

Carlow Dolmens



Sunrise at Imbolg and Samhain. Ballynasillog, Co Carlow
Photography by: Roger Jones

Joseph.M.Feeley.
Dunleckney,
Bagenalstown,
Co Carlow.

2nd Edition 2/05

Carlow Dolmens

Introduction;

Our interest in this topic began in 1995 when I began to do research on possible patterns to the siting of dolmens in Co Carlow and neighbouring counties. This research conducted from maps ended in failure.

During the summer of 1996 my good friend and partner in crime Roger Jones suggested looking for solar alignments. We checked out all known dolmens in sight of the Mount Leinster Range . The only site to have both a clear view of the mountain range and with the proper alignment angle is at Ballynasillog just north of Borris. Establishing that it monitored two important solar events in early Spring and late Autumn meant getting up in the dark for nearly two years to check this out fully. One reason why it took so long was that Roger wanted to get the perfect photo of the sun rising in the Sculloge Gap. Glad to say that he eventually got his picture.

The second phase began last September when I was asked by your chairman to give this lecture. Such a request concentrated my mind wonderfully and I returned to my original quest of finding a pattern in the siting of dolmens.

The *Inventory of Archaeological Sites in County Carlow* published by the OPW was our main reference source.

In addition the *Discovery Series Maps* (published by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland) and the Geological Survey maps were regularly consulted.

Our research is still at a very early stage and as far as the author is aware is largely original in its treatment. Archaeological textbooks and journals have approached the topic in a traditional 'above ground' manner, whereas our approach has been to investigate the 'below ground' and hidden aspects as well.

Megaliths may be regarded as 'just a pile of old rocks in a field' or at the other extreme; places of power and ancient magic. Which is true I leave to my audience / readers to decide

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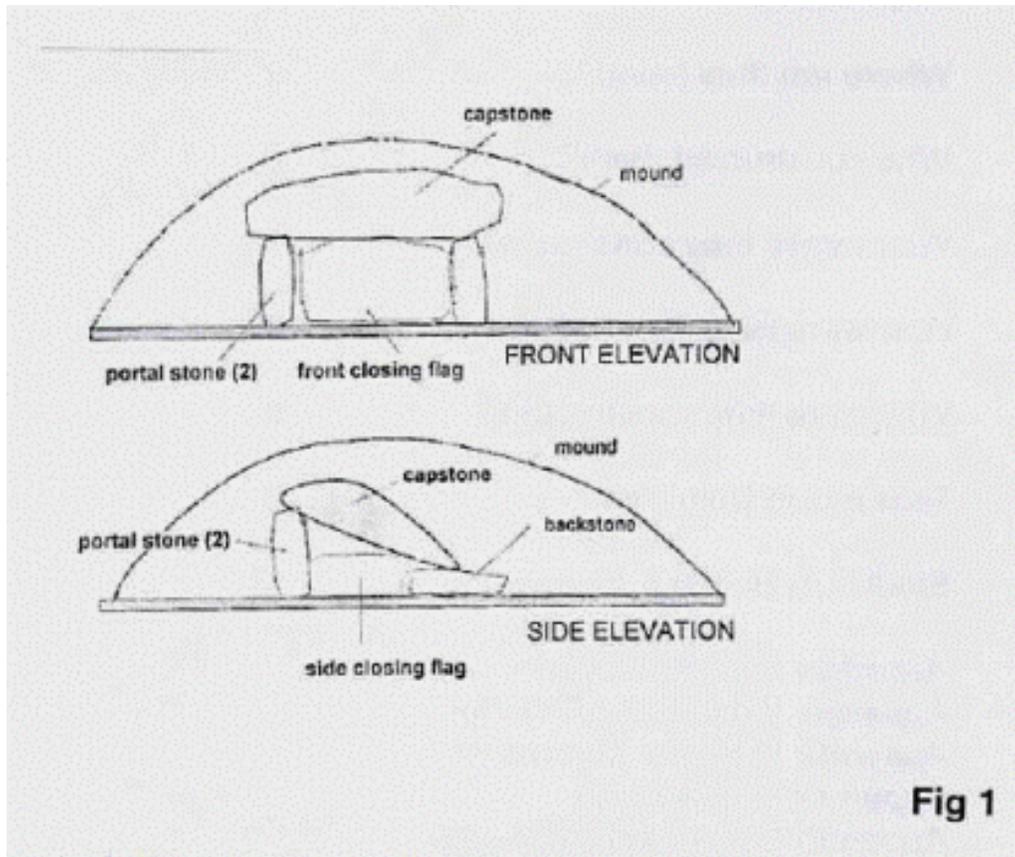
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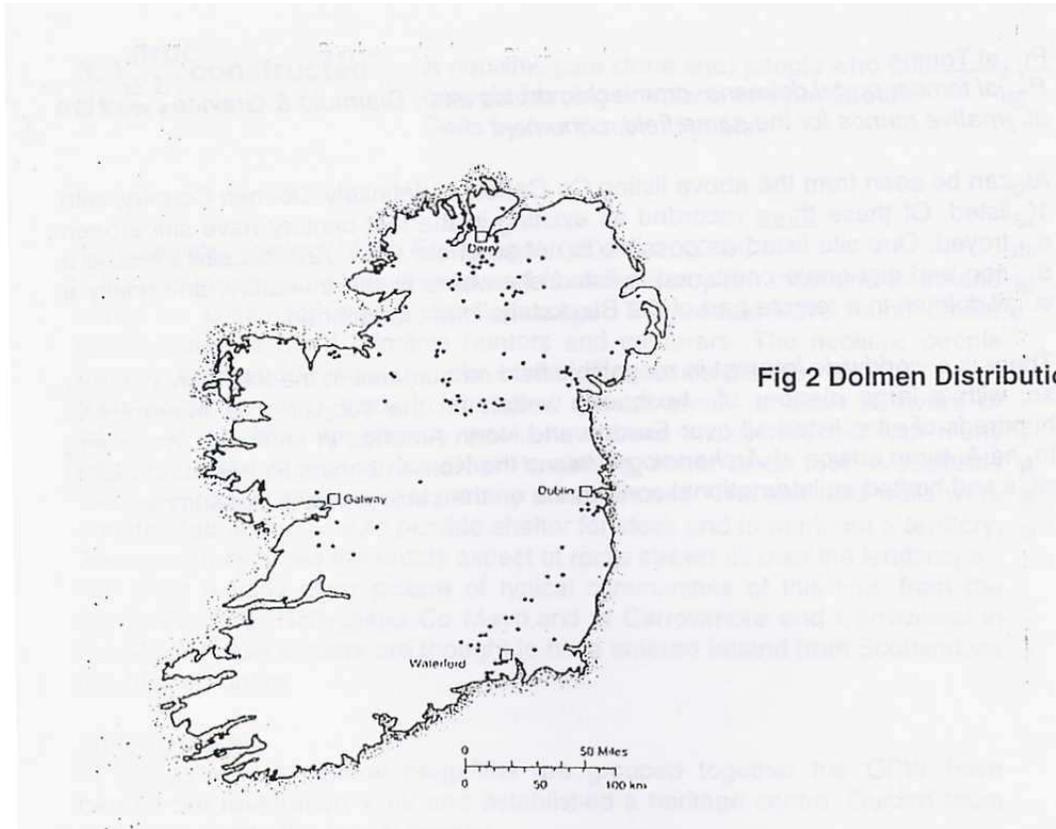
1. What is a dolmen?

