



Predevelopment Archaeological Testing 19E0617

Golf Course Road, Westport

Sue Zajac

PROJECT DETAILS

Project	Archaeological Test Excavation carried out in advance of the construction of fifty proposed housing units at Golf Course Road, Westport, Co. Mayo
License Number	19E0617
Townland	Westport Demesne
OS six-inch Edition	Mayo 88
RMP No.	None
ITM	498738, 785377
Contractors	Architects Section, Mayo County Council, Áras an Chontae, Castlebar
Excavation Director	Sue Zajac, Civic Offices, Ballina, Co Mayo
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Planning Ref	None
Report Status	Final
Report Date	12th June 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mayo County Council intend to construct fifty social housing units on zoned lands adjacent to Westport House. The development site is in Westport Demesne townland on the north-western outskirts of Westport Town, County Mayo. This report describes the results of pre-development testing, carried out for archaeological assessment purposes prior to a Part VIII planning application for the proposed housing development.

The pre-development testing took place between 17th October and 25th October 2019 under archaeological excavation licence No. 19E0617 issued by the National Monuments Service (NMS), Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI). It was carried out in two adjoining fields totalling 6.98 Ha. (Plate 1). A dry-stone wall, with mature trees, divides the fields and runs across a substantial hill in the centre of the development site. This wall is a townland boundary between Westport Demesne, Parish of Oughaval and Barrony of Murrisk and Westport Demesne, Parish of Kilmeena and Burrishoole Barony (www.townlands.ie/mayo). From this boundary the ground falls away steeply to east and west and more gradually to north and south. The low ground to south-east is referred to as *bog park*, on nineteenth century estate drawings (pers. comm S. Sexton). On the lower ground to north-west, the remains of a mill race, designated on the 1838 OS edition, clips the north-west corner of the development site.

The pre-development testing involved the mechanical excavation of thirty-four test trenches using a toothless grading bucket. Ten potential archaeological sites were recorded. These comprised six burnt spreads, one possible fulacht fiadh and three pits.

As well as the mill race and townland boundary, further vernacular features were also recorded within the development site. These included two sunken, stone-lined troughs or vats, visible prior to testing. One was partially water filled and a second had an associated stone-lined culvert, visible just below the sod. Further stone-lined culverts were also seen in proximity to the mill race. Still in good condition, these were located at depths of up to 1.2m and their position may be related to the mill race in some way. All the vernacular features occur within the former curtilage of Westport House and farmyard complex (National Inventory of Architecture, Reg. Nos. 31212001 and 31308801), located to west and south-west respectively (Plate 2). The pre-development archaeological testing concluded that both the archaeological sites and vernacular features all required full resolution prior to the construction of social housing units.



Plate 1 Aerial view of Development Site showing position of some of the known Archaeological Sites prior to testing (MA088-005 Deerpark-Enclosure, to north-east and MA088-098 Westport Demesne-Mound.

MA088-006 in the woodland is a Redundant record



Plate 2 Part of the Farm Complex (Reg No. 31308801) associated with Westport House

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INTRODUCTION

This is the final report that describe the results of pre-development archaeological testing of a proposed development site in Westport Demesne townland on the north-west outskirts of Westport Town, County Mayo (Figure 1). The testing was carried out in accordance with Excavation Licence No. 19E0617 issued by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. It took place between the 17th and 25th October 2019.

Scheme Description

The development site is made up of two green fields currently used for grazing and covering 6.98 hectares. The fields are divided by a substantial dry-stone wall, which acts as a townland boundary and also forms the boundary between the Parish of Oughaval and Barrony of Murrisk and the Parish of Kilmeena and Burrishoole Barony (www.townlands.ie/mayo). Remains of mature trees run along this boundary and the land falls away from here to low-lying ground on all sides. A regional road delimits the northern edge of the development site and Westport House, grounds and farmyard complex are located to the south. The intention of the scheme is to use the higher ground as an amenity area for a small plantation of trees with the lands to each side used for both social and affordable housing. The development will also include access roads and all associated axillary works.

Methodology

Thirty-four test trenches (1.8m wide) were mechanically excavated using a toothless grading bucket. The trenches ran on a north-east x south-west axis and ranged in length from 40m to 140m, with the majority averaging 120m in length. The trenches in general, followed a longitudinal pattern and were excavated parallel to each other (Figure 2). The test trenches covered two adjacent fields and for the purposes of this report these are referred to as Field 1 and Field 2¹. Eighteen test trenches were in Field 1 and sixteen in Field 2. This represents a total of 4604 linear metres of test trench were excavated in the development site giving a total area test trenched of 5,525 m². This represented 12.6% of the lands made available for testing. The predevelopment testing was carried out by the license holder. Topsoil was removed from the test excavation trenches by a mechanical excavator using a toothless grading bucket working under the direct and continuous supervision of an archaeologist. Where potential archaeologically significant features were identified, these were recorded and left in situ for future hand investigation under a revised licensing arrangement. A written, drawn and photographic record was prepared, and all trenches and features were surveyed by the project surveyor and related to the Irish National Grid (ITM). The Trenches were all excavated down to natural subsoil except for Trenches Three and Four in the south-eastern area of the development site in Field 1. Here natural subsoil had not been reached at a depth of 2m and rising water levels caused the sides of the trenches to collapse at this depth. As such these trenches were not fully excavated out for Health and Safety reasons.

Cultural landscape

This proposed development does not impact on any recorded or previously known archaeological sites (Zajac, 2019, 5). Four archaeological sites however are designated in Westport Demesne townland between 400m and 600m away from the development site (Plate 1). These are, an Enclosure (MA088-003), a Burial Ground (MA088-002), a Mound (MA088-098) and a Souterrain (MA088-007). In the adjoining townland of Deerpark there is also another enclosure (MA088-005). To the north-east of the development site however, in Gortaroe and Attireesh townlands, several fulachta fiadha, as well as a Neolithic house and associated small finds, were uncovered in 2001 and 2002. These were found and subsequently excavated as part of the Westport Main Drainage and Waste-Water disposal

¹ Thirty-seven test trenches were originally proposed and are shown in Figure 2 below. In the final event Test Trench 10 in Field 1 and Test Trenches 36 and 37 in Field 2 were not excavated.

scheme (Licence Nos. 01E1042; 01E0562; 01E0563; 01E0649; 01E0650). Their location is not currently designated on the Register of Monuments and Places for County Mayo (RMP). Their discovery however, points to the potential for previously unrecorded, prehistoric, subsurface deposits and features within the general area (www.excavations.ie).

