



**MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL**



**ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSULTANCY SERVICES LTD.**



# M3 Clonee-North of Kells

## Contract 3 Navan Bypass

Report on the Archaeological Excavation  
of  
**Gainstown 3, Co. Meath**

Ministerial Directions No.  
A023/011  
E3103

Stephen J. Linnane

October 2008

*Final*

## PROJECT DETAILS

<b>Project</b>	M3 Clonee–North of Kells Motorway Scheme
<b>Site Name</b>	Gainstown 3
<b>Ministerial Direction Number</b>	A023/011
<b>Registration Number</b>	E3103
<b>Senior Archaeological Consultant</b>	Donald Murphy
<b>Site Director</b>	Stephen J. Linnane
<b>Excavated</b>	29 August – 12 September 2006
<b>Client</b>	Meath County Council, National Roads Design Office, Navan Enterprise Centre, Navan, County Meath
<b>Townland</b>	Gainstown
<b>Parish</b>	Ardracran
<b>County</b>	Meath
<b>National Grid Reference</b>	284870 264785
<b>Chainage</b>	45650–45700
<b>Height</b>	62.26m OD
<b>Report Type</b>	Final
<b>Report Status</b>	Submitted
<b>Date of Report</b>	October 2008
<b>Report by</b>	Stephen J. Linnane

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This report has been prepared by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd on behalf of Meath County Council National Roads Design Office (NRDO) and the National Roads Authority (NRA). The excavation was carried out under Ministerial Direction Number A023/011, issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) in consultation with the National Museum of Ireland (NMI).

### **Consulting Engineers - N3 Meath Consult**

Engineer – Peter Thorne and Thomas Meagher

Resident Engineer – Mary O Rourke

### **Meath County Council, National Roads Design Office**

Senior Engineer – John McGrath

Project Archaeologist – Mary Deevy

Project Liaison Officer – Ambrose Clarke

### **National Monuments, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government**

Archaeologist – Martin Reid

### **Irish Antiquities Division, National Museum of Ireland**

Keeper – Nessa O'Connor

**NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

The site at Gainstown 3 was excavated by Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (ACS) as part of the M3 Clonee–North of Kells Motorway Scheme on behalf of Meath County Council NRDO and the NRA. The excavation was carried out between 29 August and 12 September 2006 under Ministerial Direction Number A023/011 issued by the DoEHLG in consultation with the NMI. Two pits containing burnt stone within their fills and a possible metallised surface were excavated amidst a number of more recent features including plough furrows field drains, a field boundary and evidence of tree root disturbance.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The site at Gainstown 3 (Figures 1–6) was identified during advance testing carried out by Aidan O’Connell during May 2004 under licence number 04E0578 (O’Connell 2004). The geophysical survey, conducted by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy (Bartlett 2002), suggested the presence of a pit but this was not located during testing. Testing revealed a different pit (0.90m diameter by 0.23m in depth) with dark brown clay with charcoal and burnt clay inclusions. Two north–south orientated field drains were also noted. These features were located again during full resolution of the site in 2006 when a second pit and a possible metallised surface were also discovered along with other features interpreted as tree boles.

### *1.1 Development*

Meath County Council is constructing 49km of two-lane, dual-carriageway motorway between Clonee and Kells and 10km of single carriageway from Kells to just north of Kells alongside additional road upgrades, realignments and associated ancillary works. The scheme has been subdivided into five separate sections as follows: Clonee to Dunshaughlin (Contract 1), Dunshaughlin to Navan (Contract 2), the Navan Bypass (Contract 3), Navan to Kells and the N52 Kells Bypass (Contract 4), and Kells to North of Kells (Contract 5). This section of the scheme (Contract 3) represents the Navan By-pass.

The desk-based study and the field survey for the whole scheme, carried out in 2000–2001, were divided into sections which were investigated by Valerie J Keeley Ltd and Margaret Gowan and Company Ltd. The Record of Monuments and Places, the Sites and Monuments Record, Topographical files, and literary sources were all consulted. This information was augmented by geophysical testing conducted by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy who undertook a magnetometer survey across sample transects which was then supplemented by magnetic susceptibility, and also by GSB Prospection who undertook gradiometer scanning and a detailed gradiometer survey. The Environmental Impact Survey (EIS) compiled this data set to identify approximately 100 sites of interest either along the route or in its proximity (500m of the landtake). Advance archaeological testing was completed in 2004 by ACS and Irish Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd (IAC). Excavation of the sites identified during testing was conducted by ACS and IAC on behalf of Meath County Council, and the NRA under directions issued by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government following consultation with the Director of the National Museum of Ireland.

## 2 EXCAVATION

Excavation occurred between 29 August and 12 September 2006 under Ministerial Direction Number A023/011 issued to Meath County Council NRDO. The work was carried out by Stephen J. Linnane on behalf of ACS. The topsoil (F901) consisted of pale yellow-brown clay loam, was 0.50m deep and was removed by a tracked machine equipped with a toothless grading bucket. The natural subsoil (F902) consisted of orange-brown silty clay with occasional rounded and angular stone inclusions.

All archaeological features exposed were recorded and excavated by hand using the single context method whereby each feature and fill was assigned an individual context number. Where appropriate, samples were retrieved in an attempt to obtain evidence for the date and function of these features (Appendix 3). Unless otherwise stated, the features have been measured length-width-depth. All measurements are in metres. All finds were numbered according to the requirements of the NMI from 1 onwards consistent with licence and feature number.

### 2.1 Results

The context sequence ran from 901 to 933 (the context numbers 1–900 were not assigned on this site). Of the allocated numbers some proved to be natural features or tree roots, others consisted of plough furrows, modern drainage features and a field boundary. Only two pits containing burnt stone within their fills were deemed to be archaeologically convincing. All of the archaeological features of Gainstown 3 are discussed within this report but further details of all contexts and their stratigraphic relationships can be found in Appendix 1.

The site had been used most recently as pasture. The site sloped gently from 62.45m OD to 61.15m OD from southwest to northeast; a fall of 1.30m over a distance of 31.00m at a ratio of 1 in 24.

An oval pit (F912) was 1.60m from north to south by 0.55m with a maximum depth of 0.26m (Figures 7–9; Plate 3). The pit contained three fills (F911, F930 and F931), two of which contained burnt stones and minute flecks of charcoal. Fill F911 was sampled for further analysis but did not produce any additional information.

A second oval pit (F928) had dimensions of 1.62m from northeast to southwest by 0.53m with a maximum depth of 0.35m (Figures 7–9; Plate 4). The sides were near vertical leading to a flat base. The pit contained two fills (F927 and F932), the upper of which consisted of near-black silty clay with charcoal flecking and burnt stone inclusions.

An irregular, apparently metallated, spread (F929) measuring 3.00m from north to south by 2.50m was cut by pit F928 (Figures 7–8; Plate 6). The spread consisted of a compact surface of rounded pebbles and may have once formed a working surface but, alternatively, may well have been a natural concentration of rounded stones within the natural glacial deposits (F933). No associated finds were excavated and the excavation was inconclusive.

Non-archaeological features included three northwest–southeast plough furrows (F920, F922 and F924) (Figures 7–8; Plate 1), on average 0.30m wide, 0.05m deep and filled with compact topsoil, two contemporary field drains (F904 and F926: 0.24m wide by 0.28m deep) at right angles to each other and a NNW–SSE ditch (F906: 1.12m wide by 0.29m deep; Figures 7–9; Plate 2) cut by field drain F904 which contained a cut silver coin (A023/011:905:1; Plate 7) of medieval date (1251–154 AD; Appendix 4) in its fill. Four features were identified, investigated and eventually interpreted as tree boles (F901, F914, F916, and F918) (Plate 5). The irregular depressions had pale grey clay fills that contained slight traces of charcoal but their irregularity and the evidence of roots running away from them confirmed their interpretation as tree boles and root disturbance.

