



Monitoring Report No. 109

**260m north-east of 77 Ballyportery Road
Lavin Upper
Dunloy
County Antrim**

AE/07/05

Ruth Logue

Site Specific Information

Site Name: 260m north-east of 77 Ballyportery Road, Dunloy

Townland: Lavin Upper

SMR No (if applicable): ANT 018:044

State Care Scheduled Other

Grid Ref: D0534323075

County: Antrim

Excavation Licence Number: AE/07/05

Planning Reference Number: D/2004/0307/O

Date of Monitoring: Between 24th January and 1st February 2007

Archaeologist Present: Ruth Logue

Brief Summary:

Monitoring of access road and part of house/garden site topsoil stripped to subsoil to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development on any previously unrecorded below-ground remains.

One small pit of archaeological significance found; struck and burnt flint found in topsoil.

Type of monitoring: Ground preparation works using mechanical back-acting digger under archaeological supervision

Size of area opened: Access road - 225m long and 3m wide
House/garden site - 65m by 55m

Current Land Use: Improved grassland

Intended Land Use: Single dwelling with access road

Account of the monitoring

Archaeological Background

The proposed development site is located off the Ballyportery Road in the townland of Lavin Upper, County Antrim. The site comprises an access road from Ballyportery Road and a rectangular site where the house is to be built. The access road is 225m long and follows a field boundary. One of the planning conditions for the house was that it was to be built out of view of the road: the access road inclines from Ballyportery Road and declines further up the field just before the house site is reached.

The development site was recommended for archaeological monitoring due to its proximity to ANT 018:044. In the Northern Ireland Sites and Monuments Database ANT 018:044 is described as a 'probable neolithic occupation site'. In 1966 the site was partially excavated by the Ulster Museum after a large quantity of flints were brought to the museum for identification. A roughly circular area of about 600m in diameter was pointed out by the landowner as the findspot of flint tools, flint cores and both broken and whole polished stone axe heads. A small part of the townland Ballyportery North is included in the south-west quadrant of the area. The centre of the area is a hill, with good views to the south and west but overlooked by higher land elsewhere.

A small excavation, directed by Laurence Flanagan of the Ulster Museum, was undertaken in the area in 1966, no features of archaeological significance were found.

In 2004 an evaluation was carried out on the application site under PPS 6 Policy BH 3. Archaeological remains were uncovered during this evaluation. To make the planning application acceptable under policy guidelines EHS:PHM required that a zone of 15m out from the rear of the site should be avoided by development. This would exclude any building or deep planting (eg trees), but could facilitate access, parking or pathways if the work was archaeologically monitored and any remains recorded and preserved beneath geotextile matting before work commenced.

Monitoring

Monitoring took place over 6 days (24, 25, 29, 30, 31 January and 1 February 2007), requested by PHM Casework Officer Paul Logue. As the access road from Ballyportery Road to the house site was to be stripped of topsoil this process was also monitored. Hardcore was levelled on to the access road as the topsoil was removed to facilitate the movement of machinery to the house site. The 15m zone highlighted by EHS:PHM at the rear of the site to be avoided by development was designated for landscaping purposes by the developer, and topsoil from the access road was dumped there.

The topsoil (Context 100) averaged between 0.20m to 0.25m across the application site, it was a mid brown silty loam. Flint, including an end scraper and burnt flint were found in the topsoil (see Appendix B). Topsoil lay above subsoil (Context 101), an orange silty clay.

In the western corner of the house site a small pit (Cut 102) was found cut into the subsoil. The cut measured 0.50m north to south and 0.47m east to west, and had a maximum depth of 0.13m. Cut 102 was filled with Context 103, a mid-brown silty loam with light charcoal flecking, there were a number of sherds of pottery in the fill (see Appendix A).

Archive:

Finds:

From topsoil: flint scraper, 5 pieces of flint, 8 pieces of burnt flint, 1 sherd of glazed red earthenware

From feature: 10 sherds of pottery

Photographs: 14 digital photos

Plans/Drawings: Section and plan of Cut 102

Archive held in Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork offices.

