



Development Control Report No. 301

**Adjacent to St Patrick's Church, Killyliss Road
Roan
Eglish
Co. Tyrone**

AE/10/189

Philip Macdonald

Summary for Incorporation into the SMR Database

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken during February 2011 in order to inform advice over a planning application to install a disabled toilet facility located in a car park positioned immediately to the west of the graveyard surrounding St Patrick's Church, Killyliss Road, Eglis, Co. Tyrone. The evaluation demonstrated that the proposed disabled toilet facility was not located in an area where any archaeologically significant features or deposits survived. Excavation of a single trench, 7.75 metres by 3.55 metres in size, revealed that the modern tarmac of the car park was laid directly onto the surface of an earlier car park made up of concrete. This concrete had, in turn, been laid directly onto the truncated surface of the natural subsoil – a heterogeneous glacial till that consisted of bands of loose gravel and sandy clay with medium-sized stone inclusions that dipped steeply towards the north. As the developer believed that the earlier car park was built upon a dump of spoil derived from the former quarry site located immediately to the northwest, two *sondages* in the investigated area were excavated into the natural subsoil. The excavation of the *sondages* demonstrated that the footprint of the proposed development was located within an archaeologically sterile position. It should be noted, however, that other parts of the car park may well have been built upon a dump of quarry spoil as the developer stated. Consequently, if further planning proposals are made to develop other parts of the car park, it would be appropriate to request that additional archaeological evaluations are carried out in order to assess their impact.

Site Specific Information

Site Name: Adjacent to St Patrick's Church, Killyliss Road, Eglish.

Townland: Roan.

SMR No (if applicable): TYR 061:030.

Irish Grid Ref: H78215654.

County: Tyrone.

Excavation Licence No.: AE/10/189.

Planning Ref. No.: M/2010/0708/F.

Dates of Excavation: 21/2/11 and 22/2/11.

Archaeologist Present: Philip Macdonald.

Type of excavation: Archaeological evaluation undertaken to inform advice over a planning application to install a disabled toilet facility located in a car park positioned immediately to the west of the graveyard surrounding St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Killyliss Road, Eglish, Co. Tyrone.

Brief Summary: The evaluation demonstrated that the proposed disabled toilet facility was not located in an area where any archaeologically significant features or deposits survived. Excavation revealed that the modern tarmac of the car park was laid directly onto the surface of an earlier car park made up of concrete. This concrete had been laid directly onto the truncated surface of the natural subsoil – a heterogeneous glacial till that consisted of bands of loose gravel and sandy clay with medium-sized stone inclusions that dipped steeply towards the north. As the developer believed that the earlier car park was built upon a dump of spoil derived from the former quarry site located to the northwest, two *sondages* in the investigated area were excavated into the natural subsoil. The excavation of the *sondages* demonstrated that the footprint of the proposed development was located within an archaeologically sterile position. It should be noted, however, that other parts of the car park may well have been built upon a dump of quarry spoil as the developer stated. Consequently, if further planning proposals are made to develop other parts of the car park, it would be appropriate to request that additional archaeological evaluations are carried out in order to assess their impact.

Size of area excavated: A single, rectangular area 7.75 metres (northeast to southwest) by 3.55 metres (southeast to northwest) in size. The *sondages* were both 2.00 metres (southeast to northwest) by 1.00 metre (northeast to southwest) in size.

Current Land Use: Car park.

Intended Land Use: Disabled toilet facility.

Account of the Evaluation

The evaluation was requested because the development site was located in an area of potential archaeological sensitivity immediately adjacent to the west of the churchyard of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Killyliss Road, Eglish, Roan, Co. Tyrone (SMR No. TYR 061:030). The present church was built in 1834 and is located within a near-central position within the small settlement of Eglish, upon a high point of a ridge which overlooks the Oona Water to the southwest (Hamlin 2008, 803). The following description of the site is largely derived from a short history of the parish (McAnallen 1986a), which was published simultaneously with a transcription of the gravestone inscriptions within the churchyard of St Patrick's (McAnallen 1986b). The local eminence that the church is positioned on has been at least partly created by long-term burial activity. The oval-shaped churchyard is bounded by a wall of varying height that in places rises four metres above the surrounding countryside. The total area of the churchyard, including the church, is approximately 0.3 hectares. The earliest burial recorded on a gravestone within the churchyard dates to 1688 (McAnallen 1986b, 114, no.252).

