

what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings in and between **Glanmire** and **Watergrasshill**.



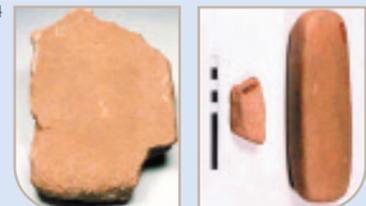
1. Late Bronze Age pottery
Funerary vessel from a Late Bronze Age cremation uncovered at **Killydonoghue**.
(Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)



2. Bronze Age vessel
Rim of a Bronze Age vessel uncovered at **Killydonoghue**.
(Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)



3. Gun money
Part of the late 17th-century 'gun money' coin hoard uncovered at **Ballinvinny South** after conservation.
(Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)



4. Saddle quern
Saddle quern uncovered during excavations of the Bronze Age settlement at **Killydonoghue**.
(Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

5. Rubbing stones
Bronze Age rubbing stones uncovered during excavations at **Killydonoghue**.
(Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

background



Aerial view of medieval moated site uncovered at **Ballinvinny South**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)



Part of the late 17th-century 'gun money' coin hoard with linen wrapping uncovered at **Ballinvinny South**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

In 2001, a programme of archaeological site investigations were undertaken along the 10km route of the N8 Watergrasshill Bypass (Glanmire-Watergrasshill), County Cork, in order to identify and resolve any features considered to be of archaeological significance.

Site investigations yielded a wide variety of archaeological activity spanning some 4,000 years of human history.

In all, 35 sites were investigated ranging in date from the Early Bronze Age to the early modern period.

The work was carried out by **Sheila Lane & Associates, Consultant Archaeologists** on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Cork County Council**.



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archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Part of the late 17th-century 'gun money' coin hoard uncovered at **Ballinvinny South** after conservation. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

RIGHT: Funerary vessel from a Late Bronze Age cremation uncovered at **Killydonoghue**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

MIDDLE: Timber trough from *fulacht fiadh* uncovered at **Killydonoghue**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)



bronze age

Fulachta fiadh/burnt mounds



Timber trough from *fulachta fiadh* uncovered at **Killydonoghue**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

One of the most immediate and frequent signs of Bronze Age activity on any scheme study tends to be the presence of *fulachta fiadh* or burnt mounds. These sites are the result of a process for heating water. What the heated water was used for is still unclear and is the subject of ongoing academic debate. Prevalent theories suggest that *fulachta fiadh* may have been used to produce hot water for cooking, dyeing, processing hides, bathing, sweating, ceremonial cleansing or even for the production of an early form of beer. Ten *fulachta fiadh* were identified along the route of the scheme.

At the southern end a well-preserved example was identified in **Killalough townland**, which is located on the east-sloping side of a narrow valley, dropping down onto a northern tributary of the Butlerstown River, northeast of **Glanmire**. The site was located along the base of the valley and the excavation revealed a well-constructed stone-lined hearth (where stones were heated) positioned immediately west of a wooden trough. The trough was made from a large, hollowed out piece of oak, which had the appearance of a log boat or canoe. Tree-ring analysis of the timber produced a Middle Bronze Age date of 1535 BC.

A cluster of five burnt mounds were identified in marshy ground in the townland of **Mitchellsfort**, south of **Watergrasshill** village. Of these, one produced a radiocarbon date of 1800-1740 BC. Other examples of burnt mounds and possible *fulachta fiadh* were identified at the townland of **Meenane**, one immediately east of Watergrasshill village and two 1km further to the north-east. One of these produced an Early Bronze Age date of 2030-1870 BC and a second produced a Late Bronze Age date of 1055-975 BC. A final example at **Transtown**, 3.5km southwest of Watergrasshill, produced a date of 1290-1170 BC.

Despite the uncertainty about the exact function of *fulachta fiadh*, what is clear is that they are by far the most numerous of the known prehistoric site types in the landscape.

bronze age



Bronze Age rubbing stones uncovered during excavations at **Killydonoghue**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

Habitation

The townland of **Killydonoghue** is located on the southern end of the road scheme. It sits on the eastern part of the Butlerstown River valley, north-east of **Glanmire**. At one site the foundation remains of a circular house were uncovered, which dated to 1211-919 BC. The structure would originally have had an internal floor area of 28.3m². It would have been formed by a circular wall of woven wattle, coated with hardened clay daub, held up by ten sturdy, evenly spaced, wooden posts and is likely to have had a conical thatched roof. It had an entrance in its eastern perimeter. A concentrated patch of scorched clay within the house is likely to have been a central hearth. That the site was used over a prolonged period was evident from the discovery on the same site of a series of deep grain storage pits dating to 1525-1429 BC. Though not contemporary with the house structure, the pits may reflect prolonged or

seasonal revisits. More importantly, the pits revealed direct evidence of food storage during the Middle Bronze Age period. Contained within the pits were some fragments of saddle querns, large rocks used to grind grain into flour with rubbing stones, samples of which were also identified on site.

