

DUBLIN'S MONUMENTAL MOUNTAINS

The archaeological landscapes of the Dublin Uplands

The Dublin Mountains Community Archaeology Project 2021
Produced by Abarta Heritage
On behalf of South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council,
Dublin Mountains Partnership and with the support of the Heritage Council



Ice House at Massy's Woods

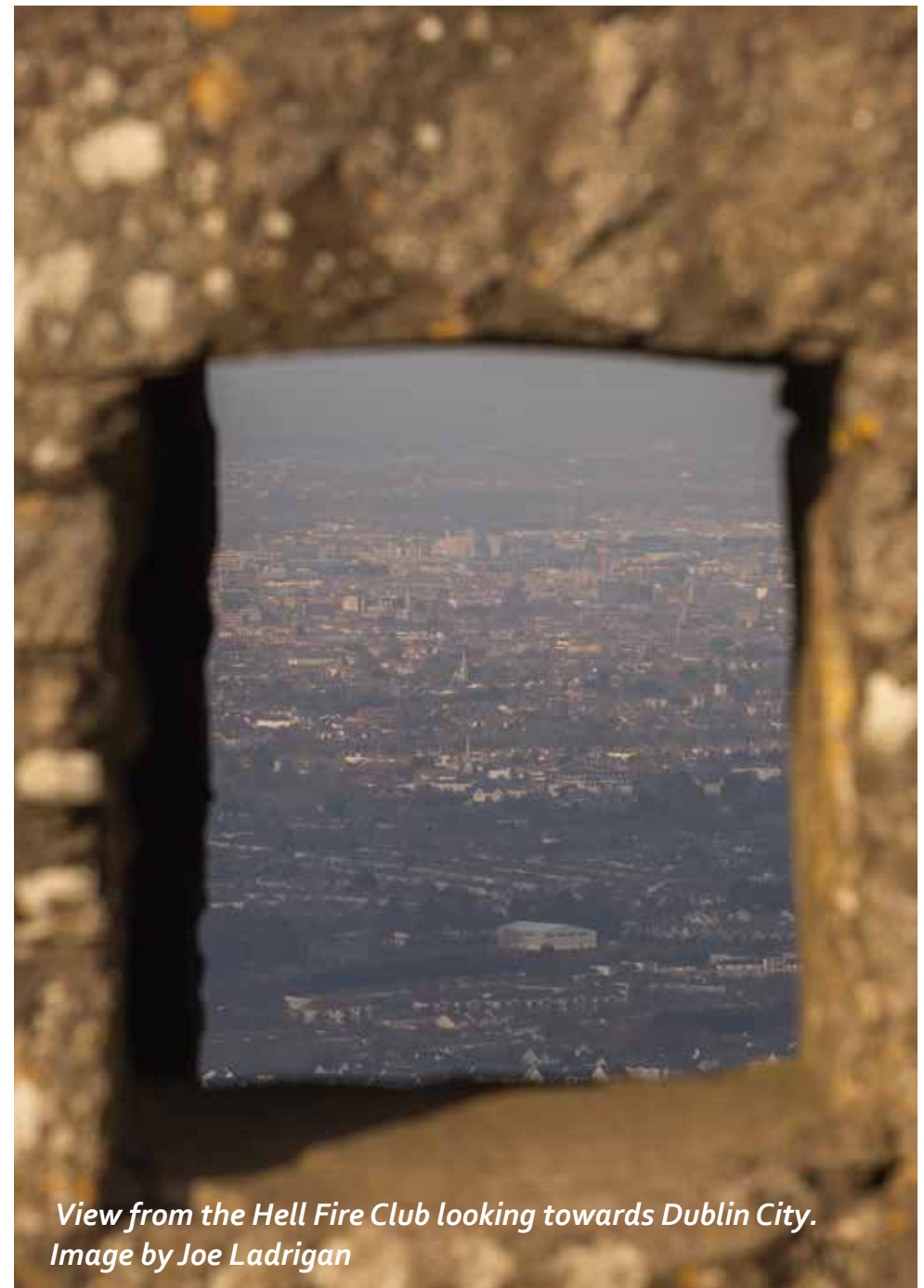
STAKEHOLDER INFO AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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All images by Abarta Heritage unless otherwise stated.

Cover Image: Board walk at Tibbradden cairn with views to Dublin City Image by Joe Ladrigan



*View from the Hell Fire Club looking towards Dublin City.
Image by Joe Ladrigan*



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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS ARCHAEOLOGY?

Archaeology is the study of people in the past through the material remains they have left behind. Some of these remains are still visible in the landscape like castles, churches or cairns or can be viewed in museums. However, humans have left their mark all over the landscape. Many archaeological sites only survive as features under the topsoil that are revealed during construction or cultivation.

Environmental evidence such as pollen can be preserved in soils and waterlogged environments such as bogs and can tell us about how the landscape was being used. Was it grassland for grazing animals, woodland or arable land for growing crops? Artefacts too can be found anywhere that people have been, and might tell us about what ways they travelled, who they traded with and more. All these different types of evidence can come together, sometimes with the help of historical records, to tell us the full story of our landscape.

Once you leave the settled valleys of the lowlands, the Dublin Mountains seem open and wild in comparison to the busy urban landscape at its feet. Yet it is a landscape that has been used by people since they first arrived on this island about 10,000 years ago. Since the forest clearances of the first farmers in the Neolithic, it has undergone many changes, and is still a dynamic





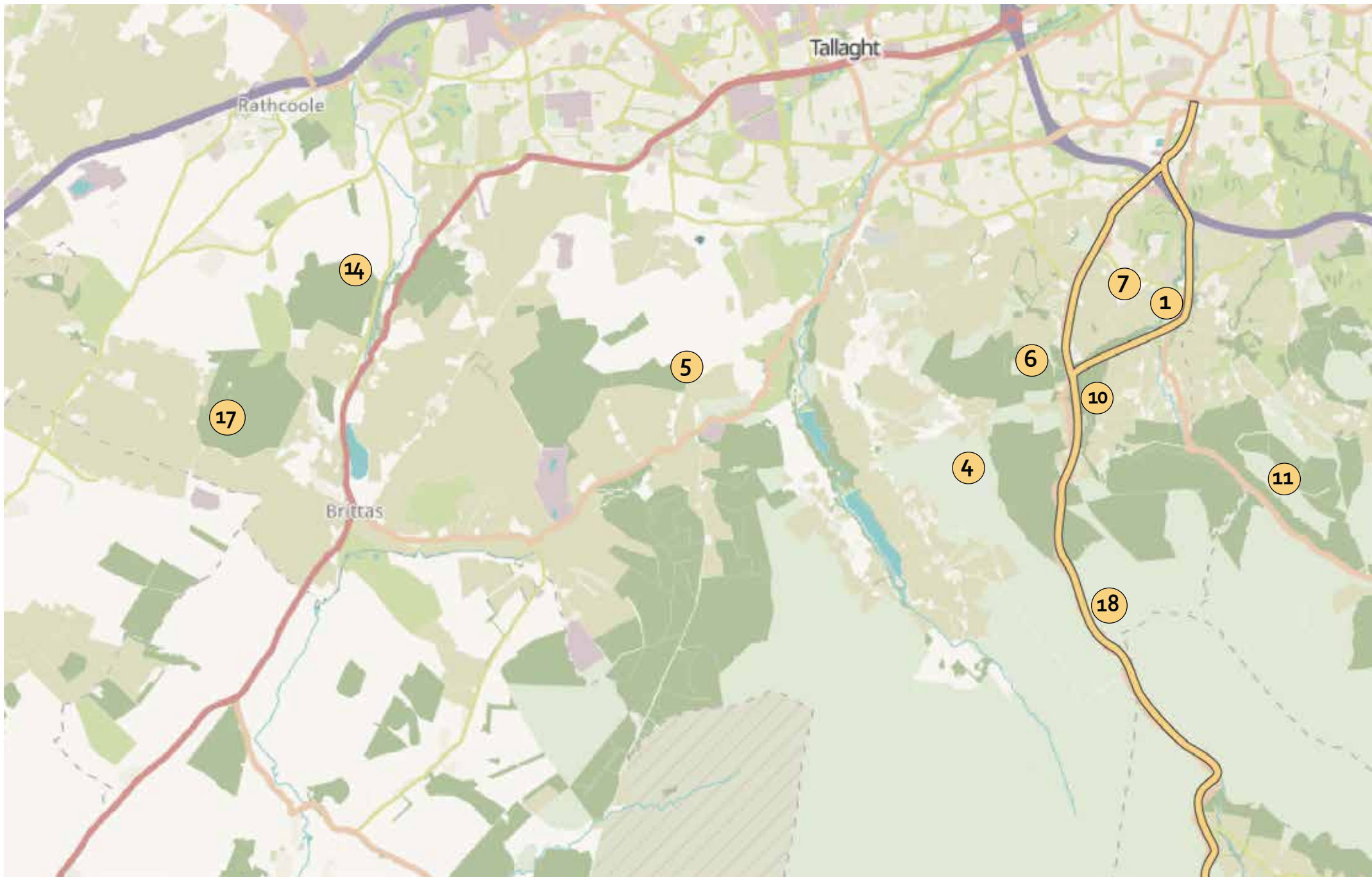
place. We can see this in the urban expansion at the foot of the mountains and in our forests where trees are periodically planted, grow and are felled.

