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 Chláir
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An Early Christian metalworking site at Cahircalla More
Láithreán miotalóireachta Luathré Chriosfaí ag Cathair Ua Cealadh Mór

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

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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.

Cúlra don seandálaíocht

Is é a thugann an tógra bóthar seo i dtreis ná seachród cirthear Inis a thógail ó Leath Tua Mhumhan, lastuaidh de Chora Caitlin, go Creag Árd, lastuaidh de Chort Lomán agus Bóthar Faoisimh Thiar chun Coill Eo agus Clárín a nascadh le chéile. Mar cuid den tógra seo ag an Údarás um Bóthar Náisiúnta, d’íarr Comhairle Chontae an Chláir go ndéanfaí sráith scrúdaithe seandálaíocht ar an mbealach 21km seo.

De réir rialacha náisiúnta is idirimhse flood na h-oidhreacht, uilfhlaithéar Ráiteas Tionchar Tímeallachta (RTT) sa bhliain 2000. Taobh leis an RTT rinneadh clár de thrineastail trialaí mar aon le suirbhéanna ar ailtreacht agus ar thoscaí gheofisiceacha agus foshruthacha a léirigh límistéiri acmhainní seandálaíochta a shil an bhóthar nua. Ós rud é nach raibh caomhnú in situ mar rogha ann dó acharadh caomhnú trí thairfeadhadh i.e. tochtaí agus taifeadh iomlán ar na látthreáin seandálaíochta ar fad.

Tá an tógra seo maonaithe ag Rítaiss na h-Eireann le cúimhne ar aigheadaithe ón Aontais Eorpach faoi gCiste Comhthaithe an bPleán Náisiúnta Forbartha 2000 – 2006.

Rinne na comhlachtí seo leasadh inscrúdaithe seandálaíochta ar son Chomhairle Chontae an Chláir: Aegis Archaeology Ltd, Babtie Petit Ltd, Donal Boland, Earthsound Archaeological Geophysics, Geoquest Ltd, IAC Ltd, Moore Group, and TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. Rinne TVAS (Ireland) Ltd na tochtaí 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

Scrúdaíodh sna blianta 2001-2002, le trinseáil trialach agus suirbhéaracht, láithreán seandálaíochta a raibh eolas orthu cheana nó a ceapadh a bheith ann. Rinneadh tástáil i Samhradh na bliana 2003 ar shampaí timpeall 10% de thalamh na mbóthar nua. Tochailíodh trinse lár agus cláonstrapaí gach 25m ar dheis 's ar chlé. Úsáideadh innill tochailte, rialaithe ag seandálaíthe, chun bárn-thír a bhaint den mbealach agus rochtadh 19 láithreán seandálaíochta nua. Áit ar cinntíodh nó ar ceapadh ábhar seandálaíochta mhéadaigh ar an gcéadadhán sampla ins na h-áiteanna sin. Baineadh Úsáid as giáirtsí láímhe chun na sil-teaganacha a ghlanadh agus scriobhadh tuairiscí a léirigh agus a chainnlochtaigh an tseandálaíocht agus cheadaigh sin acmhainní a spricadh don chéad chéim eile - tochailt.
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 (2300-700BC), the Iron Age (700BC - AD450), the Early Christian period (AD450 - 1167/70) and also from the last few centuries. The archaeology included:

A fulacht fiadh found east of the N68 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 Clarenre. 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 Clarenre 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 Carrowduff 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.

Fulacht fiadh at Cahircalla Beg. Half-sectioned
Fulacht fiadh I gCathair Ua Cealadh Beag. Leathghearradh

- 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 Claureen ring-gully was used for burial sometime between 100 BC and AD 70.

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.

Stone trough of Cahircalla Beg fulacht fiadh. This will be displayed outside the Clare Museum, Ennis

Umair cloiche den fhulacht fiadh ó Chathair Ua Cealadh Beag Taispseánfear é lasmúgh de Mhusaem na h-Inse
Tocháilte na láithreán seandálafochta

Rinneadh tocháilte ar na láithreán nua-nochtaithe (19) agus ar na sé láithreán a raibh eolas orthu cheana idir Fómhar 2003 agus Earrach 2004. Iníodhadh láithreán agus déantaí ón gcórais umhaois (2300-700BC), an lármaois (700BC-AD450), an Luathré Chroist Staif (AD450-1167/70) agus ón gcúpla céad deireanach anuas. Mar sheandálafocht a bhí in úsáid, déarfóraíodh leis an bhlianta 1600 de bhlianta.

