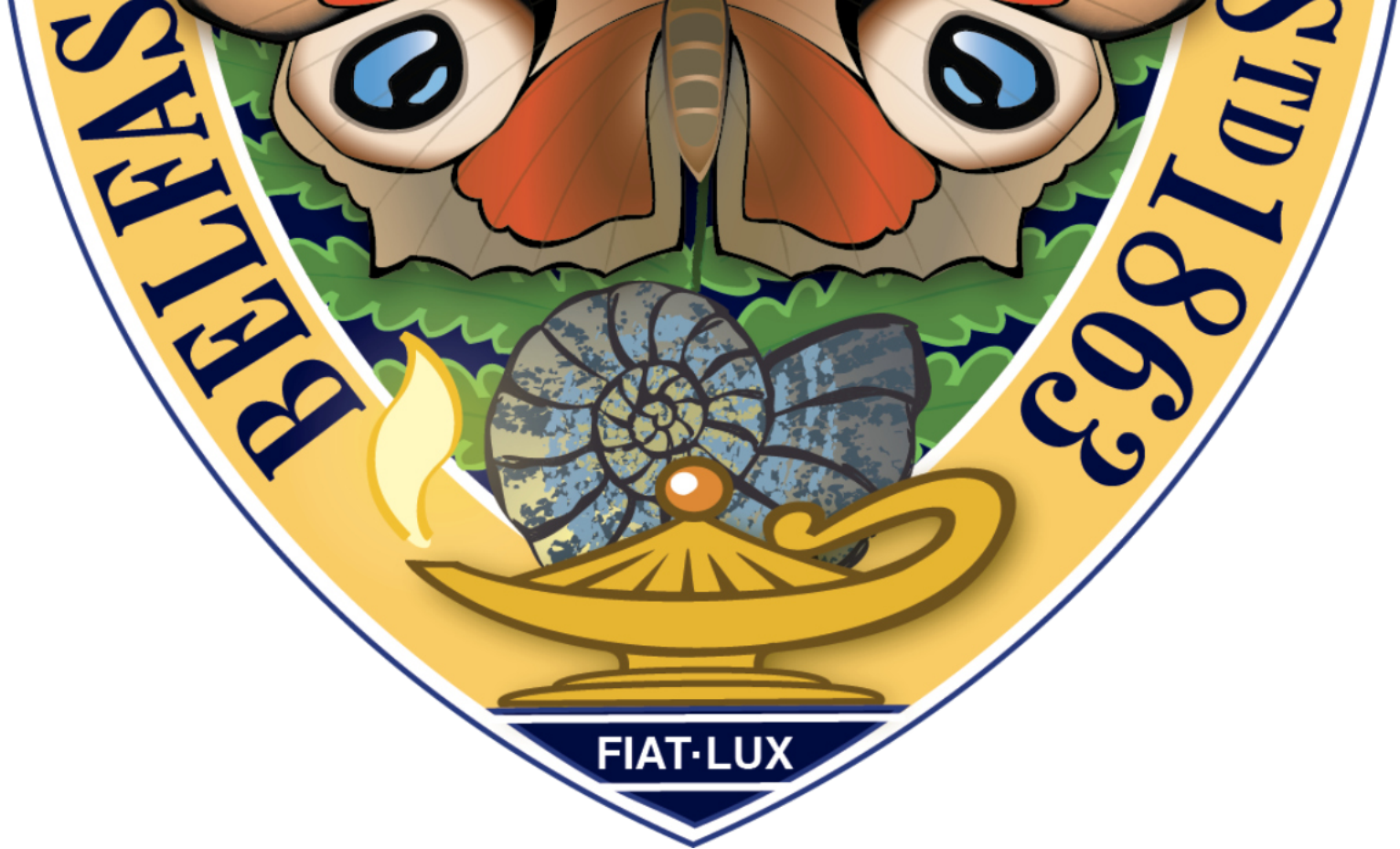


150  
Belfast Naturalists<sup>®</sup>  
Field Club

Field Reports  
2013





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## Cranmore House and Giant's Ring

Commemorative field meeting

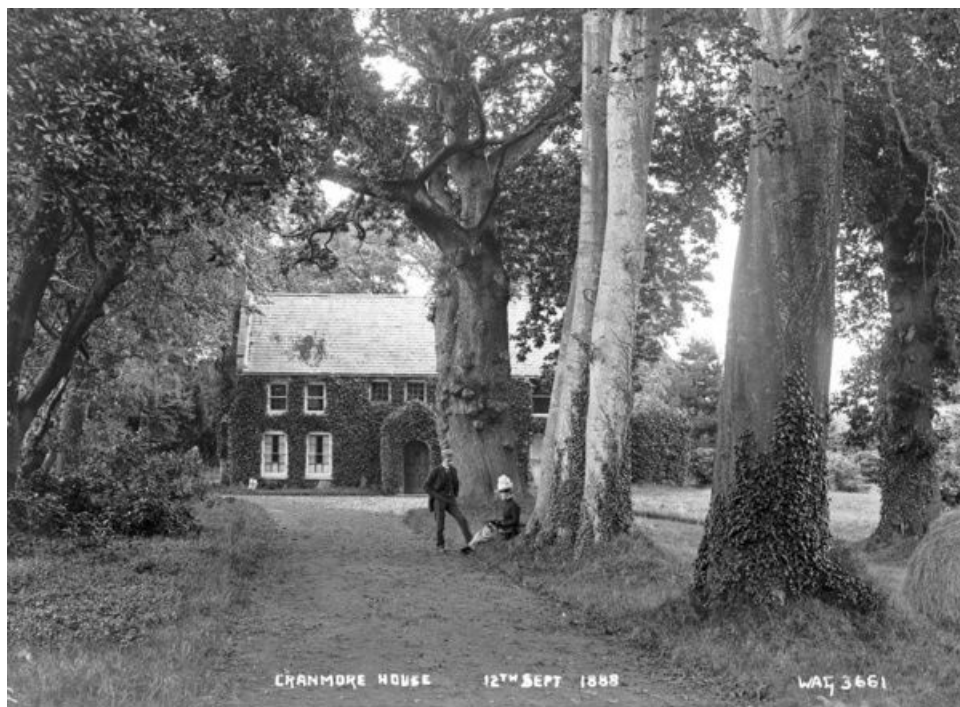
11th May 2013



*Appropriately dressed BNFC members in 2013*

### Ballynahatty Ceremonial Landscape.

To commemorate the special field meeting of 13th June 1863 to the **Giant's Ring** and the Club's repeat visit of 1913 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its foundation, a good number of members, some in period costume, attended this outing to **Cranmore House** and the Giant's Ring in blustery, rainy weather. **Barrie Hartwell** had agreed to be our leader for the day as he has directed the archaeological excavation at Ballynahatty adjacent to the Giant's Ring from 1990 to 2000 and has more recently done a special study of Cranmore House and its occupants.



At Cranmore House Barrie, who turned out in historic costume, distributed copies of a well - illustrated handout. He thought that the house may pre-date the 1641 rebellion as a one-storey rubble-built structure similar to the **White House at Ballyspurge**, Co. Down and that it may have been burnt out at that time along with nearby **Newforge** and **Moses Hill's Fort** at Malone. He believes that the rebuilding after the rebellion involved adding the upper storey in brick and the **Hearth Money Rolls** record a **Mr John Eccles** resident here by 1690.

A legend has **King William** sheltering here from heavy rain on his way to the Boyne and that the house was renamed **Orange Grove** to commemorate this. A drawing of

c.1850 and a Green photograph of 1888 illustrate the enlargement of the ground floor windows on the south side and a later (undated) painting shows the addition of an elaborate gabled front.

*continued*



## Cranmore House and Giant's Ring

Commemorative field meeting

11th May 2013

The naturalist **John Templeton** laid out the 13 acre garden around the house in 1793 and many of his rare trees and shrubs may still be found here in mature condition. In 1810 he renamed the house **Cranmore** (big tree) and it was known as 'The Big House' by elderly local residents in the early 19th century, with Templeton family members living on here until the 1880s. About 1900 it was bought by **John Henry Wilson**, a partner in **Harland and Wolff**, who converted it to a fernery by the removal of floors and the addition of pipework and cement render to the interior walls.

The house is now in the ownership of **Royal Belfast Academical Institution** and the remains of the 13 acre garden were entered into the Northern Ireland Heritage Gardens Inventory in 1992.

The house was entered into the Schedule of Historic Monuments in 1996 and a programme of conservation to remove ivy, consolidate the wall tops and provide oak window heads was carried out in 2006.



