

Crokershill, Kilkenny
Archaeological test excavation
Licence No: 19E0217

CLIENT: Kilkenny County Council

DATE: 29.03.19

Crokershill, Kilkenny

SITE NAME	Crokershill
CLIENT	Kilkenny County Council
INVESTIGATION TYPE	Archaeological test trenching
LICENCE NO	19E0217
PLANNING REF	N/A
TOWNLAND	Crokershill
IRISH TRANSVERSE MERCATOR	649641, 656027 (centre of site)
RMP NO	N/A
RPS NO	N/A
ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANT	Archer Heritage Planning Ltd.
ARCHAEOLOGIST	Liam Coen
DATE OF ISSUE	1st May 2019
JOB REF.	2019_16

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SUMMARY

A desk-based study and field survey was carried out on a site located on the western outskirts of the town of Kilkenny (ITM 649641, 656027). The site covers an area of c. 2.5 hectares on the northern side of the Kennyswell Road (R695) on the edge of the town. This Archaeological Impact Assessment report sought to identify and describe known and potential archaeological or cultural heritage constraints within and/or immediately adjacent to the site. The following factors were identified in the course of desktop study:

- The site is large in scale occupying an area of roughly 2.5 Ha.
- There are no recorded monuments situated within the site boundaries.
- No potential archaeological features were recorded in aerial photos of the subject site.
- Examination of the cartographic sources indicates no archaeological features.
- No archaeological excavations have been undertaken previously within the subject site, however a number of excavations along the River Breagagh (north of the site) have highlighted the archaeological potential adjacent to the river.
- There are no Protected or Recorded structures in or adjacent to the site.

Test trench locations were agreed in advance with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG, Excavation licence 19E0217). A total of seven trenches (825 linear metres) were mechanically excavated across the site under archaeological supervision.

No material or features of archaeological interest were identified during test trenching.

RECOMMENDATION

No further archaeological works are recommended.

Revision	Status	Date	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
1	Final	1 May 2019	L Coen ARCHAEOLOGIST	A O'Connell SENIOR ARCHAEOLOGIST	C. Mc Guinness

1. INTRODUCTION

This archaeological test excavation report for a proposed development has been prepared by Archer Heritage Planning Ltd for Kilkenny County Council. The test excavations were undertaken under licence 19E0217 issued to Liam Coen by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI). The work was undertaken over a 2-day period from 29-30 April 2019.

1.1 Proposed Development

This site is being assessed for future residential development. There is currently no detailed site layout proposed.

1.2 Archaeological Requirements

The test-excavation was undertaken as part of a pre-planning process and following a recommendation from an Archaeological Impact Assessment prepared by Archer Heritage Planning.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

This site is on the western outskirts of Kilkenny. The site is predominantly agricultural land with a cluster of domestic houses along the Kennyswell Road. The landscape is comprised of a low hill in the centre of the site with falls to the west, east and north where a substantial stream (Breagagh River) runs between Crokershill townland and Bishops Demesne townland to the north.

3. METHOD STATEMENT

Seven test trenches (825 linear metres) were excavated by mechanical excavator under archaeological supervision using a 13-ton tracked excavator with a 2m grading bucket. The trenches were located to assess the potential of the general site. Excavation proceeded in level spits no greater than 0.2 m to the subsoil or top of the first archaeological horizon where present. Each revealed surface was inspected for archaeological remains and any features present were recorded appropriately. All features identified within the trenches were tested to determine their extent, composition and depth and to ascertain potential dating material. All trenches were reinstated on completion of the works.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 General Archaeological Background

Prehistoric sites and artefacts have been recovered from the hinterland of Kilkenny City. However, the earliest sustained settlement in Kilkenny City was connected with two early medieval monasteries Domhnach Mór and Cill Chainningh (Bradley 2000, 1). A substantial monastic town developed around the latter 'church of Canice', which would become the principal ecclesiastical power in Leinster outside Dublin in the twelfth century (O'Drisceoil 2008, 80). The early monastery was defined by concentric Kennyswell ditched enclosures that survive in the curving street-pattern of Vicar Street, St. Canice's Place, Dean Street and Thomas Street (Hogan 1884, 157; Bradley 1990).

