Evaluation Report No. 143

50 Kirk Road
Drummard (td.)
Ballymoney
Co Antrim

Licence No. AE/07/170

David McIlreavy

Site Specific Information

Site Name : 50 Kirk Road, Ballymoney

Townland : Drummard

County : Antrim

Grid Ref. : C 95992773

SMR No. : ANT17:005(s)

Current Land Use *:* Agricultural

Intended Land Use *:* Residential

State Care : Scheduled [**X**]
Other [ ]

Excavation Licence No : AE/07/170

Planning Ref / No. : D/2007/0043/F

Dates of Monitoring : 11/09/2007

Archaeologist Present : David McIlreavy

Brief Summary

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site in the townland of Drummard, Co. Antrim, as part of the planning application for a new dwelling. The development site was located next to a small, steep sided mound, identified as a possible motte, located on top of a hill with extensive views to the E and W (see Plates 14-16). The summit of the mound shows some damage from soil removal giving a stepped profile, and the sides have suffered erosion from badgers.

The mound itself and a surrounding 10 metres area are under scheduled monument protection (see Fig. 3), however, the proposed development does not impinge on the protected area. It is not considered that the location and scale of the proposed development will impact adversely on any archaeological features uncovered.

Type of monitoring

Excavation of three test trenches along the length of the development area, by back acting mechanical digger fitted with a 2 metre wide toothless bucket.

Size of area opened

Three trenches 1, 2 and 3, approximately 35 metres, 5 metres and 10 metres in length respectively. All trenches where 2 metres wide, with some extensions connected with Trench 1 (see Fig. 4)

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The development area is located in the townland of Drummard, near Ballymoney, Co Antrim, approximately 1 kilometre NE of the town. The development site consists of a roughly L shaped field to the north and northeast of the scheduled area, the boundaries of which are delineated by a wire and post fence. The development area runs from the top of the small hill to a level area where the Fort Farm buildings are situated.

The evaluation took place as part of the planning application for the construction of a new access lane, and was requested by Andrew Gault (Caseworker with Environment and Heritage Service: Built Heritage) due to the proximity of the development site to a potential motte (ANT 17:005) and the possibility that there may be previously unrecorded remains associated with this site.

The initial evaluation methodology suggested for the proposed development site was amended in conjunction with the Caseworker to take account of a curve in the proposed accessway. See Fig. 3 for the proposed initial siting of the test trench and Fig. 4 for the repositioned test trenches.

Excavation

The evaluation consisted of the archaeological supervision of three mechanically excavated areas, Trenches 1-3, all of which were excavated to the glacial subsoil level. The development area was under pasture and did not show any signs of recent disturbance.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated running NW – SE, running initially for 35 x 2 metres. The trench was extended by approximately 14 m² at the NW end, and 4m² along the NE edge of the trench (See Fig. 6). The trench was excavated to glacial sub soil level, a light orange sandy clay with frequent stony inclusions (Context No. 103).

The topsoil (Context No. 101) was a dark brown sandy clay with organic inclusions and some small to medium sized stones. This layer was approximately 8-10 cm in depth, and ran for the length of the trench, overlaying a light brown sandy clay cultivation soil layer (Context No. 102) of approximately 10 cm depth. The difference

between the topsoil and the cultivation soil layer was mostly based on soil consistence, the former being more friable. Both Context Nos. 101 and 102 directly overlay the glacial subsoil from the SE end of the trench to approximately 8 metres from the NW end of the trench.

Approximately 25 metres from the SW end of Trench 1, a rectilinear band of grey sand extended across the trench with a tapered terminus, 80 cm maximum width, 75 cm maximum depth (see Fig 7; Plate 2, 3). The feature was archaeologically half sectioned, and the cut (Context No. 104) was noted as a steep sided 'stepped' post hole with a U shaped basal profile, widening towards the top of the feature (See Fig. 9; Plate 4 and 5). It was noted that the centre of the rectilinear feature was filled with a light grey sand (Context No. 106), surrounded by a light brown sand/clay (Context No. 105). With the excavation of Context No. 106 a dark line approximately 0.3 cm in depth was recorded (Context No. 107), which may indicate a relict land surface, and the possibility that the hill at this point had been artificially modified (see Fig 11).

At the NW end of the trench a layer of ash with charred tree roots was encountered (Context No 108; Fig 7; Plates 6, 7), although the glacial cultivation soil did not show evidence of direct burning. A piece of late 19th 'Creamware' (Small Find No. 1) was recovered from this layer but did not show any evidence of heat fractures, which may suggest that the material had been disturbed. The ash layer continued towards the end of the trench, overlying a progressively deeper deposit of light brown/yellowish clay (Context No. 109). This clay deposit was relatively homogenous in composition, excepting some mottling of colour, reaching a maximum depth of 1.49 metres. No artefacts were recovered from this deposit. The clay deposit (Context No. 109) directly overlay the glacial subsoil (Context No. 103)

At the base of the clay deposit a small rectilinear feature (Context No. 110; Fig. 8; Plate 8, 9, 10), filled with waterlogged peat (Context No. 111), was encountered which had a regular steep sided profile, and a maximum depth of 6 cm. No finds were recovered from this feature.

The trench was extended at the NE end to trace the extent of the ash layer, but no further artefacts were recovered (although it was noted that the ash layer did extend significantly towards the scheduled area surrounding the motte.

Trench 2

Trench 2 was excavated to investigate the curve of the proposed driveway on the development site (see Fig. 4). The trench was approximately 2 metres wide by 5 metres in length. The topsoil (Context No. 201) was a dark brown sandy clay with organic inclusions with a maximum depth of c. 10 cm, analogous with the topsoil layer of Trench 1. The topsoil overlay a light brown sandy clay cultivation soil (Context No. 202) approximately 60 cm deep. This cultivation soil layer lay over a light brown/yellowish clay layer (Context No. 203) which had a field drain feature (Context No. 204; Fig 5; Plate 11, 12) cut into it, containing large stones (Context No. 205) with

noticeable voids. A piece of late 19th century 'Blackware' (Small Finds No. 2) was recovered from the cultivation soil layer (Context No. 202). The excavation of this trench was halted when a pressurized water pipe was ruptured.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was excavated at the terminus of the proposed driveway. The trench was approximately 2 metres wide x 10 metres in length. The topsoil layer (Context No. 301) was a mid brown sandy clay with organic inclusions, maximum depth of c. 10cm, which overlay a light brown sandy clay cultivation soil (Context No. 302), c. 40 cm in depth, largely differentiated from the topsoil because of the difference in consistency, the topsoil being more friable. The cultivation soil layer overlay a layer of building debris (Context No. 303; Plate 13) evenly distributed throughout the trench with a depth ranging from 11cm to 22cm. This layer of building debris directly overlay the glacial subsoil which consisted of a stony orange brown sandy clay (Context No. 304). A large piece of late 19th century 'Blackware' (Small Finds No. 3) was recovered from the layer of building debris, no other finds were recorded.

