



**Evaluation/Monitoring  
Report No 86.**

**Aughnagin Road  
Milltown  
Mayobridge  
Co. Down**

**AE/06/189**

**Ronan McHugh**

## Site Specific Information

*Site Address:* Aughnagun Road, Milltown, Mayobridge, Co. Down

*Townland:* Milltown

*SMR No.:* Closest recorded sites is Dow 051:011

*State Care*      *Scheduled* ✓      *Other*

*Grid Ref:*      J 1328 2840

*County:* Down

*Excavation Licence No:* AE/06/189

*Planning Ref / No.:* P/2005/2445/F

*Date of Monitoring:* 14<sup>th</sup> August 2006

*Archaeologist Present:* Ronan McHugh

### *Brief Summary:*

The proposed development site is located in a field directly across a public roadway from a scheduled monument, the court tomb registered in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record as DOW 051:011. 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.

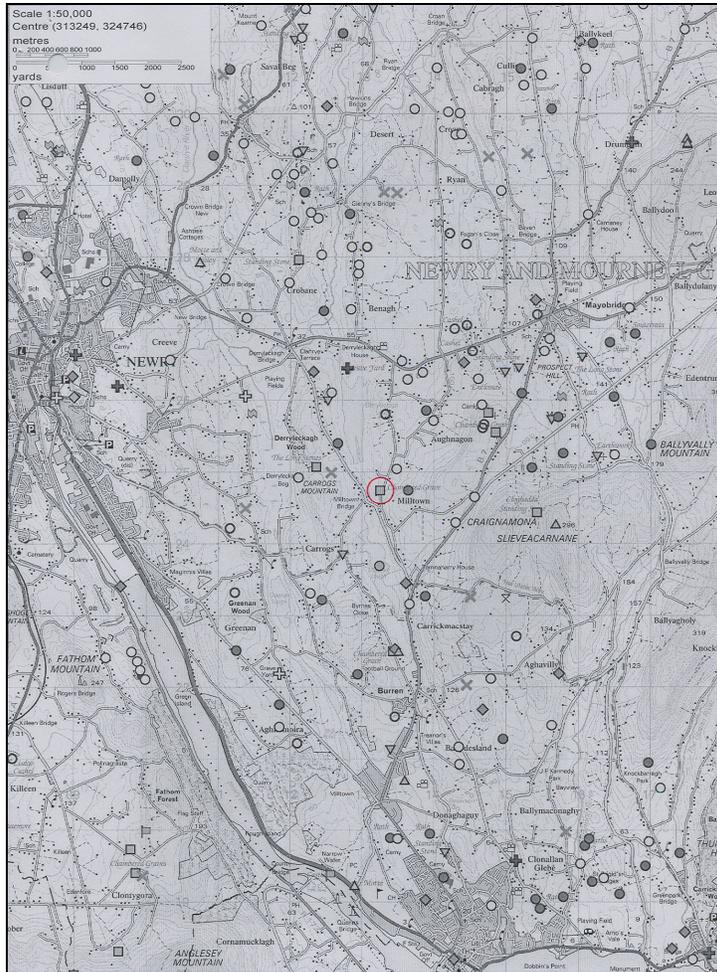
*Size of area opened:* Three trenches were excavated. Two of these measured 50 metres x 2 metres. The third trench measured 25 metres x 2 metres.

*Current Land Use:* Pasture

*Intended Land Use:* Residential

## Background

Archaeological evaluation was requested in response to application for outline planning permission for a single dwelling house in the townland of Milltown, less than 2 km south-south-east of Newry, Co. Down (Fig. 1).



