

National Roads Authority  
National Archaeology Seminar  
'Creative Minds: production, manufacturing and  
invention in ancient Ireland'

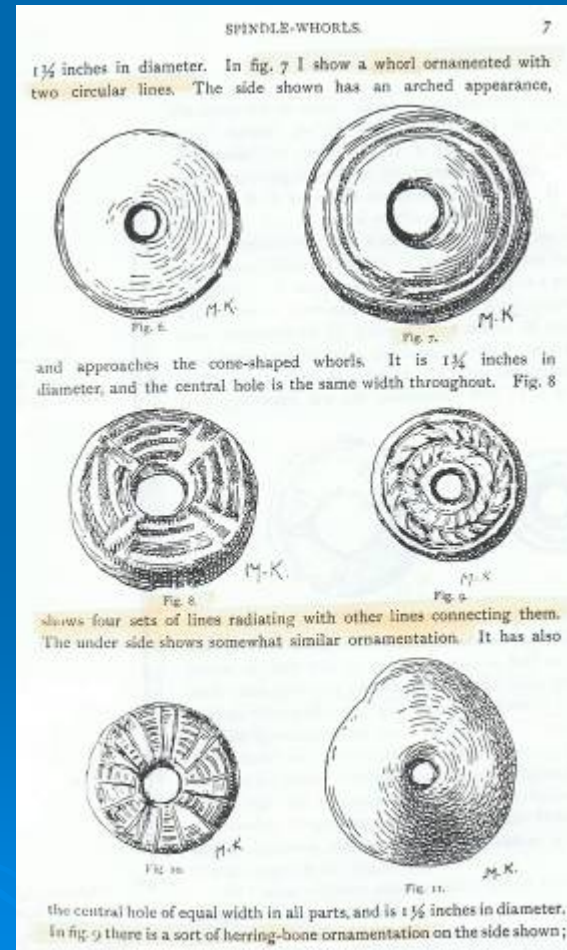
Spindle whorls and hand spinning in Ireland

27<sup>th</sup> August 2009  
Gresham Hotel, Dublin

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NRA Archaeologist

# What is hand spinning?

*wharrows and fairy millstones*



# Potential Early Bronze Age whorl

- Rath-Healy 1 multi-period site
- N8 Rathcormac / Fermoy Bypass scheme
- Sandstone whorl found in the lower fill of a pit, upper fill had cremated bone
- A nearby pit dated to 2020-1770 cal BC



## Bronze Age whorls found in *fulachtaí fia*

- Richmond Co. Tipperary, N52 Nenagh Bypass Link Road, stone whorl
- Coarhamore, Co. Kerry, siltstone whorl,
- weight 9.5g (Burnt Offerings)

