

**Proposed Housing Development,
Deerpark, Adare, Co. Limerick**
Archaeological Test Trenching Report



Excavation Licence Number: 17E0085

Detection Device Licence: 17R0029

Prepared by

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a programme of archaeological test trenching undertaken in a green-field site in Deerpark townland, located on the southwest of Adare town, County Limerick. The site investigations were undertaken as a pre-development assessment of the lands to be impacted by the proposed construction of a Council housing scheme.

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the subject site and the nearest example is a levelled enclosure (LI021-156001-) located c.370m to the south.

The archaeological test trench investigations were carried out under an excavation licence (17E0085) issued by the National Monuments Service (NMS) and the artefact retrieval strategy incorporated the licensed use of a metal-detector (17R0029).

Test trenches were excavated across the footprint of the proposed development footprint by a tracked machine operating with a 1.8m wide toothless bucket and nothing of archaeological significance was identified in any area.

PROJECT DETAILS

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Project type | Test Trenching |
| Archaeologist | Tony Cummins |
| Excavation Licence | 17E0085 |
| Detection Licence | 17R0029 |
| Townland | Deerpark |
| County | Limerick |
| OS Sheet | LI021 |
| ITM | 545878, 645780 |
| Recorded Monument | n/a |
| Local Authority | Limerick City and County Council |
| Planning details | Pre-development assessment |
| Development Type | Housing development |
| Client name | Works commissioned by Carr Cotter & Naessens Architects on behalf of Limerick City and County Council |

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1. Introduction

Archaeological test trenching was undertaken by Tony Cummins, John Cronin & Associates (JCA) within a proposed Limerick Council housing development site located in a green-field site within Deerpark townland in the southwest outskirts of Adare town, County Limerick (**Figure 1**).

An archaeological assessment presenting the results of a desktop study and a site inspection was previously prepared for a wider area that encompassed the subject site and this has been submitted to the planning authority (JCA 2016). This assessment noted that there are no recorded archaeological sites within 370m of the proposed development area. The potential for the presence of unrecorded, sub-surface archaeological features within the landholding was noted and a pre-development programme of archaeological test trenching was recommended. The test trenching investigations were subsequently undertaken by the present author in March 2017 under an excavation licence issued by the National Monuments Service (ref. 17E0085). An application for a detection device licence for the use of a metal-detector to assist in artefact retrieval was also submitted to the NMS (ref. 17R0029).

