Newgrange – a view from the platform

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Introduction

It was in *Antiquity* that the late M.J. O'Kelly (1979) first presented a detailed discussion of the restoration of Newgrange. Debate on this issue has focused on the decision by the Office of Public Works to build a reinforced concrete retaining wall inside the kerb to keep the restored material in place, using mortar and metal pins to affix quartz and granite to the face of the concrete over the kerb in the vicinity of the entrance. This was intended to present what O'Kelly believed would have been the original drum-shaped mound and the dry-built appearance of the quartz and granite wall (1979: 209: Figure 1).

In a recent critical evaluation of O'Kelly's restoration, Palle Eriksen (2004) argues that the monument may have been built in a number of stages, that the mound would have been dome-shaped and hence there never was a vertical revetment wall placed on top of the kerb. In the vicinity of the entrance, rather than a vertical wall composed of quartz and granite standing on the kerb, it may have been either laid on the face of a less steeply sloping mound or as a deposit on the ground in front of the monument.

By way of complementing Eriksen's remarks this contribution places the reconstruction work in a wider context, offers a different interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence and the role of the quartz/granite layer at Newgrange and comments on the consequences of the quartz wall for archaeological and public interpretation of Newgrange. The use of the term 'passage tomb' rather than 'passage grave' has become standard in Ireland (see de Valera & Ó Nualláin 1972: xiii) and this is used here. While not the focus of this debate the discussion below is based on a recognition of the range and depth of symbolic value that quartz would have held for people in the Neolithic (e.g. Cooney 2000a: 176-8).

Restoring ancient monuments

Whatever view one takes of the reconstruction of Newgrange by O'Kelly, it should be seen as the culmination of an interest in experimental archaeology that was a hallmark of his archaeological career. This is seen for example in his work demonstrating by experiment the effectiveness of hot stone technology both in heating water to boil meat and in roasting meat at prehistoric burnt mounds or *fulacht fiadha* (O'Kelly 1954; Coles 1979: 129-30). His interest in restoration can also be traced to his early training in engineering and architecture (Evans 1981: xxvi). It should come as no surprise then that he turned to an engineering colleague, J. Fogarty, to provide the expertise in the behaviour of mounded loose materials for the argument that the revetment wall at Newgrange would have been about 3m in height from the top of the kerb on which it rested and that it had an inward batter of

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30cm (O'Kelly 1979: 207; see also O'Kelly & Fogarty 1981). To test this idea, a full-size experiment was carried out which involved the excavation of a 2m wide trench out from the kerb. A revetment was then constructed on top of the kerb from the larger pieces of quartz and granite that had been uncovered in the excavation as the basal layer above topsoil stripped of its sod (O'Kelly 1979: 208; O'Kelly 1982: 73). This interest in experimental work can also be seen in his account of the discovery of the alignment of Newgrange on sunrise at the mid-winter solstice (O'Kelly 1982: 123-5).

The excavation at Newgrange was undertaken with the specific remit of informing a programme of conservation and restoration by the Office of Public Works (O'Kelly 1982: 10-11). Although not explicitly stated in such terms, O'Kelly's work at Newgrange can also be seen as reflecting a belief in the value of an empirical, processual approach; hypothesis testing followed by re-evaluation. That O'Kelly was aware of the resonance between his approach and contemporary developments in archaeological theory is captured by his use of the phrase the 'new archaeology' of Newgrange (O'Kelly 1982: 73) in referring to the restoration of the mound as drum-like in shape.

