

An abstract graphic featuring three blue circles of varying sizes and three thin blue lines. One line connects the top-left of the largest circle to the top-right of the medium circle. Another line connects the top-right of the medium circle to the top-left of the smallest circle. A third line extends from the top-right of the smallest circle towards the bottom-right of the page, passing near the large circle at the bottom right.

Archaeological Report 11E0055

Excavation and Testing

N59 Road widening scheme at Knockbreaga,
Knockloughra and Carrowbeg (Fergus), Co Mayo.

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3/30/2011

Excavation Report

Address: Carrowbeg (Fergus) / Knockloughra Townlands, County Mayo.

Site type: Possible Early Field wall and fields adjacent to the existing road.

NGR: 92642 / 296298

SMR/RMP: None present

Excavation Licence Number: 11E0055

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Summary

A possible early field wall and the greenfield area of the N59 Newport to Mallaranny road realignment scheme were archaeologically predevelopment tested in advance of this scheme, 1-9 March 2011. Two trenches were excavated by hand across the impacted section of the field wall; however no significant subsurface remains were identified. A programme of archaeological testing of the greenfield area of the scheme was carried out using a mechanical digger with a toothless bucket. Nothing of Archaeological significance was uncovered by this testing.



Figure 1 Aerial photo of Carrowbeg (Fergus) c.1965.

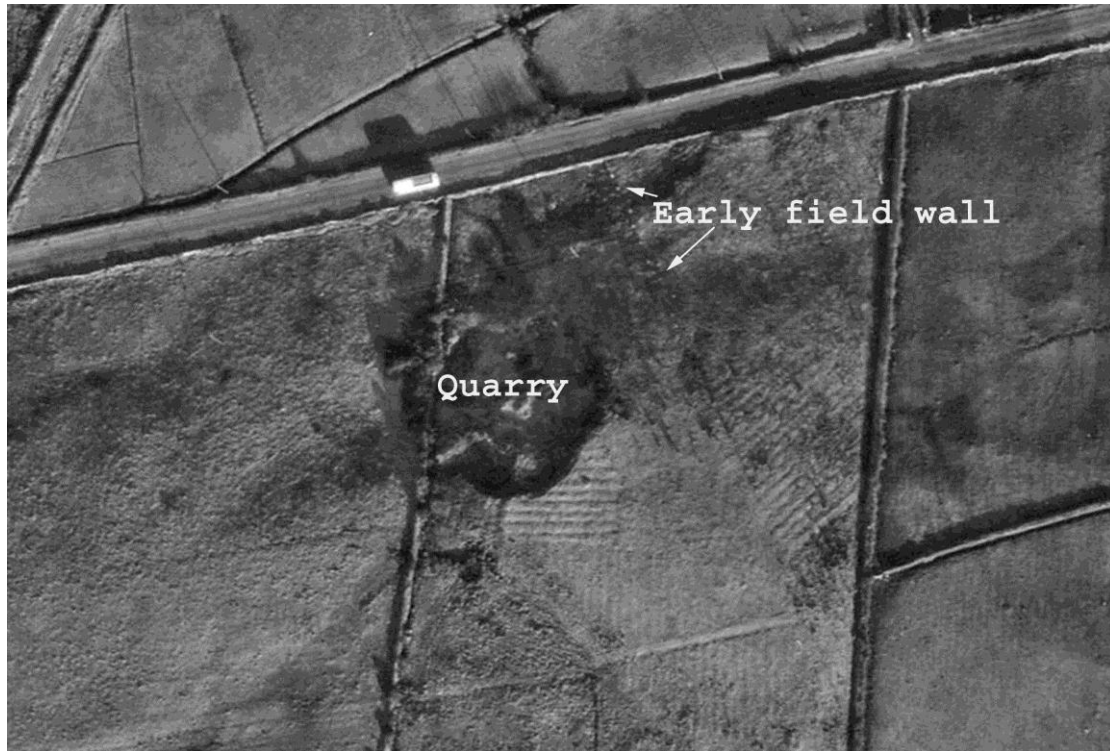


Figure 2 Detail of excavation area from aerial photo (Fig.1) showing the field wall and quarry.

The Possible Early Field Wall

This early field wall, of potential archaeological interest, was identified immediately south of the N59 Newport to Mallaranny road which is planned for realignment at this point. As the northern section of this wall will be impacted on by this proposed realignment, a programme of archaeological predevelopment testing was carried out to assess its potential.



