

Preliminary Report of
Excavations
A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road
Area 13, Site 113



Ministerial Direction no:	E3798
Chainage:	12510-12610
NGR:	307083E, 311958N
Townland:	Proleek
Parish:	Ballymascanlan
County:	Louth
Country:	Republic of Ireland
Director:	Caroline Powell
Submitted:	November 2005

**Preliminary Stratigraphic Report
of Excavations Along the
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Compiled by:	Archaeological Development Services Ltd
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Abstract

Louth County Council, the Roads Service NI (Department for Regional Development) and the National Roads Authority are currently proposing a Road Scheme, the A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Road. The route consists of 14.2km of 2-lane dual carriageway with 5.7km of associated link roads from Cloghoge roundabout, south of Newry to the Ballymascanlan interchange north of Dundalk. The proposed route was tested for archaeological and historic remains during Phase 1 of the project, after which this site was determined eligible for further archaeological excavations.

Provisionally Site 113 was identified as “an extensive spread of charcoal-enriched black silt and burnt stone”. This measured up to 33m (north to south) and 15m (east to west) and was interpreted as “evidence for a large fulacht fiadh, or burnt mound with evidence for additional or satellite burnt mounds within Field 9”.

Recent excavations have revealed that although burnt mound material was present at the site, along with associated pits and a possible well, only secondary traces of burnt mounds remained. This was probably due to later agricultural activity in the 19th Century when the ground was levelled, drained and ploughed. This probably occurred at a time when land pressure increased.

No troughs or hearths, feature types often associated with burnt mounds, were found during the course of the excavation, however a subcircular unlined well dug to a natural spring would attest to the possibility that the burnt mound material found on the site are the remains of fulacht fiadh. It is thought that the burnt mound material found at the site may be the truncated remains, with material continuing under the western baulk towards the Ballymascanlan Stream, of three burnt mounds, probably dating to the Bronze Age.

It is hoped that charcoal samples taken from the burnt mound material will firmly establish the date of the archaeological activity found on the site.

1 Description of the Site and Location

1.1 Introduction

The National Roads Authority (NRA) for the Republic of Ireland and Department for Regional Development (DRD) for Northern Ireland are the authorities in charge of the proposal to construct a new road between Newry and Dundalk. As part of the road works, Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS) was commissioned to perform an archaeological assessment along the proposed Link Road and to mitigate the impacts of any construction on archaeological resources.

The proposed scheme involves a 14 km route with 5.7 km of associated link roads (Fig. 1). Upgrading the key transport corridors and associated trunk road links will provide a strategic framework for infrastructure investment, improvement of public transport, future urban and economic development especially for large-scale sites to accommodate industry and commerce and assisting tourist travel around the region.

The features were located in Field 9, lying to the immediate north of the Ballymascanlan River an extensive spread of charcoal-enriched black silt and burnt stone F9/001 was uncovered. This spread measured up to 33m east to west and 15m north to south. To the north was a small spread of similar burnt material F9/002 measuring 2m east to west by 3m north to south. Further to the north was a flat stony platform, not investigated by the trenches during the testing, was evident this may represent an addition burnt mound (McConway and Dawkes 2005).

The following report details the results of the fieldwork at Site 113 that followed the recommendations of the assessment of “an extensive spread of charcoal-enriched black silt and burnt stone.” The excavations were carried out between 26th July and 26th August 2005. Staff of ADS carried out archaeological work on behalf of the developers under the direction of Caroline Powell. This section of the project occurs in Plaster Townland, Ballymascanlan Parish, Co. Louth; at National Grid Reference 307083E, 311958N (centre point), Ordnance Datum (OD) 28.07 and Road Scheme Chainage 12510-12610.

The director would like to acknowledge, Archaeologists Andrew Smith and Sam Fowler, and General Operative Clare Nugent.

1.2 Site description

1.2.1 Topography

The existing landscape character of the study area is a result of previous glacial, geological and human impacts (Figs 1, 2 and 3)¹. The study area is contained within a mountainous backdrop known as the Ring of Gullion. Slieve Gullion defines the western extent of the study area and lies at the centre of the Ring of Gullion. To the north lies Camlough Mountain and Fathom Mountain. The eastern boundary is defined by the western edge of the Carlingford Mountains and specifically Black Mountain. The southern edge of the Ring of Gullion is contained within the study area and includes Feede Mountain and Slievenabolea. Between the mountains of the Ring lies a broad gently undulating agricultural landscape. South of Feede Mountain the study area levels off gently undulating to Dundalk Bay.

The site was situated at the lowest point (O.D 28.07m) of Field 9 and bounded immediately to its north and west by the Ballymascanlan Stream, a tributary of the Flurry River. The site was low lying in nature and liable to flooding. Peat deposits had formed in the lowest lying areas, adjacent to the stream. The field, and the field adjacent to and east of the roadtake was under meadow. The view was entirely localised due to the vegetation bordering the stream at the western and northern end of the site, which comprised of alder and ash trees, ferns and shrubs and also due to the hill approximately 100m to the east of the site (Plate 1).

1.2.2 Geology

Vaughan in Buckley and Sweetman (1991, 8-10) indicates that the bedrock geology of the site area is composed of Silurian Greywacke. Silurian rocks were deposited in deep water in active tectonic zones. Each layer in the Silurian strata represents materials displaced and then redeposited by earthquakes, which would cause sediments to slump from the off shore slopes of the continental shelf that would then be deposited as a future greywacke bed.

1.2.3 Archaeological and historical background

The road follows a natural route way through mountainous terrain that may have been in use from the prehistoric period. The previously known monuments recorded near the route date from the Neolithic period to the 11th Century AD (Buckley and Sweetman 1991).

¹ This information has been taken directly from the A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road Environmental Statement/Environmental Impact Statement Non-Technical Summary prepared by RPS Ireland Environmental Sciences

Previously known sites within 1km of the current site. A search of the “Archaeological Survey of County Louth” (Buckley and Sweetman 1991) and of the Records of Monuments and Places (RMP) shows that there are numerous known prehistoric and historic sites in the area. These include the following seven sites, listed by townland, the RMP number, the Buckley and Sweetman (1991) page number, their reference number and their description (usually shortened) (Fig. 3).

RMP: LH004-039 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 180 Survey No 669)
Townland: Plaster
Parish: Ballymascanlan
Barony: Lower Dundalk
County: Louth
Country: Republic of Ireland
NGR: 30641E, 30641N
Description: A ringfort subcircular in area (int. dims. 28m E-W, 25m N-S) enclosed by an earth and stone bank (W 4.7m, H 0.9m internally, 1.9m externally) with facing of large stones.

RMP: LH004-041 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 25 Survey No. 41)
Townland: Aghnaskeagh
Parish: Ballymascanlan
Barony: Lower Dundalk
County: Louth
Country: Republic of Ireland
NGR: 307490E, 312470N
Description: Possible wedge tomb described as a Megalithic tomb. This tomb is very ruined. The remains consist of two orthostats, 2.4m apart and aligned WSW-ENE, with a large, horizontally-laid stone set beside and perpendicular to one of the orthostats; the two latter stones are incorporated in a roadside fence. The OS field trace records that there was formerly ‘a large flat stone resting on 2 others’.

RMP: LH004-042 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 75 Survey No. 179)
Townland: Aghnaskeagh
Parish: Ballymascanlan
Barony: Lower Dundalk
County: Louth
Country: Republic of Ireland
NGR: 307540E, 312450N
Description: Standing stone: Formerly located a short distance SE of megalithic tomb (LH002-041).

RMP: LH004-068 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, (01) 66 Survey No. 155, (02) 256 Survey No 971)
Townland: Proleek
Parish: Ballymascanlan
Barony: Lower Dundalk
County: Louth
Country: Republic of Ireland
NGR: 30738E, 31187N
Description: (01) Two stone-lined long cists, aligned E-W, one containing a skull and the other containing human bones.
NGR: 30738E, 31187N

Description: (02) Circular Early Christian enclosure with a maximum diameter of 76.5m. Probable ancient entrance at W. Two long cists (No 155) discovered in interior (CLAJ 1933, 100)

RMP: LH004-069 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: Survey No. Not Listed)

Townland: Aghaboys

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 306770E, 311410N

Description: Enclosures no further information.

