



Monitoring Report No. 42

**Dinnahorra Road
Dinnahorra
Co. Armagh**

AE/06/07

Kara Ward
& Cormac McSparron

Site Specific Information

Site Address: 70m NW of 20 Dinnahorra Road

Townland: Dinnahorra

SMR No.: ARM 017:011 – enclosure

Grid Ref: 298623 339829

County: Armagh

Excavation License No: AE/06/07

Planning Ref / No.: O/2004/0566/O

Date of Monitoring: 10th February 2006

Archaeologist Present: Kara Ward

Brief Summary:

Four test trenches were excavated to evaluate the potential impact of a proposed development on any hidden archaeological remains. The truncated remains of a bank and ditch were uncovered in three of the trenches.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of four test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a grading bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened:

Trench A	45m by 2m
Trench B	40m by 2m
Trench C	40m by 2m
Trench D	35m by 2m

Current Land Use: Pasture

Intended Land Use: Residential

Account of the monitoring

The proposed development site is located c.20m west of an enclosure (ARM:017:011) situated on a rise above a tributary of the Cusher River. The enclosure is an irregular oval shaped earthwork measuring c.50m (north-south) by 38m (east-west) and is marked on the 2nd edition 6" Ordnance Survey map of 1863. The western edge of the enclosed area is marked by a steep (possibly natural) scarp and the remains of a ditch are visible around the north and east sides of the enclosure. The proposed site of development is located on a flat field in Dinnahorra townland adjacent to the tributary which marks the townland boundary (Fig. 1 and 2, Plate 1).

An archaeological evaluation was requested by EHS: Protecting Historic Monuments to assess the potential impact of the proposed development on any hidden archaeological remains. Monitoring of test trench excavation took place on 10th February 2006. Four test trenches were excavated (Fig. 3) as requested by the PHM Casework Officer, Liam McQuillan. The measurements of each trench are indicated in the table below:

Trench A	45m by 2m
Trench B	40m by 2m
Trench C	40m by 2m
Trench D	35m by 2m

In Trench A the topsoil (C101) was approximately 0.20m deep; it was a consistent mid-brown sandy silt across the site. Underlying this was an eluviation layer (C102) composed of light brown silty sand, also consistent across the site. In Trench A the eluviation layer (C102) was present between 0.20m and 0.30m below ground level. The subsoil (C103) was located at 0.30m below ground level, it was a mottled grey and orange silty clay with frequent stone inclusions (Plates 2 and 3).

The topsoil (C101) in Trench B had an average depth of 0.22m. The eluviation layer (C102) was at a depth of between 0.22m and 0.35m and overlay the subsoil (C103) which was encountered at a depth of 0.35m (Plates 4 and 5).

In Trench C the topsoil (C101) was up to 0.21m deep. The eluviation layer (C102) was at a depth of between 0.21m and 0.35m and overlay the subsoil (C103) (Plates 6 and 7).

The topsoil (C101) in Trench D had an average depth of approximately 0.23m. Overlying the subsoil (C103) was the eluviation layer (C102) at a depth of between 0.23m and 0.41m (Plates 8 and 9).

The truncated remains of a ditch and bank were uncovered within 10m of the eastern ends of Trenches A, B and C and within 25m of the edge of the enclosure (ARM:017:011). The features appear to respect the curve of the enclosure and the ditch (C104) may be a continuation of the ditch visible on the northern and eastern sides of the monument. In Trench A, the inner edge of the ditch was between 4.6m and 5.8m from the eastern end of the trench (Plate 10). The ditch (C104) was located directly outside the bank (C106). The contrast between the ditch fill (C105) and the bank material (C106) made the inner edge of the ditch cut obvious while the outer edge could not be easily discerned (Plate 11).

A small section was excavated through part of the ditch fill in an effort to determine the nature and extent of the feature (Plate 12). The section was excavated from the eastern edge towards the western edge. Time constraints did not allow the section to be completely excavated. A depth of 0.26m and a width of 1.38m were reached. The cut of the ditch (C104) along the eastern edge was gradual and uneven due to the stoney subsoil (C103). The base was not totally uncovered but the cut appeared to be shallowing into a concave base at a depth of around 0.26m. The ditch and bank are likely to have been severely truncated by agricultural works in this field, including ploughing which took place three years ago (Lesley Willis pers. comm.)

The fill of the ditch (C105) was a charcoal rich mottled orange and grey clay with frequent stone inclusions. Two sherds of pottery and a fragment of burnt bone were also retrieved from the fill. The pottery was coarse with frequent inclusions, some of them quite large, including quartzite and very occasional mica. One sherd was a base sherd while the other was a body sherd and both fragments were blackened, indicating they came from cooking vessels. One sherd is of souterrain ware type while the other is possibly a sherd of everted-rim ware (Cormac McSparron pers. comm.).

