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| A red circle with a white letterDescription automatically generated | Supplementary material for  Smyth, J., N. Carlin, D. Hofmann, C.J. Frieman, P. Bickle, K. Cleary, S. Greaney & R. Pope. 2025. **The ‘king’ of Newgrange? A critical analysis of a Neolithic petrous fragment from the passage tomb chamber.** *Antiquity* 99.  Author for correspondence ✉ jessica.smyth@ucd.ie |

**Supplementary Information: a brief summary of early investigations at Newgrange**

Given its striking size, Newgrange has attracted considerable antiquarian interest since its rediscovery in 1699 (Lhwyd 1710). This has both caused structural alterations and introduced elements of uncertainty regarding the appearance and location of human remains, which can be traced through subsequent reporting and interpretation. Late 18th century visitors to the tomb dug through the rear recess in search of treasure, smashing its basin stone in the process, and by 1891 the upper basin stone from the right recess had been moved to the centre of the tomb chamber, where it remained until the 1950s (Coffey 1892; O’Kelly 1982: 38, 102; Stout & Stout 2008: 55). In the late 1880s, restoration work by the Board of Works (now Office of Public Works or OPW) also significantly disturbed the interior. These interventions extended into all of the tomb recesses, with concrete spread over some of the floors and cast into plinths to support timber struts (O’Kelly 1982: fig. 4) and the basin stone in the left recess apparently moved.  By the late 19th century, Newgrange was already viewed as a ‘despoiled tumulus’, with little in the tomb thought to remain intact (Coffey 1892: 15). Major disturbance also took place in 1901, when holes were dug along the front of the orthostats in the passage and chamber to facilitate recording of the megalithic art (O’Kelly 1982: 102), and again from the mid-1950s, when work facilitating increasing tourist access was conducted.

The presence of human remains in the chamber was also extensively discussed by antiquarians. Crucially, early in the history of investigation of Newgrange, Thomas Molyneux (1726: 204) was told by the landowner Charles Campbell that “when first the cave was opened, the bones of two dead bodies entire, not burnt, were found upon the floor, in likelyhood the reliques of a husband and his wife”. While discounting the more fanciful elements of this account, O’Kelly (1982: 24, 107) was struck by the similarities between this apparent double burial and the human bone report recording the unburnt remains of at least two individuals, one likely male (Fraher 1982: 198, 200; also O’Sullivan 1982). Based on this, O’Kelly (1982: 107 [emphasis added]) suggested that this material “may have been derived from a *pair* of skeletons”, presumably (although not explicitly) referring to those mentioned by Molyneux. However, Molyneux is alone among early visitors to Newgrange in describing articulated human remains, and the veracity of his supposed ‘eye witness’ account has been challenged (Coffey 1892: 15; Herity 1967: 130–1). Significantly, the first antiquarian to visit Newgrange, Edward Lhwyd (1710: 504) observed the basin stones in the chamber recesses and “loose stones every where under feet”, but does not mention any burial deposits. His account of what was previously retrieved is telling: “They found several bones in the cave…and some other things, *which I omit, because the labourers differ’d in their account*” (Lhwyd 1710: 504; [emphasis added]).

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