

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **ENNIS BYPASS ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS PROVIDE NEW DEPTH OF UNDERSTANDING OF IRELAND'S CULTURAL PAST**

- Archaeological reports for the Ennis Bypass placed online by Clare Library



**Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2007** – A new and expanded exhibition of archaeological material spanning 4,500 years was today placed on display at Clare Museum in Ennis, County Clare. According to archaeology company, TVAS (Ireland) Ltd the artefacts provide a new depth of understanding of Ireland's heritage and cultural past. Meanwhile, archaeological reports, illustrated with photographs and drawings for the 27 sites discovered on the N18 Ennis Bypass and N85 Western Relief Road are now available on the Clare County Library website ([www.clarelibrary.ie](http://www.clarelibrary.ie)).

Graham Hull, Company Director, TVAS (Ireland) Ltd, stated *“This new and expanded exhibition of archaeological finds provides us with a new depth of understanding of Ireland's cultural past and heritage. During excavations we discovered numerous archaeological sites that provided us with invaluable information relating to early Christian settlement types. For example, we discovered County Clare's oldest known cremation burial dating back more than 4,500 years.”*

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.

According to Graham Hull, *“In the past few years we have excavated the remains of at least ten Bronze Age round houses in the west of Ireland, perhaps half a dozen Early Christian ditched enclosures – some with graves – and lots of fulachta fiadh (burnt stone mounds). Sites on the Ennis Bypass, for example, ranged from burials dating back 4,500 years to 19<sup>th</sup> century brick-making kilns. From these excavations we have learnt an enormous amount about the domestic and funerary traditions of the past inhabitants of the region.”*

He continued, *“After the fieldwork has finished and we have put away our shovels and trowels, the next phase of the work begins; this is known as ‘post-excavation’. The artefacts and samples we collect are cleaned and examined by specialists and the data is analysed and interpreted. We then work towards publishing the results of our research, relating the new findings to previous knowledge of the archaeology of the area.”*

John Rattigan, Curator, Clare Museum said, *“We hope the exhibit will spark great interest in local heritage, and provide an opportunity to view artefacts found locally, before the final storage of these materials in the National Museum of Ireland.”*



The display of artefacts at Clare Museum is structured by townland and site code, to coincide with the online access to all the TVAS Ennis Bypass archaeological reports. The exhibit also

includes details from the testing phase and the investigation of known monuments, which were not previously exhibited.

Tomas MacConmara, Acting Heritage Officer with Clare County Council said the exhibition, and accompanying online publication of the final archaeological reports, was a significant addition to the continuing study of County Clare's varied and rich heritage.

He explained, *"The most effective method of promoting heritage is to place it in a local context. The archaeological work and subsequent reports undertaken by TVAS provide us with a suitable illustration of the depth of archaeological heritage in this County. The Clare Heritage Office would encourage anyone with an interest in the County's history to view the reports online or visit the new exhibition at Clare Museum."*

Noel Crowley, County Librarian described the archaeological reports as a wonderful addition to the ever-expanding Library website.

Mr. Crowley said, *"We decided to place the documents online in order to support personal and academic users in their learning, teaching and research of historical issues relating to Clare. I firmly believe that the online publication of the reports compiled by TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. will help to preserve and create a newfound interest in local history."*

*"With so much material now being published on the Internet in either un-reviewed form or on a pay-per-view basis, Clare County Library has opted to promote the study of local history by publishing these reports for their historical value in one place and free of charge",* he concluded.

Commenting on Clare County Library's publication of the reports on [www.clarelibrary.ie](http://www.clarelibrary.ie), Graham Hull of TVAS (Ireland) Ltd. said, *"Clare Local Studies Library is nationally and internationally regarded, and aims to collect all material relating to the County. I am delighted that the library has put our archaeological reports online as I do not think that this has ever been done in any other County."*

Meanwhile, RTE has confirmed that it will be featuring the exhibition and archaeological reports in an upcoming episode of its 'Nationwide' programme. 'Nationwide' presenter Diarmuid Peavoy will visit Clare Museum, TVAS offices at Ballinruan and an excavation site on the N7 Nenagh to Limerick dual carriageway this Wednesday (9<sup>th</sup> May). The programme will also feature a recently launched guide to County Clare's ecclesiastical sites. ***'Rian na Manach - A Guided Tour of Ecclesiastical Treasures in Co. Clare'***, which was produced by Clóbh Research in association with the Heritage Council and Clare County

Council, contains the results of a comprehensive audit of more than 80 Early Christian, Medieval and Celtic ecclesiastical buildings in County Clare.

Graham Hull said, *“We hope to show the viewers of ‘Nationwide’ that archaeology is not just about digging up objects but is a process that begins at the project planning stage, continues through fieldwork and research and reports back to the public via written documents, museum displays, websites and lectures.”*

TVAS (Ireland) Ltd was formed in 2003 and employs approximately fifteen core staff, including three state licensed archaeologists. At their busiest, the company has employed as many as ninety archaeologists on projects including the Ennis Bypass, the Limerick Southern Ring Road Phase II and the N7 Nenagh to Limerick High Quality Dual Carriageway. In addition to fieldwork projects the archaeologists at TVAS are involved in local societies and have a particular interest in the public presentation of the results of their work.



*Photos © Kimberley O'Shea, TVAS (Ireland) Ltd.*