

**N18 Ennis Bypass
and N85 Western Relief Road**

Site AR105, Manusmore, Co. Clare

**Final Archaeological Excavation Report
for Clare County Council**

Licence No: 04E0050

by Markus Casey

Job J04/01

(NGR 137898 171975)

1st August 2006

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Summary

Site name: N18 Ennis Bypass and N85 Western Relief Road, Site AR105, Manusmore, Co. Clare

Townland: Manusmore

Parish: Clareabbey

Barony: Islands

County: Clare

SMR/RMP Number: N/A

Planning Ref. No: N/A

Client: Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Landowner: Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Grid reference: 137898 171975 (OSI Discovery Series, 1:50,000, Sheet 58. OS 6" Clare Sheet 42)

Naturally occurring geology: Alluvial clay

TVAS Ireland Job No: J04/01

Licence No: 04E0050

Licence Holder: Markus Casey

Report author: Markus Casey

Site activity: Excavation

Site area: 49m²

Sample percentage: 100%

Date of fieldwork: 13th February 2004

Date of report: 1st August 2006

Summary of results: Two stones set in concrete were examined. The stones were clearly placed in their excavated position fairly recently and are not of any archaeological significance.

Monuments identified: Modern stones

Location and reference of archive: The primary records (written, drawn and photographic) are currently held at TVAS Ireland Ltd, Ahish, Ballinruan, Crusheen, Co. Clare.

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Final Archaeological Excavation Report**

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Report J04/01r

Introduction

This report documents the final results of an archaeological excavation of two post-medieval stones set up at the edge of the Ardsollus River (Site AR105) on the route of the N18 Ennis Bypass and N85 Western Relief Road at Manusmore, Co. Clare (NGR 137898 171975) (Fig. 1). The excavation forms part of the Ennis Bypass Archaeological Contract 6.

A preliminary archaeological report for this site was produced in May 2004 (Casey 2004).

The National Monuments Act 1930 (as amended) provides the legislative framework within which archaeological excavation can take place and the following government publications set out many of the procedures relating to planning/development and archaeology:

Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (DAHGI 1999a)

Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation (DAHGI 1999b)

Code of Practice between the National Roads Authority and the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands (NRA/MAHGI 2001)

Project background

As part of the National Roads Authority scheme for upgrading the N18 Limerick to Galway Road, Clare County Council, in consultation with NRA Project Archaeologist Sébastien Joubert, requested a series of archaeological investigations along the route of the proposed Ennis Bypass and a Western Relief Road. The proposed scheme has an overall length of 21km and involves the construction of a 13.8km eastern bypass of Ennis from Latoun, north of Newmarket-on-Fergus, to Cragard, north of Barefield. The Western Relief Road is 7.1km long and is to link Killow and Claureen (Fig. 1).

A number of sites of archaeological interest were known to lie on the route of the new roads and the mitigation strategy agreed by the Project Archaeologist and the national licensing authorities for these sites was preservation by record, i.e. full archaeological excavation. Further sites, without surface expression, were located as the result of intensive test trenching along the course of the road (03E1291 Hull 2003 and 03E1293 Roger 2004). As preservation *in situ* was not a reasonable option, the resolution strategy for these new sites was also preservation by record.

The archaeological excavation and post excavation work were funded by Clare County Council through the National Roads Authority and part-financed by the European Union under the National Development Plan 2000-2006.

Location, topography and geology

The site was located in the townland of Manusmore, parish of Clareabbey, barony of Islands and lay approximately 7km south-east of Ennis town centre (the O'Connell Monument), 3.5km south-east of Clarecastle and was centred on NGR 137898 171975 (Figs 1 and 2).

The site lay in a large field of fertile, cleared and drained pasture within the flood plain of the Ardsollus River. A 1.5m high earthen embankment along the northern shore mitigates the worst of winter flooding while a piped underground culvert runs into a large drain, which is not depicted on the 1922 Revision of the OS 6" Sheet Map. A smaller embankment protects the southern bank of the nearby Ardsollus River.

The land slopes very gently down to the south and the site lays at approximately 2m above Ordnance Datum (OD).

