

N18 Gort to Crusheen Road Scheme



Site Name: Ballyline 3

Ministerial Direction No.: 044
Excavation Registration No.: E3715

Burnt Spread

Final Report

On behalf of Galway County Council

Site Director: Joe Nunan
November 2009

IAC Irish Archaeological
Consultancy

PROJECT DETAILS

Project Reference No.	A044
Project	N18 Gort to Crusheen Road Scheme
Ministerial Direction Reference No.	A044
NMS Registration Number	E3715
Excavation Director	Joe Nunan
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Consultant	Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd, 120b Greenpark Road, Bray, Co. Wicklow
Client	Galway County Council
Site Name	Ballyline 3
Site Type	Burnt Spread
Townland	Ballyline
Parish	Kilraghtis
County	Clare
NGR (Easting)	138183
NGR (Northing)	185987
Chainage	20650
Height m OD	27 m OD
RMP No.	N/A
Excavation Dates	6–8 February 2008
Excavation Duration	3 Days
Report Type	Final
Report Date	18 November 2009
Report By	IAC Ltd

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The excavation was carried out in accordance with the Directions issued to Galway County Council by the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government under Section 14A (2) of the National Monuments Acts 1930–2004 and the terms of the Contract between Galway County Council and Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd.

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ABSTRACT

Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd (IAC), funded by Galway County Council and the National Roads Authority (NRA), undertook the excavation of a burnt spread under Ministerial Directions at the site of Ballyline 3 along the proposed N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme (Figure 1). The following report describes the results of archaeological fieldwork at that site. The area was fully excavated by Joe Nunan under Ministerial Directions A044 and Registration Number E3715 issued by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. The fieldwork took place in February 2008.

A very disturbed charcoal-rich feature was discovered during test excavations at the base of a hill at the edge of a wetland area in Ballyline townland in north Co. Clare. It was located at NGR 138183/85987 and situated at 27 m OD.

The site consisted of a pit and a small spread. A shallow ditch ran northeast to southwest across the site and cut through both features. A fragment of alder/hazel charcoal from the pit returned a 2 Sigma calibrated date of 2286–2035 BC (3571±40 BP: UBA 12743), placing the site in the early Bronze Age.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

This report describes the excavation of Ballyline 3 (Figures 1–3), in the townland of Ballyline, Co. Clare, undertaken by Joe Nunan of IAC Ltd, on behalf of Galway County Council and the NRA. It was carried out as part of the archaeological mitigation programme of the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme. The excavation was undertaken to offset the adverse impact of road construction on known and potential subsoil archaeological remains in order to preserve the site by record.

The site was not a Recorded Monument but was first identified during testing carried out by James Kyle in summer 2007 (Ministerial Direction No. A044, NMS Reg. No. 07E489). All features identified during the assessment phase were subsequently re-identified and excavated during the full excavation phase of the site which took place between 6 and 8 February 2008 with a team of 1 director and 4 assistant archaeologists.

The site was located approximately 2.4 km to the southwest of Crusheen cross road and c. 150 m west of the present N18 (Clare OS sheet 26).

The site was assigned the following identification data:

Site Name: Ballyline 3; Ministerial Direction No.: A044; NMS Registration No.: E3715; Route Chainage (Ch): 20650; NGR: 138183/185987.

1.2 The Development

The N18 Gort to Crusheen scheme involves the construction of a total of 44 km of road to include mainline roadworks (22 km), associated side roads (10 km) and access tracks (12 km). The road will have twin 7 m carriageways, 2.5 m hard shoulders adjacent to the verges and a median with a minimum width of 2.6 m which includes two 1m hard strips. The selected route bypasses the town of Gort to the east and the village of Crusheen to the west.

1.3 Archaeological Requirements

The archaeological requirements for the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme were defined in the Ministerial Directions issued to Galway County Council by the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government under Section 14A (2) of the National Monuments Acts 1930–2004 and in the terms of the contract between Galway County Council and Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd. These instructions formed the basis of all archaeological works undertaken for this development. The archaeological excavation works under this contract were located between the townlands of Glenbrack, Co. Galway, and Carrowdotia, Co. Clare.

The proposed N18 was subjected to an Environmental Impact Assessment, the archaeology and cultural history section of which was carried out by Babbie Pettit Ltd in 2006. The Record of Monuments and Places, the Sites and Monuments Record, Topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland, aerial photography, and documentary sources were all consulted. Two phases of geophysical survey were conducted. The main phase was by RSKENSR (Bartlett 2004) during the preparation of the EIA (Babbie Pettit Ltd 2006). A supplementary survey was carried out in Ballyboy by Target Geophysics Ltd (Target Geophysics Ltd 2007). As a result of the paper survey, field inspections, geophysical survey, archaeological testing and archaeological monitoring, a total of 22 fully recorded manual excavations were carried out on this section of the overall route alignment. In some cases where a

number of sites of similar type were located together in a single townland, the sites were excavated under one excavation number.

Phase 1 archaeological testing was completed by IAC Ltd and Phase 2 excavation of the sites identified during testing was conducted by IAC Ltd on behalf of Galway County Council and the NRA.

1.4 Methodology

The presence of archaeological remains beneath the topsoil layer was confirmed by machine-cut test trenches. Following testing, the topsoil was reduced to the interface between topsoil and natural subsoil using a 20 tonne mechanical excavator equipped with a flat toothless bucket under strict archaeological supervision. The remaining topsoil was removed by the archaeological team with the use of shovels, hoes and trowels in order to expose and identify the archaeological remains. A site grid was set up at 10 m intervals and was subsequently calibrated to the national grid using GPS survey equipment.

All features were subsequently fully excavated by hand and recorded using the single context recording system with plans and sections being produced at a scale of 1:50, 1:20 or 1:10 as appropriate.

A complete photographic record was maintained throughout the excavation. Digital photographs were taken of all features and of work in progress.

An environmental strategy was devised at the beginning of the excavations. Features exhibiting large amounts of carbonised material were targeted. Animal bone, unburnt wood and stone samples were all retrieved through both hand and bulk collection and retained for specialist analysis wherever they were encountered during the excavations.

In the instances where artefacts were uncovered on site they were dealt with in accordance with guidelines issued by the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) and where warranted in consultation with the relevant specialists. All artefacts, ecofacts and paper archive are currently stored in IAC offices, Lismore, Co Waterford and will ultimately be deposited with the National Museum of Ireland.

Radiocarbon dating of the site was carried out by means of AMS (Accelerator Mass Spectrometry) dating of identified and recommended charcoal samples. All calibrated AMS dates in this report are quoted to 2 Sigma.

All excavation and post-excavation works were carried out in consultation and agreement with the Project Archaeologist, the National Monuments Section of the DEHLG and the National Museum of Ireland.

2 EXCAVATION RESULTS

The archaeological activity recorded at Ballyline 3 was an early Bronze Age pit.

Detailed descriptions of all excavated features and deposits are listed in Appendix 1.

2.1 Phase 1: Natural Drift Geology

Most of the low-lying areas along the route are associated with poorly drained, bog and wet marshland areas of glacially formed depressions and seasonal lakes known as turloughs. The higher ground generally comprises well-drained, gently undulating pastureland with some uneven hummocky ridges, formed either of limestone epikarst or glacial features such as drumlins. The two dominant rock types of the region are Carboniferous Limestone, which underlies the entire length of the N18 Gort to Crusheen scheme, and the Devonian Old Red Sandstone, which forms the Slieve Aughty Mountains to the east of the proposed route. The road alignment is predominantly underlain by either limestone derived till and sandy till deposited during the last glaciation or organic peat which has generally formed in the low-lying, poorly drained areas where standing water and slow percolation causes thin layers of peaty soil to accumulate.

The site was located at the base of a northeast facing hill at the edge of a wetland area in Ballyline townland in north Co. Clare. It was located approximately 180 m from the Millbrook stream at 27 m OD. The subsoil was a mottled orange-yellow silt clay.

2.2 Phase 2: Burnt Deposit with Pit

2.2.1 Pit

Context	Fill of	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description	Interpretation
3	N/A	1.75	1.68	0.14	Roughly square cut, irregular sides	Cut of a shallow feature
4	C3	1.75	1.68	0.14	Brown black sandy clay, stones, charcoal	Fill of a shallow feature

Finds: None

Interpretation

The pit, C3, was a rectangular pit (Figures 3–4; Plates 1–3) and contained a single fill, C4. This deposit was made up of heat-affected limestone with some charcoal inclusions. There was no evidence for *in situ* burning. The precise function of the pit remains unknown. It may have been a single-use cooking pit.

One AMS date was obtained from deposit C4, the fill of pit C3. A fragment (4 g) of alder/hazel (*Alnus glutinosa* /*corylus avellana*) charcoal was identified (Cobain, Appendix 2.2). This charcoal returned an AMS result of 3571±40 BP (UBA 12743). The 2 Sigma calibrated result for this was 2286–2035 BC (Appendix 2.1). This pit also contained birch, oak, ash and Maloideae (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments.

2.2.2 Heat-Affected Stone Deposit

Context	Fill of	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description	Interpretation
5	N/A	0.55	0.48	0.04	Black charcoal-rich silty clay	Burnt stone spread

Finds: None

Interpretation

C5 represents a deposit of heat-affected stones in a black, charcoal-rich silty clay (Figures 3–4; Plates 1–3). The deposit C5 was very similar to the fill, C4, of the pit, both containing charcoal and some heat-affected stones, which suggested the pit and spread, were contemporary. Analysis of the charcoal from the deposit revealed hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, cf hawthorn and elm inclusions.

2.3 Phase 3: Post -medieval Activity

2.3.1 Land Drain

Context	Fill of	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description	Interpretation
6	N/A	10	0.5	0.08	Linear cut, gradual sides	Cut of a land drain
7	C6	10	0.5	0.08	Grey brown silty clay, stones	Fill of a land drain

Finds: None

Interpretation

A shallow land drain, C6 ran NE/SW across the site and cut the pit and the deposit (C3 and C5) (Figures 3–4; Plates 1–3). The land drain fill, C7, was a medium, soft brown, silt clay with some sandstone inclusions.

2.4 Phase 4: Topsoil

Context	Fill of	L	W	D(m)	Basic Description	Interpretation
1	N/A				Peat mid-brown	Topsoil

Finds: None

Interpretation

The topsoil was mid-brown peat and it covered the entire site.

3 SYNTHESIS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Landscape Setting

Most of the low-lying areas along the route were associated with poorly drained bog and wet marshland which have developed within glacially formed depressions and seasonal lakes known as turloughs. The higher ground generally comprised well-drained, gently undulating pastureland with some uneven hummocky ridges, formed either of limestone epikarst or glacial features such as drumlins. The two dominant rock types of the region were Carboniferous Limestone, which underlay the entire length of the N18 Gort to Crusheen scheme, and the Devonian Old Red Sandstone, which formed the Slieve Aughty Mountains to the east of the project. The road alignment was predominantly underlain by either limestone and sand derived till deposited during the last glaciation or organic peat which has generally formed since then in the low-lying, poorly drained areas where standing water and slow percolation caused thin layers of peaty soil to accumulate.

A very disturbed charcoal-rich deposit with heat-shattered stone was discovered during test excavations at the base of a hill at the edge of a wetland area in Ballyline townland in north Co. Clare. It was located at NGR 138183/85987 and situated at 27 m OD. It lay in pasture 180 m to the south of the Millbrook stream at Ballyline. A steep slope rose above it to the west. The site is located 175 m west of an unclassified mill (CL026-012) and c. 310 m northwest of a burnt mound (CL026-145) (Figure 2).