A megalithic chambered tomb with a large flat stone (the cap stone) laid on upright stones. These structures are generally believed to have had a clay cover originally. Alternative names are *cromlech* (sloping flag in Gaelic), *portal tomb*, *druids altar*, *bed of Diarmaid & Grainne*

**2. Where are they found?**

All over the world.

In Ireland very plentiful in Ulster, also in the Western counties of Clare, Galway, Sligo . Between south Dublin and Waterford there are approximately 32 listed



Neolithic Field Monuments

According to the ; -*Archeological Inventory of County Carlow*
Published by the OPW

Court Tombs; (3200-2200 BC)	None listed
Portal Dolmens (2600-2100 BC)	10 listed
Passage Tombs (3100-2400)	None listed
Late Neolithic burials (2200-1800 BC)	1 listed
Stone Circles(Henges)(2100-1700 BC)	None listed
Wedge Tombs (2200-1600 BC)	None listed
Cists	2 listed

Portal Tombs

Portal tombs, portal dolmens, cromlechs, druids altar, Diarmuid & Grainne's bed are alternative names for the same field monument

As can be seen from the above listing Co Carlow is definitely 'Dolmen Country' with 10 listed. Of these three recorded as existing in the last century have since been destroyed. One site listed as possible is not so in our view. Another site which is a dolmen and cist grave combined is listed elsewhere in the Inventory, and finally a small dolmen in a remote part of the Blackstairs is not mentioned.

There is a worldwide interest in megalithic field monuments in the last thirty years or so, with a large number of textbooks written on the subject. The Internet has hundreds of sites listed all over Europe and North America in particular. According to

the Autumn edition of *Archaeology Ireland* the Korean peninsula has hundreds of sites and hosted an international conference on the subject during last summer.

3. Who constructed them?

A neolithic.(late stone age) people who brought farming to Ireland and predate the Celts by two thousand years.

The Neolithic Period. (Late Stone Age) 3200 to 2000 BC

The first farming communities spread from the European mainland to Ireland some via Britain others by direct passage. They would have found earlier communities of more primitive hunters and gatherers. The neolithic people brought the first domestic animals, cereal crops, cattle & sheep etc.

Isolated settlements were in sheltered coastal areas or close to rivers or lakes. At this time the country would have been thickly forested with many boggy /marshy areas, so travel was mainly by water or on foot. Woodlands were cleared for pasture and marshy areas drained. The first field walls were constructed at this time; to get rid of the profusion of stones and boulders scattered over the landscape and to provide shelter from the prevailing winds.

We have a fairly clear picture of typical communities of this time from the Ceide Fields at Ballycastle Co Mayo, and at Carrowmore and Carrowkeel in Co Sligo. These settlers are thought to have entered Ireland from Scotland via the Mull of Kintyre

Important sites.

In places where several megaliths are grouped together the OPW have carried out restoration work and established a heritage centre. Guided tours are given during the tourist season.

Examples are;

Co Meath; Hill of Tara, Newgrange, Knowth,

Co Sligo: Carrowmore Megalithic Cemetery, Carrowkeel Settlement.

Co Mayo: Ceide Fields at Ballycastle.

All sites report a steady stream of visitors native and foreign. They show an aspect of our ancient culture of which we can well be proud.

Neolithic Technology

Materials; Wood , stone, flintstone, bone, horn, leather, baked clay pottery.

Animal skins and woven cloth garments were commonly worn.

Dwellings. Constructed of timber, mud, rushes , animal pelts etc. Hole at top through which smoke of cooking /heating fire escaped.

The People / Social Organisation.

Lived in isolated communities with little need for communication between them. Quiet period in history, no need for large defensive works as in the later Bronze Age and Celtic period, when hill forts became necessary. Neolithic peoples lived close to and in communion with nature and remained in close touch with their ancestors and the after life. Nevertheless life was tough and life span short probably about 35-40 years for males. Height 5'-0

The dead were cremated and placed in elaborate court or portal tombs on own territory. Ashes of the deceased would await the building of a suitable tomb. Several people being interred together.

This combination of a complex social organisation combined with low technology is reflected in many communities around the world. Examples in recent centuries, include the native American Indians and many African nations before the European settlers arrived.

Religion; Shamanism. Ancestor worship, contact with spirits of the dead, gods of place.

