

ARTEFACTS AND BONES FROM GLENCURRAN CAVE

Marion Dowd
Archaeologist, Sligo I.T.

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Glencurran Cave, in the heart of the Burren, has been the site of important archaeological discoveries since 2004. The oldest material recovered consists of a single bear bone, a scapula, which was radiocarbon dated to about 8,000 BC. This is the oldest bear bone known from Co. Clare and an incredibly important and interesting find. The cave was used as a place of ritual veneration in the Bronze Age (1,500 BC to 600 BC) at which time a series of offerings were placed on the cave floor including bone and shell beads, pottery vessels, amber beads, stone tools, human bones and young animals that had been sacrificed. A Viking necklace of much later date was also discovered. The necklace is the largest to have been found in Ireland, composed of 70 glass beads covered with gold foil. This stunning piece of jewellery can be dated to the mid 9th century AD. Its discovery in the cave is somewhat of a mystery, though it may have travelled from Scandinavia to the established Viking settlement at Limerick and from there traded to Gaelic chieftains living in the Burren.



Cowrie shell beads (1,500 – 600 BC). Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



Detail of Viking necklace

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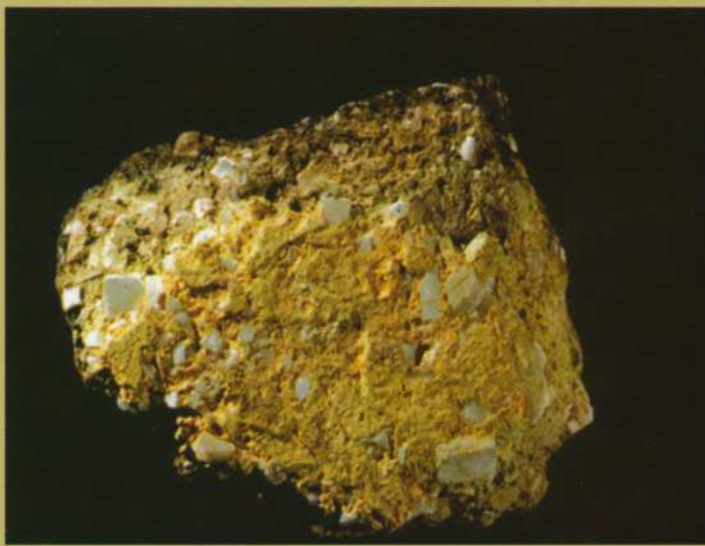
Late Bronze Age amber beads (1,500 – 600 BC)



Bronze Age chert scraper, may have been used for cleaning animal hides, basketry or bone working (2,400 – 1,400 BC)



Prehistoric bone beads (exact date uncertain)



Sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery (1,500 – 600 BC). Photo by Richie Hinchy



Periwinkle and cowrie shell beads (1,500 – 600 BC). Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



Glencurran Cave. Photo by Marion Dowd



Quartz crystal (exact date uncertain). Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



Bear scapula (shoulder bone) – Early Mesolithic. Photo by Richie Hinchy



Neolithic chert blade (4,000 - 2,400 BC). Photo by Richie Hinchy