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**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works Project,
Creevagh Beg, Ballymahon, Co. Longford**

19E0446

An archaeological assessment report

for

Longford County Council

Graham Hull

TVAS Ireland Ltd

J19/27

August 2019

ITM 615825 756895

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Summary

Site name: N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works Project, Creevagh Beg, Ballymahon, Co. Longford

Townland: Creevagh Beg

Parish: Noughaval

Barony: Shrule

County: Longford

Planning Ref. No: Part 8

Client: Longford County Council, Aras an Chontae, Great Water Street, Co. Longford, N39 NH56

Landowner: Longford County Council, Aras an Chontae, Great Water Street, Co. Longford, N39 NH56

National Grid Reference: ITM 615825 756895

Naturally occurring geology: Orangey brown clay (glacial till) at the east and pale yellow to grey sandy gravel (alluvium) at the west

TVAS Ireland Job No: J19/27

Licence No: 19E0446

Licence Holder: Graham Hull

Fieldwork: Graham Hull and Katherine Hurley

Site activity: Testing

Date of fieldwork: 30th and 31st July 2019

Date of report: August 2019

Report author: Graham Hull

Summary of results: Archaeological testing of a greenfield area in advance of a roundabout and site compound construction in Creevagh Beg townland, Ballymahon, Co. Longford revealed no archaeological features, deposits or artefacts

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The primary records (written, drawn and photographic) are currently held at TVAS Ireland Ltd, Ahish, Ballinruan, Crusheen, Co. Clare.

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Report edited/checked by: Kate Taylor August 2019

**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works Project,
Creevagh Beg, Ballymahon, Co. Longford
An Archaeological Assessment Report
19E0446**

Graham Hull

Report J19/27a

Introduction

This report documents the results of archaeological test trenching undertaken in advance of improvement works to existing roads and junctions within the town of Ballymahon, Co. Longford (ITM 615825 756895) (Figs 1-2).

The following Government publications set out many of the procedures relating to planning/development and archaeology:

Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (DAHGI 1999a)

Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation (DAHGI 1999b)

Archaeology and Development: Guidelines for Good Practice for Developers (ICOMOS 2000)

Review of Archaeological Assessment and Monitoring Procedures in Ireland (Lambrick and Doyle 2000).

The planning background

Longford County Council, Aras an Chontae, Great Water Street, Co. Longford, N39 NH56, intend to carry out improvement works to existing roads and junctions within the town of Ballymahon, Co. Longford. The works involve the improvement of two T-junctions; at Nally's Corner, the junction of the Edgeworth Road (N55) and Main Street (R392), towards the centre of the town and further to the south-east, the junction of the Athlone (N55) and the Mullingar Road (R392), as well as the existing road between the two junctions. It is proposed to replace the latter T-junction with a new roundabout. The majority of the construction activity will take place within the horizontal and vertical extents of the existing road, along with some limited greenfield construction activity at the proposed roundabout site. A site compound will also be built adjacent to the roundabout site.

Archaeological testing was proposed by the local authority in the greenfield area adjacent to the footprint of the proposed roundabout. following discussions with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) Project Archaeologist Martin Jones.

Location, topography and geology

The improvement works are located mostly within the townland of Ballymahon, parish of Noughaval/Shrulle and barony of Shrulle/Rathcline and the area to be tested is located in the neighbouring townland of Creevagh Beg, parish of Noughaval and barony of Shrulle, Co. Longford (project centre ITM 615644 757072, works centre ITM 615825 756895) (Figs 1 and 2).

The improvement works are located in the southern part of Ballymahon town, mostly within Ballymahon townland, within the roadway between Nally's Corner, the junction of the Edgeworth Road (N55) and Main Street (R392), towards the centre of the town, and at the junction of the Athlone (N55) and the Mullingar Road (R392) further to the south-east, on the southern side of the Inny River.

There will also be limited construction work in Creevagh Beg townland to the south of Ballymahon townland, in a greenfield area (Plates 1 and 2) at the site of a proposed roundabout at the junction of the Athlone (N55) and the Mullingar Road (R392).

The archaeological works took place in this greenfield area in Creevagh Beg townland, a rough pasture field on the southern bank of the Inny River adjacent to a modern road bridge.

This proposed development area is approximately rectangular and occupies an area of 1,985m², lying between 40m and 50m above Ordnance Datum (OD). The land plot is divided into two approximately equal parts by a north-east to south-west aligned stone field boundary wall. The western part is approximately 1m lower than the eastern part. Both parts are very gradually inclined downwards from east to west towards the river.

Observed natural geological deposits were orangey brown clay (glacial till) at the east and pale yellow to grey sandy gravel (alluvium) at the west.

Archaeological and historical background

A search of documentary and cartographic sources was made. Information was gathered from the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR), the *Excavations* database and publications (Bennett 1987-2010), and from other available sources.

Ballymahon, from the Irish *Baile Uí Mhatháin*, means ‘townland, town or homestead of Mahon’, supposedly from Mahon, King of Thomond who is said to have defeated Fergal, son of Ruarc, in a great battle here in 960 AD (Lewis 1837; www.logainm.ie). Creevagh Beg translates as *An Chraobhach Bheag*. Creevagh means ‘the branchy place’ (Joyce 1923) while beag means ‘small’, www.logainm.ie).

Cartographic sources

Ballymahon is first recorded as a group of cottages on the east bank of the River Inny on William Petty’s Down Survey Map of 1654 (NLI; www.downsurvey.tcd.ie).

The first detailed cartographic source available for Ballymahon is the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1837 (Fig. 3). The map depicts Ballymahon townland north of the River Inny and Creevagh Beg townland south of the river. The settlement of Ballymahon (modern-day RMP LF027-003006) is shown in the centre of Ballymahon townland, centred along the route of a wide north-west to south-east aligned street (modern day Main Street/R392). The route of the modern-day N55 branches off the main street to the north-east. Buildings fronting narrow, and sometimes quite elongated, plots with formal gardens line either side of the main street. Public buildings include a Roman Catholic chapel at the north-western end of the street, a market house and school in the northern half of the street, a post-office in the southern half and another church (LF027-003001, LF027-003002) and a police barracks at the south-eastern end of the street. A corn mill is shown on the northern bank of the River Inny (a townland, parish and barony boundary) and *Ballymahon Bridge* (LF027-003003) is depicted spanning the river, with three islands illustrated within the wide river channel here. The rest of Ballymahon townland is rural and characterised by irregular-shaped fields with little of note to describe apart from a circular feature annotated as *Fort* (LF027-002) in the northern part. The town extends for a short section into the neighbouring townland of Creevagh Beg to the south where more buildings, within narrow elongated plots, also line the street south of the bridge. Creevagh Beg is rural in character but appears to be unenclosed for the most part, suggesting poor quality land. A sub-square enclosure along the north-south aligned road is annotated as *Old Tan Yard*. The route of the proposed works extends along the main street from north of the market house and down to the river, past the site of the church, police barracks and corn mill and the south beyond Ballymahon Bridge into Creevagh Beg townland. The site of the archaeological works is located directly south-east of Ballymahon Bridge, on the southern banks of the river. A long narrow building stands within this field fronting on the main road,

opposite the road junction. Another L-shaped building stands in the same field to the north-east and a small structure is shown against the river edge.

