

**SURVEY RESULTS****2000 / 104 N3 Navan to Dunshaughlin Road, Co. Meath****1. Survey Area**

- 1.1 A total of 105ha of magnetic scanning and 26ha of detailed survey was carried out along the route of the proposed road scheme. In all, 30 sites of archaeological potential were identified during the initial scan and investigated by recorded survey, Areas 1 to 30.
- 1.2 Figure 1 shows the scanned areas of the proposed road and the locations of the detailed survey areas at a scale of 1:50000.
- 1.3 **GSB Prospection** set out the survey grid and, with a few exceptions, the survey baselines were positioned along the centreline of the proposed road. Staff of **Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd.** tied in most of the survey baselines using a GPS system.

**2. Display**

- 2.1 The report volume comprises the text, an overall location diagram at 1:25000, location diagrams at 1:5000 (Figures 2 to 9), summary greyscales and summary interpretations of the results at a scale of 1:2500 (Figures 10 to 37).
- 2.2 The archive volume contains XY traces, dot density plots and interpretations of the survey results produced at a scale of 1:625. The display formats are discussed in the *Technical Information* section, at the end of the text.
- 2.3 Numbers in parentheses in the text of the report refer to anomalies highlighted in the relevant interpretation diagram.

**3. General Considerations - Complicating Factors**

- 3.1 In general, ground conditions were good for geophysical investigation; most fields were under pasture or stubble at the time of the survey. Some sections of the proposed route were wet and occupied by sedge grass that made evaluation awkward in some instances. All areas of woodland or forest could not be scanned or surveyed in detail, including a large plantation adjacent to the River Boyne crossing in the north.
- 3.2 One field was excluded from detailed survey due to a heavy ploughed surface. Aerial photographs showing a cropmark of a circular enclosure and a field system are present in this field (ME 038:001 and ME 038:002), although scanning showed very little. It could be that archaeological features exist within this field despite the lack of scanned anomalies.
- 3.3 Small-scale ferrous type anomalies were recorded in all detailed survey areas. Unless otherwise stated they are considered to be due to modern debris in the topsoil and are not considered to be of archaeological potential.

#### 4. Results of Scanning

- 4.1 With gradiometers in scanning mode, the road corridor was examined along traverses spaced at intervals of approximately 10m, a total of 8 traverses being undertaken in each field. During this operation, fluctuations in magnetic signal were observed on the instruments' display panel. Any significant variations were investigated more closely to determine their likely origin. The location of those anomalies considered to have archaeological potential was recorded on a map for subsequent detailed survey.
- 4.2 The level of magnetic background response along the entire route was found to be low. This helped to identify relatively low fluctuations and areas where only a slight increase in magnetic response was encountered.
- 4.3 Variations in magnetic response that were thought to be of archaeological potential were identified at 30 sites along the route of the proposed road. These varied in character; some contained a number of anomalies and linear responses that could be clearly traced. Others comprised a single response in an otherwise quiet background. In a few cases distinct regions of ferrous interference were observed that are likely to be of modern origin. However, all potential anomalies were subjected to detailed survey even where the archaeological potential was uncertain.

#### 5. Results of Detailed Survey

*The results will be described sequentially from north (Area 1) to south (Area 30).*

##### **Area 1**

*The northernmost monument near the proposed route lies to the north of Areas 1-3 and comprises the ruins of Cannistown Church (SMR No. ME031:002).*

- 5.1 Scanning detected responses of archaeological interest near a significant topographic low.
- 5.2 Subsequent detailed gradiometer survey located linear anomalies in the southeastern part of the grid. These are most likely part of a double-ditched enclosure. However, other weaker linear trends can be seen in the results parallel and perpendicular to these presumed ditches and may be due to ploughing.

##### **Areas 2A and 2B**

- 5.3 During scanning three possible areas of interest were located in the same field. These included two areas of increased response and one area of ferrous response.
- 5.4 An area of increased magnetic response containing several indistinct anomalies has been recorded in the northwestern corner of the survey block (Area 2A). This is bisected by a long meandering ditch anomaly (A). These responses may result from former settlement.
- 5.5 A large zone of ferrous disturbance located across the southeastern half of the field is assumed to be modern. Some linear responses in the southeast may be ditches of archaeological significance, although they may result from former field boundaries.