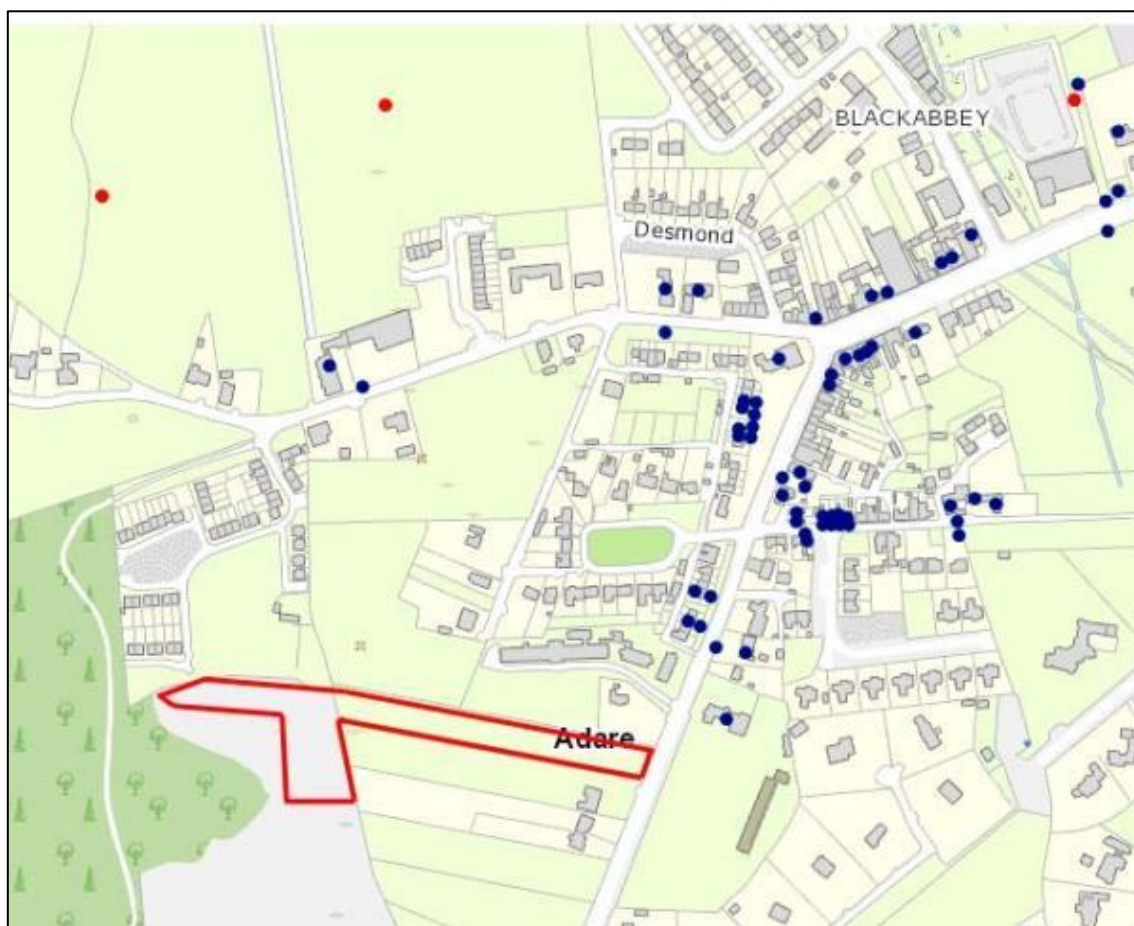


Figure 1: Location of approx. site boundary in relation to Adare (source: www.archaeology.ie)

2. Context

The proposed housing development site extends across an area of generally level terrain in the southwest outskirts of Adare town, County Limerick. The proposed development site is contained wholly within the townland of Deerpark and the parish of Adare, which is mainly in the barony of Coshma although parts extend into the baronies of Kenry and Upper Connello. The subject site consists of two fields separated by field wall and there are no recorded archaeological sites within 370m of its boundaries.

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland records the presence of eight enclosures within the 1km study area and, while the origins of such sites can often only be ascertained through excavation, these may indicate the presence of unclassified early medieval ringforts within the wider environs of the subject site. The discovery of an 11th-century Viking coin hoard within the vicinity of Adare demonstrates the presence of early medieval activity within the area during this period

The origins and development of Adare during the medieval period is intrinsically linked to the construction of Adare Castle during the early 13th century at a time when the area was in the ownership of Geoffrey de Masco. There is evidence that the masonry castle was constructed on an earlier Anglo-Norman ringwork castle which may indicate that the initial settlement predated the castle construction. The castle and adjacent lands had come into the possession of the Earls of Kildare by 1228 who subsequently undertook strengthening works in 1326 although the structure was described as in poor condition later in that century. While the presence of the castle, which became an important regional stronghold during the following centuries, resulted in the development of the town, the subsequent struggles for the ownership of the fortification also resulted in concurrent periods of expansion and decline of the settlement. Lewis (1837) provides the following summary of the early origins and subsequent development of Adare during the late medieval and post-medieval periods:

Some time prior to the year 1310 the town appears, from ancient records, to have been incorporated, as in that year a grant of murage and customs was made by Edw. II. to "the bailiffs and good men of the town of Adare ;" and in 1376 Edw. III. issued a writ to the sheriff of the county and all officers connected with the subsidies, &c., prohibiting them under heavy penalties from demanding from the provost or commonalty of Adare any services or customs, until the town, which had been then recently burned and destroyed by the "Irish enemy," should be fully rebuilt and inhabited. The castle was originally erected by the O'Donovans, rebuilt by the second Earl of Kildare in 1326, and enlarged and fortified by several of his successors. When Turlough O'Brien was ravaging this part of the country, he burned the castle, which was soon afterwards repaired by Thomas, Earl of Kildare. Gerald, a subsequent earl, having countenanced the second attempt of Perkin Warbeck, was accused of treasonable practices, and the castle and all his possessions were forfeited to the Crown; but he was restored to his estate by favour of Henry, Prince of Wales, who made him his deputy-governor of Ireland.... During the wars in the reign of Elizabeth the castle was frequently attacked by the English forces without success; but in the summer of 1578 it was taken, after a siege of eleven days, and in the following year was garrisoned by a powerful body of English troops, under the command of Captain Carew. Sir John Desmond soon after assaulted it, but was repulsed with great loss by the garrison, and compelled to seek protection from his friend and kinsman, the Knight of Glin. In 1581 the castle was again besieged by the Earls of Desmond and Kerry, with a numerous and powerful army, who succeeded in reducing the garrison, and put every man to the sword. Upon this occasion the English forces, under Col. Zouch, marched from Cork to the relief of the garrison, but arriving too late, they attacked the confederate earls, whom they defeated with great slaughter, and retook the castle. It was again besieged in 1600, when the garrison suffered greatly, being without food for many days, and obtaining a supply of water only by excavating a subterraneous passage to the bed of the river. In 1641 the castle was seized by the insurgents

and held for some time, till they were at last driven out by the Earl of Castlehaven; in 1657 it was dismantled by Cromwell's orders.

