

Final Report
of Excavations Along the
A1/N1 Newry-Dundalk Link Road
Area 12, Site 123

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Chainage: 10967-10990
NGR: 307639E, 313375N
Ordnance Datum: 70m
Townland: Aghnaskeagh
Parish: Ballymascanlan
County: Louth
Country: Republic of Ireland

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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.

Site 123 was discovered during the archaeological monitoring of mainline stripping in Area 12, approximately 100m north of site 108 and 500m south of site 107, at road chainage 10950. All features on Site 123 were located outside of the Phase 1 test trenches. As bulldozers had been employed to remove the topsoil for the mainline stripping it was difficult to determine the full extent of the deposits. A mechanical back acting digger, fitted with a flat toothless bucket, was employed to clean the surrounding area to determine if the archaeological deposits continued further beyond the then known site limits. The area was subsequently cleaned back by hand. Once this was completed it was possible to determine that there were two possible features, located 3m apart. The first was a small spread, oval shaped in plan, of burnt heavily charcoaled soil measuring 1.2 by 0.7m before excavation. The second possible feature consisted of a spread of charcoal flecked fill intermixed with stones. This spread measured 2 by 1.5m as exposed but continued beyond the limit of the excavation. There were no other features noted in the cleaned area that measured 20 by 20m. Excavation proved the spread of stones and clay flecked with charcoal to be of no archaeological significance and the charcoal rich spread to be the probable remnant of a small fire. There were no finds from these features.

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 123 that followed the recommendations of McConway and Lynch 2005.

The proposed scheme involves a 14km route with 5.7km 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 April 25 2006. Staff of ADS carried out archaeological work on behalf of the developers under the direction of Sinclair Turrell. This section of the project occurs in Aghnaskeagh Townland, Ballymascanlan Parish, Co. Louth; at National Grid Reference 307639E, 313375N (centre point), Ordnance Datum (OD) of around 70m and road scheme chainage 10967-10990.

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

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

undulating agricultural landscape. South of Feede Mountain the study area levels off gently undulating to Dundalk Bay.

This site was located south of Feede Crossroads on a gentle northeastern slope towards a small stream flanked by trees and shrubs. The existing N1 Newry-Dundalk road passes by approximately 100m to the east of the site. The immediate surroundings consist of farmland and houses. Some distance away is Feede Mountain to the northwest with Ravensdale to the northeast. Previously excavated site 108 is located 100m south and site 107 is located 500m to the north. (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 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 Records of Monuments and Places (RMP) shows that there are twelve known prehistoric and historic sites in the area. These include the following seventeen sites, listed by townland, the RMP number, the Buckley and Sweetman page number their reference number (1991) and the description (usually shortened) presented in Buckley and Sweetman (1991). All of the sites are in the Republic of Ireland (Fig. 3).

LH004-041, a possible wedge tomb described below, came within the road take and was partially excavated as site 111.

RMP:	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 stonewall. 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.
-
- RMP:** 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)
-
- RMP:** 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.
-
- RMP:** LH004-032 (01), (02), (03) [Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 25 Survey No. 39 (01), 63 Survey No. 137 (02) and 94 Survey No. 249 (03)]
- 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) Portal 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.

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].

RMP: LH004-033 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991, 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 No. 39 [LH004-032 (01)] 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 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 to the 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.

RMP: 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.

RMP: 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 EW) 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 trace of fosse.

RMP: 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 that 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.

RMP: 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. 15 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.

RMP: LH004-041 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 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'. Partially excavated as site 111 within the A1/N1 project.

RMP: LH004-042 (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: 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

RMP: LH004-043 (01), (02) (Buckley and Sweetman 1991: (01) Survey No. 760; (02) 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 H1.3m) running N-S.

Sites known from the current project. Current work has identified a considerable number of archaeological sites within one kilometre of this location (Figs 2 and 3). Positive results of trial pits excavations along the route were reported in 2005 (McConway and Lynch). Sites investigated within one kilometre of this excavation during the current project include:

Site 104. 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 periods 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.

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 were no stratigraphic links 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 a 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 (Ó Baoill 2005).

Three sites were in a cluster approximately 500 m north of Site 123. These consisted of:

Site 105. This was where a 20 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. These features all had a similar fill 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 (Turrell 2005).

Site 106. This was where 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 (Powell 2005a).

Site 107. Consisted of a single large pit thought to have resulted from modern farming activities associated with an adjacent farmhouse (Powell 2005b).

A further three sites were in a cluster centered approximately 100-200m south of Site 123. These were:

Site 108. This was Feature 8 from testing (McConway and Lynch 2005). Initially the site consisted of a concentrated charcoal spread 0.66 by 0.8m. Following surface stripping five pits, two of which may be hearths, and one stakehole were discovered and excavated (Powell 2005c).

