

Archaeology Legacy Grant Scheme 2022

Stefan Bergh_Final report

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1. Title: Dr

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2. Email:

3. Grant programme Archaeology Legacy Projects

4. Year awarded 2022

5. Title of project The Knocknarea Archaeology Project

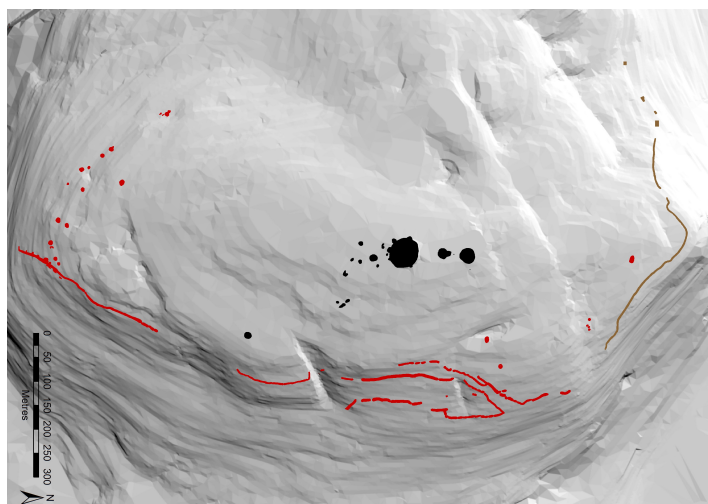
6. Summary of report (Min. allowed 100 words)

The overall focus of the project has been to prepare for dissemination the archaeological information collected during the excavations and survey work undertaken within the Knocknarea Archaeological Project on Knocknarea Mountain. Co. Sligo in 1999 and 2000.

The dissemination was, a per application, divided into two sections: a final Excavation Report and the preparation of a Draft for a monograph. The work with the Excavation Report has mainly consisted of preparation of plans, sections, GIS based maps and photography to be integrated into a format suitable for online publication as via Open Access. The technical side of the work is completed and has mainly been done by Dag Hammar and Noel McCarthy. What remains is some editing before it can be made available via Open Access online. The Report consist of 84 pages of text including images. With the Report there are also 6 Appendices including full photographic record of the extensive assemblage of concave scrapers recorded during the project.

The work with the draft for the monograph has been ongoing in tandem with the Excavation Report work and the full text for this is now in draft format and consists of 120 pages. Imagery and map work for this has been undertaken by Dag Hammar and Noel McCarthy

7. Please provide two appropriate images



Map 1



9. Please outline the objectives of the project

The main objective of the project is to prepare two types of dissemination of the archaeological information and knowledge achieved through The Knocknarea Archaeological Project in mainly 1999 and 2000. These consist of an Excavation Report and a Draft for a monograph publication as outlined in application.

10. Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research

My original draft manuscript for a single monograph publication contained c. 200 pages of text, divided into ten chapters. This turned out to be a too heavy and complex monolith to bring to publication.

To resolve this the current project involved the partitioning of this original draft into two separate entities: one being a Report fulfilling the license requirements for an Excavation Report while the second being a more interpretative text, discussing the Neolithic archaeology of Knocknarea in its local, regional and wider context.

The main work relating to the Excavation Report, besides the actual extraction of the text relating to the Report from the existing draft, has consisted of the production of plans, sections and various GIS based maps and imagery. This work has mainly been undertaken by Archaeologist Dag Hammar and Dr Noel McCarthy. The work with the text has been mainly done by me.

The work related to the draft for the monograph has mainly been focused on structuring the remaining text and to adjust this as it now has been separated from the more detailed excavation accounts. The production of the various imagery for the Excavation Report has of course also served the monograph, but additional imagery to the latter has also been produced by Hammar and McCarthy as per application.

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

The archaeology that will be disseminated thanks to the current funding, will on several levels have the potential of being of major significance to Neolithic studies, since the remains uncovered represent a rather exceptional set of monuments and lithic technologies, linked to the Irish Passage tomb tradition. The main findings can be summarised as follows.

- The discovery of an extensive complex of Neolithic banks measuring some 1.6 km along the eastern flanks of Knocknarea mountain adds a new dimension to how ritual space is to be understood in the context of this mountain and its wider landscape. We are already aware of the dynamic dialogue between monuments and landscape that characterises the Irish passage tombs. The presence of highly segmented banks defining the summit with its passage tombs forces us to re-think the landscape perception held by these people in the Neolithic.
- The rather un-orthodox layout and construction of this complex of segmented banks from the Neolithic, has potential to actively inform our understanding of the growing corpus of upland enclosures in Neolithic Ireland.
- Seven C14 samples from various sections of the banks returned dates

to a narrow window at 3500-3400 calBC which will be of significant value to the Neolithic chronology of the region and beyond.

