

GEOCHEMICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF ROUNDHOUSE 2

Johanna Ullrich, Ph.D.
UCD School of Archaeology
Achill Archaeological Field School Specialist Report:
Phosphate Analysis

At the site of Roundhouse 2 phosphate analysis was able to identify several areas where human activity has altered the phosphate status of the soil, and to generate possible modes of use for the site. Phosphate analysis is useful as an archaeological site and/or feature location technique, but its value is magnified through application to use-of-space studies within identified sites. Phosphate analysis can be used to identify and interpret “clean” and “dirty” activity areas (Matthews *et al.* 1997: 293), including sleeping areas (Terry *et al.* 2004: 1243), food consumption/production/storage areas (Sanchez *et al.* 1999: 56), areas where refuse was deposited (Crowther 1998: 118) and some craft areas (Eidt and Wood 1974: 44). Phosphate analysis can also be used to interpret less archaeologically tangible components of use-of-space such as the placement of entryways (Yerkes *et al.* 2002: 865) and pathways (Parnell *et al.* 2002: 336), which can help interpret how people were creating and using their own landscape(s). Phosphate analysis is a valuable source of information in this regard, because in many cases these features cannot be identified through conventional archaeological excavation. In this manner, phosphate analysis can aid in the archaeological interpretation of Roundhouse 2 on the large and small scale.