



Dr Herity with a group of students.

Archaeologist Michael Herity

Dr. Michael Herity gave a lecture on his 60-year career at Oideas Gael, Glencolumcille

FEATURE

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Nationally renowned archaeologist Dr. Michael Herity recently gave a lecture on his 60-year career to a standing room-only audience at Oideas Gael, the language and cultural school in Glencolumcille.

As a specialist in the Neolithic and early Christian sites in the Glencolumcille area, Dr. Herity was further surprised and chuffed when Liam Ó Cuinneagáin, director of Oideas Gael, presented a work of original art to him featuring the region's Celtic stone carvings.

Urged more than 30 years ago by community organizing legend Father James McDyer, Dr. Herity founded the Archaeology Summer School to bring interested people to the Glen to learn more about the region's rich history. In outdoor sessions, Dr. Herity encouraged participants to study the

evidence of the monuments in their context, to deduce their original form and use. He invited guest archaeologists to further engage students, including David McGuinness, Brian Lacey, Seamus Caulfield, Dorothy Kelly and Markus Redmond over the years.

To this day, the school continues to attract interested people from around the globe. And it has been featured in National Geographic.

Dr. Herity also wrote the book "Glencolumcille: A

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Guide to 5,000 Years of History in Stone," which has been reprinted many times since it was first published in 1971. In it he reveals the layout of

the pilgrimage Turas dedicated to St. Columcille, who reportedly lived in the secluded valley during the 6th century AD. For centuries, pilgrims came from afar to do the penitential rounds of the 15 Turas stations that include standing stone slabs bearing early Celtic motifs, a holy well with massive stone cairn deposited by pilgrims, and more. Dr. Herity says it is perhaps the best-preserved Turas in the country.

The book also explains the massive court tombs and



Station No 2 on Turas Colm Cille.

gravity-defying portal tombs in the Glen, Malin More and Malin Beg that date back over 5,000 years. And it explains the Bronze Age forts at Doonalt and Dooneeny. "The whole of Irish archaeology is represented here," Dr. Herity said.

CREDIT TO LOCAL PEOPLE

Dr. Herity gave credit to local people who initially helped him locate certain monuments, shared folklore and stories, and provided clues for his analysis.

One such person was Jimmy Carr, who provided invaluable insight. "He'd always smile before starting to tell a story," he said.

"The importance of Glencolumcille in terms of Ireland's archaeological heritage cannot be overstated," said Dr. Herity. "The Neolithic and early Christian remains here are in very good condition, and reveal much for scholars as well as curious visitors." Through stunning slide shows, Dr. Her-

ity illustrated that the quality of the monuments in the region equal those found elsewhere in the country. "Comparison is what matters. You wouldn't learn much if you looked at what's in the Glen only," he explained. Dr. Herity summed up the detail work required for archaeology: "A ton of description for an ounce of synthesis." Many local people attended the event to hear what the legendary 86-year-old had to say about the special, near-sacred

nature of Glencolumcille and the surrounding hills. When asked which site in the area is his favorite, Dr. Herity replied, "That's like asking a parent which of his children is his favorite." But he relented and said if he had to pick one, it would be Cloghanmore, a megalithic court tomb in Malin More with dual chambers, full central court and massive surrounding stone cairn. It had been preserved under the bog and uncovered in the mid-1800s.



Liam O Cuinneagáin, Seosamh Watson, John Gleeson, (Milwaukee), Jean Kennedy Smith (US Ambassador to Ireland) and Dr Michael Herity.

honoured in Glencolmcille



Michael in 1984 during a book signing, picture there with the director of the Patrick MacGill Festival, Joe Mulholland.



Wendy Donaghy at a Turas Station.

DONEGAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Dr. Lochlann McGill, president of the Donegal Historical Society and author of the book "In Conall's Footsteps," addressed the Oideas Gael audience to formally honor Dr. Herity's impact on the region and historical legacy. He called Dr. Herity "a colossus of culture" and "a giant." Dr. McGill explained, "He was the first to look at the concentration of megalithic tombs here and attempt to an-

swer "What are they for, what do they mean and how can we interpret them?" Dr. McGill added that by pinning down the details of An Turas in Ireland, Dr. Herity contributed an invaluable piece of academia. He noted that people are still interested in doing the Turas. Mr. Ó Cuinneagáin was happy to honor Dr. Herity at the event. "Father McDyer recognized the archaeology here was special and went looking for the best school director. Michael put

the archaeology on the world map," he said. In commemoration, Mr. Ó Cuinneagáin commissioned a piece of art from Gerald Buchanan at Crow Pottery in the Glen. "I used Michael's own photographs in his book for reference when creating a ceramic montage of the Celtic motifs found on the stones in the area," said Mr. Buchanan. Dr. Herity now has it hanging in his Dublin home as a reminder of the intriguing stones he admired in the Glen

* Respectfully contributed by American journalist Kathleen M. Mangan, an award-winning writer with Irish citizenship who regularly writes about Ireland for publications such as National Geographic. She has attended the Archaeology Summer School a number of times, fascinated by the mysteries of the ancient stones, and by the intellectual virtuosity of Professor Michael Herity. "He is the epitome of the classic Irish scholar ... one of Ireland's leading intellectuals who brings academic rigor to all conversation, just a joy. He challenges us to think, use our inner resources, and then add to the country's historical and cultural legacy. He is a larger-than-life figure," Ms. Mangan said.

Prof. Herity: One of Ireland's Leading Archaeologists

Michael Herity spent his career as a Professor of Archaeology and Dean of Celtic Studies at University College Dublin. He held the prestigious roles of President of the Royal Irish Academy, President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (RSAI), and editor of the Journal of the RSAI.

Dr. Herity has published numerous academic papers and books, covering subjects such as Tara, the Cathach, island monasteries and much more. He has published 17 volumes of Ordnance Survey Letters written primarily by Irish scholar John O'Donovan in the early 1800s. These important reference works of place names and antiquities cover 25 counties to date, and are published by Four Masters Press. The volume on County Clare will be released soon.

He has been married for 54 years to Prof. Berna Herity, a retired professor of Public Health Medicine and Epidemiology at University College Dublin. Together they have four children - Michael, Bairbre, Niall and Emer - as well as 10 grandchildren.

