

The size, shape and location of our cropmark in what was once low-lying marshy ground led us to believe that DU015-018 may represent the remains of a medieval moated site. This would also explain why there was a line running from the corner of the enclosure to the site of a possible spring – was this a channel to lead water into the moat?

#### WHAT IS A MOATED SITE?

The general definition is: a 13th-14th century rectangular enclosure defined by a ditch often filled with water (hence moat) and surrounded by an internal bank. The bank would probably have been topped by a timber palisade and the entranceway usually protected with a gatehouse, thereby protecting the space within the moat from attack or raiding.

The traditional interpretation suggests that moated sites represent a second wave of Anglo-Norman settlement into border territories on the fringes of Norman control. This would explain the frequent occurrence of moated sites in the south and west of the country. These areas, known from the contemporary sources as 'the land of war' would have been exposed to attack from the Gaelic Irish. In these contexts, moated sites are believed to be the fortified homesteads of minor barons or wealthy farmers.

Within the relatively secure hinterland of Dublin, or the 'land of peace', moated sites are believed to be rare. So who could have constructed the site? Records exist for two Norman families who had stakes in the Baldoyle area during the 12th-13th centuries. Following the Norman takeover of Dublin, Strongbow granted Vivan de Cursun the lordship of Raheny. De Cursun, a minor baron presumably without the means to construct an earth and timber castle such as that constructed at this time by St. Laurence at Howth, might be just the candidate for the construction of a fortified dwelling in the Baldoyle area. The lords of Howth, Alberic St. Laurence and later his son Nicholas were also aggressively

pursuing interests in Baldoyle in the 13th century. Another candidate is one Richard de Feypo. Records show that de Feypo, who was granted the nearby lordship of Santry by Hugh de Lacy, made grants concerning Baldoyle in 1236. It seems that descendants of Adam de Feypo held land in this area well into the 17th century and it is possible that Richard, or some other family member may have built a moated site to consolidate a claim on the land. It has however, long been recognised, especially in Britain, that moated sites can be associated with Monastic Grange Farms.

#### WHAT IS A GRANGE?

The word grange comes from the old French word for a barn which ultimately finds its roots in the latin granum. The word grange is therefore connected to the modern words grain and granary. During the medieval period, a grange was an outlying farm often associated with a monastic order. Even before the beginning of the Anglo-Norman takeover of Ireland in 1169, it was a common practice for lords to grant lands to religious establishments. It was the Cistercians who first began to order their possessions into structured farmsteads arranged according to strict guidelines. The Cistercian grange soon inspired its imitators and the Benedictines, Cluniacs and Augustinians began to order their possessions in much the same way.

We know from an early charter that Baldoyle was granted to the Augustinian Priors of All Hallows by Dermot MacMurrough in 1166 and held by them until the dissolution of the monasteries in Tudor times. Although the ruined church known as Grange Abbey in Donaghmede has long been associated with the grange through local tradition, no contemporary sources can prove this. Excavations carried out at Grange Abbey did not unearth any clear evidence of a grange farm at this location. The Seagrang moated site, occurring in a townland with strong associations with the Augustinians, is a potential candidate for the location of the original monastic grange of Baldoyle.

#### THE DUBH GALL

Baldoyle is surrounded by placenames loaded with Scandinavian connotation. Baldoyle too has long been recognized as a placename of Gaelic origin indicative of Scandinavian settlement, deriving as it does from the Irish Baile Dubh Gall, which has been interpreted as meaning 'settlement/farmstead of the dark foreigner'. Throughout the 9th and 10th centuries, the Irish and Welsh annals refer to Dubhgaill (dark foreigners) and Finngaill (Fair foreigners) in relation to different Viking groups. The most enduring interpretation has seen the Finngaill equated with the original Norwegian invaders, turned settlers, who held and occupied Dublin from the early 9th century. In this context, the Dubgaill have been equated with the group who surged westwards from Denmark in the mid-9th century, overrunning and conquering York in AD866. The placename, 'Baldoyle' may therefore represent Irish recognition of a secondary settlement away from the main focus of Finngaill activity in Dublin. Could our ring, brooch and pin once have adorned the hand and garments of a Viking farmer settled in Baldoyle over 1100 years ago?

