

**Interim Stratigraphic Report
of Phase 2 Excavations,
A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road,
Area 12 Site 108**

Townland: Aghnaskeagh
Parish: Ballymascanlan
County: Louth
Country: Republic of Ireland
Chainage: 11100
NGR: 307591E, 313263N
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Plates

Plate 1

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. As part of the road development, a number of archaeological and historic sites were within the construction zone of the road scheme and were determined eligible for excavation before the construction began.

Site 108 was Feature 8 discovered in the Phase 1 site testing; it consisted of a concentrated charcoal spread 0.66m by 0.80m. Following the Phase 2 surface stripping of the area, seven archaeological features were revealed. These consisted of three likely hearths that were clustered toward the west of the site; a second cluster of two probable hearths and a stakehole located approximately 8m to the east of the first group and approximately equidistant from both clusters (between and to the south) was another likely thermal feature. The close proximity, similar function and presence of flaked lithic artefacts in the three thermal features to the west of the site are indicates contemporaneity, as do the attributes of the second cluster to the east of 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 following report details the results of the fieldwork at Site 108 that followed the recommendations of McConway and Lynch (2005) following the discovery in testing of Feature 8.

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.

This report describes the results of excavations carried out at Site 108 between June 2 and 10 2005 in advance of groundwork. The 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 Aghnaskeagh Townland, Ballymascanlan Parish, Co. Louth; at National Grid Reference 307591E, 313263N (centre point), Ordnance Datum (OD) of approximately 72m and road scheme chainage 11100.

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.

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

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. This site was situated on pastureland with a slight southeast-facing slope around 150m west of the existing A1 (Figs 1-4).

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. There are numerous monuments (following) recorded near the route date from the Neolithic period to the 11th Century AD (Buckley and Sweetman 1991).

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 SMR shows that there are twelve known prehistoric and historic sites in the area. These include the following seventeen sites, listed by townland, the SMR number, the Buckley and Sweetman page number their reference number (1991) and the description (usually shortened) presented in Buckley and Sweetman (1991) (Fig. 3).

SMR:	LH004-008 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: (01) 171 Survey No. 618; (02) 122 Survey No. 321)
Townland:	Drumnasillagh
Parish:	Ballymascanlan
Barony:	Lower Dundalk
County:	Louth
Country:	Republic of Ireland
NGR:	307670E, 313830N
Description:	(01) Ringfort oval area (int. diams. 50m NNW-SSE, 29m WSW-ENE) enclosed by much altered and gasped bank (W 5m, H c. 1.1m). From NNE-E the bank is replaced by a modern stone wall. Original entrance not identifiable. No visible fosse. Souterrain [(02) below] in interior.
NGR:	307670E, 313840N
Description:	(02) Souterrain situated in the interior of a ringfort [(01) above] (CLAJ 1909, 137-8). Now inaccessible.
SMR:	LH004-030 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: (01) 158 Survey No. 546; (02) 100 Survey No. 262)

- Townland: Aghnaskeagh
 Parish: Ballymascanlan
 Barony: Lower Dundalk
 County: Louth
 Country: Republic of Ireland
 NGR: 307550E, 313300N
 Description: (01) Ringfort oval area (int. diams. 44m NNW-SSE, 24m WSW-ENE) enclosed by earthen bank (W 5m, H 1.3m externally) with traces of stone facing. Souterrain [(02) below] in NW quadrant of interior.
 NGR: 307330E, 313310N
 Description: (02) Souterrain lintels showing on surface of interior of ringfort [(01) above] (CLAJ 1908, 29)
- SMR: LH004-031 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: (01) 158 Survey No. 547; (02) 100 Survey No. 263)
- Townland: Aghnaskeagh
 Parish: Ballymascanlan
 Barony: Lower Dundalk
 County: Louth
 Country: Republic of Ireland
 NGR: 307300E, 313200N
 Description: (01) Ringfort circular area (diam. 32m) enclosed by earthen bank (W 6.5m, H 1.2m externally) and external fosse (W 7m) with traces of outer bank, obscured by later field boundaries. Remains of souterrain [(02) below] in SE quadrant of interior.
 NGR: 307300E, 313200N
 Description: (02) Souterrain situated in ringfort [(01) above]. Stone-lined depression, running E-W with slight turn to S at W end, located in SE quadrant of ringfort is probably the remains of a partially collapsed souterrain.
- SMR: LH004-032 (01), (02), (03) [Buckley and Sweetman 1991: Cairn 25, Survey No. 67; (01) is three tombs 25, Survey Nos 39-41; (02) 63, Survey No. 137; (03) 94 Survey No. 249]
- Townland: Aghnaskeagh
 Parish: Ballymascanlan
 Barony: Lower Dundalk
 County: Louth
 Country: Republic of Ireland
 NGR: 307550E, 313690N
 Description: Cairn 'Cairn A', excavated by E. E. Evans in 1934 (CLAJ 1935, 234-55).
 NGR: 307550E, 313690N
 Description: (01) Survey No. 39 is a Megalithic tomb: This monument was excavated in 1934 by E.E. Evans (CLAJ 1935, 234-55). It comprises an oval cairn (above) 17.5m long by 11m wide, orientated NNE-SSW incorporating a portal-tomb to the E and six Bronze Age cists to the W. The tomb, facing N, is represented by portal stones, each 2.7m high, and a back stone standing 2m to the S. The chamber area contained four pockets of cremated bone with some Neolithic and Bronze Age potsherds and a blue glass bead. The cists [No. (02) below] yielded cremations and food vessels. Evidence of iron smelting was recovered from a furnace area [No. (03) below] immediately N of the cairn.
 Survey No. 40 is a Megalithic tomb, which lies 40m to the S of No. 39 (above), excavated in 1935 by E. E. Evans (CLAJ 1937, 1-18). It comprises the remains of a cairn, 15m long, orientated NNW-SSE and narrowing from about 8m wide at the S to 6m at the N. The cairn, revetted on the E and W with dry walling, incorporates four small

chambers, two opening at the E and two at eh W. Although Evans considered that the NW chamber may have opened to the N, the morphological evidence indicates that it probably opened to the W. Finds from the chambers included cremated bone, Neolithic potsherds and flints, including two hollow scrapers. The chambers are clearly comparable to the subsidiary chambers found in court-tombs and hence the monument is assigned to that class; the finds are consistent with this view.