A mill race is designated on the first edition OS 6-inch scale map in Westport Demesne and while it mostly runs outside the limits of the development site it does clip the north-west corner where it is seen as a stream, partly revetted by a high stone wall. Other vernacular features, associated with the former demesne of Westport House, were found during the pre-development testing (Section 2 below). A vernacular survey/assessment of the nineteenth century, cultural heritage is recommended prior to any construction work going ahead (Section 3 below).

The archaeological features newly identified within the development site, as a result of predevelopment testing, include six areas of burnt stone, a possible fulacht fiadh and a group of three pits. The fulachta fiadha and burnt spreads, are most likely Bronze Age in date while the pits may belong to the Early Medieval period. These newly discovered sites in Westport Demesne are similar to some of the sites discovered in the adjoining townlands of Gortaroe and Attireesh, mentioned above. As such the value of the sites in Westport Demesne may be greatly enhanced by their association with related contemporary monuments or with monuments from different periods indicating an extended time presence in a specific area (Gillespie, 2019, 27).

Layout of Report

This report is the final report for the predevelopment testing at Westport Demesne under license number 19E0617. Predevelopment testing was carried out on behalf of the Architects Section of Mayo County Council, Áras an Chontae, Castlebar. It took place in two adjoining fields, referred to in this report as Field 1 and Field 2. For purposes of this report each field has been further subdivided into areas. This is based primarily on the topography and the occurrence of archaeological features. The majority of the archaeological remains uncovered during the predevelopment testing were found in Field 1 in Area 3. A limited number of archaeological features were also located in Field 2, found within Area 2 (see Section 1 below). Vernacular features were recorded in both fields and these are dealt with separately from the archaeological remains in Section Two of this report. Section One of this report covers the archaeological features only. All figures relevant to this report are located at the end, the plates meanwhile, of the archaeological sites and vernacular features, are shown in the relevant section of the text.

The recommendations in Section Three of this report outline the procedures which are now required to fully resolve the archaeological and vernacular features uncovered or recorded during the predevelopment testing and outlined in this report. These recommendations must take place prior to construction of any kind going ahead and in consultation with the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland.

SECTION ONE RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL PREDEVELOPMENT TESTING

FIELD ONE

FIELD 1/AREA 1 This is represented by Test Trenches 1-4 inclusive and takes in an area at the south-eastern extremity of the development site. This area is referred to on nineteenth century estate maps as *bog park* (pers. comm. S. Sexton) and is still known locally as the *bog field*. The stratigraphy in Trenches 1-4 were the same in each case. A fill (Context 1) of stone, redeposited white marl, clay and pebbles, along with pockets of modern gravel maintenance, underlay the sod and overlay compact peat (Context 2) particularly at the south-western end of the trenches (Plate 3). This fill was between 0.3m and 1m deep. The compact peat underlying the fill had moderate inclusions of naturally occurring wood some consisting of large tree roots and trunks (Plate 4). The peat overlay a distinctive white marl (Context 3) which towards the north-eastern end of the trenches became light grey in colour (Context 6). Some large boulders were found in the marl at north-eastern end of the trenches. From the centre of Test Trenches 3 and 4, to the north-eastern end, the peat was over 2m deep and the test trenches did not reach natural marl in these areas. In Test Trenches 1 and 2 the sides of the trenches were unstable and collapsed in after excavation (Plate 5). Between the fill and the peat were a series of land drains (Context 4) consisting of modern clay piping or stone culverts suggesting the area had been drained successively over time (Plate 6). Once test trenching began in Area 1 it became very wet and needed a pump to remove the water, in order to continue. At the south-western end of Trench 1 the fill, overlying the peat, may have come from an adjacent sewer line that has been laid between the trench and the adjacent road. In general, however, the redeposited material seems to have been tipped here to try and raise the level of the ground to make it viable for grazing. This seems to have succeeded to a large degree but once the sod was broken the water began to rise once more. Trenches 1-4 ran for between 85m and 120m in length. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in Field 1/Area 1.



Plate 3 Fill, including redeposited, white marl overlying peat and natural mineral soil at south-western end of Test Trench 1



Plate 4 Fallen tree in peat at north-eastern end of Test Trench 2 with Test Trench 1 to left of photo



Plate 5 Trench collapse at north-eastern end of Test Trench 1



Plate 6 Stone culvert in Test Trench 3

FIELD 1/AREA 2 This is represented by Test Trenches 5-8 that take in a short ridge running across the field on a north-east x south-west access. The ridge divides the low-lying bog in Area 1 from further, low-lying ground, in Area 3.

In Trench 5 clayey peat (Context 5) overlay grey marl (Context 6) for a depth of 0.6m for the first 35m, as the trench was excavated from the south-west end (Plate 7). After this the clayey peat became deep peat with moderate inclusions of wood (Context 2). The base of the trench was not reached at the north-eastern end of the trench where the peat was over 2m deep. There was no fill (Context 1) above the peat, as previously seen in Trenches 1-4. Trench 5 however, seemed to form an interface between deep peat on one side (Trenches 1-4) and undulating limestone rock, with shallow soil cover, subsequently seen in the remaining parts of Field 1/Area 2. Consequently, Test Trenches 6-8 all had the same stratigraphy namely a shallow layer (averaging 0.25m deep) of reddish-brown clay (Context 7) overlaying an undulating limestone rock (Context 8) with sparse inclusions of either orange or grey marl (Plates 8 & 9). Trenches 5-8 each ran for 140m in length. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in Field 1/Area 2.



