

# A very warm welcome to Everybody



## Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2019



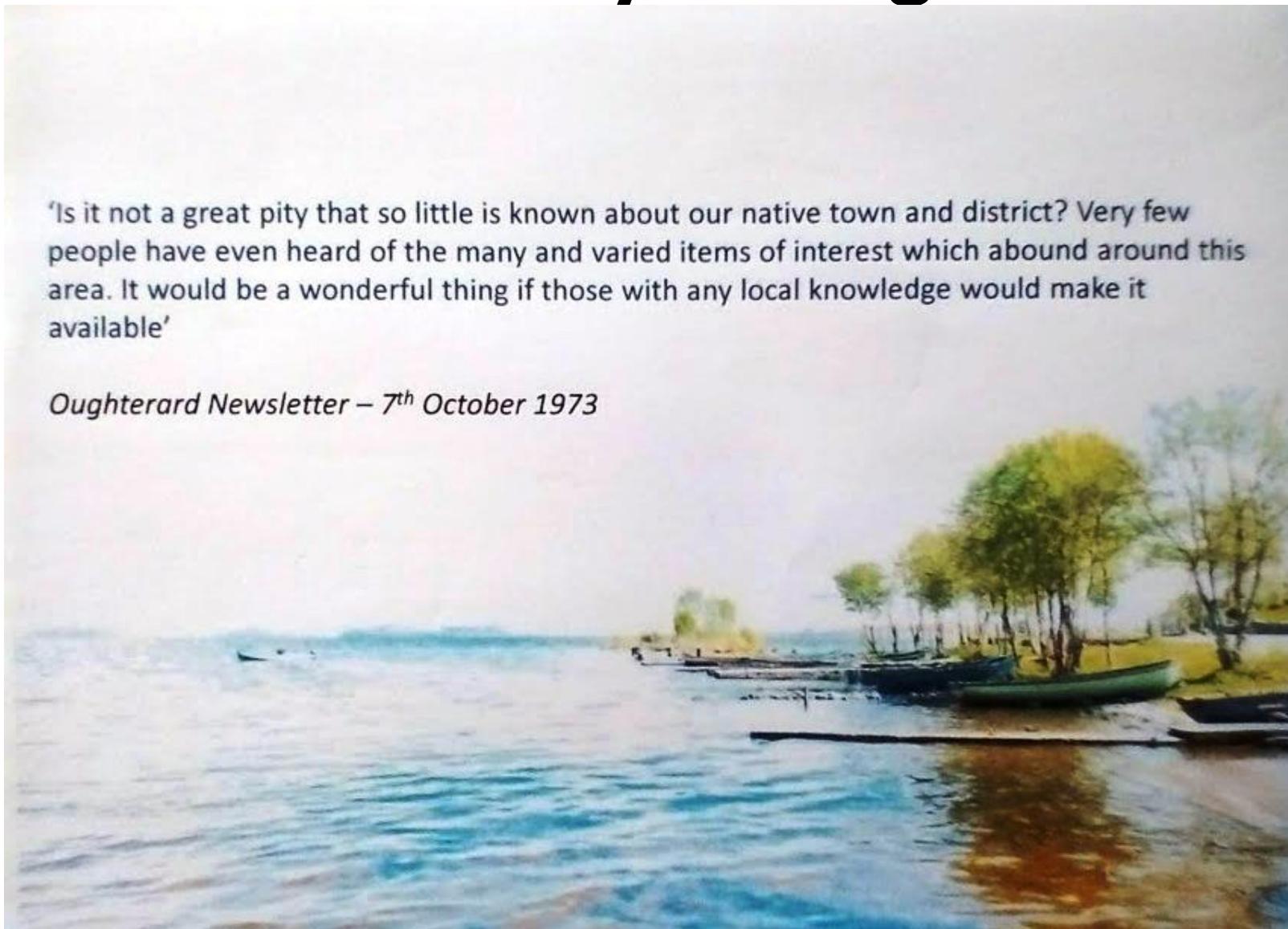
# Oughterard's First Farmers



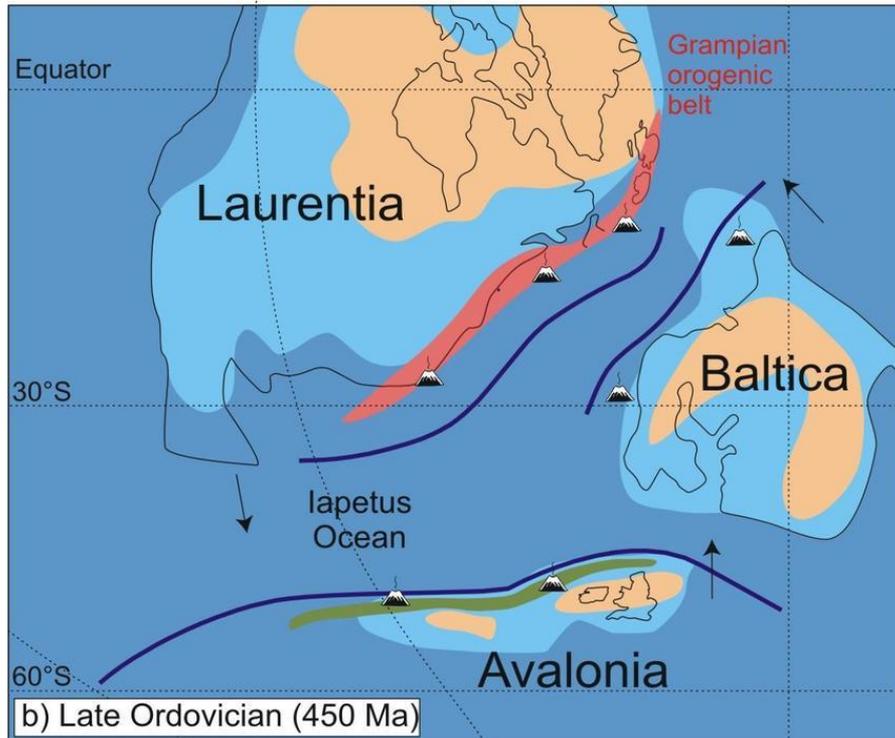
# The Prehistory of Oughterard

'Is it not a great pity that so little is known about our native town and district? Very few people have even heard of the many and varied items of interest which abound around this area. It would be a wonderful thing if those with any local knowledge would make it available'

