Prehistoric Burials at Cahirguillamore,
Co. Limerick

John Hunt

During the operation of stripping a low cliff or rock face, preparatory to blasting for road metal, in the demesne of Cahirguillamore,¹ near Bruff, on the east side of the old avenue to Cahirguillamore House, now in ruins and acquired by the Land Commission, County Council workmen came upon some human bones, in the Summer of 1948. The ganger, Mr. John Guinan, realising that the discovery might be important, immediately stopped the work and reported the find. The site was investigated by the writer who was associated with the late Professor S. P. Ó Riordáin on the archaeological excavations then in progress around nearby Lough Gur.

THE EXCAVATION

The remains first discovered consisted of a skull and long bones of a skeleton with a pottery vessel, partly damaged by the spade, some fragments of it, unfortunately, having been carried away in the first shovelfuls of soil removed by the workmen who made the discovery. The burial lay near the top of a little pile of earth banked up in the angle between a large boulder and the rock face against which it rested. The workmen had cut away the outer part of the pile of earth and in doing so some of the leg bones and part of the vessel had been carried away. The skull, much of the skeleton and the greater part of the pot were still in situ, however, and an immediate search in the recently removed soil resulted in the recovery of some broken bones, fragments of the pottery vessel and a portion of a stone axehead. This skeleton was lying in a crouched position on its right side with the vessel in front of the skull. It quickly became clear that this skeleton was the latest interment in a series of burials.

The heap of earth and stones in which the crouched burial had been found formed a bank sloping downwards and outwards from the cliff face. When removed it was found to have sealed the entrance to a stone chamber almost full of burial deposits and debris (fig. 1). This burial chamber was formed by a large

¹Townland, Rockbarton; parish, Glenogra; barony, Smallcounty; Co. Limerick; O.S. 6-inch sheet 31, 10.5 cm. from the eastern margin and 19.5 cm. from the northern margin; Nat. Grid Ref. R.613.402.

For an account of the locality, its topography, antiquities and traditions see S. P. Ó Riordáin and J. Hunt, JRS.41, 72(1942), 37-44.
boulder and the rock face against which it rested, giving a small irregular cavity or recess. The floor was quadrilateral, measuring 4 ft. 6 ins. wide (1.37 m.) at the entrance on Old Ground Level, extending for about 6 ft. (1.83 m.) to the opposite wall naturally formed of rough block of stone, and narrowing to 3 ft. 2 ins. (96 cm.) in width at floor level. The floor was approximately 23 square feet in area. One long wall was formed by the slightly overhanging face of the cliff, the other by the underside of the large polygonal slab of stone; the cliff ran roughly North-and-South. Where these two walls met, at a point 6 ft. 3 ins. (1.90 m.) above Old Ground Level, was the apex of the tent-shaped cavity.
The narrow end of the chamber was blocked with large broken rocks which were partly covered on the outside by the undisturbed yellow clay of the subsoil on which lay a dark humus overgrown with plants and bushes. On the Old Ground Level, the open end of the burial chamber had a sloping approach because the floor within was lower than the surrounding undisturbed soil and, apparently, had been slightly deepened in antiquity. The chamber was filled to within a foot of the apex with a dry and porous mixture of bones and pieces of broken limestone varying from approximately 5 to 15 cm. in diameter. Intermingled with this mass was a quantity of sherds of pottery and, in addition, a number of small objects including pins and beads. Only at the bottom, on Old Ground Level, was there much soil among the bones, where soaking from the outside into the sloping entrance might have carried in some clay. Most of the small finds were found near the floor level and the rock crystal objects were at the lowest level. Besides human remains a certain amount of animal bone was found interspersed throughout the fill. No obvious stratification was observable in the fill of the chamber.

While the excavation was in progress an examination was made of the cliff face. Lying exposed on a ledge of rock about 10 feet (3 m.) from the ground, above and slightly to the left of the slab covering the multiple burial, a portion of the neck and rim of a pottery vessel was found. With these sherds there was a large scraper of white flint. It must be stressed that these latter finds were only associated with the burials by their proximity. They were stray finds only reached by climbing the almost vertical rock face. They showed no signs of having been recently taken from the earth, and, as far as could be discovered by enquiry, none of the workmen had climbed up the cliff or put the finds there.

THE FINDS

The finds from the site are arranged here in three groups—A, from the burial chamber, B, from the crouched burial, and C, the stray finds. Within each group they are listed under the categories pottery, stone, shell and bone, as far as they go. The registration identification in the National Museum precedes each item and at the end of the description the reference is to the illustration in the present paper.

A. FROM THE BURIAL CHAMBER

Pottery: (Figs. 2-3).

1957: 343. Many fragments of a large vessel of heavy thick ware, dark reddish brown, hard and close in texture and with little visible grit. The sherds give a profile and it was possible to reconstruct them with the aid of plaster to form a bucket-shaped pot with flat rim, slightly swelling body and flat base. It is

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All the finds were presented by the excavator to the National Museum of Ireland and are registered in the Irish Antiquities Division under the following numbers: 1957:343 and 344, 1960:290 to 394. The skeletal material and the animal bones (but not the bone artifacts) were deposited in the Natural History Division of the Museum.

Some of the finds have been briefly noted in JRSAI, 88(1958), 123 and 92(1962), 151, and in PPS, 27(1961), 220.
which were subsoil on Old Ground because the apparently, within a mass of broken intermingled, a number of broken sherds were at the outside of the cliff. The find of the cliff, above, outran the outside so that only assiduous work was possible in the enquiry.

The burial site was a large group as they each item present.

