

# what we found

## in brief:

Some of the findings from the scheme:



1. Flints  
Two flint scrapers from the cist cemetery at **Owen's and Biggs-Lot**.  
(Photo: Studio Lab)



2. Pottery  
Early Bronze Age Beaker pottery from **Windmill**.  
(Photo: Studio Lab)



3. Weaponry  
Gun flint used for a 17th–19th-century flint-lock firearm from **Hughes'-Lot East**.  
(Photo: Studio Lab)



4. Quern-stone  
Rotary quern fragment from a vernacular homestead at **Windmill**, abandoned mid-20th century.  
(Photo: Studio Lab)

# background

The N8 Cashel 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.

Ten potential archaeological sites identified in desk-based and field-walking studies were investigated by test excavation undertaken by **Mary Henry Archaeological Services Ltd** in 2001. The results confirmed the presence of intensive archaeological remains around Cashel. Further testing and full excavation was undertaken by **Judith Carroll Network Archaeology Ltd (JCNA 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**.

The intricacies of designing a modern road through the rich archaeological landscape that surrounds Cashel were immense. No archaeological works took place north of the Rock of Cashel, within the ancient 'Plains of Cashel'.

The archaeological sites discovered spanned the entire 8 km length of the bypass, and the 1.9 km length of the Link Road. These sites ranged in date from Early Mesolithic artefact scatters, c. 6000 BC, to early 19th century vernacular homesteads. Certain landscape characteristics determined settlement location. Ponds served as foci from the early Mesolithic right through to the medieval period, and sites investigated were often multi-period in date. The slopes of hilltops also attracted settlement and burial activity, a precursor to the later occupation on the Rock of Cashel itself.



Elevated view of the double-ditched ringfort uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**. (Photo: Richard O'Brien)



A view of the Cashel Corporation townland boundary at **Hughes' Lot East**. (Photo: JCNA Ltd)

N8 CASHEL BYPASS & N74 LINK ROAD,  
County Tipperary



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# archaeological DISCOVERIES

## front cover images

LEFT: Excavation of the outer ditch of a ringfort uncovered at **Hughes'-Lot East**. (Photo: Richard O'Brien)  
RIGHT: Female skeleton recovered from the outer ditch of the double-ditched ringfort at **Hughes'-Lot East**. (Photo: Richard O'Brien)  
MIDDLE: Coin from a hoard of 18 silver pennies from **Cooper's-Lot** dating to the reign of King Edward II (1307–27). (Photo: Studio Lab)



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# mesolithic

The earliest human evidence from Cashel was dated to c. 6000 BC, with the discovery of two flint blades from **Farranamanagh**.

In addition three early Mesolithic single platform blade cores found in **Windmill** and two early Mesolithic chert blades from **Monadreela** highlighted the potential of further Mesolithic discoveries.

# neolithic

A Neolithic flat cremation cemetery consisting of over 20 cist burials was also discovered at **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot**.

This site was situated on the east-facing slope of a prominent hill, atop which lies the ancient hilltop enclosure of **Windmill**. 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 around the structure. Further west a flint hollow scraper and an unfinished leaf-shaped chert arrowhead were a clear indication of a Neolithic presence in **Farranamanagh**.



Two Early Mesolithic flint blades from **Farranamanagh**. (Photo: Studio Lab)

A large backed flint knife from **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot** townland was dated to the later Mesolithic period. The defining characteristic of these early sites was their deliberate location beside a pond.



Neolithic structure on **Monadreela** ridge. (Photo: Richard O'Brien)

Discoveries of Early Neolithic Carinated Bowl pottery were made east of Cashel in the adjoining townlands of **Boscabell** and **Monadreela**, and to the north in **Gortmakellis**. On the **Monadreela** ridge a circular slot structure comprising two trenches and a post-hole enclosed an area 2 m in diameter. A flint blade found in one slot and nine sherds of Early Neolithic pottery from an associated post-hole may represent evidence of Cashel's first Neolithic structure.

# 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 yielded over 80 sherds of Beaker pottery, a polished stone axe head, cremated bone and 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. Early Bronze Age funerary evidence came from a cremation burial in **Gortmakellis** dated to 1940–1610 BC, and from sherds of Bowl and Vase Food Vessel pottery from the adjoining townlands of **Windmill** and **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot**.



Polished stone axeheads from a *fulacht fiadh/burnt* mound at **George's-Land** (top) and a Beaker period pit at **Monadreela** (bottom). (Photo: Studio Lab)



Alder wood ladder from a 'well' sealed by a *fulacht fiadh/burnt* mound at **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot**. (Photo: JCNA Ltd)

Twenty-two *fulachta fiadh/burnt* mounds were discovered including a cluster of seven around two ponds in **Owen's and Bigg's-Lot**. Beneath one mound a large timber-lined pit in-filled with discarded worked planks was discovered. It is possible this pit served a ritual function being later sealed by the debris from the burnt mound.

Settlement evidence came from a number of townlands. In **Hughes'-Lot East** a rectilinear enclosure surrounding a roundhouse has been dated to the Late Bronze Age. Nearby an inverted saddle quern had been deliberately deposited in a pit. In **Monadreela** more Bronze Age post-structures were discovered as well as a ring-ditch.

# early medieval

Two new ringforts were discovered in **Hughes'-Lot East**.

The larger site (c. 50 m wide) 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 interred 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.



Disc-shaped stone spindle whorl from the ditch of a ringfort at **Hughes'-Lot East**. (Photo: Studio Lab)

# medieval

Two enclosed rural medieval settlements were discovered. In **Monadreela** a ditch encircling post-built structures was discovered, dating between the **11th and early 14th centuries**.

In **Farranamanagh** an almost identical site-type consisted of a rectilinear ditched-enclosure with internal structures. An external metalworking area and



Coin from a hoard of 18 silver pennies from **Cooper's-Lot** dating to the reign of King Edward II (1307–27). (Photo: Studio Lab)

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 the reign

of King Edward II (1307–27). These coins were found in a tree bole beside a pond at **Cooper's-Lot**; they may have been hidden during the turbulent Scottish occupation of Cashel in March 1317, under Robert and Edward Bruce.

# post-medieval

Investigations on the old road *Rian Bó Phádraig* (Track of Saint Patrick's Cow) produced no dating evidence.

A cobbled roadway known as Croke's Lane was investigated and proved to be of late medieval date. A beehive-shaped limekiln from **Farranamanagh** was found to have been partly constructed of re-used architectural stones, possibly from Hore Abbey. Some monumental earthen townland boundaries were also recorded, as well as three vernacular homesteads of 18th/19th century date.



Cobbled yard of vernacular house uncovered at **Kilsobin**. (Photo: JCNA Ltd)