*Oughterard Newsletter – 7<sup>th</sup> October 1973*



# Ireland geologically in two parts



700 million years ago

# Laurentia meets Avalonia

## The seam across Ireland



Approximate location of the seam that runs across Ireland, from Limerick to Clogher Head

Credit: Mary Mulvihill

**Iapetus Suture** 420 million years ago

# Loop Head, Co. Clare



# Clogher Head, Co. Louth



# Productid Brachiopods



330 million years old, found across from The Courthouse

# Straparollus



Spiral shell of a Carboniferous  
Gastropod 359 – 330 million years old

Ireland submerged in a warm tropical and coral sea



350 million years ago

# Quaternary Glaciation

1.7 million years ago



Cold periods of 100,000 years and warmer periods from 10,000 to 60,000 years



Our last Ice Age was called 'The Midlandian' from 80,000 to 12,000 years ago  
500 metre glaciers covered most of Ireland with everything dead underneath.



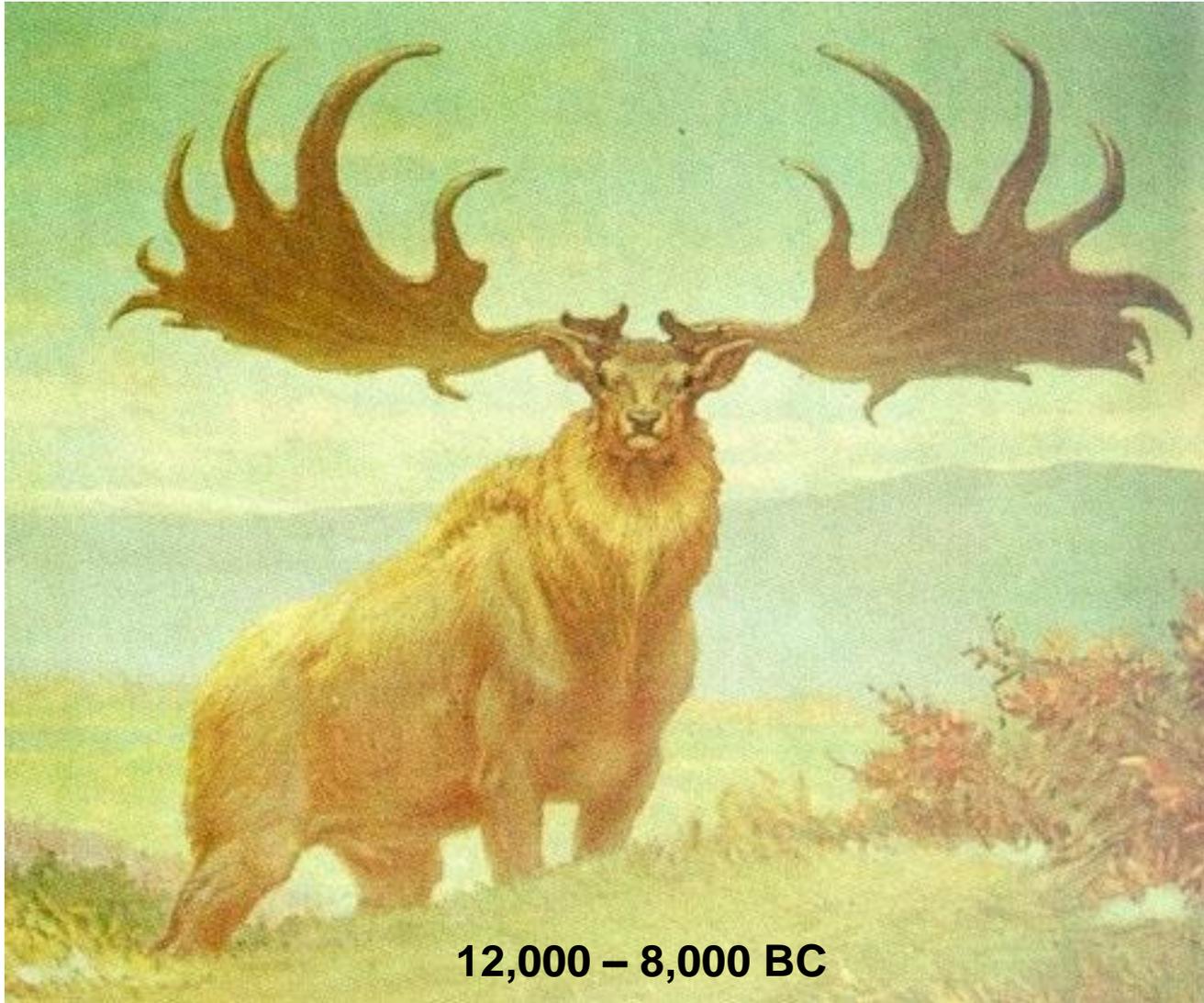


# The Timeline

Palaeolithic	12,000 – 8,000 BC
Mesolithic	8,000 – 4,000 BC
<b>Neolithic</b>	<b>4,000 – 2,500 BC</b>
Bronze Age	2,500 – 500 BC
Iron Age	500 BC – 400 AD
Early Christian	400 AD - 800 AD
Viking	800 AD – 1100 AD
Norman	1100 - 1600
Plantation	1600 – 1922
Independence	1922 -



# Palaeolithic (Stone Age)



12,000 – 8,000 BC

# Palaeolithic

- 12,000 years ago – rapid change to present day conditions.
- First 2,000 years after the post glacial period- changes that turned the open treeless landscape into a forest with open areas on higher ground.
- Irish Elk.....700 kg....antler span of around 30 feet...shed antlers every year... needed more calcium and phosphorous in diet. The emergence of the forests And the soft ground made them extinct.
- No evidence of Stone Age Man in Ireland.
- Kilgreany Cave, Rosses Point Lithics, Co. Clare Bear Patella.

