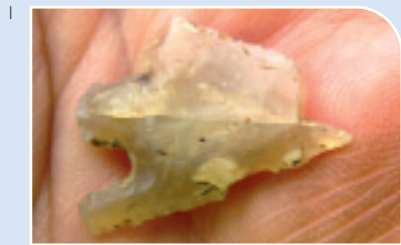


what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings from the scheme:



1. Arrowhead
Broken barbed-and-tanged arrowhead from **Castleroan**.
(Photo: Niall Roycroft)



2. Silver penny
Edward I long-cross silver penny from **Busherstown**.
(Photo: John Sunderland)



3. Saddle quern
Saddle quern and rubbing stone (found in adjacent pits) from **Park**.
(Photo: Niall Roycroft)



4. Palstave axe
Bronze Age palstave axe from **Camlin** before cleaning.
(Photo: Studio Lab)

background

The N7 Castletown to Nenagh scheme is 35 km long, running south of **Roscrea**, past **Moneygall** and connecting to the N7 Nenagh Bypass, east of **Nenagh**



Large cereal-drying kiln inside the moated manor at **Busherstown**. The kilns all had a scorched lower section and an unburnt step for access. (Photo: Niall Roycroft)

The route passes through the low wetland of the upper River Nore, across high hills connected with the Devil's Bit range and over the flat, well-drained gravels west of Moneygall.

Sixty archaeological sites were excavated by spring 2008 in advance of road construction. The

archaeological work was undertaken by **Eachtra Archaeological Projects** and **Valerie J Keeley Ltd** on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **Laois County Council**.



An extensive area was stripped and excavated at **Park**. Part of a rectangular enclosure with adjacent corn-dryers and storage pits were found. (Photo: Eagle)

**N7 CASTLETOWN TO NENAGH:
DERRINSALLAGH TO BALLINTOTTY,**
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archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Christian burial at **Camlin** being recorded. (Photo: Niall Roycroft)

RIGHT: Edward I long-cross silver penny from **Busherstown** before cleaning. The inscription reads "Edward King of England Lord of Ireland". (Photo: Niall Roycroft)

MIDDLE: The dry moat of the **Busherstown** manor. (Photo: Niall Roycroft)



prehistoric settlement and burial

Two probable 'Beaker' sites at **Castleroan** and **Rathnaveoge Lower** showed considerable settlement evidence on high ground with great, panoramic views. Clusters of post-holes were evident at each site but buildings could not be easily made out. Associated pits contained pottery and a broken barbed-and-tanged arrowhead.



Cluster of Bronze Age cremation burials at **Derrybane**. (Photo: Eagle)

Two Bronze Age palisade enclosures were found at **Camlin** and **Derrymore**, south of Roscrea. Both were built using a slot-trench containing vertical planking held in place by large packing stones and both had

wells and burnt mounds

There were 22 burnt mounds/*fulachta fiadh* on the project. The most significant was at **Camlin** where a natural spring was enlarged to form a large, deep pond up to 20 m across, accessed via a ramp. Adjacent to this pond was another deep well 10 m in diameter in



Bronze Age enclosure and buildings at **Derrymore**. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)

narrow entrances facing south. Two buildings were found in the first and one building (possibly rebuilt once) was found in the second.

Other circular buildings with large porches were found outside the **Camlin** and **Derrymore** enclosures showing considerable Bronze Age settlement. Buildings of a similar type were also found at **Derrybane** and **Drumbaun**. The buildings at **Derrybane** were located close to a cluster of cremations. One cremation was covered by an upturned urn.



Preliminary reconstruction of the *shaduff* at **Camlin**. (Drawing: Niall Roycroft)

which a large *shaduff* had been built. A *shaduff* is a water-lifting crane usually associated with Ancient Egypt, where examples dating to c. 1500 BC are illustrated on tomb walls. The **Camlin** *shaduff* was fairly well preserved through waterlogging and was built on two modified tree-trunks placed across the centre of the well. In these trunks, two sockets supported sloping poles and two large, vertical posts were set back from the tree-trunk face. The *shaduff* was accessed by a base of planks and sand. A *shaduff* can lift great quantities of water and one possibility is that it was there to top-up the adjacent pond—perhaps during steamy communal baths. Lots of hazel nuts were found in the well and a nearby small trough. The discard mound was 40 m in diameter.

