



archaeological DISCOVERIES

background

This scheme, part of the upgrade works on the N4 from **Dublin** to **Sligo**, is about 10 km long and starts just within the County Longford boundary, bypassing the villages of **Dromod** and **Roosky** in County Leitrim.

Archaeological investigations were carried out by **CRDS Ltd** over a seven week period commencing at the end of August 2005 on behalf of the **National Roads Authority**

and **Leitrim County Council**. More than 40,000 m of test trenching was excavated, across the scheme's length.

During the course of these investigations, a trackway site was identified in the townland of **Edercloon**, Co. Longford, which is about 2.5 km to the south of **Roosky** village. Edercloon, comes from gaelic for between, *idir* and the Irish word *cluain* which means watery meadow - an accurate description of the townland as it is predominately bog land located between two prominences.



Archaeologists recording and sampling the trackway at Edercloon.



Aerial view of the site at Edercloon. (Photo Hard Hat Photography Ltd)

excavations at edercloon

In April 2006, a team of archaeologists began five months' excavations at the site. It was no easy task, as this is in an area of partially reclaimed bog and could only be excavated during the summer months. At any other time of the year the land would be underwater.

The site comprised a series of trackways and platforms criss-crossing the field. More than 40 individual structures were identified, ranging from quite small structures measuring less than 1 m² square to large trackways which extended across the width of the site and were more than 25 m long.

How old are they?

Initial radiocarbon dates for the site place it firmly in the Iron Age, however, an analysis of the tool marks, suggests that at least one trackway dates to the Early Bronze Age, as the timber was worked with both stone and bronze axes. The latest trackway activity is dated to the fourth century AD. It is clear that this site was used over a long period of time. However, post-excavation will reveal the extent to which individual trackways and platforms were contemporary.

What were the trackways used for?

The trackways may have been used either to get across the bog, or to access the bog, perhaps to a platform. People may have wanted to access the bog, to hunt, to gather herbs and mosses, or perhaps for ritual purposes. However, examination of the timber from some of the structures shows that it is from coppiced wood, which means that at least some of the woodlands were being managed.

Was anything else found?

There were more than 40 wooden artefacts recovered from the trackways including bowls and bowl fragments, a possible wheel, two spears and a range of miscellaneous wooden objects whose purpose and function is unknown.

Some of these objects are highly worked and are finished to a very high quality, and would have been of considerable value to their owners, while others appear to be functional and in many ways quite ordinary.

Of course, even the simplest of objects can tell us quite a lot about the craftsmen, their skill, their technical experience and their knowledge of the material. Through the artefacts it is also possible to start asking questions of not only the people who made them but also the people who used them.

Ongoing work

It is hoped to address some of the questions raised above during post-excavation works. Some of the areas to be addressed will include: the development of a landscape model, to illustrate the changing environment at Edercloon. The site will be dated through radiocarbon, dendrochronological dating, toolmark analysis as well as artefact analysis. The artefacts themselves will be compared to findings from other sites in Ireland, Britain and the Continent, to see if there are any parallels. Indeed, one of the principal starting points will be to assess any parallels with the **Corlea** trackway complex which is about 21 km to the south at **Keenagh**.



Close up of trackway found at Edercloon. (Photo CRDS Ltd)



View of platform uncovered at Edercloon. (Photo CRDS Ltd)



Archaeologist conserving one of the wooden objects found at Edercloon. (Photo John Sunderland)



Wooden object found at Edercloon. (Photo CRDS Ltd)



Archaeologists uncovering a wooden bowl at Edercloon. (Photo CRDS Ltd)



Wooden tool as found during excavations at Edercloon. (Photo CRDS Ltd)



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