

BURRENINSIGHT



POSTSCRIPT **SEAMUS HEANEY**

POULNABRONE A TOMB FOR THE BURREN'S EARLIEST FARMERS **ANN LYNCH**

THE LEGACY THEY LEFT BEHIND **MARYANGELA KEANE**

THE BURREN: IRELAND'S NEXT WORLD HERITAGE SITE? **IAN DOYLE**

BURREN WOODLANDS **JOHN CROSS**

THE BURREN THE FUTURE OF TOURISM? **MANCHÁN MAGAN**

LOST IN TIME - MYTHS FROM A DESERTED VILLAGE **PETER O'DONOGHUE**

... and much more

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A Message from the Editors

The Burrenbeo Trust recently celebrated its fifth anniversary and we are delighted to be able to say that, in spite of the challenges that the recession has brought to us all, we continue to grow in terms of our work programme and its impact. In fact the only thing that is reducing is our budget – we are doing even more with even less resources. For this we are deeply indebted to our wonderful staff, volunteers, members and supporters who remain passionate in their commitment to the Trust and its role in safeguarding the future of the Burren. This fragile landscape and its communities (whether they be people, plants or animals) offers inspiration and a sanctuary to many; it continues to need our protection and support.



We feel it is apt to look at why the Trust started this journey in the first place. It arose because many individuals from near and far recognised the potential the Burren has, and continues to have, to inspire. Burrenbeo Trust patron, Maryangela Keane kickstarts this issue by examining the legacy of those who came to the Burren over the last century, laying the foundations as a place of learning. Fellow patron Michael Longley has lent us a poem describing the need to protect the fragile landscape with all its wonder. Ann Lynch looks to the ancient past of Poulnabrone; Manchán Magan looks at what the future may hold for the region.

We are extremely grateful to all our contributors who have lent us their time and energy to bring you *Burren Insight* this year – and our special thanks to Carsten Krieger for his superb photographs.

Due to continuing pressure on resources and lack of funding available for this magazine, we regret to say this may be the last of issue of *Burren Insight* unless you know of an organisation, company or individual that would be able to offer support towards it in coming years - the annual production (design and print) cost is c.€6,500.

We hope you continue to join us on this journey for years to come!

Brigid Barry & Stephen Ward
Editors

This magazine is dedicated to the late, former Burrenbeo Trust patron, Seamus Heaney, who passed away last year. This poem by Prof.Heaney, *Postscript*, says it all....

Postscript

*,And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightening of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully-grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park or capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open'*

Photo by Carsten Krieger

The legacy they left behind...

“Stones in every fertile place” J.Betjman
& the guests that become friends.

by Maryangela Keane

Photo by Carsten Krieger

The three ladies arrived by bus at the stop opposite our Hotel. It was May 1962; and I had just arrived home from my honeymoon. These ladies, aged seventy-six, twins dressed alike, and a single lady were botanists from Norfolk. They were to be my first guests in the Hotel; I had plenty of free time to drive them around the Burren for the week. They became my first teachers and introduced me to the wonders of the Burren, lessons that not only started for me an interest that has lasted well over fifty pleasurable years, but became essential for my life in the Hotel until it closed in 1990.

My husband, Maccon, was the fourth generation to run his family's small Keane's Hotel in Lisdoonvarna. The hotel operated a 'house party' style where guests were introduced to each other, dined together, or separately if desired. It catered, almost exclusively, for naturalists. It had specialised for a very long time in accommodating guests with wide

geographical interests in the area, probably established by visits from Robert Lloyd Praeger and others to the house in the 1930s and 40s – long before my time. During my time, it was customary most evenings, after dinner, for the guests to have informal slide talks, or *ad hoc* lectures on some Burren subject; this was invariably followed by discussions over maps, locations, listing and annotating interesting 'finds' and sharing discoveries made during the day's walking by the guests.

The majority of the academic papers on Burren interests were researched and published before the last war and, since these emanated primarily from British or mainland European universities, these sources more or less ceased during the war and perhaps for a decade or so thereafter. So, in the early 1960s, a great new wave of academic interest and activity in Burren natural history recommenced and, for over thirty years, I had the singular good fortune in my own home

to be able to sit at the feet of great individuals as they tested their theories and ideas, and to walk with them in the limestone 'classroom' that encompassed every natural history discipline from archaeology to zoology. I was taught by them, and gradually, little by little, I was able to apply their science somewhat through the seasons to a landscape that I had come to know intimately and to understand a little better.

Looking back, it is almost impossible for me to record, or indeed remember, all their names, or recall the excitement of ideas and the generosity of conversations which I had the good fortune to witness and hopefully to absorb.

Like all stories and studies, it is best to start at the beginning, in this case perhaps with geology. During my time, of those who stayed in the hotel, and with whom I came in contact, the University of Bristol and associates carried out the most extensive research of both the

horizontal bedding of the limestones and particularly the old underground features of caves, pots, swallow holes and rivers. Of the very many I could mention Eric Tratman and Oliver Cromwell Lloyd (a direct descendent of his more infamous namesake) came every summer for years. I can picture them now, as I write, their OS maps spread over the hotel tables mapping, measuring, recording, identifying, and tracing the features of the limestones, until ultimately they published their work. This led other geologists and speleologists to come and proceed further, such as David Drew of Trinity College, and many others who have published on the geology / geomorphology of the area.

Around this time, another guest, Professor Marjorie Sweeting of Oxford University published a seminal paper on Mullaghmore and the nearby turlough. This, together with an earlier paper on the karstic features of the area's limestones published by Professor

J Corble of Lyon University, attracted wide international attention which extended to many of the other natural history interests dependent on limestone. This publicity resulted in a variety of published papers on various subjects from various sources on the uniqueness of the area. I collected these papers as a reference resource for guests.

'They made our lives so interesting, so fulfilling and so aware and appreciative of the Burren that was just outside our door, with all its complex interdependent specialities that ultimately depend on the limestone for their existence.'

Of all the natural history interests that are intermingled and interdependent on limestone it

is, perhaps, the plants and flowers which have most caught the public imagination. The flora of the Burren is so rich it constitutes about three-quarters of the flora of Ireland. It was my good fortune, until his untimely death in 1994, to be taught in the field by the colossus Professor David A. Webb of Trinity College and author of *An Irish Flora* which is for many the Irish bible of floras. David was joint author, with Mary J.P.Scannell, of the *Flora of Connemara and the Burren (1982)*, in which he kindly accepted my 1980 record of narrow-leaved helleborine *Cephalanthera longifolia* last previously recorded in 1912. It would be impossible to list all the other authors who stayed in the Hotel, but for those that have natural history books on their shelves the names David Bellamy, Keble Martin, Estyn Evans, Geoffrey Grigson, Richard Fitter and Richard Mabey will be familiar, to name just a few.

At the end of the sixties, the Northern Ireland

difficulties discouraged British universities and individual botanists from doing field studies in the Burren. It seemed to me that, at about this time, the teaching of geography in the Irish schools and universities became more focused on geophysical studies than heretofore. This resulted in several colleges locating their field studies to the Burren and, due to that, many of today's specialists rediscovered their original love of nature from educational trips here.

During the seventies, the Dutch universities made biannual field study visits to the Burren. Those that stayed in the hotel were from Leiden, Utrecht, (they had a mini Burren Department!) Amsterdam and The Catholic University of Nijmegen, (now called Radboud University). Their interests were mostly botanical, including mosses, algae, lichens and aquatic plants in general. Professor Victor Westhoff of Nijmegen, the godfather of conservation in the Netherlands, influenced the other universities to select the Burren as a venue for field studies which they did for many years. He himself was a renowned international botanist, and published several papers on the Burren; he was chosen to compile the national Flora of Japan and has been called 'the greatest post-war conservationist'. His fascination with the Burren and Connemara was such that he arranged for a group of Dutch botanists to purchase a holiday house in Roundstone where they worked, among other things, on bogland plants and particularly the rare heathers there.

But it was not just botanists that our multifaceted Burren attracted. It was the individual guests who came alone, or in twos and threes who are the most memorable: memorable for their generosity in contributing their knowledge to the evening sessions and in giving to the hotel long lists of plants, birds, field monuments and everything else that could possibly be collected and recorded to add to our expanding collection for the use of future guests!! What a wealth of knowledge and joyous entertainment these people gave us.

Over the years archaeologists, artists, poets, playwrights, photographers all came to learn and to further their interest in what I call the Burren 'theatre'. To mention some is to ignore the many; however, one day a group of four guests arrived: little did I know it at the time, but they were to influence my life in the Burren in a very practical way. They returned several times to the Hotel. I speak of Dick Deegan, lecturer in photography and his wife who catalogued his work. At that time Dick's photographs of the Burren concentrated on form and light and were used in every tourist board brochure. He gave me my first set of slides of the area, which for a great number of years became the mainstay of my lecture tours.

The other two were George McClintock a plant pathologist who daily taught us everything he knew and Raymond Piper the artist. Raymond fell in love with orchids and the Burren. Orchids portraits were to become his life's work.

So intense was his love that he created a little Burren in his Belfast green house in which to grow orchids to paint at home. During the early spring, and later during the flowering season, he would telephone me to ask exactly what weather we were having so that he could provide the same for his orchid plants in the green house! Raymond returned many times, usually with this friend Michael Longley the poet. Longley's poem *Burren prayer* encapsulates for me not just the flowers but the beauty and the spirit of this strange solitary austere place. During my time, the Burren fascinated film makers; at one time over eleven films were made by companies from countries as far away as Israel. But it was our own Eamon de Buitleir that captured the seasons, spirit, flowers, and wildlife at their best. I greatly valued his friendship throughout the years ... it was Eamon who showed me my first two whales swimming off Blackhead.

I cannot end these reminiscences without mentioning a special guest; he arrived on a bicycle, a tall erect good-looking man, dressed in well-worn weather clothes and walking boots: it was, of course, the amazing Tim Robinson, cartographer and author, who through the years became a dear friend. Tim's *Burren Map* has guided thousands of people through and over the Burren - into its most secret and secluded places, their walks always enhanced by a little history and folklore. His maps are truly 'folding landscapes' which, to me, are more books than maps. Discreet as the man himself, he kindly hid my name on his Burren map, of which of course I am very proud and never miss an opportunity to boast about it.

Now retired, I still live in the Burren; it spreads around my house like a great horseshoe, its opening to the North West. I greatly miss the constant stream of extraordinary guests who were attracted to our hotel and ultimately became friends. They made our lives so interesting, so fulfilling and so aware and appreciative of the Burren that was just outside our door, with all its complex interdependent specialities that ultimately depend on the limestone for their existence.

Sadly more than a few of those I have mentioned are no longer with us. However, their work lives on for others to explore and develop with the aid of more recent techniques and experiments and isn't that just wonderful?

Maryangela Keane was co-proprietor of Keanes Hotel in Lisdoonvarna for 30 years. Maryangela lectured on Historical Geography in the Adult Education Dept of Limerick University. She was a guest lecturer for 21 years in the British Natural History Museum and gave talks on the region as far afield as the Smithsonian Institute in NYC. She is the author of *The Burren* and a Patron of the Burrenbeo Trust. Maryangela can be contacted on maryangela@eircom.net

¹An *Irish Flora* was first published in 1943; the most recent edition by John Parnell and Tom Curtis published in 2012, long after his death, is entitled Webb's *An Irish Flora* in his honour.

Burren Prayer

*Gentians and lady's bedstraw embroider her frock.
Her pockets are full of sloes and juniper berries.
Quaking-grass panicles monitor her heartbeat.
Her reflection blooms like mudwort in a puddle.
Sea lavender and Irish eyebright at Poll Salach,
On Black Head saxifrage and mountain-everlasting,
Our Lady of the Fertile Rocks, protect the Burren.
Protect the Burren, Our Lady of the Fertile Rocks.*

by Michael Longley
Poet, Burrenbeo Trust Patron,

As found in *Collected Poems*
(Published by Jonathon Cape, 2007).

Dr Ann Lynch and her team carried out excavation on Poul nabrone portal tomb between 1986-1988.

The iconic tomb at Poul nabrone, standing proud on the limestone plateau just south of Ballyvaghan, is a tangible reminder of those early farmers who settled in the Burren almost 6,000 years ago. The tomb is one of 180 portal tombs known from throughout the country and comprises a rectangular chamber the entrance to which is marked by two tall portal stones. A single large capstone, sloping down towards the rear, covers the chamber which is surrounded by a low mound or cairn of stones. The tomb was constructed with limestone slabs taken from the surrounding pavement and, in the mid-1980s, a crack that had been noted in the western portal stone had worsened to such an extent that the structural integrity of the tomb was considered to be at risk. A major conservation programme was immediately carried out by the National Monuments Service (OPW) during which archaeological excavations took place within the chamber and part of the surrounding cairn. These excavations produced a wealth of material including stone tools, bone objects, fragments of charcoal, snail shells, animal bone and, of course, the bones of those individuals who had been interred in the tomb. The results of analysis of these remains now allow us to tell the story of Poul nabrone.

When was it built and by whom?

A large number of radiocarbon dates were obtained from the human remains and the animal bone. The earliest dates produced by the human bone centre on 3,800 BC which must have been the time when the tomb was constructed. This is at the very beginning of the Neolithic (New Stone Age) in Ireland when major social and economic transformation was taking place that included an increased scale of woodland clearance, the cultivation of crops, the introduction of domestic animals, the use of pottery and new types of

stone tools and the construction of megalithic (large stone) tombs to contain the remains of the dead. The only evidence of human activity in the Burren prior to this is the shell middens on the coast close to Fanore which belong to the hunter-gatherers of the Mesolithic period. It is therefore likely that those who first practised agriculture in the Burren in the early fourth millennium were settlers who moved into the area, possibly arriving via a coastal route and moving inland along the Caher river valley and the Ballyvaghan valley.

The landscape encountered by these early settlers would have been very different from that of the Burren today. There was extensive forest cover including pine, oak and elm with hazel also abundant. Once clearances were made in the woodland for settlement and farming, hazel and yew would have expanded significantly.

Building a house for the dead

It is likely that settlement and farming practices had become established before efforts were expended on the building of the portal tomb at Poul nabrone. The choice of location must have had particular significance for the builders: perhaps it was adjacent to a north-south route across the Burren, as it still is today, and marked a territorial boundary; perhaps its proximity to a spring in the nearby ravine was important as water may have played a vital role in whatever rituals and ceremonies took place at the tomb or perhaps it was simply a convenient clearing in the woodland close to the community's settlement. Once chosen, the location was cleared by burning the vegetation and the soil was removed from the area of the chamber. Limestone slabs were prised loose from the surrounding pavement and placed upright on the limestone. The capstone was probably put in place by building a ramp of stone and soil against the back of the tomb; this would have allowed it to be moved into position using ropes and timber runners. The slab that currently lies

at the back of the tomb may originally have supported the back end of the capstone and the low mound of stones built around the base of the tomb helped to stabilise the structure. This cairn of stones was never much higher than it is today allowing the dramatic profile of the tomb to be seen. A low sillstone marked the entrance to the tomb, allowing open access to the chamber over the millennia.

Burial Ritual

Once constructed, the tomb was used for intermittent burials until about 3,200 BC, a period of almost 600 years. The bodies were interred within the chamber in a deposit of stony soil that was about 20cms deep. At the time of excavation, the bones were almost entirely in a disarticulated and very fragmentary state but detailed analysis indicated that a minimum of 36 individuals had been interred over the lifespan of the tomb. Male and female and all age groups ranging from foetus to older adult were recorded. Certain skeletal elements, especially the skull and long bones were under-represented indicating the intentional removal of bones after decomposition. Some of the long bones had been exposed to heat and then returned to the tomb suggesting rituals that involved the removal and redeposition of bones and perhaps the circulation of bones amongst tombs or other burial places within the region. Burial activity appears to have ceased around 3,200 BC, but the tomb must have retained its status as a special and sacred place as a foetus was buried at the base of the sillstone, at the entrance to the tomb, about 1,500 years later in the middle Bronze Age.

The Poul nabrone community

The recovery of the actual bones of members of the community that built and used Poul nabrone has provided us with glimpses of their lifestyle. Not surprisingly, the Poul nabrone people led physically strenuous lives resulting in wear-and-tear at their joints. Degenerative arthritis

was common, particularly in the upper back, suggesting the carrying of heavy loads using the head, neck and upper back. Arthritis of the hands and wrists was common. Accidental bone fractures must have been an occupational hazard for these early farmers and there were a few instances of fractured foot bones. They had good overall dental health and a diet low in refined sugars as indicated by the low incidence of caries. Analysis of stable isotopes has suggested a terrestrial diet with little input from marine sources – somewhat surprising given the tomb's proximity to the coastline at Ballyvaghan. There appears to have been limited consumption of animal protein and a preference for plant proteins, suggesting a diet that included grains and cereals, nuts, seeds, legumes and fruits. Dairy products must also have been consumed. Cattle, sheep, pigs and possibly goats were kept but the bones recovered from the tomb were those of the very young (i.e. calves, lambs and piglets) with no evidence of butchery marks or burning. They may simply have been weaklings who took shelter in the tomb and died.

It was not an entirely peaceful society as indicated by the evidence for interpersonal violence. The tip of a chert arrowhead was found embedded in the right hip bone of an adult (probably a male) who had been shot with some force from behind. Healed injuries to a skull and a rib bone are also likely to be the result of blows from a blunt object such as a stone.

A wide range of artefacts was recovered from amongst the human remains. The stone tools, made from locally-sourced chert were well-used everyday objects including arrowheads, scrapers, blades and flakes. Use-wear analysis has indicated mostly wood-working and plant processing traces with less evidence for hide-

working. A finely polished stone axehead may have originated from as far away as the north-east of England and indicates a network of communication and exchange that extended as far as the west coast of Ireland. Items of personal ornament were deposited with the remains and included two stone beads, a bone bead, part of a bone barbell-shaped toggle and a unique decorated bone/antler pendant. Two quartz crystals may have had particular symbolic significance that resulted in them being deposited with the dead.

We don't know where these early Burren farmers lived or what type of houses they built. Given the nature of the landscape it is likely that stone-built structures must have been used. Recent survey work in the vicinity of Poul nabrone by Christine Grant has identified the remains of a large figure-of-eight enclosure and two small circular enclosures about 400m north of the tomb that may belong to the Neolithic period, but only further research including excavation can confirm this. There are also remnants of ancient walls (both mound walls and slab walls) in the vicinity of Poul nabrone some of which may have been built by the communities that used the tomb.

In conclusion, the portal tomb at Poul nabrone is the earliest known megalithic tomb in Ireland and was built by the first farmers who settled in the Burren. The evidence recovered from the excavation has important implications for our understanding of the function and use of portal tombs in Ireland in general and their place in the complex social landscape of the early Neolithic in Ireland. A detailed report of the excavation and its findings is due to be published during 2014.

by Ann Lynch

Dr Ann Lynch is a Senior Archaeologist with the National Monuments Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Affairs. In addition to Poul nabrone, she has directed excavations at some of Ireland's premier monuments including Newgrange and Dublin Castle. She can be contacted on ann.lynch@ahg.gov.ie

Photo by Carsten Krieger



Right hip bone of an adult with embedded tip of chert arrowhead (Photographic Unit, National Monuments Service).



Bone / antler pendant, front view (Photographic Unit, National Monuments Service).



Chamber following excavation showing bedrock floor and stump of broken portal stone, front left (Photographic Unit, National Monuments Service)

POULNABRONE

a tomb for the Burren's earliest farmers

Burren Woodlands

Native woodland does not usually spring to mind when the Burren is mentioned: limestone pavement, species-rich grasslands, heath, turloughs and hazel scrub but not 'real' woodlands! However, there is in fact a considerable diversity of woodland types within the Burren and even the hazel scrub should not be dismissed lightly.

The terms 'scrub' and 'woodland' are artificial concepts and one grades seamlessly into the other. Scrub, defined as stands of trees less than 5m in height, may be considered as low woodland restricted in height by exposure, soil conditions or to be merely the early stages in woodland development. The extensive tracts of hazel in the Burren vary considerably in character. Newly established scrub, which has grown up in recent decades, is typically species-poor and largely characterised by grassland species, remnants of the former grassland it has replaced, and it lacks typical woodland species. Embedded within these stands, however, are areas of older woodland with a true woodland flora. These are typically found in more sheltered areas, such as at the base of cliffs, as at Slieve Carran, or in hollows or dry valleys, as at Cahercommaun. Typical species include ash, whitethorn and grey willow, with holly and spindle in the shrub layer. The herb layer is species-rich and is often characterised by a colourful spring flora with bluebell, primrose, celandine, wood anemone, 'wild garlic' (on wetter soils), as well as a variety of ferns such as hart's tongue and soft shield fern, grasses such as false wood brome and summer flowering species including enchanter's nightshade and meadow-sweet. There is a well-developed, although often rather species-poor, moss layer. Some of these stands contain a rich lichen and fungal flora, including the lichen 'blackberries and custard' (*Pyrenula hibernica*) and the rare hazel gloves fungus (*Hypocreopsis rhododendri*). They belong to the so-called Atlantic Hazel Woods, which in addition to western Ireland are only found on the Atlantic seaboard of Scotland.

