

More from The Times and The Sunday Times
Just click 'Explore'

Archaeologists plead for urgent Tuam home excavation

Measures to protect remains 'were only meant to last six months'

Sonja Tutty

Monday November 08 2021, 12.01am, The Times

Television



Four years after children's remains were found, it remains unclear how many there are
CLODAGH KILCOYNE/REUTERS

Share



Save



The archeologists who confirmed children's bodies were put in sewage chambers at Tuam mother and baby home

have that said the remains were protected by measures only made to last six months.

Dr Niamh McCullagh, excavation director and consultant forensic archaeologist, carried out sample excavations to confirm whether children's bodies had been put in the chambers between 1925 and 1961, when the Bon Secours mother and baby home operated. The remains of children between 35 weeks and three years old were found in 18 of the 20 chambers.

Speaking to the ITV documentary *The Missing Children* last night, McCullagh said: "As a forensic archeologist I have never walked away from human remains in that context. The measures that were put in place to protect the site and to protect the remains were temporary measures. They were not designed to last longer than six months."

She added that they were not able to say how many bodies were on the site. "We shouldn't be sitting here four years later with the remains still in the chambers."

Aidan Harte, a forensic archeologist, said they had emphasised in their report that a full excavation was required urgently. "It could be excavated and should be excavated," he said. "Subsequent reports and delays have meant it's now over four years and there's still no action."

ADVERTISEMENT

SAVE 34%



Catherine Corless, a local historian, discovered a list of 796 children who had died in the home without burial records. Corless said the sewage chambers were the only plausible site where the bodies could have been hidden.

She believes that more bodies were placed in old cesspits that are now covered by a large playground.



Catherine Corless at the Tuam mother and baby home memorial site
TRUENEVISION

McCullagh said the “best-case scenario” for a full excavation was to individualise and identify remains and give the children a respectful burial. Katherine Zappone, who was children’s minister, said in 2019 that the government would set up a voluntary scheme to collect DNA from relatives to identify the remains.

Patrick Naughton was born in the institution in 1954 and was illegally adopted, without his mother's consent, to England. It is believed that his date of birth was falsified to suggest he was adopted aged six months when he was actually a few weeks old. Naughton eventually found his birth mother, who said she had another son who had died in the home. Naughton's brother has no burial records.

SPONSORED



“They are going to have to excavate and get all them babies out to see if he is one of the many babies in that pit. So that child, my brother and my mother's son, can be buried with her when the time comes,” Naughton said.

The Department of Children is working on legislation to allow excavations, exhumations and reburial of the remains. A full excavation is expected to cost €13 million. The Bon Secours has offered to contribute €2.5 million.

Television

Share



Save



PAID PROMOTIONAL LINKS

Promoted by **Dianomi**



We approach investing with a long-term view.
Capital Group



Learn to invest in the future with eToro
eToro



Property or pensions? Find out which is better for your retirement
Netwealth



7 Ways to Build Wealth Over 50 Once Your Portfolio Reaches £500,000
Fisher Investments UK



Retirement Blunders British Millionaires Should Avoid
Fisher Investments UK

Comments (16)

Comments are subject to our community guidelines, which can be viewed [here](#).

Brian Edwards



Add to the conversation...

Sort by **Recommended** ▾



2.5million contribution from the perpetrators and the tax payer pays the rest..... Something doesn't add up. They still think they can get away with murder.

[Reply](#) [☆ Recommend \(17\)](#)



Bear in mind that it was the Irish taxpayer (aka our parents and grandparents) who populated those homes and who underfunded those institutions throughout the 20th century. Hence it seems only right and proper that the Irish taxpayer should part-fund the reparations. That said, I really wish th...**See more**

Debbie O Mahony 14 HOURS AGO

[Reply](#) [☆ Recommend \(1\)](#)

MarkII 11 HOURS AGO

I

...

This has gone on long enough, what an appalling abuse of power by those responsible and those in authority now who bury their heads and hope the problem will go away. Shame on the Church, shame on the government of Ireland

Reply ☆ Recommend (11)

T

...

You forgot the wonderful Nuns who actually did the dirty handiwork! Oh wait, they must have been victims as well.

Ian Russell ☆ Recommend (2)

↳ 1 reply

G

...

What a good job that this did not happen pre 1922 as there would have been so many complaining about the awful British and how they treated Ireland's poor. This was done by the so called great and the good of Catholic Ireland to the most destitute and needy people of the country, aided and abetted b...**See more**

Reply ☆ Recommend (10)

J

...

The Bon Secours mother and baby home, operated between 1925 and 1961 by Christians. Makes me happy to be an atheist.

Reply ☆ Recommend (9)

M

...

Whereas I'm quite grateful that my mother was able to avail of the services of a Catholic orphanage rather than having access to the convenient, taxpayer-funded service that would have had me terminated. *(Edited)*

JanH ☆ Recommend (2)

MarkII • 11 HOURS AGO

J ...
any digging up of bodies is undignified and meddling.
this site should have a monument and memorial garden.
any person suffering as a result of this debacle should be
offered mental health treatment. *(Edited)*

[Reply](#) [☆ Recommend \(2\)](#)

N ...
Really? Just leave these babies in a sewage pit?

[Reply](#) [☆ Recommend \(4\)](#)

[↩ I reply](#)
john farrell · 10 HOURS AGO

L ...
Is that so the extent of the crimes committed can be
'covered up'?

[Reply](#) [☆ Recommend \(3\)](#)

[↩ I reply](#)
NDA · 7 HOURS AGO

C ...
So much for the sanctity of life.

[Reply](#) [☆ Recommend](#)

Lucy's dad · 8 HOURS AGO



[Feedback](#)

[^](#) BACK TO TOP



GET IN TOUCH

[About us](#)

[Help](#)

[The Sunday Times Editorial Complaints](#)

[Classified advertising](#)

[The Times corrections](#)

[Careers](#)

[Contact us](#)

[The Times Editorial Complaints](#)

[Place an announcement](#)

[Display advertising](#)

[The Sunday Times corrections](#)

MORE FROM THE TIMES AND THE SUNDAY TIMES

[The Times e-paper](#)

[Times Currency Services](#)

[Times Print Gallery](#)

[Times Crossword Club](#)

[Times+](#)

[Times Expert Traveller](#)

[Schools Guide](#)

[Best Places to Live](#)

[Sportswomen of the Year Awards](#)

[Podcasts](#)

© Times Newspapers Limited 2021.

Registered in England No. 894646.

Registered office: 1 London Bridge Street, SE1 9GF.

[Privacy & cookie policy](#)

[Cookie settings](#)

[Topics](#)

[Terms and conditions](#)

[Licensing](#)

[Site map](#)

[Commissioning terms](#)