

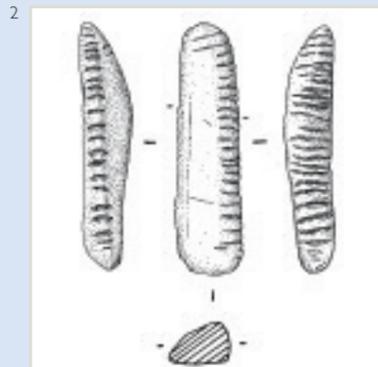
# what we found

## in brief:

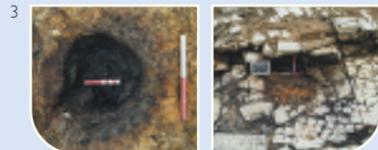
Some of the findings from **Castleisland to Abbeyfeale**.



1. Charcoal production pit  
Medieval charcoal production pit in **Kilmaniheen West** townland.  
(Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)



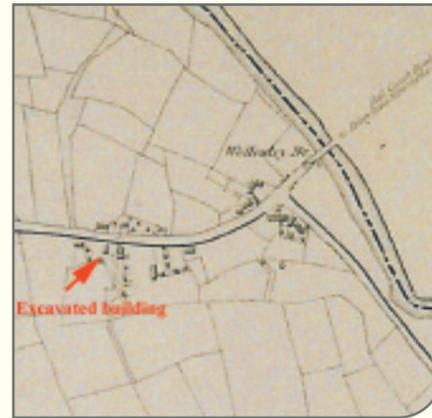
2. Stone object  
Stone object from metalworking site in **Knockbrack** townland.  
(Figure TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)



4. 19th-century house  
Hearth from 19th-century house in **Kilmaniheen West** townland.  
(Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

3. Metalworking mould  
Mould for metalworking in **Knockbrack** townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

# background



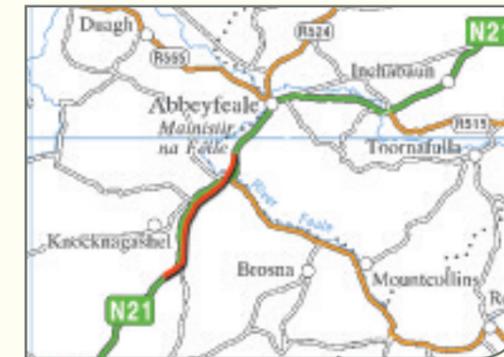
Excavated building in **Kilmaniheen West** townland on Ordnance Survey 1st Edition 1841. (TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. based on Ordnance Survey Ireland map)

This scheme involved the realignment of around 7km of the N21 from **Ballyduff, Knocknagashel, County Kerry** to **Kilconlea Lower in County Limerick**.

The road runs through the Owveg River Valley and portions of the townland of **Ballyduff, Knockbrack, Knocknagashel East and Kilmaniheen West** in County Kerry and **Kilkinlea** in County Limerick. The River Feale forms the boundary between the two counties.

Archaeological testing and excavations were carried out by **Michael Connolly, Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd.**, and **TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.**, on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Kerry County Council**.

There is a paucity of recorded archaeological sites in the area. Only one recorded site is in proximity to the scheme (RMP KE024-001), in the townland of **Kilmaniheen West**. The site is recorded as a church and is 20-30m away from the route. The only other sites recorded in the listed monuments for County Kerry in the general area of the scheme are: a burnt mound in the townland of **Kilmaniheen East** (RMP KE024-002), approximately 700m to the east of the scheme, an enclosure in the townland of **Carrigeenwood** (RMP KE023-008), approximately 600m to the west and a burial ground in the townland of **Meenbannivane** (RMP KE023-010), approximately 1km to the west of the scheme.



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# archaeological DISCOVERIES

## front cover images

**LEFT:** Mould for metalworking in **Knockbrack** townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)  
**RIGHT:** Hearth from 19th-century house in **Kilmaniheen West** townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)  
**MIDDLE:** 19th-century house in **Kilmaniheen West** townland during excavation. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)



# archaeological investigations



Burnt stone mound with trough under excavation in Knockbrack townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

A number of potential archaeological sites were recorded during the Archaeological Impact Assessment carried out by RPS Ltd., in 2000.

Test excavations were also carried out by Michael Connolly in 1998 at the nearest point of approach to the recorded church (RMP KE024-001).

These test excavations were a priority because the results could have seriously affected the proposed route. No archaeological features were encountered during these test excavations. It was noticed that the lands were the subject of intensive drainage and improvement works over a long period of time.

Further archaeological investigation of potential sites was carried out by Eachtra Archaeological Projects Ltd., in 2003. However, no archaeological activity was recorded.