3.2 Bronze Age Archaeological Landscape

Following the test excavation phase of the project it was apparent that most of the archaeological sites identified were located to the south of the scheme in County Clare. This trend appears to have resulted from landscape management in the recent past where the better drained lands to the north have been improved and the fields enlarged which would have had a negative effect on any buried archaeological sites. However, the area to the south, which coincides with crossing the county border, was of more marginal land prone to flooding and in this area the route of the new road tended to follow wet valley floors and steep valley slopes. The landscape encountered in County Clare was much the same as it was depicted on the first edition Ordnance Survey maps (1842).

As with the transition from the Mesolithic to Neolithic periods, the transition to the Early Bronze Age period brought with it many changes to society. In County Clare and particularly in the northwest of the county in the Burren, where there is a highly visible prehistoric landscape due to the exposed bare rock nature of the terrain, the large number of prehistoric sites, including c. 80 wedge tombs (Jones 2004, 65), indicates a well organised late Neolithic/early Bronze Age landscape. The transition from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age reflects a continued and somewhat intensified population in north and east Clare. It is during this period that megalithic monuments were abandoned in favour of individual cist or pit burials, either located in isolation or in small cemeteries. Different forms of barrow monuments were also being constructed during the period, as well as ceremonial monuments such as circular henges, standing stones, stone rows and stone circles. A current research project in the Burren has also recorded middle and late Bronze Age ritual funerary deposition in Glencurran Cave, Co. Clare (Dowd 2007).

In recent years Bronze Age habitation sites have come more to the fore as they have been uncovered as part of development-led or infrastructural projects. They are well documented elsewhere but two interesting, recently excavated sites include Bronze Age roundhouses at Tober 1, County Offaly (Walsh 2009) and Barnhill, Dromoland,

Co. Clare (Moore Group 2009). An important academic study of the spatial organisation of Bronze Age society and landscape has been undertaken of the north Munster area and in county Clare this is defined by the work undertaken by Grogan on the Bronze Age trivallate hillfort at Mooghaun (Grogan 2005). This study identified and mapped a Bronze Age landscape dominated by the hillfort which may have influenced a catchment area of up to 450 km sq (Grogan 2005, 95). Identified within the area of influence were ceremonial monuments, house sites, burnt mound sites and other more mundane features such as fish traps and trackways in the Fergus estuary (O'Sullivan and Dillon 2005). The Mooghaun study area is outside the sphere of influence of sites identified on the Gort to Crusheen scheme but indicates nonetheless that a similar societal organisation of the landscape may have existed for them too. A hoard of gold objects discovered at Mooghaun during the construction of the Limerick – Ennis railway in 1854 is one of the largest single discoveries of Bronze Age gold in Europe (Grogan 2005, 70). Another significant gold find from the north of the county was the Gleninsheen gorget, a large collar of hammered gold discovered by a farmer in 1932 (Jones 2004, 74).

The most widespread domestic sites from the Bronze Age are burnt mounds. They survive as low mounds of charcoal-rich soil mixed with heat-shattered stones. They are usually horseshoe-shaped, located in low-lying areas near a water source and are often found in clusters. While it is generally thought that they were probably used as cooking places (Ó Drisceóil 1988), finds from excavated examples where there is a noteworthy absence of animal bone does not easily support this theory. Lucas (1965) suggested that burnt mounds might have been used for processes such as bulk washing, dyeing and leather working while Barfield and Hodder (1987) have suggested that such sites were covered by light structures and used as sweat houses. Radiocarbon dates for this monument type have generally placed them in the Bronze Age (Brindley et al. 1990, 55) though evidence from early Irish texts (Ó Drisceóil 1988) suggest use of this type of site up until the 16th century AD.

Burnt mounds make up a significant number of the Recorded Monuments within the immediate vicinity of the Gort to Crusheen road scheme and following examination of a one kilometre wide corridor, using the road as the centreline, of the scheme, these classic elements of the Bronze Age landscape became apparent. Within this defined corridor there were no recorded burnt mounds in south County Galway, whereas north County Clare was rich in the monument-type: RMP sites CL018-069, CL018-071, CL018-072, CL018-077, CL018-084, CL018-082, CL018-083, CL018-086, CL026-143, CL026-130, CL026-131, CL026-136, CL026-138, CL026-137, CL026-134, CL026-135, 02E1284 partly excavated as part of Bord Gáis Éireann pipeline to the west at Bearnafunshin (Dennehy 2002a), 02E0342 excavated as part of Bord Gáis Éireann pipeline to the west at Bearnafunshin (Halpin 2002), CL026-149, CL026-150, CL026-151, CL026-156, CL026-157, CL026-158, CL026-165, CL026-164, and Site AR25 Carrowdotia (Taylor 2006a). There appeared to be a tendency in the sites identified for clustering, often within 100 m or less of each other.

Single upright standing stones are a common feature of the Irish landscape and, though they may date to different periods and serve different functions, excavation has shown that some may mark prehistoric burials, while some may signify a route-way, a boundary, or serve a commemorative role. Generally speaking, it is likely that a large number date to the Bronze Age. The orientation of a stone may have had significance, with their long axes aligned to another stone or toward a cairn on a mountain top, although the latter is difficult to prove. A standing stone (RMP CL026-035) has been identified c. 150 m southeast of the southern end of the route.

Ring barrows consist of a low, usually circular mound or level area enclosed by a fosse and external bank, the diameter of the earthwork usually ranging between 4 m and 12 m and rarely exceeding 1 m in height or depth. Excavation has demonstrated that they usually sealed a burial deposit, often a cremation. Such forms of burial have a long tradition and individual examples have been assigned to the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages. A ring barrow (Dennehy 2002b) was identified during monitoring of Bord Gáis Éireann's pipeline at Cloonagowan, Co. Clare. The archaeological remains represented a cremation pit with a ring ditch. Pits, stakeholes and a slot trench were identified within the ring ditch, with some pits indicating a probable domestic function. A second cremation pit was identified c. 75 m to the northeast, with an isolated posthole, which may have acted as a marker for the cremation pits, located further to the northeast. A single thumbnail scraper was recovered from the site, enabling the rough dating to the late Neolithic/early Bronze Age period (Dennehy 2002c). A single possibly Bronze Age cremation pit and industrial pits were identified during the monitoring of Bord Gáis Éireann's pipeline in Gortaficka (Dennehy and Sutton 2002). A wedge tomb (CL026-015) is located less than 500 m northeast of a concentration of burnt mounds and spreads which surround a peat bog, and were excavated as part of the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme, in Caheraphuca townland. The wedge tomb is also likely to date to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age.

Our appreciation of the wider Bronze Age landscape in counties Clare and Galway is continually being expanded as more sites are being uncovered during research, development-led and infrastructural projects such as the N18 road scheme. Excavations connected with construction of the N18 to the north (Gort to Oranmore) which is entirely within County Galway has also recently produced evidence for the Bronze Age with eight burnt mound sites identified, one at Ballyglass West, a cluster in Caherweelder townland and further examples in Moyveela and Coldwood (Eachtra 2009).

Excavations undertaken by TVAS (Ireland) Ltd in 2003 in advance of construction of the N18 Ennis Bypass and N85 Western Relief Road, which terminated at the southern end of the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme revealed similar archaeological sites. This area was generally better drained and the variety of Bronze Age sites encountered during that project reflects the change in terrain. The marginal lands and areas closest to wetlands, rivers and streams produced evidence for burnt mounds such as the four burnt mound sites identified at Clare Abbey (Hull 2006a and b, Taylor 2006c and d) close to the Ardsollus river (a tributary of the Fergus). Burnt mound sites were also excavated at Killow (Taylor 2006b), Cahircalla More (Taylor 2006e) and Carrowdotia (Taylor 2006a) to the south of the Gort to Crusheen project. Apart from the burnt mound sites a number of funerary sites were also identified the N18 Ennis Bypass and N85 Western Relief Road. Two cremation cemetery sites were identified in Manusmore townland (Hull 2006c and 2006d); both were located on slightly elevated free-draining gravel ridges. A third site with cremation pits was identified at Killow (Taylor 2006b) in close proximity to a burnt mound; it was located on a low but well-drained gravel drumlin.

The landscape of County Clare is rich in sites dating to the Bronze Age, indicating that the area was widely inhabited during that period. Burnt mounds are the most frequent site of Bronze Age date encountered in this area of Clare, with twenty seven identified within the immediate area of the road scheme. There are no burnt mounds recorded within the tight constraints of the study area for Co. Galway but there are examples in the wider surrounding area and they were also located in the excavations on the N18 contract further to the north. The archaeological evidence to date indicates that the study area and indeed its wider landscape was inhabited throughout the entire Bronze Age period.

Bronze Age Ballyline 3

Ballyline 3 was a pit located on flat land, which was prone to flooding, close to the base of a hill in Ballyline townland. The site was badly disturbed, however it did return a 2 sigma date range of between 2286–2035 BC (3571±40: UBA 12743) placing the activity at the site in the early Bronze Age period.

A number Bronze Age sites were identified and excavated across the project. The sites excavated across the scheme were generally identified as simple spreads or mounds of burnt and heat-shattered stone, while some of these like the one at Drumminacloghaun 1 (McNamara 2009a) had evidence for a simple earth-cut trough, other sites such as those at Gortavoher 1 (Delaney 2009b) and Caheraphuca 10 (Bayley 2009c) were represented simply by spreads of heat-shattered stone.

Isolated burnt mound sites identified along the project were Rathwilladoon 4 (Lyne 2009), Drumminacloghaun 1 (McNamara 2009a) and Clooneen 1 (Bayley 2009a). As the route travelled further south it tended to follow marginal wetland and stream valleys and the burnt mounds appeared to become more clustered. This clustering of sites was identified at Curtaun 1 and 2 (Delaney 2009a), Gortavoher/Monreagh (Delaney 2009b and McNamara 2009b), Derrygarrieff (Nunan 2009a and 2009b), Sranagalloon/Gortaficka (Nunan 2009c, 2009d and 2009e), Caheraphuca and Ballyline. A similar pattern of clustered burnt mounds to the south in County Clare and a paucity of examples of burnt mounds in County Galway was also encountered during the construction of Bord Gáis Éireann pipeline (Grogan et al. 2007). The AMS dating indicates however that the sites were not necessarily contemporary but rather spanned the entire Bronze Age period and extended into the Iron Age (with one example at Derrygarrieff 1 possibly indicating a medieval date) illustrating how the process of this pyrolithic technology remained the same across thousands of years.

More elaborate examples of troughs and pits from across the project (though serving the same function) displayed evidence for timber lining through the identification of stakeholes for upright supports at Curtaun (Delaney 2009a), Caheraphuca 1 (Bayley 2009b) and Gortaficka 1 and 2 and in some cases the actual remains of timber lining as at Clooneen 1 (Bayley 2009a), Caheraphuca 4 (Bayley 2009c), Sranagalloon 1 (Nunan 2009c) and Sranagalloon 3 (Nunan 2009d). Although the primary function of these sites was to heat water through the use of hot stones the actual purpose remains unknown. The sites at Caheraphuca 1 and Gortaficka 2 both displayed evidence for numerous troughs, drains, hearths and possibly preparation areas with stake-lined pits suggesting that they may have been used for some more formal industrial function than the other sites.

The sites at Ballyline 1 and 2 were located approximately 800 m south of the burnt mound cluster at Caheraphuca 3–12 (Bayley 2009c). They were also located in an area with a high concentration of known burnt mounds. These are located approximately 500 m to the northeast in Carrahil townland (CL026–137 and CL026–138) and within 800 m to the north and northwest in Caheraphuca (CL026–143, 128, 134 and 136) and Ballyline (CL026–133), 800 m to the southwest in Ballyline (CL026–144) and 700 m to the south in Bearnafunshin townland (CL026–149 and CL026–179). Clusters of burnt mounds were excavated on the project to the north in Monreagh and Derrygarrieff, Sranagalloon/Gortaficka and Caheraphuca townlands.

