

PREHISTORIC MONUMENTS

(2009)

PH 008

The landscape of Northern Ireland has been shaped by human activity for over 9,000 years. Since the arrival of the first colonists during the Mesolithic era successive generations have each had an impact on the countryside around us. The peoples of the prehistoric period have left us a rich variety of monuments. Their tombs, stone circles, earthworks and standing stones dot our landscape even today.

Many of these monuments are now in State Care and are looked after by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Still more are scheduled and protected from damage under law. This fact sheet is part of a series which provides information on monuments under State Care. Meanings of words in bold, like this, can be found in the glossary.

1. AGHANAGLACK DUAL COURT TOMB

3^o miles (5.2 km) north-north-east of Belcoo, approached from the road from Belcoo to Boho. Turn north-west to Aghanaglack Forest and along a signposted forest road, parking close to the monument and walking the short remaining distance. The tomb is built across the slope on a south-east facing mountainside, which was used as open grazing land until the 1950s with a farmhouse beside the monument, but is now forested. It was excavated by Oliver Davies in 1938 but had been much disturbed by earlier excavation. Some of the stones were reused for building and the monument itself used as a pigsty! Davies found structural features, especially of the **cairn kerb**, which are now overgrown and invisible. This is, nevertheless, a fine example of a dual court tomb, with two two-chambered galleries sharing a common backstone. The court to the south-west is roughly semicircular but has been disturbed. It opens into two chambers built of impressively large limestone slabs. The north-east court is a half oval in shape and the two chambers are made of smaller stones. Finds included small fragments of the burned bones of a child or children and the burned remains of a youth. There were also some animal bones, plain and decorated Neolithic bowls, flint implements and a stone bead. Two barbed and **tanged** flint arrowheads indicate some early Bronze Age activity here.

2. DRUMSKINNY STONE CIRCLE, CAIRN & ALIGNMENT

4.5 miles (7.2 km) north of Kesh, east of the minor road north to Castleberg. There is a car-park close to the monument. The site lies in upland bog which was drained after the excavation of the monument in 1962. A circle 12.8 m in diameter is made up of 39 stones, and a small round **cairn** is associated with an alignment, 7.6 m long, of 24 stones. The stones are fairly small and some that were replaced after the excavation are clearly marked. It is far smaller but of the same general type as Beaghmore circles (see information factsheets PH010, PH011) and many others in mid Ulster. Finds were sparse but included Neolithic material, so it is not clear whether the site dates from the Neolithic or the Bronze Age. There are other prehistoric stone monuments in the bog in this area.



AGHANAGLACK
DUAL COURT TOMB



DRUMSKINNY STONE CIRCLE

GLOSSARY

Cairn: A mound of stone.

Cairn kerb: a ring of large stones around the edge of the cairn helping to prevent the body of the cairn spreading outwards.

Tang(ed): The projection of stone by which an arrowhead was attached to the shaft of the arrow.

FURTHER READING

Mallory and McNeill - The Archaeology of Ulster (QUB, 1991)

Colm Donnelly - Living Places (QUB, 1997)

G Cooney, Landscapes of Neolithic Ireland (London, 2000)

Pieces of the Past (HMSO, 1988)

The Monuments and Building Record

The Monuments and Buildings Record (MBR) holds data on all elements of the built environment in the form of databases, written, photographic and drawn material. MBR makes available information on archaeological, architectural, industrial and maritime sites, as well as historic gardens and designed landscapes and the statutory lists of scheduled historic monuments and listed buildings. For further information visit:

www.ni-environment.gov.uk/builtheritage

For further information and advice on access to State Care Monuments contact the address below.

Our aim is to protect, conserve and promote the natural and built environment for the benefit of present and future generations.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
5-33 Hill Street,
Belfast
BT1 2LA
Tel: 028 9054 3037

www.ni-environment.gov.uk



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