



# THE CAVE HILL CAMPAIGNER

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## On a Green Hill

Since its inception the Cavehill Conservation Campaign has endeavoured to maintain the integrity of Cave Hill and to support Belfast City Council's efforts to develop the adjacent Castle Estate. The entire area is now widely recognized as an area of considerable natural beauty and historic interest – as evidenced by its inclusion in international guidebooks. It is also of acknowledged importance to maintaining the character of this part of the city.

The original purpose of the Campaign was to prevent commercial exploitation of the Cave Hill, and since then we have lobbied successfully to prevent speculative development on Cave Hill or in neighbouring areas.

The Cavehill Conservation Campaign believes, of course, in the importance of economic development, but holds that in the first instance, this should be in keeping with high standards of environmental protection, and that it should meet the needs of those who live in the vicinity of Cave Hill.

There are, at the moment, concerns that the present economic climate may encourage politicians and developers to pursue economic objectives at any cost, and that those who challenge this attitude by defending the environment and the priorities of the community will be considered unrealistic – or, dread word, “nimby”.

Environmental protection, we believe, is best served by the fostering of ‘local sovereignty’. Communities should be consulted about what is appropriate for their area, and indeed, this was implicitly conceded by the requirement under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 to consult local people with respect to planning strategies. But more recent emphasis on “new localism” should be more than just a rhetorical device to compensate for lack of adequate public funding for the city’s parkland, or for



Edward McCamley and Cormac Hamill accepting an award from Belfast City Council officials on behalf of the Cavehill Conservation Campaign. The Council's competition was endearingly named *The Brush Factor*, and the award was in recognition of the Cave Hill Clean Up Day of May 2010.

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Chair: Cormac Hamill  
Editors: Edward McCamley  
Martin McDowell

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selling off to private interests assets which should be permanently and adequately preserved for the benefit of the community - and for future generations.

The Cavehill Conservation Campaign is now officially recognised by the City Council as an active partner in the enhancement of the area and we, in turn, welcome the involvement of the Council's Outreach Programme in our work of safeguarding Cave Hill.

Recently, for example, walkers on the Hill will have noticed that many of the paths had become degraded – as a consequence of increased use, of course, but also of rather uncertain maintenance. Belfast City Council has assured us that this problem is being addressed and we may hope that the tradition of sporadic repairs will be replaced with a more systematic programme .

A third element of this cooperation is more active citizenship and here we wish to thank those who support the work of the CCC by attending fund raising events; buying advertising space in this newsletter; participating in the annual CleanUp Litter drive, and taking part in our programme of guided walks. Better still: join us in the constant battle to maintain this cherished feature of the City's profile.

E McCamley





*Glengormley House, 2006.*

## Time to Remember: Alan Gardner Brown

Less well known than the Donegall and Shaftesbury families is that of Alan Gardner Brown who lived for a time on the slopes of Collinward which form the eastern flank of Cave Hill, and who built Glengormley House in 1834. This not only predated Belfast Castle by over thirty years but was described at the time as, “a splendid mansion, [well] situated, and commanding a handsome and agreeable prospect.”

The Brown family (after whom Brown Square, adjacent to Gardner Street is named) was well known in old Belfast. Alan Gardner Brown’s father John had been Sovereign ( in today’s term, Lord Mayor) of Belfast even though he was reputed to carry his quart pot from his then home at Peter’s Hill to the corner of North Street where it was filled by an obliging brewer and enjoyed in the great outdoors. The Peter’s Hill area was then (this is the 18th century) a rural area distinguished by orchards and well-tended gardens – but which offered a venue for horse racing and bear baiting as entertainment. In contrast, Alan’s brother, the Revd John Brown, was an evangelical preacher at St George’s Church in High Street distinguished by his eloquence and biblical learning. In 1820 he was appointed Chaplain to the new (and grimly entitled) House of Correction in Howard Street above the door of which was inscribed the forbidding injunction, “Within Amend, Without Beware”. No races or bear baiting there!

Nor indeed for Alan Gardner Brown who was more interested in tilling and husbanding his land. In doing so he discovered a rare species of plant which proved to be an effective substitute for the bark which was then used in the tanning of leather and was thereafter much sought after by local tanners.

At this time also significant numbers of cattle were shipped from Belfast to America. Many of these beasts died

from lack of water if the ship was delayed by adverse weather. Brown, who was aware of this problem, experimented with a hybrid turnip which had a high water content. Developed as Dale’s Hybrid Turnip this proved to be a great success and the subsequent planting of seven acres of turnip yielded Brown a profit of £22.00 per acre. This was a useful supplement to the herds of cattle which Brown grazed – and which presumably were shipped to America along with the sustaining turnips.

Notwithstanding this good fortune by 1884 Glengormley House passed to the Berkshire family who remained in residence until the early 1930s from which time the house and its outbuildings were offered up for rental. The tenancy was taken up by the Blackshaw family and it was here that that the future, and famous, artist, Basil Blackshaw was born in 1932.