Archaeological background

As part of the environmental assessment process for the road scheme, Clare County Council commissioned desk-based and walkover surveys that formed part of an Environmental Statement (Babbie Pettit 2000) and an archaeological study for the Environmental Impact Statement (Doyle 1999). A total of 36 sites of known or potential cultural heritage significance were identified along the entire route of the proposed Ennis Bypass and Western Relief Road.

Earthwork and geophysical survey were undertaken on potential archaeological sites and invasive testing and excavation took place in 2002 and 2003 on some of the above ground sites affected by the proposed road (Aegis 2002, IAC 2003, Geoquest 2002, Earthsound 2003).

A systematic programme of testing along the new road route, involving the mechanical excavation of a central linear trench with offsets, took place in Summer/Autumn 2003. Twenty-two previously unknown sites, including cremation cemeteries, burnt stone spreads, enclosures and brick clamps were found (03E1291 Hull 2003 and 03E1293 Roger 2004). Monuments dating from the Bronze Age to the modern period were found.

Clare County Council, as part of the current road project, at the Ardsollus river crossing, commissioned underwater examination and geophysical survey. No archaeological material was found as a result of this work (Boland 2003).

Earlier phases of archaeological intervention on newly constructed stretches of the N18 (Dromoland to Carrigoran), to the immediate south of this road project, have demonstrated that the locality has a rich range of prehistoric and later monuments (99E0350 Hull and Tarbett-Buckley 2001).

Recent archaeological work on the BGE Gas Pipeline to the West in the neighbourhood of the new road route has tended to support the picture of continuous human activity in Co. Clare from the Neolithic and even becoming intensive from the Bronze Age. A number of burnt stone spreads and burnt mounds were excavated near the route of the new road in the summer of 2002 (MGL 2002).

Two possible pious stones (memorial stones?) were identified at Post-EIS stage at the northern side of the flood plain of the Ardsollus River. These stones have been allocated the name Site AR105 and are the subject of this report.

Cremation cemeteries of prehistoric date were excavated nearby as part of this road project. (AR100, 04E0187, Hull 2006a, 300m to the north-west and AR102, 04E0189, Hull 2006b 1.2km to the north-west). The remains of a post-medieval brick production site were also excavated 1km to the north-west (AR101, 04E0188, Hull 2006c).

Excavation aims and methodology

A licence to excavate was granted to Markus Casey by the National Monuments Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, in consultation with the National

Museum of Ireland, on behalf of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The licence number is 04E0050.

The aims of the excavation were to:

- 1) Preserve by record all archaeological deposits and features within the excavation area
- 2) Produce a high quality report of the findings

The fieldwork took place on the 13th February 2004 and was directed by Markus Casey, supervised by Richard Oram and assisted by Frank Mulcahy.

The excavation area was square, centred on the stones and examined 49m². Topsoil and overburden were removed by a 15 tonne, 360°, tracked machine, operated under direct and continuous archaeological supervision. The digger was fitted with a 6 foot toothless bucket.

All features were hand-cleaned then fully excavated.

A full written, drawn and photographic record was made following procedures outlined in the TVAS Ireland Field Recording Manual (First Edition 2003).

Excavation results (Fig. 3 and Plates 1 and 2)

No trace of any surface features of archaeological or historical significance, other than the stone setting itself, could be seen in advance of the investigation.

A roughly hewn limestone upright and adjacent horizontal ‘sill-stone’ were both set in concrete. Both stones had been erected recently as not only were they set in concrete, but they stood directly on top of the piped culvert.

The limestone upright stood 1.03m high over the ground surface, 0.80m over the adjacent sill stone and measured 0.177m thick. It is 0.405m wide at the base, tapering to 0.38mm at the top and both faces are plain, with no incisions visible. When removed from the concrete surround, the stone was measured at 1.48m long and 0.42m at it widest at base. The upright stood 0.02m from the horizontal slab and the faces pointed north and south.

The horizontal slab was a reused stone from a gateway from a big house, most likely from a stable door. The chisel-cut chamfered edges and slot for a metal gate hinge attest to this. A small hole on the upper face may have held a lamp. The stone is 0.66m long and 0.19m deep at the edges, reaching a maximum of 0.25m at the centre. It averages 0.35m wide and stood 0.04m within the concrete setting with on average 0.15m exposed.

The area immediately around the two stones was littered with domestic and building rubble, extending 3.6m to the south and 1.8m to the east and west. The area was overgrown with brambles and the stone upright had been used as a scratching stone by cattle. Beneath the rubble was a layer of gravel which surrounded the pipe beneath.

