

EVALUATION REPORT No. 273

Freeduff Presbyterian Church, 3 Oldtown road, Freeduff,

Cullyhanna, County Armagh

Licence No.: AE/13/133E Sapphire Mussen

Report Date: 20/09/2013

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1.0 Site Specific Information

Site Name: Freeduff Presbyterian Church

Site location: Freeduff Presbyterian Church, 3 Oldtown road, Cullyhanna, Newry, County Armagh

Townland: Freeduff

County: Armagh

SMR No.: Not Applicable

Grid Reference: H 9255 1997

Excavation Licence: AE/13/133E

Planning Reference: P/2013/0097/F

Dates of evaluation: 29th July-3rd August 2013

Archaeologists Present: Sapphire Mussen, Grace McAlister and Dermot Redmond

Brief Summary:

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in August 2013 at Freeduff Presbyterian Church, County Armagh, over the footprint of a proposed new extension. Due to its proximity to surrounding marked graves and the possibility of uncovering human remains, trenches were first excavated by hand, followed by some further work by mechanical excavator. Articulated human remains were found in the form of several burials which were recorded in situ before being re-covered. Due to the findings, it will be necessary to carry out further mitigation at the site prior to development. The church will have to consult the Planning service for an update on how to proceed.

Size of area opened: 8 square metres (0.0008 hectares)

Type of Evaluation: Excavation of up to six hand dug trenches followed by further small scale evaluation with mechanical excavator

Current land use: Grassed area within church grounds/graveyard, containing no grave markers or indications of burials on the ground surface

Intended land use: For development of extension to upstanding church, to contain hall, lobby and kitchen.

2.0 Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at Freeduff Presbyterian Church, Cullyhanna, County Armagh (figure 1), in order to assess the impact of a proposed new extension, on any previously unknown archaeological features or unmarked burials. The current upstanding building dates to the 18th century and although it is not thought that the site is of any archaeological significance, it is in close proximity to a number of important, known archaeological sites which are listed in the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Record database (figure 2). Seven trenches were excavated with a total area of 8 square metres within the footprint of the development area. Placement of the trenches was hindered by the presence of five grave slabs (not in their original locations), lying across the line of one of the proposed new walls (figure 6). The excavation was aided however, by the provision of a map of grave plots (undated, figure 4) by the church minister, Reverend Brian Wilson. This helped to assess the possible location of burials within the development area and place trenches accordingly. The initial excavation of the seven trenches was carried out by hand due to the likelihood of human remains being uncovered. A mechanical excavator was used to excavate the final two trenches in areas where no burials were anticipated. The mechanical excavator was also used to complete one of the hand-dug trenches in which no human remains were found and whose depth had become too great to excavate by hand, given its small surface area. All layers, artefact material, and disarticulated human remains were excavated and recorded using standard methods for context recording. Articulated remains were exposed, cleaned up and recorded in-situ along with their associated grave-cuts and coffins. These, where possible, were not removed from the trenches; instead, they were covered with a layer of tarpaulin before the trenches were backfilled.

3.0 Archaeological Background

Freeduff church as it now stands, is an 18th century re-build of an earlier 18th century thatched 'meeting house' which was burnt to the ground in 1743 (Farrell 2005, 72-73). The church site itself is not perceived to be of any archaeological significance and is not listed in the NISMR. It does however, lie in close proximity to a number of identified archaeological sites; An Early Bronze Age settlement site lies within 1km of the development site to the west-southwest (NISMR ARM 027:009). Within a 2km radius, a megalithic tomb may be found to the north-northeast (NISMR ARM 028:026), and a platform rath to the west-northwest (NISMR ARM 027:005). The development site also lies within 2km of the Scheduled Iron Age enclosure otherwise known as the Dorsey (NISMR ARM 028:008), (figure 2).

A 'vault', most likely a burial vault, is depicted on the First edition County Series map of 1829-1835, immediately adjacent to the development area (figure 3). There is currently no visible evidence of a vault at this location which is now occupied by marked graves.

