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**REPORT ON
PRE-DEVELOPMENT TESTING
AT
KILGARVE TOWNLAND,
BALLINASLOE, CO. GALWAY**

Excavation Licence No. 21 E 0470

November 2021

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Av. Th.	Average Thickness	C	Context
E	East	F	Feature
Illus.	Illustration	ITM	Irish Transverse Mercator
m	metre	max.	maximum
mm	millimetre	N	North
NGC	National Grid Co-ordinates	OD	Ordnance Datum
OS	Ordnance Survey	RMP	Record of Monuments and Places
S	South	SMR	Sites and Monuments Record
Th.	Thickness	W	West

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This work was carried out by the writer on 24 and 25 August and 17 September 2021 and involved the test excavation of a site in advance of its development adjacent to Creagh Cemetery in Kilgarve townland, off the R446 (old Dublin Road) in Ballinasloe, County Galway (Illus. 1).



Illus. 1 Site Location Map showing site outlined in red (Delany & Associates, May 2021).

The project consists of a proposed extension to an existing burial ground (Illus. 2). The testing is a recommendation of an impact assessment of the proposed development by Dominic Delany and Associates, which was carried out in May 2021 for Galway County Council. The reports on the pre-development testing and the previous impact assessment will accompany a Part VIII planning application for the proposed development.

Note: In terms of ownership, Ballinasloe Urban District Council was renamed Ballinasloe Town Council in 2001 and disestablished in 2014.

Funding for the testing has been provided by the client.



Illus. 2 Aerial photo showing site outlined in red and existing graveyards to the N and W (Delany & Assoc. 2021).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BRIEF

1. Pre-development testing, in the form of the excavation of a number of trenches by machine on the site.
2. Report on same to be forwarded (with the planning application) to the Local Authority and to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Based on the results of the testing the Local Authority/Department will decide whether the proposed development can proceed or whether further excavation, avoidance or monitoring is required.

LOCATIONAL INFORMATION

Locational Details

Townland:	Kilgarve	Parish:	Creagh
Barony:	Moycarn	OS 6-inch sheet:	Galway No. 88
OD:	45-55m	ITM:	586615, 731036
RMP No.	GA088-006	Classification:	Church
	GA088-006001		Graveyard

Access

The site is easily accessible being located off the R446 to the S and via Creagh graveyard which is located along the R357 to the E (Illus. 1).

Siting



The proposed development site consists of a field of pasture which slopes down into the centre from E and W with a general slope also from S down to N. The grass at the time of the site visit, on 2 July 2021, was over waist high (Plate No. 1).

Plate No. 1 Looking W across the site.

The site is located just S and E of Creagh Cemetery with a line of modern dwellings facing onto the R446 to the S and a field of pasture to the E (Illus. 2). The site is bounded by a modern concrete block wall to the N, by a mortared stone wall to the W, by modern property boundaries to the rear of dwellings to the S and by a wire fence lined with hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and ash to the E. The W site boundary is also the townland boundary between Kilgarve and Creagh. The site is currently accessed via a wide gate centrally located along the N boundary, inside which is a stoned area measuring 17.5m E/W x 3.5m N/S.



A narrow strip gives access to the old Dublin Road (R446) off the SW corner of the field. This area is quite overgrown with grass, briars, ivy and bushes (Plate No. 2).

Plate No. 2 Looking N along narrow strip of site along R446.

Archaeology



The proposed development site is partly located within the constraint for a recorded monument, a church (RMP No. GA088-006) and graveyard (RMP No. GA088-006001), which are located adjacent to the W side of the proposed graveyard extension (Illus. 2 & 3 and Plate No. 3).

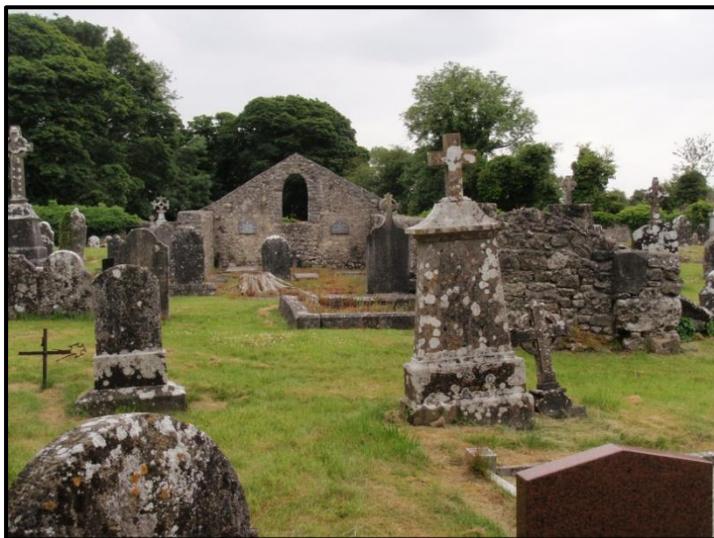
Plate No. 3 Church and graveyard from ESE.

