



Monitoring Report No 82.

**Glenleslie Road
Lower Tullykittagh
Co. Antrim**

AE/06/175

Ronan McHugh

Site Specific Information

Site Address: Glenleslie Road

Townland: Lower Tullykittagh

SMR No.: Closest recorded sites are Ant 027:018 and Ant 027:019

State Care *Scheduled* *Other* ✓

Grid Ref: D 1139 1538

County: Antrim

Excavation Licence No: AE/06/175

Planning Ref / No.: G/2006/0229/O

Date of Monitoring: 28th July 2006

Archaeologist Present: Ronan McHugh

Brief Summary:

The proposed development is located within 90 metres of two registered monuments, both of which are recorded as the site of standing stones or possible megalithic tombs (Ant 027:018 and Ant 027:019). Three trenches were excavated to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development on hidden archaeological remains. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in any of the trenches.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of three test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a grading bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened: Three trenches were excavated. Each of these measured 25 metres x 2 metres.

Current Land Use: Conifer plantation

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief Account of the Monitoring

Background

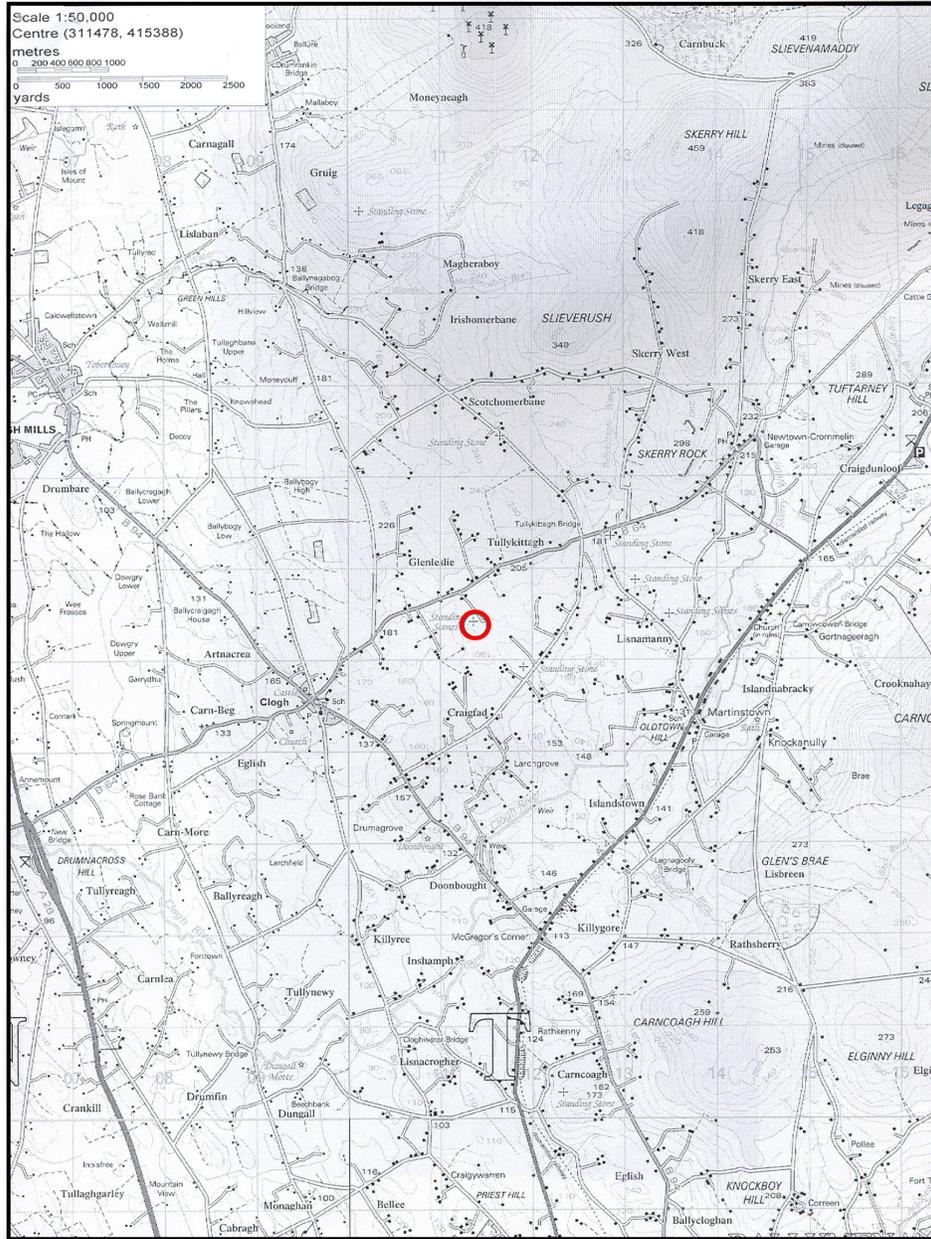
Archaeological evaluation was requested as part of an application for outline planning permission for a single dwelling house in the townland of Lower Tullykittagh, Co. Antrim, approximately 2 kilometres north-east of Clough, Co. Antrim (Fig. 1). The evaluation was requested because of the proximity of the proposed development site to two registered monuments (Fig. 2). Both the precise locations and the interpretation of the nearby sites, however, is problematic.

