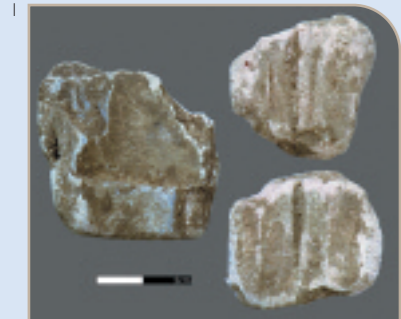


what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings from Cashel to Mitchelstown.



1. Mould fragments
Fragments of a mould for a knife or dagger found at **Ballyegan**.
(Photo Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd)



2. Smoothing stone
Smoothing stone found at **Ballyegan**.
(Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)



3. Bronze Age pottery
Bronze Age pottery found at **Ballyegan**.
(Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)



4. Copper-alloy pin
Copper-alloy pin with 'watch-winder' head found at **Marhill**.
(Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

5. Ceramic object
Perforated ceramic object found at Bronze Age site at **Knockgraffon**.
(Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

background

The **N8 Cashel to Mitchelstown Road Project** is 41 km long and runs across two different landscapes. From the north it cuts through rolling agricultural limestone lowlands from **Cashel-Cahir**, taking in a portion of the N24 which is being realigned east of **Cahir**.



Two Bronze Age structures discovered at **Caherabbey**.
(Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

Investigations were started in 2005 by archaeological consultants **Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd** who completed on site works in 2006 on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **South Tipperary, Limerick and Cork County Councils**. In 2005 a complete geophysical and aerial survey of the route was conducted in order to identify all archaeological and potential archaeological sites on the route. These were followed by archaeological test excavation along the route and by full excavations in 2006 between **Cahir** and **Mitchelstown**, was undertaken. Around 90 new archaeological sites were identified and investigated during the works.

Excavation of the sites to the north of the **Galtees** and along the new N24 revealed an array of settlement (round houses/structures and burnt mounds), burial (unmarked cemeteries and ring-

ditched enclosures) and ritual activity (hengiform post circles enclosing backfilled pits).

The excavated sites date from the late Neolithic through to the later Bronze Age together with three well-presented Late Iron Age/early medieval ring-barrows, one early medieval settlement site, some limited evidence for medieval land use and settlement activity and one post-medieval weaver's cottage.

An increase in site recovery rates was found around the **River Suir** area and northwards toward historic **Cashel** - hardly surprising for such important route ways in the past.

The post-excavation analysis will incorporate a significant emphasis on the landscape and topographic context, site location and distribution and the chronology and inter-relationships of the sites revealed.

N8 CASHEL - MITCHELSTOWN ECI ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT,
Counties Tipperary, Limerick & Cork



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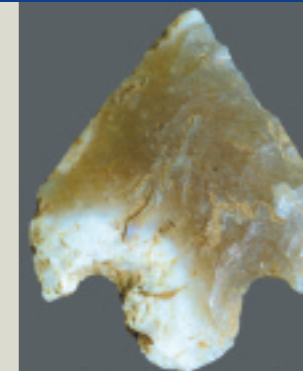
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archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Bronze Age tanged and barbed arrowhead found at **Knockgraffon**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)
RIGHT: Archaeologist excavating an urn burial at **Shanballyduff**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)
MIDDLE: Bronze Age urn *in situ* as found at **Shanballyduff**.



neolithic settlement

A Neolithic and a Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age site were found at **Knockgraffon**, and one late Neolithic site at **Caherabbey Upper**, suggesting Neolithic/Late Neolithic activity on both sides of the **River Suir** valley.

bronze age settlement

Settlement evidence was found at a number of sites on both sides of the **River Suir**. A range of sites were revealed at **Cloghabreedy** and **Knockgraffon**, including two circular enclosures of large, deep posts around backfilled pits. These sites may be hengiform post-circle sites although the pits yielded few finds apart from a very tiny barbed and tanged, flint arrowhead found at Knockgraffon.

Another very enigmatic find is a highly fired, perforated ceramic object found at the Knockgraffon 'hengiform'. Shaped like a mace head and of similar size, it clearly had a ceremonial function, with comparative finds of perforated ceramic objects from Bronze Age ritual contexts, notably at **Knowth** Co. Meath.