Several other burnt mounds had multiple troughs separated by narrow saddles of earth, perhaps so that fat and scum (rising from boiling meat) could be skimmed from the surface.



Bronze Age circular building adjacent to a burnt mound at **Camlin**. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)

early medieval round and oval enclosures

Of the five enclosures investigated, the most impressive was a previously recorded example at **Camlin**. Inside the enclosure, the eastern third comprised a close-packed cemetery, originally containing up to 400 burials. There are many ringforts at **Camlin** and this cemetery perhaps serviced all of them, before the Bishops of Roscrea formalised burial in the later early medieval period. Burial started in a specific area but later expanded, necessitating the narrowing of the ringfort banks. Burials were generally supine (laid on their backs) in the Christian manner but there are numerous flexed and even crouched individuals. The cemetery population is of all ages and both sexes. One



Exposing an early medieval burial at the **Camlin** cemetery. (Photo: Niall Roycroft)

juvenile was accompanied by a blue glass and white enamel bead necklace and some adults wore a small, iron knife at the hip. Wood stains show planking was

used, in combination with stones, to line some graves.

The centre of the **Camlin** enclosure appears to have been occupied by a droveway and the western third held a building from which numerous high-status stick-pins and dress ornaments were recovered.

Outside this ringfort were at least three contemporary buildings. One of these had two nearby cereal-drying kilns and all appeared to lie within a ditched field system.



Early medieval building and nearby cereal-drying kilns at **Camlin**. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)

medieval rectangular enclosures

At **Busherstown**, near Moatquarter, part of a medieval moated manor was uncovered. The dry moat enclosed an area c. 50 m by 50 m. Outside the moat was a large ditched annex, measuring 40 m by 30 m, containing many large cereal-drying kilns and at least two circular buildings. A total of 14 cereal-drying kilns, as well as several grain storage pits were found. Clearly there was an important mill nearby, possibly on the stream that lies adjacent to the site. A later

Two more ringfort-type enclosures were found at **Camlin** and others were excavated at **Killeisk** and **Clynoe**. **Killeisk** was 'stadium'-shaped, measured c. 60 m by 25 m internally, and had an associated external droveway, pits and field system.



Previously unknown cemetery at **Camlin** within ringfort. (Photo: AirShots Ltd)



The annex at **Busherstown** mid-excavation showing the crop-mark of the main moated enclosure. (Photo: Studio Lab)

phase of annex ditches contained a very fine Edward I silver long-cross penny (c. 1279–1307, London mint), as well as two human skeletons. Perhaps these ditch-burials resulted from the Black Death of the mid-14th century.

field system

The remains of a later medieval field system were found between **Moneygall** and **Moatquarter** reflecting the importance of **Moatquarter** as one of the Ely-O'Carroll 'castles'.

quern-stones

At **Killeisk** and **Camlin** broken, decorated, quern fragments were placed in the upper back-fills of droveway ditches. Saddle querns and rotary querns were also found at **Park**. The number of quern-stones, cereal-drying kilns and field systems reflect the importance of cereal growing in this area during the early medieval and medieval periods.

axeheads

A beautiful Bronze Age palstave axehead was found at **Camlin**. The axe had been deliberately buried on its own a short distance from a burnt mound. A large, iron, bearded axe of later medieval type was also found buried on its own, again at **Camlin**.

Part of a second rectangular enclosure was found at **Park**. Adjacent to it were many small cereal-drying kilns and grain storage pits.



First decorated quern-stone placed in the Killeisk droveway. (Photo: Niall Roycroft)



Medieval bearded axe from **Camlin** after cleaning. (Photo: Niall Roycroft)