

BURRENINSIGHT



The Burrenbëo Trust Magazine

summer/autumn 2009

Members FREE/Non-members €3.50



A TRUST IS LAUNCHED

ECOBEO HERITAGE PROGRAMME - Tomorrow's guardians

BURREN WALKS & TALKS - Away we walked

A SURVEY OF FARM FAMILIES - The voice on the ground

■ book reviews ■ research ■ quiz & competition

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Letter to Friends of the Trust

Welcome to the very first issue of Burren Insight, the bi-annual magazine of the Burrenbeo Trust. I would like to introduce myself as the Trust's sole employee! Originally from a farm in Co. Cork, I have spent the last ten years working for conservation organisations in the UK and further afield, and returned to Ireland last year to take up the role as Biodiversity Officer for Co. Clare. As the post was only temporary, I was lucky and delighted to be invited to become Communications Officer for the Burrenbeo Trust. It is a fantastic opportunity to be involved in an organisation that is encompassing so many different aspects of conservation through education, information and research.

As I am sure you will agree, Summer is truly a magical time to be in the Burren; to see the floral beauty that makes it famous, to be outdoors exploring its geological wonders and archaeological sites. Whether you live or work here, or are just visiting the Burren, every day spent exploring the area holds a new discovery; a new orchid in bloom, butterfly in flight, or myth to uncover. Such bountiful natural and cultural heritage makes the Burren region priceless, but this is a finite and fragile resource. This vast campus of heritage is very sensitive and can suffer from abuse or neglect. For future generations to enjoy the fruits of its rich legacy, the Burren needs to be conserved by those who know it best – its people – the local farmers and communities. The knowledge and enthusiasm of those who visit from afar is also a vital resource.

Burrenbeo has responded to this need by setting up a membership trust, providing a holistic environment that every interested person can join and be part of working towards conserving the Burren. Since its launch at the end of 2008, the Burrenbeo Trust has developed its role as an education and information provider for the region, whilst working in collaboration with other stakeholders, and supporting research on the sustainable and strategic management of the Burren.

So far this year, the Trust has successfully graduated almost 100 young Burren experts from its Ecobeo heritage programme that was carried out in four national schools in the region. It was truly an impressive sight to see these children enthused by their environment; identifying the Bloody Cranesbill flower, telling the legend of Maire Rua and her twenty-five husbands or describing how a glacial erratic comes to be where it is. Important seeds for the future of the Burren's heritage have been sown in these children, 'instilling a sense of pride and responsibility in their environment which will stay with them into adulthood.

Another remarkable achievement by the Trust this year has been to carry out a survey amongst Burren farm families to hear the voice of those that have managed the land for generations and continue to maintain the land on a daily basis, *'I feel proud to be a Burren farmer, have been given a gem, and wouldn't want to be farming anywhere else in the country'*. This important survey gave farmers the opportunity to speak out on issues they feel are relevant to the current and future management of the Burren. We are proud to launch the survey's findings in this magazine.

Meanwhile, the Trust continues to build on the information that it provides to the friends of the Burren. Through the website, the dissemination of factsheets, monthly e-newsletters, and monthly walks and talks with Burren experts, the Trust's network continues to grow and keep the Burren community informed.

This has been an exciting first six months for the Trust and we are grateful for your support for the work we carry out. Please continue to spread the word and encourage your friends to join us in conserving this precious landscape so that our work may continue to grow from strength to strength.

Brigid Barry
Communications Officer

A Trust is launched

On the 5th December 2008, the Burrenbeo Trust was officially launched by renowned conservationist, Professor David Bellamy. More than two hundred local residents, farmers, scientists and lovers of the Burren from near and far attended to see Professor Bellamy launch the first Trust of its kind in Ireland – one dedicated to the conservation of a landscape. The Trust launch marked a new era in working towards a more strategic, inclusive approach to the management of the Burren.

Key Work Areas of the Burrenbeo Trust

Ecobeo heritage education programme

Monthly walks and talks

Providing information: website, e-newsletters, magazine & information leaflets

Supporting research on the sustainable management of the Burren



Professor David Bellamy explained: "The Burren is a very, very unique place. It has everything. It is a time capsule of the last 6,000 years. I have been coming here since 1951, but the Burren is in great danger of being loved to death." Bellamy said that Burrenbeo, an independent membership-based trust, "offers a 'greenprint' for the future development of the Burren and it is being done through the communities here".

The Irish Times, 6th December 2008

The launch night featured not only a speaker from an international platform but also from national and regional organisations; Dr Conor Newman, lecturer in Archaeology at NUI Galway and Chairman of the Heritage Council, and Michael Davoren, Chairman of the Burren IFA, both officially welcomed the formation of the Trust on the launch night. Trust Secretary and Burren enthusiast, Dr Brendan Dunford, presented the evening.

Dr Dunford said that the effective management of the area can only be done through empowering local communities. "Strategic management and an informed and engaged community are key requirements to sustain conservation, heritage, agriculture and tourism in the Burren." Dr Dunford said that the Burren landscape faces the dual threat of "intensification and abandonment". He said there is also developmental threat on the fringes of the Burren. "The dangers facing the Burren are not immediate, but no less pernicious for that," he said. "In Ireland, we only value things when they are gone and we can't allow the Burren to suffer from continued neglect."

The Irish Times, 6th December 2008

The Burrenbeo Trust aims to create a greater appreciation of this unique area's natural and cultural heritage by disseminating free information at the Burrenbeo Trust Resource Centre situated on the Main Street of Kinvara, carrying out an education programme with local schools, organising monthly walks and talks with local farmers, naturalists and archaeologists, increasing the information

available about the Burren through a website, factsheets and e-newsletters, and finally through collaborating with other organisations researching a more sustainable approach to future management. In addition, during the summer the Trust provides weekly guided Burren walks for everyone which are proving very popular.

Burrenbeo Trust was launched with the objective of sustaining and protecting that unique and enviable habitat. The initiative recognises that without the cooperation of the local community it would be difficult to protect such a vulnerable landscape. The Burren is truly a wonder and anything that protects it while at the same time recognising the rights and concerns of the local community should be supported by all of us.

The Irish Examiner, 6th December 2008

The Trust is currently supported by hundreds of members, both residents of and visitors to the Burren, to promote the holistic and sustainable development of the Burren. By creating a membership trust, each individual that joins has the opportunity to input and guide the future of this unique area. The Burrenbeo Trust is giving the Burren community the opportunity to conserve this landscape for future generations.

Current Research

The Burren region attracts a lot of researchers, enhancing our knowledge of the area. Throughout this magazine there are extracts from various academic bodies or researchers currently working in the Burren. This is not definitive but is a sample of what researchers have chosen to share with us. If you are carrying out research in the Burren and wish to tell us about it in our next magazine please send an abstract to trust@burrenbeo.com

Dr. Martin Feely

Senior Lecturer in Earth and Ocean Sciences, School of Natural Sciences,

There are dark grey linear zones that weather proud of the surrounding limestones in the Burren. Why have they resisted weathering ?

Dr Martin Feely and his team of researchers are working on how and when these features were formed. A notable network of dark grey vertical structures occur in the Burren limestone. They are exposed near Mullagh More, 2kms NW of the R460 connecting Gort to Corrofin. The area is composed of near horizontal limestone pavement. The network of vertical structures is due to joint controlled wholesale silicification of the limestone, which involves the replacement of the limestone calcite by silica (quartz). These silicification zones are therefore more resistant to weathering than the limestone due to their high silica content. The zones are approximately 1m wide and range in length from approximately 1m to 30m; they also contain crystals and/or veins of purple fluorite. These vertical structures represent a substantial addition of silica and fluorine to the limestone. They reflect the ingress of silica and fluorine-bearing fluids along pre-existing fractures in the limestone with concomitant lateral migration into the limestone to form the network of dyke-like structures. They are invariably colonized by distinct species of lichens and bryophytes and can often be recognised from a distance by the covering of heather - a calcifuge (lime-hating) species otherwise absent from the limestone.

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"Ecobeo is a good and educational way to learn about our home, the Burren" Laura, age 11

"I think it was a great idea setting up the Ecobeo because it helps us see more into the Burren" Aine, age 10

"I enjoyed Ecobeo and I would love to do it again" Scion, age 12

Tomorrow's guardians

The Burrenbeo Trust celebrated another significant milestone recently when almost 100 new 'Burren experts' between the ages of 10 and 12 graduated from Burrenbeo's Ecobeeo heritage education programme. These young experts partook in an intensive and highly innovative learning experience, the only one of its kind in the country, which was designed, funded and delivered by the Burrenbeo Trust. Ecobeeo aims to open up the Burren's rich heritage to local children, their teachers and families, in a way that is both entertaining and informative. The purpose of the course is to engender a sense of informed pride, ownership and ultimately responsibility among the communities of the Burren for their surroundings, creating a new sense of place which will stay with them into adulthood.

