

# **Blackhill Crescent Potential Housing Scheme Donacarney Little, Co. Meath**

Donacarney Little townland

Site Area: Approx. 1,400 sqm

ITM: 713701/774917 (centre)

**Record of Monuments and Places: None.  
Approx. 100m from ruined Tower House-Castle ME021-009  
(which is also Protected Structure MH021-112)**

**Record of Protected Structures: None.**

**Architectural Conservation Area: None**

**Desk Based Review and Assessment  
Niall Roycroft  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**

### **Non-Technical Summary**

Meath County Council is reviewing lands for potential social housing at various locations across the county. The Blackhill Crescent lands at Donacarney ITM 713701 / 774917 are approx. 1,400 sqm and were acquired by Meath County Council in 1974.

Donacarney settlement seems to focus around the L5614 – R150 which loops around a probable defensive bawn (potentially D-shaped c.110m N-S x 125m E-W) that surrounds the remains of Donacarney Little Tower House Castle ME021-009. As part of this Assessment, the adjacent ‘Smithy’ ruin shown on 1837 OS and later maps was found to actually be a medieval building with a pointed-arched (blocked) W door with the remains of medieval moulded jambs and part of the pointed arch (internal measurement 0.85m wide x 1.80m or so). The S (road) face includes a now-blocked window with a possible saucer-like arch that perhaps once contained a two-light medieval ogee-arched window (approx. 0.85m wide x 1.0m high) of 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. The ‘Smithy’ walls are on the same grid as the walls of the Tower House. The ‘Smithy’ measures around 5m (N-S) x 8.90m (E-W) with strong block-and-start quoins and potentially a piece of tufa in the S wall (tufa often crops up in medieval 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Tower Houses).

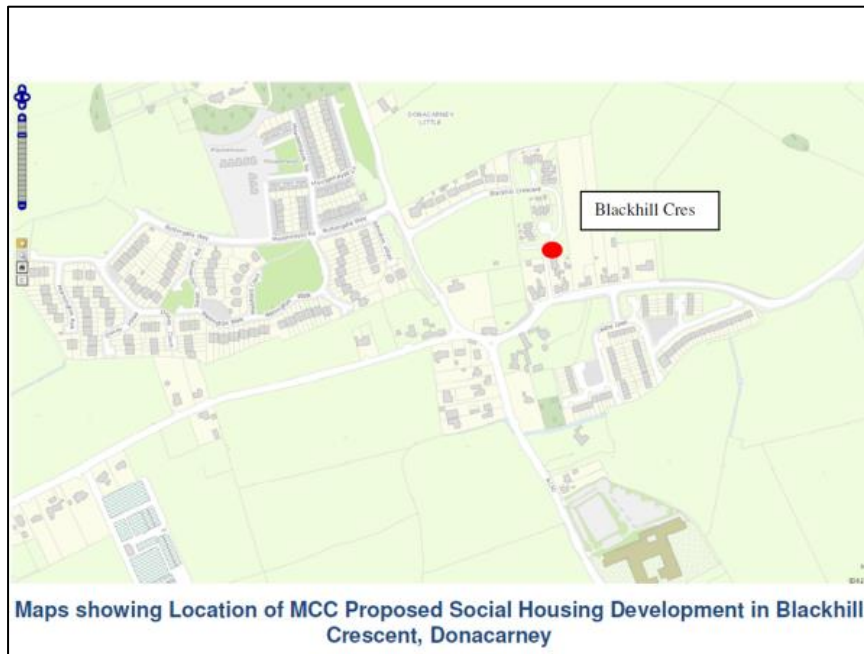
It is not known if there was a chapel or church in the Donacarney Little medieval settlement: it is possible the ‘Smithy’ was once a chapel associated with the Tower House. The Tower House and ‘Smithy’ sit on a local high point with lower ground all the way round the potential D-shaped enclosure. The E + N sides of this D-shaped area is a large, wet ditch that is possibly the remains of a rampart. The important Colpe West church ME021-012004 and settlement is 1km to the W of Donacarney.

There are eight entries on excavations.ie for archaeological investigations in Donacarney Little. Despite most of the projects being housing developments of well over 1 ha, relatively little archaeological evidence has been found. Nevertheless, local archaeological hotspots are well known in the area (particularly in Colpe West). However, the indication is that the focus for Donacarney Little is the potential D-shaped enclosure around the Tower House, as defined by the road network (W and S sides) and the wet ditches (N and E sides). The Blackhill Crescent plot is c.5-10m outside this area at the closest point. The plot is roughly 100m from the Donacarney Little Tower House ruin at its closest point.

The Blackhill Crescent plot is part of an existing housing development built in the early 1970s and has probably had the topsoil removed and replaced. Since then there have been several small trees planted across the site. There are overhead power lines running along the S boundary of the site. The current Blackhill Crescent plot boundaries are all modern or demolished previous field boundaries. There is an open access zone to the W into the Donacarney playing fields.

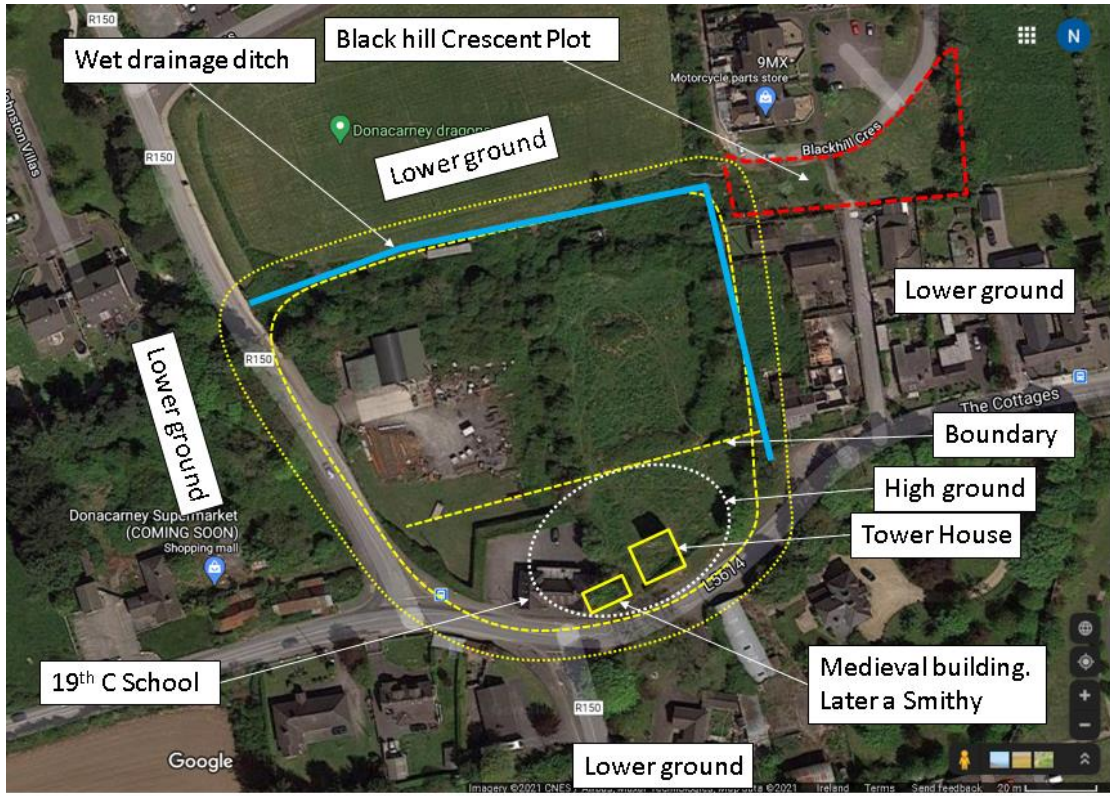
Given the current landscaping and probable archaeological contamination from previous housing development, there is no need to require any archaeological geophysics or advance trial trenching. Monitoring the topsoil stripping for the development should be sufficient archaeological strategy.

# 1 Introduction



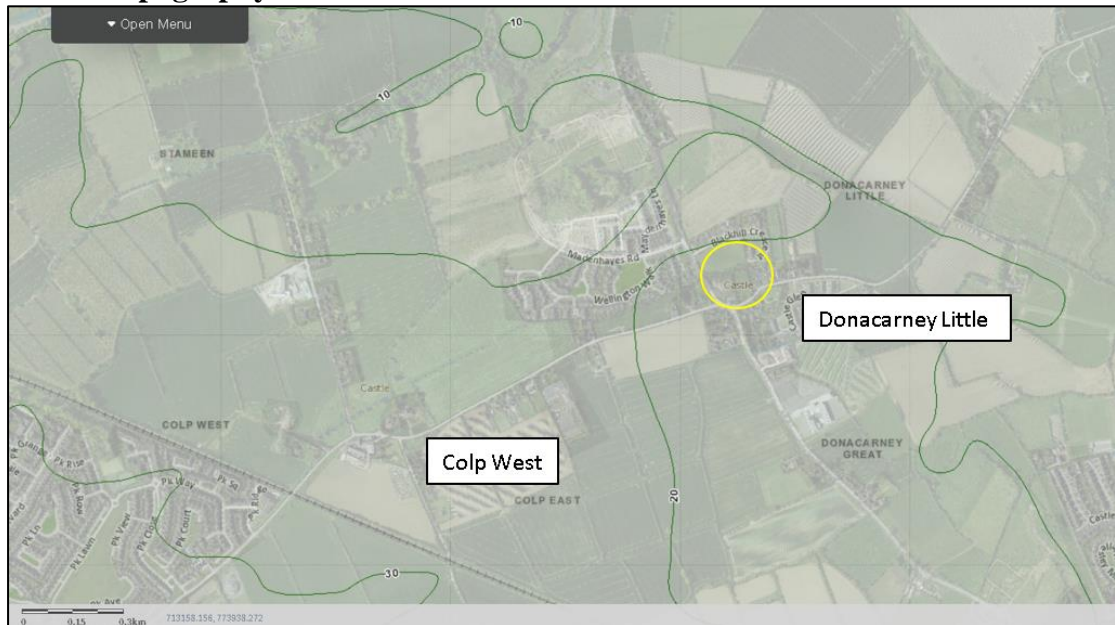
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Donacarney settlement seems to focus around the L5614 – R150 which loops around a probable defensive bawn (either circular or D-shaped) that surrounds the remains of Donacarney Little Tower House Castle ME021-009. It is not known if there was a chapel or church in this settlement: the important Colpe West church ME021-012004 and settlement is 1km to the W of Donacarney.



## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Topography



Donacarnev Little lies on the N-S R150 Mornington-Laytown Road and the E-W Colp West Road between 10m OD and 20m OD.

### 2.2 Record of Monuments and Places

|               |           |                   |   |
|---------------|-----------|-------------------|---|
| ME021-033001- | Enclosure | DONACARNEY LITTLE | 0 |
| ME021-033002- | Enclosure | DONACARNEY LITTLE | 0 |

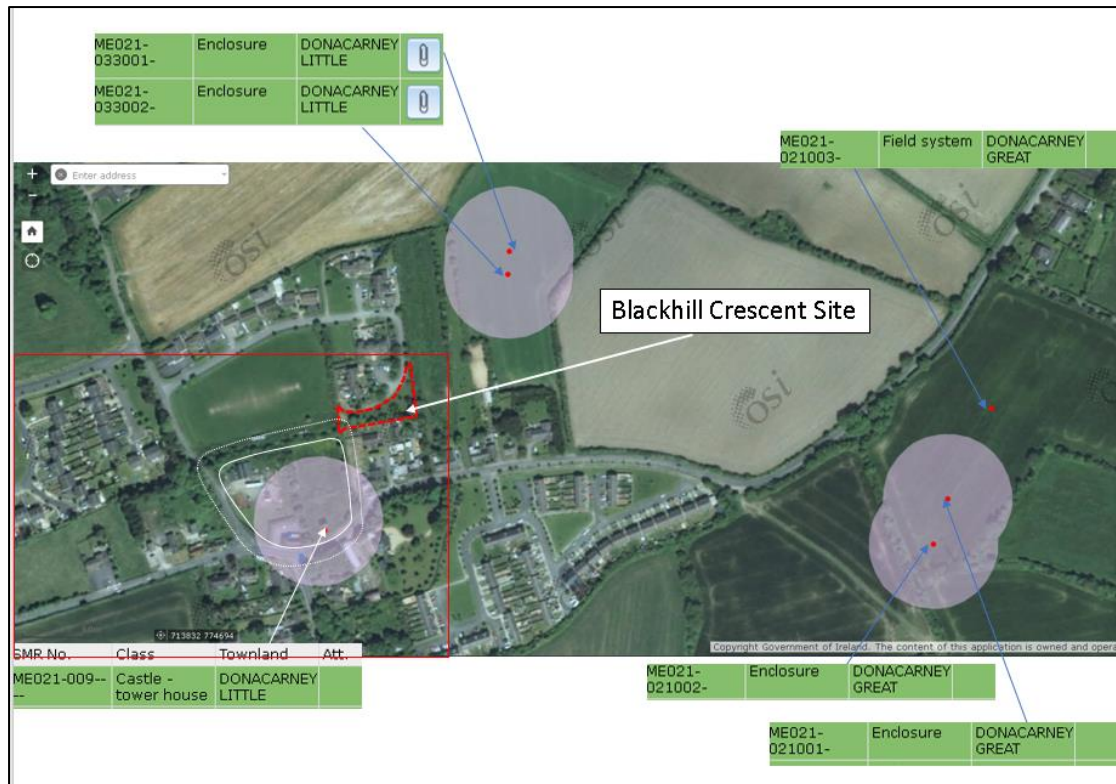
|               |              |                  |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|
| ME021-021003- | Field system | DONACARNEY GREAT |
|---------------|--------------|------------------|

| SMR.No.     | Class                | Townland          | Att. |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------------|------|
| ME021-009-- | Castle - tower house | DONACARNEY LITTLE |      |

|               |           |                  |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| ME021-021002- | Enclosure | DONACARNEY GREAT |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|

|               |           |                  |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|
| ME021-021001- | Enclosure | DONACARNEY GREAT |
|---------------|-----------|------------------|

It is possible the road runs around the defended area of Donacarnev Castle-Fort. This curve could be part of a circular or D-shaped defensive bawn



The local archaeological landscape has the Tower House Castle ME021-009 at the Donacarne Little cross-roads. There is a sweep of road around this Castle that is likely a fossilisation of a defensive bawn or enclosure associated with the Castle or even an earlier site. If circular this enclosure would be around 110-120m in external diameter. However, there is also a possibility that any enclosure is D-shaped with a flat side along the N edge (where there is a long-standing boundary on OS mapping).

The RMP shows a series of other enclosures and a field system in the surrounding area.



Remains of Donacarne Little Tower House ME021-009

**ME021-009----**[Scope note](#)**Class:** Castle - tower house**Townland:** DONACARNEY LITTLE**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** Situated on a rise in a fairly level landscape. A castle at Donycarny (12) in Colp parish and Duleek barony is not depicted on the Down Survey (1656-8) barony map (<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/>). Nor is one recorded in the Civil Survey (1654-6), although only 40 acres at Donacarne was forfeit (Simington 1940, 4). This was known as 'Draycott's Castle' and is thought to have been burnt in 1641. Later a forge was built against the remains (ITA Survey 1942). One wall is depicted on the 1836 ed. of the OS 6-inch map where it is described as a 'Ruin'. Only the N wall (L 6m; T 1.75m) and the adjacent part of the E wall survive with a recess towards the W end and the springing of an E-W barrel-vault in the N wall. A fragment of the wall survives above the vault with a small light and the E side of the fragmentary remains of a fireplace with dressed stonework and a flue.

The above description is derived from the published 'Archaeological Inventory of County Meath' (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1987). In certain instances the entries have been revised and updated in the light of recent research.

Compiled by: Michael Moore

Date of revised upload: 22 June 2016

**References:**

- 1. Irish Tourist Association. Surveys undertaken in the 1940s for the Irish Tourist Association (now Fáilte Ireland) relating to 'Natural features, antiquities, historic associations etc.' Extracts from these surveys were copied into the Topographical files of the Office of Public Works and these have been incorporated into the Sites and Monuments Record files (National Monuments Service).
- 2. Simington, R.C. (ed.) 1940 The Civil survey, AD 1654-1656. Vol. V: county of Meath. Dublin. Irish Manuscripts Commission.

[Zoom to](#)

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'Smithy' measures around 5m (N-S) x 8.90m (E-W) with strong block-and-start quoins and potentially a piece of tufa in the S wall (tufa often crops up in medieval 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Tower Houses).

It is not known if there was a chapel or church in the Donacarney Little medieval settlement: it is possible the 'Smithy' was once a chapel associated with the Tower House. The Tower House and 'Smithy' sit on a local high point with lower ground all the way round the potential D-shaped enclosure. The E + N sides of this D-shaped area is a large, wet ditch that is possibly the remains of a rampart. The important Colpe West church ME021-012004 and settlement is 1km to the W of Donacarney.



IMG\_0089. Tower House ME021-009



IMG\_0090. 'Smithy' E wall. Facing W



IMG\_0091. Smithy W and S walls. Facing NE



IMG\_0092. N side of W door





IMG\_0093 Springer point on S side of W Door



IMG\_0094. Springer and arch on S side of W door



IMG\_0095. L5641 facing W



IMG\_0096 'Smithy' blocked W wall

Old W Door



IMG\_0097 'Smithy' Facing NE

New Door



IMG\_0101. Smithy S wall

Blocked window



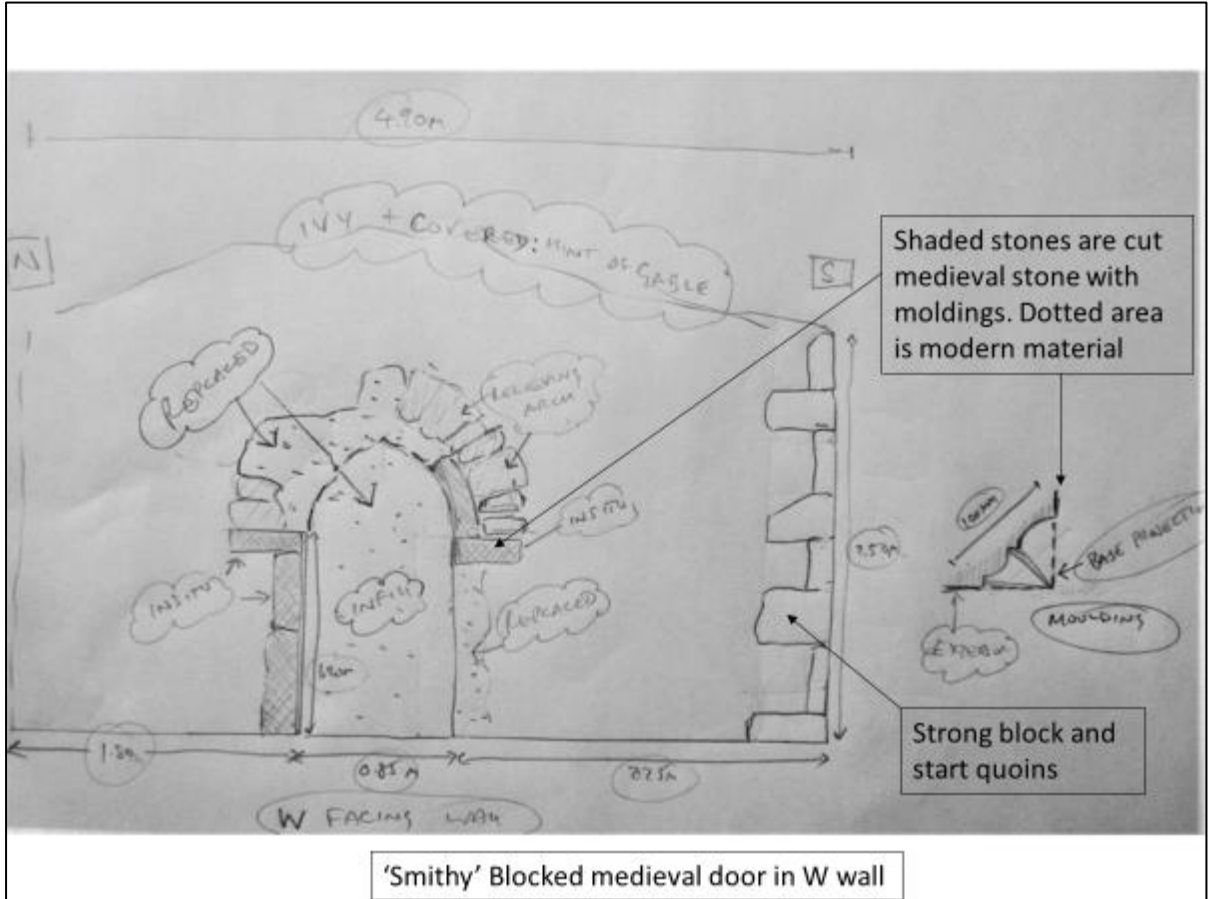
IMG\_0098. 'Smithy' W door base moulding on N jamb