They are described in the Archaeology Survey of County Galway (1999, 306) as ‘In a rectangular graveyard on E outskirts of Ballinasloe Town. The standing remains are those of an ivy-mantled rectangular church (E-W; L c. 17.7m, Wth 6.8m) in fair condition. Apart from W gable, all the walls stand to full height. There is a rectangular doorway towards W end of S wall, to E of which are three plain rectangular windows. A large round-headed window graces E gable and there is also a window in N wall. As Egan (1960, 27) surmises, this is a Protestant church of 18th century date, though it probably stands on the site of the medieval

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parish church.’ The photo above shows that much of the ivy has now been removed from the church (Plate No. 1).

Located 140m to the N of the proposed development site is another recorded monument (RMP No. GA088-008), comprising two churches (RMP Nos. GA088-008001 and -008002) and a graveyard (RMP No. GA088-008003) (Illus. 3), which along with the modern graveyard immediately N of the proposed development site and the church (RMP No. GA088-006) and graveyard (RMP No. GA088-006001) immediately to the W, make up Creagh Cemetery (Illus. 2).



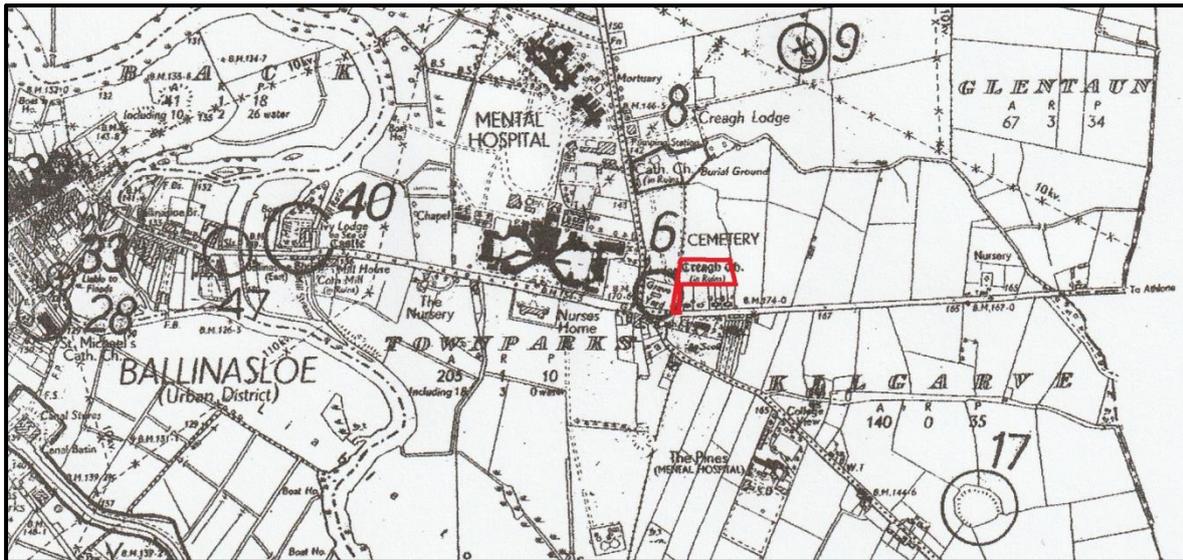
The Galway Inventory (1999, 306) refers again to Egan (1960), that this church (Plate No. 4) (RMP No. GA088-008001) ‘is the site of an early 18th-C Mass House which was in use until 1824 when it was replaced by another church’ (GA088-008002) (Plate No. 5).

Plate No. 4 Looking E towards the earlier church (RMP No. GA088-008001).



Another graveyard (RMP No. GA088-008003) is located to the E of the churches (RMP Nos. GA088-008001 and -008002).

Plate No. 5 Looking E towards the 19th century church (RMP No. GA088-008002).



