Archaeology of the N18 Ennis Bypass and the N85 Western Relief Road, County Clare

Seandálaiocht Seachród Inis N18 agus an Bóthar Faoisimh Thiar N85, Contae an Chlár
An Early Christian metalworking site at Cahircalla More
Láithreán miotalóireachta Luathré Chríostaí ag Cathair Ua Céadadh Mór

Seandálaiocht Seachród Inis N18 agus an Bóthar Faoisimh Thiar N85, Contae an Chláir

Téacs le Graham Hull, TVAS (Ireland) Ltd
Aistriúchán le Michéal Ó Caoinleáin
Background to the archaeology

The road project involves the construction of an eastern bypass of Ennis from Latoon, north of Newmarket-on-Fergus, to Cragard, north of Barefield and a Western Relief Road to link Killow and Claureen. As part of this National Roads Authority project, Clare County Council requested a series of archaeological investigations along the 21km route.

In accordance with national and international regulations protecting heritage, an Environmental Impact Statement was prepared in 2000. This report, supplemented by a programme of trial trenching, architectural, underwater and geophysical surveys, indicated areas of archaeological potential along the course of the new road. As preservation in situ was not an option, the archaeological sites were preserved by record i.e. fully excavated and recorded.

The project is funded by the Irish government and part financed by the European Union under the Cohesion Fund of the National Development Plan 2000-2006.

Archaeological investigations were undertaken on behalf of Clare County Council by: Aegis Archaeology Ltd, Babtie Pettit Ltd, Donal Boland, Earthsound Archaeological Geophysics, Geoquest Ltd, IAC Ltd, Moore Group and TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. All archaeological excavations were carried out by TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.

Cúlrá don seandálaíochta

Is é a thugann an tógra bóthar seo i dtreis ná seachróid oiriúnach in é a thógáil ó Leath Tua Mhumhan, lústaúi de Chora Caitlin, go Creaig Ard, lústaúi de Giort Lomán agus Bóthar Faoisimh Thiar chun Coll Óg agus Clárín a nascadh le chéile. Mar cuid den tógra seo ag an Údarás um Bóthair Náisiúnta, d’íarr Comhairle Chontae an Chláir go ndeanfadh sraith scrúdúaithe seandálaíochta ar an mbéalach 21km seo.

De réir rialacha náisiúnta’s idirnáisiúnta faoi chosanta na h-oidhreachtachta, uilimhaidh Ráiteas Tionchar Timpeallachta (RTT) sa bhliain 2000. Taobh leis an RTT rinneadh clár de thrinseail triúlaí mar aon le suibhneanna ar aithireacht agus ar thoscaí go féin is eagrach a bhaint as scrúdúaithe náisiúnta le chéile ar an mbéalach 21km seo. Os rud é nach raibh caomhnú in situ mar rogha ann déanaí caomhnú trí thaireadadh i.e. tochtai agus taifeadh iomlán ar na láethrleáin seandálaíochta ar fad.

Tá an tógra seo maonaithe ag Rialtas na h-Éireann le cúnaimh ar an dtuaisigh agus gCiste Comhthaithe an bPlean Náisiúnta Forbartha 2000 – 2006.

Rinne na comhlaithiúcháin seo leanas inscrúdaithe seandálaíochta ar son Chomhairle Chontae an Chláir: Aegis Archaeology Ltd., Babtie Pettit Ltd, Donal Boland, Earthsound Archaeological Geophysics, Geoquest Ltd, IAC Ltd, Moore Group, and TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. Rinne TVAS (Ireland) Ltd na tochtaiú ar fad.
Testing the road route

Previously known, or suspected, archaeological sites were examined in 2001-2002 by a combination of trial trenching and survey. A sample of approximately 10% of the land that will be used for the scheme was tested in Summer 2003. This testing comprised a centreline trench with offset trenches every 25m on either side. Machines, under archaeological control, were used to remove topsoil and 19 new archaeological sites were found. Where archaeology was present, or thought to be present, the sampled percentage was increased. Hand-tools were used to clean the deposits and reports were written, characterising and quantifying the archaeology and this allowed targeting of resources for the next phase of work - excavation.