The field trip continued to the **Giant's Ring henge monument** where the visit was interrupted by several dramatic hail showers. Barrie provided a detailed account of the construction of the earthwork around the megalithic tomb and the various excavations which have taken place here; **Henry C. Lawlor** in 1917; **Ian Richmond** in 1929; **Pat Collins** in 1954 when he established that there was no actual internal ditch but that the material for the bank had been scraped from a wide area of the interior and that a boulder revetment had been built on the inside to retain the bank. The purpose of the monument was probably as an assembly site for crowds drawn from far afield at particular times of the

year and parallels were drawn with similarly large henges in the Boyne Valley, Co Meath. Barrie's own excavation was conducted on the nearby ridge where he had photographed from the air the cropmark of an oval site 100 metres in length. This discovery has led to a greater understanding of this large ritual landscape. The crop-mark proved to be a timber enclosure defined by pairs of post-holes each 2m deep which would have held posts the size of telegraph poles.

A square setting of less deep post-holes within it was interpreted as a platform for exposing the remains of the dead prior to cremation or burial. The scientific dating of samples from the site provided a central date of around 2700 BC.

A record photograph of the group in front of the megalithic tomb, taken by our President between challenging hail showers, reflects a similar photograph taken in 1913. The turnout of members in period costumes was exemplary and we were grateful for the shelter offered by the National Trust at nearby Minnowburn to complete the day with a very elegant picnic.

**Claire Foley**



## Killough and Killard

**Leader - Margaret Marshall**

**18th May 2013**

On Friday we were basking in sunshine but the dire forecast for Saturday was accurate. However as there were no bees or butterflies, members concentrated on birds and flowers. Near the coastguard cottages orangey-pink slugs were examined on Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*); this and the nearby clumps of *Spanish Bluebells* were probably garden escapes. Some of the native bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) in *Killard Nature Reserve* are showing signs of hybridisation with the Spanish plants.



Sea Sandwort

On the shingly shore we identified Common Scurvy Grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*) with its spoon-faced leaves, presumably rich in Vitamin C and used in the past by sailors as a treatment for scurvy. Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*) with its thick fleshy leaves can grow in large patches on sand and shingle and its long creeping stolons help to consolidate sand and gravel on sea shores.

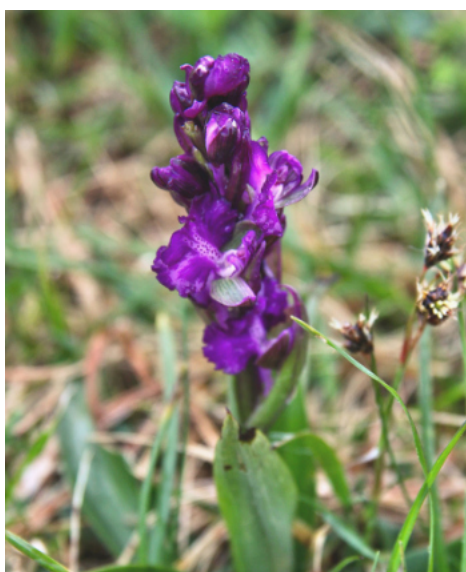
It has been a cold spring and the main colour in mid-May came from banks of Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) and Common Dog Violets (*Viola riviniana*). The yellow anthers of Ribwort Plantain

(*Plantago lanceolata*) and Field Wood-rush (*Luzula campestris*) made them conspicuous in the short grass.

Only in sheltered spots were the occasional plant of Kidney Vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and the maritime Wild Pansy (*Viola tricolor ssp. curtsii*) coming into flower.

Normally the reserve would be awash with their yellow blooms in spring. Near the shore Sea Thrift (*Armeria maritima*), Sea Campion (*Silene uniflora*) and the antler-like leaves of Buck's horn Plantain (*Plantago coronopus*) were noticed.

However Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*) with its star-shaped flowers was beginning to colour the headland blue. It is the county flower for Down and can be found in grassy places near the sea. We had seen occasional Orchid leaves but there was excitement when several flowering Green-winged or Green-veined Orchids (*Anacamptis/Orchis morio*) were discovered. The sepals, veined with green, join with the upper petals to form a hood, so botanists, bird watchers and lepidopterists were down on their knees in pouring rain with hand lenses to see the details.



Green-veined Orchid

*continued*



## Killough and Killard (contd)

### Botany and Zoology

18th May 2013



*Kidney Vetch*

Killard is its only site in Northern Ireland. It had been regarded as an Orchid along with Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) but molecular evidence has re-classified it as a species of *Ancampsis* like the Pyramidal Orchid.

In spite of the rain we had had an enjoyable and profitable morning in this special place.

**Margaret Marshall**



*Spring Squill*



*Common dog violet*

### Zoology

Around 24 folks from BCNI and Belfast Naturalists' Field Club met at *Mill Quarter Bay* car park to help re-create one of BNFC's events from its founding year in 1863. No-one was available to tell us what the weather had been like 150 years ago but it could not have been much worse than we experienced on the day. Amongst the party was 18 month old *Anna Quinn*, thankfully very well attired to cope with the elements.



*Brent geese*

Species of interest seen from the meeting point included 8 Brent Geese (*Branta bernicla*), awaiting a change in wind direction before embarking on their epic journey to *Arctic Canada via Iceland*. Also seen were some resplendent Eiders (*Somateria mollissima*), Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), Dunlins (*Calidris alpina*), Ringed Plovers (*Charadrius hiaticula*), a Hare and Sand Martins (*Riparia riparia*), which breed in the sand-bank at Killard.

*continued*

## Killough and Killard (contd)

### Zoology

18th May 2013



*Eider duck*

Unperturbed by the gloomy conditions the group made its way to *Killard Point* where banks of *Primroses* and *Bluebells* and the song of *Skylarks* (*Alauda arvensis*) soon lifted our spirits. Birds seen included 2 *Wheatears* (*Oenanthe oenanthe*), 5 *Whimbrels* (*Numenius phaeopus*) and, through increasingly misted optics, *Gannets* (*Morus bassanus*) and *Black Guillemots* (*Cepphus grylle*) off shore.

Alas, all moths and butterflies stayed well out of sight and with increasingly heavy rain prevailing, all thoughts of an afternoon venture to *Sheepland* were abandoned.

**David Nixon** (BCNI)



*Sand Martin*



*Dunlin*



## Sentry Hill

21<sup>st</sup> May 2013

### Reception given by Newtownabbey Council.



*Sentry Hill* was the home of *William McKinney* who was a very active member of the BNFC from when he joined in 1891 until his death in 1917. McKinney attended the Opening Meeting of the Club's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1913 in the *Examination Hall at Queens University*, so it seems appropriate that we should visit his home in our 150<sup>th</sup> year. Because of the McKinney family connection with the BNFC, *Newtownabbey District Council* offered to host a reception for the BNFC to mark our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We were welcomed by the mayor and treated to a delicious finger buffet. Members then had the opportunity to view the exhibitions in the house.

*Wesley Bonar* provided us with the following document about William McKinney's involvement with BNFC.

*William Fee McKinney* joined the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club in 1891/2 and was a member of the club until his death in 1917. The first excursion that he attended was to *McArt's Fort on the Cave Hill*, followed by tea at *Ardrie*, home of Francis Joseph Bigger. The last excursion that he attended was to Antrim in September 1916, a year before he died. On that outing he took a photograph of the famous *Antrim Round Tower*.

McKinney also attended some of the longer trips with the club, for example to *Rosapenna in Donegal*. They left *Downings Bay* on a chartered steamer, the 'Cynthia', for *Tory Island* where they encountered thick fog. So thick was the fog that the only way to land was by rowing boat – bear in mind McKinney was in his 80s at this stage! On the return journey the fog was so dense that they decided to drop anchor for the night and a photograph at Sentry Hill taken by *Robert Welch* captures the mood as the passengers are surrounded by fog, sheltering under coats and tarpaulin. McKinney has written on the photograph that they hoped to be home with the crows in the morning! They eventually did come ashore to Rosapenna the next morning.

Incidentally, the Field Club visited a number of sites in McKinney's local area, including *Carnmoney*, *Templepatrick & Donegore*, *Roughfort*, *Ballyclare* and *Doagh*. On their trips to Carnmoney, they visited places such as the Parish Church graveyard (where former B.N.F.C. member Lieutenant General Smythe was buried and which has a Celtic cross erected in his memory) and Carnmoney Hill, an interesting volcanic plug and rock formation.

*The Annual Conversazioni* of the Field Club were held at the beginning of the Club's winter session, when members brought along items such as photographs or unusual and interesting specimens. These were displayed and discussed. At that time the venues were the *Old Museum* and later the *Exhibition Hall (Botanic Avenue)* and the *Assembly Buildings*.

*continued*



## Sentry Hill (contd)

21<sup>st</sup> May 2013

The records of the B.N.F.C. show that William Fee McKinney was an active participant in the conversaziones, displaying the following:

- 1904 - old spears, pikes and other weapons*
- 1906 - slides of the Poet Orr's Monument in Ballycarry Graveyard*
- 1908 - leaf insects from Ceylon showing protective mimicry, and fungi which had been 'freshly collected' by McKinney*
- 1910 - Spanish and Australian shells*
- 1911 - Brazilian insects and shells*
- 1912 - 'curious' insects and shells*

On other occasions he showed a silver fish from the *River Hoogley in India* and a white sparrow shot at Sentry Hill – this sparrow can be seen today in the exhibition room at Sentry Hill.