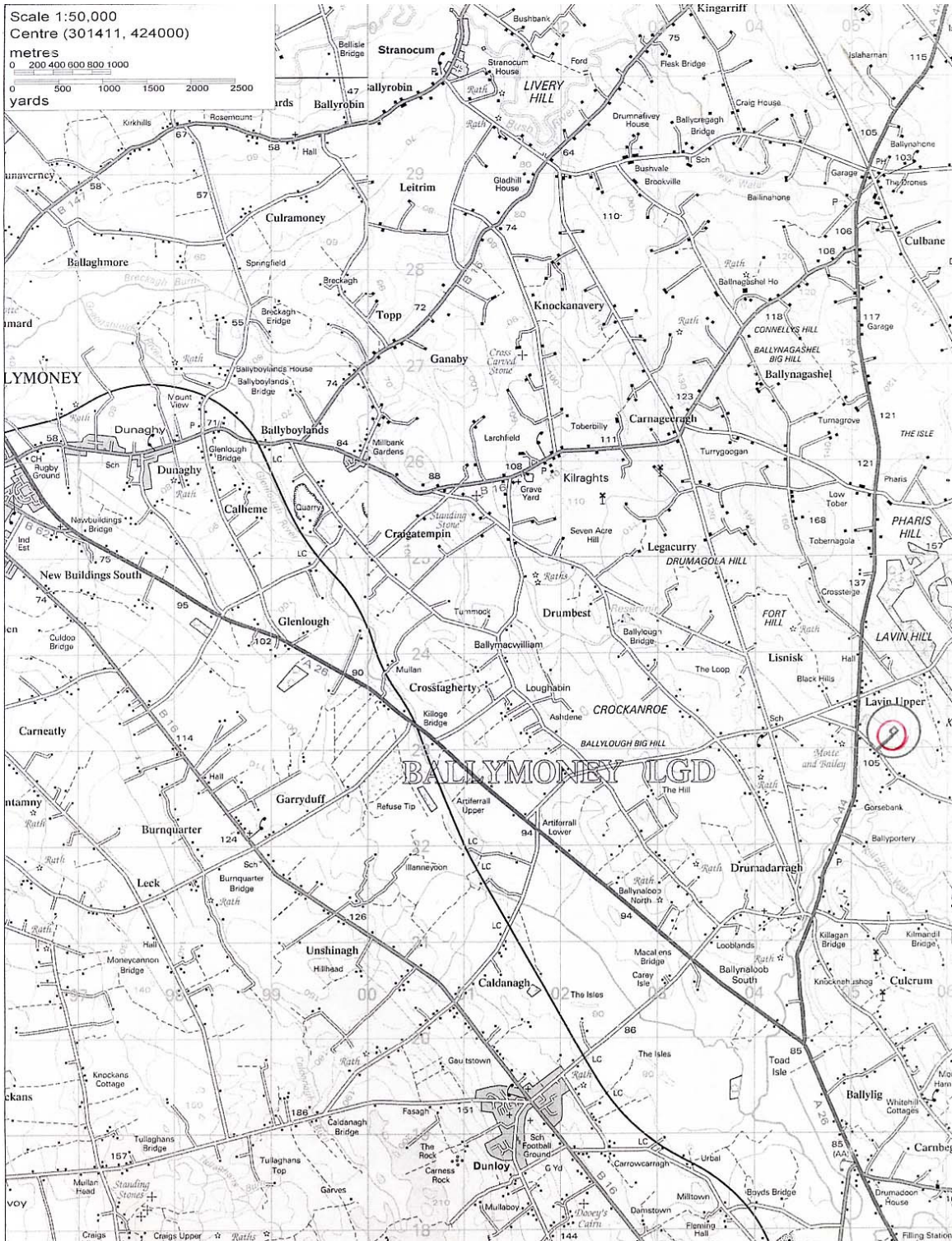


Figure 1: 1:50,000 map of area showing location of application site (circled).

