Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 094

HALL CRAIG
MONAGHAN
SPRINGFIELD
COUNTY FERMANAGH

LICENCE NO.: AE/06/232

NAOMI CARVER

Site Specific Information

Site Name: Hall Craig

Townland: Monaghan

SMR No. : FERM 210:091

State Care Scheduled Other √ [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: H 1599 4717

County: Fermanagh

Excavation Licence No. : AE/06/232

Planning Ref / No. : L/2005/3034/F

Dates of Monitoring: 26th September 2006

Archaeologist(s) Present: Naomi Carver

Brief Summary:

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site in the grounds of Hall Craig, Monaghan, near the village of Springfield in County Fermanagh, as part of the planning application for a new dwelling. The application site is adjacent to a number of archaeological sites, several of which have been identified as burnt mounds. One of the burnt mounds (FERM 210:091) is located within the same field as the application area, around 90.0m to the north. The evaluation consisted of three mechanically-excavated test trenches ranging in length from approximately 17.0m to 27.0m. Two of the test trenches contained spreads of material which may have been derived from a burnt mound. It is recommended that the site is subject to further archaeological fieldwork prior to the construction of the new dwelling.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of three test trenches by mechanical excavator equipped with a 'sheugh' bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened:

Four trenches each approximately 2.0m wide and ranging in length from approximately 17.0m to 27.0m.

Current Land Use: Pasture

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The archaeological evaluation was carried out at an application site located approximately 6.0km south-east of Derrygonnelly and approximately 2.0km from the village of Springfield, County Fermanagh (Figure One). The site lies in drumlin country, approximately 5.0km from the shores of Lower Lough Erne. The application site occupies low-lying ground at the base of a drumlin, the top of which is approximately 90.0m OD. It is located at the base of the driveway to Hall Craig, a modest Georgian farmhouse (Figure Two).

The application site consists of a triangular area of approximately 0.3 hectares in size. The site is bordered by mature trees to the west, beyond which is the driveway to Hall Craig. To the east of the site runs a small stream. The application area consists mainly of low-lying, marshy land with a covering of grass and reeds (Plate One). The land slopes up to the north-west where Hall Craig is visible. At the time of evaluation the field was lying fallow but it was likely to have been subject to agricultural activity in the past. The surrounding land is mainly used for agriculture, predominantly for grazing, but is interspersed with some private dwellings.

The evaluation took place as part of the planning application for a new dwelling and was requested by Edith Gowdy: Protecting Historic Monuments Caseworker with Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage. There are at least three known burnt mounds in the vicinity (FERM 210:090, 091 and 092), one of which is in the same field as the application site (FERM 210:091). The situation of the site, on low-lying marshy ground with a water source nearby, is consistent with known burnt mound locations.

Excavation

The evaluation consisted of the supervision of three mechanically-excavated test trenches. The trenches varied in length from 17.0m to 27.0m and all were around 2.0m in width (Figure Three). The test trenches were excavated to the surface of potential archaeological deposits (Figure Four). In parts the boulder clay subsoil was also visible at this depth.

Trench One

Trench One was located beside the site's easternmost boundary. The south-eastern corner of the trench was approximately 25.0m from the field entrance and 6.4m from the easternmost boundary. The trench was approximately 2.0m wide and 27.0m long (Plate Two). Approximately 10.0m from the south-eastern end of the trench it was stepped out by about 0.3m to the west to avoid the destruction of two wooden posts (see description below). Trench One was excavated to the surface of several stone spreads, a depth of approximately 0.4m (Plate Three). In parts of the trench the surface of the boulder clay subsoil was present at this depth.

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 101) in Trench One consisted of compact, mid brown, loamy clay containing frequent angular stones (average size: 20x20x10mm). It was around 0.2m thick and contained no finds. Below the sod

and topsoil layer (Context No. 101) was a compact, dark brownish black, loamy clay (Context No. 102) which was present over the whole trench. The loamy clay contained a large quantity of humic material suggesting that it was a 'pre-peat' deposit which had begun to form due to the damp conditions. It was around 0.2m thick and contained no finds.