## **2.2 Finds**

A cut quadrant from a hammered silver coin (A023/011:905:1) represents the only find from the excavations. The coin is medieval (1251–1254 AD) and is considered to be residual having been found within the fill of what was interpreted as a post-medieval ditch (see Appendix 4).

## **3 DISCUSSION**

The two pits containing burnt stone within their fills attest to the use of burnt stone for an unknown purpose. Unfortunately these features did not produce any material by which to date them. However, both pits are likely to be the remains of burnt mound activity, which can be broadly dated to the Bronze Age period. There was evidence elsewhere in the townland of similar sites dating to the Early Bronze Age (Gainstown 1; Linnane 2008a) and Gainstown 2 (Connell 2008), with further EBA remains in Hanlonstown to the northeast (Hanlonstown 1; Linnane 2008b) The discussion concerning burnt stone technology and the various uses to which it may have been put is ongoing but the principal concept of using the hot stones to heat water is generally accepted. It is possible that the two pits were excavated to hold the water, which was to be heated by the hot stones. The traditional cooking place explanation for sites producing burnt stone (O’Kelly 1954) has been challenged by alternatives including bathing (Barfield & Hodder 1987), cloth making (Lucas 1965; Jeffrey 1991) and beer brewing (Quinn & Moore 2007). The scant remains from this site do not allow for further

interpretation and all that can be said is that human activity occurred in the area and involved the use of burnt stone technology at a date which has not been determined but may have been within the Bronze Age as burnt mounds are frequently dated to that period (Brindley & Lanting 1990).

An unstratified artefact of note was a quadrant of a cut silver penny (A023/011:905:1) minted in 1251–1254 AD, during the reign of Henry III (1207–1272 AD). The ditch from which the coin came was not judged to be medieval but as it does not appear on Ordnance Survey maps its antiquity prior to the early 19th century is not known.

The metallised surface was not dated and no finds came from its surface. It was to some extent doubtful whether the spread was a man-made feature and it is possible that the feature was merely an unusual concentration of rounded stones within the natural subsoil.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

Gainstown 3 (A023/011) was excavated from 29 August – 12 September 2006 by Stephen J. Linnane (ACS) as part of the M3 Clonee–North of Kells Motorway Scheme on behalf of Meath County Council NRDO and the NRA. The two pits excavated, containing burnt stone within their fills, would indicate human activity in the area. The use of burnt stone technology for whatever purpose is, most frequently, found to date to the Early Bronze Age. The use to which the burnt stone was put is, as indicated above, the subject of on-going debate. It must be sufficient to state that the activity occurred, probably within the Bronze Age, and that the information retrieved will form a small part in interpreting the development of the wider landscape and man's place within it.

#### 5 REFERENCES

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- Bartlett A 2002 *M3 Clonee to North of Kells, Report on Archaeogeophysical Survey*. Unpublished report prepared by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy for N3 Meath Consult.
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- O'Kelly, MJ 1954 'Excavations and experiments in ancient Irish cooking-places', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 84, 105–55.
- Quinn, B & Moore, D 2007 'Ale, Brewing and fulachta fiadh', *Archaeology Ireland*, 21 (3), 8–11.

Signed:



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Stephen J. Linnane

October 2008

## APPENDIX 1 Context Details

Gainstown 3: A023/011											
No	Type	Fill of/ Filled with	Strat above	Strat below	Description	Interpretation	Group	Artefacts	Animal bone	Cremated bone	Samples
1-3					used previously during Topsoil Assessment						
4-900	NOT ASSIGNED										
901	topsoil	N/A	902	N/A	medium-yellow-brown clay loam with frequent small stone inclusions, average depth 0.50m	turf and topsoil					
902	subsoil		N/A	901	orange-brown silty clay with occasional rounded and angular stone inclusions	subsoil					
903	fill	904	904	901	fill of 904, irregular limestone rubble	fill of field drain 904					
904	cut	903	901	903	linear east-west cut (0.24m wide x 0.28m deep) with a sharp break of slope, steep sides and a sharp break of slope leading to a flat base	modern field drain					
905	fill	906	907	901	firm, mottled, dark-yellowish-brown, clay silt with occasional small stone inclusions	upper fill of ditch 906		silver coin			
906	cut	905, 907, 908	901	908	linear NNW-SSE cut with a sharp break of slope, gradually sloping sides and a gradual break of slope leading to a slightly concave base of 0.60m width (1.20m wide x 0.29m deep)	post-medieval field boundary					
907	fill	906	908	905	firm, dark-brownish-grey, clayey silt	secondary fill of ditch 906					
908	fill	906	906	907	firm, light-greyish-brown, silty clay with occasional small angular stones	primary fill of ditch 906					

909-910	NON-ARCHAEOLOGICAL					tree bole					
911	fill	912	930	901	firm, light-grey clay with occasional charcoal flecks and burnt stone inclusions	upper fill of cut 912					#1 soil
912	cut	911, 930, 931	901	931	oval pit (1.60m north-south x 0.55m x 0.26m deep)	pit					
913-918	NON-ARCHAEOLOGICAL					tree boles					
919	fill	920	920	901	firm, mid-brownish-grey clay with occasional small irregular stones	fill of furrow 920					
920	cut	919	901	919	linear, northwest-southeast cut	furrow					
921	fill	922	922	901	firm, mid-brownish-grey clay with occasional small irregular stones	fill of furrow 922					
922	cut	921	901	921	linear, northwest-southeast cut	furrow					
923	fill	924	924	901	firm, mid-brownish-grey clay with occasional small irregular stones	fill of furrow 924					
924	cut	923	901	923	linear, northwest-southeast cut	furrow					
925	fill	926	926	901	fill of 926, irregular limestone rubble	fill of field drain 926					
926	cut	925	901	925	linear north-south cut. (0.24m wide x 0.28m deep)	modern field drain					
927	fill	928	932	901	mid-black, silty clay with burnt stone inclusions	upper fill of pit 928					
928	cut	927, 932	901	932	oval pit (1.62m NE-SW x 0.53m x 0.35m deep)	pit					
929	spread	933	933	928	irregular metalled surface (3.00m north-south x 2.50m)	metalled surface but it could be merely a change in the natural subsoil					
930	fill	912	931	911	dark-grey, silty clay (with slight purple hue)	secondary fill of cut 912					

					with occasional charcoal flecks						
931	fill	912	912	930	mid-black, silty clay with moderate burnt stones and occasional charcoal flecks	primary fill of cut 912					
932	fill	928	928	927	light-greyish-brown clay	primary fill of pit 928					
933	cut	929	902	929	irregular depression filled by 929 (3.00m north-south x 2.50m)	depression					

**APPENDIX 2 Finds List**

<b>Find No</b>	<b>Description</b>
A023/011:905:1	Silver penny fragment of medieval date (1251–1254 AD) See Appendix 4

**APPENDIX 3** *Sample List*

<b>Sample No</b>	<b>Context No</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Results</b>
1	911	Soil	Nothing

