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**REPORT ON
PRE-DEVELOPMENT TESTING
AT
RINVILLE WEST TOWNLAND,
ORANMORE, COUNTY GALWAY**

Excavation Licence No. 24 E 0518

May 2024

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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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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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- Illus. 2** Proposed Site Layout showing Test Trench Layout.
- Illus. 3** Site Location showing recorded monuments with site outlined in red
(Extract from Galway RMP, Sheet No. 95).

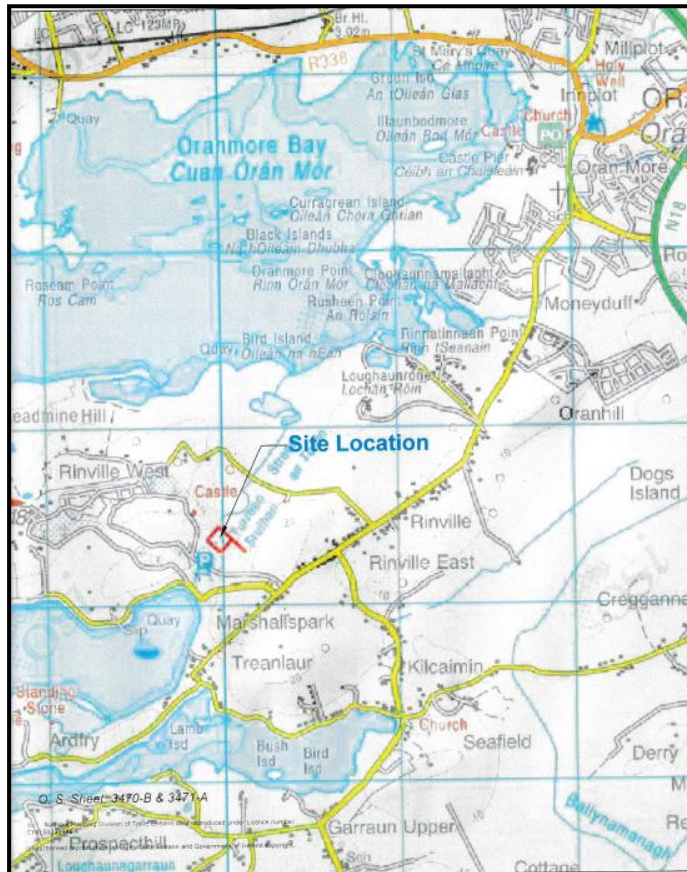
LIST OF PLATES

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- Plate No. 5** Trench B completed from its NE end, showing C5, C6, C7 and C8.
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- Plate No. 8** F1 in Trench E from NW.
- Plate No. 9** F1 following excavation, showing C16, C20 and C18. Taken from SW.
- Plate No. 10** F2 in Trench F from NW.
- Plate No. 11** F2 following excavation, showing C21, C25, C22 and C23. Taken from SW.
- Plate No. 12** Trench G completed from its SE end, showing C26, C27 and C28.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This work was carried out by the writer between 20 and 22 May 2024 and involved the test excavation of a site in advance of its development in Rinville West townland, near the eastern shores of Galway Bay, c. 2km SW of Oranmore in County Galway (Illus. 1).