- 5.6 Finally, a broad band of increased responses (B) at the eastern limit of survey is probably caused by changes in soil depth at the edge of the field. Several weak linear trends have also been detected which are of unknown origin.

### Area 3

- 5.7 This field appeared to have an increase in background variation during scanning, but detailed survey merely identified some short linear anomalies in the north. These may have some archaeological significance, although the interpretation is tenuous. There is no clear archaeological pattern and these poorly defined anomalies may be due to agricultural practices.

### Areas 4A and 4B

*Immediately to the south of the proposed corridor a circular enclosure site is known through cropmark evidence at Ballinter Crossroads (SMR No. ME031:035). To the northeast at Dowdstown are the remains of a church which is incorporated into the grounds of Dalgan Park (SMR No. ME031:007).*

- 5.8 Strong linear anomalies were encountered on the edge of a topographic plateau during scanning. Other responses of archaeological potential were found to extend throughout this field.
- 5.9 Detailed gradiometer survey has detected a series of enclosures typical of a large settlement complex with possible field systems. The main enclosure (C) appears to be circular c. 35m in diameter with a secondary irregular extension to the east. There appears to be internal divisions, although no clear pattern can be discerned due to magnetic interference from an electricity pole (D). To the northeast, other possible rectilinear enclosures have been located which appear to be later additions. Several curvilinear responses and trends in the east of Area 4B may suggest at least one other sub-circular enclosure (E), approximately 15-20m in diameter. A broad rectilinear enclosure measuring approximately 40m x 60m can be seen in the results from Area 4A. Again, there are some weak anomalies and trends in the data that may suggest internal sub-enclosures or divisions. It is likely that different phases of settlement are represented in the data.
- 5.10 Linear concentrations of disturbed responses in the west of this survey block (Area 4A) may represent former boundaries or drains containing ferrous material. A large isolated ferrous response (F) in the east (Area 4B) result from a second electricity pole.

### Area 5

- 5.11 Except for one small isolated response scanning found this area to be very quiet. Detailed survey confirmed this with very little of archaeological interest recorded; it is most likely that the pit-like anomalies reflect more deeply buried ferrous debris. Two large responses result from electricity poles.

### Area 6

*A souterrain is known to the south of Areas 6-8 (SMR No. ME031:014).*

- 5.12 A background of undulating magnetic signal was encountered during the scan, which the detailed survey results show to comprise broad, amorphous anomalies. Such responses are

typical of natural magnetic variations in pedology or geology associated with low-lying wet areas. Some linear trends have also been detected which may be of archaeological interest, although this interpretation is cautious.

#### **Area 7**

- 5.13 Two broad responses were located by scanning at the edges of this area, along with a region of ferrous disturbance. At the time of survey this field was very waterlogged.
- 5.14 Detailed survey confirmed the existence of two clusters of broad, amorphous anomalies (G and H). These responses appear to be natural in origin, although some of the more linear elements may have archaeological potential. A distinct linear anomaly (I) can be seen in the results, which may be associated with the western cluster of anomalies (G). It is possible that natural or geomorphological features have been exploited by past human activity, for example, water management or channels. Several curvilinear trends can be seen in the results, which may be of interest but are barely discernible above background levels.
- 5.15 Detailed survey was extended to the south of the proposed centreline to encompass anomalies of archaeological interest. An area of increased magnetic variation containing large pits and negative linear anomalies has been detected that could indicate structural remains of unknown date. This interpretation is strengthened as the responses coincide with a platform visible in the field, and a former well depicted on maps.
- 5.16 Large areas of magnetic disturbance and concentrations of ferrous responses most likely represent iron or fired material. While it is possible that these are associated with former structural remains, it is more likely they reflect dumping of debris to reclaim boggy land.

#### **Area 8**

- 5.17 Scanning noted an area of magnetic noise associated with a change in ground cover at the western and eastern edges of this field. A zone of magnetic disturbance can be seen in the survey results that almost certainly reflects a spread of ferrous debris. Some broad and weak responses have also been recorded which are probably natural in origin.