Survey No. 41 A very ruined Megalithic tomb. 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' (6" sheet 4, revision 1862). The tomb must remain unclassified pending further investigation but interpretation as the remains of a large wedge-tomb would be consistent with the surviving stones.

NGR: 307550E, 313690N

Description: (02) Cists. Six short cists, aligned NW-SE, were found during excavations by E. E. Evans of Cairn A at Aghnaskeagh. These secondary burials, dating to the Bronze Age, were W and SW of the megalith (individual descriptions omitted).

NGR: 307550E, 313690N

Description: (03) Iron working furnace. Excavated by E. E. Evans in 1934. At NE end of cairn [No. (01) above] was a primitive furnace, 'stoke hole' and flue used in iron working. The structure consisted of an unlined furnace, using fused clay as walling. This type of bowl furnace probably had courses of stone added as heightening. Extending from the bowl was a flue (L c. 2m, W c. 0.3m) roughly D-shaped in section. The door of the furnace faced SW, obviously to catch the prevailing wind, and led to a small 'stoke hole' and a paved pathway (L c. 1.7m) of granite slabs. The excavator has suggested that smelting took place at the mouth of Cist 3 [No. (02) above].

SMR: LH004-033 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 25, Survey No. 40)

Townland: Aghnaskeagh

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 307570E, 313650N

Description: Court tomb: This monument, which lies 40m to the S of Survey No. 39 [LH004-032 (01) above] was excavated in 1935 by E. E. Evans (*CLAJ* 1937, 1-18). It comprises the remains of a cairn, 15m long orientated NNW-SSE, and a narrowing from about 8m wide at eh S to 6m at the N. The cairn, revetted on the E and W with dry walling, incorporates four small chambers, two opening at the E and two to the W. Although Evans considered that the NW chamber may have opened tot eh N, the morphological evidence indicates that it probably opened to the W. Finds from the chambers included cremated bone, Neolithic potsherds and flints, including two hollow scrapers. The chambers are clearly comparable to the subsidiary chambers found in court-tombs.

SMR: LH004-034 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 171 Survey No. 617)

Townland: Drumnacarra

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 308220E, 313590N

Description: Ringfort subcircular area (int. dims. 26.5m N-S, 24m E-W) enclosed by earthen bank (W 3.3m, H 0.9m) with internal and external stone facing. No visible trace of fosse. Entrance gap (W 5.6m) at SW.

SMR: LH004-035 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 171, Survey No. 616)

Townland: Drumnacarra

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 308270E, 313360N

Description: Ringfort subcircular area (int. dims. 35.5m N-S, 32.5m E-W) enclosed by a bank (W 5m, H 0.6m internally, 1.1m externally) with internal and external stone facings and a basal course of large stones. Probable entrance gap (W 1.5m) at ESE. No visible fosse.

SMR: LH004-036 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 28, Survey No. 44)

Townland: Drumnasillagh

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 307950E, 313240N

Description: Court tomb is incorporated in a roughly trapezoidal cairn some 30m long and 20m wide at the WSW, narrowing to 7.1m wide at the ESE. There is a well-defined court at the W leading to the gallery area, which is covered by cairn material. The court, 7.5m wide and 6m deep, embraces almost three-quarters of a circle and is represented by 14 orthostats, 7 at either side. Two large slabs lie at the inner end of the court. A single façade stone stands beyond the N arm of the court. Two kerb stones are exposed at the E end of the cairn and a field wall runs along its southern side.

SMR: LH004-037 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 88, Survey No. 234)

Townland: Drumnasillagh

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 308080E, 313120N

Description: *Fulacht fiadh* situated in a small swampy valley, between ridges of light soil to E and W. Immediately to E of mound is a small stream, probably the original source of water for the trough. The site consists of an irregularly shaped mound (max. dims. 15m by 9m, H 0.6m) of burnt stone and charcoal with trough depression to E. To W and S are low irregular banks extending from the mound, comprised of mound material. However, their exact relationship to the mound is indeterminate.

SMR: 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'.

SMR: 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).

SMR: LH004-043 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: (01) 195, Survey No. 760; (02) 123, Survey No. 322)

Townland: Drumnasillagh

Parish: Ballymascanlan

Barony: Lower Dundalk

County: Louth

Country: Republic of Ireland

NGR: 308180E, 312750N

Description: (01) Enclosure polygonal enclosure (max. dims. 27m E-W, 26m N-S) Known locally as 'Jameson's Fort'. May be modified ringfort. Souterrain [(02) below] in interior of enclosure.

NGR: 308190E, 312740N

Description: (02) Souterrain situated in enclosure [(01) above] and consisting of a section of passage (L 5.2m, W 1m, H 1.3m) running N-S.

Sites known from the current project. Current work has identified seven archaeological sites within 1km of this location (Figs 2 and 3). Positive results of trial pits excavations along the route were reported in 2005 (McConway and Lynch). These are:

Site 104 was approximately 910m north of the current site; this site was composed of three areas of activity, termed the northwest, the middle-north and the east. In the northwest area, the archaeological remains appeared to represent repeated episodes of burning. Here the archaeology consisted of a posthole, two charcoal spreads and three pits. They were all discreet features as there were no stratigraphic links between any of the features to indicate either their chronology or contemporaneity. The three pit features would appear to be a series of hearths (Ó Baoill 2005).

