

BURREN INSIGHT



The Burren^{beo} Trust 2010

Issue 2

Members FREE/Non-members €5.00



MAP OF THE BURREN!
with walking trails outlined

On the Trail of the Burren Green · Sharon Parr

My Burren - a priceless treasure · Bishop William Walsh

The Burren - A new dawn? · Michael Starrett

A year of Spotting Burren Butterflies · Jesmond Harding

Artefacts and Bones from Glencurran cave · Marion Dowd

Wildlife around Carron - now and then · Gordon D'Arcy

The Underworld - caves in the Burren · David Drew

A Day in the Forge · PJ Curtis

walks & talks programme

quiz & competition

book reviews

and much more...



CONTENTS

Features

My Burren – a priceless treasure	Bishop William Walsh	3
The Burren – a new dawn?	Michael Starrett	4
The Burren – a personal question	Shane Casey	6
Artefacts and Bones from Glencurran Cave	Marion Dowd	10
A Year of Spotting Butterflies in the Burren	Jesmond Harding	13
On the Trail of the Burren Green	Sharon Parr	17
Wildlife Around Carron – now and then	Gordon D'Arcy	19
The Burren Inspiring Art	Eileen Hutton	21
The Famine Road	Stephen Ward	22
The Seven Streams	David Whyte	22
A Walk on the Wild Side	Mary Howard	24
Top Ten Places in the Burren	Richard & Linda Morrison	26
New Looped Walks in the Burren	Eimer McCarthy	27
Ecotourism in the Burren	Carol Gleeson	31
A Critique of Protected Area Planning	Noel Healy	33
Geoparks	Ronán Hennessy	34
The Dolmen Builders	Brian Mooney	35
The Underworld – caves of the Burren	David Drew	36
Our Debt to Udders	Caoilte Breatnach	38
A Day in the Forge	PJ Curtis	40
The Big Freeze	Stephen Ward	43
The Burren as a Musical Muse	Tim Dennehy	44

Also includes

Butterfly workshop invitation	16
Burren map including walking trails	28
Burren in Bloom events programme	30
Quiz and competition page	45
Book reviews	46

Burrenbeo Trust pages

Letter to Friends of the Trust	3
Burrenbeo Trust Conservation Volunteers	8
Burrenbeo Trust walks and talks programme	23
Burrenbeo Trust members' page	52
Burrenbeo Trust – achievements and membership application form	54

Disclaimer: All the articles in this magazine represent views of the author and not necessarily those of the Burrenbeo Trust.

Patrons

Tom Arnold
David Bellamy
Olive Braiden
Gordon D'Arcy
Michael Davoren
Mary Hawkes Greene
Seamus Heaney
Michael Houlihan
Carleton Jones
Mary Angela Keane
Michael Longley
Ann Madden le Brocqy
Patrick McCormack
Ann O'Connor
Michael Viney
Bishop William Walsh

Directors

Sean Braiden
Paddy Brennan
Martin Hawkes
Stephen Ward

Trust Secretary

Brendan Dunford

Trust Coordinator

Brigid Barry

Cafébeo Manager

Agnieszka Radzewicz

Editors

Brigid Barry
Stephen Ward

Design by

Agnieszka Radzewicz
design@truesign.ie

Photographs by

Brendan Dunford
unless otherwise stated

Cover photo by

Sharon Parr

My Burren - a priceless treasure



Bishop William Walsh
Burrenbeo Trust Patron

When I was growing up my father used to go to Lisdoonvarna for a week with some farming friends after the harvesting was completed. On his return he would report on his holiday to his less widely travelled

colleagues. He always expressed sympathy for the farmers in North Clare – "I don't know how they make a living, sure 'tis all rocks, you wouldn't feed a snipe on it". I imagine my Dad was no more or no less knowledgeable about the treasures of the Burren than the vast majority of his colleagues.

It was much later in life, when I came to live in Clare, that I gradually got to know and enjoy that unique landscape with its dolmens and turloughs, its cairns and ringforts. The Burren stone, its flora and fauna speak much to the geologist, the botanist, and the antiquarian. But the Burren speaks to us, non-specialists in these areas, through the sheer solidity of its rock formation, the beauty of their patterns, the shades of their colouring.

The late and much loved John O'Donoghue was a Burren man to the core. His best known works, *Anam Cara* and *Benedictus*, inspired people worldwide. I found perhaps greater inspiration in his lesser known "Tabernacle of Stone". For me he gave life to the Burren stone. What my Dad saw as barren rock John saw as a living record of human, animal and plant life still speaking to us today.

For those who are interested there is a lifetime of exploration and study. From Ballyvaughan to Corofin, from Doolin to Kinvara, from Mullach Mor to Sliabh Elva there is an extraordinary variety of treasures to be investigated whether your interests are flora or fauna, underground caves or dolmens, monastic settlements or pre-Christian places of worship.

I still delight in driving to the top of Sliabh Elva to enjoy the sight of the "golden ring" of Fanore – fáinne óir – suddenly revealed far below with Galway Bay and the Aran Islands in the background. We have indeed a priceless treasure in "our Burren". This product of nature's work over endless time deserves special respect and care from all of us who are simply passers-by.

Letter to Friends of the Trust

Brigid Barry and Stephen Ward
Editors

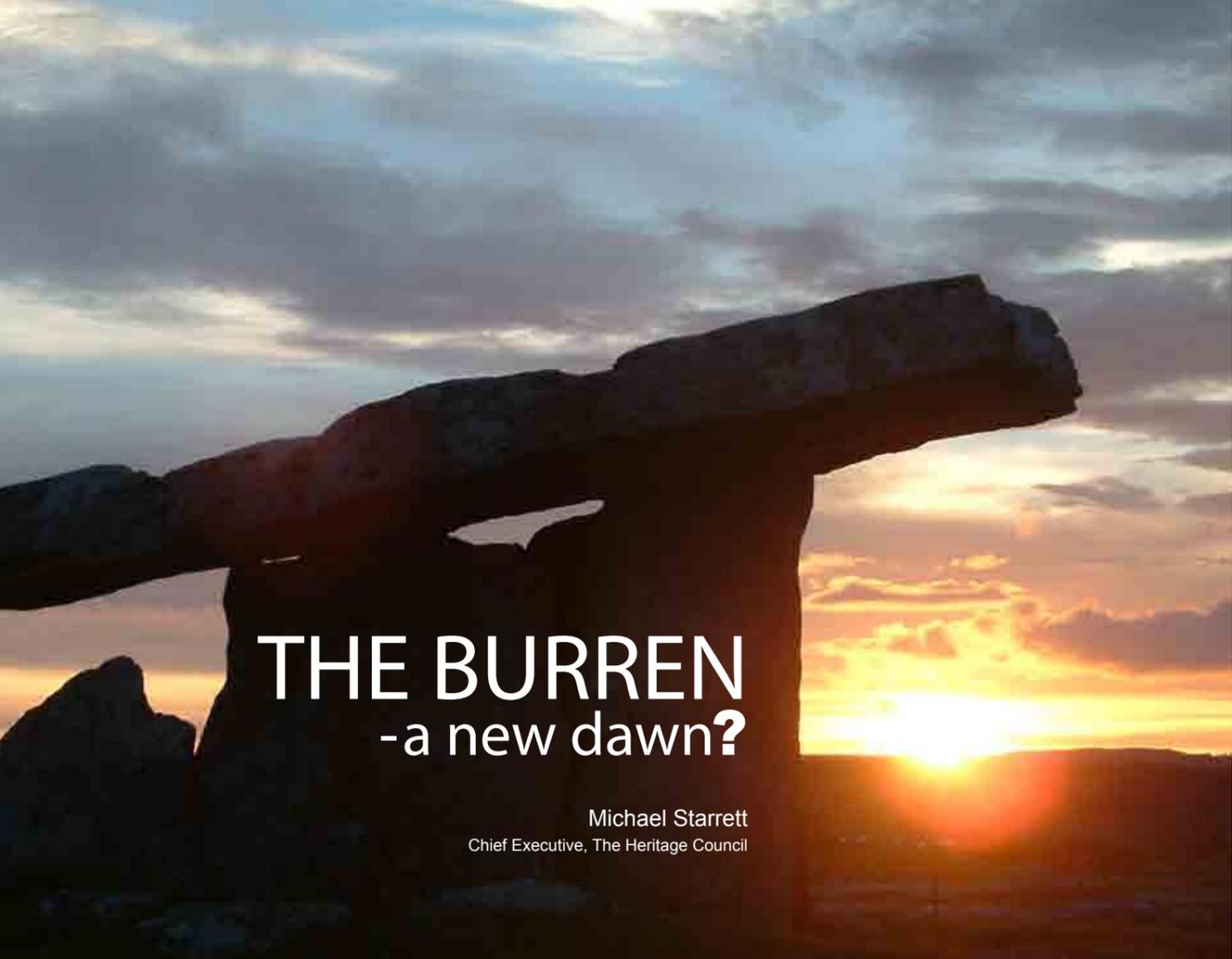
In this issue of *Burren Insight*, as is usual when dealing with the Burren, we span a vast time range. David Drew and Ronán Hennessy look at it in geological time. Marion O'Dowd presents photos of cowries and other jewellery worn by those who lived here long, long ago; drilling holes in tiny shells would be a challenge now, so how did they do it then? Clare's rich folklore and oral history is recalled by Caoilte Breatnach. In living memory we join a small boy helping his Dad to shoe horses. Whilst at the other extreme, Michael Starrett of The Heritage Council imagines what the future could bring, with a little help from us all, with his concept of a *Burren Charter*.

As 2010 is the **International Year of Biodiversity**, this issue includes several features on natural heritage – a comprehensive look at the Burren's butterflies with Jesmond Harding, an invitation by Eugenie Regan to join in monitoring them, a look at the birds and mammals both past and present around Carron with Gordon D'Arcy and, as featured on the cover, the elusive Burren green moth described by Sharon Parr. In keeping with this special year, one of the books reviewed is *The Bumper Book of Nature* - a call to encourage children to freely connect with the natural world.

This is an important time to look around, see the link between us and nature, how we depend on each other and how everything we do can affect our environment. That is why this year, we have launched the *Burren Conservation Volunteers* to tackle key conservation issues in the Burren, to be proactive in making a positive change to our environment, to help secure a sustainable future for the Burren. This programme is adding to the list of initiatives that the Trust is carrying out to create a more informed Burren community.

Since the last issue of *Burren Insight* in 2009, *Cafébeo* and the Burrenbeo Trust Centre have been revamped to offer substantial space for immersing people in a learning environment; over 650 people attended our monthly walks and talks in 2009; these were complemented by the weekly walks in the Burren during the summer; we continue to develop the Burren's most used website www.burrenbeo.com and inform 3000 people through our monthly e-newsletters.

We are delighted with the success of our first year of operation and we are especially grateful to all our members. Everyone has something to offer, and something to gain, from the Trust. So please do renew your membership and encourage others to join.



THE BURREN -a new dawn?

Michael Starrett
Chief Executive, The Heritage Council

A Charter for all

Imagine all the people....

The Burren has for countless generations provided support and sustenance for many families. It has provided the hard won soil and water of quality to support them and provide a quality of life in a wonderful setting that many envy. It has at the same time provided inspiration for writers and poets and visitors who marvelled at the dynamic and changing nature of this landscape. For all of them, just as it has done for its residents, the Burren has provided strength and inspiration through its ever-changing vistas and the feeling that this is at the same time the harshest and most rewarding of places to live in, to work in or to visit.

The variety of plants and animals that this landscape supports has long been recognised as of international significance and the Burren is undoubtedly one of our most iconic landscapes. This international recognition accorded to the Burren, and the richness of its cultural/people's landscape extends interest in its future well-being well beyond the narrow confines of our shores.

It's just imagination...or is it?

Now, close your eyes and imagine that an agreement is in place that provides the opportunity for everyone who values the Burren to work together and put together an agreed action plan to safe guard its future for everyone. That action plan when implemented would bring benefits of an economic, social and environmental nature to all those who live in, work in and visit the Burren. That programme would (if you close your eyes for even longer) have dedicated support structures and human and financial resources to make it happen. It would have regular reviews and evaluations to make sure it was doing just what it was supposed to in the way that people want. Imagine even more. This action plan, this programme, the benefits derived from it, the structures and resources to be given to it have not been imposed on those who live, work or play in the Burren, but have been provided because the people want them and a framework exists at a national level to bring people together (if they want) and then to support them when they do. This level of empowerment and enabling of such regional

and local communities to manage and conserve their landscapes requires a whole new way of working, and indeed thinking, and yet its conception is so simple.

I hear you singing the words of John Lennon's song *Imagine* and the line "They may say that I'm a dreamer.."

My riposte is equally quick with "well, I'm not the only one..." and my earnest commitment is that now that we have opened our eyes with a bit of imagination, that with the help of some leadership, the new way of working is only just around the corner. Heaven knows that there have been enough economic, environmental and social upheavals in Ireland in recent times to suggest we have to do something differently. The Burren can take the lead.

It is in this context that the idea of a *Burren Charter* has been conceived. Many groups and individuals are carrying out excellent work in the Burren, all of which has an impact on the management and conservation of their landscape and of course the people who live in, work in and visit that landscape. Whilst all of these groups do their level best to communicate effectively they experience many frustrations. Much of the good and benefit to be derived from their work is threatened by the fact that they are only working on short-term and often fragmented projects. Their funding from Europe or other sources is only short-term and the main energy has to be directed not to doing the work that is required for the benefit of everyone in the long-term, but in wondering where the next source of funding might come. Ireland really has gone beyond such a hand-to-mouth type of existence and there are proven ways of 'doing things better.'

Another way

The framework for a *Burren Charter* is in its very early stages of development. *The Heritage Council* has, over the last couple of years, been involved in supporting a wide range of initiatives through its grants programmes and, at the same time, has met with and discussed the possibility of such a Charter with representatives of a range of groups including the local authorities, the *Burren IFA*, *Burrenbeo Trust*, *Burren Connect*, *Shannon Development* and government Departments. The *EU BurrenLIFE* project has also shown what is possible and had the Council's support. Notwithstanding the current economic situation *The Heritage Council* has, once again, secured resources to allow the concept of a *Burren Charter* to develop further in 2010 and perhaps even move to a much more practical stage.

A variety of surveys and reports have been carried out locally to test the water and my overwhelming sense is that people are supportive of the idea and we now need to capture the imagination and make it a reality. However, if *The Heritage Council* is to be true to its principles regarding the desire to enable and empower regional

" this charter cannot be imposed.
it has to be requested..."

and local communities, to truly devolve responsibility and allow those communities to identify and agree what they want for their landscapes, this Charter cannot be imposed. It has to be requested and everyone must see and subscribe to its value for all. The value and need for it has to be recognised locally and regionally. All *The Heritage Council* should do is provide encouragement and facilitate, ensure the mechanism exists to make it happen and allow others to use it - if they can all agree on what they want.

Such a change in how we go about doing our business together cannot be rushed. It needs confidence in common goals to be built, goals that extend beyond the current fragmented and sectoral approach. It requires real and meaningful levels of participation in the process. The Burren can be in the forefront of this development if its people want. There is of course ultimately the need for leadership at a national level if such mechanisms and structures are to be sustainable.

Looking for national leadership

The Government's commitment to have a *National Landscape Strategy* in place during 2010, a commitment reiterated at *The Heritage Council's* landscape conference in Tullamore in October 2009, can provide that leadership. The Burren is not alone in needing such a new and integrated and indeed imaginative approach. Each area has its own needs but the common issue is the fact that our existing structures and legislative frameworks may not be the appropriate ones to deal with current complexities, whether those complexities are economic, social or environmental. A *Burren Charter*, developed within the existing frameworks could show what is possible and point the way to the *National Landscape Strategy* of just how landscape management and conservation measures can play a central role in sustaining us all. We have certainly seen in the last 12-18 months the end result of unsustainable development.

Let's hope we can all benefit from such a new approach.

The Author: Michael Starrett was appointed to his current post as Chief Executive of The Heritage Council in 1996 and has over 30 years of experience in the planning, management and conservation of landscapes throughout Europe. On being elected the first Irishman to be President of the EUROPARC Federation (www.europarc.org) 2002-2005 he travelled extensively to examine different legislative systems and structures aimed at assisting the implementation of the European Landscape Convention.

