The N9/N10 Waterford to Knocktopher road project is the southernmost part of a new national road linking Kilcullen to Carlow, Kilkenny and Waterford. The scheme involves the construction of 23.5 km of dual carriageway between the Waterford City Bypass and the town of Knocktopher, Co. Kilkenny. Archaeological works were carried out by Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd and Valerie J Keeley Ltd (VJK Ltd) between January 2006 and February 2007 on behalf of the National Roads Authority and Kilkenny County Council. A total of 54 previously unknown sites dating from the fourth millennium BC to the 19th century AD were uncovered as a result of this work. Post-excavation analysis of the remains discovered on these sites is ongoing.

The road is built through varied landscapes commencing with the valley of the River Suir in the south. It crosses over the Walsh Mountains between Mullinavat and Ballyhale and then descends into the central lowlands of Kilkenny at Knocktopher. The archaeological investigations have shown a greater density and diversity of sites in lowland areas compared with upland locations. These discoveries are enabling archaeologists and historians to build upon the existing knowledge of man and the environment in this part of Ireland.

**in brief:**

1. Quern-stone
   Quern-stone found within pit at Scart (Photo: VJK Ltd)

2. Cremation site
   Cremated human bone on the floor of a cist at Knockmoylan (Photo: VJK Ltd)

3. Spearhead
   An iron spearhead found during excavation of the multi-period site at Baysrath (Photo: VJK Ltd)

4. Reaping hook
   An iron reaping hook was discovered at Baysrath (Photo: VJK Ltd)

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neolithic
kilkenny’s first farmers

While Kilkenny is well known for its upstanding medieval remains, archaeologists excavating in advance of the construction of the new county council offices in the town have uncovered evidence of the county’s prehistoric communities.

Excavations at Earlsrath, on a prominent location with extensive views to the south, have revealed the foundations of two rectangular buildings excavated in advance of the construction of the new county council offices in the town. The remains of one of the four-post structures is visible in the foreground. (Photo: VJK Ltd)

Evidence for iron working was also encountered. Archaeologists revealed a single, unburnt cist at Knockmoylan. (Photo: NRA)

The foundations of two rectangular buildings located 4 m apart were excavated in advance of the construction of the new county council offices in the town. The date of this feature will be determined through radiocarbon analysis. (Photo: VJK Ltd)

The iron age-early medieval period was marked by an increase in the size of centres, and the growth of ringforts. These structures indicate that a greater density of population was beginning to develop. Forts and ringforts were often built on hilltops or by the side of rivers. In the past, iron was produced through a number of stages commencing with the sourcing of iron ore from the local area. Once iron was produced, it was used to make tools and weapons. Every activity from shoeing a horse to making a quern-stone was done within the enclosed area around the ringfort, to the west of Baysrath. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)

An Early Bronze Age cemetery was found at Knockmoylan. The burials had been cremated. Two of them were placed in decorated pottery urns, while others were found in cists and pits. An Early Bronze Age cemetery was found at Knockmoylan. The burials had been cremated. Two of them were placed in decorated pottery urns, while others were found in cists and pits. (Photo: NRA)

Living with the ancestors

The tradition of burial at the Ringfort continued outside the enclosed area around the ringfort. In the later Bronze Age or Iron Age, living with the ancestors continued outside the enclosed area around the ringfort. In the later Bronze Age or Iron Age, people continued to be buried outside the ringfort. (Photo: NRA)

Bronze age
life and death

An Early Bronze Age cemetery was found at Knockmoylan. The burials had been cremated. Two of them were placed in decorated pottery urns, while others were found in cists and pits. (Photo: NRA)

Evidence for iron working was also encountered. Archaeologists revealed a single, unburnt cist at Knockmoylan. (Photo: NRA)

Rectangular cist at Knockmoylan. (Photo: NRA)

A small number of pits containing cremated bone were also found at Knockmoylan. These pits, which contained cremated bone, were placed within the excavated post-holes. (Photo: VJK Ltd)

Evidence for iron working was also encountered. Archaeologists revealed a single, unburnt cist at Knockmoylan. (Photo: NRA)

A small number of pits containing cremated bone were also found at Knockmoylan. These pits, which contained cremated bone, were placed within the excavated post-holes. (Photo: VJK Ltd)

Evidence for iron working was also encountered. Archaeologists revealed a single, unburnt cist at Knockmoylan. (Photo: NRA)

Bronze Age urn containing cremated bone, as well as bronze-age artifacts, was found at Knockmoylan. (Photo: NRA)