The Calendar

A solar calendar was used in which the year was divided into eight equal parts of 6 1/2 weeks duration. Reading clockwise these are;

Cross quarter	Summer Solstice	Cross quarter
Spring Equinox		Autumn Equinox
Cross quarter	Winter Solstice	Cross quarter

It is believed that considerable importance was attached to these solar events and prompted these ancient peoples to construct elaborate and permanent monuments in order to record them accurately. The megaliths of Newgrange, Knowth and Lough Crew in Co Meath are now known to be aligned in order to monitor the sunrise at important times of the year. The author and colleague Roger Jones investigated the possibility of solar alignment for the Carlow dolmens during 1996/7. Only one dolmen had a clear view of some permanent feature on the landscape and had the correct azimuth angle. This is the small dolmen at Ballynasilloge which is aligned for the Sculloge Gap where the sun rises at Imbolg (early February) and Samhain (early November). See Maps and diagrams at Appendix II.

4. When were they constructed? Between 2200 and 3200 BC

5. How were they built? The opinion of Archaeologists is that they were constructed by first embedding the supporting uprights in a mound of clay and boulders. The capstone would then be hauled up the ramp so formed until the capstone rested in its final position on top of the supports.
This enclosing mound has since been eroded by weathering over the millenia leaving only the skeletal remains which we see today.

Extract from ; Antiquities of the irish Countryside 95th Edition). Sean.P.O'Riordán.

The method of raising such immense capstones (Browns Hill Co Carlow has been estimated at 100 tonnes) is a constant source of speculation and wonder. We know little of the actual methods used by the megalithic builders and can only guess that

wooden levers and props of stone or wood and perhaps ramps overlaid by timber rails were probably employed.

The *cairns of portal tombs are often poorly preserved and many examples are completely denuded (of cover). Surveys and excavations in recent years have shown acceptable evidence for long cairns in about 25 sites of a total of 160 Irish examples.

These cairns resemble those of court tombs, though they appear to be somewhat narrower and to taper less sharply to the rear

Occasionally the capstone is found poised on the portals and backstone while the sidestones and cairn have been stripped away. So called Tripod dolmens have sometimes been treated as a special case but they are merely skeletons of normal portal tombs. There is sufficient evidence from several sites that the space between the sidestones and the capstone was filled by a form of corbelling as at one of the tombs at Burren Co Cavan. Some such device would in any case be necessary to keep the cairn which originally enveloped the chamber from collapsing.

Siting

In general the portal tombs do not differ from the court tombs in the type of land they occupy but show a marked tendency to be sited in valley positions often close to streams. The availability of suitable building material especially a great glacial erratic to provide the capstone may have influenced the siting of individual tombs. However the occurrence of portal tomb in more or less sheltered valleys may indicate a greater penetration of more heavily wooded land than chosen by the tomb builders,-----

** The example at Carrowmore Co Sligo excavated by a group from Lund University Sweden was hidden under a large cairn of stones. After excavation a dolmen was found beneath in an excellent state of preservation.*

6. Why were they constructed?

Traditional answer by archaeologists is that they are simply tombs. Recent research points to other more interesting possibilities.

Our Survey.

The map of Ireland at Fig 2 shows a band of dolmens stretching from Dublin to Waterford about 32 in total. The Geological Map of Carlow/ Wexford (No 19) shows that Co Carlow has bedrock mainly of granite . The exception is a narrow strip running NS along its eastern border adjoining the River barrow, which is limestone (the best commercial stone in Ireland in fact)

Carlow therefore has a profusion of glacial erratics presumably broken off the adjacent mountains. Over the centuries these boulders have been picked up / shifted off the land to form the present field boundaries. The early megalith builders were provided with a plentiful supply of raw materials from which to choose . Most of the dolmens visited are sited close to stream or a river.

During the course of writing this paper seven sites within the county were visited and examined. To date we have found that most dolmens in this county have the following seven features.

- | | | |
|-----|---|---|
| i | Granite | Dolmens are constructed from granite and the underlying bedrock is granite. The dolmens at Donore and Ballynasillog were quarried from the pavement on which they rest. All of the other examples are constructed from glacial erratics. |
| ii | Stream nearby | This holds for most examples. The exceptions are those located on high ground. |
| iii | Tomb entrance | Except for Harristown all other sites have an entrance facing due east. |
| iv | Underground watercourse | True for all examples found on pastureland but not true for sites located on granite pavement.
The diagrams given at Appendix II show that sites are located exactly above a curve or dogleg or crossed stream. For readers interested in divining the L-rods technique was used to locate flow. The 'Bishops Rule' was used to estimate the depth below surface. Note This rule is accurate only to a depth of 5 metres.
<i>We were much excited by the discovery of streams flowing beneath dolmens until the horrible thought occurred to us ' perhaps any big rock in any field will also give a dowsing reaction'. On further checking with sunken boulders too large to have been moved since deposited during the Ice Age a similar positive reaction was found!</i> |
| v | Adjacent to discontinuity in underlying bedrock | Ref; Geology of Carlow/Wexford. Sheet 19.
Probably the most important of our findings. In Co Carlow all sites except Ballynasillog are located on or in close proximity to geological discontinuity lines ie a sudden change of the underlying bedrock.
A further twelve megalithic sites were examined in counties Kilkenny, Wexford and Waterford. Eleven were found to be sited on local geological discontinuities. |
| vi | Radon gas level | Ref ; Radon in Irish Dwellings.
Published by the Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland.

By comparing the dolmen location map and the radon emission level map it can be seen that the distribution of megalithic tombs seems to align closely with the distribution of radon gas, not only for the county of Carlow but also for the SE region as a whole. |
| vii | Flooding | Another interesting feature of dolmen location is that they are located on high ground and even in winter are not subject to flooding. |

See Appendix I – for details of each site and photographs.