Approximately 65 metres to the west of the development site is the reported site of four standing stones, or possibly a megalithic tomb, which is recorded in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record (NISMR) as Ant 027:018. The SM 7 reports that this monument is recorded on the third edition Ordnance Survey maps (c. 1904/5) as "Standing Stones", but, by the 1933 edition, it appears that the stones had been removed and the monument is labelled as "Standing Stones" (site of), although the location is marked by a cross (Fig. 3a). The recorded location of the monument depicted in Fig. 2 is based on the position indicated on the 1933 map.

The Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) SM 7 file contains a report on the site dating to 1991. At this date, it was confirmed that there were no extant stones at the recorded location of the monument, however, two standing stones are marked on the 1977 revision of the Ordnance Survey maps, in a field to the north-east of the recorded location of the monument (Fig. 3b). According to the SM 7 file, one stone stood in the position indicated on the 1977 map, while two other stones of megalithic proportions were incorporated into nearby field boundaries. In addition, local tradition recalls that a fourth stone was buried at some time in this area by a previous landowner. Whether any of the stones recorded in the SM 7 were part of the monument recorded as Ant 027:018, or indeed of any other monument is impossible to verify.

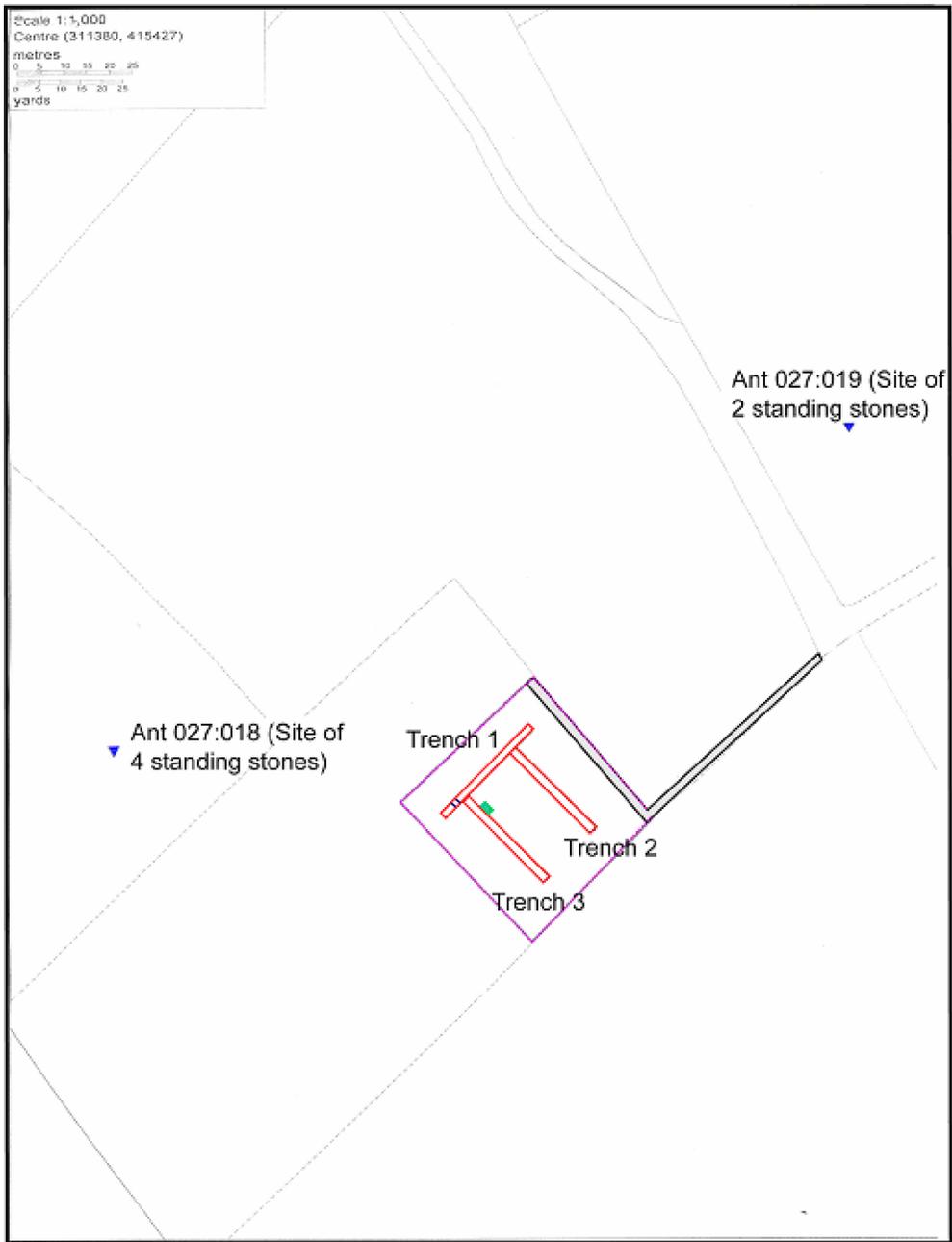
The second recorded monument near to the development site is described in the NISMR as standing stones or a possible megalithic tomb. It is designated as Ant 027:019, and its recorded position is approximately 87 metres to the north-east of the development site (Fig. 2). The initial designation of the site dates to the 1933 six inch maps, where the site is labelled "Standing Stones", although there is no actual symbol locating this site on the 1933 map. There are no extant stones on the site today, but the EHS SM 7 file discloses that there are two sub-rectangular depressions at the site, which might conceivably be the remnants of socket holes for standing stones. The proximity of the recorded location of the site to the stones observed during the 1991 EHS inspection of the surrounding environs suggests that the three stones noted during

this inspection might as easily be the disturbed remnants of this monument (Ant 027:019) as the nearby standing stones recorded as Ant 027:018.



○ Approximate site of proposed development

Fig. 1. Location map



- ▼ Location of recorded archaeological sites
- ▭ Proposed location of evaluation trenches
- ▭ Cobbled pathway
- ▬ Trench Extension 3a
- ⋯ Approximate boundary of development site
- ⋯ Approximate position of field drains in Trench 1

Fig. 2. Development site showing evaluation trenches, nearby recorded sites and access pathway.

