

# II: Early Ireland

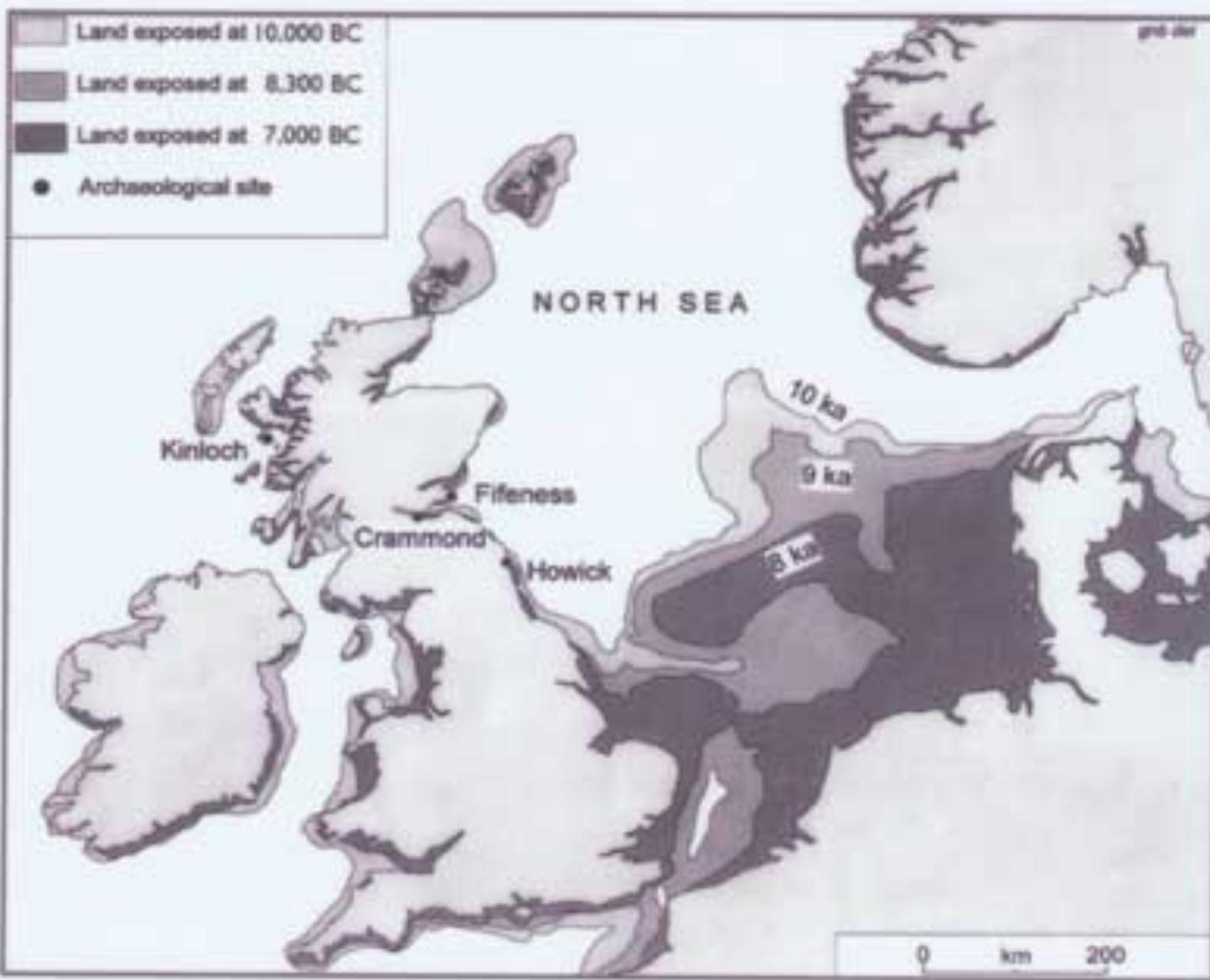


Section 2

# Our Roots in Ancient Civilisation

- Mesolithic = Middle Stone Age





The changing coastline of Northern Europe

# Ireland in the Mesolithic Period

- 7000 BC
- The country was covered in thick forest with plenty of wildlife in the rivers, lakes and forests.
  - Red deer, wild boar, wolves and foxes.
  - The Mesolithic people lived at this time.
  - Why were they called that do you think?
  - All their tools and weapons were made from stone and they hunted and gathered to survive.

