

# Tara Foundation

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## Editorial

The Minister for the Environment, Dick Roche, has announced that the Wicklow National Park is to be expanded, with the purchase of 19 hectares of land, including the famous monastic site and round tower. According to the Minister, this expansion will “help to protect some of Ireland’s most important monuments”. However, those acquainted with the State’s record in protecting and preserving Irish heritage would be justified in greeting this news with skepticism. The Office of Public Works, on behalf of the Irish state, is currently engaged in demolishing archaeological sites on Skellig Michael and reconstructing them according to how the OPW believes they ought to look. Meanwhile, Grianán Aileach in Donegal has been “restored”, i.e. rebuilt according to how a State appointee believes how it should look; and the NRA is

*prepared to demolish national monuments to build the M3, a road which is designed primarily to serve the interests of property developers and their political associates. In light of such a distinctive record, it can only be supposed that the State's aim in acquiring more land in Wicklow is to subject more monuments to a reshaping in the State's own image: mindless, ahistorical, subservient.*

*The Irish State is effectively claiming that Irish heritage is its own private property, to be rebuilt or totally destroyed according to the whim of a Minister, regardless of archaeological best practice or any regard for historical or cultural value. Coillte, the State forestry body, has sold land on Rath Lugh, a national monument located directly adjacent to the route of the M3 Motorway, and is currently felling ancient broadleaf trees there. In doing this, Coillte is breaking the law. Coillte is a public body, and as such has a responsibility to maintain the forests a national property. Coillte does not own them, and therefore has no entitlement to sell anything, or for that matter destroy irreplaceable old growth trees. Plant and roadfill materials have recently been moved into position in advance of construction of the first phase, even though no contract has yet been signed.*

*It appears that the race is on to make irreversible the destruction wrought in the construction of the carpet-bagger's opportunity that is the M3, in case the Supreme Court should in a future case confirm that the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 2004 is repugnant to the Constitution. The Act is the only means by which such a road can be built, as it accords dictatorial power to a Minister, allowing any and all considerations of heritage and culture to be ignored in favour of what the same Minister should decide to be "in the public interest". No national monument is exempt from this threat. The phrase "public interest" is a manufacture of the PR firms employed by the political establishment, empty of substantial meaning, but at the same time freighted with moral connotations. Thus it is capable of bearing whatever construction it is politically expedient to place on it to intimidate the public. "Heritage" and "archaeology" are things that must be got out of the way so that "necessary infrastructure" may be created, i.e. enormously expensive roads that go nowhere and serve only to increase the problems they are supposed to solve, i.e. traffic congestion.*

*Thus, oversight of archaeological excavations along the route of the M3 is in the hands of the National Roads Authority, a conflict of interest which is entirely intentional. The NRA can represent itself in propaganda terms as a pioneer in archaeology, even as it prepares to tear apart over 160 sites, at least three of which are national monuments.*

*If the M3 motorway is allowed to proceed, it will be a major victory for land-speculator government. For the first time in the State's history, government*

*will have, as a matter of explicit policy, torn asunder heritage it has purposely neglected for decades, in the name of making fortunes for developers, landowners and middlemen. Those who now own the State have no other vision for it.*

## ***Tara – its political significance throughout the ages by henscastle***

*On the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1843 some 100,000 people came to the Hill of Tara to listen to Daniel O’Connell speak in favour of repeal of the Act of Union. His words proclaimed the immense social, political and military importance of the location:*

*“This was emphatically the spot from which emanated every social power and legal authority by which the force of the entire country was concentrated for national defence. On this important spot I have an important duty to perform. I here protest in the face of my country and my God against the continuance of the Union”.<sup>1</sup>*

*The choice of this site was particularly resonant in view it being the location of one of the most crucial battles of the 1798 Rebellion, the Battle of Tara. 4,000 Irish soldiers mustered at the historic hill, taking advantage of the panoramic view that it afforded as well as using the old defensive walls and ditches for cover. The English numbered 700 but possessed superior firepower and overwhelmed the Irish, killing 500.*