Large areas of woodlands occur on the eastern margin of the Burren, particularly in the Coole-Garryland and Dromore Nature Reserves. The former area in particular contains a variety of woodland types and is one of the most extensive, varied and species-rich areas of woodland in the entire country. Ash-hazel woodland dominates on the shallow soils, with a flora similar to that of hazel woodland but with the addition of pedunculate oak. Around the margins of Coole Lake there is a narrow fringe of alder-whitethorn-

buckthorn woodland with abundant meadowsweet in the herb layer. This is a very rare woodland type, restricted to turlough margins. In addition, there are small stands of yew woodland on outcrops of limestone. Yew woods are poor in species because of the dense, year-round shade and the woodland floor is typically dominated by mosses and ivy.

Dromore Woods are similar but with an unusual amount of elm. In addition, there are narrow bands of alder-willow woodland on the lake shores. Both Coole-Garryland and Dromore have been considerably modified by man and there is an abundance of non-native trees, especially beech and sycamore, which regenerate readily, and various conifers, principally larch. The long term policy of the NPWS is to gradually reduce the abundance of these species.

Finally, there are two unique woodlands which deserve mention. At the foot of Mullaghmore in the valley of a small, semi-permanent stream, is an area of alluvial woodland. This is the only such area known within the Burren. It consists mostly of hazel and grey willow and has a ground flora dominated in the spring by wild garlic. Nearby, at Rock Forest, is a most unusual Scots pine wood with an understorey of hazel, blackthorn and ling. The intriguing possibility that the pine is of native Irish provenance is the subject of ongoing study.

These woodlands all contribute to the biodiversity of the Burren providing important habitat not just for plants but also for invertebrates, birds and mammals. All these woodland types are restricted to the Atlantic margins of Europe and are, therefore, like much of the Burren, of international importance. So, if the weather is too inclement for the open habitats, head for the shelter of the woods and discover a totally different world!

by John Cross

Dr John Cross recently retired from the Science and Biodiversity Section of the National Parks and Wildlife Service. He has spent nearly 40 years studying native woodlands and was also centrally involved in the BurrenLIFE Project and the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme. He recently published *Ireland's Woodland Heritage - a guide to Ireland's Native Woodlands* (available from the NPWS). He may be contacted at jrmcross@gmail.com

The lure of the land the need to belong

'The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on all of us ... It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere...'

Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*.

In Ireland the question of 'the land' has long been contentious, often being associated with narratives of possession and dispossession, ownership and stewardship, identity and belonging. As Leanne Howard discussed in *Burren Insight 4*, cultural landscapes embody the deep connections people have developed with their homes and particular places, such as the Burren. Local mapping groups can make those connections more tangible through community-mapping practices that reflect the way we experience landscape and community, and which can also re-frame the way we think about the heritage and value of local places in Ireland today.

Mapping Killinaboy: The Full Story?

While attachment to place in Ireland is not a unique phenomenon, it has a distinctive resonance due to the historical, cultural and linguistic legacies associated with land ownership.

A recent mapping project at Killinaboy unearthed a new way to excavate local memories which was communicated to the new generation through exhibitions and collaborative publications. The work was undertaken by *The Mapping Group* comprising Brendan Beakey, John Kelleher, Deirdre O'Mahony, Francis Whelan and Seán Whelan based in the village's former Post Office - the X-PO - <http://x-pokillinaboy.blogspot.ie/>.

This group met on a weekly basis since the X-PO opened in 2007, and during that time it has traced the history of human occupancy as shown on maps, documents, the deserted houses, 'cabhails', and castles of Killinaboy parish. The role of oral history is central to their work of collecting information from the local community. In 2012 the group held an exhibition of their mapping work in Ennistimon entitled '*The Full Story? Tracing Killinaboy Townlands*'.

The Full Story was described by Deirdre O'Mahony as 'a combined re-presentation of

documentation of the names of the householders of the fifty-one townlands of Killinaboy for the past 150 years'. Their work brought to mind what Edward Casey, the philosopher of 'place', said: '*To live is to live locally, and to know is first of all to know the place one is in*' (Casey, 1996).

The title of the exhibition indicated the group's awareness that their mapping work was by necessity 'incomplete', that the 'full story' could never be retold. The mapping of the parish was an ongoing process that sought to recapture the dynamic nature of 'place', and how places change through the lives of the people.

This community mapping project shows the importance of a shared sense of ownership. Of more importance perhaps is the acknowledgement that mapping and documenting place is an open-ended process. The emphasis on the map-making puts into sharp relief not only how memory informs the present, but also enables ways to 'reveal the new' (Tuan, 2004) and to imagine alternative futures. Such mapping demonstrates that place-making is something that we all do, in one form or the other, in our daily lives, in our homes and our communities.

by Nessa Cronin

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Nessa Cronin is Lecturer in Irish Studies at the Centre for Irish Studies and Co-Director of the Ómós Áite: Space/Place Research Network, at NUI Galway. She is a founding co-convenor of the Mapping Spectral Traces international network of artists, scholars and practitioners. Nessa's interdisciplinary work focuses on Irish cartographic history, literary geographies and developing academic and community-based research in Irish Place Studies.

'Nothing replaces those early food memories of dawn mushroom forays in dewy fields, accompanied by my Dad and yes our Yorkshire terrier Orla, the promise of these beauties steamed in butter on toast with hot tea for breakfast.'



WILD & WONDERFUL FORAGING FOR FOOD

As an avid forager since childhood, growing up in the shade of the Galtee Mountains in Co. Tipperary, finding, cooking and using wild food remains, to this day, the joyful experience I often recall of those carefree days of my youth. Nothing replaces those early food memories of dawn mushroom forays in dewy fields, accompanied by my Dad and yes our Yorkshire terrier Orla, the promise of these beauties steamed in butter on toast with hot tea for breakfast. Or climbing into the branches of a wild cherry tree on the neighbour's farm, a risky reward far greater than any sweet shop treat. A wonderful experience I now share with groups on wild food walks in the Burren and surrounds.

Through the ages, with the ongoing advances in agriculture and the sad decline in gathering wild food, like our ancestors did, we have lost touch with that primal need to feed ourselves from nature and look to supermarkets and mass-produced "food" to sustain us, though thankfully a food revolution seems to be emerging, with more people growing their own, supporting local farmers' markets, and setting up community supported agriculture projects (CSAs), and co-ops; may they thrive and grow, locally and globally.

Why Wild Food?

We have about 8000 edible plants available to us globally but most of us eat only a tiny fraction of these. Whilst our bodies have evolved over tens of thousands of years to deal with a varied diet of hundreds of plants, modern living can now leave us with less than 20 plant sources of food and much of this is processed.

So we often have a nutritional deficit, a taste deficit and a nature deficit.....hence wild food. I don't know about you, but I crave being out in the wild.

Though we have lost a lot of local knowledge about where a particular wild food plant grows in abundance, the hunter-gatherer in me is on a quest to find some forgotten areas for certain plants and sustainably forage them, while preserving and sharing them at the same time. I was recently asked to take a certain person on a wild food walk and wanted to take the roads and lanes near my home that overlook the sea and that are rich in obvious plant life, folklore and history, but I felt there was more to these hedgerows and fields than met the eye. What to do? You ask your neighbour? Not only did my wonderful neighbour Sean tell me of places he knew where crab apples and wild pears grew in abundance, he drove me to places locally I had never heard of, holy wells, forgotten houses, and yes a dry lake, not a Turlough he insisted.... a mirage in the middle of fields of rushes and yes wild food in abundance, Pignuts

Conopodium majus, Reed-Mace *Typha latifolia*, Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and many more hidden treasures.

I might show you someday.....and as I write of such things, and being near completion of months of training to join the *Burren Ecotourism Network*, I feel more in tune than ever about the need to protect our native habitats, to ensure the protection of the species that grow and thrive in them and that they are as safe-guarded for the future as they are today. I was privileged to guide two walks in the Burren in the last year, with Burrenbeo Trust walking series that take place the first Sunday of every month and the Burren Winterage Weekend festival in October. These gentle ramblings revealing the richness of the biodiversity, beauty and uniqueness of the Burren, encountering dozens of wild food plants along the way, as well as a huge variety of moths, butterflies, birds, and insects, a unique habitat managed so well by all who live in and enjoy it.

So, I hear you say, can you forage sustainably? Surely we should leave these precious plants alone to reproduce without any more human intervention, especially in the Burren. A debatable subject for sure, and one I have researched and am happy with my findings, as promoting what I do in a sustainable way is at the core of my work. The answer is yes. Education is the key. Get informed, arm yourself with local plant knowledge, a good foraging book indicating the endangered species that should be left alone, and let yourself be guided through the Burren and Special Areas of Conservation by a trained walking guide/educator/trained forager to familiarize yourself with common and endangered plants. Join

local organizations like Burrenbeo Trust to have a say in the conservation of this exquisite landscape. I recently received a certificate for a training session I did with Darach O'Murchu, Master Trainer with *Leave No Trace*, a network of organisations and individuals with an interest in promoting the responsible recreational use of the outdoors. It was a worthwhile and very practical day, learning how to BE, in the countryside. www.Leavenotrace.com.

Promote responsible use of the outdoors by example and encourage school children to do the same, through all the various initiatives available locally.

Pick only in a sustainable way, a bit here and there, safe in the knowledge that most of the common wild plants provide us with more than enough. Bring a camera, sit, listen, smell, taste and see.

Tread lightly in the wild.

Of course I also love to cook with my wild larder and you will find a couple of recipes overleaf. I hope you enjoy them.

by Oonagh O'Dwyer

Oonagh O'Dwyer, who is an organic horticulture tutor, grows, makes and sells salad vegetables, herbs and preserves, locally. She guides groups on wild food walks in Co. Clare, on the seashore, land and wooded areas. She runs cookery classes, using locally sourced ingredients and food from the wild (of course) and is setting up a Wild Food Supper Club. She is a member of the Burren Eco-Tourism Network and a tourism partner of the Geopark. For more information, www.wildkitchen.ie



Photo by Brendan Dunford



Donagh O'Dwyer's Blackberry Ketchup

- 2Lbs./900g blackberries
- 1 teaspoon of mixed spice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Dash of nutmeg
- 4 oz/100g demerara sugar
- 1 chilli
- 4 cloves
- 1/2 pint/275ml wine vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon mustard powder

Simmer the blackberries in their own juice (do not add water) until soft. Stir all the time so they do not burn, but don't add water or it won't work. Put them through a blender. Sieve to remove pips, then put into pan with all the other ingredients, and simmer on low heat for about 15 mins. Sieve once more to remove the solid ingredients, or tie these loose spices in muslin, to avoid a second sieving. Just remove the muslin bag, before bottling into sterilized jars or bottles, seal and label. Delicious on omelettes, with cheese, chicken and yes mackerel....

Donagh O'Dwyer's Nettle Pesto

I love this stuff, and find it a great way to incorporate this wonderful iron and mineral rich weed into our diets. I could go on forever about Nettles, *Urtica dioica* such is the variety of its uses, but that's for another day. I don't use the traditional recipe for pesto, which includes parmesan cheese, as this tends to reduce its shelf-life. Be adventurous, and add seeds and other nuts as you please.

The basic recipe is, washed young nettle leaves, add olive or rape-seed oil, salt to taste, and as much garlic as you like. I love to use the new leaves of Wild Garlic or Ramson's *Allium ursinum*, they taste so full of the goodness of the earth.

I don't even steam the nettles first, though you can, but wear gloves when washing and preparing. Blitz all the ingredients in a blender, or mortar and pestle. I add toasted sunflower or pumpkin seeds, rocket from the garden, or even some anchovies or olives, to smear over my salad.....divine.

Set-Dancing

Still alive & kicking

Six years ago my mother, a seasoned set dancer, asked me if I would take up dancing lessons at the local Community Hall. "Why?" I implored. "So you can accompany me to Céilidhs." I lasted two sessions and failed to return. So six years later, after moving home from the U.K. what does my mother do? She finds me a teacher, in a hall, in Ennis. "Only costs a fiver!" says my mam, "And Maggie gets a great turnout." She wasn't kidding. Maggie, a pint sized lady with a warm approach and a voice soaring to the end of the wooden dance-floor, proved to be a might to be reckoned with. Equipped with a booming sound system – Maggie calls the sets on her microphone. Determined to hone our dancing skills, she threatens to stick our feet to the ground with chewing-gum – if we become too giddy like a filly, or indeed may give a slap on the back of the legs as is necessary. Flying around the floor, it was a great workout with whoops filling the air. Alas two sessions later, I was hooked.

Dancing makes me laugh. My jaw aches and my head spins. First few times I went I was done for by the end of four sets. I felt euphoric. Let me explain. Each set is comprised of eight people - four couples that make up a square. The couple facing the stage is referred to as "first tops"; the couple opposite them are the "second tops",

with "first sides" and "second sides" to the left and right of first tops respectively.

Different counties have different nuances such as whether they start the set advancing in a circle or leading around the house. Steps are danced either as the basic one-two-three, two-two-three ... ending on eight, or as a polka-reel – the down-two-three step as I call it. Descriptions of how the sets proceed are as follows: you can go "round the house", "dance at home," and "swing." You can "advance", do a "Little Christmas" where four dancers swing fast in a circle, or form "the wheelbarrow" where one

man pulls both ladies forth and back and then swaps with the opposite man in a beautifully orchestrated twirl. The list goes on.

Sounds complex? Not *tatal!* Patience and persistence are the key to perfecting your dance style. Also a knack for the bit of banter helps ... for dancing in close proximity with someone you don't know warrants some getting to know each other before they dance you round the house, or gallop you all the way home!

Of course that brings me onto "the right partner." As in love it's hard to find "The One" ... on the dance-floor that is. Everyone dances distinctly differently to one another. One partner may eagerly lead you around the floor; but your head is dizzy and your feet are lost behind you. Another may very well slow you down, your step is out; you crush each other's toes. So, when the right partner presents him or herself, the timing will be right, the swing impeccable and the home-run a graceful procession. You will both glide purposely across the dance-floor, in perfect step, with one foot solidly anchored to the ground, while the rest of you takes off, soaring, in sync with the music – diddy diddy di.

'Dancing makes me laugh. My jaw aches and my head spins. First few times I went I was done for by the end of four sets. I felt euphoric.'

On the 29th December 2013 I danced at my first céilidh. Seven out of the Ten sets - a record count. *The Five Counties* band were in flying-form, footwork was impressive, pony-tails bobbed up and down, Riverdance crew jersey tops flashed across the dance-floor and the atmosphere was electric. I commented afterwards that it was like a Riverdance Rave. Tea and sandwiches at half-time with mincemeat pies helped sustain for a long night ahead. Young and old attending, the Connemara and Caledonian flew by in *shtyle*, commencing at nine and going on into the cold winter night. Inside the craic was ninety. Maggie's céilidh had more than a good turnout. It was a knockout. Then two weeks later, I accompanied my mother to our first céilidh together. That same night – I met "The One." My dream dance partner... of course.

by Sorcha Ní Slatraigh



Photo by Áine Bird

There are many set-dancing classes around the Burren; Maggie's classes are held on a Monday night in the Holy Family Hall in Ennis at 8.00pm and in Gort Community Centre on a Tuesday night at 8.30pm.

Summer 1986 - one of those glorious May evenings, blessed with endless light. With baby Roisin in arms and Diarmaid toddling along, we strolled from the crumbling Newtown House- now our new home- to coax Michael in from the mammoth task of rebuilding the old avenue wall. He paused for a moment, Burren rock in hand "we will have an art school here Mary, granting

potential in those who don't consider themselves artists - to enable radical new ways of thinking and innovative action.

Creativity is the ability to imagine what does not exist; imagination is the source of creativity. The Burren is the powerful catalyst that opens up that imagination.

programmes invite political and business leaders, students from other disciplines, the Burren community, anyone who is interested - an opportunity to rid themselves of immobilising scepticism, to broaden their lens and to utilise intuition, dreams and fantasies in addition to brain power. Core to the experience is a return to source, metaphorically facing a blank canvas,

Blue Sky Thinking on CREATIVITY IN THE BURREN

*degrees to students from all corners of the earth
It's going to be the best little art school in the world "*

*Dream on Michael - I replied flippantly
.....and he did.*

2014. Burren College of Art (BCA) prepares to celebrate its twentieth anniversary. An international cohort of students enrolled on undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral programmes, together with established resident artists and faculty, populate its purpose-built studios and facilities. BCA Gallery hosts international contemporary exhibitions, and the restored 16th century Newtown Castle welcomes leaders, lawyers and conference attendees. Ballyvaughan and the Burren are enriched culturally and economically by the steady flow of artists and thinkers to the College.

So where does such a vision come from and how does it become reality? Can such innovation be fostered? In my view it depends on two central principles.

- Having a sense of higher purpose- for Michael this was his love for the Burren and his desire to ensure its survival as a lived-in landscape.
- Having a clear vision - Michael believed that education provision was a viable and appropriate form of development and survival for the Burren. Self belief, determination and an ability to take risks and learn from failures propelled purpose and vision to reality.

The very factors that imagined the Burren College of Art into being, underpin our alternative approach to art education. They also inform the next phase in which BCA transitions from being "a hothouse for artists" to "a hothouse for universal creativity" unleashing latent creative

This elemental and enigmatic fertile rock - a complex fusion of nature's force and human imprint, has the power - as the late Seamus Heaney so strikingly captures in *Postscript* - to "catch the heart off guard and blow it open".

Open hearts and minds in turn access multiple forms of consciousness that generate ideas from a spectrum which mirrors human complexity. Paintings, music, art of all genres created from this broadened perspective connect universally, providing a different lens and entry point through which to engage with complex issues.

This was clearly illustrated at the first of BCA's "Audacious Conversation" series, held in February 2013. An international gathering of senior political advisors and scientists with a scattering of artists and other concerned citizens assembled in the College to advance some solutions to the pressing issue of Climate Change. At a moment in the proceedings when the enormity and urgency of the challenge threatened to divide opinion and stifle progress, the rising strains of an old Clare tune gradually replaced dissenting voices with a powerful sense of our common humanity. Martin Hayes, musician and alchemist - had awakened the realisation that science, facts and logic alone will not lead to societal change- something greater that also engages heart and gut is required to address the complexities of contemporary society. This realisation was not the anticipated outcome of the conference but it has led to a profound and practical shift in how this group now approaches its work.

We are all born with creative potential that often becomes dormant or totally eroded by rigid education and societal categorisation. Burren College of Art's goal for the next 20 years is to be a catalyst for unleashing that universal creativity. A new suite of creative leadership

finding one's true passion, making that first mark and moving confidently from there. Embracing ambiguity is central- understanding that there are no definite predictable outcomes, just a steady north star that sustains one to fail, fail and fail better as Beckett says. This is what artists do- this is the process that generates new ideas and knowledge and leads to unexpected outcomes. New thinking that subverts the status quo is required to tackle the complex issues facing humanity at present since, to quote Albert Einstein - "*problems cannot be solved from the same level of consciousness that created them.*"

As our next 20 years dawn, Burren College of Art audaciously aims to be a catalyst for profound global change. The Burren was and continues to be our powerful source - its ancient, learning landscape teaches us if we are open to listening and seeing. John O'Donoghue, Anne Madden, Seamus Heaney listened; Burrenbeo, farmers and custodians of the Burren listen; Michael Greene listened. His vision was deeply rooted in ten generations of Burren forebears, in a love and respect for its rocks, its history, stories, music and culture. It flowed from an undiluted wellspring of creativity activated through the art of wall building.

