

Painting Orchids In The Burren

SUSAN SEX

A New Archaeological Site In The
Burren MARION DOWD

A Very Peculiar Place JAN MORRIS

Miniature Limestone Landforms

DAVID DREW

Twelfth-Century Pilgrims. The
Burren's First Tourists? PETER HARBISON

Feeling Peckish? Foraging In The
Burren. VIVIENNE CAMPBELL

and much more....



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Editorial

This is a significant time for the future of Ireland's biodiversity and heritage. Two plans have been published in recent months: *Actions for Biodiversity 2011-2016* and the Heritage Council's *Strategic Plan for 2012-2016*. The first accepts that we all have a moral duty to look after habitats and species for our own benefit and that of future generations. Reassuringly for the Burren, one of the Actions is to continue the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme. The second is preceded by a Ministerial Statement in which Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht acknowledges the significant contribution made by the Heritage Council "to vastly improving our collective appreciation and understanding of our rich national heritage", but goes on to say

that the future of the Council is being reviewed. Taking its functions back into Government would be a huge step backwards and this Trust has written to the Minister to say so. Actions proposed in the Plan include helping heritage groups such as this Trust to grow and develop; supporting the development and implementation of conservation and management initiatives in high-nature value areas such as the Burren and maintaining the Grants Programme which has been so beneficial throughout Ireland and from which this Trust has gained considerable support. It is to be hoped that wisdom will prevail and that the Heritage Council which has done so much to promote world-class standards of heritage care is enabled to fulfil its Strategy through to 2016 and beyond.

Stephen Ward

How do we do it ... ?

When we launched Burren Insight 2011, amongst the communications we received was one which read 'May I congratulate you all on another fantastic Burren Insight publication. The quality, feel and content is superb and really reflects well on the excellence of the organisation. Quite extraordinary also that you can produce such a quality publication with such limited resources. **How do you do it?'**

How do we do it, indeed!?! The answer is that we must be grateful to numerous benefactors who, when the occasion has demanded, have come to our aid, determined that the Burrenbeo Trust will succeed. Like the benefactor who supplied a laptop when our computer died last year, or the one who stepped forward with the costs of design when the third Issue of Burren Insight looked unlikely to be printed. Ecobeo, the Trust's highly acclaimed education programme aimed mainly at children – some 700 have now benefitted - was sponsored at the last moment by a parent and the Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Club enabling this fantastic course to continue.

In 2012, corporate sponsorship has allowed Ecobeo to be developed even further.

We held our first ever Burrenbeo Gala at Dublin's Ely Restaurant in the Irish Financial Centre. How on earth could the Trust afford such a lavish gesture? We could not – it was a gift to the Trust by restaurateur Eric Robson and it enabled us to promote the Burren in Dublin. The reception was visually stunning with new Trust banners around the room. How could we afford these? We couldn't – an anonymous benefactor stepped forward at the last minute and paid for them to be made.

And it doesn't stop there. Over the last year, skilled individuals have donated their time to a top standard heritage course, a botanical workshop, the Ecobeo course, Burren in Bloom and the heritage monthly series, regular conservation volunteers action days, editing of websites, grant writing, e-newsletters and Burren Insight. It is calculated that up to €75,000 worth of professional time was donated in 2011! That is how we do it!

We are extremely grateful for the time, energy and financial assistance of these benefactors. With your help, the Trust can build upon these formative years and go from strength to strength.

Brigid Barry and Stephen Ward
Editors

The Archaeology of the Famine in the Burren

For the last two years the communities of Ballyvaughan and Fanore, together with archaeologists from NUI Galway, have been investigating the lives of tenant villagers, labourers and others around the time of the Great Famine. We have looked at the relationship with landlords and others in authority and the devastation and other changes brought by the Famine. Despite all the books and maps, there's much more to be said about Famine times. The history has been passed down through generations; traces remain on the landscape or lying in the ground. Combining archaeology with the community's concerns and knowledge is a powerful way to find out more about this significant time.

Community Archaeology

Our approach is based on principles developed over many years with communities in different countries and takes its orientation from an international grassroots women's network of which I'm a member. In the Burren we aim to involve as many as possible in research and other activities. We aim to take direction from community concerns and to support the community and its cultural heritage. We began by listening to what people had to say, including what heritage they thought useful and significant. The enormous interest expressed in researching the Famine helped the project to develop. The community response has been fantastic with the enthusiastic participation of so many, ranging in age from 6 to 90; people who take part include housewives, farmers, pensioners, waitresses, small business owners, tourists, teachers and many others.

Fieldwork So Far

We asked if anyone knew of deserted tenant villages or settlements from which their families came and visited those sites with them. We learned a huge amount and have been privileged to hear some of the rich store of information in Ballyvaughan and Fanore about the Famine and more recent times. We have now made preliminary records of nine deserted 19th century settlements and have been invited to visit several more. Not all settlements were abandoned at the time of the Famine; some have a story that continued into the 20th century or even up to the present day.

Over the last two years, adults and children have participated in many other kinds of field research. These include walking the landscape to find and record places important in the lives

and work of women, children and men such as cultivation ridges ('lazy beds'), mass paths, wells and water sources, agricultural structures like goat cros (in which kid goats were reared for meat) and turf thuiles (within which turf and dung was wind-dried for fuel), famine roads, famine graves, children's burial grounds, soup kitchens and more. Historical sources and maps are being consulted. At some sites we undertake more detailed surveys. Two deserted villages have been mapped so far: the intriguing moss and scrub-covered Lissaroo in Newtown and the evocative village of Caherbannagh in the Caher valley. To produce images of what may lie hidden beneath the ground children and adults also took part in a geophysical survey at Lissaroo.

This Burren landscape was clearly very busy in the 19th century, populated by vibrant communities until evictions and other landlord clearance activities, famine, emigration and other factors led to abandonment of some places and great change to the social fabric of others.

Public talks and walks, report-back meetings, site open days, consultation and regular discussions with as many people as possible are central. Helping to organise and participate in the fieldwork provides occasions for everyone to contribute, develop ideas and exchange information and skills.

Burren Community Archaeology Project

We have set up the Burren Community Archaeology Project (BCAP) to allow us to respond to community requests for support, research and training. We aim to make professionals and researchers, archaeologists' skills, volunteers and other university resources available locally. BCAP includes the Famine project as well as research on other periods and heritage issues, oral history, presentation

and education work including with the children and teachers of Ballyvaughan primary school. It also involves providing independent expert advice which is requested by the community, for example, in relation to the impact of proposed developments.

Conclusion

The work so far has been achieved with little or no funding and with great community assistance. To develop it to the extent that everyone wants over the coming years will require a more substantive funding base; the search is underway. We also see that others are beginning to take up some of the methods we are using. Our aim is that the approach we are all working out in the Burren will be useful to other communities.

Acknowledgements

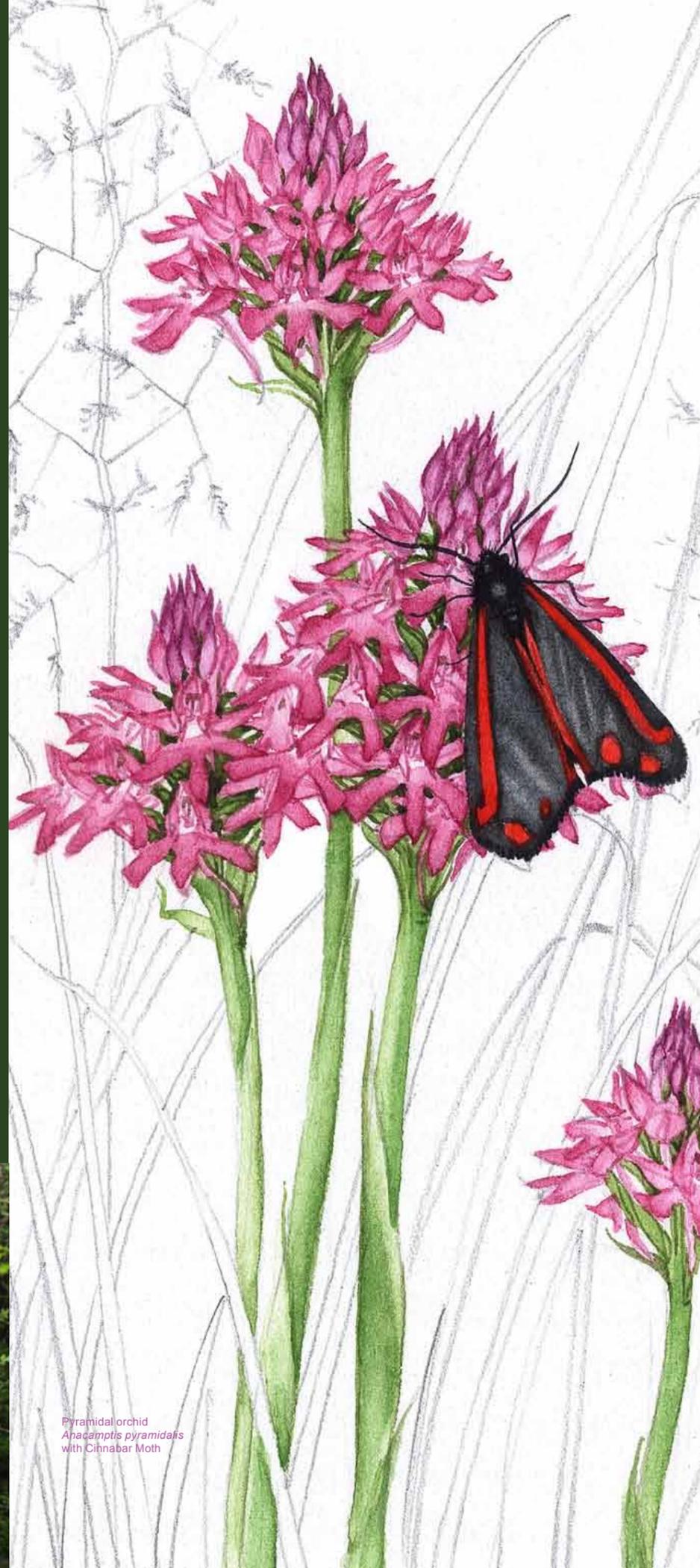
Many thanks to everyone in Ballyvaughan, Fanore and further afield who is taking part or helping out, particularly the landowners and their families. Please ask permission before visiting sites; some may not be open to the public. We also thank the community organisations, students and university staff who have given time or other support. Thank you to the Global Women's Strike for orientation and moral support. Thanks also to Professor Charles Orser, New York State Museum, for advice on the historical archaeology of 19th century Ireland when we first began.

by Maggie Ronayne

Maggie Ronayne lectures in archaeology at NUI Galway and has developed and published public archaeology projects with communities in Turkey, Mexico and Ireland. New volunteers are always welcome! Contact Maggie at: maggie.ronayne@nuigalway.ie or Tel: 091 493701. More details on the project at: www.nuigalway.ie/archaeology.



Mapping a deserted village. Photo by Maggie Ronayne.



Pyramidal orchid
Anacamptis pyramidalis
with Cinnabar Moth

Painting orchids in the Burren

Scrambling up Blackhead (definitely a bit younger then) in late May, the sun melting us, sky and sea endless deepest blue, a cuckoo calling, scarcely able to put a foot down without standing on yet another early purple orchid (*Orchis mascula*), in yet another shade of pink, rose, magenta or white, was my introduction to the glorious Burren.

I think it was about 16 years ago that Brendan Sayers, orchid man at the National Botanic Gardens, and a couple of colleagues invited me to go over to Clare to see the wild flowers. As the word had it, it was a great year for the orchids. That was the beginning, I was only becoming familiar with the orchids that grow in Ireland from sites near to my home in North County Dublin, that include up to 8 species on the North Bull Island at Clontarf.

An opportunity to see several more species, especially some rarer, elusive ones, was a wonderful chance and, indeed, that was a great year for the orchids in the Burren.

On that visit, and on subsequent annual visitations, often with my husband Vincent, we first saw the little dense-flowered orchid (*Neotinea maculata*) one of the legendary Burren plants whose natural home is the Mediterranean.

First one, then another, eventually eight in a staggered line, tiny helmets pointing in all directions, every leaf nibbled to bits - evidently catnip to the slugs and rabbits. The heavenly blue of a few late-flowering gentians were bright pin-points among the dense greens.

Another great treasure house is Mullach Mor. Delicately negotiate the beautiful but unpredictable stone walls and an excitingly different (- for a Dubliner) terrain reveals itself. The famous cracked limestone seeping with underground streams, slopes to the turlough at the foot of the mountain. In amongst those tufts of grassy vegetation, half hidden by feathery silverleaf is one of our rarest orchids - the flecked marsh-orchid (*Daltrylorhiza incarnata* subsp. *cruenta*). A packed head of rich rosy-purple flowers, pierced through by dark bracts,



The turlough at Mullach Mor

sits atop a tall stem of tightly clasping leaves, whose wine dark splotches are visible on both back and front, a helpful identifying feature.

One year, a long walk around the turlough, across more treacherous limestone pavement, was rewarded with a tantalising bed of fly orchids (*Ophrys insectifera*) – now you see them, now you don't, a sharp eye is needed, so cleverly camouflaged are they. The wonderful bee orchids (*Ophrys apifera*) would shyly reveal themselves, standing on tiptoe, among the competing grasses. The Burren has many “bee” sites, the dryer, more gravelly and the more miserable the ground, the better.

In a small wet field, not far from Mullach Mor, we found many wonders. A rich sprinkling of hybrid orchids, defying taxonomy, but delighting the aspiring artist, a cluster of fly orchids, casually munched and trodden by a few cattle, two or three lesser-butterfly orchids – porcelain perfection, and many beautiful flowers including water avens, marsh marigolds and the marvellously named “grass of Parnassus”.

The dunes behind Fanore Strand have all the orchids that are common elsewhere but here they are in prodigal abundance. Tiny fragrant orchids and every shade of pyramidal orchid, all humming with insects.

Up in the National Park, threaded through a stony carpet of burnet rose, bloody cranesbill, carline thistle and masses of fragrant orchids (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) are the helleborines – the greeny-pink and the pinky-green broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*) and – at just the right time in late July and early August, and for a short period only, another star

attraction - the dark red helleborine (*Epipactis atrorubens*) so deep a winey red, that sepia has to be added to alizarin-crimson to approach its dark beauty in watercolour.

Through the years, painting the treasures of the Burren, inspired by other artists and botanists who have gone before us - Charles Nelson and Wendy Walsh's great collaboration on Burren plants, Raymond Piper's masterly paintings of orchids which can be viewed at Gregan's Castle Hotel, we too have collaborated on books about the orchid. In 2004, the folio volume “Ireland's Wild Orchids” brought together the large plates of all the species found on the island of Ireland, with text by Brendan, a book definitely to be enjoyed at home, it weighs 5 Kilos! In 2008, “Ireland's Wild Orchids – a field guide”, was published with small-scale, though still life-sized, new paintings of all the species. With this pocket-size guide anyone, anywhere can have the pleasure of taking the book to the orchids and trying to identify this fascinating, though by no means easy, family of wild flowers. In these precarious times, it is comforting to know that this privilege continues to return for us each year, and will do so, for as long as this precious habitat, the Burren, endures.

by Susan Sex

Susan Sex is one of Ireland's best known botanical artists. The folio book “Ireland's Wild Orchids” 2004, now out of print, has been designated a 'rare book'. Details of its companion, the award winning 'Ireland's Wild Orchids – a field guide' 2008 can be accessed at www.orchidireland.ie Susan leads a botanical painting class each August in the Burren College of Art who can be accessed at www.burrencollege.ie



Flecked marsh-orchid
Dactylorhiza incarnata subsp. *cruenta*
with Damselfly

Sea bindweed
Calystegia soldanella

Dense-flowered orchid
Neotinea maculata

Spring gentian
Gentiana verna

A VERY PECULIAR PLACE

The Burren, a rocky wilderness in western Ireland, is a region of ancient magic and infinite strangeness

Nearly halfway up the west coast of Ireland, at about 53 degrees north, nine degrees west, there stands the presiding symbol of one of Europe's most peculiar places. The thing is peculiar enough in itself, being an ungainly megalithic structure, five millennia old, that stands there all alone and looks to me, especially in silhouette, suggestively like a witch's supper table. It is the Poulnabrone dolmen, and it is a proper symbol of the Burren, a place of infinite strangeness.

The Burren is an indeterminate limestone region of about 100 square miles, sparsely inhabited, with small towns and villages only at its edges, and a landscape that can seem, at first sight, forbiddingly unwelcoming – stern bald hills, apparently devoid of life or colour, crossed only by a few narrow roads, and with nothing much to see, so the map suggests, but tombs and ruins.

But wait. The witches of Poulnabrone stir their cauldron and the Burren reveals itself to be a place of paradoxical magic. As the clouds shift, those grey hills are suddenly tinged with mauve or violet, those uninviting lanes blossom with gentians, an ancient history comes to life and almost everywhere you go you will stumble across the geological wonders that have made these 100 square miles celebrated across the world.

Stumble is the right word, for the Burren's most famous features are the immense platforms of limestone slabs that figure on the jackets of books and travel brochures. Patterned with crevasses, they can be treacherous to the unwary. These huge expanses of empty stone vary from pavements that might almost be man-made to wide piles of rubble, and there are patches of them throughout the Burren, sometimes noisily attended by tourist coaches and hiking parties, more often weirdly silent. The Irish name for the region, An Boireann, means simply "a stony place", and probably the most famous quotation about it comes from the Cromwellian general Edmund Ludlow, who said it had "not water enough to drown a man, wood enough to hang one, nor earth enough to bury him".

This is karst country, akin to the limestone highlands of Slovenia or the Mendip hills of Somerset, riddled with caves and potholes, sparse of foliage, conducive to poetic legend. It has its own jargon – the big slabs themselves are called clints, the cracks between are grykes, and the big boulders that stand here and there, left behind when the ice of the Ice Age melted, are properly known as erratics. There is a pub in the middle of the Burren, called Cassidy's, which overlooks a wide green declivity: it seems a kindly pastoral prospect but is really a geological hiccup called a turlough, and every now and then water floods into it from hidden springs, turning it in a matter of hours into a lake. That's the stuff Burren legends are made of, like the cave in the north they call the Cave of the Wild Horses, because once upon a time a herd of mustangs suddenly emerged from it and laid waste to the country around.

But it is not all turloughs, caverns and grykes, because all over this place of secrets a sweet sub-alpine flora flourishes. Everywhere, subtle touches of colour, in between the sterile rocks, show you where the gentians lurk, or the wild orchids, Lady's Smock, milkwort and irises and honeysuckles. The Burren is like one vast botanical rock garden but infinitely subtler than most, and minus all labels.

There are wild goats about, too, and pine martens, seals in the sea, kestrels in the air, and in some of the waters a kind of water-beetle so rare it has been found only at five sites on earth – one in Sweden, the other four here.

There are also walls, miles and miles of walls. The place is criss-crossed with dry-stone walls, on flat ground as on hillsides, walls of such complex fascination that they amount to a kind of composite art form. Where do all the Burren walls go? Where do they start? How old are they? What are they for? They may be just piled together any-old-how, they may be carefully patterned, and they have been lovingly analysed by scholars and artists alike. Some are age-old, some were probably piled together by a farmer's bulldozer the week before last, and they are

a constant reminder that the Burren, far from being a desert or a wilderness, has been the home of humanity for longer than history.

The place is instinct with human allusions, often curious, sometimes unique, from the bones of the 33 people buried beneath the Poulnabrone dolmen to the shades of the German U-boat crews who, locals say, came ashore during the second world war to draw water from the holy well of Gleninagh. There are supposed to be only about 1,700 people living permanently today in the Barony (yes, the Barony!) of the Burren; many thousands, though, have lived and worked there, from the Stone Age until now and, almost into modern times, they were governed by the local clans and chieftains, O'Loughlins, O'Connors, O'Briens, living by their own immemorial laws, honouring their own bardic traditions.

Since then, famines, wars, evictions and economics have all conspired to lay waste to the Burren's population but not to destroy its sense of continuity. Those ageless walls help, of course, and so do the countless miscellaneous lumps of masonry, once tower houses, villages, shrines, monasteries or churches, which hauntingly litter this countryside. Customs and allusions die hard here. On islets off the coast, I am told, the odd farmer still makes a raft of seaweed, and poles it ashore to use as fertiliser. In taverns fiddles, flutes, accordions and whistles still play the old music. Cassidy's, that pub beside the turlough, was not always a pub: it was a British army post long ago, and then a station of the Irish garda, and its walls are full of mementos of a man from down the road, Michael Cusack, who was the original of the Citizen, Joyce's anonymous and curmudgeonly character in *Ulysses*.

Christianity came to the Burren at least a thousand years ago and the most substantial of its monuments is the ruined abbey of Corcomroe, near the northern coast. It was founded by Cistercians in the 13th century and is now evocatively isolated in its silent valley but those monks knew what they were doing when they dedicated it to Holy Mary of the Fertile Rock.

by Jan Morris

Writing as James Morris, a correspondent for The Times, the author accompanied the British Everest Expedition of 1953 and was the first to report the success of Hillary and Tenzing in conquering the mountain. As Jan Morris she has been named by The Times as one of the greatest British writers of recent times. This is an extract from an article which first appeared in The Financial Times dated 8th July 2011 and is reproduced here by kind permission of the author.

Photo by Carsten Kreiger



Flesh fly on thistle *Cirsium*



Otiorhynchus sulcatus vine weevil - a garden pest



Inachis io
Peacock butterfly



Fungus Gnat on *Cirsium* 'Mount Etna'



Pine Marten are frequent in the Caher valley; still uses the house for breeding



Geometra papilionaria
Large Emerald Moth



A garden visitor make his web across one of the many flowers



Emerald Shield Bug

Attracting Wildlife Visitors to a Burren Garden

Gardening for wildlife has become very popular over the past few years. Most people assume that it is only beneficial in urban gardens, offering 'safe havens' for wildlife under pressure from encroachment on the surrounding countryside. But with careful planning amazing results can also be achieved in rural gardens. In Ireland one can argue that wildlife gardening has an

extremely important role to play in conservation, whereby a well-planned garden can quickly become a haven for wildlife when surrounded by a monoculture of green fields.

Even in the Burren, surrounded by unimproved agricultural land, or woodland rich in wildlife, a few simple changes will greatly enhance the

wildlife frequenting your garden.

When I started creating my garden at Caher Bridge twelve years ago, it was mostly immature hazel/ash woodland, a fabulous natural resource rich in species that appreciated the dense cover and damp, dark north-facing conditions. I saw very few butterflies and moths, and the

range of visiting birds was surprisingly limited. Although bats used the house as a roost, they were seldom seen, preferring to hunt in the more open spaces away from the house.

To create a garden which would serve to enhance its value for wildlife, I developed a series of interconnecting 'open rooms' and corridors within the woodland itself. In so doing I effectively extended the woodland edges and opened up areas into which more light and air could penetrate. More light has also provided more heat which has created new microclimates within the former woodland.

Even before extending the 'garden' into these

newly cleared sections, the increase in wildlife was very noticeable. Dragonflies, butterflies, moths and a host of other insects immediately began to use the 'rooms' as feeding zones which, in turn, led to a greater variety and number of birds eager to exploit the new food supply. The bats were also quick to take advantage of newly accessible feeding areas.

The cleared areas are now filled with a vast array of flowering plants many of which are 'weeds' – native plants which are carefully managed so as not to become 'real weeds'. Over the past ten years, my garden has effectively developed into a warm, sunny oasis of nectar and food, protected by the surrounding woodland and

house with an ever present cacophony of twittering, humming and buzzing especially on sunny days.

Whatever size your garden, and wherever it is located, a few small changes can make an enormous difference to the fellow creatures that make it their home, and will also give you immeasurable pleasure and a better understanding of what's going on in the world around us. Enjoy!

by Carl Wright



Woodmouse, frequent visitor all year round in the garden, enjoying a breakfast of foxgloves

Caher Bridge garden is open at most times throughout the year BY PRIOR APPOINTMENT. Visits are by guided tour and cost €5pp. To book an appointment, phone 065 7076225. The photographs in this article all belong to the author. These and many others can be seen on www.facebook.com/pages/Caher-Bridge-Garden.