**Fig 1.** Location map showing approximate position of the development site (Circled in red) (Map supplied by EHS).

The evaluation was required as the development site is located within 15 metres of a scheduled monument, a court tomb known locally as Carnanbane, which is registered in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record (NISMR) as Dow: 051:11 (Fig. 2). The monument is described in the Archaeological Survey of County Down (1966, 75-77) as being a wedge-shaped cairn with a slightly asymmetric forecourt on the northern side, which contains the entrance to a north-south aligned burial gallery. Traces of a gallery were also noted at the southern end of the

cairn, but it is not clear whether this represents a second gallery or a continuation of the northern gallery. The eastern side of the cairn surrounding the monument has been truncated by the construction of a public roadway which separates the monument from the field housing the proposed development site. Today, the monument is overgrown with gorse and briars, although it appears to have altered little since the Archaeological Survey volume.



**Fig. 2**

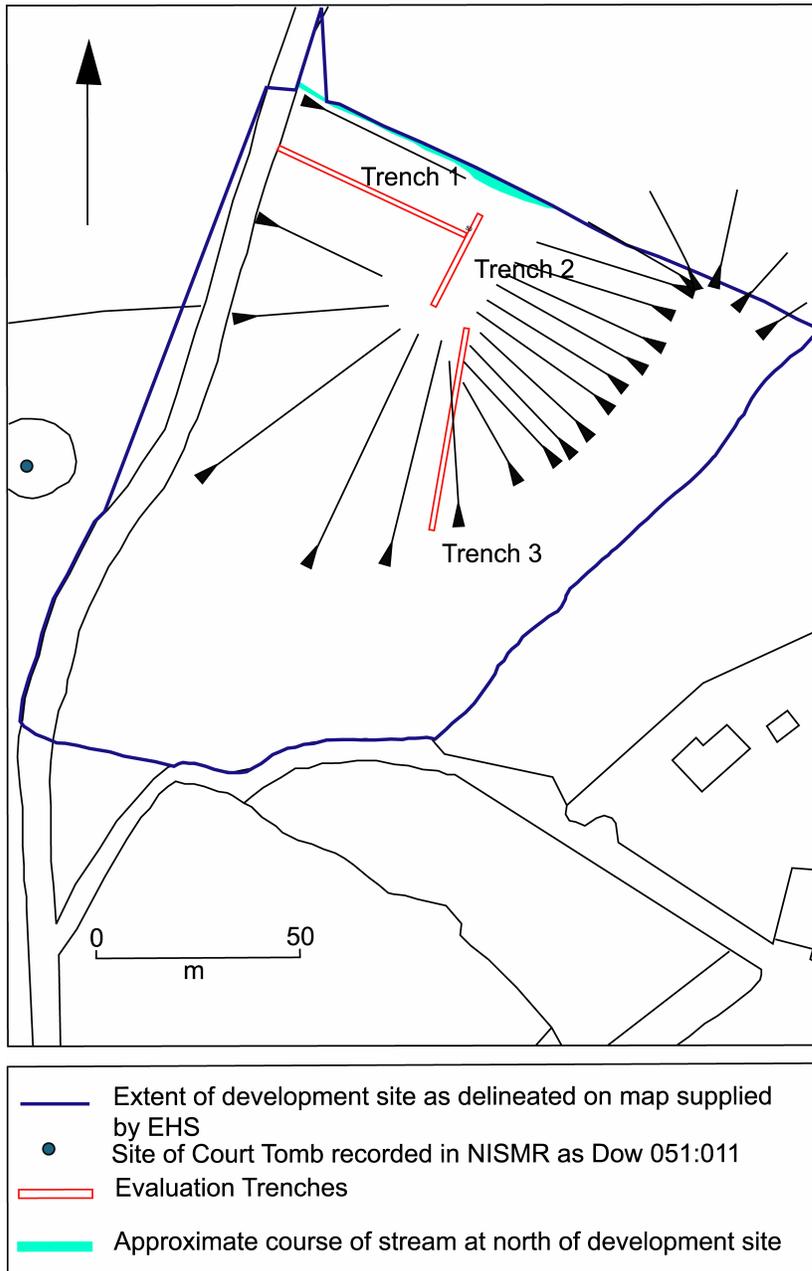
Location map showing position of development site (represented by red dot), together with registered archaeological monuments in the immediate area (Map supplied by EHS).

