The 18.5 km N9 Carlow Bypass Dual-Carriage, which is part of the N9/N10 Kilcullen to Waterford Scheme: Kilcullen to Powertown runs to the east of Carlow town. It extends from the existing N9 at Prumplestown, just south of Castledermot, back to the N9 at Powertown, some 7 to 8 km south of Carlow town.

Initial paper research was carried out to ensure that known archaeological features and landscapes in the area of the proposed route were avoided as far as possible by the road designers. Extensive geophysical surveys were also undertaken by Bartlett-Clark Consultancy, Earthsound Archaeological Geophysics and Target Archaeological Geophysics on sections of the route as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process.

These were closely followed by the excavation of centerline and offset test-trenches between June and August 2005.

A total of 64 sites were identified by both the geophysical survey and the test-trenching works and recommended for resolution through excavation.

Resolution excavation works started in early January 2006 and were completed by mid-August 2006. All of the on-site test excavation and resolution works were undertaken by Headland Archaeology Ltd on behalf of the National Roads Authority, Kildare and Carlow County Councils.

1. Stone axehead
Stone axehead found during excavations at Russellstown.

2. Medieval pottery
Medieval pottery found during excavations at Prumplestone.

3. Skeleton
Post-medieval skeleton found during excavations at Prumplestone.

4. Bone comb
Early medieval bone comb found during excavations at Prumplestone.

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At Busherstown, another large water-filled basin for deposition incorporated a wooden palisade supported by stakes, probably for ease of access for fire water.

Prehistoric ritual and burial features were discovered along the route probably dating from the early Neolithic to the Bronze Age. The Busherstown ring barrows were surrounded by various structures and pits with others surrounding such features. Dotted around and outside the ring barrows were other cemeteries, one of which was contained within a complete perimeter wall.

A small ring ditch with a central cremation from Busherstown is likely to date to the Bronze Age.

Other cremation pits were discovered at Reaacraunan, Ballyhade, Ballybar Lower and Ballybar Upper.

One of the pits at Ballybar Lower contained a portion of a polished stone axehead amongst the cremation at Ballybar Lower contained two striated iron arrowheads. At Ballyhade, 15 sherds of prehistoric pottery, respectively. Artefacts from here included scraps of leather, worked antler, an alder shovel; but also a tanged arrowhead, a javelin head and a large flint scraper.

Specialist examination and study of the excavation archive is ongoing, including artefact and environmental analysis. This will result in the compilation of plans, mapping, photography and written documentation of the sites. These will result in the completion of preliminary and final excavation reports which in turn will lead to full publication of the excavation.

At Burtonhall, another large water-filled basin for deposition incorporated a wooden palisade supported by stakes, probably for ease of access for fire water.

Settlement
Customs Court’s first historic house was uncovered while excavating at Russellstown and is therefore the county’s earliest house known to date. It was set back about 30 m by a 30 m diameter circular perimeter enclosure. Large post-hole provided evidence of four probable wooden round houses probably dating to the Bronze Age - two were uncovered in Russellstown and the other two in Tinryland. Many, probably fort and confine sites generally regarded as places belonging to the Bronze Age - were uncovered along the scheme, but a few of the locations were significantly different from the norm. At Ballybar Lower, a large circular-shaped depression incorporated a double ring of timbers along the slope, indicating that it was reached with a ladder or ramp structure and may have been used as a sweat-house. A site at Ballybar Lower contained a large basin for regulating water flow and may have been used as a sweat-house.

A ring-ditch incorporated a wooden platform supported by stakes, probably for ease of access to the water. Extending from the ring-ditch to the water’s edge was a large funnel-shaped depression incorporated a wooden platform supported by stakes, probably for ease of access to the water. At Burtonhall, a large ring-ditch with a central cremation from Busherstown is likely to date to the Bronze Age.

At Reaacraunan, another large water-filled basin for deposition incorporated a wooden palisade supported by stakes, probably for ease of access for fire water.

Ring-ditches were excavated, with some of the latter being possibly related to a nearby moated site. These included a possible boatyard that may have held the sites future, a probable circular enclosure, possibly being a possible fort and confine site and a large ring-ditch incorporated a wooden platform supported by stakes, probably for ease of access to the water.

Included on the preliminary reports were findings such as the discovery of a possible trackway that may have led to the church, a portion of a sub-circular enclosure, possible being a possible fort and confine site and a large ring-ditch incorporated a wooden platform supported by stakes, probably for ease of access to the water.

At Burtonhall, another large water-filled basin for deposition incorporated a wooden palisade supported by stakes, probably for ease of access for fire water.

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Burtonhall Demesne
A medieval castle originally stood outside the line of the road in Maple Big. Several features probably relating to the occupation of the castle were included inside the line of the road, including a lime kiln, stone enclosures and fields, ditches, potsheds, pits, carrying works, charcoal furnaces and charcoal production pits. Artefacts recovered included two bonecoccs, a stone potsherd, and a bone file. A medieval post-medieval smithy is evidence linked to the castle.

At Ballybannon numerous prehistoric and medieval features were excavated, with some of the latter being possibly related to a nearby moated site.

An early medieval settlement contained four possible kilns, smelting furnaces and charcoal production pits. These included a possible trackway that may have led to the church, a portion of a sub-circular enclosure, possibly being a possible fort and confine site and a large ring-ditch incorporated a wooden platform supported by stakes, probably for ease of access to the water.

At Burtonhall, another large water-filled basin for deposition incorporated a wooden palisade supported by stakes, probably for ease of access for fire water.

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