RMP: LH004-070 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, (01) 138 Survey No 385, (02) 203 Survey No 826)

Townland: Proleek Acres

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 30791E, 312110N

Description: (01) Souterrain situated in interior of earthwork (No 826). The souterrain consists of two passages forming an L-shaped plan. Passage 1 extends SE-NW, at NW end turning almost at right angles into Passage 2 running N-S (CLAJ 1942, 149-50).

NGR: 30791E, 312110N

Description: (02) Site of an earthwork. Marked as oval earthwork and labelled 'fort' on 1835 edition of OS 6" sheet. No visible surface trace.

RMP: LH004-071 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 147 Survey No 530)

Townland: Proleek Acres

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 30784E, 31204N

Description: Possible souterrain. Local tradition of a 'cave' in field south of earthwork site (No 826) (CLAJ 1942, 149-50).

Sites know from the current project. Current work has identified a considerable number of archaeological sites within 1km of this location. Positive results of trial pits excavations along the route were reported by McConway and Lynch (2005). Sites investigated within one mile of this excavation during the current project include:

Site 111 (excavations in progress) is an extensive site, laying next to recorded monument (LH 004:041) a Megalithic Tomb (Figs 3 and 4). F18/001 lay to the immediate north of a beech-lined avenue and in the immediate vicinity of a recorded monument, a 'megalithic structure'. The area was noticeably stony underfoot and many larger boulders protruded through the dense grass cover.

This feature consisted of a stony surface measuring approximately 30m north to south by 25m and was identified lying immediately under the topsoil and overlying subsoil. These stones were embedded within a friable mid brown/grey soil and appeared delineated with an interrupted kerb of larger boulders. F18/001 has been interpreted as a collapsed cairn associated with the recorded megalithic tomb. It is likely, given local tradition that the area may also have been used as an infant burial ground.

In the area to the immediate south of the beech lined avenue it was noted that large boulders protruded through the grass in the northwest corner of the field, although these may be associated with collapse from a stone field wall. Three areas of archaeological deposits were identified in F17. F17/001 consisted of an isolated spread of grey/brown silt; F17/002 was a roughly circular and measured 3.5m in diameter. F17/011 was a spread of black charcoal rich silt and burnt and heat shattered stone that was uncovered 75m to the southwest of F17/001. As uncovered, this deposit measured 3.5 by 2.5m and continued into both the northern and southern baulks. This deposit has been interpreted as being burnt mound or *fulachta fiadh* material. F17/003 was a circular feature that was uncovered around 27m east of F17/001 and lay within a small cluster of archaeological deposits. It consisted of a spread of orange/brown redeposited subsoil identified as F17/004, which itself measured 3.3m in diameter. A fifth feature was identified within this cluster. F17/006 was an irregular feature consisting of charcoal rich black silt F17/005, at least 5m east to west and continuing into the western baulk.

Site 112 (O'Connor 2005) thirteen features of archaeological potential were uncovered on this site. Six of these were discovered to be of natural origin, formed either by root action or the removal of stones. Of the remainder, two linear features and two pits could be dated to the recent past and were likely to be the result of farming activities. The remaining features, a stakehole and the large pit formed by two smaller pits were not datable but, given the nature of the surrounding features, there is no reason to believe that they are not contemporary.

2 A Description of the Works Carried Out

2.1 Reason for the excavation

The principal objectives of the Roads Service in implementing the scheme are to improve the conditions for road users by reducing journey times between the major commercial centres, together with an improvement in road safety. The specific objectives are:

- To contribute to the improvement of the Regional Strategic Transport Network and major transport links with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland;
- To reduce vehicle operating times and costs;

- To facilitate freight transport;
- To improve road safety and improve pedestrian and cycle access and safety.

2.2 Excavation methods

2.2.1 Phasing

The road works have been divided into 2 phases: Phase 1 included (a) the archaeological evaluation of known sites, possible sites and areas of archaeological potential and (b) the recording and evaluation of standing buildings/structures at identified locations. Phase 2, reported here, includes the resolution of any sites identified by the works.

2.2.2 Desk top study

A desktop study of archaeological and cultural heritage sites was reported in the Environmental Impact Statement for the project (RPS 2002a, 236; 2002b). A particular emphasis was paid to sites with 1km of what was then the proposed route alignment.

2.2.3 Phase 1 archaeological testing

Area 13 was considered an area of high archaeological potential, situated in an area of fertile soils within an archaeologically sensitive landscape. The potential for uncovering evidence of human activity was investigated and evaluated under Phase 1 of the contract by means of test excavation and a metal detecting (Project Sub No: A002/004) and wade survey (Project Sub No: A002/009) of the stream.

The Phase 1 report discusses the archaeological findings within Area 13, at Aghnaskeagh, Proleek Acres and Plaster Townlands, between chainages 12150-12800 (McConway and Dawkes 2005). Eoin Halpin carried out testing in this area under project sub number A002/004 from November 15-17 2004.

The purpose for and the methodology employed in the Phase I testing included:

- To fully expose, investigate, record and resolve archaeological deposits uncovered in Phase 1 and all deposits associated with this.
- Resolution of the archaeological features described above will be carried out by a licenced director, a supervisor, two assistants and four general operatives.
- A 100m x 40m area will be appropriately opened over the features under archaeological supervision to the latest archaeological horizon or to the upper surface of natural geology, whichever occurs first. The area will be manually cleaned and examined for further archaeological deposits.

- All archaeological deposits will be surveyed in to a site grid and in relation to their position on the road. All deposits will be recorded and investigated by methods appropriate to their nature and complexity using best archaeological practice. Methods used will include sectioning, planning and photographing the deposits, investigating the stratigraphic relationship with other deposits if appropriate, compiling a written record of the deposits via a context sheets

The dispersed nature of the discoveries made during the testing required the division of the original Area 13 into several sites; name and reference these sites. At this location, Site 113, the test excavations revealed “an extensive spread of charcoal-enriched black silt and burnt stone” which was thought to measure 33m north to south and 15m east to west and required further investigation. As it was determined likely that more subsurface archaeological deposits, which may or may not be associated with the deposits described above, would be uncovered during the excavation of the identified archaeological deposits and the road construction a wide area was topsoil stripped around the features discovered in testing.

The two original features that were recommended for further work, and the features found while investigation these; lay to the immediate northwest of the present N1 (McConway and Dawkes 2005, Fig. 5).

As it was determined likely that additional subsurface archaeological deposits would be associated with the known features it was also recommended that an appropriate area around each feature be topsoil stripped. All features exposed from the stripping were to be fully investigated. If it became apparent that these features form part of a more extensive archaeological landscape then it was recommended that an appropriate area be opened up on plan in order to fully investigate and record any discovered features.

2.2.4 Phase 2 archaeological excavations

Recording strategy. Recording was by means of ‘best archaeological practise’ with the primary records of these excavations consisting of written and drawn records, photographs, survey data, finds and samples. The stratigraphic record was primarily made on context record sheets, of the standard type used by ADS. These are supplemented by information from the site daybook, photographs, notebooks, plans and sections. Field surveying equipment consisted of an Ashtech DGPS surveying suite, which allowed real-time data collection with horizontal accuracy of 0.005m +1ppm and vertical accuracy of 0.010m +2ppm.

The primary records of these excavations consist of written and drawn records, photographs, survey data, finds and samples. The stratigraphic record was primarily made on context record sheets, of the standard type used by ADS. These are supplemented by information from the site diary and notebooks.