The Burren

a personal question

Shane Casey

Biodiversity Officer, Co. Clare



Down through the years, there have been countless attempts to answer a seemingly simple question; what is the Burren? Scientists, academics, bards and various others have all contributed their tuppence worth, leaving us with a bewildering bundle of definitions, each one different from the last, and yet all correct. So how can this be explained? Well, not surprisingly, each individual will base their definition on their own background.

The botanist, for example, will focus on the anomaly of Arctic-Alpine and Mediterranean flowers growing together contentedly in the same turf, or may venture to explaining the critical role played by blue moor-grass in the Burren's winterages, while the zoologist will chime in that the Burren is home to many rare beetles, butterflies, and various other invertebrates including Ireland's rarest damselfly, the Scarce Emerald, not to mention the elusive pine marten and specimens of the old Irish goat breed.

The geologist will rightly boast that the rocky landscape gave the Burren its name, and will note the conservation value placed on the open karst limestone and its associated erratics, mushroom

stones, caves and swallow holes, while the hydrologist will point towards the abundance of turloughs and petrifying springs, or argue that some of the Burren's oligotrophic lakes deserve greater conservation status than the limestone pavements.

The archaeologist will try to uncover the lives of our ancestors and express wonder at the absence of early settlements in the midst of so many burial sites, while the agriculturist will contend that the Burren owes much of its uniqueness to the farming system which has been practiced in the region for generations, and that the Burren's farming community should be an integral part of any definition.

Of course, the Burren is all this and much more, but to combine so many different disciplines into a single definition is a difficult task and one I do not intend to attempt here; however, as evident from above, the Burren can be something different for everybody, and so perhaps the question is not 'What is the Burren?', but rather "What does the Burren mean to you?"

"...the Burren can be something different for everybody, and so perhaps the question is not "What is the Burren?", but rather *What does the Burren mean to you?*"

As Clare's Biodiversity Officer, I always try to show the links between biodiversity and other aspects of our natural, built and cultural heritage, a lesson I learned growing up on our family farm in Blackhead. A little while back, I was told that there was a *fulacht fiadh* (ancient cooking place) in Blackhead, but it took me a long time to figure out exactly where it was. Now I know what they are before you ask, and I know every inch of the land, so what took me so long?

There is a spring in Blackhead, *Tobar na Lice* (well of the flagstone), which is a source of water for the livestock (natural heritage), and which acts as a landmark when we're giving directions at home (cultural heritage), but it's also part of a *fulacht fiadh* (built heritage). The thing is, I've always associated the term *fulacht fiadh* with archeology, a relic of the past, but *Tobar na Lice* is part of our living farm and still serves an important purpose. I didn't see it for its scientific value, but for something much more.

Another message I'm always keen to get across is that biodiversity is not a science that people should be afraid of, but something we're part of and which should be embraced and enjoyed. There's no doubt that long before scientists recognized the anomalies associated with the Burren flora, there were people enjoying it simply for its beauty, not to mention the farmers who relied on it as part of their livelihoods; and what's more, even after the science becomes fully understood, people will continue to enjoy the Burren simply for its beauty. In much the same way, the entire Burren can,

and should be viewed, not as a multitude of scientific disciplines, but as to how it contributes to the lives of its inhabitants and visitors. All too often, scientists and academics overlook local knowledge and local people, simply because, like me in the example above, we see beyond the science.

For many, the Burren provides the perfect retreat for healing, meditation and inspiration. Even our own little piece of the Burren proved an inspiration for Luke Kelly when he 'saw *Blackhead against the sky, where twisted rocks they run down to the sea*' in his '*Song for Ireland*'. Indeed the Burren and North Clare have a long history of producing renowned musicians, poets and writers, and perhaps one reason for this is that away from the congested tourist routes, and off the beaten track, the Burren retains an inherent sense of wilderness.

Often the miles of criss-crossing stone walls provide the only infrastructure, with an odd erratic or solitary bush acting as landmarks. It's here that I'm often reminded of the Christy Moore lyrics '*to a hidden beach where boats can't go, where wild abandon fills my soul*', and yet the Burren is far from abandoned. There is an interdependent, symbiotic relationship between the Burren and the farmer, but there's more to it than general good husbandry; there's the knowledge of the land.

When herding across several hundred acres of a Burren winterage, it helps to know the land inside out, and where the livestock are likely to be. For many Burren farmers, this knowledge is etched into the memory from early childhood and passed from generation to generation which engenders a unique sense of belonging.

This brings me on to one final point. Having grown up in the Burren, and farmed with my family in Blackhead, it means more to me than any of the above; it means I'm home.



The Burrenbeo Trust launched the Burren Conservation Volunteers Programme in February 2010 as a means of coming together as a community and tackling key conservation issues that exist in the Burren. Under the guidance of experts, once a month the volunteers carry out a task that is aimed at creating a more sustainable environment as well as building the capacity of the group.

If you want to be part of the Burren Conservation Volunteers, actively working together as a community and making a real difference to the Burren, please contact trust@burrenbeo.com or call 091-638096 to register your interest.

Less talk and more action...

On a beautiful, bright Burren morning at the beginning of February, a group of twenty people gathered at Slieve Carron Nature Reserve to create their own little slice of history in the management of the Burren. Young and old, male and female, students and bank officials, travelling from as far away as Cork, this eclectic gathering represented the very first day out for the Burren Conservation Volunteers.

The Burren Conservation Volunteers, organised through the Burrenbeo Trust, were formed to address some of the pressing conservation issues in the Burren from scrub encroachment to rebuilding of stone walls. On this occasion, this group spent six

hours removing hazel bushes from an area of orchid-rich grassland, using a mixture of loppers and hand saws, leaving in their wake an impressive heap of brushings. For some of those present it was an opportunity to get some fresh air, good exercise and good company, for everyone it was a chance to get away from thinking and talking about the Burren and to do something proactive instead.

The work was done under the supervision of staff from the NPWS and the BurrenLIFE project. The volunteers came away from the day tired but happy, ready to gather again for whatever this monthly conservation outing throws at them in future.



First outing of Burren Conservation Volunteers, Slieve Carran Nature Reserve, 6th February, 2010.

This programme is funded by the Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund 2009



Comhshaoil, Oidhreacht agus Riailtas Áitiúil
Environment, Heritage and Local Government



Artefacts and bones FROM GLENCURRAN CAVE

Marion Dowd
Archaeologist, Sligo I.T.

Excavations at Glencurran Cave have been directed by Dr. Marion Dowd, I.T. Sligo and funded by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Royal Irish Academy.

Glencurran Cave, in the heart of the Burren, has been the site of important archaeological discoveries since 2004. The oldest material recovered consists of a single bear bone, a scapula, which was radiocarbon dated to about 8,000 BC. This is the oldest bear bone known from Co. Clare and an incredibly important and interesting find. The cave was used as a place of ritual veneration in the Bronze Age (1,500 BC to 600 BC) at which time a series of offerings were placed on the cave floor including bone and shell beads, pottery vessels, amber beads, stone tools, human bones and young animals that had been sacrificed. A Viking necklace of much later date was also discovered. The necklace is the largest to have been found in Ireland, composed of 70 glass beads covered with gold foil. This stunning piece of jewellery can be dated to the mid 9th century AD. Its discovery in the cave is somewhat of a mystery, though it may have travelled from Scandinavia to the established Viking settlement at Limerick and from there traded to Gaelic chieftains living in the Burren.



Cowrie shell beads (1,500 – 600 BC). Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



Detail of Viking necklace

Detail of Viking necklace



Late Bronze Age amber beads (1,500 – 600 BC)

Bronze Age chert scraper, may have been used for cleaning animal hides, basketry or bone working (2,400 – 1,400 BC)



Prehistoric bone beads (exact date uncertain)



Sherd of Late Bronze Age pottery (1,500 – 600 BC). Photo by Richie Hinchy



Periwinkle and cowrie shell beads (1,500 – 600 BC). Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



Glencurran Cave. Photo by Marion Dowd



Quartz crystal (exact date uncertain). Photo by Thorsten Kahlert



Bear scapula (shoulder bone) – Early Mesolithic. Photo by Richie Hinchy

Neolithic chert blade (4,000 - 2,400 BC). Photo by Richie Hinchy



Male Brimstone on Devil's-bit Scabious

A year of SPOTTING BUTTERFLIES IN THE BURREN

Jesmond Harding
Secretary, Butterfly Conservation Ireland

holly. The Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell take refuge in caves, beneath slabs of limestone or in dense woodland, especially in the case of the Peacock. Though three of our butterflies are migrants from warmer climes; the Clouded Yellow (*Colias croceus*), Painted Lady (*Cynthia cardui*) and Red Admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*), and are hundreds or even thousands of kilometres to the south during our winter, the occasional Red Admiral spends the winter here. During the winter, the rest of the Burren butterflies are in their immature states - in the egg, larval and pupal stages. Like adult butterflies these are awaiting the arrival of warmer weather.

The Burren provides most of Ireland's butterflies with a home.

Twenty-nine out of a national total of thirty-five butterfly species occur in the region and this includes two of Ireland's scarcest species, the Wood White (*Leptidea sinapis*) and Pearl-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*) neither of which have been recorded as breeding anywhere else in Ireland. Yet as I stand here in February looking out on a landscape of grey stone and leafless scrub the butterfly billing given above looks like false advertising. Where are the butterflies at this time of year?

There are butterflies present even in this exceptionally cold and frosty Burren winter.

Three of our showiest species - the Peacock (*Inachis io*), Small Tortoiseshell (*Aglais urticae*) and Brimstone (*Gonepteryx rhamni gravesi*) are hibernating as adult butterflies. The Brimstone has hung itself up for the cold season in clumps of ivy, in low growing, scrubby bramble or in common

A warm, calm day in early March rouses overwintering butterflies. They seek out early wild flowers especially primroses, violets, dandelions and willow. Temperatures are often low at this time of the year so butterflies spread their wings to the fullest extent in order to absorb the maximum sunshine and warmth. The moment spring sunshine is interrupted temperatures plummet and butterflies return to hibernation sites where they will remain if winter returns.

By April warmer conditions will see the three butterflies that spent the cold months in the adult state out of hibernation seeking nectar and mates. Butterflies that hibernated in the pupal stage emerge to join this search. During a warm April I love to walk the Burren's green roads, boreens and sunny sheltered areas. The lemon yellow primrose, bluish purple violets and rich deep gold of common dandelions brighten these areas. Butterflies soon appear



Butterfly habitat: a mosaic of limestone pavement, scrub and limestone grassland

to take advantage of the floral banquet. I always admire the shining sulphur yellow of the male Brimstone, a large butterfly with a slow flopping flight. A Peacock alights to sip a dandelion's nectar and the scheme of maroon, violet, yellow, purple, moon-white and velvet black is truly mesmeric. The Small Tortoiseshell, a smaller butterfly with barred wings of black, white, yellow, orange and blue is another arresting sight. A flash of startling white and sharp orange creates another intake of breath as a male Orange-tip (*Anthocharis cardamines*) surges by on his patrol of a hedgebank. He will pause to investigate any pale object in the hope of encountering a virgin female. A gleam of iridescent blue is all I am usually able to catch of the Holly Blue (*Celastrina argiolus*) that disappears high up in tall shrubbery but the brown and cream Speckled Wood (*Pararge aegeria*) permits closer inspection and appreciation.

Fast forward a few weeks and a number of other species will be on the scene. Prolonged unseasonable weather will affect emergence times to some extent and butterflies can be seen outside flight times stated in texts.

By mid-May the cryptically-coloured aptly-named Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*) can be seen flying around yellow-flowered bird's foot trefoil on which it nectars and lays its eggs. The rare and dainty Wood White probably occurs nowhere else in Ireland except in the Burren and is to be seen fluttering around the edges of scrub and hedgerows adjoining limestone. The Wood White has an odd courtship: the male alights opposite the female, faces her head on, uncoils his proboscis [tongue] and sways his head from side to side, waving his tongue! Impressed by what looks bizarre to us she bends her abdomen to meet his and mating occurs.

A Burren exclusive, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary emerges in May and flies until mid-June. This butterfly is bright orange with a chequered black patterning on its upper surfaces. It frequents clearings in scrub that grows sparsely on limestone.

The endangered Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*) flies from May to the end of June and is found in damp grassland where its foodplant, devil's-bit scabious grows abundantly. Its stained glass window patterning features brick red, yellow, cream and black.



Peacock on Common Knapweed



Male Silver-washed Fritillary

“To appreciate the Burren’s butterflies this year, walk in warm sunshine, along the green roads and boreens... with flower-rich margins that face south or west or sheltered meadows adjoining scrub/limestone pavement...”

May sees the emergence of common species like the Common Blue (*Polyommatus icarus*), Small Copper (*Lycaena phlaeas*) and Large and Small Whites (*Pieris brassicae* and *rupae* respectively). The Wall Brown (*Lasiommata megera*) and Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*) emerge from their pupae in May, fly into June and produce a second brood in August. They are joined in June by the Meadow Brown (*Maniola jurtina iernes*) that flies well into September and in late June by the Ringlet (*Aphantopus hyperantus*), a frequenter of tall often partly shaded grassland growing near scrub and hedges. It flies from late June to mid-August.

Ireland's most dramatic grassland butterfly is the Dark Green Fritillary (*Mesoacidalia aglaia*). It appears in June and usually flies until mid-August. This magnificent aerial acrobat flies directly into strong winds on exposed areas such as cliffs with its striking flight complementing its bright orange coloration. The Silver-washed Fritillary (*Argynnis paphia*) emerges later in June and can extend its flight time into early September. The Silver-washed Fritillary is also a showy, eye-catching species.

The final butterfly to emerge in summer is the Grayling (*Hipparchia*

semele). This master at concealment is disturbed by walkers on limestone pavement and flies swiftly for a few metres and, on alighting, appears to melt into the rock.

As mentioned before, three migrant species the Burren regularly. The Red Admiral, Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow occur from about May to October in varying numbers. The reliable and often the most abundant migrant is the Red Admiral although the Painted Lady reached the Burren in huge numbers in 2009. The Clouded Yellow occurs in numbers about twice a decade.

Why are butterflies so abundant here? Visitors to the region often ask this question and the answer lies in the quality and size of the habitats. The Burren boasts high quality wildflower meadows, scrub, limestone pavement, wetland and native woodland with warm, sheltered clearings. The presence of native plants for butterflies to lay their eggs on and the superabundance of nectar for adult butterflies to fuel their flight makes the Burren ideal. The farming carried on here is a vital ingredient in maintaining these habitats. There is little application of grassland fertiliser and the extensive cattle grazing practised in the Burren preserves the habitats' quality. Another reason for the Burren's status as Ireland's

premier butterfly [and moth] haven can be appreciated when you take in the views on any of the Burren's high points. The Burren is a large area that has continuous habitats. Many species of lepidoptera [the order butterflies and moths belong to] need a sizeable area to breed in and need to be able to disperse and locate mates and new breeding sites within a reasonable distance. Elsewhere in Ireland and Western Europe habitats have become disconnected. Habitat fragmentation inevitably leads to extinction for all sorts of wildlife including rare butterflies that are restricted to very specific habitats. The Burren is excellent for butterflies because it has continuous, high quality, large-scale habitats and a range of habitat types.

One note of caution must be struck. For this favourable situation to continue **traditional farming must be continued**. There is also a need for some **periodic scrub control** as some species need open grassland habitat with some scrub but grassland butterflies cannot tolerate cooler, shadier conditions that a strong build up of

scrub produces.

To appreciate the Burren's butterflies this year, walk, in warm sunshine, along the green roads and boreens that have wild flowers at the edges, along hedgerows with flower-rich margins that face south or west or sheltered meadows adjoining scrub/limestone pavement that are bathed in sunlight. Bring a good guidebook with you and you'll soon be able to identify the butterflies. Enjoy observing their activities and appreciate how these gems beautify our world and contribute to pollination, to the food web and to our understanding of the workings of the natural world.

