



The Chairman's View

The Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust is an organisation involved in looking after what we all hold dear - Our beautiful landscape and heritage. This does not mean trying to preserve heritage at any cost by fossilizing it like a Museum specimen. It does not mean conserving our natural built and cultural environment in such a way that we can only stand and look at it rather than enjoy it, live in it or use the resources it brings to better our lives. It does however mean that we must recognise that our environment is a 'golden goose' which we must not destroy and that when we work or play in it we must do so in a sustainable manner which does not kill that goose.

Within our responsibilities we have three AONBs – The Antrim Coast and Glens AONB, the Causeway Coast AONB and now the latest to be re-designated – The Binevenagh AONB. We manage these through locally based committees of local inhabitants and other experts in aspects of the work. These groups do not work in isolation but in partnership with all of those with an interest in the area.

In the immediate future we will have the first meeting of a new Binevenagh AONB Management Committee at which we will elect a Chairman and commence drawing up a management plan for the area.

We sincerely welcome into our AONB family those who will be undertaking responsibility for this very special place. I personally am looking forward to working with them and to helping them meet the challenges which will certainly ensue. With their help we can assure the future of a totally unique and irreplaceable part of all our heritages – the Binevenagh AONB.



Dr David G Erwin
Chair CCGHT

The cliffs and scree slopes ...



Richard Rogers, Chief Executive, Environment & Heritage Service.

The views from the summit of Binevenagh Mountain over the Roe Estuary, Magilligan, Lough Foyle and beyond are stunning but, without risking life or limb, I would urge visitors to cast their eyes downwards as well; to the cliffs and scree slopes that stretch northwards below the summit. This area has great scientific interest, as well as natural beauty, and much of it is included in the Binevenagh National Nature Reserve, owned and managed by EHS.

The scree slopes are home to a range of Arctic Alpine plants including Mountain Avens and Purple Saxifrage: reminders of colder times associated with the last Ice Age. On the grasslands below the cliffs, many species of wildflowers are found, including Wild Thyme and Harebell, Tormentil and Eyebright and 20 different types of colourful Waxcap fungi have been recorded. The grasslands in the southern section of the Reserve are grazed by traditional breeds, such as Wiltshire Horned Sheep, Dexter Cattle and Exmoor Ponies; breeds that are suited to the terrain and

conditions found there.

Access to the Reserve is by foot. Here is a suggested walking route: from Leighrey Road drive to the Forest Service car park (follow signs for Binevenagh Lake). From the top of Binevenagh's cliffs, turn right and follow The Ulster Way down into Binevenagh Forest. Once in the Forest, turn left and follow the track until you enter the Reserve over a stile on its northern boundary. Continue along the hardcore track till you reach its end and then retrace your steps back up to the Forest service car park beside Binevenagh Lake. As the



Purple Saxifrage

terrain is steep and uneven, a walking companion is recommended. Please keep dogs on leads at all times and keep to tracks, as there is livestock on the Reserve.

Enjoy this marvellous area!

For further information contact EHS staff at Roe Valley Old Hospital, Limavady. Telephone number 028 77763982.



Great natural beauty steeped in history and legend!



Liam Flanigan
Chief Executive

Limavady Borough Council
Comhairle Bhuirg Léim an
Mhadaidh

From my office I have the great pleasure of having a clear view of the striking profile of Binevenagh cliffs and slopes, depending of course on our weather. The entire region of course is one of great natural beauty but is steeped in history and legend as well. The name Binevenagh spelt in the original Irish Binn Fhoibhne means Foibhne's peak and apparently is named after the son of a local chieftain who in ancient times died on the mountain. I often wondered what the full story behind his death was and why he merited such immortality in the name we still use many centuries later.



The views from the top of Binevenagh are without exaggeration breathtaking, as one looks down over the cliffs and woodland, out over the plains of Magilligan, the beaches of Benone and across the lough to the hills of Inishowen and Donegal. Often the ravens or a buzzard are to be seen beneath riding the rising thermals or guarding their cliff based nesting sites. You really can feel at one with nature here.

