

# How Erratic is Your Block?

Dublin, 1 October, 2007

**As part of the celebrations of the International Year of the Planet Earth, which begins on 1st January 2008, Minister Eamon Ryan today announces the launch of a Schools' Competition: "How Erratic is Your Block?" The competition is being organised within his department by the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI). The competition is aimed at Transition Year students in the Republic of Ireland and Year 11 and 12 students in Northern Ireland. Its aim is to stimulate geological awareness among school pupils throughout Ireland and to encourage students to consider pursuing geoscience at third level.**

Minister Ryan: *"This competition will assist in the process of opening young peoples' minds to the wonders of the geological processes that have shaped our landscape and help them to develop a broad understanding of environmental issues. Such a hands-on approach to education, particularly ecological education, is to be encouraged as much and as often as it can. The more we understand about the living world around us, the more we understand the necessity to conserve it for future generations."*

Students are asked to identify an erratic (an out-of-place rock) to tell, in a short essay, where it is and how it got there. This could range from a fragment of a rock in a pebble dash wall to a displaced boulder on a mountainside. €300 cash prizes will be awarded to the best entries from each of the 32 counties of Ireland and a top prize- the Maxwell Henry Close Award- of €1000 will be awarded to the best overall entry. A number of special awards to other entries of exceptional high standard might also be awarded at the judges' discretion. All schools from which there is an entry will receive a geological wall map of Ireland. The school of the Maxwell Henry Close Award winner will also receive a prize of digital equipment to the value of €1,500.

The competition closes on Friday 14th March 2008. This will be followed by a prize giving in May 2008, which will be hosted by Minister Ryan. The Irish Concrete Federation (ICF) and the Association of Geography Teachers of Ireland (AGTI) along with the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy are all proud supporters of this initiative.

The competition announced today involves the creation of a Maxwell Henry Close Award. Born in 1823, the Rev Maxwell Henry Close was an eminent Irish geologist of international repute. He was the first to understand the comprehensive and complex way in which Ireland was glaciated during the Ice Age and he introduced both the term drumlin and our understanding of such features to the international literature. In addition he was one of the most effective protagonists in the campaigns in support of the preservation and promotion of the Irish language of the latter part of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th century.

More information about *Maxwell Henry Close* and *Erratics* can be found at [www.planeteearth.ie/erratics](http://www.planeteearth.ie/erratics).

## "How erratic is your block?"

A competition for second level students of geography

**This competition is open to all students in Transition Year in the Republic of Ireland and GCSE students in Years 11 and 12 in northern Ireland. Our object is to stimulate geological awareness among school pupils throughout Ireland and to encourage students to consider pursuing geoscience at third level.**

### What to do

Write a short essay (absolute maximum 1000 words) describing an *erratic* boulder or stone (pebble, particle or fragment), that is an erratic of any size, and tell where it is and how it got there. You may have picked it up in your garden, on the road or on a beach, or seen it in a field, in a wall or on a mountainside.

Remember an erratic is simply a stone out of its original place. Also remember you must tell us what type of stone it is.

Illustrate your essay as appropriate. You may use sketches, diagrams, cartoons and/or photographs.

Creative writing that tells the story well and imaginatively will be welcomed. The story may be told from whatever point of view you think best.

Make your story as interesting as possible.

State clearly the exact location of the erratic. For preference locate it on a map.

### Things to remember

Although most of our obvious erratics were transported by ice, other agencies may also have been involved, e.g. water, gravity, human action.

Many may have been moved only by other agencies and may not involve ice at all.

### Think about

The total history of the erratic (e.g. what happened to it after it was deposited).

Are there, or were there, other views as to how the erratic got to where it is today. Are there local traditions or stories about it?

## **We would like you to be able to demonstrate that you**

- \* can identify lithologies (rock types) sufficiently well to tell that a stone is an erratic – that it is out of place;
- \* understand the nature of the landscape;
- \* have achieved an understanding of glacial/glaciofluvial and/or other geological processes;
- \* can tell the story of the erratic in an interesting way;
- \* can take a holistic view of the environment, particularly in the context of heritage and/or resource issues.

## **Prizes will be awarded as follows**

**County:** The best entry from each county: one for each of the 32 counties of Ireland: €300.

**Country:** One top prize (The Maxwell Henry Close Award) for the best entry overall: €1,000

**Special:** A number of special awards may be made at the discretion of the judging panel.

**School:** All schools from which there is an entry to the competition will receive a free map of the Geology of Ireland and the school of the overall winner will receive a prize of digital equipment to the value of €1,500.

### **Furthermore**

The location of each erratic described will be shown on a map on our website.

### **Entries**

*Submit your entry according to the instructions on the application form before March 14, 2008.*

**<http://www.planetearth.ie/Erratics/Erratics%20Application%20Form.doc>**

*Read the terms and conditions before you enter.*

Planet Earth Newsletter

**<http://www.planetearth.ie/NEWSLETTERS/IYPE%20Newsletter%20Issue1.pdf>**

Irish Geology Year of planet earth and geoscience

**[www.planetearth.ie](http://www.planetearth.ie)**

Earth Science For Society

**[www.esfs.org](http://www.esfs.org)**

Geological Survey of Ireland

**[www.gsi.ie](http://www.gsi.ie)**

Royal Irish Academy

**[www.ria.ie](http://www.ria.ie)**

### ***Earth Sciences for Society - an International Year of Planet Earth***

*This Initiative was announced during the 30th International Geological Congress in Rio de Janeiro (August 2000). Now 5 years of work further on, it is strongly supported by the Initiators, 12 Founding Partners and 23 Associate Partners. The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the International Year of Planet Earth for 2008 during its 60th Session on the 22nd of December 2005.*

*The International Year's strapline 'Earth Sciences for Society' emphasises the principal ambition of the Year, which is to raise public awareness of the ways in which our science can help to make Planet Earth a safer, healthier and wealthier place for all. Our efforts will include persuading decision-makers, politicians and other community leaders to apply effectively the great store of knowledge accumulated by the world's half a million geoscientists.*

*The International Year has an exciting scientific programme. Ten societally relevant themes are open to high quality 'bottom-up' project proposals from earth science groups around the world for realisation through the International Year of Planet Earth.*

*It is heart warming to see the great enthusiasm of many geoscientific organisations who share our belief that this Initiative is both necessary and timely. Although it started as an international endeavour, the International Year will be successful only if implementation is effected also at national levels. We therefore invite you all to create national bodies and to work with us to make this the greatest (geo)show on Earth!*

Eduardo F.J. de Mulder

*Chairman of the Management Team of the International Year of Planet Earth)*