Site 109. This was the designation for a cluster of features found in testing. Feature 7 was the northernmost feature in the cluster of features. It was identified as two teardrop shaped spreads of charcoal flecked soil 0.75 by 0.5m. 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 2.60 by 1.00m. 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 0.34 by 0.24m. Feature 4 lay 40m to the west of Feature 5 and consisted of two apparently discreet spreads of charcoal 0.50 by 0.20m. 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 0.50 by 0.55m (Powell 2005d).

Site 110. This site was composed of testing Feature 2; it consisted of a small spread of burnt clay and charcoal 0.5 by 0.2m (Powell 2005e).

Site 111. Consisted of an extensive site, lying next to recorded monument (LH004:041) a Megalithic tomb. 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 large 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 below topsoil and overlying subsoil. These stones were embedded within a friable mid-brown grey soil and appeared delineated with an interrupted kerb of large 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 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 fulacht 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 black silt F17/005, at least 5m east to west and continuing into the western baulk (Ronayne 2006).

Site 112. Thirteen features of archaeological potential were uncovered on this site. Six of these were discovered to be of natural origins, formed either by root action or by 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 they are not contemporary (O'Connor 2005).

Site 122. The archaeology uncovered on Site 122 consisted of sixteen pits and five postholes, confined within a 10 by 15m area. Apart from one isolated pit at the northwest corner of the site, the features of archaeological interest were concentrated at the centre of the site. Three of the pits produced both pottery and flint, while a further seven pits produced flint, some of which was burnt. Burnt bone was also present in the fills of two pits. It is most likely that the pits were used to contain refuse deposits, hearth scrapings or initially for storage purposes and later reused for one of the above. Five probable post-holes were excavated on the site. Three of the postholes **(032)**, **(054)** and **(057)**, found approximately 2 and 3 metres apart and oriented southeast to northwest, may have been the remnants of a structure, the remainder of which may extend beyond the area of excavation. But as no artefacts were recovered from the deposits, and no further structural elements are present on site, it can also be suggested that they may have been part of a fence-line, therefore the interpretation of the postholes may be open to conjecture. No finds were retrieved from the postholes.

The horizontal stratigraphy, though limited, suggests there was more than one phase of activity on site. It is likely that the features are closely dated as they all produced similar finds (Malone 2006).

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 two 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 within 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.

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. Nine contexts, comprising of two cuts and seven fills, were recorded at the site. 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 director would like to acknowledge site archaeologists Sarah Porteus and Camilla Brännström.

3 Excavation Records-Phase 2

Site 123 was discovered during the archaeological monitoring of mainline stripping in Area 12. The immediate area around Site 123 had previously been tested during Phase 1 with no archaeological deposits being un-covered within the test trenches. The deposits that were subsequently un-covered were found during the Phase 2 mainline stripping, located between the trenches. As bulldozers had been employed to remove the topsoil during this phase of works it was difficult to determine the full extent of the deposits. A mechanical back acting digger, fitted with a flat toothless bucket was employed to clean a 20 by 20m large area around the visible features to determine if the archaeological deposits continued further, beyond the then known site limits. The digger uncovered and partly removed a layer of hill-wash on the north-eastern slope adjacent to feature **(004)**. The whole area was subsequently cleaned back by hand.

All features exposed from the stripping were concentrated within a 6 by 4m area and consisted of one spread of heavily charcoaled soil, oval shaped in plan, and a second spread of charcoaled flecked clay mixed with stones. The latter feature appeared to extend beyond the limit of excavation and was irregular shaped in plan. There were no other features noted in the cleaned area.

3.1 Results of the excavation

This report details the results of the excavation that took place at 25 April 2006 at Area 12, Site 123 (Fig. 5), under the direction of the author. The topsoil **(001)** at Site 123 was loose medium brown clayey silt with occasional inclusions of gravel and small stones.

The site consisted of one spread of charcoal rich soil that appeared to be a pit or possible hearth, cut **(002)** fills **(003)/(007)**, and one spread of stones mixed with clay with charcoal flecks in its fill, cut **(004)** fills **(005)/(006)**. Both features were located directly below topsoil and shallow in depth. The spread of mixed clay and stones with charcoal flecks was situated 3m to the east of and below the feature **(002)** on a northeastern slope towards a small stream by the limit of the road take.

