



NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN
FACULTY OF FINE ART PAINTING

"EMAIN MACHA - Its Origins, Controversies and Continuing
Importance."

By

NUALA C. DALZELL

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CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.	1
CONTENTS.	2
LIST OF PLATES	3
INTRODUCTION.	4
CHAPTER ONE.	The origins of Emain Macha - Navan Fort and the Findings There 8
CHAPTER TWO.	Quarry Threatens Plight of Emain Macha. 23
CHAPTER THREE.	Proposals for a Visitor's Centre at Emain Macha. 28
CONCLUSION.	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY.	45

LIST OF PLATES

	Page
Plate 1. Navan Fort from the East.	7
Plate 2. Aerial view of the excavation on Navan Forts singular mound.	16
Plate 3. Detail of excavated mound. Remains of limestone blocks.	18
Plate 4. Aerial view of Haughey's Fort.	20
Plate 5. The Kings Stable's	21
Plate 6. The Loghnashade Horn.	21
Plate 7. Circular disc of bronze from Loughnashade Horn.	22
Plate 8. Aerial view of stone quarry adjacent to Navan Fort.	27
Plate 9. Aerial view of Navan Fort and surrounding area.	27
Plate 10. Photograph of Car Park at Visitors Centre.	35
Plate 11. Photograph of entrance to the Visitors Centre.	35
Plate 12. View of Visitors Centre from Car Park	36
Plate 13. Distance between Navan Fort and Visitors Centre.	36
Plate 14. Coffee Shop at Visitors Centre.	44
Plate 15. Photograph of internal finishes at Visitors Centre.	44
Figure 1. An artists impression of Bronze Age settlement at Navan Fort.	16
Figure 2. An artists impression of the Great Post.	17
Figure 3. Detail drawing of cup - and - ring marks.	20
Map 1. Proximity of Navan Fort to Armagh.	7
Map 2. Distance between the three archaeological sites.	19

INTRODUCTION

Navan Fort near Armagh City is Northern Ireland's most important ancient monument. Navan is the site of a legendary capital, and the setting for heroic deeds of ancient warriors.(Pl. 1) Archaeology, legend and literature, all confirm its exceptional status as Emain Macha, the political and spiritual capital, of the Kings of Ulster and scene, of the boyhood exploits of the hero CuChulainn.

Its location in Armagh - the Ecclesiastical Capital of Ireland, is one of significant importance.

Pope John Paul II at Drogheda in September 1979 claimed,

The see of Armagh is the Primatial see, because it was the see of Patrick. The Archbishop of Armagh is the Primate of All Ireland today, because he was COMHARBA PHADRAIG, the successor of Saint Patrick, the first Bishop of Armagh.

(Sharpe, 1978-9, p.241-2)

It is believed that all early missionaries set up their own headquarters as close as possible to the Capital of the Kingdom to which they were sent. This supports the tradition that Armagh was founded by Saint Patrick in the 5th Century, one can associate this belief to the geographical proximity of Armagh to Navan Fort, the Emain Macha of the Ulster Cycle.(Map 1.)

Patrick is thought to have chosen Armagh because it was close to Emain Macha; which was a religious rather than a political centre. His motives could possibly have been intended to provoke occupants at the pagan centre there. Patrick erected his church close to a pagan temple at Armagh (now Armaghbraque), and

subsequently moved to the Cathedral Hill site, once called Druim Sailech; but renamed Ard Macha as a challenge to the pagan establishment at Emain Macha.

It is believed that as the population received the new religion, so the old cult centre at Armagh suffered a decline. Perhaps the druids themselves decided that the time had come to rearrange their alliances. In the event, Ard Macha gave up its old faith and became a Christian church.(Sharpe, 1982, p.55)

Today the interest in the history and legends surrounding Emain Macha, has reached its peak, due to a major visitors centre at Navan Fort. It receives world-wide attention as visitors as far as South-Africa, and as near as Newry, Co. Down, travel to learn about the occupation of Navan Fort from the 3rd millennium B.C., from its great late Bronze/early Iron Age(from 700 B.C.) periods. They learn about ancient treasures which have been uncovered by archaeologists. Most finds thought to be the first of their kind.

However, in 1986, the existence of this historical site was threatened by an adjacent limestone quarry at Emain Macha. The quarry was slowly eroding the main monument. When the quarry owner decided to apply for further planning permission to extend his business, the public decided to defend the monument. They realised the consequences of ignoring the possibility of its destruction.

It was at this time that the interest in Emain Macha began to arouse local appreciation of the site. It was to be the first time in decades that people of Armagh City would learn the historical importance of Navan Fort, which had been a mere "hill" in the past to them.

After the enquiry into the limestone quarry, proposals were gathered for a visitors centre, these proposals were apprehensively welcomed. Concerns lay on the

possibility of the centre (which would be situated in the surroundings of the Navan Fort landscape), destroying the future of archaeological diggings around Navan. Also there was the fear that the centre would take away the mystical atmosphere, which is extremely noticeable when you visit the site.

It was decided a few years later that the building of the centre should go ahead, after discussing the arguments 'for' and 'against'. The centre opened in 1993 and its success has been overwhelming.

I have spent most of my life in Armagh, and I confess to being once ignorant on the history and legends of Emain Macha. It wasn't until the centre opened to the public that I began to learn and appreciate the importance of its existence.

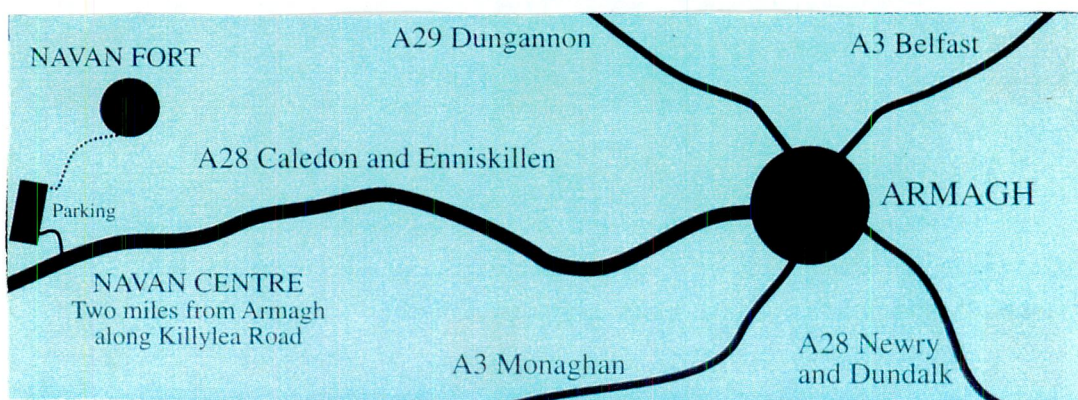
The lack of education I received on the Navan Fort throughout my school days; in comparison to today's educational schemes in the visitors centre, provoked me to present this thesis on the new found fascination I have for Navan Fort.

