

**Archaeological Excavation Report**  
**Acute Hospital**  
**Enniskillen**  
**Planning Ref L/2005/2267/O**  
**Licence No AE/07/84**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

It is proposed by Sperrin Lakeland Trust to build a new acute hospital for Fermanagh and W Tyrone at Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh (figure 1). An archaeological programme of works was established prior to ground works commencing. This recommended that archaeological monitoring took place in advance of the construction work.

## **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

A desk top survey was conducted to identify the location of known archaeological sites within the area and near vicinity of the proposed development site. The Sites and Monuments Records (SMR) were examined and indicated that a number of sites were identified within a 1km radius of the proposed development site (figure 2).

The site **FER 211:24** is recorded as a prehistoric standing stone. It is described in the SMR as a large sandstone slab located on a gradual SE facing slope of a large drumlin that overlooks Black Lough to the S. The stone stands 1.75m high x 1.4m wide x 0.45m thick, and tapers gradually to a blunt point. Two large boulders and a scattering of smaller stones lie to the SW of the slab. The site is mentioned in the writings of Rogers.

The site **FER 211:25** is recorded as a landscape feature of uncertain date. It is described in the SMR as the former site of a tree ring located on the W facing slope of a large drumlin, approximately 350m W of Cross House. The site is marked on all editions of the OS 6" maps, and is recorded as a plain circle on the current IG map. In 1962, however, the feature was destroyed to facilitate the construction of an electricity station. No finds were made during its removal, and there are currently no visible remains at the site. A surviving tree ring (**FER 211:26**) is located approximately 620m to the SE.

The site **FER 211:26** is recorded as a landscape feature of uncertain date. It is described in the SMR as a small, circular tree ring, located close to the townland boundary, and immediately adjacent to the dismantled Enniskillen - Londonderry railway. It is recorded on most of the OS 6" map editions,

and on the current IG map. The feature is approximately 16.7m N-S x 17.7m E-W, and is enclosed by a low earthen bank and outer ditch. The bank is 1.6m wide and stands 0.1m above the interior x 0.7m above the ditch. Beech trees have been planted against the inner face. The ditch is 1.8m wide x 0.1m deep. There are no visible remains of an original entrance to this tree ring.

The site **FER 211:106** is recorded as a burnt mound of uncertain date. There are currently no details relating to this site recorded in the SMR.

### 3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONITORING

Archaeological monitoring of topsoil removal commenced on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007. Prior to this work the site consisted of a farmhouse, with outbuildings, set within a high ridge of land, used for pasture, which is bordered by an area of bog to the N and E with a small lough to the W. Access was gained via an existing lane off the Irvinestown Road.

The topsoil removal was conducted under strict archaeological supervision. The topsoil consisted of a fine, cohesive mid brown loamy clay, which varied in depth from an average of 0.2m along the summit and slopes of the high ground to around 0.3-0.4m at the base of the ridge. Random sherds of post-medieval pottery and clay pipes were retrieved from the topsoil during monitoring. This quickly gave way to boulder clay, which varied in colour from a light brownish orange on the higher ground to a light grey at the base of the ridge and in areas of reclaimed land.

During the course of the topsoil removal a number of areas of potential archaeological interest were identified, across the development (figure 3). These were cordoned off, evaluated by a qualified archaeologist and subsequently excavated by hand.

### 4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

The largest concentration of archaeology was located at the N limit of the development, approximately 40m W of the temporary access road (figure 4). It was positioned at the base of a steep N facing slope on the fringe of an area of bog. The site was dominated by 4 concentrations of burnt mound spread material, [53], [54], [57] and [58], beneath which there was a trough [64] along with 2 pits [69] and [71] (plates 1-4).