The area of the site designated middle-north contained a stratified sequence of archaeological deposits consisting of two deliberately scarped features in the natural associated with a large area of burning. It would appear that some sort of communal activity, either cooking or perhaps ritual, was taking place at

this location. There appeared to be an effort to mask the burning activity by laying down various layers of redeposited natural on top of the charcoal within the cut. Later, the digging of a linear feature damaged the earlier features. This cut, both in orientation and dimensions, has all the appearance of an early medieval grave but no remains were recovered from its basal fill. However, attributes of the feature including the digging of the berm or ledge at its south side, the orientation of the feature, the presence of a cairn of stones that slumped into the main cut and the possible stone marker socket all suggest a burial.

In the east area, there were two features, an irregularly shaped oblong cut and a circular pit. They were both discreet features, as there was no stratigraphic link between either of the features to illuminate either chronology or contemporaneity.

The excavations found no evidence for a 'ring ditch' or 'ploughed out barrow', suggested from the Phase 1 archaeological testing. However, there was evidence of small scale, multi-period activity across the site. The lack of artifacts retrieved from site hinders close preliminary dating of the features investigated. It is hoped that more information may be gained when the radiocarbon dates from the various samples taken are analysed.

Site 105 (Turrell 2005a) was approximately 665m north of the current site. At this site a 20m by 20m area was stripped down to the stony subsoil to reveal two plough furrows, several shallow pits, perhaps the result of spade cultivation, and a linear feature, perhaps a ditch or possibly the result of mechanical ridging. All of these features had similar fills and some contained sherds of modern pottery. Some burnt areas, noted during the testing phase, proved to be no more than thin spreads of charcoal-rich topsoil.

Site 106 (Powell 2005a) was approximately 625m north of the current site at this location Phase 1 testing revealed two potentially significant features. Feature 10 was a spread of charcoal flecked silty soil with stone inclusions, Feature 11 was 13m north of Feature 10 and consisted of a circular spread of ash and charcoal that continued into the northern baulk. In order to investigate the deposits an area measuring 20 by 20m was stripped of topsoil after which several additional potentially significant features were exposed in plan. In the course of the excavation, twenty-seven contexts consisting of ten cuts and sixteen fills or deposits were investigated. All of the excavated features appear to be related to post medieval agriculture, these include a wall foundation, burnt tree bowls, agricultural furrows and a field drain.

Site 107 (Powell 2005b) this site was approximately 570m north of the current site, it consisted of a thin spread and one large pit feature. Both are thought to have resulted from modern farming activities associated with an adjacent farmhouse.

Site 109 consisted of a cluster of features found in testing that were located approximately 60m to the south of the current site (McConway and Lynch 2005). Feature 7 was the northernmost feature in the cluster, it consisted of two teardrop shaped spreads of charcoal flecked soil. These features lay beside one another and continued into the northern baulk. Feature 6 lay 25m to the southeast of Feature 7 and consisted of a spread of brown/grey silt; the eastern edge of this spread continued into the baulk. Feature 5 lay 30m to the southwest of Feature 6 and consisted of a subcircular silty soil with charcoal inclusions. Feature 4 lay 40m to the west of Feature 5 and consisted of two apparently discreet spreads of charcoal. Feature 3 lay 20m south of feature 4 and was the southernmost feature in the cluster of Features 3 –7. It consisted of a roughly oval spread of charcoal flecked brown/grey soil.

Site 110 this site is approximately 180m south of the current site, at this site test trenching had discovered a single feature (Feature 2 from testing). After clearing the feature measured 0.95m east to west by 0.60m north to south, it was dish-shaped in profile with a maximum depth in the centre of 0.08m. There was no cut per se as the feature consisting of a burnt patch of clay with charcoal inclusions. The excavated feature appears related to agricultural practice, in particular tree clearing.

Site 111 this site is next to recorded monument (LH 004:041) a Megalithic Tomb approximately 780m south of the current site (Figs 3 and 4). Field 18/Feature 1 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. Field 18/Feature 1 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 Field 17.

Field 17/Feature 1 consisted of an isolated spread of grey/brown silt, Field 17/Feature 2 was a roughly circular and measured 3.5m in diameter.

Field 17/Feature 11 was a spread of black charcoal rich silt and burnt and heat shattered stone that was uncovered 75m to the southwest of Field 17/Feature 1. 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.

Field 17/Feature 3 was a circular feature that was uncovered around .27m east of Field 17/Feature 1 and lay within a small cluster of archaeological deposits. It consisted of a spread of orange/brown redeposited subsoil identified as Field 17/ Feature 4, 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 Field 17/Feature 5, at least 5m east to west and continuing into the western baulk.

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 12 is in a zone of fertile soils within an archaeologically sensitive landscape in close vicinity to a number of known archaeological sites (Figs 2 and 3; Section 1.2.3). This area was considered to have high archaeological potential and was investigated and evaluated under Phase 1 of the Contract by means of test excavation. The Phase 1 report discusses the archaeological findings within Area 12, at Drumsillagh and Aghnaskeagh townlands, between chainages 10925-12150. Patricia Lynch carried out the testing under project sub number A002/003 from the 15th through 26th of November 2004 (McConway and Lynch 2005).

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

- To fully expose, investigate, record and resolve archaeological deposits uncovered in and all deposits associated with these.
- A licenced director, a supervisor, two assistants and four general operatives carried out resolution of the archaeological features described above.
- A 100 by 40m area was 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 were surveyed in to a site grid and in relation to their position on the road.
- All deposits were recorded and investigated by methods appropriate to their nature and complexity using best archaeological practice.
- Methods used included 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

Fieldwork at this location followed the recommendations of McConway and Lynch (2005) that resulted from the discovery in testing of Feature 8 that consisted of a concentrated charcoal spread 0.66 by 0.80m. 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.

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 instant, 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 & Safety at Work Acts and the Construction Safety, Health & 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

The site director, Chris Farrimond (formerly with ADS) would like to acknowledge site supervisors James McKee and Deirdre Malone and site assistants Tara Clark, Caroline Cosgrove and Colm O'Brien.

