

ARTS-COMMERCE BUILDING
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
DUBLIN 4

DEPARTMENT OF MODERN HISTORY

14 December 1972

TELEPHONE 694866

Rev. Michael Keaveny,
St Columb's College,
Derry.

Dear Father Keaveny,

Please forgive my long delay in replying to your kind letter - I am rather snowed under, and have been away.

The problem you face is a difficult one, and has extensive ramifications. My impression, which I offer you in confidence, is that you face a major obstacle in the Trinidad Valencera project in a singular lack of enthusiasm on the part of the authorities of the National Museum - or perhaps it may be the Department of Education here in Dublin.

But the excavation situation in the Republic in general is (I believe I am not putting it too strongly) critical. There is no general service available even for such elementary matters as the proper study of animal and vegetable remains, not to speak of the more sophisticated analyses which modern excavation techniques require. The conservation service provided by the National Museum is extremely limited.

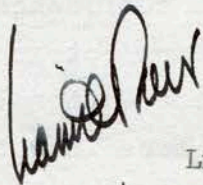
It would seem that the proper body with whom such matters should be raised is the National Committee for Archaeology of the Royal Irish Academy. This committee replaced the Academy's Archaeological Exploration Committee a few years back - a retrograde step, because the new committee is dominated by civil servants, and the "National" in its title in effect refers to the twenty-six counties, whereas the Academy is an all-Ireland body. In spite of the deficiencies of the committee, I think the Academy is probably the best place to raise the matter, initially at least. I would strongly suggest you enlist the aid of Michael Dolley (of the History Department in Queen's) who is, I think, a member of Council this year, and perhaps also of Kenneth Connell, also of Q.U.B. If the question were to be raised in the Academy, my wife and I, who are both Members, would be glad to help.

Perhaps the time has come to organise independently and to set up a meeting of people from all parts of the country interested in seeing a general service and fund established for conservation and other

scientific ancillaries to excavation. It might be possible to raise some money privately, perhaps from large firms, to help.

I appreciate the urgency of your problem, but feel that any solution is going to take time and organisation. We are simply not equipped in Ireland at the moment to cope properly with excavations which produce large quantities of interesting or important material. I would very much like to have a talk with you, perhaps early in the New Year (a visit to my brother-in-law, Donal MacDermott, is overdue), and I am sure that if we called a private meeting of interested people we should at the very least get some useful suggestions.

Yours sincerely,



Liam de Paor

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