Belfast Naturalists'
Field Club

Field Reports

2025

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Evening Tree Walk in the Botanic Gardens

Botany

Tuesday 20th May

Leader - Jonathan Pilcher, Friends of Belfast Botanic Garden

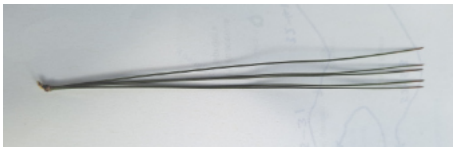
Jonathan discussing the leaf morphology of *Tilia tomentosa 'Petiolaris'* the Weeping Silver Lime.

We met up at the iconic Palm House (more members joined later on) for a tree walk and talk with *Jonathan Pilcher* from the *Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens* (FOBBG). He handed out a comprehensive species list and location map and gave an overview of the many species of trees in the gardens.

The Weeping Silver Lime tree *Tomentosa 'Petiolaris'* has large silver leaves on the underside. Its flowing, shimmery foliage is extremely effective on breezy days.

The area near the entrance is given over to the conifers - these three giants together.

Metasequoia glyptostroboides - Dawn redwood. *Metasequoia* is one of relatively few conifers that are deciduous like the larch. *Sequoiadendron giganteum* - Giant sequoia, Wellingtonia or Sierra redwood and *Sequoia sempervirens* - Coastal redwood with the base completely covered by young offshoots.



Bhutan pine needle

We learned that a key identification tool for pines is to count the needles on each leaf - Generally, pines have needles arranged in clusters of two, three, or five. The picture is from *Pinus wallichiana* – Bhutan pine, a coniferous evergreen tree native to the Himalaya, the leaves ("needles") are in fascicles (bundles) of five.

contd

Evening tree walk in the Botanic Gardens (contd)

Wollemi pine

The extremely rare *Wollemia nobilis*, commonly known as the Wollemi Pine (though not a true pine) was only discovered in 1994 in the family *Araucariaceae*. The cage is to deter any modern "plant hunters".

Our group continued to grow too!

Cork Oak *Quercus suber*

This young *Quercus suber* or cork oak was planted in the arboretum on 24th November 2024. It replaces a previous cork oak planted in memory of Wesley Semple, former President of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club.

We should also remember another distinguished BNFC member that has a tree planted in his memory, the Bald Cypress *Taxodium distichum,* a deciduous conifer, native to the south-eastern United States. This tree was planted back in 2009 for *Stan Beasley* a prominent Belfast Naturalists' Field Club (BNFC) member and a first class botanist. John Wilde and Stan produced the *Belfast Flora*.

Bald Cypress *Taxodium distichum*

"The Global Medicine Garden is a joint project between the Botanic Gardens Management (Belfast City Council) and the Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens. In 2019, Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens were given the go-ahead by our Garden Focus Group for the creation of a Global Medicine Garden in an enclosed site next to the newly restored Tropical Ravine. This collaborative initiative is the first of its kind in the Gardens. The site chosen is an enclosed area at the South-West end of the Tropical Ravine. It had been cleared as a materials store during the building work and had a temporary planting of heathers. Our enterprise references the collection of medicinal herbs that was a feature of the Victorian Botanic Gardens described by the then Curator Daniel Ferguson and marked on the plan in his guide to the Gardens of 1851."

This quotation is from the FOBBG website.

contd

Evening tree walk in the Botanic Gardens (contd)

Maidenhair tree *Ginkgo bilbao*

Ginkgo biloba - the Maidenhair tree. This particular specimen is special and may be related to one of the few species to survive the atomic bombing in Hiroshima!!

Left is the *Rosa canina x pimpinellifolia (R. x hibernica)* Templeton-rose – *Rosaceae*

From Habitas' website….

"A rare hybrid between two very common wild roses. The first examples of this hybrid were discovered by Belfast botanist John Templeton in 1795 and named as Rosa hibernica, literally 'the Irish rose'. Originally thought to be a new species of rose, it later became apparent that it was a hybrid. One of the shrubs found by Templeton survived into the 1950's on a roadside near Holywood in Co Down and was removed from there into cultivation when the road was being widened about 1954. This individual plant now grows in Belfast Botanic Gardens".

Other examples have been found occasionally since Templeton's time. All names: *Rosa canina x pimpinellifolia (R. x hibernica)* Templeton; Rosa x hibernica Templeton; *Rosa canina x pimpinellifoli*.

