



Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 152

**150m west of 7 Portmore Rd.
Portmore
Lower Ballinderry
County Antrim**

LICENCE NO.: AE/07/241

David McIlreavy

Site Specific Information

Site Name : 150m west of 7 Portmore Rd, Lower Ballinderry

Townland : Portmore

County : Antrim

Grid Ref. : 1211668280

SMR No. : SM 11/ANT 062:007

State Care : Scheduled []
Other []

Excavation Licence No : AE/07/241

Planning Ref / No. : S/2004/0352/O

Dates of Monitoring : 6th, 7th and 10th March 2008

Archaeologist Present : David McIlreavy

Brief Summary:

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site, in advance of development, in the townland of Portmore, Co Antrim as part of the planning application for a new dwelling. The proposed development site is approximately 150m south of Portmore Castle, a 17th century fortification/fortified house and 400m northeast of an early medieval church and graveyard site (see Fig. 1).

The evaluation revealed evidence of carr woodland and possible infilled palaeo channels relating to mid Holocene climatic change. However, no features of archaeological significance were recovered.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of four test trenches (A-D) across the area of the proposed development site, by mechanical excavator fitted with a 1 metre wide smooth edged bucket, under archaeological supervision (see Fig. 2).

Current Land Use: Agricultural

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The development site is located in the townland of Portmore, Lower Ballinderry, Co. Antrim, approximately 1km northwest of the village of Ballinderry. The proposed development site is located on the southern edge of a larger field that has been reclaimed from carr woodland and flood deposits surrounding Portmore Lough.

The evaluation took place as part of the planning application for the construction of a new dwelling, and was requested by Neil Yeaman (Caseworker with Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage) due to the proximity of the development site to Portmore Castle and the possibility that there may be previously unrecorded remains associated with this site.

Excavation

Four test trenches were mechanically excavated under archaeological evaluation within the footprint of the proposed development. Whilst the archaeological methodology submitted for the site suggested that the trenches be excavated to glacial subsoil (or archaeological deposits), Trench A was excavated to significant peat deposits, and Trenches C and D partially to peat deposits.

Trench A

The topsoil layer (Context No. 101) consisted of a dark brown silty clay loam approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth. This topsoil layer overlay a loose, mid to light brown, silty clay cultivation soil (Context No. 102) which was 0.10 metres in depth. Both layers showed no evidence of agricultural improvement in the recent past. Underlying the cultivation soil was a layer of fine grey clay (Context No. 103) with a maximum depth of approximately 0.10 metres.

Underlying the layer of fine grey clay was a layer of coarse grey silt (Context No. 104) approximately 0.25 metres in depth. Underlying Context No. 104 was a layer of grey sandy clay approximately 0.30 metres in depth (Context No. 105), which in turn directly overlay a layer of peat containing pieces of alder (Context No. 106).

No artefactual evidence was recovered from the trench and no archaeological deposits were noted.

Trench B

The topsoil layer (Context No. 201) consisted of a dark brown silty clay loam approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth, overlying a loose mid to light brown sandy silt cultivation soil (Context No. 202) approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth. A

layer of grey sandy clay (Context No. 203) approximately 0.75 metres maximum depth underlay Context No. 202, which in turn overlay a silt shale deposit (Context No. 204).

The evaluation of this trench was concluded at this point due to flooding of the trench. No artefacts were recovered and no archaeological deposits were noted.

Trench C

The topsoil layer (Context No. 301) consisted of a dark brown silty clay loam approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth, overlying a loose mid to light brown sandy silt cultivation soil (Context No. 302) approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth. A layer of grey sandy clay (Context No 303) ranging from 0.25 metres to 0.70 metres in depth (NW – SE). This layer overlay a deposit of orange decayed stone (Context No. 304) approximately 0.10 metres in depth, which in turn overlay a deposit of grey sandy silt (Context No. 305) approximately 0.10 metres in depth.

Context No. 305 overlay a layer of dark shale approximately 0.05 metres in depth, which overlay a thin layer of mixed brushwood and shale (Context No. 306), a more substantial layer of shale (Context No. 307) and more brush and shale (Context No. 308). Some peat inclusions (Context No. 309) were noted in the shale layer (Context No. 307) but these were considered washed in elements.