To find out more about Irish butterflies and about the best sites to find the Burren's butterflies a publication **Discovering Irish Butterflies & their Habitats [by Jesmond Harding]** priced at €12 is invaluable. The book contains over 150 original photographs and describes habitat creation, each butterfly's life cycle and distribution and contains a site guide. It is available from Cafébeo, Kinvara or directly from the author who may be contacted at deniseharding@eircom.net.

All photos in this article were taken by Jesmond Harding



On the Trail of the Burren Green

Sharon Parr

Science Advisor, BurrenLIFE Project

Many of us have been lucky enough to see some, if not all, of the classic Burren plants: the spring gentian, mountain avens and the Irish orchid. Fewer of us have caught anything more than a fleeting glimpse of the elusive pine marten or red squirrel, nevertheless it is common knowledge that they are here. But how many of us know about, let alone have seen, another of the Burren specialities – the Burren Green moth?

The Burren Green (*Calamia tridens*) is a true Burren resident, found nowhere else in the world. It was first recorded in the Ballyvaughan area by Capt. W.S Wright in 1949 and was the moth that put the Burren 'on the map' for those interested in Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). In the 1950's and 60's, Ballyvaughan became a 'Mecca' for British moth experts seeking to see this rarity. The

coastal parts of the Burren may well be its stronghold but it is found further inland as well, particularly on the unimproved, limestone grasslands and limestone pavements around Carran, Rinamona and South Commons.

My first sight of a Burren Green was in July 2007 with the Munster Moth Group, which kick-started a latent interest, and I began moth trapping in various gardens around Ballyvaughan with electricity kindly supplied by the garden owners! Moth trapping is a revelatory pastime; it's hard to believe the beauty of form and colour that's flying around after dark – moths with evocative names such as Burnished Brass, Ruby Tiger, Emperor and Swallowtail. Being in the hotspot of Ballyvaughan, catching a Burren Green was always at the back of my mind but I wasn't having any success until I met local farmer, Mikey Irwin, whose farm had been the focus for many visiting lepidopterists during the moth-catching heyday.

Mikey had spent many evenings manning the traps for some well-known names in the moth world and had picked up a lot of information from them. However, he hadn't seen a Burren Green for a good few years so we set about trying to find out whether his farm was still home to this elusive creature.



Eugenie Regan

Ecologist, National Biodiversity Data Centre

Workshop Monitor Butterflies of the Burren

As mentioned by Jesmond in the above article, the Burren is home to the rarest of Ireland's butterflies, the Pearl-bordered Fritillary, the Brown Hairstreak and the Wood White. Not only are they rare, but the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and the Brown Hairstreak are under threat of extinction in Ireland and in Britain. These butterflies need conserving and monitoring. And we're asking you to help!

The Irish Butterfly Monitoring Scheme is seeking volunteers to monitor these species and help inform their conservation. Weekly walks will be undertaken during their flight period and the number of butterflies seen counted. Monitoring will take place in April and May for the Pearl-bordered Fritillary and August and September for the Brown Hairstreak.

If you're interested in getting involved, there will be a training workshop on **Saturday the 24th of April** at the **Burrenbeo Trust Centre** in Kinvara from 10.30am-4.00pm. No butterfly experience is necessary. For more information contact: mwalsh@biodiversityireland.ie

The Burren Green's main flight season is from mid-July to late August, so we set up a trap on the 8th August. However, Mikey remembered something Mr Raymond Haynes, once an annual visitor, had said about the behaviour of the Burren Green and this led us to try a different approach to finding it. Armed with Mikey's high-power lamp we ventured on to an area of coastal grassland, turned the lamp on and 'bingo', half a dozen or so freshly emerged Burren Greens sat half-way up the grass stems. Despite our delight, it is hard to appreciate them when it is pitch-dark, so two moths were collected and transferred to the trap for a better look in the morning. On opening the trap the next day, these had been joined by two more Burren Greens as well as 17 other species of moth.

The Burren Green is a truly stunning moth. At roughly 2cm, it is not particularly big, but it is overall green and amazingly furry. In fact, it looks as if it is wearing a waistcoat of green fur! After taking some photographs, all the moths were released unharmed.

As is often the case, you wait a long time to see something but once you have, it turns up again quite quickly ... a bit like buses! One week later, in Poulnalour, on a bright sunny day I was lucky enough to see a Burren Green flying quickly and then landing to feed on the flowers of devil's-bit scabious and common knapweed – an unusual sighting of this normally night-flying moth.

So, later this year, arm yourself with a good torch, find a nice area of Burren grassland and venture out on a warm, cloudy night between mid-July and late August at about 10.30 p.m. and see if you can spot this elusive Burren gem failing that – leave your bathroom window open, the light on and hope!



Note: These moths are rare and delicate. If trapping, treat with care and release after viewing.



All photos in this article were taken by Sharon Parr

WILDLIFE

AROUND CARRON - NOW AND THEN

Gordon D'Arcy
Naturalist

The Carron region – fairly described as the heart of the Burren – offers the nature lover a variety of habitats and wildlife as rich as anywhere in the entire region. The turlough, the largest in the Burren, dominates the region but there are also dramatic waterless valleys at Clooncoose, Glencurran and the Glen of Clab and the open grassy craglands of Fanygalvan and Tullycommon. Scrub, which has been spreading noticeably in recent years, fills many of the hollows like Poulacarran and Poulaphuca. Patches of ash woodland are found here and there in places where there are thicker soils and time and abandonment has allowed the trees to mature. Nor should we forget the man-made habitats, the drystone walls and many ruins and the vibrant human habitat of Carron village itself.

The turlough, important for summer livestock grazing, comes into its own for wildlife in winter, when flooded. At this time flocks of wildfowl and wading birds are attracted to the easy pickings, leaving their droppings as free fertiliser for the following year's grazing. The majority of the wildfowl are ducks – wigeon, teal and mallard with occasional shoveler and tufted duck. However, small numbers of whooper swans, visitors from Iceland and occasional white-fronted geese from Greenland, are also found there, sadly nowadays, less regularly than before. The majority of the wading birds are lapwings and golden plover, also from northern countries, with smaller groups of curlews, snipe, redshank and herons, which typically prefer to be alone. It is a great experience on a still winter's day to see the aerial patterns and hear the intermingling whistles



Peregrine Falcon

made by the flocks of wildfowl careening above the turlough, their panic sometimes initiated by a hunting falcon or harrier.

The great bare basin or polje in which the turlough lies was, in prehistoric times, covered in woodland. We know this from the scientific examination of tree pollen extracted from the bed of the turlough. Birch, which dominated after the end of the Ice Age, was replaced by Scots pine and hazel and ultimately by oak, elm and alder - which are now scarce in the Burren. Ash and yew eventually became established and remain today, though the latter is artificially scarce due to removal, it being poisonous to cattle.

The many wooded gullies, dolines and dry valleys near Carron are wonderful dells replete with moss-covered boulders, ferns and coppiced hazel. These 'Yeatsian retreats' have a magical quality in spring enhanced by the strong odour of wild garlic, the spangled colours of violets, anemones and orchids and the constant, pleasing hum of hoverflies and bees. Birds found here include great tits, goldcrests, blackcaps and wood pigeons and from autumn onwards, occasional woodcock and jays forage here in pursuit of the hazel harvest. Red squirrels are also attracted to the store of hazel nuts but they are not as common as one might suppose given the bounty. Field mice, on the other hand, are abundant; their tiny burrows and caches of end-opened hazel nuts in the mossy ground cover testify to this. However, their nocturnal habits mean that they are not often seen.

Apart from farmers on a bovine mission or the odd sortie by an archaeologist or naturalist, few venture out across the expansive craglands around Carron: the lack of trails and the dangerously eroded and broken surface are prohibitive to all but the most resolute. The limestone grassland being unfertilised artificially and essentially wild is full of native grasses, herbs and flowers. As many as a hundred species can be identified in the course of a day, some of which, like a few of the orchids, are scarce or endangered. The commonest birds are the skylark and the meadow pipit but summer visitors such as the wheatear and the whitethroat are also to be seen. The cuckoo and the yellowhammer, now on the decline throughout 'cultivated Ireland', are still to be heard and seen here.

In winter the crag is the domain of the hooded crow and the raven foraging for scarce food. Occasionally also a merlin or a peregrine, dashes into the picture, on a hunting expedition.

Excluding cattle and feral goats the most widespread large mammal of such open land is the Irish hare *Lepus timidus hibernicus*: Irish because our species is distinct and different



from its Scottish counterpart – the mountain hare *Lepus timidus* which moults to a white pelage in winter. This is also stoat and fox country though encounters with these wandering predators are unpredictable, but no less delightful for that. Badgers are quite widespread in the Carron region but they favour dense hazel and locations with thick soil deposits for their setts. Pine martens, though even more elusive, are also scrub dwellers but, (if you are fortunate), they can be seen, even near Carron village, at dusk. The village, with its scattering of houses, old and new, supports nesting starlings, jackdaws, and swallows. Bats, which hawk for insects in summer along the main road, may have a nursery in the roof-space of one of the old stone buildings in the village.

Casting a panoramic eye over Carron one might be tempted to think, given the types of habitat represented, that it has been thus, at least as long as people have been here. In fact, as the pollen tree evidence suggests, there have been radical changes not only in the flora but also in the fauna, down the ages. Evidence from a scattering of archaeological sites in the vicinity can enable us to envisage former wildlife and reconstruct former habitats in our mind's eye. A boar tusk found at the prehistoric cairn of Poulawack, for instance, is consistent with mixed or pine woodland. One can envisage herds of wild boar running before spear-carrying hunters intent on obtaining meat for their *fulacht fiadh*. One such open-air cooking place, at Fahee south, has revealed animal remains including antler tines of red deer. Red deer remains have been found also at Glencurran and at Cahercommaun, at the latter site dating from the Early Medieval period.

Prehistoric brown bear hibernation pits and bone remains from Aillwee, a few km to the north, suggest that these early game hunters faced greater danger than that presented by wild boar. Though the deer probably survived until the end of the Gaelic era, the bear was undoubtedly hunted out of the Burren even before

the historic period. The former presence of the wolf is without question. The placename *Knockaunvictiera*, literally, 'the little hill of the wolf', near Lisdoonvarna makes this clear. That it survived up to the Early Modern period is suggested in a reference to Clare's wildlife by Fr. Anthony MacBrody (1669), who mentions both the wolf and deer (presumably red deer) as animals of the hunt. Archaeological evidence from Cahercommaun and Glencurran is not so unequivocal since it can be difficult to differentiate between the remains of a large dog and a wolf in some instances, and we know that large dogs such as wolfhounds were used in the 'chase' well into the Early Modern period. Other animal remains from these sites can also be confusing. The bones of rabbits and (brown?) rats at Cahercommaun - animals not thought to be found in Ireland during the period of occupation of the cliff fort - can be explained as later, surface deposits, somehow mixed up with earlier, deeper deposits, during excavation. Could this also be the explanation for the discovery of hedgehog and bank vole bones at Glencurran? The hedgehog is now thought to have been brought to Ireland, for food, by the Normans while the bank vole is nowadays regarded as an invasive species, having been introduced in Ireland in the middle of the 20th century!

At Glencurran also, corncrake bones, hundreds of years old, were found in the cave, food perhaps for a pine marten. Though vulnerable to such predation this has not been the reason for their disappearance from almost the whole of Ireland. How sad that this iconic bird of the meadows is no longer found in the Burren today. Its loss from most of the country may be more to do with climate change than agricultural change, which is often blamed, since much of the abundant grassland in the Burren is still suitable for the corncrake. Some old residents remember both the corncrake and the partridge in the Burren. The partridge was associated with crop fields with ruderal weeds such as fat-hen. It is likely that the decline of subsistence farming and arable plots caused the disappearance

of this game bird. The remains of another lost bird – the white-tailed eagle – were found at Cahercommaun. Though these spectacular birds, symbols of power, were sometimes kept as pets or buried along with chiefs it is likely that the cliff-fort remains were simply those of scavengers at the site. While white-tailed eagles are formerly known to have nested at the Cliffs of Moher, golden eagles are thought to have once nested at Eagle's Rock a few km north-east of Carron. The reintroduction of the native eagle back into Ireland are already showing signs of being successful, despite initial scepticism. Concerns, expressed for instance by farmers, have been largely allayed. Hopefully, we can look forward to the day when eagles once again soar majestically over their former Burren habitats.

In the wider context Co. Clare once held other lost birds. Bones of great-spotted woodpeckers were found in limestone caves near Ennis more than a hundred years ago. Recent carbon dating has shown them to be from the Bronze Age, more than three thousand years ago. Another bird known to have been formerly a widespread Irish resident, the turkey-like capercaillie, has also been identified through prehistoric and historic bone evidence, though not to date in Co. Clare. However, a reference by Mac Brody to 'wild cocks and hens', in the woods of Co. Clare may well be to the capercaillie, perhaps even in the Burren.

Now that most large birds and animals can be identified reliably from bone evidence, who knows what other surprises await us in the future with ongoing archaeological investigation? We owe a debt of gratitude to those archaeologists such as Marion Dowd (presently excavating Glencurran cave - see article page 10) who, by painstakingly gathering the bone and pollen evidence and having it identified, are opening our eyes to former habitats around Carron and their past flora and fauna.

NEGOTIATING SPACES THE BURREN INSPIRING ART

Eileen Hutton, PhD Student, Burren College of Art



'Negotiating Spaces' investigates life cycles and growth found within the landscape of the Burren. It is represented by a 2m x 1m nest constructed from culled hazel, dried grasses and leaves as well as a series of hexagonal nest boxes constructed for blue tits. The building of both nests have been filmed and are played side by side as a video diptych.

The Famine Road A Burrenbeo Trust Walk

On the first Sunday of each month the Burrenbeo Trust organises a walk in the Burren guided by a heritage expert on various topics. Here Stephen Ward, a Director of the Burrenbeo Trust, describes February's walk to the famine road at Poulaphouca which was led by Burren enthusiast, Bill McInerney.

The old road clings to the side of the hill. No foot ever travels over it. No wheel ever runs over it. The only feet to use it were those that built it and, for today only, as a special privilege – ours. We make our way down on to it through the unsurfaced mud and sod following the footsteps of cattle. Once on its surface, it is a massive feat of engineering – a rampart twice the height of a man, hewn from the rock and covered with rough cobbles which, as grassland creeps across, are steadily being reclaimed by nature. The reason nothing ever comes this way is that this road begins and ends in the middle of nowhere. So when and why was it built?

We are standing on an even older green-road, looking across a field to the heavily engineered road with no beginning and no end. Our guide, Bill McInerney, points out a barely discernible green line through the field below which was to have been the lower end of the road. Building

the road was a way of bringing 'relief' to the local population who were starving as a result of the loss of the potato crop over several years. This dates its construction to the late 1840s when many miles of famine roads were built, some of which are still in use today such as the *new line* from Abbey Hill to Tubber. In the days before local government and social welfare, road construction was a way of putting money – a pittance – into the hands of men, women and children – to enable them to buy meagre rations.

The green-road on which we stand is steep even by today's standards and too steep ever to have been traversed by horse-drawn carts. The famine road cuts a new line across the hill with the intention of by-passing the steepest section and providing a gentler incline. The question then focuses on why it was never finished. There is no record, but Bill surmised that it was not that the money ran out but probably that the famine eased and the incentive to complete the road simply evaporated. Piles of broken

rock remain from the day when the builders downed tools and, no doubt relieved to be able to abandon such gruelling work, walked off-site.

We continued up the green-road to the point where the famine road would have intersected. Here, the owner of the land, Tom Burke, kindly opened a gap in his wall so that we could make our way down, following in the muddy hoofprints of his cattle until we

found ourselves standing on the never-travelled road. To think that people on near-starvation rations had succeeded in building a road which, even by today's standards, would require powerful machinery was deeply moving. Years ago, Bill's vision had been to develop a sculpture trail depicting figures building the road – a dream never realised. But the road to nowhere will endure down the centuries as a monument to those who built it.

The Burrenbeo Trust is continuously developing the heritage walks and talks series. The walks are the first Sunday of each month at 2pm and the talks are the third Thursday of each month at 8.30pm in different locations throughout the Burren. Below are the events organised at the time of going to print, however, please look up the events page on: www.burrenbeo.com or phone 091 638096 for more details on any of the below or the events organised thereafter.