The reddish brown earth gave a rise to form the base. It is

1957: 343

Fig. 2. Large pottery vessel from the Burial Chamber.

ornamented with an all-over chevron pattern formed of about a dozen rows of impressed oblique strokes. The pattern fades out towards the base. There is also a row of chevrons on the slightly thickened rim. The overall pattern has been made, apparently by pressing a short rod, possibly of bone, about 3 cm. long into the damp clay. One end was bluntly pointed, the other slightly en-
larged and cut obliquely across. A faint deepening of the imprint in the centre of each individual impression suggests that the object used as a stamp was held around the middle by a piece of cord or thong thus forming a convenient handle for manipulating the stamp. The walls of the vessel are from 1.0 to 1.5 cm. thick and as reconstructed it measures 26 cm. high with an external diameter of 26.8 cm. at the mouth.
1960:321. Sherds forming the rim and part of the body of a Neolithic round bottomed bowl. The sides contract sharply to the mouth. The body, as far as it survives, is covered with encircling parallel grooves with intervening flat ribbons. These grooves have a small regular pattern within them which does not run at right angles to the line of the track and it is probable that it was made by impressing a whipped cord, i.e. a straight cord tightly wound round with another. The rim has an impressed design of short oblique strokes and a single line of whipped cord impression. The ware is hard, dark grey-brown, burnished and with distinct white grits, pitted on the interior where these have fallen away. The average thickness of the walls is 8 mm.; the diameter is 12.4 cm. and the present maximum diameter is 14.6 cm.

1960:322-326. Five sherds of a large, straight-sided Neolithic vessel of dense hard paste with very little grit. The outer surface has been blackened by fire, the inner surface is orange red, shading to brown. The flattish rim has a slight outward slope and is decorated with stabbed impressions at staggered intervals along the inner and outer edges. The external surface of the body has a pattern of rounded triangular impressions of what appears to be the articulating end of the bone of a small animal, in regular formation. The rim is slightly thicker (1.0 cm.) than the rest of the body (8 mm.).

1960:327-8. Two sherds, from the body of a large vessel, probably from the last vessel above or the next following. No ornament, outer surface buff to carrot colour. Average thickness 1 cm.


1960:334-350. Several small sherds of a Neolithic vessel. Thick blackish ware, inclined to flake, with burnished surface elaborately ornamented with channel and hurdle patterns and rows of oblique stabs, deeply cut with a V-profile. The vessel had a series of applied knobs, only two of which survive, ornamented in the same manner as the body. Only two sherds have the inner surface intact and one of these (1960:334) may be a rimsherd. Average thickness 1 cm. (without knob).

1960:351. Fragment of the angular shoulder of a Neolithic vessel. The ware is buff coloured and of corky texture. Thickness, max. 1.2 cm., min. 8 mm.

1960:352. Fragment of Neolithic ware, grey coloured and corky texture, appears to be a shoulder portion. Thickness, max. 8.5 mm., min. 4 mm.

1960:353. Sherd of a large, thick-walled vessel with a broad shallow corrugation, possibly at the neck. Hard, smooth paste, with buff surfaces and black core. Thickness, max. 1.2 cm., min. 1 cm.

1960:354. Sherd from the shoulder or the base of a vessel; the sherd shows no curvature in one plane. Fine texture, with burnished, pinkish surface. Thickness, max. 9 mm., min. 4.5 mm.


Stone:

1960:200. Flake of flint or perhaps pale chert, one face showing ripples of percussion. L. 1.8 cm.; W. 2.6 cm.; T. 4 mm.
1960:300. Flake of chert, dark grey, one face showing percussion ripples. L. 2 cm.; W. 1 cm.; T. 2 mm.
301 has a straight bore perforation and the surface is well polished as if from long wear.
? Slate. Diameter 1.1 cm.
302-303. Thinner than the others and with larger perforations. The perforations are ribbed as though started with a drill of large size and finished with a smaller one. The surfaces show little signs of wear. Micaceous siltstone. Both 1.1 cm. in diameter.
304. Very thin and with well worn, straight bore perforation. ? Slate. Diameter 8 mm.
1960:309-310. Two small pieces of rock crystal from the floor of the burial chamber.
309. A rectangular flake. L. 1.5 cm.; W. 1.2 cm.; T. 3 mm.
310. A microlith of pointed form. L. 1.8 cm.; W. 7 mm.; T. 3 mm.

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Fig. 4. Stone and shell beads, and crystal microlith, from the Burial Chamber.

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The stone and shell objects were kindly identified by Professor J. C. Brindley, U.C.D., and Dr. J. S. Jackson of the National Museum.
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**Stone:**  
1960:209. Flake of flint or perhaps pale chert, one face showing ripples of percussion. L. 1.8 cm.; W. 2.6 cm.; T. 4 mm.  
1960:300. Flake of chert, dark grey, one face showing percussion ripples. L. 2 cm.; W. 1 cm.; T. 2 mm.  
301 has a straight bore perforation and the surface is well polished as if from long wear. slate. Diameter 1.1 cm.  
302-303. Thinner than the others and with larger perforations. The perforations are ribbed as though started with a drill of large size and finished with a smaller one. The surfaces show little signs of wear. Micaceous siltstone. Both 1.1 cm. in diameter.  
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**Fig. 4.** Stone and shell beads, and crystal microlith, from the Burial Chamber.

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![Bone objects from the Burial Chamber](image)

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Fig. 5. Bone objects from the Burial Chamber.
Shell: (Fig. 4).

1960:305-8. Four perforated disc beads of creamy white shell. The holes appear to have been bored from one side only but this may be due in part to their damaged condition.
305. Diameter 1.0 cm.; identification of shell indeterminate.
306. Diameter 1.1 cm.; possibly *Venus striatula* (da Costa) 1778.
307. Diameter 1.1 cm.; possibly *Venus verrucosa* L. 1758.
308. Diameter 1.0 cm.; identification indeterminate.