Ligustrum lucidum 'Excelum superbum

Left is a picture of *Ligustrum lucidum 'Excelsum Superbum'*.
This variegated glossy privet is from the family *Oleaceae*.
A choice of *superb-um* or *super-bum* epithet!

A fact-packed excursion around the magnificent arboreal treasures of this jewel in Northern Ireland's parks and gardens.

A huge thank you to Jonathan (and partner) for being our knowledgeable guides.

The Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens are busy attempting to identify and label all the species in the park - If you can help - they would love to hear from you. Some history, a map and a complete list of all the species can be found on their excellent website - https://fobbg.co.uk/

Matthew Porter

Castle Leslie and Emy Lough

Joint outing with Dublin Naturalists' Field Club

Saturday 31st May

Leader - Alexis Fitzgerald

This was a joint outing with the *Dublin Naturalists' Field Club* to Co. Monaghan led by *Alexis Fitzgerald*.
Glaslough (Castle Leslie) Estate has been in existence since 1608 and is thus one of the oldest existing estates in Co. Monaghan. The estate is centred around the grand façade of Castle Leslie, which overlooks the serene Glaslough, after which the estate was named. Aside from its interest as a popular wedding and horse-riding venue, this beautiful, idyllic estate is also of immense botanical interest and has been visited by botanists since at least the mid-1800's. There is an early link to the Field Club – *Joseph Lawson Drummond*, founder member of the BNHPS visited in the 1820s, and he discovered a new *cyanobacterium* in the lake.
On a day of mixed weather, ten BNFC and six DNFC members met and were led by Alexis Fitzgerald, author of the recently published *'Flora of County Monaghan'*, who describes himself as 'a passionate field botanist and vegetation ecologist, with a broader interest in general ecology'.

Group by Emy lough shore

We explored two types of vegetation, with Alexis concentrating on the lake margin grasses etc., while *Charles Shier* identified trees. Castle Leslie has a collection of magnificent mature trees, dating back to the 18th century or earlier – a *pinetum* was established in 1690.

The vegetation on the shores of Glaslough is rich, varied and in many places fenny in nature, due to the base-rich quality of the water. *Thalictrum flavum* (Common Meadow-rue), *Carex strigosa* (Thin-spiked Wood-sedge) and other notable plant species are characteristic of the estate and we expected to see a good variety of species on the day.
Emy Lough is a similarly base-rich lough near Emyvale, north Co. Monaghan, which we will enjoy in the afternoon. The lough has a well-developed aquatic and wetland flora.

For the morning we followed a route through the Castle Leslie Estate that has been approved by management in order to avoid other activities.
In the afternoon we explored the mature specimen trees and woodland and lacustrine vegetation in a splendid setting, with identifications by Charles Shier.

contd

Castle Leslie and Emy Lough (contd)

Horsetail *Equisetum fluviatile*

Among others, Charles showed us Western Red Cedar, then *Cedrus Atlantica*, then an Atlas Cedar - from Morocco, Giant Redwood with epicormic growth, Variegated Sycamore with the really beautiful leaves, Bishop Pine - a 2 needle pine with cones that have a spike on each scale, a Tulip Tree with typical cut off leaves - said to be called Tulip Tree from the shape of the flowers.

Outside the Oriel building where we had lunch is a Katsura Tree from Japan. Then a Douglas Fir – and much more.

Following is a comprehensive list compiled by *Sebastien Boino*t.

Trees and Shrubs

Tilia cordata
Rhamnus cathartica
Thuja plicata
Cedra atlantica
Sequoiadendron giganteum
Pinus radiata
Davidia involucrata
Cornus sp.
Salix sp.
Liriodendron sp

Animal species

Reed bunting
Mistle thrush
Swallow
Pike

Sebastien Boinot

Herbaceous and Aquatic plants

Stachys sylvatica
Solanum dulcamara
Galium palustre
Stellaria graminea
Veronica chamaedrys
Chelidonium majus
Arctium minus
Lotus pedunculatus
Sanguisorba sp.
Angelica sp.
Mercurialis perennis
Phragmites sp.
Luzula campestris
Carex sylvatica
Carex hirta/flacca
Carex remota
Carex strigose
Scirpus sylvaticus
Schoenoplectus lacustris
Eleocharis palustris
Equisetum fluviatile
Potamogeton sp.
Alisma plantago-aquatica
Nuphar lutea
Elodea canadensis
Charophyta
Polystichum setiferum
Asplenium scolopendrium

Other:
Puccinia sp. (plant fungi)

Arrowgrass

St John's Point and Kilclief

Archaeology and History

Saturday 27th June

Leader - Mike King

St John's Point Church

At 10.30am we met at *St John's Point Church* (NGR 528338) on Map sheet 21 (Strangford Lough). This was an all-day field trip starting at 10.30am and finishing at 5pm. (N54.23098 W5.65713)

The site: St John's Point Church is one of the best preserved Early Christian churches in NI, dating probably to the early 11th century. A west door and much of the west gable, looking towards the Mourne Mountains, survives. We examined some early scratched images on this wall, and also the projecting antae on each side, partly made from Mourne granite blocks. Excavations have revealed graves on a different alignment. A holy well is located outside the modern wall, by the road.