As was so common in modern times, the house and some of the outbuildings were subdivided for use as apartments but the latter were demolished in 2007. The house was then redeveloped to incorporate apartments backed by a quadrangle of townhouses in the style of the original house. The development is known as Collinward Manor...but races and bear baiting are not permitted!

*Stewart McFetridge*

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## Tramways: Now And Then: The Cavehill And Whitewell Tramway

Many cities in the UK have reintroduced tram systems: so also has Dublin. Belfast has toyed with the idea but the most recent information indicates that the Department for Regional Development has developed proposals for the introduction of a bus-based rapid transport system for the Greater Belfast Area.

Of course Belfast did once have a tram system and one of its more colourful elements was The Cavehill and Whitewell Tramway.

From 1872 the Belfast Tramways Company operated horse-drawn trams running on iron rails from Castle Junction, via Carlisle Circus and then along the Antrim Road to Chichester Park. The journey took twenty minutes. From here two horse 'omnibuses' carried on past Cave Hill to Glengormley, then a scattered rural settlement. In July 1882 a novel steam powered omnibus service was introduced on this route. This operated from the town centre to Fortwilliam Park and was later extended to Chichester Park so as to connect with the green liveried steam engines of the Cavehill and Whitewell Tramway. Travellers continued their journey to Glengormley in doubled-decked, open-topped vehicles in green and fawn colours with the company's name proudly displayed in gold on the waist panels. Each omnibus accommodated 80 passengers, and horse-cars worked in conjunction with steam-cars until 1895, when steam traction was abandoned, and from then to 1906 horse power alone was used.

And the passengers? The lower deck saloon was divided into 1st and 2nd class, while (yes) 3rd class passengers rode on the open upper deck where seating consisted of two back-to-back seats running the length of the car with the occupants faced outwards.

Belfast's tramway system was electrified in 1905 and in the fol-

lowing year the C&WT was rebuilt as an electric tramway with a single track and passing loops. Ten four-wheeled, open topped, double-decked electric cars were supplied by the Brush Company of Loughborough. For many years afterwards the bodies of the redundant horse-cars served as shelters in the old Bellevue Gardens, a 40 acre site owned by the tramway company and used as a public park.

In June 1911 the track and overhead as well as the eight cars of the C&WT were taken over and operated by the Belfast Tramway Company and their distinctive livery changed to that of the new owners. The trams now ran from the City Hall and there was no change of car.

Thus the Cavehill and Whitewell Tramway passed into history. One feature remained – the section of single track from Bellevue to Glengormley was retained by BCT until the route was abandoned in 1949.

*Adapted from an article by W E Weir*

## Detective Cherry Takes A Walk Belfast, The 4Th Of May 1914

Detective-Sergeant Cherry walked briskly through the trees, following the path which led steadily upwards. A flash of colour caught his eye – a swathe of bluebells lit by a shaft of sunlight. His heart lifted involuntarily at the sight and he stopped. A blackbird called his doobie-doobie song and then, suddenly, all was quiet. Far off, a dim clanging came from the shipyard, but here among the birch and oak there was only the light and shadow and the smell of damp earth. A racket in the branches startled him – a pigeon flapping clumsily through the branches. He looked back at the violet flowers and drank in their efful-



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gence, knowing that it might be the last of them for this spring.

May Reade used a rolling pin to crush the stem of the tulips and dropped them into a crystal vase beside some ferns and baby's breath. She arranged the flowers to her satisfaction, then lifted the vase onto the windowsill. She looked up at the Cave Hill and could see a figure moving along the summit. The bright May sun threw the hill's features into relief so that it looked more dramatic and noble than usual. She promised herself she would take a walk to McArt's Fort before long. For now, however, there was too much to be done. It felt to her like they were running out of time. She put on her coat, checked her bag for keys and went out.

The policeman looked out over the lough and let his eye roam along the docks and shipyard into the centre of the city. There was the "new" City Hall and the other impressive buildings which had sprung up around it in recent years; big, impressive monuments to commerce and industry. He breathed deeply and let out a sigh. On such a beautiful day he ought not to be feeling so tired, he thought. What was the matter with him? He had always had a melancholy streak, but he had been good at keeping it at bay, showing the world a smiling front. Now, however, it seemed as if the strain of that effort was taking its toll. It felt like dark and chaotic forces were impinging on his peace of mind. Perhaps if his present work were not so onerous...

Miss Reade alighted from the tram on the Albertbridge Road and walked a hundred yards or so to McBurney's hardware store. She bought half a dozen candles and a box of safety matches, as well as a canister of paraffin. She made sure not to allow the shop assistant to look too closely at her face. Leaving the shop she turned right and right again, looking over her shoulder to make sure no-one was following her. She knew that sometime soon she would be caught and that her day in court would be a means of publicising their aims, but Dorothy had insisted that she must try to remain undetected for now; while some women were still imprisoned or being tried in Belfast it was good to keep the police guessing. Some of the more well-known members of the movement, such as Marie Johnston and Margaret McCoubrey, were shadowed constantly by detectives, but May was fairly confident that they had not yet begun to monitor her movements. She emerged onto the Albertbridge Road further down and quickened her step when she spotted a tram destined for the centre of town.

