

**Archaeological Excavation
Preliminary Report**

**Bremore Castle
Balbriggan
Co. Dublin**

Excavation Licence No.: 17E0302



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Abstract

This report describes the preliminary results of an archaeological excavation, which was carried out under Licence No. 17E0302 at Bremore Castle, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Excavation of five trenches, concentrated within the walled garden, took place over 13 days between 14th July and 28th July 2017.

Bremore Castle which is a recorded monument (RMP: DU002-0002001-) and protected structure (RPS No.14), is located at the end of a lane off Drogheda Street (ITM 719709/ 764537) and to the west of the 19th century Drogheda-Dublin railway line.

The aim of excavation at Bremore Castle was to verify the nature of the anomalies on the geophysical survey, while engaging the community in archaeology. The site proved to be extensively disturbed with activity primarily dating to the post-medieval and modern period.

Contents

1-Introduction	4
2-Location, topography.....	4
3-Historical and Archaeological background	7
3.1. Cartographic Evidence.....	9
3.2. Previous Excavations	13
3.3. Geophysical Survey	15
4-Archaeological Excavation.....	16
4.1. Excavation Stratigraphy.....	17
4.2. Samples and Finds.....	33
5-Discussion.....	35
6-Conclusions	38
Acknowledgments.....	39
7-Post-Excavation programme.....	41
7.1. Archiving	41
7.2. Dissemination.....	41
References	41

Appendix 1- Feature List

Illustrations

Figures

- Fig. 1 Site Location Map 1:100
- Fig. 2 Archaeological Constraint Map
- Fig. 3 Austin Cooper's 'a View of Bremore' 1783
- Fig. 4 Down Survey map, 1655
- Fig. 5 Roque's Map, 1760
- Fig. 6 First Edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey map, 1837-43
- Fig. 7 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1865
- Fig. 8 6-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1871
- Fig. 9 Trench layout over geophysical resistance survey

Plates

- Plate 1 Aerial Photograph, Google Earth, 2017
- Plate 2 Trench 1 post-excavation, facing north-west
- Plate 3 Feature 18, facing east
- Plate 4 F10 mid-excavation, facing east
- Plate 5 F14, post-excavation, facing east
- Plate 6 Feature 17 mid-ex, facing south
- Plate 7 Trench 2 mid-excavation, facing south
- Plate 8 Path F2/F6, pre-excavation, facing east
- Plate 9 F6 and F4, mid-excavation, facing east
- Plate 10 Feature 26, post excavation, facing south
- Plate 11 Feature 9, pot-excavation, facing west
- Plate 12 Trench 4, Post-excavation, facing east
- Plate 13 Feature 22, facing south
- Plate 14 Trench 5, facing south
- Plate 15 Ted and Phil washing finds
- Plate 16 Bremore Big Dig 2017 participants in Trench 3

1 Introduction

This report describes the preliminary results of an archaeological excavation, which was carried out under Licence No. 17E0302 at Bremore Castle, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Excavation of five trenches, concentrated within the walled garden, took place over 13 days between 14th July and 28th July 2017.

The *Bremore Castle Big Dig 2017* was designed to address the research and knowledge gaps identified in the *Bremore Castle Conservation Plan* (2013); to assess the veracity of geophysical survey results undertaken by Target Surveys in 2011; to inform future restoration works of the walled garden by investigating the remains of possible garden features including paths, edging and possible tree planting pits, and to engage the local community with Bremore Castle.

2 Location & topography

Bremore Castle (ITM 719711/764570) is a 15th/16th century fortified house (DU002-002001-) and manor, coastally located on the northern outskirts of Balbriggan. It is situated within the townland of Bremore, west of the Dublin-Drogheda railway line. The site is within an undulating low-lying landscape that slopes gently towards the sea. To the north is an early-2000's housing estate and to the south is a 1970's school. The land to the east has been utilized for playing pitches, including a recently installed all-weather pitch.

The walled garden (ITM 719709/764537) is located to the south of the castle and north of the remains of St Molaga's Church (DU002-002002-) and graveyard (DU002-002003-). Defined by walls which have been subject to collapse and restoration, the interior of the walled garden relatively level, if somewhat overgrown currently, with occasional mounds of material and modern dump.

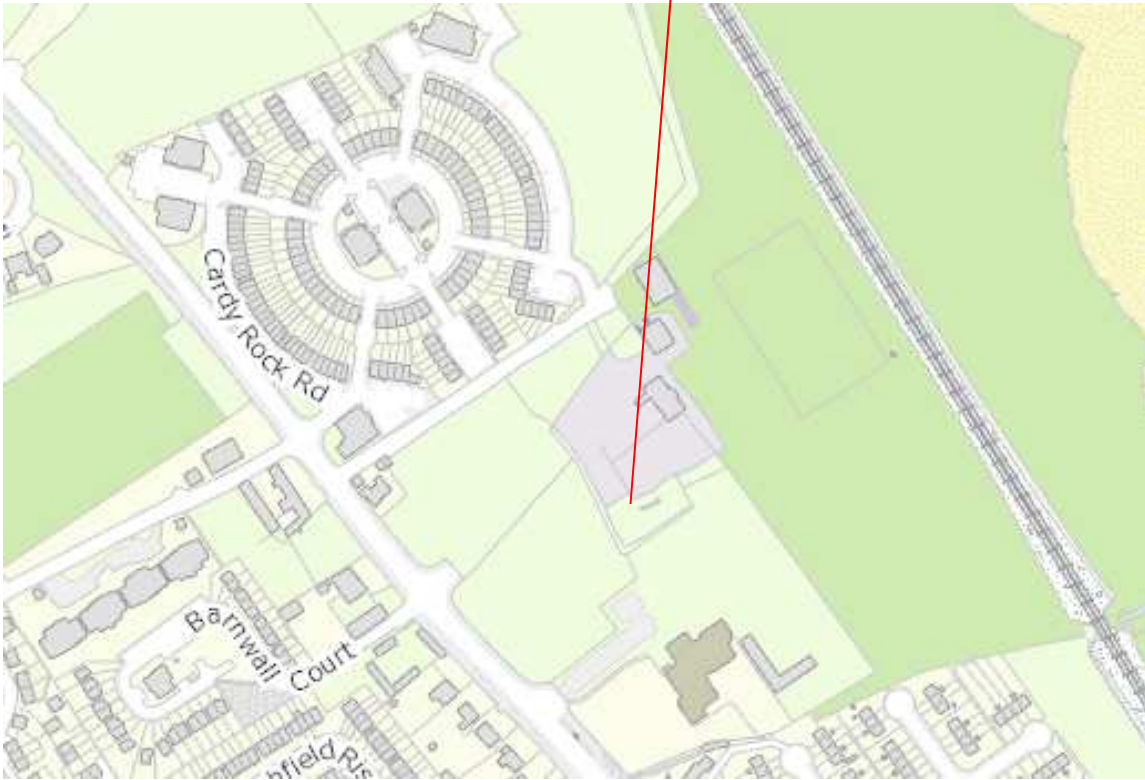
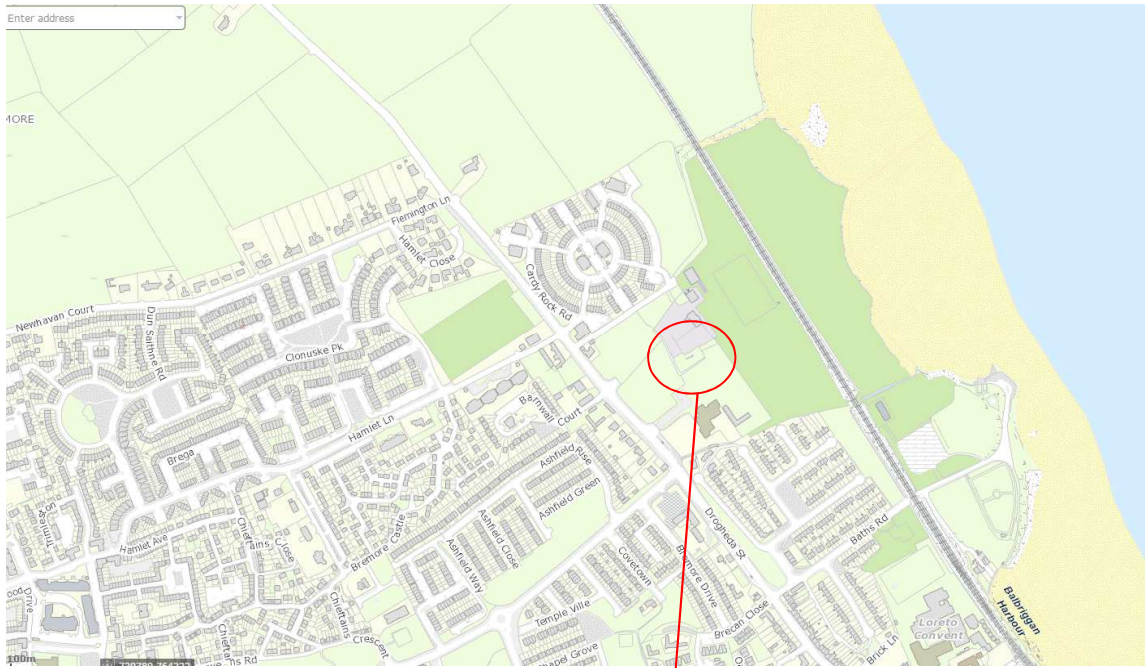