The Caher Valley garden in bloom



1. A granite erratic deposited by ice c.15,000 years ago



2. A limestone erratic of similar age



3. Flat-floored pans

Miniature Limestone Landforms

Karren in the Burren

Some of the bare limestone surfaces of the Burren are perfectly smooth and fully justify their name – limestone pavements. These are the exception though and most of the exposed Burren limestone has been heavily eroded and in places, on the foreshore for example, almost no level surfaces remain. These small-scale features are called by the German term *karren*, and comprise a limestone landscape in miniature with a relief and a horizontal extent ranging from a few centimetres to a few metres. When lit by low-angle sun the karren forms may be striking, beautiful even, and are often a subject for the photographer.

This article summarises how and why karren form and presents a typology of the features; it may perhaps encourage the reader to examine the bare pavements in more detail and speculate as to how a particular clint block developed its suite of karren.

The study of these features, which occur worldwide wherever rain falls onto bare limestone, was initiated by earth scientists in the Alps and in the Dinaric mountains (present day Slovenia and Croatia) and hence the names are largely Germanic and Serbo-Croat. There is no

single term in English for the features, only the ponderous and unmemorable phrase: *micro-solutional limestone landforms*. For the benefit of more resilient readers the accompanying table gives a classification of karren types with the full splendour of their academic names!

Two boulders can tell very different tales. One is a granite erratic, i.e. carried here in the ice from Connemara (photo 1); its surface has been exposed to the elements since the ice that covered it melted away some 15,000 years ago. However, the granite rock remains almost unaltered; it has been eroded by the elements but evenly, crystal by crystal, so the overall appearance of the boulder remains the same. The second boulder is of Burren limestone; originally it would have been rounded and polished beneath the glacier but has been exposed to the weather for a similar length of time (photo 2). Clearly the limestone has suffered intense erosion over these 15,000 years and the result of this erosion is pitting and runneling of the rock - karren.

Karren are parts of the limestone surface which have been eroded more than the surrounding rock by slightly acidic rainwater which dissolves limestone. If the original surface of the rock is horizontal, or nearly so, then rainwater tends to accumulate in hollows which then deepen over time to form **pans**, with flat floors and near vertical walls (photo 3). If a micro-soil and then vegetation accumulate in the hollow then the damp soil acts as an acidic sponge, dissolving the limestone in all directions (and often very rapidly) to form rounded, sometimes almost spherical hollows termed **cups** (photo 4).

Even on the flattest surface, if sufficient rain falls the pools will overflow and often drain into the nearest vertical cleft or gryke (enlarged joint) in the limestone. In this way drainage grooves or runnels may develop like river valleys in miniature. If the rock surface is significantly tilted then the runnels may be the dominant karren forms (photos 5 and 6 show small and large runnels respectively).

On limestone pavements karren forms are often very varied and have a complex history of development which can sometimes be teased out if the limestone surface is studied in detail. In the Burren some of the most spectacular karren forms – mainly pans, are found in the inter-tidal zone, whilst runnels are best developed on the tilted limestone of the south-eastern Burren.

Karren also develop on monuments subsequently exposed to rain; they often have a story to tell of its history and the conditions under which it was constructed. This is too large a topic for this article however....

by David Drew

Dr David Drew until recently lectured on hydrology and hydrogeology in Trinity College Dublin. His particular interest is in limestone (karstic) regions of Ireland such as the Burren and especially in the underground waters in these areas. He is actively involved in research into the groundwater in the Burren and adjacent areas of lowland limestone in Counties Galway, Roscommon and Mayo. He also has a keen interest in the environmental archaeology of the Burren. All the photos are the author's own.

4. Pans which have become soil-filled deepening and widening into cups



5. Larger runnels on a less steep slope



6. Small-scale runnels (rillenkarren) on a steep slope



KARREN TYPES

Some of the main types of karren with their Germanic-Slavic names

Hollows (collectively known as kamenitza (Slavic))

- Pits contain soil and vegetation and may drain via rock fissures or evaporation, they are rounded and bowl-shaped
- Pans are open to the air, flat-floored and water-filled at times

Linear (fracture) controlled karren

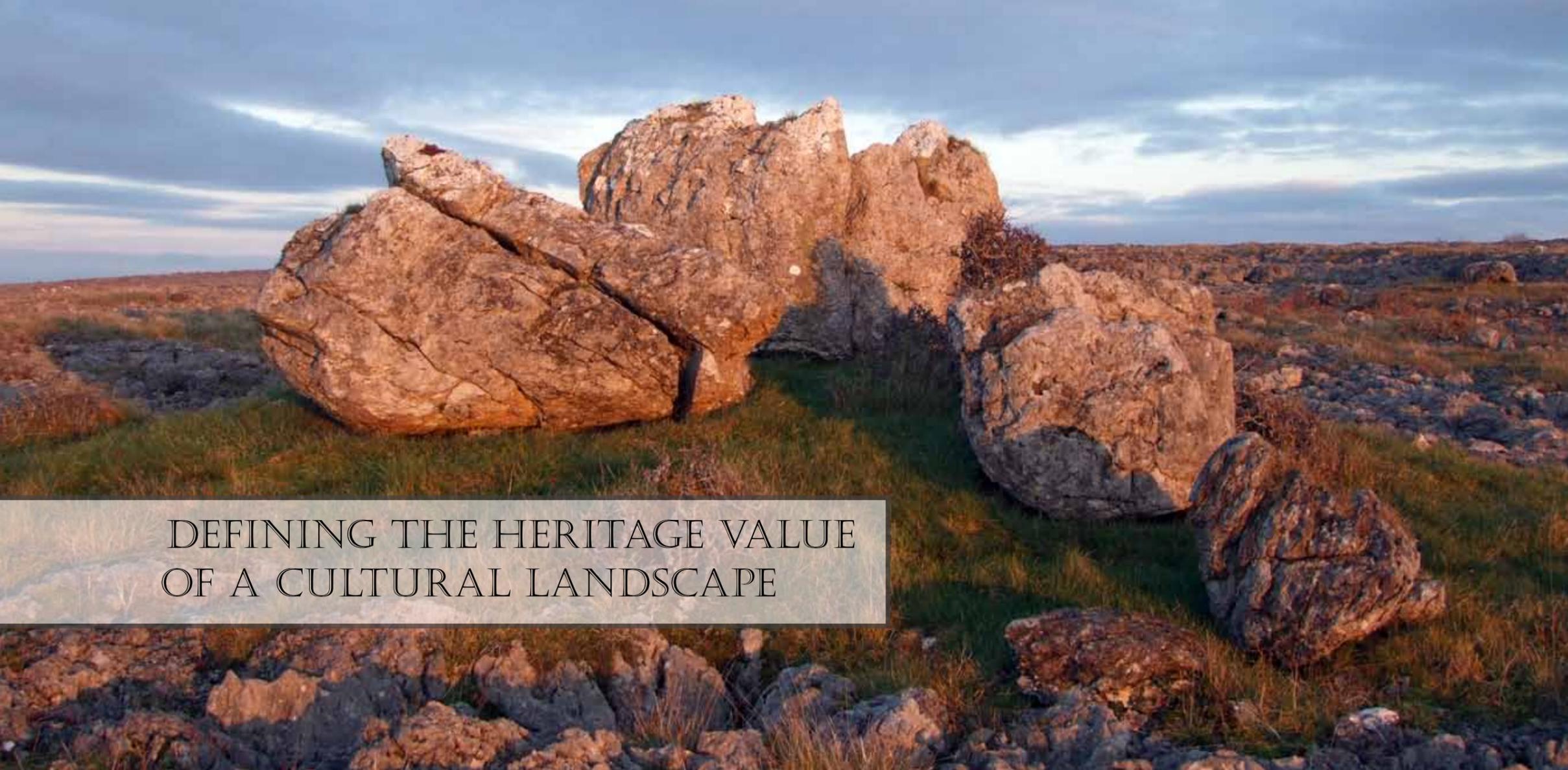
- Enlarged fissures (vertical or inclined) developed from joints, faults, bedding-planes
- The fissures are called Grikes (Kluftkarren) and bound a slab of rock called a clint
- As grikes deepen and widen, the clint block is reduced to a ridge or a pinnacle (cutters, spitzkarren)

Runoff Karren (Gravity flow of water over the limestone)

- Rillenkarren – small parallel runnels
- Rinnenkarren/Rundkarren – larger, mini-valley forms
- Trittkarren – 'heelprint' karren
- Decantation Runnels and Flutes

Complex and Large Scale Features

- Felsenmeer, rockforests, bogaz



DEFINING THE HERITAGE VALUE OF A CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

There is Room for All Voices

As the world becomes more global we also become more local with an increasing focus on questions of our own heritage, memory and identity. Interest in heritage conservation has grown in the last few decades. This now includes not just the elite, old world tangible heritage of monuments, buildings, grand parks and gardens, well represented in World Heritage listing and the historical record, but also the intangible or non-material heritages such as local knowledge, skills, stories and cultural practices. These distinctly local or vernacular forms of heritage embrace a multiplicity of people and places. Often vernacular heritage is not well documented or widely understood, including as it does the everyday landscapes and ordinary places lived in by ordinary people leading ordinary lives—which are in their own way, of course, extraordinary!

Cultural landscapes embody layers of the

past and are part of this diverse heritage. As a cultural landscape, the Burren is renowned for its significance on many levels. Writer and cartographer, Tim Robinson accurately described the Burren as 'one vast memorial to bygone cultures' and this description also appears as a tentative statement of significance for the Burren's potential World Heritage listing. However the Burren is more than artifact, more than monument, and neither relic nor wilderness. With a unique heritage widely recognised as nationally and internationally significant, the Burren continues as a living landscape and home to its people. Cultural landscapes also recognise the interrelationships and deep connections between people and their places, for all landscapes include cultural as well as natural aspects even though this may not be immediately apparent. We see in the Burren, for example, that high biodiversity is not purely accidental but aided by people performing

ancient well-honed agricultural practices that encourage species-rich habitat.

Landscapes can mean many things: the geologist's eye sees a Burren of rocks, caves and hydrology; a botanist will delight in the juxtaposition of Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean wildflower species; the archaeologist unearths a rich ancestral past; the anthropologist focuses on community, family and kin; the artist captures a fleeting moment of beauty and sense of place; while the farmer knows the field well through nurturing the land and practicing the tradition of winterage carried out over generations. The multifaceted Burren means all these things and many more besides.

So how do we conserve the many different natural and cultural heritages while recognising cultural landscapes as lived-in places? We can start by defining what we value. When

considering a landscape's importance we have often relied on expert knowledge which has dominated the discussion and fashioned an authorised view of heritage. While expert knowledge provides essential information and highlights why a landscape is exceptional and worth conserving, perhaps comparing it nationally or internationally to other landscapes, often the voices of local people with sustained connections and an intimate knowledge of a place are left unheard. When defining the heritage value of a cultural landscape, the social value communities place on their landscape and the personal heritages of individuals also need to be acknowledged as a vital part of the mix.

Part of the complexity is in considering where a landscape begins and ends, for a landscape does not have clearly defined borders. The physical boundary of the Burren is a point of conjecture, but more perplexing is that cultural landscapes such as the Burren also exist in the mind and imagination. The Burren is a storied landscape with a rich Gaelic oral tradition of

place lore or *dinnseanchas* where myth, folklore and stories are intertwined with place names so that the place becomes something that is experienced culturally. The story of the cow called *Glas Ghaibhneach*, for instance, is a multilayered story with cultural connections to place names and the landscape. The *Glas* could fill any vessel into which she was milked. When two women laid a wager on whether a vessel large enough could be found and one returned with a sieve, the milk passed onto the ground forming the Seven Streams of *Taosca* and the *Glas*, distressed at being unable to fill the sieve, died. To the east of *Slieve na Glaisé* is a place called *Leaba na Glaisé* where the cow is said to have slept at night, and near it another spot where her calf lay. Grass has never grown on these places and the impressions of the cow's hooves are still seen today in the rocks in many places. In protecting the Burren, could the ancient story of the *Glas* also be read as a modern day fable which reminds us that unless we respect and judiciously use our resources, we risk losing them? As part of an intangible

heritage the stories embedded in the landscape need to be remembered and valued.

Attachment to landscape or place also engenders emotions. The upward path to the mass rock walked long ago by past family members, the waters of the holy well visited faithfully for cure, the grandparents' house at the crossroads where neighbours met going on *cuairt*, the black soil in the garden made by the toil of ancestors, the old clay pipes and razor fish bones left from famine days unearthed while working the land, the evocative smell of the elderberry and the new mown hay, walking the field to find the cows with the sun rising over the mountains, the hope and desire for children to settle on the family farm—these, and more besides, belong to the present day as part of a rich Burren heritage. The local and personal heritages of people simply going about their daily lives are no less important than the heritages attached to the grand narratives of history. The links between the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage are evident; people can express their connection to the physical form of landscape or place by drawing on their memories, stories and emotions. What people value most often connects to their sense of family, community, culture, who they are and where they belong.

Increasingly, cultural rights are considered a human right. We each identify and value our personal heritage in accordance with our own cultural background and experience. As there is room for multiple histories, archaeologies or interpretations of the past there also needs to be room for multiple heritages. The Burren Charter provides an important and timely opportunity for all voices across the generations to be heard from the venerable, who have lived through many changes in their Burren lifetimes, to the young Burren custodians of the future! All voices have something to offer in defining and conserving a precious Burren heritage. Ask yourself what the Burren means to you. What is it that you value? What would you like remembered? And what do you wish kept for your children and for future generations? There is room for all voices; it is time to speak as the voices need to be heard.

by Leanne Howard

[Leanne Howard is a PhD student at the University of Melbourne, Australia. Her research involves a comparative study of the ways local communities are involved in valuing and conserving cultural landscapes and their heritage values. Leanne has visited the Burren three times: in 1989, 2006 and then in 2010 for her fieldwork on Burren landscape and communities. She hopes to return in the not-too-distant future.](#)

TWELFTH-CENTURY PILGRIMS THE BURREN'S FIRST TOURISTS?

PART 2 - HIGH CROSSES AND A 'T' - OR TAU-SHAPED CROZIER-RELIQUARY

In the last Burren Insight, we looked at the probable presence at Killinaboy of a relic of the True Cross. But there must have been another Burren reliquary enclosing the wooden staff of a local saint which meets us in various guises at four different sites. The first of these is on the north face of the cross-base at Dysert, which has a carving of what I take to be a procession with the reliquary – two figures carrying it flanked on each side by a walking figure with a (pilgrim's) staff (Fig.7). The reliquary is in the form of a T,



7. The scene on the north face of the base of the twelfth-century cross at Dysert O'Dea may represent a procession with a T-shaped reliquary with 'bumps' at the top of each end, like the heads on the Tau Cross (Fig. 9).



8. A flat stone in Killinaboy churchyard bears a carving of what was probably a T-shaped crozier-reliquary.

having a tall stem and a cross-bar on top with a 'bump' at each end of the upper surface. Etienne Rynne pointed out that the same general shape is found on a tombstone laid flat at the south-western corner of the churchyard at Killinaboy (Fig. 8) – almost in the shadow of the double-armed cross. There the stem can be seen to have three bulges or 'knops', akin to those found on a comparable crozier-reliquary held by a figure incised on a tombstone now placed inside the door of Kilfenora Cathedral.

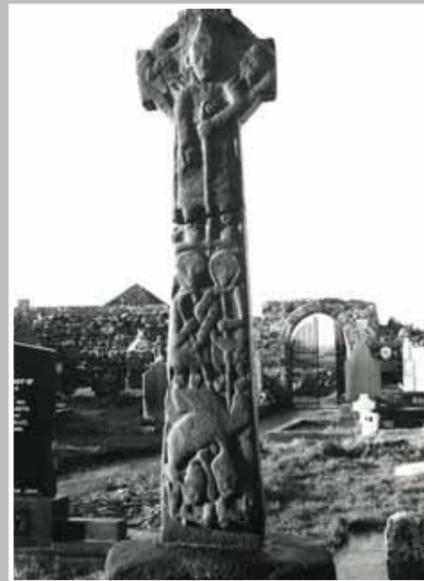
The tall shape of the Dysert and Killinaboy reliquary carvings was also copied on a third example - the famous Tau Cross (Fig. 9), formerly at the top of a hill between Killinaboy and Leamaneagh Castle but, to protect it from the weather, now removed to the Heritage Centre in Corofin and replaced on site by a replica. It stands there to a height of little more than two feet, but another piece of the shaft lay near to where it originally stood. However, as that fragment did not fit on to the bottom end of the



9. The famous twelfth-century Tau Cross (of Inneenboy) formerly on Roughan Hill, removed to the Heritage Centre in Corofin.

head-piece, we must presume that there was an intermediate section of the shaft which has got lost, and which would have given the Tau Cross a total height of about six feet. At each end of the roughly horizontal top of the Tau Cross are two carved heads, facing heavenwards, and the same T-shape – but with animal heads at each end - is found in the hands of that great figure of St. James the Apostle seen by millions of medieval pilgrims as they passed through the doorway of the church dedicated to him at Santiago de Compostela which, along with Rome, was the greatest centre of pilgrimage in medieval Europe. The Tau Cross may well, then, have been a 'station' where pilgrims, having walked from Dysert or Rath, could rest and say a prayer at the top of the steep hill at Roughan before proceeding onwards to their final destination, which I take to have been Kilfenora at the centre of the Burren.

There, seven crosses once stood (one was removed to Killaloe Cathedral in 1821), and this



10. Among the figures on the east face of the Doorty Cross now in the sacristy of Kilfenora Cathedral is one bearing a T-shaped crozier.

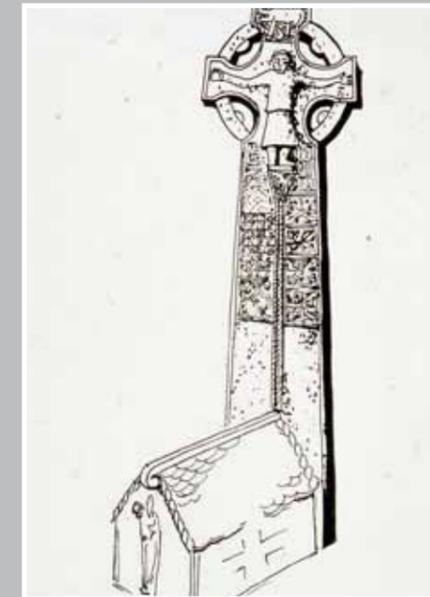
number may well symbolise the seven hills of Rome, suggesting that a pilgrimage to Kilfenora could have been seen as a substitute for the much more arduous trip to the Eternal City. Part of the route from the Tau Cross to Kilfenora goes along what the early Ordnance Survey map calls Sir Donat's Road, but a section between Corofin and Killinaboy is named Bóthar na mac Ríogh, which could have had a pilgrimage connotation as it passes a well dedicated to St. Inneenboy of Killinaboy.

The so-called Doorty Cross at Kilfenora, now moved into the re-roofed sacristy of the Cathedral, bears our fourth example - a figure



11. A horseman on the bottom of the west face of the twelfth-century Doorty cross in Kilfenora seems to ride above what may be the upper part of an old Irish house-shaped reliquary.

carrying a T-shaped crozier on what was its east face (Fig. 10). On the other face is a horseman (Fig. 11) letting his mount's front hoof stand on what looks suspiciously like the upper part of a house-shaped reliquary of the kind made in early Christian Ireland, suggesting that pilgrims may have come riding on horseback – which might also help to explain the presence of another horse-rider on a cross at Killeany on the



12. Fergus O'Farrell's suggested reconstruction of the cross in the field to the west of Kilfenora Cathedral, with a sarcophagus attached to the bottom of the shaft.

Aran Islands. The late Fergus O'Farrell made an interesting suggestion that the roughly-finished triangle at the bottom of the otherwise smoothly-carved east face of the High Cross still in the field to the west of Kilfenora Cathedral may well have had placed up against it a rather larger sarcophagus-style reliquary (Fig. 12) of the kind still existing in stone at Clones in Co. Monaghan. There are, of course, other stone monuments in the Burren which can also be associated with pilgrimage, including two roof-shaped reliquaries close to the church of Teampull Chronáin (Fig. 13), which find parallels at Slane in County Meath and various sites in County Kerry. These two Clare examples are undatable,



13. Teampall Chronáin near Carran with one of two roof-shaped reliquaries standing near it. Photo: Roger Stalley.

but may be of roughly the same date as the church. The penitential stations still existing at Glencolumbkille in the parish of Carran may, however, be considerably later.

If we ask why there seems to be a sudden upsurge in pilgrimage activity in the Burren during the twelfth century, the answer may well lie in the active church reform movement being preached and practised in Ireland at the time. Donnchadh Ó Corráin has suggested that these reforms were mulcting the old Irish monasteries of their property and possessions in order to set up new diocesan administrations. The old monasteries, such as Dysert and Kilfenora, may well have dusted down older reliquaries and instituted pilgrimages to attract devotees who would bring in much-needed cash to help them stay alive. Dysert probably declined as a monastery some time after 1200, whereas Kilfenora got a new lease of life by going over to the reformers' camp and being made into a diocesan centre some years earlier.

Even though history is silent about pilgrims in the Burren in the twelfth century, the stone monuments plead eloquently in favour of their former existence there. When pilgrimage blossomed in Europe in the eleventh century, and more particularly in the twelfth, people took advantage of the opportunity and freedom it provided to leave their own patch to go and see other parts of the world. In that way, pilgrims became what we would now call (religious) tourists, and thus the pilgrims evinced from looking at the churches and crosses of the Burren show them to have been the first recognisable tourists there – and today they still come to enjoy the area, its stone monuments, its flora, and its unique atmosphere.

For references to material used in these two articles, see the author's contribution 'The churches of medieval Clare' in Matthew Lynch and Patrick Nugent (eds.), *Clare History and Society*, Dublin 2008, 1-26.

by Peter Harbison

Dr. Peter Harbison spent many of his childhood summers in Corofin, where his interest in archaeology blossomed when reading through the library of his granduncle-in-law Dr. John Macnamara. He has written many articles on Clare topics for various local journals – along with over 20 books on Irish art and archaeology. He is now Honorary Academic Editor in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. All photos in this article were supplied by the author.



WHOLEHEARTED HEROINE OR MENACING MADWOMAN?

MAIRE RUA

Passing by the iconic Lemenagh Castle as a child, always led to one of the fantastic stories of the great Maire Rua. How she did away with her many husbands. How the hoof beats of the stallion she loved, more dearly than any husband, can sometimes still be heard on the top of Roughan Hill. How her maids were hung by the hair from the corbels of the castle. How her husband count ran to in excess of twenty, most of whom she murdered using methods that would make Agatha Christie blush; one was thrown from the top of the castle and several flung over the Cliffs of Moher by her specially trained stallion.

Shortly after her marriage to Cornet John Cooper, they quarrelled while he was shaving and he spoke discourteously of Conor O'Brien.

Unable to bear any insult to the one husband she had loved, she jumped out of bed and gave Cooper a kick in the stomach, from which he died.

Maire and her husband Conor O'Brien built gates (Red Gate) to shut in the people of the Burren, and would let no one through without seeking permission. Some of the Burren gentry gathered a band of locals, broke the gates, and forced O'Brien to promise free right of way forever. When Conor was carried back to Lemenagh mortally wounded after a battle with the Cromwellian forces of General Ludlow, myth suggests that Maire closed the gates on them while shouting "we want no dead men here". On realizing her husband was alive she let him in and nursed him till he died. As soon

as he died she dressed up in her finest clothes drove to Limerick to Ludlow's stronghold and offered to marry any one of his men. In this way she married her third husband, Cornet John Cooper, a protestant and secured ownership of Lemenagh.

What is interesting about this folklore is the fact that it sometimes reveals more about the storytellers than the subject. The cruelty, disloyalty and energy accredited to her gives her stories strength and colour incomparable to most others. Above all, the stories endure. Our attachment to these narratives reveals more about ourselves than the maligned Maire. I have come to believe our chronicles have managed to keep Maire Rua's name alive but at the expense of misunderstanding her and misrepresenting

her life's achievements.

To query the historical accuracy of the lore of Lemenagh is not in any way to reduce its worth or importance, our folklore is after all part of who we are, it is to achieve a more complete view of our past and who we are.

Understanding this remarkable woman needs an understanding of her life and times. Maire was born to The Lord of Imponderable Torlagh Rua Mc Mahon and Mary O Brian in 1615 or 1616.