Cherry brooded as he stepped down from McArt's Fort, hands in pockets, and walked north towards a small cairn he was fond of. He liked to imagine how men many centuries before had kept vigil here, or performed funeral rites, looking up the coast to Slemish or west to Lough Neagh. It seemed to him that life must have been simpler then and nobility of character less rare. The work he was forced to do was far from noble – tracking down hysterical women so that they might be prosecuted for arson and other crimes. He'd had his fill of it a week or so ago when Dorothy Evans was brought before the judge and proceeded to turn the court into a macabre freak-show. His stomach still sickened when he remembered how she screamed like a maenad, her body in spasm, then flailing grotesquely. He knew that this was part of her strategy; to shock and disturb so as to draw attention to her cause, but he could neither fathom nor condone the woman's crazed obsession. Perhaps women ought to have the vote, thought Cherry – and probably would eventually – but to be so extremist, to endanger one's own life and the lives of others, to thus belie the dignity of womanhood – it disturbed him. He turned and made his way back to the descending path.

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May Reade changed trams in the city centre and as she watched the streets go by she thought of last night's events. At half past midnight she and Lucy had entered the grounds of the Cavehill Lawn Tennis and Bowling Club. Recently built, it was another symbol of male supremacy and the establishment. They were dressed in black and had pulled thick socks over their shoes to muffle the sound of their footsteps. The new pavilion sat framed against the starry sky, a handsome building of which the Antrim Road burghers were very proud. They found a window with a catch on the inside. Lucy smeared soap



**Cavehill Conservation Campaign lobbys Stormont.**

Katherine Hall, Cormac Hamill, Alex Attwood (the Environment Minister), Brian Callaghan, Martin McDowell, Tierna Cunningham (Sinn Fein Councillor for Castle Ward), and Gerry Kelly (Sinn Fein MLA for North Belfast). The delegation urged the Minister to consider bringing the Chapel of the Resurrection into public ownership as a step towards developing the building for the benefit of the local community.



# J.D. O'Boyle

M.V.B., M.R.C.V.S.

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on it and then stuck some brown wrapping paper to the soap, before hitting it a sharp tap with a hammer. There was a soft crunch and when they pulled away the paper the shards came with it. May reached through the hole and opened the catch. Once inside, they scattered paraffin on the floor and furnishings. They left firelighters in the corners of the room and at the legs of a table. They climbed out through the window and dropped a match on the soaked carpet. They scattered some Suffragist literature about the grounds and then fled, hearing the crackle and roar of the fire grow louder behind them.

The detective picked his way along the rocky path, descending towards the Devil's Punch Bowl. He remembered his parents and grandparents talking about the fair that used to take place up here on Easter Mondays. Were those the good old days? It found a new use now as an occasional drill-yard for the UVF, ever since anti-Home Rule fever had gripped the North. He stopped and looked down at the Antrim Road. He picked out the Fortwilliam golf links and the big houses along Fortwilliam Park, then, between these two and closer, a black smudge where the Cavehill Bowling pavilion had been. Smoke rose thinly from the ruins still. He'd spent the morning going through the evidence, taking notes for his report and questioning the witnesses. There were the usual Suffragist pamphlets scattered on the grass and the usual *modus operandi* was evident – kerosene, firelighters, a broken window pane. Where to begin? Evans and Muir were out of the frame in any case; they were doing their time in Crumlin road Gaol, whose dark shape he could make out further west. Some of the more high-profile members of the movement were already being monitored, occasionally making monkeys of his men. He either had to find more manpower to widen the net or take some men off the "usual suspects" and set them to work investigating the newer recruits.

Miss Reade entered a street off the Limestone Road and stopped at number 18. She looked up and down the street – some children and two women coming out of a house with a perambulator. The door opened and a servant let her in. When she entered the drawing room Lucy was standing at the window, a newspaper in her hand. She was a pretty woman in her early 20's, younger than May and of a more nervous disposition.

"Have you seen it?"

"Yes."

"Gracious, May, I got such a shock reading how quickly the fire was discovered. What if that policeman had caught us leaving? He was at the pavilion only ten minutes after we'd gone!"

"Well, I doubt he would have caught both of us, but it's possible one of us would have been in gaol this morning."

"Oh my God!"

"Keep your voice down!"

"Sorry. Well, I suppose that's where we're headed anyway, isn't it?"

"M-hm. Whatever it takes to move things on."

"Well this isn't going to do much, is it? Three paragraphs in a distinctly supercilious tone. Look – the usual literature relating to the 'votes for women' crusade was found scattered about near the pavilion – the usual literature!"