Tástáil an bhealaigh

Scrúdaíoch sna blianta 2001-2002, le trinseáil triailach agus suirbhéaracht, láithréin seandálaiocht a raibh eolas orthu cheana ní a ceapadh a dheanamh. Rinneadh tástáil i Samhradh na bliana 2003 ar shampaítimpeall 10% de thalamh na mbóthar nua. Tochailloch trinse lár agus cláonstráal gach 25m ar dheis 's
Excavation of archaeological sites

The 19 newly discovered sites and six previously known sites were excavated between Autumn 2003 and Spring 2004. Archaeological sites and artefacts were examined, dating from the Bronze Age (2300-700 BC), the Iron Age (700 BC - AD 450), the Early Christian period (AD 450 - 1167/70) and also from the last few centuries. The archaeology included:

A *fulacht fiadh* found east of the N58 Kilrush Road at the margin of a boggy field (Cahircalla Beg). In plan, the burnt stone mound was crescent-shaped with the 'horns' closing to the wetter (west) side. The monument measured 13.5m by 17.5m, had a maximum height of 1.6m and is estimated to have been made from 400 tonnes of burnt stone. A rectangular trough, edged with six large limestone slabs, was found between the two horns of the mound. The trough measured 1.8m by 0.9m and was 0.45m deep with a volume of approximately 0.75m³. It is thought that these monuments may have served as gathering places for local community feasting or may have been used as saunas or for textile manufacturing. This example was seemingly in use for 1600 years between c. 2500 BC and c. 900 BC.

Smaller deposits of heat-cracked and burnt stone were found in wet environments (Killow, Cahircalla More, Clareabbey). These ill-defined spreads of stone ranged in size from 1m to 15m across and were typically less than 0.1m thick. It is not clear what specific activity the spreads represent, but it is likely that the stone was used to heat water in a similar manner to *fulacht fiadh* with the lack of a trough perhaps indicating that the water was held in a portable container. The shallow stone spreads may perhaps be thought of as 'baby' *fulacht fiadh* at which the process of repeated deposition of burnt stone across many years was not continued long enough for the full-blown mound to develop. Radiocarbon dating has produced dates for these spreads ranging from 2330 BC to 1700 BC.

Human cremation burials were found at Manusmore and Clareeen. The Manusmore sites were characterised by small pits often with a token deposit of cremated bone sometimes accompanied by pieces of prehistoric pottery or stone tools. As many as 30 individuals were buried in two locations on the hillside overlooking the Latoon River in the Middle to Late Iron Age. One site was dated 500 - 380 BC and the other was AD 60 - 240. The burials at Clareeen were in a circular gully (diameter 6m, 0.5m - 1m wide and 0.15m
A small building, indicated by three short lengths of curving gully, was also found in the enclosure and high concentrations of iron slag and charcoal suggest that iron working took place here between the 10th and the 12th Centuries AD.

A cashel (or stone-built ringfort) was examined just to the north of Barefield National School in Carrowdota townland. Approximately one third of the circular fort was on the road route and therefore only this part was excavated. The monument had a diameter of 26m and was covered by hazel and whitethorn. Very few archaeological deposits were found in the examined portion of the cashel but a piece of a stone rotary quern found in the topsoil near the cashel suggests domestic activity at the site.

More recent sites were also examined and these included brick-making kilns on the clay-rich banks of the River Fergus in Clareabbey townland and a 19th century limekiln in Keelty townland.

At Killow, a well-preserved wooden bowl was found beneath peat. The bowl was made from a single piece of ash. A radiocarbon date from a sample of the wood shows it to be Early to Middle Iron Age and it is one of only a handful of similar prehistoric vessels found in Ireland. The tree that the bowl was made from died between 777 BC and 407 BC.

A ditched oval enclosure 38m across was excavated in Cahircalla More. The enclosure was defined by a ditch 0.75 to 1.53m wide and up to 0.8m deep. Artefacts found within the enclosure and in the ditch included a piece of rotary quern, fragments of iron slag, animal bone and an iron tool, possibly a chisel. The enclosure was part of a rectangular field system that was defined by ditches. Finds from these field ditches included a copper alloy ring pin, whetstones, a pin-sharpening stone, a small quantity of iron slag, animal bone fragments and struck chert pieces.

