NORTHERN MOTORWAY ROAD PROJECT CONTRACT 7 GORMANSTOWN – MONASTERBOICE

FINAL REPORT ON RESOLUTION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Site: Kilsharvan 17
Licence: 01E0192

PREPARED BY
IAN RUSSELL
& EOIN CORCORAN

Northconsult
Consulting Engineers

Mr. Donall O'Caoimh,
Project Resident Engineer,
Project Office,
Kilsharvan,
Bellewstown,
Co. Meath

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY
SERVICES LIMITED

Oliver Perkins,
County Engineer,
Meath County Council,
County Hall,
Navan,
Co. Meath

Project Details

Site: Northern Motorway–Contract 7. Kilsharvan 17, Co. Meath.

Client: Meath County Council, County Hall, Navan, Co. Meath.

Planning Ref. No: N/A.

Licence No: 01E0192.

Archaeologists: Ian Russell & Eoin Corcoran.

Nat. Grid Ref: ~~270120, 310048.~~ 308990/270504

ch 19,330

32

Townland: Kilsharvan.

Date of Project: 21st March 2001.

Report Prepared: 3rd December 2001.

Abstract

The site was exposed near the western edge of the proposed motorway to the south of the enclosure at Kilsharvan 16. It consisted of a sub-oval pit measuring 1.04m in length, 0.93m in width and 0.18m in depth and had been filled with a humic dark-grey–black silty clay containing moderate inclusions of charcoal, burnt stone and occasional fragments of burnt bone. A radiocarbon date of 2880 +/- 40 BP (Cal BC 1190–930) was recovered from the fill which dates the pit to the Middle–Late Bronze Age. No further archaeological features or deposits were exposed and no finds were recovered.

CONTENTS

List of Figures

List of Plates

Final Report on the Archaeological Excavation at Kilsharvan 17, Northern Motorway–Contract 7, Gormanstown–Monasterboice, County Meath.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report gives an account of the archaeological resolution of a single pit uncovered at Kilsharvan 17, County Meath (OS six-inch sheet number 27, 621mm from the west margin and 415mm from the south margin, NGC 270120, 310048, *Figures 1–3*) carried out on behalf of Meath County Council, County Hall, Navan, County Meath. The site was exposed at chainage 19425 in the western portion of the motorway in the townland of Kilsharvan. It was exposed during archaeological monitoring of topsoil stripping carried out by Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. during groundworks associated with the construction of Contract 7 of the Northern Motorway Project. The site was identified as a deposit of organic soil with burnt stone and charcoal and a possible pit/posthole. The excavation was conducted under licence number 01E0192 issued by *Dúchas* The Heritage Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands to Ian Russell.

2. 0 THE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Site

The site was exposed in the townland of Kilsharvan at Chainage 19425, a short distance to the south of the enclosure exposed at Kilsharvan 16 (01E0191). As the proposed motorway would have a direct impact upon the site, a full archaeological excavation was conducted. The excavation was carried out under licence number 01E0192 issued by *Dúchas* The Heritage Service to Ian Russell.

2.2 Proposal

Meath County Council in association with the National Roads Authority intend to construct a new motorway linking the existing M1 at Gormanstown to Contract 6 of the Northern Motorway at Yellow Island.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

3.1 Archaeological and Historical Background *by Bryn Coldrick*

Prehistory

The earliest settlers in Meath are thought to have arrived around 7,500BC in a period known as the Middle Stone Age or Mesolithic. These people were hunter-gatherers whose existence was based almost entirely on a foraging economy. As this culture tended not to produce the kinds of permanent structures which later cultures would build, it is difficult to find evidence for Mesolithic settlement. One of the only Mesolithic structures known in Ireland is a hut site at Mount Sandel in Co. Derry. The main indicators of Mesolithic activity in Ireland take the form of flint scatters and shell middens which have been identified at several locations along the east coast. Given the nature of the Irish landscape at the time, covered as it was in dense primeval forests, the Mesolithic peoples tended not to venture very far inland. Instead, they remained largely confined to the coasts and river valleys where they would fish for their survival, only making expeditions into the thick forests for roots, berries and for the wild animals that roamed there.

During the Neolithic or New Stone Age period (*c.* 4000BC–*c.*2400BC), as the country's forests were being cleared to make way for the new farming culture which had emerged in Ireland, it became apparent that the central plain of which the future County Meath would form a part, was one of the most fertile areas of the country and in time, this area became the most coveted. In addition to its economic advantages, the topography and strategic location of the Meath area made it the ritual and political centre of Ireland as well as its economic heart (Brady 1956).

The spiritual and economic importance of Meath and of the Boyne Valley in particular, is forever enshrined in the Boyne Cemetery on the north bank of the river. Now a UNESCO world heritage site, the Bend of the Boyne which includes the townlands of Newgrange, Knowth, Dowth and several others, contains some of the most important passage tombs in Western Europe. A passage tomb is an oval or circular stone and earthen mound retained at the base by kerbing. This mound or 'cairn' contains a stone-lined passage often terminating in a chamber in which cremated burials were placed. The great tombs of the Boyne Valley are amongst the largest and most elaborate Neolithic passage tombs in the world. The cemetery as a whole comprises around forty known passage graves ranging in date from *c.*3260BC to *c.*3080BC. The cluster of around eighteen tombs at Knowth contains the largest concentration of Neolithic art in Western Europe with some of its finest examples. The great tombs of Knowth, Newgrange and Dowth were all constructed on a height overlooking the Boyne in rich fertile farmland which had been cleared for up to five hundred years before the building began (Stout 1997).

Seed and pollen analysis has shown that the early Neolithic people of the Boyne Valley practised both pastoral and arable farming techniques, probably using bramble and crab apple as a hedging material to separate fields. The fertility of the land allowed a stable and wealthy community to develop gradually. These people lived at first in ephemeral rectangular timber houses but their architectural achievements

culminated in the building of permanent stone tombs which testify not only to their religious dedication but also to their in-depth knowledge of engineering and astronomy. By the late Neolithic, from around 2,855BC onwards, the tombs became the focus of renewed ritual devotion with large enclosures (or henge's) being erected using stone, timber and earth to form arenas for long forgotten ceremonies. Although the general location of the rituals remained the same, the actual burial practices of these so-called 'Beaker People' were much less elaborate than their tomb-building forebears with stone-lined cists, such as those discovered at Monknewtown and Oldbridge, being used (Stout 1997). From around 1,800BC to the first century AD, there appears to have been a period of virtual inactivity in the Boyne Valley. One of the few indications of human activity in the area during this time is the recent discovery of several *fulachta fiadh* in the townland of Sheephouse on the south side of the Boyne (Stout 1997). *Fulachta fiadh* are Bronze Age cooking sites characterized by a crescent-shaped mound of burnt stone. Groups of these monuments are often found in damp areas where the trough used for cooking would naturally fill with water. Stones were heated on a fire and then thrown into the trough until the water was hot enough to cook with (although alternative uses such as bathing have also been suggested for these monuments). After use, the stones were removed from the trough and placed around its edge until the characteristic crescent-mound was formed.

