



# archaeological DISCOVERIES

## 1. background

The scheme, which was officially opened on the 15th April, 2005, marks the completion of the link between **Tralee** and **Castleisland**, County Kerry.

The scheme was 3km in length and the archaeological works were carried out on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Kerry County Council**. The N21 Ballycarty to Tralee Road Improvement Scheme extends through

the townlands of **Ballingowan, Ballycarty, Ballyseedy, Caherbreagh, Curraghleha East** and **Manor East**. These are located in the parishes of Ballymacelligott, Ballyseedy and Ratass and are in the area of the Lee Valley.

The general Tralee area and the Lee Valley have attracted human populations for over four millennia. A detailed survey of the Lee Valley was undertaken by Michael Connolly, **Kerry County Archaeologist**, who also excavated a passage tomb in the townland of Ballycarty in 1996. The study identified 98 previously unrecorded sites.

The early medieval period is also well represented in the **Lee Valley** by a large amount of ringforts. The site of Ballingowan Castle (Record of Monuments & Places No. KE029-162) is located c. 200m north of the road.

## 2. archaeological investigations

Archaeological investigations were carried out in advance of the main road construction.

A geophysical survey was commissioned to determine whether any archaeological features were present within the corridor of the proposed scheme. The geophysical survey was carried out by **ArchaeoPhysica Ltd.**, in June 2003. Several elements of former landscapes were found, in particular parts of a probable multi-phase road network and agricultural terraces.



Archaeological pit excavated at **Ballingowan**. (Photo Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd.)



Aerial view of scheme under construction.



Overall view of **Ballyseedy mill**. (Photo Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd.)

A series of archaeological test trenches were excavated to identify the presence or absence of archaeological material. The archaeological works were also undertaken to obtain further information about the potential sites and anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. The pre-construction testing was carried out by **Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd.**, in October 2003.

Four isolated archaeological features were uncovered during monitoring of the topsoil stripping along the route. As no artefacts were recovered from any of the archaeological features uncovered, there is no indication as yet as to their date and function. Further analysis of the soil samples may yield material suitable for radiocarbon dating. However, it is suspected that these features date from the prehistoric period.

In early 2004, the remains of a 19th-century corn mill were uncovered in the townland of **Ballyseedy**. The location of the mill was known from cartographic evidence as well as other sources.

The documentation shows that the mill was not in use for very long. The four-storey mill was built in 1800, however, by 1839 it lay in ruins and by 1852 it was valued by **Griffiths Valuation** at only £3.

**Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd.**, uncovered the foundations of the mill, millraces, and the site of the gearing for the millwheel. The remains of the mill which lay within the road take were cleaned and surveyed. Due to the levels required for the new road, part of the site was excavated, the remainder preserved *in situ*. A sterile sandstone pea-gravel, 0.5m in depth was spread over the remains of the mill.



Works being carried out to ensure the preservation *in situ* of **Ballyseedy mill**. (Photo Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd.)

Although no major archaeological finds were uncovered along this scheme, the archaeological excavations carried out in conjunction with the scheme demonstrate that the **Tralee** area and the **Lee Valley** were occupied during prehistoric times.