



EVALUATION REPORT No. 300

Southwest of 2A Cloughey Road,
Portaferry,
Co. Down

Licence No.: AE/135/85E

Sapphire Mussen

Report Date: 14th May 2015

Site Specific Information

Site Name: [Southwest of 2a] Cloughey Road, Portaferry, Co. Down

Site Location: Greenfield site southwest of 2a Cloughey Road, Portaferry

Townland: Ballyphilip

County: Down

SMR No.: In the vicinity of the site of a medieval church and graveyard (NISMR DOW 032:020)

Irish Grid Ref.: J 5989 5132

Current land use: Overgrown grassy field

Intended land use: Residential development

Planning Reference: X/2014/0562/O

Type of Evaluation: Mechanical excavation of three trenches

Size of area opened: Three trenches, each of 2m width and approximately 20m length (0.0125 ha)

Archaeologist present: Sapphire Mussen of the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, QUB

Excavation Licence No.: AE/15/85E

Date of Evaluation: 11th May 2015

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation of a proposed new residential site immediately southwest of 2a Cloughey road, Portaferry (X/2014/0562/O) (figure 1), was undertaken on 11th May 2015 in order to assess the archaeological potential of the site and to assist the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in making an informed response to the Planning Service (NI). The proposed site has been out of use for a number of years and as such, has become overgrown with mature trees, shrubs and grass. The hedge line

which bounds the site along the southwest and southeast has encroached into the development area. The ground slopes approximately 35° from the east to the south and west, and more gently towards the northwest (figures 4-6). Beyond the north-western edge of the site, the ground drops sharply away to a depth of approximately 6m due to the cutting of earth and rock from the natural hillside for previous developments in this area and bedrock and clay can clearly be seen in an exposed section (figure 19). The site measures approximately 30m northeast to southwest and 70m northwest to southeast and has been roughly divided in two along its northeast-southwest axis. The development area lies to the south of this line, closest to the Cloughey road and the area to the north of this line is to remain undeveloped so as not to obstruct neighbouring views (figure 2). Archaeological evaluation of the area was warranted as it lies approximately 150m to the southwest of the site of a medieval church and graveyard (NISMR DOW 032:020) (figure 2). Three parallel linear trenches running northeast to southwest and measuring approximately 2m x 20m were excavated within the footprint of the development site (figure 3). As set out in the research design, trenches were originally intended to be 30m length. However, due to the overgrown nature of the site and its indefinable boundaries, alterations to the methodology were necessitated. All archaeological artefact material was retrieved from the topsoil and comprised of 20th-century debris. No finds or features of archaeological interest were uncovered, each trench concluded on encountering bedrock or sterile subsoil.

Archaeological Background

Templecraney church and graveyard to the west-southwest (DOW 032:004) and the undated Ballymurphy mound to the west-northwest (DOW 032:021) lie within an approximate 500m radius of the development site. Portaferry castle (DOW 032:003) is located approximately 1km southwest of the site. The closest known site of archaeological significance is that of a medieval church and graveyard at Ballyphilip (DOW 032:020), approximately 150m northeast of the development site (figure 2). While there are no extant remains of the medieval church it is thought that substantial subsurface remains may still exist along with the possible remains of an earlier, more extensive, ecclesiastical foundation on which it may have been built.

Account of the Evaluation

Three trenches measuring approximately 2m x 20m were mechanically excavated using a 1m straight-edged sheugh bucket under archaeological supervision, on 11th May 2015. These trenches ran northeast to southwest across the site, parallel to the Cloughey road (figure 2).

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 2m x 20.5m and was located as close to the Cloughey road as the current tree and shrub growth would allow. The presence of a telegraph pole within the development area also influenced the placement of trench 1 (figures 1, 7 & 18). After removal of the sod layer C101 (figure 8), the loamy brown topsoil C102 was excavated which revealed bedrock C103, shattered bedrock C104, and orange clay subsoil, C105, directly beneath. Solid bedrock ran from the centre of the trench and beyond its eastern end (figures 9-12). A 5m wide band of shattered bedrock ran along the western edge of the solid rock mass, at a depth of 0.60m and beyond this, at the westernmost end of the trench, sterile, orange clay subsoil with bedrock was encountered (figures 11-12). Scattered fragments of 20th-century brick, ceramics, coal, and confectionery wrappers were uncovered from the topsoil of trench 1. Solid bedrock was encountered at a depth of 0.10 - 0.15m and subsoil at 0.60m. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 2m x 22m and was located north of trench 1. Due to the presence of obstructing shrubs and felled trees, the trench could not run directly through the centre of the development area but was placed as close to this as possible. Removal of the sod layer C201, revealed loamy brown topsoil C202 (figure 13), and directly below that lay solid bedrock C203, located centrally within the trench at a depth of 0.15m (figure 14). A 2m wide band of shattered bedrock, C204, ran along the western edge of this solid mass and beyond this, at either end of the trench, lay sterile orange clay subsoil C205, at a depth of 0.30 – 0.50m (figure 14). Scattered fragments of 20th-century brick and coal were uncovered from the topsoil of trench 2. No archaeological finds or features were noted.