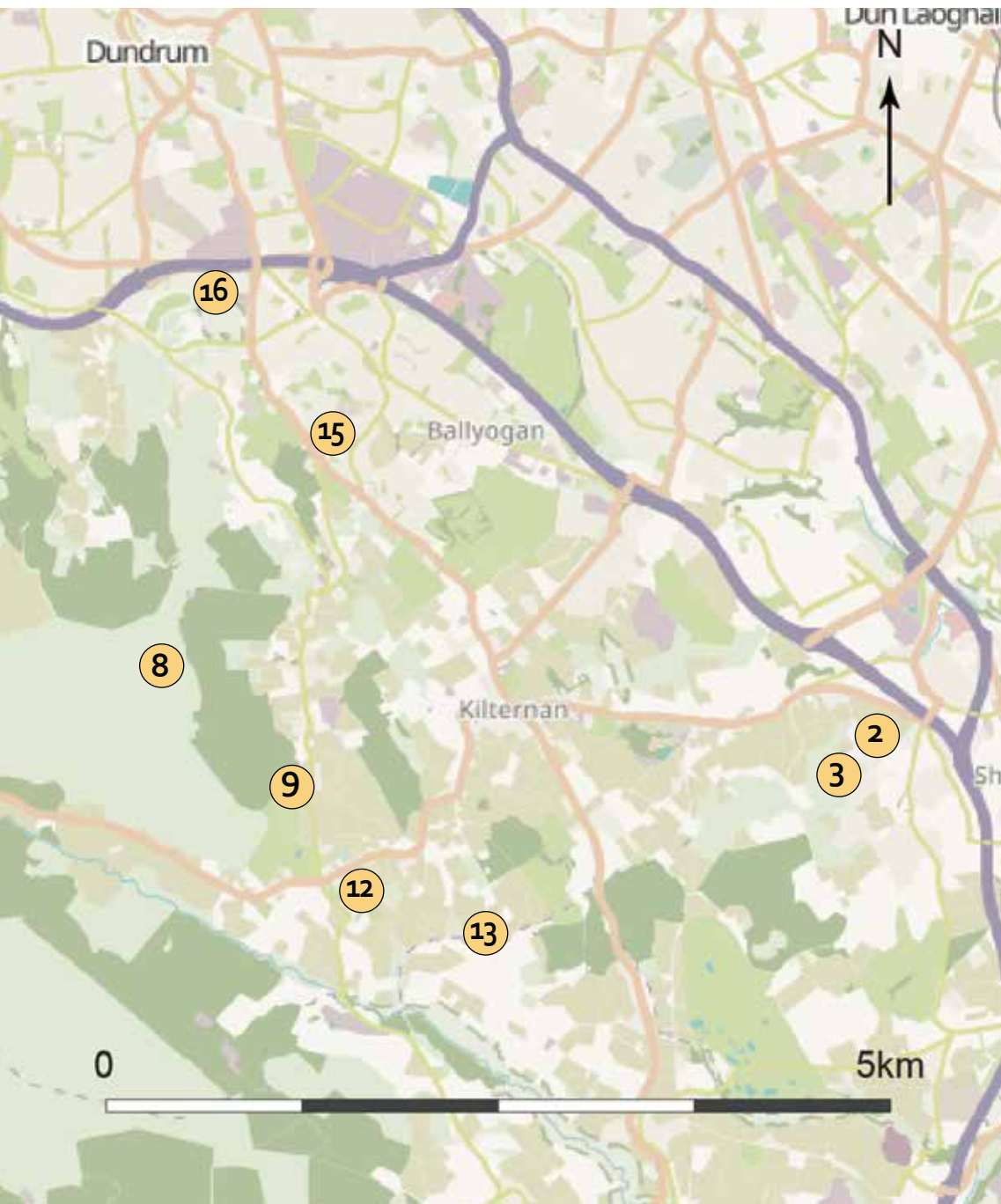
Archaeological distribution maps might show the Dublin uplands as having relatively few sites, however, there are probably more than you think, and still more yet to be discovered. Archaeology can be anywhere. This booklet is an introduction to the story of the Dublin Mountains through the archaeological sites that we know about.

Our archaeological heritage may seem indestructible, having in some cases survived for thousands of years. However this is not the case. This precious resource is vulnerable to damage from visitors who do not respect it, and from the changing environment and ravages of time. This is why we also have a chapter on protecting and preserving this heritage for future generations.

We hope you enjoy learning about how our predecessors used the uplands and that this will add to your enjoyment of and respect for this landscape of stories, Dublin's monumental mountains.

Board walk at Tibbradden cairn with signs of footfall impact. Image by Joe Ladrigan





LIST OF SITES

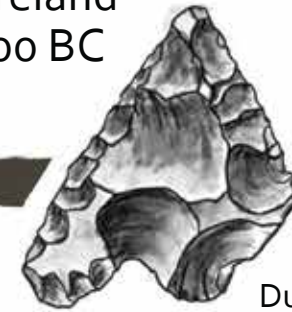
- 1 Cruagh cemetery
- 2 Rathmichael church
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- 4 Piperstown cairns
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- 6 Hellfire Club
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- 12 Glencullen standing stone
- 13 Ballybetagh bog
- 14 Lugg henge
- 15 Kilgobbin church
- 16 Pale ditch
- 17 Slievethoul passage tombs
- 18 Military Road

TIMELINE

Mesolithic Ireland
8000 - 4000 BC



Neolithic Ireland
4000 - 2400 BC



Hunter-Gatherers

First burial at
Poulabrone,
c.3800 BC

First
Farmers

Dublin Mountains
Portal Tombs
c.3800-3400 BC

Laughaunstown ringfort
7th - 9th Century

Cruagh Church foundation
5th Century

Early Medieval
AD 400 - 1169

Patrick arrives
c432 AD



Viking Dublin
c.841-1170 AD



Medieval Ireland
AD 1169 - 1550

Kilmasantan
Deerpark
AD 1207

Black Death in
Ireland 1348

Battle of Clontarf
1014

Normans Arrive
1169/70



Bronze Age 2500 - 500 BC

Rathmichael Hillfort constructed
Piperstown Cairns and Hut sites
Raheen Dhu Barrow

Newgrange
c.3200 - 2900 BC

Dublin Mountains
Passage Tombs
c.3600-3200 BC

Dublin Mountains
Wedge Tombs
c.2500-2000 BC

Iron Age 500 BC - 400 AD

Brighter Hoard
c.100 BC



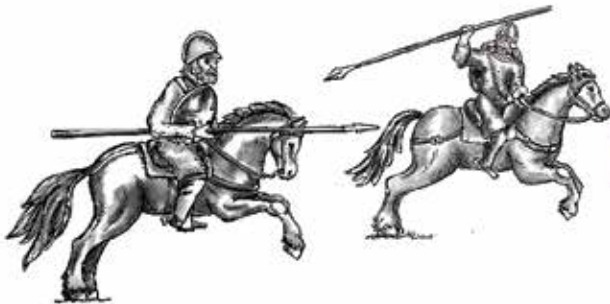
Paper Mill Rathfarnham AD 1719,
Hellfire Club AD 1725

