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## **N6 Galway to Ballinasloe Scheme, Contract 2.**

**Final Report on archaeological investigations at Site E2439, a modern burnt spread in the townland of Rathgorgin, Co. Galway**

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Ministerial Direction no.: A024/15

Excavation no.: E2439

Director: Brendon Wilkins

Chainage: 19950-19960

NGR: 153811/224988

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## **1 Summary**

This report presents the results of archaeological investigations carried out on behalf of Galway County Council prior to the commencement of construction on the N6 Galway to Ballinasloe Scheme. The work was undertaken under Ministerial Direction number A024/15, Registration number E2439, in the townland of Rathgorgin, Co. Galway. Phase I test excavations on this site in 2005 identified the remains of a plough truncated burnt spread. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, following consultation with the National Museum of Ireland, directed that Brendon Wilkins of Headland Archaeology Ltd should proceed with Phase II full excavation.

Full archaeological resolution revealed the burnt spread to be relatively modern and this was confirmed by the discovery of a clay pipe bowl stamped 'Home Rule'. A farm track with a metalled surface and the remnants of a dismantled drystone wall were also recorded.

## **2 Introduction**

Works are being carried out along the route of the proposed N6 Galway to East of Ballinasloe national road scheme, between the townlands of Doughiska in County Galway and Beagh in County Roscommon. The proposed road will consist of approximately 56km of dual carriageway, a 7km link road from Carrowkeel to Loughrea and approximately 23km of side roads. There will be four grade-separated junctions, 36 bridges and a toll plaza located at Cappataggle.

The area of proposed archaeological investigations was divided into four contracts, based on four sectors of approximately equal extent. The work described here was undertaken under Archaeological Investigations Contract 2. Contract 2 covered a stretch of road development of approximately 13.2km of dual carriageway and 7km of single carriageway, and passed to the south of Athenry and Kiltullagh in a generally east-west direction. The project was funded by the Irish Government and the European Union under the National Development Plan 2000-2006. Headland Archaeology Ltd was commissioned by Galway County Council to undertake the works. Arch Consultancy undertook an archaeological survey as part of an Environmental Impact Survey of the route compiled by RPS-MCOS in 2004. Archaeological test excavations were carried out by M. Jones (03E1874, Galway County Council, National Roads Design Office), a geophysical survey was conducted (Archaeophysics 2004) and an aerial survey was undertaken. On the basis of findings from this work Contract 2 Investigations commenced in September 2005.

## **3 Site description and location**

The site was located approximately 4.2km south-east of Athenry at NGR 15811/224988 and chainage 19950-19960. The landscape consisted of gently undulating pasture land and the site was close to the large stone estate wall marking the boundary between the townlands of Rathgorgin and Deerpark. The site was also close to site E2439 at Deerpark directed by Tom Janes. Close to the road were farm buildings, behind which the site was located. This proximity to farmstead may be the reason for the finds at Rathgorgin.

## **4 Aims and methodology**

The objective of the work was the preservation by record of any archaeological features or deposits in advance of the proposed road construction.

Topsoil stripping of the site was conducted using a 360° tracked machine fitted with a 1.9m wide ditching (toothless) bucket under archaeological supervision. A total area of 600 sq m was exposed. The resulting surfaces were cleaned and all potential features investigated by hand. Archaeological contexts were recorded by photograph and on standard record sheets. Plans and sections were drawn at an appropriate scale. Context, finds, samples, photo and drawing registers from the site are provided in the Appendices. Ordnance Datum levels and feature locations were recorded using penmap and an EDM. Environmental samples were taken on any deposits suitable for analysis or dating.

## **5 Results**

All features were modern and consisted of a rubble wall remnant, including brick, underlying a burnt spread that contained a clay pipe fragment.