"It's another small step, a sign we're not going to give in. Look, this thing is catching fire – we've more active members than we've ever had and there's a huge anger



that we can tap and channel. Dorothy and Madge have really shifted things. Nobody who read about those two days in court can take it lightly anymore. Granted, some will dismiss us as crazy women, but anyone with a heart will have felt their dedication ... their passion ... their courage. And the truth of it, too! Even the journalists couldn't gloss over that."

"You're right. I know. It's just that I lose patience sometimes. Right then, what's next?"

Cherry looked for the bluebells again as he moved through the trees, but he must have missed them. He was thinking of the crowd in court for the trial of the two Suffragettes, most of them women and supporters of the movement. They packed the gallery, and when the RM cleared the court a group of them remained as "journalists". Some of them he knew; Dr. Bell and Mrs Priestley McCracken, the writer, among them. Others he did not recognise, even though he had instructed his men to get any information they could. Shame we couldn't take a photograph. Ah well, just have to see who we can pick up at the weekly Suffragist meetings in Wellington Place. And then what? More house searches, more hunger strikes, more Cat and Mouse, more chaos and uproar in court. They make the law look asinine, he thought. Just like women – you think you've put your foot down and they make you look like a brute.

Miss Reade breathed deeply as she stepped briskly along the Antrim Road. Talking to Lucy had calmed both their nerves and steeled their sense of purpose. She felt pleasure in the warm air of spring and the sense of new beginnings. She thrilled at the thought of a new world where women's voices would be heard at last – voices which would cry out in defence of mothers and children, of the weak everywhere. The voice of compassion and care. A man was walking towards her and he looked familiar. Was this one of her brother's

cronies – one of the Trinity crowd perhaps? Or was it ...? It was the policeman who gave evidence that day, the man in charge of the investigation. Don't give yourself away, she thought. Keep moving. Breathe.

Cherry wondered why the woman was carrying such a heavy load. She looked well-to-do; couldn't she have had her purchases delivered? She was a strong-looking woman; tall and straight and handsome. She kept her eyes down as she passed him, but he'd swear she'd seen him. Something familiar about her. Where had he seen her before? At the theatre perhaps? No – of course! That day in court. She had been in the gallery, he was sure of it. What was she carrying? Where was she going? He continued walking, half whistling something through his teeth. After ten paces he turned and saw her stop at a gate. Before opening it, she looked back at him. For two seconds their eyes locked. He had expected her to look flustered, but she didn't. Instead there was a steadiness in her look – a toughness. She opened the gate and disappeared from view.

John Gribbin

## Author's Note

A year later the suffrage movement in the North of Ireland was in disarray. Many women who had campaigned for the vote turned to war work. Others took a pacifist stand. Either way, it was the war in France and Belgium which took precedence. In 1918 a limited franchise was granted to women at last, but much of the idealism within the movement seemed lost amid the violence of the pre- and post-treaty wars. The kind of vision and passion demonstrated by women such as Elizabeth Priestley McCracken – a vision of justice, compassion and equality for all – were not to be seen again until the Civil Rights movement of the late 60's.

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## FAMILY TREES AND A CAVE HILL TRAGEDY

Researching one's family tree is something that is talked about very much these days, something that has been made more popular but the popularity of TV shows such as *Who do You Think You Are?* and by the easy availability of information through a number of new websites.

Although research has never been easier many people are still unsure how to get started. Websites can be used free of charge. A good one to start with to build your family tree is [www.genesreunited.com](http://www.genesreunited.com) who provide a very easy to use tree which is private to the individual and on which there is no size limit.

The best way to begin is to record the names of all the individuals that you know and ask older relatives for information, as they will know more than you do. By recording your own parents and grandparents, your cousins, and your aunts and uncles, you will have created a mini-tree which you can then extend as you go further back in time.

The 1901 and the 1911 census can be found online at [www.census.nationalarchives.ie](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie), and can be used to find the names of everyone who was living in Ireland on the nights of those two census. Another good site to use is [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) which can be particularly useful in finding information about births.

When you start to research your ancestors you never know what you'll find, and that's what makes it exciting. I have always had a particular fondness for the Cave Hill and hoped that I would find some connection to the area, but alas that was not to be. The closest I came was a blood relative from Belfast called 'Hill Walker' who lived from 1819-1853.

Recently I was carrying out some research for a friend and discovered that he was related to a certain George Arthur who was involved in a tragedy that took place on Cave Hill over 120 years ago. It is a story that I have heard recounted many times during my lifetime and it was a surprise to find a connection to a story which I knew so well.

George lived in Nelson Street and was a typical young man, a clerk who worked for a city centre firm and who was generally popular with all who knew him. He was romantically involved with Nora Tattersall, a young woman who worked as a domestic servant for the Best family in Clarence Place.