Puck's Castle,
The Pale Ditch
15th Century

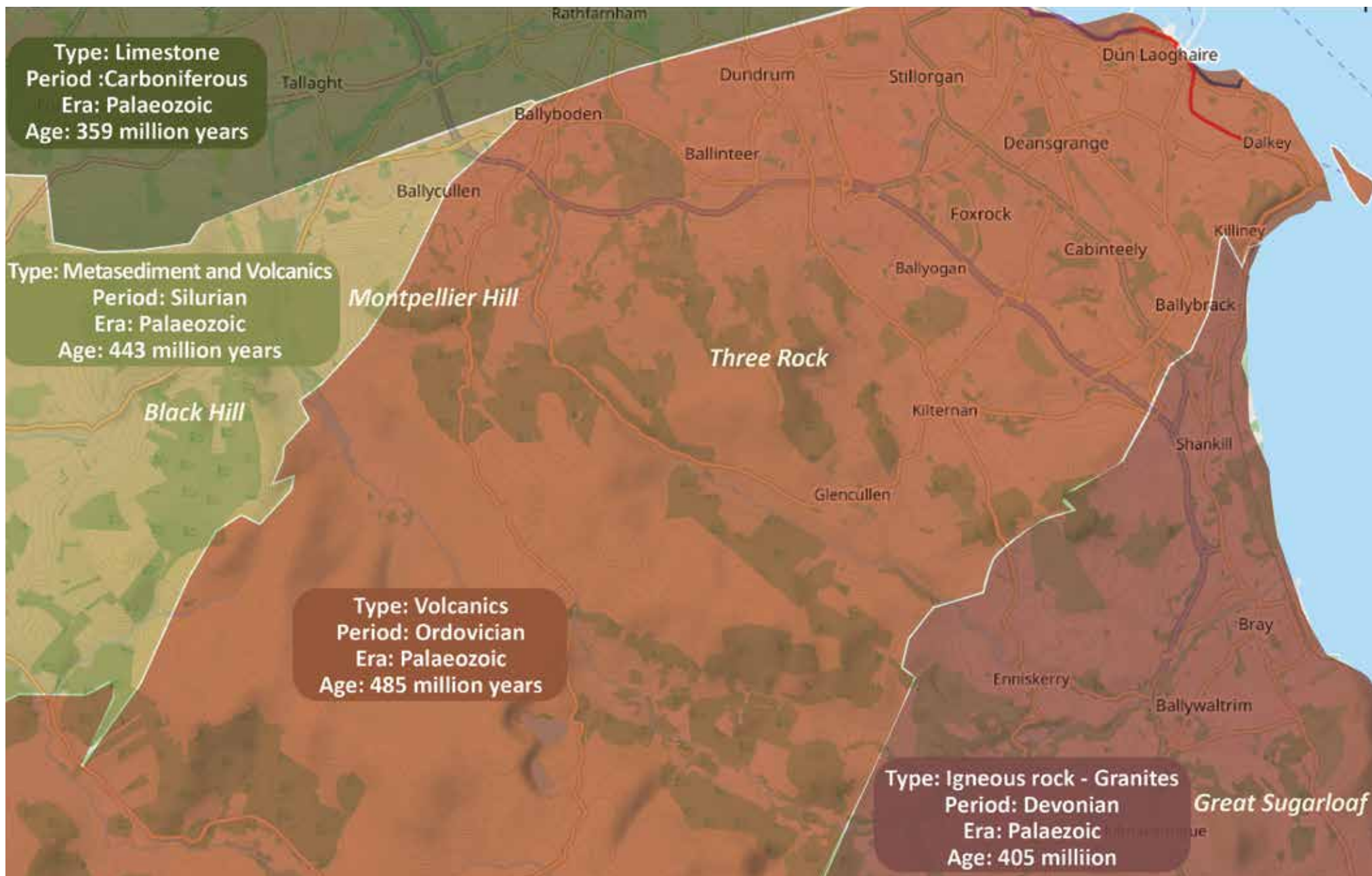
Postmedieval Ireland AD 1550 - 1607

Construction of Military Road AD 1800-1809,
O'Connell Monster Meeting at Tibradden AD 1823,
Mustering of Fenians at Tallaght Hill AD 1867

Markievicz cottage sheltering James Connolly's family
during Easter Rising AD 1916



1916 Rising



THE DUBLIN MOUNTAINS IN PREHISTORY

The story of the Dublin Mountains begins nearly 500 million years ago. South Dublin has three main geological areas. The oldest is composed of Ordovician volcanic rocks and Silurian sedimentary rocks in the south western part of the county. These were formed as an ancient sea floor around 470 to 440 million years ago. They were uplifted into land as part of the Caledonian mountain building event at the end of the Silurian Period. Shortly after, big masses of granite were injected into them during the Devonian Period at around 405 million years ago. South Dublin includes the northern end of the Leinster Granite chain.

The northern half of the county is formed of Carboniferous Limestone rocks deposited in a deep marine basin. These rocks were formed around 340 million years ago and are faulted against the older rocks along the base of the mountains. Over the last 2 million years the Ice Age had a big effect on the landscape, eroding the mountains, depositing glacial gravels in places and then rivers such as the Dodder have been active in recent times, crafting, shaping and carving the landscape into the one we are more familiar with today.

Ten important sites in South Dublin County of geological heritage help to describe this story; these sites have been selected as the best examples within the county, and are listed in the county development plan. Each site has a non-technical site report which can be found on www.gsi.ie.

Map of Dublin Mountains Geology.

Basemapping provided by © OpenStreetMap contributors



Giant Irish Deer

FROM FISHERS TO FARMERS – THE FIRST INHABITANTS OF THE MOUNTAINS

The mountains were first marked by hooves long before hiking boots. The area of Ballybetagh Bog, now long since harvested of peat, drained and reclaimed, was the most important source of bones of the Giant Irish Deer or Irish Elk. Far in excess of a hundred specimens were found here and sold to decorate the halls of stately homes, or to stand proudly in our Natural History Museum.

As yet, no evidence of those families of hunter-gatherers in the Irish Mesolithic has been found in the mountains and uplands. They may have stayed in the lower contours, near the rivers, creeks and Dublin Bay. The earliest human activity we have in the mountains comes from the time of the first farmers, around 5,000 years ago

MONUMENTAL IMPACTS

The Neolithic (meaning 'New Stone Age') is the time when people moved away from living as nomadic hunters and gatherers, and began to farm and form more permanent settlements. The adoption of agriculture was arguably the most consequential development in all of human history. Farming first began in the Near East and moved steadily westwards, first reaching Ireland around 4000 BC.

Farming is likely to have been introduced by new migrants to Ireland, and with agriculture the whole relationship between people and the land changed forever. These early farmers built large rectangular houses of oak planks and began to clear the primeval forests using polished stone axes. They raised livestock and sowed early forms of wheat and barley.



*Polished stone axe found during excavations at the Hellfire Club
Image: Ken Williams*



THE MEGALITHIC TOMBS OF THE DUBLIN MOUNTAINS

The Neolithic is one of the most significant periods for the Dublin Mountains in terms of the representation of archaeological monuments. These uplands were clearly a place of real importance and appear to have been a landscape of spiritual meaning based on the number of funerary monuments that can be found on the summits and slopes of the mountains and hills, as well as the valleys and low lying land. These funerary monuments give evidence of the changing nature of society and settlement. They may be seen as a form of expression of not just religious belief, but community strength, cohesion and perhaps even territorial ownership.

Ireland's megalithic tombs are split into four broad categories – court tombs, portal tombs (also known as dolmens), passage tombs and wedge tombs. There are no known court tombs in the Dublin Mountains, but there are fantastic examples of the other three types. They are all found in different parts of the mountains – portal tombs may be some of our earliest, and they are found in the foothills, glens and valleys, often near a stream or river.

Top Image: Mount Venus Dolmen
Bottom Image: Fairy Castle Cairn

They consist of large upright stones that support an enormous capstone. You can see examples like the Mount Venus Dolmen, or at Brennanstown or Kiltiernan.