Fig.1: Site Location Map 1:100

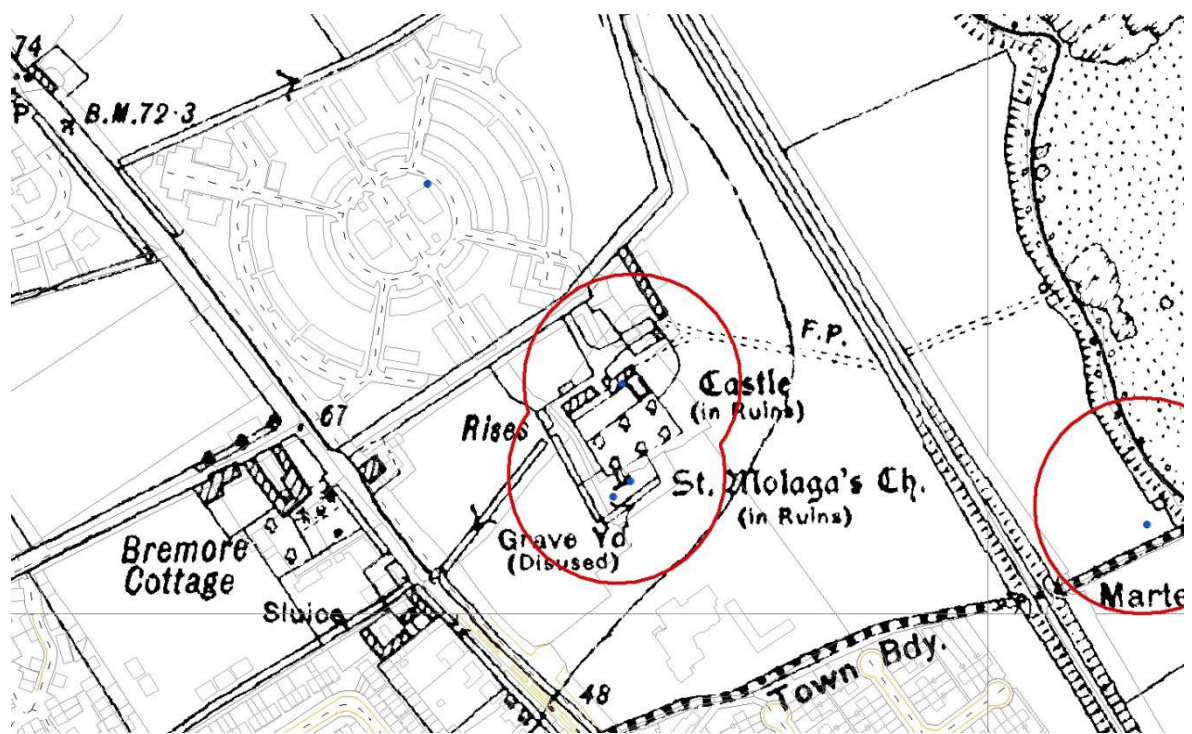


Fig. 2: Archaeological Constraint Map



Plate 1: Aerial Photograph, Google Earth, 2017

3 Historical and Archaeological Background

St. Molaga's late medieval church was the manorial chapel associated with Bremore Castle. It purportedly lays upon the early monastic site of *Lann Beachaire*, founded in the seventh century by students of St David of Meniva, Wales. Legend has it that St Molaga introduced bee-keeping into Ireland from Wales and there is a strong tradition associated with bees in the locality.

Medieval Bremore is tied to the prominent Anglo-Norman family, of the Barnewalls. Reginald de Barnewall acquired lands in Bremore in the early fourteenth century and by the close of that century the Barnewalls were described as the lords of Bremore, Balrothery and Balbriggan.

An Inquisition of 1567 described the estate at Bremore as consisting of 'a castle, 8 messuages or buildings, a dovecote, 8 gardens and 132 acres'. This is the first documentary evidence for a castle on the lands. The Barnewalls were confederate Catholics during the Cromwellian wars and the castle appears to have been subject to attack. A cannon ball was recovered during excavation in the field north of the castle (O'Carroll, 2009) and the *Civil Survey* of 1654 refers to Bremore as containing 'one burnt castle' (Simington, 1945).

Following the restoration of the monarchy, the Barnewalls regained the estate and the castle was refurbished. The decorated door lintel dated 1689, now within the graveyard may have been part of this work. Nearly a century later the castle was described by Cooper as

'rather a modern building with good limestone quoins, window frames, munnions &c...besides a number of Garden walls and such like inclosure still to be traced are the walls of a Chapel in wch. nothing is remarkable'.

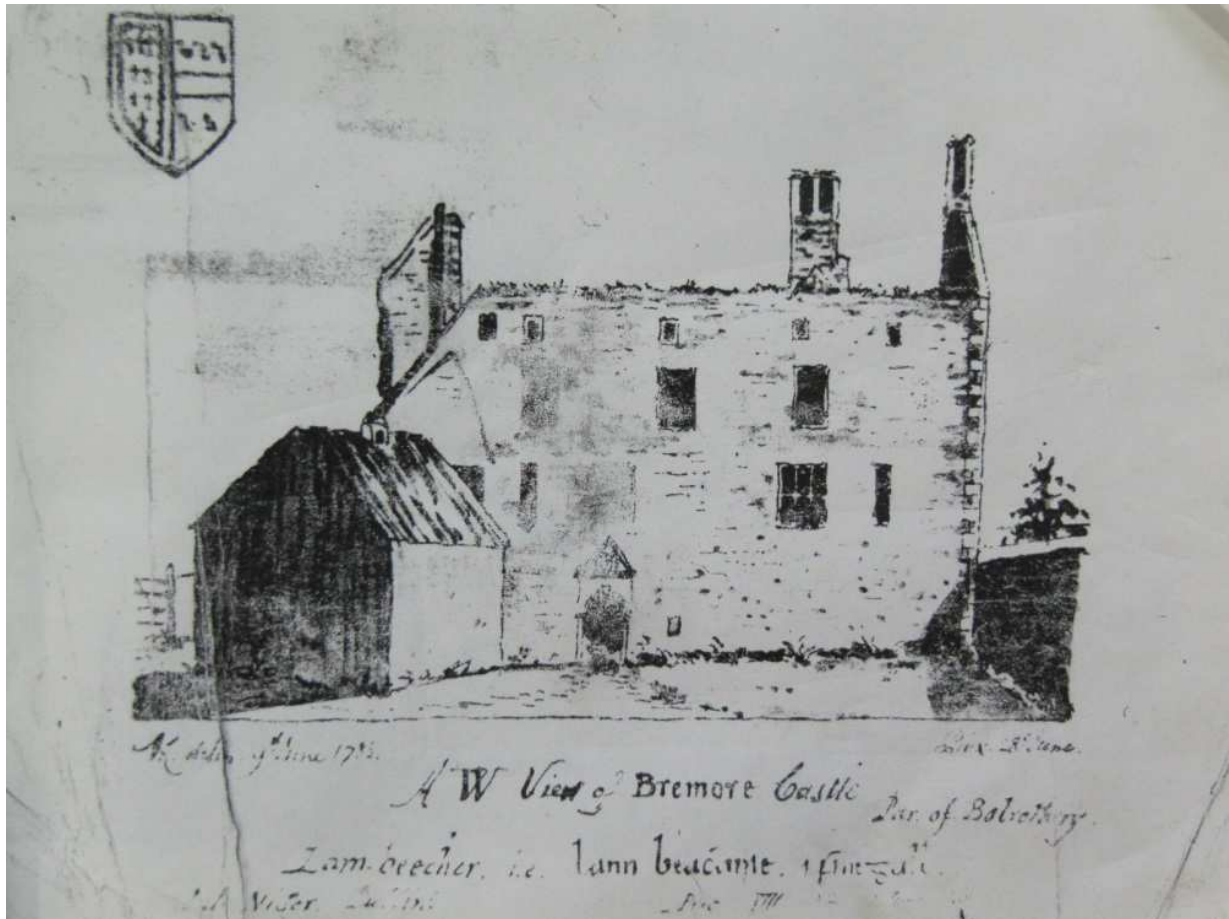


Fig 3: Austin Cooper's 'a View of Bremore' 1783

The castle continued in ruinous condition until it was taken down in 1883. The 'arching' stone of the castle dated 1689 had been deposited 'within the remains of the old church' by the late 1830s when D'Alton visited. The ruins and surrounding lands were owned by a number of farming families before being acquired by Dublin County Council in 1984. The site is now part of Bremore Regional Park which is owned and managed by Fingal County Council and a training centre for traditional building skills.

The walled garden located south of the castle may have evolved from the bawn of an earlier castle. The nineteenth century cartographic evidence shows it as a 'cabbage garden' or 'potager' whose layout was dramatically changed to that of a typical Victorian walled garden and orchard layout.

3.1 Cartographic Evidence (after Bremore Castle Conservation Plan)

The earliest historical map showing Bremore Castle is the Down Survey Map of which portrays the castle as house with high gables surrounded by trees. The survey also shows Newhaven with five structures on Bremore Head and a large pier, this settlement is referred to in the Civil Survey as a fishing settlement. No upstanding features of the village survive today, however remnants of its long pier still endure.