Trench 3

Trench 3 measured 2m x 20m and was located north of trench 2, along the north-eastern edge of the development area. The sod C301 was removed to reveal the same loamy brown topsoil (C302) as found in trenches 1 and 2 (figure 15). This removed directly onto sterile orange clay subsoil which ran the entire length of the trench (figure 16). No artefact material or archaeological features were noted.

Conclusion

Excavation of the three trenches revealed nothing more than the natural underlying geology of the site. The bedrock lies immediately below the ground surface in the centre of the development area and is surrounded by fairly level, sterile, orange natural clay subsoil (figures 3 & 20). No finds or features indicative of archaeological remains were uncovered. As such it is not foreseeable that further surveillance or mitigation work will be necessary and the development will not impact on any previously unidentified archaeological remains. A short summary of this report will be submitted for inclusion in the Excavations Bulletin-no further publication is merited.

References

Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Sites and Monuments Records; DOW 032:020

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

Archive

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



Figure 1: Location map showing development site at Cloughey Road, Portaferry, Co. Down (circled in red) (NIEA, LPS, 2006).



Figure 2: Development site, outlined in red: Area for development in block red, the remainder is to remain undeveloped. Proximity to site of medieval church and graveyard (DOW 032:020) also shown.

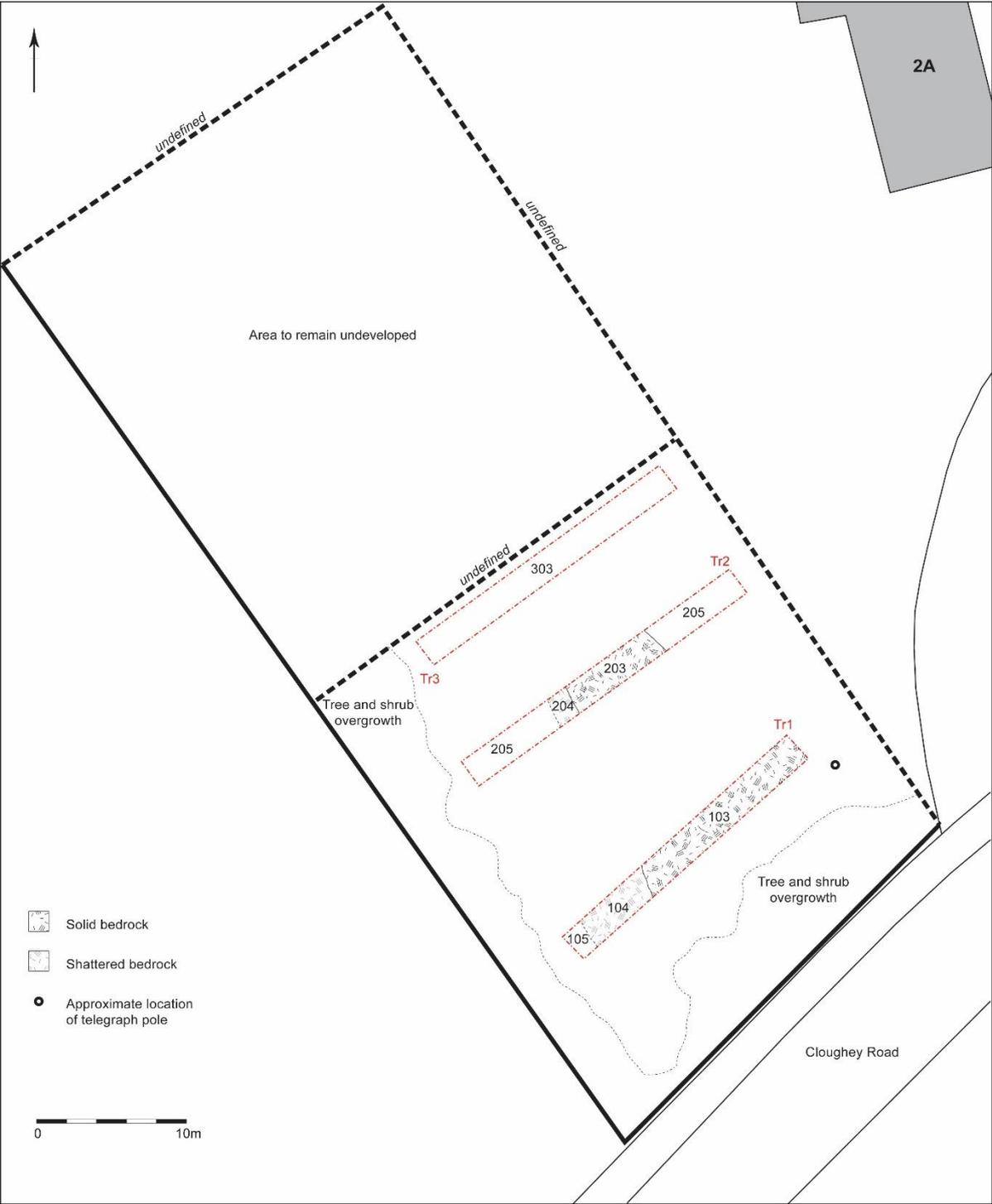


Figure 3: Trench location map showing scaled and planned findings of evaluation.



