



North Clare dig is coining it in

Bernie English

AMATEUR archaeologists who volunteered to become members of a Time Team excavating a fort in north Clare have unearthed two 14th century silver coins.

The uncovering of the rare Edward I silver half-pennies on Sunday raises an even bigger question about what went on at the Caherconnell Stone Fort in Carron, according to Graham Hull, Director of TVAS Ireland Ltd, the archaeology consultancy company supervising the dig along with Dr Michelle Comber of NUI Galway.

"We're absolutely delighted with the find and on the first day of the dig," said Graham.

"The people who lived at Carron were lords but they would not have used coins - they did their dealings in barter. The Anglo-Normans, who lived further east were using coins but they would not have traded with

the Gaelic lords, because they were at war with each other," the archaeologist explained.

There are a number of ways the coins, minted in 1300 and 1310 in London and York, might have come to be in the fort, according to Graham.

"These may have come in with a prisoner of war or they may have been the spoils of war, taken in a raid."

Carron is possibly Ireland's best preserved fort and is twice the size of the standard fort or cashel.

This is the second in a series of open excavations at Caherconnell, in which members of the public get a chance to work alongside the experts to unearth the past.

The cashel keeps throwing up surprises. Last year, the excavation revealed that the fort was inhabited for centuries later than was previously

thought, which shows that the traditional Gaelic way of life existed for hundreds of years after the Anglo-Norman invasion.

This year's dig is zoning in on a souterrain, an underground passage, which was recently discovered. It's believed the passageway may have been used as a way of escape or even as a primitive fridge.

"We don't know all the answers and digging helps us to put together pieces of the puzzle," Graham said.

The team are working with volunteers for this coming week and all the newcomers have been given training in how to work on-site.

The site is owned and operated by the Davoren family and anyone who would like to come along and have a look will be met by someone from the team who can explain what's going on.



Left: Archaeologist Graham Hull, Director TVAS with one of two Edward first silver half pennies found at Caherconnell Cashel, Carron, on Sunday.

Eamon Ward