#### **Areas 9A & 9B**

*A subcircular ringfort (SMR No. ME031:015) has been recorded to the south. A substantial house and farm lies in ruins a short distance to the south of Areas 9 and 10.*

- 5.18 During scanning an increase in background response was encountered throughout this field, with several possible anomalies of archaeological interest noted for detailed recorded survey.
- 5.19 An unusual linear ditch response (J) can be seen in the centre of the detailed results. The peculiar nature of the anomaly is due to plough damage spreading magnetically enhanced material.
- 5.20 Several short linear anomalies and trends have been located in Area 9A which may form a rectilinear pattern. It is possible that these responses also reflect fragmentary archaeological deposits, although it is equally likely they result from natural variations or agricultural practices.

- 5.21 A region of increased magnetic response has been detected alongside some linear responses and pit anomalies in Area 9B. This group of responses could represent plough damaged archaeological features.
- 5.22 A large ferrous response in Area 9B is caused by an electricity pylon and will have masked any anomalies of archaeological strength, if present.

#### **Area 10**

- 5.21 The initial scan indicated an increase in magnetic response that appeared to be mostly ferrous in nature.
- 5.22 A scatter of ferrous debris was recorded across the site but a more substantial region of strong magnetic disturbance was noted in the western part of the survey area. The anomalies are characteristic of those produced by building debris (brick and tile), possibly dumped in the field to improve drainage. The western part of the field was wet and boggy at the time of the survey.
- 5.23 Several linear responses and pit anomalies of archaeological potential have been detected in the southern part of the survey area. There is the suggestion of an enclosure, although the responses are broad and are more likely to represent natural soil variations, such as those connected with natural drainage.

#### **Area 11**

- 5.24 During scanning, a series of mainly ferrous anomalies were detected either side of a boundary on a hillside sloping up to the south and east.
- 5.25 A region of ferrous disturbance was recorded in the western part of the survey area and to the north of the boundary that divides the survey area into two. This is likely to be modern in origin though a few anomalies have the potential to be archaeological and two may represent fired objects or pits containing burnt debris (K and L). Therefore, the ferrous disturbance could be caused by localised small scale industrial activity.
- 5.26 Several linear trends have been recorded, as well as possible pit anomalies, but no clear pattern emerges from the results to support an archaeological interpretation.
- 5.27 An increase in magnetic response was noted in the centre of the eastern part of the survey. A cluster of pit anomalies and linear responses has been detected but sub-surface soil variations and/or agricultural disturbance may have produced these anomalies.

#### **Area 12**

- 5.28 Several isolated anomalies were encountered on a hilltop and on a southeastern slope during the scan.
- 5.29 A group of pit anomalies and ditch lengths have been detected in the centre of the survey area, some of which are magnetically strong and well defined. The responses could indicate remains of small-scale settlement activity, though the ditch anomalies could represent relatively recent boundaries. Other anomalies, such as the east-west trends are magnetically weak and intermittent in nature; they may be agricultural in origin.

- 5.30 Ferrous disturbance in the southeastern corner of the survey area is due to an adjacent fence, water trough and gate.

### Area 13

*Areas 13-18 lie within a group of monuments at Lismullin, identified during the desktop study as an area of high archaeological potential. Remains associated with the Holy Trinity Priory (SMR No. ME032:024), a souterrain (SMR No. ME032:049) and a barrow (SMR No. ME032:053) are documented in the vicinity. A tumulus (SMR No. ME032:023) lies in a field a short distance to the south. In addition, another tumulus is known to the north (SMR No. ME032:020) along with a further souterrain immediately to the north (SMR No. ME032:021).*

- 5.31 An increase in magnetic response and several small-scale anomalies of potential interest were observed during the scan.
- 5.32 Linear responses and some magnetically weak and broad changes in magnetic response have been recorded in the eastern part of the survey area. There are suggestions of rectangular arrangements of anomalies in the data that may relate to possible building remains but the interpretation is far from certain. The survey area was extended a short distance outside the proposed road corridor in an attempt to assist in the interpretation of the data but the results remain inconclusive.
- 5.33 The high density of responses from ferrous debris apparent in the data, could represent recent ground disturbance and may account for the magnetic variations recorded in the survey area. However, an archaeological origin cannot be dismissed as the anomalies may represent ploughed out earthworks associated with settlement.

### Area 14

- 5.34 During scanning a high level of background response was encountered and hollows in the ground were visible in the field. Detailed gradiometer survey confirmed the scanning and located some responses of archaeological potential. No clear pattern emerges from the results, although several trends suggest ploughing may have damaged archaeological deposits.