The 25” to the mile OS map of 1912-13 (Fig. 4) shows some changes in the years since the 1st Edition map. The church at the north-western end of Main Street is named *St Matthew’s*. A parochial house is shown south of the church and to the north there is a convent and an associated school. A graveyard is marked west of the convent. The market house has the additional annotation *Court House*. At the south-eastern end of the street the church and police building are still present but the corn mill is marked as disused and the area of the river immediately adjacent is illustrated as wet marshy ground, suggesting that without the mill water management features this area has silted up. New annotations elsewhere in the town include a graveyard adjacent to the church, a masonic hall, a school, two smithies and a dispensary. Within Creevagh Beg a building on the southern side of the street is annotated as *Inny View* and a smithy is depicted north of the street with a new building to the east annotated as *Creevaghbeg House*. The fort is still shown in the northern half of Ballymahon townland but is less circular in shape and no longer annotated. A Union Workhouse has been constructed in the northern bank of the river some distance outside the town to the south-west, including a Roman Catholic Church, two hospitals and a school. The rural part of Creevagh Beg is now characterised by irregular-shaped fields and the tan yard is still depicted but not annotated. The route of the proposed works remains relatively unchanged from the earlier map, however the site of the archaeological works shows some changes as all three buildings appear to have been removed and a north-east to south-west aligned field boundary divides the site.

The 1912 Ordnance Survey map at 6” to the mile (Fig. 5) is based on the same survey as the 25” map and shows no relevant change.

The current Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 2) shows that the centre of Ballymahon has more or less retained its 19th century layout and character but the edges of the town have expanded in a primarily linear fashion. At the roundabout site the land to the east of the current road layout is characterised by an area of tree plantation and west of the road there are no buildings shown.

Record of Monuments and Places / Sites and Monuments Record

Seven monuments or sub-monuments are listed on the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) and/or Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) in the vicinity of the proposal site and as shown on the departmental website (www.archaeology.ie; Fig. 5). The entirety of the proposed works is located within the Zone of Archaeological Potential (ZAP) for RMP LF027-003006 (historic town). Two of the monuments are unlocated. All of the monuments are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Sites and Monuments Record / Record of Monuments and Places monuments within 500m of site

SMR	Townland	Class	ITM	Distance from edge of site
LF027-002	Ballymahon	Ringfort- rath		400m N
LF027-003001	Ballymahon	Church		15m E
LF027-003002	Ballymahon	Graveyard		30m E
LF027-003003	Ballymahon	Bridge		0m
LF027-003004	Ballymahon	Castle - unclassified	n/a	unlocated
LF027-003005	Ballymahon	Water mill – unclassified	n/a	unlocated
LF027-003006	Ballymahon	Historic town		0m

The earliest site is likely to be the ringfort (LF027-002), a probable early medieval semi-defended farmstead. The remainder of the sites/monuments relate to the historic town. The earliest references to the town (LF027-003006) date to AD 1620 and refer to the castle, town, lands and water mill, of ‘Ballymahon’ (Irish Manuscripts Commission 1966). The castle (LF027-003004), currently unlocated,

is recorded first in the early 15th century (Ó hInnse 1947, 164). Mason (1819, vol. 3, 338) notes that at the time of the 1641 Rebellion it is described as a 'strong castle, near a ford over the Inny, and near the present bridge (LF027-003003)', which had 'been long since taken down, the cellars of it remain under a house erected on its ruins'. The water mill (LF027-003005) is also unlocated. Archaeological testing undertaken on the northern banks of the river in 1999, close to church and graveyard (LF027-003001, LF027-003002), encountered only the backfilled remains of the millrace associated with the extant (disused) corn mill (Byrne 1999). There are references to a bridge over the River Inny in the 1650s, described as a wooden bridge in the 1680s (Gillespie and Moran 1991, 209; Whelan 2001, 6). The original stone bridge dates at least to the early 18th century or even earlier. The Church of Ireland church was built in 1723. Legible headstones within the graveyard date to the 19th and 20th centuries (www.archaeology.ie).

Previous excavations

The results of archaeological investigations in Ireland are published in summary form in *Excavations* (Bennett 1987-2010) and online at www.excavations.ie. A search of the database was made for Ballymahon town, the townlands of Ballymahon, Creevagh Beg and the neighbouring townlands of Creevagh More, Clooncallow, Ballymulvey, Ballybranigan, Drinan, Moygh, Castlecore, Rathmore and Cartron.

One entry is recorded for Ballymahon. Archaeological testing was carried out at a proposed development in 1999 adjacent to the church and graveyard (LF027-003001, LF027-003002) on the northern bank of the River Inny. There were two mill buildings on the site, an extant cornmill and associated kiln/store. Three trenches were excavated. The backfilled remains of a mill-race associated with the extant mill, were uncovered. No other features or finds of archaeological significance were found (Byrne 1999).

Unpublished testing prior to the construction of a housing development to the rear of buildings on the southern side of Main Street in 2005 (O'Donnchadha 2005) and subsequent unlicensed monitoring of associated groundworks (Doherty and Doherty 2005) found nothing of archaeological significance.

Archaeological testing and excavation took place approximately 4km east of Ballymahon town in advance of construction of the Center Parcs facility in the townland of Newcastle and Forgnay within the grounds of the former Newcastle Demesne. Seven prehistoric sites, a medieval pit and a number of 19th and 20th century demesne features were revealed and subsequently excavated. The sites included burnt stone spreads, some of which were dated to the Early Bronze Age. Another Bronze Age site contained a hearth, post-holes and two pits. The medieval pit produced evidence of *in situ* burning. Post-medieval features included the site of Forgnay House and well, estate kennels, stone culverts, a drinking trough, footpath and drains (Clancy 2019).

In the wider landscape the most prominent evidence for activity and settlement in County Longford takes the form of toghers, or timber bog roadways or trackways. Two of the most significant of these are trackways found at Edercloon and Corlea, approximately 28km to the north-north-west and 8.5km to the north-west. In 1984 toghers were identified in Corlea and Derroghil townlands, with one in Corlea dated to the Iron Age. In the late 1980s an additional 40 trackways were found in Corlea, Derroghil and adjacent townlands and by 2008 that number had increased to over 100 (Raftery 1996). In 2006 a large number of trackways were found during archaeological investigations in advance of the N4 Dromod-Roosky Bypass. A total of 48 previously unknown wooden structures were found in an area measuring 170m by 30m wide, of which 26 were excavated. Fourteen of these sites were classified as toghers and five as platforms, dating to between the Neolithic and medieval period. Over 50 artefacts were found during the excavations, including the remains of wooden tubs, troughs, carved bowls and platters, two broken spear shafts, the remains of three wheels and other intricate wooden artefacts (Moore 2008).

