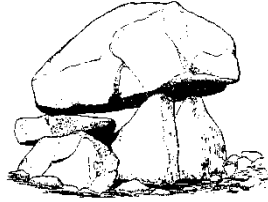


# ULSTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY



**Survey Report: No. 39**

**Survey of Johnston's Green at Divis,  
County Antrim**

**UAS/12/04**



**In association with**

 **THE NATIONAL TRUST**

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## 1. Summary

### 1.1 Location

A site survey was undertaken of a site known as Johnston's Green at Divis townland, County Antrim, within two tributary streams of the Colin river and lying south east of Divis Lodge. There are a number of other monuments in the Divis area including farms and houses. The survey was the 39th in a series of planned surveys undertaken by members of the Ulster Archaeological Society since 2006.



Figure 01: General view of the site, looking south-west

### 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

The survey of Johnston's Green was undertaken on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2012. 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 Johnston's Green was subsequently chosen to be the 39<sup>th</sup> of these.

## 2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

As far as it is known, there has been no previous archaeological survey at this site.

## 2.3 Cartographic Evidence

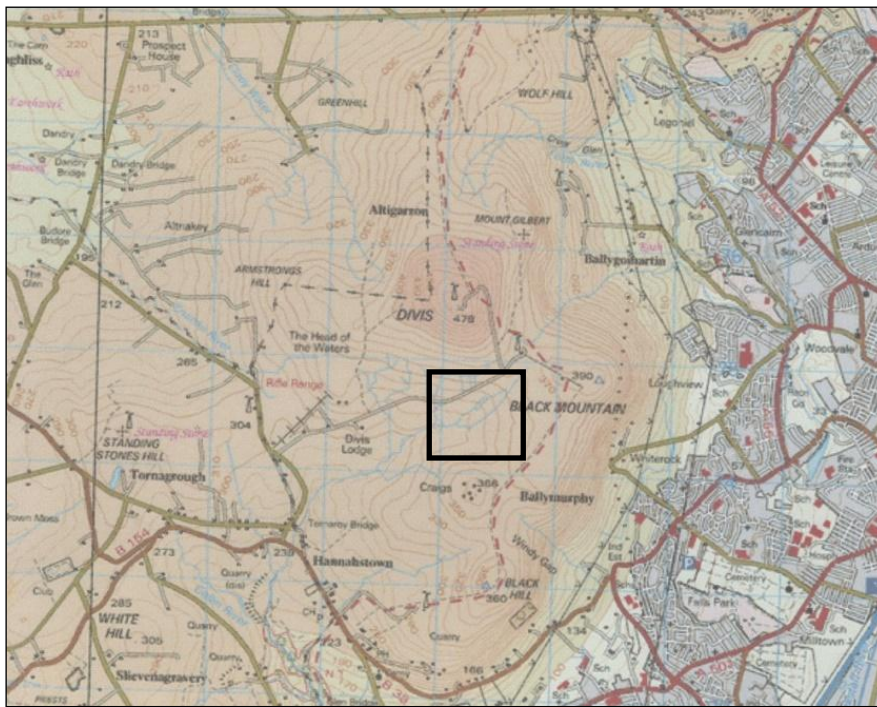


Figure 02: Location Map for Divis and Black Mountain, *Ordnance Survey*

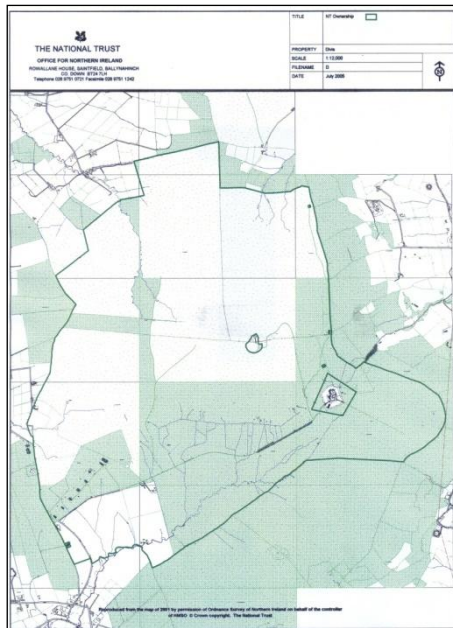


Figure 03: Location of Johnston's Green at Divis and Black Mountain, *National Trust*

