



ULSTER  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
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# Survey Report

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Reference: Survey Report No. 75

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Author: Harry Welsh

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Location:

Survey of Second World War  
Military Base  
Derrymore  
County Armagh

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In association with:

 National Trust



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Cover illustration: Survey Group in action at Derrymore

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## 1. Summary

### 1.1 Location

A survey was carried out by the Survey Group of the Ulster Archaeological Society (UAS) at a National Trust property at Derrymore, Bessbrook, County Armagh, on Saturday 30 March 2019. The survey site was located in the Townland of Derry More in the Parish of Newry, Barony of Orrior Upper. Irish Grid reference J 0554 2802.

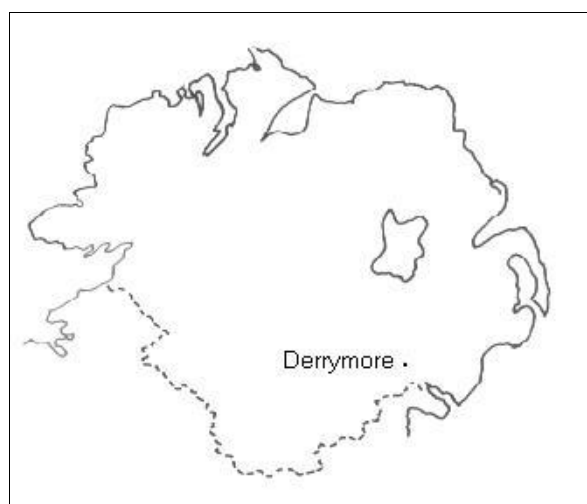


Figure 01: Location map for Derrymore

### 1.2 Aims

The aim of the 2019 survey was to add to the existing knowledge of the Derrymore property, particularly the location there of a military base during the Second World War. There is some local knowledge of the wartime base, including the presence of American soldiers in the Bessbrook area, but little of this has been recorded. An initial survey by the UAS in 2009 revealed the presence of several hut sites, but it was suspected that the site was much more extensive than is visible at ground level (McShane and Rutherford 2011). The features that have been investigated by the UAS within the National Trust Derrymore property, including those of the 2019 survey are annotated on Figure 03. These are:

Site Number (figure 03)	Details
1	Geophysical survey grid (2019 survey)
2	Hut sites (2009 survey)
3	Hut platforms (2019 survey - visible in aerial photograph, figure 08)
4	Derry More Rath (2011 survey)
5	Pond [Fire Dam] No. 1 (2019 survey)
6	Large raised platform (2019 survey)
7	Pond [Fire Dam] No. 2 (2019 survey)
8	Richardson House site (2015 survey)

