

Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork
School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology
Queen's University Belfast



Data Structure Report: No. 048

St Thomas' Church, Church Quarter,
Rathlin Island, County Antrim
AE/06/191

On behalf of





ST THOMAS' CHURCH
CHURCH QUARTER, RATHLIN ISLAND
CO. ANTRIM

Sarah Gormley

CAF DATA STRUCTURE REPORT 048
AE/06/191
Grid Ref: D1452 5111
SMR No: ANT 001:023

2007

CONTENTS

SUMMARY		2
INTRODUCTION	General	3
	Historical & archaeological background	3
	Objectives	4
	Archiving	5
	Acknowledgements	5
THE EXCAVATION	Site description	6
	Methodology	7
	Account of the excavation	7
DISCUSSION		16
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK		18
BIBLIOGRAPHY		20
APPENDIX 1	Context list	21
APPENDIX 2	Harris matrix	24
APPENDIX 3	Photographic record	25
APPENDIX 4	Field drawings register	28
APPENDIX 5	Small finds list	30
APPENDIX 6	Bulk samples register	34

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 An archaeological evaluation (License No. AE/06/191) was carried on land, owned by the National Trust, which lies immediately north of the boundary of St Thomas' Church, Church Quarter, Rathlin Island. The work was undertaken by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast on behalf of Environment and Heritage Service, to investigate the archaeological potential of the site ahead of a proposed graveyard extension project.
- 1.2 The area is included in the Sites and Monuments Record (ANT 001:023) as tradition states that the present church, St Thomas', is located on the site of an earlier church, reputedly founded by St Comgall of Bangor in the late 6th or early 7th century (e.g. O'Lavery 1887, 374; Law 1962, 27; Hamlin 1976, 458). In 2003 a number of human skulls and other human bone remains were uncovered within the present church, during renovation work, and it has been suggested that they may have originated from the earlier church, being deposited within the present church when it was constructed in the 18th century (Hurl 2003).
- 1.3 Five small trenches were opened (three measuring 2m by 1m and two at 1m by 1m), to test for archaeological remains. The evaluation uncovered remains of successive events of slippage and tumble from the cliffs which rise to the north and east side of the site. The slumping and stone tumble deposits in many cases contained what appeared to be midden material of shell and animal bone, coarse pot of Bronze Age and Early Medieval date, and struck flint, quartz and porcellanite. A hearth and a pit were the only features, of any antiquity, encountered and were concentrated in the south-west of the area under investigation (in Trench 2). The hearth deposit, visible as lenses of orange, orange-red and black sandy clay, measured 0.30m by 0.28m and was 0.15m thick. Finds recovered from the hearth included a sherd of lead glazed pottery, suggesting a possible date in the Medieval period for the feature. The possible refuse pit extended into the trench from the south, 1m – 1.4m and extended beyond the limits of the trench at the east, south and west. It was up to 0.50m in depth and its dark-brown sticky clay loam fill contained animal bone and shell. Souterrain Ware pottery was also recovered, as was an articulated skeleton which has been identified as a dog (Emily Murray pers. comm.). The associated Souterrain Ware suggests that the pit has a probable Early Medieval date.
- 1.4 No evidence to suggest that the area had been used for human burial was uncovered during the evaluation. The recovery of a pit with a probable date in the Early Medieval period would suggest that the site was in use, for some time at least, during the period that St Comgall's Church was active on the island, between 6th and 11th centuries.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 General

2.1.1 The following report details the preliminary results of the archaeological excavation carried out on land, owned by the National Trust, which lies immediately north of the boundary of St Thomas' Church, Church Quarter, Rathlin Island (D 1452 5111; Fig. 1). The area is included in the Sites and Monuments Record (ANT 001:023) since St Thomas' Church may lie on an earlier church site, and stone-lined graves are reported to have been uncovered in the vicinity. The evaluation (Licence No. AE/06/191) was undertaken on behalf of the Environment and Heritage Service by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast between 14th and 25th August 2006.

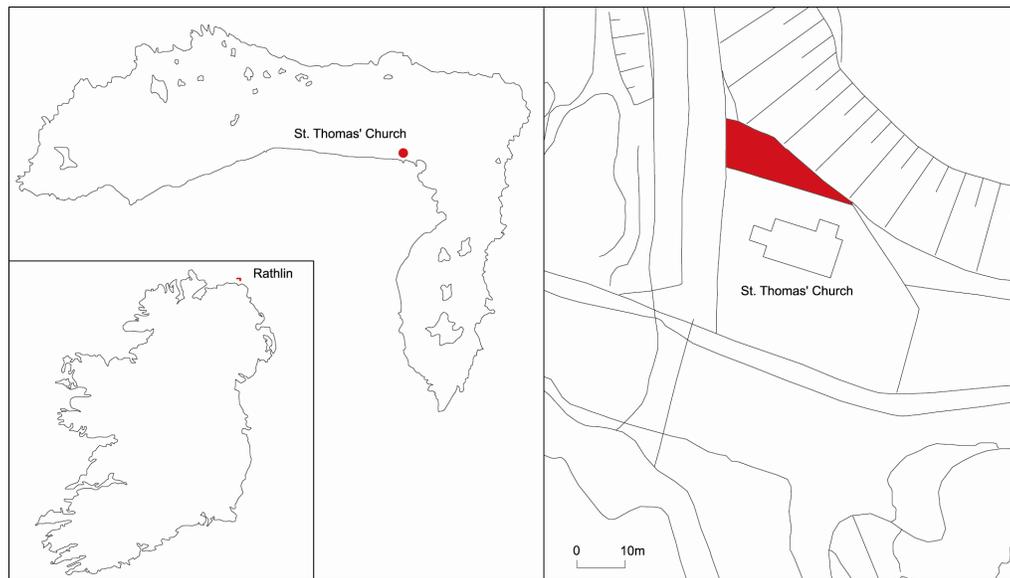


Fig. 1 – Site location. Area of proposed graveyard extension is highlighted in red.

2.2 Historical and archaeological background

2.2.1 It is likely that a church was founded on Rathlin Island sometime in the late 6th or early 7th centuries AD. Little is known about the foundation, however, and there is some inconsistency in the historical sources. According to the 'Life of St. Comgall of Bangor' the church on Rathlin was founded by the saint in 580 AD and was called *Seippeal Cooil* (the Chapel of Cooil) or *Teampool Cooil* (the Church of Cooil; Law 1962, 27). 'The Monastical History of Ireland', however, states that the church was founded at the beginning of the 6th century by Sigenius, while the 'Four Masters' place the foundation early in the 7th century and also name Sigenius as the founder (*ibid.*). The foundation of the church on Rathlin has also been attributed to St Columba (Marshall 1837, 13),

however, although he did visit the island, there is no evidence that a church was founded by him (Reeves 1847, 249).

2.2.2 Entries relating to the church on Rathlin in the 'Four Masters' appear between the 8th and 11th centuries and it would appear that the church was destroyed by Vikings in 790, 973 and 1038 AD during invasions of the island (Law 1962, 28). Following the final invasion there is no evidence of a church building on Rathlin until 1722 (*ibid.*; O'Lavery 1887, 375). Prior to that date, Rathlin had formed part of the parish of Ballintoy and it was not until the Rev. Francis Hutchinson was installed as Bishop of the Diocese in 1721 that plans were put in place to separate Rathlin from the parish of Ballintoy and to erect a permanent church on the island (Law 1962, 28). There is no firm evidence, therefore, for the presence of a church building on Rathlin between the destruction of the church in 1038 AD and the erection of the church on the present site of St Thomas' early in the 18th century (*ibid.*, 29).