Illus. 3 Site Location Map showing site outlined in red (extract from Galway RMP)

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Pre-development testing on the grounds of St. Brigid's Hospital (formerly Ballinasloe and District Lunatic Asylum), in advance of proposed road improvements at Creagh junction in November/December 2001 (under Excavation Licence No. 01E1180), uncovered a total of 77 grave-cuts and possible grave-cuts and 5 possible inhumations. Further grave-cuts and inhumations were subsequently uncovered during monitoring of the works in August 2002. Full excavation of 12 skeletons was subsequently carried out under Excavation Licence No. 01E1180 (ext.). The burials were thought to be associated with the adjacent psychiatric facility. These works were located to the W of the graveyard (RMP No. GA088-006001).

References

- Alcock, O., de hÓra, K. and Gosling, P. (1999) *Archaeological Inventory of County Galway Volume II: North Galway*. Dublin.
- Delany, D. (2021) *Archaeological Impact Assessment of Proposed Burial Ground Extension at Creagh, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway*. Unpublished.
- Egan, P.K. (1960) *The parish of Ballinasloe, its history from the earliest times to the present day*. Dublin.
- www.excavations.ie (Summaries of all licensed excavations in Ireland 1969-2020).

SUMMARY

The pre-development testing revealed evidence of topsoil above natural subsoils in three of the five trenches excavated. An area of fill, which contained a large number of animal bone fragments, a small number of human skull fragments, modern pottery sherds and modern glass fragments, was found in a fourth trench. A small shallow cut containing charcoal, animal bone and red brick fragments was found in the fifth trench. No human burials were in evidence.

