

Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 092

20 ROCKTOWN ROAD LEMNAROY KNOCKLOUGHRIM COUNTY DERRY

LICENCE NO.: AE/06/205

NAOMI CARVER

Site Specific Information

Site Location: 118m north-east of 20 Rocktown Road				
Townland: Lemnaroy				
SMR No. : LDY 037:021				
State Care	Scheduled	Other	\checkmark	[delete as applicable]
Grid Ref.: H 9092 9670				
County: Derry				
Excavation Licence No. : AE/06/205				
Planning Ref / No. : H/2006/0166/O				
Dates of Monitoring: 22 nd – 23 rd August 2006				
Archaeologist(s) Present: Naomi Carver				
Brief Summary:				

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site to the north-east of 20 Rocktown Road, as part of the planning application for a single dwelling and garage. Records showed that within the north-eastern part of the application area the remains of a rath or enclosure (LDY 037:021) may have been present and therefore an evaluation was necessary to ascertain the potential for building. The evaluation uncovered a number of modern features such as field drains and plough furrows. There was no evidence of a rath or enclosure and it is not thought that the proposed development will impinge on significant archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of six test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a 'sheugh' bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened:

Six trenches each approximately 2.0m wide and ranging in length from 8.2m to 26.6m

Current Land Use: Pasture

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The application site for a proposed new dwelling is located approximately 1.5km east of Knockloughrim, County Derry (Figure One) and lies at a height of approximately 70m above sea level. The proposed development site is situated in the north-eastern corner of a field which is around 0.8 hectares in size. The site itself is triangular in shape and covers an area of approximately 0.1 hectares. To the east of the site is a stream, to the west a house and associated outbuildings and more fields to the north. The Rocktown Road runs to the south of the application site (Plate One). The surrounding land is agricultural and is currently in pasture. There are also dwelling houses along the road and a disused school building to the south-east of the site.

The field in which the site is located is bounded on all sides by hawthorn hedges which are interspersed with some mature trees. The field is generally flat although there is a barely perceptible rise from the middle of the field towards the west. The rath or enclosure (LDY 037:021) is believed to have been in the north-eastern corner of the field (Figure Two). The Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record (NISMR) notes that the enclosure survives as "an amorphous height, not defined enough to measure, but estimated at *c*.25m diam.the site is marked on the 1850 OS 6" map as an enclosure composed of 3 concentric rings, indicating that the site may have been originally counterscarp or even bivallate.". In the Ordnance Survey memoirs for the parish the site is described as "a fort of earth near the corn mill, 72ft diam., but nearly all destroyed". There are no visible remains on the ground, although nettles and thistles grow quite densely in the corner of the field which may be a sign of an underlying negative feature such as a ditch (Plate Two).

The evaluation was requested by Paul Logue: Protecting Historic Monuments Caseworker with the Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage in response to a planning application for a proposed new dwelling.

Excavation

The evaluation consisted of six test trenches positioned in the locations shown in Figure Three. The test trenches were each approximately 2.0m wide and ranged in length from just over 8m to nearly 27m. The trenches were excavated to various depths, depending, on the nature of the stratigraphy within each individual trench. Trenches Three, Four, Five and Six contained a deposit of dark brown humic loamy clay which continued to a depth of at least 2m in Trenches Four and Five. In these trenches it was necessary to excavate to a substantial depth to determine the nature of the deposit. For reasons of health and safety the stratigraphy of the deepest trenches was recorded from the outside of the trench and, where possible, measurements of the features and deposits were estimated.

Trench One

Trench One was located parallel to the application site's northernmost field boundary. The trench was positioned with its eastern end 5.5m from the field boundary and its western end 2.2m from it. The trench was not excavated in straight line due to the proximity of the field boundary; the digger had to change angle part of the way through. Trench One was 22.0m long and 1.7m wide (Plates Three and Four).