Figure 02: Features at Derrymore investigated to date by the UAS

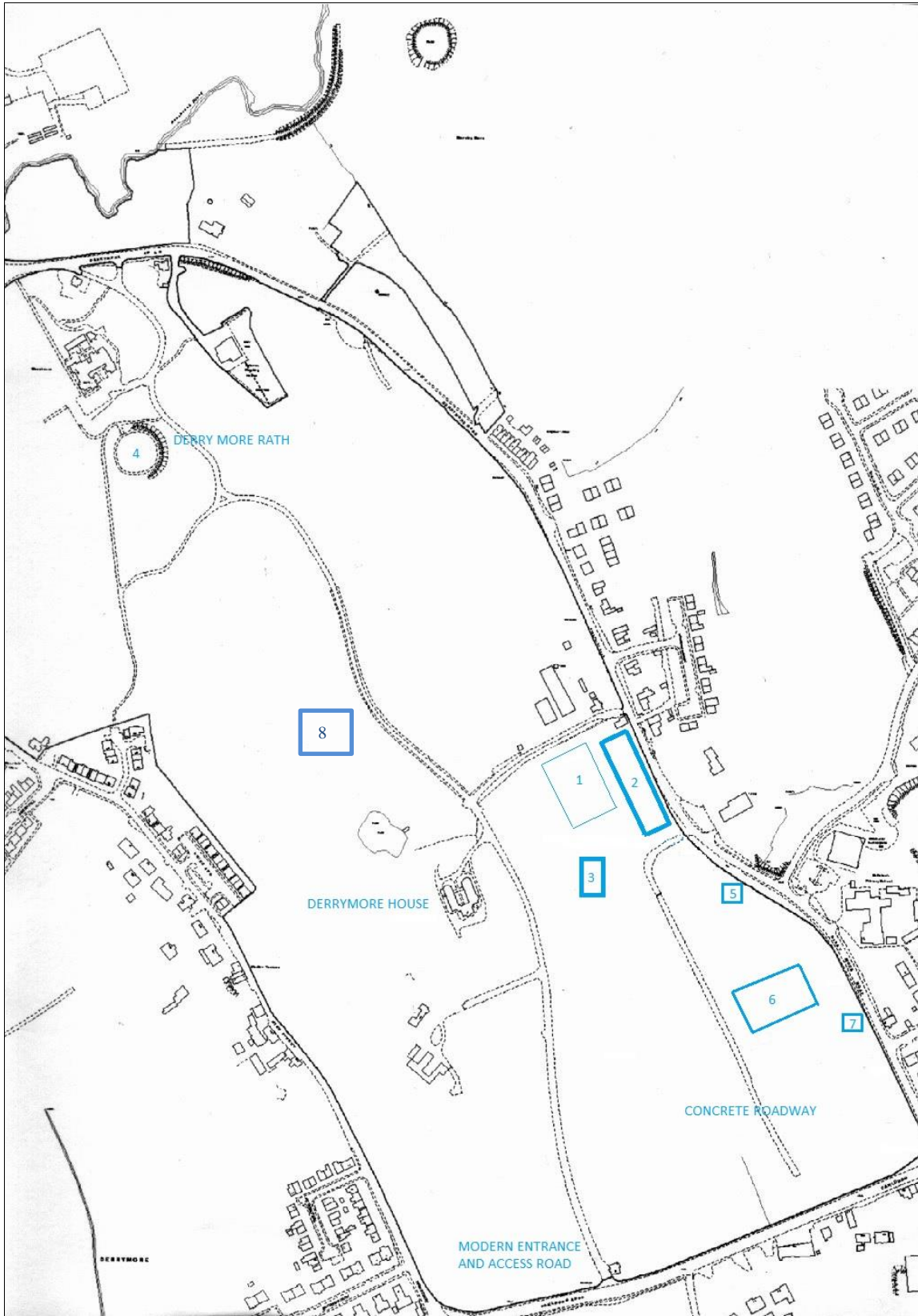


Figure 03: Survey sites at Derrymore Property (after Rutherford 2011)

## 1.3 Summary of Results

The 2019 survey added significantly to the understanding of the military site at Derrymore. It is now clear that most of the property was taken over by a network of buildings and access roads to accommodate the personnel and equipment relating to wartime use. Much of this detail is not visible at ground level, but the use of drone technology and geophysical survey has revealed more of its sub-surface presence.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Description of site

The focal point of the Derrymore property is the eighteenth-century thatched cottage, or cottage ornée, built by Isaac Corry. The surrounding grounds were laid out by John Sutherland, a disciple of Capability Brown and include woodland and parkland. The property was later purchased by John Richardson, who was responsible for the establishment of much of the village of Bessbrook. During the Second World War, the property was occupied as a military camp, but in the post-war years the military structures were cleared and grounds re-landscaped.

### 2.2 Previous archaeological surveys

The National Trust Derrymore property was first investigated by the Survey Group of the UAS on 25 July 2009, when a number of features relating to military occupation were recorded (McShane and Rutherford 2011). Subsequent visits to the property took place on 25 July 2015 when a rath to the north of the property was investigated (Rutherford 2018) and on 3 October 2015 to survey the remains of the Richardson mansion (in preparation).

### 2.3 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.

### 2.4 Credits and Acknowledgements

The 2019 survey was led by Leo van Es and included David Craig, June Welsh, Randal Scott, Lee Gordon, Liz McShane, Colin Boyd, Hilary Boyd, Ken Pullin, George Rutherford, Harry Welsh, Kate Crane, Ian Forsythe, Chris Stevenson, George Johnston, Paula Sandford and Ian Gillespie.

The Ulster Archaeological Society is particularly grateful to Malachy Conway and Rosemary Mulholland of the National Trust for facilitating access to the survey site.

### 2.5 Cartographic Evidence

By the time of the First Edition of the Ordnance Survey map of the area (figure 04), several features associated with the modern Derrymore estate were already in existence. These include Derrymore House itself, the walled garden to the north-east of it and the main entrance and access road, which are still in use today. Interestingly, a line of trees is shown crossing the southern part of the estate, which conforms to the townland boundary with the adjacent townland of Cloghreagh. A screen of trees was present at the eastern and southern boundaries.