### Area 15

- 5.35 A series of anomalies that appeared to be associated with a prominent rise in topography was observed at the time of the scan.
- 5.36 Strong magnetic anomalies, both pit type and linear, have been identified at the northern corner of the area. In particular, a possible burnt feature coincides with the top of the hill and may be related to industrial activity; burnt debris was visible on the ground surface at the time of the survey. This may relate to *fulachta fiadh*.
- 5.37 There are suggestions of enclosures at the edge of the survey and possible field systems but the pattern is fragmentary. There is insufficient evidence to clearly indicate the presence of a settlement site. The lack of clarity may be due to ploughing, the field being in arable use at the time of the survey.

**Area 16**

*The site lies to the south of the Lismullin group of ancient monuments referred to above and is located on high ground between Tara and Skreen. To the east a system of small rectangular fields is recorded at the foot of Skreen Hill (SMR No. ME032:026). An enclosure site to the west is marked as a fort on maps (SMR No. ME032:031).*

- 5.38 A group of anomalies was encountered that is coincident with a marked rise in topography during scanning.
- 5.39 A complex of varying types of magnetic anomalies has been recorded. The most substantial is a series of linear responses that are assumed to represent former field boundaries.
- 5.40 A noticeable increase in magnetic response is visible in the eastern part of the site. Several strong pit anomalies are apparent in the data that are thought to be archaeologically significant. Survey was extended a short distance to the east of the road line in order to determine whether or not these anomalies were part of a settlement site, but the results remain inconclusive
- 5.41 A series of weak trends has been identified and some may be of interest, being possible extensions of the former field boundaries. Most, however, are aligned northeast-southwest and are likely to be due to relatively recent cultivation practises.
- 5.42 A broad response in the southwestern corner coincides with sloping ground and is thought to be natural and/or topographic in origin. Two large ferrous responses recorded in the northwestern part of the survey area are due to horse jumps.

**Area 17**

- 5.43 An isolated anomaly was identified at the time of the scan within an otherwise quiet level of background response.
- 5.44 Three small pit type anomalies and some linear trends have been identified. They are minor magnetic variations for which the interpretation is doubtful. The survey results serve to illustrate the generally quiet nature of magnetic response observed along this part of the proposed road corridor.

**Area 18**

*The village of Skreen overlooks the site from the east. A cluster of ancient remains is recorded at Skreen in the SMR and some of these are connected with a monastic foundation. In addition, an enclosure site or fort (SMR No. ME032:031) lies to the west of the proposed road and a ringfort (SMR No. ME032:032) is present a short distance to the southeast. During field work a set of earthworks was noted downslope to the west.*

- 5.45 A broad and possible linear response was detected during scanning that was seen to coincide with a slight hillock.
- 5.46 A ring ditch, probably indicating the remains of a barrow, was recorded in the eastern part of the site. Several linear responses and trends have also been detected that are on a general east-west alignment and could represent redundant boundaries. Some lie in the vicinity of the ring ditch and there may be a relationship with the burial feature.

- 5.47 A cluster of linear responses and pit anomalies at the northern edge of the survey area coincide with a hollow and may be natural in origin or due to minor quarrying.
- 5.48 A burnt feature or pit containing burnt material may have produced a strong anomaly recorded in the southwestern part of the survey area. However, the possibility cannot be dismissed that modern ferrous debris in the topsoil has generated this response.

#### **Area 19**

- 5.49 At the time of the scan a series of linear responses was observed within a high level of magnetic background response. The boundary of the field enclosing these anomalies is sub-circular and thought to be of archaeological significance.
- 5.50 A circular enclosure, measuring 45m in diameter, has been recorded at the southwestern boundary of the field. Extending out from the enclosure are a series of ditch type anomalies, some enclosing small fields or gardens on the northern side. The linear responses on the western side of the survey area coincide with steep slopes down to a stream and, therefore, may be partly topographic in origin.
- 5.51 A semicircular ditch response within the enclosure is thought to divide off a 'dwelling' area. While no anomalies suggestive of occupation are apparent within the 'dwelling', pit anomalies present both inside and outside the circular enclosure are indications of occupation.
- 5.52 A series of linear trends, predominantly aligned north-south, are present throughout the survey area, slightly confusing the interpretation. They are likely to be due to more recent cultivation. Other weak and intermittent trends may relate to field systems associated with the enclosure. However, it appears that due to their remoteness from areas of occupation activity little magnetically enhanced material is contained within the fill of these features.

