



Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 132

**151A MARLACOO ROAD
MARLACOO BEG
PORTADOWN
CO. ARMAGH**

LICENCE NO.: AE/08/98

BRIAN SLOAN

Site Location: 151a Marlacoo Road, Portadown, Co. Armagh

Townland: Marlacoo Beg

SMR No. : ARM 013:015

State Care Scheduled Other ✓ [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: H 9875 4478

County: Armagh

Excavation Licence No. : AE/08/98

Planning Ref / No. : O/2007/0054/F

Dates of Monitoring: Phase One test pits – 22nd and 23rd May 2008
 Phase Two topsoil strip – 19th June 2008

Archaeologist(s) Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary:

A phased archaeological evaluation was carried out at a site in the townland of Marlacoo Beg, Co. Armagh as part of the planning application for a new dwelling. The application site is adjacent to Marlacoo Lough and crannog, which played an important role in military campaigns in Armagh in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The first phase of the investigations involved the manual excavation of four 1m x 1m test pits in the area of the proposed development. A similar stratigraphy was encountered in all the test pits, with topsoil and a cultivation soil directly overlying the natural subsoil. Several sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the test pits indicating that the site had been 'middened' to improve the soil for agriculture. The second phase of the investigations involved the mechanical stripping of the topsoil over the development area. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in the evaluation. It is recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is carried out.

Type of monitoring:

Excavation of 1m x 1m test pits by hand, followed by the mechanical excavation of the proposed house footprint (approximately 16m x 15m).

Current Land Use: Agricultural

Intended Land Use: Residential

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

A phased archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of a development at 151a Marlacoo Road, Marlacoo Beg, Co. Armagh. The application site lies just outside of the town of Tandragee, situated approximately 4km south-west of its centre (Figure 1). The application site is situated in a roughly rectangular field, the boundaries of which are delineated by a wire and post fence interspersed with mature trees. The field slopes gently downwards to the west, towards the eastern shore of Marlacoo Lough. The surrounding landscape consists of agricultural land, predominantly pastoral, interspersed with residential dwellings.

The application site is situated in an area of archaeological importance with numerous sites and monuments being in the general vicinity. Lisdoon Rath (ARM 013:019) dating to the Early Christian period is in the same townland as well as an unidentified 'fortification' (ARM 013:033). The evaluation at this application site was requested due to its proximity to Marlacoo Lough (ARM 013:015), a supposed focal point of hostilities between the English and Irish in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The evaluation was requested by Gina Baban, Caseworker for the Environment and Heritage Service.

Phase One Test Pits

The manually excavated Test Pits were located in the proposed location of a new dwelling. Each measured 1m x 1m and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil. The natural subsoil was, on average, encountered at a depth of approximately 0.4m.

Test Pit 1

Test Pit 1 was positioned approximately 12m from the southern boundary of the application site and measured 1m x 1m. It was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 103) which was encountered at a depth of 0.42m.

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 101) was removed and found to compose of a light brown compact clay loam. Numerous inclusions of small rounded stones and pebbles were observed in this deposit. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 101) was a maximum of 0.23m in depth, and overlay a cultivation soil (Context No. 102).

The cultivation soil (Context No. 102) was similar in texture and appearance to the topsoil (Context No. 101), although larger stones were observed through out this deposit (Context No. 102). Numerous sherds of post medieval glazed earthenware and white glazed ceramics were recovered from the cultivation soil (Context No. 102) which had a maximum depth of 0.2m. The cultivation soil overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 103) which consisted of a yellowish orange sandy boulder clay.

Upon removal of the cultivation soil (Context No. 102) a negative feature was observed cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 103). This was observed as a thin linear feature roughly running north-west/south-east/. The fill of this feature (Context No. 104) consisted of a light brown sandy loam. Upon excavation of this feature, the cut (Context No. 105) was found to be quite shallow (average depth of 0.1m) with steeply sloping sides and a 'v' shaped base. The feature is interpreted as the mark made by deep ploughing where the tip of the plough has broken the surface of the natural subsoil. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in Test Pit 1.

