



archaeological DISCOVERIES

background

Archaeological excavation on the M3 Clonee–North of Kells Motorway Scheme was undertaken between 2005 and 2007 by **Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd** and **Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd**, on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Meath County Council**.

Archaeological, historical and palaeoenvironmental research and specialist analysis is ongoing in preparation for detailed publication of the full results. In the meantime updates on this work are presented on a dedicated website: www.m3motorway.ie.



Neolithic enclosure at **Kilmainham**. (Photo: Hawkey)



Aerial view of **Collierstown** early medieval cemetery post-excitation. (Photo: Studio Lab)



Early medieval glass beads from **Roestown**. (Photo: John Sunderland)



Late medieval copper-alloy buckles from **Boyerstown**. (Photo: John Sunderland)

scheme overview

The scale of the M3 scheme as an infrastructural development, travelling 60 km north–south through County Meath from the border with Dublin to the border with Cavan and covering an area of approximately 700 ha, has resulted in an archaeological project of unprecedented scale. In particular, the large-scale archaeological investigations carried out in advance of the M3 scheme comprise the most intensive investigations of aspects of the archaeological heritage of Meath ever carried out.

All of these archaeological discoveries, ranging in date from earliest prehistory to the post-medieval period, will now be analysed, studied in scientific detail and published in a range of formats, but already it can be seen that many of the individual excavations will be of some significance in interpreting past lives and times in the Irish landscape.

prehistoric

One of the highlights of the 167 sites excavated includes a Late Mesolithic possible mooring or fishing platform with woven wooden fishing baskets at **Clowanstown**. An extensive Neolithic settlement was discovered at **Kilmainham**. Undoubtedly the best-known discovery was an early Iron Age ceremonial post enclosure at **Lismullin**.

early medieval

While the majority of the sites date to the prehistoric period it is arguably the results of research on the early medieval sites that will prove most exciting. These excavations of early medieval sites on the M3 are among the most important in the county since the work of the famous Harvard Archaeological Mission in the 1930s and they will provide unique insights into how early medieval people lived and worked in this landscape.

These include large enclosed early medieval settlements at **Castlefarm**, **Roestown**, **Baronstown** and **Dowdstown** and early medieval cemeteries at **Collierstown** and **Ardsallagh**.

medieval

Another rare site type discovered was a late medieval rural settlement at **Boyerstown**. The site was particularly artefact rich with over 7,000 sherds of pottery and a range of metal objects including brooches, buckles and coins.



Thirteenth-century silver ring-brooch from **Boyerstown** with a religious inscription on the front in Latin and decorative panels with birds and fantastical creatures on the reverse. (Photos: John Sunderland)



Early medieval pins and brooches from **Castlefarm**. (Photo: John Sunderland)