At **Caherabbey** two well-preserved, round post/slot-built structures, one of which may be a workshop were discovered. The structures are notable for the depth and content of their discontinuous circular



Neolithic pottery found at **Caherabbey Upper**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

foundation slots which are characterised by fill with large packing stones. A copper-alloy ferrule-type metal ring was retrieved from one of the structures which may suggest a workshop rather than domestic function for the site.



Archaeologists excavating the Bronze Age structure uncovered at **Ballydrehid**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

bronze age



Decorated spindle whorl found at **Killemlly**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

At **Lissava** a remarkable burnt mound site revealed two circular settings of very large post-holes with packing stones which to some extent 'enclosed' the mound material. On the south-west-facing slopes clusters of Bronze Age sites occurred at **Killemlly**, **Suttonrath** and **Ballylegan** townlands, including circular structures, some in association with ring-ditches, and an assortment of pits and other settlement activity.

Finds included coarse-ware pottery, and a finely made spindle whorl decorated with concentric circles, recovered from what appears to be a Bronze Age context. On a similar site nearby a smoothing stone was recovered along with fired clay which appears to be related to metal working and fragments of a mould for a knife or dagger.

burial

Burial evidence was found all along the route. At **Shanballyduff** an urn burial, with its decorated rim and much of its cremation deposit surviving, was recovered *in situ*. It was found along with two unmarked cremation pits. At **Templenoë** a large unenclosed cremation cemetery of 72 unmarked pits was found. Nearby were two further sites with both structural and burial evidence, one of which yielded a fragment of a food vessel. The Templenoë burial complex is close to the recorded Henge Monument at **Carron**, (Record of Monuments and Places No. TI069-002) providing further evidence of the burial landscape of Bronze Age Tipperary.



Cremation pit cemetery found at **Templenoë**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

bronze age

A number of finely made early Bronze Age flint arrowheads were recovered two of which were found during post-excitation sieving of the **Templenoë** cremation deposits. One, a tanged arrowhead is very tiny and is burnt. The burnt state is notable as it is possibly a result of being embedded in the body of the deceased at the time of cremation. This, of course suggests that it might have been the cause of death!

Results from the investigations between **Cahir** and **Cashel** extend the trend of Bronze Age activity noted elsewhere (about 27 sites), but these are more sparsely distributed, perhaps due to the relatively poor soil conditions south of **Cahir**. Early examination of the ceramics confirmed a date range from the late Neolithic through to the later Bronze Age, with beaker, food vessel, urn, and Bronze Age pottery represented.

late iron age/ early medieval

Near the southern end of the route in Co. Limerick, late Iron Age/early medieval sites were discovered in **Knockcommane** on a prominent north-east facing hill overlooking the **River Funshion**. The sites consisted of one 20 m diameter ring-ditch/ring-barrow with internal pits and posts.

Finds from one pit included a blue glass bead and another may have represented the remains of a bowl furnace for iron working. Nearby, a 7 m diameter ring-barrow site had evidence of cremated bones from which another blue glass bead was retrieved. At **Knockgraffon**, north of the **River Suir** a 5.4 m

diameter ring-barrow site produced iron slag, burnt bone and two small blue glass beads from the fill of its enclosing ditch.



Iron Age ring-barrow found at **Knockgraffon**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

early medieval/ medieval

Investigations along the route suggested that early medieval and medieval settlement may have been confined to the known settlement centres which later became villages or towns; **Knockgraffon Motte**, **New Inn**, **Cahir** and **Cashel**.

At **Marhill** settlement activity in the form of a rectangular house structure, associated pits and an enclosed corn-drying kiln was found. Also found here were an iron knife and a fine copper-alloy pin with a 'watch-winder' head. Could this have been evidence of **Loch Ceann**, the ancient settlement of New Inn?



Early medieval corn-drying kiln found at **Marhill**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

post-medieval



18th-19th century weavers cottage found at **Loughfeedora**. (Photo Margaret Gowen & Co Ltd)

Behind **Rockwell College** on the site where food vessel pottery was found was also evidence of land division associated with the nearby known deserted medieval village of **Dogstown**. Closer to historic **Cashel** a late 18th/early 19th century weaver's cottage at **Loughfeedora** was fully revealed and excavated. The discovery of the poorly preserved remains of the stone house and outlying cobbled areas suggested a well-maintained local industry thrived here, hence the townland name.