The bank material (C106) was very compact stoney yellow clay intermixed with a light brown sandy silt and is likely to be upcast from the ditch. The bank was visible in Trench A where it had a width of approximately 1.2m but was not so obvious in Trenches B and C. The depth of bank material was not investigated.

The inner edge of the ditch (C104) was between 6.9m and 7.8m from the eastern end of Trench B (Plate 13). The western edge of the ditch was not definite but the ditch appeared to have a width of approximately 1.5m which would suggest that it has been severely truncated. There was a slight trace of the bank in Trench B, indicated by a higher frequency of small stones just inside the ditch, although its width could not be accurately discerned.

In Trench C, the inner edge of the ditch (C104) was between 7.5m and 8.5m from the eastern end of the trench (Plate 14). The ditch in this location had a width of only 0.9m and has probably been scarped away by agricultural activity. The bank was not apparent in this trench but this area had been disturbed by shoring and levelling out imported soil from elsewhere on the farm (Lesley Willis pers. comm.). This imported soil contained numerous fragments of 19th to 20th century pottery.

No features, deposits or finds of archaeological significance were uncovered in Trench D or in the remainder of the other trenches.

Discussion

The discovery of a ditch and bank in this evaluation gives some insight into the function and date of the enclosure (ARM:017:011) which prior to this was unclassified and undated. It now seems that the enclosure was a rath with surrounding ditch and an earthen bank. The ditch and bank are likely to be related to the monument since they respect the curve of the enclosure. The recovery of a sherd of souterrain ware from the ditch fill is an indication that the monument may have been a rath since souterrain ware is primarily found in association with this monument type. Everted-rim ware succeeded souterrain ware in the thirteenth century, however, it is thought that the two may have been used for a period side by side. Souterrain ware has been found in the same contexts as everted-rim ware on a number of sites including at Doonbought, Co. Antrim (Edwards, 1990). The recovery of sherds of souterrain ware and everted-rim ware from the fill of the ditch (C105) suggests that the ditch went out of use sometime in the thirteenth century. The enclosure may have been a platform

rath since other rath types were unlikely to have been in use as late as the thirteenth century. The scarped western side of the enclosure, whether natural or man-made, also gives the impression of a platform rath and the site seems too small to have been an ecclesiastical enclosure.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Cormac McSparron for looking at the ceramic finds and to Lesley Willis, the landowner, for information about agricultural activity on the site.

Bibliography

Edwards, N. (1990) *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*. Bell & Bain Ltd., Glasgow.

Archive:

Finds: one sherd of souterrain ware and one sherd of possible everted-rim ware, held by CAF

