

**Preliminary Report
Committee for Archaeology
Royal Irish Academy**

**EXCAVATION OF AN ENCLOSURE SITE AT
ROSSNAREE, (BRÚ NA BÓINNE) CO. MEATH.
10E0242**

Preliminary Report, Excavation 2010



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September 2010

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1. Introduction

The site under investigation was first discovered as a dense scatter of lithic (chipped stone) material on the surface of a tilled field close to the River Boyne, NGR 299200 273150, at the point where the famous ‘Bend of the Boyne’ begins (Figure 1, Brady 2007a; 2007b). This was subsequently investigated using various geophysical techniques (Brady and Barton 2008; 2009a; 2009b; in prep.) at which time it became apparent that there was a substantial multivallate enclosure at the site (Figure 2). This enclosure was reported to the Archaeological Survey of Ireland and an RMP number was subsequently issued (ME019-080---).



Figure 1 Site location.

The enclosure is roughly D-shaped and is bounded on the north and east sides by the River Boyne. The enclosure cordons off an area of several hectares and measures *c.* 300m east-west by *c.* 150m north-south. The core of the enclosure and the main area of activity is located on the first fluvio-glacial terrace overlooking the floodplain proper of the River Boyne, the outermost enclosure ditch extends from the river floodplain at the north western end of the site across the terrace to the wide floodplain to the east. While the floodplain of the River Boyne in this area is subjected to regular flooding, the area of the terrace is at an elevation that avoids inundation (Brady and Barton 2009b).

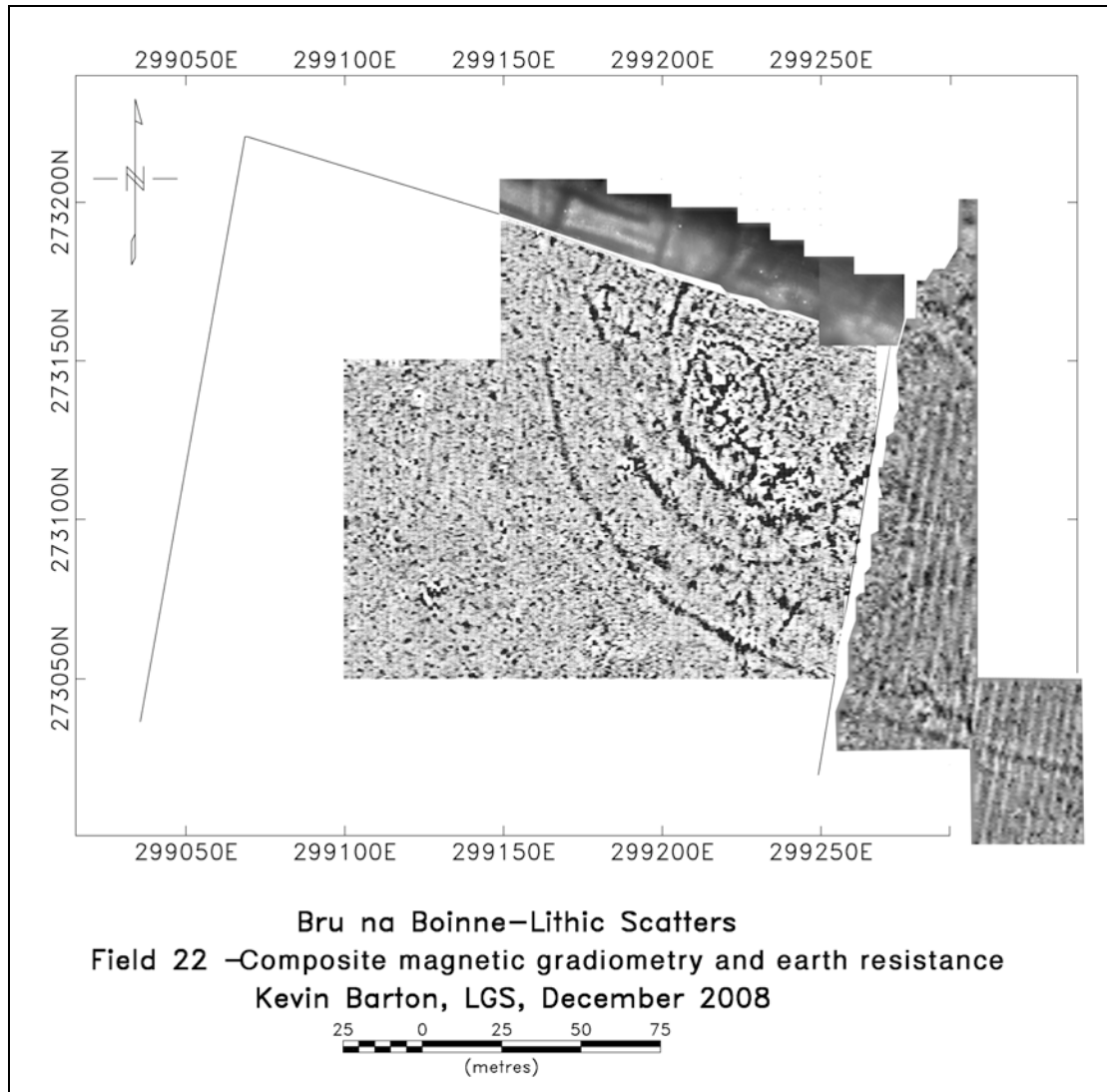


Figure 2 Composite of geophysical survey plots.

The key aim of the excavation was to retrieve material suitable for dating, to assess the archaeological potential and preservation of subsurface remains at the site and also to explore some of its functions. The excavation also offered an opportunity to directly test the relationship between the outputs of the various geophysical techniques used in preliminary phases of the investigations by comparing the plots to the excavated evidence. To this end, five cuttings were planned for excavation (Trenches 1-5, see Figure 3). In the end, due to time constrictions, only four of these were actually opened, Trench 2 was left unexcavated. As the core area of the site lies within a tillage field, the excavation cuttings were positioned in the adjacent areas of pasture to avoid damage to the growing crops and also to avoid impeding harvesting activities which took place during the course of the excavation. However, the location of Trenches 1, 2 and 3 on the sloping face of the fluvio-glacial terrace mentioned above is an area that appears not to have ever been cultivated, probably because of the steepness of the slope. Preservation of archaeological stratigraphy was likely to be much better in this location than elsewhere. Trench 4 was positioned in the floodplain to the east of the tillage field and Trench 5 was opened around a greywacke slab partially exposed on the surface of the same pasture field close to the field boundary.

