

15.1 Introduction

The information provided in this Chapter was provided by Cultural Resource Development Services Ltd.

The main purpose of the archaeology and cultural heritage section of the EIS is to assess the importance of the receiving archaeological and historical environment in the vicinity of the proposed development at Pass of Kilbride, County Westmeath. This is in addition to assessing the impact of this proposed development on the surrounding environment.

The study included the total area of land owned by Thorntons Recycling at this location, which includes parts of Enniscoffey and Pass of Kilbride Townlands.

15.2 Study methodology

For the purpose of setting the proposed development within its wider archaeological and cultural heritage landscape, and to assess the archaeological potential of the site, a comprehensive paper survey of all available archaeological, historical and cartographic sources was undertaken.

The study also included a field assessment which was carried out in August 2003.

15.3 Baseline Survey

15.3.1 Recorded archaeological sites and monuments

The Record of Historic Sites and Monuments was consulted for the relevant parts of Co. Westmeath. This is a list of archaeological sites known to the National Monuments Service. The relevant files for these sites contain details of documentary sources and aerial photographs, early maps, OS memoirs, OPW Archaeological Survey notes and other relevant publications. These were studied in the Sites and Monuments Records Office. All sites within a radius of c. 1.5km of the proposed development were identified. These monuments are listed in Appendix 1 and Figure 15.1.

15.3.2 Recorded archaeological finds

The topographical files in the National Museum of Ireland were consulted to determine if any archaeological artefacts had been recorded from the area. This is the National archive of all known finds recorded by the National Museum. It relates primarily to artefacts but also includes references to monuments and has a unique archive of records of previous excavations. Other published catalogues of prehistoric material were also studied: Raftery (1983 - Iron Age antiquities), Eogan (1965; 1993; 1994 - bronze swords, Bronze Age hoards and goldwork), Harbison (1968; 1969a; 1969b - bronze axes, halberds and daggers) and the Irish Stone Axe Project Database (Archaeology Dept., U.C.D.). All townlands within the study area were assessed. There are no archaeological finds from this area.

15.3.3 Previous Excavations

The excavation bulletin website (www.excavations.ie) was consulted to identify any previous excavations that may have been carried out within the study area. This database contains summary accounts of all the excavations carried out in Ireland from 1985 to 2001. There are no previous excavations in this area.

15.3.4 Aerial Photographs

Aerial photographs of the site of the proposed development, provided by the client, were assessed. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted.

15.3.5 Historical research

Primary historical sources consulted included Griffiths Valuation, Lewis Topographical Dictionary and local Archaeological and Historical Journals.

15.3.6 Archaeological and Historical Background

Prehistory (c. 7000 BC - AD 500)

There is no evidence of recorded archaeological finds or monuments representing activity in the Prehistoric period in the townland of Enniscoffey. However, a funerary monument known as a barrow is approximately 1.5km to the south of the study area in the townland of Pass of Kilbride (WM034:004). Barrows are constructed predominantly of earth and are often reduced to low embankments or subsurface features due to the erosion and agricultural practices in the intervening years since their construction. The material is likely to have covered a single burial, though without excavation it is difficult to assess whether a burial and associated grave goods remains at this location.

Early Medieval Period (c. AD 500 - 1170)

The area in which Enniscoffey is situated, the barony of Fartullagh, is a territory that has existed on record since the Early Medieval Period and no doubt earlier still. To the south of the site lies An Slí Mhór, the 'great road' - an esker that stretches across the middle of the country, linking the east and west through the great expanses of bog that dominate the topography of the midlands. Fartullagh is an island of land surrounded by expanses of bog on the northern, southern and eastern sides and An Slí Mór, Lough Ennell and the River Brosna (a tributary of the River Shannon to the west). At either end of the barony are passes through the bog, the Pass of Kilbride and what is now known as Tyrrells Pass. The barony of Fartullagh gets its name from the 'Fír Tullach' - 'the men of the mounds' - in reference to the raised homesteads in which the people lived - ringforts. The Fear Tullach were the Ua Dubhlach - the O' Dooley's - who controlled the area until the 6th century when the Uí Neil took over the territory. They were descendants of Fiacha, descendant of Niall of the Nine Hostages. Thus they were known as Cinel Fiacha. The only changes that they made to the area was to take the tithes or taxes that would have been due to Tara, thus the Ua Dubhlach remained in Fartullagh. The Cinel Fiach were beaten by Clann Chomáin in the 8th century at the Battle of Dún Bile, probably at Rathconrath, east of Fartullagh.