#### **Areas 20, 21 and 22**

*An enclosure site (SMR No. ME038:001) and a field system (SMR No. 038:002) have been recorded as cropmarks on the line of the proposed road a short distance to the north. Possible deserted medieval settlement and a field system has been recorded to the west of the road line.*

- 5.53 The scan of this low lying region identified strong magnetic anomalies over an extensive area. Area 21 coincides with a series of earthwork like features enclosed within a curving bank. Area 22 lies within a field that contains earthworks that indicate past cultivation and a trackway; this may be part of the deserted medieval village.
- 5.54 The results from all three areas exhibit numbers of broad magnetically strong responses. These anomalies are characteristic of those produced by natural soil variations associated with palaeochannels.
- 5.55 A large ferrous response recorded at the southern edge of Area 20 is due to the presence of a bore hole cap. Other ferrous debris has been recorded but no anomalies of archaeological interest.

**Area 23**

- 5.56 An isolated increase in magnetic response, mostly ferrous in nature, was observed during scanning. In addition, burnt material was noticed on the ground surface.
- 5.57 Several small pit anomalies and linear trends are indicated on the interpretation diagram. They are accompanied by a dense scatter of ferrous responses. It is likely that the pit anomalies are also due to modern debris and ploughing, but an archaeological origin cannot be ruled out.

**Area 24**

- 5.58 A broad linear magnetic response and an increase in magnetic activity were encountered during the scan. These responses were seen to be associated with a prominent rise in topography.
- 5.59 A cluster of pit anomalies and short ditch lengths were recorded on the centreline of the proposed road. A westward extension of the survey area revealed part of a circular enclosure that was subsequently investigated in total by further survey. It measures 30m in diameter and lies at the centre of the survey area. It is surrounded by numerous pit anomalies, of which some are well defined. These features may relate to unenclosed settlement, but the possibility that they are primarily associated with a burial site should also be considered. The pit anomalies could represent individual burials, though it is rare to detect such features using geophysical techniques.
- 5.60 A series of magnetically weak responses has been recorded in the eastern part of the survey area. These anomalies may represent buried ditch features, supporting the interpretation that this is a settlement site. However, they are ill-defined and may be due to natural soil variations and/or agricultural disturbance.
- 5.61 Recent plough disturbance is indicated by a series of narrowly spaced trends running east-west which has confused the interpretation. They are most prominent in the northwestern corner of the survey area where they coincide with regions of increased magnetic response. The results suggest that archaeological deposits have been damaged or destroyed by ploughing.
- 5.62 Linear anomalies running east-west on the southern edge of the survey area may relate to former field boundaries.

**Area 25A**

- 5.63 Scanning revealed an isolated pit type anomaly adjacent to a plantation of trees that appears to be a parkland feature. Slight earthworks were visible in the field and were thought to be of archaeological significance.
- 5.64 A few pit type anomalies and weak trends have been recorded within a generally quiet level of background response. The interpretation is tentative but an archaeological origin for these cannot be ruled out entirely. However, it is likely that soil variations, minor debris and recent agriculture have produced these anomalies.

**Area 25B**

- 5.65 A region of elevated magnetic responses was observed during the scan in an otherwise very quiet level of background response.
- 5.66 A cluster of pit anomalies has been recorded within a region of increased magnetic response in the northwestern part of the survey area. Several linear trends and other pit anomalies have also been detected but the overall pattern is not readily identifiable as archaeological. However, these anomalies may be associated with the results from Area 26, situated in the field immediately to the south of this survey area. The possibility that the responses result from natural variations or agricultural practice cannot be dismissed.