The 2009 Ecobeeo programme, subtitled 'My Burren Heritage', ran as a 20-week course between January and June in four different national schools around the Burren; Lisdoonvarna, Doolin and Ballyvaughan in County Clare, and Tierneevin in County Galway. In previous incarnations of the course over the past five years, 14 other schools and 400 students have taken part.

Ecobeeo was designed as a fun learning experience. Each subject was delivered through colourful classroom presentations (and occasional nature walks) by professionals, supplemented by quizzes, as well as fortnightly newsletters and assignments sent to the schools by e-mail. The students then had the opportunity to put their newfound knowledge to the test on a field trip around the Burren, visiting cultural, natural and historical sites such as the iconic burial chamber at Poul nabrone, Michael Cusack's cottage nestled in the trees below the new centre in his name, Cahercommaun ringfort spectacularly perched on a cliff edge, and the massive sheets of bare limestone pavement at



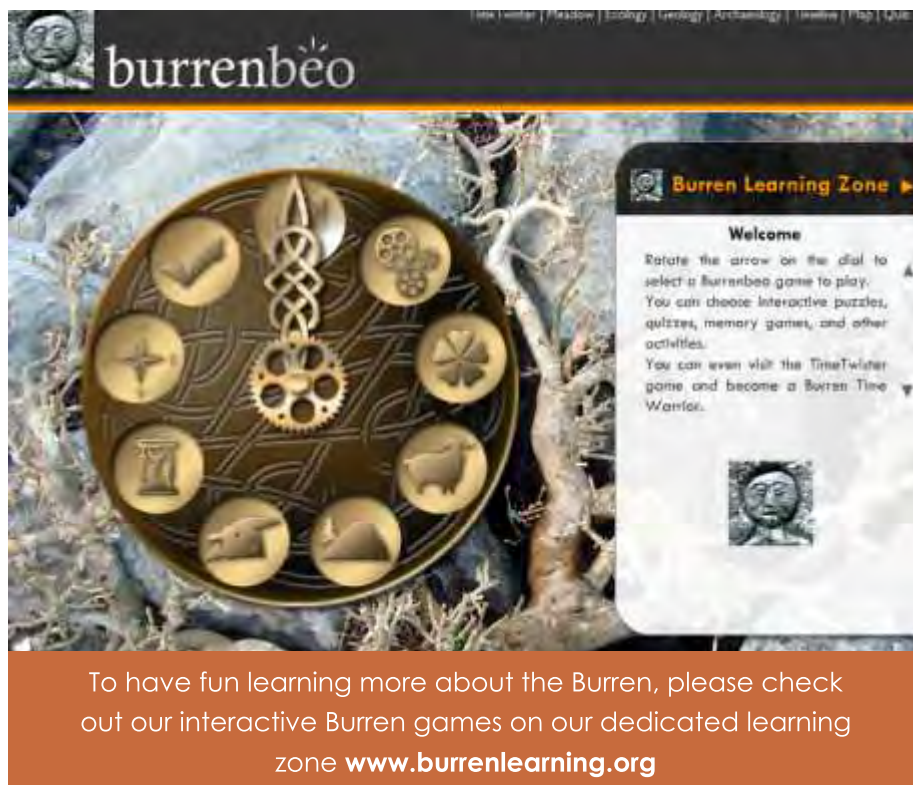
Tierneevin National School receiving their Ecobeeo certificates

Sheshymore. The course culminated in the awarding of special expert certificates and graduation packs to the students as well as special prizes for outstanding work.

During the graduation ceremonies, the children enthusiastically shared their new-found knowledge with the audience – astounding their parents and local experts such as Trust patron Mary Angela Keane who presented some of the awards. They were able to identify a range of Burren flowers and animals, describe how various geological and archaeological features were formed, identify various megalithic structures and relay local folklore and historical tales. The obvious sense of pride and delight with which the students were able to do this offers great hope that these young custodians of the Burren will be more than capable of building a bright new future for the Burren.



Lisdoonvarna National School exploring a wedge tomb on Ecobeeo field trip



Teachers' comments from schools that participated in Ecobeo:

"Very enjoyable course, well worth it - would do it again!!"

"I felt the course was very comprehensive-well researched, well presented with excellent follow-up."

"We were delighted and privileged to be chosen for inclusion in their year's programme, and appreciate very much the professional and enthusiastic manner in which the programme was delivered. Keep up the good work!"

Burrenbeo would like to thank all the schools, teachers, parents and students involved in Eco-beo 2009. We would like to thank all the course tutors – Zena Hctor, Gordon D'Arcy, Brendan Dunford and Carol Gleeson and Maria McNamara from the Burren Connect Project. Thanks to the prize sponsors – Aillwee

Caves, The Cliffs of Moher and The Burren Centre. The Burrenbeo Trust hopes to run further Ecobeo courses in the Burren in 2010. If your school is interested, please contact us. For anyone interested in sponsoring future courses, or modules thereof, we would love to hear from you at: trust@burrenbeo.com

Congratulations to The Ecobeo Graduates 2009

Lisdoonvarna NS

Hannah King
Shauna McNamara
Aisha Dobbin-Catto
Amy O'Brien
Ella Barrett
Martyn Whyte
Conor Shannon
Sarah Leneghan
Josephine Moloney
Annie Xiao Heng
Ashley Garrihy
Rowan Danaher
Nicole Davis-Danaher
Bronagh Considine
Patrick McNamara
Ciaran Johnston
Ryan Burke
Cian Garrihy
Joanne Howley
Suchadar White
Brandon Connolly
Michael Mac an Ríogh
Johnathon Whelan
Liam O'Sullivan
Kanjana Sriwang
Tanin Sriwang
Otto Liffands
Asia Kowalczyk

Tierneevin NS

Edel Killeen
Shane Moran
Grace Kelly
Ross Carr
Evan Honan
Darra Carr
Maeghan Redpath
Anna Clancy
Aisling Rock
Tom O'Neill
Clíodhna Harney
Seán Crehan
Aiden Helebert
Darragh Monahan
Niall O'Donnell
Áine Flaherty
David Quinn
Jack Grealish
Clem O'Connell

Doolin NS

Sinead McCormack
Louise Stringer
David Nagle
Tomás Cullinane
Riona Burke
Kelsey McDonagh
Laura McGann
Ava Flanagan
Thomas Griffin
Rhianna McMahon
Liam St George
Stephen O'Connell
Blathnaid Sheedy
Heather Fitzpatrick
Tristan O'Callaghan
Alan Sweeney
Conor Garrahy
Crebhan Hughes
Barry Fitzgerald
Nessa McCormack
Austin Moloney
Deirdre O'Connell

Ballyvaughan NS

Niamh Brennan
Brian Irwin
Molly McDonnell
Maria Beuselinck
Eoin O'loghlen
Leanna McGann
Megan Mullins
Hannah McDonnell
Iseult Leahy
Rowan Johnson
Maree Schuenemann
Scion Flanagan
Conor Casserly
Aine Fahy
Michael Anik
Stephen Nilan
Claire Costello
Grainne Long
Amy Costello
Eimear O'loghlen
Gar Connoles
Rachel Mellett
Jonah Culligan

Current Research

Maria Long & Dr. Daniel Kelly

PhD Candidate & Research Fellow, Trinity College Dublin

Land-use change: The effects of the cessation of grazing and the spread of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) on biodiversity

The Burren is famous for its flora and fauna, as well as its cultural heritage, both past and present. From a natural history point of view, the limestone pavements and the species-rich grasslands are among the most famous aspects. But not to be ignored are the very notable hazel woods and well-developed areas of scrub. Mature hazel woodlands in the Burren are few and far between. Their beauty and biodiversity have been largely overlooked, even by biologists. Areas of long-established hazel scrub are also very important habitats in their own right, often supporting luxuriant and scientifically significant mosses and lichens, as well as a number of rare or scarce plants. They are important repositories of biodiversity; as well as harbouring many plant species, they provide much-needed cover and protection to many of the Burren mammals, birds and invertebrates.

These woods and areas of scrub are set in a changing landscape. Much of the grassland and pavement that surrounded them in the past is now being taken over by young, secondary hazel scrub. This newer scrub may interfere with farming by blocking access trackways and taking over valuable farmland. The popular perception is that nearly all the biodiversity and the rare and special species of the Burren are confined to open habitats such as grasslands and pavement, and that the spread of scrub represents a major threat to these. Is this the case? And if so, how quickly will it happen? What species might disappear first? And are there any species which may benefit from the changes?