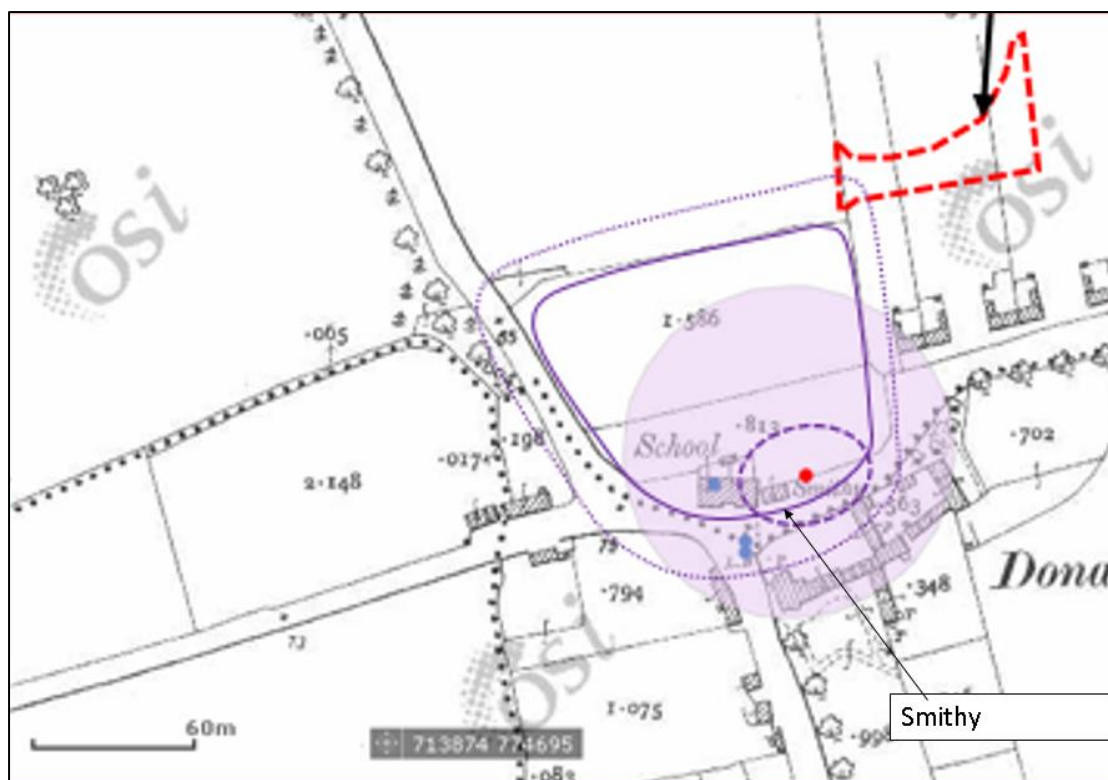
IMG\_0099 'Smithy' W door N jamb



IMG\_0100 'Smithy' W door S side moulding







**ME021-021001-**

[Scope note](#)

**Class:** Enclosure

**Townland:** DONACARNEY GREAT

**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** The Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) is in the process of providing information on all monuments on The Historic Environment Viewer (HEV). Currently the information for this record has not been uploaded. To access available information for research purposes please make an appointment in advance with the Archive Unit (open Fridays 10.00 am – 5.00 pm), Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, The Custom House, Dublin 1 D01W6XO or email [nmarchive@chg.gov.ie](mailto:nmarchive@chg.gov.ie).  
[Zoom to](#)

**ME021-021002-**

[Scope note](#)

**Class:** Enclosure

**Townland:** DONACARNEY GREAT

**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** The Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) is in the process of providing information on all monuments on The Historic Environment Viewer (HEV). Currently the information for this record has not been uploaded. To access available information for research purposes please make an appointment in advance with the Archive Unit (open Fridays 10.00 am – 5.00 pm), Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, The Custom House, Dublin 1 D01W6XO or email [nmarchive@chg.gov.ie](mailto:nmarchive@chg.gov.ie).

[Zoom to](#)

**ME021-021003-**

[Scope note](#)

**Class:** Field system

**Townland:** DONACARNEY GREAT

**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** The Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI) is in the process of providing information on all monuments on The Historic Environment Viewer (HEV). Currently the information for this record has not been uploaded. To access available information for research purposes please make an appointment in advance with the Archive Unit (open Fridays 10.00 am – 5.00 pm), Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, The Custom House, Dublin 1 D01W6XO or email nmarchive@chg.gov.ie.

[Zoom to](#)

**ME021-033001-**

[Scope note](#)

**Class:** Enclosure

**Townland:** DONACARNEY LITTLE

**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** Located on a gentle S-facing slope of Donacarney Hill. The cropmarks of two conjoined enclosures are visible only on Apple Maps, which utilises a survey conducted by Bluesky International during June 2018. This larger feature is circular (int. diam. c. 26m E-W; c. 24m N-S) and is defined by a continuous fosse (Wth c. 2m) but it borders a wider SSW-NNE channel (Wth c. 6m) at W. The enclosure (ME021-033002-) is attached at S, and ditches from an associated field attach to both enclosures from the E. The features were first reported by Anthony Murphy. Archaeological testing and monitoring (18E0380) by J. Stirland c. 50m to the NW at the closest point produced no related archaeological material (excavations.ie 2018:871).

See the attached enhanced view from Apple Maps

Compiled by: Michael Moore

Date of upload: 31 January 2020

Amended: 4 February 2021

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[Zoom to](#)

**ME021-033002-**

[Scope note](#)

**Class:** Enclosure

**Townland:** DONACARNEY LITTLE

**Scheduled for inclusion in the next revision of the RMP:** Yes

**Description:** Located on a gentle S-facing slope of Donacarney Hill. The cropmarks of two conjoined enclosures are visible only on Apple Maps, which utilises a survey conducted by Bluesky International during June 2018. The larger feature (MW021-033001-) borders a wider SSW-NNE channel (Wth c. 6m) at W, and this smaller enclosure is attached to it at S. This is an oval area (int. dims c. 17m WNW-ESE; c. 11m NNE-SSW) defined by a continuous fosse feature that it shares with the larger feature. Ditches from an associated field attach to both enclosures from the E. They were first reported by Anthony Murphy.

See the attached enhanced view from Apple Maps

Compiled by: Michael Moore

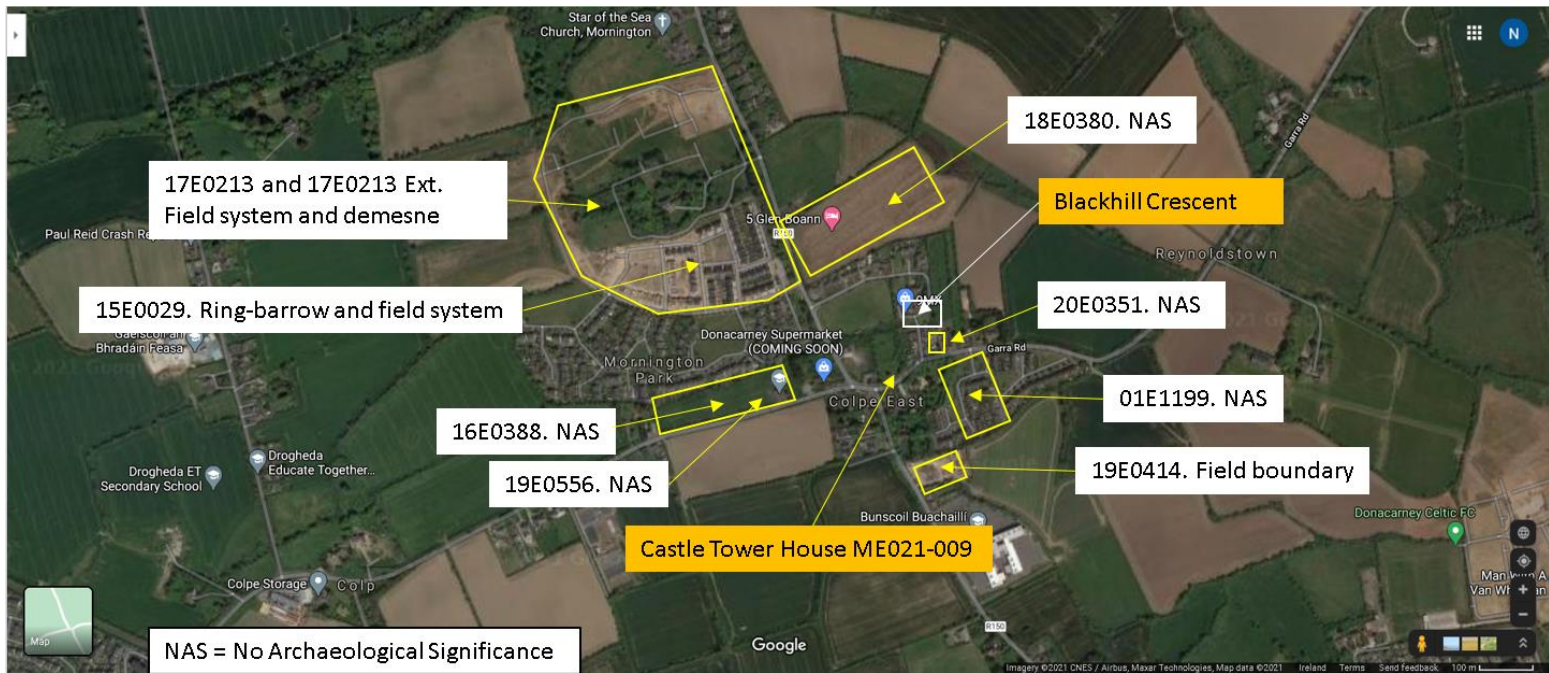
Date of upload: 31 January 2020

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### 2.3 Details of the Excavations.ie entries



