

SEPTEMBER 2023

# BCV NEWSLETTER

Official Newsletter of the Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteers



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## Some words from the Chair

KAREN VAN DORP

For those of you who are familiar with the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers, it will come as no surprise that the group has been busy as ever with events and activities aimed at the conservation and preservation of many aspects of Burren heritage. All this hard work definitely deserves a platform and I am happy that we are able to present some of it in this newsletter. Burrenbeo Trust is so grateful to the many volunteers who join the monthly events to make the Burren a better place, so on behalf of the Trust and of the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers Committee I would like to thank each and every one of you – whether you trampled vegetation around Burren Pines, picked up litter during a Beach Clean, spent days digging for artefacts, baked delicious treats for other volunteers or simply showed your support!



We are more than halfway through another year and so much has already been done. Scrub clearing season ended at the end of February, but not before we undertook a massive effort to not only clear a beautiful Burren monument, and also once more returned to the well-known Fahee site to prevent scrub from encroaching onto important butterfly conservation habitat. Successful beach cleanups followed and Elaine Lynch repeated a three-week dig with Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers, which proved even more spectacular than last year! During the summer months our volunteers came together for a walk and a picnic in a stunning Burren area to celebrate the difference they make in our community.

A huge change happens this month as the wonderful Kate Lavender steps down from her post as Conservation, Outreach & Membership Officer at the Trust. Kate has been involved with the BCVs since their inaugural event; all the way back in 2010. We are delighted, grateful and relieved that she will stay on the BCV committee and will take over as Chair. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours!

If you would like to join the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers, you are more than welcome! Contact us on [volunteer@burrenbeo.com](mailto:volunteer@burrenbeo.com) to sign up and receive information on upcoming events.





## Hands-on conservation for the Burren

So far it has been a busy year for the Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteers; with 5 different events and a day of celebrating communities taking action for their places across Ireland (Communities for Heritage event). Up until the end of May we have had 76 different people volunteer with us including 26 new volunteers who had not been out with us before. Since the inception of the BCV in 2009 an impressive 8,780 hours of voluntary work has been carried out by the BCVs in the Burren!



## BCV committee

Our committee remains relatively unchanged apart from Kate Lavender, our Trust Liaison leaving the Trust in September. She is taking over the role of Chair in the committee, and Karen van Dorp will become the Trust Liaison.

Kate Lavender (Chair)  
Wendy Smith (Secretary)  
Karen van Dorp (Burrenbeo Trust Liaison)  
Louise Brogan (Committee Member)  
Ristead Crimmins (Committee Member)  
Margaret Duffy (Committee Member)  
Tony Galvin (Committee Member)  
Ritchie Jones (Committee Member)  
Eileen O'Connor (Committee Member)  
Mike Scanlon (Committee Member)

## First-aid training

Part of our event health and safety is that we always have at least one qualified first aider present on all our events.

This year we had 11 BCVs attend the free training and receive their REC2 certificates, meaning we now have a pool of 14 qualified first aiders to attend our events.

Receiving training to become a BCV First Aider is free of charge. If you are interested and would like more information, please contact us by email ([volunteer@burrenbeo.com](mailto:volunteer@burrenbeo.com)).





## Fahee butterfly habitat maintenance

BY MIKE SCANLON

The weather forecast could not have been more ominous and boding for the first BCV event of the year, revisiting a butterfly breeding site that the BCV have been working on for at least the last 12 years under the expert guidance of Jesmond Harding, Butterfly Conservation Ireland. Due to a busy volunteering year in 2022 we didn't manage to visit the site so we were expecting plenty of work to do.

A number of butterfly species occur at this site. The species, together with their status on the Ireland Red List No. 4 Butterflies is as follows (RE-Regionally Extinct, EN-Endangered, VU-Vulnerable, NT-Near Threatened, LC-Least Concern): Brown Hairstreak (LC, but almost confined to the Burren), Common Blue (LC), Dark Green Fritillary (VU), Dingy Skipper (NT), Grayling (NT), Green-veined White (LC), Large White (LC), Marsh Fritillary (VU), Meadow Brown (LC), Orange-tip (LC), Painted Lady (LC), Peacock (LC), Pearl-bordered Fritillary (EN), Red Admiral (LC), Ringlet (LC), Silver-washed Fritillary (LC), Small Copper (LC), Small Heath (NT), Small Tortoiseshell (LC), Small White (LC), Speckled Wood (LC), Wall (EN), Wood White (NT).