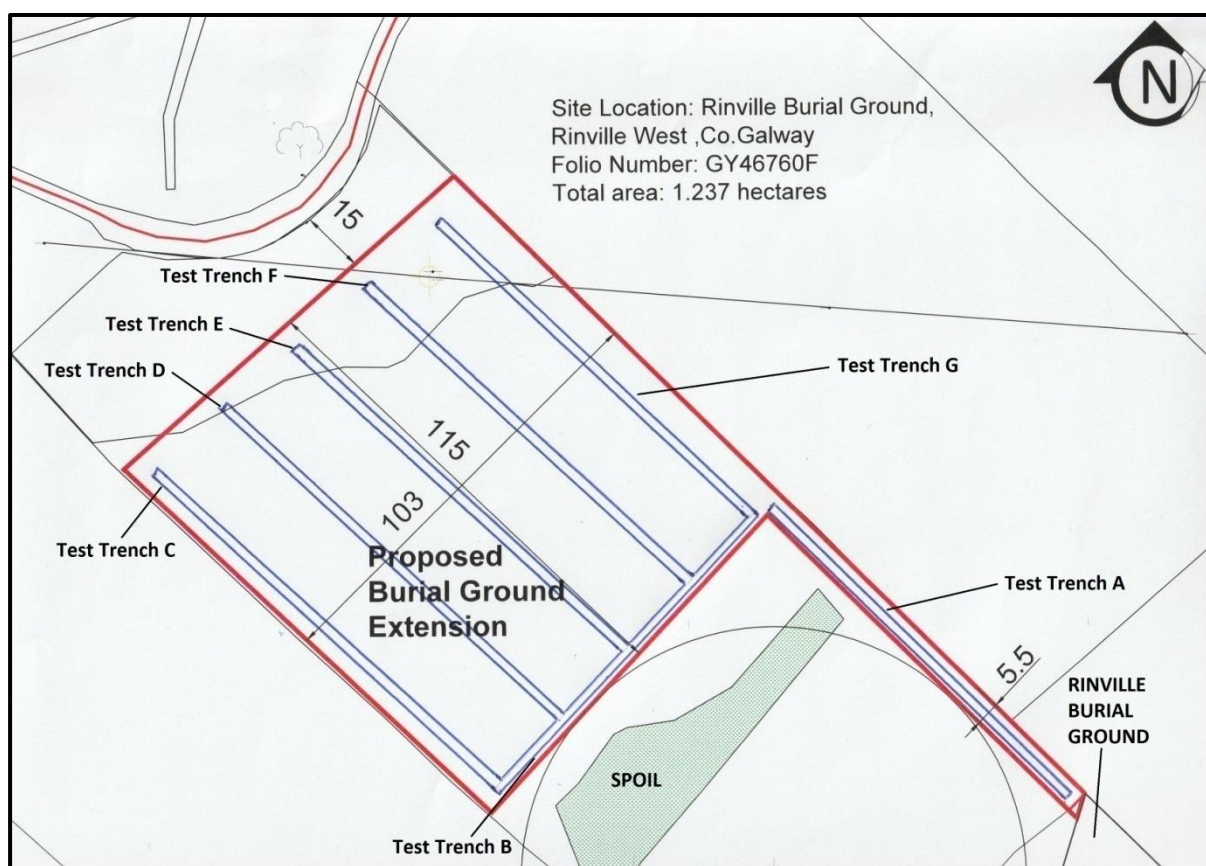
Illus. 1 Site Location Map showing site outlined in red (courtesy of Galway County Council).

The project consists of an extension (of 1.237 hectares) to the existing Rinville Burial Ground (Illus. 2). The proposed development includes a 100m long and 5.5m wide access road which extends NW from the existing Burial Ground (Illus. 2).

The testing is necessary due to the size of the proposed development site and its proximity to a ringfort (RMP No. GA095-129) (Illus. 3).

Funding for the testing was provided by the client.

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Illus. 2 Proposed Site Layout and Test Trench Layout – original scale 1:1000 (courtesy of Galway County Council).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BRIEF

The project is in the pre-planning phase. Following a discussion with Mr. John Olney, National Monuments Service, Mr. Olney agreed that the following archaeological impact assessment could be carried out:

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 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.

A report on the pre-development testing will accompany an application for planning permission.

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LOCATIONAL INFORMATION

Locational Details

Townland:	Rinville West	Parish:	Oranmore
Barony:	Dunkellin	OS 6-inch sheet:	Galway No. 95
OD:	5-25m	ITM:	535953, 722383

Access

The proposed development site is easily accessed being located along a local road which gives access to the existing Rinville graveyard (Illus. 1).

Siting



Plate No. 1 Looking SE across the site.

The proposed development site is a large field of pasture enclosed by earthen banks (Plate Nos. 1 and 2). The land slopes very gently from SW to NE and from SE to NW. To the NW of the proposed development site is a wooded area (Plate No. 2). To the NE and SW are fields of pasture.



Plate No. 2 Looking NW across the site.

Just outside the SE side of the proposed development site is an area of grass-covered spoil, whose origin is unknown (Illus. 2 and Plate No. 3). Further to the SE the land rises (Plate No. 1). A ringfort (RMP No. GA095-129) is located on the higher ground, beyond which is the current Rinville burial ground (Illus. 2).

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No features of archaeological significance are visible within the proposed development site.