Figure 4:
Pre-excitation view of development area looking northwest along southwest boundary (hedge-line can be seen encroaching onto site).



Figure 5:
Pre-excitation view of development area looking south towards Cloughey road (mature trees and hedges spreading inwards from edges of site).



Figure 6:
View looking west-northwest across the northern half of the site-to remain undeveloped.



Figure 7:
Line of trench 1, pre-excitation.



Figure 8:
Trench 1, post-removal of sod layer C101,
showing topsoil layer C102.



Figure 9:

Post-excavation view of solid bedrock C103 in trench 1, looking northeast from centre of trench.



Figure 10:

Post-excavation view of trench 1, looking northeast, showing western edge of solid bedrock C103 in foreground.



Figure 11:

Post-excitation view of trench 1 looking northeast, following removal of topsoil C102. Solid bedrock C103 in background, shattered bedrock C104 in centre and natural clay subsoil C105 in foreground.



Figure 12:

Post-excitation view of trench 1 looking southwest, following removal of topsoil C102. Showing edge of solid bedrock C103, with shattered bedrock C104 beyond and orange clay natural C105 at the end of the trench.



Figure 13:

Trench 2 post removal of sod layer C201,
looking northeast across topsoil layer C202.



Figure 14:

Trench 2 looking southwest, post removal of
topsoil layer C202. Solid bedrock runs through
the centre of the trench (C203) and is bounded
on either side by sterile natural clay C205 which
runs beyond either end of the trench.



Figure 15:
Trench 3 following
removal of sod layer
C301, looking southwest
across topsoil layer
C302.



Figure 16:
Trench 3 following removal of topsoil layer C302,
looking northeast. Showing sterile natural clay
subsoil C303 extending throughout trench. Any
observed discoloration of the clay is due to
shattered bedrock lying just below the surface in
several locations.



Figure 17:

General mid-excavation view of site looking southeast towards the Cloughey road and along the south-western boundary of the site. Trench 3 visible in foreground, trench 2 in centre and trench 1 in background.



Figure 18:

General mid-excavation view of site looking south towards Cloughey road. Showing telegraph pole, trees, shrubs and other obstructions, and northern end of trench 2 in foreground.



Figure 19: View from northern end of site (to remain undeveloped). Looking west towards cut-away, developed ground beyond the development area. Sterile clay and bedrock is visible throughout the exposed section. Difference in ground levels is approximately 6m.

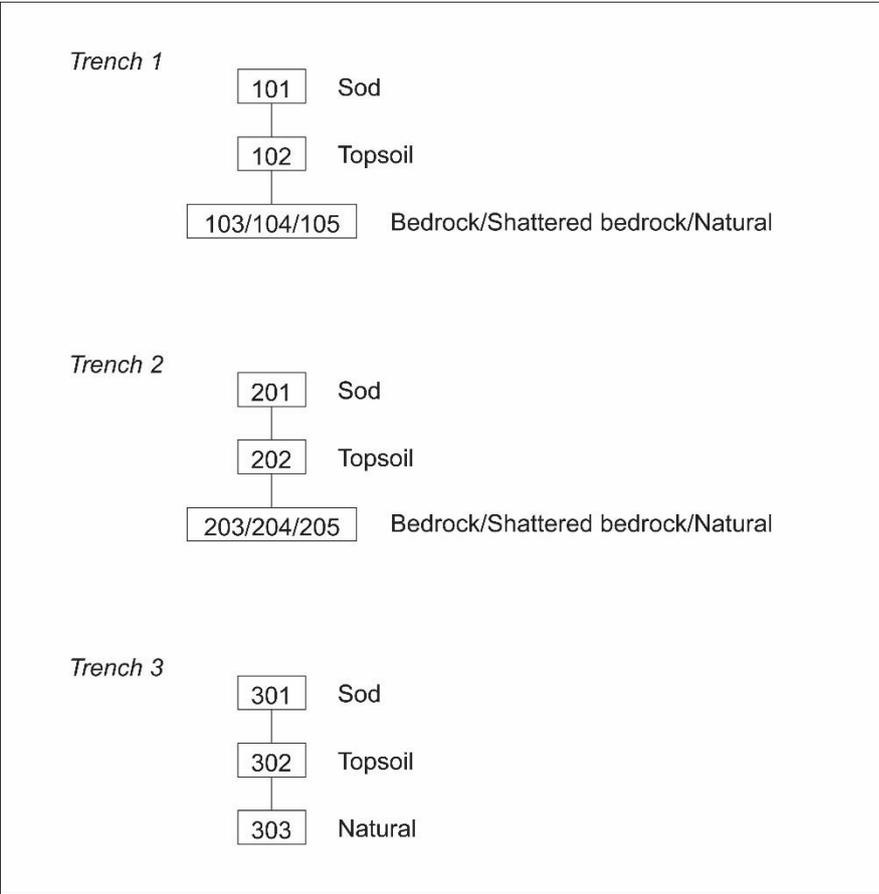


Figure 20: Harris matrices for trenches 1-3