There are eleven passage tombs crowning a number of the summits of the Dublin Mountains, and along with another five in the Wicklow Mountains, they should be considered collectively to be an extended passage tomb cemetery. These tombs may all be geographically quite distant, but they are highly intervisible; you can often see at least one other tomb from each monument. A recent archaeological dig on the tomb that was destroyed to make way for the Hellfire Club revealed fascinating insights, including a polished stone axe, megalithic art and radiocarbon dates that suggest a date around 3500 BC.

Some of Ireland's best examples of wedge tombs can be found in the Dublin Mountains. Including the remarkable tomb at Ballyedmonduff, and those at Killakee (in Massy's Woods), and Kilmashogue. These tombs date to around 2400–2000 BC, at the end of the Neolithic period, when the first metalworking began in Ireland.

Top Image: Excavations underway at the Hellfire Club in 2016
Bottom Image: Ballyedmonduff Wedge Tomb





Aerial view of the megalithic tombs on the summit of Seahan







METAL MASTERS

FROM COPPER TO BRONZE

The first use of metal – copper and gold - in Ireland dates to around 2500 BC. This new technology where stones seemed to melt before being moulded into axes, knives, swords, and decorative items must have seemed like magic. The addition of tin from Cornwall about 500 hundred years later meant that they could make bronze, an even stronger metal, which came to define the next era of activity on this island. Ancient DNA research tells us that a new population group arrived in Ireland at this time, who may be responsible for bringing this technology. We also see changes in pottery styles and burial traditions.

Cairn on Piperstown Hill



Tibradden Cairn

As the Bronze Age progressed, new forms of cultural and social practice appeared. The mountains remained a place for burial, with small stone-lined graves known as 'cist burials' covered with heaps of stones known as cairns. Examples of these cairns can be found on Piperstown Hill, overlooking the valley of Glenasmole, along with the ephemeral foundations of hut structures. Bronze Age pottery was found in the cairn on the summit of Tibradden when it was excavated in 1849, though that may be another example of later reuse of a Neolithic tomb.

There are several Bronze Age monuments in the Dublin Mountains. Including an important complex of ring barrows at Lugg Woods at the foot of Slievethoul. Another large barrow known as the Raheen Dhú can be found on Tallaght Hill.

DID YOU KNOW?

The large quartz standing stone at Glencullen has the nickname Queen Mab and can appear to change colour during sunset

THE IRON AGE

The Dublin uplands continued to be a place of significance into the Iron Age. A large circular enclosure, known as Lugg Henge, can be found on the shoulder of Slievethoul. It was excavated in 1939, and the archaeologists found a circular bank with an external ditch, 49m in overall diameter, within which there were a series of postholes, a habitation site and a low central mound. The archaeologists estimated the site to date to the early Iron Age, based on the type of pottery retrieved during the dig.

In some cases, entire hilltops became enclosed. Hillforts are large enclosure monuments that can vary greatly in date, from the Neolithic up to the early medieval period. Though traditionally, hillforts were associated with the Iron Age. A large hillfort is located at Rathmichael, and measures approximately 140m in diameter. Though the name suggests a defensive purpose, these sites may have been more for large gatherings, *óenaig*, with the hillforts serving political or ceremonial roles.



Aerial view of Lugg Henge



Aerial view of Rathmichael Hillfort







DUBLIN MOUNTAINS IN THE EARLY MEDIEVAL AND VIKING AGE

In the early medieval period, people lived a rural, agricultural life. The landscape was divided into territories called tuatha, each of which was ruled by a king. There were also overkings who ruled more than one tuatha. This period is sometimes known as Ireland's Golden Age as it saw a highpoint in craftsmanship that produced stunning works of art in metals, stone and manuscripts, like the Tara Brooch, our high crosses and the Book of Kells. Many of these treasures were created for the church through the patronage of wealthy kings.

Dave Swift of Claiómh portrays a 9th century Viking warrior in Dublin City

RURAL COMMUNITIES

With the exception of some of the larger monastic sites, there were no settlements that could be described as towns or even villages. A roughly circular bank and external ditch (ringfort) or a stone wall (cashel) enclosed what was essentially a farmyard with the family home and other related structures. Most raths are 25-38m in diameter, but they can be smaller or larger. The size and the number of enclosures are indicative of the wealth and social status of the inhabitants



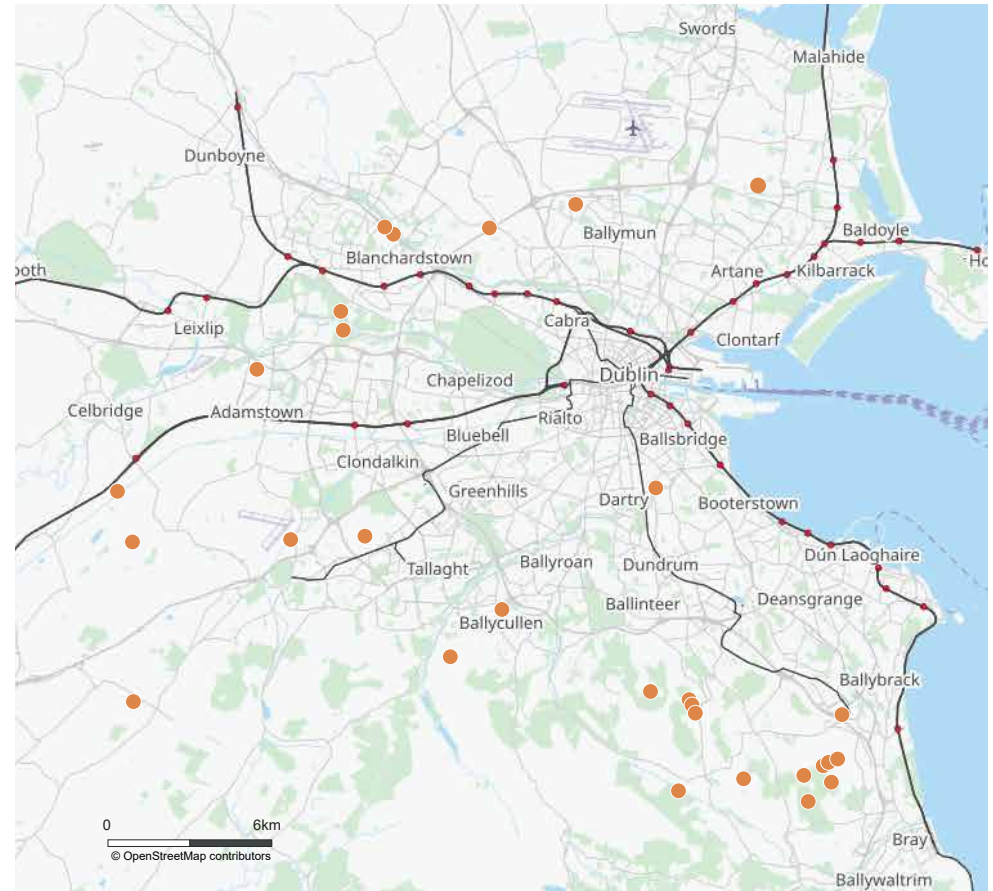
Visualisation of a Ringfort

It is estimated that there may have been 60,000 of these ringforts/raths/cashels/duns/settlement enclosures all over the island of Ireland, including in the Dublin mountains. As they supported farming families, we should expect to find them in land suitable for agriculture – and this means that many were destroyed over the millennia as the land continued in use, especially for cultivation of crops. Those in the Dublin mountains tend to be found on the poorer agricultural land that hasn't seen extensive tillage, often overlooking a stream or river, sometimes with a well nearby. Excavations have shown that the inhabitants engaged in mixed farming, growing cereal crops like barley, and raising cattle, sheep and pigs. They would also have availed of the wild game and seasonal fruits available around them.

When we look at the distribution of ringforts in South Dublin, we can see that there is a stronger concentration to the east. This could be for a number of reasons including security, depending on the relations with nearby tuatha, or better resources, including access to the sea for fishing and trading. A cashel up on Ballymorefinn overlooks the Glenasmole valley but also provides broad views as far as Dublin Bay.