Her uncle, the Fourth Earl, known as the "Great Earl" was educated in the court of Queen Elizabeth I after taking the English side in the Tudor wars. Maire was considered at the time to be well bred and one of the best connected young women in the county. She married her first husband Daniel Neylon of Dysert in 1634, by arrangement, at the age of 18. She had three sons and was pregnant with a fourth child when Daniel died in March 1639.

Being widowed at such a young age, while pregnant, could have been disastrous. This is when she showed the first signs of a political skill that would become increasingly evident. Daniel's death was not reported until after the baby was born in June so that Maire could influence the terms of the will. The estate at Dysert was willed to William Jnr., but through a complicated Ward of Court system that was intended to ensure that

all land inheritors were brought up as protestant, Maire avoided her son's religious conversion by making use of her family connections. In this way she gained effective control of the estate, leaving her a young financially independent widow - a remarkable thing for the time.

With this new found freedom, in Oct 1639 she married the love of her life, Conor O Brien, bringing with her a dowry of £1000 - a fortune at the time. For the next eleven years all her energy went into her family life. During that time she had eight children; assisted in running the estate and extended Lemenagh Castle with the addition of the Elizabethan house section, a trend-setting first for the area. The castle renovations were concluded in 1648.

Unfortunately the happy times were not to last; tragedy and adversity were just around the corner. In 1651 her daughters Mary and Slany died. It has been speculated that they died of the plague which was rife in the area at the time. The two children are buried in Coad graveyard.

Later that year, her husband was mortally wounded in a battle against the Cromwellian solders of General Edmund Ludlow. Three or four years later she married Cornet John Cooper. This marriage seemed to have been an attempt to hold on to the land for her children's sake. The marriage however produced a son Henry and possibly a daughter. This means that Maire bore a total of 14 children which proves

that she was blessed with extraordinary health and vitality. Most Catholics had lost all land and title at this stage, so Maire allowed her son Donagh to be brought up as a protestant so that he could inherit the estates. This was bitterly resented by the people and seen as a betrayal. Maire's attachment to the land was stronger than attachment to her religion.

Throughout her remarkable life she displayed an intuitive political skill that put many of her contemporaries to shame. She was responsible for holding on to most of the family property through one of the most dangerous, tumultuous and volatile periods in Irish history.

Her energy and loyalty to her family was above reproach. When the winds of change blew with a ferocity never seen before or since, her mental agility, physical stamina and political acumen, came to the fore. But her popularity suffered. We need to celebrate her success rather than dwell on her failings. This wholehearted heroine is a figure from whom we could all learn.

by Frank O'Grady

Frank O'Grady is a Burren farmer who is the third generation to work the family farm near Kilnaboy. He is a member of the Farm Heritage Tours through which you can get a personalized tour on his land and hear local lore on Maire Rua and more. For more information go to www.farmheritagetours.com



BI GALLERY

Fergus A Ryan

Meeting Point

acrylic on linen, 24" x 36"

Mysteriously, a boy waits anxiously at the outer edge of the Old World, the Burren above Fanore, where huge rocks called 'erratics' keep watch from their high terrain over the boundaries of the primeval sea. Is the anticipated encounter with someone else, or with the raven?

About the artist

Fergus A Ryan is an Irish artist working in acrylic and in the medieval medium of egg tempera. He has exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy's annual exhibition (2008, 2009, 2011). His west of Ireland work won recognition in the world landscape competition of International Artist magazine, where a forthcoming article will feature the art and working methods of the artist. Fergus was formerly an Aer Lingus transatlantic pilot, and his art can be viewed at www.FergusARyan.com

BURREN FARMERS LEAD THE WAY

Rainwater harvesters, solar pumps, special animal feedstuffs, traditional Burren gates, one-page farm plans and payments for biodiversity are just some of the innovations which have been introduced under Ireland's first 'High Nature Value Farming' programme, the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP).

Now in its third year of operation, the BFCP is based on the findings of the award-winning BurrenLIFE Project (2005-2010) and is jointly funded by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Over 140 farmers are participating, availing of an annual budget of €1m and implementing best practice on 13,256 ha of the Burren – almost half of all designated EU Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) land in the region.

One of the main measures (M2) of the BFCP is for site enhancement. Under M2, many farmers elected to remove hazel and blackthorn scrub (c.50ha in total, mainly using hand tools) in Year 2 of the BFCP - improving animal access and protecting rare, orchid-rich grasslands. Repairing 19,400m of run-down stone walls,

improving water supplies and vehicular access were among the other jobs done. Each one of these jobs was vetted by the project team in terms of overall environmental benefit and value for money, and the farmer contributed 25-75% of the cost.

The other main BFCP measure (M1) pays farmers for the production of species-rich grassland. In year 2 of BFCP, 908 fields (7,178ha) were given a score between 0 and 10 based on how well managed they were (looking at weeds, water supply, grazing and feeding systems etc). On the basis of these scores, €420,000 was allocated to conservation farmers. Any farmer who fed silage on a field received no payment for that field – resulting in a remarkable and very welcome reduction in this damaging practice and a movement toward the feeding of a special Burren ration instead.

The BFCP is very much farmer-led: farmers have huge flexibility in choosing whether or not to undertake any job, and to decide when, how and with what to graze their land and feed their animals. As a result, BFCP farmers have been very enthusiastic about the programme and have

done some great – and very innovative – work: installing wind and solar-powered water pumps, constructing traditional rainwater harvesters and installing locally made 'Burren' gates.

But the BFCP is not just good for Burren heritage – it is also having a major impact on the local economy. The BFCP management team is based in Carron in the central Burren, while most of the 12 trained farm advisors are also based in, or close to, the area. Farmers receive an average annual payment of c.€6-7,000 to help improve the condition of their habitats, but for every three euros spent, farmers invest an additional one euro of their own. The BFCP has also generated a lot of additional temporary work locally – building walls, cutting scrub and so on – which is also very welcome.

During such recessionary times the BFCP also provides excellent value for money. For an average cost to the taxpayer of €75/ha, real improvements are being made to the landscape and biodiversity of the Burren. A 2009 study found that the benefits provided by these public goods were worth between €842 and €4,420/ha per year, amounting to a return on investment

through the BFCP of at least 1100%!

The BFCP continues to grow from strength to strength. Its main limitation is the lack of funding to accommodate the 350 farmers who initially applied for entry (including the 143 currently participating) plus several farmers who have subsequently expressed a wish to enter. The long term aspiration is that any farmer who wants to be part of the BFCP should be able to do so, but this will require funding in the order of 2-3m euro per annum. It is hoped that the success of this first phase will eventually benefit all Burren farmers and all those with an interest in the Burren.

by Brendan Dunford

Dr Brendan Dunford is the Project Manager of the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme. He came to the Burren to carry out his doctorate on farming methods and conservation in the region. He is the author of *Farming in the Burren* and is a co-founder of the Burrenbeo Trust. For more information on the above programme go to www.burrenlife.com



Ireland Reaching Out

Genealogy is one of the fastest-growing areas in local history. It is at the heart of a growing project, Ireland Reaching Out (IRO). This venture, which was piloted earlier last year in South East Galway, an area of about thirty parishes stretching from Portumna to Gort, has also huge economic potential.

How did it start? Within the past two years the first of the *International Global Irish Economic Fora* was held in Farmleigh. Irish people who were successful abroad were invited to share their ideas regarding how we could lift ourselves out of the present recession. The economist David McWilliams regarded the IRO – *Ireland Reaching Out* – as the most practical solution at local level. It was the brainchild of Mike Feerick, an IT entrepreneur, who lives in S.E. Galway but who has spent considerable time in the USA. The PRO is John Joe Conwell, author of several books on local history.

So what is the essence of IRO? It is based on a simple idea: instead of waiting for Irish-Americans and their global counterparts to come to Ireland to trace their roots, we go the other way. In each parish we identify who emigrated and trace them and their descendants worldwide. We then invite them to come back to visit their parish.

The IRO has the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Galway County Council, The Heritage Council, the GAA and Irish-American sources. But, without the enthusiasm of an "army" of volunteers in each parish the project would never have got off the ground.

While the main IRO office is situated in Loughrea, in each parish, volunteers distribute forms to each household. They, in turn, write the name and contacts of each living emigrant and also, where applicable, the original ancestor who left Ireland. This information is fed into the office in Loughrea who use the latest high tech methods in contacting the diaspora.

Every available source is researched, ranging from *The Tithe Applotment Books* of the 1820s, through Griffith's Valuation of the 1850s to the

1901 and 1911 Census, which are now online. Church and State records of births, marriages and deaths are a vital source. School Roll Books, gravestone inscriptions and the invaluable memories of the older citizens are central to the research. County Family History Centres have a wealth of information. Local heritage centres such as the Kiltartan Gregory Museum hold priceless lore. One never really knows where information might turn up.

It would be impossible to list all the internet resources but the Ellis Island Records and the data on emigration and census records which are to be found on websites such as www.ancestry.com cannot be ignored.

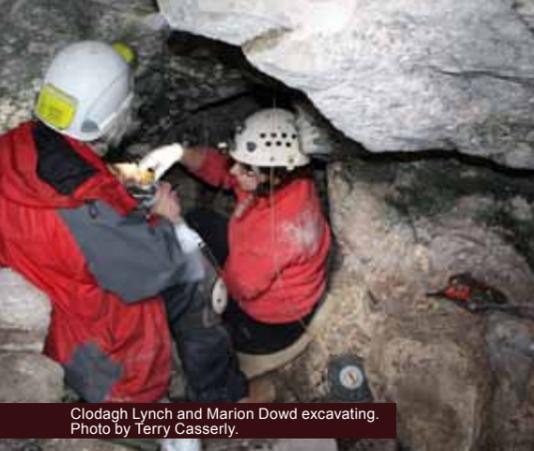
Then, the IRO organised the Week of Welcomes in 2011, this week from 26th June to 2nd July was the happy culmination of months of effort. The diaspora came to Cloghaun Castle in Kilchreest, the main base for the week, from the USA, Australia, New Zealand and England. They visited the homes of their ancestors – sadly, mostly in ruins – they walked their fields, they prayed in their churches and cemeteries, they imbibed their history, they listened to their music, they watched their Gaelic games, they laughed, they cried, they vowed to return and bring back other relatives with them.

The good news has spread far and wide so much so that the recent launch of this year's IRO was attended by people from at least ten counties, all eager to find out more about this exciting venture. This rising tide will lift all boats. The next Week of Welcomes takes place during the week 24th to 30th June 2012. For more details please contact info@irelandxo.com

by Sr. DeLourdes Fahy

Mary de Lourdes Fahy is a Sister of Mercy and the Gort parish coordinator for the Ireland Reaching Out project. A native of Gort, she has taught in Gort, Kinvara and Lisdoonvarna. Her published works include *Many Leaves, One Root – A History of the Parish of Kiltartan* (2004) and *Near Quiet Waters – The Story of the Early Years of Gort Mercy Convent and its Branch Houses* (2007).





Clodagh Lynch and Marion Dowd excavating. Photo by Terry Casserly.



Tim O'Connell and Terry Casserly sieving soil outside the cave. Photo by Marion Dowd.



Elaine Lynch excavating. Photo by Marion Dowd.

half the chamber has been excavated, Moneen Cave has proved to be a very rich archaeological site used during several different periods.

A broken flint flake may be the oldest object recovered. Professor Peter Woodman dated it to either the Neolithic (4,000 – 2,400 BC) or the earlier part of the Mesolithic (8,000 – 4,000 BC). The blade was quite weathered suggesting it may have been exposed to the elements before being deposited in the cave. Objects such as this were common every-day items in prehistory and would have been used for a variety of purposes, particularly as cutting tools.

A large quantity of pottery sherds was scattered throughout the cave. Pottery specialist Elaine Lynch has established that the sherds represent six different vessels that date to the Middle-Late Bronze Age (1,500 – 1,000 BC). These would have been large bucket- or tub-shaped vessels, none of which were decorated. The pottery might appear to suggest occupation of the cave but this is unlikely because of a general absence of other domestic refuse (such as butchered animal bones, hearths etc.). The pots may have been used for storage by a family living nearby and certainly the cool stable temperature of the cave would have been advantageous for such purposes. Another possibility is that the pottery represents some form of ritual use of the cave similar to the vessels that formed part of religious offerings placed inside Glencurran Cave in the latter part of the Bronze Age.

The antler hammer-head (or macehead) is the most exciting find from Moneen Cave; it is unique in Ireland and may have been a ceremonial item. Dr Ruth Carden determined that it was manufactured from the naturally shed antler of a red deer stag. A hole had been drilled through the centre, presumably to hold a wooden haft it. Eagerly awaited radiocarbon results will establish its precise date - likely to be prehistoric.

Caves are usually rich in animal bones and Moneen Cave is no exception. A total of 3,124 fragments of animal bone (including a skull that had broken into 353 pieces) were examined by zoo-archaeologist Fiona Beglane. Those

that could be identified included (in order of frequency) sheep/goat, bird, hare, mouse, cattle, frog, rat, fish, pig, deer and cat. Almost all the bones had entered the cave by natural processes, for instance animals that had died there or carcasses that had fallen in. However, four mammal ribs with butchery marks were also found and represent human activities, probably the remains of meals.

One of the most intriguing discoveries made during the excavation was a human skeleton that was found in a niche in the cave wall. This was a small rectangular cavity measuring 60cm x 60cm x 85cm high. Dr David Drew believes that the niche was an artificial feature. The human remains were analysed by Dr Catriona McKenzie who established that they represent an adolescent aged between 14 and 16 at the time of death. It has not been possible to determine from the skeletal remains alone whether this was a boy or a girl. The bones bore no indication of violence yet the body was not in a formal burial position. The skull that was initially discovered by the cavers in the main chamber (2.5m outside the niche) derives from the skeleton. It is not yet clear how the skull became separated from the corpse. Radiocarbon dates for the skeleton are expected; only then can we begin to interpret this poignant discovery.

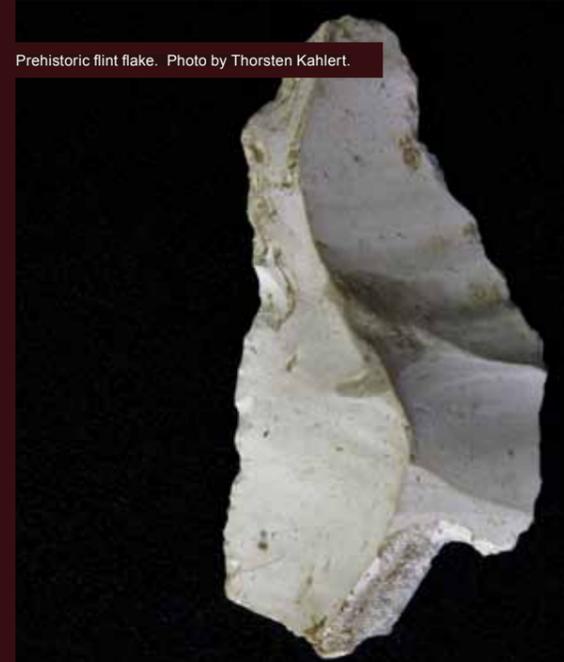
Acknowledgements
I would like to thank the landowner Gerard Collins for his support and assistance during the dig; the excavation team; the N. M. S. who funded the excavation – particularly Pauline Gleeson and Christine Grant; all the specialists involved in the project; the archaeology students at I. T. Sligo for post-excavation work; and Thorsten Kahlert for artefact photography.

by Marion Dowd

Dr. Marion Dowd is a lecturer in prehistoric archaeology at I.T. Sligo. Her doctoral research examined the role of caves in religious practice in Ireland over 10,000 years. She has excavated several caves across Ireland, most notable of which is Glencurran Cave in the Burren. She has given papers at national and international conferences on Irish cave archaeology and has published widely on the subject.



Impression of type of pottery from Moneen Cave. Photo by Elaine Lynch.



Prehistoric flint flake. Photo by Thorsten Kahlert.



Washing bones from the cave at I.T. Sligo. Photo by Marion Dowd.



A NEW ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE IN THE BURREN MONEEN CAVE

The Burren is renowned for its rich archaeological heritage as well as for its impressive cave systems both of which made the discovery of a new cave with archaeological material especially exciting. Moneen Cave is located towards the summit of Moneen Mountain. Known to the landowner, Gerard Collins all his life, it only came to the attention of cavers in 2010 when hill walker Tony McFadden stumbled across the entrance and mentioned it to Terry Casserly of the Clare Caving Club.

In 2011 cavers Quentin Cooper, Gaelen Elliffe and Tim O'Connell were digging through the floor to see if access to a larger cave system could be reached. In the process they made some very

important discoveries: an antler hammer-head (or macehead), prehistoric pottery, a human skull, animal bones and oyster shells.

Digging was immediately suspended and Christine Grant of the National Monuments Service (N.M.S.) was contacted. The significance of the site was quickly realised and funding for a rescue excavation was provided by the N.M.S. A two-week excavation followed with a team of archaeologists (M. Dowd, Elaine Lynch, Clodagh Lynch and Michael Lynch) and cavers (T. Casserly, Q. Cooper and T. O'Connell) - the first archaeological excavation in Ireland to include a team of both cavers and archaeologists. It proved a very successful

collaboration that drew on their joint expertise in this specialised environment.

The cave consists of a small chamber 2.8m x 3.4m. Access to the interior is via a small opening in the cave roof with a drop of 1.8m to the cave floor beneath. The objective was to recover archaeological material exposed in the cave and to try and understand how the cave had been used. A significant quantity of artefacts was recovered as well as animal bones and a human skeleton. To retrieve tiny bones and artefacts, all the soil excavated was taken outside the cave and washed through sieves. Some soil was taken to Institute of Technology Sligo and sieved under laboratory conditions. Though less than



Antler hammer-head macehead. Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



A PHOTOGRAPHER'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE BURREN

The Burren is arguably Ireland's most enchanting landscape and I have been photographing this place for over a decade now. You could actually say the Burren is where I learned my craft.

For a landscape and wildlife photographer the Burren holds the best and worst that could happen to you. On the one side there is the limestone pavement with its grykes and clints. It's what I like to call a tidy landscape. Making a picture out of that is pretty straightforward; there is foreground interest in form of the clints, the grykes or the occasional stonewall are just made for leading the eye through the picture. Then add some soft morning or evening light or a colourful sunrise and you have a good or even spectacular image.

On the other side there are the hazel shrubs and the ever-changing shoreline of the turloughs. Both are rather untidy, chaotic places and it takes time and effort to work out a composition that works.

The first step to a successful landscape image is to find some key elements - the cornerstones or the foundation around which the image is being built. On the pavement these are the clints and grykes. In a woodland it can be a couple of branches, a row of ferns or moss-covered rocks that lead the eye through the picture. At the turlough it can be an assembly of puddles, tussocks or rocks. Whatever it is it must instantly catch the eye and lead the viewer naturally through the picture.

Once you have found a composition it's time to look for the second ingredient: light... or the lack of it. Seasons play an important role here. In midsummer the best light occurs around sunrise and sunset, which means getting up very early and going to bed very late. That's why most landscape photographers suffer from sleep deprivation during summer.

My favourite time to capture the Burren landscape is autumn and winter. First there are the colours; the striking autumn colours that fade into the warm tones of a Burren winter; the red and blue berries or the hazel and bracken fading from yellow to brown. Then there is the light; nothing beats the crisp and warm light of an autumn morning or the softness of a sunny winter's day. And you don't have to get out of bed at an ungodly hour.

However if you want to catch a spectacular sunrise your chances are better in spring and summer. These seasons also offer many other opportunities for the Burren photographer; the landscape is lush and green which isn't necessarily suitable for landscape images.

Spring and summer is the time to photograph the Burren flora. But that's another story...

by Carsten Kreiger

Carsten Kreiger is a nature and landscape photographer based in West Clare. To date he has published several books on Ireland's landscape and nature, including 'The Fertile Rock - Seasons in the Burren', 'The West of Ireland - A photographer's journey' and the highly acclaimed 'The Wildflowers of Ireland'. His new book will be a visual journey along Ireland's coast and is due out this autumn. For more information go to www.carstenkrieger.com or www.wildirelandphotography.com

'What happens if a worm goes up the badger's nose?' An adult would probably not ask this question out loud, but coming from a child it demonstrates curiosity, intrigue, and even concern towards the eating habits of a badger. Children have an inherent capacity for creativity - something that is often lost in adulthood. Natural play in nature helps develop this creativity and foster empathy and respect towards the environment. However, research shows that for many children such encounters with nature are becoming less frequent.

Recently, after a mini-beast hunt a child was asked 'what eats a snail?' and the reply was 'French people!' There was a roar of laughter from the group and a vague nod of approval as his reply was not wrong. However, it is an example of how little children interact with

nature on a regular basis. What eats what and who eats who is no longer known by children when it comes to the basic life cycles of most species in Ireland. There is a disconnection with nature, more time is spent indoors, in a car or immersed in the technological world of computer games and mobile phones. Through television programmes, the internet and other media outlets they learn more about global environmental issues such as climate change, global warming and rising sea levels than they do about local ones. Children have not changed; the simple things still work and a mini-beast hunt will capture the attention of even the most fearful! However, unlike previous generations, what has changed is children's contact with and access to nature.

In the past, farming communities passed down

knowledge of the land from one generation to the next. Very often fields, mountains and lakes had names that held a symbolic meaning and children learned about nature in informal or spontaneous ways. They learned about soils through touch, and flowers by smell. With freedom to explore and play unsupervised outdoors, contact with nature was an everyday experience. Children were more likely to walk to school, build forts, make mud cakes and climb trees. These activities help to develop independence, self-reliance and engage the senses.

Children's access to nature is now more difficult. Some of the reasons lie in the planning of towns and villages during the recent construction boom. There are many examples of bad planning with regard to inadequate footpaths from new

housing estates for children to walk and cycle to school. Also the designation of natural play areas for children that provide an environment for learning, playing and exploring over uneven ground are virtually non-existent.

Children's access to nature is also hampered by busy roads, health and safety issues, 'stranger danger' fears and time constraints. Playing outdoors gives an opportunity for children to just 'be' and helps develop a sense of belonging to, and an identity with, the world around them. Natural play in nature allows children to challenge themselves, for example, climbing a tree to see inside a bird's nest. Being free to play outdoors develops their imagination in creating new worlds, perhaps one filled with fairies or creatures that have special powers. Making tools and weapons from twigs to play war games

gives a child a variety of skills. These games may mimic a scene from a computer game or action film but often with time they evolve and take on an adventure of their own. The games also nurture important skills such as critical thinking and problem solving.

It is vital that children are aware of their natural surroundings for both their emotional and physical wellbeing. Although children's contact with nature has become less spontaneous there are ample opportunities for exploration and adventure. The Burren, for example, is both a natural playground for outdoor learning and a perfect backdrop to connect with nature. It is a landscape full of folklore, traditions, archaeology, geology, flora and fauna. Its unique biodiversity offers children the opportunity to engage with natural history. By learning about nature,

children develop an appreciation for and an understanding of the environment. Considering the various environmental issues facing the next generation, the Burren is an important place for children to learn how to value and protect their environment. This will enable them to gain the experience and knowledge to become the decision-makers of the future.

by Sarah O'Malley

Sarah O'Malley, Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) scholar, is a PhD candidate in the School of Political Science and Sociology, NUI Galway. The title of her thesis is '*Reconnecting children and nature? A sociological study of environmental education in Ireland*'. Contact details: s.omalley5@nuigalway.ie



Photo by Krystian Czekalski

Connecting Children with Nature

The Burren's potential

Plenty of help cutting corn in Boston 1941



Looking Back Change ain't what it used to be!

Shearing Sheep c.1943



rearing large families, worked nonstop all day long in the house and on the farm. Very many lived in quite poor houses, often sharing them with elderly relatives. They cooked and baked over open fires which had to be started and cleaned out every day, and boiled food for animals as well. All washing was done by hand with buckets of water carried from a well or water tank. Clothes were knitted, altered, patched, and pieced. Socks were darned, every usable was reused and nothing was discarded.

Women also helped out on the farm, in particular milking the cows morning and evening, and perhaps having a young child in a tea chest - the standard playpen of those days - in the cow byre. Every farm activity created more work for women. When a pig was killed, water had to be boiled and puddings were made from the pig's blood, which involved a lot of cleaning, washing and cooking. Saving the harvest,

I grew up near Boston in Tubber in the 1940s/50s where I have spent all my life. I will attempt to recall some of the great many changes I have seen; these have vastly improved the quality of farming life here and the living standards of everybody changing from being a mere existence, to one of the best in the world. While people seemed content back then, it was a struggle. My grandmother (born 1859) would tell us how lucky we were because people in her young days depended mainly on potatoes, had very little clothes and very few had any type of footwear.