The sod and topsoil layer in Trench One (Context No. 101) consisted of compact to loose silty clay loam which was mid brown in colour. The layer contained some small stone inclusions (average size: 5x5x5mm) and was 0.1m thick. There were no finds recovered from the sod and topsoil layer. Below the sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 101) was a cultivation soil (Context No. 102) consisting of compact, dark brown, clay loam containing frequent angular to sub-angular stones (average size: 80x50x30mm). The cultivation soil was 0.2m thick and a single sherd of late nineteenth century pottery was found within it.

The removal of the cultivation soil (Context No. 102) revealed three features or possible features cut into the subsoil of the trench (Context No. 111: Plate Three). These consisted of: a possible post-hole (Context No. 103) at the western end of the trench, a stone-lined field drain (Context No. 105) in the centre of the trench and a possible plough furrow (Context No. 107) at the eastern end of the trench.

The possible post-hole (Context No. 103) was located beside the northern limit of excavation (Plate Five). It was sub-circular in plan, with steeply sloping sides and a U-shaped profile. The possible post-hole measured 0.30m (east-west) by 0.28m (north-south) and was 0.10m deep (Plate Six). The fill (Context No. 104) of the possible post-hole (Context No. 103) consisted of compact, dark brown, clay loam which contained some sub-angular stones (average size: 30x30x30mm). The possible post-hole had active roots growing into it and did not contain any finds. It is likely that it was an isolated feature of relatively modern date- perhaps part of an old fence or field boundary.

Around 4.0m from the western end of the trench was a stone-lined field drain (Context No. 105) which ran north-east/south-west across the trench (Plate Seven). The field drain had steeply sloping to vertical sides and was at least 0.20m deep although it was not fully excavated. It was 0.40m wide and exposed to a length of 3.70m. The field drain was filled with large angular stones (size range: 110x40x60mm to 200x200x100mm) in a matrix of loose, mid brown, silty loam (Context No. 106) which contained small stone inclusions (average size 5x5x5mm). The southern end of the feature was disturbed by the mechanical digger and stones were dragged from their original position. There were no finds associated with the field drain.

At the western end of Trench One was a possible plough furrow (Context No. 107: Plate Eight). The possible plough furrow ran north-east/south-west across the trench for a distance of 1.90m. The feature was 0.20m wide and 0.10m deep (Plate Nine). The fill (Context No. 108) of the possible plough furrow (Context No. 107) consisted of compact, mid brown, clay loam which contained a sherd of glass.

Immediately beside the possible plough furrow (Context No. 107) was an area of whiteish boulder clay (Context No. 109)¹. The area of whiteish boulder clay was at least 1.90m long, 0.50m wide and 0.10m deep. There was no evidence of a cut and the discoloured area peeled off to reveal orange boulder clay subsoil below. It was probably natural; the result perhaps of the subsoil being stained by chemicals dissolved in groundwater. The subsoil in Trench One (Context No. 111) consisted of boulder clay, the surface of which was present at a depth of around 0.3m.

Trench Two

Trench Two was located to the south of Trench One. The eastern end of Trench Two was 3.0m from Trench One while the western end was 2.3m from the latter. Trench Two was 6.0m west of the field's easternmost boundary. The trench was 15.0m long and 2.0m wide (Plates Ten and Eleven).

The sod and topsoil layer in Trench Two (Context No. 201) consisted of loose to friable, mid brown, silty loam which contained frequent sub-angular stone inclusions (average size: 10x5x5mm). There were no finds associated with the sod and topsoil layer which was 0.2m thick. Below the sod and topsoil layer was a cultivation soil (Context No. 202) consisting of compact, dark brown, clay loam containing frequent sub-angular stone inclusions (average size: 100x50x10mm). The cultivation soil was around 0.3m thick and did not contain any finds.

Following the removal of the cultivation soil a number of deposits (Context Nos. 203 and 205) and features (Context Nos. 207 and 209), were visible, either overlying or cut into the subsoil of Trench Two (Context No. 211). At the western end of the Trench were two irregular-shaped, localised deposits of dark brown clay (Context Nos. 203 and 205²). These deposits were ill-defined and were not associated with cuts. One deposit was located beside the northernmost limit of excavation (Context No. 203: Plate Twelve) and the other beside the southernmost limit of excavation (Context No. 205). Both were around 3.0m wide and between 0.10 and 0.20m deep. The deposits both consisted of compact, dark brown, humic clay containing large angular and sub-angular stones. There were no finds associated with either deposit. The origin of these localised deposits is not obvious, however, there is no reason to suggest that they are artificial.