Documentary sources

17th century sources

A land grant in 1620 to a James Mc William McFerrall included the 'castle, town and lands of Ballymahon' (Irish Manuscripts Commission 1966). The Civil Survey of 1654-56 records a mill and the 'ruines of a castle with some chimney houses and Irish creats, alsoe some chimney houses with Irish creats dispersed in several places' (Simington 1961, Vol. 10, 48). In 1682 the town is described as 'the market town called Ballymahon where there is a wooden bridge over the river' (Whelan 2001, 6).

19th and 20th century sources

The Ordnance Survey Field Name Books of the 1830s (www.longfordlibrary.ie) describe Ballymahon as follows:

It contains 276a. 1r. 29p., and is a flat country. Its roads and houses are in good repair. There is a good market held in the town every Thursday. It is the property of the Shouldham family, held by a deed for ever, & pays 25 1s. 4d. Co. Cess.

And Creevagh Beg as follows.

It contains 455 acres, all arable except 8 acres of water and part of Ballymahon Town. It belongs to Mr. Shuldham, held by a deed forever. Co. Cess - 35 18s. 4d.

Samuel Lewis, writing in the mid 19th century, describes Ballymahon town as a market and post-town containing 1081 inhabitants (Lewis 1837). The ancient castle is mentioned as is a bridge 'of five arches'. Lewis refers to a history of weaving in the town. The Royal Canal conveys passengers and goods to and from Dublin daily. A Thursday market is held and fairs on the last Thursday before Ash Wednesday and in May, August and November with the May fair regarded as one of the best in the province for cattle. A chief constabulary police force is stationed here and petty sessions are held weekly. Churches of the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland faith are also mentioned.

The 1855 Griffith Valuation records the following lessors on Main Street; John Shuldham, Ecclesiastical Commissioners, John Duigenan, Michael Dooner, Owen Maxwell, Joseph Flanagan, William Savage, Catherine Ratigan, Patrick Casey, Luke Egan, James Farlow, James McCormack, Mary Feeny, Matthew Lee, Reps. Thomas Bracken, Patrick McDonngh, Alice Murray, Thomas McGovern, Michael Gannon, Anne McHugh, Anthony Mannion, Eliza Higgins, Mary New, James Neill and Laurence Anthony, with John Shuldham listed as by far the dominant lessor. Fourteen properties are listed as vacant. Business/institutions include Henry Bevan Slator and Co., John McCann & Sons, Jas II McManus MD, Messrs M & M Murtagh, Walter Joyce and others, the National Board of Education and the Constabulary Force. Over 100 occupiers are listed, with the surnames, include Allen, Anderson, Anthony, Armstrong, Bannan, Bard, Brackan, Brennan, Bridges and Butler, Caffry, Callaran, Casey, Clancy, Cooney, Cronan, Cullen, Cummins, Daire, Dungan, Donohoe, Donnelly, Donnellan, Doran, Dowd, Dowdall, Downey, Egan, Farlow, Farrell, Fetherson, Flanagan, Finneran, Fox, Gannon, Geraghty, Geoghegan, Glennon, Grogan, Grumbley, Hanly, Hayden, Higgins, Hoare, Igo, Jordan, Keating, Kelly, Kenna, Kennedy, Kerrigan, King, Lanigan, Larkin, Lee, Lovett, Mahon, Maxwell, Matthews, , McCormack, McDermott, McDonogh, McGuinness, McHugh, Mee, Melody, Meyers, Moore, Moran, Mulvihill, Murray, Naughten, Neill, New, O'Hara, Quinn, Quin, Ratigan, Reynolds, Reilly, Richards, Savage, Scales, Sullivan, Sutton, Stamp, Sweeny, Toole, Vaughan, Walsh, Wilman, Wright, Yorke and York.

For that part of the town within Creevagh Beg townland the lessors are John Shuldham, James Atkinson, Peter Clarke, John Dignan, Robert Ganly, Edwin Sandys, Charles Gibson, Mary McGee and Michael Malin again with John Shuldham lister as the main lessor. There are approximately 70 occupiers; with surnames Anthony, Atkinson, Armstrong, Dr. Issac Bracken, Byrne, Burnford, Burns,

Cully, Cunningham, Daly, Davis, Donnellan, Dignan, Dillon, Doonagan, Doran, Dowdall, Farrell, Fenoran, Fox, Graham, Guy, Kelly, Johnston, Jones, Hyland, Kane, Keegan, Kelly, Kennedy, Kenny, Larkin, Lynam, McDaniel, Mahon, Malin, McManus, Mulvihill, Murray, Neal, O'Brien, Quinn, Priday, Powell, Savage, Slator, Shuldham, Sweeny, Vaughan, Walsh, Wright and Wynne along with three vacant properties. The lessor in the area of the proposed roundabout are listed as John Shuldham, Robert Ganly and Michael Malin with occupiers John Shuldham listed for the river and weir area. South of the river and west of the road Patrick Daly is listed as occupier of two houses, offices and land. The area directly south of the river and east of the road is listed as vacant and directly south is an area including a house occupied by John Kennedy.

The 1901 census enumerates over 900 individuals living in Ballymahon. That number had dropped to less than 400 by 1911.

Architectural heritage

Architectural heritage sites are recorded on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH) and the Record of Protected Structures (RPS). The RPS lists have a statutory basis and are created and maintained by each planning authority, forming part of the County/City Development Plans (Longford Co. Co. 2015-2021).

There are thirty-two listed NIAH sites located within 500m distance of the pipe route. Seventeen sites are located close to the proposed works (NIAH 13316004, 13316010, 13316012, 13316013, 13316014, 13316015, 13316016, 13316017, 13316018, 13316019, 13316020, 13316021, 13316022, 13316024, 13316027, 13316029 and 13316030). Most of the rest are located between 100m and 400m distance from the works. These sites are all listed in Table 2.

Table 2: NIAH sites within 500m of scheme

Reg. No	Name	Townland
13316003	Scoil Naisunta Naomh Colmcille	Drinan
13316004	House – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316005	Convent of Mercy, Ballymahon	Ballymahon
13316006	Youth Street – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316006	Youth Street – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316006	Youth Street – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316008	House – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316009	House – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316010	Ballymahon Market House, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316011	Halo Hair Salon, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316012	House – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316013	House – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316014	K.L. Laundrette & Dry Cleaners, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316015	Bank of Ireland, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316016	RIC barracks, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316017	Skelly's, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316018	House – Main Street	Ballymahon
13316019	St. Catherine's Church of Ireland Church, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316019	St. Catherine's Church of Ireland Church, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316020	House, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316020	House, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316021	Water pump, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316022	Water tower, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316023	Innyside, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316024	House, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316024	House, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg

Reg. No	Name	Townland
13316025	Masonic Lodge	Ballymahon
13316026	Creevaghbeg House, Ballymahon	Creevagh Beg
13316027	Fox's, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316028	Dean Egan Library, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316029	Claffey, Main Street	Ballymahon
13316030	Ballymahon Bridge	Ballymahon

Along Main Street, between 100m and 200m north-west of the proposed works, there is an early 20th century former national school, a mid 20th century house and an early 20th century library, on the southern side of the street. On the northern side of the street there is a late 19th to early 20th century former national school complex, a late 19th century Convent of Mercy and a late 19th century house. Further south, on the southern side of the street there is an early 19th century house.

