

SUBMITTED WITH PLANNING APPLICATION SD18A/0363



**Archaeological Test Excavation of a site at Main Street,
Newcastle, County Dublin**

For Pavement Homes

**Licence 18E0558
Planning ref: SD18A/0363**

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April 2019**

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Introduction

This report details the archaeological background and test excavation in April 2019 of a greenfield site off Main Street, Newcastle Lyons, County Dublin. The report was requested by Pavement Homes Ltd to accompany a planning application to South Dublin County Council to develop the site for housing (SD18A/0363). Condition 3 of the request for additional information required that the site was subject to test excavation under licence from Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht (18E0558). The County Heritage Officer had indicated that geophysical survey of the lands was also preferred, however this was not carried out due to the relatively high probability of recent disturbance in the area-subsequently proven in the test excavation.

The site lies within the zone of archaeological significance for Newcastle Lyons, medieval settlement. In addition, the site is adjacent to a well, DU02017001. The site lies within the boundary ditches of the medieval settlement, with access from an old laneway off Main Street.

Archaeological background to the site

The village of Newcastle Lyons is considered to be one of the more significant manorial villages of the Pale. The settlement may have begun as a pre-Norman settlement, and Swan has suggested the possibility an early ecclesiastic enclosure north-west of the village (Bradley 1998, 136).

Newcastle is first mentioned as a royal manor in 1215, however borough status is not recorded until the late 15th century. The village was enclosed by ditches, but there is no evidence that it was ever walled or even gated.

The plan was essentially linear, with dwellings located at the Main Street frontage, and long burgage plots extending from the rear of the houses to the boundary ditch. An earlier study by O'Keefe identified potentially two phases in the development of these boundaries. Seven castles or fortified houses have been recorded in both the Down Survey (1654-6) and the Civil Survey of the same date.

The settlement appears to have remained important into the 17th century. In 1614 it received a charter from James 1 making it a parliamentary borough and continued to send members to parliament until the Act of Union.

Cartographic evidence

The Down Survey map of Newcastle indicates an intense level of settlement. Seven substantial towers or fortified houses, a mill, and a church are standing, along with annotation 'old castle'. The scale of the Down Survey trace is not adequate to determine where the fortified houses were sited.

Rocque's map of 1760 indicates a linear settlement around a curving street (Swan's potential ecclesiastic enclosure) with laneways leading off to all directions. Buildings are located to the street, and the remains of the burgage plots extend from these. One of these laneways appears to be on the present site, where the proposed access from Main Street will be located. There was no building on the street front in the mid- 18th century. Parts of field boundaries extend along the margins of the site on Rocque's map.

A composite map derived from George Aylmer's estate map of 1722, after Simms, shows the layout of a three- field system, with scattered ownership of long strip fields, and commonage. No strip fields are indicated on the subject site.

Griffith's Valuation map for Newcastle Lyons, of the mid- 19th century, indicates the long strips of medieval origin. There are no burgage plots on the subject site however.

The 6in (first edition) map shows no features on the subject site, nor on the 25 inch, dating from c. 1880-1913. There are no structures on the site indicated on the mid- 20th century Cassini series of maps.

The Digital Globe aerial photograph shows that the site has been used as gardens for some time. A concrete surface and shed extends into the northern part of the site, and further hedged boundaries have been planted on the eastern part. These areas are likely to have been subjected to heavy land drains, disturbing any earlier deposits.