3 Excavation Records-Phase 2

Testing in Area 12 was carried out under number A002/003. Eight areas of archaeological potential were identified. At this location, the test excavations revealed one feature that required further investigation (McConway and Lynch 2005). Feature 8 consisted of a concentrated charcoal spread 0.66 by 0.8m (Fig. 5).

3.1 Results of the excavation

Following the clearing of the area surrounding the original Testing Feature 8 [now context (266)] a further seven features were discovered all within a 12 by 17m area. Three features were clustered in the west of the site (261), (262) and (266); three were in the northeast area of the topsoil stripped area (270), (272) and (273) and two were to the south (260) and (271) (Fig. 5).

3.1.1 Features in the west

In this area of the site there were three features interpreted as either burnt pits or hearths, each of these were within 2.20m of the other (Figs 5 and 6)

Cut (261) was, irregular in plan, basin shaped in profile and likely vertically truncated. The feature measured 1.04 by 1.06 by 0.08m deep and contained two fills (254) and (275). Context (254) was the upper fill of the feature it consisted of a medium compacted, black/grey, silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking occasional burnt stone and two pieces of burnt flint (Appendix II). The lower fill (275) consisted of medium compacted, orange/grey, redeposited silty clay. The feature was interpreted as a shallow burnt pit or probable hearth

Two metres to the southeast of hearth (261) was feature (262). The feature was nearly circular in plan; basin shaped in profile and appeared vertically truncated. The feature measured 1.02 by 1.22 by 0.22m deep and contained four fills (264), (253), (265) and (263). Fill (264) was modern disturbance deposited following the excavation of a recent, adjacent, water pipe. Context (253) was the *in situ* upper fill of the feature; it consisted of brown/black silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking. The middle *in situ* fill was Context (265) that consisted of light brown, sandy silty clay with occasional pockets of charcoal. The bottom fill of the feature was (263) that was black, charcoal rich silty clay with frequent lumps of charcoal and occasional small stones. This feature also likely functioned a hearth

Cut (266) was located 1.5m to the east of hearth (261) and 1.10m north of Cut (262); this was Feature 8 identified in the testing (McConway and Lynch 2005). The feature was oval in plan; basin shaped in profile and is likely vertically truncated. The hearth measured 1.00 by 1.20 by 0.25m deep and contained two fills (255) and (267). Context (255) is the upper fill of the feature; it consisted of brown/black, silty clay with frequent charcoal flecks, occasional small stones and a piece of worked flint (Appendix II). Beneath fill (255) was fill (267) that consisted of brown/black, silty clay with frequent [but less than (255) above] charcoal flecking. Under this, was a hard-compacted 'indurated' surface that consisted of burnt natural. The feature was thought to be is a second (or third perhaps) hearth in this area that

These three features appear to be the vertically truncated remnants of hearths. The clustering of these features is an indication that they are likely contemporary or near contemporary and the presence of flaked lithic artefacts in the fills of these features [(261) and (266)] suggests a prehistoric date.

3.1.2 Features in the east

Within a 5 by 3m area, approximately 7m to the east of the above area, was an second set of three pit features that were clustered in a 5 by 2m area (Figs 5 and 6).

Cut (270) was a shallow, circular, unburned pit with an uneven base that measured 0.60 by 0.50 by 0.17m deep. The feature contained a single fill (257) that consisted of grey, silty clay. The function of this pit is unknown.

Cut (272) was approximately 3m to the southwest of pit (270) it consisted of an oval pit with a concave, uneven, slightly burnt and mottled base. The feature measured 1.18 by 0.88 by 0.09m deep and contained a single fill (251). Fill (251) was grey/black clayey silt with very frequent charcoal flecks and lumps and very frequent medium sized angular stones, some of which were fire cracked. Below this fill, the natural showed evidence of burning. This was another likely hearth feature.

Cut (273) was 1.8m northwest of feature (272) and 4.5m west of Cut (270). The feature measured 0.18m in diameter and was 0.14m deep; it contained a single fill (259) that consisted of loose, black, fine silty clay with frequent charcoal inclusions. The feature was interpreted as a stakehole.

3.1.3 Features in the south

Two features were excavated within the topsoil stripped area approximately 5m to the south of the two clusters described above. These were cuts (260) and (271) (Figs 4, 9 and 10)

Cut (260) is a shallow pit that was circular in plan, had an undulating base and which measured 0.83 by 0.86 by 0.10m deep. The feature contained one fill (250) that consisted of charcoal rich, medium compacted, black, silty clay with occasional small subangular stones. There was no evidence of *in situ* burning; the function of the feature is uncertain but the remains may represent a low temperature hearth or warming pit.

Cut (271) was determined to be a stone socket; the feature contained a single fill (256).

3.2 Summary

Site 108 was Feature 8 discovered in the Phase 1 site testing, it consisted of a concentrated charcoal spread 0.66m by 0.80m (McConway and Lynch 2005). Following the Phase 2 surface stripping of the area, seven archaeological features were revealed. These consisted of three likely hearths that were clustered toward the west of the site; a second cluster of two probable hearths and a stakehole located approximately 8m to the east of the first group and approximately equidistant from both clusters (between and to the south) was another likely thermal feature. The close proximity, similar function and presence of flaked lithic artefacts in the three thermal features to the west of the site are indicates contemporaneity, as do the attributes of the second cluster to the east of the site.

4 Quantification of the Materials and Records

4.1 Quantity of the record

The site archive comprises those items listed in Table 1:

Table 1 Records Inventory

Form	Number (after voids)
Context Sheets	27
Photographs (Rolls)	22 frames on 4 rolls
Sections and Plans	6 sections and 2 plans
Finds	4
Samples	2

4.1.1 Context sheets

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

4.1.2 Miscellaneous written records

Site Diary/ Daybook (with supplementary notes and correspondence). Miscellaneous administrative notes and correspondence.

4.1.3 Drawings

Two plans and six sections.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Finds

Three pieces of struck flint was recovered from the excavations (Appendix II). The artefacts will be analysed by the appropriate specialist. Should additional artefacts be recovered from the processed samples they will be analysed by the appropriate specialists.