A review of the RMP records and the sites excavated as part of the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme indicate that the number of known or suspected burnt mounds increased towards the south of the project. In relation to Ballyline 3 a wedge tomb and two unclassified megalithic tombs are located approximately 4 km to the

northeast in Knockmael East (CL016–026, CL016–027) and a wedge tomb is located within Caheraphuca (CL26–015) townland approximately 1.20 km to the northeast. A wedge tomb is located approximately 3.75 km to the south of Ballyline at Ballymaconna (CL026–054) and a standing stone is located approximately 3.80 km south southwest in Carrowdotia (CL026–035) townland. There is a high concentration of tombs (unspecified) and standing stones approximately 9 km to the southeast close to Tulla.

3.3 Typology of Burnt Mounds

Burnt mound sites (also commonly referred to as *fulachta fiadh*) are one of the most common field monuments found in the Irish landscape. The last published survey (Power et al. 1997), carried out over a decade ago, recorded over 7,000 burnt mound sites and in excess of 1,000 sites have been excavated in recent years through development led archaeological investigations. In spite of this no clear understanding of the precise function of these sites has been forthcoming.

Burnt mound sites are typically located in areas where there is a readily available water source, often in proximity to a river or stream or in places with a high water table. In the field burnt mounds may be identified as charcoal-rich mounds or spreads of heat-shattered stones; however, in many cases the sites have been disturbed by later agricultural activity and are no longer visible on the field surface. Nevertheless even disturbed spreads of burnt mound material often preserves the underlying associated features, such as troughs, pits and gullies, intact.

Ó Néill (2003–2004, 82) has aptly identified these sites as the apparatus and by-product of pyrolithic technology. This technology involved the heating or boiling of water by placing fire-heated stones into troughs of water. Small shallow round-bottomed pits, generally referred to as pot boiler pits or roasting pits, are often associated with burnt mound sites. The purpose of these pits remains unclear. Occasionally large pits are also identified and may have acted as wells or cisterns. Linear gullies may extend across the site, often linked to troughs and pits, and demonstrate a concern with onsite water management. Post and stakeholes are often found on burnt mound sites and these may represent the remains of small structures or wind breakers.

Burnt mound sites are principally Bronze Age monuments and reach their pinnacle of use in the middle/late Bronze Age (Brindley et al. 1989–90; Corlett 1997). Earlier sites, such as Ennis Coffey Co. Westmeath (Grogan et al. 2007, 96), have been dated to the Neolithic and later sites, such as Peter Street, Co. Waterford (Walsh 1990, 47), have been dated to the medieval period. Thus although burnt mound sites generally form a components of the Bronze Age landscape, the use of pyrolithic technology has a long history in Ireland.

Although there is a general consensus that burnt mound sites are the result of pyrolithic technology for the heating or boiling of water, the precise function of these sites has, to date, not been agreed upon. Several theories have been proposed but no single theory has received unanimous support. The most enduring theory is that burnt mounds sites were used as cooking sites. O'Kelly (1954) and Lawless (1990) have demonstrated how joints of meat could be efficiently cooked in troughs of boiling water. The use of burnt mound sites for bathing or as saunas has been suggested as an alternative function (Lucas 1965; Barfield and Hodder 1987; Ó Drisceóil 1988). This proposal is largely influenced by references in the early Irish literature to sites of a similar character and is very difficult to prove, or disprove. Others, such as Jeffrey (1991), argue that they may have been centres of textile production for the fulling or dyeing of cloth. More recent demonstrations by Quinn

and Moore (2007) have shown that troughs could have been used for brewing, however, this theory has been criticised by specialist environmentalists due to the absence of cereal remains from most burnt mound sites (McClatchie et al. 2007).

3.4 Discussion

3.4.1 Phase 1: Natural Drift Geology

This phase represents the natural subsoil, which was cut or sealed by all subsequent archaeological features. The site was located at the base of a northeast-facing hill at the edge of a wetland area in Ballyline townland in north Co. Clare. It was located approximately 180 m from the Millbrook stream at 27 m OD. The subsoil was mottled orange-yellow silt clay of glacial origin.

3.4.2 Phase 2: Burnt Deposit with Pit

The main feature at this site was a rectangular pit which contained a single fill with some heat-affected stone and charcoal inclusions. The fill was dated to 2286–2035 BC (2 Sigma calibration) placing it in the early Bronze Age period. This dating places it within the same date range as the early activity at the burnt mound site at Ballyline 1 and 2 approximately 500 m to the north. Alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash and Maloideae (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments were identified from the fill. They indicate that there was an oak-ash woodland close by with plenty of scrub-like growth in its under-storey. The firewood was probably collected as dead wood within the woodland.

Lab code	Context / sample	Sample material	Years BP	1 sigma	2 sigma
UBA 12743	C4 / S1	Charcoal Hazel/ Alder	3751±40	Cal 2271–2050 BC	Cal 2286–2035 BC

A heat-affected stone deposit located close to the pit may be a dump deposit from the pit if it had been used repeatedly. It pit may have been simply been a cooking pit.

3.4.3 Phase 3: Post-Medieval Activity

A shallow land drain ran NE/SW across the site and cut the pit and the deposit.

3.4.4 Phase 4: Topsoil

The topsoil was mid-brown peat and it covered the entire site.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The site at Ballyline 3 was a pit and a small deposit of heat-affected stones and charcoal-rich material. Charcoal from the pit has been dated to 2286–2035 BC (2 Sigma calibration) placing the site in the early Bronze Age period. The charcoal assemblage suggests that the site was surrounded by primary woodland comprising of a combination of oak-birch-ash with a hazel under-storey with scrub-land type taxa such as hawthorn/rowan/crab apple.

The pit appears to have been isolated yet it was contemporary with Ballyline 1 and 2 approximately 500 m to the north. Although there is no evidence to indicate what it was used for it is suggested here that it may have been a cooking pit.

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PLATES

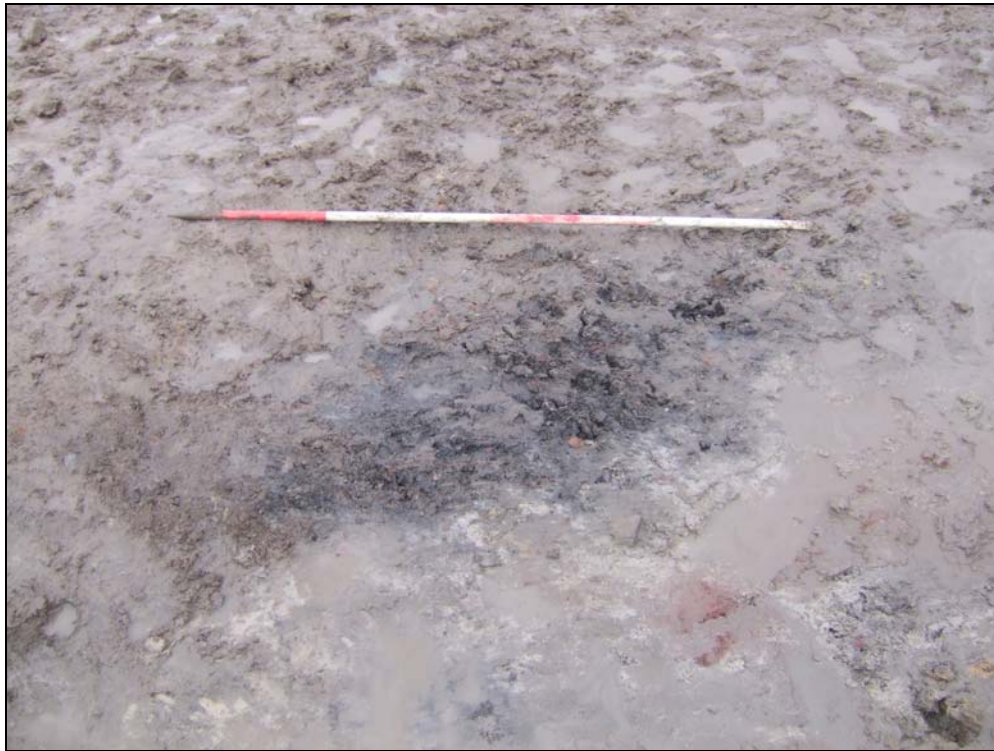


Plate 1 Mid-excavation view of pit, C3, facing southwest



Plate 2 Mid-excavation view of burnt spread, C5, facing north



Plate 3 Post-excavation view of the site, facing east

APPENDIX 1 CATALOGUE OF PRIMARY DATA

Appendix 1.1 Context Register

Context	Fill of	L(m)	W(m)	D(m)	Basic Description	Interpretation	Description	Finds	Context Above	Context Below
1	N/A				Mid brown peat	Topsoil	Mid brown peat	N/A		
2	N/A				Mottled silty clay	Natural subsoil	Mottled orange-yellow silt clay	N/A		
3	N/A	1.75	1.68	0.14	Roughly square cut, irregular sides	Cut of a shallow feature	Roughly square in plan. N-S cut. No corners. Gradual to not perceptible break of slope at top. Irregular sides. Not perceptible break of slope at base. Flat base. Cut by c6.	N/A	C4	C2
4	C3	1.75	1.68	0.14	Brown black sandy clay, stones, charcoal	Fill of a shallow feature	Hard dark brown black sandy clay. Burnt stones and charcoal inclusions.	N/A	C6, C1	C3
5	N/A	0.55	0.48	0.04	Black charcoal rich silty clay	Burnt stone spread	Hard black silty clay. Charcoal and stone inclusions.	N/A	C6	C2
6	N/A	10	0.5	0.08	Linear cut, gradual sides	Cut of a field boundary	Linear in plan. NE-SW cut. No corners. Sharp break of slope at top. Gradual sides. Gradual break of slope at base. Rounded base.	N/A	C7	C4, C5
7	C6	10	0.5	0.08	Grey brown silty clay, stones	Fill of a field boundary	Medium soft grey brown silty clay. 5% sandstone.	N/A	C1	C6

Appendix 1.2 Catalogue of Artefacts

There were no artefacts recovered during the excavations at Ballyline 3.

Appendix 1.3 Catalogue of Ecofacts


These results relate to the processed samples taken at the excavation. A full list of these samples was supplied with the preliminary reports lodged with Galway NRDO. A total of two bulk soil samples were taken during the course of excavation at these sites. Both of these were processed by means of flotation and sieving through a 250/300µm mesh. The resulting retrieved samples of this process are listed below.

1.3.1 Charcoal

Two charcoal samples were recovered following flotation.