Photographs: 32 digital images, held by CAF

Plans / Drawings: n/a

Signed: _____ Date: _____

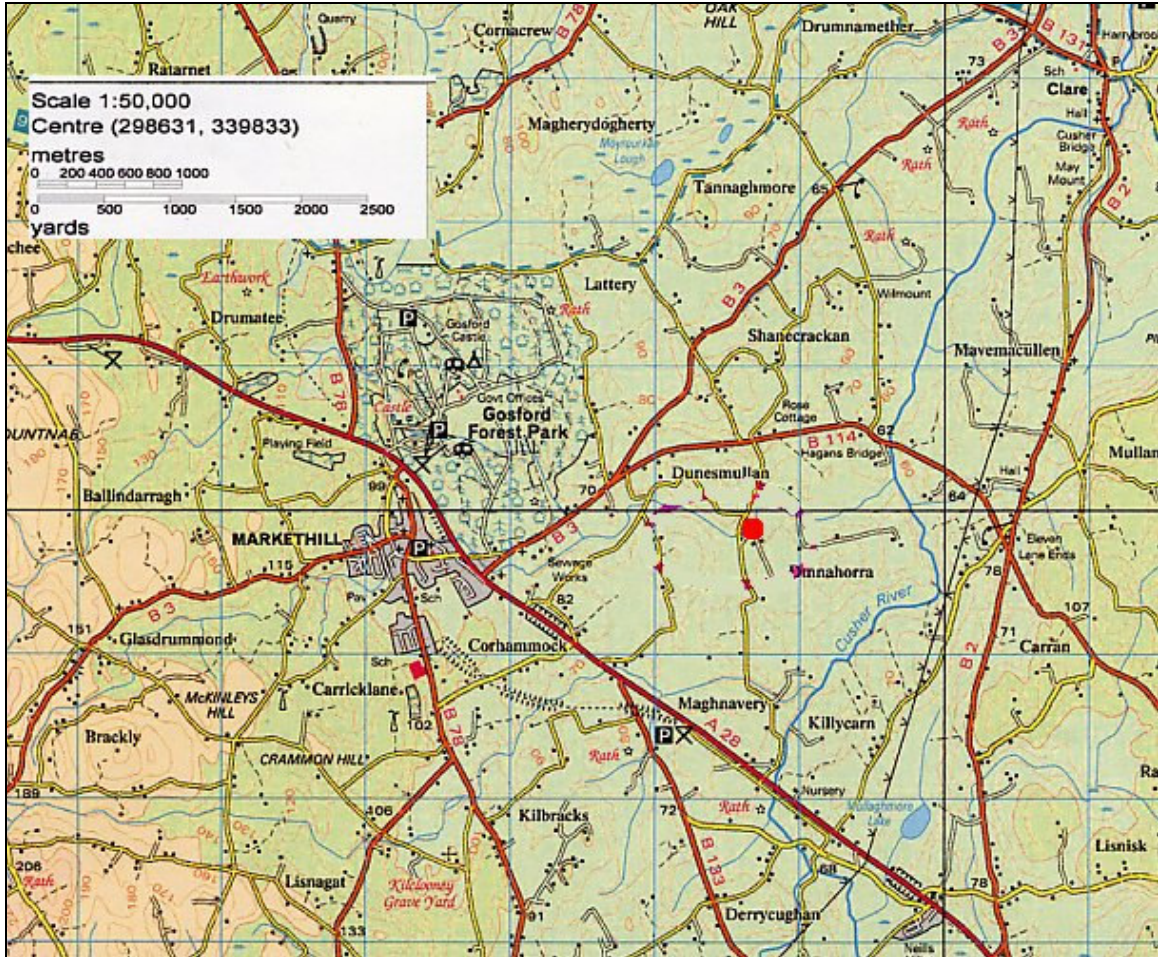


Fig. 1: 1:50,000 map showing location of development site (marked red circle).