2.2.3 Tradition has it that the 18th century church was simply constructed on the site of the Medieval church (e.g. Reeves 1847, 289). This is supported by the discovery of human remains within the present church and also in the immediate vicinity of the church grounds. There is a tradition of stone-lined graves, likely to be of Early Medieval date, in the vicinity (Hamlin 1976, 459) while O'Lavery states that the whole of the land extending from the old coast guard station to the standing stone would have been required to house interments given the lack of ground available in the immediate vicinity of the St Thomas' Church (1887, 375). In 2003 a number of human skulls and other human bone remains were uncovered within the present church, during renovation work, and it has been suggested that they may have originated from an earlier church, being deposited within the present church when it was constructed in the 18th century (Hurl 2003).

2.2.4 Although it seems likely that the Early Medieval church was located at St Thomas', there are also several other place names on the island which would suggest the presence of a church. These include Kilvoruan, Carravindoon td., Kilvoruan, Knockans td. and Kilbride, Ballygill Middle td. (Hamlin 1976, 459), with the '*kil*' element of the name being suggestive of the presence of a church. Reference has also been made to a small graveyard at Portcam (*ibid.*).

2.3 Objectives

2.3.1 The Church of Ireland church, St Thomas', requires an extension to the present graveyard which is nearing full capacity. A small plot of land immediately to the north, which is owned by the National Trust, is presently under consideration for this purpose

(Fig.1). As the possible location of an Early Christian church, it was anticipated that the site could potentially be the location of timber and stone structures, an earthen or stone enclosure and a graveyard. The excavation work was necessary, therefore, to investigate the archaeological potential of the site ahead of a proposed graveyard extension project.

2.4 Archiving

2.4.1 A copy of this report will be deposited with the Environment and Heritage Service. All of the site records and finds will be initially archived with the School of Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University of Belfast.

2.5 Acknowledgements

2.5.1 Funding for the project was provided by the Environment and Heritage Service and permission to excavate on National Trust land was kindly provided by that organisation. Many thanks are due to Malachy Conway (National Trust) and Davy Brown (Church Warden), as well as the National Trust team who strimmed the site of vegetation prior to the excavation. The excavation was directed by Sarah Gormley, assistant director was Brian Sloan and Janet Bell, Thom Kerr, Alison Kyle and Lauren Mansell were the excavation crew.

3. THE EXCAVATION

3.1 Site description

3.1.1 St Thomas' Church is located on the shoreline at the western end of the small settlement of Church Bay on Rathlin Island, Co. Antrim (Fig.1). The church and graveyard are bounded by a modern road at the south and west, and cliffs rise immediately to the north and east. The evaluation was carried out on a small portion of land, measuring approximately 170 square metres, which lies immediately beyond the graveyard wall at the north (Fig. 2). This area of rough ground, located between the graveyard wall and the base of the cliffs, is at present unused and was covered in thick vegetation prior to the excavation, having to be strimmed before work commenced (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2 – The area for the proposed graveyard extension lies immediately north of the present graveyard wall, looking north-east.



Fig. 3 – The excavation area, strimmed of vegetation, looking east-north-east.

3.1.2 No upstanding remains were identified in the area of the proposed graveyard extension prior to it being cleared of vegetation. It was noted that the site was quite uneven, with more level ground at the south and a step running approximately east-west to higher ground at the north (Fig. 4).

3.1.3 The geology of Rathlin Island is characterised by the olivine-basalt flows of the lower basalt formation and the underlying chalk of the Ulster white limestone formation (Wilson and Robbie 1966, 190). The coastline is dominated by cliffs cut into the basalt and in the area of St Thomas' Church the cliffs are bordered by a rock platform covered by raised beach scree slopes and shingle (*ibid.*, 281). The soils, typical of those found elsewhere on the island, are undeveloped and thin (Cruickshank 1997, 135).

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Initially four trenches were opened, three at 2m x 1m and one at 1m x 1m, with a view to determining the archaeological potential of the area. A fifth small trench (1m x 1m) was subsequently opened to investigate the nature of a stone alignment which was visible when the undergrowth was removed from the site (Fig. 4). The trenches were excavated by hand using the standard methodology outlined in the Environment and Heritage Service *Excavations Standards Manual*. The principal site records consisted of context sheets, supported by photographs, field drawings and field notes. All features were planned prior to and following excavation, and section drawings were completed for all features and trenches. The written site archive is presented in Appendices 1 – 6. The site code used was CHQ'06.

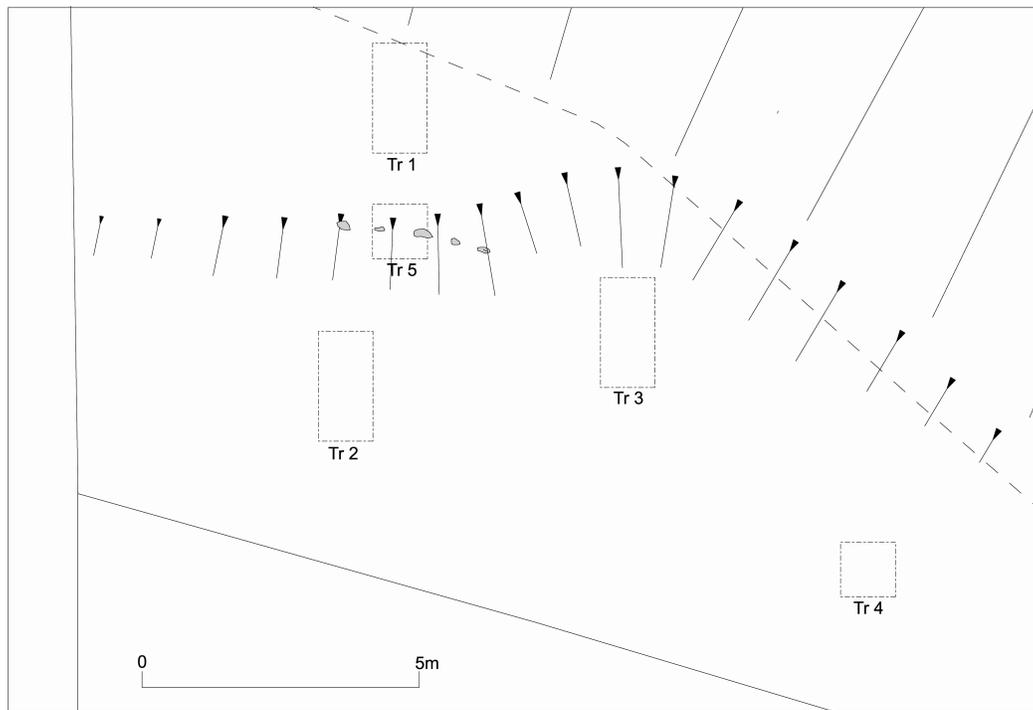


Fig. 4 – Location of evaluation trenches 1-5, plan orientated north.

3.3 Account of the excavation

3.3.1 Trench 1

3.3.1.1 Trench 1 was the northern-western most trench in the area under investigation, set out on the sloping ground which rises away from the church boundary. It measured 2m x 1m and was aligned north-south (Fig. 4).

