

# what we found

## in brief:

Some of the findings from the scheme:



1. Leather shoe  
Twelfth-century leather shoe found during monitoring in **Annaholy** bog.  
(Photo: Studio Lab)



2. Coins  
Coins found by metal detection from **Castlecrauna**.  
(Photo: TVAS Ireland Ltd)



3. Lead shot  
Assemblage of lead shot and possible side-arm fragments from **Castlecrauna**.  
(Photo: TVAS [Ireland] Ltd)



4. Flint arrowhead  
Flint arrowhead from **Kilnacrauna**.  
(Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

# background

The N7 Nenagh–Limerick road scheme passes through the undulating pastureland of the Kilmastulla river valley of north Tipperary, flanked to the south-east and north-west by the Silvermines and Arra Mountains respectively, and crosses three substantial wetlands.

It will provide a dual carriageway connecting the N7 Limerick Southern Ring Road to the N7 Nenagh Bypass, a distance of 27.8 km. The scheme will also involve the upgrading of the Nenagh Bypass to dual carriageway (c. 10 km) and the provision of a link road connecting the mainline to the village of Birdhill on the existing N7.



The Environmental Impact Statement for the scheme was prepared by **Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd** in 2003. Townland boundaries and watercourses crossed by the scheme were surveyed and recorded, as were all upstanding structures. Test trenching of the route was carried out by **Aegis Archaeology Ltd** and **Judith Carroll & Co. Ltd** in 2006. Excavation of the 150 archaeological sites identified, undertaken by **Aegis Archaeology Ltd**, **Headland Archaeology Ltd**, **TVAS (Ireland) Ltd** and the **Archaeological Services Unit Ltd (UCC)**, was completed in July 2007. Post-excavation analysis is currently underway. All of the archaeological works were carried out on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Limerick County Council** in conjunction with **North Tipperary County Council**.

Aerial view of archaeological excavations at Carrigatogher. (Photo: Markus Casey)

**N7 NENAGH–LIMERICK HIGH QUALITY DUAL CARRIAGEWAY,**  
Counties Limerick and Tipperary



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# archaeological DISCOVERIES

## front cover images

LEFT: *Fulacht fiadh*/burnt mound under excavation at Carrigatogher (Ryan). (Photo: Paul O'Keefe)  
RIGHT: Stone spindle whorl from Kilnacrauna. (Photo: Paul O'Keefe)  
MIDDLE: Medieval enclosure at Ballintotty with Ballintotty Castle in left centre. (Photo: Markus Casey)





# neolithic

Excavations in 2006 on a gravel mound in **Tullahedy**, on the outskirts of **Nenagh**, revealed that it had been partly enclosed by a palisade during the Neolithic period.

The remains of two roughly oval-shaped structures were also identified, as well as evidence for the later alteration of the mound by the introduction of

# bronze age

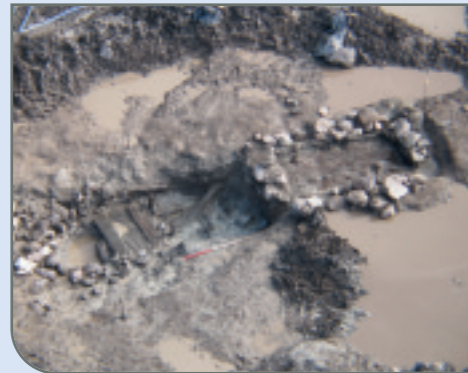
Along the low-lying meadows of the Kilmastulla river valley and on the margins of wetlands, 37 *fulachta fiadh*/burnt mounds were discovered.

A *fulacht fiadh* in **Annaholty** consisted of a mound of burnt stone overlying a stone- and wood-lined trough. A series of rough planks, supported by wooden pegs, led from the trough to a small stone-lined spring. Another notable *fulacht fiadh* in **Carrigatogher** (**Harding**) was unusual in that all of the burnt stone

extensive layers of glacial till. The artefacts recovered included chert arrowheads, scrapers, large quantities of Early Neolithic pottery and, remarkably, over 130 stone axeheads. **Tullahedy** is the only site of its type known in Ireland.

In **Ballycahill**, 200 m to the east, an extensive man-made stone platform (180 m east–west) was uncovered. Although as yet undated, it is possible that the platform was related to the nearby Neolithic site in **Tullahedy**.

material was deposited in a deliberately cut hollow 20 m wide and up to 1.2 m deep. At its base was a stone-lined trough, connected via a narrow channel to an adjacent stream.



