



MONITORING REPORT No. 223

69 DRUMLOUGH ROAD, DRUMGATH,
COUNTY DOWN

LICENCE No. AE/11/32E
EMILY MURRAY

Report Date: 13th April 2011

Site Specific Information

Site name: 69 Drumlough Road, Drumgath, Rathfriland, Co. Down

Townland: Drumgath

SMR No. : (adjacent to) DOW047:042 (Scheduled)

Grid ref.: J1667329641

County: Down

Excavation lic. No.: AE/11/32E

Planning ref. / No.: P/2010/1417/F

Dates of monitoring: 21st March 2011

Archaeologist present: Emily Murray

Brief Summary: An archaeological evaluation was carried out at this site (see above) in an effort to inform the planning service of the presence and survival of archaeological remains that would be adversely affected by the proposed development (P/2010/1417/F). The application site is located in close proximity (approx. 9m-11m) to the scheduled medieval graveyard and church-site of Drumgath (DOW047:042s). Four trenches were opened across the footprint of the proposed development using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision. The four trenches were excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (encountered at a depth of between 0.17-0.15m) and no features or finds of archaeological significance were observed during the evaluation.

Type of monitoring: Mechanical excavation of four evaluative trenches opened across the footprint of the proposed development (each 1.5m wide and with varying lengths measuring between 12m and 18.7m).

Size of area opened: Approximately 59m² (total area mechanically excavated).

Current land use: Gravel-covered farm yard with associated barns and outbuildings.

Intended land use: Residential development – single dwelling and garage.

Introduction

The application site (P/2010/1417/F) for a single dwelling and garage at 69 Drumlough Road, is located approximately 9m-11m north-west of the sub-circular boundary of Drumgath graveyard (DOW047:042s). The Drumlough Road, which links Rathfriland (to the north) and Mayobridge (to the south), separates the two and truncates the western edge of the cemetery enclosure (Figures 1 and 2). Although irregular, it seems likely that the curvilinear outline of the graveyard once extended further west by some 8m-10m (see Figure 2). If the former boundary of the graveyard did extend further west as suggested in Figure 2, this does not overlap with the application site. However, if there was once a larger enclosure than survives today, then there is the possibility that the church/graveyard boundary once extended further west.

The antiquity of the graveyard is not known but it is cited in sixteenth and seventeenth century documentation (Reeves 1847, 313-4; 318. See also Research Design for licence application, 01.03.11). A medieval bronze hand-bell, with iron clapper and suspension loop (UM J21/A4170.1936) of probable eighth-tenth century date (Bourke 1980, 59 and 66), was also found in the vicinity of the graveyard sometime *circa* 1800 (C. Bourke pers. comm.).

Account of the evaluation

Four trenches were opened using a mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision on March 21st, 2011 in the approximate locations as specified by the NIEA case worker, Gail Howell (Figure 3). All four trenches were excavated with a mechanical excavator using a 1.5m wide sheugh bucket and were excavated to the natural subsoil.

Trench 1 (1.5m x 12.5m) was located at the southern end of the yard, running roughly east-west and parallel to the southern boundary fence. Trenches 2 (1.5m x 9.5m), 3 (1.5m x 9.2m) and 4 (1.5m x 8m) were opened perpendicular to it. The northern extents of the latter three were curtailed by the presence of services (electricity and water) running from the standing old farm house that faces onto the Drumlough Road, at the north-eastern corner of the yard, to a mobile home located at the western side of the yard (see Figure 3 and Plate 1).

Trench 1

Trench 1 measured 1.5m wide and 12.5m long, was orientated approximately east-west and parallel (2.2-2.8m north of) to the fence marking the southern boundary of the yard (Figure 4 and Plate 1). Removal of the loose quarried-stone, that forms the surface of the yard (C.101; 0.05-0.08m thick), exposed a mid-brown silty loam, a remnant topsoil, with occasional stones and roots (C.102; 0.12-0.14m thick). This overlay the orange-brown sandy subsoil which was encountered at a relatively shallow depth of 0.17-0.25m (Plate 2). In the western half of the trench, a line of four sub-circular

