

# MAY *the Archaeologist*

In his day to day work May became very familiar with the countryside around Coleraine, but his main topic of conversation was mostly about archaeology. His knowledge and ability to recognise the importance of what was unearthed was widely recognised and he was often called upon to examine something found by workmen carrying out building repairs or drainage work.



## The River Bann

In the 1930's Andrew McL May monitored the dredging of the Lower Bann above the Cutts.

Pointed bone implements, which are rare elsewhere, were discovered here. These were later carbon dated to 7000- 9000 years ago.

Approximately 130 were rescued and are now held in the National Museum of Northern Ireland. Below is an example loaned by the Johnston family, who were related to May by marriage.



May often worked with the help of his son Laurence and it was thanks to his eagle eye that a silver bound handle of a Viking Sword was recovered from the 1930, dredging. Other artefacts from later periods show the continued importance of the area: - these include the Bann Disc.



*A n urn found at Crossgare, Coleraine.  
Picture courtesy of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon  
Museum.*



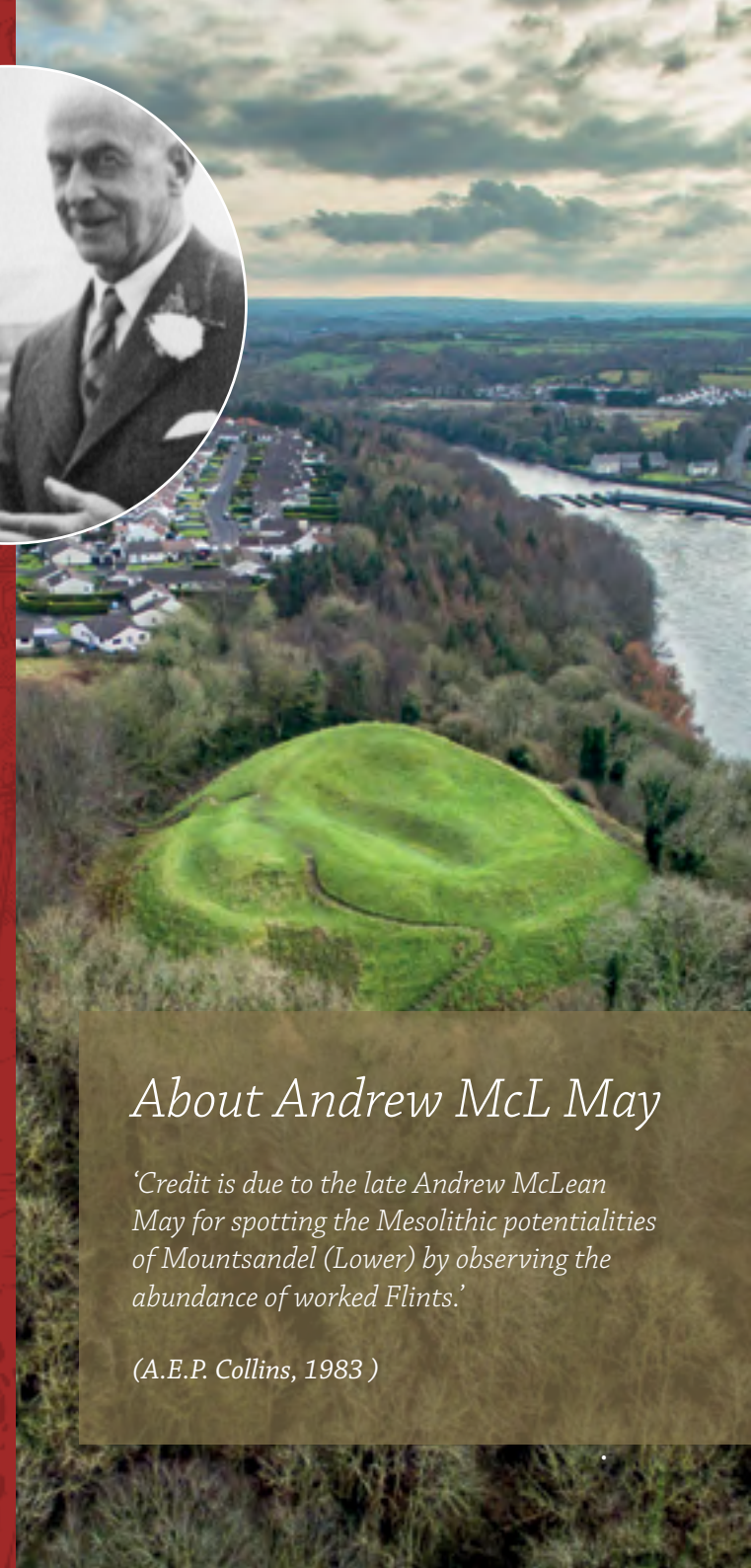
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Causeway Coast & Glens Museum Services.  
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Facebook page

## About Andrew McL May

*'Credit is due to the late Andrew McLean May for spotting the Mesolithic potentialities of Mountsandel (Lower) by observing the abundance of worked Flints.'*

*(A.E.P. Collins, 1983 )*







## About Andrew May

- Born** 1880 at Kirkintilloch Scotland
- Died** Coleraine December 1971 aged 91
- Married** Grace Gordon Martindale 1903

### Known for:

- Recognising the importance of Mountsandel
- Excavating Port Braddon Cave
- As the first honorary member of the Ulster Archaeology Society
- A leading member of the Route Naturalist and Field Club
- A Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society

### Occupation:

Lecturer, Writer, Instructor in Horticulture & Beekeeping, Amateur Archaeologist

## MAY and his work

With the advent of the 2nd World War food was seen as a weapon of war and farmers and householders of Ulster were asked to sow an additional 250,000 acres of crops in 1940 alone.

With the introduction of rationing in 1941 May was most likely tasked with implementing a programme of growing more food. This involved recommending varieties of vegetables and fruit that would have higher yields and also making most use of the ground available.

Orange carrots were also introduced in the Magiligan area, previously early carrots had been purple.

## Beaghmore



Signage on the entrance to the Beaghmore **standing stones** site pays tribute to Andrew May's work. He is also immortalised in a poem by George Barnett



*There's a man they call 'May' who comes down  
from Coleraine, If he's hunting for treasure, I  
fear it's in vein, He digs with a spade, and much  
time he does spend, To look for a trace of the  
bold 'Beaker-Men!.*

**Beaker men** – people who came to Britain from Europe in the early Bronze Age.

## Port Braddon

Another major site explored by May was Port Braddon **Cave** where he was a frequent visitor, often found picnicking with family members there on a Sunday afternoon. His initial exploration of the cave began in 1931 and a more in-depth excavation followed during the Christmas holidays of 1935 and continued intermittently until summer 1939.