Bone: (Fig. 5).

1960:311-317. Seven fragments of bone pins of various types.
311. The pointed end of a tapered pin, polished; probably from the bone of a horse. L. 6.6 cm.
312-3. A pin or awl in two parts, pointed and polished; probably from the split bone of a sheep. L. 13.4 cm.
314. The pointed end of a polished pin, probably from the bone of a horse. L. 6.3 cm.
315. The perforated end of a pin, pendant, or needle formed from a hare’s bone. L. 4.5 cm.
316. A mushroom-headed pin with thin stem (lower part broken off). Probably from the femur of sheep. Diameter, max. of head 1.0 cm.; Diameter of stem 3.5 mm.; L. of stem 3.1 cm. Total L. 4.1 cm.
317. A mushroom-headed pin with a very short portion of the thin stem intact. Probably from the femur of sheep. Diameter of head 1.3 cm.; Diameter of stem 2 mm.; L. of stem 4 mm. Total length 1.3 cm.

On the floor of the burial chamber, at old ground level were found two fragments of charcoal, identified as either willow (*Salix*) or poplar (*Populus*) by Dr. P. O’Connor formerly of the National Museum. A stone of *Prunus* species, probably cherry, was found in the burial chamber and was identified by Miss M. J. P. Scannell of the National Museum.

B. FROM THE CROUCHED BURIAL

Pottery: (Fig. 6).

1957:344. Neolithic bowl with round bottom, reconstructed from about a dozen sherds with the aid of plaster; found beside the skull. The ware is close textured and hard, dark grey with minute white grits. The neck is contracted and the rim has a steep inward bevel. The outer surface is ornamented all over with parallel grooves encircling the body. The flat ridges left between the grooves are ornamented with a pattern of short cogged strokes. These appear to alternate: are ornamented with a pattern of short cogged strokes. These appear to alternate: on one ridge the strokes are close together and lie slightly obliquely across the line of the ridge, in the next ridge they are spaced slightly wider apart, are more shallow and lie at right angles to the ridge.

The external diameter of the reconstructed bowl is 15 cm. and the greatest diameter 10.2 cm. The average thickness of the wall is 0 mm. and it is one mm. more at the mouth.

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The animal bone identifications were kindly made by Miss G. Roche of the National Museum.
Fig. 6. Finds from the Crouched Burial (above) and from the Rock Ledge (below).

**Stone: (Fig. 6).**


**C. STRAY FINDS found on ledge of rock above the burial chamber.**

**Pottery: (Fig. 6).**

1960:389-391. Sherds of the rim and neck of a Beaker. Fine-textured, hard ware, with blackish core and pale biscuit-coloured surfaces. The walls are thin (average thickness 6 mm.), with flattish rim and slightly everted neck. The external surface is decorated with an all-over pattern of circular, flat-based, impressions perhaps made with the hollow end of a reed or bone. There is a single row of similar impressions on the interior of the vessel near the rim. The reconstructed diameter of the mouth would be about 15 cm.
Stone: (Fig. 6).
1960:320. Thumb-scaper of whitish flint, of “D” form with flat cross-section. Steeply retouched around the margin on one face which is otherwise covered with buff cortex. Height 3.3 cm.; W. 4.3 cm.; T. 9 mm.

DISCUSSION

This burial-site in Cahircogilmore Demesne presents us with evidence of a variety of funerary practices and a challenge to unravel the cultural elements involved. It follows no known tradition, yet it seems to be an amalgam of several elements. It is not in the main stream of any Neolithic tradition nor is it a typical burial of the Bronze Age; it has some affinities with both and the evidence of the grave-goods seems to anchor it somewhere between the Neolithic and the Bronze Age. It seems logical to begin the investigation with (A) the primary deposit in the stone chamber, then to consider (B) the crouched burial outside the chamber, and finally (C) the few stray finds.

A. The main burial deposit was laid in what has been described as an imitation megalithic tomb,\(^4\) where a large boulder rested at an angle against a cliff face. The people who chose this makeshift tomb must have had some knowledge of megalithic customs, however unimpressive their own efforts were. They seem to have been a mixed community, as will be demonstrated in the course of this discussion, and perhaps had no very strong convictions about tomb-types. Whatever the circumstances, having selected this apparently ready-made stone slab they proceeded to bury their dead there, finding room for no less than fourteen persons in the small chamber. It was a communal burial, but whether all were buried at once or at successive intervals is not clear: the stratification of the contents of the chamber did not reveal this. The large quantity of bones in the grave were mixed with stones and interspersed with grave-goods and there would have been little possibility of preserving separate layers in the grave after any length of time, no matter how they had been deposited originally. Had the burials been put in all at once, the bodies could scarcely have been fitted into such a small space in any sort of orderly fashion; indeed, it would seem probable that the bodies, or at least some of them, may have been in a skeletal condition and more or less disarticulated at the time of burial. Unless there had been some calamity or ritual sacrifice so many deaths would scarcely have occurred at the same time; the corpses, of course, could have been assembled elsewhere over a period of time awaiting formal burial.

On the other hand, the burials might have been added at intervals to the family grave, incidentally causing some disturbance. (The anthropological examination of the bones—see pp. 36ff.—revealed a similarity between the skeletons which might amount to a general kinship). The ritual of inhumation is a departure from that customary in all megalithic groups in Ireland where cremation is standard practice. Inhumation is first found in a few rare single-graves, as that at Site C, Knockadoon,\(^6\) and at Linkardstown,\(^7\) the grave-goods of which

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link them with our present site. Cahirguillumore may be the earliest instance of a group of inhumations in a single grave. How far Beaker influence may be involved remains to be demonstrated. Inhumation only becomes widespread with the use of larger cists by the Food Vessel people in the Bronze Age. The occasional ox-bone found among the burials may be the remains of funerary offerings, and the few small animal bones may be due to small animals using the chamber as a lair.