features or spreads of brown loam (C.103, C.104, C.105 and C.106) were uncovered. These measured between 0.3m and 0.6m in diameter and were unevenly spaced, between 0.7 and 1.4 metres apart. One of these (C.105; 0.36 N/S by 0.34 E/W) was half-sectioned and was found to be a relatively steep-sided cut, 0.14m in depth (Plates 3 and 4). It contained a single homogenous fill, a loose grey-brown silty loam with occasional stones and pieces of coal (C.107). Feature C.104, approximately 1.2m west of C.105, had a freshly broken tree- root protruding from close to the centre of the feature. It seems probable that these (C.103, C.104, C.105 and C.106) represent a remnant tree or fence line of no great antiquity. At the eastern end of the trench an earlier loose, quarried-stone/hard-core deposit, with a reddish hue (C.108) was encountered. It ran across the full width of the trench, for a length of between 1m -1.7m from the eastern end of trench. This modern deposit is located in proximity to the yard entrance and may be related to earlier metalling of the yard for heavy farm machinery, or may be associated with the laying of services.

Trench 2

Trench 2 measured 1.5m wide and 9.5m long (approx. north-south) and was located perpendicular to the western end of Trench 1 at the western side of the yard. Again the loose quarried gravel (C.201) was removed to reveal a remnant loamy topsoil (C.202) which overlay the subsoil which was encountered at a depth of between 0.35-0.4m (Plate 5). Three mature trees are located just south of the southern end of this trench and, not unsurprisingly, roots and root disturbance were encountered towards the southern end of the trench. No other features were uncovered.

Trench 3

Trench 3 was opened parallel to, and approximately 4.7m east of, Trench 2 and about 1m north of Trench 1 (Plate 1). Trench 3 measured 1.5m wide and 9.2m long (north-south). The loose gravel (C.301) was removed to expose the loamy topsoil (C.302) which overlay the subsoil encountered at a depth of between 0.19-0.2m. Three irregular spreads of brown loam were uncovered at the northern end of the trench (Plate 6). The southernmost, C.303, was located about midway along the length of the trench and ran into the western baulk. It measured 0.8m north-south at the western edge of the baulk, narrowing to 0.56m towards the centre of the trench, and 0.68m east-west. This was half-sectioned and was found to be a shallow (0.09m deep), uneven-bottomed depression in the subsoil with a single loamy mid-brown fill, C.304, very similar to C.302. Although difficult to distinguish C.302 and C.304, the section-face of the trench would indicate that C.303 cuts the topsoil, C.302 (see Plate 7), suggesting a recent origin for the cut. The fill yielded a single piece each of blackware and cream-ware along with some fragments of charcoal and coal. Just north of this was a larger and more irregular loamy spread (C.305), 1.06m north-south by 0.95m east-west. This was quarter-sectioned (north-west corner excavated) which demonstrated that it contained a single brown loamy fill, C.306, not dissimilar to C.302 and C.304 (Plate 8). C.306 had occasional small rootlets, flecks of charcoal,

coal and stones. The depression was shallow with uneven irregular edges and 0.17m at its greatest depth. The applicant's father, Mr Brendan Keenan, remembers the gravel-covered yard formerly as the 'high field' where threshers used to be set into the ground. It is possible that some of the anomalous spreads encountered in this trench, and possibly also Trench 4, may relate to this activity.

The northern end of Trench 3 dipped down (Plate 8). A small box trench opened across this feature (running north-south) revealed it to be a shallow depression running across the full width of the trench filled with an homogenous loamy soil (C.308). This probably represents a natural depression or variation in the old ground surface.

Trench 4

Trench 4 measured 1.5m wide by 8m long (approx. north-south) and was located just 3m west of the eastern boundary of the yard. The gravel (C.401) was removed to reveal an earlier coarser quarried-stone surface, with a yellower hue, extending across the northern half of the trench only (C.402). This sealed the old topsoil horizon (C.403) and the natural subsoil below it. The top of the subsoil was encountered at a variable depth, being deeper at the northern end at 0.5m and shallower to the south at a depth of 0.23m (Plate 9). No cuts, features or finds were recorded but C.403 was observed to fill haphazard hollows and depressions in the subsoil. There was formerly a line of mature trees running south from the old farm house in this location, roughly parallel to the road, which Mr Keenan remembers having been pulled down sometime in the 1960s. It is possible that some the bumps and hollows in the subsoil are related to these trees.

Conclusions

The four evaluative trenches excavated at the application site contained nothing of archaeological significance and all four trenches were back-filled on completion of the evaluation. It is not thought that the development of the dwelling and garage will impact upon previously unrecognized and unrecorded archaeological remains. It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out at the development site. With the exception of a short summary in the annual *Excavations Bulletin*, no publication of this work is merited.