## APPENDIX 4

### *Medieval Coinage: John Stafford Langan*

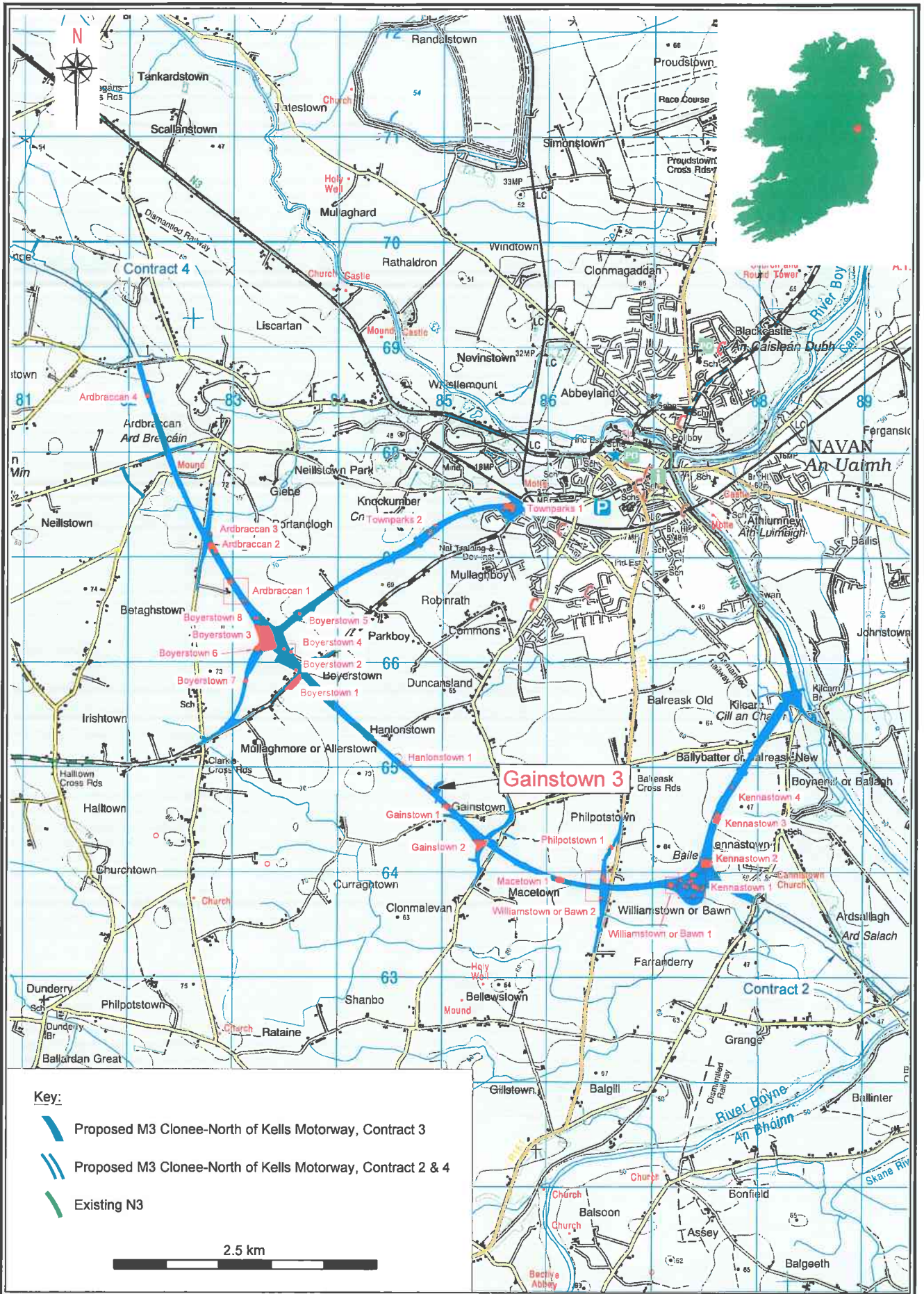
This is a quarter of an Irish Penny of Henry III struck in Dublin between 1251 and 1254 under the moneyer Richard Bonaventure. The coin has been intentionally cut for use as a farthing. This coinage was struck in Dublin under two London moneyers, David of Enfield and Richard Bonaventure who appear to have travelled to Dublin to assist in setting up the mint and may have continued to supply dies from London for the mint. The primary purpose of this coinage was to facilitate the export of silver from Ireland and the majority of the surviving examples come from finds outside Ireland; there were 1800 Irish pieces of this type in the 1908 Bruxelles hoard. However the cut halfpennies and cut farthings are not common in overseas hoards—hoards, other than those deposited in extremis, don't normally contain damaged or cut coinage - so the majority of cut pieces are known from Irish and English circulation losses. The coinage was similar in design to Henry III's English coinage of the period which also facilitated division into halves and quarters - the obverse triangle around the bust is distinctly Irish contrasting with the circle around the bust on English issues. The quarter coin is lightly bent, but has no corrosion and has some remnants of the matrix (light clay) adhering to the surface. The coin shows little evidence of wear on either the original design or the cut edges suggesting it was cut soon after minting and lost soon thereafter. This suggests deposition after 1251 AD and before c. 1260 AD.

#### *Obverse*

The obverse features the king's head crowned facing, with a hand and sceptre to the left, within a triangle with the legend HENRICVS REX III, the head of the sceptre impinging between the REX and III. This example clearly shows the hand and the left lower corner of the triangle and the letters S R E are distinct.

#### *Reverse*

The reverse design is a voided cross pommee extending to the edge of the coin with a pellet at the centre and three pellets in each quarter within a beaded circle. The legend (split into quarters is) RIC - ARD - OND - IVE. The IVE is clearly visible in the remaining quarter and makes the attribution unambiguous. The other moneyer active during this issue, David of Enfield, signs his coins with DAV - ION - DIV - ELI or occasionally DAV - ION - DIV -ELIN. So any legible quarter is sufficient to identify the moneyer.

