

Following Corbet's flight from Ireland at the end of 1659, and his subsequent execution in the wake of Charles II's restoration to the throne, John Talbot managed to regain possession of the manor in the 1660s. John Talbot, and subsequent generations of his family, were obviously concerned to ensure that neither the requisitioning of the castle, nor its confiscation, were ever repeated, and there is a suggestion in surviving estate records (cf. Byrne 1997, 16, 69) that the main concern with renovations and upkeep to the castle and demesne involved not just modifications according to new ideas about polite architecture and landscape design, but also a desire to lessen the military appearance and effectiveness of the site.

By the late 18th century, prosperous Dubliners were leaving the city and establishing small country estates in the surrounding countryside, with coastal locations proving more attractive still. Auburn House ('Auburne') is mentioned as the seat of J. Crawford, Esq. In the mid-18th century, the property belonged to the Crawfords, a prosperous merchant family from Fermanagh. The house was built in about 1779, probably to mark the marriage of its owner, James Crawford, to Frances Vernon of Clontarf Castle in 1776; it is presumed that the courtyard, coach-house and walled gardens also date from this time (www.turtlebunbury.com/published/published_interiors/ireland/pub_int_auburn). Bunbury describes Auburn House as one of the finest residences built at this time, it being 'a golden-brown three-storey mansion located within a wooded demesne adjacent to Malahide Castle' (Ibid.).

2.5. RMP / SMR Sites

There are no RMP / SMR sites located within the subject lands and only two within c. 500m (Figure 3). One is a mound (RMP DU012-028) c. 300m to the south that was excavated in 1982 and is thought to be the remains of an ornamental feature attached to the grounds of Auburn House (the mound was formed from medieval and post-medieval 'dump' material). The second is an enclosure (SMR DU012-078), also located in Auburn townland, c. 275m southwest of the subject lands. The site was identified by Dr Steve Davis as a cropmark on an aerial photograph in 2015 (SMR file).

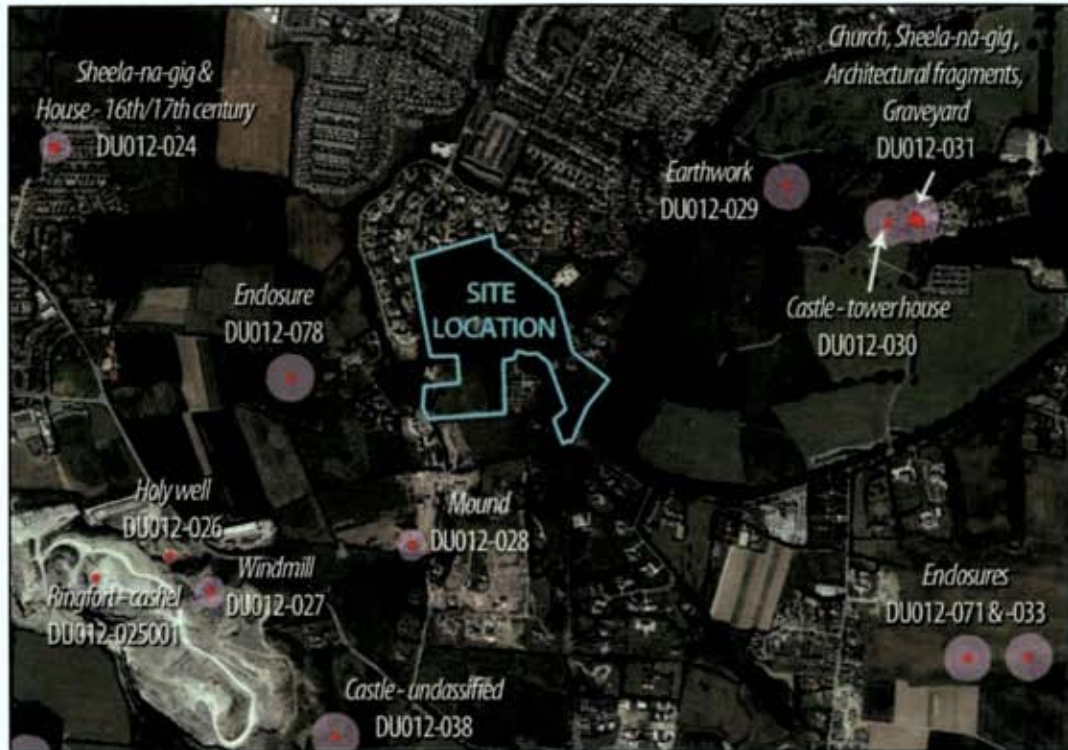


Figure 3 Recorded archaeological sites within 1km of subject lands

2.6. Stray Finds (National Museum of Ireland Topographical files)

Only three finds are recorded to Auburn townland, all of which are pottery sherds of unknown date (NMI Reg. Nos 1946:410-412). The volume of stray finds recorded to the surrounding townlands, particularly Feltrim Hill to the southwest and Paddy's Hill in Broomfield to the east, indicates significant activity and settlement in the wider area during the prehistoric period.