In the terms in which he used to describe the apparent collapse of the quartz wall and the mound layers behind it relatively soon after its original construction, O'Kelly was also very much in tune with the popularity of catastrophe theory (e.g. Renfrew 1979) at the time he was writing his account of the monument. Specifically O'Kelly (1982: 73) suggested that the slide of the cairn material once the quartz/granite had been removed might be attributed to freeze-thaw action or to an earth tremor (and one had occurred in south-west Scotland and north-east Ireland in 1979). Perhaps not surprisingly this link to a natural catastrophe has come to be discussed in the literature as a possible cause of the collapse of the quartz/granite revetment itself (e.g. Simpson 1988: 35; Meighan *et al.* 2002: 33). What is clear is that only a synchronous collapse of the whole quartz/granite revetment could have produced the close similarity of the shape and appearance of the quartz/granite layer in the sectional profiles through the stratification outside the kerb (O'Kelly 1982: 72). The extensive sod stripping to provide turfs for the passage tomb mounds was also seen as precipitating a socio-economic decline which brought an end to the society which had built Newgrange (O'Kelly 1982: 128, 145, 1983: 52). Subsequent activity at Newgrange during the Beaker period was discussed in terms of a very different social context. The people were described as having a lower standard of living with food production concentrated chiefly on cattle and pig herding (van Wijngaarden-Bakker 1986). The extravagance of the construction of the tomb/house for the dead had wrecked the economy.

After the wall

It is worthwhile emphasising just how much subsequent research in the Boyne Valley now influences the way we think about Newgrange. Sweetman's (1985) work at the site demonstrated that the arc of pits discovered by O'Kelly (1983: 16-21) formed part of a large circular timber/pit enclosure which can be seen as part of the henge tradition (see Figures 1 and 2). The strength of this tradition in the Boyne Valley was demonstrated by Stout (1991) who has recently published a detailed study of the long-term development of the cultural landscape of Brú na Bóinne (2002). Further excavation at Newgrange (Lynch 1989, 1990)



Figure 1. View of the reconstructed façade of Newgrange from the south, with the Great Stone Circle and the timber/pit circle (Photographic Unit, National Monuments Section, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government).

revealed more of the pre-cairn sod mound seen in O'Kelly's north cutting (1982: 90-1) and demonstrated that the quartz/granite layer was present outside K79, giving a length of over 100m to the quartz/granite layer (from K21 to K79). Eogan (1991) published a review of the sequence of settlement in the Boyne Valley, set in cultural historical terms. In the context of understanding later Neolithic activity this has been superseded by work at Knowth which demonstrated the presence of a Grooved Ware phase (Eogan & Roche 1997, 1999). This included the construction of a small timber circle just to the south of, and on a similar orientation to, the entrance to the eastern tomb under the main passage tomb mound. A related small timber structure was also built to the west of Newgrange (Sweetman 1987). It seems that in Brú na Bóinne Grooved Ware may have been in use from 2800 BC with Beaker being present from around 2500 BC (Grogan 1991, 1997). This makes the concept of any marked break between the passage tomb phase and Beaker period activity much harder to sustain.

In considering the potential of the Boyne Valley in economic terms Cooney (1991) suggested that there was no reason to assume that there was any significant change in soil or environmental conditions in the period between the passage tomb phase and the Early Bronze Age (see also Cooney 2000a: 29-31, 48-50). Mount (1994) has argued strongly that the Late Neolithic/Beaker faunal assemblage from Newgrange has to be seen as primarily the result of deliberate, ceremonial patterns of consumption and deposition. Eogan and