*This site has been paramount in Irish political, social and religious life for millenia. The site dates back to 4000 B.C., consisting of the ceremonial hill itself, as well as settlements, sacred monuments and defensive fortifications. Tara’s Irish name *Teamhair na Rí* reflects the royal background of the Hill. It features in annals and literature as the site of inaugurations of kings. Kingship in medieval Ireland was a complex and sacred institution, bound up with taboos and proscriptions. The hill (*síde*) on which the inauguration took place was a sacred place, underlining the supernatural nature of kingship. The inauguration itself was a sacred ritual, which illustrated the king’s primary duties – to promote peace and bounty in the land. The king’s chariot was yoked to two horses which had never been harnessed before and he who was not fit to rule would not be able to control it. *Feis Temro* (The Festival of Tara) was a ritual held once in a king’s reign, as a means of affirming his kingship.*

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Muireann Ní Bhrolcáin, “WHEN TARA GREETED THE LIBERATOR” *Royal Meath* December 2004

*The question of whether the concept of flaithe Érenn (“kingship of Ireland”) was a political reality or merely a literary construct is a controversial one to say the least. If the ardrí (“high-king”) was real, the question remains as to whether he had political power over the entire island or was merely a symbolic figure. The list of the High-Kings of Ireland from the Annals of the Four Masters which extends two millennia B.C. has been dismissed as a pseudohistorical construction. However, In Adomnán’s seventh century text *Vitae Sancti Columbae*, he refers to Diarmait mac Cerbaill being ordained by God as the ruler of all Ireland (*totius Scotiae regnator*).<sup>2</sup>*

*The concept of high-kingship is a prominent one in Irish literature.<sup>3</sup> Irish society revolved around the king. He is the most privileged person in medieval Irish society.<sup>4</sup> He had power of issuing an ordinance in times of emergency, such as defeat in battle or after a plague.<sup>5</sup> The concept of justice and peace emanating from the king was a crucial one. The preservation of *fír flathemon* (“the king’s truth”), the maintenance of the king’s *búada* (prerogatives) and the avoidance of *geasa* (taboos) was crucially important for a king’s reign to be prosperous and peaceful. However, law-tracts including *Críth Gablach* (CG) show that a king (*rí túaithe*) could exercise authority over other petty-kingdoms (*túatha*) than his own.<sup>6</sup> The provincial king or *rí cóicid* is referred to as *rí ruirech* (“king of great kings”).<sup>7</sup> This indicates that the idea of a centralised kingship is not outrageous by any means.*

*Tara is depicted as the symbolic centre of Ireland, the ancient “fifth province” of Ireland. Even today, each of the four provinces of Ireland are referred to as a “fifth” (*cúige*) in Irish. This would be the origin of Meath in Irish (*Mide*, from *mid* “centre”).*

*Whether the power of the high-king was real or symbolic, the status of Tara as a religious, political and military centre has lasted up to recent times. An excavation by so-called British-Israelites in 1899 to find the Ark of the Covenant shows that its importance is not confined to Ireland. However specious their goals, their attention shows that Tara is a site of world importance. The current road-building scheme through the Tara-Skryne valley will destroy much of the integral value from a site which has held continuous significance for over 4,000 years.*

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<sup>2</sup> *Vita Sancti Columbae*: Adomnán Life of Columba, ed. A.O. and M.O. Anderson, London 1961, folio 36b.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. Airne Fíngin, ed. J. Vendreyes, Dublin 1953, 16; *Togail Bruidne Da Derga* ed. Eleanor Knott, Dublin 1936 1.

<sup>4</sup> Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law*, Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1988 (reprint 1998), 17.

<sup>5</sup> CG 517-9.

<sup>6</sup> CG 459-60.

<sup>7</sup> e.g. CG 475.

## *The NRA: the M<sub>3</sub> Motorway Scam (I) by hanshiro*

*On its website devoted to the M<sub>3</sub> motorway, the NRA goes to some lengths to justify the road's construction. The NRA states: "The M<sub>3</sub> Motorway is a key part of the plan to upgrade the overall roads network for the country. It will significantly improve road transport connections between the North West and the East of the country." It is obvious that these statements have little or nothing to justify them. The State has rejected out of hand the idea of upgrading the existing N<sub>3</sub> route on the most spurious grounds, even though the inconvenience, expense and destruction of heritage that would result would be minor compared to what is now underway. Neither will the road do anything except increase pressure on the already gridlocked M<sub>50</sub> ring road. The M<sub>3</sub> will not "bypass" Dunshaughlin, Kells and Navan, even if this is the stated purpose of the road, for at least three reasons.*