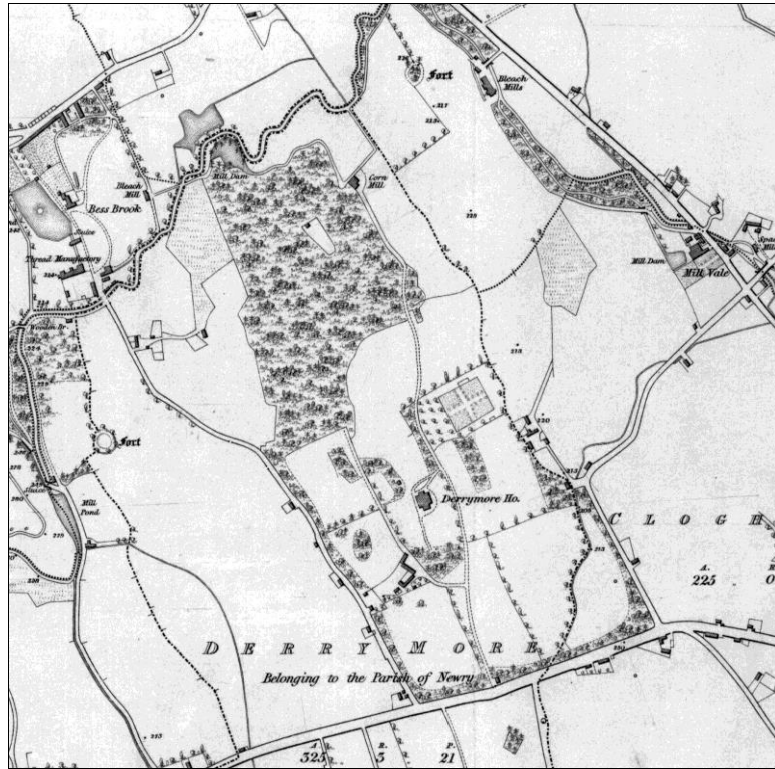


Figure 04: Ordnance Survey, County Series, Armagh, First Edition (part of) 1834-1835

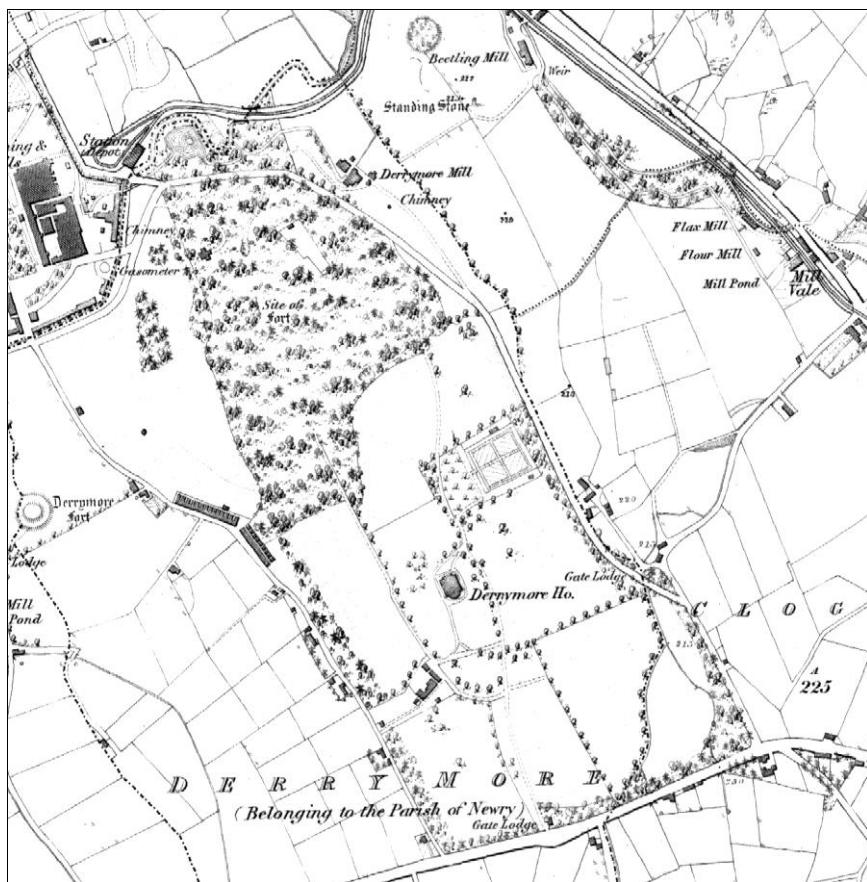


Figure 05: Ordnance Survey, County Series, Armagh, Second Edition (part of) 1863

By the time of the Second Edition map in 1863 (figure 05), the public road to the east of the property had been extended to the north and is consistent with its modern alignment.



Gate lodges had been constructed at the main entrance to the south and at a new entrance to the east. The line of trees marking the townland boundary was still in existence, as was the screen of trees at the southern and eastern boundaries of the property.

