



NEWSLETTER

Spring 2023

SCHEME DETAILS

The M28 Cork Ringaskiddy Project is an approved road development, under the terms of the National Monuments (Amendments) Act 1930–2014, and is the subject of directions issued by the Minister Housing, Local Government and Heritage (ref. A00080). The project is being progressed by Cork County Council (CCC) in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and will comprise the construction of approximately 12.5 km of new road linking the N40 Bloomfield Interchange to the east of Ringaskiddy, in County Cork. Rubicon Heritage Services Ltd. are undertaking the archaeological works on behalf of CCC and TII. Rubicon are working in partnership with TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. The investigations are being overseen by Ken Hanley, TII Project Archaeologist, and Ed Lyne, Cork County Council Resident Archaeologist.

"The proper investigation and recording of archaeology is an integral part of the advance works on this project"

Finola O'Riordan
M28 Project Manager
Cork County Council

Archaeology on the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Project

The archaeological investigations in advance of the new M28 have been ongoing for over a year. This project has provided an exciting opportunity to closely examine the route of the road for archaeological remains. A team of over 50 archaeologists have been making some exciting discoveries which are greatly enhancing our previous knowledge of human habitation on the Ringaskiddy Peninsula.

This newsletter is intended to provide a flavour of what has been identified so far, and to provide you with links to where you can find more information.

Patricia Long
Senior Archaeologist for Rubicon Heritage





Location of the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy project.

Archaeological testing of the route



Test trenching ongoing at Ballinrea

Prior to any fieldwork, the known archaeological and historical background of the project had been fully outlined in the environmental impact statement (find out more [here](#)). Extensive geophysical survey of the route of the road had also provided indications of possible previously unknown archaeological remains beneath the ground surface.

The first stage of fieldwork involved archaeological testing along the entire route to search for any further possible archaeology that might be present. This was carried out between January and March 2022, with a second phase in March 2023. It involved excavating linear trenches with tracked excavators under constant supervision. During this work we had up to six tracked excavators and 20 archaeological staff on the project. We excavated over 50,000 linear meters of test trenching over the footprint of the scheme. During the work a total of 131 areas of archaeological potential were identified, and all townland boundaries and built heritage sites impacted by the road were surveyed.

Preparing the ground for archaeological excavation

Between March and August 2022 topsoil was stripped from defined areas along the scheme to further investigate the archaeology that was identified during the testing. During this phase over 100,000 sqm of ground was stripped of topsoil to expose archaeological levels. The team increased to over 50 staff for this



Stripping of topsoil underway at Ballinrea

work. During this stage it was confirmed that 124 areas contained archaeological remains, and these have been consolidated into 38 archaeological sites named after the townlands they were found in.

Archaeological excavation

Rubicon is now well advanced in the archaeological excavation (by hand) of these sites. The excavations have been ongoing since March 2022, and are due to continue until July 2023. What we have uncovered so far is a fantastic representation of human activity in the area stretching back over 7,000 years. Some highlights from the Prehistoric era include a stone tool from the Mesolithic period, settlement evidence from the Neolithic period and a number of Bronze Age settlement, industrial and burial sites.



Neolithic house foundation discovered at Ballyhemiken, dating to c. 3,700 BC



Fulacht fia/ Burnt mound at Castletreasure- possibly Bronze Age in date



Bronze Age Cremation cemetery, including a Cist burial at Carrigaline Middle (watch the video [here](#))

Community Engagement

During the course of our work on the M28 we have constantly engaged with the local community to showcase the work that we do as archaeologists in the context of a road development.

For example, Rubicon's Senior Archaeologist Trish Long has given presentations to five local schools on what we are learning about the heritage of the area.



Pupils of Carrigaline Community School learning about the archaeology of the M28 project.



Trish also gave a public lecture for Heritage Week in August and a recording of that can be found by clicking on the link [here](#).

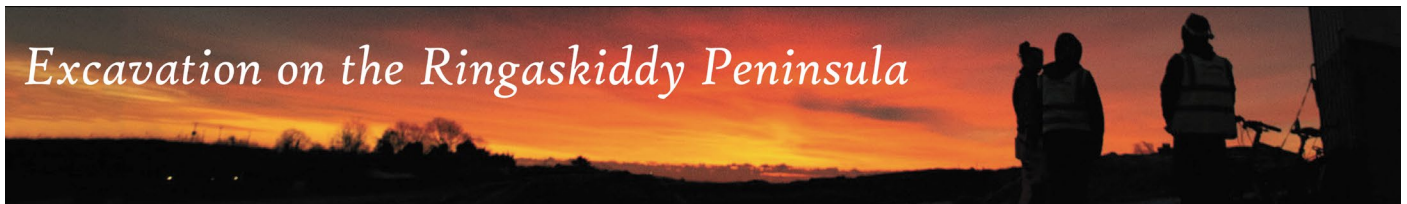
Rubicon were also delighted to host a variety of interested local groups on site visits - including Apple Cork, the Praxis Centre, Carrigaline Tidy Towns and Ringaskiddy National School.



Students from Ringaskiddy National School enjoying a visit to Barnahely 2. More footage of this visit can be seen by clicking [here](#).

Barnahely 2

One site stands out in terms of scale and significance. In the townland of Barnahely a large multi-period site – including a Bronze Age house, grain storage pits and a ring-ditch as well as an early medieval enclosure complex – was identified and excavated over the course of a year.



Background

During 2022 and early 2023 Rubicon undertook an excavation at Barnahely, on the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Project, south-east of Cork City. This site had been identified by preliminary geophysical survey and test-trenching, and was prioritised for excavation in the Stage (i)-(iv) archaeological services contract.

Pre-excavation services confirmed the presence of a large archaeological site, which was subsequently fully documented and excavated (Registration Number E5389).



Excavation

The excavation was divided into four areas

- **Area A** contained pre-historic archaeology including a small ring-ditch with outer concentric ditch, a small ring of post-holes representing the remains of a possible house and a dense concentration of pits containing saddle querns, grinding stones and charred grain.
- **Area B** contained the southern third of a settlement enclosure, with evidence of metal-working and at least one other smaller oval enclosure.
- **Area C** contained the northern half of a second settlement enclosure, with an earth-cut souterrain.
- **Area D** contained another large settlement enclosure approximately 40 m in diameter internally, with waste pits and a stone-lined souterrain.

BONE PIN

GLASS BEADS

SPEARHEAD

BROOCH

SPINDLE-WHORL

QUERN STONE

SOUTERRAINS

Souterrain (Area D)

Souterrain (Area D)

Barnahely Castle/Castle Warren

Preliminary Analysis
Initial C14 dates indicate occupation of the three closely-spaced settlement enclosures some time between AD 650 and AD 950. A large quantity of animal bone and slag has been recovered, along with over 500 finds including; a brooch, beads, knives, spindle-whorls, a bill-hook and spearhead.

Artists impression of 7th-10th century enclosures



Poster on the excavations at Barnahely 2 (read in more detail [here](#))

As our work continues you can find more information about the project on [our story map](#) and on Rubicon’s social media channels (follow the icon links below). Download a copy of this newsletter [here](#). Also, keep an eye out for our Summer 2023 issue!

Once the fieldwork is complete we will be embarking on an extensive programme of specialist analysis, dating and research in order to produce reports and publications. We will keep you updated with future newsletters as we progress on this M28 journey of discovery.

Text: Patricia Long; **Images:** Rubicon Heritage and TVAS Ireland M28 crew;
Design: Hannah Sims; **Barnahely 2 Poster:** Bruce Sutton and Hannah Sims

