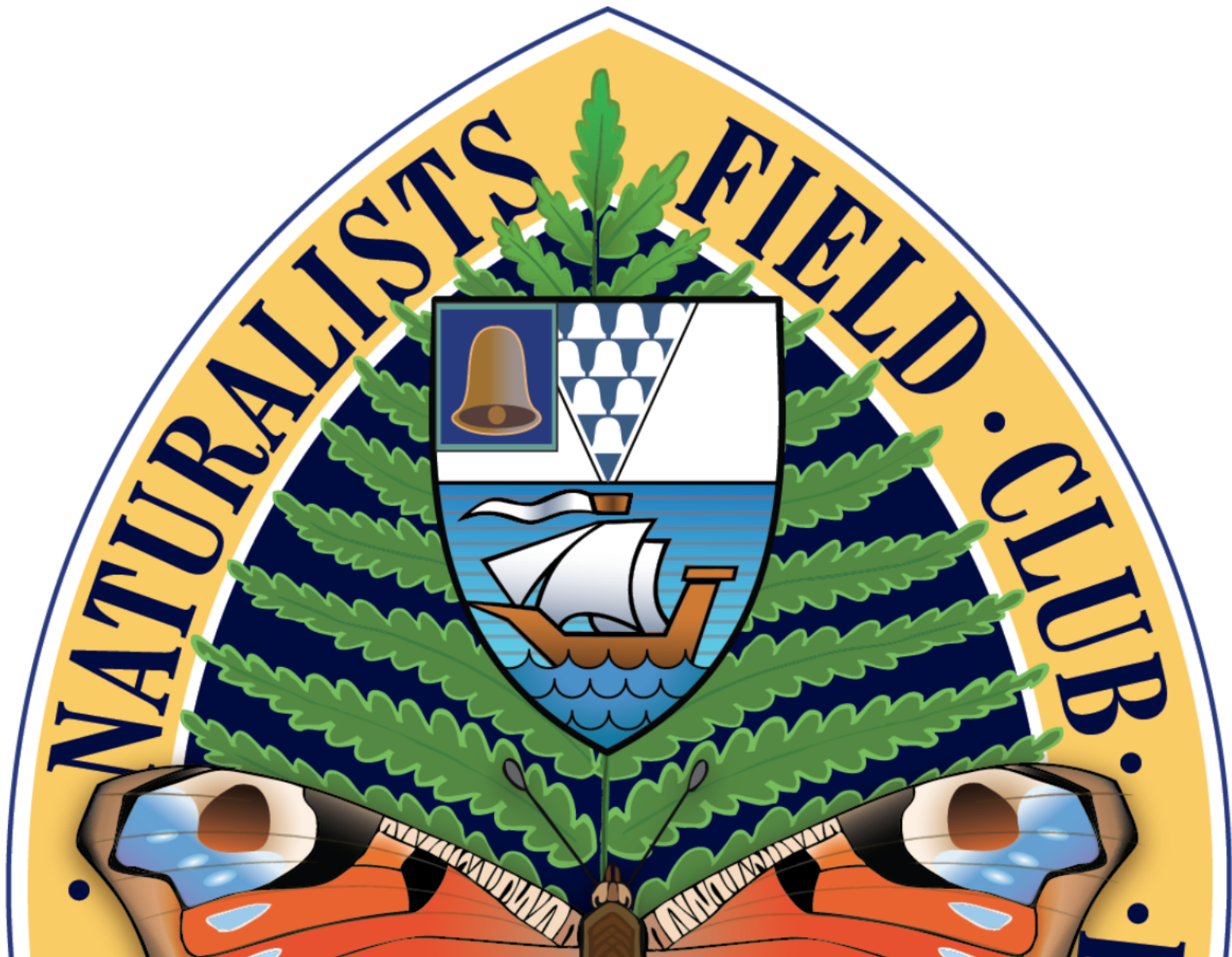


Belfast Naturalists'
Field Club

Field Reports
2018



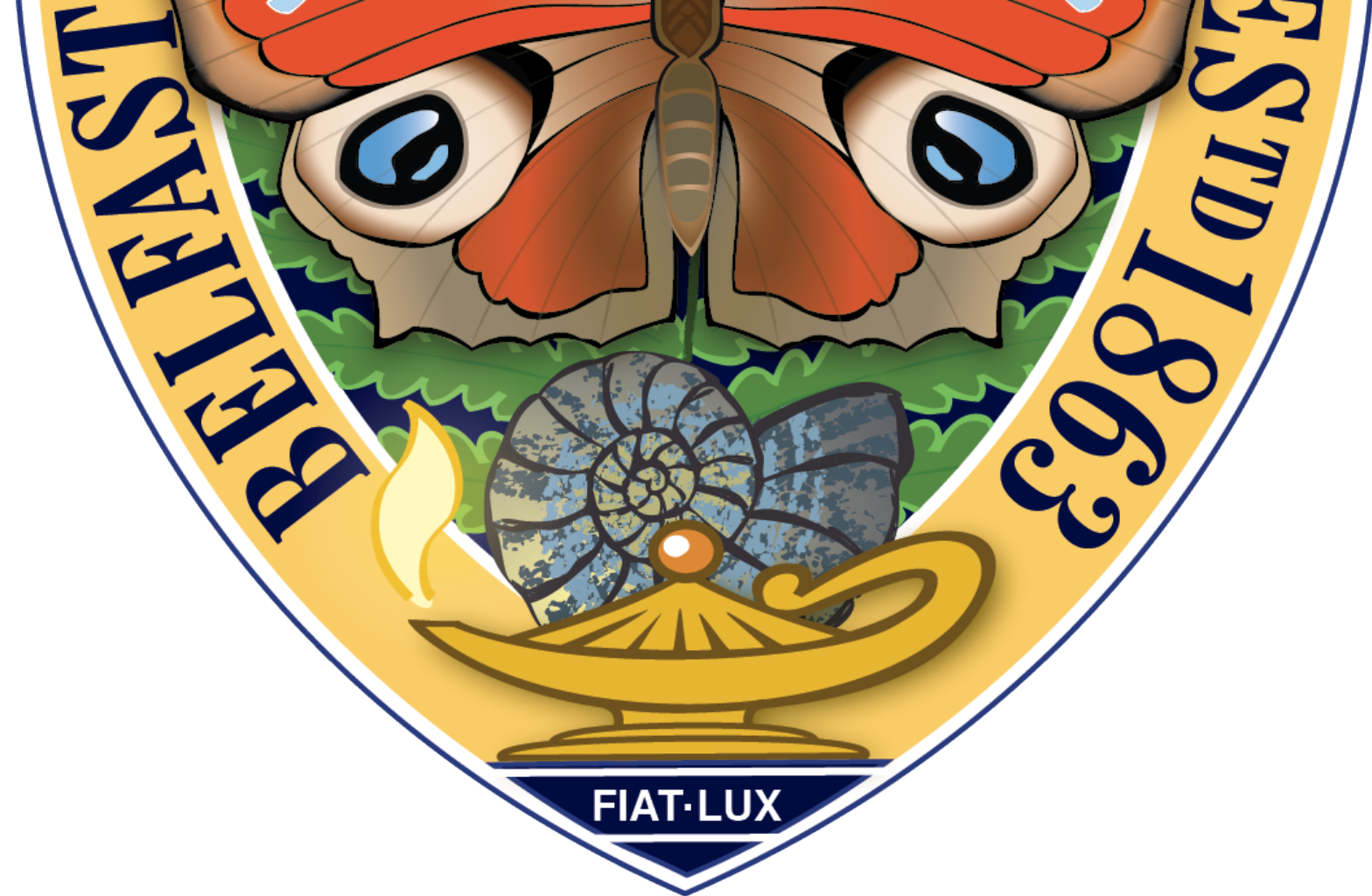


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The Tropical Ravine

28th April 2018



The Tropical Ravine, the creation of *Charles McKimm*, head gardener in *Belfast's Botanic Gardens*, first opened in 1889 and was built on the site of the former orchid and propagating houses. After a hundred and thirty years of use and changes, between 2013 and 2018, the ravine was restored to how the Victorians designed the original building in 1887.

Old features were reinstated and unique details preserved.



To mark its opening, and as the first outing of the summer programme, the Club arranged to have a conducted tour of the newly refurbished Tropical Ravine. We spent a very interesting hour examining the tropical plants in the heat and humidity.

As well as the botanical interest, the ravine has excellent explanatory posters, one of these noting the early contribution of members of the *Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society* and the *Field Club*.

Tribute is also given to *John Templeton*, as the 'Father of Irish Botany'.

After the visit and lunch in the Museum, *Joan Semple* gave a Power Point presentation featuring a selection from some of the 2017 outings, and a short preview of some of the places we plan to visit in 2018.



Minnowburn

Leaders: Craig and Lorna Somerville

8th May 2018



We are most grateful to Craig and Lorna Somerville for leading us on a beautiful May evening walk through the mixed deciduous woodland (mainly beech) along the river Lagan to what is informally known as Turnip Wood. Large Bittercress, *Cardamine amara*, grows along the Lagan Path. It is distinguished from *Cardamine pratensis*, Lady's Smock, by its white petals and violet anthers. In *Cardamine pratensis* the anthers are yellow and the petals are usually mauve, but sometimes white. In Ireland, *Cardamine amara* is confined to Ulster and is rare (Webb's Irish Flora, eighth edition). It is increasing at this site.



Tree planter (2008)



The BNFC planted trees in Turnip Wood in 2008. Those who remembered that occasion were surprised and pleased to see how well the two-year-old saplings had grown in the intervening ten years. The mix included Scots Pine, Oak (grown from acorns sourced from ancient Irish Oaks in Belvoir Park), with gall- wasp induced oak apple galls, Hazel, Crab Apple in flower, Wild Cherry, *Prunus avium*, in flower, Birch in catkin and Ash in flower.

The herb layer is still mainly grass with a deep mat of Springy Turf Moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*) amongst it.

continued

Minnowburn (contd)

8th May 2018



Tree planting (2008)



Some of us examined the minute characters of the twigs and flowers with Lorna's guidance. The red gland-tipped hairs on the young twigs of Hazel are well worth seeing with a hand lens. At the edge, we also found Bird Cherry (*Prunus padus*), and examined catkins on one of the Birch trees. The male catkins are pendulous and yellow and the female are upright and green.

We moved on to another area where contractors had planted thousands of trees in blocks of single species in straight lines. One tree in a block of Ash has already succumbed to Ash Dieback.

We returned to the carpark via *Terrace Hill*, the former *Robinson rose garden*, now restored by the *National Trust*.

We admired one of the best views in Belfast, over the woodland towards Cave Hill. On the way down, Lorna showed us Spindle trees, in full leaf, but with their flowers yet to open.



Craig has used Iroko wood, reclaimed from the old Lagan footbridge, when it was replaced, for new seating and signage at Minnowburn.

Folk Museum, Cultra

8th May 2018

The BNFC and *Graham Day*, BSBI Recorder for Co Down, were asked to do a botanical survey of the Cultra Manor grounds to contribute to the future plans for management of the grounds; the aim is to encourage native plants and pollinators.



The Ulster Folk Museum covers 170 acres of rolling countryside and the Country Route round the re-constructed old farm buildings and mills leads through semi-natural woodland and tillage and grazing fields.

On a lovely sunny May morning we headed first for the grounds round Cultra Manor – these consisted of over-mown lawns, where the only wild plants such as Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and Lady's Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) were under box hedges and on a sloping bank.

Graham and other botanists spent some time with hand lenses



Lady's Smock

examining a Lady's Mantle, which turned out to be a sub-species (*Alchemilla filicaulis ssp. vestita*). "Al" is the Arabic word for the "the" and many words beginning with "Al" are of Arabic origin – Alchemists thought that the water droplets which gather on Alchemilla leaves would help turn other metals into gold. Also on the lawn were Slender Speedwell (*Veronica filiformis*), an alien from Turkey and a frequent weed of lawns since 1927, and Field Club-rush (*Luzula campestris*). There is an obvious need to reduce the amount of mowing on these lawns to allow



Bluebells

plants favoured by pollinators to appear. In the woodland areas, Bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) were in full flower. We also spotted Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*) with its hairy stems, Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) and Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*). Lysimachus was a Greek King from Sicily and his name means "Ending Strife". Marshy pond areas near reconstructed mills had flowering Yellow Flags (*Iris Pseudacorus*), Water Mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and Watercress (*Nasturtium officinale*).

continued

Folk Museum, Cultra (contd)

8th May 2018



Birdsfoot Trefoil

The farm lands should continue to be farmed in the manner appropriate to their farm-houses – grazing animals, tillage and hay-making.

Graham recorded over 200 plants in the 3x1km squares we covered; many are introductions typical of large estates.

Before heading to the Town Area for refreshments, we stopped at the *Old Rectory* dating from 1717, where Marion Allen showed us the garden with old Irish plants, planted and looked after by the *Irish Garden Plant Society*. Her report follows this.

Margaret Marshall

In 1987 members of the *Irish Garden Plant Society (IGPS)*, along with volunteers from the *Ulster Museum*, undertook to plant and maintain the garden around *The Old Rectory*.

The IGPS was set up to promote the study of plants cultivated in Ireland and their history and to research and locate garden plants considered to be rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen.

The garden is planted in the style of the era of the rectory, pre 1900, with plants either from before 1910 or of Irish origin.

As you enter the garden almost the first plant to catch your eye is the elegant 'Black Lace' (*Sambucus nigra*), Purple leaved Elder, a small tree with purple leaves and pink flowers. Alongside is the lavender flowered Rhododendron (*augustinii* ssp. *Augusti*).

This plant is named after *Augustine Henry* (2 July 1857 – 23 March 1930) who was renowned Irish plantsman. In 1935, *J. W. Besant* was to write:

"The wealth of beautiful trees and flowering shrubs which adorn gardens in all temperate parts of the world today is due in a great measure to the pioneer work of the late Professor Henry."



Folk Museum, Cultra (contd)

8th May 2018

Other plants with Irish connections include the cerise-tipped 'Lady Leitrim' (*Osteospermum jucudum* var. *Compactum*) or African Cape Daisy. This is named for Anne, Lady Leitrim, 2nd wife of the 5th, and last, Earl of Leitrim and is an Irish cultivar;

Another Irish cultivar is 'Rowallane' - St John's Wort (*Hypericum x hybrid*) a shrub with large yellow flowers. This *Hypericum* cultivar was a chance seedling that was found in the 1940s in *Rowallane Garden*.



The Old Rectory from Lismacloskey.
Photo courtesy of Barbara Kelso (IGPS)

Also in the garden are old-fashioned plants that have fallen out of fashion. The architectural Cardoon or Artichoke Thistle (*Cynara cardunculus*) are splendid plants topped by large thistle-like flowers but are generally too large for modern gardens. A personal favourite is the pure white flowered Caucasian Penny-cress (*Pachyphragma macrophyllum*) a semi-evergreen perennial from the woods of Caucasus and N.E. Turkey.

Amongst the roses are 'Rambling Rector' (*Rosa multiflora*), a strong-growing large climber with thorny shoots and large heads of small, semi-double, creamy white flowers, which eventually fade to white.

Each flower exhibits a cluster of pretty yellow stamens. Rosa 'Madame Alfred Carrière' is a sweetly scented old Noisette rose. Neither of these are for the faint-hearted.

Many of these plants have their own story to tell. In the garden is a collection of *Crocsmia* amongst which is 'Rowallane Yellow' (*Crocsmia masoniorum*). It began life in 1981/82 in the middle of a clump of 'Lucifer' (*Crocsmia masoniorum*) in the walled garden at Rowallane, to the left of the Magnolias. It was spotted by Head Gardener Mike Snowdon who nurtured it and is now commercially available.

Other locally bred plants include a collection of Primulas and about 40 different daffodils.

Rosa 'Irish Hope' has a special place. It is a Floribunda which has clusters of full, shapely flowers of pale-lemon yellow, with slightly scalloped edges to the many petals and it is highly scented. This was commissioned by an IGPS member and garden volunteer, Aleen Herdman, to celebrate 90 years of Bryson House.

Provenance is very important. On its journey through life a plant passes through many hands, a name can become corrupted, produce a sport or be mislabelled. A rose known as Miss McCombe was given, many generations ago, to a family member by a Miss McCombe. It has a perfectly legal name of its own, almost certainly now lost.

Ballymacormick Point, Groomsport

Leader: Margaret Marshall

29th May 2018



This was a joint visit of the BNFC with members of the **Groomsport Village Association** who are working enthusiastically to enhance the village; they have planted apple trees in a neglected piece of land and their plant boxes include herbs with a pair of scissors attached so passers-by can help themselves.

They are anxious to see improvements at Ballymacormick with the ambition to create an eco-zone and have been in consultation with the National Trust and North

Down and Ards Council. *John Crockard* of the Groomsport Village Association had contacted BNFC in 2017 and *Lesley Crawshaw* and *Margaret Marshall* had a botanical walk at Ballymacormick with members of the Group in September 2017.



Sea Squill (*Scilla verna*)



Thrift (*Armeria maritima*)

On a fine May evening a large group of BNFC members and Groomsport residents set off on a walk along Ballymacormick Point, a mixed habitat of sea-shore, sea marsh, rocky areas and Gorse scrub. Along the lane we saw the **Mediterranean Three-cornered Garlic** (*Allium triquetrum*) with its 3-angled stems, now naturalised in Co.Down. Another coastal plant is **Tree Mallow** (*Lavatera arborea*) which can withstand Atlantic gales but does not tolerate frost. We found the purple flowers of the **Chinese Duke of Argyll's Tea plant** climbing through a privet hedge. People were warned that **Hemlock Water Dropwort** (*Oenanthe crocata*) is poisonous. Spring brings a riot of colour to Ballymacormick, the blue of the county flower of Down, **Sea Squill** (*Scilla verna*). The yellow of **Birdsfoot Trefoil** (*Lotus corniculatus*), the pink of **Thrift** (*Armeria maritima*) and the whites of **Sea Campion** (*Silene uniflora*) and **Sea Mayweed** (*Tripleurospermum maritimum*). The sea marsh area is distinctive with **Sea Milkwort** (*Glaux maritima*). **Sea Arrow-grass** (*Triglochin maritima*), **Lesser Sea-spurrey** (*Spergularia marina*) and **Glasswort** (*Salicornia europaea*); this has fleshy leaves to cope with the saltiness and soda used to be extracted from it for use in glass-making.

Yellow Flag Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) was flourishing in damp areas and **Great Willowherb** (*Epilobium hirstum*) and **Rosebay Willowherb** (*Chamerion angustifolium*) would soon be in flower.

It was agreed that paths could be improved but should still be kept suitable for pedestrian-use only and that Gorse, brambles and rough grasses should be kept under control to allow more desirable plants to flourish and hence to improve conditions for other wildlife. The Groomsport Village association would continue to work with the National Trust and the Council to make the area more accessible and to improve its value as a habitat.

Margaret Marshall

Bellaghy and Waterfoot

Leader: Ian McNeill

2nd June 2018



Ian Mc Neill, BSBI recorder for Co.Tyrone, and members of the Cookstown Wildlife Trust had recorded 160 plants at the Waterfoot Holiday Cottage site on the shores of Lough Neagh in June 2016. The BNFC had been able to join them in August 2017 where we had been impressed by the great diversity of plants.

Ernie and Ruth Hunter had again arranged a joint visit with the kind permission of the owners, Henry and Kathleen Walls.

We began the day with coffee at the Seamus Heaney Homeplace in Bellaghy and Marion Allen had produced a Powerpoint presentation about some of the plants we would see. She had arranged the plants in groups to demonstrate differences between species, for example different thistles, speedwells, vetches, grasses and willows. She had also provided



Comfrey (*Symphytum x uplandicum*)



Blue Azure Damselfly



poems on Ivy, Dandelions and other plants which members read out. After lunch we met up with the Cookstown group at Waterfoot; our leaders, Ian Mc Neill and Ronnie Irvine considered that because of the late spring plants were at least 2 weeks behind in flowering. Northern Marsh Orchid (see left) (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*) was just coming into flower. The paths mown through the lush vegetation make these shores of Lough Neagh accessible. Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), Red Bartsia (*Odontites verna*) and Eyebright (*Euphrasia spp.*) are hemi-parasites on grass, so make the habitats better for wildflowers.

Common plants by the Pond were the poisonous Cowbane (*Cicuta virosa*), Hemlock Water-dropwort (*Oenanthe crocata*) and Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) which is related to Mint but not fragrant.

Nearby had been planted a large member of the Saxifrage family -Indian Rhubarb (*Darmera peltata*). There were large clumps of Yellow Loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Marsh Woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) but unfortunately Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is also spreading. Skullcap (*Scutellaria galericulata*) a rare labiate was not yet in flower. Ian Mc Neill dragged water plants such as Hornwort (*Ceratophyllum*) and invasives like Azolla from a ditch.



Hymalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

Another ditch near the lough had Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), 2 Water Forget- me-nots (*Myosotis laxa* and *scorpioides*) and Water Plantain (*Alisma plantago- aquatica*).

continued

Bellaghy and Waterfoot (contd)

2nd June 2018



Green Veined White (*Pieris napaeum*)

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

Among birds seen and/or heard were *Great Crested Grebe*, Swans with 5 cygnets, *Coot*, *Little Grebe*, *Grey Heron*, *Sedge and Willow Warblers* and a *Jay*.

There were lots of *Blue Azure Damselflies* in flight and *Giant Pond and Ram's Horn Snails* were pulled out of the water.

The Walls family and our leaders were thanked for making it possible for us to re-visit this very special place.

Margaret Marshall



Lesley Crawshaw

Cavehill

Leaders: Rob Raine and Kirsten Lemon

5th June 2018

The month of June is always expected to be reasonable summer weather and this evening we were not disappointed for a few hours in the vicinity of the *Cavehill*.



Twenty five members of both the *Belfast Naturalists' Field Club* and *Belfast Geologists' Society* met for a joint excursion in the company of the leaders *Rob Raine* and *Kirstin Lemon* of the *Geological Survey of Northern Ireland*.

Leaving from *Old Cavehill Road* we ascended by way of the woodlands and it was a good opportunity for our leaders to promote the recently published book '*Rambling on the Rocks*' Walking Northern Ireland's Natural Landscape. One of the walks outlined in the book was the *Cavehill* and this is what we were following during the evening, although it was actually in reverse order.



Old Limestone Quarry

We passed the *Limestone Quarry*, now disused, that transported the material by a horse drawn railway towards the docks by way of a road appropriately called the *Limestone Road*. After this we reached the *Ballyaghagan Nature Reserve* where there were plenty of limestone exposures.

Good opportunities to catch up on breath and take in the views of north Belfast and beyond. Some members were able to study the meadows and rich diversity of local plants.

Our goal was the summit of the

continued

Cavehill (contd)

5th June 2018



Old Limestone Quarry

Cavehill on top of the *Antrim Basalts* that dominate much of the countryside to the north from 60 million years ago. At 368 metres or 1,207 feet above sea level the views were superb – all the way to mid Antrim, Belfast Lough and towards Scrabo and the Mourne to the south. *McArts Fort* has historical associations with the *United Irishmen* of 1798 and close by are the caves well known to us through the photography of *R.J. Welch*, a well known member of the club a century ago. We had plenty of time to linger to take in

the views from the summit before descending towards *Belfast Castle* by way of the *Devil's Punchbowl*, a scarp of basalt carved out like the shape of a bowl.

Once past the Castle a short walk through woodland brought us back to the Old Cavehill Road starting point – a good evening had by all, about 4.5 mile walk in total.

Ian Forsythe



McArts Fort (Photo NI Tourism)



Sandstone from the Triassic Period



Kirsten Lemon and Rob Raine



The Limestone Quarry showing the Dolerite Dyke traversing the Chalks and Basalts. Photo by R.J Welch, National Museums of Northern Ireland.

Downpatrick

9th-10th June 2018

Leader: Mike King, Curator, Down County Museum

This **Federation of Irish Field Clubs** excursion largely followed the plan of the BNFC Presidential outing in June 2016 and was themed as a look back at the Early Christian period in Downpatrick and surrounding area.



BNFC members outside Saul Church

There was a good representation by members from Belfast and Dublin Clubs. Mike King was again our guide for the day and those who have met him know of his deep knowledge of and enthusiasm for the museum and its artefacts.

After the tour of the Museum, we visited the replica of the *High Cross* outside the Cathedral and *St Patrick's* grave (see *photographs in the 2016 report by Joan Semple*). There was also an opportunity to view fragments of Crosses inside the

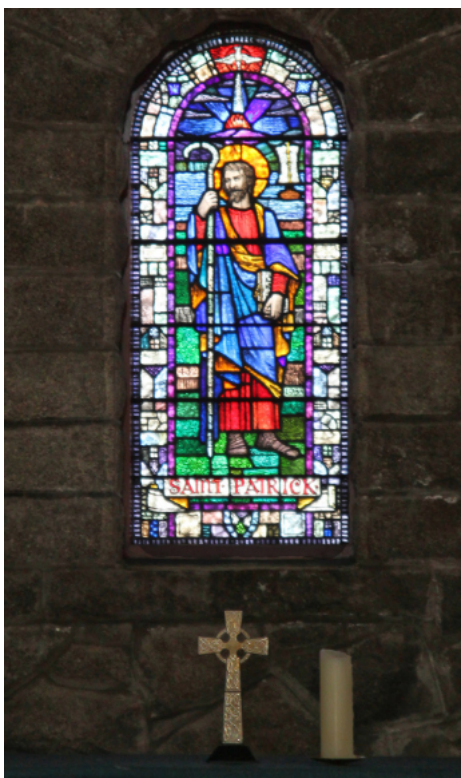
Cathedral and hear about the latest discoveries and the restoration project for *St Patrick's Cross*. After lunch we assembled outside the museum where we were conducted by coach to *Saul Church*, *Struell Wells* and *Inch Abbey*.

Our penultimate visit was to *St. Tassach's Church*, Raholp which was founded by *St. Patrick* who put his disciple, *St. Tassach*, in charge of it. *St. Tassach* was a skilled artisan who made church artefacts for many of the churches founded by *St. Patrick*. He is most remembered, however, for the fact that he was selected by *St. Patrick* to be with him at his death.

The remains of the 10th-11th Century church stand on a slight rise in the middle of a grassy field which was easy to cross on a hot and sunny day.

The ruin was heavily restored in 1915 by *F. J. Bigger*. The church is a simple rectangular structure of shale, originally bound with clay, not mortar. Over the East window is a broken lintel with lightly incised crosses on its interior face. It is thought to have been reused from a previous church on the site. East of the church is a large slab with a hole cut through it, which has been identified as the base of a cross.

Then to *Inch Abbey*, the ruined Cistercian abbey in its beautiful setting on the banks of the *Quoile river*. And a déjà vu from our last visit - leaving *Inch Abbey* we again met a coach-load of tourists armed with swords and shields, on a 'Games of Thrones' tour.



Window inside Saul Church

continued

Downpatrick (contd)

9th-10th June 2018



Inch Abbey

The evening finished with an excellent meal in *Denvir's Hotel* close to the Cathedral in Downpatrick, where we were delighted to socialise with our friends in the *Dublin Naturalists' Field Club*.



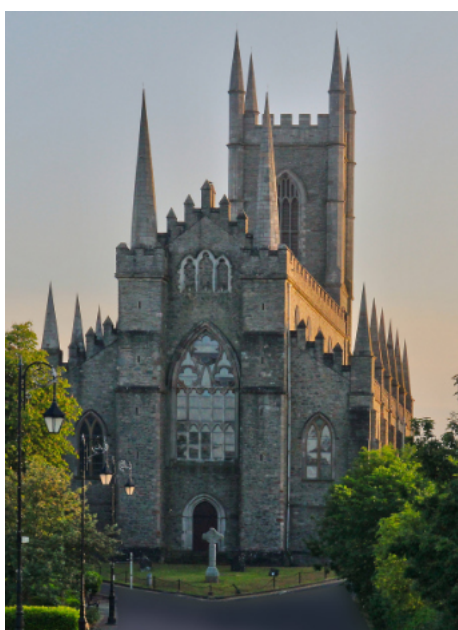
St Tassach's Church



St Tassach's Church



Redcoat outside Down County Museum



Downpatrick Cathedral



Cross remnants inside the Cathedral

Murlough

10th June 2018

The botany, zoology and geology of Dune systems



Leaders: Jo Whatmough and Stephen Craig



Fox moth

This, the second day of the *Federation of Irish Field Clubs* weekend, was a joint outing with BCNI. While the BNFC has made frequent excursions to the Murlough dunes, for many FIFC members it was their first opportunity to visit this extensive diverse ancient dune system.

We were fortunate to have *Jo Whatmough* with her 50 years experience as a National Trust Warden to lead us on a sunny June day. Jo began by giving us a detailed introduction to the site. 'Murlach' is the recognised Irish form of the place name meaning 'sea inlet'. Murlough is a fragile sand dune system, including also some woodland, owned by the *National Trust* and managed as Ireland's first Nature Reserve since 1967. It is the best and most extensive example of dune heath within Ireland (and makes up one fifth of all dune heathland in the British Isles). It supports an array of butterflies and wild flowers. The dune system at Murlough is estimated at being up to 6,000 years old with the present landscape owing much of its appearance to millennia of natural processes. A particularly stormy period in the 13th and 14th centuries resulted in a huge movement of sand. Dune was formed upon dune resulting in the unusually high dunes seen at the property today.

After this talk, the party split in two, those with a main interest in butterflies being led by *Stephen Craig*, who monitors the Marsh Fritillary sites in the dunes – earlier we had all observed the opening of moth traps which had been set overnight.

The main party continued with Jo Whatmough (photo next page). The heath grassland which forms much of the site today owes its existence to grazing by rabbits.

Murlough (contd)

10th June 2018



In the middle ages it was used as a rabbit warren, and recently the National Trust has been removing scrubby tree vegetation, using livestock grazing and encouraging rabbits (!!) to open up the grassland. Conservation work is essential to control Bracken and *Hippophae rhamnoides* (Sea Buckthorn) which was originally planted as a sand-binder. Its orange-yellow fruits are a winter food source for birds which deposit the nuts across the dune area.

Jo explained the complex nature of the site, which is composed of a range of gravel ridges, re-curved spit, dune systems, palaeosols and contemporary beach processes.



Sheepsbit

The oldest dunes are now acidic, so *Erica cinerea* (Bell Heather) and *Calluna vulgaris* (Ling Heather) are widespread with *Erica tetralix* (Cross-leaved Heath) in damper areas.

Murlough is an important site for the *Marsh Fritillary Butterfly* and we were pleased to see its caterpillar food-plant, *Succisa pratensis* (Devil's-bit Scabious) in abundance. It has a shallow root reputedly bitten off by the devil.

As we walked towards the sea, on less ancient dunes, the pale yellowish flowers of *Teucrium scordonia* (Wood Sage) became common - in spite of the name 'Wood' it is commoner in heath areas. The plant was first named by the Greek scientist *Dioscorides* after *Teucer*, the first king of Troy, and *scordonia* refers to a smell of garlic rather than sage. Nearby were the bright gentian- blue flowers of *Jasione montana* (Sheepsbit), a member of the Campanula family. *Rosa spinosissima* (Burnet Rose) has pretty pink and white flowers, black globular hips but deserves its epithet "spiniest" and can be invasive. Also identified were *Euphorbia portlandica* (Portland Spurge), *Euphorbia paralias* (Sea Spurge) and *Cynoglossum officinale* (Hound's-tongue).



Common Centaury

The most recent dunes nearer the shore were bright with typical sea-side plants – multi-coloured *Viola tricolor* (Wild Pansies) with a few of the seaside yellow sub-species *ssp.curtisii*, *Centaureum erythraea* (Common Centaury) and *Erodium cicutarium* (Storksbill). *Erodium* is the Latin name for the Heron and like the English name refers to the long beak-like seed heads. *Echium vulgare* (Viper's Bugloss), rare in Ireland, is a striking plant with pink buds, bright blue flowers and protruding purple stamens. The tough rootstock of *Ammophila arenaria* (Marram Grass) helps to bind the dunes nearest the sea together. Other grasses that bind sand include *Phleum arenarium* (Sand Catstail) and *Elytrigia juncea* (Sand Couch). Mosses and lichens help to build up humus on the dunes.

Declan Doogue demonstrated how a desiccated-looking *Tortula*

continued

Murlough (contd)

10th June 2018



Early forget-me-not



Storksbill



Portland Spurge

ruraliformis (Moss) revived almost immediately when he poured some water on it.

Botanical experts searched for three very rare spring-flowering Murlough specialities – *Cerastium semidecandrum* (Little Mouse-ear), *Teesdalia nudicaulis* (Shepherd's Cress) and (*Myosotis ramosissima* (Early Forgetmenot).

The presence of the Early Forgetmenot in the Bushfoot dunes helped to prevent planning permission for a golf course development that threatened the UNESCO World Heritage status of the Giant's Causeway.

The most energetic members of the party continued our walk along the shore towards *Dundrum Bay*. Jo encouraged each of us to pick up a stone and was able to show how Ice Age glaciers had carried granites, sandstones, shales and many other rocks from their original geological sites. The building of the new Promenade at Newcastle and defensive shore-defences near the Golf Course had increased the movement of masses of sand from Newcastle Beach towards Dundrum Bay. Murlough House had originally had a sea view but was now separated by a sycamore wood.

Jo was thanked for her most informative sharing of her expertise and love of this very special place.

Margaret Marshall



Sea Spurge



Joan McCaughey, Jo Whatmough and Stephen Craig

Jo Whatmough led us on an immensely informative walk through the dunes, along the beach and back through the sycamore wood adjacent to *Murlough House*. *Graham Day*, Vice County recorder for County Down made a list of the plants seen. Jo stopped at key points to expand on the geology, vegetation and history of the dunes, drawing on her fifty years on the reserve, since being made Warden Naturalist there in 1967.

continued

Murlough (contd)

10th June 2018



Hound's-tongue (*Cynoglossum officinale*)

Bluebells, source of nectar for adult Marsh Fritillary butterfly and Devil's Bit Scabious, food plant of its caterpillar, have increased in recent years. Recording of the caterpillars is facilitated by the shiny webs woven by the 3rd to 4th instars in September, in each of which up to 300 caterpillars hibernate.

There has been accretion of sand dunes over six millennia. The Murlough House boathouse was engulfed in sand within forty years of its construction following the building of Murlough House in 1864. Rock defences constructed since the 1880s to protect the Newcastle Promenade from erosion and Golf Course from trespassers have resulted in the loss of beach sand at Newcastle, leading to increased deposition of sand further north, in the estuary near Dundrum. A spit has formed, behind which saltmarsh, a rare vegetation type in Northern Ireland, has become established. It is now drying up and being colonized with Blue Lyme Grass, *Leymus arenarius*, and non-native species such as Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae ramnoides*. Attempts are being made to halt the expansion of both of these species into the open dunes.

A maximum of 10% scrub is allowed on a Nature Reserve of this type. The native Burnet Rose, *Rosa pimpinellifolia*, forms dense stands but is seen as an important habitat of the ancient duneland, but other scrub such as gorse has to be controlled due to this regulation.

Murlough's history as a commercial rabbit warren allowed rabbit grazing to produce floristically rich short turf, blow-outs and bare sand, where rare winter annuals found a home. *Myxomatosis* reduced the population drastically and there is now more closed turf and scrub encroachment. Rabbits were reintroduced in the 1980s, and with Exmoor Ponies, now graze and help to halt further encroachment. Sheep were tried first, but they were found to be too destructive especially in the rare dune heath.



Keel point car park opened at the turn of the 21st century, bringing in dogs. A pregnant *pine marten* is known to have been killed by a dog last year. Other dead pine martens have been found on the reserve. An estimation of the population size should be made by surveying for scats.

Graham Day's report of this field meeting on the BSBI website adds: *A joint field clubs meeting at Murlough NNR led by Jo Whatmough in early June was interesting and botanically rich.*

Finds included Carex pilulifera (Pill Sedge), Viola canina (Heath Dog-violet) and Salsola kali ssp. kali (Prickly Saltwort).

We are grateful to Jo Whatmough for sharing with us her knowledge built up over five decades as Warden Naturalist for the reserve.

Kiltonga Nature Reserve

12th June 2018

Leader: Dot Blakeley



Mute Swan (*Ardeidae*)

The group of a dozen met at 7pm at Kiltonga near Newtownards. Dot Blakeley, a local bird expert, met us and took us round the reserve. This consisted of a walk along a track round the lake and close to hedges and trees. The weather was mild, dry and with a pleasant breeze.

We started by looking over the lake from the car park. A notice unfortunately ignored by some, advised not to feed bread to the birds as it's junk food for them, causes contamination and attracts rats and mice. These are particularly unwelcome during nesting season



Grey Heron (*Ardeidae*)

as they can be predators of eggs and young vulnerable birds. From there we could see Greylag geese (*anser anser*), various gulls and mallards some looking very bedraggled as they were in eclipse, a period usually lasting two weeks and during which they are unable to fly. We proceeded along the track and Dot immediately heard the calls of young Robins (*Erithacus rubecula*) asking parent birds for food. Young birds of Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*), Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*), Blackcap (*Sylvia atricapilla*), Longtailed tits (*Aegithalos caudatus*) and Blackbird (*Turdus merula*) were heard calling as we went along.

The dense foliage didn't allow very clear views but we did see young fledglings at times and adult birds. In particular we had nice sightings of Longtailed tits, Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Blackbird, Robin and fleeting glimpses of Goldcrest. Half way round there was a clear view of the lake and a Mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) sitting on a nest. A nesting Coot (*Fulica*) was also spotted. There we saw a very active Little grebe (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*), Moorhen (*Gallinula*) and 3 Herons (*Ardeidae*) along with



Greylag geese (*Anser anser*)

Mallards (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and gulls of various types. Overhead Swifts (*Apodidae*) were flying high, a Swallow (*Hirundinidae*) flew low over the water and Housemartins (*Delichon urbicum*) were plentiful as were the flies and other insects they were after.

Overall this was a very pleasant outing enhanced by Dot's amazing

ability to hear and identify so many different bird calls and share her extensive knowledge in an easy manner.

Cellbridge, Kildare Field Trip - Zoology

Leader: Jesmond Harding

24th -28th June 2018

The weather during our field trips to Kildare was hot and dry. Perfect weather for many insects – so although some of our sites were focused on botany, there were many other species to see.



Goat Moth (*Cossus Cossus*)

On Monday afternoon while botanising with Declan we saw Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*), Ringlets (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), Grass moths (particularly *Agriphila tristella* and *Chrysoteuchia culmella*) and Riband Wave (*Idaea aversata*). These are the typical species in a damp meadow and grassland species. The Riband Wave is often disturbed by day visiting flowers of Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*).

Tuesday was the day for Zoology visiting the Bog of Allen. Jesmond Harding had agreed to lead us – firstly on an early morning opening moth traps. Many thanks to Philip Strickland too who undertook to set a range of traps including two battery traps we had brought with us. Hilary Buchanan, Sheila Fitzpatrick and I set off after an early breakfast to meet up with an excited group of Butterfly Ireland members who were joining us for the day. Philip started opening the traps one by one and they were buzzing with a great variety of moths. A member of the Club bravely offered to record the species as they were identified and I will include the full list when it is submitted to the County Recorder in the Autumn.



Elephant Hawk moth
(*Deilephila elpenor*)

The highlight of all the traps was a Goat moth (*Cossus Cossus*) an amazingly large moth - unfortunately named because of the goat-like smell of the caterpillar! A massive species (the wingspan is 64 – 84 mm), that sat obligingly on a branch while everyone took turns to photograph it. This was not a common sight, Jesmond had only seen it once before. The caterpillars spend many years munching away inside trees. Many species of trees can act as host. During late summer some mature caterpillars leave the tree and wander around looking for a place to pupate. This is why the caterpillar is more likely to be seen than the adult. The pupa state may remain for many years before it emerges.

We were delighted with the number of moths caught including:-



Poplar Hawk moth
(*Laothoe populi*)

Eyed Hawkmoth (*Smerinthus ocellate*)
Elephant Hawkmoth (*Deilephila elpenor*)
Poplar Hawkmoth (*Laothoe populi*)
True Lovers' Knot (*Lycophotia porphyria*)
Buff Arches (*Habrosyne pyritoides*)
Small Seraphim (*Pterapherapteryx sexalata*) The Miller (*Acronicta leporine*)
Large Emerald (*Geometra papilionaria*) – the caterpillars of these two feed mainly on the small birch trees in the bog.
Clay Triple-lines (*Cyclophora linearia*) Burnished Brass (*Diachrysia chrysis*)
Silver Hook (*Deltote uncula*)
Northern Eggar (*Lasiocampa quercus f. callunae*)

To name just a few of the highlights some of which can be seen in the photographs.

continued

Cellbridge, Kildare Field Trip - Zoology

24th -28th June 2018



Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*)



Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*)
On Meadowsweet



Four Spotted Chaser
(*Libellula quadrimaculata*)

The most spectacular were potted up and shown to the rest of the BNFC members when we meet together after their more leisurely breakfast.

Then Jesmond took us onto the Bog of Allen and *Lullymore West Bog* which is being regenerated and becoming an important refuge for wildlife. Over 300 species of bird, plant, insect and animal are found here. The variety of habitats on the bog including grassland, scrub woodland, pools and ditches support the biodiversity of life on the site.

Our visit was at the right time of year to see many of the target species and with beautiful sunny weather a range of butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies and other insects were soon spotted.

The first butterflies we saw were Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina*), Ringlets (*Aphantopus hyperantus*) and Dark Green Fritillary (*Argynnis aglaja*) a large, powerful butterfly which can be seen feeding on thistle and rapidly flying in open, sunny habitats like this bog and Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) eggs. This is important to record as the Marsh Fritillary is a threatened species not only in the UK and Ireland but also across Europe. The wings of this beautiful butterfly are more brightly patterned than those of other fritillaries, with the more heavily marked races being found in Scotland and Ireland. Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*) butterflies were in flight and we were excited to see a female Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni*) too. The Brimstone is not a common sight in Ireland, a large yellow butterfly, the 'word' butterfly is thought to have originated from the yellow colour of the upper wing of the males. We also saw day flying moths Grass Wave (*Perconia strigillaria*) and Pebble Hook-tip (*Drepana falcata*) - the latter more likely to have been disturbed as it flies by night.

We also saw an amazing range of species of other insects. There were Black-tailed Skimmer Dragonflies (*Orthetrum cancellatum*), Four-spotted Chasers (*Libellula quadrimaculata*), Hairy Dragonfly (*Brachytron pratense*), Emperor dragonfly (*Anax imperator*) around the area along with Blue-tailed damselflies (*Ischnura elegans*).

It was a wonderful day and we were delighted that Philip and Jesmond were able to share their expertise and this beautiful area with us.

Pamela Thomlinson

continued

Cellbridge, Kildare Field Trip - Botany

24th -28th June 2018



Lesser Butterfly Orchid
(*Platanthera bifolia*)

One of the great strengths of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club is that we have the four sections - Botany, Zoology, Geology and Archaeology/History and our field excursions involve all four interests.

On our Sunday evening walk round the historical *Celbridge* village, keen-eyed members spotted Ivy Broomrape (*Orobanche hederæ*) beside the pavement.

After our tour of *Castletown House* in Celbridge on the Monday morning of 25th June, we were joined by members of the *Dublin Naturalists' Field Club* for a botanical walk in the grounds. Our leader was the expert botanist *Declan Doogue* of DNFC who is adept at explaining variations in habitats.



Sundew (*Drosera*)

Our first stop was an area overgrown with willows and rough vegetation due to lack of grazing. Declan pointed out that this area had a high water table - as well as willows there were Creeping Buttercups (*Ranunculus repens*), the tall Tufted Hair-grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) and Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). Declan showed us how to differentiate various willow species and subspecies (*Salix caprea*, *cinerea*, *subsp. oleifolia*, *aurita*, *fragilis*)

A few yards further on, we came to dry woodland over limestone with Beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) dominating and then walked to a lake which had been created by damming a small stream. By the lake were Bulrushes (*Typha latifolia*), Water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), Fool's Watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*) and flowering Maretail (*Hippuris vulgaris*), not to be confused with Horsetail (*Equisetum*) which has spores.

The *River Liffey* rises in the granite area of *Co. Wicklow* and the sand on the banks had glittering specks of mica. Bushy Mint (*Mentha x gracilis*) is a speciality of the Liffey. Near the River was a large patch of Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*) with rhubarb-like leaves which appear after the flowering in early spring. The scientific name is from the Greek for Sunhat and the English name came from the leaves being used to wrap up butter! Declan was thanked for leading us on such an informative walk; he had kept us enthused in spite of the heat.

Tuesday was the day for Moths, Butterflies and Dragonflies in the Bog of Allen and for the great diversity of plants that attract the invertebrates. *Lullymore West Bog* is being conserved by the Irish Peatland Conservation Council and has calcareous and marl areas as well as peat and scrub woodland.

The rare Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) was growing alongside white rather than pink-flowered Common Centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), Round-leaved Wintergreen (*Pyrola rotundifolia*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*).

Lesser Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*) has whitish flowers and is more fragrant at night to attract pollinating moths. We also saw Twayblades (*Listera ovata*), Fragrant Orchids (*Gymnadenia conopsea*)

continued

Cellbridge, Kildare Field Trip - Botany

24th -28th June 2018

and Heath and Common Spotted Orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata* and *fuchsii*). At *Ballynafagh Lake* the dark purple flowers of Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris*) were admired.

The Bog of Allen Nature Centre, run by the IPCC has a large collection of carnivorous plants including the native Sundews (*Drosera*) but also

Pitcher Plants from all over the world. Their leaves are hollow inverted cones with lid- like flaps on top. Insects are trapped and digested in the liquid inside the cones. *Sarracenia pupurea* from North America is naturalised in some Irish bogs such as Peatlands Park.

On Wednesday our first stop was at *Taghadoo Round Tower* where Storksbill (*Erodium cicutarium*), a seaside plant, was growing in the dried-up grass. A neighbouring farmer was about to start feeding his cattle on winter fodder because of the drought.

After the visits to Maynooth and Leixlip we had a walk along the banks of the Grand Canal where there were large clumps of Hemp Agrimony (*Eupatorium cannabinum*) alongside Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*).

Our thanks go to Hilary Buchanan and Joan Semple for arranging such a varied Field Trip with so much of interest covering all sections of the Club.

Margaret Marshall



Spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza*)

Cultra, Helen's Bay

Leader: Peter Millar

3rd July 2018



Once again on the BNFC second geology trip of 2018 we were fortunate to have a great sunny warm evening at the Cultra/Helen's Bay foreshore. It was led by one of our regular local geology leaders Peter Millar, a past Secretary and President of Belfast Geologists' Society. We had (around 25) members present



First we walked east along the coast towards Helen's Bay to see dykes in the Lower Palaeozoic rocks mostly Ordovician around 460 million years ago. We spent some time at a lamprophyre dyke which usually has a composition of biotite, hornblende and feldspar minerals (almost 400 million years old from the late Caledonian period) than most of the surrounding Tertiary dykes mainly olivine basalt or dolerite in composition which belong to the Palaeogene period (56 million years old). We then retraced our steps west to the western exposures to see the Tertiary dykes of which there are many dotted along this coast. It was a reminder

of the wider impact of volcanic activity millions of years ago on our coastline which has contributed to its rugged outlines and intervening bays.

Nendrum Monastic Site

**Leader: Claire
Foley**

24th July 2018

Members turned out in good numbers for this visit to *Nendrum monastic site* on *Mahee Island* on a fine, sunny evening.



This is one of the most visually accessible monastic sites in Ireland, enclosed by three concentric dry-stone walls. Although it was mentioned in various documents from the 7th century and associated with the cult of *St Mo-choi* it was lost sight of and rediscovered by *Bishop Reeves* in the 19th century. It was excavated by *Lawlor* in the 1920s when timber structures, workshops and graves were found.

It was undoubtedly home to a large community of monks.

The present upstanding remains of a stone church, a re-constructed sun dial and the stump of a round tower

illustrate the site as it was in about the 12th century. In 1999 what was thought to be a fish-pond on the shore nearby was excavated and proved to be a series of tide mills one of which was dated to AD 619-621, the earliest so far in Ireland.

This was replaced after 150 years indicating the importance of milling to the economy of the monastery. *NIEA* kindly opened the little museum on site for us and we viewed a fine model of the site. We learned about the construction of the tide mill and its millpond and saw the remains of the wooden waterwheel and a millstone recovered from the site.



continued

Nendrum Monastic Site (contd)

24th July 2018



Claire Foley

A collection of cross slabs from the early phase of the monastery are indoors for safe keeping. Afterwards we were kindly invited to tea and cake by *Max and Eleanor Browne*, who live nearby - a welcome treat in a very picturesque setting.



Sun dial at Nendrum

Upperlands, Maghera

Leader: Bruce Clarke

4th August 2018

This excursion was by coach to *Upperlands*, Maghera which is Ireland's oldest linen village.

The morning commenced with coffee and scones in The Old Mill Coffee Shop before our visit to the adjoining *Flax Visitor Centre*.

The visitor centre is a former working beetling mill, called '*Road Engines Beetling House*'. *William Clark* established his linen manufacturing plant here in 1736, making it the oldest of its kind in Ireland. With over 600 employees *William Clark and Sons* held the position as the largest industrial operation in Mid-Ulster during the first half of the 20th century.



As an unplanned extra Bruce conducted us to the historic *Flax Mill in Derrylane* just outside *Dungiven* which is county Derry's only active hand weaving linen-

mill. The weaving shed and looms as well as the adjoining cottage have been lovingly restored by a German couple.



We were able to watch a demonstration of hand weaving on one of the restored looms. Many of the party took the opportunity to buy some of the merchandise produced on site.



continued

Upperlands, Maghera (contd)

4th August 2018

After this visit we travelled to *Gortead Cottage*, the boyhood home of one of the American founding fathers, *Charles Thomson*.

Chiefly remembered for his role as Secretary to the Continental Congress, he served as Secretary of the United States in Congress. He was also one of only two original signatories of the *Declaration of Independence*.



Bruce Clark, the direct descendant of William Clark, was our guide and host for this session, which started with a delicious lunch, before Bruce gave us a presentation about Charles Thomson and the family who had lived in the cottage.

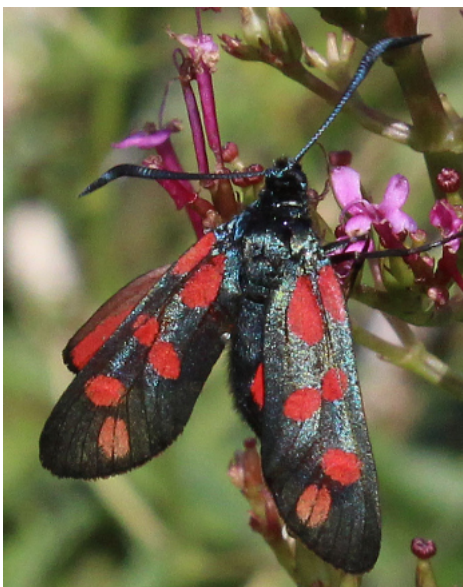
Kearney - Zoology

11th August 2018



Kearney is a showpiece village carefully restored by the *National Trust* to give the authenticity of a traditional fishing village. The village lies three miles to the east of *Portaferry*, with views across to Scotland, the Isle of Man and the Mountains of Mourne. The Trust owns a number of cottages at Kearney and these have been restored in the vernacular style giving authenticity to this place of character.

The day was sunny and warm as started to walk along the shore we



Six Spot Burnet moth (*Zygaena filipendulae*)

soon saw our first sightings of butterflies in flight. We were able to see all three common white butterflies, Large White (*Pieris brassicae*) with black tips extending down the wing edge, Small White (*Pieris rapae*) with small black wing tips and Green- veined White (*Pieris napi*) which is differentiated from other white butterflies by the prominent green stripes on the hind wing. Thanks to Rosie who netted a Small White and allowed everyone to take time to note the differences.

It was pleasing to spot a Speckled Wood (*Parage aegaria*) at the top of the shore. Their numbers are down this year despite the good weather, a common butterfly of woodlands, gardens and hedgerow, the caterpillar feeds on a range of grasses. Perhaps we will know more about its numbers over the season when we have all the sightings analysed later in the year. This is reminder of how important it is to report sightings even of these common butterflies.

NB An easy way to do this is to have the app iRecordbutterflies on your phone, then it's very easy to upload them as you see them.

We also saw many other insects in flight and nectaring White-tailed bumblebees (*Bombus lucorum* agg.) and a Red-tailed bumblebee (*Bombus lapidaries*), it was interesting to see the later as its not common. There were 6-spot Burnet (*Zygaena filipendulae*) which fly with a slow buzzing flight during sunshine attracted to a range of flowers including thistles, knapweeds and scabious and marmalade hoverflies (*Episyrphus balteatus*) a common hoverfly seen nectaring on flat-topped flowers.



Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*)

We saw many breeding birds along the coast include Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*) and Dunlin The dramatic white form of the Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) were diving out to sea and many Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) with their buoyant graceful flight. Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*) can also be seen feeding around the seaweed-covered rocks.



Oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*)

After a pleasant picnic at Kearney we headed to Portaferry to visit Exploris.

Kearney - Botany

11th August 2018



Oysterplant (*Mertensia maritima*)



Yellow-horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*)



Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*)



On a sunny morning a large number of members gathered at the picturesque National Trust village of Kearney on the Ards Peninsula for a zoological and botanical walk along the coastal path.

The dry hot summer had meant that many plants had flowered, seeded and died off earlier than usual but we were able to see many distinctive seaside plants. Sea Radish (*Raphanus raphanistrum ssp. maritimus*) is a large cabbage-family plant with distinctive spherical seeds. Another large yellow-flowered seaside plant is Perennial or Corn Sow-thistle (*Sonchus arvensis*) which presumably was once common as an arable weed. Sea Sandwort (*Honkenya peploides*) has fleshy leaves and long creeping stolons which help to prevent sand eroding from the shore. Its scientific name comes from Honkeny, an eighteenth century German botanist. Sea Campion (*Silene uniflora*) is the coastal counterpart of Bladder Campion (*Silene vulgaris*).

However the great botanical attraction on the shingle shore at Kearney are three rare plants. Oysterplant (*Mertensia maritima*) of the Borage family gets its English name as the leaves are supposed to taste of oysters – one brave member vouched for this and there is a fear that chefs might make it even rarer. Its scientific name comes from Mertens, another eighteenth century German botanist. It is a Boreo-Arctic plant and Kearney and the shore at Bloody Bridge are its most southerly sites.

The seeds can remain dormant and withstand immersion for long periods in sea-water and so are spread by winter gales; there were numerous plants among the shingle. The fleshy greyish leaves, the long prostrate flowering stems fanning out from the central rosette and the tiny bell-shaped blue-pink flowers kept the photographers busy.

Nearby the Yellow-horned Poppy (*Glaucium flavum*) was already in seed – the long seed capsules can be up to 30 cm long and look just like horns; it is a common Mediterranean plant and this is its most northerly site.

The third rare plant - Sea Kale (*Crambe maritima*) - has distinctive tough-looking wavy leaves, its white crucifer flowers were almost over, but the corky seed pods float in sea-water to disperse the seeds. The cultivated Kale, now a fashionable healthy vegetable, is fortunately less tough!

The return walk to the village and our picnic lunch was very much quicker than the outward journey!

Margaret Marshall



GSNI Core Store

Leader: Rob Raine

1st September 2018



The third and final BNFC Geology trip of 2018 took place on the first Saturday afternoon in September which saw ten (or eleven) members meet in the car park of a rather ordinary looking warehouse centre in the Dargan Crescent area of Fortwilliam.

Inside we were treated to a tour of the *Geological Survey of Northern Ireland* Core store by Rob Raine. This building is a national archive of rock samples, some 20km of rock cores and in excess of 150,000 rock and geochemical specimens. These represent up to 600 million years of Earth history from a variety of environments like deserts to volcanic landscapes. Complementing this Rob had a display of rock specimens to reflect Northern Ireland geology from Pre Cambrian to the present day, as well having several biographies / photos of past GSNI Directors and staff on display.

At the end of the two hour tour refreshments were served and much appreciated by the visitors.



Fungus Foray, Hillsborough Forest

Leader: Richard O'Hanlon

15th September 2018



Once again, our foray was led by *Richard O'Hanlon*, who is the principal plant pathologist at the *Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)* based in Belfast. *Hillsborough Forest* is set within the historic landscape of an old fort and demesne offering visitors 150 acres of mixed woodland.

Richard had earlier collected some different species and laid them out on a picnic table to give the members an outline of the world of fungi. He stressed their importance in our daily lives with essentials

such as bread, wine and stilton cheese all enabled by yeasts. He mentioned that the largest organism in the world may well be a type of a honey fungus (*Armillaria ostoya*) in eastern Oregon, U.S. estimated to be 2,400 years old and spread over 2000 acres!

The two main phyla or divisions we would be looking at are the ascomycetes, the "spore shooters" eg. cup fungi and the basidiomycetes or "spore droppers" which cover the typical species such as gilled agarics and the boletes with tubes/pores under their caps. We learn there are also three categories of their ecology; *mycorrhizal fungi* forming a symbiotic partnership with trees, *parasitic fungi* preferring a living host and the *saprophytic fungi* which prefer dead and decaying material.



Scarletina bolete
(*Boletus/Neoboletus praestigiator*)



Dyers's Mazegill (*Phaeolus schweinitzii*)

As we followed the paths round the lake we were soon finding a variety of species and types, the Artist's bracket or conk (*Ganoderma applanatum* - used as a flavour-enhancer in Asian cuisine), the blood-red Beefsteak fungus (*Fistulina hepatica* - edible when fresh) and the Dyer's mazegill (*Phaeolus schweinitzii* - used as a yellow dye). The dramatic colour change in the Scarletina bolete (*Neoboletus luridiformis*) which turns blue when the flesh is cut. A true Chanterelle (*Cantharellus cibarius* - excellent edibility) to compare to the False Chanterelle (*Hygrophoropsis aurantiaca*).



Dead Man's Fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*)

Then we found Common Puffballs (*Lycoperdon perlatum*), the Black Witch's Butter (*Exidia glandulosa*), the grisly Dead man's fingers (*Xylaria polymorpha*) and a few sites with the aptly named Stinkhorn (*Phallus impudicus*) including the emergent "witch's egg". The beautiful purple Wood blewit (*Lepista nuda*) and a fresh Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*). Blushers must be thoroughly cooked; otherwise they can cause serious illness.

continued

Fungus Foray, Hillsborough Forest (contd)

Leader: Richard O'Hanlon

15th September 2018



Wood Blewit (*Lepista nuda*)

More finds included the Hare's ear (*Otidea onotica*) which wafts it's spores when you blow on it, some tiny delicate Horsehair parachutes (*Marasmius androsaceus*) which are relatively common here but are rarer elsewhere in the UK and the pure white Porcelain fungus (*Oudemansiella mucida*) on dead beech logs.

Hillsborough forest provided a great variety of habitats – both coniferous and deciduous with many trunks from veteran trees lying about to host a wide range of fungi, but the day must go to the sheer numbers of the Honey fungus (*Armillaria mellea*). It was everywhere and as a major parasite of trees must give cause for concern.

We returned to the picnic table and the finds were laid out in their different

groups and discussed. We had a great turnout of 14 members and enjoyed a varied and interesting foray. Richard was thanked for his time taken to share his knowledge of the fascinating mycological world.

Matthew Porter



Witch's Butter (*Exidia glandulosa*)



Blusher (*Amanita rubescens*)



Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*)



Witch's Egg (*Phallus impudicus*)

