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Excavations at Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, 1977-1978: Part II

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CAR PARK AREA II: MEDIEVAL SETTLEMENT SITES

INTRODUCTION

The 1977 excavations at Lough Gur covered an area adjacent to the north-east lake shore and the results have been published in *JCHAS* 1982, Vol. 87, No. 245. This excavation uncovered the remains of a late Neolithic/Beaker-period temporary shelter or squatting site and fragments of a Food Vessel Burial. The data obtained from the lakeshore trial trenches showed that much of the present line of the lakeshore in this area was created by late 19th century reclamation work.

The 1978 season of excavation was in the area due east of Bouchier's Castle which was to become a second car park (Car Park Area II). The site of the excavation lay adjacent to Beechwood Cottage.¹ Preliminary excavations were carried out in September-October 1977, and a full excavation was undertaken in May-August 1978. Prior to the post-famine drainage scheme of 1847, this area was one of the access points to Knockadoon hill² (Fig. 1). It lies outside a defensive ditch of the nearby Bouchier's Castle, but is less than 130m from the castle. The excavated area was formerly the site of the kitchen-garden of Beechwood Cottage that had been intensely cultivated up to the 1950s. Because of this activity the upper horizons were disturbed.

When the preliminary excavation of 1977

showed that Car Park Area II contained a number of archaeological features, a full excavation was undertaken in 1978. A thick deposit of topsoil covered the entire site, a combination of soil creep from the hillside, constant cultivation and manuring in the past and leaf mould from the nearby trees. The site of Car Park II excavation measured 20m x 50m, divided into two areas. Each consists of the remains of a medieval house site, numerous pits, postholes, ditches, hearth sites, and paved areas. This section of the report covers Area 1, while Part 3, forthcoming in the next issue of this *Journal*, will deal with Area 2. A large yard enclosure foundation trench associated with

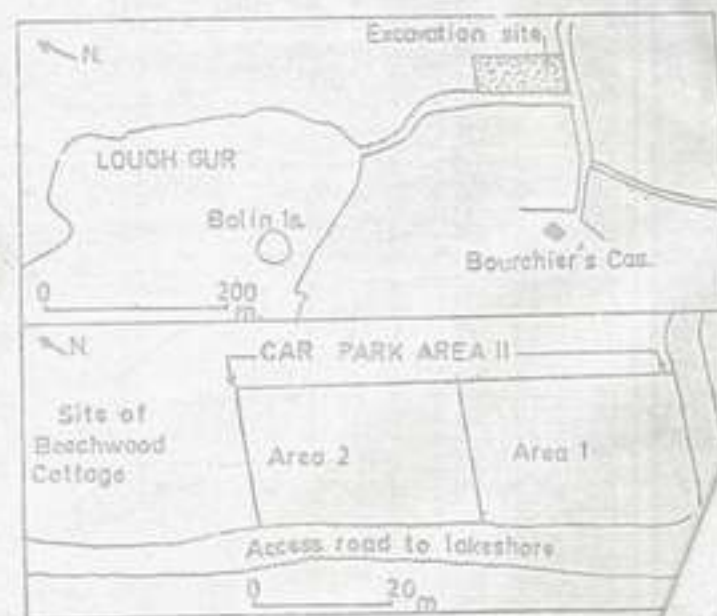


Fig. 1: Location map

the rectangular house of Area 2 (Fig. 2) traversed the site and cut through the north-western wall of the house in Area 1. (This will be dealt with in Part 3.) The main features of Area 1 are as follows:

House. Sub-rectangular in plan and 13th century in date.

Huts 1-3. Circular in plan. Hut 1 pre-dated the house foundation trench (Fig. 2).

Rectangular shelter. A small open-ended shelter, post-medieval in date (Fig. 2).

Paved Areas. Areas of roughly-laid paving stones, medieval in date (Fig. 2).

Ditch. This traversed the south-east of the site, and has been interpreted as part of a land enclosure system which post-dates the medieval trackway (paved areas).

Ironworking area. This produced a series of features, i.e., two hearth sites, pits, slate-covered drain, stone foundations and features 4-5 (Fig. 2). These features are regarded as a complex, associated with ironworking. All post-dated the yard enclosure which is 14th century. A considerable amount of ironworking debris was recovered from the fill.

Pits 1-10. Some were associated with the house, e.g., pits 4 and 10, but many were unrelated to any superstructure.

Features 1-15. A miscellaneous group.

Postholes. A number of these in the north-east of Area 1 post-dated the paved area associated with the 13th century house.

HOUSE (Figs. 1-4)

This house occupied the centre of Area 1. It was sub-rectangular in plan with an external length of 14.5m and a width of 7.6m. The foundations and interior were disturbed by the recent laying of water pipes. The long axis of the house ran south-east/north-west. It had rounded corners on the north and east (Figs. 2 and 3). The southern corner was square. The north-west wall foundation trench was cut across and disturbed by the erection of a yard enclosure in the 14th century. The hearth was

in the south-western wall.

The foundation trench for the house varied in depth from 50cm on the north-eastern side to 75cm on the south-western side. (Fig. 3a, section A-B). The north-east part of the house cut across pre-existing features e.g., Hut 1, Feature Nos. 9-11 and 14. The section of the foundation trench where it was best preserved, i.e., east, south and west sides, was a deep 'U' shape. Because the fill of the foundation did not contain much stone, a completely mud-built superstructure seems likely. The only area of stone foundation was that of the hearth site in the south-west wall. Evans (1957, p. 46) suggests that a stone foundation layer was first sunk when a house was completely mud-built. The house at Lough Gur may therefore have had a timber frame on which the mud was plastered. The nature of the soil in the Lough Gur region makes it difficult to determine if postholes are present. Postholes are easily recognized only if the post has been driven into the yellow boulder clay levels. Consequently though no posthole bottoms were found in the base of the house foundation trench, it is possible that it had a row of posts. These posts may have been either closely set and subsequently plastered with mud, or more widely spaced with an intermediary wattle frame, and again plastered with mud. The trench varied in width from 80 to 140cm, the widest part being at the corners. Mud walls c. 1.5m thick would have made a very stable structure. The roof was probably thatched and, because the wall corners are rounded on the north and east, possibly hipped.

The southern end of the house contained much stone and an elaborate ash-pit set within the foundation trench. This part of the wall must have had a stone chimney breast (Figs. 3 & 3a). The ash-pit to the south of the hearth was a stone-lined, box-like structure with a floor and side wall slabs of limestone (Fig. 4). The fill consisted of charcoal and humus. The charred seed remains were oats and barley with

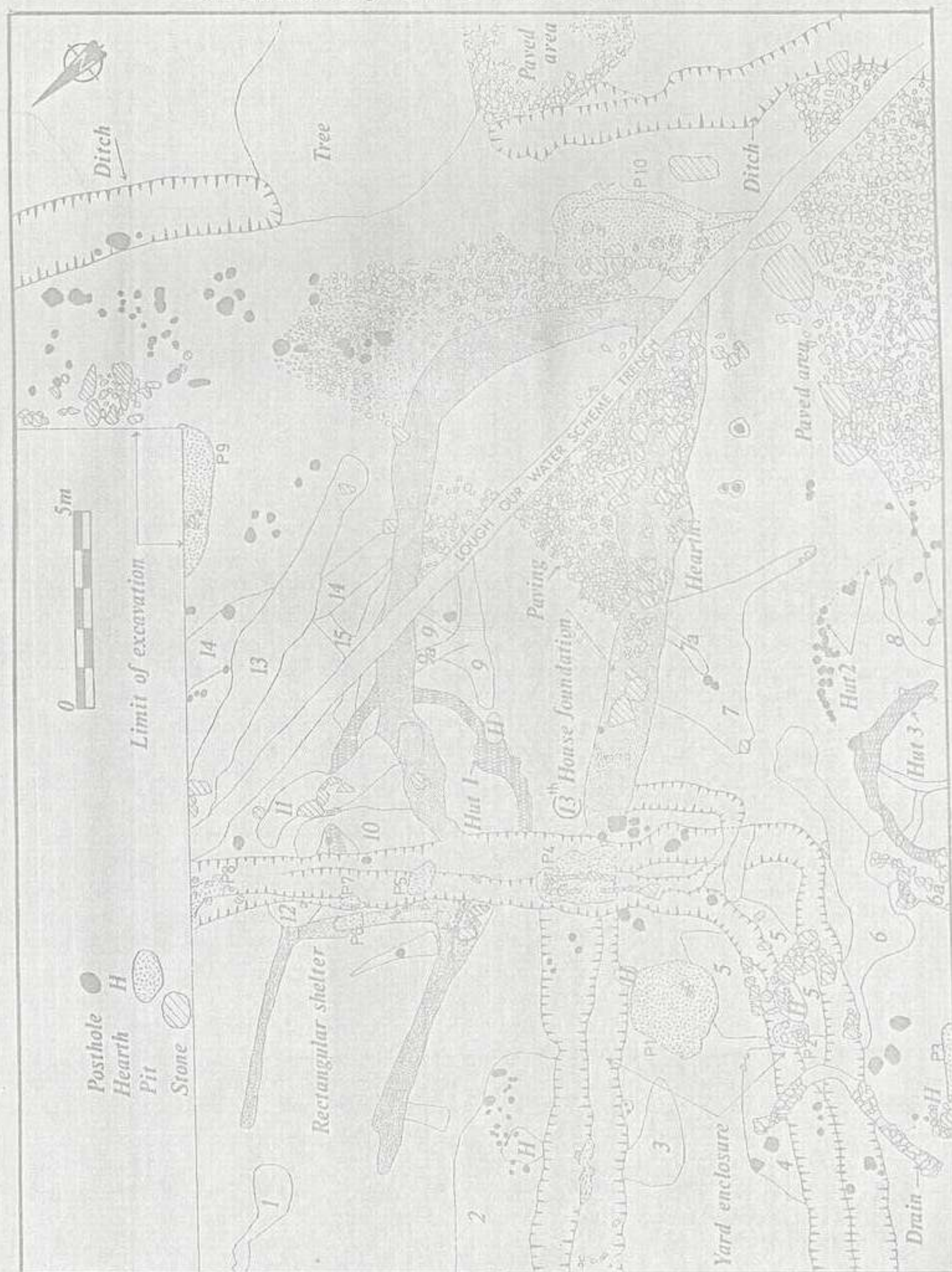


Fig. 2: General Plan of Excavation, Area I

a medium high incidence of weeds. This can be interpreted as chaff which had been used to light fires (Appendix I, p. 100). The base of the ash-pit was below the floor level, and must have formed part of the lower chimney breast. A single post hole was recorded in the foundation trench to the north of the hearth. The function of this remains unknown, though it may have been associated with an internal partition or jamb wall.