The sheer hard physical work that people endured in the 40s/50s, often with the most basic equipment, stand out in my memory. In particular the women, some of whom were

the hay, or the turf meant meals had to be prepared and carried to the garden, the field or the bog. The threshing which often went on for two days meant that upwards of twenty men were fed and catered for and no one was ever left short of a meal. How so much work could be done every day never ceases to amaze me.

Bottle gas, introduced in the early 50's, helped to ease cooking while rural electrification, which followed some years later, improved the woman's lot no end. The electric kettle and electric iron were the first choice of many and gradually washing machines, driers, dish washers, electric cookers, and food processors came into the kitchen.

The life of men was not a bed of roses either, hard physical work being the order of the day. Tillage was the principal farming activity in this area, with potatoes, beet, turnips, swedes, wheat, oats and barley grown for sale and to feed animals. This meant that there was work all the year round on farms. Ploughing started, to prepare for the next year's crops, as soon as the last of the beet was sent to Tuam. Crops were planted, many singled, and how we hated being on our knees thinning and weeding all summer long. Hay saving was looked forward to as a break from the dreaded gardens. Binding the sheaves of corn was nice work only for the thistle thorns. The advent of the reaper and binder brought welcome relief.

After the corn was harvested, threshing meant at least three weeks of going from farm to farm as about twenty men were required to keep the threshing mill operating to its capacity. Barley was dispatched to the Guinness brewery in 16 stone sacks (200kilos), while wheat was sent in 20 stone sacks (225kilos) to mills in Kilrush, Limerick and Galway. Lifting these sacks was a real test of a man's strength.

Root-crop harvesting started immediately after the corn, with the beet sometimes continuing into the New Year. Beet harvesting in particular was very hard work, as each beet had to be pulled and crowned by hand (30,000 roots per acre), put out on the roadside, and loaded on lorries to go to the sugar-factory in Tuam. Beet, which was a profitable crop also had additional benefits as the tops and pulp were very good animal feed. Beet growers got a special extra sugar allowance during the very strict food rationing in the 1940s. I had my first experience of the effects of industrial relations when the sugar cooks in the beet factories went on strike in 1947/8, leaving stacks of beet rotting on the roadside. It was a poor, and tough, Christmas that year.

As well as tillage, men had to walk their stock to fairs, leaving home in the early hours of the morning, en route to Gort, Kinvara and Ennis; unfortunately they sometimes came home again with unsold stock. Water-proof clothing was practically unknown and rubber boots were scarce, which meant often wearing a wet tweed coat for half-a-day.

The horse was king; everything depended on a good one. One of my oldest memories is of my father arriving home with two loads of seaweed (one horse following the other) from Clahane in Liscannor, a distance of 35 miles each way, walking every step. The seaweed was a very valuable fertilizer for root crops. On wet days, the tackling and harness for the horses was repaired and stables were cleaned out. At night shoes and boots were resoled, repaired and made as good as new again.

The harvest of 1947 was perhaps the most difficult ever experienced; all state and local authority employees were released to help save the harvest and school children were given days off to help pick the potatoes. The government issued a very special statement thanking the farmers for the massive effort made in providing the very much needed food for the nation. However not one extra shilling was given, though very badly needed, to the farm families in recognition of the huge hardship endured in doing so. Food rationing was so severe that you even had to have an empty jar to buy a pot of jam, with government issued coupons

required for most items. Variety of choice was very poor with people grateful for whatever vegetable or fruit etc was in season. What a change nowadays with every vegetable and fruit available every day of the year.

The food we have on our tables today may come from two or three different continents, and many of the tools and implements in everyday use come from as far away as China. In my childhood days it was very different; most food that we consumed was produced locally and nearly all tools and implements made in the neighbourhood.

I remember three carpenters in the area. Thomas Quinn made coffins and house furniture in his workshop beside Boston school, Jamsie Conors working across the road from the school made wheels for carts, turf barrows, wooden harrows etc. while Mick Carr living near Lough Bunny specialized in making horse carts, and creels for same. He once was the victim of a cruel joke as he walked an animal the fourteen miles to Ennis fair. When daylight broke as he neared Ennis, he discovered that it was his only cow he was driving, not the fat bullock he intended to sell. Some smart local lads had switched them in the haggard the night before.

Patrick Naughton and his sons shod horses, made various farm implements and were renowned for servicing farm ploughs. John Cooley a great blacksmith, made gates - some of which survive to the present day - and were a real work of art. I also remember many travelling tin smiths coming into the area, making and repairing buckets, pots and pans etc. The amazing skills of the many craftsmen were a joy to watch and helped to make our parish more self-sufficient. Paddy and Jack Kelly operated a lime kiln near where the GAA pitch is now. The lime, which was produced by burning stone, was used for white washing house and farm buildings around the parish. Later they sold lime far and wide and were perhaps the last people in Clare to burn lime.

While tillage was the mainstay of farming, all households kept pigs and poultry which provided a very useful cash flow. Local merchants and shopkeepers supplied the few necessities that could not be produced locally. They purchased surplus eggs, butter, wool and even rabbits, most of which were exported to England. Shopkeepers were also the main source of credit as very few people dealt with the banks.

Poultry are quite rare on farms now, also pig farming is now very specialised, with only about 600 herds in the whole country.

Sheep fairs were held in Tubber Fair-green on

Shearing Sheep 1930



Threshing in Killkeey c.1948



the 12th of July and the 20th of September each year. Farmers came from all over Clare and Galway to buy breeding stock as the area was renowned for healthy sheep. With the decline of sheep numbers the fairs were discontinued in the 1970's. A fair and horse races were held at Turloughmare (near Boston on the road to Carron) each June until about the mid-1930's and revived briefly in the late 1940's but were discontinued after 2 years.

One of my neighbours (known as Pateen Ned - long since dead) only source of income was cutting scallops (hazel rods), used for thatching, which he sold in Gort Market every Saturday.

Mechanisation arrived slowly, the iron-wheeled Fordson tractor and threshing mill led the way, followed by the more powerful rubber wheeled Fordson Major. But it was the little grey Ferguson 20, with its then unique hydraulics system, that made the farm-horse redundant. Modern road systems put an end to the dreadful state of the Burren roads. The bicycle was the only mode of transport for many and indeed it gave a great sense of freedom to those fortunate to have one. However, the cyclist had to navigate through totally unsuitable roads. Only main roads between big towns had a good surface. The road surfaces were mainly sand, littered with sharp stones as big as hurling balls, and in some places deep ruts from cart wheels. On every journey, the cyclist carried a pump and puncture repair kit which were well used!

In the middle of the last century (1950) there were approximately 130 families totally dependent on farming for their income in this area. Today, it is less than half of that, with only a very few solely dependent on farming as their full income; numbers continue to dwindle. There is always a certain resistance to change - people hated the smell of silage at first, yet it was slowly accepted and used a lot as a winter feed for livestock. Machinery has removed the drudgery from farming while the car, TV, radio, phones (both landline and mobile) and internet ease the isolation. However, we have lost some of our old customs such as going 'on cuairt' where the neighbours gathered in some house to tell stories, discuss the fair, markets, weather etc., and maybe frighten the life out of young children with ghost stories.

As one door closes another opens. Farming may be in decline, but a clean environment is more precious than ever, opening up opportunities in leisure and tourism for a growing population. We live with change as we move through time. Let us look to continue peaceful living in our quiet rural setting which we now share with people from different lands, we can experience change together. For those nostalgic amongst us, I suppose you could say "change ain't what it used to be"!

by Michael O'Donoghue

Michael O'Donoghue is farming 140 acres of mixed land near Boston. A lifetime IFA activist he was jailed for his part in the Farmers Rights Campaign in 1967, he was Chairman of the Clare IFA for 12 years and also represented Clare on the IFA National Council. In 1978 he was diagnosed with terminal cancer and discharged from hospital with only days to live, but he survived against all odds. Extracted from an article written for the IFA.



CLARE'S FIELD MONUMENT ADVISER SCHEME

The Co. Clare Field Monument Adviser (FMA) scheme commenced in 2004 with the purpose of raising the awareness amongst the farming community and other landowners of the vast archaeological resource in Co. Clare; which has over 7,000 recorded monuments and an untold number yet to be identified. Landowners and occupiers are given information on the monuments on their land and advice on how to identify and manage them. A primary aim of the project is to visit the sites with the landowner and share in the local knowledge of the monuments.

Liaisons were also developed with relevant bodies and groups such as, Teagasc (REPS), IFA, Monuments Section of the DoEHLG, Forestry Service, BurrenLife Project, Burren Connect, local schools, local archaeological and historical societies and community groups.

From 2009 to 2010, whilst working with the BurrenLIFE and Burren Farm Heritage Tours projects, over 300 sites on 18 farms were surveyed. This raised the awareness of each farm's archaeology and thereby enhanced its preservation.

Since June 2011 the FMA scheme in Clare

has been jointly sponsored by Burrenbeo Trust and the Heritage Council. During this time the FMA has worked closely with the farmers in the Burren Farming for Conservation Project (BFCP), which is currently advising 143 farmers, in assessing the archaeological element of the work proposed in the farm plans. This involves walking the farm with the owner, with a view to minimizing the impact of the work on the monuments. When ancient fields systems and walls are included over 100 monuments were visited, many previously unrecorded. As well as those of archaeological interest (pre- 1700AD), information and advice was given on numerous sites of cultural and historic interest. As part of BFCP farmer training, a presentation was given of an overview of the archaeology of the Burren and its monuments.

A welcome new development for the FMA project is involvement with the Burren Conservation Volunteers. An archaeological field survey with them at Fanore proved most successful and enjoyable; the potential for this type of work in the Burren is almost limitless. Further surveys are proposed in 2012.

Meanwhile, visits by Fanore and Ballyvaughan

primary schools to the excavation of the shell midden at Fanore were arranged. This gave the children a hands-on experience of excavation techniques; their enthusiasm provided some of the highlights of the dig.

The principal of 'preservation through awareness', by shared knowledge with the landowners, has proved to be the cornerstone of the success of the FMA project. Fortunately for the Burren, counties Clare and Galway retain their FMAs. The coming year will see a continuation of the work with the BFCP farmers including some more detailed surveys of selected farms.

The FMA continues to visit farmers outside the BFCP and indeed responds to queries from any part of Co. Clare.

by Michael Lynch

Michael Lynch is an archaeologist and the Field Monument Adviser for Co. Clare. His research subjects include Prehistoric Archaeology and Church Plate. He also farms near Killinaboy. Photo supplied by author.

The Field Monument Advisory position in 2011/12 is 75% funded by The Heritage Council and 25% by The Burrenbeo Trust

An Chomhairle Oidhreacht
The Heritage Council



a public art project

X-PO

When the X-PO was opened by Deirdre O'Mahony as a public art project in 2007 in the former post office in Kilnaboy, nobody knew exactly what would happen. What was known was that, during the time it was to be run by the artist, the space would be given over to certain events; clubs and groups on a weekly basis, exhibitions that dealt with rural life, talks and exchanges about local knowledge and genealogy. The post office building was a familiar domestic space and the intention was to encourage collective reflection on the value of local knowledge and the changing face of rural society. The building overlooks the cross at Kilnaboy, and served as both home for the postmaster and post office for the locality for the best part of seventy years. When it closed in 2002 a vital centre of connection, communication, and local exchange was lost.

The first event in the space was a temporary installation by the artist of photographs, paintings, texts, material objects, cassette tapes, newspaper cuttings, flyers and paraphernalia left in the building when the postmaster, John Martin 'Mattie' Rynne, died in 2000. The installation included a portrait wall drawing of Mattie, made from soot taken from the kitchen stove, that has remained by popular demand - a benign reminder of the postmaster. A subsequent series of talks, artworks and events curated by the artist during 2008 was aimed at generating discussion on rural life and the idea of 'community' today.

Over time clubs and groups formed around specific topics and, as familiarity grew with the process of exhibiting, two of these groups decided to make their own re-presentations of their local history and knowledge. During their weekly meetings at X-PO, the Mapping Group research and trace the occupants of Kilnaboy's townlands from the 1840's to the present. They conduct interviews, walk the townlands and compare oral histories with documentary evidence of occupancy. The "official" survey maps have been overlaid with a fluid, changing narrative and the exhibitions are now a forum for an open-ended story of place as visitors bring in new information, photographs and stories. The Group will present their work on the townlands of Kilnaboy to date in an exhibition at the Courthouse Gallery, Ennistymon in September 2012.

X-PO also provided a space for the descendents

of families whose stories formed a significant part of a classical text: *Family and Community in Ireland*, in their re-presentation of life in Rinnamona that disrupted and complicated the authoritative text. A discovery by Anne Byrne (NUIG) of the original diaries kept by anthropologist Solon Kimball, while staying in Rinnamona in the 1930s, prompted her to contact some of the successors of those mentioned and X-PO provided an opportunity for them to tell their own story of family and community in the 21st century. (See *Family and Community: (Re)Telling Our Own Story in Family Relations Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, Dec 2011.)

An Udder View, presented photographs taken by Peter Rees, as he drove the roads of North Clare for the creamery and more recently delivering oil. Perched high in his cab he documented the changing face of his parish, taking some 25,000 photographs since the early 1980s. In 2008, the artist and photographer selected 1000 of these for an exhibition telling stories of the communities and history of Kilnaboy. The selected photographs were made available at X-PO for visitors to look at at leisure. A further selection, hosted by Peter and his family over a three-week period, was made available for communal viewing and drew over five hundred visitors. (See *An Udder View* filmed by Fergus Tighe <http://www.X-PO.ie>)

The primary objective was that X-PO become a self-sustaining social and cultural space. In August 2008 responsibility for its running passed to those groups using it: Monday is singers evening, Tuesday the Mapping Group and Wednesday the Craft Group meet weekly; Irish language and Mind Meitheal meet monthly. The Mapping Group also run a monthly gathering where different individuals bring knowledge to the table, freely exchanging information on aspects of the area from caves to dry-stone walls, Cillins and Holy wells. Exhibitions are programmed through 2012.

X-PO is now entirely run by volunteers and, like other local activities, is dependent on the generosity of the communities of North Clare. Donations and fundraising cover the running costs. Acknowledging the busiest time of the farming year, X-PO is closed from June to September.

Re-opening the post office has stimulated



Mattie Rynne Installation.
Wall Drawing by Deirdre
O'Mahony
Photo by Ben Geoghegan

How a community made it happen for themselves

discussion on how to maintain an active, inclusive, social community whilst maintaining contact with the knowledge and sense of place that comes from reflective consideration and involvement with the locality. The cultural exhibitions have manifested a 'common-sense' of place, that is not presented as a definitive statement but as a moment, a pause in an ongoing process. The public sharing of these insights and knowledge is not, as in the past, presented through the medium of landscape painting or image making, but through an aesthetic process based on discourse and collaboration. This discourse does not assume that all participants represent everyone in the area, nor that there is only one



possible form of participation or organization. Rather, the various groups have come to a provisional understanding; formed, articulated and made visible through connections made within the space. It has allowed different forms of knowledge; social, historical, agricultural and cultural to make unexpected and transcendent conjunctions, a 'catalyst for a gradual reforging and renewal of humanity's confidence in itself starting at the most miniscule level!'

* Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*. Trans. Ian Parker and Paul Sutton. English Edition. (UK: The Athlone Press 2000) 69.

by Deirdre O'Mahony

Deirdre O'Mahony is an artist and lecturer in the Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. In her latest research she has been exploring three themes, all arising from her earlier work on the perception and representation of rural landscapes. This concerns first, the mechanics of belonging in rural communities, secondly, the creativity of tacit, practice-led knowledge and thirdly, the relational dynamic between the local/rural and the national/global. She is presently completing her PhD through practice-led research at the University of Brighton.

For more information contact:
xpo.community@gmail.com

Feeling Peckish? Foraging in the Burren

Feeling peckish after a long hike in the Burren? While you've taken in the beautiful views and enjoyed the fresh air and exercise, you may have little idea of the wild treats that you've walked past. Most of us have nibbled a yummy blackberry or two while out on a country walk but there's an edible landscape there that can offer a whole lot more.

Anyone visiting the Burren in autumn will be familiar with the sight of hazelnuts, usually hanging in clusters from our hazel trees (*Corylus avellana*). Some more industrious rambles may have remembered to bring a bag to gather nuts to bring back home. If you do this then you are in for a treat. The nuts should be picked on a dry day in mid-autumn when they are ripe and the husks start to dry. Split open to remove the husks. The nuts may be eaten raw but they are even nicer roasted or toasted. The more adventurous wild chef may try turning them into a tasty hazelnut pesto.

If you're walking earlier in the year then you're likely to come across the tiny but delicious wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*). These wonderful fruits have an intense flavour and just go to prove that less is often more! Bring them home and scoff them with fresh cream. You'll not want to eat a bland supermarket strawberry again.

If you stroll through the woods then it's quite likely that you'll come across wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*). It was once a popular pot-herb cultivated for salads. A few leaves added into a salad gives a refreshing, lemony taste. In fact, so similar is the flavour of wood sorrel to lemons that a recipe from the 1820s suggests using wood sorrel extract to make 'Lemonade without the Lemons!'

In July and August the fields and ditches are full of the heavenly fragrance of meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*). This pretty plant, with its



Hawthorn/Whitethorn Berry Jelly

Ingredients

1.5kg/3lb ripe haws
750ml/1 ½ pints water
Juice of 2 lemons
Sugar (for quantity see 'Method')

Method

Remove stalks from the haws and wash haws. Put haws into large saucepan. Cover with the water. Bring to boil, cover, reduce temperature to gently cook for an hour, occasionally pressing haws with back of a spoon to mash them. Drip through a jelly bag or double layer of muslin over-night. Pour the strained haw juice into a measuring jug and note the volume, then pour the juice into a large saucepan. For every 500ml/1 pint of juice add 500g/1 lb of sugar. Add in the lemon juice. Bring to the boil while stirring continuously to dissolve the sugar. Boil for 10 mins. Skim, then pour into warm, dry jam jars. Cover with wax circles. When the jelly is completely cold cover with cellophane or lid and label the jar.

plumes of creamy flowers, is actually the plant that aspirin comes from. The name 'aspirin' was developed from the former Latin name for meadowsweet 'Aspirea' and to this day some local people in the Burren still refer to meadowsweet as 'Wild Spirea'. As well as its tonic properties, meadowsweet makes a delicious cordial drink. When diluted with sparkling water it's very refreshing on a hot summer's day.

The whitethorn or hawthorn tree (*Crataegus monogyna*) provides many options for the wild chef. The confetti-like flowers that adorn the trees in May make a beautiful herbal tea. They can even be made into a syrup or (if you really want to impress your dinner guests) an ice-cream. The red berries that appear in autumn can be brewed into wine or simmered with sugar to make hawthorn jelly, a tasty spread for toast or accompaniment to meat.

Every autumn the Burren is covered in deep blue berries. These are sloes: the berries of the blackthorn tree (*Prunus spinosa*). I don't recommend eating them raw because they are very bitter. As many Burren residents know, by far the best thing to do with sloes is to turn them into sloe gin. This delightful drink develops into a deep claret liqueur that fortunately is ready to enjoy by Christmas and is even more delicious if left to mature for a year (if you have that much discipline...).

All the plants that I have mentioned are edible, but do bear in mind that tasty plants often grow right next to poisonous ones. Your gastronomic adventures won't go wrong if you remember the first rule of foraging: be absolutely certain that you have the correct plant. There are some excellent books on this subject. 'Wild & Free: Cooking from Nature' is full of delicious recipes from the hedgerow. It was written in 1978 by Cyril & Kit Ó Céirín of Lisdoonvarna. This book is currently out-of-print but second-hand copies do turn up from time to time. It would be wonderful to have this local book re-printed. Richard Mabey's foraging classic 'Food for Free' is also brilliant, as is the River Cottage Handbook 'Hedgerow' by John Wright.

by Vivienne Campbell

Vivienne Campbell is a qualified Herbalist who lives in the Burren. She takes guided herb walks in the Burren and teaches courses on herbalism and natural cosmetic-making across the country. Her courses have featured in The Irish Times and she co-presented the hit RTE 1 television show Corrigán Cooks Naturally. More details are on her website www.theherbalhub.com. She is currently writing her first book.



Viewing Points:

- 1 Balliny
- 2 Ballyallaban
- 3 Carran
- 4 Corkscrew Hill
- 5 Craggycorrada
- 6 Crumlin
- 7 Fahee
- 8 Moyhi
- 9 Murrooghtoo



Monuments:

- 1 An Rath / Earthen Fort
- 2 Cahercommaun Ring Fort
- 3 Cahermacnaghten Stone Fort / Law School
- 4 Cahermore Stone Fort
- 5 Corcomroe Abbey
- 6 Creevagh Wedge Tomb
- 7 Doonagore Castle
- 8 Dunguaire Castle
- 9 Dysert O'Dea Church & Cross
- 10 Eagle's Rock Fulacht Fia
- 11 Finnevarra Martello Tower
- 12 Gleninagh Castle
- 13 Kilfenora Cathedral & Cross
- 14 Killinaboy Church
- 15 Kilmacduagh Round Tower
- 16 Leamaneh Castle
- 17 Newtown Castle
- 18 Noughval Church
- 19 Oughtmama Churches
- 20 Parknabinnia Wedge Tomb
- 21 Poulabrone Portal Tomb
- 22 St. Colman's Oratory
- 23 St. Patrick's Well
- 24 Templecronan Church



Burren Walks:

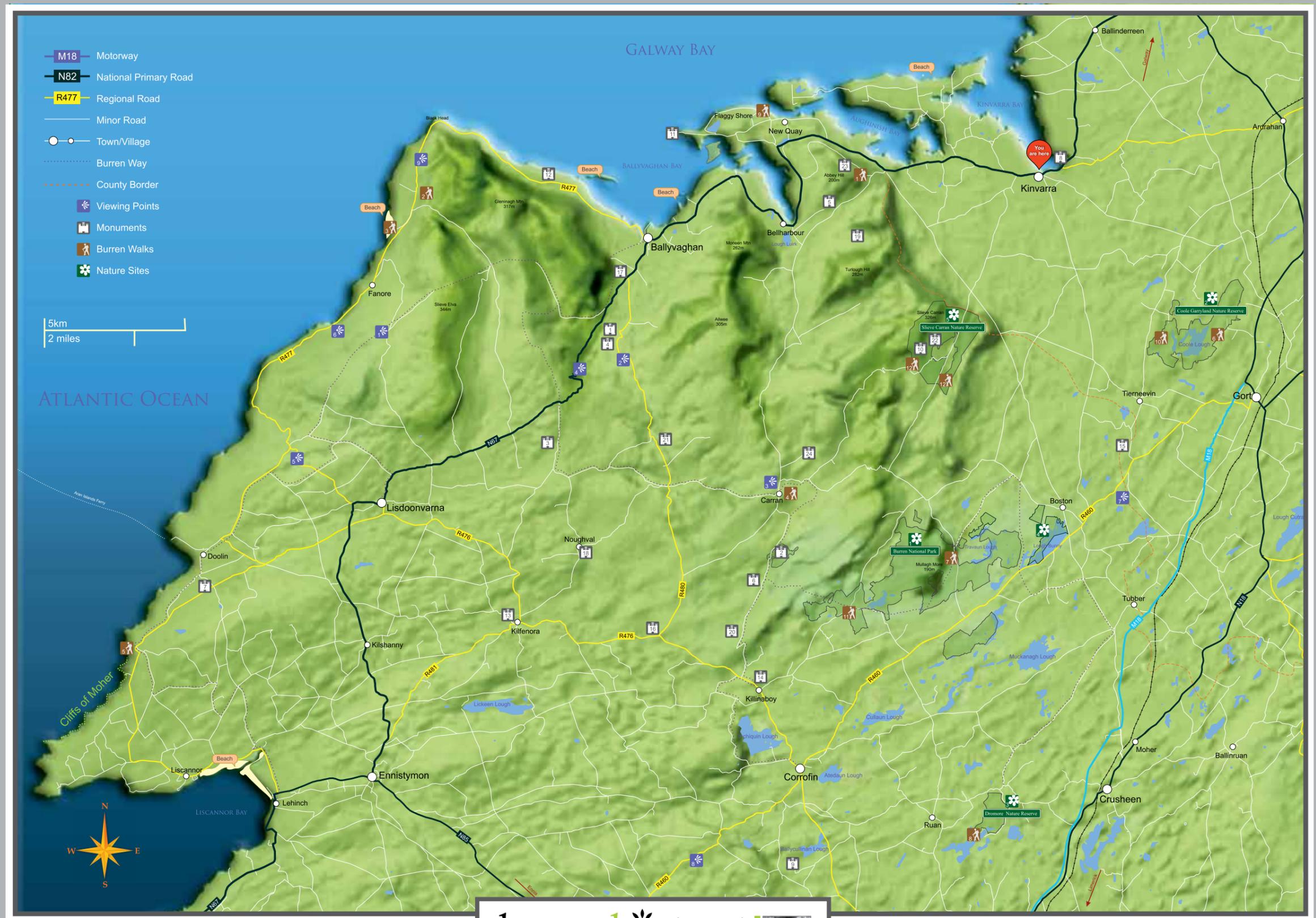
- 1 Abbey Hill
- 2 Black Head Loop
- 3 Caher Valley Loop
- 4 Carran Loop
- 5 Cliffs of Moher
- 6 Coole Park Woodland
- 7 Cooloorta
- 8 Dromore Wood Loop
- 9 Flaggly Shore
- 10 Garryland Woods
- 11 Gortlecka Cross
- 12 Slieve Carran Nature Reserve



Nature Sites:

- 1 Burren National Park
- 2 Coole Garryland Nature Reserve
- 3 Dromore Nature Reserve
- 4 Lough Bunny (Part of Burren National Park)
- 5 Slieve Carran Nature Reserve

BURREN





Standing the test of time

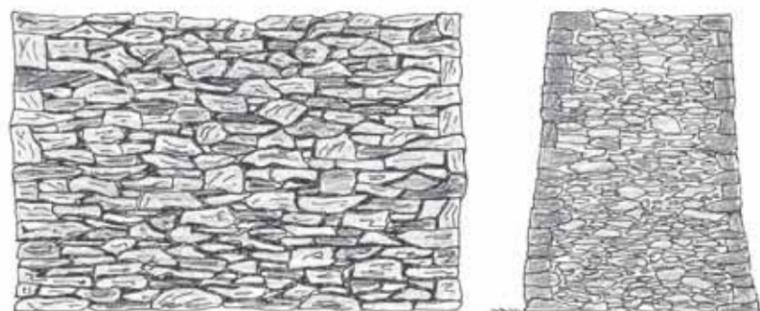
When you are driving, cycling or walking through the Burren one of the first things that will strike you is the amount and variety of stonewalls. Their importance is often overlooked by the locals; however the walls to the visitor give the Burren its distinctive character and are a physical reminder of the thousands of years

of human settlement. The walls, unlike many man-made creations, built of local stone seem to blend into the landscape in the same way as a stream or tree might do and thus add to the region's charm. Below are some examples of walls you might come across. These walls are a signature of the people that built them and

their ingenuity using what stones were available nearby to construct strong fences that have stood the test of time. Some old, some new, some are single stonewalls, some are double, some have a feidin, some built by hand, some by machinery but each with their own style...so keep a look out to see how many you recognise.