The main objective is to show, how close the monument was to danger and the controversies surrounding the visitors centre. The centre has helped to promote the success of interpretative centres everywhere; their importance to Celtic learning in Ireland.

The centre gives an appreciation of the "other world" enabling visitors to interpret the archaeological Navan landscape which lies hidden beneath the 20th century surface.



Pl. 1. Navan Fort from the East.



Map 1 Proximity of Navan Fort to Armagh



PLATE 1. The front of the book.



PLATE 2. The back of the book.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ORIGINS OF EMAIN MACHA - NAVAN FORT, AND THE FINDINGS THERE.

The years between 1963 and 1971 saw extensive excavations carried out at the site by Dudley Waterman, the chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Northern Ireland. The series of excavations were financed by the Ministry of Finance of Northern Ireland. It was the longest and one of the most complicated excavation ever to be carried out in Ulster. It was also one of the most productive. As part of this excavation the larger singular mound prominent in today's landscape in Navan was excavated (and later reconstructed.) (Pl. 2)

Mr. Waterman discovered through his work that there was evidence of Bronze Age settlement present under the mound, dating approximately to 700 B.C.. (Lynn, 1986, p.11-19) Through further excavation the archaeologists were able to define that at this time an enclosure was built marked by a surrounding ditch. On this enclosure a circular house attached to a larger stockade was believed to have been rebuilt one after the other on the same spot. These were basically typical domestic round-houses. This is extremely important to archaeologists; they can see from the reoccurrence of similar structures that the change in culture at that time was very slow unlike today's society. (Fig. 1)

Further investigation proved interesting in that remains of metal objects were uncovered. These were typical of the native late Bronze Age Culture of Ireland. They included bronze spearheads and a bronze sickle.

Later foundations of other houses proved to contain significant findings. The end piece of a sword scabbard for example was uncovered which was typical of the

REPORT

Submitted to the Board of Directors of the Company

January 1, 1950

The following report was prepared by the Board of Directors of the Company for the year ending December 31, 1949. The report covers the financial and operating results of the Company, and the actions of the Board of Directors during the year. The report is presented to the Board of Directors for their review and approval.

The Board of Directors of the Company has reviewed the financial and operating results of the Company for the year ending December 31, 1949. The Board of Directors has approved the report of the Board of Directors for the year ending December 31, 1949, and has recommended that the report be presented to the stockholders of the Company at the annual meeting of the stockholders.

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early Iron Age in Britain and the Continent. All of this information is of immense importance as there is still little known about Irish pre-history. Navan also offers excellent evidence for the change of culture at the critical time of the early Iron Age. Archaeologists believe that it was during this period that the Celts first entered Ireland, bringing new language and culture. No one can talk or indeed argue about the problems of knowing the origins of the Irish people without taking into account the evidence of Emain Macha.

The high status of the occupants of these series of houses is suggested by the discovery of an exotic object the skull of a Barbary ape in that area. This could only have originated in Spain or North Africa and it is known to be dated between 390 and 20 B.C. It can only have come to Navan by ship. Was it a gift given by a Mediterranean voyager to an Irish king? The Navan ape underlines the vital perhaps international importance of this royal site.(Raftery, 1994, p.79)

About 100 B.C. the people at Navan cleared away the remains of the round house-compounds. The character of the site completely changed and the extraordinary sequence of events took place which culminated in the construction of the great barrow. It is dated precisely to 94 B.C., for that is the tree-ring date given by analysis of one of the preserved timbers.(Raftery, 1994, p.78) First a great timber structure approximately 40 metres in diameter was constructed. This has an outer wall of horizontal planking within which were four concentric rings of regularly placed upright posts. At the centre of the structure was a large central post of oak. A passage way was allowed through the wooden posts to facilitate transporting the large oak timber - thought to have been 55cm in diameter and could have been as much as 13 meters long. Into the centre of the structure, in order to raise this massive post, a ramp 6 meters long was built so that it might be tipped into its pit; before raising it to an upright position.(Fig. 2)

It is believed that the workmanship of the building was carefully spaced and planned. There was a well defined entrance into the building and a long passage leading to its centre. Because of its enormity it has been wondered whether such a structure would have been roofed. It probably was, there are no architectural reasons to suggest any reasons why it shouldn't have been.

Within the structure there were no hearths and because of its size it is believed that it would have been too large to have been inhabited - no signs of domestic use was found. What was this structure for? Why was it built?

Barry Raftery gives an explanation that.

.....the soil cast up from the postholes was directly overlain by stones of the final covering mound, and where this soil was absent the mound material rested on the undisturbed debris. All this, in addition to the unique and extraordinary character of the multi-ring construction and its very presence on a site of known ceremonial importance, strongly supports the view that the building served a purpose which was primarily ritual. The distinct possibility that the huge central post was a non-structural, free-standing timber, reinforces this view. It could have been a totem pole, the focus of cult activities which might well have been carved or painted.....

(Raftery, 1994, p.78)

Almost as soon as this structure was erected, it was carefully and systematically filled with limestone blocks. These were placed while the posts were still standing and the surrounding wall of wood around the structure enabled the stones to remain intact. It is believed that the structure was deliberately set alight.(pl.3)

After Dudley Waterman's death, Chris Lynn, an Inspector in the Historic Monuments Service, has now nearly completed the task of writing up reports from

Waterman's excellent notes. In the course of his work, he has some ideas of his own. One of his speculations can be read in the summer edition of Current Archaeology.

.....the Gauls would build a wicker man, a huge image (simulacrum) with the limbs (membra) woven out of branches..... This was filled with living men and set alight so the men perish in the flames as an offering to the Gods.... was this oak-post building at Emain Macha equivalent of Ceasar's image (Simulacrum)? The Irish epics have an account of a magic hostelry, a Bruidne in which the heroes were feasted until the structure was then burnt down around them. It has been described as the Celtic equivalent of Valhalla.....

(Lynn, 1993, p.49.)

In his original account Dudley Waterman indeed reflected on such an interpretation of a Bruidne. However there is no evidence to suggest this - no human bones in the burnt material: where was the offering? There are many unanswered questions about this structure and it is open for speculation.

