

Belfast Naturalists[®]
Field Club

Field Reports
2017

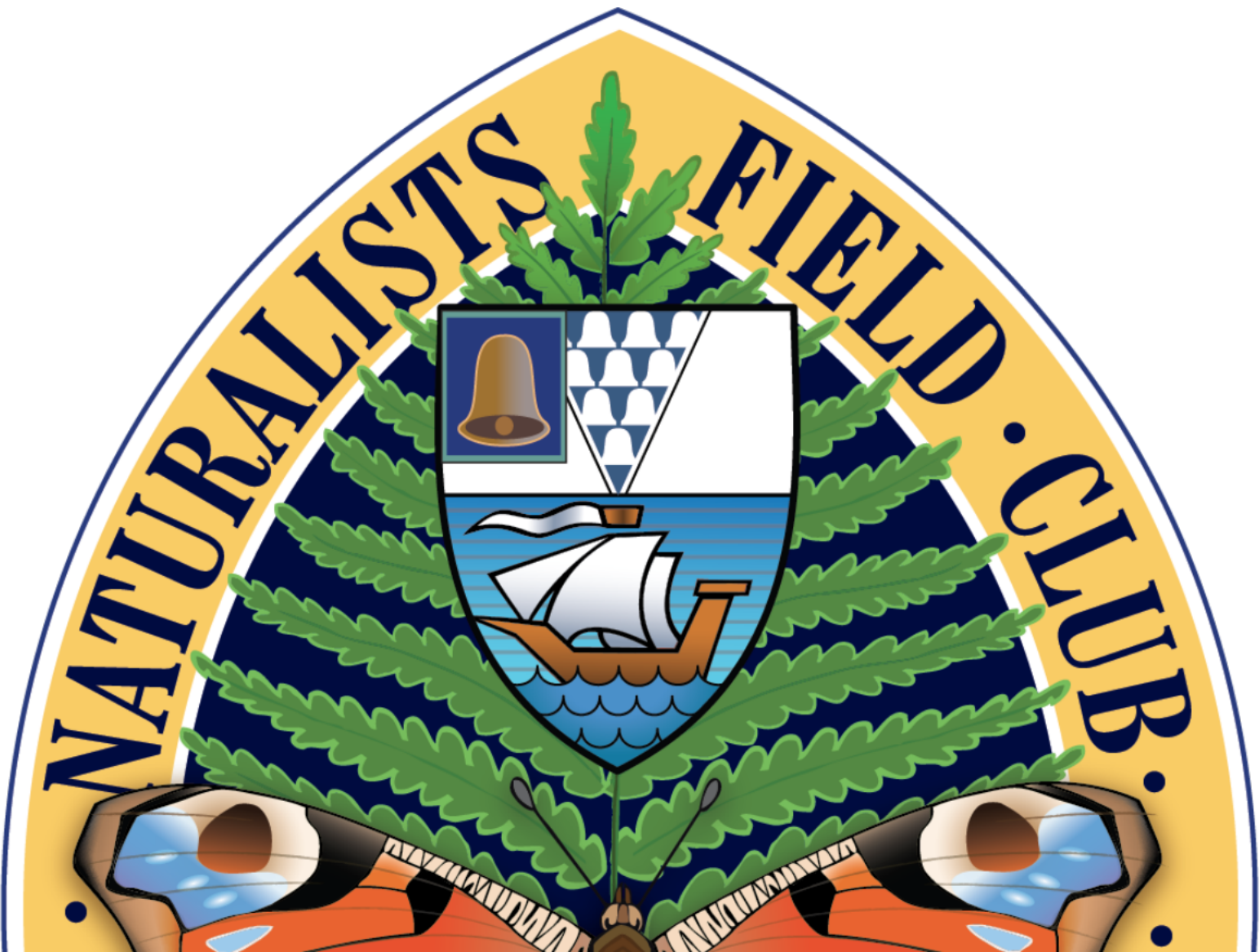




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Carrickmore Area, County Tyrone

Leaders; Claire Foley and Ian Meighan

6th May 2017



Carved head, St Columkille's Church

Our meeting place for this outing was the car park beside *Carrickmore Catholic Church*. Unfortunately there was a service in the church and parking became a problem with some people finding themselves hemmed in when it was time to leave. Our visit was not to the church itself but the surrounding grounds. Claire had enlisted the help of a local historian, **Michael Haughey** who had a wealth of knowledge about the site.

Although the present church, St Columkille's was built in the 1840's its graveyard is the site of an ancient church. The only remains of this building, which would have stood on the highest point of the graveyard, is a carved stone head (opposite) that is built into the gable wall of St Columkille's church. The townland in which the church site is placed is **Termonmaguirk** and as the word *termon* means boundary it is clear how the name was derived as seven town lands meet in the graveyard and they are marked by modern boundary stones. Adjoining the graveyard is a **Cillin** or children's burial place. These were for the burial of unbaptised infants and were used up to the 1960's, when they were discontinued after the Second Vatican Council.

This was one of three separate graveyards in Carrickmore the others being the women's, which we visited after lunch and the one for wounded men which was near the church but is now gone.

In the car park there is a truncated wedge or court tomb i.e. the back end of it is all that remains. It was Michael Haughey who managed to get the remains preserved when the car park was being expanded. Ian was able to identify the type of stone used to build it, which is an igneous rock called Dolerite. It is the bedrock in that part of Tyrone and is an ancient fragment of a subducted ocean floor. He explained the difference between the basalt (fine grained) dolerite (medium grained) and gabbro (coarse grained).



Our next visit was to a portal tomb in the townland of Athenree. It is in the grounds of a private estate but Claire had gained permission for us to visit. This single chamber portal tomb is like many of its kind built near a stream. Ian was able to identify the huge capstone as gabbro and we were able to identify the mineral felspar, which glistened in the sunlight.

We drove to the Carrickmore GAA club car park where we had time for a picnic lunch and a visit to the little museum in the **Nally Heritage Centre** that was set up by the club and officially opened in 2009. There are several exhibits in the museum covering such areas as sporting achievements, social life, transport, farming and industry in the area. There

was a visual display showing the geographical history of the parish and the evolution of the town lands of Termonmaguirk. At this juncture my involvement was curtailed due to a puncture and the AA man ended up with an unexpected audience as he made a temporary repair to the tyre, so I am grateful to Claire Foley for providing the report on the remaining two sites we visited.

continued



Carrickmore Area, County Tyrone (contd)

Leaders; Claire Foley and Ian Meighan

6th May 2017

The Women's graveyard is a polygonal graveyard with many small grave-markers, one of them inscribed with a simple cross. Traditionally St Columcille had this site chosen as it was out of bell hearing from the main church settlement. It is said that no live woman or no dead man can enter – we ignored this tradition at our peril.



Creggandevsky is one of the best preserved court tombs in Ireland. It is situated on a glacial esker and one of many prehistoric sites in mid-Tyrone. These were the first settled communities in the area clearing woodland and using the land for grazing and tillage. Excavated by Claire Foley for DOE back in the 1980's it has a semi-circular court and a burial gallery of three chambers all enclosed by a trapezoidal cairn with a dry-stone retaining wall. Cremated remains of at least 21 people were found here as well as a range of flint objects including arrowheads and scrapers. Flint and quartz working was identified nearby. Unusually 120 small stone beads, a former necklace, accompanied one of the burials. Pottery recovered dates from early Neolithic, 3800BC, to mid Bronze Age c. 1200 BC, suggesting that the site was a focus of burial and domestic activity for over 2500 years before blanket peat began to take hold in this landscape.

Joan Semple and Claire Foley



Rathlin Island

Leaders; Margaret Marshall,
Pat Rutherford and RSPB Staff

20th May 2017



West Light Observation point



Fulmar

A group of 17 set off from Ballycastle on the 10.00am ferry to the island of Rathlin where we were met by **Bert's Puffin bus** and transported to the **West Light** and the recently refurbished **Seabird Centre**, spotting a **Buzzard** flying overhead on the way. We descended the steps to the platform, admiring on the way down the **Sea Pinks/Thrift, Tormential** and **Sea Campion**, and getting our first glimpse of some of the seabirds populating the beautifully craggy stacks below.

Down on the platform we were greeted with the usual cacophony of sound as the various seabirds come and go and jostle for position on the stacks and cliffs and the shore below.