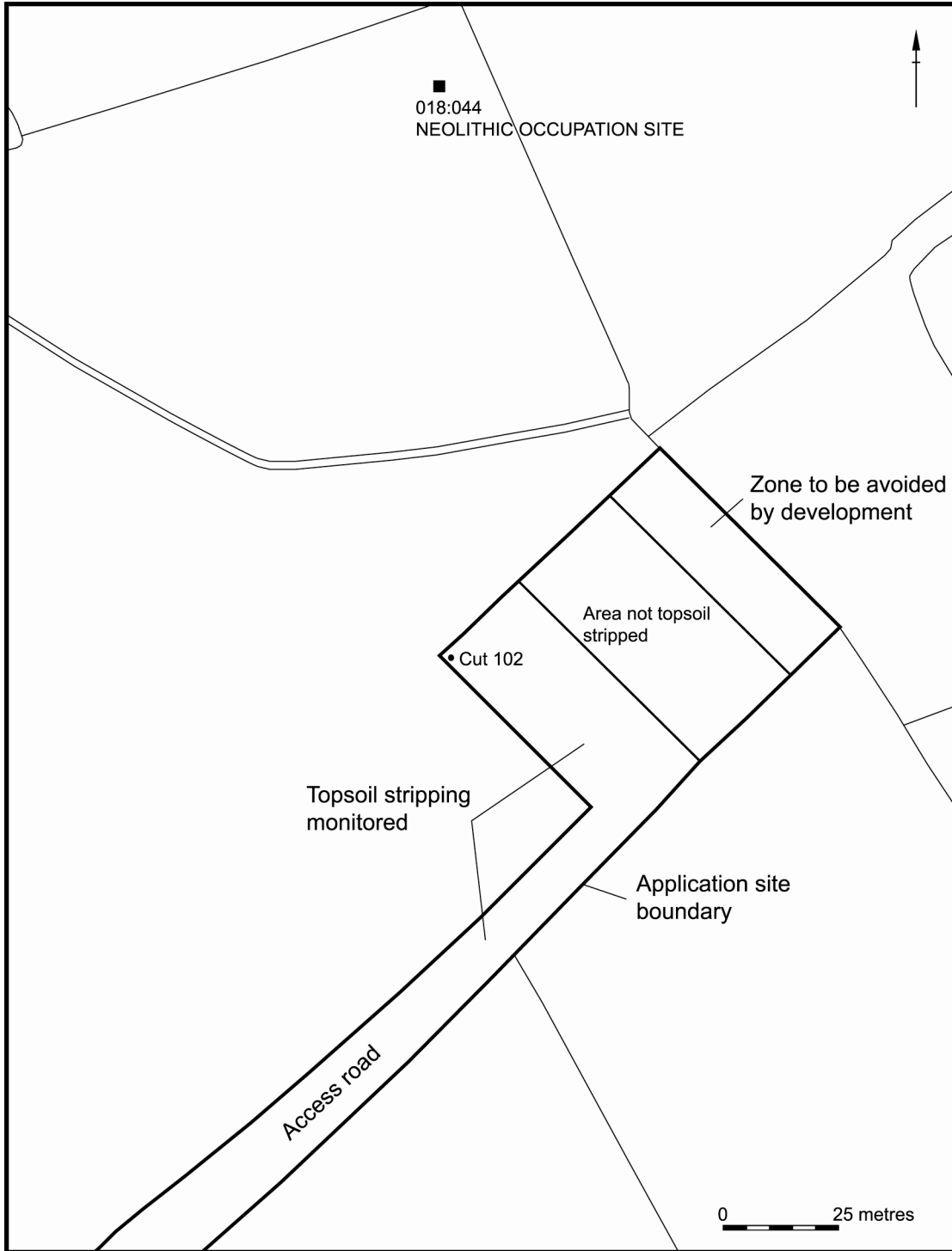


Figure 2: Plan of application site and location of ANT 018:044.



Plate 1: Hill where ANT 018:044 is situated, looking north-west from application site.



Plate 2: House/garden area of application site, looking north-east.



Plate 3: Access road looking south-west towards Ballyportery Road.



Plate 4: House site after removal of topsoil, looking north.

Appendix A: The Pottery

Cormac McSparron, Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork

Ten sherds of pottery were recovered from the pit at Lavin Upper. Three of the sherds were rim sherds; the other seven sherds were body sherds. Three of these body sherds were tiny fragments which were too small for meaningful comment. These sherds are likely to represent six different vessels.

Vessel 1 A single rim fragment of Medieval Ulster Coarse pottery (Everted Rim Ware). This vessel would have had a rim diameter of approximately 20cm. The rim has been rolled over to give an almost rounded appearance with the top of the rim being slightly trimmed or flattened with a knife. The vessel has a near vertical rim sitting on top of a slightly globular body. The thickness of the sherd, measured from a point just below the rim, is approximately 6mm. The fabric of the pot is black (possibly indicative of firing in a reduced atmosphere although it may simply indicate the use of an oxygen poor clay) has a high density of what appear to be small fragments of crushed quartz and crushed black iron oxide fragments within the fabric. All these inclusions are small, up to approximately 1mm, and very angular suggesting deliberate additions to the clay rather than inclusions present in the clay before its extraction. This vessel is typical of Medieval Ulster Coarse pottery from the mid thirteenth century through to the fourteenth century. Thirteenth and fourteenth century Medieval Ulster Coarse pottery tends to have smaller rim diameters than later vessels which have much wider rims, in some cases in excess of 30cm. Also rounded and flattened rim forms dominate in the earlier vessels with a wider range of forms apparent in the later vessels. Unfortunately it is impossible, in the absence of more examples, to say with certainty that this vessel dates from 1250 to 1400, as smaller vessels with simple rim forms continued to be made in the later Middle Ages, they were just no longer the only or dominant forms.

