

**Are the rare heathers of the west of  
Ireland and south-west Britain really  
native?**

**Nick Scott & Micheline Sheehy Skeffington**

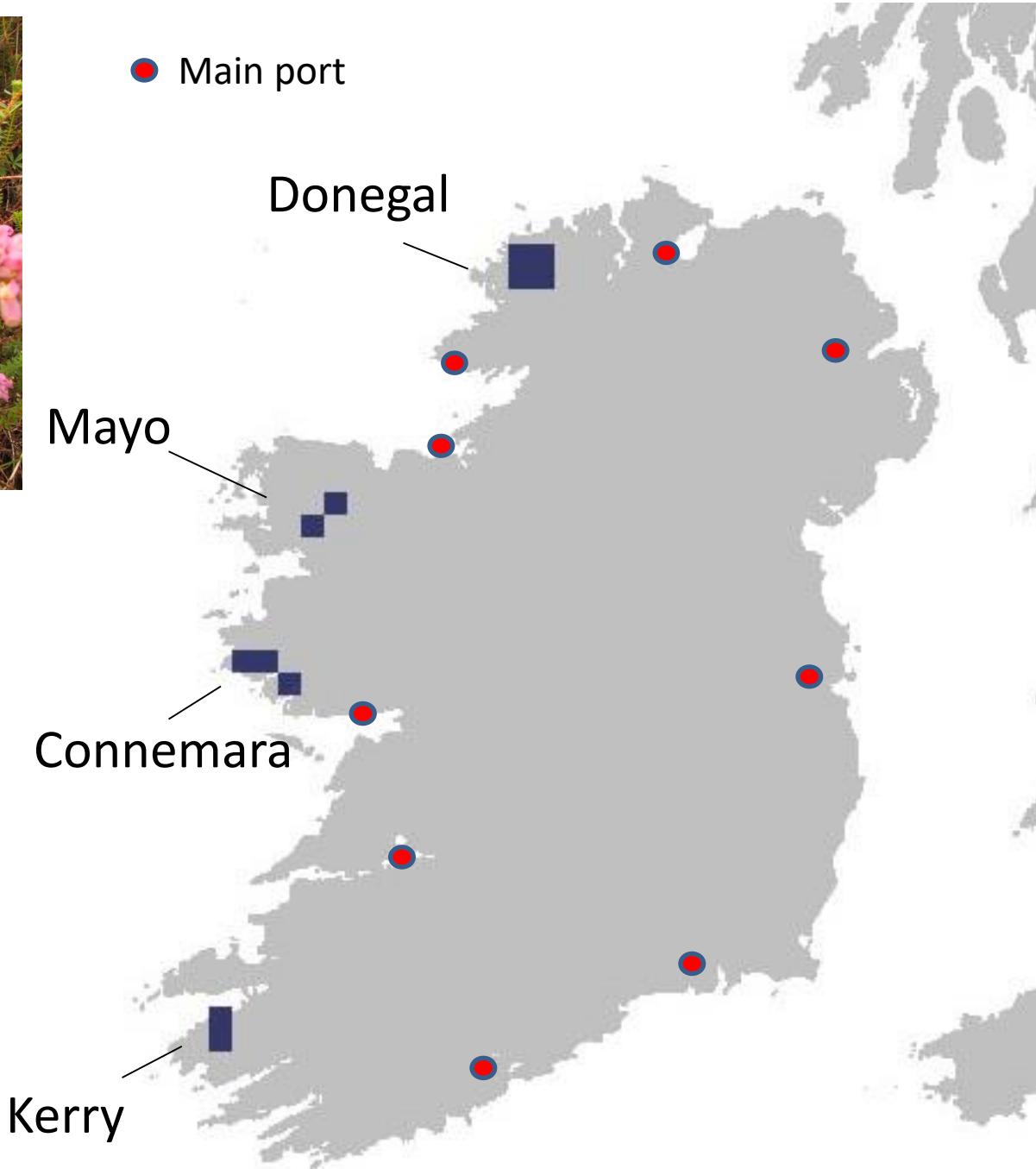
**Galway  
Ireland**

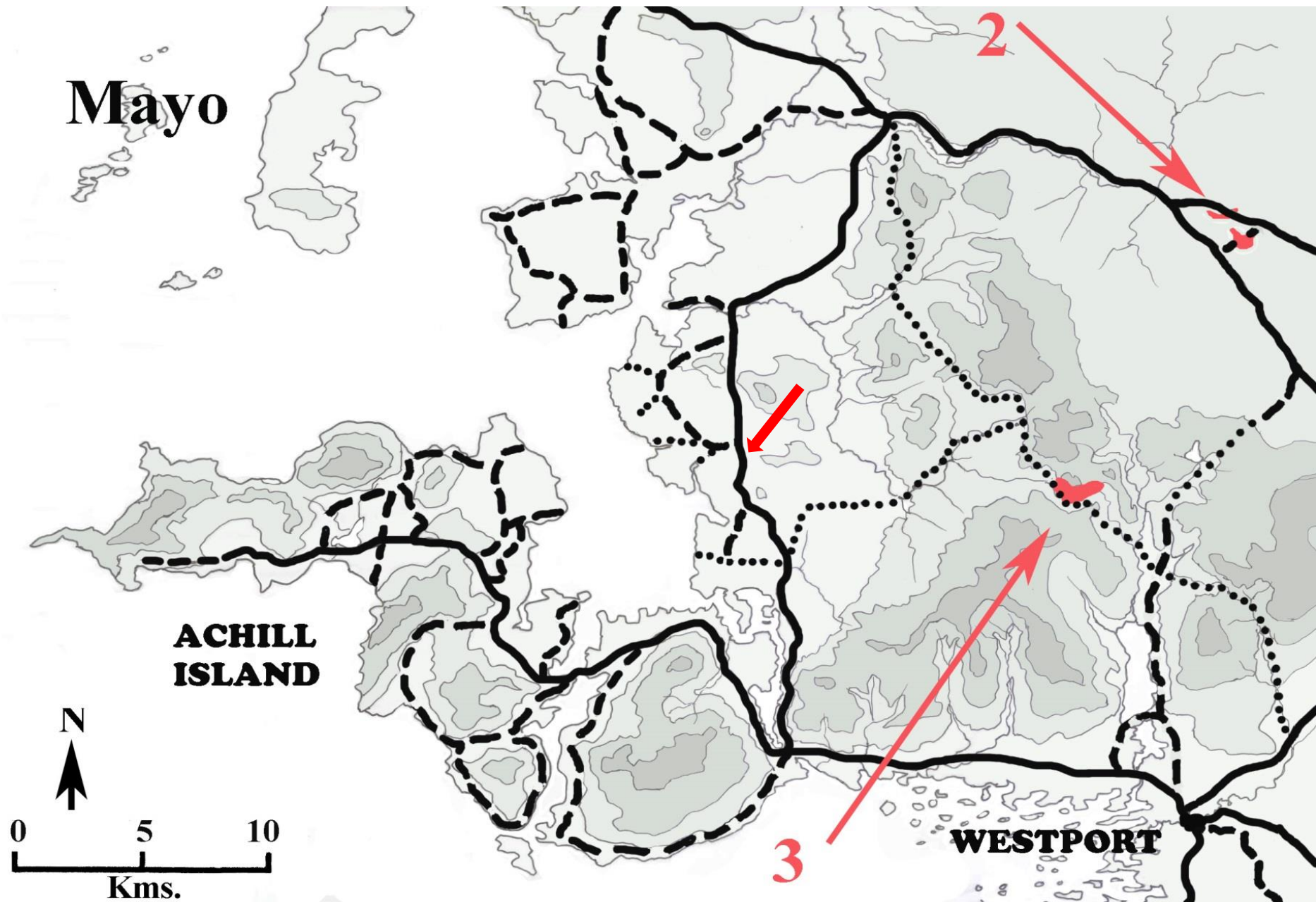