Recorded Monuments

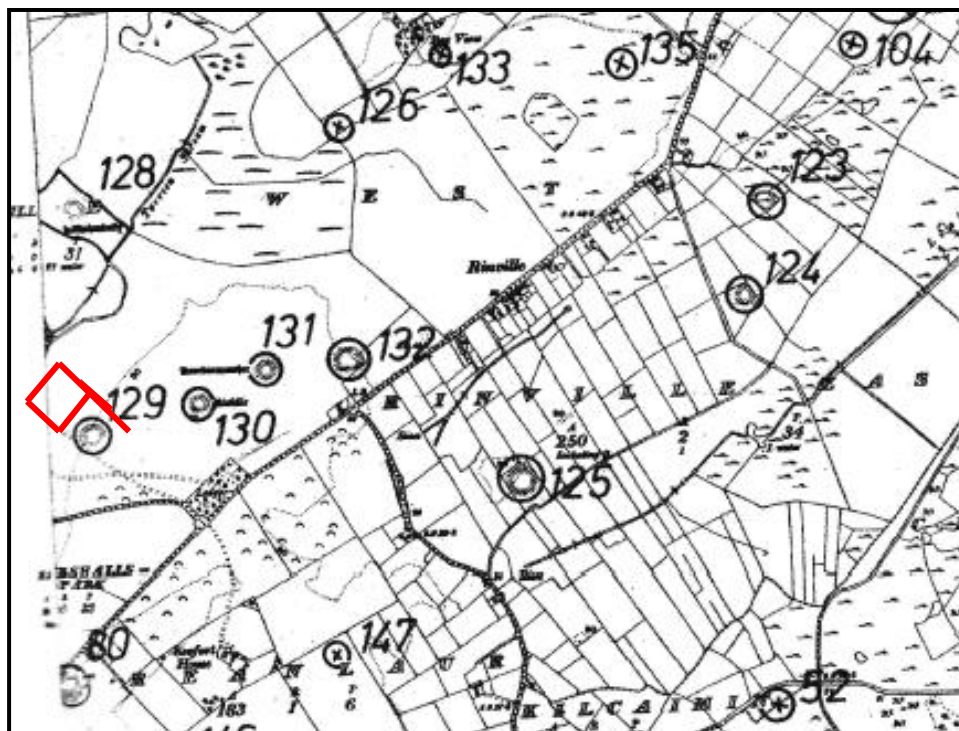
A ringfort (RMP No. GA095-129) is located c. 40m SE of the proposed development site (Plate No. 3 and Illus. 3). It is described in the Historic Environment viewer of the National Monuments website (www.archaeology.ie) as ‘On a NW-facing slope in pastureland. Classified by McCaffrey (1952, 144, no. 15) as a circular “earthen fort” (diam. c. 45.7m) defined by a bank with an entrance gap at W. Athy (1914, 138) refers of a fosse and outer bank which “have disappeared”. The rath has been levelled and no visible surface trace survives, however, its outline is clearly visible on the OSi digital globe aerial photograph’.



The outline is also visible on the ground, albeit from a distance rather than on, or within, the monument (Plate No. 3).

Plate No. 3 Looking SE across site with ringfort in the background.

A tower house (RMP No. GA094-064) is located c.200m away within the wooded area to the NW. Two ringforts (RMP Nos. GA095-130 and GA095-131) are located c.200m and c.380m away to the E, respectively (Illus. 3). A field system (RMP No. GA095-134) is located c.280m away to the NE.



Illus. 3 Site Location Map showing site outlined in red (extract from Galway RMP, Sheet 95)

SUMMARY

The pre-development testing revealed nothing of archaeological significance.

THE EXCAVATION

The Test Trenches

The testing consisted of the excavation of seven trenches, located to best cover the area of the proposed development (Illus. 2). Trench A was located along the proposed access road, which is located to the NE of the ringfort (RMP No. GA095-129) and measured 98.2m NW-SE, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.2-0.6m deep. Its SE end was located 2.2m from the SE site boundary and 2.85m from the NE site boundary. Its NW end was located 3.1m from the NE site boundary. Trench B was located along the SE side of the site, that closest to the ringfort (RMP No. GA095-129) and measured 90.4m NE-SW, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.3-0.7m deep. Its NE end was located 7.6m from the NE site boundary and 103.2m from the SE site boundary (entrance gate). Its SW end was located 5.4m from the SW site boundary and 103m from the SW end of the field boundary to the SE. Trench C exited from the SW end of Trench B and measured 110m NW-SE, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.4-0.7m deep. Its NW end was located 5.2m

