



Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 165

**BOLERAN ROAD
GLENKEEN
GARVAGH
COUNTY LONDONDERRY**

LICENCE NO.: AE/08/198

Peter Bowen
November 2008

Site Specific Information

Site Name: Boleran Road.

Townland: Glenkeen

SMR No. : LDY 018:019

State Care Scheduled Other [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: C 8178 1850

County: Londonderry

Excavation Licence No. : AE/08/198

Planning Ref / No. :DARD Ref: 621017

Dates of Monitoring: 19th November 2008

Archaeologist(s) Present: Peter Bowen

Brief Summary:

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site just off the Boleran Road, Glenkeen, Garvagh, Co. Londonderry as part of a farm nutrient management scheme (slurry tank). A recorded archaeological site, LDY 018:019, a counterscarp rath, is located within a neighbouring field and although no trace of it was visible within the area of monitoring there was a possibility that it would have originally extended into the site. Archaeological monitoring of the topsoil stripping was undertaken to investigate the possible present of the rath and any associated archaeological deposits.

The evaluation comprised of the monitoring of topsoil removal within an area measuring 30m east – west by 15m north – south. Prior to the evaluation the site was greenfield, used for the storage of hay bales and was extremely rutted by farm machinery tracks. There were no visible signs that the rath extended into his area prior to the commencement of work. Upon removal of the topsoil it became evident that that site had been disturbed both by the construction of an animal pen to the north and by farm machinery. No trace of the rath, or any other archaeological deposits were found within the site.

It is recommended that the installation of the farm slurry tank be allowed to proceed with further archaeological investigation.

Type of monitoring:

Archaeological monitoring of topsoil removal by a back acting mechanical digger fitted with a flat, toothless bucket. .

Size of area opened:

Area measured 30m east – west by 15m north – south.

Current Land Use: Agricultural

Intended Land Use: Farm Nutrient Management Scheme (Slurry tank).

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The site is located 120 north of the Boleran Road, Gleenkeen, Co. Londonderry. It is approximately 3.5km northwest of the town of Garvagh and 4km southeast of Ringsend. (Figure One)

The site is located within a generally flat landscape, at a height of approximately 120m OD, within an area of several recorded monuments, mostly raths or enclosures (Figure Two). Lying between 15 – 20m to the north are the remains of a counterscarp rath, LDY 018:019, separated from the site by a farm access lane and an animal pen. This rath is described in the sites and monuments record as consisting “of a central platform, cut by a field boundary at S, some 30m E-W 17m to the field boundary. Beyond this is an enclosing ditch, and a low, eroded counterscarp bank. The ditch is 3.7m wide, 0.9m-1m below the platform and 0.6m below the counterscarp bank, which is 5m wide and 0.5m high. At west, the perimeter of the platform preserves the remnant of an inner bank, 6m wide, 0.75m high internally and 0.9m externally; this has been leveled elsewhere. A lane runs N of the site and the counterscarp bank merges into it. There is also a lane cutting across the S part of the site and the platform etc. are not visible”.

The evaluation was undertaken as part of the works for the installation of a farm nutrient management scheme (slurry tank) and was requested by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency caseworker Stefanie McMullen. It was requested due to the proximity of the application site to the counterscarp rath with a potential for related archaeological deposits to exist within the limits of the proposed development. The projected line of the rath would suggest that a portion of it would have been located within the northern half of the area under investigation (Figure Three). No trace of this rath was visible prior to the commencement of work although the site was severely rutted by farm machinery tracking across it (Plate One). According to the landowner the site had been used for the storage of hay bales.

The site is bounded by a relatively recent concrete animal pen and farm access laneway to the north, while the southern and eastern limits were formed by small field boundary banks with trees, although the trees had been removed prior to the commencement of work. To the west the site was open, providing access to nearby farm buildings.

Excavation

The evaluation consisted of the supervision of topsoil removal across an area measuring 30m east – west by 15m north – south (Figure Two). The topsoil removal was undertaken by a mechanical digger fitted with a flat toothless bucket. The site was stripped to the top of undisturbed subsoil, comprising of an orange sandy clay. The surface of the subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.25-0.6m.