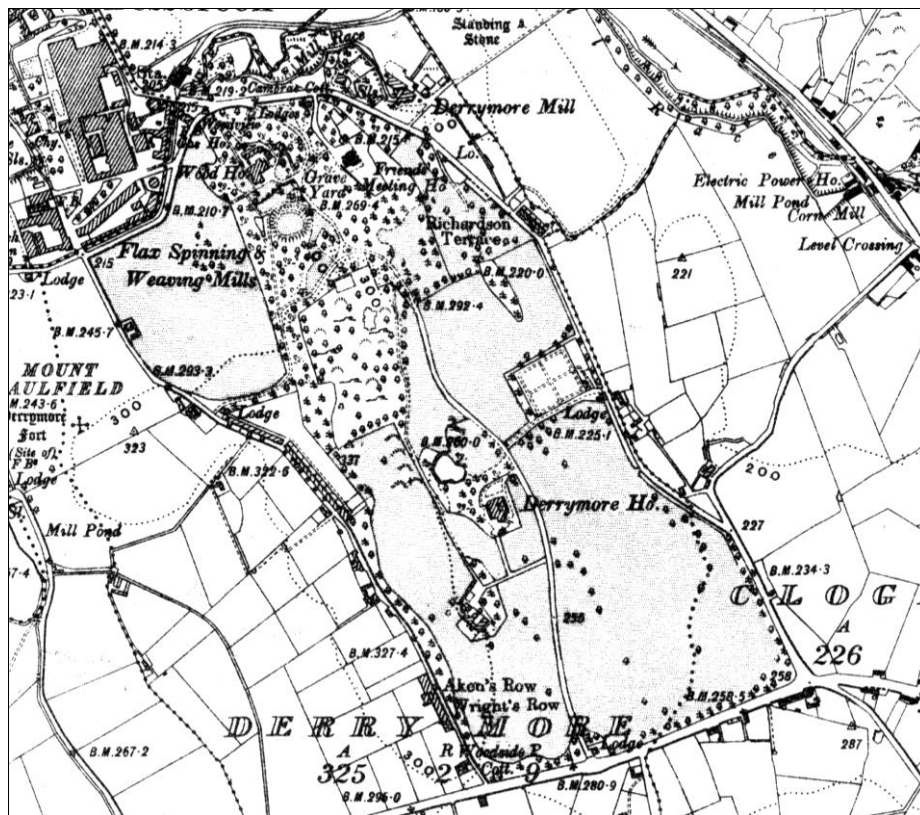


Figure 06: Ordnance Survey, County Series, Armagh, Third Edition (part of) 1909

By the Third Edition map of 1909, the line of trees marking the townland boundary had been removed, but the screen of trees at the eastern and southern boundaries was still present and remains so to this day.

## 2.6 Survey Methods

The March 2019 UAS survey consisted of three elements. These were a topographical survey of visible features, an aerial photographic survey by drone and a geophysical survey (earth resistivity). The results of the geophysical survey will be the subject of a separate report.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Date of Fieldwork

The fieldwork was carried out 30 March 2019. The weather was dry, following recent rain with good, well drained ground conditions.

### 3.2 Topographical Survey

The topographical survey focused on a number of features that were visible at ground level. These were a series of hut bases (area 3 on figure 03), a pond, or possible fire dam (area 5 on figure 03), a large raised base for one or more structures (area 6 on figure 03)

and another pond or possible fire dam (area 7 on figure 03).



Figure 07: View of eastern access road, looking north

### 3.3 Hut platforms (site 3)

These hut platforms were observed during an aerial survey of the area in the 1960s (figure 08), but since then, the area has changed into grassland, although the concrete bases might still be present below ground level.



Figure 08: Aerial photograph looking north-east (*St Joseph's JN 071*)

The remains of at least four large hut platforms were barely discernable at ground level.

A possible fifth platform may be present, so the hut platforms were numbered 1-5 to allow for this, if it is confirmed by future investigations. The hut platforms are located in grassland and are centred around 110m due west of Derrymore House.