Within the loamy clay (Context No. 102) were two wooden posts (Context Nos. 103 and 104) which appeared to have probably been driven into the ground. The wooden posts were located beside the easternmost limit of excavation, around 10.0m from the south-eastern end of the trench. One of the posts (Context No. 103) was lying horizontally (Plate Four). It was approximately 0.5m long and 0.2m wide and appeared to be within the loamy clay (Context No. 102). The other post (Context No. 104) was upright, presumably in its original position (Plate Five). It was also set into the loamy clay (Context No. 102) and was 0.3m high and around 0.2m in diameter. The posts were in relatively good condition and appeared unburnt. It is possible that they may relate to a relict field boundary, several of which are visible on Figure Three.

Below the loamy clay (Context No. 102) were three discrete spreads of fragmented stone. The discrete stone spreads were at the north-western end of the trench. The smallest spread (Context No. 105) was located approximately 0.5m to the north-east of the upright wooden post (Context No. 104). The spread consisted of angular fragmented stones (average size: 30x20x10mm) within dark brown, humic clay loam (Plate Six). The stone spread was approximately 2.0m (south-west/north-east) by 0.3m (north-west/south-east). The spread was not excavated. Around 5.0m from the north-western end of the trench, beside the westernmost limit of excavation, was another stone spread (Context No. 106). The spread was 3.1m long (north-west/south-east) and at least 0.9m wide (north-east/south-west). It consisted of angular, fragmented, stone (average size 50x30x20mm) within a matrix of charcoal-rich sandy clay (Plate Seven). There were also patches of humic loamy clay between the stones. To the north of this stone spread was another spread (Context No. 107). It was approximately 1.0m long, at least 0.3m wide and consisted of angular stones (average size: 50x30x20mm) in a matrix of dark brown, charcoal-rich, sandy clay loam (Plate Eight). None of the three stone spreads had artefactual material associated with them and there was no evidence that they were set within cut features.

The stone spreads overlay the natural boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 108), the surface of which was present at a depth of around 0.4m.

Trench Two

Trench Two was located approximately 5.0m to the west of Trench One. It was 23.0m long and 2.0m wide (Plates Nine and Ten). Approximately 8.0m from the south-eastern end of the trench an extension to the north-east was excavated. The extension was approximately 2.0m wide, 4.0m long and was excavated in order to determine the extent of a stone spread (Context No. 204; see below).

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 201) in Trench Two consisted of compact, mid brown, loamy clay which was 0.3m thick. It contained frequent angular stones (average size 20x20x10mm) but no artefactual material. Below the sod and topsoil layer was a relatively compact, dark brownish black, humic loam (Context No. 202). The humic loam was approximately 0.2m thick and did not

contain any finds. Within the humic loam were angular stones (average size: 20x20x10mm).

Below the humic loam (Context No. 202) were two stone spreads (Context Nos. 203 and 204). The smaller spread (Context No. 203) was located at the north-western end of the trench and consisted of small angular stones (average size: 100x80x40mm) within a matrix of dark brown, charcoal-rich, sandy clay (Plate Eleven). The spread was around 2.0m long (north-west/south-east) and 0.6m wide. There were no finds associated with the spread and there was no evidence of it comprising the fill of a cut feature. The second stone spread (Context No. 204) was located approximately 8.0m from the south-eastern end of the trench (Plate Twelve). It was around 3.0m long (east-west) and at least 2.0m wide. The feature was not excavated to its full depth but was found to be at least 0.1m deep. The spread comprised angular stones (average size: 100x80x40mm) within a matrix of charcoal-rich sandy clay. No finds were found within the spread and it did not appear to have a cut associated with it.

The stone spreads in Trench Two (Context Nos. 203 and 204) overlay the natural boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 205) which was encountered at a depth of around 0.5m. There was no evidence of any cut features within the subsoil.

