Evaluation Report No. 154

8 Knockmount Park
Knock
Belfast
Co. Down

LICENCE NO. AE/08/150

David McIlreavy

Site Specific Information

Site Name : 8 Knockmount Park

Townland : Knock

County : Down

Grid Ref. : J3819 7292

SMR No. : DOW 04:002

State Care : Scheduled [ ]
Other [X]

Excavation Licence No : AE/08/150

Planning Ref / No. : Z/2007/2364/F

Dates of Evaluation : 21st January – 05th February 2008

Archaeologist Present : David McIlreavy

Brief Summary:

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in the townland of Knock, Belfast, Co. Down, in advance of development. The archaeological evaluation was requested by Neil Yeaman, EHS Built Heritage Caseworker, due to the proximity of a medieval church and graveyard. The NISMR notes that the church site was listed in the 1306 ecclesiastical taxation as Dundela, and as Knockollumkille in late 17th century documents. At present only fragmentary elements of the church remain, although the graveyard is still in use.

Type of monitoring:

Due to the proximity of a medieval graveyard, and the high potential for the presence human remains, four hand dug trenches were archaeologically excavated on the proposed development site.

Current Land Use: Garden

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief account of the excavation

Introduction

An archaeological evaluation was conducted in the townland of Knock, Belfast, Co. Down. The proposed development site consisted of a roughly rectangular garden plot; maximum length 10 metres, maximum width 5 metres. The driveway to the existing dwelling at 8 Knockmount Park has encroached on some of the area designated as garden, whilst it was noted that there was a drop of approximately 0.5 metres from the surface of the garden to that of the adjacent woodland park, implying a discontinuity between both levels.

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 proposed development site to that of a medieval church and graveyard (DOW 04: 002) and the possibility that there may be previously unrecorded remains associated with this site.

Excavation

Due to the high potential for burials in the immediate area of the proposed development site, four evaluation trenches were hand excavated to the level of the glacial subsoil.

Trench 1 was excavated running 2 metres x 1metre NW – SE parallel with the proposed development site boundary. The overlying vegetation was removed and the trench was manually deturved, exposing a grey/light brown topsoil layer (Context No. 101). This overlay a layer of mixed mid orange and brown soil (Context No. 102) that exhibited signs of a levelling deposit. No cultivation soil was noted for the site, Context No. 102 overlying loose rubble (Context No. 103) at the northern end of the trench, and a modern rubbish layer (Context No. 104) at the southern edge. The modern rubbish layer extended below the level of Context No. 103, and directly overlay a poured concrete layer (Context No. 105) that extended throughout the trench. The concrete layer was manually broken, uncovering the glacial subsoil (Context No. 106), a deep red sandy clay. A sondage of approximately 0.20 metres was excavated in the glacial subsoil. No artefacts were recovered from the trench.

Trench 2 was excavated running 2 metres x 1 metre NW – SE, parallel to Trench 1. The trench was manually deturved and a layer of light grey/light brown topsoil (Context No. 201) was removed, revealing a layer of modern rubbish mixed with rubble (Context 202). This layer of modern rubbish directly overlay a poured concrete beam (Context 203) that ran longitudinally across the trench. This concrete was exposed in section, and rested directly on a deep red sandy clay (Context No. 204). As with Trench 1 a sondage of approximately 0.20 metres was excavated into the deep red sandy clay (Context No. 204). No artefacts were recovered from the trench.

Trench 3 was excavated running NE-SW between Trenches 1 and 2. It was positioned at 90º to Trench 1 to identify if the poured concrete structure (Context No. 105) extended as far as the concrete beam in Trench 2 (Context No. 203). As it had been identified that the concrete layer was the base of severe modern discontinuity the layers above were not allocated Context Nos. On excavation of the trench it was confirmed that the poured concrete structure (Context No. 105) extended throughout Trench 3, abutting the poured concrete beam (Context 203). No further excavation of this trench was undertaken.

Trench 4 was excavated running NW-SE, approximately 1 metre SW of, and parallel to Trench 2. The trench was manually deturved and the topsoil, a light grey/brown sandy clay (Context No. 401) was removed revealing a layer of fine sand and rubble (Context No. 402). This directly overlay a mixed layer of mid brown/orange clay (Context No. 403) considered to be a modern levelling deposit. The levelling deposit directly overlay a layer of rough stone (Context No. 404) similar to the material used to construct parts of the wall around the graveyard, however, on removal of the loose stone no evidence for a wall footing or structural collapse could be identified. The stone layer directly overlay a deep red sandy clay subsoil (Context No. 405). No artefacts were recovered from the trench.