All Phase 2 archaeological excavations were carried out in accordance with the Specification for Archaeological Rescue Excavation on Known Sites document (ADS 2005). Field methods included:

- An appropriately sized area around each of the deposits was fenced off and access to these areas by machinery and personnel denied until they have been resolved.
- The removal of topsoil was by judicious use of a machine fitted with a toothless bucket under the constant supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist.
- All trenches were excavated to the latest archaeological horizon or to the upper surface of natural geology, whichever occurred first. If archaeological features were revealed these deposits were in the first instance, cordoned off using high visibility tape and access to these areas by machinery denied.
- All deposits were hand investigated using methods appropriate to their composition, nature and date and time was allowed for the archaeologist to undertake the appropriate level of recording.
- The level of recording depended on the nature and extent of the archaeological remains encountered. All deposits were recorded on plan (in relation to the site grid), photographed and if appropriate, their location surveyed in advance of hand excavation.
- Excavation of deposits was carried out by sectioning using methods appropriate to their composition and nature.
- Contexts were sampled for palaeobotanical material, radiocarbon dating, soil micromorphology, petrology, wood identification, etc.
- All sections and cut features were photographed and drawn.
- The position of all finds and samples were recorded in three-dimensions (when practicable) in relation to the site grid.
- Sampling strategies depended upon the dimensions, make up and complexity of the archaeological remains encountered.
- A day book was maintained where all archaeological features were recorded in writing utilizing ADS context sheets, scaled field illustrations and by both slide and digital photography.
- All finds were logged according to context, bagged and catalogued.
- A contract conservator was on call if necessary.

- All finds are stored in our post excavation unit at Kells, Co. Meath and will ultimately be stored in whatever facility the State will provide.
- Excavation or preservation by record was carried out on archaeological deposits that will be impacted on by the construction of the road scheme.

2.2.5 Health and safety documents

It is the policy of ADS to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Acts and the Construction Safety, Health and Welfare Regulations and to ensure so far as reasonably practicable the safety, health and welfare of all employees whilst at work, and to provide such information, training and supervision needed for this purpose. To comply with these acts and regulations the works were conducted following the procedures and principles laid out in the company health and safety document (ADS 2003). Special attention to health and safety will be paid in areas close to rivers, streams, woodland, marshy ground and overhead power lines. ADS can confirm that the excavation crews all hold a valid safe pass certificate.

2.2.6 Staff involved

Sam Fowler and Andrew Smith were site archaeologists and Clare Nugent was site General Operative.

3 Excavation Records-Phase 2

The Phase 2 excavation records consist of two context logs with thirty-eight context sheets (Appendix I); finds log (Appendix II) and a sample log (Appendix III) two photographic logs representing 59 frames (Appendix IV); a plan and section log.

3.1 Results of the excavation

Archaeological excavation of Site 113 (Area 13) was undertaken between July 26th and August 26th 2005. The excavation of this area exposed the ploughed out remains of burnt mound material, possibly from three burnt mounds or *fulacht fiadh*, pits and an unlined well (Fig. 4). Modern furrows and a drainage ditch were also exposed.

An area approximately 300m² was cleaned back and the features identified during testing and the subsequent topsoil stripping were further exposed. All identified features were, where deemed necessary, fully excavated by hand and a written, drawn and photographic record prepared. Thirty-eight contexts were recorded at the site that included twelve cuts and thirteen fills. Three contexts; redeposited sandy clay (002), a spread of burnt mound material (004) and a further burnt mound spread (013) contained finds (Appendices I and II). Environmental samples were taken from context deemed appropriate (Appendix III).

The first spread of mound material was situated at the northern most end of the site (Fig. 4). This had a length of 5.80m, a maximum width of 1.20m and a maximum thickness of 0.09m. It comprised of a mix of loose dark brown/black silty-clay (60%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (40%) (**004**). This spread of burnt mound material was very loose and thin nature and probably represent the disturbed remains of burnt mound found further to the south. Context (**004**) contained a single flint flake (Appendix II). Below this was a thin spread of mid grey/brown silty-clay (50%) and heat-fractured stones (50%) with occasional inclusions of charcoal flecks and pieces (**012**). This had a length of 5.60m, a maximum length of 1.20m and a maximum thickness of 0.10m.

Directly south of (**004**) was another spread of burnt mound material (**005**). This spread was also loosely compacted and comprised of a dark grey/black silty-clay (30%) and subangular heat fractured stones and charcoal (70%) (**005**) (Figs 4 and 5; Plate 2). The spread had a length of 5.20m, a width of 3.20m and a maximum thickness of 0.30m. The spread was irregular in shape and continued under the western baulk. Underlying (**005**) was a friable grey, sandy-silt (**014**). This was sporadic in nature and contained frequent inclusions of burnt stone and charcoal. It had a maximum thickness of 0.07m.

South of the spread of burnt mound material (**005**) was another spread of burnt mound material and associated pits. This spread of material (**015**) had a classic horseshoe shape, synonymous with burnt mounds, however no trace of a trough was present and may have been destroyed by the later agricultural activity on the site. The spread was friable in compaction and was a dark black/brown silty-clay (60%) and small and medium subangular heat fractured stones and charcoal (40%). It had a maximum length of 6.80m, a maximum width of 1.85m and a maximum thickness of 0.20m (Fig. 6; Plate 3).

Directly south of (**015**) was a very shallow spread of dark black/brown silty-clay and heat fractured stones and charcoal (**035**). It had a length of 2m, a width of 1.20m and a thickness of 0.01m (Figs 4 and 6). Given its make up and close proximity, this spread is probably a disturbed continuation of the burnt mound spread (**015**).

In close proximity to (**015**) and probably associated with (**015**) were four pits (**020**), (**024**), (**026**) and (**031**) (Fig. 9). Context (**024**) was situated approximately 3.5m east of (**015**) and was oval in plan. It measured 0.72m in length (northwest to southeast), had a width of 0.50m and a depth of 0.23m. It had a sharp break of slope at the top, steep concave sides, a sharp break of slope at the base and a slightly uneven base. It contained a single fill of loose mid grey/black silty-clay (70%) and small stones (some heat fractured and fire cracked) with frequent inclusions of charcoal flecks (**023**).

South-southwest of **(024)**, 1.75m away, was an irregular shaped cut **(020)**. It had a length of 0.80m (east to west), a width of 0.55m and a maximum depth of 0.28m (Fig. 9). It had a sharp break of slope at the top, with the exception of the western side, which was gradual. Its sides were steep sided and slightly concave, with a sharp break of slope at the base. Its base was even and sloped gently down from east to west. The cut was filled with a single fill of a dark black/brown silty-clay (40%) and small and medium heat fractured stones (60%) **(016)**, this fill was similar to **(015)** found to the northwest, but contained a higher quantity of burnt stones. It was found filling the pit **(020)** but also spread out beyond the confines of the pit cut. It had a maximum length of 1.60m, a width of 1.50m and varied in thickness from between 0.08m and 0.28m.

Around 2.20m southwest of **(020)** was a small oval cut **(031)**. This had a length of 0.80m (east to west), a width of 0.58m and a maximum depth of 0.20m (Fig. 9). It had a sharp break of slope at the top, with the exception of the southern side where the break of slope was gradual. The sides were slightly concave and the break of slope at the base was gradual. It had an uneven base. It was filled with loose dark brown clayey silt (40%) and small and medium sized subangular stones (60%) **(029)**. This deposit also spread beyond the cut it was found in and had a maximum length of 1.52m, a width of 1.45m and a thickness of between 0.08 and 0.20m.

Adjacent to and southeast of the mound material **(015)** was a large ovoid shaped pit **(026)**. This had a length of 1.80m (east to west), a width of 1.50m and a maximum depth of 0.50m (Figs 4, 7 and 9; Plate 4). It had a sharp break of slope at the top and a gradual break of slope at the base. The sides were steep and slightly concave with the exception of the western side, which was vertical. It had an uneven base. The cut contained three fills **(017)**, **(025)** and **(027)**. Its basal fill was a firmly compacted mix of mid grey clay (40%) and burnt stone and charcoal flecks (60%) **(027)**. This had a maximum extent of 1.58m and a maximum thickness of 0.20m. Above this was a friable mix of grey/dark brown clayey silt (70%) and small subangular stones, some showing signs of heat fracturing and burning (30%) **(025)**. This deposit contained frequent inclusions of charcoal flecks and had a maximum extent of 1.55m and a maximum thickness of 0.15m. The upper fill of the pit was friable dark black/brown silty-clay (60%) and burnt stones and charcoal flecks and pieces (40%) **(017)**. It had a maximum extent of 1.80m and a maximum thickness of 0.15m. This uppermost fill of the pit was similar to the burnt mound material adjacent to it, however it was slightly lighter in colour and contained a large quantity of large subangular heat fractured stones. The upper fills **(025)** and **(017)** would appear to represent backfilling after disuse. The basal fill may be the residual remains of burning stones in situ, which suggests that this pit may have been used for heating stones before they were transferred to a trough.

Adjacent to and just south of the pit **(026)** was a small spread of burnt mound material, which was probably contemporary with the mound material **(015)** to its north. This spread **(035)** was dark grey in colour and friable. The spread was comprised of a mix of silty-clay (60%) and burnt stone and charcoal (40%), with a maximum extent of 2m and a maximum thickness of 0.10m.

The final spread of mound material **(013)** was located in the southwest corner of the site and east of the mound material **(015)**. Context **(013)** was the most extensive of the deposits of burnt mound material on site, with a length of 5.60m (north to south), a width of 4.55m (east to west) and a maximum thickness of 0.32m (Figs 4, 7 and 9; Plates 5 and 6). It was comprised of a mix of dark black/brown to black silty-clay (40%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (60%). A small quantity of poorly preserved animal bone and teeth, possibly deer, was recovered from this deposit.

Directly below the mound material **(013)** was the cut of a subcircular unlined well dug to a natural spring **(028)** (Figs 4, 8 and 9; Plates 7 and 8). This cut had a length of 2.14m (east to west) and a width of 1.88m and a maximum depth of 0.35m. It had a sharp break of slope at the top and a gradual break of slope at the base. It had vertical sides, with the exception of the western side, which was, steep sided and slightly concave. The base was flat and sloped in gradually towards the centre. This well may have been an attempt to provide a constant supply of water for a *fulacht* trough. Though no trough was found on the site, the well and large quantity of mound material found on the site would seem to indicate that this indeed was the site of at least one *fulacht fiadh*. The well contained two fills **(030** and **(032)** (Fig. 9). The main fill was comprised of a mix of a dark grey/black silty-clay (30%) and burnt stone (70%) **(032)**. It contained frequent inclusions of charcoal and occasional inclusions of twigs, root and hazelnut shells. This fill had a maximum extent of 2.14m and a maximum thickness of 0.28m. The other fill was the upper fill of the cut and was confined to the centre of the cut. This fill was a loose dark brown peat with occasional inclusions of large subangular stones and root activity **(030)**. It had a length of 1.05m, a width of 0.90m and a maximum thickness of 0.16m. Both fills would appear to be episodes of backfilling after disuse.

The well **(028)** appears to have been cut into the base of a diverted and drained stream channel **(037)**. The current stream channel is approximately 10m west and southwest of the site, and it would appear that this was diverted when the burnt mound material and associated features occur. The stream channel was irregular in shape, with a V shaped profile. It had an excavated length of 14m, running into the western baulk of the site, an excavated maximum width of 2m and a maximum depth of 0.52. The irregular nature of the cut and the gravel deposits found at its base would strongly suggest that this feature was natural and not archaeological in nature. The cut of the stream channel was in the main filled with a mid grey/brown clay **(003)**. At the southern end of the exposed stream channel and to the immediate south and north of the well **(028)**, was a deposit of friable purple dark brown peat,

with occasional inclusions of roots and moderate inclusions of small and medium subangular and subrounded stones **(036)**. It had a maximum extent of 6.24m, varied in width from between 0.80 and 1.60m and had a thickness of between 0.15 and 0.20m. This deposit may represent an attempt to dam up the diverted river channel and create a walkway in the area around the well.

All the spreads of mound material associated pits and cut features and peat deposits would appear to date from the Bronze Age, it is hoped that selected radiocarbon samples will more firmly establish a date for these features (Appendix III).

As well as prehistoric activity on site, a number of east to west orientated furrows and a north to south orientated drain were recorded and excavated on the site. These would appear to date from the early to mid 19th Century, and possibly represent an attempt to increase agricultural activity in the area at that time.

An attempt was made to level the ground at the western end of the site with loosely compacted mid orangey brown sandy clay with moderate inclusions of small and medium sized subangular stones **(002)**. This deposit varied in thickness from between 0.2m and 0.7m and was thickest at the western limit of the site, where it dipped down sharply into the diverted stream channel. This deposit contained sherds of mid 19th century pottery.

The five furrows **(007)**, **(009)**, **(011)**, **(019)** and **(033)** found on the site were all shallow in nature and evenly shaped (Fig. 9).

The first of these linear furrows **(007)** was located at the northern end of the site. This furrow **(007)** cut through the mound material **(004)**. It had a surviving length of 0.82m, a width of 0.24m and a depth of 0.05m. It had a shallow U shaped profile, with a sharp break of slope at the top and base, slightly concave sides and a flat base. It was filled with a soft mid brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of pebbles **(006)**.

Approximately 2.50m south of the first furrow and cutting through the mound material **(004)** was the second furrow **(009)**. This had a surviving length of 1.2m, a width of 0.24m and a depth of 0.06m. It also had a shallow U shaped profile. It was filled with a soft mid brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of small pebbles **(008)**.

The third furrow cut through the mound material **(005)**. This furrow **(011)**, had a length of 1.60m, varied in width from between 0.20m and 0.27m and had a depth of between 0.03m and 0.08m. It had a shallow U shaped profile, with a sharp break of slope at the top, concave sides, an imperceptible

break of slope at the base and a flat base. It was filled with a soft mid brown/grey clayey-silt with occasional inclusions of subangular pebbles **(010)**.

The fourth furrow **(033)** was located in Grid 3 approximately 14m south of furrow **(011)**. Context **(033)** had a length of 3.36m, a maximum width of 0.30m and a depth of 0.08m. It was filled with mid brown clayey-silt **(034)**.

The final furrow **(019)** cut through the eastern end of the burnt mound material **(015)** located in Grid 4. This furrow had a surviving length of 2.68m, a maximum width of 0.24m and a depth of 60mm. It had a shallow U shaped profile. It was filled with a light brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of pebbles and charcoal flecks **(018)**.

The modern drain **(022)** was located in Grids 4 and 5 and continued beyond the extent of the excavation, it was therefore only partially exposed and excavated. It had an excavated length of 5.20m a maximum width of 0.65m and a depth of 0.38m. It had a U shaped profile with a sharp break of slope at the top, steep near vertical sides, a sharp break of slope at the base and a flat base. It was filled by a mix of medium and large sized stones that were subangular and subcircular in shape and comprised 90% of the fill of this cut, the rest being made up of mid brown clay **(021)**.

4 Summary

The excavation of Site 113 exposed archaeology of a possible prehistoric date and archaeology of a modern date. All features found on the site were subsoil cut.

The prehistoric features on the site comprised of spreads of burnt mound material, pits and an unlined well. The spreads of heat fractured stones, charcoal and silty-clay may represent the remains of three ploughed out burnt mounds, possibly dating to the Bronze Age. Extant *fulacht fiadh* are mounds of burnt stone often associated with a water filled trough. They are often located near streams or in marshy areas to ensure a supply of water. Evidence from survey and excavation indicates that *fulacht fiadh* were a common feature of the Irish prehistoric landscape, particularly from the second half of the third millennium BC. Although predominately a Bronze Age monument, sites dating to the Late Neolithic are also known. *Fulacht fiadh* have also been dated to the medieval period.

It is thought that heated stones were added to heat the water for cooking. These stones were then cleared from the trough and dumped around it, leaving access to one side of the mound clear. Over time, this created a kidney-shape or U-shaped mound, although other shapes of mound are also known.

No troughs, usually found in association with burnt mounds were found at the site, however a large pit containing charcoal and burnt stone in its basal fill may have functioned as a pit to heat stones before being transferred to a trough. Also found on the site was a well dug to a natural spring that would have supplied a constant source of water. These features coupled with a low lying nature of the site next to the Ballymascanlon Stream lends weight to the idea that this area may have functioned as a Bronze Age cooking site.

The modern features on the site, comprised of five east to west orientated furrows, a north to south orientated drain and a spread of redeposited mid orange/brown sandy clay. It appears that an attempt was made in the 19th Century to level, drain and cultivate this low lying ground. This may have been a response to land shortage.

5 Conclusion

Three extensive spreads of burnt mound material were excavated at Site 113 (Plate 9). Given the nature of the spreads it is thought that these may represent the ploughed out remains of three burnt mounds. On this basis, these are dated to the Prehistoric period.

Samples were retained from these spreads and it is recommended that a radiocarbon date be secured for the most substantial of the spreads (**013**). Found under this spread was an unlined well. This was filled with a charcoal rich deposit (**032**) and it is recommended that a radiocarbon date is secured for this feature (Section 7.2.3).

6 Quantification of the Materials and Records

6.1 Quantity of the record

The site archive comprises those items listed in Table 1:

Table 1 Records Inventory

Form	Number (after voids)
Context Sheets	38
Photographs (Rolls)	2
Sections and Plans	19
Finds	3
Samples	10

6.1.1 Context sheets

Thirty-eight context sheets are archived at the ADS Dublin facility and are in queue for entry into the project database.

6.1.2 Miscellaneous written records

Weekly site summaries.

6.1.3 Drawings

Ten plans, comprising of eight pre excavation plans and two post excavation plans. And nine section drawings.

6.1.4 Finds

Finds were recovered from three contexts (Appendix II).

6.1.5 Samples

Ten environmental samples were collected from six contexts (Appendix III).

6.1.4 Photographs

Two rolls with fifty-seven exposed frames (Appendix IV).

7 Recommendations

7.1 Finds

The Director recommends that the minimal number of finds be analysed by the appropriate specialists (Appendix II).

7.2 Samples

7.2.1 Macrobotanical analysis

The single best source of evidence for answering economic questions related to subsistence, fuel use and material culture is macrobotanical, that is, materials that can be seen with the naked eye. Such materials can be quantified and ultimately compared with faunal and other tangible aspects of an archaeological assemblage including information recovered through pollen and other microbotanical analyses. Burned macrobotanical materials are best recovered through flotation of a soils sample. In the case where unburnt materials are suspected in the sample, they can be picked from the overall sample before flotation. If the intent is for the recovered remains to be used for radiocarbon analysis then all botanical materials recovered from the samples should undergo species identification before such analysis.

The director recommends that all collected samples (Appendix III) be examined for macrobotanical remains.

7.2.2 Microbotanical analyses: pollen and phytolith

Several types of analyses of samples that are botanic in origin can yield information that is important to the understanding or confirmation of the function of a site or its features. At this site, materials for analyses can be recovered as sub samples from the bulk soil samples.

Pollen may be transported by wind and form part of a record of local and regional vegetation. Humans in the course of working with plants may also transport pollen more selectively. Pollen analysis can focus on interpretation of the past environment or also is a good tool for interpreting human exploitation of plants as foods, construction materials, or for a variety of utilitarian purposes. Pollen is surprisingly rugged and survives in sediments that many suppose would not be conducive to pollen preservation.

Phytoliths are silica bodies accumulated by plants when soluble silica in the ground water is absorbed by the plant roots and is carried up to the plant via the vascular system. Evaporation and metabolism of this water result in precipitation of the silica in and around the cell walls in plants that accumulate silica. Phytoliths are usually introduced directly into the soils in which the plants decay. Transportation of phytoliths occurs primarily by animal consumption, man's gathering of plants or by erosion or transportation of the soil by wind, water or ice.

The site director has selected samples (<2>, <3>, <5> and <7>) for microbotanical analyses (Appendix III).

7.2.3 Radiocarbon analysis

The site director proposes that the samples listed in Table 2 be sent for radiocarbon analysis.

Table 2 Samples for radiocarbon analysis.

Context	Sample No.	Feature	Reason for sample
(013)	<10>	Burnt Mound Material	High charcoal content
(032)	<8>	Fill of well	High charcoal content

8 References

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- 2005 *A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road Volume 1 Archaeological Assessment Area 12*. Archaeological Development Services Ltd for Department for Regional Development, Roads Service, Belfast.

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- 2005 *Final Report of Excavations at the A1/N1 Newry to Dundalk Link Road Area 12, Site 112*. Archaeological Development Services Ltd for Department for Regional Development, Roads Service. Belfast.

RPS Ireland Environmental Services (RPS)

- 2002 *A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road Environmental Statement Environmental Impact Statement*, Volume 1 Main Text.

RPS Ireland Environmental Services (RPS)

- 2002 *A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road Environmental Statement Environmental Impact Statement*, Volume 2 Appendices.

Appendices

Appendix I Context log

Context	Grid	Type	Description
(001)	1-5	Deposit	Topsoil, a mid grey/brown clayey silt. Covers the entire site with a maximum thickness of 0.4m.
(002)	1-5	Deposit	Mid orangey brown redeposited sandy clay under (001)
(003)	4/5W	Deposit	Mid grey/brown silty-clay under (001)
(004)	1	Deposit	Dark brownish black silty-clay (60%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (40%)
(005)	2	Deposit	Dark grey/black silty-clay (30%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (70%)
(006)	1	Deposit	Mid brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of small subangular stones
(007)	1	Cut	Cut of agricultural furrow, U shaped in profile, 0.82m in depth, 0.24m in width and 50mm in depth (filled with (006))
(008)	1	Deposit	Mid brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of pebbles
(009)	1	Cut	Cut of agricultural furrow, U shaped in profile, 1.20m in length, 0.24m in width and 60mm in depth (filled with (008))
(010)	2	Deposit	Mid brownish grey clay with occasional inclusions of pebbles
(011)	2	Cut	Cut of agricultural furrow, U shaped in profile. 1.60m in length, 0.27m in width, 80mm in depth filled with (010)
(012)	1	Deposit	Mid grey/brown silty-clay (50%) and heat fractured stones (50%). Occasional inclusions of charcoal flecks
(013)	4/5W	Deposit	Dark black/brown silty-clay (40%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (60%)
(014)	2	Deposit	Grey sandy silt with frequent inclusions of burnt stone and charcoal
(015)	4	Deposit	Dark black/brown silty-clay (60%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (40%)
(016)	4	Deposit	Dark black/brown silty-clay (40%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (60%)
(017)	4	Deposit	Dark black/brown silt clay (60%) and heat fractured stones and charcoal (40%)
(018)	4	Deposit	Light brownish grey clayey silt with occasional inclusions of pebbles and charcoal flecks
(019)	4	Cut	Cut of agricultural furrow, U shaped in profile. 2.68m in length, 0.24m in width, 60mm in depth filled with (018)
(020)	4	Cut	Shallow irregular shaped pit. 0.80m in length, 0.55m in width and 0.28m in depth
(021)	5	Deposit	Medium and large sized subangular and subcircular stones (90%) and mid brown clay (10%)
(022)	5	Cut	Modern drain, U shaped in profile. Excavated length 5.20m, 0.65m in width and 0.38m in depth
(023)	4	Deposit	Loose mid grey/black silty-clay (70%) and small heat fractured stones (30%)
(024)	4	Cut	Shallow oval shaped pit. 0.72m in length, 0.50m in width and 0.23m in depth
(025)	4	Deposit	Grey/dark brown clayey silt (70%) and small heat fractured stones (30%)
(026)	4	Cut	Large ovoid shaped pit. 1.80m in length, 1.50m in width, 0.50m in depth

Context	Grid	Type	Description
(027)	4	Deposit	Mid grey clay (40%) and burnt stone and charcoal flecks (60%)
(028)	4W	Cut	Subcircular shaped well. 2.14m in length, 1.88m in width, 0.35m in depth
(029)	5	Deposit	Dark brown clayey silt (40%) and small and medium sized subangular stones (60%)
(030)	4W	Deposit	Dark brown peat with occasional inclusions of large subangular stones
(031)	5	Cut	Shallow oval shaped pit. 0.80m in length, 0.58m in width and 0.20m in depth
(032)	4W	Deposit	Dark grey/black silty-clay (30%) and burnt stone (70%), with frequent inclusions of charcoal flecks and pieces
(033)	3	Cut	Cut of agricultural furrow, U shaped in profile. 3.66m in length, 0.3m in width, 80mm in depth filled with (034)
(034)	3	Deposit	Mid brown clayey silt
(035)	5	Deposit	Shallow spread of dark black/brown silty-clay and heat fractured stones and charcoal. ?same as (015), directly north of (017)
(036)	4/5W	Deposit	Purple dark brown peat with moderate inclusions of small and medium subangular and subrounded stones
(037)	2-5W	Cut	Irregular natural cut of a diverted stream channel. Excavated to a length of 14m, maximum width 2m, maximum depth 0.52m
(038)	1-5	Deposit	Light yellow/brown to orangey brown clay subsoil

Appendix II Finds per context list

Context	Description
(002)	19 th century pottery sherds (n = 2)
(004)	Flint flake
(013)	Animal bone

Appendix III Sample list

Sample	Grid	Context	Bags	Reason for Sample
1	1	(004)	1	Charcoal rich- C14 for dating evidence
2	4	(016)	1	Palaeoenvironmental/ C14 dating evidence
3	2	(005)	2	Bulk sample for palaeoenvironmental/C14 evidence
4	4/5W	(013)	1	Charcoal rich- C14 for dating evidence
5	4/5W	(013)	1	Bulk sample for Palaeoenvironmental evidence
6	5	(027)	1	Charcoal rich- C14 for dating evidence
7	4/5W	(032)	1	Bulk sample for Palaeoenvironmental/C14 evidence
8	4/5W	(032)	1	Charcoal rich- C14 for dating evidence
9	2	(005)	1	Charcoal rich- C14 for dating evidence
10	4/5W	(013)	1	Charcoal rich- C14 for dating evidence

Appendix IV Photographs**Roll 1**

Frame	Direction	Subject
1		Test Frame (Site Code and Date)
2	Looking north	Burnt mound (005) and associated spread (004)
3	Looking south	Burnt mound (005) and associated spread (004)
4	Working shot	Showing burnt mounds (013) and (015)
5	Looking north	Burnt mound spread (015)
6	Looking east	Burnt mound spread (015)
7	Looking west	Section through (005) and (012)
8	Looking north	Section through (005) and (012)
9	Looking east	Spread of burnt mound material (013)
10	Looking north	Spread of burnt mound material (013)
11	Looking west	Spread of burnt mound material (013)
12	East facing	Section through burnt mound material (015)
13	Post ex	Pit (020)
14	Post ex	Pit (020)
15	Looking east	Mid excavation shot of (015)
16	Looking south	Mid excavation shot of (015)
17	South facing	Section through pit (024)
18	Looking north	Post ex of pit (024)
19	Looking east	Quarter section through burnt mound material (013) and well (028)
20	Looking east	Quarter section through burnt mound material (013) and well (028)
21	Looking south	Quarter section through burnt mound material (013)
22	Looking west	Quarter section through burnt mound material (013)
23	Looking west	Pre-ex
24	Looking south	Pre-ex
25	Looking northwest	Post ex
26	Looking west-northwest	Section through well (028)
27	Looking west-northwest	Section through well (028)
28	Looking west-northwest	Section through well (028)
28	Looking southwest	Looking southwest
30	Looking southwest	General shot of the southwest end of the site
31	Looking southwest	General shot of the southwest end of the site
32	Looking west	Post ex of well (028)
33	Looking north	Post ex of well (028)
34	Looking north	Post ex of well (028)
35	Looking east	Post ex of well (028)
36	Looking east	Post ex of well (028)
37	Looking southwest	Post ex of well (028)

Roll 2

Frame	Direction	Subject
1	Test Frame	(Site Code and Date)
2	Looking west	View of site from hill
3	Looking west	View of site from hill
4	Looking south	Post ex of well (028)
5	Looking north	Southwest corner of the site
6	Western baulk section	Showing (005) running under the baulk
7		Section through old stream course (037) showing peat deposit (036)
8	From west	Modern feature (approximately 100m east of the site)
9	From east	Modern feature (approximately 100m east of the site)
10	From north	Modern feature (approximately 100m east of the site)
11	Looking south	Post ex shot of the northern end of the site (Grids 1 and 2)
12	Looking south	Post ex shot of the northern end of the site (Grids 1 and 2)
13	Looking south	Post ex shot of the northern end of the site (Grids 1 and 2)
14	Looking south	Post ex shot of Grids 2 and 3
15	Looking south	Post ex shot of Grids 2 and 3
16	Looking south	Post ex shot of Grids 4 and 5
17	Looking south	Post ex shot of Grids 4 and 5
18	Looking north	Post ex shot of Grids 1
19	Looking north	Post ex shot of Grids 1
20	Looking north	Post ex shot of Grid 4W and Grid 5W
21	Looking north	Post ex shot of Grid 4W and Grid 5W
22	Looking north	Post ex shot of Grid 4W and Grid 5W

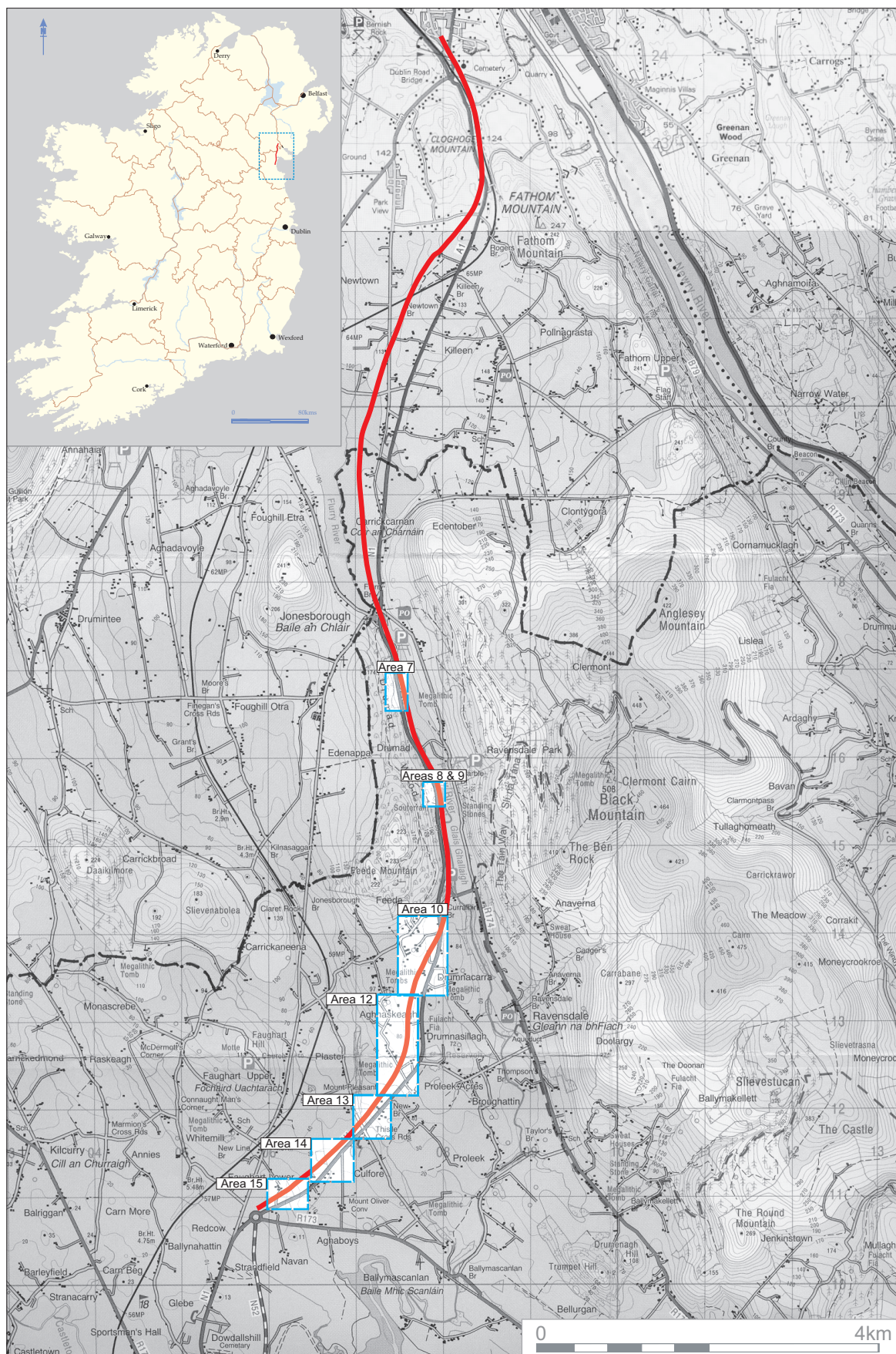


Fig. 1 Location plan for A1/N1.

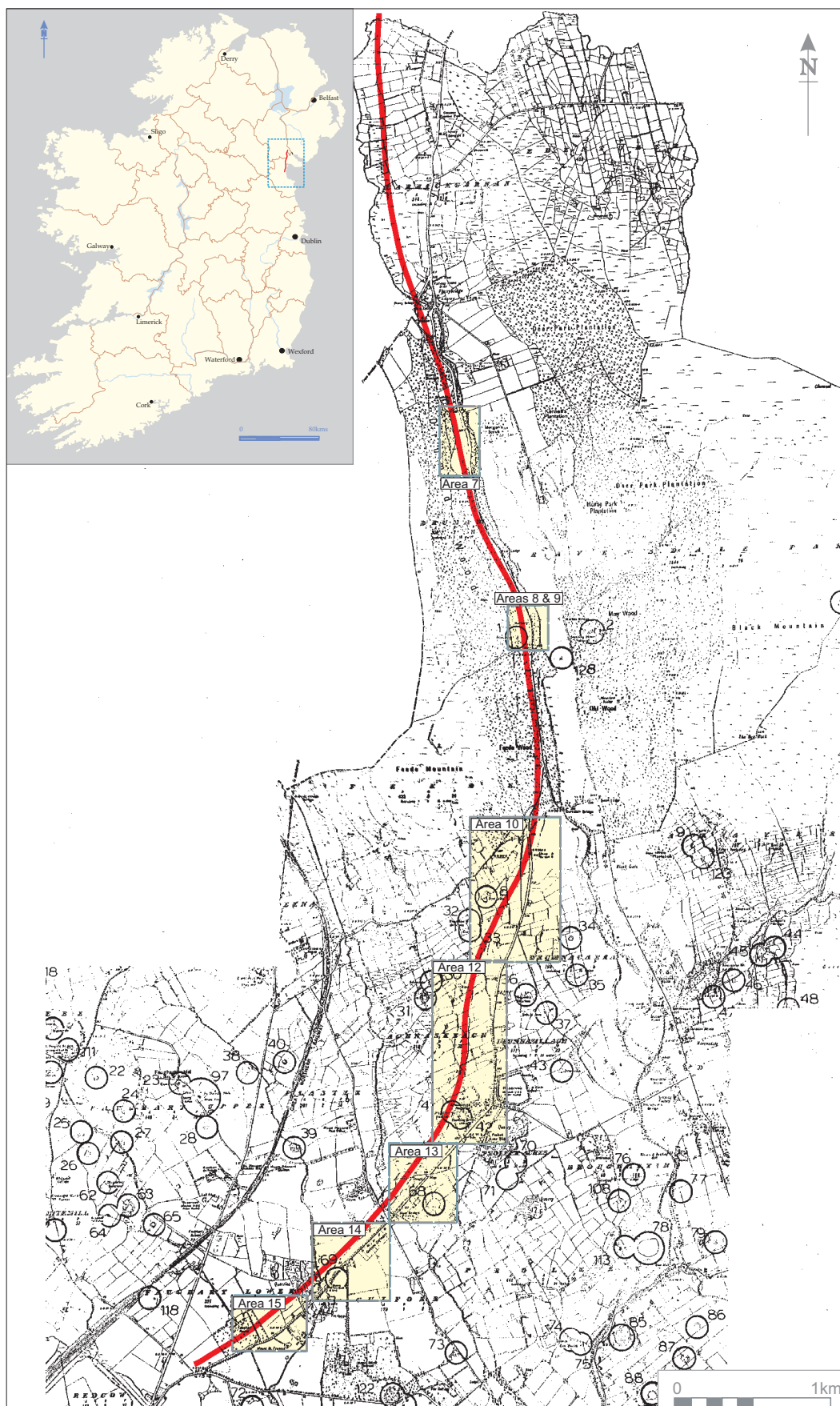


Fig. 2 Extract from RMP Maps of Louth, Sheets 1 & 4. A1/N1 in red. Scale as indicated.



Fig. 3 Location of Area 13 and Site 113 on RMP Map of Louth, Sheet 4. A1/N1 in red. Scale 1:10,000.

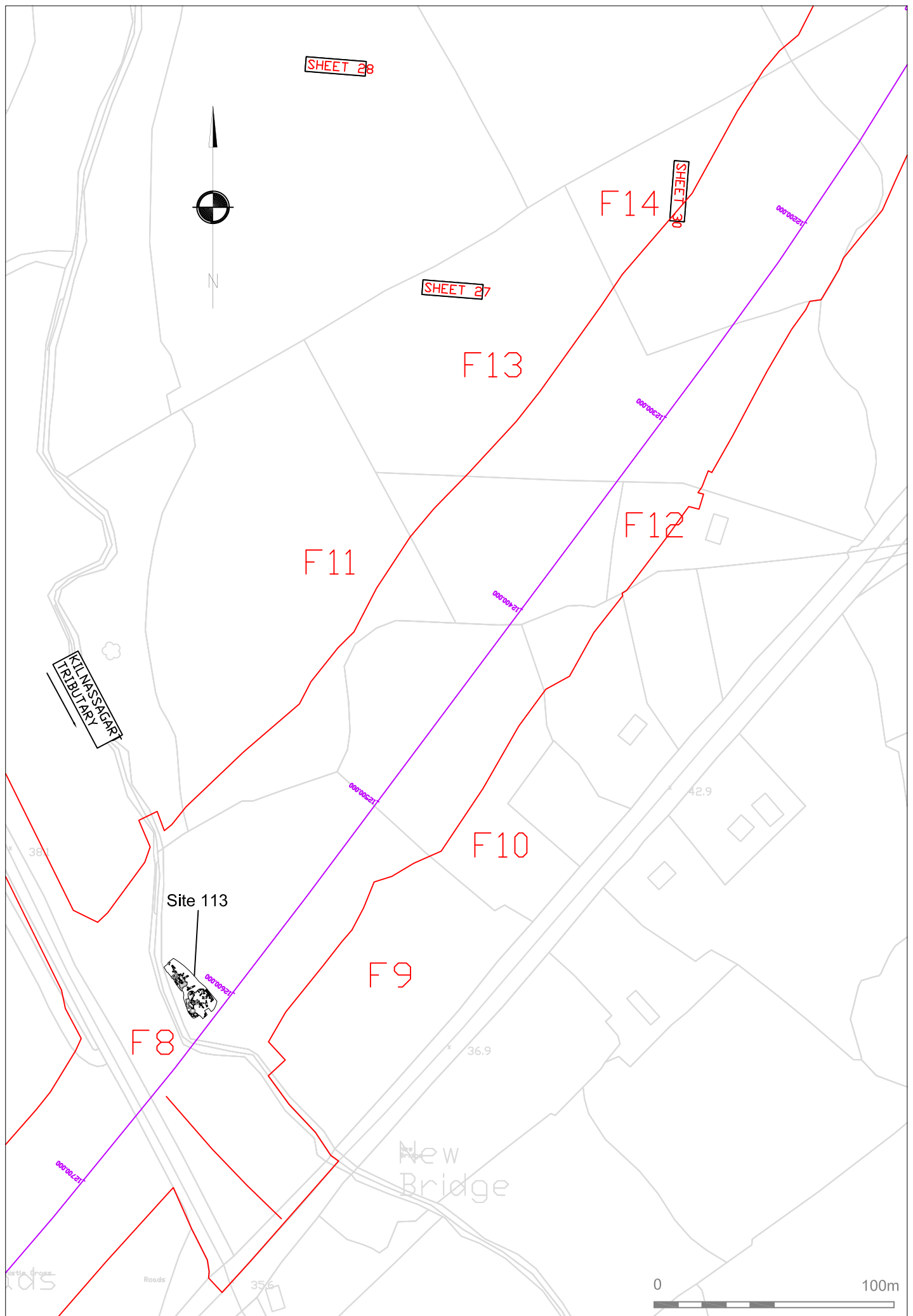


Fig. 4 Plan showing Area 13 and Site 113.

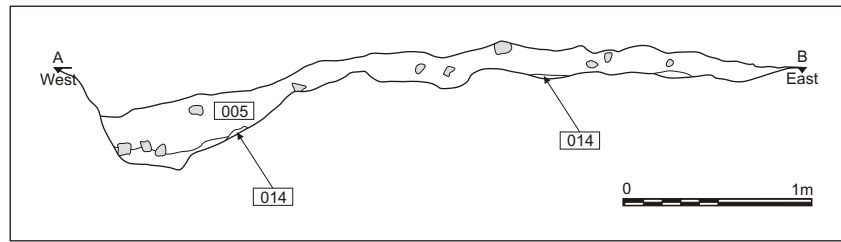


Fig 5 South facing section through mound material (005) and (014).

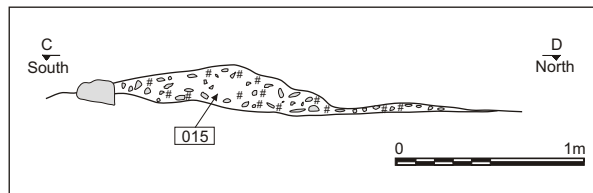


Fig 6 East facing section through mound material (015).

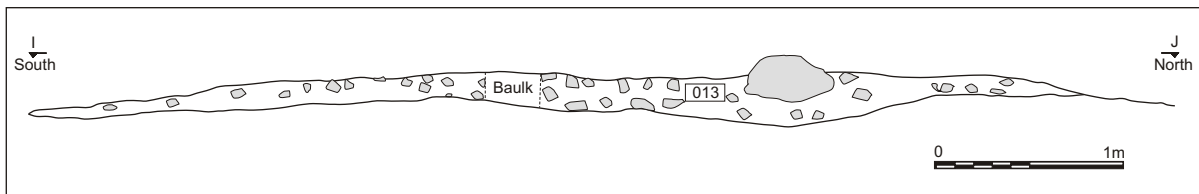


Fig 7 East facing section through mound material (013).

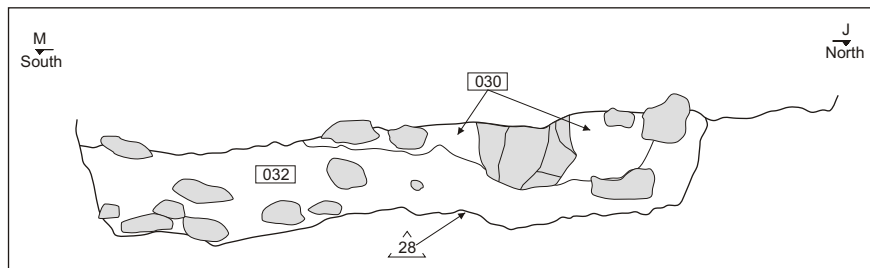


Fig 8 East facing section through well (028).

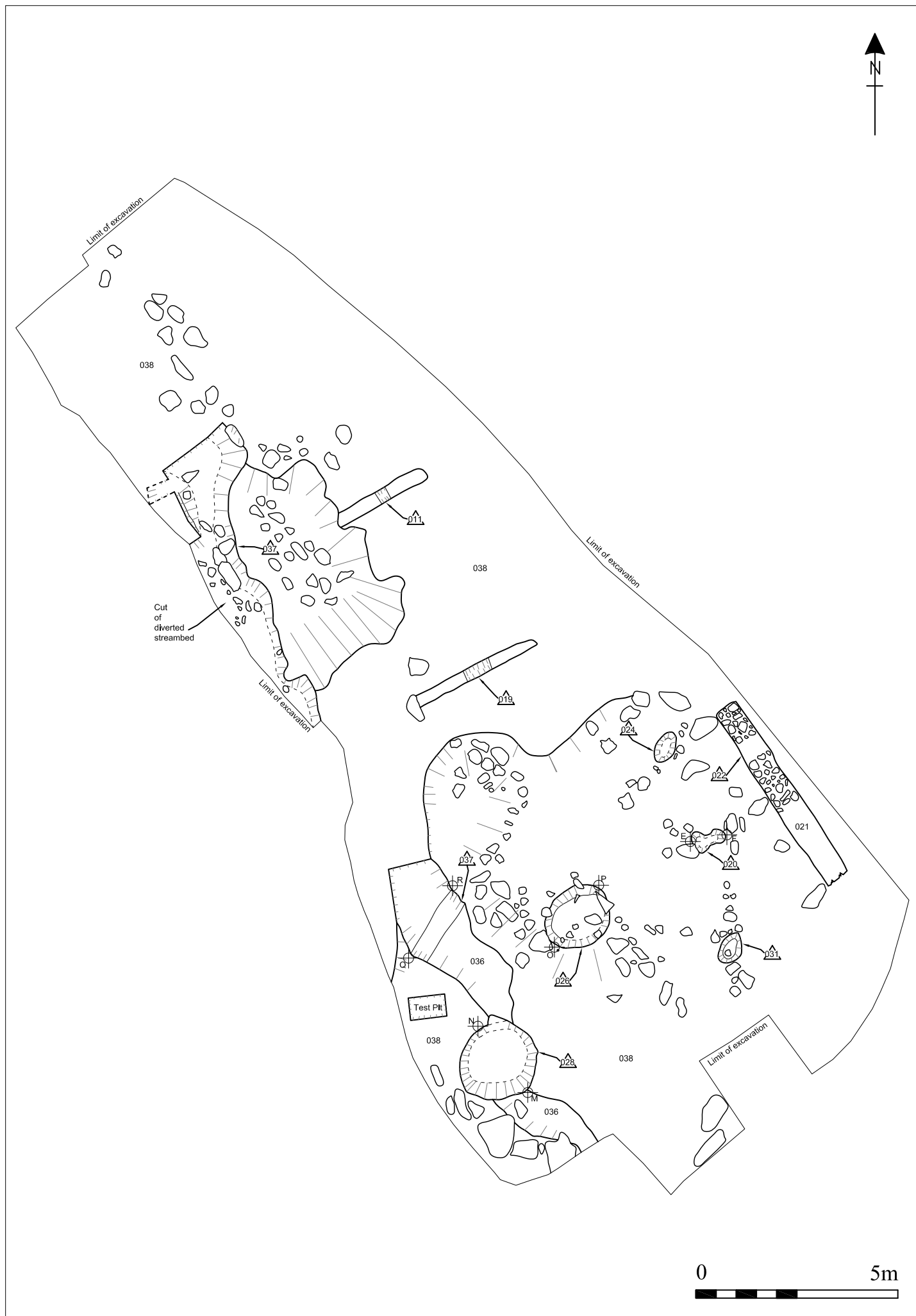


Fig. 9 Post-excavation plan of Site 113. Scale 1:120



Plate 1 Looking West, view of Site 113 from hilltop.



Plate 2 Looking north, spread of burnt mound material (005) in foreground and (004) in background.



Plate 3 East facing section through burnt mound material (015).



Plate 4 Looking southwest, post ex of pit (026).



Plate 5 Looking west, burnt mound material (013).



Plate 6 Looking west, quarter section through burnt mound material (013).



Plate 7 Looking west-northwest, section through well (028).



Plate 8 Looking north, post of well (028).



Plate 9 Looking north, post excavation overview of Site 113.