5.2 Samples

5.2.1 Macrobotanical analysis

The single best source of evidence for answering economic questions related to subsistence, fuel use and material culture is macrobotanical, that is, plant materials that can be seen with the naked eye. Such materials can be quantified and ultimately compared with 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 soil 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.

Both environmental samples will undergo macrobotanical analyses with materials saved for radiocarbon analyses.

5.2.2 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 two bulk soil samples (Appendix III).

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.

5.2.3 Radiocarbon analysis

The excavated features may form part of a more extensive archaeological landscape, in particular the clustering of features with similar functions (hearths), which indicates contemporaneity or near contemporaneity. The post excavation analyses should include the processing of the soil samples to recover charcoal for radiocarbon analysis of the two hearth features; the relatively isolated hearth **(260)**, Sample <3> and one of the hearths in the west cluster **(261)**, Sample <4> (Appendix III).

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Appendices

Appendix I Context list

Context	Type	Description
(250)	Fill	Charcoal rich fill of (260).
(251)	Fill	Charcoal rich fill of (272).
(252)	Fill	Charcoal rich fill of (260).
(253)	Fill	Charcoal rich fill of (260).
(254)	Fill	Charcoal rich fill of (269).
(255)	Fill	Charcoal rich fill of (266).
(256)	Fill	Stoney light grey upper fill of stone socket (271) (NAS).
(257)	Fill	Upper fill of pit.
(258)	Fill	Fill of pit.
(259)	Fill	Fill of pit.
(260)	Cut	Cut of shallow pit. Filled by (250).
(261)	Cut	Cut of shallow pit. Filled by (254).
(262)	Cut	Cut of pit.
(263)	Fill	Fill of pit (262).
(264)	Fill	Fill of pit (262).
(265)	Fill	Fill of pit (262).
(266)	Cut	Cut of pit. Filled by (255).
(267)	Fill	Fill of pit (266).
(268)	Fill	Fill of pit (266).
(269)	Cut	Cut of small circular posthole.
(270)	Cut	Cut with fill (257).
(271)	Cut	Stone socket (NAS) filled by (256).
(272)	Cut	Shallow pit with mettled base.
(273)	Cut	Stakehole containing fill (259)
(274)	-	Void
(275)	Fill	Fill of pit (261).
(276)	Fill	Fill of modern water pipe. NAS.

Appendix II Finds

Context	Description
(254)	Two pieces of burnt flint from fill of hearth (261) feature.
(255)	Worked flint from hearth (266).
(256)	Pottery from stone socket (271) fill.

Appendix III Samples

Sample Number	Context	Description
3	(250)	Charcoal rich fill of shallow pit feature (260).
4	(254)	Fill from hearth (261), also contained 2 pieces of burnt flint.

Appendix IV Photo log

Roll	Photo	Description
2	24	Pre excavation of (250) from the north.
3	1	Pre excavation plan of (251). From the north.
3	2	Pre excavation plan of (252). From the north.
3	3	Pre excavation plan of (253). From the north.
3	4	Pre excavation plan of (254). From the east.
3	17	Pre excavation plan of (255). From the east.
3	18	Pre excavation plan of (256). From the northeast.
3	19	Pre excavation plan of (257). From the north.
3	20	Pre excavation plan of (258). From the south.
3	21	Pre excavation plan of (259). From the south.
3	23	Section of hearth (260) showing fill (250). From the south.
3	24	Mid excavation. Section of hearth (261) showing fills (254) and (275). From the northeast.
4	7	Mid excavation. Section of hearth (262) showing fill (253), (264) and (265).
4	16	Post excavation of hearth (262) looking west.
4	20	Mid excavation. Section of hearth (266) with fills (255), (267) and (268). Looking southwest.
4	21	Mid excavation. Section of hearth (266) with fills (255), (267) and (268). Looking southwest.
5	2	Mid excavation of pit (272).
5	3	Mid excavation. Section of shallow pit (270) with fill (257).
5	4	Mid excavation. Section of shallow pit (270) with fill (257).
5	5	Post excavation of pit (272).
5	6	Stakehole (273).
5	7	Hearth (261).

Appendix V Site matrices

In progress, or soon to be.