Trench Three

Trench Three was located 2.2m to the west of Trench Two and ran parallel to the site's westernmost boundary. It was located 4.0m east of the boundary. The trench was approximately 17.0m long and 2.0m wide (Plates Thirteen and Fourteen).

The sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 301) in Trench Three consisted of compact, mid brown, loamy clay which was 0.3m thick. It contained frequent angular stone inclusions (average size 20x20x10mm). There were no finds within the sod and topsoil layer. For much of the trench the sod and topsoil layer was physically above the boulder clay subsoil (Context No. 303). However, at the north-western end of the trench was a possible area of burning (Context No. 302) comprising of an irregular spread of ashy coloured, sandy clay approximately 1.5m long (east-west) and 0.4m wide (Plate Fifteen). There were no finds associated with the possible burning and no evidence of a cut feature. It was not established if it was evidence of *in-situ* burning or an accumulation of material associated with burning elsewhere.

The subsoil in Trench Three (Context No. 303) was a heterogeneous boulder clay, the surface of which was encountered at a depth of around 0.3m.

The results of the evaluation carried out at Hall Craig suggest that there is potential for further archaeological remains on the site. The presence of three burnt mounds (FER 210:090, 091 and 092) in the immediate vicinity of the site make it possible that the evaluated area may contain the remains of such a site. This is not uncommon: burnt mounds often appear in clusters of between two and six (Waddell 2000, 174). Although burnt mound sites are more common in the south of Ireland, examples are also known from the north. The Environment and Heritage Service's Sites and Monuments Database shows that burnt mounds are most numerous in County Fermanagh. Prior to the evaluation there was no evidence of a mound on the site, however, many burnt mounds have no above-

ground remains and are only discovered through archaeological testing. Where a mound is present it is generally low (for example 1.0m to 2.0m in height) and crescentic or U-shaped in plan. The immediate environment of the application site is consistent with known burnt mound locations; most are found near a source of water, for example, a stream, lake, river or marshy ground. A stream borders the eastern side of the application site and the ground is waterlogged. In general, most burnt mounds consist of a mound of heat-fractured stones, a trough, traces of fires and in some cases a formal hearth. The evaluation revealed spreads of burnt stone in two of the test trenches (Trenches One and Two) and an area of possible burning in another trench (Trench Three). It is possible that these are the remains of a 'ploughed-out' burnt mound. There was no evidence of a trough but the test trenches may have clipped the edge of the 'mound' of burnt stone and a trough may exist beyond the area of evaluation.

The true nature and scale of the archaeological remains at the site can only be estimated at this stage. The position of the features on the site means that there is limited potential for moving the development. Therefore, it is recommended that should the development proceed, the site is subject to a programme of archaeological works. This would include topsoil stripping and full excavation of any archaeological remains which may be disturbed by the development. Where possible remains should be preserved *in situ.* At this stage no publication is required save for a short summary in the annual *'Excavations'* bulletin.

Archive:

Finds: N/A

Photographs:

The digital images taken during the evaluation are archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: N/A

Signed:_____ Date:_____

References:

Waddell, J. 2000. The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland. Wordwell Ltd., Dublin.