4.0 Site Description

Freeduff church is aligned on an east-northeast – west-southwest axis and is surrounded by a pouredconcrete pathway. The new proposed extension runs in a northwesterly direction from the church's northwestern façade and encompasses a rectangular area measuring 12.42m by 6.85m. The development site occupies a raised, fairly flat and uniform area which slopes down towards a planted hedgerow along its northwestern edge. Marked grave plots are visible on the ground surface immediately to the west and east of the development area. Five large grave slabs dating to the 19th century were found lying across the location of one of the proposed new extension walls. These, however, have been reported, by the church minister, to have been placed here in recent years during a 'tidy-up' of the graveyard and indeed, on further inspection, it is evident that they are not in their original placements. One of the grave slabs which at first glance, appeared to be broken in two was in fact from two separate burial plots. Further grave slabs have been laid side by side in the same manner, and presumably at the same date, along the western edge of the existing graveyard. The original locations of these grave slabs are unknown and cannot be determined without the aid of a detailed grave plan showing their original placements. No further indications of grave markers or plots were visible on the ground surface within the proposed development area.

5.0 Account of the evaluation

A total of seven trenches were opened up within the footprint of the walls for the proposed new extension. Initially, five 1m x 1m trenches were opened and excavated by hand. One of these was then extended, by hand, to become a 2m x 1m trench and two further 1mx1m trenches were excavated mechanically once the hand-excavated trenches had reached a stage of completion. The matrices for the excavated trenches have been included in this report and it is intended that they are referred to while reading the following account of the excavation (figure 8)

Trench 1

This comprised a 1m x 1m trench located in the northernmost corner of the development area. Manual excavation of this trench revealed successive layers of loamy leveling soils (C103, 106, 109) and basal deposit of stony rubble (C108), beneath the sod (C101), and topsoil (C102). Artefact material of 19th - 20th century date was uncovered including, glass, brick, plastic, slate, stoneware, and various broken ceramics. A single fragment of disarticulated human skull and five coffin nails were found in the upper layers of the trench alongside 19th-20th century debris and various parts of plastic, fabric, and metal grave tributes. A thin mortar-rich layer (C109) was also observed in the northeastern half of the trench. The basal layer (C108) came directly down onto an uneven surface of orange silty clay subsoil with voids caused by decayed roots. The voids left by the roots were up to 0.1m in diameter and it is likely that the uneven base of trench 1 was created by the removal or decay of a fairly large tree. During the final stage of the evaluation the trench was deepened using the mechanical excavator which confirmed that the orange silty clay encountered at a depth of approximately 0.5m, was natural subsoil.

Trench 2

This was initially a hand-excavated trench, 1m x 1m in size and positioned at the western corner of the development area, at the edge of the leveled ground where it sloped sharply towards the planted hedgerow. As with trench 1 it was found to contain layers of stony rubble (C209), loamy leveling soils (C203, 204, 205), mortar (C207), and 19th - 20th century artefact material, including glass, various plastics, painted concrete render and broken ceramics. A fragment of a large clay pipe bowl with a hatched heart striking surface, was recovered from an upper silty loam layer (C203). A broken endscraper, which could potentially be of Bronze Age date was found in a sandy laver which also contained modern finds of concrete, glass, plastic and iron guttering (C206). The basal layer within the trench was a thick deposit of angular stones (C209), very similar to the stony deposit in trench 1 (C108). Overlying this, in the northeastern half of the trench, was a thick humic deposit (C208), of similar consistency to garden compost. A single broken slab of concrete was recovered from this layer. Due to the depth reached in this small trench, it was not possible to complete excavation by hand. Therefore, this was done using the mechanical excavator and the trench was excavated to the level of the shattered bedrock, which, due to the natural slope underlying the leveled upper surface, was encountered at a depth of 0.9m. No human bone or coffin nails were found in this trench and no further finds or features of archaeological interest were noted.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was located mid-way along the western limit of the proposed new extension and measured 1m x 1m. This trench was entirely hand-excavated and removal of the sod (C301) and topsoil (C302) layers revealed orange-brown compact sandy clay (C303) with sub-angular stones. Disarticulated fragments of a human cranium and mandible were recovered from this layer along with corroded iron coffin nails and plastic electrical tape. No evidence of articulated remains or cut features was observed

and removal of the sandy clay revealed the shattered bedrock of the site, fairly close to the surface, at a depth of 0.08 to 0.26m.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located along the western limit of the development area, close to the church wall and was entirely hand-excavated. Initially the trench measured 1m x 1m but was then extended to 2m x 1m due to the high probability that skeletal remains would be discovered as indicated by a grave plan of the site (figure 4). It was thought that a 1m x 1m trench would not be sufficient to fully investigate this (figure 7).