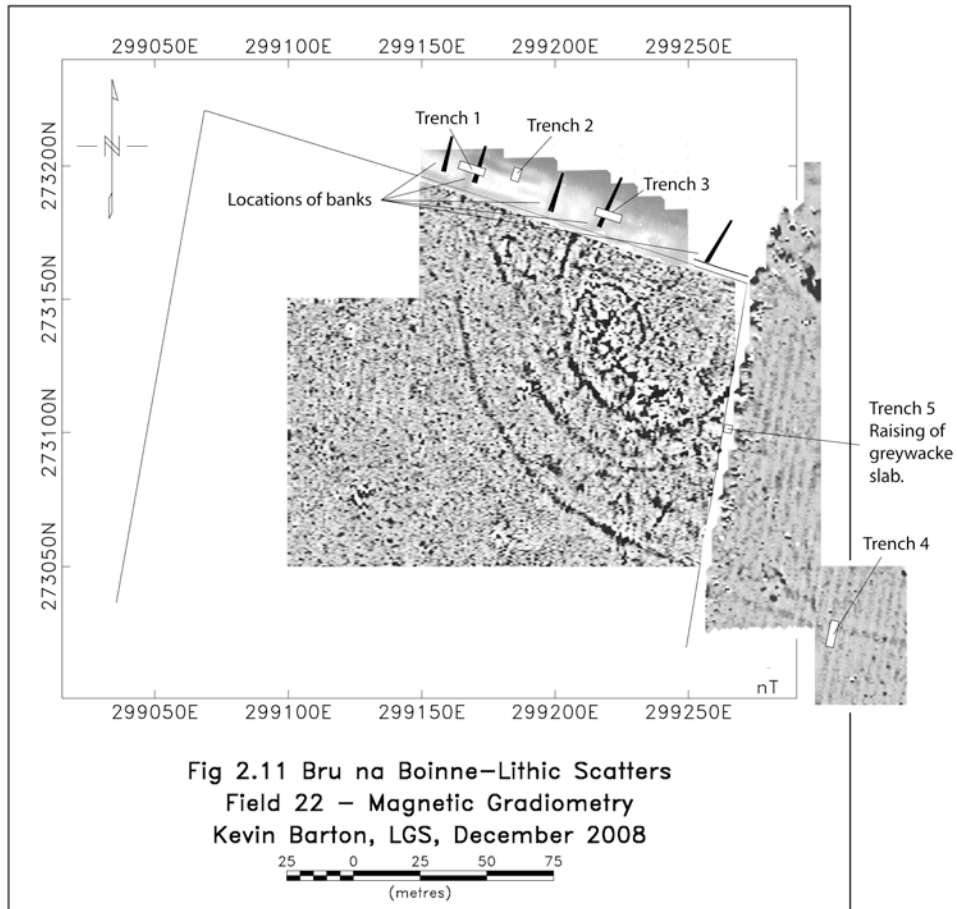


Figure 3 Location of trenches

2. Preliminary Work

This programme of excavation followed a series of geophysical surveys designed to investigate surviving features that may be associated with the lithic scatter and is briefly outlined above. The field where the lithic scatter was initially discovered was labelled Field 22. As the subsequent geophysical surveys indicated that the full extent of the site spreads over three separate fields, Field 22a refers to the area of the tillage field, Field 22b refers to the north-facing slope immediately to the north of the tillage field and Field 22c refers to the low-lying floodplain to the east of the tillage field.

Immediately in advance of the excavation, a number of geophysical techniques were applied on a targeted basis in order to provide detailed data that would be of direct use to the conduct of the excavation. To this end the following works were carried out:

2.1 Field 22b:

An earth resistance survey had been carried out previously over this area (see Figure 3) which, along with the topography, suggested the potential survival of archaeological layers and features. Specific measurements taken in advance of the excavation included the following:

- Electrical resistance tomography section, 120m long, over the extant features on the face of the north-facing fluviglacial terrace slope. This was laid out along the centreline of the proposed trenches (Figures 3 and 4).

- Detailed magnetic susceptibility survey on a 1m grid over the area of Trenches 1, 2 and 3 to be followed by laboratory analysis of depth MS soil samples retrieved during excavation.

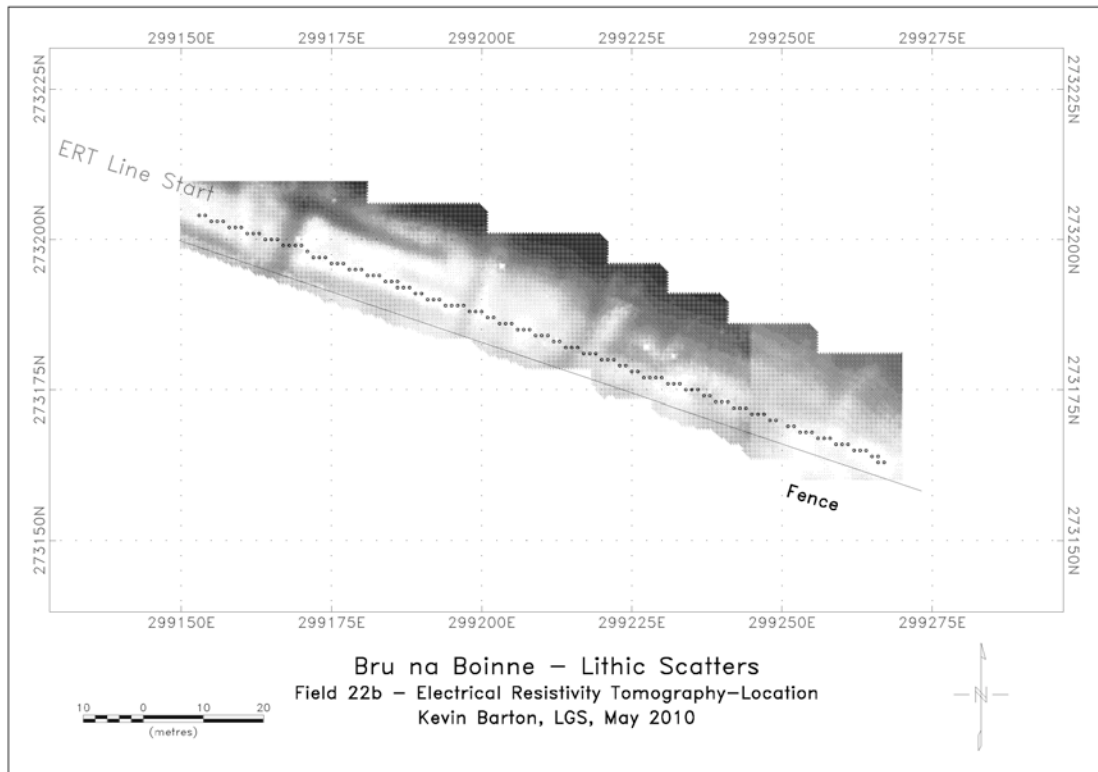


Figure 4 Earth resistance in Field 22b with line of electrical resistivity tomography section

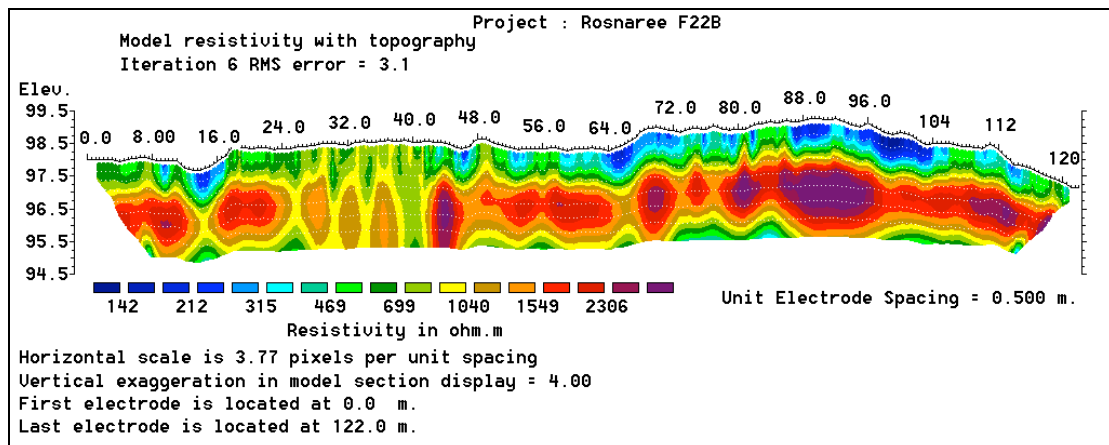


Figure 5 Electrical resistivity tomography section, Field 22b

2.2 Field 22c:

A magnetic gradiometry survey had been carried out previously over this area which pinpointed the line of the enclosure ditch and suggested the potential survival of archaeological layers. There was no corresponding surface expression for this feature but there was a heavy overprint of medieval/post medieval cultivation. Specific measurements taken in advance of the excavation included the following:

