

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
CONSULTANCY
SERVICES UNIT

Licence No.: 22E0559

ITM: 686555, 767686

RMP No.: ME025-044

Ian Russell

17th August 2022

Report Status: Final

ACSU Ref.: 2274

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PROJECT DETAILS

Project Archaeological Assessment of a site at 42–44 Brews Hill,

Navan, Co. Meath

Report Type Archaeological Test Trenching

Licence No. 22E0559

Site 42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath

Townland Abbeyland South

RMP ME025-044

ITM 686555, 767686

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This final report details the results of archaeological test trenching carried out at 42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath (ITM 686555, 767686).

A previous Archaeological Impact Assessment of the site recommended test excavation (Roycroft 2022). Consequently, it is proposed to carry out test trenching of the back garden of the property to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

There are no monuments located within the site, as listed in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The site lies outside, and c. 50 to the west of the zone of archaeological potential associated with Historic Town ME025-044----. There are no Protected Structures located within the site, as listed in the *Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027*, nor any sites listed within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The nearest such structure to the site is a row of three detached red-brick structures that lie c. 20m to the east of the site and occupy numbers 48–50 Brews Hill (RPS ID. 90957–90959, NIAH Reg Nos 14009219–14009221, respectively).

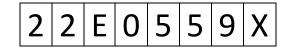
Archaeological test trenching was carried out by Ian Russell of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd (ACSU) on 8th August 2022 under licence number 22E0559 issued to Ian Russell by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland.

A total of three test trenches were excavated within the site, with each trench measuring 1.0m in width, and in total, 90.0m of linear trenches were excavated to the top of natural subsoil (C3), which consisted of mid-brown sandy clay, gravel and stone. The topsoil (C1 and C2) represented post-medieval/early modern garden soils deposited to the rear of 42–44 Brews Hill. A modern sump or tank (C4) was also representative of modern utilisation of the site. No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.



NON-ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFORMATION





Site Owner:	Meath County Council.
Address:	Bovinda House, Dublin Road, Navan, Co. Meath.
Planning Authority:	Meath County Council.
Planning Reg. No.:	N/A
Excavation Type:	Test Trenching
Contractor/Developer:	As above
Site	42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath.

Description of Proposed Development

This assessment was carried at the pre-planning stage in relation to a proposed residential development. It is proposed to demolish all buildings on site and develop it with approximately six housing units.

Archaeological Condition

The assessment was carried out at the request of the client to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

Impact Statement and recommendations

A total of three test trenches were excavated within the site, with each trench measuring 1.0m in width, and in total, 90.0m of linear trenches were excavated to the top of natural subsoil (C3), which consisted of mid-brown sandy clay, gravel and stone. The topsoil (C1 and C2) represented post-medieval/early modern garden soils deposited to the rear of 42–44 Brews Hill. A modern sump or tank (C4) was also representative of modern utilisation of the site. No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

Consequently, the site was archaeologically assessed. The work is now complete. No further archaeological work is recommended.



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1. INTRODUCTION

This final report details the results of archaeological test trenching carried out at 42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath (ITM 686555, 767686, Figures 1–2).

An Archaeological Impact Assessment of the site was carried out (Roycroft, 2022). This recommended test trenching. Consequently, it is now proposed to carry out test trenching of the back garden of the property to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

There are no monuments located within the site as listed in the Record of Monuments and Places or the Sites and Monuments Record. The site lies outside, and c. 50 to the west of the zone of archaeological potential associated with Historic Town ME025-044----. There are no Protected Structures listed in the Meath County Development Plan 2021-2027 nor sites listed within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) located within the site. The nearest such structure to the site is a row of three detached red-brick structures (RPS ID. 90957-90959, NIAH Reg No. 14009219-14009221, respectively) that lie c. 20m to the east of the site and occupy numbers 48-50 Brews Hill.

Archaeological test trenching was carried out by Ian Russell of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd (ACSU) on the 8th August 2022 under licence number 22E0559 issued to Ian Russell by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland.

1.1 Site Location

The site is located at 42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath (ITM 686555, 767686). It lies adjacent to and north of Brews Hill and consists of three former rectangular plots with buildings fronting onto the street. These comprise a single-story cabin type, 19th-century bungalow, originally thatched, at No. 42, while the remaining two consist of three-bay, two-storey mid-20th century buildings. The access to the rear is between No. 42 and No. 43 via a gate. The site is bounded by residential properties from east and west, and a back lane runs along the rear of the property.