- 7 Discussion The result of our brief survey is that instead of answering the simple question ; for what purpose were dolmens built?, we seem to have succeeded in raising even more questions.
- i. Were they built only as tombs for the dead? No record of human remains found at any of the sites studied locally.
 - ii. Why are they sited over underground water courses. The megalith itself creates a dowsing effect similar to an underground watercourse.
 - iii. Why are they located next to a stream or river? To give a channel for the deceased to travel between the tomb and the nearby water source!
 - iv. Were the tomb builders aware of earth faults beneath or that radon level was high? It is likely they were aware of some anomaly in the ground beneath without fully understanding its nature

8. Studies in Britain and elsewhere.

Ref ; Places of Power . Paul Deveraux (Published by Cassell Books)

On the other hand the results of a twenty year study in Britain of dolmens, stone circles, sacred wells and Cornish fogues from the Neolithic and later Bronze Age is worthy of study. The most active sites are found in areas of known seismic disturbance. Before or during earthquakes; pillars of light, floating glowing orbs and wraithlike shapes have been observed at many sites. In modern times these phenomena are often recorded as UFOs but in fact the record show similar sightings going back to Roman times. In Britain the local folk record abounds with stories of dancing fairies, ghostly apparitions , strange lights overhead and in modern times cases of car electrical systems being completely disabled.

The exact cause is not understood but may be the result of incandescent gases issuing from ground fissures in a random fashion .

It is also established that many spas and sacred wells have water high in natural radioactivity which have the power to heal a wide range of ailments.

Dolmens were originally covered with a cairn and thus enclosed a chamber in which radon gas could accumulate. People who enter or spend some time within these chambers have experienced 'radiation langour' altered states of consciousness, out of body experience, and some have seen beautiful luminous images etc

The modern treatment involving the use of magnets attached to the body to relieve certain ailments seems to have been known also to the ancients. Several stone circles have rocks with magnetised bands against which the patient would stand or in one instance sit .

Editors Note :

Without the proper equipment we have not been able to test the various sites visited for radio-activity or magnetic anomalies. This will be a matter for future study. In conclusion we would like to offer the following possible uses of dolmens;

Tomb for chief or other important persons.

Place of worship ie 'spirit house'

Initiation of shamans

Place of healing

Solar observatory.

A territorial marker

Appendix I

Carlow Sites

Appendix Section

Please note that none of these sites are open to the public (with the notable exception of Brownhill Dolmen) and permission to inspect must be obtained from the landowner in each case.

Site 1 BallynasillogeOPW Description

OS 22:3:2 (588.585) OD 300-400 27467,15223

Portal-tomb. Marked 'Banshee Stone' on 1839 OS 6" map, but marked incorrectly on 1908 revision. Displaced capstone (3.7m x 2m x 0.35m) originally resting on two portal stones and door stone. Partly collapsed chamber faces E. No clear evidence for cairn or mound (JRSAI 1983.91)

Ballynasilloge ;*The place of the spittle.* A small dolmen situated in a stone walled enclosure. From here a magnificent view is available over a long valley bounded on the East by the Blackstairs range. Clear view from Slieve Bawn to Caher Roe's Den.

The dolmen is readily accessible from nearby laneway. It sits on the granite pavement from which it was quarried. Solar observations conducted from here in 1996/7 showed that the dolmen is aligned for 121° azimuth which corresponds exactly with the Sculloge Gap, about 4 miles distant. The sun rises in this gap on two occasions each year, at Imbolg (Feb 4th) and again at Samhain (Nov 8th). *Further information at Appendix v (See Carloviana Editions of 1997 and 1999)*

Bedrock Type	Boulders type	Dowsing Effects	Investigated	Landowner
Granite	Granite	None found	1996-97	

Site 2 Ballynoe or Newtown

OS 13:8:4 (727,350) 'Cromlech' OD 200-300 28560,16915)

Portal-tomb Capstone (3.5m x 3.2m x 0.8m) resting on single orthostat (other collapsed) and small flat stone. Small endstone visible. Facing upslope to E, at end of outcrop. No visible trace of cairn or cover mound (JRSAI 1983,91) 13:36

Situated in pasture overlooking the River Slaney . As with all other sites there is much glacial debris in the area. Most of these rocks have been used over the centuries in the construction of dry stone walls and buildings. Many submerged rocks still remain in the nearby field.

Top surface of the capstone is heavily scored by glacial action in an E to W direction.

Three underground watercourses converge beneath the dolmen. at 8 and 6 m estimated depth.

Bedrock Type	Boulders type	Dowsing Effects	Investigated	Landowner
Granite	Granite	yes	Nov 1999	Richardson

Site 4 Donore

OS 16:14;4 (265,26) 'Dolmen' DOD 200-300 27114,15908

Megalithic Structure Massive granite slab (2.95m N-S x 3.60 E-W) now split in two, supported at N by large upright slab (1.21m by H 1.00-1.30m) S end of capstone rests on rocky ground.

16:75

21-8-1987

This small dolmen situated in a new plantation is very similar to that at Ballynasillog, in that it sits on the granite pavement from which it was quarried. Difficult to determine its purpose as it is not suitably located for observing the sunrise nor were any significant dowsing effects found.

<u>Bedrock Type</u>	<u>Boulders type</u>	<u>Dowsing Effects</u>	<u>Investigated</u>	<u>Landowner</u>
Granite	Granite	None	Sept 1997	

Site 5 Haroldstown

OS 9:2:1 (240,569) 'Cromlech' OD 300-400 29006,17794

Portal Tomb. Two overlapping capstones(upper 4m x 3.2m x 0.85, lower 3.2 x 2.4 x 0.7m) resting on large chamber comprising two well preserved portal stones, large door stone, and side stones. Chamber faces NNW (JRSAI 1983,91) 9.8

Situated on the banks of the Dereen River near main road bridge. Capstone heavily scored in NS direction presumably by glacial action. Well preserved example . Unusual not to have entrance facing due E. Underground watercourse flows beneath the tomb entering from SW and leaving in NNW direction. No magnetic anomalies found.