The objective of our work here is to maintain the habitats on the site in the most favourable condition for breeding butterflies. The main conservation priorities are the Dark Green Fritillary, Marsh Fritillary, Pearl-bordered Fritillary and the Wood White.

Thirteen people showed up promptly and just in time for a light rain shower. After a quick briefing we moved into the central area of the site to begin to clear the smaller Hazel and Blackthorn regrowth. We were joined later by Isobel, the farmer and landowner, who came out to lend a much appreciated hand with the work. Plenty of light scrub was in need of removal to clear the main area in the field to allow light in for the nests of Marsh fritillary butterflies that were hopefully present scattered around on the leaves of the Devil's Bit Scabious plants.

A couple of hours later and the promised torrential downpours, floods and plagues of locusts having failed to materialise, we decided it was a good time to stop for the lunch break. After a quick recharge, work was resumed this time up at the north end of the field, re-clearing what hasn't been cut in over five years. Scrub was stacked neatly on old piles and any useable wood left to one side for attendees to take if they wished (great for walking sticks, poles for the garden or kindling for the fire). A short, sharp, extremely heavy hailstorm saw a brief pause for shelter in the hedgerow before work resumed. By around 2pm and incredibly surprised that we STILL hadn't been properly rained on, a huge amount of scrub had been cleared and energy levels were starting to drop, so we decided to call it a day.





## Fahee Castle scrub clearing

BY ELAINE LYNCH

Well done to everyone who came on the scrub clearing days at Fahee North. Two days were spent clearing a lot of scrub from the site. It was amazing work by all involved.

Day 1 saw an impressive turn out of 18 volunteers. It was spent clearing the scrub from the fire place of the Medieval house, which has not been seen for years. We opened back up the two entrances along the bawn wall, which was just lovely to be able to walk through them again. The small Medieval house was cleared and revealing the unrecorded entrance along the bawn wall. It was amazing to be able to see these features again.

Day 2 was spent clearing more scrub from around the Medieval house where the fire place was. This revealed the walls of the house and some internal walls and we found the entrance to the house on the south side. We were also able to open a clear path from the house to the bawn wall entrance along the NE side, which will make it easier for the cattle to move around the site and graze which will help keep back further scrub growth. A small later enclosure was also found while clearing some dense scrub from around the house. We also found a few architectural fragments which possibly belonged to the tower house. One is off a door stone, likely the entrance door to the tower house and the other stones are possible from window or door stones.

BY MIKE SCANLON

The volunteers were welcomed on arrival on a bright but frosty morning by Isobel and Ethan and their two very friendly dogs. The castle is c. 500 meters from the farm sheds and very soon after arrival we were making our way across the rough limestone strewn fields. Elaine showed us a sketch of the castle and after appointing appropriate jobs, soon had everyone diligently working up a sweat to combat the chilly morning air.

Shortly before tea-break, some excited rumblings could be heard. It transpired that Ann, unknowingly, had 'unmossed' a large, nicely marked voussoir from a window or door arch. Later, Elaine unearthed a large carved door jamb.

Tea-time was spent debating the narrow window available yearly for scrub clearing with some surmising that monuments should be exempt from the strict regulations but Elaine countering that all custodians of the environment should adhere to the same rules in the interest of fairness.

Thanks to the Robson family for facilitating us on their magnificent farm and to Elaine, who inspires with her knowledgeable comments as work progresses. Fahee Castle is a fascinating site, that needs more work and definitely it will reveal more secrets in the future.