Jordan's Castle

11.15am We drove to Ardglass (NGR 560371) arrived 11.45am.

The site: Jordan's Castle is a late 15th-century tower house, between Kildare St and Quay St, is named after *Simon Jordan*, who withstood a siege here in 1601.
It is the largest of an impressive group of tower houses that clustered around the important medieval trading port with storehouses at Ardglass. The antiquarian *Francis Joseph Bigger* bought the castle in 1911, restored it and hosted many cultural gatherings here, before bequeathing it to the State in 1926. We had the keys, kindly placed on loan from HED, to access the castle on our visit and accessed all levels via the spiral staircase. We had lunch at 1pm at Curran's Bar and Seafood Steakhouse, Chapeltown (NGR 572399).

2.15pm After lunch we visited St Mary's Church, Chapeltown (NGR 572400).

Plaster figure added to Jordan's Castle by F.J.Biggar

The site: St Mary's Catholic Church was built at the meeting of 5 roads in 1791. Above the doorway we saw an Early Christian cross-slab, brought from *Ardtole*, where the remains of the medieval church of *St Nicholas* survive, just outside Ardglass. There were also several bullaun stones near the entrance, one from *Dunsford*. Under the steeple we saw a 13th-century figure carved from Scrabo sandstone of the Virgin and Child, restored by Francis Joseph Bigger in 1908, when the fragments were brought together.

3.30-5pm we visited Kilclief Church (NGR 596457) and Kilclief Castle (NGR 597458).

The site: Kilclief Church *(the church of the hurdles)* is located on the site of an Early Christian monastery, where the early church was made of wood. Raided by Vikings in 1001 AD, many monks were taken away into slavery. A saddle quern now in the church testified to prehistoric settlement in the area, and 13th-century Anglo-Norman grave slabs, made of Scrabo sandstone, showed its importance in medieval times.

contd

St John's Point and Kilclief (contd)

Medieval gaming board

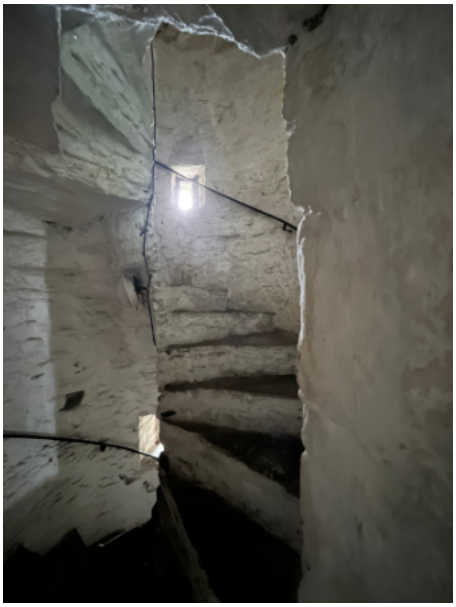
In the graveyard wall, a stone used as a medieval gaming board has been re-used as a building-stone and was pointed out to the group.

We were kindly granted access to the church by the Church of Ireland.

From the church we walked to *Kilclief Castle*, the earliest datable tower house in County Down, built by *John Sely*, bishop of Down, between 1413 and 1441. It displays the high machicolation arch (for dropping oil/missiles etc onto attackers) also seen at *Jordan's Castle,* Ardglass, and *Audley's Castle*. A 13th-century grave slab from the church/graveyard has been re-used as a lintel in a fireplace on the second floor. Due to repair works we were not able to enter the castle, but we walked around it and examined its external features.

At 5pm we ended the tour and departed.