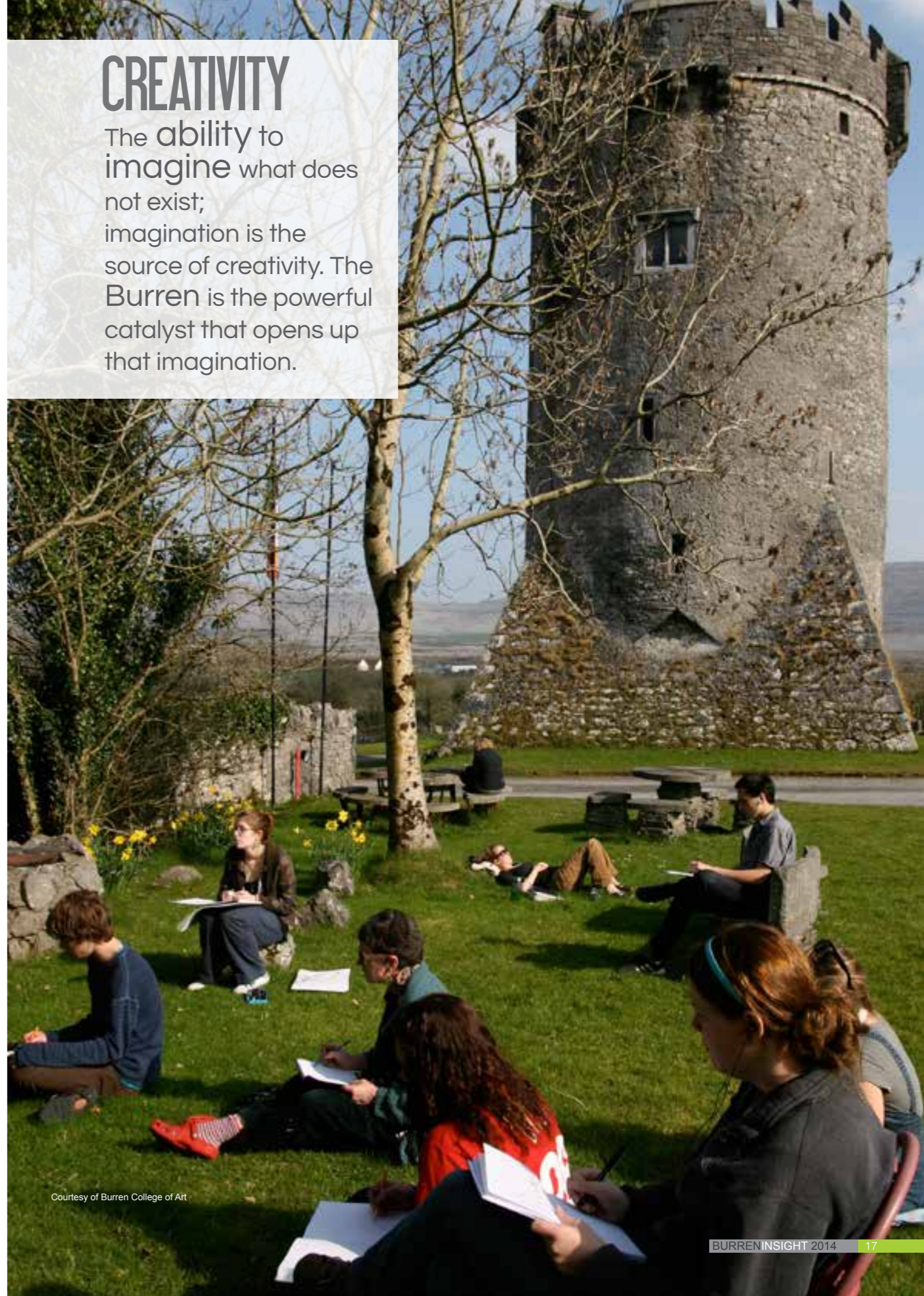
Michael Greene died suddenly in July 2001, playing football for his local team. His dream lives on. The "*greatest little art school*" continues to build.

by Mary Hawkes-Greene

Mary Hawkes-Greene is the President and Co-Founder of the Burren College of Art which celebrates its 20th year this year. For more information on the college go to www.burrencollege.ie

CREATIVITY

The ability to imagine what does not exist;
imagination is the source of creativity. The Burren is the powerful catalyst that opens up that imagination.



Courtesy of Burren College of Art

Burren Farming for Conservation Programme

Another year begins

The Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (BFCP) is now in its fifth year. The BFCP evolved in 2010 from the successful BurrenLIFE pilot project which included 25 farmers. In 2010 this new agri-environment scheme welcomed 120 farmers to take part; now 160 farmers are enjoying being part of this incentive scheme. Based in the Old School in Carron, in the middle of the Burren, a small core team administers the programme, liaising with farm advisors and the farmers to create annual farm plans. The total area currently covered by the BFCP is over 14,500 ha, which is 46% of the three main Natura sites in the Burren: Black Head – Poulisallagh, Moneen Mountain and East Burren Complex. The payments to farmers under the programme fall under three measures:

- 1) The production of species-rich grassland;
- 2) Site enhancement works and;
- 3) Protection of designated land and other areas of habitats listed under Annex 1 of the European Habitats Directive.

In this issue of Burren Insight Oliver Nagle, a BFCP participant, discusses his farm and the work he has carried out under the programme. Driving through the Burren, the work of farmers in

the BFCP is now very evident. The encroaching scrub, which was creeping over the limestone pavements and species-rich grasslands, is being controlled. Over the four years of the programme scrub removal has been the number one task carried out by farmers, resulting in 190ha of scrub cleared from the Burren. 72 kms of stone walls within fields have been skilfully restored to their former function of retaining stock. As I write this the turloughs of the Burren are full and overflowing onto the roads; it seems hard to believe that water storage and provision can be a major issue for farmers and their cattle, but it is. Part of the objective of BFCP is to maintain water quality in the Burren. The installation of 350 water troughs and 56 water storage tanks has meant better water provision for farms and, as cattle are encouraged away from natural water sources to water troughs and tanks, has improved the water quality within springs.

I have been very lucky to be working with the BFCP since August 2013, through the JobBridge National Internship Scheme and have enjoyed being part of this team. I have seen at first hand the great relationship between all involved in the programme. The team in Carron, the farmers on

the ground, the farm advisors, the staff directly involved from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the National Monument Service, all have the same objectives at the heart of their work and that is to conserve and support the heritage, environment and communities of the Burren and to ensure the sustainable agricultural management of high-nature-value farmland in the Burren. It is this drive with people working together that has made this such a successful programme. The future for the programme is looking positive, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, as part of its consultation paper on the Rural Development Plan, have proposed that the programme is expanded in 2015 within the Burren and beyond. Hopefully more farmers will be able to join the programme and continue the tradition of farming within this unique region, maintaining the Burren for all to enjoy.

by Paula McHale

Paula McHale is working for the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme through the JobBridge National Internship Scheme. The data above was obtained from *Burren Farming for Conservation Programme Report No. 4 (May 1st 2013 – Dec 31st 2013)* www.burrenlife.com

A farmer's viewpoint

Little did I know when I started preparing my farm plan for the *Burren Farming for Conservation Programme* (BFCP), four years ago, that the Burren was going to win a European Award. In September 2013, the Burren was awarded the *European Diploma for Protected Areas*, in recognition by the Council of Europe of the work carried out by the people of the Burren, the farmers, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the BFCP to conserve this unique and special area. Such is the quality of this scheme and the people who founded it, Brendan Dunford and Sharon Parr.

It has been a special journey for me and my farm. It started with my first annual farm plan under which walls have been repaired, water springs trapped and water tanks built. Fences were introduced to divide the farm for better management and power was provided by solar

fences. Burren gates have been hung and, last but not least, scrub has been removed and tree stumps treated preventing regrowth.

A cultural feature was exposed and rebuilt. This feature turned out to be a herdsman's hut. Through scrub removal other features, such as glacial erratics, can now be seen by all who visit the farm.

This scheme has given me a new awareness of what is on my farm. It encouraged me to study my farming practices. I increased the grazing on the farm, which in turn improved the species-richness of the flora. A direct result of the scheme has been a 20% increase in stock levels on the farm.

The BFCP is the best environmental scheme to come to the Burren in many years. It has

encouraged farmers to go back in time to the ancient ways of 'winterage' farming, which has been practiced for a thousand years in the Burren, whereby the cattle are outpastured on the high Burren over winter. This, in turn, is improving the cattle, the farms and the environment. The visual effects are already making a difference and speak for themselves.

I hope for the future that the scheme will continue to grow and, in time, that every farmer in the Burren will be able to be part of the scheme.

by Oliver Nagle

Oliver Nagle farms an area of land by Slieve Carron. He and his family have been farming this land for generations. He has been a participant of the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme since its inception.



Photo by Gavin Frankel



Photo by Morgan O'Donovan

Burren Botanicals

Hidden away in the middle of the Burren, the Perfumery has been a working factory for 42 years. A family run business since its foundation, Ralph and I and our two daughters are the third family to live and work on the premises. We are open all year round and it is much more than just a job. I never know what the day will hold when I step out of the door.

The Burren Perfumery & Floral Centre was one of the first tourist destinations to be established within the Burren. It was founded on the concept of using the diverse flora of the Burren as inspiration for a unique

The Burren is a beautiful landscape but it also needs to be a living landscape, a place where there is work for people and their children. We like to think that we are an example of what can be done within a rural economy without disrupting the environment.

range of Irish fragrances. The founder experimented with distilling local plants and marrying their properties with the established technique of the French perfume houses.

When I bought it, the business was focused on the wholesale perfume market and had a small product set. I wanted to move away from the Irish-American craft focus and develop a much broader and more contemporary offering that would include products for the Irish and European market. It was (and is) very important to me to create products that could stand alongside the best of modern European cosmetics in terms of design, quality of ingredients, and packaging.

So in 2001 I engaged a top designer from Paris and one of France's leading 'noses'. A perfume is like a piece of music, with top notes, middle notes and base notes, all blended into a harmonious whole to give a sensory and emotional experience. Using some of my favourite Burren notes of Meadowsweet, Lady's Bedstraw, Wild Thyme and Fragrant Orchid, we formulated a contemporary range of Eau de Toilettes, the Burren Botanicals (Spring, Summer and Autumn Harvest) which are inspired by the smells of the Burren at different times of year.



Photo by Agnieszka Radzewicz



Meadowsweet. Photo by Ralph Doyle

Fast forward 12 years, and today we also make 100% plant-based and Soil Association-certified organic creams, lotions and balms, as well as hand-made, plant-based soaps, candles and herbal teas.

It would not be feasible, practical or environmentally sound to denude the Burren for production needs – to put it in context, it takes 400 kg of cultivated thyme to make just 1 kg of essential oil. We pay €11,000 per kg for the organic Rose Otto that goes into our creams, and when one learns that it takes between 5,000 and 10,000 kg of rose blossoms to produce just 1 kg of Rose Otto one understands why it costs so much! So, as with all the best perfume houses, we source the very finest natural and organic ingredients from a range of suppliers around the world.

When I bought the business the challenge was just to survive and pay the bills. Nowadays we have different challenges. Every business should have a responsibility to its employees: to provide stable employment, interesting work and opportunities for personal growth. We employ 16 staff, some of whom have worked with us for 17 years. There is also a responsibility to the environment, which we take seriously - not because we feel obliged to, but because we want to. And how could one not, living in such a place as this? So we've installed solar panels that provide 50% of our power needs, a water treatment plant, and we plant native trees each winter to increase the biodiversity of our site. This year we will give talks and workshops on the plants of the Burren, and the ingredients and the techniques we use to make our products.

The Burren is a beautiful landscape but it also needs to be a living landscape, a place where there is work for people and their children. We like to think that we are an example of what can be done within a rural economy without disrupting the environment. Would it be easier for us to work from an industrial unit off the M50? Certainly. But we would lose all the vitality, the wondrous changeability that is the Burren. It is a mistake to think that life is enjoyable when it is easy. It is the challenges and the overcoming of them that make for some of the most enjoyable work one can do. True, as those of us who choose to make a living within this rocky setting know, some days the lashing rain and shaky internet connection are daunting, but then the hail stops for a few minutes, the golden winter light washes across the hills and all is well with the world.

We are proud to be one of the network of businesses which are such an important part of the fabric of the Burren. In the same way that the Burren itself is constantly changing, the activities of the Perfumery will continue to evolve while remaining local and Irish.

by Sadie Chowen

All Burren Perfumery products are available via mailorder at www.burrenperfumery.com. The Tearooms are open from April for the Summer season. Admission to the Burren Perfumery & Floral Centre is free.

The mounting social, economic and environmental challenges we face continue to erode the wellbeing and confidence of our people. The effects of emigration, unemployment, stagnant economies and shrinking public services can be seen and felt in every town, village and community across Ireland. The need to build a strong, inclusive and resilient society that caters for the needs of every individual has perhaps never been so great.

In the Burren, the foundation for a strong and inclusive society rooted in community is very much in place. Our communities are fundamentally strong; a sense of solidarity and social cohesion pervades every aspect of life. However, maintaining this in the face of growing social, economic and environmental challenges is difficult and leveraging our sense of community and solidarity to create the type of society we want to see is an opportunity too often neglected.

In 2011, a lengthy community consultation was undertaken by several Burren organisations as part of the *Burren Community Charter* initiative. This work identified a wide range of needs and aspirations within the Burren community which were not, and could not, be met by public authorities alone. The need to develop local sustainable employment, to increase community involvement in decision-making processes and to engage the community in the sustainable management of the Burren's landscape and seascape were just some of the needs identified in the Charter.

Critically, the Charter showed that people in the Burren, if given the opportunity, are very willing to be more actively involved in rebuilding their communities and creating the type of society they want to see: *ChangeX Burren* presents this opportunity.

Launching in summer 2014, the aim of *ChangeX Burren* is to achieve measurable improvements in the wellbeing of the Burren's communities by unleashing the latent talent and ability of local communities. By introducing a suite of exciting social innovations and empowering local people to manage them, the potential of communities to improve their collective wellbeing can be unleashed. This can build a new positive and energised community culture, helping to address the challenges that the Burren faces now and into the future.

Across the areas of skills, health, inclusion and sustainability, A number of innovations have

been identified based on needs identified in the Burren Charter, local demand and proven track record of impact. These include:

Coderdojo is an open source, volunteer led global network of free coding clubs for young people where they can learn how to code, build websites, games and apps in a fun and collaborative environment.

Roots of Empathy is an evidence based classroom programme that has shown significant effect in reducing levels of aggression among school children by raising social/emotional competence and increasing empathy.

Ireland Reaching Out works parish-by-parish across Ireland seeking to identify and invite home all our diaspora, wherever they may be found across the world. The programme provides an opportunity to local communities to boost tourism and bring economic benefit to the area.

Playworks creates inclusive environments for play and physical activity both within and beyond the school day to build empathy, increase learning, and improve behaviour.

Irish Men's Sheds Association works towards a future where all men have the opportunity to improve and maintain their health and wellbeing by participating in a community Men's Shed – a friendly and welcoming meeting place where men can come together.

Siel Bleu aims to help older people maintain the ability to function independently, retain social connections and promote the recognition of older people's value to society. With an emphasis on prevention, Siel Bleu offers unique exercises and physical training to delay the onset of age-related impairment and disease.

My Mind aims to build a network of community based mental health services that are accessible and affordable for every person in Ireland.

Eden Alternative works to transform care environments for older people into dignified homes that focus on quality of life for both residents and staff. Using a low-cost training programme to move nursing homes away from an institutional model of care, the Eden Alternative provides a person-centred model focused on allowing residents to continue to lead meaningful lives.

KaBOOM! envisions a great place to play within walking distance of every child by creating

playgrounds through the participation and leadership of communities.

Fáilte Isteach is a community project with older volunteers welcoming new migrants through conversational English classes. Fáilte Isteach utilises the skills, talents and expertise of older volunteers and harnesses their desire to contribute positively to society.

GIY [Grow it Yourself] is an emerging global community of food growers, made up of GIYers and community food-growing groups. By growing some of our own food GIY believes we can make the world a healthier, happier place and by coming together we grow more and better food, and have more fun in the process.

Slow Food reconnects consumers to the source and quality of their food, as well as to its wider implications in the global food chain. Through a series of events and education initiatives, Slow Food builds profile for producers and informs consumers of alternatives to processed and unseasonal foods.

These exciting innovations have the potential to enhance the supports already on offer through public services and other exciting local projects.

The ultimate aim of *ChangeX Burren* is to improve the wellbeing of everyone living in the Burren, making it 'the best place to live in Ireland'. In order to measure this in a meaningful way, researchers from NUI Galway will assist the community in collecting and measuring data over a 12 month period. Over time, we expect a measurable improvement in community wellbeing across the Burren's communities.

ChangeX Burren is a pilot for the broader initiative, ChangeX, which is envisaged as the solutions platform for the world's Changemakers to build wellbeing. This will, over time, equip millions of local communities across the world with the knowledge and tools they need to organise talent and finance around ideas that will strengthen community wellbeing. The Burren's unique history and heritage combined with the naturally entrepreneurial and resourceful nature of its people, make it the perfect place to begin the ChangeX journey.

by Niamh McKenna

Niamh McKenna works with ChangeX, based in Dublin. To find out more, or to get involved, contact the ChangeX Burren Community Leader Brendan Dunford (brendan@changex.io) or local coordinator Elaine Williams (elaine@changex.io).



Failte Isteach

ChangeX Burren

AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE WELLBEING IN THE BURREN



Roots of Empathy



Coder Dojo



GIY

Dragonflies and damselflies spend most of their life in water and this aquatic stage lasts at least a year, but in some species perhaps as many as four years. Like many insects the adult stage is short — a few weeks for most species — but, if you know where to look, this is when they can be seen. The adults are large insects and most are brightly coloured and, compared to butterflies for example, they can be very common. The right place is usually near a lake or wetland. The smaller damselflies tend to stay in the vegetation as their size allows them to perch on grass or rush stems. As you watch them they will keep you in view with their eyes visible either side of the stem. If you get too inquisitive, they either fly off or just let go and drop deep into the vegetation. The larger dragonflies are easier to spot as they wander further from breeding sites. They have the ability to suddenly appear and equally suddenly disappear. Sightings therefore can often be a matter of luck.

The Burren may seem an unlikely place to look for dragonflies but we now know it's one of the best places in Ireland for the variety of species. Virtually all the Irish species can be seen within the Burren and new species may appear in the next few years because they are spreading north in Europe as climate is warming. The eastern side is the best near the lakes and wetlands between Corofin and Gort. The season starts in early May and a walk along the green road from Mullagmore to Coolorta will usually feature Hairy or Spring Hawker dragonflies *Brachytron pratense*. Newly-emerged adults congregate in the hazel scrub before returning to the breeding sites. Slightly later from early June Black-tailed Skimmers *Orthetrum cancellatum* can be seen basking on the green roads and limestone pavement around Lough Gealain and Lough Bunny. The males are a brilliant sky blue, the females a golden-yellow with black zig-zags. Later still from mid-July another species the Common Darter *Sympetrum striolatum* will be seen perched in the same way or on bracken and bramble. This is a smaller species than the skimmer and adults vary from yellow to brick-red. The brighter blood-red Ruddy Darter *Sympetrum sanguineum* may also be seen although it rarely strays from the edges of turloughs where it breeds. At the height of summer the Brown or Amber-winged Hawkers *Aeshna grandis* will be seen flying along sheltered lanes and hedges. The adults are brown with brown tinted wings.

Damselflies stay close to their breeding lakes. The Burren lakes are the centre of the Irish distribution of the Scarce Emerald Damselfly *Lestes dryas* a beautiful green insect that perches with its wings held slightly open. One site for the Irish Damselfly *Coenagrion lunulatum* has recently been found in the Burren which is the southernmost site for it in Ireland. It is one of the blue and black damselflies of which there are six other species. The commonest one in the Burren is the Common Blue Damselfly *Enallagma cyathigerum* which can be seen through most of the summer at the larger lakes such as Lough Bunny. The largest Irish damselflies are the two species of demoiselles which can be easily recognised by their floppy flight and coloured wings. The Banded Demoiselle *Calopteryx virgo* is common along the river in Dromore Nature Reserve, the Beautiful Demoiselle *C. splendens* has recently been found in the Burren on the Caher River.

The DragonflyIreland project gathers Irish records of dragonflies and damselflies. Records are always welcome. Records can be submitted online to the National Biodiversity Data Centre (www.biodiversityireland.ie). For information on all the Irish species and maps visit the DragonflyIreland pages at www.habitas.org.uk/dragonflyireland or on Facebook.

by Brian Nelson

Brian Nelson is the invertebrate ecologist for National Parks and Wildlife Service. With Robert Thompson he was a co-author of the Natural History of Ireland's Dragonflies, which presented the results of the 4 year DragonflyIreland project and together they have also authored a new Guide to the Dragonflies and Damselflies of Ireland which will be published in Spring 2014. He regularly gives training courses on dragonfly identification and hopes one day to have taken a good picture of all the Irish species.

Flitting around



A male of one of the blue damsels
by Carsten Kreiger

Access for all

When you think of those who make use of the Burren as an outdoor arena, you think of hikers, cyclists and tourists ambling along the country roads. But the key to the Burren is that, with a little help where needed, there is something for everyone keen to explore it. To prove just that, for the past two years, in association with the *Irish Wheel Chair Association*, the *Burrenbeo Trust* has organised **A Walk with a Difference**. With the help of the *Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers*, 35 wheel-chair users from Clare, Limerick and Galway with their helpers took part in this event last year. Various natural heritage guides introduced the participants to the wild-flowers, seaweeds, birds, rocks, land-use and landscape of the Burren along the Flaggly Shore giving them an insight into this distinctive landscape which might not be accessible to them otherwise.

"Some people just have this view that outdoor events are not accessible to us, but this [event] proves that we can participate. It just requires some thought and planning in advance. There is a really important social side to this also. For some people here, this is the only way they will get out of the house and meet people. I was in this area once before but only saw it from the car and wasn't able to get out and about. Today, I can" said Nicola Dore, 25. (As quoted in the Irish Times, 25th Sept 2013.)

If you have a group that you wish to introduce to the Burren, contact us on trust@burrenbeo.com



Photo by Eamon Ward

God bless my great fortune to be alive at this time – part of the first generation in the history of mankind to be free of wide-spread wars and to have access to previously unimaginable choice and opportunity. The inescapable truth is that we have never been so free and so fortunate despite the fact that things may feel a bit chaotic at present. More people have more access to abundance, health and opportunity than any previous generation could have imagined.