Plate 7 Peat overlying natural mineral soil (grey marl) at south-western end of Test Trench 5



Plate 8 Shallow clay above limestone rock and marl Test Trench 6



Plate 9 Looking north-east to general view of test trench 7 with 8 in the background

FIELD 1/AREA 3 This is represented by Test Trenches 9-12 and includes all the areas of archaeological significance identified in Field 1. Namely, six areas of burnt stone exposed within Test Trenches 9, 10, 11 and 12 and one possible, grass-covered fulachta fiadh, in Test Trench 10 (see below). These features are referred to as FF1-FF6 on the accompanying drawing showing their location. The low-grass-covered mound is outlined and hatched in green on the same drawing (Figure 3).

Test Trench 11

This trench was excavated in two halves, separated by one of the stone-lined vats which was located near the north-eastern end of the trench. It ran for 80m north-east x south-west. The remains of two burnt spreads were found in Trench 11, known as FF1 and FF2 (Figure 3).

FF1 Found at the north-eastern end of Trench 11 and located just below the sod and a thin layer of clay (Context 7), reaching a maximum depth of 0.3m. The spread was composed of frequent inclusions of burnt stone and moderate inclusions of charcoal (Context 9). The south-western limits of the material were seen within the trench, where the burnt stone reached 0.25m above natural rock and marl subsoil (Context 8). The north-western end of the trench was extended however, to take in an area 10m north-east x south-west and 5m north-west x south-east, but no definite limits of the burnt material could be identified (Plate 10). This may be due to later disturbance (Context 10) which overlay the burnt material and included, broken crockery such as creamware and willow pattern. Sherds of Blackware were also evident as well as a broken, naturally occurring stone covered by a green vitrified material, that may be a trial piece of some sort (Appendix 2). Further disturbance had occurred along the eastern side the burnt spread which was truncated by a stone-lined culvert running on a north-east x south-west axis into one

of the stone-lined vats. A possible setting of flagstones (Context 11) may be occurring around the south-western limits of the burnt spread (Context 9), though it is not possible to clarify this without hand investigation (Plate 10 & 11).



Plate 10 FF1 Located at the north-eastern end of Test Trench 11, showing possible stone revetment and pockets of gravel overlying burnt stone



Plate 11 FF1, looking north-east. Sod removed and south-western limits within trench to foreground. Line of stone-lined culvert leading to vat to right of photo

FF2 Found 30m south-west of FF1. near the centre of Trench 11. Like FF1, it was located just below a thin cover of sod and clay topsoil (Context 7) and overlay natural limestone rock and marl subsoil (Context 8). A deposit of burnt stone and charcoal (Context 9) was seen extending for 7m. within the trench, reaching a maximum depth of 0.3m. The south-eastern edge of the trench was widened slightly for 2m (Figure 3) and the material was seen continuing in this direction. Thus, while the limits of this burnt material were found within the trench, it seemed to be continuing outside of the trench on both the north-west and south-east sides (Plate 12).



Plate 12 Looking north to Test Trench 11. Location of two burnt spreads, both covered by blue plastic with FF2 in the foreground

Test Trench 12

This trench was excavated for 76m and the remains of two burnt spreads were located known as FF3 and FF4 (Figure 3).

FF3 Disturbed pockets, of burnt stone and sparse inclusions of charcoal (Context 9), found 26m from the south-western end of Trench 12 (Plate 13) and located just below the sod and a thin layer of peaty clay (Context 12). The pockets of burnt material were seen extending within the trench for 6.5m. reaching a maximum depth of 0.1m, in each section face. The trench was extended for 2m on the north-western side (Figure 3). The disturbed pockets of burnt material were seen continuing in this direction, below a layer of peaty clay (Context 12). Thus, while the limits of this burnt material were found within the trench, it seemed to be continuing outside of the trench on both the north-west and south-eastern sides though it seemed to be in a very disturbed condition.



Plate 13 FF3_Located south-west of centre in Test Trench 12

FF4 Found at the north-eastern end of Trench 11 and located just below the sod and a thin layer of clay topsoil (Context 7), burnt stone and moderate inclusions of charcoal (Context 9), reaching a maximum depth of 0.25m in the north-west facing section of the trench. The spread extended south-west, within the trench, for 4.2m (Plate 14). The trench was not extended further so the limits of the burnt material beyond the test trench is unknown (Figure 3). What was uncovered in Test Trench 11 seemed to form a very shallow layer above natural marl (Plate 14).



Plate 14 FF4 Located above marl at the north-eastern end of Test Trench 12

Test Trench 10

Test Trench 10 was only partly excavated for a total distance of 7.3m from its north-eastern end. The remainder of the trench was not excavated as part of the predevelopment testing.

FF5 Found below the sod and a thin layer of clay topsoil (Context 7) running for 4m within Test Trench 10. A deposit of burnt stone (Context 9) which at its south-western end was seen running into a low, grass-covered mound that was horseshoe-shaped (Context 25; Plates 15 & 16). The shape of the mound and its location beside the burnt stone suggest it is an undisturbed fulacht fiadh. The mound covers a maximum area of 10m north-south by 12m east-west and has a maximum height of 0.4m. In the centre of the mound there is a sub-oval depression, measuring 2m east-west, and 0.65m wide (Figure 3). No further testing took place around the potential site, which was left in situ for hand investigation.



Plate 15 FF5 Test Trench 10 with sod removed by digger and burnt stone and charcoal uncovered



Plate 16 FF5 start of Test Trench 10 with low, grass-covered, mound to right of ranging rods

Test Trench 9

FF6 Located at the north-eastern end of Test Trench 9 which was excavated for a distance of 91m (Figure 3) A shallow band (max 0.2m deep) of burnt stone and charcoal (Context 9) was seen in the north-west facing section of the trench (Plate 17). The material extends for 3.5m within the section face and was seen running into the trench for a maximum distance of 0.6m. It was not seen continuing into the opposite section face (Figure 3). There is a slightly raised grassed over area outside the south-east side of the trench against the section face and more burnt stone may be extending in this direction outside of the excavated test trench (Plate 17).