2. NATURAL & CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

2.1 Cultural landscape

A review of available historic mapping for the area was carried out to include the 6-inch 1835 and the 25-inch 1910 editions of the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, the Down Survey map of County Meath, Barony of Navan (1654–56), Taylor and Skinner's Maps of the roads of Ireland 1777 and Larkin's map of 1812–17. Potential archaeological or cultural heritage features are marked on such maps and provide a useful resource in identifying sites, particularly if they no longer have any above-ground remains or have been built over.



Pre-ordnance survey maps examined depict Navan and Navan Bridge; however, these do not give any detail in relation to the site. The site is, however, shown within the south portion of an area labelled as 'Abbey Lands'. The mapping examined suggests that up to the time of the 1812–17 (Larkin's map), the site was located outside of Navan Town.

Ordnance Survey maps of the area were also examined in order to identify any possible archaeological features and to trace the development of the site during the 19th and early 20th centuries (Figures 3–4). It appears that the development along this portion of town started at the beginning of the 19th century. The 1835 map shows the street lined with detached 'cabin suburb' developments with associated garden plots at the rear (Figure 3).

More detail is given on the 1910 map, showing buildings that appear to have been altered or rebuilt, particularly visible in relation to No. 44 (Figure 4). A boundary extending the length of the site is shown between Nos 44 and 43, while no boundary is depicted at the rear between Nos 42 and 43. It appears, however, that small yards immediately adjacent to the rear of the buildings were enclosed, and these areas also contained a number of minor ancillary buildings.

2.2 Archaeological background

Navan is situated at the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater rivers, on the main routeway between Dublin and Kells. The medieval town hugged the top of a triangular ridge overlooking the river junction. The ground drops steeply along Watergate Street on the north and Ludlow Street on the south, but westwards, along Trimgate Street and Brews Hill, the drop is much more gradual. The placename is derived from *An Uaimh*, 'the cave'. The proximity of the Boyne River would have provided an ideal location for Mesolithic activity. The Boyne Valley was an ideal environment for these early communities and according to Stout (2002) water proximity in coastal, lakeside or riverine settings is a locational feature of 75% of Mesolithic sites in Ireland. The small group of prehistoric objects known from the town suggest that it was frequented during the Neolithic and Bronze Age, perhaps because of its suitability as a fording point (Bradley 1985). The nature of this prehistoric activity remains unknown, but as yet there is nothing to indicate that there was a substantial settlement here during this time.

Perhaps the most significant archaeological discovery from the town is the rich Viking burial discovered in 1848 (Wilde 1850). Burials are usually indicators of settlement, and this find suggests that further work may uncover remains of the Viking period, perhaps a rural settlement site. Navan is traditionally identified with Nuachongbail, where an early monastery was reputedly established by St Fechín (Gwynn and Hadcock 1988). Although no reference to the monastery occurs in contemporary sources, the likelihood of its existence is supported by the foundation of a house for Augustinian Canons prior to the Norman conquest of the late 12th century AD (Bradley 1985). This monastery appears to have been subsequently patronised by Jocelin de Angulo, to whom Hugh de Lacy granted Navan and Ardbraccan before 1186 (Orpen 1911–20). De Angulo built a motte on an esker ridge south of the Blackwater and he or his son William was probably responsible for the



foundation of the town. Nothing is known of the early development of the Anglo-Norman town of Navan and the first clear documentary indication of it as a corporate borough is in 1462 (Berry 1914). Corporate charters were granted in 1494, 1605 and 1679 (Cogan 1862). A charter of James II made in 1689, like his other Corporation charters, did not come into force after the Battle of the Boyne. In the Later Middle Ages the town was on the frontier of the Pale and in 1539 it was plundered by O'Neill and O'Donnell. Exposure to attack was so great that the parliament of 1542-3 enacted a charge of 3s 4d on every ploughland in Meath and Westmeath in order to build the walls of Navan. The street pattern of the medieval town was essentially Y-shaped and consisted of Trimgate Street, Ludlow Street and Watergate Street. New Bridge and the street leading to it from Market Square are additions of more recent times. In the 16th century, Cannon Row was built up and the Civil Survey makes it clear that by the mid-17th century streets were established outside the gates on the north, west and south, giving the street plan the characteristically linear form which it has retained. The area of the medieval town is characterised by a largely intact burgage plot pattern. The plots are almost all of the long burgage variety, with the house fronting onto the street and the property extending to the town wall at the rear. The town charters of 1605 and 1679 refer to markets and fairs and there is little doubt that the importance of the town in the medieval period rested on its function as the marketplace for its hinterland. The medieval marketplace was located at the junction of the medieval streets in what was later known as Market Square. It was of triangular form, like those at Thurles and Fethard, Co. Tipperary. The remnants of a market cross of c. 1585 are now preserved in the National Museum of Ireland (No. X1639).

