With over 120 miles of coastline along the Causeway Coastal Route there is a plethora of spectacular attractions including Northern Ireland’s only World Heritage Site at the Giant’s Causeway. For more information visit:

ccght.org
ccralive.com
discovernorthernireland.com/causeway
causewaycoastandglens.com
James Stuart built Gracehill House in c.1775 and named it after his wife, Grace Lynd. The family planted an avenue of over 150 beech trees along the entrance to the Georgian estate. It was intended as a compelling landscape feature to impress visitors as they approached Gracehill House. Today this unique, tranquil and spellbinding tunnel of ancient beech trees stretches along the Bregagh Road, intertwining and entangling to create a spectacular fusion of light and shadow.

The large estate surrounding the house has a royal heritage dating back to the early 17th century. King James I granted the land to a cousin who drowned on his way to Ireland before he could take possession of his new home. The estate then passed to his grandson, William Stuart, and remained in the Stuart family for many years. The house and immediate grounds are now privately owned with some of the estate developed into a popular 18 hole parkland golf course and The Hedges Hotel.

*Private property*
A favourite local ghost story features the grey lady, a spectre that glides along the Bregagh Road, sashaying between the gnarled trees. She vanishes from sight when she passes the last tree.

Whilst some local people believe she is the ghost of a maid from the nearby house who died in mysterious circumstances centuries ago, or perhaps the daughter of James Stuart, referred to in some genealogy lists as ‘Cross Peggy’, others believe that she is a lost spirit from an old, deserted graveyard that is thought to lie hidden in the fields nearby.

On Halloween night, the forgotten graves are said to open and the Grey Lady is joined on her walk by the tormented souls of those who were buried beside her.

Two centuries later, the ethereal tunnel remains a magnificent sight and has become known as The Dark Hedges, one of the most photographed natural phenomena in Northern Ireland and a popular attraction for tourists from across the world. With its mysterious and spectacular play of light and tranquillity the site has inspired visiting artists and photographers. Antrim-born composer Elaine Agnew premiered her compelling Dark Hedges composition at the BBC Proms in 2012.

Photo: Matthew Woodhouse
More recently The Dark Hedges avenue has been featured as The Kings Road in the epic HBO series, Game of Thrones®.

On behalf of The Dark Hedges Preservation Trust, the Causeway Coast & Glens Heritage Trust commissioned a tree survey of the area in 2014. Ninety-four Beech trees (Fagus sylvatica L.) were surveyed and recorded. Their age ranged from mature to post mature which is estimated to be about 300 to 350 years. The life span of a typical Fagus sylvatica L. would be about 150–200 years. Some of the trees at the site reach upwards by over 28 metres and across, becoming heavily entwined with each other with a crown spread of over 30 metres to create the iconic dark hedges tree tunnel.

Photo: Uel Gordon
c. 1775 | Gracehill House built/Dark Hedges planted

1801

1834 | First Commercial Railway in Ireland opens

1845 | The Irish Potato Famine begins

1869 | Gracehill railway station opens

1878 | Marconi transmits the first radio signals from Rathlin to Ballycastle

1880 | Queen Victoria awards Belfast City Status

1888 | The Titanic sinks on her maiden voyage

1912 | World War I begins

1914 | World War II begins

1918 | The Titanic sinks on her maiden voyage

1939 | American Neil Armstrong walks on the Moon

1969 | Five times World Formula 1 Champion, Joey Dunlop was killed while racing in Estonia

1986 | Giants Causeway declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site

2000 | HBO ‘Game of Thrones’ on location at Dark Hedges

2011 | UNESCO World Heritage Site

2011 | American Neil Armstrong walks on the Moon

2014 | World War I begins

2018 | Wheatley, chief executive officer of the CBI, declared a five times World Formula 1 Champion, Joey Dunlop was killed while racing in Estonia

2021 | HBO ‘Game of Thrones’ on location at Dark Hedges

2022 | Giants Causeway declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site
In 2004 the Department of the Environment (NI) Planning Service placed a Tree Preservation Order on the Dark Hedges. The Order is intended to ensure the preservation of the trees while allowing work to be undertaken to safeguard road users. The Dark Hedges Preservation Trust was set up in 2009 to preserve and enhance the ancient trees, prominent in the landscape on the Bregagh Road in Stranocum. In preserving the trees it is also their intention to preserve an area of significant cultural importance and communicate an understanding of the value of the trees and their significance to the local community. With the help of Heritage Lottery Funding The Dark Hedges Preservation Trust has four aims – to conserve and enhance the Dark Hedges, utilise the hedges as a learning tool and improve and develop interpretation around the hedges.

**THE DARK HEDGES PRESERVATION TRUST**

**HOW TO GET THERE**

**PARKING**
There are coach/car parking and toilet facilities available at the Hedges Hotel – a two minute walk from the Dark Hedges.

**SAFETY**
The Bregagh and the Ballinlea roads are public roads and therefore pedestrians should be aware of traffic travelling in both directions. Avoid walking or driving under the trees on windy days. The Dark Hedges is a picturesque site and therefore it is important that visitors leave no trace in terms of litter or damage to the trees.

From the main Belfast to Coleraine road (A26)
In Ballymoney take the B147 Kirk Road (Signposted Stranocum/Gracehill Golf Club/Ballintoy);
• Keep on B147 (through village of Stranocum) for approx 7 to 8 Miles;
• Bregagh Road is on right before reaching Gracehill Golf Club

From the North Coast
If you are driving from the North Coast direction travelling south to Ballymoney, Stranocum is between Dervock and Armoy.

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