The road runs through the Owveg River Valley and portions of the townlands of Ballyduff, 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 and an enclosure in the townland of Carrigeenwood (RMP KE024-003), approximately 600m to the east and a burial ground in the townland of Meenbannivane (RMP KE024-010), approximately 1km to the west of the scheme.

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

what we found
in brief:

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.)

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

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

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archaeological investigations

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.

A 9th-century AD radiocarbon date was obtained from a charcoal sample taken from one of the pits. Until now, the remains of such buildings had not been recorded in this area. However, the presence of burnt animal bone within the fills suggests that the pit may have been used for the production of charcoal and represented semi-industrial activities.

Further archaeological investigation of potential sites was carried out by Michael Connolly of RPS Ltd., 153-2000. However archaeological activity was recorded in situ.

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

archaeological resolution

Below the central road and the northern road, a line of postholes was recorded. It is likely that they represent the location of a landlord or auditor’s partment between the walls.

The form of the buildings and associated finds suggest that they were used for the production of charcoal and represented semi-industrial activities. The trench was located at the northern side of the mound adjacent to a natural spring.

The remains of three stone-built buildings excavated in the townland of Kilmaniheen West are of particular interest. The construction of the buildings is likely to have post-dated the completion of the C垣lann in 1627. The buildings were not recorded in the first edition 1841 Ordnance Survey maps and it is likely that they were abandoned in the aftermath of the famine (1845-50). The buildings were defined by timbreed walls. These walls were 8.7m wide and survived to a height of 1.4m. The form of the buildings, indicating that they were constructed in the second half of the 19th century. Two large slabs located around the heart are a characteristic feature of Kilmaniheen. A single pit and an iron-smelting furnace were also excavated in the townland of Knockbrack.

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