background

At 56 km the N6 Galway to East Ballinasloe PPP Scheme will be one of the biggest public construction projects in the history of County Galway. After initial reconnaissance work along the entire route, 36 archaeological sites were fully investigated, ranging from a prehistoric cremation cemetery to an early modern tenant’s cottage.

in brief

Some of the findings from the scheme:

1. Prehistoric stone tools
   From the Suck and Melehan river valleys.
   (Photo: John Sunderland for Eachtra Archaeological Projects)

2. Storage pit
   Storage pit at Gortnahoon.
   (Photo: CRDS Ltd)

3. Human remains
   Excavating human remains at Carna.
   (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

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Burton Persse’s stableyard at Moyode.
(Photo: Galway County Council)

Souterrain in the ringfort at Mackney.
(Photo: Eachtra Archaeological Projects)
peoples

This landscape has been inhabited for about 15,000 years but its historical record only accounts for the latest peoples. It has a history that we use the term of the 13th century. Their Kingdom extended across the Suck river valleys that confirm the presence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers—the first people to colonise Ireland—about 10,000 years ago.

A hirilaf at Rahally was a remarkable discovery. It consists of a series of concentric ditched enclosures, about 430 m in overall diameter. It was not a military fort but instead a place where people from all around the area congregated. From the spillage in the ditch, the archaeologists have a sense of the people living there. They were arranging to make a living partings.

a sense of place

A hillfort at Rahally was the heart of the estate in the 1820s. It was not a military fort but instead a place where people from all around the area congregated. From the spillage in the ditch, the archaeologists have a sense of the people living there. They were arranging to make a living partings.

making a living

Work is a constant for all but the rich and there is plenty of evidence of this on our excavations. At Carrowkeel, an example of a very early medieval encircled hearth with associated features indicates a central hearth for warmth, storage and environmental areas, but elsewhere, at Coolagh, the emphasis was on enclosed, earthwork enclosures to have been a very large corral with one outstanding horned male.

partings

An early 19th-century road bridge on the Connaught extension of the Grand Canal, built in the 1820s for canal barges travelling between the Shannon and Ballinasloe. The new road is not the first major transport project between the Shannon and Ballinasloe. The old Gortnahoon road bed is providing a route for rail transport between the town and the town of Loughrea. Further north, at Pollboy, the new road will cross the Connaught extension of the Grand Canal, built in the 1820s for canal barges travelling between the Shannon and Ballinasloe.