Fig. 4: Down Survey Map of 1655

Rocque's Map of 1760 (Fig. 5), is the earliest map that shows field divisions and property plots. There appears to be three access roads from the Drogheda Road into Bremore Castle lands. It is difficult to identify which of the structures depicted is the castle, there is an L-shaped structure but its return is at the southern end of the structure rather than at the northern end which is to be expected. The chapel is not indicated. It shows the site with no apparent enclosed garden or visible walling. The site at this time is segmented and trees and scrub shown occupying the area of ground that roughly corresponds with the site of the castle bawn/walled garden area and St. Molaga's Grave Yard.



Figure 5: John Rocque, *An Actual Survey of the County of Dublin*, 1760

First Edition 6-Inch Ordnance Survey Map, 1837-43

The first edition Ordnance Survey six-inch map (Fig. 6) for this area was published in 1843. The access roads that were indicated on the previous map from the Drogheda road have been removed, indicating the lands to the west may have changed ownership. Access is gained solely from the laneway to the north and through a small courtyard which also led to a number of outbuildings to the west. To the east of these a Thrashing Machine is indicated. The L-shaped plan of Bremore Castle with its protruding eastern tower and the western extension can be deciphered; the main hall is shaded lighter suggesting that it may not have a roof. A structure on the northern side of the kitchen elevation is shown as a return. There is a large enclosed rectangular yard to the west of the castle, defined to the north by a long structure.

A rectangular walled area is shown immediately south/southeast of the castle buildings. No solid paths or entrance/exits are shown, yet there must obviously have been access into the area. The entire walled area is divided into nine cultivation plots that would have been used for crop rotation.

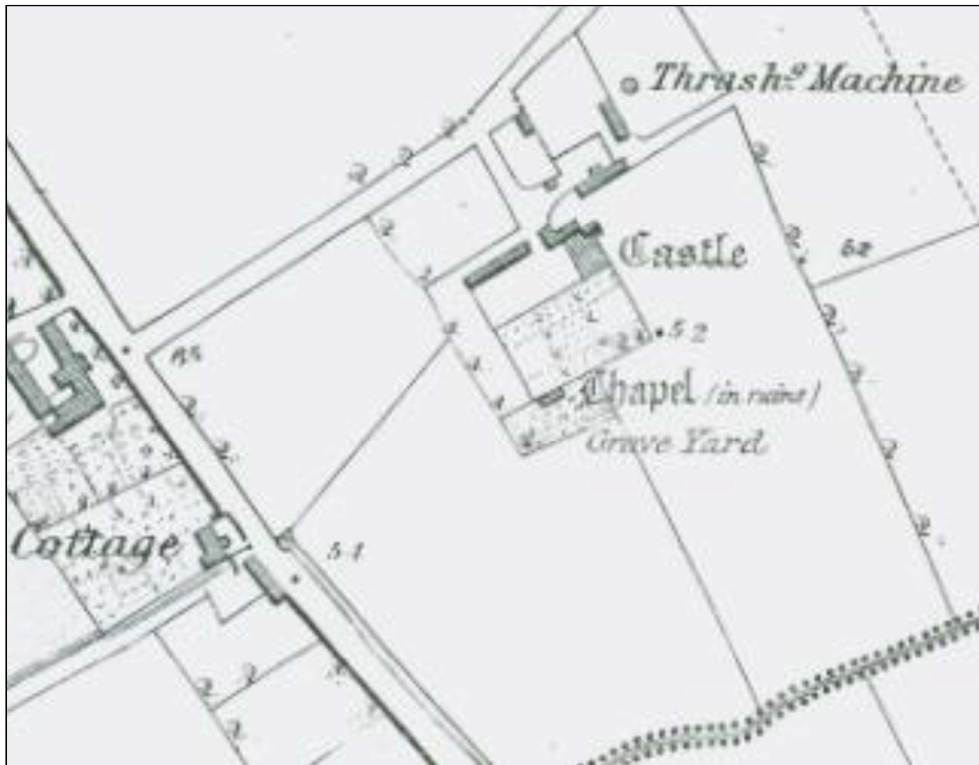


Fig. 6: First Edition 6 inch Ordnance Survey map, 1837-43

First Edition 25-Inch Ordnance Survey Map 1865

Few changes to the structures occurred in the intervening years between the first survey and the 25-inch 1865 revision (Fig. 7)

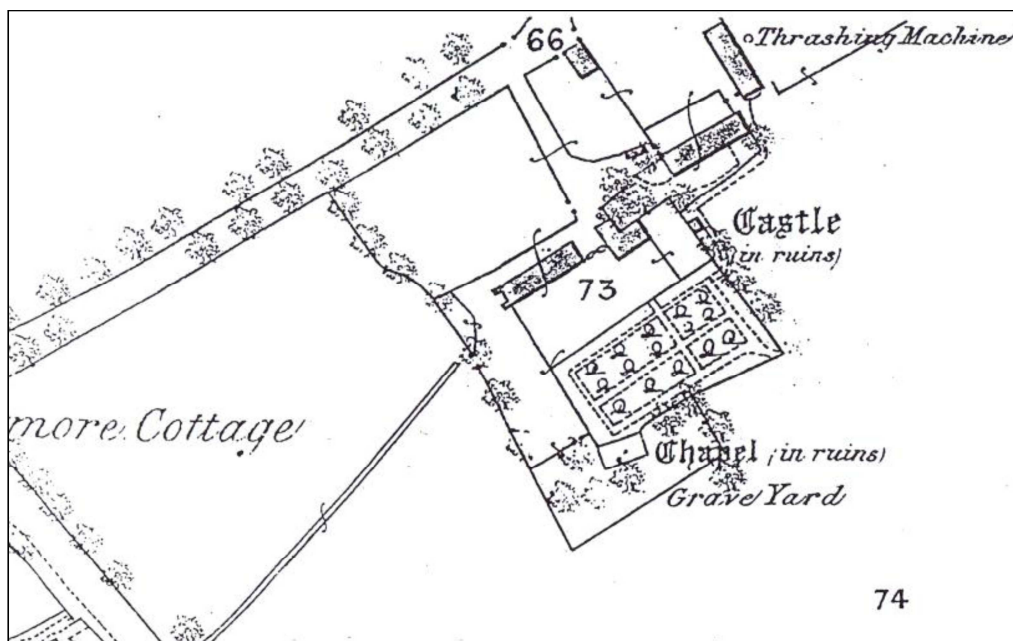


Fig. 7: 25-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1865

The map has a very detailed depiction of the walled garden. Its layout has changed considerably from the old nine plot layout of OS 1837-43. It is now a typical Victorian cross path layout of cultivation plots, each of different rectangular dimensions and with perimeter borders. The path system forms the boundaries of the plots and borders. The four plots are populated with fruit trees with the trees in the two north end plots appearing to be planted nearer the plot edges while the trees in the two south end plots are shown in more central planting positions.

Revised 6-Inch Ordnance Survey Map 1871 Revision

The 1871 6-inch revision shows (Fig. 8) that the layout of the structures on site has remained unchanged, however it revision shows two important changes. There is a wide path route shown at the northeast end connecting the walled garden with the yard and buildings to the southwest of the threshing machine. This is wide enough to be a gated access cart route into the walled garden and is more clearly shown on the later of the 25 inch 1865 maps. The area graveyard is slightly larger and is now is a sub- rectangular in shape with the western now incorporating a wider area.

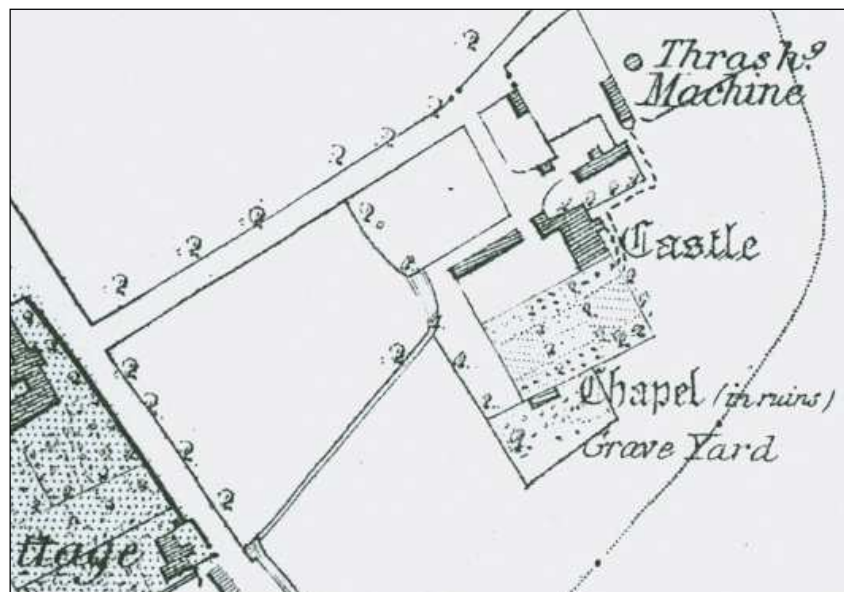


Fig.8: 6-inch Ordnance Survey map, 1871 revision

Revised 1937 25- Inch and 1906 6- Inch Ordnance Survey Maps

One hundred years later the revised 25-inch 1906 and 1937 6-inch OS survey (Fig. 9) shows that there had been little change in layout, but indicates the decline of the site. On the 1837 edition the western extension of the castle appears to have some form of roof as does the

northwest corner of the main castle structure, by 1937 there is none shown. There are breeches or entrances in the north-eastern, northern and western facades of the principal hall house structure. The rectangular graveyard was indicated as not being in use and the remains of St. Molaga's Church which is 'in ruins' and the southern wall and a short section of the eastern wall is indicated.

