



Press Release

SECRETS OF THE IRISH LANDSCAPE

A major new three part RTÉ television series

Standing by a small pool near Roundstone bog in the west of Ireland, any first-time European botanist would be both confused and startled by the mixture of plant types. The pools from which grow American Pipewort and Water Lobelia, are fringed by Spanish heathers, while the rocky knolls over which Siberian Juniper straggles are also abode to two Pyrenean plants; St. Dabeoc's heath and St Patrick's-cabbage. In the limestone wilderness of the Burren of northern County Clare, the Dense-flowered Orchid, far from its Mediterranean home, sends up its flower-spikes through carpets of the arctic-alpine Mountain Avens. Ever since this seemingly flora of contradictions was revealed, botanists have argued as to how it came about, and only now do we have the tools that allow us to begin to unravel that history....

In 1895 Robert Lloyd Praeger began a pilgrimage across Ireland that was to take up every weekend of the spring and summer months of his life for the next five years. On Friday evenings he made his way from his place of work, the National Library, to Heuston Station (then Kingsbridge) to board the Great Southern and Western Railway or Midland Great Western Railway services, which then connected to nearly 500 rural railway stations across the country. Saturday and Sunday were spent botanising with a purpose – his aim was to chart the distribution of all plants across the country – nothing less than a one-man census of the entire Irish flora. By Sunday evening he had walked across country, or conducted a 40 mile circuit that brought him to a railway station and a return train to Dublin for work on Monday morning.



Praeger considered a days' field work as "twelve hours spent covering 20–25 miles." In total he spent over 200 days walking in excess of 7,000 kilometres, noting thousands of plant records as he went. He abhorred motorcars.

Not only did Praeger more than double our knowledge of the distribution of the Irish flora, he also gained an intimate knowledge of the country, which he recounts in his classic book 'The Way that I Went' published in 1937. It was during these heroic walks across Ireland when Praeger might have pondered where the flora of Ireland had come from and how it had got here.

For this major new three part television series and Derek Mooney will follow in the footsteps of one of Ireland's greatest unsung scientists to uncover the true extent of the extraordinary scientific journey started by Praeger. What Praeger began was a process – discovering the true makeup of Ireland's distinct and unique plant life – that is far from over. It is still subject to much scientific endeavour and hot debate today. The story is ongoing and ever changing with new questions being asked and answered all the time.

For this series Derek Mooney, with the help of Praeger's 1937 book 'The Way That I Went', will go on an epic journey around Ireland and Europe, looking back 20,000 years to unravel the true enigma surrounding Ireland's unique and stunning eco system.

'Secrets of the Irish Landscape' is part funded by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and is an RTÉ Cork Production for RTÉ Television.



Derek Mooney – Presenter

One of Ireland's best-known broadcasters, Derek Mooney has been leading the development of wildlife radio broadcasting in Ireland for over two decades. His credits in the natural history field include *Habitats*, *The Nature Line*, *Nature trails* and *Mooney Goes Wild On 1*, all for RTÉ Radio 1. *The First Brood of the Millennium*, *Wildtrack* and *NestWatch 2006* on RTÉ TV and *Nature Detectives* for the BBC. As a producer, Mooney has won several national and international awards including The Prix Europa, The ESB Millennium Environment Award, World Animal Week Award and Two PPI Awards. Derek Mooney currently presents a week day magazine programme for RTÉ Radio 1 called MOONEY.

Colm Crowley – Producer

Colm Crowley is currently Head of RTÉ Cork and is responsible for overseeing hundreds of hours of broadcasting each year. Colm originally trained as a producer for both the BBC and ITV in the UK, before returning to Ireland to work for RTÉ in 2001. Colm has worked as producer in entertainment as well as factual programmes winning several international awards. Colm originated the idea for *Secrets of the Irish Landscape* and is the series producer/director.

A major new book published by RTÉ and Cork University Press, will be published to coincide with this new television series.

Transmission dates

RTÉ ONE – Sunday May 5th 2013 6.30 pm
RTÉ ONE – Sunday May 12th 2013 6.30 pm
RTÉ ONE – Sunday May 19th 2013 6.30 pm

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Key Production Team

Presenter – Derek Mooney
Chief Historical consultant – Matthew Jebb,
Director of the National Botanical Gardens
Producer/Director – Colm Crowley,
Head of RTÉ Cork
Director of Photography – Barry Donnellan
Researcher – Naoimh Reilly

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