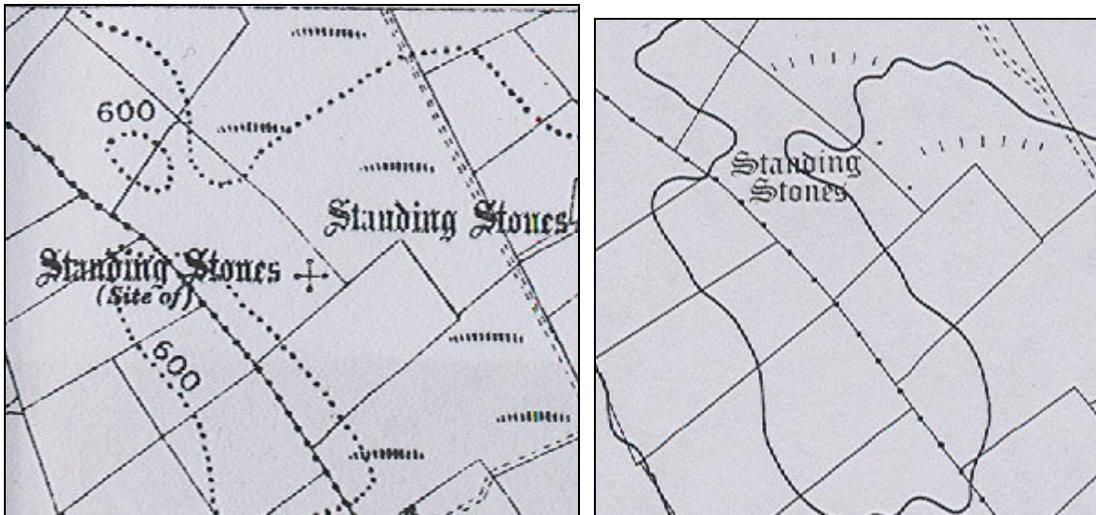


Fig. 3. Fig 3a (Above left) shows the 1933 Ordnance Survey map with the locations of the two sites recorded as Ant 027:018 and Ant 027:019. Fig 3b (Above right) is the extract from the 1977 Ordnance Survey maps. The location of only one monument is shown and it is in a different field to any of those shown on the 1933 map.



Plate 1. Development site prior to the evaluation (Facing north-west).

Assessment of the archaeological significance of the area where the development is located is fraught with difficulty as the surviving evidence for archaeological activity in the area is confusing. There are currently no definitive archaeological remains in the locations specified in the NISMR, whereas there are possible disturbed stones located around the surrounding area, including within the field where the development is to be located. The nature of the sites that were formerly located in this area is also unknown. Archaeological evaluation was therefore required to assess whether the proposed development would have an adverse impact on hidden archaeological remains, potentially including previously hidden traces of the two no longer extant monuments recorded nearby (Ant 027:018 and Ant 027:019).

The Evaluation

The site was situated in the eastern corner of a sub-rectangular field at the base of a very gradual south-east facing slope, approximately 60 metres south-west of a narrow roadway (Fig 2). The site was accessed by a cobbled pathway which ran south-eastwards from the roadway and entered the field at the extreme eastern corner, after which it turned north-westwards and ran along the north-eastern boundary of the small field before terminating at an overgrown dry-stone wall field boundary to the north. The cobbled pathway was approximately 3 metres wide and was laid by the present landowners within the past 10 years.

The development site was located in the heart of a conifer plantation, which now occupies both the sub-rectangular field housing the development and the adjoining fields to the east and north. Most of the area is covered in trees and vegetation, which made both the taking of accurate measurements and identification of the precise line of the existing field boundaries difficult. The nature of the vegetation also prevented the location of the possible megalithic stones identified in 1991, although the actual site of the proposed development was cleared of trees prior to the evaluation by the developer after consultation with the licensed archaeologist (Plate 1).

The evaluation originally envisaged the excavation of four trenches, three on the proposed site of the dwelling and a fourth along the line of the cobbled pathway. Discussion with the developer confirmed that the cobbled pathway did not require upgrading for the purpose of the development so it was agreed with the EHS caseworker, Mr. Andrew Gault, prior to the evaluation that this fourth trench was not required. The evaluation methodology was therefore revised to consist of the excavation of three trenches, each measuring 25 metres x 2 metres, on the development site (Fig. 2). These were excavated mechanically using a smooth-edged (sheugh) bucket operated on a back-acting mechanical digger, under the supervision of the licensed archaeologist.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was set out along the north-western edge of the area cleared by the developer (Fig. 2). It was aligned north-east/south-west, approximately parallel to the north-western boundary of the field at a distance of approximately 31 metres from the boundary. The north-eastern edge of the trench was set against the cobbled pathway at the north-east of the site. A shallow sod of vegetation (Context 101), with a maximum depth of 0.05 metres was removed to reveal a grey-black loam topsoil (Context 102) which contained a quantity of small rounded basalt stones, as well as frequent tree roots. The diameters of the stones ranged from less than 0.04 metres up to approximately 0.25 metres. The topsoil was consistently between 0.13 and 0.15 metres in depth across the length of the trench. Immediately beneath the topsoil lay a layer of coarse yellow-brown sand (Context 103), which also contained rounded basalt stones of a similar size to those recorded in the overlying topsoil (Context 102). This deposit (Context 103) varied in depth along the length of the trench, reaching a maximum depth of 0.31 metres at 17 metres from the north-eastern end of the trench. Two, approximately-parallel, linear features were observed when the sand layer was exposed. The first of these (Context 104) was recorded between 21.5 and 22.0 metres from the north-east end of the trench and the second feature was recorded between 23.5 and 24 metres. Both of these features appeared as dark linear strips extending north-west/south-east across the yellow-brown sand (Context 103). Excavation of the yellow-brown sand layer (Context 103) exposed a reddish-orange gravelly boulder clay (Context 106) at the base of the trench. The nature of the two linear features was also resolved during excavation of the sand deposit (Context 103) and exposure of the subsoil (Context 106)

