

# The hill-slope enclosures of the Burren, Co. Clare

D. BLAIR GIBSON\*

Department of Anthropology, El Camino College, Torrance, U.S.A.

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## Abstract

In the summer of 1985 a trial excavation was undertaken on the remains of a wall, which was part of a prehistoric hill-slope enclosure in the Burren, Co. Clare, Ireland. The excavation was successful in confirming the antiquity of this site, as well as in revealing the wall's particular structure. Radiocarbon dating of discovered bone suggested that the enclosure was in existence in the Late Bronze Age. Survey of the site has revealed the presence of additional hill-slope enclosures in the Burren. Their siting and associated field boundary walls suggest a connection to pastoral activities.

## Introduction

A reconnaissance of archaeological remains in the vicinity of the Carron depression in the eastern portion of the Burren region of Co. Clare was undertaken in the late summer of 1984 (Figs 1–2). A large circular field delineated by a stone field boundary wall, located upon the upper slope of a limestone terrace overlooking the Carron depression, was noted from the 6" Ordnance Survey map (Clare Sheet 10; Fig. 3).<sup>1</sup> The shape, large size, and prominent location of the field suggested that it might be a prehistoric enclosed site. Subsequent inspection of the field confirmed that the present-day stone field boundary wall overlay a low mound along most of its extent, and that the modern field boundary wall incorporated large vertical and horizontal limestone slabs at its base (Pl. I). It was decided to undertake a trial excavation of a portion of the enclosure wall as a part of the overall research programme of the Cahercommaun Project.<sup>2</sup> This site has the project inventory number C-9.

## Description

The site lies 70m to the west of the road that runs from the village of Carron to Bell Harbour, and is directly adjacent to and south of the east–west road, which intersects two other north–south roads leading to Ballyvaughan. It is 550m south of Carron (Fig. 3). The field is situated just below the brow of a high plateau on the south-eastern slope at an elevation of between 152 and 183 metres above sea level. From this

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\* Author's e-mail: [dbgibson@elcamino.edu](mailto:dbgibson@elcamino.edu)

<sup>1</sup> Ballyconry townland, Ballyvaughan parish, Burren barony; National Grid Reference R 277 985; Excavation Number E 321.

<sup>2</sup> The Cahercommaun Project is a study of the protohistoric chiefdom centred upon the settlement at Cahercommaun. Portions of some prehistoric sites have been excavated for this project to determine the chronological position of unknown site types.