Removal of the sod (C401) and topsoil (C402) layers revealed a loamy layer of disturbed graveyard soils (C406) which contained iron coffin nails and fragmented and disarticulated human bone. Removal of C406 revealed a number of wide linear features (C404, 407, 412), at a depth of 0.35-0.40m, cut into a layer of mottled clay (C403). The cut features were filled with gravelly, compact graveyard-type soil which was not fully excavated as it became evident that both articulated and disarticulated human remains were present along with the remains of coffins, within these fills.

Articulated skeletal remains with associated coffins and grave cuts were uncovered at a depth of 0.35-0.40m in the northwestern half of the trench. The articulated lower remains of one individual were found within the outline of a narrow coffin (C413), disappearing into the trench section at the westernmost corner. Alongside this were disarticulated long-bones (C414), probably from one other individual. These appeared to have been carefully laid alongside the coffin and along the same alignment. Directly overlying the coffin burial and long-bones and within the layer C406, a concentration of disarticulated human skeletal remains was found. These were removed in order to expose the extent of the articulated remains beneath. The top edge of a second coffin and intact skull (C408/409) were uncovered at the northernmost corner of the trench. Individual grave cuts were not identified for these two coffins and associated long-bones, however the faint edge of a grave cut separating them from other burials within the trench, could be made out, to the southeast (C412). The outline of a third coffin (C410) was exposed approximately 0.4m to the southeast of the first coffin (C413), and contained extremely delicate and fragmented human remains which could be only faintly discerned from the associated grave soil (C411). The edge of a grave cut (C407), associated with this burial, could be seen approximately 0.12m from its southeastern edge. Another linear cut, C404 was observed a further 0.12m southeast of C407, and was filled with mottled brown, slightly gravelly clay (C405), similar to the fills of the other grave-cuts. No evidence of a coffin or articulated human remains could be seen in the surface of this layer.

The skeletal remains, coffins and grave-cuts were all aligned northeast-southwest, with their heads to the southwest. The remains in this trench were exposed at depths of 0.35m and 0.40m, at the southeastern and northwestern ends respectively, cleaned up, measured and photographically recorded. No further remains were removed and tarpaulin was placed over the exposed remains prior to back-filling of the trench.

Trench 5

Trench 5, which was also fully hand-excavated, was situated along the eastern limit of the development area, directly to the northeast of the grave slabs and measured 1m x 1m. Removal of sod (C501) and topsoil (C502) revealed layers of disturbed graveyard soil (504), and loam (C503), with brick, glass, ceramics, mortar, plastic, cut stone, fragments of graveyard furniture, a single coffin nail, and a few fragments of disarticulated human bone. Removal of these layers exposed a fairly level deposit of dark blackish-brown humic material (C505) at 0.37-0.43m, of very similar consistency to garden compost, with fragments of disarticulated human remains from the layer above partly impressed into the surface. One long fragment of iron, possibly grave furniture, was uncovered from C505, and removal of this layer exposed a thick deposit of angular stones (C506), which in turn were removed directly onto the surface of the shattered natural bedrock, encountered at a depth of 0.65-0.70m. No further finds or features were noted in this basal deposit. It was anticipated, given the

location of grave markers shown in figure 4, that the edge of a burial may be encountered, however no evidence of an undisturbed grave cut or coffin was observed.

Trench 6

This was a mechanically excavated 1m x 1m trench situated along the southwestern limit of the development area and roughly mid-way between Trenches 2 and 3. Its excavation revealed sod (C601), topsoil (C602) and stony, sandy clay (C603) coming directly down on to the surface of the shattered natural bedrock of the site at a depth of approximately 0.2m. No finds or features of archaeological interest were uncovered.