Richard de Clare constructed a motte castle in Kilkenny in 1173, which was burnt and rebuilt before the end of the century (Stokes 1895-7, 433) when William Marshall began construction of a large quadrangular stone castle, which led to the development of the city and liberty of Kilkenny (Crouch 1990, 92-106). The borough flourished and prospered during the 13th – mid-14th centuries, becoming the chief market place for the hinterland, resulting in the emergence of a wealthy merchant class. The success of the town led to a steep rise in its population and the rapid expansion of the urban area, into the flood-plains of the rivers Nore and Breagagh and then into a series of suburban developments. At least five suburbs are documented; Irishtown, Donaghmore, linear extensions along Walkin's Gate and St. James's Gate, Flemingstown (south of the castle), and St. John's. The earliest reference to town walls is in the thirteenth century under the reign of Henry III (Thomas 1992, 128) and probably after 1288 (Bradley 2000, 8). There were also several murage grants or references to the wall into the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (these dates probably referring to the completion of the wall circuit or the enclosure of the suburb of St Johns), with on-going maintenance and improvement through sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Thomas *ibid*).

There was a general decline in population from the mid-fourteenth century, a result of the cumulative effects of poor harvests, the Bruce invasions and the 'Black Death' which resulted in the desertion of some suburbs and the abandonment of the wider countryside (Neeley 1989, 15-16). The fifteenth century was however, a period of consolidation and economic revival (*ibid*).

The Breagagh which is directly north of the subject site flows into the west bank of the River Nore and takes its name from the Irish bréagach, meaning deceitful. It has been described as 'flanked almost continuously by significant archaeological sites' (O'Sullivan and Deevy, EIS 1999, 63) and served as the dividing line between the medieval boroughs of High Town and Irish Town. The river is fortified by the city wall, a mural tower and gates on the High Town side and is also crossed by a number of medieval and post-medieval bridges. It is also bordered by ecclesiastical sites and several mills.

4.2 Record of Monuments & Places

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) is a statutory inventory of archaeological sites protected under the National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 (Section 12, 1994 Act), compiled and maintained by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland (ASI). The inventory concentrates on pre-1700 AD sites and is based on a previous inventory known as the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) which does not have legal protection or status (see www.archaeology.ie). **There are no recorded monuments located within the application area;** there are a small number in the immediate area. The Zone of Archaeological Potential for Kilkenny City (KK019–026) lies 600m to the east of the site (Figure 2; Table 1).

SMR No	Class	Townland	ITM	Distance to site
KK019-102	House	Kilcreen (Crannagh By.)	649350, 656156	180 m to NW
KK019-022001	Ring-ditch	Kilcreen (Crannagh By.)	649284, 656403	350 m to N
KK019-022002	Ring-ditch	Kilcreen (Crannagh By.)	649280, 656334	320 m to N
KK019-022003	Ring-ditch	Kilcreen (Crannagh By.)	649324, 656322	300 m to N
KK019-022004	Ring-ditch	Kilcreen (Crannagh By.)	649293, 656317	320 m to N
KK019-024	Ritual site - holy well	GARDENS (Kilkenny City By., St. Canice Par.)	649932, 656038	150 m to E

Table 1: Archaeological sites within 0.5km of the proposed development

4.3 Cartographic Sources

Analysis of historic mapping can show human impact on landscape over a prolonged period. Large collections of historical maps (pre- and early Ordnance Survey maps as well as estate or private maps) are held at the Glucksman Map Library, Trinity College and other sources (UCD Library, Ordnance Survey Ireland, local libraries and published material). The development of the site and its vicinity recorded through the eighteenth to twentieth century cartography are described in Table 2 below (Figure 3). **No new archaeological features were recorded within the subject site.**

Map	Date	Description
Down Survey, City of Kilkenny	1656	This map shows the old town walls on both the east and west side of the River Nore. The course of the River Breaghagh is not depicted on the map, the subject site lies within an area noted as "Robert Booths parkes"
Historic 6inch	1838	The site is comprised of two fields with a boundary in the centre running north-south. St. Canice's well KK019-024 is shown to the east. A small number of buildings are depicted on Kennyswell Road.
Historic 25inch	1909-10	Trees are shown on the site running along Kennyswell Road, on the boundary between the two fields and more heavily in the low area further to the north along the river. White Bridge is shown further to the SW outside the site boundaries. The shed which still stands in the SE corner of the site is shown with a yard to the rear.