Iron Age and Early Christian Period

During the first century AD, Ireland was divided into five ancient kingdoms known as 'the Five Fifths of Ireland'. These kingdoms corresponded roughly to the modern provinces of Ulster, Munster and Connacht with Leinster divided into North and South. By the end of the first century, the tribes of Connacht had crossed the Shannon and had begun to occupy lands around present-day Mullingar, making Uisneach their royal seat. Thus, the new kingdom of Meath was born and the name perhaps signifies its geographical location in the centre of the country. Brady suggests that it derives from the Latin Regia Media or 'the middle kingdom' but it could also derive from a Gaelic word with the same meaning (Brady 1956).

By the third century AD, Tara, the former capital of North Leinster, had been adopted as the capital of Meath and as the kingdom's power grew, it assumed the status of a High Kingdom, exercising authority over the entire island. The first High King of Meath was Cormac Mac Art who is said to have reigned from AD226 to 266 (Callary 1955). The first High King of Ireland was Niall of the Nine Hostages and from AD402 to 1169, his descendants or those of his brothers are said to have reigned uninterrupted except for a short period from 1002 when the title was usurped by BrianBorú. By the sixth century, resistance to Meath's supremacy in Leinster had evaporated. The kingdom of Meath was divided into seventeen sub-kingdoms with the kingdom of *Dál Fiachach* corresponding to the medieval barony of Duleek and that of North Brega corresponding roughly to the barony of Slane (Brady 1956).

The Early Christian period was one of population growth and the most common settlement type at the time was the ringfort. These monuments remain the most common archaeological site type in existence in Ireland today with around 30,000 examples recorded. They are characterised as a circular area defined by banks and external ditches and excavation often reveals the remains of dwelling houses within

their interior. The banks are generally constructed of earth except in stony areas where they may be of stone. Those with earthen banks are sometimes referred to as 'raths' while those with stone banks are known as 'cashels'. Most ringforts are enclosed by a single bank, but it is also quite common for them to have two sets of banks (a 'bivallate' ringfort) or even three ('trivallate').

Ringforts are usually situated on gentle slopes with good views of the surrounding countryside and although they tend to have a dispersed distribution in the landscape, they are occasionally found in pairs or even joined together to form a 'conjoined ringfort'. At one time, it was believed that ringforts served a military function. It is now more widely accepted, however, that they were merely farmsteads, the fortifications of which were designed more to keep livestock in than to keep enemies out. In local tradition, ringforts were the dwelling places of fairies and it was often said that at night, lights could be seen emanating from their interiors. Such superstition encouraged people to keep a safe distance, but now, as superstition dies out, the monuments are coming under increasing pressure from development and intensive agriculture. Many have been partially or completely destroyed since the 1960s and often the only indication of the former presence of a ringfort is preserved in placename elements such as *Dún* or *Rath* or *Lios*. The townland names of Donore, Lisdornan and Rathmullan, therefore, all owe their origins to Early Christian farmsteads.

Often found in association with ringforts and cashels are souterrains. The term 'souterrain' derives from the French *sous terrain* meaning 'underground'. In archaeological terms, souterrains are artificial underground structures cut into bedrock or, more commonly, built into dug-out trenches with drystone walling and large stone lintels. The primary function of souterrains seems to have been food storage as they maintain constant temperatures (*c.*10°c). Souterrains vary in extent with some examples being short and simple affairs while others, such as those at Knowth, can be intricate, extending for many meters and leading to several underground chambers.

Souterrains were entered through narrow openings which were often concealed and it is believed that, as well as being used for storage, some souterrains were used as places of refuge during times of attack. Considerable mythology surrounds these monuments and stories are often told about tunnels linking one place to another. In reality, however, they are almost always self contained with only a single entrance. By their nature, souterrains can go undetected for long periods and are often discovered dramatically when ground collapses during silage cutting, ploughing, and quarrying (Power & Lane 2000). Isolated souterrains are known to exist in Rosnaree, Oldbridge and Sheephouse (Stout 1997).

Throughout the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, the kingdoms of Meath were, like many other parts of Ireland, subjected to harassment by the Norse which may be one explanation for the existence of souterrain networks. The *Annals of the Four Masters* record that a Viking fleet was stationed on the Boyne at Rosnaree in AD841 and the souterrains of Knowth and Dowth were pillaged in 863. The traditional agricultural wealth of the area must have been a major factor in its repeated selection as a target for raids (Stout 1997). At first, the attacks took the form of sea-borne raids but were later launched from the permanent Viking settlement in Dublin. The majority of the

raids were aimed at monastic houses of which Duleek was one of the most important in Meath. These church raids were also recorded in the annals and had a very serious impact on church organisation in Ireland. Only the most resilient monasteries (such as Duleek, Kells, Clonard, Fore and Durrow) could survive against the repeated onslaughts (Brady 1958).

Medieval to Post-Medieval Periods

The landscape of the Boyne Valley between Slane and Drogheda, north and south of the river, was to undergo another agricultural revolution during the twelfth century. In 1142, the Cistercian monks established their mother house at Mellifont and were granted huge tracts of farmland by the local Gaelic king. Their new style of European monasticism differed immensely to that traditionally practised in Ireland since the time of St. Patrick in the fifth century. Their land management techniques represented the most revolutionary landscape change the Boyne Valley had seen since the forests had been cleared in the early Neolithic period. At the dissolution of the monasteries in the mid-sixteenth century, Mellifont Abbey held up to 11,000 acres including estates and rights over much of the area under study in this report (D'Alton 1844; Graham 1974). Mellifont divided the land into independent monastic farms or 'granges' which were managed by teams of lay brethren. The granges of Mellifont included not only obvious examples such as Newgrange, Sheepgrange and Roughgrange but also townlands such as Oldbridge, Rathmullan, Sheephouse, Fennor and Rosnaree. The grange began as a small group of farm buildings but in most cases it eventually developed into a nucleated settlement similar to a manorial village. A good example of this evolutionary process is Monknewtown or 'the New Town of Monkland' (Graham 1974).

The monastic economy, like the Early Christian and Neolithic economies before it, was based entirely on agriculture and the potential of this area to produce wealth had more than proven itself in the past. The granges became the focus of a kind of agriculture so different from what had gone before that it can perhaps be compared to the industrial agricultural practices which are carried on in certain places today. Grain cultivation, cattle breeding and sheep rearing were conducted extensively in the Boyne Valley under the patronage of the monks at Mellifont. Grain is known to have been exported from here to England in the thirteenth century while archaeological evidence from Balfaddock, Knowth, Townley Hall and Donore all indicate intensive ploughing (Stout 1997).