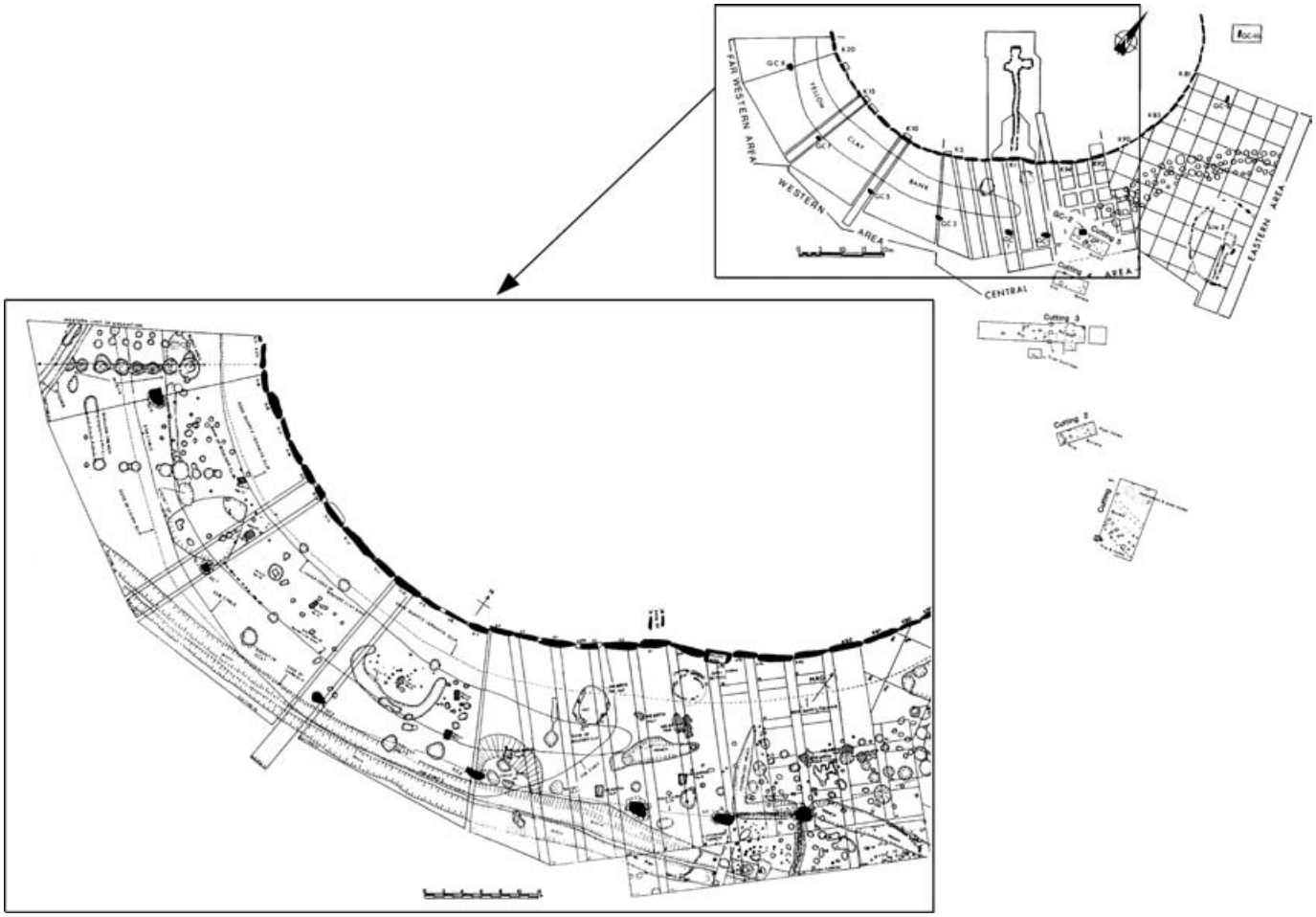


Figure 2. Plan of excavated areas at Newgrange 1962-84 with detail of central and western area of O'Kelly's excavation (after O'Kelly 1983; Sweetman 1985; Mount 1994).

