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Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, 31 August 2006

Introduction

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Politics, wealth and expansion: the archaeology of Rochfort enclosure

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Settlement and death on the A1/N1 Newry–Dundalk Link Road

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Roestown revealed: an excavation on the M3 Clonee to North of Kells Motorway Scheme

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Ancient peoples, hidden landscapes: the archaeology of the M7/M8

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Beside the rath: archaeological excavations at Raheenagurren West townland, Co. Wexford

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Burial and ritual in late prehistory in north Wexford: excavation of a ring-ditch cemetery in Ask townland

*Paul Stevens,
Excavation Director, Valerie J Keeley Ltd*

Glossary

Alluvium Fine-grained, sticky clay deposited by rivers.

Artefact Any movable object that has been used, modified or manufactured by humans.

Assemblage All of the artefacts found at a site, including the sum of all sub-assemblages at the site.

Bronze Age The period dating from c. 2400 to 600 BC that succeeded the Neolithic and saw the introduction of the use of bronze for tools and weapons.

Bullaun A large boulder with an artificial basin-like cavity on its upper surface used to grind various substances or to hold water. Bullaun stones are frequently associated with early ecclesiastical sites.

Burnt mound A mound of burnt stones that can be found in isolation or in association with a *fulacht fiadh* (see below).

Cairn A mound of stones.

Capstone A slab or block of stone forming the top of a burial cist or the roof of a chambered tomb or souterrain.

Chert A flint-like material, usually black or dark brown in colour.

Collared Urn A type of Bronze Age pottery vessel with a flat base, a conical body and a heavy overhanging rim or collar.

Context A generic term for the smallest identifiable stratigraphic unit recognised in an excavation.

Cordoned Urn A type of Middle Bronze Age pottery probably derived from Collared Urns (see above). The outer face is decorated with applied cordons or raised ribs.

Corbelling A technique for roofing stone chambers by laying courses of stone one on top of the other and overlapping inwards until the stones eventually meet or can be bridged by a single stone.

Core A lump of stone from which pieces are removed for the purposes of tool production.

Crannog A lake settlement, mainly dating from the early medieval period, built on an artificial, or artificially enlarged, island.

Crucible A small coarse pottery vessel for holding molten metal during smelting or casting.

Cremation The practice of burning the dead. In prehistoric Ireland ashes were commonly placed in a pottery vessel and buried in a pit or cist.

Debitage Detached pieces of stone from larger stone cores that are discarded during the process of stone tool production.

Dendrochronology A dating method based on the study of tree-rings as a means of providing precise calendar dates.

Drystone walling Walls constructed of stone without the use of mortar.

Enclosure A piece of ground surrounded by a boundary such as a wall, bank or ditch.

Environmental Impact Assessment The process for anticipating the effects on the environment caused by a development. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the document produced as a result of that process.

Environmental Impact Statement See Environmental Impact Assessment, above.

Filigree A delicate and intricate form of ornamentation using gold, silver or other fine twisted wire.

Feature This term refers to any component of an archaeological site, such as a post-hole, pit, wall, ditch or any deposits that may have accumulated on the site.

Fen A low-lying, marshy wetland characterised by alkaline conditions such as occur between fresh water and dry land along lake margins, in river cut-offs, or extensive wet shallows bordering river estuaries.

Flint A hard, brittle siliceous rock with conchoidal fracturing properties that is highly suitable for the manufacture of edged tools.

Food Vessel Heavily decorated biconical or bowl-shaped Early Bronze Age pot. They are mainly associated with cremation burials.

Fulacht fiadh A site, generally dating from the Bronze Age, consisting of a horseshoe-shaped mound of burnt stones, a hearth (or hearths) and a trough(s). These sites were used to heat water for a variety of purposes and are also known as ancient cooking-places. Archaeologists often prefer to refer to such sites as burnt mounds.

Geomorphology The study of landforms.