In addition to increasing the intensity of the agriculture conducted in the Boyne Valley, the Cistercians also revolutionised its milling and fishing industries. Twelfth-century documents make numerous references to the mills and millponds of the Boyne and the mills probably took the form of vertical mill wheels. By the time the monastery was dissolved in 1539, the Cistercians were operating mills at Stalleen and Rosnaree (where vernacular mill buildings still exist today) and at Newgrange where the only evidence for what was known as Broe's Mill is an extensive millrace. In addition to its mills, Mellifont possessed several fishing weirs along the Boyne including those at Rosnaree, Knowth, Stalleen, Oldbridge and Rathmullan (Stout 1997).

Although the Boyne Valley in this area was unquestionably dominated by its religious landowners, the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1169–70 reintroduced secular settlement, in particular to Dowth. Having been granted the liberty of Meath by Henry II in 1172 in return for the service of fifty knights, Hugh de Lacy subdivided it into smaller areas which he himself granted to subtenants by a process known as subinfeudation. The liberty of Meath comprised not only that county, but also Westmeath and parts of Longford and Offaly. Much of Meath de Lacy retained for himself and administered as seigniorial manors. His grantees also subdivided their holdings into manors. Upon receipt of a land grant, it was the responsibility of the grantee to ensure that his holding was adequately defended with fortifications such as a motte-and-bailey castle. The next step was to encourage immigrants from England and Wales to settle the land and make the manor an economically viable unit. At the time, the only urban settlements in Ireland were the Norse walled towns such as Dublin and Limerick. The native Irish were still living in ringforts dispersed across the landscape and sometimes in nucleated rural settlements. Their churches were isolated establishments as the parish system was only slowly emerging following the Synod of Cashel in 1171–72. The only pre-Norman settlements of note in Meath were the larger monastic foundations such as those at Kells, Slane, Duleek, Skreen and Clonard (Graham 1974).

The majority of the new settlements established by the Anglo-Normans are either still in existence today or their sites are visible in the landscape. Many are characterised by the initial fortifications used by the local lord to secure his land grant, usually a motte. A motte is a truncated conical earthen mound originally surmounted by a wooden tower or *bretesche*. The circumference of the motte was protected by a wooden palisade or fence. Associated with the motte was a forecourt or bailey, usually rectangular in shape, in which livestock and retainers could live alongside the lord's hall. The motte and bailey were usually connected by a wooden drawbridge. Around forty mottes are known to survive in County Meath and at least nine are known to have been replaced by stone castles (Graham 1974). There is an example of a motte in Lisdornan townland (ME028:013).

The first mottes to be established in the area were mainly built in strategic places such as at river crossings and are referred to as 'primary mottes'. These stood 9–12m in height and date to the period of initial consolidation (i.e. 1175–85) and were built on de Lacy's seigniorial manors, including Trim, Ratoath, Dunshaughlin, Kells, Clonard, Duleek and Drogheda. The leading grantees during the process of subinfeudation built similar mottes in Navan, Nobber, Slane, Skreen, Galtrim, Kilbeg, Castlecor, Dunboyne and Lower Duleek where a motte was probably erected in Dollardstown. Other likely primary motte sites include Athboy and Rathkenny (Graham 1974).

Secondary mottes are almost entirely associated with the process of subinfeudation and were built to secure manorial grants. They were often smaller than primary mottes and had no bailey. Most were built before the close of the twelfth century and all formed the focus of initial settlement. Examples of these occur at Scurloughstown, Ardmulchan, Knowth (where the Neolithic cairn was adapted for the purpose), Drumcondra, Derver, Castlerickard, Dunsany, Greenoge and Laracor. Once the lord felt secure in his holding, he set about replacing his motte fortification with a more permanent stone castle. These were often simple tower houses built next to an existing

8

church and were the Irish equivalent of English manor houses, though of a more
military nature in consequence of the unwelcome environment (Graham 1974).

The next phase of the manorial process was the establishment of churches, villages
and monastic settlements. Augustinian houses became especially numerous in
consequence of their popularity around the time of the invasion. The twin houses of
Llanthony Prima (in Monmouthshire) and Secunda (in Gloucestershire) were granted
extensive tracts of land in the vicinity of Colp and Duleek respectively (Graham
1974). The wealthiest abbey in the area, Mellifont, was already well established by
this time.

The primary form of settlement in medieval Meath was the manorial village.
Generally, this comprised a castle (i.e. a motte and later a stone tower house), a
manorial church (which could either pre-date or post-date the castle), and a number of
dwellings. A total of ninety-eight villages from this period had been identified in
Meath by 1974. The majority of these became abandoned from around the seventeenth
century onwards and in most cases the only upstanding indications of the village site
today are the more endurable remnants such as the castle or church. Dwellings
constructed of mud and wattle have long since disappeared leaving little or no visible
trace above ground level. Earthworks, as at Dowth, have been known to preserve the
line of former streets or property boundaries but in the majority of cases, these too
have been ploughed out by centuries of intensive agriculture (Graham 1974).

In many cases, hamlets grew up in close proximity to the manorial villages. These
comprised a nucleated grouping of dwellings without a church, though many,
especially in the west of the county, included a stone house or tower house and a bawn
(i.e. an enclosure for livestock etc). Such hamlets were occupied by servile tenants
known as 'betaghs' as opposed to the free farmers who occupied the village. As they
were made up mainly of ephemeral houses, most of these hamlets are now gone and
even their field systems have disappeared since the enclosure movement of the late
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Graham 1974).

As stated above, other than a small number of Norse towns, urban life did not exist in
Ireland prior to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169. Almost all of the most
important towns in existence today started life as an Anglo-Norman borough, i.e. a
settlement with its own corporation and privileges as set down in a charter from the
king or from a powerful local lord such as Hugh de Lacy. The earliest borough from
the post-invasion period was 'Drogheda-on-the-side-of-Meath' which was granted its
charter by William de Lacy in 1194. This was followed by Kells and Trim (1194–99)
and by Ratoath which was incorporated before 1200. The medieval boroughs of
Meath can be divided into three categories: the walled towns such as Trim, Athboy,
Kells and Drogheda; the unwalled towns which were usually baronial capitals,
monastic sites or market centres such as Slane, Nobber, Skreen, Duleek and Ratoath;
and finally, those boroughs which had their own charters but which never managed to
develop beyond the level of a manorial village. Boroughs of the last category are often
termed 'rural boroughs' and include Greenoge, Drumcondra, Newtown Trim, Syddan,
Colp and Marinerstown or Mornington (Graham 1974).