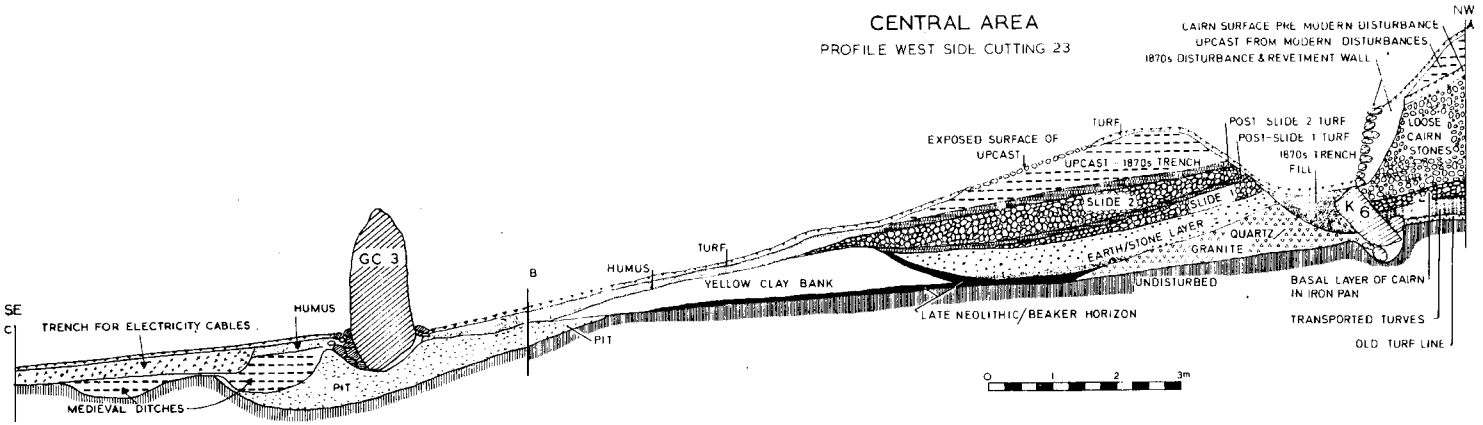


Figure 3. Section showing stratigraphic sequence from the Newgrange mound at kerbstone 6 out to and beyond GC3 of the Great Stone Circle (after O'Kelly 1983: fig. 9).

Debate

Roche's work at Knowth has presented a series of phases of activity stretching from the early Neolithic to the middle of the third millennium BC (1997: fig. 1). Work at Knowth has also shown that over the course of this period there was an active re-working of earlier material and spatial patterns in the construction of monuments (e.g. Eogan 1998). This idea of the active use of the past and material has been explored more widely for the Boyne Valley (e.g. Bradley 1998a: 101-15; Cooney 2000a: 153-8, 2000b).

Bradley (1998b: 3-6) has also pointed to the dilemma of interpreting Newgrange in this context, in that as a result of Sweetman's work there are now two radically different stratigraphic sequences proposed for the monumental phases there (Figures 2 and 3). O'Kelly argued that the setting of monoliths around the tomb (the Great Stone Circle) was erected before the cairn had collapsed and that it was contemporary with or earlier than the cairn (O'Kelly 1982: 82). Sweetman's work indicated that one of the monoliths, and by extension the entire feature, was erected later than the timber/pit circle enclosure and therefore post-dates the passage tomb (Sweetman 1985). Accepting and leading on from the difficulties these contradictory views pose for interpreting events at Newgrange, Bradley (1998a: 101) suggested that in understanding the development of later Neolithic monumentality in Britain and Ireland that we might usefully think not so much in terms of 'types' of monuments but more in terms of varying interpretations of a circular archetype. Generally this involved a change from the enclosed space of a tomb to the creation of open arenas, but monumental elements continued to be used in varied ways. Hence in his discussion of the project investigating the Clava Cairns in north-east Scotland Bradley (2000: 211-32) emphasises how the architectural elements involved there; passage tombs, platforms and circles continued to be constructed and utilised in innovative ways well into the Early Bronze Age.

Wall or platform?

The need to think both in terms of a chronological sequence and the frameworks of belief and meaning that were brought into material form through the construction and re-working of monuments is a useful basis on which to come back to the specific issue of the quartz/granite revetment at Newgrange. Firstly, there has been important work done on the sourcing of the material. Mitchell (1992: 129) demonstrated that the quartz at Newgrange and Knowth came from the Wicklow Mountains, 50km to the south, as shown by the occurrence of distinctive large crystals of muscovite in the quartz (see also Meighan *et al.* 2003 for further fieldwork and preliminary oxygen isotope data). The other stone in the wall at Newgrange is predominantly made up of rounded cobbles of granite and granodiorite with smaller amounts of similarly shaped gabbro cobbles. These originally came from the Mourne/Carlingford igneous complex to the north and their rounded shape suggested that they would have been procured from a secondary, glacial deposit. Mitchell (1992: 135, 145) suggested that a very likely source was the northern shores of Dundalk Bay, about 40km north of Newgrange. These findings were confirmed by Meighan *et al.* (2002) who showed that the granodiorite cobbles were in fact the most prominent. Very recent work on the sourcing of the kerbstones at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth indicates that the source of the greywhacke, the major source used, was probably Clogherhead on the coast to the north-east of the Boyne Valley (Eogan, Phillips & Corcoran pers. comm.). The observation

