aware that the material contained within the kerb was potentially more unstable than the naturally-occurring talus heaps in the area. Many of the kerb stones are still visible around the base of the mound and were recorded during the UAS 2013 Survey (Figure 08).

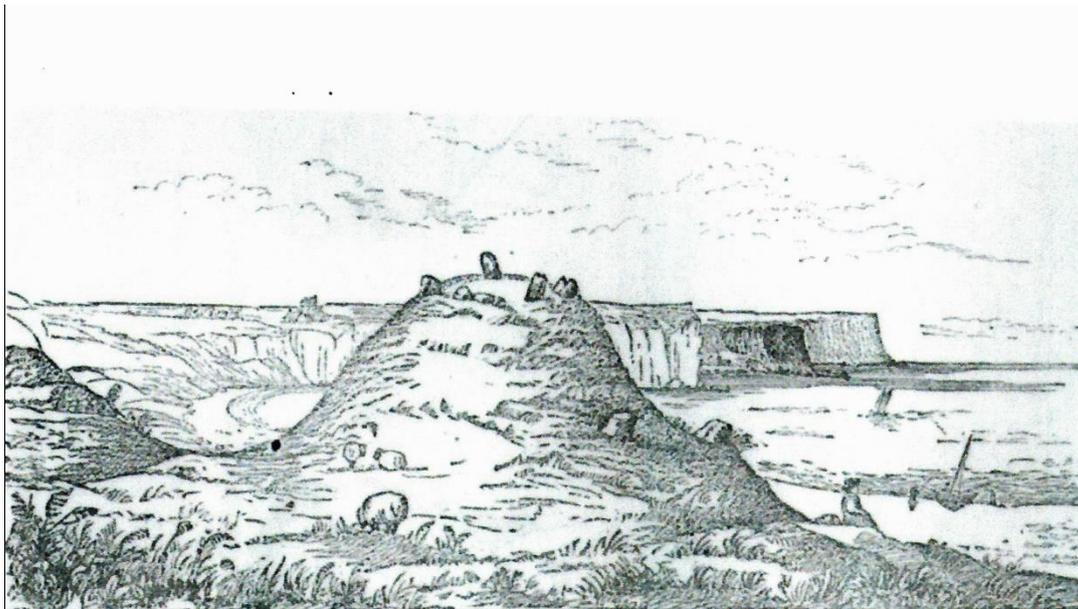


Figure 15: Illustration of *Knocknagalliagh* (after Gray 1879, 137)

The mound *Knocknagalliagh* at White Park Bay may be of a type classified by Waddell as a ‘Cemetery Mound’ (Waddell 1998, 158-162). This classification is not one that is employed by the statutory agencies in Northern Ireland or indeed the Republic of Ireland, where it might instead be classified as a mound barrow or burial cairn. Waddell explains his terminology as embracing ‘earlier mounds re-used for multiple burials in the later third and second millennia, as well as circular mounds specifically constructed to cover several burials, or perhaps built to cover just one or two graves with secondary burials inserted at a later date’ (Waddell 1998, 158). An example of a cemetery mound is Poulawack in County Clare, which is roughly circular with a diameter of 18m. It is approximately 1.2m in height, although it is estimated to have originally been perhaps 2.5m in height. The mound at White Park Bay is 18m in diameter and 4.5m in height. There are further examples of burials within stone structures along the north Antrim coast, which may also be described as ‘cemetery mounds’.

In the 1870s, Gray also carried out excavations at a site to the west of the Bannmouth that has some similarities to the mound at White Park Bay in that it contained secondary burials. This was probably the remains of a megalithic tomb, which is now unlocated but recorded in the SMR (LDY 003:071). He records:

a very rude stone circle on the sand dunes near Castlerock; it was formed of six stones each about four feet high (*see* fig. No. 20 [Figure 16]). I opened the circle without removing the stones, and found several small cists, or little box-like chambers, formed of rounded boulders, and in each cist a quantity of burnt human bones, such as are usually enclosed in cinerary urns'. He also records a third site: 'some years ago a similar monument was found near Bushfoot, having been exposed by a storm that stripped off the sand. In this case the remains of a human skeleton were found within the rude stone enclosure (Gray 1879, 136-138).

