



MONITORING REPORT No. 226

BELLEMONT ROAD, ROSELICK MORE,
COUNTY DERRY

LICENCE No. AE/11/49

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Report on an archaeological evaluation at Bellemont Road, Roselick More, Co. Derry

Site Specific Information

Site name: Roselick More, 'Rosreilige' (adj. to 9 Roselick Road)

Townland: Roselick More

SMR No. : LDY 003:012

Grid ref.: C8405037750

County: Derry

Excavation lic. No.: AE/11/49

Planning ref. / No.: C/2009/0563/O

Dates of monitoring: 4th and 5th May 2011

Archaeologists present: Emily Murray and Ruth Logue

Brief Summary: An archaeological evaluation was carried out in an effort to inform the Planning Service of the presence and survival of archaeological remains that would be adversely affected by the proposed development. The application site is located within the vicinity of the probable site of a medieval church and burial ground (LDY 003:012). Three trenches were opened across the footprint of the proposed development and were all excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil/bedrock (encountered at a depth of between 0.18-0.55m). Apart from three relatively modern drain/gully features, a posthole and a wide range of modern domestic and architectural debris (glass, slate, brick, machinery parts etc.), no features or finds of archaeological significance were observed during the evaluation.

Type of monitoring: Excavation of two hand-dug trenches (1m x 2m) both subsequently widened, lengthened and excavated mechanically (Trench 1: 1.85m x 11.3m. Trench 2: 1.85m x 8.5m). A third trench was also excavated mechanically (Trench 3: 1.85m x 9.1m).

Size of area opened: Approximately 53.5m² (total area mechanically excavated).

Current land use: Pasture/grassland and a disused concrete cattle pen.

Intended land use: Residential development – single dwelling and garage.

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation of a proposed new house and garage (C/2009/0563/O) in the townland of Roselick More (Figure 1) was undertaken over two days to assist NIEA to make an informed response to the Planning Service. The application site (approx. 20m x 29m) lies within the probable locale of a medieval church and burial ground (LDY 003:012; Figure 2), and adjacent to 9 Roselick Road, where previous excavations in 2008 (AE/08/63) uncovered the remains of a stone-built souterrain and other archaeological features (unpublished; see Figure 3).

Account of the evaluation

Given the possibility that the application site is located on or close to a former medieval church and cemetery ('Rosrelige'), with therefore the potential for uncovering burials, it was agreed with NIEA that trenches would be opened and excavated by hand in the first instance.

Trenches 1 and 2 both measuring 1m x 2m were opened by hand on May 4th. Trench 1 was opened at the south-eastern corner of the application site, in the location of the proposed garage (Figure 4), and orientated approximately east-west. Trench 2 was opened perpendicular to Trench 1 at the north-western corner of the site (Plate 1). No deposits of archaeological significance were encountered in either trench and, as had been previously agreed with NIEA, these trenches were then extended mechanically (May 5th). A third trench, running parallel to Trench 2 and set approximately 2-3m west of the concrete compound at the eastern edge of the site, was also opened (Figure 3).

Trench 1

Trench 1 (1m x 2m) was opened by hand. The sod (C.101) was removed to reveal a firm, mid-brown mottled loamy garden soil with flecks and patches of coal and charcoal and occasional roots (C.102). This deposit contained domestic building and midden material throughout including sherds of pottery (creamwares and black ware), slate, modern window and bottle glass, brick, bits of plastic etc. Cut into this deposit and running parallel to the northern long-side of the trench was a linear drain or gully (C.103; Plate 2). This contained a loose black silty fill (C.104), with lots of domestic refuse (glow plugs, slate etc.). It measured 0.2m in width at the western end narrowing to 0.15m in width at the southern end of the trench and was approximately 0.08-0.15m in deep. Excavation of this drain and the garden

soil (C.102) revealed the uneven surface of the stony orange-brown subsoil encountered at a depth of around 0.48-0.51m (Plate 3).

