



archaeological DISCOVERIES

background



View of road works from standing stone at Shanacoole. (RMP WA037-052)

The N25 Kinsalebeg realignment consisted of approximately 2.6 km of single carriageway to upgrade the existing road between the townlands **Tiknock** to **Pilltown Cross**, County Waterford. Test excavations by Waterford County Council archaeologists on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** along the length of the proposed realignment between May and June 2005 led to the identification of eight areas of archaeological interest. Subsequently, full excavation of these sites and a detailed architectural survey and inventory of two buildings scheduled for demolition were undertaken by **Headland Archaeology Ltd** in late 2005. A record of the townland boundaries impacted by the road realignment was also made by Waterford County Council archaeologists.

The zone of archaeological potential surrounding a standing stone of probable modern origin listed in the **Record of Monuments and Places** (RMP No. WA037-052) was slightly impacted by the realignment at **Shanacoole**.

Upon excavation only three of the eight areas proved to be archaeological sites. They included one possible kiln with associated possible waste pit found in **Shanacoole** townland; four subsoil-cut pits containing flint in **Pilltown** townland; and two ploughed-out burnt mounds found in **Shanacoole** townland. The narrow realigned road - in some places only 5 m wide - meant that at some sites the archaeological features clearly extended outside the route.

Shanacoole

A possible stone-lined kiln, measuring 1.9 m by 3 m and 0.22 m deep, was found at **Shanacoole**. Although no cereal grains were recovered in the fills of the structure, its shape and form suggested a kiln-type function. Samples from the kiln have been sent for radiocarbon-dating and should help date the site.

Of the two ploughed-out *fulachta fiadh* or burnt mounds identified at **Shanacoole** during archaeological testing the most westerly one consisted of a very shallow spread of heat-shattered sandstones, measuring 8 m by 9 m in diameter, and 0.12 m deep. The easterly burnt mound was heavily disturbed by modern drainage and extended roughly 8 m by 7.5 m.

A nearby pit produced evidence of burning - possibly an associated hearth? No troughs were found on either side but they may survive outside the road route. The sites next to a north-south orientated stream that ran along the eastern field boundary were typical of their kind. There were no finds from either site.



Bronze Age pits identified at Pilltown.

Pilltown

In **Pilltown** townland a cluster of four pits and a separate, irregularly-shaped spread with three additional pits about 100 m to the east were identified here during testing. During full excavation the four pits were excavated and some were found to contain much charcoal and flints (a mixed assemblage of primary or secondary workings, including some cores, flakes, debitage and possible fragments of tools). One pit produced carbonized hazelnut shell, flint and one tiny fragment of possible prehistoric pottery.

The irregularly-shaped spread may have been the remains of a small enclosure truncated by the construction of the original N25, and clearly extending north along the contour of the hillside. Fragments of possible prehistoric pottery came from the fill, and extra flints were retrieved from hand sieving the site's topsoil.

As the site was on the south-west facing slope of the hillside it would have been a favorable location for settlement in the past.



Selection of Late Neolithic - Early Bronze Age flints excavated from pits at Pilltown.

Architectural survey

An architectural survey and inventory of the two buildings scheduled for demolition was also carried out as the buildings were alongside the main N25 road in **Pilltown** townland.

The survey revealed that their construction most likely dated to the early years of the 20th century, around 1902-3. The survey noted that the two adjoining cottages were clearly built as one design, each mirroring the other in terms of internal layout and external appearance. Both were gabled one and a half storey structures.

Documentary records show that the buildings were Public Health Cottages under the management of the Board of Health. In 1940 one of the properties had a garden area of '2 rods, and 6 perches' valued at 10 shillings, with the building itself valued at one pound five shillings!



Buildings at Pilltown which were subjected to an architectural survey as part of the scheme.



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