THE EXCAVATION

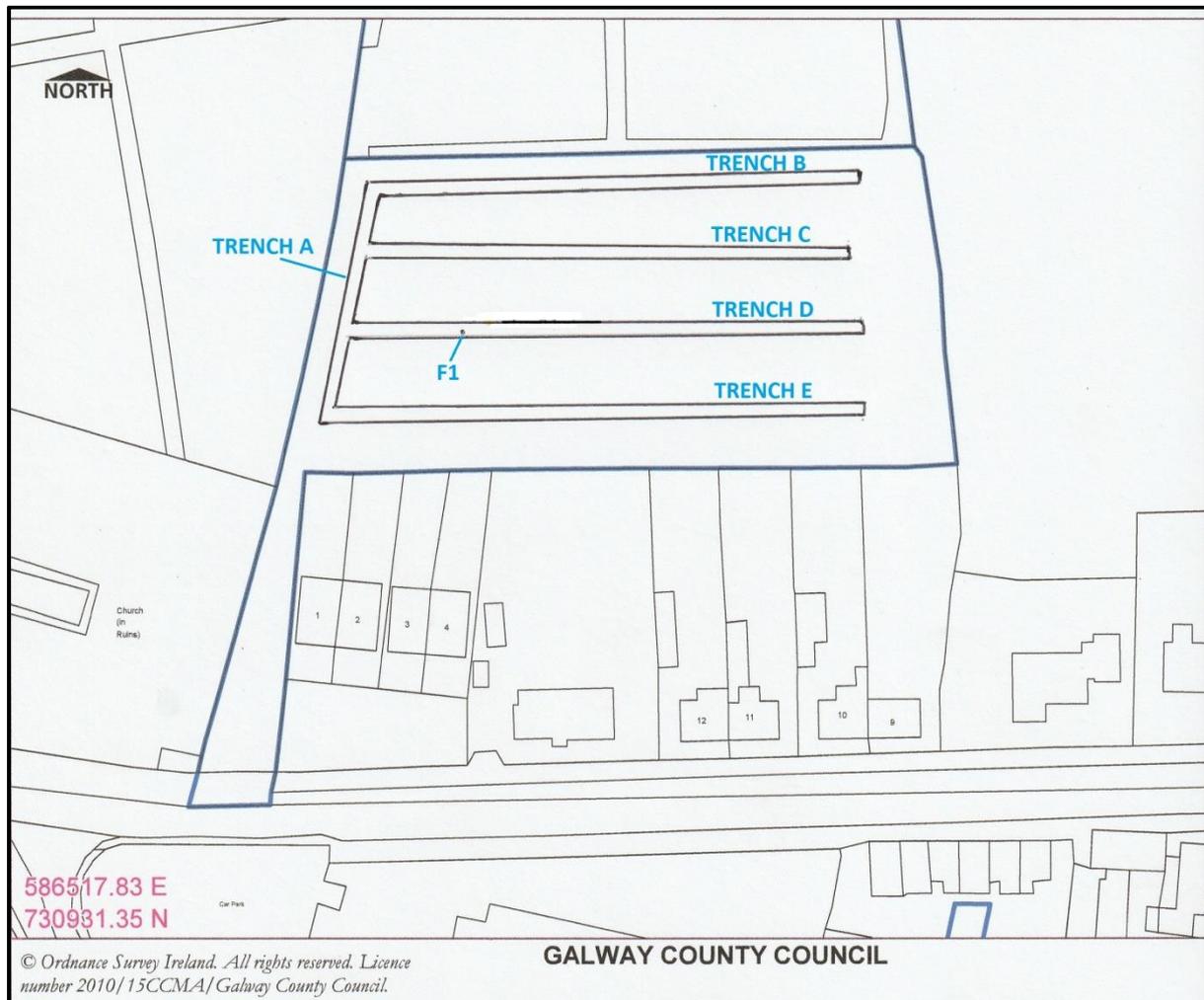
The Test Trenches

The testing consisted of the excavation of five trenches, located to best cover the area of the proposed development, especially that closest to the recorded monument (RMP No. GA088-006) (Illus. 4). The narrow strip of land between the SW corner of the site and the R446 to the S is not to be developed as part of the proposed graveyard extension. Trench A was located along the W side of the proposed graveyard extension, nearest the graveyard (RMP No. GA088-006001) to the W. It measured 41m NNE/SSW, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.5-0.65m deep. Its NNE end was located 4m from the N site boundary and 3.9m from the W site boundary. Its SSW end was located 3.8m from the W site boundary. Trench B was located along the N side of the proposed graveyard extension. It measured 80.3m E/W, 1.8-2.0m wide and 0.4-0.6m deep. Its W end exited from the NNE end of Trench A, while its E end was located 10m from the E site boundary and 3.7m from the N site boundary. Trench C exited at 12m from the NNE end of Trench A and measured 80.4m E/W, 1.8-2.1m wide and 0.4-1.5m deep. Its E end was located 16.7m from the N site boundary. Trench D exited at 24m from the NNE end of Trench A and measured 85.5m E/W, 1.8-2.1m wide and 0.45-1.0m deep. Its E end was located 29m from the N site boundary. Trench E was located along the S side of the proposed graveyard extension and exited from the SSW end of Trench A. It measured 89.6m E/W, 1.85-2.0m wide and 0.5-1.0m deep. Its E end was located 42.2m from the N site boundary.

The spoil from each trench was carefully inspected during the testing.

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Following the discovery of suspected human bone in a cut (F1) in Trench D, an amended method statement was submitted to and approved by the National Monuments Service. The amended method statement included the excavation of a sondage within the cut (F1) in Trench D. The sondage measured 0.5m E/W, 0.5m N/S and 0.07-0.2m deep (Illus. 5).



Illus. 4 Trench Layout (Scale 1:1000).

Stratigraphy



The stratigraphy in Trench A consisted of topsoil (C1) above grey loose sand gravel (C2), orange/brown friable silt loam (C3) and pea-gravel (C4) (Plate No. 6). The topsoil (C1) measured 0.2-0.35m thick and contained modern pottery sherds, red brick fragments, modern glass fragments, plastic and aluminium cans.

Plate No. 6 Trench A completed from its NNE end.

The sand and gravel (C2) was also found below the silt loam (C3) and the pea-gravel (C4). The silt loam (C3) measured up to 0.3m thick. The pea-gravel (C4) measured 50mm thick and extended for 4m from the SSW end of the trench.



Below the topsoil (C5) in Trench B was grey loose sand and gravel (C6) and orange/grey/brown friable sandy silt loam (C7) (Plate No. 7). The topsoil (C5) measured 0.25-0.4m thick and contained plastic, modern pottery, two sherds of blackware and one oyster shell. The sand and gravel (C6) was also found below the silt loam (C7).

Plate No. 7 Trench B completed from its W end.

The stratigraphy in Trench C consisted of topsoil (C8) above fill (C9), grey loose sand and gravel (C10) and orange/grey/brown friable sandy silt loam (C11). The topsoil (C8) measured 0.2-0.4m thick and contained modern pottery sherds and modern glass fragments. The fill (C9) consisted of loose grey/brown re-deposited topsoil and rocks (Plate No. 8).



Plate No. 8 Fill (C9) in Trench C from ESE.

