



Monitoring Report No. 195

**63 Castlehill Road,
Castlemervyn Demesne,
Trillick
County Tyrone**

AE/10/31

K/2008/0537/F

BRIAN SLOAN

Site Specific Information

Site Name: 63 Castlehill Road, Trillick, Co. Tyrone BT78 3NZ

Townland: Castlemervyn Demesne

SMR No. : TYR 049:001

State Care Scheduled Other ✓ [delete as applicable]

Grid Ref.: 33618 57477

County: Tyrone

Excavation Licence No. : AE/10/31

Planning Ref / No. : K/2008/0537/F

Dates of Monitoring: 23rd February 2010

Archaeologist Present: Brian Sloan

Brief Summary:

Three trenches were mechanically excavated to assess the presence and survival of archaeological strata at the proposed development site. Potential archaeological features were observed during the evaluation including a curvilinear ditch, potential slot trench and burning as well as evidence of post-medieval agriculture (ridge and furrows). Initial investigation into the potential archaeological features produced no cultural material to provisionally date the features, although a sherd of possible medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil (identified by Cormac McSparron). It is recommended that the area is subject to further archaeological investigation prior to the development proceeding.

Type of monitoring:

Mechanical excavation of three evaluative trenches.

Size of area opened:

Trench One: 22m in length by 4m in width
Trench Two: 19m in length by 2m in width
Trench Three: 26m in length by 2m in width

Current Land Use:

Greenfield site.

Intended Land Use:

Residential dwelling.

Brief account of the monitoring

Introduction

The application site is located adjacent to 63 Castlehill Road, Castlemervyn Demesne, Trillick, Co. Tyrone (Fig.1). The site lies just outside the village of Trillick, lying approximately 1.5km north of its centre and at a height of approximately 150m above sea level. The proposed development is located along the western boundary of a large rectilinear shaped field, and has panoramic views all around. The surrounding landscape is rich in sites and monuments of historical and archaeological nature, most notably the site of a stone circle (TYR 049:001) and a seventeenth-century house and bawn (Trillick Castle TYR049:002). The archaeological evaluation was requested due to the proximity of the application site to the stone circle (TYR 049:001).

The monitoring took place as part of the planning application for the construction of a new dwelling and was requested by Paul Devlin: Caseworker with Northern Ireland Environment Agency. It was requested due to the proximity of the application site to the stone circle (TYR 049:001) and due to the possibility that the development would disturb previously unrecognised or unrecorded archaeological remains.

Account of the excavation

Three trenches were mechanically excavated across the proposed application site. The trenches were located so to incorporate the footprint of the proposed dwelling (Fig. 3). The trenches were excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil which consisted of reddish orange sandy clay. A simple stratigraphic sequence was encountered during the evaluation, which is described in further detail below.

Trench One

Trench One was located towards the north of the proposed house footprint and measured roughly 22m in length by 4m in width. The trench was aligned north-east/south-west and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 102) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.3m. A simple stratigraphic sequence was observed in this trench with topsoil (Context No 101) overlying natural subsoil (Context No. 102). Several ephemeral features of potential archaeological significance were noted cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 102)

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 101) was mechanically removed across the entirety of the trench. On the whole it was observed as a mid to dark brown sandy loam with frequent inclusions of small and medium rounded stones throughout. This deposit had an average depth of 0.3m and overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 102) which consisted of reddish orange sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions. A single clay pipe stem and two sherds of possible medieval

pottery (provisionally identified by Cormac McSparron) were recovered from the topsoil deposit (Context No. 101).