The tradition that Hugh de Lacy walled the town may be dismissed on the grounds that de Lacy was dead before the town was established. The earliest references to murage occur in the mid-15th century. In 1462, the Irish Parliament ordained that Navan could continue to collect the murage customs that had been levied during the reign of Henry VI (1422–61). After the sack of the town in 1539, monies were raised to refortify the walls. This would not appear to have been substantial, however, because in 1598 Navan was grouped with Duleek among the market towns as opposed to the walled towns of Meath. As with other Irish towns, the 18th century was the period that witnessed the removal of the gates and the demolition of much of the wall. Dublin Gate was widened in 1786 and Watergate in 1788. The walled town enclosed an oval area measuring 320m by 275m, covering an area of about 5.2 hectares (13 acres) with a circumference of about 800m (Bradley 1985). The development site is located some 500m north of what would originally have been the walled town and likely served as farmland, providing subsistence to the inhabitants of Navan.

2.3 Previous archaeological investigations

The Database of Irish Excavation Reports does not record any excavations within the site; however, a number of investigations are recorded in Navan Town (Figure 2). The nearest, consisting of a geophysical survey, test trenching and monitoring, was carried out under licence 09E0563 prior to supermarket development on a plot located c. 45m to the southwest, exposing nothing of archaeological significance.



The details of these investigations, where available, are detailed in Table 1 and derived from the Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland (www.excavations.ie).

Table 1: Previous archaeological investigations

Excavation.ie reference	Licence No.	Investigation type	Site type
1998:516 - The Lyric Cinema, Brew, Meath	98E0233	Test trenching	Nothing of archaeological significance
2003:1426 - Canon Row, Navan, Meath	03E1314	Test trenching and excavation	Cultivated soil, furrows, pits, gullies and field ditch, with associated pottery
2005:1224 - Canon Row/Kennedy Road, Navan, Meath	05E0754	Test trenching and excavation	East—west ditch of unknown date, gullies and three large pits containing medieval pottery and animal bone
2009:656 - Brews Hill, Navan, Meath	09E0563	Geophysical survey, Test trenching and monitoring	Nothing of archaeological significance
2016:662 – Canon Row, Navan, Meath	16E0198	Test trenching	Nothing of archaeological significance

Directly southeast of the site, under licence 98E0233, test trenching at the Lyric Cinema, built in the 1940s, exposing nothing of archaeological significance although the basement of the cinema did extend to a depth of up to 3m below street level. Excavation at Canon Row (03E1314) to the north of the site identified pits, gullies and ditches and medieval cultivated soil in the north end of the site. On another site between Kennedy Road and Canon Row (05E0754), a ditch, gullies and three pits interpreted as quarry pits for clay were exposed and excavated, with the latter associated with medieval pottery.

2.4 Record of Monuments and Places (RMP)

The site contains no recorded monuments listed within the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) or Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). The site lies outside, and c. 50 to the west of the zone of archaeological potential associated with Historic Town ME025-044---- (Figure 2).

The monuments closest to the site are outlined in Table 2. These descriptions are derived from the National Monuments Service Archaeological Survey Database (http://maps.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment/).