# Mesolithic (Middle Stone-Age)



8,000 – 4,000 BC

# Mesolithic

- Ireland was originally colonised during the Mesolithic Period when humans adapted to new environments created by the warming conditions following the end of the Ice Age.
- A land lacking in resources – devised local strategies in order to survive.
- Hunter – Gatherers who moved around seasonally making their temporary camps by the banks of estuaries, rivers and lakes.
- Hazel was used (flexible) and there was a rise in alder (likes wet conditions)
- Diet was mainly fish, wild pig, hazelnuts (oil and protein), dandelion roots, and chickweed.
- Original settlers from Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man.
- Population of Ireland was approx 3,000 at this stage.

# Neolithic (New Stone Age)



**4,000 – 2,500 BC**

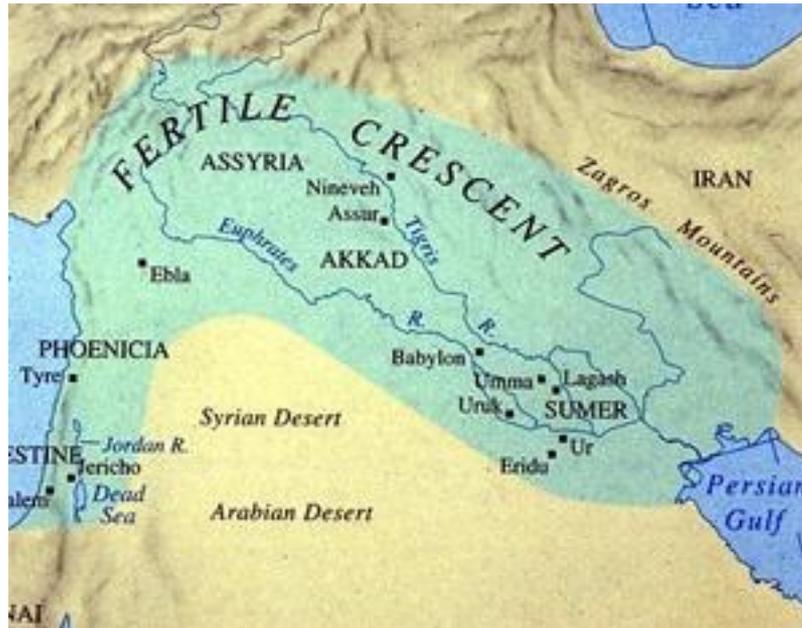
# Neolithic

- The introduction of agriculture is the most significant event in the prehistory of Ireland.
- Today 60% of the landmass is still given over to arable agriculture and pasture.

# The Agricultural Revolution

This change, the jump to Farming, was the single greatest social revolution that has ever been.

# The Agricultural Revolution



In the Fertile Crescent, wild wheat and barley began to grow as it got warmer.

# The Agricultural Revolution

- The earth entered a warm phase around 14,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age.
- This climate change may have driven the Agricultural Revolution.
- Intellectual advances in the human brain may also have caused people to settle down.

# The Agricultural Revolution

The Neolithic Era began when some groups of humans gave up the nomadic life completely to begin farming.

It may have taken humans hundreds or even thousands of years to transition fully from a lifestyle of gathering wild plants to keeping small gardens and later tending large crop fields.

# The Agricultural Revolution

Cereals such as wheat and barley were among the first crops domesticated by Neolithic farming communities in the Fertile Crescent.

They also domesticated lentils, chickpeas, peas and flax.

They selected crops that were easily harvested. Wild wheat falls to the ground and shatters when it is ripe. Early humans bred wheat that stayed on the stem for easier harvesting.

Early farmers in Asia started to grow rice and millet.

# The Agricultural Revolution

Domestication is the process by which farmers select for desirable traits by breeding successive generations of a plant or animal. Over time, a domestic species becomes different from its wild relative.

Domestic pigs were bred from wild boars, and other animals to be domesticated were cattle, sheep and goats.