Table 2: Cartographic sources relating to the site

4.4 Previous Archaeological Excavations

The Excavation Bulletin is a database of summary accounts of archaeological excavations in Ireland and Northern Ireland from 1970 onwards. Summaries relating to archaeological excavations undertaken by the National Roads Authority are also available on-line and were consulted for any adjacent sites. Reports on licensed archaeological works are also held by the Archive Unit of the National Monuments Section (NMS). **There were no previous archaeological excavations within the subject site but several have taken place along the River Breagagh as it enters the city to the east of the site.**

Excavation No.	RMP	OS Ref	Location	Ex. Bulletin Ref.	Author
00E0406	SMR 19:26	E 649960m, N 656093m	Banks of the River Breagagh, Gardens, Kilkenny	2000:0535	Paul Stevens
<p>Four of eight proposed test-trenches were excavated on the north bank of the River Breagagh. Two structural features of archaeological significance were noted in two of the trenches. However, no artefact-bearing archaeological deposits were encountered in these trenches, and outcropping white sandstone bedrock was only noted in one trench. Trench 1 was excavated 50m south-east of Watergate and was 6m long. This revealed a substantial linear timber structure 2.6m wide, probably representing part of a possible late medieval timber weir, associated with an unnamed mill on the opposite bank. Trench 3 was excavated 60m south-west of Black Friars Bridge and revealed modern and early modern activity. This consisted of the eastern end of a stone rectangular building and an unassociated revetment wall, abutted by a plank fence with iron strapping to the riverside. Both features appeared to pre-date the existing river wall and probably date to the 18th century. Trench 4 was excavated to assess the archaeological potential of a semiKennyswell portion of river wall, close to the site of Blackmills Bridge. No archaeological soils were encountered in this trench, although no date could be established for the wall, which appears on Rocque's map of 1758 and the first edition 1840 OS map. River gravels were revealed in this trench at a depth of 3m. No archaeological artefacts were retrieved from the gravels. Trench 5 was excavated 86m south-west of Black Friars Bridge and revealed early modern and modern activity but no archaeological soils or features. River gravels were revealed in this trench at 1.1m, overlying alluvial peat and muds, and an outcrop of white sandstone bedrock at a depth of 3m. The results of selective archaeological testing and an assessment along the banks of the River Breagagh have revealed fourteen sites of archaeological significance and four previously unknown structures within the banks of the river, including a possible late medieval timber weir, a post-medieval stone structure, a possible medieval wall and timber foundations for an early modern bridge. The limited remit of this programme of testing was partly owing to access limitations. However, further testing in the riverbed is planned when water levels have dropped to workable levels. Archaeological survey of all upstanding features within the riverbanks is currently underway. Archaeological monitoring of construction and full excavation or preservation in situ of all areas of archaeological potential directly affected by development have been recommended.</p>					
00E0406 ext	SMR 19:26	E 650140m, N 656163m	Banks of the River Breagagh, Gardens, Kilkenny	2002:1011	Paul Stevens
<p>Testing of the banks of the River Breagagh was initially carried out in September and October 2000 (Excavations 2000, No. 535). Additional work was undertaken in April 2001 (Excavations 2001, No. 714) and again in August 2002. Work was carried out before construction of the River Breagagh section of the River Nore (Kilkenny City) Drainage Scheme. The development involves the lowering of the riverbed, with additional selective widening of the river, and the installation of gabion walls and sheet piles.</p> <p>Trench RB-9 was excavated along the left bank of the River Breagagh, against the river wall, and 23m north-east of Trench RB-3. The trench was dug to assess an area of riverbank marked on the 1839–42 OS map as a 'Corn Kiln'. Two floors and rooms were revealed: an eastern room with stone partition wall and cobbled surface leading to the doorway, through the river wall, and a western room with a paved floor (at a slightly higher level) and truncated concrete partition wall, extending back from the river wall. The northern section of the test-trench was severely truncated by a concrete foundation pad for the existing carpark and apartment development. The eastern room dated to the early 19th century, and the western to the 20th century. Further excavation of the cobbled floor was recommended and undertaken under a separate licence (see No. 1016 below, 02E1370).</p>					

Table 3: Previous archaeological excavations adjacent to the subject site

5. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING

5.1 Methodology

A total of seven test-trenches (880 linear metres) were excavated on 29-30 April 2019 in clear dry conditions (Figure 5; Plates 1-4). A 16-ton tracked excavator with a 2 m grading bucket was used to excavate the trenches. There are several overhead power-lines traversing the site and previous ground disturbances in the form of a disused quarry/sandpit and a sharp east-facing scarp extending north from the quarry (Figure 5). These conditions made geophysical survey impractical and constrained the location and coverage of test trenches. Excavation proceeded in level spits of 0.20m. Each trench was inspected for archaeological remains and all trenches were reinstated on completion.