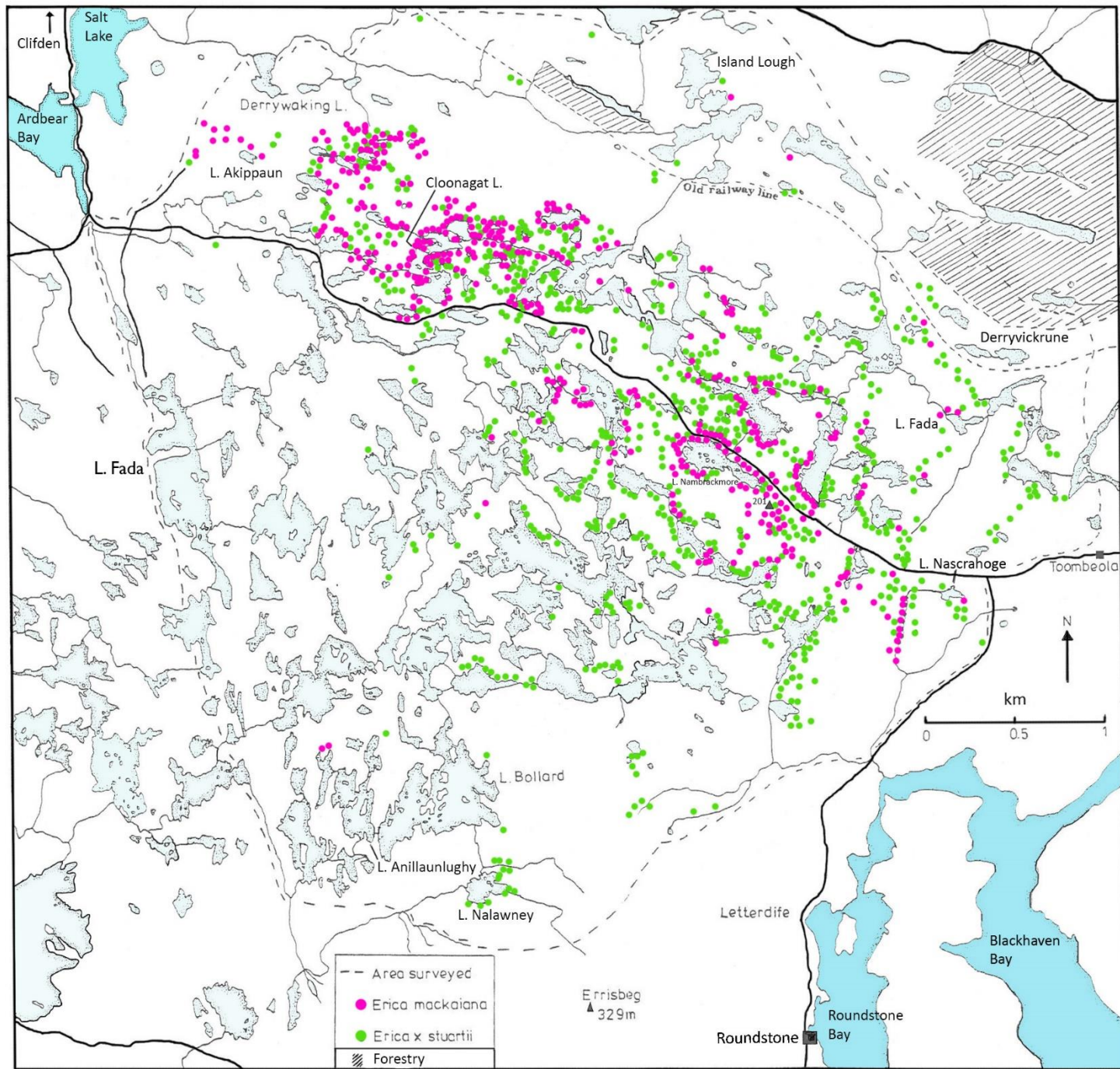
## *Erica mackayana*

does not set seed  
in Ireland,  
hybridises  
extensively with  
*Erica tetralix* and its  
populations are  
very localised.











# Plant Species Occurring in Ireland but not Britain

## 'Hiberno-Lusitanian' species

- Arbutus unedo*,
- ★ *Daboecia cantabrica*,
- ★ *Erica erigena*,
- ★ *E. mackayana*,
- Euphrasia salisburgensis*,
- Inula salicina*,
- Neotinea maculata*,
- Minuartia recurva*,
- Pinguicula grandiflora*,
- Saxifraga hirsuta*,
- S. spathularis*
- Simethis planifolia*.

