



Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 232

**A SITE 100M NORTH OF 102 NEWTOWNARDS ROAD
BALLYRICKARD
COMBER
COUNTY DOWN**

LICENCE NO.: AE/11/90E

NAOMI CARVER

Site Specific Information

Site Name: 100m north of 102 Newtownards Road, Comber

Townland: Ballyrickard

SMR No. : DOW 010:030

State Care Scheduled Other [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: J 70596 47658

County: Down

Excavation Licence No. : AE/11/90E

Planning Ref / No. : X/2010/0376/F

Dates of Monitoring: 17th October 2011

Archaeologist(s) Present: Naomi Carver

Brief Summary:

An archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site 100m to the north of 102 Newtownards Road, Comber, County Down in response to a planning application for a new dwelling and garage. The application site was less than 25m to the east of an enclosure (DOW 010:030). The evaluation consisted of three mechanically-excavated test trenches which ranged in length from 15m to 17m. No remains of archaeological significance were uncovered during the course of the evaluation and it is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out, as the development site does not pose a threat to significant archaeological remains.

Type of monitoring:

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

Size of area opened:

Six trenches each approximately 1.5m wide and ranging in length from 15m to 17m.

Current Land Use: Agricultural

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The application site for a proposed new dwelling and garage is located in County Down, approximately 1km to the north-east of Comber and 1km to the south-west of Newtownards (Figure One). The site lies on a ridge overlooking Strangford lough, at a height of around 20m above sea level (Plates One and Two). The distinctive landmark Scrabo Tower lies less than a km to the north (Figure Two). An archaeological evaluation was requested due to the presence of a circular enclosure of unknown date (NISMR DOW 010:030). The application site is less than 25m to the east of the enclosure. The mound, which is shown on the second edition of the Six Inch Ordnance Survey map (Figure Three) only partially survives. It has been truncated roughly east-west by a laneway, by a farm building at its western side and its northern side has been ploughed out. There are many other archaeological sites in the surrounding area including a Scheduled motte in the same townland (NISMR DOW 010:031).

The application site consists of a rectangular area approximately 400 square metres in size set within a larger field (Figure Four). The site is located on a slight ridge with land sloping gently to the north-west, north, north-east and east. It is bordered on its western edge by a laneway and a complex of farm buildings lie to the south (Plate Three), while there are fields to all other sides. The field within which the application site is located is bounded by hedges interspersed with occasional trees. There are good views all around except to the south-west where the land rises up to the brow of a hill. Strangford Lough is visible to the east and south-east. Land use in the immediate area is primarily arable agriculture.

The evaluation took place as part of the planning application for a new dwelling and was requested by Andrew Gault, Inspector with Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Historic Monuments Unit.

Excavation

The original research design accompanying the licence application proposed the excavation of three test trenches across the footprint of the proposed new dwelling and garage. The exact size and location of the trenches was to be decided by the licensed archaeologist carrying out the work.

Two of the three trenches were excavated over the footprint of the proposed new dwelling while the third trench was excavated across the footprint of the adjacent garage. Each trench was around 1.5m wide and they ranged in length from 15m to 17m. The trenches were all excavated to the orange boulder clay subsoil, an average depth of 0.3m.

Trench One

Trench One ran roughly parallel to the southernmost boundary of the site and adjacent farmyard. It was located approximately 20m from this boundary. Trench One was approximately 1.5m wide and 17m long (Plate Four). The topsoil in Trench One (Context No. 101) consisted of greyish brown clay containing few small angular stones

(average size: 50x30x10mm) along with a few sherds of 20th century pottery. The layer varied in thickness from 0.15-0.32m, becoming shallower as the trench followed the natural slope of the hill. The topsoil directly overlay the boulder clay subsoil (context no. 104: Plate Five). Cut into the subsoil were two modern drains (context nos. 102 and 103). Both drains ran roughly north-south across the trench and were made up of angular shale fragments. There were no other features in the surface of the subsoil which was encountered at a depth of 0.2-0.3m.

Trench Two

Trench Two ran parallel to Trench One and was approximately 2.5m to the south-east of it. The trench was approximately 1.5m wide and 16m long (Plate Six). It contained a similar stratigraphy to that observed in Trench One. The topsoil (context no. 201) consisted of greyish brown clay which was 0.2-0.3m thick and contained few small angular stones (average size: 50x30x10mm). No artefacts were recovered during the excavation of Trench Two. Again, as in Trench One, the topsoil directly overlay the subsoil (context no. 205: Plate Seven) which consisted of orange boulder clay encountered at a depth of approximately 0.2-0.3m. Three drains were observed in Trench Two. Two of these (context nos. 202 and 203) equated to the continuation of the north-south drains seen in Trench One (context nos. 102 and 103), again consisting of angular shale fragments. Another drain (context no. 204) running roughly east-west was visible in the western part of the trench. This drain was probably an old 'pen drain' and was cut by the westernmost of the north-south drains (context no. 103). There were no other subsoil-cut features observed in Trench Two.

