A Prehistoric Burial Cairn at Ardcrony, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary

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The discovery in September, 1977, of human bones in a "crude vault, covered by a huge stone, in the centre of a large heap of stones in the middle of what appears to have been a fort" was reported to the Director of the National Museum by Superintendent Smith, Nenagh. In consequence, the site was investigated by the writer who found a much denuded stone cairn with a roughly centrally placed cist-grave of massive proportions covered by an enormous capstone. The latter had been revealed by a bulldozer involved in the removal of cairn-stones for road building, the cist and its contents being exposed when the driver removed packing-stones between the sidestones and capstone at the northeastern corner. The bulldozer had torn through the cairn leaving an arc-shaped scarp at the South and West.

The monument is marked on the Ordnance Survey sheet as "Lachtacarn" (O.S. 6-inch sheet, Co. Tipperary, No. 15, at 8.5 cm. and 2.5 cm. from the N. and W. margins respectively). It is situated to the west of Ardcrony village in the field adjoining that reputed to be the find-place of the famous Late Bronze Age gorget. Local tradition associates the monument with the burial of a chieftain.

The Cairn (Plate I:1)

The cairn originally measured about 33 m. in diameter, as is evident from the flat stony surface which encircles the present remains which measure about 20 m. in diameter and about 2.5 m. in maximum height at the centre, above the cist. Subsequent enquiry revealed that the cairn was once surrounded by an earthen bank and ditch, but the bank was removed about 20 years ago because of the threat to crops posed by the rabbits which infested it.

The Cist (Fig. 1)

The cist which is orientated North-South, is constructed of a large and high sidestone on each side and by two stones at each end, the resultant chamber being polygonal in plan. The internal floor measurements are 175 cm. by 140 cm., by 69 cm. high. The capstone measures 190 cm. by 173 cm., by 51 cm. in maximum thickness where it is exposed, the south-western corner being still embedded in the body of the cairn. The sidestones are slanted inwards towards the top at an angle of about 60° to the floor while the endstones are vertically placed, the width at the mouth of the cist being thus reduced to 93 cm. (internally). The sidestones are all roughly dressed slabs of rectangular shape and cross-section except for the endstone at the southwestern corner which is a sub-cylindrical boulder. In contrast to the other side and endstones which touched or overlapped, the latter was set slightly apart which meant that the gaps between its sides and the nearest side and endstones had to be blocked with cairn stones—implying the contemporaneity of the cist and cairn. Rough globular packing stones were placed in the corners between the sidestones
Fig. 1. Ardcrony, Co. Tipperary. Plan (above) and sections (below) of cist.
and underneath the capstone. The floor is paved with small irregularly-shaped flat stones, large specimens being placed along the sides and at the corners, smaller stones being reserved for the centre of the floor where they occasionally overlap. In a few cases along the sides of the cist, these paving-stones are placed edge downwards into the underlying earth; the south-eastern and south-western corners have large round stones set deeply into the soil.

**The Skeletons (Pl. 1:2 and 3)**

The unburnt skeletons of two men aged seventeen or eighteen and forty respectively were recovered from the paved floor of the cist where they lay, one on either side of a centrally-placed pottery vessel. Unfortunately the skeletal remains in the eastern half of the cist had been disturbed before investigation. The skeleton placed along the length of the chamber at the western side had its skull at the North, pelvic bones to the South, and the distal ends of the thigh-bones pointed towards the skull. Professor C. A. Erskine, Trinity College, Dublin, has kindly examined the bones, and reports on this skeleton as follows:

“Collection comprises skeleton of male of 17-18 years, approximately 170 cm. (i.e. 5’7”).

**Skull:** well preserved and nearly complete, 4 fragments of base, occipital and 1 mandibular fossa present. Post mortem loss of incisor teeth and unerupted 3rd molar on both sides maxilla. Mandible in 2 fragments: teeth show little wear.

**Spinal column:** 4 cervical, 8 thoracic (and 8 pieces), 2 lumbar and 2 fragments of sacrum present. Number of rib fragments 5-15 cm., several nearly complete.

**Limb bones:** 2 complete femora, 2 tibiae, 2 fibulae, nearly complete and well preserved. Femora and tibiae show detachment of condyles through epiphyseal plates and lines at junction on head, greater and less trochanters, pelvic bones in two main parts and two smaller fragments; also two fragments of sacrum. 2 incomplete humeri, ulnae, radial fragments and fragments of both scapulae with two eroded clavicles present.

**Hand and foot bones:** 5 metacarpals, 2 phalanges of fingers, 2 tali, cuboid, right 1st metatarsal, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th metatarsals of left foot present. About 20 other small fragments of skeleton present.”

The skeleton which lay along the eastern side of the tomb was more confused as it had been disturbed before investigation. The bones were located in a deposit of about 5 cm. of muddy soil on top of the paving-stones, in contrast to the western skeleton which rested directly on the paving-stones. The bones appeared to be grouped in two main concentrations, the northernmost of which included the skull, but not the lower mandible. Professor Erskine reports on this skeleton as follows:

“Collection comprises skeleton of 40 years old man of approximately 165 cm. (i.e. 5’5”).