### **Phase one**

The first archaeological activity to be identified was represented by an east/west linear feature identified beneath the burnt spread (1003). Linear feature (1006) was 7.5m in length and 1.7m wide by 0.2m deep. It had steep sides and a flat base. It was filled by (1007), a poorly humic, mid brown, loose, silty sand with occasional stones. Immediately above this layer (1007) was the burnt spread (1003), suggesting that the spread was formed after the complete silting of the linear feature (1006). It seems likely that the linear feature (1006) was truncated by a footing trench (1004) for the dismantled wall (1005).

A small gully orientated NE/SW was also identified beneath burnt spread layer (1003). It was 0.1m wide, 0.07m deep and 5m long and was truncated by a natural tree bole feature (1008). It was filled by (1015), very dark brown, loose, sandy silt with up to 30% burnt stones and frequent charcoal, similar in composition to layer (1003). The gully was interpreted as a plough furrow or possibly a cartwheel rut.

### **Phase two**

Linear feature (1004) was interpreted as the remains of a wall seen on the 1841 OS map, sheet 96. It was 9.2m in length, 0.75m wide at the top with a base of 0.50m in width and 0.2m deep and orientated NW/SE. The sides were steep and the base was flat. It was filled by (1005) a drystone wall of limestone. The remains of the wall showed that it was of drystone construction and that a red half brick had been incorporated into its construction. The stones were limestone and up to 0.2m in size. They were uncoursed and unbonded.

Pit (1008) truncated linear gully (1014). This was interpreted as a tree bole although cultural material had become incorporated within the fill, including a clay pipe bowl stamped 'Home Rule' recovered from (1019), a charcoal rich layer towards the top of the fill approximately 0.15m deep.

### Phase three

The burnt spread (1003) covered an area 15m in length east/west and 7.5m wide. It varied between 0.02m to 0.2m in depth and comprised loose, black, sandy silt containing 40% burnt stones, frequent charcoal and various pieces of Victorian pottery, clay pipe and animal bone. It is likely all materials and finds were transported to the location and dumped in the spread.

A linear furrow (1010) extended outside the CPO on both sides of the site. It was filled by (1011), a mid brown silt with occasional large stones and very occasional charcoal. A feature to the east of the site was interpreted as a track way although there was no cut. The deposit (1016) was orientated NW/SE and consisted of a layer of small stones and gravel with some grey-brown silt. It was 16.3 m long but also extended out of the northern boundary of the site. It was 1.7m wide and 0.17m deep and was indicated on sheet 96 of the 1841 OS map. Cart ruts could be seen within the makeup of the stones, the ruts had later been filled by small stones for more modern vehicles.

### Natural soil profile

The deposit sequence consisted of dark brown, loose, silty sand topsoil (1000), 0.2m to 0.3m in depth with up to 10% stone inclusions. Underlying the topsoil was (1001), a pale brown, loose, silty sand subsoil 0.2m to 0.3m in depth. The unmodified natural subsoil, (1002), was glacially derived till, yellow-brown clay with a firm compaction.

## 6 Discussion

No further post-excavation analysis was needed for Rathgorgin. The walls and tracks were recorded and mapped and the spread material was interpreted as a modern dump of farm debris in the corner of a field but still relatively close to the point of origin in adjacent farm buildings.

## 7 Archive

The site archive is comprised of the following materials:

Item	Quantities
Context sheets	16
Sample sheets	1
Context, sample and drawing registers	6
Photos	18
Plans	2
Sections	11

The archive material is contained within one box.

The archive is currently stored in the offices of Headland Archaeology, Unit 1, Wallingstown Business Park, Little Island, Cork. It is proposed that following completion of post-excavation the archive is deposited with Galway County Council Archives.

