

## **Our Creation Story – Cabragh Wetlands.**

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 ten sculptures 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.

### **Sculpture 1: The Great Flaring Forth 13.8 billion years ago. The first stars form 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.***





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

This dramatic piece is inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's dredging machine with a rock and bronze sculpture in imbalance. Imbalance brings chaos which in turn leads to new beginnings. The chain holding the bronze represents the Great Chain of Being. If the chain is

broken it upsets the balance. The cast bronze encases a granite bowl which serves as a vessel for rainwater. This has 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, moulded by vapours and fragments from the making and breaking of galaxies.” -President Michael D Higgins.***

**Sculpture 3: Life emerges 3.9 billion years ago. Photosynthesis begins.**

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 scientific formula for photosynthesis is etched on to the boulder ( $6\text{H}_2\text{O} + 6\text{CO}_2 = \text{C}_6\text{H}_{12}\text{O}_6 + 6\text{O}_2$ ).

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

## **Sculpture 4. Through photosynthesis there is an explosion in biodiversity. Sexual reproduction evolves - 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 are also carvings illustrating the formula for photosynthesis which led to a great explosion in the diversity of life forms (Phytoplankton cell -



Chloroplast - Rubisco protein & Chlorophyll molecule). The Rubisco enzyme makes organic products that are used by nearly every living creature in respiration. The third stone in the sequence is an absolute treasure trove of fossils with every inch of its surface covered with fossilised cockles. Mary Anning's name is carved on the side of this piece. She is known around the world for the important finds she made in Jurassic marine fossil beds at Lyme Regis in Dorset.

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

## **Sculpture 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.”*** - Rachel Carson.

## **Sculpture 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 stone is inscribed with a quotation from John Muir, a Scottish-American naturalist, glaciologist, author, environmentalist, and an early advocate for the preservation of wildernesses in the United States.



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



## **Sculpture 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 tonnes. 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.

## **Sculpture 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 limestone sculpture. It invites you to run your hand along the top and upwards, as if taking flight. There is a very narrow divide between creatures 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.”- Brian Swimme.***

## **Sculpture 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 the front, allowing you to stand in to the cavity. This engenders 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.***

**Sculpture 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.

## **Sculpture 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.***

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.*

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***The sculptures are the work of Philip and Liz Quinn, Stonemad Studios, Holycross, Thurles.***

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**Donations welcome!**

**Clár Éire Ildánach**  
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