It is only natural that many of us have chosen to turn away from the past, and from the hardship and uncertainty it entailed. We moved to cities and immersed ourselves in intangible, ephemeral, technological worlds. That should have been the norm. Yet, a minor miracle is occurring: in recent years - barely a generation after this new post-WW11 era of stability and opportunity was ushered in - more and more

people are beginning to step back from the glitter-ball of opportunities and sensations that the fast-paced, urban world provides and to reconnect with their roots occasionally; to look at who we were and where we came from and to honour the traditions and culture that shaped us.

Intuitively, we seem to sense that cutting ourselves off from our past is not a good idea – that it can lead to imbalance and a lack of sense of self. No one is actually telling us this, but we feel it inside. We look at our children and realise how less potent, rich and magical their lives would be if they didn't have a sense of the environment and traditions from which they stem.

Fortunately, in tandem with this, some of the custodians of the land: farmers, herders and rural dwellers who never completely broke

with the old ways, are coming to a clearer understanding of the value of what they have, where they are and what they do, and of their responsibility to share this with others. It is a fortuitous coming together and is at the heart of the Burrenbeo Trust and its myriad different facets.

A host of new 'enlightened' tourism ventures in the Burren and throughout Ireland are helping people to interpret the land in new ways, to engage with it in a more profound manner than simply hiking or biking through it. A range of new publications, web sites, courses and guided walks bring history, customs, traditions and community-ways alive.

Certainly, the ideal situation would be for people who are actually involved in working the land, people whose families have been

part of keeping the traditions alive and passing them down through the generations, to offer an immersion in the culture and history of the area to visitors. This has never been possible before - farmers simply farmed, they didn't have the time, inclination or ability to interpret the land for others.

Yet, all that changed with the establishment of Clare Farm Heritage Tours in 2011, when six different farmers whose families have been farming the area for centuries, came together to offer tours of their lands. www.farmheritagetours.com

The concept behind it, and its potential, is profound. If we, as a nation, are willing to start valuing the work of farmers and to seek them out as *interpreters* of the landscape, and if they, in turn, are to regain their role as *custodians* of

the landscape, rather than exploiters, there will need to be many more such groups.

The development of these groups may be slow, but undoubtedly Farm Heritage Tours is an exciting first step. To get a sense of quite how profound a departure this is for Irish tourism just read how the farmers describe themselves and their venture on the website:

"We are a group of farmers who have come together to interpret our land and promote our traditions. We have inherited an ancient and unique system that links us directly to pre-historic Burren farmers. We practice a tried and true tradition dictated by the landscape and we are passionate about our role in its conservation. By coming on our walks you will learn how nature, culture and farming have shaped the Burren as you see it today. You will

be participating in an ecotourism experience that supports our co-op, contributes to the local economy, supplements our farm incomes and helps us to continue the farming practices that are vital for the conservation of the Burren."

It's a lofty ambition for a tourism venture, but it's realisable. The process of leading us as a nation back to a healthy relationship with ourselves, our landscape and culture will require many steps. Ventures like this are an encouraging sign that the process is underway. If enough of us support them we may soon see developing in Ireland a form of community-based, immersive tourism that will be unique in the world and will make the mass-tourism of the present-day seem an embarrassing episode from a less evolved era.

by Manchán Magan

Manchán Magan is a writer and documentary-maker. He has written books on his travels in Africa, India and South America and two novels. He writes occasionally for The Irish Times and has presented and produced dozens of documentaries focusing on issues of world culture for TG4, RTE & Travel Channel. He has written award-winning plays and articles for LA Times, Washington Post & Guardian. He lives in his oak forest in a self-made hovel in the bogs of Ireland. www.manchan.com

The Burren

the Future of Tourism?

Lost in time

myths from a deserted village

The myth, does it exist? Can you trust the story-telling farmer.

What if it only appears when you get there with the story-telling Stone Age farmer? Then as you walk away from the Shangri-la of Caherbanna, does it disappear into the ancient mist that leaves you wondering?

Never look back on a dark moonless night. On such a dark, silent, lonesome night to walk through the Deserted Village of Caherbanna is a test of all that you hold dear, also of faith and nerve.

To feel the presence of past lives, that on such a night is very present. Does that make you an intruder, carrying the stories you heard from the last old people who lived in Caherbanna.

Everything you ever heard plus your imagination make for lonesome sadness. Stories like:

Glass heard breaking against gables of the houses while people tried to sleep and no evidence of any broken glass next morning.

As one family said the rosary by candlelight, someone walked in the front door with what seemed like creaking new shoes, then walked to the fire place and stayed for a few minutes before departing. No one broke concentration to see who the intruder might be. On enquiry the person could not be identified. Ghost or human who knows?

The *Coiste Bodhar* (Dead Coach) that passed through the village. The little dog that chased the only sound from the invisible coach and horses. An old man who would come to visit Caherbanna, stay among the families about every six months for a few weeks, than be on his merry way and became known as the Tramp of Caherbanna. On one such visit he died and for some unknown reason was buried in the children's graveyard (the Coillin) ten minutes from the village.

The landlords, some ok, most just scoundrels who had no respect for people and would throw them out on the street, then burn their house because of lack of rent payment.

The pig fed with scraps from what must have been a lean enough table. This pig which would feed a big family for a year

Caherbanna

Where did the wanderer come from?

How did he imagine it?

So far from river and path

Yet to view distant Atlantic seemed important

Habitation would be difficult here

But maybe easier than elsewhere

Hidden among the Limestone cracks

The heat of summer lingered

To ease the winter memory

Foundation stone hewn, carved, laid and levelled

The first which would lead to village, imminent and welcome to the fittest and the luckiest.

Peter J. O' Donohue

had to be sold to pay the rent. No pork-steak, black pudding or bacon and cabbage (worst of all no spare ribs with barbeque sauce!).

On such a night it is easy to let the mind wander to stories like *The American Wake*. One wonders if there is a hint of "Philadelphia Here I Come" from the pen of Brian Friel. As preparations were made for the long journey to America and old parents left behind to scratch out a living, not even daring to dream that they might see their loved ones again. The world was a big place then. I'm sure the great new statement "The World is a small place" was a long way off. America was at least four weeks sailing time. No fast jet then. The electric kettle and the mobile phone were at least one hundred years away.

Now, not to be too morbid, what about the other side that also must have existed? (People being people). As you walk through the same village on a warm sunny day, your mind must wander with some merriment as to the making of poteen and dancing. The old traditional sets (around the house and mind the dresser!). Musicians played with concertina, melodeon and fiddle and dancing with maidens at the crossroad - the original, and probably the best, night club.

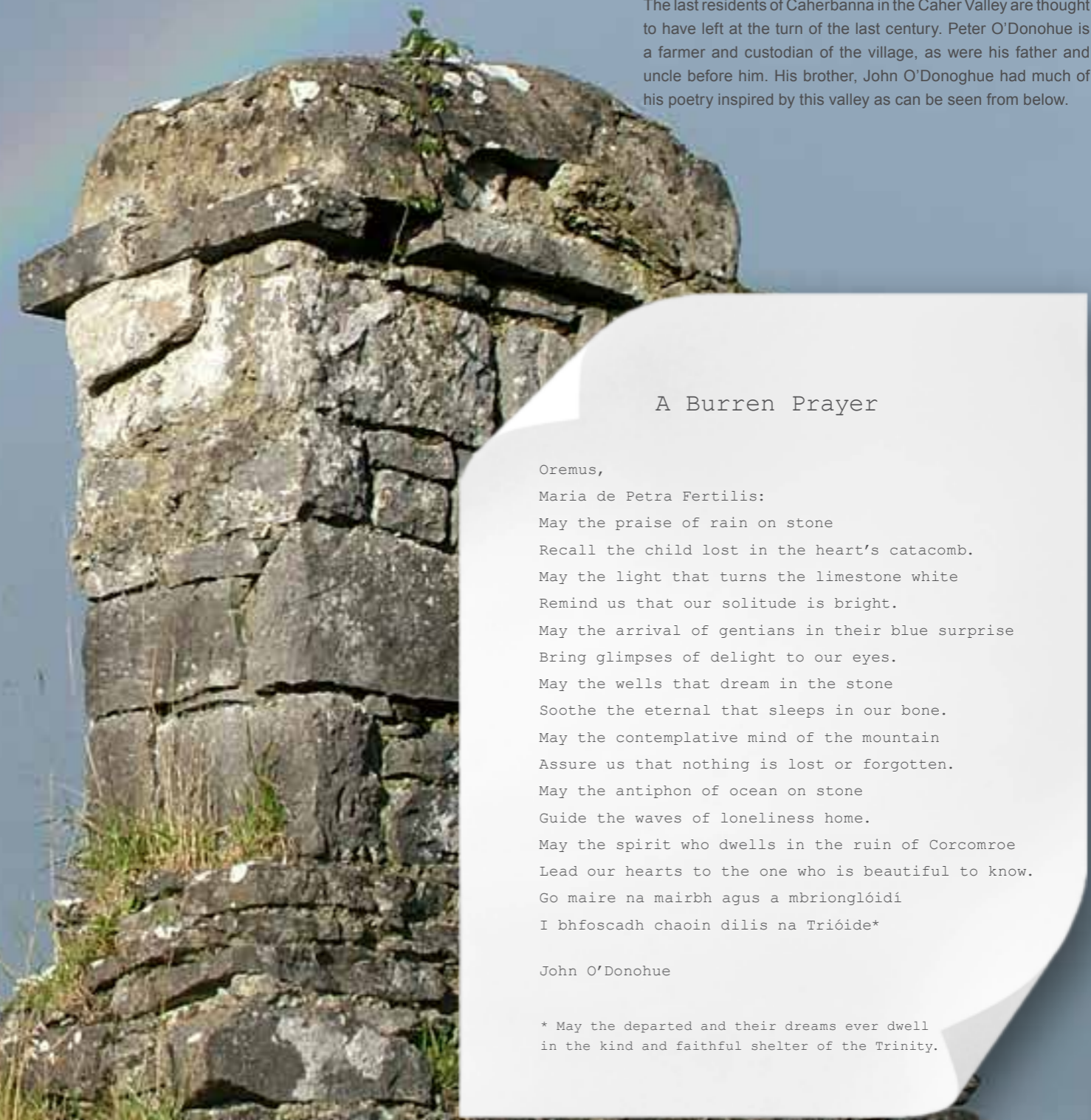
All the fun keeping an eye out for the local Priest who poked the bushes hunting courting couples and shouting, "Down with that sort of thing", trying his best to stop nature from having its way. Thank God he failed most of the time! Good thing the flashlight had not been invented. This dancing and drinking could only be the Devil's work but Caherbanna was well positioned and landlord or priest could be noticed and heard from far away. So people could be well prepared by the time they arrived. Kettle boiling on an open fire and hospitality abounded with what little they had. A few disagreeable words with your beloved and you had no choice but to share it with your neighbours, whether you liked it or not. No shame next morning, as it would be the turn of

someone else next time.

Still it must have been a great comfort knowing that you had so many friends and good neighbours close by in times of happiness and sadness. Despite everything like poorness and lack of electricity, mobile phones, motor cars and all the things we cannot do without or think we can't, life carried on and people lived. My dad, (God rest him) used to say "a little nonsense now and then is relished by the wisest man". I would like to think that all the good people of Caherbanna lived, loved, and relished more than a little nonsense in their time on earth. God Rest and Bless them all.

by Peter J. O' Donohue

The last residents of Caherbanna in the Caher Valley are thought to have left at the turn of the last century. Peter O'Donohue is a farmer and custodian of the village, as were his father and uncle before him. His brother, John O'Donoghue had much of his poetry inspired by this valley as can be seen from below.



A Burren Prayer

Oremus,
Maria de Petra Fertilis:
May the praise of rain on stone
Recall the child lost in the heart's catacomb.
May the light that turns the limestone white
Remind us that our solitude is bright.
May the arrival of gentians in their blue surprise
Bring glimpses of delight to our eyes.
May the wells that dream in the stone
Soothe the eternal that sleeps in our bone.
May the contemplative mind of the mountain
Assure us that nothing is lost or forgotten.
May the antiphon of ocean on stone
Guide the waves of loneliness home.
May the spirit who dwells in the ruin of Corcomroe
Lead our hearts to the one who is beautiful to know.
Go maire na mairbh agus a mbrionglóidí
I bhfoscadh chaoín dilis na Tríóide*

John O'Donohue

* May the departed and their dreams ever dwell in the kind and faithful shelter of the Trinity.

Fancying Fungi



Milkcap - *Lactarius sp.*

Milkcaps are the typical 'mushroom' shape (cap on top of a stalk). They get their name from their gills which exude milky juice when cut or damaged. The milk can be white, yellow, orange or even pink, tasteless or burning hot. Milkcaps are found in both woodland and grasslands and it is thought that they all form mycorrhizal associations with plants. This one was growing in a Burren hazel wood.



Blackening Waxcap - *Hygrocybe conica*

Waxcaps are usually brightly coloured (red, yellow, orange or even bright green). Most are grassland species found growing in unimproved grasslands and are very sensitive to artificial fertilizer, many species disappearing once it is applied. The Blackening Waxcap is quite common in the Burren; confusingly it can be red, orange or yellow but the blackening, when handled or as it ages, is characteristic.



Lurid Bolete - *Boletus luridus*

Boletes are chunky fungi that have a spongy layer of pores instead of gills. The Lurid Bolete is common in the Burren in late summer and often grows in association with Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*). Like many Boletes it is edible but reacts with alcohol to cause nausea and sickness. Bruise or break the cap and watch it turn blue before your eyes!



Golden Chanterelle - *Cantharellus aurora*

Chanterelles have folds or wrinkles beneath their cap rather than typical gills. The Golden Chanterelle is normally associated with pinewoods and may be a relict of the Burren's long-gone Scots Pine. Today it is mycorrhizal on Mountain Avens. Like the more common Chanterelle, it is edible and has a rather aromatic, fruity taste.



Black Morel - *Morchella elata*

The Black Morel is one of our 'early' fungi, the fruiting bodies appearing in spring. Although widespread in Burren grasslands, the Black Morel never seems to be abundant, I never find more than two at a time which is a shame as it is edible (once you are sure that it is a Morel and not a similar but poisonous False Morel, *Gyromitra sp!*).

Mention the word fungus and watch the reaction - a grimace, indifference or, just maybe, an eager smile from the few who like eating them. All too often 'fungus' induces horror and abhorrence, it conjures bad things, poisonous toadstools and mouldy decay, but fungi are incredibly important. Yes, some can poison us and some cause disease but many more do essential jobs that keep the natural world functioning. Fungi are the great 'rotters and recyclers' of the world; some break down dead material releasing the nutrients that are needed for life; others form an association with roots of plants (known as mycorrhizal fungi) and transfer nutrients from soil to plants, which in turn are passed on to grazing animals. Fungi are at the very heart of life on this planet so perhaps we should look at them with a fresh eye.

And what a lot there are to look at! Some 12,000 species have been identified in Britain (the numbers are probably similar in Ireland) and new ones are being added every year. The number alone is daunting but there are only around 3000 larger fungi that tend to catch the eye, the rest are tiny and easily overlooked, so that makes things easier ... doesn't it? Well, yes and no, many fungi look so similar that microscopes, chemicals and a plethora of specialist books are needed to identify them to species. But do we need to go that far? Unless we plan to eat them, there is really no need - fungi can be broken down into groups of related species which share similar shapes and characteristics e.g. the boletes have pores, milkcaps exude milky juice; just identifying fungi this far can be a reward in itself. Luckily there are some that even the most inexperienced fungal forager can learn to identify, name and even eat (or not!).

I am no expert when it comes to fungi but I do find them fascinating and, as with other plants and animals, the Burren is home to both common and rare species. Here are a few to whet your appetite (not that they are all edible!), to show some of the diversity in their shape and form and hopefully persuade you to have a go at fungi.

by Sharon Parr

Dr Sharon Parr has been working in the Burren since 2003 and is currently the Project Scientist with the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme. Sharon is a natural historian with wide-ranging interests that span plants, insects, birds and mammals. She is the joint Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland vice county recorder for Co. Clare and regularly contributes bumblebee, butterfly and mammal records to the National Biodiversity Data Centre. Identification photos by author. Sharon can be contacted via sharonparr@eircom.net

Pestle Puffball - *Hankea excipuliformis*

Pestle Puffballs are a relatively common sight in Burren grasslands during autumn. Their spores are produced inside the swollen 'head' and released when the skin splits open, exposing the powdery spores to be blown away on the wind. The remaining stalk can last long into the winter and, as it no longer looks like a fungus, is often an intriguing puzzle for the walker who happens upon one.



Horn Stalkball - *Oxigena equine*

Horn Stalkball is one of the Burren's more macabre 'rotters' - a 'corpse fungus'. It lives by breaking down keratin (a protein found in hooves, horn, nails and hair ... don't think about that too deeply!) and its little, white matchstick-like fruit bodies are occasionally found growing on the horns of long-dead goats.



Turkeytail - *Trametes versicolor*

Go into any hazel scrub in the Burren and you will find Turkeytail. This very common bracket fungus grows on dead, decaying wood, breaking it down and releasing the nutrients within. The colour of the fan-shaped fruiting bodies can vary considerably but the alternating light and dark bands are characteristic. Edible ... if you like eating old boots!





Scarlet Elfcup - *Sarcoscypha austriaca*

In early spring, coming across troops of the bright, red Scarlet Elfcup on dead wood strewn across the floor of a dark, dank hazel wood is guaranteed to lift the spirits. For me, this little cup fungus is a bright beacon which promises that the winter dark is waning and the bright light and colours of spring will soon be on the rise.



Common Eyelash - *Scutellinia scutellata*

Ever think of fungi as cute? Well this one is! The little orange-red discs (up to 1 cm across) of the Common Eyelash can be found growing on damp soil or rotting wood anytime from late spring to late autumn ... and just look at those lashes, they don't even need mascara.



Hazel Gloves - *Hypocreopsis rhododendri* & Glue Crust *Hymenochaetae corrugata*

Everyone should have a favourite fungus and Hazel Gloves is mine (yes, I am sad!). Not only is it an odd-looking fungus with its orange 'fingers' but it is also a very rare one. It grows in Atlantic Hazel Woodland, those of the Burren being an important stronghold. If this wasn't enough, Hazel Gloves is probably a parasite of another fungus, the Glue Crust which is responsible for the tar-like blobs that glue dead twigs to living branches.



Ergot - *Claviceps purpurea*

Wandering through the Burren in late summer or autumn, it is not uncommon to see black 'growths' in the flower heads of grasses – these are part of the life-cycle of Ergot. Whilst it doesn't look very exciting, this fungus has been used for centuries to induce childbirth. However, it is dangerous and unpredictable and accidental ingestion in contaminated grain could result in painful symptoms known as St Anthony's Fire, hallucinations or convulsions.



Splitgill - *Schizophyllum commune*

Splitgill is a scourge of Burren farmers. Once content with dining on rotting wood, it has developed a taste for silage - but not just any silage. Splitgill eschews bland rye-grass silage and shows a distinct preference for silage made from old meadow grasslands. The fruit bodies burst through the plastic silage wrap, letting in air and ruining the contents.

New lichen for Ireland found in the Burren

The yellow lichen *Caloplaca citrina* is a common member of the *Caloplaca* group. It occurs in all 40 Irish vice-counties. Recently a close examination revealed that a second species has been lurking within the guise of *C. citrina*, namely *Caloplaca limonia*. It is a pale lemon colour, compared to the more astringent or citric colour of *Caloplaca citrina* and a characteristic identification feature is the presence of numerous spherical soredia, especially around the rims of the reproductive cups or apothecia, that help to distinguish it from *Caloplaca citrina*.

Its first occurrence in the field in Ireland has been recorded by Paul Whelan (www.lichens.ie verified by Mark Powell) on hard limestone cliffs in the Burren. The newly discovered *Caloplaca limonia* occurs in a wide range of limestone/mortar habitats. It is easier to identify on mortar than on hard limestone, mainly because the mortar version is much more lemon in colour. It can be expected that with more field work it will be seen to be rather widespread in Ireland.

by Paul Whelan

Paul Whelan, author *Lichens of Ireland*, Collins Press (2012).

Rosa

Poem by Frances Atkin

*If you could flower-speak
Could commune with their faces spilling,
Spreading lime fresh and magenta onto gray against boulder,
If you could just lay there, through the light split, losing shadow, under the slanting-
Till you turn to bone
Then spectre; soon you could follow; figures in the hill mists-
Receding, as they hide in the rock light, as they fade to the landscape
Tallying towards the void.
Voices then will break the wave wash
Journeying downwards, among gryke root
To the melting point
To the furnace
Before flying with the cirrus.
Rosa,
Rosa pimpinellifolia
Five hearted
And unfurling.*

THE BURREN: IRELAND'S NEXT WORLD HERITAGE SITE?

