what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings from the scheme.

1. Rim sherd
   Rim sherd of decorated prehistoric pottery from Dunboyne.

2. Medieval pottery
   13th-century AD pottery from Merrywell.

3. Bone comb
   Bone comb fragment from Roestown.

4. Millstone
   Millstone re-used as wheel-former at Philpotstown.

5. Bone needles or pins
   Three bone needles or pins found at Roestown.

background

The M3 Clonee-North of Kells Road Scheme is approximately 68km long but with a significant quantity of additional link roads, covering a total of approximately 700ha. The route commences at Clonee on the border between Dublin and Meath with link roads to Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Navan and Kells. It joins the existing N3 north of Kells near the border between Meath and Cavan.

Extensive archaeological work has taken place on the whole of the planned M3 route, including desktop survey, field survey, geophysical survey, aerial survey and extensive test excavation. The programme of archaeological testing was undertaken in 2004 by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (A.C.S. Ltd) and Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd, on behalf of the National Roads Authority and Meath County Council. The archaeological investigations to date have revealed approximately 160 new sites along the whole route.

Archaeological excavation of those sites commenced in autumn 2005 and work is ongoing. As the majority of sites have not yet been absolutely dated, interpretation of the data is provisional and may change as excavation and further research on the sites is completed. The results of the investigations to date are presented on a dedicated website www.m3motorway.ie
The majority of sites discovered are currently interpreted as prehistoric. Most of these are round mounds, but there are also a large number currently classified as settlement or industrial sites and a number of linear sites. The linear sites are a somewhat enigmatic class of monuments which have been identified at Dunboyne from which a substantial amount of Neolithic pottery and flint were recovered.

Excavation of medieval field ditches in another area of Dowdstown involved a similar circular building of probable Bronze-Age date. The ditch excavated included a fragment of a large ditch, which may have been reported from Carhuna in Meath. Ring-ditches are the most common burial site included in the early-medieval period, and the majority of sites discovered are currently identified as prehistoric. Further investigations of numerous possible prehistoric pits may show that unrecorded burials or other ring-ditches. Modern agricultural practices have largely removed any upstanding features that may have been associated with prehistoric evidence that a round ditch was identified in the geophysical survey of ring-ditches at Ardsallagh, which shows a field boundary respecting the ditch by curving around it. This ring-ditch (c.3 m in diameter) of probable Bronze Age to Iron Age date had innovations and extended ontations both inside and outside it. One of the innovations contained in an urn was located outside the ring ditch within a pit, which was badly truncated by ploughing.

Recent discoveries on NVA projects elsewhere in Ireland have demonstrated that in addition to classic early medieval site-types, such as ringforts, crannógs etc., other nucleated or village-like settlement forms existed in early medieval Ireland. Many of these sites contain burials including a number of cremations in one of the finds recovered. Excavation of another medieval field system included a fragment of a large ditch containing much animal bone, charcoal and some metalworking waste. Some of which are likely to have been animal enclosures. Finds from the early stages of excavation include bone pin fragments, a bone-comb fragment and a possible bone needle holder.

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 eternity revealed an earlier circular building of the main focus of the site consists of a large D-shaped enclosure (max width c.60m) which appears to have been expanded from a smaller circular enclosure (c.45m diameter). Although this D-shaped enclosure is larger than enclosures that may have functioned as an animal pen, it is also associated with the early stages of excavation outside the site which may represent similar complex sites such as the apparently isolated pits at Garretstown.

Evidence that a mound did exist was identified in the geophysical survey of a ring-ditch at Ardsallagh, which shows a field boundary respecting the ring-ditch by curving around it. This ring-ditch (c.3 m in diameter) of probable Bronze Age to Iron Age date had innovations and extended ontations both inside and outside it. One of the innovations contained in an urn was located outside the ring ditch within a pit, which was badly truncated by ploughing.