Tomb in Kilclief Churchyard with Kilclief Castle in the background



Jordan's Castle spiral staircase

Ballaun stone at Chapelstone

Killard Point

Plants and Fungi at Killard Point National Nature Reserve

Leader - Jake Dalzell

Saturday 14th June

Jake's advance description of this meeting

Jake Dalzell

The intention is to see mid-season plants and fungi in the coastal grassland at Killard. This is a headland of glacial till covering about 32 hectares on the coast of south-east Down. We will see local botanical rarities like Lesser Meadow-rue, Field Scabious, Frog Orchid, and Green-winged Orchid, and many other plants of coastal species-rich grassland. We should find some interesting plant-parasitic fungi, including the rare flower smut fungus *Microbotryum scabiosae* on Field Scabious.
For more information about the site see -
https://irishplants.org/other_grasslands/killard.html

Meet at 11.00am at the steps down to the beach on the Killard Road (grid reference J59904407). There is a lay by here with free parking available. We will walk to the reserve along the beach (about 600m) – note this is a rocky beach and the terrain is uneven. The reserve itself has paths and the parts with the most botanical interest are flat, though we may climb a small hill towards the end. Wear weather-appropriate clothing and footwear for uneven ground. There are no toilets or other facilities.

Plasmopara densa Downy Mildew on *Bartsia*. The spores are food for 22 spot ladybirds and midge larvae. Photo - Jake Dalzell
https://www.inaturalist.org/observations/302355248

Bad weather demands multiple photo assistants

contd

Killard Point (contd)

Infection of *Peronospora radii* on *Tripleurospemum maritimum*. This *oomycete* infection of systemic vascular tissue is only exhibited in flower.

The main focus is botany and plant-parasitic microfungi. Bring a pack lunch and a hand lens, and you may like to bring binoculars as there are shore birds and Sand Martins.

Report of the meeting

About ten members and guests bravely attended this meeting in soaking rain. When we were all drenched, Michael and Judith Meharg generously invited the dripping survivors to their cottage in Ballyhornan to eat our packed lunches and to be revived with a hot drink and biscuits.

There is a wealth of information on Jake's plant pathogens website for those who would like to pursue this subject more extensively and in greater depth - *https://plantpathogens.net/*

Jake demonstrated that there is a great deal to be discovered about this much neglected element of our local flora.

The infection of *Peronospora radii* increases the number and distorts the ray florets, probably resulting in the attraction of more pollinators to the flowers that then carry the spores to other plants of *Tripleurospemum maritimum*.

Left and below shows Bramble *(Rubus agg.)* flowers larger than normal, with contorted petals and enlarged brown anthers.

Rubus stamen blight *Hapalosphaeria deformans*, a fungus sterilises the anthers and the fungus produces spores, 1930 thesis Native, 1 in 5 plants infected, spores white when dry.

See also Jake's photograph: *Hapalosphaeria deformans*

Jake has additional links to his photographs of other pathogenic fungi that we saw:

Peronospora minor, a downy mildew on *Atriplex sp. Aceria ononidis* on *Ononis repens*. A very under recorded gall mite (this was the thing I had thought was on Euphrasia that I found years ago and failed to re-find that day I was with you to see the *Spiranthes*.

Aceria thomasi, a gall mite on *Thymus*.

Trifolium campestre, which is somewhat uncommon in Down

And the hybrid orchid:

The hybrid orchid *Dactylorhiza × mixta*

More information on *Peronospora radii can be found with this link*.

Caroline Pannell

Mid Antrim Iron and Bauxite mines

Geology and Industrial History
Joint trip with Belfast Geologists' Society

Saturday 21st June

Around seventeen members met north of *Cargan Village* in the Glens of Antrim at Drum Car Park at Skerry East just below the bleak terrain of *Slievenanee* Mountain under the leadership of *Ian Enlander*.

Ian Enlander demonstrates the underlying geology

A rather grey morning on arrival which eventually after lunchtime became quite sunny. We started at the nearby forest to examine the various machinery and mine shafts, but unfortunately access was not possible for health and safety reasons. It gave us an idea of the extent of the mining industry in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries along with visit to nearby *Newtowncrommelin*, a village established in the early 19th century by a Huguenot family by the name of *Crommelin*. We saw the inclined plane at *Drum* or what was left of it that was responsible for trucks descending to lower ground to the tramway with the iron ore extracted to be carried on down the glen to Red Bay.

In Newtowncrommelin we saw one of the iron ore smelter buildings still fairly intact. Much of the iron ore here belongs to the *Interbasaltic Beds* between the Upper and Lower Basalts from Tertiary times 60 million years ago. From the Crommelin family and their investigations of local rocks this eventually led to *James Fisher,* a Barrow in Furness shipbuilder in Cumbria with experience of the iron industry, coming to nearby *Broughshane* and to *Glenravel* to investigate further in the 1860s. This more or less was the start of the mining industry.
Lunch was at Drum Car Park before stopping at Cargan to see evidence of where railway had been and then on towards *Glenariff Glen* where we could see the remaining raised embankments where the railway formerly ran towards the coast. We were aware of *Parkmore Station,* opened in 1876 at top of Glenariff area, but due to its disused state we skipped it but it has or had the distinction of being one of the highest of all the stations in Ireland at the height of 1,045ft or 318 metres.