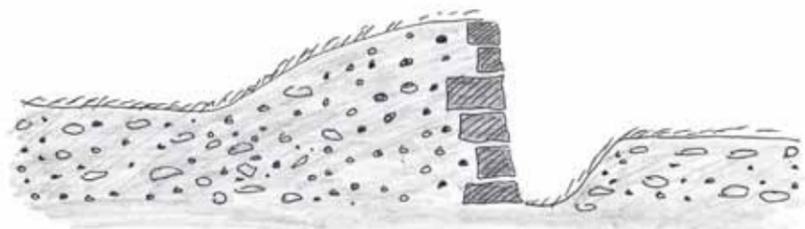
by Rory O' Shaughnessy

HISTORIC



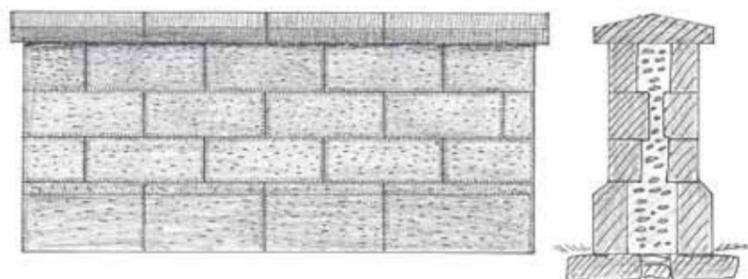
CAHER WALL

The many stone forts or Cahers found in the Burren are constructed with wide double stone walls several metres in thickness.



THE HA-HA

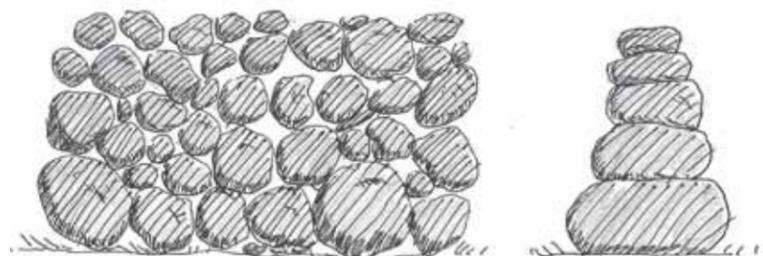
As much a 18th/19th century landscape feature as a stone wall, found mainly on the demesne of the big house, the ha-ha was a stock barrier which did not obstruct the view.



19TH CENTURY CUT STONE ASHLAR WALL

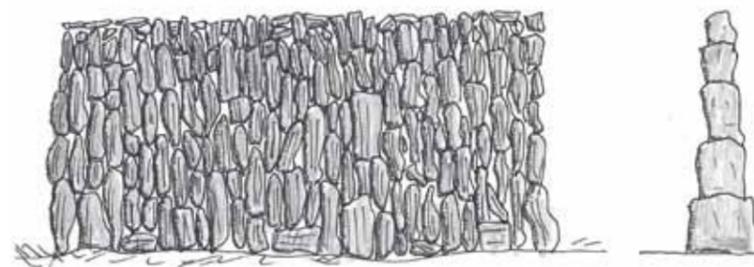
Beautiful hand cut stone with drafted margins and fine punchwork fitted together with very tight joints. These walls are usually associated with grand entrances to the 19th century Landed Estates.

TRADITIONAL



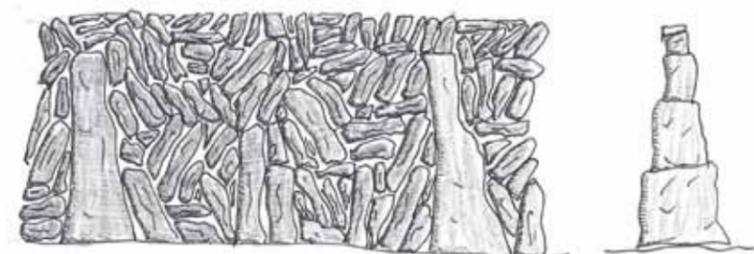
BOULDER WALL

Built with rounded boulders found in deeper glacial soils. These walls are found in South Galway and fertile valleys. The rounded shape of the stone requires both patience and skill to build.



STACKED STYLE

Built using the long angular stone typical of areas of exposed limestone pavement. These walls despite their appearance are quite strong relying on friction to stand up.



MIXED STYLE WITH UPRIGHTS

Mostly found on the rough upland pastures or on limestone pavement. This wall is constructed of angular stones picked off the surface. These walls often have tall upright stones every 4 or 5 metres which give the wall great strength as well as allowing the section of wall in between to be taken down to create a gap or *bearna*.



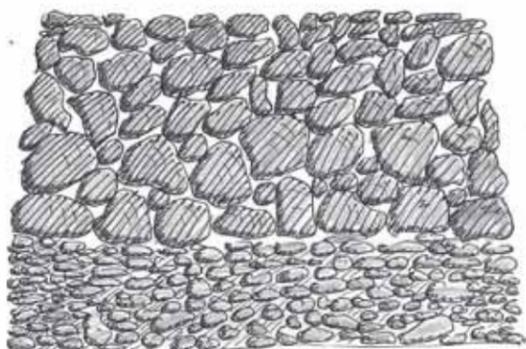
LISCANNOR/DOOLIN SLAB WALL

A single stone wall built with large slabs of stone set upright on their edges. The best known example is located protecting the cliff edge at the Cliffs of Moher.

Rory O' Shaughnessy is a stonemason and heritage practitioner. He has a love of anything built in stone. He has a degree in history and archaeology, and a postgrad. in Irish Heritage Management. He carries out archaeological talks and walks, and activities in schools relating to local heritage. All the artwork in this article is the author's own.

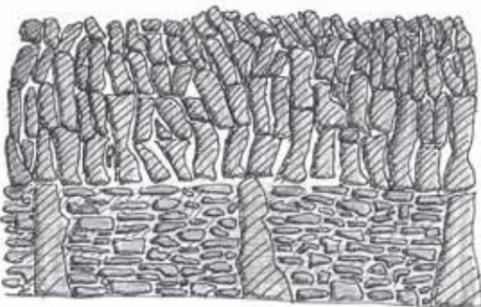


TRADITIONAL



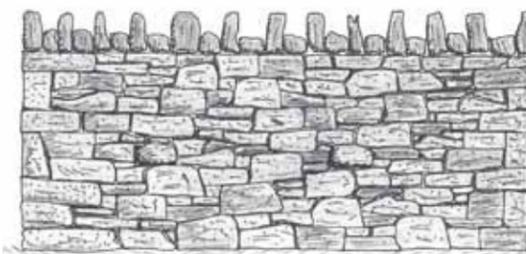
BOULDER WALL WITH FEIDIN

Boulder wall built on a base of smaller stones at the feidin. The feidin uses up smaller stones cleared from the land to construct a strong wall.



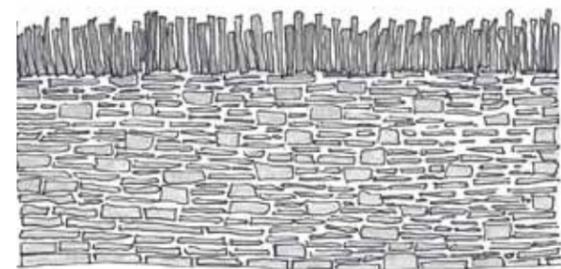
STACKED STYLE WITH FEIDIN

A very strong wall commonly found in fertile upland areas close to exposed limestone pavement. These walls may have protected tillage fields from roaming stock. The feidin is given extra strength with large uprights spaced every couple of metres.



DOUBLE STONE WALL

Very strong and well-built the double stone wall is constructed with two faces of stone with an inner core of smaller stones. They can be pointed ie. built with mortar or dry ie. without mortar. Double walls can have a number of features such as capping stones, through stones crossing full width of the wall, or batters ie. widening at the bottom. Many of the Burren examples lack a cap.



LISCANNOR/DOOLIN DOUBLE WALL

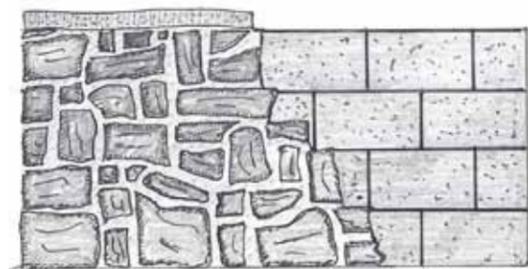
Double wall built with the characteristic West Clare flag stone.

MODERN



JCB WALL

Modern wall built with aid of a digger or JCB using large clints or boulders. These walls are a telltale sign of reclamation work.



MODERN STONE AND CONCRETE BLOCK WALL

Recent house planning regulations required the construction of a new stone wall set back from the road, this wall is typical of these walls. Basically a block wall faced with stone. Easier to build and less expensive than a traditional double wall these walls can be described as feature walls and display numerous styles and types of stone.

There are many places in the Burren of which I am fond for different reasons and in different seasons. But there is one place with an unbounded sense of freedom, a veritable limestone landscape de luxe, and somewhere you could be forgiven for thinking that the earth is cracking open. Sheshymore is hard to locate and does not flaunt itself. It is not visible from the roadside because it is hidden by an impenetrable tangle of tall thick clumps of hazel trees and thorny bushes forming a barrier to deter all but the most determined.

Its inaccessibility means that it is a peaceful few acres of limestone. Not many choose to pause here and prise their way through the undergrowth. Sheshymore straddles the main Ballyvaughan to Kilnaboy road although most of it is concentrated on the western side of this road. This vast but little-known oasis is characterized by long slabs of continuous and unbroken crisscrossed pavement, undamaged and with a clean metallic sheen. So far inland, the sea has not washed it and few if any tourists tramp its huge rectangular table-like clints which look so flat they might have been ironed to a pristine smoothness. Yawningly wide grykes stretch north-south in straight deep cuts for

hundreds of yards or as far as the eye can see. The Burren offers many dreamy places in which to linger and return to. But if you seek your own few private compressed hectares of limestone and somewhere with a profound sense of solitude, Sheshymore is the place to visit. A delectably secretive location, it retains a distinctive and largely unvisited character conferring a sense of ownership.

The Geological Society of Ireland has, without much fuss, designated Sheshymore as one of five sites in the Burren of international importance. Another seven are regarded by the geological community as being of national significance. If international awards were made for quiet, untrodden places then Sheshymore, laden with magic, and a sanctuary in which to escape from the madness of the world, would win the Nobel Peace Prize.

By Paul Clements

Extracted from Burren Country, Travels through an Irish Limestone Landscape, a collection of essays by Paul Clements about different aspects of the Burren published in May 2011 by The Collins Press at €12.99 and reviewed later in this issue.

A WALK THROUGH SHESHYMORE





Marsh Fritillary Butterfly.
Photo by Jesmond Harding

INTRODUCTION

This is a story of how a neglected and forlorn piece of land can become a place of great importance and beauty.

CHAPTER 1

Insignificant

A few years ago there was a small piece of land that was never grazed. There was no barrier separating it from the road, nor was there likely to be as it had very little nutritional value and it wasn't even much to look at despite being at the very heart of the Burren. In fact I think the only time it was ever used was when I passed it riding my horse and I would sometimes go for a nice little canter along the edge of it.

CHAPTER 2

Change

But when it was discovered that this piece of insignificant land was home to something very special; then everything changed. The hazel that had been threatening to overwhelm it was cut out, a fence (it is definitely electric, I wish I had known) with a gate was put up to enclose it and before you knew it, where there had once been an unused and bleak piece of land there was a nice little field, ready and needing to be grazed.

Eophan Robson has lived in the Burren his whole life. The freedom to roam on his parents' farm in Fahee North is what started his love of the Burren's scenery and wildlife. Eophan is currently a transition year student at Villiers school in Limerick, part of the course is to go on two weeks of work experience, which he did at the Burren Farming for Conservation Project in Carron back in February 2012.

CHAPTER 3

The Reason

The reason for all of this sudden activity was that it had been discovered that the land was a breeding ground of the *Euphydryas aurinia* or Marsh Fritillary. This is not only a beautiful butterfly but one that is in decline in Europe. This was an unusual site as the Marsh Fritillaries are usually found in wet heathy grasslands; but this land is neither very wet nor heathy, yet it contains lots of these butterflies. Over a few years surveys were taken on this site which showed that the number of Marsh Fritillaries was in decline.

The reason for the decline was that the site was becoming very overgrown and the hazel was taking over, so something needed to be done. The farmer and Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers moved into action to save this breeding ground from becoming as useless to the butterflies as it had been to the farmer before. Changes were made - the hazel cut, the fence put up and the gate hung. It was then lightly grazed by cattle to stop it from becoming over-grown again, benefiting not only the butterfly but also to some extent the farmer as well. I often go there now just to sit and watch the butterflies, they are a lovely sight. Later it was discovered that the field is also home to a rare flower, the Hairy Violet.

So this story shows that something can look boring and ugly, but if you look closer it might be interesting and beautiful. The Burren is a truly remarkable place, full of surprises.

by Eophan Robson

THE BURREN'S MARINE PLAYGROUND



It was the summer of 1989; I had seen it sitting outside the lifeguard's old caravan up on the hill overlooking the beach in Fanore. Day-in and day-out I'd pass curiously by that big, old yellowing surfboard on my way down to the sea before eventually summoning up the courage and ask to have a go. "Try to stay away from the rocks" they shouted after me as I lugged that huge board down to the waves. Dragging that board out into the surf, little did I realise how it would play such a huge positive role in my life.

Back then there weren't many surfers around; you'd be delighted if you had somebody besides the odd seal or dolphin out there surfing with you. Every time you'd venture down to the waves, curious bystanders would always enquire what you were doing, or where you were off to. With two thirds of Ireland's population living along the relatively waveless East Coast, and with no major towns close to the surf, surfing hadn't yet gained much attention here in Ireland.

That is now changing. The popularity of water sports has exploded across the world, with people taking to the water on all sorts of crafts - nowhere more so than in Ireland and especially here in the heart of the Burren. People have finally woken up to the huge natural playground we have right here on our doorstep.

The importance of this local resource cannot be underestimated. A recent survey of 8,500 nine-year olds found that 1 in 4 is overweight. The reasons for this have been directly linked to poor diet, lack of exercise and the huge part that TV and video games now play in their lives.

Back in '89 when I dragged that heavy old board down the beach, entertainment was found in the great outdoors, with sticks and stones, climbing

haystacks and running through fields. The current trend for sedentary entertainment not only leads to long-term health problems, but is also resulting in kids having less confidence and not feeling as good about themselves. The government, aware of the implications of this lifestyle, is planning to encourage kids back into the open air. To go surfing for real, not surfing the net!

The health benefits of water sports may be overlooked simply because they're so much fun! A couple of hours fly by, giving you an excellent workout while building core-strength so vital for balance and stability. This releases endorphins, the happy chemicals, which have a massive effect on improving mood. This makes it a really great way to spend time outdoors enjoying the wonderful natural environment we have, while at the same time reducing stress and anxiety and also improving your health and overall wellbeing.

What we have here on our doorstep in the Burren is a blessing, a veritable marine playground, providing an ideal location for water sports, not only surfing but also bodyboarding, kayaking and scuba diving.

Water sports enthusiasts bring with them significant socio-economic benefits for the Burren community as a whole. Whereas before, our tourism relied heavily on people visiting the area for our fabulous scenery, now we are attracting a whole new category of tourists.

While traditional tourism has been struggling, there has been a surge in adventure sports which is generating economic activity in otherwise remote areas. These adventure tourists support the local economy in accommodation, restaurants, pub and shops. Furthermore,

these activities continue to operate outside the traditional summer tourist season.

The sea, once ignored and underutilised, is now being used for sports which have a low impact effect on the environment; they do not require headphones, monitors, games controllers or even electricity. Mother Nature provides all we need.

Looking back to when I first dragged that old board down to the water's edge, much has changed. With the huge popularity of video games and TV and their impact on the nation's health, never has it been more important to encourage our kids back outdoors and to get active. With professional activity providers here in the Burren, it has never been easier to get involved; courses are available for various sorts of water sport that can introduce kids to the ocean in a fun and safe environment.

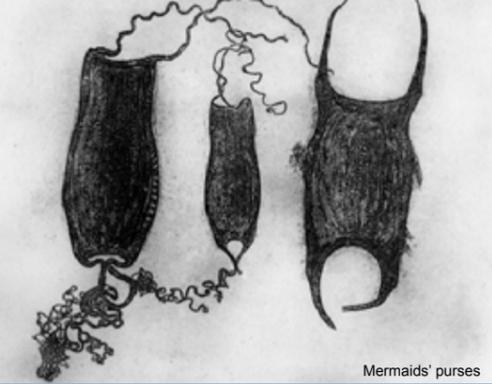
Ask any surfer and they will all tell you that it can be a truly transforming experience. There are few sports that inspire and evoke such a strong connection with our environment and planet as this one.

Surfing is addictive, and if we can encourage our kids out into the water from a young age, hopefully this may then lead them to a lifetime of being active and being out in nature.

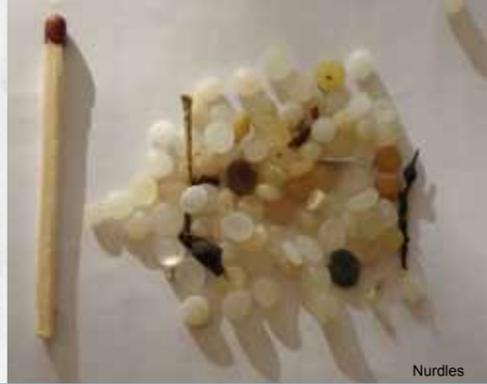
by Peter Hynes

Peter Hynes is the founder of the Aloha Surf School in Fanore. They provide surfing lessons, equipment rental and also sea kayaking tours for all ages and abilities. They operate all year round from their Surf Centre in Fanore. For more information go to www.surfschool.tv or check them out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/alohasurfschool

Photo by Aloha Surf School



Mermaids' purses



Nurdles



A sea heart

MERMAIDS' PURSES, MERMAIDS' TEARS AND SEA HEARTS

I go to the beach to find.....

To find what the sea has brought to the shore is often to find evidence of whole lives, from egg cases and seeds to bones and driftwood.

After a storm I find what had been trapped out there or died, caught in the bad weather. My best place for finding is Fanore Beach. There I found my first dolphin skull, dead otter, tropical bean, big skate egg case, and nurdles, a threat I thought was out there in the world but not yet here. There too I saw for the first time wild dolphins and gave my first guided shore walk, accompanied by my young dog who, 16 years later, would spend her last days sitting on Fanore Beach looking out to sea.

I like to think that instead of separating, the sea connects us to other countries. I was most aware of this when I found my first sea bean. Having floated for months in the currents of the North Atlantic Ocean, having crossed from the Tropical Americas or West Indies via the Gulf Stream and North Atlantic drift, it landed at Fanore. It was a Sea Heart, *Entada gigas*, the drift seed most commonly found here, probably because of its size. The Irish name for it is *Cnó Mhuire*, Mary's Nut, and I remember being told that it was once given to women in childbirth as a lucky charm and to hold onto during pain. Another belief is that the finder will not be taken by the sea. According to Charles Nelson in his captivating book, *Sea Beans and Nickar Nuts* (2000), sea beans can remain afloat in salt water for at least 19 years.

But the sea does not discriminate, it also brings messages which we do not like to hear from

other countries. Last autumn I found nurdles or 'mermaids' tears' on the beach in Fanore. Drawn to them because they were beautifully aligned where the last wave had deposited them, I was shocked by the implication of their presence. But were they new to the beach or just new to me? In his book *THE BURREN*, Charles Nelson mentioned as early as 1991 that plastic pellets are good guides to the areas of the beach on which to search for sea beans. I had not connected these with the virgin, or preproduction plastic pellets, called nurdles, which I had only lately encountered while studying plastic pollution and marine mammals. Showing them to a younger colleague, I was told that as a child she had collected them because of their colours and uniform size (as we seem compelled to do), not knowing what they were.

Transported by sea and road in massive containers, billions of pellets escape into the environment every year during transport, packaging and processing all over the world. Why are they such a threat to marine wildlife? Mistaken for fish eggs, they are ingested by seabirds and other marine animals and therefore enter the food chain. Sometimes animals starve with their stomach full of nurdles. They also carry many pollutants – additives such as plasticizers and also hydrophobic pollutants. These latter are present in the water and are attracted to the surface of nurdles. The concentration of PCBs and DDEs on nurdles collected from Japanese coastal water was found to be up to 1 million times higher than in the surrounding water.*

Other wondrous things we often find at the beach are the hard cases of skate and shark

eggs, mostly hatched, but sometimes a hungry fellow being has eaten the content. As has been said, nature is always beautiful but not always pretty. Egg cases of several species of dogfish (shark), skates and rays, can be found in Fanore. The egg case I found was from the rare White Skate (*Rostroraja alba* or *Raja alba*), also known as the Bottlenose Skate. The case is about 15 cm long, 10 cm wide and has four horns. Dogfish egg cases are yellow brown with long tendrils and are attached to seaweed or, in the case of skates, laid on the sea floor. The embryo can take up to 16 months to develop within the case. The young skate emerges with its "wings" neatly folded above its body, unfolds then and swims away.