No trace of the original entrance survived. Though there was no break in the foundation trench, it is possible that a doorway led from the paved area adjacent to the north-east wall into the interior. Pit 4 adjacent to the north-west wall precluded an entrance from this side. The area immediately in front of the fire was roughly paved with small stones. This paving was cut through by modern disturbance (Fig. 2) but extended as far as the north-east wall. The remainder of the floor may have been the natural clay. The humus over the boulder clay level within the house area was not compacted and did not appear to have been trampled on. Apart from the paving, the original floor of the house must have been disturbed by later activity on the site.

PIT 4 (Fig. 3a)

A drainage channel led from the western corner of the house to a large pit adjacent to the north-west wall. It was lined with limestone flags where it ran into the pit.

The later erection of the yard enclosure may have removed some of the stone lining from the apparently uncovered drain which ended in a stone-filled sink hole. The fill of the pit or sink hole at the lowest level consisted of two bands of peaty material overlain by charcoal-flecked humus. The pit varied in width; bottom 80-100cm, top 1-1.3m.

PIT 10

A second pit 70cm from the south-east of the house was rectangular in shape and had a stone

setting of limestone blocks on the west face. The fill consisted of a scatter of stones and charcoal-flecked humus. Animal bones were few in number. The pit was disturbed on the south by the cutting of the Lough Gur water scheme pipe-trench. A paved area along the south-east side of the house extended to the edge of Pit 10. This paving consisted of roughly-laid irregular-sized stones and may have functioned as a walk-way to Pit 10.

FINDS³

The finds came from four contexts in association with the house:

(1) The foundation trench of the sub rectangular house (Fig. 5).

Metal. Three iron furnace bottom fragments were found in the fill of the trench. These are from successful blooms and have a low iron content. Three nails (Nos. 870, 1229, 1237) with square-sectioned shafts and from 2.4cm to 3.4cm in length were recovered from the foundation trench.

No. 694 is a corroded knife fragment with a square-sectioned tang and flat blade. The present overall length is 6.3cm.

Pottery: All the vessels are thirteenth to fourteenth century in date⁴ and of local origin. The pottery is quartz tempered, with some micaceous inclusions in the paste. The sherds vary in thickness from 4-7mm. Nos. 450, 1118, 1411, and 1450 are unglazed cooking ware. No. 595 is a jug fragment with an external brown glaze. Nos. 1142(a) and (b) have an amber brown glaze on both surfaces. No. 1318 has a copper-green external glaze. No. 1334 (Fig. 5) has an external copper-green glaze and is a jug sherd. The external surface has two applied decorative strips. No. 1450(a) has a splashed external orange glaze.

Seeds: Some charred seed and cereal remains were recovered from the ash pit. These include six row hulled barley, oat grains and bread wheat, and the field weed types such as