Plate 17 Burnt stone in section at the north-eastern end of Test Trench 9 looking south-east

FIELD 1/AREA 4 This is represented by Test Trenches 13-19 which takes in part of the hill as it occurs in Field 1. Trench 13 was 83m long and for 60m, from the south-west end of the trench, peaty clay (Context 12) was seen to overlay grey marl and limestone rock (Context 8). For the remaining 23m of this trench a reddish-brown clay (Context 13) overlay an orange marl (Context 14). This reddish-brown clay (Context 13) and underlying orange marl (Context 14) was also seen in Trench 14, except for 12m in the centre of trench. Here peaty clay (Context 12) again overlay limestone rock with pockets of grey marl (Context 8). Trenches 13 and 14 were at the base of the hill still close to Area 3 and the low-lying, peaty clay (Plate 18). Trenches 15 to 19 meanwhile were higher up and the stratigraphy was uniform and distinctive. Namely a shallow layer of reddish, orange clay (Context 13), overlying a reddish orange marl (Context 14). The clay reached an average depth of 0.45m and had moderate inclusions of cobbles. The marl had frequent inclusions of angular rock. Both horizons were similar in colour and it was difficult to distinguish the boundary between them (Plate 19). The natural orange marl was not deep however (average 0.5m) and below it was a natural deposit of, limestone gravel (Context 14) that had been partly quarried away in Field 2 (Plate 20). Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in Field 1/Area 4.



Plate 18 Black plastic covering FF3 (Trench 12) in centre of photo.

Test Trench 15 to far left. Orange-red clay on the hill shown in contrast to peaty clay on lower ground.



Plate 19 Looking north-east to Test Trench 15 on slope of hill in Field 1 Area 4



Plate 20 Test Trench 19 Reddish clay over reddish marl with underlying limestone gravel

FIELD TWO

FIELD 2/AREA 1 This is represented by Test Trenches 20-25 which takes in the remainder of the hill as it occurs in Field 2. Trenches 20-25 all had the same stratigraphy and were the same in this regard as Trenches 15-19 already excavated in Field 1. That is a layer of reddish- orange clay (Context 13), with a maximum depth of 0.4m overlying a reddish orange marl (Context 14) with inclusions of cobbles (Plate 21). The trenches in this area averaged 120m in length except for Test Trench 23 which was excavated for 51m from the south-west end. The north-eastern end of this trench was on the line of a quarry which had removed part of the hill in this field and created a scarp face. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in Field Two/Area 1.



Plate 21 Looking north-east along line of Test Trench 22 with 21 to right of picture. Grassy rise behind diggers represents edge of quarry

FIELD 2/AREA 2 This is represented by Test Trench 26 and includes the only area of archaeological significance identified in Field 2. Namely, two circular pits and a larger, oval pit found together near the south-western end of the test trench. Pit 1 (Context 16) was uncovered by machine and remained in section in the north-west face of the trench. The testing cleared back a small area around Pit 1 measuring 6.2m north-south x 5m east-west. Within this, two further pits were uncovered (Contexts 18 & 20; Figure 4; Plate 22). The stratigraphical relationship and the similar fills of each of the three pits suggests they may be connected by the same activity. Further pits, outside the stripped area also seems possible. Nothing else of archaeological significance was recorded within Test Trench 26.



Plate 22 Looking south-east to Pit 1 (Context 16) in section face and area around it cleared back by digger to expose two further pits (Context 18 & 20)

Pit 1 (Context 16) This pit was partially removed by the digger and was seen in the north-west facing section of Test Trench 26 (Plate 23). A small, steep-sided pit, narrowing to a slightly rounded base. The pit measured 0.45m wide on top across a north-east by south-west axis. It narrowed to 0.12m at the base and had a depth of 0.35m. It seemed to contain a single fill (Context 17), of loose, light greyish-brown, silty clay with moderate inclusions of heat-shattered stone and sparse flecks of charcoal. No small finds were recovered. The pit had been dug into natural subsoil, which was a light orange-brown marl (Context 23) and was just below a shallow layer of clay (Context 22) and sod covering.



Plate 23 Pit 1 in Section in Test Trench 26

Pit 2 (Context 18) Located 2.2m to the east of Pit 1 (Plate 24). It was seen in plan as a subcircular pit measuring 0.9m east-west x 0.6m north-south. The upper fill contained heat-shattered stone and flecks of charcoal, amongst a light greyish-brown silty clay (Context 19).

Pit 3 (Context 20) Located 2.3m to the north-east of Pit 2 (Plate 24). A larger, oval pit aligned east west with what seemed to be a slight depression in the centre of the pit on the north side, giving it a slight kidney-shape. The pit measures 2.2m long by 1.3m wide. Seen in plan the upper fill is the same as Pits 1 and 2, containing heat-shattered stone and flecks of charcoal amongst a light greyish brown silty clay (Context 21).



Plate 24 Pits 2 and 3 (Contexts 18 & 20) in plan on east side of Test Trench 26

FIELD 2/AREA 3 This is represented by Test Trenches 27-35 and includes all the remaining test trenches in Field 2, located off the hill, in flat low-lying ground (Plate 25). These trenches ranged from between 100m long to 50m. The final two trenches, numbers 36 and 37 shown on the original drawing of trench location was not excavated because they ran through a copse of trees which were not being disturbed by the development (Figure 2). Test Trenches 34 and 35 abutted the remains of a mill-race shown on the 1838 OS edition and seen in this part of the site as a free-flowing stream which had a coursed and mortared wall delimiting its northern edge (Section 2). The excavated trenches in Field 2/Area 3 all had the same stratigraphy. This consisted of a shallow layer of brown clay (Context 22) that reached a maximum depth of 0.3m (Plate 26). It overlay a fine, silty, light orange-coloured marl subsoil (Context 23). The marl was similar, to the subsoil seen in the remainder of this field and on the high ground in Field 1 but was lighter in colour. Nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in any of the excavated trenches in this area. The remains of three stone-lined culverts were uncovered in Trenches 29, 30 and 31. (Context 25; Plate 27). The cut and fill for these features (Context 25) were seen once the topsoil had been removed and the top of the subsoil exposed. In places the drain itself was located at a depth of 1.2m which seemed quite deep for these nineteenth century features. Their location and depth suggests they may tentatively be associated with the mill race in some way. They were well built of angular flags and the drain itself measured on average 0.3m wide by 0.25m deep (Plate 28). All three sections of the drain that were uncovered were dry. The longest section was exposed in Test Trench 31 where it extended within the trench for 27m. The remaining sections in Test Trenches 29 and 30 were exposed within the trench for 8m and 10m respectively. The culverts were recorded (max width 0.4m) and left intact. Nothing of archaeological significance was found in Area 3 of Field 2.



