

Archaeologists Recreate Ancient Irish Beer

Two Galway Archaeologists have proposed a theory that one of the most common archaeological monuments in the Irish landscape may have been used for brewing a Bronze Age Beer.

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Billy Quinn and Declan Moore, two archaeologists with Moore Archaeological & Environmental Services (Moore Group) in Galway, believe that an extensive brewing tradition existed in Ireland as far back as 2500 BC. In an article to be published in *Archaeology Ireland* next month, they detail their experiments and research into the enigmatic site that is the *fulacht fiadh*. These monuments (of which there are approx. 4500), which present in the landscape as small, horseshoe shaped grass covered mounds, have been conventionally thought of by archaeologists as ancient cooking spots. However, Quinn and Moore believe that they may have also been used as breweries.

According to Quinn 'the tradition of brewing in Ireland has a long history, we think that the fulacht may have been used as a kitchen sink, for cooking, dying, many uses, but that a primary use was the brewing of ale.' The two set out to investigate their theory in a journey which took them across Europe in search of further evidence.

To prove their theory, Quinn & Moore set out to recreate the process. They used an old wooden trough filled with water and added heated stones. After achieving an optimum temperature of 60-70°C they began to add milled barley and after approx 45 minutes simply baled the final product into fermentation vessels. They added natural wild flavourings (taking care to avoid anything toxic or hallucinogenic) and then added yeast after cooling the vessels in a bath of cold water for several hours.

According to Moore 'including the leftover liquid we could easily have produced up to 300 litres of this most basic ale'. Through their experiments, they discovered that the process of brewing ale in a fulacht using hot rock technology is a simple process. To produce the ale took only a few hours, followed by a three-day wait to allow for fermentation.

Quinn and Moore point out that although their theory is based solely on circumstantial and experimental evidence, they believe that, although probably multifunctional in nature, a primary use of the *fulacht fiadh* was for brewing beer.

For additional information on ancient Irish beer, contact Declan or Billy or visit www.mooregroup.ie/beer/index.html.

A selection of photographs can be viewed at www.mooregroup.ie/beer/gallery/index.html . Larger versions can be provided on request.

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ABOUT MOOREGROUP

MOORE GROUP is a multi-disciplinary environmental, planning and heritage resource management consultancy providing pragmatic development advisory services. The company specialises in

consultancy in the fields of ecology, archaeology, both marine and terrestrial, as well as architectural conservation consultancy and related services.

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You can also visit www.mooregroup.ie for more information.