Fulacht fiadh at Cahircalla Beg. Half-sectioned
Fulacht fiadh ó Chathair Ua Cealadh Beag. Leathghearadh

- 0.2m deep. Within the gully were isolated charcoal rich patches, in some cases with cremated human bone. Three tiny glass beads were found in the sieved soil from the ring-gully. The beads did not seem affected by heat and were most likely placed in the ground with the ashes of the dead. The low weight of the bone in each deposit indicated that they may have been representative memorial burials. The Clareen ring-gully was used for burial sometime between 100 BC and AD 70.

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Tochailt na láithréain seandálaíochta

Rinneadh tochailt ar na láithréin rua-nochtaithe (19) agus ar na sé láithréin a raibh eolas orthu cheana idir Fómhair 2003 agus Earrach 2004. Inítchadh láithréáin agus deàntaín ón gCré-umhaoisis (2300-700BC), an larnaois (700BC-AD450), an Luathré Chríostal (AD450-1167/70) agus ón gcuipa cead deireannach ar na. Mar sheandálaíocht ann airdtear:

Áimsíodh fulacht fiadaidh troibh den N68 Bóthar Cill Rois ar imeall párce móintíola, (Cathair Ua Cealadh Beag). Bhí cuma corráin ar an gcarn agus na n-adharc aig dúnadh ar an dtaoibh ba fhíche (thiar). Bliad na thomhaiseanna ná 13.5m X 17.5m, le flíúr uasmhéid 1.6m agus meastar go raibh suas le 400 tonna de chloch doite ann. Áimsíodh umar dronuilleogach, le 6 leaca móra ina gconr, idir adharca an cheann. Bliad tomhaiseanna an umair ná 1.8m X 0.9m is 0.45m i ndoimhneacht, le toirt c.0.75m. Tá tuairim ann b'fhéidir gur áiteanna críonnaide iad le gcóimhair féastaí áitiúla ní b'fhéidir go n-úsáideadh íad mar thithé allaí nó ni ndéantaíocht tarctíl. Bhí an fulacht seo in Úsáid, dereir dealráimh idir na blianta c.2500BC agus c.900BC, ’s é sin timpeall 1600 de bhlianta.

Áimsíodh in áiteanna filucha (Coill Eo, Cathair Ua Cealadh Mór, Mainistir an Chláir) sí-leaganacha ní ba lú de chloch teascóilte 's doite. Mar gnáis, bhi na scaipigh éagsúla seo cloch idir 1m go 15m trasna agus níos lú ná 0.1m doimhín. Níl sé soláire cén ghníomhálaíocht ba chús leis na scaipigh seo, ach bainneann sé le dealramh go n-úsáidte cálocha chun usc in a théarmh cosúil leis na fulachtaí fhiadaidh; easpa.
dáta radacarbóin do láithrín amhán agus AD60-240 don cheann eile. Ag Clárín bhi na h-adhlachtait in gcásán clóchar (18m trasna, 0.5-1.0m in leithead is 0.15m-0.2m doimhin). Sa chúlach bhi páisti leithinis sa bhair le lúghaach agus in gcásanna áirithe cnámha daonna créamaithe. Aimsiodh tri choirín gíone sa chrió a ciathnú anidh in gcásán. Ós rud é nach raibh rian teasa ar na gcóirmín is léir gur cuireadh sa chrioí iad le lúghaithigh na marbh. De bharr meáchan iséal cnámh-iseal in agach síleagán b'fhéidir gur adhlaichtait cuimhnítheacha ionaidochta iad. Úsáideadh clóchar clúchar Clárín d'adhlaichtait am éigin idir na blianta 100BC agus AD70.

Ag Coill Eo aimsiodh babhla admaid dea-leasaithe faoi mhíin. Rinneadh an babhla as píosa amhán fuinseóga. De réir dátála radacarbóin báinean ná le is larmaois Luath go Meán agus is ceann é den uimhir bheag de scoththigh réamh-stairtíúla faighte in Éirinn. Idir 777BC agus 407BC a ghearradh an crann as a rinneadh é.