A cashel in Newtown, overlooking Glencullen, it is a good reminder that the ringfort was one aspect of this type of settlement. There is evidence of a system of small fields around the enclosure, and a nearby well was probably their main source of water. Some ringforts have been found in the course of development led excavation, such as a large ringfort excavated at Laughanstown where finds included animal bone, a decorated bone pin with a carved animal head, glass beads and much more.

In this period, pottery was almost non-existent with households instead using vessels made of wood, leather or other organic materials. Many tools and other utensils were made of iron, with bog iron ore for this area probably being sourced in the mountains, and bronze and precious metals were used to make brooches and other decorative items.



Ringfort distribution in Dublin



EARLY CHRISTIANITY

The first churches, like the farmsteads, were usually enclosed by a curvilinear bank or wall. As monasteries grew, some added outer enclosures. The communities living there were largely self-sufficient in that they were engaged in agricultural and craft activities, though they also developed strong political roles. There is still disagreement among experts as to whether we can refer to some of the larger monastic settlements as towns.

A number of early medieval church sites were founded in the Dublin Mountains region – though they tend to be in the foothills. Many of the old church sites have seen continuous use, even to today, for burial if not worship. The church buildings that survive often show evidence of additions and alterations from later times but features from their early days can be seen.

Features associated with early church sites include round towers, bullaun stones, holy wells, cross slabs and high crosses. The high cross at Kilgobbin was found buried in the churchyard in the 19th century. It was then re-erected on the roadside using a bullaun stone as its base. Kilgobbin church too is believed to have early origins.

Kilgobbin Church Cross

In the 12th century it was still known as Technabretnach – ‘house of the Welshmen’. An interesting story associated with this church is that Brian Boru’s army is believed to have stopped here after the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 to bury their dead.

The mound that is the site of the ancient church of Cruagh, near Rockbrook, is now very overgrown and the ruins of the medieval church building appear to have been robbed to build the much later tower there; however this site dates all the way back to Patrick’s time, founded by Dalua, who was “of Patrick’s household”. Another source calls him Dalua (of) Tigi Bretan – Tigi Bretan being the ‘place of the Briton or Welshman’ known now as Tibradden, the mountain that looks over Cruagh.

DID YOU KNOW?

Although many believe round towers were built at monasteries to hide from attackers, their Irish name, *cloicthech*, indicates they were primarily used as bell towers.

A watchtower was built on top of the ancient graveyard of Cruagh around 1800 to guard against bodysnatchers





Visualisation of a Viking settlement

THE VIKING IMPACT

With the arrival of the Vikings and the origins of the city of Dublin in the 9th century, the Dublin Mountains took on a new role as an urban hinterland, providing many supplies for the new town. Although most people are familiar with 'the Pale', fewer have heard of 'Dyflinaskiri', the name given to the hinterland of Dublin in Viking times. This area included the Dublin Mountains and was under the control of the rulers of Dublin. It provided an important protective buffer from Irish kingdoms and it was a vital source of resources for the town dwellers.

The many excavations that have taken place in the city provide evidence of their reliance on the hinterlands for building materials (mostly wood), fuel, cereals, raw material (such as deer antler for making combs), fruit, berries and game. Discoveries of domestic animal bone in the town show that only pigs and goats were being bred there, yet beef and mutton were their chief sources of protein. This would have come from the hinterland, with a proportion of this from the Dublin Mountains.

The people living in the hinterland were a mixture of Irish and newly arrived Scandinavians. Archaeological evidence is scarce, but we have some historical records of Scandinavians who owned or were associated with locations in the landscape. There are also a number of Scandinavian placenames, such as Balally (Baile meic Amhlaibh = 'the settlement of the son of Olaf'). In reality, it is almost impossible to tell Irish and Scandinavian rural settlements apart archaeologically, so we tend to use the term Hiberno-Scandinavian. The houses they lived in were of wood and wattle, so they do not survive above ground.

DID YOU KNOW?

Rathdown slabs are 11th to early 12th century grave slabs decorated with geometric designs that expressed the Norse identity of their creators.

One of the Rathdown Slabs at Rathmichael Church







THE MEDIEVAL MOUNTAINS

The arrival of Strongbow and his allies saw Dublin transform quickly from a Scandinavian, into an Anglo-Norman city. It became the centre of government and had a close relationship with its hinterlands, including the Dublin Mountains. The church already owned a lot of property in the area (the Archbishop of Dublin was the single largest landholder) but baronial families also established manors on land they were given by Strongbow and other powerful lords like Hugh de Lacey, in payment for their part in the conquest. Historical records can give us a valuable glimpse of activities in the Dublin Mountains in medieval times.

Although the religious houses and archbishop of Dublin owned large areas of land in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, there were relatively few monasteries, nunneries or hospitals there. Religious life instead focused on parish churches, which the parishioners would pay tithes to in the form of agricultural produce. There was an increase in church construction and renovation in the 13th century, often on the site of earlier churches.

Aerial view of St. Anne's Graveyard, Glenasmole



Rathmichael Church

By the 13th century the region around Dublin was highly populated. The manors and granges (out-farms of religious houses) would have had tenants to work the land who lived nearby or in betaghs (manorial tenant settlements). Manors would have consisted of a residence, gardens, farm buildings and possibly a dovecote, mill or rabbit warren.

THE HINTERLAND OF MEDIEVAL DUBLIN

Most of the Dublin hinterland was dedicated to agriculture – vital for supplying the burgeoning urban population with food and other resources. The nature of the Dublin Mountains landscape meant that pasture was more important than arable farming, but there would have been crops grown in the lower lands of the foothills. After harvesting, cereals were dried in kilns and the grains then milled to make flour or meal. Some people still used rotary hand querns, but tenants were discouraged from this so that they would pay to use the manorial, water-powered mills found on rivers such as the Dodder and Dargle. As well as providing flour for bread, cereals were also malted for brewing. Households would have been largely self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables.

Livestock in the pastures included cattle, sheep and goats. Pigs could be kept close to the settlement or herded in woods. Poultry, including hens and geese, would have been a common sight, indeed rents were often paid with hens. The area south of the city was the main source of the city's dairy supplies of milk, butter and cheese. Meat would be sent to the city either 'on the hoof' or already butchered and ready to be sold at markets. Farmers living within about 30km of the city could probably get there and back in a day. Of course, the mountains and their forests were an important source of game too. Lords of the manors would hunt for sport as well as sustenance, and some even constructed deerparks. In 1207, the archbishop of Dublin received permission from the king to enclose a deerpark at his manor at Kilmasentan (Glenasmole). He needed permission because it was close to the royal forest at Glenree. He also received a royal gift of fallow deer to help stock it.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Normans introduced rabbits to Ireland for their fur and meat. They called them conies (or coneys) which became '*coinín*' in Irish.

Wool and hides were valuable commodities also, frequently exported to Continental Europe. Merchants might buy directly from farmers, or in bulk at manorial centres or boroughs for transport to the city and port. Local cloth production was widespread too and fulling mills are recorded in south Dublin. Tanning could have been carried out on the farm, but tanners were most often found alongside butchers, leatherworkers and saddlers in a more urban setting.



Fallow deer



NATURAL RESOURCES

Wood was vital to life as it was used for construction, heat, light, industry (like metalworking or pottery making), cooking, brewing, manufacture and crafts. By the 13th century, masonry was replacing post-and-wattle as the preferred construction material for houses, but this required large timbers such as oak and by the 14th century it already had to be sourced further afield. We know large forests existed at Kilmasantan, Shankill and Glencree, and placename evidence suggests the presence of woods mostly between the mountains and the sea to the east.

The increased use of masonry naturally led to a higher demand for stone. Because it was so difficult and expensive to transport, it was sourced as close as possible. Some quarries existed in the mountains, such as along the banks and bed of the Dodder. Other building materials that were needed were clay for ceramic roof and floor tiles and lead for windows. We know clay was sourced from the hinterland, though lead may have been derived from places like Glendalough in the Wicklow Mountains, or imported.