On Wednesday 12 March 1890 the young couple walked up what is now the Upper Cavehill Road and headed towards the limestone quarry. Close to where the railway track was at the time they lay down side by side. Nora had a silk handkerchief covering her eyes and a parasol protecting her head. There they carried out an act which was to shock Belfast to its core and the memory of which was to live on in the collective consciousness of the city. George produced a revolver and fired three shots through Nora's left temple and proceeded to fire another into his own head. The couple were found shortly after by a local farmer and a labourer who found George slumped on Nora's chest. When found Nora was quite dead however George was taken to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he died on admission.

The days that followed revealed that this had been a joint act by a couple who, for whatever reason, did not believe that they could live together in life and who were determined to be together in death. During the course of the investigation Nora was revealed as a shy girl with few friends in Belfast and no family in the city. It was unfortunate that it took the deaths of two young people to gain them attention and compassion from the city as a whole.

Many reasons were put forward for the double suicide. One theory was that the couple could not marry because they came from different social classes. Another version was that disapproval from the



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Arthur family kept them apart, but it later emerged that the relationship between the young couple had been kept private and the Arthur family was unaware of who George was seeing. Speculation also rested on the possibility that Nora was already married to an older man in England, but this does not appear to be true either.

Nora's problems seemed to have begun when a young surgeon in a Dublin hospital discharged a syringe of liquid towards her as a practical joke. As a result Nora had lost her sight in one eye which bore a scar following a failed operation. Having researched the story my preferred theory is that Nora did not consider herself good enough and did not believe she could be a good wife to George because of her vision problems. It seems that at the time of her death she was about to be dismissed by the family who she worked for as a domestic servant as it was felt that she was not particular enough in looking after the house. She had tried to explain she had a vision problem but this did not persuade them to keep her. A note found under Nora's pillow after her death stated she could not live any longer and said she did not believe Mrs. Best, her employer, had been just to her.

Nora and George were buried together at the City Cemetery. But that wasn't the end of the matter. The spot where Nora and George died became a shrine for many in Belfast. Thousands trekked up the Cave Hill to the site of the tragedy. It was the young girls of Belfast who particularly identified with the hardships of Nora's life and visited the spot in their droves, particularly at weekends to place white stones in her memory. Many years later the event was still having an impact on the city and was commemorated in poems and a weekly pilgrimage to the spot.

Suicide letters were found on the bodies and were printed in local newspapers. Reproduced below is a poem that was found in George's possession. The message is clearly a personal one, that beauty comes from within. Was this George's way of trying to bolster Nora's self confidence and explain that she was more beautiful to him than anyone else?

*What do you think?  
A fear less one should utter  
Rude words to pain some heart  
Or do an action thoughtlessly  
To make the teardrops start.*

*A curbing of the temper,  
A bridling of the tongue,  
When for the good of other souls  
Will make the old seem young.*

*Then, more than faultless features,  
And more than golden hair,  
Regard the gift of graciousness,  
Oh, maiden, sweet and fair.*

*That, when you go forth daily,  
The thought of every mind  
Will be – she is so beautiful,  
Because she is so kind.*

*True, what is youth and beauty,  
Bright eyes and tresses fair,  
Without the gift of graciousness?  
A gift alas! too rare.*

*But well, too, it becometh,  
This tender, thoughtful grace,  
This courtesy to all around,  
The plainest form and face.*

*The gentle thought for others,  
Forgetting self awhile;  
The willingness to minister,  
And human woe beguile.*

*The question asked in kindness,  
The answer kindly given,  
Will give the human countenance  
A beauty born of Heaven.*

*Martin McDowell*

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## The Great Limestone Quarry on Cave Hill

Cave Hill is dotted with the remains of many quarries, most of them limestone but a few were blackstone quarries. Some were big enough to be individually named – the Whitewell Quarry for example – and are mentioned as working quarries in the nineteenth century. I have come across references in the Trench papers in PRONI to quarry machinery at locations named Ballydown, Ballytober, and Ballysil-lan. The exact locations and the names of other quarries seem now lost to us. But they certainly go much further back. Limestone's use as a source of lime for agricultural use was known in the sixteenth century. And Cave Hill must have had a lot of lime kilns to heat this limestone and turn it into quicklime. These too have been lost to us; somewhere among the trees it should be possible to stumble on the remains of these kilns. The basalt seemed to have been used as aggregate in the construction of streets and roads in Belfast's expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The majority of these quarries are difficult to find as they have been swamped by the trees and the zoo on the eastern slopes. But there is one which is so huge that it is still clearly visible from all over Belfast – the great limestone quarry or the Wallace Quarry. It is over 500 metres long and about 100 metres wide. A rough calculation reveals that about two and a half million tons of stone were extracted from the ground over this time. The unwanted basalt overlay was discarded and formed spoil heaps on the southern edge. The rest was sent to the Milewater Dock by the Cavehill Railway which ran straight down the side of the Cavehill Road and the Limestone Road. The quarry left a huge scar on the slopes above Belfast and is clearly discernible in nineteenth century views of Belfast.