To answer these questions, the project aims to see how biodiversity is affected when grazers (cattle, and to a lesser extent, goats) are removed from an area. In other words, if farmers stopped farming in the Burren, how would biodiversity fare? The aspects of biodiversity that are being focused on in this project are higher plants and snails, but preliminary information has also been collected on mosses, liverworts, lichens and ants.



Helicella itala. Photo by Maria Long.

Twelve sites were chosen across north Clare and south Galway, including grasslands, scrub and woodlands. At each site a fence was erected to keep out the large grazers. Plants and snails have been closely monitored over the past 3 years. Changes were recorded in detail, and compared with a nearby 'control' (grazed as normal). It should be noted that the current project is a 3-year one, but the majority of the fences will stay standing into the future, providing a source of information on landscape change which will be very valuable indeed.

So what has been found so far? Preliminary findings on the part of the plants at least, indicate that no grazing is bad news for grassland biodiversity. Species such as eyebright (*Euphrasia* spp) and yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) disappear very quickly once grazing ceases. Grasses quickly come to dominate, at the expense of flowers and sedges. The story in the woodland and scrub habitats is a bit more complex, and will take a little longer to decode. And as for the snails.... Well, work is still underway, so watch this space!

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Dr. Marion Dowd

Lecturer in Prehistoric Archaeology, Institute of Technology, Sligo

Excavation of Glencurran Cave

Glencurran Cave is located in Tullycommon. Although current research indicates that the cave reaches a total length of 700m, evidence shows that only the outermost 65m of cave passage is of archaeological interest. Excavations were undertaken at the site over ten weeks in 2004, 2005, 2008 and 2009. These excavations led to the recovery of almost 40,000 animal bones and bone fragments, over 500 artefacts and 100 human bones.



Excavation at Glencurran Cave. Photo by Dr Marion Dowd.

It is thought that the cave was used during two main periods. 1) Disarticulated unburnt remains of at least two adult individuals radiocarbon dated to the Bronze Age [approximately 3,500BC] were recovered at the base of a drystone built cairn located 15m from the cave entrance. The bones were associated with amber beads, perforated cowrie and periwinkle shells, a stone chisel axe, a net sinker and bones of cattle, sheep and pig. The disturbed unburnt remains of two 2-4 year old children radiocarbon dated to the Bronze Age were encountered 45m from the cave entrance. Surrounding the child were a series of discrete deposits including two Late Bronze Age pottery vessels; bones of four unburnt hares; cremated remains of neonatal piglets, lambs and calves; a cache of 85 perforated cowrie and periwinkle shells; human clavicles representing at least four individuals; amber beads; an organic deposit possibly representing a deliberate deposit of rushes. These remains may represent a series of votive deposits or they may indicate an exceptionally rich (and rare) series of grave goods accompanying the children's burials.

2) Deposits immediately inside and outside the cave entrance indicate that this part of the cave was also occupied during the Early Medieval [circa 7-10th century AD] period. A low wall or plinth across the cave entrance may have been constructed at this time and a hearth outside the cave is contemporaneous. Artefacts indicative of occupation include a ringed pin, spindle whorl, iron sickle and iron knife. Animal bones indicated butchery outside the entrance and meat consumption inside. A necklace of 69 glass beads of Viking type recovered from the area of the Late Bronze Age deposits may be related to occupation of the exterior of the cave.

The archaeological material recovered from Glencurran Cave is unparalleled in Ireland or Britain and it is clearly an important site with regard to our understanding of Middle and Late Bronze Age burial and ritual practices.

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Away we walked...

Under a Local Heritage Grant Award from the Heritage Council, the Burrenbeo Trust hosts monthly walks and talks for the general public. All events are themed - from fossils to butterflies, art to historical artefacts, birds to lichens, farming to flowers - the list goes on. Since February, these events have been very well attended by both Trust members and non-members with over 500 people participating thus far. The monthly outings are a fun way to learn about the Burren, to access special places (many of the walks are co-hosted by Burren farmers) and a great opportunity for Burren enthusiasts to socialise and learn. The Burrenbeo Trust is grateful to the speakers for their time and enthusiasm in sharing their knowledge. Please join us sometime - walks are usually on the first Sunday of the month at 2pm, talks are usually on the third Thursday at 8.30pm.

**For more information on these walks and talks, please check local press,
look up our events page on www.burrenbeo.com or contact us at
trust@burrenbeo.com or on 091 638096.**

Extracts from the first Burrenbeo monthly walk

by walk leader, Stephen Ward

Our walk takes us along an old road, between limestone walls, built to traverse the rough terrain, but only ever surfaced with crushed limestone - never with tar - in which the vegetation seeks to reassert itself - a 'green road'. A clump of mature ash trees indicate that without the impact of man over the millenia we would be surrounded by woodland; the familiar distant views would be hidden from us. And yet the whole scene has a natural look of subdued yellows, browns and greys associated with hazel, grassland and bare rock.

At a junction the farm-track deviates from the green road. The hazel bushes form a tunnel giving us welcome shelter. Outside, the catkins are tight closed but here they hang loose - the proverbial 'lambs' tails - confirming that despite the cold wind, spring is on schedule. Today, the first day of February, is St Brigid's Day, and the farmer - Harry Jeuken - leads us to where the

water bubbles out from a cliff amidst the hazel - St Brigid's well. En route, we pass through a 5-barred gate crafted from hazel, not only functional, but a work of art adorned today by a St Brigid's cross of fresh rushes. Cups hang on a stake for the convenience of the thirsty traveller or those in search of a cure. If drunk daily for two weeks, straight from the mountain, it is said to be a cure for diabetes.


From there, we go to a ring-fort - an ancient circle of stones completely hidden from the track below. Within its centre grow several ancient whitethorns; their twisted and gnarled form suggests they once grew in the open, but now the fort forms a clearing in the woods and the trees are clothed in mosses and ferns. These are 'fairy trees' - traditionally left out of respect for nature - fell them at your peril!



Burrenbeo programme of *walks and Talks* 2009

Month	Who	What event	When
2nd August	Patrick McCormack	Walk - Legends and myths of Slievenaglasha	2pm
27th August	Marion Dowd	Talk - Excavation of Glencurran Cave	8.30pm
6th September	Stephen Ward & Michael Keane	Walk - Plants of Muckanagh Lough	11am
17th September	Jesmond Harding	Talk - Burren butterflies and their habitats	8.30pm
4th October	David Drew	Walk - Cave geology	2pm
15th October	Deirdre O'Mahony	Talk - An artist in the Burren	8.30pm
1st November	James Moran	Walk - Exploring turloughs	2pm
19th November	Carsten Krieger	Talk - Photographing the Burren	8.30pm
6th December	Tony Kirby	Walk - Folklore in the Burren	2pm
17th December	Michelle Comber	Talk - Ringforts and their people	8.30pm

The Trust also runs guided *Introduction to the Burren* walks every Wednesday at 3.30pm throughout the summer - the last one is on the 26th August. Meet at the Burrenbeo Trust Information Centre, Main Street, Kinvara. Everybody is welcome. These walks are free to Trust members with a €5 minimum donation for non-members.



New research from The Burrenbeo Trust

The voice on the ground

A survey of Burren farm families

This research has found that the Burren farming community is steeped in the heritage of the area, broadly appreciative of the landscape, keen to continue farming and is open to working with others to ensure the sustainable management of the Burren as a unique landscape.

Foreword

By any standards, the Burren is a very special place for many people. It is a home place for generations of Burren residents, a national treasure of inestimable value for the people of Ireland, and a landscape of international importance for all who value mankind's rich heritage. At a time when we often lament the loss of heritage and tradition from our countryside, the value of the Burren landscape as a rich repository of natural and cultural heritage is priceless.

The Burrenbeo Trust is a charity launched in 2008 as an independent advocate for a more inclusive and integrated approach to the management of the Burren. One of its core objectives is to engage farming families and local communities in the decision-making processes affecting the Burren. This objective derives from our conviction that any future management plan for the Burren must be built on real and meaningful local input, enabling the people of the Burren to play a greater role in defining, participating in, and benefiting from the sustainable future development of their landscape. It also addresses one of the most common complaints from Burren farm families – that they rarely have any real say in how their region is being managed.

To realise this critical objective of engaging farm families, the Burrenbeo Trust, in conjunction with the Burren IFA and with the support of the Heritage Council, commissioned a detailed study on the perspectives of these families on the future of the Burren and their role in it. A summary of the results of this survey – which involved interviews with over 240 people from 111 different households across the Burren, followed by workshops – is presented here.