Background

St Patrick's Church was identified as having possibly been built upon the site of a medieval parish church by Hamlin in her 1976 doctoral thesis, although at the time her dissertation was prepared no material evidence of either Early Christian or medieval date was known from the site (2008, 384). The roughly curvilinear shape of the churchyard at Eglish and the fact that it is so markedly raised above the surrounding landscape suggested to Hamlin that it was of considerably greater antiquity than the earliest known historical reference to the site. That reference is contained within a 1609 inquisition taken in Dungannon in which it is stated that 'the Rowan [Roan], a chapel of ease, is in this parish [Clonyeckle/Clonfeacle], with a house and one sessiagh of [glebe] land for the vicar' (Anon. 1966, 376). This reference has been plausibly identified by McAnallen as relating to the church at Eglish – the only ancient church located within the townland of Roan (1986a, 80). The discovery during the 1980s of an Early Christian type cross-base (Plate One) in the hedge of the same car park in which the disabled toilet facility was due to be built, suggests that St Patrick's is, in fact, almost certainly the site of a pre-twelfth-century ecclesiastical centre (Hamlin 2000, 101). Furthermore, the presence of a window jamb of medieval type (Plate Two), along with a probable medieval font (Plate Three) and a possible medieval capital (Plate Four), in the graveyard at St Patrick's, which are formally noted for the first time below, indicates that a stone-built church was present at the site during the medieval period.

The Early Christian and medieval status of the church at Eglish is uncertain as the history of the parish is particularly complex. The present Roman Catholic parish of Eglish, Co. Tyrone in the Archdiocese of Armagh was formed when the then parish of Clonfeacle was subdivided into two parishes following the death of the parish priest, Dr Bernard Quinn, in 1805. The eastern division retained the name Clonfeacle, whilst the western portion of the old parish took the name Eglish (McAnallen 1986a, 78; C.Dillon pers.comm.), although in reports to the Archbishop between 1852 and 1866 it was referred to as Clonfeacle West (B.McAnallen pers.comm.). This late creation of the parish is consistent with the evidence of the 1609 inquisition which indicates that in the early seventeenth century the church at Eglish acted as a chapel-of-ease to the parish church of St Jarlath's, Clonfeacle. The village of Eglish falls within part of the present day Church of Ireland parish of Clonfeacle, Derrygortreavy and Eglish (Drumsallan) within the Diocese of Armagh. Derrygortreavy was formed as a Perpetual Curacy in 1819 out of part of the 'ancient' parish of Eglish that had been united to the parish of Clonfeacle in 1674 (Leslie 1911, 210). The Church of Ireland church at Derrygortreavy was built upon the site of a rath (Sites and Monuments Record No. TYR 054:011) in c.1818 and was dedicated to St Columba. It is located 1.6 kilometres to the northnorthwest of St Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Eglish.



Plate One: Early Christian type cross-base discovered in the car park immediately to the west of St Patrick's Church, Eglish (Roan).

The place-name 'Eglish' (from *eclais* – 'church') is itself significant as it appears to have come into vogue during, or after, the twelfth-century reform period and was frequently used to denote the principal church in a medieval parish (Flanagan 1981-82, 73; 1984, 38-39). This suggests the possibility that at some point during the medieval period the church at Eglish served as a medieval parish church in its own right for the surrounding area, despite the presence of the parish church at Clonfeacle. The earliest known use of the place-name 'Eglish' to denote the village at Roan only dates back to the final quarter of the eighteenth century (Taylor and Skinner 1778, 276).¹ Confusing attempts to reconstruct the early ecclesiastical history of Eglish, is the fact that a Church of Ireland parish that is also called Eglish is located within the Armagh barony of Tiranny immediately to the east of the Roman Catholic parishes of Clonfeacle and Eglish on the eastern-side of the River Blackwater (for an account of this parish see Neill 2009, 314-315). The Church of Ireland parish of Eglish also contains both a townland and an ecclesiastical site (see Hamlin 2008, 235-237; Neill 2009, 515-518) that are called Eglish. The coincidence of two adjacent parishes both named Eglish has led to speculation that the medieval parish of Clonfeacle may once have extended from the Blackwater in the region of Verner's Bridge, at Tamnamore, southwestwards to Tynan thus incorporating Eglish on both sides of the Blackwater (B.McAnallen pers.comm.). Ann Hamlin, apparently influenced by an appreciation of the place-name evidence and Leslie's account of the Perpetual Curacy of Derrygortreavy (1911, 210), suggested

¹ Information derived from the PlacenamesNI website on the 11/5/15; <http://www.placenamesni.org/resultdetails.php?entry=10010>.

in her doctoral thesis that Eglisish ‘seems to have been medieval parish in Armagh diocese, later united with Clonfeacle, then separated and called Derrygortreavy’ (2008, 384). If there is any validity to Hamlin’s speculation it would explain why the place-name evidence suggests that at some point during the medieval period Eglisish (Roan) was a parish church in its own right, but by the late medieval period had become a chapel-of-ease to Clonfeacle. The scarcity of documentary sources makes assessing the validity of the suggested sequence of parochial change difficult, and identifying the historical context in which the suggested medieval parish of Eglisish may have become united with that of Clonfeacle impossible.