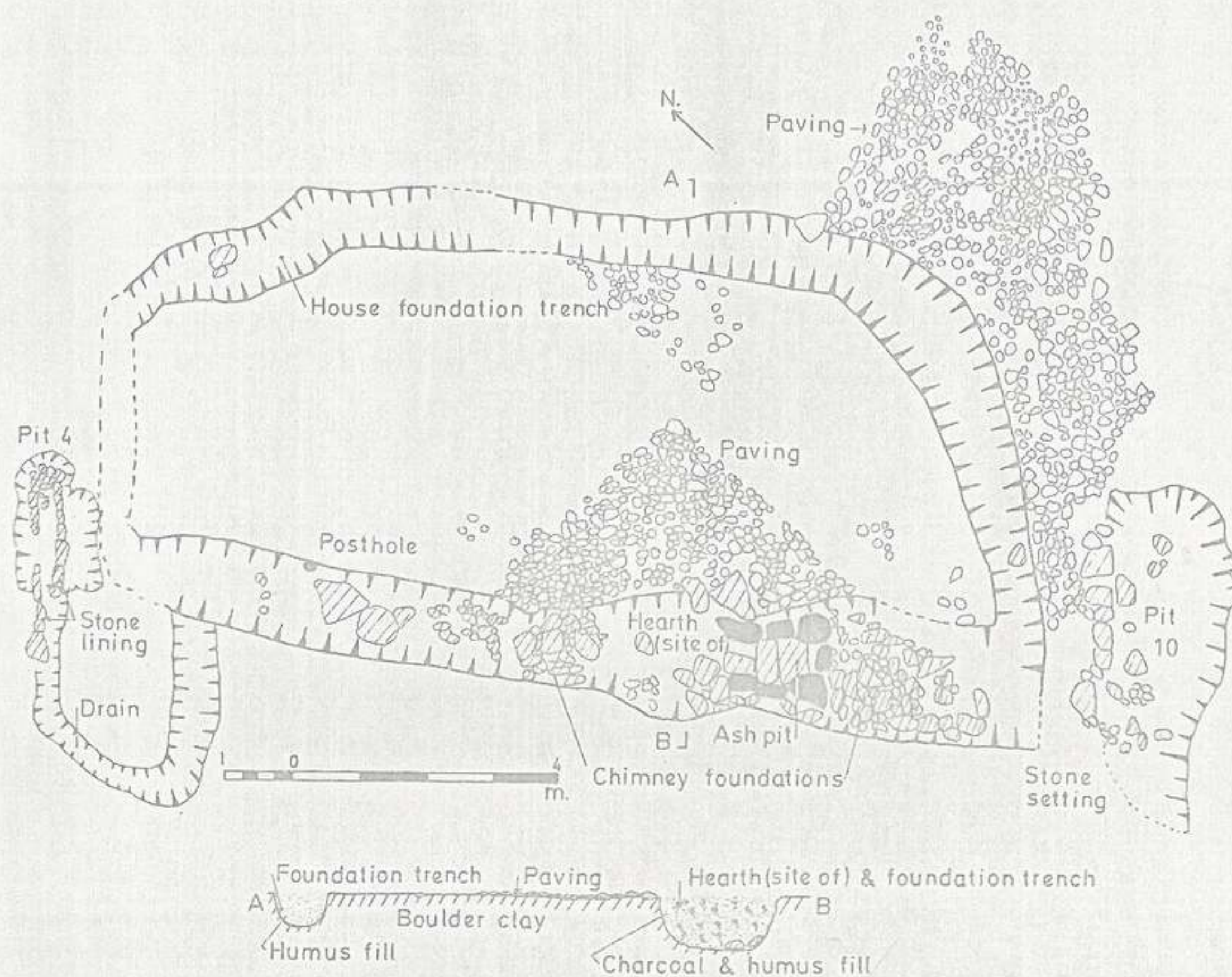


Fig. 3a: Plan and Profile of house

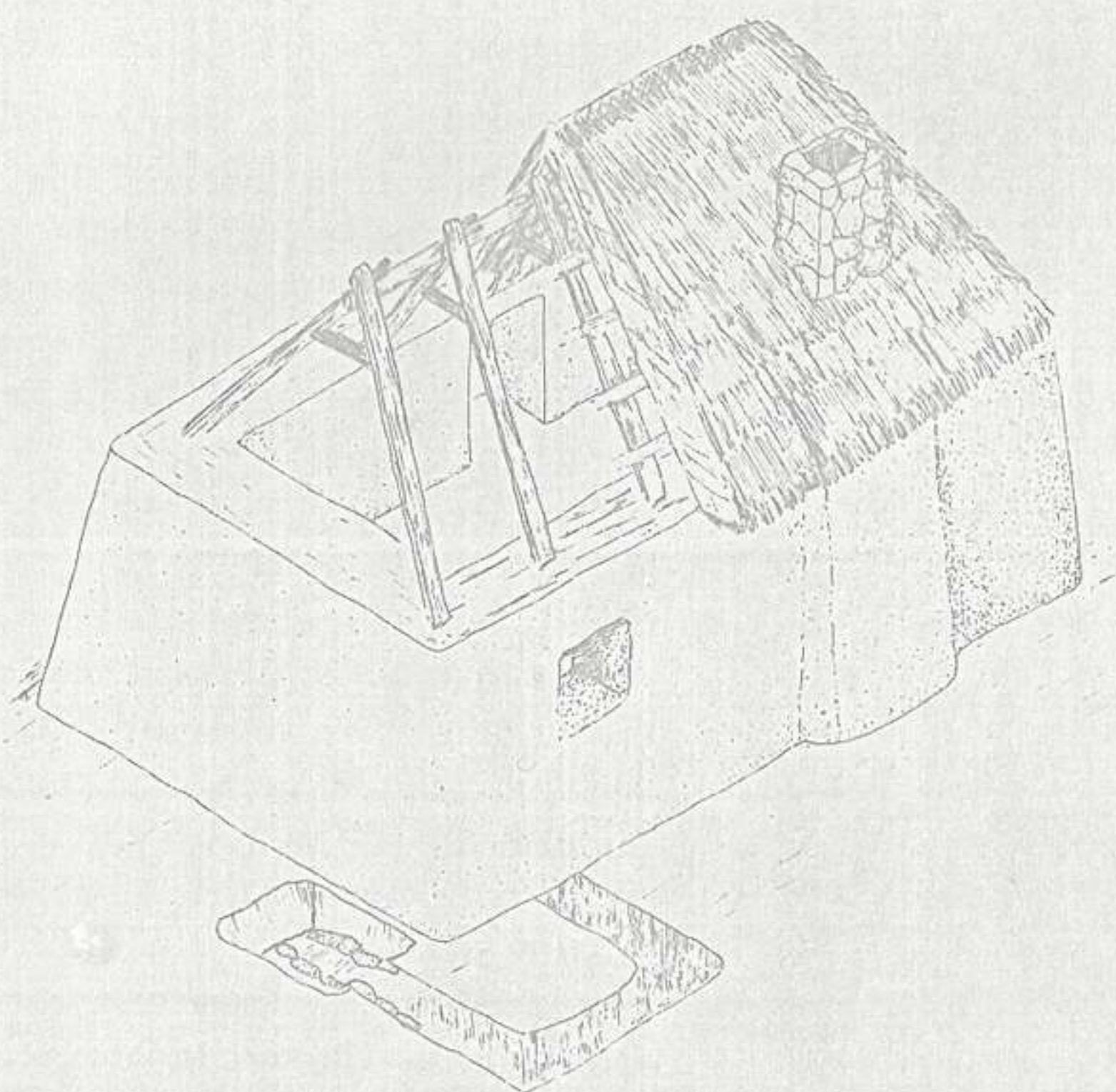


Fig. 3b: Tentative reconstruction of house

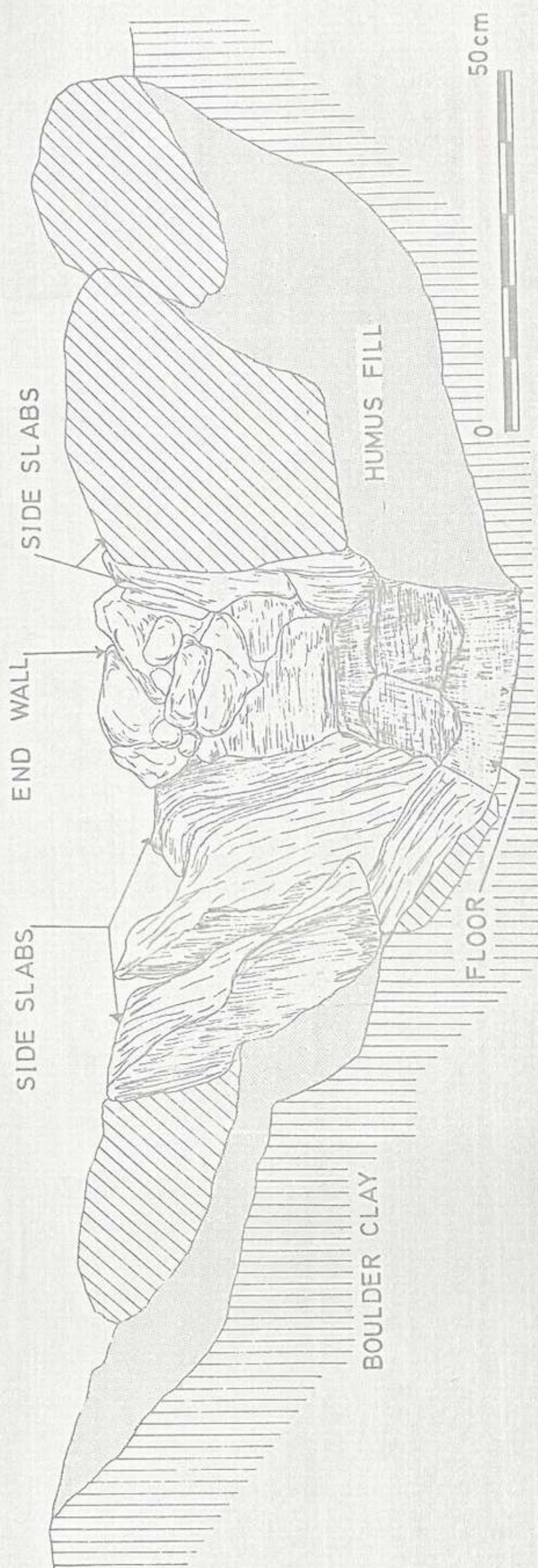


Fig. 4: Section through ashpit in S.W. wall of sub-rectangular house

Bromus grass, Nipplewort, Docks and Vetches (See Appendix I below).

(2) The paving and interior floor area.

Metal: No. 541 (Fig. 5). This iron hook, 7.5cm in length, has a rectangular cross section in the top and mid-shaft area, and tapers to a blunted point that is oval in cross section. The head is slightly flattened and is square-ended.

No. 1409 (Fig. 5) is an iron nail 4.7cm in length.

No. 639 (Fig. 5) is part of a horseshoe with a calkin *in situ* at the terminal.

Glass: A small fragment of schillerized glass, 11mm thick, came from the disturbed floor horizon near the water scheme trench, and is not directly associated with the house structure.

Pottery: The pottery has quartz/quartzite inclusions in the paste, and is sandy-textured and fired to an orange red. No. 517 is unglazed. No. 524 (Fig. 5) is a base angle fragment of a tall thirteenth century Baluster jug of local origin.⁴ The sherd has an external copper-green glaze.

(3) Pit 4.

Metal: Nos. 1126 and 1229 (Fig. 5) are iron nails with square-sectioned shafts.

Pottery: Local thirteenth to fourteenth century wares,⁴ with quartz and mica inclusions in the paste. No. 716 (Fig. 5) is a base angle fragment with a thumbbed out base, and external amber-green glaze. No. 1148 (Fig. 5) has an external copper-green glaze.

Bone: No. 1136 (Fig. 5) is a bone dice. It is not a perfect cube; the sides measure between 8.3-9.2mm. The values are indicated by dot and circle impressions. The roundals are of uniform size and evenly spaced. The only lack of uniformity is that the '6's are not perfectly aligned and a central value is off centre. The sum of the numbers on each pair of opposite faces is seven. The surfaces are evenly sawn and well polished.

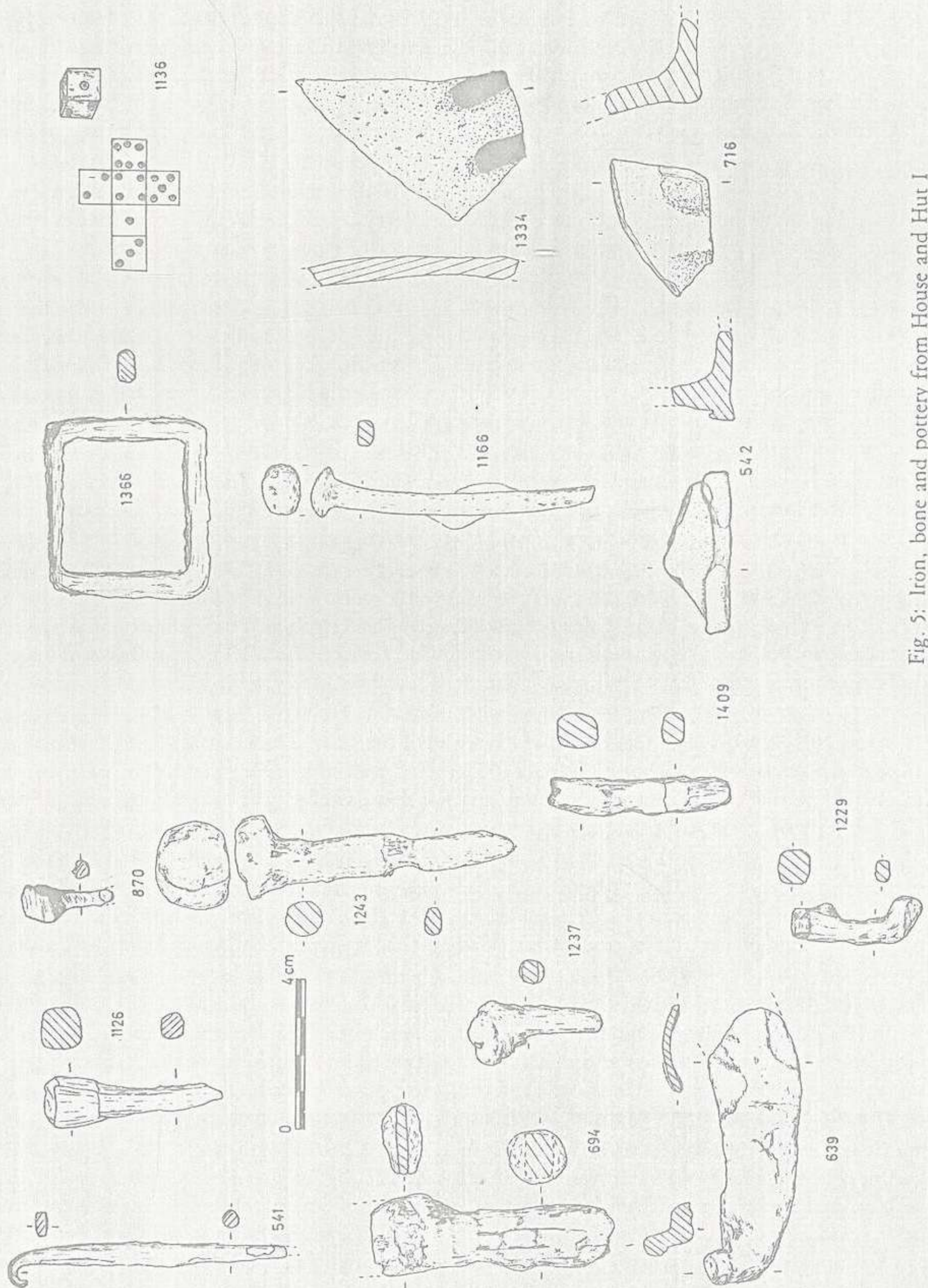


Fig. 5: Iron, bone and pottery from House and Hut I

(4) Pit 10.

