

MEDIA RELEASE

DISPLAY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS FROM THE ENNIS BYPASS, CO. CLARE AT CLARE MUSEUM, ENNIS

County Clare, IRELAND, Thursday Nov 30th 2006 - A number of significant archaeological finds uncovered along the route of the N18 Ennis Bypass, including previously unseen artefacts from Clare Abbey, were today placed on display at Clare Museum. The month-long exhibition, which follows on from the hugely successful evening lecture series that took place at Clare Museum in October 2005, features a full collection of artefacts dating from the Bronze Age to modern times. The free exhibition also represents a final opportunity for the public to view the artefacts before they are sent for final storage at the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Archaeological excavations along the route of the N18 Ennis Bypass and the N85 Western Relief Road took place in late 2003 and early 2004. Archaeological excavation and post-excavation work was undertaken by TVAS (Ireland) Ltd, based at Ballinruan in County Clare. Works were funded by Clare County Council through the National Roads Authority and part-financed by the European Union under the National Development Plan 2000-2006.

Some of the earliest artefacts on display at Clare Museum include cremated bone, pottery fragments, stone tools and cereal grains from Manusmore in the parish of Clareabbey, from a cremation cemetery containing the cremated remains of at least 27 individuals. The earliest of which has been radiocarbon dated to the Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age between 2450-2150 BC. Burials continued at the site through the Bronze Age and up to the Late Iron Age, spanning a period of some 2,700 years. Three glass beads, which are included in the 'Funerary' section of the exhibit, were found when processing archeological material during post-excavation. The beads originated from a ring barrow excavated at Claureen near the Lahinch Road and were probably votive offerings of Mediterranean origin dating from between 250 BC-50 AD.

Evidence of iron-working activity at Cahircalla More, next to the Kilrush road, was uncovered and the artefacts used at the time are included in the display. An anvil stone with tool marks, a sharpening stone, and slag- a by-product of smithing-strongly suggest its use in the medieval period. Nearby, in a field system ditch, a ring-pin was found and a photograph showing its location, *in situ*, sits next to the conserved ring-pin on display. Modern artefacts and details from excavations of brick-making kilns, at Clareabbey on the banks of the River Fergus, and a lime kiln, at Keelty, are also included in the exhibit.

John Rattigan, Curator of Clare Museum stated, “*Artefacts found at Clare Abbey, on display at the museum, include a 1691 gun money coin, spur parts and gun flint, which may suggest its use during the Jacobite-Williamite war. The excavation at Clare Abbey also found evidence of a number of ancillary structures that once adjoined the main building. Another discovery at the Abbey was the presence of a cesspit, last used during the 17th century. Organic remains included significant amounts of fish and bird bones.*”

Meanwhile, the artefacts on display at Clare Museum are complimented by a ‘*Summary of Archaeological Findings*’ report, which provides further information such as radiocarbon dates, highlights from specialists’ reports, and interpretation of the excavated sites. The display of finds follows the structure of the summary report, and it is recommended to follow the report as one views the artefacts. The display is organised chronologically and artefacts are grouped under the main headings of Funerary, Fulacht fiadh, Early Medieval and Modern times.

Commenting on the exhibition, Graham Hull of TVAS (Ireland) Ltd stated, “*As a local archaeological company we are pleased to have this opportunity to show the people of Clare some of the more interesting artefacts uncovered. The main purpose of archaeology is not just to dig and record but to show and tell. TVAS (Ireland) Ltd, through the National Roads Authority and Clare County Council, will publish a volume detailing the results of*

this archaeological work hopefully in 2007. An article describing the results will also be published in the 'The Other Clare' and the archaeological archive will be deposited with the County Clare Archive."

The archaeological finds from the N18 Ennis Bypass excavations will remain on display at Clare Museum, Ennis, County Clare until January 2007. For further information on Clare Museum contact 065-6823382, email claremuseum@eircom.net or log on www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum.

-ENDS-

Note to Editor:

- To arrange an interview please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy Public Relations on 086-8534900 or media@dunphypr.com.
- Clare Museum is located in a restored former convent built by the Sisters of Mercy congregation in 1861. The museum exhibition "**The Riches of Clare: its people, place and treasures**" occupies two galleries and incorporates the traditional method of displaying original artefacts from the county with modern interpretive tools such as colourful display panels, audio visual and computer interactive presentations, models, some replicas and commissioned art pieces. The collection comprises a large display of archaeological material of local provenance on loan from the National Museum of Ireland, the De Valera Museum collection transferred from the Clare County Library, and locally collected artefacts never seen before in public.