- From a wider landscape perspective, the mountain of Knocknarea played a central role in the ritual landscape defined by the passage tomb monuments in Sligo. It did so not only by being the location for the huge passage tomb of Queen Maeve's on its summit, but also by its visual presence and dominance. The new evidence brought forward by this project clearly indicating a variety of activities on the mountain beyond the passage tomb monuments, and will bring new and important building blocks to our understanding of this important Neolithic landscape. Since the Passage Tomb Landscape of Co. Sligo recently has been placed on Ireland's Tentative List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites the new evidence will actively inform the definition and presentation of this landscape.
- The trial excavations carried out within the project has revealed that people made, used and discarded an extraordinary amount of lithic tools on the hill side in the Neolithic. The lithic assemblage consists of some 14 600 pieces, out of which 202 are concave scraper, mainly made of chert. Since the assemblage contains by far the largest assemblage of concave scrapers in Ireland, a strong emphasis has been put on the analysis of this enigmatic tool, with the hope to make a strong contribution to our understanding of this, rather unique tool from the Irish Neolithic.
- The discovery and recording of an extensive area for chert extraction along the north-eastern slopes of the mountain probably represents the largest prehistoric chert quarry in Ireland. The link between this quarrying activity and the production of chert tools along the banks higher up on the mountain, is yet another trajectory of research where the Knocknarea Project has the potential of making a significant contribution.

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

The two main forms of dissemination consist of a full Excavation Report to be submitted to the National Monument Service, DoEHLG in fulfilment of licence conditions, and a more interpretative monograph to be published separately. The currently funded project has been of a strictly technical and editing character, from which follows that its progress has not warranted any active dissemination on social media or web platforms. For the same reason section b) and c) below have not been applicable. It needs however to be stressed that in relation the Knocknarea Archaeological Project as a whole, some 10 academic papers as well as numerous lectures and outreach events have taken place over the years.

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

The project has a presence on the website of the Discipline of Archaeology at the University of Galway.

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

The Excavation Report including Appendices will be made available as Open Access via ARAN publishing portal on University of Galway. The monograph, which has the working title 'Knocknarea – The Archaeology of a mountain', is the final dissemination of the archaeological work carried out within the Knocknarea Archaeological Project. This is planned as a monograph of c. 100 pages, and as outlined in application, funding for final editing and printing of this will be sought through University of Galway and from Local Authorities in 2023. Besides publication in hardcopy, I would also like to see this publication made available through Web based Open Access. In conjunction with the preparation of the monograph I am also preparing a paper of the main findings from the project for submission to Journal of Irish Archaeology. The results will further be made available to a wider audience via various channels by the fact that Knocknarea forms a central part of the property The Passage tomb landscape of Co. Sligo, which is included in Ireland's Tentative List for UNESCO WHS status.

16. How did the grant enhance your professional development (e.g. in terms of specific opportunities, opportunities for enhancing skills, collaborations with others etc.)?
- The grant was of immense importance to me both personally and professionally as the overly complex and large draft of the Knocknarea Archaeological Project had become a big burden to me on many levels. The grant gave me confidence to completely re-think the dissemination of this rather significant project, and I am extremely happy with the way it has worked out.
- It also has meant that important collaborations with colleagues were re-instated and new trajectories of research related to the project has emerged.
17. What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?
- The Knocknarea Archaeological Project as such will be concluded with the monograph to be delivered for publication in 2023.
- Since I have been deeply involved in the preparation of the successful bid to include The Passage Tomb Landscape of Sligo onto Ireland's Tentative List for UNESCO WHS status, the results from the Knocknarea Project will however make an active contribution to the continued interpretation and management of this spectacular Neolithic landscape. This is a work that I look forward to taking active part in on different levels.
- A different field of research is based on the lithic assemblage from Knocknarea, with its extra-ordinary amount of concave scraper within a rather opportunistic, chert based, lithic industry. This is a field of research that myself and Dag Hammar have strong plans to develop in the coming years.
- Having had the privilege for so many years to explore the archaeology of Neolithic Sligo there is no end to potential research projects!
18. For Archaeology Legacy Projects only: Please outline current plans to lead to completion of a final excavation report as per licence/consent and original grant condition:
- The plan to complete the final excavation report involves currently to conclude the editing of the text (c. 85 pages), insertion of any additional imagery into the text, and finding the appropriate format for presenting the high-resolution photography of the collection of concave scrapers.
- Some editing remains also of the wear-mark analysis Appendix submitted by Prof. Kjel Knutson, Uppsala. A reasonable timeline involves submission of Report to NMS in February 2023.