Three features of potential archaeological significance were observed cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 102). The feature which appeared to be stratigraphically later was a slightly curvilinear ditch (Context No. 103) running approximately east/west through the middle of the trench. The fill of this feature (Context No. 103) consisted of a dark brown to black, charcoal rich loam with infrequent inclusions of small rounded stones. The feature was 1.4m in width and upon excavation of a small cutting through the cut of the feature (Context No. 104), was found to be shallow, with a maximum depth of 0.32m. No artefacts were recovered to provisionally date or assign a function to this feature. Running from the northern edge of the feature (Context No. 103/104), a linear L' shape feature was observed. The fill of this feature (Context No. 105) was a pale greyish brown clay loam with infrequent charcoal inclusions. This feature was not tested, although given the shape could possibly represent a slot trench of other structural feature. At the southern end of the curvilinear ditch (Context No. 103/104) an area of burning (Context No. 106) was observed. However, it is not currently known if the burning (Context No. 106) is part of the curvilinear ditch (Context No. 103/104) or a separate feature that overlies or is cut by the ditch feature.

As these features were deemed to be of potential archaeological significance, excavation ceased at this point.

Trench Two

Trench Two was located to the south of Trench One and measured approximately 19m in length by 2m in width. Again it was aligned north-east/south-west and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 202) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.35m. A simple stratigraphic sequence was observed in this trench with topsoil (Context No. 201) overlying natural subsoil (Context No. 202). Nothing of archaeological significance was encountered during the excavation of this trench.

Trench Three

Trench Three was located to the east of both trenches one and two and was aligned north-east/south-west. The trench measured 26m in length by 2m in width and was excavated to the surface of the natural subsoil (Context No. 302) which was encountered at an average depth of 0.24m. Three features cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 302) were observed, although their alignment, width and spacing would lead to the interpretation that they are the remains of post-medieval spade cultivation ridges.

The sod and topsoil (Context No. 301) was mechanically removed across the entirety of the trench. On the whole it was observed as a mid to dark brown sandy loam with frequent inclusions of small and medium rounded stones throughout. This deposit had an average depth of

0.24m and overlay the natural subsoil (Context No. 302) which consisted of reddish orange sandy clay with frequent stone inclusions.

The three features cutting the natural subsoil (Context No. 302) were observed as diagonal (aligned north-east/south-west) linear cuts (Context Nos. 303, 304 and 305), with dimensions of 2m in length by 0.4m in width and 0.15m in depth. They were each spaced approximately 1.7m apart, and given this regularity they have been interpreted as the remains of spade cultivation ridges and of little archaeological significance.

Interpretation

The evaluation proved the presence of features of possible archaeological significance within the proposed footprint. However, without artefact evidence, it is difficult to assign a date or function to them. The features encountered in Trench Three are the result of spade cultivation ridges and are undoubtedly post-medieval in date. It is not certain whether the features encountered in Trench One are associated with post-medieval agriculture or earlier. The sherds of pottery from the topsoil in Trench One (Context No. 102) are possibly medieval/early post-medieval in date (Cormac McSparron pers comm.), perhaps indicating that activity associated with the plantation structure 'Trillick Castle (TYR 049:002) is present within the proposed application site. However, without further excavation and stratified artefacts, this interpretation is tentative.

Conclusions

The three evaluative test trenches excavated in the application area revealed features of potential archaeological significance. It is unclear at this stage of the date and function of these features, as initial investigation into them produced no material culture that could provisionally date them. It is thought that the development of the dwelling as it stands, will adversely affect the archaeological remains and so it is recommended that further archaeological investigation at the site is merited. It is recommended that the entire footprint of the proposed development is stripped of the topsoil and any archaeological features exposed, recorded and excavated prior to the development proceeding.

Archive:

Finds: The finds recovered during the evaluation are temporarily archived at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast BT7 1NN.

Photographs: The photographs taken during the evaluation are temporarily archived at the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast BT7 1NN.