Table 2: Monuments in the environs of the site

RMP/SMR No	Class/ Site Type	Description				
ME025- 044	Historic town	No information available.				
ME025- 044003-	Town defences	Enclosed an area of c. 13 acres and probably dates to early fifteenth century. Walls run W from Boyne and crossed Ladlow Street short of junction with Church Hill. Ran along S side of properties on Trimgate Street, crossed grounds of RC church and turned N at back of properties on N side of Trimgate Street. Wall and tower (ME025-044007-) survive at N end of this section where wall turned E to Boyne, just short of Barrack Lane. (Bradley forthcoming)				
ME025- 044020-	Architectural fragment	Some dressed stones from St Mary's Abbey (ME025-024) are now in a rockery at St Mary's Roman Catholic church in Navan. The limestone spandrel (dims 0.57m x 0.36m; T 0.2m) of a double ogee-headed window is decorated with three triskels in relief on one side and star shapes in relief on the other. A				
	Cross -	Now on display in the Meath County Library in Navan, This cross once stood beside an old SE-NW road from Navan to Rathaldron Castle (ME025-011) that fell out of use (Moore 1899). The highly decorated cross shaft (dims 0.24m x 0.19m; H 1.26m) had stood on a plain base (dims 0.74m x 0.7m; H 0.22m) and had been set up in 1588 by Margaret Dexter and her Cusack husband, according to its inscription (Wilde 1850 133–4; Crawford 1920; King 1984, 110). Excavation in 1977 revealed a plinth of two steps made from cut limestone blocks (dims of base 2.5m x 2.5m). The remains of 8 infants and young children were recovered in the vicinity, confirming local traditions of its use as a Childrens Burial Ground (ME025-059) (Cahill 1987–8). The cross has been described by King as:				
ME025- 067	Wayside cross (present location)	A shaft fragment rectangular in section set in an undecorated rectangular base. The shaft has rounded edges, an inscription, floral motifs and an heraldic shield in false relief. 1st: The lower part of a shield with the Cusack (per pale or and azure a fess counterchanged) and Dexter (argenta cross fleury gules between four parrots vert) arms impaled and the letters M.C. M.D. 2nd: An inscription in contracted Gothic Latin. [C]USA / ARMIG / ER I ET / MARGA[R] / RETAE DE / XTER UX / ORIS EJU /S AC HE / REDU EO / RM QUE/ HANC C/RUC FECE / RUT A/DNI 1588 / QUORU / ANIMA / BUS P[RO/PICIET] U [R / DEUS]. 3rd: Has a stiff undulate band of eight tulips. 4th: Has a vertebrate band of seven tulips growing from a vase.				
		The date and patrons of this cross are evident from the inscription: 'Cusack Knight and Margaret Dexter his wife and their heirs who had this cross made A.D. 1588 on whose souls may God have mercy.'				



2.5 Protected Structures and National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH)

There are no Protected Structures listed in the *Meath County Development Plan 2021–2027* located within the site, nor any sites listed within the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH). The nearest such structure is a row of three detached red-brick buildings that lie c. 20m to the east of the site and occupy numbers 48–50 Brews Hill (RPS ID. 90957–90959, NIAH Reg Nos 14009219–14009221, respectively).

2.6 Stray Finds

The Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland for the townland of Abbeyland South were consulted. These finds are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland

NMI Reg Simple Name Compon		Component	Find Place
1976:643 Bottle Glass		Glass	Abbeyland South. Land drain exposal in section of trench
1976:644 Pottery Ceramic Abbeyland		Ceramic	Abbeyland South. Land drain exposal in section of trench
1976:645 Marble (Ceramic	Abbeyland South. Land drain exposal in section of trench
1977:6 Tile Ceramic Abbeyland South. Near mediev		Abbeyland South. Near medieval abbey, "Spicer field"	
1977:7 Font Stone Abbeyland. N/A; private possession l		Abbeyland. N/A; private possession locally	
1977:11 Human remains Bone Abbeyland South. Site of abbey, sev		Abbeyland South. Site of abbey, sewage works discovery	

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

3.1 Site description

The site is located at 42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath (ITM 686555, 767686; Figures 1–2).

3.2 Methodology

Test excavation was carried out in accordance with the *IAI Code of Conduct for Archaeological Assessment Excavation* (IAI 2006). The test trenches were excavated to the natural subsoil. No archaeological deposits or features of archaeological significance were exposed; subsequently, no samples were taken, and no archaeological finds were recovered. Spoil from excavated test trenches was examined for finds.

All excavated trenches were recorded using digital photography. Digital photography images were taken using a high-resolution digital camera, with a minimum resolution of 10 Megapixels.



Archaeological test trenching was carried out by Ian Russell of Archaeological Consultancy Services Unit Ltd (ACSU) on 8th August 2022 under licence number 22E0559 issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland.

3.3 Results

A total of three test trenches were excavated within the site (Figures 5–6, Plates 1–8). Each trench measured 1.0m in width, and in total, 90.0m of linear trenches were excavated to the top of natural subsoil (C3), which consisted of mid-brown sandy clay, gravel and stone.

