



THE DARK HEDGES  
PRESERVATION TRUST

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](http://ccght.org)  
[ccralive.com](http://ccralive.com)  
[discovernorthernireland.com/causeway](http://discovernorthernireland.com/causeway)  
[causewaycoastandglens.com](http://causewaycoastandglens.com)



CAUSEWAY COAST & GLENS  
HERITAGE TRUST



Causeway  
Coastal  
Route



LOTTERY FUNDED

design by **darol**.com



THE DARK HEDGES

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.



**GRACEHILL HOUSE**

\*Private property

Photo: CCGHT



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.



## THE GREY LADY

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.

Photo: Matthew Woodhouse

## THE KINGS ROAD

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

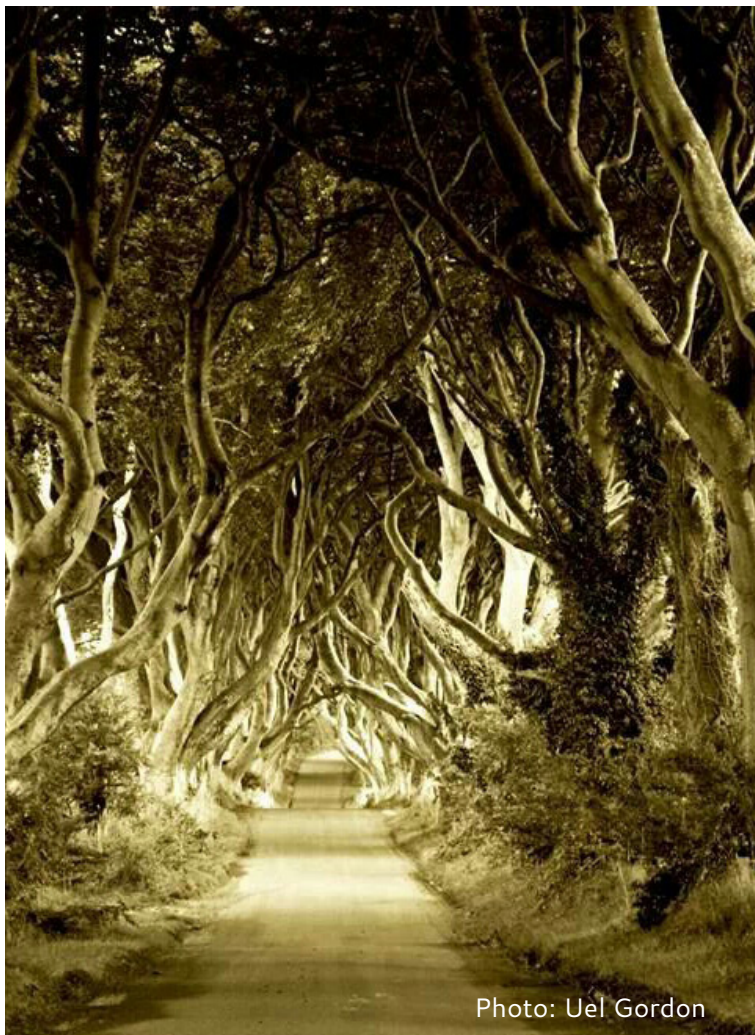


Photo: Uel Gordon

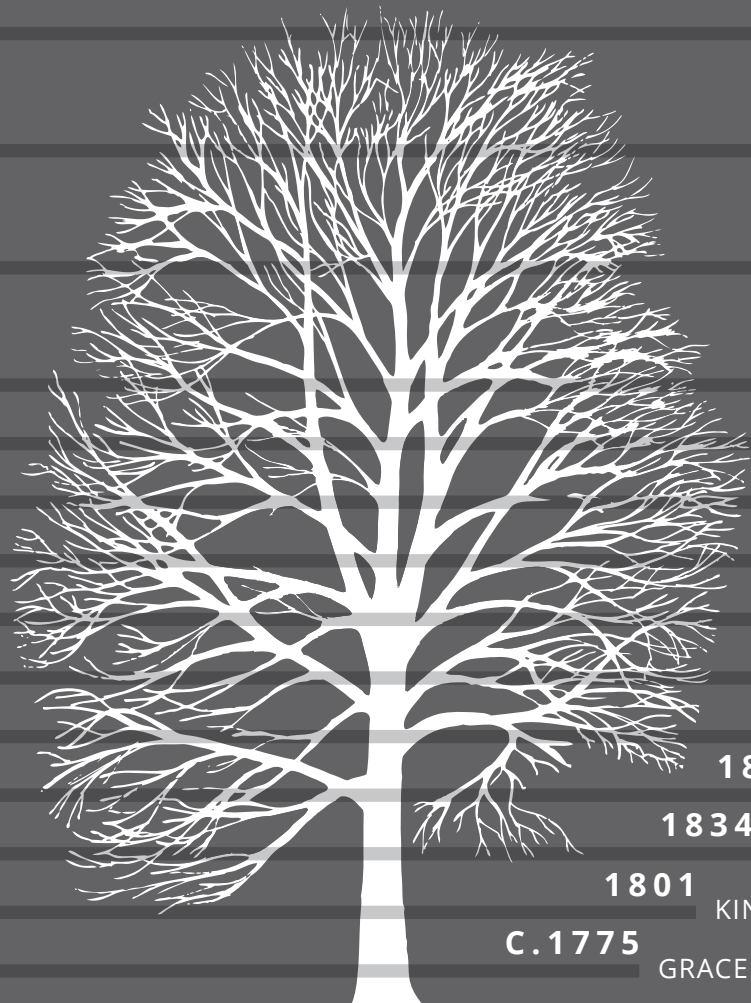
## TREE SURVEY

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.





**C.1775**

GRACEHILL HOUSE BUILT/DARK HEDGES PLANTED

**1801**

KINGDOMS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND UNITE

**1834**

FIRST COMMERCIAL RAILWAY IN IRELAND OPENS

**1845**

THE IRISH POTATO FAMINE BEGINS

**1888**

QUEEN VICTORIA AWARDS BELFAST CITY STATUS

**1890**

GRACEHILL RAILWAY STATION OPENS

**1898**

MARCONI TRANSMITS THE FIRST RADIO SIGNALS FROM RATHLIN TO BALLYCASTLE

**1912**

THE TITANIC SINKS ON HER MAIDEN VOYAGE

**1914**

WORLD WAR I BEGINS

**1939**

WORLD WAR II BEGINS

**1969**

AMERICAN NEIL ARMSTRONG WALKS ON THE MOON

**1986**

GIANTS CAUSEWAY DECLARED A

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

DUNLOP WAS KILLED WHILE RACING IN ESTONIA

**2000**

FIVE TIMES WORLD FORMULA 1 CHAMPION, JOEY

ON LOCATION AT DARK HEDGES

**2011**

HBO 'GAME OF THRONES'

# THE DARK HEDGES PRESERVATION TRUST

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.

## 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.