

Archaeology Radiocarbon Dates Scheme 2020

Final Report

1. Title: Mr

First name: Eoin

Surname: Halpin

2.

3. Grant programme Archaeology C14 Radiocarbon Dates Scheme

4. Year awarded 2020

5. Title of project Timber row, Dugort beach, Achill Island Co Mayo

6. Summary of report
(Minimum allowed 100
words)

In June 2015 a series of preserved wooden stakes were noted within an intertidal peat formation at Dugort, Achill Island, co. Mayo (F 67189 08796). These were subsequently surveyed by students of Achill Archaeological Field school under the supervision of Stuart Rathbone and on notification to the National Monuments Service was designated an archaeological site with associated reference MA042:047---. In the accompanying report on the find (see appendix one), Rathbone suggested a number of possible interpretations; it was possible that the stakes are one side of a post-inundation fish trap or that the stakes were driven into the peat prior to the inundation of the formation by the sea, in which case they would represent some sort of fence line and could be of quite considerable age.

A successful application was made to the Royal Irish Academy's Archaeology Radiocarbon Dates Scheme with the sample dispatched to 14Chrono Centre, Queens University Belfast, which returned a date of cal BC 1617- 1516 (UBA-44257), placing the stake within the Middle Bronze Age.

The date and location of the site, on boggy ground close to the shore might suggest a type of animal trap, possibly for wildfowl. For the two- to three-week period after breeding waterfowl, for example mallards, grebes and coots, molt all their flight feathers and they become temporarily flightless. During this time they can be relatively easily "rounded up" by herding or driving them between barriers which funnel the birds into capture pens. It is possible that the linear arrangement recorded in the intertidal zone on Dugort beach in Achill, represents the remains of such a wildfowl trap.

Please provide two images:



8. Please outline the objectives of the project

In June 2015 a series of preserved wooden stakes were noted within an intertidal peat formation at Dugort, Achill Island, co. Mayo (F 67185 08796). These were subsequently surveyed by students of Achill Archaeological Field school under the supervision of Stuart Rathbone and on notification to the National Monuments Service was designated an archaeological site with associated reference MA042:047---. In the accompanying report on the find, Rathbone suggested a number of possible interpretations; it was possible that the stakes are one side of a post-inundation fish trap or that the stakes were driven into the peat prior to the inundation of the formation by the sea, in which case they would represent some sort of fence line and could be of quite considerable age. A storm in April 2020 uncovered the site once again, which was noted to be suffering active erosion, with one of the wooden stakes loose and in danger of being lost. This was retrieved and reported upon by Dr Lorna O'Donnell. It is this sample which it is hoped to date in order to address the dating questions posed by Rathbone and assist in the interpretation of the site. .

9. Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research

The sample was secured and dispatched to Dr Lorna O'Donnell for examination, who identified that the stake (MA042:047/3) was chisel ended, cut on one side, at an angle of 45 degrees, with no clear facets evident, making it difficult to determine if the stake was chopped using a stone or metal axe. The stake was identified as birch (*Betula* sp.) and has 15 annual rings remaining.

10. Please outline the findings of your research and/or milestones achieved

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11. a) Please provide details of the dissemination of the outcomes from this project (inc. publications, presentations, outreach, media etc.) including details of any social media/web platforms used to publicise this project

An article has been written and submitted to Archaeology Ireland. It has been accepted, with hoped for publication in the forthcoming Winter 2021 edition

b) No. of Academic Papers/articles published:

1

c) No. of Lectures given/outreach events involved in: **1**

e) How will you continue to communicate the results of your project and what are your publication plans? **Report likely to be published in Archaeology Ireland Winter 2021**

15. How did the award enhance your professional development (e.g. in terms of specific opportunities, opportunities for enhancing skills, collaborations with others etc.)? **The grant helped with the interpretation of another intertidal site along the west coast of Ireland**

16. What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project? **None at this stage - although the site is being regularly monitored for further evidence of erosion**