

what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings in and around **Ballincollig**.



1. Iron Age structure
View of plank walling from an Iron Age structure uncovered during excavations at **Ballinaspig More**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)



2. Stone axe
Stone axe found during excavations at **Barnagore**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)



3. Neolithic house
Early Neolithic house uncovered during excavations at **Barnagore**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)



4. Stone axe
Stone axe recovered from excavations at **Ballinaspig More**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)



5. Flint
Flint find recovered from excavations at **Ballinaspig More**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)

background



Aerial view of an Iron Age structure uncovered during excavations at **Ballinaspig More**.



Burnt spread from a *fulacht fiadh* excavated at **Ballinaspig More**.



View of the early medieval enclosure uncovered during excavations at **Curraheen**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)

The N22 Ballincollig Bypass is 11.5km in length and stretches across six townlands. Archaeological site investigations in advance of construction identified a variety of site types, ranging from Neolithic settlement structures to Bronze Age houses, cremation pits and *fulachta fiadh*, to Iron Age pits, medieval farm enclosures and post-medieval industrial sites. The work was carried out by **Archaeological Consultancy Services Ltd.**, (A.C.S. Ltd.) on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Cork County Council**.



Archaeologist carrying out detailed recording on the excavations at **Ballinaspig More**.

N22 BALLINCOLLIG BYPASS SCHEME, County Cork



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For more information
please contact:

Archaeology Section
National Roads Authority
St. Martins House
Waterloo Road, Dublin 4

Tel: +353 1 660 2511
Fax: +353 1 668 0009
Email: info@nra.ie
Web: www.nra.ie

archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Archaeologist carrying out detailed recording on the excavations at **Ballinaspig More**.
MIDDLE: Stone axe recovered from excavations at **Ballinaspig More**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)
RIGHT: View of plank walling from an Iron Age structure uncovered during excavations at **Ballinaspig More**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)



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neolithic

Settlement/habitation

At **Ballinaspig More**, a range of settlement related features of Neolithic date were revealed. These included post-holes, pits, stake-holes and a possible hearth. Associated finds included a stone axe, a grinding stone and some flint and chert flakes. The remains of Early Neolithic Carinated Bowls were also recovered. These were well-made pots, small with very thin walls of very brittle fabric. The features have been dated to 3970-3660 BC.

Site investigations at **Barnagore** revealed a rectangular house foundation, surviving as slot-trenches with *in situ* remains of burnt timber planking and stakes. The slot trench varied from 0.22-0.50m in width and was 0.12m-0.20m in depth. The planking was identified as oak and has provided radiocarbon dates ranging from



Archaeologists working on the excavation of a Neolithic house at **Barnagore**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)

3940-3640 BC to 3790-3620 BC. All four corners had post-pits with stone packing to support large structural timbers. No internal features were noted. This plank-built house would appear to be the oldest house excavated to date in County Cork. The Early Neolithic date also suggests that its occupants, **Ballinacollig's** first farmers, lived during the transition from a predominantly hunter/gatherer society to a more sedentary agricultural society.

Ritual/burial practices

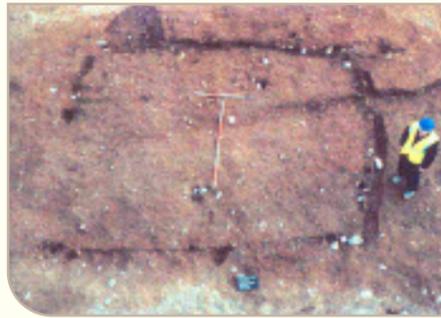
An isolated pit at **Carrigrohane** produced a date of 2580-2200 BC. It was circular in shape, with a diameter of 0.66m and a depth of 0.11m. It contained a range of finds including two sherds of probable Neolithic pottery, 35 sherds of Beaker pottery, flint fragments, charcoal and charred seeds.

Fulachta fiadh/burnt mound

A total of fifteen *fulachta fiadh* or burnt mounds were identified across the scheme. *Fulachta fiadh* are believed to have been cooking sites predominantly of Bronze Age date but some Neolithic examples are known. These sites derive from a process of using heated stones to heat water. Precisely what the heated water was used for is still unclear. Processes such as cooking, dyeing, processing hides, bathing, sweating, ceremonial cleansing or fermentation have been suggested.

neolithic

A significant example was uncovered at **Ballinaspig More**. Here two distinct *fulachta fiadh* were revealed, one built after the earlier had been long abandoned. The earlier *fulacht fiadh* contained a sub-oval trough, measuring 1.75m x 1.15m and 0.73m deep, in association with a dense cluster of stake-holes. This activity produced a Late Neolithic radiocarbon date of 2800-2500 BC. The second *fulacht fiadh* had a sub-rectangular trough, measuring 1.9m x 0.88m and 0.3 m deep. A series of stake-holes were also present to the east and west. This latter activity produced a Middle/Late Bronze date range of 1430-1130 BC.