## The Evaluation

### *Site background*

The development site is located in a field of undulating topography (Fig. 3). The proposed position of the house coincided with a lowlying hollow at the intersection of a number of slopes (Plate 1). The topography rises gradually to the west of the hollow, to form a slight but appreciable rise towards the public roadway which skirts the western edge of the field. To the east of the hollow, the slopes are more dramatic, with a steep drumlin rising from the eastern side of the hollow and continuing in an arc which frames the south-eastern edge of the hollow before flattening slightly as it curves westwards to merge with the gradual rise towards the public road.

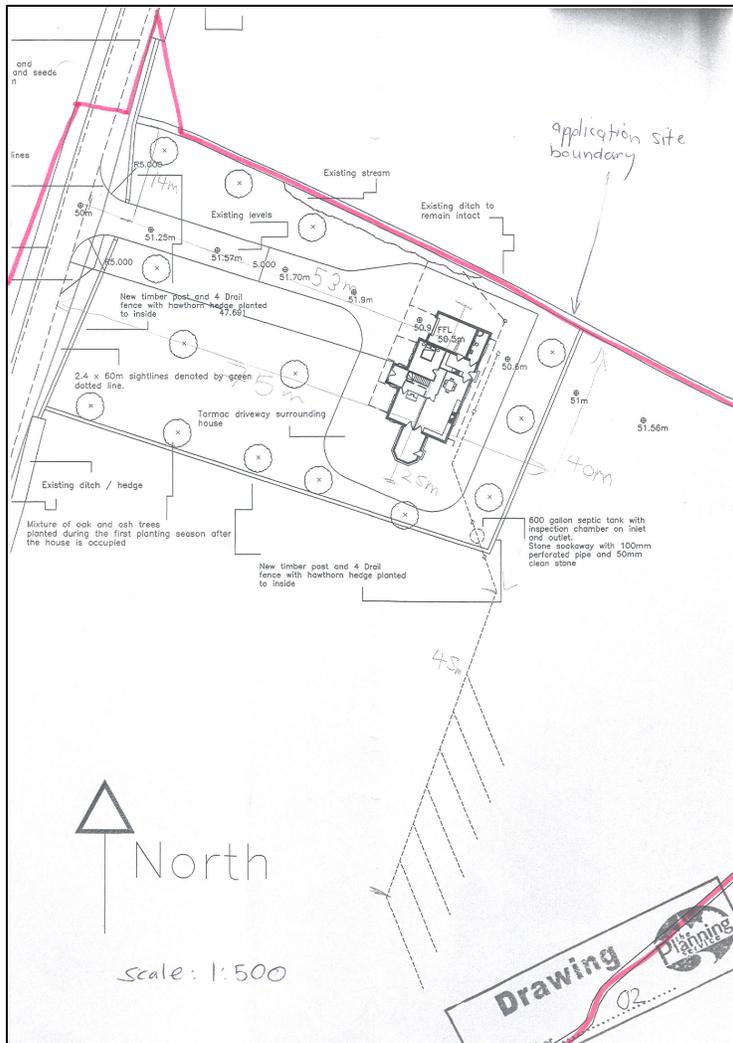
The field is primarily used for cattle grazing and is covered by a growth of short meadow grass. It is relatively dry, although the current landowner, Mr. Patrick Fitzpatrick, advised that this is due to large scale drainage particularly in the area of the lowlying hollow, where the dwellinghouse is to be located. A shallow stream runs along the northern boundary of the field, immediately to the north of the lowland hollow.