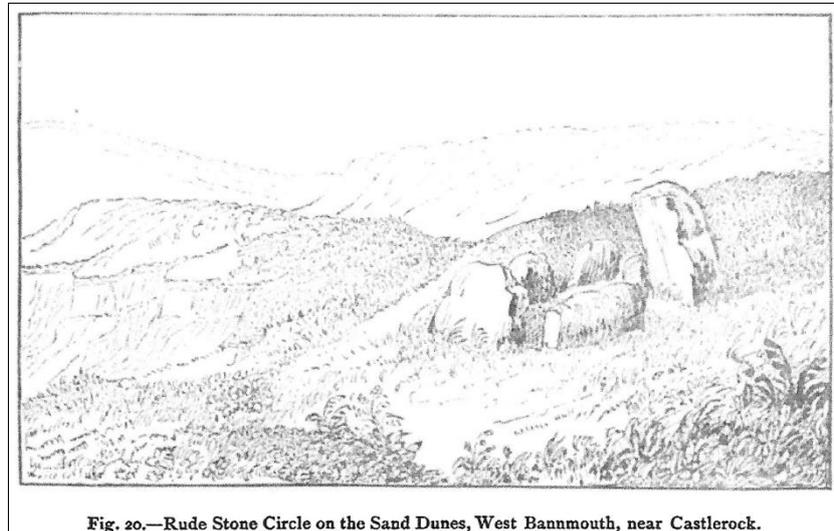


Fig. 20.—Rude Stone Circle on the Sand Dunes, West Bannmouth, near Castlerock.

Figure 16: Illustration of megalithic tomb (LDY 003:071) (after Gray 1879, 135).

*Knocknagalliagh* is currently recorded on the SMR as a cairn (ANT 004:010) and is a scheduled monument in accordance with the terms of the Historic Monuments and Archaeological Objects (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The lack of visible stone in the construction of the mound suggests that this monument should be re-classified as a mound barrow. There are similar sites in the Republic of Ireland and the classification used by the National Monument Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in the Republic of Ireland is 'a circular or oval earthen or earth and stone mound with no external features...they are funerary in nature and contain and/or cover burials. Excavated examples have been dated to the Bronze and Iron Ages (*c.* 2400 BC – AD 400)' (DoEHLG 2008).

#### 4.3 Probable Burial Cairn

During the UAS 2013 survey, a low circular mound was observed about 35m to the north-east of the *Tumulus*. This monument had previously been recorded in 1897 by Knowles as Site *n* (Figure 19) (Knowles 1900-1902, 332) but is not currently recorded on the SMR. Probing with a survey flag during the 2013 UAS survey revealed the feature to be largely composed of stone and is probably the remains of a prehistoric burial cairn.