The trough [64] was roughly oval in plan and measured 1.75m E-W x 1.5m N-S, with a maximum depth of 0.48m (figure 5). The cut had an abrupt break of slope at the top with steep sides and a sharp break of slope at the

base, which was comparatively flat. The trough was cut into a soft, yet compact, very cohesive boulder clay, which was naturally waterproof and as such could have retained water. The base of the cut had a moderate scatter of small (<0.1m) angular and subangular shaped stones, which had probably been pressed into the soft clay when the trough was being backfilled. The trough contained 2 fills. The basal fill [66] consisted of soft, inky, cohesive, and mouldable black clayey silt mixed with very frequent charcoal flecking along with small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized angular and subangular shaped heat fractured stones. This was overlaid by [65] a soft, cohesive dark brownish grey clayey silt mixed with the occasional small (<0.1m) angular shaped stone and the fill was stained through contact with [66]. It was similar to [53] which covered it and sealed [64]. No artefacts were recovered from either of the fills.

The trough [64] was sealed beneath a layer of burnt mound spread, [53] which was irregular in plan. The spread covered an area of 4.7m E-W x 3.2m N-S, with a maximum depth of 0.06m. It consisted of a cohesive, mouldable mid brownish grey silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking and very frequent small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized angular and subangular shaped stones, some of which were heat fractured. This layer produced no artefacts.

To the N of [64], at a distance of 3.5m, was the pit [69] which was oval in plan, with a length of 1.25m, width of 1.06m and maximum depth of 0.38m (figure 6). The pit had a sharp break of slope at the top with gently sloping sides, except along the W edge where it was steep, and had a gentle break of slope at the base. The base of the pit was concave in shape.

Immediately to the S of [69] was the pit [71], which was roughly circular in plan, with a maximum diameter of 0.7m and depth of 0.15m (figure 7). The cut had an abrupt break of slope at the top, with vertical sides and a sharp break of slope at the base, which was even. It had a single fill, [72], a soft, mouldable, compact dark greyish brown silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking and small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized angular shaped stones. No artefacts were recovered from this fill.

The pit [69] was filled by and both pits [69 and 71] were sealed by the spread [57]. The spread measured 4.25m N-S x 2.66m E-W with an average depth of 0.1m, which increased to 0.38m in pit [69]. It consisted of a soft, cohesive, pliable dark brownish black silty clay mixed with very frequent charcoal flecking and small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized angular shaped stones, with a moderate number of heat fractured stones. No artefacts were recovered from [57].

Just to the E of [57] was the burnt mound spread [54], which was irregular in plan, with a maximum length of 3.7m, width of 2.08m and depth of

0.07m. It was very similar in colour and consistency as [53], being cohesive, mouldable mid-brownish grey silty clay mixed with moderate inclusions of small (<0.1m) angular shaped stones and heat fractured stones, along with moderate charcoal flecking. This spread produced no artefacts. Spread [54] was partially sealed by spreads [55 and 56] both of which represent charcoal rich basal topsoil.

The final spread of burnt mound material [58] was located 1.2m W of [57]. This was irregular in plan, measuring approximately 2.6m x 1.4m with a maximum depth of 0.08m. The spread [58] was a soft, cohesive dark brownish black silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking and moderate small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized angular shaped stones. No artefacts were recovered from this spread.

In addition to the burnt mound, a number of isolated areas of archaeological activity were investigated across the area of the proposed development site.

Approximately 15m E of the burnt mound, along the same N facing slope was the 'D' shaped pit [49], which had a length of 0.9m, width of 0.72m and maximum depth of 0.07m (figure 8). Bar the S edge of the pit, it had a gentle break of slope at the top with gently sloping sides, which merged into a relatively flat base. It contained a single fill, [45] a compact, cohesive mid brown silty clay mixed with occasional charcoal flecking and moderate concentrations of red, oxidised clay. Once [49] had been completely excavated small concentrations of oxidised clay remained at the base of the cut, close to its E and SE edge, which suggested there may have been some limited, insitu burning. No artefacts were recovered from this fill.