**Skull:** Vault in two large pieces with a number of smaller pieces of flat bones present. Strongly formed mandible in 2 pieces; maxilla also in 2 pieces; some irregular marking at external occipital protuberance. Teeth show moderate wear.

**Vertebral column:** 5 cervical vertebrae present, two show pathological fusion of bodies: 2 thoracic and 2nd and 5th lumbar present. Osteoarthritic changes in 5th
Fig. 2. Ardcrony, Co. Tipperary. Pottery vessel.
lumbar. One left complete innominate bone shows some post-mortem erosion on iliac crest; separate right pelvic bone and fragments of ilium and upper half of sacrum. 5 fragments of ribs present.

**Limbs:** 2 complete humeri, radius and ulna, clavicles and left scapula, all very well preserved. Fragment of right scapula present. Left radius and ulna distal ends missing. One complete right femur and large part of left (female characteristic in femoral head). Fragments of tibae and fibulae present.

**Hands:** Right: thumb, middle and ring metacarpals and scaploïd present. Left: index, middle and little finger metacarpals present.

**Foot:** Only phalanx of left great toe present. Calcareous and talus of both sides and coneiform of left side present."

Using drawings and photographs of the bones which were numbered while in situ, and reconstituting the bones as they were found in the cist, it was concluded that the bones could not have assumed their final positions in the cist had the bodies been articulated at the time of interment. They were almost certainly defleshed and were certainly disarticulated, though kept separate one from the other, at the time of burial.

**Pottery Vessel (Figs. 2 and 3, and Pl. I:3)**

A round-bottomed, shouldered and highly decorated pottery vessel was placed on the paved floor midway between the two skeletons. Originally standing mouth upwards, it had tilted slightly to the east owing to the partial disintegration of the opposite side. Most of the vessel survives so that its scheme of ornament can be confidently reconstructed (Fig. 3). The vessel is light brown in colour on its burnished exterior slip and has a loose powdery fabric, the clay being soft, coarse and blackish. Dr. John Jackson, Consultant Geologist, has examined the clay and reports thus:

Two quite distinct types of material were submitted:

(i) Cream coloured dolomitic limestone (3 pieces).

(ii) Black shale-like material (4 fragments).

The fragments of dolomitic limestone are of considerable interest, for they are local and this rock-type is abundant to the north and west of Nenagh (e.g. Puckaun) and is associated with the Waulsortian reef limestone magnesium so that, chemically, the rock is the dual carbonate of lime and magnesium (Ca.Mg (CO₃)₂). In this form the limestone is brightly refractory and, due to its ability to withstand temperatures in excess of 1000°C, it was usually separated from limestone for burning (into lime). When it was included in such limestone it has remained uncalcined and the resistant dolomitic limestone is often found as unburned residual lumps around old lime kilns. In a low-temperature fired pot the dolomitic would be unaltered, uncalcined and would constitute quite acceptable 'grog'.

The black fragments appear to be shale; they could occur as shale bands in the local limestone, particularly immediately below or above the Waulsortian reefs.

I would therefore consider the fragments submitted as quite local in provenance. The use of the dolomitic limestone is, in my experience, most unusual and of considerable interest.

The vessel is a shallow round-bottomed bowl which is sharply shouldered with an
inturned neck and plain, rounded rim. It was hand-made and its thickness varies from 1.8 cm. at the shoulder and 1.6 cm. at the base to 90 mm. at the neck. The vessel was slightly asymmetrical, its estimated average diameter being about 16.5 cm, the estimated diameter at the shoulder being about 21.5 cm. A maximum of 13.7 cm. of the rim, a maximum width of 19 cm. and a shoulder length of 12 cm. survive. The neck measures 3.6 cm. from shoulder to rim. The pot appears to have been about 8.2 cm. in maximum depth.

The bowl is completely decorated in channeled ornament, divided into two zones at the shoulder—one pattern on the neck and the other on the convex rounded bottom. The design is bordered by two closely-set encircling lines below the rim on the neck and by two (and in places three) similar and occasionally touching lines, partly relieved by a series of short parallel oblique strokes above the shoulder and by three similar encircling lines below the shoulder. Between these lines, the main neck ornament consists of a series of paired triangles alternately filled with horizontal lines and dots (Fig. 3); the triangles average about 2 cm. high by about 2.9 cm. along the base line.

The decoration on the body of the bowl consists of a quartered double-lined "square" on the bottom around which is arranged a series of lined and dotted triangles.
similar to, but larger than, those on the neck. Parts of the six triangles which survive show a pair of lined triangles, two separate dotted examples and a specimen displaying a combination of lines and dots. The triangles average about 3.8 cm. high and about 5.8 cm. along the base line.

The “square” at the centre of the design on the bottom measures 11.8 cm. by 12.2 cm. It is quartered diagonally from its corners by two three-channelled lines from one side and two paired channels (divided by a central band decorated by short parallel radial strokes) from the other. The diagonals converge on a small, plain, diamond-shaped zone at the centre of the base. The resulting four sub-triangular zones within the “square” are mainly filled with parallel lines at right angles to their base lines; each zone encloses a smaller area of shorter lines at right angles to the main lines.