The topsoil, context 101, consisted of a dark brown clayey loam measuring up to 0.25m in depth. When removed it was discovered that running along the northern half of the site was a layer of re-deposited subsoil, context 102. This was up to 0.35m in depth and lay directly upon the natural un-disturbed subsoil. This re-deposited subsoil comprised of a fairly loose, yellowy orange sandy clay (Plate Two). It was found against the northern limit of the site formed by the pre-existing concrete animal pen and covered an area measuring 20m east-west by 7m wide.

In the northeast corner of the site a large concrete tank (context 103), used as a catchment tank for the animal pen was uncovered. This was square in plan, measuring some 3.5m across. Within the immediate area surrounding this it was noticeable that there had been severe disturbance associated with the installation of this tank with modern material, including lumps of iron and a tyre tube clearly visible within the backfilled foundation cut (context 104) (Plate Three).

At the western limits of the site there was a second large area of modern disturbance. This measured 10m north-south and extended into the site from the west for 5m (Plate Five). This was visible as a large cut area back filled with modern material including copper pipe, wood, iron, and plastic sheeting (context 105).

Running along the northern edge of the site were further traces of disturbance (context 106), this time caused by farm machinery tracking across the site. This had caused the topsoil (context 101) and subsoil (107) to churn and mix, leaving a 10cm depth dark greyish stain on the ground (Plate Six).

The subsoil on the site (context 107) consisted of a orange sand clay with several large boulders (measuring up to 0.5m diameter).

No trace of the nearby rath, or any other archaeological deposits were uncovered within the confines of the site.

Discussion

The archaeological monitoring undertaken on the site found no trace of the rath (LDY 018:019) within the limits of the site, and it is clear from the monitoring that the site has been disturbed, severely in places. Although the bulk of the rath would have lain beyond the northern limit of the site, when projected, the line of the rath (Figure Three) indicates that it would have continued into the northern half of the site. An examination of the ordnance survey 3rd edition map also suggests that the rath would have formed a circular enclosure, the southern limits of which would have extended just into the northern edge of the site (Figure Four). As no trace the

rath survived it is probable that it had been truncated to such a degree that it had been removed in its entirety.

According to the landowner, the layer of re-deposited subsoil (context 102) found within the northern half of the site, along the projected line of the rath, had been dumped onto the site during the construction of the neighbouring animal pen. This layer was found to be lying directly upon the un-disturbed subsoil (context 107) with no trace of a buried original topsoil layer. This would suggest that this portion of the site may have been stripped at some time in the past. Such work may have inadvertently removed any trace of the rath had it existed. It would also appear to imply if this was the case then the portion of the rath in the site would have been substantially slighter in nature than the upstanding remains to the north. When compared it was noticed that the surface of the site was up to 0.5m lower than the surviving rath prior to topsoil stripping. When combined with the depth of soil removed to reach the un-disturbed subsoil then this would have been over 1m in difference. If such a depth of soil had been removed from the site then it is plausible that all traces of the rath would have been removed during earlier works on the site (Plate Six).

Recommendations

The purpose of this evaluation was to determine the presence or absence of sub-surface archaeological deposits surviving within the area of the application site including any remnants of the counterscarp rath (LDY 018:019). As no archaeological deposits were uncovered within the limits of the site it is recommended that no further archaeological work is undertaken and the installation of the farm nutrient management scheme is allowed to proceed.

Archive:

Finds:

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

Plans / Drawings:

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____



Figure One: 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map showing location of the site (circled in red).