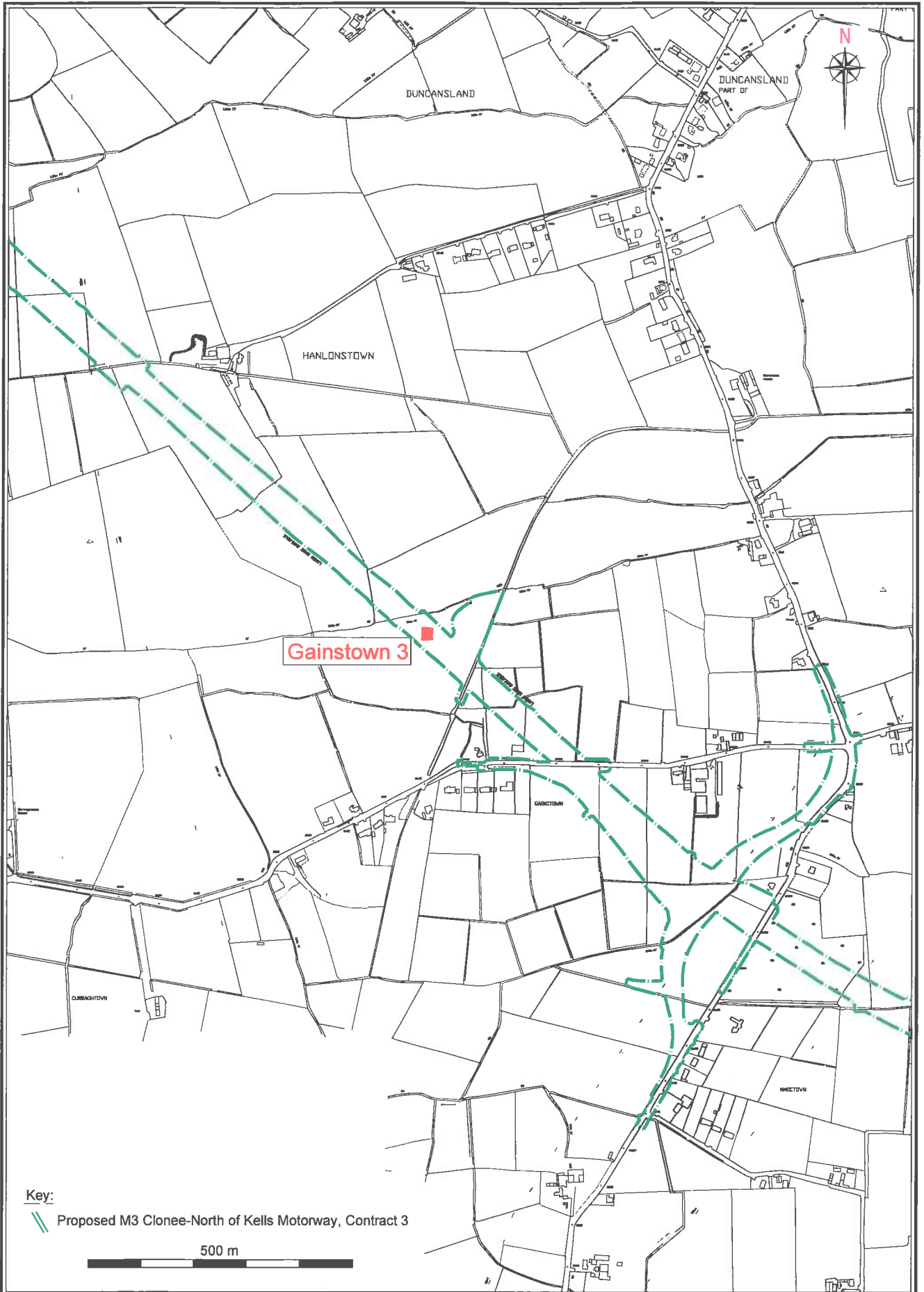




**Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.** Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3  
 Issued for: Excavation Report  
 Client: Meath County Council

Scale: 1:50,000 A4  
 Date: Jul '08  
 Origin: OSi Discovery Series  
 Drawing no.: 04\_01\_C2051i

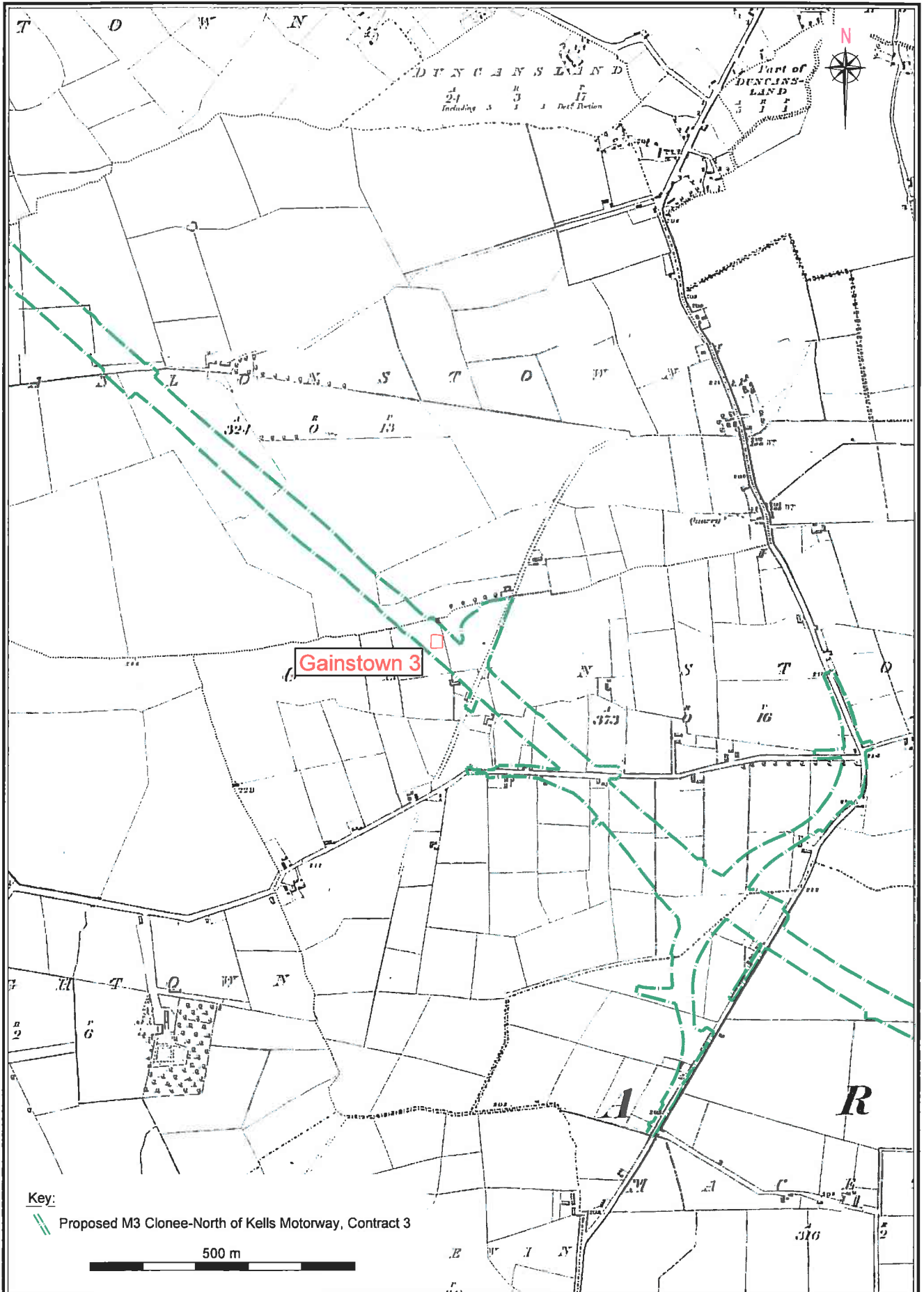
Figure 1: Location of Gainstown 3




**Key:**  
 Proposed M3 Clonee-North of Kells Motorway, Contract 3  
 500 m

<b>Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.</b> Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth	Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3	Scale: 1:10,000 A4 Date: Jul '08
	Issued for: Excavation Report	Origin: Client/ACS Ltd.
	Client: Meath County Council	Drawing no.: 04_01_C2051i