McKinney attended the Opening Meeting of the Clubs 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1913 in the Examination Hall at Queens University. Although he never held office, he proposed other members for positions on the committee.

In the collection at Sentry Hill are many photographs taken by *Robert Welch* and *A.R. Hogg*, along with humorous poems written by members and circulated after excursions. Friends that McKinney made at the Field Club, aside from Welch and Hogg, included *William Gray*, *Isaac Ward* and the *Rt. Hon Robert Young*. *Francis Joseph Bigger* was another friend and fellow member.

In 1906, *McKinney's daughter, Margaret*, joined the club, and a close family friend, *Miss Bird*, became a member in 1922.

In 1937, some 20 years after McKinney's death, his grand-daughter, *Isobel Crozier*, attended her first week-end excursion as a guest. The Chairman gave her a warm welcome and told members how pleased he was that she was in attendance. Mrs Crozier had previously attended an excursion to the *Castle at Ardglass* purchased by Francis Joseph Bigger and opened in 1912 by William Fee McKinney's sister, *Mrs W J McGaw* of Australia.

Mrs Crozier went on to become President of the Field Club for the session 1947/8. Her Presidential address in October 1947 was on 'Botanical Field Work'. A few years later, as Honorary Secretary of the Archaeological Section of the club, she lectured on 'Witchcraft, with special reference to the Carnmoney witches'.

In the collection at Sentry Hill are a number of annual reports of the B.N.F.C. There is also a receipt for payment of the annual fees for the 1899 session (five shillings) paid by Mr McKinney.

Diary Extract 16<sup>th</sup> August 1890

*'Walked after noon to McArt's Fort to a meeting of the Belfast Naturalists Field Club. Took tea with them at Mrs Biggers'*

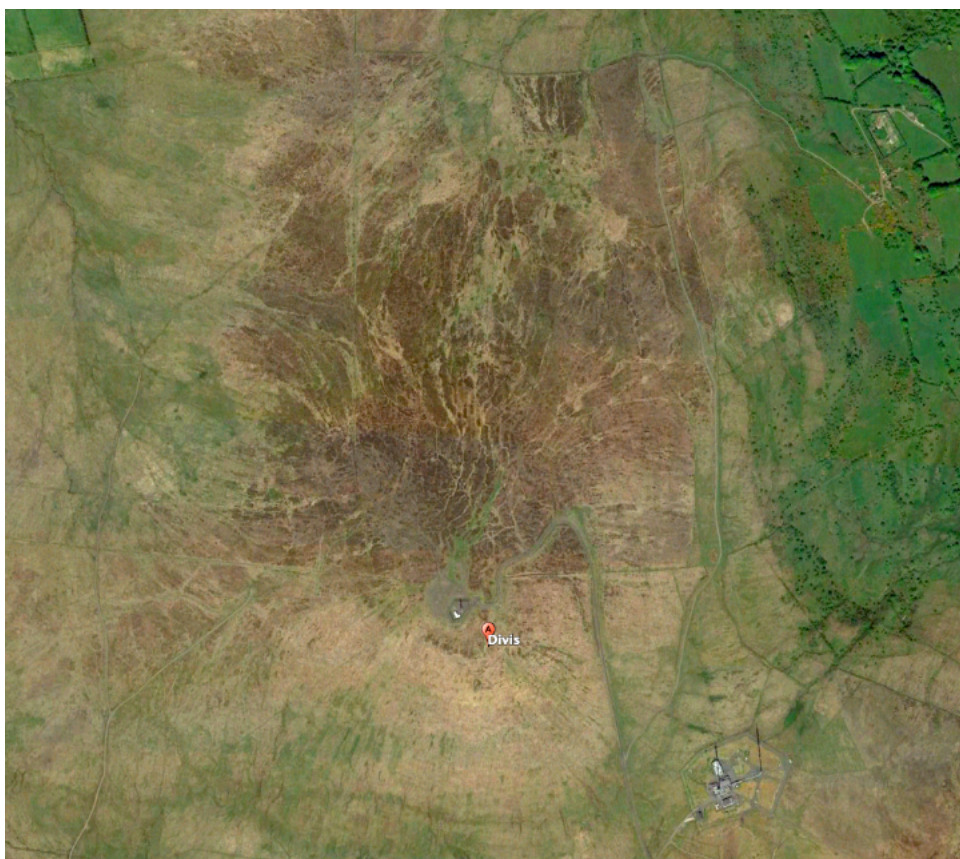
**Wesley Bonar 2009**

**Divis**  
**Leaders: Malachy Conway**

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2013**



This evening outing was led by Malachy Conway, who is a survey archaeologist for the *National Trust* and has immense knowledge of the property and is up to date on the recent property developments.





## Derrygonnelly Zoology

Leaders -

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2nd June 2013

**Pamela Thomlinson**

**Robert Northridge**

**Ralph Forbes**



Flame Carpet

After a very cold spring with very few moths and butterflies to be seen the weather started to warm up for the Field Trip based at Derrygonnelly.

Traps were set on Saturday 1st June by *Catherine Bertrand* and *Pamela Thomlinson*. Two were at the centre and Catherine took a battery 125W up to *Callow farm*. As always these traps have to be closed up at dawn but everyone else was able to enjoy breakfast and gather at 9.30am to watch the traps being opened. To our delight we had a good range of species. We had expected the numbers to improve as the night time temperatures had risen above 8°C and so it was warm enough for them to become active.

The highlights of the traps were in the 125MV trap at the side of the Field Centre classrooms which had a Brimstone (*Opisthocraptis luteolata*), 5 White Ermine (*Spilosoma lubricipeda*), a Lesser Swallow Prominent (*Pheosia gnoma*), 2 Early Thorns (*Selenia dentaria*), 2 Peppered Moths (*Biston betularia*), a Clouded Border (*Lomaspilis marginata*), 3 Flame Carpets (*Xanthorhoe designata*), 1 Garden Carpet (*Xanthorhoe fluctuata*) and a Cinnabar Moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*).

**11 species altogether, 21 moths in total.**

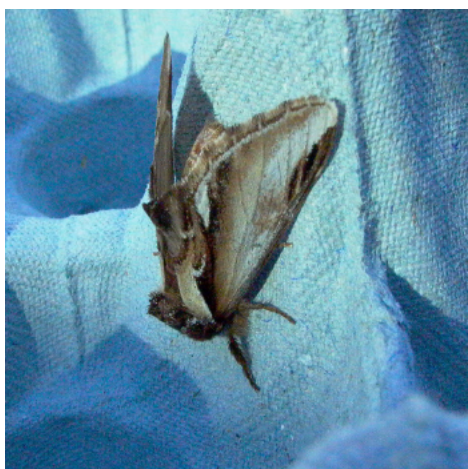
Catherine's 125 MV trap at the side of the Dorms at the Centre had an Early Thorn (*Selenia dentaria*), Broome moth (*Ceramica pisi*), 2 Clouded Border (*Lomaspilis marginata*), 2 Cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*), White Ermine (*Spilosoma lubricipeda*) and 2 Clouded-bordered Brindle (*Apamea crenata*).

**6 species altogether, 10 moths in total.**

The 125MV trap at *Callow farm* had a Scalloped Hazel (*Odontopera bidentata*), Clouded Border (*Lomaspilis marginata*), 2 Flame Carpets (*Xanthorhoe designata*), a Lesser Swallow Prominent (*Pheosia gnoma*) and a Coxcomb Prominent (*Ptilodon capucina*), a Common Wave (*Cabera exanthemata*), an Engrailed (*Ectropis crepuscularia*), 2 Nut-tree Tussock (*Colocasia coryli*) and a Poplar Hawkmoth! (*Laothoe populi*).

**9 species altogether, 11 moths in total.**

The 3 traps had 18 species of *macromoths* which delighted the 'mothers' amongst us, who had been catching very low numbers of moths in the months before and all present enjoyed the chance to see so many beautiful moths at close range.



Lesser Swallow Prominent



Peppered moth

*continued*



## Derrygonnelly Zoology (contd)

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2nd June 2013



Brimstone



Poplar Hawk moth

We then moved on to *Correll Glen* to meet up with all the members of the various clubs. As there were 60 of us the party was split between our leaders, *Robert Northridge* and *Ralph Forbes*. After a botanical tour, a smaller group lead by *Catherine Bertrand* visited a number of sites and as the temperature rose to 16°-17°C we hoped the weather had improved enough for butterflies to be flying.

*Ian Rippey* and *Bob Aldwell* spotted a rare moth the *Argent and Sable* (*Rheumaptera hastata*), perhaps the most exciting find of the day as this beautiful moth has only been seen in a few areas in *Fermanagh*.

