

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



Excavation Licence Number: 17E0085 ext.

Detection Device Licence: 17R0029

Prepared by

Tony Cummins

John Cronin & Associates

Unit 3A Westpoint Trade Centre

Ballincollig, Co. Cork

On behalf of

Carr Cotter & Naessens Architects

32 South Terrace,

Cork City

March 2018

SUMMARY

This report presents the results of a second programme of archaeological test trenching undertaken within a landholding in the southwest outskirts of Adare town, County Limerick. The site investigations were undertaken within a subject area in the southwest corner of the lands as part of an assessment of the location of a potential Limerick City and County Council housing scheme. There are no recorded archaeological sites within the subject area and the nearest example is a levelled enclosure (LI021-156001-) located c.70m to the south, on the opposite side of the N21 road. The Zone of Notification around this archaeological site, as designated by the National Monuments Service (NMS), does not extend into the boundary of the subject site.

A 2017 programme of test trenching was carried out by the present writer in the north end of the field to assess a potential location for the housing scheme and nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in that area. A report on the 2017 site investigations has been submitted to the NMS and Limerick City and County Council.

The archaeological test trench investigations described in this report were undertaken in the southwest corner of the field to assess a potential alternative development area. These investigations were carried out under an extension to excavation licence 17E0085 and the artefact retrieval strategy incorporated the licensed use of a metal-detector (17R0029).

Test trenches were mechanically excavated across the subject area at 15m intervals and nothing of archaeological significance was identified.

PROJECT DETAILS

Project type	Test Trenching
Archaeologist	Tony Cummins
Excavation Licence	17E0085 ext.
Detection Licence	17R0029 ext.
Townland	Adare
County	Limerick
OS Sheet	LI021
ITM	545811, 645466
Recorded Monument	n/a
Local Authority	Limerick City and County Council
Planning details	Pre-development assessment
Development Type	Housing development
Client	Project commissioned by Carr Cotter & Naessens Architects on behalf of Limerick City and County Council

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. CONTEXT	2
3. TEST TRENCHING	6
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	9
5. REFERENCES	10
APPENDIX 1: PLATES	11

1. Introduction

A second phase of archaeological test trenching was undertaken by Tony Cummins, John Cronin & Associates (JCA) within a green field subject area on the southwest outskirts of Adare town, County Limerick (**Figure 1**).

An archaeological screening report based on a desktop study and site inspection was previously prepared as part of a pre-development assessment of the wider lands in this area (JCA 2016). This assessment noted that there are no recorded archaeological sites within the overall landholding but that the potential existed for the presence of unrecorded, sub-surface archaeological features and a pre-development programme of archaeological test trenching was recommended in areas proposed to be developed.

Test trench investigations were subsequently undertaken within the north end of the field by the present author in March 2017 under an excavation licence issued by the NMS (Licence ref. 17E0085). The licensed use of a metal-detector was incorporated into the test trenching project to assist in artefact retrieval (Licence ref. 17R0029). Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered during these site investigations.

The current report details a second programme of archaeological test trenching undertaken in the southwest corner of the landholding in order to assess a potential alternate location for a housing development and was carried out under an extension to Licence 17E0085. An extension to Licence 17R0029 was also issued in order to use a metal-detector to assist in artefact retrieval.