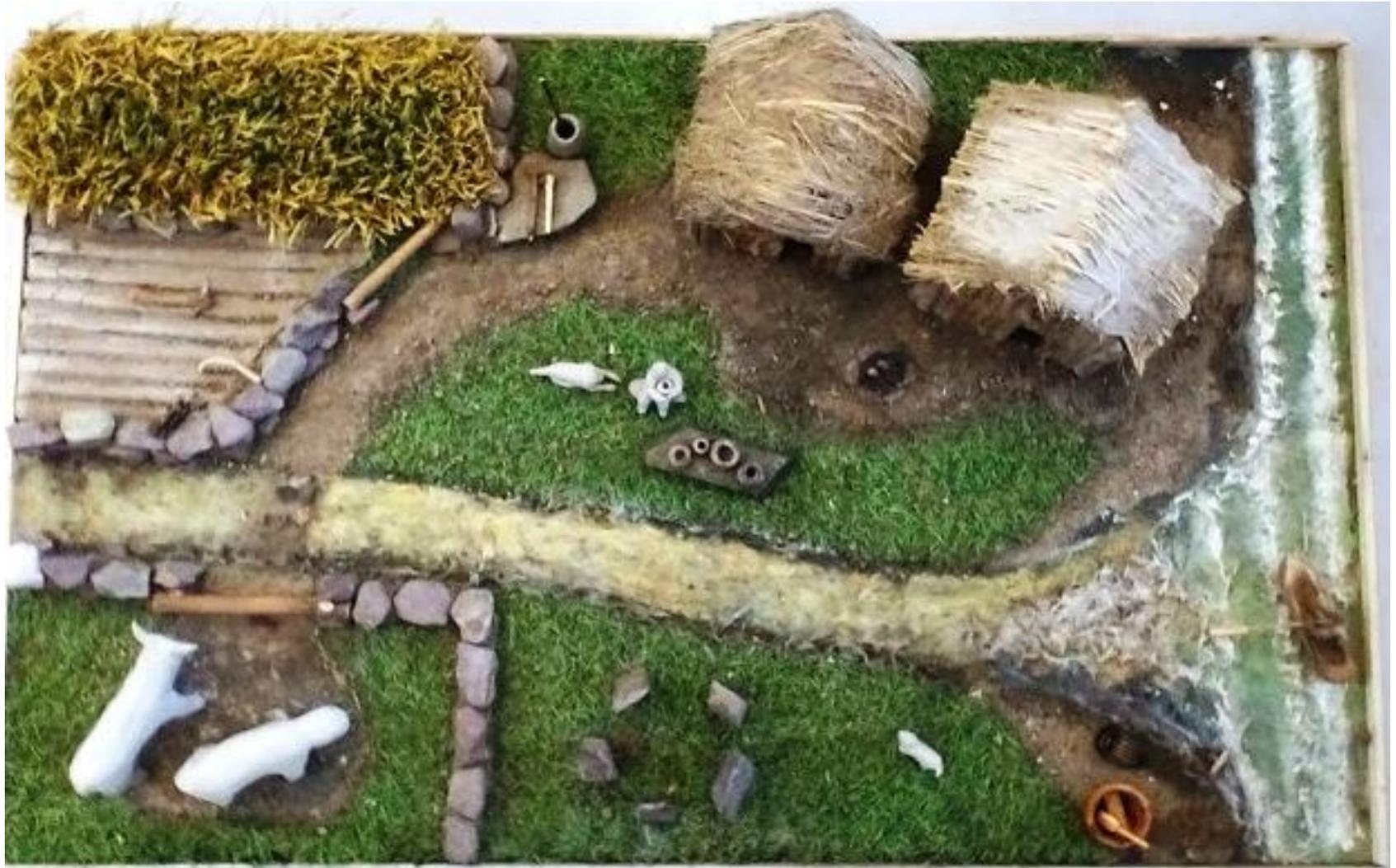
# The Agricultural Revolution

The Agricultural Revolution (Neolithic) reached Northern Europe by about 6,000 BC.

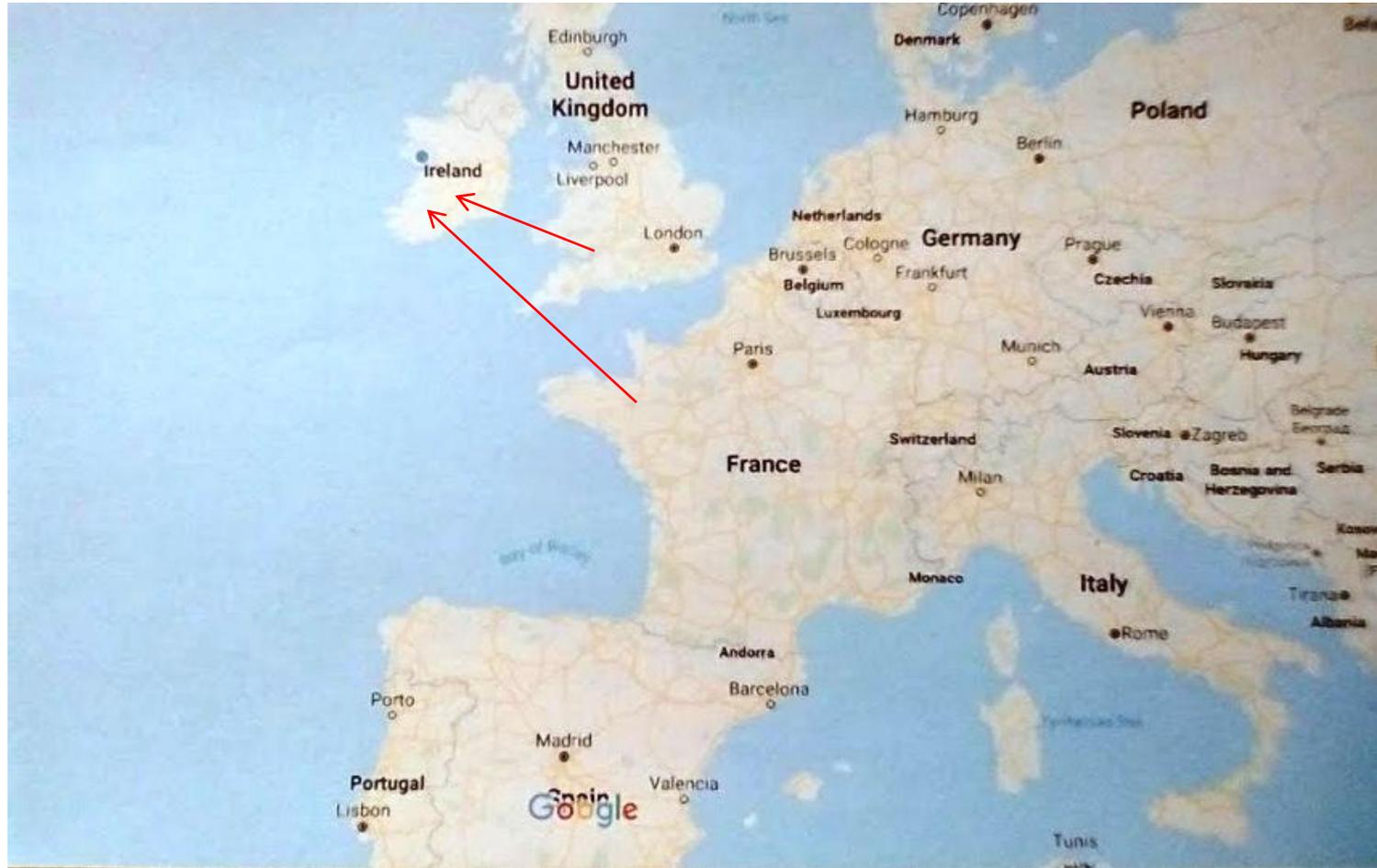
The Neolithic reached Britain and Ireland by 4,000 BC via Southern Europe.

