

Report on the metalworking remains at Gurteenroe 1, Co. Cork (E4971)

Paul Rondelez

Independent Researcher

Macroom, Co. Cork 10 March 2019

Description and interpretation

During archaeological investigations ahead of road construction works a burnt mound with associated features was uncovered at Gorteenroe 1, Co. Cork.

A fragment of blue glassy slag was recovered from topsoil. Blue glassy slag can be the waste of two processes: the smelting of iron ore in a water-powered blast furnace or the melting of cast iron in a foundry to produce cast iron objects (Young 2011)

The only foundry active around Macroom was located in Firville townland and operated from the 1920s until 1964. The waste from this operation, however, consists exclusively of dark green glassy slag (observations by the author).

In the 1620s and '30s, a charcoal-fired blast furnace was operated in the Macroom area (Rondelez 2017, PRO SP 63/247 ff 220, NLI Prior-Wandesford Papers 35.476.7). This ironworks, using local ore, was built as part of a scheme by Richard Blacknell and Henry Wright, two associates of Richard Boyle, First Earl of Cork, to obtain a royal monopoly on iron production in Ireland and so undermine the Earl's ventures around Lismore in Co. Waterford. The furnace was built but the scheme did not succeed. After the death of Richard Blacknell, of Macroom, Co. Cork, the Macroom ironworks and others became the property, in 1635, of Christopher Wandesforde and Sir George Radcliffe, both members of the incoming Stafford administration.

The fragment of slag found at Gurteenroe is highly likely the waste of the blast furnace operating in the Macroom area in the 17th century. The location of this furnace remains unknown.

Bibliography

NLI: National Library of Ireland

PRO: Public Records Office (London)

Rondelez P. 2017 The metallurgical enterprises of Richard Boyle, First Earl of Cork in Edwards D. and Rynne C. (eds). *The Colonial World of Richard Boyle, the first earl of Cork*. Four Courts Press, Dublin: 112-120.

Young T. 2011 *Archaeometallurgical residues from the M74 Completion, Glasgow* (= GeoArch Report 2010/22). Unpublished specialist report, GeoArch Ltd.

Catalogue

Cut	Fill	Sample #	Feature	Description	Weight (g)
n/a	Topsoil	1	Topsoil	Fragment of rather dense deep blue to greyish blue glassy slag	62

Figure



Fig. 1. Blast furnace slag from topsoil