The shale and brushwood sequences noted above directly overlay a peat layer (Context No. 310) analogous to that noted in Trench A, although the peat in Trench C was encountered approximately 0.60 metres higher in section than that encountered in Trench A.

No artefacts were recovered from the trench and no archaeological deposits were noted.

Trench D

The topsoil layer (Context No. 401) consisted of a dark brown silty clay loam approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth, overlying a loose mid to light brown sandy silt cultivation soil (Context No. 402) approximately 0.05 – 0.10 metres in depth. A layer of grey sandy clay (Context No 403) ranging from 0.30 metres to 0.60 metres in depth (NW – SE). This layer overlay a deposit of orange decayed stone (Context No. 404) approximately 0.10 metres in depth, which overlay a deposit of grey sandy silt (Context No. 405) approximately 0.10 metres in depth.

Within the layer of grey sandy clay (Context 405) a substantial piece of unworked timber was uncovered (Context No. 406). As only one half of the timber had rotted it is suggested that the tree had been deposited in the sandy layer as a trunk and that the exposed half had rotted in situ. An undiagnostic flint core (Small Finds No. 1) was recovered from the layer of grey sandy clay, however it is considered that it is a

residual piece and does not constitute evidence of significant human activity in the immediate area of the proposed development site.

Context No. 405 overlay a layer of dark shale approximately 0.05 metres in depth, which overlay a thin layer of brushwood and shale (Context No. 407), a more substantial layer of shale (Context No. 408), and more brush and shale (Context No. 409). Some peat inclusions (Context No. 410) were noted in the shale layer (Context No. 411) but these were considered residual.

The shale and brushwood sequences noted above directly overlay a peat layer (Context No. 411) at a similar depth and considered analogous to that noted in Trench C.

No archaeological deposits were noted for this trench.

Interpretation

It is considered that the stratigraphic sequences encountered in the evaluation do not represent significant archaeological deposits. The flint core recovered from Trench D is considered to be a residual piece, and cannot be considered to represent significant archaeological activity in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development site. The stratigraphic sequence encountered in Trench A and B are considered representative of infilled palaeo channels and the development of a peat land on the fringes of standing water. However, the brush and shale layers encountered in Trenches C and D may be representative of a major hydrological hiatus in the palaeoecological record and therefore of potential significance.

Recommendations

It is not thought that the development will impact upon previously unrecorded archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out, and that the proposed development be approved.

Whilst it is considered that the stratigraphic sequences represented in this report may not represent an area of archaeological significance it is considered that the material may be of potential interest to palaeoecological studies of the Portmore and Lough Neagh area. It is recommended that two samples (Sample 1 and 3) be AMS dated to provide a possible terminus ante quem for the hydrological hiatus noted above. The provision of a date for such an event would be of significance for further study of the Lough Portmore and Lough Neagh palaeoecological development.

www.ehsni.gov.uk/landscape/country_landscape/63/63-land.htm

In addition it is recommended that a brief note of the evaluation results be made in the 'Ulster Journal of Archaeology', in addition to a brief summary in the 'Excavations' bulletin.

TABLE 1

Context Register

Context No.	Description
101	Dark brown silty clay loam
102	Mid to light brown silty clay
103	Fine grey clay
104	Coarse grey silt
105	Grey sandy clay
106	Peat
201	Dark brown silty clay
202	Mid to light brown silty clay
203	Grey sandy clay
204	Silt shale
301	Dark brown silty clay loam
302	Mid to light brown silty clay
303	Grey sandy clay
304	Orange decayed stone
305	Grey sandy silt
306	Brushwood and shale
307	Shale
308	Brushwood and shale
309	Peat inclusions
310	Peat
401	Dark brown silty clay loam
402	Mid to light brown silty clay
403	Grey sandy clay
404	Orange decayed stone
405	Grey sandy silt
406	Timber
407	Brushwood and shale
408	Shale
409	Brushwood and shale
410	Peat inclusions
411	Peat

TABLE 2

Small Finds Register

Small Finds No.	Description
1	Flint core

TABLE 3

Sample Register

Sample No.	Description	Bags
1	Wood from timber (Context No. 406)	1
2	Upper gravel and brush layer (Context No. 306)	1
3	Lower gravel and brush layer (Context No. 308)	1