The Irish Neolithic may have emanated from Britain or directly from France and Spain.

# The Irish Neolithic



# Where did they arrive from?



From Britain or directly from Europe or France  
Monuments, House types and Pottery are similar to Britain and France.



The first Farmers, must have arrived by boat, bringing their families, domestic animals and grain.

They were very early Pioneers – undertaking a perilous journey to a new and unknown land.

# Acculturation or Colonization?

No evidence to suggest there was conflict between the Mesolithic Hunter –Gatherers and the new Neolithic people.

Neolithic traders may have visited Ireland from time to time to trade.

Mesolithic may have converted to the ‘new ideas’, while others maintained their old lifestyle.

Because of the rate of change, it looks like the Neolithic people came in numbers.

# Characteristics of the Irish Neolithic

- **Farming and Domestication of Animals.**
- **House Types**
- **Pottery**
- **Megalithic Monuments**

# Arable and Pastoral Farming.

- Clearing of the uplands with stone axes, ring-barking, and burning, using the ash as fertilizer.
- Move from flint to porcellanite polished axes.
- Because they were not crop rotating, the soil became acidic, and they had to keep clearing patches of land.
- The pollen record shows a sharp decline in tree species, and an increase in grain, as well as farming weeds like plantain, nettles and dock.
- The pollen record also shows that 'dutch elm' disease may have visited us around this time also.

# Reclaimed Field in Maghera Beg - 2018



# Tree Types

Birch

Willow

Pine

Hazel

Oak

Elm

Alder



# Arable and Pastoral Farming

- Cattle, sheep, pigs and goats were domesticated for meat, milk and hides.
- Small fields had to be constructed by building stone walls to separate dry stock from milking stock, and calves/lambs – (Ceide Fields on Mayo Coastline).
- Increased proximity to live animals increased the transference of viruses and disease to humans.

# Arable and Pastoral Farming

Tools needed to work the land included....

- Digging Stick
- Stone Hoe
- Timber Rake
- Manual Timber/Stone Plough
- First Timber Plough
- Polished Stone Axe
- Sickle
- Flailing Tool
- Quern

# Ethiopia – 19<sup>th</sup> January 2019



# Neolithic House



Houses were larger, more durable and permanent.  
Rectangular shape, wattle and daub, upright timbers, reed thatch.  
The roof had small holes to allow smoke through.  
Shape is determined by the post-holes left behind.

# Neolithic House

Neolithic Farmers may have lived in larger communities than the Mesolithic Irish did.

A number of families (maybe 5) lived together in a cluster of houses.