Figure 2: Location of Gainstown 3 on current OS background

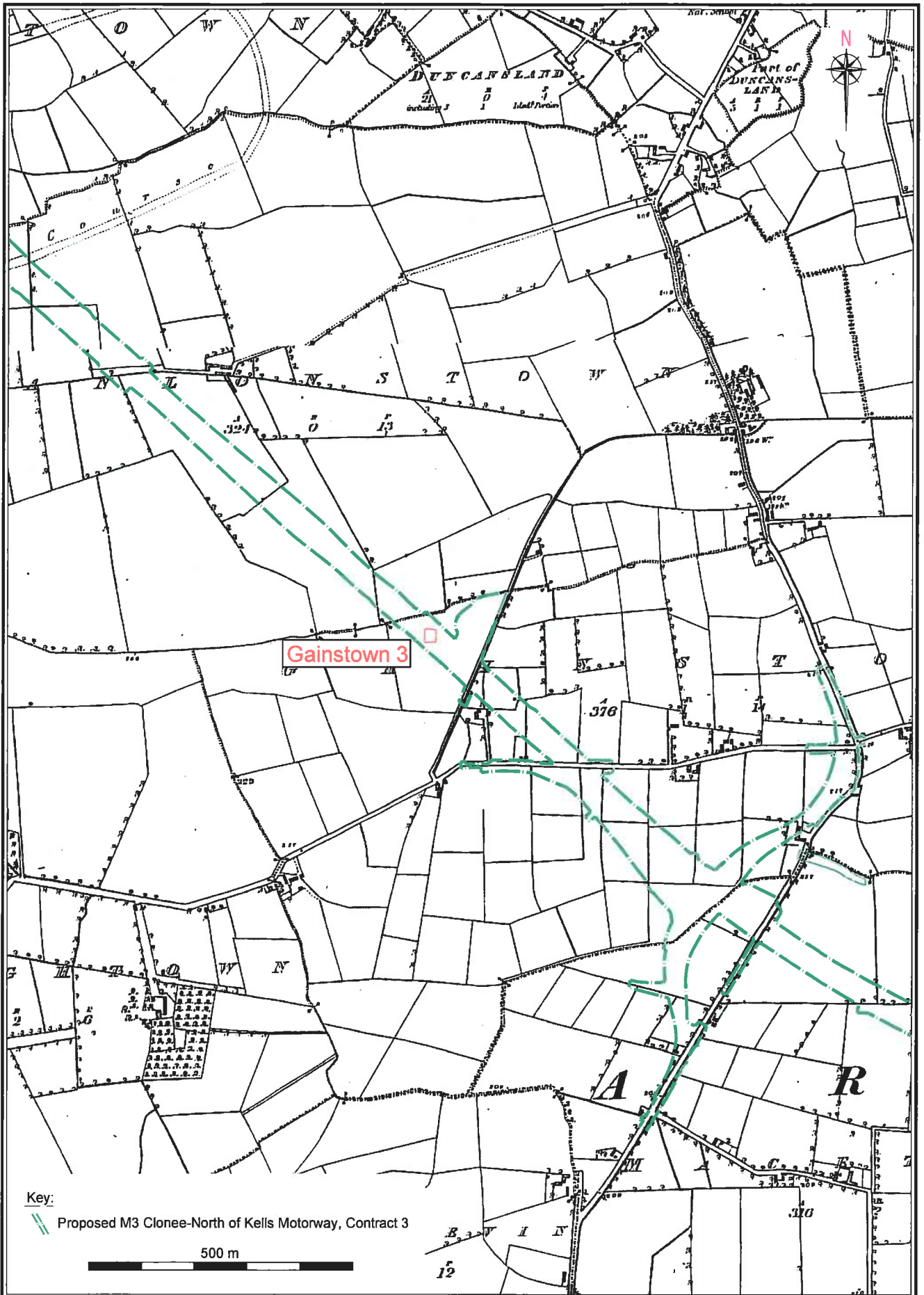


Key:  
 Proposed M3 Clonee-North of Kells Motorway, Contract 3

500 m

<b>Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.</b> Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth	Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3	Scale: 1:10,000 A4 Date: Jul '08
	Issued for: Excavation Report	Origin: OSI (1836)
	Client: Meath County Council	Drawing no.: 04_01_C2053i

Figure 3: Gainstown 3, extract from 1st edition OS map, Meath sheets 25 & 31



Key:

— Proposed M3 Clonee-North of Kells Motorway, Contract 3

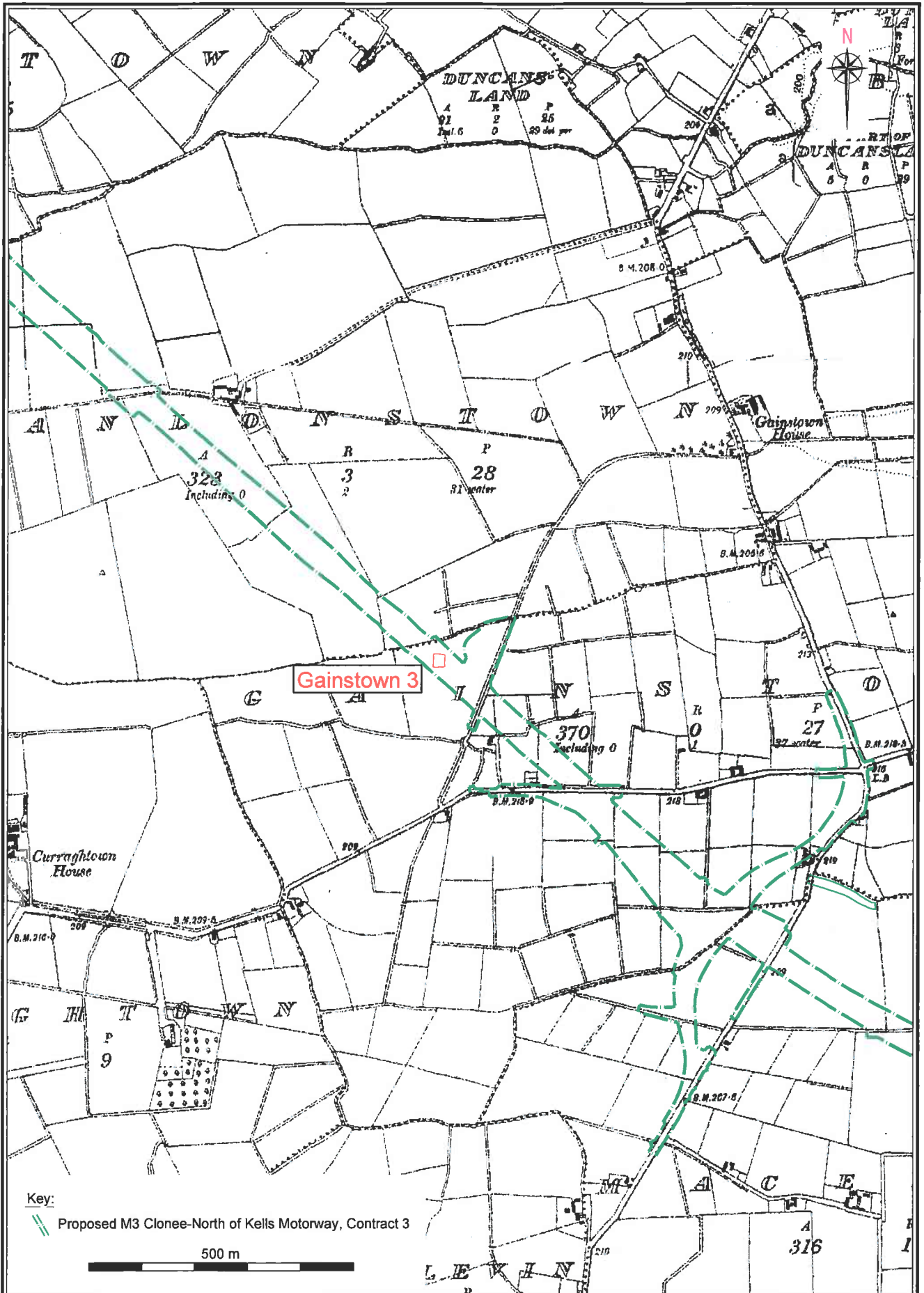
500 m

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Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3  
 Issued for: Excavation Report  
 Client: Meath County Council