A series of archaeological test trenches were also excavated along the length of the route. This involved the excavation of a 2m wide trench with offset trenches at regular intervals. This intensive testing identified five areas of archaeological significance. Two of these were burnt mounds, both of which are located in a low-lying wet marshy area partially covered with peat. The further areas of archaeological significance were identified by the presence of pits.

# archaeological resolution

During 2004, TVAS (Ireland) Ltd., carried out archaeological excavations and additional archaeological investigations. Nineteen charcoal-rich pits, two burnt mounds and three stone-built buildings were excavated in the townland of Kilmaniheen West.



Medieval charcoal production pit in Kilmaniheen West townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

## Kilmaniheen West

The preliminary results indicated that the pits were used for the production of charcoal and represented semi-industrial activities.

A 9th-century AD radiocarbon date was obtained from a charcoal sample taken from one of the pits.

With the exception of one circular example, the pits were similar in form, sharing a long rectangular or oval shape. Most pits had fairly steep sides and flat bases with evidence of *in situ* burning. No artefacts were retrieved from the pits except for a single piece of iron slag. These pits appear to have been associated with iron smelting activities.

Two burnt mounds were excavated in the townland of Kilmaniheen West. The first burnt mound consisted of a low mound of burnt stone material with two associated troughs. These troughs consisted of sub-circular pits. A radiocarbon date was obtained from a charcoal sample retrieved from the burnt mound giving a Middle to Late Bronze Age date of 1130-920 BC.

The second burnt mound was found to be associated with a wooden trough. It was crescent-shaped in plan and had maximum dimensions of 13m x 12m and was up to 0.75m in thickness. A radiocarbon date was obtained from one of the samples retrieved from the site giving a Late Bronze Age date of 1010-830 BC. The trough was located at the northern side of the mound, adjacent to a natural spring.

# archaeological resolution

At the base of the trough, three parallel oak planks formed a lining. The planks were abutted tightly against each other; however, there was no trace of any sealing material. The planks were in poor condition. The surface of the wood had largely rotted away and it was not surprising that no tool marks were identifiable on any of the timbers.

The remains of three stone-built buildings excavated at Kilmaniheen correspond with buildings indicating on the first edition 1841 Ordnance Survey map.

The form of the buildings and associated finds suggest an early 19th century date for their construction. The construction of the buildings is likely to have

post-dated the completion of the Castleisland to Newcastle West road in 1827. The buildings were not recorded in the second edition 1897-8 Ordnance Survey map and it is likely that they were abandoned in the aftermath of the Famine (1845-50). The structures were defined by limestone walls. These walls were 0.72m wide and survived to a height of 0.45m. Three rooms were recorded in the larger of the buildings. Flag stones were exposed in the central room. These flags located around the hearth are a common feature of 19th-century housing and served as not just a dry cooking and sitting area but also a place for step dancing. The remainder of the floor was of lime mortar with gravel and formed a solid floor.



Stone-filled pit beneath burnt stone mound in Kilmaniheen West townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)



19th-century house in Kilmaniheen West townland during excavation. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

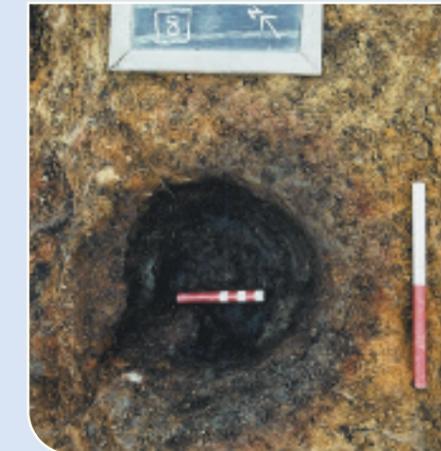


Hearth from 19th-century house in Kilmaniheen West townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

# archaeological resolution

Between the central room and the northern rooms, a line of post-holes was recorded. It is likely that they represent the location of a timber or wattle partition between the walls.

Even though the structures are likely to be relatively modern in date, the excavation of features like the pre-famine period floor is relatively uncommon and this excavation revealed interesting information on vernacular dwellings from the early 19th-century.



Mould for metalworking in Knockbrack townland. (Photo TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.)

## Knockbrack

A single pit and an iron-smelting furnace were also excavated in the townland of Knockbrack.

The date and function of the pit are not certain, however, the presence of burnt animal bone within its fills suggest that the pit may have been used for cooking or for the disposal of waste by burning. The furnace showed evidence of a stone-lined flue and two clay-lined moulds. The furnace was composed of a fire-pit, a flue and two small hollows that were cut into the natural geology for embedded clay crucibles/moulds.

A large assemblage of material was recovered during the excavation. The majority of the artefactual material consists of slag, fired clay and burnt stone, representing waste from iron smelting. A 2nd-4th century AD radiocarbon date was obtained from one of the samples extracted from the site.

A worked stone object consisting of an elongated piece of limestone with knife-cut incisions along two opposing edges was recovered from the iron-smelting furnace.