# Neolithic House



Skara Brae Neolithic Site, Orkney Islands, Scotland

# Neolithic House



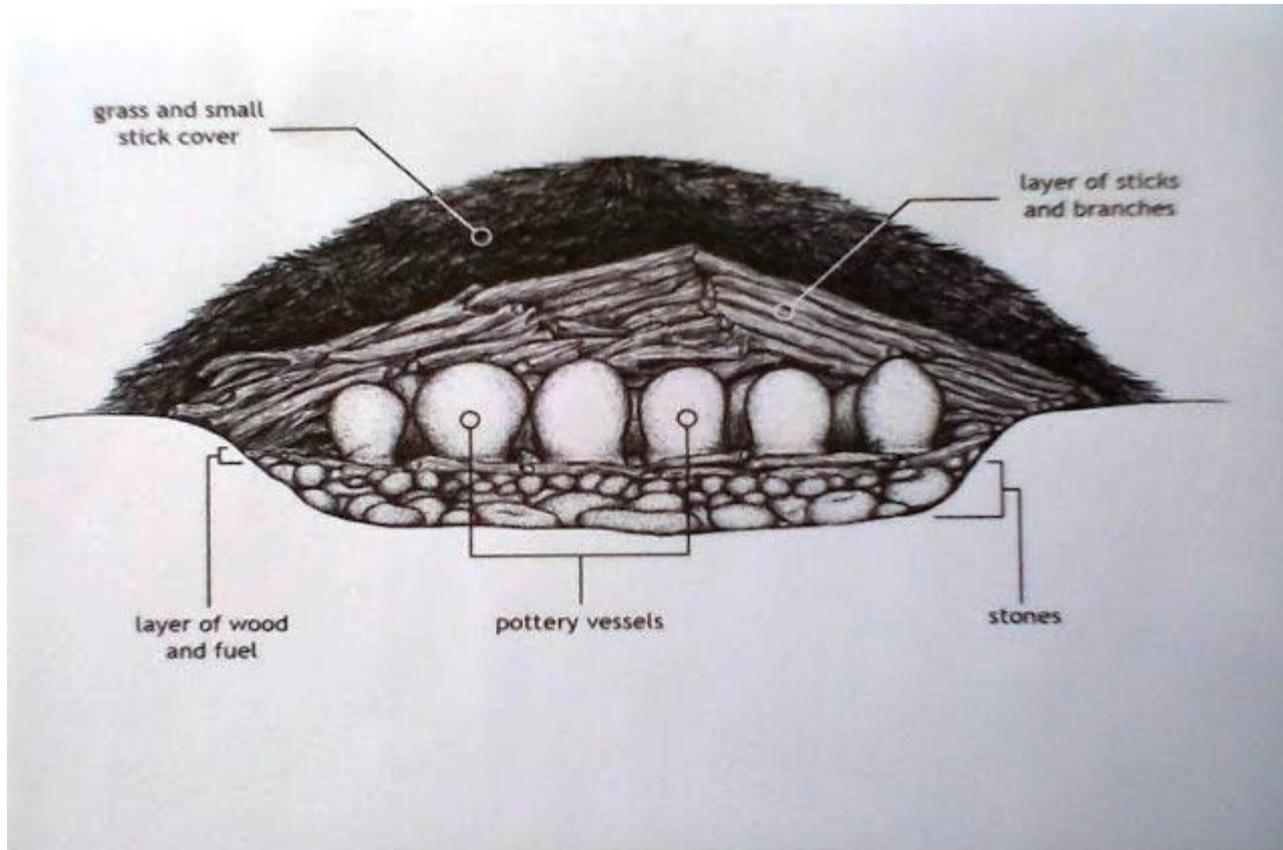
Catalhoyuk Neolithic Site, Turkey.  
Estimated up to 8,000 people lived in this settlement.

# Pottery



Made by 'coiling' clay and placing coils on top of each other. Smoothen with fingers and hand, and decorate with sticks. Clay was mixed with granite for fire and heat resistance. Heat between 500 – 700 degrees Celsius in a bonfire kiln. Used to store grain, flour, dairy products and could also be placed on fire as a pottery pan.

# Pottery in Kiln



# Pottery on Open Fire



# Megalithic Monuments

One of the most important legacies left by the Neolithic farmers was their megaliths, or large earthen constructions.

Megaliths also found in Spain, Portugal, Western France and Denmark.

Approximately 1500 recorded, many have been destroyed over time, and many more are still unrecorded.

Construction began a few centuries after the first farmers arrived in about 3,500 BC.

The monuments were the work of a whole community.

The creation of them mattered more than anything else they were doing during the day, even though they were busy farmers.

This was a world built by the community of the living for the dead.

# Megalithic Monument Types

- Court Tomb
- Portal Dolmen
- Passage Tomb
- Wedge Tomb
  
- Stone Circles
  
- Standing Stones

# Court Tomb



Found almost exclusively in Ulster and North Connaught.

Built mainly in upland areas

# Portal Dolmen



Found mainly in the northern half of Ireland.  
Also in Wexford, Waterford ,Wicklow and Galway Bay.

They may have developed from Court Tombs.

# Passage Tomb



Found in Eastern and Northern Ireland.  
Built by later Neolithic settlers, probably from Western France.  
Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth are examples in the Boyne Valley and are renowned for Megalithic Art.

# Wedge Tomb



Wedge Tombs are the primary type of megalithic tomb found in Ireland.

Generally found in the West, the North and South-West.

1570. - PLOUHARNEL-CARNAC. - Dolmen de Crucuno



Baron, Nol. H. 1888

# The Age of Cosmology



Court Tombs, Portal Dolmens and Wedge Tombs- honouring the mountains.

Passage Tombs, Stone Circles and Standing Stones – honouring the skies.

