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Archaeology is about uncovering, recording and interpreting the past. It is central to our understanding and appreciation of our rich and diverse human heritage. Human history in Britain spans 700,000 years, 10,000 years in Ireland, but it is only for the last 1,500 years that we have written evidence. Thus archaeology provides us with our only clues and links with the past. It helps explain the growth and positioning of our settlements, the evolution of our countryside and our relationship with nature and the spiritual world.

- Encourage a coordinated and proactive approach to research into the historic environment and its dissemination.
- Promote the economic, cultural, social and environmental value of the historic environment and its links to sustainable development.
- Advance understanding through education and awareness activities.
- Encourage cooperative action to raise archaeological up the political and public agendas.

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**Flint arrowheads, Co. Antrim**  
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**Maritime Archaeology**

Everything that is special about our landscape and environment has been touched and shaped by millennia of daily human lives. It is a record of their creativity, conflict, beliefs and technologies. This is known as the **historic environment**. Much of what we know about this environment is learned through archaeology, although the historical record is also important in deciphering the past.

**Downpatrick Young Archaeologists Club Digging at Castle Ward**

## Why the Historic Environment Matters

- Archaeology is key to understanding an irreplaceable store of human history, most with no written record and sometimes highly vulnerable.
- Understanding and appreciating this legacy makes a core contribution to local identity and to our sense of who we are as people and as communities.
- A sense of place and a common cultural perspective are essential contributors to the quality of life for communities and for individual citizens.
- Like other disciplines in the historic environment, archaeology makes a major contribution to the tourist economy and to heritage-led regeneration.
- Archaeology helps us to understand how others have dealt with change and challenges in the past and helps us to learn how to deal with the challenges facing us now.
- The historic environment has an enormous amount to contribute to the government's agenda for sustainable communities, helping to create better places for people to live and work and to enhance local identity.
- The historic environment provides a rich resource for outdoor education, in our cities and in the countryside, and for cross-curricular learning.
- Archaeology supports a large voluntary and community sector and inspires enthusiastic interest in all age groups.
- Archaeological discoveries evoke understanding about long-term climate change and about our diverse cultural backgrounds in Northern Ireland.



## Making the Most of Our Historic Environment

Members of the Northern Ireland Archaeology Forum believe that the historic environment's potential social, economic and cultural contribution should be more widely recognised to reflect the great public appetite for learning about our past. In recognition of this role, there has been support from the government for developing its public benefits. We need to create many more opportunities for people to be involved, to reach new and diverse audiences, to share skills and to develop lessons from archaeology for our communities today.



We have identified **four main areas** where action is needed to harness the full value of the historic environment and to help deliver government's goals for sustainable communities and the cultural heritage:

- Robust, clear cross-governmental recognition of the social, economic and educational value of our rural, urban and maritime historic environment, with DoE providing a strong, strategic lead within government.
- Sustained investment in national and local government historic environment services, including museums.
- Capacity-building and resources for the voluntary sector to improve delivery of social, cultural and educational benefits.
- Promotion and celebration of the contribution that archaeology and the historic environment make to quality of life in our communities.

**Early Bronze Age Food Vessel**

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES OF COUNTIES ARMAGH AND DOWN

## Co. Armagh: Sites of interest

**ARMAGH FRIARY:** Remains of a Franciscan friary church, founded by Dominican Archbishop Patrick O Scannail in 1263-4. It had prominent patrons and played an important part in the city's religious life until it was suppressed in 1542.

**BALLYKEEL DOLMEN AND CAIRN:** locally known as 'the Hag's Chair'. This impressive portal tomb is one of an important group of Neolithic stone monuments around Slieve Gullion.



Ballykeel Dolmen

**BALLYMACDERMOT CAIRN:** A court tomb set on the southern slopes of Ballymacdermot Mountain, with magnificent views over the Meigh plain to Slieve Gullion and the ring-dyke mountains.



**CLONTYGGORA CAIRN:** This court tomb, also known as the King's Ring, is badly damaged - its stones were used to build the Newry Canal - but it is still very impressive.

Clontyggora Cairn

**THE KING'S STABLES:** an atmospheric Bronze Age earthwork containing a deep pool used for religious rituals. Excavation in the 1970s revealed that it may have been used for sacrifices, with bones of deer, dogs and even part of a human skull found in its depths.



The King's Stables

**LISNAMINTRY RATH:** This once-substantial rath has a circular central area with a perimeter bank, surrounded by a wide ditch, and there are remains of an outer bank and ditch. A gap to the north probably marks the entrance.



Navan Castle

**NAVAN FORT:** Navan is one of Northern Ireland's most important archaeological sites. It is identified as *Emhain Mhacha*, the chief residence of the kings of Ulster, and is prominent in heroic literature and legend.