Close to the line of the proposed works, there are buildings north and south of the street. South of the street they include Ballymahon Market House (1819-1826 AD), now a library archive, two early 19th century houses, now retail units, a late 19th century house, now a laundrette, and the mid 19th century Bank of Ireland building. On the opposite side of the street are five houses dating to between the early 18th and early 19th centuries. Further south, closer to the river, on the southern side of Main Street is the early 19th century Royal Irish Constabulary Barracks, also used as a garda station/constabulary barracks and on the opposite side of the street there is the early 19th century St Catherine's Church of Ireland Church, whilst further to the east is a mid 19th century Masonic lodge/hall. Ballymahon Bridge, straddling the River Inny, dates to the early 18th century and was renovated in the 1970s. On the southern side of the bridge and river there are two houses on the southern side of the street, dating to the early 19th century and early 20th century. On the opposite side of the street, there is an early 20th century water pump and further to the east is a mid 20th century water tower. The mid 19th century Creevaghbeg House is located further to the east.

Approximately 400m south-west of the route is the mid to late 19th century Innyside house.

Site visit

The site was visited by TII Archaeologist Martin Jones on 3rd May 2019 on behalf of Longford County Council. No previously unknown features – or any features of potential archaeological significance were noted during the inspection.

Discussion of archaeological and historical background

The proposed development site lies within an area of moderate to high archaeological potential. Early medieval activity is demonstrated by the ringfort north of the works and there is also a cluster of monuments and sites within the historic town, some of which are currently not closely located. In the wider landscape, prehistoric activity is attested by various archaeological investigations. There is potential within the town to uncover features or deposits associated with the castle, mill or other features associated with the historic town, or any other archaeology located close to the river.

The testing site occupies a plot immediately adjacent to the river and close to the bridge, it is also opposite the site of a corn mill shown on maps since the mid 19th century. There were three buildings standing on the site itself at that time, none of which are currently evident.

Test Trenching – Objectives and methodology

Test excavation took place at the proposal site in order to supplement the documentary research for this assessment and, specifically, to establish the nature and extent of any archaeological deposits and features.

A licence to excavate was granted to Graham Hull by the National Monuments Section of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland. The licence number is 19E0446.

The National Monuments Acts 1930-2004 provide the legislative framework within which archaeological excavation can take place.

Test trenching should be sufficient in scale to be able to characterise the deposits within them without significantly compromising the effectiveness of any subsequent excavation (Lambrick and Doyle 2000).

The proposed roundabout – where it extends beyond the limits of the current junction – lies on ground that has been imported and built up in modernity to provide a solid foundation for the existing boundary wall and also to provide access to the field. As a result no test trenching took place within this permanent land take area. An adjacent area, measuring 1,985m², has been designated a temporary land take area; this area will be completely stripped of topsoil, and / or will be severely impacted by heavy plant during the construction period, and / or will be used for temporary storage of materials before and during construction. This previously undisturbed greenfield location was tested.

Test trenches were excavated to examine a representative sample of the site area. A trench layout had been proposed, and this was followed where possible, however due to water ingress in trenches close to the river the trench layout was slightly altered, whilst retaining approximately the same percentage sample that had been proposed.

Six test trenches with a combined length of 130.3m were dug by a 4 tonne tracked machine fitted with a 1.20m wide toothless bucket. The test trenches were opened to a width of 1.80m. A total area of 234.5m² was examined and this represents an 11.8% sample of the 1,985m² site area. This figure sits very well with simulation modelling based on empirical studies of archaeological testing (Hey et al. 2000) that has shown that the optimum sample fraction for the most commonly encountered conditions is in the order of 4-5%. Beyond this percentage the information gain suffers from sharply diminishing returns, while smaller fractions offer low probabilities for intercepting many potential sites. Higher sample fractions can be justified in exceptional circumstances (Orton 2000).

Topsoil was removed under direct and continuous archaeological supervision and the spoil was visually scanned for artefacts. Where necessary the bases and sides of the trenches were cleaned using hand tools and a written, drawn and photographic record was made according to the TVAS (Ireland) Ltd Field Recording Manual (First Edition 2003).

The test trenching was undertaken by Graham Hull and Katherine Hurley on 30th and 31st July 2019.

Test Trenching – Results (Fig. 6 and Plates 1-12)

The trenches ranged in length from 4.2m to 32.3m and were all 1.80m wide (Appendix 1). No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were present.

Trench 1 (Plates 3-5)

The trench was 32.3m long and oriented from north-east to south-west. Topsoil ranged in thickness from 0.20m to 0.41m and was a mid brown loam. Beneath the topsoil was made ground that ranged in thickness from 0.20m at the northern end to 0.55m at the southern end. Inclusions of plastic, modern glass and pottery sherds and animal bone were noted. Beneath or within the made ground was a dump of stone, recorded at the northern end of the trench for a length of approximately 8.50m. This stone fill had a maximum thickness of 0.40m and was composed of angular and rounded stones in the size range

of 0.10-0.40m across. Inclusions within the dumped stone were 19th or 20th century pottery sherds, metal, glass and animal bone. The natural geology was an orange to brown clay at the north end and a pale yellow sandy gravel at the south end. The surface of the natural geology was undulating and observed at depths from the modern surface of 0.40m to 1.03m. It is likely that the dumped material seen in the trench was placed to build up the road to the east.

Trench 2 (Plate 6)

The trench was 30.0m long and oriented from north-east to south-west, curving westwards at its southern end and sloping downwards in this direction. Topsoil ranged in thickness from 0.20m to 0.50m and was a mid brown loam. Beneath the topsoil were natural geological deposits that were orange to brown clay at the south and pale yellow sandy gravel with some grey at the centre and south.

Trench 3 (Plate 7)

The trench was 4.2m long and oriented from north-east to south-west. Topsoil was 0.20m thick and was a mid brown loam. Beneath the topsoil was made ground composed of large stones, soil and 19th to 20th century refuse that was 0.80m thick and came down onto dark grey to brown peaty marl. Water ingressed the trench at 1.00m depth and the trench was abandoned and back-filled immediately.

Trench 4 (Plates 8-11)

The trench was 38.6m long and oriented from north-west to south-east, sloping down to the west. Topsoil ranged in thickness from 0.20m at the west to 0.50m at the east and was a mid brown loam. Frequent 19th to 20th century pottery and modern refuse was noted in the topsoil. The natural geology was orange to brown clay at the east end and pale yellow to brown gravel and small stone at the west end. A stone wall seen outside the proposal area to the north (Plate 10) was present in vestigial form in the trench centre. The wall is clearly the boundary shown on the 1912-13 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 4) but not evident on the previous 1837 Ordnance Survey map (Fig. 3) and is likely to date to the later 19th or earlier 20th century. The wall was mechanically excavated in the trench (Plate 11) and shown to be composed of large irregular stones in the order of 0.40m across and was 2.20m wide and 1.10m deep.