In the centre of the trench, running in a north-south direction across it was a field drain (Context No. 207), which was at least 2.00m long and 0.40m wide (Plate Thirteen). The field drain was not excavated. The fill (Context No. 208) of the field drain (Context No. 207) consisted of angular small (average size: 60x50x30mm) to large stones (average size: 300x200x200mm) in a matrix of loose, mid brown, silty loam. To the east of the field drain (Context No. 207), at the eastern end of the trench, was second field drain (Context No. 209) running north-east/south-west across the trench (Plate Fourteen). The feature was at least 1.50m long and 0.36m wide. It was not excavated and therefore its depth is not known. The fill (Context No. 210) of the second field drain (Context No. 209) consisted of loose, dark brown, silty loam surrounding small sub-angular stones (average size: 50x50x20mm) and larger angular stones (average size: 300x200x100mm).

² Context Nos. 204 and 206 were not used during the evaluation

The subsoil in Trench Two (Context No. 211) consisted of a heterogeneous boulder clay. In some parts the surface of the boulder clay was present at a depth of 0.5m.

Trench Three

Trench Three was located to the south of Trench Two and ran roughly parallel with it. Trench Three was 2.0m from the eastern end of Trench Two and 4.6m from the western end of the latter. The trench was also 2.3m from the easternmost field boundary. Trench Three was 26.6m long and 1.9m wide (Plates Fifteen and Sixteen).

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 301) consisted of a loose to compact, mid brown, silty loam which contained small sub-angular stone inclusions (average size: 10x12x5mm). The sod and topsoil layer was 0.2m thick and contained a few sherds of modern pottery. Below the sod and topsoil layer was a cultivation soil (Context No. 302) which consisted of compact, mid to dark brown, silty clay loam. The cultivation soil contained small sub-angular inclusions (average size: 30x30x10mm), was around 0.2m thick and had a few sherds of modern ceramics associated with it.

Below the cultivation soil were two field drains (Context Nos. 304 and 306). Both field drains were located towards the western end of the trench (Plate Seventeen). The westernmost field drain (Context No. 304) ran north-south across the width of the trench (1.90m) and was at least 0.20m wide. The field drain was not excavated and therefore its depth was not measured. The fill (Context No. 305) of the field drain (Context No. 304) consisted of compact, mid brown, silty loam surrounding sub-rounded stones (average size: 50x40x20mm). The other field drain (Context No. 306) ran parallel to the first and was also around 1.90m long and 0.20m in width. This field drain was also not excavated. The fill (Context No. 307) of the field drain (Context No. 306) consisted of sub-rounded stones (average size: 50x40x20mm) in a matrix of compact, mid brown, silty loam.

Both field drains were cut into the top of a deposit of dark brown humic clay (Context No. 303). The humic clay was present at the western end of the trench and continued for 14.8m to the east. The humic clay was mechanically excavated but no evidence of a cut was revealed. The nature of the deposit, which contained organic material such as partially decomposed leaves and twigs, suggested that it was a natural in origin. The same deposit was also encountered in Trenches Four A, Four B, Five and Six and may also be represented in Trench Two by the localised deposits of clay (Context Nos. 203 and 205).

The humic clay (Context No. 303) overlay the subsoil (Context No. 308), which was variable, consisting of orange boulder clay at the eastern end of the trench and greenish sandy clay at the western end. The surface of the subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.4m.

Trench Four

Trench Four was excavated in two parts with a baulk in between, due to the presence of an active field drain. The context numbers have been suffixed with 'A', 'baulk' and 'B' to differentiate them.

Trench Four A

Trench Four A was located approximately 2.5m to the south of Trench Three and ran parallel to the latter. The trench was 4.5m north of the field's southernmost boundary. Trench Four A was 16.8m long and 1.9m wide (Plates Eighteen and Nineteen).

