



Development Control Report No. 299

**200 metres north of 11 Castleraw Road
Castleraw
Co. Armagh**

AE/10/179

Philip Macdonald

Summary for Incorporation into the SMR Database

A watching brief was conducted on a development site adjacent to the remains of an early seventeenth-century fortified house and situated within the southern part of a large rectangular enclosure at Castleraw, Co. Armagh (Sites and Monuments Record No. ARM 009:004). The watching brief was undertaken in order to fulfill a condition of planning permission. The development site was that of a single replacement dwelling, which was built within the footprint of a twentieth-century agricultural barn. Consequently, the watching brief had two aims. First, to ensure that the scheduled areas surrounding the fortified house to the north of the development site and the enclosing earthwork immediately to its south were not impinged upon during the building works; and secondly to monitor the demolition of the agricultural barn and all invasive ground works that might disturb deposits of archaeological significance. The watching brief was successful in so much that the adjacent scheduled areas were not compromised during the building works. Monitoring of the ground works associated with the development failed to reveal any archaeological deposits or features of significance. Given that much of the footprint of the development had already been truncated during the construction of the agricultural barn, this failure cannot be considered definite proof that the development site had not been the focus of settlement activity in the past.

Site Specific Information

Site Name: 200 metres north of 11 Castleraw Road, Castleraw.

Townland: Castleraw.

SMR No (if applicable): ARM 009:004.

Irish Grid Ref: H92735282.

County: Armagh.

Excavation Licence No.: AE/10/179.

Planning Ref. No.: O/2009/0801/F.

Dates of Watching Brief: 13/12/10, 12/1/11, 13/1/11, 18/1/11, 12/10/11.

Archaeologist Present: Philip Macdonald.

Brief Summary: Archaeological watching brief undertaken during the construction of a 'replacement' dwelling upon the site of a large agricultural barn, undertaken in order to fulfill a condition of planning permission. No deposits, features or artefacts of archaeological significance were observed during the course of the excavation.

Type of excavation: Watching brief undertaken to fulfill a condition of planning permission. The development site was located adjacent to the remains of a seventeenth-century fortified house and is situated within the southern part of a large rectangular enclosure which has speculatively been identified as the remains of a failed Plantation-period town. The watching brief had two aims. First, to ensure that the scheduled area of the enclosing earthwork immediately to the south of the development site and the scheduled area surrounding the fortified house to the north were not impinged upon during the building works; and secondly to monitor the demolition of the agricultural barn and all invasive ground works that might disturb deposits of archaeological significance. The watching brief was successful in so much that the adjacent scheduled areas were not compromised during the building works. Monitoring of the ground works associated with the development failed to reveal any archaeological deposits or features of significance, however, given that much of the footprint of the development had already been truncated during the construction of the agricultural barn, this cannot be considered definite proof that the site had not been the focus of settlement activity in the past.

Size of area disturbed: A single, near-rectangular area, approximately 35 metres by 15 metres in size, a curvilinear cutting approximately 37 metres long and 0.75 metres wide.

Current Land Use: Agricultural.

Intended Land Use: Residential.

Account of the Watching Brief

This document reports upon the results of a watching brief conducted during the construction of a 'replacement' dwelling located close to the remains of an early seventeenth-century fortified house and situated within the southern part of a large rectangular enclosure at Castleraw, Co. Armagh (Sites and Monuments Record No. ARM 009:004). The development site was located 200 metres north of the property at 11 Castleraw Road (Irish Grid Reference H92735282). The aims of the watching brief were twofold. First, to ensure that the scheduled area of the enclosing earthwork immediately to the south of the development site and the scheduled area surrounding the fortified house to the north were not impinged upon during the building works; and secondly, to monitor the demolition of the agricultural barn that the dwelling was replacing, as well as any associated invasive ground works which might compromise deposits of archaeological significance. The watching brief had been made a condition of planning permission (Planning Reference No. O/2009/0801/F) for the construction of the replacement dwelling because of the close proximity of the development site to both a surviving section of the enclosing earthwork bank of the Castleraw enclosure and the early seventeenth-century fortified house.