Figure 3 Looking south to the early and later field walls



Figure 4 Looking south to the early field wall.

This denuded wall consists of relatively large upright boulders aligned NNW/SSE. It runs from the existing road boundary wall, south up a moderately steep, north facing drumlin slope. At c. 60 m it runs into a low linear bank which continues to the top of the drumlin and turns sharply to the west at the hill top.

This wall may be the remains of a boundary wall marked on the first edition OS six inch scale map (See attached) and is of unknown date. Most of the walls in the area postdate the first edition OS maps, are generally aligned NS/and EW and are of different construction i.e. built with smaller stones, laid horizontal, with no larger vertical boulders noted. The majority of the early wall is outside the development area and as such will be preserved *in-situ*.

The 5m length of wall, which was tested, was located immediately south of the northern field boundary wall. This section consisted of three upright boulders which were roughly 0.1m apart and 0.1m from the northern boundary wall. One additional, larger boulder was set 0.7m further south, in line with the previous boulders. The boulders ranged in size from 0.58m by 0.60m by 0.30m to 1.1m by 0.45m by 0.6m. All of the boulders were naturally rounded with no evidence for modification and were set upright, resting on topsoil and the surface of the subsoil. There was no evidence for foundations or any ground preparation for securing the wall in place. Smaller stones identified on either side of the boulders were probably used to fill the gaps between the boulders and formed part of a more substantial wall when complete.



Figure 5 Pre-excavation view of the test area, looking west.



Figure 8 Looking west to trench 1 showing the displaced stones resting on the subsoil.



Figure 6 South side of trench 1 showing the early field wall in section.



Figure 9 Looking east to trench 1 showing one of the boulders resting on sod and subsoil.



Figure 7 Trench 2 showing the field wall and displaced stones to the east and west



Figure 10 General view of the excavation looking northwest.