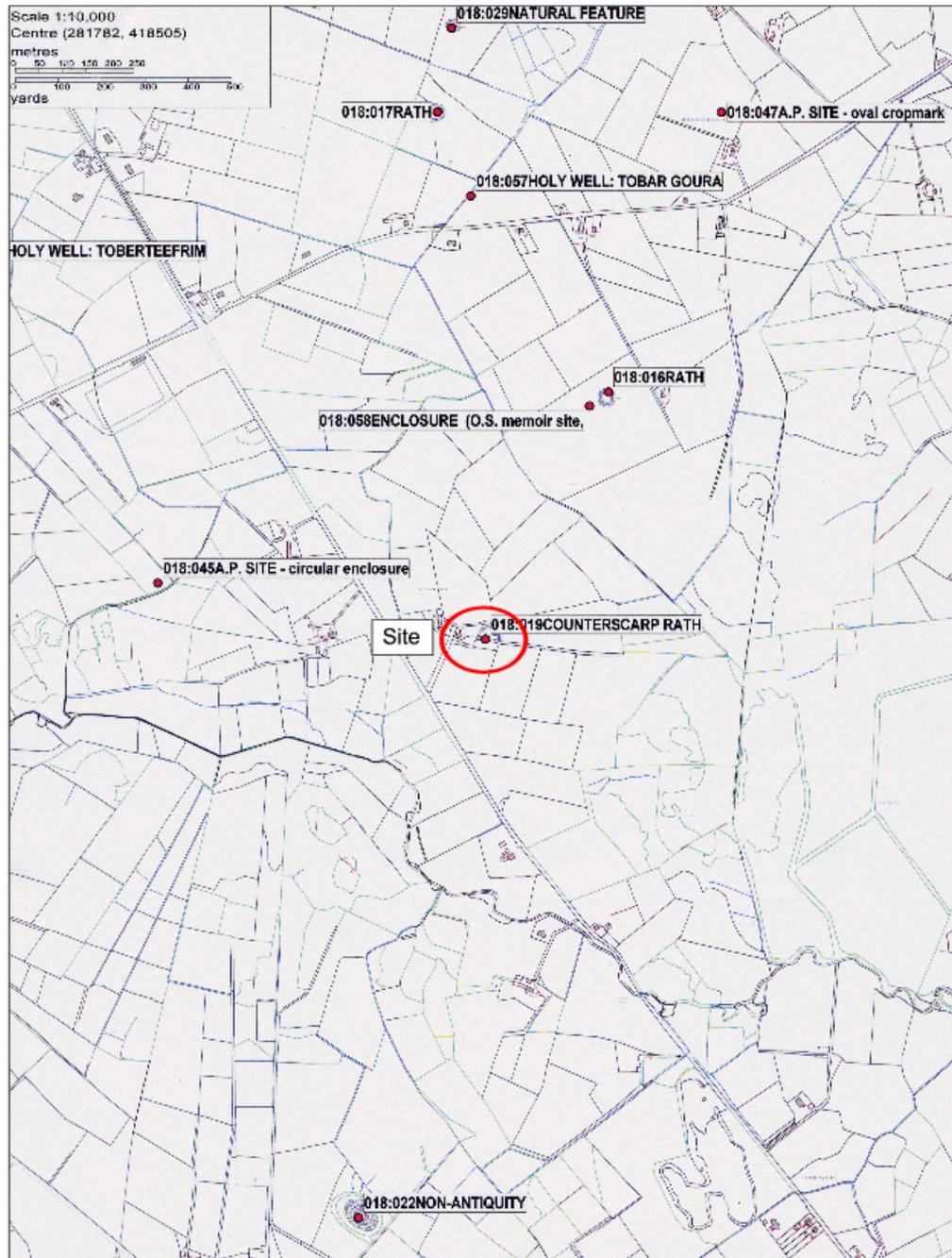


Figure Two: Detailed location of site (circled in red) showing recorded SMR sites within general vicinity.