Early Neolithic house uncovered during excavations at **Barnagore**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)

bronze age

Settlement/habitation

Excavations at **Ballinaspig More** also revealed a multi-period site. A sub-oval, plank-built structure (5m diameter) produced a Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age date range of 790-390 BC. It had a slot-trench foundation, open ended on one side, which contained the burnt remains of split timber planks. Nearby, there was a concentration of pits and post-holes containing occupation debris including numerous sherds of Beaker pottery and stone tools. These features dated to 1700-1430 BC.

Ritual/burial practices

Another site at **Barnagore** consisted of the basal remains of a sub-circular pit filled with a black charcoal-stained soil, with minute traces of cremated bone. Cremations were a common form of burial practice in the Bronze Age, in which the deceased would have been burnt on a wooden pyre and the ashes placed in a pit, often covered with a pottery vessel. Twenty-three sherds of Bronze Age pottery were recovered in association with the cremation. The remains were dated to 2300-2040 BC.

bronze age

Another cremation pit was located in the townland of **Carrigrohane**. It consisted of a shallow pit, measuring 0.97m long and 0.73m in width. The pit contained a dark charcoal-stained soil and frequent sherds of Beaker pottery. The pit was radiocarbon-dated to 1650-1420 BC.

Fulachta fiadh/burnt mounds

A *fulacht fiadh* at **Ballinaspig More** produced an Early Bronze Age date of 2190-1870 BC. This site had a single, un-lined trough, sub-rectangular in shape with four rounded corners. A series of stake-holes were noted to the south and east of the trough

A well-preserved *fulacht fiadh* was identified at **Curraheen** containing a wooden trough used in two

phases. The first phase had a trough constructed from at least 24 timbers contained within a large oval pit. The second phase involved a deliberate reduction in the trough size, made possible by the insertion of a timber across the trough, almost halving the total trough area. The unused section was then backfilled with black clay. A hearth was located close to the trough. Dates for this *fulacht fiadh* ranged from 1120-810 BC. Another *fulacht fiadh* was identified nearby, which had a rectangular trough with some fragmentary traces of poorly preserved wood exposed at the base. This was associated with accompanying pits, one of which produced a date of 985-785 BC.

iron age

Settlement/habitation

Excavations at **Ballinaspig More** also revealed an Iron Age structure comprising of a sub-circular arrangement of post-holes, which had been severely damaged by erosion. These features have been interpreted as the remains of a probable roundhouse. Radiocarbon analysis has returned a date of 360-280 BC.

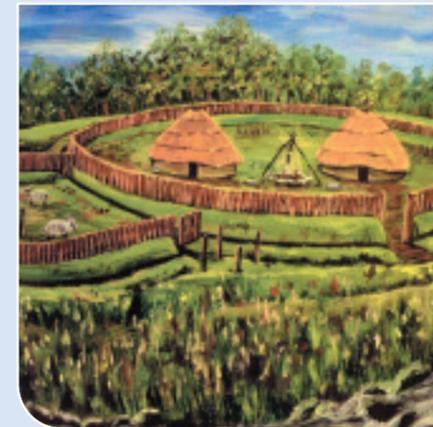


View of plank walling from an Iron Age structure uncovered during excavations at **Ballinaspig More**. (Photo A.C.S. Ltd.)

medieval

Settlement/habitation

Additional sites at **Curraheen** included the badly damaged remains of two conjoined enclosures of early medieval date. Both enclosures were defined by shallow ditches and, originally, were likely to have had internal earthen banks. The larger of the two contained a range of settlement features including a probable house foundation as well as numerous pits, hearths, post-holes and stake-holes. Finds included iron objects, a glass bead, a fragment of a copper-alloy stick pin, hazelnut shells and charred seeds. Internally, the smaller enclosure contained only a few isolated post-holes and has been interpreted as a livestock pen. The main phase of activity on the site has been radiocarbon dated to AD 595-830.



Reconstruction drawing of what the enclosure site uncovered at **Curraheen** may have looked like. (Figure A.C.S. Ltd.)

post-medieval

Settlement/habitation

Excavations also revealed a post-medieval cottage and yard at **Ballinaspig More**. A series of drainage features, cultivation furrows and pits were also exposed. The lack of an obvious fireplace or hearth suggests that this building may have functioned as a non-residential building or, alternatively, it may have been constructed as a vernacular-style cottage.

Industry

In the townland of **Ballynora** a post-medieval brick kiln was investigated. Three distinct spreads of brick fragments were exposed, along with suggestive evidence of a flue or chimneystack. This kiln has been dated to the 18th-19th century.