

How to Dove-Tail Souterrain Dating?

How to Dove-TAIL?

① Dating Issues and Distinct Souterrain Types

[My thanks to Florian Heller, Austria for bringing the work of Bossard (2020) to my attention and also the Scottish pamphlet by MacRitchie entitled Underground Living. See Bib. references elsewhere on this website.]

(Bossard 2020)

To what extent does the dating for Breton and Normandy souterrains of the ~~6th~~ 6th century BC to 1st century AD dovetail with the dating for Irish souterrains as currently known? How many centuries of a gap between the 1st century AD ~~in Gaul~~ in Gaul and say the 6th century AD in Ireland exists? Say 4 to 5 centuries. What happened, given that the sea routes of the Atlantic Sea Province were busy, during the centuries? Rome conquered Gaul, Rome →

conquered Britain but ⁽²⁾ not Scotland. The
Scottish souterrain dates align with ~~the~~ those of
Gaul. So why are the Irish dates so much
later i.e. 6th - 12th centuries AD approx?

Is the current evidence saying that
the cultural activity which was taking
place in Gaul and Scotland not
taking place in Ireland? If so, why not?

Gaul and Scotland can be linked ~~by~~ by
sea routes ~~and~~ either the English or Irish
channels. But if such were activity highways
of trade and travel, why no Irish souterrains
at this time? Is the ~~the~~ current evidence saying
that it was only from ~~the~~ at the earliest perhaps, the
6th century AD that souterrain building and tunnelling
arrived here on the island of Ireland? If so,
why might such have happened? From the mid-5th
century AD Roman Britannia is no longer a
cohesive administrative and social entity, no
longer an expression of ^{Roman} ~~the~~ Western Empire, though

Latin as this decline, (3)
at the same time Rome as the rising centre
of Christianity, as the Patriarch of the Western
Empire, sends a mission to Britannia to restore
the church there. Around the same period of time
the mission of Patrick comes to Ireland in response to
a call for a missionary bishop from some local
community there. (432 AD). Give or take a century,
a religion which has had a tradition of
underground residences for several centuries, though
only perhaps for those who do not wish to be directly
connected to cenobitic living i.e. the residential
ones being a choice of path toward the asceticism of
the hermit existing in local and parallel harmony
with cenobitic communities? This path was seen as
the higher ~~path~~ spiritual path to follow, one which
required several years training ~~in~~ beforehand in
a cenobitic setting before retiring to a hermit
and from there to the spiritual and ascetic peak of
aliveness with God in a high or extremely remote
place. Such aspirations are reflected not only
in the monastic Irish poetry of the time but as
far afield as the Century poetry of Dao Fu in
China or the poet Rumi in the
and the silk routes, the Mediterranean and Atlantic routes →

in between, highways of trade for minerals, (and) cultural ideas, religions/philosophical concepts and much more that was once the beating heart of Rome's commercial and military empire.

But to return to why, if the current Irish archaeological record truly reflects the reality in terms of the dating of Irish souterrains and indicates an approximate date for when they first appeared here, what might have given rise to their appearance? Do they reflect an influx of people or an influx of ideas and influences? If people, then did something happen in Gaul in the 5th/6th centuries AD which gave rise to a migration of certain clan or tribe groups to certain coastal parts of the Irish landscape? Does the potential for souterrain evidence (esp. from C14 dating) from 2/3rd centuries Gaul, along with 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th century dates yet to be identified from Irish (e.g. Lough and West-Loke) souterrains, if present, exist? If so, ~~that~~ would not such comparative and parallel evidence ~~to~~ line-up with the mytho-historical information from Irish (Gaelic) literature →

which tells of Eoghan Mór ⁽⁵⁾ and the Fiteccs
(faoi teach), of Oilill Olum and his 'rath'
building (ramped earth ramparts), Eochu
Airem he 'who first dug caves' in Ireland. Was
~~the~~ the Eochu somewhat resonant of the
Eochu of Kilpatrick Park in Myskerry?
But, what structural form(s) of souterrains
in South Munster are we talking about?
Architects speak about function dictating
form but to the archaeologist the form which
has survived has to be used to speculate and/or
determine the intended function it represents. Tig-
fai-talamh was a common Irish folk term
for souterrains and this sits quite comfortably
with Scottish terms such as 'earth house' or the
words 'Residential Artificial Caves' at Querran
in Israel. But, from the beginnings of Christian
communities, they were also 'worship' caves, which were
sometimes also residences, sometimes not. In the
penitential tradition of Western Christianity, a cave

(6)
natural or residential, was seen as a place
of private penance i.e. the 'pit'. In the folk
history of Ireland a souterrain in certain
localities was referred to as a poll faoi talamh
i.e. poll means pit.

Do we have ~~two~~ essentially two types of souterrain
in Irish folk history? One type being
souterrains constructed for use as residences -
albeit nothing more than night lodgings/shelter, the
other being a variety of ^{architectural} forms of penitential- and
meditation oriented - pits? If so, then does each
type represent an independent, though in certain
~~cases~~ centuries parallel, chronology? Is the
Tig faoi Talamh form distinct from the
Poll faoi Talamh set of souterrain forms?
If so are the latter a product of Christianity
or of an older Druidic/Bardic tradition
absorbed with Gaelic nobility into the present
Christian Church of Ireland?; the story of Bishop
Eric or of Ibar of Wenford?

Are the Poll faoi Talamh forms⁽⁷⁾ of souterrains
distinct from the Tig faoi Talamh forms? Do these
forms represent different and distinct intended
functions?

If so, did the Poll faoi Talamh form give
rise to the place name Kilclogh (Bell Cell);
as one thinks of the handbell hidden beneath a
slab in a ringfort souterrain by the coast and
a deep water harbour by Olocoast in West Cork?
Like Saint Adomnán in the words of his Rule,
did the occupant sing his psalms today by the
beating of the dapper of his handbell kneeling
alone in ^{the watch-out} cell of this ringfort souterrain?
Did another similarly kneel in his cell at
Kilpadder (Prayer Cell i.e. ^{prayer} paddair) in North
Cork?

Strategically, where might archaeology search for
the missing linking Tig faoi Talamh dates, as
distinct from Poll faoi Talamh dates? If early
Christianity or certain forms of it reach Ireland's South
Coast from the Bay of Biscay i.e. from the Mediterranean →

(3)
via Gaul, does the landscape of France - once the
~~core~~ core of tribal Gaul - have
examples of both Tig faoi Talamh souterrains
as well as examples of Poll faoi Talamh
souterrains? ~~Yes~~ If so does such a
scenario also play out in Saxony and
Bavaria and Austria's souterrains? If
so, then why?