# Prehistoric People

- These people were PREHISTORIC
  - What does this mean?
  - What do you think this means for gathering evidence?
  - Mount Sandel, Coleraine, Co. Derry.

# Evidence of the Past

- Lots of stone tools were found and small pieces of flint.
- Flint = Hard rock that splinters into sharp pieces when broken off.
- Spears or axe-heads would have been made out of flint.
- North-East of Ireland is where flint is commonly found.

# Hunter-Gatherers

What do we hunt and what do we gather?

Action	What?	Who?
<i>Hunt</i>	<i>Fish and wild animals</i>	<i>Men</i>
<i>Gather</i>	<i>Berries, fruits and nuts.</i>	<i>Women and Children</i>

# Mesolithic Homes

- Post-holes and dark patches were discovered in the ground at Mount Sandel.
- What could this mean?
  - Huts
  - Fires

# The Neolithic Period:

4000BC- 2000BC

# Archaeological evidence

- Studies of the pollen show:
- 4000BC serious changes were beginning to happen:
- Less tree pollen and more grass pollen.
  - What does this tell us?
- They found pollen from wheat and barley.
  - What does this tell us?
- Cattle, sheep and goat bones were found.
  - What does this tell us?

- Neolithic Age: The New Stone Age.

ENGLISH

neo-

new

GREEK

lithos

stone

Neolithic

*mid 19th century*

ENGLISH

-ic

- Tools and weapons were still made from stone this time, so we are still in the Stone Age.
- People were farmers now rather than hunter-gatherers. They relied less and less on hunting and gathering to feed their families.
- Farming gave them a regular supply of food.
- Now that they had crops and animals to look after, they started to settle on land.
- Permanent homes were now being built rather than huts.

# Human Activity

- *Tools:*
  - Flint
  - Porcellanite (A stronger, heavier stone than flint)
- *Homes:*
  - Wooden
  - Rectangular or round shape.
  - Wooden frames staked into the ground
  - Branches woven between the frames
  - Thatched roof
  - Plastered over with mud and clay.
    - Keyword: Wattle and Daub Method



Reconstruction of Lough Gur House

Clare Heritage Park  
Oughterard, Co. Clare

# Human Activity

- *Clothes:*
  - Sheep → Wool → Weaving
  - Berries → Dye → Colour for Fabric
  - Bone and Stone → necklaces and Jewellery
- *Pottery:*
  - Clay → Pottery

# Human Activity

- Farming:
- Stone walls were built to ...
  - ...keep their livestock safe from wild animals.
  - ...stop the livestock from wandering off.
- Cattle provided milk and meat to the Neolithic people.
- Crops were grown (Wheat, oats and barley).
  - A quern stone was used to grind the cereals down to flour for bread.
- ❖ Example: The Céide Fields, Co. Mayo – 4000BC-3000BC

# Megalithic Tombs

- Megalithic
- Mega – Large
- Lith- Stone
- Ic- Period
- Megalithic tombs
- The tombs, made of large stone, that the Neolithic farmers built for the dead in order to honour their afterlife.
- Neolithic people believed strongly in the afterlife.