This trench was then extended eastwards mechanically to a length of 11.3m and northwards (width = 1.85m). The linear feature, C.103, was found to extend further northwards giving it a total width of 0.45m and it ran east-west across the full length of the evaluation trench. The excavation of C.102 exposed the subsoil at the western end of the trench which shallowed out considerably further east (around 0.18m deep) where it overlay an outcrop of bedrock extending across most of the eastern third of the trench or more. Two features were found cut into the subsoil (Plate 5). A linear feature (C.105), 0.5m wide ran diagonally (north-northwest/south-southeast) across the trench, approximately 3m east of the western end of the trench. This was partially excavated and found to be a shallow (0.08m), broad U-shaped depression with a loose grey-brown loamy fill (C.106). A circular posthole, C.107 (0.5m N-S by 0.45m EW) was recorded approximately mid-way along the length of a trench. The posthole was half-sectioned and it was found to be straight-sided, cut into the subsoil with a depth of 0.25m. It had a single loose grey-brown loamy fill (C.108) and produced fragments of glass, brick and coal.

Trench 2

The basic stratigraphy recorded in Trench 1 was also encountered in Trench 2. This was initially excavated by hand (1m x 2m) and then extended southwards from the northern edge with a mechanical excavator measuring in full, 1.85m wide by 9.1m in length. The sod (C.201) was removed to reveal a mid-brown loamy garden soil (C.202) with black-brown mottles and flecks of coal and charcoal. This garden or midden soil contained finds throughout and, as with C.102 in Trench 1, these were more heavily concentrated in the upper levels with the soil becoming 'cleaner' and stonier with depth. Finds included fragments of broken glass and glazed pottery, butchered (sawn) animal bone, slate, coal etc. This deposit directly overlay the uneven surface of the orange-brown stony subsoil encountered at a depth of 0.45-0.55m (Plate 6). A linear feature 1.15m wide and cut into the subsoil ran diagonally (north-northwest/south-southeast) across the northern end of the trench (C.203; Plate 6). This was partially excavated and was found to be a shallow linear depression, 0.13m-0.14m deep, with sloping sides and filled by a greyish-brown loam (C.204) with inclusions of stones, flint, coal and pottery sherds (creamware).

Trench 3

Trench 3 (1.85m x 8.5m) was excavated mechanically and opened in between and parallel to Trench 2 and the cattle pen. The sod (C.301) was removed to reveal the mixed garden soil (C.302) as encountered in Trenches 1 and 2. This directly overlay the subsoil and bedrock – the former was encountered at a depth of around 0.45m at the northern end of the trench, becoming shallower further south and thinning out over the bedrock in the southern third of the trench, at a depth of around 0.35m. Bottle glass, slate, clumps of lime and other mixed midden material was observed in the garden soil (C.302) but apart from this debris, no other deposits or features of archaeological interest were found.

Discussion

No features or deposits of archaeological significance were found during the evaluation. The same basic stratigraphy was encountered across the site (sod overlying a garden or midden soil, directly over the subsoil and bedrock). Three linear gullies or drains, two cut into the subsoil (C.105 and C.203) and one relatively shallow and cut into the garden soil (C.103), and a posthole (C.107), all yielding relatively modern finds, were the only features encountered. It is probable that these features, the majority of finds and garden soil all represent back yard activity associated with the houses that once fronted onto Bellemont Road (see Figure 2). These were located where the present concreted cattle pen is situated and were pulled down sometime in the early 1970s (Henry Lynch, landowner, pers. comm.). It is perhaps surprising that not more postholes, walls or other structural and domestic debris was encountered, in particular in Trench 3.

The absence of any evidence of medieval activity is also of note given the proximity of the previously excavated souterrain at 9 Roselick Road (see Figure 2), and the cartographic and historical documentary references which place a medieval church and/or cemetery at this locale. The latter, however, are vague as to the precise location of the medieval church and cemetery. ‘Rosrelick’ is listed in the 1306 Taxation of Pope Nicholas (Reeves 1847, 75) but in the *Ulster Visitation Book* of 1622 it is recorded as ‘*Grange de Rossrolike church, noe walls nor knowne to be there*’ (quoted in O’Lavery 1887, 256). This suggests that by the mid-seventeenth century there were no visible or upstanding remains of the church. These two historical references therefore locate a medieval church in Roselick but not specifically to a precise location or even to a townland (Roselick More or Roselick Beg?).