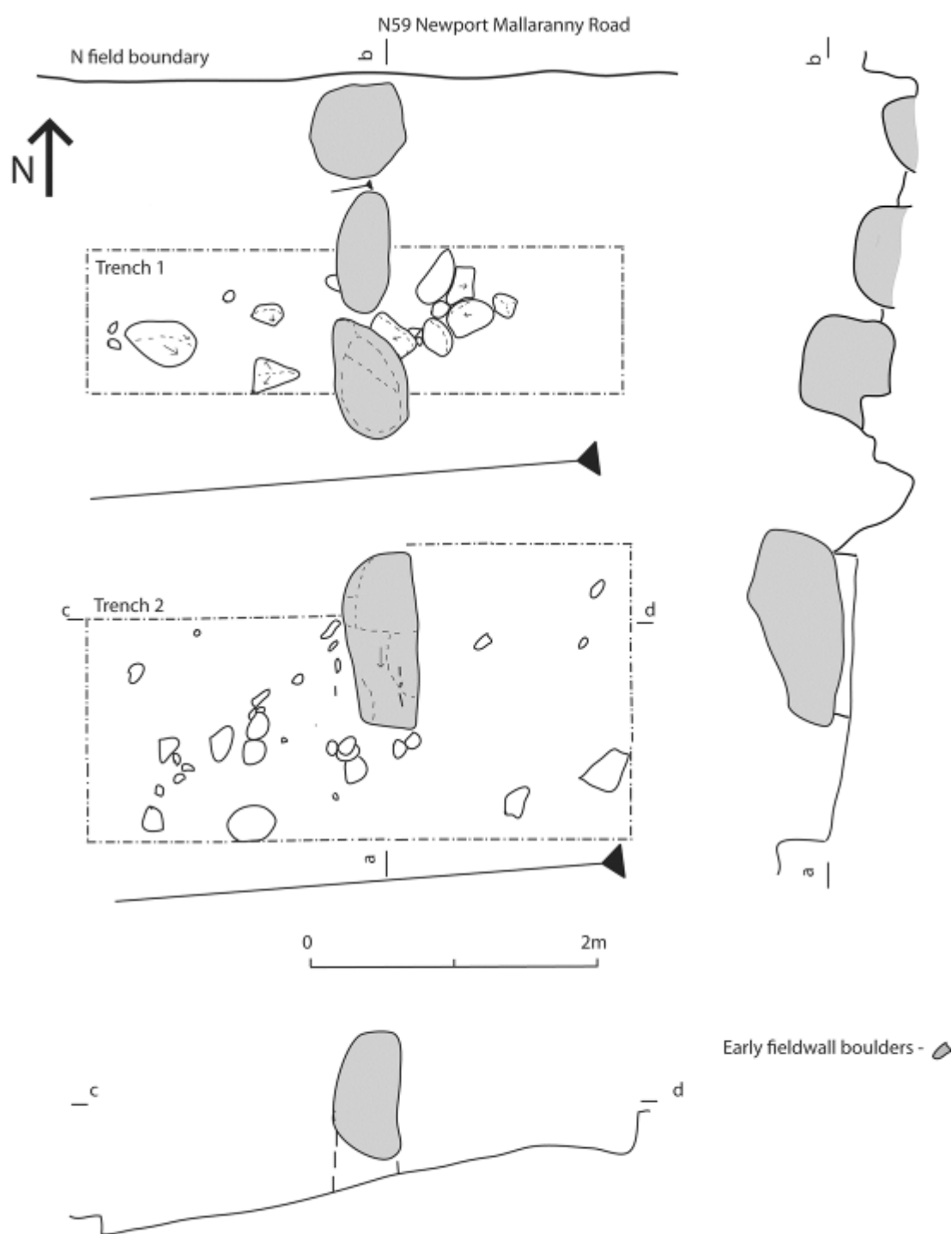


Figure 11 Plan and profiles of the excavated section of the early field boundary at Carrowbeg (Fergus).

Two trenches were fully excavated by hand to undisturbed subsoil across the wall within the impacted area (Fig.11). Trench 1 to the north measured 3.4m by 1m and Trench 2 measured 3.4m by 2m. Both were excavated to natural subsoil at a depth of 0.15-0.4m. The sod and topsoil consisted of waterlogged sandy clay with frequent roots. The subsoil consisted of a mottled orange/brown boulderclay. Loose stones within the topsoil and resting on the boulderclay, are likely to have been disturbed fill from between the boulders. This section of wall was located at the foot of a large drumlin where the ground sloped gently from south to north. The wall continues south for a total of 60m up a much steeper slope and runs into a low bank which continues to the top of the hill. There were no subsurface features associated with the wall and the boulderclay was undisturbed indicating that the wall was constructed on the ground surface and had been imbedded into it through pressure and time. There were no dateable deposits or artefacts associated with the wall so it is not possible to assign it to a particular period, however cultivation ridges visible on the 1966 aerial photograph (Figs.1&2) respect the boundary at a higher level indicating that the boundary was recognised and in use in the pre-famine period. This is supported by its inclusion on the first edition six-inch scale OS map.

Machine Testing

Predevelopment testing for potential subsurface archaeological remains was carried out along the greenfield section of the proposed N59 Newport – Mallaranny road realignment at Knockbreaga, in Carrowbeg (Fergus) and Knockloughra Townlands. The machine test area consists of greenfields adjacent to the existing road over a length of 600m and varying in width from 8-12 m. Test trenches were opened over this 600m length parallel to the existing road c. 2m south of the drystone wall along the road edge (See fig. 26). The trenches were located in six distinct fields one of which contained the early field boundary described above. This machine testing did not uncover anything of archaeological interest. The trenches are described field by field below from east to west:

Field 1: This trench was located 2-3m from the northern field boundary, was 1.9m wide by 75m long. The eastern half of the trench cut through a waterlogged hollow and was excavated to a depth of 0.8-1.0m. Its eastern end was cut by a modern stone filled drain. The field was characterised by frequent rushes with 0.1-0.15 m of rooty sod resting on fine sticky silt and peat with occasional preserved natural wood. The subsoil in this area was a mid-grey daub rising to the west to a grey/orange-brown mottled boulderclay. The sod /topsoil to the west was 0.2m deep and rested directly on this boulderclay. A modern 0.3m wide machine trench cut through the test area into the subsoil to a maximum depth of 0.25m.



Figure 12 East end of field 1.



Figure 13 Looking east to field 1 test trench.