5.2 Results (see Figure 5)

Topsoil was uniform across the site, 0.2-0.4m in depth with an orange/brown sandy clay subsoil of medium compaction. No archaeological features or material was identified in the course of testing.

Trench	L x B x D	Orientation	Description
1	100m x 2m x 0.32m	E/W	No archaeology found
2	165m x 2m x 0.4m	E/W	No archaeology found
3	80m x 2m x 0.35m	E/W	No archaeology found
4	100m x 2m x 0.25m	E/W	No archaeology found
5	90m x 2m x 0.27m	E/W	No archaeology found
6	130m x 2m x 0.31m	E/W	No archaeology found
7	160m x 2m x 0.38m	E/W	No archaeology found

Table 4: Testing results

6. IMPACTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

During the course of the testing program nothing of archaeological significance was uncovered in the site. **No further archaeological works are required.**

The conclusions and recommendations expressed in this report are subject to the approval of The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG) and the relevant local authorities. As the statutory body responsible for the protection of Ireland's archaeological and cultural heritage resource, the DCHG may issue alternative or additional recommendations.

7. REFERENCES

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7.2 Web references

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Online Archaeological Survey of Ireland www.archaeology.ie [accessed 05th March 2019]

Architectural Heritage www.buidingsofireland.ie [accessed 05th March 2019]