To the E of [49], at a distance of 20m, on the edge of the stoned access road, was the roughly circular pit [44], with a maximum diameter of 0.72m and depth of 0.06m (figure 9). The pit had quite a sharp break of slope at the top with steep sides along the NW-NE edge of the cut, with more gentle sides for the remainder of the circumference. It had a gentle break of slope at the base, which was flat. Pit [44] contained a single fill, [48] a compact, fine dark brownish black sandy clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional small (<0.1m) angular shaped stone inclusions. The fill produced no artefacts.

On the E facing slope of the ridge, around 20m to the SW of [44] was the remnants of a shallow pit [61] (figure 10). The pit was sub-rectangular in plan, being 2.8m in length, 1.25m in width with a depth of 0.06m. Along most of its length the top and base of the slope along with the sides were imperceptible, except for the N and NW edge of the cut, which were more pronounced and steeper. The base of the cut was quite flat. Pit [61] had 2 fills, [60] concentrated along the E limit of the feature, a compact, cohesive, light brownish orange clay mixed with the occasional fleck of charcoal. This

re-deposited natural, was partially overlaid by the primary fill of [61], [59] which was a soft, fine cohesive black silty clay mixed with a very high frequency of charcoal flecking and produced the only artefact from this feature, a large body sherd of glazed 17<sup>th</sup> century pottery.

Approximately 15m to the SE and downslope of [61] was a small concentration of features, consisting of 2 pits and 2 spreads (figure 11). The elongated pit [67] was only uncovered during the removal of the spread [42]. The pit measured 2.7m E-W x 0.6m N-S with an approximate depth of 0.25m. Aside from the E-SE edge, which was imperceptible, the pit had an abrupt break of slope at the top with steep sides and a sharp break of slope at the base, which was uneven and pitted. Pit [67] had 2 fills, [62] and [63], the latter of which was the basal fill, which consisted of a moderately compact, mouldable dark greyish brown silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional small (<0.1m) stones. The fill [63] also produced a base sherd of early Bronze Age pottery (A.M. Denvir, pers comm.). This layer was covered by [62] a very compact, coarse, cohesive mid greyish brown sandy clay, mixed with occasional small (<0.1m) stone inclusions. No artefacts were recovered from [62].

Spread [42], which partially covered pit [67], was sub-rectangular in plan, measuring 2.4m NE-SW x 2m NW-SE, with a maximum depth of 0.12m. The spread consisted of a soft, cohesive dark brown clayey silt mixed with moderate small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized rounded and sub-rounded stones, as well as moderate charcoal flecking. No artefacts were recovered from this fill.

Immediately to the W of [42] was the pit [43] and small spread [46]. Pit [43] was roughly oval in shape, with a length of 0.8m, width of 0.5m and depth of 0.18m. Aside from the NW edge of the cut, which had a sharp break of slope at the top, with steep side, the pit had a gradual break of slope at the top and base, with gentle sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill, [47], which had been dragged a short distance, around 0.6m, from the S edge of [43]. The fill consisted of a compact mid grey silty clay with moderate flecks of charcoal and small flecks of orange clay. No artefacts were retrieved from the fill.

Just to the E of [43] was the small spread [46], which was oval in plan, being 0.7m E-W x 0.5m N-S, with a maximum depth of 0.04m. The spread was a moderately compact mid grey silty clay mixed with moderate charcoal flecking. It was very similar in colour and texture to [47], that, along with spread [46] being in close proximity to pit [43] would strongly suggest that the spread is simply more drag material from [47], created by later disturbance. The spread produced no artefacts.

To the SW of the burnt mound, at a distance of approximately 40m, at the brow of the hill, which overlooked the site, there was a stake hole [11] (figure 13). It was roughly circular in plan with a maximum diameter of 0.26m and depth of 0.15m. The cut had an abrupt break of slope at the top with vertical sides and a sharp break of slope at the base, which was flat. The stake hole was filled by [12], a moderately compact, mouldable, black silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional small (<0.1m) stone inclusions. No artefacts were recovered from the fill.