**Fig. 3** Site plan showing position of evaluation trenches and major topographical slopes.

### The Evaluation trenches

The position of the trenches was determined with reference to the architect's plan of the proposed dwelling, a copy of which was furnished by the EHS as part of the evaluation brief (Fig. 4). The trenches have been labelled Trenches 1, 2 and 3 for the purpose of this. Trench 1 was set out along the line of the proposed access laneway connecting the dwellinghouse to the public road. Trench 2 was located on the site of the proposed dwellinghouse itself while Trench 3 was sited along the line of the proposed drainage system. The actual position of the trenches within the development site is depicted in Fig. 3 above. The trenches were excavated mechanically using a smooth-edged (sheugh) bucket operated on a back-acting mechanical digger, under the supervision of the licensed archaeologist.



**Fig. 4**

Architect's plan of the proposed development (Plan supplied by EHS).

### *Trench 1*

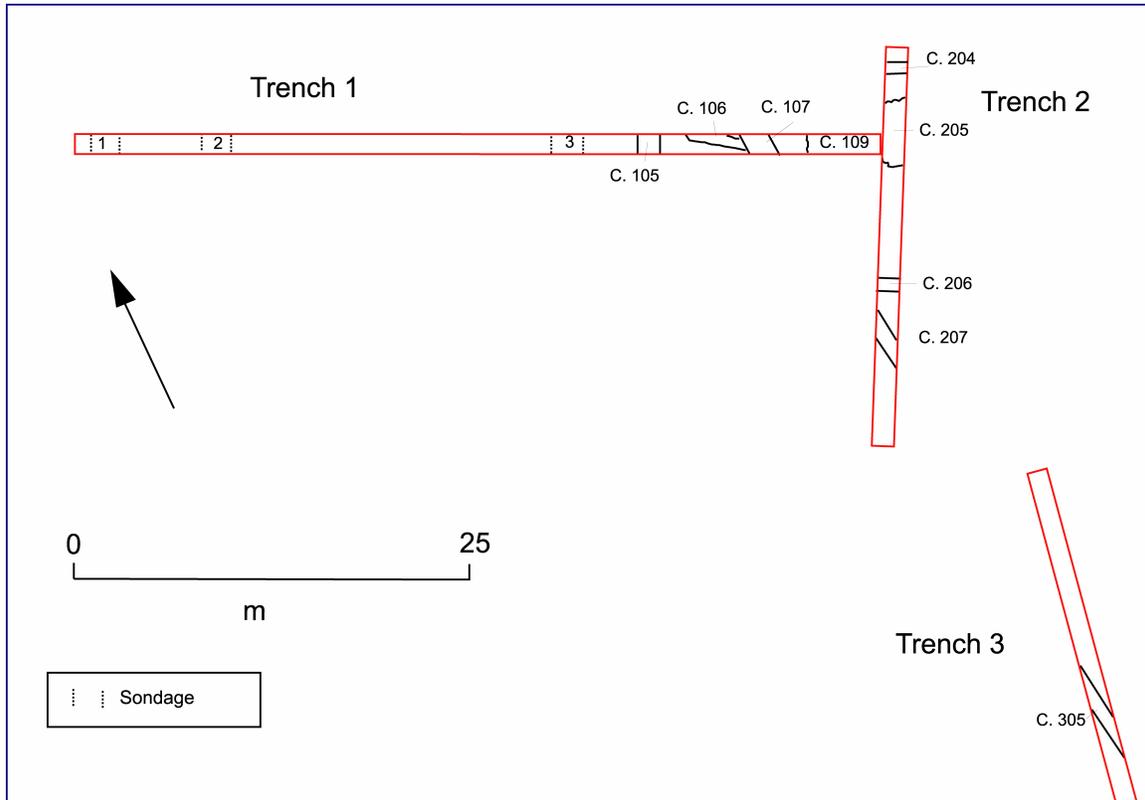
Trench 1 extended from the western boundary of the field and was aligned parallel to the northern boundary of the field at a distance of approximately 13 metres from the northern boundary (Fig. 3). The trench was approximately 50 metres in length and was 2 metres in width. Trench 1 coincided with the gradual slope from the roadway for the first 30 metres from the western edge of the trench, before continuing into the lowlying hollow where the house was to be sited. The trench terminated in the heart of this hollow. The uppermost layer in Trench 1 was a shallow sod (Context 101), with a maximum depth of 0.05 metres which overlay a light brown sandy loam topsoil (Context 102), which had a consistent depth of approximately 0.3 metres along the length of the trench. Excavation of the topsoil revealed some variation in the underlying soils that reflected the differing degrees of drainage across the field. Immediately beneath the topsoil was a deposit of coarse sand (Context 103) which, in places, contained massive angular boulders within its matrix. The boulders occurred periodically along the length of the trench. The largest boulder was a block measuring approximately 1.6 metres x 1.1 metres x 0.8 metres and was recorded at 14.2 metres from the western edge of Trench 1 (Plate 2).