# Megalithic Tombs

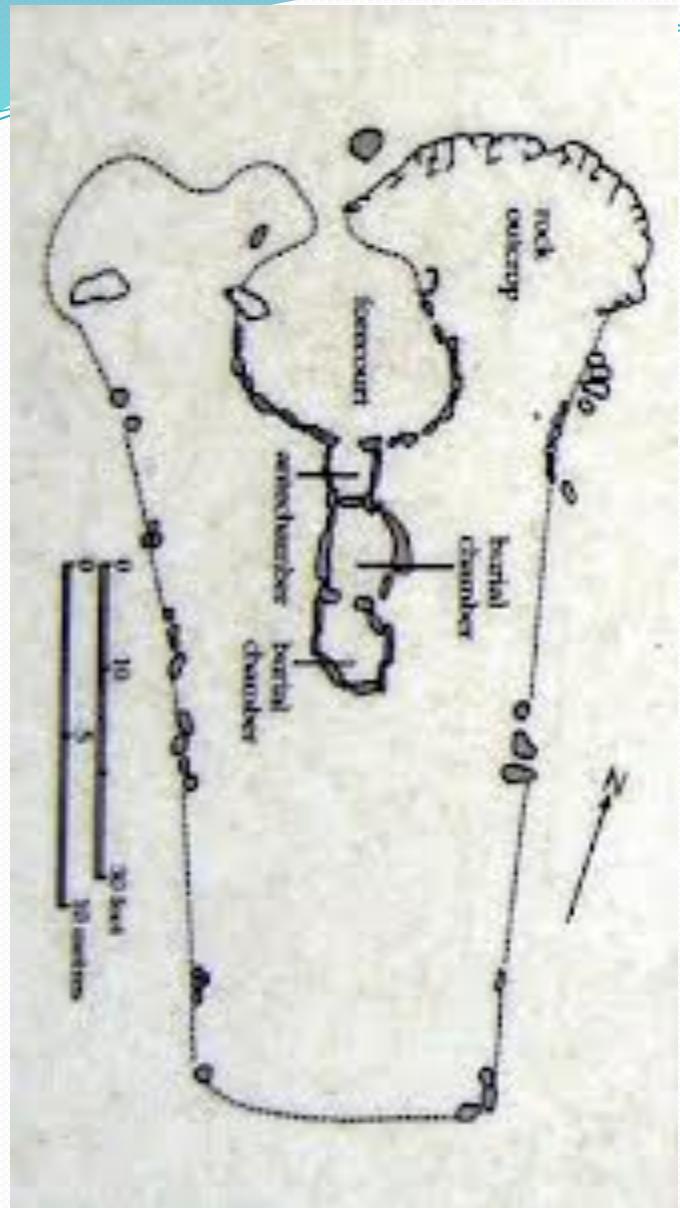
- Very large stones crafted into ornate tombs.
- These stones are of great interest to archaeologist as they only had stone tools to carve these tombs.
- Three Types:
- Court Cairns
- Dolmens
- Passage Tombs

# Court Cairns

- The earliest tombs in Neolithic Period.
- So where would we most likely find them?
  - **Court:** This name comes from the court, an open area, at the entrance of the tomb. The tomb is made of upright MEGALITH, covered with earth and stones.
  - This court may have been used for a burial ceremonial before the actual burial, inside the tomb, took place.
  - **Cairn:** The word Cairn means ‘a mound of stones’ .

# Inside the Court Cairn...

- It may look like “a mound of stones” outside but inside the court cairn there is a passage leading to a chamber.
- Many objects have been found inside the tomb like pottery or weapons.
- Why is this?
- Cremated ashes of Neolithic people were also found in many tombs.



# Dolmens or Portal Tombs

- Huge stone “tables”
- Two / Three large upright megaliths
- Another megalith laid on top – “a capstone”
- Remains placed inside the Dolmen
- ❖ Example : Poulnabrone, Co. Clare.



© Brian T McElheron

# Passage Tombs

- The most impressive Megalith tombs.
  - Like Cairn Courts, but much bigger!
  - Passage tombs can vary in size.
  - From Outside: Looks like a hill or mound of earth
  - From Inside: A long passage leading to a chamber
  - Cremated remains have been found in these chambers.
- ❖ Example: Newgrange, Co. Meath

# Newgrange

- Excavation commenced in the 1960s. Archaeologists used carbon dating on the objects found in Newgrange to find out how old it was.
- Built between 2675BC and 2485BC
- Older than the pyramids in Egypt!
  - Passage: 19m long
  - Chamber: 6m high
  - Central chamber + 3 small chambers.
  - Walls: Standing Stones