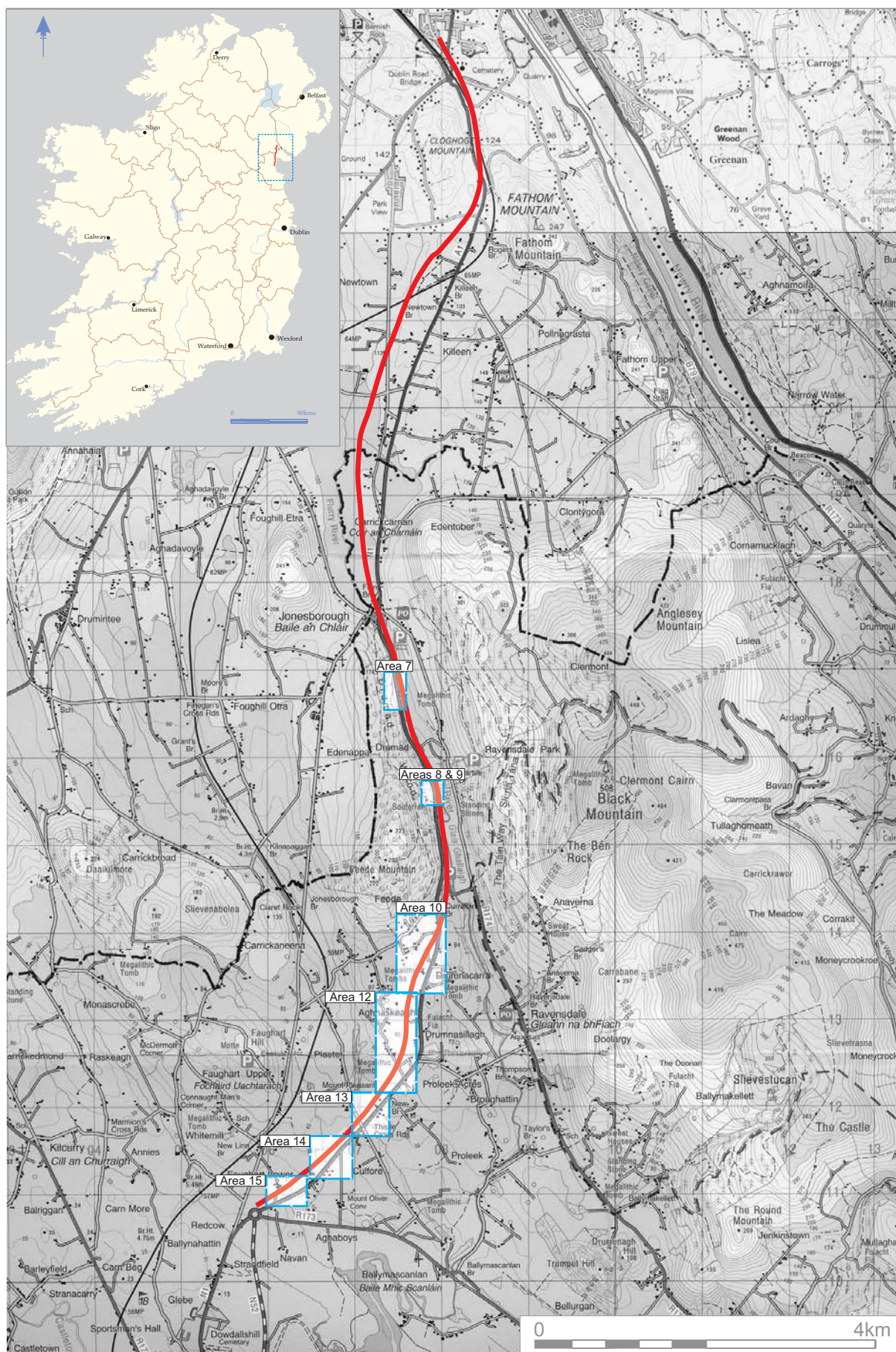


Fig. 1 Location plan for A1/N1.

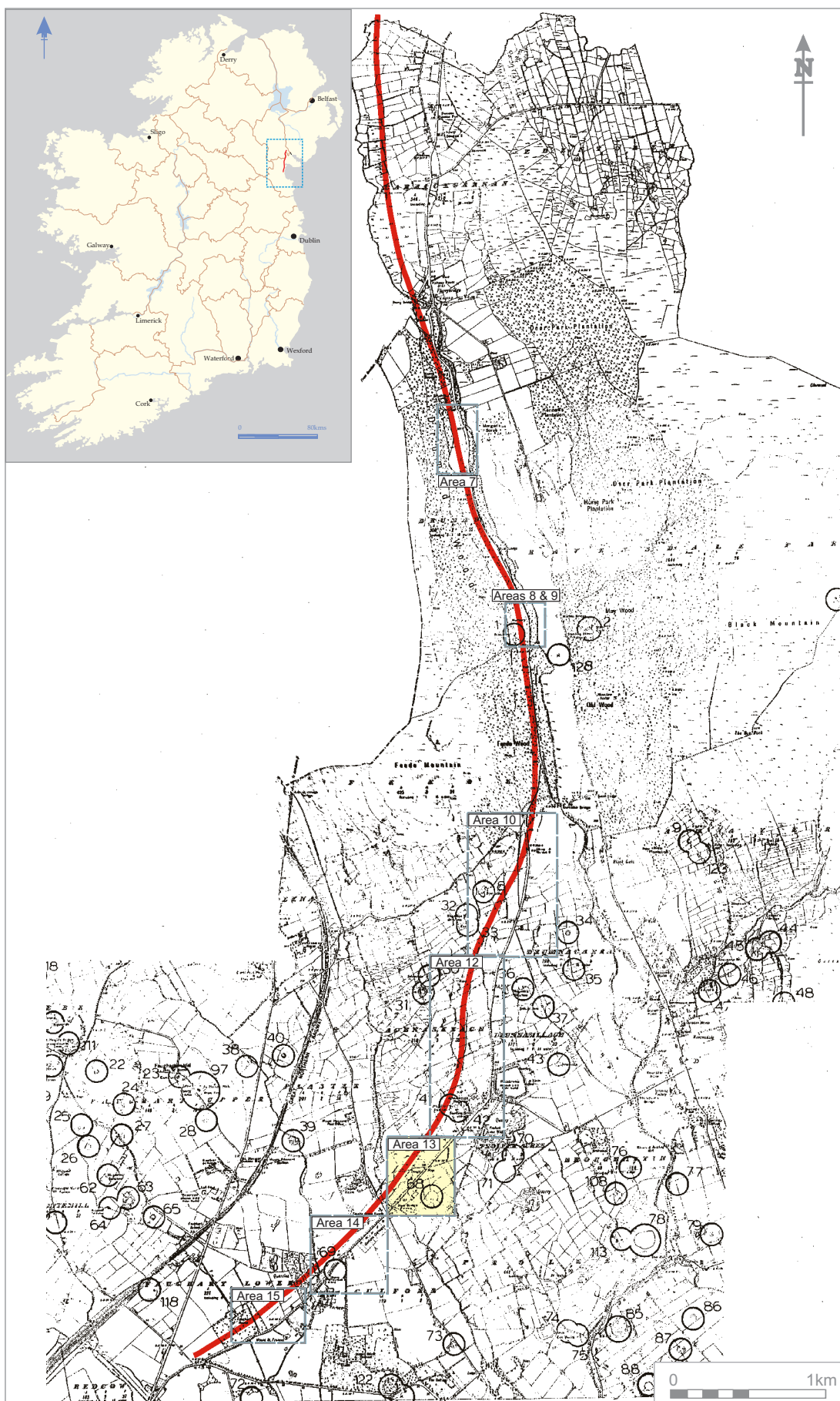


Fig. 2 Extract from RMP Maps of Louth, Sheets 1 & 4. A1/N1 in red. Scale as indicated.