Plate Two: Window jamb within the graveyard at St Patrick’s Eglisish (Roan). Note the glazing groove and adjacent socket for a horizontal bar. Broadly dated to AD 1200-1600. Scale 0.50 metres.

The Early Christian type cross-base was discovered during the construction of the car park adjacent to the church in the 1980s. Local informants recall that prior to the construction of the car park the site was an overgrown yard in private ownership. The cross-base was discovered in the hedge that bordered the yard with Killyliss Road when the car park was extended. Whether the Early Christian cross-base, which is now located in the southern corner of the car park (Plate One), originally came from the general area of the car park is uncertain, although it is reasonable to assume that it had long been associated with the church site at St Patrick’s. McAnallen noted that older people in the parish remember the cross-base being used to cure warts (1986a, 80), but does not record where the monument was physically located when it was so used. McAnallen also records a local tradition that the cross-base was used as a font during the penal period when people ‘were going to the Mass Garden in Shanmoy’ (1986a, 80), however, this tradition is perhaps of questionable veracity. Although initially identified as a bullaun (as recorded in the plaque erected by the Cumann Stáire Dúiche Néill adjacent to the stone’s current position), the monument was subsequently recognised to be a cross-base of Early Christian date by Ann Hamlin (2000, 101). The sub-rectangular form of the socket in the top of the stone is the correct shape to receive a cross shaft, whilst bullaun stones typically have circular or oval depressions. Unfortunately, the rough and undecorated character of the cross-base prohibits any close dating, although the monument is almost certainly of Early Christian date. As the place-name *Eglisish* suggests a

church of the twelfth century or later (Flanagan 1981-82, 73; 1984, 38-39), the presence of the cross-base at St Patrick's, Eglishe indicates that the site was used at an earlier period, probably under an earlier and now lost name (Hamlin 2000, 101).



Plate Three: Probable medieval font within the graveyard at St Patrick's Eglishe (Roan). Scale 0.50 metres.



Plate Four: Possible medieval capital within the graveyard at St Patrick's Eglishe (Roan). Scale 0.50 metres.

During the course of the excavation reported upon below, the author took the opportunity to inspect the adjacent churchyard and noted the presence of three dressed stones - a window jamb of medieval type (Plate Two), a probable medieval font (Plate Three) and a possible medieval capital (Plate Four). The medieval date of these dressed stones has not been previously been recognised, although the probable font has been noted before cf. McAnallen 1986a, fig.1A; 1986b, 116, no.283a. The window jamb is probably made from a local sandstone and is furnished with a glazing groove and a socket for a horizontal bar that still contains traces of ferrous corrosion. Although a medieval type, the jamb cannot be more closely dated than a broad AD 1200-1600 *floruit*. The font is octagonal in cross-section and is known locally as ‘the wart stone’ (McAnannen 1986b, 116, no.283a). If correctly identified as a medieval font, it serves as a useful material confirmation of the presence of a church at the site during the medieval period. Two comparatively local parallels for relatively plain or undecorated, polygonal fonts of medieval date include: the undecorated, seven-sided, granite font formerly located in the west church at Ballintemple, Killevy, Co. Armagh (Neill 2009, 493, pl.301) and the square granite font from Maghernanhely, Killevy, Co. Armagh whose chamfered corners lend it an octagonal appearance (Neill 2009, 534-535, pl.349). The third dressed stone within the graveyard at St Patrick’s, Eglisli (McAnanna 1986b, 103, no.77) has the form of a capital.

Given the fixed chronological points provided by the Early Christian-period cross-base identified by Ann Hamlin and the early seventeenth-century historical references to there being a chapel-of-ease at Eglisli, prior to the recognition of the fragments of definite and probable medieval masonry within the graveyard, it was reasonable to infer that the site at St Patrick’s was used for worship and burial throughout the medieval period. The recognition of the window jamb of medieval type in the graveyard is important because it provides material confirmation of this inference. Unfortunately, the jamb cannot be closely dated, although it certainly dates from between AD 1200 to 1600. The octagonal-sectioned font, known locally as the wart stone (McAnannen 1986b, 116, no.283a), if correctly identified as a medieval font, also serves as a useful material confirmation of the presence of a church at the site during the medieval period.