Scale: 1:10,000 A4  
 Date: Jul '08  
 Origin: OSi (1882)  
 Drawing no.: 04\_01\_C2054i

Figure 4: Gainstown 3, extract from 2nd edition OS map, Meath sheets 25 & 31

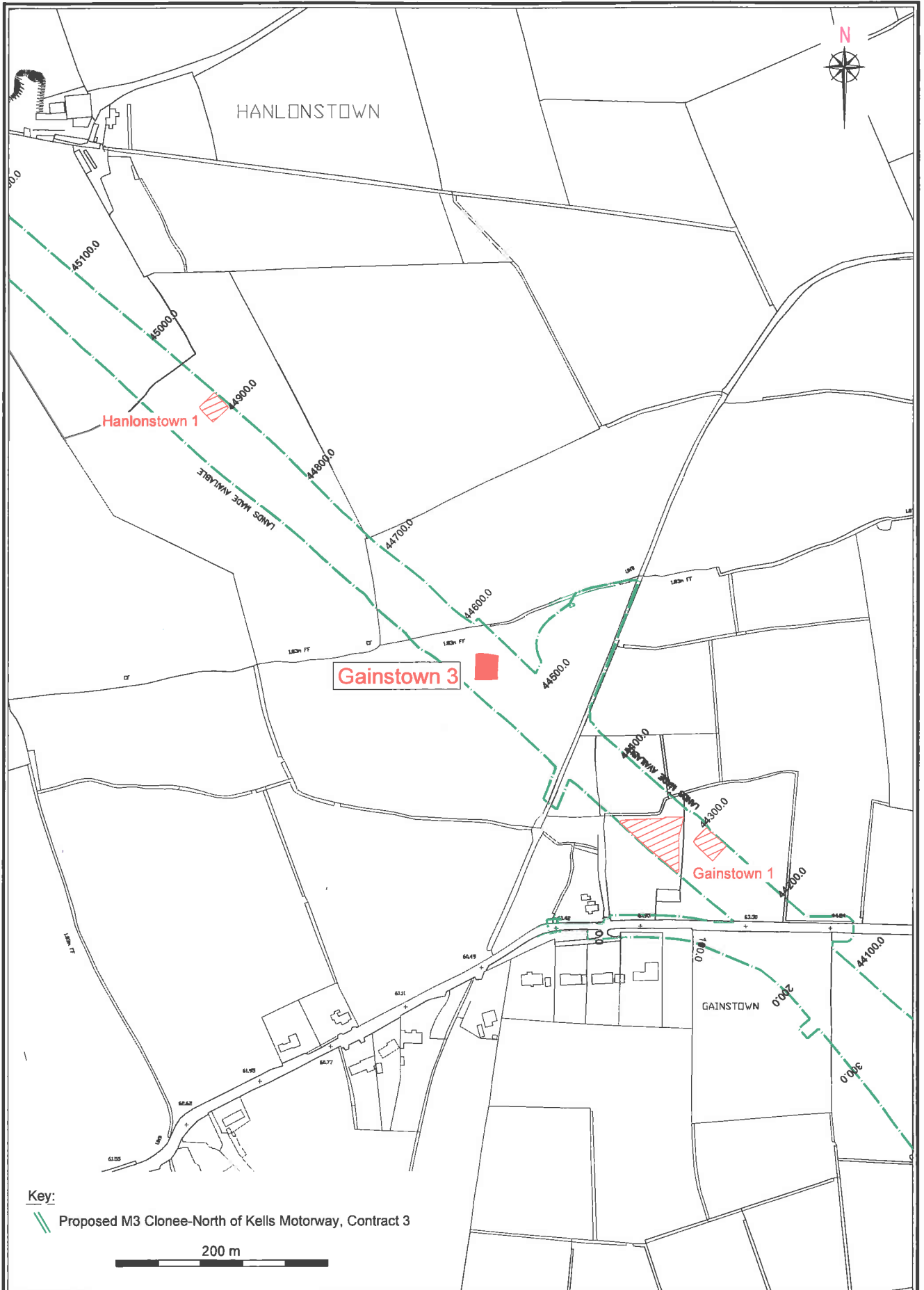


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 Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme  
 Contract 3, Gainstown 3  
 Issued for: Excavation Report  
 Client: Meath County Council

Scale: 1:10,000 A4  
 Date: Jul '08  
 Origin: OSi Sheets 25(1955) & 31(1909)  
 Drawing no.: 04\_01\_C2055i

Figure 5: Gainstown 3, extract from 3rd edition OS map, Meath sheets 25 & 31



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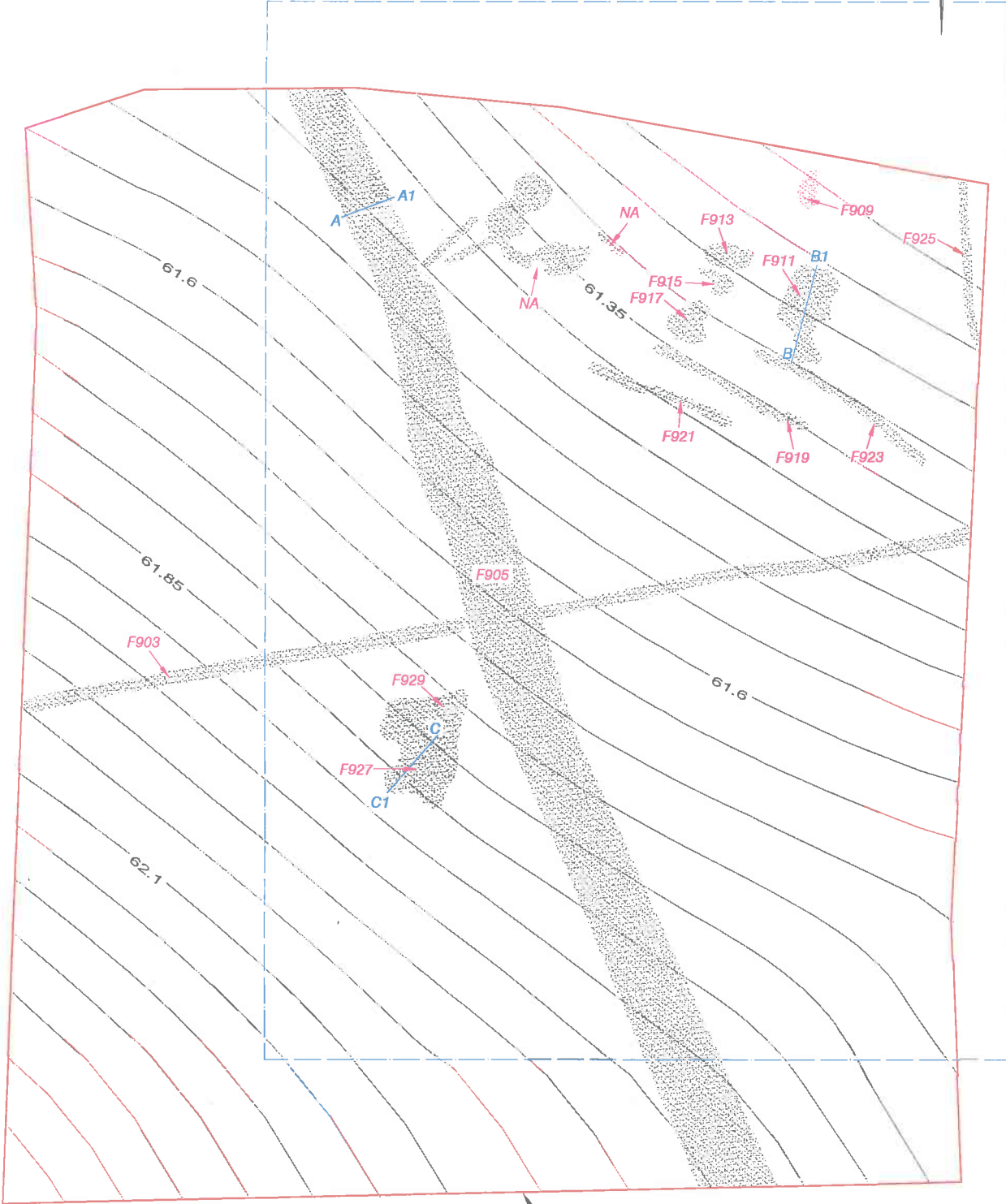
Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3  
 Issued for: Excavation Report  
 Client: Meath County Council