Context number	Sample number	Feature	Sample weight (g)
C4	1	Fill of pit	17.7g
C5	2	Burnt spread	39.0g

Appendix 1.4 Archive Checklist

Project:	N18 Gort to Crusheen	Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd	
Site Name:	Ballyline 3		
NMS Number:	E3715		
Site director:	Joe Nunan		
Date:	15/02/08		
Field Records		Items (quantity)	Comments
Site drawings (plans)		2	All on one sheet
Site sections, profiles, elevations		2	
Other plans, sketches, etc.		0	
Timber drawings		0	
Stone structural drawings		0	
Site diary/note books		0	
Site registers (folders)		1	
Survey/levels data (origin information)		0	
Context sheets		7	
Wood Sheets		0	
Skeleton Sheets		0	
Worked stone sheets		0	
Digital photographs		25	
Photographs (print)		0	
Photographs (slide)		0	
Finds and Environ. Archive			
Flint/chert		0	
Stone artefacts		0	
Pottery (specify periods/typology)		0	
Ceramic Building Material (specify types eg daub, tile)		0	
Metal artefacts (specify types - bronze, iron)		0	
Glass		0	
Other find types or special finds (specify)		0	
Human bone (specify type eg cremated, skeleton, disarticulated)		0	
Animal bone		0	
Metallurgical waste		0	
Enviro bulk soil (specify no. of samples)		2	2 Buckets
Enviro monolith (specify number of samples and number of tins per sample)		0	
Security copy of archive		Yes	IAC Digital

APPENDIX 2 SPECIALIST REPORTS

Appendix 2.1 Radiocarbon Dating Results – QUB Laboratory

Appendix 2.2 Charcoal Remains – Sarah Cobain

RADIOCARBON DATING RESULTS
BALLYLINE 3

CHRONO LABORATORY, QUEENS UNIVERSITY BELFAST

Colette Rynhart
 Irish Archaeological
 Consultancy Ltd
 120b Greenpark Road
 Bray
 Co. Wicklow, Ireland
 Rep. of Ireland
 VAT No. IE8288812U



¹⁴CHRONO Centre
 Queens University
 Belfast
 42 Fitzwilliam Street
 Belfast BT9 6AX
 Northern Ireland

Radiocarbon Date Certificate

Laboratory Identification: UBA-12743
 Date of Measurement: 2009-10-20
 Site: E3715 Ballyline 3
 Sample ID: C4S1
 Material Dated: charcoal
 Pretreatment: AAA
 Submitted by: IAC

¹⁴C Date: 3751±40
 AMS δ¹³C: -24.4

Information about radiocarbon calibration

RADIOCARBON CALIBRATION PROGRAM*
 CALIB REV5.0.2

Copyright 1986-2005 M Stuiver and PJ Reimer

*To be used in conjunction with:

Stuiver, M., and Reimer, P.J., 1993, Radiocarbon, 35, 215-230.

Annotated results (text) - -

Export file - cl4res.csv

C4S1
 UBA-12743
 Radiocarbon Age BP 3751 +/- 40
 Calibration data set: intcal04.14c # Reimer et al. 2004
 % area enclosed cal AD age ranges relative area under
 probability distribution

68.3 (1 sigma)	cal BC	2271- 2259	0.072
		2206- 2130	0.694
		2086- 2050	0.234
95.4 (2 sigma)	cal BC	2286- 2108	0.753
		2105- 2035	0.247

References for calibration datasets:

PJ Reimer, MGL Baillie, E Bard, A Bayliss, JW Beck, C Bertrand, PG Blackwell,
 CE Buck, G Burr, KB Cutler, PE Damon, RL Edwards, RG Fairbanks, M Friedrich,
 TP Guilderson, KA Hughen, B Kromer, FG McCormac, S Manning, C Bronk Ramsey,
 RW Reimer, S Remmele, JR Southon, M Stuiver, S Talamo, FW Taylor,
 J van der Plicht, and CE Weyhenmeyer (2004), Radiocarbon 46:1029-1058.

Comments:

* This standard deviation (error) includes a lab error multiplier.
 ** 1 sigma = square root of (sample std. dev.^2 + curve std. dev.^2)
 ** 2 sigma = 2 x square root of (sample std. dev.^2 + curve std. dev.^2)
 where ^2 = quantity squared.
 [] = calibrated range impinges on end of calibration data set
 0* represents a "negative" age BP
 1955* or 1960* denote influence of nuclear testing C-14

NOTE: Cal ages and ranges are rounded to the nearest year which
 may be too precise in many instances. Users are advised to
 round results to the nearest 10 yr for samples with standard
 deviation in the radiocarbon age greater than 50 yr.

THE CHARCOAL REMAINS

BALLYLINE 3 E3715

SARAH COBAIN

*De Faoite Archaeology,
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Introduction

The survival of seed and charcoal macrofossils from dryland archaeology sites is dependent upon the water table being high enough to keep the archaeological features in damp/wet and anoxic conditions. This does not usually occur on archaeological sites in Ireland, unless they are located on riverine flood plains or close to lakes. Seeds and charcoal are however preserved abundantly in the form of charcoal and carbonised plant remains as a result of burning activities in features such as hearths, kilns, furnaces, burnt structures and as waste material disposed in ditches and pits.

There were 24 burnt mound sites spanning from the early to late Bronze Age period in date on the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme. The burnt mound activity from Caheraphuca 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, Ballyline 3, Drumminacloghaun, Clooneen and Gortavoher dated from the early Bronze Age. Ballyline 1 and 2 and Gortaficka 1 and 2 were from the early to mid Bronze Age and Sranagalloon 1, 3 Caheraphuca 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 12, Rathwilladoon 4, Monreagh, Monreagh 3 and Derrygarriff 3 were dated to the mid to late Bronze Age. These sites consisted of archaeological features associated with burnt mound activity and included burnt mounds, spread, troughs, pits and gullies. Plant macrofossil and charcoal remains provide valuable information to determine socio-economic activity on archaeology sites. It is the aim of this report to identify the seed and charcoal species recovered from all these sites and to use this information to:

- 1) provide additional information regarding the function of features sampled
- 2) interpret the diet and living conditions of the occupants of the site
- 3) interpret socio-economic and industrial activities on the site
- 4) infer the composition of the local flora and woodland

Methodology

There were 2 samples to be analysed for charcoal remains. The following methodology was used to identify the charcoal fragments.

Charcoal

The number of charcoal fragments to be identified is dependent on the diversity of the flora. A study by Keepax (1988:120–124) has indicated that depending on the location of the archaeology site, 100–400 fragments of charcoal would need to be identified in order to obtain a full range of species diversity. As Britain and Ireland have a narrow flora diversity in comparison to that of mainland Europe, an identification limit of 100 fragments has been deemed sufficient for samples from either of these two countries (Keepax 1988; cited in Austin 2005:1). As the majority of the samples contained more than 100 fragments, in accordance with Keepax (1988), a maximum of 100 fragments were identified. Of the samples which contained greater than 100 fragments these were sieved through a 10 mm, 4 mm and 2 mm sieve and an equal proportion of each sieve were identified. This is to prevent any bias that may occur if only larger pieces are identified (thereby ensuring any potential smaller species are equally represented).

Each charcoal fragment was fractured by hand to reveal the wood anatomy on radial, tangential and transverse planes. The pieces were then supported in a sand bath and identified under an epi-illuminating microscope (Brunel SP400) at magnifications from x40 to x400. The sand bath allowed the charcoal pieces to be manipulated into the flattest possible position to aid identification. As fragments less than 2 mm in size cannot be accurately identified (it is not possible to get a wide enough field of vision

to encompass the necessary anatomical features for identification) only fragments above this size were examined. During identification, any notable growth-ring characteristics, evidence of thermal and biological degradation and any other unusual microscopic features were recorded. Identifications were carried out with reference to images and descriptions by Cutler and Gale (2000) and Heller et al. (2004) and Wheeler et al. (1989). Nomenclature of species follows Stace (1997).

Plant macrofossils

Plant macrofossil remains were retrieved by standard flotation procedures by IAC Ltd using 1 mm and 250 micron sieves. The floated material was sorted and seeds identified using a low-power stereo-microscope (Brunel MX1) at magnifications of x4 to x40. Identifications were made with reference to Cappers et al. (2006), Berggren (1981) and Anderberg (1994). Nomenclature follows Stace (1997).

Results

The plant macrofossil and charcoal results are fully tabulated in Table 9 in the Appendix at the end of the report.

Charcoal identification notes

The anatomical similarities between (a) the Maloideae species (hawthorn, rowan, crab apple); (b) alder/hazel; (c) sessile/pedunculate oak; (d) wild/bird cherry and (e) poplar/willow mean that it was not possible to identify these taxa to species level (Cutler and Gale 2000).

E3653 Caheraphuca 1

There were five samples retrieved from Caheraphuca 1. Sample 15 (C29) was recovered from pit C100, C101 and contained hazel, oak, ash, cf hawthorn, and poplar/willow charcoal inclusions. The fill (C58-sample 18) of pit/trough, C57 contained alder/hazel and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments. Burnt spread material C95 (sample 30) contained alder/hazel, birch, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and elm charcoal inclusions. Two samples were retrieved from pit C102. Secondary fill C106 (sample 39) contained alder/hazel charcoal fragments and tertiary fill C107 (sample 35) contained alder/hazel, oak, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), poplar/willow and elm charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 3

Five samples were analysed from Caheraphuca 3. Burnt spread C327 contained no charcoal inclusions and pit/tree hole pit C332 (sample 21-C333, samples 20 and 32--C334 and sample 38 C344) contained hazel, alder/hazel oak and ash charcoal inclusions. Sample 20 (fill C334) also contained a single carbonised hazelnut shell.

E3653 Caheraphuca 4

Burnt spreads C404 and C405 were retrieved as samples 2 and 3, respectively. C405 contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, cf hawthorn, blackthorn/sloe, poplar/willow and elm charcoal inclusions. Burnt spread C405 contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash, cf hawthorn, cf crab apple and blackthorn/sloe charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 5

A single sample (sample 1) was retrieved from the burnt spread C504 at Caheraphuca 5. This sample contained hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash, *Maloideae* species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), poplar/willow and yew charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 6

Three samples were retrieved from burnt mound material at Caheraphuca 6. Deposit C604 (sample 3) contained alder and hazel charcoal inclusions, deposit C605 (sample 1) contained alder/hazel, oak, cf hawthorn, blackthorn/sloe and elm charcoal fragments and deposit C608 (sample 12) contained hazel, birch, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and wild/bird cherry charcoal inclusions. Sample 7 was retrieved from fill C617, which was a packing fill supporting timber C612. This fill contained alder, hazel, oak and ash charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 7

Samples 2 and 7 were retrieved from burnt spread deposits C708 and C709 (respectively). Sample 2 (C708) contained hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and wild/bird cherry charcoal fragments. Deposit C709 contained alder/hazel, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and elm charcoal inclusions. Trough C715 contained fill C713 (sample 8), which contained alder/hazel, birch, oak and ash charcoal inclusions. Sample 5 was retrieved from the fill (C710) of pit C711. This pit contained alder/hazel, oak, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), wild/bird cherry and blackthorn/sloe charcoal inclusions. Pit C712 contained fill C704 (sample 3), which included alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), wild/bird cherry and blackthorn/sloe charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 8

Five samples were analysed from burnt mound activity at Caheraphuca 8. Sample 10, 39, 48 and 54 were retrieved from burnt mound spreads C810, C827, C829 and C835 respectively. Sample 10 (C810) contained alder and oak charcoal inclusions and a single carbonised hazelnut shell fragment. Burnt mound spread C827 (sample 48) included alder/hazel and ash charcoal fragments. Alder, hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), cf hawthorn and poplar/willow were recovered from burnt mound spread C829 (sample 54). Sample 88 (C835) contained alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), cf hawthorn, cf crab apple and yew charcoal fragments. One additional sample (sample 39) was retrieved as a packing fill (C825) located under timber plank C814. This packing fill (C825) contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 9

Sample 2 was retrieved from the fill (C906) of pit C904 and contained alder and ash charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 10

Two samples were retrieved from burnt mound activity at Caheraphuca 10. Burnt mound spread C1008 was retrieved as sample 4 and contained alder/hazel and oak charcoal fragments. The spread of unburnt stones C1005 (sample 1) contained alder/hazel, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal inclusions.