## Non 'Hiberno-Lusitanian' species

- Arenaria ciliata*
- Hypericum canadense*
- Sysirichium bermudiana*



**The Flora of Ireland in its European Context (Webb 1983)**



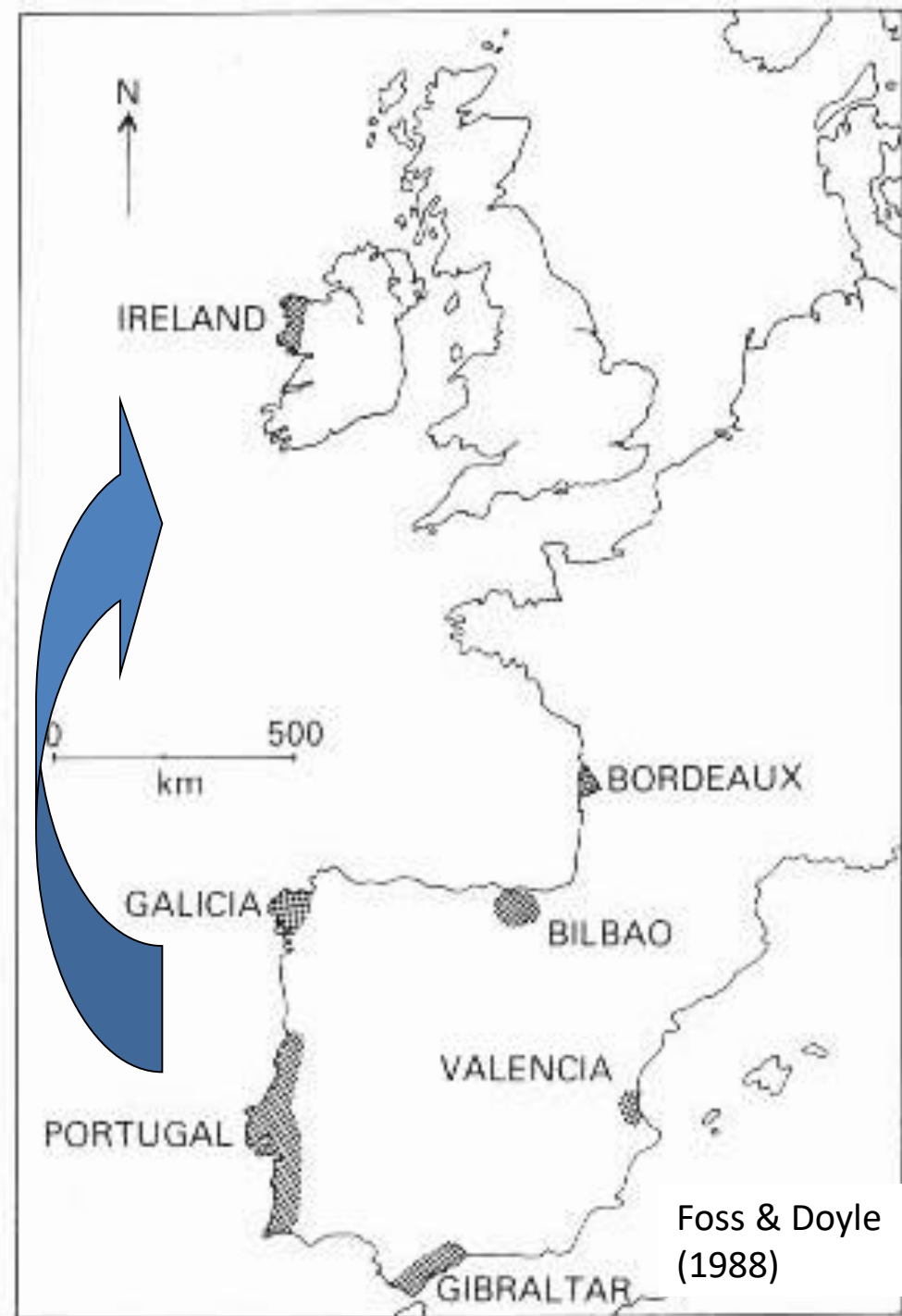
# *Erica erigena*



*E. erigena* may have been introduced from N Spain as bedding or packing.