Trench 7

This was a 1m x 1m, initially mechanically excavated trench positioned at the northeastern edge of the development area, between the recumbent grave slabs and the concrete edging which surrounds the currently upstanding church. This was the final trench and was located in order to further determine whether sinking of the foundations would disturb human burials along this northeastern edge. The trench was at first, mechanically excavated as it was not anticipated that burials would be encountered. No remains had been found in either of the two trenches previously excavated along this edge of the development area and the grave plan provided (figure 4) does not show any marked graves in this location. Sod (C701), loamy topsoil (C702) and mottled brown silty clay (C703) were removed, similar to layers encountered in Trench 4. From this point onwards, excavation of the trench continued by hand as a layer of mottled grave soil (C704) was encountered. Investigation of this layer revealed the intact, articulated, upper skeletal remains of an individual, within the outline of a coffin (C705). No evidence of a grave cut was observed-its limits likely lie beyond the trench boundaries. This burial was briefly cleaned back and photographically recorded before being covered with tarpaulin and the trench back-filled. As with the skeletal remains found in Trench 4, the burial was found to be aligned northeast-southwest, with the head at the southwestern end.

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Where skeletal remains were uncovered, tarpaulin was laid down to protect remains from back-fill. All trenches were back-filled and the sod where possible, was re-instated.

It is probable that the burials encountered during excavations date from the 18th - 19th century. It may be further suggested that the slabs found 'tidied-up' in various locations may once have served as some of their respective grave-markers.

The results of the excavation show that there may have been a difference in alignment between the original church building and its subsequent re-build. This is reflected in the alignments of the burialsthe older marked graves of the site are aligned, like the uncovered skeletons, northeast-southwest, whereas the newer burial plots, are aligned more squarely with the current upstanding church, eastnortheast to south-southwest. This may be an indication that the earlier (burnt) church was also aligned, like the skeletons and older marked grave plots, more northeast-southwest, with its associated graves following suit. When the church was re-built in the latter half of the 18th century its alignment may have been corrected slightly to be more east-west facing, with all subsequent burials following suit.

6.0 Conclusion

It is highly likely that the sinking of the foundations of the proposed new extension will disturb further human remains. This is evidenced by the presence of at least 13 graves in this area, as indicated on the undated plan provided by the church minister, Reverend Brian Wilson (figure 4). The excavation of the seven evaluative trenches confirms the presence of intact burials at these marked locations, and, given the location of the skeleton found in Trench 7, shows that there are also burials in unknown locations. It is likely that the grave-markers for the latter were removed prior to drafting of the grave plan given in figure 4. It is estimated that the majority of currently unmarked burials are contained within the half of the development area which is closest to the upstanding church. In conclusion, it is evident that human burials will be disturbed by ground-works at the site and mitigation will need to be undertaken to either remove and re-bury the remains or make alterations to the architect's plans. Further works at the site will be decided by the developer in conjunction with the NIEA Inspector for the area and the Planning Service.

It is suggested that human remains are examined by an osteologist before being passed back to the church for re-internment.

References

Farrell, S. 2005. The Burning of Freeduff Church 1743. *New Hibernia Review/Iris Éireannach Nua,* Vol. 9, No.3 (Autumn 2005), pp. 72-85

Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Sites and Monuments Records; ARM 027:005; ARM 027:009; ARM 028:008; ARM 028:026

Maps obtained from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Land and Property Services, 2006; <u>http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/MapViewer</u>

Archive

Digital images, site drawings and artefact material from the evaluation are currently archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University, Belfast.



Figure 1: Map showing the general location of Freeduff Presbyterian Church, Cullyhanna (NIEA LPS, 2006)



Figure 2: Location map showing proximity of Freeduff Presbyterian Church to nearby sites and monuments of archaeological importance (NIEA LPS, 2006);

- 1: Early Bronze Age Settlement site (NISMR ARM 027:009)
- 2: Megalithic Tomb (NISMR ARM 028:026)
- 3: Sheduled Iron Age Enclosure (in red), also known as The Dorsey (NISMR ARM 028:008)
- 4: Platform Rath (NISMR ARM 027:005)



Figure 3: Six Inch, First edition County Series map (1829-1835), showing a 'vault' marked in an adjacent location to the development area (NIEA LPS, 2006)



Figure 4: (Undated) plan of marked graves, as provided by Rev. Brian Wilson of Freeduff Church; The area of the proposed new development is highlighted.