Plate 25 looking north-west to low-lying ground in Field 2 prior to excavation of Test Trenches 26-35



Plate 26 Trench 34 with Trench 33 to right and Trench 35 being excavated to left of photo



Plate 27 Trench 31 with linear band of redeposited soil representing cut and fill (Context 25) for stone lined culvert



Plate 28 Trench 31 with stone-lined culvert cut into subsoil

SECTION TWO VERNACULAR FEATURES

The archaeological predevelopment testing took place within the former curtilage of Westport House and Farmyard complex listed on the Architectural Inventory of Mayo and of regional importance (Reg Nos 31212001 and 31308801 respectively). The area is now zoned for residential development. This section of the report highlights some of the vernacular features within the development site that were noted as a result of the archaeological predevelopment testing. Section 3 below recommends that these features be fully recorded and/or excavated prior to any construction works going ahead.

Mill Race

A mill race is marked on the 1838 OS six-inch edition running into a mill pond on the south-west side of the Westport House farmyard complex (Figure 5). A small section of it runs through the north-west corner of the development site where it is seen as a free-flowing stream with a coursed and mortared wall delimiting its northern edge and reaching an average height of 1.2m (Plate 29). The mill race was followed outside of the development site and it was seemed to be in tact on the opposite side of the road running for a considerably distance to higher ground also in Westport Demesne townland. In this area, outside the development site, both sides of the mill race appear in tact and the water/stream is still being channelled through a stone-built sluice. Some stone culverts were also seen in the vicinity of the mill race where it appears in Field 2 of the development site (Plate 28). These are described in Section One above and were uncovered during predevelopment testing in Test Trenches 29-30. Their location so close to the mill race in Field 2 suggests they may be associated in some way.



Plate 29 Free flowing stream with retaining wall on north side obscured by trees, looking east, remains of mill race in Field 2 of the development site.

Stone-lined Troughs

Two sunken, stone-lined troughs or vats were located close to each other, in a low-lying position in Field 1 (Plate 30). They are trapezoidal in shape and one, which is slightly larger than the other, was partly water filled (Plate 31). This measures 6.4m north-west x south east with a width at the narrower end of 2.2m and a maximum width at north-west of 2.8m. The larger example also had the remains of a stone-lined culvert running from it in a northerly direction from its north-western end. The second one was smaller and was aligned in the same direction, however part of its north-western end may have collapsed and become grass-covered (Plate 32). The original purpose of the stone-lined troughs is currently unknown, but they may have had a semi-industrial function associated with the farmyard activities of Westport House.



Plate 30 Overall position of the sunken stone-lined troughs in Field 1



Plate 31 Larger trough, partly water-filled



Plate 32 Smaller trough partly collapsed at its north-west end

Townland Boundary

Field 1 and 2 are divided by a substantial dry-stone wall which represents a townland, parish and barony boundary. The wall remains in good condition with several mature trees running along its line. A brake in the wall gives access between Fields 1 and 2 but does not appear original (Plate 33). An intact milk bottle with an emblem of a phoenix with a crown above it and the wording *Westport Demesne Dairy Fresh Milk from Tuberculin Tested Cows* was found at the base of the wall in Field 1 (Plate 32).



Plate 33 Townland boundary between Fields 1 & 2. Milk bottle with phoenix and crown emblem

SECTION THREE IMPACT STATEMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The archaeological sites identified by advance testing in Westport Demesne under license number 19E0617 include six burnt spreads, a possible fulachta fiadh and three pits. These sites will be adversely impacted upon by the proposed development as they lie within the lands made available for the housing project. As well as this, vernacular features within the former curtilage of Westport House were also identified and will be adversely impacted by the proposed development.

As such preservation by record is recommended for all archaeological sites in Fields 1 and 2 and for the sunken, stone vats in Field 1. A full excavation of these features should take place prior to any further works on site. As well as this a survey should also be carried out of all the remaining vernacular features mentioned in this report, to include the townland/parish/barony boundary, the mill race and any associated features.

The recommended areas for archaeological excavation are outlined in Section One above and the areas of vernacular interest are detailed in Section Two. No further works on the site can take place however until the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland has been notified of the findings to date. Following this a new method statement and license application should be submitted to them for approval. Only when approval has been granted by the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland can archaeological excavations, to fully resolve the archaeological and vernacular features, take place. It is recommended that the findings from the archaeological excavation and architectural survey are subsequently published in a local journal.