E3653 Caheraphuca 11

Trough C1109 contained the fill C1118 (sample 5) which included alder/hazel, oak and elm charcoal fragments.

E3653 Caheraphuca 12

Two samples were retrieved from Caheraphuca 12. Sample 1 was taken from burnt mound spread C1203 and contained alder, hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), wild/bird cherry, yew and elm charcoal fragments.

Sample 2 was retrieved from the fill (C1204) of trough C1204. This fill contained elder, alder, hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash and wild/bird cherry charcoal inclusions.

E3655 Rathwilladoon 4

The burnt mound spread (C3 – sample 1) at Rathwilladoon 4 contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and elm charcoal inclusions and a single carbonised hazelnut shell inclusion. The fill (C6) of boundary ditch, C5 contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak and ash charcoal inclusions.

E3712 Monreagh 1 and 2

Four samples were retrieved from Monreagh 1 and 2. Sample 13 was recovered from the fill (C25) of trough C24 and contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), blackthorn/sloe and yew charcoal fragments. Fill C36 (sample 18) from trough C35 contained alder/hazel, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments. Sample 21 was retrieved from fill C41 within pit C40. This fill contained ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal inclusions. Sample 14 was retrieved from fill C27 within well C26. This sample contained elder, hazel, oak, cf hawthorn and wild/bird cherry.

E3713 Sranagalloon 1

Sample 2 was retrieved from burnt mound spread C5 and contained alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), poplar/willow and elm charcoal inclusions. Trough C8 contained fills C11, C12, C9 which were retrieved as sample 22. This sample contained hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash, traveller's joy and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments.

E3715 Ballyline 3

Sample 1 (C4) was retrieved from pit C3. This pit contained hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments. The sample (sample 2) retrieved from burnt mound material, C5, contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, cf hawthorn and elm charcoal inclusions.

E3716 Derrygarraff 3

Three samples were retrieved from burnt mound activity at Derrygarraff 3. Sample 8 was recovered from burnt mound material (C3) and contained alder/hazel, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), cf hawthorn and poplar/willow charcoal fragments. Hazel, alder/hazel, birch, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), wild/bird cherry, poplar/willow and elm charcoal inclusions were obtained from fill C5 (sample 1) within trough C4. Sample 6 was retrieved from the fill (C8) of trough C6 and contained alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and wild/bird cherry charcoal fragments.

E3717 Ballyline 1 and 2

Troughs C22 and C6 were analysed for charcoal remains from burnt mound activity at Ballyline 1 and 2. The fill (C25-sample 1) of trough C22 contained alder/hazel, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments. Sample 9 was recovered from fill C7 within trough C6. This fill contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and poplar/willow charcoal inclusions.

E3720 Drumminacloghaun 1

Burnt spread material C3 (sample 2) from Drumminacloghaun 1 contained alder/hazel, oak, ash, yew and elm charcoal fragments and a single carbonised

yellow water lily seed. The fill (C6-sample 5) from trough C4 only contained three ash charcoal fragments.

E3722 Clooneen 1

There were three samples retrieved from burnt mound activity at Clooneen 1. Sample 6 was recovered from burnt spread material C3 and contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel, ash and poplar/willow charcoal inclusions. A packing fill layer (C15 – sample 10) which was located under the wooden base of trough C8 contained alder and ash charcoal inclusions. The fill C7 (sample 3) from pit C7 contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel and ash charcoal inclusions.

E3897 Sranagalloon 3

There were eight samples recovered from burnt mound activity at Sranagalloon 3. The spread (C34-sample 40) from possible up cast material contained birch, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal inclusions. Burnt spread material C3 (sample 38) contained hazel, alder/hazel, cf hawthorn, cf crab apple, blackthorn/sloe and elm charcoal inclusions. Two fills (C30 and C35 –samples 28 and 27 respectively) were recovered from trough C28. Fill C30 contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel, cf hawthorn, cf crab apple, blackthorn/sloe and elm charcoal inclusions and a single carbonised hazelnut shell. Fill C35 contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) and poplar/willow charcoal fragments and a single carbonised hazelnut shell. Trough C50 contained fill C8 (sample 41). This fill included alder, hazel, alder/hazel, ash and cf hawthorn charcoal fragments. Two fills were sampled from pit C19. Sample 10 was taken from fill C22 and contained hazel, ash, wild/bird cherry and poplar/willow charcoal inclusions. Sample 12 (C27) contained alder/hazel and poplar/willow charcoal fragments.

E3898 Gortaficka 1 and 2

A single sample (sample 1) was recovered from burnt spread material C3 at Gortaficka 1. This sample contained hazel, alder/hazel, ash and wild/bird cherry charcoal inclusions. Two samples were taken from burnt mound material at Gortaficka 2. Sample 5 was retrieved from deposit C10 and contained alder, hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), poplar/willow and yew charcoal inclusions. Deposit C20 (sample 8) contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash and yew charcoal fragments. Fill C41 (sample 35) from within trough C39 and contained wayfaring tree, alder/hazel, traveller's joy and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments. Sample 20 was retrieved from fill 29 within pit C21. This sample contained hazel, alder/hazel, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), poplar/willow, yew and elm charcoal inclusions. Drainage gully C53 contained fill C55. The sample from this fill (sample 37) contained two fragments of wayfaring tree charcoal.

E3984 Gortavoher 1

There were two samples recovered from burnt mound material deposits from Gortavoher 1. Sample 1 was recovered from deposit C3 and contained wayfaring tree, hazel, birch, oak, ash, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), cf crab apple, blackthorn/sloe, poplar/willow, yew and elm charcoal fragments and carbonised mustard/cabbage, tufted vetch and water pepper seeds. Deposit C6 (sample 2) contained hazel, alder/hazel, birch, oak, Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple), poplar/willow, yew and elm charcoal inclusions.

E4037 Monreagh 3

Three samples were retrieved from burnt mound activity at Monreagh 3. Sample 2 was recovered from burnt mound material C3 and contained alder, hazel,

alder/hazel, oak, ash and elm charcoal inclusions and two carbonised hazelnut shell inclusions. The fill C11 (sample 3) from trough C10 contained alder/hazel, oak, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal fragments and uncharred blackberry and stone bramble seeds. The fill from pit C8 contained alder/hazel, birch, oak, ash and Maloideae species (hawthorn/rowan/crab apple) charcoal inclusions.

Discussion

Burnt mound/spreads

Table 1: Burnt mounds, spreads and deposits excavated on the N18 road scheme (exclusively those analysed for plant macrofossils and charcoal)

Site Name	Details	Context Number
E3653 Caheraphuca 1	Burnt spread material	C95
E3653 Caheraphuca 3 *	Burnt spread material	C327
E3653 Caheraphuca 4	Burnt mound material	C404, C405
E3653 Caheraphuca 5	Burnt spread material	C504
E3653 Caheraphuca 6	Burnt mound material	C604, C605, C608
E3653 Caheraphuca 7	Burnt deposit	C708, C709
E3653 Caheraphuca 8*	Burnt spread	C810
E3653 Caheraphuca 8	Shallow burnt spread	C827, C835
E3653 Caheraphuca 8	Burnt spread material	C829
E3653 Caheraphuca 10	Burnt mound material	C1008
E3653 Caheraphuca 10	Spread of unburnt stones	C1005
E3653 Caheraphuca 12	Burnt mound material	C1203
E3655 Rathwilladoon 4*	Burnt mound material	C3
E3713 Sranagalloon 1	Burnt spread material	C5
E3715 Ballyline 3	Burnt spread material	C5
E3716 Derrygarriff 3	Burnt spread material	C3
E3720 Drumminacloghaun 1 *	Burnt spread material	C3
E3722 Clooneen 1	Burnt mound material	C3
E3897 Sranagalloon 3	Spread – up cast from trough	C34
E3897 Sranagalloon 3	Burnt spread material	C3=C12
E3898 Gortaficka 1	Burnt spread material	C3
E3898 Gortaficka 2	Burnt mound material	C10, C20
E3984 Gortavoher 1 *	Burnt mound material	C3, C6
E4037 Monreagh 3 *	Burnt mound material	C3

* - also contained plant macrofossils

Table 1 shows context numbers of the burnt mound deposits/burnt spreads from each site sampled on the N18. This activity involved heating stones on a hearth and then placing these into troughs filled with water, thereby heating or boiling the water. The stones were then raked out of the trough and ultimately piled as waste material into a horseshoe-shaped mound around the working area. The mounds usually contain burnt stones along with frequent charcoal inclusions which represent the remains of the firing debris used within the hearth/s to heat the stones. All of the burnt spreads/mounds along the N18 route (with the exception of C317 Caheraphuca 3) contained moderate to frequent charcoal inclusions which would represent the firing debris from fuel used within the hearths. The burnt spread samples from Caheraphuca 3 (C327), Caheraphuca 8 (C810), Rathwilladoon 4 (C3), Gortavoher 1 (C3) and Monreagh 3 (C3) also contained carbonised hazelnut shells which may

represent either remains of food consumed during burnt mound activities or hazelnuts still attached to the hazel branches which used as fuel.

The spread of unburnt stones (C1005) at Caheraphuca 10 and spread of uncast material (C34) at Sranagalloon 3 both contained only occasional charcoal inclusions as a result no further information about the use/function of these two spreads can be deduced from palaeoenvironmental activity.

Troughs

Table 2: Troughs excavated on the N18 road scheme (exclusively those analysed for plant macrofossils and charcoal)

Site Name	Details	Context Number
E3653 Caheraphuca 1	Fill of pit/trough C57	C58
E3653 Caheraphuca 6	Fill of trough – fill supporting timber C612	C617
E3653 Caheraphuca 7	Fill of trough, C715	C713
E3653 Caheraphuca 11	Top fill of waste pit/trough, C1109	C1118
E3653 Caheraphuca 12	Fill of trough C1205	C1204
E3712 Monreagh 1 and 2	Fill of trough C24	C25
E3712 Monreagh 1 and 2	Fill of trough C35	C36
E3713 Sranagalloon 1	Fill of trough, C8	C9, C11, C12
E3716 Derrygarraff 3	Fill of trough C4	C5
E3716 Derrygarraff 3	Fill of trough, C6	C8
E3717 Ballyline 1 and 2	Fill of trough, C22	C25
E3717 Ballyline 1 and 2	Fill of trough, C6	C7
E3720 Drumminacloghaun 1	Fill of trough, C4	C6
E3722 Clooneen 1	Layer under wooden base of trough, C8	C15
E3897 Sranagalloon 3 *	Fill of trough C28	C30, C35
E3897 Sranagalloon 3	Fill of trough, C50	C8
E3898 Gortaficka 2	Fill of trough, C39	C41
E4037 Monreagh 3 *	Fill of trough C10	C11

* - also contained plant macrofossils

The troughs outlined in Table 2 from Sranagalloon 1, Caheraphuca 1, 7, 11, 12, Monreagh, 1 and 2, Derrygarraff 3, Ballyline 1 and 2 and Drumminacloghaun 1 all contained a mixture of silty material, burnt stones and charcoal indicating that they were backfilled with burnt mound material soon after use, either deliberately or through collapse or animal treading whereas the troughs from Sranagalloon 3 Gortaficka 2 and Monreagh 3 contained less charcoal and burnt stones which suggests they silted in naturally. Fill C15 was located under the wooden base of trough C8 at Clooneen 1 and C617 was located under timber plank C612 at Caheraphuca 6. These fills have been interpreted as deliberately placed packing fills for their respective trough structures. The charcoal within these fills is most likely intrusive and was derived from the charcoal/stones being deposited into the trough above.