Pit **(002)** measured 1.30m north to south, 0.65m east to west and had a depth of 0.20m. It was cut into the underlying subsoil **(009)**, yellow-orange sand with moderate inclusions of small angular and sub-angular stones. The cut was oriented roughly north to south and was an irregular oval shape in plan. The edges were sloping gently to the base, which was rounded (Fig. 6, Plate 2). The earliest fill **(007)** was medium compacted grey silty sand that contained moderate charcoal flecks. This was found on the south edge of the pit, with **(008)** slightly overlying it. Its maximum thickness was 0.14m and it extended 0.30m north to south and 0.65m east to west. Above **(007)** was **(008)**, located at the centre

of the pit. This was a stone deposit **(008)** consisting of moderately sorted sub-angular stones with a diameter of 0.08 to 0.20m. Many of these stones showed evidence for burning, with some shattered by heat. The final upper fill **(003)** was medium compacted black silty sand with frequent charcoal inclusions. The fill measured 1.35m north to south and 0.68m east to west and had a maximum depth of 0.08m. It was located immediately below topsoil **(001)** and above stones **(008)**.

The second feature **(004)** at Site 123 was located 3m southeast of pit **(002)** and consisted of a oval cut, which upon excavation proved a natural hollow measuring 1.60 m north to south and 2m east to west although the eastern edge continued beyond the limits of the excavation (Plate 2). The undulating base was located at a depth of 0.14m and had become in-filled with **(005)**, loosely compacted blackish-grey sandy silt with a moderate inclusion of sub-angular stones and a small number of charcoal flecks. The stones were 0.04 to 0.15m in diameter and poorly sorted. A layer of hill-wash, mottled grey and orange silty sand, **(006)** was removed to reveal the subsoil below the feature (Fig. 7).

3.2 Summary

The two features **(002)** and **(004)** were situated 3m from each other but only one of them was archaeological. The feature **(002)** has been interpreted as the remains of a small fire, possibly associated with agricultural clearance, while the second feature investigated, **(004)** was a natural hollow that had been in-filled through natural processes.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

After the completed excavation of the features it would appear as though the shallow hollow (004) at the edge of the road take is non-archaeological and simply a natural depression that has become infilled with the charcoal flecked fill (005), that had become trapped around the stones that were present within the hollow. Pit (002) contained a layer of a very charcoal rich fill (003) above the stone deposit (008) showing that there was a short lived period of burning, which was most likely a one off event, as is evident by the lack of any burning on the stone deposit.

Although there is no stratigraphic relationship between the two features excavated at Site 123 it is possible that they may be related and could both be the result of agricultural activity such as field clearance. The burning in pit (002) could easily be due to the burning of a small tree/shrub result in the charcoal rich fill, some of which would have become mixed with the topsoil and subsequently due to plough action natural processes such as weathering, charcoal has been mixed and trapped within the soil filling hollow (004).

5 Recommendation

The excavated features do not form part of a more extensive archaeological landscape nor are they significant by themselves. No further work is recommended at Site 123 nor is there reason to perform post-excavation analyses.

5.1 Finds

There were no finds from Site 123.

5.2 Samples

Two soil and environmental samples were recovered from the contexts at the site (Table1, Appendix II).

5.2.1 Macrobotanical analysis

It is the directors' recommendation that none of the samples recovered from Site 123 will be analysed for macrobotanical remains as it is felt that the nature of the features does not warrant any further work.

5.2.2 Radiocarbon analysis

The site director proposes that none of the samples taken at Site 123 will be sent for radiocarbon analysis. Although the samples listed in Table 1 were taken for possible radiocarbon analysis the nature of the features and their limited archaeological value does not warrant further work.

Table 1 Samples taken for radiocarbon analysis.

Context	Sample No.	Feature	Reason for sample
(005)	<1>	(004)	Charcoal. Fill of irregular shaped cut.
(003)	<2>	(002)	Charcoal. Fill of possible hearth or treebowl.

6 Quantification of the Materials and Records

6.1 Quantity of the record

The site archive comprises those items listed in Table 1:

Table 2 Records Inventory

Form	Number (after voids)
Context Sheets	9
Photographs (Rolls)	23 Frames in 2 Rolls
Sections and Plans	Sections 3; Plans 2
Finds	0
Samples	2

6.1.1 Context sheets

Nine 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

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

6.1.3 Drawings

Two plans and three sections/profiles.

8 References

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RPS Ireland Environmental Services (RPS)

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

Appendix I Context log

Context	Grid	Type	Description
(001)	123	Fill	Topsoil. Mid-brown clayey silt.
(002)	123	Cut	Cut for possible hearth. Filled with (003), (007), (008).
(003)	123	Fill	Black silty sand with frequent charcoal. Fill of (002).
(004)	123	Cut	Irregular shaped cut. Filled with (005).
(005)	123	Fill	Blackish grey sandy silt containing sub-angular stones. Fill of cut (004).
(006)	123	Fill	Mottled orange and grey silty sand. Possible hill-wash.
(007)	123	Fill	Grey silty sand. Fill of (002).
(008)	123	Fill	Sub-angular, partially burnt, stones below (003) in cut (002).
(009)	123	Fill	Yellowish orange sand. Subsoil.

