This section of the N9/N10 Kilcullen to Waterford Scheme involves the construction of 27 km of High Quality Dual Carriageway linking the existing M9 motorway at Kilcullen to the northern end of the Carlow Bypass, just south of Castledermot. Also incorporated is an 11 km single carriageway Athy Link Road, which will link Athy town with both the existing and new N9 roads.

Preliminary test excavation were undertaken by Irish Archaeological Consultancy Ltd (IAC Ltd) between October and November 2005 and by Cultural Resource Development Services Ltd (CRDS Ltd) between May and August 2006. These works identified a total of 102 archaeological sites, which were fully excavated by Headland Archaeology Ltd between March and December 2007. All of the archaeological works were carried out on behalf of the National Roads Authority and Kildare County Council. Up to 310 archaeologists were on the ground at any one time, divided into 10 separate excavation teams, with an international flavour, as up to 20 nationalities were represented.

**background**

Some of the findings from the scheme:

1. Wooden animal trap
   Top view, from Prumplestown Lower.
   (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

2. Wooden animal trap
   Base view, from Prumplestown Lower. (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

3. Wooden axe handle
   Haft for a Late Bronze Age socketed axe from Prumplestown Lower.
   (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

4. Pottery beads
   Pottery beads from Burtown Little separated from cremation deposit.
   (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

5. Drinking horn terminal
   Silver plated drinking horn terminal from the fill of a souterrain at Ballyvaas.
   (Photo: John Sunderland)

6. Bone and antler objects
   from medieval enclosing ditch, early Bronze Age cemetery site at Moone.
   (Photo: Headland Archaeology Ltd)

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prehistoric

Important Early Bronze Age cemetery sites were discovered either side of the River Lerr, close to Castledermot.

1. Prúmpóistí Láine: To the south of the town a concentration of Middle Bronze Age cemeteries was revealed north of a large pile and a ring ditch along with associated burials and features.

At Moone the circular ditch ringfort was found at the southern end of the village. The outer bank was clearly visible along with a large gate formed by an entrance in the inner bank.

Other significant excavations included a double-socketed stock (Ballyvaas) (Plate 1) and a series of post-medieval enclosures.

medieval

At Mullamast, part of a large deserted medieval village was excavated, the original founders of which was probably Walter de Riddlesforde, a grand-in-law of King Henry I.

The planned medieval village consisted of a bridgehouse over which is a mark and a probable village gate. (Plate 1). Above an open area, other open areas, enclosed spaces, small plots and garden plots. The houses would have been formed of earth-and-stone or possibly stone structures. The majority were probably built on large ground foundations—founder stones on the external wall. A series of 1,000 artefacts were recovered from a substantial single site. These include various grave goods and the second by juveniles in medieval/post-medieval times, with the first phase represented by supine (laid on their back) and prone (on their side) burials. In addition, a later medieval ditch at the Prúmpóistí Láine was also discovered along the scheme, including imported wares from south-west England and France. A silver long-cross penny of King Edward I would have been minted in Canterbury, between 1272 and 1284. Further notoriety is apparent for a fine corner of a Constantinian stone dating to the first century AD which had been brought from Rome by a returning medieval traveller or warrior. Other artefacts included an eighth/ninth-century silver-plated terminal of a drinking horn in the shape of a dog’s head and a modern glass bead of a drinking horn. Two other glass beads would have adorned the body of a person committed to a funerary pyre. Two tiny blue glass beads showed that there were 24 beads in total and would have made up a complete bracelet. Originally from the Fite Irish region it was thought that these beads were made by a hand craft person. The beads may have been a form of adornment in the form of protective amulets. A portion of an early medieval enclosure was uncovered close to the brow of a gravel nide in Ballyvaas being excavated at a separate site in Ballyvaas (Plate 1). It seems generally likely that it is not a likely to be an early medieval or medieval in date.

medieval/ post-medieval

At Mullamast, part of a large deserted medieval village was excavated, the original founder of which was probably Walter de Riddlesforde, a grand-in-law of King Henry I.