The quarry, owned by a Belfast solicitor, John Wallace began large-scale industrial extraction in 1840 and finished in 1896. The limestone was used mainly as ballast in sailing ships trading out of Belfast. In the days of sail, ships needed a cargo so if they failed to find a cargo in Belfast for the outward journey, they took on a load of limestone which they could unload for cash in English ports. Steam ships could use water for ballast and this was much more convenient.



As steam replaced sail through the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand for limestone fell and the quarry ceased to be profitable. The 350 acres of the quarry and its surrounding land was acquired in 1988 by Belfast City Council and added to its land acquired from the Donegall family and from other estates to create the 750 acres of the present Cave Hill Country Park.

On the 4 May 1912, Belfast Naturalists' Field Club met at the Waterworks and walked to the now disused quarry; they valued the geological background made visible there. I have come across somewhere a photograph taken at that time (or possibly on another trip by them around that time) of the members of BNFC with the quarry face as background. I would greatly value finding it again if anyone can direct me to its source.

The quarry has not been worked for over a hundred years and its present condition is a tribute to the recuperative powers of nature. In contrast to the industry carried out over those years, it is now a quiet, peaceful place to walk. There is a track through it but his track goes along the southern edge, through what were the spoil heaps of the quarry. These spoil heaps have grassed over and are very pleasant to walk through; there is a constant view down over Belfast. The grass and the spring and summer flowers provide food and shelter to a lot of butterflies; I have seen about ten different species around the site. The quarry floor is completely overgrown with scrub, hawthorn and gorse mainly and is impenetrable. It has become, therefore, a wildlife haven, particularly for birds. As well as a great variety of finches and members of the tit family, I have heard in it each summer for the last two years the distinctive voice of the grasshopper warbler, a migrant bird on the edge of its range and not that common. There are certainly foxes hunting through it and probably badgers.

But all is not well with the present quarry and some remedial work is required. The Belfast Hills Partnership has recently been successful in getting funding of nearly a million and a half pounds to be spent over a period of four or five years across the whole of the Belfast Hills. Part of their scheme involves upgrading work in the Wallace quarry. There is concern about a recent loss in biodiversity; until some years ago this area was grazed by moiley and dexter cattle, rare breeds owned by the zoo. There is currently no grazing here and the scrub is taking over too much. It is proposed to clear some of it to encourage a variety of grasses, to create a patchwork of different habitats which will support a greater insect variety and consequently a greater bird variety. Sycamore trees have begun to invade; these are not native and support relatively few insects and all but a few will be eliminated from the quarry; some will be left as nesting resources. There is a possibility of ledges on the chalk face being cleared as possible nesting sites and also nest boxes could be erected. This work will be carried out in conjunction with the City Council biodiversity officer and the park manager.

If we look after this valuable resource, generations to come will experience the pleasure of wandering through this rich wildlife resource and spectacular viewpoint long into the future.

*Cormac Hamill*

*I am indebted to Stewart McFetridge for most of this information about the historical quarry. It and a great deal more is contained in a pamphlet of his "The Cavehill Waggon Line. Belfast's Forgotten Railway" published in 1999.*

# CAVEHILL



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## The Killing of a Gamekeeper

One of the Donegall family's gamekeepers, James Huston, was recruited at the age of 17 in c.1868 as an under-keeper in the Castle demesne. His commitment to his role led to his violent death in 1875 and to a sensational murder trial.

It was on 26 October that James Murphy and James O'Neill set out for the Cave Hill equipped with 'a gun, a dog, a basket with ferrets, a game bag and ammunition', gear that suggests pursuit of rabbits rather than pheasants. They were certainly well equipped because the gun was 'an exceedingly good one', a modern 'patent pin-fire double barrellled breech loader, made with strong mechanical arrangements'. Murphy also had a licence for it.

The two hunters proceeded from Belfast via the Shore Road, up Gray's Lane, and on up the track to Joseph Magill's property, Martello Towers (today's main path up the hill). En route they met and greeted Ellen Allen, one of Magill's servants, who lived in a house within Magill's farmyard close to the Volunteer Well.

Further up the lane they were challenged by a Mr Cosgrove but he was re-assured when he learnt that Mrs Allen knew they were there. When they arrived at the farm yard they accosted Allen's grandson, a young boy called Robert Magennis, and gave him 14 pence to go and buy whiskey for them. Only after consuming this did they proceed with the hunt.

They were initially successful and captured two rabbits, but then they were spotted by James Huston who gave chase. As a fit 24 year old he soon closed with them, but they ran back into Magill's farmyard and closed the gate. There was no back gate to the yard so they scaled the 10' high wall but Huston caught up with them on the far side.

A confused struggle ensued. According to Huston, Murphy fired at him and missed, and a hand to hand struggle then ensued in which Huston was shot at close range in the thigh. Nothing daunted he got the upper hand by biting Murphy on the thumbs and hitting him over the head with his own gun.