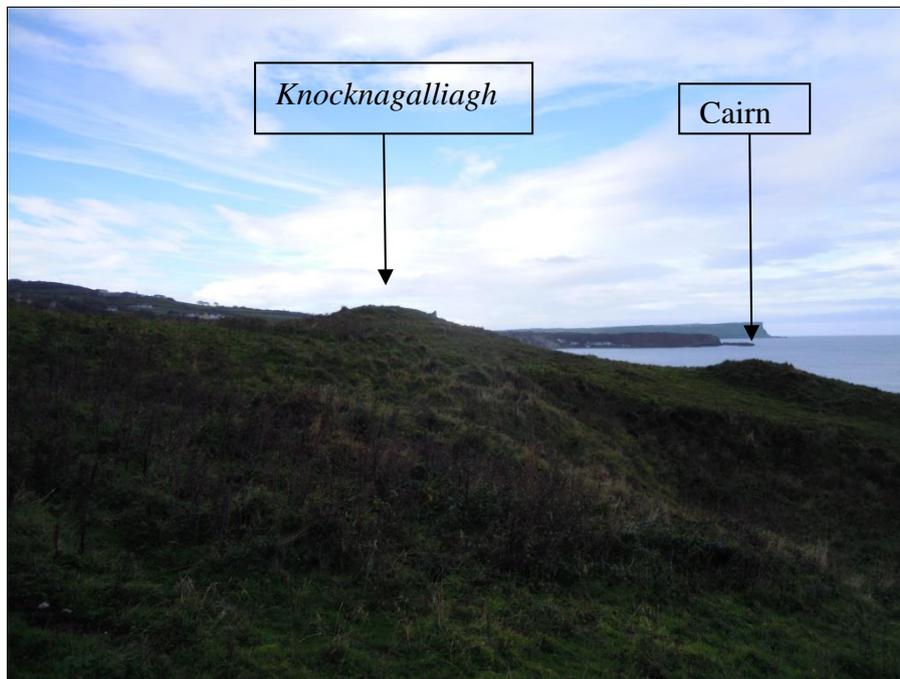


Figure 17: View of *Knocknagalliagh* and probable cairn, looking west

#### 4.4 Possible Cist Burial

At approximately 80m to the south of *Knocknagalliagh*, another mound was investigated during the UAS 2013 survey. At the summit of this mound, a stone feature was located and probing with a survey flag revealed the presence of a stone slab, which may be the capstone of a cist burial, possibly the unlocated cist burial recorded in the SMR as ANT 004:023.

#### 4.5 Possible Stone Row

At approximately 90m south-south-west of *Knocknagalliagh*, a row of fifteen stone boulders was identified during the 2013 UAS survey. The boulders were aligned east/west, 26m in overall length and are probably the remains of a stone row. Two larger boulders were located adjacent to the stone row (Figure 11). The presence of such features was recorded in the OS Memoirs 'around the precincts of the above enclosure [*Knocknagalliagh*] are sundry traces of ancient stone fences or parapets, and in several parts of the White Park are also to be found similar traces' (OS Memoir 1838, 47).

#### 4.6 Nearby monuments

##### 4.6.1 Occupation Site (ANT 004:008).

'In the east end of White Park, stands the ruins of some ancient enclosure, the design or use of which is not locally known. It was enclosed by a stone wall and some of the stones sunk on their ends in the ground. However the fence is now nearly destroyed (OS Memoir 1838, 49). These are probably the sites recorded by Knowles (1900-1902, 333) and are probably mound barrows (Figure 19).

##### 4.6.2 Enclosures and possible megalithic tombs (ANT 004:091)

Likewise the ruins of ancient enclosures and in some instances large stones lodged up one end by smaller stones and apparently for some particular purposes, but no detail to be had concerning their design (OS Memoir 1838, 47).

#### 4.6.3 Occupation site (ANT 004:009)

Knowles excavated one of these 'hut sites' in the early 1880s. He described the site as 'near the shore, and running parallel with it, there is a bank of sand fully half a mile in length, parts of which are covered with grass, but others are bare and show no vegetation of any kind. On this bare portion, which is about thirty feet [9.2m] above sea level, there is still visible the remains of several huts' He goes on to say that 'the destructive tendencies of implement-seekers have greatly altered the appearance of the place, and it is now not anything like when I first discovered it...At the time of my earlier visits, seven hut sites were visible, and, on looking at the bank from the sea, these stood out as little mounds or prominences at intervals along the top of the bank'. Knowles described one hut site as being in 'very perfect preservation...It was circular, and had a foundation of stones about two feet broad [0.6m] all round the outside. The stones were unhewn, and it took two sometimes to form the breadth, but there was only one row in depth. The hut site was twenty-seven feet [8.3m] in diameter inside the walls.' (Knowles 1885, 107). Knowles records that when the floors were excavated, very few finds were recovered, but that there was abundant evidence that most of the work of manufacturing flint implements was carried out immediately outside the 'dwelling-places'. The type and quantities of implements recovered suggest that there was significant prehistoric activity in the sand dunes, but this may well have been on a seasonal basis, rather than an indication of permanent settlement. Further, it is difficult to imagine occupational activities taking place in the dunes contemporary with their use as a burial site.

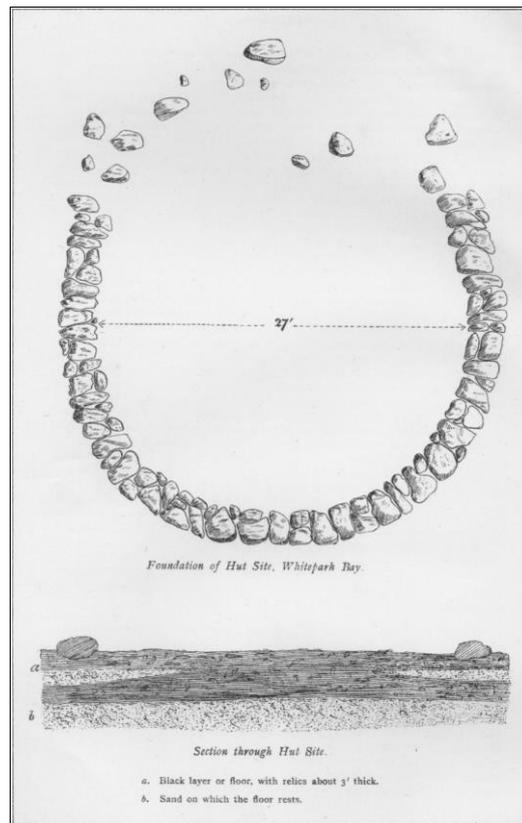


Figure 18: Plan of 'Hut Site', or mound barrow (after Knowles 1885, Plate 1).