Observations of mermaids' purses, either found on the shore or full purses observed during diving, can provide valuable information on the location of nursery areas. If you are interested in further information or in recording your finds there is a mermaids' purse record scheme in Ireland (www.marinedimensions.ie).

These are only few of the many fascinating things we may encounter.

While I do not always like what I find I will keep going to the beach.... to find.

by Sabine Springer

Sabine Springer is a biologist with a keen interest in all things marine. She is an avid nature collector. Amongst other things she is an wildlife artist, carries out whale watching for the IWDG and does otter surveys in her spare time.

Burren Ecotourism Network is spreading its net

The Burren Ecotourism Network (BEN) has established itself as a sustainable and vibrant business and conservation network that currently comprises 18 independently-certified tourism providers in the Burren Region. Its aim is to promote the Burren as a premier international ecotourism destination.

Ecotourism is defined as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and promotes the well-being of local people. For BEN, it's a question of focusing on achieving long-term sustainability on a number of different fronts – it aims for economic benefits for the region but equally aims to protect and enhance the environmental, social and cultural richness of the Burren Region. The designation of The Burren and Cliffs of Moher as a Geopark is an important development for BEN and gives an even stronger context to the potential of the region to continue to differentiate itself on a national and international scale.

In order to develop further, BEN set itself the objective of expanding its membership to build a critical mass of ecotourism providers offering a range of sustainable services.

It's clear that the greater the number of accredited ecotourism businesses, the stronger the claim for the Burren as an ecotourism destination. To this end, two public events were hosted by BEN in 2011. These were well-attended by local tourism businesses as well as representatives of regional agencies and were successful in engaging interest and building momentum around the idea of ecotourism in the Burren. More than 20 tourism operators expressed an interest in joining the Network and working towards independent certification. This would involve them in an extensive training programme in Spring 2012 and in preparing for an independent audit of their environmental practices and ecotourism experiences.

Achieving independent certification is a requirement for membership of BEN. To maintain standards of ecotourism excellence and avoid any perception of 'green-washing', it

essential that proposed ecotourism initiatives in the Burren are independently assessed, audited and accredited. This reassures the visitor of the environmental policies and practices of the business.

So what are the benefits of expanding the Network? For a start, there would be a much greater array of ecotourism experiences on offer, providing more reasons to visit the area and to stay longer. A larger Network offers greater choice and geographical spread of certified accommodation than currently available. Furthermore, BEN provides a forum for businesses to engage with each other, to learn more about each other's products and services and to share advice and experience. It also gives much greater scope for co-operation and collaboration, e.g. some tourism 'product clusters' may emerge – such as a Burren Geopark Trail, the Farm Heritage Tours, a Burren Food Trail or a Burren Craft Trail.

The ecotourism concept is gaining momentum not only in the Burren, but elsewhere as well – BEN has developed links with tourism providers in the Loop Head area of Co. Clare, while East Galway is in the process of establishing its own ecotourism Network.

BEN has acted as a pilot for such initiatives and provides the template and lessons for the effective establishment of further ecotourism pockets throughout Ireland.

More information on the Burren Ecotourism Network and its activities can be found on www.burrenecotourism.com

by Tina O'Dwyer

Tina O'Dwyer is employed as an Animator for the Burren Ecotourism Network, with the support of the LEADER programme administered by Clare Local Development Company and The Burren Connect Project. The objectives of this role are to ensure the ongoing development of ecotourism ethos and practice in the Burren and to facilitate the Network's future development.



The BurrenBeo Trust's series of talks was held in Tubber Hall this past winter to the great delight of the east Burren community. The series included an in-depth description of how a new and very different type of cave is being explored outside Carron; a picturesque journey through the archaeological history of local monasteries like Kilmacduagh; and a delightful evening of uilleann pipes and storytelling amongst others. It was great to see Tubber Hall full of people for these informative and inclusive events.

Over the years, the community in the east Burren lowlands has at times felt forgotten. Being positioned at the border between counties Clare and Galway and excluded from some Burren maps has not helped to promote this important area of calcareous wetlands. The new Ennis bypass does not signpost the Burren at Crusheen which is an ideal entry point via Tubber and Boston. However, in contrast the newly UNESCO approved Burren Geopark includes Lough Bunny as its 7th Geosite.

Why is it time it was rediscovered? Well, there

is a resident group of ravens on top of Boston castle at the north-west corner of Lough Bunny and we regularly enjoy swans flying above from one wetland to the next. Upwelling springs can be seen after heavy rainfall along the eastern shore of the lake. Between rockpools unique meandering karsts have formed like small undulating rivers etched into the limestone. Eggbox pitting and the formation of raised rims around solution pans (kamenitzas) is debated amongst the scientific community.

An unsightly disused sheep-dipping pond along the eastern shore, on the Gort to Corofin road, was converted by Kilkeedy community group into a picnic and car parking area in the late 1990's. This enables Lough Bunny to take a proud place along the Burren Geopark route. A large mushroom stone, indicating higher water levels after the last ice age as water eroded a pedestal at its base, is easily accessible only a short walk south of the picnic area.

Lough Bunny is a shallow lake, less than 2m deep for much of its area, and many a local and visitor

alike enjoy swimming along its eastern shore. The lake level fluctuates by over 1m throughout the year, changing the overall size considerably. There is a delay of about 2 weeks between peak rainfall and highest water level as it takes time for rain falling over the entire catchment area to percolate through underground fissures and caverns.

While surveying the lake in 1993 for a college project we went aground on large boulders whilst 8m depth was measured on the other side of the boat, indicating a very jagged and uneven bottom and the deepest point found was 14m. A solution corridor, a type of cave, may have collapsed forming parts of Lough Bunny. The lake has no permanent surface in- or out-lets, a characteristic for most water bodies in the Burren. It drains underground in a northerly direction via Rockvale River before reaching Galway Bay in Kinvara, while loughs and wetlands to the south drain into the River Fergus.

Many of the rare Burren flowers can be

found between the picnic area and the shore. Limestone pavement at the water's edge is covered by a protective and very slippery marl layer. Stoneworts, large rooted algae that resemble higher plants encrusted with lime which is rough to the touch, grow submerged in Lough Bunny and provide food and shelter for an extensive invertebrate community, including larval stages of the beautiful dragon and damselflies. The shallowness allows sunlight to reach these perennial water plants which absorb some of the nutrients arriving from run-off into the lake. This natural system could easily be disrupted by excessive run-off causing algal blooms and reduced light penetration. It is a very delicate balancing act in action. All this makes it a fascinating place due for rediscovery.

by Linda Tough

Linda Tough is a Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer with a background in Aquatic Sciences and publishing. She is originally from Sweden and has been living close to Lough Bunny for 20 years and is interested in the geology of this intriguing area.

LOUGH BUNNY

AND THE FORGOTTEN EAST BURREN LOWLANDS, REDISCOVERED

LOUGH BUNNY

AND THE FORGOTTEN EAST BURREN LOWLANDS, REDISCOVERED



beside the waterfall - 20m into a spray-lashed chamber. Here the river divides, the two routes leading in opposite directions.

To the north a series of wet descents lead down for 15m until the cave becomes too small to continue; to the south another series of descents lead down a further 20m to a pool. We were now 86m below the entrance but the cave continued beyond this point via a sump which can only be explored by cave divers using specialist equipment. We summoned Artur Kozłowski, a Polish cave diver, with many years of successful diving, establishing several Irish and UK records especially in the Gort area. Artur found the sump became too narrow to proceed after just a few metres.

The cave is of interest for its silica mineralization along parallel vertical "fault lines" within the limestone. These give the cave its vertical nature and allow the water to drain rapidly to the water-table. The same fault line is associated with two small nineteenth century mines near Michael Cusack's cottage in Carron, and Poll an bhalain – a huge amphitheatre like depression in the limestone at the western end of the Glen of Clab. Following the same line to the south leads to a large spring near Kilnaboy; to the north it leads to a large spring at Corranroo in Galway Bay. Despite testing it is not yet known whether the water in the cave flows north or south.

It is likely that the cave extends north along the fault line; we have started digging again and hope to discover more unseen wonders of the Burren - so watch this space!

If you are interested in trying caving it is very important to go with experienced cavers. Professional guides are available at the Burren Outdoor Education Centre www.burrenoec.com and Back West adventures www.backwestadventures.com The Clare Caving Club can be contacted through their website: www.clarecavingclub.wikispaces.com

I would like to thank Pat Hehir, the owner of the cave, for his continuing support of our strange activities!

by Colin Bunce

Colin Bunce has been caving for over 30 years in Ireland and Europe. He is a Senior Instructor at the Burren Outdoor Education Centre, Chairman of the Speleological Union of Ireland and a founding member of the Clare Caving Club.

Sadly Artur Kozłowski, an extraordinary asset to exploratory caving in Ireland, died on 5th September 2011 whilst shedding new light on the Pollonora borehole near Gort.

First shown to me in 1992 by Sean Shannon, and named after his dog, it had been thought to be a small cave but suddenly it was starting to reveal its hidden wonders. Excited at the prospect of finding a river we carefully explored the large chamber, following the sound of water into a lower passage. This soon brought us to a gaping hole 45m below entrance level, about 150m below the top of the nearby hills.

It was several weeks before the water level had dropped enough for us to continue our exploration, but soon we were abseiling down



THE INCREASING INTEREST IN THE BURREN AS A TOURIST REGION

For many years the Burren's relationship with tourism has been ambivalent; as early as 1973, the geographer William Nolan noted that *'The advantages (of tourism) will be the influx of money and social diversity to an area which is strongly uniform in social terms. The disadvantage will no doubt result from pressure on the environment and the tension between visitors and people living in the area.'* *North West Clare Today? Tomorrow?*, 1973.

This underlying tension was magnified during the Mullaghmore visitor centre dispute and the aftermath was a period of intense discussion and reflection on environmental, community and tourism related issues. The Consultative Committee on the Heritage of the Burren proposed the following, which few can argue with:

"If we are to develop a sustainable form of tourism in the Burren, we must recognise and harmonise the needs of the three components in the tourism triangle – the visitor, the host community and the host environment. Tourism must not be allowed to damage the environmental resource, prejudice its future enjoyment or use or bring unacceptable environmental impacts. Equally, tourism must be developed as a positive activity with potential to benefit the host community and the place, as well as the visitor".

This became the key objective of the Burren Connect Project, which works with agencies and local community groups to build on the work of previous studies and initiatives. The project works with an Advisory Committee composed of representatives of sectors in the Burren interested in the sustainable development of tourism and is managed by a Steering Committee with representatives from Clare County Council,

Shannon Development, Geological Survey of Ireland, National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Monuments Service, Burrenbeo Trust and the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Attraction.

The areas we focus on are; the development and growth of an Ecotourism ethos and practice amongst Burren-based tourism businesses. We facilitated eighteen businesses to form a network (the Burren Ecotourism Network) and pilot an ecotourism training and certification programme. Twenty more businesses are joining the network in 2012.

The provision of information on the Burren to visitors through a range of media such as information points in nine visitor centres, publications such as the Burren Passport (with a group of local businesses), and leaflets on the Burren Code and Build No Cairns. We support the Burrenbeo Trust's EcoBeeo programme for local national schools and included the Fanore National School and Lisdoonvarna Secondary School in a conservation project in Fanore Dunes. We provide information for local tourism businesses with our Burren Interactive Information CD ROM and for those interested in interpreting the Burren landscape in more detail we provide information on geology in the Stone, Water and Ice resource pack. These are also available to schools.

Traffic management is one of the more challenging areas; so far we have created viewing points with signage at nine locations and a car park at Poul nabrone Dolmen. We have spent a few years working on a traffic management plan for the Coast Road and a signage plan for visitor centres, two areas that have proved complex and are requiring a lot of time to reach consensus. Meanwhile, the project

is part of an international Interreg project called Transtourism that is encouraging visitors to use public transport in rural tourism destinations.

The development of good practice on access to natural amenities such as the sea shore, dunes, walking trails and monuments is also a complex issue; these are sensitive places that are easily damaged and it is important that we find, monitor and manage a balance between conservation and recreational needs. We have been involved in a conservation project at Fanore Dunes and the development of walking trails and we are working on best practice guidelines for developing and managing access to natural and cultural locations. We have applied to the EU Life fund for a programme which will help us work in tandem with relevant agencies and local interest groups to develop this aspect of the project.

The work we have undertaken in the areas outlined above helped greatly in achieving Global and European Geopark status in September 2011, a UNESCO recognized designation that promotes and supports regions of outstanding geological, natural and cultural significance that are actively encouraging conservation and awareness alongside sustainable tourism and economic development.

For more information on Geopark status please visit our web site www.burrenconnect.ie.

by Carol Gleeson

Carol Gleeson is the Project Manager of the Burren Connect Project. For more information go to www.burrenconnect.ie or contact Carol on cgleeson@burren.ie / 065 7071017.

UNDER THE BURREN

into the unknown

We inched forward on our bellies into the narrow space, carefully avoiding the stalagmites on the floor. Emerging from the crawl our lights were the first ever to break the darkness of a huge chamber. A large slab of rock covered in stalagmites bridged the chamber where it had fallen thousands of years before; stalactites glistened on the roof. Two passages on the far side of the chamber led into the unknown; in the distance we could hear the roar of a river echoing. We had entered Poll Gonzo – discovered following a couple of months of digging and rock moving by the Clare Caving Club.



A Community Charter For The Burren

The Burren represents many things to many people – a home and a resource of inestimable value for the communities who live here, a unique national treasure for the people of Ireland and a landscape of international importance to all who value mankind's rich heritage.

The conservation and development of this unique resource for the benefit of all requires an integrated approach to replace the current sectoral arrangements and this new approach should be developed by the people and communities of the Burren and not imposed from outside.

Recognising this, four Burren-based organisations – Burrenbeo Trust, Burren Farming for Conservation Programme, Burren Connect, and the Burren IFA – have been working together since October 2010 in conjunction with the Heritage Council, Galway County Council and Clare County Council, to forge a common vision for the future of the Burren.

The initial result of this effort, which has been based on a ground-up, participatory approach, was to investigate a **Burren Community Charter**. This is a voluntary partnership agreement between the people who live and work in the Burren and the organisations that have responsibilities for the region, to safeguard this place, its people and its heritage while

supporting the local economy and enhancing the communal life of its residents.

In principle, the Burren Community Charter recognises:

- that the Burren is an exceptionally rich natural and cultural landscape.
- that the local community must be central to decision-making with regard to the management of the Burren.
- the wish of all signatories to the Charter to work in partnership to secure a more cooperative, productive and sustainable future for the Burren landscape and its people.

The Burren Community Charter sets out a vision for the Burren:

- where a high quality of life is enjoyed by all.
- where the natural, built and cultural heritage is protected and maintained.
- where respect for the environment and local economic development are compatible.
- where there are recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike.
- where dynamic, engaged, sustainable local communities work together for shared benefits as they build a better future.

It is intended that the Charter will bring together a wide range of communities and sectors to develop a common approach for the future management of the Burren, defining the role that each of groups aspire to play within that approach and identifying how this approach can be implemented.

The first draft of the Charter, which was completed in December 2011, has been sent to the statutory bodies which have responsibility for the region for their comments. Once these have been collated, the draft Charter will be forwarded to the communities of the Burren for their comment following which the final Charter will be prepared for signature, launch and circulation.

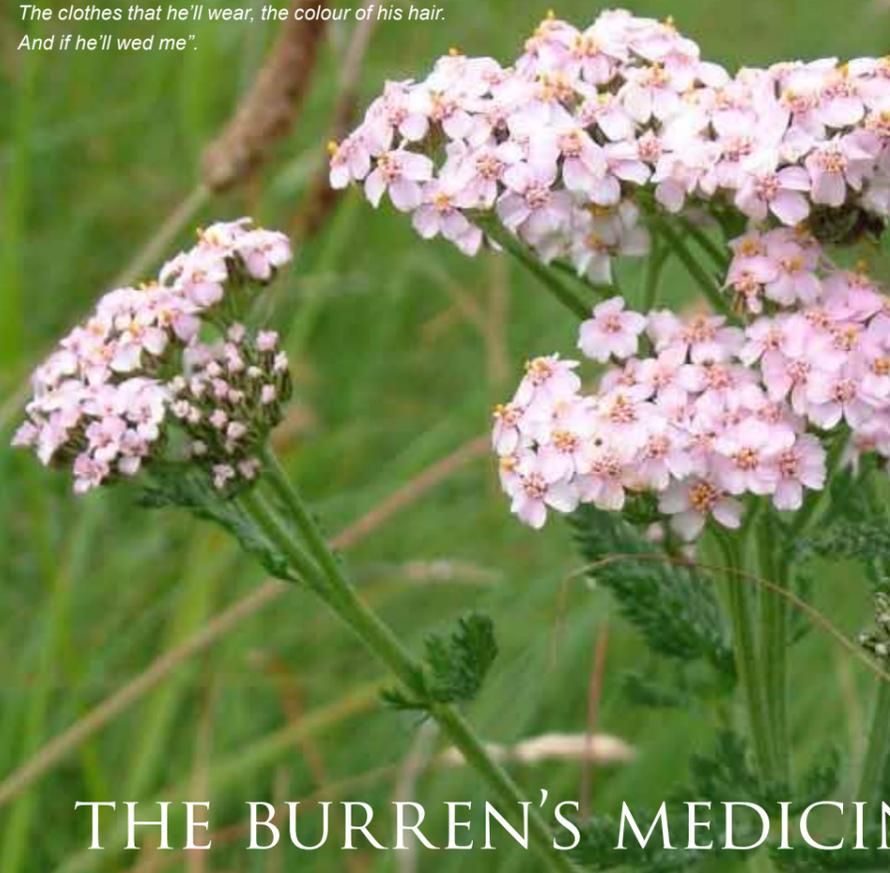
The next stage will be development of themed action plans for the Charter which will contain time frames, budgets, roles and responsibilities.

Subsequent stages will require further time and resources but it is intended that the Charter will be a living, evolving agreement by the people and for the people of the Burren, focussing on what we can do for ourselves as opposed to what others can do for us.

by Richard Morrison

Richard Morrison is the Chairman of the Burren Community Charter Management Group. He is also a Director of the Burrenbeo Trust.

"Good morrow, good Yarrow, good morrow to thee. Send me this night my true love to see, The clothes that he'll wear, the colour of his hair. And if he'll wed me".



More than 655 species of flowering plants, conifers and ferns have been recorded in The Burren, the Aran Islands and SE Connemara. Although The Burren is unique, none of the plant species found growing there are unique to that area. It follows therefore that many plants have a documented medicinal usage somewhere in the UK or Europe. In spite of a tradition of usage of plants as medicines it is important to remember that few plants or their constituents have been proved by rigorous scientific (clinical) trials to have medicinal effects. Because of this I have decided to concentrate on those medicinal plants found in The Burren that have now been evaluated by the Committee on Herbal Medicinal Products (HMPC) of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and are considered to have valid medicinal uses (shown in Table 1) and some that are under active consideration (see Table 2).

by Ingrid Hook

THE BURREN'S MEDICINE CABINET

TABLE 1. MEDICINAL PLANTS CONSIDERED TO HAVE MEDICINAL VALUE.

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	PART OF PLANT	MAIN CONSTITUENTS	MAIN ACTIONS
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	Herb	essential oil; sesquiterpenes; flavonoids	diaphoretic; diuretic
<i>Althaea officinalis</i>	Marshmallow	Root	mucilagenous polysaccharides	demulcent; antitussive
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i>	Bearberry	Leaf	flavonoids; quinones; tannins	diuretic; urinary antiseptic
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	Leaf	saponins	expectorant
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	St. John's Wort	Herb	hypericin; flavonoids	antidepressant; sedative
<i>Juniperus communis</i>	Juniper	Female cone ('berry')	essential oil	stomachic; diuretic
<i>Primula veris</i>	Primula; Cowslip	Flower	flavonoids; quinones	sedative; expectorant
<i>Rhamnus frangula</i>	Frangula	Root	saponins	expectorant
<i>Salix species</i>	Willow	Bark	anthraquinone glycosides	laxative
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	Bark	phenolic glycosides; salicylates	anti-inflammatory; antipyretic
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Dandelion	Flower	essential oil; flavonoids	diaphoretic; antidiarrhoeal
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i>	Thyme	Root+herb	bitter glycosides; phytosterols; inulin	bitter; hepatic stimulant
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Nettle	Leaf	essential oil	choleric; diuretic
<i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Valerian	Herb	phytosterols; lignans	antitussive; expectorant
<i>Viola tricolor</i>	Wild pansy; Heartsease	Root	flavonoids; minerals; lignans	prostatic
		Herb+flower	essential oil; iridoids	diuretic
			salicylates	sedative
				expectorant

TABLE 2. MEDICINAL PLANTS WITH POTENTIAL MEDICINAL VALUE.

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	PART OF PLANT	MAIN CONSTITUENTS	MAIN ACTIONS
<i>Euphrasia officinalis</i>	Eyebright	Herb	iridoid glycosides	anti-inflammatory; conjunctivitis
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet	Herb	flavonoids; phenol glycosides	anti-inflammatory
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	Leaf	flavonoids	diuretic; diaphoretic
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>	Bogbean	Leaf	secoiridoid glycosides	bitter tonic

The Burren Community Charter Project asked the primary school children of the Burren to put together their thoughts and visions on the future of the Burren. Here are some examples of the insightful messages from the local children.





Juniper



Dandelion



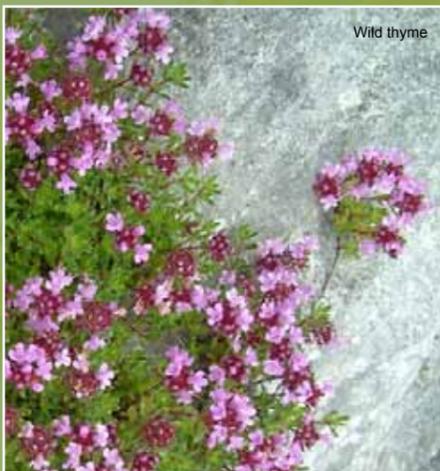
Nettle



Eyebright



Common ivy



Wild thyme



St. John's Wort

Points to Remember regarding Medicinal Plants

- Before use therefore it is vital to, not only identify the collected plant as correct, but also to know how to store and prepare the material. Herbals and herbal practitioners have this information and it ensures that preparations with desirable effects can be made.
- Medicinal plants collected from the wild cannot be presumed to be of the same quality as those grown commercially and may not produce the same biological effects.
- Medicinal plants usually contain a complex mixture of compounds which may be active individually or together (synergism) or with compounds still unknown.
- Medicinal plants can be used fresh or dry, whole or in powdered form, as aqueous extracts (teas, tisanes) or as alcoholic extracts (tinctures) with the spectrum of constituents in each form being different and having different actions.
- As with all medicines, it is the dose used "which differentiates a poison from a remedy".

Ingrid Hook is a Senior Lecturer in Pharmacognosy, Trinity College Dublin. She has a B.Sc. (Pharm.); M.Sc. (NUI); and an MA

A shore thing

In Burren Insight 3 we looked at Bell Harbour, Corronroo and Mullaghmore, and the birdlife to be seen there. Here we look at Ballyvaughan Bay with the sandy, stony spit, the Rine and the birds which frequent this location throughout the year. We also look at the Flaggy Shore, with Lough Murree and the winter birds attracted there. Then we move inland to the Burren fringes where we look at Lough Bunny which offers good summer birding.



Common Guillemot

Rine & Ballyvaughan Bay

The Rine is a long finger of sand with underlying bedrock that almost encloses Ballyvaughan Bay, with but a short distance separating it from Bishops Quarter to the east. This sandy spit is a fantastic place to walk in summer or winter. The botharín down to the Rine is enshrouded by hazel and holly scrub which provides a great feeding and nesting habitat for small passerine birds. In summer Whitethroat, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and many other small birds take up residence in this scrubby Burren landscape. The occasional Shelduck nests in underground burrows while Skylark and Meadow Pipit fill the air with their song. Once they return from Africa in late March, Wheatear abound. The sandy beaches and shingle areas are home to ground-nesting Ringed Plover, so do be vigilant when strolling along the Rine. Unaware of their presence, many eggs and young of Ringed Plover get trampled on by walkers.