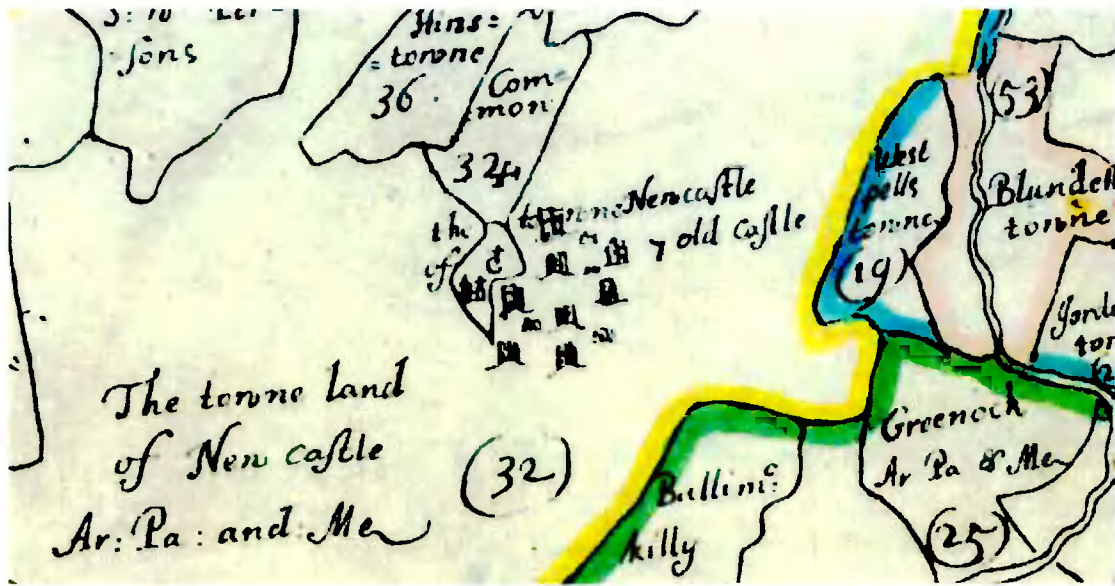


Figure 1. Down Survey map, 1654-6, showing Newcastle Lyons.

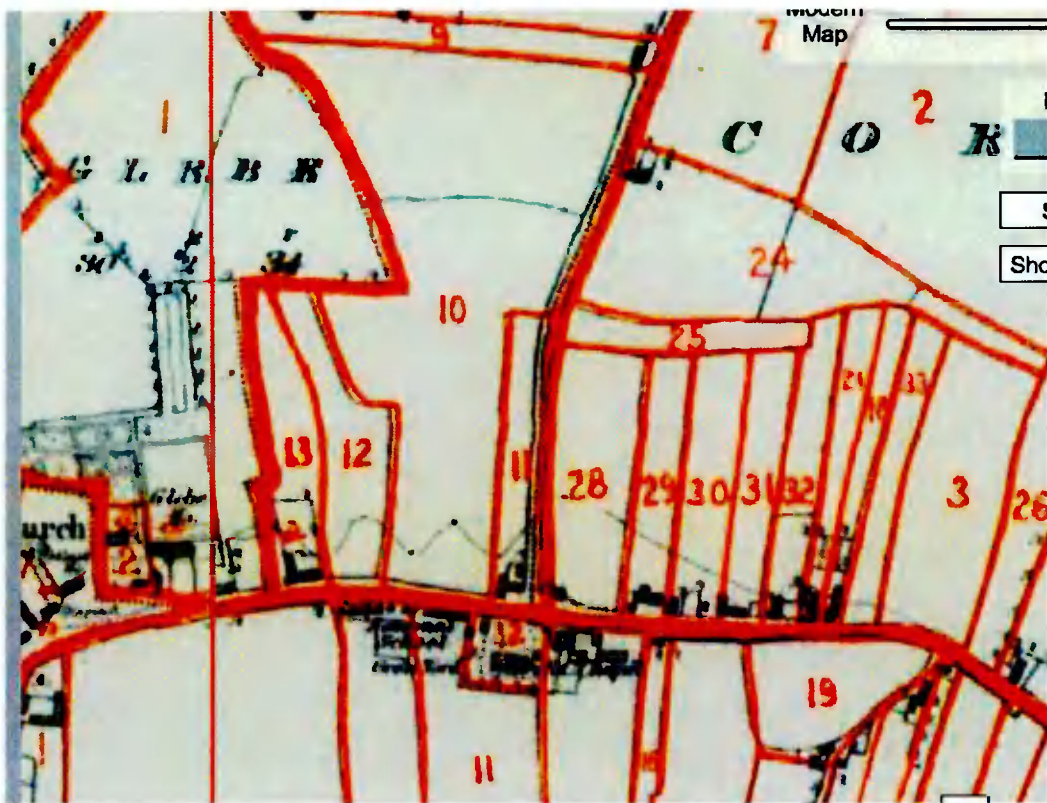


Figure 2. Map of Newcastle from Griffith's Valuation, showing burgage plots.