Burial practices

While many of the excavations revealed evidence of life in the Bronze Age, others revealed evidence of the respect and honour afforded to the dead. At **Killydonoghue** three separate human cremation pit burials were identified. One site consisted of the remains of an Early Bronze Age urn cremation dated to 1915-1777 BC. Here the cremated remains of an adult were placed into a large urn, and then inverted carefully inside a shallow pit. Buried next to it was a small food vessel intended, it is thought, to accompany the deceased into the after life. A similar, though later (1127-905 BC) cremation was identified along the same eastern valley slope. This Late Bronze Age example revealed the base of a thick-walled urn within which the cremated remains of at least one adult were stored. A third example at Killydonoghue produced a similar Late Bronze Age date of 985-905 BC. Another cremation pit burial, of presumed Bronze Age date, was identified in the townland of **Mitchellsfort**; however, this example could not be dated.

medieval

Farming and metalworking

Evidence of early medieval farming practices were identified in the townland of **Ballinvinny North** at a site, on a west-sloping valley, 4.5km southwest of **Watergrasshill**. Investigations revealed a keyhole-shaped stone-lined corn-drying kiln, dated to AD 860-940.

Evidence of Iron Age (possibly early medieval) metalworking was uncovered at three sites. At **Kilrussane**, a cluster of five small bowl furnaces, a possible post-hole and a furnace/forging pit were identified, providing evidence of iron smelting and forging. At **Transtown**, excavations revealed a smelting furnace, a bowl furnace and two pits. While another bowl furnace was identified at **Ballinvinny North**.

Settlement

At **Ballinvinny South**, an impressive medieval moated settlement revealed dramatic evidence of colonial expansion and consolidation in east Cork during the late 13th-century. The site consisted of a moat ditch enclosing a sub-rectangular area measuring approximately 30m x 40m. The moat, which would have been filled, at least partially, with water channelled in from a nearby spring, varied in depth and width but averaged approximately 2.2m wide at its top to 0.5m at its base and had an average depth of 0.75m.

Originally, the site is likely to have had an internal earthen bank with a palisade fence on top. The site was entered from the south via a gap in the moat. A gate tower or similar defensive structure, the foundations of which survived, would have protected the entranceway. Centrally placed within the enclosure were two structures aligned at right angles to each other. One structure, evidenced by a slot-trench and the footings for structural timbers, was used for domestic purposes and measured 11m x 4m. The foundations of a stone-lined chimney survived in the northeast corner of the structure. The second structure was located immediately east of the structure. It measured 11m x 4m and appears to have been a wooden structure built on a stone foundation.



13th-century moated site uncovered at **Ballinvinny South**. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

post-medieval

Farming and settlement

Archaeological works at **Ballinvinny South** also produced evidence for a late 17th to early 19th-century rural settlement, coincidentally covering part of the long abandoned moated site.

The post-medieval settlement comprised of three houses and two farm buildings. All three houses were poorly preserved, the meagre remains consisting of an ash-covered hearthstone slab, a hearth, short sections of the foundation courses and possible foundation trenches. One house had some evidence of a southern wall and two internal partitions.

Between the partitions archaeologists discovered a hoard of 68 James II coins, known as 'gun money', dated to 1689 and 1690.



Part of the late 17th-century 'gun money' coin hoard uncovered at **Ballinvinny South** after conservation. (Photo Sheila Lane & Associates)

Externally, a gully curved around the eastern side of the house, which would have taken running water from the roof. One of the farm buildings was a stone-built structure measuring 9m x 8m. The second farm building was identified as a possible lean-to structure.

This settlement has been interpreted as supporting one or two 'dairymen' families. The finds associated with the settlement span the late 17th-century to the early 19th-century. The pottery included a broad range of domestic wares including fragments of cooking pots, jugs, bowls, cups, tankards and plates. Metal objects included a padlock, a staple, a sickle, a horseshoe, three blades, a knife, a belt buckle, a button, iron nails and a possible musket ball.

Approximately 90m to the south, excavations revealed the remains of a smithy floor. This survived as a 4.2m x 2.7m sub-rectangular concentration of burnt clay and charcoal, and a build-up of hammer or smithy scale deposits. Several stake-holes were also noted, some of which were interpreted as an anvil support. Externally, there was evidence of a metal surface interpreted as a smithy yard. The finds recovered suggested an 18th-19th century date.