The Navan Fort also contains three other sites of great archaeological importance, these are Haughey's Fort, King's Stables and Loughnashade.(Map. 2)

Approximately three-quarters of a mile west of Navan Fort lies Haughey's Fort, (Pl. 4), a late Bronze Age hill fort, which was built and occupied about 1100B.C.. Archaeological investigation in recent years indicate that this settlement is even larger than the Navan Rath. Jim Mallory, of the Queen's University in Belfast found that the ditch was waterlogged and the lower levels provided a haul of waterlogged objects. The most interesting were the handles of tools, including considerable amounts of cattle bones. These cattle bones were rather larger than normal. There is a hint that in this very cattle conscious society, big cattle were especially valued, and perhaps were even bred to be big. There was a dog skull

found, which is the largest found yet - a royal hound of truly monstrous size?(Lynn, 1993, p.17-21)

Excavations in the centre of the interior of Haughey's Fort proved extensive. There was a scatter of posts and stakeholes. There was also a number of pits which were rather more substantial than expected. They contained charcoal and late Bronze Age pottery. More exotic objects were found. They included fragments of gold and a gold stud, while one pit contained several fragments of iron and several glass beads, which would normally date to the Roman period. Were at least the pits later? The most remarkable find however was a cup - and - ring marked stone found in one of the pits. Such cup - and - ring marks are usually dated to the Late Neolithic. It seems incredible that it could have been a contemporary feature pecked out in the late Bronze Age.(Fig. 3)

Close to Haughey's Fort, is the King's Stables.(Pl. 5) This is the only pre-historic artificial pool yet known in the British Isles. It was excavated in 1975 by Mr. Chris Lynn of the Archaeological Survey. He discovered that the round pond which forms the King's Stables is artificial - it was manmade during the late Bronze Age settlement at Navan. The pond was about thirty metres in diameter and two to three metres deep. At the bottom of the pond animal bones were discovered especially of red deer, dogs, cattle, pigs and of sheep. The location of these bones and their numbers suggest that they were deposited as a result of animal sacrifice. The facial part of a human skull apparently cut off deliberately was also discovered. Finds within the pool indicate that it had a ritual purpose where people deposited offerings to their gods.

Immediately down slope from Navan Fort is Loughnashade. Today at less than half a hectare it is only a shadow of its previous size. At the end of the 18th Century, men digging drains nearby discovered four bronze trumpets which had

been deposited in the lake as some form of offering. They were decorated in the traditional Celtic La Tene style and probably date back to the first Century B.C.(Pl. 6)

The Loughnashade horn measures 1.86 metres along its concave seam and 1.11 metres from tip to tip.

A circular disc of bronze, finely decorated in repousse technique with La Tene.(Pl.7)

The fabrication of a horn such as this from Loughnashade represents a feat of spectacular craftsmanship. The bronze sheets had first to be bent or hammered around appropriately shaped bars (perhaps wood), a process which required frequent annealing to make the metal more pliable and less prone to buckling or fracture. The sealing strip was then inserted into the prepared tube and held firmly in position by wedging a solid core or mandrel of some sort into the tube. Rivet-holes were then drilled through the two thicknesses of metal and the core removed. Using long tweezers, flat headed rivets were inserted into the holes from the inside. The mandrel was then re-inserted and the heads of the rivets on the outside were hammered against it to make them expand to hold them in place. They were then carefully filed smooth. The final action was bending the tubes to the desired form. To do this they probably packed them tightly with sand, plugged the ends and with frequent annealing, which would achieve the desired curve without damaging the bronze.(The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977, p.88)

Such a centre must have been a highly organised, well stocked focus of craft production staffed by skilled, permanent artificers working under the patronage

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the position of the various groups.

2. The second part of the report deals with the economic situation and the measures taken to improve it.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation and the measures taken to improve it.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the political situation and the measures taken to improve it.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the cultural situation and the measures taken to improve it.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the health situation and the measures taken to improve it.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the education situation and the measures taken to improve it.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the environment situation and the measures taken to improve it.

9. The ninth part of the report deals with the foreign relations situation and the measures taken to improve it.

10. The tenth part of the report deals with the conclusion and the recommendations.

and protection of the great and mighty. Indeed, could this workshop have been at or near the royal site at Navan? Yet there has never been a find of such a site.

The breathtaking care and attention lavished on these horns indicate clearly that they were made for no ordinary purpose. There can be little doubt that these were for the socially privileged, to be used on occasions of exceptional significance. They could have been blown during processions or religious ceremonies or in the course of military confrontations.

Unfortunately three of these trumpets have been since lost, and only one now remains - which is on permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland. It is known that the Celts often deposited precious goods in the water as offerings to gods. Bones of animals were found near where the trumpets were found. This clearly reveals that Loughnashade lake was a sacred lake.

The fact that there are four key archaeological sites at Navan is indicative of the importance of the area. It also suggests that there may be much more hidden in the surrounding landscape which may be brought out during further archaeological investigation.

Emain Macha is one of the central places of the Irish Epics, there are stories of CuChulainn, Conchobor(Conor), MacNessa, Fergus Mac Roech and Deidre of the Sorrow's. In these tales Emain Macha is portrayed as the great capital of Ulster where King Conchobor holds court and feasts his warriors, and where the youth of Ulster organised into the Macrad, the boy troop or boys brigade, played their early form of hurling and learned techniques of warfare. It was where the severed heads of the enemies of Ulster were placed on display. And where poets and druids recounted the glories of Ulster warriors and their ladies.

The legends associated with Emain Macha include one of the most important of all Irish legends, the "Cattle raid of Cooley" (Tain Bo Cuailnge), which tells how CuChulainn, the hound of Ulster, single handedly defeated the invading armies of Connaught. (Ross, 1986, p.40-1) These are stories, which may hark back to an Indo-European genesis, told by Irish storytellers (seanachie) and written down by the early Christian monks. Even today CuChulainn has a wide and in some cases dubious significance, from being an icon for extreme loyalist groups, to being the Irish hero captured in verse by W. B. Yeats in his poem "Statues".

Whether folk tale or fact, Emain Macha's is both entertaining and intriguing. Emain Macha was the ancient capital of Ulster, the seat of ancient kings when the power of Ulster was at its greatest. It is horrifying to think that this major piece of history was threatened by a quarry business that proposed to extend its quarrying into the main Navan Fort area and the existence of the Fort only still remains after years of fighting for its preservation.



Pl. 2. Aerial view of the excavation on Navan Fort singular mound.

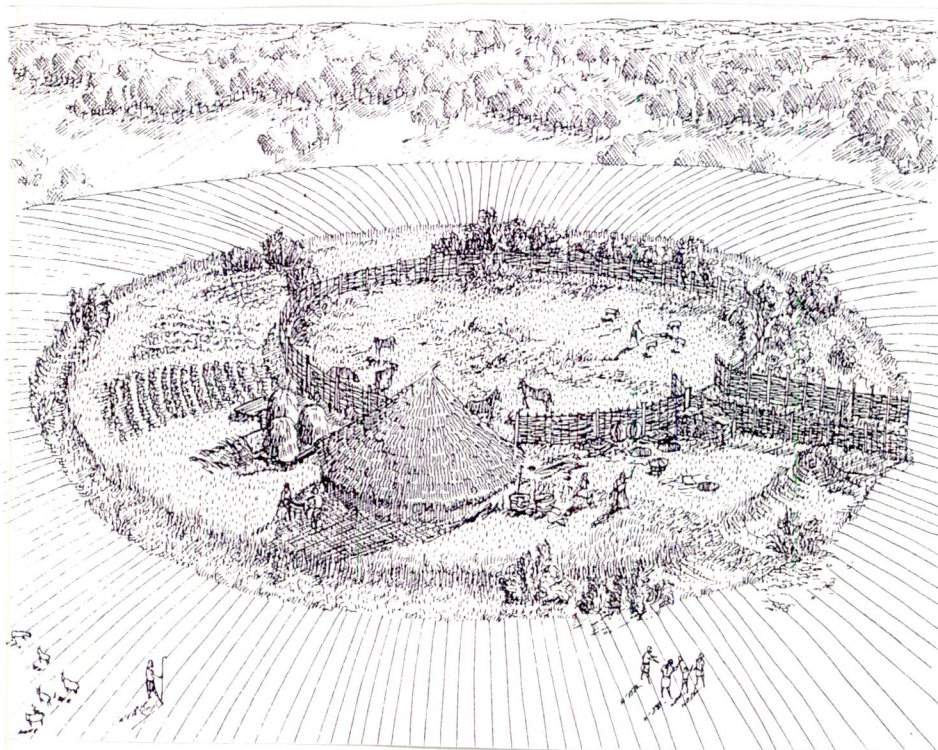


Fig 1. An artists impression of Bronze Age settlement at Navan Fort.