Scale: 1:5,000 A4  
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Figure 6: Detailed location of Gainstown 3



See Fig. 8 For Detail



Limit of excavation

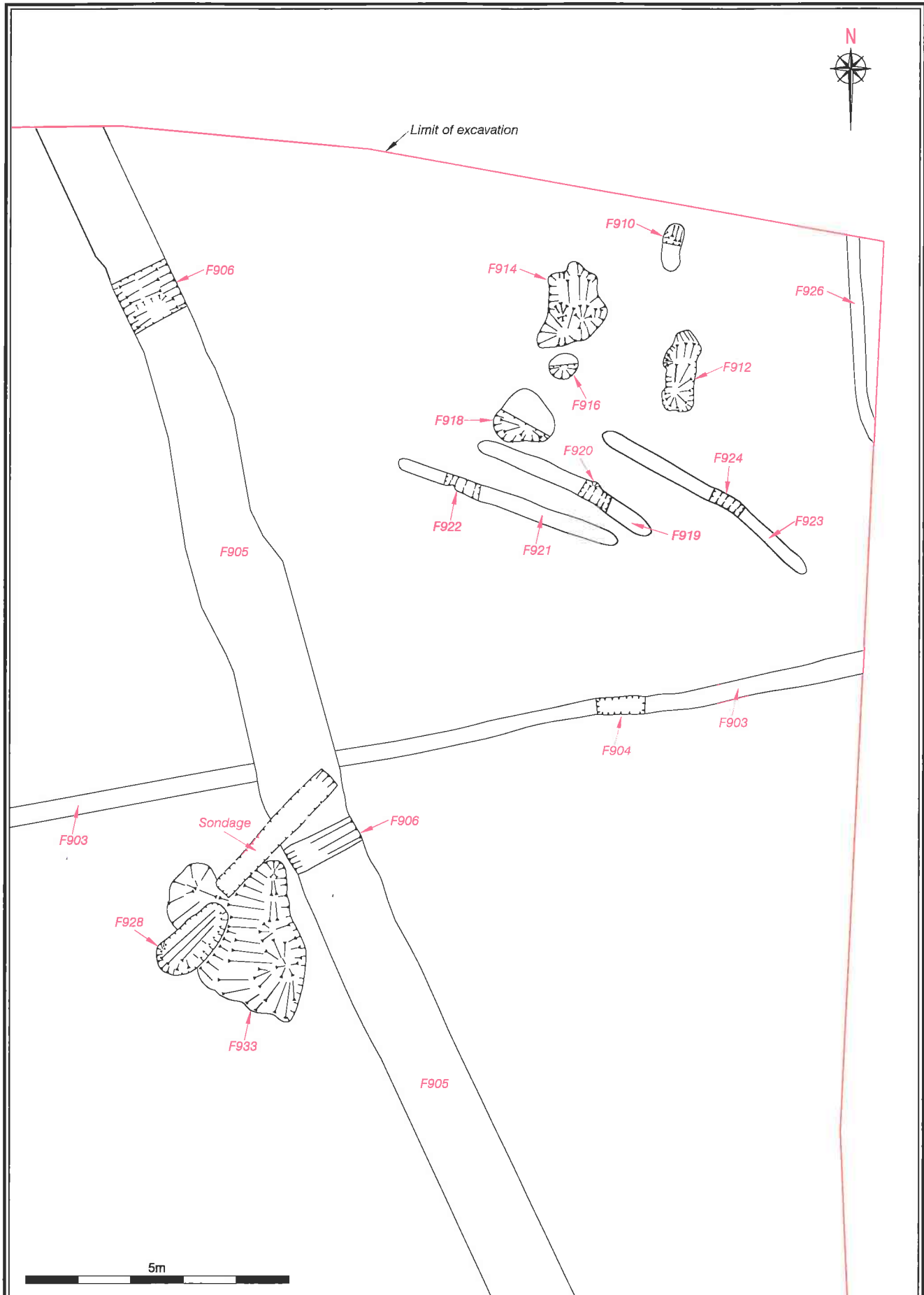
5m

**Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.** Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth

Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3  
Issued for: Excavation Report  
Client: Meath County Council

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Date: Jul '08  
Origin: Client/ACS Ltd.  
Drawing no.: 04\_01\_C20571

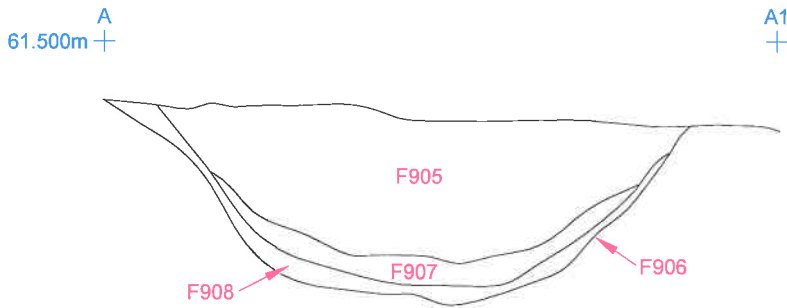
Figure 7: Pre-excavation plan of Gainstown 3



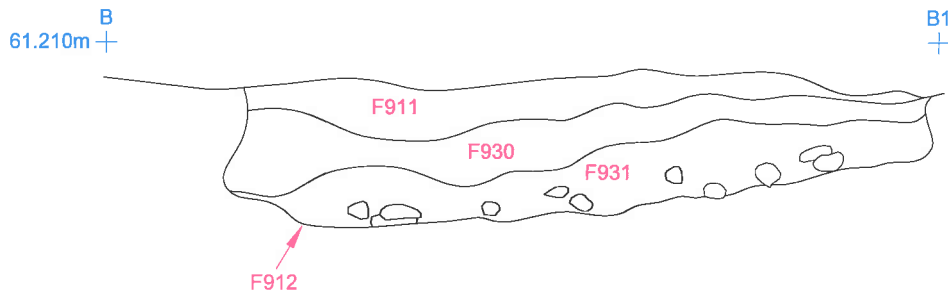
<b>Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.</b> Unit 21, Boyne Business Park, Greenhills, Drogheda, Co. Louth	Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3	Scale: 1:100 A4
	Issued for: Excavation Report	Date: Jul '08
	Client: Meath County Council	Origin: Client/ACS Ltd.
		Drawing no.: 04_01_C2058i

Figure 8: Mid-excavation plan of Gainstown 3

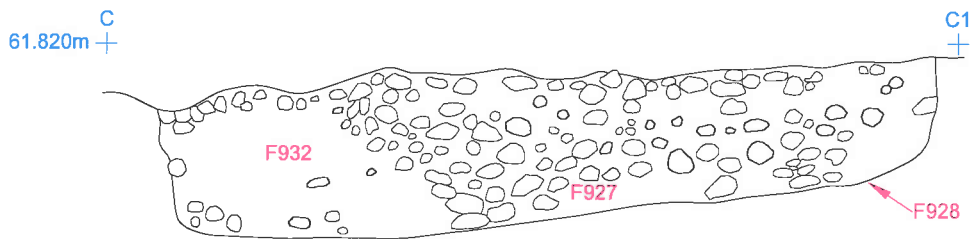
SECTION THROUGH F906



SECTION THROUGH F912



SECTION THROUGH F928



Key:



Stone

50cm



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Site: M3 Clonee-North of Kells PPP Scheme Contract 3, Gainstown 3

Issued for: Excavation Report

Client: Meath County Council

Scale: 1:15 A4

Date: Jul '08

Origin: Client/ACS Ltd.