Three *sondages* were excavated through the sand deposit (Context 103) in order to verify its depth and character. The *sondages* all measured 2 metres x 2 metres and were located between 1 and 3 metres (*Sondage 1*), 8 and 10 metres (*Sondage 2*) and 30 and 32 metres (*Sondage 3*) (all measurements from the western edge of Trench 1) (Fig. 5). The sand deposit (Context 103) was sterile of finds throughout and was interpreted as a natural deposit. The maximum depth of the sand deposit (Context 103) was recorded in *Sondage 1*, where it reached 0.8 metres before giving way to bedrock (Context 104).

The character of the sand deposit (Context 103) varied along the length of the trench; for the first 29.6 metres from the western edge of Trench 1, the sand was yellow-brown in hue and was dry and loose in consistency. After this point, the sand became increasingly mottled and blue, while puddles of standing water were prevalent (Plate 3). This change in the natural sand deposit (Context 103) coincided with the gradual flattening of the topography to form the lowlying hollow where the dwelling is to be situated. Conversation with the current landowner, Mr. Patrick Fitzpatrick, revealed that a series of drains has been cut through this hollow to facilitate the channelling of water from the surrounding field through this area and the eventual deposition of the water in the stream to the north of the hollow. Flooding from this stream, together with leakage from the field-drains, has undoubtedly contributed to the waterlogging of the subsoil in this area.

The artificial draining of the field was demonstrated by 4 features associated with drainage which were located between 35 and 50 metres from the western edge of the trench (Fig. 5). Between 35.3 and 36.7 metres from the western end of the trench, a stone-lined drain (Context 105)

extended north-east/south-west across the trench. Removal of a number of the stones from the surface of this drain showed that it was functional and it was not disturbed. The drain had been cut through the overlying topsoil layer (Context 102), was approximately 1.4 metres in width.



**Fig. 5.** Plan of evaluation trenches showing position of drainage features and *sondages*.

Less than 2 metres to the east of this drain was the remnants of a second stone-lined drain (Context 106). This feature extended from the northern edge of the trench and ran on a west-north-west/east-south-east alignment for approximately 4 metres, after which it became less distinct, probably due to truncation by a later feature (Context 107). The alignment of the stone-lined field drain (Context 106) suggests that it was designed to carry off water from the rounded hill to the east of the hollow, although it was no longer functioning. It was approximately 1.8 metres in width and 0.2 metres in depth and, as with the neighbouring drain (Context 105), had been cut through the level of the topsoil.

The disused field-drain (Context 106) was truncated at its east-south-eastern end by a later feature demarcated by a spread of grey-black quarried chippings (Context 107) set into the natural sand deposit (Context 103). This feature (Context 107) was aligned approximately north-

south and had a maximum width of approximately 2 metres. This feature (Context 107) was identified by the landowner as the area where drain-pipes were laid down in the late 1970's. A number of the chippings were removed to reveal the surface of a modern plastic pipe (Context 108). Because this drain was still functioning, no further excavation was undertaken in its vicinity.