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The King's Stables and
the 19th Century
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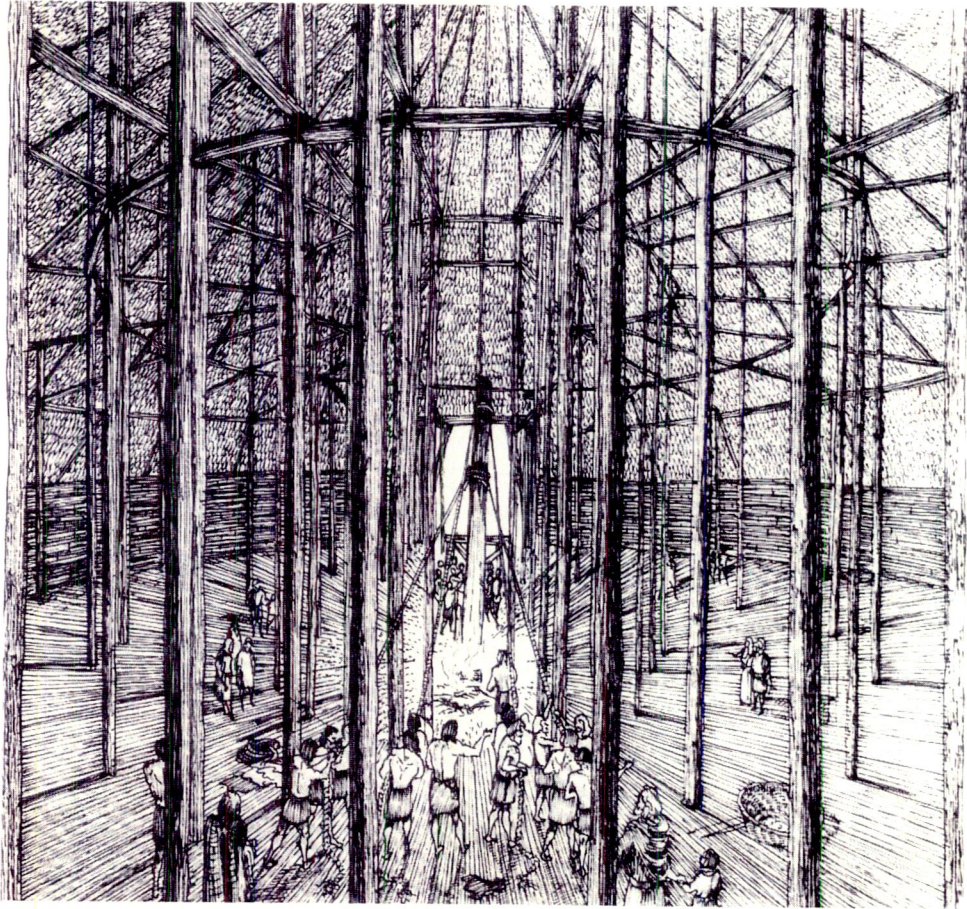


Fig. 2. An artists impression of the Great Post.



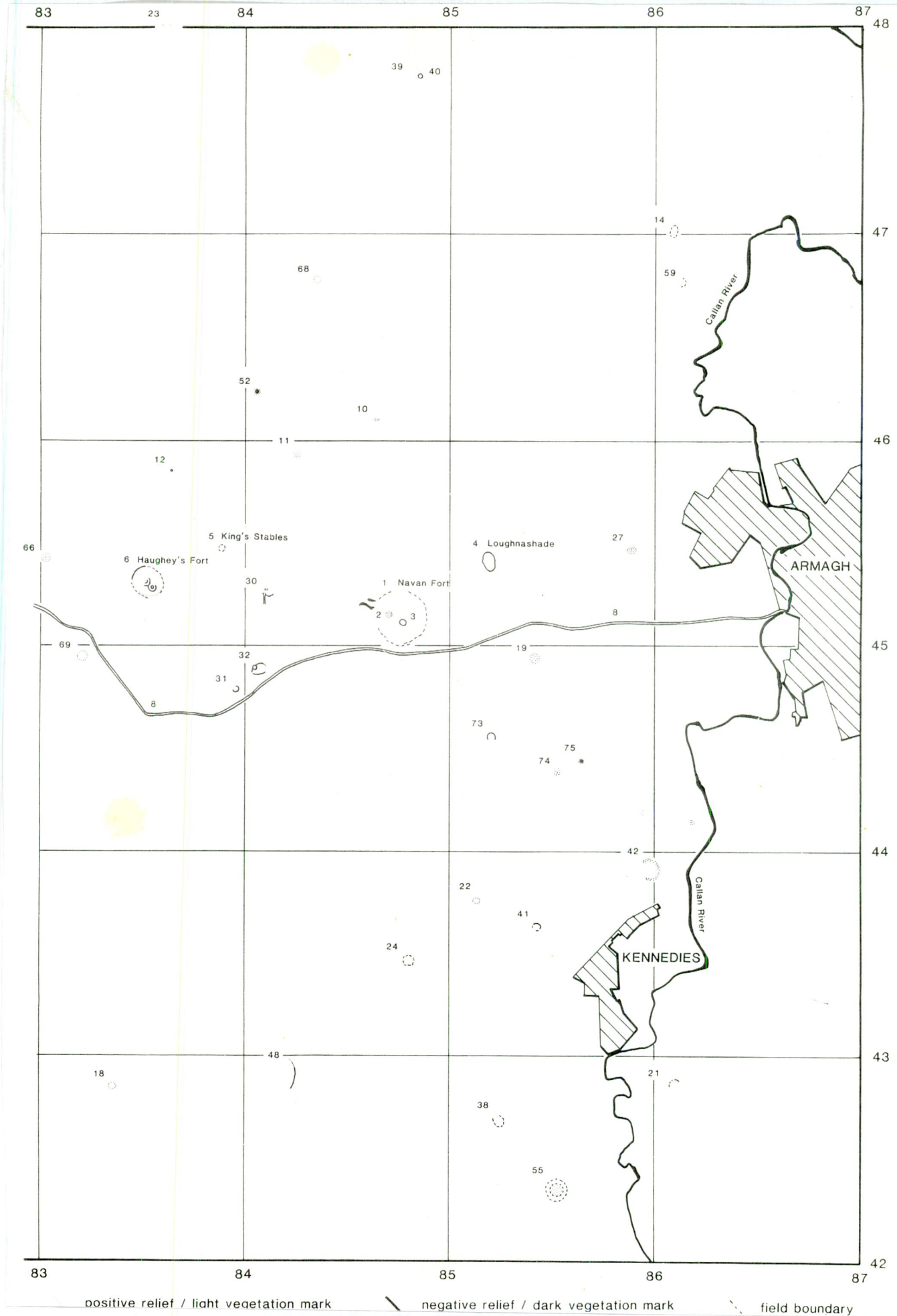
Fig. 1. Aerial photograph of the Great Port.