## 2001:958 - Donacarne, Meath

County: Meath Site name: Donacarne

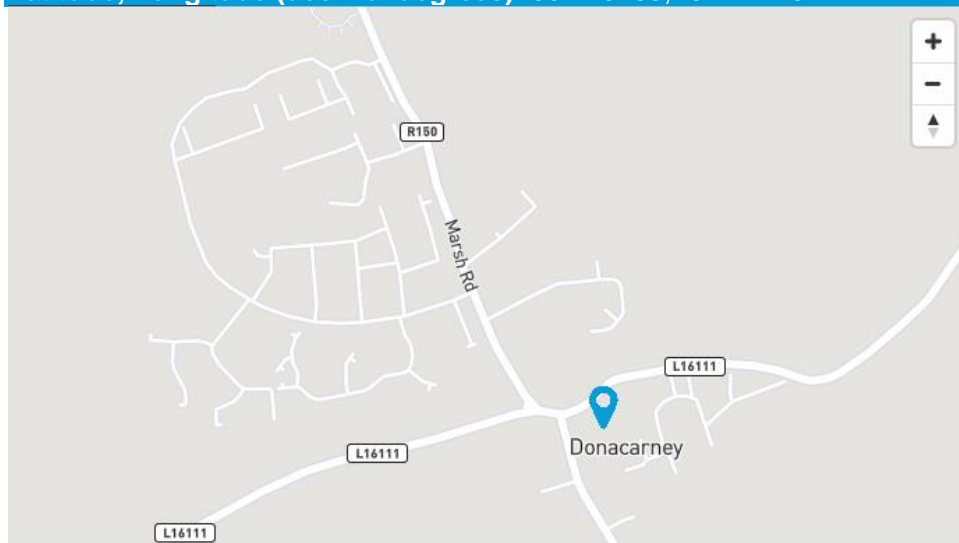
Sites and Monuments Record No.: N/A Licence number: 01E1199

Author: Linda Clarke, Archaeological Consultancy Services, 15 Trinity Street, Drogheda, Co. Louth.

Site type: No archaeological significance

ITM: E 713697m, N 774798m

Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees): 53.710465, -6.277718



An assessment was carried out on a proposed residential development site at Donacarney, Co. Meath. The development involves the construction of 85 dwelling-houses and associated site works. The site is near a tower-house (SMR 21:9). Eleven test-trenches were excavated within the proposed development site. No finds were retrieved from the trenches and no features of archaeological significance were exposed. The unusual depth of the topsoil in the field would suggest that intensive ploughing has taken place on the site with the possibility that some soil has been introduced.

## 2015:085 - Donacarney, Mornington, Meath



**County:** Meath **Site name:** Donacarney, Mornington

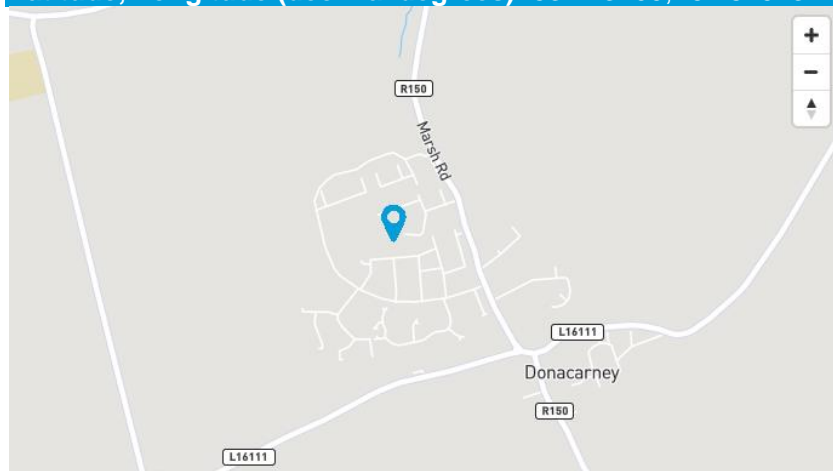
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** none **Licence number:** 15E0029

**Author:** Jon Stirland

**Site type:** Prehistoric/medieval

**ITM:** E 713211m, N 775147m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.713709, -6.284943



An assessment (test trenching) took place of a proposed housing development at Donacarney and Mornington, Co. Meath. The testing was carried out in fulfilment of planning conditions associated with the grant of permission for the construction of 255



houses (Planning Ref: An Bord Pleanála PL17.243610). The site is beside a protected structure (14318001), Donacarney House, built in 1860 and which is listed within the County Meath Development plan. Although the site of the proposed development contains no Recorded Monuments the surrounding townlands have in recent years proven themselves to be rich in previously unrecorded features and deposits of an archaeological nature.

Between 23 and 26 February 2015 a total of 31 test trenches were excavated. For the purposes of the test trenching the site was divided into 6 areas: the wooded Area and Fields 1 to 5. Both Fields 1 and 2 were found to contain archaeological features and deposits but the test trenching within the wooded area and Fields 3-5 failed to identify any further features.

Two archaeological features were identified in Field 1, Trench 5. The first comprised a linear feature (F15) measuring 2.24m in length and containing a deposit of burnt stone and charcoal with a circular pit-type feature located at its north-west end. Located approximately 57m to the north of F15, a circular pit (F16) was recorded. This was rich in charcoal and contained two fills within a bowl-shaped cut. Trench 5 was extended within the area of F15 and no further associated features were identified.

Despite no further features being identified within the trenches located within Field 1, it cannot be assumed that these features are isolated. Therefore it is recommended that Field 1 be subject to monitoring during topsoil stripping.

Within Field 2 a total of fourteen features of an archaeological nature were identified. The core of these features appear to be located along a low glacial ridge running south-west, north-east across the centre of Field 2 just above the 20m contour. The general appearance of the features and deposits suggests prehistoric activity, probably dating to the Bronze Age.

Within Trench 10 two pits were recorded (F10 and F11) with their surfaces rich with flecks of charcoal. Located directly to the east of pit F11 a linear ditch type feature was recorded (F12). With a width of 0.75m this ran north-south across Trench 10 with a slight suggestion that it may slightly curve to the east.

In Trench 11 two circular pits were recorded, F4 & F7, the surface of which were rich in flecks of charcoal. Trench 11 also contains a linear-type feature (F5) that may be in alignment with a similar linear feature recorded within Trench 10. Also within Trench 11 a third pit was identified (F6). This pit, rich in flecks of charcoal contains the broken base of a large pottery vessel. The vessel appears inverted within the pit and may be a Bronze Age Urn or large food vessel. Also recorded within Trench 11 towards its eastern limit

was F13, a small sub-circular area of oxidised fire-reddened material that may represent a pit with in situ burning measuring 0.3m in diameter.

In Trench 12, towards the trenches northern limit, a curving ditch-type feature (F14) was recorded. This curving ditch had a width of 0.96m and its surface was rich with flecks of charcoal. Within the confines of Trench 12 this curving ditch appears to suggest the appearance of a possible ring ditch with an internal diameter of 10m.

In Trench 13, three post-holes were recorded (F1, F2, F3). They each had diameters of 0.16m and appeared to form a possible curve, suggesting a possible circular structure. F2 contained a post pipe surrounded by packing material that contained three small sherds of prehistoric pottery of possible Bronze Age date.

Two features were recorded within Trench 14, F8, an irregular shaped spread of decomposing mussel shell and charcoal and F9, a spread of charcoal.

Within Fields 3, 4 and 5 a total of 17 further test trenches were excavated but no features or deposits of an archaeological nature were recorded.

**Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit, Unit 21 Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co Louth**

## 2016:369 - Colp East, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Colp East

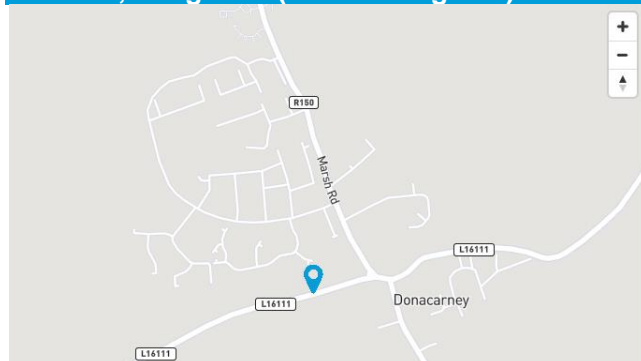
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 16E0388

**Author:** Aidan O'Connell

**Site type:** No archaeology found

**ITM:** E 713425m, N 774779m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.710357, -6.281838



An archaeological assessment was carried out at the site of a proposed residential development, a 1.51ha green-field site in Colp East Td, Donacarney, Co. Meath. A geophysical survey of the site was carried out followed by targeted test trenching. A total of 4 trenches were mechanically excavated across the site under archaeological supervision. No archaeological material was recorded in any of the trenches.