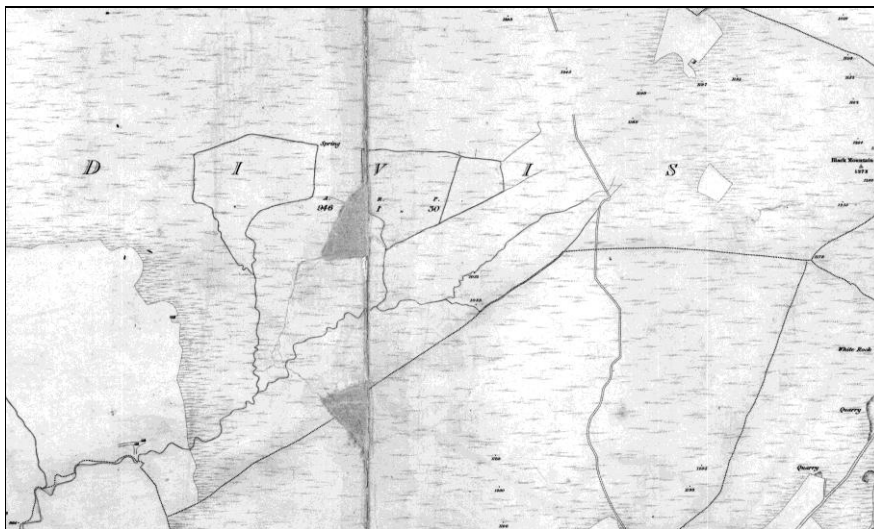


Figure 04: First Edition, County Series 1832 map (part of) *Ordnance Survey*

The site at Johnston's Green is not recorded on the 1832 Ordnance Survey County Series, Sheet 60, 1832 map (Fig. 04).



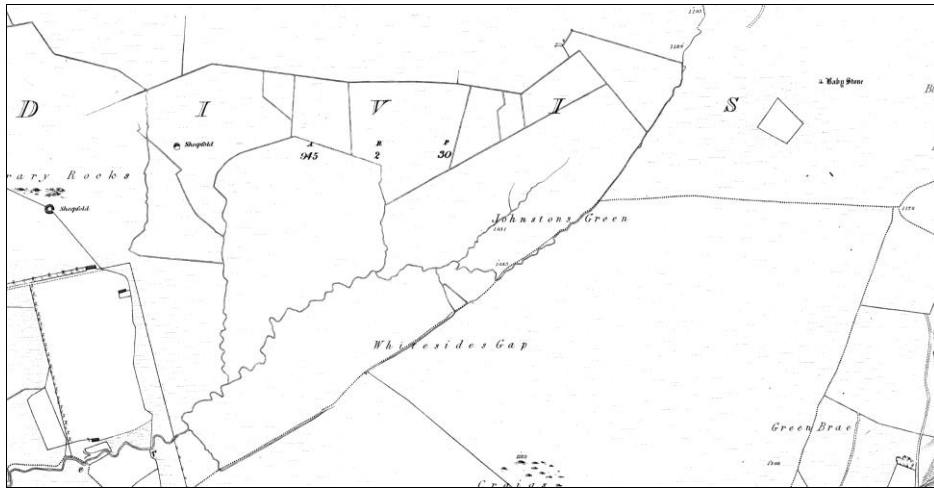


Figure 05: Second Edition, County Series 1857 map (part of) *Ordnance Survey*

The Ordnance Survey, Second Edition County Series 60 map of 1857 shows *Johnston's Green*, but not any structures in the area (Fig. 05). There is little change recorded on the Ordnance Survey, Third Edition County Series 60 map, but other properties, such as *Divis Barn* are indicated (Fig. 06).