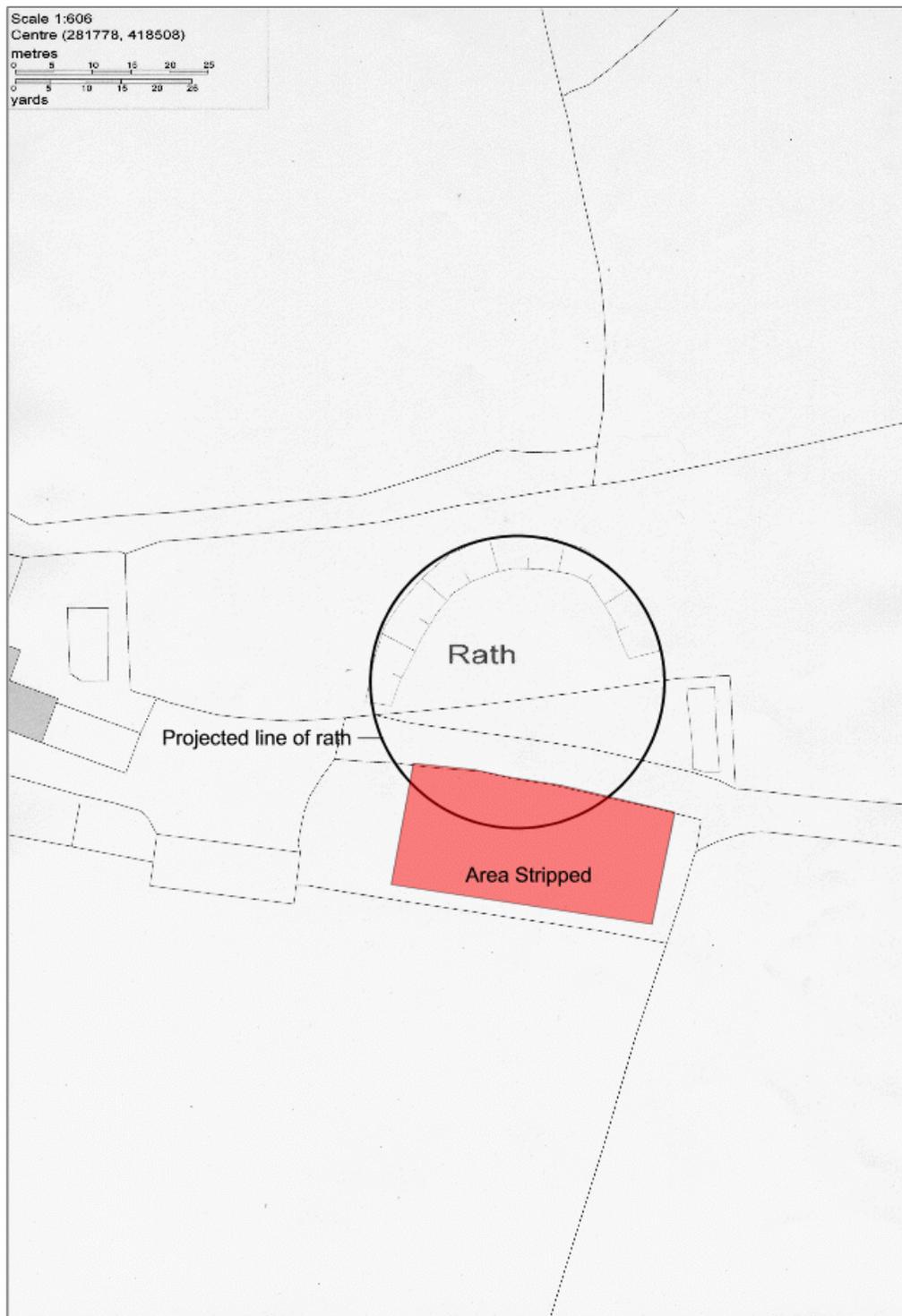


Figure Three: Detail of area stripped (in red) with projected line of counterscarp rath LDY 018:019 running into northern half of site.

