

BURRENINSIGHT

MAKING SCHOOL MORE LIKE A FARMERS MARKET. **DAVID SOBEL**

WILD FLOWERS FROM MANY CLIMES. **BOB GIBBONS**

THE FIRST BURREN GEOGRAPHER? **MICHAEL GIBBONS**

READING A LANDSCAPE. **JOHN FEEHAN**

BIOMIMICRY; WHAT CAN YOU SEE? **KATY EGAN & SOPHIE NICOL**

... and much more



The Inaugural
Winterage Weekend

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Ancient Burren - A 21st Century Learning landscape?

As Ireland struggles forward into the uncharted territory of post-Celtic Tiger society, the need to nurture new ideas has become ever more urgent and the quest to find innovative campuses to incubate them; critical. The Burren's ancient landscape offers a setting within which we can do both. Its unique endowment of geological, archaeological, ecological and cultural attributes – the 'building blocks' of most places - offer a quality, 21st Century canvas for innovative learning and creativity.

The deep interconnected richness of the Burren as a place of learning runs through this issue of Burren Insight. Shane Casey attests to the learning opportunities afforded in growing up on a Burren farm while Declan Kelleher's recollections as a school teacher in Corofin confirm the learning benefits of the great outdoors. Michael Gibbons describes 'the Burren's First Geographer' who paid a visit to the Burren in 1680 as Sophie Nicol and Katy Egan hint at the exciting new learning opportunities afforded by technology and the science of biomimicry.

For years the Burrenbeo Trust and others have championed the Burren as a place of learning. We see huge potential in combining creative conservation with sustainable development and believe the 'Learning Landscape' concept is a positive opportunity for the Burren and for other high nature value areas of Ireland.

In 2012, with support from the Heritage Council, the Trust organised Ireland's first 'Learning Landscape' symposium. The symposium strove to shift the paradigm 'from apathy to empathy' by reconnecting people with place. We invited 'Place Based' learning innovators to share their ideas and help inform our work and were delighted with the outcome.

More recently, Burrenbeo Trust commissioned a study in an attempt to articulate the immense learning potential of the Burren and hope to present findings at the next 'Learning Landscape' symposium later in the year.

The Burren in 2013 is a beacon of hope and light. The award-winning Burren Farming for Conservation Programme, the Burren Ecotourism Network, the pioneering work of the Burren College of Art and the sterling work of the Burrenbeo Trust, among others, are individually exceptional, collectively transformational. Through the 'Learning Landscape' initiative we can together shape an exciting new future for this extraordinary and most ancient place of learning.

by Ann O'Connor Dunford

Co-founder of Burrenbeo (est. 2002)

Patron, New Media Editor & Fundraiser of Burrenbeo Trust (est. 2008)

A Message from the Editors

We are delighted to bring you this issue of Burren Insight. Each year we are buoyed up by your praise for the magazine's ever higher standards which we could not, of course, achieve without your support. Whether we have succeeded in maintaining this trend this year is for you to decide. Please let us know your views; we appreciate your feedback.

This year's magazine builds on the concept of the

Burren as a **Learning Landscape**, one which inspires people to learn from their surroundings and their place in them. The articles which follow illustrate this through prose, poetry, photography and art.

We are extremely grateful to all our contributors who feature in these pages. We hope you enjoy the fruits of both their, and our, labour!

Brigid Barry and Stephen Ward
Editors

Making school more like a farmers market



The market was another microcosm - the bounty of the Burren all gathered together in one place - and it illustrates a different way of thinking about schools'

"That's the loop to do, right there," Brendan Dunford stabbed the map with his forefinger. *"That'll get you up high, give you a good taste of the Burren."* Really, it was a feast rather than just a taste.

Jen and I wanted the quintessential Burren bike ride, something that got us up in the high winterages, close to the sky, away from the tourist buses. We started just east of Carron, where the road diverges - one lane continuing east down across the turlough and then up and over the ridge towards Boston. The other heading north, past the Perfumery rising through farms and along the flanks of Gortaclare Mountain and Slievecarran.

As soon as we passed the lane into the Perfumery, the road felt lost and lonely, reminiscent of the moors in Devon where I have tramped many miles. Passing through a farm in Doonmoor ('Keep the Burren Fracking Free!'), we switchbacked gently higher to the crest of the ridge. Here we tasted the first dish of our Burren feast, that sense of high mountain, sub-alpine exhilaration even though we were at an altitude of only about 250 metres. It's a unique aspect of the Burren to be able to get that way-

up-high feeling with comparatively little effort or elevation gain.

Swooping down the far side toward Slieve Carron, we stopped at an abandoned cottage, only the barn still in use for storing farm equipment. We shuffled through the broken glass and wall board, imagining a family of 8 or 10 packed into two small bedrooms, huddled around the meagre heat from a peat fire, tired after the senseless work of constructing a famine road. This living historical record of recent history and the raft of ancient artefacts of portal tombs, towers, ringforts, abbeys and fire rings is another unique Burren feature. It's as if all of Irish history was boiled down and concentrated into an historical gumbo - so near at hand and yet reaching so far back into history.

At the bottom of the hill, we turned right, towards the church site at Glencolumkille. We rode along a narrow tunnelled lane, thick with whitethorn thickets on either side, lined with little tucked-away farms with rubber-booted children and ponies. This was an intimate landscape, the antithesis of the windswept and wide open pavement summits, the secret-around-every-corner-and-in-every-cleft-Burren. We'd

experienced this the day before on a walk to Temple Cronan with Brendan and his two young boys. We delved into the grikes of the pavement to find tiny pastures of wildflowers. In tiny potholes in the pavement, we picked up whole miniature gardens intact - soil, roots, primrose, wild thyme, bloody cranesbill. These little potholes were a microcosm of the sweeping rich and rocky pavement meadows. Strolling pasture lanes we came to another treasure - a holy well of limestone-filtered water. Do you remember treasure balls from your childhood where you unravelled a ball of continuous ribbon and as it unraveled you'd come upon a series of tiny toys?

At the Glencolumkille corner we turned right for the cardio portion of our ride. Like the Alpe d'Huez climb, but oh so much easier, maybe eight or nine short hairpins rather than twenty-one long ones, but just as satisfying. Then the long swoopy plunge down to the turlough below and back past our starting point to a well-deserved repast at the Perfumery. From the windy winterages to haute cuisine in the blink of an eye. The carrot-ginger soup, fresh mesclun, apple raspberry juice, tart cheddar-on-toast represented the distinctive flavours of each part

of the ride. After lunch we watched children on a patch of pavement adjacent to the Perfumery—the griked pavement is a giant natural hopscotch board. The pavement is perfectly fractured to create a wide range of challenges from tiny little hops to long risky leaps. It reminded me of Burrenbeo's 'Wild Child' exploration days that enable parents and children to roam and play freely in this family-friendly landscape. This just "beo-ing" in the landscape is an integral part of developing the sense of place that in turn becomes the foundation for stewardship later in life.

At the end of the day we sat outside at Cassidy's and enjoyed pints of Guinness and Smithwick's. Looking across the valley we could see different soil types and depths represented in the differentiated flora. We could trace centuries-old boundary lines running perpendicular to the hill in the old walls. Here a dolmen, there a rock fort, there a field managed through the efforts of the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme. So exciting to see ecological preservation and sustainable agriculture working hand-in-hand, and so unlike many of the ranchers vs. environmentalists battles in the western United States.

A few days later we munched our way through the Kinvara Farmers' Market - vivid carrots and heirloom tomatoes, hand-made pretzels, German sausages, a panoply of cheeses. I was even tricked into tasting, and liking, an odd-flavoured cheddar that was made from goat's milk - goat's cheese has always been a personal gustatory challenge. The market was another microcosm - the bounty of the Burren all gathered together in one place - and it illustrates a different way of thinking about schools.

Schools, in Ireland and in the United States, have progressively become isolated from their surrounding landscapes and communities. Children learn that the nearby is mundane and insignificant; what's faraway is glamorous and important. Instead, especially in the primary years, education should be rooted in what's local and unique about their places. These local places and traditions - the dolmens of the Burren, the rich flora, the farming heritage - can be windows into the wider world of history, science and agriculture. Moreover, writing and maths are more engaging when you're writing a story about yesterday's stream adventure or solving a real problem about shopping at the local market. Our high winterages bike ride and

our tasting tour of the Kinvara Farmers' Market provided a feast for the senses and for the mind. Similarly, the Burren has the potential to serve as an educational feast for the young hearts and minds of Clare's and Galway's children. And for the wider world as well.

by David Sobel

David Sobel is one of the leading pioneers of place-based education. He lectures in the Education Department at Antioch University, USA. He consults and speaks widely on child development and place-based education. He has authored seven books and more than 60 articles focused on children and nature for educators, parents, environmentalists and school administrators in the last 30 years. His most recent books are *Place-based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities*, *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators and Wild Play*, *Parenting Adventures in the Great Outdoors*.

A PLACE FOR AUDACIOUS CONVERSATIONS

The Challenge of this Time

We live at a unique moment, a moment pregnant equally with risk of break-down and the potential of break-through to a new level of human possibility. It is a time when the global economic and financial systems by which our material well-being is governed are in danger of collapse from their own excesses. More seriously, the dominant economic paradigm of our time is undermining the ecosystem upon which our survival as a species depends.

These presenting problems are all too apparent. And yes, there have been attempts to reform the economic and ecological systems at a surface level. What has been less obvious is any serious attempt to deal with issues on a systemic basis. Could it be that the split between the material and the spiritual, between mind and matter and between man and nature that has characterised human thought and human institutions for the last three centuries is reaching its natural conclusion?

The story of human progress is not one of smooth evolution. Rather it is a story punctuated by step-changes such as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, the start of the modern era. Current circumstances call for such a step-change. We have a choice to continue reacting mindlessly to emerging crises or to move to a more mindful way of regulating our affairs. Now is a time for creative renewal both local and global, for no one is absolved from the challenges before us. It is a time for audacious conversations and the Burren is a natural place to host such conversations.

by Martin Hawkes

Martin Hawkes is a frequent visitor to the Burren being a Trustee of the Burren College of Art, a founding member of the annual Burren Law School and Chairman of the Burrenbeo Trust. He is a businessman/entrepreneur with a particular interest in education and the role of creativity in the education system and more generally. He is a founder member of the recently launched Burren Call, a group dedicated to the belief that the Burren's unique character makes it an ideal place to host the breakthrough conversations, both local and global, that need to happen at this time – such as Green Foundation Ireland's convened *Climate Gathering* in Ballyvaughan in February 2013.

The Burren Calls

For those familiar with the Burren, its natural power as a crucible of creative potential needs little articulation. The call of the Burren is as ancient as time, as raw as its naked rocks, as insistent as the break of the Atlantic Ocean on its western shores, as paradoxical as the Alpine and Mediterranean flowers that nestle side by side in its crevices, as haunting as the legend of Poll na Glaise and the Seven Streams

At a time when man's tenure on the planet is delicately poised while new thresholds of possibility beckon, this ancient place summons us to a gentle embrace of the big questions that need to be addressed right now, to writing fresh narratives for the new futures that are within sight, to a rededication to the individual and collective 'hero's journey' that will fashion this future. The Burrenbeo Trust's launch of its 'Learning Landscapes' symposium last August and its first inspired Winterage Weekend are the green shoots of invitations to us to open our eyes and our senses to reconnect with the natural world.

Whether your question is to do with spirituality in the workplace, peace in our time, the path to creative resilience for rural communities, renewing country through language revival, a holistic role for tourism in the world or the future we will leave our children, the Burren is a place where a transformational journey can begin. A community is already forming to host these conversations. The first of a series of climate gatherings convened in February and its effects will hopefully ripple out to influence the greater debates that are now in prospect.

The Burren is calling!



music to our ears

Place and environment influencing traditional music in the Burren

Place and environment feature prominently in discourse on music and music-making. In the field of ethnomusicology, the study of music in its cultural context, researchers have not only observed but also participated in the activities of individuals and communities to gain an insight into what motivates people to play the music that they do. Such research, when applied to the Burren can unravel a rich diversity of ideologies on place, environment, and what it means to be a traditional musician from the Burren.

The Burren's international prestige for its landscape and wild flowers is paralleled by the global acclaim enjoyed by its traditional music.¹ Doolin and Lisdoonvarna have become synonymous with the 1960s and 1970s traditional music revival period and have remained prominent traditional music sites. Doolin's association with the Russell family,

among traditional musicians. Donegal fiddler, the late Johnny Doherty recalled how older generations of musicians in his locality would 'take music from the sound of the sea', and from 'the chase of the hound and the hare'.² Seamus Tansey echoes Doherty's sentiments on environment when he refers to the influence of 'the singing of the birds, the ancient chants of our forefathers, the calls of the wild animals in the lonely countryside, the drone of the bees, the galloping hooves of the wild horses'.³ In the context of the Burren specifically, accordionist Bobby Gardiner describes a palpable 'music spirit' that he experienced as a young musician at home in Lisdoonvarna and he believes that you could even have heard music in 'the mooing of the cows'. He recalls bringing tea to his uncle in the bog and 'feeling music in the air'. From such recollections it would seem natural that the genius loci of the Burren has shaped



and Lisdoonvarna's memories of its famed music festival and musicians such as Micilín Conlon, endure today. The celebrated Kilfenora Céilí Band continues to achieve considerable success both at home and abroad while a global community of musicians and enthusiasts annually converge upon musical gatherings such as the Corofin Traditional Festival and Kinvara's Fleadh na gCuach. A vibrant traditional music scene has also been maintained in Ennistymon and Ballyvaughan.

Beyond the often-oversimplified constructs of 'regional style' lies a rooted sense of place

the musical temperament of its inhabitants, a number of whom are prominent musicians known to international audiences.

One of the most common representations of place and environment in musical form are found in lyrics and tunes or song titles. In the instrumental music tradition, there are many examples of tune titles that refer to the Burren's landscape and the Burren in general. The first commercial recording that I was involved in, with the Barefield Céilí Band was entitled Flowers of the Burren, after a popular jig featured on the album.

Set on Stone by the Kilfenora Céilí Band and The Fertile Rock by Bellharbour concertina player Chris Droney are other examples of album titles that refer to the Burren landscape. Also, one of Droney's most popular compositions, a reel entitled The Furrow was composed while ploughing the land in Bellharbour. As a young man, Droney remembers thrashing corn in Finnevarra, and subsequently having to provide music for dancing after a long day of working the land.

Kilshanny flute-player Michael Hynes, also a noted composer, has named numerous compositions after landmarks and areas in his locality. These include The Spectacle Bridge, The Old Sulphur Well, Corkscrew Hill and The Smithstown Jaunt. In the case of Corkscrew Hill, he describes how the meandering curves of the hill between Ballyvaughan and Lisdoonvarna, are represented in the tune by melodic and harmonic 'twists and turns'. When considering a title for The Spectacle Bridge, he speaks of the correlation between the uniqueness of a particular landmark and that of a newly created melody.

It is beyond the scope of this brief piece to ruminate fully on the Burren landscape as a stimulant of creative expression through traditional music, but it offers a cursory insight into a wealth of place-based sensibility to be found among the traditional music community of the Burren. Furthermore, considering the significance of 'handing down' repertoire as an integral characteristic of traditional music, the longevity of tune titles associated with the Burren is guaranteed to rival that of the landscape itself.

by Jack Talty

Jack Talty is a concertina and piano player from Lissycasey in Co. Clare. As a performer Jack has toured extensively throughout Europe, North America and Australia, and has contributed to over 25 albums to date, as a musician, engineer, composer, producer and arranger. In 2011 Jack released the critically acclaimed *Na Fir Bolg* with fellow concertina player Cormac Begley on his own Raelach Records label. In the same year he also formed *Ensemble Ériu* with double bass and flute player Neil O' Loughlen; the ensemble's debut album is due for release in March 2013. Currently a PhD student, Jack teaches on the BA in *Irish Music and Dance* at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick.

1. For a more comprehensive overview of musicians of the Burren region see Charlie Piggot's 'The Bardic Connection: Traditional Music and Song in the Burren' in *The Book of the Burren*, (2nd edition 2001), published by Tír Eolas.
2. Feldman A. and O' Doherty, E., (1985) *The Northern Fiddler: Music and Musicians of Donegal and Tyrone*, London: Oak Publications
3. Tansey, S. (1996) 'Irish Traditional Music - the melody of Ireland's soul; its evolution from the environment, land and people' in Vallyley, F., Hamilton, H., Vallyley, E., and Doherty, L., Eds. *Crossbhealach an Cheoil, The Crossroads Conference 1996: Tradition and Change in Irish Traditional Music*. Dublin: Whinstone Music.

AN BHOIREANN: ÁIT FOGHLAMA

THE BURREN AS A LEARNING LANDSCAPE

The Burren landscape holds an extraordinary potential as a learning resource to the Irish education system. As a teacher I have seen at first-hand how children, when taken into the Burren, react with huge positivity and creativity.

With current pressures relating to literacy and numeracy, some teachers will ask 'How can I justify time spent outdoors in the Burren?'

Within a primary curriculum which promotes:

- a child's sense of wonder and natural curiosity;
- a child as an active agent in his or her own learning;
- environment-based learning;
- learning through guided activity and discovery;
- the aesthetic dimension;

how can one justify not spending time outdoors?

'A rich experience of different aspects of the curriculum outside the classroom adds enormously to the relevance and effectiveness of children's learning'.¹

Another barrier often cited is the vexed issue of risk and insurance. Provided adequate planning takes place, the teacher is familiar with the route to be used and a suitable ratio of supervision is available, then risks are minimised. Normal insurance provided to schools fully insures participation in outdoor learning.

For schools distant from the Burren a day tour may be the only option, but for those with the privilege of easy access, short class trips provide a far more effective learning experience.

What type of learning experience does the Burren provide? It certainly provides a story of man's interaction with its landscape. Portal tombs erected by Neolithic farmers and the later wedge-shaped dolmens leave an abiding built heritage allowing children visual access to sacred places from 3000 years BC. The privilege of speculating about their use ties in closely with components of the primary history curriculum. The hundreds of iron-age and early Christian stone forts in townlands, almost invariably bearing the name 'cathair', illustrate clearly the layout of farm dwellings. Children love to speculate why these dwellings had huge walls and some, such as Cathair Bhaile Cinn Mhargaidh near Kilfenora, had stones set into the ground in front of them. They may also wonder why Cathair Chomáin in Kilnaboy was built on a cliff edge.

Churches provide another close link to the curriculum. Imagine taking children to Colman Mac Duagh's Church under Eagle's Rock. The silence, stunning beauty, solitude and sense of the spiritual make this an unforgettable experience where children of all faiths and none can make their own unique spiritual response to beauty.

Standing on the stark famine road at the eastern side of Mullach Mór children inevitably feel the sense of isolation and hopelessness experienced by those who strove to break stones and spread sand there in an effort to remain alive during the darkest days of the Burren's long history.

Tower houses, particularly the extended tower house of Léim an Eich, and other heritage buildings and monuments throughout the Burren, make this a history teacher's dream.