– Foss & Doyle 1988

They suggest by pilgrims.





*E. mackayana*  
& *E. erigena*  
distribution in  
the Iberian  
peninsula



Sheehy Skeffington (2017)





*Daboecia cantabrica*

# *Daboecia cantabrica*

Blue 10km Squares – native  
Red/pink 10km squares – introduced





# *Daboecia cantabrica* outside Ireland

[www.anthos.es](http://www.anthos.es) (Spain)

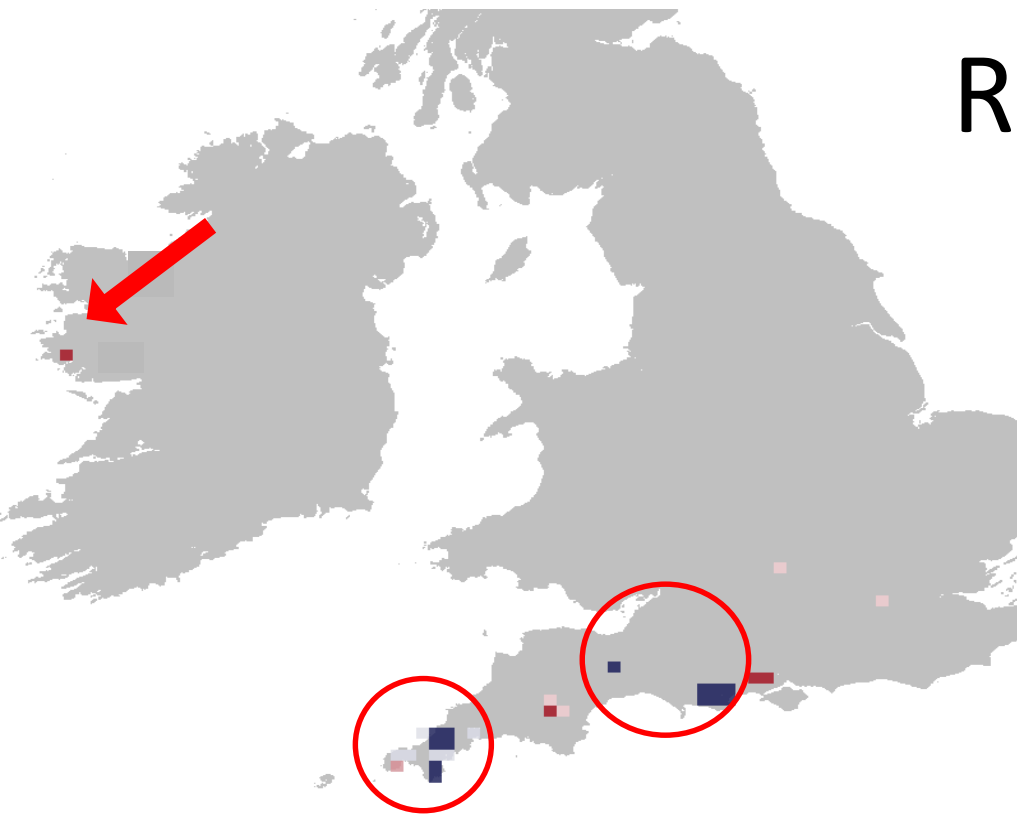
[www.flora-on.pt](http://www.flora-on.pt) (Portugal)

[www.tela-botanica.org](http://www.tela-botanica.org) (France)

