



Monitoring Report No. 196

**Riddell Hall
Queen's University Belfast
Co. Antrim**

AE/10/12

Z/2009/0309/F

BRIAN SLOAN

Site Specific Information

Site Name: Riddell Hall, Queen's University Belfast

Townland: Malone Upper

SMR No. : N/A

State Care Scheduled Other ✓ [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: J3371

County: Antrim

Excavation Licence No. : AE/10/12

Planning Ref / No. : Z/2009/0309/F

Dates of Monitoring: 9th-11th February 2010

Archaeologist Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary:

A single trench was mechanically excavated to assess the presence and survival of archaeological strata at the proposed development site. The site has been subject to substantial truncation due to the landscaping of the area from the early twentieth century. As such, little topsoil was present across the development area. Excavation of the test trenches revealed nothing of archaeological significance, with no further archaeological work recommended at this development site.

Type of monitoring:

Mechanical excavation of topsoil removal to the west of the upstanding building.

Size of area opened:

Approximately 27m (north/south) by 22m (east/west).

Current Land Use:

Landscaped garden

Intended Land Use:

Proposed extension to Riddell Hall.

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

Riddell Hall is located at 185 Stranmillis Road and is currently vacant, having previously been occupied by the Staff Training and Development Unit, Queen's University Belfast. The building was designed by William Henry Lynn and constructed between 1913-15 (McClelland 2005, 194). The proposed redevelopment at Riddell Hall involves major work including the renovation of the existing hall, a large extension to the west of the building (the area subsequently monitored) and the construction of additional parking. To the north-west of Riddell Hall is a modern car park and to the east two greenhouses. The development proposals include the demolition of buildings, construction of a new building extension and additional car park provision. The green houses located to the east of Riddell Hall are to be demolished and replaced by a 31 space car park. The current car parking area to the north-west of Riddell Hall will be removed and the building extension located within this area. The landscaped gardens to the south of the current car park will be converted into a car park with 41 spaces. However, as invasive groundworks are not associated with the conversion of areas into car parking facilities, it was decided that monitoring was to be carried out within the footprint of the extension, to the area west of the upstanding Riddell Hall.

Account of the excavation

A large area (approximately 27m north/south by 22m east/west) was mechanically stripped of topsoil and strata overlying the natural subsoil in an effort to assess the presence and survival of archaeological strata. The stratigraphic sequence encountered in the excavated area was relatively simple with topsoil (Context No. 101) sitting directly on natural subsoil (Context No. 102). Excavation ceased at the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 102) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.3m.

The sod and topsoil in the excavation area (Context No. 101) consisted of a friable mid to dark brown sandy loam. Inclusions of small angular stones (average size: 30mm x 20mm) and larger rounded stones (average size: 60mm x 80mm) were frequent throughout this deposit, as well as brick fragments (of apparent twentieth century date). Various discreet lenses of material including fragments of asphalt were observed within the topsoil deposit (Context No. 101) although were not assigned separate context number due to the topsoil being removed as a single stratigraphic unit. The topsoil (Context No. 101) was on average 0.3m in depth and directly overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 102) which consisted of an orange red sand.

Four field drains were observed following the removal of the topsoil deposit (Context No. 101), and these were assigned Context Nos. 103, 104, 105 and 106 (see table 1). These drains were observed as linear features of approximately 0.3m wide filled with angular gravel. Due to the apparent modern nature of these features they were not excavated.

Context No.	Length	Alignment
103	2m	North/South
104	3.6m	North-west/South-east
105	8m	North/south
106	6.8m	West/East

Table 1: Detail of the field drains encountered following the removal of the topsoil (Context No. 101).

Conclusions

The evaluative test trench excavated in the application area contained nothing of archaeological significance. It is not thought that the redevelopment of Riddell Hall will impact upon previously unrecognised and unrecorded archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out at the development site. No publication of this work is merited save a short summary in the annual *Excavations Bulletin*.

References

McClelland, G. 2005. *Pioneering Women, Riddell Hall and Queen's University Belfast*. Ulster Historical Association, Bath Press.

Archive:

Finds: No finds were recovered during the evaluation.

Photographs: Digital images are temporarily archived at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast, BT7 1NN

Plans / Drawings: No plans or drawings were generated during the evaluation.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