Irish remained the vernacular of the Burren until the dawn of the 20th Century. Thanks to the pioneering work of Tim Robinson - mapmaker supreme, many of the original Gaelic place-names have survived. For senior primary pupils, using Tim's map integrates mapping skills from the geography curriculum with an appreciation of the beautiful Gaelic descriptors for places such as Sliabh na Glaise, Loch Trá Bhán, Ceathrú na Madra, Tobar Fiacla and Léim an Phúca Mór. Children, especially those at the senior end of the primary school, can interview older members of the community with their rich knowledge of individual field names. Unfortunately, we no longer have access in the Burren to local native Irish speakers but interviews with Irish speakers now deceased survive. The late Seamus Delargey, the renowned UCD folklorist, described Stiofán Ó Ealoire of Doolin as being the greatest ever speaker of the Irish language. *'Bhí Stiofán ar an gcainteoir Gaeilge is fearr a casadh riamh liom in aon áit in Éirinn ... Do bhí na céadta agus na céadta focal agus sean-nathanna cainte aige ná raibh le fáil ó aoinne eile sa Mhumhain'.²*

The Geography curriculum furthers the case for outdoor work: *'Geographical activities should be based on the local environment and all pupils should have the opportunity to explore and investigate the environment systematically and thoroughly'.³*

Subsequent extension to regional, national and global environments is also laid down and it is of significance that the teacher guidelines specifically cite the Burren as an exemplar of a major region suitable for study.

From a scientific point of view the Burren presents an immense wonderland. Primary students inevitably ask how it took on its present appearance. Children love to explore the limestone and seek out fossils. They can be guided to discover its beginnings, the effects of the earth's movement, of the ice-age, and of erosion, the extent of which they can assess by examining pedestals beneath glacial erratics. The reaction of the limestone to water solution is fascinating and exploring the clints and grikes, which have huge visual impact throughout the Burren, is a must. Learning this information from books could never replace their feelings of wonder and awe as they walk along the clints and gaze into the grikes.



Ballyvaughan National School enjoying the delights of the Burren.

Another aspect of the science curriculum is the study of the variety and characteristics of living things. With its rocky coast, inland waters and scrub vegetation the Burren is an ideal breeding grounds for seabirds, Arctic waders and wildfowl as well as songbirds. The Burren is, of course, famous for its plants and excursions will be rewarded richly in terms of pupils studying flowering plants from the Arctic, Alps and Mediterranean. The sheer beauty of these flowers, whether they be *Ceadharlach Bealtaine* (Spring Gentian), *Crobh Fola* (Bloody Cranesbill) or *Magairlin* (Orchid) cannot but inspire a deep love of nature within children. For instance tracking the Gentian each year on the same stretch of road in Shandangan, Kilnaboy was an activity which stimulated poetry and art for my senior pupils. Knowing in advance exactly where we were going was extremely important in terms of the economical use of time and the full exercise, which usually included the examination of some tiny *cabhails* (house ruins), was normally completed by the 11 o'clock break.

The revision of the Junior Certificate will facilitate postprimary schools in developing their own short courses. Such courses will be designed for 100 hours of student engagement over two or three years and will be developed in accordance with a specification provided by the NCCA (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment). Such a course themed on the Burren and developed individually by local post-primary schools with assistance and advice available, if desired, from the Burrenbeo Trust would enhance learning experiences and have the potential to integrate many elements of the post-primary curriculum.

However the greatest influence on children is that of the parent and the opportunities for parents to walk and talk to their children, whilst out exploring the many less trodden ways of the Burren, have no bounds. To engender a love, understanding and infectious enthusiasm for all things Burren would be an outstanding legacy to pass on to any child. *'Is fada cuimhne an tseanlinbh'*⁴

by Declan Kelleher

Declan Kelleher is a native of Kilnaboy and is a former principal teacher of Scoil Mhuire Náisiúnta, Corofin. He is currently deputy chair of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and is also a member of An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta. He is a member of Burrenbeo's Education Committee.

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1. Cúraclam na Bunscoile Foilsithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann (1999), pg 15.
2. Lth xv sa réamhrá as Leabhar Stiofáin Uí Ealoire le Seamus Ó Duilearga. Foilsithe ag Comhairle Bhéaloideas Éireann (1981).
3. Cúraclam na Bunscoile Geography. Foilsithe ag Rialtas na hÉireann (1999), pg 66.
4. Lth 10 Seanfhocail na Mumhan An Seabhadh. Foilsithe ag an Gúm (1984).

THOUGHTS OF THE BURREN

BY ALISON BYRNE

A WAVY SEA OF STONY LAND
A LOST REMOTE OCEAN OF GREY
WEATHER BEATEN PLANTS THAT CRAWL
ALONG THE STONY WAY.

CALM AND TRANQUIL, VAST AND SILENT
GAPING ROCKS THAT SELDOM CEASE;
HERE AND THERE, A PRECIOUS FLOWER
THAT DANCES IN THE GENTLE BREEZE.

A STONY SEA OF BEATEN ROCKS
WHICH NATURE MADE SO WILD
BUT EVERY FLOWER THAT GROWS THERE
IS NATURE'S GENTLE CHILD.

Alison Byrne (aged 11) wrote this poem when she was in 5th class in Corofin National School, after visiting Mullaghmore with her class, a few decades ago. Alison is now a primary school teacher and this is a message to her former teacher, Declan Kelleher. *'To this day I have kept my love of the Burren which stems from being in your class... You can tell from [the poem] that my trips to the Burren made a huge impression on me and I still feel inspired by it.'*



What Do You See?

Can biomimicry open our eyes to a new appreciation of nature and the Burren?

Imagine a first-time visitor to the Burren arriving with no prior knowledge of the landscape, what do they see? At first glance perhaps, only a rocky grey expanse with scrub and plants, little soil, and few trees or large animals. Now take this person on a nature walk and allow them to see the huge diversity of plants and animals that live in this seemingly hostile landscape. From St. John's wort to the alpine spring gentian, the lesser horseshoe bat to the pine marten, the Burren is teeming with life. Take them through the history of human evolution from Stone Age tombs to modern culture and art. How this person's attitude to the Burren and their perspective must change as its secrets are

revealed? In this article we ask you to look afresh at the Burren with a new understanding of nature.

There is another layer of information and wisdom that we can access within the Burren. This layer encourages us to focus on the species living within this unique ecosystem. It challenges us to learn about our own lives and technologies as well, improving our way of living and becoming more sustainable, striving for a greater degree of harmony with other species. This layer of knowledge is the science of biomimicry. This word comes from the Greek bios for life, and mimesis which means to imitate. Biomimicry is the science and art of consciously emulating life's genius. It is using nature's blueprint to solve the technological and design challenges we face, in a sustainable and often surprising way.

There is an incredible wealth of knowledge contained within each and every species that has evolved to live on this planet. These species face the same conditions and challenges that we face. We need to build structures, have access to clean water and air, and sources of energy that don't pollute. Over time we have found many ways to carry out these functions; to procure energy, make our materials, build our cities and develop technologies. We have patted ourselves on the back and shouted 'bravo' at our achievements. It is not until we look at the natural world and observe how it can achieve similar results that perhaps we see how rudimentary and basic our methods are. It is safe to say we have not always been highly efficient in our attempts to create, build and develop.

The result is the ecological crisis we currently face - climate change, air and water pollution, and food and water scarcity. On the other hand, nature has found ways to build, purify water, produce food, and procure energy while making sure it takes care of the place that is going to provide a home for its offspring. Nature's efficiency is such that there is no such thing as waste in an ecosystem. Biomimicry encourages us to look to nature consciously for ideas and models of sustainable design and, when faced with a challenge, asks the question "What would nature do here?"

'It is not until we look at the natural world and observe how it can achieve similar results that perhaps we see how rudimentary and basic our methods are.'

We create materials such as steel using extreme amounts of heat, pressure and chemicals, resulting in 96% waste product. But how does nature achieve strength? A spider creates silk which, pound for pound, is five times stronger than steel. The spider does this through simple chemistry, using its own body as the 'factory', with no boiling temperatures or harsh chemicals, and no waste. This is the tip of the proverbial iceberg. There are hundreds of really exciting advances that are being made through biomimetic processes. In the world of industry, designers are bringing biologists to

the design table to avail of their understanding of how nature works.

The result? More efficient trains modelled on the head profile of a kingfisher; paint that mimics the self-cleaning properties of a lotus leaf; super-adhesive bandages that are modelled on the structure of a gecko's foot; even bacteria-resistant surfaces inspired by the skin of the Galapagos shark. The moth's eye has shown scientists how to create an anti-reflective coating for solar panels which has significantly increased their efficiency. The dragonfly's wing has inspired panels on a boat called "Solar Sailor", which harness both solar and wind energy.

These exciting advances and developments in science have created a huge opportunity bringing together ecology, biology, design and technology.

As biomimicry encompasses a range of subjects from art to science, technical drawing to maths, it is an excellent way to engage youth in both their own studies and the mounting environmental challenges our society is facing. It is tangible, idealistic, exciting and creative.

It is as much about cell phones as it is about cells.

With the Burren on Ireland's backdoor for young and old alike there is an enormous potential just waiting to be discovered. No matter what your passion, be it the natural world or the technological one, there is something to be learned, discovered and understood from the fascinating species living in such a unique habitat.

by Katy Egan & Sophie Nicol

Katy Egan works as the Ecology & Sustainable Living Officer for *Presentation Ireland*; her postgraduate experience is in environmental education and communication. Sophie Nicol has a doctorate in marine ecology; she has extensive experience of environmental education and increasing public awareness on environmental issues. For further background information, see Janine Benyus' book on Biomimicry: *Innovation Inspired by Nature*.



Bring biomimicry to your school or youth group

Biomimicry is an exciting blend of science, design, technology and art that can bring nature to life for students of all ages and interests. We have a range of experiential workshops with a curriculum base, walks and talks available on this dynamic subject. Workshops and talks can also be arranged for third level and private organisations. For more information, contact:

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Photo by author

HIDDEN TREASURE

It is often said that the Burren is a storehouse of nature's hidden treasures as well as a rich source of archaeological finds, some previously unrecorded. This article is not about any of these! What is less well known is the 'treasure' that has been recently hidden around the Burren (and worldwide), known as geocaches.

In 2003 Geocaching Ireland was established with the aim of creating a 'virtual community' of geocachers. This community shares the common interest of exploring the Irish landscape and discovering hidden caches through the use of Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

This begs the question: *Is geocaching in the Burren a worthwhile pastime or littering under another name?*

It was only recently that this 'new craze' came to our attention and it appears still to be relatively unknown amongst people living in this part of Ireland. Despite this it may surprise you to know that there are over 40 caches scattered around the Burren and north Clare.

The caches generally take the form of a small watertight plastic box or tube containing a log book and, in the larger ones, some 'treasure' which tends to be small knick-knacks much valued by children. Some of these objects are 'trackable' which means they have a code that can be entered online to follow where the object

has been previously. An object can only be removed from the cache if you have something of similar value to replace it with.

We started geocaching in August of 2012 and have already found roughly a third of the Burren geocaches. The ones closer to the road are very suitable for small children, as we have discovered, and so far it has been a fabulous way of encouraging our children to explore the Burren. It has also helped us to discover places that we had not previously visited, for example a less well known ringfort near Kilfenora. Not only this, but our children are learning how far distances really are and how to use a GPS for navigation – not bad for a fun day out in the Burren. We were all suitably impressed to find that some of the trackable objects that we have discovered in the last few months have come to the Burren from as far as Missouri and Hong Kong.

The Geocaching Ireland website tells you all you need to know about geocaching and emphasises responsible placing and visiting of caches and encourages removal of litter en route to the cache. However, it can be argued that there is no control over how many caches are placed in an area and, although they are very discrete and need some effort to find them, they are still foreign objects in the landscape and could be termed litter.

It would be interesting to monitor some of the more remote caches in the Burren to see if there is any environmental impact arising from their placement, for example new footpath formation and cairn building.

Badly placed caches can be removed and reported if necessary, e.g. one Burren cache was hidden in the wall of a monument which, although against the geocaching guidelines, still occurred.

In conclusion we would have to say that geocaching gives a great Burren day out for the family and can take you into some truly beautiful areas that you may not have thought of visiting. All you need is suitable footwear and waterproofs and a GPS (or a GPS app for your smart phone). We will continue to hunt for the rest of these Burren treasures.

by John and Kate Lavender-Duncan

John and Kate Lavender-Duncan moved to the Burren four years ago with their children Niamh and Derry. Since then they have delighted in the pleasures of exploring this landscape with the help of their children. They are both keen outdoors explorers, especially caving. Kate is also a member of the Burrenbeo Trust team.

For more information go to www.geocachingireland.com



photo by Gavin Frankel

From derelict to dazzling; Many contrasts of a single walk

Located only 6km south of Kinvara, and adjoining Slieve Carron Nature Reserve, the small, flat-topped mountain - *Leim an Phuca Mor* (leap of the big ghost) is situated on the easternmost edge of the high Burren. The hike to the 210m peak is moderate, dry underfoot and very enjoyable. Once atop the peak, the view to the east provides a stark vista of the demarcating line between the green and fertile Gort plain and the pale, grey hues of the Burren. Well worth the view.

It was while I was hiking *Leim an Phuca Mor* I come across a ruin of an old farm dwelling, a common but generally inconspicuous feature of the Irish landscape. They are usually engulfed by vegetation, which makes them easy to pass by unnoticed. Sometimes I detect the presence of these ruins by the feral profusion of garden plants such as fuchsia, montbretia, greater periwinkle or privet. I find these ruins fascinating and sad in equal measure. They remind me of the transience of life and how nature ultimately has the last say at our feeble attempts at permanence. How, once, these houses were filled with the chaos of family life - children playing with parents who scolded, laughed, cooked and mended. The contrast is stark and poignant, for a ruin is a desolate, ghost-quiet shell of its former self. I especially dislike the slow peeling away of the roof, allowing rain to soak the dry interior of the house, which eventually weakens

the skeletal frame of wooden roof beams, thereby hastening its demise. But nature is beautiful, even in decay. One can almost sense the silent, enveloping persistence of nature yearning to return the house to ground level. How elderberry trees have taken root in the sitting room and in the kitchen, ivy has slipped in through the cracked windows, past an old blackbird nest on a bookshelf, until finally its tentacles of dark green sprawl across the faded, peeling wallpaper - over the dusty mantelpiece which juts quietly out over the fireplace. As I stand in the chilly sitting room of the old house a raven utters its eerie, guttural call from somewhere above. Time to leave, looks like a shower of rain is coming.

As I ascend the flank of Leim an Phuca Mor I come across an old stone wall. About 5 foot high, the wall is typical of the Burren, with neatly stacked flat stones regularly interspersed with long, vertical stones for extra stability. There are plenty of gaps to allow the passage of the wind through the wall without toppling it over. I sit on the wall - it is remarkably stable. I adore enduring remnants of old craftwork like these, which are not only beautiful but practical. They enhance a landscape and make you appreciate the ingenious ways in which humans use natural resources. I stand back from the wall to admire the sun sieving through the many gaps. To create such elegant work, in such a beautiful

setting, must have been satisfying. There is such an attention to detail and an austere symmetry to its structure I feel compelled to linger awhile, admiring its simple beauty and conjured out of nowhere - a meadow pipit alights on the wall - the first bird I have seen that day.

There are very few birds inhabiting the uplands of the Burren throughout the winter. One such bird, the meadow pipit manages to keep a foothold in this exposed, wind-shorn place. A small, modest bird of mostly soft brown it is a remarkably enduring creature. It favours open areas with some cover, such as the odd gorse bush, but generally speaking they are birds of open habitat. I cannot imagine what it would be like to live here out in the open – exposed to all weathers. In the air, meadow pipits are preyed upon by sparrowhawks and the diminutive merlin. Cuckoos like to lay their eggs in their nests, and terrestrial predators such as the stoat and fox readily feed upon their low nests. Regardless of all these threats, come spring time male meadow pipits will arise from the scant safety of ground cover and begin to ascend, stay in the air for a minute or two, then parachute down on fluttering wings, all the while emitting a shrilling song – the garbled, excited chatter of their territorial claim. Meadow pipits, being birds of open land, resort to singing high up in the air. This enables the frisky males to broadcast their territorial proclamations and attract potential mates. They do not have the full-bodied, melodious song of that other flying songster of open habitats, the skylark, but up here, on a spring day, their song, chaotic as it may be, is a welcome refrain against the constant, background winnowing of the wind.

It was on the flat peak of *Leim an Phuca Mor* that I got a sense of how different the Burren is from other landscapes in Ireland. As I look to the east I can see where the pale stone of the Burren dies out to the rich green pastures of the Gort plain so typical of the rest of Ireland. The contrast is startling. I was glad to be on the pale grey side of the line, ensconced within that paradoxical and mercurial mix of hard stone, open landscape, meadow pipits and the occasional, abandoned building.

by Sean Fagan

Sean Fagan is a biologist and bushcraft instructor. His company, *Pioneer Bushcraft*, provides training in outdoor skills such as navigation, camp-craft, survival, wild food, coastal foraging, nature awareness & tracking. He can be contacted on: pioneerbushcraft@gmail.com



BEING CREATIVE IN THE BURREN

An interview with Robert Ellis

What type of creative work do you do?

As a photographer, I make work that blurs the line between documentary and fine art photography. Essential to my practise is the notion of "truth." While my images appear to be

question about where I was born. If I told people I was from Kinvara, the question followed about my family name and I was then sometimes casually dismissed as a "blow in". It wasn't a conscious judgment on their part, just a way of



a factual account of a place, I like to think that they ask more questions than they answer. The final images that appear in a body of work are edited down from hundreds, and are carefully selected to construct a narrative, that is open to interpretation, while remaining true to the subject matter. I intentionally give away very little and try to create a sense of wonder and intrigue rather than revelation or spectacle.

Why did you start doing what you do?

My family moved to Kinvara when I was very young. While I greatly enjoyed growing up in the locality, there was always an underlying

conversation. However, it did leave this bigger question in my mind, one that when I started making photography started to emerge very clearly. I was curious about the notion of home, and what that is.

What were your main influences in picking your subject matter?

Picking a subject depends on a number of different things. I am always looking for something that is visually interesting, but contains a deeper meaning. Having driven past the New Line community (near to Kinvara) hundreds of times, I always wondered what

was behind the dense hazel scrub that lines the road; the camera gives me a strange permission to explore. This is an initial influence, but as an idea develops, it is extremely important that I believe that I can work with a community, and that they are willing to work with me. I find it essential to work in cooperation, to make a representation of their community.

What attracts you most to working in the Burren?

Having grown up surrounded by the Burren, I love to make work that relies on local or inherent knowledge. However, the thing I love most about the Burren is the challenge it presents in term of representing it. Being such a fantastic landscape, the Burren is no stranger to the tourist gaze. It is easy to be sucked into

representing the Burren as a majestic place untouched or influenced by man, but this is not the Burren that I have come to know. I love the challenge of representing an alternative view, one that is full of human presence and function.

What do you think are its strong points from an artist's point of view?

The Burren is unique in so many ways. Its history, its aesthetic, its features all contribute to its appeal. There are many strands for artists to focus on in order to make contemporary work.



How has your work developed through the years?

I started off making documentary work but as I have grown as an artist, I have realised the limitations, for me, of working within the boundaries of such a genre. Documentary insinuates factual evidence, newspaper reportage, and has a very straight forward philosophy behind it. It assumes that the photograph is an accurate representation because it records exactly what is in front of the lens. In terms of my work, I am not a member of the New Line community so I cannot present a "reality" that I don't know about. I wanted to make a body of work, which references my perspective as an outsider while trying to understand a way of life, a body of work that is more subjective or subtle than documentary.

Which of your works are you happiest with?

To date, I have had the most success with the "New Line" work, but this is not necessarily the reason that I am happiest with it. I have been making this work for nearly four years on and off. At one stage, I hadn't visited the community in maybe six months and I got a bit apprehensive because I hadn't been in touch. After finally getting the time to go back and visit, I wasn't met with any kind of discontentment from lack of contact or questions about the work, I was just offered tea and asked about how I was doing. I am very fond of the place and the community.

Where do you think you want to go with your work?

While making so much work in the Burren, and relying on my own knowledge of a place, I have developed a style or a language that I am excited now to use on other places which I am not so familiar with. I am currently researching a few communities that I have heard about but never seen. I am interested in using the "New Line" work as a platform for making other works that develop on the notion or theme of "home" while being an outsider.

Any advice for aspiring artists in the Burren?

I think it is essential to get an education in your area of interest. I have benefited vastly from my undergraduate and postgraduate studies. I don't think I would be making the work that I do at the moment if not for them. I often get my best ideas while spending time away from the Burren, when given time to reflect on it and studying was a great way for me to do this.

What is coming up for you in 2013?

2013 is already looking busy for me. I will be teaching evening classes in photography, along with a one month Summer School and week-long workshop in August at the Burren College of Art. For further information about any of these, visit www.burrencollege.ie. I also have some ideas for a new body of work, while trying to get a bit more exposure with the "New Line" work. Some exhibitions are already in prospect but with no fixed dates yet.

Robert Ellis grew up in Kinvara. He graduated from the University of Ulster in 2011 with a Masters in Fine Art Photography. Since then his work has been exhibited extensively both at home and abroad. Most recently his work was featured in a show titled *Project 30 – Emerging views of Ireland* in the Gallery of Photography (Dublin), also his work was shown in *Blow your mind* at Botschaft Von Irland as part of the European Month of Photography (Berlin) and *Open Now* in Gallery Nine (Belfast). His work has been published in Prism Photography magazine (Dublin), selected by Jean-Luc Monterosso, (director Maison Européenne de la Photographie) on Le Journal de la Photographie (Paris) and subsequently was among twenty photographers nominated for best portfolio of 2012. His work was also featured in Aperture's *What Matters Now* (New York). All photos are the author's own.

www.robertellis.eu

'WHILE MY IMAGES APPEAR TO BE A FACTUAL ACCOUNT OF A PLACE, I LIKE TO THINK THAT THEY ASK MORE QUESTIONS THAN THEY ANSWER.'

Reading a landscape

When we visit a place for the first time we like to go prepared. We read the tourist literature or the accounts of others, who have visited before us, so that we will know what to expect and what to look out for – where the highlights are – so that we won't miss anything important. But valuable (and indeed essential) as such advance preparation is, it can mislead – even blind us – to important things. It's a bit like birdsong. You can walk through a park and come out at the other end without having heard anything, even though a dozen different species were singing. You did hear, but you weren't listening.

What you read and hear beforehand moulds the way you look at landscape. You may get a somewhat different picture if you attend also to what the landscape itself is telling you: if you use the landscape itself as the primary document. This is especially important if it is the intention of the authorities that we view a particular place in a certain light.

As you prepare for your first visit to the Nature Reserve at Keelhill there is plenty for you to read. For the naturalist there are lists of plants and animals; the archaeologist and antiquarian can consult the *Record of Monuments and Places* or any of the several excellent guide books and websites on the Burren. And there you will read the wonderful tale of Colmán mac Duagh who, fired with the enthusiasm of Early Irish Christianity for the desert hermits of Egypt, came here in search of his own hermitage, choosing this place because it was out of the way of human traffic and distraction and hence closer to God, a place hidden deep in the rocky woods of the Burren where nobody ever came. Here he lived with his one servant for seven long years, spending his days and nights praying and fasting, their only food what the wilderness could provide: until that famous Christmas day when their retreat was discovered by royal visitors from Kinvara.

All that remains today is the little church that was built as Colmán's saintly fame grew and a community gathered around him, the holy well adjacent that bears his name, and the little cave

in the rocks above, where he is said to have had his bed. What also remains – for those who know in what direction to seek it out across the scrub-covered limestone – is the strange amphitheatre of flat, grike-slashed pavement upon which the hooves of the horses of the King's retinue, who discovered Colmán's hideaway that Christmas day, and the pawprints of the hounds that accompanied them, are still to be seen, frozen in perpetuity into the rock by the miraculous hand of the saint.

'You may get a somewhat different picture if you attend also to what the landscape itself is telling you: if you use the landscape itself as the primary document.'

The Carron landscape tells a different story. To begin with, it harbours one of the densest concentrations of fulachta fiadh anywhere in the Burren, attesting to large-scale agricultural use in prehistoric times. These are located along the several spring-lines that run across the stepped limestone: some even perched on ledges in the cliff of Eagle's Rock itself. Colmán's hermitage is located beside one of the most prolific of these springs (indeed, adjacent to one of the fulachta fiadh).

And it is far from being a place where only a meagre repast of hazel nuts and pignuts, water-cress and wild garlic might stock the eremitical larder. Look more carefully at how the landscape changes as you approach the hermitage. As you leave the limestone pavement, you enter the monastic precincts (you may fail to notice this because the perimeter wall has collapsed and is hidden in scrub). You find yourself on a green, flowery sward, one of several moraine whalebacks that surround the hermitage, a great tract of fertile ground in which the monks could grow their oats and barley, as had countless generations before them, back to the lost people to whose

lives the fulachta fiadh bear witness.

If you look more carefully now at the wood, beyond the church and well, you will find it is divided into small compartments by walls that run out from the cliff, and which are closed-off by a wall at right angles that once kept animals out: and a strangely prolific dominance of wild garlic unusual in these hazel woods. These are the well-watered gardens in whose tended soil they grew their cabbages and leeks. The tracery of collapsed walls makes it possible for us – more readily now that GPS enables us to plot their scrub-encroached winding course with relative ease – the intimate geography of a prosperous, self-sufficient community whose choice of this place echoed its selection by a succession of earlier peoples because of its favoured landscape endowment of soil and water, and the relative solitude bestowed by its location: a fertile oasis in its desert of rock.

All of this the landscape tells us. We need no books. And the picture that emerges sheds a new and different light on the early Christians of Carron, who came to a place shrewdly and knowledgeably assessed for its support potential, and then anchored their story in the semi-mythical Colmán, whose tale cast a Christian veil over the pagan people from whom they inherited the land: and whose ritual amphitheatre with its mysterious prints of hoof and paw was transformed by a tale that cast a saintly Christian aura over its earlier ritual significance.

by John Feehan

John Feehan has recently retired from his post as senior lecturer at the School of Agriculture and Food Science at UCD, where he lectured in sustainable agriculture, resource management and landscape interpretation. He is well known for his writings on the Irish landscape, including *Farming in Ireland: history, heritage and environment* (2003). He is the author of the geology chapters in *The Book of the Burren* and *The Book of Aran*, and presented a programme on the Burren in his award-winning television series *Exploring the Landscape* many years ago. His Agricultural History Study Group is currently looking at the landscape of Carron.



CAISLEÁN GEARR REVISITED



North of Parknabinnia the road from Killinaboy to Carron crosses the high commons and descends into the valley of *Gleann Chorráin* (Glencurran) before rising gradually to the higher ground of Tullycommon. To the east of the road within the valley, perched on a large limestone outcrop, lies the cashel *Caisleán Gearr*. T.J.Westropp appropriately described it as 'like the acropolis of some lost city'. Due to the dense hazel woodland and scrub which now engulfs Gleann Chorráin, this once prominent stone fort is now virtually hidden from the road, particularly in the summer months.

What makes *Caisleán Gearr* exceptional amongst the large number of cashels in the Burren is its irregular shape around the edge of the outcrop, with sides which vary from cliffs to steep rocky slopes. Only the most determined explorer can trace the moss-covered walls of enclosures and fields now concealed by the valley woodlands. It is almost certain that these are associated with the cashel. Westropp's obvious interest in the fort is shown in his published drawings and photographs dating from the early 20th century. These encouraged the writer to survey the monument some years ago which confirmed that, despite a further century of collapse and erosion, most of the features he noted are still discernible.

At a height of 400ft above sea level *Caisleán Gearr* overlooks the Glencurran valley and, as the walls follow the perimeter of the plateau on which it stands, it is irregular in shape being 46.5m north-south by 27.5m east-west. In one or two places the walls appear to stand at or near their original height (c.4m) but in others they have disappeared altogether, having collapsed

down the steep slopes. In most places only the base of the wall remains. The level of the base of the wall externally varies dramatically as the wall follows the contours of the edge of the outcrop. The walls vary in thickness from 2m to 3.7m and, due to the nature of the construction, they are much higher externally than internally.

The walls are built of dry random rubble limestone, faced internally and externally with large blocks, and with a rubble core between. Some long tie-stones were used for stability. A good section of wall, rising up to c.14m above the valley floor, survives at the north end. It has a vertical joint, a feature of many of the large cashels in the Burren - it represents the meeting of work by different groups of masons [a service provided by clients to their overlord].

The entrance to the cashel is on the east side and is 2m wide and 3.7m long; the wall is widest here. Its floor is covered with fallen masonry but appears to have sloped up to the interior. Whether this is totally due to fallen masonry is impossible to tell without excavation. In contrast to the southern side of the entrance the northern side, where large quoins stones were used, is in good repair. There are the remains of two walls of poorer masonry forming an extension of the entrance passage into the cashel towards a central hut site. Outside the entrance, some long slabs at the base of the steep slope may have been lintels from above the entrance.

A sheer cliff forms the south-east end of the cashel and here the wall follows a zig-zag course with sharp angles as the outer face following exactly the line of the cliff. At the south-west corner, where the natural limestone

is at its highest and forms a natural boundary which the wall adjoins, any masonry which may have been used to increase the height no longer remains. There is evidence of structures [possibly chambers] within or attached to the collapsed walls in several places.

The interior of the cashel is covered in a thick growth of rough grasses and some scrub. Without Westropp's plan of the fort it would now be impossible to locate some of the hut sites with certainty. That at the centre of the fort is discernible by a few protruding stones through the grass and scrub. The remains of three huts at the northern end are completely covered by grass with some stones visible through disturbance by wild animals and feral goats, the only regular visitors to the cashel nowadays.

The hidden nature of *Caisleán Gearr* today is in stark contrast to its prominent position in the landscape during its heyday. It is difficult to imagine how impressive and intimidating it would have been with its gleaming limestone walls high above the valley. Westropp's photograph in 1917, in a much clearer landscape but even then with collapsed walls, gives some idea of its status.

The construction of *Caisleán Gearr* must have been a major undertaking with the hoisting of the large blocks of masonry up the steep slopes being very labour intensive. The quality of the masonry is very good and the construction of the walls along the cliff edge in places quite remarkable. The extended family group that occupied this cashel must have been quite powerful and one wonders at the relationship they would have had with their illustrious neighbours living in Cahercommaun, a mere 630m to the east. Without historical references to either fort, *Caisleán Gearr*'s archaeological secrets will remain locked in its remaining crumbling structures pending an excavation.

The ongoing survey and recording of monuments is an essential element in the preservation of information on our heritage. The Burren offers huge potential for groups such as the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers to add to Westropp's valuable century-old legacy of photographs, drawings and surveys of the archaeology of the Burren.

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.

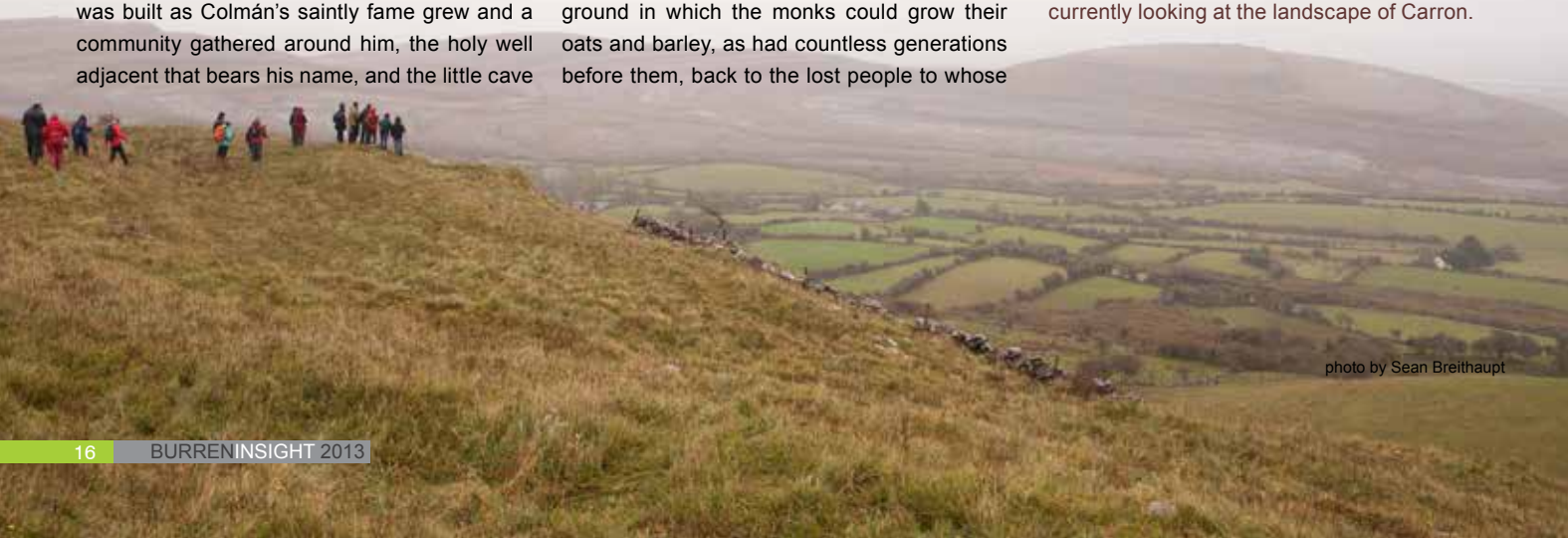


photo by Sean Breithaupt

Paddy Hynes is a retired Carron local aged 84, well known for his stories and recitations. Here he shares his memories of his life and farming in the Burren with Geraldine Greene, a cuairteoir with Cuimhneamh an Chláir.

CAPTURING THE PAST

Paddy grew up in Crughwill, one of a family of seven. His earliest memory is of bonfires blazing outside Jones's to mark de Valera's election in 1932. His school days were very different from those of today; teachers were paid according to results and learning by rote and punishment were common. His early schooling was through Irish and indeed he can effortlessly recite many facts "as Gaeilge". Carron had two teachers in the one-roomed school (where the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme office is now based). In those days it was partitioned by large maps and the boys and girls also had separate playgrounds. Each family paid 2 shillings weekly for coal, the school being the only building in Carron to burn coal then. Challenge games in football between neighbouring schools were played, often using a pig's bladder as a football. Boys wore short pants to school. Carron school choir won the Plain Chant Competition for two years in succession under the direction of the Miss O'Sullivan. The inspector gave Paddy a poem "Seamus O'Brien" to learn for his next visit; that was probably the start of his great career!

His mother made their clothes, including dresses for his 4 sisters. His father bought a suit for £1 and a hat for one shilling after selling a heifer for £13 at Ennistymon fair. There were four shops in Carron up to 1960s; today there are more.

Paddy bought his first bike for £8 in 1940. He cycled to his sisters' boarding school in Kinvara on Sundays, taking them food. The first car he saw was in the late 1930s. Renowned horse-races were held in Carron but were banned by the priest because of rows and replaced by athletics and cycling races. Electrification came in the late 1950s; before that they washed in a large galvanised tub in front of the fire on Saturday nights. The house had a dry toilet. As a boy, Paddy set snares for rabbits which were rampant; some were kept for their own use, the rest were sold at ½ crown each to a Gort man who came to Carron weekly.

The local postman, Kerin, known as the weather man, claimed that "a cap on top of Mt Callan" indicated that the day was suitable for cutting hay or turf. Paddy's father bought turf "by the step" between Lisdoonvarna & Kilfenora; neighbours helped in the bog in exchange for service from their bull. Cow dung was occasionally used as fuel.

His family farmed in Carron and Deelin and had no winterage. They kept cattle, sheep, goats and fowl. They had two pairs of horses and 48 acres of tillage, growing sugar beet, wheat, corn,

oats & barley. They kept milk cows for butter-making; skimmed milk was fed to the calves and some retained for their own use. The younger family members were reared on goats' milk. Five pigs and a sheep were killed annually and geese around Christmas and goat kids in Spring. With self-sufficiency they were hardly affected by rationing in the war years.

Paddy learned farming from his father and two uncles who lived with them. He learnt ploughing from Tadhg Walsh of Boston who warned that he had to have "no clay on the board of the wheel-plough when coming into the headland". From the early 1940s, he recalls getting up in the dark to round up cattle and walking to the fairs in Ennistymon. Other fairs attended were Kilfenora (cattle), Corofin (lambs), Tubber and Kinvara (sheep).

After threshing, salting the pig and hay-making, there were great nights of music and dancing in the house.

The blacksmiths were Curtis in Kilnaboy and Naughton in Boston. When the head of the house died, it was customary to sell the horse and he recalls their fine horse being sold when his father died. He bought his first tractor in early 1960s. Farmers and even the priest grew ½ acre of compulsory wheat during World War II (for starving Europe); eight army men helped to cut their wheat during the bad harvest of 1947. To prevent bad luck, people put cows in on May Night, fearing their butter or cream would be taken; they believed that meeting a red headed woman going to the fair brought bad luck. His grandfather Patsy Hynes played the fiddle at house dances and his two uncles played concertina and fiddle while his mother and siblings danced a full set in the house. They danced Caledonian and Plain sets; dancing was compulsory when he was a teenager! The dancing master stayed in various townlands in Carron during the winter months, playing the violin/tin-whistle as he taught step-dancing. Paddy remembers platform/crossroads dancing held locally though he was very young at the time.

Cuimhneamh an Chláir is a community-based organisation which records and shares the memories, customs and traditions characteristic of Co. Clare; these may represent the last link to an older way of life. Cuairteoirí (volunteer recorders) have recorded 500 people's recollections to date. For further information on the organisation or how you can help see www.clarememories.ie or contact Tomás MacConmara on 087 9160373.

Photo by Gavin Frankel

photo by Sean Breithaupt

THE BURREN ATLAS PROJECT

After a talk to the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers a few years ago on archaeologist Christine Grant's Burren Atlas Project, I asked her whether myself and my partner could help volunteer to map the archaeological sites of the Burren.

The Burren Atlas Project was established in order to survey the large number of unrecorded archaeological remains surviving on the Burren uplands. This follows on from previous projects. The first was a pilot project, commissioned by the Heritage Council, to assess the impact of scrub encroachment on archaeology and habitats and future requirements for the conservation of these resources. The second was a collaborative research project carried out under the Irish National Strategic Archaeological Research programme. The use of satellite and air-photo imagery was used as a baseline mapping resource.

This type of mapping allows for the creation of a full map of an area including all man-made features, a typology of all walls and a set of data that can be analysed for any application related to the study of the man-made landscape.

The Burren is a large area and field mapping of features is a time-consuming activity. Christine decided to see whether interested amateurs could be trained using remote imagery, to the point where their data could be used in the Burren Atlas. We were the guinea pigs used to assess the viability of Christine's idea.

Christine provided us with a satellite image of the townland of Lissylisheen (west of Kilcorney and extending up to the junction between the limestone and the shale rocks) together with a separate baseline computer-generated map which consisted of the presumed man-made features which she had identified from the satellite image.

Armed with our satellite image and base map, as well as a camera, compass and GPS, we set out to begin mapping part of Lissylisheen townland – an area roughly 1 km square. We were tasked with field-walking the area and ground-truthing the features outlined on the base map. Having identified these features, we then colour-coded them onto the base map. The

features we colour-coded included walls, both ancient and modern, cairns, cashels and ruined cottages. We carried out this survey at the beginning of the year when it was easier to see subtle features on the ground, such as ancient mound walls, which are low-lying and difficult to see when the grass is long in summer. At first, it was a slightly daunting task as the area was a particularly complex one in terms of human activity over the millennia. But after a while, as we became more familiar with our surroundings and with some help from Christine, who accompanied us on an early visit, it became an ever more fascinating and fun thing to do like fitting the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle together.

What did we find? We found little evidence for prehistoric activity around the ruins of Lissylisheen castle or tower house, probably because this was the area of densest human habitation over the millennia with traces of early settlement being largely obliterated by later inhabitants. Close by the castle were three cashels, several abandoned cottages and a bawn associated with Lissylisheen castle. Nearby too we found a low lying (15m) stretch of what could have been an ancient mound wall leading to a small cairn. Criss-crossing the surveyed area as a whole was a series of ruined slab walls which surrounded tiny fields some of which seemed to have been associated with at least one of the cashels.

All-in-all we revealed a really complicated pattern of fields and structures. It took roughly 11 visits (50 man hours) in the field and perhaps as long again deciphering, interpreting and discussing the data, before we were done. It was a challenging, sometimes frustrating, but always intriguing project and surely an approach that could greatly enhance our knowledge of Burren archaeology.

by Aileen Treacy

Aileen Treacy retired from Trinity College in 2011 where she worked as an administrator with the School of Pharmacy. Since then she has lived more or less full time in the Burren. She is a Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer, has a keen interest in the archaeology of the Burren and has worked on digs at Caherconnell and Fanore More.



Any botanist or naturalist who grows up in Britain soon hears of the Burren, a remote mythical region famous for its remarkable collection of plants with origins in all quarters of Europe.

I first visited The Burren over 40 years ago, and – although it was September, raining, and well past the best flowering period - I was immediately entranced and began planning to return at a better time. Since then, I have been back a number of times, initially on my own but later bringing groups of naturalists to share what I had found. Its reputation is wholly justified and has largely escaped the vast changes in agricultural practices and social structure that we have witnessed elsewhere in these islands over the last 40 years. A few years ago, I began compiling an open-ended list of sites for a book *Wildflower Wonders of the World* (New Holland 2011) on the most spectacularly flowery places in the world; in the end, I had to cut it down to just 50 sites, but the Burren stayed firmly on the list, up there with the Californian deserts, Namaqualand, Mount Rainier and the rest.

Visiting botanists are intrigued by the strange mixtures of plants to be found here, an unlikely amalgam of Arctic, Alpine and Mediterranean species, together with the general plants of Ireland. The spectacularly blue spring gentian *Gentiana verna*, for example, occurs in vast quantities throughout the Burren, including the Aran Islands, yet only occurs in much smaller quantity in the British Isles in Upper Teesdale, beyond which it's an Alpine plant of the high mountains of Europe and beyond.

By contrast mountain avens *Dryas octopetala*, a beautiful sprawling member of the rose family with large creamy-white 8-petalled saucer-shaped flowers, is essentially an Arctic plant, occurring throughout the world's boreal regions, though with outposts in mountains further south. Yet in the Burren it occurs in its millions, from barren hilltops down to sheltered coastal sites (though curiously not on any of the islands); frequently it's so abundant as to be impossible to avoid treading on the flowers.

Another Burren specialty is the pretty yellow hoary rockrose *Helianthemum oelandicum*, confined in Britain to a few western coastal sites where it is very rare, yet here it is abundant on many a grassy limestone hillside. This is essentially a warmth-loving plant, most at home on the limestone *causses* of southern France, or the hot hills of northern Italy, yet doing well here in the cool Atlantic climate of western Ireland.

Perhaps the strangest of all is the Irish or dense-flowered orchid *Neotinia maculata*, an inconspicuous pink, white or greenish-white tiny flowering spike. Otherwise, this is



almost confined to the Mediterranean regions of Europe, such as Spain or Greece, many hundred miles to the south of Ireland.

For the visiting botanist, it is a pleasure to see these special plants, not just for their beauty and abundance, but also to ponder on the strange question of just why they grow together here. There is no simple answer, but in essence it lies in the Burren's particular combination of geology, climate and recent history. By the end of the last ice age, about 15,000 years ago, the Burren had been scraped bare by ice, leaving it open to cold-loving plants spreading north as the ice retreated. At that time, Ireland was connected by land bridges to mainland Europe, paving the way for waves of early colonisers such as mountain avens. As the climate ameliorated, so warmth-demanding species followed, and the early colonisers were pushed out by the growth of woodlands with their more competitive species. But the harsh limestone geology of the Burren allowed elements of the ice-age colonisers to linger on. With the clearance of forests to produce open grazing land, these species spread out into new niches.

And because Ireland became an island, separated both from Britain and Europe, it was left with a smaller range of species than either. As is often the case on islands, reduced competition enables species that are present to find new niches and this may be why, for example, the spring gentian or mountain avens are so abundant in such a range of habitats. Whilst the current remarkably mild climate of the Burren lacks the heat of a Mediterranean summer, it does have winters similar to those of southern Europe, allowing warmth-loving southern species to survive.

For even the less serious naturalist and casual tourist, the flowers of the Burren provide ample reason to visit. They are spectacular in their colours, scents and extent. There are few other places in the world where you can see so many different species growing together in such spectacular abundance amidst such magnificent scenery.

by Bob Gibbons

Dr Bob Gibbons is a British botanist, photographer and author. After many years working in nature conservation, he now earns his living running botanical tours, writing books and taking photographs all over the world. Photographs are author's own.

www.naturalhistorytravel.co.uk

Goats are beautiful, inquisitive animals. They are caring and loyal, each with a distinctive character. I have an absolute love for these animals and dedicate my time to working in partnership with them every day. It all started with Ginny, eleven years ago now. As a goatling of six months old, she found herself astray from the wild goat herd. So I took her in and tamed her. She formed the basis of the Avalla goat herd. In 2009, I decided develop a goat enterprise on the family farm. The ethos of the business is a holistic and natural approach to animal husbandry and production, working in tune with nature, and producing top quality products.

In 2000 our family of seven left Holland and moved to the unique and, for us, completely new landscape of the Burren. I can honestly say that it gave a new direction and lease of life to all of us. Our 200-acre organic farm consists of the oval-shaped Lough Avalla, 20 acres of grassland, and the remainder is made up of winterage, bare rock and hazel woodland. The farm is stocked with cattle, sheep and now a herd of goats.

Currently the Avalla herd consists of 42 in-kid nannies (female), 15 goatlings and 2 breeding pucks (male). All the goats are individually named, and many respond to their name. Most of the herd still has genetic links to the Old Irish Goat, with dairy crosses bred in in recent years. The herd is outside all year round and is free to roam the whole farm.

Goats are natural browsers, not grazers. Throughout the year they consume a mixed diet of herbs, shrubs and, occasionally, grass - mainly in spring and late summer when they are looking for a protein boost. Autumn brings a treat for them, hazelnuts! Hazel scrub plays an important part in their diet all year round; they happily consume foliage, buds, bark, nuts and, especially during the winter months, catkins. The

goats are given powdered seaweed all year round and, one month prior to and one month after kidding, organic concentrates.

Kidding starts in January and takes place in the goat shed to protect kids from predators. All kids, regardless of gender are reared by their mothers for the first 3-4 months. Female kids are either retained for breeding or sold in pairs.* Male kids are castrated at 2 months old. At 3-4 months old they are brought to a local butcher, and the meat is sold to people and restaurants in the locality.

Once the kids are weaned, the goats are hand-milked once a day until October. In the spring, milking takes place on the mountain, but by early summer the goat herd is brought down daily for milking in the shed. The goats are never over-milked for production. The fresh, warm milk is processed immediately by hand into a Gouda style cheese, cream cheese and yogurt. The Gouda cheese is matured from six weeks up to seven months; it is a very mild flavoured creamy cheese.

Goats' milk is well known for its health benefits; it is a very beneficial and nutritious complete food source. The milk is low in lactose and cholesterol and is known to ease the effects of asthma and allergies. Goats' milk is also naturally "homogenized", its small fat particles aiding fast digestion. Whereas goats' milk is digested in 20 minutes, cows' milk can take up to 24 hours.

Goat meat is also a healthy alternative to other meats. It is low in fat, cholesterol, calories and

saturated fat. It is:

- over 50% lower in fat than beef;
- 40% lower in saturated fat than chicken (with the skin removed);
- 1.5 times higher in iron than beef;
- and has an equal protein content to beef.

It is a truly beneficial, healthy and tender food source, reared naturally, freely and happy.

The Burren is an idyllic location for the goats. Living here, surrounded by raw beauty and goodness, is a privilege. While the goat enterprise is just a one person operation; it is hands-on and quite time consuming. However, it is a real opportunity, through the goats, to conserve, utilize and benefit from this unique landscape.

by Melissa Jeuken

Avalla Goats products range is available on-farm, if interested please contact Melissa on 086-8122410. This farm is part of the Lough Avalla loop walk which starts at Gortlecka Crossroads on the edge of the Burren National Park. Each Spring, a beautiful selection of kids look for loving homes, if interested contact Melissa as above.

*Goats are sold in pairs; because goats are true companion animals, and need to be with another of their species to be truly content.



Photo by Eamon Ward

The Burren Community Charter

Too often policies and decisions are made without meaningful community input and engagement. The Burren Community Charter started life in late 2010, with the aim of allowing the Burren community to shape its own future. The Charter was developed to meet the need for an integrated and strategic approach towards the Burren's landscape, heritage and communities. Four Burren organisations have coordinated the development of the Charter to date; the Burrenbeo Trust, the Burren Connect Project, the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme and the Burren Irish Farmers' Association along with support from the Heritage Council and the Heritage Officers in Galway and Clare County Councils.

Following research and public consultation a draft Charter for the Burren was launched in 2012. The public were invited to comment on the document, which comprises two parts – the project background and research, followed by the proposed Burren Community Charter. In 2013 it is hoped that all relevant state agencies, local community groups and the Charter Advisory Group will 'sign up' to and then integrate the Charter into their organisations and work practises.

Along with work on the progression of the

Charter, 2012 was also the inaugural year for four very successful Burren Community Charter projects: The Burren Winterage Weekend; an audit of heritage education provision in the Burren; a series of recordings of the oral history of the Burren; and the coordination of pilot Burren resource clinics. Each of these projects came about in light of queries raised during public consultations.

While there are a number of festivals held in Clare and Galway, there has been to date no celebration specific to the Burren and its people. The inaugural *Burren Winterage Weekend*, held over the October bank holiday, highlighted the unique farming traditions of the Burren. It was established to reveal the Burren's identity and celebrate the people and their way of life. The weekend was a resounding success, and something which it is planned to repeat.

The second project, an audit of heritage education provision in the Burren, has provided an excellent overview of current resources. This will provide the basis for future work addressing how best to meet gaps within heritage education in the region.

The Charter team worked alongside Clare-based oral recording group, Cuimhneah an

Chláir on the third project to collect oral history on the traditional farming methods in the Burren. The recordings strengthen the background and baseline knowledge available on the winterage tradition and it is hoped will form part of an ongoing process of recordings in the area.

The final project arose from another issue highlighted in the public consultation; the difficulties people can face in contacting state bodies and organisations when they need to know about issues on the ground. The pilot Burren Resource Clinics were established to address this difficulty. Topics covered were; funding, planning and heritage. The clinics brought together state bodies, local organisations and the public, opening up dialogues and answering a range of queries.

The Burren Community Charter is an ongoing, continuing process. As developments and research become available the document will evolve accordingly, continually focusing on what the community requires and how this can be achieved. It is hoped that in 2013, should funding be allocated, the Charter process will continue to progress and to build upon the projects which were so successful in 2012.

by Áine Bird

MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE FERAL

The Burren Community Charter is an evolving document on the Burrenbeo Trust website (www.burrenbeo.com). If you wish to comment on the charter or have any further queries about the it, please contact the Charter Administrator, Áine Bird on 091 638096 or charter@burrenbeo.com.



CAHER RIVER

a portrait

In any other place the Caher River wouldn't be considered in any way special. It would be nothing more than just another average stream running through the countryside.

In the Burren, however, the Caher holds a unique position. As in other limestone karst areas most rivers make their way underground and only visit the surface on occasion, if at all. Not so for the Caher River. It is the only river in the Burren that stays above ground from source to sea.

The river starts its journey in the shadows of Slieve Elva and Poulacapple and from there it flows along the Caher Valley. It is thought that the significant number of ringforts, or cahers, in the area gave the name to both valley and river. These ringforts however are not the only sign that the side-valleys along the Caher River have been inhabited by men for a long time. A fulacht fiadh (cooking place), the panel chapel of Fermoye with its nearby children's burial ground and the village of Caherbannagh, which was wiped out during the famine, are examples of the long and rich history of the area.

The heart of Caher Valley is a small forest, mainly made of hazel and other shrubs, which is bounded by the river. It is one of the major strongholds of the pine marten in the Burren and the sheltered conditions host a multitude of wildflowers. John McNamara, a local man from Fanore, turned this little piece of heaven into a nature reserve and opened it to the public in 2000. Tragically and

unexpectedly John passed away in 2004 and unfortunately the reserve has been closed ever since.

For the majority of its course the Caher River is a slow-flowing and gentle stream, rarely more than ankle deep and during dry periods it can disappear almost completely. For the last part of its journey through the 'Khyber Pass' however the Caher turns into a majestic mountain stream. Over 2km the river drops a total of 60 meters, rushing over cascades and forming deep eddies overshadowed by soft cliffs. Especially in winter or after heavy rain the Caher river is a truly impressive and beautiful sight. The oddly named Khyber Pass most likely got its name from a local man who had served with the British army in India and who made a connection with the famous pass that connects Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The only fish recorded in the river are brown trout and European eel. The birdlife is a bit more varied with dipper, grey wagtail and grey heron being regularly seen along the river.

The Caher finally reaches the sea after a run of only 6km in Fanore where it runs across the wide sandy beach into the Atlantic Ocean.

by Carsten Kreiger

Carsten Krieger is one of Ireland's most published landscape photographers. So far he has photographed, written and contributed to 7 books on Ireland's landscape and nature, including *The Fertile Rock*, *The Wildflowers of Ireland* and *Ireland's Coast*. His new project *The Burren – Portraits of the Fertile Rock* brings him back to the place where he started his career a decade ago. For the coming 2 years or so Carsten will put together a collection of photo essays on all things Burren: Its landscape, its wildlife and its people. You can follow the project at <http://thefertilerock.blogspot.ie> or visit his website www.carstenkrieger.com for updates.

photos by Carsten Kreiger



Coastalgatherings



Grey Heron

Birds at Fanore, the Caher Valley & Black Head

Secreted within Fanore in the northwest corner of the Burren lie a number of special places. No matter what time of the year you visit, it has a distinctive feel with its own microclimate. Fine examples of Burren habitats make it an area of international scientific interest which forms part of the Black Head to Poulsallagh complex Special Area of Conservation. The limestone pavement, adjoining heath and the marine shoreline are particularly noteworthy, while the plant communities contain a high density of rare and interesting species such as hoary rockrose *Helianthemum oelandicum* and the Irish orchid *Neotinia maculata*.

But what is known of the birds which frequent these habitats? The whole region is excellent for birds, especially the beach and sand dunes which stretch north of the Caher River for over 1km. In crevices within Black Head black guillemots breed. Black-throated divers winter in large numbers just off-shore.

The Caher River flows down through Fanore from higher ground within the Burren. This shallow, spring-fed stream is only about 6 km long and during dry periods it flows through

limestone underground for some of its course. The lower section flows over limestone bedrock and periodically dries out, during hot summers! Nevertheless the river has a healthy population of trout and fresh-water invertebrates which provide food for dippers, grey wagtails and grey heron. The upper river is heavily shaded by hazel and other scrub supporting luxuriant lichens. Here blackcaps, whitethroats, willow warblers, chiffchaffs, chaffinches, greenfinches and goldfinches all take advantage of this native wooded scrub to live and nest.

In summer, the rocky valleys echo to the call of male cuckoos which return from Africa in mid-April. The female cuckoo is a great bird-watcher and parasitizes small birds by laying single eggs in the nests of host species such as wheatear, meadow pipit, stonechat, reed bunting, skylark and willow warblers which then rear the young cuckoo.

As autumn approaches various species of gull, along with sandwich and Arctic terns which breed on islands in Galway Bay or further north, rest on the beach and preen. They are joined by locally bred waders which feed close to the tide-line and include ringed plover, redshank and oystercatcher. Other waders pass through on their migration to West Africa; including

sanderling, often to be seen following the waves out in search of food and then dashing back as the wave turns and turnstones which feed among the seaweed and are so well camouflaged as to be almost invisible.

Auks including guillemot, black guillemot and razorbill which probably bred at nearby colonies at the Cliffs of Moher or around Black Head can be seen swimming in the surf. With the onset of winter further north, brent geese arrive from Arctic Canada, along with the great northern divers which feed on crabs and other crustaceans.

No matter when you visit Fanore and Black Head, you stand a chance of a good day's bird watching.

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 produced various series on wildlife for TG4. His new book *Birds of Fanore* will be released this year. All the photos are the author's own. For more information go to www.clarebirdwatching.com or www.waxwingfilms.ie

Skylark



Ringed Plover



Sanderling



Turnstone



Brent Goose



Black Guillemot



John's new book 'Birds of Fanore' will be released this year.

Single to the Burren By Lila Stuart

In the back garden
Limp lilac blossom hung idly
Already beginning to rust.
Peonies bled accusingly
Having opened in our absence.
The clematis clung to the garage wall
Faded now to the colour of a Burren dawn.
Virginia Creeper framed the French door
Stealing the light and
Blocking the warmth of the sun.
Rosemary swayed, fernlike
In among overgrown parsley,
While oregano spilt over the edge
Of the black iron pot.

There was a glimpse of a soft green Divis
Lifting her misty skirts
Out the top corner of the kitchen window
But I longed for the grey nakedness
Of Mullaghmore.

The tap dripped and I delved again
Into Doolin Cave where the drip drip there
Paid constant homage to the majesty
Of the limestone chandelier
Growing down
At the rate
Of one
Millimetre
A year.

The porridge splattered on the stove
And small volcanoes erupted on its surface
Recreating the cool rock curdled
Ceiling of the cave.
The calendar stared down from the wall,
The Burren escape days highlighted,
Fading now from cowslip yellow
To insipid cream
And June's stepping stones of appointments
Left grykes of emptiness -
Fertile spaces for a network
Of shrivelled urgencies.

The day before our grandchildren's
School fair in Dublin,
I stood at the ticket window

Of Central Station, Belfast
And absentmindedly asked for
'A single to the Burren'.

The Winterage Weekend



a Photographer's Impression

The good thing about being a photographer is that you find yourself being sucked into other people's daily lives, sometimes tolerated for a moment while you take their portrait, other times welcomed for hours while they walk you through their world. Last October I was invited to document the Winterage Weekend in Carron. I had a great vantage point from my window in the local hostel, looking across a glen with stone-walled fields to a rocky mountain behind which the sun rose each morning.

I knew little about the Burren and nothing of the tradition of Winterage; every face I met was a new one. I was enlightened about the role of cattle in shaping the landscape - that

for centuries cattle had been put out to graze the Burren highlands during the winter months; how this had cut back the blanket of native hazel scrub, leaving dry stone exposed for the cattle to lie on and, in between, the fertile ground famed for its Burren flowers in all their beauty. As I looked across the landscape I understood for the first time what I was seeing: a unique environment, its appearance entirely dependent on Winterage. Naturally, the first picture I took was of a cow, watching me gently.

Over the weekend I took this same photo many times, showing cattle in their element, along with other images of what is 'past, passing, and to come' as Yeats once perfectly put it;

of communities pulling together, sharing their memories of past traditions and perhaps anxiously anticipating the future. There were still moments too, of people watching time pass, of the birds singing in the blackberry bushes outside my window, and one evening I watched the last rays of the setting sun through gaps in the clouds.

All around us the Burren was very much alive. To me the Winterage Weekend was a celebration of all this and of a way of life that was once common place, now perhaps in need of support and revival.

My three days in the Burren were to be filled

with excitement and exploration. The festival brochure in my pocket, I set off, my activities of choice circled as it was impossible to see it all. First of all I walked through the ruins of a herdsman's cottage and photographed lush plants now sprouting from an iron oven. I attended a talk by a witch about ancient Celtic times and visited a shorthorn cattle mart where I was made dizzy by the speed of the auctioneer's chant that everybody except me seemed to understand. I listened to recordings of local stories in the Tubber Village Hall and sat in an ancient fort on a cliffside. I climbed Mullagh More just in time to see swans flying over a nearby lake and stood by a dolmen thousands of years old. I helped count cattle in a field and

took part in a cattle drive from Willie O'Reilly's farm to his winterage pastures near Carron. At Cassidy's isolated Burren Inn, I tapped my feet to the Kilfenora Céilí Band whilst drinking a pint or two of the black stuff, at my ease in good company and conversation by a turf fire. One after another, each in their turn, people broke into song, singing of love, of good times and bad, each of them, whether listening or singing, seeming at that very moment to be in the only place to be.

by Gavin Frankel - a photographer with a varied interest in subjects from fashion to farming. He uses a series of multimedia tools to capture his subject matter. All photos are the author's own.
www.gavinfrankel.com

The Burren Winterage Weekend

is a community-led festival that celebrates the traditions of farming in the Burren and its strong links to the heritage and conservation of this unique landscape. For more information on the Burren Winterage Weekend 2013 (25th-27th October) keep an eye on

www.burrenwinterage.com



A LOST SAINT

INNEWEE OF KILLINABOY

Photo by Roman Radzewicz

Inghean Bhaoith, the daughter of Baoith is the saint who gives name to Killinaboy. The earthworks of an early Christian site, now traversed by the road, can be discerned in part in the surrounding fields. In the twelfth century, as part of the Church Reform which developed the parochial system, a substantial stone church was erected here. It was extended in the fifteenth century and was in use and roofed in thatch in the eighteenth century.

The ruin today rises above the road, on an outcrop that also has the stump of a round tower. This is not in the usual position close to the north-west of the church gable, but this might be to do with factors such as other structures present at the time of building, or the lie of the land. As a bell-tower and a place for storing valuables, it must also have served as a way-marker, rising above the trees, its position on this rocky outcrop giving it further prominence.

'WHETHER MOTHER, AUNT OR INSPIRATION, THIS SAINT SEEMS TO HAVE HAD THE LAST WORD.'

According to Pádraig Ó Riain, Inghean Bhaoith is variously described as having 45 or 56 children, a tribute hopefully intended in the spiritual rather than physical sense! They include a number of saints who founded monasteries in Clare, Limerick and Galway. Some sources make her the aunt of Saint Senan of Scatterry Island and of Brigit of Kildare. Other sources give her own name as Fionmhaith ('goodness of wine') or Cuman ('favour').

Her origins are lost in obscurity, but her cult remained strong. Around Killinaboy there are several wells associated with her, including the holy well on a bend of the R480. Around Killinaboy, the name Innewee is said to have been popular until the 1830's.

While nothing is known of an early monastic site here or, even whether the earthworks are from a female establishment, its use in the twelfth-century as a parish church indicates a place of continuing significance. Peter Harbison suggested it was a major stopping place on a pilgrim route to the mother-church of the new diocese, the cathedral of Saint Fachnan at Kilfenora, some twelve kilometres north-west. The position of the free-standing 'tau cross'

on Roughan Hill (where a replica now stands) suggests that the church lands divided here. The figures carved on this cross both have head-coverings, and the slighter figure, in spite of its prominent chin, may very tentatively be considered female. This might also be the case with the slighter of the two figures, with a head-covering and 'tau' cross, on the Doorty cross at Kilfenora.

The two-barred 'patriarchal cross' on the gable-end at Killinaboy is reminiscent of the cross in the Holy Sepulchre Church at Jerusalem. This is the place of the Resurrection of Jesus, and Irish religious sites were regarded as local versions, places where the bodies of the dead would rise at the last day, under the protection of the founder saint. In addition, the 'True Cross' of Jesus was found where the Holy Sepulchre stands, and fragments believed to belong to it were distributed as relics throughout Europe. One such fragment was kept under the central crystal of the Cross of Cong – and the wood behind it is carved with a tiny two-armed cross. It is possible that a fragment kept at Killinaboy attracted pilgrims. The gable-end cross seems to have been moved and re-set out of centre during rebuilding in the fifteenth century.

Also from this period comes the prominent sheela-na-gig above the door. These figures are thought to be derived from forms that arrived in Ireland with the Normans, and the most convincing interpretation of their role here is that they are to protect sites against supernatural evil presences.

Little remains to remind us of the significance of this site in the past. There is however a poem in eleventh-century Irish in which Inghean Baoith challenges Saint Senan, and reminds him that before the end there will be women on his island. Whether mother, aunt or inspiration, this saint seems to have had the last word.

by Rosemary Power

Rosemary Power is based with the *Centre for Antique, Medieval and Pre-Modern Studies at NUI in Galway*, and has published extensively on *Scandinavian-Gaelic studies and folk tradition*. She has organised spiritual walks, and her most recent book *Sacred places and pilgrim paths: Kilfenora, Killinaboy and Scatterry Island: A guide for pilgrims in County Clare* (Columba Press), was released this year.

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Portraits of the Burren by Morgan O'Donovan

Morgan is a freelance photographer who attended the inaugural Winterage Weekend with the aim of capturing portraits in this landscape. This is an exhibition of some of his work. www.morganodonovan.com

What happens when one finds a SHELL MIDDEN

On an August morning in 2008, I came across a shell midden in Fanore. This midden comprised of shells left after people from prehistoric times had eaten limpets, periwinkles and whelks. Having reported it to the Field Monument Adviser for Co. Clare, he undertook an exploratory excavation in 2009 which led into a longer excavation in 2012 enabling him to confirm it to be the first confirmed Late Mesolithic site in the county. Working on the edge of the Atlantic Ocean with changing weather conditions is challenging, but the atmosphere on site was always relaxed, and the excavation volunteers benefited from the experience and knowledge of the professional archaeologists. Students of archaeology and Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers joined the dig which gave them valuable excavation experience. Some volunteers have since gone on to study archaeology in NUI Galway. Skills such as sieving, surveying with automatic level and staff, drawing and excavation methodology were learnt. Sieving is an important function as it reveals smaller items not picked up by the excavators. Sometimes the objects were very small, for example, a fragment of cowrie shell, a piece of charcoal, or a hazelnut shell. Stone tools, microliths, and a very large amount of shells and burnt stone were also retrieved. The stone would have been used in fires to cook the shell fish.

As the excavation continued, interest in the site became widespread and many professional archaeologists came to visit. Newspaper, radio reporters and film crews from news and television programmes came as word spread of the importance of the midden. The site will feature in an upcoming series on RTE, presented by Derek Mooney. In this, Professor Peter Woodman will talk about the Mesolithic period in Ireland, and the significance of the



Photo by Eileen O'Connor



Photo by Elaine O'Malley



Photo by Eileen O'Connor

Fanore shell midden. Visiting children from local schools, including Ecobeo students, were enthusiastic and challenging with their questions! The dig was explained to them and they had the opportunity to excavate and record their finds.

But people were not the only visitors to the site. A stoat, who lives nearby, kept us company and introduced us to his family as he hurried them across the little beach on several occasions. Whimbrels, held up on migration by northerly winds, whirled over us each morning as they came down from the Burren hills to feed on the shoreline. Excavating in the months of May, June and July revealed the changing floral displays, so special to the Burren.

Little did I imagine on that August morning in 2008 when I went for my walk along the beach, what wonderful experiences lay ahead. It was good to work with those involved on the excavation and research process which is still ongoing. It was also salutary to reflect on the lives of the Stone Age people living on the edge of Galway Bay, and not take for granted our own contribution to the history of this special place on the shoreline at Fanore.

by Elaine O'Malley

Elaine O'Malley MA lectures in Local History and Art History in the University of Limerick and is currently studying for a Diploma in Archaeology. She has a long association with the Hunt Museum and is a freelance lecturer, researcher, author and tour guide. She is a member of Burrenbeo Trust and the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers.

Eileen O'Connor, a Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer was inspired by her experiences at the Fanore shell midden dig to scribble down this poem!

ECHOES OF THE PAST AT FANORE MORE

The drag of the trowel, the swish of the brush
The scrape of the shovel, the grunt of the lift
The hope in the search, the joy of the find
The links to the past

Who were the people who gathered these shells?
Who lit the fires that heated these stones?
Who left us their axes and flint and chert?
The links to the past

I think of them now as I scrape back the sand
And see again stones that cracked in their fires
I see the same sky, I hold the same rocks
The links to the past

And always and always
The sound of the sea

THE FIRST BURREN GEOGRAPHER?

Thomas Dineley, an English antiquarian and travel writer from Herefordshire, who visited Ireland in 1680, could be described as the father of Burren geography. His illustrated manuscript account of his journeys seems to have been completed in 1681; extracts were published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* in 1867. Dineley's account of the Burren (quoted in Frost's 1893 *History and Topography of County Clare*) is found overleaf.

This account of the Burren is the earliest we have and provides the classic (and still largely valid) description of the area *"this Barony affordeth not a piece of timber sufficient to hang a man, water in any one place to drown a man, or earth enough in any part to bury him"* – although these words may have been a well-known saying – they were also recorded by Cromwellian General (and later regicide) Edmund Ludlow who commanded parliamentary forces in the area in 1651. In his memoirs, written many years later, Ludlow added that, in spite, of the rocky terrain: *"and yet their cattle are very fat; for the grass growing in turfs of earth, of two or three foot square, that lie between the rocks, which are of limestone, is very sweet and nourishing."*

While his illustrations of other areas of Clare are widely used, the remainder of Dineley's account of the Burren has long been neglected. While relatively brief, the account is of considerable importance; particularly as the 17th century Down Survey for the Burren Barony has been lost. Dineley clearly shows that the Burren remained a Gaelic fastness despite large-scale transfers of land during the Cromwell period as detailed in the *Books of Survey and Distribution*; retaining customs which had died out or were dying out in more Anglicised areas. In particular he notes the practice of *making soil*, as also practiced on Aran, as well as the conflicts for this scarce resource among neighbours which are paralleled by conflicts about seaweed elsewhere on the west coast. Ludlow had also commented briefly on the tendency of the locals to steal scarce soil from one another.

The continued practice of tying the tails of horse teams to primitive wooden ploughs, as well as the lack of horseshoes, were also typical of earlier Gaelic farming. The *brogues* made of raw hides or tanned leather remained in use on Aran into the early 20th century.

Several of the features he notes, including

the division of land by *"broad stones like slate turn'd up edgewise"*, remain visible to this day.

His reference to *"one narrow road"* is intriguing and is evidence of the antiquity of at least one of the local roads. He may have been referring to the central road running northwards from Leamenagh Castle but he is likely to have been mistaken on the number of roads in this area as there are in fact numerous early roads throughout the Burren, many still visible on the ground as relict landscape features.

"Eringo Roots" – sea holly are still found on the coast although knowledge of its former significance has been lost. In Elizabethan times sea holly was believed to possess aphrodisiac qualities in addition to its more prosaic use as flavouring. Significantly perhaps, while describing the value of local herbs, oysters and the raising of local cattle and sheep, Dineley does not refer to the practice of winterage; possibly calling into question the antiquity of this tradition.

The oyster fisheries may have played a significant role in local life for millennia as evidenced by the discovery of oyster shells in Megalithic tombs, cairns and caves while prehistoric winkle middens have been identified recently, no Burren oyster middens have been dated to the prehistoric period as of yet. Dineley refers to the Burren Oysters as exceeding those of Colchester; indicating that the famous Pouldoddy and Redbank Oyster fishery on the north Burren coast may have been built on an existing medieval/early modern fishery.

Dineley's account marks the beginning of scientific reflection on the wonders of the Burren. This brief commentary is only an introduction to this important text, which is deserving of a wider audience.

by Michael Gibbons

Michael Gibbons is a Connemara-based field archaeologist and a former director of a national archaeological survey programme. He has been the focus of numerous TV and radio programmes on Connemara, the Aran Islands and the Irish Highlands. He worked as a researcher on the Irish in America series *The Long Journey Home*. He also presented a series of eight programmes for Irish television on the famine in Ireland. He has recently completed a survey of the inter-tidal zone archaeology of the north Burren coast.

THE JOURNAL OF THOMAS DINELEY, 1681

BARONY OF BURREN

BARONY OF BURREN, IN THE COUNTY OF CLARE, FAMOUS FOR PHYSICAL HERBS THE BEST IN IRELAND, AND EQUALL TO THE BEST OF ENGLAND. HERE ARE ERINGO ROOTS IN GREAT QUANTITY. OYSTERS OF MIDDLE SYZE, SALT, GREEN FINND, FARR EXCEEDING OUR COLCHESTER, AS OWND BY SEVERAL JUDGES OF BOTH; THIS BARONY AFFORDETH NOT A PIECE OF TIMBER SUFFICIENT TO HANG A MAN, WATER IN ANY ONE PLACE TO DROWN A MAN, OR EARTH ENOUGH IN ANY PART TO BURY HIM. THIS CONSISTS OF ONE ENTIRE ROCK WITH HERE AND THERE A LITTLE SURFACE OF EARTH, WHICH RAISETH EARLIER BEEF AND MUTTON, THOUGH THEY ALLOW NO HAY, THAN ANY LAND IN THIS KINGDOME, & MUCH SWEETER BY REASON OF THE SWEET HERBS INTERMIXED AND DISTRIBUTED EVERY WHERE. EARTH OR MOLD IS SO PRECIOUS HERE, THAT IT IS REPORTED PROCESS HAS BIN SEVERALL TIMES MADE FOR ONE NEIGHBOURS REMOVING EARTH IN BASKETS FROM ONE ANOTHERS LAND. HERE HORSES 4 ABREST DRAW THE PLOUGH BY THE TAYLES, WHICH WAS THE CUSTOME ALL OVER IRELAND, UNTIL A STATUTE FORBAD IT. YETT THEY ARE TOLERATED THIS CUSTOME HERE BECAUSE THEY CANNOT MANNAGE THEIR LAND OTHERWISE, THEIR PLOUGH GEERS, TACKLE, AND TRACES BEING (AS THEY ARE ALL OVER THE REST OF THE KINGDOME) OF GADDS OR WITHS OF TWIGS TWISTED, WHICH HERE WOULD BREAK TO PIECES BY THE PLOUGH SHARE SO OFTEN JUBBING AGAINST THE ROCK, WHICH, THE GEERS BEING FASTENED BY WATTLES OR WISPES TO THE HORSES TAYLES, THE HORSES BEING SENSIBLE STOP UNTIL THE PLOWMAN LIFTS IT OVER. HERE PEOPLE LIVE TO AN EXTRAORDINARY AGE, AS OBSERVED BY A GENTLEMAN OF THIS COUNTRY, WHO HATH AN ESTATE UPON THE PLACE, THAT A MAN AND HIS WIFE MADE ABOVE 204 YEERS. THE ROCK IS A SORT OF LIMESTONE. AND THEIR GARRENS, HORSES SO CALLED, ARE SELDOME OR NEVER SHOOD. IT IS NOT SO SERIOUSLY, AS JESTINGLY, REPORTED THAT A TRAVELLER PASSING OVER THIS BARONY HIS HORSES LEG CHANCED TO STICK IN AN HOLE BETWEEN TWO ROCKS AND TO LEAVE ONE OF THE SHOOS, WHICH HE ALIGHTING AND SEARCHING FOR IT, DREW UP OUT OF THE SAME PLACE ABOVE 30 SHOOS; THIS IS MODESTLY THOUGHT THE LEAST NUMBER, FOR SOME UNDERTAKE TO SAY 30 DOZEN. HERE IS BUT ONE NARROW ROAD, NO GOING OUT OF IT, AND IN THIS BARONY THE PARTICONS OF LAND ARE MADE BY BROAD STONES LIKE SLATE TURN'D UP EDGEWISE. THE COMMON PEOPLE HERE USE BROGUES MADE OF RAW HIDES OR UNTANND LEATHER.

'NOT A PIECE OF TIMBER
SUFFICIENT TO HANG A MAN,
WATER IN ANY ONE
PLACE TO DROWN
A MAN, OR EARTH
ENOUGH IN ANY
PART TO BURY
HIM.'

Aran Islands

Same rock, different place

The Aran Islands (Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Óirr), perched at the mouth of Galway Bay, may appear to be an extension of the Burren. There are many similarities but as you come to know them you realise that the comparison between the Burren and the Aran Islands can best be summed up as “the same but different”. I do not know either area as well as the people who work and farm these areas; living and working in a place everyday brings an intimate understanding of the interplay between human existence, nature, landscape and culture that can never quite be captured by the visitor. The comparisons in this article are based on what I have learned through working with the BurrenLIFE project (now named Burren Farming for Conservation Programme) over the last few years and during the development of an application for a similar project for the Aran Islands (Aran LIFE: this is yet to receive funding but hopefully 2013 will prove successful).

From a geological perspective both areas are glaciated karst limestone; much of the landscape is dominated by limestone pavement with its characteristic clints (paving slabs) and grykes (crevices). There is evidence that both the Burren and the Aran Islands were dominated by woodland before the advent of farming in the Neolithic period, approximately 4000-5000

years ago. The combined effect of changing climate and clearance of woodland for farming led to soil erosion. As a result soil cover today, where it exists, is thin. Much of the soil is thin skeletal rendzina often only a few centimetres thick. This is where you start to notice slight differences. The glaciers were kinder to the Burren in places, leaving behind some thicker glacial deposits of till (sand and gravel) where deeper soils have developed. No such luck for the Aran Islands where the only usable land for grazing and small scale tillage is confined to the rendzina soils and machair.

Machair is a unique habitat confined to the coasts of western Scotland and Ireland, the Aran Islands being its most southerly location. Machair is a flat grassy plain composed of windblown sand located along the coast, generally behind a sand dune system. Globally, it is estimated that there are only 15,000-20,000ha. The large variation in estimate is due to whether or not the sand dune system and adjacent loughs are included as part of machair habitat. The nature value of these machair areas on the islands is intrinsically linked to the grazing and small scale tillage practices adopted. This

creates orchid-rich grasslands interspersed with potato, rye and vegetable crops harbouring rare arable weeds such as corn flower (*Centaurea cyanus*) and darnel (*Lolium temulentum*). Purple milk vetch (*Astragalus danicus*) is found on the Aran Islands but not the Burren, while a species common across the Burren – mountain aven (*Dryas octopetala*) is absent from the Aran. The machair, calcareous grasslands, heaths, limestone pavement, turloughs (Inis Mór) and coastal habitats, dissected by hundreds of kilometres of stone wall, create a rich natural and cultural tapestry.

This rich tapestry is further enhanced by the work of generations of farmers. The industry of these farmers is evident in another unique feature of the Aran Islands – the man-made fields. Reading JM Synge's 1907 book *The Aran Islands*, one sentence, illustrating the farming influence in creating this landscape, stands out: *The other day the men of this house made a new field*. Synge goes on to describe the process of taking a small bank of soil from under a wall, mixing it with sand and seaweed and spreading

it out over a flat rock in a sheltered corner, where it was planted with potatoes. Stone rainwater harvesters are another innovative feature of the farming system that has been used on these islands for generations, long before water conservation was fashionable.

Today the landscape of the Aran Islands is

further subdivided by stone walls into smaller fields. The animals are grazed outdoors all year round, certain areas being retained for winter grazing. The rotational grazing systems between these plots can be complex and the maintenance of the species-rich pastures is dependent on their continuation.

Tourism and agriculture on the islands are inter-dependent enterprises. The main tourism attraction includes the agricultural landscape

'SIMILAR TO MANY EXTENSIVELY FARMED AREAS, LAND ABANDONMENT AND CHANGING FARM PRACTICES ARE A SERIOUS THREAT TO THEIR NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE'

managed by approximately 200 farm families, working 3,025 ha. They are involved mainly in suckler beef production with some sheep. Small scale tillage systems remain in some areas. The scale of the farming is much smaller than the Burren, average farm size and herd size being approximately only 20% of that in the Burren. The small holdings can be divided up into as many as 9 or 10 different plots, with each plot

of small fields, the sea-scape beyond, species-rich pastures, boreens, associated cultural and archaeological features and, indeed, being on an island itself – that feeling of a special place – a world apart. The obverse of this feeling is, of course, the difficulty of farming in such a remote place with its added costs of getting stock to market. Hence, despite its central role in maintaining the landscape of the islands,

farming today is under threat. Similar to many extensively farmed areas, land abandonment and changing farm practices are a serious threat to their natural and cultural heritage. Support is needed for high-nature-value-farming systems such as these to ensure their continued survival. This is essential for the sustainable development of both the Burren and the Aran Islands as their economies are tied to their nature, landscape and cultural value.

by James Moran

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James Moran is a lecturer in Ecology and Environmental Science at IT Sligo. Before joining IT Sligo in 2009 he worked on the BurrenLIFE project (the predecessor to Burren Farming for Conservation Programme). He maintains a keen interest in ecological management and restoration, in particular of high-nature-value farmland. He currently leads a number of research and outreach projects in this area at IT Sligo.



Recent history

The RIC in Carron

Situated on top of the Burren and now known as a place of good food, traditional music sessions and merriment, the building that houses Cassidy's Pub and Restaurant in Carron was not always as hospitable. Built to police the high Burren as a Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks in 1830, its purpose was to protect the interests of absentee landlords in an area known for agrarian disobedience.

The RIC was the brainchild of Sir Robert Peel in 1822. Its objective, by integrating itself into the community, was to become the eyes and ears of the British government in rural Ireland. They came to be known as "Peelers" and were a military-style armed police force made up of Irish recruits (75% catholic) with the higher ranking officers picked from the British army.

In appearance they were similar to the Rifle Brigade of the British army with dark green uniforms and black buttons. A half-acre site for the Carron Barracks was donated by the landlord Lucius O'Brien of Inchiquin. Stone to build the Barracks was quarried across the road and mortared with white sand from the site. Timber was transported from Galway to Kinvara by boat and brought to Carron by horse and cart.

The construction of the barracks made quite a difference in the Carron area. The Cassidys, who operated the local general store and shebeen across the road, were forced to license their premises, and their ongoing relationship with the RIC remained coloured, to say the least! The catholic church, which lay directly opposite the barracks at that time, was taken down stone by stone and rebuilt in its present location because (local folklore has it) of the practice hitherto of using the church bell to warn tenant farmers to "put things in order" during a visit by landlords or bailiffs.

The first constables to arrive were not at all popular with the locals in Carron because of their military-style discipline and heavy handedness. The rules they followed ensured that interaction between themselves and locals was strictly business. Whether on duty or not, they had to wear a uniform at all times. They could not help or work with local farmers, and were transferred on a regular basis to prevent familiarity. They were not allowed to marry until they were in the force for several years, and they could not be stationed in the county from which they came or, if married, in their wife's county.



Inside Cassidy's Pub today. Photo by Gavin Frankel

Photo donated by author



There were five constables and one sergeant stationed in Carron, all catholic. Each was issued with a baton, handcuffs, a revolver, a carbine rifle and a bicycle with a rifle holster.

In the early years most of the work for the constables in Carron was land related. They accompanied bailiffs on tenant evictions and oversaw the demolition of cottages to prevent reoccupation. They attempted (in vain) to control the goat population by documenting each tenant's allotment. During the famine years they oversaw the payment of the famine relief work scheme and soup distribution.

In 1831, the government introduced a tithe tax which required every tenant to pay 10% of their annual earnings to the Church of Ireland. This did not go down well in the Carron area, where practically all the population was Catholic, and most refused to pay. This resulted in raids by bailiffs and the RIC where livestock was confiscated, deepening the rift between locals and the constabulary.

In the mid 1800s two people were born in Carron who would go on to make a huge difference in Irish history, Michael Cusack and Thomas O'Loughlen. O'Loughlen became a thorn in the side of the RIC, with his involvement with the United Irishmen; later he organised, and then became commander of, the Irish Volunteers in North Clare. Michael Cusack's organisation, the GAA played a very important, although covert role, in the struggle for independence. This was a trigger for the Croke Park massacre in 1918.

In the second half of the 18th century, with the decline of the huge population in the wake of the famine, life became quieter in Carron. This relieved the pressure on the limited arable land available, so the work for the RIC was reduced to minor offences like poteen distilling and public disorder. The area had quite a reputation at this time for poteen distribution!

The strict military rules were not as rigidly enforced and, because of this, the relationship between the RIC and locals improved. As time went on some constables married local girls and were accepted into the community.

In the early 20th century issues heated up considerably once more for the RIC in the Burren as the tenant farmers became more militant towards the landlords or 'large graziers' as they were known. Boundary walls being knocked, cattle driven off the land and tails being cut from cattle became regular occurrences. The ranks of the Irish Republican Brotherhood had swelled in North Clare under O'Loughlen's guidance; their need for arms made rural barracks a prime target.

The Carron constables on duty at Thomas O'Loughlen's funeral in Kilcorney graveyard in 1918 were requested (at gunpoint) to turn their backs, while a volley was fired over his coffin, with which they duly complied.

In 1919, an ambush at Sheshymore on landlord HV McNamara from Ennistymon, while on a shooting expedition with some of his British army friends to his lands in Carron, coupled with a threat by the IRA (military wing of the IRB) to the RIC to "resign or be shot on sight" spelt the end for the RIC in Carron. Four of the constables, who were by now married to local girls and sympathetic to the cause, resigned from the force. The sergeant and one constable remained, but were boycotted by the people and the local shop (Cassidy's), and so were moved to Ennistymon where they patrolled only with the regular army or Black and Tan backup.

On 10th April 1920, to prevent it being reoccupied the 4th battalion of the IRA attacked and burned the Carron RIC Barracks. The interior and the roof were extensively damaged and the building lay in ruin until 1926 when it was renovated by the Free State government as a Garda Barracks, and so began another chapter in its history!!

by Robert Cassidy

Robert Cassidy, along with his family own and run Cassidy's Pub in Carron. His family have been in Carron for generations. He is also a farmer and a member of the Clare Farm Heritage Tours.

As Galway Field Monument Adviser (FMA) I have the pleasure and opportunity to engage with the archaeology and people of the Doorus peninsula within the Burren. I have also been working my way south along the Clare border. The archaeology around Doorus is diverse, ranging from megalithic tombs to more recent features.

My role is to engage with landowners about the archaeological monuments on their farms and provide them with information and advice on how best to understand and conserve those features. The landowners I have encountered have been more than friendly and have been very accommodating and generous with their time. For example in 2012, several Doorus landowners granted me permission to access monuments on their lands when undertaking a walk for the Burrenbeo Trust. This was much appreciated and is an example of how landowners are accommodating to other users, provided they seek permission and appreciate the owner's needs.

The land-based archaeology dates to at least the Bronze Age, with a wedge tomb and a number of burnt-mounds from this period. Several well-preserved ring-forts on the peninsula itself,

and immediately to the south of the Kinvara to Ballyvaughan road, attest to medieval settlement and allow us to determine that the area has enjoyed a long and rich tradition of farming. Holy wells and sites bearing saints names more commonly associated with the Aran Islands suggest they may be pilgrim stations linked to a tradition of maritime pilgrimage between Doorus and the Aran Islands.

The medieval parish church in Parkmore exhibits at least three phases of construction and has traces of associated settlement outside the graveyard enclosure in the form of grassed-over wall footings. A tower on its western end may have been a residence for the incumbent. A classical-style monument within the graveyard commemorates the De Bastro family.

Tidal mills on the peninsula were associated with corn growing; the piers and harbours appear to have been constructed for the export of grain. A windmill in Tawnagh West townland was built as a pumping station, automatically pumping out tidal waters during land reclamation. Drains, channels and seawalls associated with its use can still be seen in the surrounding fields.

The Doorus coastline is liberally dotted with

maritime features associated with fishing and boats. These include middens, stone piers and harbours, various intertidal enclosures and low walls. Some of these may be prehistoric; others are probably no older than the nineteenth century. They tell of a place with a very long history of human settlement.

Dorus and its hinterland exhibit a palimpsest of features representing nearly every layer of archaeological time. While much of it has been recorded and put to paper a lot remains to be discovered. What is important is that people appreciate the importance of this rich built heritage and see it for what it is - an exhaustible and finite resource – which once lost cannot be replaced. With this in mind, it behoves us all to do our bit to preserve this resource.

by Christy Cuniffe

Christy Cuniffe is the Field Monument Adviser for County Galway. This position is funded by The Heritage Council and supported by the County Council. For further information or advice in relation to archaeology on your land in Galway please ring Christy on 087 9697692. Photos 2-5 are the author's.

Photo Captions:

Background Photo: A windmill, minus its cap and sail, as seen from the road in Tawnagh west townland. Monuments such as this windmill are located on private land, so are not freely accessible to the public. This monument is typical of the traditional windmill and has doors on opposing sides.

Photo 2. A large ringfort in the townland of Roo Demesne. A depression in the middle of the monument appears to be the outline of a sunken souterrain or underground chamber. Souterrains are generally accepted as having functioned as places of refuge at times of conflict, and for the storage of goods. A series of set stones hidden beneath brambles mark a possible children's burial ground. Strong folk tradition surrounded the ringfort throughout rural Ireland. They were often associated with the fairy folk, and are therefore, commonly referred to as 'Fairy Forts'. This belief in the otherworld helped in a big way to protect monuments from destruction.

Photo 3. St Brecán's well: this saint is also associated with Inishmore indicating this may be a place of pilgrimage. What is also significant is that this well lies in close proximity to the sea. It is traditionally related in local story, that a starving man was sustained by drinking the water from this well during the Great Famine. The fact that St Brecán is associated with Inishmore is significant and adds to seeing this site as a former place of pilgrimage.

Photo 4. A midden on the sea's edge, comprising layers of discarded shell, an ideal site for excavation before it is washed away, a few hundred metres north of Parkmore Pier. The original function of this monument was as a type of communal feeding station. The numerous layers of shells encountered are the product of several seasons use.

Photo 5. A burnt mound or fulacht fiadh, the result of heating stones in an open fire and then plunging them into a trough to heat water. This is in the townland of Inishroo. Generally it is found, that where livestock encroach on these monuments they break the surface, exposing telltale particles of burnt stone and black earth and ash. They are assigned a date in the Bronze Age of between 1800-800BC.



Photo by Krystian Czekalski



2



3



4



5

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELDWORK IN DOORUS

It seems almost crude and insensitive to be discussing business and money in the context of conserving somewhere as unique and beautiful as the Burren. For many people, farming in the Burren is all about the timeless tradition of out-wintering cattle, and the subsequent floral display set against a grey limestone backdrop. However, for a farmer in the Burren, this is only a small part of the story. In fact, only half of this story is part of a farmer's story!

Let's begin by taking a walk through a typical year on a Burren suckler farm. We start in October. The calves have just been weaned from their cows and sold. The cows themselves have been in-calf since June, and are now put onto the winterage (winter grazing land) and will stay there, without supplementary feeding, until March.

In March, when they are due to calve, they are taken off the winterage. It's likely that the cows, and possibly the farmer, won't see the winterage again until next October, missing out on the profusion of wild flowers – the biggest attraction of the Burren.

The calves are born in March, and the aim is to turn them into weanlings (calves weaned from their cows at around six months old) by next October.

However, there has been very little grass growth during the winter, and so there is a need for supplementary feeding between now and the first of May, whether it's hay, silage or meal.

Once May arrives, and grass is in full growth, the cows and calves are moved onto green land and, having spent the winter on the mountain, the cows make the most of it!

This may all sound straightforward, but when October arrives, and the weanlings are brought to the mart, Burren farmers find themselves competing with farmers from all over the country. So what's wrong with this?

It's widely acknowledged that traditional cattle breeds such as Herefords and Shorthorns are better for conservation in the Burren, as they are better grazers of the winterage. However, they also receive a lower price than continental breeds at cattle marts. Continental breeds are bigger, and produce leaner meat than traditional breeds, and so command a higher price.

So take a farmer who has Shorthorn cows. By using a continental breed of bull such as a Charolais, the cows can produce a weanling around forty kilos heavier than using a Shorthorn bull, despite using the same cows, the same land, and the same farming practices. If weanlings were receiving €2.50 per kilo, this equates to €100 just for changing the breed of bull.

Of course, by using a Charolais cow with a Charolais bull, this will produce an even more sought after weanling and command a much-higher price. At first glance it would make sense for a farmer to switch to a continental breed of cow, but these cows are not as effective

at grazing winterages and, due to their size, generally require supplementary feeding much sooner, and more of it, costing the farmer their extra profit.

This of course is just one of many things a Burren farmer has to consider. Even bringing the calving date forward a month to February has implications, as the cows will require an extra month of supplementary feeding, which, pardon the pun, will eat into the farmer's profits.

Overall however, the idea of putting in-calf cows on top of a mountain for the entire winter, without any other feeding, would make farmers outside the Burren green with envy.

This is only an introduction to a complex subject, but hopefully it demonstrates that farming in the Burren isn't as simple as some might think!

by Shane Casey

Shane Casey grew up on his family farm at Blackhead in the Burren, where several generations of his family have kept the traditions of Burren farming alive. It was here, helping out on the farm that Shane first learned about the unique heritage of the Burren, long before studying it in more detail at college. Shane currently works as Clare's Biodiversity Officer, helping to raise awareness and education of the Burren's ecology and the biodiversity of the whole of County Clare.

BEING A BURREN FOOD PRODUCER - THE UNIQUE SELLING POINT

Some of the earliest signs of human activity in the Burren are related to food such as the fulacht fiadh, an ancient cooking place. Being a Burren food producer is a unique position in a geographical sense – one of the corners of Europe, on the Atlantic western seaboard, in a unique limestone area.

Food Tourism

When my husband Peter and I started our own food business, the Burren Smokehouse, almost 25 years ago we did so out of wanting to make a living in Peter's native town Lisdoonvarna, refusing to move from such a unique landscape to a city. To survive in the coastal region of the west coast of Ireland is challenging, but tourism made it possible for us.

The proximity to Cliffs of Moher, one of Ireland's largest visitor attractions, with 900,000 visitors annually, and being surrounded by the unique Burren landscape ensured the potential of passing trade. To be able to sell directly to customers proved essential for our survival.

Provenance

Blessed with the highest quality raw materials locally, combined with Ireland and its even climate, lack of industrialisation, and pristine Atlantic waters, we are ideally placed for quality food production. Handled with care and respect, along with unique artisan techniques, ensures a world class product. However, it did not happen overnight or without sweat & tears!

Using the ancient preservation technique of smoking - we perfected filleting, the length of dry-salting, smoking temperatures and length of smoking time. Oak-shavings are sourced locally, mixed with various marinades and, with the support of a dedicated team and enthusiastic customers, we have produced a strong product with many rewards - and awards!

International recognition

We are able to meet national and international customers at our doorstep, while modern technology allowed us to build an extensive database of mail-order customers with whom we communicate on a monthly basis in English, German and French. Our original website only displayed but a single product, whereas it now presents a multi-lingual choice of 'build your own hamper' incorporating dedicated space for hundreds of useful recipes and product information.

Burren Smoked Irish Organic Salmon is to be found in speciality food shops around the globe from London to Shanghai. We were proud to be honoured by Michelin-Star Chef Ross Lewis to supply salmon for the historical State Dinner for Queen Elisabeth II at Dublin Castle 18th May 2011.

Part of a network

We are not the only food producer in the Burren, but part of a wider network connected through the Burren Ecotourism Network and other organisations. This group of food producers with hotels and restaurants employing skilled chefs

has in common the principle of sustainability. This is crucial to our future growth, with local food is being named and showcased at restaurants and gastro pubs throughout the network. The Burren Food Experience is a multitude of experiences with locally produced cheeses (St Tola, Burren Gold, Kilshanny, Cratloe Hills and Mount Callan's sheep cheese), Linnalla Ice-cream, Burren Beef & Lamb, organic vegetable growers, preserves and jams, and suppliers of locally caught lobster, crab, oysters, mussels and cockles.

Come and enjoy our food

The Burren Food Experience is presenting a series of food events once a week in the Burren during 2013, organised by the Burren Ecotourism Network. Two festivals – the Burren Slow Food Festival 18-19th May and the community-led Burren Winterage Festival 25-27th October are part of this growing programme. Come and join us at one of these events or, indeed, on any occasion – the Burren Food Producers will always be proud to serve you. Being a food producer in the Burren is a vibrant place to be in 2013!

by Birgitta Curtin

To view the Burren Smokehouse products go to www.burrensmokehouse.ie
For more information on The Burren Food Experience or any of their events go to www.burrenecotourism.com

THE BURREN AND THE BUSINESS OF FARMING

photo by Morgan O'Donovan



GROWING VEGGIES ON FERTILE ROCKS!

grow crops that suit your soil:

- shallow-rooted crops like Nantes carrots or bunching beetroots.
- for blueberries & cranberries use containers of acid soil.
- cabbages - including broccolli, cauliflower, brussel-sprouts, kale, red cabbage and spring cabbage, be sure to cover the crop with a fleece or fine net from late June to late August to prevent caterpillar attack.
- onions, including garlic & shallots grow well on light soils - leeks less so.
- herbs - Mediterranean herbs have a stronger flavour when grown dry and hungry. Parsley and mint are the exception, as they like a damp rich soil.
- salads are easy to grow in shallow soils, so long as you keep up the watering. Remember a thin soil or a raised bed dries out quickly. Push your finger into the soil; if it's damp an inch down there is no need to water.

ENJOY!

Photo Anna Jeffrey Gibson

Author. Photo by Nutan Photography

Most New Year's resolutions include exercising more and eating a better diet; a hobby that includes both of these is growing your own vegetables!! Nothing beats being outside in the fresh air, getting exercise and then reaping the reward of eating your own freshly grown seasonal healthy produce.