No. 1366 (Fig. 6) is a rectangular iron buckle, 4.3cm by 4.7cm. The prong is missing. The buckle has a rectangular cross-section and is 5.6mm thick.

DISCUSSION

The proportions of the house are roughly equivalent to House I at Caherguillamore (Ó Ríordáin *et al.*, 1942) and are comparable to house types that survived in the region until modern times (Ó Ríordáin *et al.*, 1942). Apart from the possibility that a jamb wall may have occurred on the north-west side of the stone hearth, the house site did not produce any evidence of inner partitions. The floor area was disturbed by later ploughing, and it is possible that some inner partitions existed, but the evidence for this no longer survives.

The drain which led from the south-west wall into Pit 4 was incorporated into the house structure and must have been built at the same time as the house as it ran under the house wall. The presence of this drain may suggest that the house also acted as an animal shelter or byre and the drain carried animal waste from the house interior although Evans (1957, p. 40) says that the 'central chimney and fireside partition did not easily allow keeping of livestock in the house'. The drain is on the extreme west side of the interior and the chimney is almost 5m south of it. Pit 4 produced the remains of a number of charred weed seeds (Appendix I below) which are commonly found in damp areas. A possible origin for these is that they were dumped with damp land plant waste which was collected as a flooring material. It is possible therefore that the remains in Pit 4 are those of animal bedding which was strewn around on the west side of this house, and some of which was carried off with animal waste through the drainage channel into Pit 4.

The method of house construction appears to be as follows: A sub-rectangular foundation

trench was dug first. The paucity of stone within the trench suggests that the upper structure was built of mud and/or timber, though no postholes were recorded. The animal bone finds from the trench were fresh in appearance. This suggests that the bones were incorporated in the fill at the construction stage of the house. The dimensions of the trench (75cm in depth, 1.40m in width), suggest that upper walls were very thick. It is likely that the upper structure consisted of a frame of timber posts plastered over with mud. Timber posts have been used as a building material in mud-walled houses up to recent times (Danaher, K., 1978, pp 8, 65-68) and it is likely that a timber frame was used in this house at Lough Gur.

The south-west wall had a large stone-built hearth and ash-pit set into the foundation trench. The floor area of the hearth did not survive, and it is possible that the stone from this and from a chimney breast was re-used for later building — i.e., the house in Area II. Ash-pits are recorded in vernacular architecture up to recent times. 'In old houses there is a hole near the fire, either in front or let into the wall alongside, which is used to store the ashes (Evans, E.E., 1957, p. 62). The wall chimney breast and hearth site is regarded by Evans (1957) as an improvement introduced by English settlers. It is possible that this house at Lough Gur was occupied by Norman settlers, tenantry of the Fitzgeralds at Lough Gur.

The area in front of the hearth site was paved with small cobblestones. This extended over the floor of the house as a roughly triangular-shaped setting. A further area of paving occurred outside the house, to the east.

Pit 10 did not produce much animal bone, and its primary function was not as a rubbish dump. Some of the bone fragments showed traces of discolouration which is associated with the presence of cess. The pit did not produce any charred seed remains, but the stone setting on the south-east may indicate some

type of superstructure. It is possible that Pit 10 was primarily a storage area for the sub-rectangular house and had later been used for cess deposit.

DATE

The artefact finds from the area of the sub-rectangular house consisted of local medieval pottery of 13th and 14th century date, iron nails, iron knives, an iron buckle and a bone dice. Where the pottery can be closely dated, e.g., Nos. 524, 1334 and 1450(a), it appears to be 13th century. The knife fragments could be as late as the 15th century, since the form of the knife in medieval Ireland and Great Britain does not appear to change dramatically. The bone dice and buckle fragment are not closely datable. A glass fragment from the floor level of the sub-rectangular house is unlikely to be contemporary since the area was considerably disturbed. The iron nails may be roofing nails, but again these do not change in form throughout the medieval period.

The only closely datable finds therefore consist of pottery; the other finds fit comfortably into the 13th century date indicated by the pottery sherds 524, 1334, 1450(a). The artefact finds from the house in Area 2 (forthcoming in Part 3 of this report) appear to be slightly later in date, though still within the 13th to early 14th century bracket. It is probable that the house in Area 1 pre-dates that of Area 2, the yard enclosure of which cuts across part of the house in Area 1. However, both houses produced similar artefactual material and their periods of occupation must be close in time. It is likely that the house in Area 1 is earlier by, perhaps, a couple of generations than that of Area 2, i.e., 13th century as against early 14th century.

HUT 1 (Fig. 2)

This consisted of a roughly circular trench disturbed on the north-west side by the insertion of the yard enclosure. The extant internal

diameter is 4m (NE/SW). It was partly overlain by the sub-rectangular house; features 10 and 11 also cut through it. The foundation trench had a flat-bottomed 'U' shaped profile, varying in width from 30-40cm, and was cut to a maximum depth of 30cm below the boulder clay level. The nature of the superstructure remains unknown. A single surviving posthole, cut into the underlying boulder clay on the north side of the foundation trench may indicate a wooden superstructure. If the superstructure was of timber, it may have been a post and wickerwork-type shelter.

The hut was greatly disturbed by later activity on the site. A hearth site adjacent to the south may be contemporary with it. This consisted of burnt soil which suggests that it was more in the nature of a camp-fire rather than a formal structure. The side of Hut 1 curved inward to accommodate the hearth site and this may suggest that both were used simultaneously, though if the superstructure of Hut 1 was of wood, the proximity of a fire would be hazardous. Oat and barley charred remains were recovered from the hearth (Appendix I below). The only find was No. 1166 (Fig. 5), an iron nail from the foundation trench.

HUTS 2 AND 3 (Fig. 2)

These were found on the south-west section of Area 1 and could not be fully exposed because of the proximity of trees delimiting the excavation.

Hut 2 consisted of 22 postholes, 12-20cm in diameter, which formed an arc on the north-east side of the hut. A narrow trench on the west side is also on this arc. The diameter of the hut was 5-6m. The cluster of postholes suggests the hut was repaired. As only the bottom of each posthole was visible, it was not possible to see if the posts were set vertically or had leaned in towards a central point. Eleven postholes on the south side of the hut did not form any regular pattern, but may have been

part of this structure. The hut pre-dated an extensive area of paving on its south side, and Hut 3, which cut across it on the western side.

Hut 3 consisted of a narrow foundation trench, which had a number of small stake holes (diam. 10cm) visible at the bottom. These suggest a superstructure of wickerwork. A break in the foundation trench on the south side indicates that this was the original entrance. The estimated internal diameter is 4m. Stone foundations in Feature No. 6a overlay part of the foundation trench of Hut 3, and post-dated it.

DISCUSSION

Huts 1-3 appear to have been flimsy structures of timber (Hut 2) and wickerwork (Huts 1 and 3). No datable finds were recovered from the sites and the only indication of date is that Hut 1 pre-dates the 13th century house. They may have served as booley huts or stock shelters. The floor area of Hut 2/3 produced a piglet burial.

RECTANGULAR SHELTER (Fig. 2)

This structure was indicated by a shallow rectangular trench, open-ended on the north side. It lay north-west of the sub-rectangular house. The trench measured 6m on the west side, 4m on the south, and 5.5m on the east, and was cut to a depth of 15-30cm below the boulder clay level. No evidence survived to indicate the type of superstructure, but it may have been either timber or wickerwork. A triangular plan trench was recorded inside the shelter on the south-west side. This had a 20cm diameter posthole within it. If the shelter was some type of animal pen, it is possible that the internal trench was the remains of a wooden manger or hay rack. Pit 6 was cut into by the foundation trench of the shelter and pre-dated it. The shelter also post-dated the

yard enclosure. The shelter had no definitely associated finds, as the pottery came from the humus over the foundation trench. No. 646 is a sherd of Brown Ware from the North Devon area and is probably late 17th century in date. No. 567 is a sherd of late 17th century smooth ware, also from North Devon. The bone scatter from within the shelter was worn and similar to refuse material. This may suggest food waste associated with the shelter. The shelter probably belongs to the post-medieval period.

PAVED AREAS — AREA 1 (Fig. 1)

(1) *South-west*. This paving (15m × 3m) consisted of irregularly-sized boulders. It overlay the southern postholes of Hut 2, and post-dated this hut. The trench dug for the laying of the water pipes cut through the paving on the S.E. side. A ditch which traversed the site in a NE/SW direction also cut through the paving and post-dated it. It was not possible to excavate the area between this ditch and the paving on the south-east side because of the presence of a large tree.