There were the usual myriads of **Guillemots**, **Fulmar**, **Razorbills** and noisy **Kittiwakes**, and on the ground their bright red legs helped us spot some **Puffins**, but not in great numbers. **Gannet** were spotted flying past by the lighthouse. The RSPB staff were on hand to talk to us and answer questions. They were able to point out the first egg that they had spotted this year and had the telescope trained on the Guillemot that was sitting on it - a beautiful blue egg. They were also able to tell us that so far this year they have only seen one **Chough** on the island. They are however managing the landscape to try to attract the Choughs back.



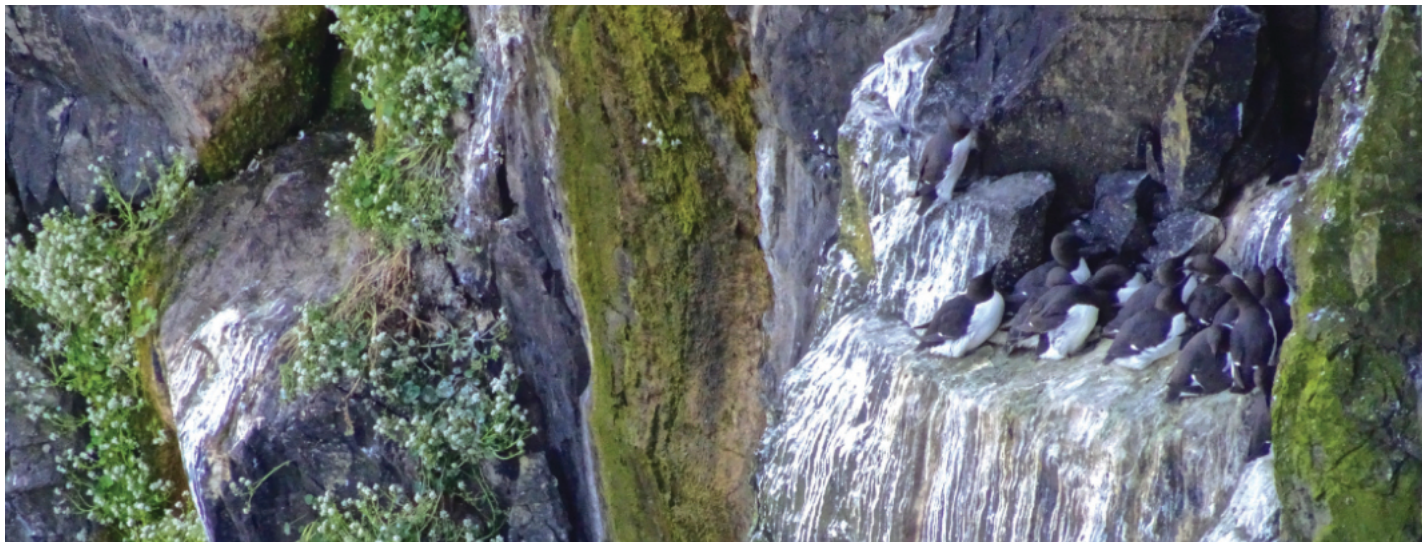
Guillemots



Rathlin Island (contd)

Leaders; Margaret Marshall,
Pat Rutherford and RSPB Staff

20th May 2017



Guillemots



Ribwort Plantain

The 89 steps had to be climbed to return to the top where some of the group went back to the harbour area on the bus, and some of us walked the four miles back along the road, allowing us to observe various flowers and birds on the way. There were some patches of Orchids - including **Heath Spotted** and **Early Purple** - which looked as if someone had just strewn handfuls onto the grass. There were lots more Tormentil and **Birdsfoot Trefoil**, some **Primrose**, **Marsh Marigold**, **Lousewort**, **Milkwort**, **Bluebell**, **Violet**, **Yellow Flag Iris**, **Bogbean**, **Silverweed**, **Wild Strawberry**, **Wood Anemone**, **Horsetail**, **Foxglove** and lots of **Ribwort Plantain** dancing in the breeze like little ballerinas wearing tutus!

We also spotted an **Orangetip** butterfly, and some **Green-veined Whites**. On the side of the road we caught sight of a **Garden Tiger moth** caterpillar (Woolly Bear) before he quite quickly moved to seek cover in the grass on the verge. Also in abundance was the beautiful vibrant yellow of the **Whin/Gorse Bushes**.

Some of the birds that were spotted on the way were **Skylarks** (treating us to their wonderful song as they soared), **Swallows**, **Grey Wagtail**, **Goldfinch**, **Stonechat**, and one of the party (Bernard Anderson) heard a **Corncrake**.

We saw **Eider Duck** in the harbour, with **seals** further along and **Black Guillemot** from the ferry as we journeyed back to Ballycastle.



Early Purple Orchid

We enjoyed great weather throughout the day on the island, with lots of sunshine and blue skies and wonderful clouds. The views across the island and back to the mainland were quite spectacular.

Maureen Carswell



Oakfield Glen and Bashfordsland Wood

Leader **Peter Lyons**, *Woodland Trust*

23rd May 2017

*Up the airy mountain,
Down the rushy glen,
We daren't go a-hunting For fear of little men;
William Allingham*

Oakfield Glen was the place to see fairies, a good old fashioned magical woodland with a stream running through it.

Oakfield was once a country gentleman's residence, built in the early 1800s and decorated with fine gardens and exotic plantings.

It is listed in the *Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland* (Vol 1) 1844-45 as one of the principal residences of Carrickfergus. There was a mill race here, 1700-1800, and it powered a cotton mill.

While there are no traces of the house itself, the site is now a school, some features, including some of the Victorian bridges, and reminders of the garden plantings remain.

Plants such as **Apples** (*Malus domestica* sp.), **Irish Yew** (*Taxus baccata* 'fastigiata') **Red Hazel** (*Corylus* sp.), **Periwinkle** (*Vinca major*) and **Roses** (*Rosa* sp.) are probably garden remnants. To the garden, from Europe and Asia, had come **Spanish Chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*) and the dreaded but decorative **Japanese Knotweed** (*Fallopia japonica*).

The area around the Black Sea is home to that popular Victorian plant **Cherry Laurel** (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and possibly the **Cherry** (*Prunus* sp.).

North America provided **False Salmonberry** (*Rubus spectabilis*), **Pick-a-Back Plant** (*Tolmiea menziesii*), **Snowberry** (*Symphoricarpos albus*), the majestic **Monterey Cypress** (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) and a large **Redwood** (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*).

About 10-15 years ago the **Woodland Trust** began the planting of native saplings as well as the giants of the wood - **Beech** (*Fagus sylvatica*), **Ash** (**Fraxinus excelsior**), **Oak** (*Quercus* sp.) and **Elm** (*Ulmus* sp.) good mixed woods need smaller trees, **Whitebeam** (*Sorbus aria*), **Alder** (*Alnus glutinosa*), **Hazel** (*Corylus avellana*), **Blackthorn** (*Prunus spinosa*), **Silver Birch** (*Betula pendula*) and **Downy birch** (*Betula pubescens*).



Chaffinch, and newly fledged below



Not all saplings enjoy a long and happy life. In a clump of **Rowan** (*Sorbus aucuparia*), some appeared to have been ring barked and were dead. Possibly hungry rabbits.

Personally, I prefer the evening birdsong, one does not have to get up at such an unearthly hour to enjoy it. Birdsong included **Willow Warbler** (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), **Blackcap** (*Sylvia atricapilla*), **Chiffchaff** (*Phylloscopus collybita*), **Woodpigeon** (*Columba palumbus*), **Robin** (*Erithacus rubecula*), **Chaffinch** (*Phylloscopus collybita*), **Great Tit** (*Parus major*) and **Song thrush** (*Turdus philomelos*).

Also seen were **Jays** (*Garrulus glandarius*) and **Hooded Crows** (*Corvus cornix*). The variety an excellent example of a diverse habitat. Then the wonderful sound a child (and the occasional adult) loves to hear, the chimes of an Ice Cream Van!

