

Navan Fort

Navan Fort, or in Irish Emain Macha, is one of the most important centres of power and culture in pre-historic Ireland.

The site is in the townland of Navan (hence the name), part of the modern Armagh City in Northern Ireland.

The Story of Navan Fort:

Irish legends, foremost the "Ulster Cycle", tell of a major centre of power in (what today is) County Armagh - the capital of the Ulaidh. It is also known as Emain Macha, literally "Macha's Twins". Named after the children the goddess Macha gave birth to while competing in a race. Macha reputedly founded Navan Fort somewhere around the sixth century BC and legendary Ulaidh (Ulster) king Conchobar mac Nessa is supposed to have held court here. The famed Red Branch, a group of mighty warriors, is said to have made Navan Fort its home as well, so the poet Amergin, the druid Cathbad the poet, the beautiful Deirdre of the Sorrows and even Cuchulainn and Emer would have lived here (...provided they ever lived).

What You Will See at Navan Fort:

You will see ... a hill with some landscaped features. These are all that remain: A circular enclosure of around 250 metres diameter, with a surrounding bank and ditch. As the ditch is inside the bank, defensive purposes of the site are negligible.

Inside the enclosure one can still see two monuments. To the north-west a mound of earth, diameter 40 and height six metres. To the south-east a (faint, ploughed-down) ring-barrow, of 30 metres diameter.

The Archaeology of Navan Fort:

The more important site seems to be the north-western mound. This dates from around 95 BC (as the bank and ditch seem to) and would have been a circular building with a central oak post and four concentric rings of posts around it. The entrance seems to have been facing west (which in itself is unusual) and the floor inside was paved with stones in a circular arrangement. After being so painstakingly built ... the whole structure was then burnt down and covered with earth. Not as an aggressive act of war, but more as a deliberate action by the builders. For what reason remains unknown.

The ring-barrow also hides remains of a figure-of-eight shaped wooden building, apparently rebuilt twice.

Traces of inhabitants dating back maybe up to 6,000 years have been found at Navan Fort ...