Finds

Although both stones were removed, neither item can be considered an archaeological artefact. The stones are currently stored at the archaeological contractor’s premises. These stones have not been allocated finds numbers, as it is not anticipated that they will be deposited with the National Museum. The former landowner has expressed an interest in having the stones returned to him.

Samples

No soil samples were taken from the site.

Discussion

The excavation of Site AR105, Manusmore, Co. Clare has produced evidence of the relatively recent deliberate setting in concrete of two stones.

Neither stone is an archaeological artefact and the site itself cannot be considered an archaeological site or monument. The stones were clearly moved from elsewhere in the recent past.

The stones were reported by the landowner to have been set up by his father in the early 1960s. The stones might have been erected as a rubbing post for cattle. The stones had 'sentimental value' for the landowner and will be returned to the landowner to be re-erected near the new road.

Archaeological potential off the road CPO

This excavation and earlier testing (03E1291, Hull 2003) indicate that the setting of stones at Site AR105 was a discrete and modern event and has been resolved in its entirety within the road CPO. No evidence for archaeological deposits off the road CPO was apparent.

Publication plan

A summary of the findings of the excavation has been submitted to *Excavations 2004*.

Copies of this final excavation report will be deposited with the Clare County Museum and the Local Studies Library, Ennis, Co. Clare

A summary article, describing the findings of this road project has been published in the local journal *The Other Clare* (Hull and Taylor 2005).

An illustrated information brochure describing the findings of this road project has been published by Clare County Council.

The stated aim of the National Roads Authority with regard to archaeological publication is clear, (O'Sullivan 2003) and it is anticipated that the results of this excavation will be disseminated as a component of a monograph dedicated to the archaeology of the Ennis Bypass. Publication is expected to take place in 2006/7 at the latest.