The Glen has open spaces as well as woodland and this was reflected in the species recorded.

continued



Oakfield Glen and Bashfordsland Wood



Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*)

Orchids with spotted leaves, not yet in flower, but potentially *Dactylorhiza* sp., and **Yellow Rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*) were found in a meadow, also recorded were **Speedwell** (*Veronica officinalis*), **Bush Vetch** (*Vicia sepium*), **Hogweed** (*Heracleum sphondylium*), **Foxtail** (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and **Hairy Willowherb** (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and the more typical woodland plants of **Herb Bennett** (*Geum urbanum*), **Wood Anemone** (*Anemone nemorosa*) and **Primrose** (*Primula vulgaris*).

Remote Sedge (*Carex remota*) and **Hairy Sedge** (*Carex hirta*) like dampness but **Cocksfoot** (*Dactylis glomerata*) and **Annual meadow grass** (*Poa annua*) will grow anywhere.

Thick Ivy stems climbing around trees made the perfect place to see trolls, gnomes and goblins from the Edvard Grieg "Hall of the Mountain King"!

And the climber **Old Man's Beard** (*Clematis vitalba*) was hanging down in Tarzan-like ropes.

And what of the "little men of Green jacket, red cap, And white owl's feather!"? Keep an eye open for ten special new inhabitants – the mischievous fairy-like creatures are actually steel sculptures and are hiding in treetops throughout the woodland. The mystical Púca, who lurk in the treetops, are said to be the most mischievous of all the fairies. These unique sculptures, were designed by *Alan Cargo* and *Eleanor Wheeler*.

Somewhere in Oakfield Glen is a tree planted, by family and friends, in memory of *John Wilde*, for many years a doyen of the Club.

Bashfordsland Wood is owned by the local Council and has received funding from a **BIFFA** award. This award is a multi-million pound fund which awards grants to community and environmental projects across the UK. The fund's money comes from landfill tax credits donated by Biffa Group Limited. This money is being used to remove invasive species such as laurel and rhododendron. There have been thousands of native trees planted, over 20,000 in total. There are wildlife ponds with a various water-weeds and tadpoles well advanced. The damp areas are a perfect home for a beautiful stand of **Flag Iris** (*Iris pseudacorus*). **Burdock** (*Arctium minus*) and **Knapweed** (*Centaurea nigra*) were added to the list.

New strategically-placed steel sculptures in the shape of leaves were created by artist *Kevin Killen*, with input from *Oakfield Primary School*.

Best memories of the night?

Light through beech leaves, the pungent smell of **Wild garlic** (*Allium ursinum*) was overlaid by the muskier smells of **Queen Anne's Lace** (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), **Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*) and **Hawthorn** (*Crataegus monogyna*), fields yellow with **Buttercups** (*Ranunculus acris*) and an extremely vocal **Blackbird** (*Turdus merula*). Noticeable was the lack of litter and graffiti in a place obviously used and enjoyed by many people thanks to the hard work of Peter Lyons and his fellow volunteers of the Woodland Trust.

A final memento, a pretty badge decorated with woodland symbols. This is the Logo of the **Charter for Trees, Woods and People**, a project organised by over 70 organisations to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the 1217 *Charter of the Forest*, due to be launched on the 6th November 2017.

M. Allen, Ruth and Ernie Hunter, Margaret Marshall



Portmore Lough (RSPB)

**Leaders; Laura Smith (RSPB)
and Pamela Thomlinson**

3rd June 2017

Portmore Lough, to the south-east of **Lough Neagh**, is an ASSI and RAMSAR site managed by the **RSPB**. There has been controversy about the origins of this shallow circular lake; one theory is that it was a kettle hole left after glaciation, but the sediments are jumbled up, not laminar. Blown-over Oaks dating to 539 AD have been found which suggests a meteorite exploded overhead.

We were welcomed by **Laura Smith**, the RSPB Warden, who had put out a moth trap overnight - a mild night, so there was a good selection of moths. Pamela Thomlinson and Doris Barr made a list of over 150 moths belonging to 33 species, which are listed on the BNFC website. These included **Brimstones**, the large **Elephant and Poplar Hawkmoths**, **Green**, **Silver Ground** and **Common Marbled Carpets**, **White and Buff Ermines** and **Peach Blossoms**.

Bernard Anderson listed over 35 birds seen or heard, ranging from **Tree Sparrows**, **Sedge and Willow Warblers**, **Swifts** and **Reed Buntings** to **Great Crested Grebes**, **Cormorants**, **Redshank** and **Lapwings**.

Laura explained how the **Konik ponies** are used to manage the vegetation to encourage breeding lapwing and other ground-nesting birds. Konik is apparently just the general Polish word for pony. Electric fencing is used to keep out predators such as foxes and a large population of **Irish Hare** now live inside the reserve.



White Ermine



Pond dipping

The young Somervilles pond-dipped enthusiastically to fill tubs where we could all admire newts of various sizes, pond snails, caddisfly larvae, water beetles, tadpoles, and water boatmen. A field has been sown with seeding plants to encourage birds to come to the "Giant bird-table".

After a picnic lunch we walked down to the lakeshore meadows; in the drains were the poisonous **Cowbane** (*Cicuta virosa*) and **Bur-reeds** (*Sparganium*). The meadows were a mass of colour – **Red Ragged Robin** (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) – cuculi as it flowers at the time of the

Cuckoo, yellow **Lesser Spearwort** (*Ranunculus flammula*) - it differs from other buttercups because of its spear-shaped leaves - and blue **Water Forgetmenots** (*Myosotis scorpioides* and *laxa*). **Marsh Valerian** (*Valeriana dioica*) was growing near the entrance to the hide, from where we had a good view of the nesting **Black-headed Gulls** and **Common Terns** on their raft in the Lough. Laura goes out by canoe to do counts and check on the young. **Blue-tailed Damsel Flies** (*Ischnura elegans*) were flitting around.

John Templeton had visited the Lough in September 1808 and had written in his diary that **Frogbit** (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*) and **Arrowhead** (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*) were in abundance, but these plants are now rarer.

Laura was thanked for conducting us on a most interesting excursion with opportunities to see a wide range of botanical and zoological species.

Margaret Marshall



Smooth Newt



Divis Mountain

**Leaders; Craig Somerville
and Dermot McCann**

6th June 2017

Belfast has a unique position - on the sea and encircled by hills. Over its long history the BNFC has made many archaeological, botanical, geological and zoological excursions to most of these hilly areas - to Cavehill, Slievenacloy, Divis, the Giant's Ring, Lisnabreeny and Redburn as well as to the Lough shore.



As in June 2006, on our 2017 June Divis visit the brave participants needed to turn out in rain-weather gear and woolly hats!

Craig Somerville and Dermot McCann of the National Trust entertained us to coffee by the warm stove in the Barn.

They told us the background to the National Trust's involvement in the area; after the Ministry of Defence had left, the National Trust was able to acquire Divis and the Black Mountain to provide free access for the public. It is planned to have continuous walking routes from the *Black Mountain* to *Collin Glen* and on to *Dunmurry* and the *Laganvalley Regional Park*.



Marsh Thistle

A vast amount of work was necessary to remove accumulated rubbish and construct the various trails – many archaeological sites were discovered during surveys.

It is now visited by thousands of walkers, runners, cyclists and nature lovers every year. On a clear day from the 475m summit of Divis one can see all of Belfast, the Mourne, Lough Neagh, the Sperrin and Donegal mountains and as far Scotland.

The 2000 acres are a mosaic of blanket bog, heather-clad hills, upland wet and dry heath and unimproved grassland. Grazing cattle and horses prevent the growth of scrub.

Bird watchers can find *stonechats*, *skylarks*, *red grouse*, *snipe* and the occasional *peregrine falcon*; there are Irish hares, frogs and newts, *Small Heath butterflies* and rare varieties of *Waxcap Fungi*.



Bog Cotton

continued



Divis Mountain (contd)

6th June 2017



Common Spotted Orchid

By now the rain had eased and we ventured out to a wet heathland area; colour was provided by the yellow of Spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), the pink of Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*) and of Heath and Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and *maculata*). The purple buds of the Marsh Thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) in their symmetrical leaf rosettes were photographed along with the carnivorous Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*). The white fruiting heads of Bog Cotton (*Eriophorum angustifolium*) were fluttering in the breeze.

I had thought the hemiparasite Lousewort and its botanical name came from its ability to combat fleas and lice but apparently it is because grazing cattle and sheep are susceptible to "lice" or liverflukes in the wet areas where Lousewort grows.

