



Monitoring Report No: 237

**36-38 Windsor Park
Queen's University Belfast
Co. Antrim**

AE/12/31

(Phase 1)

Grace McAlister

Site Specific Information

Site location: 36-38 Windsor Park

Townland: Windsor

SMR number: n/a

State Care Scheduled Other

Grid reference: J32657174

County: Antrim

Excavation licence number: AE/12/31

Planning reference number: Z/2011/0570/F

Date of monitoring: 14th-15th March 2012

Archaeologists present: Grace McAlister, Naomi Carver

Brief summary:

Archaeological monitoring of seven test trenches excavated to subsoil or archaeologically significant remains.

Type of monitoring:

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

Size of area opened: Seven trenches, ranging in size from 1.2m – 1.7m in width and 8.6m – 17.3m in length.

Current land use: Residential

Intended land use: Residential

Introduction

The site of the redevelopment is located at 36-38 Windsor Park, Belfast (Figures 1 & 2) and is the property of Queens University Belfast. The site currently contains two three-storey buildings which were constructed in the 1970's and are currently being used as student accommodation.

Archaeological monitoring was recommended by Dr. Harry Welsh - Centre of Archaeological Fieldwork, in an Archaeological Impact Assessment carried out in November 2011 (AIA Report No. 10). Archaeological monitoring would help assess the presence and survival of any archaeological remains that would be adversely affected by the redevelopment. Although presently no archaeological remains are visible on site, the site is located on the Malone Ridge, an area occupied and settled during prehistoric times. A number of scheduled monuments are found within a 1km radius of the site and Early Christian artifacts have been found less than 300m from the site itself. More information about the surrounding scheduled monuments can be read in detail in AIA Report No.10.

It was planned that the archaeological monitoring would be carried out in 2 phases. Phase 1 would involve the topsoil stripping of grassed areas around the existing structures. Phase 2 would occur after the demolition of the buildings and would include monitoring the removal of concrete floors and the topsoil stripping of the new development footprint. Once on site and upon consultation with the architect's maps, it became apparent that it would not be possible to strip all of the grassed areas during Phase 1. This was due to vegetation and underground electrical cables supplying the buildings on site. Therefore it was decided that individual trenches would be opened in accessible areas where it was less likely to cause disturbance to any on-site amenities.

Account of Monitoring

Phase 1 took place on 14th-15th March 2012 with the excavation and archaeological monitoring of the test trenches. Seven test trenches (1-7) were excavated and recorded as highlighted in Figure 3. Trenches 1-4 were opened on 14th March and trenches 5-7 opened on 15th March. The trenches

were excavated using a mechanical excavator equipped with a smooth edged “sheugh” bucket. All the trenches were back filled once recording had been completed.

Trench 1

Trench 1 (Plates 1-5) measured 8.60m x 1.20m and was aligned approximately north - south, parallel to the access route leading to the rear of 36-38 Windsor Park. The trench was excavated to the subsoil where possible but was interrupted by a number of modern features. The sod layer (101) was 0.05m thick and came down on to a mid-brown silty clay topsoil layer (102) which was approximately 0.12m in depth. A mottled reddish brown sandy clay with mid-grey clay mottling (103) was below 102, this layer contained angular stones rubble, red brick, glazed pipe. The cut for a cable trench (104) was then encountered cut into the subsoil, this was 0.16m wide and filled with a mid-brownish grey silty sand (105). The subsoil (106) was bright reddish orange clayey sand typical of that found on the Malone Ridge. It was not possible to excavate this trench to the subsoil throughout as a water “well” (Plate 4) interrupted the trench between 4.5m and 5.6m (measured from the northern extent of the trench). A concrete plinth, most likely a manhole cover was located towards the south of the trench which was 1.40m long and at least 0.20m deep. Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench.

Trench 2

Trench 2 (Plates 6-9) was aligned approximately east - west, parallel to Windsor Park and measuring 17.3m x 1.20m. The sod layer (201) was 0.07m in thickness and the topsoil (202), a mid-greyish brown clayey silt was 0.15m in thickness. Directly beneath the topsoil there was a 0.14m thick, bright orangey red deposit mottled by grey clay (203). This contained red brick, angular stones, cement and other building rubble, indicating that it was probably associated with the building of the present property and the landscaping of the site. A cable trench (204) approximately 0.20m wide was cut in the subsoil and runs roughly south-east – north-west. It entered the trench at 4.6m on the south-east edge and left at 6.5m at the north-west edge of the trench. The cable trench was filled by a mid-brown clayey silt (205), a sherd of white glazed ceramic was found in this deposit. A firm light bluish grey clay was below 203 throughout the trench. This deposit ranged from 0.06-0.13m in depth and contained red brick, small sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and occasionally charcoal smearing.