Mid Antrim Iron and Bauxite Mines (contd)

Iron sculpture at Drum

On down Glenariff Glen to Cushendall and Red Bay Yacht Car Park for an overview of Red Bay Geology before a final stop on far side of Red Bay at the Milltown Pier. It was here in the Old Harbour where the Iron Ore was shipped to Scotland for the aluminium works at *Kinlochleven*.
Part of the *White Arch* bridge that carried the train down to the harbour still stands.

The golden age of Mid Antrim Mining effectively came to an end in the early 20th Century with falling prices and less profitable ores.

A most interesting day enjoyed by all and wonderful drive back home along Antrim Coast Road.

Ian Forsythe

Bauxite - Aluminium ore

Newton Crommelin blast furnace

Studying coastal geology - Lurigethan across Red Bay

Bee Orchids and other Botany, Glenarm

Report on the outing held by the BNFC celebrating the Irish Naturalists' Journal's centenary.

Compiled by Helen M. Barber-James

Saturday 28th June

Belfast Naturalist's Field Club celebrated the Irish Naturalists' Journal's centenary by looking for the bee orchid in County Antrim, 100 years after the first publication by C.D. Chase recorded the orchid.

Coordinated by Helen James, the outing was led by BSBI Antrim county recorder, David McNeill. Judy Meharg was the first to spot the trophy of the day. While this orchid was not found in abundance during this trip, in all, we saw five species of orchids, and some hybrids. We also enjoyed learning about many other plants, not reported on here.


The
IRISH NATURALISTS'
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A MAGAZINE OF NATURAL HISTORY ANTIQUITIES & ETHNOLOGY.
Volume I.
September, 1925—November, 1927
Edited by
J. A. S. STENDALL.

Cover of the first issue of the Irish Naturalists' Journal

THE BEE ORCHID IN CO. ANTRIM.

In 1923, the first year that the Bee Orchid, *Ophrys apifera* Huds. was observed in its only Co. Antrim station, there were about a dozen plants. These had increased in 1924 to several hundred, and it was confidently expected that the number would grow every year. This year (1925), however, a long search could only discover nine widely separated spikes. Has the dry weather this June anything to do with the decrease? Or is the appearance of this chalk-loving species in our district a mere flash in the pan? Time will show.

C. D. CHASE.

Campbell College, Belfast.

Extract from the Irish Naturalists' Journal Volume 1 by C.D. Chase, referring to the Bee Orchid in Antrim.

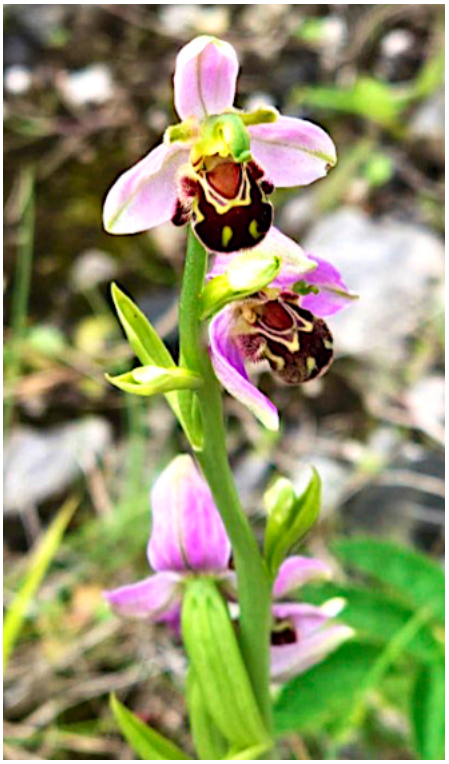
David McNeill addressing the group

Bee Orchids - Glenarm (contd)

Photographing the Bee orchid

Bee-orchid *Ophrys apifera,*

Broad leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine*



Bee-orchid *Ophrys apifera*, Park Head, Glenarm

Twayblade *Listera ovata,* Straidkilly

Bird's Nest Orchid *Neottia nidus-avis,* in flower and last years seed head, Straidkilly

Bee Orchids - Glenarm (contd)

Hybrid Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza x formsa*.