Markus Casey
For TVAS Ireland Ltd
1st August 2006

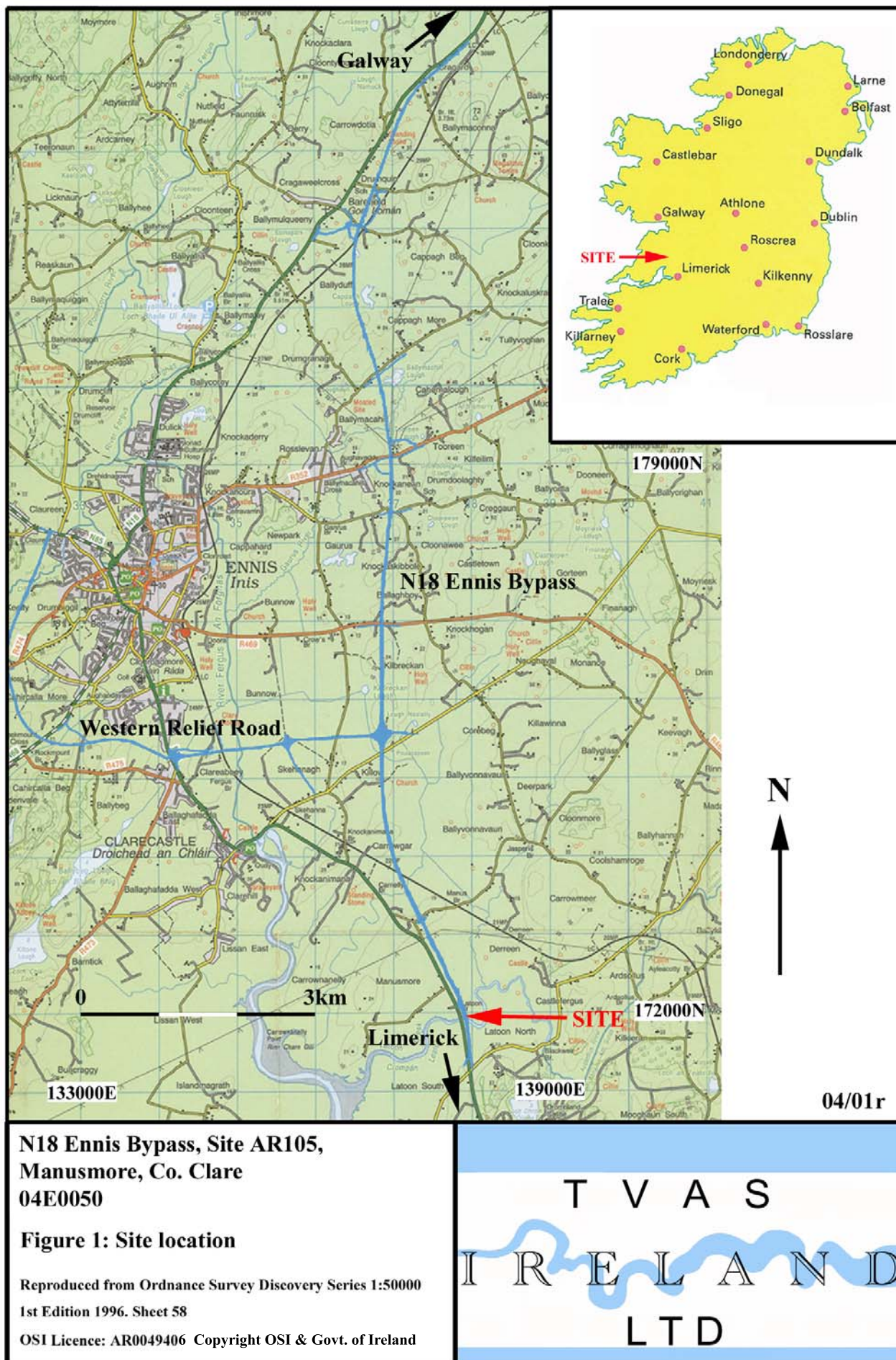
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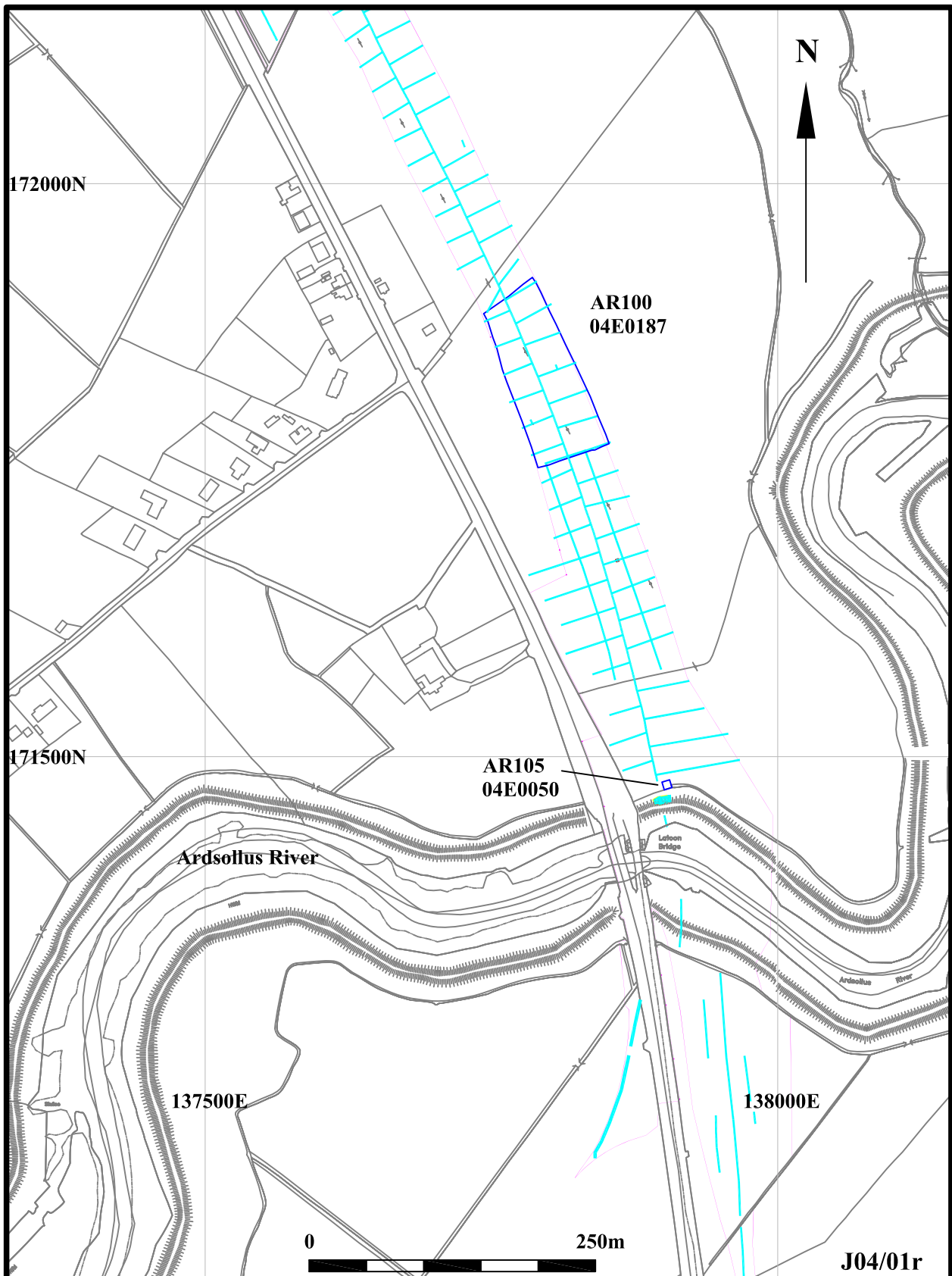
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N18 Ennis Bypass, Site AR105, Manusmore, Co. Clare