The sod and topsoil layer in Trench Four A (Context No. 401A) consisted of a loose to compact, mid brown, silty loam which contained some stone inclusions (average size: 10x10x2mm). The layer was between 0.2m and 0.3m thick and did not contain any finds. Below the sod and topsoil layer was a cultivation soil (Context No. 402A) consisting of compact, mid brown, clay loam and containing stone inclusions (average size: 50x30x20mm). The cultivation soil was 0.2m thick and contained a few sherds of late nineteenth century pottery.

Following the removal of the cultivation soil (Context No. 402A) two features were visible in the subsoil (Context No. 408A) at the eastern end of the trench. There was a plough furrow (Context No. 403A) running north-east/south-west from the northern limit of excavation. The feature was around 0.5m long and 0.3m wide. It appeared to peter out to the south-west. The fill (Context No. 404A) of the plough furrow (Context No. 403A) consisted of compact, dark brown, silty clay loam which contained small stones (average size 10x10x5mm). To the south-west of the plough furrow (Context No. 403A) running east-west through much of the trench. The field drain was approximately 16.0m long and 0.2m wide. Its depth was not measured as the feature was not excavated. The fill (Context No. 406A) of the field drain (Context No. 405A) consisted of compact, dark brown, silty clay loam which contained stone inclusions (average size: 10x10x5mm).

The field drain (Context No. 405A) was cut into the top of a deposit of dark brown humic loamy clay (Context No. 407A) which was present at the western end of the trench. The humic loamy clay extended around 7.0m eastwards. It was at least 0.5m deep and became deeper towards the western end of the trench. Towards the western end of the trench the humic loamy clay gradually thinned out and there was no evidence of a cut associated with it. The deposit was comparable to the humic clay encountered in Trench Three (Context No. 303).

The humic loamy clay (Context No. 407A) directly overlay the subsoil (Context No. 408A). At the eastern end of the trench the subsoil consisted of orange boulder clay, while at the western end, below the humic loamy clay, it changed to greenish grey sand. The surface of the subsoil was up to 1.0m deep in parts.

Trench Four Baulk

The baulk between Trenches Four A and Four B was 1.9m (north-south) by 1.5m (east-west) in size (Plate Twenty). It was left *in situ* due to the presence of an active field drain (Context No. 403 Baulk). The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 401 Baulk) and the cultivation layer (Context No. 402 Baulk) in Trench Four Baulk was the equivalent to the layers excavated in Trench Four A.

Below the cultivation layer (Context No. 402 Baulk) was a linear field drain (Context No. 403 Baulk) which ran north-south across the width of the trench. The feature was at least 1.9m long and 0.5m wide. It was not excavated. The fill (Context No. 404 Baulk) of the field drain (Context No. 403 Baulk) consisted of compact, mid to dark brown, silty clay loam mixed with sub-rounded and sub-angular stones (average size: 50x30x20mm).

Trench Four B

Trench Four B was the continuation of Trench Four A. The trench was approximately 7.0m long and 1.9m wide (Plates Twenty-one and Twenty-two). The western end of the trench was 5.7m from the corner of the field's easternmost boundary. The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 401B) and the cultivation soil (Context No. 402B) were equivalent to the layers excavated in Trench Four A and Trench Four Baulk.

Following the removal of the cultivation layer (Context No. 402B) three field drains were visible. For health and safety reasons, due mainly to the depth of the trench, none of these features were excavated. They were recorded from outside the trench and as a result only estimated measurements were taken. At the western end of Trench Four B was a field drain (Context No. 403B). It was filled with large angular stones (Context No. 404B). To the west of the field drain (Context No. 403B) was another field drain (Context No. 405B) which was filled with small to medium sub-angular stones (Context No. 405B). In the east-facing section of Trench Four B was another field drain or water pipe (Context No. 407B). A plastic pipe was visible within the fill of angular gravel (Context No. 408B).