At the height of their power in the first half of the thirteenth century, the Anglo-Norman conquerors held no more than two thirds of the country. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, their authority was in continuous decline until they effectively controlled only the area occupied by the modern counties of Dublin, Louth, Meath and Kildare. In 1495, this area was designated 'The Pale' under an Act of Parliament and it became the area in which English dress, customs, language and political power flourished most in opposition to the native Gaelic culture all around it. In terms of agriculture and settlement patterns, the impact of the Anglo-Normans in The Pale was revolutionary and apart from Dublin, Meath became the most intensively settled part of Ireland (Graham 1974).

Unlike the true castles of the early medieval period (e.g. Trim, Limerick, etc) which were complex military fortresses designed to protect the most important members of the early conquest establishment, the majority of 'castles' in Meath from the later medieval period were no more than fortified towers. The tower house as it emerged in the fifteenth century was a relatively plain structure of three or more storeys in height which became the principal dwelling type for the wealthy Anglo-Irish landowning class of The Pale for the next two hundred years. The tower house was a response to the increasing harassment suffered by the Anglo-Irish gentry at the hands of dispossessed Gaelic clans intent on reclaiming their traditional territories and status. In 1429, Henry VI passed a statute granting the sum of £10 to anyone who built a stone tower 20ft long, 16ft wide and more than 40ft high. Many castles of this period, therefore, are known as 'ten-pound castles' and among the more elaborate examples are Dunmoe and Liscarton near Navan and Dardistown Castle near Drogheda (Galway 1985–68; Graham 1974).

The Civil Survey of 1654–56 recorded 170 tower houses in Meath but by the time of the 1884 edition of the Ordnance Survey maps for the county, that number had fallen to only seventy-two upstanding remains or known sites. Most of the tower houses in the county date to the fifteenth century and were almost exclusively built on high ground near to a river for strategic and transport reasons. The tower house was the focal point of the lordship, representing a source of employment and protection for the local peasant community. When a tower house was under construction, all men within the lordship were obliged under a statute of 1431 to work eight days of the year for three years on the castle. Thereafter, their working lives would centre around the castle economy (Galway 1985–86).

Post-Medieval to Modern Periods

The present landscape of County Meath owes its origins to the nature of late seventeenth and eighteenth-century landholding arrangements and agricultural practices. The medieval villages were gradually deserted as people gravitated towards the towns. The amount of pasture land steadily increased (especially in the second half of the nineteenth century), slowly replacing the medieval tillage economy (Graham 1974). One of the most decisive factors in the nature of the local landscape was the Battle of the Boyne fought between William of Orange and James II on July 1st 1690.

During the battle, the opposing armies manoeuvred over an area stretching from Tullyallen in the north to Duleek in the south and as far west as the village of Slane

10

with the most intense engagements taking place at Oldbridge (de Buitléir 1998). The Protestant king, William, had a force of around 36,000 men comprising Dutch, English, German, Huguenot, French and Irish troops. His Catholic father-in-law, James II, had around 25,000 troops including Irish, English, French and German. Early on the morning of July 1st, a detachment of around 10,000 Williamites made their way under the cover of dense fog from what is now called King William's Glen, through Monknewtown and Newgrange, towards the ford at Rosnaree. On hearing of this, James made the classic mistake of dispatching the cream of his army to intercept them, leaving his Oldbridge defences dangerously weak. William capitalised on James's error and sent the bulk of his army to cross the river at Oldbridge. Fierce fighting took place during most of the day as the Williamites struggled to establish a bridgehead on the south bank in the face of heavy resistance. When they had achieved their objective, the Williamites forced the Jacobites to retreat to the Hill of Donore and then on to Duleek. The initial retreat was highly disorganised as troops began to panic at the Williamite advance. The Jacobite cavalry eventually secured a bridge over the River Nanny and facilitated a more orderly retreat.

The Battle of the Boyne ended James's hopes of regaining the Crown from his Protestant son-in-law and the war finally ended on October 3rd 1691 with the signing of the Treaty of Limerick. This paved the way for the confiscation and resettlement of land, the introduction of the Penal Laws, and for two hundred years of Protestant Ascendancy. History would prove it to be one of the most important and controversial battles in Irish history and the landscape changes that had begun in the aftermath of the Dissolution were copper fastened by the Williamite land settlement. The gradual enclosure of monastic grange lands after 1539 was formalised during the eighteenth century by regular hedgerows which divided the land into farms of various sizes.

The eighteenth century also witnessed tremendous advances and improvements in land management and agricultural practices. Farms were leased to tenants who often sublet their holdings to subtenants. This created a social pyramid in which local farmers spanned almost the entire range of the social spectrum from the numerically-superior small cottiers with their mud-walled houses, through the middle and strong farmers with their more comfortable and more durable stone houses, to a handful of major, usually Protestant, landlords (such as the Coddingtons of Oldbridge who were the wealthiest landowners in the entire area) whose dwellings reflected their social, political and economic standing (Stout 1997).

Kilsharvan

Kilsharvan is said to have been named after a saint called Sharvan. *Cill Searbháin* or 'The Church of Searbhan' is a parish lying partly in the baronies of Upper and Lower Duleek. It is bound on the north by the parishes of Duleek and Colp; on the east by those of Julianstown and Moorechurch; on the south by Moorechurch and Duleek and on the west by Duleek parish. By the mid-1830s, it comprised 2,096 statute acres which included around 40 acres of woodland and 100 acres of waste. The remainder was divided between tillage and pasture. Like many of the parishes and townlands in the area, there were several gentlemen's seats including Mount Hanover (J. Matthews Esq.), Cooper Hill (J. Cooper Esq.) and Annagor, the residence of P. Matthews Esq. (Name Books; Lewis 1837).

The townland of Kilsharvan is bound on the north by Duleek parish and the townland of Crufty; on the east by Shallon; on the south by Newhaggard townland and on the west by Annagor. The townland comprised 199 statute acres in the mid-1830s and contained Kilsharvan House, a bleach green, and a mill (Name Books). The 'bleach field' contains an interesting stone structure known as 'the sentry box' from which watchmen would keep an eye on the linen left out in the field for bleaching (McCullen 1988–89). Tradition has it that the mill dates back to the sixteenth century and that the northern portion of Kilsharvan House was originally the sixteenth-century miller's home. Kilsharvan House lies a short distance west of the proposed motorway and is a large two-storey Regency revival house dating from c.1880. It contains a five bay entrance front with two bows flanking a central Doric porch. Adjoining the house on the west side is a smaller circa eighteenth-century house which retains its graded slating. In the 1940s, the old mill was converted to produce a dandelion-based beverage known as Cof-o-Era (McCullen 2001)

The ruins of a church in this townland are recorded as ME027:009. The church was divided into a nave (11.2m in length and 5.5m wide) and a chancel (8.7m in length and 4.9m wide). Opposing doors are located towards the western end of the nave and a tomb niche is located in the south wall of the nave. There is a large east window and two double light windows with tracery in the south wall of the chancel. A sacristy was added to the north of the chancel (Moore 1987). The church was dedicated to St. John the Baptist and probably dates to the twelfth century. The tithes were granted to the Llanthony monastery in Colp. Bishop Dopping in 1682–85 described the church as unrepaired since the rebellion of 1641 (McCullen 1988–89).