Background

The ruined fortified house known as Castleraw is situated upon the summit of a prominent drumlin located approximately two kilometres to the east of Loughgall, Co. Armagh. Today, only part of the western arm of the three-storied structure survives to its original height, the remainder of the structure being reduced to almost ground level. Historical research suggests that the house was built for Sir Anthony Cope between 1619 and 1622 and replaced an earlier fortified house which Cope had built in 1611, but which had collapsed by 1613 (Brannon 1983, 165). The Irish Commission of 1622 describes what is almost certainly the current ruined structure as being 'a strong howse of lyme and stone, 3 stories and ½ high, wherein he [i.e. Cope] inhabiteth with his wife and Familie' (Treadwell 1960, 130; Paterson 1960-61, 110, 120-122). According to this 1622 survey of Cope's holdings, Castleraw was located within a 2000-acre parcel of land called Dirricrevy that had been acquired by Cope in July 1611 (Treadwell 1960, 130; Paterson 1960-61, 120).¹ Although included in the *Preliminary Survey of the Ancient Monuments of Northern Ireland* (Paterson 1940), the ruined fortified house was first meaningfully studied and brought to the attention of the wider archaeological community in two papers published by E.M. Jope in 1953 and 1960 as part of his research into post-medieval architecture in the north of Ireland. Brannon has usefully corrected some of the historical and architectural aspects of Jope's appreciation of the site (Brannon 1983, 165), however, Jope's work still represents the most useful description of the building and forms the basis of the following description. The building has a symmetrical cruciform plan, with an exterior dimension of approximately 20.75 metres and walls which are about 1.2 metres thick. The masonry, including the surviving quoins and window dressings, consists of roughly dressed limestone bonded with a lime mortar. The position of the original entrance is uncertain. Brannon has plausibly suggested that the small rounded alcove visible in the northwest corner of the northern arm of the building is probably the remains of a hearth-side oven (Brannon 1983, 165; *pace* Jope 1953, 63). If this is the case, then it is probable that the kitchen occupied the ground floor of the northern arm of the building. The position of only four of the ground-floor windows survive, whilst at first- and second-floor level similar windows are present in the surviving portion of upstanding walling. These windows are fairly large and, although not numerous, coupled with the absence of any evidence for the building being furnished with gun loops led Jope to suggest that Castleraw represented a fairly late stage in the transformation in high-status domestic architecture in Ireland from late medieval defended tower-houses to open

¹ Assuming that the 2000-acre holding was measured in Irish acres (equivalent to 1.6 conventional acres), then the size of the Dirricrevy estate would be approximately 1320 hectares.

undefended houses influenced by the European Renaissance (1960). Paterson notes, without citing his source, that the fortified house was badly damaged in the rebellion of 1641 and is not believed to have been subsequently repaired or occupied (1960-61, 121).



Figure One: The ruined remains of the fortified house at Castleraw from the adjacent lane, looking south (1.12.10).

The fortified house at Castleraw is located in an off-centre position within a large rectangular-shaped enclosure. The enclosure is generally assumed to be seventeenth century and associated with the fortified house (i.e. Neill 2009, 179), however, its date and function are far from certain. The enclosure, which is without close parallel in the north of Ireland, is rectangular in shape, being approximately 315 by 305 metres in external dimension and aligned with its longest axis roughly northnortheast-southsouthwest. The best preserved sections of the earthwork are on the northern and eastern sides of the enclosure where it consists of a wide ditch with a steeply scarped inner edge and a substantial external bank. Jope inspected the earthwork, which in several places had been eroded to the surface of the natural subsoil of boulder clay, but found no evidence for the footings of a stone wall (1953, 66) - a result consistent with the observations of the author when he inspected the entire circuit of the enclosure in December 2010.

The enclosure pre-dates the first Ordnance Survey mapping of the area in the 1830s and if it had an eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century origin then it would be reasonable to expect its purpose to be remembered and recorded in the Ordnance Survey Memoirs, which is not the case (see Day and McWilliams 1990, 63, 68). The substantial size of the enclosure indicates that it cannot have been erected as a bawn or a fort for a garrison under Cope's command in the early seventeenth century. Jope 'provisionally' associated the enclosure with the fortified house, but felt 'its purpose must remain obscure' (1953, 66). Noting the similarity in size of the enclosure with the walled area of the plantation town at Coleraine, he speculated that perhaps the enclosure represented an aborted attempt by Cope to establish a new town at Castleraw (Jope 1953, 66). This interpretation is, however, problematic. As Jope noted himself 'it is surprising that there should seem to be no hint of such [a] proposal in the documentary sources of the period' (1953, 66).