Trench 5 (Plate 12)

The trench was 10.9m long and oriented from north-east to south-west. Topsoil ranged in thickness from 0.20m to 0.25m and was a mid brown loam. Beneath the topsoil were natural geological deposits that were pale yellowish brown clay with patches of grey clay with some small stones.

Trench 6

The trench was 10.5m long and oriented from north-east to south-west. Topsoil ranged in thickness from 0.20m to 0.25m and was a mid brown loam. Beneath the topsoil were natural geological deposits that were pale yellowish brown clay with patches of grey clay with some small stones.

Finds

Sherds of later 19th and 20th century pottery, modern glass, metal, plastic and animal bone were noted in most of the trenches. None were retained.

Samples

No samples were taken.

Test Trenching – Discussion

The proposal site is located within a moderate to rich archaeological environment, with recorded monuments dating from the prehistoric to medieval periods found nearby.

No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were found in the test trenches at the proposal site.

Deposits of stone and 19th/ 20th century refuse were noted, particularly towards the northern end of Trench 1, and these no doubt represent the demolished remains of buildings shown on the 1837 Ordnance Survey map but which had been removed by the early 20th century. No evidence of the foundations of any buildings was encountered.

Archaeological Impact Statement

In accordance with *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation* (DAHGI 1999b), an archaeological impact statement is to be made. The impact statement should describe the following:

...possible direct or indirect effects of the proposed development on archaeological deposits, features or objects. The archaeological impact statement must be based on the results of the overall archaeological assessment as well as the results of the test excavation. (DAHGI 1999b, 21)

The documentary research has demonstrated that the proposal site is within an area of moderately to high archaeological potential and is located within the ZAP of the historic town of Ballymahon.

The test trenching found no evidence for archaeological features, deposits or artefacts, although 19th/20th century demolition rubble was encountered.

On the basis of the results of the assessment it appears that the proposed development will not impact on any below-ground archaeological features or deposits. Although it was not possible to investigate the immediate edge of the river, this part of the site will not be impacted by the proposed works.

No further archaeological work is recommended

The opinions given in this archaeological assessment report are made subject to approval by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Recommendations and further work

Fieldwork

As the test trenching did not reveal evidence of archaeological features, deposits or artefacts, no further archaeological intervention is recommended for the proposed development.

Post-excavation

An accessible archive of primary records will be prepared for long term storage and will be deposited with the National Monuments Service's Archive Unit in Swords in accordance with their guidelines (Barrett 2012).

Publication and dissemination plan

A summary of the findings of the excavation will be submitted to *Excavations 2019*.



Graham Hull
TVAS Ireland Ltd
August 2019

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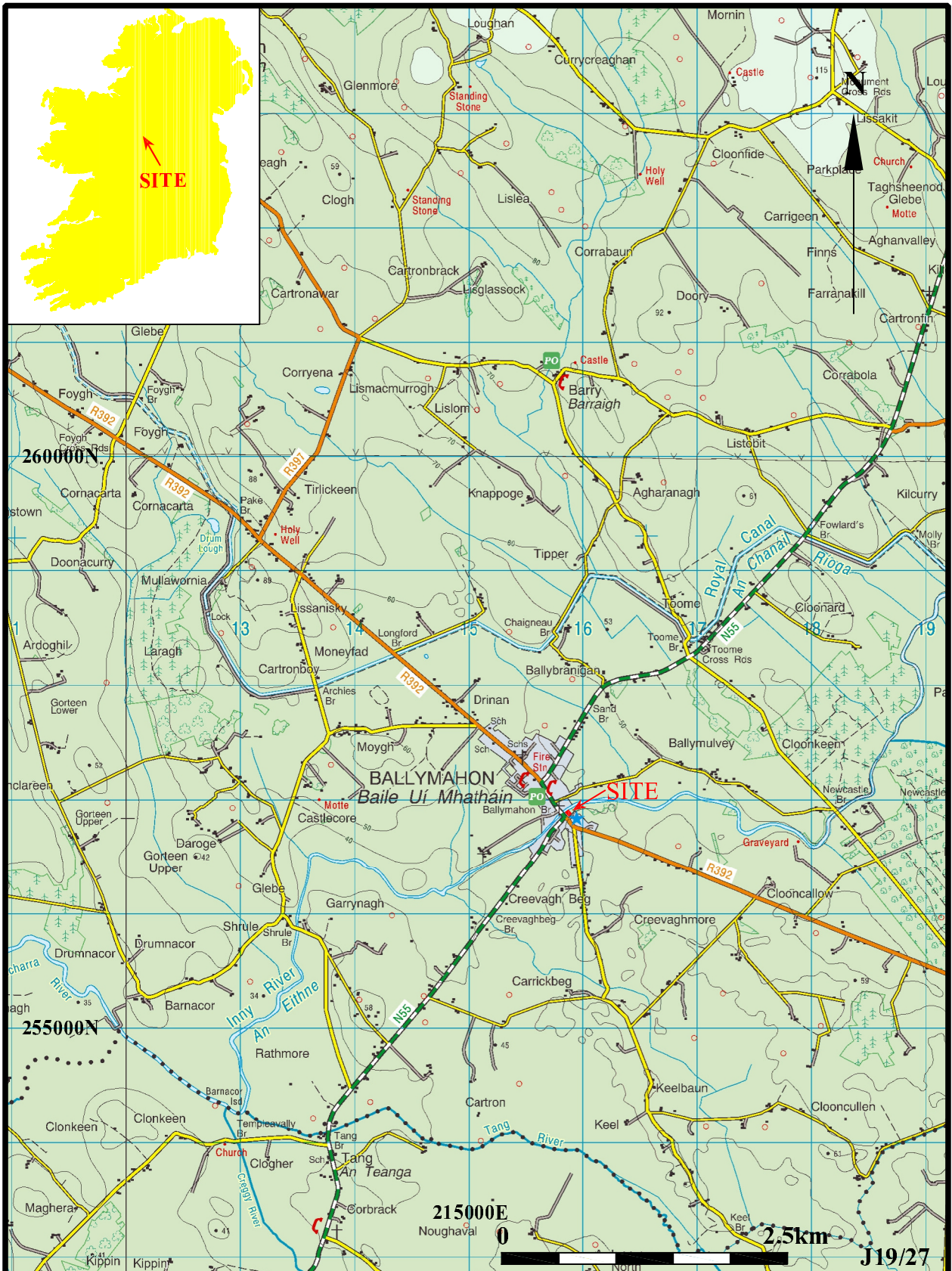
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www.osi.ie