There was a considerable amount of grave-goods deposited with the dead, as the inventory given above shows. The diversified character of these goods, of pottery, stone, bone and shell, may point to a community of mixed traditions. The pottery was in sherds, scattered among the bones and not sufficient to form a complete vessel in any one case; it could have been deposited as sherds and, perhaps, subsequently damaged or partially disintegrated. The other small objects were recovered mostly from the earth which had accumulated on the floor of the chamber; they could have percolated down through the porous fill.

The sherds represent at least six vessels and almost as many fashions in potting, if not as many distinctive cultural strata. The first major class of Irish Neolithic pottery known simply as Neolithic A is represented both in its plain and decorated forms, and with an offshoot, the Goodland Bowl. The second major class, Coarse Ware, is represented by Rockbarton pottery. This Rockbarton pottery may incorporate something of Carrowkeel Ware, so characteristic of the Irish Passage Graves, and, at the same time, something of Beaker Ware. All these wares, except Carrowkeel Ware, have already been found in association, to some extent, in the Lough Gur area, so that the present close association of such a variety of finds, is acceptable—if somewhat baffling.

Examining the Cahirguillumore finds in more detail it may be seen that in the Neolithic A family, the plain classic ware is represented by a shoulder sherd (Fig. 3, no. 357), a grooved sherd (Fig. 3, no. 353) and several featureless fragments. There is an abundance of this early pottery in the area around Lough Gur and a match for the grooved sherd may be seen on a vessel from Clontygora court cairn. Decorated Neolithic A ware is also present (Fig. 3, group 334-350). The vessel found with the crouched inhumation on Site C, Knockadoon, provides a very good parallel, and the site at Linkardstown produced a similar vessel in circumstances that are relevant to this present instance. The resemblance to some vessels of Peterboro' character, like those from Thames and Mortlake, is striking.

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[8] Following the lead given by R. de Valera in "General Discussion on Neolithic Cultures", PPS, 27(1901), 234 f. Because of the ambiguity of the terminology used he says: "Workers on various aspects of the Irish Neolithic are especially liable to find themselves at cross-purposes." In the same volume Mr. Humphrey C. published his indispensable paper on "Irish Neolithic Pottery: Sequence and Distribution" where every sherd is accounted for, including the Cahirguillumore finds. His terminology is adhered to, as far as possible, in the present report.

The Goodland Bowl\textsuperscript{10} is regarded as being within or on the fringe of the great Neolithic A family. The smaller of the two bowls from Rath, Co. Carlow,\textsuperscript{11} provides a remarkable parallel for the one (fig. 3, no. 321) found within the Cahirguillamore chamber, and it is extremely interesting that another such bowl was found with the burial outside the chamber. These Goodland Bowls have an underlying relationship with Ballyalton or Beacharra bowls, and their simple style of horizontal ornament seems to reflect a relationship with early cordoned Beakers. As implied in the discussion on the Rath example, these latter vessels seem to be involved in the problem of the origin of the Irish Food Vessel. Important additional knowledge on this problem is provided by this Cahirguillamore site. Because of the sophisticated type of cist-grave at Rath it seemed that the bowl in that instance might be parallel to an early stage in the development of Food Vessels. It now seems possible that the Goodland Bowls are earlier and contributed more directly to the evolution of the Food Vessel.

The second major class of Neolithic pottery, called Coarse Ware, is represented at Cahirguillamore by a large barrel-shaped pot (fig. 2). It is by no means classic Coarse Ware but resembles quite closely some Neolithic ware described by Professor Ó Riordáin, as far back as 1954, as "various" and "peculiar" when it occurred on habitation Site D, Knockadoodon, Lough Gur.\textsuperscript{12} Similar ware has since been noted from a neighbouring site at Rockbarton\textsuperscript{13} and also from the wedge-shaped gallery-grave at Ballyedmonduff, Co. Dublin,\textsuperscript{14} and in his paper on Irish Neolithic Pottery Mr. Humphrey Case has isolated a whole category of so-called Rockbarton Pots. He regards them as an offshoot of Lough Gur Coarse Ware and, indeed, he goes so far as to describe the Rockbarton pottery as southern "Beaker-pottery". This vessel from Cahirguillamore is of such good ware and similar profile that it might well merit a relationship with Beaker pottery despite its thickness, while at the same time it resembles the Coarse Ware in the barrel shape with flat rim and flat base. It seems that these Rockbarton pots have an entity and a character of their own which would repay closer scrutiny. Whatever community or culture they represent, they seem to owe something to Beaker pottery as well as to the local Coarse Ware pottery.

It could be that two additional Rockbarton pots are indicated at Cahirguillamore by two sets of sherds (fig. 3, nos. 323-4 and 329-331). These two vessels seem to owe something to Carrowkeel Ware in their style of ornament, if noth-
ing more. The ware itself, the flat rim and the probable size of the vessels, may
be closer to the Rock Barton type of Beaker-pottery but in the present state of
our knowledge of these wares and their ancestry, it would be rash to venture
much farther. The grave we are discussing cannot be said to bear any resem-
bance to a Passage grave or to any orthodox tomb-type. Cahirguillamore is not
within any Passage grave focus, the nearest of such tombs being that at Dun-
tryleague. Inside the Co. Limerick border, near Galbally, but even Duntry-
league is only an outlier. Any Passage grave attributes on this site would be
exceptional. Admittedly, but before dismissing the matter completely another
factor among the grave-goods must be considered: the little group of bone ob-
jects (fig. 5).