2.7. Cartographic sources

Down Survey

At the time of the mid-17th century Down Survey, the subject area lay within 'Mabstowne' (Mabestown), with the townland of Auburn presumably a much later division. Several small dwellings are depicted in the townland, described as 'foure or five cabbins' in the parish terrier, with the forfeited land formerly the possession of Chris Fagan of Feltrim. Malahide Castle is depicted as a fortified house surrounded by trees to the northeast, while the windmill on Feltrim Hill is also shown to the southwest.

'An Actual Survey of the County of Dublin', John Rocque

John Rocque, on his 1760 map of County Dublin (Figure 4), shows a property already occupying the lands at Auburn. The property comprised a house and outbuildings arranged around a courtyard, with a kitchen garden on the southwest side. The buildings were situated on the south side of 'Peas Fields Hill'. As now, the property was accessed off the Malahide Road. The present house was built around 1779, presumably replacing the earlier dwelling. Malahide Demesne is depicted, named 'Malahide Court'. There are small settlement clusters at 'Streams Town', 'Mabes Town' and Feltrim. Feltrim Hill and the windmill are both depicted and named.



Figure 4 Rocque map of the County of Dublin (1760)



Figure 5 Taylor's map of Dublin (1816)

'Map of the Environs of Dublin', John Taylor

Taylor's map (Figure 5) is less detailed than Rocque's, but it provides some new information. Most notably, the present Auburn House is depicted and named, with woodland shown around it to the north, west and south. The house is shown occupying an elevated site, presumably the hill named on Rocque's map, 'Peas Fields Hill'. Malahide Demesne is named as the 'Court of Malahide', with both castle and church ruins indicated.

Ordnance Survey Mapping

The first edition OS six-inch map (Figure 6) represents the earliest accurate and detailed cartographic source for the study area. It shows Auburn House, with courtyard buildings arranged on its west side, and woodland to the north, west, and south (as on Taylor's map). The house is approached along a carriageway that leads north and westwards from the entrance on the Malahide Road. To the south and west of the carriageway

is a group of outbuildings, a walled garden and orchards. These form part of the Auburn estate and are in roughly the location of those depicted on Rocque's map of 1760. The remainder of the estate is divided into fields, with an area of parkland to the front (east) of the house. Mabestown townland is now only one small section on the east side of the Malahide Road (the remainder having been renamed Auburn), where it forms part of the large estate associated with Malahide Castle. The part of the subject lands that fall within Streamstown townland comprise fields outside the boundaries of both Auburn estate and the neighbouring Clairville.