Appendix 1: Trench catalogue

Trench	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comments
1	32.3	1.80	0.40-1.03	<u>North end</u> 0.00-0.20m Topsoil 0.20-0.40m Made ground 0.40m + Natural glacial till NB Stone dump <u>South end</u> 0.00-0.40m Topsoil 0.40-0.95m Made ground 0.95m + Natural gravel
2	30.0	1.80	0.25-0.55	0.00-0.20/0.50m Topsoil 0/20/0.50m + Natural alluvium and gravel
3	4.2	1.80	1.05	0.00-0.20m Topsoil 0.20-1.00m Made ground 1.00m + Natural peaty marl
4	39.2	1.80	0.25-0.55	<u>West end</u> 0.00-0.20m Topsoil 0.20m + Natural gravel <u>East end</u> 0.00-0.50m Topsoil 0.50m + Natural glacial till
5	12.6	1.80	0.30	0.00-0.20/0.25m Topsoil 0.25m + Natural alluvium
6	12.0	1.80	0.30	0.00-0.20/0.25m Topsoil 0.25m + Natural alluvium

NB Depths are from current ground surface

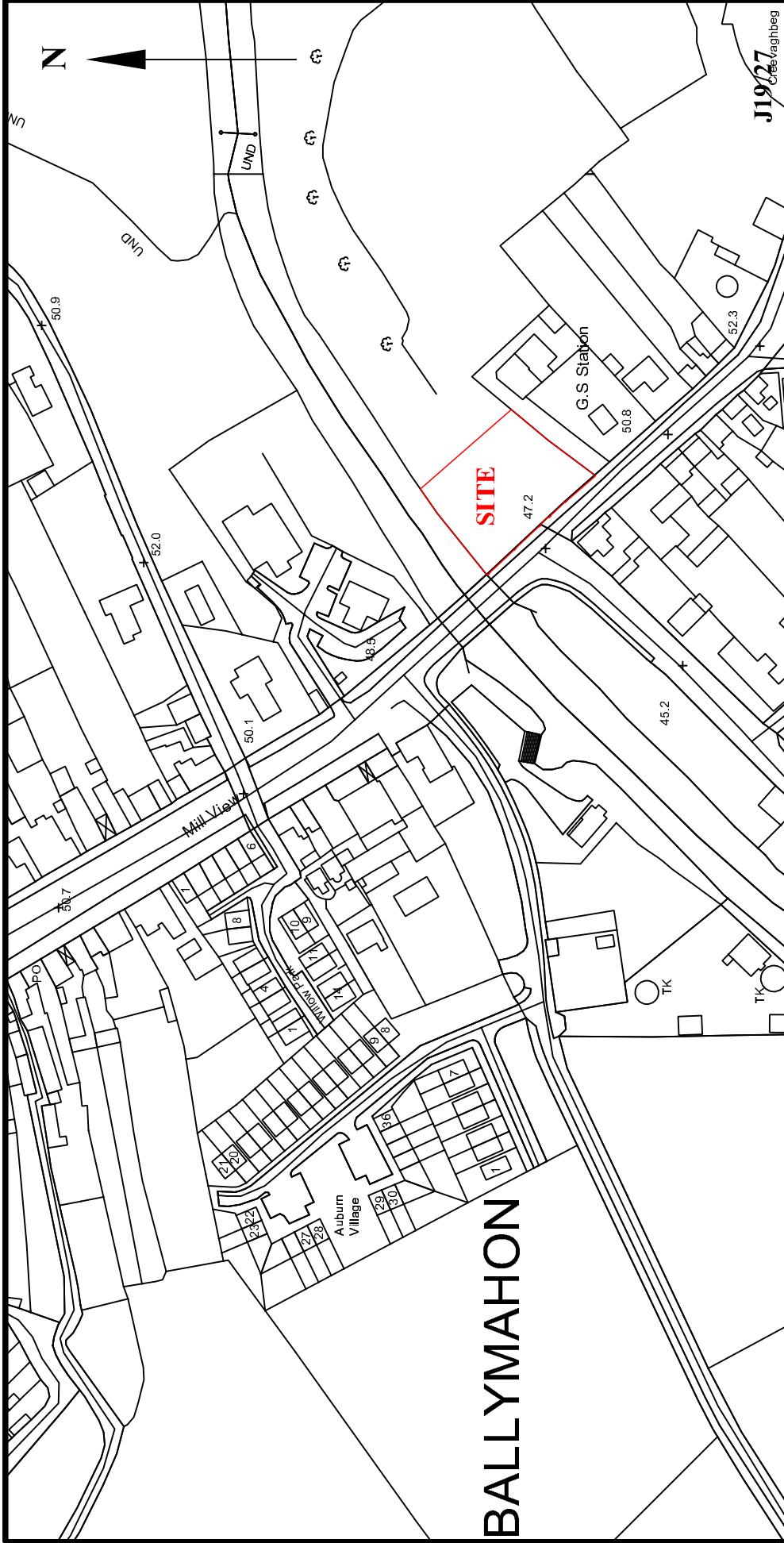


**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works,
Co. Longford 19E0446**

Figure 1: Site location

Scale 1:50,000 @ A4. Grid NGR
 Based on Ordnance Survey Discovery Series 1:50,000
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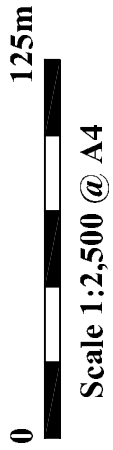




**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works,
Co. Longford 19E0446**

Figure 2: Site outline and location

Based on Ordnance Survey Ireland digital mapping provided by client
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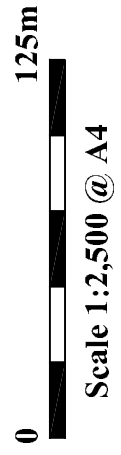




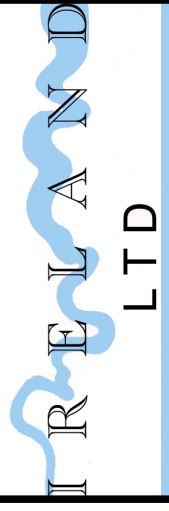
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Co. Longford 19E0446**