Test Pit 2

Test Pit 2 was located approximately 6m to the north of Test Pit 1 and was manually excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 203) which was encountered at a depth of 0.35m.

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 201) was removed and found to compose of a light brown compact clay loam. Numerous inclusions of small rounded stones and pebbles were observed in this deposit. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 201) was a maximum of 0.15m in depth, and overlay a cultivation soil (Context No. 202).

The cultivation soil (Context No. 202) was similar in texture and appearance to the topsoil (Context No. 201), although larger stones were observed through out this deposit (Context No. 202). Numerous sherds of post medieval glazed earthenware and white glazed ceramics were recovered from the cultivation soil (Context No. 202) which had a maximum depth of 0.25m. The cultivation soil overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 203) which consisted of a yellowish orange sandy boulder clay. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in Test Pit 2.

Test Pit 3

Test Pit 3 was located approximately 7m to the west of Test Pit 1 and was manually excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 303) which was encountered at a depth of 0.4m.

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 301) was removed and found to compose of a light brown compact clay loam. Numerous inclusions of small rounded stones and pebbles were observed in this deposit. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 301) was a maximum of 0.18m in depth, and overlay a cultivation soil (Context No. 302).

The cultivation soil (Context No. 302) was similar in texture and appearance to the topsoil (Context No. 301, although larger stones were observed through out this deposit (Context No. 302). Numerous sherds of post medieval glazed earthenware and white glazed ceramics were recovered from the cultivation soil (Context No. 302) which had a maximum depth of 0.22m. The cultivation soil overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 303) which consisted of a yellowish orange sandy boulder clay. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in Test Pit 3.

Test Pit 4

Test Pit 4 was located approximately 6m to the north of Test Pit 3 and was manually excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 403) which was encountered at a depth of 0.3m.

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 401) was removed and found to compose of a light brown compact clay loam. Numerous inclusions of small rounded stones and pebbles were observed in this deposit. The sod and topsoil (Context No. 401) was a maximum of 0.1m in depth, and overlay a cultivation soil (Context No. 402).

The cultivation soil (Context No. 402) was similar in texture and appearance to the topsoil (Context No. 401), although larger stones were observed through out this deposit (Context No. 402). Numerous sherds of post medieval glazed earthenware and white glazed ceramics were recovered from the cultivation soil (Context No. 402) which had a maximum depth of 0.2m. The cultivation soil overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 403) which consisted of a yellowish orange sandy boulder clay. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted in Test Pit 4.

Conclusions of Phase One Test Pits

The four test pits excavated at the application site contained no features or artefacts of archaeological significance. Each displayed a similar stratigraphy with topsoil overlying cultivation soil which overlay the natural subsoil. The only negative feature encountered was a plough furrow encountered in Test Pit 1. The lack of other plough furrows in the other test pits is probably attested to the position of Test Pit 1 on a slight rise in the application site.

Phase Two – Monitored topsoil strip

Following the results of the manually excavated test pits, the application site was subject to the mechanical excavation of the topsoil to the surface of the natural subsoil. An area measuring approximately 15m (north/south) x 16m (east/west) was excavated using a mechanical digger and 'sheugh' bucket. The area investigated incorporated the earlier test pits and an identical stratigraphy was encountered in Phase Two to that encountered in Phase One. Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered in this phase of archaeological investigations at Marlacoo Beg.

Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered in the investigations at Marlacoo Beg, Co. Armagh. It is not thought that the development of the application site will impinge on any previously unrecorded archaeological remains, and so it is recommended that no further archaeological work is carried out. Publication of the results of the evaluation is not thought merited, save a short summary in the annual *Excavations* Bulletin.