Pl. 3. Detail of excavated mound. Remains of Limestone blocks.



PLATE 1. Detail of excavated masonry. Remains of Portland Block.



Map 2. Distance between the three archaeological sites.





Pl. 4. Aerial view of Haughey's Fort.

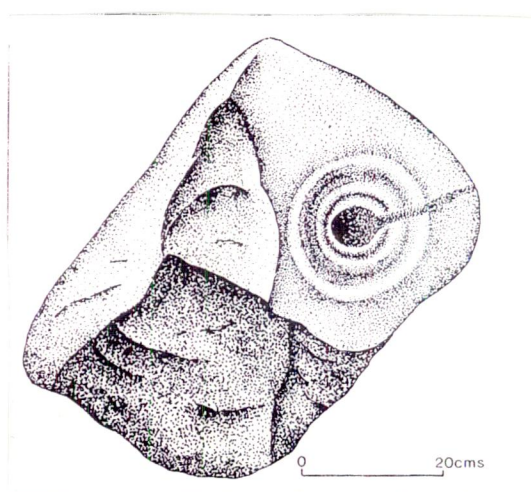


Fig. 3 Detail drawings of cup - and - ring marks.



Fig. 1. Anterior view of *Paraphysa* sp.



Fig. 2. Detail of the mouthparts of *Paraphysa* sp.



Pl. 5. The King's Stables.



Pl. 6. The Loughnashade Horn.



PL. 2. The King's Table



PL. 6. The King's Table



Pl. 7. Circular disc of bronze from Loughnashade Horn.

CHAPTER TWO

QUARRY THREATENS PLIGHT OF EMAIN MACHA.

In the latter part of 1986 the Navan Fort was headline news in Northern Ireland. The headlines were not informing the public on the Fort and its important history, instead journalists and members of the government were concerned about the plight of Navan Fort, because of a stone quarry adjacent to it which was threatening its existence.(Pl. 8)

The quarry had been beside the monument for hundreds of years. It never seemed to pose a threat as it was quite a small business. However, during the 1970's E.C. grants enabled the quarrying to significantly expand. Unfortunately as the years progressed the business became more viable, it developed into a major industry complete with mechanization, vast earth-moving machines and plant, making it one of the major quarries in Northern Ireland.

By 1984 the quarry owner Mr. Douglas Acheson had exhausted the immediate area and devastated much of the area between the Navan enclosure and Loughnashade. His decision to put forward a proposal for planning permission to expand further, led to the inevitable conflict between those who supported industrial expansion at Navan, and those who believed that the paramount complex of Ulster's heritage must be preserved from further destruction.

When the council granted permission for further development, concern was raised and a group of archaeologists led by Jim Mallory and Tom O'Neill of the Queen's University, Belfast began to protest. Through this a public campaign was mobilised by a wide group of interested and concerned persons, under the name "Friends of Navan". They were fighting for the preservation and indeed the

development of Emain Macha. The development of world-wide concern led to a public enquiry being set up.

The issues were argued in one of the longest local enquires in the history of Northern Ireland. The fate of Ulster's two thousand year old capital was debated in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Parliament, The Dail Eireann and The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Throughout the enquiry the paramount issue was the historical importance of Emain Macha and the need to preserve it. An S.D.L.P. spokesman Mr. Eddie McGrath had his opinions voiced in the Ulster Gazette on the 17th April 1986. Mr. McGrath's opinion was that all shades of expressed political opinion in the North were in favour of the preservation and protection of the Navan Fort and a decision which would mean the certain destruction of the site, would, be regarded on all sides as an act of ".....philistinism and vandalism....."(McGrath, 1986, p.14)

Many shared the opinions of Mr. McGrath agreeing on the preservation of the complex. The fact that both sides of the community were actively involved, showed that the preservation of the ancient site would have another advantage. It is the common heritage of two traditions - Protestant and Roman Catholic. It would greatly help to heal the wounds and divisions inflicted on each other by Planter and Gael. The paramount issues were culture and heritage versus the economic case for the quarry. The public had also to be made aware of the irredeemable consequences of permission for further quarrying.

The operations to deepen the quarry by another 50 feet would make any further rehabilitation of the landscape physically, and economically unfeasible. It would also further sever the important link between Loughnashade and Navan Fort. It

would eventually lead to abandonment and flooding as filling would be impractical. This was the inevitable consequence of granting permission.(Pl. 9)

Despite the support and the weight of evidence in favour of curtailing the further exploitation of the quarry, the enquiry ruled in favour of the quarry owner.

On the 21st May 1986 however, in a shock decision, this ruling was overturned by the incoming Minister responsible for the environment, Richard Needham, and he ordered Mr. Acheson to stop quarrying immediately. Despite the fact that the ruling meant the loss of employment, the minister's decision finally settled the dust on the future of the Fort as a place of outstanding historical interest.

Mr. Needham described Navan Fort as the Camelot of Ulster. His decision to seize the quarry had been greatly influence by the public enquiry and the significant increase of interest. Speaking at a Stormont press conference he answered questions relating to the quarry closure, or alteratively seeking compensation. He told members of the press that he still had to negotiate with Mr. Acheson on those terms. Mr. Needham admitted the reasons for favouring the Navan Fort, in the 21st of May 1986 edition of the Ulster Gazette they were the following:

1. By reason of unsightliness, dust and noise. quarrying would have an adverse effect on the amenity and siting of the Navan Fort, which is an archaeological site of primary importance.

2. In considering the public interests the department has to make a judgment between on the one hand, the normal presumption in favour of developing the continuation of quarrying, and the importance of employment considerations. On the other hand the accepted unfortunate and regrettable juxtaposition of the quarry to a significant monument.

(Needham, 1986. p.12)

In conclusion Mr. Needham described Navan Fort as

The primary archaeological site in Ulster. It is a historic monument in the ownership of the State, and it is open to the public. Apart from its archaeological significance it is important in history, legend and literature. It is part of Ulster's heritage.....

(Needham, 1986, P. 12)

The quarry owner, compensated for being ordered to stop quarrying, continues to work from the buildings in the quarry area.