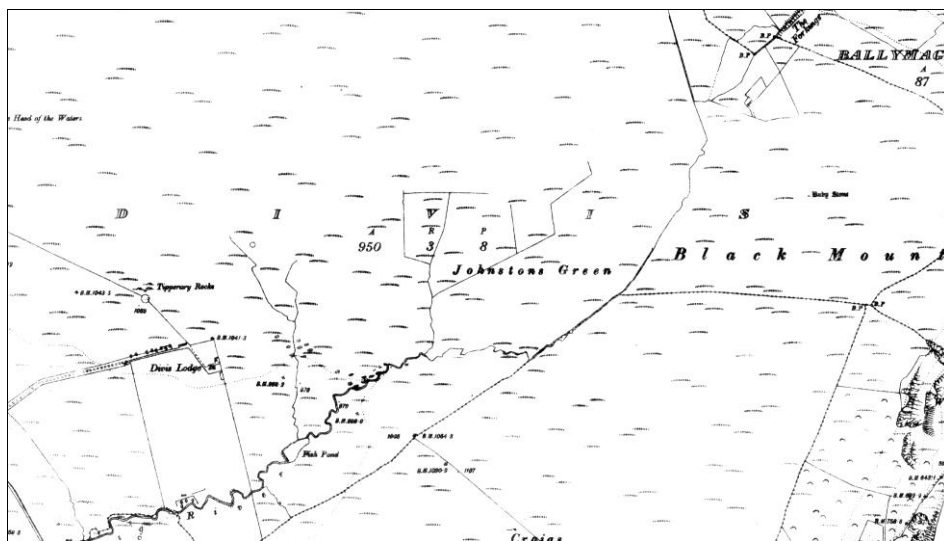


Figure 06: Third Edition, County Series 1901 map (part of) *Ordnance Survey*

## 2.4 Archiving

Copies of this report have been deposited with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, 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 Ian Forsythe, Ian Gillespie, Lee Gordon, Anne MacDermott, Janna McDonald, Liz McShane, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford, Harry Welsh, June Welsh. 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 who worked on the survey on the day.

### 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. 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 a plane table and *Leica Sprinter* and a measuring tape and ranging rods. Sketch plans at 1:200 scale were completed on site by recording these measurements on paper and backing up the data on a field notebook for subsequent reference. Field plans were later transferred to a computer-based format for printing.