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from the SW site boundary. Trench D exited at 22m from the SW end of Trench B and measured 107.5m NW-SE, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.35-0.95m deep. Its NW end was located 27m from the SW site boundary. Trench E exited at 44m from the SW end of Trench B and measured 106.1m NW-SE, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.3-1.05m deep. Its NW end was located 46.5m from the SW site boundary. Trench F exited at 66m from the SW end of Trench B and measured 103.7m NW-SE, 1.9-2.1m wide and 0.3-1.0m deep. Its NW end was located 71.6m from the SW site boundary. Trench G exited from the NE end of Trench B and measured 101.4m NW-SE, 1.9-2.0m wide and 0.25-0.8m deep. Its NW end was located 8.9m from the NE site boundary.

A 20m section was not excavated at 10.6m from the NW end of Trench G, i.e. 10m on either side of an overhead power line. The spoil from each test trench was inspected for artefacts.

TRENCH	LENGTH	WIDTH	DEPTH
Trench A	98.2m	1.9-2.0m	0.2-0.6m
Trench B	90.4m	1.9-2.0m	0.3-0.7m
Trench C	110m	1.9-2.0m	0.4-0.7m
Trench D	107.5m	1.9-2.0m	0.35-0.95m
Trench E	106.1m	1.9-2.0m	0.3-1.05m
Trench F	103.7m	1.9-2.1m	0.3-1.0m
Trench G	101.4m	1.9-2.0m	0.25-0.8m

Table 1 Test Trench Dimensions.

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Stratigraphy



The stratigraphy in Trenches A and B consisted of topsoil (C1 and C5) above grey plastic boulder clay (C2 and C6), orange/grey/brown plastic clay (C3 and C7) and grey loose sand and gravel (C4 and C8) (Plate Nos. 4 and 5). The topsoil (C1 and C5) measured 0.15-0.4m thick and contained plastic and one oyster shell in Trench A.

Plate No. 4 Trench A completed from its NW end, showing C1, C2, C3 and C4.



The boulder clay (C2 and C6) and the sand and gravel (C4 and C8) were also found below the plastic clay (C3 and C7). The plastic clay (C3 and C7) contained naturally decaying rocks.

Plate No. 5 Trench B completed from its NE end, showing C5, C6, C7 and C8.

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Below the topsoil (C9) in Trench C was grey plastic boulder clay (C10) and orange/brown plastic clay (C11) (Plate No. 6). The topsoil (C9) measured 0.2-0.4m thick and contained one oyster shell. The boulder clay (C10) was also visible below the plastic clay (C11).

Plate No. 6 Trench C completed from its NW end, showing C9, C10 and C11.



The stratigraphy in Trench D consisted of topsoil (C12) above grey plastic boulder clay (C13), orange/brown plastic clay (C14) and grey loose sand and gravel (C15) (Plate No. 7). The topsoil (C12) measured 0.25-0.6m thick and contained two oyster shells.

Plate No. 7 Trench D completed from its SE end, showing C12, C13, C14 and C15.

The spoil from the trench (D) contained a third oyster shell and two sherds of modern pottery. The boulder clay (C13) and the sand and gravel (C15) were also located below the plastic clay (C14). The plastic clay (C14) contained naturally decaying rocks.

Below the topsoil (C16 and C21) in Trenches E and F was grey plastic boulder clay (C17 and C22), orange/grey/brown plastic clay (C18 and C23) and grey loose sand and gravel (C19 and C24). The topsoil (C16 and C21) measured 0.15-0.5m thick. A drain feature (F1 and F2) crossed both trenches near their NW ends (Plate Nos. 8-11).

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Plate No. 8 F1 in Trench E from NW.

In Trench E it measured 2.5-2.6m wide and 0.3-0.4m deep. It (F1) was located 19.3-20.6m from the NW end of the trench, at 0.5-0.6m below the surface and was orientated ENE-WSW.



Plate No. 9 F1 following excavation, showing C16, C20 and C18. Taken from SW.

It was filled with grey/brown plastic clay (C20) which contained occasional fist-sized rocks and a very small amount of tiny oyster shell fragments (Plate Nos. 8 & 9). The feature (F1) was cut into the plastic clay (C18) (Plate No. 9).

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Plate No. 10 F2 in Trench F from NW.

In Trench F the feature (F2) measured 2.0m wide and up to 0.4m deep. It (F1) was located 21.8m from the NW end of the trench, at 0.4m below the surface and was orientated NE-SW (Plate No. 10). It was not as clearly defined as in the previous trench (Plate No. 10).