The Trust also runs guided *Introduction to the Burren walks* every Wednesday at 3.30pm from beginning of June till the end of August. Meet at the Burrenbeo Trust Information Centre, Main Street, Kinvara. Everybody is welcome. All Burrenbeo Trust walks are free to Trust members and a €5 minimum donation for non-members.

walks and talks burrenbeo trust 2010

What event	Who	Where	When	
walk	<i>Easter flowers</i>	Stephen Ward and Sharon Parr	Slieve Carron	4th April
talk	<i>New perspectives on old stones</i>	Ronán Hennessy	Kinvara	15th April
walk	<i>Searching for botanical ghosts</i>	Cillian Roden	Fanore	2nd May
talk	<i>Flowers of a limestone landscape</i>	Matthew Jebb	Ballyvaughan	20th May
walk	<i>Wildflower hunt</i>	Matthew Jebb (10.30am & 2pm)	Mullaghmore	22nd May
walk	<i>Butterflies of the Burren</i>	Jesmond Harding	Gortlecka Cross	6th June
talk	<i>Biodiversity in the Burren</i>	Maria Long	Carron	17th June
walk	<i>The heritage around us</i>	Michael Killeen and Frank O'Grady	Corofin	4th July
talk	<i>Protected area planning in Ireland</i>	Noel Healy	Kinvara	15th July
walk	<i>Archaeology around the harbour</i>	Christine Grant	Bellharbour	1st Aug
talk	<i>Burren through literature</i>	Paul Clements	Ballyvaughan	19th Aug
walk	<i>Folklore in the Burren</i>	Patrick McCormack	Carron	5th Sept
talk	<i>The underwater Burren</i>	Tadhg O'Brien	Doolin	16th Sept

For the Burrenbeo Trust walks, we suggest the following:

- Wear comfortable and sensible walking shoes. Much of the Burren's terrain is uneven, please ensure you have the correct footwear on.
- The walks generally take 2-2.5 hours. They are held in the afternoon so that each individual has the chance to have a good hearty lunch before heading into the great outdoors!
- The weather in Ireland is variable and can change fast. So come prepared with warm clothes and waterproofs. In case of good weather, do not forget sunscreen and a hat as the rock reflects the sunshine and can cause sunburn.

Bethere, be prepared!

The Seven Streams

As recited by Patrick McCormack at the Burrenbeo Trust walk, Carron, August 2009.

*Come down drenched, at the end of May,
with the cold rain so far into your bones
that nothing will warm you
except your own walking
and let the sun come out at the day's end
by Slievenaglasba with the rainbows doubling
over Mulloch Mor and see your clothes
steaming in the bright air. Be a provenance
of something gathered, a summation of
previous intuitions, let your vulnerabilities
walking on the cracked sliding limestone
be this time, not a weakness, but a faculty
for understanding what's about
to happen. Stand above the Seven Streams
letting the deep down current surface
around you, then branch and branch
as they do, back into the mountain
and as if you were able for that flow,
say the few necessary words
and walk on, broader and cleansed
for having imagined.*

by David Whyte
River Flow © Many Rivers Press, 2007



Bill McInerney guiding walk



Walkers exploring the famine road. Photos taken by Sharon Parr

A Walk on the Wild Side The growing sport of walking in the Burren

Mary Howard
Burren walking guide



Blue moor grass (*Sesleria caerulea*), also known as féar boirne or Burren grass. One of the earliest flowering plants in the Burren this grass has a lovely metallic blue (or rarely pale green) flowering head.

Nationally the sport or pastime of walking is on the increase. Whether it is our need to lead a healthier lifestyle or just to enjoy the countryside, there's no doubt that walking has huge benefits for us, both physically and mentally.

The Burren landscape with its unusual rock formations, fascinating archaeology and renowned flora and fauna provides a spectacular terrain which will delight and surprise the walker all year round. The unique scenery continues to fascinate visitors and makes its exploration on foot so compelling.

During the past few years there has been a big increase in the number of people walking in the region. This is due, in part, to the greater number of walking opportunities available and to an increased awareness of what this spectacular area has to offer.

The walkways

The Burren Way, a linear 114km waymarked route, has been established for a number of years. It includes some of the Burren's ancient "green roads" and small country roads. It is clearly marked and well maintained and has attracted many tourists to the area over the years. Furthermore, four looped walks have recently been developed in the Burren. Three of these loops are completed; the Ballyvaughan wood loop, the Carron loop and the Caher Valley loop. Hopefully the Blackhead loop will be available for the coming summer season. These looped walks, range from about 10km to 26km, offering the walker and Burren enthusiast a clearly marked route to follow whilst enjoying some of the most spectacular scenery in Ireland. From Spring right through to Autumn the wonderful flora to be experienced on these walks could be described as walking through Europe's largest rock garden. A memory that will last in the visitor's mind long after they have left the area.

Please note that the majority of the Burren is privately owned. When walking treat the land with respect; don't leave rubbish, don't leave gates open; leave it as you found it - if landowners don't want you walking on their land, respect their wishes and stick to the waymarked ways (see page 28 for trails map).



Walking groups

The Burrenbeo Trust hosts monthly walks covering all aspects of heritage in the Burren. These walks are fun, social occasions where the general public and the Burren enthusiast get access to very special places in the company of Burren farmers and specialists on a variety of heritage topics.

Another walking opportunity is to go with the popular local walking club; Fanore Ballyvaughan Walking Club. The club organise walks every Sunday throughout the year. It draws its membership from all around Co. Clare and indeed from much further afield. The walks, led by a club member, are off the beaten track and explore some of the more remote areas of the Burren. The club also organises a marathon and walking festival each year. There are also the opportunities to enjoy guided walks with one of the many expert guides resident in the Burren, who will share his or her knowledge and passion for this remarkable area, or there are plenty of walking and guiding books to go at it alone.

So, there is now no excuse not to walk and experience the magic of this place called The Burren.

For Burrenbeo Trust walks look up

www.burrenbeo.com

For the Burrenway or the loop walks look up

www.shannonregiontrails.ie

For the local walking group look up

www.ballyvaughanfanorewalkingclub.com



Richard & Linda's

TOP Ten

Places In the Burren

Richard and Linda Morrison moved to the Burren last year and became enthusiastic members in support of the Burrenbeo Trust. Below are just a few of their favourite haunts in the Burren. They might have kept these a closely-guarded secret, but for those new to the Burren it can be helpful to have a few pointers of where to start.

Ordnance Survey sheets 51 and 52 coordinates are used below and you will find these maps a handy complement. You can buy them in Cafébeo in Kinvara and most newsagents across the Burren. The walks are over uneven terrain so good walking shoes are recommended.

- 1** Hunt for bee orchids in the meadow at Gortlecka
51 R306945 – the spot height of 33 more or less marks the start of the walk.
- 2** Walk the ancient green road between Gortlecka crossroads via Clooncoose to the Creevagh crossroads
51 R304945 to 51 R273954.
- 3** Follow the blue route to the summit of Mullaghmore, strewn in season with hoary rockrose – this walk is in both sheets 51 & 52.
Start at 51 R314944. Arrows by NPWS mark the way.
- 4** Espy spring gentians on the high common between Parknabinnia and Commons North.
51 R265935 to 51 R271950.
- 5** Look across Galway Bay to the 12 Bens of Connemara as you walk along the ancient green road, flanked with mountain avens, from Fanore to Black Head.
Start at Murroogh 51 M147094.
- 6** Look out for boulders carried here by the ice from Connemara as you walk behind the raised beach at Murroughtoohy. Park at the layby on the coast road R477. Walk towards the sea and head north.
Layby at 51 M147117.
- 7** Wonder at the sheer power of the sea where it has dislodged limestone boulders as you walk along the coast from Doolin to Poll Salach.
51 R058978 to M087020.
- 8** Cycle along the coast road from Lisdoonvarna to Ballyvaughan.
- 9** Marvel at the enormous stalactite hanging within Doolin Cave.
- 10** Walk around the Carran turlough and then relax on the deck at Cassidy's with a pint of Guinness.
Start at Castletown River R285985. Cassidy's at 51 R278987.

New looped walks in the Burren

Eimer McCarthy
Rural Recreation Officer, Co. Clare

Walking possibilities in the Burren have been greatly enhanced recently, with three new mostly off-road looped walks. The **Blackhead Loop** (26 km) travels along the old green road from Fanore to Gleninagh, affording spectacular views over Galway Bay. The **Ballyvaughan Wood Loop** (8km) and the **Carran Loop** (9km) offer scenic, mostly off-road shorter walks. Please refer to the map in the centre-spread for these and other walks and trails in the area.

The walks are rated easy, moderate or difficult according to ability and are insured by Irish Public Bodies Insurance through Clare County Council. Their development has been made possible with funding from the Fáilte Ireland Loop Walks Programme and Shannon Development through their Shannon Region Trails programme.

But the biggest single factor has been the support of local landowners who, through the Walks Scheme funded by the Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, now receive bi-annual

payments to inspect, maintain and enhance their sections. They clear pathways, improve drainage, maintain and repair stiles, bridges and waymarkers. This brings employment into the area, and the improvements benefit both walkers and landowners.

Co. Clare has a dedicated Rural Recreation Officer employed by Clare Local Development Company, and a Walks Officer employed by Clare Trails Steering Group. Your comments, suggestions, ideas and queries in relation to any of these walks, or walking in general in the county, are welcomed.

Eimer McCarthy, Rural Recreation Officer, Co. Clare
emccarthy@cldc.ie

Cyril Killeen, Walks Officer, Co. Clare
cyrilkilleen@hotmail.com

Information on this walks can be found at
www.shannonregiontrails.ie



Rural Recreation Officers visit Blackhead Loop Walk. Photo taken by Eimer McCarthy

next page...
BURREN MAP WITH TRAILS!

BURREN WAY

Trailheads: Lahinch, Doolin, Lisdoonvarna, Ballyvaughan, Carran and Corrofin
Distance: Approx. 114km (including East Burren Loop and links to Lisdoonvarna and Ballyvaughan)
Time: Approx. 4 days. Each section represents approximately a half day's walking
Difficulty: Moderate to difficult
Terrain: The Way follows a mix of green road, pathway, minor roadway, and grassy/rocky track, with an initial steep climb out of the Caher Valley and steep descent to Feenagh Valley
To Suit: Average fitness, casual walkers

BLACK HEAD LOOP

Trailhead: Fanore Beach Carpark, Co. Clare
Dist/Time: 26km/6-8 hrs
Difficulty: Difficult
Terrain: Mix of minor roadways, green roads, mountainous pathways
To Suit: Higher than average levels of fitness

CAHER VALLEY LOOP

Trailhead: Fanore Beach Carpark, Co. Clare
Dist/Time: 14.5km/3-4hrs
Difficulty: Moderate
Terrain: Mix of minor roadways and green roads
To Suit: Medium level of fitness

BALLYVAUGHAN WOOD LOOP

Trailhead: Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare
Dist/Time: 8km / 2hrs-2.5hrs
Difficulty: Easy
Terrain: Surfaced roadway, green roads, tracks, cross country
To suit: Medium level of fitness, casual walkers

CARRAN LOOP

Trailhead: Cassidy's Pub, Carran Village, Co. Clare
Dist/Time: 9km/3-4hrs
Difficulty: Difficult
Terrain: Mix of minor roads, animal tracks and green lanes
To Suit: Higher than average levels of fitness

DROMORE WOOD LOOP

Trailhead: Dromore Wood NR, Ruan, Co Clare
Distance: 6km
Time: 1hr 30mins - 2hrs
Difficulty: Easy
Terrain: Mix of laneways, lakeshore and wooded tracks
To Suit: Medium level of fitness

DOOLIN CYCLE HUB - 4 CYCLE LOOPS

Loop 1 is the shortest tour (18km - takes 1.5-2 hours), it goes from Doolin south towards the Cliffs of Moher.
Loop 2 (26/39KM, takes 3 to 4 hours) visits the south west corner of North Clare taking in some amazing coastal views.
Loop 3 (43 KM, takes 4 - 4.5 hours) guides cyclists inland towards Kilfenora and the Burren.
Loop 4 (21/47KM, takes 4.5 - 5 hours) takes cyclists north from Doolin along the coast road with spectacular views of the Aran Islands.



Be prepared! Minimum gear:
 Trekking Shoes, waterproofs, fluid, snacks, mobile phone



More information on this walks can be found at www.shannonregiontrails.ie

Burren in Bloom

A FESTIVAL OF WALKS, TALKS AND CULTURAL EVENTS

Ballyvaughan Celebration

DATE	DAY	TIME	EVENT	SPEAKER / LEADER	BOOKING	VENUE	TOPIC
Apr. 30 - May 2	Friday to Sunday		Law School	The Burren Law School at Newtown Castle.	www.burrencollege.ie	Burren College of Art	A contemporary and Brehon perspective on the theme "Power - its uses and abuses"
DATE	DAY	TIME	EVENT	SPEAKER / LEADER	COMING FROM	VENUE	TOPIC
May 4	Tues	afternoon	Launch	Michael Canavan / Brendan Dunford / Ecoceo experts	Ballyvaughan National School & Burrenbeo Trust	Ballyvaughan National School	The Blooming Burren Free Linalla ice-creams courtesy BiB
4	Tues	afternoon	Judging	Michael Canavan / Brendan Dunford / Ecoceo experts /	Ballyvaughan Filling Station	Ballyvaughan Main St.	Best dressed Burren in Bloom window
4	Tues	8.30 pm	Talk	Professor John Sweeney	National University of Ireland Maynooth	Burren College of Art	Climate change and the Burren
5	Weds	2.00 pm	Walk	Stephen Ward / Emma Glanville	Burrenbeo Trust & Nat. Parks & Wildlife Ser.	Slieve Carran Nat. Nature Res. 52M 335 035	Flowers & Management of the Burren
6	Thurs	8.30 pm	Talk	Micheline Sheehy-Skeffington	NUI Galway	Burren College of Art	Disappearing lakes - Burren turloughs
8	Sat	6.30 pm	Barbeque	"Gregans Gourmet Garden Gathering"		Gregans Castle Hotel. Booking Essential. Tel. 065 7077005.	A stylish alfresco feast of local produce, organic wines and gentle music.
9	Sun	2.00 pm	Walk	Micheline Sheehy-Skeffington	NUI Galway	Burren National Park Gorlecka 51R 319 945	Disappearing lakes - Burren turloughs
11	Tues	8.30 pm	Talk	Simon Berrow	Irish Whale & Dolphin Group, Kilrush	Burren College of Art	Whales & Dolphins off the Burren
12	Weds	2.00 pm	Walk	Stephen Ward / Emma Glanville	Burrenbeo Trust & National Parks & Wildlife Service	Burren National Park Coolora 52R 342 967	Flowers & management of the Burren. Walk along a famine Road
13	Thurs	8.30 pm	Talk	Una Fitzpatrick	National Biodiversity Centre, Waterford	Burren College of Art	Burren Bumblebees
16	Sun	5.15 am	Walk	Gordon D'Arcy	Ballindereen	Meet outside Ballyvaughan Spar Village Store	Dawn chorus
16	Sun	2.00 pm	Walk	Stephen Ward / Sharon Parr	Burrenbeo Trust	Berneens 51M 225 027	Flowers & farming in the Burren
18	Tues	8.30 pm	Talk	Mike Simms	Ulster Museum	Burren College of Art	Exploring the Limestone Landscapes of the Burren
19	Weds	2.00 pm	Walk	Mike Simms / Stephen Ward	Ulster Museum & Burrenbeo Trust	Black Head 51M 147 107 lay-by 2km south of lighthouse	Rocks, flowers & lichens of the Burren
20	Thurs	8.30 pm	Talk	Matthew Jebb Joint event with Burrenbeo Trust	National Botanic Garden Glasnevin	Burren College of Art	Wild flowers in a Limestone Landscape
22	Sat	10.30 am & 2.00 pm	Walk	Matthew Jebb	National Botanic Garden Glasnevin	Burren National Park am: 51R 310 945 pm: 52R 342 967	Wild flower hunt on International Biodiversity Day
22	Sat	9.00 am	Marathon	Ballyvaughan-Fanore Walking Club		Ballyvaughan seafront	www.ballyvaughanfanorewalkingclub.com
23	Sun	2.00 pm	Walk	Vivienne Campbell	Kilfenora	Meet on Burren College of Art car park	The Burren's Medicinal Herbs
25	Tues	7.00 pm	Walk & Talk	Michelle Comber	NUI Galway	Caherconnell (just beyond Poulabrone)	Who lived at Caherconnell, long, long ago?
26	Weds	2.00 pm	Walk	Stephen Ward	Burrenbeo Trust	Meet on Burren College of Art car park	Flowers of the Burren
27	Thurs	8.30 pm	Talk	Emma Glanville	National Parks & Wildlife Service	Burren College of Art	Ranging over the Burren
28-30	Fri-Sun.		Festival	The Festival of the Valleys,	www.festivalofthevalleys.com		A weekend of music, song, dance and sporting events celebrating Celtic and Mediterranean cultural Fusion.
29	Sat	8.30 pm	Walk	Sharon Parr/Mikey Irwin /Ken Bond/Kevin Hannan/Penny Bartlett	Burrenbeo Trust, Ballyv. /NUI Cork/Limerick/Nat. Parks & Wildlife Service	Meet outside Ballyv. Spar Village Store	Setting live moth traps
30	Sun	9.00 am	Walk	As above	As above	Meet where traps set previous night	Identification and release of overnight trapped moths
30	Sun	2.00 pm	Whale watch	Simon Berrow & Sabine Springer	Irish Whale & Dolphin Group, Kilrush	Black Head 51M 147 107 2km south of lighthouse	Whales & Dolphins off the Burren
July 23	Fri	2.00 pm	Walk	Una Fitzpatrick & Andrew Byrne	National Biodiversity Data Centre	UCG Field Research, Station 51R 287 992	Identifying Burren Bumblebees
July 24	Sat	2.00 pm	Walk	Una Fitzpatrick & Andrew Byrne	National Biodiversity Data Centre	As above	Identifying Burren Bumblebees