Interpretation

The majority of the area investigated in Trench 1, adjacent to the scheduled area, showed no evidence of previously unrecorded archaeological features. However, the features represented by Context Nos. 104 and 110, located at, and beyond the break of slope may indicate that the hill had been artificially modified in this area.

It might be suggested that the feature represented by Context No. 104 was structural, however, the extension of the area to the immediate NE of the feature failed to establish any continuation. In terms of function, Context No. 104 may represent the slot trench of a palisade that extends towards the motte (running SW), although the terms associated with this evaluation did not allow the resolution of how far such a structure may continue. The lack of any organic remains within the feature may indicate that the structure was intentionally dismantled before deterioration in situ could occur.

Of particular interest was the potential relict land surface represented by Context No. 107, which may support the suggestion that this section of the hill slope had been modified artificially. However, no artefactual evidence was recovered in association with the feature.

The area of ash and burnt tree roots (Context No. 108) in Trench 1 is considered to be relatively modern, or at least heavily disturbed in modern times, supported by the presence of late 19th century 'Creamware'. Given that the ash layer was encountered across the extended area of Trench 1 (to the SW) it may represent the removal of mature trees by burning stumps and roots in situ. The 1858 revision of the OS map for this area (Sheet 17) shows that the ground to the SE of Fort Farm, towards the motte, was flanked by two lines of trees.

Today one line of trees is preserved in the existing laneway to the SW of the motte, however, the other line has been removed in this burning episode. Given that the tree line would have run at a splayed angle from the motte (SSW – NNE), and that the NNE portion of this tree line is probably represented by the trees to the east of the motte, this could resolve why only burning to the NE end of Trench 1 was encountered.

On removal of the clay layer (Context No. 109) a small rectinlinear feature (Context No. 110), filled with a waterlogged peat (Context No. 111), was uncovered. This feature probably represents the remains of a drainage channel, however, the depth of the feature may suggest that it was vertically truncated before the clay layer was laid down. The peat at the bottom of this feature would seem to indicate that it had been left open for some time, although establishing the time scale necessary for such growth is problematic, compounded by the fact that no datable evidence was recovered from the feature.

Given the fact that the clay layer (Context No. 109) was relatively homogenous and did not exhibit any clear indication of successive build up, it would seem reasonable to suggest that it had been laid down in a single episode, or over a relatively short space of time. That the area of the development site immediately to the NE – NW of the motte displays a marked 'hollow' may indicate that the clay was dumped as a leveling deposit that has settled at a lower level.

In Trench 2 the field drain feature (Context No. 204) cut into the clay layer (Context No. 203) may be part of drainage associated with the area flanked by the two lines of trees shown in the 1858 OS revision map. However, the depth of cultivation soil (Context No. 202) would suggest that it had been artificially raised. Therefore it is possible to suggest that the field drain is associated with an earlier drainage of the land to the NW of the motte, possibly from the 17th century onwards given the drain construction. It may well be suggested that the present land surface was created by the introduction of the cultivation soil, and then flanked by the lines of trees shown in the 1858 OS map revision, probably late 17th/early 18th century at the earliest.

That the field drain (Context No. 204) is cut into the clay layer (Context No. 203) in Trench 2 would suggest that the clay layer had been deposited prior to early modern landscaping. If the clay layer in Trench 2 is of a comparable depth to that encountered at the SW end of Trench 1, then a significant amount of material may have been artificially deposited in this area.

In Trench 3 the layer of building debris is of definite late 19th century date, and on its removal did not conceal any features of potential archaeological significance. However, the level of the glacial subsoil (Context No. 303) would seem to indicate that the clay filled hollow noted to the NW of the motte does not extend as far as Trench 3.

The results of the evaluation suggest that there may have been significant landscaping carried out on the development site during the late 17th/ early 18th century at the earliest. However, the discovery of features such as the small drainage channel (Context No. 110) and the possible palisade structure (Context No. 104) would suggest that some features of potential archaeological interest are preserved in situ. Whilst establishing if these features relate to the motte structure is difficult without some form of artefactual evidence, it is possible to suggest some form of phased use for the site. In particular the clay 'levelling deposit' which sealed Context No. 110 may be interpreted as the remains of a possible platform rath, the majority of the material NW of the motte being used to fill in the hollow in front of the Fort Farm buildings during the planting of the tree avenue.

If the clay 'levelling deposit' (Context No. 109) does represent the remains of a platform rath, which was later reused as a motte site, it raises the important question of function. The motte itself does not seem to fit the profile of 'Ulster mottes' as described by McNeill (1980, 87), which tend to be lower in height and broader at the summit to support manorial halls. Therefore, it may be suggested that the motte may be either an Irish adaption of an Anglo Norman motte, or a small Anglo Norman defensive chain motte relating to the expansion of the north Antrim Anglo Norman county of Twescard in the first half of the 12th century AD (McNeil 1980, 86)

Recommendations

It is not thought that the scale and location of development will impact significantly upon previously unrecorded archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out. Given the results of the evaluation, which suggest that the motte may have been constructed on a platform rath site, and the dual possibility of Irish or Anglo Norman construction, it is proposed that an article be prepared for the Ulster Journal of Archaeology. Also a short summary should be prepared for the annual *'Excavations'* bulletin.

Bibliography

McNeill, T.E. 1980 Anglo Norman Ulster: The history and archaeology of an Irish barony 1177 – 1400; Donald, Edinburugh

Table 1

Context Register

Context No.	Description
101	Dark brown sandy clay with organic inclusions
102	Light brown sandy clay cultivation soil
103	Light orange sandy boulder clay with stony inclusions
104	Cut of possible slot trench
105	Light brown sand/clay mix – fill of C 104
106	Light grey sand – fill of C 104
107	Possible relict land surface
108	Grey ash layer with charred tree roots
109	Light brown/yellowish clay
110	Cut of possible drainage channel
111	Waterlogged peat – fill of C 110
201	Dark brown sandy clay with stony inclusions
202	Light brown sandy clay cultivation soil
203	Light brown/yellowish clay
204	Cut of field drain
205	Large stones with voids – fill of C 204
301	Mid brown sandy clay with organic inclusions
302	Light brown sandy clay cultivation soil
303	Late 19th century building debris
304	Orange brown sandy clay with stony inclusions

Table 2

Small Finds Register

Small Finds No.	Description
1	Creamware sherd – late 19th century
2	Blackware sherd – late 19th century
3	Blackware sherd – late 19th century

