INISHARGY, COUNTY DOWN: INVESTIGATION OF A VIKING SILVER FIND-SPOT

Geophysical survey, metal detector survey and excavation carried out on behalf of
The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA): Built Heritage

by

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CAF DSR 088
SMR: (adjacent to) DOW 018:020 & DOW 018:001
NGR: J6061 6465
Excavation Licence: **AE/12/149**

22nd November 2012

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1 Introduction

In May 2012 the NIEA were contacted by David Taylor, the brother-in-law of Mr Andy Coulter of Inishargy House, who had found an object in the field downslope of the house, adjacent to a now-drained bog and marsh area (Figures 1 and 2). This proved to be a silver arm-ring or bracelet of Viking type - sometimes referred to as 'ring money' as the weights of the arm-rings correspond to specific weights. The bracelet has been analysed for silver content and a specialist report on the object is being prepared for the coroner. A GPS record of the find-spot was made (J6061 6465). In October of the same year, the NIEA inspectorate requested that the CAF carry out an investigation at the find-spot location to try to establish any context for the object, or whether there are further items in the vicinity.

The find-spot was made approximately 200m southeast of Inishargy House (DOW 018:020) which dates to the 17th-century though it has been much altered in recent decades. The house is located beside the ruins of a church both of which are situated within a large enclosure, of unknown date, at the summit of a drumlin (Figure 2). The church and enclosure, and an Anglo-Norman coffin lid which was found within the ruins of the church, and since removed to Balligan Church, are classified as the remains of an ecclesiastical site (DOW 018:001).

The find-spot location has a GPS record although it was recovered from amongst stones that were gathered together after the field was harrowed. It is therefore likely that it is *ex situ* and given its 'battered' condition, it is reasonable to assume that it has probably been tossed about by farm machinery.

A three-strand approach was adopted to the investigation of the find-spot; geophysical surveys (electrical earth resistance and magnetometry), a metal detector survey and excavation. The methodology and results of each of these are described separately below followed by a discussion.

2 Geophysical surveys *by Sapphire Mussen and Ronan McHugh*

2.1 Introduction

A limited geophysical survey was carried out between 29th October and 1st November covering an area of 0.36 hectares in the area immediately surrounding the find-spot of the Viking silver arm-ring. The purpose of the survey was to investigate whether there were subsurface archaeological remains associated with the artefact. Two geophysical techniques were employed; magnetometry and electrical resistance. The local bedrock geology comprises mudstone, greywacke and conglomerate

(500k), sandstone (250K) and superficial layers of till diamicton (Geological Survey of Northern Ireland - online) which it was not anticipated would be of any impediment to either survey method. The survey was conducted in fair weather and the underfoot ground conditions also did not provide any hindrance. The only obstacles encountered were large hay bales in the field, some of which lay within the gridded survey area.

2.2 Cartographic evidence

Ordnance survey maps of the area show no features of archaeological interest in the area of the find-spot. A number of changes to the field boundaries can be observed in particular between the first and third editions, i.e. between 1835 and 1932 (Figure 3). By 1932, the field in which the 2012 survey was located was divided in two and encroached upon by marshland which lies southeast of it. The current location of the find-spot would place it directly over the intersection shown between arable land and marshland. By 1957 it appears that there is no longer a fence line separating these two areas (Figure 3c). The site is currently completely fenced off from the marshland although its south-eastern boundary now encloses more of this area than in previous times (Figure 3d). The boundary which divided the survey field in two has also been removed.

2.3 The survey site

The find of Viking silver was made approximately 200m to the east-southeast and down slope of Inishargy House, church and enclosure (DOW 018:0120 and DOW 018:001). The survey grid was set up to cover a total area of 0.36 hectares immediately surrounding the find-spot (Figure 4). The south-eastern edge of the grid coincided with a modern field boundary which consisted of a barbed wire fence, with a drain or small *sheugh* beyond it. The terrain within the grid had a significant northwest to southeast gradient, levelling-off along the boundary edge (Figure 5). The field is used for arable farming and, at the time of the survey, the crop had been recently cut. A number of large hay bales lay within the field, some within the gridded survey area which caused only a slight inconvenience in conducting the survey.

2.4 Survey specific information

Survey type	**Electrical Earth Resistance**	**Magnetometry**
Instrumentation	Geoscan RM15 resistance meter and MPX15 multiplexer	Bartington Grad 601-2 fluxgate gradiometer
Probe/sensor configuration	Parallel twin (3-probe)	Twin sensor
Probe/sensor spacing	0.5m	--
Grid size	20m x 20m	20m x 20m
Traverse interval	0.5m	1m
Sample interval	0.5m	0.25m
Traverse pattern	Zig-Zag	Zig-Zag
Spatial accuracy	Grids set out using a Leica TS06 series total station	Grids set out using a Leica TS06 series total station
Dates	29th – 31st October	1st November

Table 1 Details of the equipment and methodologies employed.

2.5 The survey

Nine survey grids covering a total area of 60m by 60m were set out in the area immediately surrounding the find-spot which was located using a handheld Global Positioning System with an accuracy of 6m (Figure 4). The bulk of the survey area lay on the north-western side of the find-spot due to the proximity of the adjacent field boundary.

The earth resistance survey was carried out using a Geoscan RM15 meter and MPX15 multiplexer. All grids were surveyed at a traverse interval of 0.5m and with a probe spacing of 0.5m. The results of the resistance survey are graphically presented in Figures 6-7. An interpretation of these results is given in Section 2.6 and should be read in association with Figure 7b, an interpretative illustration of the resistance survey data.

The magnetometry survey was conducted over the same gridded area using a Bartington Grad 601-2 fluxgate gradiometer with a sample interval of 0.25m. The results of the magnetometry survey are

graphically presented in Figure 8 and an interpretation of these results is given in Section 2.6.

2.6 Discussion and interpretation of survey results

No remains of archaeological significance were detected during the course of the earth resistance survey. There was nothing of note in the area directly over the find-spot and all features discovered can be easily explained as the results of modern agricultural activity. The background readings of the site are fairly homogenous and of mid-range resistance with some patchy areas which are most likely a reflection of the topography of the site and underlying geology. Tilling of the field is evidenced by the presence of a series of regular straight lines running in a northwest to southeast direction across the survey area.

The **r1** anomaly (Figure 7b) measures less than 1m in width and runs northwest to southeast across the entire survey area. It corresponds almost perfectly with the line of a field boundary as marked on the third edition Ordnance survey map of 1932 and as yet, still represented by the current Ordnance survey map (Figure 3b-d). It is highly probably that anomaly r1 represents this field boundary.

The **r2** anomalies (Figure 7b) are most likely representative of a series of stone-lined field drains associated with 19th- and 20th-century agricultural use of the site. Each of these anomalies measure less than 0.5m in width and are of varying length. They run at different angles from north to south and northwest to southeast across the site, following the downward slope of the site and terminating along the south-eastern edge along the fence line and location of r3.

Anomaly **r3** (Figure 7b) is detected as a band of high resistance flanked by low resistance running from southwest to northeast along the south-eastern edge of the survey area. This anomaly may be an indication of the underlying geology and drainage conditions in this part of the site which represents the base of an inter-drumlin hollow. Its width varies from 1m to 5m and its curvilinear form appears quite natural; it could be suggested, given its location at the division between the arable land of the drumlin and the waterlogged land of the marsh, that it forms a natural water margin or stream bed predating reclamation and draining of the marshland. It is also possible that it was once a man made *sheugh* cut during a phase of land reclamation. In its current state this feature is filled with soil, rubble and other debris which is evidenced in the ground surface along the line of the wire fence which forms the south-eastern boundary to the site.

