

Directed Research for World Heritage

Sites 2022

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1. Title: Dr.

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2. Email:

3. Grant programme Directed Research for WHS

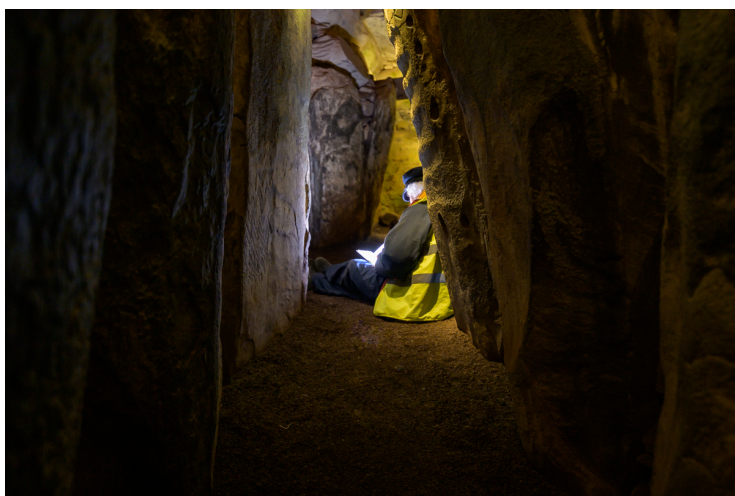
4. Year awarded 2022

5. Title of project Recording carvings on the exterior stones at Newgrange, County Meath

6. Summary of report (Min. allowed 100 words)

We have successfully completed the recording of carvings on the exterior stones at Newgrange County Meath over the summer of 2022. This comprised principally the taking of high resolution photographs of the front faces of all the kerbstones, with the exception of kerbstones on the western side of the cairn where only the tops are visible. The stones of the Great Circle on the periphery of the mound were also recorded. A database has been created showing details of the types of carvings on each kerbstones. Plans and elevations of the tomb have been digitised and location of carving types marked up.

7. Please provide two appropriate images



9. Please outline the objectives of the project

The project was designed to record the carvings on the external stones at Newgrange passage tomb, County Meath, following on the successful work carried out in 2021 in the interior of the tomb (facilitated by the unique opportunity afforded by the pandemic to have access to the interior while the public were excluded). Both the kerbstones at the edge of the cairn and the free standing stones of the Great Circle were recorded.

10. Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research

The Kerbstones and the stones of the Great Circle were photographed using carefully directed lighting to maximise the visibility of the carvings. In many instances this required photographing the stones with the lighting set in different way due to the changing planes of the stones' surfaces. Detailed photographs were also taken of some stones. In tandem with the photography, a written record was generated in an excel database, and the varying types of carvings were noted. At present we have listed 163 examples of carved surfaces inside the tomb, and 124 on the kerbstones. In order to show the location of the carvings, new plans and elevations have been prepared combining various a number of sources including plans published in M.J. O'Kelly's excavation report, Laser scanning by the Discovery Programme which is available through Sketchfab, a photogrammetric model of the chamber roof made during the course of creating the photographic record, and details from publications such as a paper on Irish Basin stones. As far as we can ascertain, no new drawings have been made of the structure since O'Kelly's 1982 report. This exercise has revealed some weaknesses in the published drawings which we now know were made under the less perfect circumstances of the time (pers. comm. Frances Lynch, who recorded the plans and elevations with M.J. O'Kelly in the mid 1960s).

11. Please outline the findings of your research and/or milestones achieved

It was found that almost without exception the kerbstones show evidence of dispersed pickmarks on the visible faces of the stones; archived photographs suggest that this was also the case for the backs and sides of stones which are now no longer visible (due to restoration). This type of picking occurs more rarely inside the tomb, where anomalous close-area picking is widespread. Some picking is also visible of some of the stones of the Great Circle. This type of carving has been neglected in studying megalithic art, but preliminary research at other sites shows it occurred elsewhere, e.g, at Fourknocks. It is difficult to detect at less well preserved sites.

12. a) Please provide details of the dissemination of the outcomes from this project (inc. publications, presentations, outreach, media etc.) including details of any social media/web platforms used to publicise this project

Papers: We are scheduled to give a paper specifically on this topic in a Rock Art session at the Theoretical Archaeology group Meeting in Edinburgh on 16 December 2022. Earlier in 2022 Elizabeth Twohig presented the findings of the project in two lectures within a more general account of recent work in Irish megalithic art. These lectures were given at Knowth in May and at the Boyne Valley and Beyond conference in Dublin Castle in October. ET and KW are presenting a joint paper at Lough Gur, County Limerick in late October. All except the TAG presentation have a mixed audience, with both interested laypeople and professional colleagues attending. While on site over the summer we always engage with interested visitors to the site.

b) No. of Academic Papers/articles published:

0

c) No. of Lectures given/outreach events involved in:

4

d) Media Coverage (article in local newspaper, feature on University website etc.):

In May our work was filmed by Munich-based film company as part of a series of programmes being made for the European culture TV Channel ARTE, which will be widely disseminated as one of eight stories about Irish culture and heritage. In August Elizabeth Twohig was filmed speaking about megalithic art as part of an hour-long TG4

programme to be shown in January 2023.

e) How will you continue to communicate the results of your project and what are your publication plans?

We will prepare an academic paper which will demonstrate the extent of picking at Newgrange, through photographs and a definitive list, and will discuss the various forms of picking used in different areas, including the extent to which the stones were prepared for insertion into the tomb and what picking was done when the stones were in situ. This will be documented by means of photographs and a complete tabulation showing the occurrence of motif carving and/or picking on each stone. In addition we are investigating how best the remarkable collection of photographs might be published in its entirety. We will be exploring both traditional and non-traditional methods of presenting the material, but in a way or ways that would not compromise its archaeological importance.

16. How did the grant enhance your professional development (e.g. in terms of specific opportunities, opportunities for enhancing skills, collaborations with others etc.)?

One of the main attractions of a grant like this is the opportunity to bring together people with different skill sets who contribute in different ways to the overall aim of the project. The need to define goals and objectives focuses ones research design and the reporting process ensures that the project has been correctly carried out.

17. What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?

Preparation of an academic paper containing photographs and a definitive list which will demonstrate the extent of picking at Newgrange. This will contribute to a better understanding of how various forms of picking was used in different areas, including:

- The extent to which the stones were prepared for insertion into the tomb
- What picking was done when the stones were in situ.

In addition we will be investigating options which can best present the remarkable collection of photographs in either digital or print format, or both.