



# NAVAN FORT

## Ulster-Scots Translation

### NAVAN FORTH

Tha Twuns o Macha

Tha Coontie o Armagh

### Tha Steid

Navan Forth is a big roon earthenwark dyke 2 mile W. o Armagh citie. It's stuid on a clie drumlin abane limestane, an tha mair frae far aff tha hill disnae staun oot, frae tha tap o it tha sicht ye hae roon aboot on a guid day is owre ocht. Tae tha NW. is tha Sperrin moontains; Slieve Gallion is tae tha N. an Slemish tae tha NE., an then tae tha S. is tha uplanns o mid Armagh. Clear as ocht tae tha E. is Armagh citie wi its twa hilltap cathedrals. Jist oot tae tha W. is quhaur tha view isnae as guid. Tha wee lough the' caa Loughnashade is near tae tha forth tae tha NE., an tha road that rins S. o tha earthenwark wus lakelie aareadie an auld yin quhaniver it wus pit doon on a map o 1602.

### Navan in Sagas an Historie

Navan fur certes wus tha auld rife kepitale o tha kaings o Ulstèr, caa'd in Gaelick Emain Macha (Tha Twuns o Macha). In tha sagas Macha wus a princess or goddess, an yin story ahint tha name Emain Macha (tha twuns o Macha) wus that she gien birth tae twuns eftèr haein jist wun a race agin tha kaing's fastest chariot. Anither yairn wus that she mairk't oot tha plan o tha earthenwark wi tha pin o her brooch.

Tha big blad o Auld Airish sagas screevit in Gaelick an knowed as tha Ulstèr Cycle maistlie hings roon Kaing Connor, quha rule't his kaingrick frae Emain Macha. The' wur big haws thonner fur festive boords, fur tha sodjers airms an fur tha pruch o war, an forbye tha kaing's ain horsemen, tha Rid Branch Knights. Up til Emain Macha cum Cuhoulin frae his hame in tha coontie o Meath tae be raired an trained wi tha kaing's boy-sodjers that nummer't 150. Maist likelie these sagas gan bak tae tha days o Airn, but the' wur writ doon furst in tha days o tha furst Christ-yins an we hae thaim in writins o tha 11 hunnèrs an eftèr. In recent days the' hae gien inspiration tae writers an artists, takkin in yins lake Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory an Louis le Broquy.

Navan maist likelie furst cums intae historie in a map o Airelann by Ptolemy, a Greek geographer, in tha yin hunnèrs AD, tha mair it's no certain that's quhit's mairk't. Forbye, we dinnae ken fur sure quhan it wus Navan quat bein tha kepitale o Ulstèr. Tha date affen gien is 331 AD, but there's anither in tha 4 hunnèrs, an it leuks lake tha settin up o a gye an auld kirk in Armagh wus tied in some road wi tha auld kepitale o Ulstèr. Emain Macha kep on bein a weel-kent spot – a lanmairk an a symbol. In about 800 it wus set up agin tha leaved in touns roon tha kirks, as a waste't pagan place. The' wur a battle at Emain Macha in 759; Brian Boru set up camp there in 1005, an in 13&87 Niall O'Neill bigged a hoose thonner fur tae entertain 'tha lainit companies o Airlann'. A picthur map drawn in 1602 mairks tha Navan Forth far aff, wi Loughnashade an tha auld road passin near by.

## **Tha Earthenwarks**

Tha forth, kent roon aboot as Navan Raing or Navan Forth, is near a true circle, takkin in aboot 12 acre, an stauns oot as a muckle dyke wi a sheuch inside o tha dyke. It's aa kep weel doon tha yeirs tae tha W. an S., but gin the' wur aa this big richt roon at tha furst tha dyke wud hae civer't aboot 15.5 acre. In a defendit forth tha sheuch wud aye be on tha ootside o tha dyke, sae even afore onie diggin fur archaeologie it wus clear that Navan wusnae an ordinarie hill forth. Ben tha raing is a laich roon moun, wi a filled in sheuch rinnin roon it, an at tha tap o tha hill is a heich moun, as it is jist noo lake it wus bigged up agane efter tha historie dig.

## **Tha Archaeologie**

Quhit tha tripper cannae see on tha gressie knowe is tha owre ocht historie that wus brocht up wi sich skill durin 10 yeir o diggin fur archaeologie, aqween 19&61 an 19&71, by tha umquhile Dudley Waterman, an here we can jist gie a reuch accoont. Frae tha days o tha New Stane Age, tha days o tha furst fairmers in Airlann (3000-2000 BC), cums delf, flints an pue-mairks. In tha Late Bronze Age, in aboot 700 BC, a roon sheuch-an-dyke forth wus bigged in tha pairt noo civer't wi tha heich moun. Inside wus a roon timmer hoose wi a dorr tae tha E., an wi a bigger 'yaird' tied in tae it, an got at by a fenced in kye-trail frae tha E. These biggins had new yins bigged owre thaim a wheen o times owre tha next 600 yeir – tha hooses nine times an tha yairds sax times – an owre ocht sign o heirskip getting haunit doon. No a big lot o thaings wus fun but quhit wus tied in wi heich heidyins leevin here. Tha maist quare thaing fun wus tha skull o a barbary ape, that maun hae bin brocht frae Spain or Noarth Efrica, aiblins fur a hansel.

