Monitoring Report No. 235

160 metres north of 129 Ennislare Road
Balleer townland
Armagh
County Armagh

AE/12/12E

Grace McAlister

**Site Specific Information**

*Site location*: 160 metres north of 129 Ennislare Road

*Townland*: Balleer

*SMR number*: ARM 016:034

State Care Scheduled Other √

*Grid reference*: H86823824

*County*: Armagh

*Excavation licence number*: AE/12/12E

*Planning reference number*: O/2009/0686/RM

*Date of monitoring*: 14th February 2012

*Archaeologists present*: Grace McAlister, Naomi Carver

*Brief summary*:
Monitoring of five test trenches excavated to subsoil to evaluate the potential impact of the proposed development on any previously unrecorded below-ground remains. 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*: Five trenches each approximately 2m wide, ranging from 10m to 15m in length.

*Current land use*: Agricultural

*Intended land use*: Residential

**Account of monitoring**

The site of the proposed dwelling is located 160 metres north of 129 Ennislare Road, Balleer townland, near Armagh in Co. Armagh (Figure 1).

The evaluation was requested due to the proximity of a possible rath / landscape feature (NISMR ARM 016:034), located to the west of the application site. In general, the surrounding area is rich in archaeological remains, generally Early Christian in date (Figure 2). The archaeological evaluation was carried out to assess the presence and survival of any archaeological remains that would be adversely affected by the development. This was the second evaluation to take place on this site. In 2006 Naomi Carver (CAF) carried out an evaluation in the north of the field (CAF Evaluation/Monitoring Report No. 079). However, after a revision in the planning permission it was deemed appropriate that another archaeological evaluation should take place. Monitoring of test trenches took place on 14th February 2012. Five test trenches (A-E) were opened in the area highlighted by Liam McQuillan: NIEA Inspector (Figure 3).

*Trench A*

Trench A was aligned perpendicular to the existing laneway and ran approximately east – west, measuring 1.8m x 14.9m (Figure 3). The north-eastern corner of the trench is 3m from the north-south field boundary. The sod and topsoil layer (context no. 101) in Trench A consisted of a compact light brown silty loam layer averaging 0.09m in depth. Below this there was a cultivation soil (context no. 102) consisting of a light greyish brown silty clay and averaging 0.22m in depth. The subsoil in Trench A (context no. 103: Plate 1) was a light greyish orange sandy clay, with frequent small angular stones protruding from the surface. No subsoil cut features or finds were located in this trench.

*Trench B*

Trench B was positioned parallel and approximately 3.4m to the south of Trench A, with the north-east corner of the trench 3.2m from the north-south running field boundary (Figure 3). A simple stratigraphic sequence was encountered in this trench. A sod and topsoil layer (context no. 201) measuring 0.12m in depth was above a 0.2m deep layer of cultivation soil (context no. 202). This was directly overlying the natural subsoil (context no. 203: Plate 2). The character of each layer was the same as in Trench A. Again no subsoil cut features or finds were found in this trench.

*Trench C*

Trench C was positioned approximately 2m to the south of Trench B with the north-eastern corner of the trench 3.8m from the north-south field boundary (Figure 3). The trench was parallel to

trenches A and B and measured 1.8m x 10.8m. The stratigraphic sequence and the nature of the contexts are similar to those encountered in trenches A and B. The sod and topsoil layer (context no.301) was 0.10m in depth, the underlying cultivation soil (context no. 302) was 0.2m deep and was directly overlying the subsoil (context no. 303: Plate 3).

*Trench D*

Trench D ran roughly north-south, perpendicular to, and 9.5m from Trench C (Figure 3). The trench measured 1.8m x 10.6m. The sod and topsoil layer (context no. 401) was 0.1m in depth and similar in character to the same deposit in trenches A, B and C. The underlying cultivation soil (context no. 402) was on average 0.2m in depth and again the same as in trenches A, B and C. Below the cultivation layer, at the northern end of the trench there was a mid greyish brown, compact, clayey silt deposit with frequent medium sized, angular stones (context no. 403: Plate 4). This deposit was 0.32m deep and approximately 2.7m wide and extending north-east – south-west through the trench. Elsewhere in the trench context no. 402 was directly overlying the subsoil (Plate 5).

There is no cut for context no. 403 and it is most likely that this layer is a modern feature. It is possible that context no. 403 is associated with the present day concrete path which runs north-south before veering to the south west and then stopping a few metres before the application site. It is likely that before part of the path was concreted, a hardcore path running from the present laneway to the small building located on top of the "rath" (Plate 6).