Appendix II Sample list

Sample	Grid	Context	Bags	Reason for Sample
1	123	(005)	1	Charcoal. Fill of cut (004). Radiocarbon dating.
2	123	(003)	1	Charcoal. Upper fill of cut (002). Radiocarbon dating.

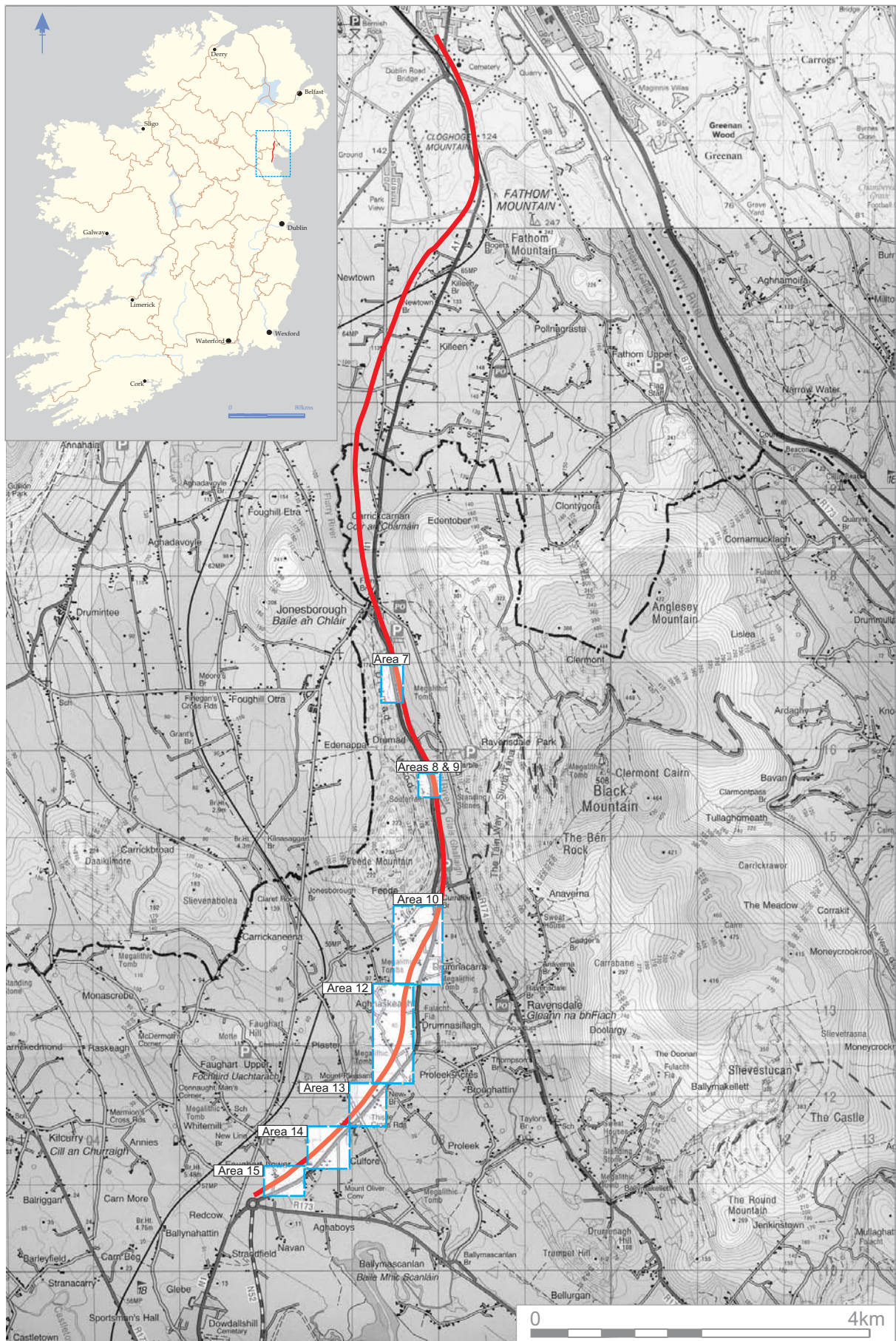


Fig. 1 Location plan for A1/N1.