The farm structures in 1906 appear to have roofs but by 1937 there are none. The plan form of the castle and its thick walls are indicated. In the 1906 edition the garden paths are no longer shown, in the 1937 revision trees are still shown in the walled garden in an orchard layout.

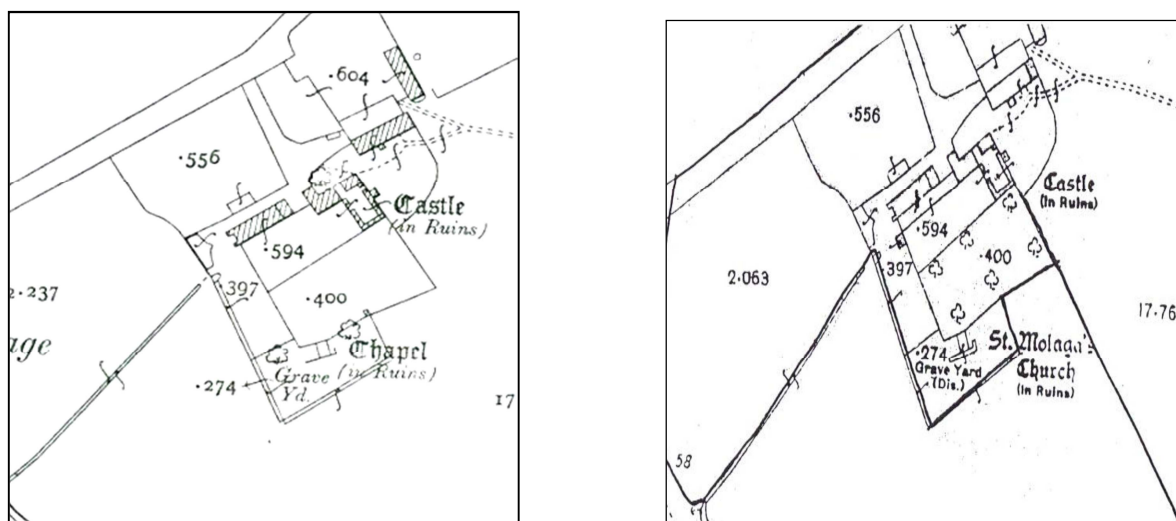


Fig. 9: Revised 1906 25-inch and 1937 6 inch Ordnance Survey maps

3.2 Previous excavations:

Several licensed archaeological investigations both internal external to the castle have been previously undertaken;

1995 (95E0183) Leo Swan undertook archaeological testing within Bremore Castle. Five trenches were opened within the three main compartments of the castle interior. Due to high levels of disturbance, no consistent evidence for original floor levels was recovered, although a series of walls were identified. Subsequent monitoring identified two stone built channels associated with a garderobe. Apart from some bone and much shell, including large quantities of whelk and limpet, together with 17th- to early 20th-century pottery, no archaeological deposits or artefacts were identified. No pottery datable to a period earlier than the 17th century was recovered.

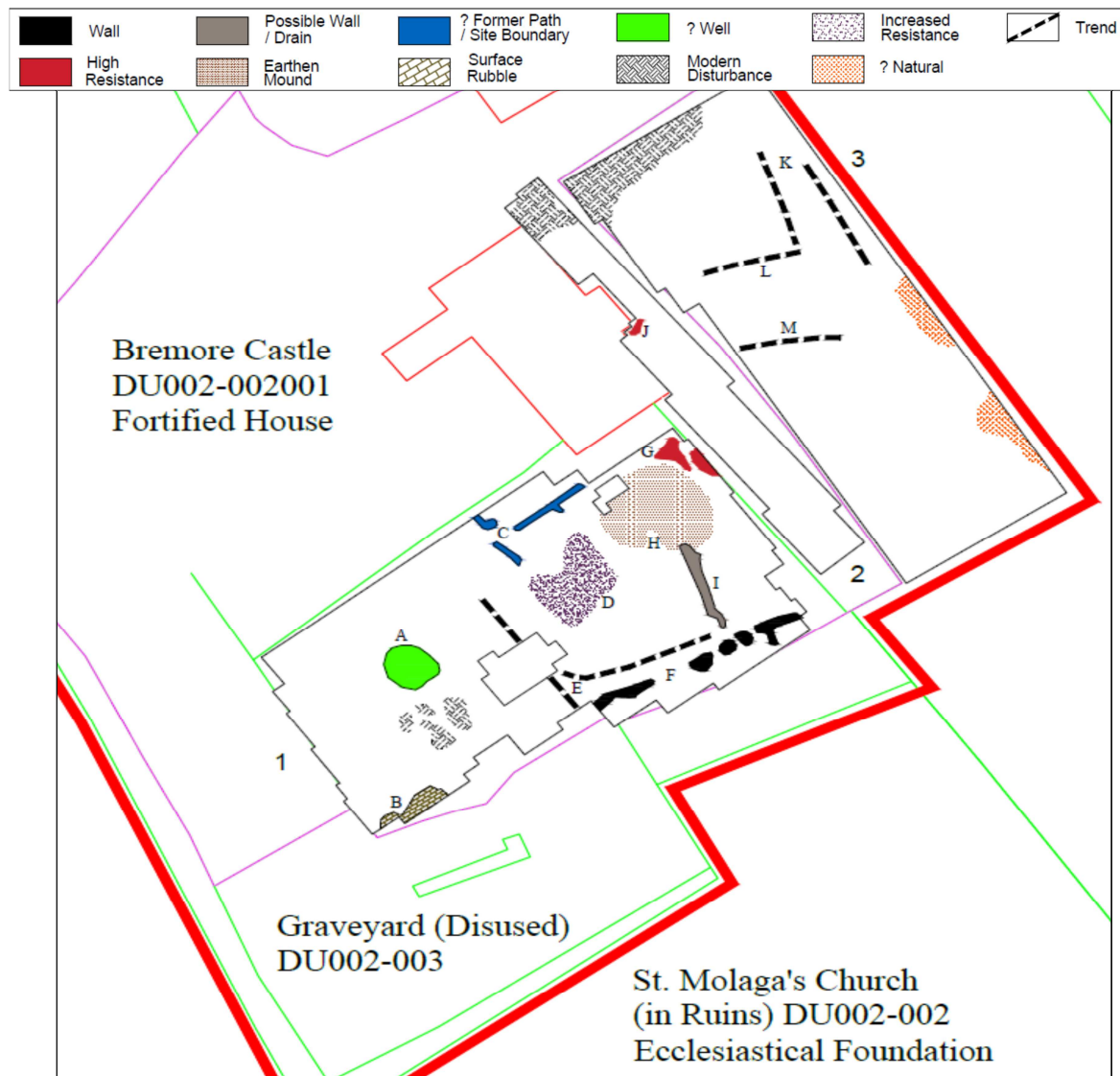
1997 (95E0183 Ext) Archaeological Monitoring of the insertion of palisade fencing around the site was undertaken by D.L. Swan of Arch-Tech Ltd. No artefacts, objects or deposits of archaeological significance were noted.

2010 Eimear O'Connor of ADS Ltd produced an Archaeological Impact Report subsequent to reports of unauthorized works having taken place in 2009.

2001 (01E0311/01E0370) Pre-development testing was undertaken by Fin O'Carroll of CRDS Ltd, in advance of a large-scale housing development (4.5 ha.) north of Bremore Castle. Subsequent excavation uncovered a medieval field system was uncovered. This consisted of densely cultivated narrow plot that contained a number of separate furrow systems, running both parallel and perpendicular to the ditches, suggesting that it had been a defined area of cultivation from the medieval period onwards. The remnants of a path or laneway with two Elizabethan coins dating from 1601–2 was identified and nearer to the castle cobbling and pits containing a large amount of late medieval pottery a slate sundial, possibly unfinished, of late medieval date. The possible footprint of a small structure, of either medieval or early post-medieval date, was also exposed in the vicinity, between these two pits. The pottery from the site totalled approximately 4000 sherds. The majority of this pottery was late medieval in date, with a very large proportion of Leinster Cooking Ware. The assemblage included a broad sample of post-medieval wares, including ridge tiles of North Devon Ware which may have originally been attached to the castle. On the basis of a preliminary examination of the pottery, other associated finds and the evidence of excavation, there appears to have been intensive activity associated with the use of the castle in the late medieval period and extending into the early post-medieval period.

3.3. Geophysical Survey

Geophysical survey was undertaken by Target Survey (Licence no. 11R0038) as part of the *Bremore Conservation Plan*. The survey consisted of resistivity over three areas-within the walled garden (Area 1); immediately east of the castle (Area 2) and west of the sports fields (Area 3). The latter areas were characterized by weak trends, some high resistance and modern disturbance (Nicholls 2011, 10).



A concentration of anomalies suggesting remains associated with a possible medieval garden are apparent within Area 1. These include a potential well/water feature (A), possible pathways (C), linear trends/internal divisions (E) and part of the original garden wall (F). (Nicholls 2011, 13).

4 Archaeological Excavation

Based on the historical, anecdotal and geophysical survey evidence it was anticipated a well, possible farmyard, and features related to the layout of the nineteenth century garden walled garden would be identified during the excavation. The excavation took place over thirteen days between Friday 14th July and Friday 28th July 2017. A total of 96 volunteers participated.