## 8 References

ArchaeoPhysica Ltd 2004 *Archaeological Geophysical Survey Report*. Published report submitted to Galway County Council

Jones, M 2004 *Archaeological test excavations on a ringfort site (GA96:089) in Farranablake East, Co. Galway, on the route of the proposed N6 Galway to East Ballinasloe road scheme*. Published report submitted to Galway County Council

OS 1829–1842 Ordnance Survey of Co. Galway, first edition, sheet 96, scale 1:10560

OS 1897–1913 Ordnance Survey of Co. Galway, second edition, sheet 96, scale 1:10560

RPS-MCOS 2004 *N6 Galway to East Ballinasloe Environmental Impact Statement*. Published report submitted to Galway County Council

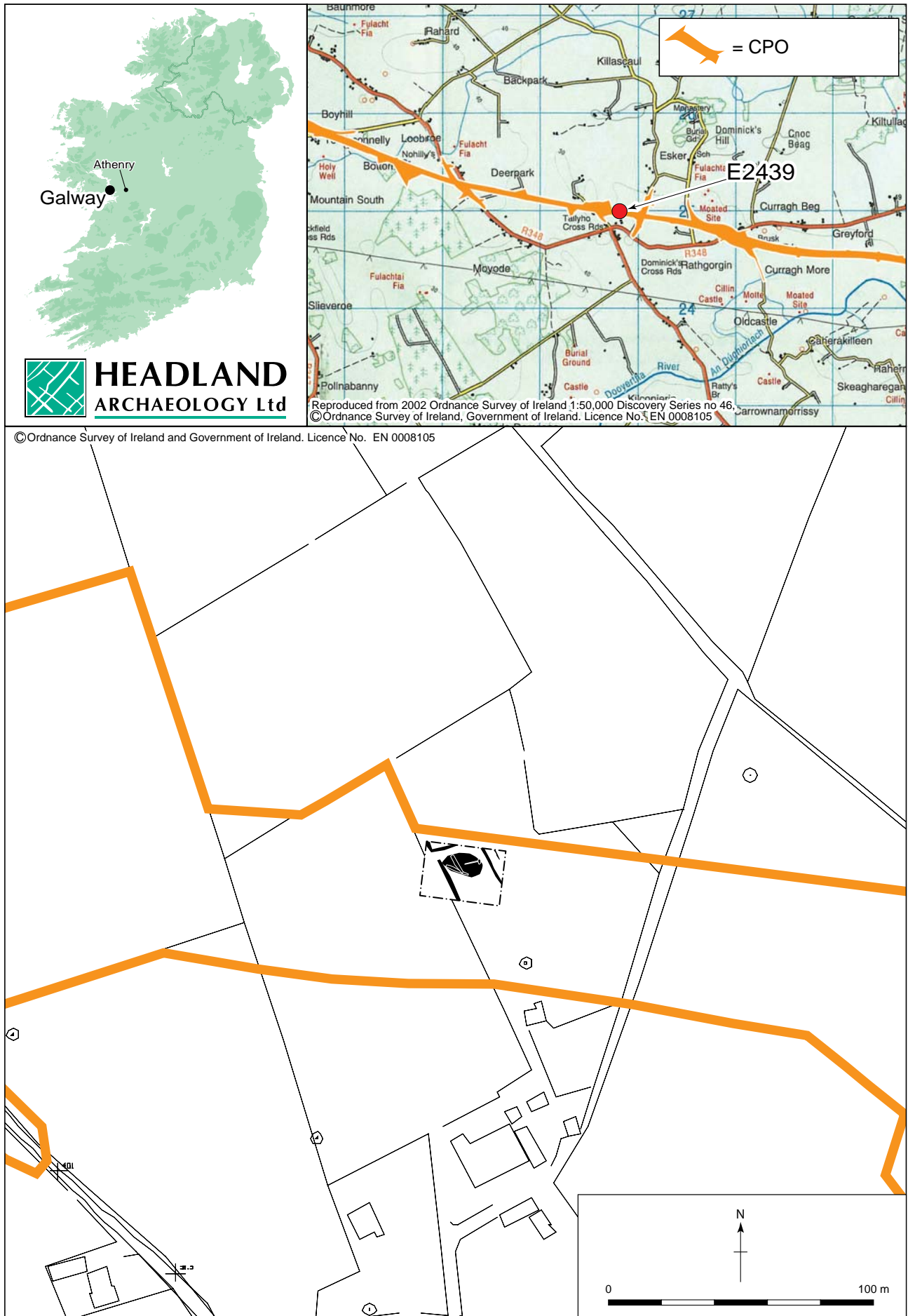


Figure 1 - N6 Galway to Ballinasloe Scheme, Co. Galway, Contract 2: Rathgorgin E2439  
 Location of excavation area



