

BELLAGHY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



KNOCKONEILL COURT TOMB
Located NW of Swatragh

A megalithic tomb, dating to the Neolithic or New Stone Age (2000-4000 BC), is found in Knockoneill. It gets its name from the semi-circular forecourt of upright stones that lead to a gallery. In most cases the dead would have been cremated and their remains placed in the gallery together with some belongings and food for their journey to the after-life. This gallery consists of two chambers. It is known locally as the "Giant's Grave", a common name applied to such monuments.

This court tomb is unusual in that it has a subsidiary chamber at the back of the gallery, which is entered via a passage in the side of the tomb. More unusual is the fact that the backstone of the main gallery is used as a side stone of the subsidiary chamber. The tomb was used in the Bronze Age (approximately 2000-250 BC) for burial.

Excavations at the site in 1948, 1977 and more recently in 1984 produced charred bones and an urn dating to the Bronze Age located to the south of the tomb and in the forecourt respectively. The majority of court tombs are found in the north of the island of Ireland with the majority of those with subsidiary chambers found in mid Ulster and north Connacht. Seven court tombs are located in County Derry.