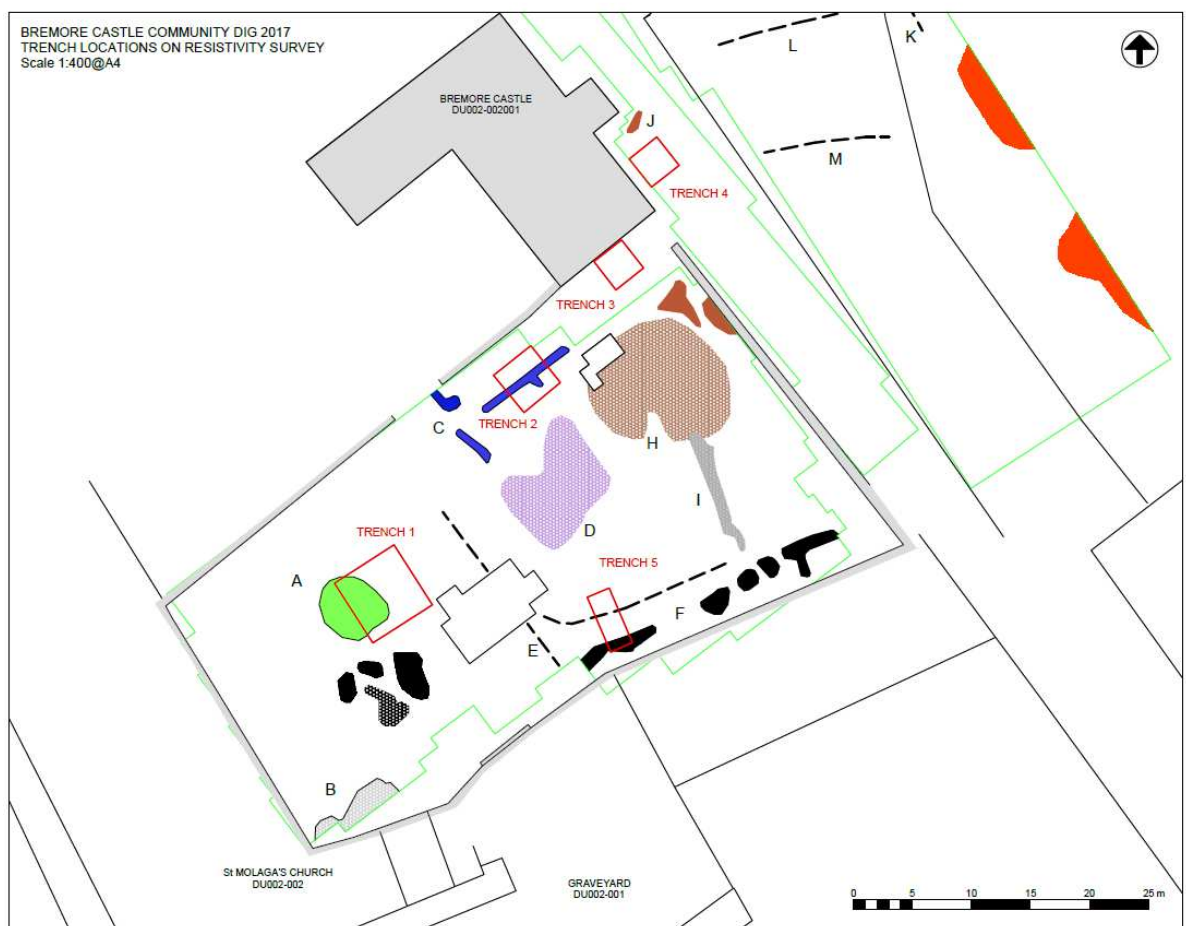


Fig. 10: Trench layout over geophysical resistance survey

Five trenches were opened as part of the excavation, four within the precinct of the walled garden and another (Trench 4) to the east of Bremore Castle. Trench 1 was located over a geophysical anomaly, interpreted as a possible well and measured 6m NS x 6m EW. Trench 1 was excavated to natural subsoil, a maximum depth of 0.55m.

Trench 2 was located c.15m east of Trench 1 and was situated over geophysical anomalies interpreted as possible garden pathways. Trench 2 measured 4m NS x 4m EW and was excavated to natural subsoil, a maximum depth of 0.40m.

Trench 3 measured 4m x 4m and was located in an area that geophysical survey had not been undertaken (due to the presence of scaffolding at the time of survey). Abutting the original remains of the south wall of Bremore Castle natural subsoil was located an average of 0.45m below present ground level.

Trench 4 was located c.1m east of the eastern wall of Bremore Castle. It was positioned to inform the possible future installation of a lift, within in area that had not yielded any results on the geophysical survey. Trench 4 measured 3m NS x 3m EW and was excavated to natural subsoil, a maximum depth of 0.40m.

An application for an additional trench to investigate geophysical anomalies close to the southern limit of the walled garden was approved during the excavation. Time allowed for Trench 5 to be excavated as 5m NS x 2m EW. Natural subsoil was identified 0.65m below the present ground surface.

4.1 Excavation Stratigraphy

The overall stratigraphy consisted of grey-yellow stony natural subsoil overlain by compact metalled surfaces, and post medieval to modern activity. A high level of modern disturbance was identified.

Trench 1

Natural subsoil was attained at 0.55m below ground level. It was overlain by a metalled surface (F18) that was truncated by a modern machine cut (F17); and a clay deposit (F16) truncated by the insertion of animal burials (F10, F13, F14, F15) and the modern machine cut.



Plate 2: Trench 1 post-excavation, facing north-west

Trench 1-Surfaces and Deposits:

Feature 18

This metallised surface would have extended over the entire trench but was heavily truncated to the west by modern disturbance. It survived over a maximum area of 6m NS x 5m EW. It consisted of a well-made compacted surface of rounded and sub-angular stones (0.04m-0.12m diam.; 0.03m-0.06m in thickness) packed into yellow clay subsoil. It presented as a consistent surface but sloped noticeably from north to south with a drop of 0.14m over the 6m length of Trench 1. The surface was overlain by a rougher stony surface (F3) to the north and clay deposit (F16) over the remainder of the trench.



Plate 3: Feature 18, facing east

Feature 3

This was a rough metalled surface that extended 5.82m EW x 1.38m NS over the metalled surface F18. Feature 3 consisted of an irregular deposit of angular and sub-angular stones (0.04m-0.17m diam.; 0.04m-0.07m in thickness) compacted into a grey brown silt with inclusions of mortar fragments, brick and occasional roof slate. It was abutted to the south by clay deposit F16.

Feature 16

This irregular deposit consisted of a yellow-brown clayey silt with small to medium angular and sub-angular stone inclusions that extended over much of Trench 1 (6mEW x5.18m NS; 0.1m-0.28m in depth). It contained sherds of dark glazed Buckley ware (Rosanne Meenan pers. comm.) dating to the 17th century, and occasional animal bone. Feature 16 was truncated by the insertion of four animal burials and a modern machine cut (F17).

Trench 1-Animal Burials:

A total of four animal burials (F10, F13, F14 and F15) were identified in the east of Trench 1.

Feature 10

Feature 10 was a shallow sub-rectangular cut (1.05mNS x 0.6mEW; 0.08m-0.1m in depth), aligned north-south, that contained a sheep carcass (Siobhan Duffy pers. comm.) within a loose friable mid grey brown sandy silt fill. Two sherds of post-medieval pottery and two sherds of modern pottery were associated with this burial.



Plate 4: F10 mid-excavation, facing east

Feature 13

Located approximately 0.3m east of Feature 10, this animal burial was aligned east-west. Contained within a shallow sub-rectangular cut (0.8m EW x 0.38m NS; 0.06m-0.1m in depth) was a canine carcass (Siobhan Duffy pers. comm.) within friable grey brown sandy silt.

Feature 14

Extending beyond the eastern baulk of Trench 1 was the north-south aligned animal burial F14. Located c.1.2m south of burial F13, this steep-sided cut (1.42m NS x 0.64m EW; 0.08m-0.12m in depth) contained a sheep carcass (Siobhan Duffy pers. comm.) within loose sandy silt. A fragment of clay pipe and modern pottery were recovered from this fill.



Plate 5: F14, post-excavation, facing east

Feature 15

Located 0.2m west of burial F14 and 1.06m south of F10, this shallow sub-rectangular cut (1.1m EW x 0.6m NS; 0.06-0.10m in depth) was aligned east-west. Feature 15 contained a calf carcass within friable grey brown sandy silt. There were foetal remains associated with the calf indicating it was pregnant (Siobhan Duffy pers. comm.).

Trench 1-Modern truncation

Dominating the western half of the trench was a machine cut and backfill.

Feature 17

This sub-rectangular, irregular cut (5.6m NS x 3.42m EW; 0.26m-0.68m in depth-base not ascertained) was cut through the identified deposits and surfaces within Trench 1. It correlated with the geophysical anomaly identified as a possible well and the area known locally as 'the pond' for its predisposition for waterlogging after rain. The feature was excavated to a maximum depth of almost 0.7m. Excavation ceased due to the instability of the

fill and the fact water was beginning to seep up, possibly indicating the former site of a well/pond. The machine cut was backfilled with large field stones, a tree stump, brick and plastic in a peaty matrix.