No remains of archaeological significance were detected in the magnetometry survey (Figure 8). The magnetic signals for the majority of the plot were relatively homogenous with frequent but isolated magnetic spikes indicating the presence of ferrous debris throughout the field, an inevitable result of agricultural activity. The contrast between the spikes and the relatively flat readings elsewhere in the

plot are most evident in Figure 8b. The most prominent anomaly was located at the south-eastern edge of the grid. Here a linear, strongly dipolar, magnetic field, up to 7m wide in places, extended along the edge of the grid, coinciding with the line of the modern field boundary. The strength of the readings characterising this anomaly exceeded the level of response to a standard wire fence, so it is likely that a quantity of ferrous debris has accumulated along the line of the boundary over the years; the location of the fence – at the base of an inter-drumlin hollow – would lend itself to soil drift and a natural build-up of material.

A second, weaker magnetic anomaly was visible close to the south-western edge of the grid. This anomaly was much narrower, ranging from 0.5m to 2m in width, and was recognised by variations of approximately $\pm$ 1-2nT from the plot mean. Definition of the anomaly was patchy and inconsistent, but it emerged from the north-western edge of the grid and extended downslope beyond its south-eastern edge. The dimensions of the feature combined with its relatively weak and fluctuating magnetic signals, suggest that this anomaly probably imaged a field drain that has filled up with local soil, stone and gravel, of slightly differing magnetic character, at various locations along its course. In the alternative, it may represent the line of a former fence, which is now only detectable by weakly ferrous fittings and nails which were dropped in the soil.

2.7 Conclusion

No features of archaeological significance were discovered during the course of either the earth resistance survey or the magnetometry survey. All anomalies present can be explained as either disused fence lines or stone lined field drains from agricultural use of the site probably dating since the 19th century. As these anomalies have been investigated through mechanical excavation within the gridded area and shown not to be of archaeological importance (see Section 4 below), it is not recommended that further survey work be carried out at this location. The artefact found at this spot is likely to have been shifted from some other location at Inishargy and been transported by agricultural processes.

3 Metal detector survey

An experienced metal-detectorist, Mr Jim Beggs, was employed to conduct a systematic metal detector survey of the grided survey area (Figure 4). The metal detector employed was a Fisher Coin Strike. Each of the nine grids (20m x 20m) was traversed north-south and 'hits' were recorded (Figure 9) and then dug by hand. In the first grid traversed (Grid A) discrimination was set at the lowest setting ('0'). This resulted in a relatively high strike rate and resulted in the recovery of mostly ferrous objects of farm machinery, and nails and staples from the adjacent fence. It was decided to conduct the rest of the survey employing a higher discrimination ('7') and target non-ferrous objects, although large ferrous objects and ferrous objects close to the surface were not excluded.

The survey was conducted over one day and no further finds of silver were recovered. Twenty-seven metal finds were recorded (Table 2). There was a higher incidence of 'hits' across the southern half of the area surveyed, i.e. the lower slopes of the field, and it is probable that these objects migrated downslope over years of ploughing and harrowing and with hillwash.

The finds of most interest were a pistol shot and a copper button. Other finds included two pieces of sheet lead, pieces of corroded fine wire, a copper-alloy solid rod with terminal, a perforated cabinet(?) fitting, a section of chrome pipe, a modern metal-alloy electrical(?) fitting, and an iron ring. The unwashed finds were cursorily examined by a metalwork specialist, Dr Phillip Macdonald. The assemblage was considered to be overwhelmingly modern in date, although some of the objects, including the lead, are essentially not dateable. It was also considered as a fairly typical assemblage that would expected be to be found from an arable field in this area. The copper button is probably of sixteenth- or seventeenth-century date but would require conservational cleaning to verify this identification (P. Macdonald pers. comm). The pistol shot is small and weighs 7.5g and has a diameter of 1.14cm. It is flattened or sheared-off on one side which suggests that it had been fired.

		Find	**X**	**Y**
GRID A	A1	iron nail	59.5	20.0
	A2	twisted length of wire	55.3	0.4
	A3	iron nail(?)	52.0	10.0
	A4	amorphous piece of lead; Xg	54.5	12.0
	A5	iron link chain	51.0	7.9
	A6	iron link chain	49.8	8.8
	A7	iron link chain	51.8	17.2
	A8	small strap with corroded nails/tacks	56.0	19.5
GRID B	B1	chrome pipe	33.7	8.0
	B2	perforated cabinet(?) fitting	32.5	16.8
	B3	wire	29.6	12.0
	B4	wire	29.0	14.0
	B5	modern alloy fitting (electrical?)	22.0	19.5
GRID C	C1	corroded wire	17.8	4.2
	C2	large tooth/spike from a harrow	15.4	9.4
	C3	gun cartridge	13.6	3.8
	C4	galvanized staple	12.6	4.0
	C5	solid copper(?) rod with terminal	10.8	1.8
	C6	galvanized nail/wire	7.0	0.8
GRID D	D1	sheet copper (?) x 3 fragments	2.0	23.2
GRID E	E1	iron ring	39.0	28.8
	E2	fragment of cast metal, non-ferrous	36.2	35.4
	E3	pistol shot	32.6	36.8
	E4	ferrous machinery part	32.8	25.8
	E5	ferrous machinery part, large & corroded	24.2	27.2
GRID F	F1	piece of sheet lead	44.8	32.0
GRID G	G1	spherical copper button	51.7	48.0

Table 2 List of metal-detector finds by grid and their X and Y co-ordinates (plotted in Figure 9).

4 Excavation

On completion of the geophysical surveys and metal detector survey across the nine grids, a 7m x 7m trench centred on the find-spot location was marked out and excavated. The excavation was conducted using a mechanical excavator fitted with a smooth-edged sheugh bucket (approx. 2m wide) under archaeological supervision. The ploughsoil extended for a depth of 0.4m and lay directly over the compact stony yellow-brown subsoil which was mottled with patches of grey clay. Two field drains traversed the trench (Plate 1). One was orientated approximately north-south along the western edge of the trench and the other was cut perpendicular to it and ran roughly east-west through the middle of the trench (Plate 2). The former was exposed along the western edge of the trench with 0.45m width of the drain uncovered and this would appear to correspond with one of the anomalies, and suggested field drains (r2), detected in the electrical earth resistance survey (Figure 7b). The drain had an uneven edge and was filled with loose angular quarry stone. The second drain was less distinctive. It measured 0.85m wide and ran approximately east-west through the centre of the trench. It was filled with a compact 'dirty' grey clay with occasional stones and fragments of brick. No other features or finds of archaeological interest were uncovered. The trench was backfilled and reinstated with the mechanical excavator.

5 Field walking

During the course of conducting the three surveys the survey grid was frequently traversed and a collection of pottery sherds, a few fragments of bottle and window glass and a small number (No. 6) of struck flints (undiagnostic) were recovered. The field was otherwise relatively sterile with occasional fragments of pipe (black drain pipe, corrugated-plastic yellow pipe, ceramic sewage pipe etc.) and other bits of modern agricultural debris.

5.1 Note on the pottery by Cormac McSparron

Seventy nine pieces of pottery were found during fieldwalking at Inishargy. This assemblage has a wide chronological spread with a number of identifiable pottery fragments dating from the medieval period through to the nineteenth century.

<u>Medieval Pottery</u>

Ten pieces of pottery are likely to date to the medieval period.

Medieval Pottery: glazed sherds

There are two fragments of a vessel, probably a jug, with a dark grey fabric, yellowish interior and an olive green glaze. Two of the sherds exhibit decoration, one sherd decorated with an incised wavy line and a second with two vertical applied strips which themselves have decorative incisions. These

decorative motifs had a long usage in the middle ages and could date to anytime between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. A third sherd, with a similar fabric and glaze but a deeper orange interior colour, was also found, possibly a separate vessel of a similar type. A single rim of badly abraded medieval wheel-thrown earthenware shows a hint of glaze just above the neck.

Medieval Pottery: unglazed sherds

There were also a number of rim and base fragments of unglazed Medieval wheelthrown earthenware vessels, most likely storage and cooking vessels

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Vessels

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century vessels: glazed earthenware utility vessels

There were thirteen sherds of glazed earthenware vessels. These were manufactured at a number of small potteries scattered throughout Ulster. Local Ulster earthenwares have not been widely studied but they seem to date from the later eighteenth century/early nineteenth centuries and to have been produced at a number of locations with twenty seven regional potters being mentioned in Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland in 1837 (Orser 2000).