The 1km study area contains a number of recorded archaeological sites that are associated with the late medieval development of Adare. The core of the town is listed as a 'historic settlement' (LI021-032001-) while two medieval religious houses are also recorded within its environs; a Trinitarian Friary (LI021-32008-), dating to c.1230, which was the only house of this Order in Ireland, and a Franciscan Friary (LI021-32006-) founded in 1464 by Thomas Fitz-Maurice. A third religious house was founded in the environs of Adare by the Augustinians in c.1315 by John Fitzthomas Fitzgerald and this is located outside the 1km study area.

While there are a number of modern housing developments located to the north of the subject site, there are no entries in the Excavations Database for any archaeological investigations associated with these developments or within other areas of Deerpark townland. However, the Database does include a wide range of investigations undertaken within the town and its hinterland. These have provided a variety of results and include properties that produced no archaeological evidence and other sites that contained evidence for settlement activity dating to the prehistoric and medieval periods.

While the subject site is outside the core of the historical settlement and is not in close proximity to the castle or ecclesiastical sites, the townland name Deerpark provides an indication of its function in recent centuries and, perhaps, potentially during the early development of the manor during the late medieval period. Deerparks were an important aspect of the medieval manor and, in an Irish context, have been associated with the introduction of fallow deer into Ireland by the Normans during the 13th century (Rackham 2000, 125). While these parks are often associated with hunting activities of the nobility it has been noted that they also comprised an enclosed food resource within the manor, used for activities such as cattle-grazing, horse breeding, fish ponds and smaller game such as pheasant, partridge, hare and rabbit as well as managed woodlands that provided a ready supply of timbers (e.g. Rackham 2000, 125 and Reeves-Smyth 1997, 198-199).

The western half of the subject site is shown as part of parkland on the 1st edition 6-inch OS map of 1840 and the 25-inch OS map of 1899 (Figures 2 and 3). This area of the subject site survives as part of a pasture field on the margins of deciduous woodlands that extend to the west. Both map editions show a quarry in the field immediately to the north of this area and this has now been largely infilled and forms a green area within a modern housing estate. The eastern end of the subject site now comprises a narrow (20m wide) green field plot that extends westwards from the N21 road and is delimited by lines of trees and well-maintained hedgerows at north and south. This plot is shown as part of an area of open ground on the 6-inch and 25-inch OS maps and the existing layout does not appear on the OS maps until the 20th century. While modern houses are present on the roadside (east) end of similar narrow plots to the north and south (Figure 4), no traces of development are evident within the subject site, which appears to have been in use as pasture in recent years.