Plate 6: Feature 17 mid-ex, facing south

Feature 11

This was re-deposited mottled yellow-grey clayey sand that capped the back-filled machine cut F17. It extended for 5.6m Ns x 3.42m EW and measured from 0.14m to 0.22m in depth. Feature 11 contained modern pottery, a clay pipe stem fragment and a sherd of post-medieval pot.

Feature 1

Topsoil in Trench 1 consisted of a mid-grey brown sandy silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions. There were frequent fragments of crushed seashell indicating enrichment for garden/farm use. Topsoil measured from 0.14 to 0.22m in depth. A range of post-medieval pot was recovered alongside six sherds of medieval pottery including a fragment of Saintonge. Two fragments of clay pipe bowl bottle and window glass, brick, modern pot and animal bone

Trench 2

Natural subsoil was attained at 0.4m below ground level. Overlying natural were deposits of garden soil (F12) and redeposited natural (F5) to either side of a pathway (F2, F6).



Plate 7: Trench 2 mid-excavation, facing south

Trench 2-Layers and Deposits:

Feature 12

Feature 12 was a rectilinear (2.9m EW x 1.4m NS; 0.04m-0.2m in depth) deposit of dark brown moderately compacted clayey silt that overlay natural subsoil, in the south-west quadrant of Trench 2. The deposit was interpreted as possible garden soil with shell, animal and modern pottery inclusions. Small concentrations of compacted small stones at the interface with natural subsoil may indicate disturbed metallurgy.

Feature 5

Consisting of re-deposited yellow brown silty clay with occasional stone inclusions, this deposit overlay natural subsoil over the majority of Trench 2 (0.04m-0.2m in depth). Feature 5 contained a clay pipe bowl and fragment of stem and two sherds of post-medieval pottery.



Plate 8: Path F2/F6, pre-excavation, facing east

Feature 6

Feature 6 was the basal layer of an east-west pathway that correlated with the geophysical anomaly, confirming the original interpretation. Consisting of compacted lime mortar, brick, shell, limestone and slate, 1.06m in width, 0.12m in thickness, cut into redeposited natural F5, it was overlain by sandy gravelly deposit F2. Two sherds of slipware were recovered from this feature.

Feature 2

Directly overlying F6, Feature 2 consisted of very small gravel pebble, crushed shell and small stone (0.1m in depth) within friable sandy silt. It was exposed for 4m east-west within the trench and measured 1m in width. Modern pot, glass and brick were associated with F2.

Feature 4

Feature 4 consisted of modern disturbance, a square cut (0.74m EW x 0.7m NS) that contained concrete and limestone rubble, located south of path F2/F6. It was associated with a single sherd of medieval pottery.



Plate 9: F6 and F4, mid-excavation, facing east

Feature 1

Topsoil in Trench 2 consisted of a mid-grey brown sandy silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions. There were frequent fragments of crushed seashell indicating enrichment for garden/farm use. Topsoil measured from 0.16 to 0.24m in depth. A range of post-medieval pot was recovered alongside two sherds of medieval pottery, clay pipe fragments, bottle and window glass, brick, modern pot and animal bone.

Trench 3-Ditch:

Feature F26

Ditch cut; originally perceived as a single EW ditch this features had two cuts with a single (F19). Cut into natural subsoil the eastern cut was separated from the western by natural subsoil measuring 0.2m-0.25m in width. The eastern cut measured 1.9m EW x 1.97mNS and 0.7m in depth. It sloped down from the eastern baulk to its terminal where the base was slightly concave in section. The western cut measured 1.78m NS x 0.84m EW and 0.64m in max depth the base sloping down from the terminal westwards. This ditch or series of large pits was located 0.9m (E) - 1.2m (W) from the extant castle wall.



Plate 10: Feature 26, post excavation, facing south

Feature F19

Feature F19 extended across the southern extent of Trench 3 (4m EW x 2.8m NS) and filled ditch F26 (min. depth 0.26m –max. 0.7m). It consisted of dark brown sandy silty clay fill with frequent inclusions of angular and sub-angular stones (0.1-0.15m diam.); medium inclusions

of mortar lumps, animal bone and shell. Four sherd of medieval pottery, four sherds of stoneware, occasional post-medieval pottery, window came; fragments of tile, iron nails and window glass were recovered from this feature.

Trench 3-Layers and Deposits:

Feature 7

Located to towards the south of Trench 3, Feature 7 (4m EW x 2.45m NS; 0.12m-0.21m in depth) overlay ditch fill F19. Feature 7 consisted of very compact redeposited light orange brown clay with angular (0.05m-0.14m diam.) stone inclusions. A sherd of glazed medieval pot, post-medieval and modern pottery, bottle and window glass fragments, copper alloy wire drawn pin and brick were recovered from this feature.

Feature 9

Located to the north of Trench 3, Feature appeared to cut the redeposited subsoil (F7). Feature 9 consisted of mottled dark brown orange fill within a relatively concave cut (1.4m EW x 0.33m NS; 0.12m-0.22m in depth) that expands into a more circular cut (1.2m NS; 0.32m in depth) westwards. Feature 9 was clayey and held water well. A few fragments of animal bone and one sherd of post-medieval pot were recovered from this feature.



Plate 11: Feature 9, pot-excavation, facing west

Feature F8

Within Feature 9, this feature consisted of a dark brown silty deposit (0.7m EW x 0.5m NS; depth 0.05m-0.1m), centred on a large stone (0.3m diam.). It was associated with modern pot and glass.

Feature 1

Topsoil in Trench 3 consisted of a mid-grey brown sandy silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions. There were frequent fragments of crushed seashell indicating enrichment for garden/farm use. Topsoil averaged 0.25m depth and was disturbed to the south by modern building and planting activity. Medieval, post-medieval and modern pottery was recovered alongside lead shot, bottle and window glass, brick and animal bone.

Trench 4

Natural subsoil was attained at an average of 0.4 below ground level. Cut into were natural was a north-south drain (F21) that was overlain by a metallised surface (F20).



Plate 12: Trench 4, Post-excavation, facing east

Trench 4-Drain:

Feature 21

Feature 21 was a post-medieval/early modern drain associated with the castle. This linear north-south drain (3m NS x 1.06m EW) deepened from north (0.06m) to south (0.38m), the cut from gently sloping to concave. Cut into natural subsoil the drain was filled with loose to moderately compact dark brown clayey silt. There were occasional inclusions of limestone rubble. Slate, glazed roof tile, shell, animal bone and brick were recovered from Feature 21. A soil sample (20l.) was taken for environmental analysis.

Trench 4-metalled surfaces:

Feature 20

Feature 20 consisted of a metalled surface that extended over the entirety of the Trench 4 but was disturbed by modern drainage. It consisted of heavily compacted small rounded stones and mortar set into grey brown clay. The surface was well- preserved to east of trench, becoming more disturbed westwards, due to truncation by an east-west drain. Feature 22 surface overlay the north-south drain (F21) and natural subsoil.

Feature 22

Feature 22 (3m NS x 2.1m EW; 0.04m-0.12m in thickness) was confined to the eastern quadrant of Trench 4 and consisted of a deposit of small pebbles stones, gravel and shell in a loose grey sandy silt. It was interpreted as an attempt to resurface metalled surface F22.



Plate 13: Feature 22, facing south

Feature 1

Topsoil in Trench 4 consisted of a dark brown orange silty clay with occasional small stone inclusions. Topsoil measured from 0.12m to 0.26m in depth and included frequent modern detritus.

Trench 5

Natural subsoil was attained at an average of 0.65 below ground level. A metallised surface (F24) set into natural subsoil was overlain by redeposit (F25) and a deposit of large stones (F23).



Plate 14: Trench 5, facing south

Feature 24

Set into natural subsoil, the metalled surface consisted of compacted rounded and angular stones (0.01-0.12m diam.). Feature 24 was very similar to the metalling (F180 in Trench 1, indicating an extensive surface.

Feature 25

Overlying the metalled surface (F24) to the south, Feature 25 consisted of sterile moderately compact redeposited orange brown silty clay (2.58m Ns x 2m EW; 0.28-0.36m in depth).

Feature 25

Located to the south of Trench 5, was stone tumble, Feature 25. This deposit of large mostly rounded stones (average 0.2m diam.) within mid-brown loose silty clay matrix. Given its proximity to the original wall of the garden (since rebuilt in the 1990s) the tumble does not appear to be wall collapse, as there was no mortar or apparent working of the stone

Feature 1

Topsoil in Trench 5 consisted of a grey-brown friable silty clay with small stone inclusions that measured from 0.2 to 0.5m in depth. There was a lot of modern disturbance due to the nearby re-building of the garden wall.

4.2. Samples & Finds

The environmental sampling strategy was in consultation with Dr Meriel McClatchie. The high level of disturbance mitigated against comprehensive soil sampling. Two samples (20L each) were taken from stratified contexts (F19 fill of ditch F26 and the fill of drain F21). Animal bone and shell were retrieved from all features and layers. All layers and features of all trenches and a significant proportion of topsoil were dry-sieved. Artefacts from all layers and features were retrieved. Those from stratified layers and features and of medieval date from topsoil were processed, labelled and registered on site.



Plate 15: Ted and Phil washing samples and finds

Animal Bone Samples

The sampling methodology for bone was to hand-retrieve all bone from all features and layers. Additional retrieval was from dry sieving of the layers. A total of 19 samples (including the four animal burials) were registered from layers and features including small mammal and bird bones.