<https://excavations.ie/report/2000/Kilkenny/0005360/>

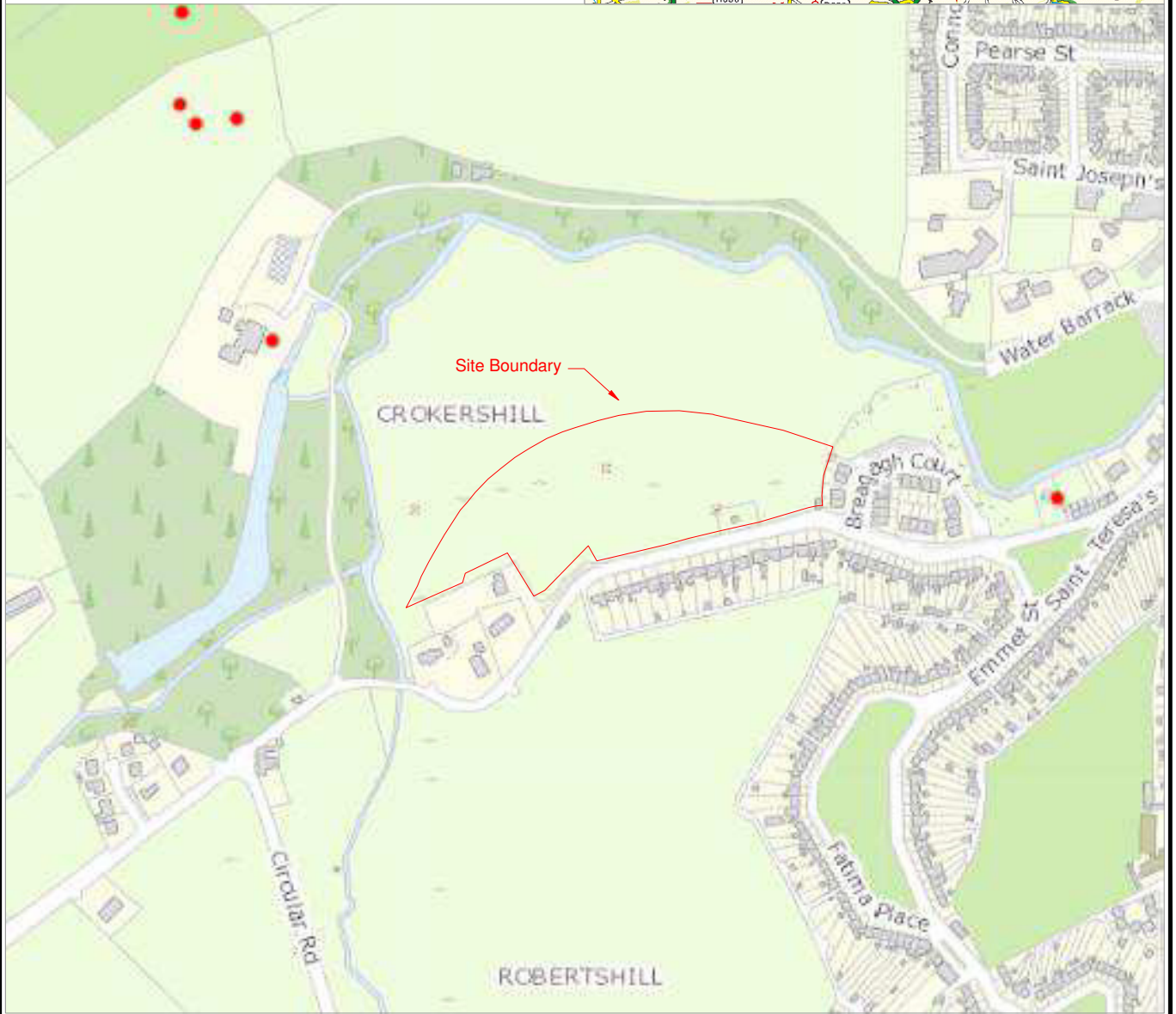
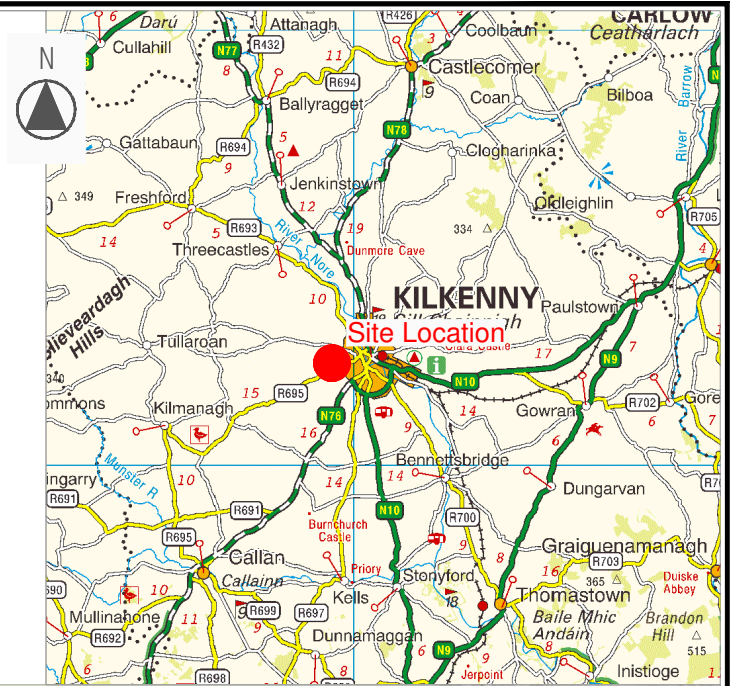
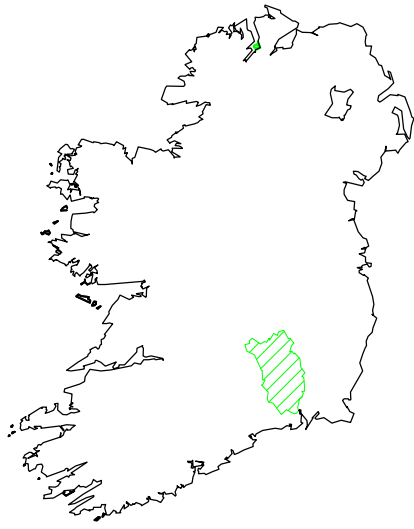
https://www.kilkennycoco.ie/resources/eng/Services/Planning/DevelopmentPlans/Appendix_C-G_City.pdf

<http://kilkennyarchaeologicalsociety.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/OKelly-Place-Names-of-County-Kilkenny-Crannagh-Barony.pdf>