The tapered bone pins are known from Grange Stone Circle, from Knockadoon
and elsewhere; they might occur in almost any grave or culture including Pass-
age Graves, but the mushroom-headed ones are an almost exclusive Passage
Grave variety. The two from Cahirguillamore are exceptionally small and have
a more slender stem than those usually found in Passage Graves. They are per-
haps better matched by one from the Neolithic habitation-site of the Ronalds-
way Culture at Ballateer, on the Isle of Man, and by the 'bar-bell' object
from the Phoenix Park burial. Another bone object from the court cairn at
Ballynichol has some resemblance but does not seem to be relevant here.
Perhaps the Cahirguillamore pins provide a link between the Passage Grave
tradition and the Bronze Age Multiple-Cist Cairn, for such the Phoenix Park
site may have been.

Whatever the significance of the pins may be, they lend an added semblance
of credibility to the possibility of a Carrowkeel strain being present in those
shards from the Cahirguillamore grave. That is not to say, of course, that those
vessels may not have stronger affinities with Rock Barton Beaker-pottery or,
indeed, that the answer does not still elude us.

The other finds from the chamber are washer-beads of stone and shell (four
in each material) and two small worked pieces of rock crystal and a flake of
flint or chert (fig. 4). Washer-beads are usually found in a variety of Neolithic
contexts, from the Knockadoon houses to the Creevykeel court cairn. What their
cultural connotation may be is at present not too clear and the same might be
said for the other stone objects.

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13 Mr. H. Case, who has had the enviable advantage of having handled the bulk of Irish
Neolithic pottery, regards it as Carrowkeel Ware though with some misgivings (in his PPS
paper). Another specialist with whom we have had the benefit of discussions, Dr. Michael
Herity, University College, Dublin, is more reluctant to accept any Carrowkeel implications
for these vessels and more inclined to see Pot-Beaker with rstriction there. Even the
added suggestiveness of the mushroom-headed pins he discounts.

14 J. Lynch, JRS.11, 50(1920), 120.

15 G. Bersu, PPS, 15(1947), 160-160, fig. 4:2.

16 J. Petrie, PRA, 111(1849-52), 156-160; W. R. Wilde, Cat. R.I., (1857), 180-3; W. G.
Wood-Martin, Pagan Ireland, (1895), 281, fig. 74. This object was associated with
inhumations and a Stone Vessel from a sub-megalithic tomb in a complex site.

17 A. E. P. Collins, T.J.A.I, 3rd ser. 10(1930), 115-120—the pros and cons are given there.

B. The burial which was made in the little mound of earth which had sealed the mouth of the burial-chamber externally must now be considered. This was a crouched interment laid in the mound without any stone protection and with a small Goodland Vessel near the skull. Associated with this deposit was a fragment of a polished stone axehead. It is possible that, over the years, some of this pile of earth may have been denuded, but there is no doubt that it sealed the entrance to the burial-chamber. The other end of the chamber could not have been used as an entrance at any time. The burials in the chamber, therefore, must have all been deposited before this crouched burial. It is not impossible, however, that the mound is the remains of a larger mound which had been piled up over the primary tomb.

The vessel (fig. 6) which accompanied this inhumation is remarkably like the Goodland Bowl found within the burial-chamber itself. Although it must have been deposited, as demonstrated, subsequent to the last burial in the chamber, the interval of time may have been slight. Certainly, the identity of these two vessels links the burials closely. Because it is a single burial it lends added probability to the possibility of the burials in the chamber being successive single-burials, though, of course, it does not prove this. In itself, this single crouched inhumation could have been in the manner of Beaker-burials, the place of the typical Beaker vessel being taken by the Goodland Bowl.21

The presence of the polished stone axehead (fig. 6) is not exceptional in any assemblage of equipment of this period. Such axeheads are to be found on any habitation place of the period, as, for instance, the Neolithic houses on Knockadoon. Frequently, one may be buried with its owner. They are found in a variety of graves, as, for instance, the sub-megalithic grave at Linkardstown, the Creevykeel court cairn, the Drumanone portal dolmen,22 the Lislea grave with Carrowkeel pottery, the Killcarney grave with Food Vessel.23 Many people would have owned such a necessary, and cheap, utility tool and it must be admitted that it is not a very telling discovery from the point of view of closely dating any culture.

C. Lastly, the stray finds from the site must not be neglected although their casual association is tantalising. How and when these few sherds of a Beaker vessel and the flint thumb-scraper (fig. 6) came to rest on a rock ledge just above the burial-chamber can only be guessed at. Did a mound once cover the tomb extending at least as high as the ledge and, in the course of denudation, these objects remained on the ledge shelf? Were they salvaged and placed there by someone, when rock was being quarried to provide for the building of the avenue or of the medieval village in the vicinity, perhaps? However they came to be on that rock ledge, in all probability it is likely that their owners were no strangers to the users of the graves.

21One recalls that the Cloghnagalla wedge-shaped tomb (I. J. Herring and A. McL. May, J.F.A. 3rd ser. 3(1940), 41-55) yielded Goodland ware and, to complete the triangle, the Lough Gur wedge-shaped tomb (S. P. Ó Riordáin and G. Ó h-Iseadha, JRSAI, 85(1955), 34-50) produced Rock Barton pottery (as well as Beaker and other wares).

22C. Topp, Bulletin of the University of London Institute of Archaeology, 3(1952), 38-40.