Rinneadh tochalta ar impháil díoghta ubhchruthach 38m trasna in gCathair Ua Cealad Nóir. Marcáilteadh an impháil le díoghta 0.75m go 1.53m ar leithead agus suas le 0.8m doimhin. San impháil agus sa díog thuasmar dhéantaín in píosa de bhóthar rothlaich, bloganna de chnámh-gear larainn, cnámha aímhithite agus gairís larainn, sisteál b'fhéidir. Cuid de chórás páircanna drosnúillogacha ab ea an impháil imnithe le díoganna. As na díoganna fuair an biorán fáinneach coimhioital copar, foachtar-chlocha agus flu amháin ceann chun faobhair a chur ar bhiorán, roinn beag de cnámh-gear larainn, cnámha aímhithite agus píosa sealte oibrithe. Bhí forgnimh beag ann léirithite le trí gharstaobh de chlúchar clóchar agus ón mhead móir de chnámh-gear larainn agus gualach is léir go raibh obair larainn ar slí anseach idir an 10 agus an 120 aois AD.

Aimsiodh ceaseál (lios clóchar) beagán lasmuigh de Scoil Naísíonta Cort Lomáin i mbáile Fearann Ceadhrú Doilteadh. Bhí suas le triú ar shil an bhodhair roga agus nó tosaighadh an chuid sin de. Bhí trastórmhas 26m ar an gcásaí agus é clúdaite le sceach gheal agus le coll. Is beag na síleagánachca seandásachta a fuairadh an chuid a iníochadh ach aimsiodh píosa de bhóthar rothlaich sa bharr-ghairís.

Plan of prehistoric ring-gully at Claureen
Plean de chlasán-clóchar réamh-stairtíúil ag Clárín

A bronze palstave dating to the Middle Bronze Age (c.1500 to c.1350 BC) was found in the topsoil at Ballymacahill during testing. The artefact may have been used for wood-working or may have been exchanged as a form of currency. D'aimsíodh an palstave cré-umha seo sa bharr-íthir i mBailte Mac Cathail. Baineann sé leis an Cré-umhaois Meán (c.1500-1350BC). B'fhéidir go n-úsáideadh é don nó mar ábhar airgeadais.

Wooden bowl as found at Killoo
Babhla admaid ag Coill Eo

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Post-extraction processing and dissemination

The material collected during the fieldwork has been cleaned and catalogued. Specialists have prepared reports on the different artefacts and some of the objects are being conserved. Written reports have been submitted to the National Monuments Section of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and to the National Museum of Ireland.

Archaeologists have an obligation to communicate their findings to the wider public and this road project has provided significant new information about County Clare's past. An article was published in "The Other Clare" (Vol. 29, 2005) and further publication is envisaged. Public displays and seminars will take place in 2005 - 2006.

Further information may be found at www.nra.ie/archaeology
www.ennisbypass.ie and tvas@eircom.net
Próiseáil iar-thochailt agus craobhscaioideadh

An t-ábhar seandálaíochta a bhalladh le linn na h-óibre allmhuigh, tá sé glanta agus clárthaite. Tá tuairisci déanta ag saineolaithe ar na déantáin agus tá caomhniú a dhéanamh ar chuid acu. Tá tuairisci scríofa curtha chuig Roinn na Sdachchomhartáí Náisiúnta, An Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreachta agus Rialtais Áitiúil agus chuig Ard-Mhúsaem na h-Éireann.

Tá sé de dhualgas ar seandálaíthe a gcuid friotha a sceapaí i measc an phobail agus mhéadaigh an t-eolas ón tógra bóthar seo go mór ar thuiscint oidhreachta an Chlár.


Tuilleadh eolais ar
www.nra.ie/archaeology
www.ennisbypass.ie agus
tvas@eircom.net
Artefacts

A Flint and chert tools - grave goods (Manusmore)
Úrslís breetcloch is seirí-earaí uaigne (Mainis Mór)

B Cremated human bone (Manusmore)
Cnámh créamaithe daonna (Mainis Mór)

C Prehistoric pottery - grave goods (Manusmore)
Potaireacht réamhstaírí-earraf uaigne (Mainis Mór)

D Conserved Iron Age wooden bowl (Killow)
Baithla admaid larndais caomhnaithe (Coill Eo)

E Microslag (Cahircailla More)
Micricnámhóg (Cathair Ua Cealadh Mór)

F Animal bone (Killow)
Cnámh ainmhíoch (Coill Eo)

G Iron Age glass beads - grave goods (Claureen)
Coirmíní gloine larndais - earaí uaigne (Cláirín)

H Early Christian ring-pin (Cahircailla More)
Biorán fánneach - Luathré Chriostaí (Cathair Ua Cealadh Mór)
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