Norman Knight guards the gates of Dublin. Claoimh

Clay was also needed for pottery which came back into widespread use thanks to the Anglo-Normans. Initially it was mostly imported, but domestic production soon began with local wares identifiable in the archaeological record. The most common type in the east of Ireland was Leinster Cooking Ware. This appears to have been a rural product and its discovery in towns as well as the presence of Dublin wares in the countryside, are evidence for trade and exchange between the city and its hinterland.

PROTECTING THE CITY

The earliest defensive structures in the Dublin landscape of this period were mottes, mounds with wooden structures on top, set within an enclosure known as a bailey. These were built around the periphery of what we would recognise as Dublin. The population growth in and use of the Dublin Mountains for provision of the city was increasingly threatened by the 15th century. The Wicklow Mountains were a notorious stronghold for powerful Irish families, like the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles, who occasionally attacked and raided the rich lowlands. Stone castles such as tower houses, were built as part of the defence of Dublin in the 14th and 15th centuries, to protect not only the

The Pale Ditch at Balally





administrative and political centre, but the settlements and agricultural producers of the hinterland who supplied it.

In 1488, landowners on the periphery were instructed to build a defensive ditch which became known as 'The Pale'. Although we have all heard the expression 'beyond the Pale', not many know that sections of this boundary, once consisting of a massive earthen bank with a wide ditch on either side, can still be seen in the landscape – including in housing estates in Sandyford and Balally and in Ballyogan.

The Pale and its castles had limited effect in preventing attacks, so the resulting damage and exposure of properties in the mountains meant their value decreased. Produce was vulnerable to theft and transport fraught with danger. By the time of the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in the 1530s, many of the church sites and ecclesiastical properties in this frontier land were considered to be of very low value. Once confiscated, the English took the opportunity to further fortify the area by building strong towers at some of the larger religious properties.

Map of the Pale Ditch



Puck's Castle, Rathmichael



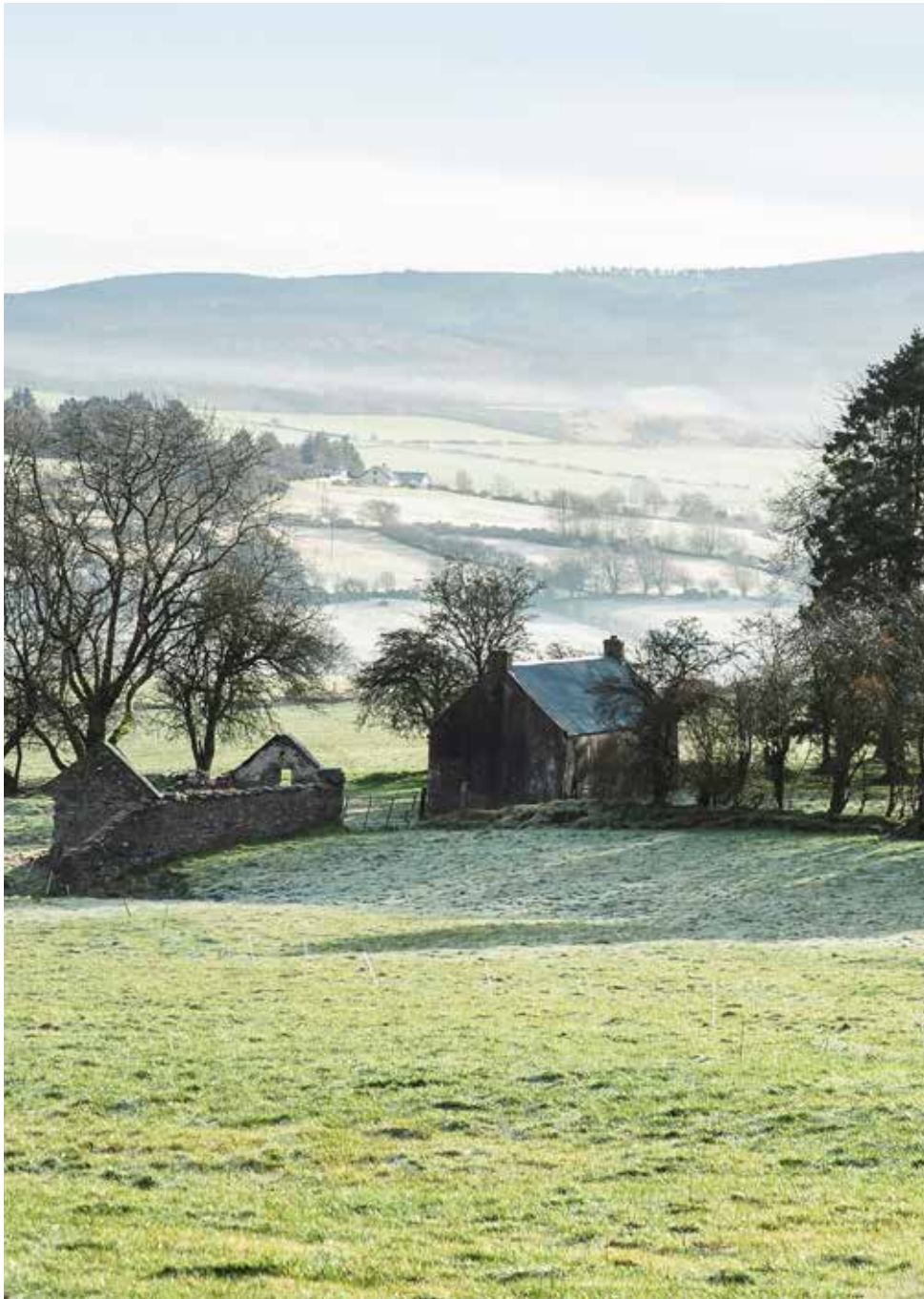


DUBLIN MOUNTAINS IN THE POST MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries during the Reformation, a huge swathe of church lands in the mountains changed ownership. Though large portions stayed with the church, with men like Adam Loftus, a Yorkshireman who had served as the Archbishop of Dublin and Lord Chancellor holding some 5000 acres of plantation land. His descendents would be known as the Dukes of Wharton, who resided at Rathfarnham Castle.

The land was redistributed again following the turbulent wars of the 17th century, particularly after the Williamite Wars of the 1690s. Men like William Conolly of Castletown House became enormously wealthy, and purchased large estates for farming, industry and sport. It was Conolly who turned Montpelier Hill into an enclosed deerpark of a 1,000 acres. Demolishing a large tomb on the summit to quarry its stone to build the hunting lodge, now known as the Hellfire Club.

The Hellfire Club



Like today, the uplands were used for pasture, particularly sheep farming as the wool industry remained significant. This can be seen in the number of fairs at Saggart, Carrickmines and Laughanstown.

Industry and quarrying intensified in the area during the 18th and 19th centuries. Paper milling became a notable activity. The first paper mill in Ireland was established at Rathfarnham in 1719, and by the end of the century no fewer than 26 mills were operating in the hinterland of the city, with notable clusters around Tallaght and Rathfarnham. The ruins of one can still be seen near the entrance of Rockbrook Park School.

The remains of a 19th century farm near Lugg Woods

A MOUNTAIN HIDEAWAY

The mountains continued to be a place of secrecy, raiding and covert activities. Perhaps most notably in 1798. As remnants of the United Irish force moved northwards after their defeat at Vinegar Hill, they were faced with a decision. Should they aim to link up with other insurgents in Ulster and the Midlands, or seek to continue a guerrilla war from the fastness of the Wicklow and Dublin Mountains? In the end, they chose both. While some decided to carry the fight northwards, others, notably Joseph Holt, Michael Dwyer, and later Miles Byrne, opted for the Mountains.

When Joseph Holt surrendered in November 1798, Michael Dwyer was left as the leader of the United Irishmen there, and they soon became known as the “masters of the mountains”. His actions over the years that followed focused around the areas of Glenmalur and the Glen of Imaal. Dwyer was not finally subdued until December 1803, when he accepted exile to Australia in return for surrender.

A section of the Old Military Road over the mountains





O'Connell's Rock below Tibbradden

In an attempt to 'tame' the mountains, the Military Road was constructed between 1800 and 1809. The purpose of the road was to allow rapid deployment of troops against insurgents, and it followed a model that had been used to counter the Jacobites in Scotland. The Military Road began at Rathfarnham, and ran for a length of 36 miles. By the time it was complete, five barracks were added at the Glen of Imall, Drumgoff, Laragh, Augavannagh and Glencree. Though this attempt to quell the threat from the mountains met with mixed success.