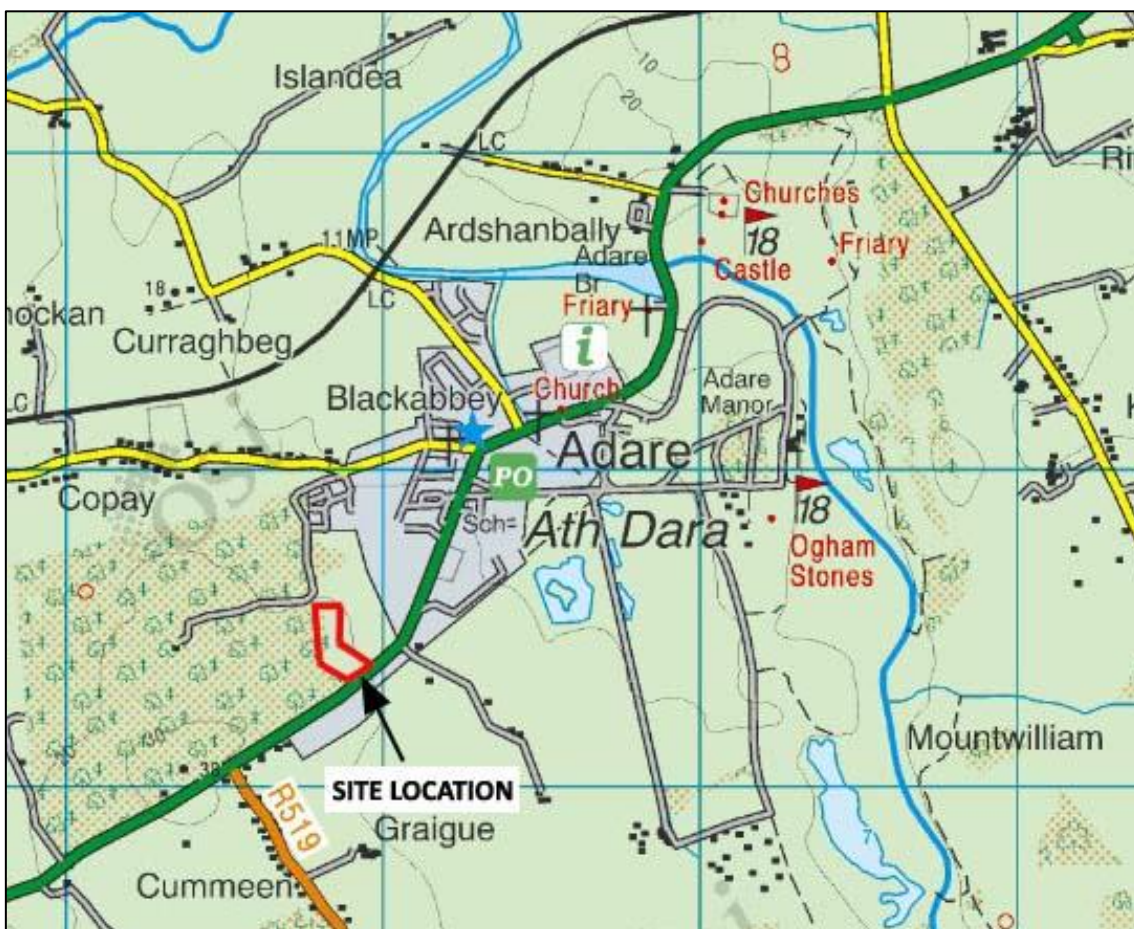


Figure 1: Location of subject site in relation to Adare [OSI Licence ref. 0003318]

2. Context

The subject site comprises an area of generally level terrain in the southwest outskirts of Adare town (**Figure 1**) and comprises the southwest corner of a large pasture field bounded by the N21 road to south. The southern boundary wall flanks the north side of the public road and the section adjacent to the subject site has been rebuilt within recent decades. An entrance gateway within the boundary wall has been blocked with a security fence and access to the subject area was gained via a field gate within the modern housing estate to the north.

As noted above, there are no recorded archaeological sites within the subject area and no surface traces of potential unrecorded archaeological sites were noted during a pre-works inspection. Nothing of archaeological significance was identified during a programme of test trenching in the north end of the field undertaken by the present writer in 2017 (Licence 17E0085).

The Archaeological Survey of Ireland records the presence of a cluster of three levelled enclosures (LI021-156001-, 02- and 03-) located in lands on the opposite side of the N21 road, at distances of 70m-150m to the south of the subject area (Figure 2). While the origins of these sites can often only be ascertained through excavation, they may indicate the presence of unclassified early medieval ringforts. The area between the south side of the N21 and the levelled enclosures is occupied by a line of roadside 20th century houses.