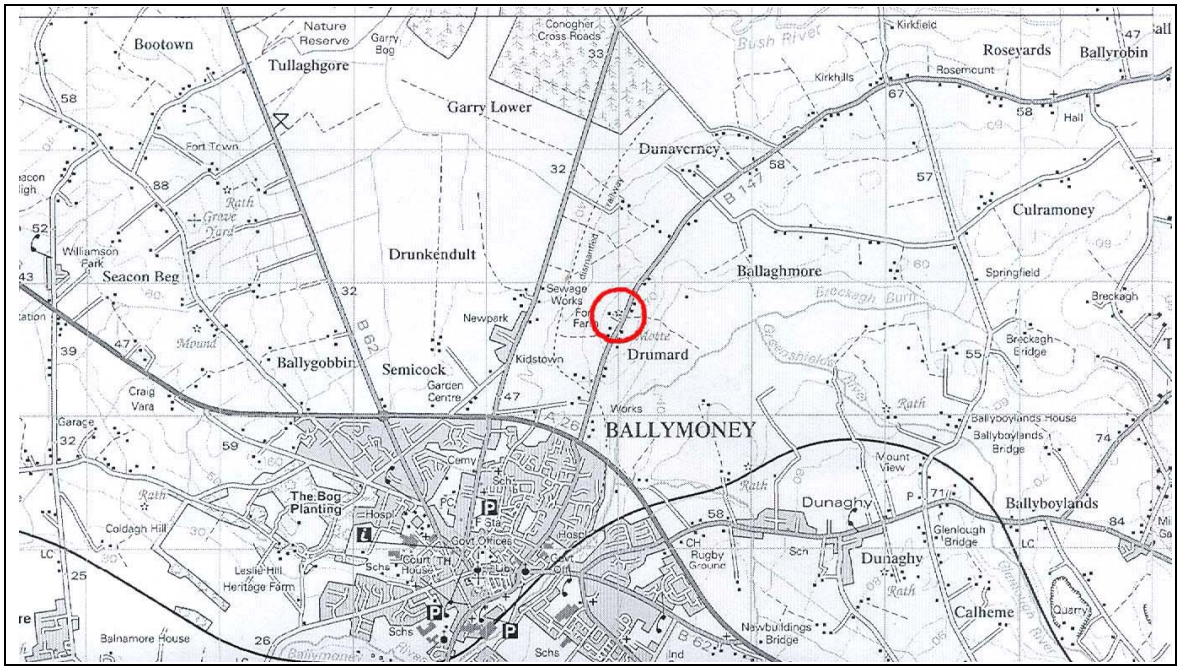

Fig. 1: Location of the development site in relation to Ballymoney. The site is circled in red.

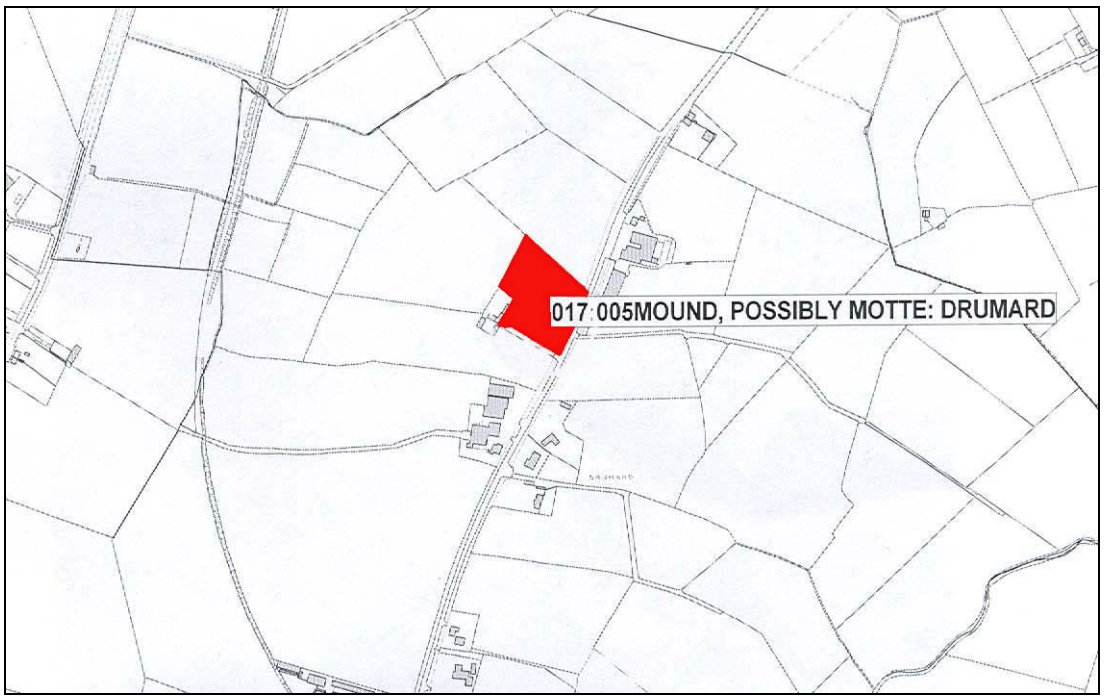

Fig. 2: Location of the development site (Maps in Action) and the associated motte feature