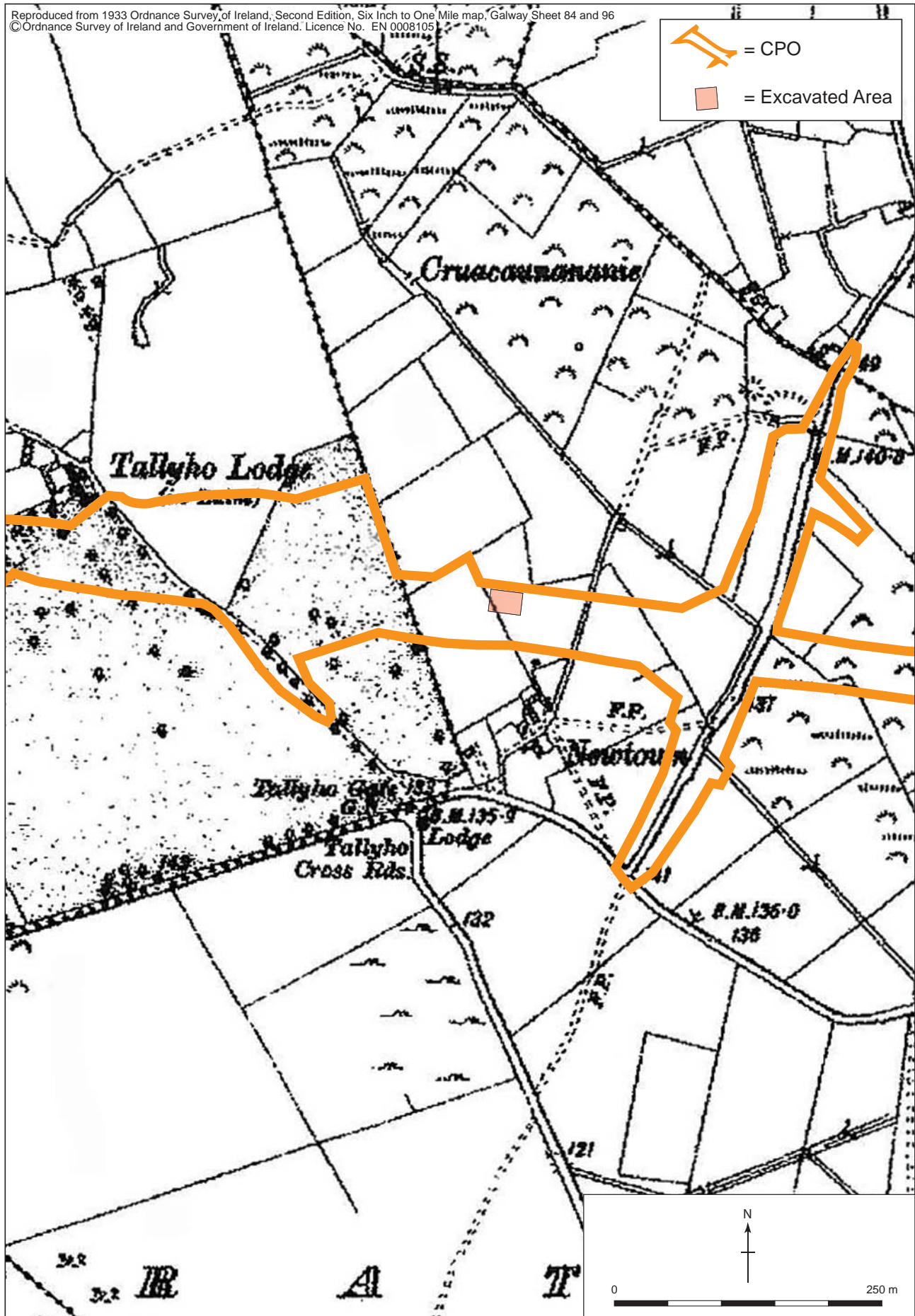


Figure 2 - N6 Galway to Ballinasloe Scheme, Co. Galway, Contract 2: Rathgorgin E2439  
 Location of excavation area and RMP extract