The findings of the survey are very positive and a cause for great optimism. Burren farmers are proud to live and work in the Burren, are appreciative of the area's unique attributes and are anxious and enthusiastic about being involved in shaping the future of this place, their home. They are open to exploring new ideas, such as farm-based tourism and farming for

conservation. They want their voices to be heard more clearly and their skills and expertise to be more fully recognised in the development and implementation of any future plans or 'designations' for the region.

This survey is very timely as we are now approaching a defining moment for the Burren. Decisions made consciously, or by default, will determine whether this special resource is managed holistically for the benefit of all, or whether it is allowed to be squandered. We believe that this farm family-based questionnaire is an important first step in this process. The results confirm that, with appropriate enabling institutional structures, we have a great opportunity to align local opinion with that of the main management agencies, addressing the costly failings of the past and shaping a bright new future for the Burren. The findings of the survey compel us to act now to ensure that this happens and that properly resourced representative structures and support systems are put in place as a matter of urgency.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this very important piece of work: Dr. Kathy Walsh who co-ordinated the survey and wrote up the findings; Hugo Deasy, Brigid Barry, Catherine Seale and Declan Peelo who carried out the interviews; Michael Davoren, Martin MacMahon, Jim Nagle, Mattie Shannon, Shane Casey, Michael O'Donoghue and John Keating who helped identify farm families willing to participate in the survey. We would like to thank the Burren IFA for their continued help and to express our sincere gratitude to the Heritage Council for their financial assistance in enabling us to undertake this work.

Finally, and most importantly, we would like to thank all of the farm families who participated in the survey and the workshops. The Burrenbeo Trust will strive to ensure that your voice is heard, that your concerns are addressed, and that your stated aspiration to continue your long-standing role as custodians of the Burren is realised.

Dr. Brendan Dunford
On Behalf of the Burrenbeo Trust





Introduction

The Burrenbeo Trust Limited (an independent, registered charity established to create a greater appreciation of the Burren as a living landscape) and the Burren IFA (the local branch of the national Irish Farmers Association established to represent the unique interests of Burren farmers at a national level) believe that farmers are central to the conservation and sustainable management of the Burren given that they own and manage the majority of land.

Both organisations are very clear that farmers have a critical role to play in the conservation of the Burren. In practice however, many of the decisions in relation to the Burren have been taken at a distance from the area and its farmers. The Burrenbeo Trust and the Burren IFA believed it was time to actively seek out the voices of the farming community and went on to collectively develop the research objectives.

The aim of the research, which was funded by the Heritage Council, was to explore Burren farm families' views on: the role of farming in the Burren; the Burren in general and the level of interest that exists among the families in becoming more actively involved in shaping the future of the Burren.

The key objectives of the research were:

- To identify the vision farm families have for the Burren;
- To explore farm families' views on the role of farming in the Burren;
- To assess the level of interest among Burren farm families in becoming more actively involved in shaping the future of the area.

The Research Methodology

The research had two distinct parts. The first part was the survey of a sample of farm households from across the Burren. The survey was undertaken through the completion of a questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered by an interviewer, in the home of the farm family. The questions included in the questionnaire were identified and agreed by the researcher and members of the Burrenbeo Trust, the Burren IFA and other people involved in farming and the Burren.

The questionnaire was divided into five parts and included open and closed questions with both qualitative and quantitative answers. A total of four survey administrators were recruited and trained. The survey area was divided into four areas, the West, Central, East and Galway Burren. A number of key local farmers were identified in each area and these individuals assisted the survey administrators to identify an initial batch of potentially suitable survey respondents. The questionnaire was piloted with two different farm household types to assess its comprehensiveness and suitability for use with different household types. The survey was finalised following the experience of the piloting.

Survey respondents were selected from across the area, across the spread of ages, across the spread of household types (e.g.

single person households, two person households, families with young children, families with older children, etc), across households where farming is a full time occupation and households where farming is part-time, across the spread of farm sizes, and included IFA members and supporters as well as non IFA Members and non-supporters (26 % of the survey respondents were not members of the IFA).

The second part of the research took the form of consultation meetings around the Burren to discuss the findings emerging from the research. The meetings were held in the evening in three locations (Lisdoonvarna, Carran and Tubber) in late April 2009. The purpose of the meetings was to give those who participated in the research and others an opportunity to shape and prioritise the issues emerging from the survey.

The farm families who participated in the research were invited to attend, as indeed were any other farmers in the area. A total of 85 individuals attended the consultations. These consultations all followed a similar format with a brief introduction and welcome, a presentation on the key findings emerging from the research and a discussion of these findings in smaller groups, with feedback to the larger group at the end of the evening. The participants at the evening consultations endorsed the findings emerging from the survey, while also adding weight and detailed examples of the issues in practice.

The Key Conclusions

The survey provides a broad representative view of the opinions and experiences of what the Burrenbeo Trust estimate to be '1 in 6 farm families' across the Clare/Galway Burren. It is interesting to note that this survey was the first time the views of farmers in the Galway Burren had been actively sought on Burren-related issues.

Burren farm families are long term residents who appreciate the Burren

The farm families surveyed had a long history of farming in the Burren, and three-quarters had been farming in the area for more than 100 years, while more than a third had been farming for more than 200 years. The farm families were generally very positive in their descriptions of the Burren and their role as farmers in it, with a majority (72%) intending to continue farming in the area into the future.

There have been significant recent changes in farming practices in the Burren

Among the most significant changes that have taken place in farming in the Burren have been the changes in farming enterprises with significant numbers of farmers having gone into suckler beef farming, and substantial numbers having got out of dairy and sheep. The building of slatted sheds and the housing of animals over winter has also proved to be a significant change for the farmers, and indeed for the wider landscape as upland areas

that used to be grazed in the winter are now underused and are slowly being taken over by scrub.

The key drivers of change at farm level

The key driver of change in farming practices has been the need to reduce the labour requirements and increase 'convenience'. This has been driven by an aging farming population and a growing level of part-time farming among the farming community. The availability of grant funding for the construction of slatted sheds and the advice that this is the way forward for farming can also be seen to have been strong incentives for farmers to build sheds. Changes at farm level can also be seen to be driven by concerns in relation to sustaining adequate income levels and increasingly a concern about the need to reduce the amount of costly external inputs required.

Key farming concerns

Many farm families' concerns focused on the restrictions imposed on them by an SAC designation, by national regulations (in relation to the spreading of slurry under the Nitrates directive and hedge cutting under Section 46 of the Wildlife Act) or by restrictions imposed as part of their participation in the REPS Programme. Farm families were also very concerned about the speed and extent of scrub infestation in the area. Profitability was another key concern for some farm families, who questioned their ability to remain farming if profitability did not improve. Other concerns related to the difficulties associated with getting planning permission for family members to build homes on the farm, linked to the need to put in place family supports for aging family members. The destruction of habitat and the need for enhanced levels of conservation of the flora, fauna, stone walls



and the management of the goat population were also identified as concerns for farm as indeed were pollution from slurry, the role of tourism and issues related to public access.

Local communities under pressure

Across the Burren there are a number of smaller rural communities feeling the pressure of an aging population and falling school sizes. In one or two communities the future of the local national school is in question. The post offices in many of these areas have closed with services now provided in larger towns. Individuals too have become increasingly socially isolated with the demise of the rural pub and the social fabric of communities. In some locations it is difficult to get broadband and mobile signals. The farming community's contact with the wider local community has also been reduced as many people now commute significant distances for work. It was also noted that there is less mixing of locals and new residents given that the opportunities for meeting have been reduced with the closure of local shops and businesses. Social isolation was highlighted as an issue within the farming community.

The role of tourism in the Burren (from a farming perspective)

There would appear to be very limited connections between farming and tourism. Only a small number of farm families identified tourism either of concern or of interest to them. This is probably not surprising since only nine (8%) of the families surveyed had tourism-based businesses on their farm, with a further 11 household members employed off the farm in the tourism and hospitality sector. Where tourism was raised as an issue, there were some very diverse views. There was a strong view that issues threatening farm futures and the Burren landscape need to be addressed, before the Burren is further promoted as a tourism destination. Some farm families had no interest in tourism given that they and their farm were located in an area that tourists generally did not visit. Others simply had no interest in tourism although some expressed concerns about public access. Where individual families (16) were actively interested in tourism there was a view that tourism in the Burren tended to be focused on some key sites and locations (e.g. the Aillwee caves and the Cliffs of Moher). Most respondents were keen that methods and products should be developed to ensure the benefits of tourism would be spread across the wider community, while some clearly saw potential for family members to train and act as local guides for visitors to the area and indeed for farm families to work together to develop initiatives that would attract visitors to the farm as an additional source of income.