No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

Table 4: Trench descriptions

Trench Number	Length (m)	Trench depth (m)	Description
1	30.0m	0.86m	The sod and topsoil (C1) consisted of mid-dark brown coarse clay. It measured 0.38m in thickness and lay above a layer of light-mid brown sandy clay (C2) that extended to a depth of 0.80m and lay above the natural clay, gravel and stone (C3) (Plates 1–3). Moderate inclusions of modern red brick and white glazed chinaware were identified within the brown sand clay (C2).
2	30.0m	0.90m	The sod and topsoil (C1) consisted of mid-dark brown coarse clay. It measured 0.42m in thickness and lay above a layer of light-mid brown sandy clay (C2) that extended to a depth of 0.85m and lay above the natural clay, gravel and stone (C3) (Plates 4–5). A modern pit or sump (C4) was exposed in the middle of the trench at a depth of 0.86m (Plate 6). It measured 20.0m in length by 1.0m in width and had been filled with mid-brown gravelly clay. Moderate inclusions of modern red brick and white glazed chinaware were identified within the brown sand clay (C2).
3	30.0m	1.30m	The sod and topsoil (C1) consisted of mid-dark brown coarse clay. It measured 0.50m in thickness and lay above a layer of light-mid brown sandy clay (C2) that extended to a depth of 1.10m and lay above the natural clay, gravel and stone (C3) (Plates 7–8). Moderate inclusions of modern red brick and white glazed chinaware were identified within the brown sand clay (C2).

Context Descriptions:

Table 5: Context descriptions

Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C1	-	-	0.38–0.50m	Mid to dark brown coarse topsoil and sod.



Context	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description
C2			0.42-0.60m	Light to mid-brown sandy clay.
C3			0.80–1.10m	Natural clay, gravel and stone.
C4	20.0m	1.00m	0.86m	Modern sump in Trench 2. Filled with midbrown gravelly clay.

4. MATERIAL CULTURE

No finds were recovered, though moderate inclusions of red brick and white glazed chinaware were identified within the brown sand clay (C2) but these were deemed modern and not retained. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed or identified. The only feature identified consisted of a modern sump or backfilled tank identified within Trench 2 at a depth of 0.86m.

5. DATING

No features of archaeological significance were exposed, though it was obvious that the topsoil (C1 and C2) represented post-medieval/early modern garden soils deposited to the rear of 42–44 Brews Hill. The modern sump or tank (C4) was also representative of modern utilisation of the site.

6. DISCUSSION

A total of three test trenches were excavated within the site, with each trench measuring 1.0m in width, and in total, 90.0m of linear trenches were excavated to the top of natural subsoil (C3), which consisted of mid-brown sandy clay, gravel and stone. The topsoil (C1 and C2) represented post-medieval/early modern garden soils deposited to the rear of 42–44 Brews Hill. A modern sump or tank (C4) was also representative of modern utilisation of the site.

No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological features of deposits were exposed or identified. The work is now complete and no further archaeological work is recommended.

8. POST-EXCAVATION PROGRAMME

No post-excavation work is necessary.



9. EXCAVATION BULLETIN

42-44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath.

22E0559

ITM. 686555, 767686

RMP No. ME025-044

No archaeological significance

17 August 2022

This summary details the results of archaeological test trenching carried out at 42–44 Brews Hill, Navan, Co. Meath. A previous Archaeological Impact Assessment of the site recommended test excavation and consequently it was proposed to carry out test trenching of the footprint of the back garden of the property to assess the archaeological potential of the site.

Archaeological test trenching was carried out on 8th August 2022. A total of three test trenches were excavated within the site, with each trench measuring 1.0m in width, and in total, 90.0m of linear trenches were excavated to the top of natural subsoil (C3), which consisted of mid-brown sandy clay, gravel and stone. The topsoil (C1 and C2) represented post-medieval/early modern garden soils deposited to the rear of 42–44 Brews Hill. A modern sump or tank (C4) was also representative of modern utilisation of the site.

No finds or features of archaeological significance were identified.

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

10. PUBLICATION PLAN

An account of this licenced test trenching assessment and its results will be published online as an excavation bulletin at www.excavations.ie (see Section 9).



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Down Survey map of County Meath, Barony of Navan (1654–56).

Extract from Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1835.

Extract from Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of 1910.

Larkin map of 1812–17.

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National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (http://www.buildingsofireland.ie/).



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Placenames Database of Ireland, developed by Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge (DCU) and The Placenames Branch (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht). (www.logainm.ie).