Interpretation

The majority of the layers uncovered during the course of the excavation would suggest that the proposed development site had experienced serious modern discontinuities. Initial research of the area indicates that the proposed development site had been part of the extended buildings of Knockmount House, a 19th century estate house, which remained extant until the late 1970s. It is therefore considered highly unlikely, on the basis of the trenches excavated during this evaluation, that any significant archaeological remains exist on the proposed development site.

Recommendations

It is not considered that the proposed development of the main site will impact on previously unrecorded archaeological remains. Consequently, it is recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out, and no further publication except a short summary in the annual *'Excavations'* bulletin.

Table 1

Context Register

Context No.	Description
101	Grey/light brown topsoil
102	Mixed orange brown clay layer
103	Loose rubble layer
104	Modern rubbish
105	Poured concrete
106	Deep red sandy clay
201	Grey/light brown topsoil
202	Modern rubbish/rubble
203	Poured concrete beam
204	Deep red sandy clay
401	Light brown/grey topsoil
402	Fine sand/rubble
403	Mid brown/orange clay
404	Rough stone layer
405	Deep red sandy clay

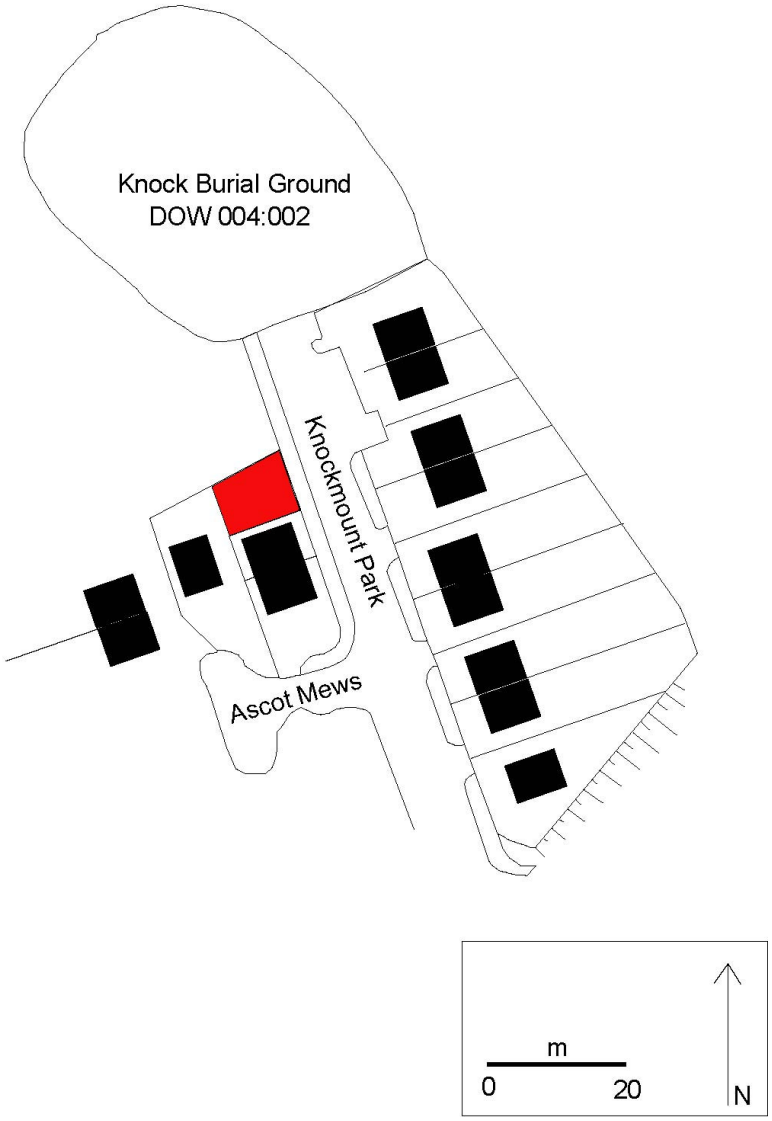

Fig. 1 Location of the proposed development site (in red)