Further S, along the ridge of the hill, some 30m from [11], was the sub-rectangular in plan pit [05] which measured 2.07m E-W x 1.34m N-S, with a maximum depth of 0.2m (figure 14). Aside from the NE edge, it had a sharp break of slope at the top with steep sides and an abrupt break of slope at the base, which was quite even. There were 2 fills, the basal fill being [06], a moderately compact black silty clay mixed with very frequent charcoal flecking which was overlaid by [07], a compact layer of re-deposited natural orange clay, mixed with frequent inclusions of charcoal and the occasional degraded stone. Neither of the fills produced artefacts.

To the W of [05], at a distance of 15m, there was the roughly oval shaped pit [08], which had a length of 0.33m, width of 0.24m and a maximum depth of 0.15m (figure 15). The pit had an abrupt break of slope at the top with steep (almost vertical along the E edge) sides and a sharp break of slope at the base, which was uneven and sloped E-W. It was filled by [09] a quite compact, cohesive mid orangey grey silty clay mixed with frequent flecks of charcoal and small (<0.1m) stone inclusions. A small, struck piece of flint was retrieved from [09].

To the SW of [05], in a hollow beneath the farmhouse and outbuildings, E of an existing concrete lane and S of a field boundary ditch, there was a pit [02] and a spread [04]. The pit [02] was oval in plan, measuring 0.56m in length and 0.3m in width with a depth of 0.15m (figure 16). It had a sharp break of slope at the top with steep sides and an abrupt break of slope at the base, which was even. The form of the pit was initially obscured, as its upper fill [01], was spread beyond the edges of the cut as a result of later disturbance. This fill was a loosely compacted dark greyish brown silty sand mixed with very frequent inclusions of charcoal and orange, heat fractured stone. It overlaid [03], a moderately compact, cohesive mid grey silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking. Burnt bone fragments were recovered from [01].

Approximately 15m E of [02] was the roughly oval shaped spread [04], which covered an area 1.18m E-W x 0.86m N-S, with a maximum depth of 0.05m (figure 17). The spread consisted of a moderately compact, mouldable black silty clay mixed with frequent flecks of charcoal. It did not produce any artefacts.

Further E and downslope from [04], at a distance of 25m was the roughly oval shaped pit [39] which was 0.6m in length and 0.4m in width, with a depth of 0.16m (figure 18). It had an abrupt break of slope at the top, with gradual, slightly stepped sides and a gentler break of slope at the base, which was uneven. It contained 2 fills, [40] and [41]. The lower fill, [41], was concentrated around the edges of the pit, consisting of a cohesive, soft light orangey brown silty clay with occasional charcoal inclusions. It was found below [40] a soft, cohesive dark grey silty clay with moderate orange flecks of clay, charcoal and small (<0.1m) stones. Neither fill produced any artefacts.

Located SW of [39], in the front garden of the farmhouse, next to the main lane off the Irvinestown Road, was the sub-rectangular shaped pit [22] (figure 19). It had a length of 2.72m and width of 1.9m with a maximum depth of 0.2m. The break of slope at the top of the cut was gradual with largely imperceptible sides and gentle break of slope at the base, which was flat. The pit contained 2 fills, the basal fill being [21] which was soft, fine black silty clay mixed with frequent flecks of charcoal and occasional medium (0.1-0.2m) sized subangular shaped stones. This was partially covered by [20] a friable dark greyish brown silty clay, which appeared to be a thin layer of basal topsoil, stained through contact with [21]. Neither fill produced artefacts.

Approximately 100m W of [22], close to the boundary of the site, which overlooked an area of reclaimed land, there was a pit [23] and 2 stake holes [25] and [26] (figure 20). The elongated pit [23] measured 1.62m NE-SW x 0.48m SE-NW with a depth of 0.1m. The cut, bar the NE edge, had an abrupt break of slope at the top with steep sides and a gentler break of slope at the base, which was uneven and deeper along the W edge of the pit.