Trench Three

Trench Three was positioned over the footprint of the proposed garage and ran parallel to Trench Two. It was 8m to the south-east of the latter. The trench was 1.5m long and 15m long (Plate Eight). Trench Three exhibited a simple sequence of strata like that seen in Trenches One and Two (Plate Nine). The topsoil (context no. 301) consisted of greyish brown clay which was 0.2-0.3m thick and directly overlay the subsoil (context no. 304). There were two modern drains running north-south across the trench (context nos. 302 and 303) which, like those in Trenches One and Two, consisted of angular shale fragments. Below the stones in each drain a plastic pipe could be seen. There were no other features in the subsoil which consisted of boulder clay and which was encountered at a depth of around 0.2-0.3m. No artefacts were found within this trench.

Conclusions & recommendations

No remains of archaeological significance were uncovered within the three trenches excavated across the footprint of the proposed new dwelling. It is not thought that the proposed development will impinge on any unknown archaeological deposits and therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out. A short summary will be prepared for inclusion 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: _____

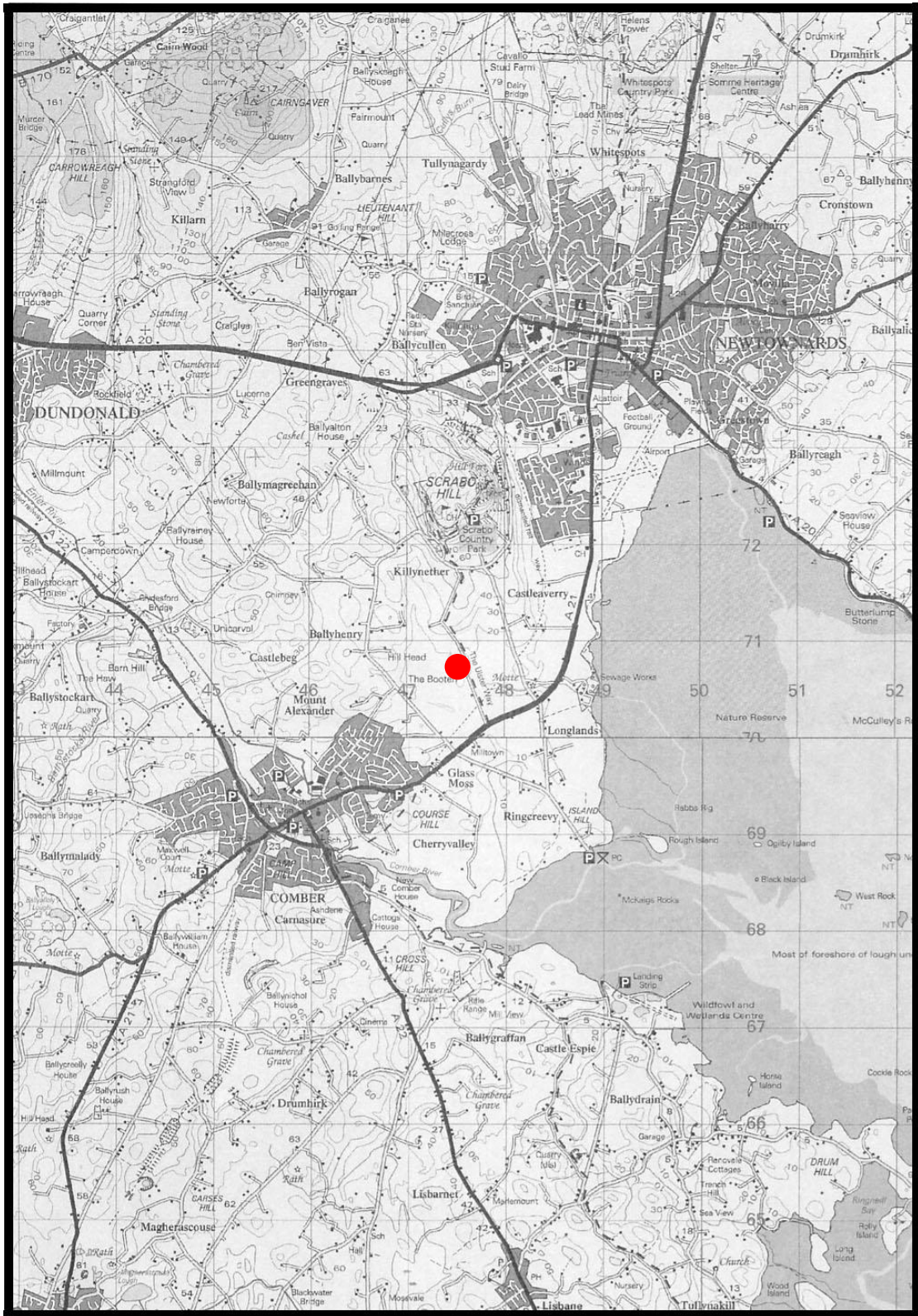


Figure One: General location map showing site (red dot)

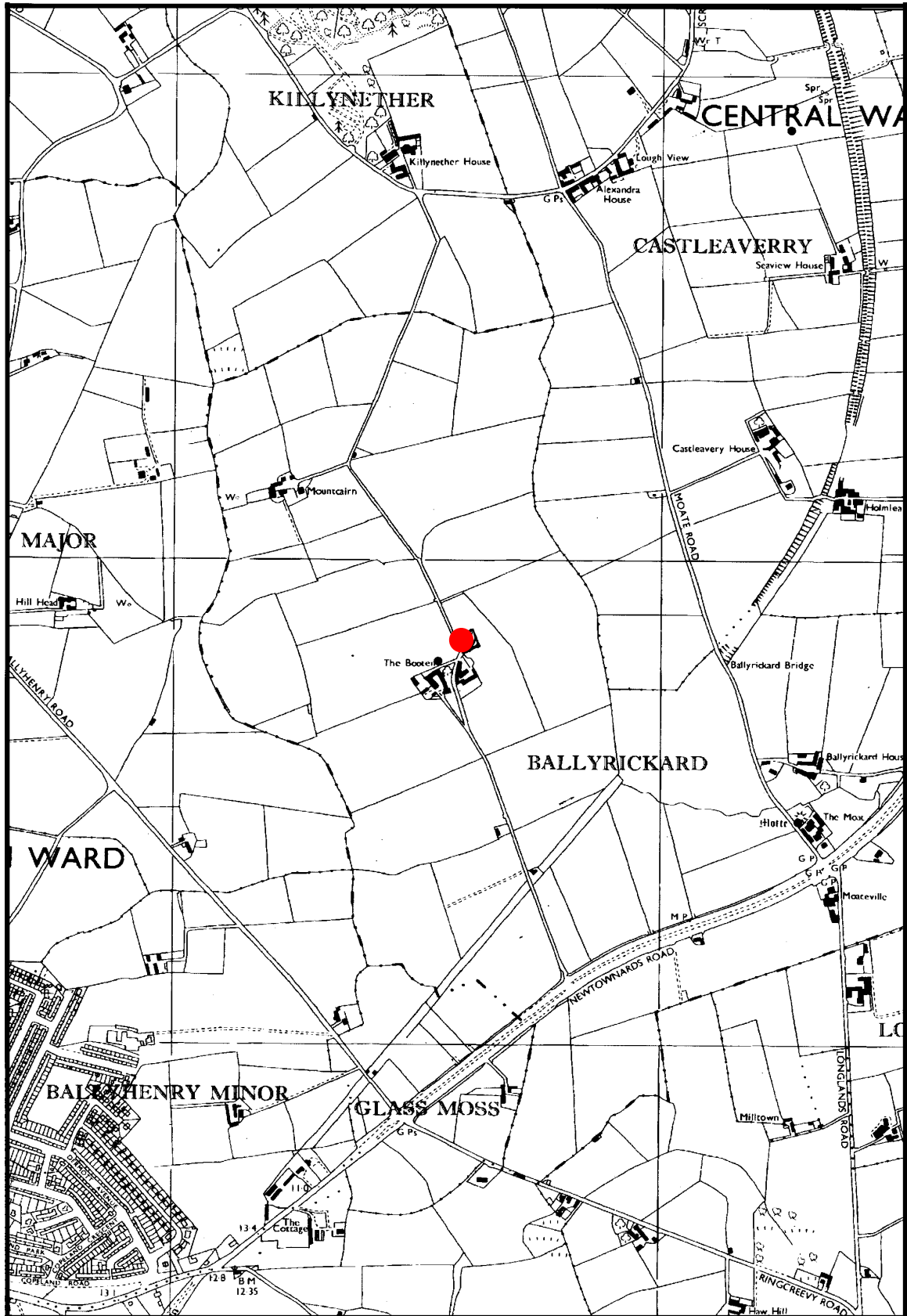


Figure Two: Detailed location map showing site (red dot)