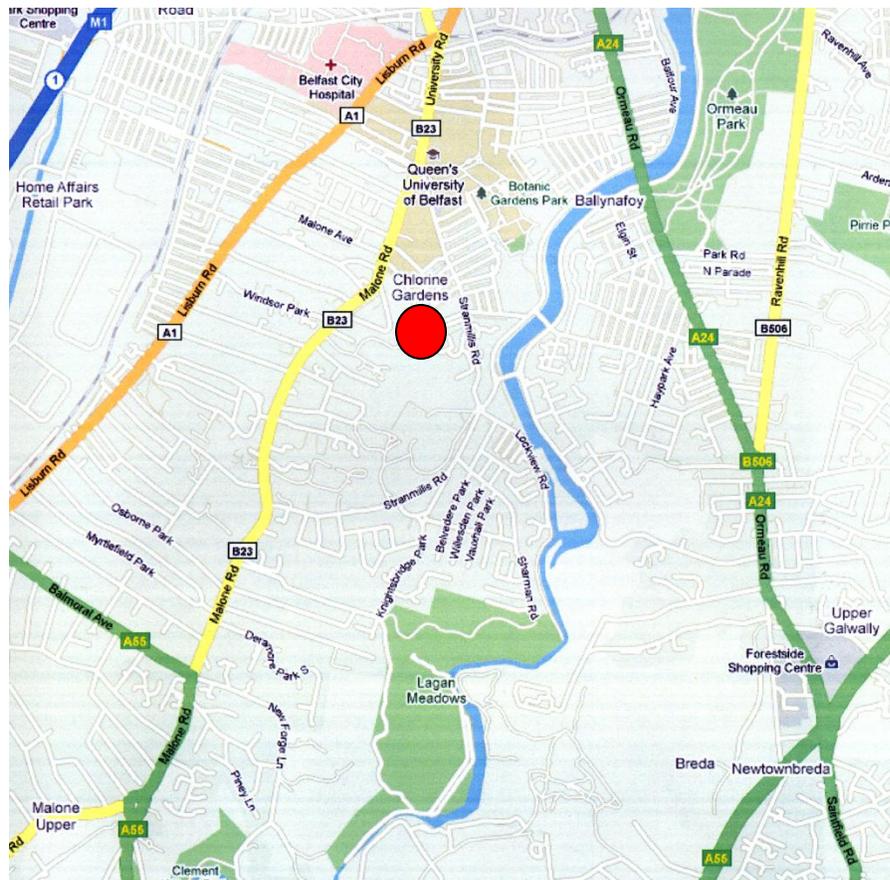


Fig.1: General location map showing location map showing location of Riddell Hall QUB (red dot).