# 2348 BC

**Rained constantly for 20 years**

**Dendrochronology Records**

**2349 BC Noah's Flood**

**Annals of the Four Masters**

**Big Volcanic Explosion**

**Dust into atmosphere**

**Blocked Sunlight.**

**1159 BC – rained for 20 years**

**430 AD – rained for 10 years**



# Hekla (Iceland) Erupting



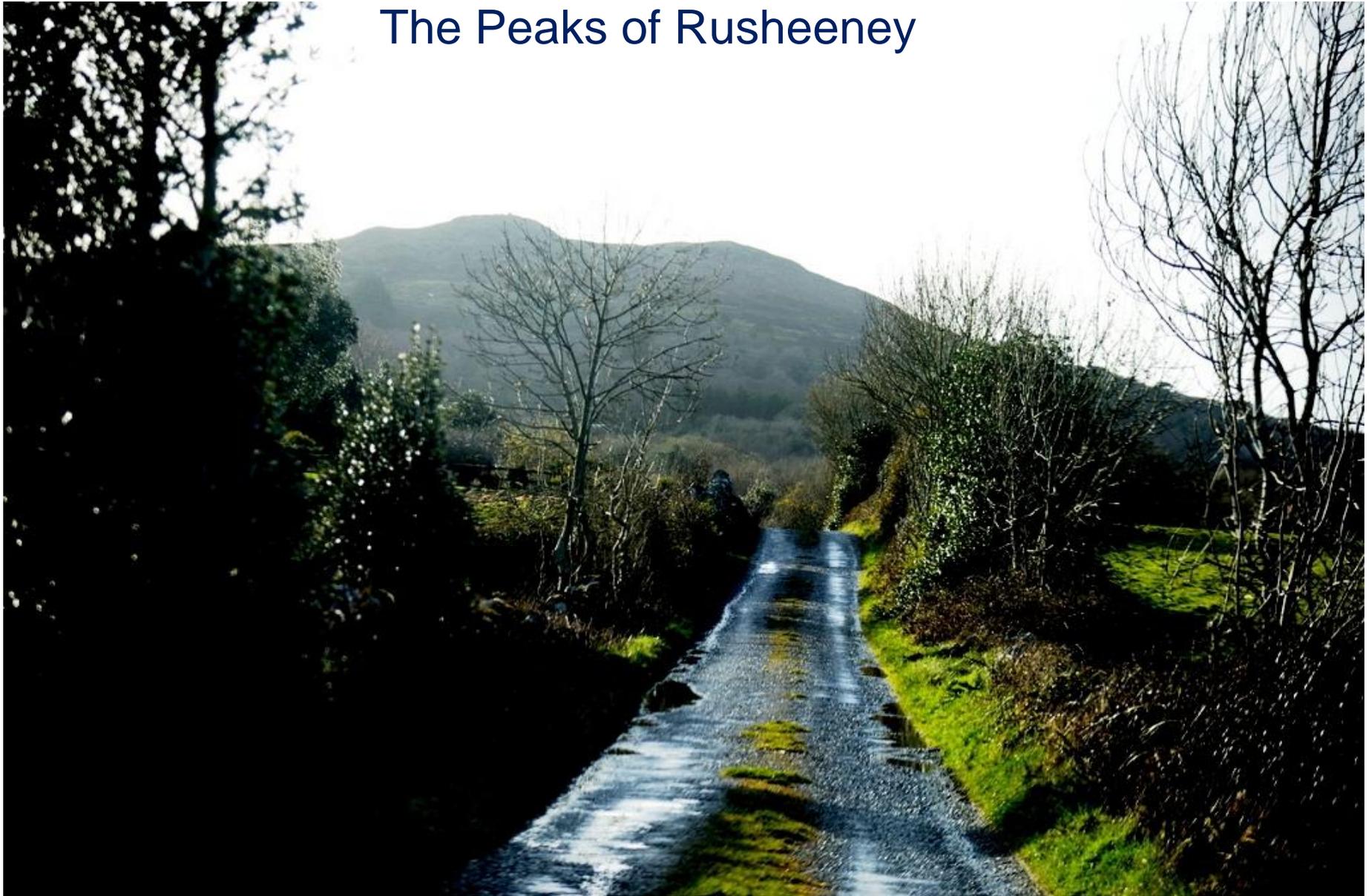
The 'Gateway to Hell'

# **The Oughterard Neolithic**

Finding the Neolithic  
Cultural Landscape.



# The Peaks of Rusheeny





# Maghera



Searching for the  
evidence.....

Druid's Altar Wedge Tomb, to the north of the Hatchery.



Flint Polished Axe and 2 Scrapers found in Rosscahill  
1971



# Small Standing Stone at Rushveala now incorporated into a stone wall



Rushveala -Seven Large Boulders in a broken circular or oval shape about 50 yards from small standing stone (previous)



Raha – standing stone on stone plinth, or small dolmen or remains of a once larger structure.



Magheramore Road – very large Standing Stone, now incorporated into a dry-stone wall.



# Majheramare Road

Electronic Sweeps

Small Standing Stone



Large Boulders

NSQ ←

Large Standing Stone



GATEWAY Hole



POLES OF EQUINOXY

Magheramore to Magherabeg road – potential Dolmen with capstone removed or remains of a Wedge Tomb.



Magheramore to Magherabeg road- steeply downhill (from last slide) 3 stones in a stone row, incorporated into a whitethorn fence.



MALDENHAMORE (BACK ROAD)

Lough Corrib

Stone Row

Dolmen Base

Down Hill

MALDENHAMORE  
- Back

ROAD  
RADIANT



- PEAKS of RUGHENCY

# **The Search For Neolithic Aughnanure**

# Dr. Robert Willis

Willpark  
Oughterard  
9th July 1855

Dear Doctor

Within the past day or so, a tenant  
on the property of Mr E O'Leaherty of further on  
found a Boat at some short distance  
from the shore (Lake Corrib) it was when  
seen partly covered by sand

Although some 30 feet by 4 feet broad  
it appears to be of one piece of dark Oak

I am aware of many others in different  
parts of the lake of the same description, if  
worth getting up I cant tell

perhaps it might be worth a notice to  
you and I mention it -

hoping you are in the enjoyment  
of good health

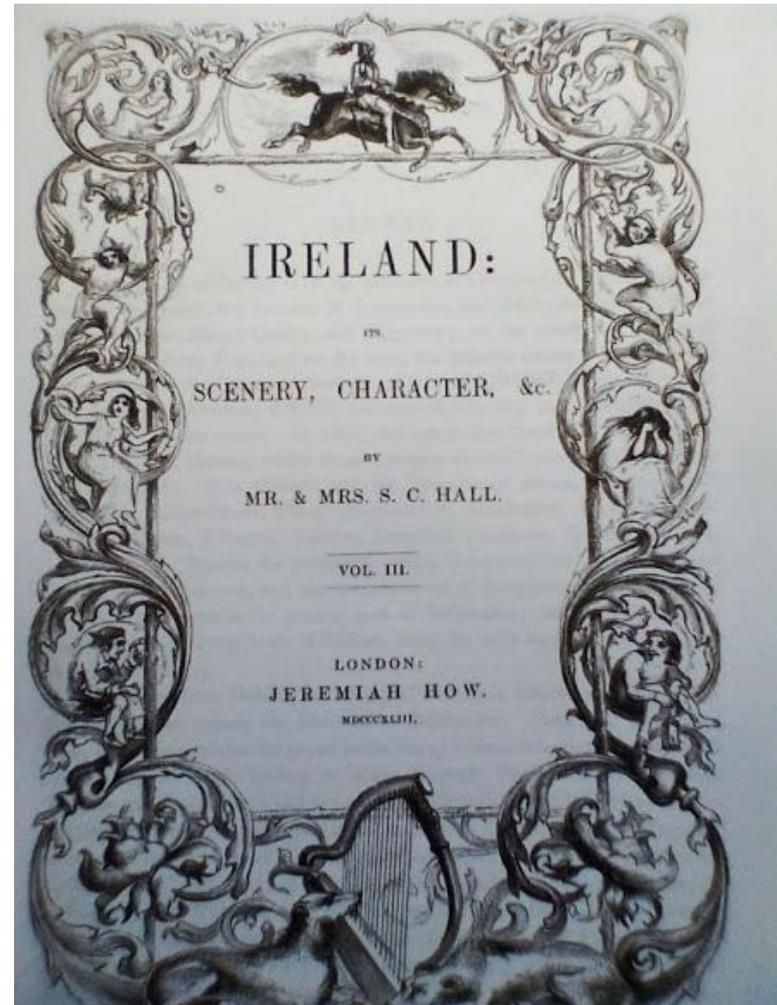
Believe me  
my dear Sir  
Yours  
Robert Willis