Both Reeves (1847, 75-6) and O'Laverty (1887, 256) note that a tradition of a church was still held in the area in the nineteenth century and that large quantities of human bones had reportedly been found. Reeves, however, allocates the discovery of the bones to the townland to the south, Roselick Beg and not Roselick More (Reeves 1847, 75-6). Bones were reportedly found when drain digging sometime in the nineteenth century (OS field Report 6 – information on NI-SMR online). The location is not given but perhaps this would explain the origin of the cross marked on the 3rd edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of the area, labelled 'Burial Ground (site of)' (Figure 2 - there is no such annotation on the first edition OS map, see Figure 5). This gothic cross is placed to the south-east of the junction of the Bellemont and Roselick Roads which lies just metres north of the location of the application site.

Conclusions

The three evaluative trenches excavated at the application site contained nothing of archaeological significance and all three trenches were back-filled on completion of the evaluation. It is not thought that the development of the dwelling and garage will impact upon previously unrecognized and unrecorded archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out at the development site. With the exception of a short summary in the annual *Excavations Bulletin*, no publication of this work is merited.

References

- O'Laverty, J. 1887 *An historical account of the Diocese of Down and Connor, ancient and modern* (Vol. 4). Dublin. J. Duffy.
- Reeves, W. 1847 *Ecclesiastical antiquities of Down, Connor and Dromore: consisting of a taxation of those dioceses*. Dublin. Hodges & Smith (Kessinger Publishing facsimile edition).

On-line sources

The maps showing the location of Roselick More and Google-Earth image were downloaded (16/02/11) from: <http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/Mapviewer/>

The historic maps were downloaded (16/02/11) from;
<http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/SixInchSeries/>

FIGURES

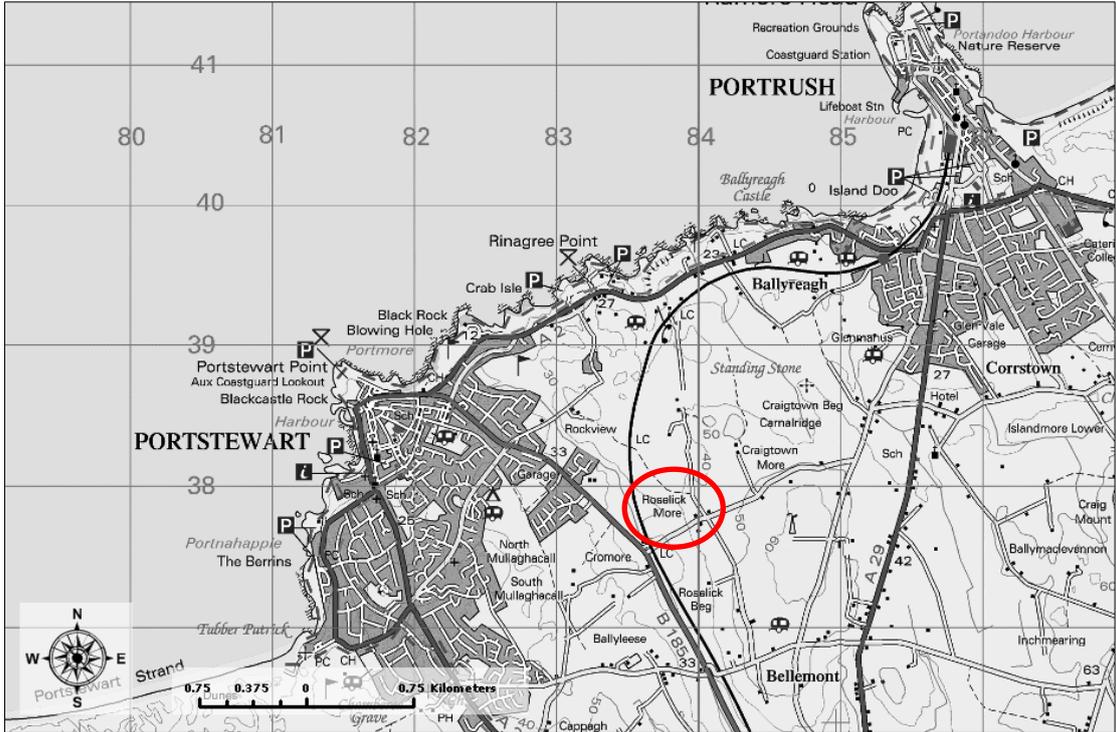


Figure 1 Location of Roselick More (LDY 003:012).