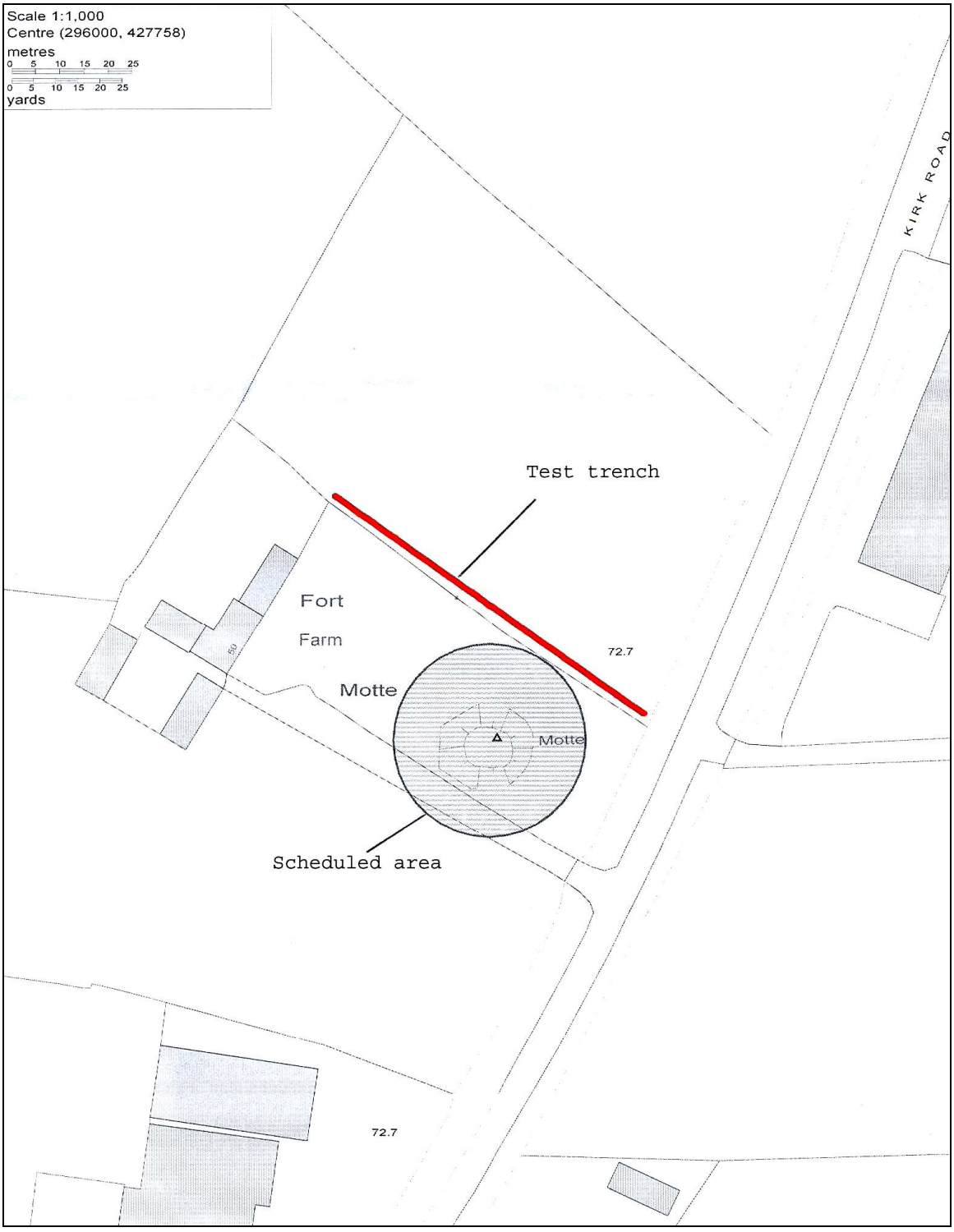

Fig.3: Location of the motte feature and associated scheduled area. The original evaluation methodology suggested a 75 metre linear test trench that was subsequently modified to three test trenches.

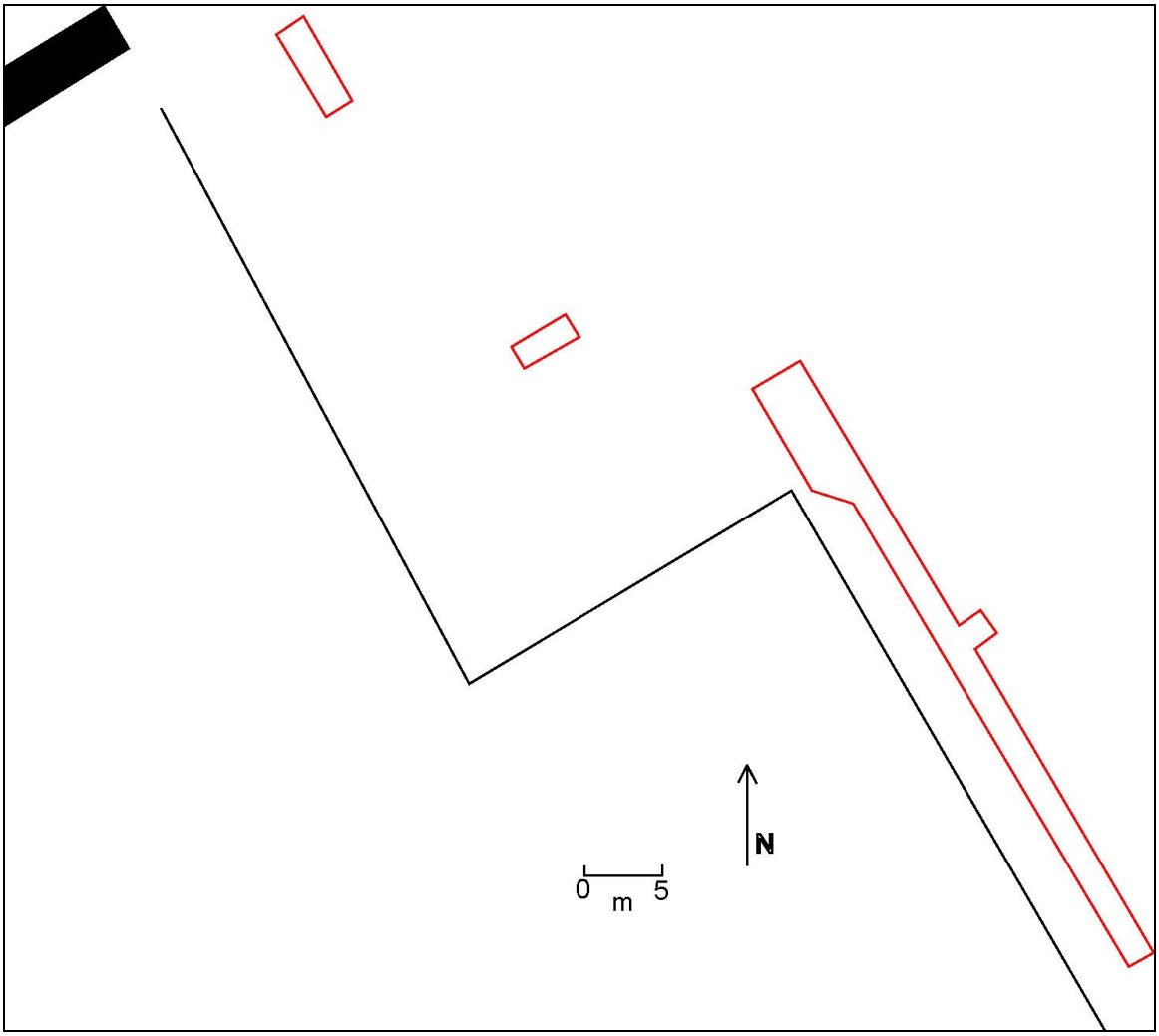

Fig. 4: Location of test trenches to the NE of the motte. Test trenches are delineated in red, and run Trench 1-3 SE-NW. Fort Farm is represented by the black box in the NE of the plan.