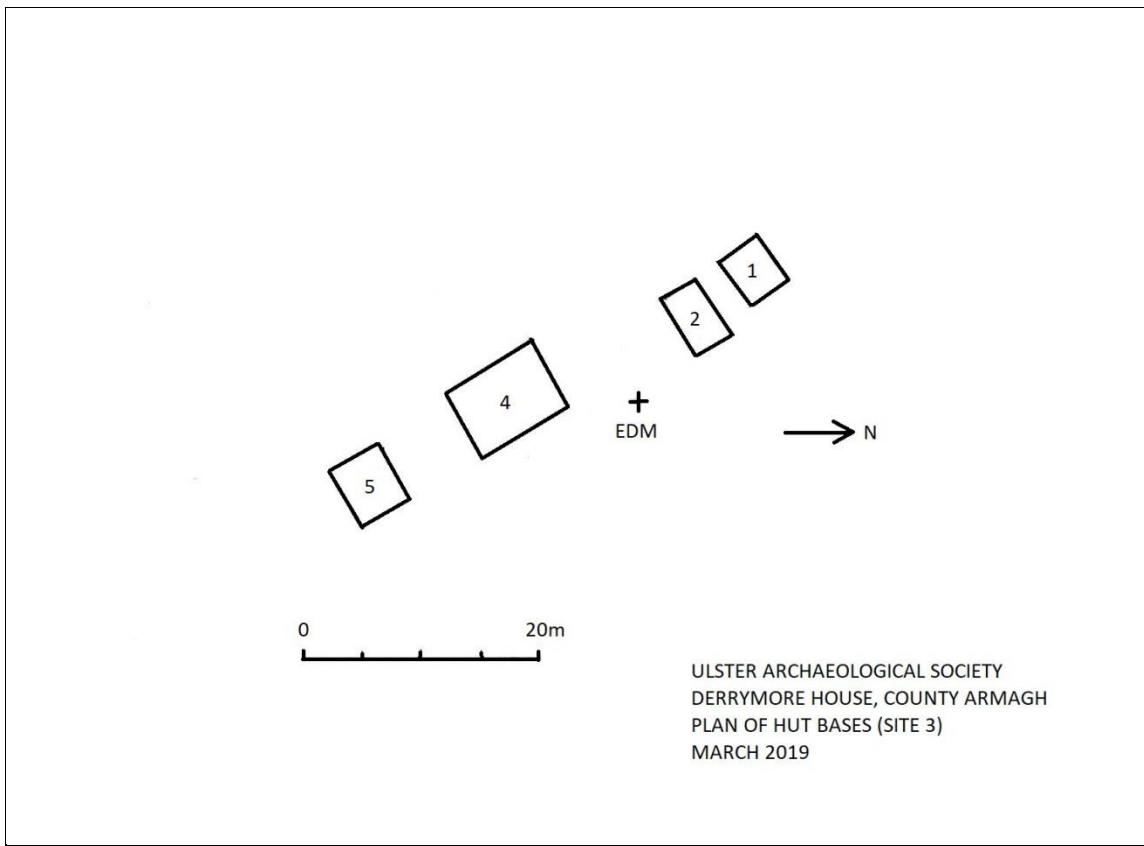


Figure 09: Plan of hut platforms (Site 3)

#### 3.4. Pond No. 1

The feature, designated Pond No.1 by the Survey Group is recorded as Site 5 on Figure 03, is currently used to encourage wildlife such as frogs to inhabit the area and has recently been extended by National Trust staff. However, it was noted that this was already a water-filled area and it is possible that this feature was the remains of a fire dam. These were (and still are) employed in areas such as military bases and forestry plantations where water supplies for firefighting are inadequate. To compensate for this, a number of pits are excavated around the site, which are usually allowed to fill with water naturally, or are kept filled using site drainage systems. These can be used to supply water for firefighting if the need arises.





Figure 10: View of pond No. 1, which may originally have originally been a fire dam, looking north-west



Figure 11: View of brick-lined drain inspection box, looking west, recently filled in by the National Trust for safety reasons.

The presence of an inspection pit associated with drain water in the area of No. 1 pond suggests that the pond was kept topped up using waste water from the military base.



Figure 12: View of eastern access road, looking south. Pond No. 1 is to the left of the vehicle and the large raised base and Pond No. 2 are adjacent to the stand of trees in the background

### 3.5. Large raised platform

This feature, termed Site 6 by the Survey Group, is a large raised platform, located to the south-east of the property and adjacent to the concrete access road. From what remains visible, it does not appear to be a number of hut bases, but rather the base for one large building, with perhaps an associated courtyard. Pond No. 2 (Site 7) is to the south-east of this feature.

