



Monitoring Report No. 244

**Site behind 93 Ballylumford Road
Ballylumford and Ballycronan More Townlands
Islandmagee
Larne
County Antrim**

AE/12/102

Grace McAlister

Site Specific Information

Site location: Site behind 93 Ballylumford Road

Townland: Ballylumford/Ballycronan More

SMR number: ANT 041:030, 031 & 032

State Care Scheduled Other

Grid reference: 343046 401677

County: Antrim

Excavation licence number: AE/12/102

Planning reference number: F/2011/0166/F

Date of monitoring: 27th August 2012

Archaeologists present: Grace McAlister

Brief summary:

Archaeological monitoring of the footprint of a dwelling site. Nothing of archaeological significance was found

Type of monitoring:

Excavation by mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth edged "sheugh" bucket under archaeological supervision.

Size of area opened: 204m², 17m east-west x 12m north-south.

Current land use: Agricultural

Intended land use: Residential

Introduction

The site of the proposed dwelling is located behind 93 Ballylumford Road, Ballylumford and Ballycronan More townlands, Islandmagee in Co. Antrim (Figure 1).

The monitoring of this site was requested as Islandmagee and the townlands of Ballylumford and Ballycronan More are rich in archaeological remains (Figure 2). The proposed development site is situated next to a prehistoric stone burial chamber known as the Druids Altar (NISMR ANT 041:007). Archaeological monitoring was carried out on a site north of the monument prior to another development but nothing of archaeological significance was found. A standing stone (NISMR ANT 041:009) referred to in the Ordnance Survey memoirs is also located close to the site, although there are no visible remains at the monument location. In the vicinity of the proposed development site there have been a number of prehistoric artefact findspots. These include a find of gold torcs (NISMR ANT 041:030), gold ornaments (NISMR ANT 041:031) and a gold armlet (NISMR ANT 041:032). A number of sites ranging from Mesolithic to Bronze Age in date were also uncovered during the construction of a gas pipeline. Therefore it was thought the development site had archaeological potential.

Account of monitoring

A large area over the footprint of the proposed dwelling was excavated by a mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth-edged "sheugh" bucket. The area measured approximately 17m east-west and 12m north-south. The total area excavated was approximately 204m². The site was located approximately 60m above sea level and sloped off sharply to the east (Plate 1).

The archaeology throughout the trench was consistent and followed a simple stratigraphic sequence. The sod and topsoil layer (Context no. 101) consisted of a dark brown clayey loam which had occasional rounded and degraded stone inclusions (Plate 2). Context no. 101 ranged slightly in depth from 0.22m at the western extent of the trench and 0.30m towards the eastern extent of the trench. This was removed to reveal the natural subsoil (Context no. 102: Plate 3). Context no. 102 was a mid-brownish orange clay which included naturally occurring find nodules and frequent large stone boulders ranging from 0.2-0.6m in diameter (Plate 4). The thickening of the topsoil towards the east i.e. downhill can be accounted for by the natural slope and probable hillwash which has occurred. The farmer stated that the field has not been ploughed for 20-25 years due to the steep gradient, this would account for the presence of only one consistent stratigraphic layer.

Finds from context no. 101 included several pieces of residual flint, 8 pieces were identified as struck but were undiagnostic (Brian Sloan, *pers comm.*). Also found were red brick fragments, 4 pieces of

glazed ceramic and 1 small fragment of blackware. These were most likely associated with derelict buildings located uphill of the site.

Two possible archaeological features were investigated but did not prove to be significant. The first was a linear feature measuring 0.40m north-south and 0.9m east-west (Plates 5 and 6). It was filled by a mid-greyish brown clay fill with charcoal flecking (Context no. 103) which contained 2 flint fragments and a piece of blue and white glazed ceramic. A small section was removed from the feature and proved to be only 0.06m in depth. The second feature was sub-circular in shape, with a diameter of approximately 0.65m and was filled by context no.103. Excavation revealed it to have a depth of 0.04m (Plates 7 and 8). A disused electrical cable which used to feed a now derelict building east of the site was uncovered in context no. 101 close to the surface.

A hardcore laneway to provide access to the site from the Ballylumford Road had already been instated for a previous development in the area (Figure 3). It was stated in the in the research design that the widening of the laneway to 4m would have to be archaeological monitored. The laneway was 3.5m in width at its narrowest point however this is due to encroachment of vegetation along the field boundary (Plate 9). Therefore archaeological monitoring was not required

Similarly an area for a septic tank was also to be monitored. This was to be located 15m east and downhill of the dwelling. The adverse weather conditions combined with the steep gradient in this part of the field meant that archaeological monitoring by mechanical excavator was not feasible.