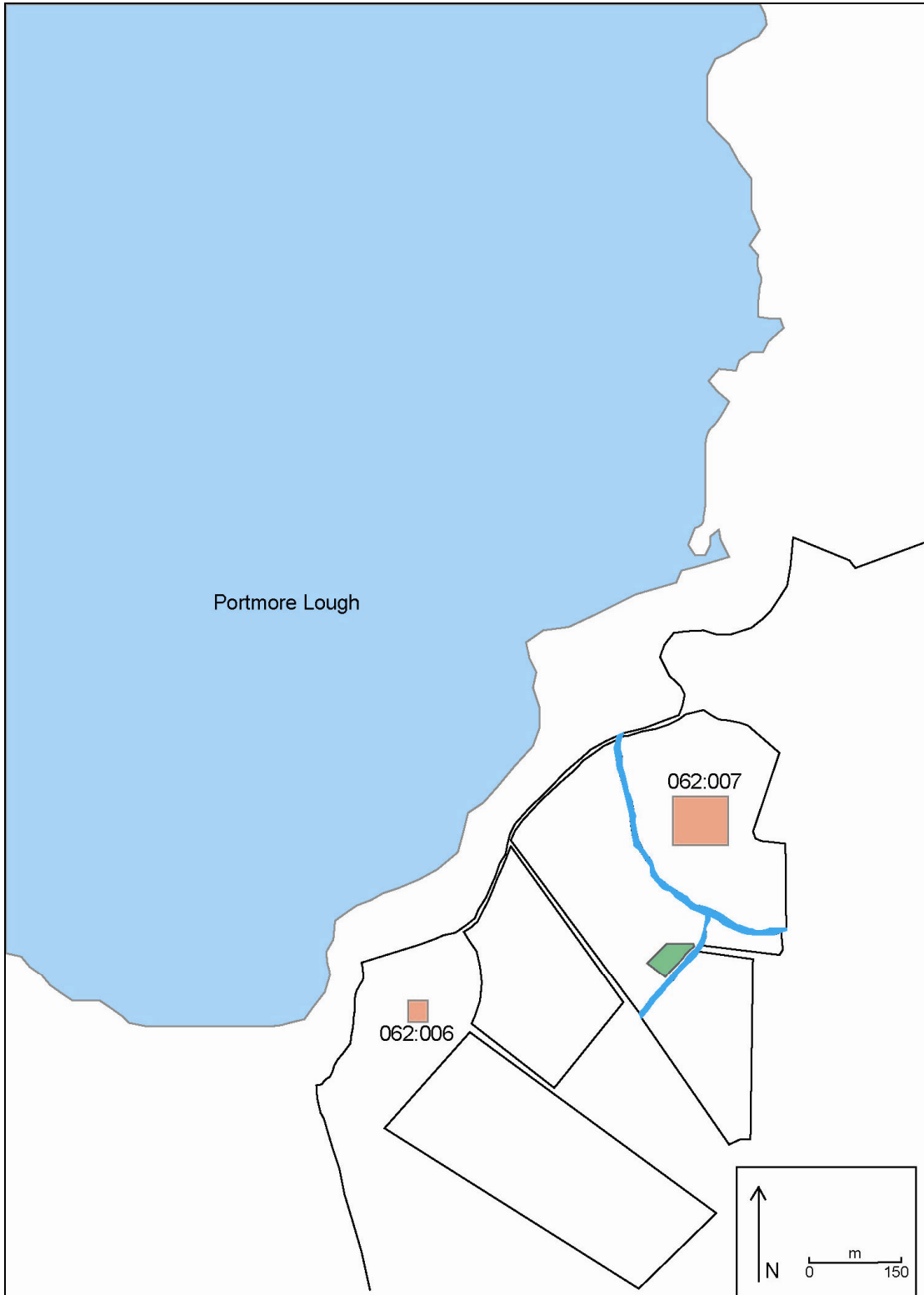


Fig. 1 Location of proposed development site (in green) in relation to Portmore Lough and known archaeological features. Portmore Castle is represented by 062:007.