Towards the north-west end of the trench a dark grey sleachy deposit (207), ranging from 0.09-0.20m in thickness, was encountered above the natural. This deposit contained red brick and tar and was present in the trench between 8.4m and 12.3m approximately (measured from eastern extent of trench). Sherds of black glazed pottery were found in this layer. The subsoil (208) was similar in character to 106 in trench 1 and was reached at an average depth of 0.6m.

Trench 3

Trench 3 (Plates 10-13) was aligned approximately north - south and measured 12.1m x 1.2m. The characters of the sod (301) and topsoil (302) layers were the same as in trench 2 and had a combined thickness of 0.20m. Directly beneath the topsoil was a layer of mid brownish grey sandy clay (303) measuring 0.15-0.30m in thickness. Beneath this was a red clayey sand (304) which contained large fragments of kerb stones, ranging from 0.08-0.21m in depth. This was reminiscent of a layer of re-deposited natural and contained a sherd of blue and white ceramic. A layer of greyish yellow firm sand (305) containing lots of mortar and occasional rubbly stones was then encountered. Below this there was a firm reddish clay layer ranging from 0.05-0.14m in thickness (306). A brownish grey mottled clay (307) with occasional charcoal smearing and red brick, 0.13-0.20m thick occurred below 306 towards the northern end of the trench. From 8.8m (measured from the northern extent of the trench), a dark bluish grey clay (310), 0.18m thick with frequent charcoal smearing appeared in the trench and continued south towards the section. This layer was below 304 and above 307. A cable trench cut into the subsoil was also located in this trench. The cut (309) was 0.20m wide and ran approximately north - south extending the full length of the trench. 309 was cut into the subsoil (311) and filled with a grey sandy silt with rubble inclusions (308). 311 was similar in nature to the subsoil found in trenches 1 and 2 and was reached at an average depth of 0.9m. Although a number of different stratigraphic layers occurred in this trench, all appear to be modern; nothing of archaeological significance was found.

Trench 4

Trench 4 (Plates 10, 14, 15) was aligned parallel to and 5.3m east of trench 3 and measured approximately 10m x 1.2m. The characters of the sod (401) and topsoil (402) are similar to elsewhere and have a combined thickness of 0.28m. Beneath the topsoil a pinkish yellow sandy gravel layer (403) was encountered. This deposit had greyish brown silty clay mottling and frequent inclusions of

mortar as well as sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and concrete patches. Beneath 403 there was a very compact dark grey gravel layer (404), 0.18m in thickness which contained tar like material, fragments of red brick and glazed ceramic pipe. Underlying 404 there was a very compact clay layer (405) which contained a large of amount of concrete building material and rubble. 405 was too compact and extensive to dig through with the "sheugh" bucket so excavation stopped at this level before reaching subsoil.

Trench 5

Trench 5 (Plates 10, 16, 17) was positioned parallel and to the east of trench 4 and measured 9m x 1.7m. The sod (501) and topsoil (502) layers were similar to the equivalent in trench 4 and had a combined thickness of 0.24m. Beneath 502 a concrete floor (503) was encountered. This was followed and found to extend the full length of the trench. It was at this point it was decided to widen the trench in an attempt to find the extent of this concrete surface or a point where it could be prised up. However when neither of these were found, it was decided that a box section should be taken through the 503 to assess the stratigraphy beneath.

The box section was positioned in the north-west corner of the trench and measured approximately 1m x 1m. The excavation of the layers required a toothed bucket. 503 was found to be 0.11m thick and the underlying stratigraphy had similarities to that of trench 4. A 0.06-0.12m thick, pinkish grey mortary sand deposit (504), directly below 503 was similar to 403 in trench 4. There was then a 0.08m thick hardcore deposit (505) which contained brownish grey clay and mortar. This deposit reappeared in other places in the trench where small pieces of concrete had become loose. Both 504 and 505 seem to be levelled therefore making it likely that they are bedding layers for the concrete "floor". Below 505 there was a 0.09cm thick dark greyish black gravel layer (506) which contained tarmac material, this was similar to 404. A thin deposit made up of sub-rounded small chalk stones (507) was below 506. Beneath 507 there was a black gravel layer (508), 0.10m in depth, which contained ceramic pipe and black glazed earthenware. This layer had similarities to 506 but was less compact. The basal fill in this box trench was a light grey clay mottled by an orangey grey sandy clay with tarmac/gravel inclusions in places (509). It is likely that 509 was the uppermost layer of the subsoil but has become contaminated by the building on the site and the above stratigraphy. The

subsoil (510) was similar to elsewhere on the eastern half of the site and was reached at an approximate depth of 1m.