The Beaumont/Kilsharvan Bridge is recorded as ME027:008. It is a bridge of seven arches of three different sizes, the river being confined to the two larger central arches. The bridge may have been expanded twice as two vertical joints can be detected in the arches (Moore 1987). The centre section is sunk more than the others. An arch was added to the south in the eighteenth or nineteenth century (RMP files).

3.2 Stratigraphical Report

The sod and mid–dark-brown sandy topsoil (**F001**) directly overlay the mid-yellow to brown sandy boulder clay (**F002**) at a height of 32.52m O.D. The only archaeological feature exposed was a single pit (*Figure 4*).

Pit

The pit (**F004**) was sub-oval in shape and measured 1.04m in length by 0.93m in width and extended to depth of 0.18m (32.539m O.D., *Plates 1 - 2*). It contained gradually sloping sides becoming more vertical towards the northwest, to a flat base and had been filled with a humic dark-grey–black silty clay (**F003**) containing moderate inclusions of charcoal, burnt stone and occasional fragments of burnt bone. A radiocarbon date of 2880 +/- 40 BP (Cal BC 1190–930) was recovered from the fill which dates the pit to the Middle–Late Bronze Age. The second possible pit / posthole was identified as a decayed stone 1.0m to the west.

No further archaeological features or deposits were exposed and no finds were recovered

3.3 List of Contexts

F001	Sod and topsoil.
F002	Sandy boulder clay
F003	Grey–black silty clay fill of pit F004.
F004	Oval pit filled with F003.

4. CONCLUSION

The site was exposed near the western edge of the proposed motorway to the south of the enclosure at Kilsharvan 16. It consisted of a single pit which was dated to the Middle–Late Bronze Age (Cal BC 1190–930). No further archaeological features or deposits were exposed and no finds were recovered. It is likely that the pit represents an outlying feature of a potential site to the south of the proposed motorway. However, it may also represent outlying activity from the nearby Bronze Age enclosure at Kilsharvan 16 (Cal BC 1000–390).

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bence-Jones, M. (1978) *Burke's Guide to Country Houses, Vol. 1: Ireland*. Burke's Peerage Ltd. London.

Bradley, J. (1985) *The Urban Survey of County Meath*. Office of Public Works.

Brady, J. (1956) 'The Kingdom and County of Meath' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. I, No. 2.

Brady, J. (1958) 'Early Christian Meath' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. I, No. 4.

Brady, N. (2000) 'River Boyne, Oldbridge' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1999: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Wordwell. Bray.

Byrne, F.J. & Byrne, F.P. (1994) 'Two lives of St. Patrick: Vita Secunda and Vita Quarta' in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries in Ireland*. Vol.124.

Callary, R. (1955) 'The Territory of Ancient Meath' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. I, No. 1.

Campbell, K. (1995) 'Sheephouse' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1994: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Wordwell. Bray.

Casey, C. & Rowan, A. (1993) *The Buildings of Ireland: North Leinster*. Penguin. London.

Clinton, M. (2000) 'Pilltown/.../Bey More/Platin/. *et al*' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1999: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Wordwell. Bray.

D'Alton, J. (1844) *The History of Drogheda with its Environs*. John D'Alton. Dublin.

De Buitléir, M. (1998) 'Battlefields: A Neglected Aspect of Irish Archaeology' in *Archaeology Ireland*. Vol. 12. No. 1. Spring 1998.

Deevy, M. (2000) 'Sarsfieldstown' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1999: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Wordwell. Bray.

Delaney, E. (1985) (ed.) *A History of Julianstown*. Julianstown.

Duchas, The Heritage Service, *Archaeological Survey of County Meath*, Dublin, 1987.

Duchas, The Heritage Service, *Sites and Monuments Record of County Meath*.

Edwards, N. (1990) *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*. London.

Gallwey, H. (1976) 'The Family of Dardis' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. VI, No. 2.

Galway, F. (1985–86) 'Meath Tower Houses' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. VII, No. 4.

Garry, J. (1992–93) 'The Colpe Inscriptions' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. VIII, No. 4.

Gowen, M. (1991) 'Donore Quarry' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1990: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Wordwell. Bray.

Gowen, M. (1988) 'Colp West' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1988: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland*. Wordwell. Bray.

Graham, B. (1974) 'Medieval Settlements in County Meath' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. V, No. 4.

Gwynn, A. & Hadcock, R.N. (1988) *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland*. Irish Academic Press. Dublin.

Julianstown Guild I.C.A. 1985, *A History of Julianstown*,

Killanin, Lord & Duignan, M.V. (1989) *The Shell Guide to Ireland*. Dublin.

McCullen, J. (1988–89) 'Gravestone Inscriptions at Kilsharvan' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. VIII, No. 2.

McCullen, J. (2001) 'Kilsharvan' in *The Parish of Duleek and 'Over the Ditches'*. Duleek Heritage. Drogheda.

Moore, M. (1987) (ed.) *Archaeological Inventory of County Meath.* The Stationery Office. Dublin.

Lewis, S. (1837) *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland.* Lewis & Co. London.

Lynch, P. (1998) 'Gormanstown' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1997: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland.* Wordwell. Bray.

Lynch, P. (1998) 'Sarsfieldstown' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1997: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland.* Wordwell. Bray.

O'Flanagan, M. (1928) (ed.) *Letters Containing Information Relative to the Antiquities of the County of Meath Collected During the Progress of the Ordnance Survey in 1836.* Bray.

Power, D. & Lane, S. et al (2000) (eds.) *Archaeological Inventory of County Cork. Vol. 4: North Cork.* The Stationery Office. Dublin.

Purcell, A. & O'Donovan, E. (1999) 'Irishtown, Gormanstown' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1998: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland.* Wordwell. Bray.

Ryan, F. (1997) 'Gormanston' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1996: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland.* Wordwell. Bray.

Stout, G. (1996) 'Oldbridge' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1995: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland.* Wordwell. Bray.

Stout, G. (1997) 'The Bend of the Boyne' in Aalen, F.H.A., Whelan, K. & Stout, M. (eds.) *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape.* Cork.

Swan, D.L. (1996a) 'Archaeological Testing at Stamullin, County Meath' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. IX, No. 2.

Swan, D.L. (1996b) 'Stamullin' in Bennett, I. (ed.) *Excavations 1995: Summary Accounts of Archaeological Excavations in Ireland.* Wordwell. Bray.

Ward, M. (1967) 'The Parish of Julianstown' in *Ríocht na Midhe* Vol. IV, No. 1.

Other Sources
Name Books: *Ordnance Survey Field Name Books of the County of Meath 1835–36.* Vol. V.