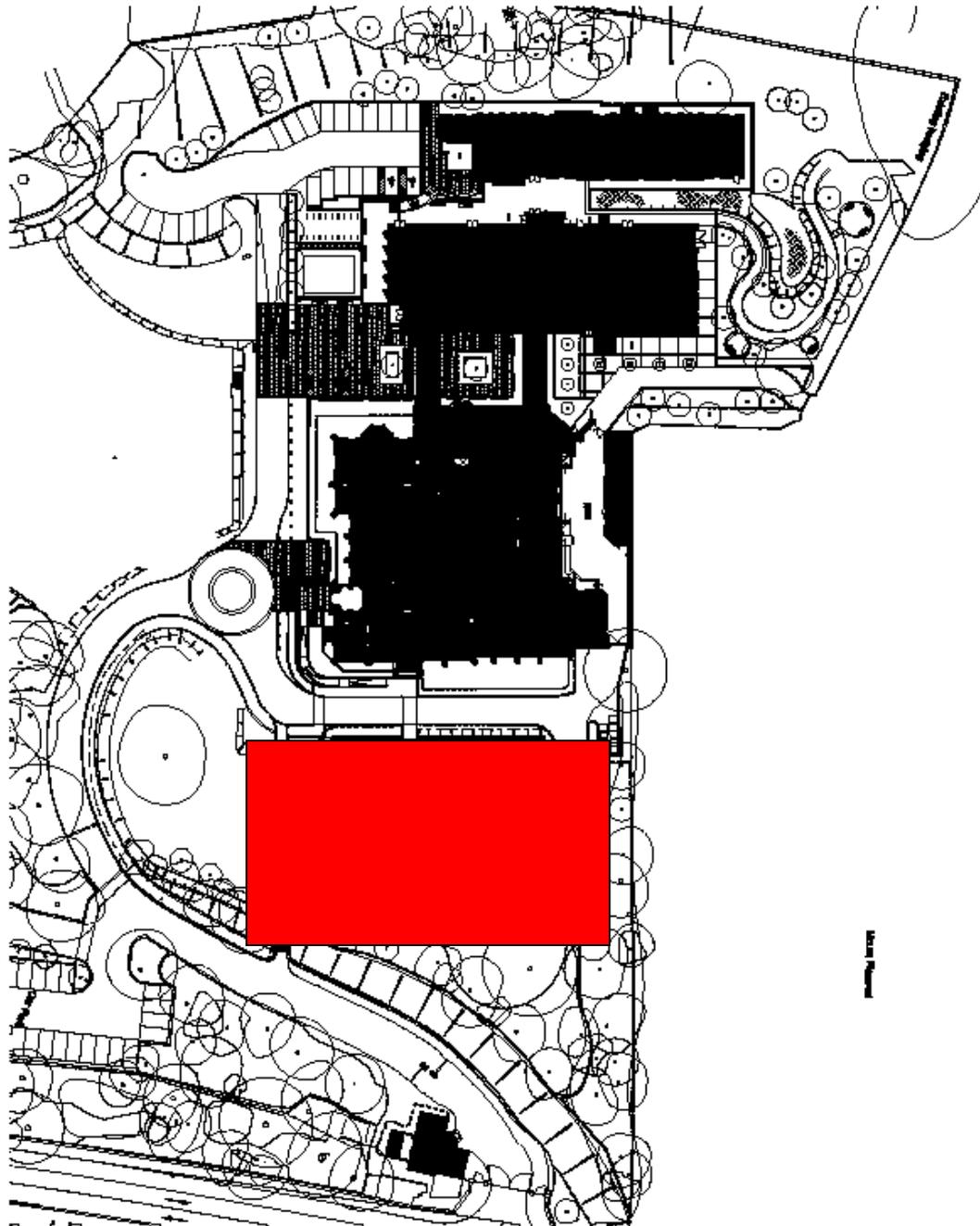


Fig. 2: Plan of the proposed development as provided by Estates Department QUB. The east of the development is at the top of the picture. Also showing is the approximate location of the area that was subject to archaeological mitigation (red box).

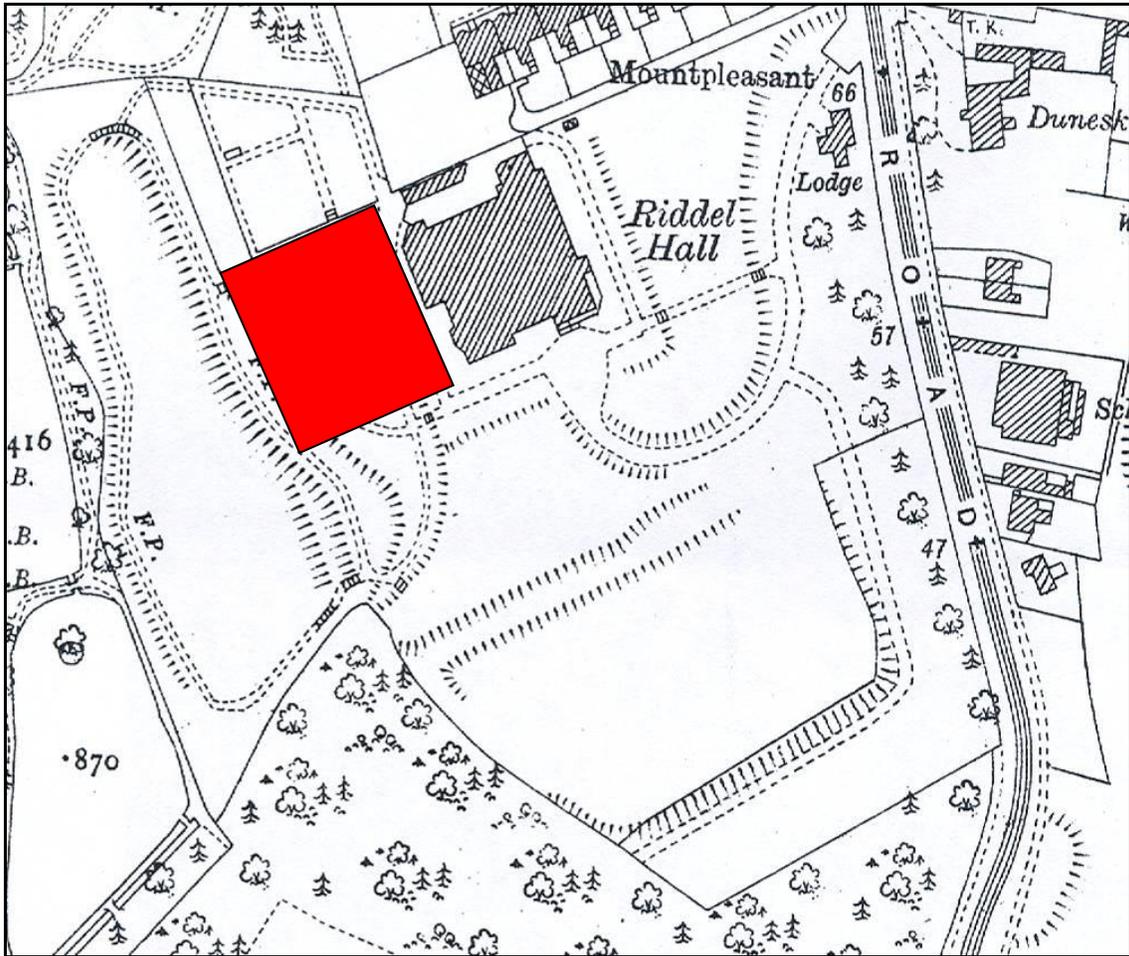


Fig. 3: Area subjected to archaeological evaluation (shaded red).



Plate 1: Upstanding remains of Riddell Hall, looking east.



Plate 2: Area to the west of Riddell Hall that was subject to archaeological evaluation, looking north-west.



Plate 3: Mid- excavation shot showing removal of topsoil (Context No. 101) to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 102), looking south-east. The field drains (Context Nos. 103 and 104) can be seen in the foreground of the picture.



Plate 4: Proposed development area following removal of the topsoil (Context No. 101), looking north-west.