#### THE GRANGE OF BALDOYLE

While we did not find the outer moat surrounding the possible grange, we found an occupation layer dating to the 13th-14th centuries in the area enclosed by the suspected moat. In addition to the medieval ceramic, our plough pebble, the metal surface and all of the cartographic, photographic and landscape information, we can say that there was most likely a moated site at Seagrang. Armed with this information and drawing on evidence from upstanding medieval granges in Britain, the excavated example at Staleen in Meath and documentary sources describing grange farms at Duleek and Grangegorman, we commissioned Baldoyle artist Paddy Lynch ([www.patrickl.net](http://www.patrickl.net)) to create the speculative reconstruction drawing of the site shown on the cover of this publication.

## 4. Conclusions

To share our results with the local community, we held numerous talks and events in the area. The interest we encountered at these events made it clear that there was a huge appetite for this kind of project. Many people wanted to get involved and had ideas of sites that needed to be investigated. In partnership with Fingal County Council, the Baldoyle Forum and UCD, we came together with interested locals from across the wider area to form the Resurrecting Monuments group. Since 2015, we have undertaken numerous surveys and excavations and have hosted a number of events organised during our fortnightly meetings in the Baldoyle Forum.

The group would like to thank The Royal Irish Academy, Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council for their support and for funding this publication. In addition we would like to thank the residents of Seagrang, Baldoyle for making the project possible.

To learn more or to get involved, visit Resurrecting Monuments on facebook or at [www.grassrootsarchaeology.ie](http://www.grassrootsarchaeology.ie)