The site, along with the rest of Co. Westmeath is an area of high ringforts density. Ringforts are an indigenous type of defended homesteads built as circular, occasionally significantly raised, platforms, in use for a period spanning perhaps up to 1,000 years around the beginning of the first millennium AD. The site of one ringfort is located immediately to the northeast of the proposed development (WM027:065). A number of other monuments in the area may represent the remains of degraded ringforts removed by land improvements in the region. The construction and frequent distribution in the area is attributed to, among other things the nature of the soil coverage. The high density zone of North Midlands is marked by highly productive grey brown podzolic soils contrasting with the lowlying boulder clays of low density Leinster. The North Midlands correspond with the limit of Anglo-Norman occupation; however this does not seem to have affected the survival of these Gaelic settlements (Stout, 1998).

Another type of settlement in use around the same time was the crannóg. There are a number of crannógs recorded from the nearby Lough Ennell, 10km to the west of the site. Lough Ennell was the centre of political organisation in the area from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD. The settlement evidence around Lough Ennell ranges from ringforts to crannógs to monastic sites with evidence for metal working. Historic sources indicate that the Clann Cholmáin kings of the Southern Uí Neill moved from the royal seat at Uisneach, a vast hill fort situated about 20 kilometres, west, north-west, from Enniscoffey, to a crannóg on Cró Inis, an island off the south western shore of Lough Ennell. The Clann Cholmáin are also associated with a large, multi-vallate ringfort, Dún na Sciath (Dysart), located on the neighbouring dry-land (O'Sullivan, 1998).

Máelsheachnaill, a king of the southern Uí Neill in the 9th century, is recorded having killed the Norse leader Turgéis in Loch Ennell. The Uí Neill were instrumental in the frequent defeat of the invading Norse during the 9th century. The Fear Tullach supported the Uí Neill in fighting the Danes. There are six silver hoards found around Lough Ennell that suggest Viking activity in the area. However, historic sources record that the area remained resolutely Gaelic. The Norse (Vikings) who made raids into the area never established settlements inland. These hoards comprised of ingots and, in one case, coins and ornaments. The metal from these hoards was analysed, showing that they all originated from a similar, if not the same, source. One of these hoards contained material that was dateable to the early 10th century. The high status of the material in these hoards suggests that they are associated with the royal sites at Dún na Sciath and Cró Inis (Ryan et al, 1984).

Medieval Period (c. AD 1169 - 1539)

The Norman invasion and subsequent subinfeudation of the eastern portion of the country brought the Tyrrells to the area. Sir Hugh Tyrrell came to Ireland in 1169 with Hugh de Lacy. De Lacy was granted lands in Meath and Tyrrell was subsequently granted the lands of Fartullagh. A footnote in the Book of Rights indicates that the Ua Dubhlach (Fear Tullagh) were driven out of Fartullagh by the Tyrrells (Egan, 1986). His son, Gerald was appointed seneschal of Co. Meath and the lands remained with the family until the Cromwellian invasion. The Tyrrell stronghold was at Castlelost (Rochfortbridge). They also briefly held a manor at Newtown - this area was controlled by the Magheoghans by the 13th century. The territory of the Tyrrells expanded quickly and came to include a castle at Castleknock. This was taken by Bruce in the 14th century. It was during this period that a number of castles were built in Fartullagh, including that at Tyrrellspass (1411). The Tyrrells remained English and supported the monarchy until the 17th century and the Cromwellian invasion. During the centuries of their rule, they frequently went to battle with neighbouring rulers including the Berminghams of Carbury, the O'Kellys and the O'Donnells. The midlands were under frequent attacks by the O'Connor Faile around the 1530s, Tyrrell opposed the O'Connors and maintained the Kings rule. The Tyrrells land was confiscated during the Cromwellian Plantation and Thomas Tyrrell was transplanted to Connauaght.

The Late Medieval to Modern Period (c. AD 1540 - 1900)

The Smyths of Gaybrook and Co. Westmeath in general would seem to have bought their way in to Ireland by buying properties that some of the Cromwell and Williamite Planters were not able to succeed with. They originally came into Ireland from Yorkshire in the 1630's and settled in Lisburn Co. Antrim. Having done well in business there, particularly as tanners, they bought estates in Co. Westmeath as well as other places such as at Drumcree, Portlick, Ballinagall, Glenanea. In the 18th century, Robert Smyth of Gaybrook owned some 6,300 acres in Westmeath. His main estate was at Gaybrook, a big walled demesne with all the trappings of the period. Gaybrook is in the parish of Enniscoffey. The estate has now been broken up into small farms, but the walls remain - while the mansion was demolished in the early 1980's.