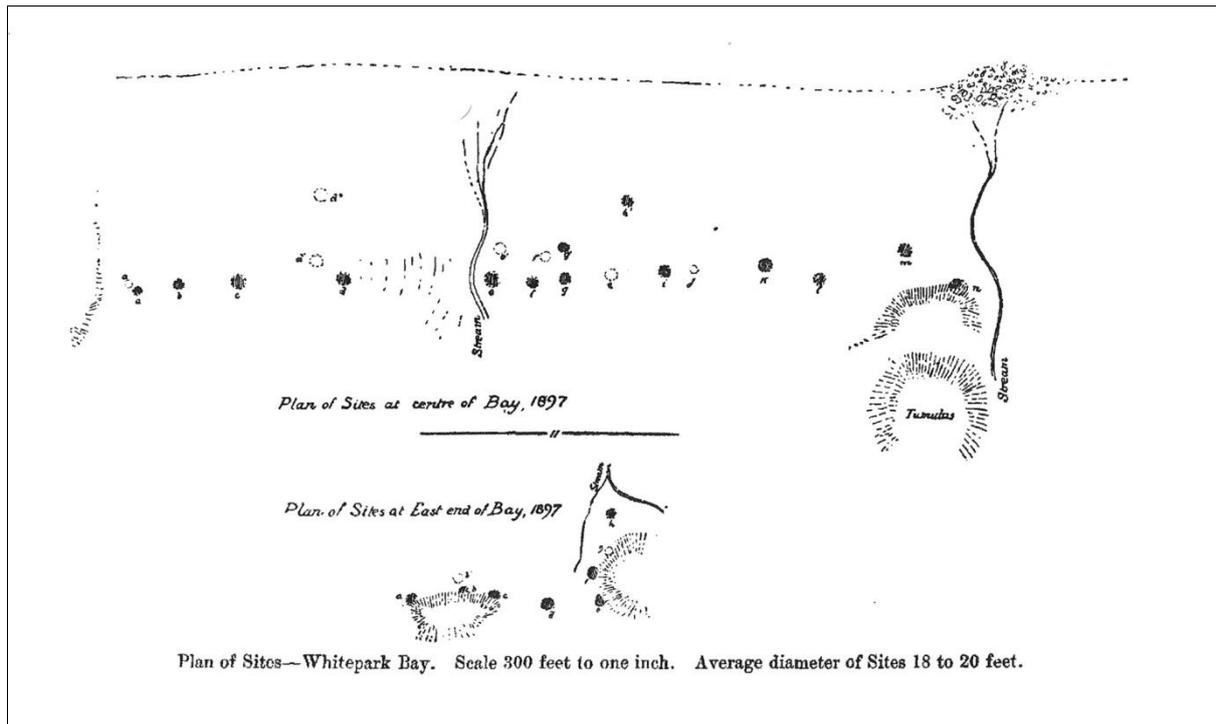


Figure 19: Plan of sites in the central and eastern parts of White Park Bay (after Knowles 1900-1902, 333)

Knowles records the finding of the skeleton of a adult male in what he refers to a hut site, lying ‘on the left side with the head to the south, and looking westward, arms flexed, hands up to the chin, legs flexed, knees between the elbows’ (Knowles 1900-1902, 334). This is what we now would refer to as a crouched inhumation and normally recovered from burial sites rather than dwellings.



Figure 20: Crouched inhumation burial (after Knowles 1900-1902, Plate XV111)

The ‘hut sites’ described by Knowles were more probably mound barrows and it is possible that the entire sand dune area of White Park Bay was a very large cemetery site and the discovery of a crouched inhumation here suggests an early Bronze Age date for these features.