# Ireland – It's Scenery & Character



Anna Maria Fielding (Mrs. SC Hall)



Published in 1843

# Ireland – It's Scenery & Character

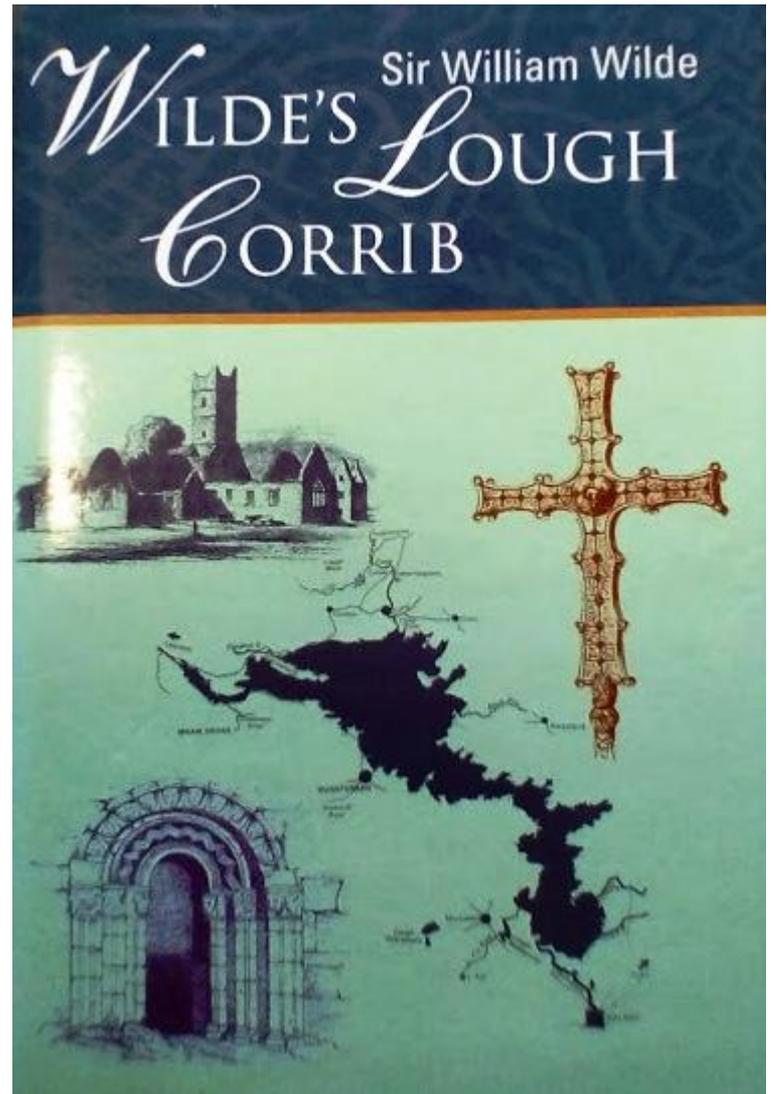
## Volume 3 - Galway

*'Within a few miles of Oughterard, our astonishment was excited by perceiving a prodigious collection of Cromlechs. These huge circles of stone were so numerous that at first we imagined them to be merely accidental occurrences, but they were as much as artificial monuments as we have seen elsewhere.'*

*This 'great city of the Druids, occupies the whole of an extended plain on the height of a steep hill, and in the valley beneath is seen the old Castle of Aughnanure'*



**Sir William Wilde**



# **‘Wilde’s Lough Corrib’**

*‘There are no cromlechs, and the only remains of stone circles in this district are those at Laghtgannon. In one of these there are still seven standing stones, and the site of ten others is visible in the vicinity’*

*There was one formerly on the Glebe, but an agricultural incumbent had it removed’. All these forts are marked on the 6 inch Ordnance Map’ – Sir William Wilde (1867).*

# Aughnanure – Aerial View



**And then my luck changed in the  
search for Neolithic Oughterard!**

# Neolithic Butt-End Stone Axe- Aughnanure



# Neolithic Axe-Head 2- Aughnanure



# Neolithic Axe-Head 3 - Aughnanure



# Neolithic Chert Arrowhead, with handle remains & binding material – Gortrevagh.



# Neolithic Polished Axe- Aughnanure



Almost identical to Polished Axe from Roscahill.

Rusheeney Peaks – Maghera- Aughnanure, linked by road and Drimneen River.





**Thanks for your time**

**Slán agus Beannacht**

# Contact Details



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