This is a hybrid between the Northern Marsh-orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and the Heath Spotted-orchid Dactylorhiza maculata. Grassland at Straidkilly

A smaller group continued in Straidkilly Nature Reserve later in the afternoon.

Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii,* coastal grassland, Glenarm

Another *Dactylorhiza* hybrid? Coastal grassland, Glenarm.

Colour variations of *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*

Ballycastle, Pan's Rock and Colliery Bay

Joint trip with Belfast Geologists' Society.

Saturday 19th July

Holy Trinity Church, Ballycastle

A fairly good day in prospect for joint trip between the two societies with long sunny periods particularly in the afternoon, led by *Karen Parks* with over twenty participants.

Meeting at the Diamond in the centre of town at 10.30 am we proceeded to nearby *Ballycastle Museum* in Castle Street to be taken on a tour by *Nic Wright* of the *Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Services*.
The Museum had recently been upgraded and it was particularly interesting to see the geological contents within the building before studying local urban geology in the town buildings, including *Holy Trinity Church* in the Diamond dating from around 1756 which is constructed from the local Carboniferous Ballycastle Sandstone.

After lunch in the seafront area, we progressed first to *Bonamargy Friary* to look at various building stones, but it again is mostly the Ballycastle Carboniferous sandstone. This is another example of using local stone before the days of easier transport.

Colliery Bay

Then to the Ballycastle Coast east of the town starting at *Pans Rock* which was important in 19th Century as an industrial hub for the salt pans with a rather distinctive footbridge nearby which has probably been damaged in subsequent storms.

Further east brings us to *Colliery Bay* as the name implies a link to coal mining which is part of the small *Ballycastle Coalfield* with a link away back to similar small outcrops in Kintyre in Argyll. We stopped at entrance to one of abandoned mines with Karen giving us a fairly comprehensive history. Then we stopped near the classic and much photographed *North Star Dyke*.

Stigmaria fossil roots

On the foreshore fossils have been found there particularly *goniatites* (extinct mollusc) from early Carboniferous times which were only discovered here in 1973 despite area being explored for about 200 years previously. Also from the Carboniferous we saw *stigmaria*, fossil roots of plants from the coal measures.

View of Fair Head from Marconi's cottage

We finished in glorious, warm sunshine close to *Marconi's Cottage* where the road comes to an end at the start of the massive cliffs of Fair Head.

Good day enjoyed by all.

Ian Forsythe

Divis Excavations

Archaeology - to see excavations of a circular stone enclosure

Leaders: Mike King and Malachy Conway

Saturday 2nd August

The dig at Divis with BNFC group and excavators at work

Mike King and Malachy Conway at the dig

A sherd of Neolithic pottery found in the dig

We met at the *Hannahstown NT* car park, before walking uphill to the site where we found a keen group of children working with their teacher and continuing careful excavation. With our leader Mike King and Malachy Conway the NT archaeologist for the site, we watched the activity, and looked at some of the recent finds.

Site description:

An excavation was carried out during July-August 2024 at this circular stone enclosure in Divis townland and another is currently underway. Previous investigation carried out at the site in 2017 by the *Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork at Queen's University* Belfast and the National Trust, revealed that at least some sections of masonry walls forming the perimeter and apparent compartments within the enclosure were datable to the mid to late 19th century.

However, tantalisingly, flints and several sherds of pottery were recovered from a layer below the walls which appeared to be of Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age character in date. A radiocarbon date returned from a sample recovered from the horizon below the later walls produced a Late Bronze Age date.

Building on the results from 2017, the excavation in 2024 opened a large area across the south-east quadrant of the enclosure. In this area further evidence was uncovered that the site had been either built as, or modified into a 'sheepfold' in the 19th century. This was confirmed by mortar bonded walls, cobbled surfaces and a compartment which contained a hearth. Finds from this phase included broken bottle glass, iron and some modern pottery fragments. Investigation below this 19th-century horizon revealed much earlier activity, which from the pottery and flint work recovered, suggests a later Neolithic date for this phase. A series of postholes and pits were revealed, one of the pits containing a considerable amount of largely undecorated prehistoric pottery of carinated bowl form, as well as several decorated pottery sherds. Of the features found, a linear alignment of postholes suggests a possible fence or palisade extending SW-NE across the area and along with the pits confirms the presence of prehistoric settlement on the site.

The date and origin of the stone enclosure itself remains to be confirmed, and the 2025 excavations reveal more about the site, which we heard about on our visit.

Fungus Foray, Ormeau Park *(Re-scheduled)*

Sunday 26th October

Leaders - Debbie Nelson and Roy Anderson from the Northern Ireland Fungus Group.

Dressed for the weather

The Northern Ireland Fungus Group (NIFG) had kindly invited members of the BNFC to join them again for our annual joint fungal foray in Ormeau Park, Belfast.

The outing was originally planned for October 4th but Yellow and Amber weather alerts were in place due to Storm Amy. In the interests of member's safety, it was decided to cancel and reschedule the foray to Sunday, the 26th of October.

Ted recording Spectacular rustgill

Ormeau Park was formerly part of the *Donegall* family estate who, due to mounting debts, sold the lands to the then Belfast Corporation. Ormeau Park is the oldest municipal park in Belfast, Northern Ireland and was officially opened to the public in 1871. It is owned and run by *Belfast City Council* and is a large and popular park in the heart of the city along the banks of the river Lagan with a variety of sporting facilities and mature woodland.

A warm Spring in 2025 appears to have created a bumper crop of acorns, haws and beechmast, a so-called "mast year" where the right conditions enable trees to overwhelm any animals that eat their fruits and nuts and thus allow a greater chance of survival. This has also been a particularly good year for the fruiting bodies of fungi with large numbers occurring all over Northern Ireland, while the season started late, October proved to be bountiful. There are studies looking at the impact of climate change on the phenology or timing of biological events – flowering and fruiting times seem to be changing from year to year.

A determined band of members turned up fully-kitted out with waterproofs and brollies, but the day turned out to be kind with just the odd drizzle, there seemed to finds made in every square metre of the park! Debbie, Aideen and Roy were on hand to help identify and discuss the variety of species.

Fungus Foray, Ormeau Park (Contd)

Hohenbuehelia grisea Photo - Roy Anderson

Peziza petersii (Courtesy Liam McCaughey)

Peziza petersii (Courtesy Roy Anderson)

Yellow spot *Nectria peziza* (Courtesy Liam McCaughey)

Lemon disco or Yellow fairy cups *Calycina citrina* (Courtesy Liam McCaughey)

A full species list is given at the end of the report but here are a few of the highlights from the day.

Hohenbuehelia grisea on a sycamore log, a super rare find and possibly new to Ireland. Incredibly, it is believed to be a carnivorous saprobe.

"Its most remarkable feature is its ability to trap and digest microscopic roundworms called nematodes. It does this by developing specialised adhesive knobs on its hyphae (filaments) that capture the tiny worms, supplementing its diet from the dead wood." Pretty amazing!

This large cluster of *Peziza petersii*, on a burnt tree stump is another rarity, possibly new to Ireland. It is most often encountered in tightly packed clusters on burned ground or charcoal as here on a burnt log.

We ended up with a commendable total of 51 different species for the day. Many thanks to Debbie, Roy and Aideen from NIFG for organising and helping out with identifications. Lots of species and a thoroughly enjoyable day out.

I have highlighted a few of the finds of the day, Drum manor is a mature woodland park and another valuable nature reserve in Northern Ireland– our combined group had a rewarding field trip with a great variety from the world of fungi, the "Fifth Kingdom" as it is sometimes known as. I would like to record our grateful thanks to the Northern Ireland Fungus Group (NIFG) and in particular, Debbie Nelson for her good work in re-arranging the outing to a precious Sunday.

Matthew Porter

Species list follows, with common or vernacular names where known.

These are largely in two groups but also rusts, pathogens and moulds are included within the world of Fungi.

Ascomycetes

The sac fungi or ascomycetes. It is the largest phylum of Fungi.

Basidiomycetes

They are also known as club fungi due to their club-shaped basidia which bear spores.

Agarics are a family within the *Basidiomycetes*, having fruiting bodies consisting of umbrella-like caps, on stalks, with gills beneath.

contd

Fungus Foray, Ormeau Park (Contd)