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century vessels: Blackware

Twelve fragments of Blackware were found. These did not display the typical yellow stripe within the fabric of the earliest Blackwares produced from the eighteenth century onwards at Buckley in north Wales (McCutcheon 1997, 94) and are more likely to be nineteenth or even twentieth century in date and possibly locally produced.

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century finewares

A number of sherds of later eighteenth or nineteenth century finewares were found. A single piece of blue tin-glazed Earthenware could conceivably be seventeenth century but an eighteenth century date is more likely. Two pieces of white stoneware vessels were found. This type of fabric is first found in the eighteenth century although it was used throughout the nineteenth century. Similar remarks can be made about the two fragments of Creamware and single piece of Pearlware found, they may be late eighteenth century but a nineteenth century date is as likely. The small fragments of porcelain found are likely to be nineteenth century as is a piece of very light coloured earthenware covered in a brown glaze and cream slip marks which is probably nineteenth century Staffordshire pottery.

Unidentifiable Sherds

Thirty four sherds of pottery were very badly abraded and impossible to accurately identify. It is however certain from an examination of their fabrics that none are eighteenth century or later finewares. Some may be post-medieval earthenwares where the glaze has been worn off, others, possibly most, are likely to be badly abraded medieval storage and cooking jars. There are a few sherds which may be worn coarseware although whether they are Medieval or earlier is impossible to say.

Conclusions

The presence of eighteenth and nineteenth century pottery in the topsoil is likely to be indicative of waste disposal practices where domestic waste is incorporated into manure and spread on fields. It is not possible to explain the medieval pottery this way however and it is possible that there is a medieval settlement somewhere in the vicinity although the level of abrasion noted suggests they may have travelled some distance.

6 Discussion

The aim of the fieldwork at Inishargy was to try and identify a context for the silver find and/or associated material. The three-strand approach adopted – geophysical survey, metal detector survey and excavation – did not turn-up any archaeological features or contemporary finds at the find-spot location that may be associated with the Viking silver object. The discovery of the object at Inishargy does, however, merit some further discussion.

6.1 Viking silver finds from the Ards and Strangford Lough area

The majority of Viking silver finds from Ireland, including the majority of arm-rings (Graham-Campbell and Sheehan 2009, 79-82) are found as part of a collection or hoard although isolated single finds are also know. The possibility that the Inishargy find therefore derives from a larger assemblage from which it has become disassociated is a strong possibility.

It is also of note that Viking-Age grave goods from Ireland are predominantly of weapons, with some tools (though these could be regarded as weapons), brooches (female graves) and horse mountings (Ó Floinn 1998, 138-144) but apparently no arm-rings. The provenance of the Inishargy silver is therefore unlikely to originate from a burial.

Despite the numerous annalistic references to the area Viking material remains from the Strangford area are slim (Figure 10) and comprise a burial at Ballyholme (near Bangor) and a mixed Viking silver hoard found in the nineteenth century at Magheralagan near Downpatrick (McErlean *et al.*

2002, 84-5)[1]. A large hoard of Hiberno-Norse coins was found on Scrabo Hill for which an early twelfth century deposition date has been suggested (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 84; Briggs and Graham-Campbell 1976, 23). This and the later Scrabo hoard and two other silver ingots provenanced to the county are the only other recorded finds of silver from Down (Briggs and Graham-Campbell 1976, 23).

It is probable that the arm-ring from Inishargy derives from a hoard or occupation site, and, assuming it has not been dislocated a considerable distance, such a site could be located towards the summit of the drumlin, or, on a natural or artificial island settlement within the now-drained bog at the base of the drumlin. The cartographic evidence, and to some extent the earth resistance survey data, show that the southern extent of field (and location of the modern boundary fence), encroach on the wetland area at the base of the drumlin. The wetland area would therefore have formerly been marginally more extensive than it currently is and the silver find, although clearly *ex situ*, was recovered from the probable former boundary of the wet- and dry-land areas. The recovery of Viking hoards, silver and gold, at watery places in Ireland and Scandinavia and elsewhere in the Viking world, is a well know phenomenon (Graham-Campbell and Sheehan 2009).

6.2 The Vikings in Strangford Lough: an elusive island settlement

The annals provide the most extensive and best evidence for Viking activity in Ireland and which include approximately nineteen entries of direct relevance to Strangford Lough (McErlean *et al.* 2002, 78-9). Eight of these date to the eighth to ninth century and eleven refer to the tenth to early eleventh century (*ibid*.). In 924 the Annals of Ulster record the arrival of the Viking fleet in Strangford Lough, and in 942 their expulsion and the capture of their 'island' is mentioned (*ibid*. 79). This island has not yet been identified (*ibid*. 82). Dunnyneil Island was considered a strong contender given both its advantageous location and the placename evidence but excavations there did not indicate a strong Viking link (McCormick and Macdonald 2004).

The townland name of Inishargy includes the prefix *inis* meaning 'island'. Hughes and Hannan (1992, 83) translate the placename as '*Inis Mhic Cairrge'* or '*Mac Cairrge's* island-hill' and note that *inis* can also 'refer to high land or a small hill surrounded by bog' and they suggest that the *inis* of Inishargy could mean 'island-hill' (*ibid*. 85). Harris, in his mid-eighteenth century description of the county, refers briefly to Inishargy; "Near 2 miles N of Rheubane [now Echlinville – Hughes and Hannan 1992, 1204], and ¾ of a mile east, of the lake, about the centre of the Ardes, stands Inishargy,

[1] The Magheralagan hoard comprised a complete arm-ring with stamped ornament and fragments of others ('hacksilver'), two kufic coins and 'possibly some ingots' (Briggs and Graham-Campbell 1976, 21). The arm-ring has been dated to *c.* 850-950 (*ibid*.) and coupled with the coins, a deposition date of late ninth-early tenth century has been suggested (*ibid*. 22).

the Mansion-House of John Bailey, Esq; having two fresh water lakes to the north and south of it" (Harris 1744, 48). Harris' description would also suggest that the drumlin on which Inishargy House is located, although not 'an island', was to all intents and purposes largely bordered by water. A century later, Bishop Reeves noted of the placename and church that "The ruins of the church stand on high ground, surrounded, not by water, but by cultivated fields" (Reeves 1847, 19). He goes on to say that "it appears .. that within the last two centuries human industry has converted the morass into arable land, and the island into a hill; for in a roll of the reign of James I, mention is made of "an island or Lough called Inischargy and eight townlands about or near said island" ' (*ibid*.).

Given the discovery of Viking silver at Inishargy and its probable former near isolation as an inland 'island', it is tempting to postulate that the drumlin could potentially be the elusive 'island' base of the Vikings. Alternatively, their island base could have been a crannog on the now drained bog and probable former lake, at the base of the drumlin. There is no indication of an island or crannog in this wetland area on any of the historic OS maps of Inishargy (Figure 3). Richard Bartlett's seventeenth-century map of south-east ulster, now held in Greenwich Maritime Museum and known as the Dartmouth Map (Figure 11), does however include a lake (or lakes?) clearly labelled *'Enish sharg'*. Within the lake a small island with a building (bawn? church?) is illustrated. Tom McErlean (pers.comm.) has argued the likelihood for the presence of a crannog at Inishargy due to both the placename evidence ('*inis'*) and the fact that a lake at Inishargy is depicted on this historic map. The latter, he suggests generally implies that the lake must have been of some importance to be illustrated with the most likely reason being the presence of a significant island settlement. To complicate things, however, there are at least two marshes or bogs and former lakes in the townland. The 'Inishargy Bog' under the care of the Ulster Wildlife Trust is a larger bog further south with a partial lake still present while the marshy area at the base of the drumlin on which Inishargy House stands is less extensive (Figures 12 and 13). It is of course possible that these two areas were all once conjoined and formed a much larger lake.