Signed: *Ian Russell.*

Ian Russell.
Archaeologist.

Date: 16.01.02

F:\Job Folders\2000\00_86 Drogheda By-pass\00_86 Reports\00_86 Reports\Kilsharvan 1 - 19\Kilsharvan 17\00_86_T147 Kilsharvan 17 Report B (Final).doc

REPORT OF RADIOCARBON DATING ANALYSES

Kilsharvan 17. (01E0192.)   Feature No. F003.

Sample Data	Measured Radiocarbon Age	13C/12C Ratio	Conventional Radiocarbon Age(*)

Beta - 159668   6060 +/- 50 BP   -25.5 o/oo   6050 +/- 50 BP
SAMPLE : 01E018521
ANALYSIS : AMS-Standard delivery
MATERIAL/PRETREATMENT : (charred material): acid/alkali/acid
2 SIGMA CALIBRATION :   Cal BC 5060 to 4800 (Cal BP 7010 to 6750)

Beta - 159669   3810 +/- 40 BP   -26.8 o/oo   3780 +/- 40 BP
SAMPLE : 01E019015021
ANALYSIS : AMS-Standard delivery
MATERIAL/PRETREATMENT : (charred material): acid/alkali/acid
2 SIGMA CALIBRATION :   Cal BC 2310 to 2120 (Cal BP 4260 to 4070) AND Cal BC 2090 to 2050
(Cal BP 4040 to 4000)

Beta - 159670   2460 +/- 70 BP   -25.0* o/oo   2460 +/- 70* BP
SAMPLE : 01E0191160637
ANALYSIS : Radiometric-Standard delivery (with extended counting)
MATERIAL/PRETREATMENT : (charred material): acid/alkali/acid
2 SIGMA CALIBRATION :   Cal BC 800 to 390 (Cal BP 2750 to 2340)

Beta - 159671   2790 +/- 40 BP   -26.5 o/oo   2770 +/- 40 BP
SAMPLE : 01E019116267
ANALYSIS : AMS-Standard delivery
MATERIAL/PRETREATMENT : (charred material): acid/alkali/acid
2 SIGMA CALIBRATION :   Cal BC 1000 to 820 (Cal BP 2950 to 2780)

Beta - 159672   **2870 +/- 40 BP**   **-24.1 o/oo**   **2880 +/- 40 BP**
SAMPLE : 01E019217031
ANALYSIS : AMS-Standard delivery
MATERIAL/PRETREATMENT :   **(charred material): acid/alkali/acid**
2 SIGMA CALIBRATION :   **Cal BC 1190 to 930 (Cal BP 3140 to 2880)**

CALIBRATION OF RADIOCARBON AGE TO CALENDAR YEARS

(Variables: C13/C12=-24.1:lab. mult=1)

Laboratory number: **Beta-159672**

Conventional radiocarbon age: **2880±40 BP**

2 Sigma calibrated result: **Cal BC 1190 to 930 (Cal BP 3140 to 2880)**
(95% probability)

Intercept data

Intercept of radiocarbon age
with calibration curve: **Cal BC 1030 (Cal BP 2980)**

1 Sigma calibrated result: **Cal BC 1110 to 1000 (Cal BP 3060 to 2940)**
(68% probability)

2880±40 BP — Charred material
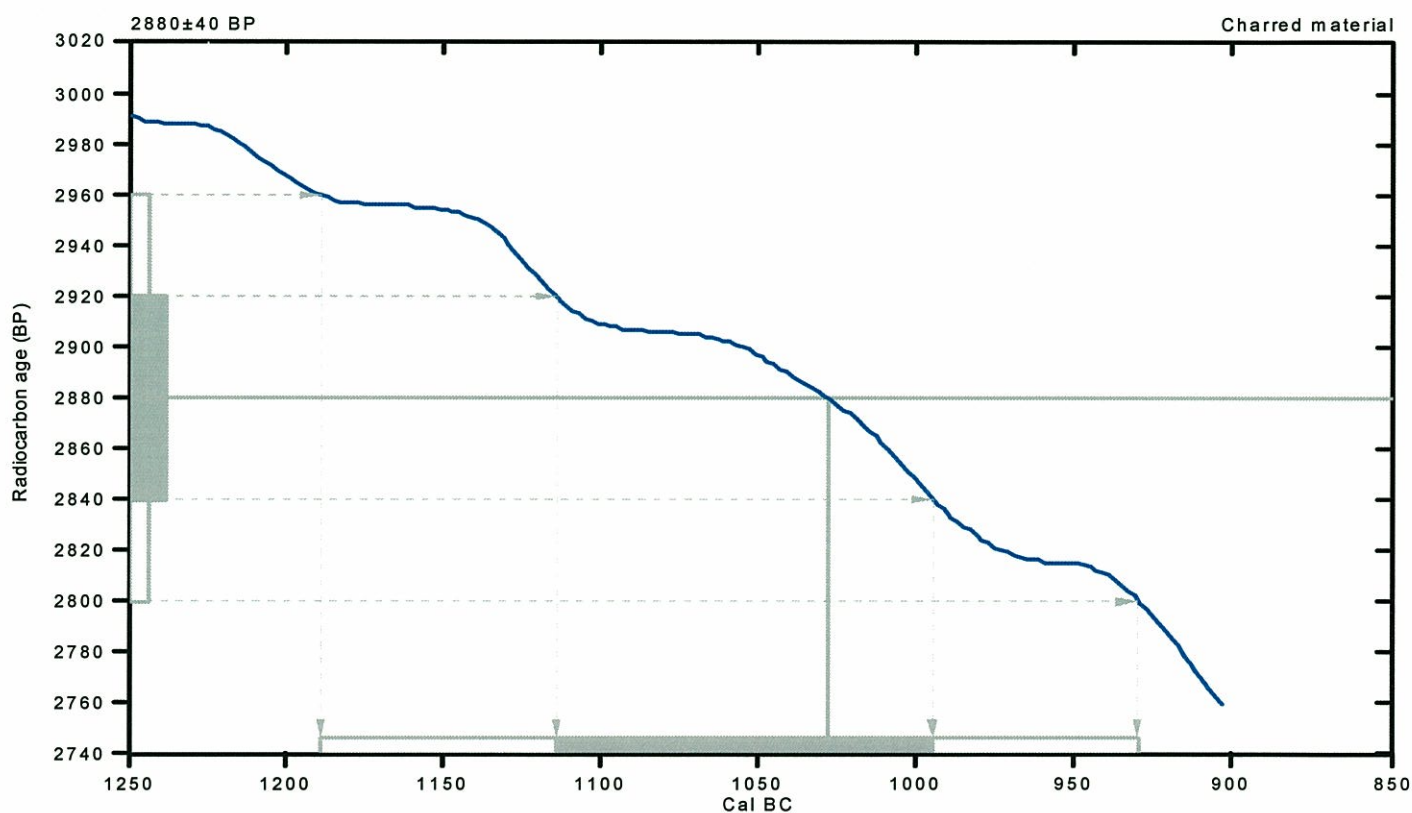
References:
Database used

