Many siege finds in Abbey River dig

By DENIS O'SHAUGHNESSY

The excavations along the Abbey River bed have yielded a rich array of funds for the archaeologists involved.

The dig was carried out as part of the Limerick main drainage scheme.

The area skirted the city's medieval walls and was close to the great sieges of the 17th century.

With the excavations and shifting of the river bed now completed, the result of the archaeologists' labours will be on display in the new Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum in Castle Lane.

Directing archaeologist of the project, Edmond O'Donovan, stated that up to 10,000 items had been shifted with up to 500 miscellaneous artefacts being retained.

Also some important discoveries in connection with the medieval city were made, including Broad Street and George's Quay.

One of the more unusual finds on the site was a rare fully intact 17th century bomb dating from the Williamite sieges and is thought to have been used in an attempt to destroy the vital bridge link from the English town to the Limerick city.

Mr O'Donovan stated that while many types of siege artefacts were uncovered, the mortar bomb was by far the most significant.

There are few, if any comparable examples in Ireland or Britain,' he said.

The bomb was discovered by Collins Barracks in Cork while it was being used as a training aid for personnel.

The Army bomb disposal unit from Collins Barracks in Cork examined the bomb, although it had exploded, its detonating mechanism still intact.

The bomb was carefully removed and the area was declared safe.

In George's Quay, close to the site of the old bridge, a number of artefacts were discovered, including a possible iron age horse bit, an Early Christian bronze zoomorphic object and a spiral headed pin.

A coin from the Viking era, minted in London for King Cnut (Canute) circa 1035, was found, along with a number of other Viking objects including a possible iron age horse bit, an Early Christian bronze zoomorphic object and a spiral headed pin.

Another coin, minted in London during the reign of King Cnut, circa 1035, was also found.

The entrance of the bridge was identified along the length of the cutting.

Limerick Corporation engaged the services of Margaret Gower & Co Archaeological Consultants to oversee the programme of survey and excavation.

As the Abbey survey is completed, further work will be carried out on the site in the next phase of the main sewerage programme.

Among the artefacts discovered from the Abbey were several pre-Viking objects, including a possible iron age horse bit, an Early Christian bronze zoomorphic object and a spiral headed pin.

Excavations in Broad Street, opposite Battle Bridge, revealed bridge piers of the medieval bridge—demolished in 1801—which were once stood.

The growth of Broad Street over the centuries was revealed with house floors dating from the 16th century being uncovered on ground reclaimed from the riverbed.

A small assemblage of locally manufactured and imported medieval pottery was recovered with many coins from 1580-1640.

One early post-medieval coin, said to be the 'Limerick Fort' coat of arms, was also recovered.

"It has been very rewarding work," he said, adding that he was enjoying the sojourn in the city.

"Limerick has all the advantages of a compact city but at the same time without the disadvantages of a bigger centre," he said.