Figure 5: (Based on the architect's plan supplied by Chris McCollum, Building Conservation Surveyor); Plan of the upstanding church with the walls of the proposed new extension (red), lines of new drainage/water courses (blue), currently visible marked grave-plots (hatched boxes), and grave plots which are no longer marked/visible (shaded grey boxes).



Figure 6: Plan showing locations of excavated trenches (red), grave slabs lying within development area (yellow), and graves which are shown on the grave plan given in figure 3 but are now unmarked and not visible on the ground surface (grey)



Figure 7: Plan of trench 4, showing location of grave cuts, coffins and skeletal remains. Note the positions of the grave markers (as shown in figure 3), corresponding with the excavated graves and remains.



Figure 8: Harris matrices for all excavated trenches



Plate 1: Development area (marked out with hazard tape), looking ENE towards church



Plate 2: Development area (marked out with hazard tape) showing concrete around base of church, looking West



Plate 3: Proximity of currently marked grave-plots to proposed extension (Hazard tape), looking ENE



Plate 4: 'Tidied-up' grave-slabs lying across the line of planned foundations, looking NNW



Plate 5: Trench 1, post removal C103, looking SSE



Plate 6: Trench 1, post-excavation, looking SSE



Plate 7: Trench 1, post-excavation, ENE facing section showing C108, 106, 103, 102, 101, looking WSW



Plate 8: Trench 2, post removal C202, looking WSW



Plate 9: Trench 2, post removal C205, looking WSW



Plate 10: Trench 2, ENE facing section post removal of C208 & 209, looking WSW



Plate 11: Broken concrete slab from C208



Plate 12: Trench 3, post removal C302, looking WSW



Plate 13: Trench 3, disarticulated human skull, bone, teeth and iron coffin nails, within C303, looking WSW



Plate 14: Trench 3, post-excavation view of NNW facing section, looking SSE



Plate 15: Trench 3, post-excavation view showing bedrock, close to ground surface, looking ENE



Plate 16: Trench 4, post removal C402, showing C406 with disarticulated human remains at NW end of trench, looking WSW



Plate 17: Trench 4, C406, mid-excavation, coffin C413 & long-bones C414 visible, looking WSW



Plate 18: Trench 4, head of coffin C408, and skull C409, visible in WSW facing section, looking ENE



Plate 19: Trench 4, remains of coffin & skeleton C410, with associated grave cut C407 visible on right, looking WSW



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Plate 21: Trench 4, as the church and graveyard is currently operational; trenches were fenced and boarded over for the duration of the excavation



Plate 22: Trench 4, skeletal remains C413 & 414, skull C409 visible at the bottom, looking ENE



Plate 23: Trench 4, close up of articulated skeletal remains within coffin, C413 (The feet and lower long-bones can be seen). Also disarticulated long-bones C414 laid alongside articulated remains, note the position of the femur, lying in an opposing direction to the articulated remains, photograph taken looking WSW.



Plate 24: Post-excavation of C406 & general cleanup, excavation ceased at this level and the trench was backfilled, looking NNW



Plate 25: Trench 5, C505 post removal C504, remains of a disarticulated and fragmented vertebra from C504 impressed into C505 surface at bottom centre, looking SSE



Plate 26: Trench 5, cut stone from C504



Plate 27: Trench 5, post-excavation showing shattered bedrock surface, looking ENE



Plate 28: Trench 6, mechanically excavated, showing solid bedrock immediately below the surface, looking SSE



Plate 29: Trench 7: Articulated human remains within a coffin (C705), fragments of the coffin lid/plate may still be surviving although the skeletal remains themselves are, like C410 in trench 4, rather delicate and easily fragmented. Looking NNW.