(2) *South-east*. This paved area was more compact than the south-west one. The west side was cut through by a large ditch, while the north-east side was not excavated because of the number of tree roots. The paving appeared to continue under the tree root cover.

FINDS

All the finds were recovered from the top of the paving.

Metal: A number of iron slag and furnace bottom fragments were recovered. Some of the slag has a high iron content and appears to be the result of failed blooms. No. 1358 has pieces chipped off the sides which suggests the smith tried to re-use this slag. Nos. 1356, 1339, and 1369 are very vitreous and probably from the junction of the tuyère and pit lining.

Horseshoes: (Fig. 6). No. 973 is virtually complete with 5 visible nail holes and a fiddle key nail *in situ*. This nail is similar to one from Trim Castle, Co. Meath (Sweetman, 1978, pp 178-9). The shoe is 9.1cm in length. Nos. 1160 and 1369 are fragmentary and in poor condition. No. 1160 has 5 nail holes with narrow terminals.

Nails: No. 1160(a) and 1362 are iron nails, 3 and 4cm in length.

Knives: No. 1348 has a round-ended tang and broken blade with an overall present length of 4.2cm. No. 1420 (Fig. 6) has a broken blade and square-sectioned tang. The overall length is 2.3cm.

No. 1421 is a fragment of an iron pin with a circular cross-section 3.7mm thick.

Pottery: Nos. 433, 1045(a) and 1369 are sherds of local 13th/14th century pottery with quartz/quartzite temper in the paste. No. 1045a is unglazed and Nos. 433 and 1369 have external amber green/amber brown glazes. No. 558 is a locally made sherd of green glazed pottery with a 'whirly' design. Comparable pottery from Adare, Co. Limerick, is dated to the mid-14th century.⁴

Nos. 1342 (Fig. 6), 933, 1162(a) and 1365 are post-medieval in date (late 17th century). No. 1342 is a jug rim and rod handle fragment with a mottled green-yellow glaze and probably West-Country English in origin. No. 933 is a rim sherd of a pancheon of Brown Ware. No. 1662(a) is a Brown Ware fragment. No. 1365 is a body sherd of slip ware.

Glass: No. 1360 is a fragment of green schillerized glass.

Bone: No. 873 (Fig. 6) is a broken hemispherical spindle whorl made from the proximal end of a cattle or deer femur. The spindle whorl is 4cm in diameter, 1.7cm deep, and the central hole is 1.1cm at both ends.

Stone: No. 860 (Fig. 6) is a sandstone hone stone fragment rubbed smooth through use. One face has abrasions which suggest it was used as an anvil or hammerstone. A pin groove

occurs on another face.

No. 1152 is a roofing slate fragment.

Shell: No. 1356(a) is an oyster shell fragment.

The artefactual finds from the paved area came from the upper levels, and suggest a date for the period of use, but do not indicate when the paved areas were laid down. The horseshoe fragments from the top are not closely datable. The form may be as early as late 12th century (Ward Perkins, 1940, 112-6). Similar horseshoes from Trim Castle (Sweetman, P.D., 1978, pp 177-8) have been dated to mid-late 13th century. The pottery from the top of the paved areas includes both local late 13th to early 14th century sherds and post-medieval wares. It may be that the post-medieval material represents a very late use of a trackway. The iron slag from the top of the paving, and the hone stone suggest that iron working was carried on nearby (see below).

DISCUSSION

The paving may have been the remains of a trackway leading to either Bouchier's Castle or to the lakeshore. The swing of the paving towards the south leads towards the lakeshore. It may be that a roadway forked on the south outside the limit of excavation and also led to the gatehouse of Bouchier's Castle. The paved area may also be the remains of some type of reclamation work outside the castle, though it did not show any signs of being waterlogged. The animal bone finds from the south-west area of paving do not show any degree of wear or trampling and may have been dumped there when it was no longer in use. A recent cow burial was recorded on top of it. The animal bones from the south-east paving were worn and trampled. Some finds from the top of the paved areas suggest a date for the period of use, but because there were no datable finds from either underneath, or in, the paving, when it was laid remains unknown.

The present structure of Bouchier's Castle

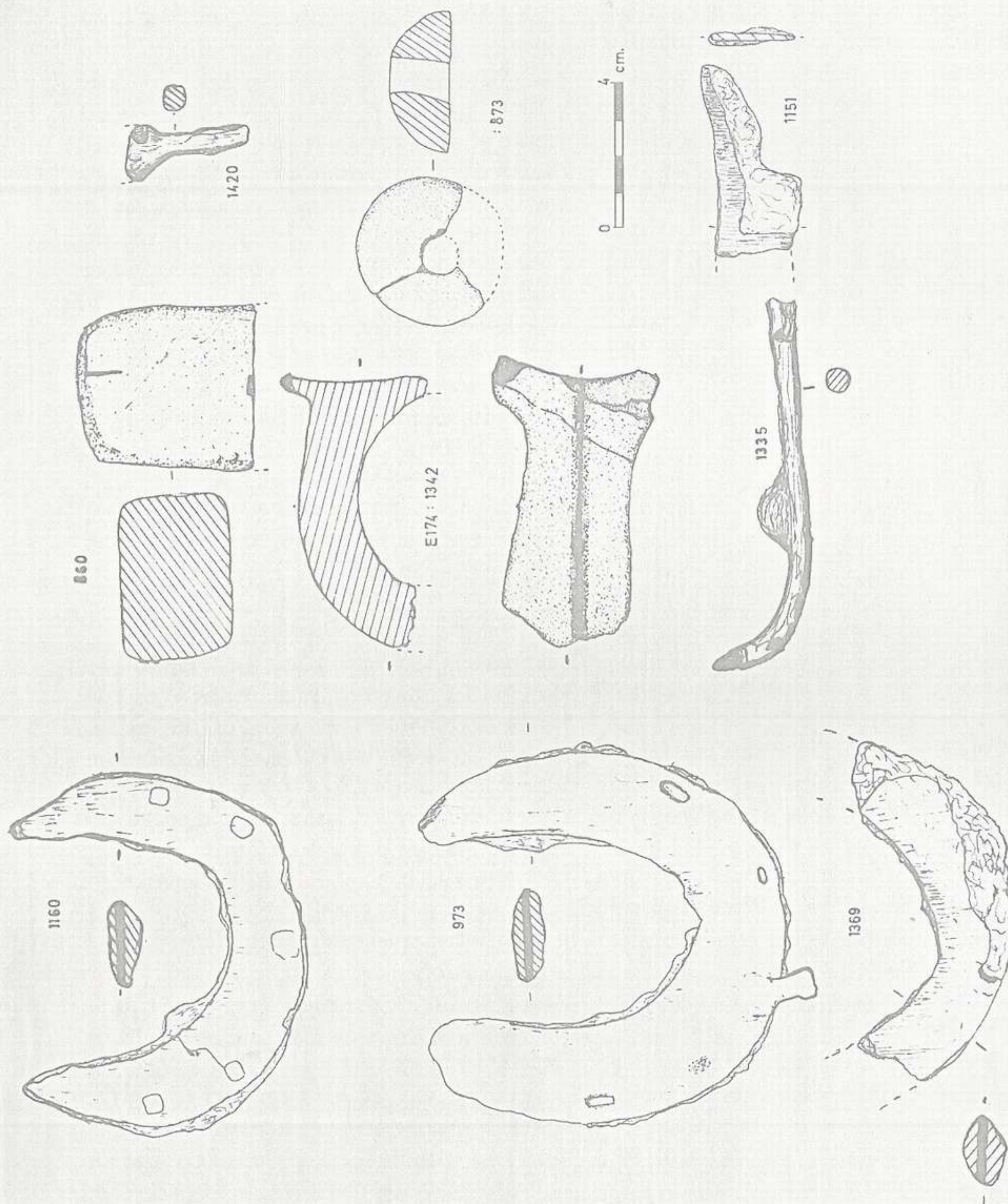


Fig. 6: Iron, bone, stone and pottery, from paved areas and ditch

may be dated to 15th/16th century. There are references to 13th century Fitzgerald castles at Lough Gur, and while Black Castle seems to be of this date, there was probably a 13th century castle on the site of Bouchier's Castle, guarding the natural approach to Knockadoon hill. The paving, therefore, if a trackway, could have led to a castle as early as the 13th century. Dinely (1680) shows the castle in the 17th century with an elaborate drawbridge over the moat, showing that at that period, the site was still well-defended.

The 13th and 14th century pottery from the top of the paved areas suggests that the paving had been laid before this period. Post-medieval pottery, which also occurred on top of the paving, indicates a long period of use.

DITCH AREA 1

This large ditch traversed the east side of Area 1 in a NNE/SSW direction. The ditch had a 'V' shaped cross-section, black humus fill, and varied in depth from 30-60cm below boulder clay level. It post-dated the paved areas. The central portion was not excavated due to the presence of a tree. Finds from the fill indicate a time when the ditch had gone out of use.

FINDS

Iron: Nos. 1159(a) and 1322(a) are iron slag fragments. No. 1336 is a fragment of pit lining from an iron-smelting pit. No. 1322(a), (b) and (c) are three nails 1.8-3.5cm in length, with domed and flat-topped heads and square-sectioned shafts.

Knives: No. 1151 (Fig. 6) is a knife fragment of scramasax form, 5.4cm in present overall length. Nos. 1152, 1322(b) and 1145(a) are similar in form, varying in length from 4.5-11.2cm. All the blades are broken.

Hooks: Nos. 1145(b), (c) and 1335 (Fig. 6) are hooks with circular shafts. Lengths average about 10cm.