All of the above field drains (Context Nos. 403B, 405B and 407B) were cut into the top of a deposit of humic loamy clay (Context No. 409B) which was equivalent to the deposit excavated in Trench Three (Context No. 303) and a continuation of the deposit excavated in Trench Four A (Context No. 407A). The drains had probably been cut from a higher level but this was not recognisable, even in the exposed section. The humic loamy clay was dark brown to black in colour and contained partially decomposed vegetation including pieces of wood. It was between 0.7m and 1.0m thick.

The humic loamy clay (Context No. 409B) overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 410B). In Trench Four B the subsoil consisted of greenish-grey sandy clay, the surface of which was encountered at a depth of approximately 2.0m. At this depth the base of the trench rapidly filled with water, partly caused by damaged field drains and partly by the height of the water table.

Trench Five

Trench Five was located 4.0m to the west of Trench Four B and ran at an angle from it. The trench was 6.3m from the corner of the field's easternmost boundary. Trench Five was 8.2m long and 2.0m wide (Plates Twenty-three and Twenty-four).

The sod and topsoil layer in Trench Five (Context No. 501) consisted of loose to compact, mid brown, silty loam containing some stone inclusions (average size: 10x10x5mm). Within the sod and topsoil layer were a few sherds of modern pottery. The layer was 0.2m thick. Below the sod and topsoil layer was a cultivation soil (Context No. 502) which consisted of compact, mid brown, silty clay loam containing some stone inclusions (average size: 50x50x20mm). There were no finds within the cultivation soil which was 0.2m thick.

Below the cultivation soil (Context No. 502) was a localised deposit of pinkish orange gritty sand (Context No. 503). The sandy layer was around 4.0m to 5.0m long, at least 2.0m wide and 0.2m thick. Below the sandy layer (Context No. 503), at the eastern end of the trench, was a field drain (Context No. 504). The drain ran north-south and was approximately 1.0m down from ground level. The field drain was filled with dark brown loamy clay mixed with stones (Context No. 505). Towards the western end of the trench was another field drain (Context No. 506) which also ran north-south. It was approximately 1.0m from ground level and was filled with dark brown loamy clay and stones (Context No. 507). At the western end of the trench was a third field drain (Context No. 508) which was present at a depth of around 0.5m. It was filled with gravel and stones (Context No. 509) and a plastic pipe was also visible.

Below the three field drains (Context Nos. 504, 506 and 508) was a deposit of dark brown, humic loamy clay (Context No. 510). The humic loamy clay was physically below the seam of sand (Context No. 503). The humic loamy clay was at least 0.5 to 0.7m thick, and possibly thicker at the eastern end. It extended over the whole trench.

Below the humic loamy clay (Context No. 510) was greenish grey boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 511) which was present at a depth of 1.3 to 2m, and appeared to rise up towards the western end of the trench.

Trench Six

Trench Six was located 2.0m to the west of Trench Five. The trench was 8.2m long and 2.0m wide (Plates Twenty-five and Twenty-six). The trench was outside the evaluation area but was excavated with the intention of determining the character of the humic loamy clay.

The sod and topsoil layer in Trench Six (Context No. 601) consisted of loose to compact, mid brown, silty loam containing some stone inclusions (average size: 10x10x5mm). The layer was approximately 0.2m thick and did not contain any finds. Below the sod and topsoil layer was a cultivation soil (Context No. 602) which consisted of a compact, mid brown, silty clay loam containing some stone inclusions (average size: 50x50x20mm) and no finds. The layer was around 0.2m thick.

Below the cultivation soil was a layer of sand (Context No. 603) which was pinkish orange in colour and around 0.2m thick. The sand layer extended over much of the trench and was a continuation of the sand in Trench Five (Context No. 503). It probably relates to a phase of sub soiling or land improvement either associated with or post-dating the laying of the field drains. Below the sand layer (Context No. 603) was the same deposit of dark brown humic loamy clay (Contexts No. 604) exposed in Trench Five. The clay was up to 0.8m thick in Trench Six and continued further than the limit of excavation.

The humic loamy clay (Context No. 604) overlay greenish grey boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 605) the surface of which was present at a depth of around 1.2m.