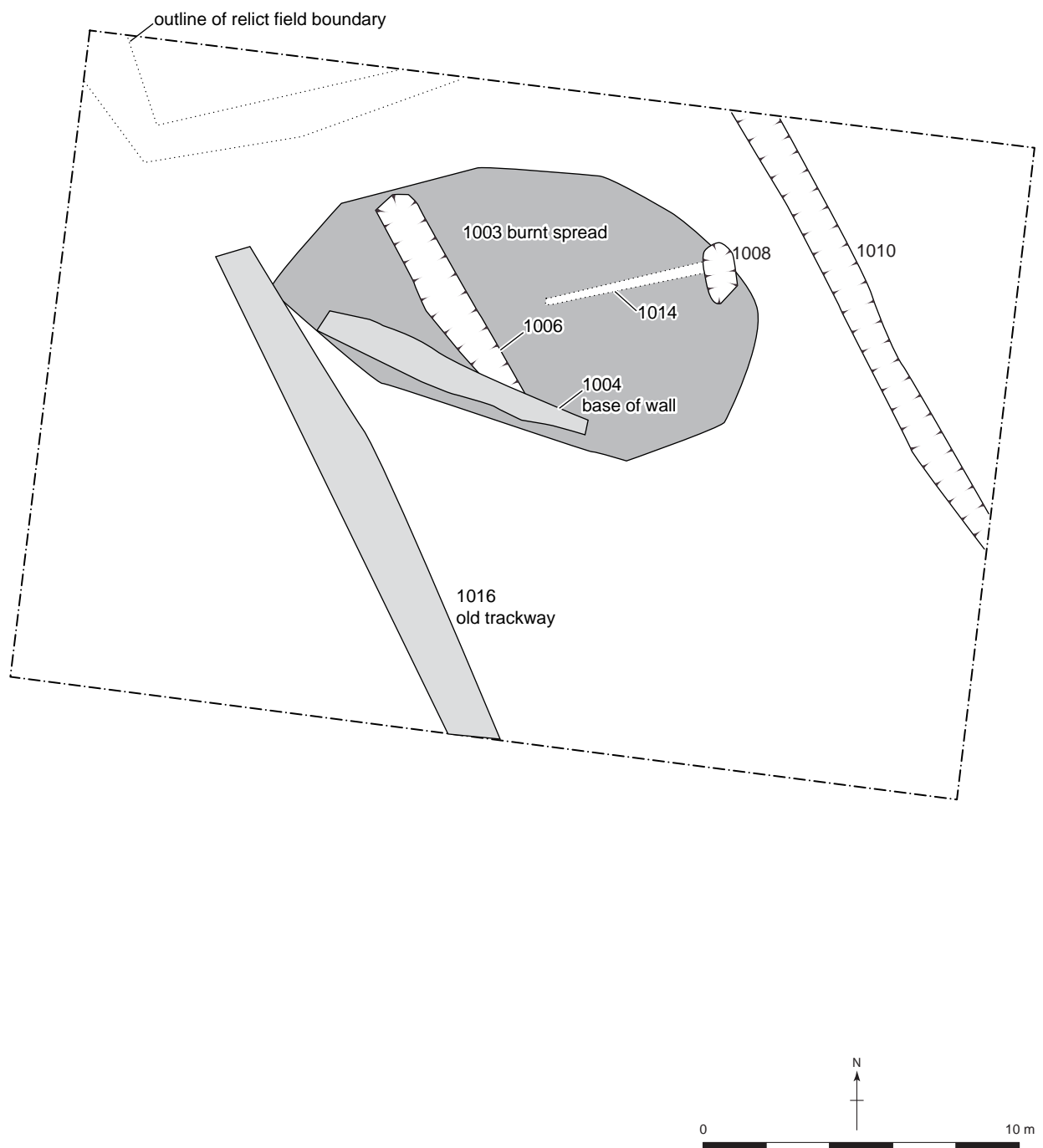


Figure 3 - N6 Galway to Ballinasloe Scheme, Co. Galway, Contract 2: Rathgorgin E2439  
Overall site plan





Plate 1 - E2439: North facing section of burnt spread



Plate 2 - E2439: West facing section of burnt spread



Plate 3 - E2439: East facing section of modern wall and cut



Plate 4 - E2439: South facing section of pit

**Appendix 1: Context register**

<b>Context Number</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
1000	2.38	Deposit	Topsoil, D 0.20m-0.30m. Dark brown silty sand, <10% stones, loose compaction.	Topsoil.
1001	2.38	Deposit	Subsoil, D 0.20m-0.30m. Pale brown silty sand, loose compaction.	Subsoil.
1002	2.38	Deposit	Yellow-brown clayey silt, very firm compaction.	Natural.
1003	2.38	Deposit	L (W-E) 15m, W (N-S) 7.50m, D 0.20m. Black sandy silt, 40% burnt stones, animal bone, Victorian pottery, clay pipe, loose compaction.	Burnt spread.
1004	2.38	Cut	L 9.20m, W 0.75m, D 0.20m. Linear in plan, steep sides, flat base of 0.50m width. Filled by structure [1005].	Footing trench.
1005	2.38	Structure	L 9.20m, W 0.50m, D 0.25m. Dry stone wall of limestone, unbonded, uncoursed. Fills [1004].	Dry stone wall foundation.
1006	2.38	Cut	L 7.50m, W 1.70m, D 0.20m. Linear in plan, steep sides, flat base. Filled by (1007). Abuts [1004].	Gully/ditch.