**Area 26**

*A 'D' shaped earthwork enclosure with internal divisions lies immediately to the west of the site. It is recorded on maps but apparently not in the SMR. These earthworks lie between two plantation enclosures separated by a few hundred metres, one due north and adjacent to Area 25A, and the other due south. All three may be part of a complex of parkland features possibly preserving earlier monuments.*

- 5.67 Numerous strong magnetic anomalies were found to cluster in the southern part of the field during the scan.
- 5.68 Survey was expanded to the west of the proposed road centre line in order to determine the full nature and extent of the site. A square enclosure with rounded corners measuring 20m x 20m is surrounded by a second similar shaped enclosure measuring 60m x 60m. The intervening space is occupied by a complex pattern of internal divisions and pit responses. This area clearly contains occupation remains, though it is noticeable that the responses recorded within the central enclosure are weaker by comparison to those detected immediately outside.
- 5.69 A third enclosure ditch (M) extends off to the north and contained within are further subdivisions and evidence of occupation activity. One particularly strong magnetic anomaly (N) may represent the remains of a hearth or a pit containing highly enhanced material.
- 5.70 Other enclosure ditches are present to the east of the third enclosure and several pit anomalies. However, the level of magnetic response is lower, suggesting that occupation activity may have been of lower intensity here as it is apparently further from the core of settlement. A circular enclosure (O) lies at the centre of these responses.
- 5.71 There are suggestions that another enclosure extends to the south of the main complex, and responses and trends are present on the fringes of the settlement. Some of the anomalies are quite strong, in particular a cluster of responses in the northwest (P) and along the eastern edge (Q) of the survey area. These could indicate more isolated sites of anthropogenic activity away from the main settlement areas. It is possible that the anomalies recorded in Site 25B, in the field immediately to the north are part of an extensive area of occupation.
- 5.72 An adjacent post and wire fence has caused ferrous responses along the eastern limit of the survey area.

**Areas 27A and 27B**

- 5.73 Several isolated pit type anomalies were found during scanning across an undulating rough pasture field. Two sample areas were investigated by detailed survey.
- 5.74 An intermittent curving linear response and several pit anomalies have been recorded in Area 27A and might relate to minor settlement activity. Several trends have been recorded but they could be agricultural in origin.
- 5.75 A number of minor pit anomalies were detected in Area 27B, in an otherwise quiet level of magnetic response. These responses are less substantial than those recorded in Area 27A. The archaeological interpretation is doubtful, however, as these anomalies could have been produced by natural soil variation.

**Area 28**

- 5.76 Numerous linear and pit anomalies were scanned on a noticeable plateau area immediately to the east of the present N3 road. Off the plateau a series of low earthwork enclosures can be seen to extend northward along the line of the proposed road corridor.
- 5.77 A 'U' shaped enclosure occupies the raised area in the southern part of the field. The interior is occupied by a series of dividing ditch type anomalies, some forming almost circular enclosures. Pit responses are also present that indicate possible occupation activity. Other linear features extend from the enclosure and may form further enclosures to the south and east. It is likely that these responses are part of a larger complex that extends westward beyond the present N3 road (Area 29).
- 5.78 The pattern is partly obscured by a series of parallel linear trends that relate to more recent cultivation practices. These can be traced as ridges visible in the field.
- 5.79 A southwest-northeast linear response (R) runs diagonally across the survey area from a gate at the roadside. It relates to a boundary or trackway; the land to the south of the track is noticeably higher than that to the north.
- 5.80 A linear alignment of ferrous responses in the northern part of the survey is due to modern debris or a drainage feature. The low earthwork enclosures visible in the field have produced no clear magnetic response but slight trends in the data have been detected. They may be recent field boundaries.
- 5.81 Ferrous disturbance at the southwestern edge of the grid is probably due to hard standing at a field gate. Other ferrous responses have been caused by adjacent field boundaries.

**Area 29**

- 5.82 A series of strong magnetic responses was observed during scanning immediately to the west of the present N3 road. The anomalies were seen to coincide with a slight mound on a roughly circular platform.
- 5.83 A 'D' shaped enclosure measuring 70m x 55m at the maximum extent has been recorded in the centre of the survey area. Two clear internal subdivisions, one rectangular and one curving are visible in the data. Within these are numerous magnetically strong pit anomalies that attest to intensive occupation activity.

- 5.84 Anomalies (S) appear to form part of a second enclosure containing several internal ditches. Ditch anomalies running westward from the 'D' shaped enclosure relate to adjoining field systems. The level of magnetic response drops rapidly to the southwest although some minor pit type anomalies have been recorded. Linear responses and weak trends in the southern part of the survey area may be agricultural in nature. It is possible that this activity has disturbed archaeological deposits at the periphery of the site.
- 5.85 Ferrous type disturbance along the southeastern boundary is thought to relate to the excavation of a deep rock cut ditch that forms the southwestern boundary of the field. It is a major drainage feature and heavy plant might have required hard standing, such as building debris, for access to the site. The magnetic disturbance will have masked responses from archaeological features that may be present.
- 5.86 Ferrous disturbance in the northeastern part of the survey area is due to adjacent fences. A pipe or drain runs across the northern part of the survey area.