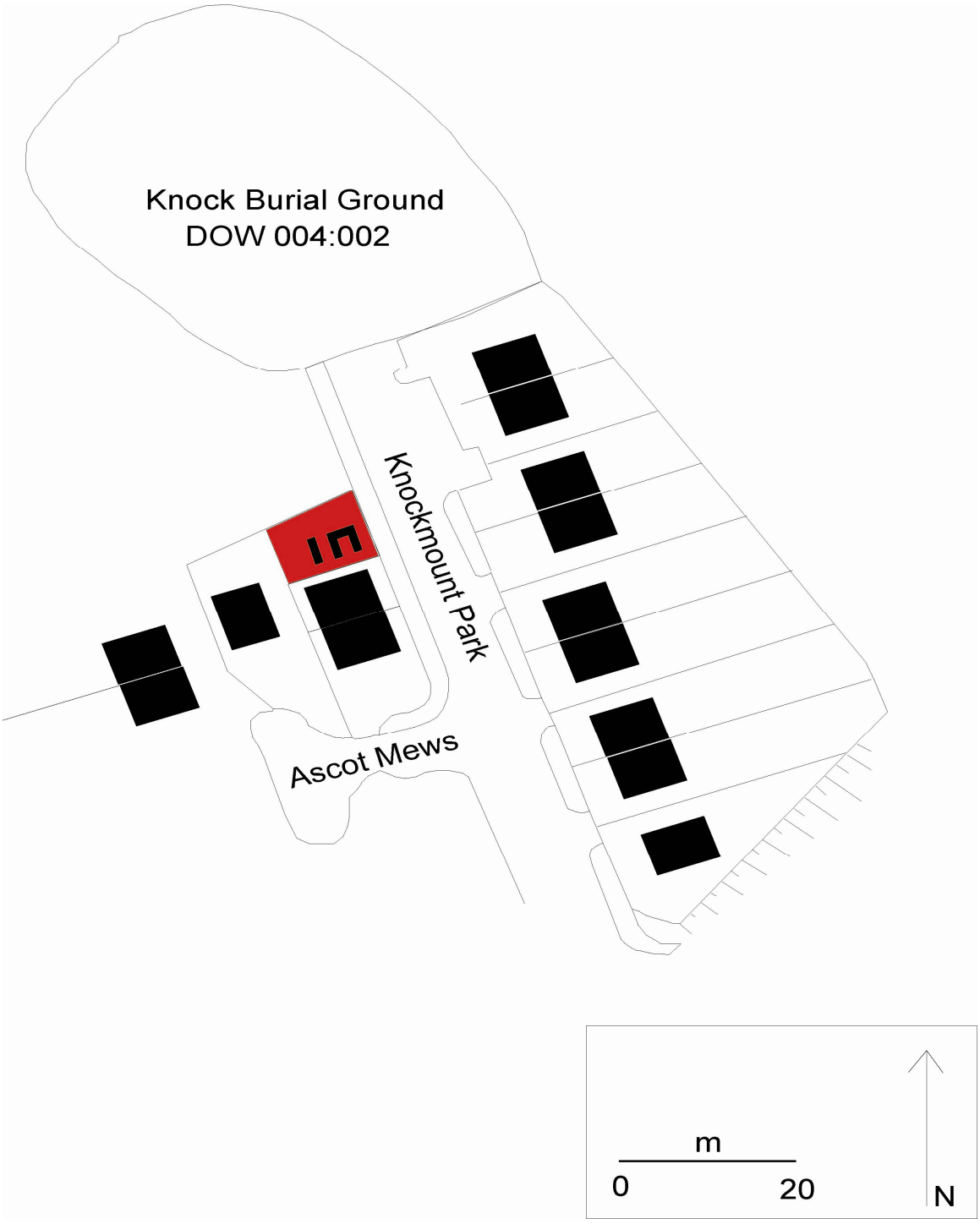

Fig. 2 Location of test trenches on the proposed development site. The proposed development site is highlighted in red, the trenches are highlighted in black.

Plate 1 General shot of the proposed development site, looking NE.

Plate 2 Looking SE across Trench 1 after the removal of the sod layer.

Plate 3 Exposure of the modern rubbish layer (Context No. 104)

Plate 4 Exposure of the poured concrete layer in Trench 1 (Context No 105)

Plate 5 Exposure of the poured concrete beam in Trench 1 (Context No. 203), abutting the poured concrete surface (Context No. 105).

Plate 6 Removal of the concrete beam (Context No. 203) and poured surface (Context No. 105).

Plate 7 Exposure of the deep red sandy clay glacial subsoil (Context No. 106).

Plate 8 Exposure of the deep red sandy clay (Context No 106, 204) in two sondages through the poured concrete surface (Context No. 105)

Plate 9 Exposure of the rough stone layer (Context No. 404) at the base of Trench 4.

Plate 9 Exposure of the rough stone layer at the base of Trench 4.