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Pattern and diversity in the Early Neolithic mortuary practices of Britain and Ireland: contextualising the treatment of the dead

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Abstract

This article presents the first synthesis of the evidence for a diverse range of mortuary practices across the British Isles, and an interpretation of what they suggest about understandings of the body, relatedness, personhood and ancestry in Early Neolithic Britain and Ireland. By exploring the ways that mortuary practices were interwoven with the development of the places where they were carried out, we can build up a more

detailed – and more varied – picture of the principles underlying Early Neolithic mortuary practices. Some practices suggest an interest in the ancestral remains of the dead, while others suggest different phenomena, yet a general picture of how human bodies were appreciated emerges.

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