

Technical report

Analysis of plant remains from Fermoy Townland, Co. Cork (05E0078)

By Penny Johnston

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Drumm, M. and Tierney, J. (2010). Archaeological Excavation Report, 05E0078 – Fermoy, Co. Cork Neolithic pit and Bronze Age Fulacht Fiadh. Eachtra Journal, 6. Retrieved from http://eachtra.ie/new_site/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/05E0078Fermoy-N8RF.pdf

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Introduction

This report details the analysis of charred seeds and plant remains from samples taken during excavation of a burnt mound and two pits found at Fermoy Td., Co. Cork.

Methodology

The samples were collected on site as bulk soil and were processed using a simple flotation method. Each sample was saturated in water to allow carbonised plant material to float; this “flot” (the floating material) was then poured into a stack of geological sieves and trapped in the sieve meshes (the smallest measured 250µm). When all the carbonised material was collected the flot was then air-dried in paper-lined drying trays prior to storage in airtight plastic bags. All the samples were initially scanned under low magnification (using a binocular microscope with magnification x10 to x40) to identify the samples with most potential for analysis, the scanning results are listed in Table 1. None of the samples contained the remains of charred seeds.

Results

Thirteen samples were scanned for charred plant remains. Although all the samples contained charcoal no charred seeds were recovered from the site. Charred seeds are consistently absent from burnt mound deposits and while the debate rages regarding the function of these sites, plant remains studies can only contribute a negative; they were evidently never involved in the processing of cereal foods.

Non-Technical Summary

This report examined the plant remains taken from a burnt mound excavated at Fermoy Td., Co. Cork. There were no plant remains in the samples, an absence that is consistent in samples of charred remains from burnt mounds.

Penny Johnston

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Table 1: Scanning results for Soil Samples from Fermoy Td., Co. Cork (05E0078)

Context	S.S. No.	Fraction Scanned	Cereals	Weeds	Charcoal
16	2	100%			Present
22	5	100%			Present
26	3	100%			Present
29	4	100%			Present
30	7	100%			Present
31	6	100%			Present
63	16	100%			Present
79	19	100%			Present
80	20	100%			Present
83	23	100%			Present
84	22	100%			Present
92	24	100%			Present
109	29	100%			Present