Fulacht fiadh/burnt mound at **Annaholty** post-excavation. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)



Bronze Age house at **Carrigatogher** (**Harding**). (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

Ten habitation sites were excavated, comprising of a total of 16 houses and a number of ancillary structures. The houses were all circular in plan and situated on south or south-east-facing slopes. A particularly well-preserved house in **Carrigatogher** (**Ryan**), with a distinctive porch-like entrance feature, was 7 m in diameter and consisted of a circular slot-trench ringed by approximately 60 stake-holes forming two concentric external circuits. A cluster of five houses was located over 10 km to the south-west in **Ballynahinch**. One of these houses (9.4 m diameter) was constructed of a slot-trench, 23 post-holes and over 800 stake-holes. Artefacts recovered from these

sites included chert and flint arrowheads, flint blades and large quantities of Bronze Age pottery. Generally, these settlements were located in close proximity to *fulachta fiadh* and funerary sites such as flat cremation cemeteries.

## Annaholty trackway

A plank trackway (c. 70 m long and 7 m wide) connecting two gravel islands within Annaholty bog was discovered during monitoring. Several vessel fragments and a barrel stave were found. Although as yet undated, examination of the toolmarks suggest the use of iron woodworking tools.



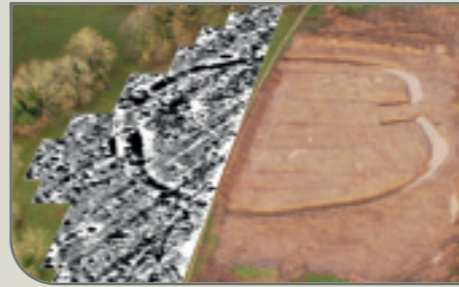
Timber trackway under excavation at **Annaholty**. (Photo: Paul O'Keeffe)

# early medieval

Seven enclosures of probable early medieval date were excavated on the scheme.

The largest of these was a multi-phase site in **Kilnacranra** that incorporated three enclosures, the earliest of which was sub-rectangular in plan and dated

to the mid-sixth century. This was truncated by a roughly circular enclosure (c. 100 m in diameter) and a 'plectrum-shaped' enclosure. The latter surrounded three houses of post-and-slot construction. Two rectangular structures were associated with either the sub-rectangular or sub-circular enclosure. Evidence for cereal processing and metalworking was found across



Early medieval enclosure at **Gortybrigane**. (Photo: Markus Casey, Geophysical greyscale image: Target Archaeological Geophysics)

the site and rotary quern-stones, a stone spindle whorl and numerous ferrous objects were recovered. Similar industrial activities were noted at a multi-phase enclosure in **Carrigatogher** (**Harding**). Two blue glass beads were among the artefacts found. Only 400 m to the south-west a sub-square enclosure was discovered in **Carrigatogher** (**Abbott**), while a large sub-circular enclosure was excavated in nearby **Ballywilliam**.

A substantial sub-circular enclosure in **Gortybrigane** was most notable for its opposing causewayed entrances, at least one of which was flanked by two parallel ditches. Surface finds, such as worked flints and a polished stone axehead fragment, may indicate that this area was also the focus of prehistoric activity, suggesting that the site had a long history of occupation, owing to its panoramic setting overlooking the River Shannon.



Early medieval enclosure at **Ballywilliam**. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)



Multi-phase early medieval enclosure site at **Kilnacranra**. (Photo: Markus Casey)

# medieval

Excavations in Ballintotty revealed a multi-phase site consisting of a sub-square enclosure (34 m north–south by 30 m east–west) and a later enclosure measuring 60 m<sup>2</sup>.

# post-medieval

A sub-circular enclosure (27 m north–south by 24 m east–west) in **Castlecranna** displayed evidence for possible internal and external palisade trenches.

Metal detection survey recovered 16th and 17th-century coins, buttons, pieces of lead shot and possible side-arm fragments. This site was possibly a 17th-century military fortification and may represent an important discovery for the archaeological identification and interpretation of small-scale conflict sites from this period in Ireland.

The recovery of numerous quern-stone fragments and the presence of cereal-drying kilns within both enclosures, coupled with the complete absence of habitation evidence, may suggest that the site served a primarily industrial purpose associated with either nearby Ballintotty Castle or the hall-house recorded during excavations on the Nenagh Bypass in 1998.



Possible 17th-century fortification at **Castlecranna**. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)