



NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

PROJECT DETAILS

During the course of the M28 Project, a total of 38 archaeological sites, consisting of 124 individual cuttings, have been discovered. All of these have been excavated under registration numbers issued by the National Monuments Service in accordance with the Ministerial Direction issued for the project.

The sites are spread along the length of the scheme and represent many facets of life including settlement, industry, agriculture, and burial. They range in date from the early prehistoric period (c. 8,000 years ago) up to the relatively recent past.

The current stage of fieldwork will conclude in October 2023 and then the archaeologists will embark on an equally important stage of analysis and reporting. Technical reports will be produced, and the work will eventually culminate in the publication of a book about the archaeology of the scheme aimed at the general public.

Archaeology on the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Project

Our [Spring '23 edition](#) of this Newsletter outlined some of the exciting work on the archaeology of the M28 project that had been undertaken throughout 2022 and into 2023. At that time, we were excited by the potential the newly-discovered sites had to tell us how the community in the area developed over time. Since then, excavation has continued and we have not been disappointed! In this edition, we focus in on a few of our most impressive sites and share what we have learned so far.

Patricia Long

Senior Archaeologist for Rubicon Heritage



Excavation ongoing in the townland of Loughbeg.



Location of the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy project.

Community Engagement Update



Scoil Bhríde visit Shannonpark!

We have continued to have some fantastic engagement with the local community and interested parties on the M28. In June, we welcomed 4th class pupils from Scoil Bhríde in Crosshaven for [a site tour and a taste of real archaeology!](#) These budding archaeologists showed great interest in the heritage of their local area.

The month of July saw a photo exhibition of images taken during the M28 archaeological work go on display in Carrigaline Library. At the end of the exhibition, Rubicon's Senior Archaeologist Trish Long gave [a talk on the findings from the scheme](#) in the library. The exhibition then moved to Cobh Library for the month of August, where it was also very well received.



Trish Long gives a talk in Carrigaline Library.

National Heritage Week 2023

We had a packed schedule for this year's Heritage Week. Our [‘Digging Deep’ seminar at the Carrigaline Court Hotel](#) on August 14th was a great success, as was an open day on our 17th-century farmstead with medieval origins at Ballinimlagh.



The ‘Digging Deep’ seminar.



Seminar poster.



Open day at Ballinimlagh!

Rubicon Heritage was also represented via [Bruce Sutton's talk at Cobh Library](#) and at the [Synergies Conference](#) at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin, where Trish Long and Bruce Sutton outlined results from the project.



Bruce Sutton at Cobh Library.



Bruce Sutton and Trish Long at the Synergies Conference, RIA, Dublin.



Focus on: Ballyhemiken 3 - A Neolithic house

During test investigations on the western slopes of the limestone knoll at Raffeen Quarry, the foundations of a rectangular house were identified. The shape and character of the building were typical of Early Neolithic houses that appear in Ireland at the same time as the first farmers (c. 3,700 BC). This is the ninth such house from that era discovered in Co. Cork, and all have been unearthed during roads projects. From the archaeological investigations of the site, we know that the people living in this house were herding livestock and growing crops.



Aerial view of the Neolithic House foundation at Ballyhemiken, and a flint tool from the site.

The artefacts found on this site include flint tools and fragments of the earliest type of pottery to have been used in Ireland (Carinated Bowls), which further confirm the Neolithic date of the house. Food waste such as burnt cereal grains and fragments of burnt animal bone were also identified. We hope further analysis of the artefacts and samples we have collected will shed more light on the lives of the earliest farmers on the shores of Cork Harbour.



Artist's impression of how the house may have looked in the Early Neolithic period.

Focus on: Carrigaline Middle 1 – A Bronze Age cremation cemetery

Between Raffeen Quarry and the Shannonpark roundabout, a Bronze Age cremation cemetery was found that gives us an insight into the rituals associated with the dead around 4,000 years ago. At least 13 cremations burials were found here and carefully excavated by osteoarchaeologists. Some of these were simple pits in the ground, into which cremated human remains were placed. However, the central burial consisted of a stone-lined box set into the ground, known as a cist. This cist was filled with the cremated human remains of at least two people. A second smaller cist was also identified nearby. An engaging short film about the excavation can be seen [here](#).



(L) Cist burial at Carrigaline Middle 1 after cremated remains were excavated.



(R) Cist burial under excavation by osteoarchaeologist Jason Murphy

The remains of an urn was identified adjacent to the central cist. It was common in the Bronze Age to place cremated remains in a pottery vessel and bury that in the ground. Once we had identified the pottery, a specialist conservator came to site to block lift the burial before undergoing micro-excavation in a lab to retrieve the pottery and bone.



Fragment of decorated Bronze Age pottery from a cremation burial.



Specialist conservator Susannah Kelly Block lifting the Urn at Carrigaline Middle 1.

Focus on: Ballinrea 5 – An Early-medieval enclosure

An unusual enclosure site was uncovered near the summit of the hill at Ballinrea. The location of the site has a commanding view towards Cork Harbour to the southeast. At this site, an area measuring c. 35m across was enclosed by a ditch, with a causewayed entrance on the southeastern side.



Aerial view of the enclosure at Ballinrea.



View along one of the Souterrain chambers to the tunnel linking it to the adjacent chamber.

What makes the site remarkable is the high number of souterrains (underground chambers) that were present within the enclosed area. Souterrains are common on early-medieval enclosure sites and are thought to have been used for underground storage as well as defensive purposes. The souterrain chambers at Ballinrea were linked in discrete groups by a series of underground tunnels that could have acted as crawlspaces or vents. Post-holes within the souterrains suggest they would have been roofed.

Very few artefacts were found at Ballinrea 5, and we are still researching what this site could have been used for. We are hopeful organic remains from our soil samples will shed further light on this enigmatic site!



View through a tunnel linking two souterrain chambers at Ballinrea.

In the News!

M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy archaeology makes the Irish Examiner and RTÉ

The archaeological work on the M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy Project has been popular in the Press, with stories appearing in both the Irish Examiner and RTÉ.

Archaeologists working on new motorway route in Cork unearth remains of early Neolithic home

Discoveries include evidence of Bronze-age cremations and what has been dubbed 'Cork's earliest roadside service station'



Archaeologists sift through stones likely to have formed 'cobbling' on a courtyard of a 17th century fortified house along the route of the M28. Picture: Archaeology & Heritage Section, Transport Infrastructure Ireland

THU, 07 SEP, 2023 - 17:45
SEAN O'RIORDAN

Archaeologists working on new motorway route in Cork unearth remains of early Neolithic home.

The Irish Examiner focused on the discovery of a Neolithic home at Ballyhemiken dating back c. 5,700 years. Read the article [here](#).

'Exciting' archaeological discoveries made along M28 motorway route

Updated / Saturday, 23 Sep 2023 20:53



By **Paschal Sheehy**
Southern Editor

'Exciting' archaeological discoveries made along M28 motorway route

RTÉ featured the Neolithic house and also discussed the find of a well-preserved early medieval spearhead, thought to date to the 8th century. Read the article [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 Autumn 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 & Tom Horne; **Images:** Rubicon Heritage and TVAS Ireland M28 crew;
Design: Hannah Sims