<u>Bedrock Type</u>	<u>Boulders type</u>	<u>Dowsing Effects</u>	<u>Investigated</u>	<u>Landowner</u>
Granite	Granite	yes	Nov 1999	

Site 6 Kernanstown

OS 7:4:4 (703,489) 'Cromlech' OD 200-300 27546,17685

Portal Tomb. Known as Brownshill. Very large capstone (4.7m x 6.1m x 2m) rests on two portal stones, door stone and prostrate slab. Side stones missing. Single orthostat flanks N portal stone, possible remains of façade, but no visible trace of cairn or mound. According to Borlase(1897, 398) one of three dolmens in this townland (No 6-8) Chamber faces East (JRSAI 1983,91)

This site now has easy public access from the Hacketstown road. The capstone is exceptionally large and estimated over 100 tonnes. In common with many other boulders in this and the neighbouring townland of Chaplestown have glacial erratics of Wicklow granite. It is thought that this was a centre for religious rites in the Late Stone Age 2500 BC.

Dowsing Effects ;Underground watercourse enters at the NW support and exits at the SE support . Depth is estimated at 10m below. When dowsing beneath the capstone a very strong 'buzzing i the ears sensation was experienced. This ceased immediately when the L-rods were discarded leading to a feeling of peace and tranquility. The megalith appears to amplify the earth energies.

<u>Bedrock Type</u>	<u>Boulders type</u>	<u>Dowsing Effects</u>	<u>Investigated</u>	<u>Landowner</u>
Limestone	Granite	Yes	Sept 1999	Public access

Sites 7 and 8 Kernanstown

Both sites of dolmens are mentioned by the Cornishman Borlase (1897,398) , but no visible trace now remains. *Probably located in same line as No6 along the local discontinuity*

Site 805 Ballygraney

OS 19:13:6 (188,04)

OD 200-300

27043,15254

Portal Tomb Capstone (3.5 x 2.9m x1m) rests on two portal stones at E and on ground to W. Long chamber (2.6m x 0.8m) faces E and is formed by portal stones, three side stones and a door stone. Tomb is incorporated into field fence

19:90

23-6-1992

The tomb now forms part of the field boundary wall. Capstone has very smooth surface presumably smoothed by a glacier flowing over it at some stage. Known locally as 'the fairy house'; not surprising as beneath the capstone is a beautifully built dry stone-walled cist, below the present ground surface.

Two underground watercourses were located. The first approaches from the NW, flowing directly under the tomb and exiting due E at an estimated depth of 8m. This stream then curves to the S and flows beneath two sunken boulders about 20 m apart. The second watercourse is only 4m to the S and flows W to E following the hill slope.

This area has an abundance of granite field walls indicating it was once a glacial moraine. Huge boulder in nearby field is largest the author has ever seen. This boulder has two underground watercourses associated with it.

Bedrock Type	Boulders type	Dowsing Effects	Investigated	Landowner
Granite	Granite	Yes	Oct 1999	Hattan

Site 9 Kilgraney (Idrone East by)

OS 19:9:3 (167,264) ' Cloghnabrona Druids Altar' OD 100-1200 27017,15518

Portal Tomb. Capstone(3.9 x 2.6 x 1.15) rests on a collapsed chamber, at N of sub circular mound (D8m)

JRSAI 193,01)

19:41

'Stone of the sorrows'

This dolmen lies at the bottom of a steep slope leading to a swiftly flowing stream , one of many Barrow tributaries in the area. Capstone is of granite and remarkably rectangular in shape. The capstone is tilted up at its edge to form a portal entrance facing E to the rising sun

Underground watercourse at an estimated 15m below enters from south and exits in a westerly direction.

Bedrock Type	Boulders type	Dowsing Effects	Investigated	Landowner
Granite	Granite	Yes	Oct 1999	Grothier

Main Features in Common ->> OPW Inventory Site Number	1. Granite Bedrock	2. Glacial Debris	3. Near stream or river	4. Entrance faces East	5. Underground watercourse	6. Adjacent to discontinuity	7. Radon Level 10-20/>20%	Remarks
1. Ballynasilloge	■ ■			■ ■			■ ■	On pavement
2. Ballynoe	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	Slaney R
3. Clonygoose								Not a dolmen
4. Donore	■ ■			■ ■		■ ■	■ ■	On pavement
5. Haroldstown	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■		■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	Dereen.R
6. Kernanstown	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	Browns Hill
7. Kernanstown	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■			■ ■	■ ■	destroyed
8. Kernanstown	■ ■	■ ■	■ ■			■ ■	■ ■	destroyed
9. Kilgraney	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■	
10. Knockmore	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■				■ ■ ■	■ ■	Not visited
805. Ballygraney	■ ■ ■	■ ■		■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■	■ ■	Cist Grave
Barrowmount			■ ■		■ ■ ■	■ ■	■ ■	In ruins [Co Kilkenny]
Totals [11]	10	8	7	6	6	10	11	

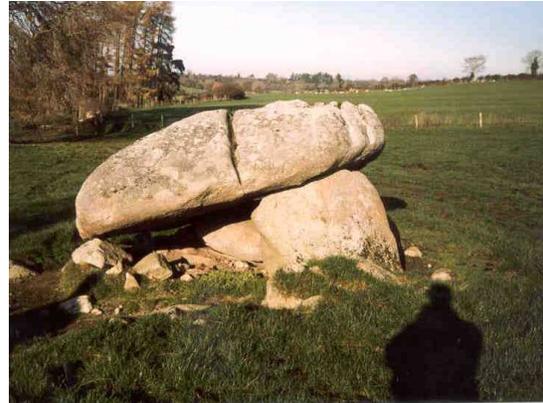
Fig 3; Summary Chart

Appendix II

Photographs



Site 1; Ballynasillog



Site 2; Ballynoe/Newtown



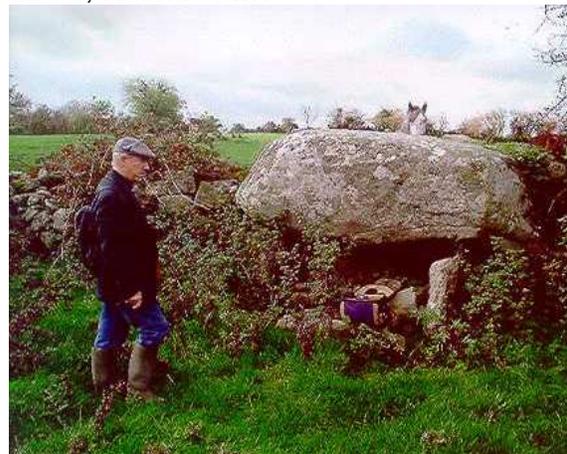
Site 4; Donore



Site 5; Haroldstown



Site 8; Kernanstown (Brownshill)