Field 2: The Possible Early field wall described above was centrally located in the test area of this field. The test trench was excavated parallel to the northern field boundary 2-3m to the south of it. It was 1.9m wide had an overall length of 88m and was excavated across uneven ground to a depth of 0.3-0.8m. The sod/topsoil consisted of mid brown silty clay with frequent roots resting on light grey brown mottled boulderclay and blueish-grey boulder-clay with occasional large boulders at the lowest levels.



Figure 14 Looking south to the lime kiln incorporated into the field boundary at the road edge.



Figure 15 Looking west to the lime kiln within field 2.



Figure 16 Exposed upper level of the lime kiln within field 2.

A lime kiln (Figs. 14-16) of probable nineteenth/twentieth century date was incorporated into the northern field boundary with the stokehole opening out onto the road. It is located 20m from the eastern field boundary. It was evidenced on the surface as a low sub circular mound 3.4m in diameter with a central hollow roughly 2m in diameter. This hollow overlay the kiln bowl which had a maximum diameter of 2m near the surface and is filled with loose stone, ash and charcoal. A linteled stokehole is incorporated into the field wall visible in its northern face. The wall is of roughly coursed local limestone with a large lintel (1.2m long by 0.1m thick) over the stokehole opening. Second lintel set back at a lower level is also visible. This opening is 1.06m wide and currently 0.5m high and is overgrown. A gap (0.22m by 0.22m) is located in the wall to the west side of the kiln and may be related to it.



Figure 17 Water filled hollow in field 2.



Figure 18 Second water filled hollow in field 2.

Two crudely lined water filled hollows located in the same field are likely to be improvised drinking troughs for livestock or rough wells. They were located to the west of the hand test area 6-8m from the northern boundary field wall.

Field 3: This trench was located 2-3m from the northern field boundary, was 1.9m wide by 87 m long. The trench was generally excavated to a depth of 0.35-0.5m deep with 0.35-0.45m of sod and topsoil which was a fine silty clay turning to peat for the eastern western 20m. Peat in the eastern 20m reached a maximum thickness of 1m and rested on very stony subsoil. This stratigraphy continued east in field 4 and the lower part of the hollow is crossed by a stream. The stony subsoil may be the result of water action from an earlier course of the stream.



Figure 19 Field 3 looking west.



Figure 20 Field 3 looking east.



Figure 21 Looking east to field 4.



Figure 22 Looking west to field 5.

Field 4 & 5: The trench was located 2-3m from the northern field boundary, was 1.9m wide by 87 m long and had an overall length of 211m. The eastern 78m ran from the stream and side road to the eastern face of a moderate sized drumlin. The sod and topsoil, a silty peat with frequent roots, ranged in thickness from 0.4-0.8m on lower ground and was 0.2m thick on the hill top. This field was heavily overgrown with gorse, occasional trees and scrub vegetation. Topsoil in the eastern half of the trench, mostly in field 5 was very black and contained frequent rubble possibly from a demolished stone building, however there were no in situ remains present. A modern machine dug trench, containing a plastic pipe, cut the eastern 25m of the trial trench longitudinally and continued into the eastern field, field 6. Modern pottery and plastic was identified in the topsoil towards the centre of the trench indicating modern disturbance.



Figure 23 Looking east to field 6.

Field 6: This field consists of flat reclaimed grazing land although the stratigraphy below the sod was similar to the previously described fields. The trench was 50m long and was excavated to a depth of 0.6m. The sod and topsoil was 0.2m thick and consisted of mid grey silt which rested on 0.4m of dark peat with frequent rubble inclusions in the eastern half. The subsoil was a continuation of the boulderclay present elsewhere. The modern pipe trench continued through the eastern half of this field and was cut to a depth of 0.3m into the subsoil. No other finds or features were present.

