



8,000 YEAR OLD WOMAN IS FOUND

'Pauleen' preserved in swamp since Ice Age

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A BODY dug up in a bog could be up to 8,000 years old – making it the oldest woman ever discovered in Ireland, it was revealed yesterday.

The young female, dubbed "Pauleen" by archaeologists, could have lain in the swampy earth since shortly after the last Ice Age.

It was discovered during an excavation at Caherconnell Stone Fort, Co Clare, on Saturday – just metres from the famous Poll na mBron tomb in the heart of the Burren.

The excavation team have so far uncovered Pauleen's complete skull, rib bones, spine, pelvis and her right arm.

The remains were lifted on Sunday and have been sent for radiocarbon dating but it is estimated they could be 10,000 years old.

Archaeologist Graham Hull described the find as "an amazing discovery".

He added: "The remains were disarticulated, which means that it is not a complete skeleton.

"What this suggests is that the body was brought here from somewhere else, rather than being buried here in its entirety.

"This would suggest a ceremonial burial. It doesn't seem to be Christian burial – which would be orientated in an east-west direction

and lying on its back – whereas our body was in bits. This means it is most likely prehistoric, dating from between 8,000BC and 500AD.

"I would say the skull is at least 4,000 years old, from around 2,000

years before the birth of Christ."

When the excavation work began three weeks ago, the team from TVAS Ireland believed the site contained a souterrain or underground passage.

Mr Hull said: "It is possible this is a prehistoric chamber tomb or a

medieval burial ground. Usually in archaeology you have a good idea what you are looking for, but in this case we just don't know.

"The fact we can't figure out what it is yet makes it an even more rare discovery.

"We are almost sure the body is female and fairly sure she is about 14 or 15 years old based on the development of her teeth.

"We will learn more over the next few days as we continue the excavation.

"This has the potential to be as important or even more important than the Poll na mBron discovery.

"It is very significant no matter what results come back from the carbon dating but there's a good chance it could be a really major discovery.

"We are looking at what could be a completely new monument type."

Alongside the TVAS Ireland crews, the excavation team includes experts from NUI Galway and public volunteers.

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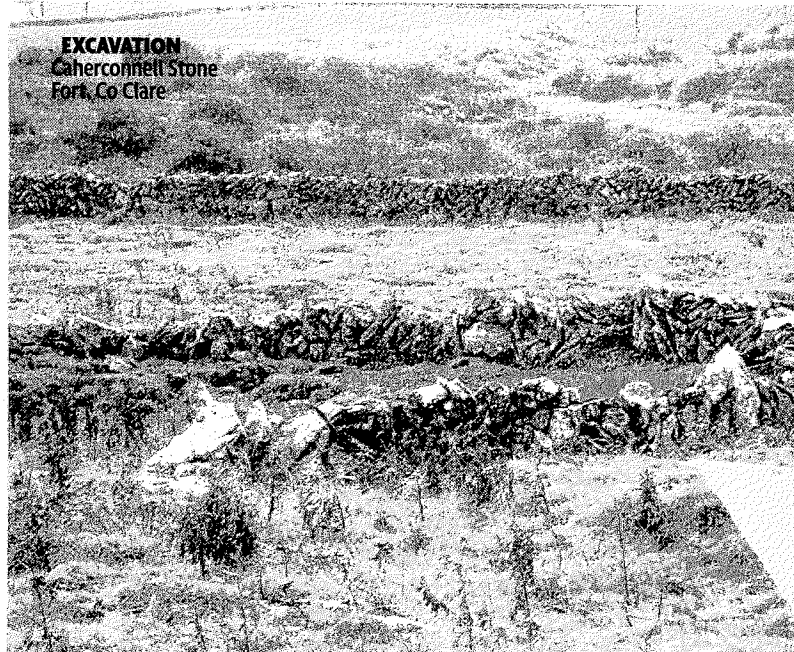
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DISCOVERY
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O'Shea yesterday
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Caherconnell