BY IAN DOYLE

Photo by Carsten Krieger

Within Ireland, Brú na Bóinne in Co Meath, which contains the megalithic tombs of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, and the early monastic settlement of Skellig Michael, off the Kerry coast, are already inscribed on the World Heritage List. In Northern Ireland, the Giants Causeway is also a World Heritage site. Yet, internationally, there is a general perception that three World Heritage Sites is a low figure, given the wealth of heritage on the island of Ireland.

In 2009 Ireland drafted a new Tentative List for World Heritage designation, which includes the Burren. The Tentative List provides a list of potential sites for possible submission to the World Heritage Committee of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for inscription on the World Heritage List.

So, should the Burren be a World Heritage Site? There are perhaps three issues to discuss and this article poses these as questions rather than seeking to provide definitive answers.

First, **is the Burren worthy of a World Heritage designation** or in World Heritage language does it have Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)? For a site to be successfully

inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List it must be of value not just in an Irish context, it must be of value to the wider, global heritage of human-kind. Demonstrating this involves setting out what makes the Burren landscape unique in terms of its geology, plants, wildlife, archaeological monuments, and customs and practices like winter grazing which together have created the landscape we see today - an outstanding example of a challenging limestone landscape which has been continuously settled for over 6,000 years.

Secondly **do we have the right kind of structures to reach agreement on World Heritage Status**, to put together the detailed nomination documents required and, finally, to manage it if it is designated? This I cannot answer but what is clear in the Burren, and I stress this is very much an outsider's perspective, is that the Burren is exceptionally well placed in a number of ways. There is a wealth of effective groups operating at a local level and also thinking and interacting at the national and European context. By this I mean the range of groups such as the Burrenbeo Trust, the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (which sprang from BurrenLIFE), the Burren Irish Farmers' Association, the

Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark (supported by GeoparkLIFE) and Clare and Galway County Councils, all of which cooperated to produce the Burren Charter. The use of EU LIFE funding, the development of High Nature Value farming and the Burren Charter are clear evidence of this.

In the national sense the body responsible for managing World Heritage in Ireland, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has a crucial role. Guidance from UNESCO sets out the importance of what they call institutional frameworks to facilitate the management of World Heritage Sites in partnership with land owners, residents and community groups. In the Burren, whilst a range of groups all exist and interact to some degree at present, the critical question is can a structure be developed to assess the pros and cons of a WHS designation, to progress nomination if is deemed desirable and, finally, if inscribed, to manage it as a model of shared stewardship? The existing initiatives mentioned above all provide a useful starting point which could be developed further to look specifically at the relevance of a World Heritage designation for the Burren. The realisation that innovation is possible (and needed) in how World Heritage Sites are managed and run should also be in the thinking - in other words, there is no

rigid formula that can be applied to all WHS sites; successful management strategies have to be developed that could work in the Burren.

The third and most critical question is the hardest to answer. **Is World Heritage Status desirable long-term for the Burren?** Will it bring long term benefits and if so at what cost? International work on the value of World Heritage Sites sets out economic benefits for some sites largely through increased tourism. Yet WHS designation needs to demonstrate a strong sustainable approach to its management so as to ensure that the impact of tourism does not undermine its *Outstanding Universal Value*. In the case of the Burren, it is an attractive environment with a range of interesting places to visit and the development of Fáilte Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, even without a WHS designation, will direct more visitors, certainly to the coastal margins of the Burren at the very least, if not further inland also.

Equally, a general conclusion is that WHS status leads to greater scrutiny of development proposals by local and national government, using existing laws and processes but, in exceptional cases, by groups acting on behalf of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

This reflects the need for better care of the landscape but WHS designation could also be a means to make a strong case for consistent funding for projects to preserve the integrity and authenticity of the Burren and hence its *Outstanding Universal Value*, such as farming programmes which favour landscape conservation or sustainable tourism initiatives which offer employment opportunities to local people.

Sustainability is a value in its own right, especially in a place like the Burren, and various Burren initiatives mentioned above are already addressing these issues, so the question remains would World Heritage Status add an impetus or a sharper focus to these efforts? Perhaps, the point here is that WHS status could put a framework in place that brings all these groups at local and national level together to work on an ongoing basis.

Fortunately, gone are the days when national government nominated heritage sites and places to the World Heritage List without local dialogue and discussion. It is now a stated policy that our government will only move towards nomination to the World Heritage List with local agreement and active involvement. Hence the

crux of this issue is the need to contribute locally to the discussion and debate as to what might be best described as a 'vision for the Burren' - and whether this involves World Heritage nomination or not. While there are likely to be negative views of such a designation and its implications, we should not lose sight that a WHS designation, if done well, will provide opportunities to many.

In the meantime it would be a useful exercise to explore the *Outstanding Universal Value* of the Burren, the likely shape of a WHS designation and how it could be managed. This would provide a means to explore all the relevant issues, to involve all the potential partners and on this basis to make an informed decision about whether to proceed to nomination or not. Let the debate begin.

Ian Doyle is the Head of Conservation for The Heritage Council. He has a background in archaeology and has worked for the Heritage Council since 2003. The Heritage Council has a longstanding interest in supporting community related heritage projects in the Burren. Ian can be contacted on idoyle@heritagecouncil.ie

INSIDE THE HIGH WALLS OF *Clare's Tower Houses*

During Risteard UaCróinín's survey work for the OPW and restoration of Dysert O'Dea Castle in Corofin some interesting information about tower houses in County Clare came to light.

There are 230 tower houses and sites in Co. Clare. They were built between 1400 and 1600 by local Gaelic Clans. They are often referred to as Norman Castles but in fact the Normans only built three castles in Co. Clare: Bunratty (destroyed by the McNamaras, who built the present one); Quin (destroyed by the McNamaras who built Quin Abbey with the stone) and Clare Castle, (parts of which remain in the old barracks). The O'Briens, descendants of Brian Ború, built 46, the O'Deas built four and the McNamaras (Tánaistes, and likely bankers to the O'Briens, built 82!). Just over 70 tower houses exist in Co. Clare's Burren.

Tower houses, which were Gaelic farmhouses, were surrounded by walls 6m high enclosing a bawn (*ba-dhún* – enclosure for cattle). The bawn often contained a banquet hall, a bakery, a dairy, stables, workshops, houses and barns. Today these can be seen at Fahee, Killinaboy (*An Cabhail Mhór*) and Ballyportry. These bawns often had massive and elaborate stone gateways but few remain except at Ballyportry and Clarecastle, whilst the Leamaneh Gate now stands in Dromoland Castle garden.

When the tower houses were first built, mostly out of fashion, they were not popular, as they were dark, cold and damp. The only fire was in an iron brazier in the top room where smoke

escaped through a louvre in the roof. All life such as cooking, entertaining and sleeping went on in the adjoining banquet hall. Later when the English wars became a part of life during the 1500s and 1600s, people were forced to move into the old tower houses for added security, which they made more comfortable by installing fireplaces in the different rooms. This required cutting flues through walls and stone vaults to serve the massive stone chimneys. This practice often weakened the structures which later cracked and collapsed. Many fireplaces were set in old window embrasures to reduce the work involved, hence some beautiful four-light windows can be seen blocked up to serve as a fireplace.

Many tower houses such as Leamaneh and Moyhree were built in two separate sections, the staircase section first, which allowed the builders to mount a crane on the top, used to build the larger residential section. The crane would have

been powered by a windlass or ropes tied to a heavy horse wagon, weighted with stones, to counter balance the lift, driven away from the building to raise the loads. This technology was widely known and used extensively in shipping at the time.

Today, when what we see is the elaborate stone skeleton of a tower house, we can only guess at the wooden details lost over the centuries. Most of the internal walls were plastered and painted with colourful murals of hunting scenes, folklore, mythology and religious icons. Many rooms were panelled in oak, hiding secret rooms, now visible to all. Stone wall presses (ambreys) were fitted with wooden cupboards which often hid secret compartments or "taiscí" (safes). In Dysert there is even a safe within a safe! The tower houses were invariably rendered externally with a rough-

cast hydraulic lime plaster which repelled water and dampness but allowed the wall to 'breathe'. These days, most of this has been washed away with only a few examples remaining.

All tower houses had a garderobe (toilet) on each level, often flushed with rainwater from the roof. These garderobe shafts are very useful today to act as vertical conduits for plumbing and wiring with access to most rooms.

Tower houses in Clare were built on bedrock, as the builders had no faith in the usual "pad" (stone plinth) foundations. Often they selected a large outcrop of limestone bedrock and quarried the edges to provide the building stone and lime, prepared in a temporary kiln. This provided mortar, concrete, render, plaster and fine lime-putty finish for internal rooms. Painters not only painted and decorated these buildings but prepared their own paints and colours from lime and minerals. In West Clare where limestone was not freely available, flagstone was used for building and lime was manufactured by burning huge quantities of sea-shells. Although this produced good quality lime, the sea-sand used in the mix often contained too much salt, resulting in a weak mortar. For this reason most of the tower houses from Miltown Malbay to Loop Head have totally collapsed.

Floors were covered with flags (over stone vaults) and wooden planks (over wall plates, over stone corbels). These were covered in rushes or "tresh" (straw left over after threshing). The high stone at each door which kept the tresh from falling down the stairs was known as the "thresh-hold" (*táirseach*).

The narrow loop windows were not glazed but fitted with padded oak shutters set in stone gudgeons. The top room (*an grianán* – the solar) was glazed with coloured glass imported from the continent and was usually the most expensive and only material not acquired locally.

Although tower houses are rarely dated, date stones are often found on fireplace lintels and nearly always contain the names of both husband and wife. This indicates that Gaelic or Brehon Law was still adhered to at the time, as men and women had equal rights(...)

The roof was usually of oak trusses, purlins and rafters, dowelled and pegged with very high quality joinery. Iron straps or nails were rarely used because of their susceptibility to rust and even the slates were hung on oak dowels for the same reason. Slates (*slinnte*) were available locally in most parts of Co. Clare, the best coming from quarries in Broadford, Moher, Knockerra, Luogh and Killaloe but most areas in the county had a slate quarry.

The cut-limestone features like quoins, chimney-pieces, ogee-windows, door-surrounds, corbels etc. were invariably of exceptional skill, maintaining their sharpness to this day. The sandstone features used in East Clare tower houses were probably as good but suffered badly from the elements. For this reason many sandstone and flagstone tower houses had "imported" limestone features.

Ironwork was expensive and often confined to small items like hinges, door-locks and fire-grates, although many tower houses had a "yett" or iron gate, outside the main entrance door to

give added protection. Inside and above this door was the "murder hole" in the floor above, from where intruders could be shot while trying to break down internal doors, while there was often a "machicoulis" or stone, bottomless box, similar to the murder hole, over the front door, at parapet level.

It is widely thought that the sites for tower houses were selected so that they could signal each other in times of war. Research has proven this to be untrue. Most Co. Clare tower houses are located in good tillage or pasture land, close to a road or river. This strengthens the case that they were, above all, strong farmhouses which needed access to export farm produce.

Although tower houses are rarely dated, date stones are often found on fireplace lintels and nearly always contain the names of both husband and wife. This indicates that Gaelic or Brehon Law was still adhered to at the time, as men and women had equal rights before English law was imposed on the county. We know little about the tradesmen who built the tower houses except that they were held in great respect and were probably well paid. There was no slave labour under Brehon Law. Slavery was abolished in Ireland, at the Synod of Rath Brassil in 1111 AD!

by Risteard UaCróinín

Risteard UaCróinín is the Architectural Conservation Officer and Archaeologist with Clare County Council. His specific research interests include the conservation and repair of late mediaeval and vernacular buildings. He has published widely on Gaelic tower houses and the built environment of County Clare. For more information contact him at Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare or email ruacroinin@clarecoco.ie

Dr Susan Pike outlines the strength of place-based education in schools and teacher education.

Place Based Education is very evident in our primary schools and colleges of education. Walk into any primary school and you are likely to see photographs, writing, pictures and models of children's places within the school and its locality. In colleges of education future teachers are often seen out and about around the colleges. Ireland is fortunate in having a child-centred and place-based curriculum at primary level; this is reflected in initial and post-graduate teacher education programmes.

Children's place-based learning is multi-faceted and activities can be broadly grouped into four overlapping categories:

- place-based *doing* resulting in intentional and unintentional learning;
- place-based *thinking* enabling children's thinking to be broadened and deepened;
- place-based *feeling* to help children in developing their ideas, opinions and interests and;
- place-based *being* provides children with time alone or with friends

In all subjects at primary level, these dimensions of place-based learning can be developed. Teachers are guided by the aims of the curriculum, which includes place-based elements¹:

- using the child's sense of wonder and natural curiosity, especially in their immediate environment;
- basing learning in children's knowledge and experience and allowing children's agency (or action) to guide learning;
- using enquiry based learning, guided activity, discovery methods, higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills

It is in geography education this is most evident, as children's sense and use of spaces and places are part of the curriculum¹, and children should be provided with opportunities to 'explore, investigate and develop an understanding of the natural, human, social and cultural dimensions of local and wider environments; to learn and practice a wide range of skills; and to acquire open, critical and responsible attitudes.'

Primary Schools

As amply exemplified by the Trust's EcoBeo programme, *place based education* has so many advantages for children in our primary schools. Those working in education have always known this enhances children's lives but this is also backed up with fascinating and informative research with children². Whether learning about the flora and fauna in their locality or quizzing a local decision-maker about changes in their area, *place based education* is meaningful, relevant and challenging for the children in their current and future lives. In the process of *place based education* children also have lots of fun!

Teacher Education

Opportunities for prolonged engagement with local people and places ensure a dedication to *placed based education* in primary schools, and this concept is incorporated into teacher education courses. At St Patrick's College, students in geography, art, science, history and digital learning courses all spend time in the college grounds and locality. For example in the first term of their course our new student-teachers take a geography course in which place-based outdoor time amounts to over half the course. Students undertake guided and independent enquiries in the college grounds and in Drumcondra. The result is that students

learn about their surroundings and in the process have great fun getting to know each other and working together! In 2nd year and 3rd year they apply this expertise to their own area, sourcing opportunities to develop their locality for place based geographical education.

We must recognize that there is work to do to help other educators and decision-makers see the enormous value of *place-based education*. There are many areas where *place based education* as a part of teacher training could be developed and promoted further. With this in mind the BurrenBeo Trust and St Patrick's College have started looking at ways of collaboration, inspired by the *Feasibility Study of The Burren as a Learning Landscape* by Brendan McGrath and Brian McNally³.

We look forward to teacher education being part of the development of the concept of a 'learning landscape within the Burren - one which inspires people to learn from their surroundings and their place in them.

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- ¹ Department of Education and Science / National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (1999) *Primary School Curriculum: Geography*. Dublin: The Stationary Office.
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- ³ McGrath, B. and McNally, B. (2013) *Feasibility Study of The Burren as a Learning Landscape*. Kinvara: BurrenBeo Trust.

At under-graduate level our geography specialists from St Patrick's College will visit the BurrenBeo Trust to work alongside their staff. We hope to develop links with local schools, farmers, businesses and organisations. At post-graduate level, opportunities for prolonged work in our Masters' programmes in geography, human rights and citizenship could mean students, who are classroom teachers, spending time in the Burren and bringing their experiences back to their own classrooms.

by Susan Pike

Dr Susan Pike is a Geography Lecturer in St Patrick's, Teacher Education, Drumcondra. She is the author of numerous resources, articles and chapters on geography education, place based learning and environmental education. She may be contacted at Susan.Pike@spd.dcu.ie or via Twitter @SusanJPike

PLACES, SPACES AND LEARNING

Place based education in primary schools

Food, Sustainability & the Family Farm

Opportunities for unique communities such as the Burren

The Edible Schoolyard

Societies in developed countries across the world are increasingly concerned with the 'broken link' between people and the ecological process of food production. Alice Waters' famous project - 'The Edible Schoolyard' - seeks to educate children in particular about where food comes from and how it is produced. In recent decades there has been a backlash to the problem of the broken link between nature and society. A growing proportion of consumers demands authentic and ecologically sound food provenance. Some food producers are responding to consumer demands, often because they wish to improve the link between mainstream society and food production. They highlight, and command a higher price for, the special qualities of the food they produce and its importance to ecological health as well as social sustainability.

A Food Story

Schemes such as those calculating the 'carbon footprint' of food products respond in a particular way to consumers who want to make sustainable choices as 'food citizens'. However, sustainability is not measured solely by technical indicators such as food miles, carbon footprints and population density. It is also about dynamics such as human relationships, human-ecological relationships and cultural identity. Many of the niche food products that fall within the category of 'environmentally friendly' also have a strong cultural identity – a branding strategy that is often referred to as a 'food story'. Retailers, including supermarket multiples, are developing branded products that provide consumers with the stories they seek: details of the origin of the food relating to the environment that the food is produced in, as well as the people who are producing it. Independent small and artisan food producers, typically those producing processed foods such as cheeses, develop profitable niche brands. However, despite the growing popularity of 'farmers' markets', farmer-owned brands representing fresh unprocessed foods such as meat, milk and vegetables are less common. Farmer-owned brands, representing primary food products that have a special ecological, cultural and/or social significance, are quite rare in Ireland. Research has found that very few Irish farmers have independent brands or sell directly to consumers compared to other countries, such as the UK. What implications does this have for a society that wants to reconnect with the food production process?

The Role of the Traditional Farmer

It is important that the role of traditional farmers, representing those who have farmed the same land for generations in an ecologically sensitive way, are included in how sustainability is understood and defined. As well as ecological, there are social and cultural aspects to sustainability that are rooted in humans' inter-relationships and how they interact with their environment.

Farming in the Burren is a clear example of multi-dimensional sustainability, the crux of which is the human-ecological relationship. Local knowledge, passing down (and adapting) from generation to generation is a crucial resource. It is associated specifically with animal husbandry, representing a long lineage of human ecological relationships involving native people, animals, and their natural environment. Food produce of the Burren, the identity of which includes social, cultural and human ecological elements, cannot be captured by using technical indicators such as a carbon footprint. Sophisticated approaches to branding and communications seek to include in the 'food story' social and cultural as well as ecological elements.

The Culture Economy

Receiving a higher price for the socio-cultural aspects of rural products, referred to as a 'culture economy' approach, is a key aspect of contemporary EU rural development policy. This can be a feasible development approach for farmers who do not have enough farmland or do not wish to produce large volumes of undifferentiated commodity agricultural products.

Developing and Marketing a Brand

In order for farmers to own their brand and offer a genuine product directly to consumers, they are challenged in the first instance with developing a compelling brand and with undertaking and coordinating a range of processing, packaging, marketing, promotion and distribution activities to make their brand a success. In addition to the time-consuming and skilled process of actually producing the food (i.e. farming), these additional tasks can be

undesirable, difficult or impossible for many farmers. Farmers can simply lack the time or skills to undertake these activities at the level required to make their brand a success. It can also often be unaffordable for an individual or small group of farmers to pay for dedicated professional services such as marketing and distribution.

The Federated Cooperative Approach

A particular type of cooperative that is operating internationally may hold promise in this context. The federated cooperative structure joins together and represents the interests of individual small cooperatives, which retain their own independent brand identities under the 'umbrella' federated cooperative. The small local cooperatives co-own the federated cooperative, which provides coordinated services and facilities such as processing and packaging to the member cooperatives with the main aim of making the services more affordable and improving exposure and bargaining power in the market. The farmers involved can retain their focus on using their own specialised skills - producing food – with the cooperative undertaking all of the additional services required to bring their product to market.

Farmers working together within an appropriate support framework, one example of which is a federated cooperative framework, potentially represents a workable solution for both farmers producing ecologically sensitive food and consumers who wish to access this food as well as the food story it represents. Such federated cooperatives can provide consumers access to a plethora of new products, such as differentiated meat and vegetable breeds, which have an authentic lineage in Ireland's food history. While Irish artisan processed food such as cheese products have gained prominence and international notoriety for their special qualities, there is also potential for unprocessed food products to be acknowledged for their special qualities. The ancient tradition of beef production in the Burren is undoubtedly unique, representing a special food story that is representative of the many dimensions of sustainability.

by Áine Macken-Walsh

Dr Áine Macken-Walsh is a Research Officer at Teagasc's Rural Economy and Development Programme (REDP). Her primary interests are in cultural sociology with a specific focus on agriculture. Her PhD focused on rights-based approaches to rural development, agriculture, and the EU governance and rural development model. She can be contacted at aine.mackenwalsh@teagasc.ie

Further reading:

The edible schoolyard: a universal idea by Alice Waters & David Littschwager, Chronicle Books, 2009
Rural Cooperation in the 21st Century - Unique Opportunities for Farm Families is available on www.teagasc.ie



Attyslany Woodland is located within the Eastern Burren Complex Special Area of Conservation, just a few kilometres east of the village of Boston. As native woodland occurs to such a small extent in the Burren, Attyslany is an important habitat in the context of biodiversity. Approximately 50 hectares of the area consists of limestone pavement with deep pockets of soil occurring between the pavements. This results in a unique mosaic of habitats and microclimates where trees, shrubs, occasional dwarfed species and typical Burren flora are interspersed among limestone pavement. Attyslany is open to the public.