Public access (from a farming perspective)

The issue of public access which was frequently linked to tourism was raised by farm families across the Burren. It was an emotive issue with two very different sets of responses. One response was that if the issue of liability was sorted and access was controlled and managed to ensure the privacy of the farm family and the safety of livestock and crops, then there would be no problem with public access. A minority view linked to this was that access should be provided only in limited areas. The second response was scepticism about whether the issue of liability could be sorted and a view that public access and farming were generally not compatible.

The need to enhance levels of awareness of the Burren

The need for enhanced marketing of the Burren, locally, nationally and internationally was identified by a cross section of farm families who believed that marketing was needed to raise awareness of the uniqueness of the Burren as a landscape and as a habitat. The example of the Burren Beef & Lamb Producers Group was cited several times as an example of how the Burren could be used as a unique brand and quality symbol. It was suggested that further such initiatives could be developed. There was also a view that many local people had limited levels of awareness of the Burren and the role of farmers in conserving the Burren, and that some work could perhaps be done with farmers and the local schools to ensure that young people growing up in the area were aware of the complexities and interdependencies associated with the landscape around them.

The role of farming in the Burren

The farm families surveyed believed that farming is central to the conservation of the unique landscape of the Burren. They saw farming and farmers as having a key role in controlling scrub and conserving the plant life of the Burren. They identified themselves as being knowledgeable about the wildlife and cultural history of the area but identified that they would like to learn more about not only the wildlife and cultural heritage of the area but also the archaeology, geology and plant life. Family and friends were identified as the most important source of knowledge about the Burren suggesting that there is a repository of local knowledge within the farming community in Burren that may have the potential to be shared with others.

The role and potential of designations

There was no clear consensus about the role and value of designations in the Burren. Very few people were clear about what might be involved in either the possible UNESCO World Heritage Site designation or indeed the UNESCO Geopark designation and as such were not able to give a clear response to

either designation. Most people were however open, and in many cases keen, to learn more about what would be involved in such designations and what impacts they might have on their farming practices, thus enabling them to have a clearer position on the designations.

Representing the views of farming, farmers and farm families

Ninety-six percent of the farmers believed that the voices of farmers needed to be better heard. Mechanisms identified that could be used to better represent the views of farmers were found to include one-to-one and group consultations linked to participation in decision-making structures. Particular groups that were identified as having a role in representing the views of farmers included the Burren LIFE programme, the Burrenbeo Trust and the IFA locally and nationally. Seventy-three percent of survey respondents agreed with the statement that *"There is an absence of a long-term dedicated centre where farmers can go to get information and advice about the Burren"*. The Burren LIFE programme was seen by some to fill this role but its future remains uncertain as its funding is currently due to run out in 2009.*

An organisation to represent Burren farm families?

The IFA, the Burren IFA, Teagasc, the Burren LIFE programme and the Burrenbeo Trust were all identified as having potential to represent the views of Burren farm families. In reality, the views of farm families could be represented by a number of these groups in different ways, in different contexts. There is, it must be noted, some confusion between the Burren LIFE programme and the Burrenbeo Trust, probably because an individual who works for one organisation is very closely associated with the other. It is also the case that the Burren IFA currently only operates in the Clare Burren, although there may be potential for them to extend their remit and engage with the IFA parish structure in the Galway Burren, thus strengthening their ability to represent the views of farmers across the Burren.



A Possible Agenda

The current economic downturn poses unique challenges for farming, for the west and indeed for the communities and individuals who live and work in the Burren. Burren farmers also need to consider the implications and respond to the wind-down of the Burren LIFE Programme* and the proposals emerging to designate the Burren as both a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a UNESCO Geopark. This survey is therefore very timely in that addressing these challenges will undoubtedly require the adoption of new ways of working and new approaches to the management of scarcer resources.

This research has found that the Burren farming community is steeped in the heritage of the area, broadly appreciative of the landscape, keen to continue farming and is open to working with others to ensure the sustainable management of the Burren as a unique landscape.

This provides a very positive context both for the farming community to develop their role in the Burren and for other organisations working in the Burren to seek out and engage with the farming community. From this survey we can see that what is needed to enable this work to be progressed would include the following:

1. There is a need for ongoing and effective representation of the interests of Farmers and the Farming Community.

The Burrenbeo Trust, the Burren LIFE programme, the Burren IFA and Teagasc all have roles to play in the ongoing collection and representation of the views of farmers in the Burren. These groups also need to develop meaningful feedback mechanisms to ensure that the farming community is up-to-date with progress.

2. There is a need for ongoing pro-active involvement of the farming community in consultations and decision-making about the Burren.

Burren farmers as the managers and owners of the majority of the land need to be consulted and centrally involved in decision-making about the area.

3. There is a need for the development of a shared vision and longer-term management plan for the wider Burren, with farming as a central element of the plan and farmers involved in the development and management of the plan.

The Burren is a complex landscape with enormous potential that requires a multi-dimensional management approach. There is a need for all the various interest groups to work together to develop a shared vision and plan for the sustainable management of the area in the longer term. In this context consideration should be given to the establishment of a wider Burren Management Structure/Authority that would oversee the overall development and management of such a plan. To be effective this structure would need a long-term commitment with associated resources and staffing.

4. The farming community needs to, and is keen to, work with other groups and local communities to ensure the long-term management of the Burren (ideally as part of the structure identified above).

5. The management of the Burren needs to be led by a locally-based organisation that farm families trust.

Farm families work best with individuals that they know and trust. As such it is important that organisations working with, or indeed intending to engage with, the farming community, identify one or two key individuals who will work with, and establish relationships of trust over time with, the farmers. The management of the Burren needs a local structure (which involves active representation from the farming community) led by an organisation that farm families and others involved in the management of the wider local area trust.

6. There is a need for more information and consultation with the farming community in relation to the possible UNESCO World Heritage Site and Geopark Designations and any other relevant options.

Farmers and farm households are keen to learn more about these proposed designations and how they might impact on their farming in real terms. Ideally farmers would like to learn about the designations from other farmers who are living and farming within these types of designations.

7. There is a need for a regular and accessible forum where practical questions in relation to landscape management can be discussed and information shared.

Key issues to be addressed for the farming community include:

- Scrub
- Control of goat population
- Securing some local flexibility in relation to the application of national restrictions

8. The Burren LIFE Programme needs to be extended and open for participation to all farmers within the Burren.*

9. There is a need for, and an interest in, the provision of further information and knowledge about different aspects of the Burren to farm families and to the wider local community particularly through the provision of walks and talks, and work within the local schools.

10. There is need for the different interest groups working in the Burren to come together to develop a clear 'Burren' identity. This identity could be used to market, promote and raise awareness of the area and the products produced there. The development and marketing of this identity will need to be effectively resourced with skilled personnel.

11. Mechanisms need to be found to spread the benefits and income derived from tourism across the wider community of the Burren and the farming community in particular.



*On July 8th 2009, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food Brendan Smith TD announced that he was proposing the allocation of: €1 million each year for three years to support high environmental value farming, with tourism spin-off, in the Burren, continuing and main-streaming the pilot scheme operated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

by Stephen Ward

- as an outstanding example of landscape;
- for its rich fossil record;
- for its geological features including evidence of glaciations, its limestone pavements and turloughs;
- as a continually settled landscape over 6,000 years;
- for its rich legacy of interaction between cultural and natural heritage.

Current Research

Dr. Ronán Hennessy

Researcher, School of Natural Sciences, National University of Ireland,
Galway

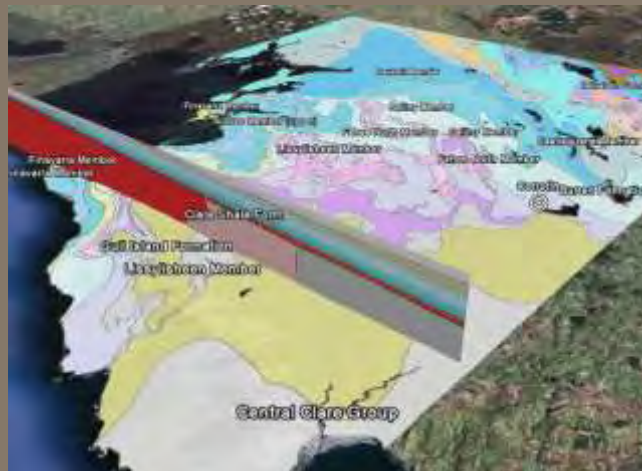
New perspectives of the Burren brought to Google Earth

The development of a suite of Burren-specific 3D maps for Google Earth is being carried out by the Digital Landscapes Research Group at NUI Galway as part of the NEED (Northern Environmental Education Development) project. These maps will give the Burren region a fresh approach to communicating geo-knowledge in schools, visitor centers and the wider community.