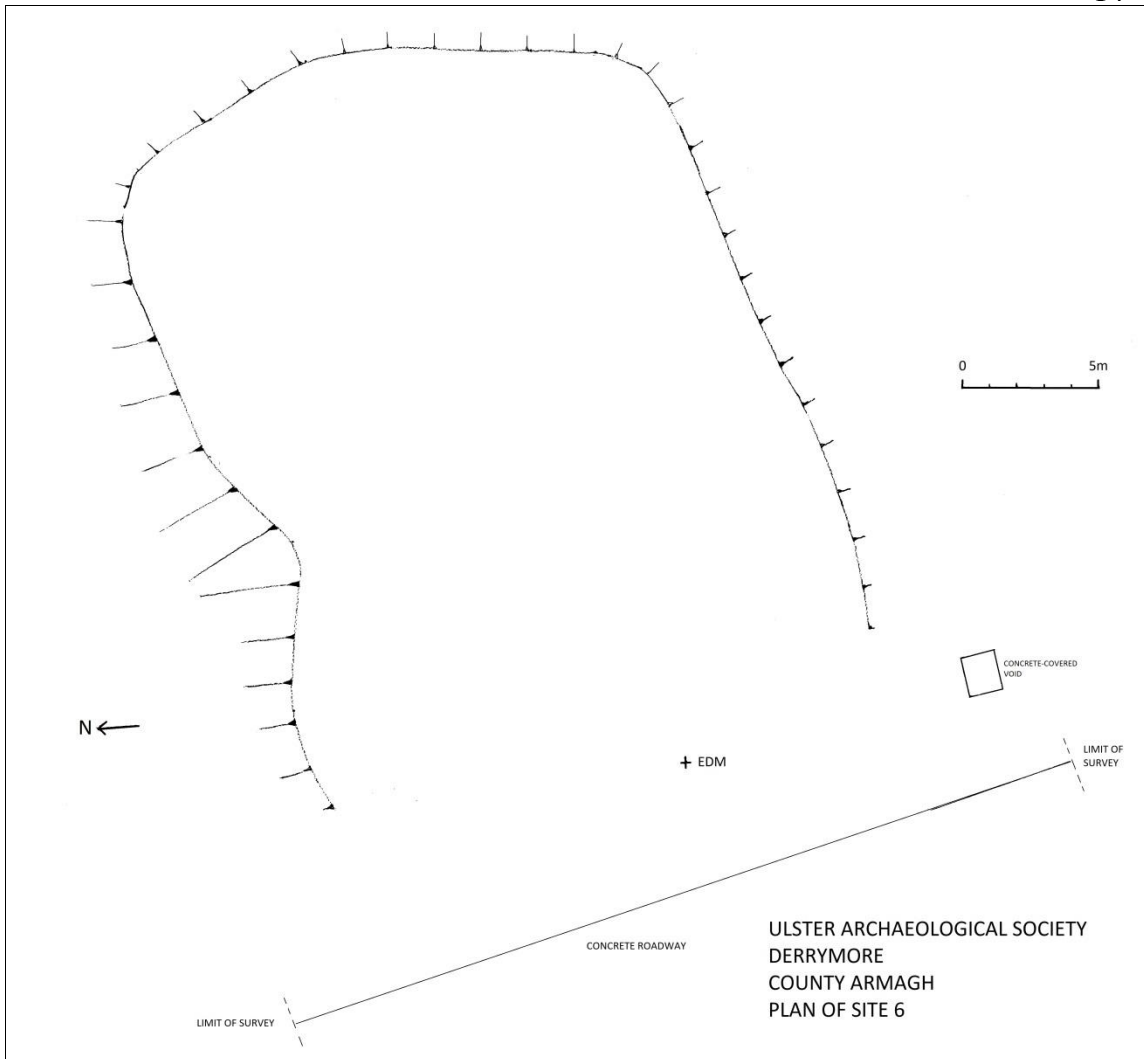


Figure 13: Plan of Site 6 (large raised platform)

### 3.6. Pond No. 2 (Site 7)

This feature, termed Pond No. 2 by the Survey Group, is located to the south-east of the property and close to the large raised platform referred to above. The pond is currently used to encourage wildlife such as frogs to inhabit the area and has recently been extended by National Trust staff. However, it was noted that this was already a water-filled area and it is possible that this feature was also originally constructed as a fire dam. The presence nearby of a concrete slab over a brick-built drainage access pit and a small stream, give further support to this, as both were often used to keep fire dams filled and ready for use for firefighting if the need arose.

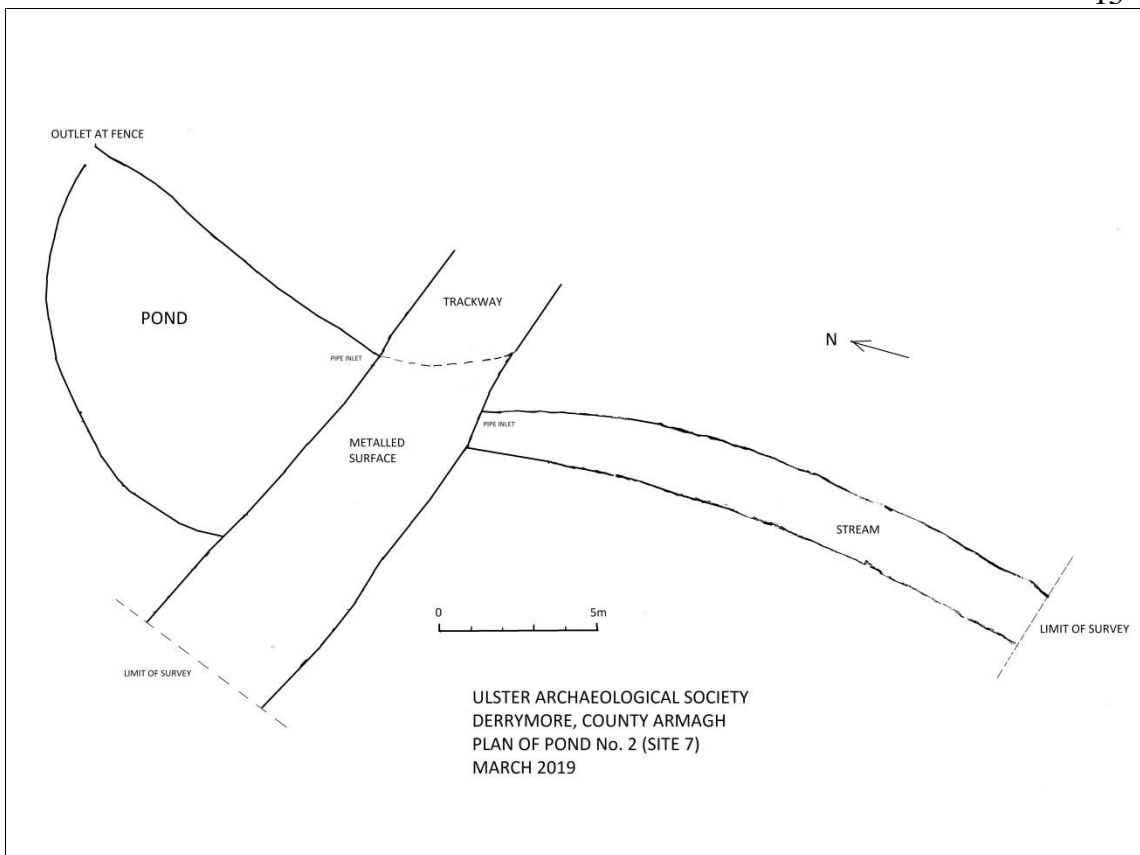


Figure 14: Plan of Pond No. 2 (Site 7)



Figure 15: View of pond No. 2, which may originally have been a fire dam, looking west

#### Aerial Survey

The aerial survey was carried out by David Craig, using a drone which captured a range of images. These images were later enhanced by computer software to sharpen surface details. The survey included all of the National Trust Derrymore property and not only revealed the extent of the military base to the east of the site, but also uncovered the remains of further structures and access roads to the west. There had not previously been any awareness of such features to the west of the property and indicates that the military



base had been much more extensive than had been thought.

