

The original idea of a Cosmic Walk came from Miriam MacGillis, Genesis Farm, New Jersey, USA.



*Aerial View of Cabragh Wetlands Centre and the marsh beyond, looking north.*

Robbie Ingram Photo

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## Our Creation Story – Cabragh Wetlands.

**Our Cosmic Story:** The cosmic walk is a brief history of the birth and development of the universe. It's the story of the unfolding universe, planet Earth, the emergence of life and our own evolutionary story. It helps us to experience that story and to awaken in us a sense of beauty and mystery of what we are part of; evoking a sense of awe and wonder, gratitude and compassion. It enables us to make sense of our own lives and our place on the planet.

The eleven stations are artistic interpretations of the landmark events in the cosmic story but we must keep in mind that from the great flaring forth to now is one unbroken event. The story as told here draws on the four human wisdoms: science, the classics, women and indigenous peoples. When all four are drawn together we get a more complete account.



**Station 1 The Great Flaring Forth 13.8 billion years ago. The first stars 12 billion years ago.**

The first piece on the path is a carved and polished boulder bowl. The polished surface with water in it acts like a mirror to reflect your image with the sky above. This generates a feeling that one is part of the universe, and not merely an on-looker. The inscription is a quotation from the Bible:

***"In the beginning was the Word ..." - John 1:1.***

**Station 2 As a supernova explodes it gives birth to our solar system 4.6 billion years ago.**

The second piece is a cast bronze piece, encasing a granite bowl which serves as a vessel for rainwater, with a spout allowing for overflow. Over time the rainwater will cause the bronze to oxidise, acting like a miniature version of creation itself, slowly changing and transforming the sunburst.

***“It is of stardust we are made, moulded by vapours and fragments from the making and breaking of galaxies.”***

*-President Michael D Higgins*



**Station 3. Life emerges 3.9 billion years ago.**

The third piece is a convex boulder, with a quotation by Galileo carved onto its surface, spiralling from the centre outwards, representing the expanding Universe. The inscription was plotted onto the boulder using the Golden Ratio - the Fibonacci sequence – every number after the first two is the sum of the two preceding ones. This appears everywhere in Nature, from the leaf



arrangement in plants to the bracts of a pinecone or the scales of a pineapple and on a larger scale in the shape of the path of a hurricane or grander still the Whirlpool Galaxy. Above the facsimile of Galileo’s signature on the boulder we have carved the words “Eppur si muove” (Yet, it moves) referring to the

earth – reputed to have been uttered by Galileo at his trial for heresy in 1633. The boulder is polished to reveal fossils of many life-forms, making this a tactile piece, inviting you to search out and touch the fossilised remains of early life.

***“The sun can still ripen a bunch of grapes, as if it had nothing else in the Universe to do.” -Galileo Galilei.***

**Station 11. We are part of the unfolding mystery.**

The final piece is in fact the first piece; we have come full circle and arrived back at the mirror-finish stone bowl. Look again into the bowl and realise that ‘You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.’ - *Desiderata* by Max Ehrmann.

***“From 13.8 billion years ago to today is one unbroken event”*** - Brian Swimme, Professor of Evolutionary Cosmology.

**This very simply sums up our creation story.**

**‘It takes a universe to create a child of outer form and inner beauty.’** - Thomas Berry.



**‘The more deeply we grow in our scientific understanding of creation ...the more deeply we understand the extraordinary closeness of our kinship with all creatures. - John Feehan.**

**Station 10. Great civilisations and religions emerge 6,000 years ago. Varied religious perspectives lead to Hinduism, Confucianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.**

The tenth piece is a pair of slate Standing Stones, approx 8' high. These stand close to the entrance to Cabragh Wetlands itself. They are inscribed all over with quotations. The image of a pair of inscribed stones echoes the ancient carved stone tablets from the Old Testament and many other religious beliefs.



***“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children”*** Mayan Proverb.

***“All things share the same breath, the beast, the tree, people”***  
Chief Seattle.

***“Nothing is itself without everything else”*** Thomas Berry.

***“Without nature we are orphaned”*** John Feehan

***“If you are doing the right thing for the earth, she’s giving you great company”*** Vandana Shiva.

***“Man does not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it.”*** Chief Seattle.

***“The physical world is the doorway to the spiritual.”*** St Francis.

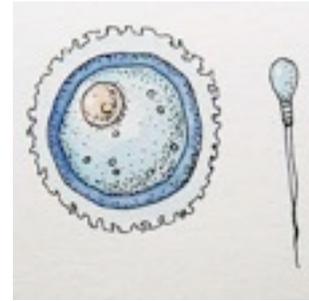
***“Live simply so that others might simply live”.*** St Teresa of Calcutta.