Geophysical survey Methods of exploring below the surface of the ground by measuring the soil's magnetic susceptibility, electrical resistivity and other properties.

Henge A more or less circular enclosure, normally with the bank outside the ditch and often enclosing a circle of stones.

Honestone A fine whetstone for sharpening edged tools.

Inhumation The name given to the burial custom by which the body was laid in a grave.

Iron Age Final period of prehistory, beginning around 600 BC. Iron superseded bronze for the manufacture of tools and weapons in this period.

La Tène The site of an Iron Age votive deposit of metal artefacts, some bearing distinctive curvilinear decoration, at Lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland. La Tène has given its name to La Tène art and to the second period of the European Iron Age.

Lithics General archaeological term applied to all collections of stone tools, working debris and raw materials.

Medieval Period succeeding the Iron Age, from the advent of Christianity in the fifth century up to the early 16th century AD.

Megalith A large stone used in the construction of prehistoric tombs, stone circles and stone alignments.

Mesolithic The Middle Stone Age, c. 7000–4000 BC, when Ireland was first settled by early hunters and foragers.

Monitoring Archaeological monitoring involves an archaeologist being present during the course of development works, such as topsoil removal, so as to identify and protect archaeological deposits, features or objects.

Neolithic The New Stone Age, c. 4000–2400 BC. Frequently defined by the beginnings of farming.

Osteology/oste archaeology A branch of archaeology that deals with the study and analysis of human and animal skeletal remains.

Palaeoenvironment An ancient or past environment.

Palisade A stake-built or post-built defensive barrier, often positioned on top of an embankment or rampart.

Pipkin A small earthenware vessel.

Post-excavation A general term applied to those tasks to be undertaken following the fieldwork stage of an archaeological project.

Post-hole The void or soil-filled hole where a post once stood.

Post-medieval The period after the medieval period, often taken to be the period after the dissolution of the monasteries around AD 1540.

Prehistoric Any period for which there is no contemporary documentary evidence.

Quernstone A large stone used for grinding grain into flour.

Radiocarbon dating A dating method that measures the decay of the radioactive isotope Carbon 14, which is present in all organic material.

Rath A circular earthen enclosure, otherwise known as a ringfort.

Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) A list of archaeological sites with accompanying maps recorded on a county-by-county basis by the State. Inclusion in the list affords archaeological sites certain legal protections.

Revetment Facing of hard, solid material given to a body of softer, less stable material to retain and support it.

Ring-ditch A circular monument, very similar in structure to a henge, but generally much smaller.

Ringfort A defended farmstead, mainly dating from between the seventh and ninth centuries AD, enclosed by one or more concentric earthworks comprising a bank and outer ditch.

Ring-pin Early medieval dress-fastener, usually of copper alloy, with a swivel ring inserted through a perforation in the pin.

Roadtake The land area to be occupied by a proposed road.

Scraper Stone tool comprising a round or horseshoe-shaped flake deliberately fashioned with an extreme oblique angle to provide a working edge.

Site A term used to define places of archaeological interest.

Slag Partly vitrified non-metal residue and waste material left behind after the smelting of a metal ore or in glass-making.

Souterrain A long, narrow, subterranean gallery, usually stone-walled with a slab roof. Some have small chambers off the main passage.

Standing stone A block or slab of stone set upright as a marker, dating mainly from the Neolithic and Bronze Age.

Stratigraphy The laying down of layers one above the other. A succession of layers should provide a relative chronological sequence.

Test excavation Test excavation is a limited form of archaeological excavation whose purpose is to establish the nature, extent and, if possible, the date of archaeological deposits and features by excavating small areas.

Tower house Fortified private residence commonly built from the 15th century through to the 17th century.

Trial trench A small exploratory excavation designed to determine a site's depth and composition prior to full excavation.

Viking (*Vikingur*) Scandinavian word for seafaring raiders from Norway, Sweden and Denmark who ravaged the coasts of Europe from about the seventh century AD onwards.

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