during this work by the late Adrian Phillips that many of the granite and granodiorite cobbles at Newgrange had abraded ends backs up Mitchell's (1992: 136) comment that one of the granite cobbles that he examined had a band of roughness and had probably been used for pounding. Hence it would seem that as well as being decorative these cobbles were involved in the working of stone and the construction of the monument (Cooney 2004: 199).

In relation to whether the quartz and the granitic cobbles (the term quartz/granite is retained for ease of discussion) ever stood as a wall there are a number of relevant points to be raised. Firstly, in terms of sheer quantity the amount of quartz revealed at Newgrange greatly exceeds that found at Knowth or Loughcrew, the two sites discussed for comparison by Eriksen (2004). These and other sites suggest the use of quartz both as the fronting of the cairn and deposits in front of the tomb. At Knowth while the character of the face of the main mound cairn cannot be definitively interpreted as it was removed by the cutting of a deep ditch inside the kerb early in the first millennium AD, the profile of the mound layers suggest that it sloped gradually inwards from the top of the kerb (Eogan 1986: 45). In the recessed areas in front of both the eastern and western tombs here there were a number of features, including stone settings and standing stones. A spread dominated by quartz, granite, granodiorite and banded siltstones lay either directly over the old ground surface or over the settings. Eogan (1986: 48, 65) suggested that the spreads could either have been the result of cairn slippage, indicating a concentration of quartz on the mound in the vicinity of the tombs, or were deliberately laid features. There was no spread material under the fallen standing stone in front of the western tomb and the standing stone in front of the eastern tomb had fallen after some of the spread was in place, but before it had all accumulated (Eogan 1986: 48, 65). The latter stratigraphical detail could been seen as supporting the idea of the creation of a deliberate feature over the earlier spreads as part of a late phase of passage tomb related activity. From Conwell's (1873: 29) description, it does appear that at Loughcrew Cairn T there was a layer of quartz over 1m in height forming the lowest part of the surface of the conical cairn inside the kerb. But quartz was also found within two small cairns outside the entrance to Cairn T (Rotherham 1895: 311).

Excavation of the passage tomb at Knockroe, Co. Kilkenny (O'Sullivan 1993, 1996) adds important evidence to the debate. Here a cairn about 20m in diameter contains an eastern and western tomb structure. The cairn is constructed on a slope and the southern half of it was built on a levelling deposit of glacial till which extended beyond the edge of the cairn as a platform. Particularly in front of the eastern tomb there was a considerable quantity of quartz. O'Sullivan (1993: 12-4) states that there is no evidence that the quartz had been intentionally placed on the platform. Most of it appears to have come from above, as the result of cairn collapse. Comparing the Knockroe evidence specifically to O'Kelly's reconstruction at Newgrange, O'Sullivan (1993: 13) suggested that at Knockroe there had not been a single major collapse of the quartz but an initial collapse followed by further slippages. While poor preservation made it impossible to reconstruct the angle of the face of the Knockroe cairn, O'Sullivan (1993: 13) points out the stratigraphic issue of whether collapse of a gradually sloping cairn would consistently produce the occurrence of the quartz at the base of collapse as at the Knockroe, Knowth and Newgrange entrances.