Liam Coen

1st May 2019



Unit 8 Beat Centre
 Stephenstown,
 Balbriggan,
 Co. Dublin

CrokersHill, Kilkenny
 Archaeological Assessment

Client: Kilkenny County Council

Scale: 1:5000 A4

Date: May 2019

Origin: www.archaeology.ie

Ref: 2019_16_Ass_01

Figure 1: Site location

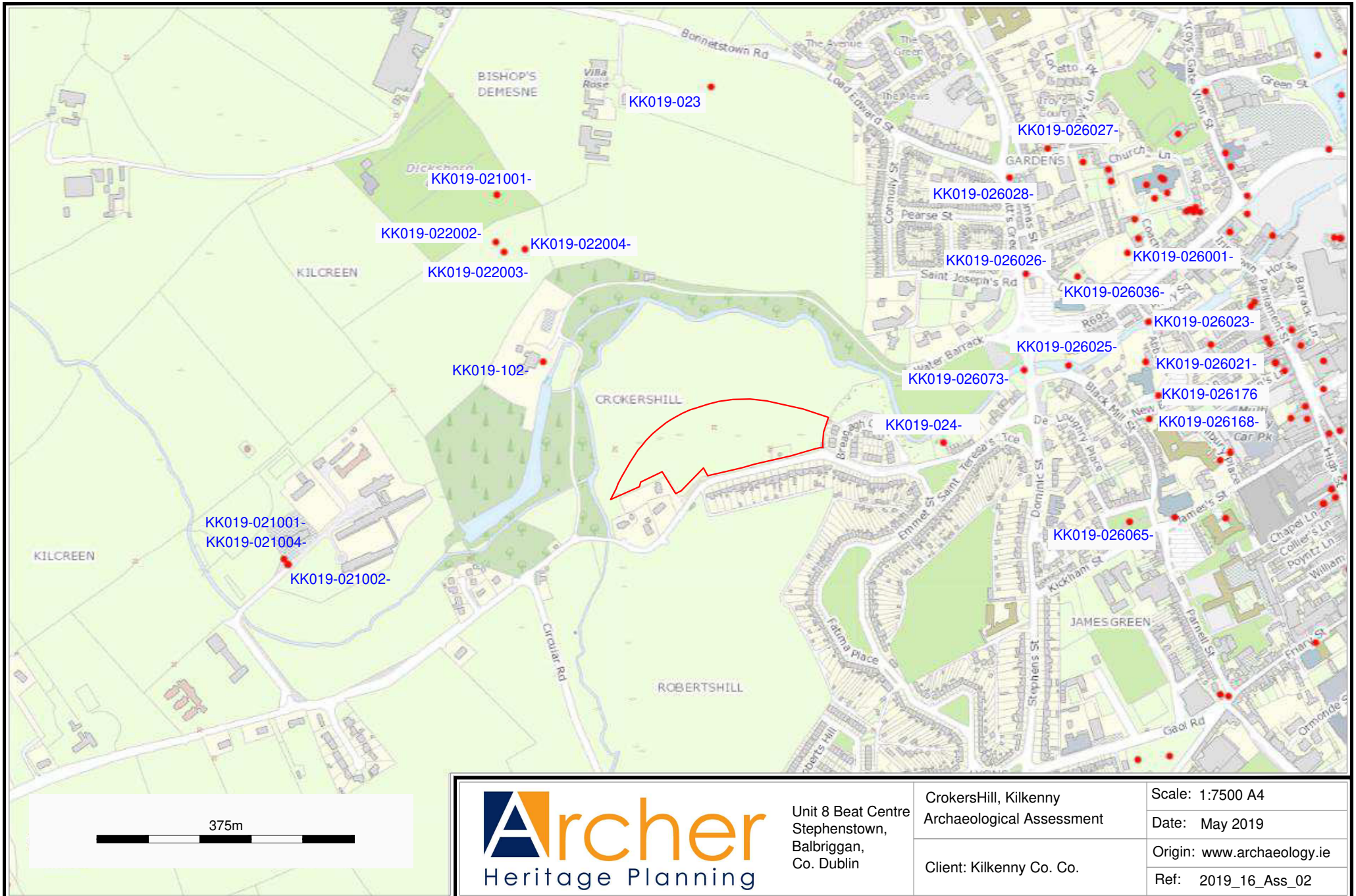
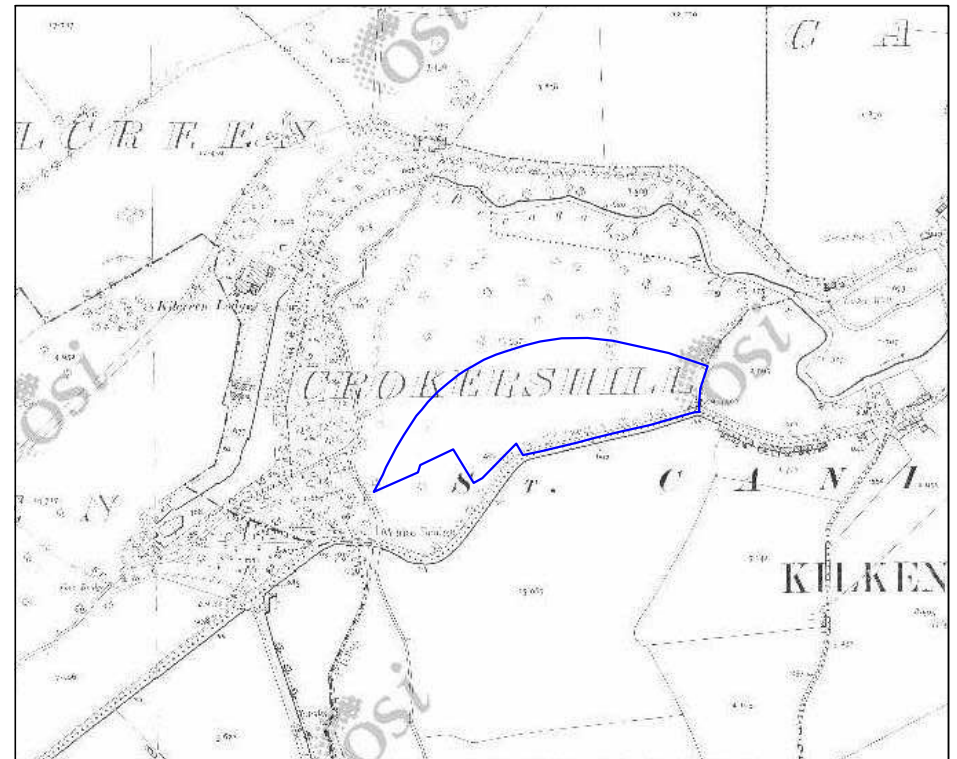
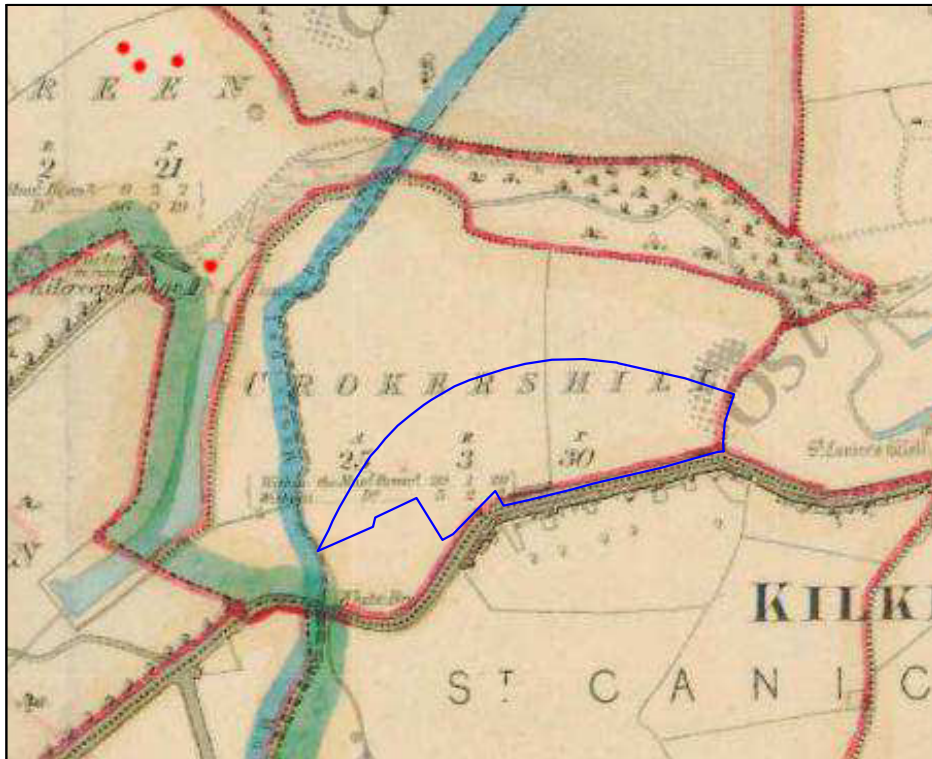


