



Hazelnuts were a staple food and once cured, could be stored for 12 months. The Bann Valley, with its rich natural resources, has enabled these ancient settlers to thrive.



Archaeology has revealed that the inhabitants may have sat around a fire while they made or repaired tools. Many of these tools would have been made from flint. This type of stone was perfectly suited for crafting into the arrowheads and blades that Mesolithic man would have hunted with. Other tools were also made from bone and wood.



MOUNTSANDEL FORT

Through the ages, Mountsandel has been a haven, supporting life, building communities and a driver for the establishment of a remarkably rich history for Coleraine and its surrounding area. We have only just scratched the surface....there are many more Mountsandel discoveries just waiting to be uncovered!



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS
HERITAGE TRUST



MOUNTSANDEL FORT



Nestled above the River Bann in Coleraine, Co. Londonderry is a very special place called Mountsandel. This site is home to the **oldest known settlement** in Ireland dating back some 10,000 years, to the Mesolithic period.

In 1973 Peter Woodman (now Emeritus Professor of Archaeology, University College Cork) began a small excavation at Mountsandel Fort which would lead to one of the most important archaeological discoveries on the island of Ireland. This dig would reveal the existence of an ancient community, from c.10,000 years ago, at 'Mesolithic' Mountsandel. Most importantly, the site would uncover a wealth of information, giving a tantalising glimpse into the ancient people of Ireland and their way of life.



A unique feature of Mountsandel's Mesolithic community is that they appear to have lived at one location throughout much of the year. This is indicated by the remains of delicately constructed homes discovered at the site. These were near circular huts, roughly 5 meters wide and made for long-term use, unlike the temporary shelters used by many other groups in Mesolithic Europe.

The ancient settlement was ideally situated in prehistoric woods of Birch, Hazel and Willow, over-looking the rapids in the area now known as the Cutts and close to the location of the Lower Bann Estuary, as it was 10,000 years ago. The combination of the forests, river and the estuary supplied a bounty of natural resources that could sustain the community throughout the year.



One of the biggest discoveries made was definitive archaeological evidence of the foods enjoyed at Mesolithic Mountsandel. Hearths for fires and burnt remains dumped in pits showed that the inhabitants had caught Salmon, Trout and Eels from the river, while they also relied heavily on hunting or trapping animals such as Wild Boar, Hares, Mallard and Woodpigeon. Fish was the most important protein resource accounting for 81% of the animal remains found. Seasonal items such as seeds, nuts, fruits and berries would have been routinely foraged to form a rich and varied diet and they were also preserved to provide vital sustenance during long and harsh winters.

