



Monitoring Report No. 175

**Site adjacent to 142 Whitepark Road
Ballintoy
Co. Antrim**

AE/09/95

Brian Sloan

Site Specific Information

Site Address: Adjacent to 142 Whitepark Road, Ballintoy, Co. Antrim

Townland: Glegnagh

SMR No.: ANT 004:012, 034 and 035

State Care *Scheduled* *Other* ✓

Grid Ref: 0248043744

County: Antrim

Excavation Licence No: AE/09/95

Planning Ref / No.: E/2007/0479/O

Date of Monitoring: 29th May 2009

Archaeologist Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary:

Five test trenches were excavated to evaluate the potential impact of a proposed development of a residential dwelling on any hidden archaeological remains. The proposed development site is located in an archaeologically sensitive area with known Neolithic (ANT 004:012) and probable Bronze Age (ANT 004:034, 035) burial sites within the immediate vicinity. A large assemblage of lithic artefacts (including cores, flakes and retouched tools) was recovered from topsoil deposits in all trenches. An area of burning was encountered in trenches one and two. The cleaning of this feature revealed numerous sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery. As this feature was deemed to be of archaeological significance, excavation ceased at its level and the feature was covered with plastic and loose topsoil. Recommendations for further work at the site are detailed in this report.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of five test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-edged 'sheugh' bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened:

Four trenches each measuring approximately 30m by 2m and a further trench measuring approximately 15m by 2m.

Current Land Use: Pastoral agriculture

Intended Land Use: Residential dwelling

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The site of the proposed dwelling is located at 142 Whitepark Road, Ballintoy, Co. Antrim. The site lies approximately 2.5km from the village of Ballintoy at a height of approximately 120m above sea level. The development area is located within a roughly rectangular field which has panoramic views, especially to the north, east and west. The ground rises sharply to the south to a maximum height of 160m above sea level. The development site is currently used as a grazing area for sheep. The surrounding area is primarily utilised for pastoral agriculture interspersed with residential dwellings.

The surrounding area is rich in sites of archaeological and historical interest (Fig 2). In the field to the south of the development site, a chambered tomb is located (ANT 004:012) as well as two possible barrows (ANT 004:034 and 035) that have been identified through aerial photography. An archaeological evaluation was requested by Adrian McAleenan (Case Officer for Northern Ireland Environment Agency) in advance of the development of land adjacent to 142 Whitepark Road to assess the presence and survival of archaeological remains that may be disturbed by the development.

Excavation

The original research design for this evaluation requested the excavation of seven trenches across the proposed site of the dwelling and the access lane. However, this methodology was adjusted in the field following a conversation with the landowner, Mr. S. McAllister, who said that the current access lane (leading to 142 Whitepark Road) was to be utilised for access to the new development. The natural bed rock rises to a low mound about the middle of the field. The slope of the bedrock, sloping downwards towards the east and south of the development site, was encountered in the western ends of trenches one to four.

Trench One

Trench One was positioned along the southern boundary of the application site and measured approximately 30m by 2m. The trench was aligned roughly east/west and was excavated to the surface of the natural bedrock in the western end of the trench, and to the surface of an archaeological deposit (Context No. 103) in the eastern end, which was encountered at an average depth of 0.3m. This feature (Context No 103) was deemed to be of archaeological significance and so excavation ceased at this level.

The sod in Trench One (Context No. 101) was mechanically removed across the length of the trench. In most parts it overlay topsoil (Context No. 102), apart from the extreme western end of the trench where it appeared to overly natural bedrock (Context No. 104). The topsoil in Trench One

(Context No. 102) consisted of a mid brown sandy loam and had a maximum thickness of 0.3m. This deposit had infrequent inclusions of rounded and angular stones (average size: 30 x 30 x 40mm) within it. Numerous lithic artefacts including cores, flakes and retouched tools (primarily flakes exhibiting slight retouch) were recovered from the topsoil deposit (Context No. 102). Removal of the topsoil revealed a linear area of burning (Context No. 103) located approximately 5.5m from the eastern end of the trench. This feature had a maximum width of 0.6m and ran into the northern edge of the trench (this feature was again encountered in Trench Two). Numerous sherds of prehistoric coarse ware, provisionally identified as Late Bronze Age (Jim Mallory *pers comm.*) were recovered following the cleaning of this feature. The burning (Context No. 103) appeared to be sitting on, or cut into, a mid to dark brown sandy clay. However, the stratigraphic relationship of these deposits was not investigated at this time.

Trench Two

Trench Two was located 1.5m to the north and parallel to Trench One. The trench measured roughly 30m in length and was orientated roughly east/west. As with Trench One, excavation ceased following the identification of archaeologically significant deposits and artefacts.