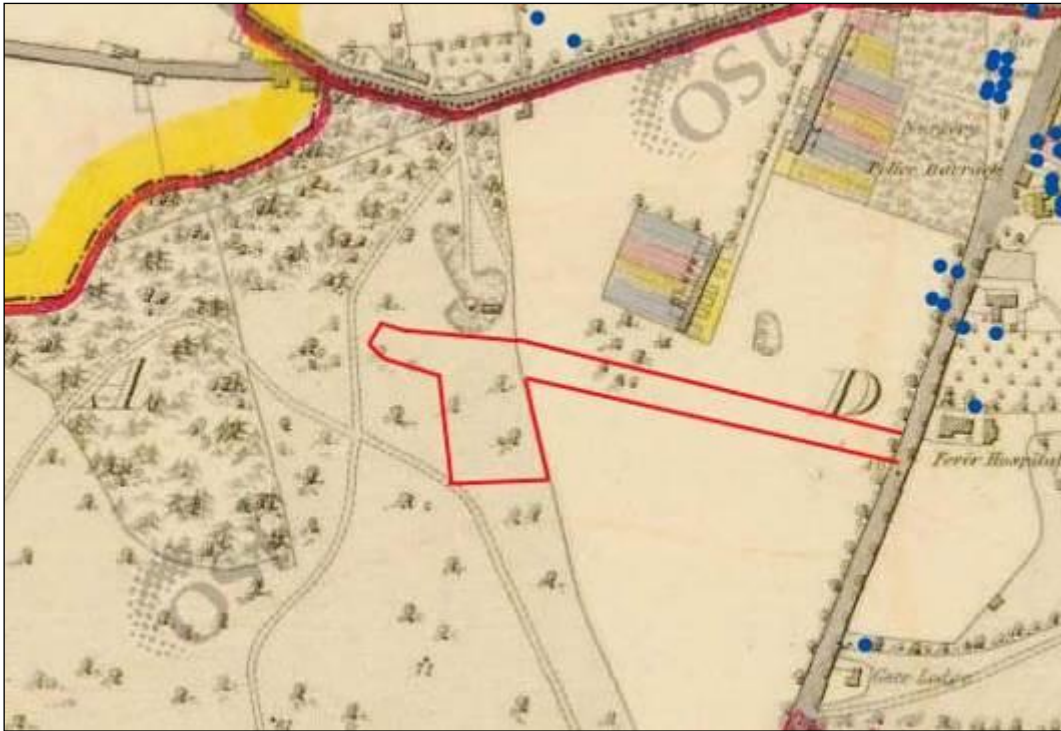


Figure 2: Extract from 6-inch OS map of 1840 showing approx. layout of subject site

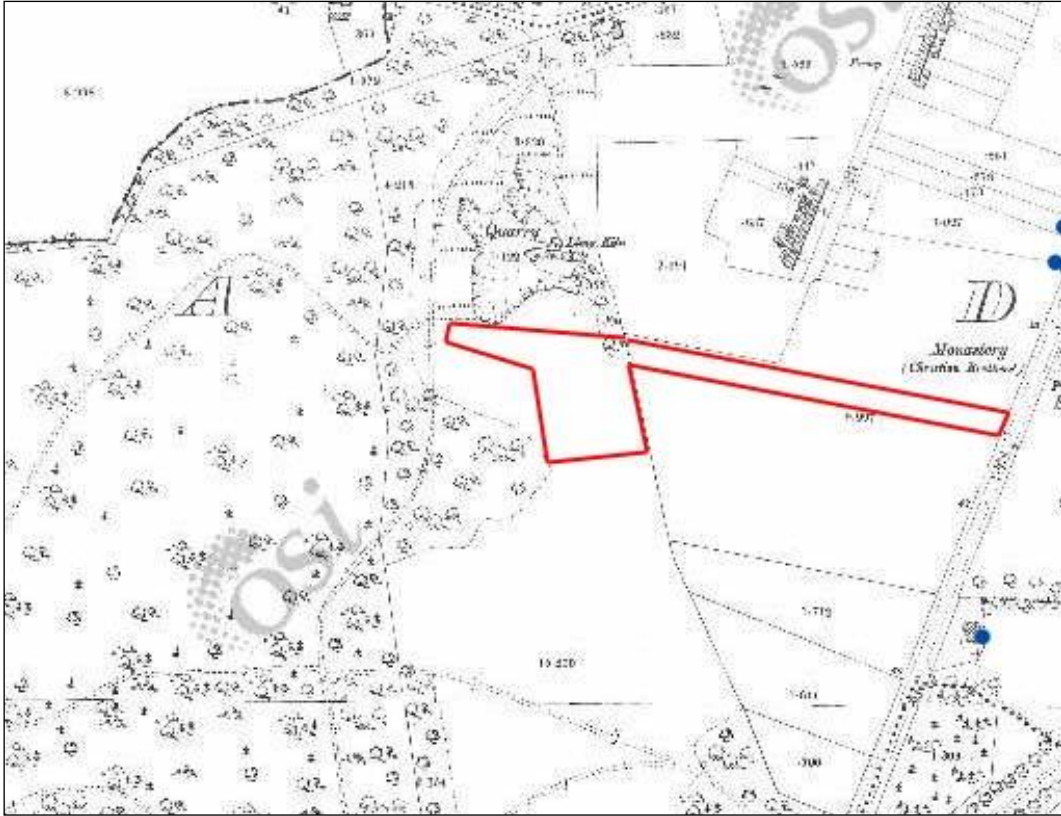


Figure 3: Extract from 25-inch OS map of 1899 showing approx. site layout



Figure 4: Aerial view of subject site and adjacent modern land plots showing approx. site layout

3. Test Trenching

The archaeological test trenching investigations were carried out on 20th and 21st March 2017 by the present author and a site assistant. The investigations comprised the excavation of two 250m long test trenches within the narrow field in the east end of the subject site and four trenches (ranging from 40m to 100m in length) in the west field (Figure 5). The trenches were excavated across the footprint of the proposed housing development footprint and associated access road by a machine operating with a 1.8 wide toothless bucket and the upcast soil from each of the trenches was systematically scanned with a metal-detector (Licence 17R0029) as the excavations progressed. The following table presents the results of the test trenching investigations and extracts from the photographic archive are presented in Appendix 1 of this report.