**Discussion**

The monument at Ardcrony is a new addition to the seven or so accepted late Neolithic single-burial monuments generally referred to as the “Linkardstown Group”, previously thought to have been confined to South Leinster. Apart from the type-site at Linkardstown, Co. Carlow, the group also includes the tombs at Norrismount, Co. Wexford, Drimnagh, Co. Dublin, Ballintruermore, Co. Wicklow (hereinafter referred to as Ballintremer), Jerpoint West, Co. Kilkenny, Baurnogesnaid, Co. Carlow (hereinafter referred to as Baurnoge) and the probable site discovered in 1838 at Knockmaree (Chapelizod), Phoenix Park, Dublin.  

**The Cist and Cairn**

The cists of these tombs tend to be polygonal in plan, apart from Norrismount which was rectangular and Drimnagh which was of irregular plan and open-ended. These cists which are centrally placed in kerbed cairns, cairn-cores, or mounds, often resemble megalithic tombs, especially the so-called B-dolmens or derived passage graves like those at the Carrowmore cemetery, Co. Sligo, which may have been ancestral to them. The Linkardstown cists generally have slanting or inclined sides and may sometimes be double-walled. They invariably contain single burials.

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of unburnt and often disarticulated remains of one or two men, which are always accompanied by round-bottomed, shouldered pottery bowls, the surface of which is completely covered in channelled ornament, often arranged in zones.

Comparing the characteristics of the cist and cairn at Ardcroney with those of the other tombs in the group, we find that its polygonal plan is shared by all except Norrismount and Drimmagh and its sloping sidestones are paralleled at Linkardstown, Baunoge, Jerpoint West, Ballintruer and Drimmagh. Ardcroney is the only example of a tomb in this class where the sidestones are inclined and the endstones straight-sided. The paved floor at Ardcroney is matched by the roughly cobbled floor at Jerpoint West and by a single flagstone at Ballintruer. Paving is often a feature of wedge-shaped gallery graves and is often found in cists of the Earlier Bronze Age. It also occurs in the cemetery cairn at Poulawack, Co. Clare (Graves 8 and 8a) in which there are also stones set on edge like those along the sidewalls of the cist at Ardcroney; such stones are not unlike the more functional “buttress slabs” in the Baurnadomeeney wedge grave. Single large capstones covered the cists at Baunoge Norrismount and Ardcroney, in contrast to the other cists of the group. In this respect, Barry Raftery’s conclusion that the Baunoge chamber with its imposing capstone belonged “clearly in the megalithic tradition” seems to apply equally to the Ardcroney cist.

All the cists of the Linkardstown group were covered by a round tumulus or a cairn. The Ardcroney and Baunoge cists were completely covered by cairn-stones, while the Ballintruer, Jerpoint, Drimmagh and Norrismount cists were situated at the centre of a cairn core which was covered by an earthen mound; only in the case of Norrismount did the core extend above the cist capstone. Most of the mounds/ cairns of the Linkardstown group were revetted by stone kerbs. The bulldozing which has taken place at Ardcroney has removed all visible trace of kerbstones, if ever they existed. Future investigation may throw further light on this aspect, and may also locate evidence of internal kerbs, arc and radial settings such as featured at other sites of the group, e.g. at Jerpoint West, Baunoge and Drimmagh, and also at wedge-graves like Baurnadomeeney, at passage graves like Townleyhall II, and at cemetery cairns like Poulawack. Future excavation might also reveal evidence for the alleged bank and ditch which once incircled the cairn at Ardcroney—a large mound and ditch dating to the Early Bronze Age encircled the tumulus at Drimmagh, and there may also have been a ditch at Norrismount. The megalithic character of the Ardcroney cist could mean that double walling is absent, as it was at Baunoge—the cist and cairn of which resemble those at Ardcroney more closely than any of the other “Linkardstown” tombs.

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16 M. J. O’Kelly, op. cit., esp. plates X(a) and X(b).
The cist at Ardcrony seems to be of average dimensions (175 cm. by 140 cm. by 69 cm.) among the tombs of this class. The chamber at Jerpoint West (214 cm. by 187 cm. by 119 cm.) was the largest, followed by Linkardstown (200 cm. by 230 cm. by c. 100 cm.), Ardcrony, Knockmaree (180 cm. by 100 cm. by ? ), Norrismount (160 cm. by 50 cm. by 65 cm.), Drimnagh (c. 225 cm. by c. 180 cm. by c. 40 cm.), Baunoge (145 cm. by 100 cm. by c. 100 cm.)—the latter being the smallest, despite its megalithic character.

The original diameter of the Ardcrony cairn was about 33 m. which was less than those at Norrismount (35 m.) and Knockmaree (33.5 m.), and greater than those at Ballintruher (32 m.), Linkardstown (25 m.), Jerpoint West (24 m.), Drimnagh (22 m.) and Baunoge (18 m.)—a range of measurements which seems to indicate two general diametres for this group of tombs. The surviving height of the Ardcrony cairn (2.5 m.) is considerably less than that at Baunoge (5 m.), Knockmaree (4 m.) and Norrismount (3 m.). The long axes of five of the cists of this group for which we have information (Ardcrony, Ballintruher, Baunoge, Jerpoint West and Drimnagh) are all orientated North-South, which represents a break with the known orientations of the megalithic tomb groups which are east-west in the case of the court cairns, portal dolmens and wedge-graves, though passage graves tend to have more varied orientations, including a North-South range noted especially among the B-Dolmens at Carrowmore, Co. Sligo.