References

Bourke, C. 1980 Early Irish hand-bells. *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* **110**, 52-66.

Reeves, W. 1847 *Ecclesiastical antiquities of Down, Connor and Dromore: consisting of a taxation of those dioceses*. Dublin. Hodges & Smith (Kessinger Publishing facsimile edition).

On-line sources

The maps showing the location of Drumgath and the Google-Earth image (Figures 1 and 2) were downloaded (25/02/2011) from: <http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/Mapviewer/>

FIGURES

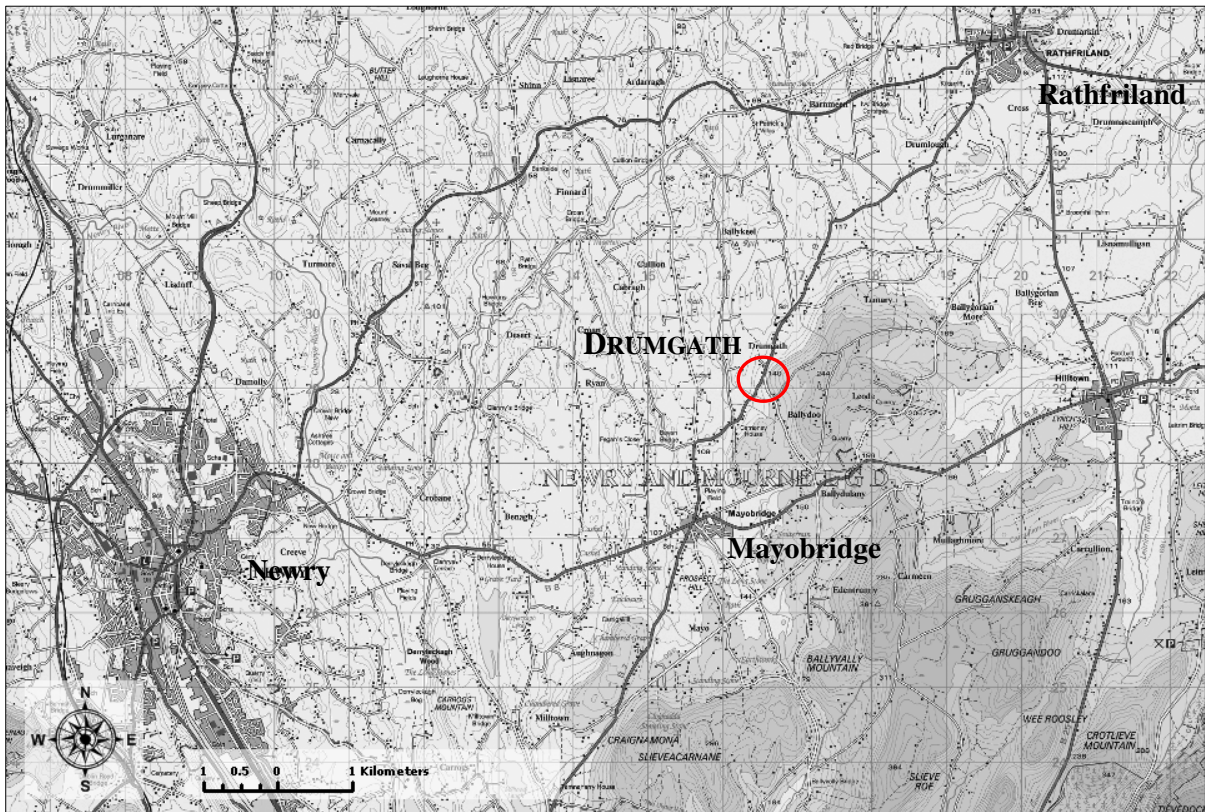


Figure 1 Location of Drumgath, Co. Down.

