

The Clare People

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Tale of the tomb

Archaeologists uncover north Clare burial ground of oldest Irish remains

Andrew Hamilton

ARCHAEOLOGISTS in north Clare have uncovered the remains of a young woman - which they believe could be the oldest Irish person ever discovered. The ancient body, which has been named Pauleen, was discovered during an excavation at Caherconnell Stone Fort on Saturday, just metres away from the world famous Poll na mBrón dolmen.

The excavation team, led by Crush-een based TVAS Ireland, 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.

"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," said Graham Hull of TVAS Ireland.

"This is an amazing discovery. 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 8,000 BC and 500 AD. I would say the skull is at least 4,000 years old, from around 2,000 year before the birth of Christ."

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

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Photograph shows archaeologist Kim O'Shea of TVAS with the skull found at Caherconnell Stone Fort on Saturday. Eamon Ward



Clare triumphs in Tidy Towns

Andrew Hamilton

ENNIS came within a whisker of recapturing the glory of 2005 last night with a stunning performance at the 2008 Tidy Towns Awards. With 300 points from a possible 400, the county capital came within just three points of overall winners Westport, with the Mayo town claiming the title for the third time in less than a decade.

There was a number of huge consolations for the Ennis Tidy Towns committee however, with the town

winning the awards for Ireland's Tidiest Large Urban Centre as well as claiming the National Le Gaeilge Award. Ennis last won the award for Tidiest Large Urban Centre in 2005, when they also won the overall national award.

Indeed, there was good news all around the county last night with Lissycasey topping the poll for the Best New Entry and both Ennis and Kilrush winning gold medals.

In addition to this Ballynacally won a silver medal while Kilkee and Mounthannon both took home

bronze medals.

Regional accolades were awarded to Ennis for Best Presented Bring Bank, Labasheeda Community Pride for the Notice Nature project, the Ennis Tidy Towns Committee for their Map of Recycling Locations and the Holy Family Senior National School in Ennis for the Mid-West School Award.

In the county awards, Ennis took first place overall, followed by Kilrush and Ballynacally, while Killaloe won the Endeavour Award for Clare.



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Tale of the tomb

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"It is possible this is a prehistoric chamber tomb or a medieval burial ground. Usually in archeology 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," continued Mr Hull. "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 mBrón 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 team, the excavation team includes experts from NUI Galway and volunteers.

Make-over plans for Durty Nelly's

Andrew Hamilton

ONE of the world's most famous public houses is planning a major redevelopment with the news that Clare Taverns Ltd, owners of Durty Nelly's in Bunratty, have applied for planning permission for a major new expansion of their premises.

The group have applied to Clare County Council to demolish an existing ice-cream shop and store and construct an extension to the rear of it's current location. If successful, the planned development will

include an extension of the ground floor restaurant; the construction of a new ground floor licensed café and retail unit complete with a riverside decking area and the construction of an 85 square metre function room.

The development will also include the construction of a 42 square metre extension to the first floor loft restaurant; the construction of a 22 square metre covered smoking area and the construction of a pedestrian pathway with lightweight bridge to the existing carpark to the north of Durty Nelly's.

Plan goes off track

Andrew Hamilton

WORK on the Western Rail Corridor could be brought to a halt this week following protests by locals in Ard-raham to work carried out by Iarnród Éireann on an historic bridge in the village.

Locals in the south Galway town have called for work on the Western Rail Corridor to be suspended until the disagreement surrounding the bridge is resolved. Stone capping and flags have been removed from Ballymacuiv bridge and replaced with a concrete deck.

According to Iarnród Éireann, the bridge, which dates back to the 1800s, has to be updated to keep up with railway safety standards.

The company says the work is being carried out as part of the reopening of the Western Rail Corridor between Athenry and Ennis.

Meanwhile, a public meeting to discuss the services which will be offered on the Western Rail Corridor will take place in Ennis on September 23. Interests groups and members of the public are welcome to meet with Iarnród Éireann officials and discuss issues relating to the corridor.

"We are hoping that a large number of local people will turn out for this meeting. At present we have a number of unanswered questions regarding timetable and fares which we would like the public input on," a spokesman told *The Clare People* yesterday.

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