| Trench | Summary of results |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | This trench extended parallel to the south boundary of the east field and was excavated along the line of a proposed access road. The topsoil layer, averaging 0.2m in depth, was composed of a greyish brown, sandy clay and contained occasional inclusions of 19 th and 20 th century inclusions (pottery sherds, plastics and bottle glass). The majority of inclusions dated to the latter century and were notably concentrated in the area of the field closest to the roadway to the east. The topsoil overlay a mid red-brown sandy clay subsoil which contained localised areas of limestone outcropping close to existing ground surface. A north-south cut feature with vertical sides and extending under both baulks was identified directly beneath the sod layer in the east end of the trench (ITM 056095, 0645786). The exposed section measured 1.6m wide and it extended 0.5m below modern ground level. The fill was composed of a mixture of redeposited topsoil and subsoil and it contained inclusions of decayed sod as well as a paint tin and 20 th century pottery sherds. The presence of modern inclusions and the regular sides of the cut, which truncated the topsoil layer, indicated that this was a machine-cut feature perhaps associated with the creation of the 20 th century land divisions associated with the development of the modern houses in the adjoining plots to the north and south. |
| 2 | This trench extended parallel to the north boundary of the east field and was excavated through the centre of the line of the proposed residential units in this area. The stratigraphy and inclusions encountered in this trench was similar to that noted in Trench 1 to the south although there was no trace of the modern cut feature noted in that area. There were two features noted on the subsoil surface within this trench. A thin, compact surface of uneven, compacted stones (ITM 0546080, 0645806), orientated NW-SE and augmenting an area of bedrock outcrop, was identified in the east half of the trench (ITM 0546080, 0645806). A number of sherds of 20 th century pottery and bottle glass were identified within the stone surface during hand cleaning and it is interpreted as the remains of a stone trackway perhaps associated with recent agricultural activity or the creation of the 20 th century land divisions and construction of the modern housing to the north. This feature was not encountered in Trench 1 but a level area of bedrock was noted in this area on the extrapolated line of the feature. A slight trace of an irregular shallow lens of burnt subsoil, measuring 2m east-west and extending under the north baulk, was identified to the west of the trackway (ITM 054039, 0645815) and modern inclusions were also noted during hand cleaning of this feature. The irregular nature of this lens and the presence of modern inclusions were indicative of recent burning activity. |
| 3, 4, 5 and 6 | These four trenches were excavated along the line of the proposed residential units and access roads within the west field. The stratigraphy encountered in all trenches was similar with a thin topsoil layer (ranging between 0.05m and 0.1m deep) overlying either a reddish brown sandy clay subsoil or localised areas of limestone bedrock. The bedrock outcrops were concentrated in the northern end of the field closest to the former quarry in the area to the north. There were very occasional inclusions of 19 th and 20 th century pottery noted in all trenches. The absence of land drains or cultivation features combined with the presence of areas of bedrock outcrops close to existing ground surface indicated that this area may have been historically used as grazing land. |



Figure 5: Location of test trenches superimposed on proposed development

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the boundaries of the subject site and the nearest example is a levelled enclosure (LI021-156001-) located c.370m to the south. The consulted historic OSI maps do not indicate the presence of any former structures within the landholding and no surface traces of any potential unrecorded archaeological sites were noted during a pre-works inspection of the site.

There were no unrecorded archaeological features or artefacts noted during the test trench excavations and metal-detecting survey undertaken on the footprint of the proposed development. The east field contained some evidence for modern activity perhaps associated with the creation of the existing land divisions and the construction of adjoining houses during the 20th century.

Given the absence of any recorded monuments with the environs of the subject site and the absence of any features of archaeological significance identified during test trenching it is recommended that the proposed development should proceed without any further archaeological intervention. It should be noted that this recommendation is subject to the approval of the National Monuments Service and the planning authority (Limerick City and County Council).

5. References

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Appendix 1: Plates



Plate 1: View of east field from west



Plate 2: View of bedrock outcrop in Trench 1



Plate 3: View of section of modern cut feature in Trench 1



Plate 4: View of stone track in Trench 2



Plate 5: View of burnt lens in Trench 2



Plate 6: View of shallow topsoil in Trench 3



Plate 7: View of excavation of Trench 4 from south



Plate 8: View of bedrock outcrop in Trench 5 from south



Plate 9: View of bedrock outcrop in Trench 6 from east