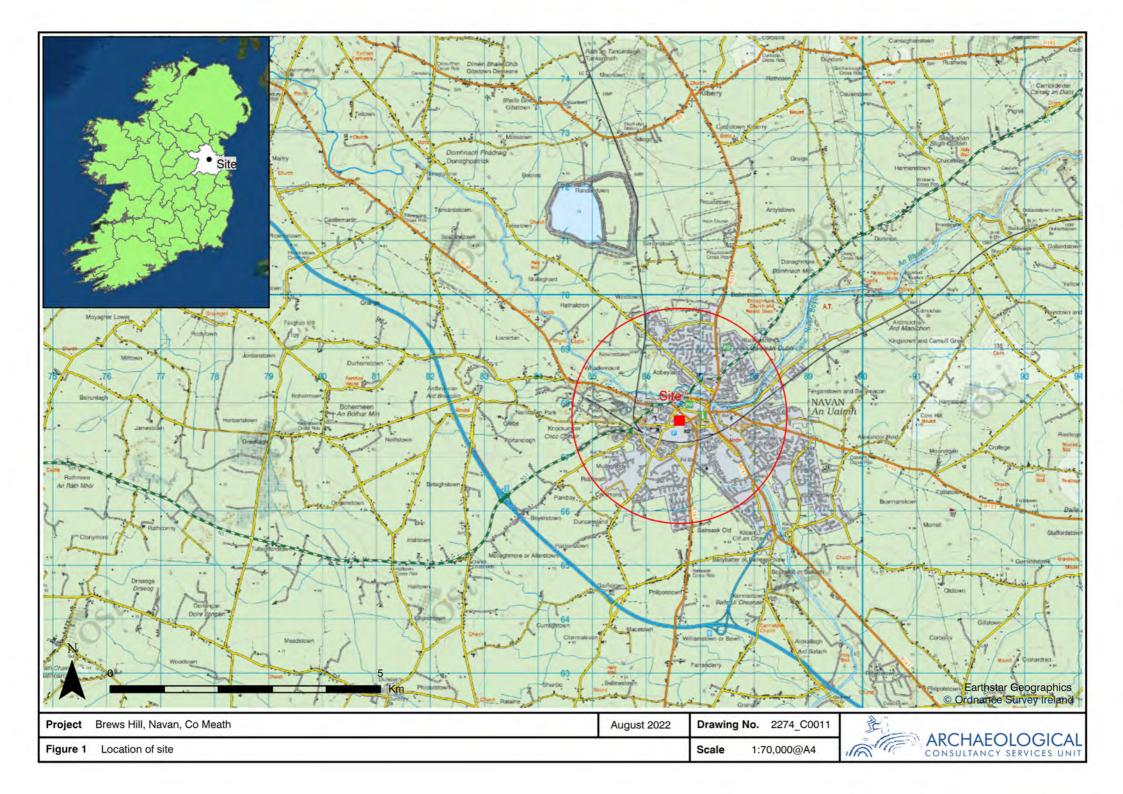
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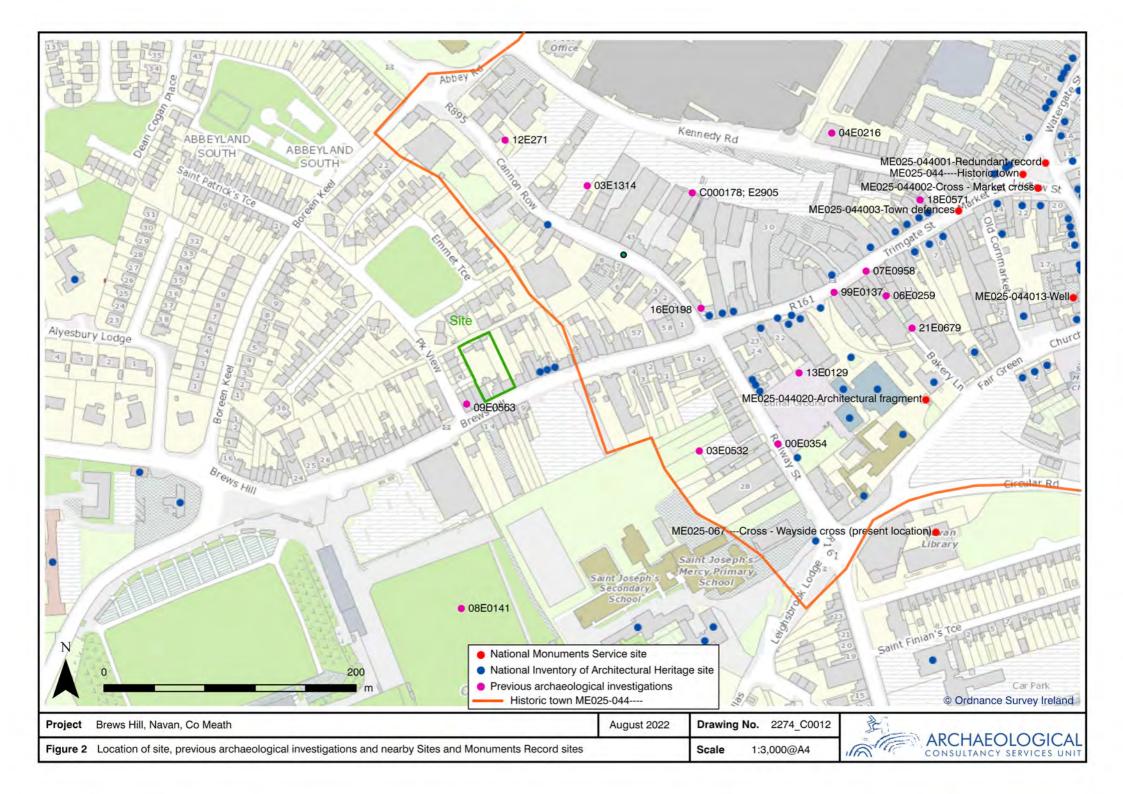
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Taylor and Skinner's Maps of the roads of Ireland 1777.