*One reason is that, because the heavy traffic volumes between Navan and Dublin are a direct result of a short-sighted development model which focuses on land rezoning and construction to the exclusion of other factors such as proportionality and the need for balanced regional development; as a result, most of the country outside Dublin has been all but completely deindustrialized. This ensures an imbalance of infrastructure funds between Dublin and elsewhere (and hence a Dublin-centric "transport" plan for the whole of Ireland), and relentless, developer-driven sprawl which invariably takes advantage of the ill-fated attempts to decrease traffic volumes by the same means which created them in the first place.*

*Second, the "bypass" scheme as implemented throughout Ireland has proved to be an abject failure, doing little or nothing to ameliorate traffic conditions in the "bypassed" towns, because the roads are simply ad hoc measures, implemented as face-saving measures by governments. The obvious failure of the much-trumpeted bypass schemes is dismissed by government on the grounds that the grand plan will set all to rights, on the distant day when it is completed. But there is no grand plan, except that of providing bonanzas for developers while appearing to provide a transport network.*

*The third reason comes down to the importation of a model of development which has already been demonstrated as a costly failure in Britain, the example to which all redundant State employees look. The M<sub>3</sub> will be built as a Private Finance Initiative. As such, the private consortium involved in its construction must be guaranteed a return on its investment as a condition of its involvement. This means that the M<sub>3</sub> must be tolled in not just one but two locations, and it is up to the consortium to decide what constitutes an*

*acceptable return. Resentment for having to pay tolls on roads which are already substantially taxpayer-funded, and continue paying them for up to thirty years, spells the failure of the road even in advance of its construction.*

*Abandoning the M3 would entail a decision by the State to turn its back on an ethos to which it is firmly committed: the privatization of transport, in the form of starving public transport and thereby ensuring reliance on motor vehicles; the Private Finance Initiative to force projects through, even though the PFI entails much greater risk and expense for the taxpayer; and the planning of infrastructure to benefit construction firms, contractors and land speculators.*

*It is irresponsible to base an economy entirely around the guarantee of the endless availability of construction sites and the eternal increase of property prices. Yet this, along with making ecologically-sensitive regions a base, again at taxpayer expense, for highly toxic and dangerous multinational industries (the Aughinish alumina plant and the Corrib shell refinery are two instances), is settled state policy. These decisions are down to a political decision rather than sound statesmanship. For that reason, such policies need to be scrapped. This would entail the abandonment, and reversal, of the current roads programme, and its substitution by comprehensive, country-wide commercial and commuter rail networks.*

## ***BASF and Tara*** by turoe

*It seems that the Hill of Tara and environs are being turned into a laboratory in more ways than one.*

*On 13 January 2006, BASF Plant Science GmbH (an affiliate of the multinational chemical and pharmaceutical corporation BASF) formally notified the Irish Environmental Protection Agency of its intention to grow genetically modified (GMO) potatoes near the Hill of Tara, on a plot located next to the Teagasc Grange Research Centre at Arodstown, Summerhill, Co. Meath.*

*The townland of Arodstown is situated 2 km north of the R156 road between Dunboyne and Summerhill. [1]*

*The proposed "field trial" would have taken place from April 2006 to October 2010. On 4<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the Environmental Protection Agency granted the licence subject to a number of conditions. However, on 23 May 2006 BASF announced that they would defer commencement of the trial for a year, citing what they claimed to be overly strict conditions laid down by the EPA. It is more than likely that the high-profile campaign launched by a number of groups and activists to prevent the trial from proceeding had something to do with the sudden reversal. In addition, any noticeable symmetry with the M3 project would definitely not help BASF's image, which is not exactly lily-white to begin with.*

*The suspension is temporary, however, and if the M3 motorway proceeds as planned, in 2007, the GM trial can be expected to commence in its wake. In Britain, BASF have been granted permission by its Department of Agriculture to proceed with a field trial in spring 2007. Initially, there were two sites mooted for the experiment, but one of the farmers involved has withdrawn, citing alleged intimidation. BASF will proceed with the trial in Spring 2007 on a single site, in Cambridgeshire. If the Irish trial proceeds as planned in 2007, it is likely that it will take place at the Teagasc Arodstown facility located near the Hill of Tara.*

