

Finding Hidden People

- the Archaeology of a Current Road Project

N9/N10 Kilcullen to Waterford Scheme

KILCULLEN TO CARLOW

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Avoidance of known archaeology was of major importance in the design process for the N9/N10 Kilcullen to Carlow Road Scheme - through Constraint, Route Selection and Environmental Impact Assessment phases.

Subsequently, centreline test-trenching was undertaken along the entire length of the roadtake, with offset trenches at regular intervals to the edges - 215 kms of test-trenches were excavated and 166 sites identified for resolution. These sites, with a total area of 49 ha., were excavated between January 2006 and December 2007.

Mesolithic

Eight of the sites to the east of Carlow town have produced considerable stone tool assemblages dating to the Late Mesolithic period (7000 – 4000 BC) – very significant additions to the evidence of pre-farming communities that formerly inhabited the area and survived on the migratory activities of hunting, gathering and fishing.



Worked stone artefacts

Neolithic



Russellstown house and enclosure



Artistic interpretation of the Neolithic house (Sara Nyland)



Site axe

Carlow's earliest known house was discovered at Russellstown – a large rectangular, oak built structure that was set within a ringfort-like enclosure. Radiocarbon dating of hazelnut shells from the foundation trench has confirmed that it dates to the Neolithic (3776 – 3636 BC).

Bronze Age

Extensive evidence was unearthed of prehistoric burial and ceremonial activities, including at least 138 cremation deposits and 18 inhumations - from the Neolithic to the Early/Middle Bronze Age and on to the Iron Age. Radiocarbon dates returned at present range from 4043 to 37 BC.

At Moone, an enclosed Early Bronze Age cemetery yielded 7 adult and 8 juvenile inhumations, along with 2 cremations, in a variety of burial forms that included a cist, an inverted urn, shallow pits and crouched single and double inhumations. Seven decorated Food Vessels, of both Vase and Bowl type, accompanied some of the burials.



Moone, finds from enclosure ditch



Intact funerary vessel

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Cremation urn from Moone



Beads from Burtown Little cremation

Crouched inhumation from Moone



Ballyvaas enclosure and features



Souterrain section, with approximate location of drinking horn terminal.



Mullamast Deserted Medieval Village

Early Christian and Medieval

A portion of an Early Christian enclosure, or ringfort, was excavated close to the brow of a gravel ridge in Ballyvaas townland. Inside the enclosure, a large vertically-sided, rectangular cut extended into the underlying gravels. This measured 3.5m wide by 3.5m deep and is likely to represent the remains of a timber-lined souterrain. Finds from the fill were very significant and included a silver-plated 8/9th century zoomorphic terminal for a drinking horn in the shape of a dog's head – indicating high status occupancy of the site.

In Mullamast, part of a large Deserted Medieval Village was excavated, the original founder of which was probably Walter de Riddlesford, a grandson-in-law of King Henry I. This planned village consisted of sizable boundary ditches, roads and pathways, a central village-green type open area, other open spaces, cobbled surfaces, houses and agricultural / garden plots. In excess of 10,500 artefacts were recovered, including a silver long-cross penny of King Edward I, minted in Canterbury between 1294 and 1299 AD and a Roman coin of Constantine Augustus dating to the 3rd century AD, which may have been brought back from Rome by a returning Medieval traveller or missionary. Other objects include brooch fragments, knives, a chest key and two metal arrowheads, possibly crossbow bolts.