The Navan Fort Initiative Group was set up early in 1987 by an independent group with a wide range of interests to consider the best future for the monument and its area. Navan Fort itself and the King's Stables nearby were owned by the Department of the Environment. But the quarry and the surrounding land were in private ownership.

A feasibility study was commissioned in September 1987. The group believed that the Navan Fort, its area, and other nearby sites provided an excellent opportunity to regenerate the local economy. They wished to assess the feasibility of establishing a major visitor facility at Navan Fort which would operate on a Commercial basis.



Pl. 8. Aerial view of stone quarry adjacent to Navan Fort.



Pl.9 Aerial view of Navan Fort and surrounding area.



PL 8 - Aerial view of some of the objects in the Fort



PL 9 - Aerial view of some of the objects in the Fort

CHAPTER THREE

PROPOSALS FOR A VISITORS CENTRE AT NAVAN FORT.

The proposals that emerged late in 1988 from the feasibility study undertaken by the Navan Fort Initiative Group(N.F.I.G.), into the future of Navan and its archaeological landscape, fully recognised the importance of local discussion and consultation. It focussed on three main aims.(N.F.I.G., 1988, p. 1-2)

There was the acquisition, and thereby protection, of a substantial acreage surrounding Navan Fort and encompassing Loughnashade, the King's Stables and Haughey's Fort. It would therefore present them to a wider public, in a setting appropriate to their importance. This would promote research into archaeology of the Navan area. The area would provide a leisure park, where visitors could enjoy walks, gardens, picnic sites and wild-life in its natural setting, and possibly see archaeologists at work in fields.

There was the establishment of an endowment fund which would finance further research into the archaeology of Navan. An independent charitable trust (Navan Trust) would have to purchase and hold the titles of the land, raise funds for the archaeological program, the capital developments and oversee the project. Its initial membership would reflect the various interest concerned both with Navan Fort and the wider Community. Its first objective would be to secure the fundings necessary to launch the Navan Project. (N.F.I.G., 1988, p.4)

There would also be an operating company (Navan Trust Management Ltd.) to manage the operations and develop the commercial side of the project on behalf of the trustees. The company would have to develop the creation of a Navan

Centre, from its concept stage through design and implementation studies to completion, including the design, location and layout of the Visitors Centre.

The proposals were welcomed, although the realisation of the third one caused some concern about the possible trivialization of the story of Navan. A number of concepts for a centre had been partially examined, several possible locations had been identified, money analyses carried out but, overall, the delivery of the centre project still required detailed evaluation and planning.

In February 1989, a charitable trust, Navan at Armagh was set up for the purpose of carrying through the proposals.

The trustees concentrated initially on sourcing potential funding for all aspects of the project. The International Fund for Ireland had moved in quickly in 1988 to offer financial support for the centre as it was seen as having important potential in a number of areas: tourism, academic research, job creation, economic regeneration in the Armagh area and, not least as a vehicle for cross-community educational activity based on the common heritage of Navan Fort.

Further possible support was offered by the Department of the Environment, which holds Navan Fort and the King's Stables for the nation, and from the European Regional Development Fund(E.R.D.F) Tourism program.

In addition to support for the centre the National Heritage Memorial Fund agreed to assist with acquisition of property in the archaeological landscape around Navan.

Although response from government were extremely good, the public began to air their own opinions in newspapers. One particular "Letter to the Editor" by

Richard B. Warner in a March edition of the Belfast Telegraph Newspaper, was in Complete Criticism of the plans.

.....however, the aims that were not overtly stated, but are the main reason for the unseemly haste and the unacceptable location, are the need to spend a large amount of internationally granted money in a short time, and the need to maximise income by exploiting the nearness of Navan Fort....

(Warner, 1990, p.21)

Mr. Warner continues to write of his concern:

.....it seems then that while the original aim of those who cared for the Navan complex was the preservation and development (without prejudice) of the complex Navan has now become purely an adjunct to an ambitious cultural centre to whose construction its environmental integrity will be sacrificed.

(Warner, 1990, p.21)

In a response to Mr. Warner's letter. The chairman of the Navan Fort Initiative Group Dr. G. S. Beveridge wrote in the same week a "Letter to the Editor". He was extremely defensive of the proposals describing the letter from Mr. Warner as "nonsense"(Beveridge, 1990, p.24)

He explained that the nature of the Visitors Centre was to provide an educational and archaeological research(interpretive) centre at Navan.

.....the trust had five main aims: to preserve Navan Fort and its associated monuments; to present them to a wider public; to promote research into the archaeology of the Navan area; to stimulate economic activity in Armagh City and to ensure that the whole community reaps the benefit socially and economically.....

(Beveridge, 1990, p.24)

These aims were to be met through the creation of an international interpretive facility, the Navan Centre, a 300 acre archaeological park and the establishment of an Archaeological Research Endowment Fund.

Mr. Beveridge concluded that,

.....the trust, acutely aware of the archaeological and environmental sensitivities of its proposals, will discuss with the department of the Environment the measures needed to ensure the integrity of the landscape in both archaeological and visual terms.....

(Beveridge, 1990. p.24)

Mr. Warner's argument had covered an extremely valuable point as some heritage sites and areas of countryside are showing serious signs of damage through tourism. Tourism operators should examine the impact of their operations on the environment. Historic towns are affected by overcrowding and traffic congestion. For example the shambles in York and the lanes in Brighton are often too crowded for the character of their buildings to be appreciated. The village of Lacock, Wiltshire which has just 200 residents, receive half a million visitors a year. These crucial points would have to be looked upon initially.

The Navan Centre was the heart of the development, a showpiece setting for a rich range of experiences for the visitor.

Its objectives were to complement and enhance the quality of the monuments and their landscape, to make visitors aware of the enormous importance of the area and its wealth of archaeology, mythology and history. It was to excite them with a sense of the "Other World" of Celtic imagination.

The plans of the Interpretative Centre were quickly drawn up and discussed. John Crothers, Director of McAdam Design, Architects and Engineers was leading the proposed plans.

The location of the Visitor Centre was obviously one of extreme sensitivity, and consequently there was major environmental constraints placed on the development. The planning authorities required that the Centre must blend into the existing pastoral landscape without disruption and should not intrude into the view from the top of the monument itself.

A site for the Centre was sought to the south of the Fort, towards the Killylea Road. The site initially identified was unacceptable to the planning service of the Department of the Environment and the Historical Monuments Council. Following further consultation with these and other interested bodies and individuals, the trust's proposal was revised to locate the Centre and the Car Park further away, about 400 metres from the Fort, adjacent to the Killylea Road.(N.F.I.G., 1988, p.7)

These requirements were successfully met by the use of existing tree lines and hedgerows to screen the site of the new building from most directions and by the design of the building itself, which would be virtually underground.