Geo-knowledge can be broadly described as an understanding and awareness of the processes and development of the natural environment as well as the symbiotic interactions between humans and their environment. With a better understanding of the natural environment around a local population, they can make more informed decisions on how they use and interact with their natural surroundings. In the Burren, this will ultimately help to create more sustainable opportunities in terms of tourism and businesses that rely on local resources.

Through the communication of geo-knowledge to both school pupils and adults, this project is working towards ensuring that the unique character the Burren is fully appreciated by those living among its environs. A greater local awareness of how the Burren's rocks formed, how its hills were molded, and how the cultural landscape developed will work towards a sensible development strategy of the Burren region in years to come. An improved awareness of our environment has obvious implications concerning our reliance on unsustainable resources, and how environmentally-unconscious planning initiatives will affect those who inherit our local environment.

The NEED project aims to provide a variety of learning modules and resources for schools, visitor centres and the public, and thus improve access to this information on the geology, the environment and natural landscape of the Burren. Google Earth is an ideal learning environment for schools and the wider public. The development of the suite of Burren region specific 3D maps for Google Earth can communicate aspects of environmental awareness and educational tourism in an informative, exciting and visually-stimulating manner. The maps will serve as richly informative and interactive digital visualisations of the natural landscape of the Burren, covering bedrock geology, soil, landcover, hill-shade and history. A geo-referenced photographic tour of selected geo-sites in the Burren will also enable visitors to view its rich diversity of the geology and geomorphology. ronan.hennessy@nulgalloway.ie



Geology map of the Burren viewed in Google Earth showing the names of some bedrock types. The 3D bedrock cross section shows how the Burren's rock layers slope gently to the south, with rocks of the Galway Granite in red underlying the limestones of the northern Burren region.

Book worm



All the books below were kindly reviewed by members of the Burrenbeo Trust. We are grateful for their time taken in doing so.

■ Discovering Irish Butterflies and their Habitats

by Jesmond Harding / Review by Eugenie Regan

There is a fantastic selection of books today on insects of the British Isles by British authors. However, there is always a lack of information on the Irish fauna. Jesmond Harding's book '*Discovering Irish Butterflies and their Habitats*' addresses this gap and is one of the few texts on Irish insects. Addressing an even bigger gap, Jesmond's book has been written for a wide audience and there is something in it for gardeners, professional ecologists, and indeed anybody with an interest in Ireland's butterflies.

This self-published book is the result of twelve years of personal dedication to the study of Irish butterflies. It is divided into three sections. Jesmond is a butterfly conservationist as well as a keen gardener and he combines his knowledge very effectively in the first section by looking at wider conservation issues affecting Irish butterflies and then gives practical information on creating and managing garden habitats for native butterfly species. The second section consists of the species accounts, each of which is furnished with beautiful photographs, detailed descriptions of the animals, their behaviour, foodplants, preferred habitats, and distribution in Ireland. The final section gives practical information on some of the best butterfly sites in Ireland – how to get there, access issues, what species you might expect to see, etc.

Did I like this book? Yes! And all members of my family that have ever expressed ANY interest in butterflies received a copy for Christmas or their birthdays. It is very well priced, informative and very accessible. Any changes I would have made? I would have loved to have seen maps for the distribution of each species and perhaps photos of their caterpillars – material for a second edition perhaps? But overall, it is a great book and a credit to Jesmond's dedication to the subject.

Published by Jesmond Harding. 2008.
Available from Jesmond Harding,
Pagetown, Maynooth, Co. Kildare.
RRP €12 + €2 postage within Ireland.



■ The Orchids of Ireland

by Tom Curtis and Robert Thompson / Review by Eugenie Regan

The National Museums of Northern Ireland are on a roll for producing high quality books on Ireland's natural history and the *Orchids of Ireland* is their latest accomplishment. It is the brainchild of orchid expert Dr. Tom Curtis and natural history photographer extraordinaire Robert Thompson.

The book begins with an introduction to this fascinating family of plants and the authors go through the details of their morphology. Once this has been grasped the reader can progress onto the key to the genera of orchids in Ireland and happily start orchid spotting. This key is followed by detailed species accounts that include a number of clear but beautiful photographs, information on the identification, how to distinguish from similar species (which I found particularly useful and something which is often overlooked by other natural history authors), and their status and distribution in Ireland. At the end of the book, the authors give a list of orchid species, subspecies and varieties found in Ireland, an eight-page account of hybridisation in Ireland, a bibliography, glossary, and index.

The book is aimed at all those interested in the wild orchids found in Ireland and, in my opinion, it has hit the mark. It is attractive, informative, and there is something for everyone whether professional or amateur.

Personally, I like the quality of the book (the hard cover, glossy pages, etc.), the tackling of hybrids separately (as this has always confused me), and the detailed species accounts. I'm being fussy by saying that I would have liked more detailed maps of their distribution – but that's only a reflection of my personal addiction to maps. All I can say is go out, buy it, and enjoy!

Published by the National Museums of Northern Ireland. 2009.
Available from all good bookshops.
RRP €22.50.



■ The Wild and Garden Plants of Ireland

by Wendy Walsh and Charles Nelson / Review by Paul Murphy

Once again artist Wendy Walsh has collaborated with taxonomist Charles Nelson to produce a timeless gem combining art with botany and horticultural history. *The Wild and Garden Plants of Ireland* presents the origins of many of the Irish cultivars and varieties of garden plant, along with the numerous native botanical specialities and rarities that have been cultivated by keen gardeners over the years. A number of species of exotic origin are also dealt with that were introduced to cultivation by early Irish plant collectors or those with strong Irish connections. In total over one hundred plants, which have been beautifully illustrated with breath-taking accuracy and detail, are presented as full size plates.

While the text may be defined as brief, the content is informative and sufficient to place the plant and its origins into its historical perspective, with occasional detail on specific growing requirements for more difficult species. For the keen gardener or plantsman, this window into the origins of so many familiar plants will be greatly appreciated. While this book will appeal strongly to serious gardeners and plantsmen, it will also be of great attraction to a far greater audience on the merits of its art work alone. And for many people who may have but a mild interest in either subject, it may be the seed that grows into a passion for flowers or an appreciation of art.



Published by Thames & Hudson. 2009.
Available from all good bookshops. RRP €45.

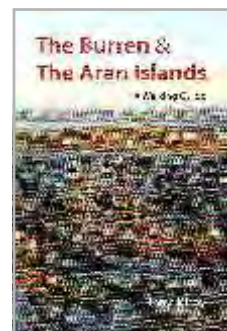
■ The Burren & The Aran Islands – A Walking Guide

by Tony Kirby / Review by Richard Morrison

This book is a must for anyone who is interested in, or cares about, the Burren. Whether you are a lifelong resident, a new-comer, a regular or occasional visitor you should have a copy. The book details 15 individual walking routes in the Burren and Aran Islands which are graded as strenuous, moderate or casual and range from 1½ to 6½ hours with at least one accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs. Each one is preceded by a handy quick-reference summary which gives distances and estimated walking times along with a colour map.

As a newcomer to the Burren, I had studied both the Ordnance Survey Ireland and the Folding Landscape maps but must admit that I was struggling to identify starting points and routes for achievable day walks. However this new guide provides everything that I expect from a walking guide and so much more. I have completed a number of the walks so far and found the guide very practical and easy to use. It is in a handy format and full of useful information about the geology, archaeology, flora and fauna of the Burren - just like having a personal guide accompanying you as you walk, high-lighting interesting features along the way. The time estimates are realistic and I think the gradings are fair.

The book overflows with Tony's passion for the area and is enhanced by a series of captivating line drawings by Carles Casasin and a selection of wonderful photographs.



Published by Collins Press. 2009.
Available from all good bookshops. RRP €14.95.

■ Ireland's Wild Orchids: a field guide

By Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex / Review by Stephen Ward

The purpose of this book is to assist with identifying orchids and this it does magnificently.

The book is distinguished by Susan Sex's world-class illustrations. Each species is presented in portrait both as a spike, capturing its jizz, and as an individual flower magnified to show its subtlety of beauty and form with the colours vividly captured. The latter enable the lesser and greater butterfly orchids, for example, to be told apart in the field.

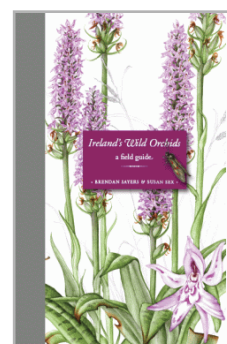
Brendan Sayers provides a succinct text commencing with a quick tour of some of his favourite sites. The structure of an orchid flower is explained and the many different forms of spur displayed within Irish orchids are illustrated. Some orchids are distinctive and cannot be confused with anything else but many, especially amongst the marsh and spotted-orchids, are 'definitely challenging' and can present an 'identity crisis, confounding amateur and expert alike'. But on such occasions, a hybrid swarm is 'equisite on a summer's day'.