- Detailed earth resistance, 20 x 20m panel over the area proposed for excavation.
- Detailed ground penetrating radar survey over the same area.
- Continuation of magnetic gradiometry to trace the line of the outer enclosure ditch between the edge of the previous survey area and the riverbank to the east.
- ERT section across the centreline of Trench 4 (Figure 5).
- Detailed magnetic susceptibility survey on a 1m grid over the area of Trench 4 to be followed by laboratory analysis of depth MS soil samples retrieved during excavation. Ground penetrating radar survey 20m x 20m panel.

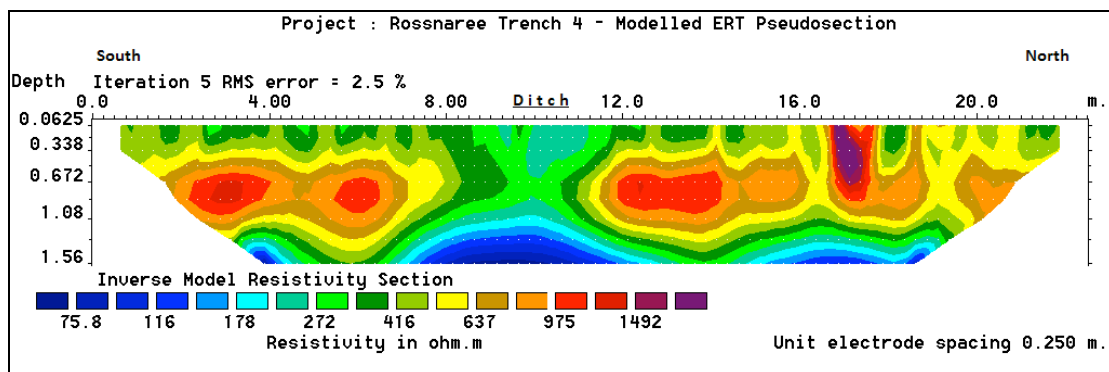


Figure 6 Earth resistivity tomography section, Field 22c, area of Trench 4

3. Project Objectives

The reasons for the excavation were set out as follows:

- to retrieve material suitable for scientific dating from the fills of the ditches
- to investigate the nature of the geophysical signatures recorded in preliminary survey work
- to explore the make-up of the bank and ditch features surviving outside the area of tillage on the N side of the site
- to assess the potential of a longer-term excavation strategy
- to retrieve environmental material from the site to help explore the function and economic basis for the site as well as contribute further to knowledge of the environment of the Brú na Bóinne area during the Neolithic (to be conducted with assistance from colleagues in the INSTAR Boyne Valley Landscape Project)
- to raise the greywacke slab from the E field boundary
- to provide an opportunity for students attending DkIT with an interest in archaeology to gain excavation experience

4. Fieldwork

The excavation commenced on Monday 5th July and finished on Friday 30th July in accordance with the wishes of the landowner and the terms of the excavation license.

4.1 Trench 1

This measured 10m x 2m and was located on the north-facing slope of the fluvioglacial terrace in an area untouched by cultivation. It was positioned with reference to the surviving topography, the results of an earth resistance survey (Figure

4) and the results of the electrical resistance tomography survey (Figure 5). The features being investigated in this trench included part of the bank of the outer enclosure in the eastern end of the trench and its associated ditch immediately to the west. Two metres further to the west of this is a smaller ditch feature with a possible associated bank.

The trench was desodded by hand and the sod and topsoil layer was found to vary in thickness from *c.* 0.1m to 0.4m. Immediately below these layers, the gravel surfaces of a number of different contexts were discernible (Figure 7A). The texture of the gravel surface varied across the length of the trench and was distinctly more compact over bank areas with clear areas of slippage of larger gravel/cobbles downslope off the bank areas to partially cover the topographically lower ditch fills. The visible portions of the ditch fills were markedly less gravelly where not overlain by cobbles, and had a silty character.

Initially, a 1m wide strip was excavated through all contexts along the northern edge of the trench. All contexts were thus exposed and removed in this area first before moving to the southern side of the trench to continue the process.

Within the fill of the main ditch (C.1024) there were a number of separate contexts indicating a series of alternating rapid and slow events which filled the ditch (Figure 7B; Table 1). A number of rapid slump/slip episodes were visible in the section with material migrating downslope in a north-easterly direction and coming to rest in the ditch. These layers were characterised by a high proportion of stones and cobbles. Between these layers was a number of less stony, more silty fills indicative of less rapid events and caused primarily by slopewash. The ditch was V-shaped in profile and reached an overall depth of 1.47m below sod. The base was characterised by a distinct 'slot' profile (C.1022) and from the fill at the base of this feature (C.1010), the mandible of a cow was recovered. A number of possible recuts were discernible in the section (e.g. C.1020) and it is possible that the slot feature (C.1022) was one such recut. Finds through these layers were relatively infrequent and were mainly animal bone and more occasional pieces of flint (see Appendix).

The western edge of the main ditch (C.1024) lay *c.*3m from the eastern edge of the smaller ditch (C.1019). It had initially been thought that there was a low bank separating the two ditches. However, on excavation it was revealed that this impression was false and that there was no appreciable structure or depth to the material in this area. While it was clear on the earth resistance plot that the main ditch ran downslope perpendicular to the slope, the smaller feature appears to run downslope at an angle to the main ditch, diverging from it as it descends the slope, and thus there was a question as to the exact relationship between the two features. This small ditch (C.1019) had a V-shaped profile with a depth of *c.* 0.8m and a width at the top of *c.*1.5m. It had three main fills; an upper stone-free silty fill (C.1005) filling a shallow recut of the feature (C.1015) covering over a more compact stone and silt layer (C1018) fill of recut C.1019 which was in turn above fill C.1025 of the base of the feature (C.1026).