Drawing no.: 04\_01\_C2059i

Figure 9: Sections of Gainstown 3



Plate 1: Furrows F921 etc., mid-excavation, looking southeast (04\_01\_Gainstown 3\_CP18\_10)



Plate 2: Ditch F906, sectioned, looking northwest (04\_01\_Gainstown 3\_CP18\_05)

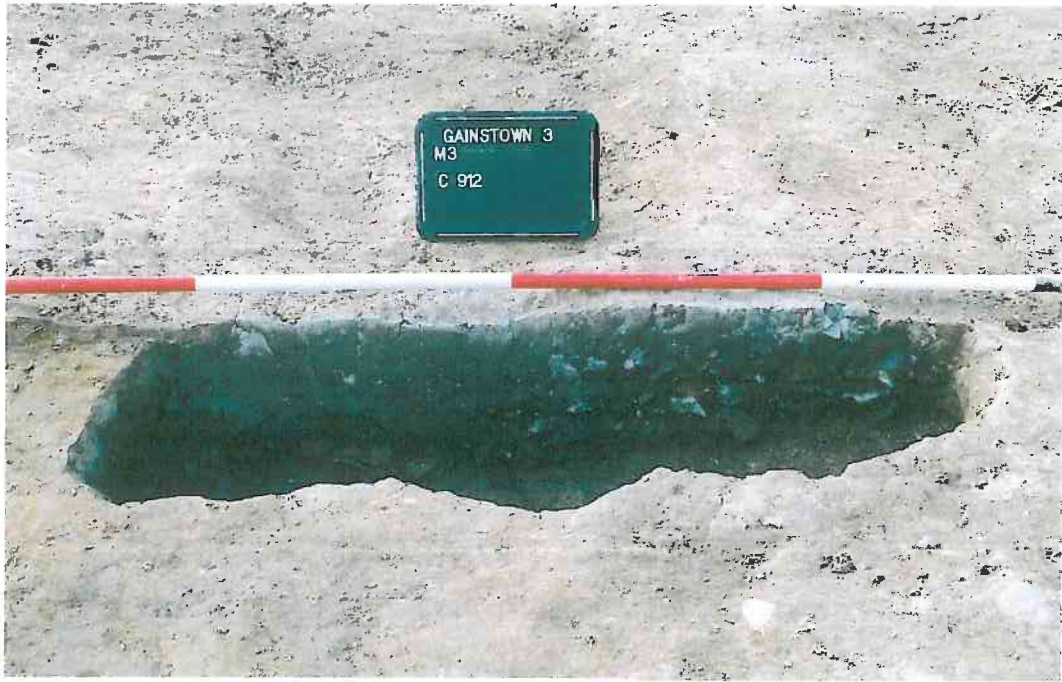


Plate 3: Pit F912, sectioned, looking west (04\_01\_Gainstown 3\_CP18\_23)



Plate 4: Pit F928, sectioned, looking southeast (04\_01\_Gainstown 3\_CP18\_24)



Plate 5: Tree root F914, sectioned, looking north (04\_01\_Gainstown 3\_CP18\_13)



Plate 6: Metalled surface F929, pre-excavation, looking north (04\_01\_Gainstown 3\_CP18\_16)

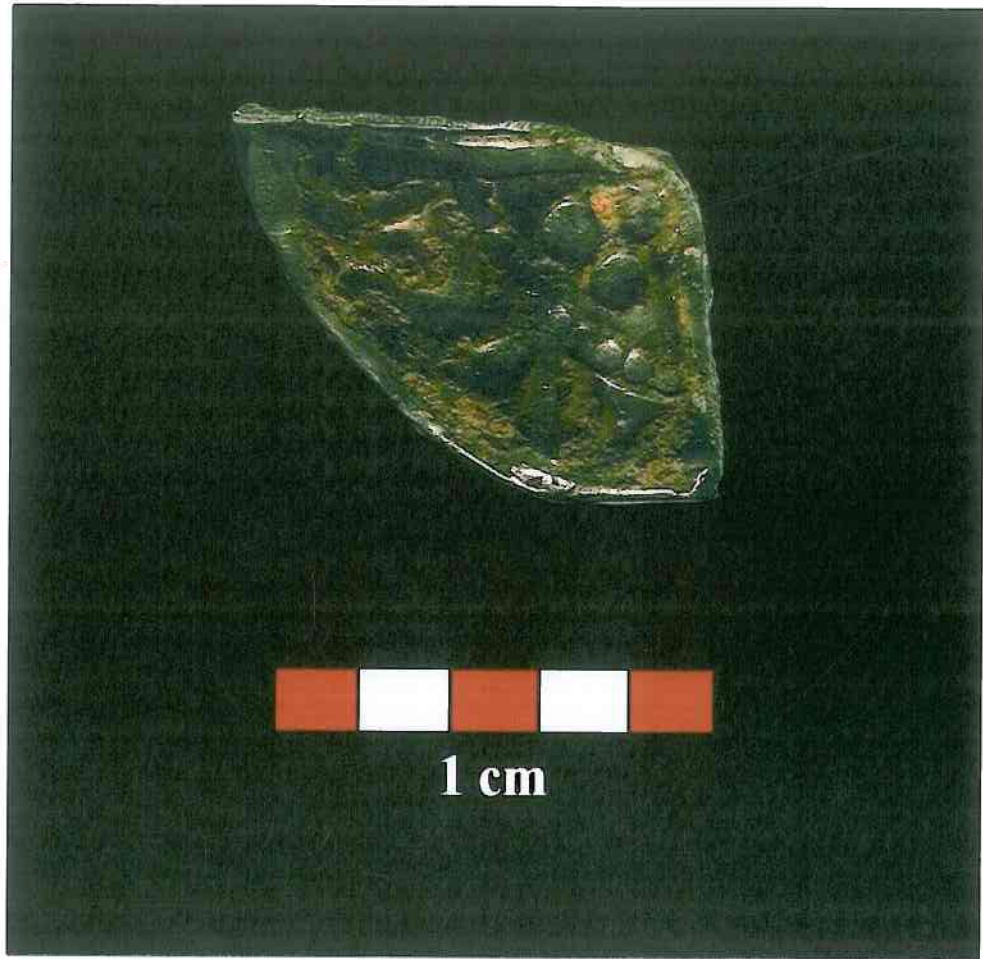


Plate 7: Silver Penny Fragment (A023/011:905:1)