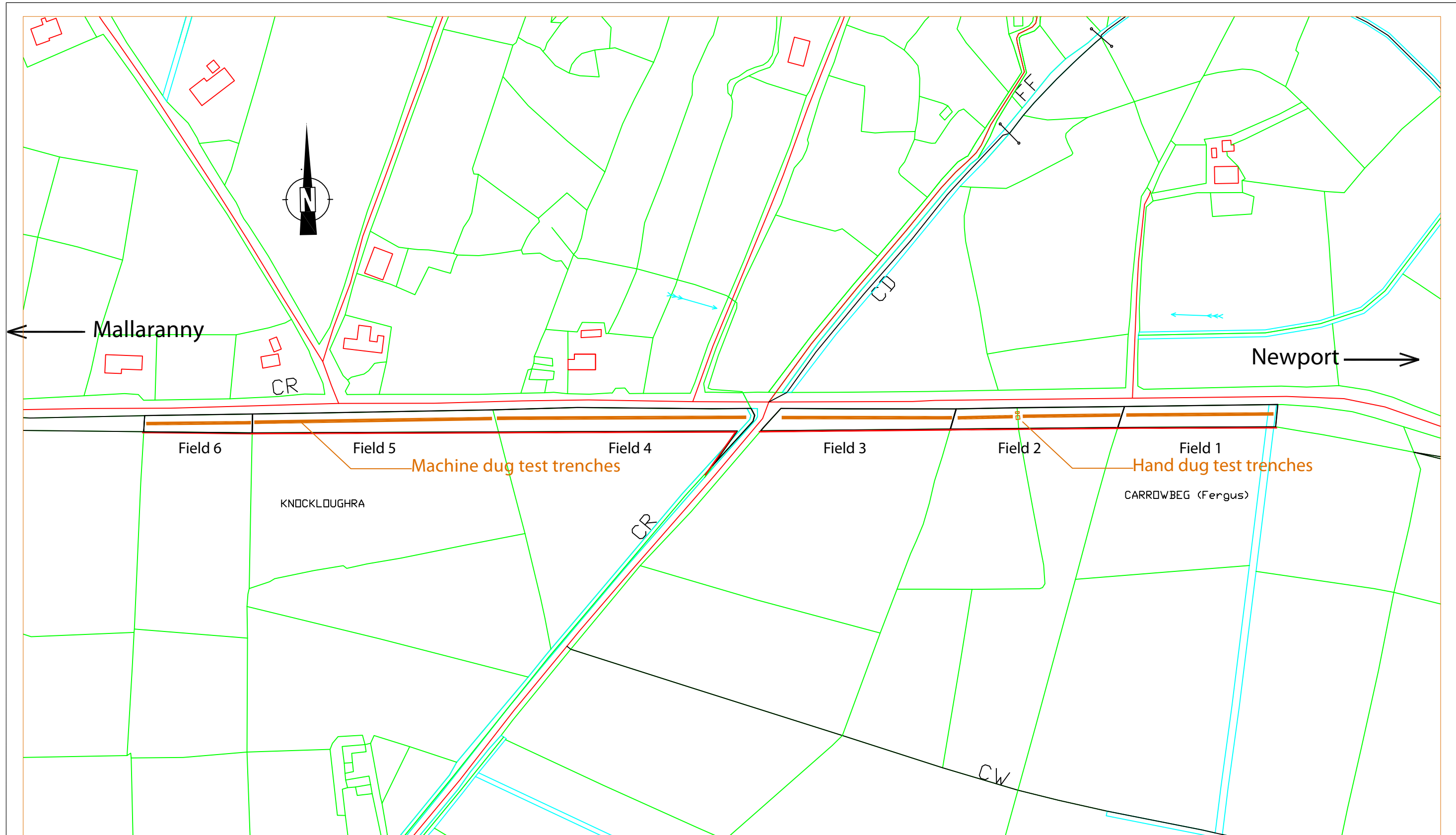
Conclusion

This testing was carried out at a predevelopment stage to assess whether further archaeological mitigation measures would be required prior to construction. No significant archaeological remains were present within the test area so no further archaeological mitigation measures are recommended in these areas.




Figure 24 Current bridge / culvert

The existing road spans a river between fields 4 and 5 and it is planned to reroute this river via a culvert to the west of the existing river and remove the existing bridge/culvert. It is recommended that works on the existing bridge/culvert be archaeologically monitored to identify and record any potential early features that may be exposed. It is planned for these works to be monitored by the writer and if anything of archaeological significance is uncovered further mitigation shall be carried out upon consultation with the national monuments service.



REV.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	DRAWN	CHECKED

Mayo County Council
Road Design Section



Project Title: N59 Newport – Mallaranny Road Realignment at Knockbrea	Date: 10/02/2011
Drawing Title: Archaeology Test Trenches	Scale: 1/2000
DRAWING No.	Surveyed: OSI/MMcD
	Designed:
	Drawn: MMcD
	Checked: