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....
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 means to make things happen.

And it doesn’t stop there. Over the last year, skilled individuals have donated their time to a top standard heritage course, a botanical walk, a top standard heritage course, and financial assistance of these benefactors. We are extremely grateful for the time, energy and financial assistance of these benefactors.

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 the lavish gesture? We couldn’t – an anonymous benefactor stepped forward at the last minute and paid for them to be made.

But there’s more. 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. Ecobees, 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 Working Club enabling this fantastic course to continue.

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

Stephen Ward

Editorial
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 is 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 community and its cultural heritage. 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 farther 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. Thanks also to Professor Charles Orser, New York State Museum, for advice on the historical archaeology of 19th century Ireland when we first began.

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@nugalway.ie or Tel: 091 493701. More details on the project at: www.nugalway.ie/archaeology

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 the year of 1980 that Brendan Sayers, orchid man of 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 visits, often with my husband Vincent, we first saw the little dense-flowered orchid (Neotinea ustulata) 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 Mullagh 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 weathered silverleaf is one of our rarest orchids – the flecked marsh-orchid (Dalfytorhiza incarnata subsp. cruciata). A packed head of rich rosy-purple flowers, pierced through by dark bracts.
sits atop a tall stem of tightly clasping leaves, whose wine dark splodges 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 gravely 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 prodigious 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 crane’s-bill, carline thistle and masses of fragrant orchids (Gymnadenia conopsea) are the helleboines – 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 Oregan’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

Fishlipped marsh-orchid
Dactylorhiza incarnata subsp. crysella
with Damselfly

Sea bindweed
Calystegia soldanella

Spring gentian
Gentiana verna

Dense-flowered orchid
Neotinea maculata

Sea bindweed
Calystegia soldanella

Dense-flowered orchid
Neotinea maculata

Siling gentian
Gentiana verna
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 unwinding 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 touch. There are also walls, miles and miles of walls. – one in Sweden, the other four here. Nearly halfway up the west coast of Ireland, at about 53 degrees north, nine degrees west, there stands a region of ancient magic and infinite strangeness.

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 erraticos. There is a pub in the middle of the Burren, called Cassidy’s, that 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 wells, miles and miles of wells. 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 wells 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 Glannagh. 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 silets off the coast, I am told, the odd farmer still makes a raft of seaweed, and piles it ashore to use as fertiliser. In taverns fiddles, flutes, accordions and whistles still play the old music. Cassidy’s, that pub beside beside the turlough, was not always a pub. It was a British army post long long ago, and then a station of the Irish gendarmerie, and its walls are full of mementos of a man from down the road, Michael Cusack, who was the original of the Claddagh ring and a very curious and curmudgeonly character in Ulyssses.

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 Saint Ciaran in the 5th 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.
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
Minature 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 fleshtone 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, 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.
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 an 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 focusses 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 disnearchas where myth, folklore and stories are interwined with place names so that the place becomes something that is experienced culturally. The story of the cow called Glas Ghabhreach, 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 Tausca 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 to which she wished to return. The Burren custodians of the future! All voices have a role 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 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 cultural heritage. The Burren continues as a living landscape and home to its people. Cultural landscapes also carry layers of the way, of course, extraordinary!
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 means 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 in 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, 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 shade 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 crozier. There the stem can be seen to have three bulges or ‘knops’, akin to those found on a comparable crozier-reliquary held by a crozier.

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 Lannamaanagh 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 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 Killenaboy at the centre of the Burren.

There, seven crosses once stood (one was removed to Killaloe Cathedral in 1821), and this number may well symbolise the seven hills of Rome, suggesting that a pilgrimage to Killenaboy could have been a substitute for the much more arduous trip to the Eternal City. Part of the route from the Tau Cross to Killenaboy goes along what the early Ordnance Survey map calls Sir Donat’s Road, but a section between Corofin and Killinaboy is named Bohar na mac Ríogh, which could have had a pilgrimage connotation as it passes a well dedicated to St. Inneboy of Killinaboy.

The so-called Doory Cross at Killenaboy, now moved into the re-roofed sacristy of the Cathedral, bears our fourth example - a figure 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-ride on a cross at Killenaboy on the 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 Killenaboy 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 Chronoin (Fig. 13), which find parallels at Stane in County Meath and various sites in County Kerry. These two Clare examples are undatable, 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 O Corrhrain has suggested that these reforms were muting the old Irish monasteries of their property and possessions in order to set up new diocesan administrations. The old monasteries, such as Dysert and Killenaboy, 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 Killenaboy 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 pled 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 evoked 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.
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 horse, 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 maids were hung by the hair from the corbels of the castle. How her maids were hung by the hair from the corbels of the castle. How her maids were hung by the hair from the corbels of the castle. How her maids were hung by the hair from the corbels of the castle.

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 a fee. Once the gates at Lemenagh were walled by William Jnr., but through a complicated Ward 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.

Understanding this remarkable woman needs an understanding of her life and times. Maire was born to the Lord of Impenetrable Turlough Ruaidhri Mc Mahon and Mary O Brian in 1615 or 1616.

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 a fee. Once the gates at Lemenagh were walled by William Jnr., but through a complicated Ward 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.

Understanding this remarkable woman needs an understanding of her life and times. Maire was born to the Lord of Impenetrable Turlough Ruaidhri Mc Mahon and Mary O Brian in 1615 or 1616.

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 a fee. Once the gates at Lemenagh were walled by William Jnr., but through a complicated Ward 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.

Understanding this remarkable woman needs an understanding of her life and times. Maire was born to the Lord of Impenetrable Turlough Ruaidhri Mc Mahon and Mary O Brian in 1615 or 1616.
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 SAC land in the region.

The other main BFCP measure (M1) pays farmers for the production of species-rich grassland. In year 2 of BFCP, 958 fields (7,172ha) 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. 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 €942 and €4,425/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

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 Fairs 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 regreted 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 Connolly, 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 to them. We work with 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 OAA 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 Lougrea, 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 Lougrea who use the latest high tech methods in contacting the diaspora.

Every available source is researched, ranging from The Tithe Apportionment Books of the 1820s, through Griffith’s Valuation of the 1850s to 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 Kiltoomton 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, the week from 20th June to 2nd July was the happy culmination of months of effort. The diaspora came to Clochaghaun Castle in Killcrochet, 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 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

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 of a small niche in the cave wall. This was a small rectangular cavity measuring 60cm x 60cm x 85cm high. Dr David Drow believes that the niche was an artificial feature. The human remains were analysed by Dr Cattíora McGeown 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 skeleton 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 – particularly Dr Catriona McKenzie 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 notably 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.
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...

Carsten Krieger 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 born 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.

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, NUIG. The title of her thesis is ‘Reconnecting children and nature? A sociological study of environmental education in Ireland.’

Contact details: s.omalley5@nuigalway.ie
Looking Back
Change ain’t what it used to be!

I grew up near Boston in Tubber in the 1940s/50s where I have spent all my life. I 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 more 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 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 baled over open fires, as well as being up at dawn and 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 plaited. Books 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, 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 watered, 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 it. One of my oldest memories is of my father leaving for Liscannor with two loads of seaweed (one horse following the other) from Clahane hill. The horse was king; everything depended on a horse. Cold, wet and scarce, which meant often wearing a wet tweed coat for half-a-day. Bottle gas, introduced in the early 50s, 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 Tium. Crops were planted, many singled, and how we hated being on our knees thinning the seedlings. The sheaves of corn was nice work only for the thistle thorns. The advent of the harvester, which 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 crown 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 allowance during the very strict food rationing in the 1940s. I had my first experience of the effects of industrial relations when the sugar cookers 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 in early hours in the early hours of the morning, en route to Gor, Kinvara and Ennis; sometimes, 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 horse. One of my oldest memories is of my father leaving for Liscannor with two loads of seaweed (one horse following the other) from Clahane hill. The horse was king; everything depended on a horse. Cold, wet and scarce, which meant often wearing a wet tweed coat for half-a-day. Bottle gas, introduced in the early 50s, 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 harvest of 1947 was perhaps the most difficult ever experienced, all stars 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. The advent of the harvester, which was a real test of a man's strength.

The horse was king, everything depended on a horse. One of my oldest memories is of my father leaving for Liscannor with two loads of seaweed (one horse following the other) from Clahane hill. The horse was king; everything depended on a horse. Cold, wet and scarce, which meant often wearing a wet tweed coat for half-a-day. Bottle gas, introduced in the early 50s, 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.

While tillage was the mainstay of farming, all households kept pigs and poultry which provided a very useful cash flow. Later they sold lime and repair buckets, pots and pans etc. The amazing skills of the many craftsmen were a joy to watch and helped to make our clothes 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 stoneware, was used for whitewashing 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.

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

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. Bailey was dispatched to the Business brewery in 19 stones sacks (200kilo), while wheat was sent in 20 stone sacks (225kilo) to mills in Kinvarra, 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 crown 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 allowance during the very strict food rationing in the 1940s. I had my first experience of the effects of industrial relations when the sugar cookers 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.

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 cottins and house furniture in his workshop beside Boston school, Jamsie Conors working across the road from the school made wheels for carts, turf barsrows, wooden hammers 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 lad 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 traveling 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 clothes more self-sufficient.

Taghlynix Killkeey c.1948

Newspaper Article 2012

As people in this article were provided by the author.
As one door closes another opens. Farming may be in decline, but a clean environment is more precious than ever, opening up opportunities for 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 143 acres of mixed land near Boston. A lifetime IFA activist he was jailed for his part in the Farmers Rights Campaign in 1987; 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.

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 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 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.

The Co. Clare Field Monument Adviser (FMA) scheme 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.

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.
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 post-master and post office for the locality for the best part of seventy years. When it closed in 2003 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 2003. 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, workshops and events curated by the artist during 2008 was aimed at generating discussion on rural life and 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 changing face of Kilnaboy. The selected photographs were made available at X-PO for visitors to look at at leisure. A further selection, held 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 Music meetings most 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, cillíns 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 discussion on how to maintain an active, inclusive, socially-connected 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 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 seen 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.’*  


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.
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 ramblers 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 lemons’.

In July and August the fields and ditches are full of the heavenly fragrance of meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria). This pretty plant, with its plumes of creamy flowers, is actually the plant that aspirin comes from. The name ‘aspirin’ was developed from the former Latin name for meadowsweet ‘Aspurea’ and to this day some local people in the Burren still refer to meadowsweet as ‘Wild Spread’. As well as its tonic properties, meadowsweet makes a delicious cordial drink. When diluted with sparking 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 acompañimiento 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 reprinted. Richard Mabey’s foraging classic ‘Food for Free’ is also brilliant, as is the River Cottage Handbook ‘Hedgerow’ by John Wright.

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 Corrigan Cooks Naturally. More details are on her website www.theherbalhub.com. She is currently writing her first book.
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

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 19th/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.

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.

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.
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 Burra examples lack a cap.

LISCANNOR/DOOLIN DOUBLE WALL
Double wall built with the characteristic West Clare flag stone.

There are many places in the Burra 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 Geological Society of Ireland has, without much fuss, designated Sheshymore as one of five sites in the Burra 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.

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

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 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.
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 juggled 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.

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.

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
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 seed pods to driftwood and drift seeds.

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 fish, 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 last day’s 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, Entella edulis, 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 because of its size. I’ve heard of it being a lucky charm and to hold onto during pain.

Mermaids’ Purses, Mermaids’ Tears and Sea Hearts

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 (Scyliorhinus) sharks and rays, can be found in Fanore. The egg case I found was from the rare White Skate (Rostrota 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 eggs 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 18 months to develop within the case. The young skate emerges with its “wings” nearly folded above its body, unfolds them 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 in regards to 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 marine wildlife artist, carries out whale watching for the Marine Mammal Research website (www.marinemammalresearch.ie) and does beach surveys in her spare time.
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 Glór 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 damsel flies. 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.
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 bhialtna – a huge amphitheatre like depression in the limestone at the western end of the Glen of Club. Following the same fault line to the south leads to a large spring near Kilnaboy; to the north it leads to a large spring at Corranroe 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.burrenec.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.

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 bhialtna – a huge amphitheatre like depression in the limestone at the western end of the Glen of Club. Following the same fault line to the south leads to a large spring near Kilnaboy; to the north it leads to a large spring at Corranroe 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.burrenec.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.

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 tourists and people living in the area.” North West Clare Today? Tomorrow?, 1973.

This underlying tension was magnified during the Mulaghmore visitor centre dispute and the aftermath was a period of honest 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 harmonize 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, Burrenbee 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 Burrenbee Trust’s Ecobooc 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 Poulnabrone 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 Lifts 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.
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 now been 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.

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

Richard Morrison was to investigate a based on a ground-up, participatory approach, the initial result of this effort, which has 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 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 now been 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.

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

Richard Morrison was to investigate a based on a ground-up, participatory approach, the initial result of this effort, which has now been 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.

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

Richard Morrison was to investigate a based on a ground-up, participatory approach, the initial result of this effort, which has now been 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.

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

Richard Morrison was to investigate a based on a ground-up, participatory approach, the initial result of this effort, which has now been 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.

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

Richard Morrison was to investigate a based on a ground-up, participatory approach, the initial result of this effort, which has now been 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.

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

Table 1. Medicinal plants considered to have medicinal value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Part of Plant</th>
<th>Main Constituents</th>
<th>Main Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achillea millefolium</td>
<td>Yarrow</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>essential oil; secoiridoid glycosides</td>
<td>diaphoretic, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allathaea officinalis</td>
<td>Marshmallow</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>mucilage; polyaccharides</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</td>
<td>Bearberry</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones; tannins</td>
<td>choleretic; diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypericum perforatum</td>
<td>St. John’s Wort</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>hypericin; flavonoids</td>
<td>antidepressant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniperus communis</td>
<td>Juniper</td>
<td>Flower</td>
<td>essential oil</td>
<td>sedative; expectorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primula veris</td>
<td>Primrose, Cowslip</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones</td>
<td>antispasmodic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhamnus frangula</td>
<td>Frangula</td>
<td>Bark</td>
<td>saponins</td>
<td>demulcent, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix species</td>
<td>Willow</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>anthraquinone glycosides; secoiridoid glycosides</td>
<td>diaphoretic, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambucus nigra</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Flower</td>
<td>phloroglucinol; salicylates</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; antipyretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taraxacum officinale</td>
<td>Taraxacum</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>essential oil; flavonoids</td>
<td>diuretic; antidiarrhoeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thymus vulgaris</td>
<td>Thyme</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>bitter glycosides; phytosterols; magnesium</td>
<td>diaphoretic; diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urtica dioica</td>
<td>Nettle</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones</td>
<td>antispasmodic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valeriana officinalis</td>
<td>Valerian</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>essential oil; essential oil</td>
<td>sedative; expectorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola tricolor</td>
<td>Wild pansy; Heartsease</td>
<td>Herb+flower</td>
<td>hypericin; flavonoids</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; antispasmodic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Medicinal plants with potential medicinal value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Botanical Name</th>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Part of Plant</th>
<th>Main Constituents</th>
<th>Main Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Euphorbia officinalis</td>
<td>Eyebright</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>essential oil; saponins</td>
<td>diaphoretic, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipendula ulmaria</td>
<td>Meadowsweet</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>flavonoids, phenol glycosides</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraxinus excelsior</td>
<td>Ash</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>secoiridoid glycosides</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menyanthes trifoliata</td>
<td>Bogbean</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>flavonoids</td>
<td>diaphoretic, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipendula ulmaria</td>
<td>Meadowsweet</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>essential oil</td>
<td>sedative; expectorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypericum perforatum</td>
<td>St. John’s Wort</td>
<td>Flower</td>
<td>hypericin</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; antipyretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menyanthes trifoliata</td>
<td>Bogbean</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>saponins</td>
<td>sedative, diaphoretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achillea millefolium</td>
<td>Yarrow</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; diaphoretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allathaea officinalis</td>
<td>Marshmallow</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>mucilage</td>
<td>sedative, diaphoretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</td>
<td>Bearberry</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones; tannins</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; sedative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypericum perforatum</td>
<td>St. John’s Wort</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>hypericin</td>
<td>diaphoretic; diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juniperus communis</td>
<td>Juniper</td>
<td>Flower</td>
<td>essential oil</td>
<td>sedative; expectorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primula veris</td>
<td>Primrose, Cowslip</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones</td>
<td>antispasmodic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhamnus frangula</td>
<td>Frangula</td>
<td>Bark</td>
<td>saponins</td>
<td>demulcent, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salix species</td>
<td>Willow</td>
<td>Leaf</td>
<td>anthraquinone glycosides; secoiridoid glycosides</td>
<td>diaphoretic, diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sambucus nigra</td>
<td>Elder</td>
<td>Flower</td>
<td>phloroglucinol; salicylates</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; antipyretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taraxacum officinale</td>
<td>Taraxacum</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>essential oil; flavonoids</td>
<td>diuretic; antidiarrhoeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thymus vulgaris</td>
<td>Thyme</td>
<td>Herb</td>
<td>bitter glycosides; phytosterols; magnesium</td>
<td>diaphoretic; diuretic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urtica dioica</td>
<td>Nettle</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>flavonoids; quinones</td>
<td>antispasmodic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valeriana officinalis</td>
<td>Valerian</td>
<td>Root</td>
<td>essential oil; essential oil</td>
<td>sedative; expectorant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viola tricolor</td>
<td>Wild pansy; Heartsease</td>
<td>Herb+flower</td>
<td>hypericin; flavonoids</td>
<td>anti-inflammatory; anti-inflammatory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than 655 species of flowering plants, conifers and ferns have been recorded in The Burren, the Aran Islands and Sceilig Mhichí. 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 been approved by rigorous scientific (clinical) trials to have medicinal effects. Because of this we 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).
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. Herbalists 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
In Burren Insight 3 we looked at Bell Harbour, Corrinroo 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.

