Ancient site reveals its secrets

By RON KIRWAN

LIMERICK archaeologists have uncovered a 4,500-year-old settlement containing the remains of two adults and a child in a hollow at Newtown, Monaleen. Further research was called in on the investigation of another nearby archaeological site after the remains of a body were found in a back yard.

Following excavations of the site only parts of human leg bones were extracted and these are now being radiocarbon dated to establish how long they were interred.

A 4,500-year-old dwelling was identified by the team of 10 archaeologists and a fullach fladh was found nearby, indicating a sizable settlement in the Newtown area around 2,500BC. Among the finds were pots, flint and locally made decorated pottery.

The remains of two adults and one child were also discovered in Adare to Annacotty bypass work.

"We usually take off the top layer to try and identify sites of interest and we were surprised when found some flints," said Frank Coyne of Aegis Archaeology. "There were no indications of settlements in the flat, rolling land, although it was a very sheltered site between two rises, and when we found the flints, we brought in bulldozers.

Some of the finds from the dig at Newtown (LL)

to take off more of the ground, cover ourselves," said Frank Coyne.

"We discovered a small Bronze Age site next to a much larger D-shaped site surrounded by a ditch. The large site contained postholes, the remains of foundations and a stone-filled and charred hearth," he said.

This site was identified as early medieval and contained some remarkable finds, including a blue armlet which indicates its long was someone of high status.

"Only five of these armlets have ever been found at the royal site in Tara and one in Lough Gar," and we were very excited by this find and found a green paste with yellow beads, polished stones, pots and pottery, flints, scrapers, spearheads and some animal bones," Mr Coyne said.

"The settlement also held a further surprise for the Limerick team as the excavations of the outer ditch had accidentally preserved another find—a 4,500 year-old burial associated with the Bronze Age settlement.

"When the early medieval settlers dug the surrounding ditch they threw it up on the bank and accidentally preserved a burial site which was lucky for us," he said. "We found four funerary vessels with crushed and cremated bones. These were identified by osteo-archaeologist Linda Lynch as the remains of two adults and a child as well as some animal bones.

A lot of these have been uncovered over the past decade but it is very unusual to find something different from the animal bone in the cremation.

"It's probable that a special pyre would have been built to reach the high temperatures required to cremate the bones and it is very difficult for us to try to solve now," he said.