*Trench E*

Trench E was aligned parallel to and 2m east of Trench D (Figure 3). The sod and topsoil layer (context no. 501) was 0.08m in depth and above the cultivation soil (context no. 502) which was 0.2m deep. The character of both layers were the same as in the other four trenches. The subsoil (context no. 504: Plate 7) sloped down in the northern end of this trench and another layer was apparent below context no. 502. This was a brownish grey clayey silt (context no. 503: Plates 8 and 9) which contained angular stones and fragments of red brick. The deposit was 0.35m deep and extended for 2.5m towards the northern limit of excavation. The proximity of this feature to the lane way and gate suggest that this was probably a relatively modern dump of material used to level a hollow in the field near the entrance thus allowing easier access.

*Summary*

The five trenches excavated at the application site contained nothing of archaeological significance. It is thought that the proposed development will not have any impact upon previously unrecorded archaeological remains. Therefore it is recommended that no further archaeological work is carried out on the site. Publication of the results of the evaluation is not merited, save an entry into the Annual *Excavations* Bulletin.

**Archive**

*Finds*:

No finds were found during the archaeological evaluation.

*Photographs*:

36 digital images taken during the evaluation are archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork offices.

*Plans / Drawings*:

N/A

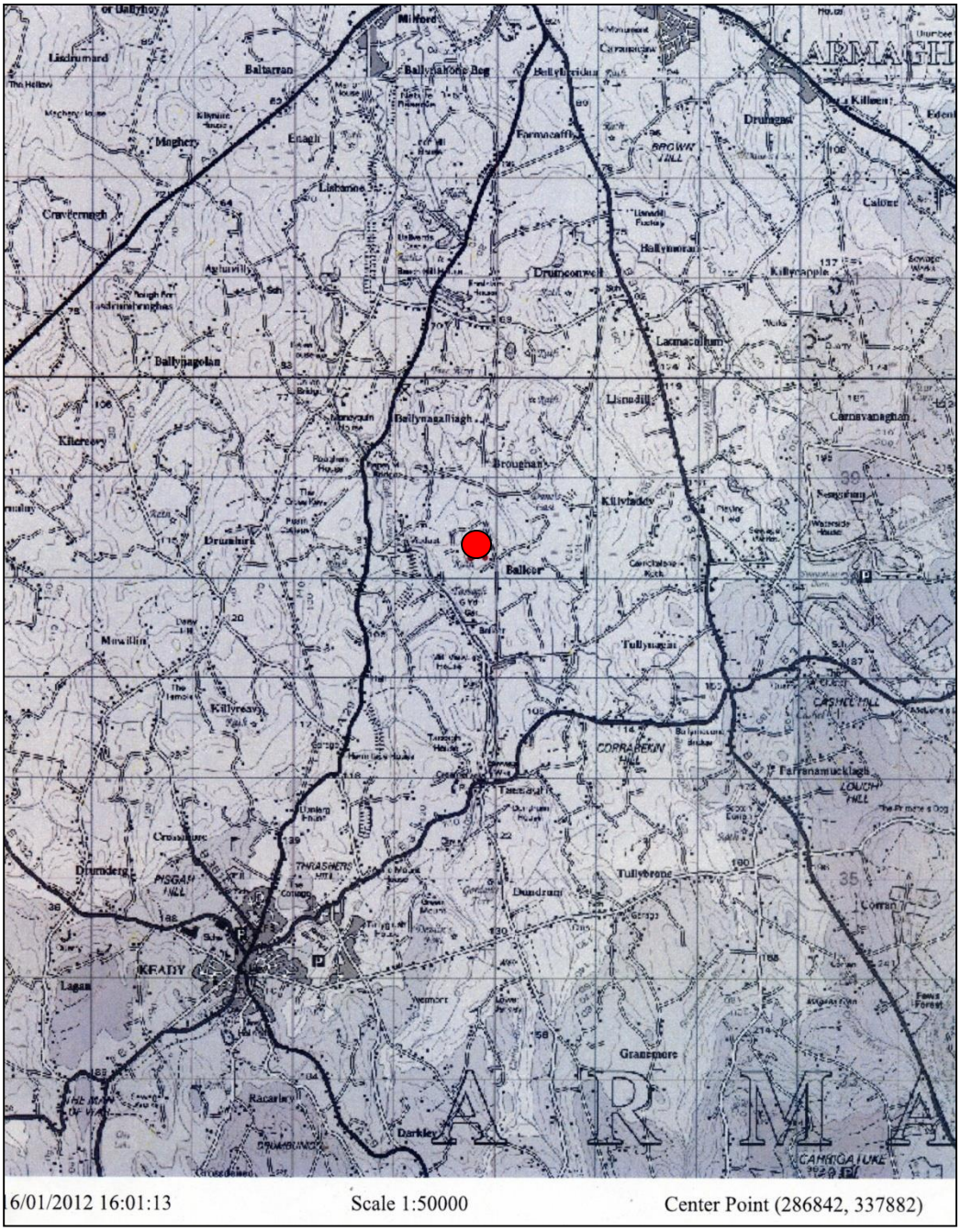


*Figure 1: 1:50,000 Ordnance Survey Map showing location of site (circled in red)*

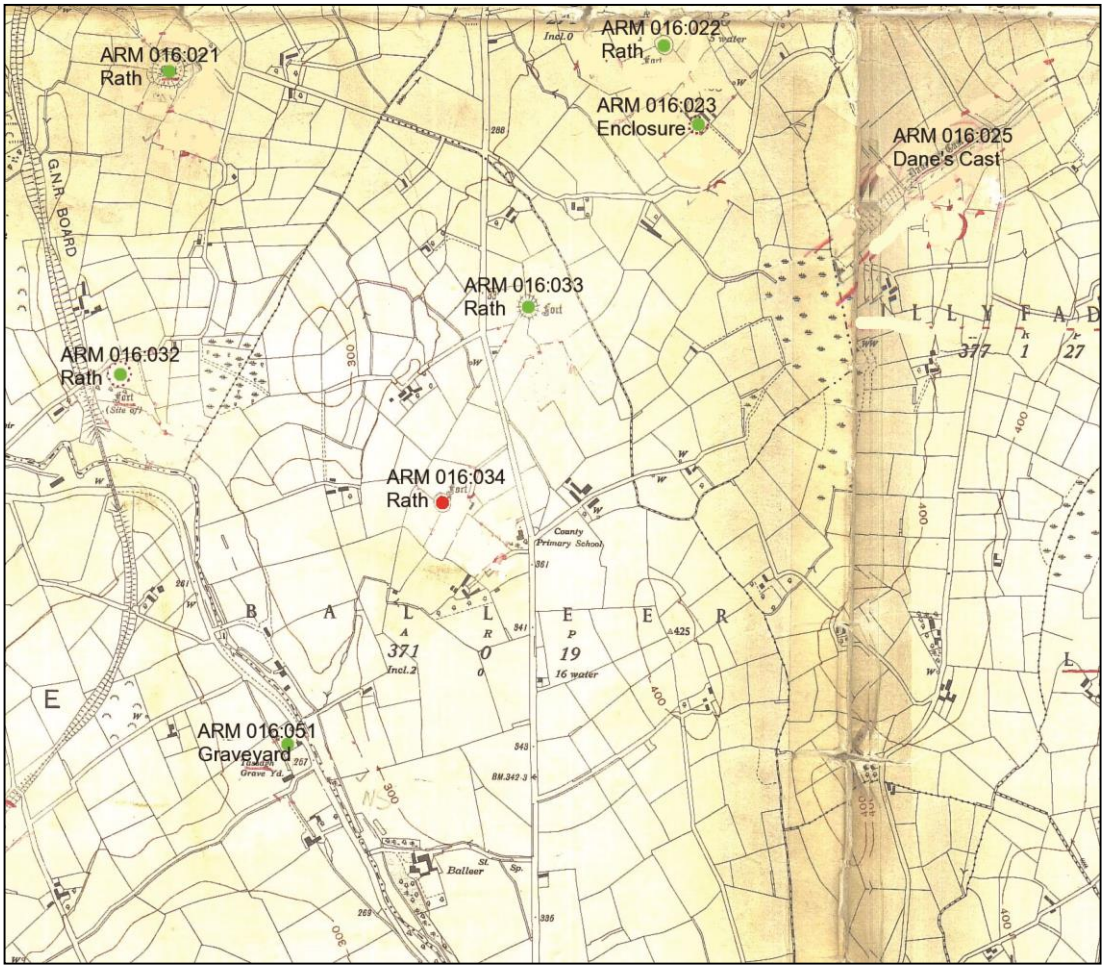


*Figure 2: Detailed location map showing application site (red dot) and other surrounding sites (green dots)*