Figure 6 First Edition OS six-inch map, 1843

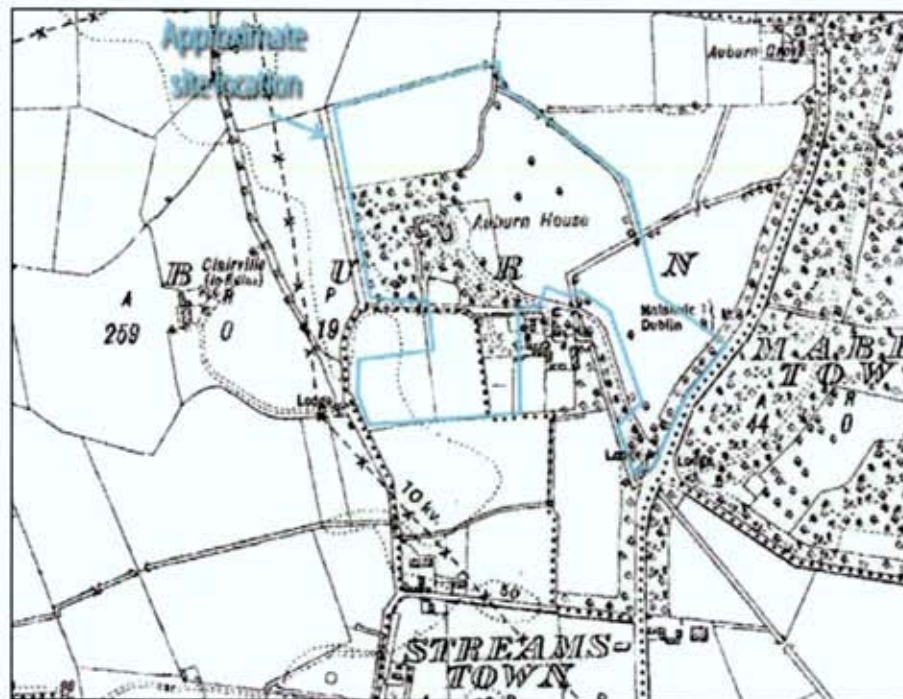


Figure 7 Revised Edition OS six-inch map, 1935-38

There are no significant changes on the OS 25-inch map of 1906-09 (not pictured), though the neighbouring Clairville house is indicated as being in ruin by this time. This remains the case on the revised six-inch edition OS map of 1935-38 (Figure 7). By this time, the walled gardens and orchards in the Auburn estate are empty plots.

3. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

There have been no previous archaeological investigations within the subject lands and only two in the vicinity, one of which is the aforementioned excavation in 1982 of the mound (RMP DU012-028) in Auburn townland. In 2012, archaeological monitoring was undertaken of investigative slit-trenches excavated along the R107 road for a proposed new watermain (St Doolagh's to Streamstown). Nothing of archaeological significance was found (Licence No. 12E0185; Excavations Bulletin Ref. 2012:247).

Of those undertaken in the wider area, the discoveries in Kinsaley townland are particularly notable. A large enclosure (SMR site DU012-071) visible as a cropmark on aerial imagery was confirmed by geophysical survey and archaeological testing (Licence Nos 14R00314 & 14E0165). A second possible enclosure, previously unknown, was identified by geophysical survey and archaeological testing further north (Licence Nos 14R0038 & 14E0162). Another enclosure and two ringforts sites nearby are also visible on aerial imagery (RMP sites DU012-033, -003001 & -003002). This demonstrates both the efficacy of geophysical survey in this landscape and the prevalence of destroyed archaeological sites that survive below-ground.

3.1. Geophysical Survey

A detailed gradiometer survey was carried out in February 2020 by J.M. Leigh surveys Ltd. (Licence Reference 20R0002). Areas available for detailed survey within the application area were limited due to dense tree cover, landscaping, buildings and roadways. Detailed survey was contained within six fields (Areas A-F, Figure 8). Areas A and B are located immediately to the north and east of Auburn House and comprised short pasture. Areas C, D and E are located in the grounds of Little Auburn and constitute its gardens. There was much magnetic disturbance in these areas and Area C comprised overgrown vegetation as well as modern litter and debris. Area F is located to the south of Auburn House and is surrounded by modern housing and ground conditions were similar to those in Area C.

Survey Results Areas A and B (Figures 9 and 10)

Several strong magnetic linear responses correspond to modern services in both Areas A and B. Curvilinear trends in the southeast of Area A were deemed of archaeological potential, although interpretation was extremely tentative. Several discreet positive magnetic responses were indicated across both Areas A and B and archaeological interpretation was tentative as there was no clear pattern. Two linear trends in the north of Area B did not form a coherent pattern and were interpreted as possible modern agricultural activity. Several linear trends and broad negative responses were identified in the southern half of Area B, however there was no clear pattern and they were interpreted as possible natural variations, with the possibility that they could represent plough damaged remains of former landscaped features. The incoherent nature of the responses makes interpretation cautious. Parallel trends in the south eastern corner of Area B are indicative of ploughing activity. A small area of increased magnetic response was identified in the west of Area B in proximity to the linear trends. This comprises several positive magnetic responses in addition to ferrous responses. Although this could possibly represent a spread of burnt material, an archaeological interpretation was highly tentative given the level of modern ferrous disturbance at the site.