3.3.1.2 The removal of the upper topsoil layers, (c101 and c102) uncovered a dark-brown gritty-loam (c103), which covered the extent of the trench, being up to 0.20m thick. This context contained abundant quantities of shell and animal bone, as well as some worked flint and one body sherd of coarse pottery. Its removal uncovered a stone tumble layer (c106), which had spread into the trench from the north. The tumble lay above, and was in some cases pressed into c105, a mid-brown compact gritty loam, which covered the extent of the trench. The layer was a maximum 0.26m in depth and contained animal bone and worked flint.

3.3.1.3 A mid to dark-brown silty-loam (c107) lay below c105 and had a maximum depth of 0.18m. The layer contained large amounts of shell, as well as some animal bone and charcoal. A thin spread of compact gritty clay (c108), lay below c107 at the southern end of the trench. It covered the width of the trench and 0.80m of the length, was 0.007m thick and contained animal bone and worked flint. When c108 was removed, c109 was revealed (Fig. 5), which was a further layer of stone tumble which covered the trench to a maximum thickness of 0.20m, except at the northern end of the trench where there was no c108 and where c107 came straight down onto c109. A mid to dark-brown clay loam (c109) which covered the trench and was 17cm thick lay above c110. This context contained bone, shell, worked flint, charcoal, a struck porcellanite flake and a rim sherd of coarse pottery. Context 111 lay below c110 and was a yellow-brown compact sandy loam which covered the trench, with a thickness of 0.15m. This deposit lay above c112 a mid-brown sandy loam which contained rounded stones or pebbles, flint and a sherd of decorated pottery of early Bronze Age date. This layer was 0.20m thick and lay directly above the natural sand and pebble beach deposit.



Fig. 5 – Plan of stone tumble layer, c109, in Trench 1.

3.3.2 Trench 2

3.3.2.1 Trench 2 was the south-western most trench laid out, opened on a fairly level area of ground adjacent to the church boundary wall (Fig. 4). The trench measured 2m x 1m and was aligned north-south.

3.3.2.2 The removal of topsoil (c201), in this trench revealed a mid-brown soil (c202), covering the entire trench. It was 0.09m thick and contained sub-angular stones, (maximum length c0.05-0.10m), along with shell, animal bone, struck flint, pottery and glass. Contexts 203, 204 and 205 were apparent on removal of c202. Context 203 lay at the south-west corner of the trench, the orange-brown clay-loam measured 0.74m x 0.62m, was 0.08m thick and contained worked flint.



Fig. 6 - Trench 2, hearth, from above, facing east.

3.3.2.3 Context 205 lay at the north-east of Trench 2, the orange-brown loamy soil survived as a spread 0.12m x 0.78m and was 0.18m thick. Animal bone was removed from the spread. Both c203 and c205 lay above c204, a mid-brown gritty clay loam which covered the extent of the trench and was up to 0.20m thick. Animal bone and worked flint were also recovered from this context. Context 204 was removed to reveal c206, c207 and c208. Shallow cut (c207) was cut into c206 at the south of the trench and was filled with a mid-brown loamy soil (c208) which contained charcoal and a few fragments of bone. The cut, of which only the northern edge was apparent, measured 0.64m x 0.25m and was 0.11m deep and ran into the baulk at the south of the trench. Context 206 covered the trench and ranged from 0.10m – 0.24m in thickness. Context 206 was a mid-brown gritty clay loam that was very compact and contained

80% sub-rounded to angular stones which ranged between 0.05m to 0.40m in size. Context 206 contained a possible dressed stone fragment and some mortar and was removed to reveal a further layer of tumbled stones, c0.15m – 0.30m in size. The stones had spread into Trench 2 from the north and overlay c210 and a hearth (c211 to c215). The hearth, visible as lenses of orange, orange-red and black sandy clay 0.30m x 0.28m (extending into the baulk at the west; Fig. 6). The burnt layers extended into c210 to a depth of up to 0.15m (Fig.7). Coarse pottery, a fragment of lead glazed pottery as well as a small amount of animal bone and flint were recovered from the hearth which was within c210.

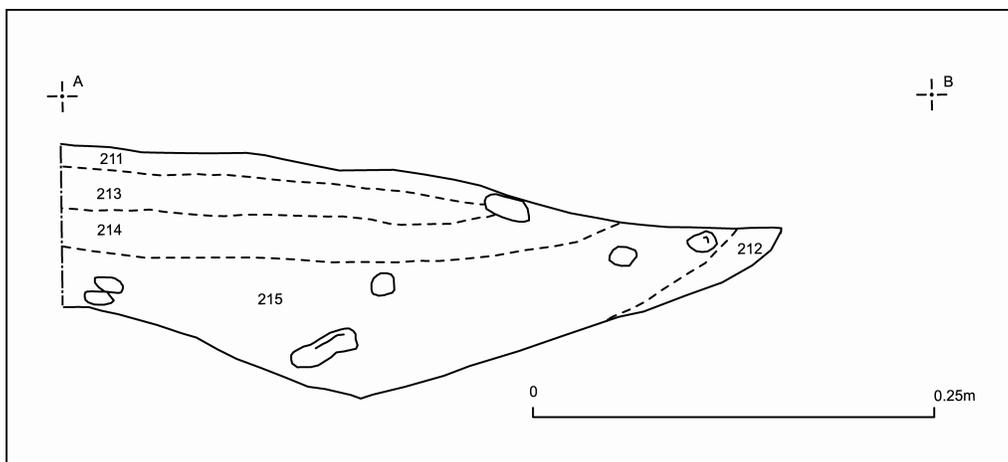
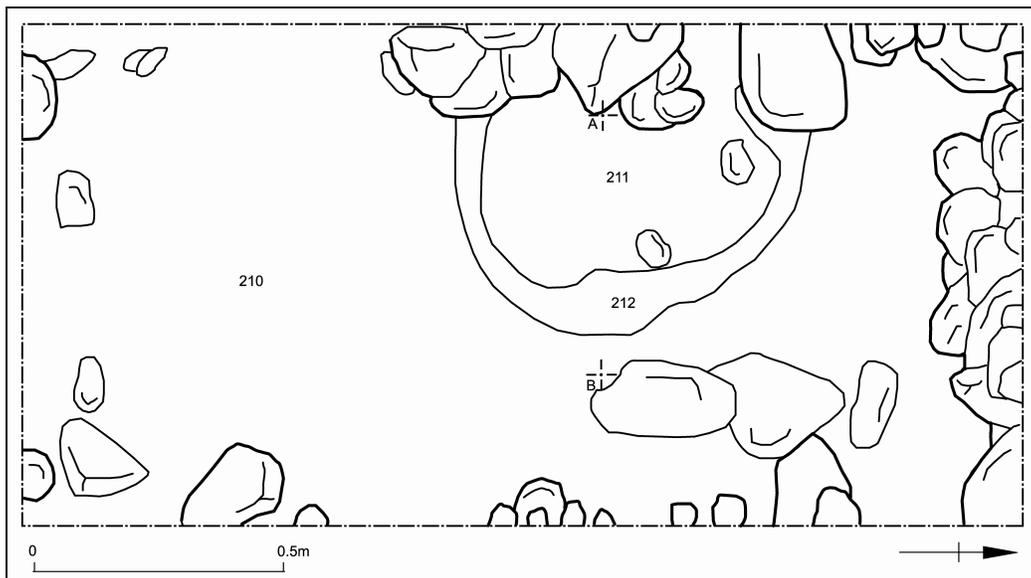


Fig. 7 – Plan of hearth in c210, Trench 2 (above) showing section points A and B and south-facing section of hearth (below).

