

what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings from the scheme:



1. Macehead
Polished stone macehead fragment from series of Neolithic and Bronze Age pits at **Lismullin**.
(Photo: John Sunderland)



2. Ring object
Early medieval copper-alloy ring object from a burial at **Ardsallagh**.
(Photo: John Sunderland)



3. Brooch
Late medieval copper-alloy brooch from **Boyerstown**.
(Photo: John Sunderland)



4. Glass tubes
Early 19th-century glass tubes from possible poitín still at **Phoenix town**.
(Photo: Clare Crowley)

background

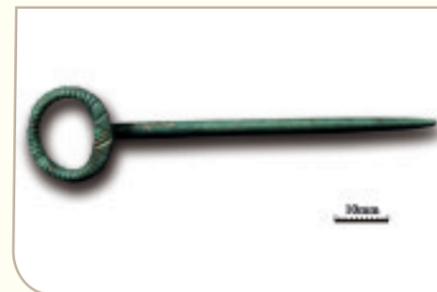


Penannular brooch head with bird heads from **Baronstown**.
(Photo: John Sunderland)

The M3 Clonee–North of Kells Motorway Scheme is about 60 km long and 167 sites were excavated between 2005 and 2007. This third Archaeological Discoveries brochure highlights some of the range of sites and artefacts from different periods excavated on the project.

The archaeological work is being undertaken by **Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (ACS Ltd)** and **Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd (IAC 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



Late Iron Age ring-headed pin from a kiln at **Lismullin**.
(Photo: John Sunderland)



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archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Neolithic polished stone pendant from **Clowanstown**. (Photo: Clare Crowley)
RIGHT: Late medieval silver crucifix pendant from **Boyerstown**. (Photo: John Sunderland)
MIDDLE: Post-holes of outer enclosure uncovered at **Lismullin**. (Photo: Mary Deevy)



mesolithic

Excavations at **Clowanstown** by **ACS Ltd** uncovered the remains of a Late Mesolithic possible mooring or fishing platform constructed on the edge of a former lake.

Four finds of well-preserved conical fishing baskets made from thin stems of alder, birch and rosaceae have been radiocarbon-dated to approximately **5000 BC**. Later activity on the site included burnt mounds dated to the Neolithic period with finds of polished stone axeheads, leaf-shaped projectile points, scrapers and polished stone pendants.



Mesolithic fish basket from **Clowanstown**. (Photo: John Sunderland)

iron age

A number of phases of archaeological activity dating from the Early Neolithic to the early medieval period were uncovered at **Lismullin** by **ACS Ltd**. In the early Iron Age (sixth to fourth century BC) a large circular enclosure formed of numerous widely spaced narrow posts was constructed. There were three elements to the enclosure: an outer enclosure comprising a concentric double ring of posts, 80 m in diameter; a central inner enclosure of a single ring of posts, 16 m in diameter; and an east-facing entrance way which comprised of an avenue of widely spaced posts.



Inner enclosure post-ring at **Lismullin** mid-excavation. (Photo: John Sunderland)

The open-air enclosure is interpreted as having had a ceremonial use.

early medieval

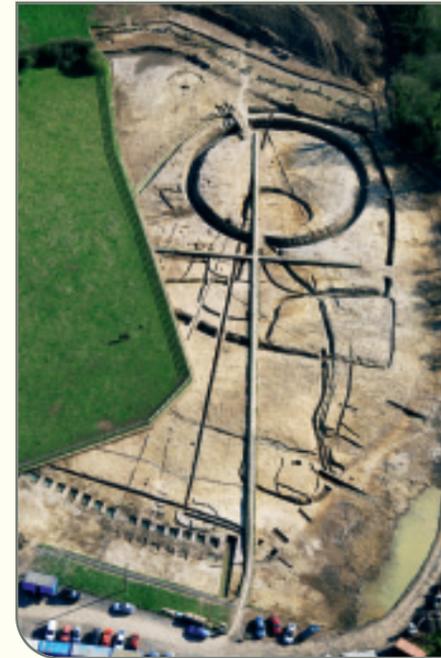
Archaeological excavations at **Baronstown** by **ACS Ltd** uncovered a circular ringfort, with ditches up to 4 m wide and 3 m deep, surrounded by further enclosure ditches.

The site also featured seven cereal-drying kilns and two oval enclosures (possibly houses) outside of the main ringfort area. Surprisingly, only a limited number of artefacts were recovered from the site and included two high status decorated brooches, a spiral-ringed loop-headed pin, iron knives and a number of very well-preserved wooden artefacts, including barrel staves and a wooden bowl containing a substance likely to have been butter. The site is currently interpreted as a defensive or military type ringfort.

Preliminary analysis indicates that a site at **Collierstown**, excavated by **ACS Ltd**, developed from an Iron Age ring-ditch, incorporating a number of human burials and possibly cremations, into an early



Elevated view of **Collierstown** post-excavation. (Photo: Hawkeye)



Aerial view of **Baronstown** ringfort and associated features post-excavation. (Photo: Studio Lab)

medieval cemetery. A total of 62 articulated human burials, including men, women and children were identified from the early medieval phase of use.

A number of different grave types were identified as being used on the site and included the use of stone- or wood-lined graves. Finds from the site included imported early medieval Mediterranean pottery, a copper-alloy chain-ring fragment, a spiral-headed ring-pin, a bone toggle and part of a bone comb.

medieval

A medieval road with a metallated stone surface was excavated at **Phoenixtown** by **IAC Ltd**.

It had a well-worn surface with wheel ruts from carts and hollows from animal traffic still clearly visible.



Medieval road at **Phoenixtown** mid-excavation. (Photo: Ed Lyne)

A number of cereal-drying kilns and a possible animal-powered mill were uncovered adjacent to the road. A large amount of 13th-century pottery was recovered on site, suggesting an associated settlement nearby. Historical research into the Anglo-Norman families who held this land is ongoing and so far has produced tantalising references to the supply of grain by these families to the King of England.

early modern



Kiln or possible poitín still at **Phoenixtown 4** post-excavation. (Photo: Ed Lyne)

A curious early 19th-century site found at **Phoenixtown** and excavated by **IAC Ltd** has been tentatively identified as a kiln or possible poitín still. Fragments of glass tubing were recovered from the two open-air rectangular kilns or fireplaces built of red brick with stone flag bases.