Survey Results Areas C, D, E and F (Figures 11 and 12)

Areas C and E are largely dominated by modern magnetic disturbance with the exception of a possible single isolated response in the north eastern corner of Area C and similar isolated responses are evident in Area F. In both areas there was no clear archaeological pattern and an archaeological interpretation was extremely cautious. Two linear trends were evident in Area D and represent pathways associated with Little Auburn House. A fragmented magnetic linear trend was identified in Area F oriented north-south and may represent a field boundary depicted on the Cassini 6-inch OS mapping. Further linear trends in Area F may be associated with nearby housing. A curvilinear positive magnetic trend in Area F may represent the remains of a curvilinear ditched feature, however an archaeological interpretation is cautious.

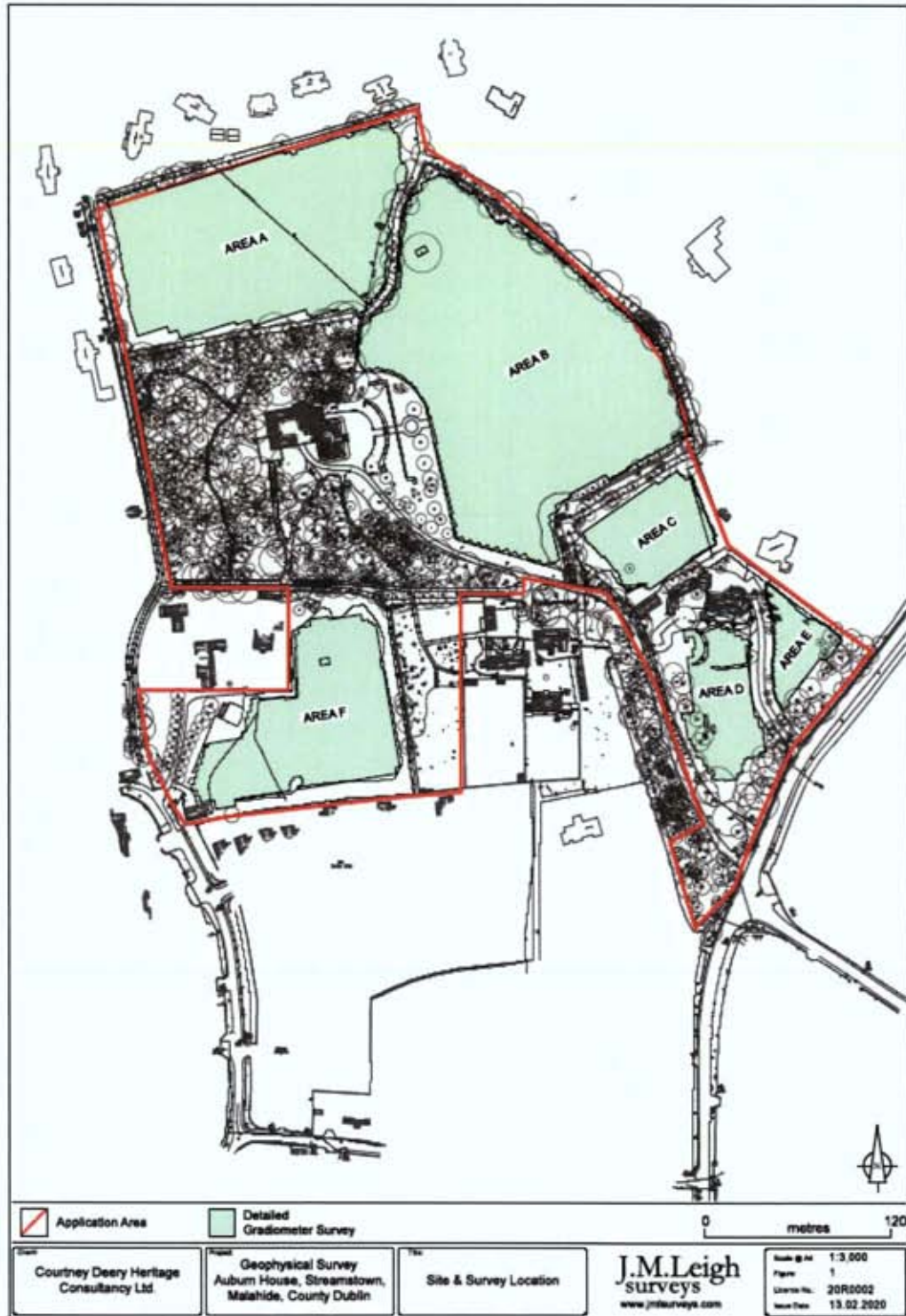


Figure 8 Survey Areas A-F

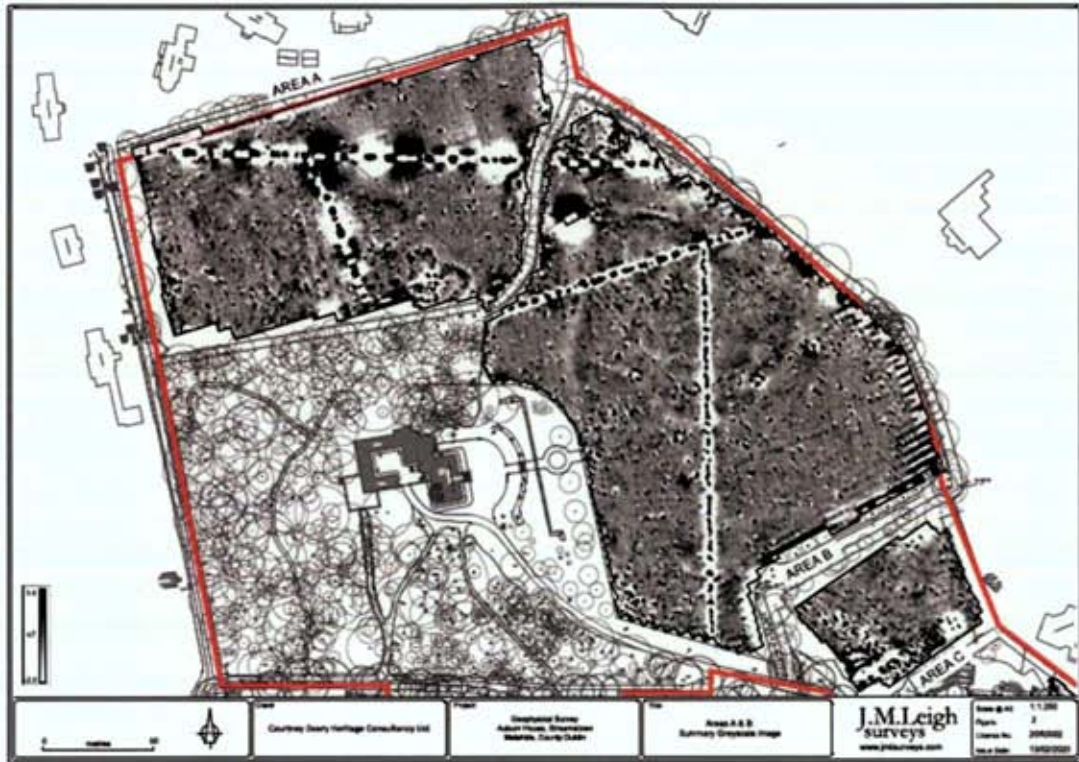


Figure 9 Geophysical survey, summary greyscale, Areas A and B

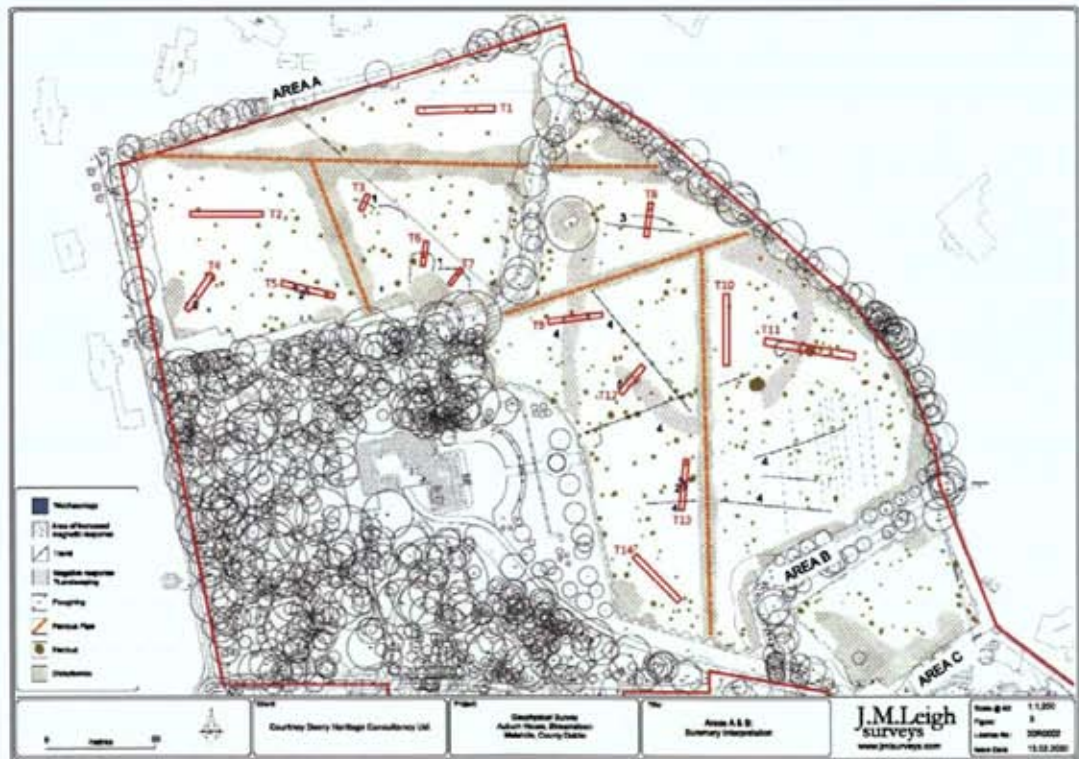


Figure 10 Geophysical survey, summary interpretation, Areas A and B and test trenches 1-14

