



Pictured at the recent official re-opening at Benny's Deli, Castlerea were Benny and Madeline O'Connell with their staff. Picture: Liam Reynolds



Pictured at the recent official re-opening at Benny's Deli, Castlerea were Gerry Flanagan (contractor), Mick McEnroe (CEO Harmac, who officially reopened Benny's Deli) and Madeline and Benny O'Connell. Picture: Liam Reynolds



Pictured at the recent official re-opening at Benny's Deli, Castlerea were Benny and Norie Mooney. Picture: Liam Reynolds



Pictured at the recent official re-opening at Benny's Deli, Castlerea were Katy Grogan, Claire Kelly, Madeline O'Connell, Lily Murphy and Benny O'Connell. Picture: Liam Reynolds

## New era for Benny's Deli

Customers and friends alike were invited to Benny's Deli, Castlerea to witness the official re-opening of the popular café.

An extensive revamp has modernised the Deli and created a more spacious and relaxing environment for their loyal customers, who have supported Benny O'Connell since he opened his doors back in 1981.

Carrying out the official opening was Mr Mick McEnroe of Harmac Medical, Castlerea and Benny and wife Madeline were joined by family and friends at the occasion which marked a the dawning of a new era for the renowned café.

**Dysart Rural Men's Group was formed in 2007 with the support of Roscommon Leader Partnership. The aim of the group is to provide rural men with an opportunity to casually meet and socially interact with one another in their local area.**

**From the beginning, we have been actively involved in promoting countless talks and projects which are beneficial to us and the wider community.**

**One such project was our '2012 Heritage Calendar', which illustrates Archaeological monuments from mid and south Roscommon over the millennia. As you will see, the articles in the series commencing this week will highlight Roscommon's cultural wealth which we have documented from a few sites in mid and south Roscommon. They have a dating range from 4000 B.C. up to the 19th Century with some examples being a Portal Tomb, Ringfort, Castle site, Mass Rock, Windmill and a Linear Earthwork.**

**We hope that you, the readers of the Roscommon People, will enjoy these articles and that they will be of interest to schools in the local and wider community as our heritage is an important part of the school curriculum. Hopefully our articles will in a small way contribute to the valuable work being done in local schools. Not only will you read about the archaeology and history of these sites but also the folklore of our county.**

**We are grateful to the Editor and staff of the Roscommon People for their interest in publishing these articles, to the local communities in south Roscommon and the numerous agencies which continue to support our group.**

*- Dysart Men's Group 2012*

# The Portal Tomb

## HISTORIC SITES IN ROSCOMMON

A series inspired by  
Dysart Rural Men's Group

The Stone Age in Ireland occurred between 8000 B.C. and 2500 B.C. It is divided into two periods, known as the Mesolithic and Neolithic. The former, being an existence of hunting and gathering of which there is little settlement evidence in Ireland, was gradually replaced by the Neolithic or new Stone Age.

There is much more evidence to this latter period with the most visible sign being the megalithic (large stone) tombs which include Passage Tombs, Court Tombs and Portal tombs (Portal Tomb in Drum, South Roscommon is pictured). The latter are also called Dolmens and during the 20th century were referred to as Cromlechs and Druids Alters.

It has been suggested that the people who built such monuments arrived here from the Mediterranean, via Gibraltar and along the Atlantic coasts of Iberia and France and eventually arrived in Ireland circa 4000 B.C. On this journey they would probably have observed such tombs being built along this route that were later to become a feature of the Irish landscape, including the landscape of County Roscommon.

The people who made this long journey were the first farmers who brought with them new farming practises which was mainly pasture, grazing for cattle and sheep, after which forest clearance ensured nutrient rich soils. Cereals



such as wheat and barley were also sown and in order to sow, grow and harvest these crops, these farmers would have used simple tools such as scratch ploughs – or sticks. Pottery production was evident at this time and was used for domestic and burial purposes and is a commonly-found artefact in portal tombs.

Stone implements such as axes were used to cut small trees and polished stone axes are associated with burials inside the Megalithic tombs, including Portal tombs. Local sources in the Drum parish state that two stone axes were found at Meehambee portal tomb (pictured) over fifty years ago and examples of such artefacts are to be seen in the County Museum, in Roscommon town.

Roscommon county has a small number of portal tombs with ex-

amples located just outside Boyle, Lecarrow and at Meehambee in Drum parish. Built on upright stones with a large capstone (the heaviest at 20 tonne) of varying sizes and almost all having a sub-rectangular chamber inside, these tombs are noted as places of burials belonging to the first farmers and have been described by pre-historians as 'examples of remarkable Neolithic engineering'. A true statement, when one considers that after thousands of years since they were first built, there are 174 such tombs still standing in our landscape today. Of course, many more have been destroyed in the passage of time because historical and cartographical sources point to a larger number that once dotted our landscape, including one in close proximity to Four Roads Community

Centre in South Roscommon.

The people who made this long and arduous journey to Ireland, were rewarded with a fertile land which they exploited for many centuries but change was evident and dawned with the arrival of the Bronze Age, an era that is very visible in the many field monuments that are to be seen today in our county. It is worth noting that these first farmers who placed the cremated remains of their dead in large stone monuments over many centuries, remind us not only of their incredible engineering skills but that they also treated their dead with great respect. Strange as it may seem, they lived in simple timber houses, now long gone.

**For a guided tour to this site, contact [www.drumheritage.ie](http://www.drumheritage.ie)**

**ROSCOMMON LEADER PARTNERSHIP**

*Delighted to be associated with Dysart Rural Men's Group*