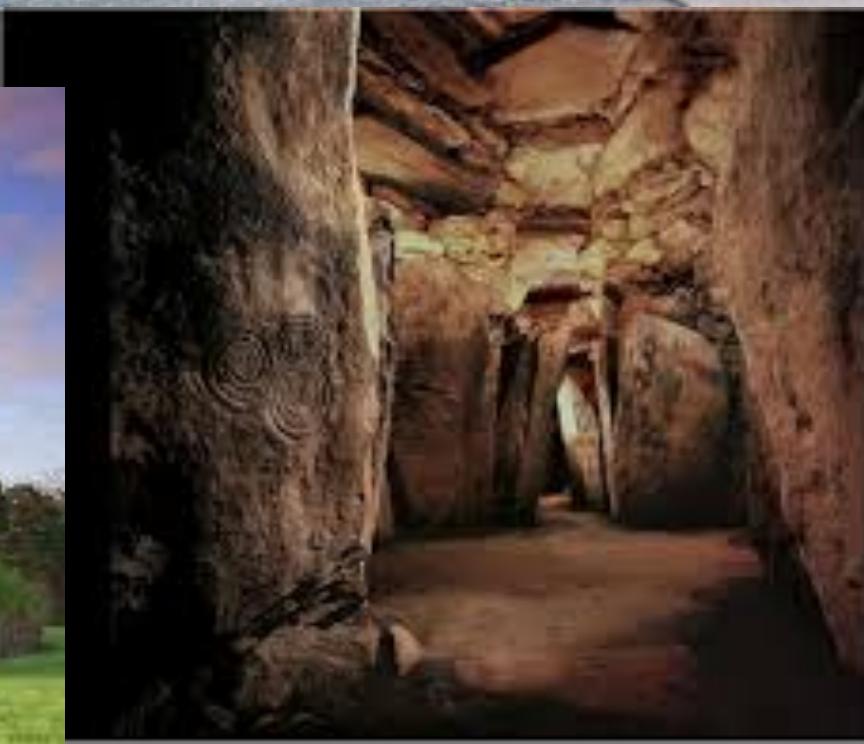
Newgrange.com

# Newgrange: Artwork

- Spiral, circle and diamond patterns decorate many of the stones.
- ❖ Example: Entrance of tomb

# Newgrange: Corbelled Roof

- The roof is an extension of the walls.
- Each layer of the wall is placed slightly inside the next until they touch.
- A cone effect!
- After 4,500 years there are no leaks at Newgrange!



# The Roof Box

- A square stone opening above the main entrance.
- Facing the south-East
- 21<sup>st</sup> of December (Winter Solstice) the sunrise floods the passage tomb.
- This event lasts 17 minutes at dawn.
- **What purpose did the roofbox have?**
- **Careful planning must have been needed to achieve this illumination.**

# The purpose of Newgrange:

- Ashes and bones were found – used as a tomb.
- However, few remains were found there.
- Must have been important people.

# What does Newgrange tell us of the Neolithic Period?

- They were skilled at building
- They understood astronomy and the sun
- They were skilled at art.
- They believed in the afterlife.
- They had respect for the dead.
- They possibly worshipped gods.

# Write about the life of a Farmer living in the year 2500 BC:

- What details of Human Activity should we include?
  - Clothes
  - Food + how food was got.
  - Homes
  - Work + Tools
  - Burial Rituals
  - Example?
- What Keywords do we need to include?
  - Porcellanite+ Flint
  - Wattle and Daub Method
  - Quern Stone
  - Wool and Dye
  - Passage Tombs, Dolmens, Court Cairns, megaliths