Examination of the section edges of the trench revealed that both linear features (Contexts 104 and 105), had, in fact, been cut from the topsoil, although this was not recognised during removal of the topsoil, probably because of the method of excavation. Excavation of these features showed that both were the cuts for field drains. The more north-eastern feature (Context 104) was exposed as the cut for a stone-lined field drain. A deposit of loose, dark-brown sandy clay approximately 0.32 metres in depth (Context 107) was excavated from the cut to expose a fill of large flat and angular slabs (Context 108) which lined the base of the drain. The drain was sunk 0.32 metres into the subsoil (Plate 2), giving the feature a maximum depth of 0.65 metres. A small fragment of glazed red earthenware was recovered from the base of the drain, confirming an eighteenth century *terminus post quem* for the drain.



Plate 2: Stone-lined drain (Context 104) recorded in Trench 1.

Excavation of the second linear feature (Context 105) 1.2 metres to the south-east of the stone-lined drain (Context 104) showed that it was the cut for a second, probably more recent drain. The upper fill of the second cut feature (Context 105) was a loose, dark-brown sandy clay with a maximum depth of 0.37 metres (Context 109). Removal of this fill revealed a modern brown ceramic drain-pipe (Context 110). The drain-pipe was broken during the excavation by the mechanical digger but was, in any case, no longer functioning. The drain-pipe itself had been set into the subsoil (Plate 3).



Plate 3. Ceramic drainpipe (Context 105) recorded at the south-east of Trench 1 (Facing south-east).

Excavation of Trench 1 was discontinued when the subsoil (Context 106) was exposed and the nature of the two linear features (Context 104 and 105) resolved. The trench was 25 metres long and its maximum depth was 0.85 metres (Plate 4), which was recorded at 17 metres from the north-east edge. No material or deposits of archaeological significance were recorded in Trench 1.



Plate 4. Trench 1 at completion of excavation (Facing north-east)

Trench 2

Trench 2 was set out from the south-eastern edge of Trench 1, perpendicular to the line of Trench 1, on an approximate north-west/south-east alignment (Fig. 2). The north-western end of Trench 2 coincided with Trench 1, between 4 and 6 metres from the north-eastern end of Trench 1. The uppermost stratum in Trench 2 was a shallow sod (Context 201) with a maximum depth of 0.1

metres which was removed to expose a grey-black loam topsoil (Context 202) which contained similar basalt stones to those recorded in the topsoil in Trench 1 (Context 102). The topsoil deposit in Trench 2 (Context 202) had a maximum depth of 0.21 metres and was sterile of artefacts. Removal of the topsoil revealed a deposit of coarse yellow-brown sand (Context 203) which also contained rounded basalt stone inclusions. This deposit was shallower than the corresponding sand deposit in Trench 1 (Context 103), with a maximum depth of 0.31 metres. The yellow-brown sand deposit in Trench 2 (Context 203) overlay a reddish-orange gravelly boulder clay (Context 204), which was noticeably more stony at the north-west end of the trench. Excavation in Trench 2 was discontinued with the exposure of the boulder clay (Context 204) along the base of the trench. The trench was 25 metres long (Plate 5) and its maximum depth was recorded as 0.59 metres at 8 metres from the north-western end. No material or deposits of archaeological significance were recorded in Trench 2.



Plate 5. View of Trench 2 (Facing north-west).

Trench 3

Trench 3 was aligned parallel to Trench 2. Like Trench 2, it was set out using Trench 1 as a baseline and its north-western end coincided with Trench 1, between 19 and 21 metres from the north-eastern end of Trench 1 (Fig 2). The sequence of deposits encountered in Trench 3

broadly replicated those recorded in Trenches 1 and 2. A shallow sod (Context 301) with a maximum depth of 0.06 metres overlay a relatively shallow deposit of grey-black loam topsoil with a notable stone content (Context 302). The maximum depth of topsoil (Context 302) recorded in Trench 3 was 0.27 metres. The topsoil overlay a yellow-brown sand deposit (Context 303) which, again, contained basalt stone inclusions and was consistently between 0.31 and 0.33 metres in depth. The yellow sand layer (Context 303) overlay a gravelly boulder clay subsoil (Context 304). This deposit (Context 304) was reddish-orange in hue, although decayed and weathered basalt within the matrix resulted in periodic stony spreads of a lighter yellow colour along the base of the trench (Plate 6).