3.3.2.4 Context 210 covered the extent of the trench and ranged from 0.15m – 0.40m in thickness. It was present as a loose orange-brown clayey-silt, containing occasional

charcoal flecks, worked flint, animal bone, coarse pottery and slag. Context 210 was removed to reveal c218 at the north of the trench and c219 at the south of the trench. Context 219 filled c220, which had been cut into c218. The cut (c220) extended into the trench from the south, 1.0m – 1.4m and extended beyond the limits of the trench at the east, south and west (Fig. 8). The cut contained a uniform dark-brown sticky clay loam. Within the fill were large sub-angular stones (most around 0.10m but up to 0.25m x 0.20m), charcoal, animal bone, shell, pottery (Souterrain Ware - Cormac McSparron *pers. comm.*), flint and metal. An articulated skeleton recovered from this context has been identified as a dog (Fig. 9; Emily Murray *pers. comm.*). The pit had a maximum depth of 0.50m (Fig. 10).

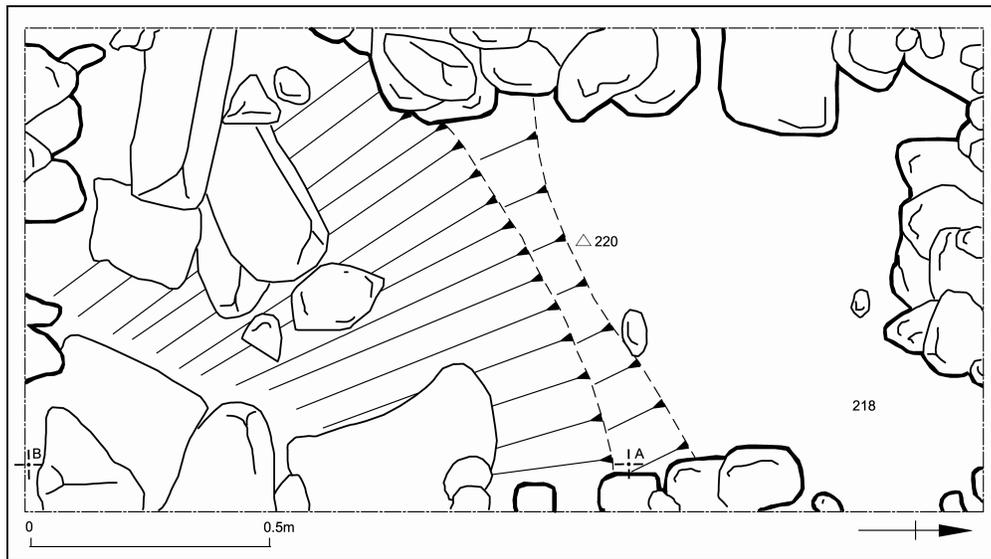


Fig. 8 – Post-excavation plan of pit, cut 220, in Trench 2.



Fig. 9 – Dog skeleton within c219 in Trench 2.

3.3.2.5 Context 220 was cut into c218, a mid-brown silty-loam, which contained animal bone, worked flint and coarse pottery. Context 218 covered the extent of the trench to a depth of at least 0.50m. Trench 2 had already been stepped, for health and safety reasons, to allow for excavation to this depth (approximately 1.50m) and further investigation of this deposit would have required additional stepping, essentially widening the trench to 3m x 4m, which was deemed impractical given the evaluative nature of the work and in particular the negative results achieved in the other trenches. Context 218 was not, therefore, investigated further and following full excavation of c219, Trench 2 was closed.

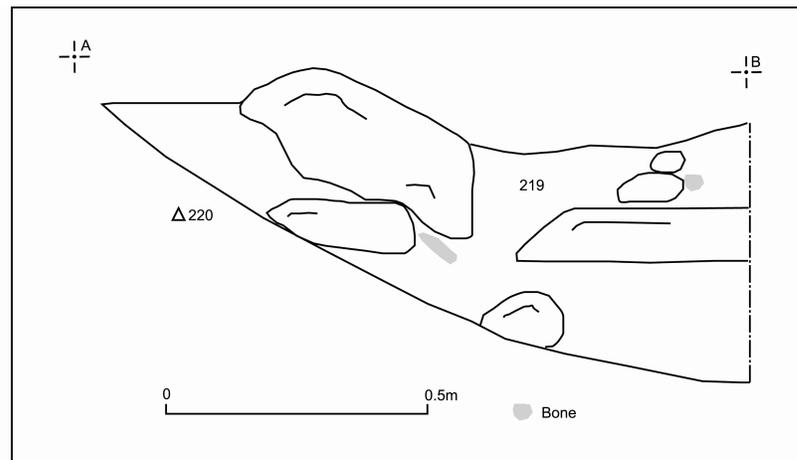


Fig. 10 – West facing section of pit, cut 220, in Trench 2. Location of section points A and B are shown on figure 8.

3.3.3 Trench 3

3.3.3.1 Trench 3 was laid out at the base of the slope, over a shallow, but perceptible linear depressed area (Fig. 4). The trench measured 1m x 2m and was aligned north-south.

3.3.3.2 On the removal of topsoil (c301), the edge of a large pit was apparent, cut from the topsoil and visible at the east edge of the trench. The pit was 1m across and 0.75m in depth and contained a dump of large stones. This pit appears to be of fairly recent origin; however, only the edge of the feature was detected in Trench 3. The removal of the topsoil (c301) elsewhere in this trench revealed, an orange-brown silty-loam (c302) which contained sub-angular stones, most between 0.10m – 0.20m, with some as large as 0.50m in size. This context covered the whole trench, with a thickness of between 0.10m – 0.20m, and contained cut slate and iron. The removal of c302 revealed c303 and c304. Context 303 survived as a orange-brown, silty-loam, which was devoid of stone and covered the trench, with a thickness of 0.05m. Context 304, appears to be a path edge and consisted of five, cut slabs arranged in a linear

fashion, running north-east to west and beyond the limits of the trench (Fig. 11). A shallow gully (c305) measuring 0.35m wide and 0.08m deep was cut into c303 and 307, and contained a levelling deposit (c306) of dark-brown silty-loam upon which the slabs were set. The removal of c303 revealed c307 and c309.

3.3.3.3 Context 309, a mid-brown silty soil, overlay c307 at the southern edge of the trench. The context extended into the trench from the south 0.80m and survived to a thickness of 0.05m and contained bone, worked flint and coarse pottery. On the removal of c304, 306 and 309, c307 was revealed covering the entire trench and ranging in thickness from 0.15m – 0.30m. The context was a dark-brown gritty-clay, mottled with orange. Numerous sub-angular stones (ranging in size from 0.05m to 0.20m), pottery and worked flint were contained within the matrix. The removal of c307 revealed c310 and 311, with c311 overlying c310 at the south of the trench. Context 311 was a orange-brown loose silty-sand, some 0.10m thick, which extended into the trench from the south, 0.70m and contained some worked flint and shell. Context 310 underlay c307 and c311 and was a dark-brown sandy-silt with 50% sub-rounded and sub-angular stones, approximately 0.10m to 0.20m in size. The context survived to a thickness of 0.20m and contained struck flint. Context 310 was removed in this trench to reveal the natural sand and pebble beach deposit.