It is perhaps also worth mentioning that almost due west of the drumlin in the townland of Ballygarvan, a wide stretch of the foreshore of Bloody Burn Bay has been cleared of rocks and boulders (Plate 3). It seems likely that these were deliberately removed and that the area was cleared to allow boats to beach more easily. The third-edition OS map of this area indicates that a lime kiln was once located close to the shore (Welsh 2012, figure 5) although no signs of this now survives (*ibid*. 8). An alternative theory, running with the suggestion of a Viking base at Inishargy, might be that this was their closest beaching point on the Lough, and that the clearance of the foreshore could therefore date to the tenth century.

6.3 The post-medieval finds

The pistol shot and copper button, both recovered through the metal detector survey, could be of sixteenth, seventeenth or eighteenth century in date. Several accounts of the 1798 Rising indicate that Inishargy played a minor role in the rebellion with a rebel camp set-up there in June. Following an attack on Portaferry on June 10th, known as 'Pike Sunday' and which the insurgents lost, the defeated insurgents subsequently retreated north to a camp at Inishargy (Wilsdon 1997, 133 and 143; Stewart 1995, 191-2). A couple of names in particular who are associated with the camp are Archibald Warwick (later interred in Movilla cemetery, Newtownards) and Robert Gowdy (*ibid*.). It is possible that the pistol shot, and copper button, both recovered during the metal detector survey could date to this period of activity. Both, however, would have been not uncommon personal objects at the time and may simply have been lost by residents of Inishargy House.

7 Conclusion

As the majority of Viking silver and gold finds have been recovered in multiples rather than singly, the possibility that the Inishargy silver arm-ring also derives from an assemblage from which it has become disassociated is a strong likelihood. It is unlikely that it derives from a burial but more probable that it originates from a hoard or settlement site. Although the silver arm ring was recovered from a relatively flat area of the field, the geophysical and metal detector surveys and excavation across this area did not indicate any evidence for archaeological activity. It can be concluded that the find was recovered *ex situ* and the probability therefore is that it derives either from a hoard or settlement site on or towards the summit of the drumlin, or, from the now drained bog/lake at the base of the drumlin. It is also an outside possibility that the recovery of Viking silver from the townland, coupled with the townland name, may point to the location of the Viking island base in Strangford at Inishargy – either on the 'island hill' or on an as yet to be identified crannog in the townland.

8 Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Sapphire Mussen and Ronan McHugh for managing and conducting the geophysical surveys and writing-up reports on the same and Harry Welsh who assisted on site in the second week. I would also like to thank Mr Jim Beggs for conducting the metal detector survey and Peter Coleman of East Down Construction who carried-out the mechanical excavation. Ruairi Ó Baoill kindly provided references to the 1798 Rebellion, Dr Phillip Macdonald identified and provided advice on the metal detector finds and Cormac McSparron identified and provided a brief report on the ceramics. Liam McQuillan of NIEA provided advice and support before, during and after the fieldwork. I would especially like to thank the landowner Mr Andy Coulter for permission to investigate the site and for his support and interest during the course of the fieldwork.

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FIGURES

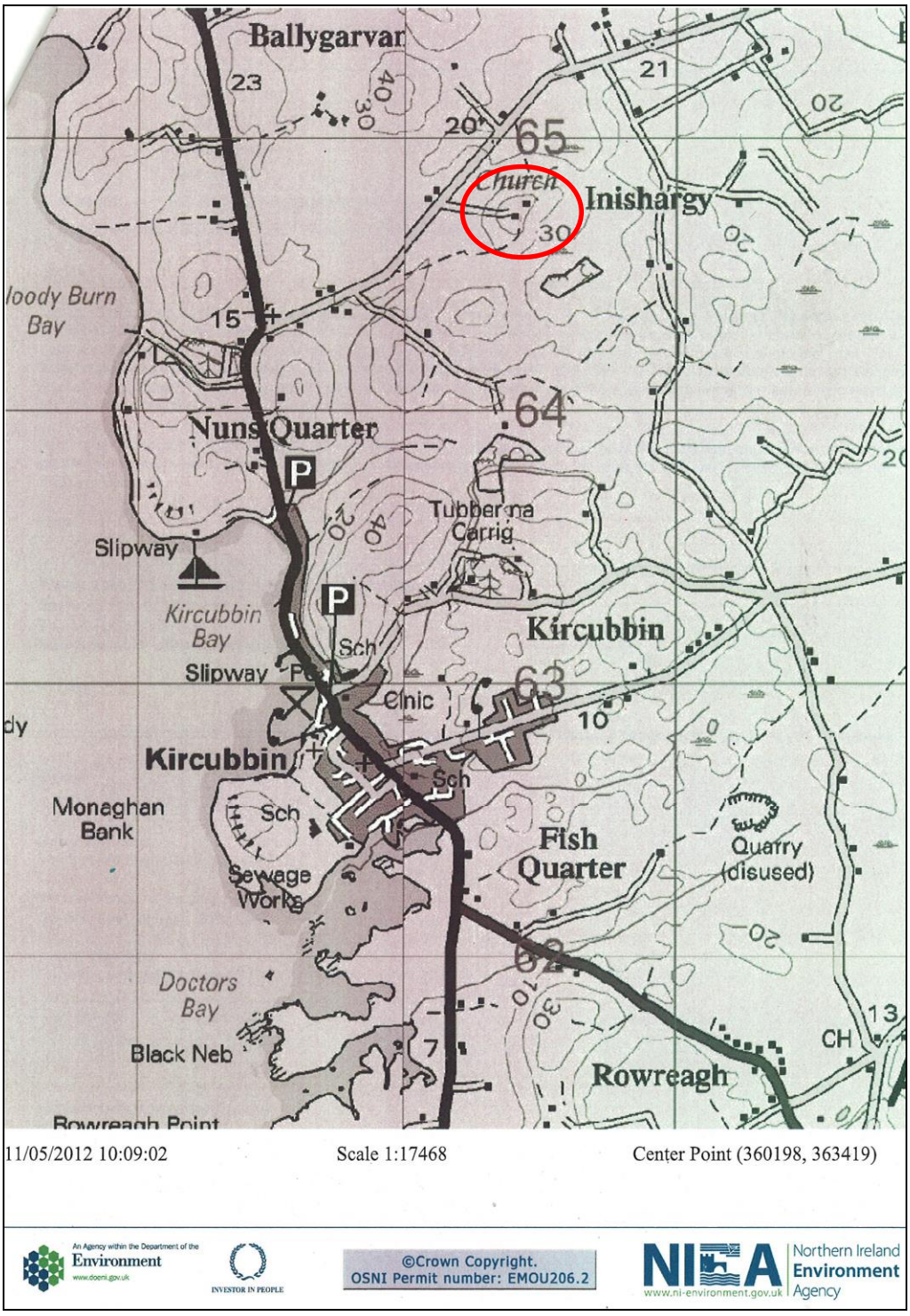

Figure 1 Location of Inishargy House, the church and enclosure, north-east of the village of Kircubbin on the Ards (supplied by L. McQuillan, NIEA).