This is a community led project by the Ballyvaughan Development Group

For more information contact the local tourist point at 065-7077464
www.ballyvaughanireland.com / email: info@ballyvaughantourism.com

Ecotourism in the Burren

Carol Gleeson

Project Manager, Burren Connect Project

Ecotourism is an activity, a philosophy and a model of development that unites conservation, communities and sustainable travel to minimise environmental impact, to provide positive experiences for visitors and host community and to provide direct financial benefits for conservation. The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines ecotourism as:

Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.

The concept of ecotourism is not new. The special character and nature of the Burren and the potential of tourism to place stresses and strains on its environment and communities has been recognised since the 1970's. Burren Connect was established in 2006; it is supported by a range of agencies* and works with local organisations and groups to implement a programme involving traffic management, information provision, environmental education for businesses, conservation projects and the development of an ecotourism network of accredited businesses. During 2007, Burren Connect commissioned an extensive survey which canvassed the views of visitors, accommodation providers and the managers of visitor centres in the Burren on a range of issues. The survey also assessed the level of interest in developing the Burren as an

ecotourism destination. 97% of accommodation providers and 80% of visitor centre managers surveyed believe that the Burren should be developed and promoted as an ecotourism location. Almost all believe this would have a potentially positive economic impact on the area.

TIES would concur with Burren businesses on the economic potential of ecotourism. It maintains that ecotourism is growing at least 20% per annum since 1990. Its potential as a market and a developmental philosophy has also been recognized by policy makers in Ireland. In its *Programme for Government 2007-2012*, the Government stated that it will "Seek, with the Tourism Agencies and Local Authorities, suitable areas to develop and promote ecotourism". The *2009 Economic Renewal Framework* stated that "We will develop a nationwide strategy for ecotourism and associated marketing campaign". In 2007, Fáilte Ireland made a commitment to undertake research into the potential of the ecotourism market, to provide appropriate support for the development of ecotourism, to promote standards for ecotourism, and to establish ecotourism networks (*Environmental Action Plan 2007-2009*). Both the upcoming County Development Plan and Shannon Development's strategic development policy support the development of ecotourism in the Burren.

*Fáilte Ireland, Clare County Council, Shannon Development, National Parks and Wildlife Service, National Monuments Service, Geological Survey of Ireland, Burrenbeo Trust, The Heritage Council and Interreg IVB.



Whilst the concept of Ecotourism is gaining popularity, respect, recognition and support, it is not always practiced with integrity. Unfortunately, 'green-washing' occurs, whereby businesses or destinations advertising themselves as ecotourism practitioners pay only lip-service to the concept. To maintain ethics and integrity and reassure those with high expectations, it is necessary to have independently accredited standards.

Countries which have established themselves as popular ecotourism destinations; Estonia, Sweden, New Zealand, Norway, all have accredited ecotourism standards. The result of extensive research undertaken by Fáilte Ireland on exploring the attitudes of holidaymakers towards landscape and natural environment found that: *Where accreditation is concerned, those who have an interest in ecotourism award it the greatest importance.*

Accreditation will ensure the quality of the experience or package on offer. The basic standards for an ecotourism experience or product are that:

- **It has to be delivered in an environmentally friendly way (consider waste, water, energy)**
- **It has to be based in nature and allow visitors to have a personal experience of nature**
- **It has to involve education/interpretation of the environment**
- **It has to promote local heritage and culture**
- **It has to be marketed responsibly**
- **It has to contribute to conservation**
- **It has to directly benefit the local community**

Greenbox, a region covering parts of Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Donegal and Fermanagh, is to date the only destination in Ireland to have developed accredited ecotourism practices and is sought after for advice and training. In 2008, a number of businesses involved in Burren Connect's advisory and working committees visited Greenbox and met with members of its business network. Subsequently a workshop in Kilfenora introduced more Burren businesses to the concept of ecotourism accreditation. At a public meeting attendees agreed to establish an Ecotourism Working Group. Its members are:

Businesses: Boghill Centre, Burren Beef and Lamb Producers' Group, Burren Centre, Burren Coaches, Burren Ecotourism Co-Op, Burren Fine Wine & Foods, Burren Outdoor Education Centre, Burren Painting Centre, Burren Smokehouse, Cassidy's Pub & Restaurant, Clare's Rock Hostel, Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, Corofin Hostel & Camping, Doolin Activity Lodge, Doolin Language Centre, Gregan's Castle Hotel, Farm Heritage Tours Co-Op, Fr.

Ted's Teas, Heart of Burren Walks, Roadside Tavern.

Organisations: Ballyvaughan Development Group, Burrenbeo Trust, Burren Connect, Carran Community Council, Clare Tourism Forum, Clare County Council, Fáilte Ireland, Leader – Clare Local Development Company, National Monuments Service, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Shannon Development.

Aside from developing a vision statement, terms of references, development strategy, business and marketing plans and a label/brand for the group, an important part of the work programme was to seek training and support from Fáilte Ireland to develop the Burren as an accredited ecotourism destination.

During 2009:

- 13 businesses achieved a Certificate in Ecotourism from Sligo IT, funded by Sustainable Tourism Skillnet and the group became a Fáilte Ireland Pilot Project to test the Greenbox model for the accreditation of ecotourism destinations.
- Greenbox undertook an audit of training and mentoring needs. Out of this audit a support programme was developed, tailored specifically for the businesses and focusing on achieving accreditation.
- The training will run through to March 2010. The pilot will inform agencies and funding bodies of the level and nature of the support required to deliver their stated policies on ecotourism development in an authentic, ethical and sustainable way.

The impact in the Burren will be a self-sustaining network of informed, well-trained and committed businesses who will be ambassadors for ecotourism. They will mentor future businesses interested in joining the network and will have the skills to market, manage and develop the network to the level where there is a sufficiently critical-mass of businesses involved to change the nature and increase the potential of tourism in the Burren.

In achieving the vision of the Burren Ecotourism Working Group **to establish the Burren as a premier internationally recognised eco-tourism region ensuring the future economic and social growth and sustainable development of its communities, environment and heritage** the network will be making an important and positive contribution to the future management, conservation, understanding and appreciation of the Burren.

For more information visit www.burrenconnect.ie

Interpretation, Governance and Conflict: A Critique of Protected Area Planning in Ireland

Noel Healy

PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, NUI Galway

Ireland's natural environment is increasingly packaged, commercialised and exploited for tourism purposes. This research explored the relationship between environmental protection and tourism by comparing two controversial developments in the Burren – the proposed Mullaghmore development (which was not subsequently built) and the new Cliffs of Moher visitor centre. A comparison of their respective planning processes enabled speculation about lessons learnt (if any) from the institutional and political flaws of the early 1980s, and to establish whether the top-down style of Irish planning has changed.

Conflicts over visitor centres reveal serious gaps in Ireland's approach to protected area planning which are impediments to the development of sustainable tourism. Recent efforts towards participatory tourism planning have been weakened by the prioritisation of scientific 'expertise' over local knowledge, a lack of research on hosts' and visitors' attitudes and behaviour, a fragmented inter-agency style of governance and serious gaps in legislation, policy and management.

The connections between tourism and Irish political and democratic traditions and decision-making structures make protected area tourism planning and governance conflictual. Key factors which exacerbate conflict include 'the chasing of funds', the regulation of nature for economic purposes, political interference in planning, and a lack of research and development. Moreover, Irish governance is highly fragmented whilst protected areas are managed in an uncoordinated *ad hoc* manner. Ireland's protected area governance is further complicated by social, cultural and historical factors such as the legacy of colonialism, land ownership, a strong attachment to land, a weak protected area system and an ensuing antipathy to external regulation. Therefore, unresolved historical events such as the 'Land Question' can affect contemporary planning.

Previous conflicts in the Burren reveal that reliance on regulation, enforcement and exclusions of locals and traditional farming methods is costly and often fails. There is a new understanding of the link between nature and culture - that conservation cannot be undertaken without the involvement of those people closest to the land, such as Burren farmers. To this end, there should be institutional reform to facilitate full and inclusive participation of all stakeholders, particularly local communities and visitors.

In particular, a Burren governing agency should be created. The absence of a co-ordinating agency, and the Burren's piecemeal multi-agency governance, makes current decision-making and proper management of the Burren unworkable. A new, Ireland-specific and culturally sensitive model of protected area planning and governance is needed. This should be based on integrating local community, culture and environment rather than trying to impose a generic international model.

Ireland's tourism planning should be more open, inclusive and transparent, aiming at greater sustainability while responding to a volatile global tourism market. A successful approach to planning, resource management and nature protection must be culturally sensitive and take the needs of both hosts and guests seriously. This implies radical transformation of visitor centre development, in particular with regard to their location within communities.

Nevertheless, positive action is occurring. The BurrenLIFE project has demonstrated a more collaborative approach to landscape management that has mended poor relations in land-use conflicts. This project can be seen as a case of good governance that could be applied to future and existing attempts at sustainable management in the Burren and elsewhere.



Geoparks – Appreciating the Foundations of the Landscape

Ronán Hennessy

Geopark Geologist, Burren Connect

To rest one's eyes upon the bare limestone landscape of the Burren is akin to peering through a window into the Earth's distant past. Whilst the present shape and mould of the Burren is a relatively recent adornment in the geological history of Ireland, the foundations of the Burren landscape represent fossilised environments that prevailed in this region long before man, mammals or even the dinosaurs first evolved. From the vast exposures of limestone throughout north Clare and south Galway, we can look into a world that existed long, long ago. From its origins in the warm tropical waters south of the Equator some 320 million years ago, the Burren has journeyed across the face of the planet to its present location on the eastern edge of a great and widening expanse of ocean. Ever susceptible to the forces of nature throughout the aeons of time, the rocky landscape we see today serves as a window into Earth's geological past. And it is upon this rocky landscape that humans established a culture which continues to this day. Recognised far and wide as a region of unique beauty, the Burren has long attracted visitors. Tourism based around the attractions of the natural landscape is a resource that can help the local economy. Over the past decade local communities in Ireland and in Europe have seen the establishment of a fresh and successful approach to sustainable tourism in the model of a European Geopark.

To appreciate the inherent symbiosis that exists between humans and their environment, we need look no further than the bounds of the Burren. Its dual character is often described as comprising a cultural and natural persona. 'Cultural' - in that it has long been managed and shaped by man; 'natural' - in that so much of the surficial cover has been stripped away revealing the solid foundations of the landscape. The rich and extensive archaeology is testament to the continued existence of humans in this region for over 6000 years. In the recent millennia, inhabitants of the Burren have learned to adapt the environment to suit their needs, whilst simultaneously adapting their ways to suit their environment.

Against the backdrop of a slowing economic pulse we face the challenge of infusing fresh vitality into the future prospects of our local communities. Recognition of the landscape as a valuable natural resource from which we can generate economic activity is one place to start. Appreciation of the unique environment and landscape of the Burren can allow for informed decisions to be made when it comes to the economic development. The European Geoparks Network is one such organisation that promotes a cohesive approach to regional sustainable economic development based around the geological and natural heritage of a region. Geoparks play an active role in the economic development of a region through the enhancement of the visitor's experience of the natural landscape in that region, and in the wider support of geotourism or ecotourism.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization) Geopark status for the Burren would represent a sustainable tourism and education model with a management plan. Geoparks within the European Geoparks Network (EGN) are recognised as important visitor regions throughout Europe. There are presently 35 Geoparks in 13 Europe countries, and many tourists that visit Ireland come from these countries. The existence of a recognisable and quality-assured tourism label in the Burren would serve to assure those familiar with Geoparks that the Burren is worth a visit.

The European Geoparks Network was established in 2000. It owes its existence to the efforts of two geologists, Guy Martini (France) and Nicolas Zouros (Greece), whose aim it was to help conserve geological heritage, enhance public understanding of our Earth's science and our dependence on its resources, and to use these to promote sustainable economic development on a regional level. Geoparks are not solely about geology – they are equally about ecology, archaeology, farming, history, and local culture.

The use of the word 'park' in the term Geopark stems from the European sense of the word. Geopark does not mean the establishment of a specific region, area or park in the way we might perceive a national park. A Geopark refers to "a territory, which includes a particular geological heritage and a sustainable territorial development strategy supported by a European program to promote development" (www.europeangeoparks.org). The proposed Burren Geopark would comprise of a network of individual sites, deemed to be Geosites.

Geopark status is not a legislative designation and, as such, carries no statutory obligations or restrictions. Because of this non-legislative basis, Geopark status cannot affect planning decisions or agricultural practices. The status is intended to allow day-to-day management of local land to continue "as normal".

Geology is but one chapter in the story of the Burren. Together with other chapters that include the flora and fauna, archaeology, history, farming traditions, food, music and literature of the region, the great story of the Burren is one that can certainly inform and inspire local people and visitors alike. Geoparks celebrate the region they represent, by informing and educating about what is special and unique about the landscape, and its people. The Burren is surely worth celebrating.

An application for UNESCO geopark status for the Burren region is currently being compiled by the Burren Connect Project, with the support of the Geological Survey of Ireland, Shannon Development and Clare County Council. For more details contact Dr. Ronán Hennessy at rhennessy@burren.ie

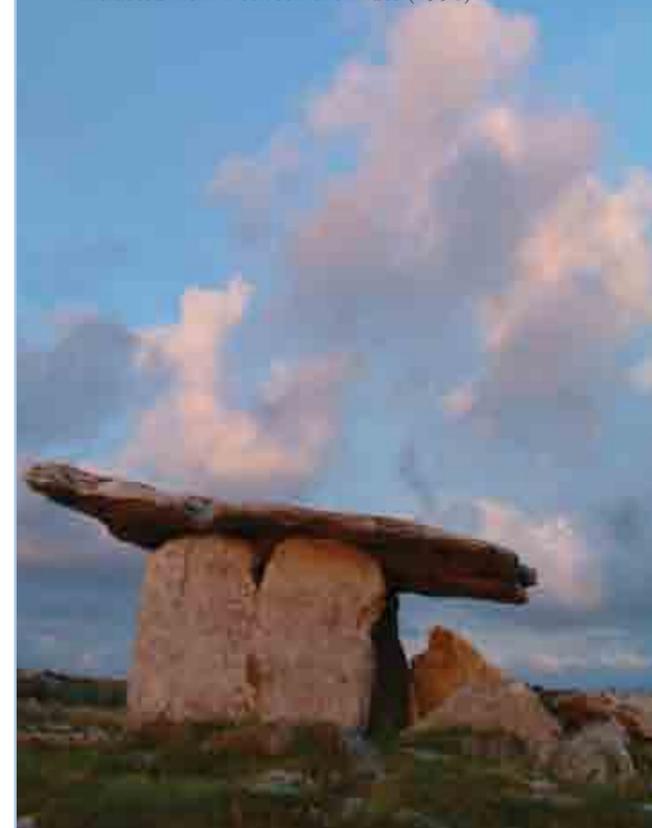
The Dolmen Builders

As recited by Brian Mooney, Burrenbeo Trust Talk, Kiltfenora Cathedral, January 2010.