**Archer Heritage Planning, 8 Beat Centre, Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin**

## 2019:103 - Donacarney Little, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Donacarney Little

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** n/a **Licence number:** 19E0414

**Author:** Liza Kavanagh

**Site type:** Potential archaeological significance

**ITM:** E 713677m, N 774697m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.709566, -6.278052



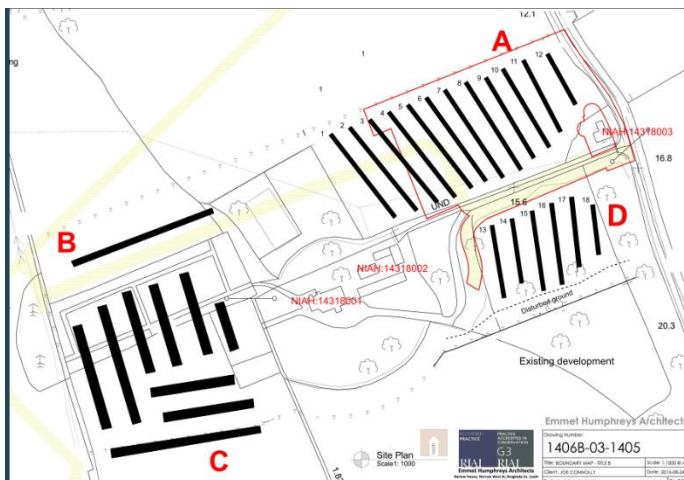
Testing was carried out at the site of a proposed residential development at Donacarney Little, Co. Meath.

Four trenches were excavated within the footprint of the development. One feature of archaeological potential was identified. This comprised a broad and shallow (4.2m wide, 0.5m deep) north–south aligned linear feature filled with dark grey silty clay with inclusions of seashell and animal bone. This feature possibly represents a former land boundary running parallel to the R150 and western boundary of the site. Given the nature of the fill it may have archaeological potential. Other features identified during the assessment include post-medieval/modern land divisions and drainage features.

All topsoil stripping on site will be monitored.

**c/o IAC Ltd, Unit G1 Network Enterprise Park, Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow**

# 2019:535 - Donacarney Little, Meath



County: Meath Site name: Donacarney Little

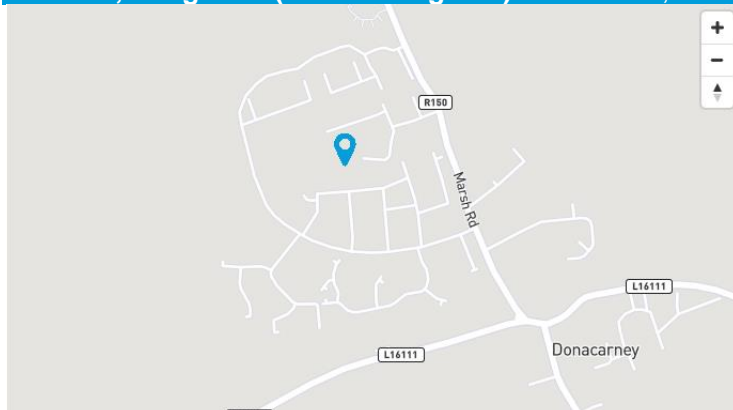
Sites and Monuments Record No.: N/A Licence number: 17E0213 and 17E0213ext

Author: Eoin Halpin

Site type: 19th-century garden

ITM: E 713202m, N 775137m

Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees): 53.713621, -6.285083



The site lies in a rural green field location, within the grounds of and adjacent to the architecturally important buildings associated with Donacarney House. In addition, a medieval tower-house lies some distance to the south-east, and previous archaeological investigations in the ground to the south of the site produced significant archaeological remains dating from prehistory through to the medieval period. Because of the historic and archaeological potential of the site, an archaeological condition was placed on the planning permission.

The testing strategy consisted of the machine excavation of 12 test trenches in the area of Phase A, all running roughly north-south, and spaced some 10m apart, each to be some 80m in length, apart from the easternmost which was some 50m in length.

In addition, Phase D, located to the south of Phase A area, was also tested. This took the form of a further 6 test trenches, again aligned roughly north-south and again spaced some 10m apart. In this case the trenches were some 50m in length.

The testing took place in May 2017. Plough soil, across Phase A, consisted of a dark yellow-brown, friable loose clay loam, and was noted on average 0.45m deep and overlay the undisturbed relatively free-draining natural, generally a compact light yellow-brown, stony glacial till. However, there was quite a variation noted across the trenches, ranging from a compact gravel to a loose silt sand. These variations, all of which were naturally occurring, appeared to conform to the layering which might be expected in a fluvio-glacial deposit.

In a number of the trenches evidence for recent ploughing was noted running diagonally across the north-south line of the trench. No evidence for land drains was noted supporting the view that the land in the area is free draining. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted in any of the 12 trenches investigated.

In Phase D, plough soil was on average 0.3m deep and consisted of a dark brown, firm, clay loam. It overlay a hard compact light yellow-brown stony clay loam, a variation in the natural glacial till. The southern end of the field had been badly disturbed by the construction of a recent housing development. Nothing of archaeological interest was noted in any of the 6 trenches investigated.

In June 2019 additional testing took place in Phases B and C, at the western end of the proposed development, under licence 17E0213 ext. The testing revealed that the southern half of Phase C was ploughed in the relatively recent past, with the boundary between the topsoil and undisturbed natural defined as 'sharp'. Examination of the cartographic evidence, particularly the 1st edition OS map of c. 1830, revealed the northern portion of the Phase C area of the site contained the remains of a walled garden, the northern wall of which still survived, to be retained in the present development. The east-west running linear features noted would appear to be the remains of the foundations associated with the southern wall of the garden, with the archaeological trenches and the OS map showing very good concordance. The fact that the northern end of these trenches was inside the walled garden would readily explain the cultivation ridges noted and the number of tree boles noted are probably evidence for at least part of the wall garden given over to fruit trees of one sort or another. Nothing apart from archaeology associated with the use of the area as a 19th-century walled garden, was noted. Finally, monitoring of ground works in Phase B, did not uncover anything of archaeological interest.

# 2020:091 - 1 The Cottage, Donacarney, Mornington, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** 1 The Cottage, Donacarney, Mornington

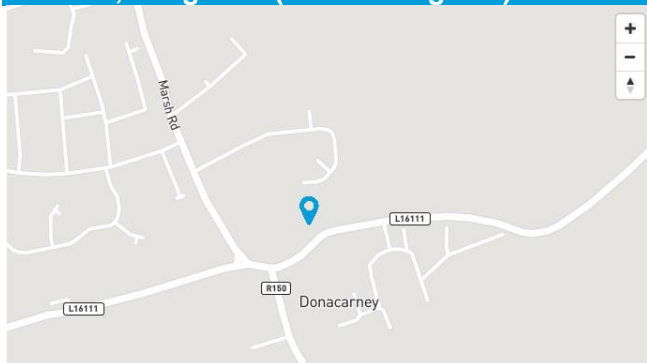
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** ME021-009 **Licence number:** 20E0351

**Author:** Linda Clarke, Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit

**Site type:** No archaeological significance

**ITM:** E 713684m, N 774877m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.711181, -6.277880



A programme of archaeological test trenching was carried out at 1 The Cottage, Donacarney, Co. Meath.

The sod and topsoil measured an average of 0.4m in thickness and lay above the natural orange clay and stone. Only one feature (C102) was identified within Trench 1. This feature was orientated north-south and had been filled with a mid-brown-grey clay containing stone and red brick and was interpreted as the remains of the 19th-century field boundary still extant on the first edition OS 6-inch map of 1835. The linear feature (C202) identified within Trench 2 appeared to have been associated with the adjacent septic tank and represented a service duct. No features were identified within Trench 3.

No archaeological features or deposits were exposed or identified and no finds were recovered. The work is now complete.

**Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co Louth.**

## 2019:652 - Colp East, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Colp East

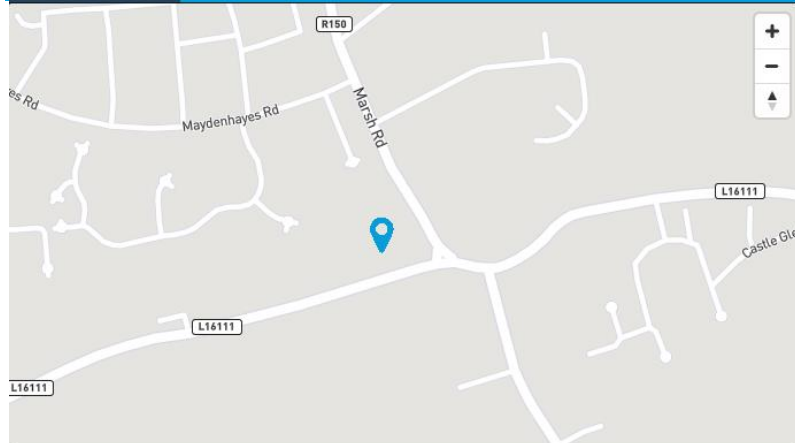
**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 19E0556

**Author:** Aidan O'Connell

**Site type:** Test excavation - no archaeology found

**ITM:** E 713512m, N 774817m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.710679, -6.280506



An archaeological assessment was carried out at the site of a proposed residential development, a 1.51ha green-field site in Colp East Td, Donacarney, Co. Meath. A geophysical survey of the site was carried out followed by targeted test trenching. A total of 4 trenches were mechanically excavated across the site under archaeological supervision. No archaeological material was recorded in any of the trenches.

**Archer Heritage Planning, 8 Beat Centre, Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin.**

## 2018:871 - Donacarney Little, Meath

**County:** Meath **Site name:** Donacarney Little

**Sites and Monuments Record No.:** N/A **Licence number:** 18E0380

**Author:** Jon Stirland, Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit

**Site type:** Non-archaeological

**ITM:** E 713618m, N 775218m

**Latitude, Longitude (decimal degrees):** 53.714258, -6.278754



Test trenching and monitoring was carried out within Field 1 of the site of a proposed residential development at Donacarney Little, Donacarney, Co. Meath from 23-27 July 2018.