Craig and Dermot were thanked for giving us so much information about this important area. Maybe one day we will see Divis in summer sunshine and warmth.

Margaret Marshall





Hollywood Stones

Leader Ian Forsythe

7th June 2017

The trip '*Building Stones of Hollywood*' by Ian Forsythe (BGS Archivist) organised by *Belfast Geologists' Society* was joined by members of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club to whom an invite was extended to join them on the evening. This was reflected in the turnout of about seventeen members plus the leader.

The weather on the evening was typical of the usual Ulster summer - fairly bright but a hint of possible showers. Thankfully any rain stayed away till our homeward journey.

The excursion started at Hollywood's oldest building the *Priory* where we noted among the *Triassic Scrabo sandstone* the odd exposure of *Yellow Magnesian Cultra Limestone* and very distinctive type of rock. Exposures are limited to Cultra foreshore.

A nearby memorial to *Withers* had a plaque of *marble* and columns of *red granite* set among *Carboniferous sandstone*.

Several churches in the town including *Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist* and *Roman Catholic Church* were studied and most reflected the local *Scrabo (Triassic)* and some local *Greywacke (Silurian)*. We were fortunate to get inside *St Philip and St James* (Church of Ireland) where we were able to see the church interior which included the following among its material - *Caen Limestone (Jurassic)* from Normandy and green *Connemara Marble* from Galway.

Also we saw the old *Windmill at Martello Terrace* off Victoria Road which is a microcosm of local stone including some basalt.

The *Praeger Memorial* in High Street is built of *Newry Granite*.

Also we saw tourist display boards of the Praegers of Hollywood at Hibernia Place just off High Street. Robert Lloyd Praeger (1865-1953) was of course a leading geologist in the BNFC.

Ian Forsythe
BNFC Geology Section Secretary



Hollywood windmill



Interior St Patricks



Mountstewart

10th June 2017

The National Trust had recently opened a series of long walks around the greater part of the estate, and this was the first opportunity to record in areas that were previously closed to the public.



Sycamore

We met close to the main entrance to the estate and took the woodland track leading past the slopes below the Temple of the Winds. While under the *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore) and *Fagus sylvatica* (Beech) trees there was much *Hedera helix* (Common Ivy), *Rubus spp.* (Bramble) and *Lonicera periclymenum* (Honeysuckle), this area was also rich in ferns. These were mostly *Dryopteris filix-mas* (Male-fern) and *Polystichum setiferum* (Soft Shield-fern), with lesser numbers of *Dryopteris dilatata* (Broad Buckler-fern) and *Dryopteris affinis* (Golden-scaled Male-fern). *Dryopteris borreii* (Borrer's Scaly Male-fern) was a notable find. To the left of the track was a patch of

Vicia sepium (Bush Vetch), a mixture of a few usual dull purple flowers but mainly were the rarer white form. *Festuca rubra* (Red Fescue), *Anthoxanthum odoratum* (Sweet Vernal-grass) and *Poa trivialis* were the predominant grasses beside the track, with *Brachypodium sylvaticum*

(False Brome) being occasional. The sedges *Carex sylvatica* (Wood-sedge) and *C. remota* (Remote Sedge) were frequent and *C. pendula* (Pendulous Sedge) was occasional. A gap in the trees permitted a view of the lagoon at Anne's Point and Chapel Island in Strangford Lough beyond.

Walking on, we passed an area where saline encroachment from the lagoon had apparently killed some trees. The ground beside the path was marshy and treacherous. *Silene flos-cuculi* (Ragged-robin) was in flower and *Epilobium hirsutum* (Great Willowherb) was seen.



Foxglove

continued



Mountstewart (contd)

10th June 2017



Sanicle

Careful investigation produced *Ranunculus sceleratus* (Celery-leaved Buttercup), but mostly the wet area was devoid of plants. *Agrostis stolonifera* (Creeping Bent) was abundant around the water and a single *Schedonorus arundinaceus* (Tall Fescue) was seen a short way along the track.

Continuing through the mixed woodland, we saw a few *Sanicula europaea* (Sanicle) and good numbers of *Asplenium scolopendrium* (Hart's-tongue) and senescing *Ficaria verna ssp. fertilis* (Lesser Celandine) and *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell). *Veronica montana* (Wood Speedwell) was a pleasing find in the glade where we stopped for a break.

Fagus sylvatica (Beech) had been planted some time ago on Patterson's Hill, and these trees were now mature. *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch) seemed a more recent addition. The ground cover was *Hedera helix* (Common Ivy) and mixed ferns. As the track left the woodland, *Ulmus glabra* (Wych Elm) was noted and *Quercus robur* (Pedunculate Oak) seen beside the track.

After passing farmed land, we entered the Glen Wood with *Oxalis acetosella* (Wood-sorrel) on the banks and a stony stream beside which *Oenanthe crocata* (Hemlock Water-dropwort) was growing. The folly was disappointingly barren.



Honeysuckle

From there we followed a farm track which had *Anisantha diandra* (Great Brome) and crop volunteers *Linum usitatissimum* (Flax) and *Brassica rapa* (possibly Turnip-rape). The track led to the Old Piggery, now derelict, but supporting significant populations of *Asplenium trichomanes ssp. quadrivalens* (Maidenhair Spleenwort) and *Polypodium spp.* (Polypody). A marshy area beside the track had *Epilobium hirsutum* (Great Willowherb) and *Veronica beccabunga* (Brooklime) with its bright blue flowers. We then entered the woodland to climb New Hill, again encountering good numbers of senescing *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (Bluebell).

On the descent from the hill to return to the car park, a comfrey was seen that after some deliberation was identified as *Symphytum tuberosum* (Tuberous Comfrey).



The Federation of Irish Field Clubs trip to the Isle of Man

Guide: Dr Katie Kewley

15th to 19th June 2017



This was the third biennial long field trip under the auspices the FIFC and this time it was the turn of the BNFC to organise it. The Isle of Man was a new venue for many of the party and after three days of only scratching the surface of what the island provides in archaeological/historical, botanical, geological and zoological interest many people expressed an interest in returning for a holiday. The first day was spent travelling to the IOM and settling into the **Welbeck Hotel** with a short briefing meeting after dinner.

We were based in the capital **Douglas**, which is central to most of the places we visited and convenient for the airport and the ferry terminal. Our guide for the three days was **Dr Katie Kewley** who had also enlisted the support of **Dr Philippa Tomlinson**, **Dr Peter Davey** and wardens at the **Ayres** and **Close Scartfield Nature Reserves**.

This is an overview of the field trip and more detailed separate reports will be available for the archaeological/historical, botanical, geological and zoological aspects of the trip.

Friday 16th

Our coach picked us up at 9.30 a.m. for our tour of the north of the island. 9.30 was a concession for the first day as the next two days were 9.00 starts. The route took us across the central highland region past the highest peak **Snaefell** and down into **Ramsay**. Today was one of the two days that we travelled on part of the TT course. Our first stop was the **Ayres**, which occupies the very northern tip of the island. This is an important stretch of low-lying sand dune coastline, great for walking and bird watching. A site of major ecological significance, parts having been designated as an Area of Special Scientific Interest and as a National Nature Reserve. The marked Nature Trail winds through the marram dunes and onto the expanse of heath with its extensive lichen flora. The Visitor Centre sits within the sand dunes, an area which stretches 8 kilometres from **Cronk-y-Bing** to the **Point of Ayr**. The **Manx Wildlife Trust** established the Centre and Nature Trail to increase public understanding of this vulnerable area and to provide information about its birds, habitats and rare plant communities. A wooden platform was erected in 2012 to enhance viewing along the coastline and out to sea. It was from this platform that the warden pointed out the features of the area before taking us on a walk, which proved to be of great interest to the botanists and ornithologists.

The beach usually provides a great walk with plenty of birds to watch including diving gannets and the pebbles are of geological interest but this was out of bounds as during the breeding season it is a nesting site for oyster catchers and little terns. The weather was overcast and windy but we did not let that stop us 'enjoying' a picnic lunch at the Point of Ayr. After that we drove to the more central location of **Close Scartfield**. Because the coach could not negotiate the narrow access road from the main road to the site we had a 20 minute walk but Philippa and Peter were on hand to ferry some people by car.