#### 4.6.4 Urn Burials

Gray records that ‘several urns have been found along the under-cliffs of this bay...and there are no less than three cromlechs on the slopes of the hills above the bay’ (Gray 1879, 138). There is currently no record of any urn burials, but the three cromlechs he refers to are probably Ballintoy Demesne Passage Tomb (ANT 004:013), Clegnagh Passage Tomb (ANT 004:012) and Lemnagh Beg Passage Tomb (ANT 004:007).

#### 4.6.5 Unprovenanced or surface finds

Much of the antiquarian activity at White Park Bay seems to have been directed at the recovery of artefacts, in an age where some individuals amassed huge collections of these. Several accounts refer to the presence of one or more dark layers, which signalled to them a rich source of plunder.

..old surface black layer, which seem to have been the sites of ancient habitations; burnt stones may be observed; fragments of charcoal have been washed or trampled into the black layer; pieces of rude pottery are scattered around; and flint flakes, scrapers, hammer stones, and other evidence of human workship, occur in more or less abundance (Gray 1879, 133)

Gray also states that ‘on one occasion at Ballintoy, I picked up as many as twenty-eight hammer stones’ (Gray 1879, 133). He also records that the quantity of flakes, cores, burnt stones, pottery, as well as hammers, found here indicate that the slopes of the talus, under the bluff cliffs, formed for a long time the camping-ground of the pre-historic Irish settlers’ (Gray 1879, 136).

Some of the bird bones recovered by William Knowles from White Park Bay were sent to Professor Newton of Magdalen College, Cambridge, who identified them as belonging to a Great Auk (Figure 21), a flightless and now extinct bird (Knowles 1900-1902, 336).

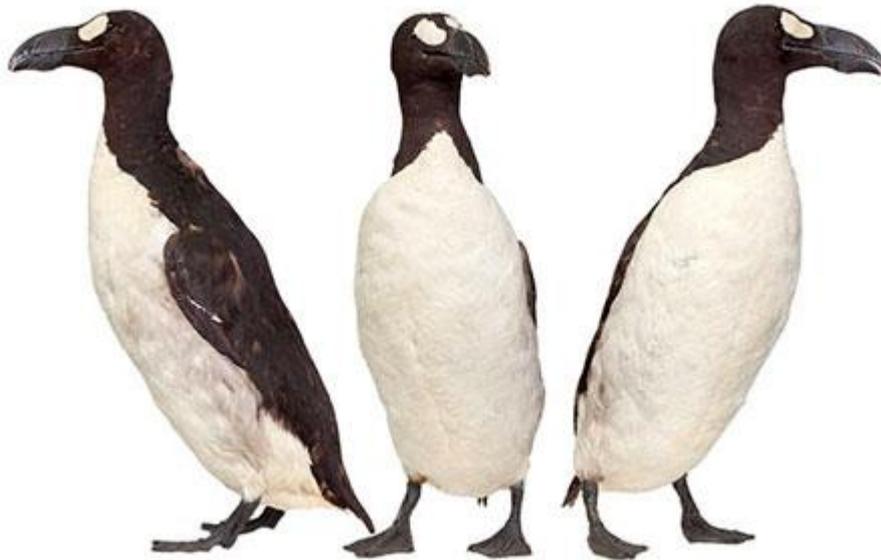


Figure 21: Great Auk, extinct in 1844 *Natural History Museum*

During the 2013 UAS survey, 7 flint flakes were observed on the ground surface and collected (Figure 22). These have been identified as late Mesolithic/early Neolithic (Brian Sloan pers. comm.) and have been archived with the National Trust. One sherd of pottery was also recovered.



Figure 22: Flints recovered during 2013 UAS survey

One sherd of pottery was found during the 2013 UAS survey (Figure 23). This was subsequently identified as sixteenth-century *Saintonge Polychrome* (Ruairí Ó Baoill pers. comm.)