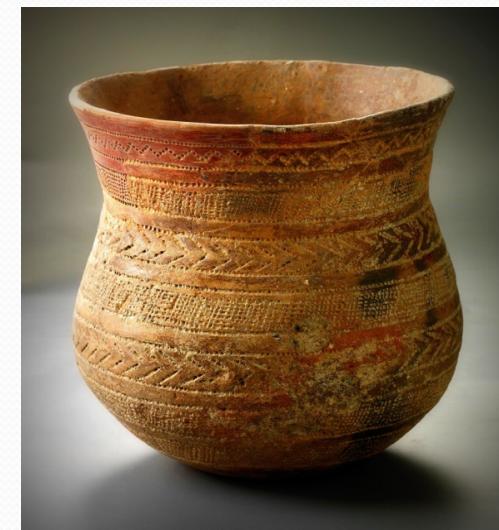
# The Bronze Age

# What is the Bronze Age

- Around 2,500 BC in the Middle East we see people learning how to remove copper from rocks.
- This copper was used to make weapons – this was very soft and the weapons broke easily.
- Soon they saw that if they added tin to the copper it made a much stronger material – Bronze!
- This knowledge and skill spread across Europe very quickly!
- This is the Bronze Age.

# The Beaker People

- Archaeologists have found pottery in sites around Europe dating back to 2000 BC.
- Very different to Neolithic pottery – made by a new kind of settlers!
- The pots are shaped like beakers for drinking from!
- The Beaker People.
- Beaker people used metal.
- We know this as metal tools were found with beaker pottery.
- It is believed that beaker people brought the Bronze Age to Ireland



# Bronze Age Copper mining and smelting

- Evidence of copper mining – Mount Gabriel Co. Cork
- Cracking the rock – Mining
- Separating copper from rock – Smelting
- However, there wasn't much tin in Ireland to make bronze, this means that they must have imported it from elsewhere.
- It was probably brought in from Cornwall in England.,

# Bronze Age: Human Activity

- 1. Tool-making:
  - **Smiths** made the metal, and travelled around making metal tools.
  - They used flat-stone moulds and hot metal to shape tools like axe-heads and knives.
  - Keyword: **Casting**
  - These tools were much sharper and stronger than stone tools!

- 2. Jewellery:

- Smiths also made jewellery
- **Some** copper, bronze and **many** gold !

- **Keywords: Lunulae and Torcs**

- *Example of Jewellery excavated:*

- The Broighter Hoard -1896- Co. Derry



- 3. Farming:
  - Slow change from Neolithic farming to Bronze Age farming.
  - Still had crops and cattle
  - Still had metal and stone tools.
  - *One big difference*: They kept and used horses!
- **How do you think the Archaeologists know this?**
  - Bones found

- 4. Food:

- Similar diet to Neolithic people.
- Cooking styles however were different:

- Fulacht Fia:

- A pit lined with wood and filled with river water.
  - Stones were heated by a fire and placed into the pit to boil the water.
  - Meat was wrapped in straw and boiled in the pit. #



- 5. Homes:
- Huts
- Wattle and daub method and a thatched roof.
- Huts were surrounded by stone walls and wooden fences for protection.



# Monuments and Tombs in the Bronze Age

## 1. Cist Graves:

1. A pit in the ground lined with stone slabs.
2. Cremated remains or bodies in a crouched position.
3. Pots and other artefacts found
4. What does this tell us?

## 2. Wedge Tombs:

1. Large flat stones used.
2. Front of tomb wider and higher than the back.
3. Cremated ashes.
4. The *most common* grave of Bronze Age.

- Draw a picture of a cist grave and a wedge tomb....

# Stone Circles

- Tall stones standing upright, arranged in circles or rows.
- Some have human remains buried within them.
- Built to align with movements of sun.
- Look at the stone circle on page 30 of your textbook TIMELINE.
  - From What you see: What uses might the stone circle have had?
  - Calendar
  - Religious significance.

# On your keyword sheet...

Keyword	Description	Example
<i>Cist Grave</i>	<i>A small burial site: a pit in the ground lined with slabs.</i>	<i>Monknewton, Co. Meath</i>
<i>Wedge tomb</i>	<i>A small tomb: Upright slabs prop a flat stone on top. Remains inside.</i>	<i>Glenisheen, Co. Clare</i>
<i>Stone Circle</i>	<i>Tall upright stones arranged in circles. Calendar or spiritual?</i>	<i>The Drombeg Stone Circle, Co. Cork</i>

# Class revision:

- TIMELINE: page 31, questions 1-9



# The Iron Age and the Celts

# The Iron Age

- Began around 1400BC.
- Iron was discovered ? new metal ? replaced bronze in tools and weapon making gradually.
- Began in Ireland around 500BC with the arrival of the Celts

# Who were the Celts?

- Farming, warlike people
- Powerful people; taking over the much of Europe
- **Sources of information on the Celts:**
- Artefacts found by Archaeologists
- Ancient Greek and Roman Writers.
- Written records by early Christian monks in Ireland

# Archaeological Evidence

- Hallstatt in Austria
- La Tene in Switzerland
- Rich archaeological sites.