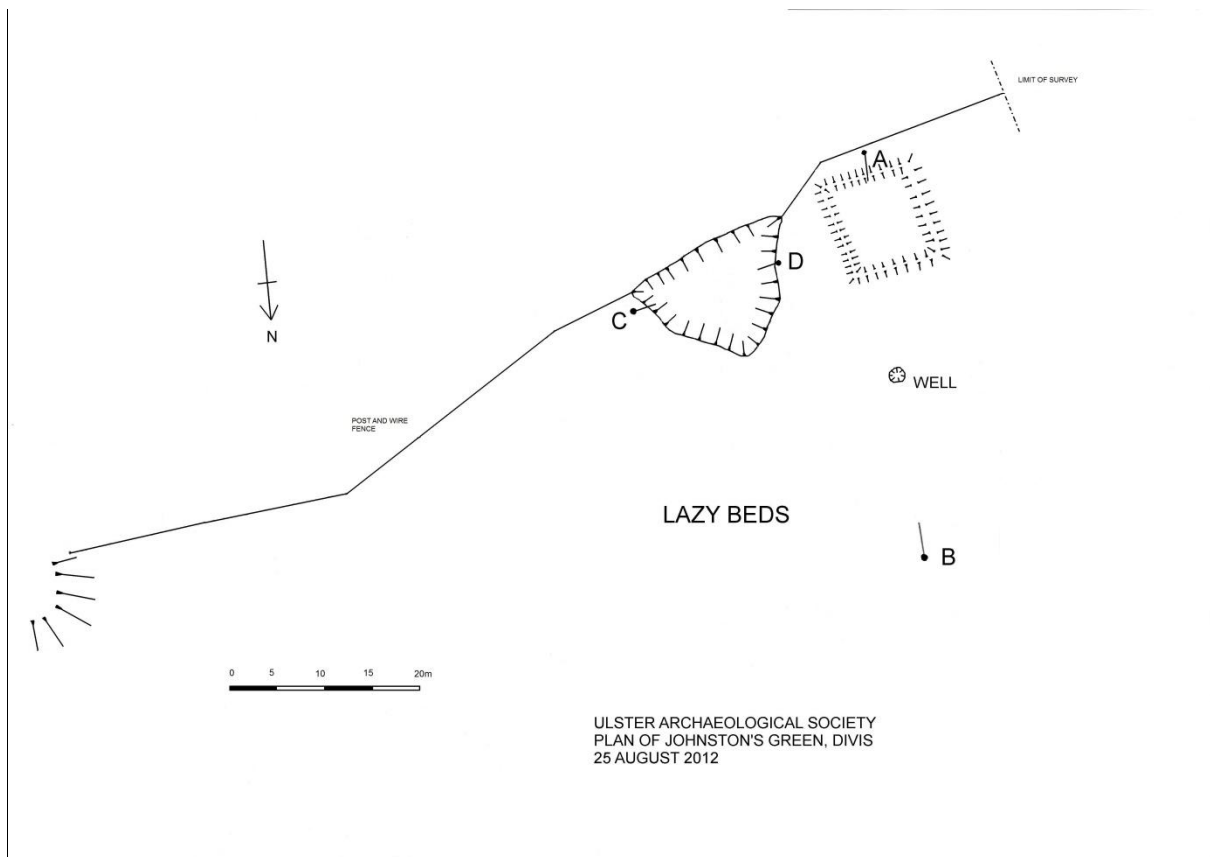


Figure 07: Plan of Johnston's Green site

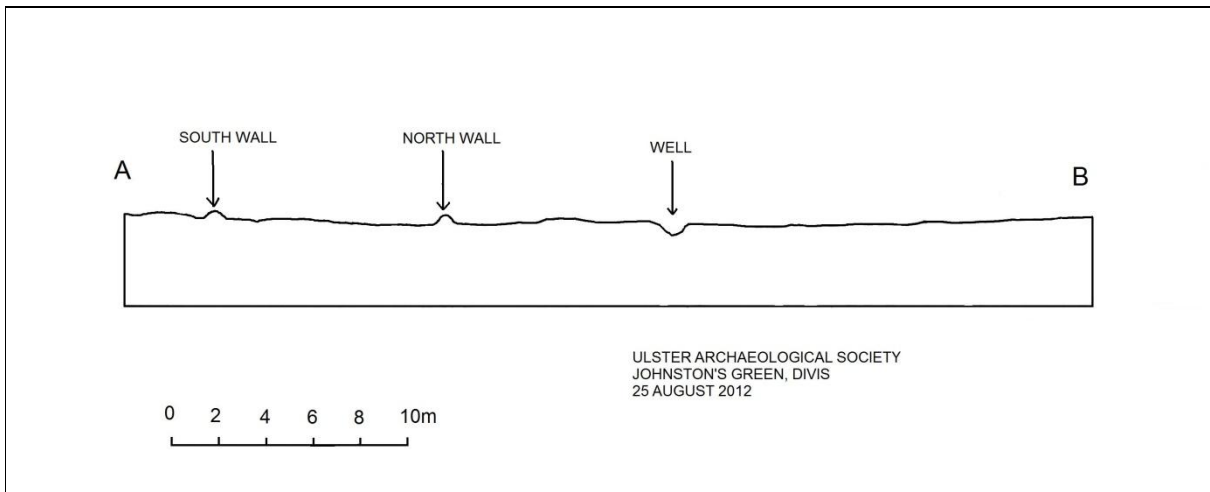


Figure 08: A-B Profile of site

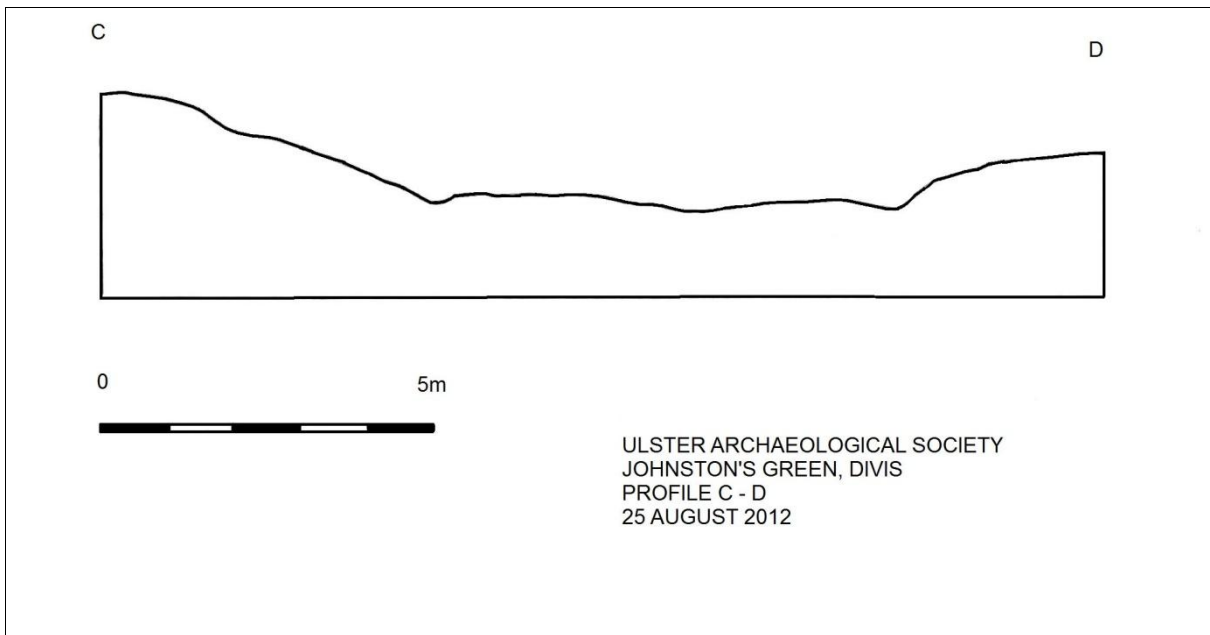


Figure 09: C-D Profile of site

### 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<sup>th</sup> August 2012. The archive has been compiled in jpeg format and saved to compact disc.



Figure 10: UAS survey team members at work

#### 4. Discussion

The survey of this site was part of a wider UAS study of archaeology in the Divis, Black Mountain area. This site is situated in a valley between the summits of Divis and Black Mountain at an altitude of 320 metres above sea level, Irish Grid reference J 28259 74433. It lies south of Divis Lodge, within Divis townland. The monument is one of a number of remains of farms and dwellings in this area, often called after people who owned them or lived there.

Today Johnston's Green is a relatively large rectangular site, 41 metres long and 15 metres wide, aligned East-West with tributary streams of the Colin River surrounding it on three sides. The far Eastern boundary of the site has a raised bank with a large stone at one corner and another opposite but slightly lower down. Entry to the site is down this slope. A badger sett, a hole with soft earth thrown out, is at the boundary fence.

##### 4.1 The site has three main features:

The remains of a rectangular building next to a bank, stream and pond; a number of lazy beds running the length of the site; a raised grassy area at the confluence of two streams of the Colin river.

##### 4.2 Johnston's Green and the Colin River

Des O' Reilly "The Rivers of Belfast" (2010, 136-152) describes three sections of the Colin River, Upper, Middle and Lower. The Upper Colin, known as the Big River, has its source in Johnston's Green, where a number of small springs combine to form the head waters of a small stream which is the Colin River. The tributary streams of the Colin River surround

Johnston's Green on three sides and join at the south western end of the site, beyond the lazy beds, to flow down the hill to Tornaroy Bridge.