Figure 3. Newcastle on Rocque's 1760 map.



Figure 4. Aylmer's 1722 map, after Simms, showing medieval structures.



Figure 5. Newcastle on Ordnance Survey First Edition, 1847.



Figure 6. Digital globe shot showing suburban gardens presently forming site.

Archaeological Assessment

Nine trenches (totalling 281 linear metres / 562 square metres) were opened on the site under archaeological supervision on the 04^h and 05th April 2019, using a 14-tonne, tracked 360-excavator equipped with a 2m-wide toothless grading bucket (figs. 7-8). All trenches measured 2m in width.

Subsoil varied from orange to grey brown in colour and consisted of boulder clay with a high content of angular shattered limestone clasts varying from 100 to 300mm in diameter. It was overlain by a 200-300mm thick ploughzone of finer boulder clay mixed with loam. A 300-400mm thick layer of fine loamy topsoil completed the profile.

Trenches 1-4 were opened in the large field under grass at the southwest side of the site. Two large mounds of modern debris limited the trenching that could be undertaken at the north side of this area. Trenches 5-9 were opened in the gardens to the rear (south) of the house in the east side of the site. The presence of a number of east-west aligned and high hedges of leylandii and fir trees, man-made garden features and a large pile of modern debris at the southeast corner dictated the location of trenches in this area.

Trench 1 (62.5m in length).

No features of archaeological interest were revealed. Both the ploughzone and topsoil were remarkably 'clean' and apart from a modern rubbish pit towards the west end of the trench and a few modern plastic objects no finds were uncovered.

Trench 2 (60m in length).

No features of archaeological interest were revealed. Both the ploughzone and topsoil were remarkably 'clean' and apart from a modern rubbish pits towards the west end of the trench and a few modern plastic objects no finds were uncovered.

Trench 3 (47.5m in length).

Two features (F1 & F2) of archaeological interest were revealed at the east end of the trench below the ploughzone at 400mm below modern ground level; over the remainder of the trench the only features revealed were modern rubbish pits.

(F1) 3m from the east end of the trench a 600mm wide north-south aligned linear gully filled with silty grey loam crossed the trench. Sherds of medieval pottery were present in its upper fill and it was not further excavated.

(F2) 5m from the east end of the trench a 2200mm wide north-south aligned linear gully filled with silty grey loam crossed the trench. Sherds of medieval pottery were present in its upper fill and it was not further excavated.

Further sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery were uncovered from the plough-soil and topsoil in the vicinity of (F1) and (F2).

Trench 4 (10m in length).

Modern rubbish pits cut into subsoil (which was shallower -350mm below modern ground level- and harder here than elsewhere) occupied the full length of the trench and no features of archaeological interest were uncovered. The shallow depth of subsoil here suggests that this area may have been scarped in recent times to level the field.

Trench 5 (14m in length).

Two features (F3 & F4) of archaeological interest were uncovered at the eastern end of the trench.

(F3) A 600mm wide, north-south aligned, lime-mortar bonded, limestone masonry wall or footing, was revealed at the north side of the trench at 400mm below modern ground level. The white lime mortar in the structure did not include coal or red brick fragments, suggesting it possibly dated to before the eighteenth century.

(F4) The large and 600-700mm wide, limestone capstones of a substantial north-south aligned drain crossed the trench 1.3m west of (F3). The top of the capstones lay 300mm below modern ground level.

Sherds of medieval and post medieval pottery were uncovered from the topsoil in the vicinity of (F3) and (F4).

Trench 6 (21.5m in length).

Eight features (F5- F12) of archaeological interest were revealed in this trench.

At the east end of the trench there was an L-shaped (in plan) 300mm-wide drain (F5) filled with grey silt and capped with stones, at 450mm below modern ground level. The fill contained medieval pottery. It was overlain by an extensive spread of dark loam containing large amounts of charcoal (F6). It also contained medieval pottery. The east side of this

deposit was cut through by a north-south aligned, 3-metre wide, silt-filled ditch (F7), that appears to be an old field boundary and which was also revealed in trenches 7 and 8. Five north-south aligned cultivation furrows (F8-F12) lay further west. These were filled with grey silt, some of which contained medieval pottery, at 500mm below the modern ground surface.