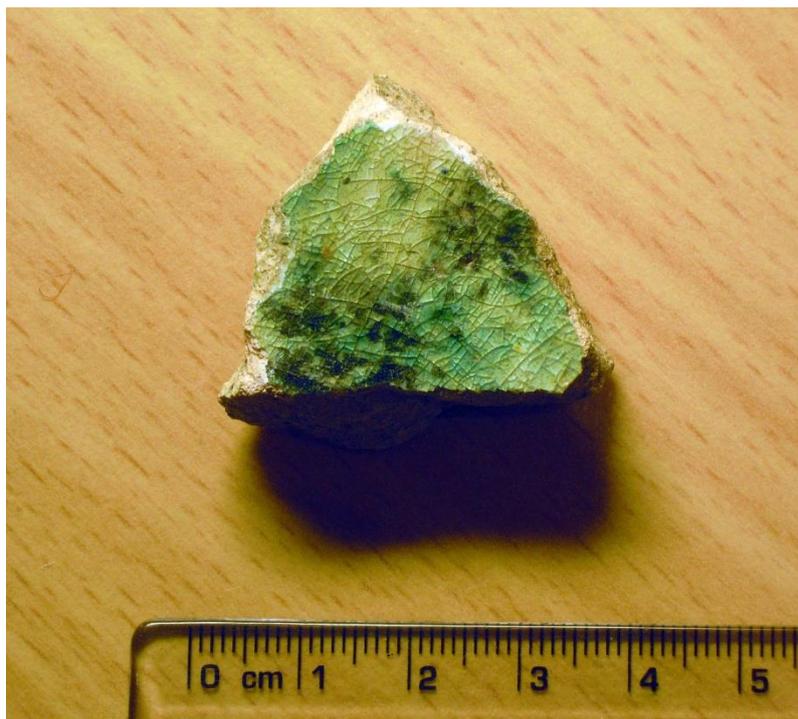


Figure 23: Sherd of Sixteenth-century pottery recovered during 2013 UAS survey

Knowles published several articles on the items that he recovered from the site, such as ‘three dumb-bell beads have been procured...three bronze pins, and a small bar of bronze...a large number of polished stone celts, or portions of such...well-made flint knives’ (1894, 245-246). A few years later, he further recorded:

I have spent a good amount of time among these sand-hills during the past fifteen or sixteen years, and have obtained a large series of objects, and some of my archaeological friends, who are now very well acquainted with the place, have obtained numerous specimens. I believe it would be no exaggeration to say that between 3000 and 4000 manufactured articles have already been collected (Knowles 1889-1891, 174-175).

#### 4.6.6 Possible relict land surfaces at White Park Bay

In 1879, Alexander M’Henry reported the findings of his ‘explorations at White Park Bay’ to the Royal Irish Academy. He recorded that ‘extensive excavations and searchings were made in the dark-brown sand deposits, capping the raised beach, resulting in the finding of numerous Palaeolithic remains laid before you’ (M’Henry 1879, 463). He reveals some interesting aspects of this deposit:

This deposit of brown sand is exposed in several places along the shores of the bay, but principally in the central part of it, and from where the greater portion of specimens were obtained. It varies in thickness from a few inches to a foot and a half [0.4m], and is undulating and irregular in its deposition. The dark-brown colour of the sand is, no doubt, due to the numerous fires which were burned on its surface at the time of occupation by the Palaeolithic people, as is evidenced by the finding of hearths of burnt stones, charred wood and bones, &c. (M’Henry 1879, 463).

Knowles described the dark layers as ‘the black layer or old surface’ (1889-1891, 620-621) and described it as being:

generally from four to six inches thick, but it may sometimes reach ten or twelve inches. It is thickest in the neighbourhood of hut sites. Underneath hearths the black material is sometimes more than three feet in thickness. Sometimes several layers will be seen succeeding each other with layers of sand between. This occurs most frequently in the neighbourhood of hut sites...At one part of Whitepark Bay, at Horn Head, and some other stations, the old surface and hearths are full of sea-shells; but where the implements and other stone objects are plentiful, as at other parts of Whitepark Bay, the shells are only sparingly distributed throughout the layer (Knowles 1889-1891, 621).

The geology of White Park Bay was examined by Coffee and Praeger in 1904, along with that of other coastal sites, when it was suggested that:

At Whitepark Bay, the “black layers,” or old land surfaces, occur at various levels among the dunes. Blown sand, an aerial deposit, lies not only above

the old surfaces, but below them. We thus get the following order of events:-

- (1) Elevation of the land till the ground on which the dunes rest rose beyond the reach of the waves.
- (2) Accumulation of blown sand on this old surface.
- (3) Formation of sward on top of the blown sand, and settlement of Neolithic man thereon.
- (4) Accumulation of sand on this surface.  
(Coffey and Praeger 1904/1905, 194).