## Beach clean ups

BY LOUISE BROGAN

Working with beachcomber and Fanore local Liam MacNamara, our 'eyes on the ground man', we target the worst hotspots for rubbish washed up by the sea along the Burren coastline. It's not just a beach clean (although we have on occasion organised those) as we like to make it more challenging by getting to those hard to access areas to give them a good clean. We have adopted the whole Burren rocky coastline as a Clean Coasts Team and were delighted to have been shortlisted for an award by them in 2022.

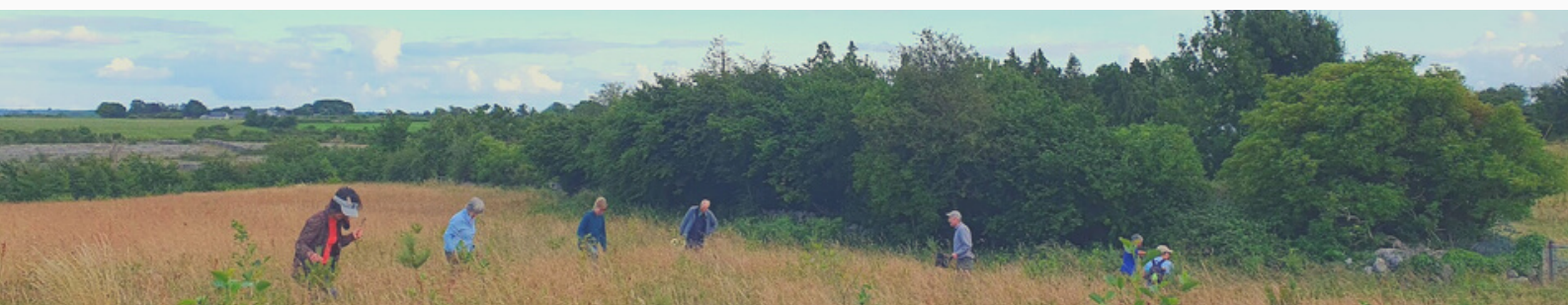
We also do our best to run these events in tandem with the Lisdoonvarna/Fanore Sea Anglers to pool all our collected rubbish, making it easier for the Council to collect.

Thanks need to go to Clare County Council for their quick collection of the rubbish (and to Liam for letting us pile it all up in his garden until the council can get there).

## Pine project site maintenance

BY KATE LAVENDER

Pine site guardians along with volunteers visited three Pine project sites in the Tubber area to carry out maintenance work on sites and check on the trees. The most important job that needed doing was trampling the tall vegetation around the trees to allow the planted pines and companion species more space and light. All pine trees are thriving and looking great and most companion species are doing well. There were a small number of failed companion species - notably birch and holly. There was some encroaching bramble on one of site and where possible this was bruised where possible to discourage growth. Most of the trees are now just tall enough to be seen above the vegetation so it is expected that the trampling won't be necessary after another year of growth. Similar pine site maintenance work was also carried out on other project sites around the Burren in June by different volunteer teams.







## Community excavation

BY MARGARET DUFFY

I joined the Community excavation of two enclosures in Lismohr in its third week.

Elaine Lynch the director had opened two trenches, one in each enclosure. The larger one had already yielded a burial and various artefacts so expectations were high. There were about 20 volunteers working each day.

Elaine gave a comprehensive training in session before starting. I was assigned to the second smaller trench with four other volunteers. It was a matter of trowelling, filling buckets and sieving! The weather was great, the company good, the work not so hard, and the days flew. We found some worked crystal, but otherwise very little. On the Wednesday we back-filled this trench, and on the Thursday we helped with sieving soil from the other. Quite a few items turned up in the sieves. On the last day a large group of volunteers appeared to help backfill and restore the site. All in all a unique opportunity.





# Communities for Heritage

BY KAREN VAN DORP

Anyone looking to take action in their community could join Burrenbeo Trust for the Communities for Heritage event in June. This one day event included networking opportunities for community groups and volunteers while considering wider questions around climate change, biodiversity loss, community fragmentation and more. Each volunteer / community group was offered the chance to showcase what they are doing in their local area with other like-minded groups from across the country. The event also celebrated the projects completed by Heritage Keepers programme participants. A delicious vegetarian lunch and dinner by Wild Catering were included.