Figure 2 Detail from the OS 6-inch third edition map (Londonderry Sheet 3) with the 'Burial Ground (Site of)' of Roselick More marked with a cross (LDY 003:012), immediately to the north of the application site (red arrow).



Figure 3 Google-Earth image of the hamlet located at the crossroads of Belmont Road and Roselick Road. The boundaries of the application site are highlighted in red. The approximate locations of the three evaluation trenches are also shown. The approximate location of the 2008 excavation is marked with stippling (location indicated by S. Moore, proprietor of 9 Roselick Road).



Figure 4 Concept plan for proposed new development at Belmont Road (C/2009/0563/O; plan supplied by NIEA - no scale). The application site is outlined in red.



Figure 5 Detail from the OS 6-inch first edition map (Londonderry Sheet 3) showing the location of the application site (red arrow) in the townland of Roselick More.

PLATES



Plate 1 Photo of the application site (facing northwest) showing the location of the hand-dug trenches, Trenches 1 and 2, before they were extended mechanically. The western wall of the concrete cattle pen is visible in the foreground.

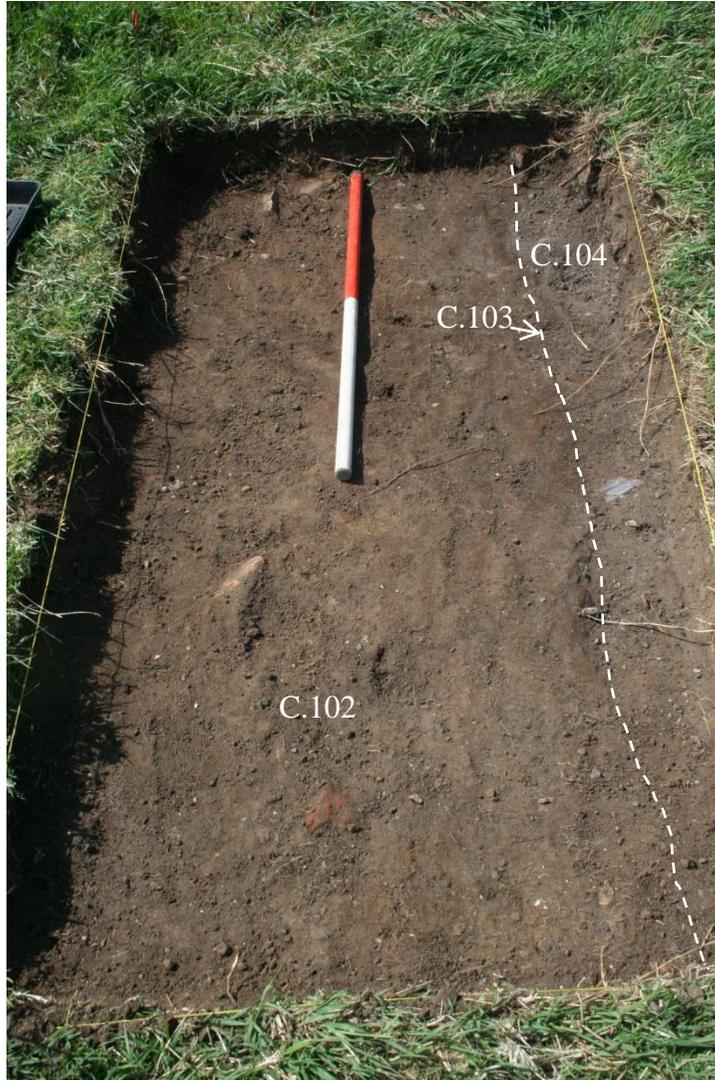


Plate 2 Trench 1 (facing west) showing C.102 and the drain/gully feature, C.103, after removal of the sod.



Plate 3 Trench 1, western half, showing surface of the subsoil.



Plate 4 Trench 1 (facing west) showing the bedrock (foreground) and subsoil (background).



Plate 5 Trench 1, western end, showing the linear feature, C.105 and half-sectioned posthole, C.107.



Plate 6 Trench 2 (facing south) showing the linear feature (C.203) and subsoil.



Plate 7 Trench 3 (facing north), with bedrock in the foreground.