If you live in the Burren and are planning to grow your own vegetables there are a few things to bear in mind, because growing on the light soils found here can be quite challenging!!

The *Fertile Rock* may be fertile for native herbs and grasses, but vegetables require a good soil. There are some pockets of good soil in the Burren, for example Kinvara potatoes are legendary and Dirk Flake on Aughinish is one of several growers who have market stalls burgeoning with local produce for most of the year.

Where to begin? Have you got soil? Often builders put a scrape of topsoil down and sow grass, and the home owner has no idea how little soil is there. Vegetables need 18ins / 40 cm of good soil. So go out with a spade and take a look at what you have. You can make the best of it by clearing soil from paths and making

raised beds. If you need to buy in topsoil ask to see it before it's delivered to make sure it's a nice deep-brown with few stones.

Once you've sorted the soil, here are a few tips for growing in the Burren.

'Nothing beats being outside in the fresh air, getting exercise and then reaping the reward of eating your own freshly grown seasonal healthy produce.'

Burren soil is very limy, thus it has a high pH. All gardening books recommend liming soil before planting cabbages for instance. DO NOT lime soil without testing its pH. The chances are that if you are in the Burren it's already too limy. Signs of a pH that is too high is blossom-end-rot on slow-growing tomatoes, water-core on apples and miserable blueberries, but happy cabbages!!!

What you need to do is make your soil more acidic. This is done by adding lots of organic matter, like kitchen and garden compost (tea and coffee grinds are good), composted animal

manures, grass clippings and seaweed - but not spent mushroom compost as it's very alkaline. Organic matter in limy soils breaks down quickly, so you can be generous and repeat it all next year. There are a few vegetables which do not like a fertile soil, including carrots and parsnips which tend to fork, and onions which grow huge but don't store well.

As organic matter breaks down, a lot of nutrients are simply washed away, so apply manures and composts when there is plant growth to use them in Spring - not in Winter. Also it's very important to keep ground covered, i.e. if a bed is empty between crops, cover it with a mulch or weighed down plastic or cardboard to stop weeds taking hold.

by Lynn O'Keeffe-Lascar

Lynn O'Keeffe-Lascar teaches horticulture with Kinvara Sustainable Living. She carries out courses in Seamount Secondary School, Kinvara, adult VEC, and community groups. She also produces the annual *Irish Kitchen Garden Calendar*, with hints and tips for Irish gardeners and inspiring photos of real Irish gardens. Email lynnsirishgardens@gmail.com for more information.



BI GALLERY

Fergus A Ryan

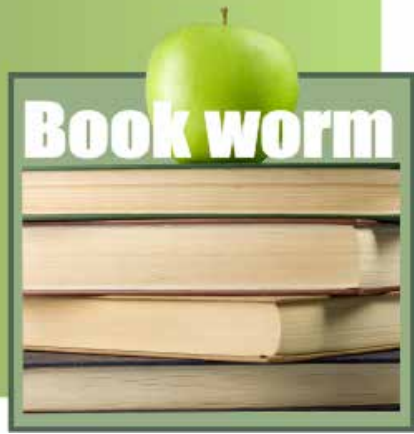
Terminus

acrylic on linen, 24" x 36"

An old bicycle rusting in the salt-moist wind, abandoned by its owner against one of the huge rocks called 'erratics' on the limestone pavements above Fanore. The bicycle is, like the continent, at the end of its journey. The picture is, in a sense, a 'portrait' of the artist's wife's mother, to whom the bicycle belonged.

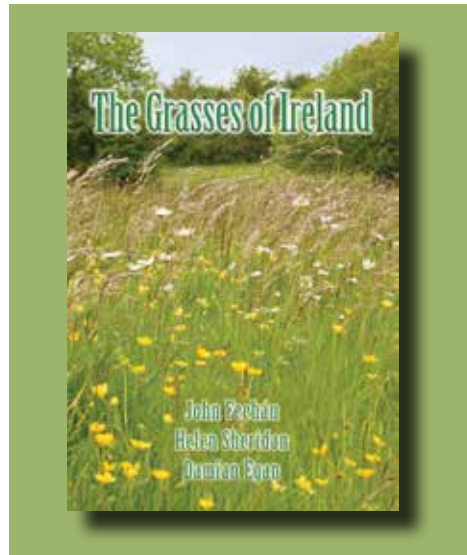
About the artist
Fergus A Ryan is an Irish artist working in acrylic and in the medieval medium of egg tempera. He has exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy's annual exhibition (2008, 2009, 2011). His west of Ireland work won recognition in the world landscape competition of International Artist magazine, where a forthcoming article will feature the art and working methods of the artist. This is second of a series of paintings, the first was shown in *Burren Insight 4*. Fergus was formerly an Aer Lingus transatlantic pilot, and his art can be viewed at:

www.FergusARyan.com



THE GRASSES OF IRELAND

by John Feehan, Helen Sheridan & Damian Egan
Teagasc, 2012/ RRP €30
Review by Stephen Ward



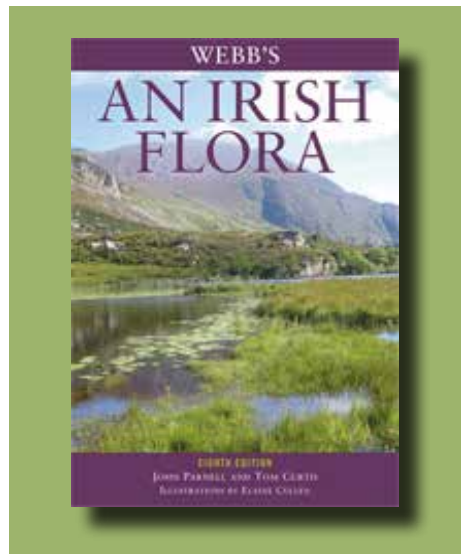
This book has been produced in recognition of a re-awakening of interest in grasses from the farming point of view. Its focus is on their agricultural worth and natural history. Whereas recent decades have favoured the input-dependent rye grass, this book looks at sustainable grassland management based on species-diverse grasslands and their role in animal welfare. It is a beautiful book, designed by Bernard Kaye and supplemented by water-colours from older works and by Damian Egan's photographs.

To quote Jim McAdam's foreword: 'Here at last is an illustrated identification guide that is dedicated to Ireland, and is of such quality and content as befits the most important group of plants in the landscape, culture and rural economy of the island. And yet it is more than an identification guide; it has John Feehan's individual stamp of unrivalled breadth of knowledge of the ecology of the Irish countryside.'

WEBB'S AN IRISH FLORA: 8th edition

by John Parnell & Tom Curtis
with drawings by Elaine Cullen
Cork University Press, 2012/ RRP €35
Review by Stephen Ward

This new edition of Webb's flora provides a clear and reliable means of identifying those flowering

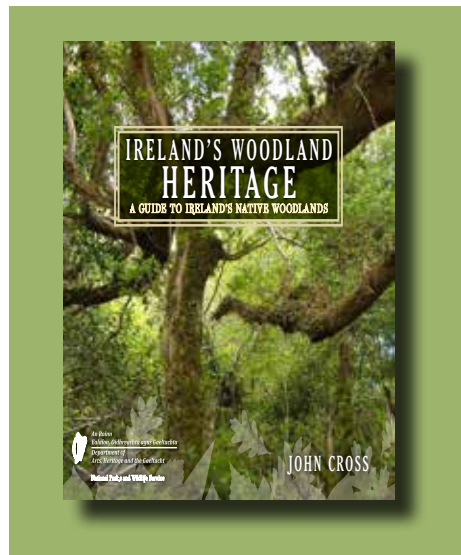


plants and ferns growing wild in Ireland. The title reflects the huge contribution to Irish botany made by David Webb, formerly Professor of Botany at Trinity College Dublin and the original author. Albeit the 8th edition, this is the first in which specific points are illustrated in colour. Reflecting current knowledge of evolutionary relationships, the order of families differs substantially from that in earlier editions. This edition is much thicker than earlier editions, reflecting in part the greater number of pages but also that it is printed on thicker paper.

IRELAND'S WOODLAND HERITAGE: A GUIDE TO IRELAND'S NATIVE WOODLANDS

by John Cross
National Parks & Wildlife Service, 2012
Free
Review by Stephen Ward

In his introduction, John says 'we can walk into a wood and be dwarfed by the trees in a way that is not possible in grasslands or bogs'. Woodlands have a distinctive air and this booklet gives a brief overview of Ireland's remaining native woodlands which today cover a mere 1.25% of



the island. These include those of the Burren comprising ash, hazel and the occasional yew. Ash is now threatened by the fungal infection ash die-back *Chalara fraxinea*; should this reach the Burren it will have a devastating impact on the region's most distinctive tree.

The history of Irish woodlands is charted from the last Ice Age. Veteran trees, which may be 200-400 years old or older, provide home for a host of invertebrates, mosses and lichens. The large range of plants and animals frequenting native woodlands is briefly reviewed.

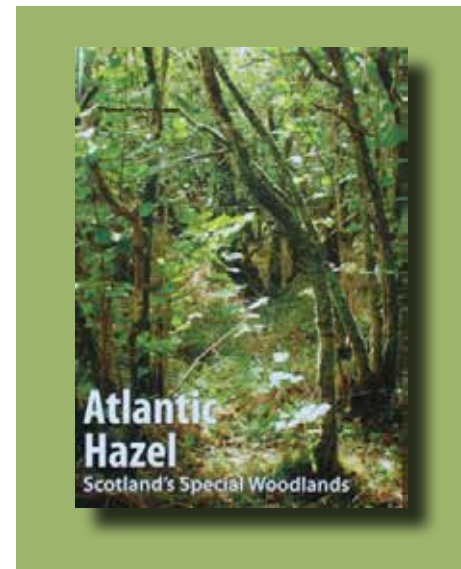
The place of Irish woodlands in an international context, including those of the Burren, is considered as are their management needs. This beautifully presented booklet is highly commended.

ATLANTIC HAZEL: SCOTLAND'S SPECIAL WOODLANDS

by Sandy & Brian Coppins
Atlantic Hazel Action Group, 2012/RRP €13
Review by Stephen Ward

Why review a book about Scotland's Atlantic hazel woodlands in an Irish magazine? In the course of their research, the authors visited Ireland, where they liaised with Sharon Parr and myself, comparing the hazel woods of the Burren with those of Scotland. Together, the hazel woodlands in both countries comprise the 'Celtic rainforest' which the authors consider to be of global importance for its specialist communities of oceanic ferns, bryophytes, fungi and lichens.

The extensive hazel woods of the Burren illustrate



the shrub's ability to colonise open ground, notably when grazing pressure is relaxed as a result of changes in farming practices. Following a visit to the Burren, Sir Arthur Tansley, a leading ecologist in the first half of the 20th century, was the first to recognise hazel as a woodland type in its own right.

Whilst much of the Burren's hazel woods are species-poor, there are pockets of high species diversity with lungwort lichens of the genus *Parmelia*, and lichens with the fruit bodies of which resemble squiggly hand-writing (the *Graphidion* genera). In common with those of Scotland, the Burren woodlands support certain characteristic but rare species such as the hazel gloves fungus *Hypocreopsis rhododendri*. (As its name suggests, this was first described growing on rhododendron – not the rhododendron which has colonised the woodlands of Kerry but an American species. Here and in Scotland, its host is usually hazel.) Of particular interest in the Burren is a lichen with the intriguing common name of 'blackberries in custard' – *Pyrenula hibernica*.

A tribute to rustic handy-work is provided by a photograph of a hazel gate made by Matthew Jeuken of Poulnalour.

IRELAND'S COAST

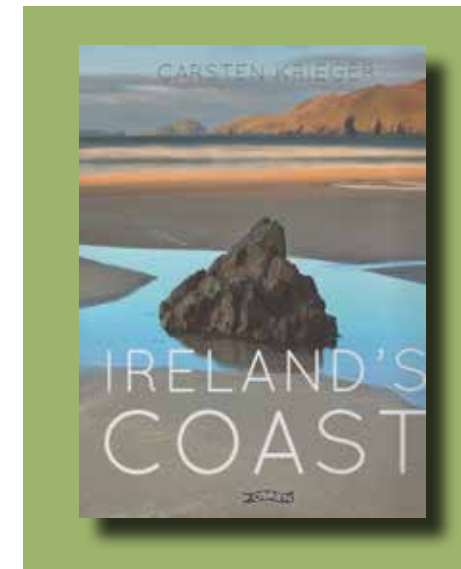
by Carsten Krieger
O'Brien, 2012/ RRP €25
Review by Richard Morrison

I first experienced Carsten Krieger's work in *The Fertile Rock - Seasons in the Burren* and over the last few years have greatly admired his photographs of Ireland's landscapes, wildflowers and wildlife. He is without doubt one

of our foremost photographers and this latest book is further proof – if such were needed – of his skill and ability as a photographer of our natural world.

In *Ireland's Coast* Carsten takes us on a journey around Ireland's 7,500km coastline in 250 wonderful photographs which celebrate the landscape, the wildlife and the people who live and work there.

Starting in the south east with a view of the Saltees from St Patrick's Bridge in Wexford our journey is divided into six chapters which lead us in a clockwise direction around the country until we finish at Leamore Strand in Wicklow. In the West, we see the Burren coast in a series



of striking photographs – from Fanore Strand and the Aran islands, via Blackhead to Ballryan, Aughinish and Dunguaire Castle.

Along the way, Carsten tells us stories of the coastline and describes his personal journey over the two years that he worked on this book. While reminding us of the beauty and variety of our coastline, he also draws our attention to the pressures that are posed by mankind's activities – a point which is highlighted in Gordon D'Arcy's insightful foreword.

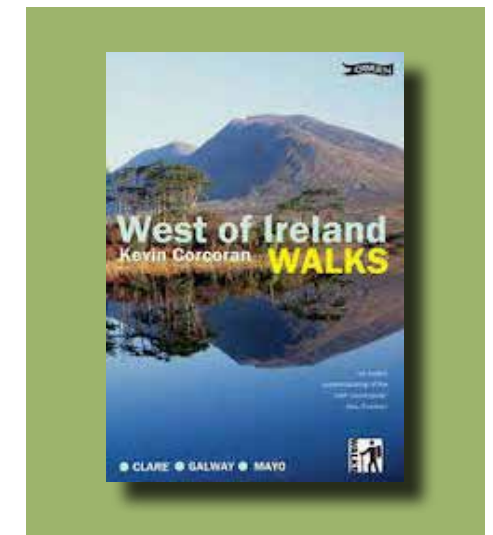
These marvellous photographs, which will hold your attention from front cover to back, show the splendor of the subject from a masterful perspective. It is the art of the photographer to take a view we know well and yet show it to us anew. In *Ireland's Coast* Carsten has again shown himself to be a master of his craft.

WEST OF IRELAND WALKS

by Kevin Corcoran
O'Brien, 2012/ RRP €10
Review by Mary Howard

Lecturer and environmental biologist Kevin Corcoran's *West of Ireland Walks* was revised and updated in 2012. He dedicates his book to "all those who love and respect Nature". I am a walking guide in the Burren and having read the detailed descriptions of his walks, I find his knowledge and love of the Irish landscape clearly apparent. The book includes an excellent choice of fourteen walks in the Burren, Galway and Mayo. The walks summary is clearly set out at the beginning of the book, showing the habitat, suitability, distance and time taken for each walk. He is very clear on how ramblers and hill walkers should appreciate and respect the privacy of farmers and land owners and on how to minimize their impact on the environment. For the purposes of this review I have enjoyed walking the three Burren routes. They included one casual walk at Sliabh Eilbhe, one tough walk at Black Head and one moderate walk at Abbey Hill.

Before setting out, I suggest that the informative walk details, which also include the author's hand drawn maps and beautiful illustrations of the Burren's flora and fauna, should be read and enjoyed from the comfort of your armchair! Of course, you must still take the book with you. Directions to the starting point and route descriptions are accurate and easy to follow. Points of interest are numbered on the map and referenced in the text. This is no 'ordinary' walking guide, as the Burren comes to life in every page, leaving you with a better understanding of many aspects of this unique landscape. Whether you are a casual Rambler or an avid hill walker this book is the perfect companion.





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EU LIFE funding for the Burren

The European Commission recently approved an application from the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark for matched project funding totalling €1.1 million under the LIFE+ programme, the European Union's environment fund. An additional €1.1 million in resources will be provided by Clare County Council, Shannon Development, Geological Survey of Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, National Monuments Service, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Office of Public Works, The Heritage Council, National University of Ireland Galway, University College Dublin.

The programme's main aims are:

Partnerships: To strengthen partnerships of local, national and international champions of conservation, tourism and community to work towards balancing conservation and tourism.

Sustaining: To encourage tourism enterprises to operate their business in environmentally sustainable ways and to create a sustainable tourism destination that will support local enterprises and producers.

Managing: To deliver better systems and structures for protecting, improving and managing access and interpretation of landscape and heritage attractions.

Learning: To create opportunities for popular and specialist learning and training

Measuring: To monitor and measure the environmental, economic and social impacts of the programme against leading international benchmarks

This LIFE programme will demonstrate how conservation and sound environmental practice in businesses and at attractions can add measurable social and economic gains to environmental gains, which ultimately benefit the Burren and its communities. The programme will be administered by the Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark over the next five years.

For more information, please contact the project at 065 7071017, or info@burren.ie or at www.burren.ie. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter

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The Burren National Park Trails

Which one shall I pick?

There is so much to admire in the Burren as a whole but the Burren National Park is arguably one of the most beautiful and captivating places in all of Ireland. The Park was established in 1991 and is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). Although it is the smallest of the six National Parks in the country, it is certainly one of the most interesting. There are many important habitats which are protected under law, some of which are quite rare. You will find limestone pavement, calcareous grasslands, fens and springs, deciduous woodland and hazel scrub, cliffs and scree, permanent lakes and turloughs. Walking the seven way-marked trails in the Park you can explore and experience all of these remarkable habitats. Whether you are interested in an easy stroll or something more challenging you will find a trail to suit.

Each trail has something unique and fascinating about it. Along the Nature/Green Arrow trail the fossil coral encased within the rock harks back to the formation of the Burren limestones 350 million years ago. This vision of warm, tropical seas never fails to ignite the imagination of adults and children alike. The trail descends off the limestone pavement into damp shady woodlands and lush, colourful meadows buzzing with life.

The Orange trail is one for the woodland lovers as it winds in and out of mature hazel/ash

woodland. On a good day the dappled light lends a magical air to your walk and on a bad day the woodland cover provides some much needed shelter. If you are lucky you may be rewarded with a glimpse of the elusive red squirrel, whose presence is marked by the abundance of broken hazel nut shells scattered along the woodland floor. The established ground flora within the woodland includes some of the less colourful orchids like the Twayblade and the Broad Leaved Helleborine. Outside the trail passes through a number of open areas where Arctic Alpine flowers flourish during the spring and summer months. The trail also passes by a turlough, a feature unique to the west of Ireland, which floods during periods of heavy rainfall and provides an important habitat for migratory birds. The trail finally comes to an end where it began, in a vibrant meadow with the backdrop of Mullaghmore in the distance.