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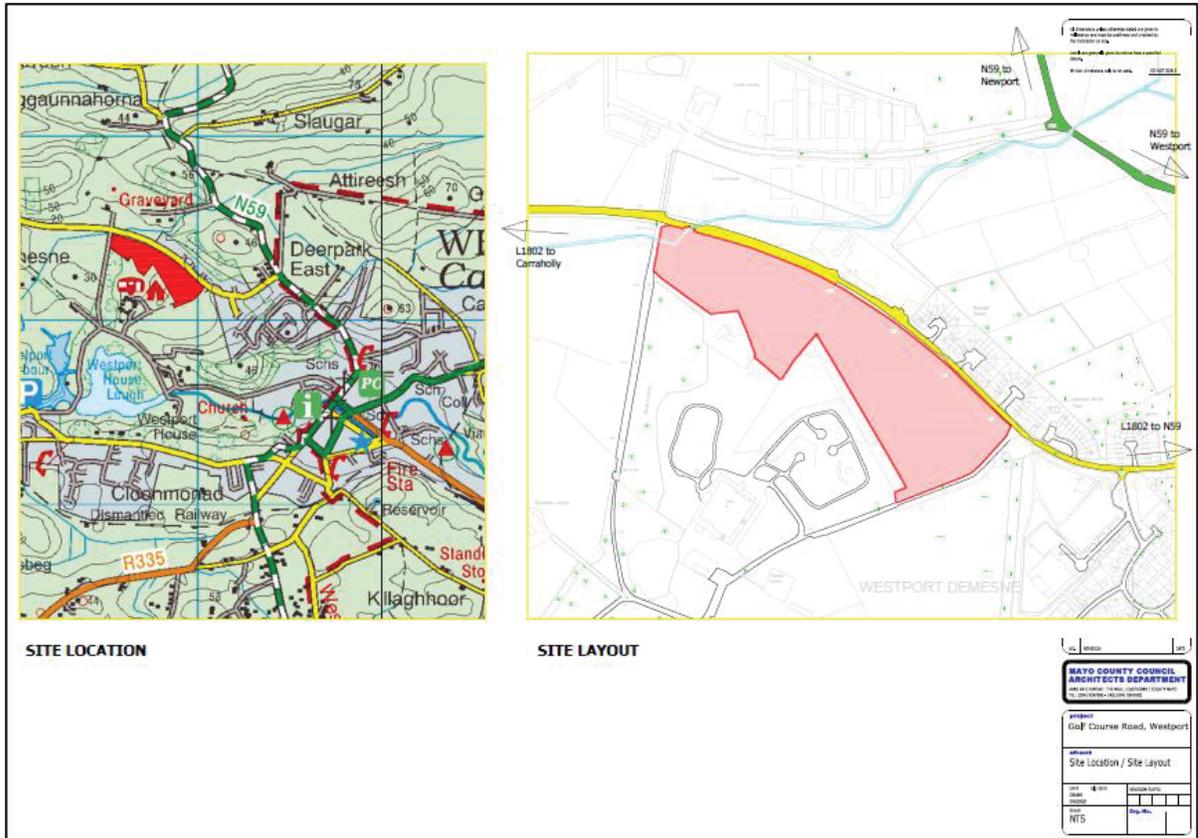


Figure 1 Development Site in red shown on the north-western outskirts of Westport town