Support for the idea of a drum-shaped mound that O'Kelly saw as the appropriate reconstruction for Newgrange comes from a number of other, admittedly significantly smaller cairns. For example, Desmond (2000) discussed the two-tiered kerbed cairn, 17m in diameter, that possibly covers a passage tomb on the summit of Mullyash mountain, Co. Monaghan. The two tiers are formed by vertical drystone walling. Jones (2004: 78) has recently drawn attention to the vertical facing of a large cairn on the western summit of Turlough Hill on the Burren in Co. Clare and suggested that it may be related to the large enclosure and other features on the summit of the hill (see Cooney 2002).

The sequence at Newgrange: an alternative view

So, we are left with support both for the idea of quartz as a cairn or mound facing as well as a deliberately placed feature on the ground in the vicinity of tomb entrances. The issue of whether there could have been a near vertical revetment is still a more contentious point. It does seem unlikely that a near vertical drystone wall, with the weight of a very large mound behind it would have stayed in place for any length of time before the settling of the mound started to dislodge it (e.g. Meighan *et al.* 2002: 34). Bradley (1998a: 104) has argued that we may be wrong to think about this feature as a revetment from the point of view of structural stability. Could it have been built primarily for short-term display purposes, an effect designed for display, with the knowledge that it would soon collapse? Citing the particular Orcadian parallels of Quoyness, Sanday (Childe 1952) and Pierowall Quarry, Westray (Sharples 1984), Simpson (1988: 35) suggested that the quartz was deliberately taken off the cairn, to create a platform as part of the slighting of the monument and its enclosure, ultimately by the ring of standing stones. Now, whether it originated as a collapse or was deliberately created as a platform, I would like to argue that it was in this latter form that we can be most definite about the role of the quartz and the graniodiorite and granite cobbles in the sequence of events at Newgrange.

In this context it is important to observe that the translation of the excavated evidence into the reconstruction (Figure 1) has lost the strong sense that O'Kelly conveyed (1982: 70-1) that the quartz/granite was thickest and most extensive in the vicinity of the tomb entrance, decreasing to the east and west along an area over 100m in length. The reconstruction has a similar appearance right along the façade. However, the original clear sense of a focus on the tomb entrance provides an important parallel with Knowth and Knockroe. The positioning of the quartz/granite layer right up against the base of K81, under the slight overhang of the upper part of the outer face of this orthostat (O'Kelly 1983: fig. 5) leads support to the idea that at least some of the quartz was deliberately placed as a platform. This is further supported by the regularity of the width of the quartz/granite layer, between 4-5m (see O'Kelly 1983: figs 4, 8, 10 and 12). What the plans of the excavated area (Figure 2) also demonstrate is that the only features sealed by this layer are directly associated with activities related to the use of the passage tomb.

So, when was the quartz/granite layer first in place? At least one of the kerbstones had collapsed before the quartz accumulated on the ground (K96; see O'Kelly 1982: 68, fig. 6c). The earliest phase of the post-passage tomb late Neolithic activity is the timber/pit circle dating to *c*. 2800 BC. Where this comes closest to the perimeter of the passage tomb

mound it is located to respect the edge of the quartz/granite material (see O'Kelly 1983: fig. 4), indicating that this was already in place as a layer or platform at this time. Bergh (1995: 90-3) argued that at Maeve's Cairn, Knocknarea, Co. Sligo a bank enclosing the cairn which is 60m in diameter was part of the primary use and activity at this site. He discussed other examples where passage tombs have encircling banks, as at Knocknarea 1 and Barclodiad y Gawres, Anglesey (Powell & Daniel 1956; Bergh 1995: 87-9). Hence, rather than seeing banks or platforms as relating to a switch in emphasis from a focus on the interior in the passage tomb tradition to the focus on the exterior in the henge/stone circle tradition, it may be more appropriate to see these features emerging in the course of the development and growing complexity of the passage tomb tradition (Bergh 1995: 156; Bradley 1998a: 114).