*It would be their last booley.
So, they would go to where
the great lintel of the sky
lay lightly on the horizon,
cattle travelled endlessly
to water. More wombs than tombs,
there they would build
their pyramids of coiffed stone
the wind would treble through,
morning catch the first beastings
of light. Later, men would look
on them as freak yetis, spoil
their graves for stones. But theirs
was a gloaming only flowers know
between migrations.*

By Brian Mooney

Extracted from *Between the Tides* (1990)



“the Burren is by far the most important area for caves in the country containing almost 40% of explored caves and almost 70% of all mapped cave passages.”

Two types of cave are found on the Burren, those that still contain streams and those that have been abandoned by the streams that carved them and are now ‘fossils’ or relics. It is a characteristic of caves that they persist as voids for long periods after they have ceased to function as drains for rainwater. Nearly all of the stream caves are found in the western Burren where streams, generated on the impermeable, non-limestone rocks that form the highest parts of Slieve Elva, Knockauns and Poulacapple near Lisdoonvama, sink underground as soon as they flow onto the surrounding limestone. The minor road running north from Killeany to the Caher valley follows exactly the geological boundary in its middle part and numerous small streams sink underground at the road’s edge. Usually the swallow holes are insignificant-seeming bushy hollows, but in places the rock roof over the cave has collapsed and it is possible to look down (but not descend!) into the big cave passage beneath. Pollnagollum, Ireland’s longest cave at 15km, is a fine example of such a collapse into a cave and is located some 100m west of the road mentioned above (grid reference M 1610 0375 on OS Sheet 51). Just to the south is the equally spectacular entrance to Pollelva (M 1640 0234) a 30m deep shaft which drops into the further reaches of Poulmagollum cave. Dozens of similar caves may be explored in the western Burren. Usually the stream occupies all the passage and has to be followed down vertical drops and cascades to

the limit of exploration – where the passage becomes too constricted for further progress or becomes wholly water-filled.

The second type of cave, abandoned by streams, is found over the remainder of the Burren, where the only rock is limestone. These are the oldest caves. Aillwee cave for example lost its river more than a million years ago and the cave probably originated much earlier still. Because they are no longer swept by underground waters some of these caves have been and still are used as shelter or refuges – by bats for example or by human beings – many Burren caves are of great archaeological interest.

All of the mountains of Ireland are known and all have been climbed. This is not the case with caves. It is certain that there are many cave systems still to be discovered in the Burren - the known unknowns! For example in 2009 cave divers explored several kilometers of enormous flooded cave tunnels between Gort and Kinvara in the lowland extension of the Burren. In the heart of the Burren, near Carran, local cavers dug their way into a spectacular cave system containing 70m of vertical shafts and a large underground river dropping into the unknown – this in an area where no caves were previously known. Nowhere else, except in the underworld, is it any longer possible to be the first human being to set eyes on a part of the Burren.

THE UNDERWORLD

Caves of the Burren

David Drew

Senior Lecturer of Hydrology, Trinity College Dublin

To the casual visitor to the Burren and indeed to many visitors with specialist interests, the major attraction is the wild, rocky landscape abutting the coast together with the richness of the flora, the archaeological sites and the culture. However, there is another, literally hidden, Burren beneath the ground. This comprises a great network of caves, that conduit rainwater funneled from the surface of the ground towards springs mainly located at the periphery of the Burren – for example those on the banks of the River Fergus near Kilnaboy and the springs in Ballyvaghan Bay. Despite having in excess of 1.5 metres of rain annually the Burren has almost no permanent surface streams – the rivers are underground and the cave passages are the ‘valleys’.

The only contact or knowledge most visitors have of this underworld is if they visit one of the commercial caves in the area – Aillwee Cave and Doolin Cave. Yet, almost by definition caves that are accessible to the general public are rarely typical of ‘wild’ caves which to explore properly involve climbing, wriggling and receiving a thorough soaking.

There are more than 700 caves known in Ireland, a reflection of the widespread occurrence of limestone in which they are formed. However, the Burren is by far the most important area for caves in the country containing almost 40% of explored caves and almost 70% of all mapped cave passages.



If you would like to explore the Burren caves either visit caves open to the public; Aillwee caves and the Doolin cave, or contact local caving group; Clare Caving Club (clarecavingclub.wikispaces.com). There are caves suitable for all abilities but all caves are potentially hazardous - only visit them in the company of experienced cavers.

A stream cave (Polldubh) excavated by a stream sinking underground at the boundary between limestone and non-limestone rocks on Slieve Elva. A tributary stream cascades into the main river passage and progress is possible only by wading and eventually only by crawling in the water. (Photograph Terry Dunne).

Our debt to words

Caoilte Breatnach
Folklore collector and writer

Collecting Folklore in the Burren

I recently heard about the County Clare Folklore Project, *Cuimhneamh an Chláir*. Founded in 2009, this voluntary group is a community-based organisation that aims to record, document, archive and share the memories, experiences, customs, traditions and practices that characterise this county.

When visiting people's homes, they will be told, as I was, that they are 20 (or even 40!) years too late. Nonetheless they will find, as I did too, that the recounting of life's experience is never too late or out of date. The sharing of memories, in any generation, enriches the mind. It feeds the soul and roots us in our environment. It helps us to recognise the present and to care about the future.

In the early 1900s, Seán Ó Flannagáin, a young man in his mid-twenties decided, instead of emigrating, to go out and collect folklore. When the Irish Folklore Commission (IFC), founded in the 1930s, heard about this voluntary project of his, they offered him a job and so, in time, Seán Ó Flannagáin became a professional collector of people's stories and lore: *folklore*.

Through his encounters, we get a wonderful glimpse of people's lives in his native parish of Beithe, near Gort, and across the Galway-Clare border. Farming practices, both tillage and livestock, the gentry and their houses, social customs to do with matchmaking, marriages, wakes and funerals, births, superstitions (*piseoga*) and the general struggles of life. Between October 1937 and January 1940, the complexities of life in all its forms were the subjects that drew his attention, each day adding more manuscript pages to his collection of some 9,000 pages, mostly in Irish. Around the same time a similar volume of work was collected in Ballyvaughan and in other parts of Clare by a humble farmer, Seán Mac Mathúna, and by the IFC director, James Delargy (1930-45).

Mac Mathúna walked long distances to collect a story; Flannagáin cycled (at first). "Mostly to the mountain I'd go but I wandered out to the country too". Flannagáin relied a lot on his memory as he



Fair Day, Main Street, Kinvara, 1956.
From the Robert Cresswell archive.

didn't like the ediphone, the recording machine of his day. Putting an ediphone to an old man "was like putting a glass of whiskey to his lips." And he had no shorthand, like Seán Mac Mathúna, who had devised his own type of notescript, "I'd listen carefully and write everything down word for word the next day..." Like, for example, the riddle he heard one day: "Four stick standers, four belly banders, two crookers, two hookers and a wheel-about." What is it? [a cow].

In the mid-1980s, it was Pat Keane and other old-timers like him, including Eibhlín and Pat McCooke, who introduced me to aspects of past memories in the Kinvara locality. Indelibly etched in their memories were songs, stories and lore about a way of life that is now long gone. Leaving Aughinish on foot at the crack of dawn bound for Loughrea with a cartload of dried seaweed, or from Kinvara, as Pat Picker recounted, to the Ennis market with a load of potatoes (or cabbage plants), or indeed fish – these accounts had been recorded for the IFC before my time by Ciarán Bairéad in the 1950s. In Doorus he met Tomás Ó Fatha, a man with a wonderful memory of life in the locality. Another man he recorded in Irish was Colman Keane, and here I was listening to similar versions and other stories, 30 years later, from his son, Pat Keane, then in his eighties.

Engrossed in the urgency of our work we sometimes forget to acknowledge the others who came before us. In my time, Tom Munnely amassed a huge collection of lore and songs in his adopted home of Milltown Malbay and further afield. Eugene Lambe, who videoed many wonderful musicians, storytellers and characters during his time in Fanore, Lelia Doolin's contributions on folk medicine in Co Clare, Michael MacMahon's scholarly work, and many others too, including small local groups working in their own community. Brendan Dunford, who took a passionate interest in the preservation of the Burren, founding the Burrenbeo Trust with other like minded enthusiasts, and so on. We all have much to learn from each other.

Heritage is as much about safekeeping as it is about celebrating memory, the milk that nourishes the spirit. One is reminded, in conclusion, of the old tale about the cow in the Burren that would fill with her milk any vessel and it became a saying in the neighbourhood that no vessel could be found which the Glas would not fill at one milking. In Seán Ó Flannagáin's version, it was a "fairy cow that was going around long ago (Glas Gaidhneach). She kept giving the milk ever until one day a man went out to milk her into a sieve."

Also see *Memories in time: Folklore of Beithe, 1800-2000*. Tubber, Co. Galway: Beagh Integrated Rural Development Association, 2003. And for more more information on *Cuimhneamh an Chláir* look up www.clarememories.ie.

A Day In The Forge

PJ Curtis

Broadcaster and writer

The clear, rhythmic 'Clang' of hammer on iron; of steel on steel; the deep-bell tone of resonating anvil; the arcing, spitting and fiery showering of sparks; the pungent aroma of sweat and burning horse-hoof, the fierce hiss and sizzle of red-hot metal being plunged into a stone-trough of iron-brown water; the stamping of horse hooves on a cobblestone floor and the snorting and bit-chomping of an impatient animal.

These are sounds and smells I remember: a backdrop to men conversing; sometimes in hushed whispers, sometimes loudly and punctuated often by raucous laughter from deep within this old stone-wall building. For a small boy, the whole effect created a strange, complex and fascinating melody. This was the music, a symphony of vibrant sound emanating from some hidden and unknown orchestra, that initially draws me towards this place - the old forge which stood for almost two centuries in our farmyard.

I am two or three years of age and I reluctantly retreat to stand out of harm's way some distance from the forge door; my father, having seen me pull playfully at the tail of a waiting horse, shoos me away to a safe distance. "Get yourself to a safe spot." He chides. "You'll get trampled to smithereens if you sit around under horse's legs." Reluctantly, I move beyond the circle of danger. But never too far from the action as I am already fascinated at the daily goings-on within this place that my father inhabits from morning till night and for most of the working week when not working in the fields.

After a while I drift slowly back towards the forge door to yet again peek inside this dark cauldron of smoke and sound, of animal and human activity and of strange exotic aromas. For a small boy



who, as yet, saw no danger in wanting to handle shards of red-hot iron, grabbing swishing horsetails or crawling under the hooves of excitable horses, this was a place of fascination and of possible play and excitement.

But the old forge, with all its dark, shadowy corners and hidden secrets was, I soon learned, a place of many dangers; a forbidden place where only adult men (even my mother never entered here) conducted some strange ritual on a daily basis. Even as a toddler, I realized that whatever was being transacted within these low stone walls was, as yet, outside my understanding. But I was determined to find out and enter into that grown-up world of mystery, noise and activity.

My father was a blacksmith; his father before him was a blacksmith and his father before him was a blacksmith. Indeed it would seem that the family had been involved in the 'smithy' trade for as far back as memory could hold and even further back. They were blacksmiths and horse-lovers and carers of animals when they arrived in the county and to the Burren in the mid 16th century. They were, more than likely, involved in the 'smithy' trade when they arrived in Ireland on invading Norman sailing-ships from northern

France sometime in the fourteenth or fifteenth century.

It is said that every Curtis family had at least one blacksmith in the clan. It would seem that with this ancient trade traditionally came a more arcane knowledge - the gift of 'Healing'. In one branch of the family this 'Gift' found expression in offering cures - often life-saving - to many human ailments. In our branch of the family it found expression in the curing of animals - especially horses.

In his travels around Clare in the late nineteenth century, the celebrated historian and author T.J. Westrop, became aware of the family's 'Cure' (also called 'The Charm'). Westrop wrote: "I am told that a Curtis of Kilnaboy, near Corofin, cures liver complaints, bleeding and cows that have swallowed potatoes. he puts his human patients on their backs on his anvil and pretends to strike them with his sledge hammer. The patient then drinks forge water. All the family have the gift of healing. A legend says that St. Patrick's Horse lost a shoe near Kilnaboy and their ancestor shod it gratuitously. The saint therefore endowed the family with the Power and people even return from America to be cured by the smith." ('Folklore of Clare' . T.J. Westrop. Orig. publ.. 1910-13. Reprinted Clasp 2000)

My grandfather was the local blacksmith when the historian travelled here. Perhaps Westrop, like so many strangers and travelers in those days, may have had his horse shod in the forge



before continuing on his way. My father Pat Joe (who along with a younger sister, survived a TB plague which took three older brothers, a sister and his mother to their graves in 1918 and 1919) was seventeen years of age and preparing to emigrate to the USA. Following the loss of almost the entire family in less than two years he decided to stay and follow in his father's footsteps. This meant farming the land and learning the blacksmith trade - as his father did before him. This also entailed taking on the responsibility of learning the secret knowledge of 'The Cure'. This he did, excelling and practicing both disciplines until his death in 1980.

Though I had cautiously explored the forge when my father was out in the fields tending the farm, I was probably five or so before I was considered grown enough to actually enter the building while work was being done there. The forge itself - a long, low, thatched, stone-walled building with cobble-stone floor - was built sometime in the late 1700's in the time of my Great-Grandfather Patrick, who was born in 1775. One of the most valued heirlooms to still survive from that time were a number of Pike (spear)heads hammered out by my ancestors in that same forge in preparation for the 1798 Rebellion.

"Even as a toddler, I realized that whatever was being transacted within these low stone walls was, as yet, outside my understanding. But I was determined to find out and enter into that grown-up world of mystery, noise and activity."

For a small boy the attractions of the forge were many. To the left of the space where the horse would be tethered was the anvil - bronzed and shined from years of constant usage - seated on a solid block of ancient black oak; very possibly an already aged, living tree when Queen Elizabeth I was still a girl. To the right of the anvil, set underneath the rows of old horseshoes of different shapes and hand-made forge pincers, punches and rasps, was the forge's centre altar, the raised stone fireplace and chimneystack. Adjacent to the fire was the water-trough, hewn from solid limestone. (Another stone-trough sat outside the forge door; where, on hot summer days, horses would slake their thirsts while waiting their turns within.) It was said that there was a Cure for warts in the water of this trough and some, considering it a source of iron, drank from it.

But the primary focus of my childish attention was the huge bellows hidden in the deep shadows behind the fire and chimneystack. This massive wood and leather contraption fascinated me as I watched it heave and contract and groan and breath life, like some mythical dragon, to the glowing coal fire, into which my father plunged all manners, shapes and lengths of metals.

My first 'official' chore in the forge was as 'Bellows Boy'. I was charged with a single task; I was to keep the coal-fire glowing red-hot by pulling the long, creaking timber arm which activated the massive old bellows (itself suspended on a sturdy wooden framework) into wheezing life. This I did, with as much energy and enthusiasm as my 5-year old body could produce, while watching and listening to the mysterious activities going on around me.

