mizen history panel 13/10/2007 14:23 Page 1

MIZEN PENINSULA

Fonn Iartharach (Western Lands) Ireland's most Southwesterly Point

A MAP & HISTORY OF GOLEEN PARISH

The Mizen Peninsula, at Ireland's most southwesterly point, is internationally renowned for the beauty of its rugged landscape, seascapes and ancient heritage sites. The land is marked by traces of the past. The original inhabitants probably came to Cork around 4000 BC to a densely wooded land populated by wolves, deer, birdlife of many kinds, including osprey and eagles, and seas teeming with fish and cetaceans. The incentive to settle in the locality arose from the highly-mineralised nature of the underlying rocks. The first inhabitants were lured by the copper bearing rocks of West Cork; primitive copper mines, standing stones, stone circles, stone rows and wedge tombs from the same period are scattered across the terrain. Prospectors and miners probably journeyed here from across the sea and structures and artefacts found in the locality share similarities with other parts of the Atlantic seaboard and there continue to be linguistic links between Irish Gaeilge, Breton, Scottish Gaelic, Manx and Cornish.

The present landscape bears evidence of every age. From the earlies times, the Irish environment has been the product of a dynamic interaction culture and nature. Cyclical periods of cooler wet weather followed by warmer more temperate times made for a difficult life in this marginal area. Over time, there has been a gradual modification of the landscape by human endeavours. Many distinctive landscape features we think of as part of our original heritage are, in fact, imported - from bog plants to beech trees, rabbits to donkeys and potatoes to pheasants! The forests hav been cleared for iron smelting, shipbuilding and agriculture; the last of the forests was felled at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In the years preceding the potato famine, of the mi 1840s, the population of the area was at its height and every scrap of ground was cultivated right up to the top of the hills – if you look up high you can stop see the so-called "lazy beds", ridges where the last crop of potatoes was left in the ground. Cattle and dairy produce have been the mainstay of rural life to the present. Mining for copper, barytes, small amounts of lead and silver continued sporadically into the twentieth century.

From the 11th century in Norman times the land throughout Ireland has been divided in units called Townlands (Baile fearainn, home-land). The name of the townlands took the names of local families, man-made structures such as churches and fortifications, prominent features of the landscape like woods, streams, hills,

conspicuous colours etc., historical events and mythical allusions.

In size they vary greatly, many falling in the range of 50 to 500 acres though in Goleen parish they are very small. Twenty or thirty adjacent townlands grouped round an abbey or church (maybe in ruins now) go to make a parish. As you go along the road you will see signs with the names of townlands on them. The postal address for a country place is the family, townland, parish then county names such as O'Sullivan, Cloughanekilleen, Goleen, Co. Cork.

A tour of the Mizen Ring shows the various strands that make the Mizen unique - from geology, flora, birds & fauna, to the influence of man & his history on the landscape.

ources

The Ordnance Survey Discovery Series map 88

t ne casties of Cork, James ricais, wiercier books, 1988 The Comprehensive and Fully Illustrated Guide to the Ancient Sacred and Historic Sites of South West Cork, Jack Roberts, Key Book

Discovering Cork, Daphne Pochin Mould, Brandon Books, 1991
Archaeological Inventory of County Cork Vol. 1 – West Cork, 1992
Archaeological Inventory of County Cork Vol. 1 – West Cork, 1992
Also, Col. List Bong I where Filmen FILM Asker, Vol. Whelen and Mankey South Cork University Press, 1997
Also, Col. List Bong I was Filmen FILM Asker, Vol. Whelen and Mankey South Cork University Press, 1997

My Parish, Nan Jermyn, Ilen Press, 2000.

For more information

Northside of the Mizen: Tales, Customs and History of County Cork in Ireland, Patrick McCarthy and Richard Hawkes, Mizen Books, 2001

Rock Island & Crookhaven Lighthouse Rock Island, Crookhaven—A Coastal Townland's History since 1800 by Aidan Power Published by Aidan

Mizen Journal, an annual book published by the Mizen Historical and Archaeological Society. Schull. West Cork

Photos in the display by: Jules Thomas, Mary Hayes, John Eagle, Michael Collins, Steven O'Sul