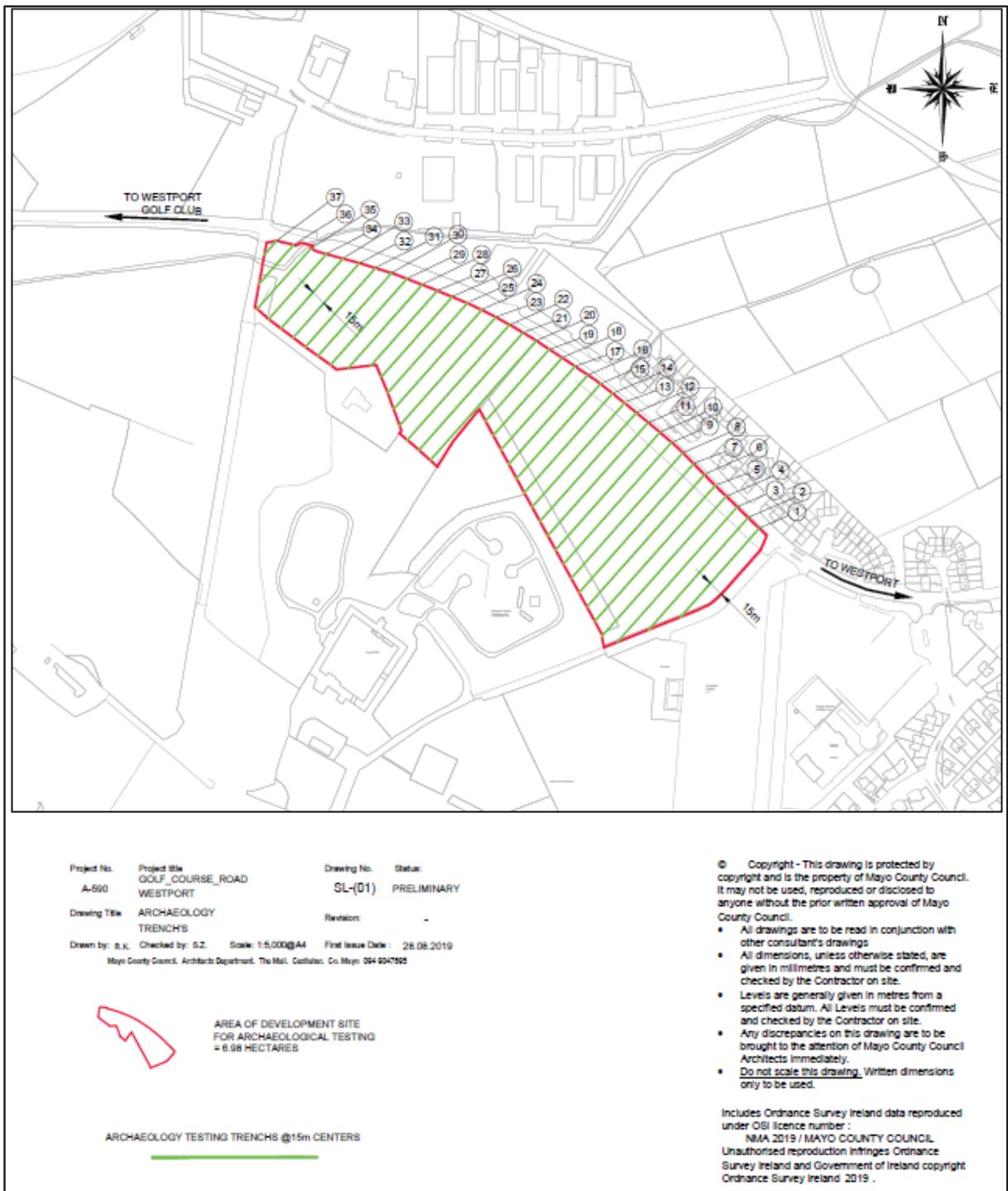


Figure 2 Location of Test Trenches across Development site

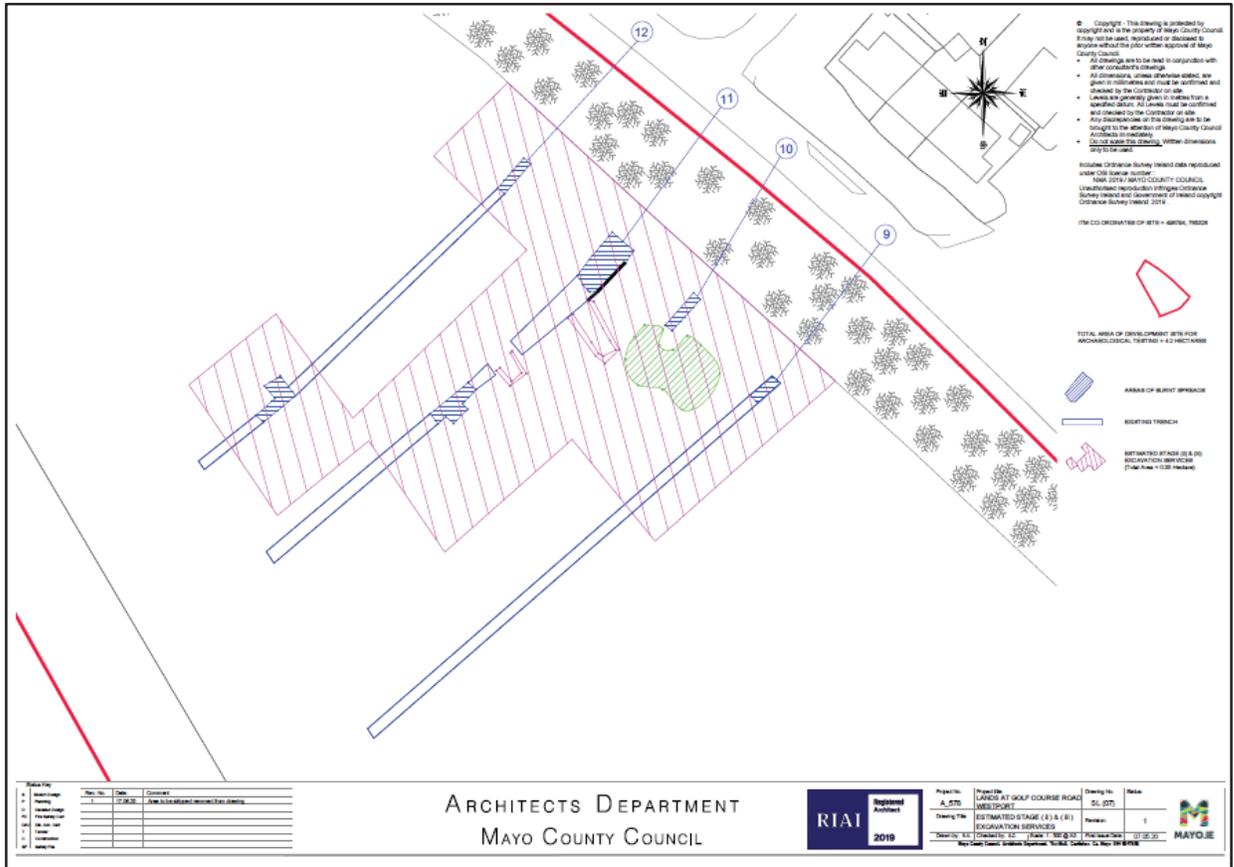


Figure 3 Location of Test Trenches 9, 10, 11 and 12. In Field 1 Areas in blue are the location of burnt stone. Possible fulachta fiadha hatched in green. Wider area of purple hatching shows proposed location of hand investigation prior to full excavation, following consultation with the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland

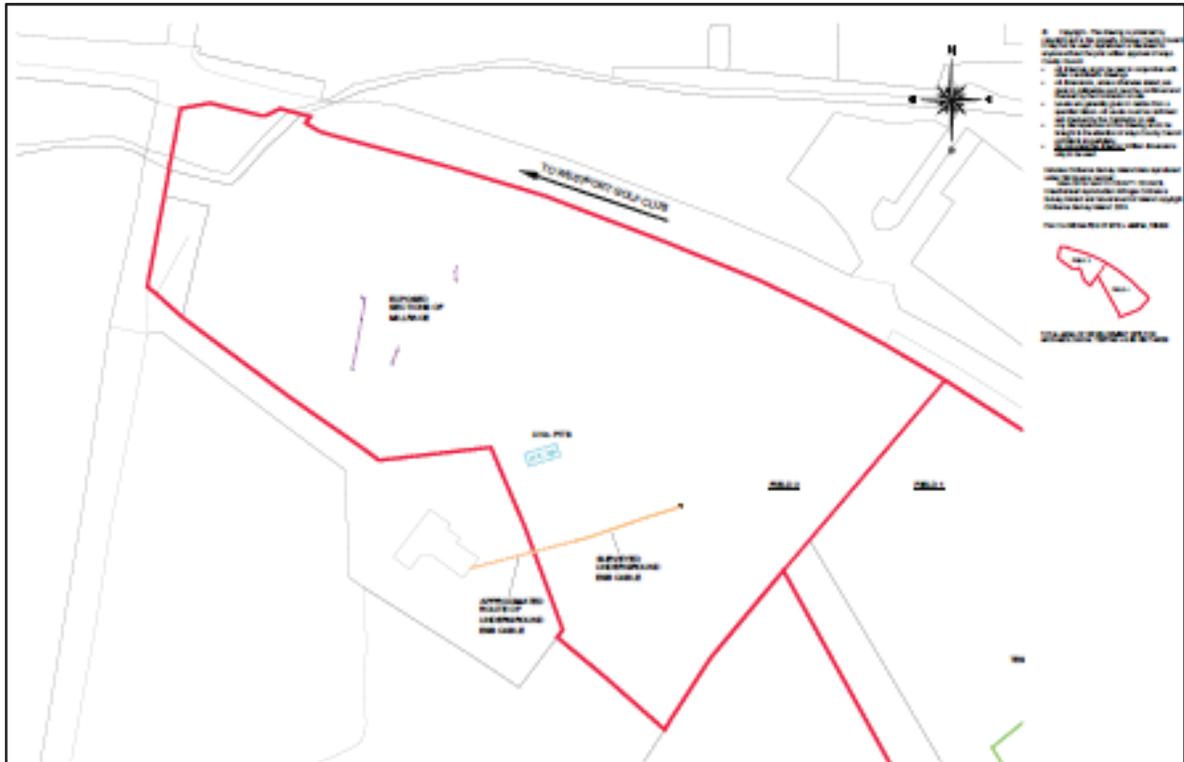


Figure 4 Location of pits in Field 2 shown by light blue square. Position of stone-lined culverts shown in purple.