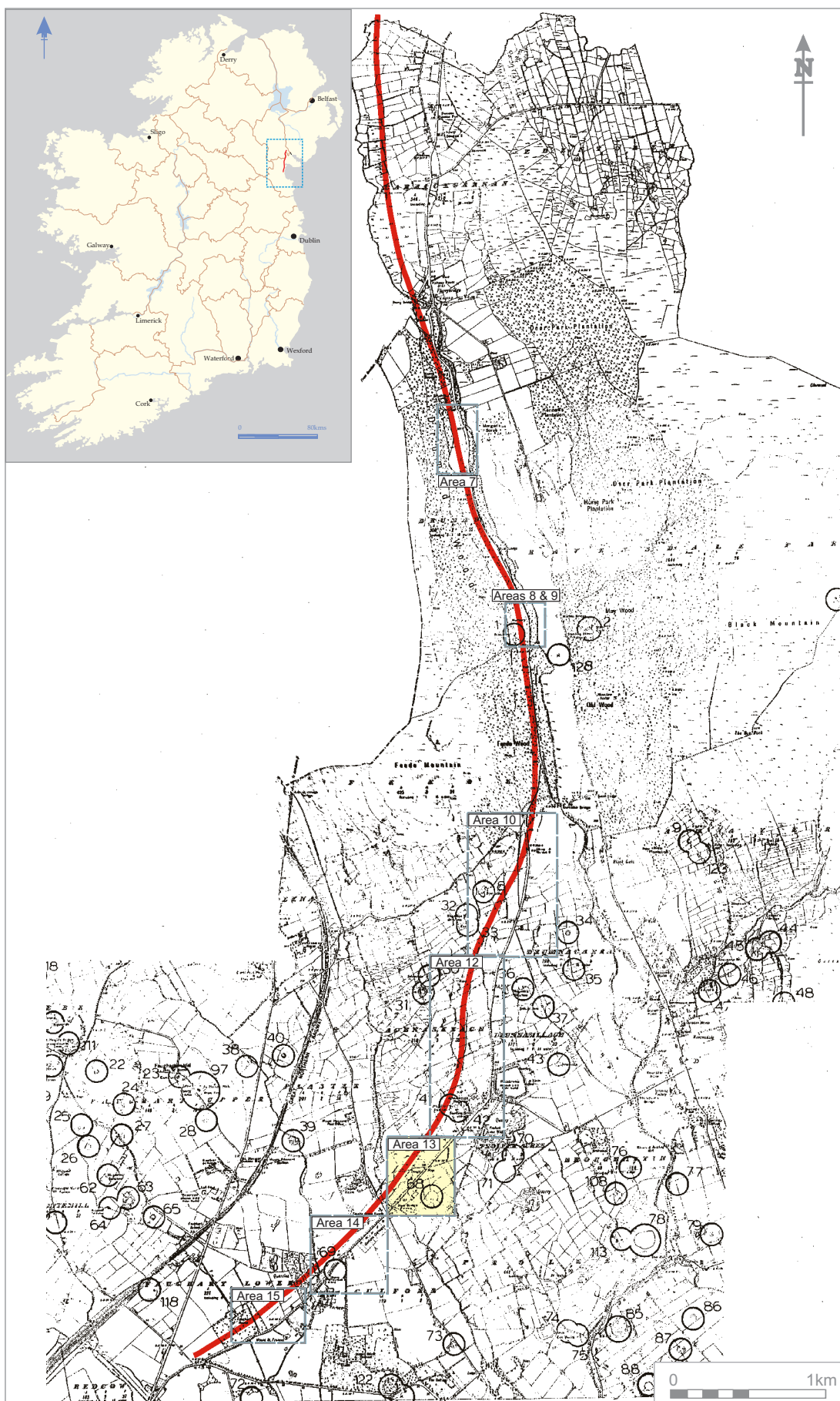


Fig. 2 Extract from RMP Maps of Louth, Sheets 1 & 4. A1/N1 in red. Scale as indicated.

