EXCAVATIONS IN LIMERICK CITY

The first phase of archaeological excavations at Baal’s Bridge, which formed the vital link between Irishtown and Englishstown throughout the medieval and post-medieval periods (1200-1800), has recently been completed. The excavations took place as a consequence of the Limerick Main Drainage and Lower Shannon Navigation Scheme, and were directed by Edmond O’Donovan of Margaret Gowen & Co.

The excavations centred on the site of the medieval bridge, demolished in 1830 in advance of the construction of the current Baal’s Bridge, and involved opening cuttings under Baal’s Bridge and in the Abbey River. This work has demonstrated how the medieval town grew and developed, portions of the riverbank having been reclaimed for the construction of housing in the late fourteenth/early fifteenth century.

A large number of Iron Age, Early Christian, Viking, medieval and post-medieval artefacts have been recovered from the riverbed, including beads, coins, horse equipment, pins, weapons and so on. A bronze zoomorphic object has been definitively established, although the style and decoration suggest a date in the Early Christian period. An early post-medieval (c. 1600) seal bearing the ‘Limerick Port’ coat of arms was also recovered from the riverbed.

Objects dating from the Williamite siege of the city include iron and stone cannon and musket balls of various sizes, gun flints, spurs, fragments of iron mortar bombs, grenades, iron bayonets and coins (Jacobite gun money).

LANDMARK UNDERWATER CONFERENCE

A ground-breaking conference on underwater archaeology, organised by the Network for Underwater Archaeology, will be held on 25-26 March in the University of Ulster at Coleraine. Entitled ‘Towards an understanding of maritime archaeology in Ireland’, the conference will feature a wide variety of experts speaking on topics ranging from site discoveries and investigations to legislation and the roles of various statutory bodies. It is proposed that the proceedings of the conference will be published at a later date. Those interested in attending should contact Colin Breen at Coleraine 265 323093. Details are also available at the following web-site address: http://www.ulst.ac.uk/faculty/science/crg/nu/a/nuah.htm