

what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings from the scheme.



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 adze
Stone adze from **Grange**.

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

background



Aerial view of **Castlefarm** with some ditches visible as cropmarks in adjacent field. (Photo StudioLab)

The **M3 Clonée-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 Boyerstown 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

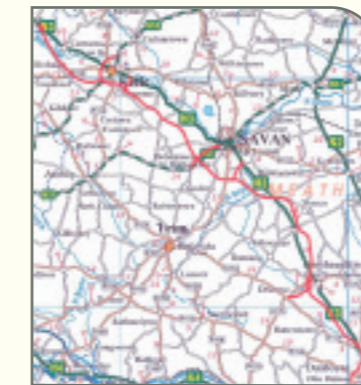


Dry sieving of topsoil at **Boyerstown**.

M3 CLONÉE-NORTH OF KELLS MOTORWAY SCHEME,
County Meath



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archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Archaeologist recording souterrain passage at **Roestown**. (Photo StudioLab)
RIGHT: Excavation of Bronze Age pottery vessel from **Ardsallagh** under laboratory conditions.
MIDDLE: Elevated view of souterrain chamber at **Roestown**. (Photo StudioLab)



prehistoric



Elevated view of ring-ditch and grave cuts of burials at **Ardsallagh**. (Photo Hawkeye)

Ardsallagh

Archaeological excavation at **Ardsallagh** by **ACS Ltd** uncovered a ring-ditch of about 13 m diameter. The remains of a Late Bronze Age vessel containing cremated bone was found a short distance north-west of the ring-ditch. Cremation was a predominant burial rite in Ireland in the Bronze Age. Occasionally the cremated bone and part of the funeral pyre were buried in a pit inside a ring-ditch or in the ditch itself. Other times, as 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.

Within the ring-ditch 23 burials were found, with a further one in the entranceway and four outside the ring-ditch. It has been suggested that these burials date to the seventh century AD and that the ring-ditch was excavated during the Bronze Age and subsequently re-cut during the early medieval period once the burials were inserted.

Grange

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

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



Saddle quern with grinding stone from **Grange**.

early medieval

Castlefarm

Archaeological excavations by **ACS Ltd** at **Castlefarm** uncovered evidence of both early medieval and medieval settlement activity. Features identified by the initial geophysical survey and subsequent testing were found to be part of a large circular enclosure when the excavation area was opened. This enclosure clearly extended outside the area of the road development and an extra geophysical survey carried out revealed its full extent of about 70–80 m diameter.

Artefacts found during excavation indicate a relatively high status settlement and include ring pins, metal and bone stick pins, a penannular brooch, glass beads, and bracelet fragments. The recovery of pottery sherds, knife blades and bone handles and a spindle whorl represent the domestic activities of food preparation, cooking and weaving. The waterlogged deposits in the six wells excavated at the northern end of the site were found to contain the preserved remains of wooden objects, such as bucket staves, bases and handles.

11 burials were also recorded at the site, seven of which were buried in the Christian fashion - on their backs and oriented east-west.



Bone stick pin with turned head from **Castlefarm**.



Penannular brooch from **Castlefarm**.



Excavated burial at **Castlefarm**.

early medieval



Selection of beads from **Roestown**.



Metal clasp from **Roestown**.



Elevated view of **Roestown** post-excavation. (Photo Hawkeye)

Roestown

Continuing excavations at the site of a large enclosure complex at **Roestown** 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 stick pins, bone combs, needles and pins, glass beads, lignite bracelets, knife blades and stone gaming boards.

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

medieval

Boyerstown

The excavation of a medieval house by **ACS Ltd** is underway at **Boyerstown** following a programme of metal-detecting and topsoil sieving. A large collection of medieval pottery dates the main occupation of the site from the 12th to 14th centuries AD. Other finds recovered so far include metal buckles, coins, knife blades and a crucifix pendant.

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, only 3 cm diameter. The inscription on the front of the brooch is in Latin, IESVS NAZARENVS REX I, and is a shortened version of the titulus - the inscription placed above the head of Jesus Christ at his crucifixion which translates as '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 violent death or sudden harm.



Medieval metal buckle from **Boyerstown**.



Medieval silver ring brooch from **Boyerstown** showing inscription on front.