Meanwhile Murphy's companion, James O'Neill, fled the scene.

Huston, despite his injuries, managed to escort Murphy down the lane, and was soon assisted by Francis Cowan, a servant at Martello Tower. They continued to the gate lodge (which still survives today) where a Mrs Cosgrave was the keeper. While they awaited the police and medical assistance for Huston, Murphy made his escape through the back door abandoning his coat and a bag with the two rabbits in it. His gun and ferrets were later retrieved from the hill.

Huston's condition worsened and he was taken to hospital by cart. Although he was not at first thought to be in danger, he died of his injuries on the morning of 28 October. Murphy thus became a wanted man and for murder. Identifying him may have been assisted by his coat and other accoutrements, but the police probably secured the necessary information from Ellen Allen and Mrs Cosgrave; Huston speaking from his hospital bed was 'certain' that they knew his assailant. Soon enough the police were able to track Murphy to 44 Denmark Street off Clifton Street, but the bird had flown the coop.

In early November he was arrested in Cork on board a tender



*The Bluebell & The Butterfly  
A Red Admiral photographed on the Cave Hill.*

taking him out to the steamer Nevada which was leaving for New York. Although drunk he had taken pains to disguise himself. He was travelling under the alias Robert Johnson and had shaved his beard. Crucially, however, when his gloves were removed the bite marks inflicted by Huston were revealed.

It seemed a cut and dried case, however at his trial at the County Antrim Assizes in March 1876 doubts soon emerged. The evidence suggested the action had taken place within Joseph Magill's property and not in the Castle demesne. What was more Magill's coachman, Thomas Donnelly, had given Murphy permission to shoot on Magill's ground and Murphy had already done so two or three times previously.

Yet ultimately the case did not hang on whether Murphy was a legal hunter or a poacher, or on whether he had been given permission to shoot on Magill's ground. The Judge, Baron Fitzgerald, in his summing up, certainly strengthened the possibilities of an acquittal. He had even had 'a doubt as to whether or not he ought to send the case to the jury'.

The apparently guilty or even reprehensible behaviour of the defendant hardly mattered if there was a possibility that he was innocent, and there was an Achilles heel for the Crown: they 'did not produce a single witness who saw the shot fired'.

In the event the jury took only a few minutes to declare Murphy not guilty. The old anti-landlord instinct that had aroused popular enthusiasm at the time of the Rights of Way case in 1859 evidently still had some life in it in 1876 because Murphy's release was greeted with 'some applause'.

*John Gray*

*NB. This is just one of the very many episodes that John Gray plans to include in his forthcoming 'History of the Cave Hill'. He would welcome any original snippets of information or copies of documents or photographs relating to the Cave Hill.*

*He can be contacted on 028 9029 0178*

*E mail: [j.gray310@ntlworld.com](mailto:j.gray310@ntlworld.com)*



## The Dig on Cave Hill: A Personal Perspective

Towards the end of summer 2011 the Belfast Hills Partnership put out a call for volunteers to help at a week-long, major community event on Cave Hill. This was to be an archaeological dig, part of a heritage project, initiated by the Partnership, and it encourages people to discover for themselves the history of the Belfast Hills. The project includes the Cave Hill.



Trench 1 Ballyaghahagan Cashel, Cave Hill October 2011

The dig site chosen was the Ballyaghahagan Cashel, thought to be an early Christian stone-built enclosure - although there is some evidence of a possible 17th century house from the Plantation period. The Cashel is situated just inside the Cave Hill Country Park close to the car park at the Hightown Road entrance. It is marked as the "Hightown Fort" on the Cave Hill Country Park maps.



Part of the Cashel at Ballyaghahagan, October 2011

The dig was supervised by the Queen's University Department of Archaeology led by Dr Harry Welsh, and it involved over a hundred local schoolchildren and adult volunteers. Members of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign were offered the chance to help out on one of the sessions, and so with an interest in the area and its history I decided to volunteer.



Trench 2 Ballyaghahagan Cashel, October 2011

The weather in October proved to be mixed, with a weekend of heavy rain, so in preparation, on Sunday 23rd, I dressed in wet weather gear with water boots. Unfortunately the site, by then water-logged and with the grass treacherously slippery, had to be closed for safety reasons and digging temporarily abandoned. I could only paddle to the gateway above the car park and look up at the site through rain-dashed glasses as the water ran off me in all directions.

However our group was lucky enough to be offered the chance to take shelter in the small portacabin "office" and examine some of the earlier finds.

It was intriguing to handle, albeit through plastic, a small sandstone disc clearly marked with 'cheese segment' type etching. Little is known about this object's purpose, but it had clearly been brought some distance to the site as there is no natural sandstone on Cave Hill.