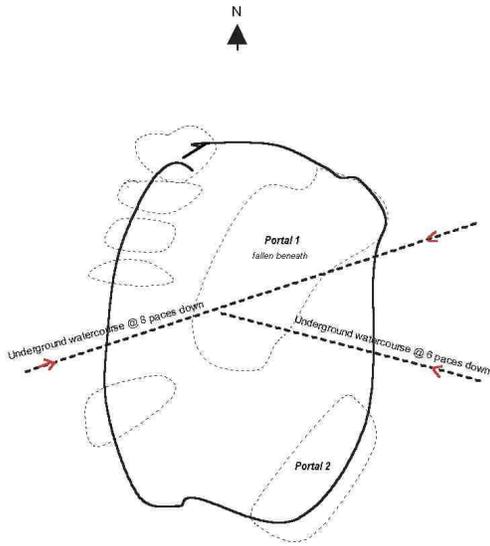


Site 805; Ballygraney

Appendix II

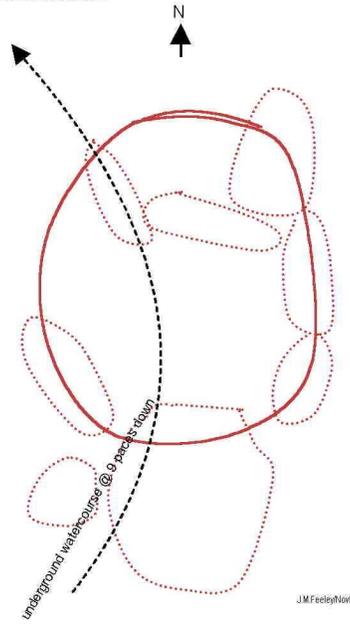
Dowsing Diagrams

Site 2: Ballynoe/Newtown



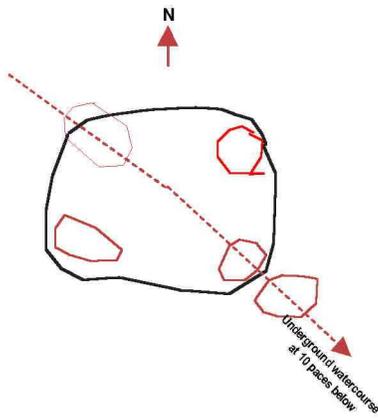
J.M.Feeley98

Site 5; Haroldstown



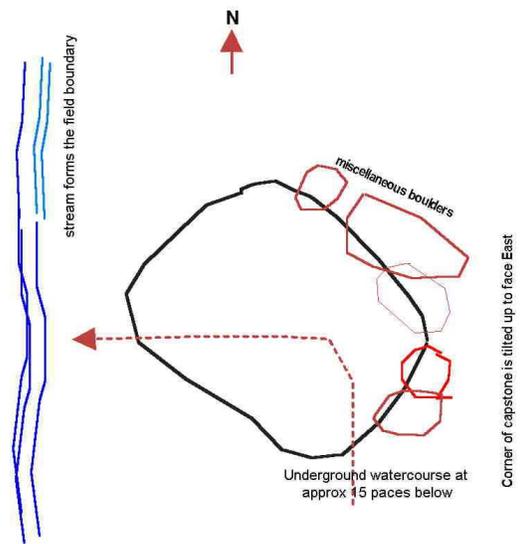
J.M.FeeleyNov88

Site 6; Kernanstown



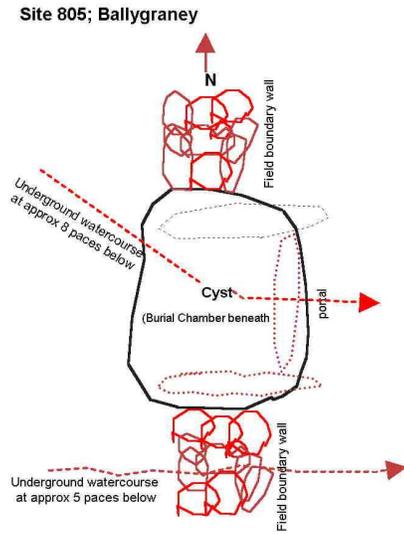
J.M.Feeley/ Sept 1999

Site 9; Kilgraney