Where the medieval chapel at Eglisli stood is uncertain. It may be that one or more of the three lengths of ‘old wall’ within the modern graveyard, located to the south and southeast of the church, may represent the remains of this late medieval chapel-of-ease (see McAnallen 1986a, 82; McAnallen 1986b, 98). These surviving lengths of masonry are, however, set up to 29 metres apart from each other and it is unlikely that they all formed part of a single medieval ecclesiastical building. Although it is possible that one of the lengths of ‘old wall’ formed part of the medieval church building, it is an equal possibility that all three represent the remains of unrelated, later funerary structures within the graveyard. That Fr. Bernard Quinn (d.1805), the parish priest, was buried in a position beside the main doors of the present church has led McAnallen to suggest that the present church was built on the same site as the previous chapel (1986a, 88-90). When the medieval church at Eglisli became ruined is also uncertain. The reference to the chapel-of-ease at Roan contained within the 1609 inquisition (Anon. 1966, 376) implies that the church survived the Nine Years’ War intact, although this is surprising given the site’s close proximity to Dungannon and the frequent slighting of stone structures by both sides of the conflict.² It is possible that the chapel at Eglisli (Roan) was slighted during the wars of the 1640s, or that the local Protestant population were not sufficient in numbers for the chapel to continue in use and it fell into ruin at some point during the seventeenth century. Analysis of the gravestone inscriptions at St Patrick’s indicates that the churchyard was being used for burial from, at the latest, the late seventeenth century (McAnallen 1986b) and it is reasonable to suppose that burial activity had continued uninterrupted

² In a description of the church of Clonfeacle in the *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, Lewis notes, without citing any authority, that the church at Eglisli was destroyed during the Nine Years’ War (1837, 362). Although this may be a reference to a medieval church that stood at the site of St Patrick’s, although it may equally be a reference to the Eglisli within the Barony of Tiranny, Armagh (B.McAnallen pers.comm.; for accounts of this early ecclesiastical site see Hamlin 2008, 235-237; Neill 2009, 515-518).

from the medieval period. The frequent occurrence of the IHS monogram on the gravestone inscriptions indicates that Catholics were being buried at Eglish. Presumably, burial of members of the local Protestant community was also taking place at Eglish until the church and graveyard at Derrygortreavy was established in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

There is a local tradition that the present church of St Patrick's is the third to have been built upon the site (McAnallen 1986a, 82). The medieval chapel-of-ease attested in the 1609 inquisition and almost certainly materially represented by the window jamb and the octagonal-sectioned font probably represents the church that pre-dated the present day church of St Patrick's at Eglish. It is possible that there was also a pre-twelfth century church on the site which was contemporary with the Early Christian cross base. If such a building did exist however, it is unlikely to have been built from stone. Ulster is a region in which mortared stone churches remained in the minority until at least AD 1200 (Ó Carragáin 2010, 15, 110, figs.1 and 119). Consequently, any earlier church that may have existed at Eglish (or whatever the site was called at that date) would probably have been built from organic materials such as turf, wattle and timber. It is uncertain what status this Early Christian church would have had, although McAnallen has plausibly speculated that it may have formed part of a monastic settlement (1986a, 82).

Prior to the evaluation reported upon here, the site of St Patrick's, Eglish had not been the subject of any archaeological investigation, although an evaluative excavation had been undertaken at the site of a twentieth-century quarry located immediately to the northwest of the church's car park (O'Regan 2010). That evaluative excavation confirmed that no deposits of archaeological significance survived on the site of the back-filled quarry (O'Regan 2010).