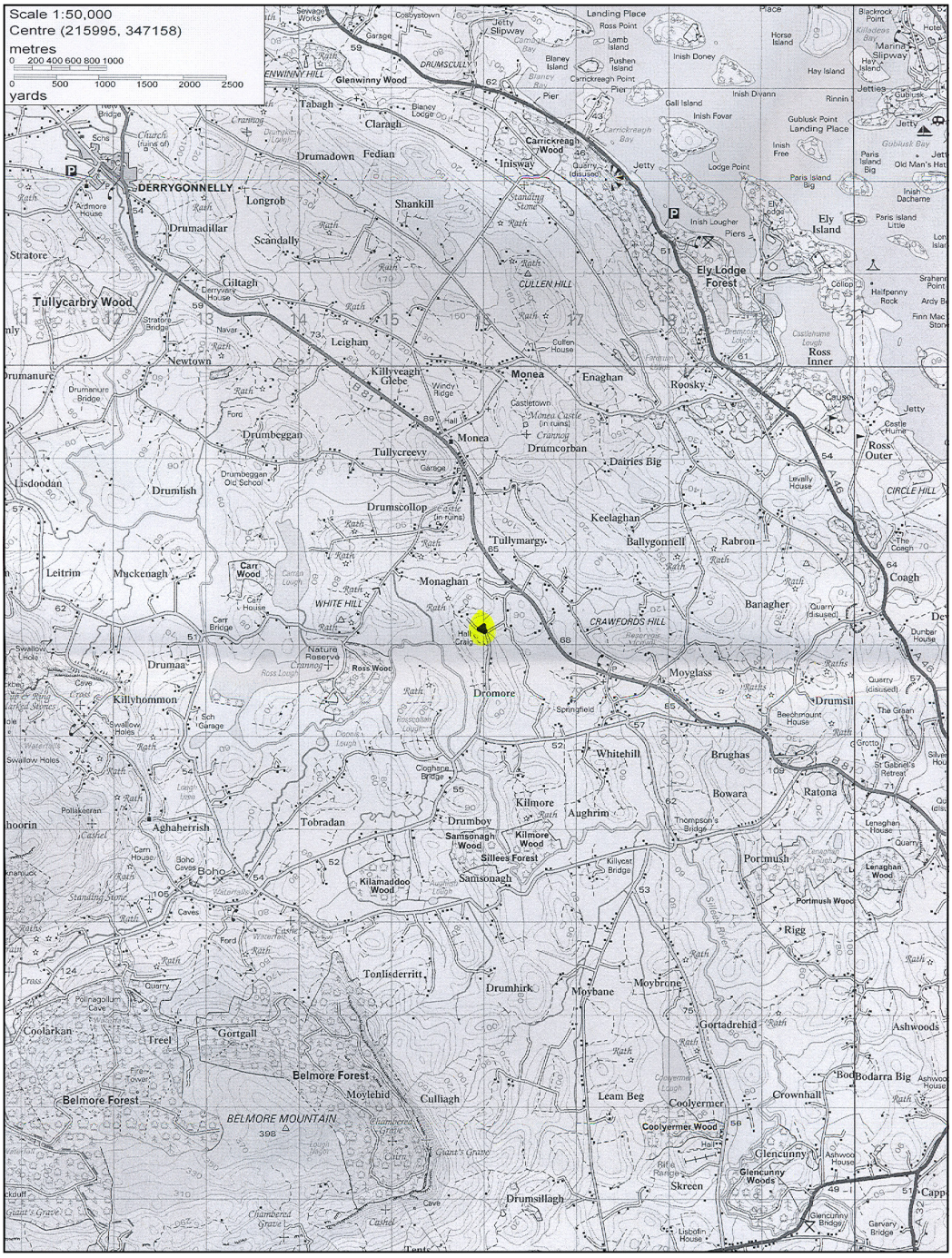

Figure One: General location map showing position of site (highlighted)