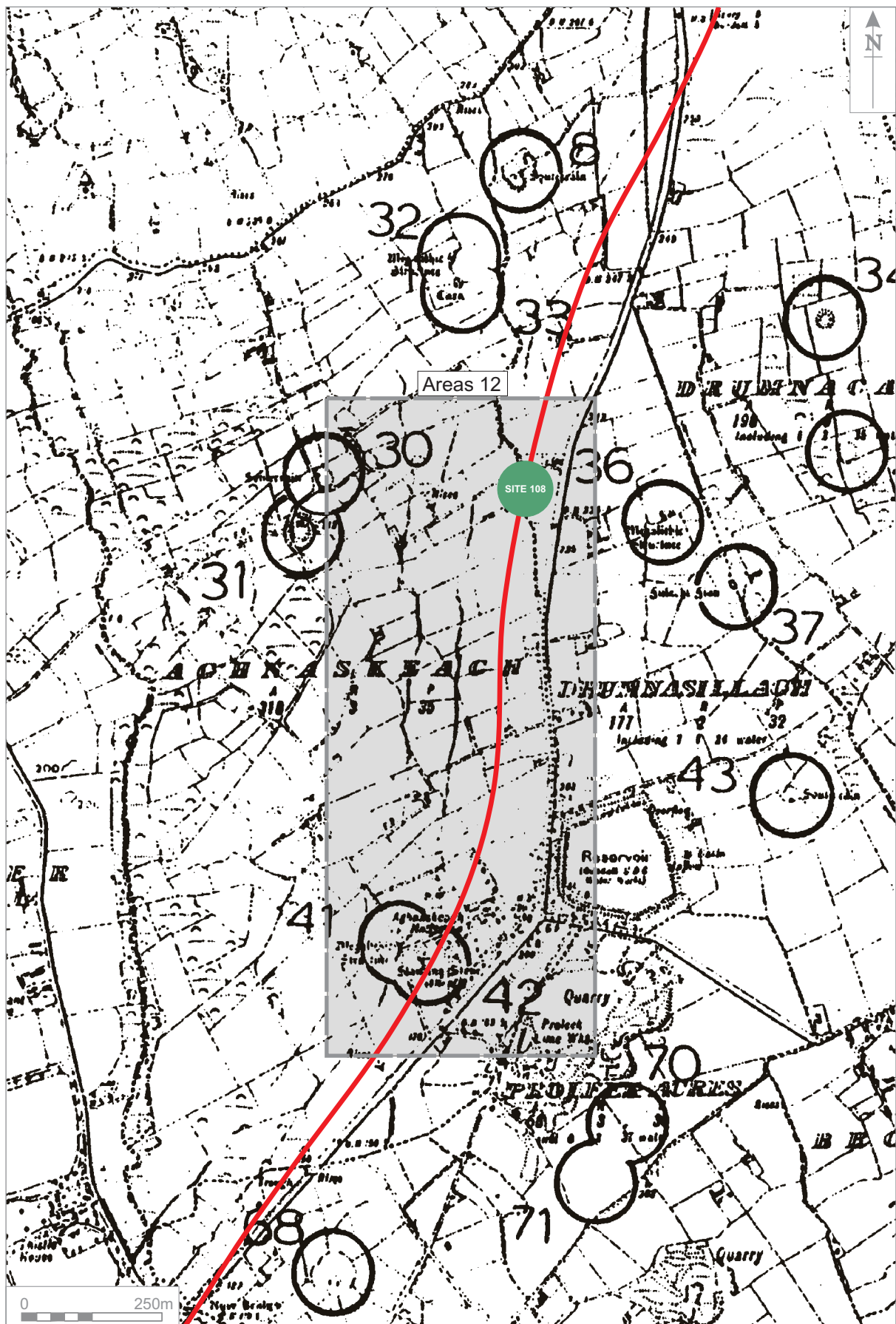


Fig. 3 Location of Area 12 and Site 108 on RMP Maps of Louth, Sheets 4.A1/N1 in red. Scale 1:10,000.

