Discovery of siege bomb is significant

By JESSICA QUINN

The mortar bomb found in the Abbey River has been described as a significant archaeological find. It has been taken to Cork for further investigation.

The seventeenth century mortar bomb was discovered during excavation work for the main drainage scheme. It was removed in a delicate operation from the river bed by an army bomb disposal unit and brought to Collins barracks in Cork. It has now been moved to Haulbowline naval docks in Cork where it will be X-rayed and tested to see if it is safe.

Capt Dan Harvey of Collins barracks explained that with historical finds such as this preservation is the most important thing. "Our main purpose is to make these finds safe so they can be preserved in their original state for heritage purposes, not to have a controlled explosion which would have happened in the past. We try to leave as much as we can intact."

The bomb disposal unit were called to the scene once the mortar bomb was discovered and they were given a gardaí escort to the bridge. Traffic was closed along the quays as the bomb disposal team went to work.

According to Capt Harvey, the mortar bomb was about 13 inches wide, resembling another mortar bomb which was found last year in the river bed. However, this mortar bomb is a much more significant find because it is in better condition with more features intact. Two carrying handles are still visible on the bomb, and a wooden plug hole has survived. This plug hole would probably have held the fuse rain of the bomb, says Capt Harvey. "I wouldn't like to be standing near it when it went off. It could cause a lot of damage," he said.

Edmond O'Donovan, archaeologist with Limerick Corporation, explained the historical importance of the find. The bomb dates back to the siege of Limerick in 1690. Historical sources suggest it was fired during William of Orange's first siege. This was when he tried to destroy the city by bombarding the quays before launching into battle.

"The fact that the object can be associated with a particular battle and that it has been recovered from an archaeological context adds to the significance of the find," he said.