It was an enjoyable day greatly helped by being in the company of experts who knew the sites well and often added interesting pieces of information about individual species as they were spotted.

A full list of moths and butterflies (with sites and Grid References) can be found in the archives.

The ***Correl Glen walk*** was led by botanists *Robert Northridge* and *Ralph Forbes*, responsible for the excellent *Flora of Co. Fermanagh* published in 2012. However for the rest of the day, those with an entomological interest were led by *Catherine Bertrand*, *Senior Regional Officer for Butterfly Conservation in Northern Ireland*. I do not at present know how many BCNI members were present, but believe that as well as *Catherine Bertrand* and *Ian Rippey* there were several members who belonged to one of either *Belfast* or *Dublin Naturalists Field Club*, etc, with the total number of people present over 60 although I did not make a count.

Weather was mainly cloudy, the wind was light and with occasional watery sunshine temperatures approached 16°-17°C. Slight rain was experienced briefly in late afternoon. Conditions, while not ideal, were not all that bad and a lot better than the heavy rain experienced on the 1st BCNI outing of the year at *Killard Point*, Co. Down, on 18th May.

Locations of sites and Grid References, in the order visited, are as follows - *Correl Glen National Nature Reserve*, H0754; Near entrance to *Lough Navar Forest* H074546; Damp upland fields near Car Park at *Aghameelan View Point*, *Lough Navar Forest*, H0855; Disused limestone quarry at *Whiterocks* in *Lough Navar Forest* H074565, *Braade Bog/Glenasheevar Area of Special Scientific Interest* near exit road of *Lough Navar Forest* H055544, all these being near *Derrygonnelly*; steep roadside bank at *Bowara* near *Enniskillen* H189451.

*continued*



## Derrygonnelly Zoology (contd)

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2nd June 2013

The following species were seen.

### Butterflies

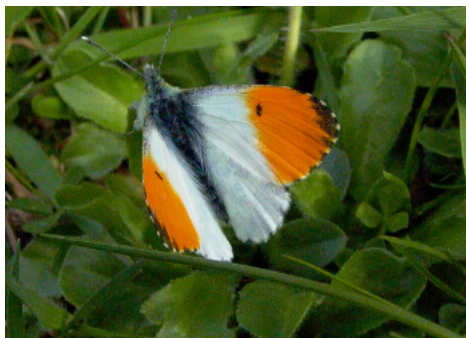


Green-veined White

**Dingy Skipper** (*Erynnis tages*) - About 12 at Bowara, although it was later afternoon and the sun was not shining.

**Cryptic Wood White** (*Leptidea juvernica*) - 1 male caught in quarry at Whiterocks; possibly another on exit road not far west of Braade Bog - 3 or 4 seen at Bowara.

**Green-veined White** (*Pieris napi*) - 15 near entrance to Lough Navar Forest; estimated c. 100 near Aghameelan Viewpoint; c. 6 at Braade Bog; 2 at Bowara.



Orange Tip

**Orange-tip** (*Anthocharis cardamines*) - About 5 males near entrance to Lough Navar Forest; 2 males near Aghameelan Viewpoint, and 2 males and a female at Brackagh Bog. I know eggs were seen at at least 1 site, but suspect there would have been many near Aghameelan Viewpoint if looked for, as Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) was very abundant there.

**Green Hairstreak** (*Callophrys rubi*) - 1 somewhat faded specimen at Braade Bog, with the green turning somewhat bluish, making it more conspicuous against the leaves of Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) than a fresh specimen would have been.



Speckled Wood

**Speckled Wood** (*Pararge aegeria*) - 1 at Braade Bog and 1 at Bowara.

**Small Heath** (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) - 1, apparently slightly faded, at Aghameelan Viewpoint, and 1 at Braade Bog.

Had the weather been better, especially if it had been a better season, we might have seen **Marsh Fritillary** (*Euphydryas aurinia*) at Braade Bog, having around 30 been seen at site in Co. Down on 30th May. **Holly Blue** (*Celastrina argiolus*) might also have been seen at Correl Glen, and perhaps **Small Copper** (*Lycaena phlaeas*), **Small Tortoiseshell** (*Aglaia urticae*) or **Peacock** (*Aglaia io*) seen at 1 or more sites. With it being a late season we would not have expected to see **Large Heath** (*Coenonympha tullia*) at Braade Bog, and as this has been extensively burned sometime in the last year, possibly this year, its future along with the rare moths such as **Clouded Buff** (*Diacrisia sannio*), **Argent and Sable** (*Rheumaptera hastata*) and **Grass Wave** (*Perconia strigillaria*) which have been recorded there, is uncertain.

*continued*



## Derrygonnelly Zoology (contd)

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2nd June 2013

### *Larger Moths*

**Clouded Border** (*Lomaspilis marginata*)- 1 in the quarry at Whiterocks in Lough Navar Forest and 1 or probably 2 at Braade Bog.

**Common Heath** (*Ematurga atomaria*) - A handful each at Correl Glen and Braade Bog.



Argent and Sable

Species taken in light traps the night before have been listed above. The **Argent and Sable** (*Rheumaptera hastata*) was seen briefly but fairly closely by myself and Ian Rippey, who also spotted it among *Bog Myrtle* just east of the car park at the entrance to Lough Navar Forest, I tried but failed to catch it. It was also seen, though less closely, by *Bob Aldwell* from Dublin and *Eithna Diver* from Donegal. The most interesting find of the day, this beautiful moth has been seen in only a few areas in Fermanagh and at Killeter Forest in Tyrone, though could occur elsewhere. There are old records from near *Tollymore Park* in Co. Down in 1941 and near *Aughnacloy* many years ago and also in the 1960s. In Fermanagh it has been found at *Lough Melvin* west of Garrison, and at several spots between *Belcoo* and *Garrison*, at Braade Bog in 1998 and at *Stratonagher* near *Derrygonnelly* in 2012, as well as *Lough Navar Forest* in 2013. It seems to prefer *Bog Myrtle*, the larval foodplant, growing in scattered rather than large clumps, on somewhat sloping ground usually near coniferous forests, perhaps due to the need for cover.

### Pamela Thomlinson



*continued*



## Derrygonnelly Botany

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2nd June 2013



Water Avens



Wood Avens



Water/Wood Avens hybrid

The Federation of Irish Field Clubs was fortunate to have *Robert Northridge* and *Ralph Forbes*, the authors of the magnificent "Flora of County Fermanagh", ably assisted by *Hannah Northridge*, to lead us on our botanical outings during the inaugural Field Meeting of the *Federation of Irish Field Clubs*.

On Saturday morning, 1st June, we walked through the *Marble Arch Nature Reserve* down the *Cladagh River Glen*, a rare example of damp ash and hazel woodland in a limestone gorge. As it had been such a late spring, Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), Primroses (*Primula vulgaris*), Wild Garlic (*Allium ursinum*), Wood Anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*), Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*) and Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) were still flowering. Robert showed us how to differentiate various ferns, such as Soft Shield Fern (*Polystichum setiferum*), Male Fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), Scaly Male Fern (*Dryopteris affinis*) and Broad Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and we admired one of the specialities of the glen, Shady Horsetail (*Equisetum pratense*) in its most southerly site in Britain and Ireland. Goldilocks Buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*), an early-flowering buttercup, was new to many of us as was the Hybrid *Geum x intermedium* (see pictures on the left) which is a hybrid between Water Avens (*Geum rivale*) and Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) and appeared more frequently than the parent plants. Walking at a botanical pace it had taken us 2 hours to reach the *Cascades*, a resurgence of cave water from the side of the gorge; a pair of Dippers (*Cinclus cinclus*) appeared to be nesting there, so we retraced our steps up the glen.

In the afternoon, our first stop was at the *Monastair Gorge* where we looked at prostrate wind-sculpted Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) and native Yew (*Taxus baccata*) growing on limestone. In the *Killykegan Nature Reserve* we walked over limestone pavement where Thyme (*Thymus polytrichus*), Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*) and Blue Moor-grass (*Sesleria caerulea*) were plentiful. Large mats of Mossy Saxifrage (*Saxifraga hypnoides*) were spotted on the walls of the *Cashel* and Brittle Bladder Fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*) in rock crevices. *Declan Doogue* of the *Dublin Naturalists' Field Club* is working on the hundreds of Irish *Dandelion* microspecies and he was able to show us how distinctive is, for example, *Taraxacum faeroenese*. A Dingy Skipper butterfly (*Erynnis tages*) rested on Birdsfoot Trefoil long enough to be photographed.