1007	2.38	Fill	Singular fill of gully/ditch [1006]. Mid brown silty sand, occasional stones, loose compaction.	Fill of gully/ditch.
1008	2.38	Cut	Diam 1.70m, D 0.40m. Irregular shape in plan, steep sides, irregular flat base. Filled by (1009).	Pit.
1009	2.38	Fill	Primary fill of pit [1008]. Thickness 0.40m. Dark brown-black silt, charcoal rich, some burnt stones, unburnt wood, clay pipe (including 'Home Rule' pipe bowl), moderate to loose compaction.	Fill of pit.
1010	2.38	Cut	W 0.90m-1.10m, D 0.10m-0.25m Linear in plan, shallow sides, flat base. Filled by (1011).	Agricultural cut.
1011	2.38	Fill	Singular fill of agricultural cut [1010]. Mid brown silt, some large stones, charcoal flecks, loose compaction.	Fill of agricultural cut.
1012	2.38		Cancelled	
1013	2.38		Cancelled	
1014	2.38	Cut	L 5m, W 0.10m, D 0.07m. Linear in plan, steep sides, concave base. Filled by (1015). Below (1003).	Plough furrow.
1015	2.38	Fill	Singular fill of plough furrow [1014]. Very dark brown sandy silt, burnt stones, charcoal, loose compaction. Same as (1003).	Fill of plough furrow.

1016	2.38	Deposit / Structure	W (W-E) 1.70m, D 0.17m. Grey to grey-brown silt, 80% stones, loose compaction.	Metalled farm track.
1017	2.38		Cancelled	
1018	2.38		Cancelled	
1019	2.38	Fill	Secondary fill of pit [1009]. Thickness 0.15m. Dark brown silty sand, 15% stones, moderate compaction.	Fill of pit.