Trench 7 (21.5m in length).

Close to the east end of the trench, a 1.3m-wide, north-south aligned gully (F13), filled with grey silt crossed the trench. To its west the 3m-wide former field boundary ditch (F14) crossed the trench. Further west again there were three silt-filled, north-south aligned cultivation furrows (F15-17), some of which contained medieval pottery. The top of these features lay at 500-550mm below modern ground level.

Trench 8 (21.5m in length).

A north-south aligned, 3.5m-wide ditch (F18) filled with silty loam crossed the trench 5.5m from its east end. The top of the ditch lay 450mm below modern ground level and this feature is likely to be the same field boundary ditch noted in Trenches 6 and 7.

Trench 9 (22.5m in length).

No features of archaeological interest were noted in this trench. Subsoil here was particularly stony and not conducive to the survival of cut features.

Archaeological Impact Assessment

The presence of the mortared stone structure (F3) and the flagstone-capped drain (F4) in Trench 5 suggest the presence of a building or buildings in the vicinity. These type of features are not generally found in a medieval agricultural context. The drain (F5) and burnt spread (F6) and other features in Trenches 6 and 7 and the discovery of many sherds of medieval and post-medieval pottery from Trenches 5-7, suggest the building/s and associated features date from the medieval to post-medieval period and were surrounded by an area of cultivation evidenced in Trenches 3, and 5-7.

These medieval features were cut through by a more recent field boundary ditch in Trenches 6 and 7. The continuation of the line of this ditch is visible in aerial photographs in the field to the south and the boundary is shown on nineteenth-century maps.

No structures are shown here on the surviving maps from the eighteenth century onwards and the features uncovered clearly predate this period.

Archaeological Mitigation Strategy

The archaeological features uncovered at the southeast quarter of the site underlie several of the houses and roadway of the proposed development (fig. 9). As the archaeological features lie at a shallow depth (300-600mm) they will be disturbed or removed by the proposed development and therefore will have to be archaeologically excavated and recorded in advance of the proposed development if it to proceed as planned.

Given their shallow depth and nature, the archaeological features are also vulnerable to disturbance or destruction from the passage of vehicles over the area in which they survive. Therefore the features should be archaeologically resolved before development commences on the southern and western parts of the site.

The archaeological resolution of the features will follow the requirements of the National Monuments Service and would typically involve the archaeologically supervised stripping of topsoil by mechanical excavator/s equipped with toothless buckets from the area of archaeological interest followed by the appropriate archaeological excavation and full recording of the features.

Should substantial masonry structural remains survive, the National Monuments Service may require *in situ* preservation, which may affect the layout or extent of the proposed development.

No excavation nor any ground disturbance whatsoever must be undertaken within the area where the archaeological features survive before they have been archaeologically resolved. This includes a prohibition on all soil stripping, drain construction, vehicle movements across the area, the excavation of engineer's test pits, removal of trees, soil sampling, etc.