The term 'Green' has two possible interpretations, it could refer to an early use as a bleach green for linen, such sites are identified further down the hill nearer the river Lagan, where historically, linen mills drew on the mountain streams for power and processing the linen. (Dobson N. "Colin Glen A History") A dam belonging to the McCance family linen mill is situated south of the site and still had water in it in the 1950's, though it is now filled in. (McShane L. 2010 "Divis and Black Mountain: a local history")

The most likely interpretation is that 'Green' refers to the ground being a green grassy area within surrounding bog, marshland and rushes, which has been used for grazing livestock or cultivated to grow food, such as potatoes and oats in lazy beds. Des O' Reilly "The Rivers of Belfast" (2010, 140-142), describes a system of settlement on Divis and Black Mountain continuing from the Iron Age into the Christian era:

*"... a society reflecting the ancient pastoral economy and culture of Ireland, based on townland settlements in forest clearings along the hill slopes. This was supplemented by seasonal movement of cattle and part of its population to the summer pastures where their booleys (Ir buaile, milking place in summer pasturage) marked out the areas where animals could graze on fresh grass. Remains of these pasturages and their temporary huts are to be seen along the Upper Collin valley. Their green swards contrast with the surrounding heather clad slopes."*

During the nineteenth century, the rapid rise in Ireland's population put great pressure on the land in terms of its exploitation. More and more marginal land was brought into production. Upland pastures above 175m used for grazing, were then cultivated to grow oats and potatoes in lazy beds. The booleying areas of the past became permanent places of settlement and the booley hut was converted into a small farm and remained so until the twentieth century. (O'Reilly) This may have occurred on Johnston's Green, the existence of a well on the site suggests there was a dwelling house there.

The rectangular enclosure/farm building on the Johnston's Green site, is not shown on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1832. The name Johnston does not appear in Divis townland in the Griffiths Valuation of 1848-1864. The Griffiths Valuation Revision Books of 1864 onwards, show that there were no buildings with a value of £5 NAV or more on Divis. (M. Catney and J McDonald UAS Survey of Divis Farm No.25) It may be that a booley hut on the site, which was not a permanent dwelling, was not recorded, it would not have had a high NAV value. Or the building may have been erected later than this,

The name 'Johnston' has continued to the present day, yet so far, no written record of a Johnston on this particular Divis site has been found. In the list of tenants of Viscount Templeton's estate for 1851, which refer to an adjoining townland of Ballutoag, (PRONI T/412/1), there is a listing of a William Johnston with a wife and five children who rented one portion of land of 68 acres and acquired another area of land of 406 acres from a John Johnston. These are relatively large holdings, suggesting William Johnston was a farmer of some standing. Whether or when the Divis site was acquired by him is not known.

Des O' Reilly refers to Johnston as being a landowner associated with grouse shooting on the mountain. (personal communication to UAS member). From the mid nineteenth century,

there was a tradition of hunting and shooting in the Belfast hills among wealthy families owning linen mills in the Lagan valley, such as the McCance, Milne, Barbour and Hamill families (McShane L , Dobson N) In the interwar years of the twentieth century this continued, in that attempts were made to establish a grouse farm on the mountain similar to the farms in Scotland, but it eventually ended (Des O'Reilly 2010, 141-142) Game shooting on the hills was an activity that was recalled by older people living in the area today, the gun dogs used were kept in kennels on Black Mountain. (L. McShane 2010, 8). Gamekeepers employed by the large landowners are recorded as living in the hills, a Sammy Lyttle in a cottage on Black Mountain townland and a Mr Darling who came from Scotland lived in Divis Lodge at the 1911 Census.