The great Daniel O'Connell held one of his Monster Meetings just below Tibbradden. And in 1867 there was a great assembly again thousands of men gathered on Tallaght Hill as part of the Fenian Rising. Due to a lack of leadership and a snowstorm, the rising never happened. Though there was a skirmish in Tallaght village where a small contingent of men attacked the police barracks and three men were killed.

The story of the Mountains as a place for refuge continued into the 1916 Rising. Located up a small private lane off the Blackglen road is the ruins of a small (privately owned) double cottage with some very important historical associations. The smaller, two roomed residence was rented out by the owner. The first notable name who stayed there is the poet Padraic Colum, leading figure in the Irish Literary Revival.

It was let to Countess Constance Markievicz, later to become one of the leaders in the 1916 Rising. She initially used it as a painting retreat, but as she became more active in the fight for independence, the cottage became a base for meetings and training of Fianna Éireann. A 1967 biography even claims that this cottage is where her passion for the Irish cause was ignited.

Arms and ammunition from the Howth gun running are believed to have been stored here briefly, and the cottage was occupied by the wife and children of James Connolly during the 1916 Rising. Sadly, this end of the double cottage was already a roofless ruin by the 1950s.

Countess Constance Markievicz, one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, used a cottage in the Dublin Mountains as a training base for Fianna Éireann (National Library of Ireland)







THE DUBLIN MOUNTAINS TODAY

The mountains continue to support modern day communities in many important ways; as home, as a place of work and as a place of recreation, renewal and inspiration. Not many capital cities have a mountain range on their doorstep and this brings many benefits as well as challenges. As Coillte Nature's Dublin Mountains Makeover project transforms commercial coniferous forests into biodiverse native woodland, the mountains are again undergoing a dramatic transformation. Recreation trails are opening up the mountains to more people and new communities forming at the base of the mountains bring a new generation of Dublin Mountains explorers.

The Dublin Mountains Way walking route and network of Coillte trails connect some of the archaeological sites. You can download maps and information here: https://www.dublinmountains.ie/dublin_mountains_way/dublin_mountains_way/

Bohernabreena Reservoir and St Annes Graveyard



Drone Panorama of the Dublin Mountains. Image by Joe Ladrigan







PROTECTING THE PAST

The archaeological heritage of the Dublin Mountains ranges from many thousands of years old, like megalithic tombs, to sites still in use, such as some ancient graveyards. All are vulnerable to change or damage caused by people and the environment. In order to protect our sites, we should be mindful of how we interact with them, so that we cause as little disturbance as possible. This ensures continued appreciation and enjoyment of these sites long into the future.

The ruin of a 19th century farm known as 'Peggy Casey's Cottage' below Montpelier Hill

PRESERVING OUR ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

All visitors to the Dublin Mountains should familiarise themselves with the Country Code and the Leave No Trace Principles, and visitors to archaeological sites should also heed the Protecting our Past Code for Caring for our Monuments:

1. **Respect private property.** Many archaeological sites are located on privately owned land, which you may not enter without the owner's permission. This includes some National Monuments.
2. **Do not light fires.** Fires permanently damages some of the hidden information held by archaeological sites and our ability to access it.
3. **Graffiti damages** archaeological and architectural remains, as do the methods of removing it.
4. **Take note of signage;** it is there for your safety as well as that of the monuments.
5. **Do not climb.** Climbing on or over monuments contributes to their erosion over time. Also, they are old and unstable and may collapse causing serious injury.
6. Archaeological sites are **not suitable for camping.**
7. Please **leave the site as you found it.** This includes taking away any litter and not moving or adding to the material that makes up the site.

8. **Off-road vehicles, quads or mountain bikes** should not be driven through ruins or archaeological sites as they can cause serious damage.
9. **Do not move or rearrange stones** at an archaeological site. This means no one can ever again experience the landscape or site in the same way and causes damage to the integrity of the monument.
10. Please **keep dogs on a lead** and remove waste. It is particularly important that dogs are kept under control at burial sites.
11. **Do not use metal detectors.** Our monuments and artefacts have strong legal protection and illegal use of metal detectors will result in severe penalties.
12. **Close the gate** behind you. This is particularly important in farmland.



Kilmashogue Wedge Tomb after vandalism in 2021



Mountain Biker in Ballyedmonduff enjoying the mountain bike trail network





USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION:

To report any damage to an archaeological site or monument ,
please contact the National Monuments Service at:
nationalmonuments@housing.gov.ie 01 888 2169

If you find an artefact, please report it to the National Museum of
Ireland Duty Officer at: antiquitiesdo@museum.ie 01 6777444

For more information about the Dublin Mountains Community
Archaeology Project, and to find out more about sites in the Dublin
Mountains see www.dublinmountains.ie/archaeology

The Hellfire Club on Montpellier Hill

Sacred Skies and EARTHLY SINNERS

**THE
HELLFIRE CLUB
ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT**

**The Excavation of a Neolithic Passage Tomb
Montpelier Hill, County Dublin
16E0497
Neil Jackman**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Websites

For more information about archaeology, publications and recommendations, visit the National Monuments Service website: www.archaeology.ie.

On this website you will also find a link to their Historic Environment Viewer (Historic Environment Viewer (archaeology.ie), which you can use to explore the known monuments in the Dublin Mountains.

For information about archaeology in the Dublin Mountains, visit the Dublin Mountains Partnership archaeology page: <https://www.dublinmountains.ie/archaeology/>

We also recommend :

<https://libraries.dlrco.ie/library-services/local-history/local-studies>

<https://www.sdcc.ie/en/services/sport-and-recreation/libraries/library-services/local-studies/local-studies-resources/>

www.heritagemaps.ie

www.buildingsofireland.ie.

www.gsi.ie

Free e-books

'*Sacred Skies and Earthly Sinners, the Hellfire Club Archaeological Project*' by Neil Jackman, www.abartaheritage.ie/hellfire-club-archaeological-project/hellfire-club-book

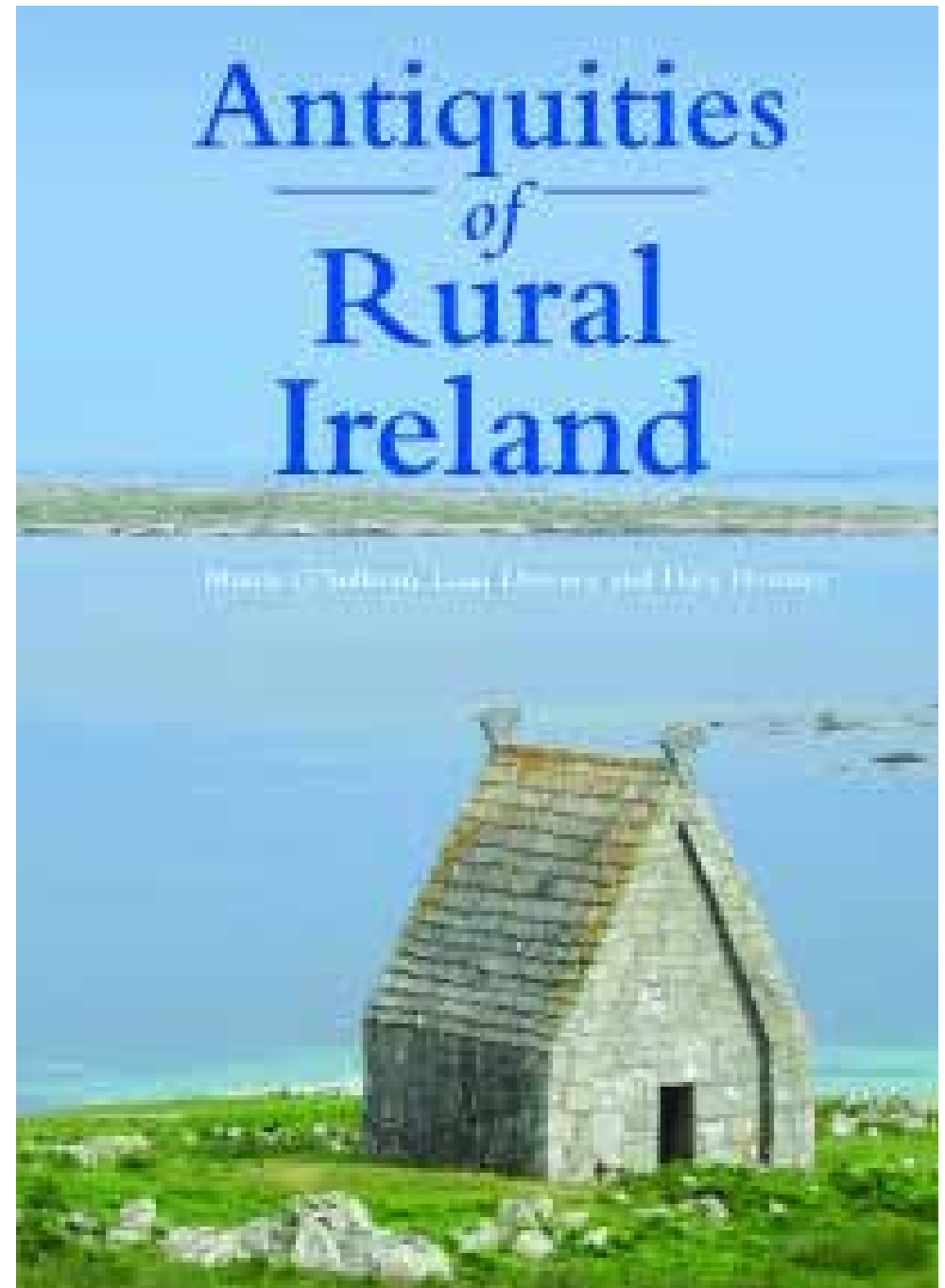
'*Rock Art- Prehistoric Rock Art in Ireland*' by Clare Busher O'Sullivan (The Heritage Council) www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/Rock-Art-Prehistoric-Rock-Art-in-Ireland-A4.pdf