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 botharán down to the Rine is enshrined 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 Corrinroo 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.clarebirwatching.com or www.waxwingfilms.ie
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 for the 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, Maureen 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 worthwhile for the children!

We were transported to days of years by the great stories told during the interviews. Childhood games like “Four corners fool,” and “Stack stones” were recalled amongst other more traditional games that have survived and still appear in playgrounds today like “tag and jat”.

“Children would stand on the four corners of a rectangle while the person in the middle threw the ball to throw. The one who was off-guard and dropped the ball was the “Four corners fool,” and had to go in the middle. “Stack Stones” was played with rounded pebbles and involved outdoing each other.

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.

Children who would have been drafted to the Land of Nod by the first paragraph of a history chapter were transformed by the stories. Grandparents recounted distant memories of the last of the Connemara boats delivering turf to Kinvara by the stories. Grandparents recounted distant memories by the first paragraph of a history chapter were transfixed one in the air and trying to pick up two before catching the airborne one again.

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.irishbae.com and the school website www.northamptonns.ie. Other similar community based projects can be viewed on www.irishbae.com and www.galwaygastranger.ie.

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.

Shane McDonagh
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.

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. White 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 Mixing Madwoman?
- Who was Katja from Kitsuney?

www.farmheritagetours.com

So, what is so special about these farms? We'll talk on my farm, Roughan farmwalk, 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 farmer’s knowledge 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.

Another of the grandparents had kept their original school
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 hammerstone, 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, Poulnabrone 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.
BURREN ARCHAELOGY - 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 dates 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 areas, Burren East, North, West and Central with individual maps showing their locations. The inclusion of an overall map showing the four areas would be helpful for the visitor to read the story of the Burren and elsewhere in Ireland today.

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 nature, and how this is being replaced by a more sedentary way of life. 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 is 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
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-versa 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 biologist 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 Zoe Devlin
Collins Press, 2011 / RRP €35
Review by Stephen Ward

Zoe Devlin is a full-time freelance photographer who specialises in the Burren region. Her collection of photographs and accompanying text is very much a personal record of her own experiences in the region unaware of its existential power.

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.

An Aphrodisiac of the Senses posits the opinion that the Burren possesses within it an aphrodisiac power. It is a sexy place. The ancient name of Corcomore Abbey, Sancta Maria de Petra Fertilis, seems to endorse this, but, as in the Sile-na-Gig above the church doorway at Kinaboy, 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 Naotha), 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 genteele romantic writer Sarah Poyntz is contrasted with the flambouyant, quirky and funny Rich O’Leighlis in two chapters about particular Burren writers. A similar contrast is drawn between the unsavouring ‘semi-abstract impressionist’ painter Manus Walsh and the (sadly late lamented), eccentrically brilliant botanical artist Raymond Pijper.