In winter this is one of the prime locations in Galway Bay for both the Great Northern and Black-throated Diver. These and many other winter visiting ducks are regularly to be seen feeding close to the shore. Look out for small rafts of Common Scoter, Razorbill, Guillemot and Red-breasted Merganser. Also at this time of year, it is not unusual to flush Snow Bunting and other ground feeding species like Linnet and Rock Pipit. A pair of Chough are often encountered along this sand spit.

The Flaggy Shore

The road hugging the shore along this stretch of the north Clare coast is a popular walking route for hundreds of people. Most park near the small beach close to Mount Vernon House; from here they walk to Lough Murree and return on the loop road back to Linnanes and the parking area near the mouth of Corronroo Bay.

Whilst it is a pleasant walk in summer, this location is best in winter. Offshore and along the Flaggy shore near New Quay, there are lots of Great Northern Diver, Red-throated Diver, Shag, Black Guillemot and, on occasion, scarce winter vagrants like Eider Duck. As you approach Lough Murree check the rocks at the edge of the shoreline for Purple Sandpiper, Turnstone and Oystercatcher. In the sandy areas along the shore near Lough Murree there will be Dunlin, Sanderling, Redshank, Bar-tailed Godwit and Rock Pipit. The Lough itself holds flocks of Wigeon, Teal, small numbers of Greater Scaup, family parties of Whooper Swan, Little Grebe and the odd wading bird along the shore like Redshank and Greenshank. Pale-bellied Brent Geese feed on fields adjacent to the lough while the snow-white Little Egret irregularly frequents the lough to feed on small fish and freshwater shrimps.

Lough Bunny

This lake is best in the summer months. Many Burren flowers are common around its shores. The south side of the lake is easily accessible from the main Gort to Corofin road which runs adjacent to the shore.

Common Sandpiper breed along the shore; these small vocal waders nest on the flaggy limestone shelves that lap the southern shore. Many birds nest here hidden in grassy tufts, including Reed Bunting, Sedge Warbler, Whitethroat, Willow Warbler and small numbers of Stonechat. The cuckoo, which has become very scarce in eastern Ireland, still commonly breeds here; they have plenty of host species from which to parasitise one to foster their offspring. The North-east corner of the lake has a small breeding colony of Black-headed Gulls including a few Common Gulls scattered amongst them. This is one of the few places in the county where Red-breasted Merganser breeds; these are members of the saw-tooth family and use their serrated bills to hold and chop up the fish they catch when diving deep into the lake.

by John Murphy

John Murphy is the founder and chairperson of the Birdwatch Ireland Clare Branch. He is also the founder and director of Waxwing Wildlife Productions, who have done various series for TG4 on invasive species and wildlife species that have been lost in Ireland. All the photos on this page are by John Murphy. For more information go to www.clarebirdwatching.com or www.waxwingfilms.ie



Wheatear



Ringed Plover



Brent Geese



Wigeon pair



Red-Breasted Merganser

Learning from our elders

People in the area of Northampton National School, Kinvara have been bringing history, culture and heritage to life by agreeing to be interviewed on camera by the pupils. Those interviewed so far in the Beo project include Eddie Forde who is living in the renovated old Northampton National School vacated in 1951, Tina Murphy who gave a memorable account of family life growing up in the area and two former principals of Northampton N.S. living in the area, Maura Mongan and Tilly Leech. Each person was interviewed by their grandchildren who are pupils at the school.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the project was the excitement of the children on the various interview mornings. The majority of the interviews were held in people's own homes so even the idea of getting into the teacher's car and heading down to Granny or Granddad's house during the school day was enough to make it a worthwhile venture for the children!

We were transported to days of yore by the great stories told during the interviews. Childhood games like "Four cornered fool," and "Stack stones" were recalled amongst other more traditional games that have survived and still appear in playgrounds today like "tag and jail". Children would stand on the four corners of a rectangle while the person in the middle threw the ball to them. The one who was off-guard and dropped the ball was the "Four cornered fool," and had to go in the middle. "Stack Stones" was played with rounded pebbles and involved outdoing each other with various feats of dexterity (e.g. throwing one in the air and trying to pick up two before catching the airborne one again).

Children who would have been drafted to the Land of Nod by the first paragraph of a history chapter were transfixed by the stories. Grandparents recounted distant memories of the last of the Connemara boats delivering turf to Kinvara Pier before the delivery lorry took over as the preferred mode. £8 would buy you a lorry load of turf at the time. The children then packed it skilfully in the shed like an agricultural Lego, in preparation for winter.

Toys were few and far between. Those that were received were treasured and cared for. Amongst the antiquities produced during filming was a 70 year old doll, a cherished childhood gift that has stood the test of time remarkably well. Being owned by the only girl in a large family of boys I'm sure contributed to this particular toy's survival. The children of Northampton N.S. in 2012 found it difficult to imagine having as many as 13 siblings. It would take great patience to wait for one's go on the Wii then!

Another of the grandparents had kept their original school

satchel all these years. Into this went the grand total of 4 small books (English, Maths, Catechism and a copybook) as they made their way through fields and roads to school. The ups and downs of school life from wonderful friendships to scrapes with the teacher were recounted, leaving the Northampton children for the most part happy to be sitting watching the DVD in the bright and warm ambience of the modern school.

There was a great sense of emotion at various stages of the interviews. Recounting leaving to go working in England in the 1950s, saying goodbye to family at the station in Gort, writing letters each month just to get one back with some news of home, returning years later with a profound appreciation for the skies above Kinvara. Others recounted lonely journeys back to Boarding School after holidays. Cycling to the station escorted by family members, the train to Ballinasloe to be picked up by the nuns and another term lay ahead. Again the warmth of friends and the art of letter-writing calmed the loneliness until the business of school life took over.

Early mass on Christmas morning was followed by a special breakfast of lamb chops in one house. The goose was then prepared for later and it was a day of plenty. The women ran the farmhouse and financed the buying of tea, sugar and flour by selling eggs, geese and turkeys. The farm was otherwise self-sufficient. One recalled the big galvanised bucket of eggs in the kitchen with each egg being washed and placed in panels of 24 which when stacked on each other would form a crate. The crate would be loaded on to the ass and cart to meet Kelly's (Ardrahan) travelling shop at the head of the road - "The woman of the house often made more than the farmer in the fields."

The school is very thankful to those who have volunteered to take part in the project so far and are especially grateful to Ted O' Malley for the countless hours of editing that went into making a finished product worthy of the interviewees. The children themselves can be very proud of their enthusiastic and energetic work on this project.

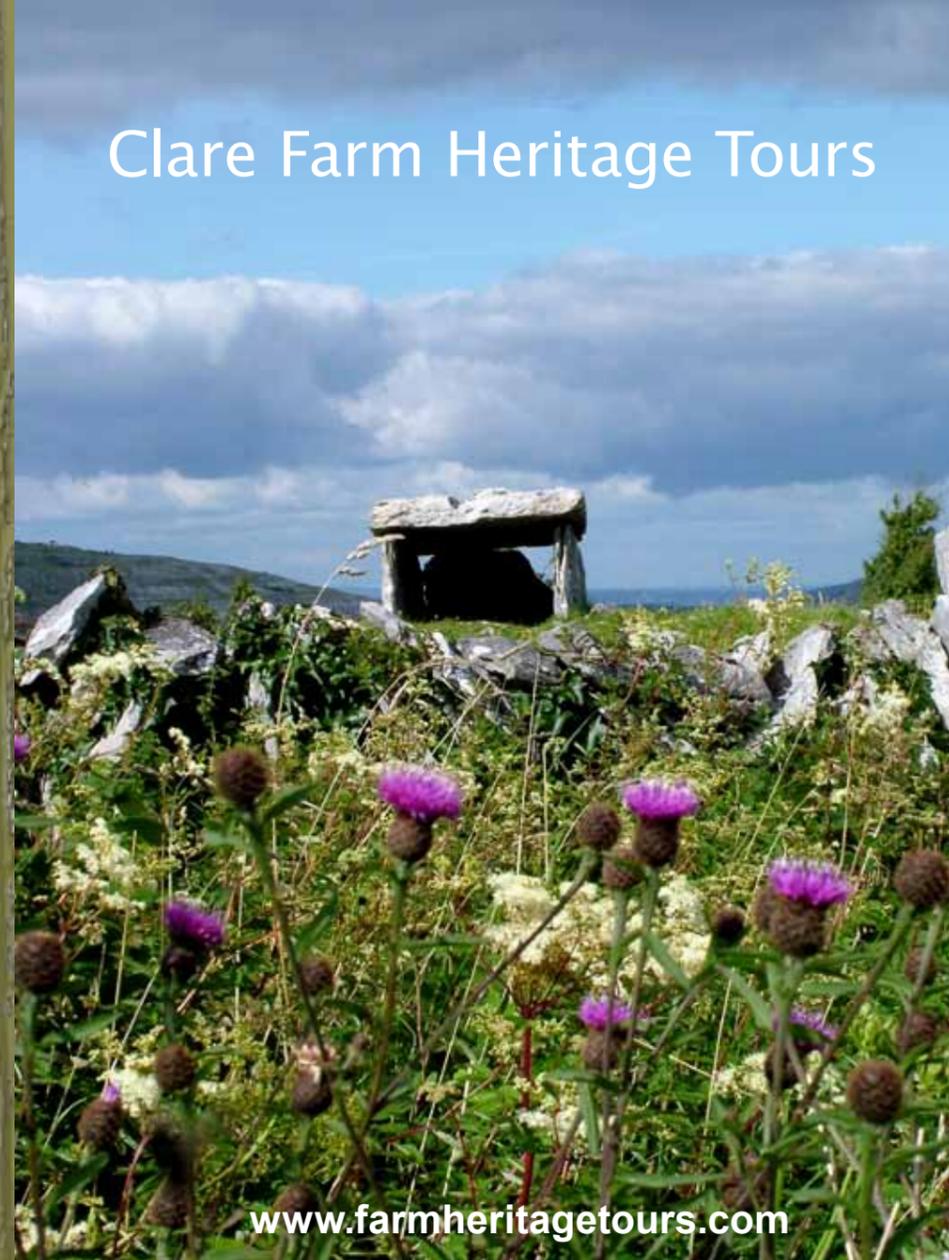
It was the aim of the Beo project which was introduced to us first here in the school by Brendan Smith (NUI Galway), to capture the essence of the past by recording interviews and collecting, editing and annotating photographs. The finished product will be posted on www.irishbeo.com and the school website www.northamptonns.ie. Other similar community based projects can be viewed on www.irishfadofado.com and www.galwaygaaheritage.com.

This project was a great opportunity for communication between young and old and allowed endless possibilities for community engagement. The recordings are to be treasured.

by Shane Mc Donagh

Shane McDonagh is the principal of Northampton National School near to Kinvara. He is involved in the Beo Project of connecting children with the lives of their elders. For more information on this project contact Shane on principal@northamptonns.ie

Clare Farm Heritage Tours



www.farmheritagetours.com

People claim that there is a book in everybody. What is certain is that everybody has a story to tell. The Clare Farm Heritage Tours comprises eight farmers in the North Clare area with stories to tell. First, we had to ensure that, in addition to our own knowledge accumulated over a lifetime, others who might be able to open our eyes yet further had the opportunity to do so and we gratefully acknowledge their help.

Michael Lynch, Clare's Field Monument Advisor, undertook an archaeological audit of each farm and recorded over one hundred sites stretching from the Neolithic period to the present. Michael's report gave each of us an insight to our sites and suggested the best ways of preserving them. His report was sent to The Heritage Council who supported us in improving access to some of the sites.

The two Geopark officers, Maria McNamara, and her successor Ronan Hennessy gave us a

geological report for each farm, together with a greater insight into this aspect for the whole of North Clare. While Clare's Biodiversity Officer, Shane Casey, himself a farmer, organised a biodiversity report on some of the farms which is a further help to us when guiding visitors round our land.

Emma Glanville of the National Parks & Wildlife Service visited each of the farms and suggested further ideas to enhance the experience. Finally, the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme and the Burrenbeo Trust have both been helpful to the project and most of us have provided tours in conjunction with the Trust for their monthly walks over the past 2 years.

Last year we provided specialist walks on:
- *Cooking and gardening in the Burren*
- *Maire Rua - Wholehearted Heroine or Menacing Madwoman?*
- *Who was Katie from Kilcorney?*

So, what is so special about these farms?

Well the walk on my farm, Roughan farm walk, differs from the other Burren-based farms in that it is a summer grazing farm as opposed to the others which all have a winterage element. On this farm there are a number of archaeological sites. Cahermore is a stone fort perched on the southern edge of Roughan hill with a commanding view of the Fergus river valley. This fort has a number of unusual features including a souterrain. While north of the fort stands a replica of the Tau cross; a monument with a chequered history, the original is on display in St. Catherines church Corofin which is now a museum. In the valley below stands a standing stone and in the cliff face south of the fort is the only known entrance to the Fergus River cave. This is where the water from the Carron turlough emerges and enters the Fergus River. The stream that exits the cave is a huge resource for biodiversity and at various times contains lots of small trout.

These proved very popular and we plan to hold similar specialist tours this year.

In 2011, we became members of the Burren Eco-Tourism Network a group to promote eco-tourism in the Burren. We took part in various training days and succeeded in securing a silver award in the Eco-Tourism Ireland programme. It is hoped that through this network the Burren can become the premier eco-tourism destination in Ireland.

Where else would you have access to walks by the people that know it best! Each tour takes about 2 hours and the visitor can expect to get a taste of archaeology, botany, geology, hydrology, folklore and, of course, the farming practices of the guiding farmer. The fact that farmers like us have been surviving in this unique landscape for over 6,000 years shows that, when man works in harmony with nature, sustainability results. A full menu of what we have to offer is available on our Website: www.farmheritagetours.com or contact Tel: 353 (0) 65 7089944/E-mail: info@farmheritagetours.com

by Michael Killeen

Michael Killeen's family have worked on Roughan Hill Farm for 6-7 generations. He is one of the founding farmers of the Clare Farm Heritage Tours.

A SHELL MIDDEN

The first Mesolithic site in Co. Clare identified

The excavation of a shell midden at Trawvealacalaha near Fanore Beach has confirmed that Mesolithic hunter gatherers occupied the Burren, at least on the coastline, before ever it was farmed.

Shell middens occur around the Irish coast and were in use from the Mesolithic through to the Medieval and even early modern times. They vary from up to 100m long, and well over a metre deep, to thin layers of shell a few metres in length. Although the layers of shell are the most diagnostic feature, middens should not be seen simply as dumps of discarded shell. Remains of hearths, heat-shattered stones, tools, pottery, charcoal, animal and human bones indicate that some sites were occupied for prolonged periods with varied activity, probably on a recurring seasonal basis.

The Fanore midden was discovered in 2008 when shells became exposed by storms and high seas removing some of the covering sand. Due to the vulnerability of the site a rescue excavation was undertaken in 2009. A more detailed excavation, funded by the Royal Irish Academy, took place in 2011 and a radiocarbon date from a hazelnut shell confirmed that the site was occupied at the end of the Mesolithic period. Both excavations showed the preferred shellfish to have been periwinkle, limpet and dog whelk with the occasional clam and top shell. Large quantities of heat-shattered stones, associated with the discarded shell, were used for either boiling or roasting the shellfish. Stone tools found included a shale hammer stone, three shale axes, and many blades and flakes of shale, chert and flint.

The Fanore excavations have been very successful, not only in providing the earliest recorded date from an excavated site in Co. Clare but in confirming that Mesolithic hunter gatherers occupied the north Burren coastal regions a few generations before the first farmers and the subsequent building of the Neolithic tombs at Doolin, Poulmabrone and Roughan Hill. Further analyses of the lithic and soil samples, shells and charcoal, together with further radiocarbon dates, will greatly enhance our knowledge of life in Fanore back in Mesolithic times.

by Michael Lynch

Michael Lynch is an archaeologist and the Field Monument Adviser for Co. Clare. His research subjects include Prehistoric Archaeology and Church Plate. He also farms near to Killinaboy.



Shale axes and hammerstone from Fanore. Photo Michael Lynch.

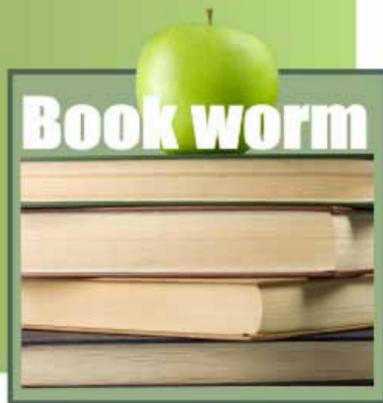


Exposed shell and shale flake at Fanore excavation. Photo Michael Lynch.



Exposed shell at Fanore midden. Photo by Elaine O'Malley.



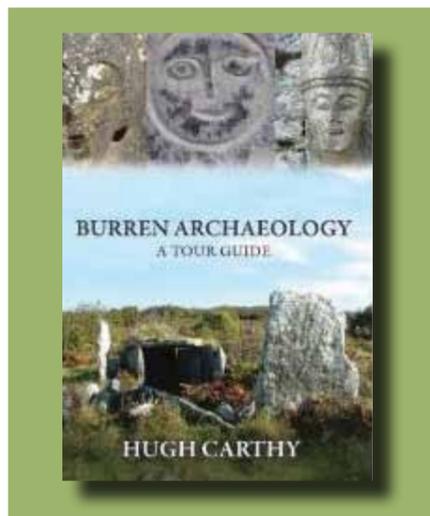


BURREN ARCHAEOLOGY -A TOUR GUIDE

by Hugh Carthy

Collins Press, 2011 / RRP €15

Review by Michael Lynch



With the increased interest in heritage tourism in the Burren and elsewhere in Ireland this is indeed a timely publication.

The first section gives the date ranges and an overview of the archaeological ages with particular reference to the monuments of the Burren. This is an informative introduction for the visitor and a most useful aid in selecting which of the 50 monuments, described in more detail in the later sections, to visit. As an aid for planning their itinerary, especially for the short term visitor, the monuments have been grouped into four locations, Burren East, North, West and Central with individual maps showing their locations. The inclusion of an overall map showing the four areas would have been helpful for the visitor. The individual monument descriptions, particularly from the historic periods, are well written with up-to-date references and interpretations. Along with some

excellent photographs the author also gives an explanation of many place names and phonetic pronunciations for those unfamiliar with the Irish language. As many of the monuments are on private property the author clearly addresses early in the book the important issue of access, an essential for any tour guide for the Burren. The inclusion of a table showing the GPS coordinates of the sites is advantageous.

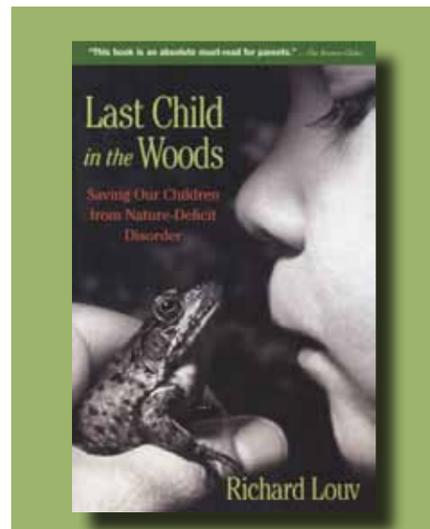
This guide is easily read and provides those with an interest in archaeology with a good overview of the monuments in the Burren. The enthusiasm of the author for this wonderful landscape is palpable and his stated aim of persuading the visitor to read the story of the Burren will surely be achieved.

LAST CHILD IN THE WOODS, SAVING OUR CHILDREN FROM NATURE-DEFICIT DISORDER

by Richard Louv

Algonquin Books, 2005 / RRP €15.20

Review by Sarah O'Malley



A bestseller in the USA, Last Child in the Woods by journalist and author Richard Louv investigates the disconnection between children and the natural world. He believes that children's hands-on contact with nature is fading and is being replaced by a more sedentary way of life which has both emotional and health implications. Louv spoke with parents, children, teachers, and a number of experts who share his concern and offer solutions.

Louv coined the phrase 'nature-deficit disorder' to describe children's detachment from nature. It is not a medical diagnosis but he uses it to 'describe the human costs of alienation from nature'. He feels children no longer have an

intimate relationship with the natural world and that this is connected to a diminished use of the senses, the rise in obesity, attention disorders and depression.

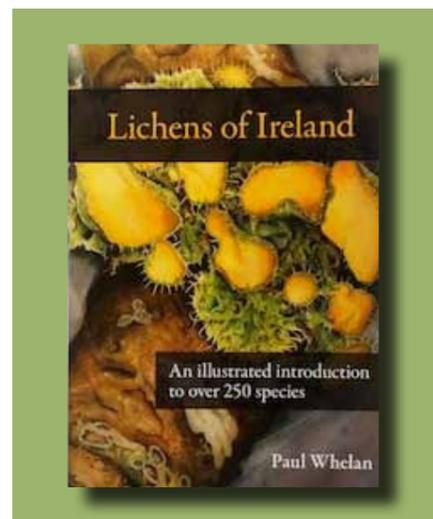
The book focuses on the emotional and physical benefits from being in nature. It recognises that in the last twenty years children playing, exploring or investigating alone and unsupervised in nature has virtually disappeared. Louv offers practical solutions to address this. Although largely focused within an American context, many of his recommendations are relevant and applicable to Ireland today.

LICHENS OF IRELAND

by Paul Whelan

Collins Press, 2011 / RRP €19.99

Review by Ray Woods



This is the first ever illustrated introductory guide to the lichens of Ireland. Paul Whelan has combined his skills as a biologist and computer-aided design expert to produce an exceptionally good-looking book. Part One provides a comprehensive guide to their biology and ecology with many fine colour photographs and excellent line drawings by Alan Orange of the National Museum of Wales. Even a beginner should have no difficulty in understanding their form, structure, reproductive biology and ecology. There is a half-page section on the Burren limestone.

Part Two describes 258 species in alphabetical order by genus, each illustrated with a colour photograph that frequently includes an enlarged image of some notable feature and a vice-county distribution map. Most photos are excellent though a few fail to quite capture the essence of the species and in one or two cases the colour reproduction, particularly of bright yellow species is distinctly odd.

With about three quarters of Ireland's lichens not covered by the book the choice of species to include in a book of this nature is also bound to cause some criticism. A few rare species, which a beginner is most unlikely ever to encounter, are included whilst other very common species have been omitted.

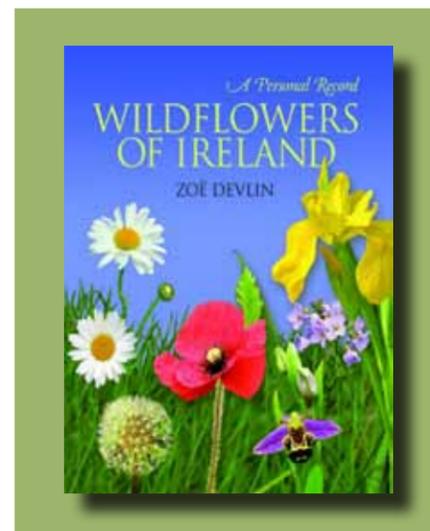
Here and there the book would have benefited from an editor's touch. Note also that there is no key or other guide to help identify species. To identify a specimen you will need to match it to the photograph and then examine the description. But this book does not pretend to be comprehensive. It is exactly what it says on the spine-"an illustrated introduction" and it does this very well in a neat, sumptuously illustrated A5 format of 160 pages in a good waterproof limp cover, ideal for the rucksack and outdoors.

WILDFLOWERS OF IRELAND: A PERSONAL RECORD

by Zoë Devlin

Collins Press, 2011 / RRP €35

Review by Stephen Ward



For some reason, when I heard Zoë describe her project, I imagined a pocket book. But, no, it is a substantial coffee-table book, distinguished by the outstanding quality of its photographs, some of which are full-page portraits such as the stunning close-up of black medick.

The species accounts include the common, scientific and Irish names; the months in which it flowers; distribution maps which are colour-coded according to whether the species is native, introduced or an invasive alien; a description of its flowers and leaves; notes on folklore and herbal uses

On occasion, Zoë quotes philosophical sayings,

e.g. for the oh-so thorny burnet rose | Rosa spinosissima | briúlán she quotes Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr (1808-1890) as saying "Some people are always grumbling because roses have thorns. I am grateful thorns have roses." For each species, Zoë tells where she first identified the plant and where she photographed it.