Plans / Drawings: No plans or drawings were generated during the evaluation.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

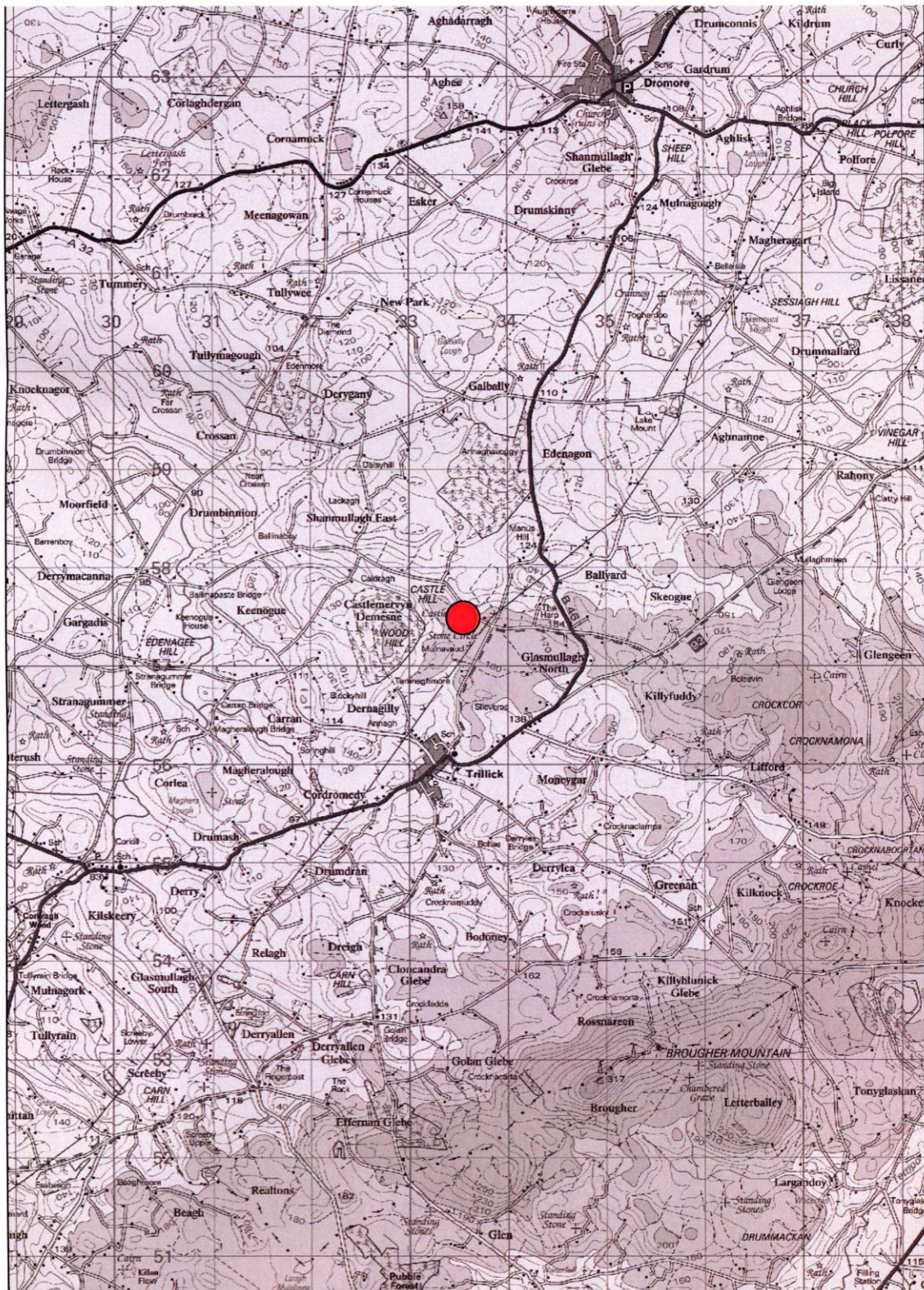


Fig.1: General location map showing location map showing proposed development site (red dot).