Cut into the base of [23] were 2 stake holes, [25] and [26], which were located at the N half of the pit. Both were oval in plan, measured 0.13m x 0.1m with a depth of 0.05m and had a sharp break of slope at the top with steep sides, and a more gradual break of slope at the base, which was concave. The stake holes were filled by [27], which was a loose dark greyish brown silty clay. The stakeholes were sealed by and pit [23] filled by [24] which was compact, cohesive dark greyish brown silty clay mixed with the occasional small (<0.1m) angular shaped stone, moderate charcoal flecking and occasional, small concentrations of red oxidised clay, which had not been burnt insitu. The fill did not produce any artefacts.

Along the same W facing slope, but approximately 50m S of [23], there was the sub-rectangular shaped pit [15] (figure 21). The pit was 0.98m long, 0.66m wide and 0.18m deep. It had an abrupt break of slope at the top

with gradually sloping sides (except the NW and SW edges, which were steeper) and a gentle break of slope at the base, which was quite flat. The pit contained a single fill, [14] a compact dark greyish brown silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking, which was concentrated along the S edge of the pit and medium (0.1-0.2m) to large (>0.2m) sized, subangular and angular shaped stones. A small, rather non-descript piece of metal was retrieved from [14].

To the E of [15], within 10m of it, was the pit [13], which was oval in plan with a length of 0.94m, width of 0.86m and a maximum depth of 0.24m (figure 22). It had a sharp break of slope at the top, with steep sides along the N and W edge, with gentler sides at the S and E. The break of slope at the base was gradual and the base was flat. The pit had 3 fills. The basal fill, [19], was a mouldable, firm, dark grey silty clay with frequent inclusions of charcoal. This was partially covered by [18], which was a mouldable, soft mid greyish brown silty clay mixed with moderate amounts of orange clay. In turn, both [18] and [19] were overlaid by [17] a very compact, dark greyish brown silty clay mixed with frequent charcoal flecking. None of these fills produced artefacts.

Further E, at the top of the hill, and along the S boundary of the development, there were a series of isolated features. The closest to [13], some 100m to the E, was the sub-oval shaped pit [31], which measured 0.58m NW-SE x 0.32m NE-SW, with a maximum depth of 0.12m (figure 23). The cut had a sharp break of slope at the top and base with steep sides along the N and E edge, while at the S and W edge it was more gradual with almost imperceptible sides. The base was irregular. Pit [31] had 2 fills. The lower fill [33] was concentrated along the sides and base of the cut, consisting of a very compact mid brown silty clay mixed with occasional flecks of charcoal and flecks of oxidised clay. This was overlaid by [32] a compact black silty clay with frequent charcoal flecking and occasional medium (0.1-0.2m) sized subangular shaped stones. Neither of the fills produced artefacts.

To the E of [31], at a distance of 15m, was the pit [30], which was oval in plan, with a length of 1.25m, width of 0.75m and had a maximum depth of 0.18m. The break of slope at the top was abrupt, while the sides were gradual, especially along the E and W edge of the cut, and the break of slope at the base was, aside from the S edge, almost imperceptible, while the base was uneven. The pit was filled by [34] a mouldable, compact dark greyish brown silty clay mixed with frequent small (<0.1m) to medium (0.1-0.2m) sized subangular shaped stones and flecks of charcoal.

Immediately to the E of [30] was the oval shaped pit [28], which measured 1.6m N-S x 0.96 E-W, with a maximum depth of 0.15m. The pit had an abrupt break of slope at the top, with steep sides, bar the S and SE edge,

which was imperceptible, and a gentle break of slope at the base, which was concave. It contained 3 fills. The basal fill, [37], was concentrated along most of the base and E edge of [28] and consisted of a mouldable, soft black silty clay with very frequent inclusions of charcoal. It was covered by [36] a compact, mouldable mid greyish brown silty clay mixed with occasional charcoal flecking. Both [36] and [37] were overlaid by [35], which was concentrated along the W edge of [28]. This fill was compact, mouldable light orangey brown silty clay, with no inclusions and was probably a layer of re-deposited natural. None of the fills produced artefacts.