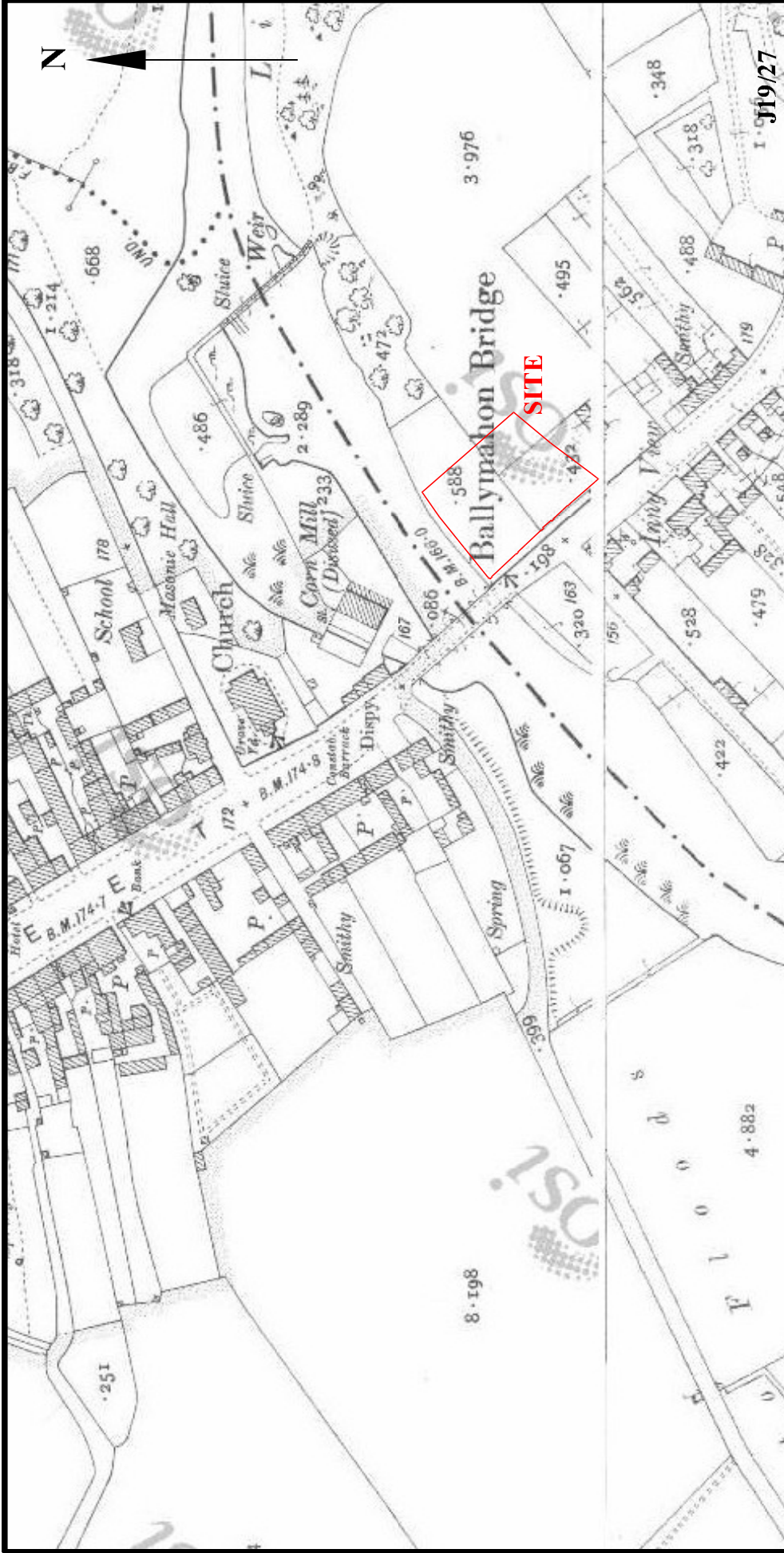
Figure 3: Ordnance Survey 1837

Based on Ordnance Survey 1837 6" to 1 mile Sheet LD027
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T V A S

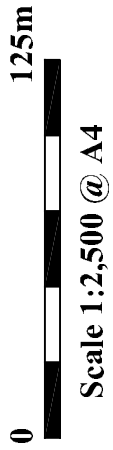


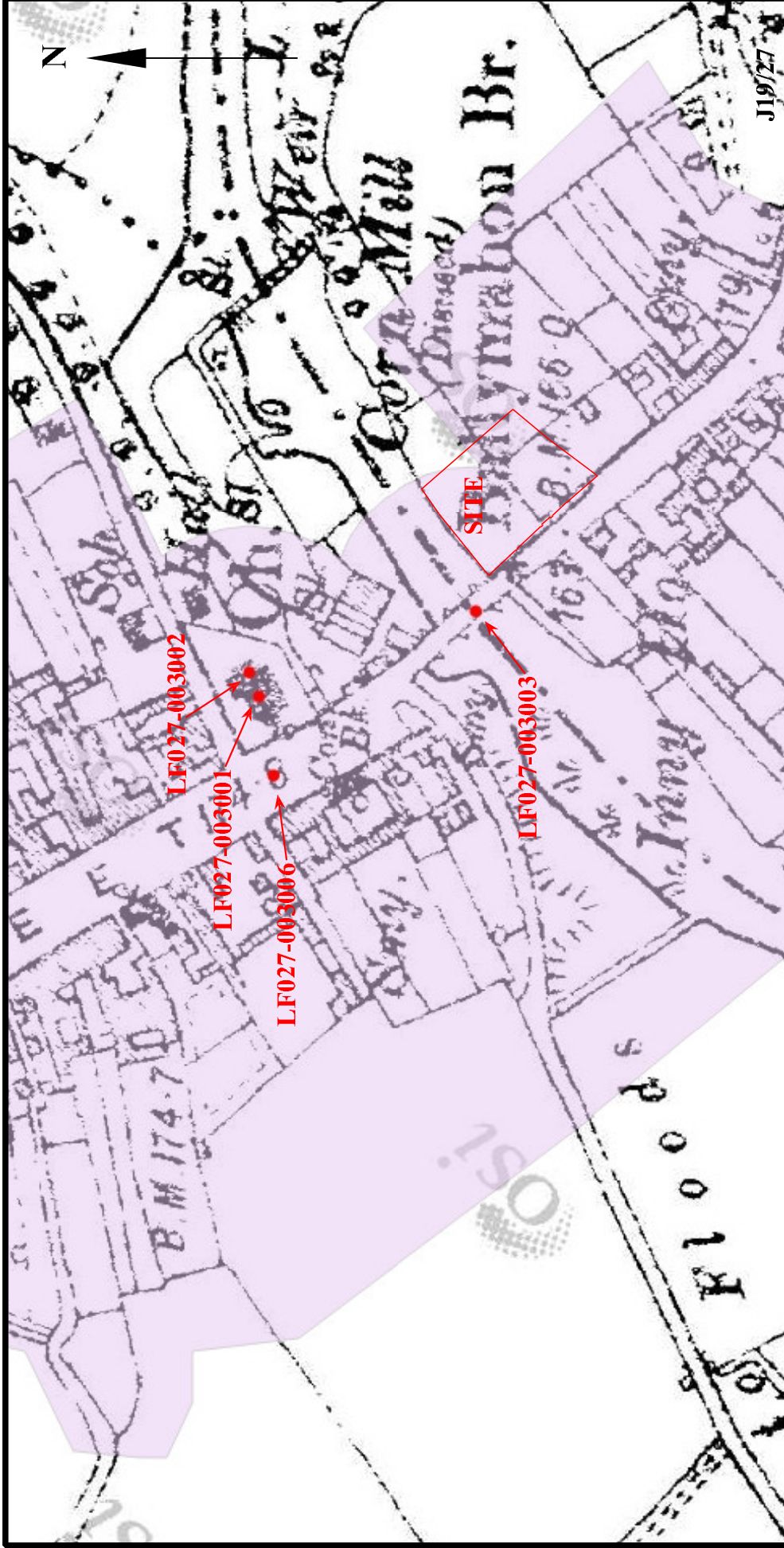


**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works,
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Figure 4: Ordnance Survey 1912