J.M.Feeley Oct99

Dowsing Diagrams-- Carlow Dolmens



J.H. Feeley Oct 1989

Appendix III

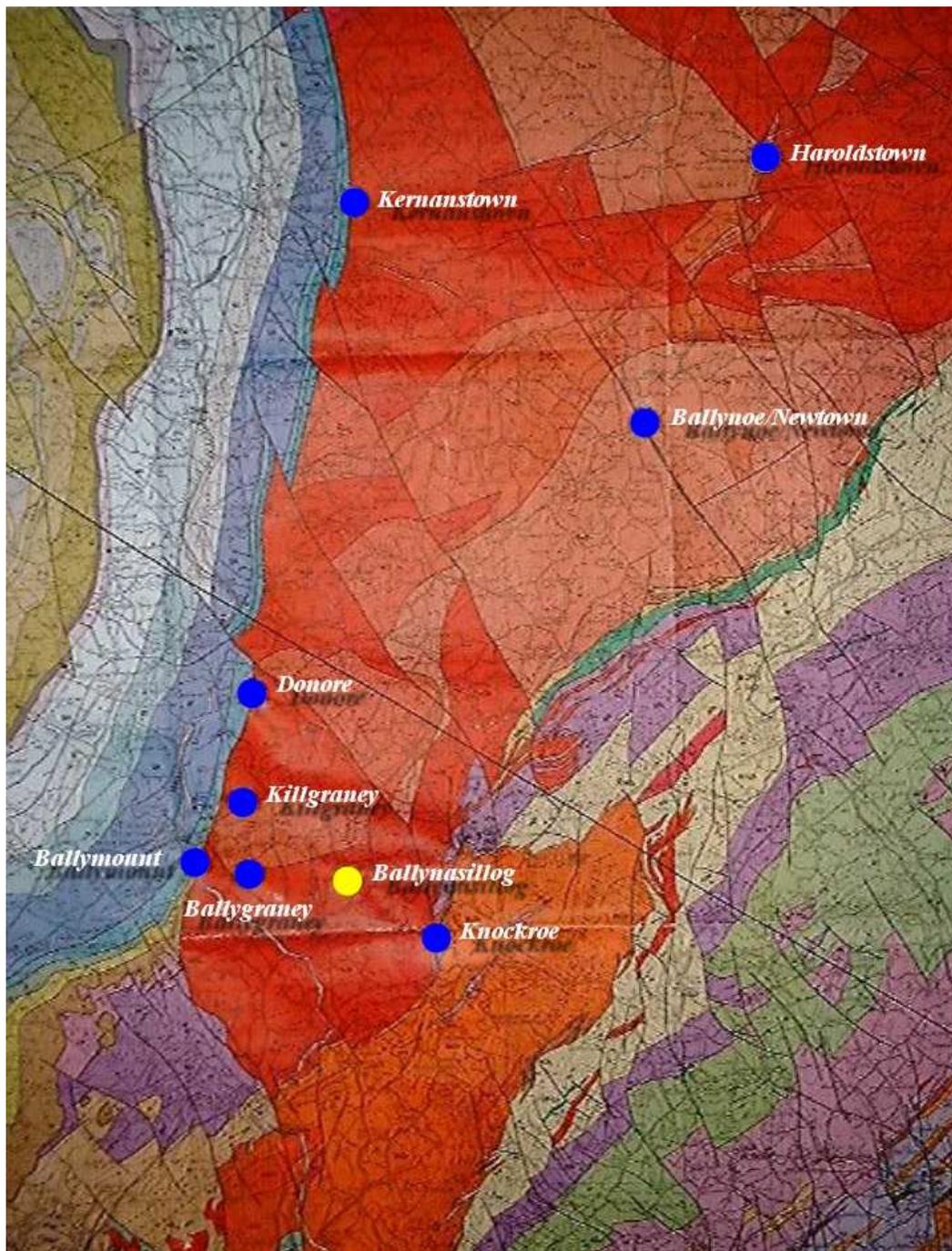
Geological Map

Co Carlow

County Carlow Geological Map with dolmens shown

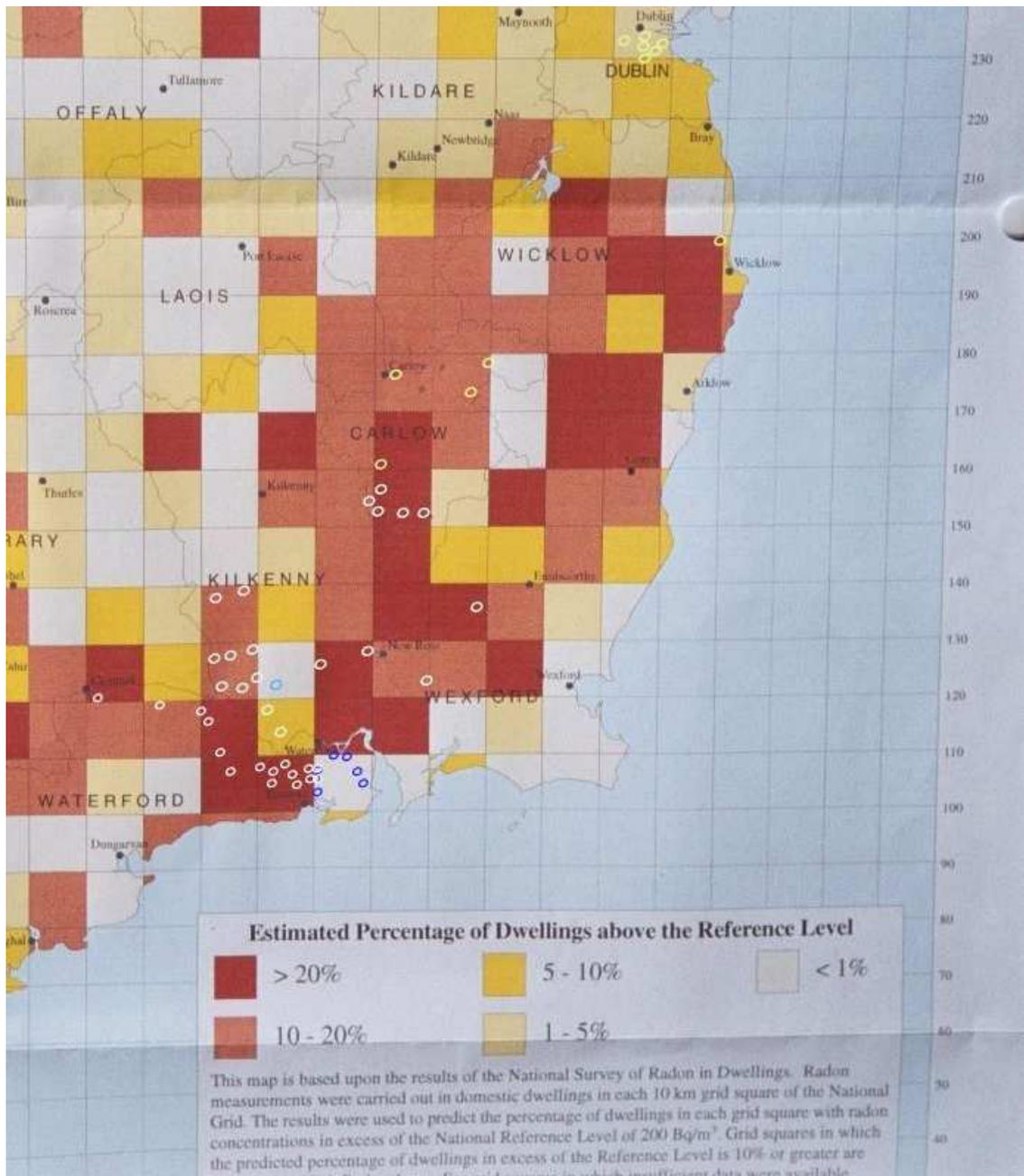
Red areas represent **granite**, **green** and **blue** areas on LHS are **limestone** areas. As can be seen all dolmens lie on geological fault or discontinuity lines.