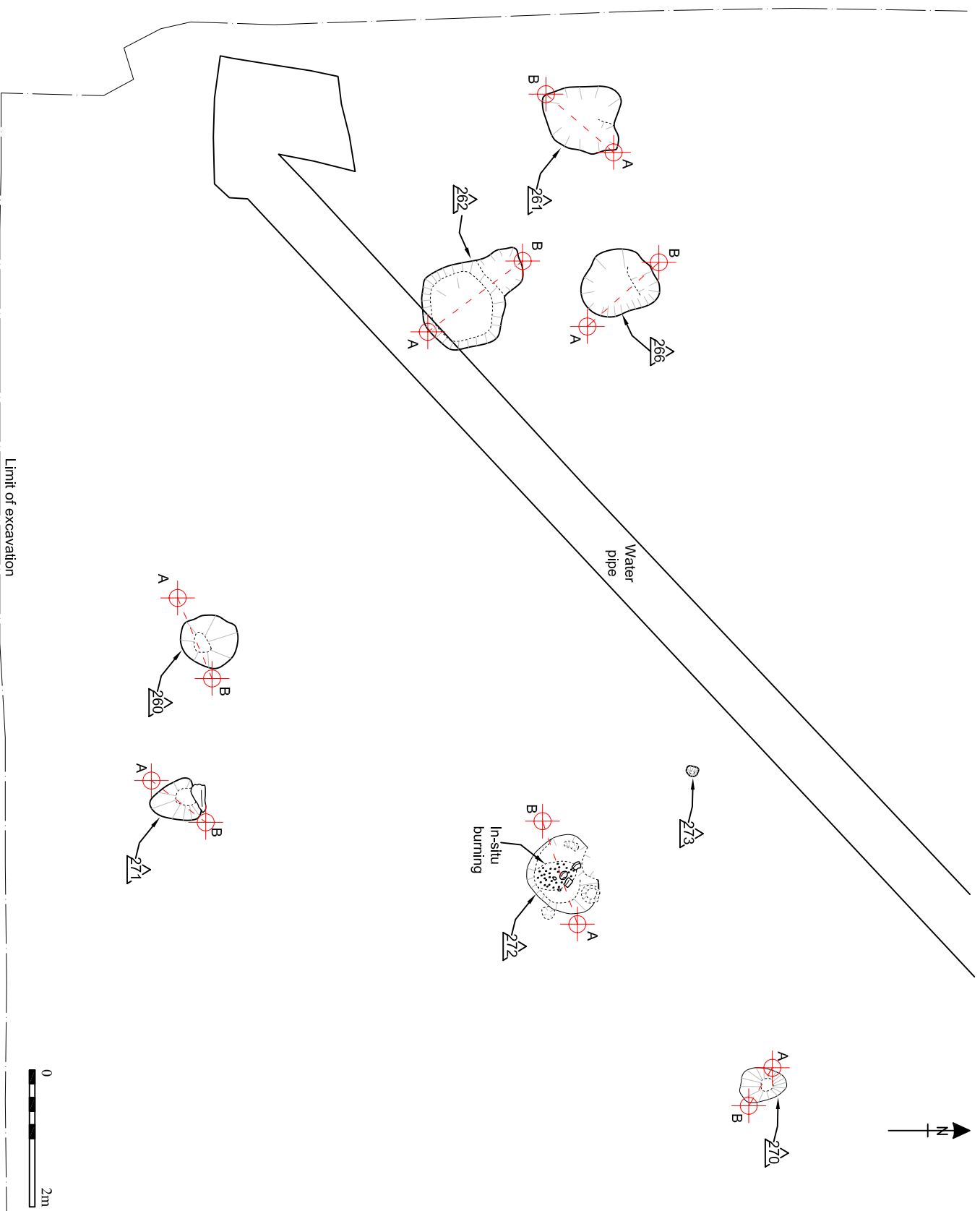


Fig. 5 Post-excavation plan of Site 108. Scale 1:80

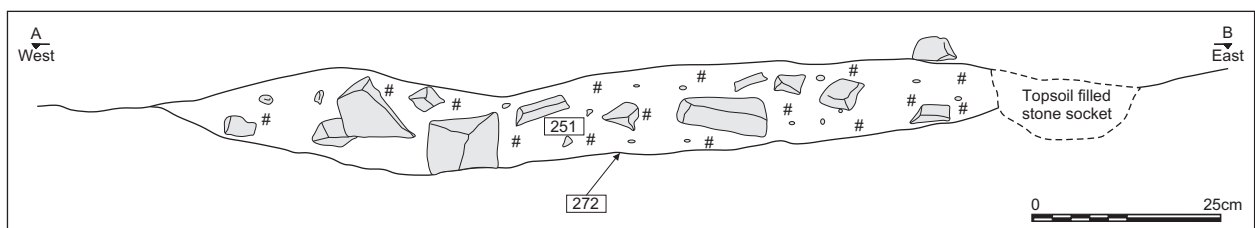
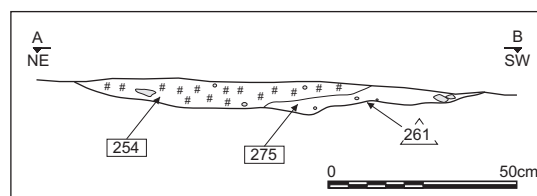
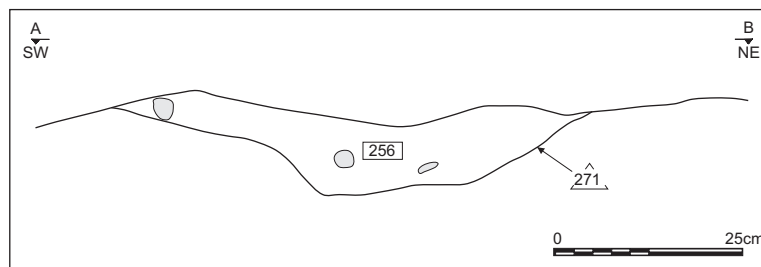
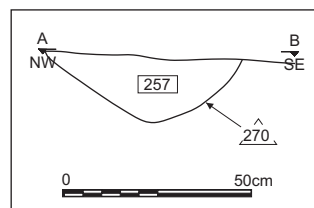
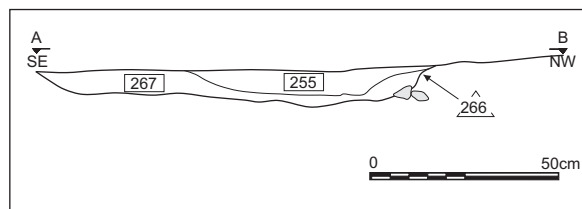
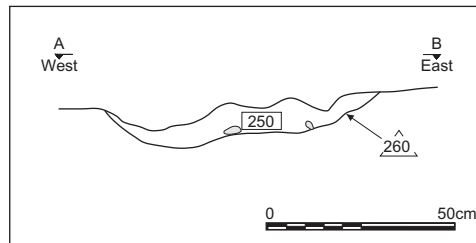
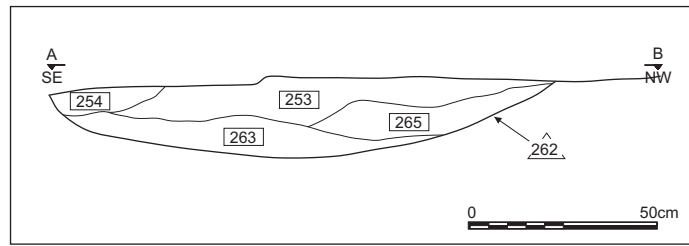


Fig. 6 Sections.