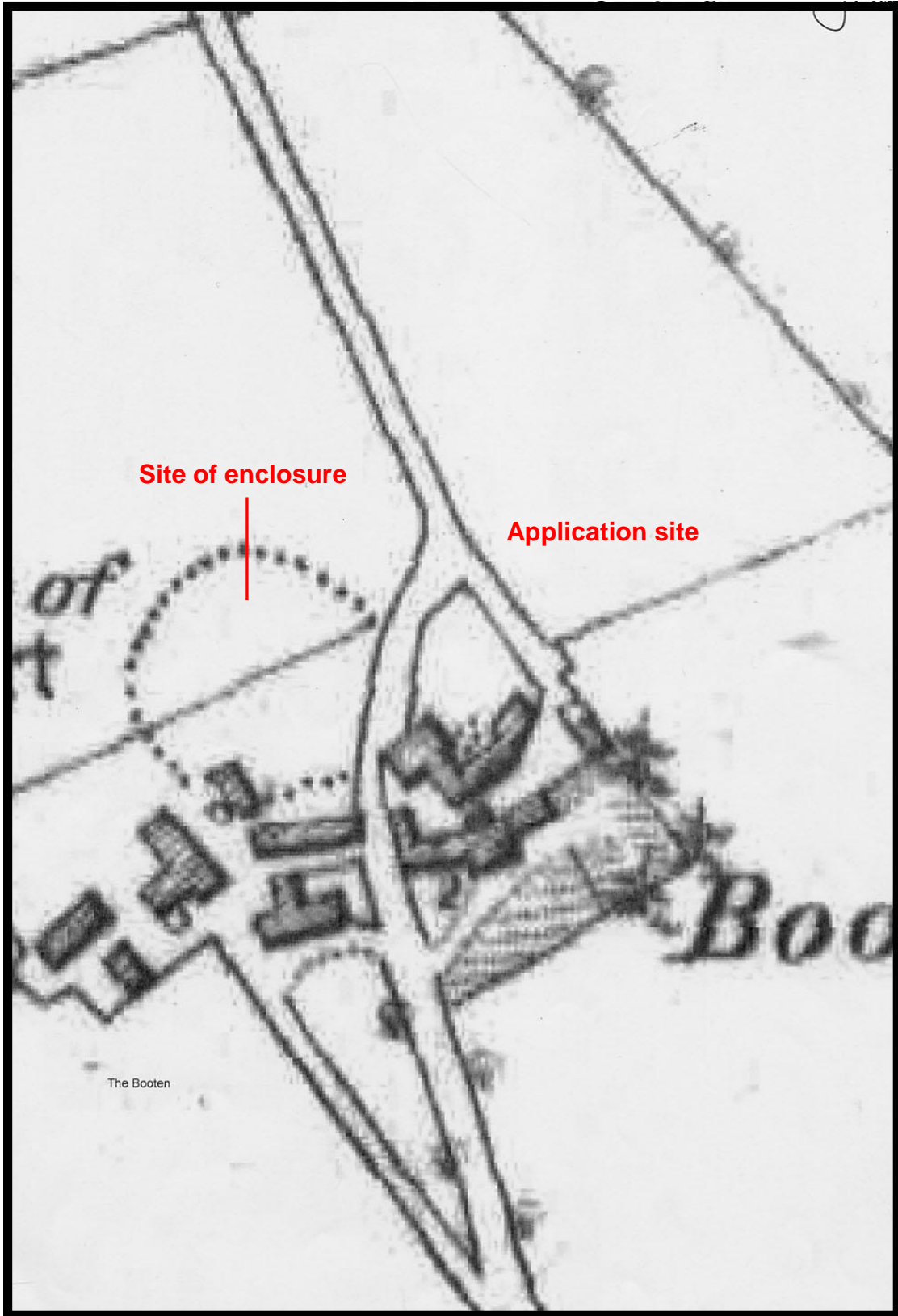


Figure Three: Detail from Ordnance Survey Six Inch map (second edition) showing site of enclosure and position of application site