Originally pine-hazel woodland dominated this part of the Burren but the site was managed for forestry from the early 1960s up until 2006. An EU LIFE project, 'Restoring Native Woodland' was implemented by Coillte between 2006-9, the main emphasis being on nature conservation and biological diversity. Under this project, non-native trees were thinned and clear-cut in different areas of the woodland.

Typical tree species that you may find in Attyslany today include whitebeam, buckthorn, spindle, hazel, birch, ash and Scots pine. If you look carefully you may also discover some

lovely oak saplings. As no mature oak grows within the woodland one may wonder where the acorns came from. Did a bird bring them in or is it possible the acorns were disturbed during the restoration work and spurted to life. Birds likely to be seen include the willow warbler, robin and gold crest. Eleven species of butterfly have been observed there, a notable one being the pearl-bordered fritillary which has a very limited habitat in Ireland.

To produce a base-line data set for the woodland, I carried out a research project in the summer of 2012 to discover the impact which woodland restoration was having upon plant diversity and to undertake a ground beetle survey. I recorded 73 plant and 11 ground beetle species in total. A number of the plant and beetle species recorded were unique to specific micro-habitats which suggest that management of the woodland should include the maintenance of a mosaic of habitats for optimum biodiversity.

I spent many hours in the woodland and was lucky enough to observe many of the gems it holds. For example one day I was sitting quietly in the undergrowth identifying plants when a pine marten strolled past me only about ten feet away. On another evening hundreds of dragon

flies appeared as if from nowhere and gave me an aerial display that would be hard to match anywhere. Wild berries grow so abundantly in Attyslany that it was hard to stop eating them and it was difficult to decide which tasted better, the blackberries, the raspberries or was it the wild strawberries that seemed to grow everywhere in open spaces on the woodland floor. Although Attyslany is woodland in transition and it will take many years to reach the mature stage it is a lovely place to go for a walk. New trails have been established and are used regularly by locals and visitors. The area has special surprises for everybody and all it takes is a little quiet time spent observing.

by Martin Gowran

The plant and ground beetle study undertaken by Martin Gowran at Attyslany Woodland formed part of his BSc undergraduate dissertation and was titled: '*A Study of Plant and Ground Beetle (Coleoptera: Carabidae) Diversity in an Irish Woodland Following Restoration Techniques*'. Martin lives in the Burren, is an avid nature conservationist. He is a member of Burrenbeo Trust and a committee member of the Burren Conservation Volunteers. He can be contacted on martingowran@yahoo.com

The rules of the mountain side

For those fortunate to enjoy the widely varying Burren landscape the sensory overload often leaves the individual stunned with an overwhelming feeling of wonder. Impending visitors who avidly read myriad publications on the numerous attractions of the Burren realise the huge range of activities and opportunities available, caving, climbing, walking, sea kayaking, to name but a few.

While caving and climbing have existed in Ireland for many years, accidents for the most part have been minor, why? It's because cavers have their own specialized rescue teams; as indeed do climbers, while walkers, anglers,

surfers, kayakers and other sea users rely directly upon the members of the Irish Coast Guard for assistance, often incurring a more publicly visible level of emergency assistance.

In recent years an increasing area of previously inaccessible countryside has been opened to the public as more and more landowners kindly agree to allow walking routes to be constructed across their land. Hill-walkers particularly have become a more common sight throughout the Burren.

For those fortunate to live within the Burren the many different types of weather that can be

experienced in a single day may not surprise them too often. The casual visitor, however, may think fine weather at the start of the day will continue throughout. Locals do not exaggerate when they speak of having the four seasons in one day; it may not happen often, but it does happen. So enquire of, and listen to, their advice if they warn of inclement weather.

As the numbers enjoying the mountains and hills gradually increase so too does the potential for an incident. So it's important even for a short excursion to be well prepared.

This can be done with the minimum of effort by following the simple guide below; for the most part though common sense prevails:

- Obtain a good weather forecast – from websites such as Met Éireann.
- Ensure you and all your party are fit enough to complete the route chosen.
- Ensure any member of the party on medication has it with them at all times.
- Leave clear written details of your route, including ideally two mobile phone numbers of the party, and the expected time of your arrival, or return, with someone responsible, perhaps the owner at your accommodation; allowing sufficient time to complete the walk at the speed of the slowest member of your party, but avoid the party becoming separated.
- Make sure you have the correct equipment and enough fluids and snacks for the journey.
- Have a plan "B" ready, in the event of a problem arising have an escape route; for example identify a number of places around the walk where it's possible to descend to avoid the onset of bad weather or a member of the party becoming unable to continue.
- Ensure that each mobile phone in the group is fully charged, but please, think before you summon assistance, is it a real emergency? If you have any doubt whatsoever then make that call immediately!
- In the event of an emergency, take control and remain calm, care for the casualty, maintain their warmth, keep the casualty out of the wind and keep as them as dry as possible.
- In an emergency please understand that you may well be quite remote from a road, therefore it is important for you to know your precise location before you make an emergency call. Be aware from the time of initiating a call to the Gardai to the actual arrival of the rescue team may well take some time, so remain calm and support the casualty.
- When you have made your call to the rescue services do not continue to use your phone, leave it on, but avoid making unnecessary calls, be patient, the rescue team will be given your mobile phone number, and a member of that team will contact you. So make a concerted effort to save battery life.
- At all times try and remain positive and keep calm, even though circumstances may make it very difficult to do so, it will help the morale of the casualty enormously.

Pat Cronin has explored caves, nationally and internationally, for over 45 years. His passion is underground Ireland, where he has discovered many kilometres of caves. He is a cave-diving instructor teaching others to safely explore underwater passages in flooded cave systems, a volunteer Rescue Warden with the Irish Cave Rescue Organization, and an Instructor with the Irish Coast Guard. Pat can be contacted on patcronin@eircom.net.

by Pat Cronin

In the event of an emergency, within the Burren, call 999 or 112 and ask for the Doolin Coast Guard, the Gardai will put you straight through to the Irish Coast Guard Control based in Valentia who will then initiate the callout procedure. For those interested in further information please check the following websites:

www.irishtrails.ie www.caving.ie
www.mountaineering.ie www.met.ie/
www.mountainrescue.ie www.windguru.cz

Attyslany

A LESSER KNOWN BURREN WOODLAND

'Up close, they have a glossy purple-black plumage, with their red legs and downward-curved red bill. According to one version of the King Arthur legend, this red colour is derived from the blood of Arthur's last battle. The legend tells that Arthur did not die after his last battle, but rather his soul migrated into the body of a chough.'



the Call of the Chough

I was doing a bit of herding along Blackhead a little while ago when I heard a familiar call. I looked around to see where it was coming from, and that's when I saw them. Four choughs were dancing on the swirling wind which was coming in across Galway Bay. It was a lovely sight, but one which is becoming increasingly rare. Choughs are declining all along our West coast, and in Clare, there are currently no breeding pairs north of the Cliffs of Moher. The birds I saw were not in Blackhead to nest. Instead they were most likely a family group from the Cliffs or the Aran Islands, and only here in search of food. This is a big change that has occurred in recent years, given that there are three historical nest sites close by at Fanore, Gleninagh and Finavarra. The reasons for it are possibly linked to the ecology of the birds themselves.

The choughs found in Ireland are part of what is believed to be a distinct race, known colloquially as the 'Celtic Chough', as they only occur in Ireland, Brittany, Wales, the Isle of Man, Cornwall, and some Scottish Islands. Choughs are often regarded as being the acrobats of the sky, and are easily distinguishable in flight as their widely spread primary feathers give the impression of fingers at the end of their wings. Up close, they have a glossy purple-black

plumage, with their red legs and downward-curved red bill. According to one version of the King Arthur legend, this red colour is derived from the blood of Arthur's last battle. The legend tells that Arthur did not die after his last battle, but rather his soul migrated into the body of a chough.

Unlike its scavenging cousin, the hooded crow, the chough's diet is made up of invertebrates, and particularly the infamous larvae of the crane-fly (daddy-long-legs), known to gardeners as 'leatherjackets'. The type of habitat is not as important to the chough as the grazing level, but semi-improved maritime grassland and maritime heath tend to be the most commonly used. Choughs primarily hunt for invertebrates that are surface active, and so grazing maintains the short sward that allows choughs to access their prey. The dung of livestock also provides a concentrated source of invertebrates to young and inexperienced birds.

It is considered that there is sufficient foraging habitat in North Clare to support one or more breeding pairs, and the presence of three historical nest sites should confirm this. However, the issue may rest in the nest sites themselves which are thought, anecdotally, to have been disturbed, or lost to a competitor or predator. Choughs are cliff-dwelling birds and seek out a suitable crevice to build their nest. As such, their distribution can be limited by the availability of suitable nesting sites. In 2012, the Golden Eagle Trust and Clare County Council set about erecting specially designed

chough nest boxes along the North Clare coastline in order to enhance breeding opportunities. This has been proven to work elsewhere, and in Wales, a significant proportion of the population have been using nest boxes, and breeding successfully for almost 20 years.

In total 17 boxes were installed at 16 different sites, from Coolrone, which is just south of Hags Head, to Finavarra Point, covering a distance of over 32km. When seeking permission, it was very reassuring to receive such a positive response from landowners, who showed considerable interest in the project, and indeed in the birds themselves.

Initial monitoring during the 2013 season did not reveal any obvious usage by choughs, although a box at Hags Head tower did have a chough calling above it when visited, and nest material was visible in a number of boxes, but may have been rock doves. Hopefully 2014 will confirm some use by choughs but it's acknowledged that uptake may need a few seasons. For now however, it's fingers-crossed that our efforts produce results and, with luck, the call of the chough will once again become part of the fabric of North Clare's soundscape.

by Shane Casey

Shane Casey is from generations of farmers in Blackhead. He is currently Clare's Biodiversity Officer, helping to raise awareness of the county's ecology and biodiversity. He can be contacted on scasey@clarecoco.ie

We often use 'landscape' to mean 'scenery', a simple description of the visible world we inhabit. Seamus Heaney wrote that *'when we go as tourists ...we go with at best an aesthetic eye, comforting ourselves with the picturesqueness of it all or rejoicing in the fact that it is unspoiled. We have little felt knowledge of the place, little enough of a sense of wonder or a sense of tradition.'* But 'landscape' can also mean something more than this. It can summarise the totality of the relationship between ourselves and the places that we inhabit, a relationship that has evolved over millennia. It is this broader perspective that I wish to bring to bear on the landscape around Corofin, where I live, and of which I am a part.

The area was described nearly a hundred years ago in 'An Angler's Paradise' by F.D. Barker. Barker was an American expatriate who began making fishing trips to Corofin at the end of the 19th Century. He was so taken with the area that in his book, which has become an angling classic, he states that *'I regret that it is denied me to tell you where Eden is and how it is named on the map. If I were to do so, it would be Eden no longer. You might all be for taking tickets and trying to engage rooms.'* His map therefore has an unreal, Tolkienesque quality but it is, nevertheless, easily deciphered as a map of the lakelands of the south-east Burren. Craighen the wooded mountain, is Clifden Hill, Inchicrag has the unmistakable outline of Lake Inchiquin and the Rugged Bare Mountains are the Upland Burren.

Barker's book is a tourist's evocation of a place that he came to love. We can reasonably surmise that the landscape experience of the first inhabitants of the area, about nine thousand years ago, was very different. Their survival depended on an intimate knowledge of where they lived. According to the anthropologist, Hugh Brody, ties to place and its resources for hunter-gatherers are often stronger than ties of history, community or even family. It may therefore be, that, so all embracing was the relationship, Mesolithic peoples would not have been able to separate their individual identities from the place where they lived.

Six thousand years ago the landscape interaction became more complex. Local people started to change their world. On Roughan Hill (pronounced Rowan) the first farmers began to clear the forest, to make fields and build a settlement. Han Lorzing, a Dutch landscape architect, conceives landscape as several interrelated layers of interaction. Of these the 'landscape is what you make' layer is the most active. The Neolithic therefore heralded a new and potent layer of landscape interaction, as local tribes began to make their mark. The

Photo by Carsten Krieger



Landscape and us

arrival of Christianity in the 5th or 6th century, with its anthropocentric philosophy, would have strengthened that impetus.

Our local landscape history can therefore be summarised as three periods of engagement, first by hunter-gatherers, then by settled farming communities and, latterly, by settlers and tourists. Our contemporary experience can be represented as an amalgam of these different types of engagement. The relevance of the settler and tourist perspectives is readily apparent but the role of the hunter-gatherer is not so obvious. F.D. Barker was a type of hunter, like the many anglers who continue to visit Corofin every year. But a hunter's perspective is hardly dominant in our culture. Indeed, what is interesting about hunting from an evolutionary psychological perspective is that it exemplifies a cultural trait which once bestowed a competitive advantage but which has become irrelevant. Other examples of redundant traits are fears of the dark and of snakes and spiders. A further example might be the ability to 'read' landscape, not the contemporary landscape but the one where our species evolved and has spent most of its existence. This is the basis of the Savanna Hypothesis, expounded about thirty years ago. According to this hypothesis we subconsciously interpret landscape through our 'African-evolved' eyes. We have an unconscious predisposition towards savanna-like environments because, in evolutionary terms, they are the best places to live. The view from Clifden Hill therefore gives us pleasure because it is a vista replete with game (livestock), fresh water (lake and river), hunting grounds (open fields and cover near water), safe passages (roadways in the open), shelter (houses) and lookouts (hilltops).

A more profound legacy of that distant tribal past may be an innate sense of communal responsibility and of the connectedness of everything. The landscape idea captures these holistic qualities, qualities which cannot be easily reconciled with the fragmented and contested nature of contemporary landscape engagement.

by Brendan McGrath

References and a fuller exposition of the ideas in this article are contained in *'Landscape and Society in Contemporary Ireland'* by Brendan McGrath (Cork University Press, 2013). Brendan and his wife, Nelleke, in collaboration with neighbours and other local people, have set up *Burren Journey* to enable visitors to have an in-depth experience of the landscape of the southern part of the Burren.

See www.burrenjourney.com for more information.

Music as an Expression of the Landscape

Looking through my catalogue of works I am struck by the number of pieces I have written inspired by the natural world – *Gentiana Verna*; *Come live with me*; *I woke at four this morning*; *Flutter fossil fox*; *Bay of Fundy*; *summit, descent* - to name but a few. The best explanation for this comes from the English composer Michael Zev Gordon 'We write music because words are no longer enough'.

When an idea for a new piece strikes me I usually hear the general sound of it in my head, as if through a fog but, essentially, complete. As I start to work on practicalities, such as the instrumentation or the text, the fog begins to clear and the piece emerges.

Last year I wrote a short choral work for the Lismorahaun singers called *Gentiana verna*. The work is a homage to the flora and fauna of the Burren in Springtime. To assemble the text I first compiled the names of the flowers in Irish, Latin and English, the colour of the flower, the month it blossomed and where it could be found - seashore, grasslands, limestone pavement or mountains. After some experimentation with the sounds of the words I settled on the Irish translations – the Irish words fit the musical sound I was looking for. Next I split the plants into three categories – low, middle and high. I assigned the low lying plants (those by the seashore or turloughs) to the lower voices of the choir, those on grasslands or woodlands to middle voices and those on the mountain to the higher voices. The 'geography' of the piece is based on two things – when the flower appears and their proliferation – so the composition starts off with just a few flowers popping their heads up but the texture intensifies as it goes on, growing into a crowded meadow of beautiful wildflowers.

When text is involved the connection to a theme is quite clear, in instrumental music it is a little more abstract. *Summit descent* was

written about climbing Kilimanjaro with the Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Club in 2011. Initially I thought I would start the piece at the foot of the mountain and work up but, the suggestion of fellow composer Peter Moran, I started at the top and came down. So the piece opens with an icy, empty sound to echo the glacier and the moon-like landscape of the volcano. It was quite surreal for the fourteen of us to stand on the summit, disorientated from the high altitude, exhausted from the overnight climb in sleet and -10 degree temperatures. The constant awareness of oxygen is emulated through the white noise at the start of the piece, with wind players blowing air through their instruments and string players drawing bows without producing actual tone.

On beginning descent the landscape changed almost immediately reaching the alpine desert – a weird other-worldly scene with strange plants and brown-grey earth – the texture of the piece changes to a slow waltz on piano accompanying a quirky, indulgent melody passing through the other instruments. And then the rainforest; there are no words to describe the feeling of being surrounded by intense green rainforest after days of darkness, glacier, alpine desert and an almost complete absence of rich colour. I remember feeling as though my eyes were thirsty and suddenly drinking this abundance of green. Giddiness followed as we found ourselves among banana and coffee plantations – civilisation! – and this is echoed in the changing tonality and bluesy chords at the end of the work.

The natural world has always inspired me and music is my preferred method of communication – to express both admiration and gratitude for the world around me. It does not feel abstract or disconnected but rather a completely natural reaction to an experience. How does the arrival of the first Spring Gentian make you feel? How does that feeling *sound*? What do you hear?

I think I just heard a new piece through the fog...

by Fiona Linnane

Fiona Linnane is a composer living in County Limerick. In 2013 her project *Bells Across The Burren* ran during the Burren in Bloom festival as part of the Arts Council of Ireland Artist in the Community Scheme. Photo by Claire O'Rorke. For more information find Fiona on www.facebook.com/fionalinnanecomposer

You can listen to the music mentioned in the article here: www.soundcloud.com/fionalinnane/sets/landscape

HOLY WELLS & PILGRIMAGE IN THE NORTH-EAST OF THE BURREN

Holy wells in Ireland have been frequented primarily for three reasons – folk medicine, pilgrimage and popular assembly. Thus the sites have been regarded as fulfilling important medicinal, spiritual and social needs. About fifty holy wells are located in the Burren region, as defined by Tim Robinson's map of which eleven lie within the parish of Carran in the north-east of the Burren.

Holy wells and penitential cairns were the primary focus of ritual in pilgrimage in Early Medieval Ireland (400-1200 A.D.). The north-east of the Burren is home to a large number of not just wells but cairns also.

Moreover, there are three pilgrimage sites located along the pass through the hills of Slieve Carran and Turloughmore: Temple Cronan, St Colman Mac Duagh's Hermitage and St Fachtna's Holy Well.

Temple Cronan, Termon

St Cronan's well lies at the base of a cliff thus making the *turas* (praying rounds) around the monument impossible. To facilitate the ritual a circular penitential space was "constructed" contiguous with the well. A collapsed penitential station is at the centre of the space.

A second holy well is situated about 25 metres north-east of St Cronan's Well. The second well is known as the Eye Well and is now covered over. Both wells were associated with cures for eye ailments.

Temple Cronan is also home to two reliquary slab shrines. No more than ten such shrines survive in Ireland. The shrines would have housed either primary (bones) or secondary (book, belt, bell, crozier) relics of St Cronan. The shrines indicate that the site was important for medieval pilgrimage.

St Colman MacDuagh's Hermitage, Keelhill

Temple Cronan and MacDuagh's hermitage are both probably of Early Medieval origin and are thus contemporaneous. In the former case the monks chose the monastic site; in the latter St Colman opted for a hermitic existence.

A stream runs through the hermitage. St Colman's well house encloses a space that was dug below the water line to ensure an almost constant pool of water within. The water is believed to cure back and eye ailments.

The hermitage is a Lughnasa site and would have been a place of pilgrimage, popular assembly or harvest celebration on the last Sunday in July. Ritual would have been performed at the well, two outdoor altars, a bullaun stone and St Colman's bed in the cave. However, it is not just the core of the hermitage which has been monumentalised for pilgrimage purposes as there are also a number of holy wells and altars in the wider area. Oral narrative suggests there was a *camino* between the hermitage and the monastic site of Kilmacduagh, the distance between the two being about 9 miles.

St Fachtna's Holy Well, Coskeam

The holy well is situated in an oval void in the rock. This particular hollow was probably selected because it never dries up (it is 0.8m deep). St Fachtna's is also an eye well.

Nine dry-stone penitential cairns lie in a line a short distance to the south-west of the well. They are an impressive sight, the tallest cairn being 2 metres tall.

While penitential cairns in the Burren have not been dated, cairns on Inishmurray off County Sligo have been scientifically dated to Early Medieval times. Cairns were the subject of

prayer rounds in the search for remittance of punishment for sins.

There are a number of other cairn complexes in the north-east of the region. Two are linked to the holy well of St Colmcille in the valley of Glencolmcille. Postgraduate archaeology students from NUI Galway have studied some of them; their excellent study contends that St Cronan's, St Colman Mac Duagh's, St Fachtna's and St Colmcille's are all components of one dynamic, interdependent pilgrimage station.

The very high concentration of penitential archaeology in the north-east of the Burren makes it one of Ireland's finest surviving pilgrimage landscapes.