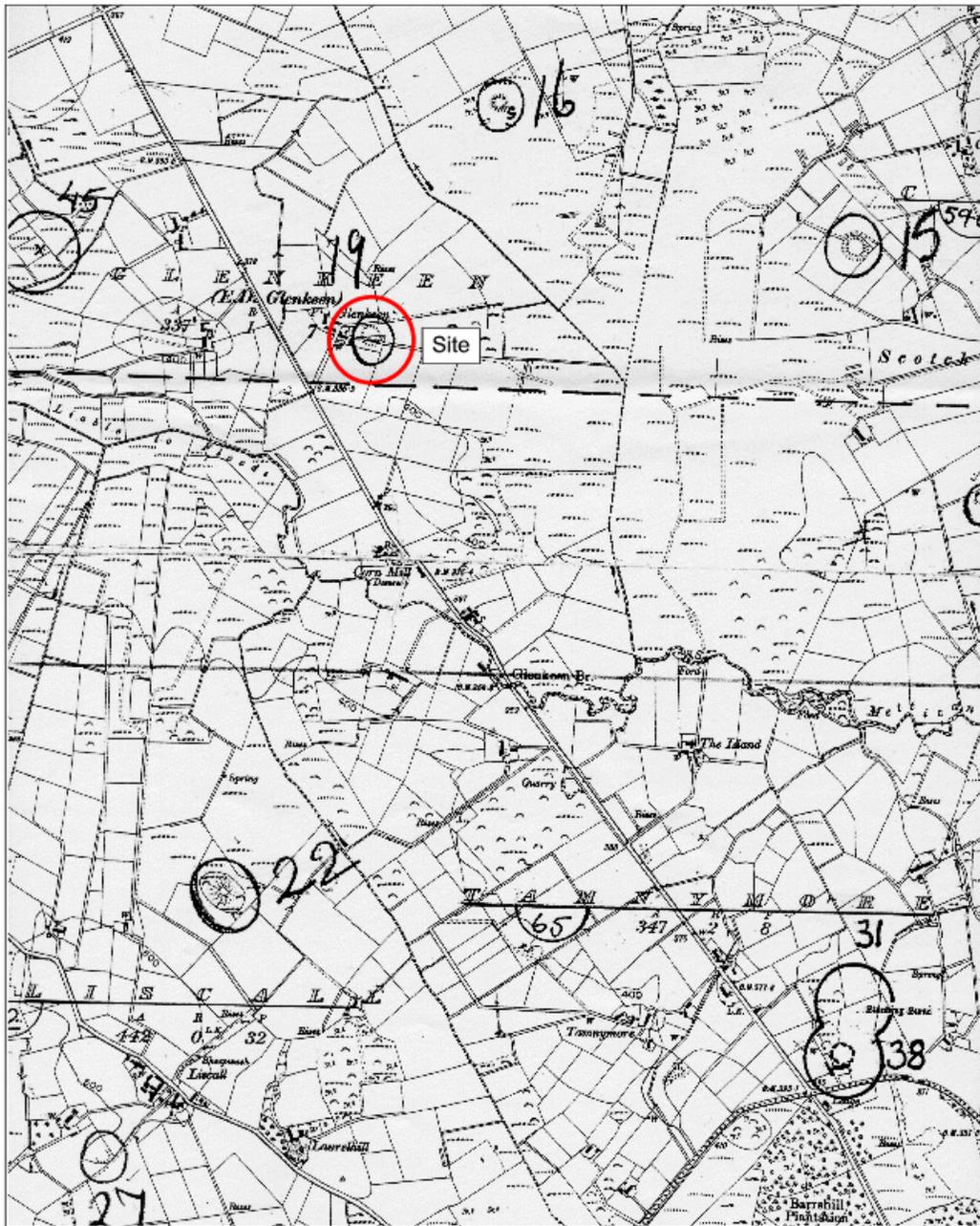


Figure Four: Site on 3rd edition Ordnance Survey map with counterscarp rath LDY 018:019 visible as a circular enclosure.



Plate One: View of site prior to topsoil removal looking southeast.



Plate Two: Shot of re-deposited subsoil layer (context 102) during removal by machine.



Plate Three: View of catchment tank (context 103) and associated disturbance (context 104) in northeast corner of site.



Plate Four: Close up view of disturbance on western edge of site (context 105) showing modern metal fragments and plastic.



Plate Five: View of disturbance caused by machine rutting (context 106) along southern edge of site.



Plate Six: View of northern half of site after stripping, showing area of projected line of path. .