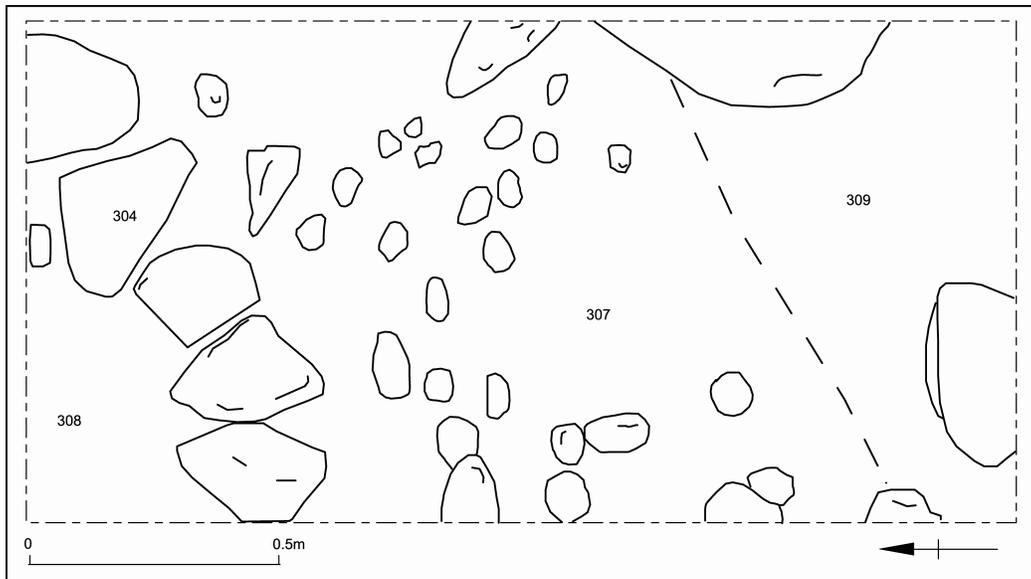


Fig. 11 – Plan of possible path, c304, in Trench 3

3.3.4 Trench 4

3.3.4.1 Trench 4, measuring 1m x 1m, was opened at the south-east edge of the area under investigation (Fig. 4).

3.3.4.2 The topsoil in this trench (c401) was removed to reveal c402 and c403. Context 402 was a friable, dark-brown loam, with a thickness of 38cm. It contained small stones (c0.05m in size) and also had lenses of shell, concentrated at the south of the trench. Struck flint, animal bone and modern pottery were recovered from this context. Context 404 lay below c402. This dark-brown loam was mottled with orange-brown sandy-loam and contained charcoal, animal bone and shells. Context 404 survived at a thickness of 0.07m at the east end of the trench and was up to 0.24m thick at the west. Context 404 was removed to reveal c405, a light-brown sandy loam, containing animal bone; it was removed to reveal the natural bedrock. The natural bedrock sloped perceptibly to the south-east and a layer of large boulders (c403) lay directly above it, just protruding into the trench (c0.30m) from the north. Context 403 was a substantial deposit, approximately 0.90m thick and was covered only by the topsoil. The sub-angular stones between 0.15m and 0.40m in size had the appearance of tumble and many voids were evident between the stones. Contexts 402 to 405 had built up against c403.

3.3.5 Trench 5

3.3.5.1 Trench 5, measuring 1m x 1m, was laid out over a line of stones (c513), visible running approximately from east to west and protruding through the turf, on the break of the slope in the area under investigation (Fig. 4).



Fig. 12 - Trench 5, c513, looking north.

3.3.5.2 The removal of the topsoil (c501) in this trench, revealed c502 and c503 which were separated by the east-west running stones. Context 502 was located to the north and was an 0.11m thick layer of dark-brown gritty loam, containing struck flint pieces and small angular stones up to 0.03m in size. Context 504 was revealed on removal of c502. The light-brown silty-clay, 0.12m thick, lay above c508, a mid orange-brown sand, ranging from 0.17m – 0.25m in thickness. Animal bone was recovered from c508. The matrix to the south of the stone setting (c513) differed from that to the north. To the south the topsoil (501) was removed to reveal c503, a mid-brown gritty-loam, 0.09m thick, which contained animal bone. Below c503 was c505, a light-brown loam layer, 0.13m thick, which contained small sub-angular stones, animal bone and a fragment of a rotary quern stone. Context 509 lay under c505 at the south of the trench; this dark-brown loam contained burnt lenses and charcoal and was 0.18m thick. Contexts 508 (to the north of the stones), c513 (the stone wall) and c509 all lay over c512 (c512 = c511). This context was a dark-brown clay loam which contained sub-angular stones, greater than 0.05m in size. It is apparent that it was at this layer that the stone wall was constructed. It would appear that this context was a land surface which was scarped to receive the boulders, rather than having been laid down specifically to receive the wall. It is likely that c512 is the same layer as c110 in Trench 1. The excavation established that the east-west aligned stones were deliberately placed upon c512 to form a dry-stone retaining feature or wall (Fig. 12). Following the construction of the wall, layers continued to slip from upslope and butt against the wall at the north; however, the boulders have served to retain this slump, allowing for the difference between the soils deposited on both the north and south of the wall following its construction.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 The excavation in the area of ground immediately to the north of St Thomas' Church boundary wall uncovered evidence of activity from the Neolithic to modern period. The excavation largely recovered a series of tumble or slumping episodes, where the layers encountered had in fact derived from upslope. Despite this, five discreet phases were identified.

4.2 Phase 1-2

The recovery of prehistoric artifacts during the course of the excavation attested to the presence of both Neolithic and Bronze Age activity in immediate area. Neolithic and Bronze Age lithics of flint, quartz and porcellanite were recovered, as were a number of sherds of Bronze Age pottery. Unfortunately, the prehistoric artifacts recovered were mostly residually deposited within layers which had slumped from up-slope. It is hoped that specialist analysis of the pottery and lithics will clarify further the composition of the prehistoric assemblage recovered at St Thomas'.

4.3 Phase 3

A pit was uncovered in the very south west of the excavation area (Figs. 8-10) and represents the third chronological phase uncovered at St Thomas'. The pit contained animal bone, some showing possible butchery marks, as well as quantities of shell and Souterrain Ware pottery. The associated pottery provides a likely date in the Early Medieval period for the feature. The sherds recovered from the feature were, for the most part undecorated, however, a number had decorated rim tops, a feature which is thought to be a later development in the chronology of Souterrain Ware (Ryan 1973, 628). Souterrain Ware has been recovered elsewhere from contexts spanning the 7th to the 13th centuries AD (*ibid.*, 626). It is feasible that this feature was created at a time when the early church on Rathlin, which is thought to date to between the 6th and 11th centuries AD (see above p4) was active. Souterrain Ware was also recovered from other layers during the excavation. It is hoped that specialist analysis of the artifacts, animal bone and samples recovered from the pit will shed further light on the nature and function of the feature.

4.4 Phase 4

A hearth was recovered at the very south west of the excavation area (Figs. 6-7). A single small sherd of lead glazed pottery was recovered from the feature, representing the fourth phase of activity at St Thomas'. Glazed pottery is produced from the 13th century and so the hearth is likely to date to this period at the earliest. No other features or artifacts were recovered during the excavation which could be assigned to the Medieval period.

4.5 Phase 5

The final chronological phase encountered during the excavation relates to the probable late 19th or early 20th century 'landscaping' activity uncovered in trenches 3 and 5 (see Figs. 11 & 12). There is local tradition of a pathway, running approximately east to west across the level area of ground immediately north of the present church boundary wall, exiting onto the present road at the west of the excavation area. It seems likely that the feature interpreted as a path edge (c304) in trench 3 relates to this route way. The 'retaining wall' feature investigated in trench 5 may also have related to this, functioning by stopping the soil slumping over the path from upslope.

