

A DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PEATLANDS OF IRELAND

July 29, 2011 Charles Mount Day of Archaeology 2011, Medieval, Prehistory ADS, archaeologist, Bog, Bord na Móna, Castlegar Bog, Co. Galway, Florida, Florin Curta, Gainesville, Google, Ireland, Jane Whitaker, Killaderry Bog, Landforms, Operations Manager, Peat, Peatland, Pedology, Project Archaeologist, River Shannon, trackways, University of Florida, Wetlands

View [Killaderry & Castlegar](#) in a larger map

About me

As an archaeologist my work ranges widely from advising developers how to avoid impacts on archaeology and built heritage, to the preparation of the cultural heritage sections of environmental impact assessments, to the commissioning of field-based investigations such as geophysical survey and the traditional archaeological excavation. Part of my professional work involves overseeing the archaeological programme of Bord na Móna, where I act as Project Archaeologist. Bord na Móna is the commercial Semi-state body with responsibility for the development of the Irish national peat resource. Bord na Móna owns and manages more than 80,000 ha of land spread across Ireland. Most of this is peatland which has preserved a wealth of organic archaeological and palaeoenvironmental material. Once thought to be areas of wilderness we now know that the bogs were used by people for thousands of years.

Up with the lark

Today I will be travelling to Killaderry and Castlegar bogs in Co. Galway to have a final look at the results of this year's fieldwork. There's no need to set an alarm as our toddler has the household awake at 5.30am and part of the morning has already been spent watching Jungle Junction!

The project

The archaeological survey of the peatlands in the ownership of Bord na Móna has been a huge two decade long task, that has indentified thousands of archaeological sites that are not only near the bog surface but also buried quite deeply. The Bord na Móna method of working is to harvest a few centimetres of peat each year from the top of the bog. This slowly reduces the height of the bog and as the archaeological features come close to the surface they are either excavated or a decision is made to preserve them *in situ*. To find out more about the project [click here](#).

The excavation work is being carried out by Archaeological Development Services (ADS) who have been carrying out the programme since 1998, under the direction of Operations Manager Jane Whitaker. To date ADS has carried out more than 250 excavations and surveyed more than 45,000 ha of bog lands. For more on ADS peatland [click here](#). I'm going to be meeting Jane on site and she is going to show me around the Killaderry and Castlegar excavations.

This year the investigations are focussing on the wooden trackways in Gowla, Killaderry and Castlegar bogs and ADS were joined earlier in the month by a group from the University of Florida at Gainesville lead by Prof. Florin Curta. Killaderry and Castlegar bogs are situated just to the west of the River Suck, a tributary of the River Shannon, and in the past would have presented a barrier to anyone trying to cross the river (see Google Map above).

It's time to hit the road!