It (C9) contained numerous animal bone fragments, nine human skull fragments (see Osteoarchaeological Report), red brick fragments, modern glass fragments, two oyster shells, an un-inscribed clay pipe stem and modern pottery sherds. It (C9) was located 4m from the W end of the trench and extended for 5.1m and up to 1.1m thick.



Plate No. 9 Human skull fragments just right of centre middleground.

Three of the human skull fragments were located 0.8m below the surface in close proximity to a number of modern pottery sherds (Plate No. 9). The sand and gravel (C10) was also found below the fill (C9) and the sandy silt loam (C11).

Below the topsoil (C12) in Trench D was grey loose sand and gravel (C13), orange/grey/brown friable sandy silt loam (C14) and the fill (C15) of a shallow cut (F1) (Plate No. 10). The topsoil (C12) measured 0.2-0.6m thick and contained modern pottery sherds and a small number of animal bone fragments and oyster shells.



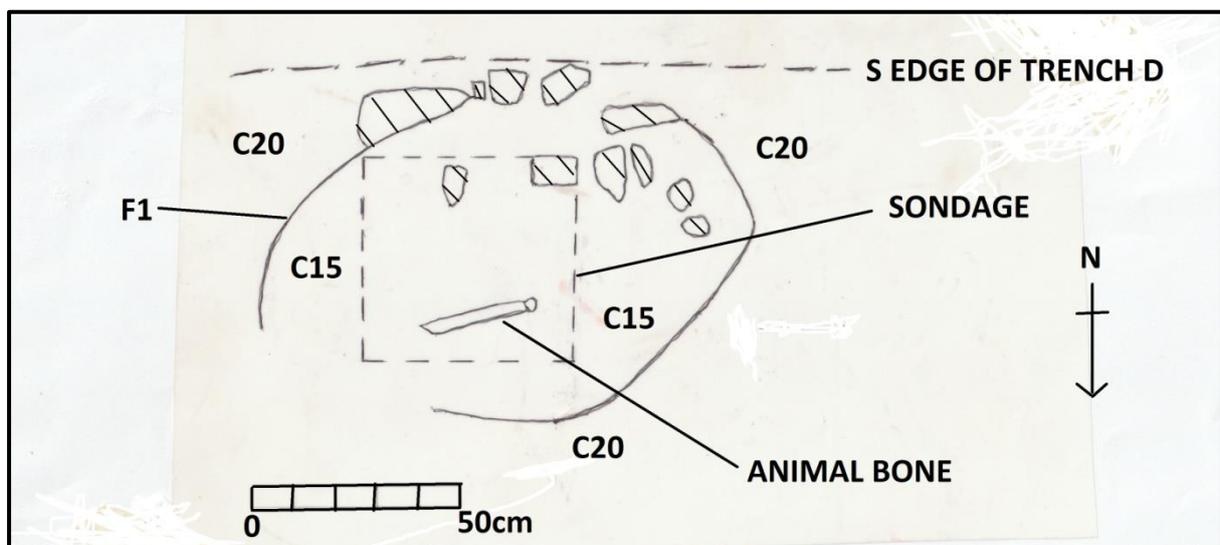
The fill (C15) of the cut consisted of soft grey/brown friable silt loam which contained rocks, frequent flecks of charcoal, red brick fragments, mortar, an un-inscribed clay pipe stem and three animal bone fragments (see Osteoarchaeological Report below).

Plate No. 10 F1 prior to excavation of sondage, from E.



The cut (F1) was found at 18.65m from the W end of the trench, at 0.4m below the surface. It (F1) measured 1.3m E/W and extended 0.85m into the trench from its S side (Illus. 5 and Plate Nos. 10 & 11). It (F1) was cut into an orange/grey/brown compact clay (C20) and measured 0.2m deep (Plate No. 11).

Plate No. 11 F1 with sondage completed. Taken from W.



Illus. 5 Plan of F1 in Trench D

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The stratigraphy in Trench E consisted of topsoil (C16) above grey loose sand and gravel (C17), orange/brown friable sandy silt loam (C18) and pea-gravel (C19) (Plate No. 12).

Plate No. 12 Trench E completed from its W end.

The topsoil (C16) measured 0.25-0.5m thick and contained modern glass fragments, modern pottery sherds, plastic, one large animal bone fragment and one oyster shell. The sand and gravel (C17) was also found below the sandy silt loam (C18). The pea-gravel (C19), as C4 in Trench A, extended 1.8m from the W end of the trench and measured 50mm thick.