Between 46.4 metres from the western edge of the trench to the eastern end of Trench 1, the sand deposit was dark grey in colour, and was waterlogged. A scattering of small rounded and angular stones (Context 109) had been deposited in the sand throughout this area, which was the most low-lying point along this trench. Several sherds of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century glazed red-earthenware pottery were noted among the stones (Plate 4). Although this feature was not fully unearthed and was amorphous, its position at the intersection of the slopes, together with the condition of the surrounding subsoil suggest that it probably served as a sump or soakaway for the field drains.

The excavation of Trench 1 was discontinued with the exposure of the sand deposit and the resolution of the drainage features (Plates 5 and 6). The maximum depth of the trench, excluding the three *sondages*, was recorded as 0.48 metres, at 6.2 metres from the western edge of the trench. No material or deposits of archaeological significance were recovered from Trench 1.

### *Trench 2*

Trench 2 was set out perpendicular to the eastern edge of Trench 1. The north-eastern edge of Trench 2 was located approximately 8 metres from the northern boundary of the field housing the development site, in the heart of the low-lying hollow, and it extended north-north-east/south-south-west through the hollow before terminating at the foot of a rise to the south of the proposed house site (Fig. 3). Trench 2 measured 25 metres in length and 2 metres in width.

The uppermost stratum in Trench 2 was a sod of matted vegetation and grass (Context 201), which was notably drier towards the south-western edge of the trench. Removal of the sod revealed a deposit of light brown sandy loam topsoil (Context 202) that increased in depth along the trench; the depth of topsoil was recorded as 0.12 metres at the north-eastern edge of the trench, in the heart of the hollow but increased gradually towards the base of the rise to the south-west and a maximum depth of 0.4 metres was recorded 19.62 metres from the north-eastern edge of the trench. Removal of the topsoil exposed a glacial sand deposit (Context 203) that displayed similar characteristics to the corresponding deposit in Trench 1 (i.e. Context 103), although there were fewer boulders within this deposit (Context 203), and those that were unearthed were significantly smaller than the boulders recorded in Trench 1. The sand deposit (Context 203) in Trench 2 was blue-grey in colour and water-logged where the trench coincided

with the lowlying hollow but became gradually drier towards the more elevated southern end of the trench. As in Trench 1, a number of field drains cut through the topsoil layer were visible in the sand deposit (Context 203). Between 0.8 and 1.4 metres from the northern edge of the trench a stone-lined field drain (Context 204) was unearthed. The drain extended north-west/south-east across the trench and excavation of a number of stones from the surface of the drain demonstrated that it was still functioning.

Between 3.9 and 7.5 metres from the north-eastern end of Trench 2, an amorphous spread of stones and pottery (Context 205), similar to the feature interpreted in Trench 1 as a possible sump or soakaway (Context 109), was recorded. Subsequent excavation of the baulk between Trenches 1 and 2 showed that these two features (Contexts 109 and 205) formed part of a single feature. As in the adjacent portion of Trench 1, the sandy subsoil in this area of Trench 2 (Context 203), into which this feature (Context 205) was set, was grey-black in colour and standing water was evident throughout the area marked by the amorphous feature (Context 205).

Two further drainage features were recorded in Trench 2. Between 14.6 and 15.1 metres from the north-eastern edge of the trench were the remnants of a north-west/south-east aligned field drain (Context 206). This feature had been disturbed prior to the excavation and consisted of a shallow cut, 0.2 metres in depth, lined with small angular stones. This drain (Context 206) had been cut through the topsoil layer and was no longer functioning.

Approximately 2.5 metres south-west of this drain (Context 206), was a linear arrangement of quarried stone chippings (Context 207) which extended on a broad north-south alignment across Trench 2. This feature extended from the north-western edge of the trench between 17.4 and 18.2 metres from the north-eastern end of the trench and continued into the south-eastern edge between 18.4 and 19.1 metres. The constituent stones of this feature were similar to those recorded in the cut for the modern drain feature in Trench 1 (Context 107) and the position of the respective features (Contexts 107 and 207) suggests that they probably represented a single feature.