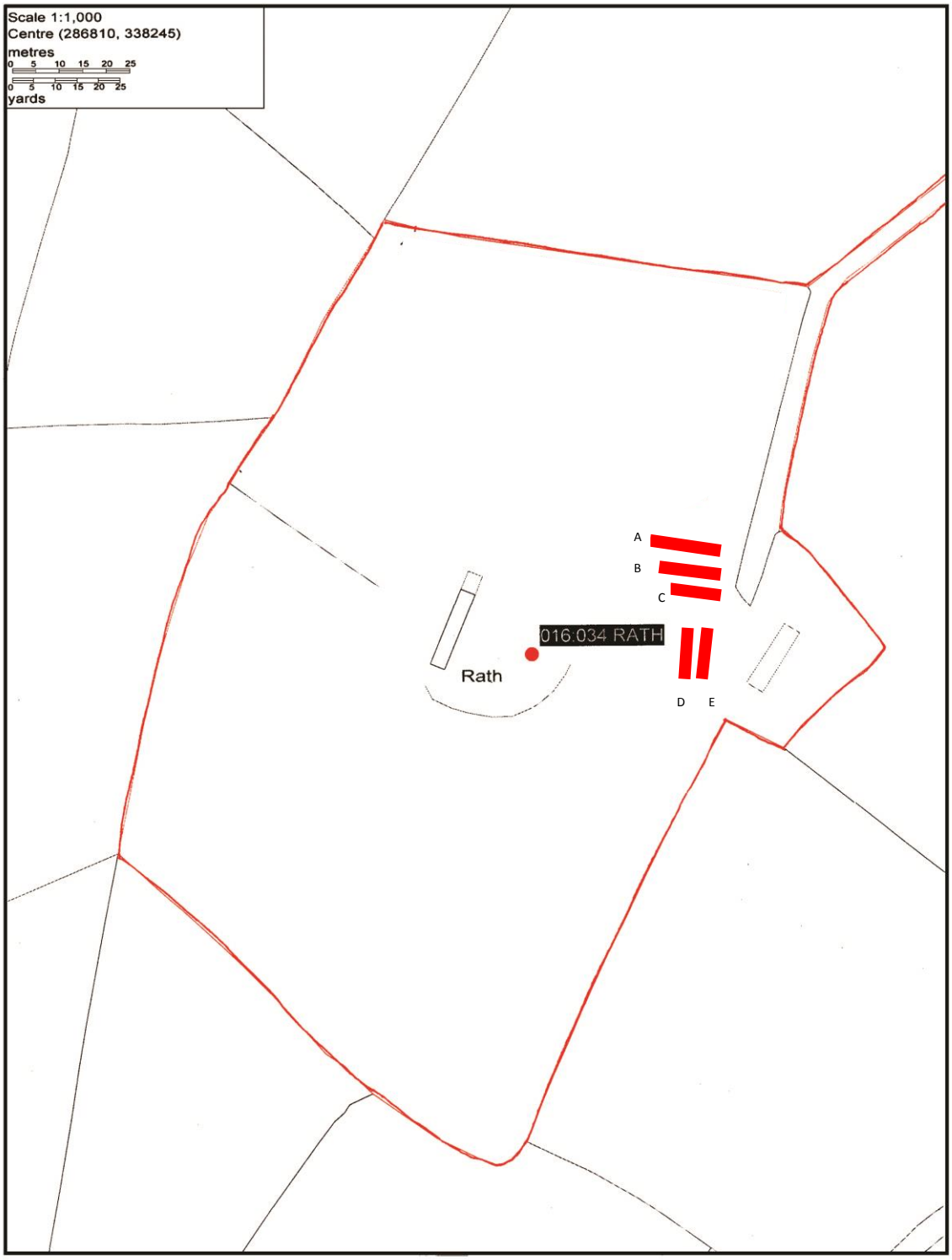


*Figure 3: Plan showing location of trenches A-E*

*Plate 1: Trench A, post-excavation, looking west*

*Plate 2: Trench B, post-excavation, looking west*

*Plate 3: Trench C, post-excavation, looking west*

*Plate 4: Context 403, looking north-east*

*Plate 5: Trench D, post-excavation, looking north*

*Plate 6: General shot showing laneway veering to the south-west towards trenches D and E, looking south-west*

*Plate 7: Trench E, post-excavation, looking south*

*Plate 8: East facing section of Trench E showing context no. 501, 502, 503*

*Plate 9: Context no. 503 looking south*