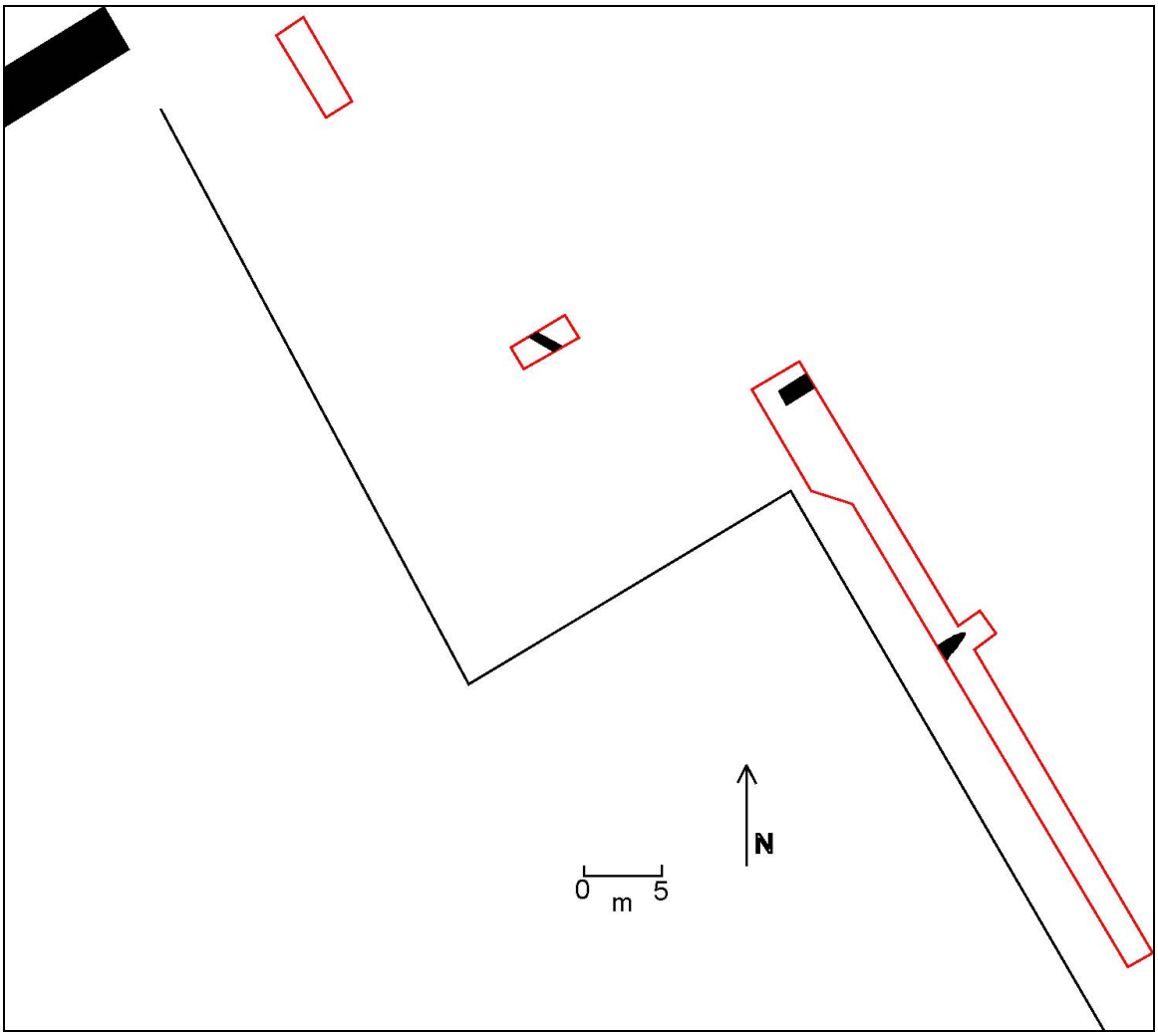

Fig. 5: Location of features of potential archaeological interest (black areas within red trench outlines). Trenches run 1-3 SE-NW.

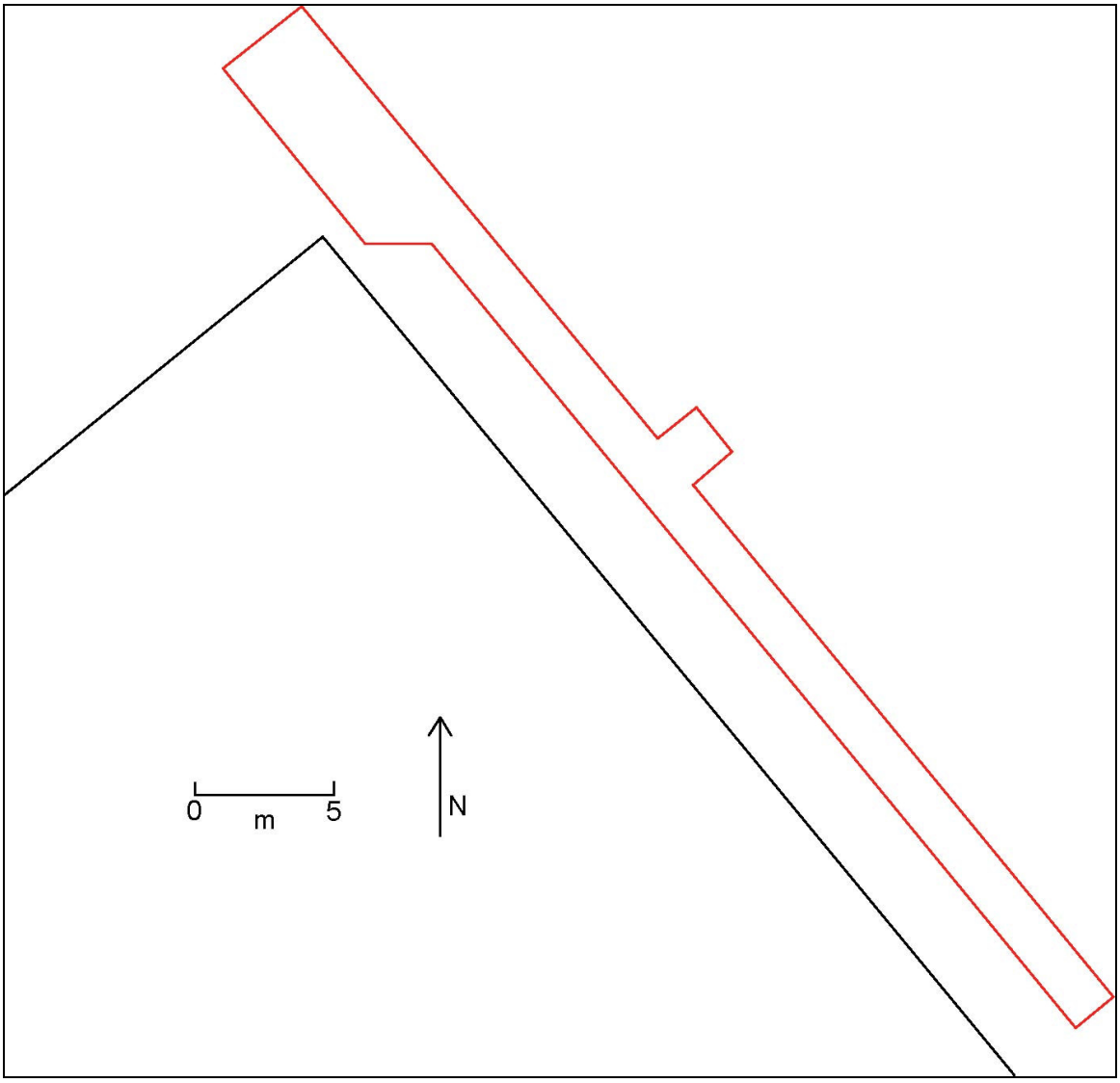

Fig. 6: Plan of Trench 1, showing extensions to NNE and NW.