Horseshoe: No. 1138 is similar to 1160 (Fig. 6).

Pottery: No. 1043 is local late 13th/14th century pottery with an external green-brown glaze and finely-textured paste. The remaining pottery types are post-medieval.⁴ No. 1142 is a rod handle fragment of 17th century slipware. No. 1143 is a rim sherd of black glazed Liverpool/Chester Buckley ware of late 17th-19th century date. No. 1322(a) is a sherd of North Devon Smooth ware. No. 1322(b) is 19th century English stoneware. No. 1322(c) is Cream Ware of the late 18th century. No. 1332(d) is a cup fragment of Staffordshire Ware similar to Nos. 1047 and 826 (Fig. 7) from the ironworking area.

Glass: Nos. 1143(a) 1322(e) and 1136 are wine bottle fragments of green schillerized glass.

Stone: No. 1322(f) is a hone stone fragment similar in shape to No. 860 (Fig. 6).

DISCUSSION

The pottery from the fill suggests that the ditch had gone out of use by the late 17th century. Stratigraphically, it post-dates the paved areas which may be 13th-14th century in date but which continued in use until the late 17th century. The ditch has been interpreted as part of a field boundary system, possibly related to the medieval strip field system. Similar ditches recorded at Newgrange, Co. Meath (O'Kelly, forthcoming) are 12th century in date and related to the Cistercian (Mellifont) exploitation of the 'new grange'. A site at Drumlummin, Co. Tipperary (Cleary, forthcoming) produced a network of similar ditches which had gone out of use by the mid-17th century. These sites give a span of 12th – mid-17th century for the use of this type of enclosure system. This example from Lough Gur stratigraphically post-dated the paved areas but had silted up by the late 17th century. This suggests that it had been cut through the paving while that was still exposed but no longer in use as a trackway.

'IRONWORKING AREA' AREA 1

This lay at the south-west edge of Area 1 and included (1) Feature 4; (2) slate covered drain ('Drain' Fig. 2); (3) Pit 2 (P2) and adjacent hearth (H); (4) Pit 3 (P3) and the adjacent hearth (H); (5) postholes; (6) stone foundations — Feature 5. These features cut across and post-dated the yard enclosure which was directly associated with the house in Area 2 and 14th century in date (forthcoming in Part 3). It was represented on the site by a foundation trench which must have held a wooden fence.

(1) *Feature No. 4.* A shallow humus-filled pit, 5-8cm below boulder clay level. It produced significant amounts of iron slag and furnace bottoms. It had two large postholes, square in plan and 30-40cm in width with 'U' shaped cross sections.

(2) *Slate covered drain.* This crossed the yard enclosure trench. It had a 'V' shaped sectional profile and was 25-30cm in depth with a slate cover over most of it. One end had a fill of iron oxide-stained humus.

(3) *Pit 2.* This cut into the yard enclosure trench and post-dated it. The pit was oval, 60 by 90cm in diameter, and 20cm in depth. The adjacent hearth, which consisted of a spread of charcoal and oxidized soil, abutted upon the stone foundations on its eastern side.

(4) *Pit 3.* This rectangular pit was not fully excavated since it extended beyond the limit of the excavation. On the west side it had a stone built hearth which showed signs of having been intensely used. The dimensions of the pit as excavated were 35cm by 85cm.

(5) *Postholes.* Five circular postholes 10-20cm in diameter were recorded within the

yard enclosure trench. Three large postholes occurred between Pit 3 and the yard enclosure. The most northerly was driven 50cm below the top of the boulder clay, while the others were 30-35cm below and had stone packing *in situ*. Two stake holes were recorded north of the hearth adjacent to Pit 3.

(6) *Stone foundations — Feature 5.* These appeared to be the vestiges of a wall that overlay the yard enclosure trench. Some loose stone was also recorded within this area.

It is possible that this network of features formed two discrete structures i.e., one of stone, and one of timber. However, it is difficult to reconstruct the format of any type of building in this area since none of the features appeared to be interrelated. Though the area has been designated 'ironworking', there was no incidence of iron-smelting pits. The amount of slag suggests a nearby ironworking area, and this may have been to the south-west outside the limit of excavation. This area is now under the present access road to the lake shore.

FINDS

Iron: 6.44 kg of dross were recovered from the fill of the above features. A concentration of slag was recorded in Feature No. 4. The waste consisted of slag, furnace bottoms, pit lining and a tuyère fragment (No. 772).

Knives: Four corroded iron knife fragments were recovered from this area. No. 542 has a welded-on tang. No. 1071 (Fig. 7) has a flat-backed blade. The length varied from 5.2-8cm.

Nails: Sixteen iron nails with rectangular-sectioned shafts and oval and square heads were recovered. These vary in length from 3-5cm. All were similar to Nos. 1033(a) and (b) (Fig. 7) and 1153(a) and (b) (Fig. 7). No. 1019 (Fig. 7) is a flat-topped bolt.

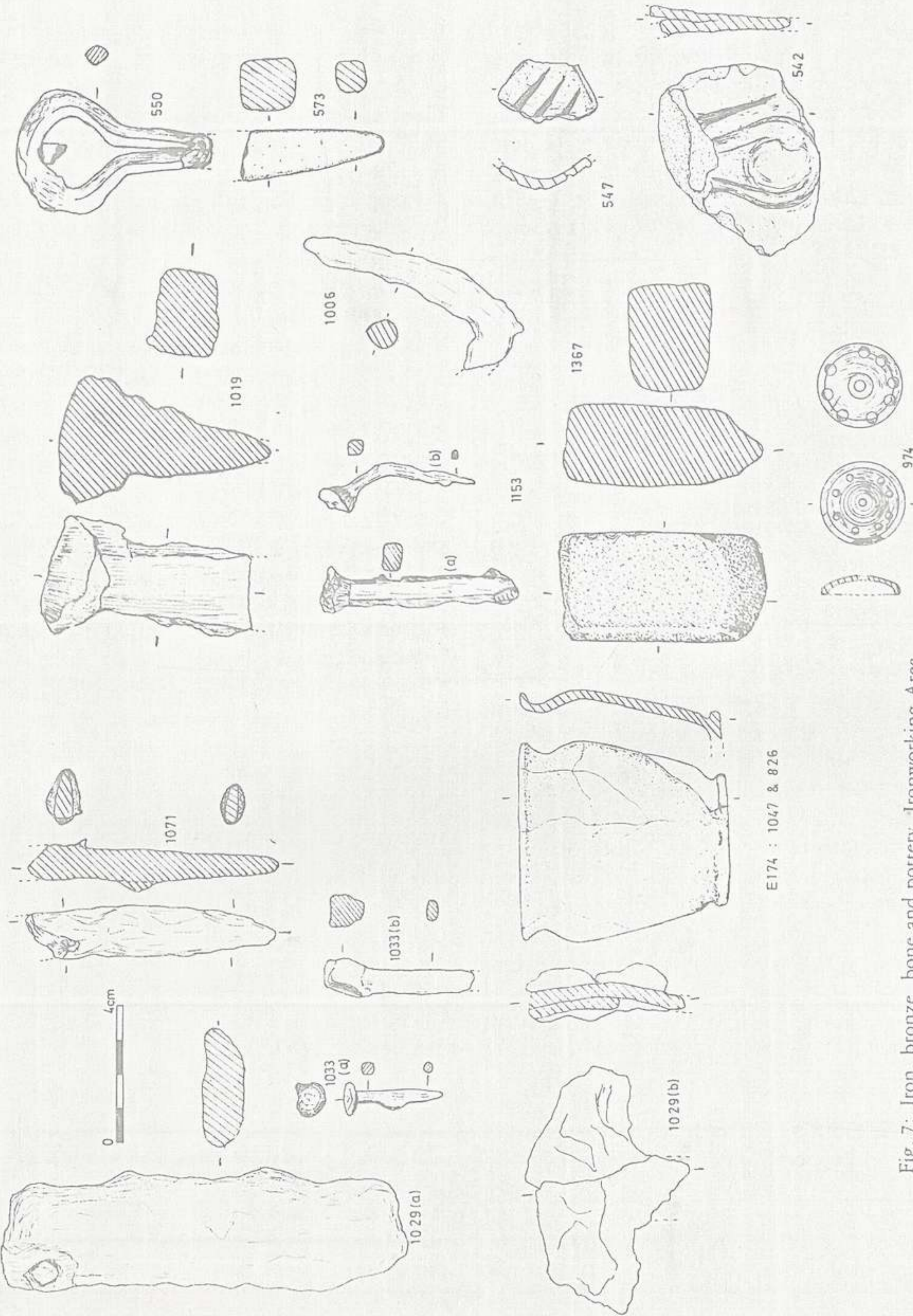


Fig. 7: Iron, bronze, bone and pottery, Ironworking Area

Miscellaneous Iron Objects: No. 550 (Fig. 7) is a Jew's harp fashioned from a lozenge-sectioned rod. The prongs are broken and pushed together. Only a vestige of the stang remains. Excavated Irish examples of Jew's harps range in date from the 14th century (Trim Castle, Co. Meath; Sweetman 1978) to the 17th century (Dunboy, Co. Cork; Gowan 1978).

No. 1066 (Fig. 7) may be a spur arm. The girth is small and the spur may be a child's.

No. 1030(a) is a chisel-like object with an overall length of 14.73cm.

No. 1029(a) (Fig. 7) is a corroded strip of banding with a rivet *in situ*.

No. 1029 (b) (Fig. 7) is a 'T' shaped object which may be a banding or mount. The present length is 7.2cm.