Sea shell Samples

A total of 15 samples of seashell were recovered. The majority of the samples are oyster shell but there were also crustacean shells identified.

Artefacts

A total of 111 artefacts were registered. This can be divided into pottery (83), tile (5), and clay pipe (9). Metal finds were divided into iron (7), copper alloy (2) and lead (3).

5 Discussion

The focus of the *Bremore Castle Big Dig 2017* was to verify the nature of the anomalies on the 2011 geophysical survey, inform future construction works and to engage the community with the monument and its surrounding archaeology. The level of natural subsoil across the site was attained; the presence of a hitherto unknown ditch was discovered, and the nature and extent of post-medieval and modern disturbance was recorded.

Fortified House

Geophysical survey was not undertaken adjacent to the southern wall of Bremore Castle due to the presence of scaffolding there at the time. Although survey had been undertaken next to the eastern façade of the castle, no anomalies were identified. Therefore Trenches 3 and 4 were positioned to the south and east of the original remnants of Bremore Castle to investigate these areas.

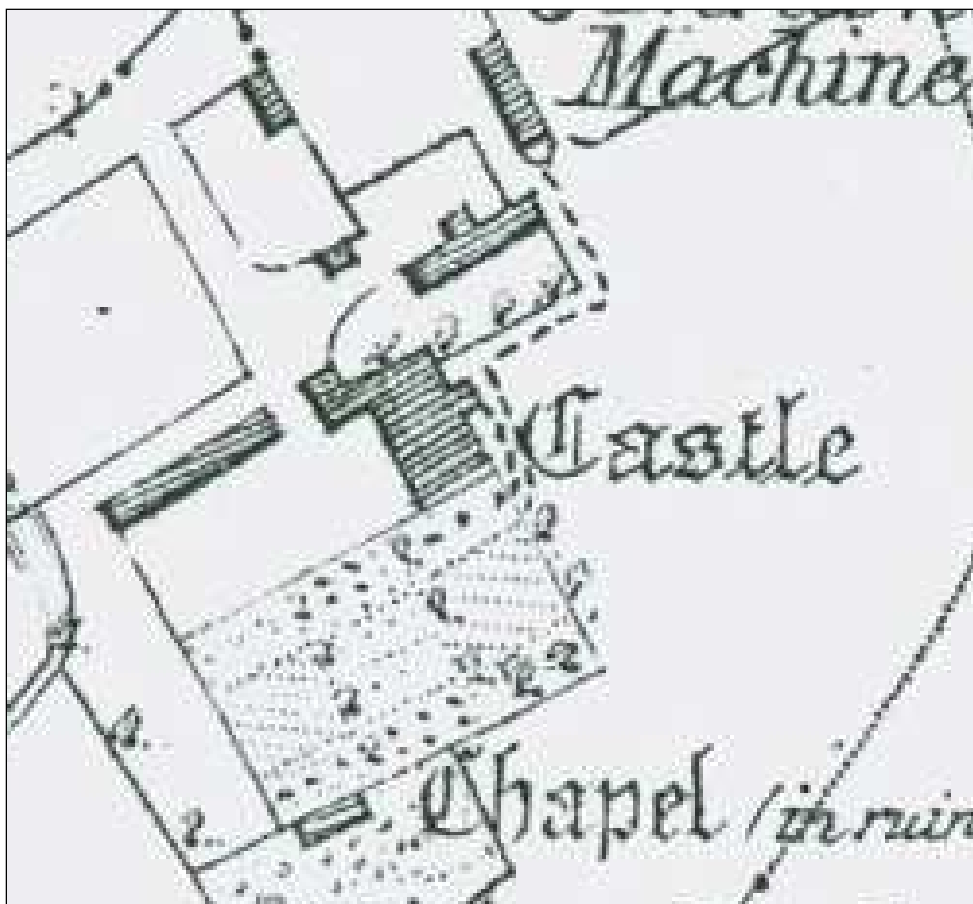
Trench 3 uncovered the foundation of the southern wall which consists of a single course of large (0.6m diam.) water rolled boulders set into natural subsoil, interspersed with smaller (0.15m-0.25m) unmortared stones. Immediately adjacent was an irregular cut and occasional area of peaty backfill which indicate disturbance, probably due to planting in this area. Between 0.9m-1.2m south of the wall was the ditch (F26). Despite there being at least two cuts meaning they could be adjacent large pits, this feature was filled with the same material (F19) which was capped by a compact redeposited clay (F7).

The fortified house is thought to have been under construction by 1546 since a bridal mantelpiece tree, part of the hall chimney piece, which announces the marriage of James Barnewall to Margaret Lawrence, took place around that year (Johnson 2007, 249-260). The window loop in the south wall has also been identified as sixteenth century in date. Based on the finds from the ditch feature which include Frechen pottery it would appear that it was backfilled during a similar period to the construction/early use of Bremore Castle.

A north-south drain was identified in Trench 4, just over 2m east of the extant wall of the fortified house. An examination of the inside of the eastern flanking tower identified two openings at ground level, one in the south wall. Although not in exact alignment it is possible that drainage from the eastern tower may be linked with that unearthed during excavation.

Bawn to Walled Garden

Fortified houses were usually situated within a courtyard or bawn wall and it has been suggested that the walled garden, given its position, may occupy the site of the former bawn (Conservation Plan 2013, 74). Excavation in Trenches 1 and 5 identified a metallised surface set into natural subsoil that appeared to extend across the current walled garden. Such a surface appears to have been disturbed in Trench 2 by later garden activity. Pottery dating from the 1550s onwards recovered from above the metallised surface, especially in Trench 1, indicates that this surface was in place at least by the early 1600s. Metalling was also identified in Trench 4 which is outside the current walled garden but indicates that Bremore Castle may have been surrounded by a considerable yard surface. The possible resurfacing (F22) of the metallised surface in the east of this trench may relate to the installation of a wide path depicted here on the 1871 Ordnance Survey map, which extended from the north-eastern end of the walled garden connecting it to a yard and buildings associated with a threshing machine.



The cartographic evidence didn't show a defined bawn. Indeed the area corresponding with the walled garden area is depicted with trees and scrub on the 1760 map. By the late 1830s

there is a walled garden in place with internal plot divisions which by the 1860s has been laid out with a typical Victorian cross path layout populated with trees. The 2011 geophysical survey had picked up on the possible survival of one of these paths c.5m south of the northern garden wall and the existence of this pathway (F2/F6) was confirmed during excavation in Trench 2.

Gardens associated with fortified houses were primarily functional rather than ornamental and Bremore castle's nineteenth century walled garden continued this tradition, being initially characterised as a 'potager' or vegetable garden before transforming into a walled orchard. In the light of the four animal burials uncovered during the archaeological investigations it is interesting to note that buried animal carcasses were a feature of old orchard sites (ibid 77).

Occupation

Historical evidence records that Bremore Castle had attacked and burnt during the Confederate wars of the 1640s; probably rebuilt in the in the early 1660s and ceased to have been a principal residence by the early 1700s. No archaeological evidence for burning was uncovered in any of the trenches. The castle was still occupied in 1736 when a Captain McCullough was besieged there over a tenancy dispute and there was an exchange of shots to and from the castle. The recovery of a lead musket ball from Trench 3 may give some weight to this account but as documentary evidence shows the castle was ruinous in the late 1770s.

However the occupant at Bremore Castle in 1833 was John King and the castle lands were farmed by the King family into the next century. The walled garden was laid out in the nineteenth century when the castle had been 'taken down' so the Kings must have lived in one of the other buildings depicted, Dalton making reference to 'the farmhouse' in 1844. Local knowledge is that during the walled garden was used for cattle and livestock prior to its acquisition by Fingal County Council.

6 Conclusions

The excavation established the presence of a previously unknown ditch close to the surviving southern wall of Bremore Castle. Backfilled in the seventeenth century it may have been contemporary with the metalled surface which extended throughout what is now the walled garden. The veracity of the geophysical survey was confirmed in the unearthing of the indicated Victorian pathway and the interpretation of a feature as a well was clarified as a modern machine cut.

In contrast to previous investigations where had found 'no pottery dateable to earlier than the 17th century was recovered' (Swan 1995), numerous sherd of 12th-15th medieval pottery, including a basal sherd of the imported Saintonge, was recorded during this excavation. It was distributed throughout the site with slight concentrations within Trenches 1 and 3, although generally within the disturbed topsoil. The presence of such pottery indicates medieval activity at the site similar to that uncovered in the fields to the north (O'Carroll 2009), but as yet no definitively high medieval features.



Plate 16: Bremore Big Dig 2017 participants fill Trench 3

An important aim of the *Bremore Castle Big Dig 2017* was to engage the wider public with an archaeological monument that has been inaccessible as a building site for decades. A total of 96 volunteers took part, 48% from the immediate locality and also included people from the wider Fingal area; members of the new communities; family groups; several tourists; Fingal County Council staff members; the Fingal Mayor and two Councillors; members of the Fingal Volunteer Centre, members of other community archaeology groups, several heritage professionals and students.

A final report encompassing specialist contributions and an analysis of the excavation results in conjunction with the historical and architectural evidence will be produced in due course for submission to the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the National Museum of Ireland.

Christine Baker MA MIAI

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Dunne, Rosaleen Roche, Ross Nugent, Saoirse McGovern O'Byrne, Sarah Hall, Sarah Madden, Seamus Murray, Siobhan Geraghty, Stephen Monks, Stephen Phillips, Susan Perry, Sylvia Bond, Tatiana Golden, Ted Nugent, Tracey Cashin, Trish Halligan.