#### 4.1. DISCUSSION

The primary site uncovered within the confines of the Acute Hospital was the burnt mound or *fulachta fiadh* at the N boundary of the development, which would indicate Bronze Age (2000-500 BC) activity. *Fulachta fiadh* are found throughout Ireland and are generally perceived to represent cooking places. Typically they consist of a trough, dug into the ground and lined with clay, stones or wooden planks to make it watertight. In the case of trough [64] though the underlying natural clay was sufficiently watertight that it did not require additional clay or other measures to retain water.

*Fulachta fiadh* are usually located close to a water source, either a river or stream, standing water such as a boggy landscape or a natural spring. The burnt mound at the Acute Hospital was situated next to an area of bog, which would have provided a ready source of water. Stones were heated in a fire and then placed in the water filled trough, to raise the temperature. It is believed that additional heated stones would have been added during the cooking process to keep the water at the required temperature. Once the meat was cooked and the water had cooled, the old stones were emptied from the trough and discarded, usually in the immediate vicinity, allowing for re-use of the trough. Generally, the discarded heat fractured stone accumulated to form a mound surrounding the trough. Over the years the mounds eroded and were frequently ploughed out, with the result that they usually survive today as large spreads of burnt material. This was clearly evident with the burnt mound spreads [53], [54], [57] and [58], all of which were relatively shallow and no upstanding mounds were identified.

The only other feature, which may be roughly contemporary with the burnt mound, would be the elongated pit [67], located at the E slope of the same hill. As a base sherd of Bronze Age pottery was retrieved from the basal fill [63].

The majority of features uncovered within the development did not produce diagnostic finds, were not stratigraphically linked, were isolated and were subsoil cut. Yet some general trends can be distinguished. Most of the features were located close to a water source, for example, [13], [15] and [23] overlooked an area of reclaimed land, while [38], [42], [67] and the burnt mound were located on the fringes of bog. The majority of the features had charcoal rich fills and/or inclusions of burnt clay, such as, [02], [05], [22], [28] and [30]. This would indicate that burning and possibly cooking regularly occurred on site, although aside from small concentrations of oxidised clay at the base of [49] and a small quantity of burnt bone from [02], there was no conclusive evidence of insitu burning on site. Rather most of the charcoal rich fills and burnt clay were deposits, thus the fires must have been lit elsewhere or had not survived. In addition, most of the on site archaeology was located along hill slopes or at the base of a hill.

In conclusion, while the majority of the features at the proposed site of the Acute Hospital, Enniskillen were subsoil cut, were not stratigraphically linked and contained no artefacts, there is sufficient information to determine that there was at least sporadic use and limited occupation of the site in the past. The archaeological evidence would suggest that there was at least some Bronze Age activity on site, as supported by the presence of the burnt mound and the pot sherd from [67]. The next period of occupation was post-medieval (post-1600 AD) as shown by the sherd of pottery found in [61] and random sherds of pottery and clay pipes recovered from the topsoil during monitoring.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

It is proposed by Sperrin Lakeland Trust to build a new acute hospital for Fermanagh and W Tyrone at Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh. Prior to construction commencing, an archaeological programme of works was established in agreement with DOE:EHS. This detailed a programme of archaeological monitoring of topsoil removal across the area of the development site. During the course of this operation, a number of areas of archaeological potential were identified. Further investigation of these features revealed a burnt mound of Bronze Age date and a number of isolated features of uncertain date or function. All features were fully excavated and recorded as per DOE:EHS Excavations Standards Manual. Archaeological resolution of this development site has now been completed and it is recommended that no further archaeological works be required.