Calibration Database
Editorial Comment
    Stuiver, M., van der Plicht, H., 1998, Radiocarbon 40(3), pxii-xiii
INTCAL98 Radiocarbon Age Calibration
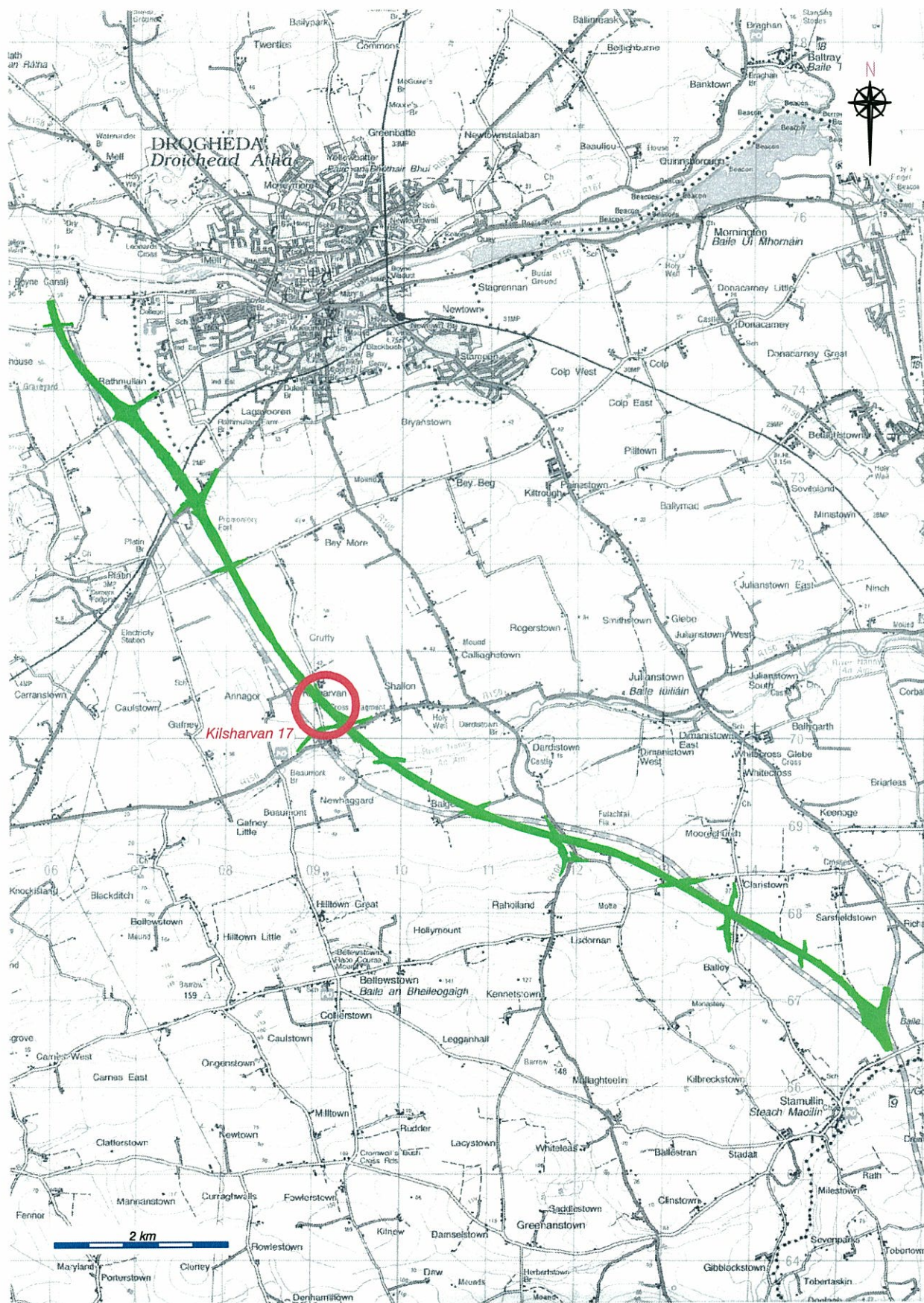   Stuiver, M., et. al., 1998, Radiocarbon 40(3), p1041-1083
Mathematics
A Simplified Approach to Calibrating C14 Dates
    Talma, A. S., Vogel, J. C., 1993, Radiocarbon 35(2), p317-322

Beta Analytic Inc.

4985 SW 74 Court, Miami, Florida 33155 USA • Tel: (305) 667 5167 • Fax: (305) 663 0964 • E-Mail: beta@radiocarbon.com

Figure 1: Location of site

DROGHEDA
Droichead Átha

Kilsharvan 17

N

2 km

Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd. 15 Trinity St., Drogheda, Co. Louth

| Site Location: Kilsharvan 17, Northern Motorway, Co. Meath | Scale: 1:65000 A4 | Map ref.: 43 Discovery Series |
| Client: Meath County Council | Date: 21 Nov '01 | Drawing No.: 00_86_C74 |

Kilsharvan 17

Figure 2: Location of site showing local SMR sites

ch 19500

19400

16

19300

19200

Kilsharvan 17

19100

18

ch 19000

19

KILSHARVAN

N

200 metres

Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd. 15 Trinity St., Drogheda, Co. Louth