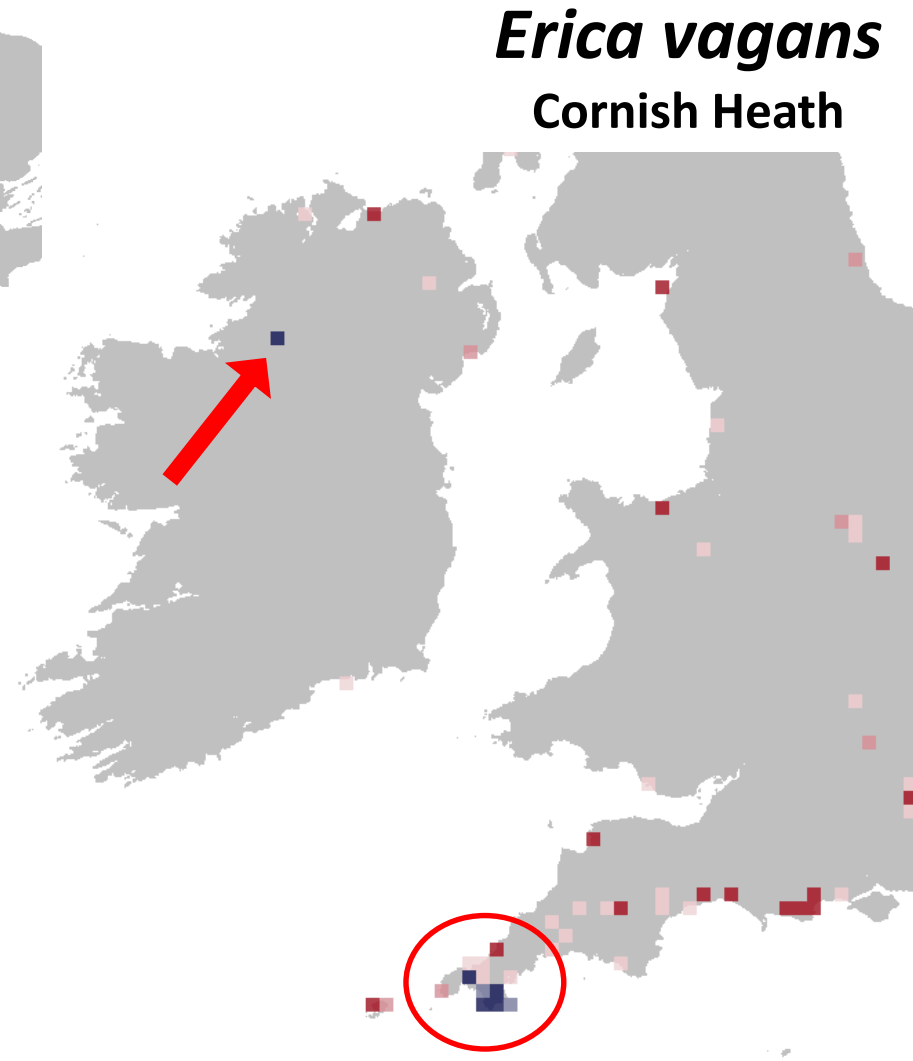
(Fr. confirmed records only)



