

what we found

in brief:

Some of the findings at **Cashel**.



1. Flint Knife

Neolithic flint knife from **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot**.



2. Pottery

Bronze Age Beaker pottery uncovered during excavations at **Windmill**.



3. Flints

Two Early Mesolithic flint blades from **Farranamanagh**.

4. Coins

Coin from a hoard of 18 silver pennies from the reign of Edward II 1307-1327 uncovered during excavations at **Cooper's-Lot**.



5. Pottery

Rim sherd from a medieval pottery vessel uncovered at **Monadreeola**.

6. Flints

Neolithic Flint scraper found beside a flat cist cemetery at **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot**.

background

The intricacies of designing a modern road through the rich archaeological landscape that surrounds **Cashel** were immense.

Only one Recorded Monument was impacted upon; an ancient highway the '**Rian Bo Phadriag**' or '**Track of Saint Patrick's Cow**' which was later discovered to have no archaeological significance. The bypass begins 3km north-east of Cashel at **Gortmakellis**, skirting **Ballyknock hill**, and meeting the existing N8 road south of Cashel. The shorter N74 Link Road begins south of Cashel at **Windmill**, skirting Windmill hill, and meets the existing Tipperary road west of Cashel. No archaeological works took place north of the Rock of Cashel, within the ancient 'Plains of Cashel'.

Ten potential archaeological sites identified were investigated through a programme of test excavation undertaken by **Mary Henry Archaeological Services Ltd.**, in 2001. The results confirmed archaeological material dating from as early as the Neolithic period, the first discovery of its kind from Cashel, and the first evidence for rural medieval settlement in Cashel. A programme of further test excavation and resolution was undertaken by **Judith Carroll Network Archaeology Ltd.**, in 2003 along the entire route. All of the archaeological work was carried out on behalf of the **National Roads Authority** and **South Tipperary County Council**.



Excavation of the outer ditch of a bi-vallate enclosure uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**.

The archaeological sites discovered spanned the entire 7km length of the bypass, and the 1.9km length of the Link Road. These sites ranged in date from the Early Mesolithic period, c. 7000 BC, to early modern vernacular homesteads. Within a 500m length of the bypass a new ringfort, an enclosed Bronze Age settlement and a possible Iron Age enclosure were discovered, illustrating the remarkable density of human settlement from Cashel's hinterland. Similarly in **Monadreeola** and **Boscabell** townlands Neolithic, Bronze Age and rural medieval sites were discovered within the same fields. Many pits, kilns and furnaces were also excavated and recorded along the route of the road.



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archaeological DISCOVERIES

front cover images

LEFT: Excavation of the outer ditch of a bi-vallate enclosure uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**.
RIGHT: Skeleton of a female recovered from the inner ditch of a bi-vallate enclosure uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**.
MIDDLE: Aerial photograph of the univallate enclosure uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**.



mesolithic

Two small flint blades (known as microliths) were recovered from a linear feature found in **Farranamanagh** townland west of **Cashel**.

Flint is not native to Cashel and these finds represent the earliest human evidence for the area.



Two Early Mesolithic flint blades from **Farranamanagh**.

neolithic

A Neolithic flat cremation cemetery consisting of over twenty cist burials was discovered south of **Cashel** at **Owen's-and-Bigg's-Lot** townland.

This unique site was situated on the east-facing slope of a prominent hill, atop which lies the well-known **'Fairy Fort'** enclosure at **Windmill**. This cemetery faced **Slievenamon** mountain, County Tipperary. Beside

the cemetery, evidence was found for a potential funerary structure, consisting of posts and stake-holes with an internal hearth. The finds recovered included three flint scrapers from within the structure.

More Neolithic sites were found east of Cashel in **Monadreela** townland. The sites consisted of pits and posts discovered on the east-facing slope of the **Monadreela** ridge, overlooking a former wetland zone. Finds recovered here included pottery and a very fine Neolithic chert blade.

bronze age

Prior to the archaeological excavations carried out for the bypass, no Bronze Age habitation sites were known from **Cashel**. At **Monadreela** a single cremation pit burial less than 1m yielded over 80 sherds of Bronze Age pottery, a polished stone axe and quantities of burned seeds.

At **Boscabell** a large, curvilinear enclosure with internal and external pits was dated to the Early Bronze Age, as decorated pottery was recovered from one of the pits. Further funerary evidence came from a collection of isolated pits which upon excavation yielded cremations and pottery. Highlights from the Bronze Age included the 24 burnt mounds discovered,

including a cluster of seven found around two ponds in one field. Upon removal of the burnt stone spread a large pit lined by wicker and in-filled with worked planks was discovered. It is possible this pit served as a ritual pond later sealed by the debris from the burnt mound. A 2m long worked timber and a wooden pick were retrieved from the pit. A second polished stone axe was found from a burnt mound in **George's-Land**.

Settlement evidence came from a number of townlands. In **Hughes'-Lot East** townland a rectilinear enclosure surrounded up to three roundhouses. Nearby a saddle quern had been deliberately deposited inverted into a pit. In **Monadreela** more Bronze Age structures were discovered as well as a ring-ditch site.



Aerial photograph of the univallate enclosure uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**.



Mortar-bonded townland boundary wall at **George's-Land**.



Excavations of a burnt mound uncovered at **George's-Land**.

early medieval



Skeleton of a female recovered from the inner ditch of a bi-vallate enclosure uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**.

The highlight from this period was the discovery of a new ringfort at **Hughes'-Lot East** south-east of **Cashel**. This site consisted of a double-ditched enclosure with evidence for structures in the interior. Beside the outer ditch was a corn-drying kiln which yielded abundant environmental evidence. A poignant discovery was the carefully-laid skeleton of a woman, the first stratified burial from a non-religious site from Cashel. The leg bone of another skeleton from the inner ditch had cut marks suggestive of battle wounds!



Aerial photograph of a bi-vallate enclosure during excavation in **Hughes'-Lot East**. The remainder of the site lies outside the road-take.

medieval

Two enclosed rural medieval settlements were discovered. In **Monadreela** townland, east of **Cashel** a ditch encircling buildings was discovered, dating to the 11th-century.

In **Farranamanagh** townland, west of **Cashel**, an almost identical site-type was discovered consisting of a rectilinear ditched-enclosure with internal structures. An external metalworking area and a disarticulated human skeleton were found nearby. The remains of a possible hut associated with the nearby **Windmill Leper Hospital** were also discovered. Disarticulated human bones from the same field are being examined for signs of leprosy.

Possibly the most exciting medieval discovery was the cache of eighteen silver pennies, dating from King Edward II, 1307-1327. These coins were found in a tree bole beside a pond at **Cooper's-Lot** townland; they may have been hidden during the turbulent Bruce Invasion of Cashel in 1317.



Coin from a hoard of 18 silver pennies from the reign of Edward II 1307-1327 uncovered during excavations on the bypass.

post-medieval

A mortar-bonded wall that may have served as a millrace was discovered at **George's-Land** townland. A cobbled roadway known as **Croke's Lane** was investigated for the first time and proved to be of late medieval date. A beehive-shaped lime-kiln from **Farranamanagh** was found to have been constructed

of, amongst others, re-used architectural stones. The site was abandoned before 1743 as a coin from the reign of King George II was found in the back-fill deposit. In addition, three vernacular homesteads were excavated and recorded elsewhere on the bypass.