Inside Marble Arch caves

continued



After a day on limestone, on Sunday we were on different habitats of sandstone and peat. The whole party of over 60 participants led by *Robert, Ralph* and *Hannah* walked through the *Correl Glen Nature Reserve*, one of the best examples of wet, western oak woodland in Ireland with the *Sillees River* tumbling down through sandstone scarps. The moss and fern-covered trees and rocks are an indication of the dampness of the area; among the ferns were Hay-scented Buckler Fern (*Dryopteris aemula*), Wilson's Filmy Fern (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*) and Tunbridge Filmy Fern

(*Hymenophyllum tunbridgense*). Another speciality of Correl Glen, Rough Horsetail (*Equisetum hyemale*), was not found on this occasion. I was intrigued to see it being used as an abrasive by a conservator, who was restoring gilt furniture in the *National Trust* property, *Mount Stewart*. All the party lunched at the *Lough Navar Forest Viewpoint* with fine views towards the *Atlantic* and the *Donegal mountains* as well as most of *Lower Lough Erne* and the surrounding countryside. We hoped some of the G8 participants would have a chance to visit the viewpoint later in the month.



*Mossy Saxifrage*

Serious botanists, clinging to clumps of heather, were led up almost vertical north-facing sandstone scarps, where grow remnants of arctic-alpine plants, including one of the specialities of Lough Navar Forest, Serrated or One-sided Wintergreen (*Orthilia secunda*). The pale-green leaves are serrated and the flower forms in a one-sided spike. Nearby were Wilson's Filmy Fern (*Hymenophyllum wilsonii*) and Tunbridge Filmy Fern (*Hymenophyllum tunbridgense*). Cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*) and Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) were growing among the heather.

*Braade Cliff* is the only known Northern Ireland site for the arctic-alpine Holly Fern (*Polystichum lonchitis*) which grows with Green Spleenwort (*Asplenium viride*). Sea Spleenwort (*Asplenium marinum*) is on its most inland site in Ireland on one of the scarps.

A gentler walk was along the shores of *Glencreawan Lough* which later in the year are white with swards of Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*). Marsh Violets (*Viola palustris*) were in flower along with Common Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*).

*continued*



## Derrygonnelly Botany (contd)

31<sup>st</sup> May - 2nd June 2013



Wintergreen

We climbed a heathery ridge where quite a few Lesser Twayblades (*Listera / Neottia cordata*) were coming into flower in sphagnum under clumps of Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Robert counted over 40 feral goats feeding nearby. Another rare arctic-alpine plant, Yellow Saxifrage (*Saxifraga aizoides*) was well established on a wet scree.

Our thanks are due to Ralph, Robert and Hannah who introduced field naturalists from many parts of Ireland, including Wexford, Dublin, Inishowen, Mayo, Belfast and Tyrone, to the rich flora of County Fermanagh.

**Margaret Marshall**

## Giant's Causeway

### Leader - Dr Paul Lyle

9<sup>th</sup> June 2013



*Belfast Naturalists' Field Club 2013*

A large attendance of BNFC members took part in *Dr. Lyle's* seminar on the *Geology of the Giant's Causeway* on 9th June. This was a re-enactment of one of the first field-studies undertaken by our Club, which was founded in 1863 so therefore a most appropriate part of the celebration of our 150th Anniversary.

The formation of the Causeway dates from approximately 65 million years ago when the tectonic plates of *North America and Europe* began drifting apart. This movement led to magma surging to the earth's surface through the great fissure that was opening up as the continents pulled apart and is now known as the *Mid Atlantic rift*. Consequently the floor of the Atlantic Ocean is covered by volcanic rocks and the northeastern part of Ireland is the result of this activity. This volcanic material, known as *basalt*, was very liquid and spread out in almost horizontal sheets.

The eruptions occurred in three phases, two main and one minor phase, usually referred to as the *lower* and *upper basalts* and the minor one, the *middle basalts*. While the two major suites cover the most of Co. Antrim, the middle one is found only in the northern part of the county. Our focus centres on the minor group as this is where the Causeway is located.

*continued*



## Giant's Causeway (contd)

**Leader - Dr Paul Lyle**

**9<sup>th</sup> June 2013**



*Polygonal joint pattern outlines basalt columns*



*Red Laterite separating lower and middle basalts*

There was a substantial time interval between the eruption of the lower and middle basalts, long enough to allow the surface rocks of the former to be weathered into soil and for vegetation to get established in the hot, wet environment in the British Isles at that time. This type of soil is known as *Laterite* and has a strong terracotta colour, the result of the oxidation of its high iron content. It is strikingly displayed in the cliff north of the *Giant's Organ* and is a good marker between the lower basalts and the middle suite. These beds have been mined for their iron ore and bauxite at various sites in the Glens of Antrim.

The most striking part of the Causeway is known as the Grand Causeway with its striking hexagonal columns. All hot liquids shrink as they cool. They lose heat rapidly to their surroundings, predominantly through their top and bottom surfaces. As the basalt cools it shrinks and cracks at right angles to the cooling surfaces forming the vertical joints or columns. Hence the result of the shrinkage is the polygonal pattern which gives the causeway its major characteristic pattern.

There are other examples of these phenomena in many parts of the world, but none compare with the magnificent setting and easy access found in the case of the Causeway in North Antrim. It really deserves its award of "World Heritage Centre"

The BNFC appreciate Dr.Lyle's interest and time involved in this project.

**James Rutherford** (Geological Sec.)



*Belfast Naturalists' Field Club 1863*



## Groomspport

### Botany and Zoology

11th June 2013

#### Botany



After a week of hot sunshine, we were back in woolly hats and rain coats so we did not venture far enough onto *Ballymacormick Point* to see County Down's special flower, the beautiful blue Spring Squill (*Scilla verna*).

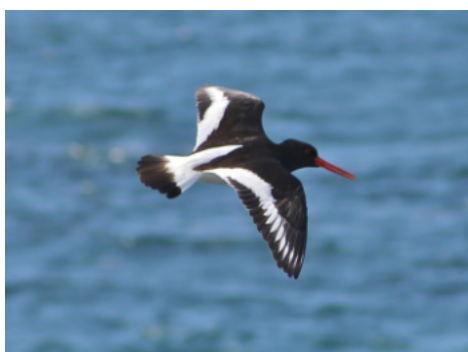
However as *Ivor McDonald* brought us to vantage points to observe birds, we were able to look at some of the plants in the harbour area. Three-cornered Garlic/Leek (*Allium triquetrum*) is a garden escape that is widespread in the Groomspport area – the triangular stems are very noticeable. Three umbellifers (*Apiaceae*) were examined – the yellowish Alexanders (*Smyrniolum olusatrum*) is a southern European plant found by the sea and near old abbeys and was used as a vegetable, Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) is the most common roadside umbellifer in the summer after Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) has finished flowering. So we had one plant with its English name connected with Alexander the Great and the other with its botanical name from Heracles/Hercules. The third umbellifer was Hemlock Water Dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*) growing in a stream. *Oenanthe* means wine-fragrant but it can be fatally poisonous. Many umbellifers are the ancestors of our familiar vegetables like carrots, parsnip, celery and parsley but others are very poisonous, so our predecessors must have tried them out by trial and error!

Tree Mallow (*Lavatera arborea*) grows by the shore - it can cope with gales and sea spray but is another Mediterranean plant that does not like frost. We tasted the leaves of Scurvy Grass (*Cochlearia officinalis*) used to ward off scurvy. Its white flowers are some of the earliest on the seashore in spring. Another white shore plant is Sea Campion (*Silene uniflora*) which was growing near the garden-escape Snow-in Summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*).

So a short seaside walk on a cool damp evening had nevertheless shown us an interesting variety of plants.

**Margaret Marshall**

#### Zoology



Oystercatcher

A very damp evening was cheered up by a warm turf fire and freshly made soda bread served to all as they arrived in the *Cockle Cottages*. *Shirley and Ed*, dressed in costume, acted as host and hostess and told us some of the history of the area.

The cottage on the seaside has two large screens to allow the breeding *Terns* on *Cockle Island* to be observed. *Hugh from the National Trust* explained the work they carried out on the island, monitoring the birds and their nests.

*continued*



## Groomsport (contd)

### Botany and Zoology

11th June 2013



Eider ducks nest

Despite its small size and close proximity to the active village of Groomsport, the island has always been an important site for breeding seabirds and is part of the Ballymacormick Point ASSI.

It is particularly important for breeding terns. Up to 275 pairs of Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) breed there although 150–200 pairs is more normal. A smaller number, 40–70 pairs of Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) use the island, and for the past ten years a colony of up to 500 pairs of Sandwich Tern (*Sterna sandvicensis*) have bred on the island. These three species of tern are all amber listed on the list of species of *Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2008–2013*.



In addition to the terns there is a good population of breeding gulls – over 400 pairs of Black-headed Gull (*Chroicocephalus* - red listed) and just a few Common Gulls (*Larus canus* - amber listed).

Ivor then took us round the bay where we were able to see a variety of birds including Gannets (*Morus bassanus*) flying quite close to land, Eider duck (*Somateria mollissima*) and Oyster catcher (*Haematopus longirostris*). As always he shared his vast knowledge of birds, telling us where they wintered and breed as well as the different names they may have. We learnt that Eider ducks are also known as 'dunters' in the Shetlands – an apt description of their movement in the water.

