The M3 Clonee-North of Kells Road Scheme is about 60 km long and archaeological excavation of 160 new sites identified by previous archaeological investigations along the route has been underway since autumn 2005. Extra geophysical surveys at a number of sites by Target Archaeological Geophysics, revealed the full extent of a large enclosure at Castlefarm, a prehistoric settlement at Grange, an early medieval complex at Boyers town and an enclosure surrounding burials at Collierstown.

The archaeological work is being undertaken by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (ACS Ltd) and Irish Archaeological Consultancy (IAC Ltd) on behalf of the National Roads Authority and Meath County Council.

Archaeological, historical and palaeoenvironmental research is being undertaken to ensure that the vast amount of data being generated by the M3 archaeological investigations will be placed in context and therefore transformed from information to knowledge. Further details of the ongoing investigations can be found on a dedicated website: www.m3motorway.ie

1. Bone comb
   Decorated double-sided bone comb from Roestown.

2. Stone gaming board
   Inscribed stone gaming board from Roestown.

3. Stone pendant
   Stone pendant from Grange.

4. Stone ax
   Stone axe from Grange.

5. Bone motif
   Early medieval bone motif piece from Roestown.

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Archaeological DISCOVERIES

M3 CLONEE-NORTH OF KELLS MOTORWAY SCHEME,
County Meath

Published 2006. 80659-13/10.06/3K
Elevated view of ring-ditch and grave cuts of burials at Ardsallagh. Finds from the excavation include Bronze Age pottery, a stone adze, and a grinding stone and a stone pendant.

**Castlxfarm**

Archaeological excavations by ACS Ltd discovered remains of a Late Bronze Age vessel containing cremated bone was found in the northeast of the ring-ditch. Castlxfarm now a prehistoric burial site is in the Bronze Age. Occasionally the cremated bone and part of the formal dress were found in the ditch itself. Other times, in this case, the cremated remains were placed in a pottery vessel and interred.

Excavation of the pottery vessel by a professional conservator under laboratory conditions revealed that it was inserted in an upright position, but with only the base and a small portion of the side surviving the plough.

Blanks were found in the east area one in the southwest, and four blanks the ring-ditch as it has been suggested that these blanks date to the seventh century AD and that the ring-ditch was measured during the Bronze Age and subsequently re-cut during the early medieval period once the burials were inserted.

Graves

A prehistoric settlement with cutting tranche and a substantial ring-ditch were uncovered during excavations conducted by ACS Ltd at Grange Two circular houses of a type generally attributed to the Late Bronze Age with cobbled work surfaces outside the structures, were found.

From the excavation include Bronze Age pottery, a stone adze, a grinding stone and a stone pendant.

**Broomstown**

Continuing excavations of the site of a large enclosure complex at Broomstown by ACS Ltd has provided a picture of a high status early medieval settlement, with a later phase of medieval occupation. The site has produced a wealth of artefacts including ring and dish pins, bone combs, needles and pins, glass beads, liguee bracelets, knife blades and stone gaming boards.

A metal detector located a silver ring brooch dating to about the 13th century. Ring brooches were worn throughout medieval Europe by both men and women to fasten clothing. The brooch is typically tiny, just 3 cm diameter. The inscription on the front of the brooch is in Latin, IESVS NAZARENVS REX, and is a shortened version of the title worn by Jesus Christ: ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’. In the middle ages such inscriptions were not simply a reflection of religious devotion but were also believed to have amuletic properties – in this case a defence against sudden harm or in this case a defence against sudden harm.

One unexpected discovery within the rear D-shaped enclosure was that of a skeleton (or underground passage). The structure consists of three beehive chambers linked by three passages with access from a drop-hole entrance. Most of the skeletons were removed in antiquity and the souterrain deliberately backfilled. Some capstones remained in place and one section of passage survived intact.

Selection of beads from Roestown. A metal detector located a silver ring brooch dating to about the 13th century. Ring brooches were worn throughout medieval Europe by both men and women to fasten clothing. The brooch is typically tiny, just 3 cm diameter. The inscription on the front of the brooch is in Latin, IESVS NAZARENVS REX, and is a shortened version of the title worn by Jesus Christ: ‘Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews’. In the middle ages such inscriptions were not simply a reflection of religious devotion but were also believed to have amuletic properties – in this case a defence against sudden harm.