'*Irish Field Monuments*' by Conleth Manning (National Monuments Service) www.archaeology.ie/sites/default/files/media/publications/irish-field-monuments.pdf

Print books:

'*Antiquities of Old Rathdown: the Archaeology of South County Dublin and North Wicklow*' by Christiaan Corlett (Wordwell Books, 1999)

'*Antiquities of Rural Ireland*' by Muiris Ó Suilleabháin, Liam Downey and Dara Downey (Wordwell Books, 2017)



GLOSSARY

Bailey: A defended enclosure, usually in association with a motte. It often protected the ancillary structures related to the fort.

Barrow: Barrow: Earthen mound that covers a burial, often surrounded by a circular ditch. Usually dates to the Bronze Age.

Bronze Age: (Approximate date range from 2400 BC – 500 BC). The introduction of metallurgy. Large copper mines were established in places like Mount Gabriel, Co.Cork. Initially copper was worked to make flat axes, later introduction on tin led to increasingly elaborate bronze tools and weapons. Gold working became common and burial rites change to more individual focus in barrows and cist graves rather than communal burial monuments.

Bullaun: A large stone with one or more circular depressions carved into it. Often relate to early medieval monastic sites, they may have served as holy water fonts, or they may have had a more practical purpose similar to a large pestle-and-mortar for grinding herbs or minerals.

Cairn: A man-made drystone mound, often covering the chambers of a megalithic tomb.

Cashel: A stone-built circular enclosure, usually dating to the early medieval period. A variation of a ringfort

Cist: A stone-lined grave or chamber, usually dating to the earlier part of the Bronze Age.

Court tomb: A megalithic tomb type that usually features a large courtyard area that was in front of a covered gallery that contained human remains, often in two or more chambers. The galleries or chambers were originally covered with a large cairn of small stones or earth.

Dissolution of the Monasteries: A set of administrative and legal processes between 1536 and 1541 by which Henry VIII disbanded Catholic monasteries, priories, convents and friaries in England, Wales and Ireland, and appropriated their income and estates.

Dolmen: See portal tomb.

Early Medieval: (Approximate date range from 500 AD – 1100 AD). Emergence of increasingly powerful regional kingdoms, occasionally overruled by a High King. Gradual christianisation of the country, leading to the establishment of monasteries across Ireland. Viking raids began from the late 8th century onwards.

Fulling mill: a factory where cloth (in particular wool) was washed to remove oils, dirt and other impurities. The process also made the cloth thicker. Mills were often run by a water wheel.

High cross: A tall stone cross, often elaborately decorated with geometric design or biblical depictions. Usually in association with early medieval Irish monastic sites.

Henge: A large circular enclosure, usually comprised of earthen banks and ditches, that is thought to have had a ceremonial function.

Iron Age: (Approximate date range from 500 BC – 500 AD). The period most associated with Ireland's large ceremonial centres or 'royal' sites like Tara, Uisneach and Rathcroghan. Broadly feudal system based on a series of tribes ruled by regional kingship. Later in the period saw increased interaction with Roman Britain, leading to development of Christian communities by the 5th century.

Medieval: (Approximate date range 1100 AD – 1607 AD). This period saw a greater connection between Ireland and the rest of Europe, beginning with church reforms and followed by the Anglo-Norman invasion of the later twelfth century. The end of the medieval period could be considered to be the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the mid-sixteenth century, or the Flight of the Earls in 1607, as it marked a pivotal change of Irish society.

Megalithic: Derives from Mega - Big and Lithic - Stone. A blanket term that refers to the many different types of large prehistoric stone tombs.

Mesolithic: (Approximate date range 7000 BC – 4000 BC). The earliest known habitation of Ireland, people led a semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer existence.

Motte: An early Norman fortification. Appears as a tall earthen mound that served as the foundation for a wooden or stone tower. Often accompanied by a bailey.

Neolithic: (Approximate date range 4000 BC – 2400 BC). This era saw the introduction of agriculture and animal husbandry. More permanent settlements were established, and burial rituals became more elaborate in the form of megalithic tombs.

Oénaig: Plural of oénach, a regional assembly or gathering.

Pale (the): The region under the effective control of the English Crown during the later medieval period. Contained parts of Louth, Meath, Dublin and Kildare. The term also applied to the English controlled area outside Calais, France.

Passage tomb: The largest and most elaborate of the megalithic tomb types. A passage tomb usually consists of a stone lined passageway that leads to a burial chamber.

The passageway and chamber were then covered with an earthen or stone mound. Sometimes a mound may cover multiple passages and chambers. The most famous example in Ireland is Newgrange in County Meath.

Plantations: Land confiscated by the English Crown where the original inhabitants were replaced with English and Scottish Protestant settlers.

Portal tomb: A megalithic tomb type typically consisting of a simple chamber formed of upright stones, with a large capstone. The monument was then possibly covered with a cairn of small stones or a mound of earth. Also known as a dolmen.

Rath: See ringfort

Ring Barrow: Circular burial monument enclosed by an earthen bank and ditch that has burials in the central area and sometimes the ditch. Usually dated to the Bronze Age (*see barrow*).

Ringfort: (Also known as rath). A roughly circular enclosure surrounded by one or more ditches with banks of earth or

stone. Usually dating to the early medieval period, ringforts are one of the most numerous archaeological sites in the Irish landscape. The enclosures often defended houses and other ancillary structures. When the enclosure is constructed of stone it is often termed a cashel.

Round tower: Iconic and uniquely Irish, round towers were tall, slender towers of stone that were primarily used as a belfry.

Túatha: a petty kingdoms or tribes in early medieval Ireland

Wedge tomb: The most numerous of Ireland's megalithic tombs, and are most commonly found in the western half of the country. The name 'wedge tomb' simply refers to the simple wedge shape, as the height and width of the monument decreases from the front to the rear. Wedge tombs are the last of Ireland's megalithic tombs, and usually date to the Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age periods.

Back Cover: Rathmichael cross (c. 12th century AD) is one of a group of crosses in this area with stylistic links to Cornwall.



This booklet was written by Sharon Greene and Neil Jackman and designed by Sara Nylund. All images by Abarta Heritage unless otherwise stated.

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