**Pamela Thomlinson**



Cockle cottage



Making soda bread



## Cavehill

### Botany

18th June 2013



Assuming the Botanists position



Tormentil

Following a period of heavy rain, the weather finally cleared for this excursion.

Although billed as a joint trip, the real credit should go to *Dr Jim Bradley*, Partnership Manager at *Belfast Hills*, who knows the reserve intimately. Dr Bradley led us over a sloping area, which included the dry remains of former boundary banks, wet flushes and hawthorn scrub.

This area is noted for its orchid flora, but the season was very late, and many plants were still in bud. Amongst those that were identified on this excursion were the *Greater Butterfly Orchid*, *Northern Marsh Orchid*, and the *Common Spotted Orchid*. Several plants, which may have been the *Heath Spotted Orchid*, were seen on the drier banks.

The grazed areas were quite species-rich, including *Bugle*, *Self-heal*, *Pignut*, *Tormentil* and a large selection of the finer-leaved grasses.

Because of the lateness of the season, several spring-flowering plants were still in bloom, including *Wood Anemone* in the scrub and *Marsh Marigold* in the wetter areas, along with *Water Mint* and numerous sedges.

On the return journey, at least four species of fern were identified on the banks of a sunken lane.

All in all, this reserve is one of the most species-rich in the area, and would well reward a much more detailed survey.

### Roger Field



Dr Jim Bradley explains



## Antrim Castle and Gardens, Clotworthy House

22nd June 2013

### Botany and History

Members met at *Antrim Castle Gardens*, where they were given a guided tour of the gardens which are “a complex living museum containing over four centuries of culture and heritage alongside remnants of the *Masserene* family dynasty. The original location of Antrim castle has now been integrated within the wider garden landscape in a contemporary and innovative way”

There was also an opportunity to view the Garden Heritage Exhibition and the afternoon was rounded off with a pleasant visit to The Garden Coffee Shop.





## Kilbroney Church

### Archaeological /Historical

6th July 2013

On a sunny 6 July 2013 a large party of members met at the old church in *Kilbroney* to hear an account of the history and recent conservation there by *Liam McQuillan, Archaeologist, NIEA*.



This site, nestled on the hill slope of the valley running north from *Rostrevor*, was an ancient nunnery founded in the 6th century AD by *St Bronach* who is believed to be the mother of *St Mocchi of Nendrum*.

The oldest part of the graveyard is on high ground and may formerly have been enclosed by a circular bank and ditch to mark out the sacred area.

A tall granite stone cross of 9th/10th century date stands to the south of the ruined church and is finely carved all over in meticulously designed geometric patterns. A low cross slab nearby is lightly incised with a human form and has a

rounded top and rudimentary arms. A holy well, now presented in modern housing on lower ground to south, has traditionally cured eye ailments. There is a much-used graveyard surrounding the church with an extensive extension to south.



*The granite stone cross at Kilbroney*

This scheduled ruined church was until recent years very ivy-covered which was threatening the stability of the walls. A cross-community group entered into partnership with *Northern Ireland Environment Agency* to clear the vegetation as a first step towards conservation. Through selective pointing using hydraulic lime mortar it has now been stabilised and several interesting features are exposed.

The ruin, built of local *greywhacke*, is of several periods and is broadly medieval in date. Sometime before 1622 the east wall was cut through creating a chancel arch and a new choir area beyond. Two earlier east windows were blocked in this process. This arch was then largely built up in the 19th century leaving a simple doorway.

At the east end of the church a window was re-discovered in the north wall and there is one as usual south wall both serving to light the altar area. The west wall was of great concern as it had been leaning outwards. Liam had the north west corner re-built and decided on a tying method to retain the slightly leaning west wall under tension with minimum intervention.

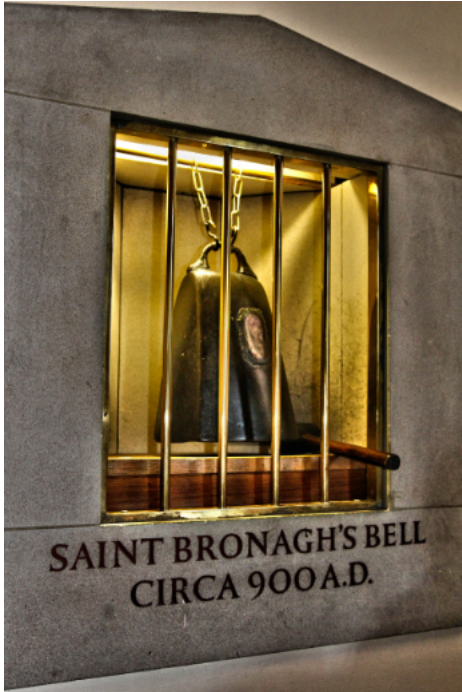
*continued*



## Kilbroney Church (contd)

### Archaeological /Historical

6th July 2013



A length of standing masonry 15m outside the west wall is unexplained and may pre-date the present church.

*St Bronach's bell*, now in the RC church in *Rostrevor*, was discovered in the ivy of this ruin in the early 19th century when a passerby heard it ringing in the wind. With it were found some bronze tubes, almost certainly parts of a crozier or staff. These were documented in 1427 by the *Archbishop of Armagh* as being in the custody of an *erenagh* (hereditary church caretaker) named *McDermot* but they have unfortunately been lost to the record.

The club continued on to Rostrevor to inspect this bronze bell now housed in the local RC church.

**Claire Foley**



*The Holy Well at Kilbroney*



*Margaret Marshall investigates*



## Minnowburn Terrace Hill

**Leaders - Craig and Lorna Sommerville**

**30th July 2013**

### Botany

After our interesting excursion in June 2012, BNFC returned this year at the end of July on another fine summer evening to see the progress on the meadows and look for later-flowering plants.



*Members on the Terrace*

*Craig Somerville of the National Trust first took us up the hill to the Terrace Hill Garden, which is being restored by the National Trust. The nearby house had been owned by Ned Robinson, of the Robinson & Cleaver Store, and he had designed the Garden in the Art Deco style.*

The view through woodland down to the Lagan and across to Malone House with the Belfast Hills in the distance is one of the finest in the country.

Volunteers were helping to restore the flower-beds, brick walls and alcoves; picnic tables and tree-trunk sculptures added to the attraction.

The *Minnowburn Meadows* were a kaleidoscope of colour – the yellows of Meadow Buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), the pinks of Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and Common Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), the brown of Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and the purple of Tufted Vetch (*Vicia cracca*). The mowing regime was enabling the flowering plants to increase and provide a valuable resource for pollinating insects.



*View across the Lagan Valley to Barnetts Demense*



*Common Spotted Orchid*



*Matthew Porter tries his hand at scything*

*continued*



## Minnowburn Terrace Hill (contd)

Leaders - Craig and Lorna Sommerville

30th July 2013



Craig Sommerville with BNFC members

Lorna showed us several grasses with contrasting seed-heads – Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Timothy (*Phleum pratense*) and Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*); the latter gets its English and its botanical name, “finger-like” or “grape-bunch”, from the shape of its inflorescence.

Craig took us upstream to the National Trust ‘Forest School’ where school parties can join in outdoor woodland activities.

He and Lorna were thanked for again bringing us to this special place.



Bee at Rosebay Willow Herb



**Footnote;** several BNFC were at the Minnowburn Meadows in Spring 2015 collecting samples and seeds for the *True Harvest Seeds Project*. We were impressed by the swathes of Wood Anemones (*Anemone nemorosa*), some growing in the open meadow instead of their preferred shade. In a damp area we found several plants of the rare Large Bittercress (*Cardamine amara*) rather like Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratense*) but with purple anthers.

**Margaret Marshall**



## Whitehead Quarry Zoology

3rd August 2013



Ringlet

### Zoology

We were also lucky with the weather as we recreated the trip to Whitehead by train.

At Yorkgate Station a Green-veined White (*Pieris napi*) was spotted perched on the grass at the side of the tracks.

At Whitehead Quarry where the growth of vegetation makes it almost impassable, we managed to spot the following -

1 Large White (*Pieris brassicae*)

2 Ringlets (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)

1 Small White (*Pieris rapae*)

4 Small Tortoiseshells (*Aglaia urticae*)

1 Six-spot Burnet (*Zygaena filipendulae*), a dayflying moth



Six spot Burnet moth

As we walked round the area we also spotted some Common Carder bumble bees (*Bombus pascorum*), White-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus lucorum*), and Buff-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus terrestris*).

It would be interesting to compare the sightings 150 years ago however the climate has so much effect on what may be flying and the general flora has changed so much it would not be a fair comparison.



Small Tortoiseshell

## Whitehead Quarry Geology

On Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 26 members of the BNFC travelled to *Whitehead* in one of several attempts this summer to recreate an event from the Club's inaugural year. In keeping with the spirit of the occasion a majority of those attending travelled by train from *Great Victoria Street* to arrive in a generally sunny Whitehead at 1.30 pm, 150 years and one day after the visit by the Club's founder members.