Figure 7A: Trench 1 pre excavation plan

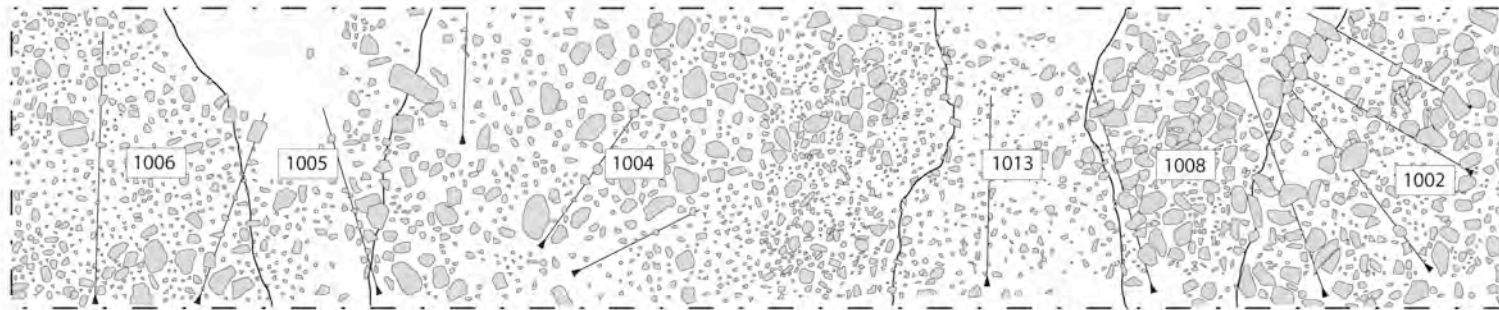


Figure 7B: Trench 1 section (north-facing)

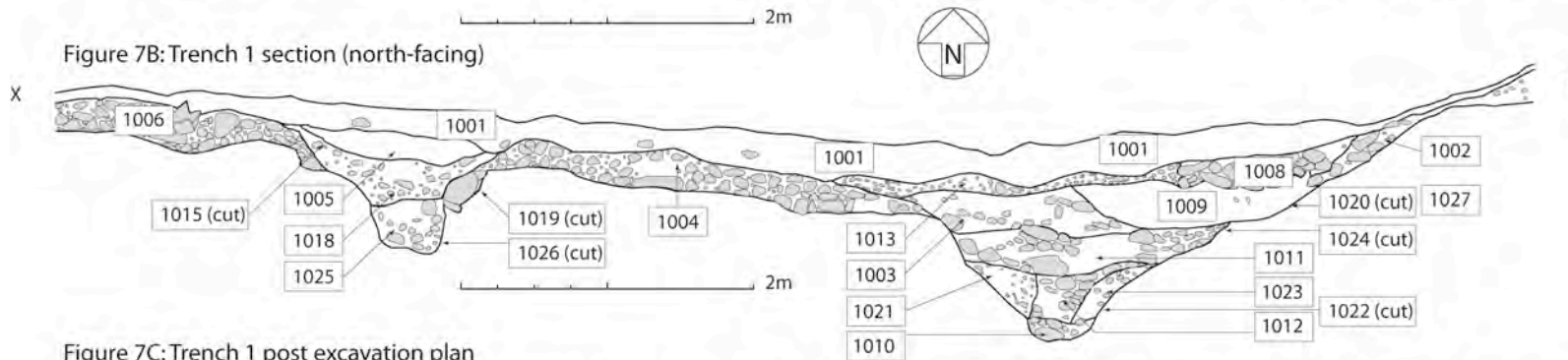
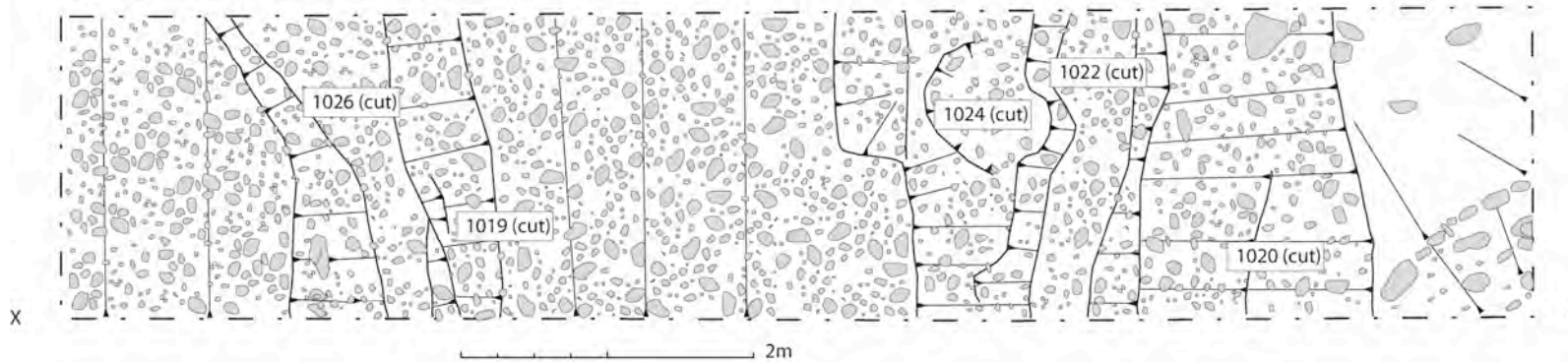


Figure 7C: Trench 1 post excavation plan



Soil samples were taken for laboratory magnetic susceptibility analysis. An initial magnetic susceptibility survey was carried out on a 1m grid over the surface of the trench and subsequently, soil samples were collected on the same 1m grid below the sod and at depth intervals of *c.* 0.2m during excavation of the trench. Bulk soil samples were also collected from key contexts within the fill of the main ditch and the fill of the smaller ditch for macrofossil remains and samples were also retrieved for mollusc analysis.

Context No.	Description
1001	Topsoil/sod layer
1002	Bank at E end of trench
1003	Ditch fill (surface)
1004	Possible bank to W of 1003
1005	Fill of small ditch
1006	Gravel at W end of trench
1007	Not used
1008	Slip of stones from 1002
1009	fill of recut 1020, E side of ditch 1024 below 1008
1010	Fill of slot, base of main ditch
1011	Stony spill from W in main ditch
1012	Fill of recut 1022, under fill 1011
1013	Gravelly material, W of 1003, top of main ditch
1014	Stony compact layer under 1004 and 1005
1015	First recut of small ditch 1026. Filled with 1005
1016	Stone spill below 1003
1017	Below 1016 and above 1011
1018	Fill of small ditch
1019	Second recut of small ditch 1026
1020	Recut filled with 1009
1021	Beside 1012 in S section
1022	Cut of slot at base of ditch 1024 filled with 1010, 1012, 1021, 1023
1023	Slump to E of 1012, S section
1024	Cut of main ditch
1025	Fill of 1026 under gully 1015
1026	Cut of small ditch, filled with 1025 under recuts 1015, 1019

Table 1 List of Contexts, Trench 1

4.2 Trench 2

This measured 5m x 2m and was positioned to investigate a high resistance feature close to the riverbank which runs at right angles to the outer bank of the enclosure. This feature is also connected to the mound-like terminal of the external bank at the base of the terrace slope and runs in an easterly direction from this point for *c.* 30m, parallel to the riverbank. Although this trench was set out at the outset with a total station, it was not excavated because of time constraints.

4.3 Trench 3

This measured 10m x 2m and was positioned with reference to the surviving topography, the results of an earth resistance survey and the results of an electrical resistance tomography survey and to investigate the innermost visible bank and ditch

feature on the north-facing slope of the fluvioglacial terrace in an area where cultivation seems to have avoided. The feature has a discernible topographic surface expression and also showed up well in the geophysical surveys carried out over this area. While the features in the western end of the trench were quite distinct and seemed to indicate the presence of a bank with an external ditch immediately to the west, the earth resistance and ERT surveys indicated an area at the eastern end of the trench of relatively low-resistance material, contrasting with the compact material of the bank. The ERT data thus seemed to suggest a possible midden-like layer extending eastwards inside the bank.