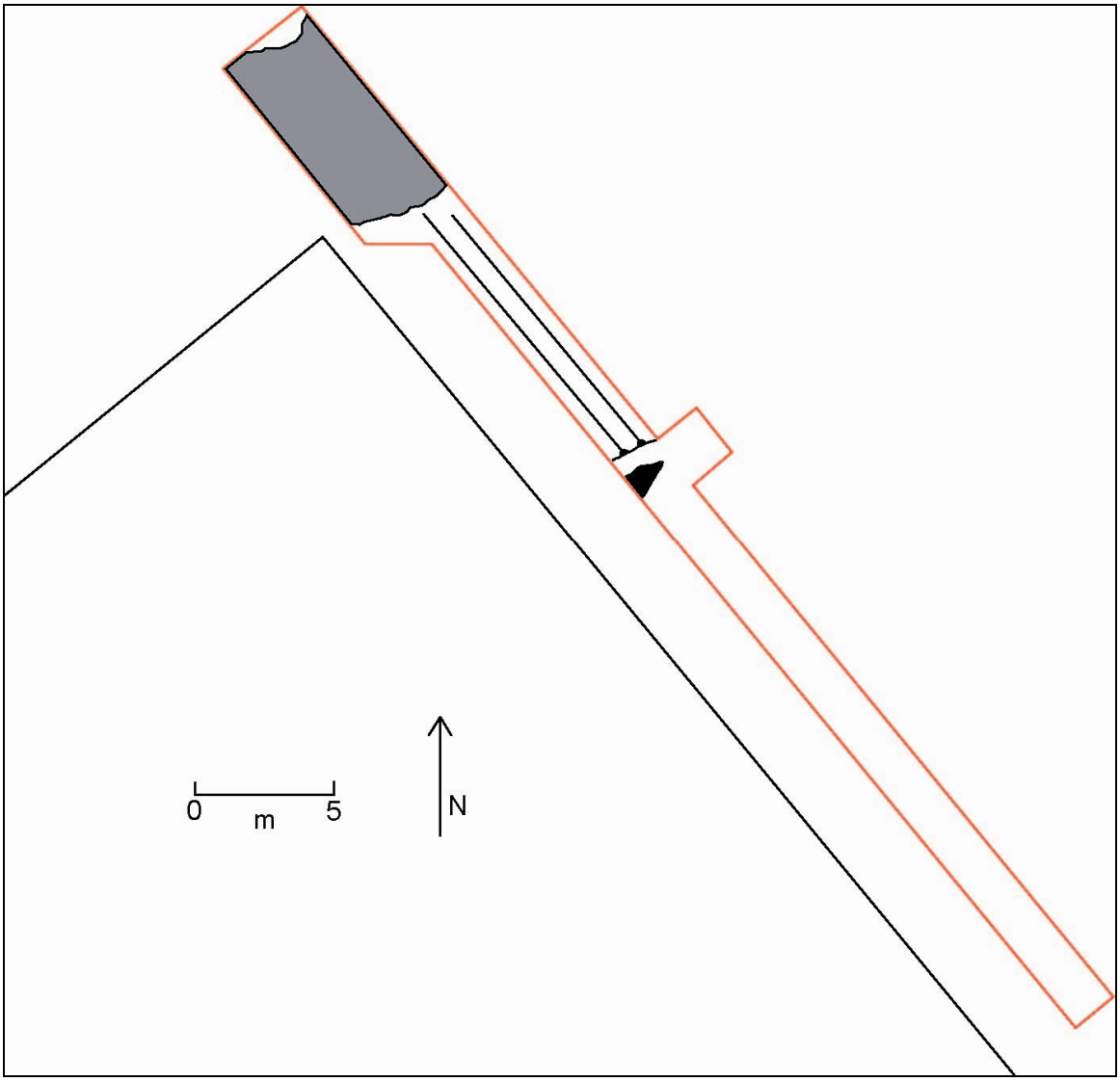

Fig. 7: Plan of Trench 1 showing rectilinear feature (Context No. 104) in black, hachures indicating break of slope, and ash layer (Context No. 108) in grey.