One of my favourite spots to visit, however, is St Aidan's church and holy well situated at the base of the mountain slopes at the edge of Ballycarton forest. The modern church has been erected beside the much older church at Tamlaghtard (high plague burial ground) and as the name suggests is still high enough up to commend good views of the area.

There is an ancient holy well here which, like the many holy wells in Ireland, enjoys a faith in the spiritual and healing properties of its pure waters that stretches back to pre-Christian times. The old church's burial plot holds another magical connection for us as it hosts the last resting place of Denis O'Hampsey, the renowned blind harpist who died in 1807.

O'Hampsey is particularly important as he was one of the last exponents of the tradition of early Irish harpists. His life stretched through three centuries having been born in 1695 near Garvagh and at the age of 97 was one of the most important harpists attending the famous Belfast Harp Festival in 1792. From St Aidan's church you can wander off onto the many trails through Ballycarton forest. The area, like all of Binevenagh can really give you a sense of peace and ancient spirituality which is very hard to find in this day and age.

St. Aidan's

The site at St. Aidan's, near Magilligan, goes back to prehistoric times and thus has great historic importance. The Druids worshiped here. When the early Christian missionaries such as St. Patrick and St. Columcille came along in the 5th and 6th Centuries, they did not totally dismiss the ways of the Druids. In fact they adopted and adapted some of their customs and traditions. St. Columcille built his church on the sacred grove of the Druids. The holy well of the Druids later became St. Aidan's holy well.



The church here was used by the Church of Ireland community from 1608 until 1772 when the C.o.I. Earl Bishop Frederick Gustus Hervey decided that it should be moved to a new location a couple of miles to the north. It is said that his reason for this was that he could keep a closer eye on the parishioners there as it was within sight of his great castle at Downhill!

This led to an interesting court case some 100 years later when the Irish Churches Act came along in 1869. At that hearing the Church of Ireland Rector, Rev Gauge, represented the Roman Catholic's point of view, saying that the Earl Bishop had in fact bequeathed the properties to the Roman Catholic community during the 1780s.

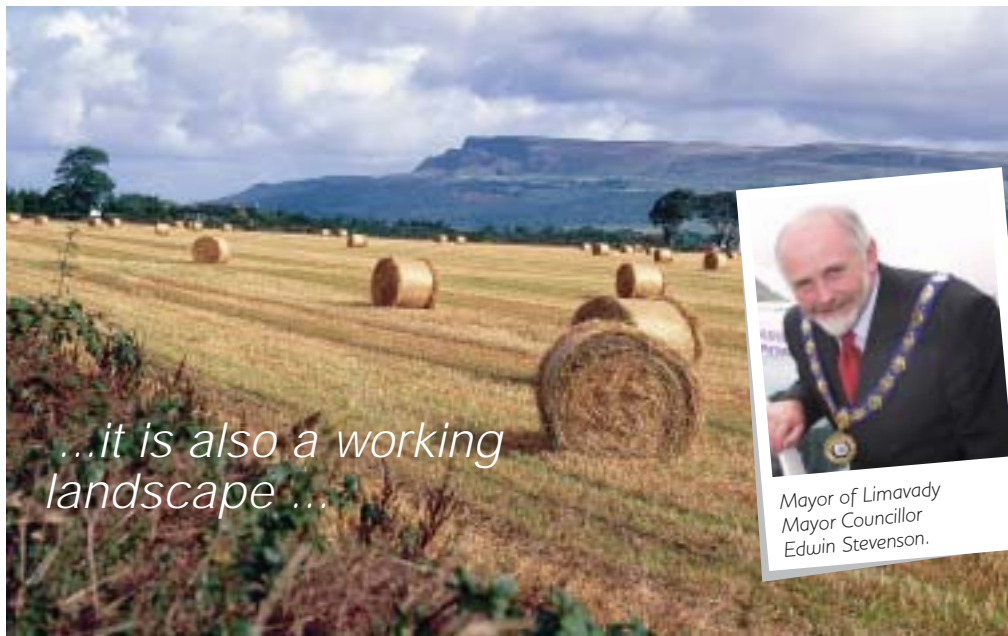
Subsequent to this, the Roman Catholic community used the church until a new one was built in 1826.