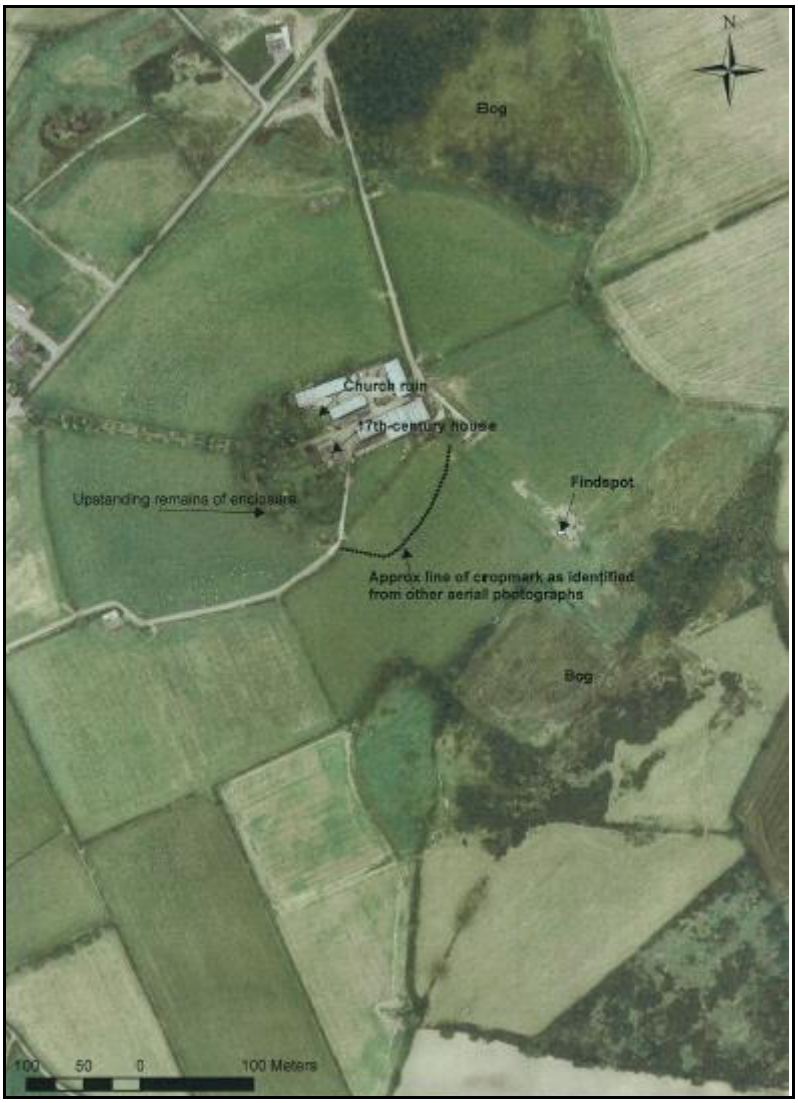

Figure 2 OS aerial photo of Inishargy showing the church ruins, the 17th-century house, the enclosure and Viking silver find-spot (supplied by L. McQuillan, from NIEA webmaping; photo taken on 17th September 2003).

Figure 3 Comparison of extracts from 6-inch Ordnance Survey maps of Inishargy (from NIEA mapviewer: http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/MapViewer/Default.aspx):

(a) First edition Ordnance Survey 1829-1835

(b) Third edition Ordnance Survey 1857-1932

(c) Fourth edition Ordnance Survey 1901-1957

(d) Current digital Ordnance Survey data with current field boundary overlaid and outlined in black

Figure 4 Location of survey grid with find-spot marked and current field boundary overlaid on current OS data (from NIEA mapviewer: http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/MapViewer/Default.aspx).

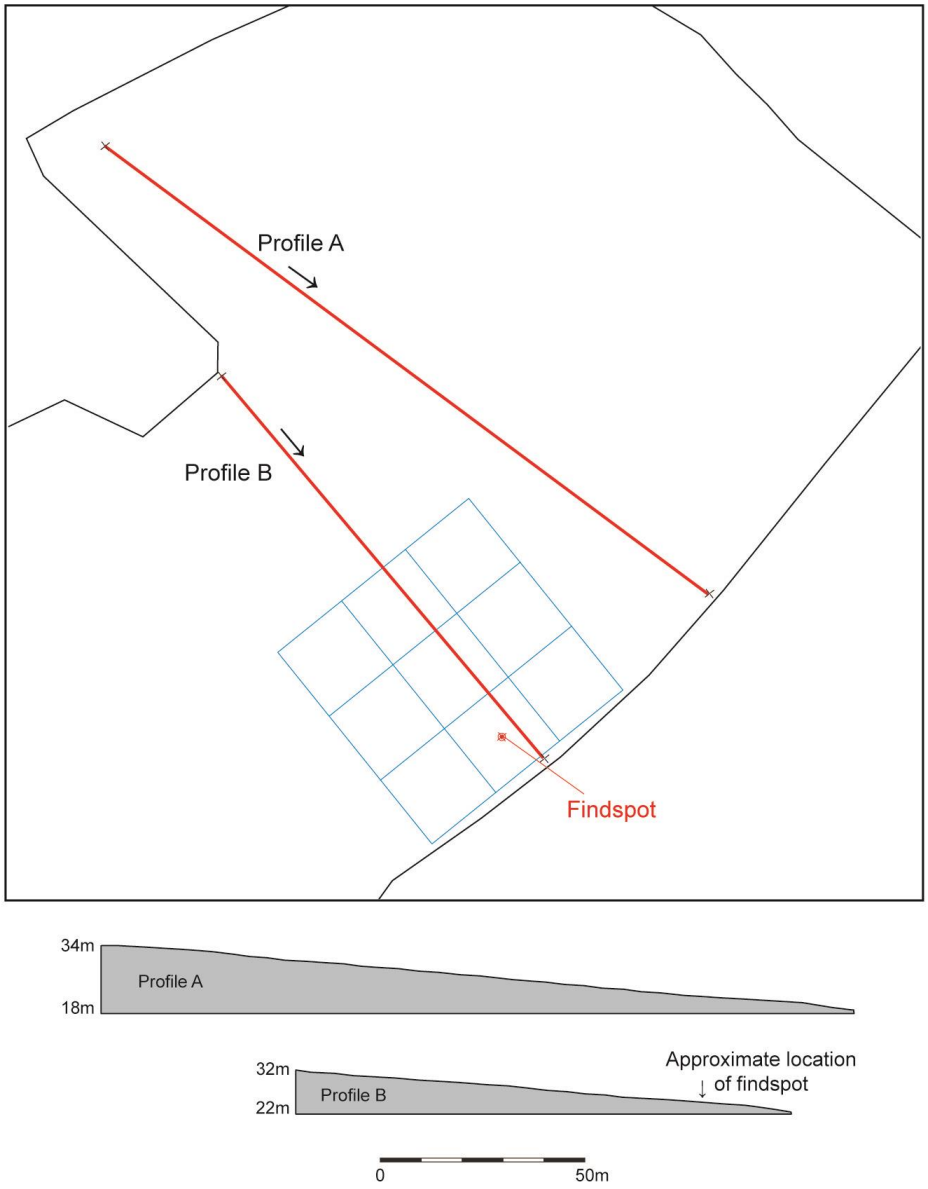

Figure 5 Two profiles of the field at Inishargy where the Viking silver object was found.