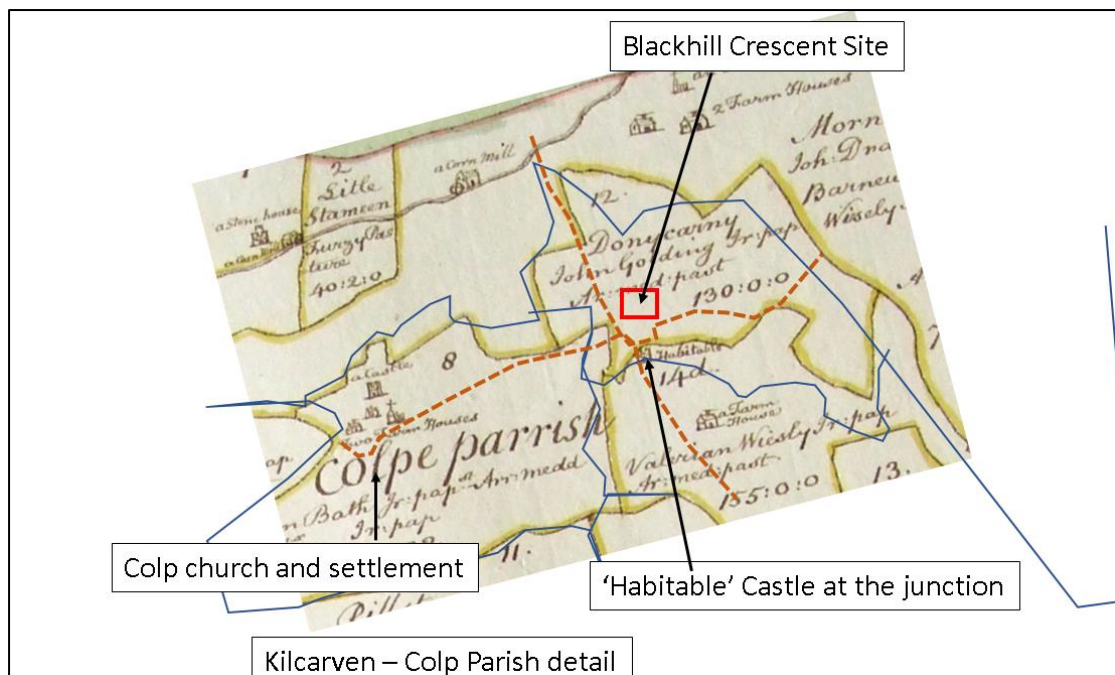
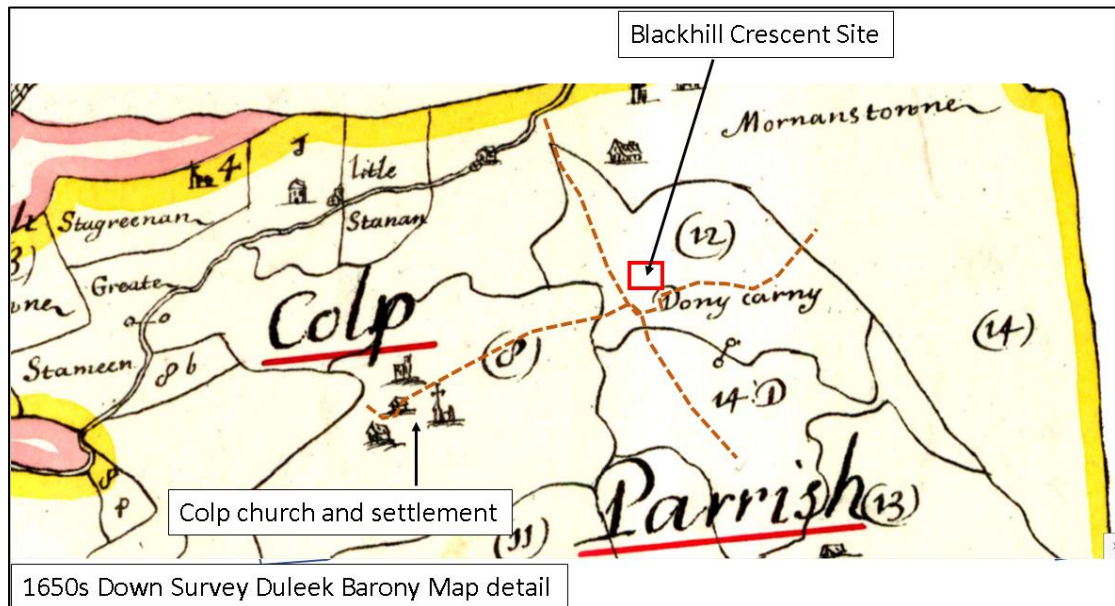
A total of ten test trenches were excavated within the south-western half of Field 1 of the proposed development and monitoring was conducted during topsoil stripping associated with a proposed site compound, storage area and car parking, in the north-eastern half of Field 1. The sod and topsoil measured an average depth of 0.55m and lay directly above the natural orange clay and stone. No archaeological features or deposits were observed or identified and no finds were recovered.

#### **Unit 21 Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co Louth**



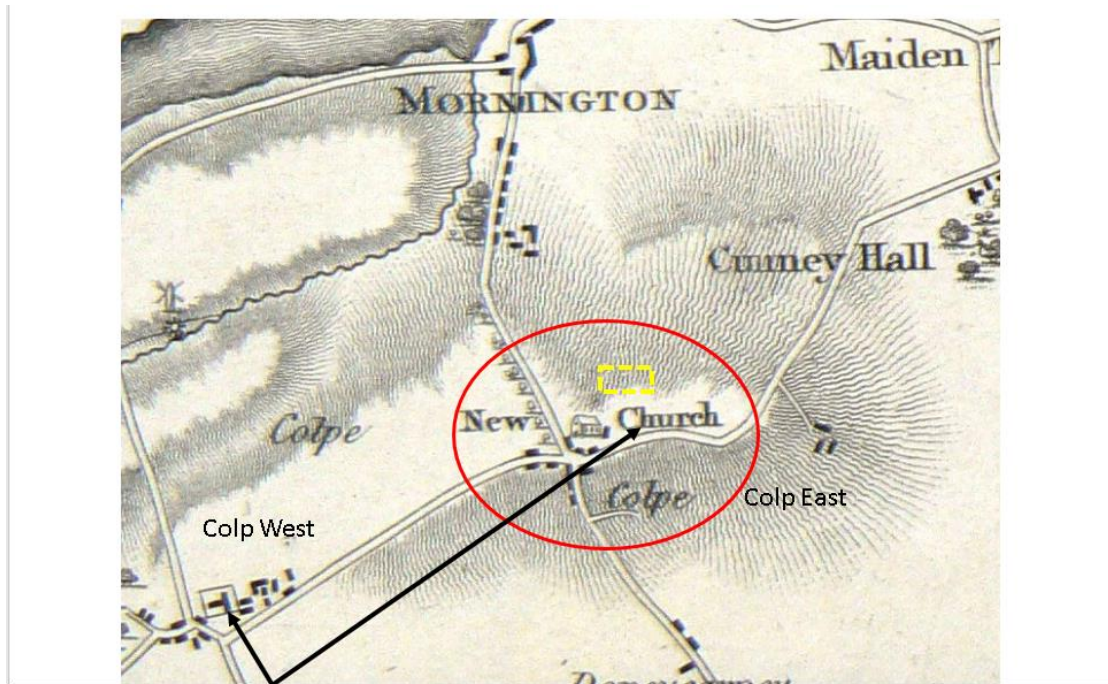
## 2.4 Map regression

1650s Down Survey



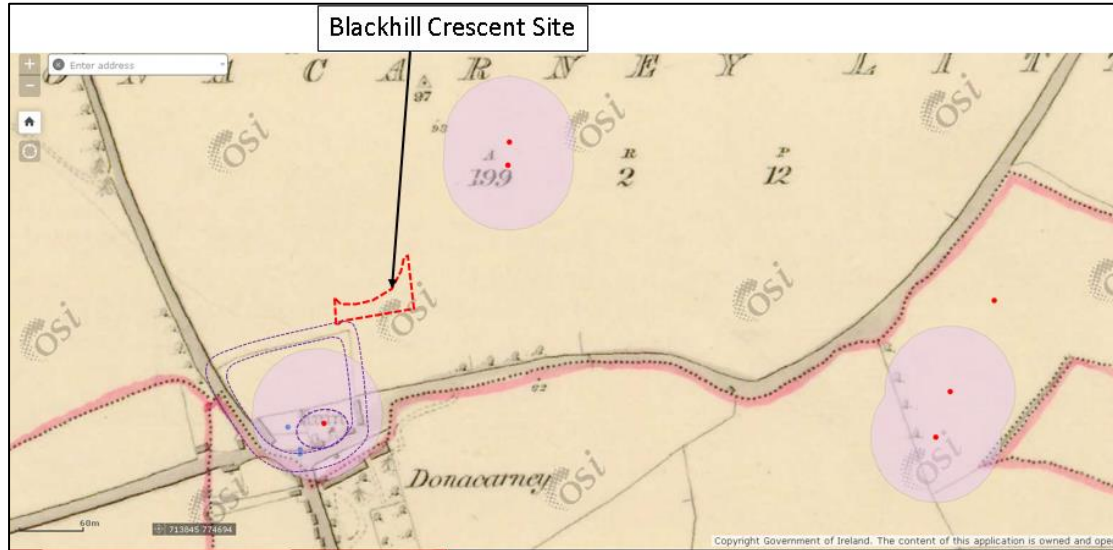
The Parish Map has Donacarney Little Tower House as 'Habitable'