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CONTEXT NO.	TRENCH	DESCRIPTION	DIMENSIONS
1	A	Topsoil	0.2-0.35m thick
2	A	Grey loose sand and gravel	
3	A	Orange/brown friable silt loam	0.3m thick max.
4	A	Pea-gravel	50mm thick
5	B	Topsoil	0.25-0.4m thick
6	B	Grey loose sand and gravel	
7	B	Orange/grey/brown friable sandy silt loam	
8	C	Topsoil	0.2-0.4m thick
9	C	Fill	1.1m thick max.
10	C	Grey loose sand and gravel	
11	C	Orange/grey/brown friable sandy silt loam	
12	D	Topsoil	0.2-0.6m thick
13	D	Grey loose sand and gravel	
14	D	Orange/grey/brown friable sandy silt loam	
15	D	Fill	0.2m thick
16	E	Topsoil	0.25-0.5m thick
17	E	Grey loose sand and gravel	
18	E	Orange/brown friable sandy silt loam	
19	E	Pea-gravel	50mm thick
20	D	Orange/brown compact clay	

Table 1 List of Contexts

OSTEOARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

Kilgarve, Co. Galway, 21E0470

by

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27th Oct. 2021

In 2021, small quantities of disarticulated skeletal material were recovered during licenced archaeological test trenching at Kilgarve, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. The work was undertaken by Richard Crumlish under licence 21E0470. The skeletal remains were recovered from c.9 in Trench C and c.15 in Trench D. All of the skeletal remains in the latter trench were faunal in origin. The nine fragments of bone recovered in Trench C were all human in origin.

These nine fragments are all adult cranial remains. All are from either the left or right parietal bones (that is, the sides of the cranium). Eight of these refitted together. It was not possible to refit the ninth, small fragment. The latter is also from an adult parietal and is, in the opinion of the writer, from the same single adult individual. The fragments exhibit breaks which occurred both in antiquity and more recently (that is, during the test excavations, an entirely normal phenomenon). The recent breaks are marked as dashed lines in **Figure 1** below. The more ancient breaks likely occurred at the time of disturbance and disarticulation in the distant past. All of the fragments have suffered from post-mortem erosion, although they are still quite robust. The endocranial (internal) surfaces all exhibit some degree of peeling of the bone surface. This can be a feature of disarticulated skeletal remains, presumably relating to changes in environment following truncation of the original grave.

It is not possible to determine a precise age-at-death. Certainly, the fragments appear adult in origin. However, it is noted that there is no fusion evident in any of the main observable sutures (the coronal, sagittal, lambdoid, and squamous). As an individual ages in adulthood, the plates of bone in the cranium gradually fuse together. In complete crania, with no other options available, it may be used as an approximate method of estimation of age-at-death (Meindl and Lovejoy 1985). However, this is not possible with the remains from Kilgarve.

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Essentially this individual may be aged anywhere between approximately 20 years and 45 years. It is not possible to determine the sex of the individual.

It is likely that these nine fragments were truncated in antiquity from one adult burial somewhere in the vicinity of Trench C. No other human skeletal remains were identified during the works.

Meindl, R. S. & Lovejoy, C. O. 1985. Ectocranial Suture Closure: A Revised Method for the Determination of Skeletal Age at Death Based on the Lateral-Anterior Sutures. *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 68, 57-66.