Figure 5 Extract from 1838 OS edition showing Mill Race, Mill and Mill Pond

APPENDIX 1 LIST OF CONTEXTS

Feature	Description
C1	Fill covering part of the 'bog field' in Field 1 Area 1. Comprised modern maintenance, redeposited marl (C3), clay and cobbles. Between 0.3m and 1m deep. Used to build up otherwise, wet low-lying ground.
C2	Compact peat with moderate inclusions of naturally occurring wood including some large tree trunks. Found predominately in Field 1 Area 1 but also partly found in Field 1 Area 2. Archaeologically sterile between 0.4m and > 2m deep.
C3	Compact, silty marl subsoil with a distinctive white colour, only found in Field 1 Area 1 becomes grey in colour at north-eastern end of Test Trenches 1-4 (Context 6).
C4	Land drains seen in Field 1 Area 1 Can be stone-lined culverts or ceramic and plastic piping located between Context 2 and 3.
C5	Clayey peat averaging 0.6m deep found in Test Trench 5
C6	Compact, sandy grey marl with moderate inclusions of cobbles and boulders at north-eastern end of Test Trenches 1-4 (see also Context 3).
C7	Reddish brown clay reaches a maximum depth of 0.3m seen in Field 1 Area 2
C8	Undulating deposit of limestone rock with sparse inclusions of either grey or orange marl within the fissures. Located in Test Trenches 6-8 in Field 1 Area 2.
C9	Burnt Stone found in Test Trenches 9, 10, 11, and 12 and referred to in this report as FF1, FF2, FF3, FF4, FF5 and FF6. All areas of burnt stone were located just below the sod. FF1 seemed to be overlaid by modern debris (C10), possibly associated with the adjacent stone-lined vat or trough. In other areas such as FF? the material seemed to be in a disturbed condition. Often it was seen to lie directly above natural subsoil. Composed of heat-fractured stone blackened soil and sparse

	flecks of charcoal that reaches a maximum depth of 0.3m in FF1. The material extends beyond the limits of the test trench in each case. Some of the only finds (all probably modern), from the test excavation were uncovered above FF1 (See Appendix 2).
C10	Modern disturbance overlying FF1, contains gravel maintenance, blackware pottery, creamware and willow pattern delph. Also, a naturally occurring stone covered on one side by a green vitrified material which may be a trial piece of some sort (Appendix 2).
C11	Possible setting of flagstones that seemed to be revetting the south-western edge of FF1 where it was expose within Test Trench 11.
C12	Peaty clay seen in Test Trench 12 underlying sod and overlying burnt material (Context 9). Also occurs in Test Trench 13, Field 1, Area 4.
C13	Reddish orange clay in Test trenches 13-25
C14	Reddish orange marl underlying Context 13 in Test Trenches 13-25. Silty and compact and difficult to distinguish the boundary between the two contexts. Sallow deposit only 0.5m deep and overlay a limestone gravel (Context 15).
C15	A natural deposit of limestone gravel composed of limestone cobbles and pebbles. A natural deposit that probably makes up the hill and has been partly quarried in Field 2 Area 1.
C16	A small, steep-sided pit partially removed by the digger and seen in the north-west facing section of Test Trench 26. The pit measured 0.45m wide on top across a north-east by south-west axis. It narrows to a slightly rounded base 0. 12m wide. The pit has a depth of 0.35m.
C17	Loose, light greyish-brown, silty clay with moderate inclusions of heat-shattered stone and sparse flecks of charcoal. Found in Pit 1 (C16)

C18	Seen in plan as a subcircular pit measuring 0.9m east-west x 0.6m north-south. The upper fill contained heat-shattered stone and flecks of charcoal, amongst a light greyish-brown silty clay (Context 19).
C19	Loose, light greyish-brown, silty clay with moderate inclusions of heat-shattered stone and sparse flecks of charcoal. Found in Pit 2 (C18)
C20	Oval pit aligned east west with what seemed to be a slight depression in the centre of the pit on the north side, giving it a slight kidney-shape. The pit measures 2.2m long by 1.3m wide. Seen in plan with an upper fill containing heat-shattered stone and flecks of charcoal amongst a light greyish brown silty clay (Context 21).
C21	Loose, light greyish-brown, silty clay with moderate inclusions of heat-shattered stone and sparse flecks of charcoal. Found in Pit 3 (C20)
C22	Shallow layer of light brown-grey clay seen in Test Trenches 26 to 35 in Field 2 Areas 2 and reaching a maximum depth of 0.3m.
C23	Subsoil in Test Trenches 26 to 35 in Field 2 Areas 2 and 3. Located below Context 22. Similar to the marl seen in Test Trenches 12-25 but lighter in colour.
C24	Possible Fulachta fiadha in Field 1 Area 3. Represented by a low, grass-covered mound that is horseshoe or kidney-shaped. The mound covers a maximum area of 10m north-south by 12m east-west and has a maximum height of 0.4m. In the centre of the mound is a sub-oval depression, measuring 2m east-west, and 0.65m wide.
C25	Cut and fill for Stone-lined culverts in Test Trenches 29, 30 and 31 located in Field 2 Area 3 possibly associated with the construction of the mill race.

APPENDIX 2 LIST OF FINDS

Find No.	Description
F1	Naturally occurring, relatively flat stone, roughly square in shape measuring 0.22m x 0.17m (max) with a thickness of 0.05m (max). One side is covered by a slip and glaze, giving the surface of the stone a green vitrified appearance. Recovered from C10.
F2	Two sherds of Blackware pottery recovered from C10.
F3	Sherds of broken crockery that includes willow pattern and creamware.