This rin-doon civers tha change frae tha Bronze tae tha Airn Age. In aboot 100 BC tha steid wus flatten't an changed owre ocht wi tha biggin o a muckle timmer biggin, 40 metèr across. It had an ootside waa o timmer an inside wus five raings o big poasts inside each ither, 275 in aa, wi tha stump o yin owre ocht muckle poast in tha middle. This poast gien a gye guid date o 100 BC, by dendrochronologie (tree-raing datin). Mair nor likelie tha biggin had a roof, but there wus nae sign o it bein uised fur onie lenth o time. Instead, yins had filled it up wi limestane boulders an set it on fire. Tha remains wus then hap't up wi scraas an clie fur tae mak a heich moun. We dinnae ken quhit sich a muckle great biggin wus, but it micht hae bin a temple, an aiblins baith tha biggin o it an tha burnin wus pairt o a ritual. But, nae mettèr quhit it wus fur, it bes fur sure yin o tha maist owre ocht biggins fun in tha hale warl o tha Kelts – tha warl o Airn Age Euraip.

A wee historie dig daen in 19&61 on tha laich moun tae tha E. showed that tha Bronze Age biggins wus here forbye, but the' wur naethin cum up anent tha date o tha moun. It micht be a barra – a buryin moun – o tha Airn Age. Nae dig haes bin daen yit on tha earthenwarks roon aboot, sae it isnae kent hoo auld tha 'raing' is, an maist o tha grunn inside haesnae bin excavatit neither.

## **Relics fun roon aboot Navan**

Forbye tha thaings dug up by tha achaeologists, a wheen o thaings haes bin fun roon an aboot Navan owre tha last 200 yeir. Tha dates o sich thaings rins frae tha Bronze Age tae tha Furst Christ-yins Age, but tha maist important yins is frae tha Airn Age, lake tha big decoratit trumpet or hoarn, yin o fower fun near Loughnashade in tha 17 hunners (noo in tha National Museum in Dublin), an twathie brooches, some bein a soart caa'd tha 'Navan type' efter this place (hae a leuk at tha picturs).

## **Ither Sites**

Navan is yin pairt o tha bigger archaeologie picthur in tha kintraside. On tha hills N. o tha forth is quhit remains o tha biggins o New Stane Age buryin grunns, 4,000 tae 5,000 yeir auld. Tha King's Stables (rin by tha Männystrie forbye), tae tha NW., cum tae licht, in a historie dig in 19&75, as a deep dug wattèr hole, uised fur ritual dumpin in tha Late Bronze Age, an Loughnashade leuks like it wus uised fur dumpin in tha Airn Age. Haughey's Forth, on tap o a hill W. o Navan, micht be a Bronze Age or an Airn Age hamesteid, an tae tha N., in Ballybrolly, is a steidin frae tha Furst Christ-yins Age caa'd 'tha abbey'. Mair S. in tha Coontie o Armagh, tha Dorsey Dyke haes bin

showed in a dig that it gans bak tae tha same day as Navan (100 BC), an sae haes tha Blak Pig's Dyke in tha Coontie o Monaghan. Tha lang earthenwark kent as tha Dane's Casts, in W. Doon an middle an S. Armagh, haesnae got a date pit on thaim but the' micht forbye gae bak tae tha Airn Age an micht hae mairk't oot a bordèr aqween differin trides. Ye hae ither royal kepitals in Airlann lake Tara in Meath, Cruachain in Connacht and Dún Áilinne in Leinstèr. A steidins o tha same ilk in Inglann wud be Kaing Arthur's Camelot, hame o tha Knights o tha Roon Table, but quhaur thon place micht be haesnae been knowed fur sure, agin tha auldrife Airish kepitals quha's historie haes niver bin loast.

### **Navan Quarrie**

Limestane haes bin taen frae quarries roon about Navan fur mair nor 150 yeir; an richt eneuch tha stanes fur some o Armagh's braw biggins cum frae here. But no a big lot wus taen oot tae jist recent, an tha quarrie jist cum up tae tha big it is theday at tha stairt o tha 19&70s. An application fur tha quarrie tae apen up mair grunn run intae an Apen Inquirie in 19&85, an at it the' wur big opposition wi fowks agin tha quarrie bein made onie bigger, an in Maie 19&86 tha Männystèr o tha Kintraside, Mr Richard Needham, gien oot that tha Männystrie o tha Kintraside wus fur turnin tha application doon. Tha side o tha forth site up agin tha quarrie haes bin fenced aff ticht an trippers maun stay inside o tha waa'd aff area.

**Mair Buiks** Current Archaeology 22 (1970), 307-8; C. J. Lynn on King's Stables excavation in Ulster J. Archaeol. 40 (1977), 42-62; and on Navan in Emania 1 (1986), 11-19; J. P. Mallory, Navan Fort (booklet, 1987).

**Quhit-wye tae get there** 2 mile W. o Armagh. It's got at along a bak road (sign-poastit) N. frae tha A3 road til Killylea.