Car parking arrangements were a potentially disruptive element in a natural landscape and pose the more difficult problems of having to cope with the movement of large brightly coloured vehicles, sunlight reflection on windscreens and, of course, at times there would be the large open spaces of an empty or virtually empty car park.(N.F.I.G., 1988, p.8)

Extensive use of grasscrete standings, providing visual continuity with surroundings, together with low earth mounding, screen planting of shrubs and trees, new hedgerows and reinforcement of existing ones, would reduce the visual intrusion of cars and coaches to within acceptable limits. The Council had been anxious that the visual impact of the vehicle access to the proposed visitor centre should not be too invasive. Their concern was also expressed about the choice of surface material for the Car Park and also pathways and it was felt that another form of firm surfacing such as green coloured bitmac might be appropriate(P1. 10)

The Centre itself was technically referred to as an earth covered structure. It was not actually an underground building, simply a single story structure built at existing ground level at the foot of a gentle slope, then the earth and surrounding meadow was drawn up over the roof to form a grassy mound.(Pl. 11)

The Centre would be described as a non-building. The only visible aspect when complete would be a minimum amount of dry stone walling, using local stone, some textured masonry block cladding, and those windows which are necessary to admit natural light.

The aim is for the visitors to arrive at Navan without immediately being conscious that there is any building there at all.(Pl.12)

A Project Director was appointed in May 1990, funds were secured from the International Fund for Ireland, the European Regional Development Fund and the Northern Ireland Department of Environment. The National Heritage Memorial Fund agreed to support the purchase of land surrounding Navan Fort, encompassing other Monuments.(Pl.13)

Construction started on the Centre in March 1992, with a visit by the Minister of the Environment, Richard Needham M.P. on his last working day in the province.

On Thursday, July 1st, 1993, the Navan Fort Centre was opened. The day was filled with events designed to give a flavour of the Centre's future cultural role, and fire the imagination of visitors.

The huge variety of entertainment included the Armagh Rhyness, Storyteller John Campbell, the Belfast Harp Orchestra, traditional music group Cradbh Rua and a performance by Armagh Youth Theatre.

The Centre represents a £4 million pound investment in Armagh. It employed twenty-eight people at the very beginning and it is hoped that the number will double in the future.

Navan Fort has been adopted as one of the flagship projects in Ireland because it offers considerable economic regeneration potential for the Armagh Region, and also because the importance of Emain Macha as a capital of the ancient Kings of Ulster, holds a special significance for the people in Ireland, North and South.



Pl. 10. Photograph of Car Park at Visitors Centre.



Pl.11. Photograph of entrance to the Visitors Centre.



PL 10: Photograph of Camp of the Visitors' Camp



PL 11: Photograph of entrance to the Visitors' Camp



Pl. 12. View of Visitors Centres from Car Park.



Pl. 13 Distance between Navan Fort and Visitors Centre.



Fig. 12. View of Ventrals Centre from the front.

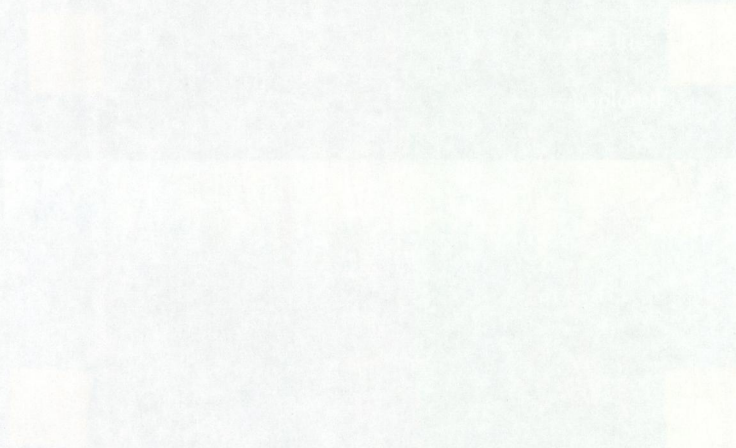


Fig. 13. Distance between M. ventral and Ventrals Centre.

CONCLUSION

Once through the inner doors all is colour and light. The visitor emerges into a brightly lit circular reception hall within a circular colonnade of tall timber columns supporting a large circular domelight. This is the heart of the Visitor's Centre; everything revolves around it.

In this area there is the reception and information desk, toilets, classroom, access stairs to the administrative offices and the entrance to the interpretive offices and on the right is the coffee shop, then on the way out which leads to the monument there is the shop.(Pl. 14)

Visitors are admitted in controlled numbers to the interpretive gallery, which presents the "Navan Experience" through the media of the latest audio-visual and computerese display techniques. Each group takes up to an hour to process through the various sections.

Visitors first enter an introductory gallery where general information in the form of graphics, notices and voice over commentary, keep them occupied until the automatic doors open on cue and they enter the first gallery. This is a short four minute audio visual sequence known as "The Dawning" and is effective in transporting the audience back through two thousand years of history and mythology to the Emain Macha of pre-Christian Ulster.

The second and large gallery know as the "Real World" presents and interprets all that modern archaeology can tell us about Emain Macha of the late Bronze and early Iron Ages, with excavations of the 40 metre structure by the late Dudley Waterman as a central feature. As the title suggests the "Real World" brings together all that is known and is relevant to the Navan Complex. Through the

traditional exhibits of models and diagrams and the state of the art computer graphics, we interpret theories and hypotheses concerning the life and times of various ancient cultures which have occupied the site.

The architects have included the intriguing insight, that relatively new sciences such as pollen analysis and demorochronology give to understanding the changing appearance of the Irish landscape from the Ice Age to the present. Most of the artifacts on display are reproductions. These include the Loughnashade trumpets, the Barbary Ape skull and the remainder of the 40 metre structure. Towards the end of the gallery there is a section devoted to the aspects of rituals which seem to have dominated the spiritual lives of our pre-Christian ancestors, and this leads on to the final stage of the experience, the entry into the "Other World".

The "Other World" is a 120 seat audio-visual theatre and the show here, which lasts approximately 25 minutes, presents a specially scripted version of the best known tales from the Ulster Cycle. Tales of the Red Branch, The Tain, of Conchobar, Deidre, Noisiu, Medb and of course CuChulainn and all the other heroes of Ulster are brought to life by the latest audio-visual interpretive techniques. Nevertheless the art of the traditional storyteller is not to be ignored. The theatre is designed with a small stage in front of the main screen and can easily accommodate a small group of performers, a solo artist, lecturer or storyteller.

After the show the visitors leave the theatre and return to the main reception area where they can chose to venture outside and take the path up to the monument - while all the history and legend are still freshly in their minds and they can fully appreciate the monument. They may take a snack in the coffee shop, or browse through the Navan shop, which sells books on Navan and related interest, items inspired by Celtic design and more general giftware from posters to local craft.

The layout of the Visitors Centre takes the form of two intersecting circular domed structures, each a single story of similar height but slightly different diametres.