St. Aidan's grave is here in the churchyard. He was an Irishman of note who served in the great Abbey on the Island of Iona off the Western shore of Scotland. His grave is readily spotted as it features an unusual design of corbelled stones forming the shape of a coffin.

There is also a curious hole in the ground at the corner of the grave. It has been a tradition for hundreds of years for people to put their hands into this hole and try to bring out a handful of sand from within the grave! This sand is said to have healing properties.

Musicianship and longevity are two qualities definitely associated with Magilligan. Magilligan was the home of Ireland's most famous Harpist, Denis O'Hampsey, who is buried here in St Aidan's Churchyard. Denis married at the age of 86 and soon afterwards found himself with a daughter. Both his wife and his daughter are buried here at St. Aidan's.

In November 1998 Limavady Borough Council erected a memorial to this musical genius at the O'Hampsey family grave.



...it is also a working landscape ...

Mayor of Limavady
Mayor Councillor
Edwin Stevenson.

I have lived and worked in the townland of Tullyarmon all my life with Binevenagh on my doorstep. The built, cultural and natural heritage is something that I am fortunate to be able to take in every day.

As a farmer I hope that the redesignation of Binevenagh AONB is not a hindrance or burden on agriculture. It is a truly beautiful landscape however, it cannot be forgotten that it is also a working landscape. The landscape speaks for itself, simply explore the area and the views take your breath away from the Bishop's Road leading to Downhill, the Seacoast Road looking up to Binevenagh itself and not forgetting the view over Lough Foyle from the Broad Road which links Coleraine and Limavady, with the sun setting behind Inishowen. It is spectacular!

The wider Aghanloo area and Bolea has long been appreciated by man with various archeological remains of sweat houses, raths and cairns testament to human inhabitation of this area. These tell a small part of the story of how civilisation developed throughout Ireland.

There is a great history associated with the area and plenty of yarns as well! The story of Bishop Frederick Hervey commissioning the Bishop's Road to enjoy his favourite approach to his palace at Downhill and the legend of Cushy Glen who preyed on travellers brave enough to take the Murder Hole Road. I would encourage you to take the time and explore the area for yourself.



“Lots of fun ...”

Binevenagh AONB is one of the North Coast's best kept secrets. You just have to spend a wee bit of time there to realise why it was one of the first AONBs designated in Northern Ireland and why it deserves its redesignation.

There is so much that is special about this landscape; the contrast between the coastline and the upland plateau, the various stories associated with the area from Cushy Glen to Bishop Hervey; and the history including the Lough Foyle Base Survey and the Martello Tower

For me the most striking thing is that no matter where you are there are stunning views. No wonder the Bishop of Derry commissioned the Bishop's Road to take advantage of the view travelling to his home at Downhill, from Gortmore look over Magilligan to Inishowen and to Islay and the Paps of Jura in Scotland; or look over Lough Foyle travelling down the mountain from Coleraine to Limavady as the sun sets behind Inishowen. Today the area has become a real outdoor playground with the beaches and clifflines playing host to kite sports, surfing, gliding and paragliding throughout the year. Lots of landscape and lots of fun, Binevenagh AONB certainly won't be a secret for much longer.

Richard Gillen
Countryside Recreation Officer, Culture Arts Tourism
Limavady Borough Council, Comhairle Bhuirg Léim an Mhadaidh

Our Heritage

Natural Heritage

Saxifraga oppositifolia, the purple saxifrage, is a species of plant that is very common all over the high Arctic and also some high mountainous areas further south, including northern Britain, the Alps and the Rocky Mountains. It is even known to grow in north Greenland, at 83°15'N, the most northerly plant locality in the world.