Áimsiodh in áiteanna flúcha (Colb Éo, Cathair Úa Cealadha Mór, Mainistir an Chláir) síl-leaganachta ní bhí léi de chlocha teasaíofaí 's d'fhiú. Mar gnás, bhí na scapúigh éagsúla seo cloch idir 1m go 15m trasna agus níos lú ná 0.1m dolmhní. Nil sé soláire cén gníomhafocht a bhí i mbliain na scapúigh seo, ach baineann sé le dealrang go n-úsáidte na clocha chun usáideach cosúil leis na fulachta fiadh; easpa.
Dáta radacarboin do láithrián amhain agus AD60-240 don cheann elle. Ag Cláirín bhí na h-adhlaichtáil á gcosána cioclacha (6m trasna, 0.5-1.0m i leithiis 0.15m-0.2m doimhin). Sa chlasán bhí paistí leithrisithe saibhir le ghualach agus i gcosanna áirithe cnámha daonna crámaithi. Aimsiodh trí choirnín ghnóine sa chearr a charthaíocht ón gcosán. Ós rud é nach raibh rian teasa ar na gcoirní mo lèir gur cuireadh sa cheann iad le luitireadh na marbh. De bharr meachan iséal cnámha in ngach sileagan b'fhéidir gur adhlaichtáil cuimhirtheacha ionadochtachta iad. Úsáideadh clásan cioclach Clárín d'achlaichtaí an éigín idir na blianta 100BC agus AD70.

Ag Coill Eo aimsiodh babhla adhmaid dea-léasaithe faoi mhóin. Rinneadh an babhla as píosa amhain fuinséige. De réir dátaóidh radacarboin babhlaí leis an lárnaois Luath go Meán agus is ceann é den uimhir bhreg de shoithigh réamhsaitiúil faighte i Éirinn. Ídar 777BC agus 407BC a chearradh an crann a sna rinnedead é.

Rinneadh tochtail ar imháil dlogtha ubhchruthach 38m trasna i gCathair Ua Cealadh Mór. Marcablaideh an imháil le dlog 0.75m go 1.53m ar leithis agus suas le 0.8m doimhin. San imháil agus sa dlog fuarthas mar dhéantáin píosa de bhro rothlach, bloanna de chnámhoga iarainn, cnámha ainmhithe agus úrlios iarann, síseal b'fhéidir. Cuí de chórais páircanna drónnúileogachá ab ea an imháil imlínte le dloganna. As na dloganna fuair adeadh biorán fáinneadh coimiria chropar, faobhair-chlocha agus fíú amhain ceann chun faobhair a chur ar bhóran, roimnt beag de chnámhóg iarainn, cnámha ainmhithe agus píosaí seirte oibríthe.

Bhí foirgneamh beag ann léirithe le trí ghartaobh de chlasán cioclach agus ón mead mó de chnámhóg iarainn agus gualach is léir go raibh obair iarainn ar síol anseo idir an 10ú agus an 12ú asois AD.

Aimsiodh caiseal (lios clocaigh) beagán lastualadh de Scoil Náisiúnta Gort Lomáin i mbaile fhearainn Ceartrú Dothaide. Bhí suas le trian de ar shli an bhóthair nua agus nior toclaíodh ach an chuid sin de. Bhí trastomha 26m ar an gcaiseal agus é cílúdaithe le seachadh gheal agus le coill. Is beag na sile-legeanachta seisidhachta a fuairdeadh sa chuid a iníochadh a aimsiodh píosa de bhro rothlach sa bharr-íthir.

Plan of prehistoric ring-gully at Clareen
Plean de chlasán-cioclacha réamhsaitiúil ag Cláirín
Post-excavation 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 craobhscaoileadh

An t-ábhar seandálaíochta a bailleadh le linn na h-óbreachaimh, tá sé gíonta agus clártha. Tá tuairiscí déanta ar saingeolaíthe ar ná déantáin agus tá caomhnú á dheanamh ar chuaidh. Tá tuairiscí scríofa curtha chuig Roinn na Seádhchomhartaí Náisiúnta, An Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreacht agus Rialtais Áitiúil agus chuig Ard-Mhúsaem na h-Eireann.

Tá sé de dhualgas ar seandálaíthe a gcuílthu a saja peadh i measc an phobail agus mhéadaigh an t-eolas ón tógra bothair seo go mór ar thuiscint oidhreacht an Chhlár. Bhí ait foilsithe san iris "The Other Clare" (Vol. 29, 2005) agus tá foilseacháin éile beartaithe. Beidh taipéantaí poiblí agus crúinnithe ar síol tréimeas 2005-2006.

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

A Flint and chert tools - grave goods (Manusmore)
Úrlísí breocloch is seirt-earráí uairghe (Mainis Mór)

B Cremated human bone (Manusmore)
Cnáth mh créamaithe daonna (Mainis Mór)

C Prehistoric pottery - grave goods (Manusmore)
Potaireacht réamhstairiúil-earráí uairghe (Mainis Mór)

D Conserved Iron Age wooden bowl (Kilow)
Bábhaí admaid lannaí oc caomhnaith (Coill Eo)

E Microslag (Cahircalla More)
Micrinnámhóg (Cathair Ua Cealadh Mór)

F Animal bone (Kilow)
Cnámh ainmhlíoch (Coill Eo)

G Iron Age glass beads - grave goods (Clareen)
Coirníní goine lannaíse - earráí uairghe (Clairín)

H Early Christian ring-pin (Cahircalla More)
Biorán fáinneach - Luathrá Chríostaí (Cathair Ua Cealadh Mór)
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