Those species which are protected in both the Republic and Northern Ireland are listed under 'conservation'. However, that protection in law is in itself insufficient is evident in the account of

narrow-leaved helleborine / cuaichín caol / *Cephalanthera longifolia* where the book tells us that 'Several of its predominantly lakeside sites are subject to considerable human activity which has definitely caused a reduction in numbers of this exquisite flower.' Greater awareness leads to greater care and informed decision-making. This book is a valuable addition to the increasing number of Irish guides devoted to this endlessly fascinating group of plants.

This truly is a field guide, with space for your own notes, ring-bound for ease of opening, water-proof, complete with magnifier and ruler. Would I buy it? I did, instantly – on impulse.

Published by Brendan Sayers and Susan Sex. 2008.
Available from www.orchidireland.ie
RRP €35 plus €5 p&p.



All of these books are available for sale in

cafebeo

Main Street, Kinvara, County Galway.

Quiz & Competition

Quick Quiz

Identify the type of archaeological monument



Quick Quiz Flowers of the Burren. Fill in the gaps.

There is a Burren flower which looks and feels like a cat's paw. It is called Mountain _____

The striking blue flower with a white centre, often used as a symbol for the Burren, is called the _____

The lovely purple-coloured Burren flower named after a bird's beak is called the _____

The Burren is very well-known for one particular type of plant of which there are many examples. Some of these plants have names like bee, fly and butterfly. These plants are called _____

Wall rue, hart's tongue, bracken and maidenhair are all types of _____ which grow in the Burren.

What is the name of the shrub found all over the Burren, particularly on areas where grazing is low? _____

The small pink flower from the geranium family, also known as Stinking Bobby because of its smell, is called _____

Answers to Quick Quizzes on page 27.

Competition_____

Send in a drawing, photograph or short story (word limit 1000 words) that captures your favorite aspect of the Burren.

The winner gets a beautiful mounted photograph of the Burren and will have his/her entry published in the next edition of Burren Insight. There will also be three runner-up prizes. Deadline 31st October, 2009. This is open to both adults and children. Digital or hardcopy entries welcome. Please send your name, email, address, age (if of school-going age) and entry to Burrenbeo Trust, Main Street, Kinvara, County Galway or email to trust@burrenbeo.com

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The Burren Connect Project

is working on environmental protection and sustainable visitor management in the Burren region of County Clare.

Linking environment, community and tourism to conserve the Burren

We work with local stakeholders and community groups, particularly those interested in the sustainable development of tourism.

Our focus is in Ecotourism, Information, Training, Traffic Management, Conservation, Education, Research, Development of Trails and Geopark Development.

For more information please check out our website
www.burrenconnect.ie

We are happy to support Burrenbeo Trust through funding and collaboration on the Ecobeo programme and media such as the web site, the Interactive Learning Zone and the Burren Information CD Rom.



NORTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL
EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

NEED (Northern Environmental Education Development) is a trans-national co-operation project between Finland, Iceland, Norway and Ireland and is part of the Northern Periphery Programme 2007-2013.

The Burren Connect Project is co-operating with other organisations in these countries to develop trans-national **study modules** and **educational materials on geology** that can be used for **environmental education** and **educational tourism** in areas of high nature value. The aim of the project is to increase environmental awareness and skills in communicating geology in schools, visitor centres and nature based tourism businesses, thereby helping to conserve natural environments and cultural heritage and to create more jobs and sustainable economic opportunities for local people.

Assisting Burren Connect on this project are several Burren schools, the Burrenbeo Trust, the Burren Centre, Kilfenora, the Burren Outdoor Education Centre, the Burren National Park, the Cliffs of Moher Centre, the Farm Tours Co-Op, The Dept. Earth & Ocean Sciences, NUIG, and the Geological Survey of Ireland.

For more information please visit www.burrenconnect.ie or the project dedicated website www.joensuu.fi/need




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 Gift Shop • Light refreshments • Online Tourist Information Point
 Carron, County Clare, Tel: 065-708 9944, SatNav: 53.0211, -9.0585
 info@michaeltcusack.ie www.michaeltcusack.ie

   **Funding Partner:**
 An tOireachtas



cafebëo


Main Street, Kinvara,

Opening times:
 Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm
 Sunday 11am-6pm

garden terrace upstairs

tea, coffee, fresh sandwiches
 homemade cakes, cookies
 wi-fi

Discover the unique magic of the Burren Region in...



THE BURREN CENTRE

'A Walk Through Time'

at the Burren Centre.

The visitor centre in the historic village of Kilfenora boasts a fantastic exhibition, audio visual film, theatre, local craft show and tea room.



Explore the flora, fauna, archaeology and natural history of the Burren in the Burren Centre.
Services: Tourist Information Point,
Free parking, Beside Kilfenora High
Crosses, all Burren reference Maps & Guides
available in craft shop.

Opening Times: Mid March to May 10am to 5pm;
 June, July & August 9.30am to 5.30 pm; September-October 10am to 5pm;
 Last Admission 30 min before closing

BURREN CENTRE, KILFENORA, CO. CLARE
Telephone: 065 7088030 Fax: 065 7088102
E-mail: info@theburrencentre.ie Website: www.theburrencentre.ie

burrenbëotrust

open your eyes to the living burren

*The Burrenbeo Trust Information Centre,
 Main Street, Kinvara, County Galway
 is open Tuesday-Saturday 10am-5pm
 Sunday 11am-6pm*

*For information & leaflets on the Burren,
 the environment & what to do in the area.
 Maps, cds & books of the Burren
 are available to buy.*



FARMING FOR CONSERVATION IN THE BURREN

BurrenLIFE - Farming for Conservation in the Burren

The BurrenLIFE Project (BLP) was established in 2004 in recognition of the importance of farming in protecting a variety of habitats, including limestone pavements and orchid-rich grasslands which are considered of European importance. The project derives its name from two sources; the Burren region and the European Commission LIFE Nature fund, from which the BLP receives 75% of its overall funding of €2.2 million. The remainder of the funding comes from the BLP partners - National Parks and Wildlife Services, Teagasc and the Burren Irish Farmers Association. The project team consists of Dr. Brendan Dunford, Dr. Sharon Parr, Mr. Ruairí Ó Conchúir and Dr. James Moran (Teagasc) and is based in Carron village.



Traditional cattle grazing on Burren winterage areas



Supplementary feeding with BurrenLIFE feed on winterages

Core Objective

The core objective of the BLP is to develop a model for the sustainable agriculture management through a range of practical farming measures. It is the first major farming for conservation project in Ireland and works to bring together farmers, scientists, conservationists and others to develop farming systems and supports to protect the Burren. The initial phase of the five-year pilot (September 2004 to August 2009) is coming to an end and it is now hoped the work will be extended across the wider Burren.*

Work Carried Out

The pioneering work of the BLP provides a model of how internationally important habitats can be managed by local farmers through the adaptation of simple, practical farming measures. These include new feeding and grazing systems, removal of scrub from flower-rich grassland, restoration of internal walls, improved water supplies and enhanced access. This has been accompanied by detailed ecological, agricultural and socio-economic research, monitoring and analysis to create a better understanding of the relationship between land management and the Burren's natural heritage. This work is an important resource for planners / policy makers in progressing conservation farming in high nature value areas.



Conservation work, including internal dry-stone wall work and scrub removal, is supporting the rural economy through local employment.

The Next 10 Years

It is critical that the benefits of the pilot phase can now be rolled-out across the Burren. The work of the BLP has delivered socio-economic, agricultural and ecological benefits to the Burren and its farmers. This work is sustaining the heritage resource which underpins the Burren's tourism sector and is preserving cultural traditions which have lasted down through the generations. Farming for conservation is vital in providing a range of environmental benefits to wider society - clean air and water, rich biodiversity and safe quality local food such as that of the Burren Beef & Lamb Producers Group.

Contact Information & Details of Upcoming Events

To register on the BLP's mailing list and for further information on the work of BurrenLIFE (including details of the DVD 'Farming the Living Landscape of the Burren') please see www.burrenlife.com or contact Mr. Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Finance & Operations Officer, telephone 353 (0)65 708 9000, e-mail info@burrenlife.com or call or write to BurrenLIFE Project, Old School House, Carron, Ennis, Co. Clare, Ireland. Check the website regularly for details of talks, field-trips and events.