## 1. Hallstatt:

- Salt-mining area.
- 700BC - 500BC Celts lived here.
- Salt preserved many of the artefacts found at Haltstatt.
- Hallstatt Celts **?** are the earliest Celts.

## 2. La Tene:

- Decorated Ornaments found – swirls, curved patterns, circles, spirals
- Different style from that found at Hallstatt.
- After 500BC



# Greek and Roman Writers

- *Keltoi* [?] the Greeks name for the Celts
- Gauls [?] the Romans name for the Celts
- Written Primary source supplied by Greek and Roman writers.
- Plato (Greek Philosopher) [?] A warlike people who drank too much!
- Roman Writers [?] “*excessive*” in appearance, dress, religion and war.
- Inferior and uncivilised.

# Irish Sources

- Christianity came to Ireland in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.
- Brought the skill of writing with them.
- Celts soon became Christians. They learnt to read and write and copied down the laws of their people **?**  
**Brehon Laws.**
- Why would this be useful?
- The Celts were known for their storytelling. The Monks in Early Christian Ireland copied these stories down.
- The monks also kept records of the major events in Ireland **?** annals.

# Celtic Society

## 1. The Tuath

1. Small kingdoms
2. Tuath was the name of the land and its residents.
3. Rí (king)  tuath leader.
4. Rí was selected from the royal family (derbhfine) only.

## 2. The Warriors – Na Laochra

1. The warriors were very important people in the tuath.
2. Owned land and cattle.
3. Defenders of An Tuath.
4. War was a big part of Celtic Society and so defence was important.

### 3. An Aos Dána:

1. After the warriors these learned and skilled people were very important.
2. Judges (brehon) ? trained experts in Celtic Law to help the Rí make judgements.
3. Druids (Draoithe / priests) ? Trained as religious men, who organised sacrifices and ceremonies.
4. Poets (Filí) ? Wrote poems praising kings and warriors and poems about history. ]
5. Bards (Baird) ? Musicians to entertain the king.
6. Doctors ? Trained as experts in healing and medicine.

## 1. 4. Farmers and Slaves:

1. The common people. The biggest group of people.
2. Rented land from warriors to grow crops and keep animals.
3. An Tuath were dependent on them for food supply, but they were considered the lower class.
4. Lowest class: Slaves.  prisoners captures at war. Owned by masters and enslaved to work for free.