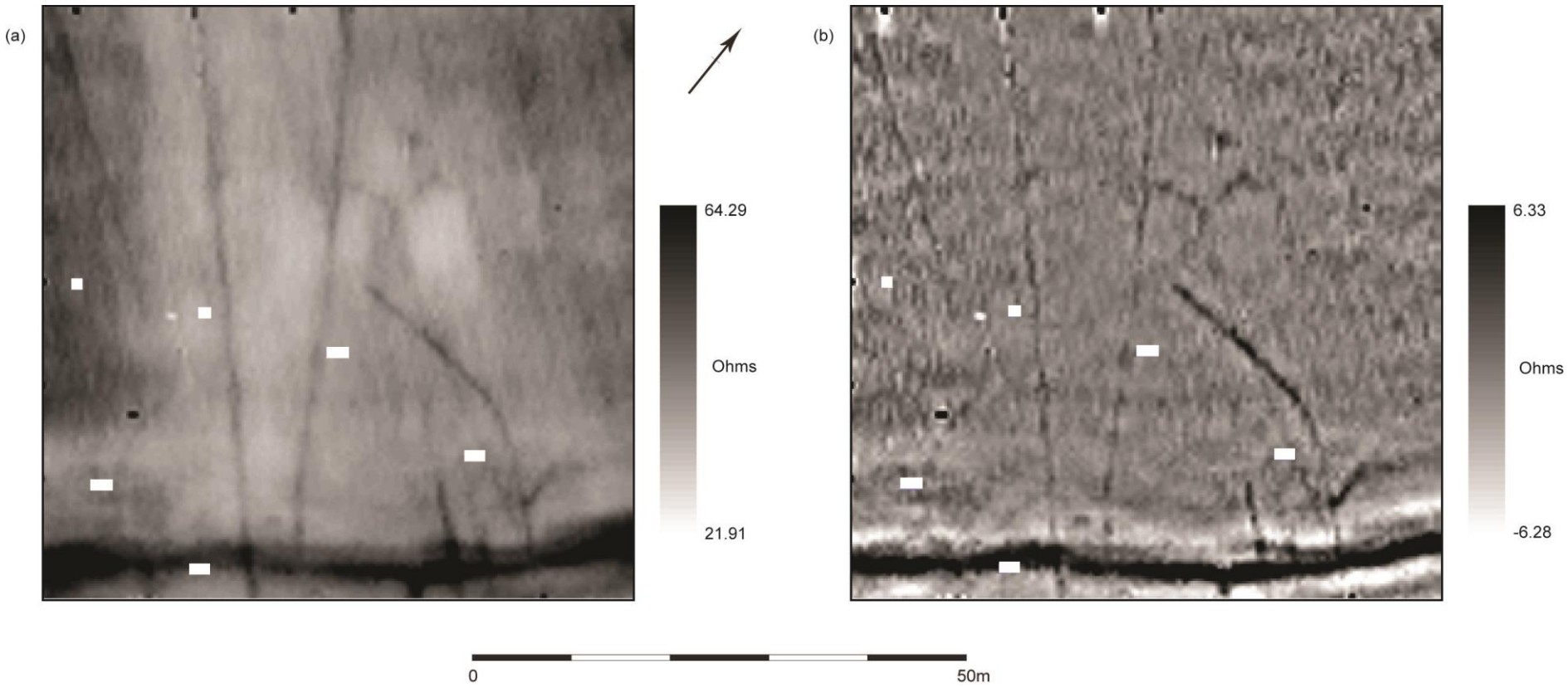

Figure 6 Plots of the electrical earth resistance data.

(a) Shade plot of raw resistance data (b) Shade plot of data after the application of High Pass Filter which has the effect of filtering out broader trends and enhancing the detail of smaller and fainter anomalies

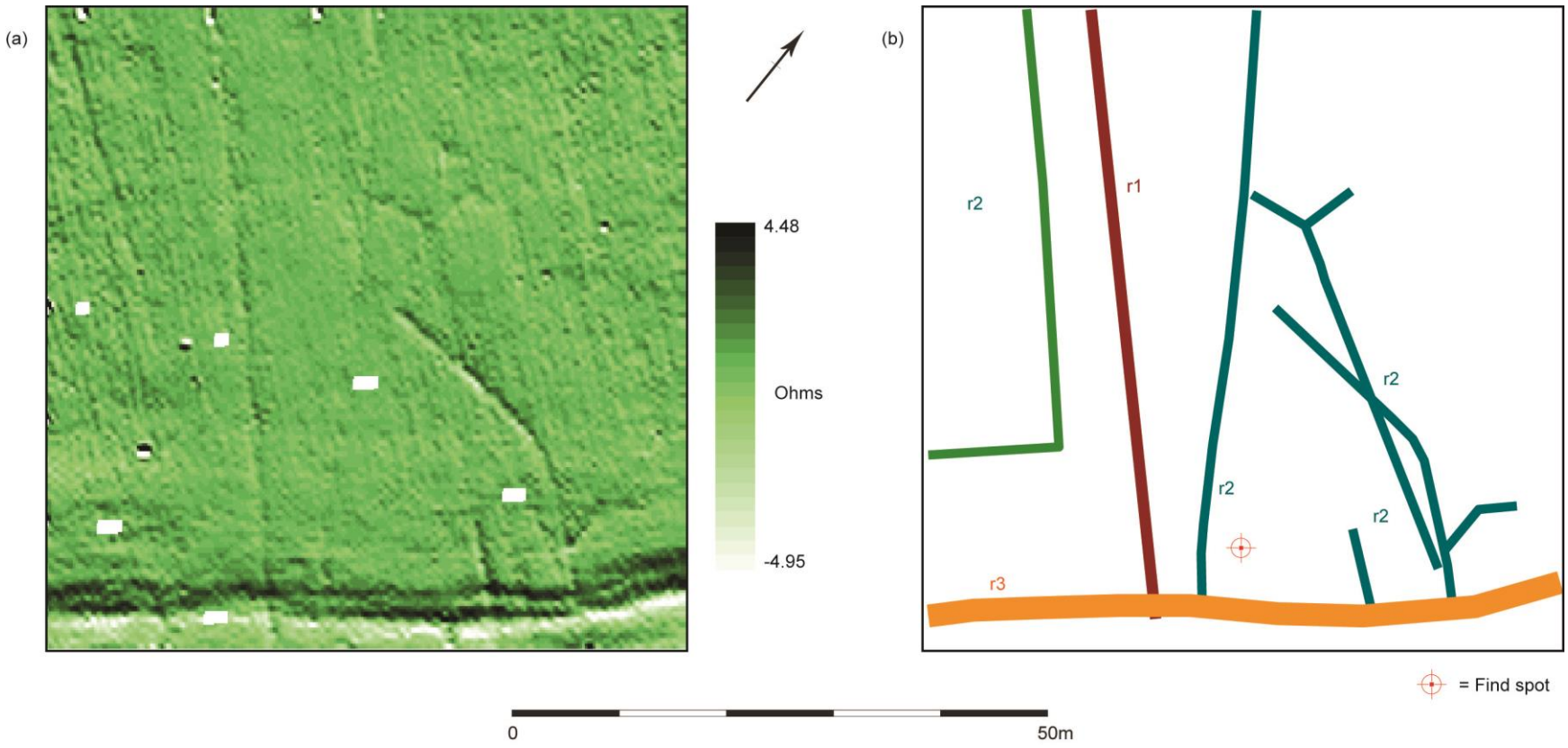

Figure 7 Earth resistance plots: (a) Shade relief plot of resistance data

(b) Graphic summary of earth resistance anomalies; to be read in conjunction with Section 2.6. The location of find-spot is marked