## Appendix 2: Finds register

### *Ceramic*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1003:002	Pottery	Late Victorian	Various pieces of tableware	Headland	
E2439:1001:001	Pottery		Surface finds	Headland	4 in bag

### *Clay*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1003:003	Pipe		1 clay pipe bowl & 2 stems	Headland	3
E2439:1009:006	Pipe	Bowl	1 clay pipe bowl stamped 'Home Rule'	Headland	1 bagged with 1003:003

### *Bone*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1003:004	Animal		Pieces of animal bone	Headland	

### *Metal*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1001:003			Surface finds	Headland	2 in bag

### *Slag*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1003:005			6cm x 4cm	Headland	1
E2439:1001:004			Surface finds	Headland	

*Brick*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1005:007			Broken half brick, in dry stone wall foundation	Headland	1

*Glass*

Find No.	Type	Identification	Description	Habitat	Quantity
E2439:1001:002	Various		Surface finds	Headland	3 in bag

**Appendix 3: Sample register**

Sample Number	Context Number	Amount	Description	Type/Initial results
1	1009	20L	Dark brown-black, charcoal rich fill of pit (1008)	Not processed

**Appendix 4: Photo register**

Photo no	Direction facing	Description	Initials/date
1	North	South-facing section of burnt spread west end	S.C. 24.03.06
2	North	South-facing section of burnt spread east end	S.C. 24.03.06
3	South	North-facing section of burnt spread west end	S.C. 24.03.06
4	South	North-facing section of burnt spread east end	S.C. 24.03.06
5	West	East-facing section of burnt spread south end	S.C. 24.03.06
6	West	East-facing section of burnt spread north end	S.C. 24.03.06
7	East	West-facing section of burnt spread north end	S.C. 24.03.06
8	East	West-facing section of burnt spread south end	S.C. 24.03.06
9	North	South-facing section of linear (1006)	S.C. 24.03.06
10	West	East-facing section of wall cut (1004)	S.C. 24.03.06
11	North-west	South/east-facing section of linear (1010) slot 1	S.C. 24.03.06
12	North-west	South/east-facing section of linear (1010) slot 2	S.C. 24.03.06
13	North-west	South-east-facing section of linear (1010) slot 3	S.C. 24.03.06
14	North-west	South-east-facing section of linear (1010) slot 4	S.C. 24.03.06
15	North	South-facing section across track (1016)	S.C. 24.03.06
16	North	South-facing section of pit (1008)	S.C. 24.03.06
17	North-west	Site shot	S.C. 24.03.06
18	North-east	Plough scrape (1014)	S.C. 24.03.06

**Appendix 5: Drawing register**

<b>Drawing no</b>	<b>Drawing type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Initials/date</b>
1	Section	North-facing section of (1016)	1:10	N.K. 23.03.06
2	Plan	Post-excavation plan of slot in (1016)	1:20	N.K. 23.03.06
3	Section	South-facing section at west end of burnt spread (1003)	1:20	S.C. 23.03.06
4	Section	South-facing section at east end of burnt spread (1003)	1:20	S.C. 23.03.06
5	Section	East-facing section at south end of burnt spread (1003)	1:20	S.C. 23.03.06
6	Section	East-facing section at west end of burnt spread (1003)	1:20	S.C. 23.03.06
7	Section	North-facing section at west end of burnt spread (1003)	1:20	S.C. 23.03.06
8	Section	South facing section of pit (1008)	1:10	S.C. 23.03.06
9	Plan	Post-excavation plan of (1008)	1:20	S.C. 23.03.06
10	Section	South-facing section of (1010) slot 1	1:10	S.C. 24.03.06
11	Section	South-facing section of (1010) slot 2	1:10	S.C. 24.03.06
12	Section	South-facing section of (1010) slot 3	1:10	S.C. 24.03.06
13	Section	South-facing section of (1010) slot 4	1:10	S.C. 24.03.06