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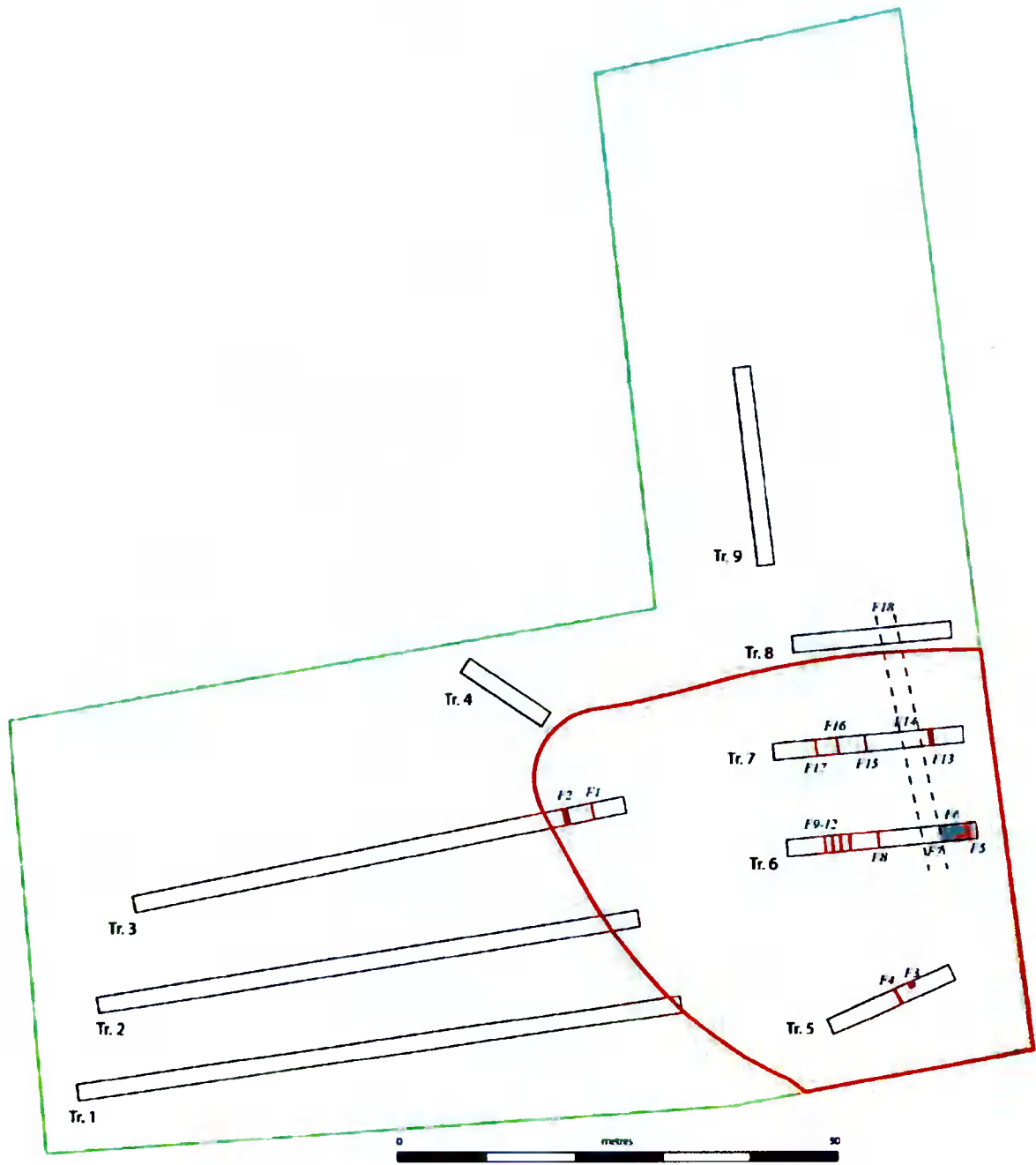


Fig. 7. Location of Trenches and features uncovered.



Fig. 8. Location of Trenches and features uncovered overlaid on satellite photograph of the site.

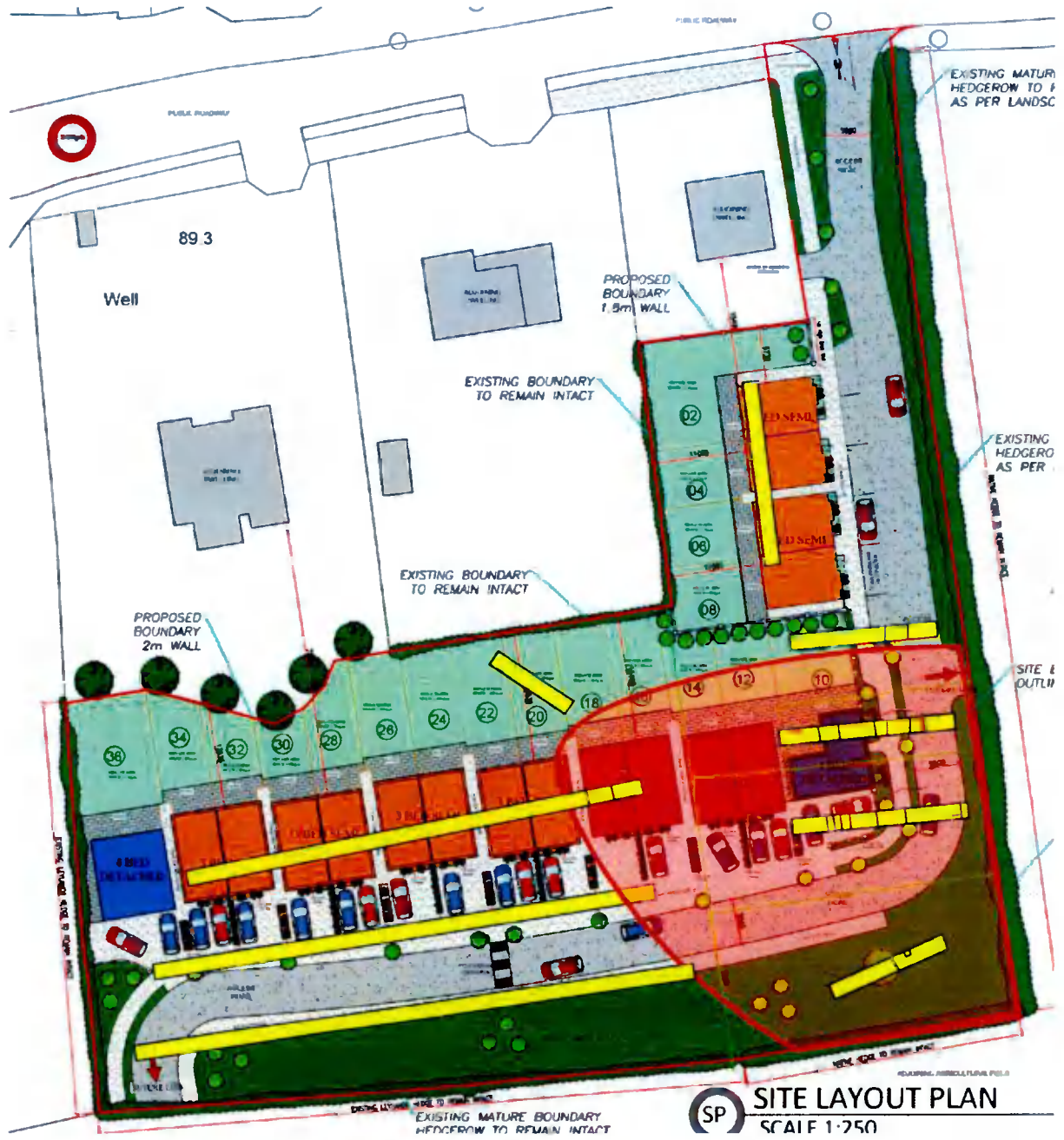


Fig. 9. Location of Trenches (yellow) and area where archaeological deposits survive (highlighted in red) overlaid on proposed development plan.



Fig. 10. Trench 1, looking west.



Fig. 11. Trench 1, looking west.



Fig. 12. Trench 3, looking west.



Fig. 13. Trench 3, F1 & F1 at ends of ranging rod.



Fig. 14. Trench 4, looking southeast.



Fig. 15. Trench 5, ranging rod beside F3 & F4

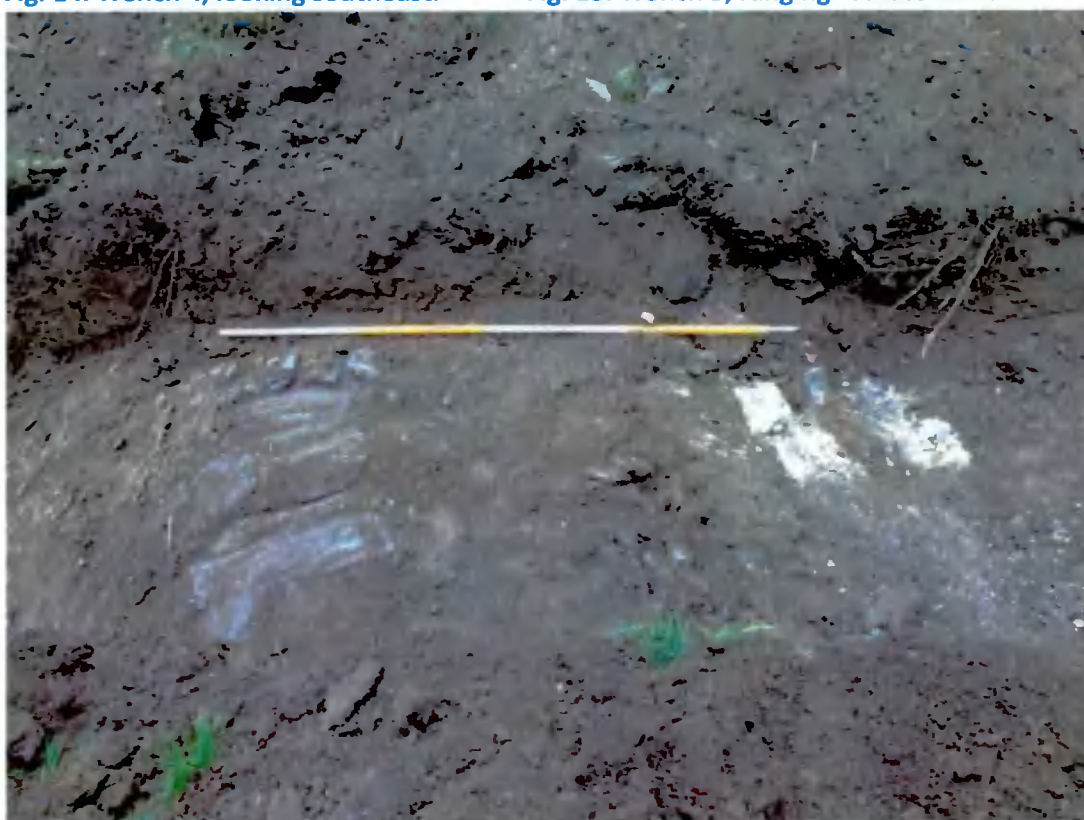


Fig. 16. Trench 5, looking north, (F3) on left, (F4) on right.

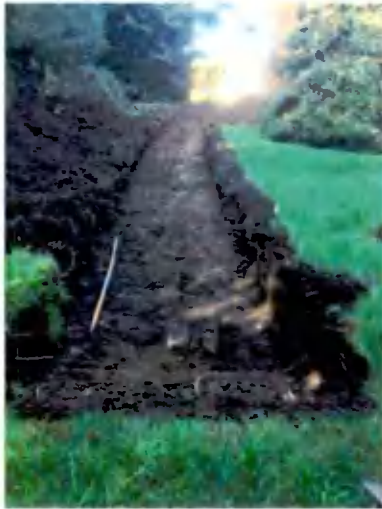


Fig. 17. Trench 6 looking west.

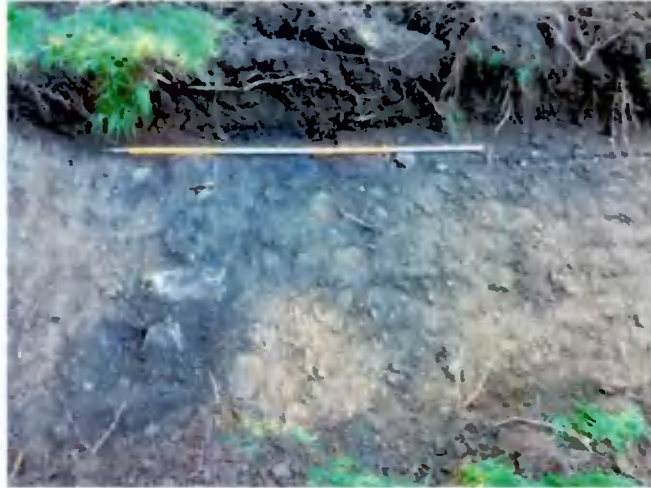


Fig. 18. Trench 6, close up of burnt spread overlying drain (F6)



Fig. 19. Trench 7, looking west.



Fig. 20. Trench 8, looking west.



Fig. 21. Trench 9, looking north