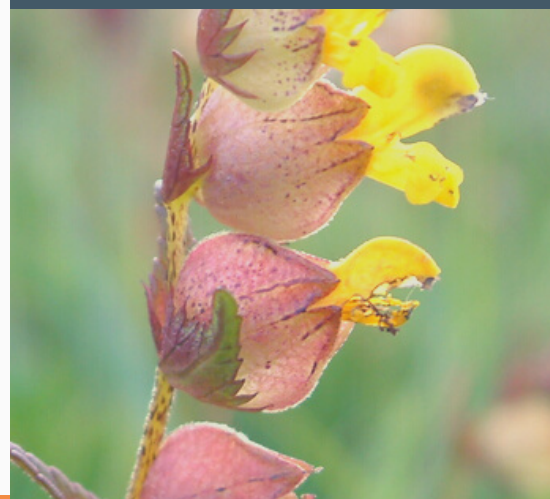
Community groups, Heritage Keeper participants, tidy towns groups, community development organisations, and conservation volunteers all came together to enjoy fieldtrips and talks about helping Barn owls, getting started with oral history, community gardens and more.

The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers organised a fieldtrip 'Working together for the Burren', which was joined by fifteen participants. The event leaders took the group on a walk through a beautiful Burren area to the ruined oratory of Temple Cronan and the nearby holy well, while telling the story of the BCVs and their accomplishments so far. It was a very social, enjoyable event – and the BCVs ended up with more enthusiastic members!

## Yellow Rattle Seed

The end of June means it is time for the BCVs to collect Yellow rattle seed! This incredible plant is known as the 'Meadow Maker', due to the fact that as a hemi-parasite on grasses it suppresses grass growth and thereby encourages a greater diversity of native wildflowers in meadows.

A dozen enthusiastic volunteers returned to the beautifully biodiverse Burren meadow that we have been picking Yellow rattle seeds from for the past two years. The meadow grasses were quite high, but the Yellow rattle plants with their dry seed pods were plentiful and easy to spot. After a couple of hours harvesting under the evening sun, we had filled two large buckets. The seeds were dried, packed and put up for sale on the Burrenbeo website. Packages were sold locally to help landowners create more space for nature, and profits go back to Burrenbeo Trust and the Conservation Volunteers.







## BCV social walk and picnic

BY KATE LAVENDER

August was planned to be our social month to have a bit of a break from our usual volunteering work and to give people a chance to catch up with each other.

We met up at the Burren Outdoor Education Centre (huge thanks to them for letting us use their premises) for a speedy pre-social event committee meeting and business over, the rest of the crew arrived all ready for some serious walking and chatting. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't looking the best but still we car pooled up to start the walk up to the holy well near Oughtmama (thanks Tony for saving the drivers a walk and delivering them to the bottom of the track).

A lovely walk was had through beautiful meadows and stunning views, with a quick hello to one of the local farmers passing by who very generously supplied us with some apples picked fresh from his garden that morning (thanks Sean). It's always great to get the chance to talk to other volunteers without work getting in the way so the group mixed around nicely and everyone had a chance to chat to everyone else.

Up at the well we paused for a nice break, to admire the view, check out the well and listen to a haunting holy well story from Pius before heading back down the hill to the cars and the Burren Outdoor Education Centre. The kettle went on immediately and all enjoyed their picnic with copious amounts of cakes and other sweet stuff - huge thanks to all those who baked/shared their tasty treats.

All in all it was a really lovely, friendly and welcoming event and I can't wait for next year.

Thanks so all who turned up making it such a nice day.







# Upcoming events

OCTOBER

7TH - ARCHAEOLOGY  
SITE MAINTENANCE

NOVEMBER

25TH - AUGHINISH  
MONUMENT SITE  
MAINTENANCE

DECEMBER

10TH - FAHEE SCRUB  
CLEARING

Contact us on  
[volunteer@burrenbeo.com](mailto:volunteer@burrenbeo.com)  
for more info and signing up.  
We'd love to hear from you!