Evaluation: Methodology

At the request of the then development control caseworker (Paul Devlin), the tarmac 'overburden' of the entire footprint of the proposed disabled toilet facility was mechanically excavated under the close supervision of the licensed archaeologist using a machine equipped with a flat, toothless bucket. The rectangular area mechanically-excavated was 7.75 metres (northeast to southwest) by 3.55 metres (southeast to northwest) in size. Following the removal of the modern deposits, two *sondages* or test trenches (dimensions 1.0 x 2.0 metres) were initially manually excavated in order to evaluate the character and archaeological significance of any deposits surviving beneath the surface of the car park. The site's stratigraphic sequence was recorded using the standard context recording method. The exposed archaeological horizons were recorded using both sketch plans (Scale 1:20) and photography prior to excavation. In addition to photography and illustration, the principal site records will consist of context sheets augmented by a site diary. As no finds were recovered or samples taken it was not necessary to prepare separate registers of small finds and samples. Relevant members of the NIEA Inspectorate and the development control caseworker were kept informed of all significant developments during the course of the evaluation. The trench was tied into the Irish Ordnance Survey Grid. Following the completion of recording, the *sondages* were manually backfilled. Responsibility for reinstatement and backfilling the footprint of the proposed development's footprint, lay with the developer.

Evaluation: the Results (including Statement of Confidence)

The excavation consisted of a single, rectangular-shaped trench 7.75 metres by 3.55 metres whose longest axis was aligned northeast-southwest. The trench was located immediately adjacent to the northwestern section of the graveyard wall surrounding St Patrick's Church and overlay the footprint of the proposed disabled toilet facility (Figure One). The modern tarmac surface of the car park (Context No.101) was mechanically excavated and demonstrated to have a uniform depth of 0.03 metres. Immediately adjacent to both the eastern corner of the trench and the graveyard boundary wall was an electricity or telephone pole. Removal of the tarmac

(Context No.101) exposed within the eastern corner of the trench a semi-circular patch of loose concrete (Context No.104) which filled a partially exposed cut feature (Context No.105) some 1.1 metres in diameter. Although not excavated, this feature extended beyond the northeastern edge of excavation and was clearly the post-hole associated with the erection of the adjacent electricity or telephone pole. Physically underlying the tarmac (Context No.101), and apparently cut by the post-hole (Context No.105), was the surface of an earlier phase of the car park, which consisted of a raft of concrete (Context No.102) that, with the exception of the area occupied by the post-hole (Context No.105) extended throughout the trench. Mechanical excavation demonstrated that this raft of concrete (Context No.102) was 0.07-0.08 metres thick and laid directly upon the truncated surface (Context No.108) of the natural subsoil – a heterogeneous glacial till that consisted of bands of loose gravel and sandy clay with medium-sized stone inclusions that dipped steeply towards the north (Context No.103). In the southern part of the trench, the removal of the concrete raft (Context No.102) exposed an earlier, irregular-shaped area (maximum dimension 2.45 metres) of concrete, which local informants identified as being a relict trace of the surface (Context No.107) of a yard that had occupied the site prior to the acquisition of the land by the church and the construction of the ‘original’ car park with the concrete surface.