### **Area 30**

- 5.87 Two isolated archaeological type anomalies were identified at the time of the scan.
- 5.88 A number of linear ditch type responses have been recorded. The character and arrangement of these anomalies suggests that they are the remains of a relatively modern field system or drainage features. A series of weaker trends parallel the alignment of the ditch anomalies and are due to ploughing which respects the boundaries.
- 5.89 A number of pit anomalies have been detected but for the most part an archaeological interpretation is tentative. Those in the southeastern corner of the survey area are the most substantial but they could have been produced by modern debris at the field edge.
- 5.90 A group of anomalies in the northern half of the survey area, comprising trends, areas of increased magnetic response and isolated pit anomalies, may be of archaeological interest. There is the suggestion of an enclosure with an increase in response in the centre. However, the anomalies are very weak and poorly defined; they may equally be agricultural and/or natural in origin.
- 5.91 Ferrous disturbance in the centre of the eastern edge of the survey area is due to an electricity pole and modern debris nearby.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 Gradiometers were used in scanning mode to identify areas of archaeological potential. A total of thirty points along the proposed route were identified for detailed survey.
- 6.2 The detailed survey located six major archaeological sites lying within the following seven areas: 4, 18, 19, 24, 26, 28 and 29. It is suggested that Areas 18 and 24 may be burial sites.
- 6.3 Most of the other survey areas contain anomalies that are thought to be of archaeological interest. However, it should be stressed that many of these are weak and/or ill-defined making an archaeological interpretation inconclusive.

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**Project Assistants:** J Leigh and A Shields

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**Date of Report:** 5<sup>th</sup> January 2001

### **References:**

Kilfeather, Dr. A 2000 *Environmental Impact Assessment, Archaeology, N3 Navan-Dunshaughlin.* Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd. Unpublished report

## SITE SUMMARY SHEET

2000 / 104 N3 Navan to Dunshaughlin Road, Co. Meath

NGR: N 880 636 to N 954 530

### Location, topography and geology

The section of the proposed route investigated by this survey starts begins at Kennastown (Cannistown) 4km south of Navan Co. Meath. The line of the road runs southeast to cross the present N3 road at Blundelstown. The route continues due south and to the west of Skreen, Collierstown and Garretstown. It re-crosses the N3 at Roestown, 1km to the north of Dunshaughlin and ends at Cooksland 1km east of Dunshaughlin. The geology comprises limestone and areas of millstone grit, sandstone and siltstone. These outcrop in some areas but are generally overlain by varying levels of morainic drift.

### Archaeology

The Hill of Tara lies approximately 2km to the east of the proposed road corridor. It is one of Ireland's most famous archaeological sites, a centre of political and cultural activity since prehistoric times. The surrounding landscape contains many archaeological sites (Kilfeather 2000). They are visible as earthworks or have been recorded as cropmarks. Clusters of archaeological sites lie near the road at Lismullin and Skreen where they range from prehistoric to medieval in date. Two sites, recorded on aerial photographs, are situated on the line of the proposed road itself. A cropmark of a circular enclosure (SMR No. ME 038:001) and a field system (SMR No. ME 038:002) occupy the same field and are probably associated.

### Aims of Survey

The aims of the survey were to locate and identify the nature and extent of any archaeological remains that may be present within the corridor of the proposed road. The work forms part of an archaeological assessment being undertaken by **Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd.**

### Summary of Results \*

This report describes the use of gradiometer scanning and detailed survey to identify potential archaeological sites along a proposed road corridor.

Six major sites of archaeological interest have been identified. Four of these indicate the remains of settlement activity surrounded by field systems, and in two instances they extend to around two hectares in size. Two sites appear to be burial sites. In addition, ten other sites are considered to have strong archaeological potential. Groups of archaeological type anomalies have been recorded elsewhere, but no identifiable pattern emerges from the results that confirms an anthropogenic origin.

**\* It is essential that this summary is read in conjunction with the detailed results of the survey.**

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