*The development of GM potatoes has been promoted as a measure to tackle blight, using the spectre of the Great Famine (1845-8) as a propaganda tool to promote GM. Blight occurred throughout Europe in 1845, but only in Ireland did mass starvation occur, thanks in part to the food exportation policies enforced by Britain. In India, similar policies led to perhaps up to 29 million deaths in 1877 and 1878. [2] In fact, when making the application, BASF stated that the aim is to develop seed GMO potatoes with improved resistance to the late potato blight fungus *Phytophthora infestans*. However, two varieties of blight-resistant potatoes, produced by safe non-GMO traditional breeding methods, are already available to Irish farmers. Irish farmers whose crops are contaminated by GMO varieties will lose ownership of their own produce, face patent infringement lawsuits, and be forced to pay annual patent royalties. [3] In addition, genetically modified genes can contaminate other crops and produce "superweeds".*

*There is growing body of scientific evidence that GM foods and crops pose unacceptable health and environmental risks, including evidence of deaths attributable to GM products among laboratory and farm animals and in the human population. [4] One of the less palatable facts about BASF is that it was once part of the IG FARBEN cartel, the most powerful German corporation in the first half of the twentieth century. After WW1, all the major German chemical concerns, BASF, Bayer, Hoechst, and other German chemical and pharmaceutical companies were merged in 1926 into a single gigantic trust - I.G. Farbenindustrie A.G. The concern produced dyestuffs, pharmaceuticals, photographic supplies and explosives, and a host of other products emerged as a result of the interconnection of finance and expertise.*

*I.G. Farben was the single largest donor to the election campaign of Adolf Hitler. One year before the Nazi seizure of power, IG Farben donated 400,000 marks to the Nazi party. As a result, after Hitler's seizure of power, IG Farben was the single largest profiteer of the attempted German conquest of Europe during the Second World War. 100% of all German explosives and synthetic gasoline came from the IG Farben factories. After the Nazi conquest of*

*a European country, IG Farben followed in their wake, systematically taking over the industries of these countries. This occurred in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France and all other conquered states. The camp at Auschwitz was the largest extermination camp in history, but the concentration camp was only the appendix. The central project was IG Auschwitz, a 100% subsidiary of IG Farben, the largest industrial complex in the world for manufacturing synthetic gasoline and rubber for the projected conquest of Europe.*

*The pharmaceutical departments of the IG Farben used the victims of the concentration camps as guinea pigs for the development of new and unknown vaccines. The prisoners too weak or sick to work upon arrival at Auschwitz were selected for extermination and sent to the gas chambers. The chemical gas Zyklon-B, developed as an insecticide and used in the gas chambers, was produced by IG Farben. [5], [6], [7], [8], [9]*

*The Nuremberg War Criminal Tribunal convicted 24 IG Farben members and executives on the basis of mass murder, slavery and other crimes against humanity. By 1951 all had been released, and continued to consult with various German corporations. The Nuremberg Tribunal dissolved the IG Farben group back into Bayer, Hoechst, and BASF. As a result, any lawsuits might have been brought against the parent company, I.G. Farben, by survivors of its facilities were circumvented. The companies were then free to profit from the fruits of I.G. Farben's research, carried out upon indentured labourers and political and religious prisoners of the various nationalities of Western and Eastern Europe who suffered in the death camps.*

*The I.G. Farben trust continued to operate, however, and in 1967 was able to form a strategic alliance with Monsanto, producer of Agent Orange, the defoliant used extensively by the United States during the Vietnam War. [10], [11], [12], [13]*

*The I.G. Farben trust was not dissolved until 2003. [14]*

*The reality is that each of the three sections of IG Farben is 20 times as large as IG Farben was at its height in 1944. For almost three decades after WW1, BASF, Bayer, and Hoechst (now Aventis) each filled its highest position, chairman of the board, with former members of the Nazi NSDAP. The majority of the political officials, scientists and businessmen affiliated or connected to these corporations continue to occupy the highest levels of power in Germany.*

*If this trial proceeds at Arodstown, near the Hill of Tara, it will signal the beginning of the end for Irish agriculture, and prevent any hope of a viable organic agricultural industry. Perhaps the location is more than accidental, and, along with the M3 Motorway, is intended as a symbolic declaration of victory over the land and resources of Ireland, symbolised by the ancient and venerable Hill of Tara itself. [15], [16]*