The beautiful country lane leading to the site was a delight with hedgerow plants including a variety of roses. The warden met us for a walk around Close Scartfield and not only pointed out interesting plants but told us about the management of the site. It lies on the northwest edge of the **Ballaugh Curragh**, the Island's largest wetland.

continued



The FIFC trip to the Isle of Man (contd)

15th to 19th June 2017

Throughout the 20th century most of Close Sartfield was grazed by cattle and or cut for hay, with some of the fields being ploughed and growing crops. This system continued until the early 1980's when the land was abandoned and received no management until the Trust began working 1989. In a short space of time scrub had invaded many of the fields and the site was quite overgrown. Five of the fields have been returned to species-rich hay meadow being mown for hay and then grazed over the winter months. The hay is cut in August when many of the plants have flowered and set seed. Once the grass has grown back a small flock of sheep are brought onto the reserve. Whenever possible the Trust uses **Loaghtan sheep**, which are a rare breed and native to the Island. They are small and hardy and browse as well as graze so they are particularly suited to the habitats present on site. The sheep have access to the curragh where they are especially useful at keeping bramble and other scrub at bay.

Fortunately the weather had improved and we were able to enjoy some late afternoon sunshine on our last visit, which was to **Maughold**. Peter Davey was on hand to tell us about the history of the area and talk about the **Manx crosses** in the specially built shelter in the graveyard. He was also able to point us in the direction of other interesting features around the churchyard. Peter accompanied us back to the hotel for dinner where we were joined by Philippa who gave us an illustrated talk on the Ecosystems and biodiversity of the island.



Sound of Man

Saturday 17th

The planned itinerary had to be changed today because of the **Parish Walk**, which was taking place a week earlier than normal. The walk is 85 miles long and involves walkers visiting every parish church on the island in 24 hours. It is a timed event so there is competition to see who can finish in the quickest time. This year was the hottest on record for the walk and 127 people completed the full distance with the winner doing it in 15:36:59.

By driving to the south of the island instead of our planned middle of the island visits we were able to avoid the road closures and holdups associated with it. Our first stop was **Scarlett Point** in **Castletown**. For those who didn't wish to do the 2-3 hour walk there was the option of staying in the

town and visiting some of the many places of historical interest there. The walk provided us with outstanding coastal scenery, spectacular limestone and volcanic rock-formations, plenty of birds to see and sites of historical interest from the quarry, source of the limestone which built Castletown, and the triple lime-kilns on the shore to the earthen works near the end of the trail.

Unfortunately a mist obscured the upland areas and kept the temperature low for a good part of the morning but it did disperse and we enjoyed a hot sunny afternoon. From Castletown we travelled a few miles to the **Sound of Man**

continued



The FIFC trip to the Isle of Man (contd)

15th to 19th June 2017

Here our first important visit was the café for lunch before exploring the adjoining area with its spectacular views in all directions. There was plenty to satisfy the diverse interests of the group should it be flowers, birds, seals or the historical Parade. The coach then drove us the short distance to **Cregneash Folk village** where again there was a choice of walking to the chambered cairn on **Meayll Hill** or staying in the Folk Village. There was also an additional walk to the **Chasms**. Some people managed to fit in all three activities.



Glen Maye

Sunday 18th

It was the centre of the island today and our first stop was **Glen Maye**. The Isle of Man is famous for its many glens and Katie had explained about the formation of these glens during our coach journey on the first day. Glen Maye has an iconic waterfall, which is featured in much tourist publications. It is relatively unspoilt by tourism and the path winds its way alongside the rushing river. Ferns clad the steep cliffs and on this sunny morning the light filtering through the trees added to the beauty of the glen. As well as the flora and fauna there is also the industrial history of mining in the area to add to the interest.

We eventually ended up on the beach where there were geological features to study. From here we took a steep winding road into the uplands on the south end of the island to visit an upland bog area at **Dalby** that is managed by **Manx Wildlife Trust**. This site did not disappoint those people interested in botany.

Geology was the next area of interest and no better place to see it than **Niarbyl**. Full marks to our driver who managed to steer the bus along narrow steep winding roads down to the coast. Niarbyl is well known for its geological features but it is also has very spectacular scenery. At the little cove there are thatched fishermen's cottages and this is where the film *Waking Ned* was shot; a film set in Ireland but entirely filmed on the Isle of Man.

Then it was off to Peel where we stopped on the outskirts of the town to walk down **The Raggat** which is a glen with a rich industrial heritage. From there we walked onto **St Patricks Isle** which houses **Peel castle**, although we didn't have time to visit the castle the walk around the perimeter walls was very interesting. The final walk of the trip was along the promenade in Peel in search of ice cream which was enjoyed in the company of the many people who had flocked to the town to enjoy the sun and sea on a perfect June day.

There was a conversazione on this our final night and there were interesting displays of artefacts relating to the places we visited. Led by a couple of Dublin members there was a performance session with poetry readings, an extract from Synge's *The Plough and the Stars* and a song from our Belfast songbird. The evening finished with everyone joining in with a rendition of Molly Malone.

continued



The Federation of Irish Field Clubs trip to the Isle of Man (contd)

15th to 19th June 2017

Monday 19th

For the majority of people their return journey was in the morning but a fortunate few had late afternoon flights or were staying on extra days so they were able to enjoy some of the experiences which couldn't be fitted in to our three-day itinerary. These included the electric tram to **Laxey** and then on to **Snaefell**, the **Manx museum** and **Port Erin**.

Thanks to everyone who participated in the field trip and especially to those people whose interest in and knowledge of the flora and fauna added to the overall success of the trip. Thanks also to Margaret Marshall who helped me with the planning and to BNFC Hon treasurer Tony Thomlinson who has kept a detailed account of deposits and expenses.

Joan Semple



Sound of Man



Slievenacloy Nature Reserve

Leader: Cromac McSparron (QUB)

25th July 2017

Slievenacloy Archaeology

On the afternoon of our trip to Slievenacloy we were joined by **Cormac McSparron** from QUB who was able to give us a conducted tour of the earthen enclosure, which has been excavated over the past few years.

The enclosure is sub rectangular with a single bank and ditch. There have been competing theories for its use and these include:

1. A military fort
2. A Henge Monument
3. A Medieval settlement/fair site.



The ditch is relatively shallow and the bank is not high so that would indicate that it was not a defensible structure. The excavation uncovered medieval pottery the earliest dating from 800BC while there was a sequence of changing ceramic styles from the 12th – 14th century. In the enclosure a medieval house measuring 8x6 metres was revealed. It had sod walls faced with flat stones, a cobbles floor, 2 hearths, stone footings for furniture and a drain leading out of the building. The pottery remains indicate that the dwelling dates to the 8th – 9th

century. Other later dwellings maybe in the enclosure but the only evidence from the site is medieval.

Cormac then talked about the changes in the landscape in early medieval times mentioning the new technologies of the iron plough and the water wheel brought in by monks. Although the early feudal system brought more grain production and while the “cow” economy was still present it was fitted around cereal farming. As cattle farming was mostly in upper pastureland there is an assumption that this was an animal enclosure. Work is in progress on soil samples to establish if there are pollen, insects and parasites present that are associated with Cattle. This raises the question of the possibility of other enclosures in the wider area of uplands.

For a community dig in 2016 a trench was opened away from the medieval dig. Much to everyone’s surprise a number of worked flints were found. Further excavation revealed the scant remains of two round houses and charcoal with flint flakes. These dwelling had a drain around them with a gap for the door with the doorways facing each other.

We are indebted to Cormac who gave us a fascinating first hand account of the work that has been done on the site and his expert interpretation of the excavation finds.



Building Stones Tour of Newtownards

Leader: Ian Forsythe

25th July 2017



Market Cross

A fairly sunny evening was the setting for BNFC trip to Newtownards with a small party of six members and the leader *Ian Forsythe* starting at *Conway Square* in the town.

With *Scrabo Triassic Quarries* nearby most of the town has been built from the sandstones which are quite diverse from light pink and grey to red and deep red in colour. Various buildings were studied including the *Town Hall* and churches in Triassic stone. We were fortunate to get into *St Mark's Church of Ireland* to see the interior mostly sandstone. Also in different buildings we saw crossbedding in the Scrabo stone.

Also in many buildings in the town there were the greywackes and slates from the Silurian age.