Furthermore, the supposedly analogous ditch at Coleraine was external to the plantation town's earthen rampart (see Camblin 1951, 32, pl.4) – the opposite of the arrangement at Castleraw, which would have been totally unsuitable for the purposes of defense unless it was augmented by a substantial masonry wall for which there is no trace. That Josias Bodley's survey of 1613 indicates that the first house at Castleraw apparently collapsed because it was built as a clay-bonded, rather than mortared, structure (see Brannon 1983, 165) suggests a high level of architectural and administrative incompetence on behalf of Cope's agents, however, it is scarcely plausible to suggest that they would have had constructed an 'urban' rampart with an external bank and internal ditch if Cope wished to establish a plantation town. Further undermining the suggestion of a seventeenth-century date for the enclosure is the result of fieldwalking within the western half of the enclosure in the 1980s. This exercise resulted in only recovering a limited number of pot sherds, all of which dated from the later eighteenth-century or later. No evidence of seventeenth-century material culture was observed at all during the fieldwalking (Brannon 1983, 166). Although as Brannon noted, whilst such a result is not conclusive and is not necessarily inconsistent with the 'failed Plantation town' interpretation of the site (1983, 166), it does emphasise that the association between the construction of the enclosure and the two fortified houses of early seventeenth century date is very much assumed rather than demonstrated. Recorded local traditions of both royal associations with the site and a connection with the O'Neills (Paterson 1940, 63; Anon. 1955, 199; Day and McWilliams 1990, 63; Neill 2009, 390) hint at alternative interpretive possibilities.

Watching Brief: Methodology

With the approval of the then development-control team at the Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Built Heritage, it was agreed that, in order to verify that the demolition was proceeding in a manner consistent with the conditions placed upon the developer's planning permission, only occasional visits to the site during the protracted process of demolition of the agricultural building were necessary. Temporary, post-and-wire, fence lines were erected under the supervision of the licensed archaeologist to ensure that the adjacent scheduled areas were not compromised during the building works and periodic visits demonstrated, with a high degree of confidence, that construction did not affect the scheduled areas. The excavation of the foundations of the replacement dwelling was monitored by the licensed archaeologist in January 2011 and the site was inspected shortly after completion of the groundworks associated with the construction of a driveway and the supply of services to the new property in October 2011. Given the absence of any deposits or features of archaeological significance, it was not considered necessary to construct a formal context record for the simple stratigraphic sequence reported upon below. Instead, the principle site records consisted of a site diary, photography, a small finds register and an overall site plan produced at a scale of 1:200.

Watching Brief: the Results (including statement of confidence)

The replacement dwelling was to be located entirely within the footprint of an agricultural barn dating to the second half of the twentieth century. The barn was raised from a concrete floor and was attached to an enclosed yard at its eastern end. Together the

barn and the yard formed a single, integrated complex some 35 metres (east-west) by 15 metres (north-south) in size. The barn and yard were built upon an artificial terrace that had been largely cut into the natural slope of the site and partly built up as a platform. At the northwestern corner of the barn, the floor of the building was set 1.5 metres below the modern ground surface. The relationship between the floor of the barn and the modern ground surface was less obvious on the southern side of the building, although it was clear that the southeastern corner of the yard was built upon a substantial platform of made-up ground. The replacement dwelling was built upon dumped deposits that raised the ground surface of the barn's footprint following its demolition.



Figure Two: Demolition of the barn in progress, looking east (12.1.11).

Given the truncation of the ground surface associated with the construction of the terrace that the barn and attached yard were built upon, most of the area occupied by the barn and yard represented a zone of archaeological destruction, although the built-up area beneath the southeastern corner of the yard formed an area of preservation where archaeological features, if they were present, might reasonably be expected to survive. The footprint of the replacement dwelling was located in the western part of the larger footprint of the barn and entirely within the zone of archaeological destruction. Following the demolition of its superstructure, the concrete floor of the barn was removed, although the underlying hardcore of rubble was left intact and the foundation trenches for the replacement dwelling were cut through the hardcore. The cutting of these trenches on the 18th January 2011 confirmed that the footprint of the replacement dwelling was entirely located within an area of archaeological destruction. Excavation revealed that the hardcore deposits, which had a maximum depth of 0.30 metres, were laid directly onto the truncated surface of the natural subsoil of orangey brown boulder clay. No evidence of archaeological deposits or features was observed. Given the distinctive character of the natural subsoil, if sub-surface features were present then they would have been highly visible. Consequently, the absence of any surviving

archaeologically significant deposits or features can be accepted with a high degree of confidence. Given that the foundation trenches were excavated within an area of archaeological destruction created by the construction of the terrace upon which the barn was built, then the absence of any evidence of features or deposits cannot be considered as definite proof that there had not once been settlement activity on the site.