But these exterior features also provide a direct link with the late Neolithic enclosures. At Newgrange after the creation of the timber/pit circle the next phase of late Neolithic activity involved the construction of a series of hearths and some associated structures. Interpretation of these has involved both occupation (Cooney & Grogan 1994: 80-1) and more ceremonial use (Bradley 1998a: 110). What is clear (*contra* Bradley's interpretation 1998a: 110, fig. 35) is that the features were built outside the extent of the quartz/granite layer, on relatively flat ground and were clearly covered by and predate a bank of yellow clay running to the west of the tomb entrance (see discussion in O'Kelly 1983: 29, 35-9; see Figure 2). More significantly in relation to the quartz/granite layer it would seem that this bank of yellow clay, averaging 5.5m in width and 60cm in maximum height (O'Kelly 1982: 78), was constructed to run parallel and about 2-2.5m outside the outer edge of the quartz/granite platform/layer, echoing this earlier feature along the façade of the tomb west of the entrance. The construction of the bank also resonates with the result of the placement of the quartz/granite layer in sealing what lay beneath it. As O'Kelly (1983: 39) observed, it looked like the yellow clay bank had been deliberately built to cover earlier features such as the hearths.

The issue of the date of the stone circle is still problematic because of the differences in stratigraphic interpretation provided by O'Kelly and Sweetman, but the latter's view of the stone circle being the latest feature on the site corresponds with the general sequence in Ireland and Britain. If this latter view is correct, then we can see the raising of the monoliths as a third act of enclosure. What is clear from the profiles is that while some mound material had fallen before the bank was in place, the main slippage of the mound had to have taken place *after* the construction of the yellow clay bank (see for example O'Kelly 1982: fig. 10; O'Kelly 1983: fig. 9, reproduced here as Figure 3). This observation has two important consequences. Firstly, it now becomes possible to reconcile O'Kelly's (1982: 82) observation that the monoliths were erected before the cairn had collapsed with the placement of the monoliths late in the sequence at Newgrange. Secondly, the significant time separation between the formation of the quartz/granite layer and the main mound slippage makes it much more likely that the quartz and other material was deliberately taken off the face of the mound or alternatively specifically created as a platform flanking the tomb entrance, long before the major episodes of cairn collapse.

With the placement of the monoliths there was a continuation in the focus on the passage tomb mound and specifically the entrance area. This is suggested by the shadow-casting

effect at the winter solstice, whereby the monolith (GC1) directly in front of the entrance casts a shadow which passes down through the triple spiral carving on the decorated entrance kerbstone (K1) (Prendergast 1991). What I would suggest then is that there is a sequence of enclosing acts which begins with and is sparked off by the quartz/granite layer. To argue whether the quartz/granite in this form is a passage tomb or a post-passage tomb feature is to miss the point that it is critical to a continuing sequence of enclosing actions emphasising the entrance area of Newgrange. Its contents, the quartz, granodiorite and granite, take us back to the construction of the monument. The ripples of later enclosure at its outer edge take us forward through the late Neolithic sequence of activity at the site. The quartz would have caught and reflected the sun and the moon in a variety of visual effects (Gibson 2004: 156) emphasising the continuing symbolic power and place of this area as an entrance to another world.

The wall and the present

If the sequence suggested above is correct then the quartz/granite layer had a long-term significance and role as a platform or enclosing bank in the sequence of activity at Newgrange stretching over more than 300 years. If it ever had been a wall or facing on the mound, that role would have been much shorter in term and was brought to an end by deliberate or natural destruction. Thinking about the history of the wall since its reconstruction in the 1970s, it started as a particular, personal interpretation of how the monument looked. Over the last thirty years it has become central to the way people think of Newgrange and interpret it, in turn very strongly influencing perceptions and understanding of the Neolithic period in Ireland.