# Rare Irish heathers also in Britain



***Erica ciliaris***  
Dorset Heath



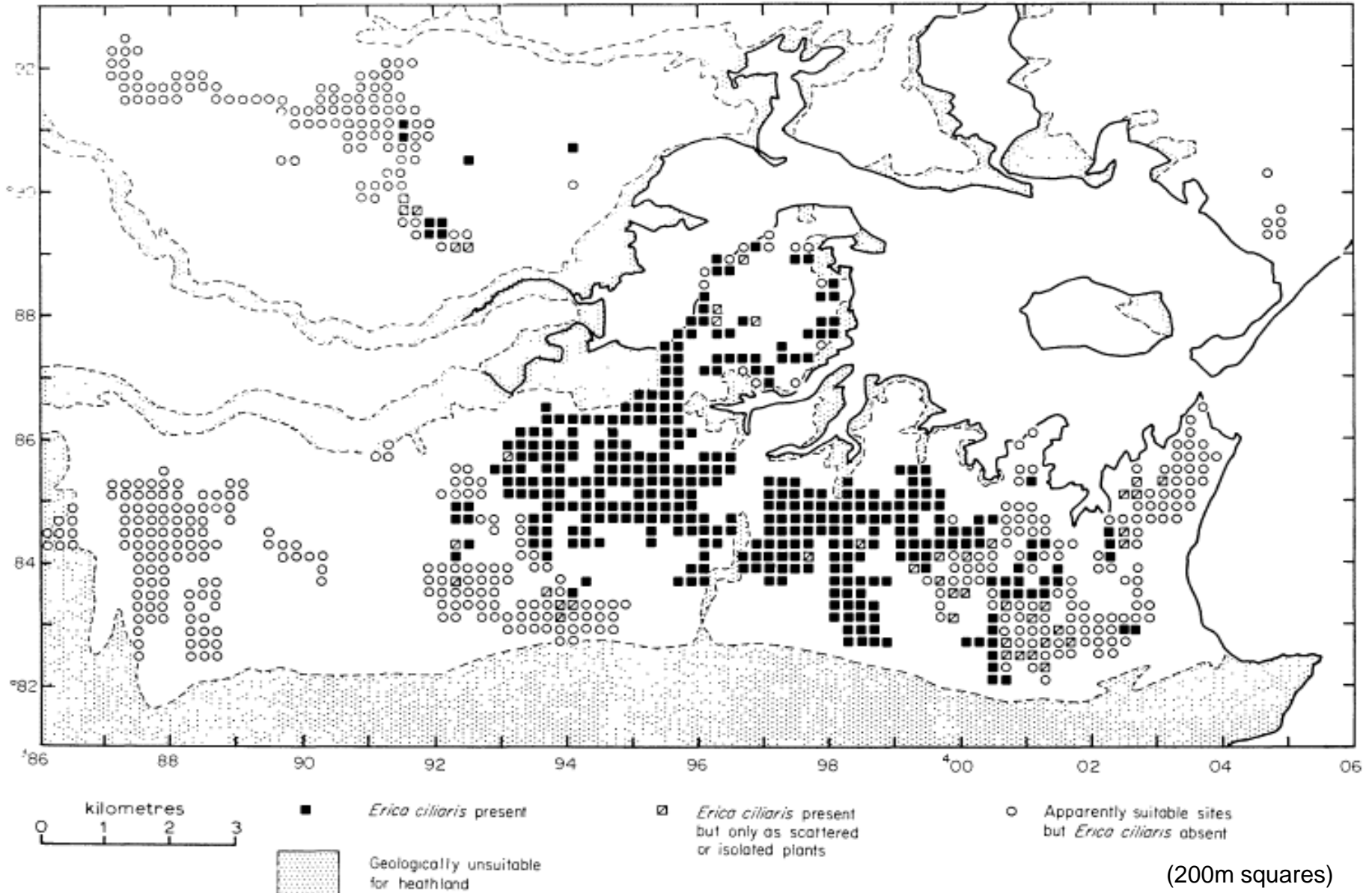
***Erica vagans***  
Cornish Heath

Blue/light blue 10km squares – native  
Red/pink 10 km squares – introduced

(BSBI Atlas 2000)



# Distribution of *E. ciliaris* at Poole Harbour in Dorset



The species is thought to be expanding (Chapman 1975).

*Erica ciliaris* invading  
Hartland Moor,  
Dorset.  
Micheline with  
Nigel Webb.







*Erica ciliaris* invading Hartland Moor, Dorset.



