

Beginning in June 2001, a range of archaeological excavations were carried out on the route of the N11, Newtownmountkennedy to Ballynabarney Road Improvement Scheme, Co. Wicklow. Archaeological Development Services Ltd (ADS Ltd) conducted the work which was fully funded through Wicklow County Council by the NRA.

Archaeological investigations involved pre-development testing ahead of the road construction contract and monitoring of topsoil stripping during the construction. If an archaeological site was uncovered during the testing or monitoring phase, subsequent full archaeological excavation took place. These investigations uncovered a landscape rich in human activity, dating from prehistory through to the modern period. The archaeological sites uncovered included habitation (any site where people lived in the past) and burial sites, ritual sites (rituals are connected with some magic or religious practice), burnt mounds (or fulachta fiadh as discussed below) and areas of industrial activity. Some of the results of this work are presented here by townland location. It is intended that once the analysis of all the materials uncovered during the archaeological works is complete, the results and record of the sites revealed will be published, thereby insuring that the story of Wicklow's past is made available to the people of its present and future.



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Rosanna, double sided stone mould found in a bowl furnace. See reverse side of mould on poster No. 2

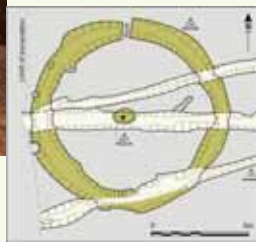
Killadreenan

Prehistoric ritual/burial site: *The Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC*

Three main areas of archaeological ritual/burial activity were identified along the proposed road route; first at **Rathmore**, second along the flood plain of the Vartry and Rathnew Rivers and third within the townland of **Killadreenan** at the very northern end of the road route. In the Townland of **Killadreenan** a ring ditch was excavated. This circular ditch (ditches are associated with defensive structures, as a means of drainage or as a construction trench) measured about 10m wide and was situated on a flat plateau at the top of the steep north slope of the Chapel River valley. The ditch encircled a central pit. Pottery and flint from the fills of the ditch have been provisionally dated to the Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC.



Killadreenan, ritual/burial site.



Killadreenan, plan of ritual/burial site.

Timore Lane

Habitation/Industrial site: *Medieval - post-medieval period (AD 1000 - 1700)*

A possible medieval occupation was excavated in **Timore Lane**. Here the remains consisted of two roughly linear shaped features emerging from an unexcavated area on the west facing slope of a large hill. It is suspected that a large portion of this site continues underneath the field surface outside the limits of the new N11. The features were in an area which documentary sources refer to as being the location of a small village dating from the 17th and 18th Centuries. The largest and most northerly of the features appeared to have resulted from an episode of burning and may represent a hearth (any place where a pit was dug and a fire built, sometimes identified by charcoal, baked earth, ash, discoloration, or an outline of stones). A second feature appeared to constitute an indistinct shallow trench, possibly a wall foundation around the hearth. Radiocarbon dating may provide an indication as to the date, however the exact form and function of these pits/trenches remains unknown. They may constitute partial remains of the 17th and 18th century village previously mentioned. Equally, the site may be the remains of industrial activity similar to that found at **Inchanappa Upper** (see poster No. 2). Finally the site may have been the location of ritual activity. This appears very unlikely, however without further investigation the form and function of the site will remain unknown.



Killadreenan, flint arrowheads.



Rathmore, ritual/burial site.



Rathmore, ritual/burial enclosure.



Rathmore, flint tools from prehistoric activity.



Rathmore, flint assemblage.



Rathmore, burnt mound.

Kilmartin/Rathmore

Prehistoric ritual/burial site: *The Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC*

A second area of prehistoric Ritual/burial activity was located within the Townland of **Kilmartin/Rathmore**, situated on a ridge of high ground to the east of the existing N11 road. Here a large prehistoric enclosure some 38m in diameter with an entrance to the northeast was identified and excavated. Several pits were situated in the interior, one of which contained an urn cremation (a vessel in which the cremated ashes of one or more individuals are placed). Cremation of the dead was a common custom in the Bronze Age c 2000 - 500BC. Deposits of burnt human bone were often placed in a large pottery urn, which was then placed in a pit or cist (a grave lined with stones and covered with slabs or enclosed on four sides). The high ridges of the area appear to have been the focus of intense prehistoric activity dating to the Neolithic c 4000-2000BC and Bronze Age c 2000-500BC. The presence of such a large enclosure, with little evidence of internal features, that is situated at an elevated position, certainly suggests a ritual function dating to the Neolithic/Bronze Age. This interpretation is strengthened by the presence of the urn cremation. The visual link of the Rathmore enclosure to features situated across the ravine in the adjacent Townland of **Kilmartin** suggests related activity. The features excavated at **Kilmartin** produced copious quantities of both lithics (stone tools) and pottery, which appear also to date to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age. Further post-excavation analyses including radiocarbon dating, environmental and artefact analyses will contribute to producing a picture of the prehistoric landscape of this part of Co. Wicklow.



Rathmore, wood lined trough.



Rathmore, clay lined trough.



Rathmore, burnt mound.



Rathmore, wood lined trough.

Burnt Mounds (Cooking/Industrial sites):

The Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC

At **Rathmore** between **Kilmartin** and **Inchanappa**, 24 burnt mounds (or fulachta fiadh as they are more commonly known) were excavated. These mounds are commonly found near water or in wetland areas. They are the remnants of a process that involved heating stones in a fire and putting them in a water filled pit or trough to boil the water, possibly for cooking, bathing or for working with textiles. The fire-cracked stones were discarded after use and eventually formed a mound around the trough or pit area. These features are visible in the landscape today as mounds and excavation reveals the fire-cracked stones and sometimes an associated trough, lined with either wood planks, clay or stone slabs to keep them watertight. They are one of the most common site types in Irish prehistory; by 1990 a minimum of 4000 had been recorded in the country. The majority of the mounds found at **Rathmore** were each associated with a single sub-rectangular trough. Flint scrapers-small stone tools, flint flakes, a flint knife and a possible fragment of gold Bronze Age ring money uncovered during excavation may be the clue to the date of these features. The vast majority of these sites are known from the Bronze Age c 2000 - 500 BC.

Medieval habitation/Industrial site:

Medieval - post-medieval period (1000 AD - 1700 AD)

In **Rathmore** Townland about 2km north of Ashford, the remains of a possible enclosure were uncovered. This feature also extended beyond the limit of excavation of the new N11 road route. It appears to represent a section of a boundary ditch, which may have enclosed an area to the west. Here a slight mound along a high ridge may indicate an area of habitation within the enclosure. The fills of the ditch suggest that following its excavation it was allowed to fill up naturally before being deliberately filled perhaps as a result of abandonment of the site. The discovery of medieval pottery here suggests a medieval date.



Reconstruction of a wood lined trough.