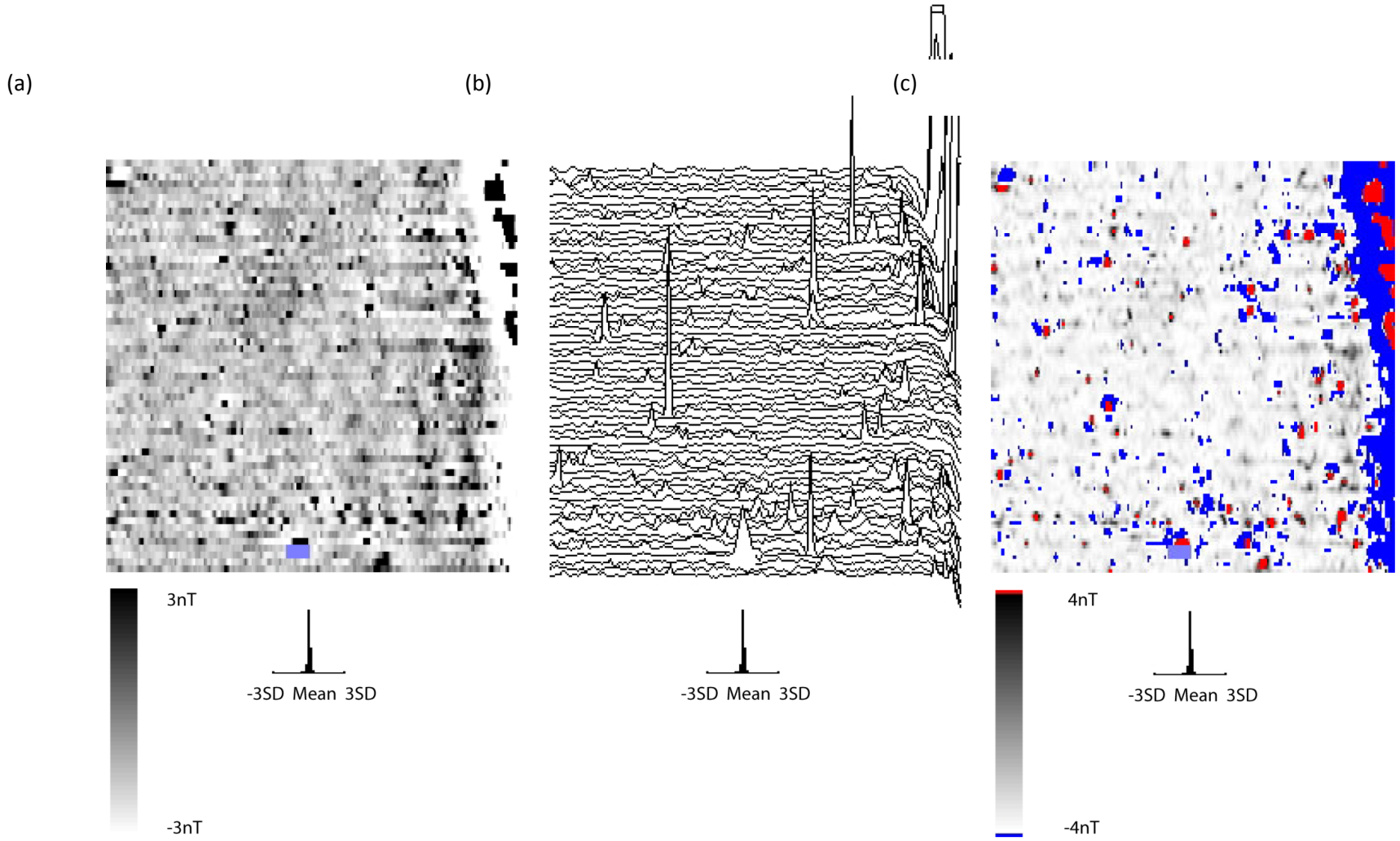

Figure 8 Magnetometry survey data (a) Greyscale plot of raw data from the magnetometry survey across the nine grids. (b) Trace plot of raw data illustrating the magnitude of magnetic signals. (c) Colour plot of processed data which has been processed with periodic filter to remove striping effects and 'spikes'.

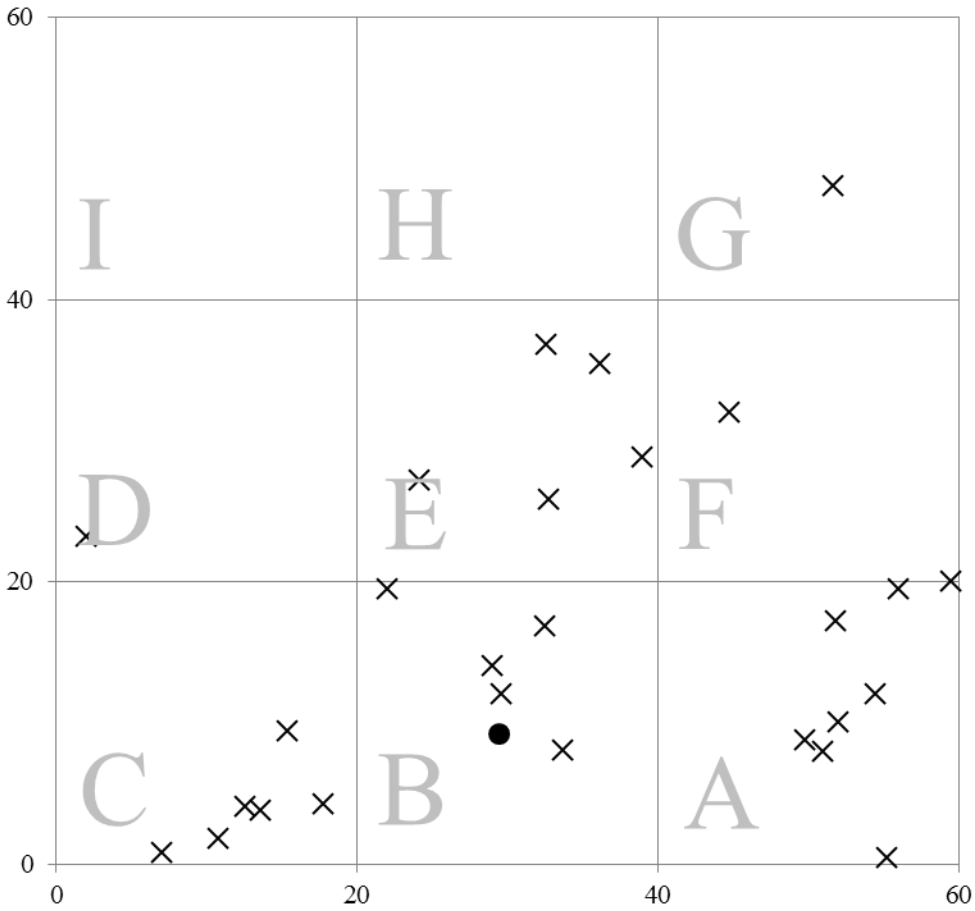

Figure 9 Metal detector finds (X) recorded by grid square (see Table 2 for list of finds). The solid dot marks the Viking silver find-spot location (See Figure 4 for location pf the survey grid - Grid C is the south-easternmost grid square).