Water supply for WW II  
RAF Upottery  
at nearby Smeatharpe







Carrine Common, Cornwall





*Erica vagans* at Kynance Cove, The Lizard, Cornwall





*Erica vagans* along roadsides, The Lizard, Cornwall



*Erica vagans*  
outside the  
British Isles



France

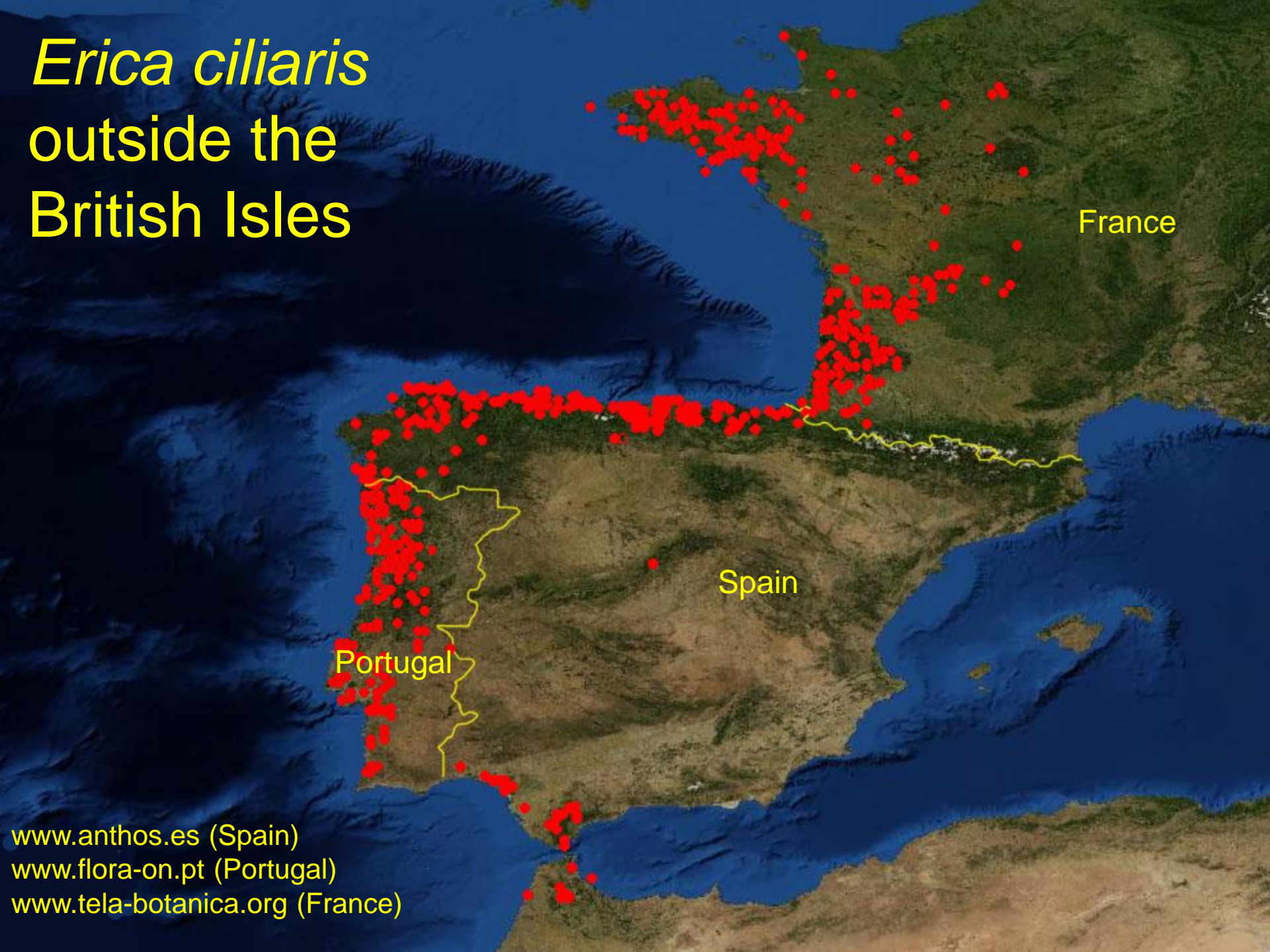
Spain

[www.anthos.es](http://www.anthos.es) (Spain)

[www.tela-botanica.org](http://www.tela-botanica.org) (France)



# *Erica ciliaris* outside the British Isles



France

Spain

Portugal

[www.anthos.es](http://www.anthos.es) (Spain)  
[www.flora-on.pt](http://www.flora-on.pt) (Portugal)  
[www.tela-botanica.org](http://www.tela-botanica.org) (France)





*Erica vagans*

*Erica mackayana*

*Daboecia cantabrica*

Cabo de Peñas, Asturias, N.Spain





Heathland cutting for animal bedding, Galicia, N. Spain





Torre de Hercules, La Coruña, Galicia.  
Ancient Roman Lighthouse: 'Portus Britanniae'.



# Conclusion

- Traffic, trade or smuggling from N Spain has been on-going at least since metals were traded in the Bronze Age
- Trade in wool, wine and other goods since at least Roman times
- Heathers are known to have been used as bedding and packing in N Spain
- It is likely all 5 rare heathers of Western Britain and Ireland were introduced inadvertently through trade with at least 4 coming from N Spain



THE FLORA OF  
**DORSET**

Humphry Bowen





Thank you!