Figure Three: The development site following the excavation of the foundation trenches through the hardcore deposits underlying the removed floor of the demolished barn, looking east (18.1.11).

Following construction of the replacement dwelling, in early October 2011 the developer excavated trenches to facilitate the provision of services and the creation of a driveway to the replacement property. Although work commitments prevented these groundworks being directly monitored, the licensed archaeologist was able to visit the site on the 12th October and examine both the areas opened up by the developer and the spoil heaps that had been generated by these groundworks. The excavation of the services trench and the driveway, which were respectively located to the northwest and west of the replacement dwelling, demonstrated that the humic turf-line (depth 0.10 metres) overlay a loamy cultivation soil (maximum depth 0.32 metres) that, in turn, directly overlay the truncated



Figure Four: Plan showing location of trenches, footprint of demolished barn (outlined in red), and location of scheduled areas (shaded) associated with both the fortified house to the north of the development site and the earthwork enclosure immediately to the south.

surface of the natural boulder clay subsoil. The subsoil had apparently been truncated as a consequence of cultivation. In addition, a number of modern deposits associated with the construction of the replacement dwelling, such as spreads of rubble hardcore and redeposited boulder clay, were present in the immediate vicinity of the newly constructed replacement dwelling, which immediately adjacent to the north-south aligned lane located to the west of the replacement dwelling was a linear feature. Although unexcavated, the fill of the feature contained a significant quantity of modern brick indicating it was of relatively recent date and it is plausibly interpreted as representing a cutting associated with the planting of a hedge that was grubbed up during the construction of the agricultural barn. No features or deposits of archaeological significance were apparently exposed during the October groundworks. Again, given the distinctive character of the subsoil within which archaeological features would have been easily observed, the genuine absence of archaeological features or deposits can be accepted with a high degree of confidence.

Some small finds were recovered from the spoil generated by the groundworks in October 2011. As the disturbed spoil consisted of the removed humic turf-line and the underlying cultivation soil, it is reasonable to assume that none of the finds were derived directly from archaeological contexts. Apart from demonstrably modern finds associated with the building works or farming activity, very little artefactual material was disturbed. Nine pot sherds were recovered – all small fragments of mostly eighteenth- or nineteenth-century pottery, but including two sherds of blackware that may be as early as the late seventeenth century (Small Find Nos.3 and 13) and a tiny fragment of what might be trailed slipware of seventeenth- or eighteenth-century date (Small Find No.1). Given its small size, it is not obvious that the pot assemblage represents anything more significant than residual material derived from the use of a kitchen midden for the purposes of manuring. The remaining finds recovered from the spoil consisted of three small brick fragments of uncertain date (Small Find Nos.10, 11 and 12), a shard of window glass of uncertain, but probably modern, date (Small Find No.14), as well as a fragment of bottle glass probably dating to the eighteenth or nineteenth century (Small Find No.7).

As of October 2011, the developer had no plans to remove the area of made-up ground that formed the platform that the southeastern corner of the enclosed yard had been built upon. It is not certain whether this part of the agricultural complex has been removed or still survives undisturbed.

Concluding Remarks

No evidence of settlement activity was uncovered during the watching brief. Due to the previous truncation of the ground surface associated with the construction of the agricultural barn on the site, however, the failure to identify any deposits or features of archaeological significance is far from conclusive evidence that the development site had not been a focus for settlement activity in the past. Unfortunately, the watching brief produced no evidence that can meaningfully contribute to an appreciation of either the date or function of the large rectangular enclosure at Castleraw, or the relationship (if any) between the enclosure and the fortified house of early seventeenth century date. It is notable that the small range of artefacts recovered from the spoil associated with the groundworks at the site in October 2011 is similar to the material recovered during fieldwalking of the western half of the enclosure in the 1980s (Brannon 1983, 166). Both assemblages are small and, with the exception of the possible sherd of trailed slipware dating to the seventeenth or eighteenth century recovered during the watching brief (Small Find No.1), contain no material that might plausibly be considered contemporary with the occupation of the fortified house during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Acknowledgments

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Details of Archive

Finds: 14 small finds (nine pot sherds, one fragment of bottle glass, one shard of window glass and three fragments of brick), temporarily held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Photographs: 118 digital images [DSCN6885-DSCN6932, DSCN6950-DSCN6995, DSCN7195-DSCN7202 and P10000413-P1000428] showing the site before, during and after the development, temporarily held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Plans / Drawings: A single post-excavation plan (Scale 1:200) of the site (partially reproduced here as Figure Four), temporarily held by the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast.

Signed: _____

Date: _____