Ryan has drawn attention to the similarity of passage grave elements—the central burial chambers, the round kerbed mound and the stone settings in the mound—to features of the Linkardstown Group which he saw as “an indigenous development from native megalithic sources”. He cited in particular some of the passage graves in the passage grave cemetery at Carrowmore, Co. Sligo, which may have been sealed off by their cairns, and thus, in effect, single burials. Raftery also suggests that structurally the Linkardstown Group can be compared with passage graves rather than portal dolmens, and that the central burial chamber at Baunoge compared with some of the B-Dolmens which are regarded as of passage grave derivation. Herity and Casp evidence resemblances between the Carrowmore tombs and those of South Scandinavia and see parallels between Irish portal dolmens and similar tombs in the same area. The Ardcrony tomb seems to reiterate the “Megalithic Connection” and to emphasise the source postulated by Ryan, though it should be pointed out that the complete absence of Carrowkeel pottery, and its lack of influence on the pottery vessels of the single burials as well as the change in burial rite from cremation to

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20 M. Herity, op. cit., p. 65.
21 M. F. Ryan, Carloviana, 2 (1972), 19.
23 B. Raftery, op. cit., p. 310.
inhumation and the general change from communal to single burials of men, indicates how different are the passage grave traditions from those of the Linkardstown Group, regardless of the structural affinities of the tombs.

While the building knowledge and religious inspiration which produced the Ardercroy tomb could be due to the reception of cultural influences from outside the area, it is worth remembering that there are passage graves on the Limerick-Tipperary border—three in Co. Limerick, including the best known example at Duntryleague, and two in Co. Tipperary, including the example of Shrough which is polygonal in plan and has one double sidewall. The Duntryleague passage is orientated North-South, but the Shrough tomb has an East-West orientation. The presence of these tombs in Munster could mean that it was not impossible for the Ardercroy tomb to derive passage grave features from tombs already in the general locality, although the “prime” (and presumably early) place accorded the cruciform Duntryleague passage grave militates against this idea. It is more likely that the “Linkardstown” tombs, originated somewhere in East Leinster where they are generally concentrated and where there is a greater number of passage graves. It would appear that the Ardercroy tomb with its absence of passage grave-type goods, in which it contrasts with the Baunoge, Linkardstown, Knockmarae and Jerpoint West tombs, represents an apparently developed and pure form of this kind of burial and, as such, could be considered as somewhere mid-way in a tentative chronological sequence based on a decreasing amount of passage grave influence at one end and an increasing amount of Early Bronze Age influence at the other. The comparatively small number of these tombs suggests that this kind of burial was short-lived, in contrast to the other megalithic traditions, future investigation of the numerous cairns in the east-Munster, west-Leinster region may identify much greater numbers of these tombs than might at present appear.

It would appear that the “Linkardstown” tombs, their pottery and burial rite is much closer to aspects of the Early Bronze Age than to the Neolithic. They appear to be very closely related (and possibly ancestral) to the Earlier Bronze Age cemetery cairns which had “custom built” round mounds over central cists which are associated with the earliest variety of Food Vessel—the Bowl. This similarity is especially true of sites like Moneen, Co. Cork and Poulawack, Co. Clare, both of which had centrally-placed large cists of primary date which yielded defleshed and disarticulated skeletons. The ornament and recurring cruciform patterns on the bases of the shouldered vessels from the single burials must have contributed to Bowl Food Vessels which are often found in secondary positions in Late Neolithic mounds and passage graves—also suggestive of a continuity of burial traditions. Continuity

98 M. Herity, op. cit., pp. 71, 75, 262, and Fig. 137.
99 P. J. Lynch, J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland, 50 (1920), 99-127, and Herity, op. cit., Fig. 60:3.
100 H. S. Crawford, J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland, 40 (1910), 38-51; Herity, op. cit., Fig. 60:2, and S. Ó Néill, op. cit., p. 65.
101 M. Herity, op. cit., p. 71.
102 R. de Valera and S. Ó Néill, op. cit., p. 115.
seems also to be emphasised by the popularity of the Early Bronze Age cist grave in the area of Leinster where the single burials were most commonly located. This contrasts with the marginal impact enjoyed by cist burials in North Munster\textsuperscript{36} where the communal burial tradition prevailed in the form of the wedge-shaped gallery graves which are particularly common in North Tipperary\textsuperscript{37}—especially in the Killaloe common area where the Baurnadomeeny grave has been excavated, in Co. Clare where there are over a hundred,\textsuperscript{38} and in East Co. Limerick\textsuperscript{39} where the example at Lough Gur was excavated. There was also a bias in favour of circular kerbed cairns among these tombs.\textsuperscript{40}