It is a low-growing, densely or loosely matted plant growing to 3–5 cm high, with somewhat woody branches of creeping or trailing habit close to the surface. The leaves are small, rounded, scale-like, opposite in 4 rows, with ciliated margins. The flowers are solitary on short stalks, petals purple or lilac, much longer than the calyx lobes. It is one of the very first spring flowers, continuing to flower during the whole summer in localities where the snow melts later.

It is one of Northern Ireland's rarest plants confined entirely to the cliffs of Binevenagh. Purple Saxifrage is the flower emblem of County Londonderry.

Cultural Heritage

The Murderhole Road or the Windyhill Road, as it has been renamed, was the main coaching road between Coleraine and Derry. When a coach pulled away from the busy market town of Coleraine, it faced bleak and mountainous territory, where thick forests impinged upon deep and desolate bogs as the route started to climb up the mountain. There were no towns on the uplands, only a few scattered houses where the people were wary of travellers. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, at least six separate highwaymen and two outlaw gangs operated along the Murderhole Road, robbing and killing travellers at will. One famous outlaw was the notorious Cushy Glen, who lived in a cave on Mount Binevenagh.



Hezlett House

Built Heritage

Hezlett house, just outside Castlerock, is a thatched Dower House, dating from the 1600's. Originally a rectory, the house has no foundations but was built around a frame of curved timbers or 'crucks'. Owned and beautifully maintained by the National Trust, the house is simply furnished in late Victorian style. There is also a small museum of farm implements and guided tours are available.



The Ulster Gliding Centre

...you really are as free as a bird.

The Ulster Gliding Centre is located on the Magilligan peninsula at Bellarena between Binevenagh Mountain and the shore of Lough Foyle. It is the only facility of its kind in Northern Ireland and has been operated by its members as a voluntary sports club for over 77 years. The Gliding Centre is a member club of The British Gliding Association who are responsible for training and approving all of the instructors.

Did you know that not all pilots fly aircraft with engines? The Ulster Gliding Centre offers the chance to be a pilot with a difference. Learn to fly in a glider, there's no engine and a minimum of knobs and switches. Just imagine you're flying over the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with the sun as your engine, quiet, peaceful and pure serenity.

Gliding is more than just turning up at your local airfield, it's about meeting new people and learning new skills but most of all it's about having fun that won't cost you the earth. Gliding can be a sport or a hobby – it's your choice. But one thing for sure is that when you are at 6,000 feet above the Sperrin Mountains with only

the gentle sound of the air flowing over the glider, there's no other feeling like it. You really are as free as a bird.

The sport of gliding can be enjoyed by females on exactly the same basis and to the same level of competence as for males, indeed the U.K. National Championship was won by Sally King in recent years. The club has female pupils and female solo pilots at present and welcomes other females who may wish to join. (It is advisable to wear trousers when having a gliding lesson.)

People with physical disabilities are welcome to try the new two-seat dual-control glider that is fully equipped with hand controls. An electric hoist is available to assist wheelchair-users board and disembark. The availability of hand controls allows users to train at the same rate and achieve the same skill level as able-bodied participants. The clubhouse is accessible to wheelchair users and there is a wheelchair accessible toilet facility. We have had a new airfield control hut specially built to provide access for wheelchair users.

For further information and directions, see the centre's website at:
www.ulsterglidingclub.org

For a chance to view Binevenagh AONB from one of the gliders, courtesy of the Ulster Gliding Centre, have a go at the competition below!



Competition

Do you know your AONB? This photograph was taken somewhere in the Binevenagh AONB. Do you know where it is?



If you can identify this famous landmark in the Binevenagh Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) you could win a fantastic opportunity to see the AONB from a glider courtesy of the Ulster Gliding Centre? Competition entries must be submitted to Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust office before 31 May 2008.

Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust provides a secretariat service for the Binevenagh AONB. The Trust is grateful for support from the following organisations:



For more information on the Causeway Coast AONB please check the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust website.

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