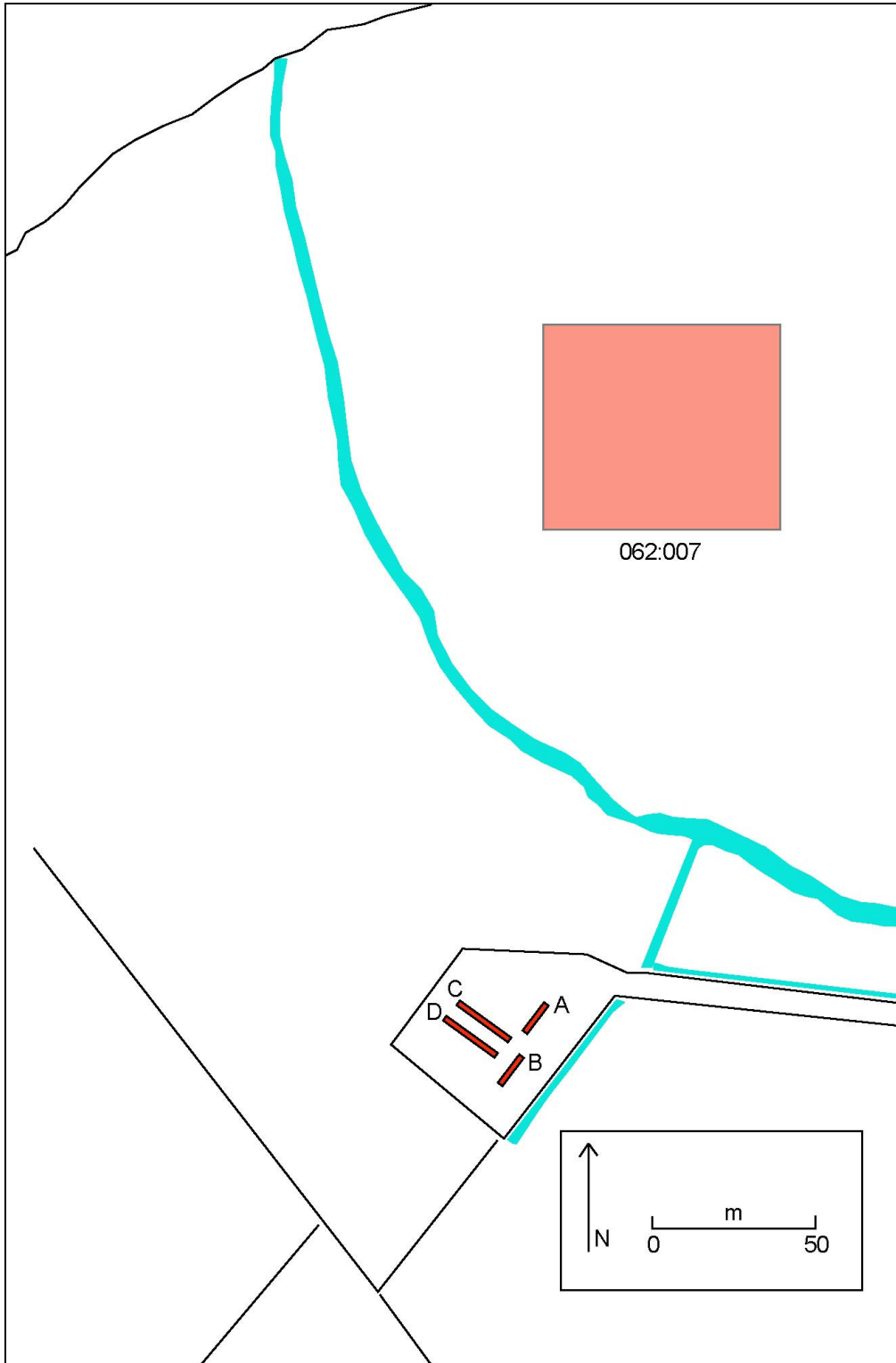


Fig. 2 Location of development site and evaluation test trenches A-D. Note the main blue line is Portmore River and the other blue lines represent modern drainage channels.



Plate 1 Looking north towards Portmore Castle (062:007) from the proposed development site. The fence in the foreground represents the modern river bank.



Plate 2 Section from Trench A showing the depth of basal peat deposits (Context No. 106).



Plate 3 Section from Trench C showing the layers of brush and shale encountered above the peat deposit (Context No. 310).



Plate 4 Excavation of timber (Context No. 406) from the fine grey sandy clay of Trench D.



Plate 5 General shot of the timber during excavation looking north.