For the more experienced walker, the trails that lead to, and over, Mullaghmore offer some of the most dramatic scenery in the Burren. The journey up takes you past the turquoise rimmed Lough Gealáin, a turlough with a permanent lake at its centre which offers a great vantage point for viewing water birds. You will pass within metres of the so-called mushroom stones, glacial erratics that have been shaped by fluctuating water levels since the time of their deposition at the end of the last Ice Age. The walk to the summit cairn on Mullaghmore is challenging,

being predominantly over limestone pavement interspersed with fossils and pieces of chert. In the spring and summer months the way is scattered with myriad wild flowers including the well known spring gentian and carpets of mountain avens. You may be lucky enough to come upon the rare limestone-loving Dark Red Helleborine later in the summer. When you reach the top you are rewarded with stunning views over a landscape of folded mountains, a mosaic of limestone pavement and species-rich grassland and a string of lakes and turloughs.

The above is only a taste of the treasures to be found throughout the National Park and hopefully will inspire many to come and explore this very unique Irish landscape.

by NPWS Park Guides 2012

Authors: Ruth Gaj-McKeever has an MSc in World Heritage Management. Her postgraduate thesis was on the *Burren Regions Potential as a World Heritage Site*. Ann Bingham has a PhD in Palaeoecology and has worked on a number of archaeological projects over the last decade. Sheila Murphy is currently completing a masters in Biodiversity and Conservation. **Artist:** Emer Gaj-McKeever is currently completing a masters in Art Therapy.

walks and Talks

burrenbëotrust



Exploring a shell midden in Doorus with Field Monument Advisor, Christy Cunniffe. Photo by Aine Bird.



Local musicians and story tellers, Paddy Hynes and Chris Droney, impart some tales about the Burren. Photo by Aine Bird.

Come & join us!

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, normally commencing at 2pm at a different location, each led by a different heritage expert. Topics range widely from glacial erratics to flowers, ringforts to famine villages, birds, bees and butterflies to farming systems. Over 1,400 people participated in Burrenbeo Trust events, including *Burren in Bloom* last year! The Trust would like to thank all those who kindly gave their time and

energy to informing these willing partakers!

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

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



David Drew takes the troops over the hills to explore a distant cave. Photo by Linda Morrison.

Examining the diversity of bloom with local farmer and heritage enthusiast, Frank O'Grady. Photo by Aine Bird.

Be there, be prepared!

For Burrenbeo Trust walks please:

- wear comfortable walking shoes or boots. Much of the Burren's terrain is uneven, so for safety please ensure you are wearing sensible footwear.
- come prepared with warm clothes and waterproofs in case of adverse or changeable weather. In good weather, do not forget sunscreen and a hat as the rock reflects the heat and can cause sunburn.
- eat a hearty lunch before heading into the great outdoors; our walks generally take 2-2.5 hours and you won't want to be distracted by hunger or thirst. In case of such an eventuality you may wish to carry a snack and a drink.

THE REFLECTIONS OF AN ECOBEEO STUDENT

In 2009, I was an Ecobeeo student in Ballyvaughan National School. For me, the highlight of Ecobeeo was the field-trip with its opportunity to explore the different parts of the Burren. Ballyvaughan is in the heart of the Burren and has some terrific woodland walks where you can see many of the beautiful types of flora and, if you are quiet, some of the different species of fauna. We were very lucky to have a walkway behind our school, where we would often go to take in the amazing views of the Burren landscape and see the unusual rock formations.

I am now a Transition Year student at Seamount College in Kinvara. The opportunity of being an Ecobeeo student has encouraged me to do work experience with The Burrenbeeo Trust. This provided me with a chance to reflect on the different projects that we completed and the field-trips that we enjoyed as Ecobeeo students. Working with Burrenbeeo has also given me the chance to think about everything I know about the Burren and all that I love about it. Now that I am older, I realise how important the course was for me in opening my eyes to the natural beauty of the Burren and how important it is to preserve that natural beauty. I'm sure that if you asked any other past Ecobeeo students how important it was to them, their response would be the same.

Ecobeeo has influenced my future career. Throughout secondary school I have always had a big interest in geography and there is no doubt that it is my favourite subject. Ecobeeo doesn't just teach you about flora and

fauna, it tells you how the Burren became the magnificent karst landscape that it is today. Learning about this at an early age gave me a chance to really enjoy the subject at secondary school, instead of zoning out in the back of the classroom waiting for the teacher to leave. I also felt it gave me an advantage over other pupils who had not done the Ecobeeo course.

The whole purpose of Transition year is to take time to think about the career that you would like to pursue and to think about your subject choices for the Leaving Certificate. One thing I am certain about is that I will be doing geography in Leaving Cert and then, hopefully, go on to do geography in the National University of Ireland in Galway.

My reflections on Ecobeeo are that it was very worthwhile. I would encourage students taking part in Ecobeeo to really make the most out of it because, one day, you might be teaching the next generation about our wonderful landscape and its surroundings.

by Megan Mullins

Megan Mullins was an Ecobeeo graduate in 2009. She is now in Transition Year in Seamount Secondary School, Kinvara and hopes to use her experience on Ecobeeo as the bases for a Geography degree into the future. She carried out work experience at the Burrenbeeo Trust office in 2012.

Ecobeeo goes from strength to strength

Ecobeeo 2013

Ecobeeo 2013 kickstarted in November 2012 and is building on previous years but is including extra subject like food producers in the region, bushcraft and allowing more time to develop projects. National schools in Newquay, Ballyvaughan, and Kilfenora, as well the Mol an Oige in Ennistymon are well on the way to producing budding new 'Burren Experts'. This year nearly 90 students are taking part in this hands-on, fun-learning experience – one which will stay with them for life. The Ecobeeo Heritage Programme is again made possible by sponsorship from Roche Pharmaceuticals, the Ballyvaughan-Fanore Walking Club, with the assistance of the Burren Cycling Club, Ballyvaughan NS and EI Electronics, for which we are very grateful.

Ecobeeo is growing up...

As well as continuing with the primary school programme, we are running a pilot heritage education programme for the Transition Year students in Gort Community School, Áitbheo. This exciting new programme, will use the Burren as a case-study for landscape, built heritage, people in history, biodiversity and conservation to enable the students to explore their own areas and become 'Place Champions' of a 3km radius of their homeplace. Student projects will make use of new media and technology and will have a dedicated website where students can upload their work. Watch this space! Thanks to Natus for their sponsorship of the secondary school programme.

By Áine Bird

Áine works as the Communications Officer for the Burrenbeeo Trust. Part of her work consists of coordinating Ecobeeo and Áitbheo.

Ecobeeo 2012

Last year another batch of 'Burren Experts' completed the Ecobeeo Heritage Programme, drawn from the national schools in Kinvara, Corofin, Kilnaboy and Ennistymon, and the Kilcolgan Educate Together School. Over a period of 20 weeks, a total of 125 students learned about the geology, archaeology, history, flora, fauna, culture, and land conservation in the Burren. Weekly projects, a field trip and a graduation ceremony all added to the experience and knowledge of the Burren gained by these children. Last June, we were honoured when the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn TD, presented the Ecobeeo graduates with their certificates.

The Burrenbeeo Trust is extremely grateful for all the work of the Ecobeeo Tutors; Brigid Barry, Ronan Hennessy, Kate Lavender, Rory O'Shaughnessy, Zena Hctor, Eugene Lamb, Eileen Hutton, Sarah O'Malley and Brendan Dunford for imparting their knowledge and expertise on these future custodians of the landscape. All tutors bring their subject to life for the children and ensure that learning takes place in a fun environment. Thanks are also due to the Ballyvaughan-Fanore Walking Club, Roche Pharmaceuticals Ltd. and the Carron Group for generously sponsoring the programme. Finally, the Burrenbeeo Trust would like to thank the Cliffs of Moher, the Ailwee Caves, the Burren Centre, the Burren Geopark and Linalla Icecream for donating prizes, and the Burren College of Art for supporting the graduation event.

Since its launch over 800 primary school children from across the Burren have taken part in the Ecobeeo Heritage Programme.

Why not invest in the future of the Burren and sponsor a school to take part in the Ecobeeo 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 sponsoring next year's Ecobeeo programme for a local school, on bringing the course to your primary or secondary school or availing of our fieldtrips and Burren Wild Child day out, please contact communications@burrenbeeo.com / 091 638096.

BUILDING WALLS AND FRIENDSHIPS WITH THE VOLUNTEERS

Under the guidance of Rory O'Shaughnessy, a professional waller, our November task was to repair a gap in a Burren wall: given the huge mileage of walls across the Burren, this was quite a task! Equipped with a variety of tools, including a bucket, we set off across the fields into Sladoo township.

It was a breathtakingly beautiful morning. Overnight it had frozen and our walk provided commanding views across a Burren frosted white. Immediately below us lay an extensive hazel wood, small fields and isolated dwellings. On the plateau, our way crossed winterage pock-marked with hoof prints and crossed by an intriguing array of walls ancient and more recent. Our destination was a wall selected by Rory the previous day which lay about a mile north.

Our walk there fulfilled Rory's advice that, before you begin walling, you should warm-up.

He led us to a long straight boundary wall which examination of maps had suggested might date from c.1870. On arrival at the tumbledown gap in an otherwise sturdy wall, we had a further chance to warm up by walking its length to observe how it had been built.

Then it was back to the gap which, when paced out, measured c. 10 metres. Rory looked at the gap, then looked at the assorted group of volunteers, and commented that whilst it was unlikely we would finish the repair, we would do what we could. That must have served as a spur; no sooner had we taken the requisite 'before' pictures, than we set to work with a will. Our first task was to retrieve the fallen stones for which the pick-axe proved its worth – some stones being completely hidden under turf. Next came demolition down to a firm base. The biggest stones were placed nearest to hand, ready for rebuilding, about a metre back; the

smaller stones were 'flung' beyond them.

It wasn't long, with volunteers working either side, before we had got down to a firm base. Now came the real challenge – replacing the largest stones, some of which required two people. When a stone 'rocked', Rory showed us how to insert 'spalts' – slivers or wedges of stone for stability. Soon, folk were rebuilding the wall from both sides. But just as important as the facing stones are the myriad of tiny stones which had accumulated during demolition. These were placed very carefully between the two faces, where they would be unseen in the finished wall, to wedge the facing stones in place. This is where the bucket came in handy for collecting them.

By lunchtime, the wall was half rebuilt and we sat nearby admiring our work and renewing our energy with the aid of parkin, cheese scones and mince pies – there's more to these BCV tasks

than you might think – and if that tempts you to join us – please do. In the winterages either side of the wall cattle grazed and we could tell they were impressed with our handywork when they came right up to the rapidly disappearing gap and looked over it.

Recommencing, we gazed at the rapidly rising wall and the seemingly huge amount of stone remaining. Impressed with our progress, Rory then supervised our 'keying' the renewed section with the existing wall at its western end

– the end he had thought we might not reach. He kept pushing our stones and praising the firmness of the wall.

By day end, the task was complete and we stood in admiration and then posed for the 'after' photos. Some volunteers were so enthused, they wanted to start on another gap there and then. But reality clicked in and we walked off site contented with a good, and very enjoyable, day's work

by Stephen Ward



The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCV) was born out of the desire for individuals who wanted to do something positive for the Burren.

We will tackle anything that is needed, 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, and cleared places of historical interest of encroaching undergrowth. 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 etc. 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 we would love to hear from you..

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



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



The handy work of the BCVs in cutting back scrub to allow the rare Marsh Fritillary butterfly to breed. Photo by Kate Lavender



Volunteer, Mary dismantling mini dolmens. Photo by C Kreitzer



A beach clean up in April. Photo by Kate Lavender



A fine wall restored by the BCVs. Photo by Áine Bird.

Don't hesitate to come join us, just email volunteer@burrenbeo.com for the next event.

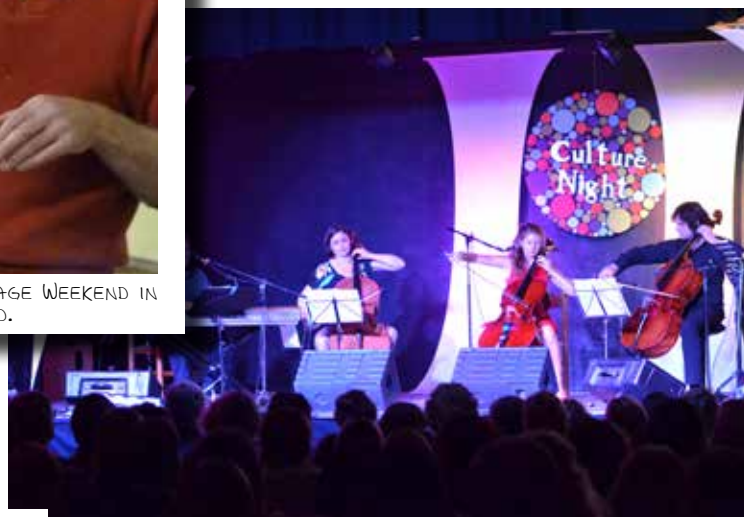
MEMORIES FROM 2012



PLENTY OF OUTDOOR FUN AT VARIOUS BURREN WILD CHILD EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.



T64 BROADCASTER, DERMOT SOMERS, LAUNCHES THE WINTERAGE WEEKEND IN TUBBER WITH A TALK ON MIGRATING PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD.



OVER 1300 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE THEATRE, MUSIC, EXHIBITIONS, & CHILDREN'S SHOWS AS PART OF KINVARA CULTURE NIGHT.



WE LAUNCHED OUR SET OF MINI FIELD GUIDES.



EDEN PROJECT DIRECTOR, TONY KENDLE, LENDS HIS EXPERTISE AT THE LEARNING LANDSCAPE SYMPOSIUM.



BUTTERFLY ENTHUSIAST, JESMOND HARDING, POINTS OUT DIFFERENT HABITATS ON OUR INAUGURAL 'A WALK WITH A DIFFERENCE'.



MINISTER JAN O'SULLIVAN ENCOURAGES PEOPLE TO MAKE A CONNECTION WITH THE BURREN AT THE LIMERICK GALA.



MINISTER RUAIRI QUINN PRESENTED THE ECOBEE CERTS TO THE 125 NEW YOUNG BURREN EXPERTS AFTER THEIR 20-WEEK HERITAGE COURSE.



THE MONTH-LONG BURREN IN BLOOM FESTIVAL HAD A GREAT TURN OUT OF 700 ATTENDEES.



LISMORAHOUN SINGERS CARRIED OUT A FUNDRAISER FOR THE TRUST IN CARRON CHURCH.



HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE GOT INVOLVED IN A CATTLE DRIVE TO HIGHLIGHT THE IMPORTANCE OF WINTERAGE.

Thanks to photos by Linda Morrison, Margaret Duffy, Eamon Ward, Áine Bird, Holly Hunt

Become a member

name

address

phone

e-mail

Membership categories

(please circle one annual membership option)

- ☐ INDIVIDUAL €40
- ☐ COUPLE €50
- ☐ FAMILY €60
- ☐ CONCESSION (unwaged/student/o.a.p) €30
- ☐ LIFE €1,000
- ☐ GOLD DONOR* €5,000

Additional donation

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

For payment by credit or Laser card please complete this section
I authorise you to debit my:

- ☐ Mastercard
- ☐ Visa
- ☐ Laser

card number

expiry date / /

security code (last 3 digits on back of card)

Cardholder Signature

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

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

Ireland’s premier
landscape charity

Why not be part of it?!

The Burrenbeo Trust is a registered charity (CHY16834) dedicated to the Burren and its people. We receive no core funding and rely on membership fees, donations and grants but most of all upon the tireless work of our volunteers who carry out an extensive work programme including 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 Ecobeo

By joining the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers

By displaying our newsletter

By inviting us to make a presentation

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

By championing us in your area

Throughout 2012 we achieved a great deal for the Burren, making a real difference to our local heritage, economy and community. We would not have been able to do so without the help of our supporters, so we wish to say a big **THANK YOU** for enabling all of this to happen! We hope you are as proud to be a part of the Burrenbeo Trust’s work as we are. Here is a synopsis of what we achieved in the last year:

Education:

- 2012 saw a new batch of **Ecobeo** Young Burren Experts graduate, bringing the total number who have qualified since the inception of the course to over 800. This year we were honoured when Ruari Quinn TD, Minister for Education and Skills, presented the children with their certificates.
- We have started a programme with Transition Year students called **Áitbheo** (‘living place’), a ten-week course to encourage them to become *Place Champions*.
- We organised a highly successful two-day **Learning Landscape Symposium**, the first of its kind in this country on place-based education.
- We held a **Heritage & Conservation Management Course** for the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers.
- We undertook a **Heritage Education Audit** for the Burren, looking at the resources which currently exist, identifying gaps and how these can best be filled.
- We provided **workshops and orientation sessions** for numerous visiting groups from universities, schools and adults either at our Kinvara centre or out in the Burren.
- We commissioned a **Learning Landscape Feasibility Study** to identify the full potential of the Burren as a Learning Landscape.

Information:

- Each month we organise a **heritage walk** in the Burren plus, in May, **Burren in Bloom** a month-long festival of walks and talks.
- In winter we hold monthly talks attended last year by 350 people.
- We published our 4th issue of our highly acclaimed annual flagship magazine **Burren Insight**.
- We organised our first **‘Walk with a Difference’** for wheel-chair users.
- We published a series of **Field Guides** covering geology, archaeology, flora, fauna and habitats of the Burren.
- We distribute a free **monthly newsletter** to over 4000 people.
- We continue to develop our **website** and **podcasts** demonstrating heritage work.

Conservation:

- The **Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers** ran 21 tasks attended by 81 volunteers ranging from archaeological excavations and mapping, clearing scrub on behalf of the marsh fritillary and pearl-bordered fritillary butterflies, collecting sea-borne plastic litter, to repairing a large gap in a wall to render it stock-proof and much more.

Advocacy:

- We coordinated a highly successful **Burren Winterage Weekend** celebrating the unique tradition of farming in the Burren. This brought the community together with 35 events spread throughout the Burren and an estimated attendance of 2,500.
- We organised a **Gala in Limerick** in April to profile our work in the Burren.
- We organised **Kinvara Culture Night** in September to highlight local talent and strengthen our community links.
- We continue to work as lead partners with other Burren agencies and the local authorities in developing a **Burren Community Charter**. As part of this we organised a series of resource clinics for local communities to help them deal with issues they face such as funding, planning and heritage issues.
- We continuously promote the Burren in both **regional and national media** so it is at the forefront of peoples’ agendas. Over the course of the year the Trust received significant media coverage on radio, television and in print. Three events received significant coverage: the shell midden dig in Fanore, the Learning Landscape Symposium and the Burren Winterage Weekend

Local Economy:

- The Trust has a policy of using **local suppliers and expertise** with a local expenditure of €90,000.
- We **promote local businesses** through our website, our business network, annual gala and, indeed, whenever opportunities avail.
- The Burrenbeo Trust currently **employs** one full time and two part time staff, and leases a building in Kinvara.
- The estimated value of the **professional input** made by volunteers to the work of the Trust in 2012 was approximately €120,000.

With your input we hope to achieve even more this year!





Invest in the future of the Burren

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

Ecobeo Education Programme

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

Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers

The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers was established to carry out practical conservation work. Funding is needed to develop skills and provide equipment for these tasks.

Burren Winterage Weekend

This is a community-led event organised to celebrate the unique farming traditions of the Burren. We are currently seeking sponsors for this exciting venture.

Learning Landscape Symposium

The Burren is Ireland's Learning Landscape. In order to build up a network of skilled individuals and keep up with best practise, the Burrenbeo Trust wishes to organise a Learning Landscape Symposium. The Trust is currently looking for sponsors for this event.

Your money goes further.....

The Burrenbeo Trust (CHY 16834) 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:
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Tel: 091 638096 / Mob: 087 9689486
Email: trust@burrenbeo.com
www.burrenbeo.com