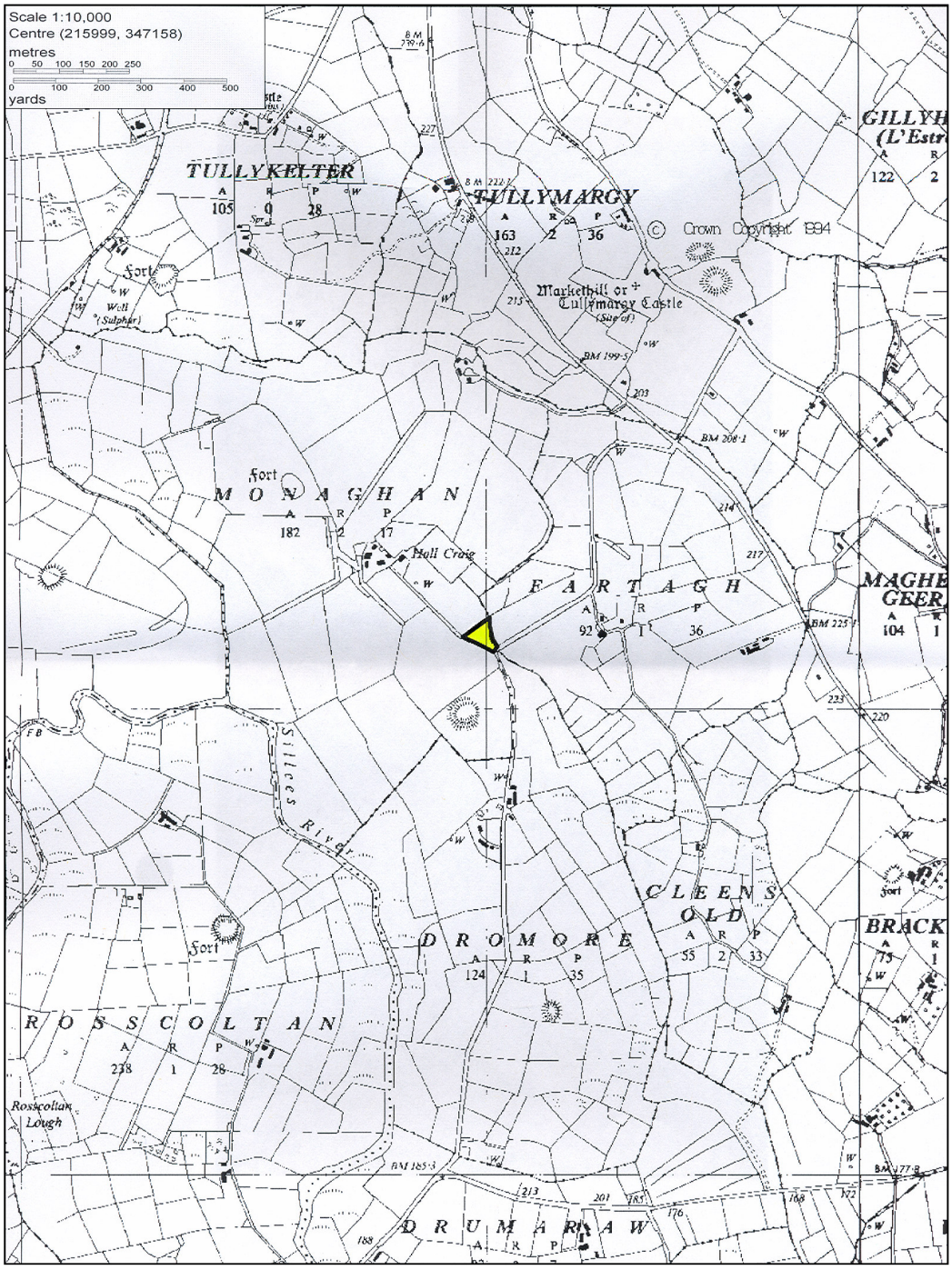

Figure Two: Detailed location map showing site (highlighted) and surrounding landscape