Though the actual excavation produced no Beaker as such, all the pottery found is of types shown to be contemporary with Beaker in the neighbouring monuments around Lough Gur and some of it may well incorporate a Beaker element in its composition. The gradual curvature of the neck of the Beaker from the ledge suggests that it is of the type known as Bell Beaker. The ornament on the surface is in character though an exact parallel for these hollow punctuations has not been found among the illustrations of such ware in these islands. It resembles some late Neolithic ware and some Beakers in Scotland and England; for instance, from Muirkirk and Glenluce, and from Huntingdonshire, Berkshire and Yorkshire.

The history of the Beaker immigrants is every day becoming clearer, and the evidence found around Lough Gur shows that there must have been considerable foreign contacts.

Accompanying the Beaker, at least as found, was the flint thumb-scraper, an expertly shaped specimen, a small tool of much practical usefulness to the owner but not of use to us for pin-pointing a culture or a people. Thumb-scrapers may be found on almost any site of the period, domestic or funerary. They are well known around Knockadoon and Grange and from most types of megalithic tomb—Court Cairns, Passage Graves and Wedge-shaped Gallery Graves. If the association with the Beaker at Cahirguillamore was not merely accidental, this could be a version of the disc-knife used by Beaker peoples. But the association, however, remains open to doubt.

* * *

In conclusion, it remains to review in brief the salient features of this unusual burial site with its profuse, perplexing and provocative array of associated articles. We have considered the pseudo-megalithic tomb, as yet without a parallel, the collective inhumations, the crouched burial with some traces of a

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21In this connection it is interesting to note the resemblance to some of the ornament on vessels of the Scandinavian "Pitware Culture" of Middle Neolithic date (c. 2200-1700 B.C.), e.g. vessel no. 324 and p. 103 in P. V. Glob, "Yngre Stenalter", Danske Oldsager, II. Copenhagen 1952. We are indebted to Mr. Etienne Rynne, National Museum of Ireland, for drawing our attention to this possible parallel.

22G. Callander, PSAS, 63(1928-29), 66, fig. 59, no. 5 and comparable examples.

23Sir C. Fox, Antig. Jour., 4(1924), 131-133 and analogies quoted there.

24S. Piggott, in Culture and Environment, Essays in Honour of Sir Cyril Fox (1963), 53-91, gives a recent summary.

The relevance of the Dutch Beaker Ware to the Irish Neolithic-early Bronze Age ceramic problems as exemplified at Cahirguillamore may be recognised by essential affinities such as those illustrated by a pot from a Late Neolithic burial at Veluwe, Holland (see G. Elzinga, "Enkele laat-neolithische grafvondsten van Veluwe, prov. Gelderland", Berichten van den Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek (=Proceedings of the State Service for Archaeological Investigations in the Netherlands), 11(1904), 12, Afb. 70). Here the context, the motif and the arrangement of the ornament provides a remarkable link with the Beaker sherds under discussion. Furthermore, the shape of the vessel, the texture of the ware and the character of the ornament may link up with the more difficult to define Cahirguillamore pottery, that with Coarse Ware/Carrowkeel/Beaker implications (i.e. 1060:325-3 and 1060:329-331).
mound-grave, the accompanying grave-goods including Neolithic A wares, something of Coarse Ware, perhaps of Carrowkeel Ware and more certainly of Beaker, together with some distinctive bone pins and some undistinguished stone, bone and shell objects. Altogether the findings would indicate a mixed community at a time when traditions of the Neolithic were overlapping with Early Bronze Age culture. It is an early, if not indeed the earliest, instance of the rite of inhumation practised collectively. It has strong Beaker Culture affinities and, in the amalgam of pottery, it sets the stage for the evolution of the Food Vessel. The fact that Food Vessel is still absent at Cahirguillamore when it is so well documented in the vicinity is surely significant.

This, then, is an important cross-roads in Irish prehistory, where native and immigrant meet. It gives sharper definition to a nebulous transition phase about the beginning of the second millennium B.C., and a new perspective to such odd sites as Linkardstown and Drimmagh. It is not altogether an isolated or accidental occurrence, but, taken together with its comparable sites, it constitutes a break-through to the Bronze Age.

APPENDIX

ANTHROPOLOGICAL REPORT ON HUMAN REMAINS FOUND AT CAHIRGUILLAMORE. supplied by Dr. David Davies

General Remarks:
From the remains of the skulls, it is indicated that there were at least 14 individuals buried, consisting of

11 adults or adolescents
1 child
2 infants

The adult crania after being reconstructed as far as it was possible from the material present showed that 4 were probably males, and 4 females. It was not possible to determine the sex of the other 3 adults.

Unfortunately the facial bones of all were missing. Nearly all the breaks in the bones were ancient.

The crania of the males were remarkably thin, a typical Neolithic trait, and the muscular attachments of the occipital region for the attendant neck muscles, are more developed than usual.

Two further interesting features regarding these crania are
(1) The large supraorbital ridges, which the male specimens possess. The heads were all well proportioned and show no malformations.
(2) The massive mastoid process of the male skulls.

The crania have the typical bulging occiputs of primitive man, showing where the sutures remained opened for a considerable time, and the frontal sutures closed early.

These people were of short slight build. There is much likeness in the skeletal remains of the individuals, enough to give the impression that they were of the same lineage, or kinship group.

H. E. Kilbride-Jones. JRSAI, 60(1930), 199-220.
On a priori grounds the art of agriculture was not unknown to them. The teeth are ground down in many cases, even the teeth of young persons, possibly by the grit from the quern used for grinding down their corn. Corn chewing itself will cause this to a lesser degree, as seen amongst millers to-day.

See further remarks under Lower Mandibles.