Figure 2: Location of levelled enclosures (with zones of notification shaded) to south of subject site
[source: www.archaeology.ie]

The origins and development of Adare during the late medieval period followed the construction of Adare Castle, located 1.65km to the northeast of the subject site, 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 ringwork fortification which may indicate that the initial Anglo-Norman settlement pre-dated the castle's 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. The castle developed into an important regional stronghold and the struggles for its ownership during the following centuries also resulted in concurrent periods of expansion and decline of the town. Lewis (1837) provides the following summary of the 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.

There are two recorded archaeological sites associated with the late medieval development of Adare within 1km of the subject site. The town is listed as a 'historic settlement' (LI021-032001-) and the subject site is located approx. 0.9km to the southeast of the Zone of Notification surrounding the historic core of the settlement. A Trinitarian Friary (LI021-32008-), which dates to c.1230, is located 0.95km to the northeast of the subject site.

While there are a number of modern housing estates located in the areas to the north and south of the lands containing the subject site, there are no entries in the Excavations Database for any archaeological investigations associated with these developments. However, the Database does include a wide range of investigations undertaken within the town and its immediate hinterland. These have provided a variety of results and include properties that produced no archaeological evidence and other examples that contained evidence for settlement activity dating to the prehistoric and medieval periods. Archaeological monitoring of site investigations undertaken in 2017 in advance of footpath and drainage improvements along the section of

the N21 Rathkeale Road in Graigue and Cummeen townlands (both located to the south of the subject site and outside the area of the historic town) uncovered nothing of archaeological significance (John O'Connor, Licence 16E0402 ext.).

The subject site is shown as part of a large undeveloped field to the east of woodland on both the 1st edition 6-inch OS map of 1840, which labels the area as Deerpark, and the 25-inch OS map of 1899, which names it as 'Oldpark' (Figures 3 and 4). The northwest corner of the subject site is shown as an unplanted area of the field on the 1840 map while it is occupied by a localised extension of the woodland on the 1899 map and trees are still present in this area. The only feature shown within the subject site on both maps is a section of a broadly east-west aligned footpath located in the northern half of the area. While the subject site is outside the core of the historical settlement and is not in close proximity to the castle, the annotation 'Deerpark' on the 6-inch OS map of 1840 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 medieval manors and 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).



Figure 3: Extract from 6-inch OS map of 1840 showing approx. layout of subject site
[OSI Licence ref. 0003318]



Figure 4: Extract from 25-inch OS map of 1899 showing approx. layout of subject site [OSI Licence ref. 0003318]



Figure 5: Aerial view of subject site showing approx. site layout

3. Test Trenching

The archaeological test trenching investigations were carried out in March 2018 by the present author and a site assistant. The investigations comprised the mechanical excavation of six test trenches within the subject area at 15m intervals (Figure 6). The trenches were excavated across the footprint of the subject site by a machine operating with a 1.9m 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 presence of mature trees in the west end of the northern half of the subject area precluded excavations in this area and it is likely that this plantation and subsequent root action will have extensively disturbed the underlying soil levels in this area.

In summary, there was nothing of archaeological significance identified in any of the test trenches. The absence of land drains and general paucity of cultural inclusions within the exposed stratigraphy suggested (as was the case in the 2017 trenches excavated in the north end of the field) that the area may have been historically used as grazing land.

The following table presents the results of the test trenching investigations and extracts from the photographic record are presented in Appendix 1 of this report.

