



There were four main types of graves used in Neolithic Ireland – court, portal, passage and wedge tombs. These names are taken from distinctive architectural features.

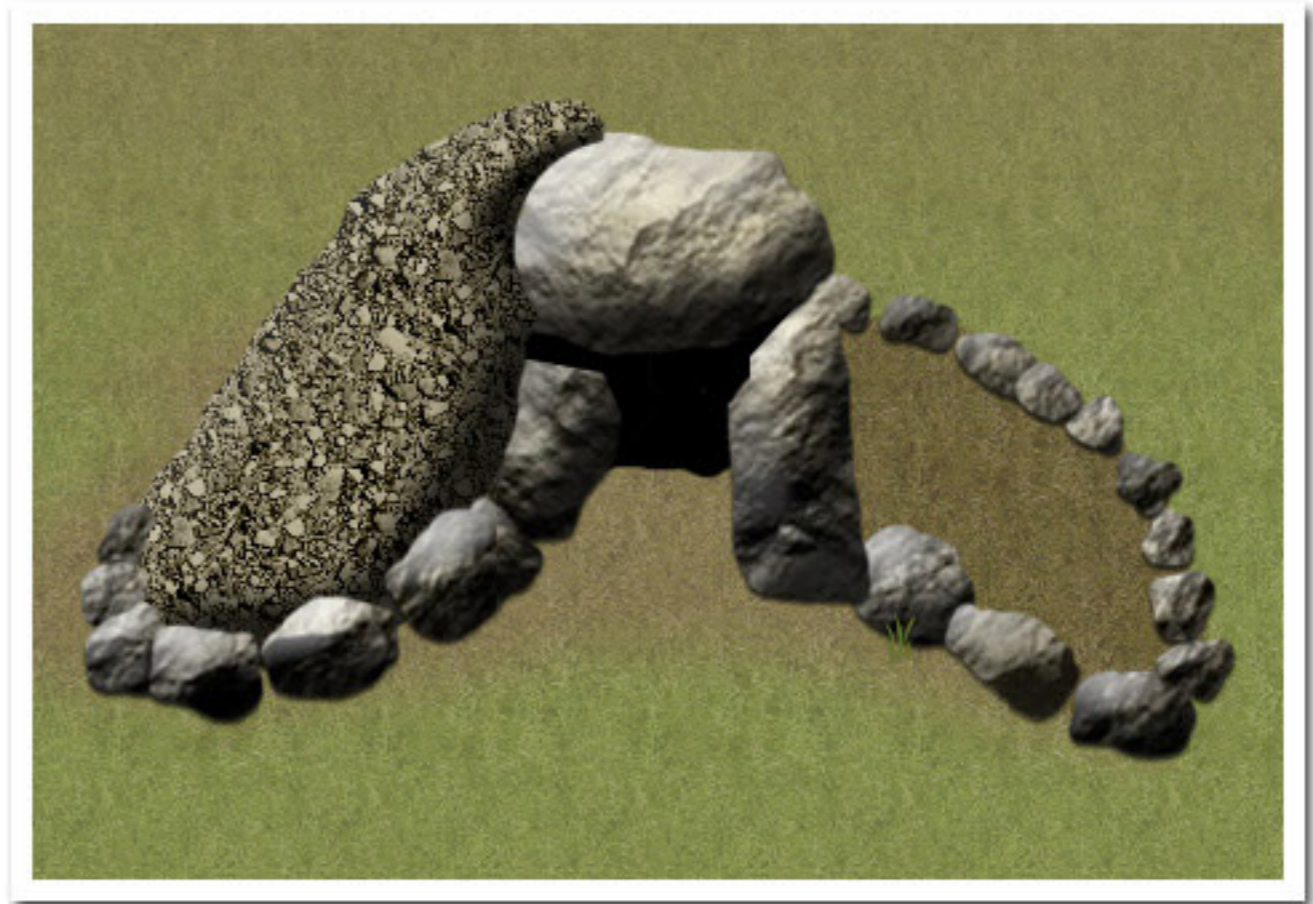
## Court tombs

Court tombs have an open area or 'court' at one end.