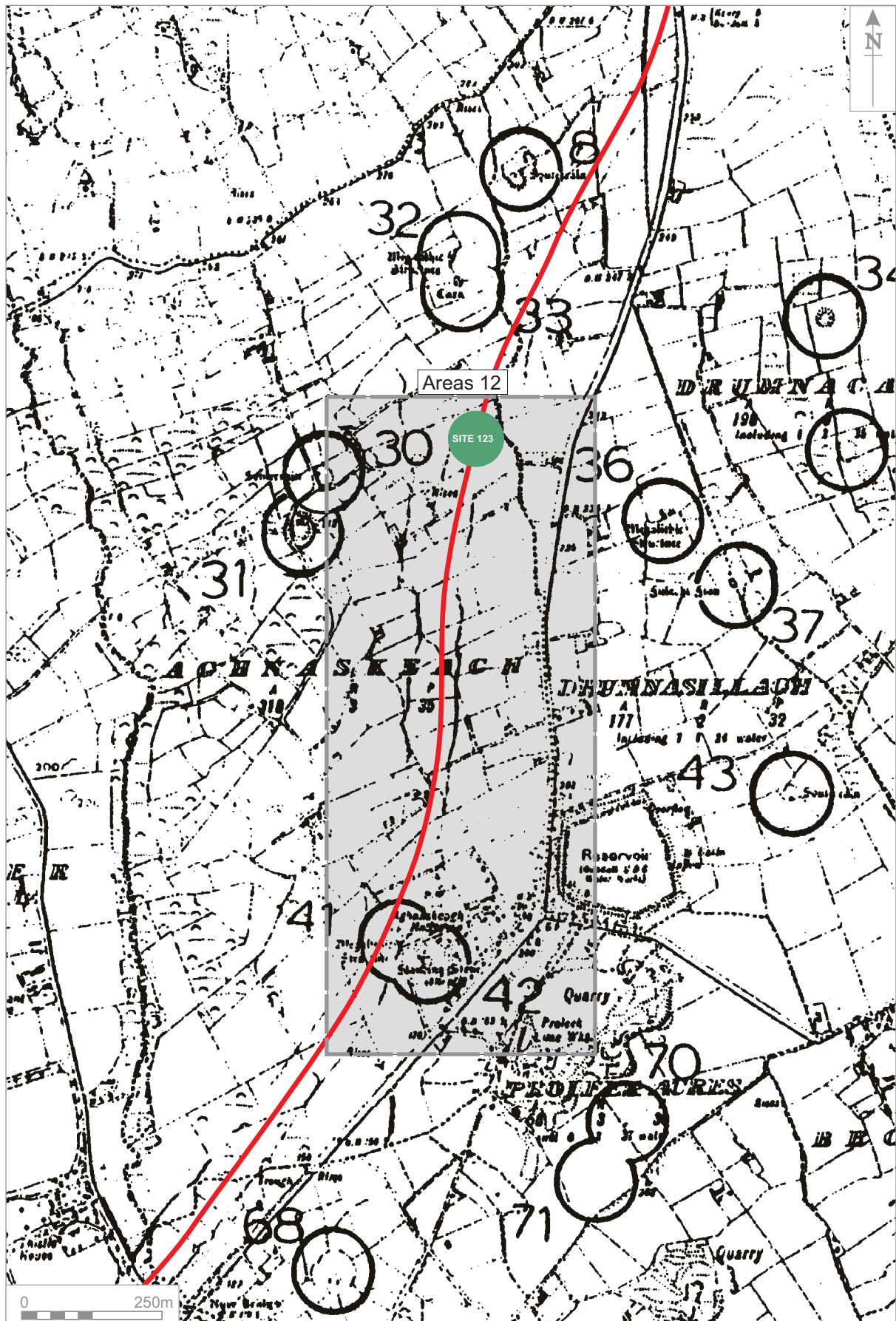


Fig. 3 Location of Area 12 and Site 123 on RMP Maps of Louth, Sheets 4.A1/N1 in red. Scale 1:10,000.