One slate features the word ***“Contemplation”***, the other ***“Celebration”*** - prompted by the indigenous proverb:

***‘The essence of life is Contemplation and Celebration’.***

All the quotations on this walk combine the four wisdoms; the wisdom of science, the classics, the wisdom of women and indigenous wisdom.

**Station 4. One hundred million years later cells learn to harvest the sun’s energy through photosynthesis. Sexual reproduction evolves so organisms can share their genetic heritage - 1 billion years ago.**



The fourth piece is a group of three stone monoliths, carved with images of plankton, early sea life, fossils, etc. There is a carving of Cooksonia, a fossil of which was found on the Devil’s Bit by John Feehan. There is also a carving of the formula for photosynthesis which led to a great explosion in the diversity of life forms.. The third stone in the sequence is an absolute treasure

trove of fossils with every inch of its surface covered with fossilised cockles. Carved on the side of this piece is the name Mary Anning, an English fossil collector from the early 1800’s, who became known around the world for the important finds she made in Jurassic marine fossil beds in the cliffs along the English Channel at Lyme Regis in Dorset. Mary Anning inspired the nursery line: “She sells sea-shells on the sea shore”.

***“Earth works because it all works together”.*** James Lovelock.

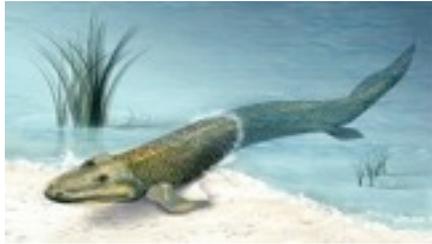
**Station 5 Organisms develop eyesight half a billion years ago. Earth sees herself for the first time and is dazzled.**

The fifth piece is made from Carrara marble, carved into the shape of an eye socket; encasing a prism, reflecting the complexity of colour and light. The eye socket sits on a shallow stone bowl, allowing the spectrum of colours to be reflected in the rain-water in the bowl. It, in turn, sits on a limestone plinth, inscribed with a quotation from Rachel Carson, a marine biologist and conservationist.



***“The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and realities of the Universe about us, the less taste we shall have for destruction.”***

## Station 6 *Life moves on to land 460 million years ago.*



The sixth piece is a simple wooden seat, formed from a trunk of oak, for you to just sit, be at one with your surroundings and consider the biodiversity about you. The seat is inscribed with a quotation from John Muir, a Scottish-American naturalist, glaciologist, author, environmental philosopher, and early

advocate for the preservation of wildernesses in the United States.

***“The whole Universe appears to be an infinite storm of beauty.”***

## Station 7. *Mammals evolve 216 million years ago.*

### **Bonding, attachment and nurturing grow in importance.**

The seventh piece is an Oak burl, with a hollowed out centre, creating a simple womb-like space into which you can nestle, almost becoming part of the wood itself. Around this space, carved on the



flat surface of the wood is an abstract image suggesting a maternal embrace - a mother's love for her child. The face of the wooden burl is carved with images of mammals nurturing their young - a race of shrews, one of the oldest mammals on the earth and a resident of Cabragh Wetlands. The burl we have used for this piece weighs approximately 3 tons. Its weight, mass and solidity, along with the richness of its colour and grain give a feeling of security, nurturing and permanence.

***“My concern is for the children – the children of all species”.*** -Thomas Berry, author, cultural historian and eco-theologian.

## Station 8. *Birds fly 150 million years ago. Flowers evolve.*



Birds join the insects in a new dance across the vault of the sky, while the earth is adorned in magnificent colour and fragrance. The eighth piece is a large, tactile, curved, winglike piece of limestone. This sculpture invites you to run your hand along the top and upwards, as if taking flight. There is a very narrow divide between all creatures, those that walk on the earth and those that fly above it and this piece



almost bridges the gap between the two.

***“The Earth was once molten rock, now it sings operas.”***- Drew Dellinger, U.S. poet.

## Station 9 *Two and a half million years ago the first humans emerge. Earth has evolved to a new self-awareness.*



The ninth piece is a hollow Yew trunk, approx 12' high and 3'6" diameter, open to the sky. There is an opening at one point in the trunk, allowing you to stand in to the cavity, engendering a feeling of self-awareness, with your own sounds reverberating around you, almost like the Buddhist idea of the “aum” sound; echoing the sounds

still reverberating from the big bang. The inside of the tree trunk is adorned with primitive “Cave drawings”, using suitable coloured inks. The piece of timber we have used for this is a fallen Yew tree, 800 to 1000 years old. The Yew has long been considered a sacred tree and is treated with reverence.

***“Be humble for you are made of earth. Be noble for you are made of stars.”***Serbian Proverb