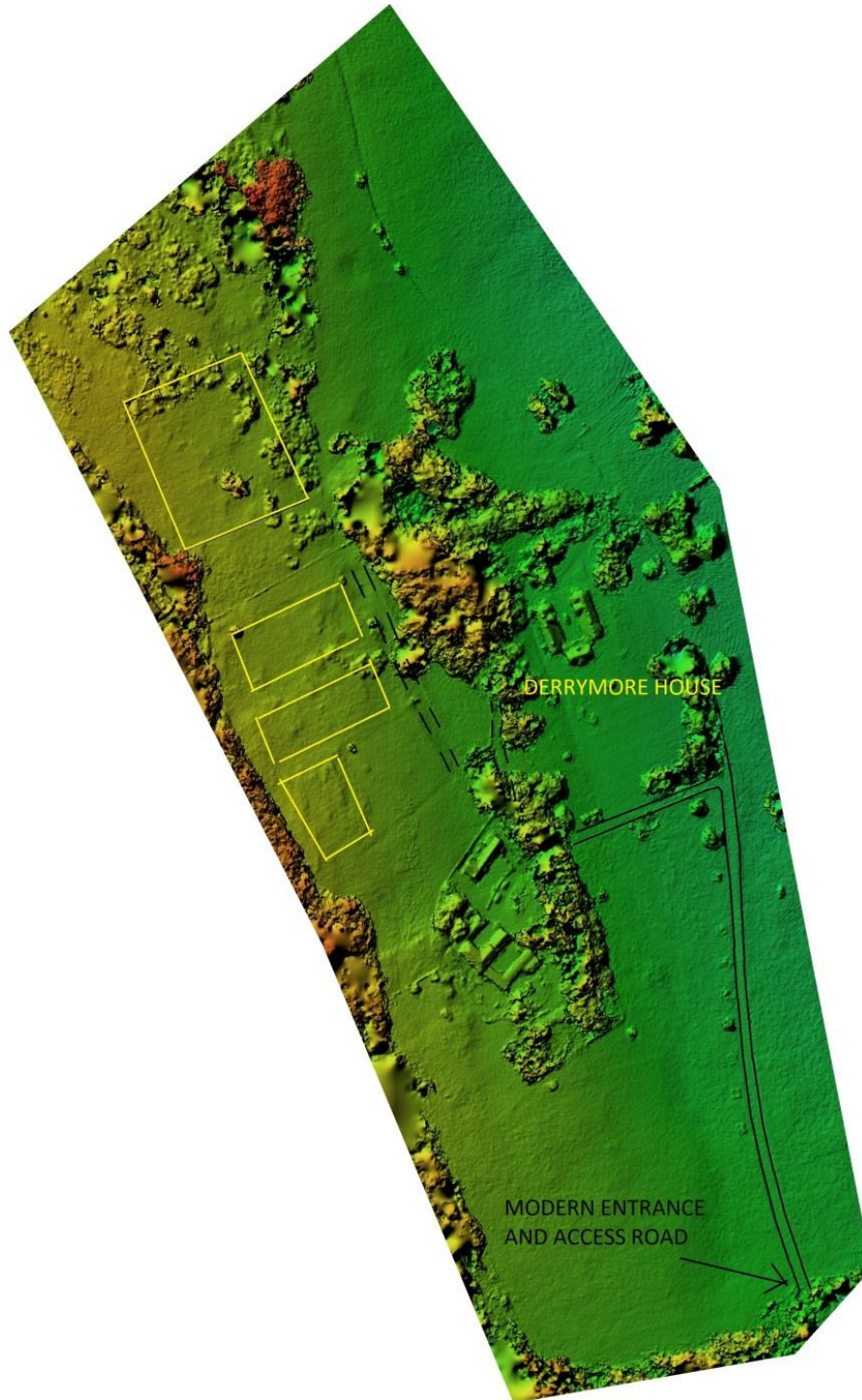


Figure 16: Aerial view of western part of property, potential structures highlighted in yellow, access roads in black



