Background

Luas Citywest is the new 4.2km extension of the Luas Red Line (operating between The Point and Tallaght) at Belgard and running to Saggart. There are 5 new stops along this line at Fettercairn, Cheeverstown (Brookfield and Ard Mor), Citywest, Fortunestown and Saggart, as well as a Park & Ride facility at the Cheeverstown Stop.

The Railway Procurement Agency carried out a number of archaeological investigations in advance and during construction of Luas Citywest.

Initially, an assessment of the potential impacts on the existing archaeological environment was undertaken by Margaret Gowen & Company Ltd. during 2006 and 2007. As part of this assessment, archaeological testing was carried out at the western extremity of Luas Citywest, an area falling within part of the historic village of Saggart and within c. 30m of a refurbished and altered medieval tower house (pictured on the front cover and inside). In September 2008, Headland Archaeology Ltd. carried out further archaeological testing along the route of Luas Citywest and following this, undertook archaeological monitoring of construction works during 2009 and 2010 in a number of areas that were inaccessible during the archaeological testing.

Although no new archaeological sites or artefacts were identified during the course of these investigations several interesting archaeological sites were highlighted in the surrounding landscape. Further research has uncovered some fine archaeological objects that have been discovered in the vicinity of Luas Citywest, one of which is pictured below. This brochure describes these archaeological sites and objects.

If you are interested in reading more about the background, methodologies and scope of archaeological investigations carried out for Luas Citywest please visit our website where you can download a copy of all professional reports at the following link:

http://www.rpa.ie/en/rpa/archaeology/Pages/LuasCitywest.aspx © Ordnance Survey Ireland & Government of Ireland permit number 6417 (Map annotation: C. O’Flaherty, RPA)

Cheeverstown tower house in 1978 (Photo: H. Wheeler, National Monuments Service ©)

An archaeological Landscape

Front cover

TOP: Luas crossing the regenerated Nine Arches Viaduct in Milltown (Photo: ‘Suckindiesel’. From en.wikipedia, CC-BY-SA 3.0)
LEFT: Refurbished and altered medieval tower house, Saggart (Photo © F. Smith)
CENTRE: Extract from John Rocque’s map depicting the village of Saggart and surrounding area in 1760
RIGHT: Drawing of a decorated Bronze Age bowl from a cist grave located on Tallaght Hill (Image © B. Ó Ríordáin & J. Waddell 1993)
The advent of Christianity in the 5th century AD heralded a new age in Ireland, known as the Early Medieval period. This lasted until the 12th century–early 16th century AD. John Rocque’s map drawn in 1760 (pictured on the front cover) labels this church as already in ruins by the 18th century. In the cemetery’s southern extent are the remains of a probable early Christian cemetery surrounding the site of this church as already in ruins by the 18th century. Evidence of this Christian settlement indicates a 10th century date, although a 13th/14th century date has also been suggested. The grave slab is currently set upright in the ground, however, originally it would probably have been a recumbent slab, lying flat on the ground with the decorated surface facing upwards. An early medieval stone cross can also be seen within the cemetery, decorated with a ringed-cross on one side (pictured to the left) and a very worn ringed-cross on the other side near the broken end of the shaft. Following the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169 AD, who brought with them new building types, new systems of land organisation and agrarian developments, the character of the Irish landscape changed. There was also widespread warfare between the new arrivals and the Irish tribal clans during this period.

The lands surrounding, Luas Citywest were situated just within the boundaries of an area under the direct control of the Anglo-Normans, later to be known as the Pale. As a result, this area suffered greatly throughout the Medieval period from the wars between the Irish tribes and the inhabitants of the Pale. In one 13th century historical document, Saggart and its environs are referred to as “the lands of war” and the village is recorded as suffering from successive raids and burnings by the O’Brien’s and O’Toole’s.

Modern Period

The paper mill became very well known for its Ancient Irish Victorian and Sinn Erin woods and was an important employer in the village of Saggart. Another significant part of the area’s industrial heritage was the Dublin and Blessington Steam Tram which operated from 1888 to 1938 along the line that closed for service in December of that year. 1932 the last tram had travelled along this route and Blessington Steam Tram gradually go into decline. By 1932 the last tram had travelled along this route and the line closed for service in December of that year. The tramway had two stops close to Saggart. The Jobstown Iris Stop and The Embarkment Stop. This latter stop was a great advantage for Swiftbrook Paper Mills, located to the immediate south of Saggart village, which could avoid the tramway services to transport materials to and from Dublin city. The tramway continued to service this area almost half a century providing much needed infrastructural support for both the rural and commercial economy as well as enhancing the daily lives of the local communities. A combination of the effects of the First World War, the Irish Civil War and the advent and increasing popularity of more modern kinds of transport, saw the Dublin and Blessington Steam Tram gradually go into decline. By 1932 the last tram had travelled along this route and the line closed for service in December of that year.