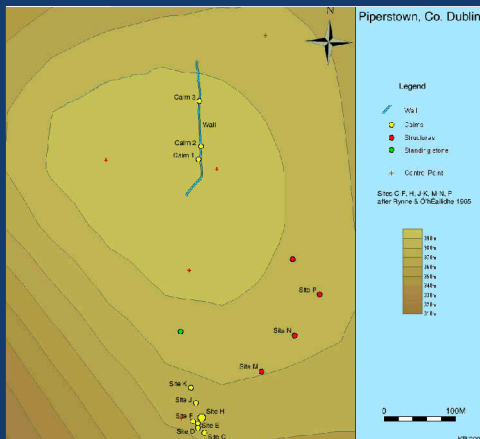


The Prehistory of Piperstown: A reassessment of an upland landscape

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In 1962, E. Rynne and P. Healy surveyed an archaeological complex on Piperstown Hill, Co. Dublin (360m - 390m O.D), which included seven structures and eight cairns. They also excavated structures L & M and cairn K (Rynne & Ó'hÉailidhe 1965).



Location of prehistoric monuments on Piperstown Hill, Co. Dublin

An MA was undertaken on this complex in 2005 and as part of this study the finds, charcoal and the cremated bone from the excavation were analysed and a radiocarbon date was obtained. New sites including a pre-bog wall with associated cairns and a probable standing stone were identified through fieldwork and surveyed along with the existing monuments.



Cairn C showing a ring of protruding upright boulders and a smaller central cairn exposed after burning of the hillside in May 2007

Cairns C, D, E, F, G, H, J & K are situated on the southwestern part of the hill and overlook the River Dodder to the west.



Structure M facing north with entrance clearly visible after burning

A standing stone and cairns C, H, J, K form a linear alignment. The excavation revealed a circle of six low standing stones beneath cairn K, enclosing a central cremation pit. The Royal Irish Academy funded the AMS dating of a charcoal sample from the pit and this returned a date of 2573-2343 cal BC (UB-7285).

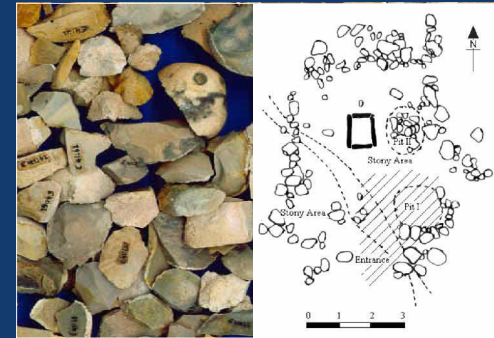
Boulders protruding from the perimeter of cairns C, F and H may be small standing stones, similar to those at K.

Cairns D, E, G and J are smaller and display no evidence of kerbstones but are directly aligned, 5m equidistant and an integrated part of the larger group



Stone capped Pit II (foreground) with a centrally located formal stone-lined rectangular hearth (background) from within Structure M during the 1962 excavations

Sites A, B, L, M, N, P & Q comprised a series of seven sub-circular structures, four of which contained stone-lined rectangular hearths. Sites L and M were excavated and 894 lithics were retrieved. Analysis of the assemblage indicated that flint nodules were collected from a beach source and reduced on-site using bipolar technology



Selection of split pebbles and bi-polar cores from the 1962 excavations and plan of Structure M (after Rynne & Healy 1965)

A drystone pre-bog wall runs from the top of the hill north downslope for a distance of 220m. A series of three cairns are associated with the feature, two are on top of the structure and the third is to the west of it. The cairns associated with the wall are smaller than the complex to the southwest and are different in form, with no evidence of protruding stones.



View along the curving line of the wall towards Slievenabawnoge and Knockannavea Mountains

This study has demonstrated the benefits of re-visiting previous excavation in the light of developing archaeological techniques and theoretical approaches. Further investigations are planned to examine the chronological development of the complex and its role in the landscape of south county Dublin.

References: Ó hÉailidhe, P. 1965. A group of prehistoric sites at Piperstown, Co. Dublin. *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.* 64C(3), 61-84.

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