Plate No. 11 F2 following excavation, showing C21, C25, C22 and C23. Taken from SW.

It was U-shaped and filled with the same material as in F1 in Trench E, i.e. grey/brown plastic clay (C25) which contained occasional fist-sized rocks and a very small amount of tiny oyster shell fragments. The feature (F2) was cut into the boulder clay (C22) and the plastic clay (C23) (Plate No. 11).



Plate No. 12 Trench G completed from its SE end, showing C26, C27 and C28.

The stratigraphy in Trench G consisted of topsoil (C26) above orange/grey/brown plastic clay (C27) and grey loose sand and gravel (C28) (Plate No. 12). The topsoil (C26) measured 0.2-0.5m thick. The plastic clay (C27) contained naturally decaying rocks.

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CONTEXT NO.	TRENCH	DESCRIPTION	DIMENSIONS
1	A	Topsoil	0.15-0.4m thick
2	A	Grey plastic boulder clay	Not excavated
3	A	Orange/grey/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
4	A	Grey loose sand and gravel	Not excavated
5	B	Topsoil	0.25-0.4m thick
6	B	Grey plastic boulder clay	Not excavated
7	B	Orange/grey/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
8	B	Grey loose sand and gravel	Not excavated
9	C	Topsoil	0.2-0.4m thick
10	C	Grey plastic boulder clay	Not excavated
11	C	Orange/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
12	D	Topsoil	0.25-0.6m thick
13	D	Grey plastic boulder clay	Not excavated
14	D	Orange/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
15	D	Grey loose sand and gravel	Not excavated
16	E	Topsoil	0.2-0.5m thick
17	E	Grey plastic boulder clay	Not excavated
18	E	Orange/grey/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
19	E	Grey loose sand and gravel	Not excavated
20	E	Fill of F1	0.4m thick max.
21	F	Topsoil	0.15-0.5m thick
22	F	Grey plastic boulder clay	Not excavated
23	F	Orange/grey/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
24	F	Grey loose sand and gravel	Not excavated
25	F	Fill of F2	Up to 0.4m thick
26	G	Topsoil	0.2-0.5m thick
27	G	Orange/grey/brown plastic clay	Not excavated
28	G	Grey loose sand and gravel	Not excavated

Table 2 List of Contexts

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CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

The pre-development testing revealed topsoil (C1, C5, C9, C12, C16, C21 and C26) above fill (C20 and C25) and natural subsoils (C2, C3, C4, C6, C7, C8, C10, C11, C13, C14, C15, C17, C18, C19, C22, C23, C24, C27 and C28).

The two features, F1 and F2, uncovered near the NW ends of Trenches E and F appear to be sections of a silted up drain. Their fills (C20 and C25), which were very similar, were quite sterile containing only a tiny amount of shell fragments and occasional rocks. They are undoubtedly part of the same feature, located near the base of the slope in the field with better quality land further upslope to the SE and poorer quality land to the SW. They are likely to have had an agricultural drainage function.

The small number of oyster shells found in the topsoil is not surprising given the location of the site in proximity to Galway Bay. The two modern pottery sherds found in the spoil from Trench D were not retained.

Nothing of archaeological significance was in evidence. The proposed development will have no impact on the ringfort (RMP No. GA095-129). No previously unknown sub-surface archaeological material was uncovered during the testing. No further investigation is required.



Richard Crumlish

28.5.24

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

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APPENDIX: EXCAVATION LICENCE

An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



Excavation Licence

National Monuments Acts (1930-2004)

Licence Number	24E0518
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Application having been duly made to me by	Richard Crumlish
Of	4 Lecka Grove Castlebar Road Ballinrobe
For a licence to excavate at the site located at	Co. Galway RINVILLE WEST
Site details (place/structure/wreck/other)	
Being part of the townland of	RINVILLE WEST
In or under the portion of land/land underwater owned by	GALWAY CITY COUNCIL ARAS AN CHONTAE
Of	Prospect Hill Co. Galway
In county of	Co. Galway

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, in accordance with the conditions of Section 28 of the National Monuments Act, 1930, as amended, and subject to the conditions overleaf, does hereby licence the said applicant (**hereinafter** called the Licensee) to dig or excavate for the purpose specified in or under that portion of land above-mentioned.

Duration of licence: 14/05/2024 to 07/08/2024

Signed:

Date: 13/05/2024