From first light and early cockcrow the farmyard bustled with life. Cows had to be milked and foddered, cow-cabins cleaned and fresh straw shaken on floors. Cattle had to be foddered in the fields and pigs, hens, geese, ducks and bronze turkeys and their chattering broods had to be fed and counted; an nocturnal visit from the neighbourhood fox or pine marten could cause havoc in the hen-house. These chores were all performed to a farmyard symphony; a cacophony of mooring, bleating, chirping, clucking, quacking: all in rhythm with the clanging of milk-buckets and creamery cans, feeding-pails and tins, barking dogs and squawking crows and magpies.

When winter days fell like a magic spell on the Burren and life and time itself slowed to a crawl, the forge, and my father, rarely saw an idle moment. At first light the first horse and its owner, eager to be ahead of what would later build into a queue of as many as 6 or 7 horses, had already arrived in the yard and tying his horse to the still-closed forge-door. Pat Joe, his sleeves rolled up in preparation for a long day of sweaty toil, stirred lazy fire-coals into life.

As other farmers arrived with their horses, (some harnessed to carts or traps, some saddled and some on tow behind their walking owners) the men gathered inside the forge close to the glow and warmth of the now-raging coal-fire. Soon the sound of loud conversation, along with that of groaning bellows, hammer on anvil and snorting horse, filled the forge and farmyard.

I recall the forge in those days to be a hotbed of activity and of animated and lively conversation, much of it beyond the understanding of a small boy. In these pre-radio or TV days, the forge offered the men-folk of the locality a safe, convivial and neutral space to air opinions and views and to hear and discuss the latest news. Topics discussed ranged from politics - local and national - to the usual country matters: of cattle and pig prices at local fairs, potato, wheat and hay crops, (how long it might take to get the hay saved and safely home, because of the inclement weather, was a common topic) to stories of strange, quirky - and sometimes dark - goings-ons in the locality.

There was news and gossip from town and city and from far-flung lands; often supplied by the farmers' close relations now living and working in England, in America or in far-off Australia. For many farmers - some married, some bachelors, isolated, lonely and remote for six days of the week - this time spent at the forge in company of my father and other farmers would be greatly valued as a place of vital social contact and of high entertainment. Here, amid the smoke, sparks, clatter and clang - as the Smithy plied

his ancient trade - they might renew old friendships, heal fractured relationships and find some solace among their peers.

While the men lit and puffed at their pipes, filled with strong tobacco cut and rolled from dark, thick plugs, and manoeuvred to get close and settle in by the fire (sometimes for the entire day), my father rolled his sleeves up, donned his work-worn leather 'smithy' apron and set about the job in hand; that of shaping a horse-shoe from iron and shoeing the waiting horse. Should the horse require a set of 'removes', the job was relatively straightforward. The old horseshoe was levered off the hoof by pincer and, while the hoof was being scraped and pared with a bone-handled hoof-knife, a new horseshoe reddened deep in the core of the red-hot fire. While still glowing it was placed on the anvil to be hammered into shape to refit the newly trimmed hoof. A fitting would follow; the still-red shoe being placed on the hoof that, (amidst a thick white cloud of acrid hoof-smoke) burned a groove into which it would settle when finally fitted.

When Pat Joe was satisfied that the shoe was a comfortable fit, (after reheating and some final hammered curving and tapering) he plunged it into the water-trough to cool before placing it on the hoof and deftly hammering home the nails, clinching and finally rasping and trimming any overhanging hoof. Making a 'new set' of shoes followed the same actions - except that the new shoe was cut from long lengths of grooved iron-bars and hammered into shape on the gleaming anvil. When at last the long day was over and the satisfied farmers and their horses had departed, my father hung up his smithy apron, washed his hands and came indoors for a well-earned supper.

Work in the forge was hard, sweaty and backbreaking. (Work that ultimately took its toll on my father's health.) But he continued to ply his ancient trade with pride and stamina until the horse more or less disappeared from the landscape. By the late 1960's and early '70's the horse as a working animal had almost been entirely replaced by the tractor and the motorcar and there was less and less call for the services of the traditional blacksmith. On those rare days when no horses waited to be shod, there was always other pressing 'smithy' work to be done in the forge. Cart wheels had to mended or shod and a motley collection of plough-shares, horse-drawn mowing-machines, iron gates and other assorted farm-implements - shovels, forks, billhooks, axes and scythes - all awaited repair work; and all, naturally, 'urgently' required by their owners.

After two hundred years of activity the forge now stands idle and silent. No more the anvil tolls its hammered bells; no more the ancient bellows breathes life to a star-hot fire, no more the smoke curls from burning hoof or from the tall chimney-stack and no more the blacksmith bends to his labours. While no other authentic forges from that period have survived, this forge has weathered

the years and the changes. And so it now stands, possibly the only surviving genuine blacksmith's forge in the province. There is no smithy to work it however; and though the love of horses remains in our blood and bones, neither I, nor any of my siblings, (life had other plans for us) took up the ancient family trade of blacksmithing.

Time has wrought many changes since this solid limestone building - more a museum these days - hummed with vitality, life and creative energy. Now the old forge stands, solid and silent; a sign-post to, and a reminder of, a very different - yet not so distant - past.

Now, more than three decades since the forge saw its last working day, I sometimes push open the rust-hinged double-doors and enter within as I did as a boy. While old ghosts rise and swirl about me, I tug at the creaking bellows and imagine I see the fire leap into life and hear once again the music of hammer on anvil, the talk and laughter of men these many years in their graves and scent yet again the heady perfumed aroma of animal and human sweat, iron-oxide and burning hoof as the blacksmith plies his ancient trade.

This is the ancient Music of the Forge.

*A symphony that remains
and still rings clear.*

The anvil-song that lives on in the Forge of Memory.

© PJ Curtis 2005. PJ Curtis is the author of 'The Music of Ghosts' (which includes this essay), 'The Lightning Tree' and 'Notes From The Heart - A Celebration of Irish Trad. Music'.



All photos in this article are taken by Mike Mulcaire

The Big Freeze - thrushes on the tideline

Stephen Ward
Burrenbeo Trust Director

Bishops Quarter on a bitterly cold day with a strong off-shore breeze and rain in the air. Along the strand-line are dozens of thrushes - blackbirds, song-thrushes, redwings and fieldfares. Normally denizens of scrub, all is frozen and denied to them. They are looking for food in a place normally home to turnstones.

From afar, I see a thrush blown out to sea. It comes down involuntarily some five metres off-shore. I hurry towards the spot - prepared to wade in. To my amazement, it manages to swim ashore and scramble a metre or so up the beach. As I get close enough, I see that it is a song thrush. I expect it to be exhausted and to be able to pick it up to recover in the warmth of my jacket. However, it is strong enough to fly back to the seaweed and resume feeding.

Ballyvaughan, 12th January, 2010

Cry of the Mountain by Tim Dennehy

'I wrote this song having spent some time on Mullaghmore mountain in the beautiful Burren...'

O wild pulse of beauty and famed ancient rooms!
Where the cranesbill and sandwort and spring gentian blooms
And the whitethroat and wheatear their migrant song bear
And the *pocaire gaoithe* is king of the air.

In the years when I laboured neath an alien sky,
Like a lover your absence brought tears to my eyes.
When the lowered sky and people and walls fenced me in,
The breath of your spirit released me again.

And fond thoughts bridged my mountain in The Burren so fair
And I breathed again in your sweet and fragrant air.
I bathed in silence, your wildness embraced
And felt your spirit seep through me in your holy place.

But of late I've been wakened from a turbulent sleep
As the roar of the diggers did trundle and creep
O'er your rare rugged beauty and ancient retreat,
Erasing the Songlines of our ancestors' feet.

And a gentle voice whispered, "Don't enslave what is free
And do not lay claim to the rock, the hill or the sea.
Let love, care and reason be your guiding hand
For lonely is the stranger in his own land."

Oh heed the cry of the mountain; fear Gaia's deep wrath.
Do not package our soul and parade it in cloth.
Let our children interpret their world from within
As they tread o'er your wild open spaces again.

And let them go to their mountain in The Burren so fair.
Let them breathe once again your sweet and your fragrant air.
Let them bathe in your silence and your wildness embrace
And feel your spirit seep through them in your holy place.

Pocaire gaoithe = kestrel

Tim Dennehy's Cry of the Mountain is available to listen to on the albums 'The Blue Green Door' and 'Old Boots and Flying Sandals'. For more information go to www.sceilig.com

THE BURREN
AS A MUSICAL MUUSE

Quick Quiz 1

Name the common Burren flower whose leaf is shown here.



Quick Quiz 2 Famous people of the Burren

1. The founder of the GAA, was born in a small thatched cottage close to Carron village.
2. Legend has it that who lived at Lemanagh Castle was thought to have had 25 husbands!
3. Saint lived as a hermit near Slieve Carron and was thought to be the brother of a famous King Guaire who owned Dunguaire castle in Kinvara.
4. One of Cromwell's soldiers famously said that the *Burren hadn't enough water to drown a man, wood enough to hang one or earth enough to bury one, but yet the cattle were very fat!*
5. The Bishop of Kilfenora is the
6. The inventor of the submarine John Philip was born in Liscannor to the south of the Burren.
7. The Irish champion steeplechase runner who was born in Kilnaboy and went on to represent Ireland at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1932 was named Sonny

Answers for quick quizzes are on page 47

Competition



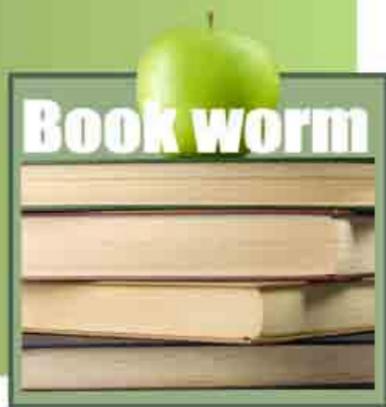
Bee Orchid. Photo taken by Niall Hunt. Burren Insight 1 competition winner.

Send in a drawing, photograph, or short story (1000 word limit) that captures *The Landscape or Seascape of the Burren*.

The winner will receive a Burrenbeo Trust voucher for Burren books or for in Cafébeo. The winning entry will be published in the next edition of Burren Insight. Deadline is the **31st October 2010**. This is open to both adults and children. Digital or hardcopy entries welcome. Please send in your entry with your name, address, email, and age (if of school-going age) to Burrenbeo Trust, Main Street, Kinvara, Co.Galway or email to trust@burrenbeo.com



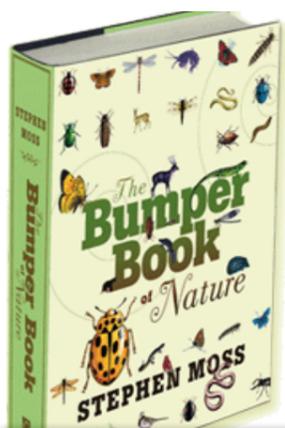
Hazel Coyle (17) from St Josephs Secondary School, Spanish Point the winner of a 'A Thousand Words' biodiversity art competition funded by Notice Nature and run by Shane Casey, Biodiversity Officer, Clare County Council.



The Bumper Book of Nature

by Stephen Moss with line drawings by Nicole Heidaripour / Review by Stephen Ward

This book is a call to nature, to nurture in children the urge to explore, not to deprive them of contact with the natural world. It rebels against 'computer games, mobile phones and a tv in every child's bedroom' and urges a return to playing outside and 'scrambling over the garden fence and into the woods, exploring nature for ourselves'. The author decries the fact that in recent decades, 'we have raised generations of children who are scared to walk in the park on their own, who scream when they encounter a spider or a moth, and who know more about the characters in tv soaps than they do about bluebells and bumble bees'.



Square Peg, 2009, London. Available from all good bookshops RRP €24.25

It is packed with things for children to do ranging from the adventurous, such as climbing a tree, to learning different ways to tell the age of a tree. Other suggestions relate to heightening the senses and include listening to a tree, going on a 'blind walk' (with a guide!), experiencing the sensations of rain and wind, to which I would add sampling the smells of plants which attract insects. Find out how to give bumblebees a helping hand and, if you want to know what that unseen bird is calling from deep within the

undergrowth, go 'pishing'! What's pishing? You'll have to buy the book to find out. With this book, either with an adult or on their own, any child can take themselves deeper into the natural world. For those who begin to keep a natural history diary or become a conservation volunteer, it may be the start of a life-long journey. Above all, this book aims to raise in children a passion for the natural world

because without it 'what incentive is there to protect it?'

In a note to children, the author promises those who fall in love with nature that they will never be bored again – and above all, to 'Have fun!'.

Collins Flower Guide

by David Streeter illustrated by Christina Hart-Davis, Audrey Hardcastle, Felicity Cole & Lizzie Harper / Review by Stephen Ward

Leading walks in the Burren, I am often asked which guide – out of the plethora of those available – I would recommend an aspiring wild flower enthusiast to purchase. Without hesitation, from now on this will be it. Let me explain why. My first thought, on reading of its imminent publication was 'not another flower guide!'. But for someone wanting to become competent and to get seriously involved in recording plant distribution this is by far the best guide I have yet seen. Coming from one who graduated in botany more than 40 years ago, that is high praise indeed. My chief reason for saying this is the presentation of excellent illustrations and brief descriptions interleaved with identification keys, thereby admirably bridging the divide between a technical flora and a pictorial guide. Scientific names, so often a stumbling block for beginners, are of course there but prominence is given to common names.

The fun which can be derived from identifying an unknown flower is described as 'a kind of detection in which a number of clues are sorted until the identity of the individual logically emerges, and there is always a great sense of achievement when an unfamiliar plant is finally nailed down in this way!'

The guide covers Ireland within the context of northwest Europe and describes over 1,900 species. It covers all flowering plants including trees, shrubs, grasses and sedges, conifers, plus ferns and horsetails but omitting micro-species of brambles, hawkweeds and dandelions, i.e. species which even most field botanists record as aggregates, since to master them would require a specialist apprenticeship rather than a general training. Species introduced to the Burren such as the cotoneasters, wall lettuce and red valerian are included. Distribution of each species is in general terms and, whilst a map of each would seem merited, one has only to look at the enormity of the *New Atlas of the British & Irish Flora*, on which the outlines of distribution are based, to realise the impracticality of this.

There has never been a more important time for recording the distribution of wild flowers. Their distribution patterns alter over time and reflect such impacts as habitat destruction and climate change. For those who want to go beyond simply identifying a wild flower, but recording its whereabouts, the guide points the



Published by Harper Collins, 2009, London
Hard-back: £30.00. Large format: £50.00. 2009/
Soft-back: £20.00. 2010. Price not confirmed in euros.

The guide comes in a format and price range to suit all circumstances and pockets. If you want to carry it in the field – a good idea since the guide says 'it is generally better to identify an unfamiliar plant by taking the book to the plant rather than to pick the plant and take it to the book' – the soft-back is ideal. If, on the other hand you want to enjoy looking at the illustrations at home, the large format is ideal. Or if you want to strike the happy medium, there is always the basic hard-back.

Irish Butterflies and Insects

by Eugenie Regan & Chris Shields / Review by Stephen Ward

An up-and-coming Irish entomologist said recently that 'insects need all the press they can get'. It is a pleasure to welcome this new guide, one of a series on nature and other subjects produced by Appletree, with the emphasis very much on pocket size. This is not a guide to the identification of Irish insects but rather an introduction to their fascinating, hidden world. And who better to do this than Eugenie Regan, an entomologist at Ireland's National Biodiversity Data Centre working with Chris Shields, a wildlife artist and illustrator with a particular interest in moths and butterflies. The book itself, however, omits any information on the author and illustrator.



Appletree Pocket Guides, 2009, Belfast. Available from all good bookshops, RRP €6.95

There are hints on the equipment an intrepid explorer will need, when beginning to pursue this overlooked and neglected part of Ireland's fauna, such as a butterfly net, a jam-jar within which to examine specimens temporarily detained, a lens for an enlarged view and even binoculars for spotting butterflies and dragonflies. The text is succinct with a simple calendar indicating when each species is active. The illustrations are of a high standard. The sexes for some species such as orange-tip butterfly are labelled, but not in other cases such as the blue butterfly. Since this book may serve as a child's

first introduction to insects, and the illustrations vary from life-size for white ermine to many times life-size for the green shield bug, an indication of magnification would have been useful.