The sod in Trench Two (Context No. 201) was mechanically removed across the length of the trench. In most parts it overlay topsoil (Context No. 202), apart from the extreme western end of the trench where it appeared to overly natural bedrock (Context No. 204). The topsoil in Trench Two (Context No. 202) consisted of a mid brown sandy loam and had a maximum thickness of 0.3m. This deposit had infrequent inclusions of rounded and angular stones (average size: 30 x 30 x 40mm) within it. Numerous sherds of pottery were recovered from the topsoil deposit in Trench Two (Context No. 202). This assemblage includes post-medieval black glazed earthenware, as well as sherds of Late Bronze Age pottery and possible Neolithic pottery (two sherds of which exhibit incised lines as possible decoration) (Naomi Carver *pers comm.*). Removal of the topsoil deposit (Context No. 202) revealed a continuation of the burning (Context No. 203) encountered in Trench One (Context No. 103). The continuation of this feature into Trench Two is interesting as it was not encountered in either trench three or four. The feature is estimated as at least 5-6m in length (aligned roughly north/south). Cleaning of the feature in Trench Two (Context No. 203) revealed a substantial assemblage of Late Bronze Age pottery. In all 84 sherds of at least two vessels were recovered, including several rim fragments that could be joined together. Provisional analysis of the rim forms suggests that they represent a large vessel with a flattened rim (flat rim ware) as well as a vessel that exhibits an internal bevel approximately 20mm from the rim of the pot. Both these wares were common among the pottery assemblage recovered from excavations at the Late Bronze Age hillfort 'Haughey's Fort' (Jim Mallory *pers comm.*). The burning (Context No. 203) appeared to be either sitting on, or cut into, a mid to dark brown sandy clay (Context No. 205). However, the stratigraphic relationship of these deposits was not investigated at this time.

Trench Three

Trench Three was located approximately 2m to the north, and parallel to, Trench Two. The trench measured roughly 30m by 2m and was aligned approximately east/west. The trench was excavated to the surface of the natural bedrock in the western end, and to the level of the archaeological deposits that were encountered in trenches one and two (this was encountered at an average depth of 0.25-0.3m).

The stratigraphic sequence encountered in Trench Three was similar to that encountered in the other trenches with sod (Context No. 301) overlying topsoil (Context No. 302). The removal of the topsoil (Context No. 302) revealed the natural bedrock (Context No. 303) as well as the mid to dark brown sandy clay (Context No. 304) that was encountered in trenches one and two (where it was assigned Context Nos. 105 and 205 respectively). However, no evidence of the burning encountered in trenches one and two (Context Nos. 103 and 203) was observed. Coincidentally, no pottery was recovered from this trench, although a large corpus of struck and naturally occurring flint was observed in the topsoil deposit (Context No.302).

Trench Four

Trench Four was located approximately 2m to the north, and parallel to, Trench Three. The trench measured roughly 30m by 2m and was aligned approximately east/west. The trench was excavated to the surface of the natural bedrock which was encountered across the entire length of the trench at an average depth of 0.2m.

The sod (Context No. 401) and topsoil (Context No. 402) directly overlay the surface of the natural bedrock (Context No. 403). Despite no features of archaeological significance being observed in this trench, numerous flint artefacts were recovered from the topsoil (Context No. 402) along with 3 sherds of abraded coarse ware pottery, possibly of Bronze Age date.

Trench Five

Trench Five was located approximately 6m to the west of Trench Four and was positioned to investigate any archaeological deposits that would be disturbed by the access lane to the development. The stratigraphy in this area was shallow, as the trench was positioned on the summit of the rise in the field. The trench was approximately 15m in length by 2m in width and was aligned roughly south-west/north-east. The trench was excavated to the surface of the natural bedrock (Context No. 503) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.1m.

The stratigraphy was made up of the sod (Context No. 501) and topsoil (Context No. 502) with nothing of archaeological significance being observed, save 2 fragments of struck flint recovered from the topsoil (Context No. 502)

Recommendations

The evaluation proved that archaeologically significant deposits are present at Whitepark road, and these will be adversely affected should development proceed as it stands. It is recommended that subject to approval from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, the area is subject to archaeological excavation, with the archaeology being recorded and cleared prior to the development of the site.

Archive:

Finds: All artefacts are currently held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Photographs: 9 digital images, held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: n/a

Signed: _____ Date: _____



Figure One: General map showing development site (red dot)



Figure Three: Detailed map showing location of the test trenches (in red) as well as the approximate location of the archaeologically significant deposits (in green). This area is highlighted as it was here that the concentration of pottery sherds and burning was encountered, however pottery and struck flint artefacts were recovered from the other test trenches as well, and it is assumed that the burning encountered in Trenches One and Two is not the only archaeological feature present onsite.



Plate One: Application site prior to the evaluation, looking north-west.



Plate 2: Burning encountered in Trench One (Context No. 103) looking north.



Plate Three: The development site following the evaluation, looking south-east.



Plate Four: Sample of Late Bronze Age pottery sherds recovered from the burning in Trenches One and Two (Context Nos. 103 and 203). At least two types of vessels are represented; the top row are sherds of 'flat rim ware' of Haughey's Fort type (Jim Mallory *pers comm.*). The bottom row are sherds from a vessel that has an internal bevel (again of Late Bronze Age type).



Plate Five: Sample of lithic artefacts recovered during the evaluation. The upper left piece is a core that exhibits bi-polar reduction (crushing on both the proximal and distal ends of the flake scars). It is thought that this is a characteristic Bronze Age reduction strategy. The other artefacts are less diagnostic retouched flakes and probable end-scrapers.