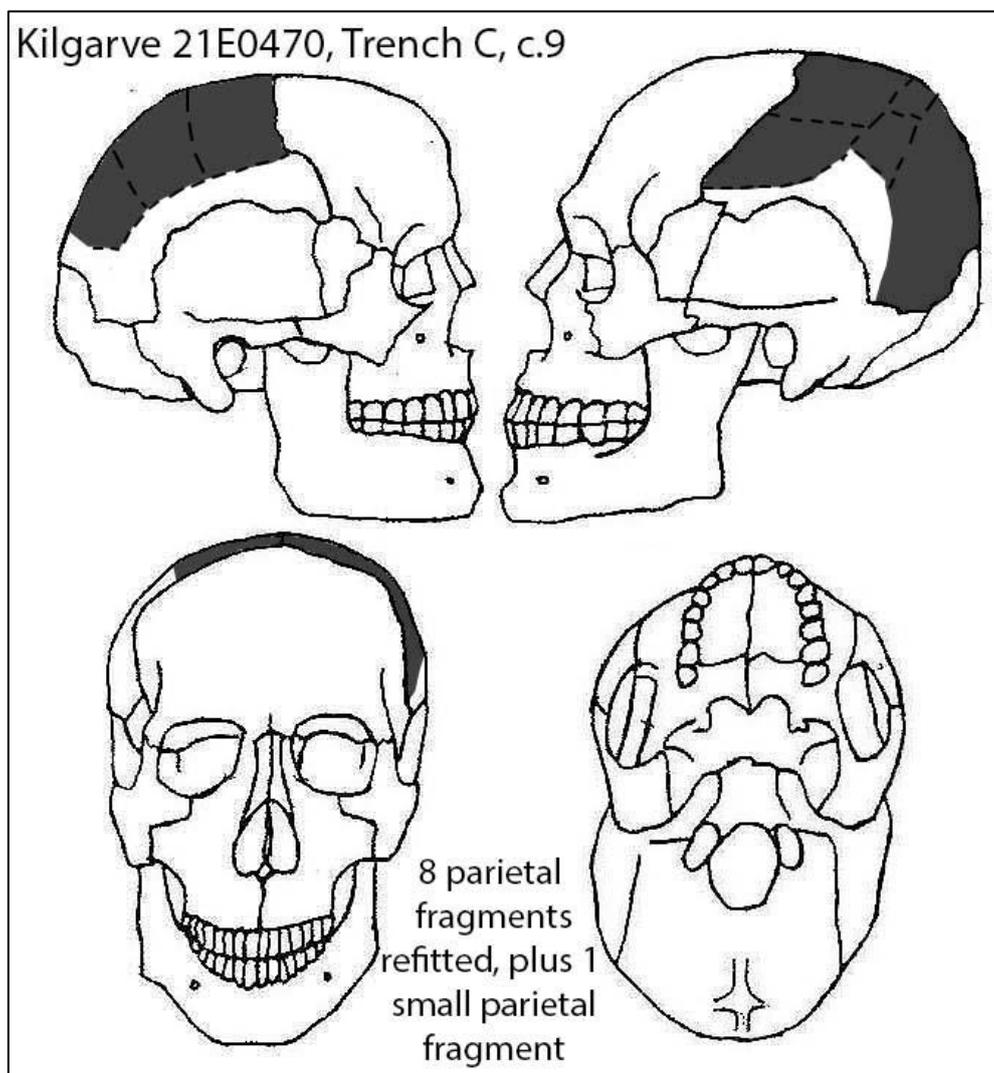


Figure 1. Schematised diagram showing the eight human adult fragments recovered from c.9, Trench C. There is one other fragment that did not refit to these particular fragments.