Large White

The excursion on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1863 was lead by *Ralph Tate*. Tate, then a young man of 23, is credited with organising the public meeting in the Ulster Museum on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1863 which saw the drafting of the BNFC constitution and the election of the founder officers. Tate left Belfast in 1964 to work in London, in South America and ultimately to become the first Professor of Natural History at the University of Adelaide. For more details of an illustrious career, see the Wikipedia article on "[Ralph Tate](#)".

*continued*



## Whitehead Quarry Geology (contd)

3rd August 2013

The *Whitehead Quarry* of 1863 worked huge quantities of white *limestone* (chalk), mainly to supply the local lime-kilns, and also exploited the overlying basalt for the construction of *White Harbour*, for railway ballast and for road-surfacing. The quarry has not been worked for several decades and it now forms part of a small recreation park.

Thick vegetation prevents the visitor from reaching the steep face and so from making a detailed hand-lens examination of the rocks. The *black*



*basalt* forming the top 10 metres of the quarry face is clearly columnar. Well developed columns are an uncommon feature of the *olivine basalts* forming the *Lower Basalt Formation* of the *Palaeocene Antrim Lava Group*. The columns at Whitehead certainly do not rival the perfection of the columns in the *Middle Basalt Causeway Tholeiites* of north Antrim. Surprisingly our predecessors in 1863 were aware that such columns were uncommon so low in the lava succession.

The Lower Basalts in County Antrim typically rest on 0-6 metres of bright red "*Clay-with-Flints*".

Presumably the *Clay-with-Flints* would once have been visible as a horizontal bright red band in the quarry face, separating the basalts above from the *Cretaceous Ulster White Limestone Formation* beneath, but grassy vegetation now covers that contact.

The White Limestone in the lower part of the quarry face is typically well bedded and, also typically, shows numerous bands of *flint nodules*, each band distinct from its neighbours. *Fletcher* (1977) was able to demonstrate that the presence and spacing of the individual flint bands, the flint types and characteristics of the individual limestone beds and groups of beds, are remarkably consistent across the entire White Limestone outcrop in Ulster. On this basis he was able to establish an *Ulster White Limestone lithostratigraphy* of 14 members and map those 14 members over the entire White Limestone outcrop in Counties *Antrim, Londonderry, Tyrone* and *Armagh*. Fossils, particularly *belemnites*, *echinoids*, *sponges* and *bivalves* are fairly common and demonstrate fairly continuous deposition through the *Santonian, Campanian*, and *Early Maastrichtian Zones* of the *Late Cretaceous*.

*continued*



## Whitehead Quarry (contd)

3rd August 2013

Fletcher's Figure 8 "*Schematic reconstruction of the spatial relations of the Cretaceous members of Northern Ireland*" indicates a thickness of about 38metres for the White Limestone at Whitehead composed of the eight members from the basal *Cloghfin Sponge Beds* up to the *Glenarm Chalk Member* (ie all of the lowest nine members of the fourteen exposed in NI).

Curiously the BNFC report of the 1863 excursion says little of interest about the White Limestone – "curiously" because Tate was essentially a stratigrapher and palaeontologist and is credited by Fletcher with "the first major attempt to correlate the faunal sequence of the Cretaceous of Ireland with its counterpart in Britain".

It was Tate (*On the correlation of the Cretaceous formations of the north-east of Ireland, Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society of London, Volume 21, 1865*) who proposed the name *Hibernian Greensand* for the formation below the Ulster White Limestone Formation – the name still current for the strata below the White Limestone in Ireland. Clearly the modern BNFC stands on giant's shoulders!

Leaving the quarry where the upper members of the White Limestone Formation are exposed the 2013 excursionists walked through the pedestrian underpass beneath the Larne railway line to examine the lowest Limestone members exposed on the sandy foreshore at the western end of Whitehead beach. The basal *Cloghfin Sponge Beds* Member is only 1.47m thick and consists of three beds:

- Bed A** ("cobbly cemented arenaceous glauconitic limestone
- Bed B** ("Evenly bedded arenaceous glauconitic limestone") and
- Bed C** ("Irregularly bedded hard glauconitic limestone").

These are all easily recognised in the *Plate 1* photograph of Fletcher's paper. The outcrop photographed is readily identified near the exit from the railway subway but, sadly since this is essentially the type locality for the *Cloghfin Member*, Bed C has largely been covered with concrete since it was photographed by Fletcher. The concrete has been used essentially to protect the rock beneath the railway line from marine erosion. We found some sponge *pseudomorphs* in the *Cloghfin Member* and numerous belemnites in the succeeding *Galboly*, *Cloghastucan* and *Creggan Chalk Members* (accounting for some 11 metres of the succession exposed on the beach).

The party then returned to *Whitehead Station* and split into two groups. The smaller and more enthusiastic group walked to *Black Head* to examine the basalts and the excellent pipe amygdalites at that locality. It appears that our fit and hardy predecessors on the 1863 excursion walked well beyond Black Head toward the *Gobbins*! The larger 2013 group were seduced by coffee, tea and a nostalgic train journey on the premises of the *Railway Preservation Society in Whitehead*.

Essential White Limestone Reference:

Fletcher, T.P. 1977. *Lithostratigraphy of the Chalk (Ulster White Limestone Formation) in Northern Ireland. Report of the Institute of Geological Sciences, 77/24.*

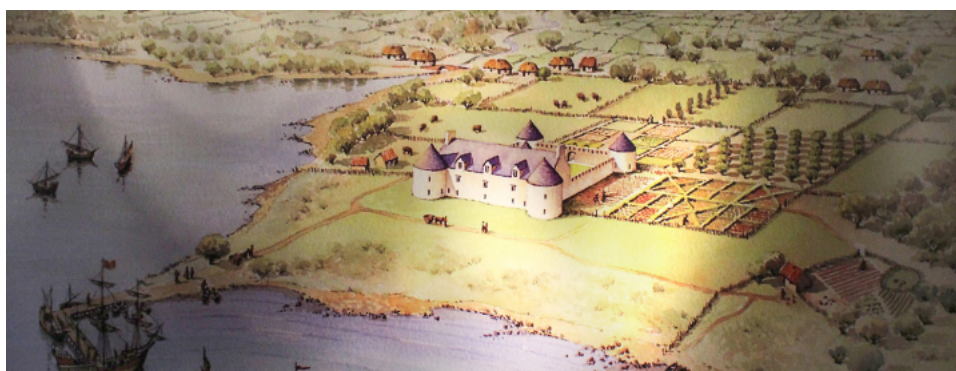


## The Whitehouse History and supper

6th August 2013

"This *Plantation Bawn* has recently been restored from a crumbling building and now hosts two exhibitions '*A Tale of Two Kings*' recounting the *Williamite and Jacobite Wars* from a European perspective and '*Relive the History*' which tells the exciting story of the buildings' past right up to the present day."

Members were given a tour of the exhibitions and the visit finished with a tea/coffee and tray bakes.





## Magherfelt, Drumlamph and an Carn Botany

17th August 2013

### Leader - Pol Mac Cana



*Bog Asphodel seeds*

The sun came out as our coach arrived at the *Carntogher Community Association Centre* where we were met by *Dr Pol Mac Cana*, co-ordinator of the *Envision Community Heritage Project*. Carntogher is in an Area of Natural Beauty in the *Sperrins* near *Maghera* and the local community is involved in many projects to preserve local culture and history and to encourage tourism. After welcome coffee and scones, *Catherine Bertrand* and our members *Shiena* and *Doris* identified the moths caught overnight.

Beside the pond is a statue of *Fionn Mac Cumhaill* and his hound *Bran* who had plunged into nearby *Lough Bran*. Pol described attempts that have been made to eradicate Curly Waterweed (*Lagarosiphon major*), an invasive South African aquatic plant, probably released into the pond from a garden pond or aquarium.

The Bio-diversity project is encouraging wildflower-growing on roadside verges and we admired a colourful display of Corn Marigolds (*Chrysanthemum segetum*), Cornflowers (*Centaurea cyanus*), Scentless Mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*) and Corn-cockle (*Agrostemma githago*), which is now extinct in the wild.



*Unimproved grassland*

In May 2001 BNFC had visited *Drumlamph* ancient woodland, part of the once extensive forest of *Killetra*, where the *Woodland Trust* and the *Carntogher Community Association (CAA)* were working to restore the woodland. Now with the help of the *Heritage Lottery Fund*, the CCA has acquired another 130 acres of ancient woodland and ecologically important grazing meadows, fen, transitional mire and quaking bog.

The management plan will meet the requirements of the UK Bio-diversity Action Plan.