*On July 8th 2009, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Brendan Smith TD announced that he was proposing the allocation of: €1 million each year for three years to support high environmental value farming, with tourism spin-off, in the Burren, continuing and mainstreaming the pilot scheme operated by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The Burren Code

The Burren, with its fascinating natural environment and abundance of cultural remains, is an important yet fragile, resource to be enjoyed, respected and conserved for future generations.

The Burrenbeo Trust encourages locals and visitors to the area to help protect the Burren region by complying with this Code:

Leave the limestone pavement as you find it*
Preserve natural habitats and leave wildflowers undisturbed
Take care not to damage monuments, walls and buildings
Respect landowners, their property and their livestock
Park and camp in designated areas
LEAVE NO TRACE OF YOUR VISIT,
TAKE NOTHING BUT MEMORIES.....

*Limestone Pavement and orchid rich grassland are listed as *Priority Habitats* in the European Habitats Directive, 1992 and are protected by law.



Life in the Burren 200 years ago

Extracts from Dutton, H. (1808). *Statistical Survey of the County of Clare*. Dublin: Royal Agricultural Society.

"This barony is extremely rocky, but produces a herbage fit for sheep of middling size and short clothing wool, of which immense numbers are annually reared, and usually sold at the fair of Ballinasloe in October, and from thence drove into Leinster to be fattened at three years old; a small part feeds store bullocks, and a much smaller fattens them for Limerick or Cork market".

"A few farmers near towns hire their cows to their tenants, whose wives retail the milk; farmers generally have from four to eight; scarcely a cottier without a cow, some two, besides their succession".

Domestic habitations of the labouring classes are described: the cottages are "almost universally built of stone without any cement" and roofed using 'ribberies or stretchers', crossed by small tree branches, and covered with thin tough sods into which a selection of straw, fern, heath, sedge, or even potato stalks are inserted using a "dibble".

In terms of diet "every cottier has a small garden, chiefly occupied with cabbages; some few sow onions, parsnips etc, but the standing and favourite dish is potatoes and milk".

Evidence for the practice of the "winterage" tradition at the time is also cited: it is the "custom of many graziers ... to permit the grass to remain for feeding store cattle or sheep in winter, and frequently for the purpose of turning in cattle until their fattening round is ready, which in backward springs is of great value ... very high prices are often paid ..."

The ecology of the winterages is outlined from an interestingly utilitarian perspective. "The herbage, produced in those of the best quality, is of the most nutritive kind, and plentifully intermixed with yarrow, white clover, trefoil (medicago), birds foot trefoil, and fattens a few black cattle and immense numbers of sheep, the mutton of which is amongst the best in Ireland".

Current Research

Noel Healy

PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, National University of Ireland, Galway

Commodification and Conflict: Investigating Ireland's approach to Protected Area Planning, Governance and Sustainable Tourism Development

Considerable debate exists over whether nature-based tourism can be sustainable and what management regimes can be employed to minimise the negative impacts associated with man's influence on natural ecosystems. Maintaining the balance between attracting tourists to threatened environments while simultaneously conserving, protecting and implementing sustainable tourism practices has proved difficult.

In contemporary Ireland, a critical management issue surrounding the extent, form and scale of visitor facilities has caused some of the most acrimonious environmental disputes in Ireland's history. Recent conflicts over visitor centres have instigated debates on how we protect, promote, and consume Ireland's protected areas. By investigating controversies surrounding the proposed Mullaghmore visitor centre in the Burren National Park, the €31.5million "Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience", along with various other sustainable tourism developments within the Burren region, this research aims to highlight opportunities, fissures, gaps and tensions within the sustainable tourism policy arena in Ireland.

Best management practices for sustainable tourism development, along with recommendations for future tourism policy development, planning and governance, were developed through an analysis of visitors (n = 141) preferred level of tourist facilities and methods of experiencing the Burren's landscape whilst systematically investigating visitor (n=345) use of, and reaction to, the "New Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience". Furthermore, by analysing the reaction of local communities, professional stakeholders and "lay knowledge" this research presents a holistic multilayered analysis of planning, governance, sustainable tourism and visitor experience in Ireland's protected areas.

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Dr. Ingo Feeser & Prof. Michael O'Connell

Doctorate & Professor, Department of Botany, National University of Ireland

Palaeoecological investigations towards reconstruction of Holocene environmental change in the Burren

The aim was to improve our understanding of the development of this exceptional karstic landscape during the post-glacial period, i.e. the last 12,000 years.

The major part of the study (2008) was centred on Loch Gealáin, the lake-turlough in the Burren National Park. Pollen and macrofossil analyses, loss-on-ignition and magnetic susceptibility measurements, were carried out on five cores from the lake-turlough. These enabled detailed reconstruction of vegetation dynamics and farming history in the Mullach Mór area as well as providing new insights into changes in the local hydrological regime and development of the turlough system at Loch Gealáin.

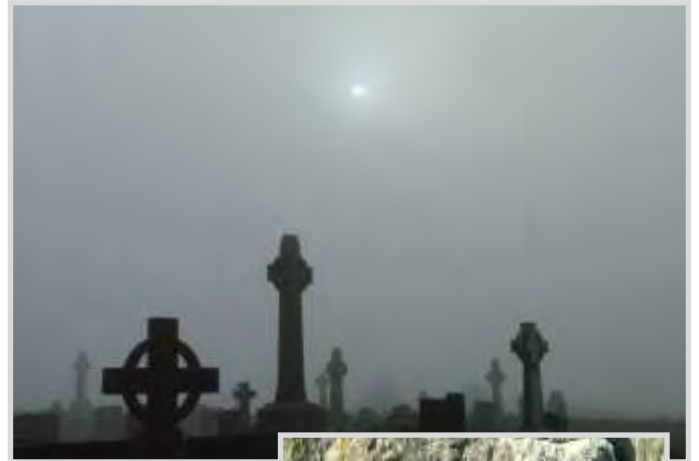
Similar investigations were undertaken on the Cappanawalla and Gortaclare uplands. In the course of the pollen analytical investigations, special attention was paid to coprophilous (dung) fungal spores as indicators of local grazing. The results enabled land use and farming history of the Burren uplands over the last ca. 3,500 years to be reconstructed. New insights were also gained into the history of the *Dryas-Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* (mountain avens- bearberry) heaths which are of exceptional biodiversity and conservation value. Sediments recovered from grykes provided evidence for soil erosion which continued to be important in the Burren uplands until well into medieval times.

ingo.feeser@nuigalway.ie

Answers to quick quizzes on page 21

Quick Quiz 1. 1) Portal tomb 2) Fulacht fia 3) Court tomb 4) Burial cairn
5) Wedge tomb
Quick Quiz 2. 1) Everlasting 2) Spring Gentian 3) Bloody Cranesbill
4) Orchids 5) Ferns 6) Hazel 7) Herb Robert

IMAGE GALLERY



Crosses and carvings of the Burren



Orchids of the Burren

The Burrenbeo Trust

Be a part of it!

The Burrenbeo Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the Burren and its people. We rely on membership fees and the work of our volunteers to carry out our extensive work programme which includes education, information provision, research, advocacy and much more. Everyone has a part to play in the Trust, so please join us!

New Members of the Trust will receive:

- An exclusive members pack containing Burrenbeo CDROM, Burrenbeo cards and Burren factsheets valued at over €25
- Free admission to Burrenbeo's monthly walks and talks programme featuring some of Ireland's leading heritage experts
- Free bi-annual copies of Burren Insight

By becoming a member of the Burrenbeo Trust you will directly support:

- Educational programmes in the Burren such as Ecobeo
- Ongoing research work such as the Burren farm survey
- The maintenance and enhancement of the portal Burrenbeo website
- The delivery of our monthly e-newsletter and bi-annual magazine
- The staffing and overheads of the Burrenbeo Trust office in Kinvara
- Advocating strategies for the sustainable management of the Burren

To join our mailing list, or to register your interest in volunteering to work for the Burrenbeo Trust, please e-mail trust@burrenbeo.com

To become a member of the Burrenbeo Trust, simply complete the membership form on next page.

To send a copy of Burren Insight as a gift to a friend, send us their name and address plus €5 (EU only, €6 elsewhere).

The Burrenbeo Trust – Open your eyes to the living Burren



Trust Membership Application

name

address

phone

e-mail

Membership categories

(please circle one annual membership option)

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<input type="checkbox"/> Couple	€50
<input type="checkbox"/> Family	€60
<input type="checkbox"/> Concession (unwaged/Student/O.A.P)	€30
<input type="checkbox"/> Gift Pack	€50
<input type="checkbox"/> For Life (Founder)	€1,000

Additional donation _____

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form and make your cheque payable to: Burrenbeo Trust Ltd.

Completed forms/cheques to be returned to:
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