Claims have been made for the inclusion in the Linkardstown group of other tombs, most of which were reported in the last century. Of these,\textsuperscript{41} Knockmaree, Co. Dublin, seems a very likely candidate and has been so regarded in this paper, and CuffEnsborough, Co. Laois,\textsuperscript{42} with its corbelled, beehive chamber and two disarticulated unburnt skeletons somewhat less so. The geographic position of Arderony is important in that it makes the acceptance of some tombs in the Kilkenny-Laois area more plausible than heretofore, Jerpoint West being geographically the nearest to the North Tipperary tomb. The present discovery also seems to prompt the acceptance into the group of the paved cist discovered in 1950 at Morenane, Croom, Co. Limerick,\textsuperscript{43} which has been suggested as related to the Linkardstown Group. However, despite the general conformation of its dimensions to the unusually small cist at Baunoge, this polygonal cist seems to conform more to Early Bronze Age specifications.\textsuperscript{44} The small polygonal cists which are often associated with urn burials in which case they are no more than stone-lined pits\textsuperscript{45} can hardly be related to the Linkardstown Group although the small specimen with inclined sides at Bealacleave, Co. Tipperary, was regarded as early by its excavator who likened it to some of the cists in the Baurnadomeeny wedge grave and saw it as a single burial intrusion into a communal burial area.\textsuperscript{46}

The geographic position of Arderony might also be used in the argument\textsuperscript{47} for the inclusion in the group of Graves 8 and 8a at Poulawack, Co. Clare. The similarity of these deep-walled graves to the abnormally high-walled cist at Jerpoint West seems to have suggested its inclusion. Poulawack contained a sherd of Beaker and had not the diagnostic bowl associated with each of the other tombs of the Linkardstown group—apart from the unscientifically excavated example at Knockmaree—while Grave 8a yielded the remains of four adults, as opposed to a maximum

\textsuperscript{35} J. Waddell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 103, Fig. 3, and inventory.
\textsuperscript{36} H. S. Crawford, \textit{op. cit.}, passim.
\textsuperscript{37} R. de Valera and S. Ó Núalláin, \textit{op. cit.}, passim.
\textsuperscript{38} P. J. Lynch, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 92 and 127; R. de Valera and S. Ó Núalláin, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. xii-xiii.
\textsuperscript{39} M. J. O’Kelly, \textit{op. cit.}, 85-115; de Valera and Ó Núalláin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{40} Listed and researched by M. F. Ryan who kindly showed me his list in advance of his forthcoming publication.
\textsuperscript{41} J. Graves, \textit{J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland}, 2 (1853), 358.
\textsuperscript{42} B. Raftery, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 304 and fn. 10; topographical files, National Museum of Ireland.
\textsuperscript{43} J. Waddell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 123.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} E. Rynne, \textit{North Munster Antiq. J.}, 60 (1964) 89-93.
\textsuperscript{46} M. F. Ryan, \textit{Carloviana}, 2 (1972) 18-20, and Ryan forthcoming.
of two individuals in each of the other tombs. The primary and central position of the graves at Poulawack seems more in keeping with some of the cemetery mounds like Moneen, Co. Cork, 48 where, incidentally, the primary cist is, arguably, more megalithic in character than that at Poulawack. Indeed, the cist-graves at Poulawack could also be likened to some of the compartmented cists of the Earlier Bronze Age such as the example at Glencunna, Co. Tipperary 49—a comparison supported by the fact that most of these had unburnt skeletons. 50 While Waddell’s caution that resemblances between megalithic tombs and Early Bronze Age cist-graves may be fortuitous 51 seems to deny the undoubted morphological relationship and implied continuity and interaction which existed between the prehistoric tomb-building traditions, it would seem that the Poulawack graves (while related to and, possibly, partly derived from a common source—the passage grave?) are out of place in the Linkardstown series which of all the Irish prehistoric tomb groups is the most unified, in terms of its dimensions, cairn diameter, cist-plan and burial ritual, and they have the two common denominators—the decorated shouldered Neolithic Bowl and (to date) not more than two unburnt male skeletons.

**The Burials**

The two male skeletons at Arderney are most closely paralleled at Knockmarce where two male skeletons (and the femora of a third) were found in an apparently flexed and articulated condition, although those at Arderney were disarticulated. The unburnt male skeleton at Drimnagh was also articulated and flexed; the Linkardstown, Ballinruer and Baunoge cists each yielded the disarticulated skeleton of an adult male, the Ballinruer bones being broken before deposition. The skeleton of a young adult male was found at Norrismount and at Jerpoint West where there was also a deposit of cremated bone—the only instance of cremation in this group of burials. It seems that we can no longer think of these burials as of men in "the prime of life" 52 as two sites have yielded the remains of young men and four the remains of adult men; the tomb at Arderney contained a youth and an adult! The custom of burying defleshed and disarticulated remains is well recorded in the Neolithic period and persisted into the Early Bronze Age and has been noted at Moneen, Poulawack, and other sites.