#### 4.3 The rectangular enclosure/ house and buildings

One of the main features of the site are the remains of what might be a house and farm building next to a bank and stream which form the southern boundary of the site. A wire fence runs along the bank and stream, it has a stone base and higher up from the site, due East towards Black Mountain, there is a stone wall as the boundary. Des O'Reilly (2010, 139) refers to an ancient boundary wall from the prehistoric period, containing large pieces of basalt, which runs down to the Colin river.

The outline of a building with a division to create two separate areas, measures 8.60 metres x 8.80 m x 8.90 x 10metres. (Fig 06) The entrance appears to be at the slightly larger south west wall. A well was found a short distance north of the building.

A stream runs alongside the building and a depression below a waterfall in the stream has been dug out to create a pond or watering hole. (Fig 07) It is triangular in shape, approximately 14.5 metres wide at its widest, with sides of 12 and 10.5 metres. A few small fragments of flint were found on the ground on the exposed river bank. Flint is found at various locations at the base of the hills, where "flint factories" may have existed.



Figure 11: Rectangular enclosure/farm building





Figure 12: Pond dug out from the stream

#### 4.4 Lazy Beds

Most of the site contains around 18 lazy beds indicating extensive food cultivation, probably potatoes and /or oats. There are three areas of lazy beds, perhaps placed to avoid rocky ground or marshy land with rushes, or constructed at different times.

Near to and parallel with the building, there are six lazy beds, extending to almost the full length of the site. Measurements were taken of their width and it was found that they were of similar width, with a range of 2.2 metres to 3.2metres wide. Lower down the site, below a dip of more damp, marshy ground with rushes, are seven lazy beds of similar width to the others (2.68 to 3 metres) These beds are more distinct and less flattened than the ones nearer the building. They run parallel to the others and stop at the northern boundary of the site, where the ground drops down to wet boggy land and another stream. North of these beds and still on higher ground, there is a corner of land where five small lazy beds have been constructed at right angles to the long ones, to make the maximum use of the cultivable land. Their widths are between 2.3 and 2.9 metres. On top of some of the larger lazy beds there are hummocky areas, which might suggest potato clamps for storage of the crop.

There are a number of lazy beds across the lower slopes of Divis and Black Mountain. UAS Report Number 25 on Divis Farm, by J McDonald and M. Catney, documents them on that site and refers to a 19<sup>th</sup> century study which points out that the creation of lazy beds for food cultivation, was important for the people living there, but also increased the value of the land. (Steuart Trench 1869)



Figure 13: Lazy Beds

A third feature of the site is the raised grassy area (Fig 09) at the south western end of the site beyond the lazy beds, where the two tributaries of the Colin river, which form the southern and northern boundaries of the site join to flow down the mountain. The steep banks of the streams on each side form a raised grassy area, rising out of boggy ground.

Des O'Reilly refers to the geology of these "terraces" as an old valley floor, where the meandering river has undercut the overhanging banks. On the other side of the confluence of the streams, there is a grassy area which has no lazy beds, perhaps being an area where animals were kept, away from the cultivated lazy beds.



Figure 14: Raised area at the confluence of two streams





Figure 15: Waterfall between banks of the stream

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations for further work**

The survey of this large site with evidence of extensive cultivation of crops, adds to the record of other farms surveyed by UAS in the area. Its location within a triangle of streams on three sides of the site, gave access to water for the inhabitants and for crops.

The site shows a clear example of lazy beds and this could be indicated on any future information boards for visitors.

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## APPENDIX: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD FORM

**Site:** Johnston's Green Divis

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Film no.	B/W Print	Colour print	Colour slide	Digital image (m.pixels)
				8

**Make and model of camera...***Ricoh G600W*

Frame no	From	Details
RIMG 0018	S	Lazy beds N of Rect. Enclosure
RIMG 0014	NE	Rectangular enclosure
RIMG 0025	S	Survey Station 1
RIMG 0043	SE	Lazy beds N side of site
RIMG 0054	W	Raised square nose of land at confluence of streams
RIMG 0029	NW	Stream waterfall
G 0013		Rectangular enclosure/buildings
G 0014		Pond