

## Hidden gems and Forgotten People

### COUNTY ROSCOMMON ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



### MUSHROOM STONES IN KILTOOM

The stone photographed above can be seen in a field on the eastern side of the Athlone to Mayo railway line, with Newpark on the western side. It is one of at least three in the same vicinity that owe their unusual shapes to the lapping of water around them over several centuries. They are situated in low-lying land close to the Kiltoom shore of Lough Ree on the River Shannon. In pre-historic times the water levels of Lough Ree were much higher and more variable than in modern times. Back then the stones referred to here would have been large limestone boulders, partly submerged in the more extensive lake which then extended over this low lying area close to the present lake shore.

Over time, the submerged sections of these boulders were gradually eroded by the lapping of water around them. Consequent indentation of the lower or middle sections of the boulders gave them characteristic shapes that attracted the description ‘wave stones’ or ‘mushroom stones’.

In an article, *Curious Stone at Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon* by Henry S. Crawford, published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, December 1913, the author includes a photograph, taken from a passing train, of what he describes as:

*probably the most curiously shaped stone in Ireland standing close to the west side of the railway, a short distance north of Kiltoom Station.*

He gives the height of the stone as ‘six and a half feet’. In the photograph it resembles a mushroom in shape, and is clearly visible in a pasture like setting. One hundred years on since publication of the photograph, this author has failed to find its location. Presumably it is out of view somewhere in the dense vegetation and bramble that covers much of the land along the railway line close to the long closed Kiltoom Railway Station, It has become another hidden gem of our heritage.

**By:** Eamon Leonard