A single feature of potential archaeological significance was observed in Trench 1. Between 4.3 and 5.2 metres from the north-west of the trench, the trench clipped the south-eastern edge of a broad pit, approximately 1.5 metres in width (Context 305). The cut of this pit (Context 305) was initially observed during removal of the topsoil and was visible only in the south-west facing section edge of the trench. Removal of the topsoil (Context 302) and the underlying yellow-brown sand deposit (Context 303) from within Trench 3 revealed that the pit feature (Context 305) had been cut down into the natural boulder clay (Context 304) and, further, that the south-eastern end of the feature had been truncated by the excavation of Trench 3. Within the pit (Context 305), a compact yellow gravelly soil (Context 306) overlay a deposit of rounded basalt stones (Context 307), which extended south-eastwards approximately 0.2 metres into Trench 3 at the level of the boulder clay's surface.



Plate 6. Trench 3 at completion of excavation (Facing north-west). The lighter spreads evident at the base of the trench were due to decayed or weathered basalt stones within the matrix of the subsoil.

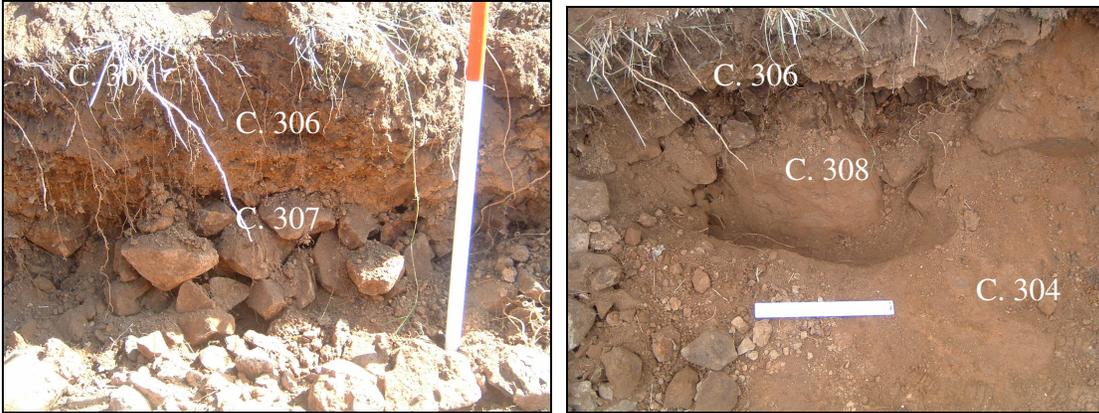


Plate 7. (Above left) Loose stone fill (Context 307) of pit feature (Context 305), where it extended into Trench 3.

Plate 8. (Above right). Cut feature (Context 305) showing boulder (Context 308) exposed after removal of the overlying stone fill (Context 307).

Removal of the cairn stones from the surface of the subsoil (Context 304) within Trench 3 showed that the pit feature (Context 305) extended to a depth of at least 0.2 metres below the level of the subsoil. The surface of a large angular basalt boulder (Context 308)(Plate 8) was uncovered during the removal of the loose deposit of stones(Context 307). Excavation within the cut feature (Context 305) was discontinued 0.2 metres below the level of the subsoil (Context 304) (Plate 9). At this stage, excavation within Trench 3 was concluded. The trench had a consistent depth of approximately 0.65 metres. Because the nature of the pit feature (Context 305) and the associated stone fill (Context 307) were not fully resolved, it was agreed with the Environment and Heritage Service Case Officer, Mr. Andrew Gault that a small extension to Trench 3 would be excavated. This extension has been designated Trench 3a for the purpose of this report (Fig. 2).



Plate 9. South-west facing section of Trench 3 at completion of excavation showing the deposits associated with the pit feature (Context 305).