Sandstone disc with etching found at the Ballyaghahagan Cashel site October 2011, photo Belfast Hills Partnership

We were then shown several worked flints and there was an informative discussion about the skills needed to nap the rock nodules into these early tools. One, a small scrapper, just fitted neatly into my hand with a perfect indentation for my thumb. It was not difficult to envisage how it could have been used efficiently in ancient times to scrape the fat from the inside of animal skins in preparation for using them for clothing or shelter. I felt a particular sensation in handling an object which had been made so many centuries ago by human beings who inhabited a world so very different from our own.

Continuing use of the hill down through the intervening years was clear from the unearthing of part of a rusting gate-hinge. This indicated more recent human and animal habitation, but clearly much closer to our own time.

At that stage, only part way through the dig, there appeared to be more questions being asked than answers found. But fortunately the weather did improve and it was possible to continue digging, though without my help as I was by then back at work. Part of the pleasure of becoming involved in such schemes is being able to witness the raw material of archaeology as the earth surrenders some of its secrets - the evidence which is later used as the basis for written accounts of the past, and then perhaps displayed in the more sedate circumstances of a museum. Later, while walking on Cave Hill, it was also quite moving to reflect that other footsteps, in very different times, had been that way.

Sheila Johnston

## Fresh Garbage

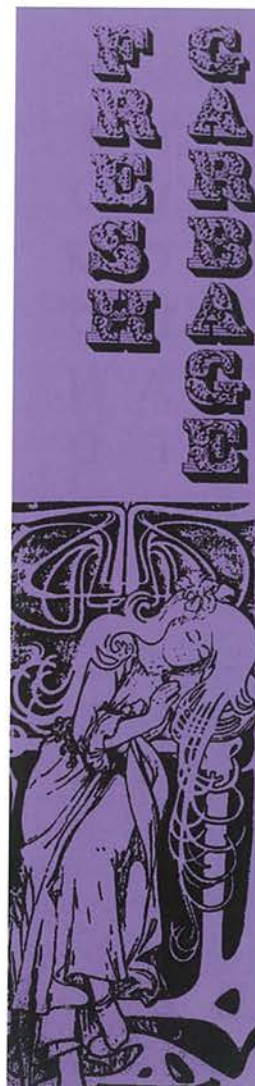
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# Upcoming Events

The Cavehill Conservation Campaign will be taking a series of guided walks on Cave Hill. These walks will be from 1000 to 1300 on the third Saturday of each month (with the addition of Saturday 31 March) from April to October. Participants should be equipped for possible inclement weather and wear suitable footwear. Children and young people under 16 must be accompanied by a suitable adult.

Most walks will have a theme where an expert will talk about a particular aspect of the Hill. In the absence of a theme, there will be a walk over the top of Cave Hill with a guide who will give a general overview of the historical and cultural aspects of the Hill and will bring participants to some of its most important sites. All walks are free.

For more information, contact us via this website or phone (028)90291357

Event	Date	Time	Description
Guided walk on Cave Hill	Sat 16 June	1000-1300	Join us as we explore Cave Hill in the company of a knowledgeable guide to look at aspects of geology, archaeology, history and flora and fauna. Come suitably dressed for a walk on the wild side!
Guided geology walk on Cave Hill	Sat 21 July	1000-1300	Join us as we explore Cave Hill in the company of a knowledgeable guide to look at aspects of geology.
Guided archaeology walk on Cave Hill	Sat 18 Aug	1000-1300	Join us as we explore Cave Hill in the company of a knowledgeable guide to look at aspects of archaeology.
Foraging walk on Cave Hill	Sat 15 Sep	1000-1300	Join us as we go foraging on Cave Hill in the company of a knowledgeable guide. We will, of course prepare and eat anything we find!
Guided walk on Cave Hill	Sat 20 Oct	1000-1300	Join us as we explore Cave Hill in the company of a knowledgeable guide to look at aspects of geology, archaeology, history and flora and fauna. Come suitably dressed for a walk on the wild side!

## CAVEHILL WORD SEARCH

D O N E G A L L S  
 G P T L A S A B K  
 O O W L E Z A H A  
 C T F A I R O V O  
 A E A P I N E O M  
 V E A S T E R L O  
 E N M A D I G A N  
 S K R A P R E E D  
 C O T C H N L Y A  
 N O T S E M I L Y

Circle or highlight these words in the square:

BASALT	DONEGALLS	MONDAY
BENEDEN	EASTER	OAKS
BENMADIGAN	FAIR	PINE
CAVES	HAZELWOOD	SCOTCH
DEERPARK	LIMESTONE	ZOO
POTTEEN	ELM	

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## CALLING ALL MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS!

If you are a member wishing to renew your membership for 2012, or a new member wishing to join, it's never been simpler! You can either join at our Annual General Meeting or attach a cheque to the form below and send it to:

Cave Hill Conservation Campaign, 32 Waterloo Park, Belfast, BT15 5HU

All e-mail addresses will be kept secure and only used to communicate with our members

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