- 4.6 The evaluation of the site, north of St Thomas' Church boundary wall, was required due to the tradition that the early church was located at this site and reports of stone-lined graves having been uncovered in the vicinity. No evidence for the burial of human remains was encountered, however, in the eight square metres investigated (approximately 5% of the total area currently under consideration for the extension to the graveyard). The recovery of a pit with a likely date in the Early Medieval period does suggest, however, that the site was in use, for some time at least, during the period that St Comgall's Church was active on the island.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTHER WORK

In order to bring the results of the evaluation at St Thomas' Church to completion, including full publication, it is recommended that post-excavation analysis of the material recovered is undertaken.

5.1 Post-excavation analysis

5.1.1 Soil sample processing

It is recommended that the soil samples collected from the pit (cut 220, fill 219) are sieved and floated to remove any further bone or artifact material and also so that any further environmental, agricultural or dietary information can be collected. A total of 58.07kg of soil was recovered from the feature.

5.1.2 Radiocarbon dating

It is recommended that an Accelerator Mass Spectrometry date is obtained from a sample recovered from the pit. It is hoped that this would better date the feature which is at present dated only by association with Souterrain Ware, which has a date ranging from the 7th to the 13th centuries AD.

5.1.3 Macro-floral remains

Any macro-floral remains recovered from the samples taken from the pit will provide further information about the environment and agriculture for that phase of the site and may also provide samples suitable for dating. Identification of any remains recovered from the samples should be undertaken.

5.1.4 Pottery

A small amount of pottery of Bronze Age, Early Medieval and Medieval date was recovered during the excavation, with the pottery being for the most part Souterrain Ware. It is recommended that a full analytical report is compiled on the pottery recovered.

5.1.5 Flint

Lithics, mostly of flint, but also of porcellanite and quartz were recovered during the excavation and it is recommended that a full analytical report is prepared on the assemblage.

5.1.6 Metal

A nail was recovered from the fill of the pit (c219) and it is recommended that a note on the artifact should be prepared.

5.1.7 *Animal Bone*

An assemblage of animal bone was recovered during the excavation and it is recommended that a report on the remains is prepared.

5.2 **Publication**

A summary of the excavation work has been submitted to the *Excavations Bulletin* for 2006. A short report will also be submitted to the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology* following the completion of the post-excavation work outlined above.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Cruickshank, J.G. 1997 *Soil and Environment: Northern Ireland*, DANI and QUB, Belfast.
- Hamlin, A. 1976 *The Archaeology of Early Christianity in the north of Ireland*, unpublished PhD thesis, QUB.
- Hurl, D. 2003 *St. Thomas' Church of Ireland church, Rathlin Island*, unpublished file note held in the EHS SMR file.
- Law, H.I. 1962 *Rathlin Island and Parish*, Cookstown.
- Marshall, J.D. 1837 *Notes on the statistics and natural history of the island of Rathlin: off the northern coast of Ireland*, Dublin.
- O'Laverty, J. 1887 *An historical account of the Diocese of Down and Connor, Ancient and Modern, Vol. 4*, Dublin.
- Reeves, W. 1847 *Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Down, Connor, and Dromore, consisting of a taxation of those dioceses, compiled in the year MCCCVI.; with notes and illustrations*, Dublin.
- Ryan, M. 1973 'Native pottery in Early Historic Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 73 C, 619-645.
- Wilson, H.E. and Robbie, J.A. 1966 *Geology of the country around Ballycastle*, 2nd edition, HMSO Belfast.

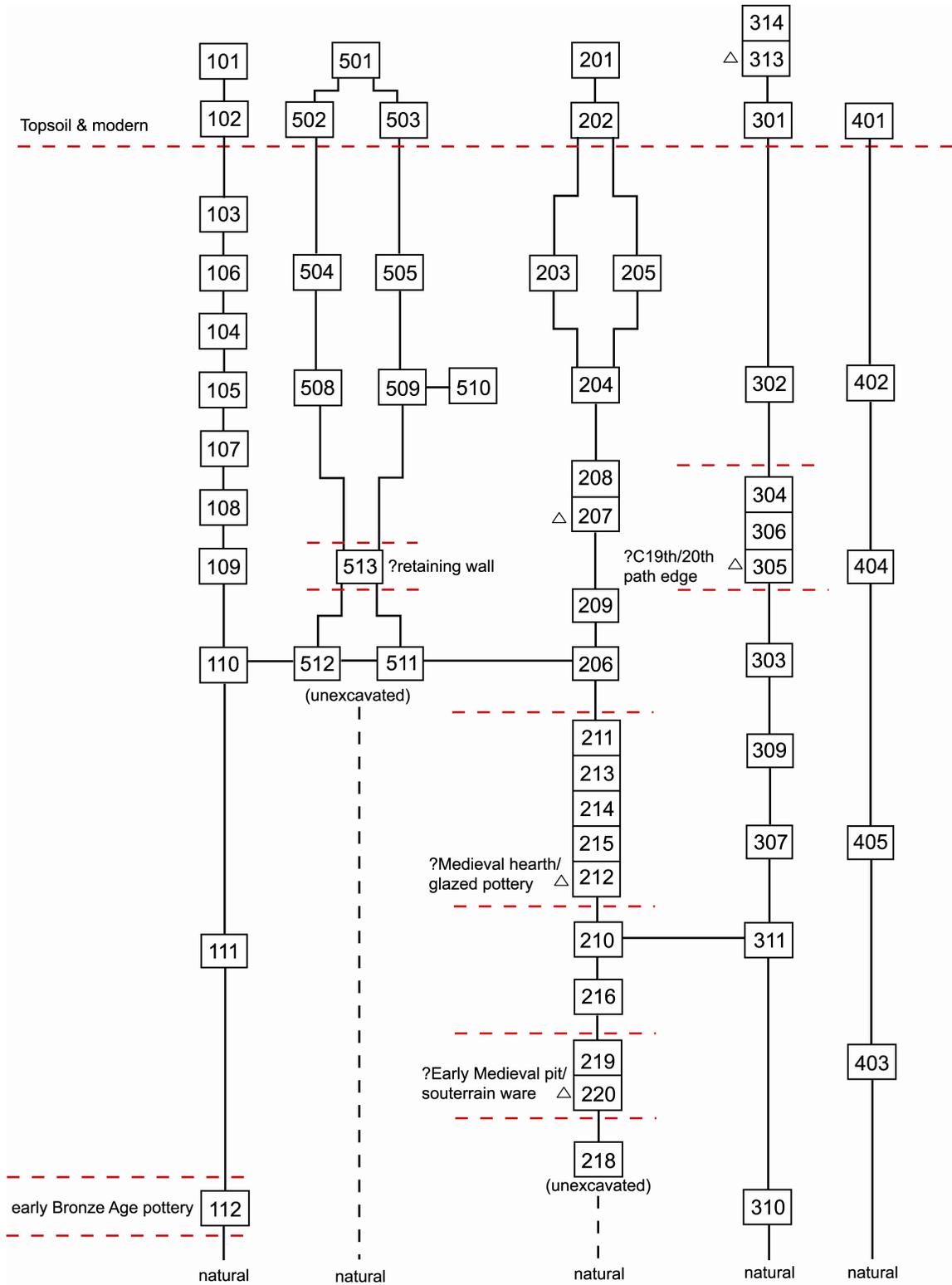
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT LIST

