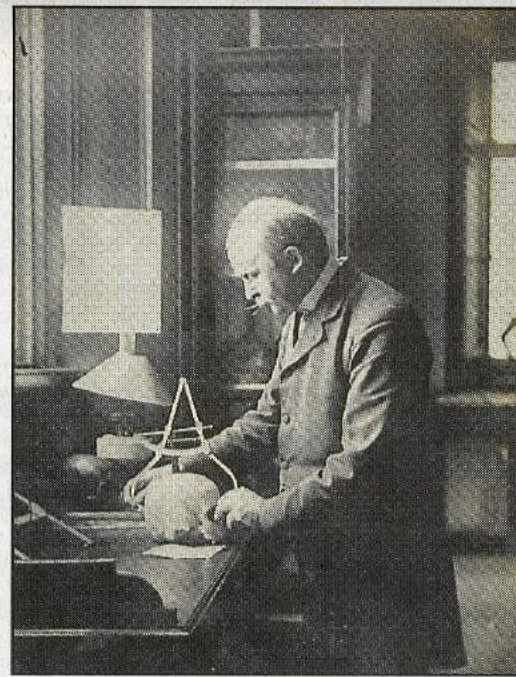




A truly remarkable picture taken by Alfred Cort Haddon on Inis Meáin in 1892. It has been labelled 'Na Talibanaí' by Mairéad Ní Ghallchóir, who will be curating the exhibition in Áras Éanna Arts Centre, Inis Oírr.



Charles R Browne, general practitioner and anthropologist, of 66 Harcourt St, Dublin, busy at work in the Anthropometry Laboratory, which he helped to set up in the Comparative Anatomy Museum in TCD in 1891.



Using a spring craniometer to measure the maximum antero-posterior diameter of the cranium on Inishbofin.



A typical Anthropometry shot of 'native' Irish types. In the middle is Tomás Ó Criomhtain, An tOileánach, a celebrated Blasket Island figure.

Rare photos capture island life in 1890s

by Donal Hickey



An exhibition of rare photographs is offering a glimpse of life on the Blasket Islands and other parts of the west coast in the late 19th century.

Just opened at the Blasket Centre in Dunquin (Dún Chaoin), Co Kerry, the exhibition has been described as one of the most important and interesting photographic collections to come into the public domain for some time.

The photographs are drawn from the albums of Charles R. Browne, a medical doctor and anthropologist from Dublin who

surveyed communities in the remotest parts of the west between 1891 and 1900.

The photographs were filed in a series of albums, six of which survive, in the library of Trinity College Dublin. A selection is now being exhibited for the first time, with the permission of the TCD board.

Dr Browne began systematically recording skull measurements as a means of racial classification of island communities and their mainland neighbours in Kerry, the Aran Islands, Connemara, and Mayo.

Between 1891 and 1893, he worked with Alfred Cort Haddon on the Ethnography of the Aran

Islands for the Royal Irish Academy.

According to the exhibition's co-curator Ciaran Walsh, the Browne archive is an unequalled illustration of life in the west of Ireland in the 1890s, including some of the earliest known photos of these communities, their physical appearance, and styles of dress.

"The difference between these and other photographs of the same time lies in the systematic way Browne recorded his subjects," Mr Walsh said.

Among the people photographed were Myles Joyce, the schoolmaster on Inishbofin, with his daughter, whose name is

not recorded; Seán 'An Common Noun' Ó Dálaigh and all the schoolchildren of the old schoolhouse at Dún Chaoin; and the first photographs of the people of An Blascaod Mór (Great Blasket).

"The naming of subjects is one of the most striking features of Browne's albums. Many people have not been named, but it is probable that many people will identify their great, great-grandparents during the run of this exhibition," Mr Walsh said.

The exhibition will run for six weeks in the Blasket Centre before going on to venues in Galway and Mayo.