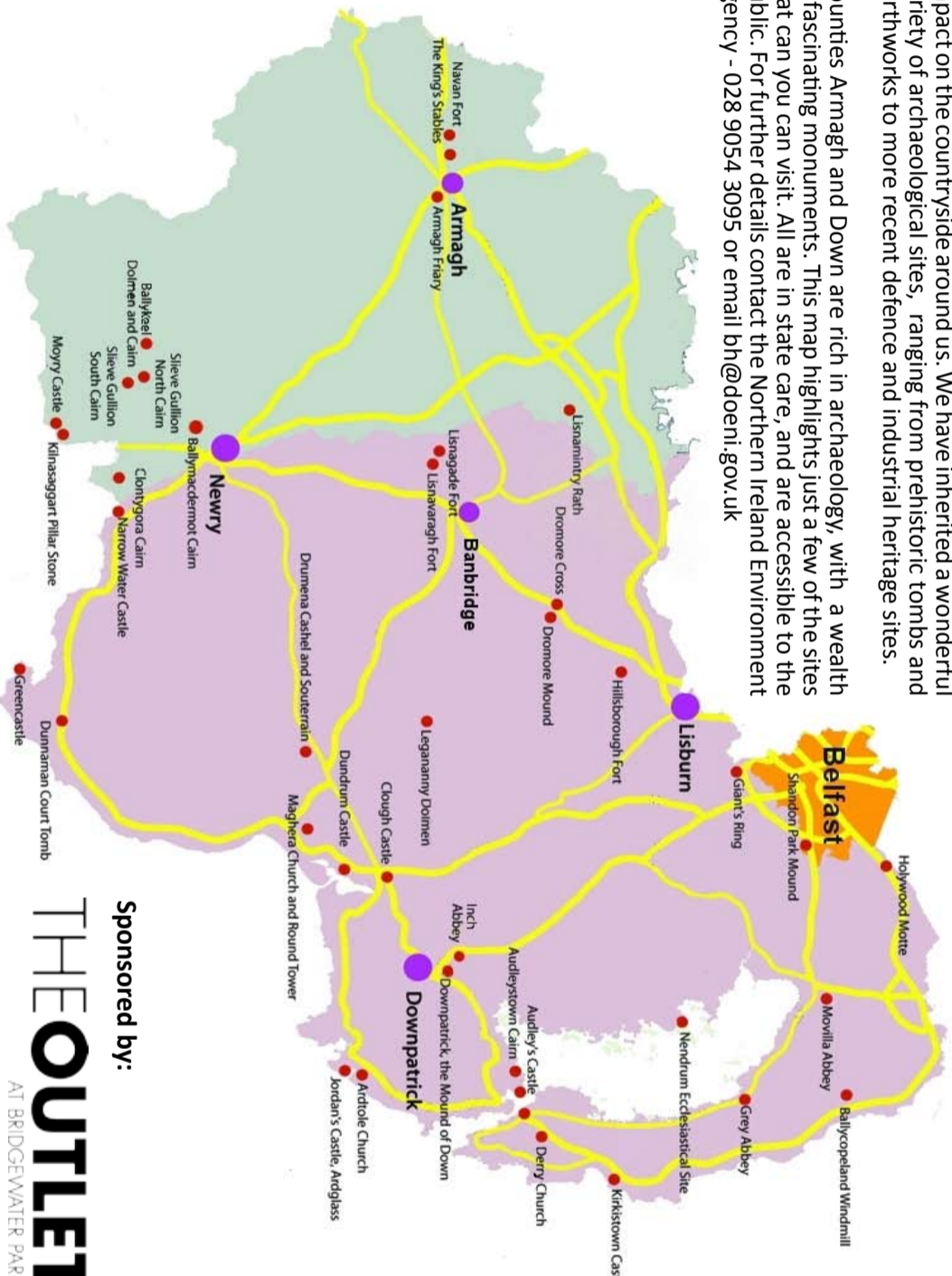
**SLEIVE GULLION, NORTH AND SOUTH CAIRNS:** At 1894 feet (577 m) the South Cairn is the highest surviving passage tomb in the British Isles. It is known locally as 'Callagh Berra's House'. Excavation of the South Cairn in 1961 revealed two small cists, one with fragments of food vessel pottery and burned bone, suggesting an early Bronze Age date.



Navan Fort

The Northern Irish landscape has been shaped by man's activities for nine millennia. Since the arrival of the first colonists during the Mesolithic era, successive generations have each had an impact on the countryside around us. We have inherited a wonderful variety of archaeological sites, ranging from prehistoric tombs and earthworks to more recent defence and industrial heritage sites.