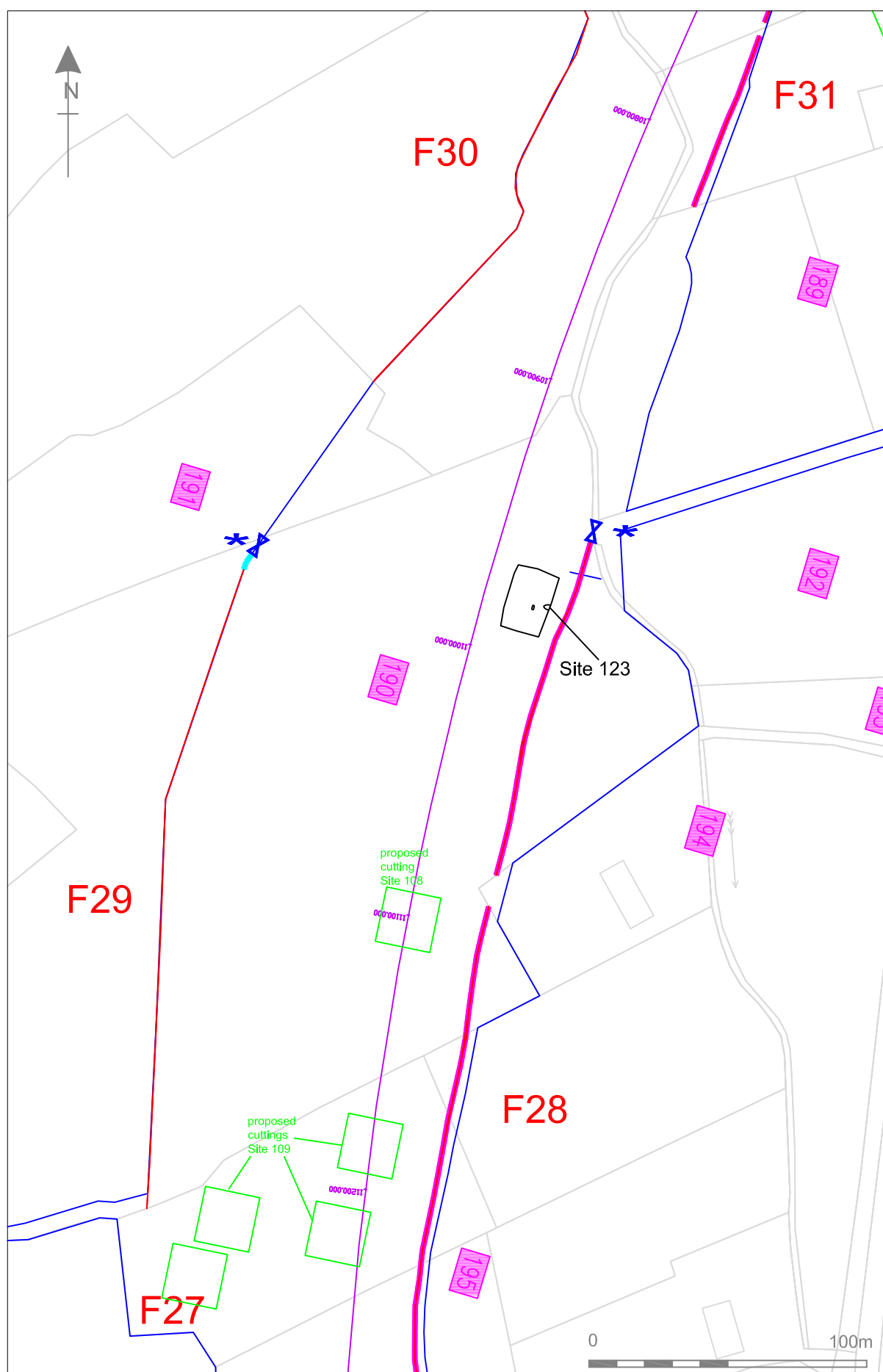


Fig. 4 Plan showing Area 12 and Site 123.

