

A DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PEATLANDS OF IRELAND II

July 29, 2011 Charles Mount Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Environmental Archaeology, Excavation, Medieval, Prehistory ADS, Bog, Bord na Móna, British Columbia, Castlegar, Castlegar Bog, Co. Galway, Dan Young, environmental analysis, Excavation, Ireland, Jane Whitaker, Killaderry Bog, Killaderry Co., Labor Issues, Landforms, Peatland, Pedology, Project Archaeologist, Reading University, Shannon, trackways, Wetlands



The view across Killaderry Bog. Co. Galway.

You can find part I of this post [here](#).

Getting to the site

It's a two hour drive from my base in Kildare to Killaderry, part of the trip is on the new Motorways built during the Celtic Tiger period but once you cross the Shannon these roads run out and you are back on the old single carriageways and narrow bridges that characterise the country.

The excavations

I Arrived at Killaderry, Co. Galway just after 11am and Jane Whitaker of ADS showed me around. These are raised bogs, which means they developed from ancient lakes. The natural vegetation has been removed by milling so they give the impression of solidified dark brown lakes. The only visible features are the long and deep drains extending into the distance that break up the bog into long narrow fields. The figures of archaeologists in reflective yellow safety gear can be seen beside shallow excavation cuttings filling out recording sheets. The trackways are spread around the bog and it takes a long time to walk out to them and then from site to site. This year 13 sites were excavated in Killaderry Bog and 3 in Castlegar. Dan Young from Reading University is busily taking samples from around the trackways for environmental analysis. When it rains this can be a bleak place as there's no cover. In a hot summer there's no shade from the sun. The peat dries out and can become airborne and tractors and harvesters create mini-dust-storms as they pass.



A section of a trackway prepared for environmental sampling at Killaderry Bog. Co. Galway.

The trackways have a wide date range from the Bronze Age right through to the fifteenth century AD. The longer trackways tend to cross the bogs at their narrowest points linking areas of dryland. In a number of cases trackways follow the routes that were established at earlier periods. There are other alignments of trackway that are being investigated this season that will soon be dated and will provide more detail. At this stage the evidence indicates that this routeway through Killaderry bog was in use for at least two thousand years and is probably the preserved wetland part of an ancient road network that existed in this area. Investigation of the nearby River Suck also has the potential to identify ancient fording points and possibly the remains of bridges. There have been interesting finds, a Late Bronze Age wooden shovel, a rough-out for a handled bowl and a spoon that resembles a chisel. Now that the season's fieldwork has come to an end the next part of work, the post-ex phase, begins.



Final recording of cuttings and samples at Killaderry Bog. Co. Galway.