Based on Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile Sheet LD027-001 1912
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**Figure 5: Ordnance Survey 1912 showing Recorded
Monuments and zones of notification**

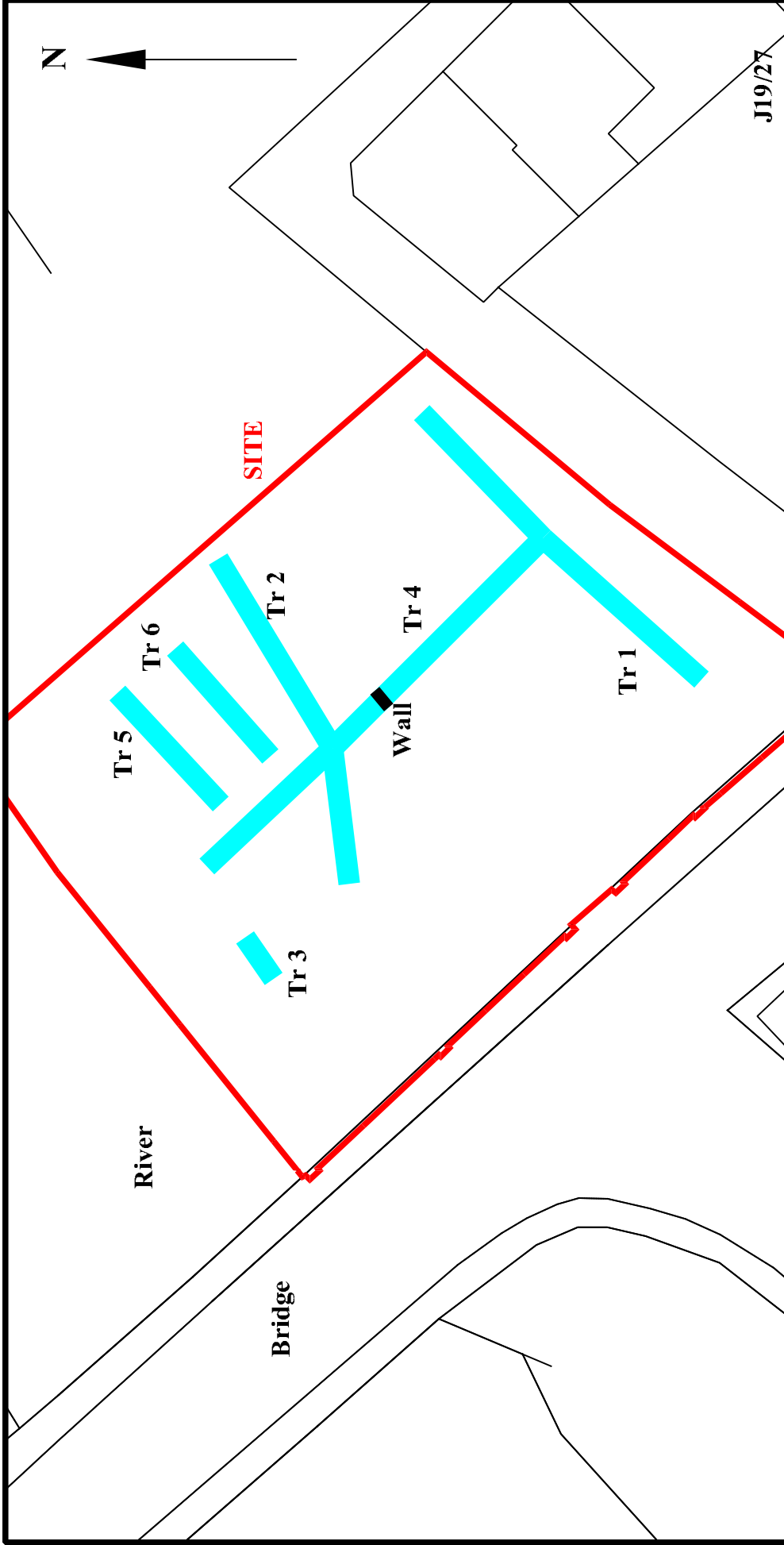
Based on Ordnance Survey RMP 6" to 1 mile Sheet LD027
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0 125m
Scale 1:2,500 @ A4

T V A S

I R E L L A N D
L T D

J19/27



**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works,
Co. Longford 19E0446**

Figure 6: Test trench layout

Based on Ordnance Survey Ireland digital mapping provided by client
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0  25m
Scale 1:500 @ A4



Plate 1: Proposal site. Looking S



Plate 2: Proposal site. Looking SW



Plate 3: Trench 1. Looking SW. Scales 1m



Plate 4: Trench 1. Showing modern dumped material at northern end. Looking S. Scales 1m & 0.5m



Plate 5: Trench 1. Typical modern refuse. Scale 0.5m



Plate 6: Trench 2. Looking NW. Scales 1m & 0.5m

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**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works,
Co. Longford 19E0446**

Plates 1 - 6

T V A S
I R E L A N D
L T D



Plate 7: Trench 3. Showing made ground and water ingress. Looking N



Plate 8: Trench 4. Western end. Looking SE.



**Plate 9: Trench 4. Eastern end. Looking SE.
Scale 0.5m**



Plate 10: Stone boundary wall to the north of proposal area. Scale 0.5m



**Plate 11: Trench 4. Showing base of stone boundary wall in section. Looking N.
Scale 0.5m**



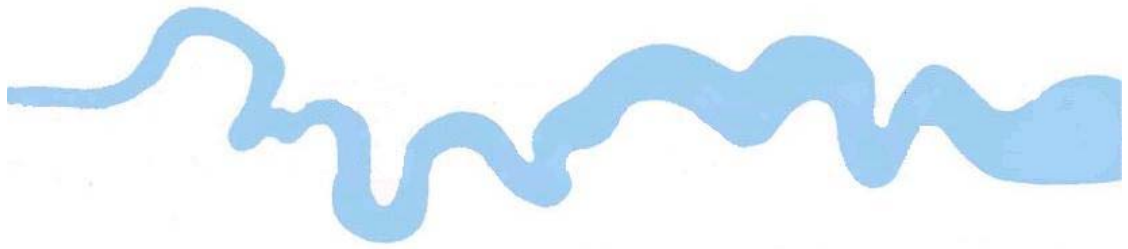
**Plate 12: Trench 5. Looking N. Scale 0.5m. NB
Trench 6 identical stratigraphy**

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**N55 Ballymahon Main Street Improvement Works,
Co. Longford 19E0446**

Plates 7-12

**T V A S
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