Without removing all of 503 in this trench, it cannot be certain that the same stratigraphy as found in the box section is maintained throughout the extent of the trench. 503 and the layers below are probably associated with a previous dwelling or structure, possibly early 20th century in date.

Trench 6

Trench 6 (Plates 18-20) measured 9.4m x 1.2m and was aligned parallel to the western property boundary. The ground surface at this area, to the west of the property is considerably lower than to the east of the site. It appears to have been landscaped and is presently approximately 0.5m lower than at the eastern half of the site. The sod (601) and topsoil (602) were consistent with elsewhere on site and had a combined depth of 0.16m. The layers in this trench seemed to show evidence for the deposition and levelling of material in order to landscape the site. Beneath 602 there was a gravelly deposit which included a lot of building rubble and red brick (603). This deposit was not present for the entirety of the trench and varied a lot in depth, from 0.08-0.28m, being thickest towards the southern end of trench. 2.6m from the northern extent of the trench it is interrupted by a red clayey sand layer (604), it continued until 603 reappears in the west-facing section 3.9m from the northern extent of the trench and continues towards the south of the trench. To the eastern side of the trench, 603 and 604 were then further interrupted by a greenish grey gravel sandy layer (605) which was approximately 0.09m in depth. 605 appeared in the east facing section at 5.4m (measured from the northern extent of the trench) and disappeared at 5.88m. Running underneath 603, 604 and 605 was a mid-greyish brown sandy clay with red brick and tarmac inclusions (606). The thickness of this deposit varied between 0.22m and 0.33m. A dirty light orange sand layer (607) was beneath 606 but this was confined to the northern end of the trench. The subsoil (608) was reached at a depth of 0.65m – 0.84m in this trench. The nature of the subsoil was similar to elsewhere on the site but was slightly stonier and had occasional pinkish clay patches. Nothing of archaeological significance was found in this trench.

Trench 7

Trench 7 (Plates 18, 21-23) was aligned perpendicular to trench 6 and measured 10.85m x 1.2m. Again the sod (701) and topsoil (702) were similar to elsewhere on the site and had a combined depth of approximately 0.24m. Below 602 there was a deposit made up of large building stones and red brick (703). This was approximately 0.27m in depth at the western end of the trench but thinned to 0.13m towards the eastern end of the trench. From 0m and 3.9m (measured from the western extent of the trench) there was a 0.13m thick dark greyish black hardcore layer with tar inclusions (704). Underlying 703 and 704 was a mid-grey (709) clay with occasional small sandy angular stones, charcoal smearing and tarmac inclusions. 709 was overlying a pinkish grey firm clay (710), which although only about 0.05m to the west of the trench, increased to 0.20-0.25m elsewhere in the trench. There were two pipe trenches running through trench 7. The first (cut 706), was aligned north – south and contained a steel water pipe surrounded by a soft, mottled greyish brown sandy fill (705). The second pipe trench (cut 708) was aligned north-east – south-west and appeared in the northern facing section from 4m - 5.1(metered from the western extent of the trench), and 6m - 7.1m in the south facing section. The fill of 708 was a mottled grey and red clay (707). 706 appeared to be cut through 708, with 708 being cut into the subsoil. The subsoil (711) was located at a between 0.5 and 0.75 beneath the present ground surface and similar in character to 608 in trench 6.

Conclusions

Nothing of archaeological significance was found in trenches 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7. Any artefacts found in these trenches are post-medieval in date. Trenches 4 and 5 could not be cleared entirely as the subsoil could not be reached in the limited excavation area. The floor layers in trenches 4 and 5 are likely to be associated with an earlier dwelling on the site as the position of this feature correlates with the edge of building line which runs along the northern side of Windsor Park. Looking at the cartographic evidence along with the artefactual evidence it is probable that the previous structure was most likely built between the Second and Third Editions of the Ordnance Survey County series, i.e. between 1860 and 1904.