Our Limestone Heritage

Edited by Joanne Pender / Review by Stephen Ward

This booklet looks at the impact of two events upon Ireland's limestone pavements, firstly the passage of ice-sheets and subsequent weathering of the rock by solution and secondly that of man from prehistoric times up to the present day. A map shows the distribution of limestone pavement within Ireland.

In recent decades, and still continuing, limestone pavements – especially those in highly visible locations around the periphery of the Burren – are still being destroyed to gain new land for agriculture. Some is exported to Britain and mainland Europe for use in landscape gardening.

Whilst areas classified as Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive are legally protected from commercial exploitation, they are still at risk in tourism 'honey-pots' where cairns and mini-dolmens are built, indicating a lack of awareness of the fragility of this landscape.



Irish Wildlife Trust, 2008, Dublin, RRP €5.00

This 16-page booklet concludes with a Code of Good Practice; plus contact details for the bodies which sponsored its production - the Irish Wildlife Trust, The Heritage Council, the National Parks & Wildlife Service, the Burrenbeo Trust, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Also available at **cafebeo**

Burrenbeo Trust's quick reference field guide to the *Common Flowers of the Burren* (€5) and Burrenbeo Trust's glossy poster of *The Common Flowers of the Burren* (€4). These and many more books, guides and maps on the Burren are available from Cafébeo, Main Street, Kinvara.

Quick Quiz ANSWERS

Answers to Quick Quiz 1:

1. Bloody Cranesbill
2. Burnet Rose
3. Wood Anemone
4. Wood Sorrell
5. Mountain Avens

Answers to Quick Quiz 2:

1. Michael Cusack
2. Maire Rua
3. Colman McDuagh
4. Edmund Ludlow
5. Pope
6. Holland
7. Murphy



*'And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore...
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones'
Seamus Heaney*

Mount Vernon

Historic House Accommodation

Mount Vernon is the home of Mark and Ally Helmore and County Clare's only historic house offering accommodation; a lovely Georgian villa of immense charm and interest built in 1788 on the Burren coastline of County Clare with fine views over Galway Bay and the surrounding area. In recent years the house has been carefully restored to provide stylish and luxurious modern accommodation while retaining its original character and charm.

The house is open for bed and breakfast from April 1st until October 31st or by arrangement.
€80 - €100 per person sharing. Single supplement €30
Discounts available for stays of 2 nights or longer.
The house is available all year for full house lets of 3 nights or a full week on a self catering or fully staffed. Please enquire for rates.

Tel: +353 6570 78126 Fax: +353 65 7078118, info@mountvernon.ie
Mount Vernon, Flaggy Shore, New Quay, Co. Clare, Ireland

www.mountvernon.ie




'A place at peace with itself'

Sleeps 4-8 guests.
Good heating.
Catered or self catering.

Gather with a group of friends,
Or family for a special birthday,
Or for a long weekend.

Curl up and let songs come into your head,
while others walk the green roads of the Burren.

Sit within the bawn and watch the moon rise by Mullaghmore.
Talk and tell stories by the fire of the Great Hall
While dinner is cooked, and wonder at the good comfort
Of times gone by, before falling asleep in a cosy bed.

The 500 year old Gaelic Tower House,
BALLYPORTRY CASTLE
(the place of the harpists)

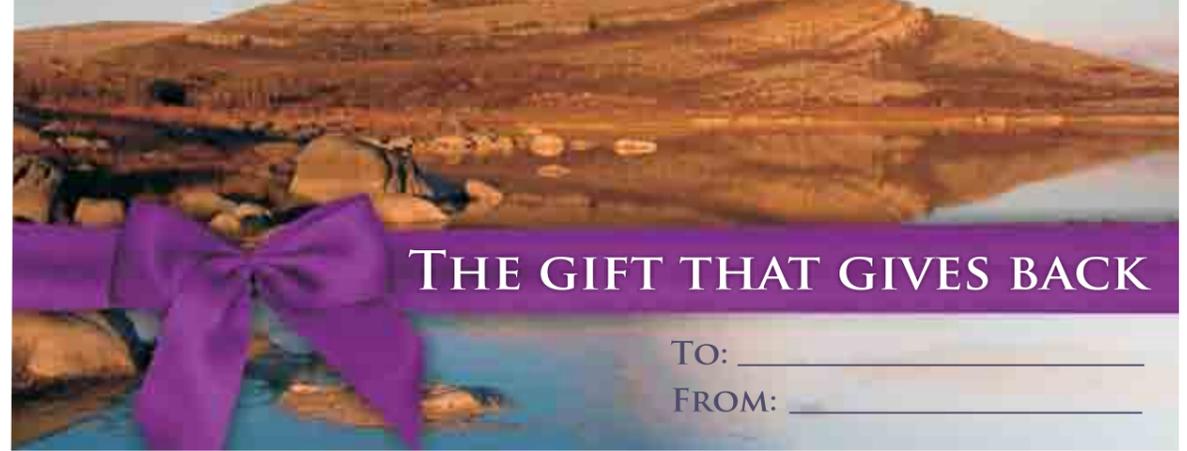
40 minutes from Shannon.
www.ballyportry.ie

Need a gift?

Why not give a Burrenbeo Trust voucher and support a local charity at the same time.



VOUCHER AMOUNT: € _____



THE GIFT THAT GIVES BACK

TO: _____
FROM: _____

'A gift that gives back' voucher is a chance to support a local conservation charity. It can be bought over the phone on 091 638096 or in Cafébeo, Kinvara. The receiver can use it towards buying a Burrenbeo Trust membership, Burren books or cds in Cafébeo, or in the café itself.

Clare's Rock Hostel

THE FAMILY FRIENDLY HOSTEL

Why stay at Clare's Rock ?

- Location in the heart of the Burren.
- One hour from Shannon Airport and Galway city.
- Most centrally located hostel to all the major Burren attractions.
- Best value for money for couples and families.
- Only two hours and thirty minutes from Dublin.
- Because we enjoy what we do, we would love to meet you.

Clare's Rock Hostel and private shared self-catering accommodation provide private ensuite rooms for **GROUPS, COUPLES AND FAMILIES** in a clean and comfortable environment.

Clare's Rock accommodation is located in the rural village of Carron at the top of the Burren mountains and is part of a traditional Burren farm.

It is best suited to those with their own transport as there is no public transport to Carron. The village is the birthplace of Michael Cusack the founder of the G.A.A. (Gaelic Athletic Association).

Internet Access, WiFi in Lobby, Guest Kitchen, Card Phones, Bicycle Hire, Common Room, Outdoor Terraced Area, Games Room, Pool Table, Fussball, Library, Linen Included, Refrigerator, BBQ Area, Washing Machine/Dryer, Towels Hire, Free Parking, Luggage Storage, Wheelchair Accessible

Clare's Rock Hostel, Carron/Carran, Co. Clare, Ireland
Tel: +353 (0) 65 7089129 / e-mail: info@claresrock.com

www.claresrock.com



burrenbeo trust

open your eyes to the living burren

Burrenbeo Trust Information Centre
Main Street, Kinvara, County Galway

Information & leaflets on the Burren, the environment & what to do in the area. Burren maps, cds & books are available to buy.

For opening hours go to www.burrenbeo.com/
email trust@burrenbeo.com or phone 091 638096





cafebeo

bringing the Burren closer to you

CAFE AND BURREN INFORMATION CENTRE

The Burren's only conservation cafe
100% of all proceeds go back into the work of the Burrenbeo Trust

Organic and Fairtrade tea, coffee, fresh sandwiches, homemade cakes, cookies wi-fi

10% discount if you are a Burrenbeo Trust member

Main Street, Kinvara



Murphy Store.
 'Irish Arts, Crafts & Gifts from the Sea'

Best coffee you'll ever taste!

The Quay, Kinvara, Co. Galway.
 Tel: 091 637760. www.murphystore.com

get wrapped...

100% pure 100% organic

Let the goodness and wealth of the sea soak through your skin, as you relax in the warm cosy environment of our treatment rooms.

BOOK NOW on 091 444123
 or online at www.seaweedtreatment.com

**The Courtyard, Lower Main Street,
 Kinvara, Co. Galway, Ireland.**

theBurren connect project

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

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

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

Linking environment, community and tourism to conserve the Burren

For more information please check out our website www.burrenconnect.ie
 We are happy to support Burrenbeo Trust through funding and collaboration on the - Ecobeo programme and media such as the web site, the Interactive Learning Zone and the Burren Information CD Rom.

WE CAREFULLY SOURCE OUR QUALITY RAW MATERIALS EXCLUSIVELY FROM IRISH WATERS BEING COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE SOURCING FOR THE BURREN SMOKED SALMON, TROUT, MACKEREL, EEL. WE SOURCE ORGANICALLY CERTIFIED AND OR WITH IRISH ECO LABEL BEING COMMITTED TO OUR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY. VISIT OUR LOCAL FOOD SHOP IN LISDOONVARNA - WE ARE OPEN DAILY. WE SHIP LOCAL FOOD BASKETS MAIL-ORDER WITHIN IRELAND AND TO COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD.

Burren
 SMOKEHOUSE

WE BELIEVE IN
FINEST QUALITY FOOD PRODUCTS,
 EXCELLENT CUSTOMER CARE,
 GOOD GROUP OF TEAM WORKERS
 TO ENSURE THAT WE KEEP UP OUR STANDARDS.

Burren
 SMOKEHOUSE

THE BURREN SMOKEHOUSE
 LISDOONVARNA, CO. CLARE, IRELAND
 INFO@BURRENSMOKEHOUSE.IE
 TEL: +353 (0)65 7074432
 FAX: +353 (0)65 7074303

WWW.BURRENSMOKEHOUSE.IE

Need

The NEED (Northern Environmental Education Development) project is a transnational European geo-education initiative involving four partners; Ireland, Norway, Finland and Iceland. The NEED project aims to develop geological & environmental learning resources; to promote awareness of the local landscape among the community; and to establish sustainable business opportunities in environmental education in the Burren.

Geo-education resources and activities developed for and with co-operation of Burren NEED partners:

- Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience
- Burren Outdoor Education Centre
- North Clare Farm Tours Co-op
- Burren Centre, Kilfenora
- Burren National Park
- Burrenbeo Trust
- Local Schools

Learning resources available at GeoNeed.org include:

- > Education Resources for Schools
- > Learning Activities for Visitor Centres
- > Information Packs for Businesses
- > Maps on Local Educational Visitor Centres
- > Interactive Maps of the Burren (Google Earth)

www.GeoNeed.org **Go Out - and Learn About!**

Logos: Need, Northern Periphery Programme, Shannon Development, GSI, Burren

It is important to make our network stronger both within the Burren and beyond.

How can we help you?

Get more from your Burrenbeo Trust membership

What

Get more information

Get more knowledge

Why

Make more informed decisions

Make more impact

Make more friends

How

Do more walks and talks

Do more volunteering

Support..... Cafébeo

How can you help us?

Can you help us by making professional introductions to further our charity?

Can you share any expertise that you may have in fundraising?

Can you make a one-off donation of support from our menu of funding areas overleaf?

Can you be active in the community by joining the Burren Conservation Volunteers?

Can you display our information in your business, local community centre etc?

Can you invite us to do a presentation at one of your businesses, committees etc?

Can you feed into the Trust network by sending us news and events to the e-newsletter?

Can you become a node for the Burrenbeo Trust in your area?

Why not Sponsor the Burrenbeo Trust?

You or your business could fund a specific part of the Burrenbeo Trust programme and receive acknowledgement for your contribution. Below is a list of projects that the Burrenbeo Trust needs funding for.

Funding Menu

Ecobeo Education Programme

The Burrenbeo Trust runs a 20-week heritage course in primary schools throughout the Burren. To date, 400 Burren experts between the ages of 9-12 have graduated from the Ecobeo programme in modules of biodiversity, geology, archaeology, culture, history and land use. To continue this fantastic work you could fund a school in the Burren to partake.

€2000 per school

Burren Conservation Volunteers

Each month the Burrenbeo Trust coordinates the Burren Conservation Volunteers to tackle an important conservation issue in the Burren region. Each session is led by an expert and each theme relates to an issue that needs to be tackled.

€5000 per annum / €400 per month/donation of equipment

Children's Learning Area

The Burrenbeo Trust Information Centre wants to develop a learning area for children to learn more about the exciting environment of the Burren through interactive games and other methods.

€2000

Heritage Walks and Talks

Every month the Burrenbeo Trust carries out a guided walk and a lecture in the Burren. Each event is delivered by a leading heritage expert. Last year over 650 people attended these walks and talks. It is a major way of informing the local and visiting Burren community.

€5000 per annum/€400 a month

The Burrenbeo Trust needs your help.

If you would like any further information on any of the above items, contact trust@burrenbeo.com or 091 638096

Letters to the Editor

If you would like to send in a letter on an unusual event or opinion for the next Burren Insight, please send to trust@burrenbeo.com or post to Burrenbeo Trust, Main Street, Kinvara, Co. Galway.

Trust Membership Application

name
address
phone
e-mail

Membership categories

(please circle one annual membership option)

- | | |
|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual | €40 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Couple | €50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | €60 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concession (unwaged/Student/O.A.P) | €30 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gift Pack | €50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> For Life (Founder) | €1,000 |

Additional donation _____

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

Mastercard Visa Laser

with the amount _____

Card number
Expiry date / /
Security code (last 3 digits on back of card)
Cardholder signature

You can also join online at
www.burrenbeo.com

For payment by cheque, please insert your details on the
form and make your cheque payable to: Burrenbeo Trust Ltd.

Completed forms/cheques to be returned to:
Burrenbeo Trust, Main Street, Kinvara, Co. Galway, Ireland

burrenbeotrust | 
open your eyes to the living burren



burrenbeo trust | 
open your eyes to the living burren

Be a part of it!

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

To become a member of the Burrenbeo Trust, simply complete the membership form on the opposite page and return to the address given.

New members of the Trust will receive:

- An exclusive members' pack containing Burrenbeo CD-ROM, Burrenbeo cards and Burren factsheets valued at over €25
- Free admission to the Burrenbeo Trust's monthly walks and talks programme featuring local farmers and some of Ireland's leading heritage experts
- Free annual copy of BURREN INSIGHT

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

- Educational programmes in the Burren such as Ecobeo heritage programme in local primary schools
- Ongoing research work on future sustainable management of the Burren
- The maintenance and enhancement of the Burren's most used website www.burrenbeo.com
- The delivery of our monthly e-newsletter and annual magazine
- The staffing and overheads of the Burrenbeo Trust office in Kinvara
- The development of strategies for the sustainable management of the Burren

Burrenbeo Trust achievements to date

Education, the Burrenbeo Trust:

- Graduated over 400 Burren Experts between the ages of 9-12 from the 20-week Ecobeo heritage programme
- Carried out monthly walks and talks with heritage experts which had over 650 attendees in 2009
- Led weekly *Introduction to the Burren* walks throughout the summer
- Launched the first ever Burren-specific magazine, Burren Insight
- Developed the Burren Conservation Volunteers to carry out monthly conservation action days
- Developed an informative CD-ROM on the Burren '*Images of a fertile rock*'
- Developed a Burren heritage education programme for adults

Information, the Burrenbeo Trust:

- Developed the largest and most used website in the Burren, www.burrenbeo.com with over 700 pages and 750 unique visitors a day
- Sends out a monthly e-newsletter to nearly 3000 subscribers on the news and events of the Burren
- Developed multilingual Burren factsheets in four languages for distribution
- Det up the Burren's first 100% conservation café with all proceeds going directly back into the Trust's activities
- Created a Burren resource centre at the Burrenbeo Trust Information Centre with free educational materials on the Burren and a gallery space for exhibiting local artists' work

Research, the Burrenbeo Trust:

- Worked in collaboration with the Burren IFA to carry out a valuable piece of research on the role of farmers and their viewpoint in the future of the management of the Burren

Advocacy, the Burrenbeo Trust:

- Works closely with other organisations in the Burren region such as Burren IFA, Burren Connect, Burren LIFE etc
- Organises regular slots with Clare FM prior to each monthly walk and talk
- Contributes regular articles to local newspapers; Clare People, Clare Champion, and Connaught Tribune