The hazelnut shells recovered from fills C30 and C35 within trough C28 at Sranagalloon 3 were most likely deposited through disposal of hazelnut shells into the fire after consumption on the site, or through hazelnuts attached to branches used as fuel in the fires. The blackberry and stone bramble seeds were uncharred

and most likely silted into or deposited by birds/ small mammals into trough C10 at Monreagh after it went out of use.

Pits

Table 3: Pits excavated on the N18 road scheme (exclusively those analysed for plant macrofossils and charcoal)

Site Name	Details	Context Number
E3653 Caheraphuca 1	Fill of pits C100 and C101	C29
E3653 Caheraphuca 1	Secondary (C106) and tertiary (C107) fill of pit C102	C106 and C107
E3653 Caheraphuca 3	Fills of pit/tree root C332	C333, C334, C344
E3653 Caheraphuca 7	Fills of pits C711 and C712	C710 and C704
E3653 Caheraphuca 9	Secondary fill of pit C904	C906
E3712 Monreagh 1 and 2	Fill of pit, C40	C41
E3715 Ballyline 3	Fill of pit, C3	C4
E3722 Clooneen 1	Fill of pit C12	C7
E3897 Sranagalloon 3	Fill of pit, C19	C22, C27
E3898 Gortaficka 2	Fill of pit, C21	C22, C29
E4037 Monreagh 3	Fill of pit	C8

The pits at Caheraphuca 1 (pit C29), Ballyline 3, Clooneen 1, Caheraphuca 3 Caheraphuca 7 Caheraphuca 9, Monreagh 3 and Monreagh 1 and 2 as outlined in Table 3 were all deliberately backfilled with burnt mound material and contained frequent charcoal inclusions. This charcoal can be attributed to residual firing debris from hearths used to heat stones. The pits at Sranagalloon 3, Gortaficka 2, Caheraphuca 1 (C102) and Caheraphuca 3 silted up naturally and the charcoal within these features was most likely residual from firing debris.

Well

Table 4: Well excavated on the N18 road scheme (exclusively those analysed for plant macrofossils and charcoal)

Site Name	Details	Context Number
E3712 Monreagh 1 and 2	Fill of a well C26	C27

The fill (C27) from well C26 at Monreagh sites 1 and 2 contained frequent charcoal inclusions. There was no burning *in situ* recorded around the edges of this cut and this, together with the burnt stone inclusions, indicates that the well was deliberately backfilled after its final use with charcoal-rich burnt mound material.

Linear features

Table 5: Linear feature excavated on the N18 road scheme (exclusively those analysed for plant macrofossils and charcoal)

Site Name	Details	Context Number
E3898 Gortaficka 2	Fill of drainage gully C53	C55

The fill (C55) from drainage gully C53 at Gortaficka 2 contained only two fragments of charcoal. It is most likely this residual charcoal accumulated from nearby through natural silting into the drainage gully after the gully went out of use.

Platform/Timber features

Table 6: Timber features excavated on the N18 road scheme (exclusively those analysed for plant macrofossils and charcoal).

Site Name	Details	Context Number
E3653 Caheraphuca 8	Burnt material under timber plank, C814	C825

The fill (C825) from under timber plank C814 at Caheraphuca 8 contained only occasional fragments of charcoal. It is most likely this residual charcoal accumulated from nearby burnt mound activity and silted under the timber plank during the use of the structure.

Economic and Industrial Activities

Burnt Mound Activity

The plant macrofossil evidence from the samples recovered from burnt mound activity from sites Gortavoher 1, Monreagh 3, Sranagalloon 1, 3, Rathwilladoon 4, Caheraphuca 3, 8, 12 not provide any definitive explanation for the use of these features. The hazelnut shells recovered are indicative of a food source being consumed, perhaps as a snack during burnt mound use or they could have been attached to hazel branches which were subsequently burnt. The vetch, mustard/pepper, yellow water lily, blackberry and water pepper can all be consumed (discussed below), although they were recovered in very small quantities from these sites suggesting they were accidental inclusions (accidental losses during harvesting, the burning of weeds or they were dropped by animals/birds) rather than an indication of food production.

Fuel use

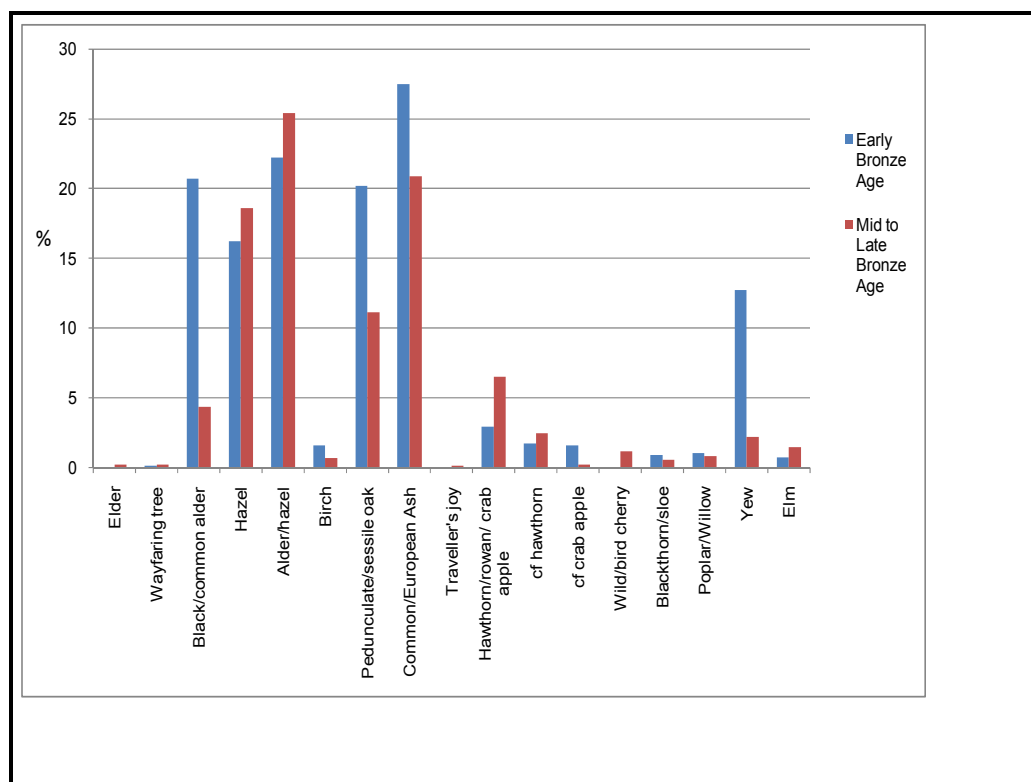
The woodland species exploited for fuel for burnt mound activities was similar throughout the Bronze Age period. The main fuels used as firing material for burnt mound activity on the N18 were ash, oak and elm. There was a high proportion of oak, ash and elm charcoal fragments which did not show obvious curved growth rings: therefore it is likely the wood was derived from larger branches or stem (trunk) wood which would have been deliberately cut with the intention of burning (rather than opportunistic gathering of brushwood). There was also a proportion of the oak and ash charcoal which did exhibit curved growth rings, which is likely to represent smaller branches. Ash, oak and elm would have been chosen as they have dense heartwood and with good ventilation, and burn slowly, maintaining an even temperature (Cutler and Gale, 2000:120, 205, Stuijts, 2005:145). This is essential for a fire being used to heat up stones as it would require constant heat for relatively long periods of time; and as collection of wood is a labour intensive activity, selection of species according to their burning properties would have been commonplace. There was also a high percentage of hazel and alder/hazel charcoal from all the N18 sites. Hazel is recorded as a reasonable fuel wood and was widely available within oak woodlands, particularly on the fringes of cleared areas (Grogan et al. 2007:30). It is possible that the hazel was used as a dominant fuel wood where oak and ash was not available.

The remaining charcoal recorded from the N18 sites consisted of elder, wayfaring tree, alder, hazel, birch, traveller's joy, hawthorn, rowan, crab apple, wild/bird cherry, blackthorn/sloe, poplar/willow and yew. The majority of the charcoal from these species exhibited curved growth rings, which suggests they derived from round wood lateral branches rather than stem/trunk wood. It is therefore likely that these branches were collected as deadwood and used within brushwood bundles as kindling for the fire. Alder, elder, birch, poplar/willow are species that are ideal to use for kindling. They are all anatomically less dense than for example, oak and ash, and burn quickly at relatively high temperatures (Cutler and Gale, 2000:34, 50, 236, Grogan et al. 2007:29, 31). This property makes them good to use as kindling, as the high temperatures produced would encourage the oak and ash to ignite and start to burn.

The hawthorn, rowan, crab apple, yew, wild/bird cherry, blackthorn/sloe have a closer grain anatomical structure, and as a result make reasonable firewood (Grogan et al. 2007:30-31; Cutler and Gale, 2000:196; Stuijts, 2005:144); however, the majority of charcoal from these species originated from small twigs which indicates that rather than being the dominant fuels, these were kindling used to ignite the oak, ash and elm. Wild/bird cherry and blackthorn/sloe can be slow to ignite and burn therefore they need assistance from other species such as alder or birch which burn at high temperatures in order to continue to burn. Travellers joy and wayfaring tree have both been recorded as good fuel woods, however as these species are both small shrub species, and because of their small representation within the charcoal assemblage, it is most likely they were collected inadvertently while gathering other twigs/roundwood for brushwood bundles (Stuijts, 2005:145, Cutler and Gale, 2000:80).

There were several slight percentage changes in species used in the early compared to mid to late Bronze Age as indicated by Figure 1. While these trends have been observed, they must be interpreted with caution because the percentage fragment count cannot be used to deduce the actual abundance of these species within the woodland (see composition of local woodlands section below for a more detailed discussion). Therefore the percentages outlined below can only realistically be used to indicate a 'presence'/'absence' variable for each species within the environment.

Figure 1: Percentage change (fragment count) in species used as fuel in the early to late Bronze Age period.



The most noticeable percentage change was the decrease in the presence of oak and ash from the early to late Bronze Age period. This can be attributed to the increase in deforestation throughout the Bronze Age period to make way for settlement, agriculture and industrial activities, which resulted in oak and ash becoming less widely available. This trend is mirrored in the pollen core results obtained from Sheeauns Lough in Connemara. Research by Molloy and O'Connell (1991:79) demonstrated a similar trend with a decrease in oak and ash pollen occurring during the late Bronze Age period. The other large percentage change to occur was the drop in yew between the early and late Bronze Age period. Yew was one of the dominant trees along with oak during the late Neolithic period; however the increase in forest clearance led to a sharp decrease in its presence within oak woodlands. This is again observed in Molloy and O'Connell's (1991:102) research which shows an increase in yew tree pollen until the early Bronze Age, when its abundance starts to decrease. In tandem with the N18 Gort to Crusheen scheme an environmental study has been carried out in the vicinity of the burnt mound sites at Caheraphuca townland. Unfortunately the analysis was not complete by the time that the final excavation reports were compiled.

Management of the local environment

Fuel wood has been a valuable commodity throughout history and has been systematically cleared for settlement, agricultural and industrial activities from the Neolithic period onwards. There are at least 7000 known examples of burnt mounds in Ireland (Power et al. 1997 cited in Grogan et al. 2007, 81) which indicates that their use was widespread throughout the Bronze Age period and subsequently this would have had a huge impact on woodland. Bronze Age communities would have been

aware of the impact of deforestation, and coppicing would have been introduced to manage and retain this valuable resource. The high volume of hazel and alder roundwood within the charcoal is indicative of woodland management by coppicing. This type of woodland management would have been undertaken by cutting the tree to a stump every five to seven years and allowing it to re-generate. The new stems produced were harvested and used for fuel and construction of other wooden structures. This management ensured that the woodland resource was maintained for future generations (Van der Verf 1991, 97; Rackham 1980, 103).