Counties Armagh and Down are rich in archaeology, with a wealth of fascinating monuments. This map highlights just a few of the sites that can you can visit. All are in state care, and are accessible to the public. For further details contact the Northern Ireland Environment Agency - 028 9054 3095 or email [bn@doeni.gov.uk](mailto:bn@doeni.gov.uk)



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## Co. Down: Sites of interest

**ARDTOLE CHURCH:** The church stands on a prominent hilltop overlooking the sea and with views to the Isle of Man. An early cross slab from this site, now built into the church at Chapeltown, and a souterrain south of the church, suggest Early Christian period activity on the hilltop. The ruin is of the medieval parish church, dedicated to St Nicholas, and traditionally is said to have been abandoned after a massacre.

**AUDLEY'S CASTLE:** This 15th-century tower-house was built by the Audley family, but passed to the Wards in 1646 and was used from 1738 as an eye-catching focus of the long vista along Castle Ward's Temple Water. Close by is **Audleystown Cairn**, a dual court tomb, discovered in 1946 and excavated in 1952. The cremated remains of 32 individuals were found inside.



Audley's Castle

**BALLYCOPELAND WINDMILL:** Built in the late 18th or early 19th century, it was worked by the McGilton family until WW1.

**COUGH CASTLE:** This is one of the best examples of an Anglo-Norman Motte and Bailey castle in Ulster. Originally built in the 12th century, the small stone tower was added much later.

**DRUMMENA CASHEL:** This is an excellent example of a small stone-built farmstead enclosure or cashel of the early Christian period. Inside is a souterrain - an underground passage for refuge in times of trouble.



Drummena Cashel

**GIANT'S RING:** This famous earthwork is a henge, a late Neolithic ceremonial or assembly site, and it is the largest known in Ireland. Research and excavation during the 1990s confirm that this whole area was an important Neolithic ceremonial landscape, in which the Giant's Ring had a prominent place.



Giant's Ring

**GREENCASLE:** Prominently sited on a rocky outcrop close to Greencastle Point, the castle commands the narrow entry to Carrlingford Lough and is within sight of Carrlingford Castle. A royal castle, built in the 13th century, it had an eventful military history.

**GREY ABBEY:** Founded in 1193 by Affreca, wife of the Anglo-Norman invader John de Courcy, this is the best example of Cistercian architecture in Ulster.



Grey Abbey

**HILLSBOROUGH FORT:** Colonel Arthur Hill built this artillery fort in the mid 1600s on the site of an Early Christian period hilltop rath to command the important route from Dublin to Belfast and Carrickfergus.



Hillsborough Fort

**HOLYWOOD MOTTE:** This is an Anglo-Norman castle mound, formerly probably with a ditch round its base and a timber palisade round the summit.

**INCH ABBEY:** This beautiful site, on the north bank of the Quoile, was originally an island in the Quoile Marshes. The Cistercian abbey was founded in the 1180s by John de Courcy in atonement for his destruction of a nearby monastery during his conquest of Ulster.

**JORDAN'S CASTLE:** This 15th-century tower-house is the largest of in the area, revealing the importance of Ardglass as a town and port in the Middle Ages

**KIRKISTOWN CASTLE:** Built for Roland Savage in 1622, this is in the style of a late medieval tower-house.



Legananny Downen

**LEGANANNY DOLMAN:** This is one of Ulster's most famous, and most photographed, prehistoric sites. It is a tripod portal tomb with a large flat capstone gracefully balanced on three unusually tall supporting stones

**LISNAGADE AND LISNAVARRAGH FORTS:** These two early Christian period farmsteads (raths) are among the finest in Northern Ireland.



Lisnagade and Lisnavarragh Forts

**MAGHERA CHURCH AND TOWER:** The ruined round tower marks the site of an early church founded by the 6th-century *St Donnogart* (Donard), who gave his name to the highest peak in the Mourne Mountains. The tower stood to its full height until the early 18th century, when it fell in a great storm.

**MOVILLA ABBEY:** One of Ulster's most important early churches and scholarly centres, it is associated with the 6th-century St Finnian. Plundered by Vikings in 824, it was refounded in the 12th century as an abbey of Augustinian Canons.

**NARROW WATER:** Picturesquely and strategically sited on a promontory in the Newry River, this Tower-house and bawn was built in the 1560s at a cost of £361 4s 2d.

**NENDRUM:** This is the best example in Northern Ireland of a pre-Norman monastery with its buildings. Nendrum is associated with St Mochaoi who died at the end of the 5th century.

**SHANDON PARK MOUND:** One of Belfast's few surviving medieval earthworks, it is strategically sited on high ground with extensive views.



Nendrum