Angel's bonnet or Late-season bonnet *Mycena arcangeliana* on Larch cone

Candlesnuff Fungus - *Xylaria hypoxylon*

Conical Brittlestem - *Parasola conopilus*

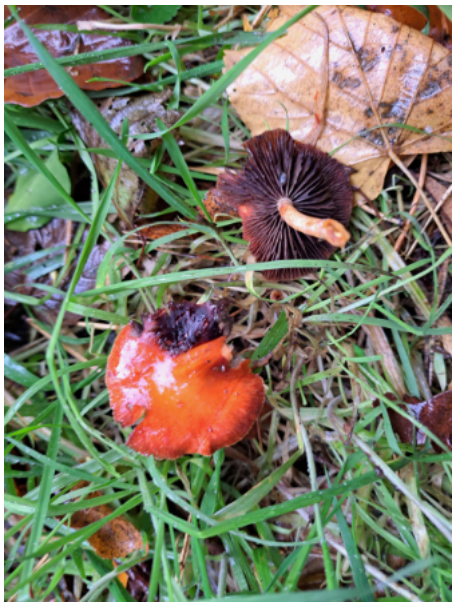
Velvet shank - *Falmmulina velutipes*

Vernacular	Scientific Name	Taxon
Ochre bracket or Turkey tail	*Trametes ochracea*	Bracket fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Angel's bonnet or Late-season bonnet	*Mycena arcangeliana*	Bonnet toadstool *(Basidiomycota)*
Yellow spot	*Nectria peziza*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
(No common name found)	*Penicillium claviforme*	*Ascomycota (Sac Fungi)*
Trooping funnel or Monk's head	*Infundibulicybe geotropa form*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Tawny funnel cap	*Paralepista flaccida (formerly L)*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Clustered toughshank	*Gymnopus confluens*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Scarlet caterpillarclub (for C. militaris species)	*Cordyceps sp*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Deceiver, Lackluster laccaria, or Waxy laccaria	*Laccaria laccata*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Larch bolete, Greville's bolete, or Tamarack jack	*Suillus grevillei*	Bolete *(Basidiomycota)*
Redlead roundhead or Chip cherry	*Leratiomyces ceres*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
(No common name found)	*Peziza repanda*	*Cup fungus (Ascomycota)*
Clouded agaric, Cloudy clitocybe, or Cloud funnel	*Clitocybe nebularis*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Oyster mushroom, Grey oyster mushroom	*Pleurotus ostreatus*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Silverleaf fungus	*Chondrostereum purpureum*	Bracket fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Southern bracket	*Ganoderma australe*	Bracket fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Lemon disco or Yellow fairy cups	*Calycina citrina*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Spectacular rustgill or Laughing Jim	*Gymnopilus junonius*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Shaggy scalycap	*Pholiota squarrosa*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Striate earthstar	*Geastrum striatum*	Earthstar fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Grey waxcap (or Oily waxcap)	*Gliophorus irrigatus*	Waxcap *(Basidiomycota)*
Candlesnuff fungus or Stag's horn fungus	*Xylaria hypoxylon*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Tar spot fungus	*Rhytisma acerinum*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Velvet shank or Winter fungus	*Flammulina velutipes*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Holly parachute	*Marasmius hudsonii*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Oak crust	*Peniophora quercina*	Crust fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Smoky Bracket	*Bjerkandera adusta*	Phylum: B*asidiomycota*
Wood blewit	*Collybia nuda (syn. Lepista nuda)*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Honey fungus	*Armillaria mellea*	Root rot fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Wood ear or Jelly Ear Fungus	*Auricularia auricula-judae*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Orange Peel Fungus	*Aleuria aurantia*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Birch Woodwart	*Jackrogersella multiformis*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Wrinkled club	*Clavulina rugosa*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Spectacular Rustgill	*Gymnopilus junonius*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Buttercap	*Rhodocollybia butyracea*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Shaggy Scalycap	*Pholiota squarrosa*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Elfin Saddle	*Helvella lacunosa*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Yellow fairy cups or lemon discos	*Calycina citrina*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Oyster Mushroom	*Pleurotus ostreatus*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Southern Bracket	*Ganoderma australe*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Sycamore Tarspot	*Rhytisma acerinum*	*Plant pathogen* (weak parasite)
Holly parachute	*Marasmius hudsonii*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Conical Brittlestem	*Parasola conopilus*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
(No common name found)	*Hohenbuehelia grisea*	Gilled fungus *(Basidiomycota)*
Wood speedwell rust	*Puccinia veronicae*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Vermillion waxcap	*Hygrocybe miniata*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Oak Crust	*Peniophora quercina*	Basidiomycota *(Spore Droppers)*
Ash dieback	*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*
Yellow spot	*Nectria peziza*	Ascomycete fungus
Foxtail mould	*Penicillium vulpinum*	Mould *(microfungi)*
(No common name found)	*Peziza petersii*	Ascomycota *(Sac Fungi)*

contd

Fungus Foray, Ormeau Park (Contd)

Wood ear and Birch Woodwart



Redlead roundhead

Wrinkled Club - *Clavulina rugosa*

Wood blewit

Striate earthstar

Fungus Foragers - *Humano pabulatores*