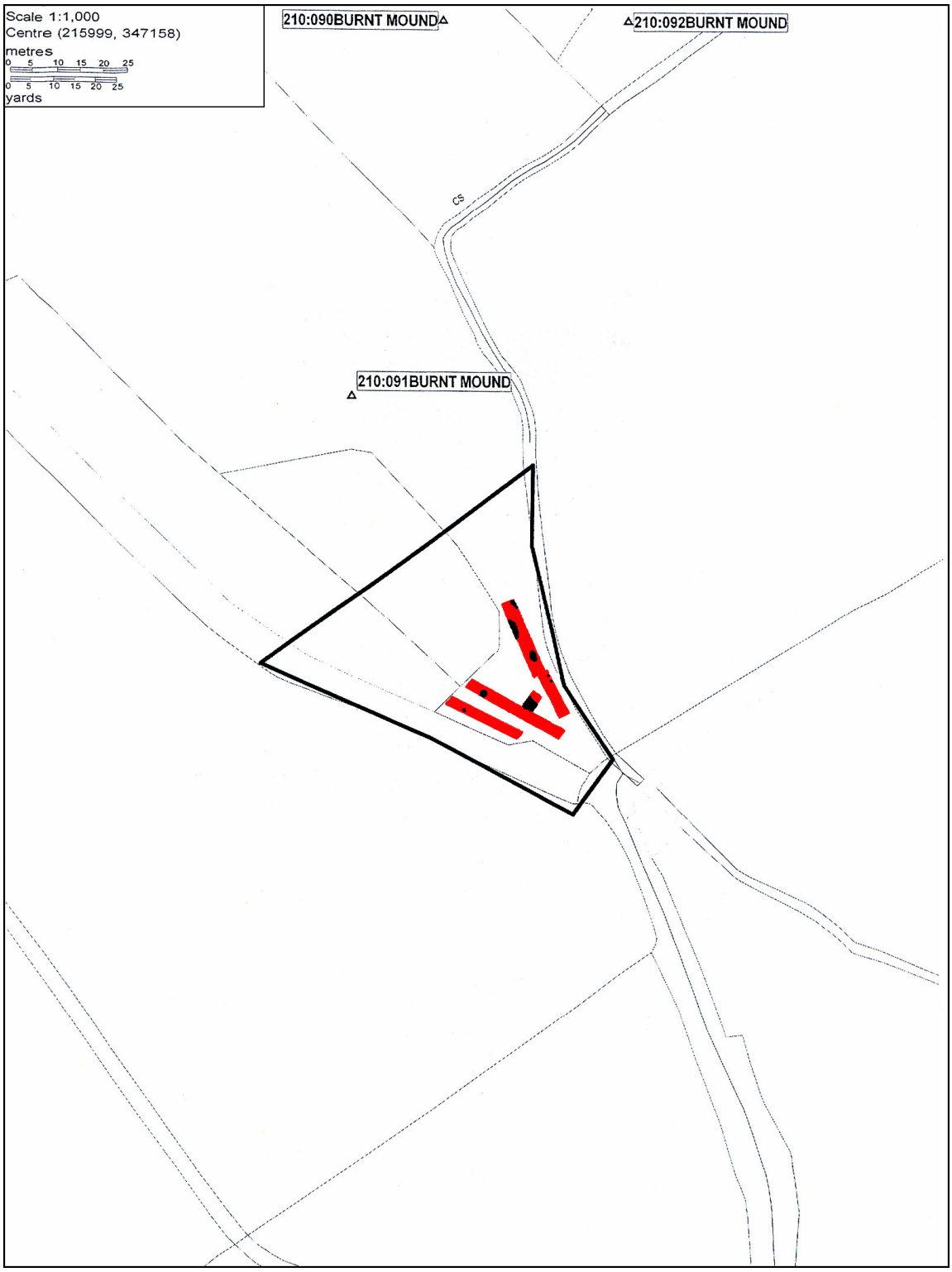

Figure Three: Plan of site showing location of test trenches

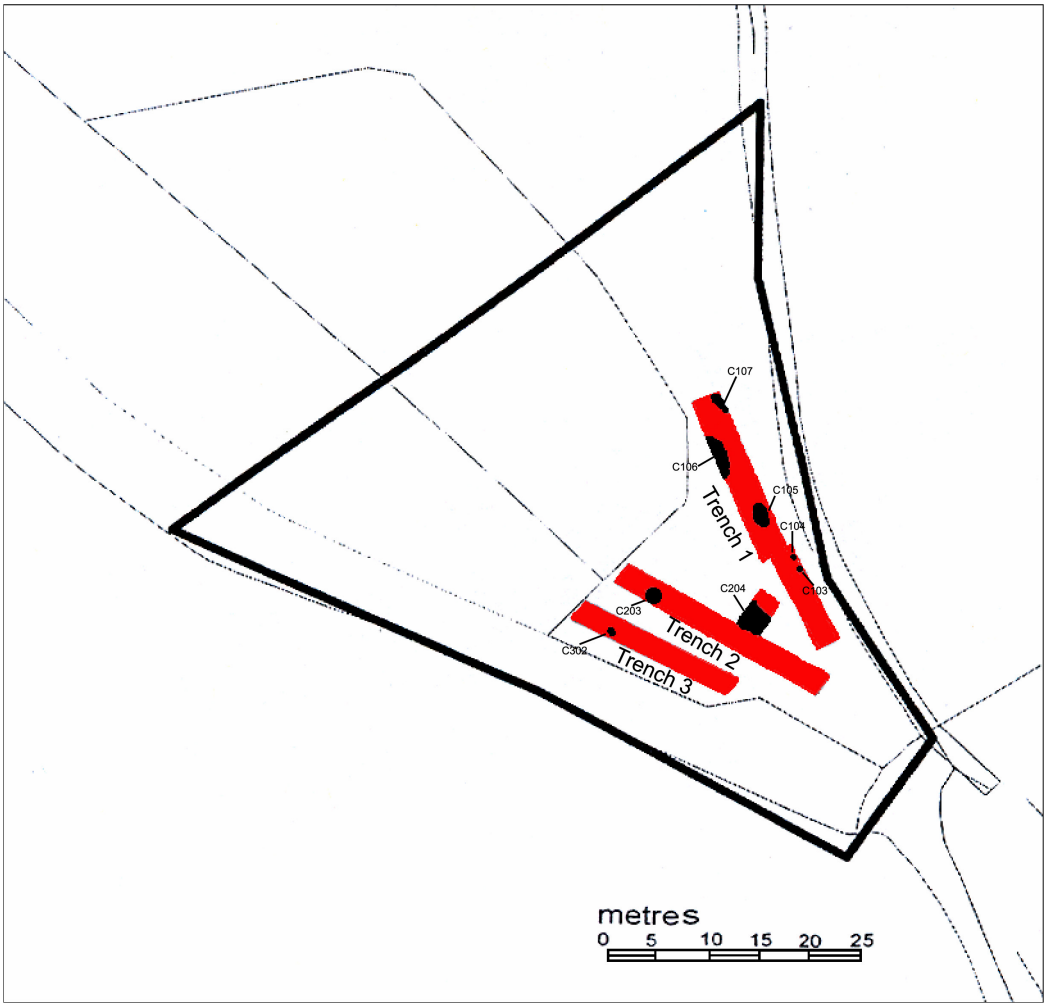

Figure Four: Close-up of site plan showing location of potential features

Plate One: General view of site prior to excavation, looking north-west

Plate Two: Trench One, following removal of the loamy clay (Context No. 102), showing stone spreads, looking south-east

Plate Three: South-west facing section of Trench One, looking north-east

Plate Four: Horizontal wooden post (Context No. 103), looking north-east

Plate Five: Upright wooden post (Context No. 104), looking north

Plate Six: Stony spread (Context No. 105), looking north-west

Plate Seven: Stony spread (Context No. 106), looking north-west

Plate Eight: Stony spread (Context No. 107), looking north-east

Plate Nine: Trench Two following removal of humic loam (Context No. 202), looking north-west

Plate Ten: South-west facing section of Trench Two, looking north-east

Plate Eleven: Stony spread (Context No. 203), looking north-west

Plate Twelve: Trench Two extension showing stony spread (Context No. 204), looking north-east

Plate Thirteen: Trench Three following removal of sod and topsoil layer (Context No. 301), looking south-east

Plate Fourteen: north-east facing section of Trench Three, looking south-west

Plate Fifteen: Irregular-shaped spread of burning in Trench Three (Context No. 302), looking south-west