Observations on the Neolithic characteristics of the Cahirguillamore skeletons:

(1) The skulls of these folk reconstructed by me give the typical dolichocephalic neolithic head shape.

(2) This burial appears to be one of the earliest collective unburnt burials yet to be found in Ireland, and is important anthropologically, on account of the large number of individuals represented.

(3) The calculated height of 5 ft. 4 inches from the only femur measurable is typically neolithic too.

(4) Teeth: the grinding down, and how the front teeth meet tip to tip when the skull is reconstructed, see further under Lower Mandibles.

(5) Tibiae: the peculiar process found here, similar in all neolithic skeletons, see further under Tibiae.

(6) The texture of the bones.

CRANIA

Cranium No. 1

Possibly a male, aged about 55 years; pronounced supra orbital ridges.

Maximum length (Glabella) ...
Maximum length (Ophryon) ...
Maximum parietal breadth ...
Interpontal frontal breadth ...
Biasterial breadth ...
Bistephanic breadth ...
Post orbital breadth ...
External bi-mastoid breadth ...
Basilic height ...
Horizontal circumference ...
Auricular bregma arc ...
Forehead arc ...
Frontal chord ...
Frontal arc ...
Parietal chord ...
Parietal arc ...
Occipital chord ...
Occipital arc ...
Face breadth (2) ...
Orbital breadth ...
Orbital breadth ...
Orbital interval ...
Cranial index ...

Thus being Dolichocephalic.

The mastoid process in this skull is massive compared with that of modern man.
Craniunm No. 2

Possibly male specimen; aged person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length (Glabella)</td>
<td>188 mm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length (Ophyron)</td>
<td>185.5 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intemparal frontal breadth</td>
<td>110 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biastral breadth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisteplastic breadth</td>
<td>128 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post orbital breadth</td>
<td>100 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forehead arc</td>
<td>130 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontal chord</td>
<td>105 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontal arc</td>
<td>132 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parietal chord</td>
<td>126 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parietal arc</td>
<td>135 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bregma-Stephanion</td>
<td>77 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbital breadth</td>
<td>39 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbital interval</td>
<td>27 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranial index</td>
<td>73 mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus being Dolichocephalic.

There are signs of the frontal suture from bregma to nasion. This is usually obliterated at an early age, after two halves of the frontal bone have joined.

Craniunm No. 3

Possibly male specimen; circa 40-50 years old.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length (Glabella)</td>
<td>199 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length (Ophyron)</td>
<td>197 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum parietal breadth</td>
<td>155 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intemparal frontal breadth</td>
<td>106 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biastral breadth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisteplastic breadth</td>
<td>140 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post orbital breadth</td>
<td>111.5 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External bi-mastoid breadth</td>
<td>140 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horizontal circumference</td>
<td>558 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forehead arc</td>
<td>120 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontal chord</td>
<td>115 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frontal arc</td>
<td>130 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parietal chord</td>
<td>123 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parietal arc</td>
<td>132 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occipital chord</td>
<td>95 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occipital arc</td>
<td>121 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foramen magnum breadth</td>
<td>31 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opisthion nasion</td>
<td>140 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbital breadth</td>
<td>41 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbital interval</td>
<td>20.5 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranial index</td>
<td>77 mm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus being Dolichocephalic.

Craniunm No. 4

Possibly a female.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length (Glabella)</td>
<td>178 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length (Ophyron)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum parietal breadth</td>
<td>137 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intemparal frontal breadth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Biasterial breadth ... ... 108 mm.
External bi-mastoid breadth ... 134 mm.
Auricular bregma arc ... 314 mm.
Frontal chord ... ... 100 mm.
Frontal arc ... ... 125 mm.
Parietal chord ... 107 mm.
Parietal arc ... 131 mm.
Palate length ... ... 41 mm.
Palate breadth (external) ... ... 58 mm.
Palate breadth (internal) ... ... 36 mm.
Prosthion - Akanthion ... ... 20 mm.
Cranial index ... ... 77 mm.

Cranium No. 5

Sex unknown - person of about 25 years.

Maximum length (Glabella) ... ... 171 mm.
Frontal chord ... ... 101 mm.
Frontal arc ... ... 112 mm.
Parietal chord ... ... 112 mm.
Parietal arc ... ... 131 mm.

This skull is rather thin, compared with the others from the site. An upper mandible goes with this skull.

Cranium No. 6

Probably female - age about 25-30 years.
This skull is remarkably thin. Only one measurement can be taken. The maximum parietal breadth - 149 mm.

Skull No. 7

Possibly a female.
One measurement again only.
Intertemporal frontal breadth - 92 mm.

Besides the skulls discussed above, there are some other skull bones (Skulls No. 9 to 14) which have been partly reconstructed. These can be assigned in most cases to these partly reconstructed skulls, but do not connect owing to missing portions.

LOWER MANDIBLES

There are lower jaws, or portions of lower jaws, of at least 10 individuals, one of these being complete, and one almost complete, one of a child about one year old, and another of a child circa 11 years, and also of a young adult about 18 years of age.

There are the remains of 4 upper jaws not associated with any reconstructed crania.

There are no signs of decay in any of the teeth (very unlike the teeth of the people of the kindred culture of Windmill Hill in Wilts - whose teeth were full of caries).

The third molar when present is well developed. This is a primitive feature of early man. In the typical Neolithic man, the front incisors touch tip to tip, not as in modern men, where the lower jaw incisors touch the crowns of the upper only.

UPPER MANDIBLES

One of these will be found in association with cranium No. 5. However the ones which are separate are as follows:
1. Consisting of right side of jaw and fragment of left, 6 teeth in main part, and 1 in fragment. These teeth are partly ground down.
2. Left side of jaw with 5 teeth, 1 being a molar, 2 premolars, 1 canine and 1 incisor.
3) Left side of jaw, teeth present 1 canine and 1 premolar.