William Larkin Map 1812-17



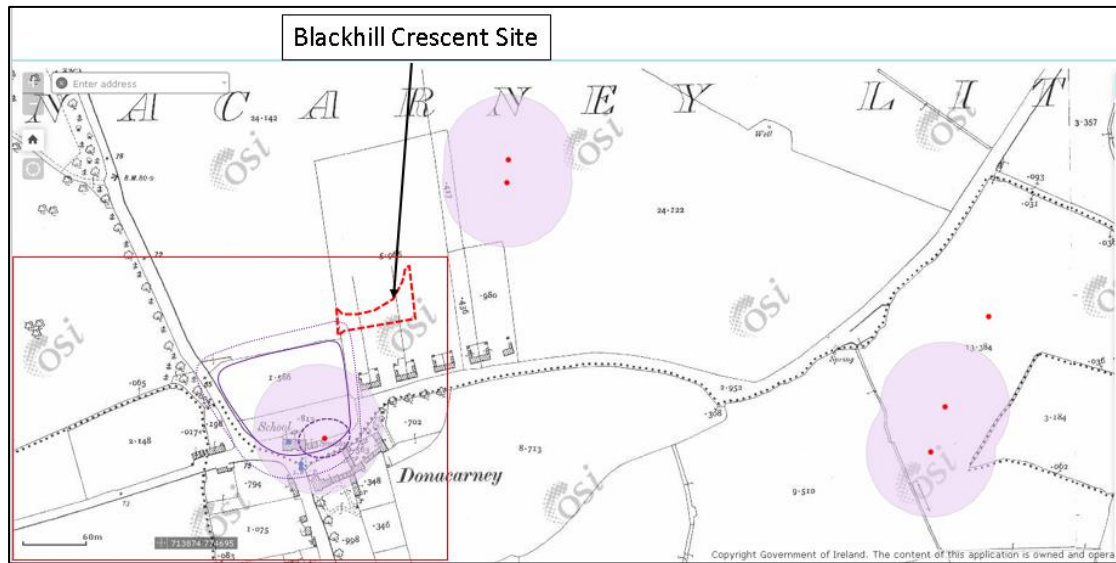
Note: the Church label here is an error and either should refer to the T-shaped building in Colpe West or was planned to be built (New Church) and never was – a school being built here instead

1837 OS



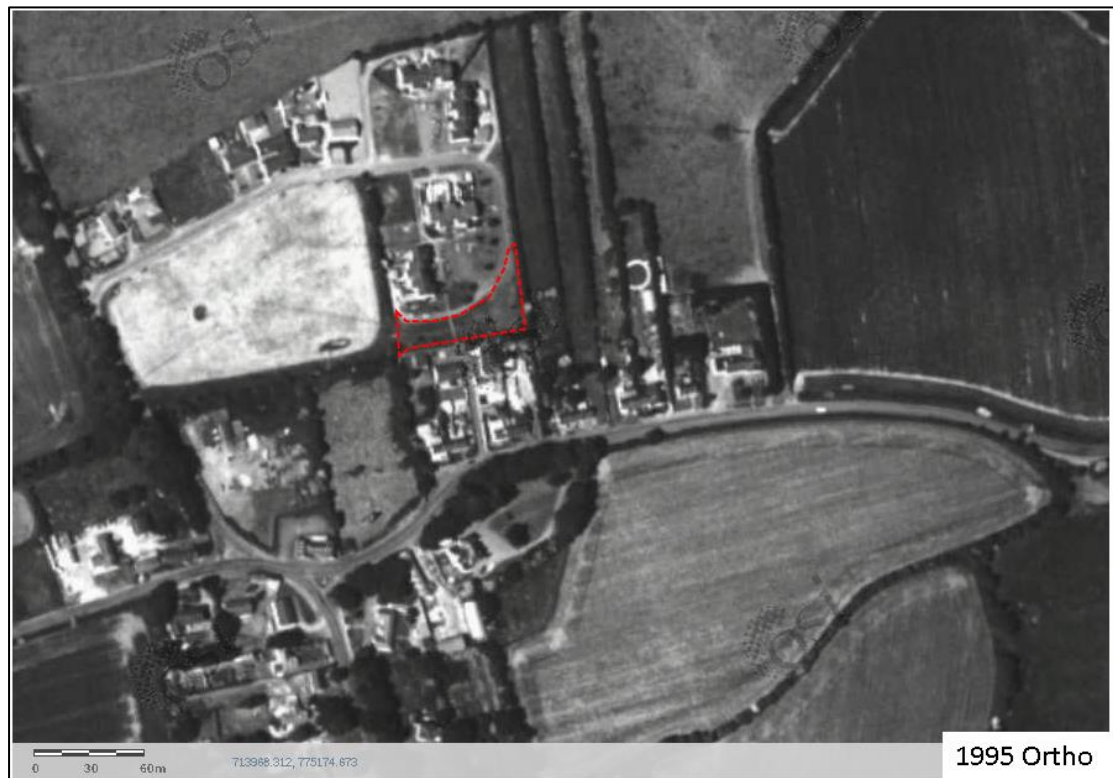
The 1837 OS shows the proposed development site as open fields

1888-1913 OS



The 1913 OS shows the proposed development site as in long plots associated with housing along the L5614.

Modern mapping and aerial images



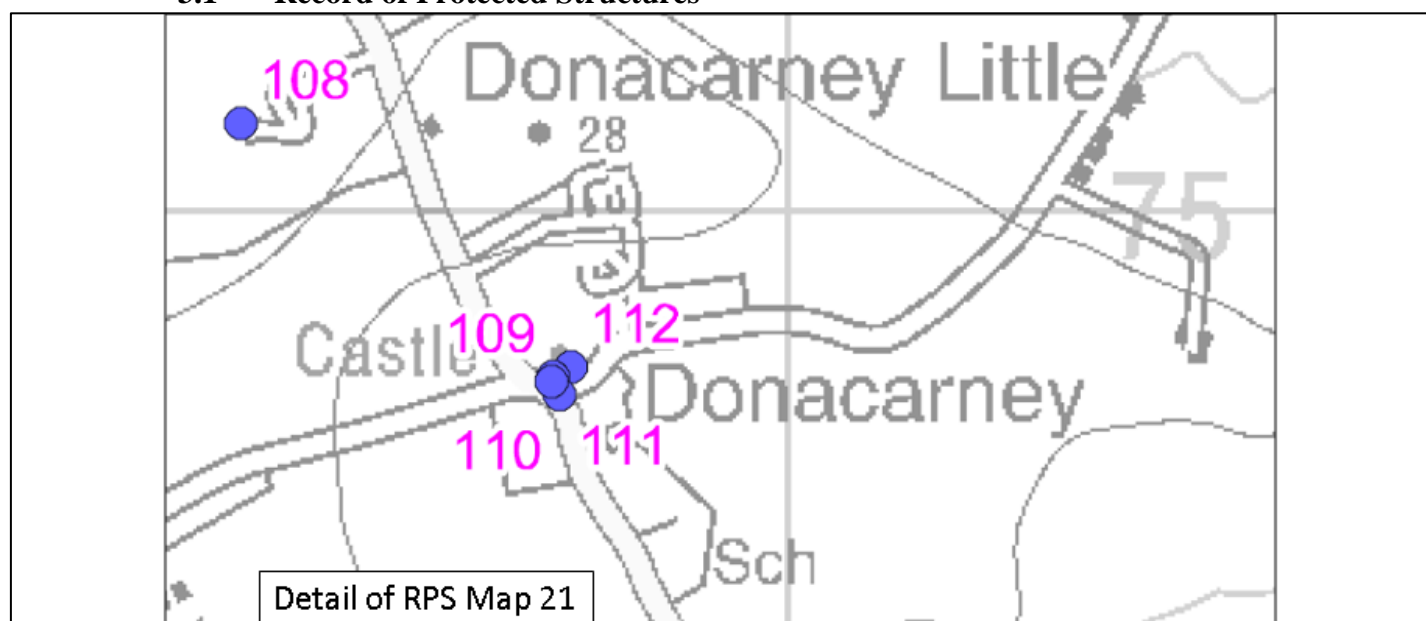


## 2.5 Place-name survey

Donacarney is considered to be derived from the Dún or fort of *Arney* who was a monk who built a monastery here / in the area (there was a monastery in Colp West). There are references to Donacarney dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

#### 3.1 Record of Protected Structures

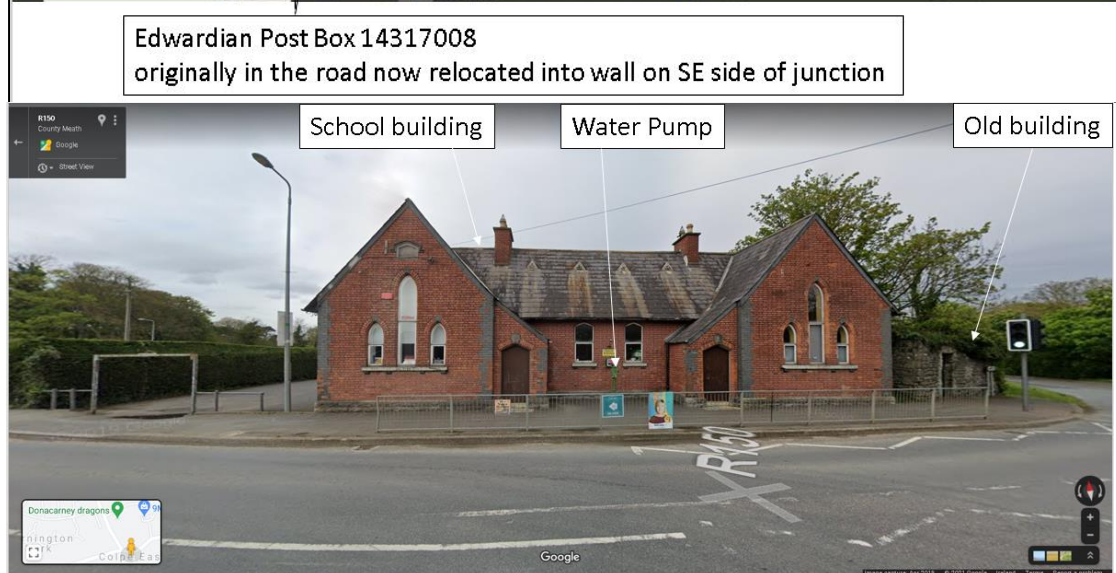
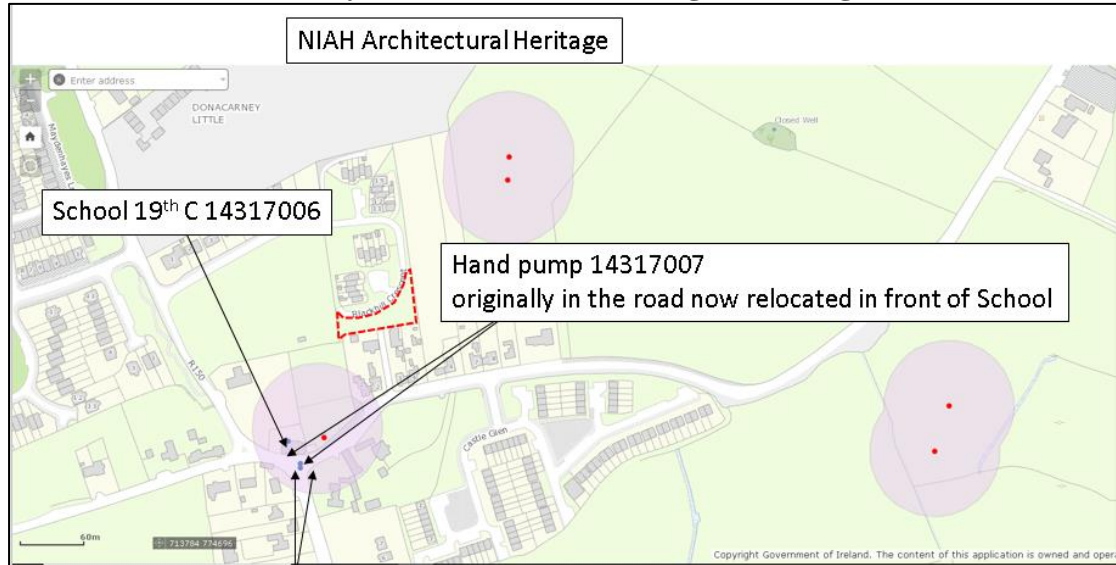