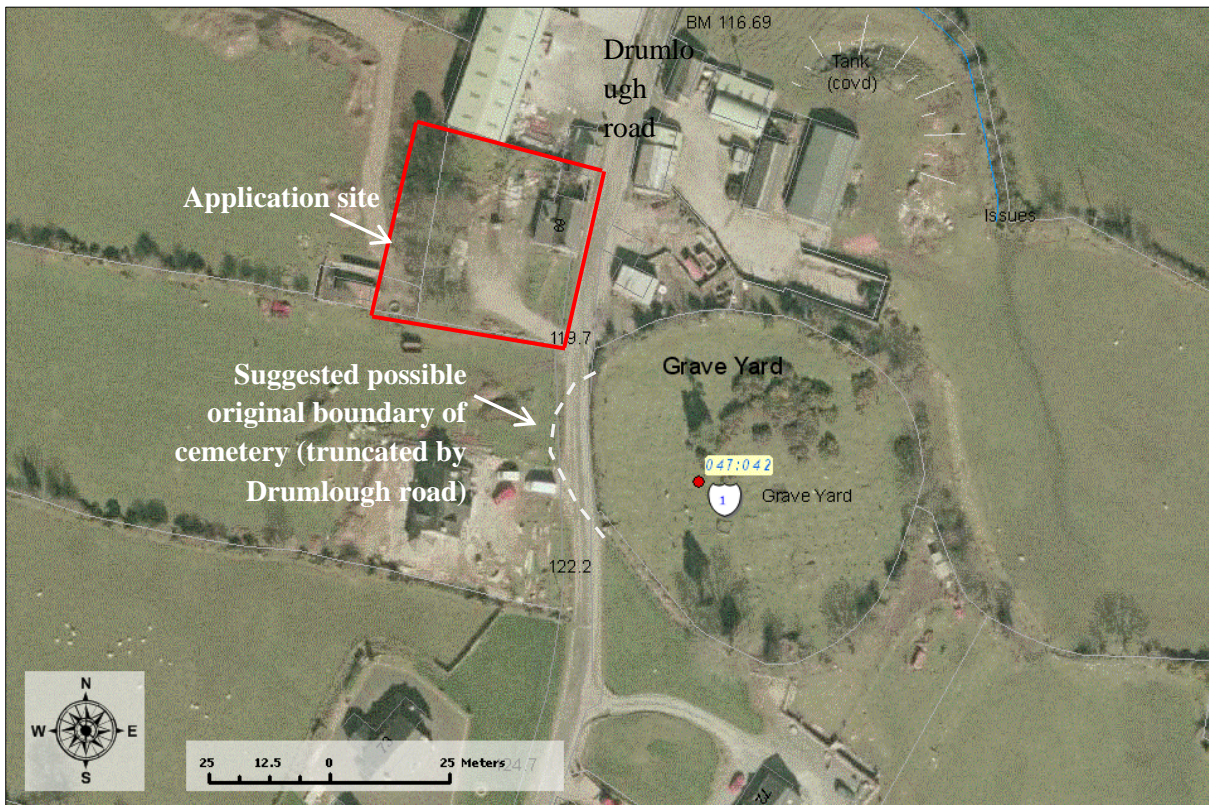


Figure 2 Google-Earth image of the graveyard at Drumgath. The approximate boundaries of the application site (P/2010/1417/F) are highlighted in red and the suggested continuation of the original graveyard boundary (DOW047:042) is marked with a dashed line.



Figure 3 Map of application site (P/2010/1479/F. Scale 1:1000) indicating the proposed location of the evaluation trenches and position of archaeological sites in the immediate vicinity (map provided by G. Howell, NIEA).



Figure 4 Google-Earth image of the application site, 69 Drumlough Road, showing the approximate location of the evaluation trenches, Trenches 1-4.

PLATES



Plate 1 General view of the evaluation site from Drumgath graveyard (looking north-west) and showing the location of the four evaluation trenches (Trenches 1 and 2 are both backfilled).



Plate 2 Trench 1 (facing west) with some of the earlier hard-core (C.108) in the foreground, and the subsoil and sub-circular features (C.103-C.106) west of it.



Plate 3 Close up of the sub-circular features at the western end of Trench 1. Feature C.105 in the foreground was half-sectioned.



Plate 4 Trench 1, feature C.105: half-sectioned and showing single fill, C.107.



Plate 5 Trench 2 (facing south): the gravel surface of the yard (C.201), the underlying remnant topsoil (C.202), roots and the subsoil are all visible.



Plate 6 Trench 3 (facing south) showing the three irregular spreads of loam.



Plate 7 Trench 3, feature C.303 half-sectioned (southern half removed) showing the single homogenous fill, C.304.



Plate 8 Trench 3, feature C.305 quarter-sectioned (south-western quarter excavated) showing single homogenous fill, C.306.



Plate 9 Trench 4, facing south: the earlier hard-core/quarried-stone layer underlying the modern grey-gravel surface of the yard is visible in the east-facing section of the trench to the right of the photo.