Figure 2: Surrounding RMP/SMR sites within 500m



(l) 1st Edition OS Map (1842)

(r) 2nd Edition OS Map (1899-1902)



Unit 8 Beat Centre
Stephenstown,
Balbriggan,
Co. Dublin

Crokers Hill, Kilkenny
Archaeological Assessment

Client: Kilkenny Co. Co.

Scale: Not to scale

Date: May 2019

Origin: OSI

Ref: 2019_16_Ass_03

Figure 3: Extracts from early historical maps



(l) 1995 OSI Aerial Photograph

(r) 2019 Google Earth



Unit 8 Beat Centre
Stephenstown,
Balbriggan,
Co. Dublin

CrokersHill, Kilkenny
Archaeological Assessment

Client: Kilkenny Co. Co.

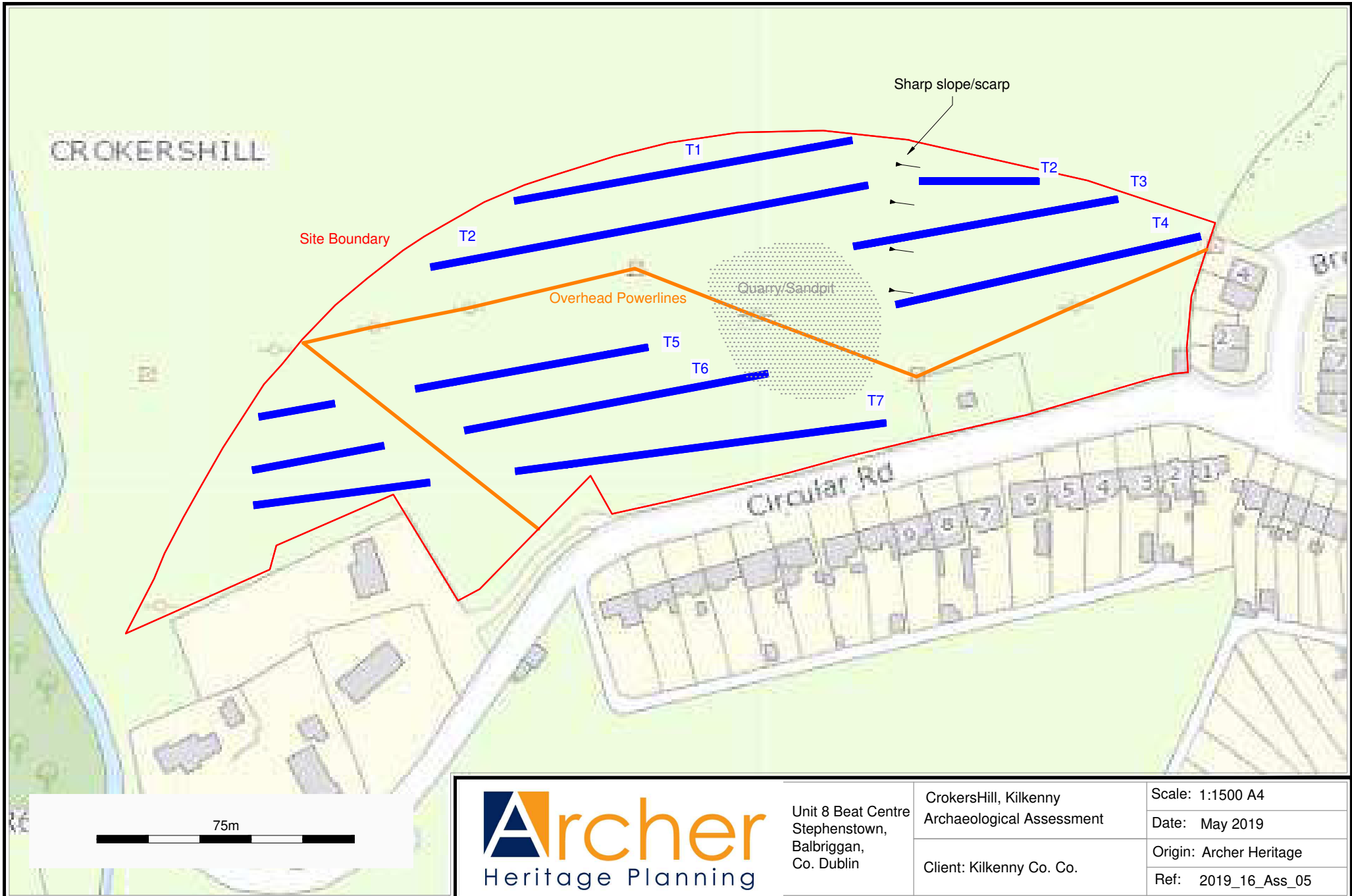
Scale: Not to scale

Date: May 2019

Origin: OSI/Google Earth

Ref: 2019_16_Ass_04

Figure 4: Aerial Photographs




	Unit 8 Beat Centre Stephenstown, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin	CrokersHill, Kilkenny Archaeological Assessment	Scale: 1:1500 A4 Date: May 2019
	Client: Kilkenny Co. Co.	Origin: Archer Heritage Ref: 2019_16_Ass_05	

Figure 5: Location of test trenches



Plate 1: Trench 1 from west



Plate 2: Trench 3 from east



Plate 3: Trench 5 from west



Plate 4: Trench 7 from east