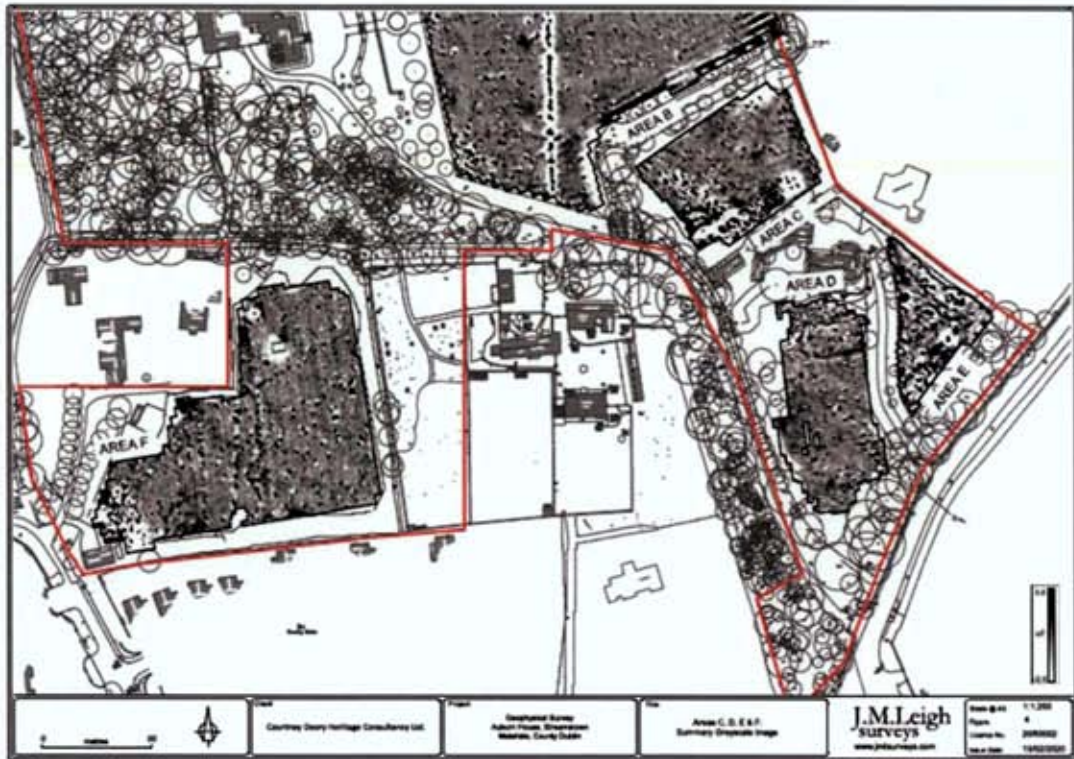


Figure 11 Geophysical survey, summary greyscale, Areas C, D, E and F

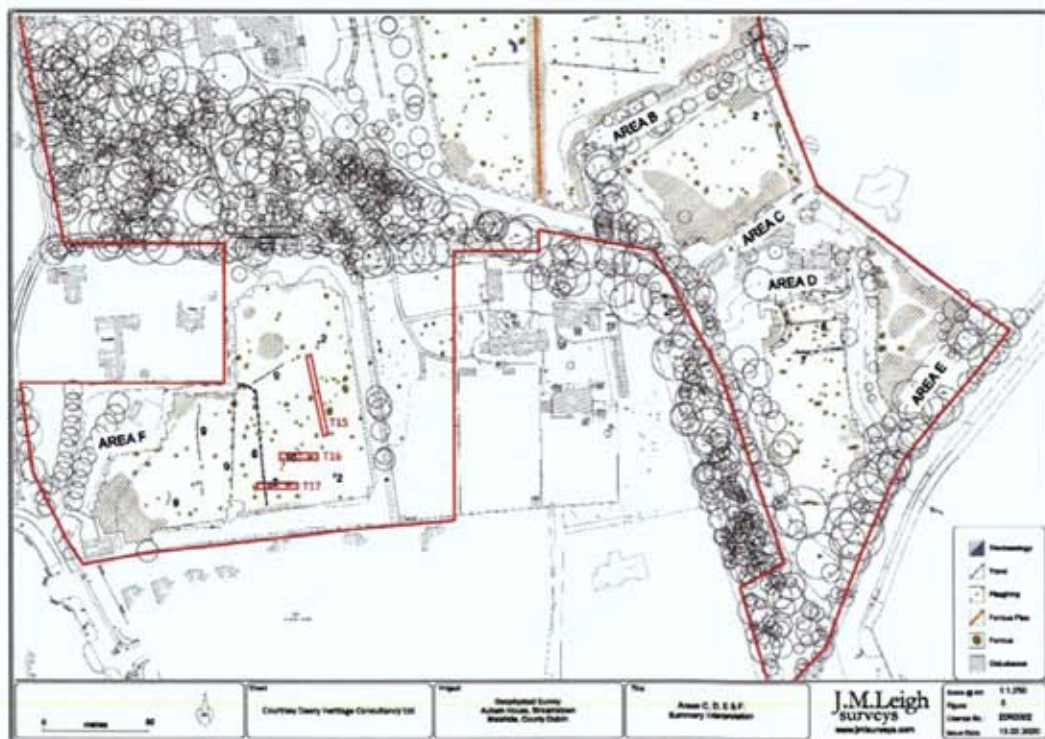


Figure 12 Geophysical survey, summary interpretation, Areas C, D, E and F and test trenches 15-17

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING RESULTS

4.1. General

Archaeological testing was carried out over three days from 3rd March 2020. This was carried out using a mechanical tracked excavator fitted with toothless grading bucket. In total 17 test trenches totalling 430m linear metres were excavated and were placed to target anomalies indicated in the geophysical survey as well as control trenches to test areas where no anomalies were indicated (Figures 10 & 12).

4.2. Methodology

All trenches were excavated to the surface of archaeological or potential archaeological deposits or to the underlying natural subsoil, whichever was encountered first. Any potential archaeological features were cleaned and sectioned where necessary, to establish their nature, extent and character. Photographs and trench recording sheets were used to record the details of each trench.

4.3. Summary of test trenches T1 – T17