Archive:

Finds:

The artefacts recovered from the evaluation are temporarily archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Photographs:

The digital images (37 in total) taken during the evaluation are currently archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings:

All plans and section drawings produced during the evaluation are archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, School of Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology, Queen's University Belfast.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

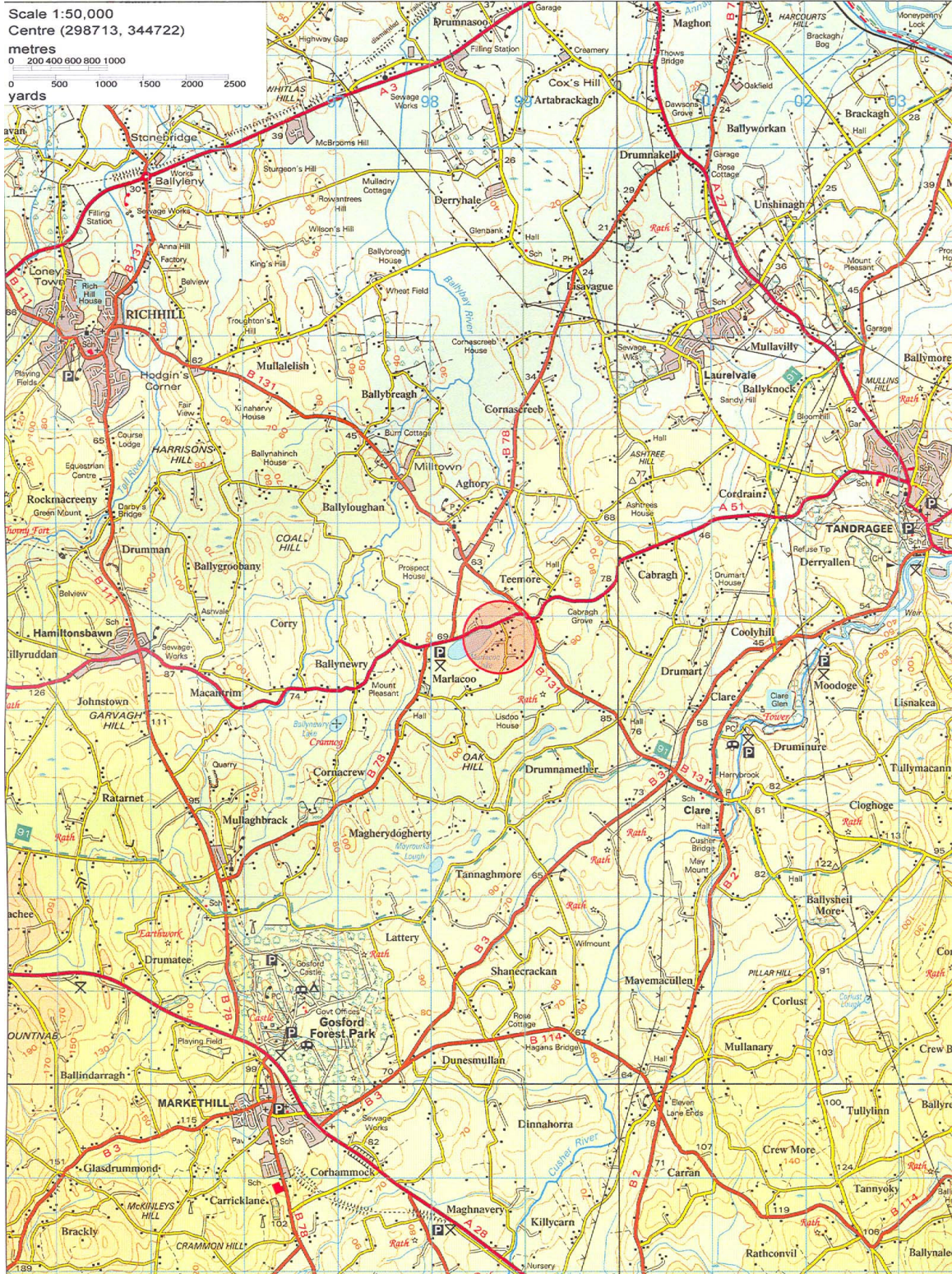


Figure One: General location map showing development area (red circle)