Summary

The struck flint shows that there was prehistoric activity in this vicinity; however no archaeological features were uncovered during the excavation. Publication of the results of this excavation is not merited save for an entry into the annual *Excavations* Bulletin.

Archive

Finds:

Finds uncovered during the archaeological monitoring have been housed temporarily within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork .

Photographs:

39 digital images taken during the monitoring are archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork offices.

Plans / Drawings:

N/A

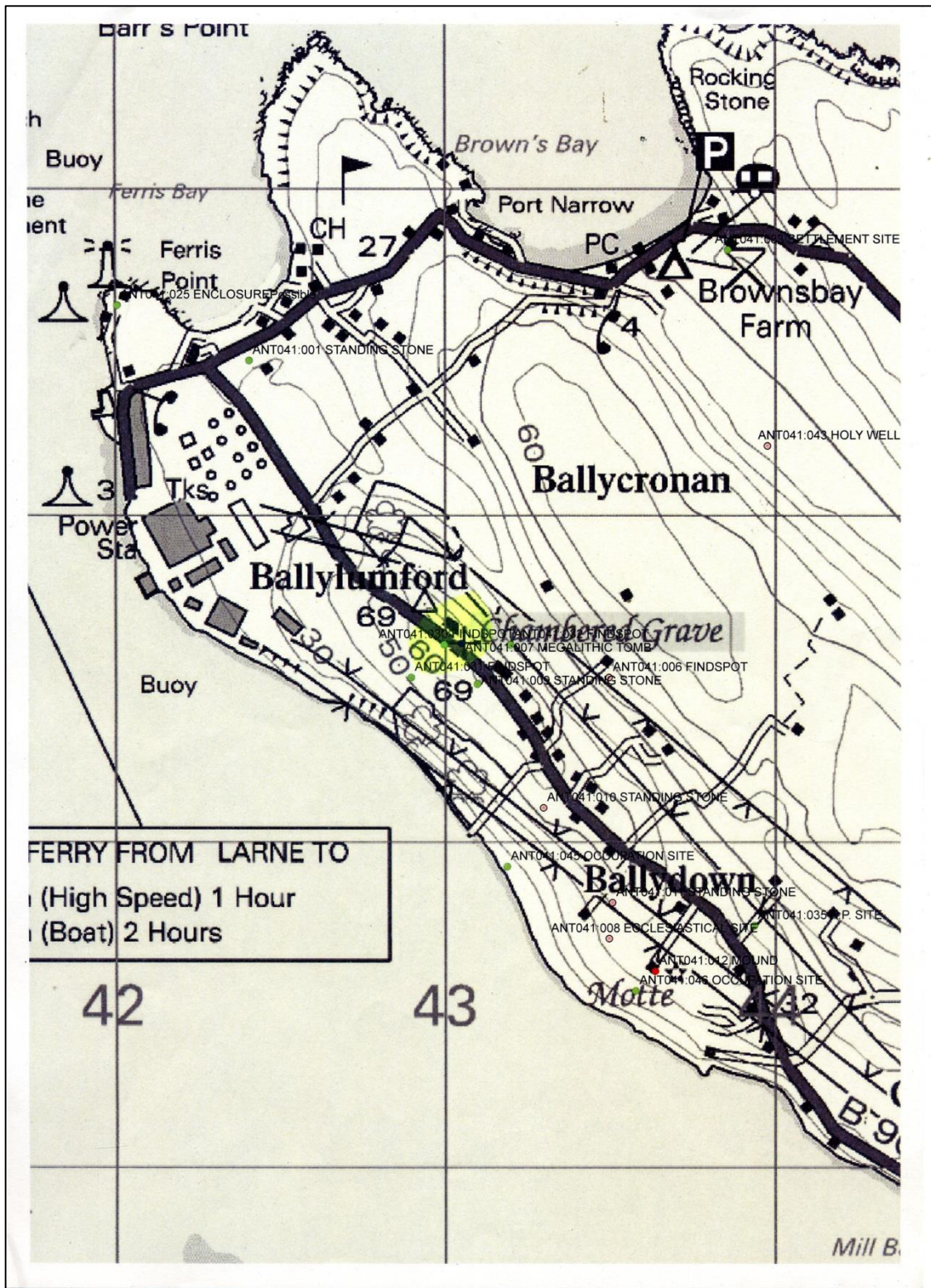


Figure 1: General location of site (highlighted in yellow)



Figure 2: Site location (highlighted in red) in relation to the surrounding scheduled monuments