The sod/topsoil layer (C.3001) was first removed across the surface of the trench and varied in thickness from 0.1m to 0.2m. As with Trench 1, it was clear that this area was unaffected by cultivation and preservation was very good. A layer of compact gravels of varying textures were encountered in which a variety of different contexts were identified (Figure 8A). These corresponded to the positions of the features visible on the pre-excavation ground surface.

As with Trench 1 (outlined above) it was decided at the outset to excavate the trench in section first. A 1m wide strip was taken down through all contexts along the northern edge of the trench. All contexts were thus exposed and removed in this area. Due to the volume and complexity of the stratigraphy in this area and the time constraints under which the excavation was being conducted, it did not prove possible to excavate the remaining 1m wide strip along the south side of the trench and this was left unexcavated.

C.3003 was located at the extreme western edge of the trench and looked like a thin layer of material overlying intact natural. A number of fragments of animal bone and some small iron objects were visible on the surface and these were taken to have been introduced or 'pressed in' to the layer from the topsoil above. To the east of this was C.3004 which was the upper layer in the fill of the ditch (C.3017). However, on excavation, it became apparent that, although this material was filling the upper levels of the ditch, it was located *c.* 1m to the west of the deepest part of the ditch (Figures 8C and 8D). This was primarily due to the significant amount of material that had slipped downslope of the surface of the bank to the east. To the east was C.3005, a layer of material characterised by larger cobbles which appeared to have slipped downslope from the bank feature to the south east. C.3004 overlay C.3005. The surface of the bank itself was C.3006 and extended for a distance of *c.* 3m to the east. Adjacent to this at the eastern end of the trench was C.3002, a compact gravely layer with frequent finds of animal bone and flint.

The main features in this trench were the bank (C.3006/3008) and ditch (C.3017). The ditch, on excavation, was smaller in scale than the main ditch in Trench 1 with a width of *c.* 2m at the top and a depth of *c.* 1m. A cow rib was excavated from the very base of this ditch and hopefully will provide a suitable sample for radiocarbon dating.



Figure 8A: Trench 3 pre excavation plan

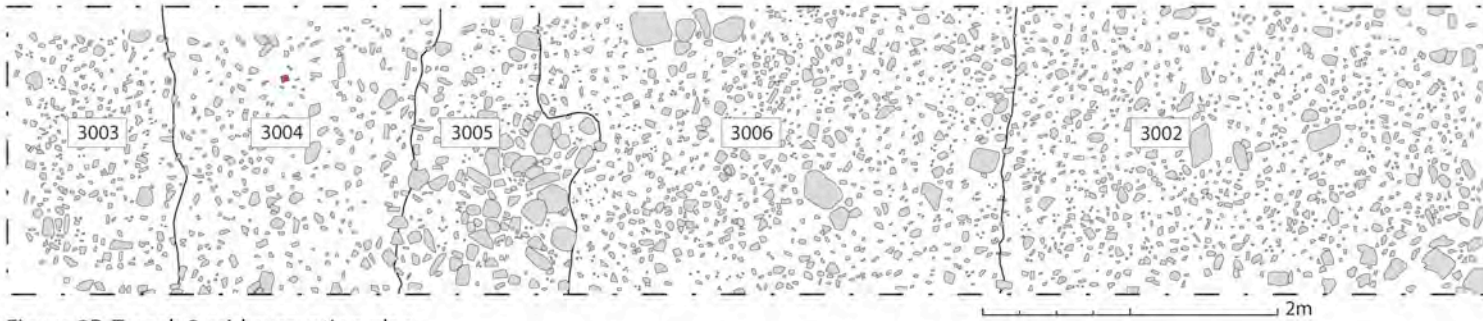


Figure 8B: Trench 3 mid excavation plan

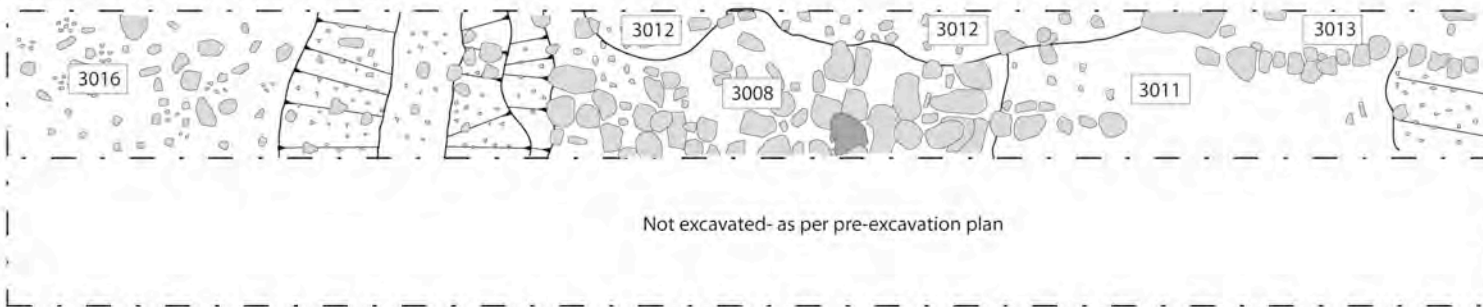


Figure 8C: Trench 3 post excavation plan

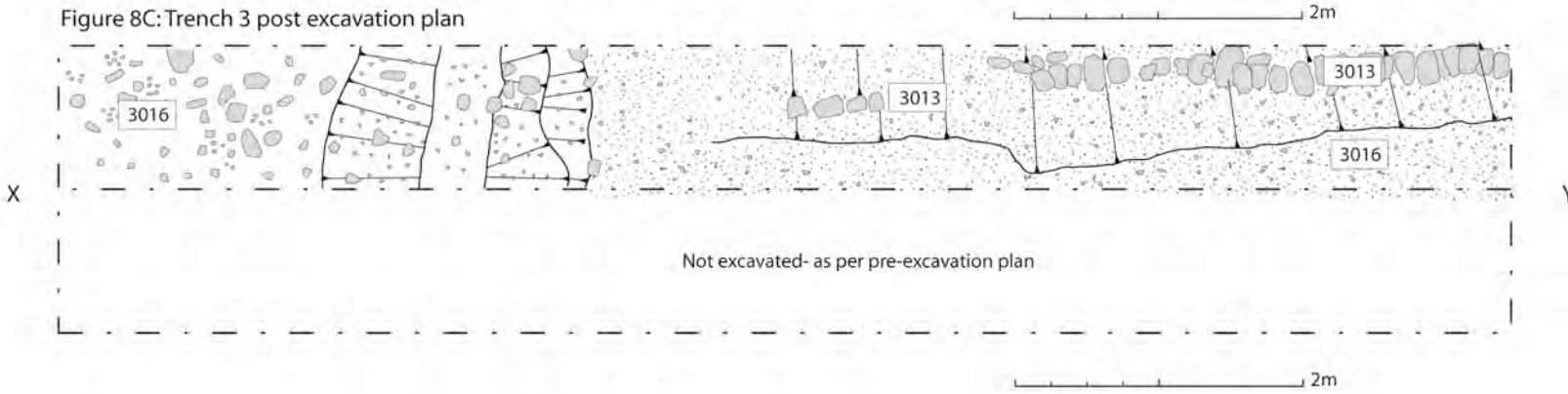
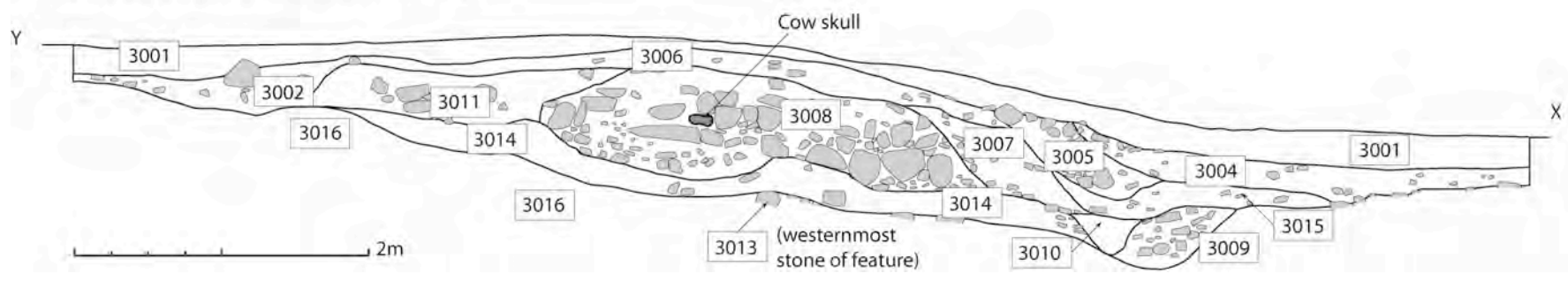