The notable exception is Site 1-Ballynasillog which is primarily a solar/lunar observatory.



Appendix IV

Radon Distribution



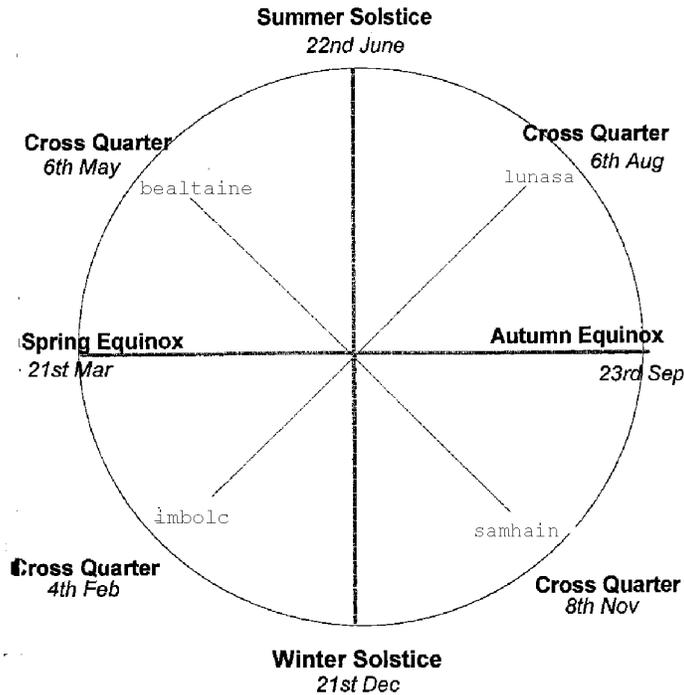
Radon Levels for South East Ireland

With dolmen sites superimposed.

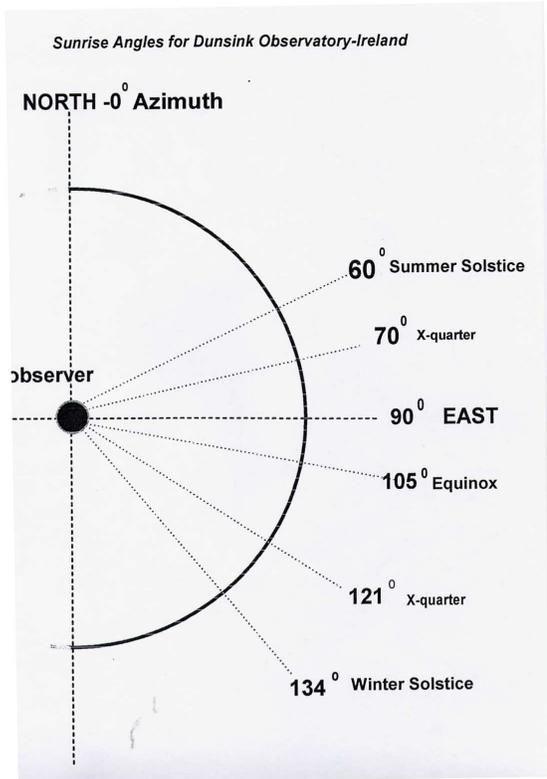
Appendix V

Solar Alignment

The Solar Year of 8 periods (6 1/2 week Apart)



The Solar Calendar



Ancient solar observatories monitored the position of the sun when either rising or setting. In Ireland the sun at rising was observed along the east coast ie in Leinster.

In Connacht however the position of the sun at setting was observed. The famous ancient solar observatory at Newgrange is aligned for the Winter Solstice rising sun position at approximately 134° azimuth.

To observe the rising sun from a fixed position there are two main approaches.

- a) erect five pillar stones (known as *gnomen*) in a semi circle as shown in the accompanying diagram. A variation of this method is to line up on a fixed point (s) on the horizon, eg a mountain peak or gap.
- b) Build a stone wall or timber fence with openings at the correct angles. The sun will shine directly through an opening at the winter solstice, cross-quarter etc

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Dolmen secrets to be revealed

WE all know of The Brownhill Dolmen's existence but do we know how it was erected, why it is there and what it represents?

While we admit that it is one of the county's best known landmarks, attracting visitors from far and wide, how much do we, natives of 'The Dolmen County' really know about it. Well, all we be revealed on February 16 when the Old Carlow Society hosts another in its series of lectures entitled, 'The Megalithic Field Monuments of County Carlow.'

The lecture will be given by Joseph M. Feeley, a chartered engineer and a member of the teaching staff at the Carlow Institute of Technology.

It seems the pattern of dolmens in the county is not as random as first imagined, in fact Joseph has discovered the genealogy of the area was vital in the construction of these monuments. Before the days of bulldozers and heavy machinery how these dolmens were constructed is a fascinating insight into life at the time, estimated to be around 2,500BC to 2,000BC. The Brownhill Dolmen is just one of 32 dolmens built along the stretch from Dublin to Waterford with just a scarce scattering of dolmens located elsewhere in the country. Joseph gives possible reasons for this phenomenon which is almost exclusive to the east coast.

The lecture will be held in the Seven Oaks Hotel on Wednesday, February 16 at 8pm. All welcome.
