

Bushmills and Dundarave

The Macnaghten Estate

6th June 2015



The Belfast Naturalist Field Club had the opportunity to study some of the aspects of the **Macnaghten Estate** which is located between **Bushmills and the Giant's Causeway**.

It has been the home of the Macnaghten family through eleven generations, from 1805, when the residence was known as **Bushmills House**. Originally the grant of land consisted of 7,000 acres but was carved up in the agricultural reforms of the late 19th century and now consists of 1300 acres.

The first owner of the estate was **Sir Francis**. He built a grand mansion and named it **Dundarave** after the seat of the family on **Lough Fyne in Argyll, Scotland**. The Macnaghten family was well known in legal circles, practicing most of their time in London and relaxing two months per year in their Irish property.

Sir Francis was a judge in the Madras and Calcutta supreme courts and was honoured with a Baronetcy in 1836.

Later, two brothers, **Sir Harry and Sir Douglas** lost their lives in the First World War in the battle of the Somme.

The present house is a Grade 1 Listed mansion built between 1846 and 1849 by **Sir Edmund**, the architect being **Sir Charles Lanyon**. The elegant hall was modelled on **The London Reform Club**.

The main house is laid out in 2 principal floors over a basement. The 5 principal rooms are on the ground floor and accessed from the large square hall. The hall rises to the full height of the building with a galleried landing at first floor level and lit by an attractive cupola.

At ground floor the great hall features timber pillars with a painted marble design. There is a central open fireplace with a decorative mantelpiece in marble. This is overlooked by the first floor picture gallery with carved timber Doric columns supporting the elaborate cupola.

The drawing room has a magnificent ceiling with cornice and frieze and decorative plasterwork. There is a white marble mantelpiece and large double doors leading into the dining room.



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The dining room is also spacious with a marble fireplace, and decorative ceiling and 3 large windows.

The other principal rooms include the morning room with large bay windows enjoying the fine views over the surrounding grounds. There is also a billiard room and library.

Although the house is in new ownership the Macnaghten family presence is much in evidence as their portraits still adorn the walls and the period furniture is still in place.

The estate has been bought by **Dr. Peter Fitzgerald** Managing Director of **Randox Laboratories** who plans to use it for Corporate Hospitality. A more wonderful place in which to impress foreign clients would be hard to imagine, with a World Heritage site on the door step, the pretty town of Bushmills with its long established distillery, and acres of woodland with wild flowers in which to relax.

The BNFC are grateful to Dr Fitzgerald for the invitation to visit the estate and for a delightful afternoon tea in the ambience of such a historical house. We wish him well in this new venture.

Pat and James Rutherford (BNFC)