Vessel 2 A single rim sherd of coarse pottery. This vessel had a rim diameter of approximately 18cm. The top of the rim is flattened. The rim is vertical and there is a slight sign of a globular upper body to the vessel although there is not enough of the vessel present to be certain of this. The sherd is 6mm thick. The fabric of the vessel is buff to light brown. The exterior of the sherd shows some sign of deliberate slurring and the vessel has been wiped prior to firing. The fabric of the vessel has some quite angular crushed quartz and crushed basalt inclusions although in fewer numbers than in Vessel 1. This may possibly be a fragment of a Medieval Ulster Coarse pot of the 1250 to 1400 period but it is too small for certainty.

Vessel 3 A single rim sherd of coarse pottery. This sherd is too small for an accurate estimate of the rim diameter. The top of the rim is flattened. The rim is vertical with no indication of any globularity to the body. The sherd is approximately 5mm thick. The fabric of the pot is light brown with what appear to be crushed flint or chalk inclusions and some mica. It is impossible to be certain what type of pottery this is however crushed flint has been observed in Neolithic pottery.

Vessel 4 A body sherd of coarse pottery. This sherd is 4mm thick and is light orange-brown. It has what appear to be crushed flint and mica inclusions. This could be part of the same vessel as Vessel 3.

Vessel 5 Two adjoining body sherds of coarse pottery, 6mm in thickness. The sherds are 6mm thick and coloured dark brown. The exterior of the sherds show evidence of wiping. The fabric contains mica inclusions. It is difficult to identify what type of pottery this is or its age.

Vessel 6 Single body sherd of pottery. The sherd is 5mm thick and is clearly curving in two planes suggesting it belonged to a fairly small globular pot. The sherd was too small for any accurate estimate of its dimensions. There is a trace of what might be rilling consistent with wheel manufacture and there is some wiping on the interior and exterior of the sherd.

Conclusions

It is difficult to attribute small fragments of coarse pottery to either a potting tradition or to a period. To make accurate attributions of this nature it is necessary to have one or preferably a number of sherds displaying form / decorative motifs. Only one sherd of pottery from this site can definitely be attributed to a style or period, Vessel 1, the piece of Medieval Ulster Coarse pottery. Of the other sherds, Vessels 2, 5 and 6 are likely to Medieval also. Vessel 3 and Vessel 4 could be Neolithic as their fabric is reminiscent of that found on Neolithic sites. Given the proximity of the evaluation area to the suggested Neolithic site (Ant 018:044) it seems likely that these sherds are residual material mixed up with later finds in a Medieval pit.



Plate 5: Vessel 1.



Plate 6: Vessel 2.

Appendix B: The Flint

Brian Sloan, Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork

End Scraper

Scraping edge is produced on the distal end of a squat, overhung flake. Distal shows some damage on the ventral side which could indicate usage, as well as two largish flakes on the dorsal side suggesting re-working or modification of the tool. Platform edge preparation is evident, this was to strengthen the platform prior to striking (probably with a hard hammer stone).

Scrapers are notoriously difficult to fit into an exact chronological time frame. It is generally assumed that the larger examples date from the earlier part of the neolithic and get smaller as we get closer to the bronze age, culminating in the thumbnail scrapers of the bronze age. However, this size difference may be functional rather than chronological. It can only really safely be said that the example from Lavin Upper dates to the neolithic/bronze ages.

Burnt Flint

These examples are completely calcified due to heat, suggesting that the pieces have been very close to an episode of burning (eg. in a fire) rather than on its periphery. Seven of the pieces are unmodified lumps, shattered by the heat of the burning. One appears to be the distal end of a small flake, although due to the high degree of calcification, this is difficult to say for certain.

Miscellaneous Flint

One angular lump may be of interest. It seems that this is a core fragment due to the flake scars and small amount of cortex present. It appears to be bi-polar shatter in that the core was rested on an anvil stone whilst being struck. The pressure from the hammerstone would travel through the core, hit the anvil stone and rebound upwards, causing the core to shatter in an angular lump. This method was used when there were inadequate supplies of quality raw material, or in the bronze age when the skill of lithic manufacture had diminished due to new materials and techniques.

Three flakes are present in the assemblage which are not diagnostic in the slightest.

One thermal shattered fragment.