These burials represent a break with the classic communal cremated burials of the established and probably partly contemporary megalithic tombs. A few single-burial inhumations of Late Neolithic date are often related to the “Linkardstown” burials; these include two burials from unmarked pits at Square 24, Site C, Lough Gur, Co. Limerick, 53 at Martinstown, Kiltale, Co. Meath, 54 and the disturbed and possible

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51 Ibid.
52 M. Herity and G. Eogan, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
pit-burial at Dún Áilinne, Co. Kildare—^the pottery from the last two being particularly relevant to the “Linkardstown” bowls. The Rathjordan, Co. Limerick ring-barrow produced possible Neolithic grave-goods but no burials! While Ryan very wisely advises distinction between “casual single burials restored to occasionally by people whose customary burial practice may have been communal and those for whom single burial . . . was an important part of their fashion of burial”, the similarity of the Martinstown and Dún Áilinne vessels to those of the group under discussion argues for a closer relationship especially as the ornament on the Arderony vessel finds some of its closest parallels on the Dún Áilinne vessel. The contemporary burials at Caherguillamore, Co. Limerick, where a probable communal burial in “an imitation megalithic tomb” was accompanied by a cord ornamented bowl of Goodland type, and the closely related pottery found with a cremation in the double-compartmented cist at Rath, Co. Wicklow, are also worthy of consideration. Caherguillemore was thought to be early if not the earliest example of single inhumation, though the possibility of its being comprised of successive single burials was admitted. Either way it seems to be more closely related to the communal rite of the megalithic tombs than to the Linkardstown group which it appears to antedate.

The skulls of the Arderony skeletons were placed at the north of the North-South orientated cist—a position also noted in the case of the skeletons at Knockmaraec and Jerpoint West, and a tendency reflected in the North-West position of the Drimmagh skull. Even though the skull at Baunoge was found broken and incomplete at the South-West of the cist, the Ballintruer skull was incomplete before burial, the position of the Norrismount skeletons could not be determined, and we have not sufficient information in respect of the Linkardstown skeleton, it seems that there is a bias towards placing the head at the North of the chamber. In contrast, the skulls of the single inhumations at Lough Gur, Site C, and at Martinstown, faced West, possibly underlining the distinctiveness of the Linkardstown Group.

The Pottery

The great similarity of the form and decoration of the Dún Áilinne and Kiltale vessels necessitates their consideration with the pottery from the “Linkardstown” burials; these are shouldered round-bottomed bowls with overall channelled decora-

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61 J. Hunt, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
tion. It seems that they fall into two rough sub-groupings—those (from Norrismount, Jerpoint West and Kiltale) with shallow, closely spaced parallel lines on a fine outer slip, and those (from Arderony, Ballintruer and Dún Áilinne) with a different pot form and a large triangular ornament pattern. The Banoge and Drinagh pots though obviously belonging to this broadly unified group do not fit into either of the suggested sub-groupings. The former, despite the general similarity of its shape to the Jerpoint vessel, is smaller and disproportionately deeper than the other bowls and its overall arc-motif distinguishes it from the more usual zoned rectilinear decoration of the others and relates it more to the ornament of Carrowkeel ware; the Drinagh pot, while displaying similarities such as encircling and radial lines as well as a cruciform motif on the base, is much larger than the other vessels of the group and is the only example with a perforated neck—truly qualifying as a “hanging bowl”.

The Ballintruer and Dún Áilinne pots are those among the group which most closely parallel the Arderony vessel. The former, though slightly smaller and deeper, has a similar shouldered profile and differs only in that its neck is slightly concave. It has similar encircling and occasionally touching lines as well as oblique strokes and, on the neck, lined triangles which resulted from a similar and slightly more wavy zig-zag line than that on the Arderony bowl. The cruciform design on the base also parallels the Arderony base motif, as does the diamond panel at the centre of the base though the Ballintruer specimen is lined and not plain. The Dún Áilinne vessel has a roughly similar profile and has the same encircling lines above and below the shoulder as well as zig-zag lines on the neck and body—the latter forming tall and sharp triangles and those on the neck forming a wavy line which alone of all the ornament on the vessels of this pottery group is suggestive of a cord impression but is more likely to have been produced by the careful rotation of a milled disc or cog-wheel. The resultant pendant triangles recall those on the Arderony bowl, the basketry motif on the base establishing a kinship with the Baunoge vessel. The combination of stabbed triangles with channelled arcs on one or two of the latter is paralleled by a triangle on the Arderony vessel which combines dots and lines. Radial or oblique strokes and encircling lines are found on almost all the pots of this group.

The shape of the Arderony bowl with its round bottom, shoulder and inturned neck seems to be a modification of the general Beacharra shape, conforming to Piggott’s Form J, the Irish examples of which were renamed Ballyalton bowls by Case. The bowls are representative of “the developed Irish Neolithic pottery tradition” in which round bottomed shouldered vessels were common—so much so