A battle was fought at Gaybrook, during the Williamite war (1690) and the site is mentioned by Lewis in his Topographical Dictionary of Ireland (1837).

Lewis (1837) describes Enniscoffey as a parish, in the barony of Fartullagh, 5 miles from Mullingar. It had, at this time, 939 inhabitants. The parish comprised 4167 acres, principally of pasture with a large amount of bog. The principle seat was at Gaybrook Demesne, then residence of Mrs. Smith. The church was built in 1818. The primary school housed 45 children at this time. The glebe house, built on 16 acres, was erected in 1821 at a cost of £650.

Archaeological significance of the site

The townlands of Enniscoffey and Pass of Kilbride, in the barony of Fartullagh is dominated by lowland boggy terrain. There are no recorded archaeological sites or monuments in the area to be developed, and nothing of archaeological significance was noted in aerial photographs of the site or during the field survey.

The area of land owned by Thorntons Recycling is mostly forested. It is likely that any archaeological activity in the area would have been confined to the raised areas of gravelly deposits etc., above the low lying and marshy terrain associated with the vast tracts of bog in this area. Although nothing of archaeological interest was noted at surface level, there is also the possibility that sub-surface remains occur.

15.4 Field Assessment

The field assessment was carried out on the 19th of August by Bairbre Mullee MA and John Swift. The day was mixed with cloud and sunshine. The plantation is nine years old and the trees are almost mature enough to be harvested.

The site of the proposed development is an area of agricultural land planted with barley (Fig. 2). The field is bounded by large wet ditches, c. 3m wide and 1.5m deep. The field itself is gently undulating. The soil is black and peaty. The north western edge of the field runs into a small area of raised bogs that has been machine cut recently. There is a drain running from the north of the site bisecting this area.

The proposed line of the access road was walked (Fig. 2). The barley crop (as yet un-harvested) made assessment difficult but it is likely that the slight undulations noted in the northern portion of the area of the field in crop are indicative of the more water saturated land, corresponding to the area of raised bog immediately north of these.

The remainder of the landholding is a forestry plantation. The plantation is mostly of coniferous trees, up to c. 5m in height, planted in rows running N-S. In the west of the plantation, there is an area of deciduous trees. These appear to be of mixed type and are 5-7m in height. Access is extremely difficult and visibility is nil. In the area of deciduous planting, visibility is not impeded by dense tree growth but long grass and compacted decaying vegetation make an assessment of possible ground features impossible. In the centre of the plantation the maturity and density of the trees made assessment impossible. Nothing of archaeological significance was noted.

15.5 Potential Impact of the Proposed Development

The results of the field survey indicate that, nothing of archaeological interest survives on the surface of the proposed site. However, the topographical context of the site indicates the potential for archaeology. There is extensive supporting evidence to indicate that should any material remain undisturbed in the boggy deposits that underlie the plantation, it may survive in unusually good condition (see extensive publications by the Irish Archaeological Wetland Unit). The anaerobic nature of the bog environment means that the survival rate of any archaeological material, particularly wood, leather and other organic material, is exceptionally high compared with other 'land' contexts. In addition, material from the Mesolithic period may survive under the bog, from a period that predates the growth of the bog. This may also be said of the adjoining agricultural land.

15.6 Do-nothing scenario

Under this scenario there would be no impact on Cultural Heritage as the site would remain undisturbed.

15.7 Mitigation Measures

As noted above, although the proposed development does not impact on any known archaeological sites or monuments, there is a possibility that previously unrecorded material or finds will be encountered during ground disturbance associated with this development. Thus it is recommended that a programme of archaeological assessment should be undertaken as follows:

15.7.1 Monitoring

Depending on the level of ground disturbance envisaged in the development of the proposed tunnel composting plant, monitoring (by a suitably qualified archaeologist(s)) may be required during all or part the ground disturbance phases of the development.