Context no.	Description
Trench 1	
101	Loose topsoil layer, dark brown loam
102	Mid- to dark-brown gritty loam
103	Dark brown-black gritty loam
104	Orangey-red sandy loam
105	Mid-brown gritty loam
106	Stone tumble, medium - large stones, range c20 - 60cm in size
107	Mid- to dark-brown silty loam - midden layer
108	Mid-brown gritty clay
109	Stone tumble, large boulders c50 - 60cm in size
110	Mid- to dark- brown clay loam
111	Yellowy-brown sandy loam
112	Compact mid-brown sandy loam
113	Orangey-yellow silty sand, natural subsoil
Trench 2	
201	Loose topsoil layer, dark brown loam
202	Mid-brown with orange flecks
203	Mottled orange-brown clay-loam
204	Mid-brown gritty clay-loam
205	Orangey-brown loam
206	Compact mid-brown gritty clay loam, with angular stones 5 - 38cm in size
207	Cut feature filled by context 208
208	Mid-brown loam
209	Compact light-brown gritty clay-loam, with high concentration of stones
210	Loose orangey-brown silt
211	Orange sandy-clay, upper fill of hearth
212	Black charcoal hearth fill
213	Orange-red clay hearth fill
214	Dark-orange clay hearth fill
215	Mid brown-orange clay-loam hearth fill
216	Brown loam, below hearth
217	Dark-brown gritty-loam
218	Mid-brown layer, not fully excavated
219	Dark-brown clay-loam, possible refuse deposit

Context no.	Description
220	Cut, contains c219
Trench 3	
301	Loose topsoil layer, dark brown loam
302	Orange-brown silty loam, containing many large stones up to 50cm in size
303	Orange-brown silty loam
304	Stone alignment, uppermost fill of c305
305	Shallow linear cut, possible path edge/ garden feature
306	Dark-brown silty loam, fill of c305
307	Dark-brown silty clay with orange flecks, concentration of stones (5cm - 20cm)
308	Compact orange sandy-silt
309	Mid-brown silt
310	Dark-brown sandy silt
311	Orange-brown sandy silt
312	Orange-brown sand
313	U-shaped pit, modern feature
314	Dark-brown loam, contains large stones and boulders
Trench 4	
401	Loose topsoil layer, dark brown loam
402	Friable dark-brown loam
403	Dump of stones at north of trench
404	Blacky-brown loam with patches of orange sandy-loam
405	Light brown sandy loam
Trench 5	
501	Loose topsoil layer, dark brown loam
502	Dark-brown gritty loam
503	Mid-brown gritty loam
504	Light-brown silty clay
505	Light-brown loam
506	Not used
507	Not used
508	Loose mid orange-brown sand
509	Dark-brown loam, contains burnt soil lens c510
510	Burnt soil lens within context 509
511	Dark-brown clay loam

Context no.	Description
512	Dark-brown clay loam - unexcavated
513	Dry-stone wall

APPENDIX 2: HARRIS MATRIX



APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

Photo. no.	Description
1	Excavation area before strimming, looking east
2	Excavation area before strimming, looking north east
3	Excavation area before strimming, looking north north east
4	St Thomas', looking north
5	The Manor House
6	Excavation area, after strimming, looking west
7	Excavation area, after strimming, looking west
8	Excavation area, after strimming, looking north east
9	Trench 2, c202, facing north
10	Trench 2, c202, facing north
11	Trench 4, c402, facing north
12	Trench 4, c402, facing north
13	Trench 1, c102, facing south
14	Trench 1, c102, facing east
15	Trench 3, c302, facing north
16	Trench 3, c302, facing east
17	Site looking west
18	Site looking south west
19	Site looking south east
20	Trench 3, c304, facing west
21	Trench 3, c304, facing north
22	Trench 1, c103, looking east
23	Trench 1, c103, looking south
24	Trench 1, c103, looking south 1
25	Trench 2, c202, detail of bone
26	Trench 2, c202, detail of bone
27	View to Knocklayd from site
28	Trench 1, c104,105,106, looking east
29	Trench 1, c104,105,106, looking south
30	Trench 1, c104,105,106, looking west
31	St Thomas', looking north east
32	Looking west from St Thomas'
33	St Thomas', looking north east
34	Trench 2, c204,205, facing south
35	Trench 2, c204,205, facing east
36	Trench 3, c310, 311, looking south
37	Trench 1, midden, c107, facing east
38	Trench 1, midden, c107, facing south
39	Trench 1, c107, close up of midden, from east
40	Trench 1, c107, close up of midden, from east
41	Site, looking south
42	Trench 4, north facing section, drawing no 7
43	Trench 4, west facing section, drawing no 9
44	Trench 4, south facing section, drawing no 10

Photo. no.	Description
45	Trench 4, east facing section, drawing no 11
46	Trench 4, plan, drawing no 6
47	Trench 4, plan, from north
48	Trench 2, c207, 208, facing north
49	Trench 2, c207, 208, facing south
50	Trench 2, removal of c208, looking south
51	Trench 2, removal of c208, looking east
52	Trench 3, c312, facing north
53	Trench 3, c312, facing south
54	Site, looking north west
55	Site, looking north west
56	Trench 1, c109, looking west
57	Trench 1, c109, looking north
58	Slope, looking east
59	Trench 3, drawing
60	Trench 1
61	Trench 2, tumble within c210, overlying hearth, facing north
62	Trench 2, tumble within c210, overlying hearth, facing north
63	Trench 2, tumble within c210 overlying hearth
64	Trench 2, tumble within c210 overlying hearth
65	Trench 2, tumble within c210 overlying hearth, looking south
66	Trench 2, c210-212, hearth, facing north
67	Trench 2, c210-212, hearth, facing north
68	Trench 2, c210-212, hearth, from above, facing east
69	Trench 2, c210-212, hearth, from above, facing north
70	Trench 2, c211, 213-215, hearth section, looking north
71	Trench 2, c211, 213-215, hearth section, looking north
72	Trench 2, hearth post-ex, facing north
73	Trench 2, hearth post-ex, facing east
74	Trench 1, looking west
75	Trench 5, burnt lens in 509, looking east
76	Trench 5, c513, looking north
77	Trench 2, facing north
78	Trench 2, facing north
79	Trench 2, excavation of c219
80	Trench 2, excavation of c219
81	Trench 2, excavation of c219
82	Trench 1, c113, looking west
83	Trench 1, c113, looking west
84	Trench 1, east facing section
85	Trench 1, west facing section
86	Trench 1, west facing section
87	Trench 1, north facing section
88	Trench 1, east facing section
89	Trench 1, south facing section
90	Trench 2, skeleton in c219, facing south

Photo. no.	Description
91	Trench 2, skeleton in c219, facing south
92	Trench 2, fore limbs of skeleton in c219
93	Trench 2, fore limbs of skeleton in c219
94	Trench 5, c513, looking north
95	Trench 5, c513, south facing
96	Trench 5, c513, looking north
97	Trench 5, c513, looking north
98	Trench 2, c218, c220, looking south
99	Trench 2, c220, detail of cut, looking south east
100	Trench 2, c220, detail of cut, looking east
101	Trench 2, c220, facing south
102	Trench 2, west facing section
103	Trench 2, east facing section
104	Trench 2, north facing section
105	Trench 2, south facing section
106	Site, post-excavation, looking north east
107	Site, post-excavation, looking north east
108	St Thomas' Church