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that Herity talks of the “native shoulder”. A strong Nordic influence has been seen in these Ballyalton bowls especially in respect of their cord ornament, but this has been challenged in the case of the bowls found with single burials in Linstern which are channelled and not corded. The decoration of pottery by channeling rather than cording was the established ornament of the Western Neolithic which when considered with the native derived pot form of the single burial vessels argues strongly for a local origin. However, the pendant triangles of the Arderony bowl while paralleled among channelled vessels like the Ballintrau and Dún Ailinne bowls from its own group and the Britonstown, Co. Wicklow, sherd are more frequently found among cord-ornamented vessels like those from Lambay, Co. Dublin, the sandhills site at Dundrum, Co. Down, as well as on “Goodland Bowls” from the apparently late court cairns at Tamnyrankin, Co. Derry, and “Larne”, Co. Antrim, and the portal dolmen at Ballykeel, Co. Armagh. A number of court cairns such as Ballynamona, Co. Waterford, have yielded Form J Vessels which though closely related in profile to the Single burial vessels are corded and not channelled. Corded zig-zag lines also occur on the coarse vessels from the Kiltiernan, Co. Dublin, portal dolmen and on Class II pottery from Lough Gur. The appearance of corded triangles on Goodland Bowls also highlights “the underlying relationship” between these bowls, the Beacharra or Ballysalloy bowls and Food Vessels, and Prendergast’s suggestion of an affinity between similar pottery from the cist at Rath, Co. Wicklow, the Beacharra pottery and Food Vessels, noting that corded and cruciform ornament on the base occurred on both Goodland Bowls and Food Vessels. Showing the interchangeability of these elements in the Late Neolithic we also find channelled cruciform devices on the bases of some vessels of the Single Burial group including those at Arderony, Ballintrau and Drimmag. The suggested parallels between the Western Neolithic derived Class I(a) pot found with the Single

67 M. Herity and G. Eogan, op. cit., passim.
70 M. Herity, Actes du VIIe Congrès des Sciences... 1970, p. 531.
71 M. Ryan, J. Kildare Archae. Hist. Soc., 15 (1974-75), 425-439. Ryan draws attention to the general relationship of filled triangles to basketry which has an important implication for the ‘odd’ vessel from Baunoge as well as for the Dún Ailinne vessel which has triangles and basketry.
74 I. Herring, J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland, 71, (1941), 43, 46 and Fig. 2, p. 40.
75 Herity, et al., Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad., 67, C (1968), Fig. 4, p. 25; Fig. 5, p. 27, and esp. Fig. 10 p. 250.
76 A. E. P. Collins, Ulster J. Archae., 28 (1965), 57-68 and Fig. 10:6-8.
77 T. G. E. Powell, J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ir., 68 (1938), 260 ff., and Figs. 4 and 5.
78 D. M. Waterman, Ulster J. Archae., 28 (1965), 29 and Fig. 10:4.
79 M. Herity, J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland, 84 (1964), 128 and Fig. 1:517, p. 126.
burial at Lough Gur (Site C)\textsuperscript{83} and the Drimnagh bowl with its T-rim and cavetto neck and the flattened rim of the Linkardstown vessel\textsuperscript{84} attest to the same intermixing of ceramic elements in the Late Neolithic. All things considered, it would appear that the Single burial bowls while deriving from indigenous sources and being broadly contemporary with a parallel cord-ornamented group associated with portal dolmens and late court cairns represent a separate form of pottery which is as distinctive and peculiar to these tombs as any of the assemblages of finds associated with the other Irish tomb groups.\textsuperscript{85} These pots also represent a gathering together of elements like zoned overall ornament and cruciform devices on bases which were to be commonly employed on the Bowl Food Vessels of the Earlier Bronze Age to which they may have been ancestral.

Summary

The monument at Arderkony is a new and important addition to the known examples of \textit{Late Neolithic} \textit{cased single burials} otherwise known as the Linkardstown or Leinster Single Burial group.\textsuperscript{86} It is the most western example to have come to light and is the only known specimen from Munster. It helps further to clarify the basic and very distinctive characteristics of this group of monuments and the, presumably, short-lived burial practice they represent. The Arderkony tomb confirms the usual north-south orientation, the sloping sidestones and the polygonal plan of the cists. It also emphasises the megalithic character of the cists and the extent to which the builders of these tombs may have drawn on native megalithic resources. The unburnt disarticulated male skeletons and the accompanying round bottomed, shouldered and decorated bowl found at Arderkony appear to represent the standard grave contents of these monuments. Indeed, apart from the stone kerb which may have been bulldozed and for which there may be evidence from excavation, the north Tipperary tomb has all the basic requirements, both structural and ritual, of these single burial monuments. The change in burial rite from the usually cremated communal burials of the megalithic tombs to the single burials of unburnt male skeletons has been seen as “looking forward” to the new single burial practice in the cist graves of the Earlier Bronze Age with which the secondary burials in some of the “Linkardstown” monuments have been seen as continuous.\textsuperscript{87}

Despite the undoubted impact which native megalithic elements, especially passage graves, exerted on the structure of these tombs and the undeniable parallels for the pottery form and channelled ornament which exist in the established indigenous Neolithic tradition, and even allowing for the early practice of inhumation in some

\textsuperscript{83} S. P. Ó Riordáin, \textit{Proc. Roy. Ir. Acad.}, Pl. XXX. See esp. Class I (A) shoulder in Plate XXXI, nos. 11, 12, 15 and esp. no. 14, all of which have horizontal channels like the Arderkony Vessel. See also footnote 156, p. 454, for the relationships of Class I (A) pottery.

\textsuperscript{84} Herity and Eogan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 84.