Trench 3a

Trench 3a was extended north-eastwards from the south-west facing edge of Trench 3, between 3.9 and 5.6 metres from the north-western edge of Trench 3. It measured 1.6 metres (north-west/south-east) x 1.2 metres north-east/south-west). Removal of the sod layer (Context 301) immediately revealed the extent of the pit feature recorded in the section edge in Trench 3 (Context 305). The feature had been cut through the topsoil (Context 302). The feature was approximately rectangular in plan, although the south-eastern end was distorted by the prejudicial excavation of Trench 3 (Fig 4). The cut (Context 305) measured 1.66 metres along the longer north-west/south-east axis at this level. It was broader at the south-eastern end, where it had a maximum recorded width of 0.81 metres and tapered gradually as it progressed north-west to a minimum width of 0.67 metres. The uppermost fill within the cut was a compact yellow gravelly clay layer (Context 306) which had considerable basalt stone inclusions within its matrix. The deposit had a maximum depth of 0.43 metres and was interpreted as a redeposited mix of the

yellow sand (Context 303) with boulder clay (Context 304) and had been used to cap the pit. The yellow gravelly clay fill (Context 306) was sterile of anthropogenic material.

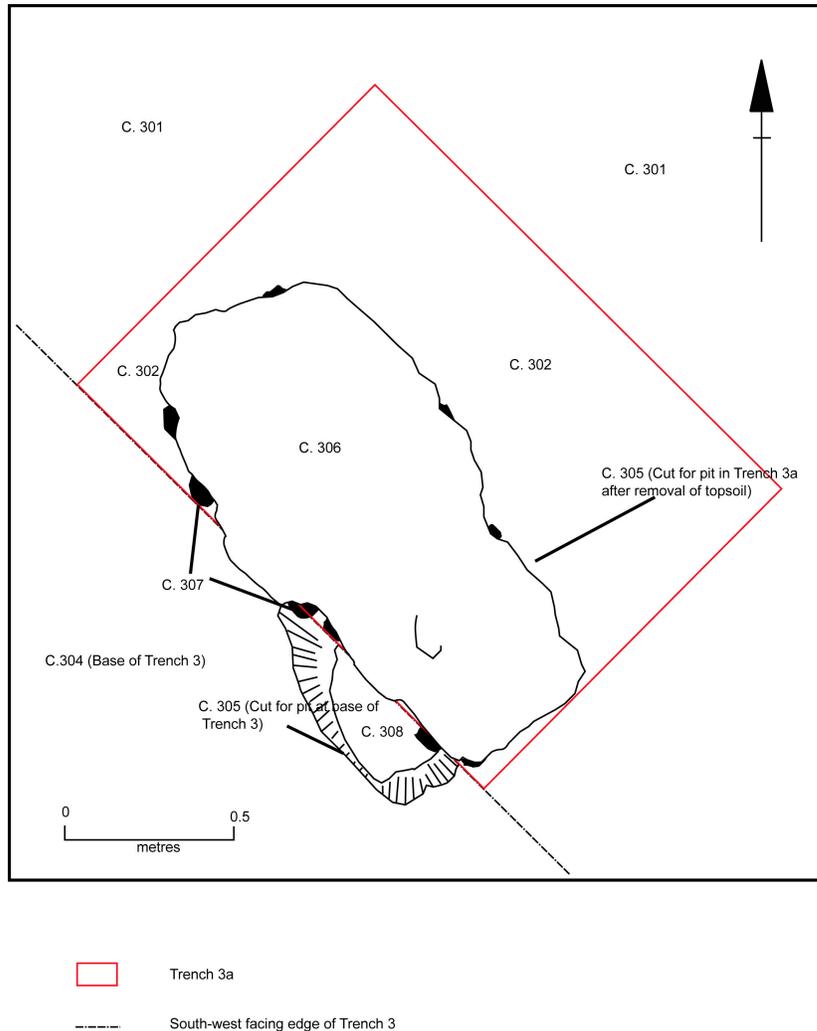


Fig. 4. Plan Trench 3a after removal of sod (Context 301).