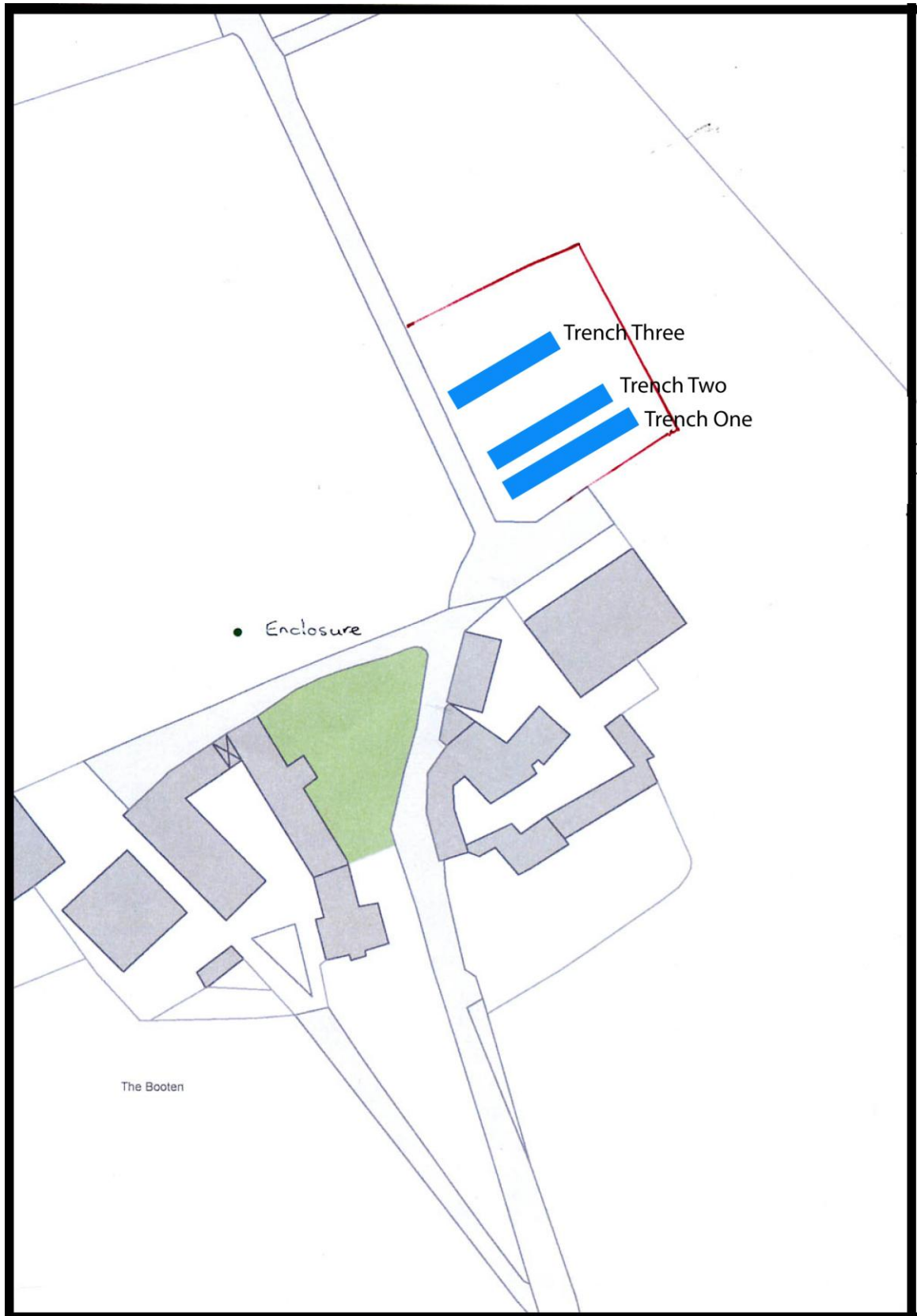


Figure Four: Site plan showing location of test trenches



Plate One: General view of site showing Scrabo Tower in background, looking north



Plate Two: General view of site showing Strangford Lough in background, looking east



Plate Three: General view of site showing farm buildings in background, looking south



Plate Four: Trench One following excavation to subsoil level, looking east



Plate Five: West-facing section of Trench One, looking east



Plate Six: Trench Two following excavation to subsoil level and showing modern drains, looking east



Plate Seven: West-facing section of Trench Two, looking east



Plate Eight: Trench Three following excavation to subsoil level, looking west



Plate Nine: West-facing section of Trench Three, looking east