Table 1: Description of Test Trenches

Trench	Summary of results
1	This 100m long trench extended parallel to the east boundary of the north end of the subject area. The topsoil layer (average 0.3m in depth) was composed of a greyish brown, silty sand clay and contained very occasional inclusions of 19 th and 20 th century pottery sherds and modern nails. The topsoil overlay a mid red-brown sandy clay subsoil which contained frequent surface inclusions of limestone bedrock fragments. The line of the footpath indicated on the historic OS maps was evident as a barely perceptible raised linear feature on the ground surface and was exposed under the sod layer as a thin band of sterile gravel averaging 2m in width.
2	This 100m long trench extended parallel to the eastern margins of the woodland in the northern end of the subject area. The stratigraphy and inclusions encountered in this trench was similar to that noted in Trench 1 to the east and the gravel footpath was also exposed.
3	This 90m long trench was excavated along the eastern margins of the woodland extending outside the western end of the subject area. The depth of the topsoil in this area was slightly shallower (10-20cm deep) than in the area to the north (in Trenches 1 and 2) although there was a similar paucity of cultural inclusions noted. There were also frequent inclusions of limestone bedrock fragments noted on the surface of the natural subsoil, with a noticeable concentration in the northern end.
4	The stratigraphy noted in this 90m long trench was similar to that encountered in Trench 3 located 15m to the east.
5	The presence of an overhead powerline constrained the excavation of the southern 10m of this trench (total excavated length 80m). The stratigraphy noted was similar to that encountered in Trenches 3 and 4 to the east.
6	The presence of an overhead powerline constrained the excavation of the southern 20m of this trench (total excavated length 70m). The stratigraphy noted in the trench was similar to that encountered in Trenches 3, 4 and 5 to the east. A growth of gorse in the area to the south of this trench, close to the gateway in the modern boundary wall flanking the N21 road, had recently been cleared at surface level and an inspection of the exposed topsoil layer revealed occasional modern inclusions.