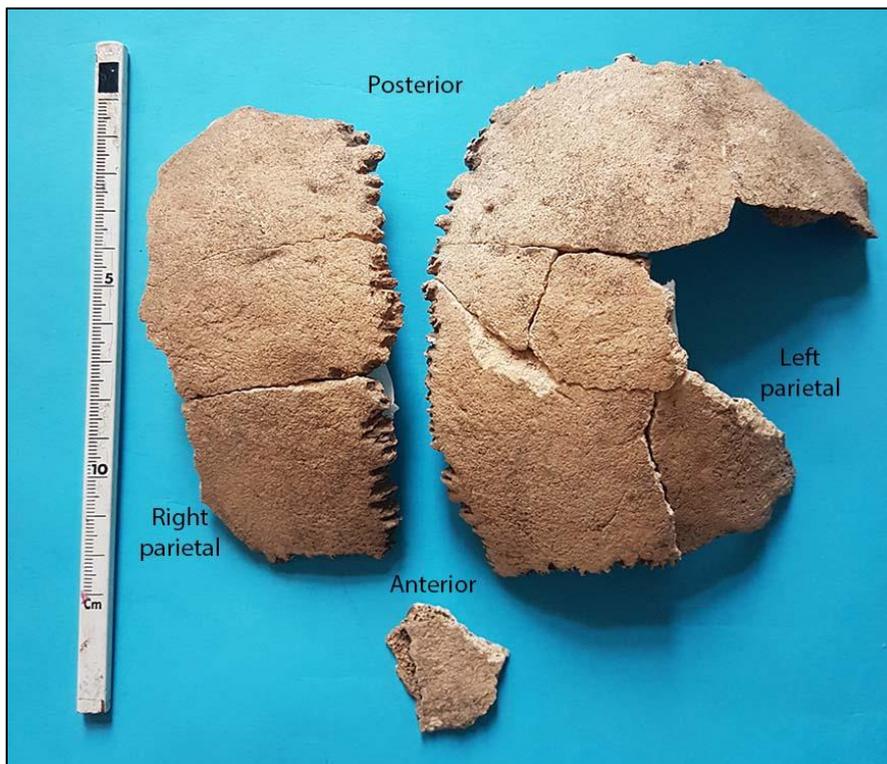


Plate 1. Ectocranial view of nine parietal fragments

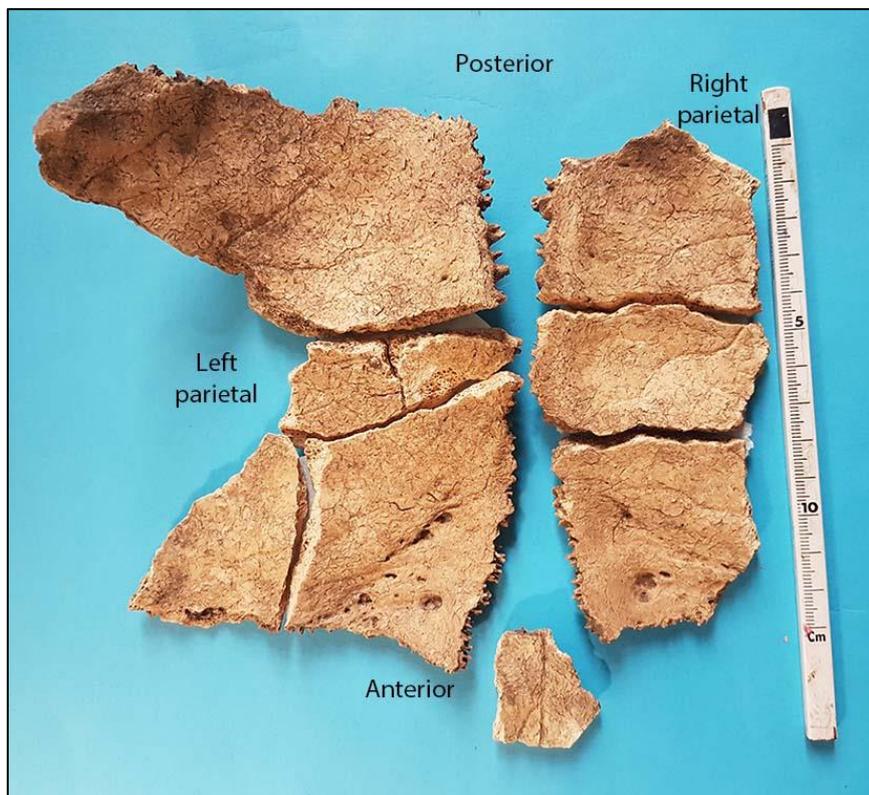


Plate 2. Endocranial view of nine parietal fragments

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The pre-development testing revealed topsoil (C1, C5, C8, C12 and C16) above natural subsoils (C2, C3, C6, C7, C10, C11, C13, C14, C17, C18 and C20), pea-gravel (C4 and C19) and two areas of fill (C9 and C15).

The area of fill (C9) in Trench D, which contained the human skull fragments, appears to fill a natural hollow rather than a cut or ditch feature. Certainly there is no evidence of a ditch feature in the nearest trenches either side of Trench D, i.e. Trench B which is located 8m to the N and Trench D which is located 10m to the S (Illus. 4). The modern glass fragments and modern pottery sherds, some of which were found in close proximity to the human skull fragments, date the fill (C9) to the 19th/20th century. It is difficult to know where the fill (C9) originated, although with the proximity of a cemetery and the presence of human bone in the fill (C9), one could speculate that it (C9) may not have come from that far away.

The fill (C15) of the shallow cut (F1) in Trench C contained artefacts from the modern period also. What was suspected to be a human bone located within the fill (C15) (Illus. 5 and Plate No. 10) was found to be from an animal (see Osteoarchaeological Report).

Apart from the nine human skull fragments (from one individual burial), no features/deposits/artefacts of archaeological significance were in evidence. No human burials were uncovered during the testing. All of the finds have been retained.

The proposed extension of the Creagh cemetery into this site will not impact on any archaeology. No further investigation is required.



Richard Crumlish

3.11.21

**ALL RECOMMENDATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO THE FINAL APPROVAL OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HERITAGE**