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 Phoenixtown.
   (Photo: Clare Crowley)

background

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

For more information please contact:
Archaeology Section
National Roads Authority
St. Martins House
Waterloo Road, Dublin 4
Tel: +353 1 660 2511
Fax: +353 1 668 0009
Email: info@nra.ie
Web: www.nra.ie
Excavations at Clowanstown by ACS Ltd uncovered the remains of a Late Mesolithic possible mooring or fishing platform constructed on the edge of a lake.

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 an avenue of widely spaced posts. The open-air enclosure is interpreted as having had a ceremonial use.

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 levels of possible domesticated herbivores, landscape features, possible monuments and polished stone artefacts.

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 was built against an earlier small ringfort. 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 an avenue of widely spaced posts. The site is currently interpreted as a defensive or military type ringfort.

Excavations 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 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.

A medieval road with a metalled stone surface was excavated at Phoenicetown by IAC Ltd. It had a well-worn surface and was laid on a stone base and inclines from animal traffic still clearly visible.

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.

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