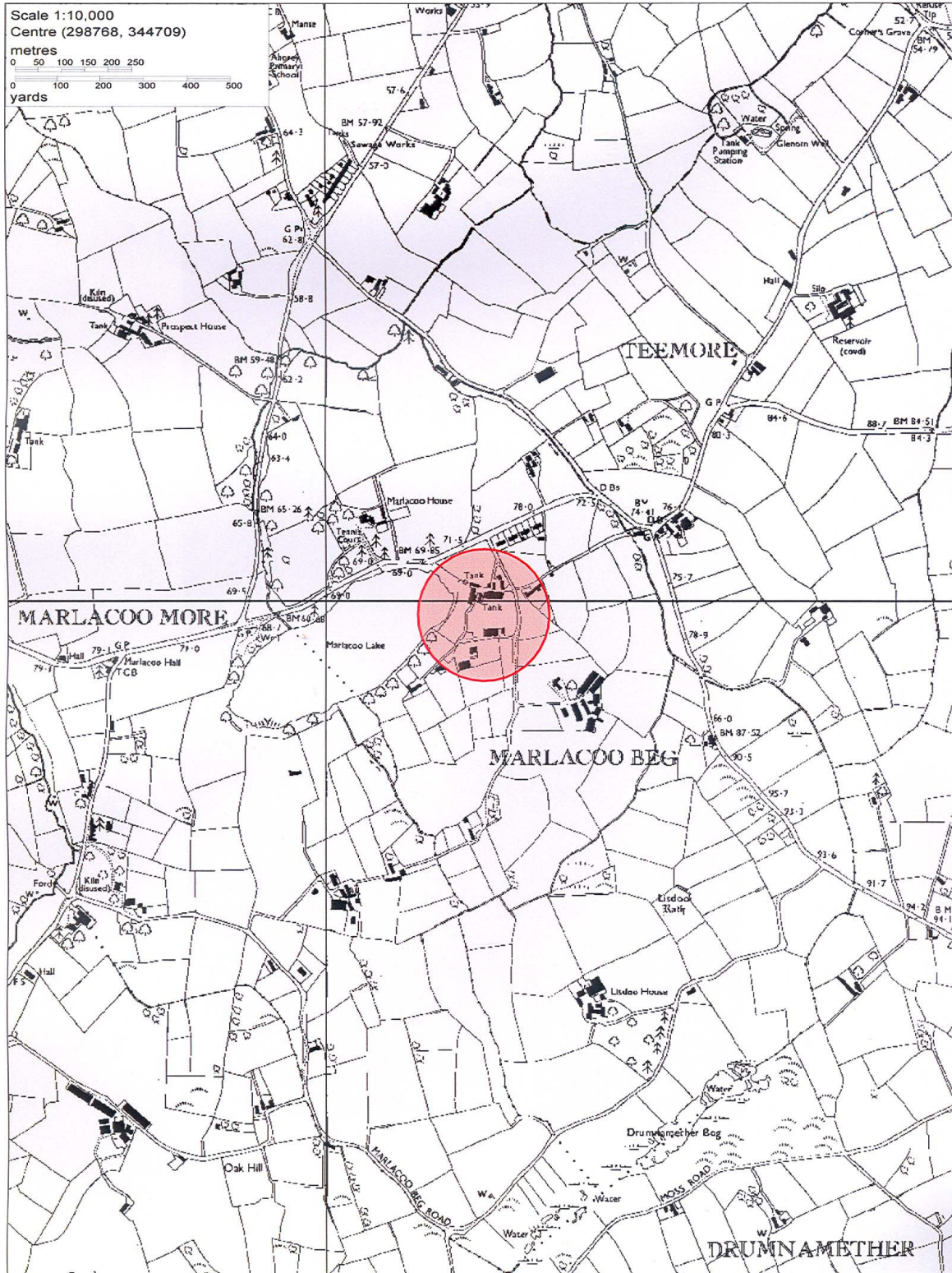


Figure Two: Detailed location map showing development area (circled red) in relation to Marlacoo Lough