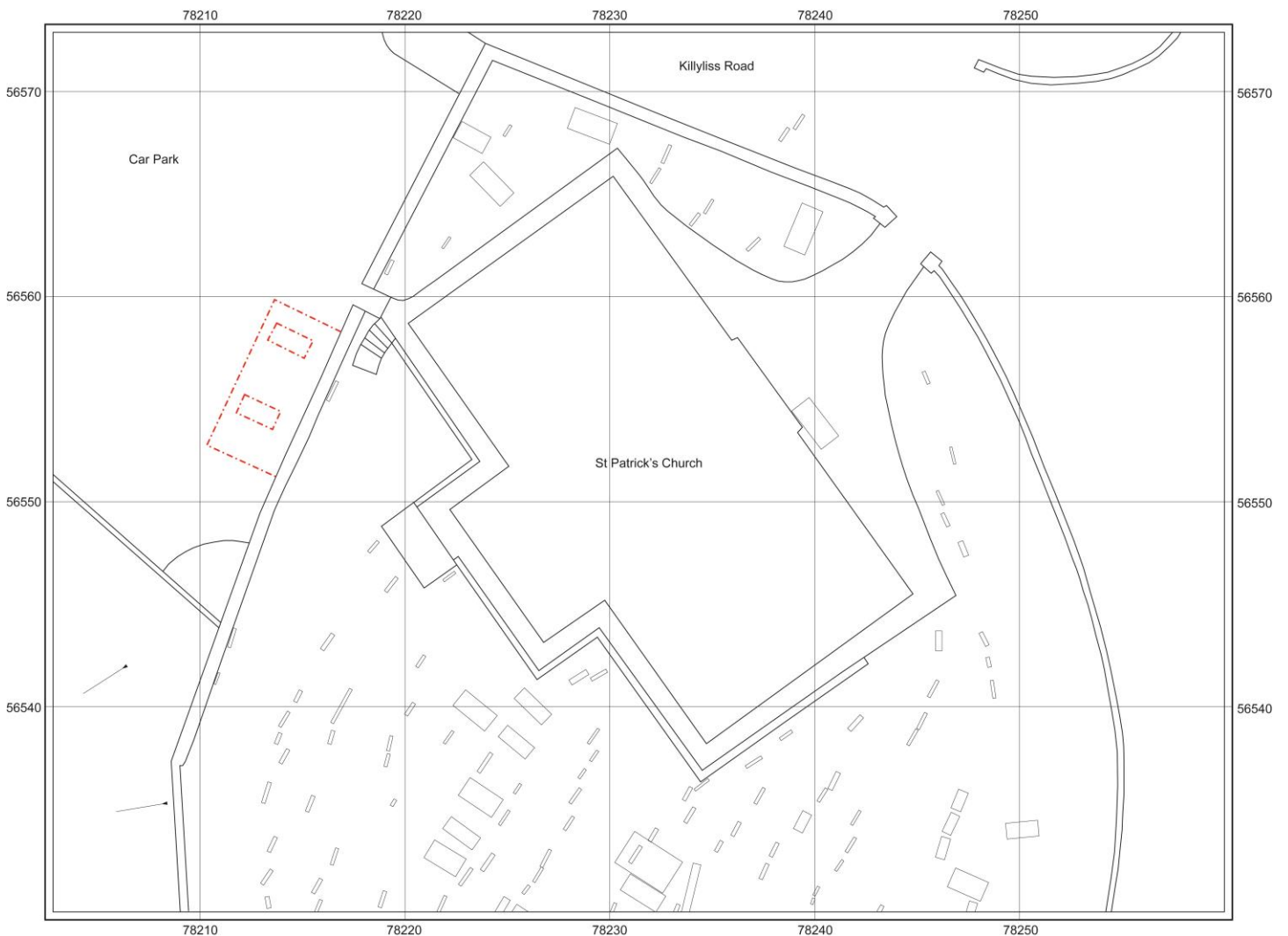


Figure One: Excavation location plan.

As the developer believed that the 'original' car park was built upon a dump of spoil derived from the former quarry site located immediately to the northwest, two *sondages*, both 2.00 metres by 1.00 metres in size, were excavated into the natural subsoil (Figure One). Initially, the *sondages* were manually excavated to a depth of 0.45 metres into the subsoil and then mechanically excavated to a depth of 0.80 metres. Excavation of the natural subsoil (Context No.103) revealed no evidence of charcoal or finds. With the exception of its truncation to form a horizontal surface for either the earlier yard or later car park, the natural subsoil was undisturbed. The excavation of the *sondages* demonstrated, with the highest degree of confidence, that the natural subsoil was not redeposited and that the footprint of the proposed development was located within an archaeologically sterile position.

Concluding Remarks

The evaluation demonstrated, with the highest degree of confidence, that the site of the proposed disabled toilet facility was located within an archaeologically sterile position within the car park adjacent to the Roman Catholic church of St Patrick's, Eglish (Roan). Excavation demonstrated that in the investigated area that the tarmac and concrete deposits associated with both the car park and the earlier yard that had occupied the site were laid directly on to the truncated surface of the natural subsoil. It should be noted, however, that other parts of the car park may have been built upon a dump of quarry spoil as the developer stated. Consequently, if further planning proposals are made to develop other parts of the car park, it would be appropriate to request that additional archaeological evaluations are carried out in order to assess their impact.

Unfortunately, beyond the recognition of the dressed stone of medieval and probable medieval date within the graveyard, the truncation of the natural subsoil, which would have removed any surviving archaeological remains had they been present, means that the evaluation has added little to our understanding of the extent and character of the early ecclesiastical site at Eglish.

Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Brendan NcAnallen for bringing the possible capital stone in the churchyard of St Patrick's to his attention and to both Brendan McAnallen and Charles Dillon for generously providing access to their unpublished research on the history of Eglish parish.

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Details of Archive

Finds: No finds were recovered during the course of the evaluation.

Photographs: 29 digital images [DSCN7014-DSCN7041] showing the proposed development site before, during and after the evaluation. An additional 55 digital photographs were taken of St Patrick's Church and its surrounding graveyard [DSCN6996-DSCN7013 and DSCN7042-DSCN7079]. All digital images are temporarily held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: A single plan (Scale 1:200) of the site (partially reproduced here as Figure One) and two sketch plans included within the director's diary, temporarily held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Signed: _____

Date: _____