

# Excavations in 2007 at Belderrig

Co. Mayo

04E0893

## Preliminary Outline of results



UCD School of Archaeology

# BDG07 Interim Statement

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Excavations continued in 2007 at the site of Belderrig, Co. Mayo (Licence 04E:0893). The project, which is directed by Graeme Warren, UCD School of Archaeology, is funded by the National Committee for Archaeology of the Royal Irish Academy. From June 26<sup>th</sup> - July 20<sup>th</sup> this year, a team focused on continued excavation of Trench 1 including opening a small annex to the Trench to investigate a second geophysical anomaly identified in the 2004 survey (Figure 1).

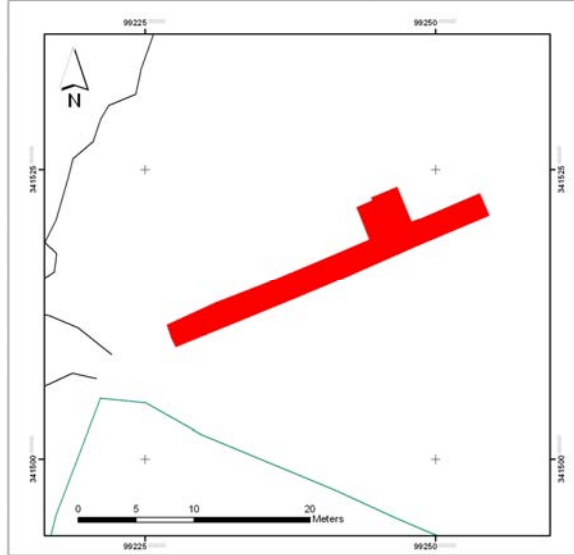


Figure 1: Location of Trench One and Annex

Progress this year was undoubtedly hampered by difficult weather conditions, with over 50% of possible digging days completely lost. Excavation of the stony surfaces (see below) was exceptionally difficult in wet conditions as the highly compacted character of the deposits led to water sheeting across the surface. The trench remained incomplete this year although good progress was made.



Figure 2: BDG07 Trench One, C.173/174, mid excavation. Facing West.

In the lower part of the trench the stony layers were completely removed. These continued to contain significant quantities of artefacts and in one location a cache of three polished stone axes was recovered (see below). The stony layer in part filled tree throws, and in one location a mica schist Moynagh point had been deposited at the base of a throw. A large shallow pit was only identified beneath the stony surfaces (Figure 2), but appears to have been cut from the

surfaces themselves. This pit contained substantial numbers of lithics.

The annex to the trench contained a range of important structural features, and forced a reappraisal of sequences excavated in 2005. In the annex a boulder defined field wall ran northwest – southeast. This wall was abutted to the north by a small D-shaped cairn (Figure 3). A second D-Shaped cairn, of

similar size, was excavated in 2005, abutting the east-west running field wall. Here modifications to the wall, including the possible creation of an entrance at the junction of the two walls led to material being thrown back onto and around a cairn, which in a narrow trench was misidentified as tumble. To the south of the wall a low curving wall was identified, corresponding with a feature excavated in a test pit in 2004 (stones coloured yellow in Figure 3). This feature, which included distinctive deposits, is currently ambiguous. Excavations in the annex were incomplete this year but it is clear that an area of important neolithic activity has been identified. The stratigraphical relationship between this area and the mesolithic layers is of considerable importance.



Figure 3: BDG07, overview of Tr. One Annex after removal of tumble, facing south west.

Artefacts recovered this year included numerous lithics, again mainly of quartz but with some chert, siltstone and other materials. Notably a very fine large flint blade was found from deep within the stony layers – the blade is very unlikely to have been manufactured on local flint and is presumably an import from northeast Ireland. The most important finds, however, were three polished stone axes, of currently unidentified materials, located in a small cache within the upper levels of the stony surface (Figure 4). A fourth axe, of similar material, was found by a member of the local community on the west of the bay some 10 years ago.



Figure 4: BDG07, three polished stone axes in upper part of stony layer

Sample processing continues and further fishbones, plant macrofossils and insect remains have been identified. Importantly evidence of fish teeth is beginning to appear in Trench One. Eleven radiocarbon dates have now been obtained from the site and demonstrate activity from the mid fifth to mid fourth millennium calibrated BC.

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