Many will remember his spine-tingling songs during those Easter Dawn masses at Corcomroe celebrated by the late John O’Dineogue.
Burren National Park and coastal walks led by author Tony Kirby.

Camino! Camino! Pilgrimage walks a speciality.

Weekend walking breaks.

Walks and slow food.

Heart of Burren Walks Kilnaboy County Clare 065 682 77 07 087 292 54 87

www.heartofburrenwalks.com

Local filmmaker needs help:
If you know the location of dens or dreys of squirrels, badgers, foxes, stoats or pine martens; 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 frilliaries, blues, greens etc; we would greatly appreciate it if you could contact us.

Sea Fever Productions have recently televised ‘Farragí 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

A UNIQUE STORY - A UNIQUE MAN

Michael Cusack Centre

Michael Cusack, Founder of the GAA

was a fascinating and complex personality. His passion for Gaelic games was matched only by his love of the unique and beautiful Burren limestone landscape where he was born and raised.

For anyone interested in the changing face of Irish life, The Michael Cusack Centre is a treasure chest of living history.

A Top Tourist attraction and popular destination for all.

Located in the Picturesque Burren CARRON, CO. CLARE

Tel: 065 - 708 9944 Carron, Co. Clare Email: info@michaelcusack.ie www.michaelcusack.ie

Discovered Pat O’Donnell

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 hesitate to contact us.

Mary Howard: tel: +353 65 707 7686, mobile: +353 87 244 5897 mary@burrenguidedwalks.com

www.burrenguidedwalks.com
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 proct-dish grassland to the Atlantic hazel woodlands. And, as I have fought the interminable fight against the encroaching hazel, my passion has become rational purposes are to provide the appropriate habitat for the rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly.

Christine Grant has enabled me to see the networks of places and paths of movement that 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, yet 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 may have been, but I added to the overall total to ensure that Dromore Woods had one species more than the last place contender.

I have been beguiled by the local volunteers who have imbued the landscape with myth, 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.

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.

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’ domens and calins – clearly incomparable 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!”*
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’Donoghue who kindly lit the fire and put the kettle on, ensuring a truly unique and cozy 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 exactly the location of the upcoming walks and talks please look up the events page on www.burrenbeo.com or phone 091 638096 for more details.

The Burrenbeo Trust would like to thank the fantastic work of the Ecobeo tutors: Ronan Hennessy, Zena Hector, Eugene Lambe, Brendan Dunford, Bridg 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 Bridg 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, Kicloogar ET, Corofin NS, Kilnaboy NS, Ennistymon NS! 45 Burrenbeo 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.

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, Doonbeg 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.

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

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

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

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.
Some of the memories from 2011

Burren Insight 2012

Burren in Bloom May month had over 700 attendees, the Burren walks had another 700!

The Burren’s Winter Talks series had over 400 people attend in Tuamgraney Village Hall.

Loughrea, Co. Galway, local author, Lorna O’Reilly, showed a side of the Burren with the Trust.

Burrenluce imprints its learning landscape online format, supported by the Heritage Council.

Gerrards Castle presented Burrenwith a voice new to raise funds for the Trust.

Burren were top organisers in the Burren Spring Conference 2011.

Also the Trust won out of 600 entries in the Coiscéim Awards, were key partners in the Burren Community Charter Project, graduate 75 new experts from Eobairc, send a monthly newsletter out to 3500 people and much much more…
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 more walks and talks

Attend more volunteering 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 EcoBee

By joining the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers

By displaying our newsletter

By inviting you to make a presentation

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

By championing you in your area

By using our Information Centre for your educational needs

Burrenbeo Trust achievements this year

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 us 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 EcoBee Heritage Education Course in four Burren primary schools producing 83 new EcoBee 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 Sabrina Snyder.
- 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.
- 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 sent monthly e-newsletters to over 3,500 people.
- We helped organise the month-long Burren in Bloom festival with over 700 participants.
- 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 Sabrina Snyder.
- We provided orientation sessions for numerous visiting groups.

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’s it 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 55 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 trademen 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!
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 Ecobeo 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.

For more information please contact:

Burrenbeo Trust, Main Street,
Kinvara, Co. Galway, Ireland
Tel: 091 638096 / Mob: 087 9689486
Email: trust@burrenbeo.com

www.burrenbeo.com