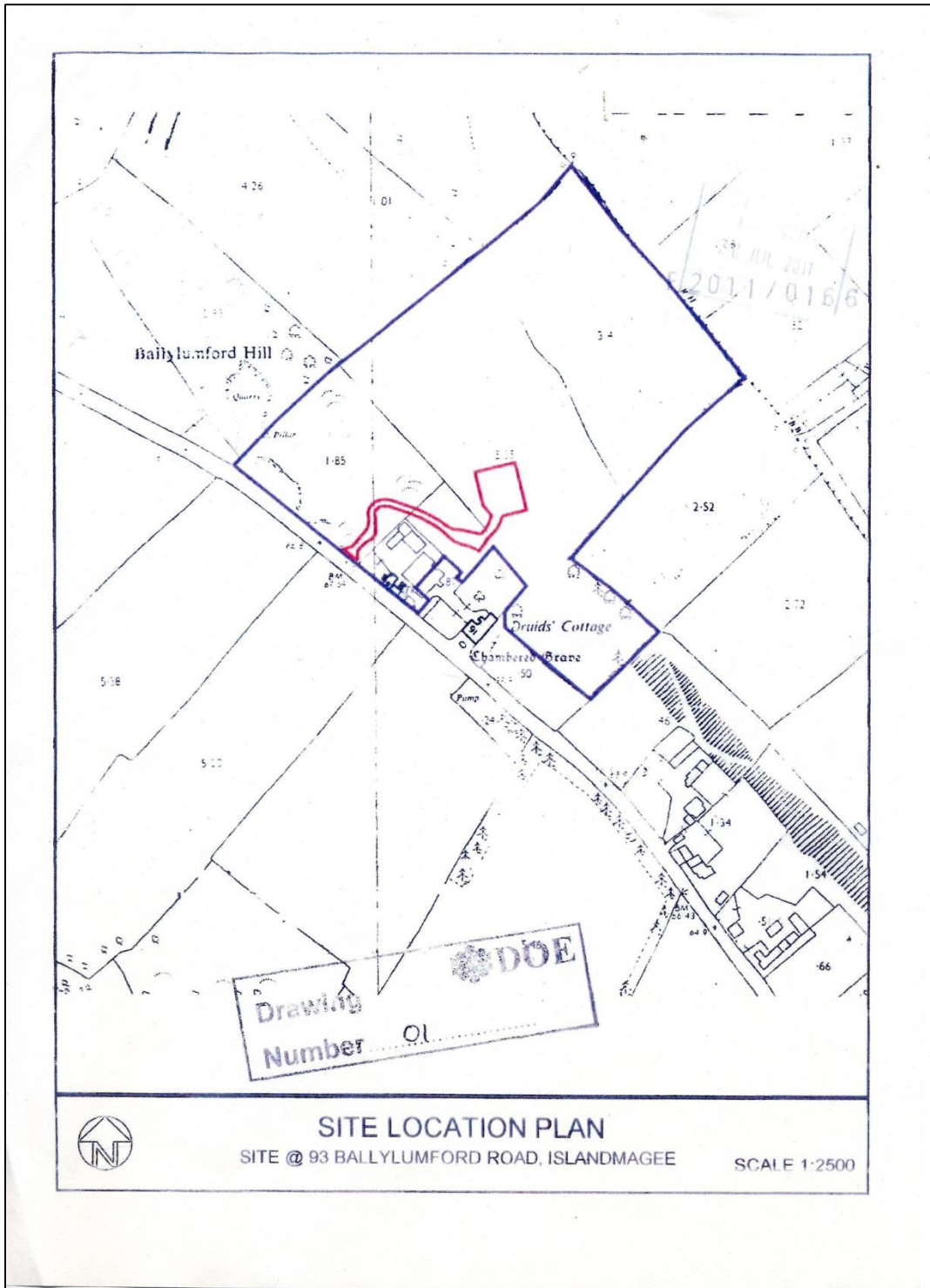


Figure 3: Development site (marked laneway already in existence)



Plate 1: Site prior to excavation



Plate 2: West facing section showing Context No. 101 and 102



Plate 3: Site after topsoil stripping looking east



Plate 4: Example of large boulders present in the subsoil (Context No. 102)



Plate 5: Linear feature (Context no. 103) looking south-west



Plate 6: South-west facing section through linear feature (Context no. 103)



Plate 7: Sub-circular feature (Context no. 103) looking north-east



Plate 8: South-west facing section through sub-circular feature (Context no. 103)



Plate 9: Existing laneway leading to site (area next to fence already hardcored but overgrown)