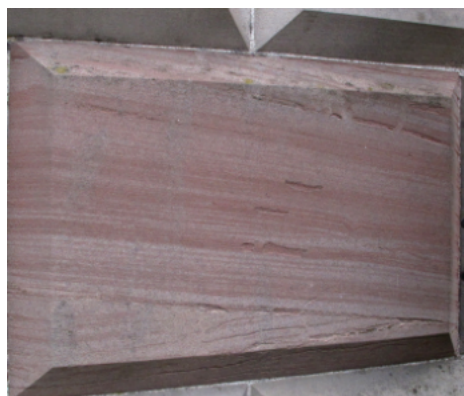
Portland (Jurassic) Limestone was noted in various banks around the town and granite made its mark by being observed at memorials such as the *Blair Mayne* and *TT Memorials* in Conway Square. Modern Granite tends to come from China and Brazil. In the *War Memorial Park* at the *War Memorial* we noted the *Newry Granite* of Caledonian age around the same age as the *Silurian greywackes* which includes distinctive xenoliths.

Ian Forsythe

BNFC Geology Section Secretary



Gargoyle on the Market Cross



Cross bedding on a sandstone block



Assorted stone used in a wall in the older part of the town



Coney Island, Lough Neagh and Maghery

Leaders: Peter McClelland, Warden Craigavon Council
Steven Lavery –Antrim, Banbridge and Craigavon Council

29th July 2017

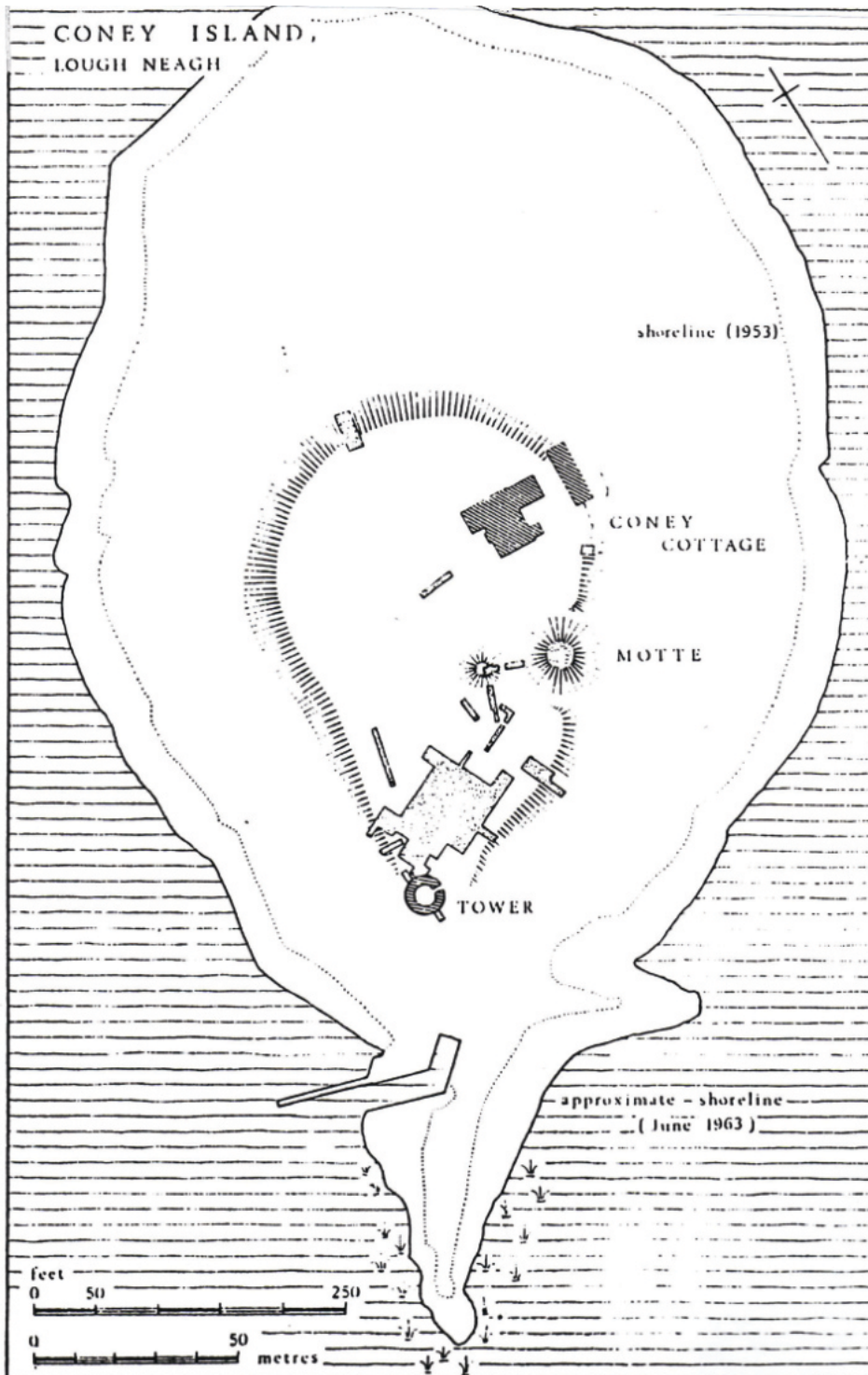


FIG. 2. Coney Island: standing buildings hatched, excavated areas stippled.

Coney Island is 1 km from Maghery, which lies between the estuaries of the **Upper Bann** and **Blackwater** rivers. It is owned by the **National Trust** and managed by **Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon Council**. Before the level of the Lough was lowered it covered 2.25 acres but now covers 9 acres and is wooded.

The island was joined to the mainland by a causeway known as **St Patrick's Road**, which was breached to allow barges to enter the **Blackwater/Ulster canal**. St Patrick was supposed to have visited from Armagh and it became a place of pilgrimage. The motte was probably built in the 13th century as an Anglo-Norman frontier post; the island was then re-fortified with a stone tower and held by the O'Neills until captured by the Elizabethan army. The tower was re-constructed to be his mausoleum by **Alfred Lord Charlemont**, the 7th Viscount Caulfield, who had built himself a summer house on the island in 1895.

Excavations by **Queen's University, Belfast** from 1962- 1964, as reported by **P. V. Addyman**, showed that the island had been inhabited from Mesolithic times. Finds included Mesolithic flints, Neolithic flint-knapping debris and pottery, signs of Early Bronze Age rectangular structures, Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age pottery similar to that at Navan Fort 12 miles away. There were signs of hearths and Souterrain Ware from the Early Christian period. Large hearths and slag indicated that iron-working using Bog Iron found in Lough Neagh was carried on during the time of the O'Neill occupation.

The proton magnetometer was also successful in locating deposits of corned beef cans, rubbish deposits of 20th century Boy Scouts. **Olive Campbell**, who joined us for this excursion, had helped with the excavation in 1962 and 1963 and I myself was there in 1964.

continued



Coney Island, Lough Neagh and Maghery

**Leaders: Peter McClelland, Warden Craigavon Council
Steven Lavery –Antrim, Banbridge and Craigavon Council**

29th July 2017



Bluebells (Hyacinthoides non-scriptus)

Members assembled on a sunny morning at **Maghery Country Park** and 21 of us embarked on an inflatable, 5 or 6 at a time, to be ferried across to the island.

At Maghery we noted **Arrow-head** (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*) and **Branched Bur-reed** (*Sparganium erectum*) in the River Blackwater. The island had many mature trees including an ancient **Yew** (*Taxus baccata*). The flora of the island includes woodland plants such as **Bluebells** (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) and **Wood Avenas** (*Geum rivale*) but the invasive **Himalayan Balsam** (*Impatiens glandulifera*) has reached its shores.

Birds seen included a **Kingfisher**, **Swans** and **Common Terns** and there is a heronry on the island as well as 5 species of bats.

We were guided round the island by the Warden, **Peter Mc Clelland**, who has lived alone on the island in the Charlemont summer house since 1995. Ironwork in the shape of the thistle, rose and shamrock decorates the roof ridge and bats roost in the roof space. He has an electricity generator and canister gas, but can be marooned in bad weather. Peter has a fund of stories about the history of the island and former visitors, including the future Edward VII. The so-called Bath House was really a changing room with a fireplace, the actual baths or bathes were taken in the lough.