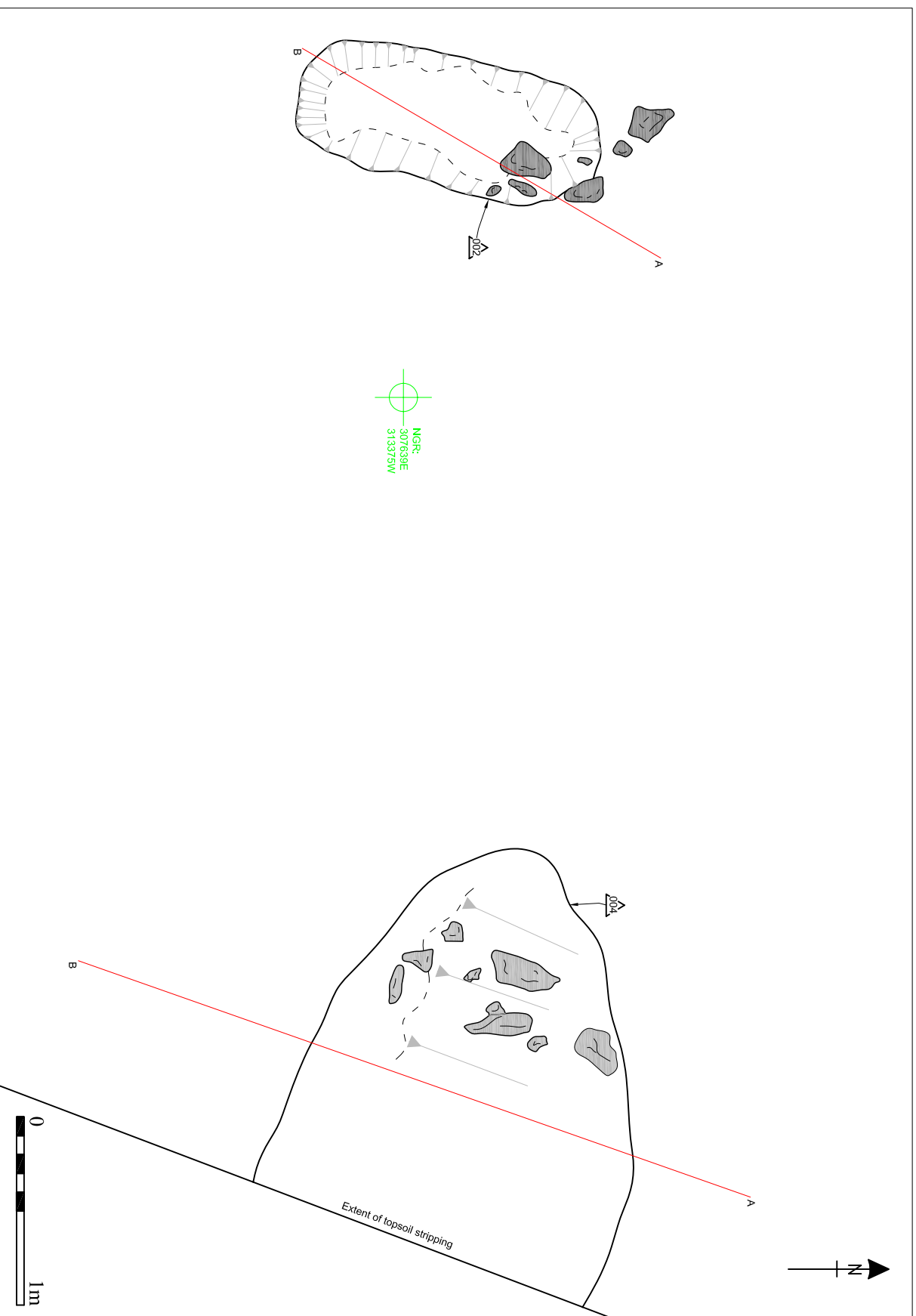


Fig. 5 Post excavation plan of Site 123.

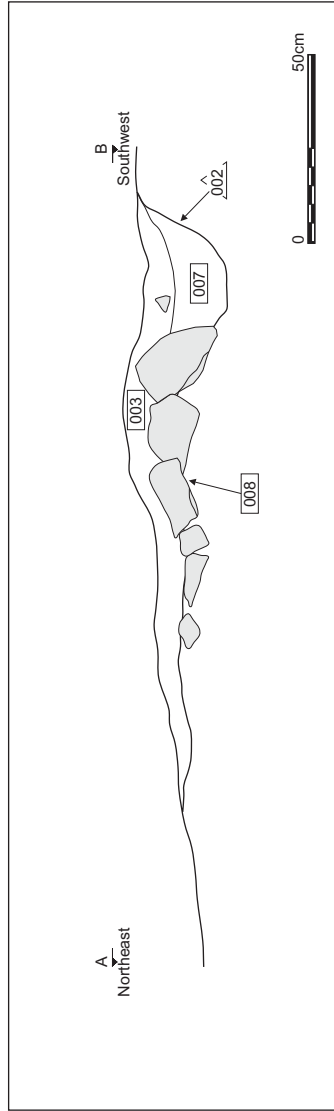


Fig. 6 Northwest facing section of pit 002.

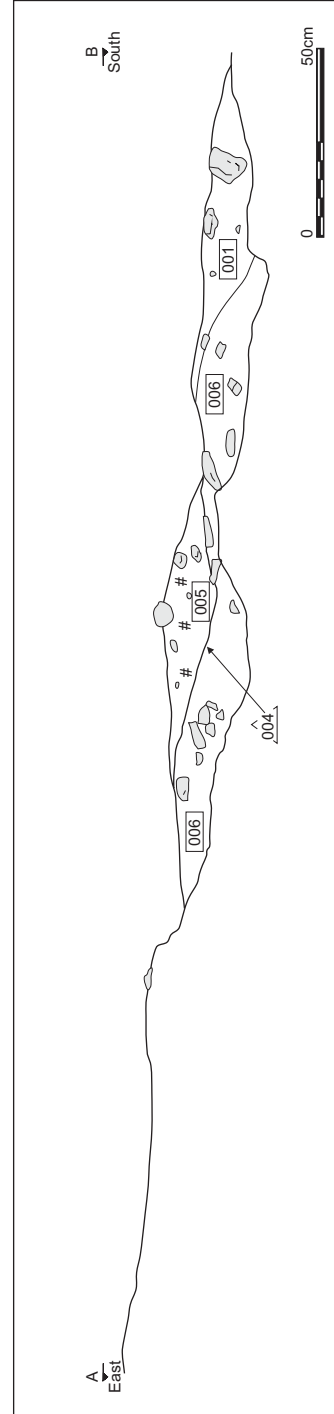


Fig. 7 East facing section of cut 004.



Plate 1 North west facing section of (002).



Plate 2 Pre ex photo of (004).