The excavation of Trench 2 was discontinued with the exposure of the natural sand deposit (Context 203) and the resolution of the drainage features (Plate 7). The maximum depth of the trench was 0.48 metres, recorded at 17.5 metres from the western edge of the trench. No material or deposits of archaeological significance were recovered from Trench 2.

### *Trench 3*

Trench 3 was set out along the line of the drainage system as depicted on the architect's drawing (Fig. 3), on an approximately north-north-east/south-south-west alignment (Fig. 4). The northern edge of the trench was located approximately 40 metres south of the northern field boundary and

the trench extended up the slope of the curving ridge to the south of the proposed development site. Trench 3 was 50 metres in length and 2 metres in width. As in Trenches 1 and 2, a thin sod of matted grass and vegetation (Context 301) formed the uppermost layer across the trench. Removal of this sod exposed a deposit of light brown sandy loam topsoil (Context 302) similar in character to the topsoil layers recorded in Trenches 1 (Context 102) and 2 (Context 202). This deposit was relatively deep towards the north-north-eastern edge of the trench. It had a maximum depth of 0.41 metres at 0.4 metres from the north-north-eastern edge of the trench but became gradually shallower towards the south-south-western edge, where it was recorded as 0.13 metres in depth.

Excavation of the topsoil layer revealed a layer of humified dark brown clay loam, which occurred only towards the north-north-eastern edge of the trench. This deposit (Context 303) had a maximum depth of 0.41 metres at the north-north-eastern edge and dwindled gradually in depth before petering out at 14.3 metres from the north-north-eastern edge of the trench. A number of fragments of glazed red-earthenware pottery, together with a single clay pipe stem (Plate 8), were recovered from this deposit, which was probably associated with an earlier episode of cultivation within the field.

Stratigraphically beneath the humified dark brown clay loam deposit (Context 303) lay a light brown, natural sand with small stone inclusions (Context 304), which occurred physically beneath the topsoil (Context 302) towards the south-south-western edge of the trench. A single field drain (Context 305) was recorded in Trench 3 (Fig. 5). It was cut through the topsoil layer (Context 302) and extended along the line of a north-south facing slope down towards the lowlying hollow. Excavation of this drain showed that it was relatively deep, with a recorded depth of 0.33 metres, and was 0.47 metres in width. A sherd of cream delftware pottery (Plate 9) was recovered from the base of this feature, which was no longer functioning.

The excavation of Trench 3 was discontinued with the exposure of the natural stony sand subsoil (Context 304) (Plate 10). The maximum depth of the trench was 0.98 metres, recorded at 0.15 metres from the north-north-eastern edge of the trench. No material or deposits of archaeological significance were recovered from Trench 3.

## **Conclusion**

After evaluating the three test trenches, 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:*

Twenty photographs were taken during the excavation. The negatives were digitized and are archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

### *Drawings*

A single sketch plan depicting the position of the field drains is held within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

## **Bibliography**

Archaeological Survey of County Down 1966. *An Archaeological Survey of County Down*. Belfast: HMSO.



**Plate 1.** The lowlying hollow to where the house is to be situated (facing north-east).



**Plate 2.** Boulder recorded at 14. 2 metres from the western edge of Trench 1 (facing west).



**Plate 3.** Photograph of the base of Trench 1 (Context 103) at 29.6 metres from the western edge of Trench 1, illustrating the change in the colour and dampness of the subsoil at this point.



**Plate 4.** Fragment of glazed red earthen ware found in Trench 1.



**Plate 5.** Trench 1, western end at completion of excavation (facing west-north-west).



**Plate 6.** Trench 1, eastern end at completion of excavation (facing east).



**Plate 7 .** Trench 2 at completion of excavation (facing north-east).



**Plate 8 .** (Above left). Clay pipe stem unearthed in Trench 3 and **Plate 9.**(Above right). Sherd of delftware found in drain in Trench 3.



**Plate 10.** Trench 3, south-south-east end at completion of excavation (facing south-south-east).