Figure 8D: Trench 3 section (north-facing)



There was a recut towards the base of the ditch filled with C.3010. The bank was very solidly constructed with a core of large well-placed cobbles (C.3008) which was *c.* 2m wide with a depth of *c.* 0.8m. A cow skull was found inverted within the stones of this feature and was clearly a deliberate incorporation rather than representing chance discard. Abutting this feature was C.3011 which was a rich silty humic layer of material with frequent pieces of animal bone and flint. Below these two contexts was C.3014, another relatively stone-free rich humic layer. Significant chronologically diagnostic artefacts were recovered from this layer: a fragment of a double-sided bone or antler comb (see Photo 1), a copper-alloy strap and a fragment of iron. These finds provide an *terminus post quem* for the bank feature above and indicate that it is likely to have a late 1st millennium AD date. C.3014 overlay a linear stone feature (C.3013) comprising at least three courses of substantial cobbles which were clearly earlier than the bank and seemed to be a terracing or revetment feature. This ran roughly horizontally across the face of the slope for a distance of *c.* 4.5m within the trench and appeared to continue eastwards out of the area of the trench. Below this feature was C.3016, the natural gravel surface, which dropped away steeply beneath C.3013.

Context	Description
3001	Sod and topsoil
3002	Compact gravel, E end of trench
3003	Compact gravel, W end of trench
3004	Ditch fill (surface)
3005	Stony spill off bank
3006	Bank, stony
3007	Below 3005
3008	Large stones, E side of ditch
3009	Slip of stones, W side of ditch fill
3010	Base of ditch/slot fill
3011	Below 3005 and 3006 and above 3008
3012	Stony layer above W end of cobbles
3013	Linear stone setting, E end of trench
3014	Below 3008
3015	Soft silty layer below 3004, 3005, above 3009
3016	Natural gravel
3017	Ditch cut

Table 2 List of Contexts, Trench 3

4.4 Trench 4

This measured 10m x 2m and was positioned in relation to area magnetic gradiometry and earth resistance surveys as well as an ERT survey to investigate the outer enclosure ditch at the level of the floodplain. Because of the position of the ditch in the floodplain of the river, below the level of the fluvio-glacial terrace where Trenches 1 and 3 were placed, it was felt that this trench had potential to shed light on the nature of the levels of the river at the time of construction of the enclosure, potentially also the tidal extent of the river.

The trench was desodded and the topsoil layer (C.4001), *c.* 0.1m-0.15m deep, was removed. It was clear from the various geophysical surveys carried out in this area as

Figure 9A: Trench 4 post excavation plan



Figure 9B: Trench 4 post excavation plan (detail)

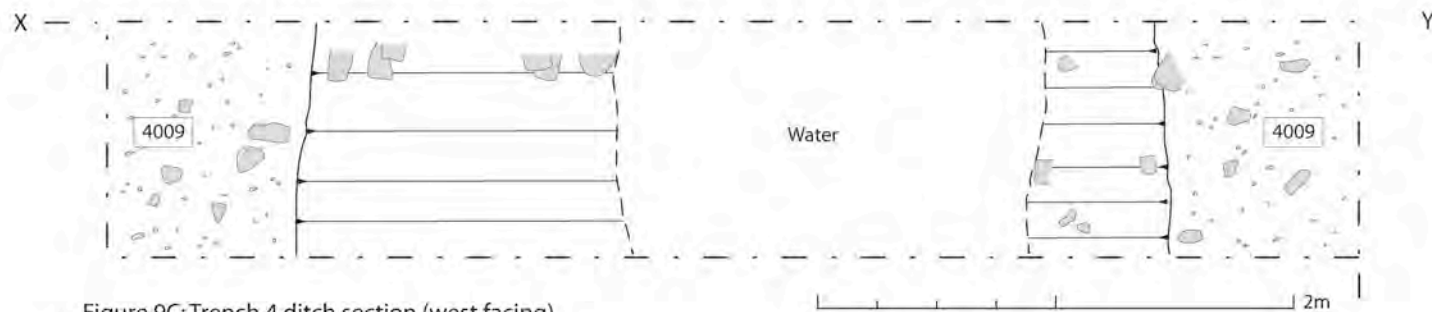
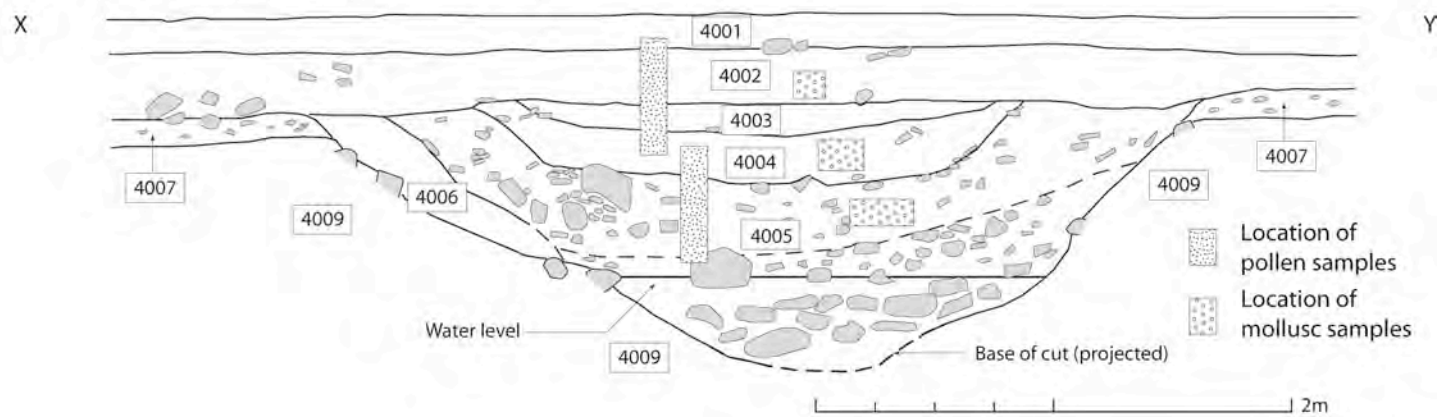


Figure 9C: Trench 4 ditch section (west facing)



well as the LiDAR data that this area had been cultivated in the past. There is a corduroy overprint in the geophysics plots which correspond with a clear series of ridges and furrows spaced *c.* 5m apart and set in a roughly north-south orientation across the surface of the field. Because of this evidence of cultivation the first step taken in this trench was to excavate a sondage the width of the trench and 1m wide at the northern end of the trench to establish the depth of disturbed cultivation soil (C.4002). Geophysical survey had previously indicated that the cut of the ditch lay towards the southern end of the trench. This was done and it was established that the depth to undisturbed natural was *c.*0.45m.