APPENDIX 4: FIELD DRAWINGS REGISTER

Drawing no.	Context no.	Plan (1:20)/ Section (1:10)	Description
1	402, 403	Plan	Trench 4 after removal of topsoil
2	302	Plan	Plan of trench 3 after removal of topsoil
3	303, 304, 307, 308	Plan	Plan of stone alignment 304 in the north of trench 3
4a	304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309	Plan	Plan of trench 3 after removal of topsoil
4b	104, 105, 106	Plan	Trench 1 on removal of topsoil
5	203, 204, 205	Plan	Trench 2 on removal of topsoil
6	403, bedrock	Plan	Bedrock and stones (403) in trench 4
7	401, 402, 404, 405	Section	North-facing section of trench 4
8	304, 310, 311	Plan	Trench 3, after removal of 307
9	401, 402, 403, 404, 405	Section	West-facing section of trench 4
10	401, 402, 403	Section	South-facing section of trench 4
11	401, 402, 404, 405	Section	East-facing section of trench 4
12	304, 312	Plan	Trench 3 - c312
13	206, 207	Plan	Trench 2 - post-ex plan of 204, showing 207
14	109	Plan	Stone tumble in trench 1
15	301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314	Section	Trench 3 - west-facing section
16	301, 302, 303, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312	Section	Trench 3 - north-facing section
17	301, 302, 303, 305, 306, 307, 309, 310, 311, 312	Section	Trench 3 - east-facing section
18	301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 310, 312	Section	Trench 3 - south-facing section
19	210, 211, 212	Plan	Trench 2 - hearth
20	210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215	Section	Trench 2 - section of hearth
21	210	Plan	Trench 2, c210 upon removal of 211-215
22	505, 506, 507, 508	Plan	Trench 5 after removal of 501, 502, 503 and 504
23	101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112	Section	Trench 1 - east-facing section
24	101, 102, 103, 105, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112	Section	Trench 1 - north-facing section
25	101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 508, 509, 511, 512, 513	Section	Trench 1 and 5 - west-facing section
26	101, 102, 103	Section	Trench 1 - south-facing section
27	218, 219, 220	Plan	Plan of trench 2 - articulated skeleton within midden deposit 219
28	505, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513	Section	North-facing section, trench 5
29	511, 512, 513	Plan	Trench 5, post-excavation plan of 513
30	218, 220	Plan	Trench 2, post-excavation plan of 220
31	201, 202, 204, 205, 206, 210, 218	Section	South-facing section of trench 2

Drawing no.	Context no.	Plan (1:20)/ Section (1:10)	Description
32	201, 202, 205, 204, 206, 210, 219, 220, 218	Section	West-facing section of trench 2
33	201, 202, 203, 204, 208, 210, 219, 218	Section	North-facing section of trench 2
34	201, 202, 203, 204, 206, 210, 212, 215, 214, 213, 211, 219, 218	Section	East-facing section of trench 2

APPENDIX 5: SMALL FINDS REGISTER

Trench	Context	Find
1	101	Flint
1	102	Bone
1	102	Coarse pot
1	102	Flint
1	102	Flint
1	102	Porcellanite
1	102	Pot
1	102	Shell
1	103	Bone
1	103	Coarse pot
1	103	Flint
1	103	Flint
1	105	Bone
1	105	Flint
1	107	Bone
1	108	Bone
1	108	Bone
1	108	Flint
1	110	Bone
1	110	Coarse pot
1	110	Flint
1	110	Flint core
1	110	Flint/porcellanite
1	110	Shell
1	110	Stone
1	112	Decorated pot
1	112	Flint
2	201	Modern (slate, metal, flint, pottery)
2	202	Bone
2	202	Coarse pot
2	202	Flint
2	202	Flint x3
2	202	Flint
2	202	Flint, retouched
2	202	Flint debitage
2	202	Flint flake

Trench	Context	Find
2	202	Flint flake
2	202	Flint scraper
2	202	Flint scraper
2	202	Glass
2	202	Iron object
2	202	Retouched flint
2	202	Flint scraper
2	202	Shell
2	202	Tooth
2	202	Tooth
2	202	Tooth
2	203	Flint
2	203	Flint
2	203	Flint debitage
2	204	Bone
2	204	Bone and teeth
2	204	Flint x2
2	204	Flint x13 & quartz (1)
2	204	Flint x2
2	204	Flint
2	204	Flint core fragment
2	204	Quartz
2	204	Tooth
2	204	Tooth
2	205	Bone
2	206	Dressed stone?
2	206	Mortar
2	208	Bone
2	209	Flint x2
2	210	Bone
2	210	Bone
2	210	Burnt bone
2	210	Burnt bone
2	210	Burnt flint
2	210	Coarse pot x3
2	210	Coarse pot
2	210	Fish bone
2	210	Flint x2
2	210	Flint x5
2	210	Flint x3
2	210	Flint x3
2	210	Flint x2
2	210	Flint x2
2	210	Flint

Trench	Context	Find
2	210	Flint
2	210	Flint
2	210	Lignite
2	210	Slag
2	210	Teeth
2	210	Tooth fragments
2	212	Glazed pot
2	213	Bone
2	214	Bone
2	214	Flint
2	215	Bone
2	215	Bone
2	215	Bone
2	215	Coarse pot x4
2	215	Tooth
2	216	Bone
2	216	Bone
2	216	Coarse pot
2	217	Bone
2	217	Coarse pot x18
2	217	Flint x3
2	217	Flint x2
2	218	Bone
2	218	Bone
2	218	Coarse pot x2
2	218	Flint
2	219	Bone
2	219	Bone
2	219	Bone
2	219	Coarse pot x9
2	219	Coarse pot
2	219	Coarse pot x5
2	219	Dog skeleton
2	219	Flint x4
2	219	Flint
2	219	Flint
2	219	Flint
2	219	Metal nail
2	219	Worked bone
2	Unstratified	Bone
2	Unstratified	Flint x2
2	Unstratified	Flint
2	Unstratified	Tooth
3	301	Bone
3	302	Iron object
3	302	Slate
3	303	Flint
3	304	Flint
3	306	Bone
3	306	Flint
3	306	Flint

Trench	Context	Find
3	306	Flint
3	307	Flint
3	307	Flint
3	307	Pot
3	307	Pot
3	309	Bone
3	309	Flint
3	309	Pot
3	310	Flint
3	311	Flint
3	311	Shell
3	312	Flint
3	312	Porcellanite
3	Unstratified	Bone
3	Unstratified	Flint
3	Unstratified	Flint
3	Unstratified	Pot
4	402	Bone
4	402	Charcoal
4	402	Flint
4	402	Flint
4	402	Pot
4	402	Pot
4	402	Shell
4	403	Bone
4	404	Bone
4	404	Shell
4	405	Bone
5	501	Flint
5	502	Flint
5	503	Bone
5	503	Nail
5	504	Flint
5	505	Bone
5	505	Rotary quern stone
5	508	Bone
5	508	Bone
5	511	Tooth
5	512	Bone

APPENDIX 6: SAMPLES REGISTER

Sample no.	Context	No. bags
1	103	2
2	104	1
3	107	1
4	108	1
5	208	1
6	211	1
7	212	1
8	213	1
9	214	1
10	215	1
11	216	1
12	na	
13	219	15

All samples are bulk samples taken for environmental analysis including charcoal, plant and artifact extraction.