The natural subsoil on the site generally comprised, brown-yellow sandy silt, with frequent gravelly and sometimes stony inclusions towards the top of rises and light grey silty clay on lower areas. Trenches ranged in width from 1.2 - 1.8m wide and depths generally ranged between 0.25 – 0.3m.

Trenches 3-9, 11-13 and 16-17 were placed to test a range of anomalies indicated in the geophysical survey and these are detailed below in 4.3.1. Trenches 1, 2, 10, 14 and 15 were placed as control trenches to test areas where no anomalies were indicated in the survey results. No features, finds or deposits of archaeological interest were identified in any of the trenches.

Table 1 Summary of test trenches

Trench #	Area	Orientation	Length	Width	Depth	Results
1	A	E-W	40m	1.5m	0.3m	No archaeology
2	A	E-W	40m	1.5m	0.35m	No archaeology
3	A	SSW-NNE	15m	1.4m	0.45m	No archaeology
4	A	SW-NE	25m	1.5m	0.3m	No archaeology
5	A	NW-SE	25m	1.4m	0.4m	No archaeology
6	A	SSW-NNE	15m	1.6m	0.25m	No archaeology
7	A	SW-NE	10m	1.7m	0.25-0.3m	No archaeology
8	B	SSW-NNE	20m	1.8m	0.25m	No archaeology
9	B	WSW-ESE	20m	1.7m	0.25m	No archaeology
10	B	NNW-SSE	35m	1.6m	0.3m	No archaeology
11	B	E-W	40m	1.7m	0.25m	No archaeology
12	B	SW-NE	20m	1.8m	0.2-0.3m	No archaeology
13	B	NNE-SSW	25m	1.8m	0.3m	No archaeology