Herbaceous taxa and diet

Herbaceous plants were often exploited to be used as herbs in cooking, vegetables or eaten raw in salads, all of which would have helped add flavour to food and to provide vitamins, minerals and additional fibre. Cabbage/mustard has been recorded as being eaten raw as salad, boiled down and used as pottage in stews and soups and as a vegetable similar to spinach (Behre 2008:67-8). Vetches were also retrieved on the site and are recorded to have been used to thicken stews. Water pepper is also present. It has a very acrid taste and for this reason, its seeds have been used for spices in food (Timson 1966:817). There is also evidence of fruit seeds and nuts – stone bramble and blackberries. These berries would have provided additional vitamin C and were possibly eaten raw or added into tarts/cakes (Pearson 1997: 14). Hazelnut shells were also recovered from various sites. The consumption of hazelnuts would have provided a valuable source of vitamins and minerals and would be eaten raw or could be crushed and added to stews (Pearson 1997:13).

All these species have been recorded as food through documentary sources, analysis of archaeological ecofacts and also information based on foods we eat today. Macrofossil analysis of the stomach contents of bog bodies from Kayhausen (Oldenburg, Germany), the Grauballe man (Jutland, Denmark), the Tollund man (Jutland, Denmark) and Lindow man (Lindow Moss, Cheshire, Britain) have shown indicated the presence of species such as cabbage/mustard and various fruits and nuts within the stomach contents of these people when they died. As these taxa were all found in Ireland during the prehistoric period, it can be assumed that they would have been selected and consumed (or processed to use in/or with cooking food) in Ireland. Their inclusion within the plant macrofossil record from the N18 may purely be indicative of weed species establishing in disturbed areas of the site, however it cannot be disregarded that some of these species were being exploited and consumed.

Composition of local woodlands and flora

All the archaeological sites within this report were located in areas of wetland, peat or areas prone to flooding as described in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Location of Burnt mound sites on the N18 Gort to Crusheen road scheme.

Site Name/Code	Description of present day ecological setting
E3653 Caheraphuca 1	A hollow between two peat basins
E3653 Caheraphuca 3-12	Located around a peat basin formed on the site of the now drained Caheraphuca Lough
E3655 Rathwilladoon 4	Located on the edge of a wetland area
E3712 Monreagh 1 and 2	Undulating peat covered land
E3713 Sranagalloon 1	Located on an area of flat pasture land, prone to flooding
E3715 Ballyline 3	

E 3716 Derrygarriff 3	Raised ground in a wetland area
E3717 Ballyline 1 and 2	Low lying flat land, close to the base of a hill
E3720 Drumminacloghaun 1	Raised area of pasture land with a natural spring and wetland area to the north
E3722 Clooneen 1	Located in a peat basin on drained bog land
E3897 Sranagalloon 3	Located between pasture and peat covered area along the base of a steeply sloping N-S orientated stream valley
E3898 Gortaficka 1 and 2	Marginal land between a pasture and peat covered area, adjacent to a N-S orientated stream
E3984 Gortavoher 1	Located at the base of a slope, positioned where the slope ended and an area of peat land began, close to the Scarriff stream
E4037 Monreagh 3	Located on the edge of a wetland area.

Local flora - Evidence from plant macrofossils

Submerged water plants

There were no submerged water plants retrieved from the N18 burnt mound sites.

Marsh/fen species

Water-pepper and yellow water lily are both species which grow in marshy, waterlogged areas and were found at Gortavoher 1 and Drumminacloghaun 1 (respectively). Water-pepper may possibly have been hand selected to use in foods (as discussed above), however it is most likely that both these species were transported by birds or other small animals and dropped/dropped of on the site.

Opportunistic/ruderal species

Cabbage/mustard, blackberry, stone bramble are all opportunistic species which grow well on cleared/waste ground. These species all could have grown easily within the N18 burnt mound sites (Gortavoher 1 and Monreagh 3 respectively) taking advantage of drier cleared areas and waste ground around the site and adjacent to tracks leading the site. While these are all considered 'weed' species, it cannot be disregarded that these were also food sources during this time, so their inclusion within the archaeological features could indicate their consumption. However as so few were recovered, it most likely signifies their accidental collection with brushwood fuel or was an indication of local flora growing in and around the site.

Dryland species

Vetch was the only dryland species recovered from the burnt mound sites (Gortavoher 1) (Holland 1919:9-10). As these were recovered in small quantities it is most likely they were either dropped by birds or small animals or were inadvertently collected with brushwood and burnt in the fires.

Local woodlands – Evidence from charcoal remains

As asserted by Scholtz (1986) cited in Prins and Shackleton (1992:632), the "Principle of Least Effort" suggests that communities of the past collected firewood from the closest possible available wooded area. If this theory were to be used it would assume that from the species collected the woodland surrounding the site would consist of oak-ash woodland in dryland areas (usually away from the sites) and alder-carr fen in areas close to the sites. Whilst this can be used as the basic theory, other variables affecting wood collection must be taken into account (Prins and Shackleton 1992:632). These include:

- 1) *Selection of particular species in favour of others within the woodland*

Oak, ash and elm were likely to have been deliberately selected as fuel to use in a hearth/furnace (used to heat stones for burnt mound activity) as they are considered long lasting and effective fuels (Stuijts 2005:141 and 143) so it is likely they were preferentially searched for and harvested and would have a higher percentage representation within the charcoal assemblage.

2) *Deliberately cultivated species*

The evidence of hazel and alder coppicing during the Bronze Age is another variable, which by altering and managing the environment would have increased the amount of available wood therefore its representation within the charcoal assemblages.

3) *Differential preservation of charcoal/non-uniform survival of charcoal over time*

Preservation rate of charcoal can be affected by a number of variables, for example

- a) Mechanical abrasion on a site with stony subsoil may cause the charcoal fragments to be broken into smaller unidentifiable fragments.
- b) Two identical pieces of wood may fragment into different numbers of charcoal fragments when burnt. Some, all or none of these may be recovered from the archaeological record which would affect possible woodland reconstructions.
- c) The overall heat of the fire may cause the wood to turn to ash and not be represented at all in the archaeological record (Asouti and Austin, 2005:1-5).

As a result of these variables it is not possible to infer from the fragment counts obtained the percentages/numbers of each of these species within the local environment. However, based on the assumption that communities will collect wood from the closest possible source (Scholtz 1986) and, in particular, the collection of economically less important kindling fuel wood (which was most likely obtained from the area close to the site), the charcoal assemblage does suggest that the local vegetation throughout the Bronze Age would have consisted of alder-carr fen in the immediate vicinity of the sites due to their wetland location. There was, however, a large assemblage of charcoal from species indicative of dryland areas which indicate the presence of oak-ash woodland on raised areas/slopes close to the sites.

Alder-carr woodland

The evidence of alder-carr fen woodland indicates a damp to waterlogged environment close to the burnt mound sites. This type of woodland would have consisted of alder, willow and poplar are all trees which thrive in waterlogged and damp soils, particularly in areas close to streams or with a high water table (McVean 1953:451, Stuijts 2005:143 and Cutler and Gale 2000:190). Viburnum and elder are both understory shrubby plants/small trees which grow in damp, waterlogged soils again adjacent to streams, lakes and in areas with a high water table (Stuijts 2005:145; Aitkinson and Aitkinson 2002:897). Birch is a tree which can tolerate both dry and damp soils and would most likely be located in marginal areas between the damp, waterlogged soil and drier areas, upslope from the burnt mound sites (Stuijts 2005:140).

Oak-Ash woodland

The large assemblage of dryland wood species indicates the presence of an oak-ash woodland, close to the burnt mound sites. This would have consisted of oak, ash and elm trees which would be the dominant large tree species (Cutler and Gale 2000:120, 205, Stuijts 2005:145). On the marginal areas of oak-ash woodlands or in clearings, yew, rowan, hazel, hawthorn, crab apple, wild/bird cherry and blackthorn all thrive. These species are all lower level woodland species and will grow in shaded conditions, however, they are usually located where there is a higher light availability to allow flowers and fruits to develop (Stuijts 2005:142, 144; Cutler and

Gale 2000:88, 183, 196). Traveller's joy is an understory shrub plant which clings to trees within oak woodlands to grow (Cutler and Gale 2000:80).

Conclusion

The archaeological features excavated from the N18 burnt mound sites have provided a rich assemblage of charcoal which allows an interesting insight into the industrial activities of the Bronze Age community. The charcoal remains identified from all burnt mound features (troughs, burnt mounds, burnt spreads, pits, gullies, wooden structures) represented firing debris from the fuel used in hearths to heat stones. These stones would then have been used either to heat/boil water within troughs on site.

The fuel used to heat the stones appears to have been exploited from alder-carr fen woodland consisting of alder, willow, poplar, viburnum and birch, and oak-ash woodland consisting of oak, ash, elm, hazel, yew, rowan, hawthorn, crab apple, wild/bird cherry, blackthorn and traveller's joy. The oak, ash and elm would most likely have provided the main fuels for the fire as they provide long-lasting heat at relatively high temperatures. The remaining species were likely to have been used as kindling material for the fire.

There are several variables that affect the reconstruction of local woodland using charcoal assemblages; however, if the charcoal were to be used as a 'presence' indicator it can be assumed that as the fuel wood (in particular kindling material) was usually selected from local woodlands. These charcoal remains have also made it possible to suggest that the woodland in the close vicinity to the N18 burnt mound sites would have consisted of both alder-carr fen in waterlogged areas close to the sites and oak-ash climax community woodland upslope/on higher ground.

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Appendix

Table 8: Charcoal species identified from E3715 Ballyline 3, Co Clare.

Sample Number			1	2
Fill Number			C4	C5
Cut Number			C3	N/A
Family	Species	Common Name		
Betulaceae	<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	5	17
	<i>Alnus glutinosa /Corylus avellana</i>	Alder/hazel	44	37
Fagaceae	<i>Betula</i> spp	Birch	1	
	<i>Quercus robur/ petraea</i>	Pedunculate/sessile oak	46	29
Oleaceae	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Common/European Ash	3	14
Roseaceae	<i>Maloideae</i> spp (<i>Crateagus monogyna/Sorbus</i> spp/ <i>Malus sylvestris</i>)	Hawthorn/rowan/ crab apple	1	
	cf <i>Crateagus monogyna</i>	cf hawthorn		2
Ulmaceae	<i>Ulmus glabra</i>	Elm		1
		Indeterminate	6	2
Total fragments identified:			100	100

*NB – All plant macrofossil material is carbonised unless otherwise stated.

