Major excavations were recently carried out by archaeologists in the townland of Rochfort Demesne near the shores of Lough Ennell, about 5 km to the south of Mullingar, County Westmeath.

Some of the findings from Rochfort Demesne.

Archaeological investigation work at the site was undertaken by The Archaeology Company in December 2004. The work included digging a series of test trenches and a geophysical survey.

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

what we found
background
in brief:

Some of the findings from Rochfort Demesne.

1. Bone pin
Bone pin uncovered during excavations. (Photo Valerie | Keeley Ltd)

2. Decorated ring pin
Close-up of decorated ring pin head found during excavations. (Photo Valerie | Keeley Ltd)

3. Decorated ring pin
Decorated ring pin found during excavations. (Photo Valerie | Keeley Ltd)

4. Decorated bone comb
Fragmented decorated bone comb found during excavations. (Photo Valerie | Keeley Ltd)

Major excavations were recently carried out by archaeologists in the townland of Rochfort Demesne near the shores of Lough Ennell, about 5 km to the south of Mullingar, County Westmeath.

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

© Ordnance Survey Ireland & Government of Ireland permit number EN0045206.

Published 2006. 80659-4/10.06/3K
Excavations revealed three enclosing ditches of which appear to date from the seventh and eighth century AD based on radiocarbon dates. The third ditch, dated to the post-medieval period, had a stone revetment, or wall, lining its inner edge and produced evidence of an associated bank to the north. It is likely this later ditch with stone revetment is dated to the post-medieval period, and may possibly reflect the route of the site as a folly.

The innermost ditch appears to be the earliest phase of the site as a folly. A few features survived within the ditch that appear to date from the seventh and eighth centuries AD based on radiocarbon dates. The third ditch with stone revetment, or wall, lining its inner edge and produced evidence of an associated bank to the north. It is likely this later ditch with stone revetment is dated to the post-medieval period, and may possibly reflect the route of the site as a folly.

The excavations revealed three enclosing ditches, two of which appear to date from the seventh and eighth century AD based on radiocarbon dates. The third ditch, which had a stone revetment, was also dated by radiocarbon to AD 750 (±35 years) and the outermost ditch, which had an internal bank, is later, dating by radiocarbon to AD 600 (±35 years). A few features survived within the interior including several pits, possible hearths and possible metal working evidence. There was no clear evidence of any internal structures which may be attributed to the nature of the earlier swan quoining and post tree planting.

A range of artefacts were discovered including a decorated bone comb, a copper pin which is understood to have been from the seventh or eighth century, a highly decorated bone needle and a blue glass bead. One of the most spectacular finds was a highly decorated ring pin which was likely to have been found dating to the late eighth century AD based on radiocarbon dates. The third ditch, dated to the post-medieval period, had a stone revetment, or wall, lining its inner edge and produced evidence of an associated bank to the north. It is likely this later ditch with stone revetment is dated to the post-medieval period, and may possibly reflect the route of the site as a folly.

The function and context of the site within the early medieval landscape of Lough Ennell has yet to be fully understood. It may be where a community lived around its Lord or King, or may have been a place for public assemblies or feasting or other activities associated with high status and King Maelseachlin II lived and died there in the late 10th/early 11th century. There is also the possibility that this site was occupied in the late 10th/early 11th century. The excavations at Rochfort Demesne have provided an excellent opportunity to explore not only an archaeological landscape, but also an important historical and ancient political landscape.

The excavations at Rochfort Demesne have provided an excellent opportunity to explore not only an archaeological landscape, but also an important historical and ancient political landscape. The excavations at Rochfort Demesne were held in January 2006 in conjunction with the National Museum of Ireland. Its aim was to introduce the 4th class pupils to archaeology and give them an understanding of how an excavation is carried out, to complement the archaeology in the classroom programme which is part of the primary school curriculum. The excavations were done in a series of talks detailing the role of archaeologists, including some basic osteoarchaeology about the specialized study and analysis of human and animal skeletal remains in order to tell the story of how people in the past lived and died. The children also visited the excavations at Rochfort Demesne to experience first hand how archaeologists work from the excavation and recording of the features, to the examination and analysis of artefacts.

The National Museum of Ireland introduced the children to the many aspects of artefacts found in their local area and from County Westmeath. Following the visits Home, connections with the excavations, they also had an opportunity to handle replica Viking tools and weapons and try on replica tunics and shoes. The children also visited the excavations at Rochfort Demesne to experience first hand how archaeologists work from the excavation and recording of the features, to the examination and analysis of artefacts.

The National Museum of Ireland introduced the children to the many aspects of artefacts found in their local area and from County Westmeath. Following the visits Home, connections with the excavations, they also had an opportunity to handle replica Viking tools and weapons and try on replica tunics and shoes. The children also visited the excavations at Rochfort Demesne to experience first hand how archaeologists work from the excavation and recording of the features, to the examination and analysis of artefacts.

The National Museum of Ireland introduced the children to the many aspects of artefacts found in their local area and from County Westmeath. Following the visits Home, connections with the excavations, they also had an opportunity to handle replica Viking tools and weapons and try on replica tunics and shoes. The children also visited the excavations at Rochfort Demesne to experience first hand how archaeologists work from the excavation and recording of the features, to the examination and analysis of artefacts.

The National Museum of Ireland introduced the children to the many aspects of artefacts found in their local area and from County Westmeath. Following the visits Home, connections with the excavations, they also had an opportunity to handle replica Viking tools and weapons and try on replica tunics and shoes. The children also visited the excavations at Rochfort Demesne to experience first hand how archaeologists work from the excavation and recording of the features, to the examination and analysis of artefacts.