Peter is kept busy guiding visitors, dealing with vandals, planting trees, keeping the grass mown and the island tidy. Unfortunately he had just been informed that he is soon to be retired. He is fearful that without a resident warden, this remarkable place will be damaged.

Peter was thanked for his excellent tour and we wished him well for the future. Steven carried us safely back to the mainland after a most interesting excursion.

Margaret Marshall



Botany at Murlough

Leader Margaret Marshall

Saturday 5th August 2017



Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*)

Joint Butterfly Conservation N. Ireland and BNFC Zoological/ Botanical excursions are always rewarding especially when the sun shines. Just as butterflies and moths and the flowering plants are dependent on each other, so our members gain from each other's expertise and enthusiasm.

The dune system at *Murlough*, estimated to be up to 6000 years old, is one of the best examples of dune heathland in Ireland and has 16% of the UK's heathland. In 2017 the area is celebrating 50 years of conservation under the management of the *National Trust*. Much work is necessary to control bracken and Sea Buckthorn (*Elaeagnus rhamnoides*). Exmoor ponies and rabbits descended from the Anglo-Norman Warren keep down scrub and grasses.

We admired the more acid dunes, purple with Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*), Ling Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) just coming into flower and in wetter spots occasional plants of Cross-leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*).



Devil's Bit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*)

Murlough is an important site for the Marsh Fritillary butterfly and we were pleased to see its food plant, Devilsbit Scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) in abundance. It has a shallow root and the devil is reputed to have bitten it off. Fritillary webs were spotted on Scabious plants sheltered by patches of heather.

The more recent dunes nearer the shore were bright with typical seaside plants – multi-coloured Wild Pansies (*viola tricolor*) with a few of the yellow sub- species *curtisii*, pink Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) and a large plant of Viper's Bugloss (*Echium vulgare*), rare in Ireland. With pink buds, bright blue flowers and protruding purple stamens it is a striking plant.

continued



Botany at Murlough (contd)

Leader Margaret Marshall

Saturday 5th August 2017



Bell heather (*Erica cinerea*)

The spherical black hips of Burnet Rose (*Rosa spinosissima*) were ripening – anyone who has tried to walk through patches of this rose will agree that 'spiniest' is a good descriptive adjective.

In spring this area is a site for several tiny rare plants – Little Mouse-ear (*Cerastium semidecandrum*), Shepherd's Cress (*Teesdalia nudicaulis*) and Early Forget-me-not (*Myosotis ramosissima*).

Fine views of the Mourne and the Red Arrows were an added bonus on a very pleasant day.

Margaret Marshall





Some Historic Belfast Buildings

Leaders: Marcus Patton and Claire Foley

8th August 2017



Details from Scottish Provident Institution Building



Joy Street Georgian Terrace



Members met at *City Hall* where Marcus drew our gaze to the *Scottish Provident Institution building* along *Donegall Square West*.

Built 1897-1902 to designs by *Young and Mackenzie* we are lucky that this splendid building has survived the ravages of redevelopment although some details at roof level were removed. The façade is worth a detailed examination with its a myriad of sculpted tableaux on industrial themes lightheartedly demonstrated by cherubs.

The sad history of destruction of many other important buildings here was lamented, particularly on corners and we were shown photographs of before and after for some of them. Leaving *Donegall Square* we walked to *Joy Street/Hamilton Street* to hear the story of the saving of these terraces, the only surviving Georgian buildings in Belfast, and their renewal as housing by *HEARTH*.

Returning to *Donegall Place* we admired the former *Robinson and Cleaver building* -1886-1888, also by *Young and Mackenzie*, a former linen warehouse, with its display of some 50 sculpted heads on another elaborate facade. We learned that this street was originally developed for upmarket private housing from the late 18th century (the *Donegall* family had a house here) before being converted to shops from the 19th to the mid 20th centuries.

We examined in particular the *Brookmount Buildings* built 1930 -1932- an Art Deco design in Portland stone by for *Riddells ironmongery* whose warehouse we would see later.

Passing along to *Ann Street* we noted the survival of the 'entries' so characteristic of Belfast and our gaze was directed to the remarkable Art Deco façade faced in faience tiling with elephant motifs now used as the *Complete Entertainment Exchange*.

Passing by other interesting facades we noted the rewards of looking upwards when traversing streets. Crossing *Victoria Street* we continued along *Ann St* and were privileged to be brought into the former *Riddells' ironmongery* warehouse, built in 1865-1867 by *Thomas Jackson and Son*. We experienced the building as an abandoned one with intact details of offices and timber floors for storage of everything from steel plate to nails. It is now saved through purchase by *Hearth* and it is intended to develop it into an art gallery for the *Royal Ulster Academy*.



Riddells' Ironmongery warehouse



Archaeology in Fermanagh and South Donegal

12th-13th August 2017

Leader: Claire Foley

After a rendezvous at *Kesh* we travelled in convoy some 4 miles north to *Drumskinny Stone Circle* (in State Care). Typical in form to many other



Ulster stone circles this is the most northerly of a local group centred on *Montiaghroe* to south. It is a complex site with a circle of 31 low standing stones, a small, central cairn and an alignment of little standing stones running off to south east. Excavated from under peat by *Dudley Waterman* in the 1960s, he felt that the finds of a piece of Neolithic pottery and at least one flint hollow scraper spoke more to a possible Neolithic date than the usual Bronze Age one for



Drumskinny Stone Circle

such sites. Members were fascinated by the miniature nature of the components and recalled a visit to a similar site at *Copney* Co Tyrone on 4th July 2014.

Next stop was the castle of *Termon McGrath castle* – just over the ‘invisible’ border into Donegal - birthplace of *Myler McGrath* who started out as a Franciscan Friar and finished up as Archbishop of Cashel in the Reformed church. The castle was probably built by his son after 1610 and is an impressive tower house with an extensive bawn or enclosed yard, a circular stair tower and a well preserved entrance doorway complete with defensive gun loops and draw-bar. Members braved a very cattle-trampled field to approach it. Although this was built during the Plantation period its architecture is partly of Irish style with ‘battered’ walls and stepped battlements. We had a clear view of the interior from the north as that wall is entirely missing and we noted that the form of the mullioned windows is more 17th- century in style. The bawn shows clear evidence for a cobbled avenue leading through it to north.



*Blennerhasset Coat of Arms,
Crevinish Castle*

Next stop was *Boa island* where in *Dreenan townland* two sculptures are found in the old graveyard. Often mis-named the ‘*janus figure*’ the largest of these is a statue of two back to back figures with remarkable faces showing large staring eyes and open mouths above pointed chins which might be beards. Each has crossed arms and details of long robes can be discerned. The heads are joined by panels of interlace representing hair. The second sculpture came from nearby *Lustymore* island and is a less developed representation of a human figure with face and flexed arms. Members discussed the issue of conservation of such sculptures and the desirability of providing shelter from frost, wind and rain.

We finished the day at *Crevinish Castle* on the shores of *Lower Lough Erne*. Built by *Thomas Blennerhasset* in the early 17th century, this is an impressive structure and the remaining bawn wall was incorporated in a farmyard. It is now a feature in the newly developed *Hayes Caravan park*.

continued



Archaeology in Fermanagh and South Donegal (contd)

12th-13th August 2017



Termon McGrath Castle

Though ruined, it is possible to read it as a four-storey building with an entrance on the east, fireplaces on three floors and a defensive angle tower in the north west corner. It was abandoned in 1641 when a dinner party was warned of an imminent attack by the local Maguires. It was converted to a church and graveyard at a later stage and the Blennerhasset coat of arms remains extant.

On Sunday members were treated to a tour of the newly re-opened *Fermanagh County Museum* by the Director *Sarah McHugh*.

Sited in the old *Castle Barracks Coach House*, the very accessible displays embrace the archaeology, history and folklife of Co Fermanagh.

A highlight was the selection of objects from the recently excavated crannog at *Drumclay*.



Claire Foley above and members left at Boa Island Janus



Drumclay Comb, Fermanagh



Crevenish Castle



Presidential Outing, Bellaghy and Waterfoot

Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Bellaghy and Waterfoot

Leader: Margaret Marshall

19th August 2017



BNFC President - Margaret Marshall

Seamus Heaney's first published volume of poetry was entitled "*Death of a Naturalist*", the title of one of the poems in this collection. However the members of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club were very much alive when we gathered at the Seamus Heaney Homeplace in Bellaghy.