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7 Post-Excavation Programme

All animal bone samples were processed on site. All artefacts were cleaned and labelled on site. Specialist analysis is in the process of being procured. It will include animal bone analysis, archaeobotanical analysis, pottery, and small finds (metal, stone, clay pipe) reporting. Dating material will be forwarded for AMS dating once selected in conjunction with the recommendations of the appropriate specialist.

7.1 Archiving

All digital photographs are indexed. A total of twenty-three plans and section drawings have been scanned. Both have been saved to the Heritage file on the Fingal County Council mainframe. The paper archive is currently with the director and will be scanned and copied for deposition in the both the Fingal Local Studies Archive, Swords and the Collections Resource Centre.

7.2 Dissemination

A summary account will be submitted to Excavations.ie. The form of further publication will be decided on completion of the post-excavation and a results talk will be held locally.

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Appendix 1-Feature Register

Feature #	Trench	Description	Dimensions	Over	Under	Artefacts
1	T1-T5	Topsoil: loose mid-grey brown silty sand with medium fragments of crushed seashell and occasional small stone. Enriched for garden/farm use. Cut by modern machine cut in T1	0.08min - 0.32m max	everything	Sod	13 medieval sherds pot (6-T1; 2-T2; 5-T3); 43 sherds post-medieval pot; 324 sherds modern pot; 1 lead came (T3); 3 tiles 0T2; T3; T4); clay pipe bowl and stem frags (T1 & T2); slate 9T1; T2. T4); Glass (T1-t4 (29 bottle/ 71 Window T3)
2	2	Deposit of gravel pebble, shell and small stone directly over pathway F6. Linear aligned EW exposed for 4m and 1m In width. Consists of very friable sandy silt with small pebbles and crushed shell inclusions	4m EW x 1m NS; 0.02m-0.1m in thickness	F6	F1	1 sherd modern pot, brick and 1 frag glass bottle
3	1	Rough metalled surface. Extends over 5.82m EW x 1.38m NS, this irregular surface consists of angular and sub-angular stones (max. 0.17m diam. min. 0.04m diam.) compacted into a grey brown silt with inclusions of mortar fragments, brick and occasional roof slate	5.82m EW x 1.38m NS; 0.04-0.07m thickness	F18/contemporary with f16	F1	
4	2	Modern disturbance-square cut revealed concrete and limestone rubble located south of pathway F2/F6	0.74m EW x 0.7m NS	Natural	F1	1 sherd medieval pottery and 1 fragment window glass associated
5	2	Redeposited clay; compact yellow brown silty clay with occasional stone. Contained clay pipe and post medieval pot. Probably used to level garden	4m x4m ; 0.04-0.2m depth	Natural	F1	Bowl, stem frag clay pipe and rim post med pot, brick
6	2	Pathway; 19th linear EW pathway within walled garden. Consists of compacted lime mortar, brick, shell, limestone and slate,, cut into redeposited natural F5 and covered by sandy gravelly deposit F2	4mEw x 1.06m NS; 0.04m-0.12m in depth	F5/natural	F2	2 sherds slipware;

7	3	Redeposited subsoil consisting of very compact light orange brown clay with angular (0.05m-0.14m diam.) stone inclusions.	4m EW x 1.4m-2.45m NS; 0.12m to 0.21m depth	F19	F1	1 rim sherd glazed medieval pot; 3 sherds post-med pot; 1 copper alloy wire drawn pin; bottle and window glass fragments; modern pot, brick
8	3	Dark brown silty deposit of large compaction, centered on large stone (0.3m diam.)	0.7m EW x 0.5m NS; 0.05m-0.1m in depth	F9	F1	Modern pot, bottle and window glass
9	3	Mottled dark brown orange fill that appear within a relatively concave cut for 1.4m EW from eastern baulk before expanding out to a more circular cut. It is clayey with small stone inclusions and holds water well.	4m EW x 0.33m-1.3m NS; 0.12m- 0.32m in depth	Natura 1	F1	1 body sherd post medieval pottery
10	1	Animal Burial; Shallow sub-rectangular cut, aligned NS containing a sheep carcass within a loose friable mid grey brown sandy silt fill. One of four animal burials in south-east of Trench 1	1.05mNS x 0.6mEW; 0.08m-0.1m in depth	F18 but cuts F16	F1	2 sherds of post med pot; 2 sherds of modern pot
11	1	Redeposited orange brown clay with occasional small stone inclusion	5.6m NS x 3.42m EW; 0.14-0.22m in depth	F17	Sod	1 sherd of possible Cistercian ware; clay pipe stem; modern pot
12	2	metalled surface-remnants of F4				
13	1	Animal burial: Shallow sub-rectangular cut, aligned EW, containing a canine carcass with friable grey brown sandy silt. Located 0.3m east of Pit F10	0.8m EW x 0.38m NS; 0.06m-0.1m in depth	F18	F1	1 sherd modern pot

14	1	Animal Burial: Steep-sided cut, aligned NS containing a sheep carcass within loose sandy silt. Located 1.2m south of F13; only half the pit excavated as extended beyond the E limit of excavation	1.42m NS x 0.64m; 0.08m-0.12m in depth	F18	F1	1 sherd of modern pot and 1 frag clay pipe
15	1	Animal burial; Shallow sub-rectangular cut, aligned EW containing a calf carcass within friable grey brown sandy silt. There were foetal remains associated with the calf indicating it was pregnant. Located 1.06m south of F13, 0.7m south of F10 and 0.2m west of F14	1.1m EW x 0.6m NS; 0.06-0.10m in depth	F18	F1	
16	1	Rough clay resurfacing/consolidation layer; Irregular layer consisting of yellow brown clayey silt with small/medium sub/angular stone inclusions, fragments of roof slate and building. Contemporary with F3 rough metalled yard surface.	6m NS x 5.18m EW; 0.1m-0.28m in depth	F18	F1	Three sherds of possible Cistercian ware; 1 blackware and 1 post med;
17	1	Modern machine cut: Sub-rectangular, irregular cut backfilled with peat/large field stones with large tree stump, brick and plastic. Modern machine cut and filled in possible 'pond' area-water table high here	5.6m NS x 3.42m EW; 0.26m-0.68m in depth-base not ascertained.			
18	1	Metalled surface; Truncated post medieval metalled surface that extends for 6m NS and 5m EW. It consists of a well-made compacted surface of rounded and sub-angular stones (0.04m-0.12m diam.) packed into yellow clay subsoil. A very consistent surface but slopes from north to south with a drop of 0.14m over 6m length of T1	6mNS x 5mEw; 0.03-0.06m thickness	Natura 1	F3/F16	Brick

19	3	Dark brown sandy silty clay fill with frequent inclusions of angular and sub-angular stones (0.1-0.15m diam.); medium inclusions of mortar lumps and animal bone.	4m EW x 2.8m NS, min depth 0.26m max 0.7m	Natura l cut F26	F7	Four sherds medieval pottery; Four sherds of stone ware; 2 post med; 2 window came; 1 glazed roof tile; 1 polished floor tile; 4 iron nails; 4 iron objects
20	4	Metalled surface disturbed by drainage. Heavily compacted small rounded stones and mortar set into grey brown clay. Surface is well- preserved to east of trench, becoming more disturbed westwards, due to truncation by an EW drain. The surface overlie NS drain f21 and natural subsoil.	3m NS x 3mEW	F21/ Natura l	F22	
21	4	Post-medieval/early modern drain associated with the castle. This linear NS drain deepened from north to south, the cut from gently sloping to concave. Cut into natural subsoil the drain is filled with loose to moderately compact dark brown clayey silt. Includes limestone rubble. Slate, glazed roof tile, shell and animal bone, brick. SOIL SAMPLE	3m NS x 1.06m EW ; 0.06m to 0.38m in depth	Natura l	F20	1 frag glazed roof tile; 1 sherd medieval pot
22	4	Deposit of gravel and shell. Possible attempt to resurface metalled surface F22; this was a deposit of small pebble stones and shell in loose grey sandy silt.	3m NS x 2.1m EW; 0.04m-0.12m depth	F20	F1	
23	5	Stone tumble in clayey; deposit of large, mostly rounded stones (average 0.2m diam.) Within a mid-brown loose silty clay matrix. Does not appear to be wall collapse-no mortar-potential store of stone?	2.1m NS x 2m EW; 0.18m-0.4m in depth	F24	F1	1 Rim sherd blackware post medieval
24	5	Metalled surface that consisted of compacted rounded and angular stones (0.01-0.12m diam.) set into natural. Very similar to metalling in Trench 1 F18	3m Ns x 2m EW	Natura l	F25	

25	5	Redeposited orange brown silty clay deposit of medium compaction, sterile	2.58m Ns x 2m EW; 0.28-0.36m in depth	F24		
26	3	Ditch cut; originally perceived as a single EW ditch this features had two cuts with one fill F19. Cut into natural subsoil the eastern cut was separated from the western by natural subsoil measuring 0.2m-0.25m in width. The eastern cut measured 1.9m EW x 1.97mNS and 0.7m in depth. It sloped down from the eastern baulk to its terminal where the base was slightly concave in section. the western cut measured 1.78m NS x 0.84m EW and 0.64m in max depth the base sloping down from the terminal westwards		Natural	F19	