Buíochoas to Dr David Drew (hydrology) & Dr Stefan Bergh, Department of Archaeology, N.U.I. Galway.

by Tony Kirby

Tony Kirby is a walking tourism operator in the Burren. He is the author of *The Burren and the Aran Islands- A Walking Guide* (Collins Press 2009). He can be contacted on info@heartofburrenwalks.com

St Colman's holy well at hermitage Keelhill, Carran. Photo by author



Photo by Carsten Krieger

The Natural Flow

As was evident earlier this year we have seen what the Irish weather can throw at us: there have been storms rolling across the Atlantic one after another driven by strong winds and gales leading to coastal flooding and extensive damage along the Clare and Galway coastlines. In 2009 we had record rainfalls putting huge volumes of water on the land throughout November, leading to extensive flooding and overtopping of turloughs and swallow holes. These events show how closely related Ireland's location and makeup are tied to the weather and how the weather and the land are intimately related. The relationship of water and the land is well studied and well understood across large parts of the Burren.

Along the northern flanks of the Burren is a series of small valleys including the valley that opens to Bell Harbour. This relatively small area (covering approximately 60 km²) has been the focus of a study of groundwater, surface water and sea water that has been undertaken by researchers from Earth and Ocean Sciences at NUI Galway. Tiernan Henry and Marie Perriquet have been collecting data from wells, springs, turloughs and lakes, as well as rainfall data, for the past three years to gain a better understanding of how water moves through this small area, which is like a mini-Burren.

The bedrock is entirely limestone which dips (or slopes) gently to the south. The valley is flanked to the west by Moneen and Aillwee Mountains, to the east by Turlough Hill and Gortaclare Mountain, and to the south by the saddle that lies immediately north of Carran. Water moves northwards through the valley and discharges to the sea between Bell Harbour and Muckinish Bay.

Almost all of the water moves *through* the rocks, rather than across them as there are no rivers or streams in the area (except some very small and usually temporary streams that appear in the uplands). However, the movement of the water is not the same across the area; in some places the water moves extremely quickly towards the sea, in other places it moves much more slowly.

A part of this study was to highlight and identify the different ways in which water makes its way through the rock. By checking how water levels changed in wells in relation to rainfall events, and by checking flows at the springs and near the coast, we have been able to establish that in certain places the water moves rapidly through large, very well connected conduits or pipes in the rock: when it rains the water levels rise rapidly in the wells and drop quickly back to normal after the rainfall. In other wells the

water levels rise slowly and drop back slowly after rainfall indicating that these wells are not well connected to conduits and that the water is moving very slowly through the system.

In some wells close to the sea, and in some of the low-lying lakes and turloughs, the water levels rise and fall with the tides. While salt water doesn't push far inland, rising tides cause the freshwater leaving the land to back up in the system.

This study is one of the first in Ireland to look at this interaction of seawater and fresh groundwater in coastal karst areas and one of the key findings is that the catchment of the valley should include the bays and the near shore line too, as the fresh water leaving the land carries nutrients to the bays that can stimulate biological activity there, increasing their productivity.

by Tiernan Henry

Dr Tiernan Henry is a hydrogeologist based in the Earth & Ocean Sciences at NUIG. His research work has focused on better understanding of coastal karst catchments and on the importance of fractures and faults in controlling groundwater flows. He can be contacted on tiernan.henry@nuigalway.ie

I fell in love! The kind of love that grows and evolves over a long, long time. Looking back, it probably started all those years ago as a student in the north of Sweden. My first encounter with Ireland – Irish traditional music! Love at first sight – or 'sound' I should say. A long winding road eventually brought me over here to live permanently. Marriage, farm-life, animals and agri-tourism came later. Here I am in the beautiful Burren in County Clare on a small farm surrounded by green hills, old mossy dry-stone walls and Iron Age ring-forts.

I grew up in a small town on the west coast of Finland. The summers were spent practically outdoors all day long and that was probably where my love for everything natural and a simple sustainable lifestyle began. No electricity, no running water, a kitchen garden, and a compost toilet outside – exactly the way it was in Ireland a couple of generations ago.

The farm my husband Stephen took over from his family a few years ago was a traditional small fragmented Burren sheep and dairy one, perfect with summer grazing pastures and a winterage field.

Milking and lambing are in the past now, so a few farm buildings and paddocks lent themselves to other types of farming, we thought. We took a trip down to West Cork about eight years ago and I fell in love. Again.

This time it happened to be beautiful rare breed pigs that were running around freely on Avril and Will Allshire's farm. Before we knew it, we found ourselves with a couple of litters of rare breed

pigs. A bit of a learning curve, but it just fitted in perfectly with our love for animals, the land and healthy food.

Our ethos is to keep everything as natural as possible: no chemical fertilisers, pesticides, no tail docking, no teeth filing or crates for sows and most importantly no addition of medication to the feed. Our pigs have sheds with plenty of straw to shelter in when the weather is bad, but the doors are open so they can go outside whenever they like and we are amazed at times to see how hardy they are.

Hands up - how many people knew that pigs love eating grass? They graze like cattle would, not the same quantities, but they keep grazing and rooting the ground for hours every day and that's when you start hearing those cute little grunting sounds. When their bellies are full, they like to snooze in the sunshine for a while, I know, it doesn't happen every day here in Ireland, but pigs can actually get sunburn. Especially those breeds that are pink in colour. The rare breed ones, that we keep, are black or ginger and have natural sun protection in their pigmentation.

On hot summer days they all want to wallow in a mud-hole to cool down. The reason being that they don't have sweat glands, and the mud also acts like a perfect natural sun factor protection.

Archaeological excavations in the Burren have shown that pigs date as far as the Bronze Age. We weren't the first ones to farm them, by any means!

On our farm, we also grow a lot of our own vegetables. The manure the pigs produce gives us good fertile soil and healthy vegetables. The surplus of vegetables goes back to the pigs. Our meats are sold directly from our farm and at farmers' markets locally.

The feedback we receive from our customers is fantastic. When we hear that it tastes like it used to, a long time ago when people reared their own pigs or memories from grandmother's dinner table, it tells us that we are contributing to showcasing sustainable farming and good quality food.

New for this year is also that we hope to offer visitors to stay overnight in a quirky converted farm-type abode to get a chance to spend some time in a relaxing environment where the only noise is the birds or the farm animals, and the only light at night is the moon and the stars. In the morning you get to pick your own fresh hen or duck eggs for your breakfast. You will be all set for your day's exploring of the beautiful Burren!

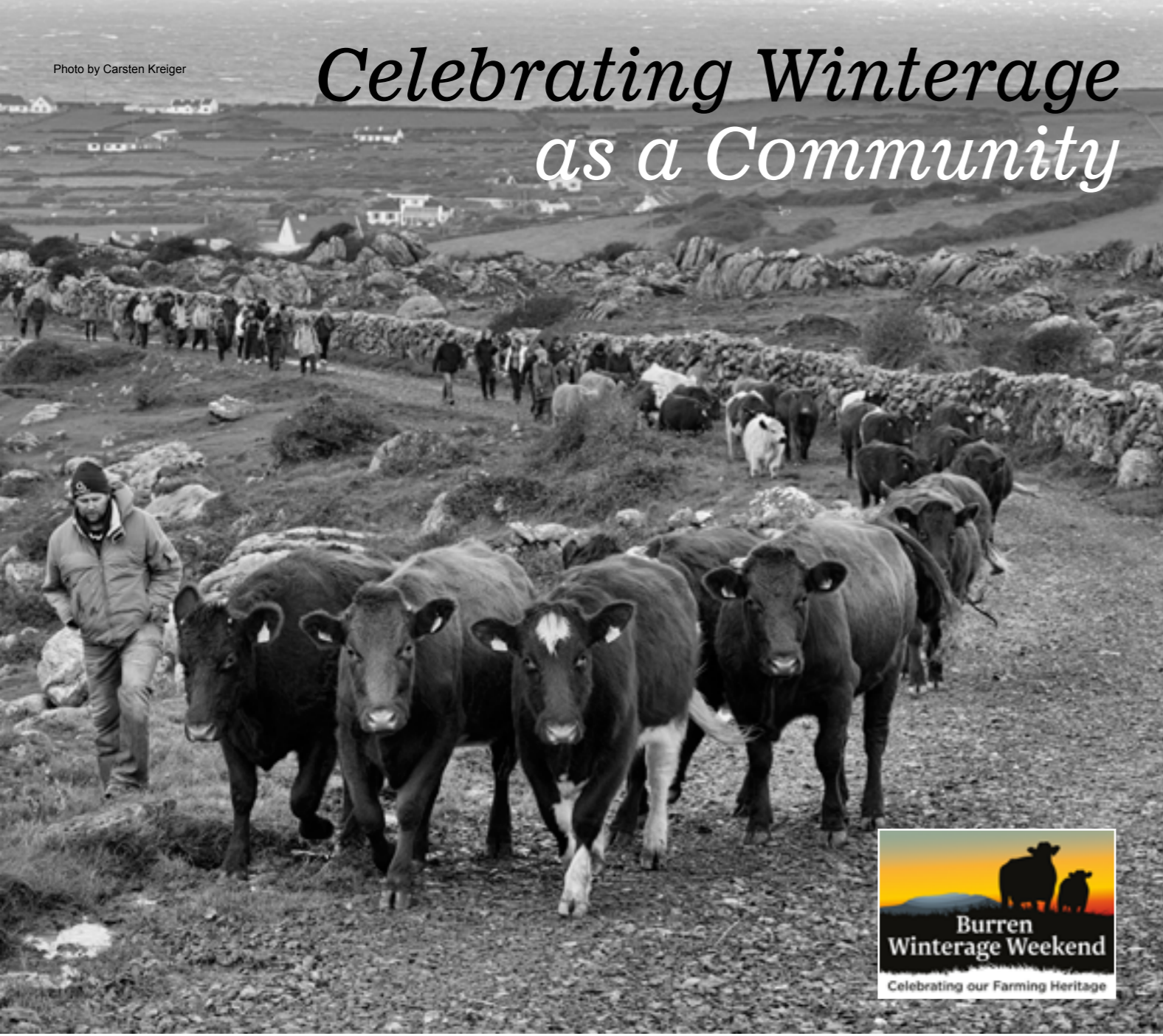
by Eva Hegarty

Eva Hegarty, along with her husband Stephen, own Burren Free Range Pork. They are part of the Burren Ecotourism Network (www.burrenecotourism.com). Photo by author. Their produce can be bought at many of the local farmers' markets or online at www.burrenfreerangepork.com



Pork to Fork
sustainable farming in the Burren

Celebrating Winterage as a Community



'Winterage', the outwintering of cattle on upland pastures, occurs nowhere else in Europe and the Burren is probably one of the only places it occurs in the world. It has been the tradition in the Burren for hundreds of years. Whilst the reasons for the practice are agricultural, it has had the effect of greatly enriching the environment, heritage and culture of the Burren, and is key in showcasing how farmers adapt to the unique limestone location.

In summer, much of the limestone uplands are devoid of surface water and unable to support the cattle which instead are fed and watered on the lush pastures of the low ground. Fresh-water springs, which either dry up or become very weak after periods without rain (theoretically during summer!!) are by far the most important water source on the winterages, supplemented by rain or condensation deposited on the vegetation.

The out-wintered cattle consume the rank vegetation which, if left ungrazed would smother the wild flowers for which the Burren is famed. When the cattle are taken to the low ground in spring, the wild flowers bloom unhindered. This rich flora in turn supports a rich fauna of groups such as bumblebees, moths and butterflies, making the Burren one of Ireland's greatest oases for biodiversity. Grazing also slows down encroachment of scrub which can damage and obscure the remarkable archaeology built by generations of farmers, from megalithic tombs to stone forts, rainwater harvesters to goat enclosures.

Winterage is a wonderful example of how farmers have adapted to the limitations of the local landscape and how, in turn, farming has enriched this landscape. The legacy of winterage is indeed worthy of celebration, particularly given the decline of pastoral farming

traditions in Ireland and elsewhere.

The annual Burren Winterage Weekend is carried out to celebrate not only the unique farming traditions of the Burren, but also to highlight, celebrate and support the broader significance of pastoral farming in shaping much of the Irish landscape. In terms of profile it has an inestimable value for the region, not only for the wide range of media coverage but also as a community event. This is demonstrated by the estimated voluntary input by the local community from this weekend alone being worth nearly €12,000 in 2013!

Join us this October Bank Holiday Weekend for our 3rd Burren Winterage Weekend 24th-26th October 2014 www.burrenwinterage.com



Turnips picked at the open farm. Photo by Carsten Kreiger



Don't let the rain stop ya wall building! Photo by Carsten Kreiger



The beautiful morning light for the Herdsman's Walk outside Glanquin Farmhouse. Photo by Brigid Barry



The cattle drive. Photo by Carsten Kreiger



The horse ploughing. Photo by Carsten Kreiger



Their home for the winter. Photo by Morgan O'Donovan

The Delights of Volunteering

On a clear morning, as I travel to a Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteer (BCV) event from my home in Galway city, I feel a mounting sense of anticipation as I turn right at Kilcolgan and head for the Burren.

My first task in January was clearing scrub for the Bells Across the Burren trail at Newtown Castle. It was a most beautiful crisp day in an idyllic location surrounded by hills. The work was demanding, particularly managing the blackthorn and hauling the cut scrub away from the site. However, the social side of the day more than made up for it when, during breaks, we shared home-baking. This was also an enlightening opportunity to share information on the Burren.

In February, again on a lovely winter's day, I joined the volunteers, under the guidance of Christine Grant, clearing scrub around the court tomb at Doolin. Later that afternoon we were treated to entering a nearby souterrain- an exhilarating experience.

I took part in two other volunteer days of equal delight; one at Fahee when Mr Hugh Robson

described organic farming on a site where we were clearing scrub for the benefit of the marsh fritillary butterfly. On the second, I opted for wall building with Rory O'Shaughnessy but not before he explained the reputation of St. Fachtna's well close by. The water is said to cure eye complaints; you take along a rag, dip it in the water and wipe the wet rag on the sore eye and then deposit the rag on the neighbouring bush which previous visitors had decorated like a May bush.

On my final volunteer day for the year in November, I gave a lift to three overseas students from Galway; the event under Mary Howard's guidance was to clear mini dolmens and cairns at Ballyreen. Shairo from Tokyo, studying English, was a wonderful worker; Chung Yu Li and his partner from Hong Kong were studying business on an exchange programme at NUIG.

They thoroughly enjoyed their day.

Shairo, keen to learn more, enjoyed Ann Lynch's talk on the Poulabrone tomb as part of the Burrenbeo Trust winter series in Tubber Hall; she especially enjoyed the evening's conclusion

when Desi Mulkear's played his flute and told local tales. These lectures are what Oliver Goldsmith described as 'the world of the bold peasant when once destroyed can never be supplied'. The evenings are hosted by Michael O'Donoghue with tea or coffee and goodies and, on cold or damp evenings, Michael feeds the stove with logs creating a warm welcome.

My aspiration for the future of the BCV, from a purely selfish point of view, is to continue in the delightful company of the volunteers; also that more students are encouraged to participate. Their excitement as they too discover the beauty I enjoy, the satisfaction of a job well done and at the same time increasing their knowledge and experience the wonders of the Burren, is a joy to behold.

by Pat Costelloe

Pat Costelloe is a retired dentist and joined the Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers in 2013. For more information on joining the volunteers email volunteer@burrenbeo.com

The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCV) is a growing group of individuals who want to do something positive by tackling the conservation needs of the Burren. Guided by knowledgeable individuals, we are becoming increasingly skilled – learning how to build walls, record archaeological sites, clear invasive species and monitor butterflies amongst much more...

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN...

- The Burren outdoors and want to put something back?
- Meeting others of like mind and having a fun day doing something useful?
- Exploring a career in heritage or conservation and want an opportunity to get hands-on practical experience under leading practitioners?
- Coming to the Burren on a holiday and want to gain knowledge on 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 fun doing it. Everyone is welcome to get involved. For dates of upcoming conservation days and training events, register by emailing volunteer@burrenbeo.com or look up our volunteer page on www.burrenbeo.com

See previous article from the impression of one of the volunteers who joined in 2013.....



Repairing walls with the BCVs, Photo by Carsten Kreiger



Finding new species of beetle to the Burren *Carabus problematicus*. Photo by Roy Anderson



Spring cleaning at Blackhead. Photo by Kate Lavender



Scrub-cutting in Ballyvaughan Photo by Aine Bird

Continuing to focus on the Burren as a Learning Landscape

A learning landscape is one which inspires and enables people to learn from their surroundings and their place in them; the Burren provides huge potential for this. Research commissioned in 2013 by the Burrenbeo Trust explored the Burren's potential as a learning environment and how this can be sustainably pursued. The Trust continues to develop these ideas; examples of key work in its development follow.

Ecobeo continues

The highly acclaimed Ecobeo course continues during 2014 with Northampton, Carron, Lahinch and Inagh National Schools all striving to graduate young 'Burren Experts'. This takes to almost 1000 pupils the total involved in Ecobeo since 2003! Through the children, and in turn their parents and grandparents, this course has a huge positive impact on the future of the Burren.

Each year, we source funding so that the course is free at the point of delivery. Over a period of 20 weeks, the pupils learn about the geology, archaeology, history, flora, fauna, culture, land-use and conservation in the Burren. Weekly projects, a field trip and a graduation ceremony all add to the experience.

There are more than 30 primary schools in the Burren region but we are able to present Ecobeo to only four schools each year. To select them, we ask schools to apply, stating why they want to learn about the Burren; the successful schools are then chosen. The Trust believes Ecobeo to be amongst the strongest investments that we can make in the future of the Burren.

Áitbheo creates new place champions

For Transition Year students in Gort Community School, both in 2013 and 2014, the Trust has run a heritage education programme Áitbheo. This uses 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'. At a time in their lives when they are more likely to be looking to cut ties with home as they flee elsewhere, this gives them a basis on which to value their home-place. It may not be until they travel full circle and return home once more that its true value will be realised.

Burren Wild Child

This one-day outing has been offered to over 90 primary schools in Galway and Clare, inviting them to explore the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Burren in a fun and interactive way. School tours don't have to be about going to a man-made playground; the Burren is the ultimate outdoor playground and Burren Wild Child introduces it to children of any age through structured exploration. These outings can be supplemented by one day school-based visits as each of the Trust employees is on the *Heritage-in-Schools* panel.

Learning Landscape Symposium 2014

Building on previous events, the Trust is planning a two-day training and networking event for 'place-based-educators' in the ultimate outdoor classroom, the Burren. Featuring keynote speakers, workshops and fieldtrips, the symposium will investigate ways to make learning a richer, more exciting and rewarding, experience, as well as an opportunity to network with individuals working in the same sector. This event is about sharing the resources of the Burren and exchanging experiences among educators nationally and internationally.

Teacher Training

This is the first year that the Trust is offering courses for primary school teachers on building 'place-based-learning' into the curriculum. The objective is to provide teachers in the Burren and beyond with some simple strategies and resources through which they can integrate the learning resource of their local environment into the school curriculum. This course is based on ten years of 'place based education' in the Burren through which numerous teachers and hundreds of children have connected with their own locality as part of the highly interactive and experiential Ecobeo programme.

This course will cover strands in the curriculum including landscape, built heritage, cultural heritage, biodiversity and conservation. On completion, teachers will have the skills and resources to enable them to deliver an effective place-based educational programme to their students.

The above, along with other local initiatives, forms part of the ongoing development of the Burren as a place of inspiration for teachers and their classes, enabling them to learn about their surroundings and their place in them and to assist the drive where everyone feeds into the future management, of not just the Burren, but also of their own environs wherever they live.

Place-based educators come together for a learning landscape event. Photo by Brigid Barry



Place-based educators workshops in the Burren as part of the Learning Landscape Symposium. Photo by Helen Lawless.



Ecobeo kids from Ballyvaughan NS in the field. Photo by Áine Bird



Zena Hector teaching people and places with Áitbheo. Photo by Áine Bird.



A Newquay Ecobeo student with her fulacht fiadh model. Photo by Brendan Dunford.

For more information on sponsoring next year's Ecobeo or Áitbheo 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 trust@burrenbeo.com / 091 638096.

Supported by



RATH-DYSERT PILGRIM PATH LOOP

The aim of pilgrimage is to impart a special sense of occasion for the pilgrims, by actively participating in a process whereby their walking will bring them from restlessness to mindfulness. For each pilgrim it is an inner personal journey, as well as a communal outing with like-minded souls. In visiting sacred places, the pilgrims will be connecting with the beliefs of the ancestors, re-awakening in themselves the sacred memory of these places and tapping into the spiritual energy to be found there. Rituals en route will enable them to connect to a deeper meaning, e.g. holy-wells as places of healing.

The quiet byways of Rath and Dysert can provide opportunities to encounter nature anew. Through the outer landscape the pilgrims can be inspired to connect with their inner journey. They will be enabled to “let go” and come into a different soul space.

Starting point: Car park, St. Blathmac's Church, Rath, Corofin, County Clare.

Getting there: From Main Street, Corofin, take the R476 for Ennis. Cross the bridge over River Fergus, turn right and take R460 for Miltown Malbay and Inagh. Take 1st left for Dysert Castle and Archaeological Trail. Take 1st right for Clare Archaeological Centre. Take 1st right for Rath Church and Castle to car park. (Distance from Corofin to car park, 4km)

Distance: 8-10 km.