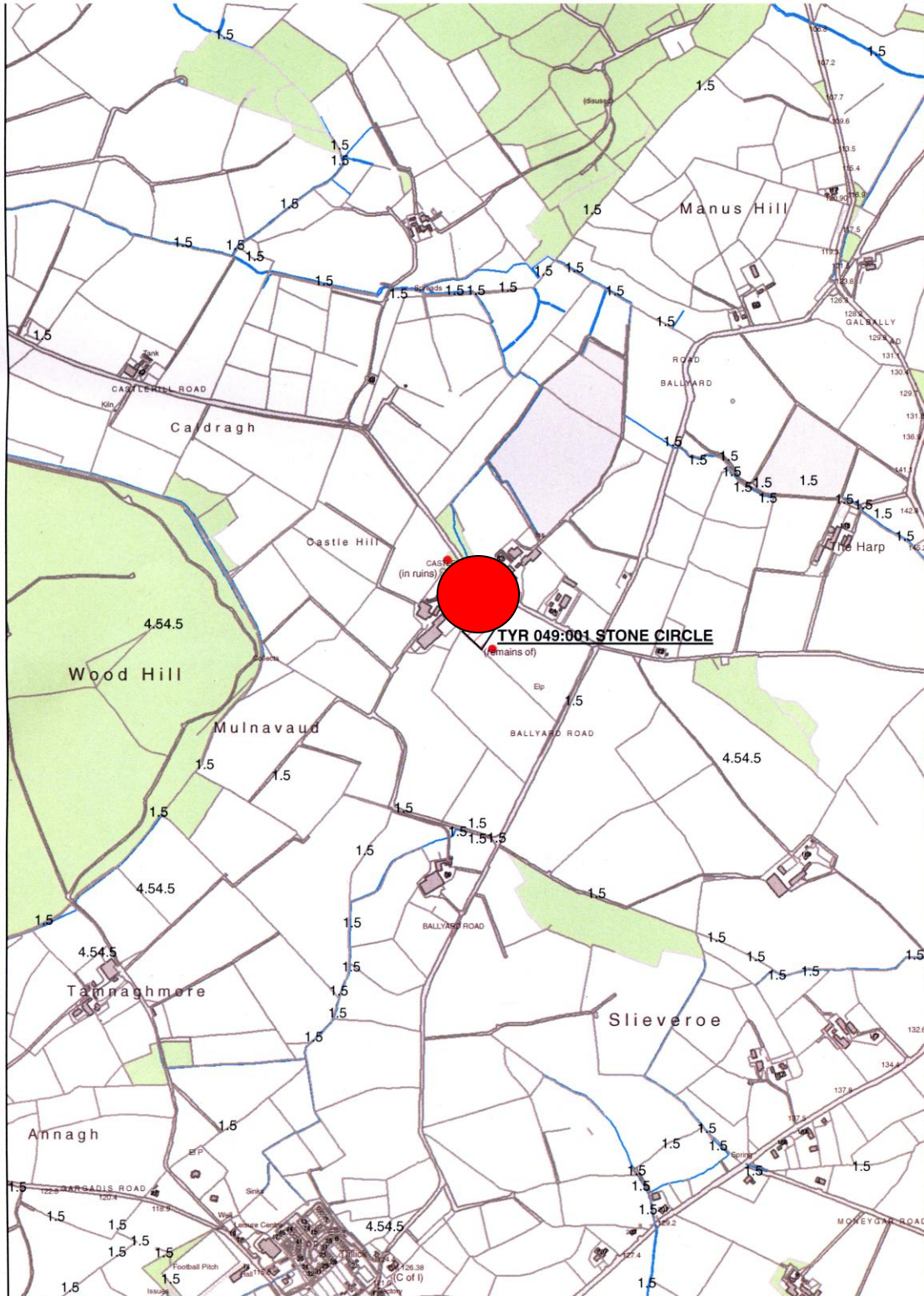


Fig. 2: Map showing proposed application site (red dot).



Fig. 3: Map showing location of evaluative test trenches (in red).



Plate One: View of the evaluation site prior to the excavation, looking south-east.