\textsuperscript{85} R. de Valera and S. Ó Néill, \textit{ibid.}, pp. xii-xiv; Herity \textit{et al.}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{86} M. Herity and G. Eogan, \textit{op. cit.}, passim.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 84-85.
court cairns, there can be no doubt that the coming together of such characteristics in such a distinctive and unified fashion must be due to some ritual or religious inspiration, possibly from outside the country. While, in the present state of knowledge, it would be unwise to equate these Late Neolithic Single Burials either to a population movement or to emphasise the general similarity of some elements of this burial phenomenon to those of Scandinavia, it would seem that the ritual change represented by them may be due to a parallel, earlier, not as sustained, and slightly different impact to that which brought about such a dramatic change in burial practice in the same eastern half of the island at the beginning of the Early Bronze Age.

The “Linkardstown” burials appear to be closer to the Earlier Bronze Age burial tradition which probably replaced them than to the megalithic tradition from which their adherents may have broken; it is not clear whether the single burials replaced the megalithic tombs or, more likely, whether they coexisted with them. It would seem that the single burials enjoyed a comparatively short-lived popularity in the couple of centuries before 2000 B.C. The Ardcrony tomb in its relative western isolation and its developed format may be seen as late in the series (though possibly earlier than the examples with evidence of secondary Early Bronze Age re-use) and nearer 2000 B.C. than most of its relatives. It was almost certainly the result of an influence from Leinster and was sited on a well beaten prehistoric route to North Munster.

Acknowledgements

The National Museum is grateful to Mr. Francis Ryan, Ardcrony, on whose land the monument is situated for permission to undertake the investigation; Mr. Ryan is also to be thanked for postponing his work until the Museum can complete the excavation. Thanks are also due to Superintendent Smith, Nenagh, for reporting the discovery and to Inspector Thomas Murphy who brought the writer to the site having previously protected the cist contents. The writer is also grateful to Messrs.

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81 It is possible that the Late Neolithic cist single burials and the Earlier Bronze Age cist-graves were due indirectly to the spread of two waves of a similar cultural current which had a tradition of individual burial; this current spread from Central and Eastern Europe (via the North Sea) beginning in the 3rd Millenium B.C. and was, possibly, later connected with metal prospecting. In this connection see J. Waddell, J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland, 100 (1970), 105; S. Piggott, Ancient Europe, Edinburgh 1965, pp. 84 ff.; and Herity and Eogan, op. cit., p. 111.
82 M. Herity, Actes du VIIe Congrès International des Sciences..., p. 530.
83 M. Herity, Irish Passages Graves, pp. 138-144, suggests that common elements in Beacharra and Carrowkeel wares argue for their contemporaneity. H. Case, Ulster J. Archae., 32 (1969), 17, sees continuous contact between Scandinavia and Ireland in the Neolithic starting with the influence of their Early Neolithic TRB on our Middle Neolithic and progressing from their Middle Neolithic to our Late Neolithic as represented by Ballylinton bowls. M. Herity, Actes du VIIe Congrès International des Sciences..., p. 533, saw this contact as extending a trail through North Britain which was to continue into the Early Bronze Age where it is demonstrated by J. J. Butler in Palaeohistoria, 9, (1963).
84 Information from Mr. E. P. Kelly, National Museum of Ireland.
Eddie Burke—doyen of Ormond Antiquarians—Tony Walsh and Richard Gough for help during the investigation. Mr. Kevin O'C. Bernal took valuable photographs of the contents of the cist which he has placed at our disposal; he also kindly supplied car battery leads and a lamp which facilitated the survey in the darkness of the cist-grave. A special word of thanks is due to Mr. Tony Corrigan who made the discovery. The writer is proud to record that the site brought together many people who founded the Ormond Historical Society to whom the discovery at Arderony was the subject of an inaugural lecture. The *Nenagh Guardian* (especially Miss Patricia Feely) are to be commended for their enthusiastic support and for their informed coverage of the investigation.

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**Note added in press**

H. N. Savory⁹³ has recently derived Irish Late Neolithic bowls from Case’s⁹⁴ “Ballyalent” group with decorative influences coming from the “Limerick” group of Western Neolithic pottery, both groups being influenced by the tall Bell Beaker and Zoned Beaker traditions which had already arrived in Ireland from northern France in the latter part of the 3rd millennium B.C. He claims that these bowls with their “separate burials by inhumations [are] in the Bell Beaker manner” rather than part of the Irish passage grave culture, saying that they must be viewed against the background of a continental Copper Age horizon in which Iberian metalworkers may have been involved in the early exploitation of Irish ores. However, his choice of the “odd” bowl from Baunoge and of the undercorated biconical pygmy cup from Cabinteely⁹⁵ as being close to Iberian models and “to the beginning of separate burial in Ireland”, and of the Drimmahagh bowl as separating “a more advanced stage of localisation”, hardly makes a strong case for Iberian influences among the other vessels of the group or for these burials as a whole. On present, evidence direct Iberian influence cannot be proven (no more than the suggested Scandinavian influence on these bowls), regardless of the ultimate origins of the myriad of influences (both indigenous and external) which contributed to the general culture of Ireland at this time.

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⁹³ H. N. Savory, *Bol. del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*, 44 (1978), 5-13. I am grateful to Etienne Rynne for drawing my attention to this article.
1. Cairn from east. [Photo: P. F. Wallace]

2. Skeletal remains in NW corner of cist. [Photo: P. F. Wallace]

3. Pottery vessel in situ between skeletons. [Photo: Kevin O'C. Bernal]

ARDCRONY, CO. TIPPERARY