Duration: 2.5 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Terrain: Minor roads, green lane and meadow.

The walk commences at St. Blathmac's Church. This medieval church is said to be the location of the 8th century monastic site of Blathmac. The church ruins date from 12th-16th centuries and contain some fine Romanesque carvings.

From the church follow the minor road passing Rath Blathmaic, an 8th century earthen fort, reputed to be the birthplace of Blathmac. This road commands magnificent views of the surrounding countryside and hills.

At the T-junction turn right on to Poll Ban road. This road and the ancient roadway, Bealach Arsa, are part of the road which linked Ennis to the tuaths and monastic sites in North Clare since times immemorial. Walk along Poll Ban road and take the second turn on the right, onto Bealach Arsa, which is a green lane, suitable only for pedestrians.

After completing the green lane, take the second road to the left, which is at a crossroad. Follow the tarred road, ignoring the minor road to the right, and pass Dysert R.C. Church on your left. Just past the church, there is a cillin, an old burial ground for unbaptised children. The graves are marked by small headstones. On the right, opposite the cillin, is a holy well, Tobar Oireachta (The Well of the Assembly), known for the cure of eye ailments. This well, associated with St. Tola, is said to be the source of the sweetest drinking water in the locality! A mound known as Cnocanna Croise, the site of an ancient high cross, is nearby on the right.

From the well, continue on to the T-junction and turn left. Walk on, ignoring the first turn on the right to Dysert Castle. Just ahead is Disert Tola (Dysert or Hermitage of Tola). Take the entrance to Dysert O'Dea Abbey through a gateway on the right. The abbey is the original location of Tola's hermitage. The church was extensively rebuilt in the 12th and again in the 17th centuries. It has a fine Romanesque doorway. The round tower dates from the 12th century.

After leaving the abbey by a stile, you traverse the field to St. Tola's Cross. This magnificent illuminated high cross also dates from the 12th century. Nearby is another well, linked to Tola. This pre-Christian well was the destination of a “patron” or “pattern” day pilgrimage, which took place on 30th March each year until the well was covered over in the 19th century. The well was re-opened in 1986.

To complete the loop, return to the road and continue on, across a low bridge, keeping to the right at the Y-junction until you reach the car park, which is the second turn left.

For further information see www.pilgrimpath.ie and www.clarepilgrimway.ie A map of this route

by Pius Murray

is available through the Burren Geopark which is for sale (€1) throughout the Burren. To arrange further reflective, spiritual and nature walks in the Burren and surrounding areas, Pius Murray may be contacted at 0879828173 and piumsm@eircom.net. He can be followed on [Facebook.com/CoisceimAnama](https://www.facebook.com/CoisceimAnama)

Photo by Roman Radzewicz

walks and talks

burrenbeo trust



Grazing and Gazing - a walk up Gleninagh Mt with Shane Casey in March 2013. Photo by Áine Bird



Foraging in the Burren with Oonagh O'Dwyer in October 2013. Photo by Áine Bird

Join us on our Walks and Talks

The Burrenbeo Trust hosts a series of heritage walks throughout the year and a series of heritage talks throughout the winter. After five years, 90 speakers and 7000 attendees we really have got into the swing of it. However we are always pleased to know of any new suggestions for walks or talks that you may have to add to the pot. Variety is the spice of life after all....

The walks are on the 1st Sunday of each month, normally commencing at 2pm at a different location, each led by a different heritage guide. Topics range widely from wetlands to dragonflies, music trails to ringforts, pilgrim routes to bumblebees. Nearly 1,500 people participated last year in Burrenbeo Trust heritage

walks and talks, including Burren-in-Bloom! The Trust would like to thank all those who kindly gave their time and energy to informing these willing partakers!

The winter 'Tea & Talks' series 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 – especially enthusiastic ones! 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.



Umbrellas for the sun on Michael Keane's farm. August 2013. Photo by Brendan Dunford.



Learning about invasives on Abbey Hill as part of Burren in Bloom. May 2013. Photo by Kate Lavender



Inside a herdsman's hut with Patrick McCormack. April 2013. Photo by Brigid Barry



A beautiful garden in bloom with Carl Wright. Photo by Leanne Howard.

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.



Nature's Secret Adventures

by Shane Casey

Privately published: suitable for dyslexic readers / RRP €10 / Review by Theo Martin (age 13)

Available in various shops or from the author direct (scasey@clarecoco.ie)

Shane Casey has published a delightful children's story book, *Nature's Secret Adventures*, comprising three short stories. The first follows the adventures of the cutest little love-struck pygmy shrew named Sheridan. The reader instantly likes this little fellow as he goes about his daily life in the rich habitat during the autumn season with its abundance of berries and nuts. But all is not idyllic....

Next meet Orla Otter as she embarks on independence in the big world, and then be astonished by the magnificent Mayflies treacherous existence.

As well as wielding an interesting story, the author has cleverly presented lots of facts about the delicate balance within nature. Children will learn about habitats and biodiversity without even realising it!

The illustrations are very beautiful water colour paintings by Vincent Killowry and complement the story perfectly.

I enjoyed the moral of the story that seemed to say that there's greatness in the smallest of things. I'm glad to recommend this new locally published book to children (of all ages!)

Wild & Free – cooking from nature

by Cyril and Kit Ó Céirín

Wolf Hill Publishing 2013 / RRP €10 / Review by Brigid Barry

This book, first published in 1972, has been reprinted due to the reawakening of interest in wild hedgerows. This growing curiosity is mainly

because of a nostalgic look at Ireland's once lush hedgerows now disappearing rapidly due to high intensive farming and excessive road management. However, all is not lost yet; Co. Clare alone has about 7000km of hedgerows and this book is a great resource as to how these can be sustainably shared with their inhabitants for the benefit of our mouths and bellies.

What I really like about this book is that it is part-anthropological with stories and poems collected from the past on how food was used by, and inspired, our ancestors; part-factual such as what should be picked when and how; and part-practical - equipped with easy to use recipes on how to get stuck into cooking these nuts, berries, flowers and fruits so that our larders are full to the brim with local produce, packed with goodness for our immune systems.

This isn't just a cookery book. It can be read like a novel or referred to when the season and the need comes upon you. Either way, it is well presented, easy to navigate, and full of useful information.

Stone, Water and Ice: a geology trip through the Burren.

2nd Edition, 2013 / Published by Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark / Review by David Drew

This booklet is comprised of three sections. The first third of the publication presents a brief geological history of the Burren and surrounding areas. The second section, the bulk of the booklet, describes the main geological and geomorphological features of nine locations termed 'Geosites' in and around the Burren. Four of these localities are coastal: the Flaggy Shore, Fanore, Doolin and the Cliffs of Moher. Three sites are hydrological: Lough Bunny, Lisdoonvarna and Carron turlough. The two remaining Geosites are the south-eastern extremity of the Burren National Park centred on Mullaghmore and the portal tomb at Poul nabrone – the reasons for including this last-mentioned (archaeological) site are not apparent. For each location the main features to look out for are described and explained in layperson's terms and a number of 'Quests' are appended asking the reader to identify or explain particular features or phenomena referred to in the text. The rationale for including the particular sites is not given and there is a considerable degree of overlap in terms of material (e.g. on limestone solutional features) in the descriptions of sites. Curiously, caves are mentioned only in passing despite the fact that the Burren hosts Ireland's longest cave and one of its deepest. One of Ireland's most scientifically and visually interesting and intriguing caves at Aillwee is not

mentioned at all in the text or on the maps.

The booklet is profusely illustrated but not always helpfully. For example, a 3-D diagram of the Burren appears on both pages 9 and 19 but with radically different captions and obscure labels. Likewise the block diagram of Carron turlough does not really explain what a turlough is all about and in particular how the Carron turlough functions. Some guidance as to further reading and to sources for the material in the booklet might be helpful for readers who want to know more about particular topics.

Overall, a useful guide for the visitor who wishes to know more about the Burren than they will learn from tourist leaflets and tours.

By the same organisation, those who like walking in the Burren will be interested in the Geopark Heritage Trails, an attractively produced series of guided walk leaflets-cum-maps covering the Flaggy Shore, Ballyvaughan, Dysert O'Dea, Lisdoonvarna, Kilfenora and Corrofin, available from different Burren tourism outlets.

Secrets of the Irish Landscape

Edited by Matthew Jebb and Colm Crowley
Review by Brendan McGrath / RRP €29 / Collins Press 2013

Pay no heed to the trite title or the somewhat tenuous link to the pioneering work of Robert Lloyd Praeger. This well-written book brings together up-to-date information and analysis on a range of landscape-related subjects. 24 short chapters deliver insightful perspectives on Ireland's natural heritage and the human-nature interaction over the millennia. Any student of Irish landscape will find something of interest here. The adopted format does not suit a traditional regional geographic approach but the editors have nevertheless devoted one chapter to the Burren. With only 1500 words at his disposal Michael O'Connell can do no more than outline a familiar story. On the other hand Micheline Sheehy Skeffington's chapter on turloughs exemplifies how successful the short essay format can be. My only serious criticism is the absence of author biographies. As co-editor Colm Crowley writes, the Irish landscape makes a good story but we, the readers, would have benefited from knowing who the story tellers are.

What has NATURE ever done for us?

by Tony Juniper
Profile Books 2013 / £9.99 / Review by Stephen Ward

Ever wondered what 'ecosystem services' means? Then this is the book for you.

Landscape and Society in Contemporary Ireland

by Brendan McGrath

Cork University Press 2013 / €39 / Review by Stephen Ward

Whilst not being exclusively about the Burren, the Burren nevertheless features often as one of his chosen examples. In the introduction, the author – a professional planner who has lived in Corrofin since 1999 – notes the mismatch between roadside signs announcing a 'protected landscape' and nearby changes. He goes on to say '*beguiled by the apparent simplicity of landscape as a concept, we make the mistake of assuming that when we look at a hill or a lake, family members and neighbours see the same thing ... discussions about landscape have the capacity to be thoroughly disconcerting because they can reveal differences of perspective.*' He applies the work of Lorzing, a Dutch landscape architect, to a local view in terms: man-made, factual, visual and emotional landscapes. It is not possible in this short review to do justice to this book which is well-researched and scholarly, and with a deep insight based on professional experience. Moving to the end of the book, the author considers much that has happened in the Burren in recent years, including the role among others of Burrenbeo. Recent successes in the Burren might suggest that Ireland can do without area-wide approaches and integrated planning. Whereas '*Brendan Dunford believes that the foundations have already been laid in the Burren for a sustainable future and that those foundations are more solid than they would have been as a result of a statutory designation process*', the author is not as sanguine, feeling that exceptional political opportunities have been missed. He comments that in the absence of a management framework, '*there is little evidence of a concerted approach to managing the Burren*'. His own impression '*is of not so much the laying of foundations for a sustainable future, but of a positive momentum that is being sustained through the work of a few exceptionally able and committed individuals, despite the absence of a supportive framework*'. Highly commended.

Geology of Ireland – A Field Guide

by Pat Meere, Ivor MacCarthy, John Reavy, Alistair Allen and Ken Higgs

Collins Press 2013 / RRP €19.99 / Review by Kate Lavender

This book fills a gap in geological guides for

Ireland.

The introduction covers the broad principles of geology and for all non-geologists it is an essential read to allow for understanding of the field guide section. However, it is still quite technical in its approach and some geological knowledge would be useful as well as having a good geology dictionary to hand.

The introduction is very ambitious being only 37 pages long with a lot of information to cover. It is very comprehensive and well written with good, clear (though on occasion slightly garishly coloured) diagrams.

The field trip section takes up the majority of the book and is a fantastic guide to anyone with an interest in field geology including a chapter on the Burren. Each fieldtrip has a clear, concise introduction and a short logistics section to give an idea of what to expect and ideal tide levels (if coastal). A great variety of areas have been selected to cover as much of the geology of Ireland as possible. In the Burren it deals with Blackhead, Poulisallagh, South Ailladie, Caher River, Poulmagollum and Slieve Elva. All maps and diagrams have a good key (but the key is not always on the same page as the diagram or map). The interpretation of the geology for each fieldtrip is generally excellent but occasionally some interpretations are given without the full reasoning behind it.

The duration of the fieldtrips ranges from 2 to 9 hours which is possibly a bit long for all but the keenest field geologists! The aerial photographs and general photographs overall are great but disappointingly some have no scale or the object used for scale is hard to spot.

This is a book that I would not recommend for the complete geology novice. It is let down by some poor photographs and lacks sections of OS maps to show field trip locations. However this is more than made up for by its excellent range of well planned, well designed fieldtrips.

The Vegetation of Britain and Ireland

by Michael Proctor

Collins New Naturalist 2013 / £35.00 / Review by Stephen Ward

The author has known the Burren for more than 50 years and considers it to be an area with a character and unity all of its own. It has the richest limestone grasslands in Ireland and, in common with those of the Yorkshire Pennines and Cumbria, blue-moor grass *Sesleria caerulea* is dominant. Spring gentian *Gentiana verna* and shrubby cinquefoil *Potentilla fruticosa* found in

the Burren also occur in Upper Teesdale in the NE Pennines.

Hazel woodland *Corylus avellana*, often with a rich ground flora and generally lacking a canopy of ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, is characteristic. During the author's acquaintance with the area he has noted an increase in its area. The grasslands are dominated by *Sesleria* & mountain avens *Dryas octopetala*. The summit plateau is covered by heathland species including ling *Calluna vulgaris*, bell heather *Erica cinerea*, Dryas, crowberry *Empetrum nigrum* and bearberry *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*.

Turloughs which fill with water following heavy rain, but drain to provide summer grazing, are principally an Irish phenomenon. The maximum water level tends to be marked at its lower level by whitethorn *Crataegus monogyna* and hazel and at its upper level by the blackish moss *Cinclidotus fontinaloides* which caps many walls and limestone boulders. The turloughs are ringed by shrubby cinquefoil in abundance and fen violet.

The wetland vegetation which fringes the wetlands of the SE Burren such as Coooororta Lough has been modified by peat cutting to leave marl with shoreweed and lesser water plantain. In some lochs, as at Rinnamona, bogbean *Menyanthes trifolium*, fen sedge *Cladium mariscus*, club rush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* and floating pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. form a fringe which suddenly gives way to water exceeding 13 metres in depth. So beware – it will come over the top of your wellingtons!

This book gives an excellent overview of the vegetation of the Burren, and just what a special place it is, in the context of Ireland and Britain as a whole.

Spirit of the Burren – exploring a unique Irish landscape through the five elements

by Jackie Queally

Published by author 2013 / RRP €18 / Review by Burrenbeo Trust

Jackie Queally has divided her connectivity with the landscape into the five elements for the reader – water, wood, fire, earth and metal. Her approach to exploring the Burren will appeal to the left side of the brain and to those that wish to delve more into understanding sacred landscapes in general. This book goes hand in hand with the spiritual tours that she leads in the area.

MEMORIES FROM 2013



ÁITBHEO GRADUATE AS 'PLACE HEROES' WITH MINISTER CIARAN CANNON. PHOTO BY ANN O'CONNOR



PHOTOGRAPHER GAVIN FRANKEL HOLDS AN EXHIBITION IN GALWAY IN AID OF BURRENBEO TRUST. PHOTO BY BRIGID BARRY



PART OF THE TEAM THAT HELPED GET THE 1ST EUROPEAN DIPLOMA FOR PROTECTED AREAS FOR IRELAND. PHOTO BY EAMON WARD



NEWQUAY ECOBEO GRADUATES WITH THE INTO VICE-PRESIDENT. PHOTO BY BRIGID BARRY



THE CATTLE DRIVE UP CAHER VALLEY AS PART OF THE WINTERAGE WEEKEND WAS UNFORGETTABLE. PHOTO BY CARSTEN KRIEGER.



COMPOSER AND MUSICIAN JULIE FEENEY (L) CARRIES OUT A MINI PERFORMANCE AT THE BURREN GALWAY GALA. SEEN HERE WITH PATRON MARY HAWKES GREENE. PHOTO BY BRIGID BARRY



ELLA MCSWEENEY, JIM CARROLL AMONGST OTHERS JOIN US FOR THE 1ST BURREN BANTER. PHOTO BY BRIGID BARRY



THE TRUST ATTENDS MANY EVENTS TO PROFILE THE CHARITY INCLUDING THE MILWAUKEE IRISH FESTIVAL. SELFIE BY AINE BIRD



IRISH TIMES COLUMNIST MANCHÁN MAGAN (L) SPOKE AT THE BURREN GALWAY GALA. PHOTO BY BRIGID BARRY



MAKING THE BURREN ACCESSIBLE TO AS MANY INDIVIDUALS AS POSSIBLE. PHOTO BY BRIGID BARRY



THE MONTH-LONG FESTIVAL OF BURREN IN BLOOM IN MAY HAD NEARLY 700 PARTICIPANTS. PHOTO BY LINDA MORRISON



TWO THINGS NOT TO BE FORGOTTEN IN CLARE IN 2013 - THE CUP AND THE CATTLE DRIVE! PHOTO BY RUAIRI O'CONCHUIR

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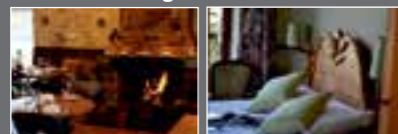
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Catherine Cleary, Irish Times food writer. (June 2012)

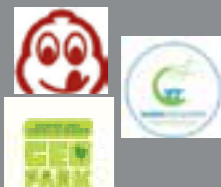


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The Burrenbeo Trust is a registered charity dedicated to the Burren and its people. We receive minimal funding and rely on membership fees, donations and grants but, most of all, upon the tireless work of our volunteers who carry out an extensive work programme including education, information provision, research, conservation, advocacy and much more. Last year their input, together with that of voluntary (i.e. unpaid) overtime by our staff, was estimated to be worth €121,000. Everyone has a part to play in the Trust, so why not join us!

Burrenbeo Trust Achievements in 2013

Throughout 2013 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 over the past year:

Education

- Building on the Burren as Ireland ultimate 'outdoor classroom', and following up from the Learning Landscape Symposium held in 2012, we held a Learning Landscape Networking Event with workshops designed for 'place-based educators'.
- Four Burren National Schools (Kilfenora, Ballyvaughan, and Newquay National School, and the Ennistymon Steiner school) successfully completed the Ecobeo programme and graduated as Young Burren Experts, with Sean McMahon (vice president of INTO) attending one of the graduations, bringing to just over 900 the number of Ecobeo graduates since inception of the scheme in 2003!
- Our first ever Áitbheo course for Transition Year students in Gort Community College was completed with 25 *Laoch Áite* (Place Heroes) successfully graduating from a 10-week course in gathering a sense of place earlier in the year. The Minister of Training and Skills from the Department of Education, Ciaran Cannon, attended the graduation.
- We provided orientation sessions for numerous visiting groups from universities, schools and adults at our Kinvara office, onsite in the Burren or at selected locations.
- This summer we ran our first Burren based school tours, taking local school children out for a fun filled day in the Burren, with the main focus on learning about their surroundings through games and activities.

Information:

- We published the 5th issue of our highly acclaimed annual flagship magazine *Burren Insight*.
- The monthly heritage walks continue to be a roaring success with over 680 people attending last year.
- We organised Burren in Bloom, a festival which runs throughout the month of May; 700 people attended events at numerous locations throughout the Burren.
- Our winter tea'n'talks series, in Tubber village hall, attracted 350 attendees.
- Our field guides on the geology, archaeology, flora, fauna and habitats of the Burren are so successful that we have had to reprint another 1,000 copies.
- We send free monthly e-newsletters to over 4,000 people.
- We produced podcasts on the work of the volunteers, the Ecobeo course, the Winterage Weekend and more.
- We continued the development of our website www.burrenbeo.com and increased our presence on new media outlets such as Facebook, You Tube and Twitter.

Conservation:

- The Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers held monthly tasks. All events had an important conservation impact and involved education and awareness-raising.
- Eleven BCV task-leaders completed a specifically designed Burren outdoor first aid course.
- The BCV was nominated for a Galway County Mayor's Award for the environment.

Local Economy:

- Burrenbeo Trust has a policy of using local suppliers. Last year, we had a local expenditure of €90,000.
- We promote local businesses through our website, our business network and whenever opportunities avail.
- We currently employ three staff and lease an office in Kinvara.

Advocacy:

- We coordinated our second highly successful Winterage Weekend which saw record numbers attending all events despite the weather.
- We promoted the Burren as a place of inspiration from which people can learn from their surroundings. To this end we commissioned a Learning Landscape Feasibility Study which will be launched in May 2014.
- As lead partner with the Burren Community Charter we have hosted a discussion of the Burren as a potential World Heritage Site.
- We held a Gala in Galway to profile the Burren and our work to a wider audience.
- We promoted the Burren in both regional and national media throughout the year so that it is at the forefront of peoples' agendas.
- We work closely with key local organisations such as the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme, the Burren Geopark, ChangeX Burren, the Burren Eco-Tourism Network and others.

We hope to achieve even more in 2014 with your input!

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