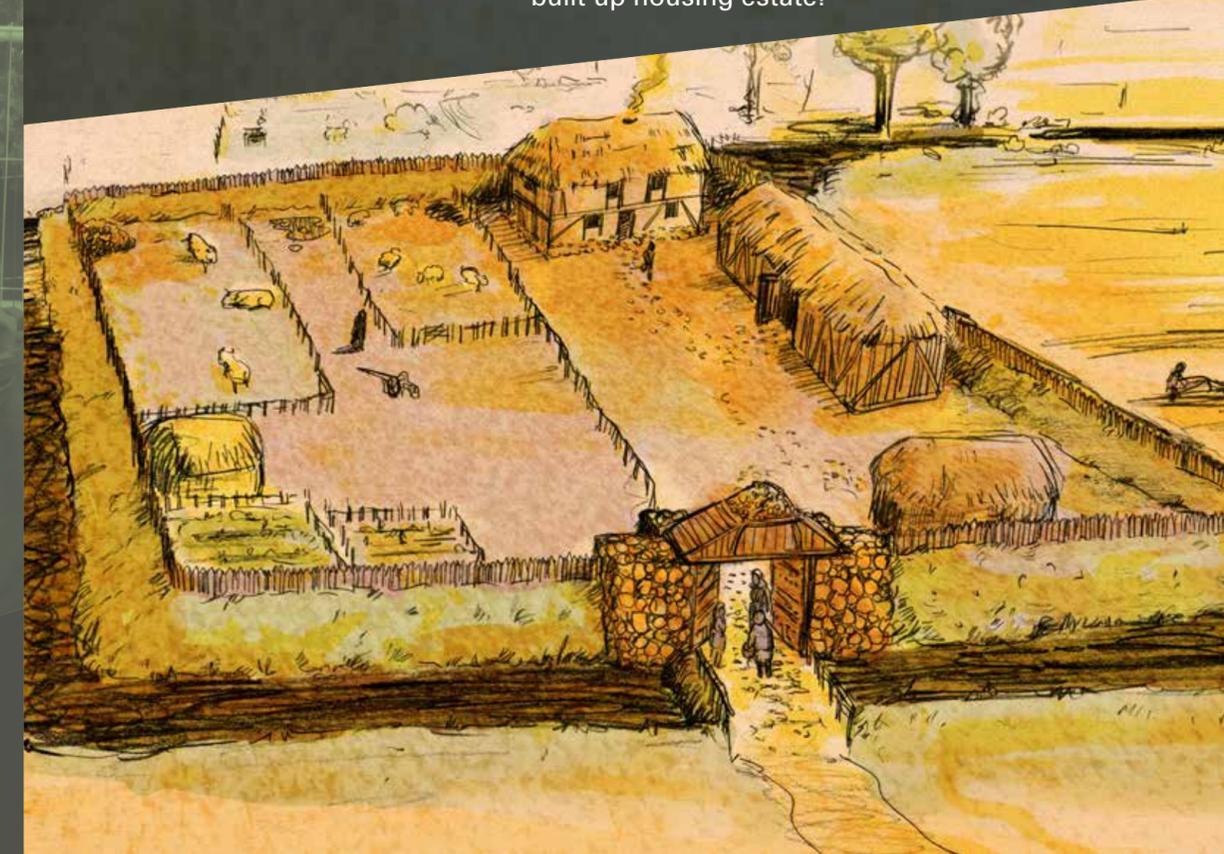


# the Grassroots Archaeology Project

During the summer months of 2013 and 2014, the Grassroots Archaeology Project attempted to resurrect the story of a forgotten monument from beneath the gardens and greenspaces of the Seagrang housing estate in Baldoyle.

#### BALDOYLE, DUBLIN 13

A community led project, funded by the Royal Irish Academy with support from Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council Grassroots brought together professional expertise and local involvement to coordinate a programme of historical research, geophysical survey and targeted excavation to achieve this goal. Why did we look for archaeology in a built up housing estate?



# I. Humble Beginnings

Archaeology is everywhere in suburban North Dublin. Every community is built beside, around or on archaeological features and historic monuments. From Grange Abbey in Donaghmede, to Corr Castle in Howth, to the 16th century church in Raheny and the probable Bronze Age mound in the Cadburys grounds in Coolock, these places are part of our everyday experience.

There are even more sites hidden beneath our feet. Some of these are known from historic mapping like the ringfort at the junction of Kilbarrack Road and the James Larkin Road. Others are known through excavation such as the late Mesolithic shell midden at Sutton, and yet others have been identified through the analysis of aerial photography which can date back to the 1950s. A list of all of the known sites in the country is maintained by the National Monuments Service (available at [www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)).



fig 1.

fig 2.

This is known as the Register of Monuments and Places (RMP) and it contains hundreds of entries which have been swallowed by housing developments built at a time before strong heritage legislation was in place in Ireland. In many instances, these sites and monuments have been identified post-development through the analysis of old aerial photography. What information, if any, can be resurrected from this considerable portion of Dublin's archaeological resource?

This was the central question to the Grassroots Archaeology Project which targeted one such monument in a suburban estate in Baldoyle. The monument in question, DU015-018, was identified from the Cambridge series



fig 3.

aerial photo 1970-CUCAP AIG 95-c which was taken just prior to the construction of the housing estate in 1973 (fig. 1). It shows the outline of a rectangular cropmark in the centre of a large field. Over time, this enclosure ditch would have filled up with organic-rich, aerated soil. The crops growing in this nutrient rich soil grew larger and fuller than crops growing in the normal topsoil. This process resulted in the formation of a cropmark that could be identified from above.

The mark visible in our photo therefore gives us a clear picture of the ditch that once existed here. By correcting the angle of the photo and mapping it over a detailed map of the estate, we can pinpoint where the enclosure might survive beneath the gardens and greens of Seagrang (fig. 2). The most exciting thing about these findings is that the location of the cropmark appeared to run through some of the gardens of members of the project team! The cropmark was not just rectangular. From the aerial photo, we could see a line coming off the northeast corner of the enclosure and stopping roughly 80m away. When we went to look at the location where this feature stops, we realised that it coincided with an area of Seagrang Green that is constantly wet with water seeping up from below ground. Could this be the location of a forgotten spring or aquifer?

Historic maps are also an invaluable tool for archaeological research. In the 1830s and 1840s, the entire country was mapped by the Ordnance Survey at a scale of six inches to the mile. These 'six inch' maps record a landscape that has changed drastically over the years. At Seagrang we looked for signs of a rectangular enclosure in the field pattern on these maps but nothing was found. However, on an older map, drawn up by William Duncan in 1821, we discovered a tree lined enclosure surrounding two buildings at the location of our cropmark (fig. 3). This feature was the right size, shape and in the right place to represent our cropmark. So what could this be?



fig 4.



fig 5.