The Schools Collection, national Folklore Collection, UCD (https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes).

Topographical Files of the National Museum of Ireland.





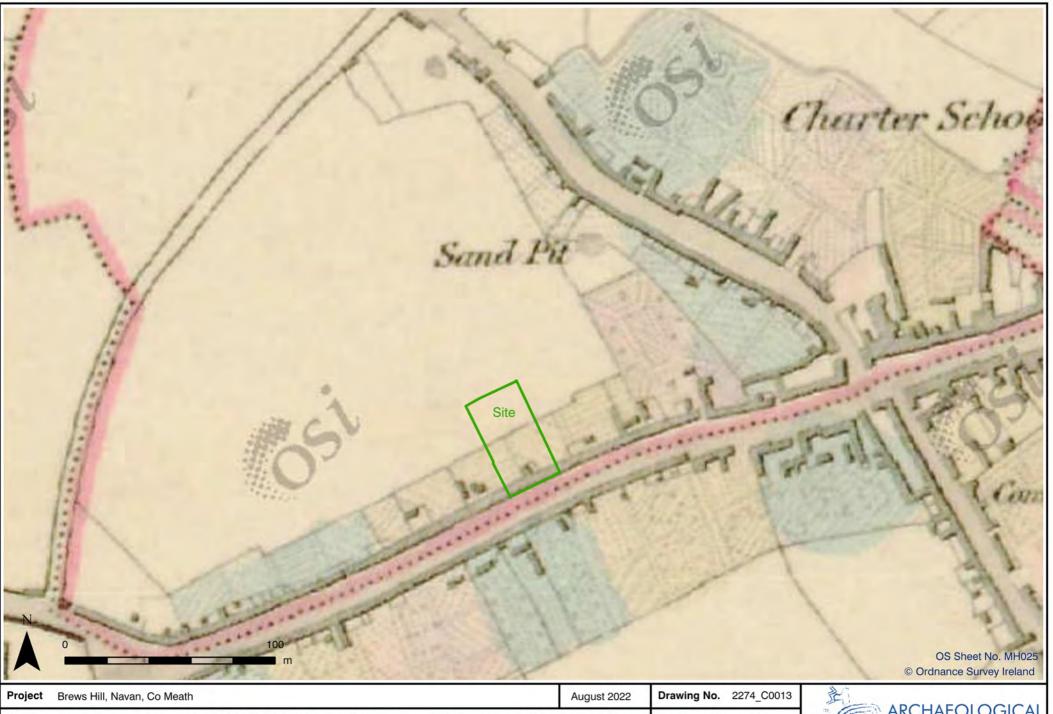
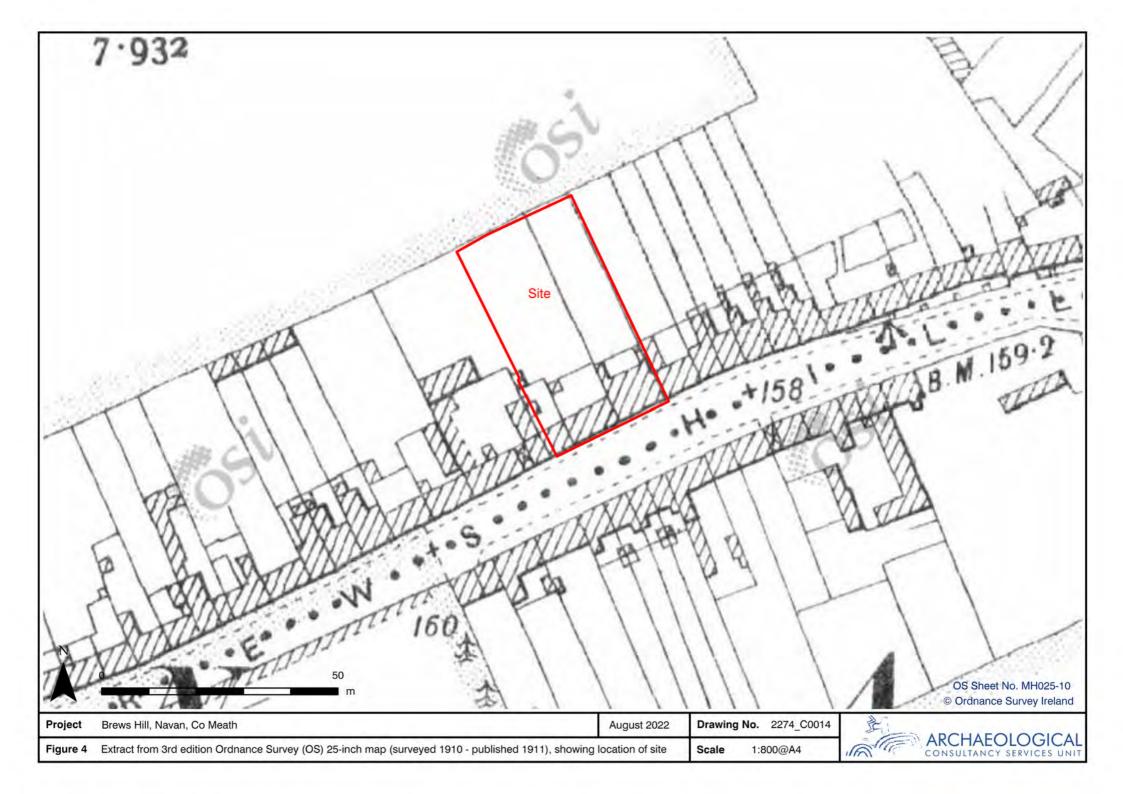