|           |   |                  |           |                  |  |          |
|-----------|---|------------------|-----------|------------------|--|----------|
| MH021-108 | Donacarne House                             | Donacarne Little | Donacarne | Country House    | Detached three-bay two-storey over basement house, built c.1860, with a single-bay two-storey addition, incl outbuildings.   | 14318001 |
| MH021-109 | Community Centre ( former National School ) | Donacarne Great  | Donacarne | Community centre | Detached six-bay single-storey former school, built c.1873, with central bays flanked by projecting gabled bays with entrance porches.   | 14317006 |
| MH021-110 | Post box                                    | Donacarne Great  | Donacarne | Post box         | Cast-iron wall box, c.1905, with E R VII insignia. Set in rubble stone wall.   | 14317008 |
| MH021-111 | Water pump                                  | Donacarne Great  | Donacarne | Water pump       | Cast-iron water pump, c.1870, with an acorn finial. Originally in the centre of the crossroads. Relocated to position in front of the community center in 2006. This attractive cast-iron water pump has a high level of artistic detailing. | 14317007 |
| MH021-112 | Donacarne Castle                            | Donacarne little | Donacarne | Tower house      | Tower house N wall surviving to first storey. Barrel-vault springing from N wall over ground floor with part of fireplace and window surviving at first floor.   |          |

NOTE: The Tower House castle stump is also a Protected Structure as well as being a Recorded Monument.

There is clearly a relationship between the Protected Tower House and the Smithy: they are both 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century medieval buildings in close proximity. However, the Smithy is not currently identified in the description.

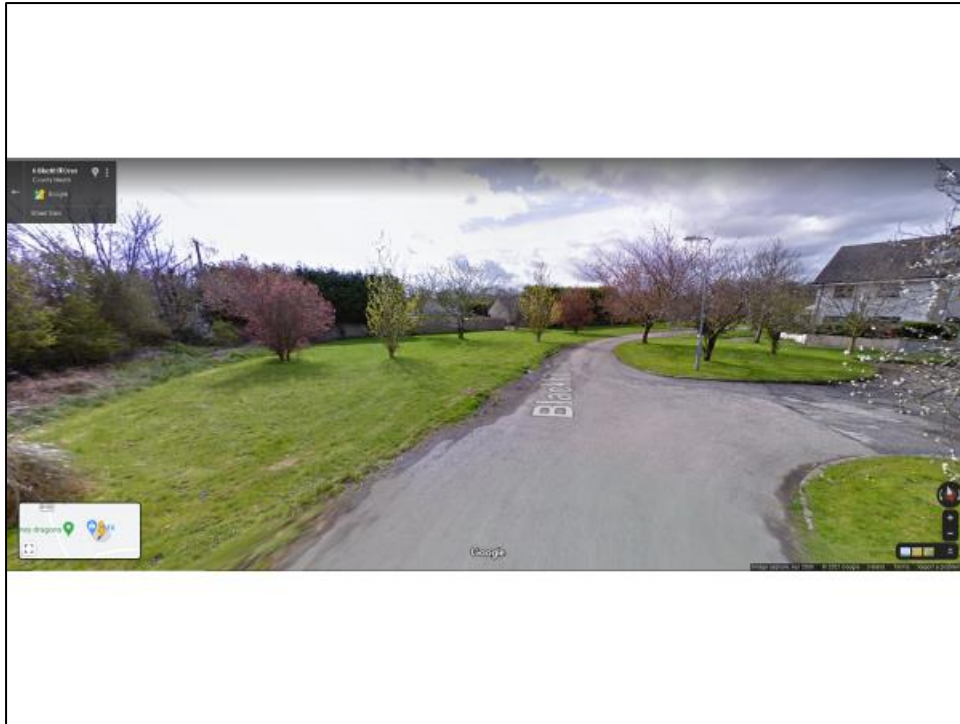
### 3.2 National Inventory of Architectural Heritage: Buildings and Gardens



## 4 SITE VISIT

Google Street View had an image capture of 2009.





The site was visited in February 2021. The layout appears basically unchanged since the 2009 Street View images, except that several of the trees have now been felled. The grass centre is well maintained but the edges to the plot are wild and overgrown.



**Black hill Crescent area**



**IMG\_0104. From SE corner facing W**



**IMG\_0103 From SE corner facing NW**



**IMG\_0102 From SE corner facing N**





IMG\_0105. Area to W of Blackhill Crescent plot. Facing E



IMG\_0106. Area to W of Blackhill Crescent plot showing the wet ditch potential 'Rampart' boundary to the Tower House area. This Ditch runs all along the S side and turns and runs up the length of the E side. Facing SW

## **5 Proposed Works**

The site is being reviewed for potential use for social housing.

## 6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Meath County Council is reviewing lands for potential social housing at various locations across the county. The Blackhill Crescent lands at Donacarney ITM 713701 / 774917 are approx. 1,400 sqm and were acquired by Meath County Council in 1974.

Donacarney settlement seems to focus around the L5614 – R150 which loops around a probable defensive bawn (potentially D-shaped c.110m N-S x 125m E-W) that surrounds the remains of Donacarney Little Tower House Castle ME021-009. As part of this Assessment, the adjacent ‘Smithy’ ruin shown on 1837 OS and later maps was found to actually be a medieval building with a pointed-arched (blocked) W door with the remains of medieval moulded jambs and part of the pointed arch (internal measurement 0.85m wide x 1.80m or so). The S (road) face includes a now-blocked window with a possible saucer-like arch that perhaps once contained a two-light medieval ogee-arched window (approx. 0.85m wide x 1.0m high) of 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century. The ‘Smithy’ walls are on the same grid as the walls of the Tower House. The ‘Smithy’ measures around 5m (N-S) x 8.90m (E-W) with strong block-and-start quoins and potentially a piece of tufa in the S wall (tufa often crops up in medieval 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century Tower Houses).

It is not known if there was a chapel or church in the Donacarney Little medieval settlement: it is possible the ‘Smithy’ was once a chapel associated with the Tower House. The Tower House and ‘Smithy’ sit on a local high point with lower ground all the way round the potential D-shaped enclosure. The E + N sides of this D-shaped area is a large, wet ditch that is possibly the remains of a rampart. The important Colp West church ME021-012004 and settlement is 1km to the W of Donacarney.

There are eight entries on excavations.ie for archaeological investigations in Donacarney Little. Despite most of the projects being housing developments of well over 1 ha, relatively little archaeological evidence has been found. Nevertheless, local archaeological hotspots are well known in the area (particularly in Colp West). However, the indication is that the focus for Donacarney Little is the potential D-shaped enclosure around the Tower House, as defined by the road network (W and S sides) and the wet ditches (N and E sides). The Blackhill Crescent plot is c.5-10m outside this area at the closest point. The plot is roughly 100m from the Donacarney Little Tower House ruin at its closest point.

The Blackhill Crescent plot is part of an existing housing development built in the early 1970s and has probably had the topsoil removed and replaced. Since then there have been several small trees planted across the site. There are overhead power lines running along the S boundary of the site. The current Blackhill Crescent plot boundaries are all modern or demolished previous field boundaries. There is an open access zone to the W into the Donacarney playing fields.

Given the current landscaping and probable archaeological contamination from previous housing development, there is no need to require any archaeological geophysics or advance trial trenching. Monitoring the topsoil stripping for the development should be sufficient archaeological strategy.

## 7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ciara Casserly Assistant Engineer, Housing Department Technical  
Paul Barrell Executive Engineer, Housing Department Technical

## 8 REFERENCES

### Electronic Sources

[www.excavations.ie](http://www.excavations.ie) – Summary of archaeological excavation from 1970–2009.

[www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie) – National Monuments Service website listing all SMR sites with aerial photographs.

[www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie) – Ordnance Survey aerial photographs (1995, 2000 & 2005) and historic OS mapping (first edition 6” and 25”). <http://map.geohive.ie/mapviewer.html>

<http://www.logainm.ie/> - Placename index

<http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/> -National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

<http://countydevelopmentplan.meath.ie/adoptedplan/> - Meath County Council 2013, Meath County Council County Development Plan 2013-2019

Environment Protection Agency website

<https://gis.epa.ie/EPAMaps/>

<http://downsurvey.tcd.ie/down-survey-maps.php> Down Survey mapping

[http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS\\_ID=LCN14679989\\_001](http://digitalcollections.tcd.ie/home/index.php?DRIS_ID=LCN14679989_001)  
Taylor & Skinner 1777-85 Maps of the Roads of Ireland

Google Maps

Bing Maps