As in Trenches 1 and 3, a strip 1m wide along the western side of the trench was excavated starting at the southern end. During this procedure both the southern and northern edges of the cut of the ditch were located so the excavation continued in the area identified. A series of fills was encountered below the cultivation soil (C.4002). C.4003 was a relatively thin lens of greyish silty clay at the interface between the upper ditch fills and the base of cultivation. This seems to correspond with C.4007 which was identified as an interface layer between the base of cultivation soil and the top of undisturbed natural (C.4009). This seems to represent a layer of material more gravelly than cultivation soil, but with more clay and silt content than the undisturbed natural that was occasionally disturbed by cultivation but not frequently enough to become homogenised and incorporated fully into the cultivation layer. C.4007 was only found directly above natural as it is comprised of a mixture of cultivation soil and natural. Over the area of the ditch, although it is highly likely that the same process was in operation, this layer took a different appearance because the interface layer is made up of a mixture of cultivation soil and the ditch fills below.

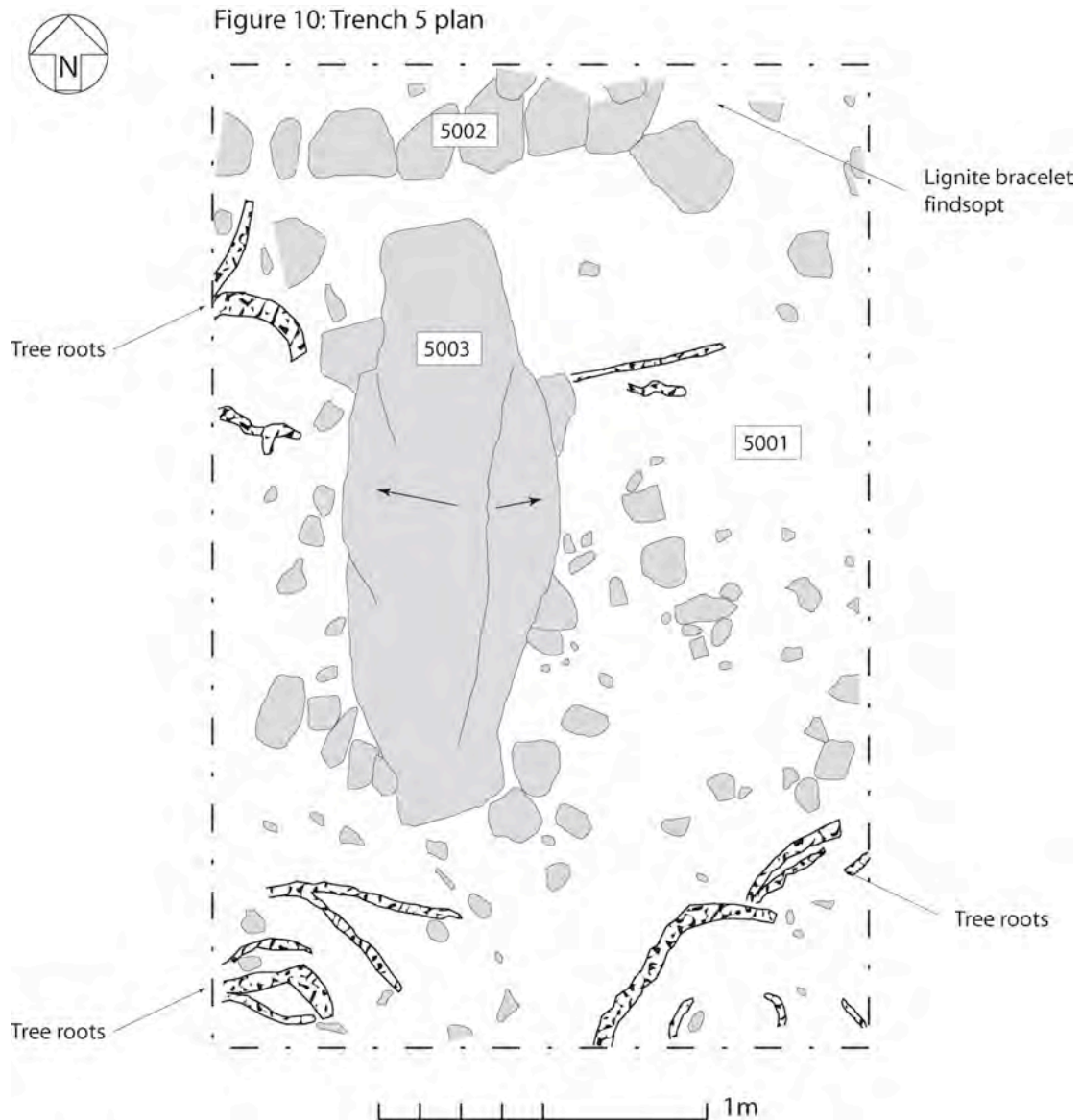
The ditch (C.4008) was *c.* 3.6m wide and was at least 1.5m deep below sod level. Five distinct fills were encountered during the excavation. The first, C.4003 has been discussed above. Below this was another lens-like layer C.4004, a relatively stone-free silty clay. Below this was C.4005, the main fill of the ditch which was also a silty clay matrix with a moderately frequent stone content. The stone content increased towards the base with frequent large cobbles. The dashed line on the section indicates the transition within this layer. Immediately below this layer on the northern edge of the ditch cut was C4006, a darker, silty clay containing very few stones. There was no corresponding context on the other side of the ditch so this may represent material that slipped down from an inner bank which would have been positioned on the northern side of the ditch.

Table 3 List of Contexts, Trench 4

4001	Sod and topsoil
4002	Cultivation soil
4003	Grey layer, lens
4004	Ditch fill primary
4005	Stony layer below 4004
4006	Layer on N side of ditch cut
4007	Base of cultivation/interface above natural
4008	Cut of ditch
4009	Natural gravel/subsoil

4.5 Trench 5

This trench (3m x 2m) was positioned to investigate the area of a greywacke slab which appears to have been displaced during cultivation of the tillage field dumped across the field boundary in the adjacent pasture field where it has become semi-buried.



