

Archaeology and the Celtic Tiger

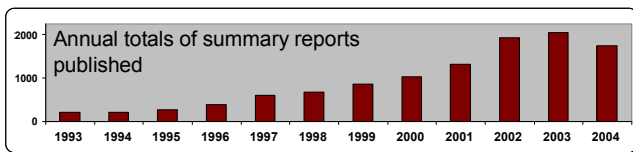
James Eogan, Senior Archaeologist, National Roads Authority

The annual Excavations Bulletin (www.excavations.ie) is a valuable source of data on archaeological excavations conducted on the island of Ireland. It is a requirement of each excavation licence issued that the director publish a summary report of the work in the Bulletin. It is used as a basic reference when carrying out archaeological assessments and evaluations. In recent years it has been shown to be a valuable research resource for those undertaking regional and period specific studies (eg. www.ucd.ie/t4cms/emap_report_january_2008.pdf).

This research reviews and evaluates 11,295 entries in the Bulletin relating to excavations carried out in the Republic of Ireland over a 12 year period between 1993 and 2004. The data is examined in terms of the practitioners who undertook the work, the distributional patterns evident and the reported archaeological results.

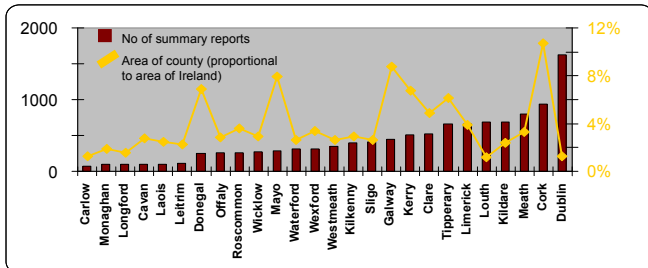
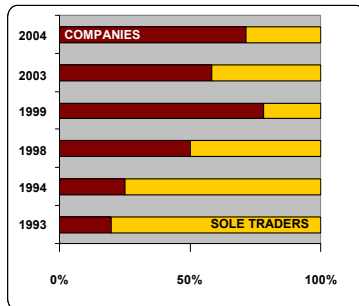
This era, the so-called "Celtic Tiger", saw unprecedented economic growth in the Republic of Ireland. This economic growth had a significant archaeological impact, which is reflected in the increase in archaeological excavations reported in the Excavations Bulletin from 214 in 1993 to 1743 in 2004.

Over the 12-years of the study the average number of excavations carried out by a director increased from three per annum in 1993 to a peak of 11 in 2003.

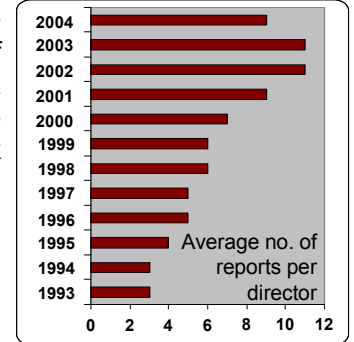


While the number of excavations shows an increase year-on-year from 1994 to 2003 the growth was not linear. From 1994 to 1997 the numbers of excavations grew on average by 43.5% per annum. From 1997 to 2001 the annual rate of increase stabilised around 21%. From 2001 to 2002 the number of excavations grew by 47%. The first decline of the number of excavations since 1993 was recorded in 2004.

Analysis of a random sample of 5% of reports in the Bulletins for 1993-4, 1998-9 & 2003-4 shows that the proportion of excavations carried out by directors employed by archaeological companies rose from 20% in 1993 to 71% in 2004.

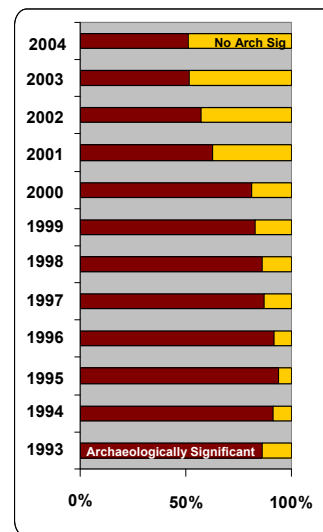


The distribution of excavations is uneven, 42% of the reports relate to excavations carried out in five counties that comprise only 19% of the area of the country. Low relative densities of excavations in Donegal, Mayo, Galway & Cork probably reflect significant upland areas in these counties. While low densities of excavations in counties such as Monaghan, Cavan, Laois & Offaly are likely to reflect low levels of development activity in the period.

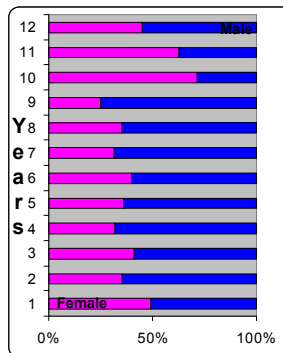
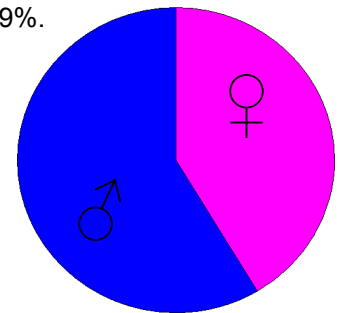


Analysis of the random sample shows that on average reports on test excavations represent 49% of the annual total, monitoring 26%, resolution 18% and research 7%.

Since 1993 the proportion of excavations which are reported to have had "No archaeological significance". has increased from 9% to 49%.



The excavations were carried out by 310 directors, of whom 182 were male and 128 female. On an annual basis the division of excavations between the genders has displayed a relatively stable ratio of 6:4 (male:female) since 1996.



It is interesting to note that 57% of the directors who have submitted reports to the Bulletin in 10 or more years are women. There is no obvious reason why women would have longer careers as excavation directors than their male counterparts.

This and the other issues identified in the research merit further and more in-depth investigation.