Logistics

Should any archaeological features or material being uncovered during the course of the archaeological monitoring, any phase of the construction works in this area should cease immediately, and the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government should be informed. Time must be allowed for a suitably qualified archaeologist(s) to inspect and assess any such material. If it is established that archaeologically significant material is present full archaeological excavation and recording will be required. Adequate financial and logistical provision should be made for any such archaeological excavation, related post excavation, testing and/or conservation work and for publication of the results.

Please note that the recommendations given here are subject to the approval of the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

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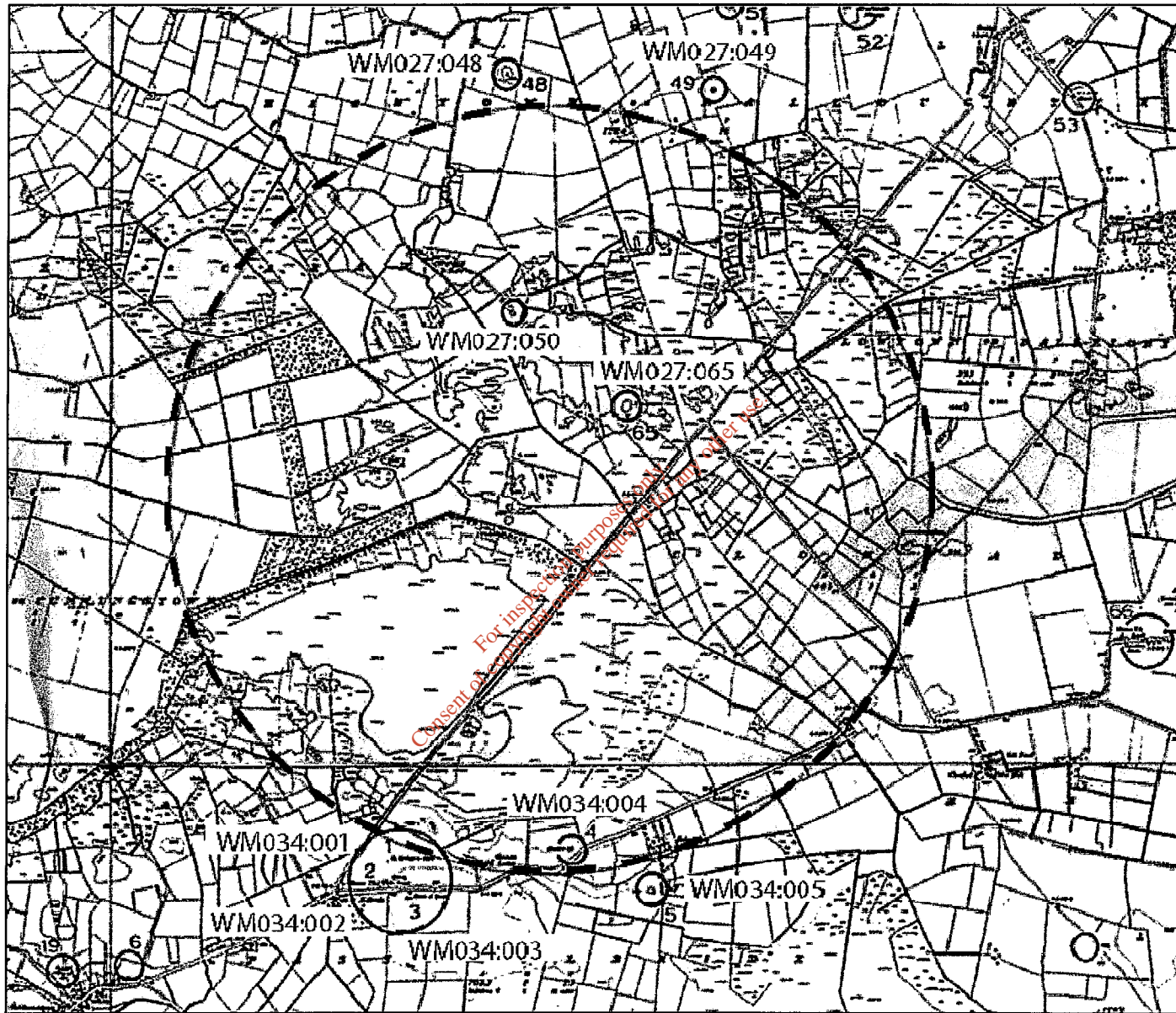


FIGURE 15.1 ARCHAEOLOGY

NOTES:
1. Based on figure provided by Cultural Resource
Development Services, May 2004