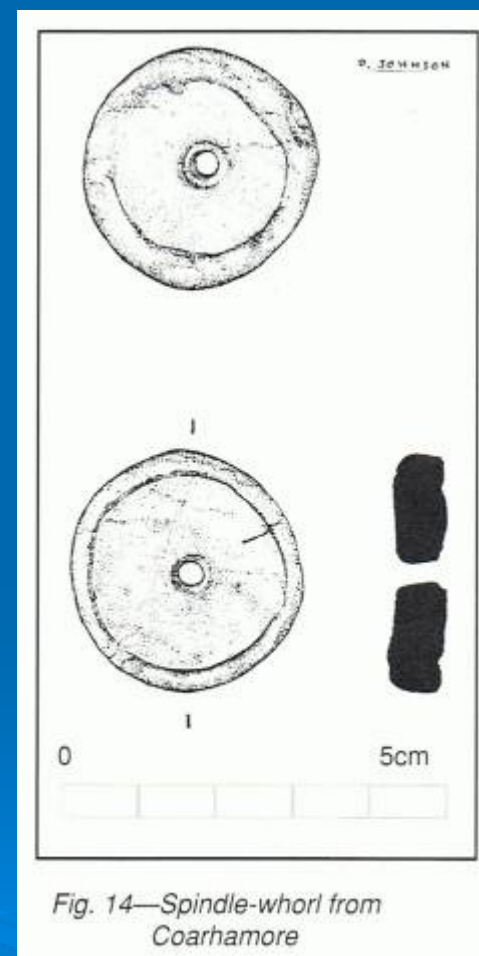


Fig. 14—Spindle-whorl from Coarhamore

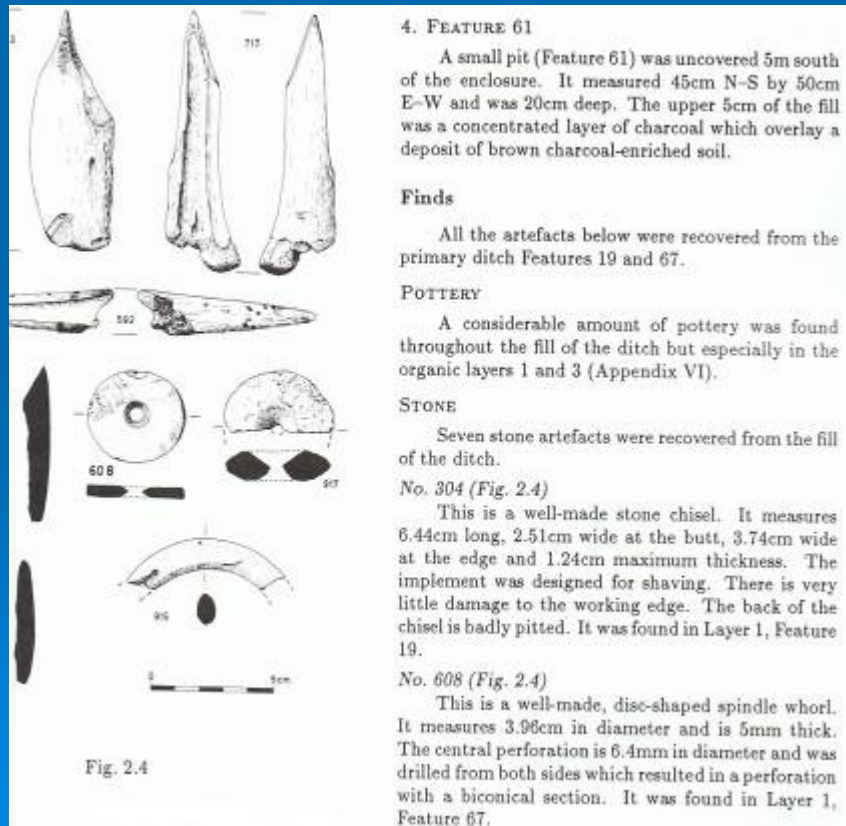
# A Late Bronze Age whorl from Tober, Co. Offaly

- Sandstone whorl found in a refuse pit within a post-built house
- Weight 50g
- N6 Kilbeggan-Athlone scheme



# Late Bronze Age whorls from Co. Tipperary

- Ballyveelish, near Ballyclerihan (Gas Pipeline Excavations)
- Killemlly, near Cahir - M8 Cashel to Mitchelstown Scheme, weight >15g



## 4. FEATURE 61

A small pit (Feature 61) was uncovered 5m south of the enclosure. It measured 45cm N-S by 50cm E-W and was 20cm deep. The upper 5cm of the fill was a concentrated layer of charcoal which overlay a deposit of brown charcoal-enriched soil.

## Finds

All the artefacts below were recovered from the primary ditch Features 19 and 67.

## POTTERY

A considerable amount of pottery was found throughout the fill of the ditch but especially in the organic layers 1 and 3 (Appendix VI).

## STONE

Seven stone artefacts were recovered from the fill of the ditch.

### No. 304 (Fig. 2.4)

This is a well-made stone chisel. It measures 6.44cm long, 2.51cm wide at the butt, 3.74cm wide at the edge and 1.24cm maximum thickness. The implement was designed for shaving. There is very little damage to the working edge. The back of the chisel is badly pitted. It was found in Layer 1, Feature 19.

### No. 608 (Fig. 2.4)

This is a well-made, disc-shaped spindle whorl. It measures 3.96cm in diameter and is 5mm thick. The central perforation is 6.4mm in diameter and was drilled from both sides which resulted in a perforation with a biconical section. It was found in Layer 1, Feature 67.



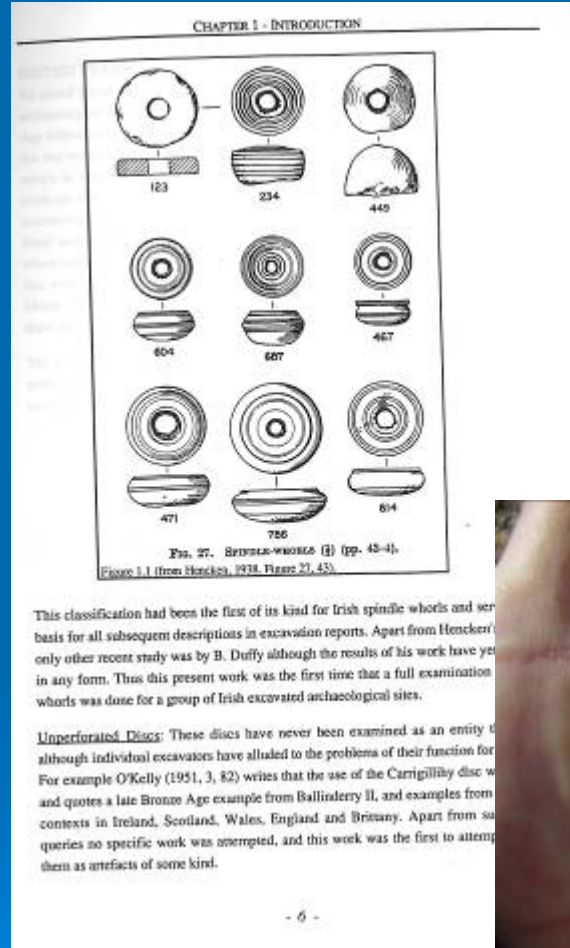
# Early Medieval whorls

➤ Cahercommaun Stone Fort, Co. Clare

➤ Lismullin, Co. Meath, M3 Clonee–Kells Motorway

Sandstone whorl found in re-deposited gravel inside a souterrain, weight 91g

Kilnacrana, Co. Tipperary, N7 Nenagh to Limerick scheme, limestone whorl from enclosure ditch, weight 30g



# Castlefarm 1, Co. Meath M3 Clonee–Kells Motorway

- Multi-period site from Neolithic occupation, Bronze Age, Iron Age and to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AD
- Three whorls at 18g, >7g and >8g
- A net sinker - too heavy as a whorl at 1,005g