We walked across some of this unimproved wet grassland, rich in various sedges and rushes. One of the most conspicuous flowering plants was Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*) which has larger flowers than the more familiar Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and Orchids (*Dactylorhiza spp.*) were in seed so less recognisable. *James Rainey*, who is studying Biology at Oxford and lives locally, was an enthusiastic mine of information on the area and the different habitats. After lunch we visited grazing meadows and Pol explained the methods of layering hawthorn to improve hedges in order to prevent cattle straying. We were glad to learn that some of the County Down Red Kites (*Milvus milvus*) had been nesting in the Sperrins.

Pol and James were thanked for leading us in this most interesting area, to which the Club is due to return in September for an archaeology excursion.

**Margaret Marshall**

*continued*



## Magherfelt, Drumlamph and an Carn Zoology

17th August 2013

The day was cool and windy and so we were not expecting to see many butterflies. However we were pleased to find and catch Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) adult butterflies which could be passed round the group to allow them to see them at close quarters.

Also some caterpillars (unidentified) were reported in the area of the meadow on the fen. All of these are good signs that the habitat is improving for a range of wildlife.

**Pamela Thomlinson**



*Small Heath*

### Archaeology leader - Claire Foley

A bus full of members assembled on a rainy morning and set out for *An Carn* visitor centre just north of *Maghera*.

The rain was relentless for the first few hours but the welcome refreshments at the centre gave courage and we were kindly afforded hospitality there again later as our picnic venue.



*Knockoneill Court Tomb*

The first stop was *Knockoneill* court tomb excavated in the 1970s by the late *Laurence Flanagan*, former *Keeper of Antiquities at the Ulster Museum*. This is an impressive *Neolithic* tomb dating to the third millennium BC. The considerable skill of the builders was in evidence both in the choice of large boulders used for

construction and in their splitting and placement following a pattern recognisable in the more than 400 known court tombs principally found across the northern part of Ireland. The burial chambers are contained within a long cairn with an open court at one end. So prominent was this tomb in the locality, probably in use for several hundred years, that when the Neolithic gave way to the early Bronze Age a circular cairn was constructed on the back end of the cairn to bury people from this new culture. Members discussed the geology of the stones and mused about the Neolithic community which established farming in this area some 5000 to 6000 years ago.



*Tirkane Sweat House*

We moved on to visit *Tirkane sweathouse* built of drystone in recent centuries into the side of a steep hill with an airhole in the roof. It is traditionally thought to have been used for sweating off rheumatic pains.

A fire would have been lit within the structure and damp rushes laid on the embers to create steam. Significantly, the group identified an artificial pool immediately adjacent which is fed by a channel from a stream and this is likely a 'plunge pool' for cooling off after the treatment, traditionally associated with such sites.

*continued*

**7th September 2013**



*Tirmony portal tomb*

*Tirmony portal tomb* on the side of a minor road came next and is probably broadly contemporary with Knockoneill court tomb. Here a single-chambered tomb was excavated by NIEA in recent years towards reinstating the slipped capstone.

The cultural remains were slight, indicating that the site had been cleared out in the past. The most important object found was a fine flint knife.

The final visit was to *St Lurach's* medieval church ruin church ruin in Maghera to view the elaborate 12th-century carved lintel over the west door which is protected from the weather by a later tower. Here a well-peopled crucifixion scene, requiring a torch to view, is one of only three in Ireland. The others are at *Raphoe in Co Donegal* and *Dunshaughlin in County Meath*.

**Claire Foley**



*St Lurach's lintel*



## Belfast City Hall

10th September 2013

The Committee thought it appropriate that we should visit the City Hall in this our 150<sup>th</sup> year. The club of course was 43 years old before the present building was opened!

We were given a private tour which lasted approximately one hour.





## Building Bat boxes

**Leader - Adrian Woodley**

**29th September 2013**

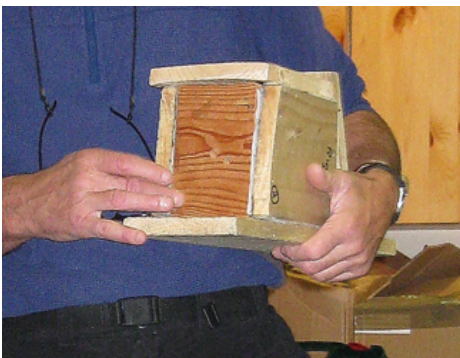
After last summer's very interesting bat talk and walk when we saw and listened to pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) feeding on the wing. We decided to return to *Crawfordsburn Country Park* to make bat boxes.



*Adrian Woodley*, who answers to *Woody*, is a member of the [NI Bat Group](#) and an entertaining speaker. He gave a short talk to the six Club members present. There are currently eight species of bats in Northern Ireland. There are several varieties of *Pipistrelles* in *Crawfordsburn Country Park*, four different species were identified there during the 2012 Bioblitz,

*Nathusius's Pipistrelle* (*Pipistrellus nathusii*), *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* 45kHz, *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* 55kHz, *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* Soprano *Pipistrelle*.

The pipistrelles are Britain's smallest bats, generally brown in colour and have fast 'jerky' flight. An individual can eat up to 3000 insects a night. He also gave us details of suitable heights and positions for the boxes in trees and under the eaves of houses.



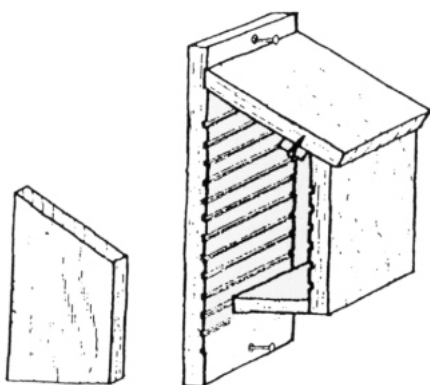
Under his watchful eye the group started, on packs of pre-cut wood, to construct ten bat boxes. *Woody* was on hand at each stage along the way to provide the extra muscle needed at times. The group made bat boxes for themselves and other members or friends.

Two of the bat boxes were given to the *National Trust* to be put up on trees in the *National Trust Reserve* at *Minnowburn*.

We look forward to hearing news from the various sites of the bat boxes in the years to come.

**Pamela Thomlinson**

Bat roost boxes placed on trees or buildings can attract bats, especially if placed in areas lacking roosts and close to feeding areas. These boxes simulate tree holes and can be used by large numbers of bats of most species. A box with each internal dimension about 10 centimetres can hold 50 bats or more.



Box shape and size are not critical, but front or back depth should not exceed 10 cm because bats like narrow spaces. Very rough sawn timber at least 2.5 cm thick should be used. Wood can be roughened by making many shallow horizontal cuts inside and out. Bats often alight on the outside and crawl about before entering. Entrances should be 15 to 20 mm wide and at least 50 mm long - or the full width of the box.

*continued*



## Building Bat boxes (contd)

Leader - Adrian Woodley

29th September 2013



It is best to have a means of inspection: a lifting lid is easiest to construct. If birds nest in boxes, their nests may be cleared out in autumn, but bats will sometimes roost in boxes with nesting birds.

A specialist booklet on this subject is available from the Fauna & Flora Preservation Society or from DOE.

You can find a *Guide to Bat Boxes* on the *Bat Conservation* website as well as how to build your own.

More information can be found on the [NI Bat Group website](#).



## Fungus Foray, Killynether

**Leader - Alistair McCracken**

**28th September 2013**

16 members gathered at *Scrabo*, to explore *Killynether woods*.



To begin with, the woods seemed very dry, and we struggled to find any fungi. Alistair took the opportunity to update us on the state of Ash dieback disease in the Province. This, which is due to fungal infection with *Chalara fraxinea*, has been identified in 88 locations in Northern Ireland – and so far all are in trees imported in the past five years.

While this is encouraging, in Denmark 95% of the ash trees have been affected, and work there suggests that just 1% of the population is resistant (not immune).



*Mycena inclinata?*

Another and potentially even worse threat is the emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*), a beetle which is attacking ash in the Pacific northwest, but has not reached Europe as yet. These could be a national disaster as Hurleys are made of Ash!

In this dry part of the wood, we thought we might have to make do with the small Candlesnuff fungus, *Xylaria hypoxylon*, but on a more shaded slope with rotting timber, things improved

The two pictured on the left and below engendered much discussion - (*Mycena inclinata* and unidentified?).



*Unidentified Sp?*

*continued*



## Fungus Foray, Killynether (contd)

**Leader - Alistair McCracken**

**28th September 2013**



*Artist's Bracket*

The best fungi were below and growing on the trunks of the beech trees - Artist's bracket *Canoderma applanatum* and Porcelain fungus *Oudemansiella mucida* grew low and high on the beeches. Dryad's saddle *Polyporosa squarrosa* was at the base of the trees, as was the Orange-peel fungus, *Aleuria aurantica*.

An enjoyable outing, but disappointing in the total number of species we found - it is not often that the Club has to complain that weather is too dry.

**Liam McCaughey**



*Porcelain Fungus*



*Orange Peel Fungus*



*Candlesnuff*



*Porcelain Fungus*



*Dryad's Saddle*