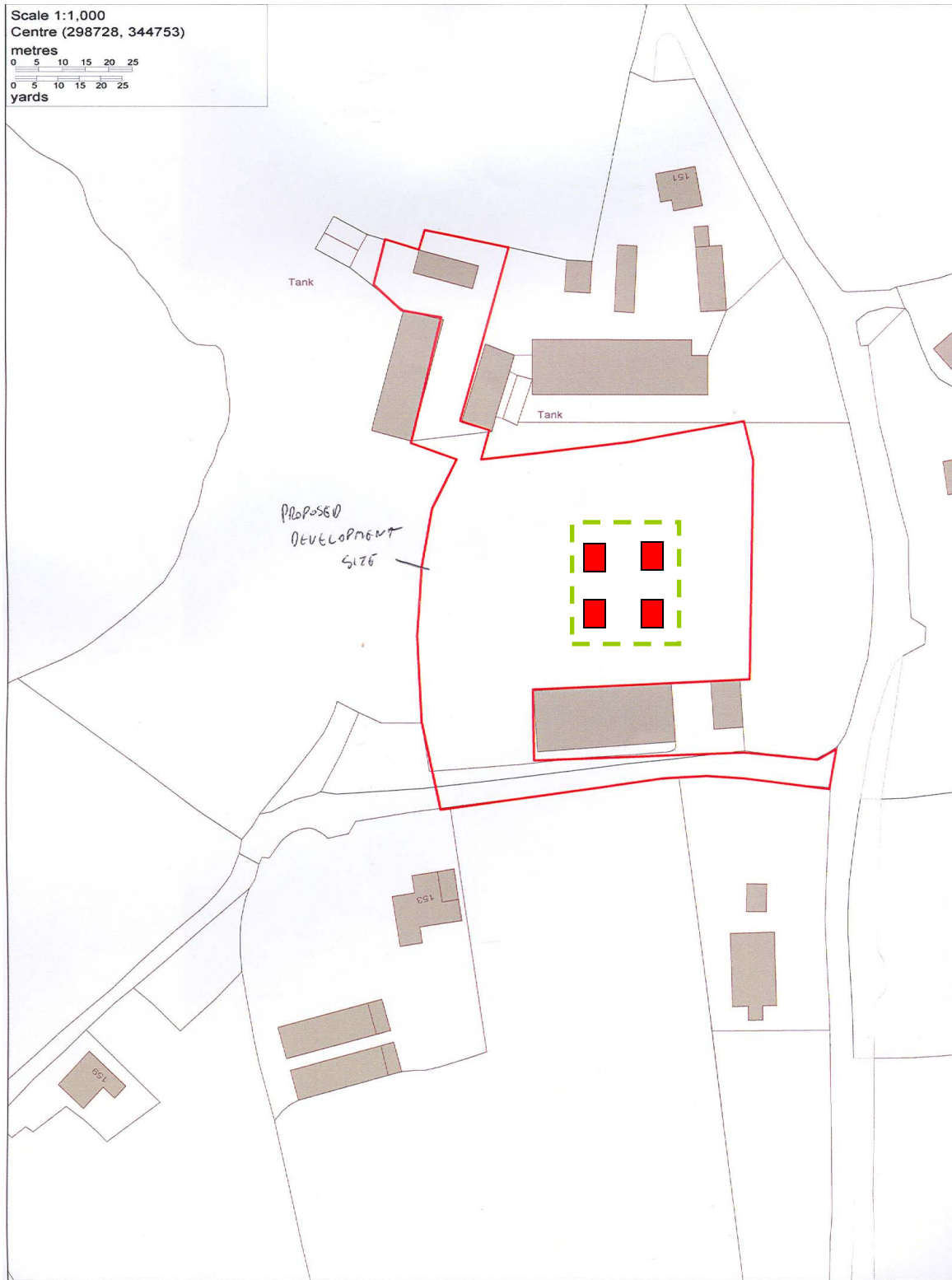
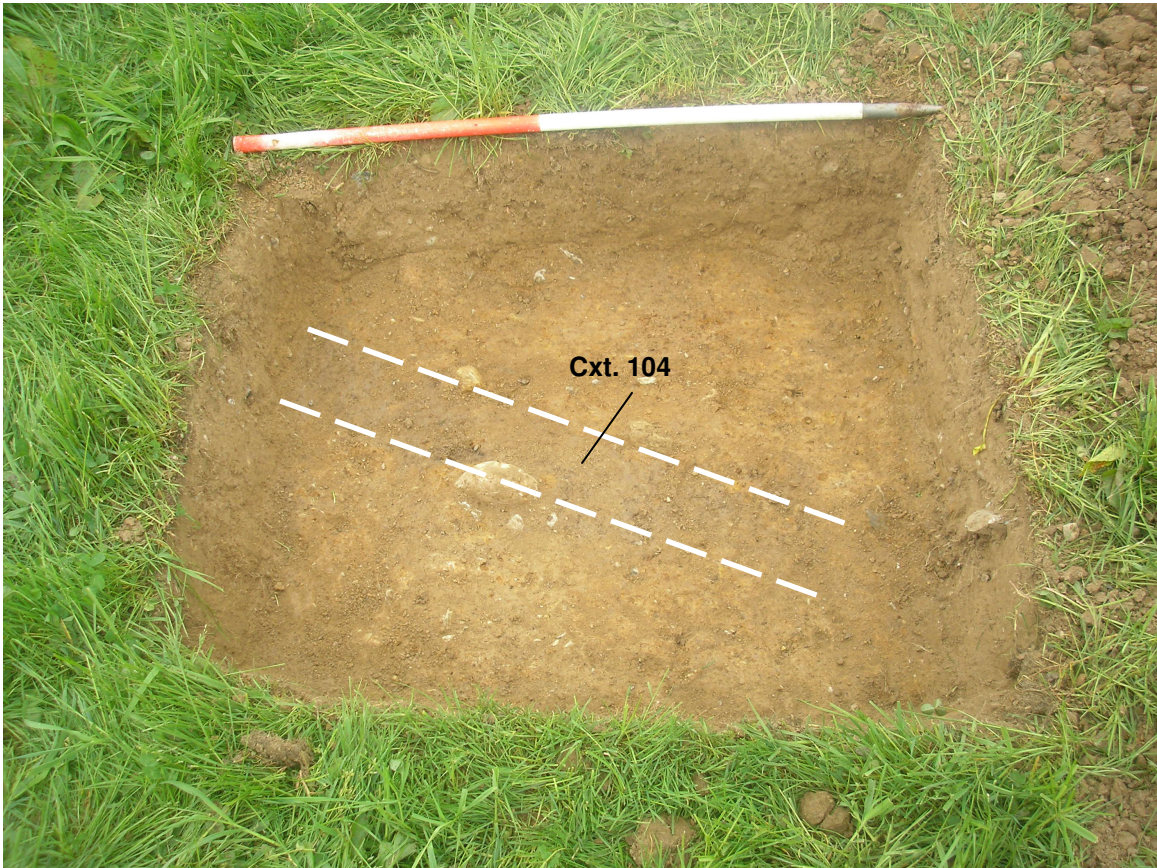


Figure Three: Development site showing location of manually excavated test pits (in red) and area mechanically stripped of topsoil (green dotted line)



Plate One: General view of the application site, looking north-east with Marlaco lough in the background



*Plate Two: Test Pit 1 following excavation to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 103),
looking north*



*Plate Three: Test Pit 2 following excavation to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 203),
looking north*



Plate Four: Test Pit 3 following excavation to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 303), looking north



Plate Five: Test Pit 4 following excavation to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 403), looking south



Plate Six: Mechanical topsoil stripping of the proposed application site, looking north-west with Marlaco Lough in the background