Trench #	Area	Orientation	Length	Width	Depth	Results
14	B	NW-SE	30m	1.2m	0.3m	No archaeology
15	F	NNW-SSE	40m	1.5m	0.3m	No archaeology
16	F	E-W	15m	1.5m	0.3m	No archaeology
17	F	E-W	15m	1.5m	0.3m	No archaeology

4.3.1 Geophysical trench results

Trenches 3, 6 and 7 were placed to investigate several curvilinear trends and ferrous responses in Area A. In trench 3 a band of gravel mid-way along the trench may correspond with the geophysical anomaly indicated in that location. In trench 6 a pit filled with mortar, slate and brick, up to 1m deep below the present ground level was identified and represents the dumped remains of a demolished modern structure. This deposit extended beyond the limit of the test trench to the east and west. In trench 7 a band of gravelly soil approximately mid-way along the trench appears to correspond with the anomaly on the geophysical survey.

Trenches 4 and 5 were placed to investigate several discreet positive magnetic responses with no clear pattern in Area A. Nothing corresponding with the geophysical anomalies was noted in trench 4 and gravelly patches were identified in trench 5 that could correspond with the survey results.

Trench 8 was placed to investigate two linear trends with no coherent pattern in Area B. No features were noted in the trench that would correspond with the geophysical survey results.

Trenches 9 and 11 were placed to investigate broad negative responses in Area B. There was no clear pattern and they were thought to possibly represent natural variations or plough damaged remains of former landscape features. In trench 9 changes in the natural subsoil from silty to gravelly natural are likely to correspond with the anomaly on the geophysical survey. In trench 11 the natural subsoil changes from sandy silt to pure silty clay and these variations may correspond with the geophysical survey results.

Trench 12 was placed to investigate another broad negative response, a small area of increased magnetic response and ferrous responses in Area B. This was thought to possibly represent a spread of burnt material, although an archaeological interpretation was highly tentative. Mid-way along the trench and corresponding with the geophysical anomalies a deposit of dark soil with modern inclusions was identified.

Trench 13 was placed to investigate an east-west linear trend and a discreet positive magnetic response in Area B. A shallow linear probable furrow oriented roughly east-west was identified in the trench and variations in the natural subsoil most likely account for the other anomalies in the survey results.

Trench 16 was placed to investigate a curvilinear positive magnetic trend possibly representing a ditched feature in Area F, although an archaeological interpretation was cautious. Nothing corresponding with the geophysical anomalies were identified in the trench.

Trench 17 was placed to investigate an isolated response and a fragmented magnetic linear trend oriented roughly north-south in Area F. Nothing corresponding with the geophysical anomalies were identified in the trench.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Testing at Auburn was carried out over three days from 3rd March 2020. No features, finds or deposits of archaeological interest were found in any of the trenches and the majority of the geophysical anomalies appear to correspond with variations in the natural subsoil. As such the archaeological potential of the area is considered low, however, based on the scale of the development, archaeological monitoring of topsoil removal is recommended.

Please note that all recommendations are subject to approval by the National Monuments Section of the Heritage and Planning Division, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

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Online Resources:

www.excavations.ie

www.libguides.ucd.ie

www.osi.ie

www.heritagemaps.ie

www.tcd.ie/downsurvey

PLATES



Plate 1 Trench 1, Area A, looking west



Plate 2 Trench 4, Area A, looking southwest



Plate 3 Trench 5, Area A, looking northwest



Plate 4 Trench 7, Area A, looking northeast



Plate 5 Trench 9, Area B, looking east



Plate 6 Trench 11, Area B, looking east



Plate 7 Trench 13, Area B, looking north-northeast



Plate 8 Trench 15, Area F, looking north-northwest



Plate 9 Trench 17, Area F, looking east

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FINGAL CO. CO. PLDEPT

Courtney Deery Heritage Consultancy
Lynwood House
Ballinteer Road
Dublin 16
D16 H9V6

Telephone: 01 5475795
Email: info@courtneydeery.ie
Website: www.courtneydeery.ie

Registered Company No. 519676
VAT No. IE1111365WH

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