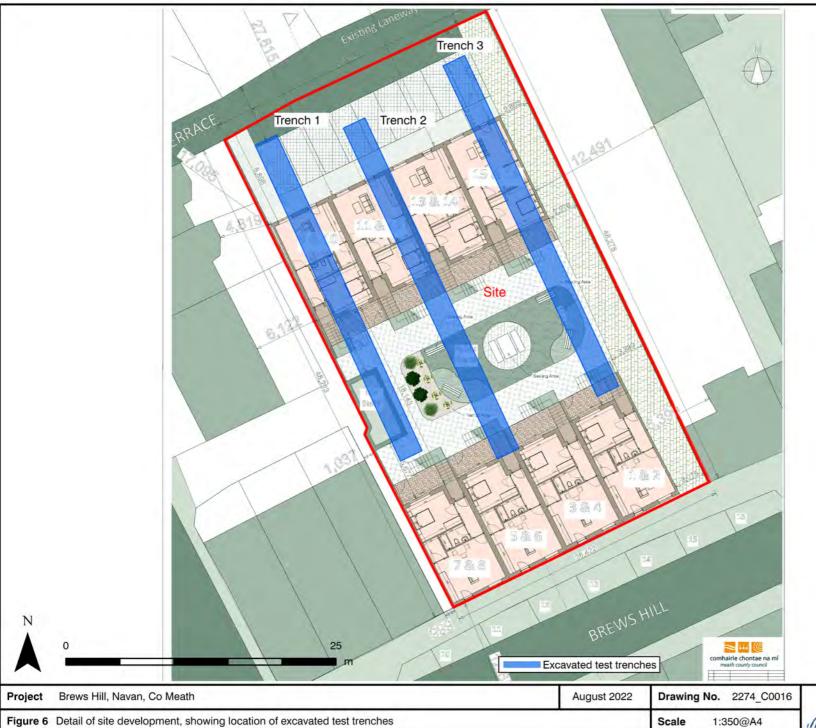
Figure 3 Extract from 1st edition Ordnance Survey (OS) 6-inch map (surveyed 1835 - published 1837), showing location of site

Scale 1:1,800@A4









Trenches detail (average width 2 m)

T1= 30 m T2= 30 m

T3= 30 m

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Plate 1: Trench 1 looking northwest



Plate 3: Trench 1 looking north



Plate 2: Trench 1 looking north



Plate 4: Trench 2 looking south





Plate 5: Trench 2 looking southwest



Plate 7: Trench 3 looking south



Plate 6: Trench 2: C4 looking northwest



Plate 8: Trench 3 looking north