4) One fragment with molar attached, with five associated teeth.

5) Nearly complete, palate of aged individual, no teeth. Probably belonging to Skull No. 2.

17 loose teeth in association.

Lower Mandible No. 1

This jaw belongs to skull No. 1. 5 teeth represented, ground down. The jaw is widely splayed with a fine mental eminence, which is clefted.

The sigmoid notch is very large and wide.

Height of Ramus .... 60 mm.
Width of Ramus .... 30 mm.
Height of Symphysis .... 31 mm.

Lower Mandible No. 2

Widely splayed, the chin more pointed than No. 1, and not cleft. Probably jaw of very old woman, as the dental cavities in many cases have closed over. 4 teeth is situ.

Height of Ramus .... 64 mm.
Width of Ramus .... 37 mm.
Mandible biongional width .... 107 mm.
Height of Symphysis .... 30.5 mm.

Lower Mandible No. 3

Represented by right side and a small portion of left, 6 teeth intact rather high but all ground down. This is a jaw of a woman of 40-50 rather delicately made, with fine mental eminence.

Height of Ramus .... 52 mm.

Jaw No. 4

Represented by left side of mandible, and the Ramus of the right. Mandible of young person. 6 teeth intact, wisdom tooth (3rd molar) just emerging, no signs of decay or grinding down except on first molar, cusps can be seen very clearly, possibly that of male of 16-18 years of age.

Height of Ramus .... 52 mm.
Width of Ramus .... 44 mm.

Jaw No. 5

Consists mainly of mental eminence which is very fine, and one tooth showing a marked case of grinding down. Probably jaw of female.

Height of Symphysis .... 31.5 mm.

Jaw No. 6

Consists of complete left side of mandible very squared at the mental eminence. 7 teeth intact, including the four front teeth, fine mental eminence, jaw probably of male about 12-14 years old. Third molar just peeping through.

Part of right ramus belonging to this jaw also present.

Height of Ramus .... 51 mm.
Width of Ramus .... 41 mm.
Height of Symphysis .... 30 mm.
Jaw No. 7

Only the mental eminence, mainly of the right side, probably lower mandible of skull No. 2; teeth most irregular.

Height of Symphysis 25 mm.

Jaw No. 8

Represented by only part of the mental eminence; pointed chin. No teeth but probably jaw of a young woman. No measurements could be carried out upon this fragment.

Jaw No. 9

Left side of jaw of very young child, very fragile. No teeth. No measurements could be carried out on this fragment.

Jaw No. 10

Part of right side of mandible with 3 teeth. 1 premolar, 2 molars one submerged and just appearing probably belonging to that of a child of 8 or 9. Made of very firm bone. The teeth in a child so young show no signs of grinding down or decay. No measurements could be carried out on this fragment.

HUMERI

M.1. Complete and measures 340.5 mm.
M.2. Almost complete and measures 326 mm.
M.2. is similar to M.1 but it is thinner and more weathered. 24 minor pieces made from as many as 3 fragments.

ULNAE

Only one complete which measured 79.5 mm.
2 others almost complete. Altogether with the one mentioned above there are 28 pieces of Ulnae made up in some cases from 4 different fragments.

TIBAE

None absolutely complete but 2 could be measured; they are

M.I 311 mm. (to flat surface of head)
M.II 340 mm. (to top of spine)

Besides these two measured there are 27 other pieces represented. The interesting feature about these Tibae is that they have the flattered process similar to those found in Kilgreany Man, in itself a rather primitive feature generally associated with Cromagnon man and even earlier skeletons.

It is interesting to note further where the Tibae are concerned that they are long for the length of the leg. They are also Platynemid. These are typical neolithic features.

FIBULAE

Almost complete length actual 351 mm.
Approximate length of whole 360 mm.
Number of fragments plus fibulae measured 48 mm.
In some cases made up of 4 separate pieces.

FEMORA

Most of those represented are imperfect, however one can be measured which is 408 mm., therefore the height of the individual would be approximately 1638 mm. = 5 ft. 4 inches.
There are a pair of femora in addition to the above, which are rather curved. There are 47 pieces of femora, made up in some cases of 4 fragments. The most interesting feature is that they show outstandingly how the bone changes in texture when weathered; in some cases it is difficult to believe that some fragments connect until they fit with each other. This is most marked in the femora. They are also pilastered, a typical Neolithic feature.

LEFT CLAVICLES

One complete, which measured 148 mm. 6 nearly complete and 11 fragments represented.

RADII

One complete which measures 255 mm., 4 nearly complete, the whole comprising some 43 pieces made up in some cases of 4 different fragments.

It will be noted that there was a complete or nearly complete specimen of each of the long bones. This is most important from an anthropological standpoint.

Considering the age of the bones, they are in a fairly good state of preservation.

Besides the long bones mentioned here, there are the remains of several scapulae, ribs, pelvis bones and hand and foot bones; many of which are in a fragmentary state.

Acknowledgments

The author's thanks are due in particular to Miss Ellen Prendergast, National Museum of Ireland, for her constant help throughout the paper and, more especially, in connection with the general discussion and assessment of the pottery and other finds.

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Miss G. Roche, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland;
Miss M. J. P. Scannell, Natural History Division, National Museum of Ireland;
Professor J. C. Brindley, Department of Geology, University College, Dublin;
Miss Rhoda Kavanagh, Department of Archaeology, University College, Dublin;
Dr. Michael Herity, Department of Archaeology, University College, Dublin.