Figure 6: Location of test trenches superimposed on aerial view of subject site

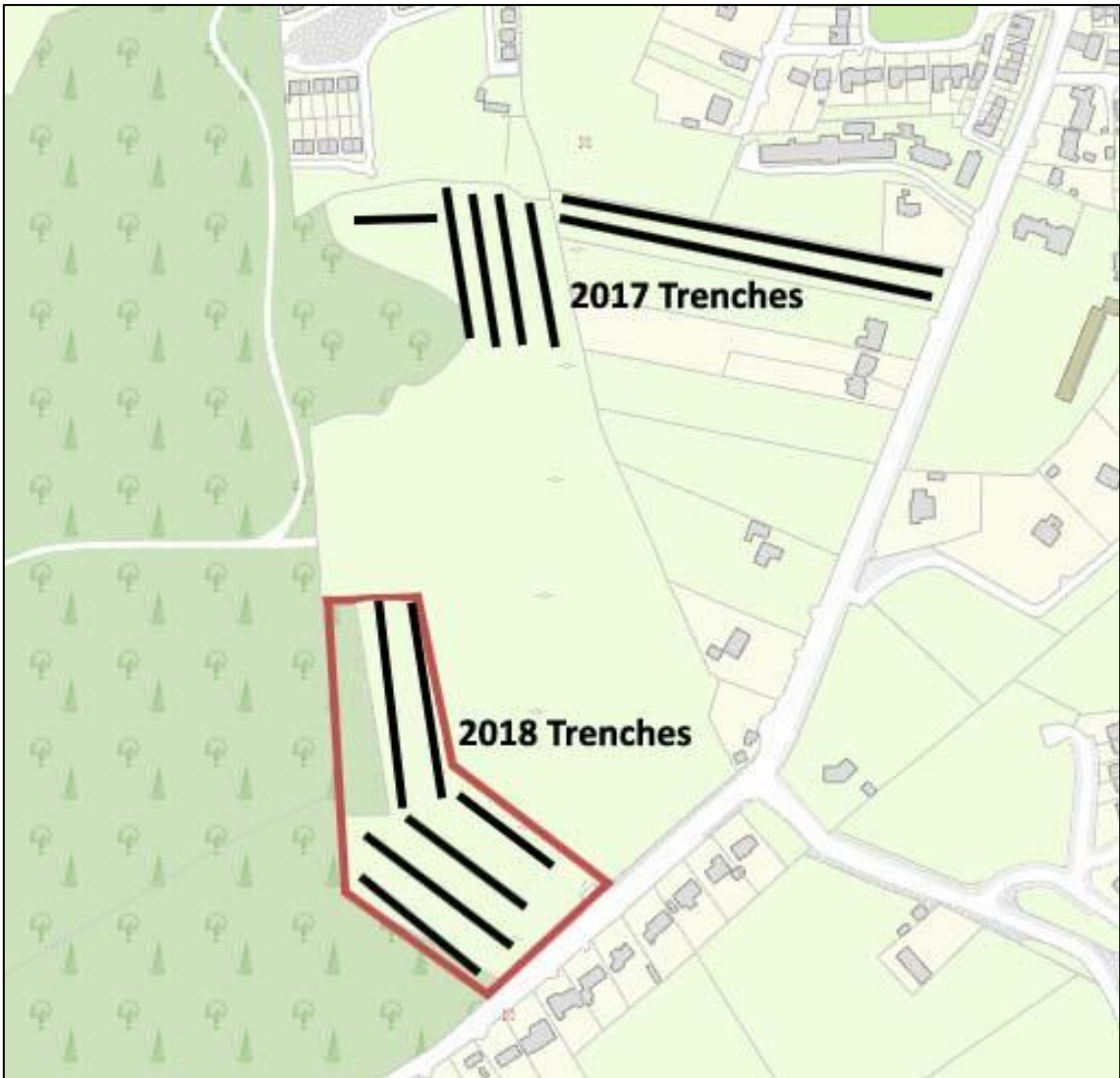


Figure 7: General view of location of overall test trenches excavated within landholding

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

There are no recorded archaeological sites within the subject site and the nearest example is a levelled enclosure (LI021-156001-) located c.70m to the south on the opposite side of the N21 road. The Zone of Notification around this archaeological site, as designated by the NMS, does not extend into the boundary of the subject site (**Figure 2**).

The consulted historic OSI maps do not indicate the presence of any unrecorded archaeological sites or now levelled buildings within the subject site. No surface traces of any potential unrecorded archaeological sites were noted during a pre-works walkover survey or an inspection of consulted online aerial images.

There were no unrecorded archaeological features or artefacts noted during the test trench excavations and metal-detecting survey undertaken within the subject area or during the 2017 programme of test trenching in the northern end of the field.

Given the absence of any recorded archaeological monuments within the subject site and the absence of any features of archaeological significance identified during test trenching **it is recommended that no further archaeological intervention is required within the boundary of the subject area**. Any proposed development locations outside the investigated areas of the overall landholding should be subjected to advance archaeological test trenching.

It should be noted that these recommendations are subject to the approval of the NMS and the Planning Authority (Limerick City and County Council).

5. References

Aalen, F.H.A. *et al* (1997) *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*. Cork University Press.

Cummins, T. (2017) *Archaeological Test Trenching, Deerpark, Adare, Co. Limerick (Licence 17E0085)*. Unpublished report submitted to Limerick City and County Council and National Monuments Service.

JCA (2016) *Archaeological Assessment, Deerpark, Co. Limerick*. Unpublished report submitted to Limerick City and County Council.

Lewis, S. (1837) *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. 2 Volumes, Lewis & Company, London.

Rackham, O. (2000) *The History of the Countryside*. Phoenix Press, London

Reeves-Smyth, T. (1997) 'Demesnes', in *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape*. Cork University Press.

Spellissy, S. (1989) *Limerick: The Rich Land*. Ennis

Consulted online sources

www.excavations.ie

www.archaeology.ie

www.logainm.ie

www.buildingsofireland.ie

<http://www.limerickdioceseheritage.org/>

<http://gis.teagasc.ie/soils/map.php> (Soil)

http://spatial.dcenr.gov.ie/imf/imf.jsp?site=GSI_Simple (Bedrock)

<http://maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/#V2,591271,743300,1,10> (Maps)

<http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>

Appendix 1: Plates



Plate 1: View of subsoil in Trench 1



Plate 2: View of Trench 2 from north



Plate 3: View of gravel footpath in Trench 2



Plate 4: View of Trench 3 from north



Plate 5: View of excavation of Trench 4 from north



Plate 6: View of Trench 5 from south



Plate 7: View of Trench 6 from north



Plate 8: View of metal-detecting survey



Plate 9: View of rebuilt southern boundary wall