# Women in Celtic Society:

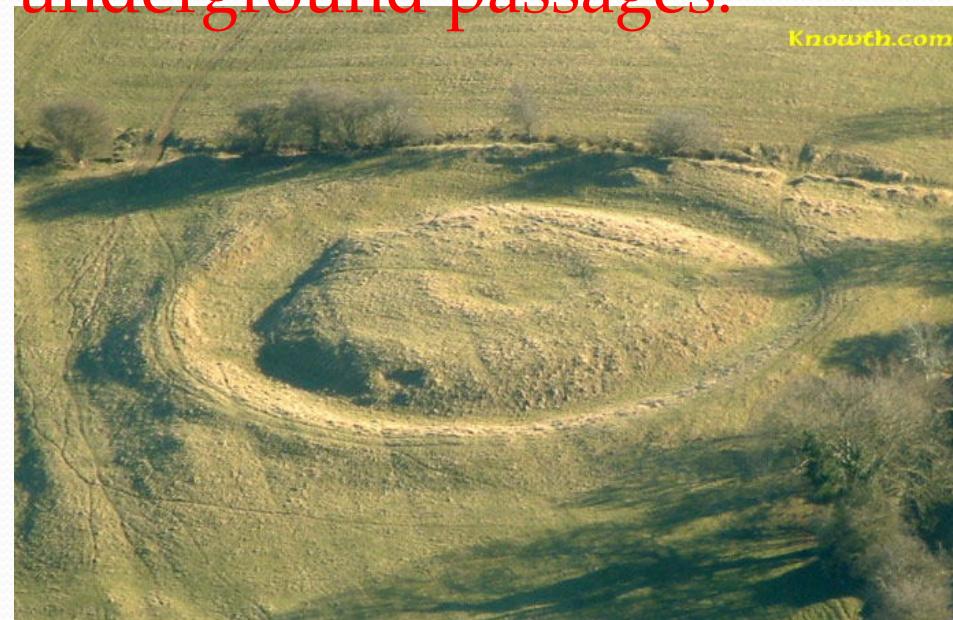
- Noble women were important figures in society:
  - Could own property under Brehon law.
  - Banríon (Queen) Maedbh
  - Boudicca
  - Aoife and Scatha trained Cú Chulainn as a fighter.
- Divorce was common
- Noblemen could have more than one wife.
- Common women in the tuath had little or no power and spent their days tending to family, cooking, spinning and weaving.

# Celtic settlements/homes:

1. Raths
2. Crannógs
3. Hillforts
4. Promontory forts.

# 1. Rath

- Forts with a mound or ditch of earth circling it.
- Several families are believed to have lived inside the Rath.
- Animals would be brought inside the Rath at night, and graze outside by day.
- Soutterrains = underground passages.



## 2. Crannógs

- Man-made islands in lakes.
  - Circle of wooden stakes put into lake bed.
  - Stones, mud and twigs were placed into the circle of wooden stakes to raise the foundations for the crannóg above water level.
  - Wooden fence circled the foundations and then houses were built within it.



### 3. Hillforts

- Like Raths but built on a hill and on a much bigger scale!
- Used for important events:
  - Religious festivals or markets
  - Headquarters of important Celtic Kings.



# 4. Promontory Forts

- Built on cliff tops.
- West and South Coast of Ireland.
- Dún Aengus Inis Mór:
  - Best example!
  - Inner enclosure  An altar / table facing onto the sea.
  - Possibly used for religious ceremonies..

# Life in Celtic Ireland

- Farming was important ? Cattle, sheep and pigs kept to produce meat and clothing.
- Brehon law ? Wealth was measured in cattle.
- Cooking was done on big spits over fires or in huge pots.
- Crops ? wheat, oats, barley ? Rotary Quern Stone for flour.

# Fashion and Jewellery

- Clothing was made from animal skin, linen and wool.
- *Léine agus Crois* [?] knee-length men's tunic and waist tie.
- Women wore ankle-length tunics and woollen cloaks called brats, tied with a brooch.
- Make-up from herbs and berries!
- The rich wore brightly dyed clothing and gold earrings, torcs and bracelets.
- The poor wore woollen trouser and tunics.
- Hair dye?

# Religion and burial customs

- An Dagda
  - Lugh
  - Brigid
  - Boann
- }
- Celtic Gods !
- Worship took place beside rivers and in woods, where they felt close to gods.
  - The Druids  Priests.  highly respected.
  - Sacrifices offered.
  - Religious events: Samhain, Imbolc, Bealtaine, Lughnasa.
  - Cremation  Burial of choice with belongings.

# Ogham

- Ogham  A series of lines carved on edge of stone to spell a word / name.
- Graves marked by standing stones, marked by ogham.

Letters of the Ogham Alphabet

- The earliest form of writing in Ireland!

ᚠ B	ᚢ M	ᚦ A	ᚩ EA
ᚢ L	ᚦ G	ᚧ O	ᚱ OI
ᚦ F	ᚦ NG	ᚤ U	ᚷ UI
ᚦ S	ᚦ Z	ᚦ E	ᚸ IA
ᚦ N	ᚦ R	ᚦ I	ᚹ AE
ᚦ H			
ᚦ D			
ᚦ T			
ᚦ C			
ᚦ Q			