

Title Old routes to new research: the results of the Edercloon wetland excavations and aims for the future

Speaker Caitríona Moore

Caitríona Moore graduated from UCD in 1996 and has been working as a professional archaeologist since that time. Having worked on infrastructural projects all over the country she also spent five years as a full-time member of the Irish Archaeological Wetland Unit in University College Dublin. She directed excavations on the N2 Finglas–Ashbourne road scheme and in 2006 directed the excavation of the Edercloon wetland complex in County Longford. She is currently co-directing the excavation of an early medieval mill at Kilbegly, Co. Roscommon, on the N6 Ballinasloe–Athlone road scheme.

Organisation Cultural Resource Development Services Ltd

Road Scheme N4 Longford to Drumsna (Dromod–Roosky Bypass)

This presentation aims to provide an introduction to the results of the excavation undertaken at Edercloon, Co. Longford, as part of the N4 Dromod–Roosky Bypass. Caitríona Moore directed the excavation for Cultural Resource Development Services Ltd (CRDS Ltd) over a five-month period commencing April 2006. Archaeology was identified at Edercloon in February 2006 by CRDS Ltd during centreline testing that revealed worked wood in reclaimed bogland beside the existing N4. During the excavation 28 trenches were opened to reveal a total of 48 structures. The most numerous site type was wooden toghers or trackways, of which 25 were excavated. These varied from small, simple paths to large, dense structures some of which were over 1 m deep. Five platforms, also varying greatly in scale and composition, were associated with the toghers. Small deposits of worked and unworked wood were also uncovered. A notable aspect of the complex was the sheer density of sites with many of the toghers criss-crossing and abutting each other. Fifty-one artefacts were recovered from within the structures at Edercloon, 46 of which were incorporated into structures. Finds included wooden vessels, wheel fragments, spear shafts, tool handles and several highly finished enigmatic objects. Such a high artefact yield for a trackway complex is unparalleled in Ireland and points to the significance and exceptional nature of the archaeology at Edercloon. Radiocarbon dating has indicated that the structures date from the Neolithic to the medieval period.

Excavation concluded in September 2006, since then an extensive programme of post-excavation research has begun. This will be multidisciplinary and will seek to answer the many questions posed by the excavation results. Palaeoenvironmental studies will include examination of the peat morphology, analysis of pollen and tephra (volcanic ash) and identification and study of insect remains. This research will seek to reconstruct the environment in which the sites were built and to understand how they affected and were influenced by that environment. Analysis of c. 4,500 wood samples will identify the species selected for use and reconstruct the forests from which they came. Radiocarbon and dendro-dating will securely date the structures and artefacts. These studies will provide a comprehensive picture of the palaeoenvironment providing a context for other sites within the region and on the road scheme. In addition, complete analysis of 8,000 worked wood samples will seek to identify the tools used, techniques of splitting and felling and trace individual tools across the site or sites. The post-excavation programme will also fully research the structures and artefact assemblage to place Edercloon in its national and international context.