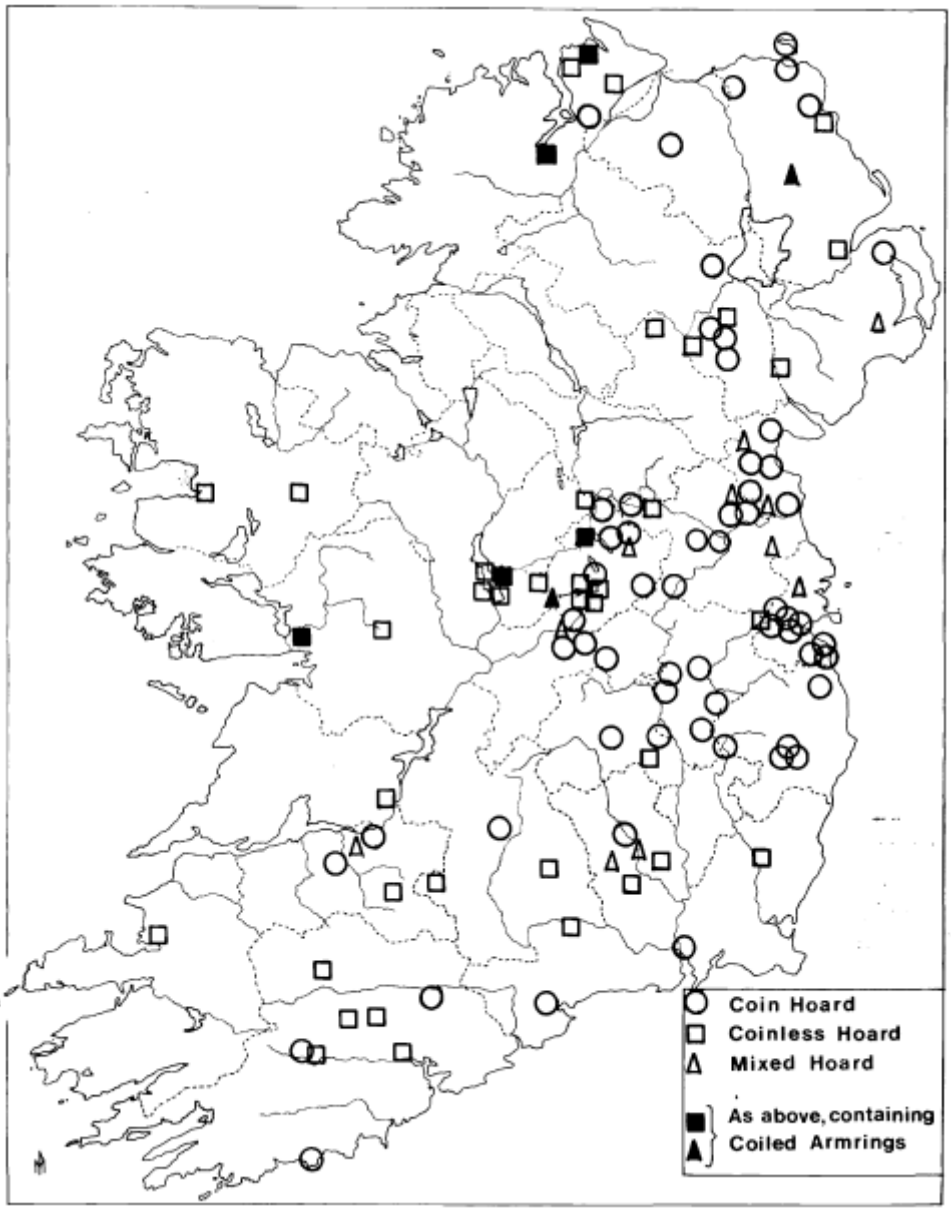

Figure 10 Distribution of Viking-Age silver hoards in Ireland (from Sheehan 1991-2).

Figure 11 Late sixteenth-century map of South-east Ulster showing the Ards in detail and with the lake of *'Enish sharg'* clearly marked (Greenwich Maritime Museum P/49(25)). Anonymous map but attributed to Richard Bartlett.

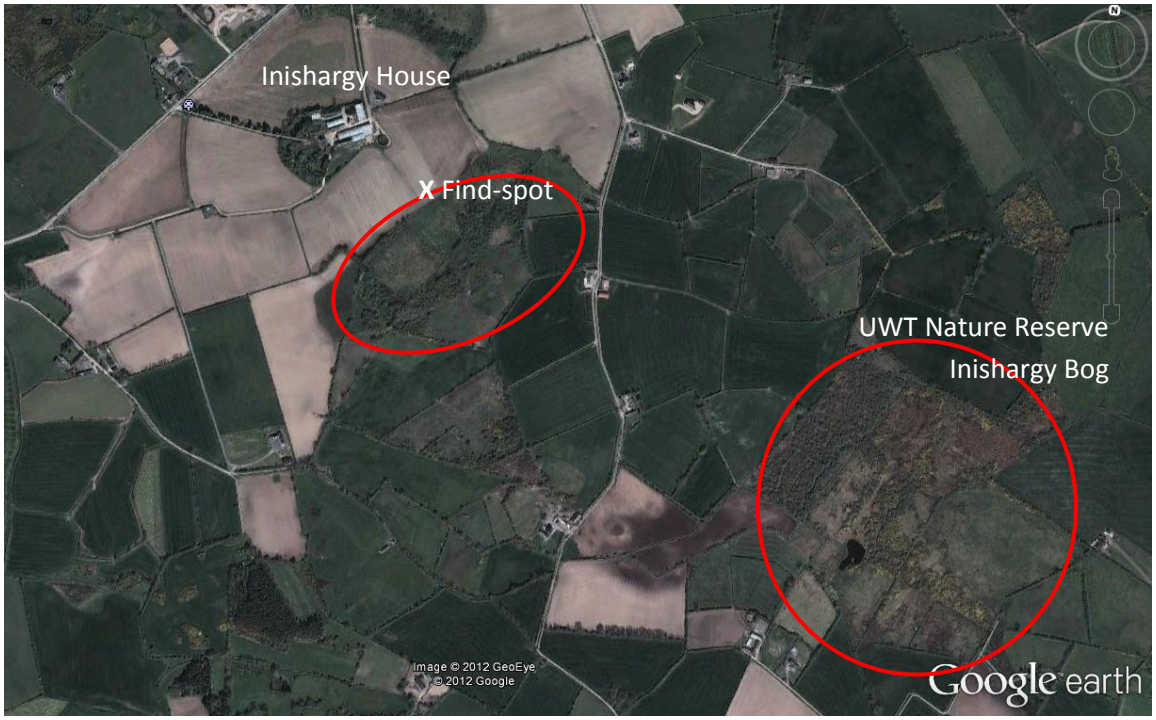

Figure 12 Google Earth image of Inishargy with wetlands in the townland marked – the UWT 'Inishargy Bog' (http://www.ulsterwildlifetrust.org/reserves/inishargy-bog) and the area at the base of the drumlin on which Inishargy House is located.

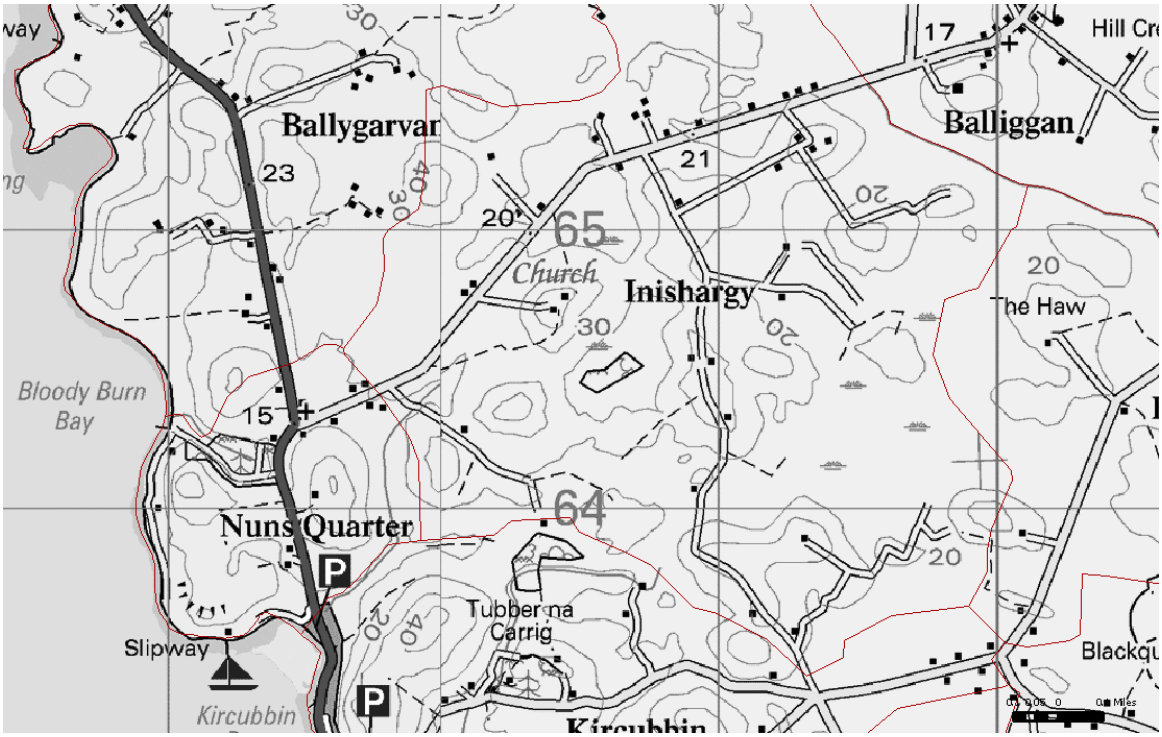

Figure 13 The extent of the townland boundary of Inishargy marked in red outline.

PLATES

Plate 1 Mechanically excavated trench (7m x 7m) centred on the Viking silver find-spot location – photo shows the ploughsoil, subsoil and field drains (facing north).

Plate 2 The east-west field-drain with brick fragments.

Plate 3 Aerial photo of a possible flat cemetery site and cleared shoreline at Bloody Burn Bay, Ballgarvan taken in March 2010 (Welsh 2012, fig. 3). See Figure 1 for location.