It is recommended that Phase 2 of the archaeological monitoring commence when the demolition of the buildings on site is completed. At this point the area around trenches 4 and 5 can be further investigated to assess the presence or survival of archaeological significant strata under the Late Victorian/ Early 20th century deposits. It is also advised that the archaeologist need not be present during the removal of the concrete floors and associated levelling deposits. Archaeological monitoring will continue when the foundation dig commences.

Archive

Finds:

Finds found during the monitoring are archived within the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork offices

Photographs:

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

Plans / Drawings:

N/A

Figures and Plates

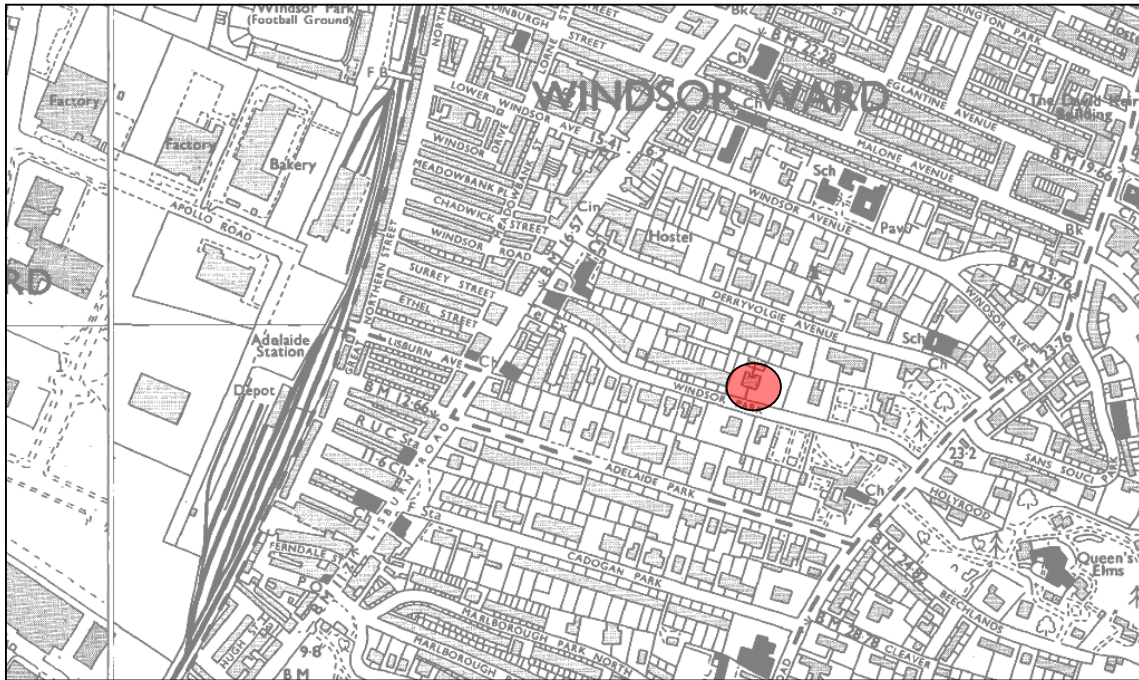


Figure 1: 8th Edition Ordnance Survey County Series showing site location in red

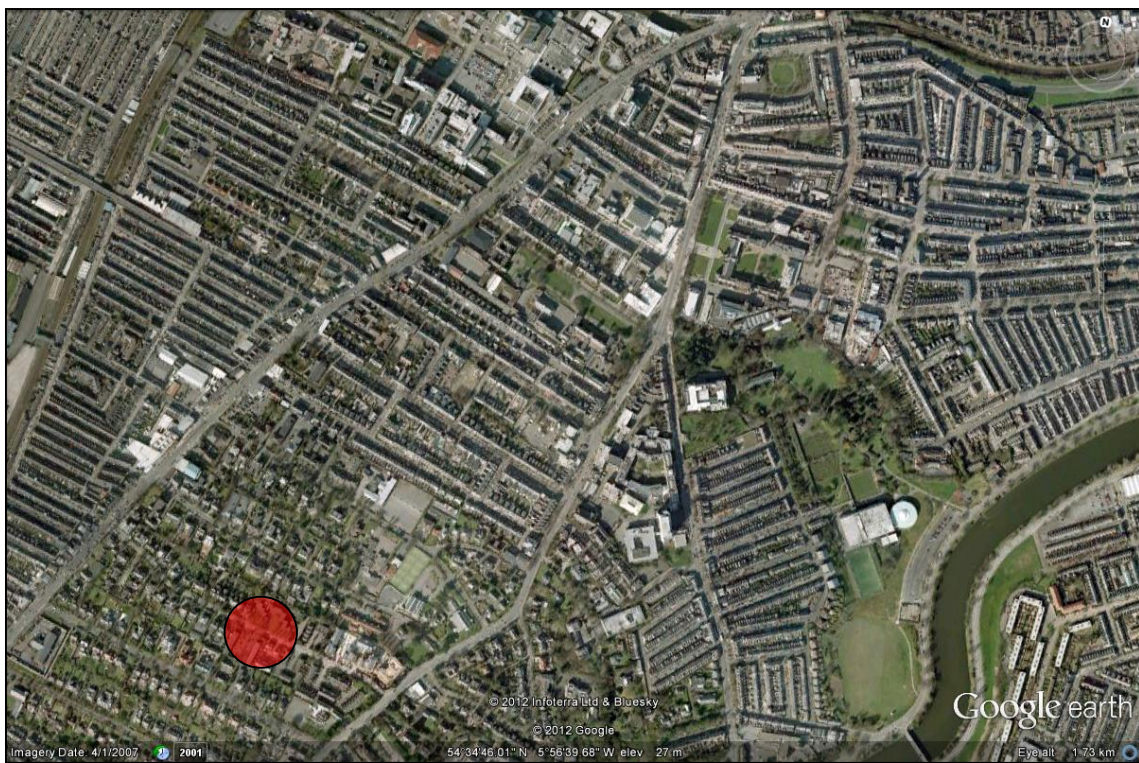


Figure 2: Google Earth image showing site location in red.



Figure 3: Schematic location of trenches 1-7

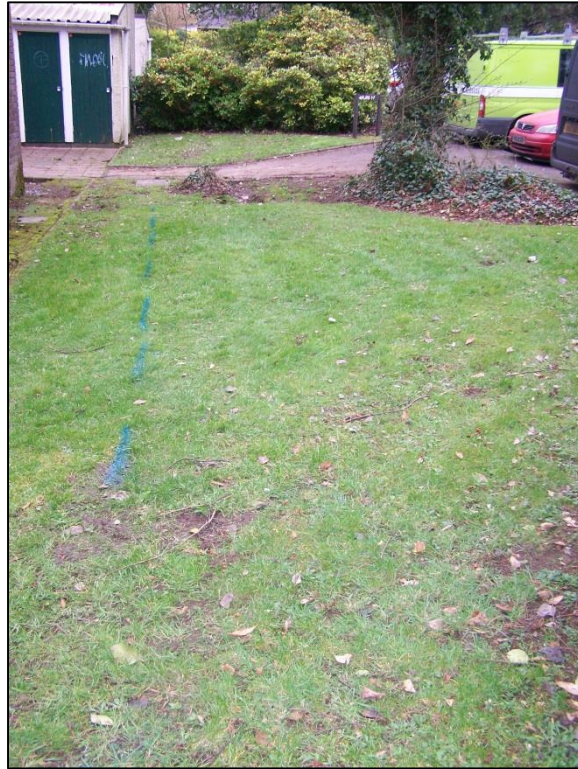


Plate 1: Trench 1 prior to excavation looking north



Plate 2: Post-excavation of trench 1 looking south



Plate 3: Trench 1, showing concrete manhole cover looking south



Plate 4: Water well interrupting trench 1



Plate 5: West facing section of trench 1



Plate 6: Trench 2 prior to excavation looking west



Plate 7: Post-excitation of Trench 2 looking west



Plate 8: Cable trench (204, 205) in trench 2 looking north-west



Plate 9: South facing section of trench 2



Plate 10: Location of trenches 3, 4, and 5 prior to excavation looking north



Plate 11: Post-excitation photo of trench 3 looking south



Plate 12: Cable trench (307 & 308) in trench 3 looking north



Plate 13: East-facing section of trench 3



Plate 14: Post-excitation photo of trench 4 looking north



Plate 15: West facing section of trench 4



Plate 16: Post-excavation photo of trench 5 looking south



Plate 17: Box section through trench 5 showing east facing section



Plate 18: Location of trenches 6 and 7 prior to excavation, looking north



Plate 19: Post-excavation photo of trench 6 looking south



Plate 20: Trench 6, west facing section



Plate 21: Post-excitation photo of trench 7 looking west



Plate 22: Trench 7 showing 606 and 607 looking west



Plate 23: East facing section of trench 7