The purpose of the evaluation at Rocktown Road was to look for evidence of a possible rath or enclosure (LDY 037:021) and to assess the potential impact of development on any archaeological remains. No evidence of an enclosure was uncovered during the evaluation. By studying the map (based on the 1850s Ordnance Survey map) provided by the Environment and Heritage Service (Figure Two) it seems likely that any remains would have been encountered in the north-eastern corner of the field. Although several possible features were recorded in this area they probably relate to agricultural activity. It is possible that if the rath or enclosure did exist in the evaluation area, it may have been ploughed out. Both the landowner, Mr Sean McCann, and his mother, Mrs Bridget McCann, spoke of the field having been intensively ploughed, but neither had any memory of visible earthworks or associated finds. In the adjacent field was a mound of slightly higher ground which may be all that remains of the monument.

The deposit of dark brown humic loamy clay which was noted in most of the trenches represents a post-glacial subsoil. It was probably formed by standing water- perhaps a relict lake. Over a prolonged period of time such environmental conditions would have allowed 'peat-like' deposits to accumulate. The landowner remarked that during the winter the field became heavily waterlogged which had driven him to install multiple field drains. During the installation of these drains he had come across a deposit of 'moss' which he likened to the exposed deposits of humic clay. During a site visit Cormac McSparron (Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast) was also of the opinion that the deposits were natural.

The results of the evaluation show that there are not significant archaeological remains present in the evaluation area. It is recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out and that no further work is required except for a short summary in the annual *'Excavations'* bulletin.

Archive:

Finds:

The artefacts recovered from the evaluation are temporarily archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Photographs:

The digital images taken during the evaluation are currently archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: N/A



Figure One: General location map showing site (circled in red)



Figure Two: Detailed location map showing site outline (in red)



Figure Three: Site plan showing location of test trenches (in red) and extent of evaluation site (outlined in black)



Plate One: General view of site, prior to evaluation, looking south-east



Plate Two: North-eastern corner of field (potential location of enclosure), prior to evaluation, looking east



Plate Three: Trench One following excavation to subsoil (Context No. 111), looking east)



Sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 101)

Boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 111)

Cultivation soil (Context No. -102)

Plate Four: West-facing section of Trench One, looking east



Plate Five: Possible post-hole (Context No. 103), prior to excavation, looking north



Plate Six: Possible post-hole (Context No. 103), following half-section, looking north



Plate Seven: Field drain (Context No. 105), looking north



Plate Eight: Possible features at eastern end of trench (Context Nos. 107 and 109), looking east



Cut (Context No. 107)

Plate Nine: Possible features (Context Nos. 107 and 109), following partial excavation, looking north-east



Plate Ten: Trench Two following excavation to subsoil (Context No. 211), looking west



Sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 201)

Cultivation soil (Context No. 202)

209)

Boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 211)

Plate Eleven: North-facing section of Trench Two, looking south



Clay spread (Context No. 203)

Plate Twelve: Spread of clay (Context No. 203), looking north



Plate Thirteen: Field drain (Context No. 207), looking east



Plate Fourteen: Field drain (Context No. 209), looking east



Figure Fifteen: Trench Three following excavation to subsoil (Context No. 308), looking west



Plate Sixteen: South-facing section of Trench Three, looking north



Plate Seventeen: Two field drains (Context Nos. 304 and 306) in Trench Three, looking north



Plate Eighteen: Trench Four A following excavation to subsoil (Context No. 408A) and humic loamy clay (Context No. 407A), looking east



Plate Nineteen: West-facing section of Trench Four A, looking east



Plate Twenty: Trench Four Baulk following excavation to surface of field drain (Context No. 403 Baulk), looking north



Plate Twenty-one: Trench Four B following excavation to surface of subsoil (Context No. 410B), looking east



No. 409B)

Plate Twenty-two: South-facing section of Trench Four B, looking north-east



Plate Twenty-three: Trench Five following excavation to subsoil (Context No. 511)



Plate Twenty-four: South-facing section of Trench Five, looking north



Plate Twenty-five: Trench Six following excavation to subsoil (Context No. 605), looking west



Plate Twenty-six: South-facing section of Trench Six, looking north