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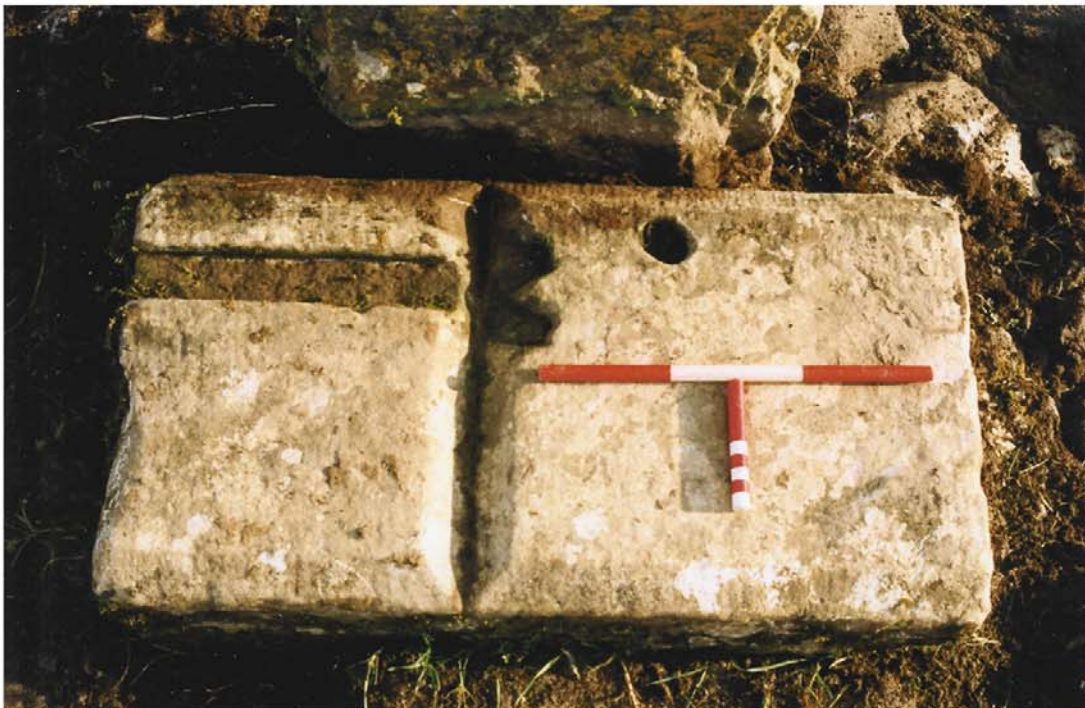
Figure 2: Location of site in local landscape, showing test trenches (03E1291)

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T V A S
I R E L A N D
L T D



**Plate 1. The two stones in situ, viewed from the north.
Scales 2m, 1m, 0.3m and 0.1m**



**Plate 2. The cut-stone sill, previously part of a gate or jamb.
Scales 0.3m and 0.1m**