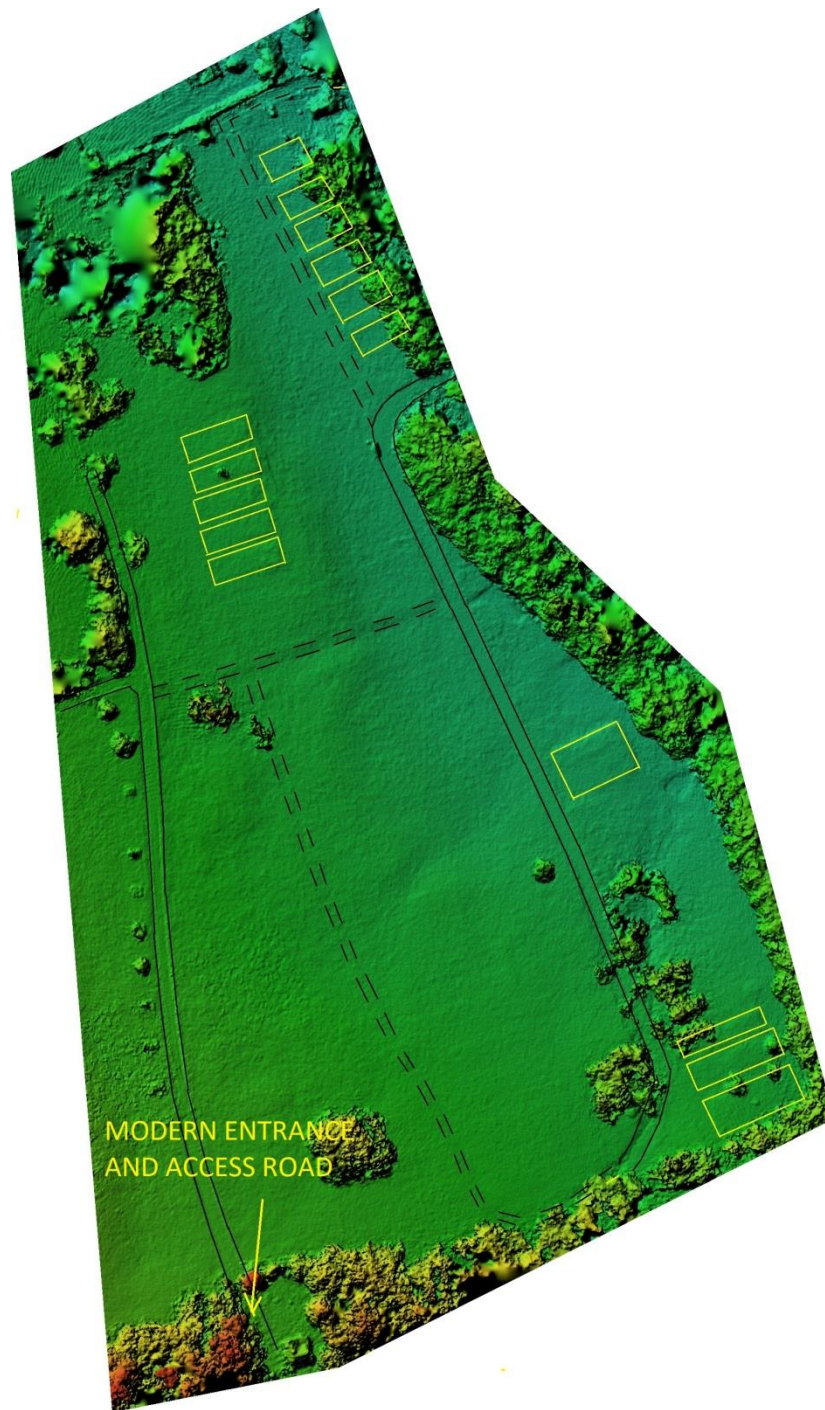


Figure 17: Aerial view of eastern part of property, potential structures highlighted in yellow, access roads in black

### 3.8 Geophysical Survey

In addition to the topographical and aerial photographic surveys, a section of the property to the south of the walled garden was chosen for a geophysical survey. This will be the subject of a separate report in due course.

#### **4. Recommendations for further work**

The survey work carried out to date at Derrymore suggests that the military activity within the property was very extensive, with many buildings occupying the site and a network of roads and tracks to provide access to them. Many of these features are not visible at ground level and were only observed due to aerial and geophysical survey. It is recommended that further geophysical survey, targeted excavation and a programme of research into any surviving military archives will be required before a more complete understanding of this complex site can be achieved.

#### **5. Bibliography**

McShane, L., and Rutherford, G. 2011. *Survey of Derry More WW II Army Base, County Armagh*, Survey Report No. 20, Belfast: Ulster Archaeological Society.

Rutherford, G. 2018. *Survey of Rath, Derry More, Co. Armagh*, Survey Report No. 55, Belfast: Ulster Archaeological Society.

## 6. Photograph Record

**Site:** Derrymore National Trust Property

**Date:** 30 March 2019

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

<b>Frame no.</b>	<b>Viewed From</b>	<b>Details</b>
DSCN8437	north	View of concrete access road
DSCN8438	South-east	View of hut bases (Site 3)
RIMG0010	south	View of Pond No.1
RIMG0013	west	View of brick-lined drainage inspection pit No.1
RIMG0014	south	View of Pond No. 2
RIMG0020	south	Geophysical Team members on action
RIMG0031	north	View of hut bases (Site 3)
RIMG0024	north	View of drainage inspection pit No. 2
DSCN8444	east	Stream discharge into Pond No. 2
DSCN8446	east	Remains of access road across stream
DSCN8447	South-east	Remains of access road across stream
RIMG0025	west	View of Pond No. 2
RIMG0019	south	Setting up geophysical survey grid