- (1) <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/potato/map1.php>
- (2) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1673895,00.html>  
**Ibid.**
- (3) <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/potato/index.php>
- (4) <http://www.indsp.org/ISPreportSummary.php>
- (5) <http://www.spectacle.org/695/zyklonb.html>
- (6) <http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/holocaust/h-zyklon.htm>
- (7) <http://concise.britannica.com/ebc/article-9042050/IG-Farben>
- (8) <http://www.cbgnetwork.org/1165.html>
- (9) <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,1026396,00.html>
- (10) <http://www.organicconsumers.org/monsanto/agentorange032102.cfm>
- (11) <http://www.corpwatch.org/article.php?id=11638>
- (12) <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/agentorange/>
- (13) <http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Monsanto>
- (14) <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/potato/index.php>
- (15) <http://www.gmfreeireland.org/potato/map1.php>
- (16) [http://www4.dr-rath-foundation.org/PHARMACEUTICAL\\_BUSINESS/history\\_of\\_the\\_pharmaceutical\\_industry.htm](http://www4.dr-rath-foundation.org/PHARMACEUTICAL_BUSINESS/history_of_the_pharmaceutical_industry.htm)

## **The NRA: the M<sub>3</sub> Motorway Scam (II) by hanshiro**

*The National Roads Authority's website dedicated to the M<sub>3</sub> Motorway, [www.m3motorway.ie](http://www.m3motorway.ie), was set up as a propaganda exercise to counter criticism and concern over the State's firm conviction that the chosen route through the Tara-Skryne Valley was unalterable, regardless of what new sites might be discovered there. There can be no doubt that, in the light of this resolve, to place responsibility for archaeology in the hands of a body whose raison d'être is the construction of motorways was unwise. This becomes clear in the "Q&A" section of the website, where the NRA's attempt to defend its supposed dual role, as both road and archaeology overseer, becomes strained and self-contradictory.*

*The attempt to justify the roads programme on the basis that, without it, many new archaeological discoveries would have remained unknown, appears to have enjoyed some popularity in State circles, and for good reason: it is doubly duplicitous. The fact that the State cares so little about the national heritage (except to express contempt for it when it becomes an obstacle to "development") that it has failed utterly to engage in any serious or sustained excavation, is a damning indictment of State policy. Further, the NRA, a State organ, is in fact saying that knowledge of such heritage properly remains*

*limited to its proximity to road projects, and if no such projects threaten heritage, then it is acceptable to remain ignorant of it. Heritage is to be seen as a disposable commodity.*

*The NRA finesses the selected route of the M3 by stating that it was carefully chosen to avoid known sites, as listed in the statutory Record of Monuments and Places. The fact that 160 new sites have since been identified along the route is dealt with by minimizing their importance: "As expected a large number of new sites have been found throughout the route but the frequency and type of sites are very similar to that from other linear developments in County Meath and throughout the country", as though the only reason not to destroy such sites would be found in the NRA's judgement that they were somehow exceptional. Indeed, the value judgement as to what constitutes an archaeological site of "importance" is insisted on: "An unprecedented level of archaeological study and investigation has been carried out as part of the planning process and is continuing prior to construction. It is, therefore, unlikely that any major archaeological site would be uncovered during the construction stage." It is clear that the decision was made in advance that no find would make any difference to the project. Even if there were a "major" discovery, the Minister for the Environment would still have the power, under the 2004 National Monuments (Amendment) Act, to order its destruction. Such powers are not granted if their use is not intended.*

*The use of centerline test trenching along the entire route of the motorway brings into question the NRA's claim to rely on archaeological best practice. Quite apart from the question of how a body whose remit contradicts the best interests of heritage preservation can be entrusted with the oversight of excavation, the use of destructive trenching as a default method renders pointless any non-invasive techniques they employ beforehand. According to the technical description on the NRA website, the use of non-invasive surveying along the M3 route is in any case rather perfunctory; this is understandable given that the entire route is trenched regardless of what is there, but it falls far short of best practice, where a variety of non-invasive techniques are often employed prior to a decision to excavate, and obviously go to inform that decision. Even so, there is little point in excavating only along the route of the motorway, as the road is bound to destroy the integrity and the context of sites that happen to lie along its route.*

*What is a cause for concern, however, is not that the NRA should see fit to proceed this way and defend its action in these terms. What is worrying is that its actions and rhetoric should go so far unchallenged, that it is seen as normal that archaeology should play second fiddle to road building, and that the existence of any State-sponsored excavation and research at Tara should depend on the existence of an expensive State whim such as the M3.*