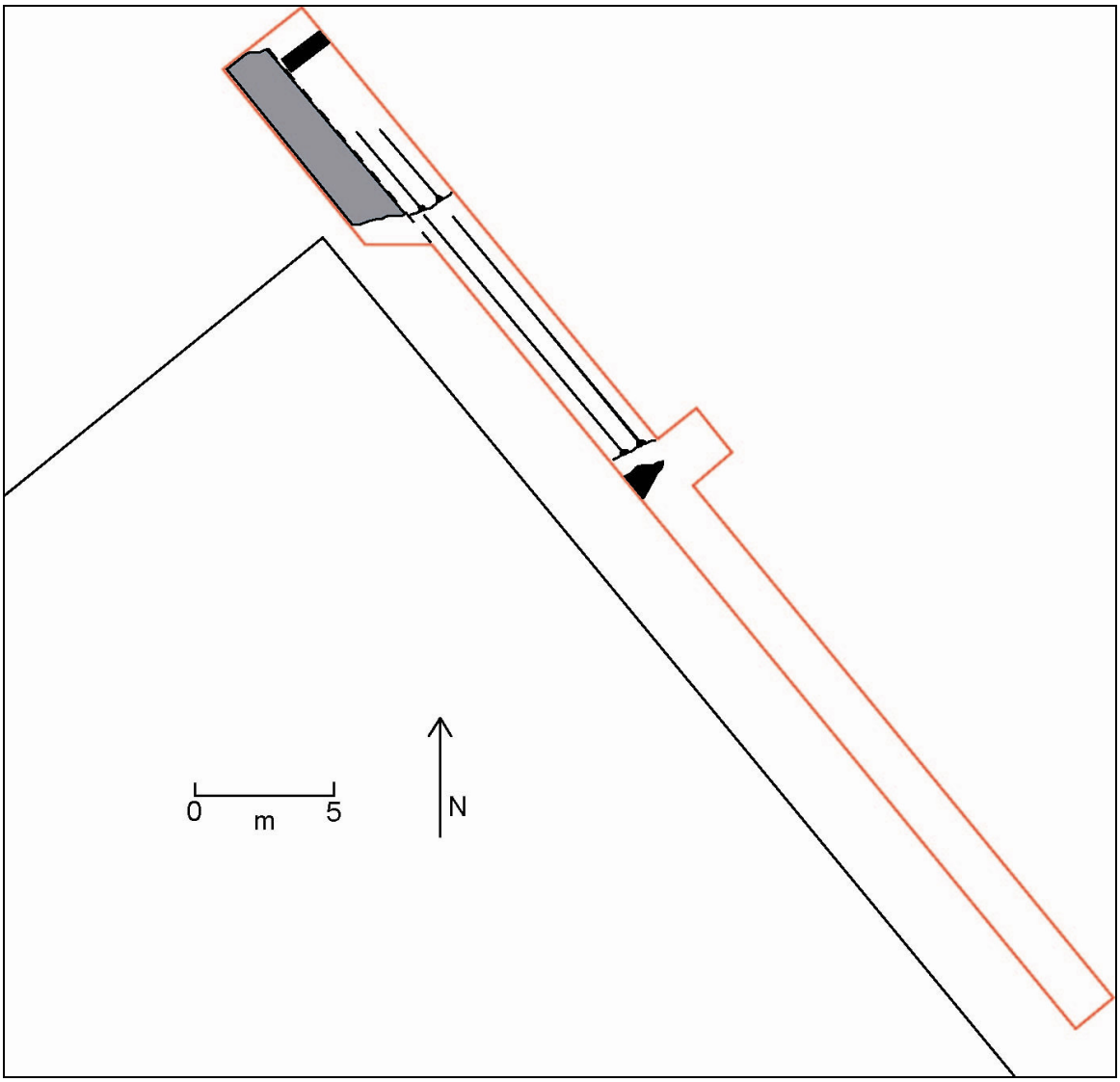

Fig. 8: Plan of Trench 1 showing the excavation of ash layer (Context No. 108) and clay layer (Context No. 109). The rectilinear channel (Context No. 110) is represented in black in the NNW extremity of the trench.

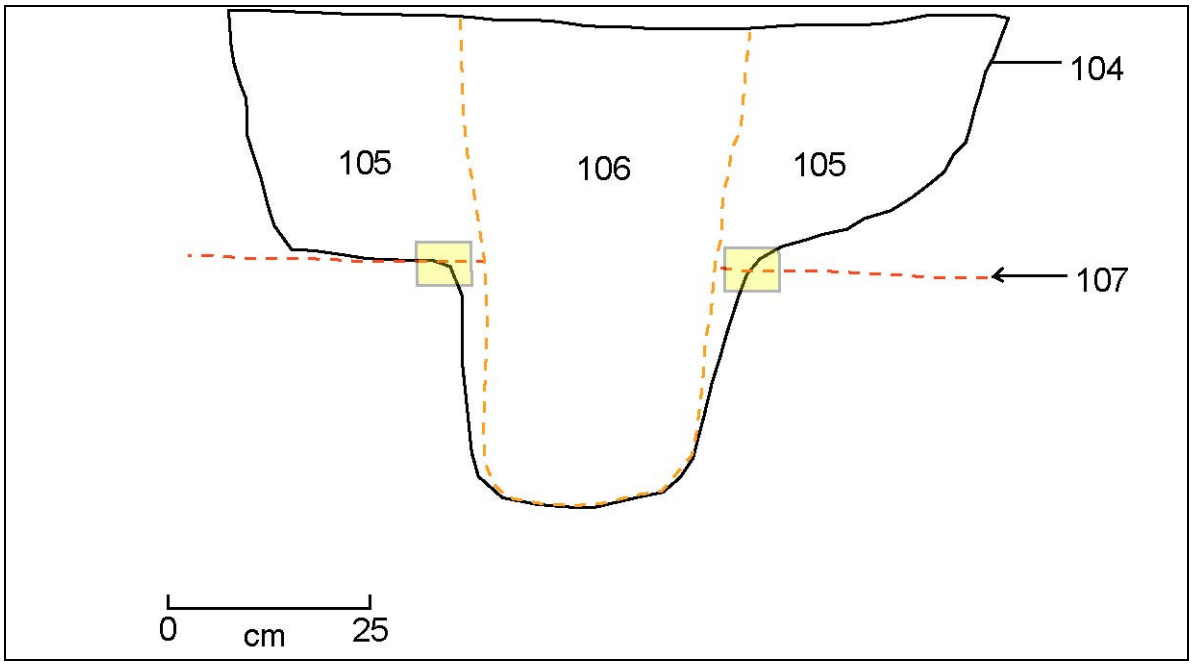

Fig. 9: Section through rectilinear feature (Context No. 104), showing fills, (Context Nos. 105 and 106), and interface interpreted interface (in orange). Note the relict land surface represented as Context No. 107. The extent of Context No. 107 encountered in section is highlighted in yellow.