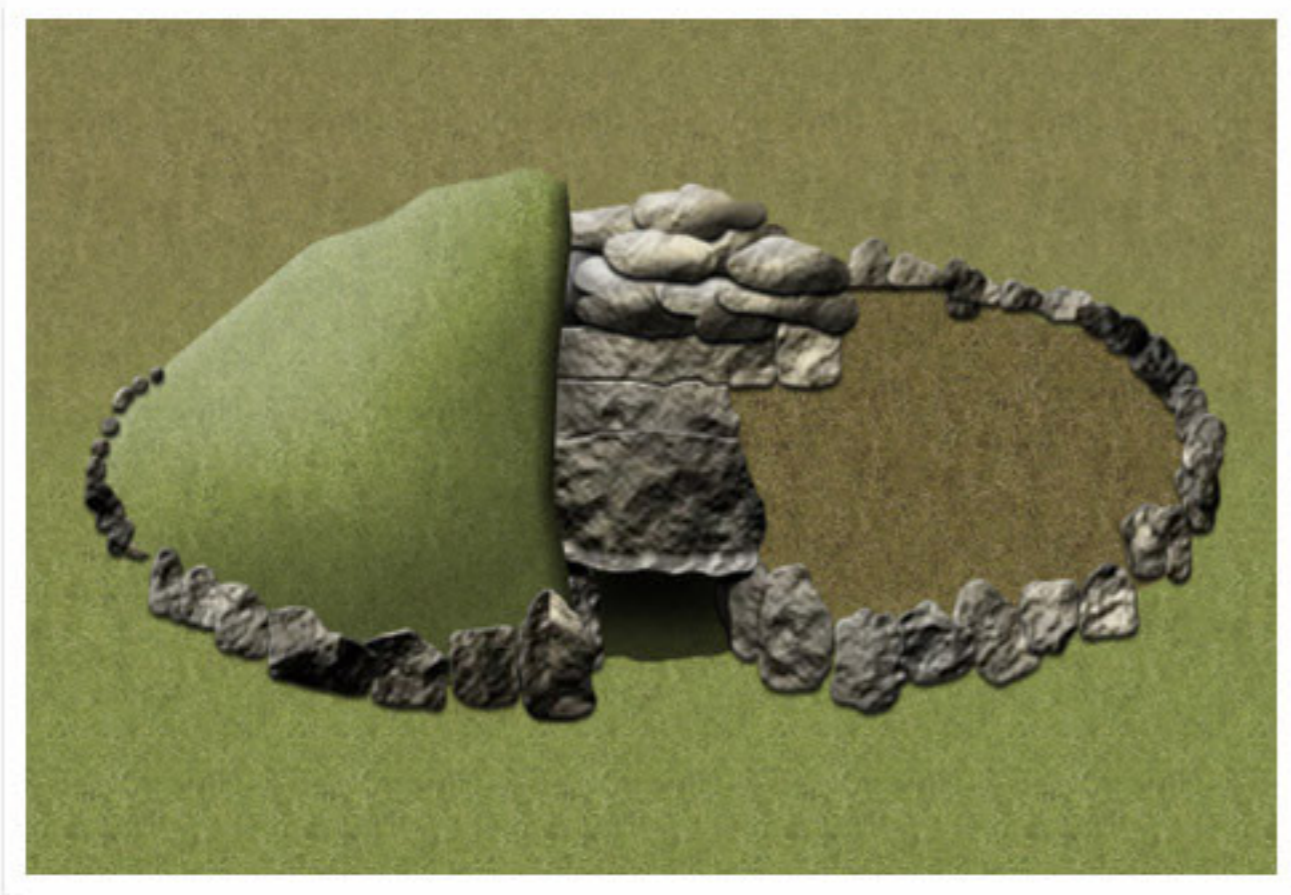


## Portal tombs

Portal tombs have impressive entrances dominated by a large capstone.



## Passage tombs



Passage tombs have burial chambers deep inside a mound approached by a passage-way. They are usually in circular mounds or 'cairns'. They are found mainly on hilltops and are often grouped in cemeteries. They may contain stones elaborately decorated with spirals, zig-zags, circles, triangles and other abstract designs.

## Wedge tombs



Wedge tombs are wide at the front and slope down, getting narrower at the back. They are often surrounded by a small heel-shaped cairn.



## Stone Structure

Smaller stone structures have also survived from prehistoric times. These include groups of standing stones set in circles or in straight rows, single standing stones or cairns of stone to cover burials.

Standing stones are very distinctive landmarks. Their purpose is not always known but some mark burials, others land boundaries or roadways.



## Earth works

Towards the end of the Neolithic period, a new impressive type of field monument appears. In addition to the large graves, large, circular embanked structures known as henges were built as ritual assembly sites. The exact purpose of these sites remains unclear but they may have been substantial 'public' monuments, providing focal points for meetings, markets or other social gatherings. People also continued to bury their dead under these circular mounds right up until the Iron Age.