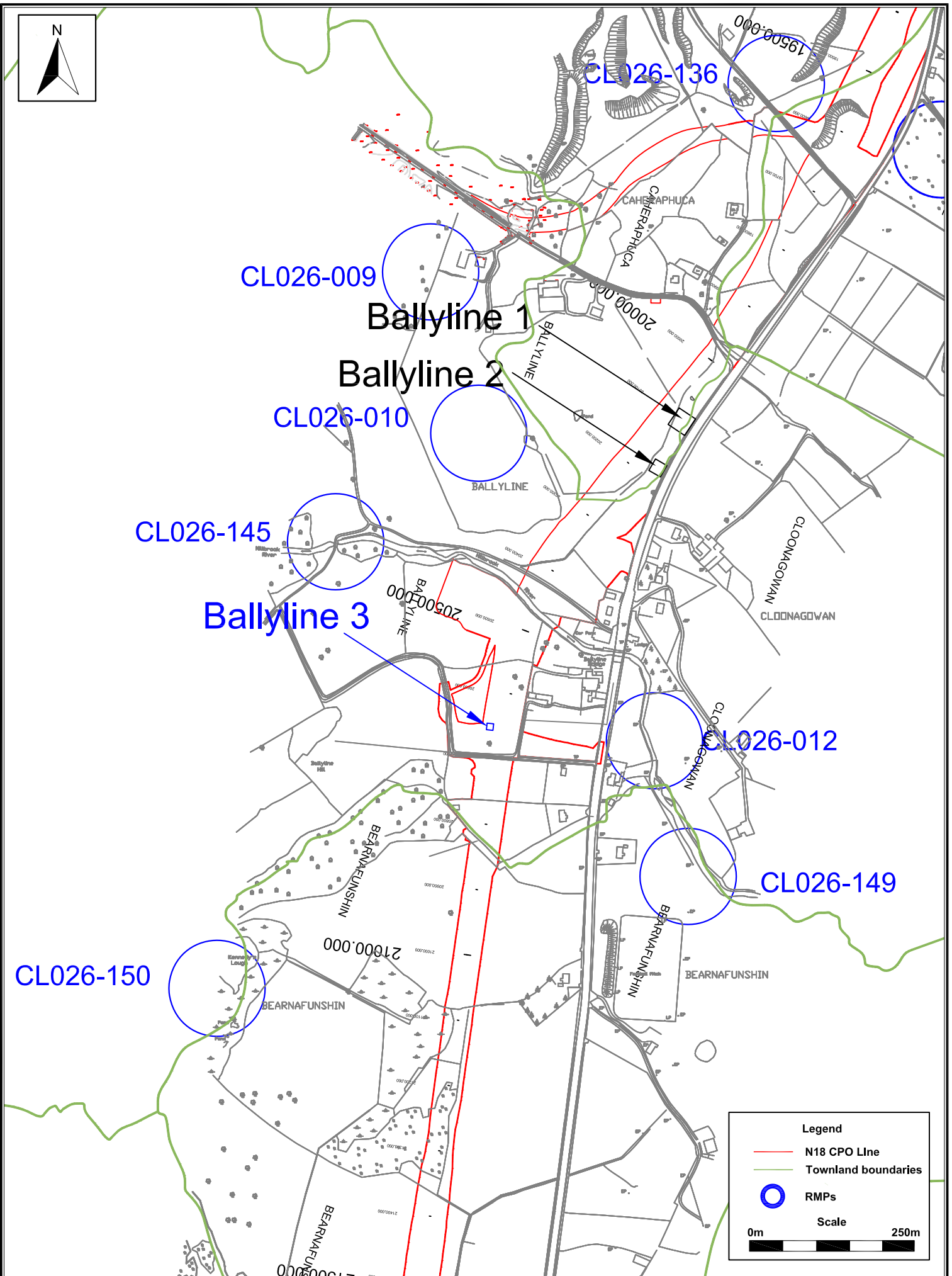
APPENDIX 3 LIST OF RMP SITES IN AREA

RMP No	Description
CL026-009	Earthwork
CL026-010	Earthwork
CL026-012	Mill unclassified
CL026-047	Earthwork
CL026-048	Ringfort Cashel
CL026-053	Ringfort Cashel
CL026-058	Ringfort
CL026-136	<i>Fulacht Fiadh</i>
CL026-137	<i>Fulacht Fiadh</i>
CL026-138	<i>Fulacht Fiadh</i>
CL026-145	Water mill
CL026-149	Burnt Mound
CL026-170	<i>Fulacht Fiadh</i>
CL026-179	Burnt Mound
CL026-180	Excavation miscellaneous*
CL026-186001	Ringditch
CL026-186002	Cremation pit
CL026-186003	Excavation miscellaneous*
CL026-186004	Cremation pit

See Figure 2 for location.

APPENDIX 4 LIST OF N18 GORT TO CRUSHEEN SCHEME SITE NAMES

Site Name	Ministerial Direction No.	NMS Registration Number	Site Type
Drumminacloghaun 1	A044	E3720	Burnt mound
Ballyboy 1	A044	E3719	Ringditch
Ballyboy 2	A044	E3718	Ringditch
Curtaun	A044	E3721	Burnt mounds and early medieval cereal kilns
Rathwilladoon 2 & 3	A044	E3656	Prehistoric settlement
Rathwilladoon 4	A044	E3655	Burnt mound
Rathwilladoon 5	A044	E3657	Charcoal production kiln
Gortavoher 1	A044	E3904	Burnt mound
Monreagh 1 & 2	A044	E3712	Burnt mound
Monreagh 3	A044	E4037	Burnt mounds
Derrygarriff 1	A044	E3716	Burnt mound
Derrygarriff 2	A044	E3711	Metal production site
Derrygarriff 3	A044	E3710	Burnt mound
Sranagalloon 1	A044	E3713	Burnt mound
Sranagalloon 2/Site 146	A044	E3714	Enclosure
Sranagalloon 3	A044	E3897	Burnt mound
Gortaficka 1 & 2	A044	E3898	Burnt mounds
Clooneen 1	A044	E3722	Burnt mound
Caheraphuca 1	A044	E3654	Burnt mound
Caheraphuca 3 - 12	A044	E3653	Burnt mounds
Ballyline 1 & 2	A044	E3717	Burnt mounds
Ballyline 3	A044	E3715	Prehistoric pit



Legend

- N18 CPO Line
- Townland boundaries
- RMPs

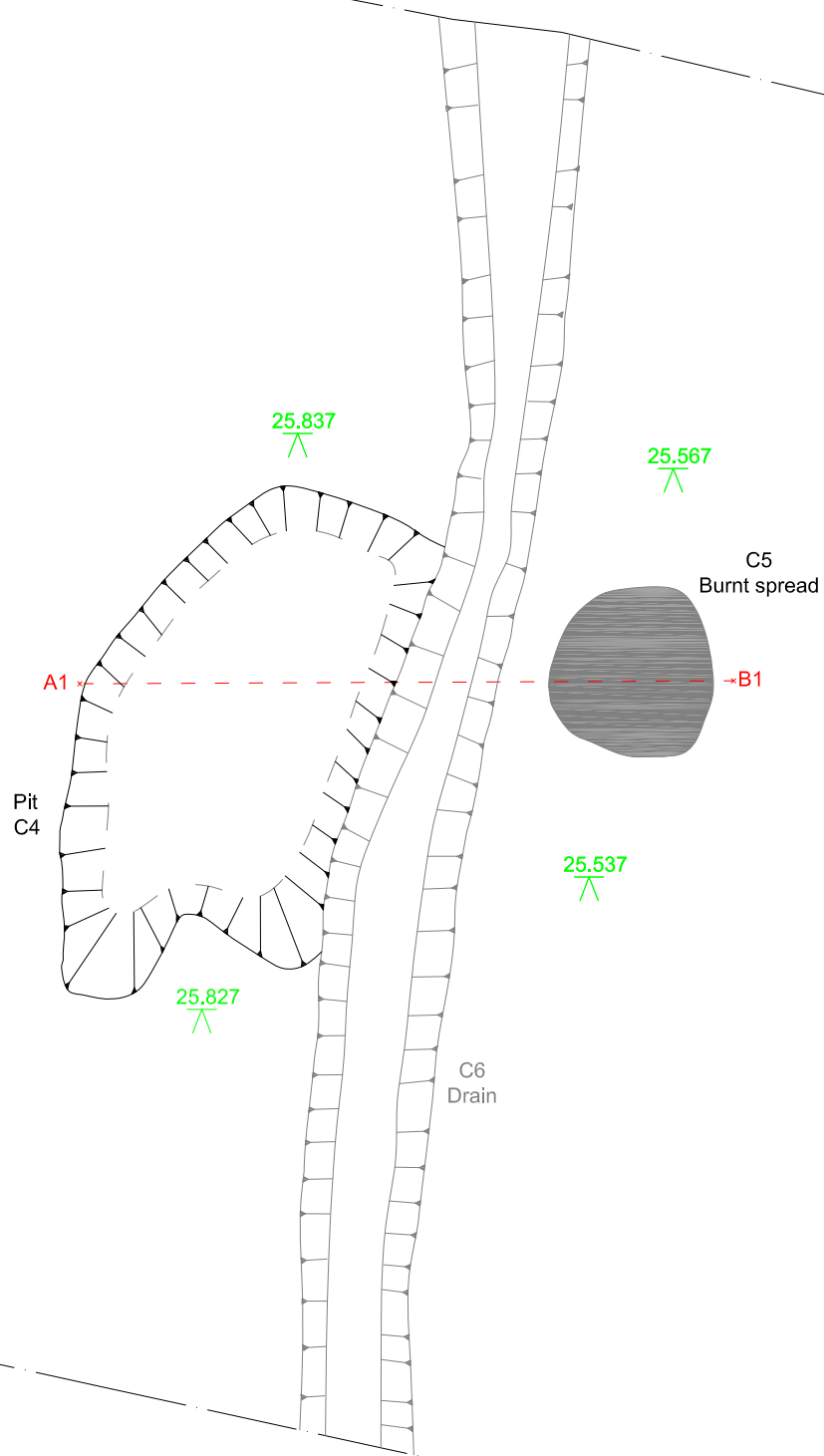
Scale

0m 250m

IAC Irish Archaeological Consultancy	Title: E3715 Ballyline 3 showing Recorded Monuments with OSI background	Scale: 1:10,000 @ A4
	Project: N18 Gort to Crusheen	Date: 18/11/09
	Client: Galway County Council	Produced by: G Kearney
		Job No: J2440
		Figure No: 2



Limit of excavation



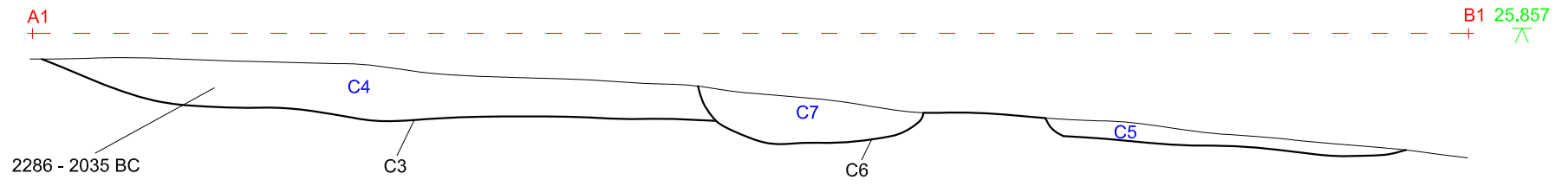
Scale 0m 2.5m

Legend

- Break of slope
- Sections
- Cut numbers
- Burnt mound deposits
- Stone
- Levels - metres OD

IAC Irish Archaeological Consultancy	Title:	E3715 Ballyline 3 post excavation plan of burnt spread C5 and ditch C6	Scale:	1:50 @ A4
	Project:	N18 Gort to Crusheen	Date:	18/11/09
	Client:	Galway County Council	Produced by:	G Kearney
			Job No:	J2440
			Figure No:	3

South facing section of C3, C6



Legend	
Cxx	Cut numbers
Cxx	Fill numbers
	Stone
#	Charcoal
xx.xx	Levels - metres OD



Title:	E3715 Ballyline 3 north facing section of ditch C6, hollow C3 and spread C5	Scale:	1:20 @ A4
Project:	N18 Gort to Crusheen	Date:	18/11/09
Client:	Galway County Council	Produced by:	G Kearney
		Job No:	J2440
		Figure No:	4