Appendix 1: Finds List

Clay Pipe

Context	Details
202	Bowl fragment, decorated, hatched heart design, possibly 19th century
203	Bowl fragment, decorated, flowers & leaves pattern, possibly 18th century

Ceramics/Pottery

Context	Context Details	
	Various, glazed, creamware and	
103	porcelain	5
106	Brown printed ceramics	1
108	Stoneware jar	2
205	Various, glazed	3
205	Red earthenware tile	1
206	Various, glazed	3
302	White glazed	1
402	Brown glazed	1
406	Creamware	1
502	Cream glazed	1
502	Stoneware	2
504	Various, glazed	4

Glass

Brick Fragments

Context	Quantity	Context	Quantity
Context	Quantity	Context	Quantity
102	3	102	1
103	6	106	1
106	2	302	3
202	5	403	5
203	3	502	2
206	1	503	1
302	2		
403	3		
502	1		
503	1		

Human Bone

Context	Details
102	Disarticulated skull fragment
302	Fragmented & disarticulated
303	Fragmented and disarticulated skull, teeth and other bone
402	Various, fragmented & disarticulated
403	Various, fragmented & disarticulated
406	Fragmented and disarticulated humerus, aligned W-E
406	Various, fragmented and disarticulated, associated with disarticulated humerus
406	Fragmented & disarticulated sacrum
406	Various, fragmented & disarticulated
406	Fragmented & disarticulated pelvis
406	Disarticulated vertebra
409	Skull fragments & tooth
504	Various disarticulated & fragmented
705	Skull fragments, Scapula & rib

Metalwork & Wood

Context	Туре	Details	Quantity
103	Iron & Wood	Coffin attachments and Iron nails with wood	5
103	Metal	Wire mesh	1
206	Iron	Broken guttering with bitumen on inner curve	1
302	Iron & Wood	Coffin nails with wood	1
302	Metal	Possible fragment of coffin plate	1
303	Iron & Wood	Coffin nails with wood	6
402	Iron & Wood	Coffin attachments and Iron nails with wood	21
403	Iron & Wood	Coffin nails with wood	12
406	Iron & Wood	Coffin nails with wood	38
408	Iron & Wood	Coffin attachments and Iron nails with wood	13
503	Iron & Wood	Coffin nails with wood	1
504	Iron & Wood	Coffin nails with wood	1
504	Metal	Circular object with some ferrous corrosion	1
505	Iron	Long nail	1
505	Iron & Copper alloy	Long iron bar with copper alloy screw-fit attachment	1
705	Iron & Wood	Coffin attachments and Iron nails with wood	3

Plastic

Context Details

103	Black Cable tie
103	Clear hard-plastic
202	Malleable red plastic with decoration
202	Crisp packet
202	Cream hard-plastic
202	Clear hard-platic
203	Orange hard-plastic
206	Crisp wrapper
206	Clear hard-plastic
206	Electrical wire covering
206	White hard-plastic
206	Floor-brush bristle
206	Blue plastic sheeting/bag
206	Blue hard-plastic
303	Grey electrical tape
	White hard-plastic pedal from child's
503	bicycle/toy, broken
EOE	Cricp packet

- 505 Crisp packet
- 203 Decorative flower (Plastic & Metal)

All other artefact material

Context	Туре	Details	Quantity
Tr6 Unstratified	Animal Bone	Animal Bone with evidence of butchery	2
Tr6 Unstratified	Aluminium & Plastic	Foil Wrapper/bag	1
103	Animal bone	Disarticulated animal bone	1
103	Sponge	Flower arranging oasis (post 1950's)	2
106	Slate	Roofing slate, possibly perforated	1
202	Concrete render	Blue painted	1
203	Clay stopper	Bottle screw-top; 'Cantrell & Cochrane Itd, B	elfast'
205	Concrete render	White painted	1
206	Concrete render	blue painted	1
206	Concrete render	White painted	1
206	Flint	Broken thumbnail scraper, bronze age	1
206	Paint	Hardened thick white paint	1
302	Slate	Roofing slate, possibly perforated	1
403	Slate	Perforated roofing slate	1

502	Lime	Lime, possibly cut	2
502	Shell	Mollusc	1
503	Shell	Mollusc	1
504	Fabric	Decorative leaf	1
504	Stone	Cut stone, graveyard furniture	1