The striking character of the reconstruction means that it stands out in photographs, it has become iconic in itself. The presentation of the construction and use of the tomb in the Brú na Bóinne visitor centre features the wall as representing the definite form of the front of the monument during its use. Artistic visions of Newgrange also feature the quartz façade as an original feature of the monument (Stout 2002: 190-205) and it is similarly rendered as a given in fictional accounts (e.g. Dunne 2005: 271, 275). It has become the exterior counter-part of the lighting up of the interior at mid-winter that has come to be a central part of what the celebration of Christmas and mid-winter is in modern Ireland (e.g. Battersby 2002). The wider international profile of the reconstruction can be seen in Newgrange's status as one of the premier tourist attractions in Ireland and the establishment of Brú na Bóinne as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1993 (DOELG 2002), with in excess of 200 000 visitors per year to the visitor centre. This illustrates the dilemma that such a definitive reconstruction poses in the light of the possibility of re-interpretation (for relevant discussion see Ronayne 2001; Harvey 2005). Because of the way in which the quartz façade has become central to public perception of the monument, it is now seen as an integral part of the monument (e.g. Greenwood *et al.* 2003: 200-1). Any redesign would be likely to prove extremely controversial. After all, while the façade itself is described as controversial, the reconstruction is also often seen as a stunning success (e.g. Caulfield 1993: 57). The wall seems likely to stand for far longer into the future than it ever did in the past, if it ever did.

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The rolling stones of Newgrange

Palle Eriksen*

In his paper 'Newgrange – a view from the platform' Gabriel Cooney accepts that the quartz/granite layer at Newgrange was never part of a wall; instead it constituted a structure – a platform – placed on the ground. This new view was first put forward by Flemming Kaul in 1995 and developed in 2004, in a paper that denounced the hideous white wall of O'Kelly's reconstruction (Eriksen 2004). But if there was no wall, one has to explain the astonishing masses of mound-fill at Newgrange. The mound-fill, mainly consisting of head-size stones, covered and hid the passage-grave and its kerbstones until the discovery of the passage-grave in 1699. In front of the kerbstones there was – before Michael O'Kelly's excavation – a lot of 'loose stones', which he explained as slip from the mound. Put them back, and you have an enormous mound, the fill of which, according to O'Kelly, can only be kept in place by an enormous wall. Gabriel Cooney does not follow this line. Instead he complements and develops the idea of the platform and its continued use through the Neolithic and the Beaker period. But the platform and the mound belong to the same structure: Newgrange. If there was never a retaining wall the great mass of stones from the mound fill which covered the kerbstones and the platform of quartz/granite are an enigma.

The only reasonable explanation is that Newgrange is a multi-period mound, and the indications for this are strong (Eriksen 2004). If you study the long section of O'Kelly's excavation-trench 10m east of the entrance (O'Kelly 1982: 69), you can distinguish four to five possible phases with three corresponding vegetation layers (Eriksen 2004: Fig. 11). In short, there was first a passage-tomb, which may have expanded once or twice, ending up with the quartz/granite layer in front of it. Later in prehistory – perhaps in the Beaker period – the mound with the passage tomb and the quartz/granite layer in front of it was incorporated and hidden by a new mound. The platform dealt with by Gabriel Cooney moved outwards following the new limit of the mound. You could no longer see the quartz-granite platform. The entrance to the passage-grave became and remained closed and hidden until three hundred years ago, and therefore O'Kelly to his great surprise did not find artefacts in the chamber or passage later in date than the first use of the passage-grave (O'Kelly 1982: 126).

When reading the structure of cairns, i.e. mounds with a filling of stones, like Newgrange, there is always a supposition of collapse and a predilection for rolling stones. In fact, if the mound is proportionate, the stones did not roll or slide under normal circumstances, because they locked each other so they were kept in place. This is shown by more than 5000 years old 'experimentations' at the undisturbed Loughcrew cairn T and at the unspoiled parts of Dowth, though its side is very steep. The cairn-stones still lie in situ and have not slid down and covered the kerbstones.

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The point is that the so-called 'slip' supposed to deposit stones in front of the kerbstones at Newgrange, is actually mound-fill *in situ* from a time in prehistory when Newgrange was still in use, but its passage-tomb was no longer visible. The shape of the mound was dramatically altered when the new monument builders provided it with at flat top – a mini Irish Silbury Hill. They had, like their predecessors, their own Newgrange, as we have ours today – unfortunately!

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