Removal of the yellow gravelly clay fill (Context 306) exposed the upper portion of the layer of stones (Context 307)(Plate 6) that was partially uncovered during the excavation of Trench 3. The stones were mostly of local basalt although they were, in general, larger than the stones recorded in the three evaluation trenches. The diameters of the stones ranged from approximately 0.2 metres to 0.6 metres. The stone deposit (Context 307) was noticeably loose in character, suggesting that the activity represented by the deposit of stones was relatively recent in date. The stones were not bonded in any way, nor had any soil accumulated between the individual stones. The loose nature of the stone deposit facilitated excavation by hand, although

the underlying boulder (Context 308) was left *in situ*. Excavation of the stone deposit (Context 307) showed that the boulder (Context 308) was set directly onto the base of the pit (Context 305), suggesting that its deposit within the pit was the primary function of the feature. The rounded stones (Context 307) filled the remainder of the base of the pit and were also recorded between the boulder and the sides of the pit.

The excavation of Trench 3a was completed when the stone fill (Context 307) was fully excavated (Plate 10a and b). The pit itself was shown to be straight-sided, with a relatively regular sub-rectangular plan. The maximum length was 1.77 metres. The south-eastern end was slightly wider than the north-western end, with the former measuring approximately 0.77 metres and the latter 0.65 metres. The depth of the pit was 0.70 metres below the level of the subsoil, which gave the feature an overall depth of approximately 1.20 metres from the level of the topsoil which the pit had initially been cut through. The boulder (Context 308) was revealed as a massive angular block, measuring 0.72 metres in length, 0.68 metres in width and was 0.77 metres in height.



**Plate 10 a (Above)
and b (Below).** Two
views of the
subrectangular pit
(Context 305) at
completion of



Discussion

Although no culturally diagnostic material was obtained from any of the deposits within the pit (Context 305), it is most probable that the feature was modern and it is likely that it was the product of field clearance. Both the shape of the cut and the straight sides of the pit suggested that it was dug by a mechanical excavator. The loose nature of the stone fill and the stratigraphically late position from which the pit was cut is also consistent with a relatively recent date for this activity. It is likely that the pit was dug primarily to accommodate the boulder and that other large stones were then collected from the soil and deposited on top of the boulder before the pit was sealed. The presence of the two field drains recorded in Trench 1 (Contexts 104 and 105) confirms that some land-improvement was carried out in close proximity to the pit in relatively recent times, although this was not associated with the conifer plantation and the present landowner was not able to comment on the prior use of the field.

The discovery of a boulder at the base of the pit is notable in the light of the recorded tradition in the SM 7 file that a megalith had been buried in this area by a previous landowner. The circumstance of the boulder (Context 308) and other stones within an apparently purpose built pit are consistent with this story, and it is conceivable that the boulder unearthed during the evaluation is the buried megalith of local tradition.

This boulder, however, is considerably smaller in scale than the stones identified in the SM 7 file as possible constituents of a megalithic structure. The respective measurements are set out in table 1 to highlight the contrast:-

Stone	Length (metres)	Width (metres)	Thickness (metres)
Boulder (Context 308)	0.72	0.68	0.77
A	1.65	0.97	0.57
B	1.90	1.00	0.70
C	1.68	1.2	0.67

Table 1. Measurement of large stones found in the vicinity of the development site (Stones A – C are arbitrary labels for the stones described in the EHS SM 7 file for the site recorded as Ant 027:018. Measurements for stones A - C are derived from the SM 7 file).

While pressure of time and the thick vegetation did not facilitate the location of the three stones listed in the SM 7 file (labelled stones A – C in Table 1), it is apparent from Table 1 that there is

some consistency in their dimensions which is not reflected in the dimensions of the boulder unearthed during the evaluation (Context 308). Presumably, these three stones (Stones A – C) have been identified in the SM 7 file as the possible remnants of a single megalithic structure at least partly on the strength of the similarities in their physical properties. Judged purely on this criterion, it is unlikely that the boulder (Context 308), is associated with this group, although this does not rule out the possibility of it being relict of another structure. In any case, it is submitted that any archaeological significance attaching to the boulder has been undermined by the removal of the boulder from its original position and its deposition in the pit. In these circumstances, the boulder (Context 308) and associated pit (Context 305) discovered during this evaluation are not considered to be archaeologically significant.

Conclusion

After evaluating the three test trenches as well as the extension to Trench 3, no archaeologically significant features or artefacts were discovered, suggesting that there is no material of archaeological importance on the development site. It is therefore unlikely that the development of a dwellinghouse in this area will have any archaeological impact.

Archive

Finds:

None

Photographs:

Thirty-two digital images were taken during the excavation. The images are digitally archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Drawings

None