The internal finishes are simple and generally in natural materials. The external dry stone walling is allowed to penetrate into the interior, particularly at the entrances. The remainder of the wall is concrete simply painted, and the public area is seen as an opportunity to display artwork, information or even specially commissioned murals. Glazed screens and the cladding to columns are in natural pine, stained and varnished. The screen separating the coffee shop from the reception area is formed in wickerwork panels which were woven in Armagh. Generally the floors are finished in carpet tiles with a special Celtic design commissioned for the public area, while the suspended ceiling is made up of stained softwood slatted panel's. The great domelight over the reception hall, or atrium, is in bronze-tinted non-reflective glass, in a wheel shaped frame made out of bronze coated aluminium.(Pl. 15)

The architectural design concept has evolved quite naturally out of the original feasibility study by the Navan Fort Initiative Group, the constraints applied by planning and other interested parties, and above all the inspiration from the history and mythology of Emain Macha.

The building is designed to tell stories, to prepare the visitor for a journey into our past, to the Celtic "Other World". Its function will be to interpret the Navan landscape - and the rich source of the Ulster Cycle which forms that other intangible literary landscape.

The offices located on the mezzanine floor are accessed from the main reception hall. These offices accommodate both the Director of the Centre and his staff as well as an office/laboratory for a resident archaeologist. Maintenance and repair workshops, projection room and stores are also on this level.

Nine months prior to the opening of the Centre an education officer was appointed to take task of developing comprehensive materials for schools.

These are the following:

KEY STAGE I (for primary 1 to 4 children)

KEY STAGE II (for primary 5 to 7 children)

The children are learning environmental science, and the Navan Fort Centre has opened new special projects for this age group. They hope to bring in Drama and Music, allowing children at that early stage to surround themselves in the Centre of Celtic Learning.

Irish language is to be inserted into the project, allowing school children, school leavers and adult learners to expand their initial knowledge of the language.

The Navan Centre which opened to the public on 1st July 1993, attracted over 50,000 visitors in its first year of operation. Some 35 jobs have been created, 10 of these being permanent and the remainder seasonal. In time, the number of permanent full-time jobs is expected to double.

In the first month of Navan's opening in July, the Visitors Centre received its 10,000th visitor.

The reason for the greater number of visitors than expected is thought to have been the international attention given to the Centre by the media abroad and at home.

Also the Centre at Navan has won several awards including the Best Tourist Project in Northern Ireland and a recognition award in Heritage and Environment Category, Allied Irish Bank Better Awards. They also received a British Airways Tourism Award.

The work of the Architect of the building has attracted great interest; the Centre won the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland Award in 1994 and a Royal Institute of British Architects Award also in 1994.

Interest in the Centre has been such that the developers of the Stone Henge Centre in England have visited Navan to give them ideas on how their development should proceed.

Many important people have also visited the Centre including top American archaeologists and more recently visits by the Chief Executive of Heritage projects and museums in England and Scotland.

Tourists throughout the world have visited the Navan Centre at Armagh.

African, Chinese, South Americans, Europeans and even a Russian professor have called into the Centre.

This professor had translated the stories relating to Navan Fort, such as the Cattle Raid of Cooley, into Russian, and they sold 150,000 copies in his country, perhaps

there are more people in Russia who are aware of Armagh's unique legends of CuChulainn and Mebh than there are in Northern Ireland!

One of the Centres major achievements over the past 2 years was bringing over 11,000 children from both sides of the political divide, and from North and South of the border together through the education for mutual understanding initiative.

Navan offers an opportunity for people to step into a past which is unsullied by political difficulties and opinions.

This is just the first step in the new Navan history.

The first phase was the opening of the Centre. The second phase is not the completion of a 300 acre archaeology landscape and the creation of an archaeological research project based upon an endowment fund to be set up through sponsorship.

An estimated 1,500 people travelled to catch the evening of entertainment put together by the members of staff at the Navan Visitors Centre at Armagh and the Planetarium on 17th December 1992, to mark the Lunar Eclipse.

With the Planetarium providing the astronomical expertise at Navan Fort, they pulled together the cultural aspects, visitors were presented with the unique pairing of ancient customs and twentieth century technology.

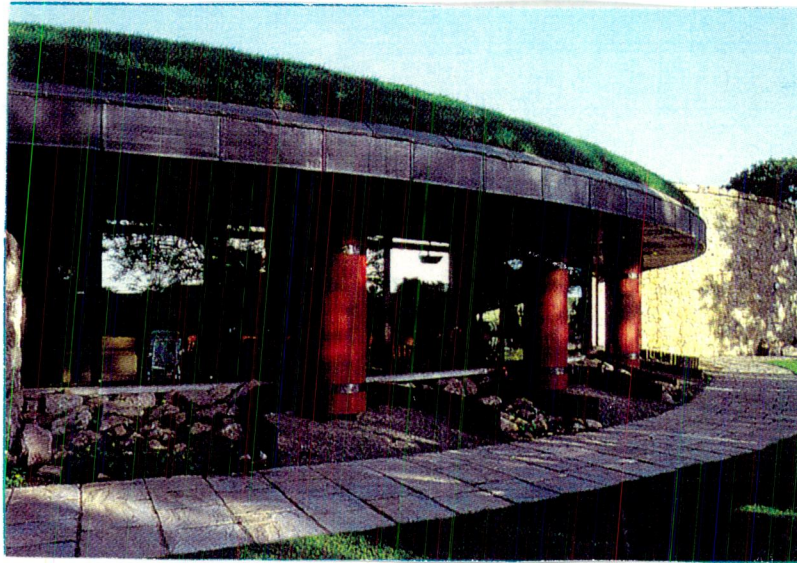
For approximately two hours a little of the pagan atmosphere which might have greeted an eclipse so many moons ago was recreated. In those days the Navan Fort enjoyed a prestigious identity as a centre of political, spiritual and cultural significance.

A little of that returned that night. Through telescopes on the Navan mound the first total eclipse of the Moon visible from Ireland for over three years was captured. And while visitors watched what the ancients once believed to be a monster swallowing the Moon, they were talked through the event with the staff from the Planetarium.

While the Navan Fort is no longer of political or spiritual significance. Culturally it still has much to offer. The numbers which have visited this Centre testify to the interest which ancient culture generates in the twentieth century.

Therefore, it is so important to maintain our cultural sites, to preserve and develop them, in a manner that complements and does not take away from their surroundings.

In Ireland there are so many sites not maintained; sites that still have to be discovered. This ignores the importance of Ireland's unique cultural history. It ignores the possibility of employment, of bringing tourism to a place that maybe needs extra business. There is such an opening for Interpretative Centres. Navan revived itself from being close to destruction and the public were close to losing interest and attention. Now nearly a decade since it all started the Centre has proved an enormous success once again rebuilding the former glory of Emain Macha.



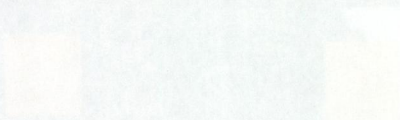
Pl. 14 Coffee Shop at Visitors Centre.



Pl. 15 Photograph of internal finishes at Visitors Centre.



PL 14. Color photograph of Vision Center.



PL 15. Three photographs of Vision Center.

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