Most of the photographs in the book were taken by Zoë. In the introduction she says "The wildflowers in [the] book do not represent the total number of Irish flora ... it is confined to plants that I have seen, photographed and can identify."

There is a strong conservation message, evident on occasion through a poetic turn of phrase as when Zoë refers to 'the whisper of yellow rattle' when referring to a special field in County Galway. But she also loves wasteland, finding an abandoned space that has become invaded by "weeds" with its unexpected surprises.

The species accounts are prefaced by a discussion entitled "Weeds or Wildflowers?" For many, this philosophical point is a stumbling block which Zoë puts in context. This is a book to savour at your leisure, to enjoy the crisp detail of its photographs, to browse the wisdom in its pages – it is a scholarly book, a learned book.

BURREN COUNTRY

by Paul Clements

Collins Press, 2011 / RRP €12.99

Review by Gordon D'Arcy

His collection of essays, 'Burren Country' is a highly personalised contribution derived from his intimate knowledge of the natural and social heritage, the people, places and lore that have made an impression on him down the years. His prologue evoking the trials and tribulations of hitch-hiking will strike a chord with older readers who remember the time when this mode of travel was not only entirely safe but also the norm. The sudden revelation of the Burren's magic experienced by the author while waiting in the rain, sets the scene for the rest of the book.

An Aphrodisiac of the Senses posits the opinion that the Burren with its glamour and fecundity is a sexy place. The ancient name of Corcomroe Abbey, Sancta Maria de Petra Fertilis, seems to endorse this, but, as in the Sile-na-Gig above the church doorway at Kilnaboy, also warns against it.

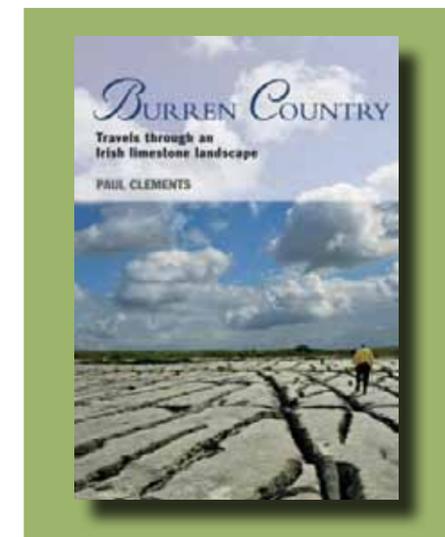
The chapter Grazing around Gleninagh is especially engaging. The author recounts his

experience attending a pattern mass at the holy well (Tobar na Croise Naofa), in the rain. With the sacred leading on to the secular, Clements informs us of the sad history of depopulation of this once thriving Irish-speaking community. The venerable genteel romantic writer Sarah Poyntz is contrasted with the flamboyant, quirky and funny Ré O Laighléis in two chapters about particular Burren writers. A similar contrast is drawn between the unassuming 'semi-abstract impressionist' painter Manus Walsh and the (sadly late lamented), eccentrically brilliant botanical artist Raymond Piper.

Of all the musicians residing in the Burren Clements singles out the balladeer Sean Tyrell for special mention in his chapter, Bard of Bell Harbour and who could argue with his choice. Many will remember his spine-tingling songs during those Easter Dawn masses at Corcomroe celebrated by the late John O'Donoghue.

The author's journalistic background is evident in his attention to detail and search for truth. If I have a quibble with the book it would be in the author's love of lists and in his predilection for arcane expressions. This is personal though and some readers might even be drawn to the book for this reason.

This book will undoubtedly be treasured by all Burren enthusiasts. Its personalised format by a perceptive erudite northerner will remind us all yet again of the region's inherent magnetism. It may also act as a memento – to be read on a wet winter night in the city – by those unfortunates who, drawn by other urgencies, hurry through the region unaware of its existential power.



“en plein air”



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BURREN GUIDED WALKS AND HIKES

Burren Guided Walks and Hikes are a guiding service offering everything from short rambles to half and full day guided walks and hikes. Our guiding service is available all year round amid some of the most spectacular scenery in Ireland. We are based in the village of Fanore on the north west coast of the Burren.

To book a walk, for individuals or groups, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Mary Howard: tel: +353 65 7076100, mobile: +353 87 244 6807
mary@burrenguidedwalks.com



WWW.BURRENGUIDEDWALKS.COM



Local filmmaker needs help:

If you know the location of dens or dreys of squirrels, badgers, foxes, stoats or pinemartens; nests of birds of prey, barn owls, skylarks, cuckoos and even small birds if they accessible (tree hollows or stone walls are great) or cocoons of butterflies such as frillaries, blues, greens etc; we would greatly appreciate it if you could contact us.



Sea Fever Productions have recently televised 'Farrraig na hÉireann' and are currently endeavouring to make a documentary film on the Burren.

All creatures will be filmed without disturbance and in agreement with NPWS.

Please contact Katrina on 086 826 8172

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Burren Outdoor Education Centre



burrenbeotrust

conservation volunteers

A Year as a Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer

Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer events are multi-layered, bubbly and eternally appealing, despite the weather forecasts.

At Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer events I have seen Jesmond Harding imitate butterflies mating: his tongue dancing. I have been instructed by Kate Lavender in the use of secateurs and of hand saws. I have taken a stroll with Stephen Ward and Sharon Parr as they unveiled the flora of the Burren: from the orchid-rich grasslands to the Atlantic hazel woodlands. And, as I have fought the interminable fight against the encroaching hazel and hawthorn, my passion has become rational and imbued with an objective purpose. This purpose is to provide the appropriate habitat for the rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly.

I have been beguiled by the local volunteers who have imbued the landscape with myth, telling tales in which - even by the infinitely flexible standards of truthfulness that apply in the telling of a good yarn - I feel there is clearly some vestige of truth: the Doctor from University College of Dublin said the evidence was imprinted in the limestone. There is a useful

clue, a hint that there is more to the Burren than meets the eye. What meets my eye now is a landscape that is imagined through language, the myths and associations of a story told and re-told.

How do you react when a container of spiders is presented to you to identify? During the National 24-hour Bioblitz I counted the species in Dromore Woods, marked them off one at a time. Common and widespread maybe, but each spider was carefully handled and magnified to reveal its uniqueness. The buffish-brown band on its carapace quickly revealed *Pardosa lugubris*. It was some time, and with reference to several identification cards and discussion with numerous volunteers, before it was revealed that the spiders running along my hand were all the same. Slower than the expert I may have been, but I added to the overall total to ensure that Dromore Woods had one species more than the last place contender.

Christine Grant has enabled me to see the networks of places and paths of movement that can be discerned through the Burren landscape. The landscape I can now see is criss-crossed

by paths, and given social substance through being drawn into networks of people and practices, and linked to other places and things: "the dust of events," in Foucault's phrase. The broken remains of animal bone, from which the past can sometimes, but always provisionally, be reconstructed, are exciting to discover, even if they are pieces of the most quotidian animal.

At Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer events, not only have I learnt, but I have participated in shaping the biodiversity of the Burren, and importantly, I have enjoyed a year as a Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer.

by Karla Breen Rickerby

Karla Breen Rickerby registered as a BCV whilst undertaking biodiversity work in her native New Zealand in 2010. She has an interest in archaeology, with her PhD from Sheffield University (UK) exploring sensory perception of Late Bronze Age pottery. She is currently looking to move into the Burren from Labasheeda, with the aim of improving her Irish language skills.



burrenbeotrust

conservation volunteers

The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCV) was born out of the desire by active members to roll their sleeves up and do something positive for the Burren.

We will tackle anything (within reason), guided by skilled leaders and experts. We have repaired walls, cut down scrub to favour the marsh fritillary butterfly, surveyed settlements that are thousands of years old, beaten back invading alien plant species which arrived in the Burren via garden centres and the diet of birds and which are in places out-competing the Arctic mountain avens, we have cleared ancient tombs of encroaching undergrowth, dismantled visitors' dolmens and cairns - clearly incompatible with 'leave no trace'. We have even done the occasional litter-pick - not the most exciting task, but someone has to do it.

With the help of experts, we are becoming increasingly skilled - learning how to build walls, record archaeological sites, monitor butterflies and plants - oh, and practice first-aid on each other! We are even venturing into home-baking - strictly to keep our strength up whilst tackling our tasks.*

If you would like to donate funds or equipment towards the work of the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers please do not hesitate to contact us.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN...

- The Burren outdoors and want to put something back into the region?
- Exploring a career in heritage or conservation and want an opportunity to get hands-on practical experience under leading experts?
- Coming to the Burren on a holiday and want to gain knowledge on key local conservation issues?
- Learning new skills in conservation and heritage management?

...or do you just have time on your hands and want to be part of an active conservation community?

Our conservation days aim to impart skills and knowledge, while giving something back to the environment and having some fun doing it. Everyone is welcome to get involved. For dates of upcoming conservation days and training events, register by emailing volunteer@burrenbeo.com or look up our volunteer page on www.burrenbeo.com

***We would like to thank Kate Lavender for all her fantastic work on keeping the volunteers informed through emails and organising events since 2010.**

Volunteers: if you have photos of any of the events don't forget to email trust@burrenbeo.com with them so we can pop them up on Facebook or print in the next magazine!



One of the dedicated volunteers - Tinker the Terrier!



Repairing some walls around Blackhead. Photo by Sharon Parr



Volunteers helping out at the Kilcrony dig. Photo by Christine Grant



Preparing an excavation site at Caherconnell. Photo by Michelle Comber





Bird spotting with John Murphy in November. Photo by Linda Morrison



Another way to get to Sabine Springer's walk in September. Photo by Linda Morrison



Michael Davoren tells the walkers some amusing tales in April. Photo by Mary Howard



Walking with Frank O'Grady up on Roughan Hill in December. Photo by Linda Morrison

'This course is extremely beneficial to the children. It fosters an interest and appreciation of the 'place' where they live from a young age. Hence they will have a connection to the Burren and are able to discuss issues with their peers and parents. It is so rewarding to see the learning that took place, we appreciate the commitment of the Trust to carry this out.' Teacher, Fanore NS

THE BURREN AS A LEARNING LANDSCAPE

Ecobeo

Last year, over 70 Young Burren Experts graduated from the 10-module Burrenbeo heritage education course. The Ecobeo 2011 course was carried out in Fanore, Ballyvaughan, Doorus and Oranmore National Schools. The course increases awareness and appreciation of the heritage of the Burren among the children who live in this special place. It is based on a hands-on, fun-learning experience, under the guidance of some of Ireland's foremost heritage experts. On completion, the students graduate as certified 'Burren experts' with a bank of knowledge and enthusiasm that they will carry with them for years to come. Since its launch in 2003, over 750 primary school children from across the Burren have partaken in this experiential learning programme.

The Burrenbeo Trust would like to thank the fantastic work of the Ecobeo tutors: Ronan Hennessy, Zena Hocht, Eugene Lambe, Brendan Dunford, Brigid Barry and Sarah O'Malley for their time and infectious enthusiasm in sharing their expertise in 2011. Burrenbeo would also like to thank the Ballyvaughan-Fanore Walking Club and an anonymous donor for sponsoring Ecobeo 2011. Finally the Trust would like thank the Cliffs of Moher, the Aillwee Caves and the Burren Centre for donating prizes in each school. For further comments or information on the Ecobeo education programme please contact Brigid Barry on trust@burrenbeo.com / 091 638096.

Ecobeo 2012 is currently underway over an extended period of 20-weeks with 125 children from Kinvara NS, Kilcolgan ET, Corofin NS, Kilnaboy NS, Ennistymon NS! Additional tutors this year include Rory O'Shaughnessy and Eileen Hutton. This is being made possible by the generous sponsorship of Roche Pharmaceuticals Ltd, The Carron Group and Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Club.

Burren Wild Child

For those children unable to benefit from a full Ecobeo experience, in 2011, the Burrenbeo Trust began developing their Burren Wild Child experiential learning activities. These aim to help children to get more out of the Burren; exploring it up-close whilst having lots of fun. Through scavenger hunts, creative games and thinking outside the classroom, the Burren Wild Child is attempting to connect children more with their environment. The Burren offers the ultimate playground to learn more about nature and culture whilst having lots of fun. For more information go to www.burrenbeo.com/learning-landscape

To book a Wild Child outing for a group of children, please contact trust@burrenbeo.com /091 638096.

Burren Wild Child 2012 is sponsored by an award from Coca Cola Co.



Learning Portal

In 2011, with the support of The Heritage Council, the Burrenbeo Trust launched its online learning portal. This content-rich and engaging on-line resource enables the user to source educational information quickly and effectively. The 'learning landscape' portal gives an all-round insight into the Burren region but also engages on different levels to ensure it reaches a wide range of ages. This immersive and innovative learning experience offers primary, secondary and third level students across Ireland and beyond the opportunity to learn more about the Burren's heritage through interactive learning resources, online projects and pre-visit resources. The portal has sections for teachers, students and volunteers and is a terrific resource for anyone planning to explore the wonders of the Burren. To view go to www.burrenbeo.com/learning-landscape



The development of the Learning Portal was sponsored by The Heritage Council

The Burrenbeo Trust hosts a series of heritage walks throughout the year and a series of heritage talks throughout the winter.

The walks are on the 1st Sunday of each month at 2pm at a different location with a different heritage expert each time. Topics range widely from glacial erratics to flowers, ringforts to birds and way beyond. The Burrenbeo Trust had a record-breaking 760 individuals on our walks in 2011, with a further 700 attending the Burren-in-Bloom events in May 2011! The Burrenbeo Trust would like to thank all the heritage experts who kindly gave their time and energy to informing these willing walkers!

The winter talks are on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 8.30pm from October to March. Last winter, these were magnificently hosted in Tubber Village Hall by Michael O'Donohue who kindly lit the fire and put the kettle on, ensuring a truly unique and cosy village atmosphere which it was a privilege to experience. The Burrenbeo Trust would like to thank Michael, all the speakers and especially the encouraging audiences who turned out in large numbers on winter evenings.

Everybody is welcome to our Burrenbeo Trust heritage walks and talks. All walks and talks are FREE to members; a minimum donation of €5 is requested from non-members. To find out the exact location of the upcoming walks and talks please look up the events page on www.burrenbeo.com or phone 091 638096 for more details.



Be there, be prepared!

For the Burrenbeo Trust walks, we suggest the following:

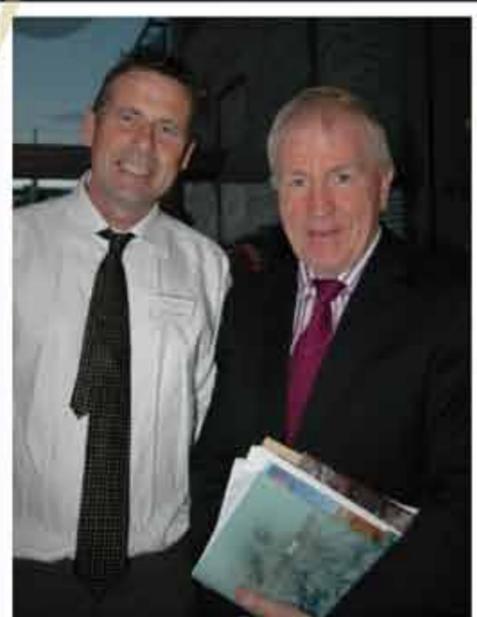
- Wear comfortable and sensible walking shoes. Much of the Burren's terrain is uneven, so for comfort please ensure you are wearing suitable footwear.
- The walks generally take 2-2.5 hours. They are held in the afternoon so that each individual has the chance to have a good hearty lunch before heading into the great outdoors!
- The weather in Ireland is variable and can change fast. So come prepared with warm clothes and waterproofs. In case of good weather, do not forget sunscreen and a hat as the rock reflects the sunshine and can cause sunburn.

Our walks programme last year was sponsored by Local Agenda 21 / Clare County Council.



Why not invest in the future of the Burren and sponsor a school to take part in the Ecobeo programme. There are over 40 national schools in the Burren area, we can only deliver this programme free to the schools with your support!

For more information on visiting the Burren as a group and receiving a lecture, guided walk or workshop by one of our on-site experts, contact trust@burrenbeo.com /091 638096.



MINISTER JIMMY DEENIHAN LAUNCHED OUR DUBLIN GALA



ARTIST SUSAN SEY RAN A BOTANICAL WORKSHOP FOR US



ORGANISED OUR FIRST MARINE WILD CHILD DAY OUT



BURRENBOO WON THE OVERALL PRIZE AT THE GALWAY HERITAGE AWARDS 2010

some of the memories from 2011



BURKEN IN BLOOM MAY MONTH HAD OVER 700 ATTENDEES. THE MONTHLY WALKS HAD ANOTHER 740!



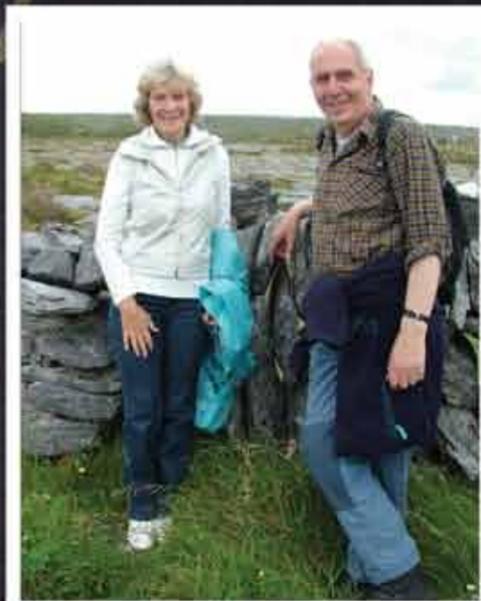
CANADIAN AMBASSADOR, LOYOLA HEARN, ENJOYED A DAY OUT IN THE BURKEN WITH THE TRUST



BURRENBOO LAUNCHES ITS LEARNING LANDSCAPE ONLINE PORTAL SUPPORTED BY THE HERITAGE COUNCIL



THE BURRENBOO WINTER TALKS SERIES HAD OVER 400 PEOPLE ATTEND IN TUBBER VILLAGE HALL



CONSERVATIONISTS PRINCESS IRENEE AND PROF MATHUS SCHOUTEN WERE INTRODUCED TO THE BURKEN AS A LEARNING LANDSCAPE



GREGANS CASTLE PRESENTED BURRENBOO WITH A VOUCHER TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE TRUST



BURRENBOO WERE KEY ORGANISERS IN THE BURKEN SPRING CONFERENCE 2011



BURRENBOO 5KM FUN RUN RALLIED UP A FEW KEEN PARTICIPANTS

Also the Trust won out of 600 entries at the CocaCola Awards, were key partners in the Burren Community Charter Project, graduate 75 new experts from EcoGeo, send a monthly newsletter out to 3500 people and much much more.....

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(please circle one annual membership option)

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- GIFT PACK €50
- LIFE €1,000
- GOLD DONOR* €5,000

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*All donations over 250 are tax deductible so your money goes further

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You can also join online at:
www.burrenbeo.com

For payment by cheque, please insert your details on the form and make your cheque payable to: Burrenbeo Trust Ltd.
Completed forms/cheques to be returned to
Burrenbeo Trust, Main Street, Kinvara, Co.Galway.

New members - invest in the future of the Burren

The Burrenbeo Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the Burren and its people. We receive no core funding and rely on membership fees, donations and grants but most of all the tireless work of our volunteers to carry out our extensive work programme which includes education, information provision, research, conservation, advocacy and much more. Everyone has a part to play in the Trust, so why not join us!

Members

How can we help you?

Get **more** from your Burrenbeo Trust membership

What

Get more information

Get more knowledge

How

Attend morewalks and talks

Attend morevolunteering events

Why

Make more informed decisions

Make more impact

Make more friends

How can you help us?

By making introductions to further our charity's profile

By asking a local business to sponsor a school for Ecobeo

By joining the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers

By displaying our newsletter

By inviting us to make a presentation

By sending us community news & events for our monthly e-newsletter

By championing us in your area

By using our Information Centre for your educational needs

Against all the odds, 2011 was been a great year for the Burrenbeo Trust. During this year we achieved a huge amount of really important work for the Burren, making a real difference to our local heritage, economy and community. The impact of this work was recognised by our being awarded the overall prize at the Galway Heritage Awards and a prestigious Coca Cola Thank You award.

We would not have been able to do any of this without the help of our supporters, so we wanted to say a big **THANK YOU** for making all of this happen! We hope you are as proud to be a part of Burrenbeo's work as we are. Here is a synopsis of what we were up to in 2011:

Education:

- We carried out the highly successful Ecobeo Heritage Education Course in four Burren primary schools producing 63 new 'Burren Experts'.
- We developed the Burren Learning Landscape Portal, an online educational resource for students, teachers, parents, visitors, conservation workers and others.
- We ran a two-day training course on Best Practice in Heritage Conservation Management in the Burren.
- We won a top award with Coca-Cola towards the development of our Burren Wild Child – singled out from over 600 other applicants nationwide.
- We arranged a botanical workshop with renowned artist Susan Sex, and held our first beach Burren Wild Child day with marine biologist Sabine Springer.
- We provided orientation sessions for numerous visiting groups.

Information:

- We published the 3rd issue of our highly acclaimed annual flagship magazine Burren Insight.
- We held monthly heritage walks and a winter talks series with over 750 people attending.
- We helped organise the month-long Burren in Bloom festival with over 700 participants.
- We sent monthly e- newsletters to over 3,500 people
- We continued the development of our website www.burrenbeo.com and up-scaled our presence on other media outlets such as Facebook, You Tube and Twitter.
- We upgraded the Burrenbeo Information Centre to facilitate groups for talks, workshops and as a starting point for our Burren orientation sessions.
- We produced a wide range of information materials from pull up stands to field guides to posters.

Conservation:

- We held monthly excursions of the 120-strong Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers group addressing key conservation issues throughout the region.

Advocacy:

- We worked as a lead partner with other Burren agencies and the local authorities in developing a Burren Community Charter for the region.
- We helped organise the annual Burren Spring Conference last March on the theme of *The Burren-What is to be done?*
- We organised a Dublin Gala Event in April to profile the Burren and the work of the Trust to a larger audience. Minister Jimmy Deenihan officiated.
- We held a roadshow with 50 attending Burren businesses to highlight the resources that are available to tourism operators on the Burren.
- We won the overall Galway County Heritage Award in March for our work as a community group against 120 other community groups countywide.
- We organised a 5km run fundraiser for the Trust.
- We developed links with visiting dignitaries such as the Canadian Ambassador to Ireland, and Princess Irene of the Netherlands as well as hosting the American Ireland Fund group on their visit to Clare.
- We continuously promoted the Burren in both regional and national media so it is at the forefront of peoples' agendas.
- We continued to work closely with key local organisations.

Local Economy:

- Burrenbeo Trust has a policy of using local suppliers. We use local designers printers for our magazine, factsheets, field guides and maps. We employ a local accountant, local tradesmen for building repairs, local transport providers and locally based consultants as required.
- Burrenbeo promotes local businesses through its website, its business network, at its roadshow and gala events and whenever opportunities avail.
- Burrenbeo currently employs two staff and leases a building in Kinvara.
- The estimated value of the professional input made by Burrenbeo core volunteers in 2011 (aside from the Burren Conservation Volunteers Group) was well in excess of €75,000!!

SO THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR HELP AND WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE EVEN MORE IN 2012 WITH YOUR SUPPORT!



Invest in the future of the Burren

This is a chance for you or your business to invest in the sustainable future of the Burren by funding specific well respected projects such as:

Ecobeo Education Programme

The Burrenbeo Trust runs a 20-week heritage course in primary schools throughout the Burren. To help us continue this work you could fund a school in the Burren in the participation of this innovative programme.

Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers

Ireland's largest conservation volunteer group was established by Burrenbeo to tackle important conservation issues. Funding is needed to develop the skills and support the training of volunteers in this a critical conservation effort.

Wild Child - Young Explorer's Club

Burrenbeo Trust is developing an experiential learning and outdoor field club for children. We are presently seeking sponsors for this exciting venture.

Heritage Walks and Talks

With the support of leading heritage experts, Burrenbeo Trust carries out a monthly guided walk throughout the year and a lecture series throughout the winter. Last year over 750 people attended our walks and talks which has increased the potential for the informed protection of our living landscapes.

Your money goes further.....

The Burrenbeo Trust is part of the Charity Tax Donations Scheme which means your money goes further with a system of tax rebate. If you would like any further information on how you can get involved in any of our programmes please contact the Trust.

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