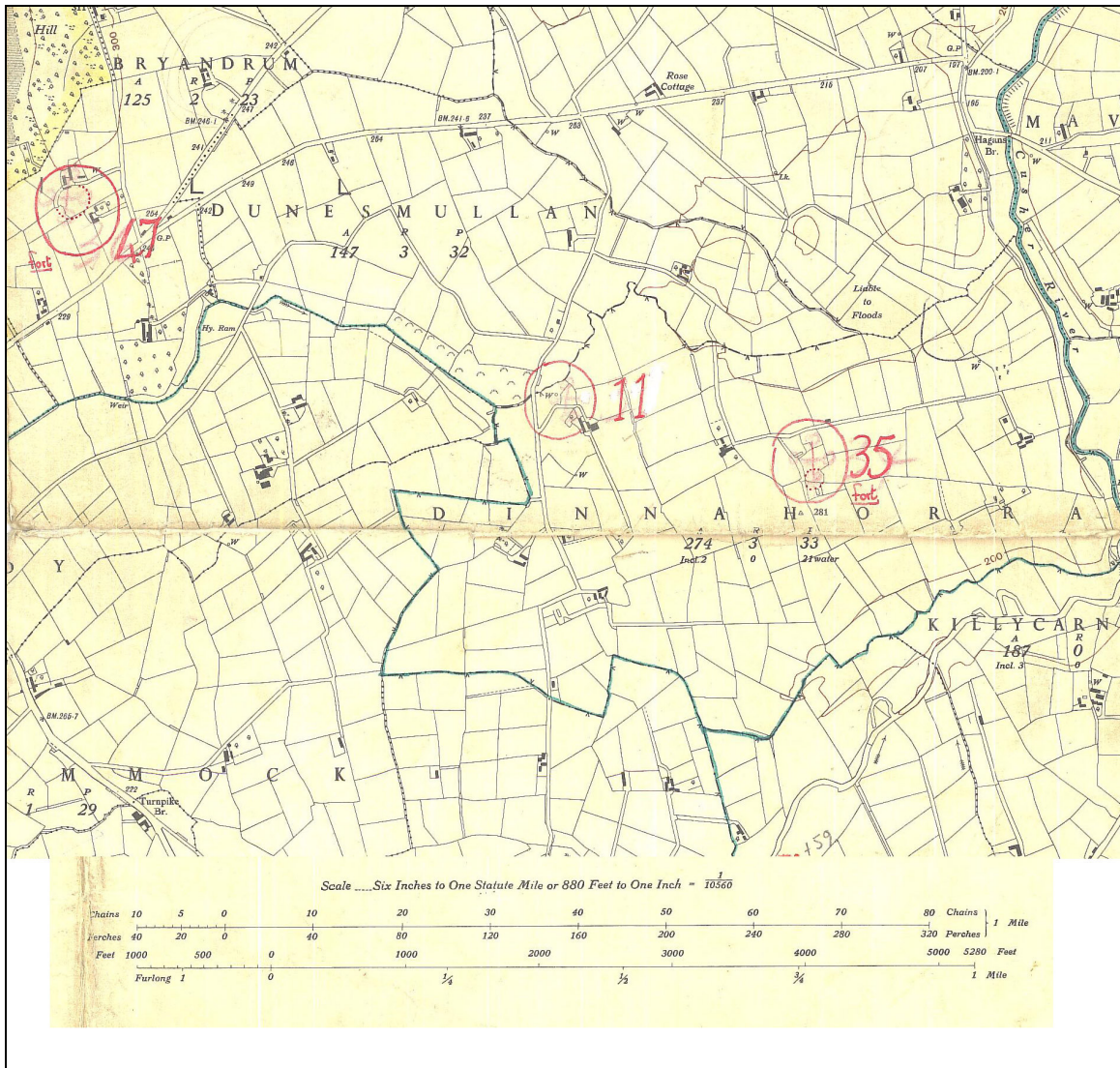


Fig. 2: Location of enclosure (ARM:017:011) and nearby archaeological sites.

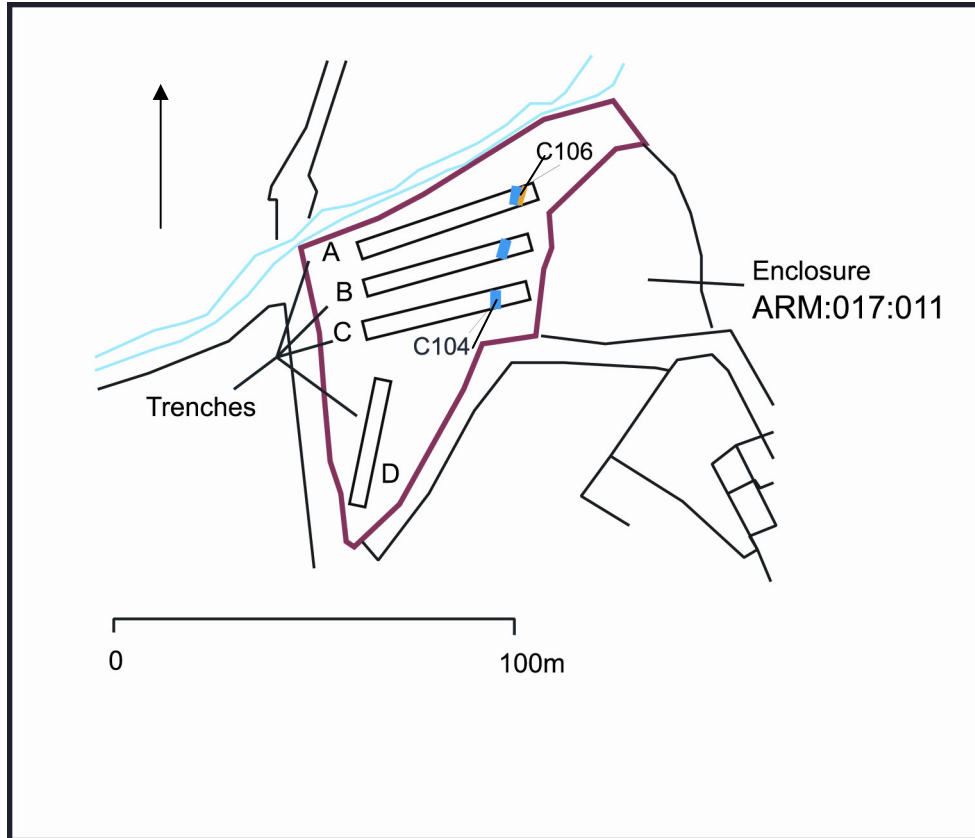


Fig. 3: 1:2500 Map showing location of proposed development site (outlined in purple), enclosure (ARM:017:011), Trenches A-D, ditch (C104) (in blue) and bank (C106) (in yellow).



Plate 1: Overall view of site from west, looking towards enclosure (ARM:017:011).



Plate 2: View of Trench A from west after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 3: View of south-facing section in Trench A after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 4: View of Trench B from west after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 5: View of north-facing section in Trench B after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 6: View of Trench C from west after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 7: View of north-facing section in Trench C after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 8: View of Trench D from south after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).



Plate 9: View of east-facing section in Trench D after excavation to surface of subsoil (C103).