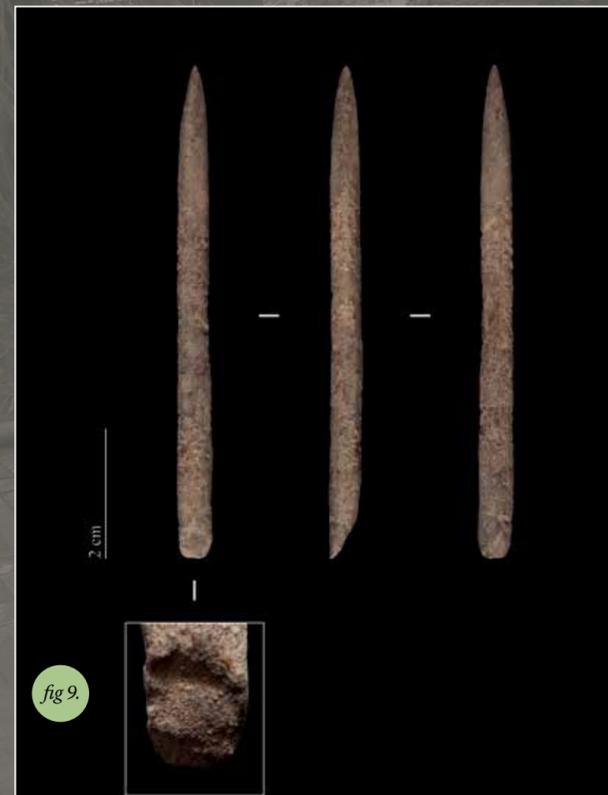


fig 9.



fig 6.



fig 7.



fig 8.



fig 10.



fig 11.

## 3. THE EXCAVATIONS

Armed with this information, the Grassroots Archaeology project obtained funding from the Royal Irish Academy and sought a licence to conduct test excavation in the area from The National Monuments Service. With support also from Fingal County Council, the project got underway in the summer of 2013. Over the course of two excavation seasons, we opened ten trenches of varying sizes within the gardens and greenspaces (fig. 4). Despite encountering some quite disturbed ground in places, we were able to answer our primary research question – can archaeology survive beneath a modern housing estate? – with a resounding 'Yes!'.

The earliest phase of in situ cultural activity was encountered in both Test trenches 2 and 9 which were opened c.5m east of the enclosure DU015-018 in what is now the side garden of a residential house. Intact archaeological layers were encountered at c.0.45m below the present ground surface. This phase consisted of the remains of a hearth or furnace feature which was cut by a slightly curving, linear gully (fig. 5).

This gully contained an abundance of mollusc shell (primarily cockle with some mussel, scallop, limpet and oyster) animal bone including a rib fragment and a distal portion of a cattle ulna, a large fragment of a horse mandible (fig. 6) and fragments of sheep bones.

Most exciting however were the finds retrieved from this gully. A fragment of a highly polished black stone (cannel coal) finger ring (fig. 7), an iron pin fragment, possibly from a brooch (fig. 8), a polished bone-pin fragment (fig. 9) in addition to a fragment of struck flint, a small flint bladelet and two small fragments of iron slag were all recovered from this feature.

Charred cereal grains, including barley, wheat, oat and possible rye and weed seeds such as small legumes and common orache were retrieved from processing soil samples from the gully.

All of this evidence points to a domestic habitation involved in the consumption and possibly production/collecting of a range of food types including meat, shellfish and cereals – which we had expected. However, one of the cereal grains was sent for radiocarbon dating and returned a date of 854-983 cal. AD (Sigma 2). This was 200 years earlier than our expected medieval moated site!

Our trenches 6 and 8 were opened in a garden that we knew was inside of the rectangular enclosure. We positioned the trenches to try and locate the upstanding buildings shown on Duncan's map of 1821. While we did not find the buildings, we found two occupation layers. The first of these contained pottery from the late 17th century to the late 18th century. Below this deposit, an earlier occupation layer which contained several corroded iron objects. We retrieved several pieces of medieval pottery from these trenches. Several of the pieces were decorated, dating to the 12th-14th century (fig. 10). We also found a plough pebble which would have been used in the 13th century, embedded into a wooden plough to help prevent wear to the timber plough share (fig. 11).

Processing of soil samples from the earlier occupation layer identified charred grains of wheat, oat, barley and bedstraw. A charred barley grain from this context was dated to AD1274-1309 cal. (Sigma 2). This result falls precisely into the time period we were expecting for our suspected moated site.

So what do these results mean?