No. 1029(c) is a hook with a broken shaft; overall length 5.1cm.

Nos. 871, 965 and 1029(d) are corroded objects that have disintegrated beyond recognition.

Bronze: No. 547 (Fig. 7) is a decorated bronze strip, 3.3mm thick with 1.2mm wide grooves. It may have been part of a mount.

Shot: Nos. 1038 and 1040 are two grains of shot 2.5-3.5mm in diameter.

Bone: No. 974 (Fig. 7) is probably the top of a post-medieval pepper pot, turned on a lathe and polished on the outside. The perforations consist of one central hole, surrounded by a ring of eight irregularly spaced holes. Between these and the central hole is a series of four lightly incised concentric circles.

No. 1048 may be a carding comb fragment. One side is hacked to produce teeth, and the object appears unfinished.

Stone: Nos. 573 and 1367 (Fig. 7) are hone stones, rubbed smooth through wear. No. 573 tapers to a point. The overall length of No. 573 is 4.46cm and No. 1367 is 5.83cm. No. 963 is a large whetstone 15.33cm long.

Pottery: A number of medieval sherds were found in this area. No. 542 (Fig. 7) is a body

sherd with a strap handle attachment showing a thumbbed out impression and an external copper-sprinkled lead glaze. It is probably of Chester origin.⁴ Nos. 1031, 1081(a) and (b), and 1400 are local late 13th-14th century pottery sherds with traces of amber-green glaze, 4-6mm thick. The post-medieval pottery was strewn around the features of the ironworking area. Nos. 523 and 1081(c) are red earthenware and probably fragments of a 17th century cooking pot. No. 1057(a) is a sherd of stoneware with an external ginger-brown salt glaze, 17th-18th century in date. No. 1057(b) is a base sherd of 17th century North Devon Smoothware. Nos. 826 and 1047 (Fig. 7) are from a small yellow glazed pot of Staffordshire ware, 6cm in height with an external rim diameter of 6cm and a base diameter of 4cm. *Glass:* Nos. 559, 1021, 1026, 1027, and 1035 are fragments of green schillerized glass probably from wine bottles. No. 1035 is a neck fragment with an applied string rim 4mm below the rim.

DISCUSSION

Though this area did not produce any kilns or furnaces, it is probable that an ironworking area existed close by. The artefactual remains include both medieval and post-medieval pottery, and these occurred as scatters over the surface of the features. Stratigraphically the features post-date the early 14th century yard enclosure trench. The post-medieval pottery may suggest that the area had gone out of use by the late 17th century. However, none of the features can be closely dated.

PITS

Pits Nos. 4 and 10 are associated with the sub-rectangular house (p. 80 above). Pits Nos. 2 and 3 have been dealt with in the ironworking area section (p. 90 above). The remaining six pits are discussed below.

Pit 1

This was a large sub-circular pit with a maximum diameter of 2.3m. It had a 'V' shaped cross section and was cut to a maximum depth of 1.5m below the top of the boulder clay. The fill was charcoal-flecked humus in the upper section and a mixture of small stones and humus in the bottom. A hearth site lay to the north-east. This consisted of a spread of charcoal and oxidized soil and had been cut into by the pit. The hearth site itself overlay the yard enclosure trench and post-dated it. Stratigraphically therefore the pit post-dated the trench. The finds from the pit included a flint scraper No. 1117 (Fig. 8), and a sherd of local late 13th-early 14th century pottery, No. 712. The animal bones from the pit were few in number, and it appears that the primary function of the pit was not as a rubbish dump.

Pits 5-8

Pits Nos. 5, 7 and 8 were cut across and disturbed by the early 14th century yard enclosure. Pit No. 6 pre-dated the rectangular shelter. The remains were generally oval with a charcoal-flecked humus fill, and varying in length from 45-90cm. Pit 8 had a single flint flake — No. 1036 (Fig. 8) — in the fill. The top of this has secondary retouch and was probably a scraper-like implement. The bone remains from the pit were mainly bird bones. The pits were considerably disturbed and may originally have been much larger. The flint flake from pit 8 may suggest a prehistoric date. It is possible that these pits were associated with Hut 1. The yard enclosure ditch disturbed the N.W. section of the hut and the upper levels of the pits.

Pit 9

This pit was not fully excavated since it lay partly outside the limit of Co. Council property on its northern side. The exposed area was 3m x 80cm, and had a charcoal flecked humus fill with some small stones throughout.

FINDS

Iron: Nos. 1156(b) (Fig. 8) and 1157 (a) were iron nails with rectangular shafts and lengths of 3.4 and 4.3cm.

No. 1156(a) (Fig. 8) is a staple with square-sectioned arms tapering towards the ends. Length 4.56cm.

No. 1138(a) is a badly corroded iron bar.

Bronze: No. 853 is a bronze strip 1cm in length and with a rectangular perforation at one end — probably a mount or decorative strip.

Pottery: Local 13th-14th century ware. No. 631 (Fig. 8) is a rim sherd of an unglazed cooking pot. No. 1344 has a green external glaze. No. 1345 is unglazed and probably a cooking pot fragment.

Glass: No. 1338(a) is a green schillerized glass wine bottle fragment recovered from the upper levels of the pit fill.

The scarcity of animal bone remains in the pit suggests that the pit was not primarily a rubbish dump. The pottery is 13th-14th century in date. No. 631 is similar to 13th century material from Ferns Castle, Co. Wexford (Sweetman 1979). This gives a *terminus post quem* date of the 13th century for Pit 9.

FEATURES 1-15

(Features Nos. 4 and 5 have been dealt with under the section 'Ironworking area'.)

Feature 1

This was an irregularly shaped trench 7m in overall length extending from Area 1 into Area 2; average width 35-60cm, depth 10-15cm. The fill consisted of stony humus. Fifteen postholes 12-45cm in diameter were recorded south and west of Feature 1 in Area 2. They were cut to depths of 9-18cm below the boulder clay level. A large erratic boulder occurred in the middle of the posthole complex. The function of Feature 1 and the posthole complex remains unknown and no datable

artefacts were recovered from this area. It is possible that these features are the remains of shelter screens similar to those recorded in the Amenity Building Area (Cleary, 1982).

Feature No. 2

This consisted of a concentration of eighteen postholes, a hearth site and a 2m x 3.6m spread of humus in a 5-10cm deep pit. The postholes varied in depth from 10-15cm and in diameter from 10-40cm. The hearth site had a maximum width of 1m with a spread of charcoal and oxidized soil. The postholes probably represent a spit-like arrangement over the fire. The area produced some animal bone and a bronze-coated metal clasp (Fig. 8, No. 729). The clasp was worn, and was made from a 2mm thick circular-sectioned rod.

Feature No. 3

This was a shallow, irregularly-shaped pit, 10-15cm in depth with a fill of charcoal-flecked humus.

Feature Nos. 6 and 6a

These were situated at the west end of Area 1. Feature No. 6 was an 8m long and 50cm deep irregularly-shaped trench, which had been cut into on its northern end by the yard enclosure. Feature No. 6a, which ran south from No. 6, was a shallow foundation trench with the lower courses of a stone setting *in situ*. The foundation trench for Hut 3 was cut by the east side of No. 6a. Three nails, Nos. 651, 770, and 1111 (Fig. 8) were recovered from the fill of Feature 6a. These vary in length from 2-3cm. Two iron slag fragments were found in No. 6. These features may represent the vestiges of some stone building, of which little survived.

Features 7 and 7a

No. 7 was an irregularly-shaped pit, 10-20cm in depth, with a 40cm wide drain extending from its southern side for a distance of 2m.

Two postholes 20 and 30cm in diameter were recorded within it. No. 7a was a narrow 30cm wide drain that cut into No. 7. The foundation trench of the sub-rectangular house cut across the north-east side of both these features. No finds were recovered from either.

Feature No. 8

This was a narrow trench 20-60cm in width, and cut to a depth of 15-25cm below the top of the boulder clay. It was originally covered by the paved area on the southwest side of Area 1, and may have been the foundation trench of a hut site, similar to Hut site 3. No datable finds were recovered.

Features No. 9 and 9a

These lay inside the foundation trench of the house site and represented a pre-13th century occupation phase. The trenches were roughly perpendicular, with No. 9a cutting across No. 9. The fill was charcoal-flecked humus. An iron nail (No. 1204) 5.9cm in length, with a rectangular shaft and domed square head, was recovered from the fill of No. 9.

Feature No. 10

This was an irregularly-shaped trench, which cut across the foundation trench of Hut 1, and was in turn cut by the sub-rectangular house and yard enclosure. The trench varied in depth from 15-30cm. No finds were recovered from the fill.

Feature No. 11

This irregular trench was cut to a depth of 20-30cm below the top of the boulder clay. The northern end had some stone fill, which was not set and did not appear to be a foundation course for a building. Feature 11 was cut across by the 13th century house foundation. A gun flint (No. 635, Fig. 8) was recovered from the top of the fill and cannot be contemporary with Feature 11, which pre-dated the

13th century house foundation trench. No. 1083 is a furnace bottom fragment recovered from the junction of Feature 11 and the house foundation trench.

Feature No. 12

This was a shallow trench cut to a depth of 15-20cm below the boulder clay level. It had been cut into by the yard enclosure and pre-dated it. No. 12 may be the north end of No. 10.

Feature No. 13

This was a 10m long trench with an average depth of 50cm below the boulder clay level. It had been disturbed by the modern water scheme trench on its northern end. Some stone occurred in the fill at the north end. The trench ended abruptly at the southern end.