Traces of the suggested relict land surfaces were observed during the 2013 UAS survey, hinting that at least some of these deposits may have survived the ravages of coastal erosion and antiquarian disturbance (Figure 24).



Figure 24: Horizontal dark bands above high water mark, north of occupation site ANT 004:009

#### 4.6.7 White Park House

At the west of the bay stands a building that was formerly used as a youth hostel and immediately to the east of this, across the modern trackway, are the remains of at least two stone walls. It has been suggested that these buildings are the surviving remains of:

an extensive two-storey, slated mansion called White Park House, and its outbuildings. They were built around 1740 by Squire John Stewart, a member of the family that lived at the nearby Ballintoy Castle. White Park House was for some years the site of a school for the sons of the local gentry. They were taught by the Rev. William Sturrock, who was curate of Ballintoy Parish Church in 1772 and vicar of Culfeightrim Parish from 1770 to 1777. Members of the Stewart, Wheatley and Macnaghten families received their early education at this school. There is a longstanding local tradition that the influential politician, Lord Castlereagh, was educated at

the school prior to entering The Royal School, Armagh in 1777. (Ballintoy Archaeological and Historical Society, 2013).



Figure 25: Possible remains of White Park House

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations for further work

It is tantalising to think that before receiving the attention of nineteenth-century antiquarians, White Park Bay was an undisturbed prehistoric landscape, protected by its geography, with cliffs to the south, the sea to the north and headlands to the east and west. From the accounts of antiquarians such as William Knowles and William Gray, it seems that vast amounts of artefactual material had been plundered from the site, although some details have been published in academic journals. The bay is currently considered to be a predominantly Neolithic landscape, largely based on antiquarian speculation and the ‘hut sites’ they described have been accepted as evidence of occupation. The recovery of domestic occupation material, such as quern stones, hearths and animal bone, has long been accepted as evidence of this.

However, the hut sites may instead be mound barrows covering burials and the crouched inhumation discovered in at least one ‘hut’ seems to confirm this. A review of antiquarian literature, particularly drawings of associated pottery would appear to be predominantly Bronze Age funerary ware, with some of possible Beaker type, which would correspond with the two crouched inhumations discovered at the bay sites. It is astonishing that the possibility of the bay being a very large funerary site has not yet attracted any discussion.

Clearly, despite the destruction inflicted on such an important archaeological resource, there is much to be learned from a study of White Park Bay. It is suggested that the following be considered by the National Trust:

- (a) Further archaeological survey and investigation, both geophysical survey and targeted excavation could greatly inform our knowledge of the area and add to the visitor experience and archaeological record of the site. Unfortunately, the uneven ground

surface and plant cover makes archaeological survey extremely difficult. The bay would therefore be an ideal subject for survey by remote sensing such as LIDAR.

- (b) A review of existing literature and surviving artefacts from White Park Bay should be undertaken, in order to re-assess the information in light of over a century of academic research since this material was identified.
- (c) Surviving 'dark layers' should be analysed in order to obtain information on their composition and possible date.

White Park Bay is an area of outstanding natural beauty and archaeological interest and monuments in the area span most of the period of human occupation in Ireland. Despite this, little recent investigation has taken place here in recent years and much of the archaeology of the bay remains poorly-understood. Most visitors to the site have little idea of the extent of the archaeological heritage of the place they visit, which could be helped by the provision of information signs and story boards.

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## APPENDIX - PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

**Site:** White Park Bay, County Antrim

**Date:** 1 September 2013

**Make and model of camera...***Ricoh G600 W*, 8 megapixel and others

Frame no	Viewed From	Details
RIMG0008(2)	South	Survey group in action at Knocknagalliagh
RIMG0015	South	Knocknagalliagh and adjacent burial cairn
RIMG0020	South	View of boulders in stone row to south of Knocknagalliagh
RIMG0037	East	View of Knocknagalliagh and adjacent burial cairn
DSCN4309	North	Bands of dark material above high water mark
DSCN4330	West	View of remains of White Park House
DSCN4340	East	View of bay and dune system
DSC7543	East	View of Knocknagalliagh and adjacent burial cairn
DSC7551	South	View of Knocknagalliagh
DSC7562	North	View of talus heap and possible Cist Burial
DSC4359	N/A	View of surface flint artefacts recovered during 2013 survey
DSC4616	N/A	View of Saintonge Polychrome pottery sherd recovered 2013