The centre opened in 2016 and shows how the poet was inspired by the countryside and people of the rural area where he was born and brought up. David, one of the guides, gave us an interesting introduction to the exhibitions. On display were Seamus' school satchel, desk and even his duffle coat. We were able to see photographs of his family and friends while listening to recordings of the Nobel Laureate reading his own poems. **Marcus Simms** had asked us to photograph and report on a water pump, this one was stamped as made in Ballymena but apparently imitation "old" pumps come from China.

On display are manuscripts of his poems showing the amount of re-working he did to achieve his final versions; the library contains many of his own books donated by the family. Walls covered with photographs show how he was inspired by people and places from all over the world; he lectured in universities in many countries and translated the Old English epic *Beowulf* and Virgil's *Aeneid VI*. Children and adults are encouraged to be creative themselves by joining in various activities. The centre has a full programme of craft exhibitions, concerts, plays and lectures - some of us stayed for a lecture by **Professor Fran Brearton** on Heaney's penultimate work "*District and Circle*".

After lunch in the pleasant cafe we joined members of the **Cookstown Wildlife Trust** at Waterfoot Cottage, on the shores of Lough Neagh, by kind permission of **Henry and Kathleen Wells**. Ernie and Ruth Hunter had arranged for us to visit the meadows around this self-catering holiday cottage. The mown paths made access easy and we were impressed by the range of plants still flowering towards the end of August. The BSBI recorder, **Ian Mc Neill**, had recorded over 160 plants there in June 2016.



Pondside foraging

First stop was at a pond, where a young **Smooth Newt** (*Triturus vulgaris*) about 5 cm long was found on a leaf; they grow to about 10cms long and hibernate on land.

Common **Blue Damselflies** (*Enallagma cyathigerium*) were flitting around. The large amounts of **Yellow Rattle** (*Rhinanthus minor*) and **Red Bartsia** (*Odontites verna*), which are both hemi-parasites on grass, will encourage wild flowers to establish themselves. **Gipsywort** (*Lycopus europaeus*), a member of the Mint family but not aromatic. It is common here but not elsewhere. Gypsies were said to use it to tan their faces.



Presidential Outing (contd)

Seamus Heaney Homeplace, Bellaghy and Waterfoot

Leader: Margaret Marshall

19th August 2017



Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*)

Two poisonous umbellifers, **Cowbane** (*Cicuta virosa*) and **Hemlock Water-dropwort** (*Oenanthe crocata*) were established on the banks. A gardener in the group identified an unusual-looking plant as **Indian Rhubarb** (*Darmera peltata*), a member of the Saxifrage family.

Along the path towards the Lough, large clumps of **Yellow Loosestrife** (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), **Purple Loosestrife** (*Lythrum salicaria*), **Marsh Woundwort** (*Stachys palustris*) and **Great Willowherb** (*Epilobium hirsutum*) with white as well as purple-pink flowers made a great show along with the invasive **Himalayan Balsam** (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Trifid **Bur-marigold** (*Bidens tripartita*) is rare away from Lough Neagh. **Skullcap** (*Scutellaria galericulata*), a rare labiate with bright blue flowers, was growing profusely by the path. Ian McNeill had a long pole to drag water plants including **Hornwort** (*Ceratophyllum*) and invasives such as **Azolla** from ditches. By and in a ditch were **Celery-leaved Buttercup** (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), **Water Plantain** (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and **Water Forget-me-nots** (*Myosotis laxa* & *scorpioides*). On the path back towards the cottage was a boggy area with the pretty pink flowers of **Bog Pimpernel** (*Anagallis tenella*) and the blue **Brooklime** (*Veronica beccabunga*) which bungs up becks!

Near the house were clumps of yellow **Greater Celandine** (*Chelidonium majus*), a member of the Poppy family.

Ulster Wildlife's **Moyola Waterfoot Nature Reserve** nearby with a Bird Hide on the Lough shore is noted as a site for the rare **Ground Beetle** (*Dyschirius obscurus*). WaterNI is allowing the former sewage settling ponds to develop as nature reserves.

We are grateful to the **Walls** family for allowing us to visit this remarkable place and for the efforts they have made to preserve the habitat for wildlife.

Margaret Marshall



The Cavan Burren

Leaders: Jim Nolan and Robert Northridge 16th September 2017

This field trip was organised by BNFC for the Federation of Irish Field Clubs. Unfortunately, distance and inclement weather combined to deter many BNFC members from attending so the majority of participants was from the DNFC.



The morning session was led by local historian Jim Nolan who has been instrumental in raising the profile of the Cavan Burren and studying and conserving the archaeological features. Our introduction to the area was held in the newly opened interpretive centre with its self-guiding display panels. The weather had improved slightly so we were able to examine the various archaeological remains without getting too wet. The low cloud cleared enough for us to appreciate the views of the surrounding

countryside and understand its connection with neighbouring Fermanagh.



In the afternoon we were fortunate to be joined by Robert Northridge who enthusiastically used his considerable knowledge of the local flora to enable us to find among things was the rare filmy fern.





Fungus Foray, Belvoir Forest Park

Conductor: Richard O'Hanlon

30th September 2017

Our leader this year was *Dr Richard O'Hanlon*, Plant Pathologist at the Agri- Food and Biosciences Institute. His PhD work in Limerick involved research into whether forestry plantations had a range of fungi species comparable to established broadleaf woods. He established that Sitka Spruce forests were excellent habitats for fungi, so a Sitka Spruce plantation was on our itinerary. Ash, Sycamore and Horse Chestnut trees do not support mycorrhiza, so there are fewer fungi under them.



Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*)

The *British Mycological Society* had visited Belvoir Forest in 1947 and Richard showed us their report identifying several species new to the area. His handout gave useful hints and warnings on wild mushroom picking – he had collected *Chanterelles* here recently and also recommended Ceps, *Hedgehog* and *Wood Blewit*. *Amanita*, *Cortinarius*, various small brown mushrooms and Look-a-likes should be avoided.

He explained the symbiotic relationship between trees and fungi through the interaction of *mycorrhiza*. Fungi reproduce through spores and in the toadstool-type fungi they are massed in gills or pores.

We first examined the ground under the ancient oak and old beech trees. Cavalier Mushroom (*Melanoleuca melaleuca*), Amethyst Deceivers (*Laccaria amethystea*), Poison Pie (*Hebeloma crustuliniforme*), Wood Blewit (*Lepista nuda*) and some of the 200 species of Milk Caps (*Lactarius*) were collected. An unmistakable species is the Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*), its smell of rotting meat attracts flies which spread

the spores. The Weeping Widow (*Lacrymaria velutina*) is so named as its gills exude watery drops.

As Richard had predicted, when we moved on to a grove of Sitka Spruce, we found a large variety of species. The bright-red juicy-looking Beef-steak fungus (*Fistulina hepatica*) is edible but tastes of mushroom not steak!



Beefsteak (*Fistulina hepatica*)

continued



Fungus Foray, Belvoir Forest Park (contd)

30th September 2017



Coral fungus (*Clavulina cinerea*)



Orange Peel fungus

Among the many species of *Russula* we found *Russula ochroleuca*. Orange-peel (*Aleuria aurantica*) is well-named. Tough Shanks (*Collybia*) can be identified by their tough fibrous stems. Puff-balls (*Lycoperdon* sp.) are edible while young, their spores are liberated through a single orifice when touched; Earth-balls (*Sceleroderma* sp.) split up to release their spores.

The photographers gathered round the aptly named Turkey-tail bracket

fungus (*Trametes versicolor*). The tiny dainty Horsehair Toadstools (*Marasmius* sp.) often grow on conifer needles.

After a picnic lunch we went into a more overgrown part of the forest with fewer fungi, but we found Jelly Ear (*Auricularia auricula-judae*) on its usual site of dead Elder (*Sambucus*) branches. Honey fungus (*Armillariella mellea*) sends out long black boot-lace like strands that can spell death to trees. Photographs were taken of a large pink Coral Fungus (*Clavulina cinerea*) that looked just like a genuine ocean coral.

Richard was thanked for sharing his expertise and enthusiasm with us on a pleasant autumn day in this area which is unique as a forest in a city.

Margaret Marshall

