

# No.2

# A Route Through The Past

## Archaeological discoveries on the N11, Newtownmountkennedy to Ballynabarney Road Improvement Scheme, Co. Wicklow

## 2001-2003

### Inchanappa

**Prehistoric habitation site:** *The Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC*

An area of prehistoric activity was located within the Townland of **Inchanappa Lower**. Here another 33m wide enclosure was uncovered at the base of a drumlin. Numerous pits and post-holes (holes originally containing structural timbers) were excavated. The post-holes indicate a large round structure, possibly a domestic house located within the enclosure. Coarse pottery sherds and fragments of a quern stone suggest a Bronze Age date for the activities at this site. Quern stones date from Neolithic times and were used in the process of grinding wheat into flour.

**Industrial site:** *Iron Age and Early Christian period (500 BC - AD 1000) & medieval - post-medieval period (AD 1000 - 1700)*

Evidence for industrial activity was found at **Inchanappa Upper**, where a series of six large areas of burning were recorded. The largest of these, a stone lined kiln (a chamber built for the firing (baking) of pottery or drying of corn, used from prehistoric times) was located in the east of the site. It was reused at least three times before its destruction. This feature has been initially interpreted as a corn-drying kiln. No production waste or debris was recorded for any of the features, although one spindle whorl, a tool used in weaving was recovered. The site was bounded by two shallow enclosing ditches, in which no archaeological material was recorded. This site may be associated with a known but unnamed Early Christian church, graveyard and font nearby.

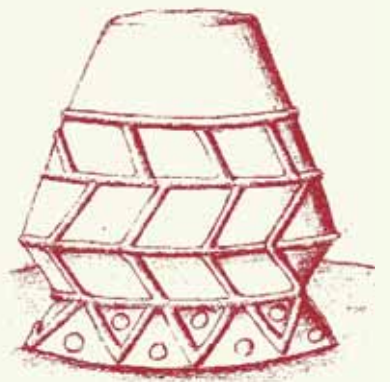


Rosanna, double sided stone mould found in the bowl furnace (pictured below). See reverse side of mould on poster No. 1

### Mount Usher and Milltown North

**Prehistoric ritual/burial sites:** *The Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC*

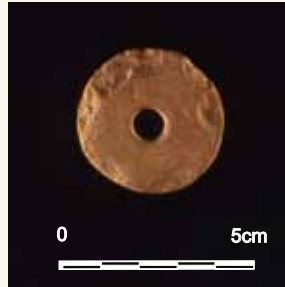
Two important burial sites were excavated in the Townlands of **Mount Usher** and at **Milltown North** on the flood plain of the Vartry River. These were both ring ditch burial sites dating from the Middle Bronze Age. **Mount Usher** is a single large ring ditch enclosing an internal structure marked by postholes. Within the structure there was evidence of a possible cremation pyre (wooden structure burned during the process of cremating the dead). Evidence for at least three cremation burials were found; a badly destroyed stone lined cist burial within the ditch contained at least 2 urns and cremated remains, the third burial was located just outside the southwest edge of the ditch. This cremation was placed in a large encrusted urn. The site in **Milltown North** contained two ring ditches 20m apart, one of these measured 15m wide and contained two simple cremation burials within and a second smaller ring ditch 5m wide located to its north. The entrance to this second ditch was facing west with two large pits at the end of each terminal. Although badly truncated over time a ring of shallow postholes encircled the outer edge of the ring ditch.



Reconstruction of an urn found at Mount Usher ritual/burial site.



Stone font at the Early Christian site near Inchanappa Upper.



Spindle whorl from Inchanappa Upper.



Inchanappa Lower, prehistoric habitation site.



Mount Usher, prehistoric ritual/burial site.



Milltown North, prehistoric ritual/burial site.

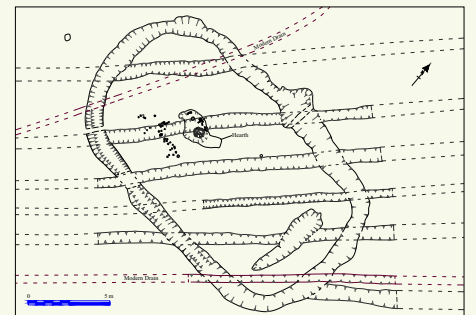
### Rosanna

**Medieval habitation site:** *Medieval - post-medieval period (AD 1000 - 1700)*

A series of five enclosures were excavated at Rosanna along the eastern side of the existing N11. Upon excavation, one of the five enclosures was confirmed as archaeological and from the recovered material it appeared to be medieval, dating somewhere between the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The other enclosures were shown to be post-medieval and were probably decorative ornamental garden features. These features further substantiate historical documents, which record the Townland of **Rosanna** as being one of the finest landscape gardens in Co. Wicklow.



Ballynabarney, reconstruction of prehistoric house site.



Ballynabarney, plan of medieval industrial site.



Ballynabarney, medieval industrial site.



Ballynabarney, prehistoric house site.



Rosanna, medieval habitation site.

### Ballynabarney

**Prehistoric habitation site:** *The Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC*

In the Townland of **Ballynabarney**, the remains of a circular house measuring 10.5m in diameter and with an entrance to the southeast were discovered. The excavation uncovered a slot trench for the house walls and an internal ring of postholes, which would have held the timber posts to support a roof. A reconstruction would show a roof, conical in shape (see above). There was a number of possible storage pits excavated within the house and storage/rubbish pits to the south. To the north were two small ring ditch features extending outside the limit of the road scheme, which probably had a ritual function. This house is probably from the Bronze Age 2000 - 500 BC.

**Medieval industrial site:** *Medieval - post-medieval period (AD 1000 - 1700)*

At **Ballynabarney** a possible kiln was discovered, this time in the centre of a medieval ditched enclosure roughly rectangular in shape with rounded corners, measuring 12m by 19m. This ditch formed a complete circuit with a notable depression (which might have allowed an entrance). The ditch appears to have been intended for drainage. The most conspicuous feature within the enclosure was an area of very heavily burnt red clay and sand, possibly representing a hearth or kiln with a flue (used to conduct the furnace-heated air). Discovered within the enclosure were 2,700 sherds of pottery (provisionally dated to the late 13<sup>th</sup> and early 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries) several metal objects and several hundred small stones apparently chosen and brought to the site for their shape and size, possibly for some industrial purpose. Two groups of small stake holes, 60 in total, associated with the hearth may be the remains/traces of a screen used to shield the fire against the wind. The quantities of pottery suggest that this enclosure may have been for a small rural pottery kiln.



Rosanna, bowl furnace where the stone mould (main picture) was found.

The N11 excavations have greatly added to the archaeological record for Co. Wicklow. It is an area rich in cultural heritage. The information obtained from the ADS Ltd excavations, the Sites and Monuments Records and other excavations within this area combine to illustrate the importance of this thoroughfare from prehistoric times to the present day.