Context	Description
5001	Cultivation soil
5002	Linear stone setting, possible feature
5003	Greywacke slab

Table 4 List of Contexts, Trench 5

Because of the location of the trench so close to the field boundary, the area is overhung by the branches of blackthorn hedging and little or no sod growth over the area of the trench. There was no distinction between sod/topsoil and cultivation soil

so C.5001 refers to the upper layer of disturbed/cultivation soil. The disturbed cultivation soil was excavated by hand in spits and all material was sieved for finds. Excavation continued until the base of the greywacke slab (C.5003) was exposed. This was found to be lying completely within the cultivation soil layer and appears to have been moved to its current position in relatively recent times. Excavation ceased at this point so as not to destabilise the stone in advance of raising it. The pattern of plough-marks visible on the upper surface of the stone suggest that it has lain for some time in an east-west direction as the direction of cultivation in the field where it is located and the neighbouring field where it may have been originally positioned, is north-south. As can be seen from the plan (Figure 5) the stone is currently lying in a north-south direction. Graffiti has been applied to the west facing plane of the stone, apparently while in its current position, which reads 'PM'. At the north end of the trench a possible deliberate linear setting of firmly set field stones was uncovered (C.5002). Because of the decision not to excavate deeper, it is unclear as to what these might represent.

Fragments of barbed wire fencing were frequent and some animal bone was also recovered. Occasional lithic artefacts were also encountered and in the north-eastern corner of the cutting close to the possible feature (C.5002) a portion of a lignite bracelet (see Photo 2) was recovered. Almost half of the original circumference of the artefact was present.

At the time of writing the greywacke slab (C.5003) had not yet been lifted from the trench. Although arrangements had been put in place with a local farmer to raise the stone using a teleporter, this unfortunately did not happen according to plan and the stone has yet to be lifted. Due to the size of the stone, appropriate equipment must be used to ensure the safety of those involved in the operation as well as safeguarding the condition of the stone itself. As a result, it was decided to wait until appropriate equipment was available before attempting the operation. However, alternative arrangements are being put in place to raise the stone in the coming weeks.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The excavation may be regarded as having been very successful in that the list of objectives of the excavation have largely been met. Although the footprint of the trenches excavated is very small in relation to the overall scale of the enclosure, important data have been retrieved as to the structure of the banks and ditches and associated features. Significant data have also been retrieved in the form of feature plans and section drawings against which the various geophysical survey techniques may be directly compared. This will be particularly important in assessing the effectiveness of the less frequently used electrical resistance tomography technique.

The excavation has been particularly successful in retrieving dating material in the form of animal bone and several pieces have been recovered from very significant levels within the ditch features, particularly in Trenches 1 and 3, which will hopefully allow accurate radiocarbon dating for the main period of use of the site. Additionally, as material has been retrieved from both the outermost (Trench 1) and innermost (Trench 3) ditches, this may allow an examination of whether the layout of the ditches was a single-phase or a multi-phase operation. The recovery of diagnostic artefacts from beneath the bank in Trench 3 seems to indicate a later first millennium AD date for the construction of that feature. It seems likely that the other substantial features

identified by the geophysical survey are of a similar date so it is clear that the initial hypothesis that the enclosure is prehistoric is incorrect.

A significant number of environmental samples were recovered. Very significant quantities of animal bone were collected and are likely to provide significant information on the economy of the site. Very useful comparanda exist for the assemblage from the work carried out at Knowth and Newgrange. All major contexts from the ditch fills were bulk sampled for macrofossil remains and separate soil samples were taken for mollusc identification. Advice received onsite suggested that the ditch fills in Trenches 1 and 3 were unsuitable for the preservation of pollen but two column samples were extracted and retained from Trench 4.

The objective of raising the greywacke slab in Trench 5 had not been met at the time of writing but it is expected that the stone will be raised and the trench backfilled in the coming weeks. The possibility that the linear stone feature C.5002 may be the remains of a souterrain might suggest that the greywacke slab (C.5003) was used as a lintel or capstone in such a structure. The presence of the lignite bracelet in such good condition could be explained by this possibility. While it is possible that the greywacke slab was located on the Rosnaree side of the river from Neolithic times and was reused in a souterrain, the possibility also exists that the stone was removed from Knowth during the early medieval period specifically for use as a souterrain capstone. It is hoped that this question may move closer to resolution on raising the greywacke slab.

In terms of providing excavation experience for students, four undergraduate students from Dundalk Institute of Technology and one from N.U.I. Maynooth worked for periods of between one and four weeks on the dig and were given detailed instruction on the conduct of an archaeological excavation. Additionally, I was fortunate in having assistance from a number of experienced U.C.D. postgraduate students, a number of whom are researching aspects of the archaeology of Brú na Bóinne.

Prior to the commencement of the excavation, a blog site was established to publicise the day-to-day activities, borrowing the idea from the blog already established for the excavation at Bective. This is considered of to have been a very worthwhile exercise because, although there were some visitors to the site during the excavation, because it took place on private land some distance from the nearest road, and because of specific conditions on the site itself, visitor access to the site by large numbers of people was neither desirable nor practical. Instead, the blog allowed a limited and controlled view of the proceedings to be presented as they unfolded. The main difficulty in this exercise was to disseminate the website address among as many people as possible. This was facilitated by inclusion of an item in the Heritage Council monthly newsletter, after which there was a significant rise in the number of online visitors to the site. There were approximately 3,500 visitors to the site during the course of the excavation and in total to date there have been almost 5,000 visitors. The site address is <http://rossnareedig.wordpress.com>.

Further detailed geophysical survey was conducted in Field 22a following the excavation and a clearer picture of the nature of the subsurface features was recorded (Brady and Barton in prep.). It is clear from this data that the features are complex and represent multi-phase activity. In some places where features intersect or overlap,

it is possible to suggest a relative chronology of development. As outlined above, it is likely that most of the large-scale features recorded are early medieval in date. However, close examination of the new magnetic gradiometry and earth resistance data as well as some reprocessing and replotting of existing magnetic susceptibility data, all point to a possible early, maybe prehistoric, set of features in the core of the site on top of the topographic knoll. Given the extent and density of the lithic scatter from this site, it appears possible that these anomalies represent features associated with the prehistoric occupation of this part of the Brú na Bóinne landscape.

Initial processing of the finds and soil samples is underway but detailed post-excavation analysis will depend on receipt of a post-excavation grant from the Royal Irish Academy. The most significant work to be done in this regard will be the animal bone report, the identification of macrofossil remains from the bulk soil samples, the identification of mollusc remains from the mollusc soil samples, processing of the column samples taken for that purpose in Trench 4, processing and laboratory measurement of soil magnetic susceptibility of the samples taken at intervals within Trenches 1, 3 and 4, lithics and other artefact reports, radiocarbon dating of the animal remains from the bases of the two ditches.

6. References

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7. Photos



Photo 1 Bone comb fragment (C.3014)



Photo 2 Lignite bracelet fragment (C.5001)

8. Appendix

Finds by Context

Material Context	Flint/ Stone	Animal bone	Iron	Lignite bracelet	Bone comb	Glass	Fabric	Shell (mollusc)	Copper -alloy
1001	4	1				1	1		
1002									
1003	5	4							
1005	1								
1007	2								
1008	1	2							
1009	3	2						1	
1010	1	2							
1012	2	3							
1013		1							
1014		1						1	
3001	3	3	2						
3002	3	1	1						
3003	1		1						
3004		2							
3005		1							
3006		2							
3007		2							
3008	1	2							
3009	2	1							
3010		4							
3011	10	7							
3014	2	5			1				1
4001	2								
4002	2								
4004		4						1	
4005		1							
4006		1							
5001	4	2	1	1					

* Numbers refer to numbers of bags rather than numbers of individual artefacts/objects.