| Site Location: Kilsharvan 17, Northern Motorway | Scale: 1:4000 A4 | Map Ref: Courtesy of Northconsult |
| Client: Meath County Council | Date: 09 Jan '02 | Drawing No.: 00_86_C136 |
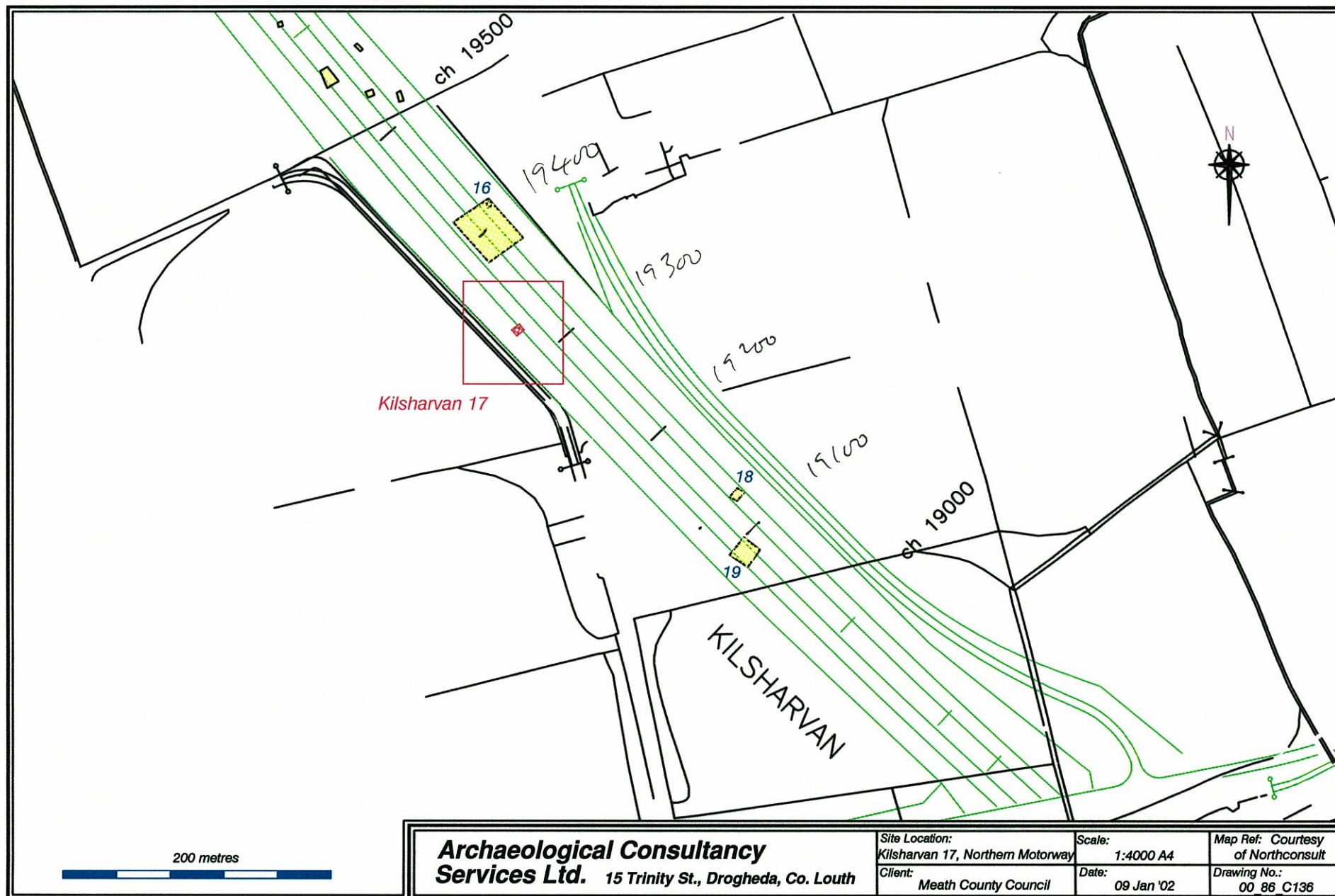
Figure 3: Location of site within route of proposed motorway

decayed
stone

F001

A1

F004

A

Edge of excavation

2 metres

Section of F003

A   F003   A1
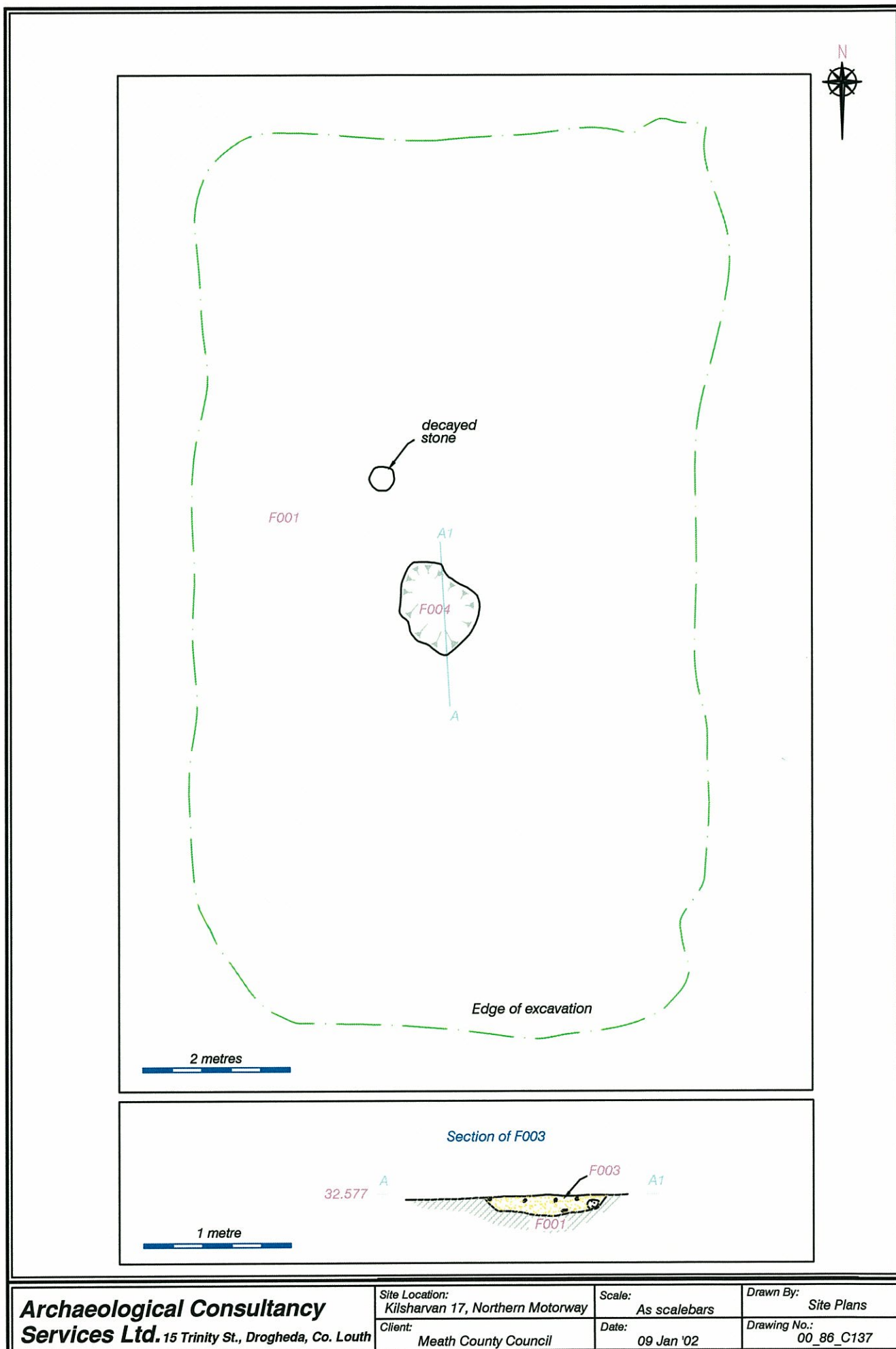
32.577

F001

1 metre

Figure 4: Detail of site showing pit F004 and section A-A1