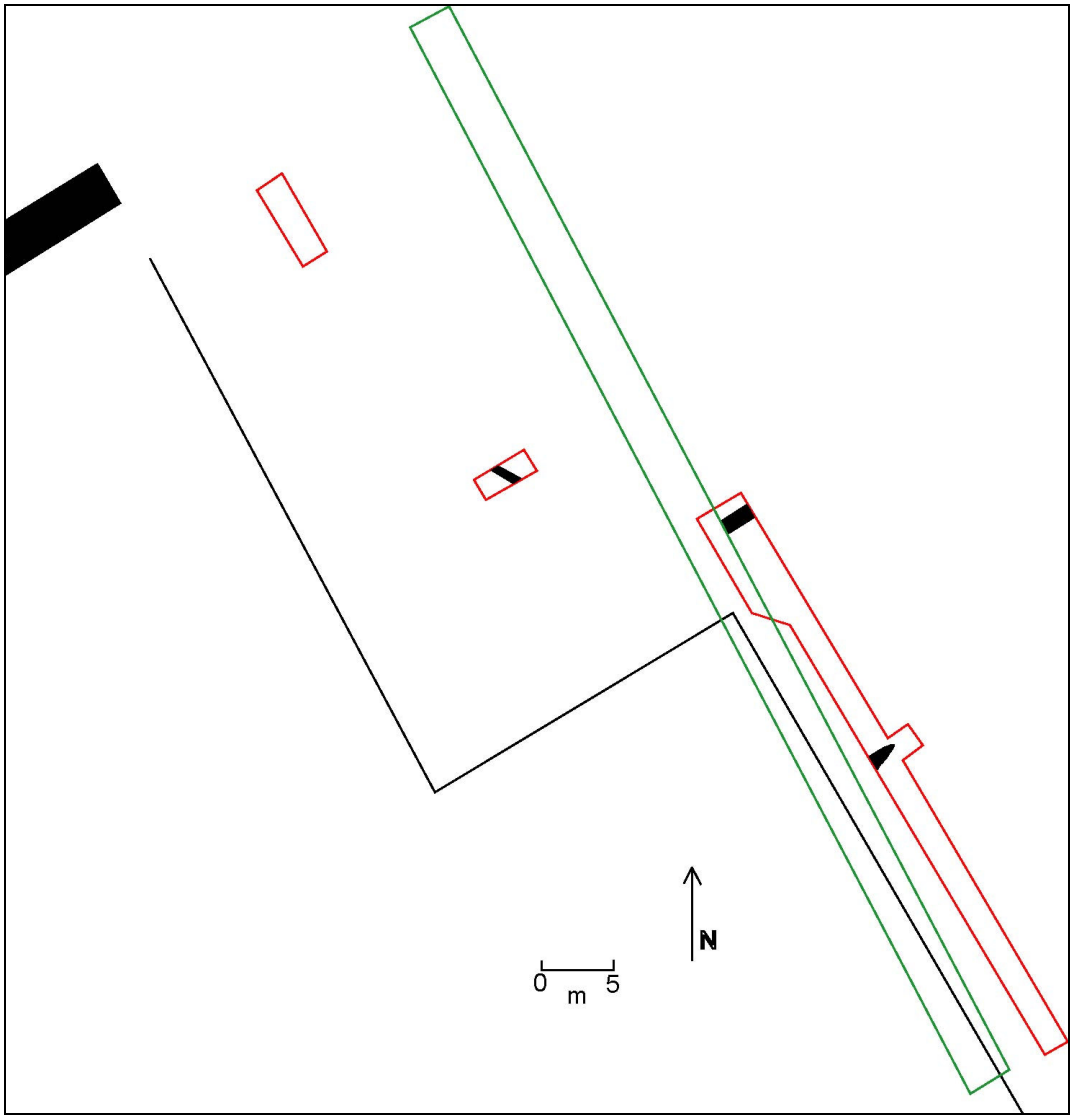

Fig. 10: Plan of Trenches 1, 2 and 3 (running SE-NW), delineated in red. The line of trees to the east of the motte (shown c. 1858) is represented by a green rectangle, the line of which crosses the NW extremity of Trench 1 (area of ash and burnt tree roots – Context No. 108).

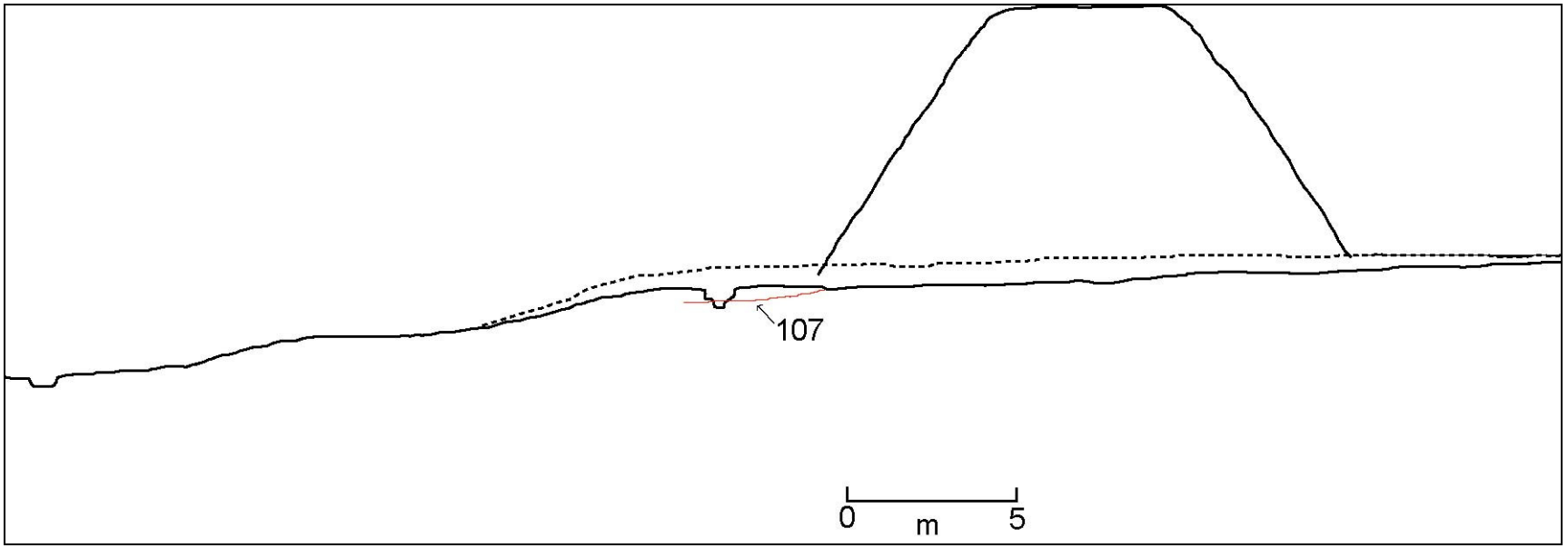

Fig. 11: Relationship of exposed land surface encountered in Trench 1 (solid black line), including projected relict surface represented by Context No. 107 (red line). The dashed black line shows the level of the ground that the motte is constructed upon, which may be the remains of a modified platform rath.

Plate 1: Motte (ANT 17: 005 S), looking SW. Note the trees along line of possible 18th century planting flanking the motte.

Plate 2: Excavation of Trench 1, looking NW. Note the exposed rectilinear band of sand (Context No. 104) with ranging rod laid horizontally. The grey ash layer (Context No. 108) is beginning to be exposed at the far end of the trench.

Plate 3: Trench 1 following exposure of grey sandy feature (Context No. 104), note the lighter sandy material (Context No. 106) at centre of the feature. Looking NE.

Plate 4: Feature 104 following half section, looking SW.

Plate 5: Feature 104 following half section, illustrating the stepped profile.

Plate 6: Excavation of Trench 1, looking NW, after the exposure of the grey ash layer (Context No. 108).

Plate 7: Close up of charred tree roots from the grey ash layer (Context No. 108).

Plate 8: Trench 1 following the excavation of grey ash layer (Context No. 108) and clay layer (Context No. 109), revealing small peat filled drainage channel(Context No. 110). Looking NW.

Plate 9: Trench 1 following the excavation of clay layer (Context No. 109) above the small peat filled drainage channel. Looking NE.

Plate 10: The small peat filled drainage channel following half sectioning and removal of peat, illustrating the high water table.

Plate 11: Trench 2, looking SW following the removal of the topsoil (Context No 201) and cultivation soil (Context No. 202), revealing the field drain feature.

Plate 12 Trench 2 looking SW following the removal of the field drain, showing the yellowish brown clay layer (Context No. 203). The excavation was halted after a pressurized water pipe was ruptured.

Plate 13: Trench 3 looking NW following the removal of topsoil (Context No. 301), cultivation soil (Context No. 302) and late 19th century building debris (Context No. 303).

Plate 14: View from top of motte, looking north over Trench 1

Plate 15: View from top of motte looking northwest over Trench 1

Plate 16: View from top of motte looking east. The hill in the distance behind the house supports another motte structure (Forttown).