

Archaeological Research for World Heritage Site Grant, 2022

Final Report- Matthew Stout

1. Title: Dr

First name: Matthew

Surname: Stout

2. Email:

3. Grant programme: Archaeological Research for WHS

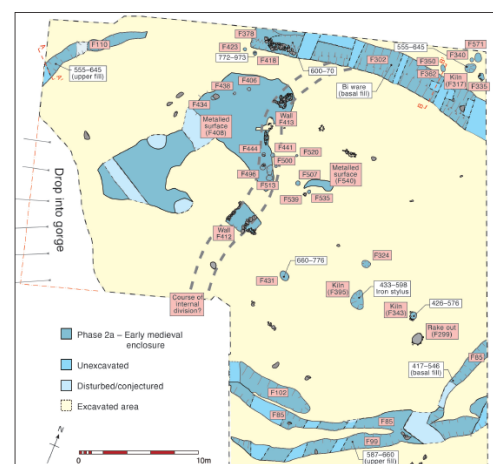
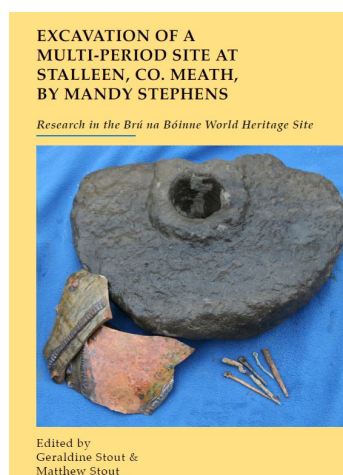
4. Year awarded: 2022

5. Title of project: Research towards the publication of the Stalleen Excavation Report: EXCAVATION OF A MULTI-PERIOD SITE AT STALLEEN, CO. MEATH, BY MANDY STEPHENS: Research in the Brú na Bóinne World Heritage Site Edited by Geraldine Stout and Matthew Stout

6. Summary of report: This book discusses the results of archaeological excavations that took place in Stalleen, Co. Meath, in 2008 under the direction of Mandy Stephens. The site is situated in the Boyne Valley within the 'buffer zone' of the Brú na Bóinne UNESCO World Heritage Site. The archaeological excavation revealed a significant multi-period site with finds reaching back to the Late Mesolithic hunter-gatherers. The earliest feature is an early medieval oval enclosure which is arguably the earliest ecclesiastical site in Ireland. This phase is followed by a period of unenclosed settlement associated with a post-Viking souterrain and industrial activity. From late in the twelfth century and well into the sixteenth, the site was used as a Cistercian grange attached to Mellifont Abbey. The physical expression of this complex includes a substantial stone gate, associated ditches and industrial features. Few granges have been archaeologically investigated in Ireland and therefore this represents a significant discovery in both regional and national terms.

7. Date the report was submitted: Oct 10, 2022

8. Please provide two appropriate images:



9. Please outline the objectives of the project

The objective was to publish this excavation report combining the talents of over ten authors, editors and specialists.

10. Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research

The research is brought together in a single monograph. The contents are as follows:

PART I – THE EXCAVATION

Chapter 1 Topography and settlement

Chapter 2 The excavation

PART II – SPECIALIST REPORTS

Chapter 3 Lithics from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Dermot G. Moore

Chapter 4 Imported Bi/LRA 2 amphora from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Ian W. Doyle

Chapter 5 Medieval ceramics from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Clare McCutcheon

Chapter 6 Post-medieval ceramics from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Joanne Gaffrey

Chapter 7 Bone finds and worked bone from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Joanne Gaffrey and Fiona Beglane

Chapter 8 Human bone from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Ciara Travers

Chapter 9 Metal finds from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Joanne Gaffrey

Chapter 10. Clay pipes from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Joanne Gaffrey

Chapter 11. Glass from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Joanne Gaffrey

Chapter 12. Stone finds from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Joanne Gaffrey

Chapter 13. Mammalian faunal remains from Stalleen, Co. Meath by Fiona Beglane

Chapter 14. Bird and fish bones from Stalleen, Co. Meath by S. Hamilton-Dyer

Chapter 15. Plant macrofossil and charcoal remains from Stalleen, Co Meath by Sarah Cobain

PART III – DISCUSSION

Chapter 16. Discussion

PART IV – APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Radiocarbon dates from Stalleen, Co Meath

Appendix 2. Features list

Appendix 3 Finds catalogue

Bibliography

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

This small site at Stalleen has been a settlement site for over six thousand years. Sometime in the fifth millennium BC middle stone age hunters and gatherers came to this point on the Boyne River. Like their contemporaries at Mound Sandel, they recognised a place of vast natural resources. This provided a secure base for what must have been a permanent settlement somewhere near the excavation site. Prehistoric people continued to have a presence at Stalleen through the new stone age and into the ages of metal. Stalleen came in to its own in the early medieval period and the excavations were miraculously positioned to reveal the existence of an enclosure built, according to the well-stratified radio-carbon dates, sometime before AD550. The date, size and shape of the enclosure are at odds with it being a domestic ringfort. The finds, include pottery from the Mediterranean and a writing implement from a time when literacy was almost exclusively the purview of the Christian clergy. This evidence combines to support the view that this was an ecclesiastical site, and if so, it is the earliest known site in Ireland. The introduction of Christianity is one of the stories told along the banks of the Boyne. It is not too farfetched to see Stalleen as the first footprint left behind by the new faith.

This rich region of the Boyne valley was at the centre of the affluent early medieval kingdom of Brega. When the Vikings waylaid Ireland in the 840s Brega became their main focus. The profound effects of this malign influence were recorded at Knowth and a similar decline was experienced by the occupant at Stalleen. The construction of a souterrain for hiding in is the key manifestation of this downturn. The twelfth-century reform movement arrived in this part of Ireland with the establishment of the Cistercian abbey at Mellifont in 1142. The grange in Stalleen was set up within twenty years of their arrival. This area was taken out of the hands of the local kings and transferred into monastic control. Stalleen is one of a small number of granges to be excavated in Ireland and it produced evidence for a secure enclosure guarded by a substantial gate. This was a thriving monastic farm but it was one where the rearing of cattle predominated. The original grange at Stalleen was farmed by lay monks, but this system would have been abandoned by the late-medieval period. At that time, Mellifont became an absentee landlord to this farming community, but the site was still occupied and grain drying and other quasi-industrial processing took place. The dissolution of the monasteries changed who owned the Stalleen farms, but not necessarily those who farmed it. The final phase of occupation at Stalleen was the uncovering of part of a house probably belonging to one of three farmers recorded in the Civil Survey of 1654.

12. 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

The publication will be distributed widely as will the PDF version of the monograph. Publicity at the book launch, scheduled for 26 October 2022 will feature in local newspapers and, possibly, in national newspapers. The contribution of the Royal Irish Academy is prominently acknowledged in the book.

b) No. of Academic Papers/articles published:

1

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

1

d) Media Coverage (article in local newspaper, feature on University website etc.):

Publicity at the book launch, scheduled for 26 October 2022 will feature in local radio and newspapers and, possibly, in national media.

e) How will you continue to communicate the results of your project and what are your publication plans?

Publication plans are as above and the results will be communicated by contacting the academic community as widely as possible. Review copies will be sent to all relevant academic journals.

a) How did the grant enhance your professional development?

The preparation of this monograph has raised the profile of the editors in the archaeological community

b) What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?

The Stalleen report project is complete with the publication of the monograph.

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