FINDS

Iron: No. 1086 (Fig. 8) is a staple made from a rectangular-sectioned iron bar. One prong has been bent out of its perpendicular position. No. 1154 (Fig. 8) is a nail 4.6cm in overall length. No. 1155 is a knife fragment with a broken blade. The blade is broad-backed and flush with the tang. The present length is 7.26cm. No. 1156 (Fig. 8) is a broken iron object with a circular shaft and pointed head. The function of this is unknown. No. 1167(a) (Fig. 8) is broken at both ends, but appears to have been a handle, perhaps for an iron vessel. The present length is 4cm. No. 1167(b) (Fig. 8) is a broken circular object. The ring is made from a rectangular-sectioned bar which thickens mid-way. It may be part of a horse trapping. No. 1168 (Fig. 8) is a knife of scramasax form, with a broad blade back. The tang is rectangular in section. The overall length is 13.3cm. No. 1176 is a furnace bottom fragment with a high iron content. No. 1199 (Fig. 8) is a staple made from a rectangular-sectioned iron bar. The prongs

have been pushed together. The overall length is 6cm.

Lead: No. 527 is a lead bar with a rectangular section at one end and a 'D' shaped section at the other. The overall length is 4.9cm.

Glass: No. 488 is a fragment of green schillerized glass, with a maximum thickness of 3mm.

Pottery: No. 530 is a sherd of unglazed local medieval pottery. The remaining sherds are 17th and 18th century in date. No. 468 is a base sherd of Buckley type ware. Nos. 490 and 569 are sherds of late 17th century North Devon Smooth ware. The artefactual range of material from the fill of Feature No. 13 varies from medieval to post-medieval period. It is possible that it was backfilled and these were accidentally included. This gives a final date of the late 17th century for the use of this trench. Its function is unknown.

Feature No. 14

This trench was 6.5m in length and varied from 70cm-140cm in width. It was cut to an average depth of 35cm below the top of the boulder clay. Two postholes were recorded at its northern end. These had been cut into the sides of the feature and probably post-dated it. Three postholes outside Feature 14 to the north-west and one on the east side were not directly related to it. No. 14 was cut across by both No. 13 and the house foundation trench and pre-dated both. No datable finds were recovered from it.

Feature No. 15

This was a shallow trench which was disturbed by the Lough Gur Water Scheme trench, the 13th century house foundation trench, the foundation of Hut 1 and Feature No. 14. No. 568 is a green glazed medieval pottery sherd of local origin recovered from the fill, but because of the considerable activity in this area, it may not be contemporary with Feature No. 15.

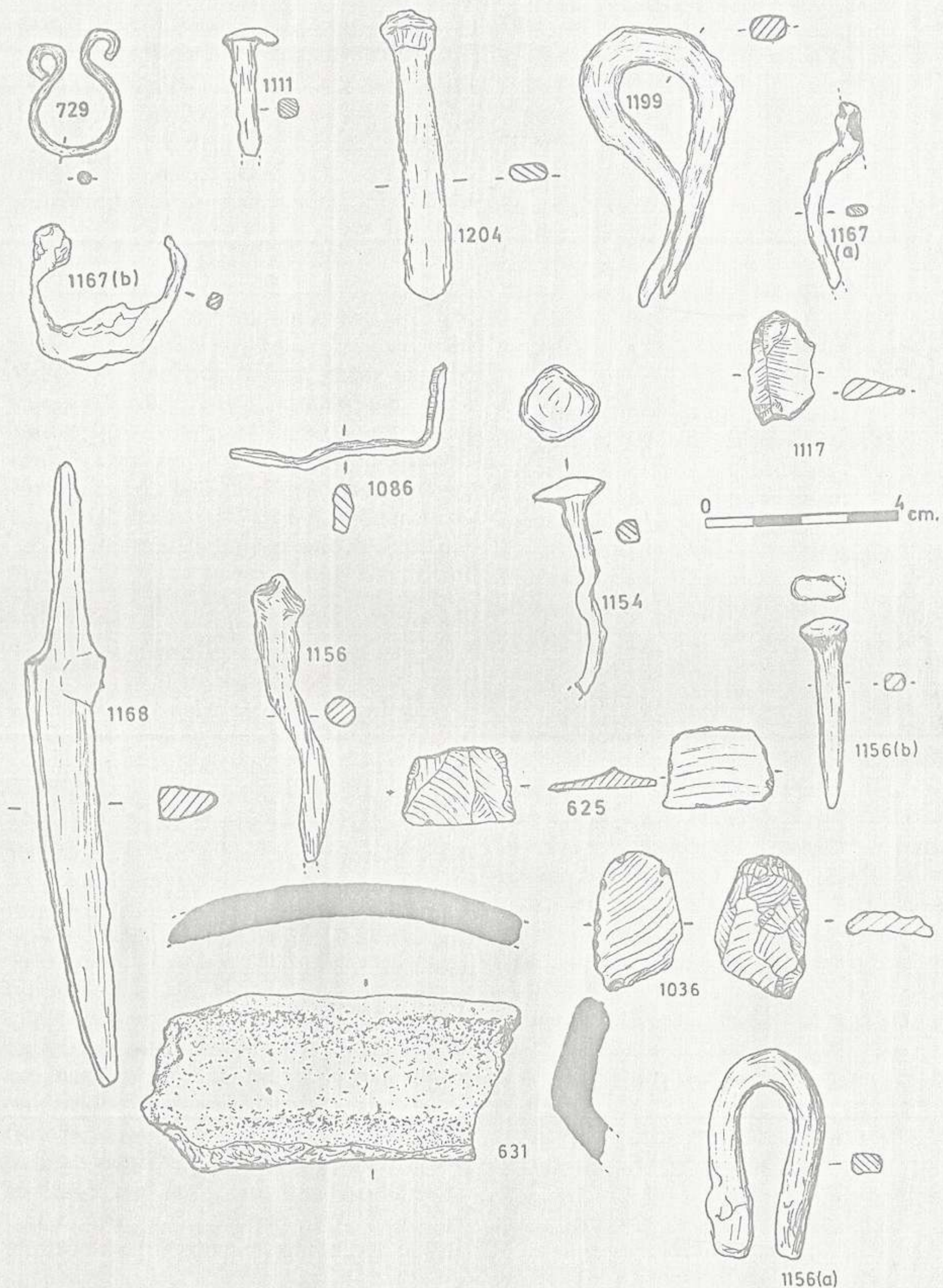


Fig. 8: Iron, stone and pottery from Pits 1-10. Features 1-15.

POSTHOLES IN THE NORTH-EAST — AREA 1

A total of forty-five postholes varying in diameter from 10cm to 50cm were recorded in the north-east of Area 1. The majority of these were shallow and cut to depths of 8-10cm below the boulder clay level. The cross sections varied from 'V' shaped to flat bottomed 'U' shaped. The majority occurred west of the 'Ditch' (see Fig. 2). A minor concentration occurred east of No. 13. The postholes appeared unrelated to any feature on the site. Some were cut into the paving on the east side of the 13th century house and post-dated it. A stone setting was recorded in the north edge of Area 1 adjacent to the postholes. The function of these postholes remains unknown, and no datable finds were recovered from the fills.

SUMMARY OF SEQUENCE OF EVENTS
IN AREA 1

1. Hut 1 is stratigraphically earlier than the sub-rectangular house. Pits 5, 6 and 7 may be associated with this hut. Huts 2 and 3 are similar to Hut 1, and may also be contemporary.
2. Features 7, 7a, 9, 9a, 14 and 15 pre-date the sub-rectangular house foundation.
3. The sub-rectangular house is 13th century in date as are the associated pits 4 and 10.
4. The paved areas may date to the early thirteenth century, but continued in use until the post-medieval period.
5. The yard enclosure cut across the sub-rectangular house and is directly associated with a 14th century house in Area 2 (forthcoming in Part 3 of this report).
6. The 'ironworking' area post-dates the 14th century yard enclosure.
7. The rectangular shelter post-dates the yard enclosure and is probably post-medieval in date.
8. The ditch on the south and east sides of Area 1 cut through the paved area and post-dated it. This ditch had itself gone out of use the late 17th century.

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In addition to those acknowledged in the preceding part of this report (*JCHAS*, 1982, Vol. 87, No. 245), I also wish to record my thanks to those who helped specifically with the Car Park Area 2 material: M. Doody and C. Cotter for drawing the finds; D.C. Twohig and P.D. Sweetman for pottery identifications; M. Hurley for bone object identifications; the Conservation Laboratory, Queens University, Belfast, for X-ray photographs of some of the iron material; Mr. M.A. Monk for his identification of the charred seeds and cereal remains; Dr. E. Shee Twohig for her help with the final draft of this report and Ms. A. Desmond for typing it.

NOTES

1. The site of Beechwood Cottage was cleared in 1979 when the car park was extended.
2. The other access point was the now destroyed causeway leading from Black Castle on the south-west shore.
3. All finds have the prefix E174 (National Museum Registration number), and are at present in the Department of Archaeology, UCC.
4. Identification by Mr. David Sweetman, Office of Public Works.
5. Green Barry (1903, p. 196) states: 'Bourchier's Castle was erected on the site of an older fortification which guarded the natural and only entrance into the island of Knockadoon'. Westropp (*JRSAI*, 1907, p. 40) gives a date of 1450 and in *PRIA* 1906-07 (p. 179) he gives a date of 1285 for Bourchier's Castle. However, it seems likely that some fortification existed here at the natural access point to Knockadoon on the north-east shore of Lough Gur in the 13th-14th centuries, since the Black Castle guarded an artificial causeway on the south-west side of the lake.

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