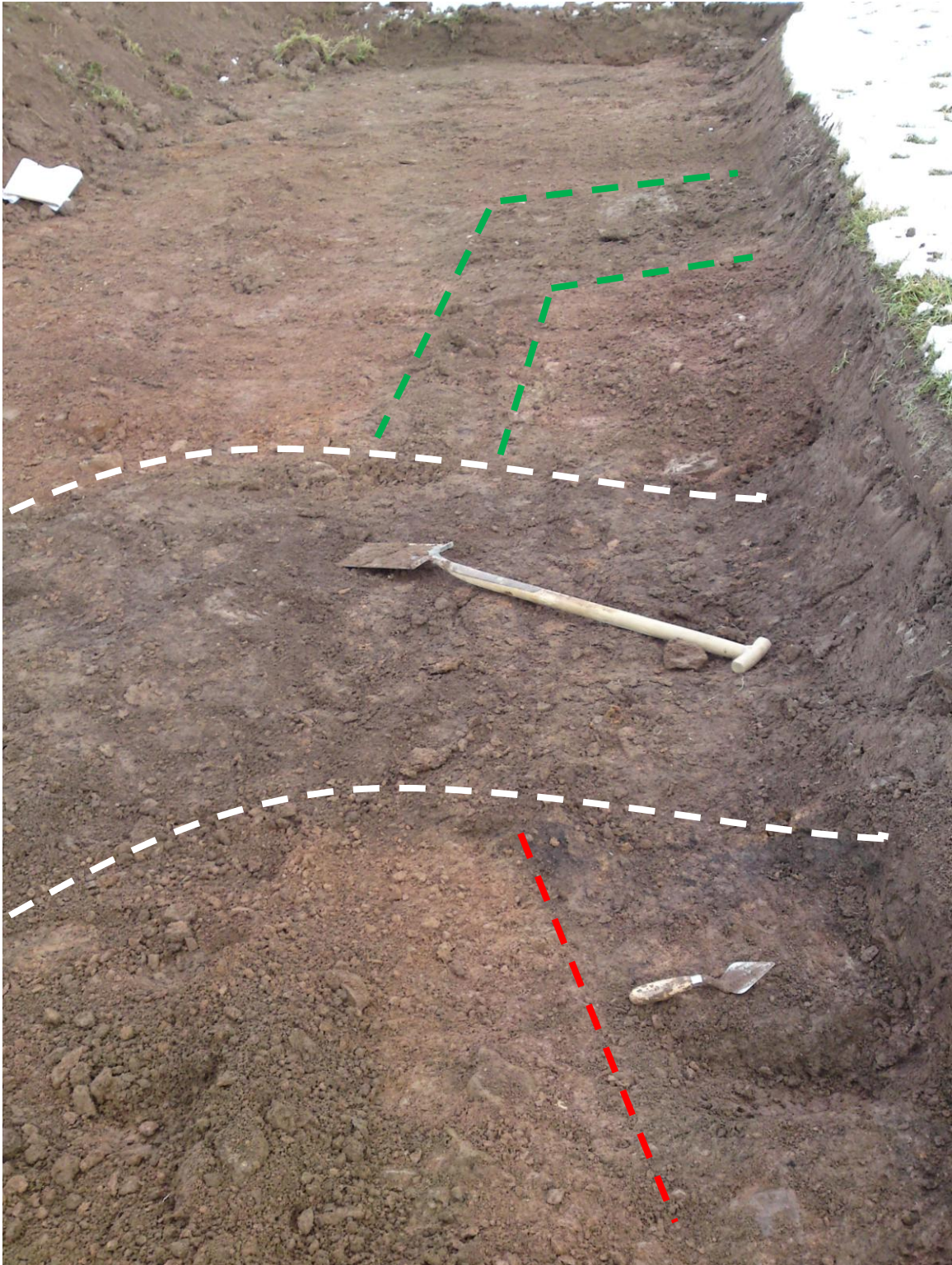


Plate Two: Features of potential archaeological significance encountered in Trench One. Shown is the curvilinear ditch (Context No. 103 – in white), the potential slot trench (Context No. 105 – in green) and the discreet area of burning (Context No. 106 – in red), looking north.



Plate Three: Trench Ones showing feature of potential archaeological significance, looking south-east.



Plate Four: Probable remain of spade cultivation ridge (Context No. 303) encountered in Trench Three, looking north. The other spade cultivation ridges encountered in this trench (Context Nos. 304 and 305) were much more ephemeral than this feature.



Plate Five: Proposed application site following the evaluation, looking south-west.