



# The Cave Hill Campaigner

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## Returning The Ring

In 1974 as a ten-year-old boy on our regular Sunday morning walks on Cave Hill with my late father we would talk about many things. On one occasion he told me about an American bomber plane that had crashed in 1944. This pricked my interest so much this was all I wanted to talk about. He told me about the artefacts he had picked up two or three days after the crash and said he would show me when we got home, I almost ran home...I still have the artefacts to this day!

I frequently visited the crash site for many years looking for fragments of the aircraft and always wondered about these men and their families that were left behind and what part of the States they were from. My late mother never liked me going to the site as she always said my luck changed on each visit and it wasn't always for the better.

On a cold dull afternoon in December 1993 I went for a visit and sifted through the soil as I had done on previous occasions, the light was fading and I had only retrieved a few fragments which I

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*This is nine out of the ten crew members that died in the crash on Cave Hill (the tenth man took the photo)  
Lawrence Dundon is first left in the front row.*



*These are the original fragments which my late father gathered in June 1944.*

had put in my pocket and made my way back down the hill to the car before total darkness fell. After dinner that evening I remembered the fragments were still in my pocket and decided to wash them to see what they were. One piece when the dirt was washed away looked like a metal washer but was coming up gold in colour. On closer inspection I could see something written on the inside. I rushed upstairs to get a magnifying glass and was astonished that it had a date and two names engraved 10/21/39 Ruth and Larry. As I sat in silence for a while the realisation of this being a wedding ring set in and I knew I had to try and find whom it belonged to and return it somehow.

I had a list of the crew members that I had obtained from the American Military Archives in the late 1980s and on looking through the names there were two Lawrences listed - this was not going to be as easy as I thought.

I contacted the US Graves Commission to see where the two Lawrences were buried, a few months had passed when I received a reply telling me that Lawrence Dundon from Kentucky had been buried in Cambridge, England and Lawrence McGrane had been repatriated back to the states at the request of his family. This left me with a 50/50 chance as to which Lawrence had a wife called Ruth.

As there were no military records for Lawrence McGrane since his repatriation back to the states

I decided to follow up on any records for Lawrence Dundon. Months went by writing to several government agencies firstly requesting marriage records (the reply came with saddening news that the marriage records were incomplete from 1939-1948 due to a fire) then pension records - this again was disappointing as no one by the name of Ruth Dundon had applied or received a pension, indicating she had possibly passed away also. A period of two years had passed and I was getting frustrated but my determination was still strong that I would return this ring.

As luck would have it two years after the find I received a folder on Lawrence Dundon which had many personal details including letters from Ruth and also from Lawrence's mother Daisy and I finally had a last known address even if it was 1949!! This correspondence was all pre-internet and email and each of the 70 odd letters were written by my then fiancée Dawn on a word processor.

Later that evening I penned a letter to Ruth and some two weeks later the letter was returned with a label saying "not known at this address" I looked up a street map of the address in Kentucky and could see that the area had been redeveloped, only some of the original houses remained, in fact 70% of this street had been made into a new highway, this was yet another disappointment.

My next enquiry was the US Embassy in Belfast to see if they could provide me with the name of a local newspaper in Louisville, Kentucky. I wrote a letter to *The Courier Journal* asking if I could place a note in the personal column in their paper in the hope that someone knew Ruth Dundon. Three months had passed with no reply and I assumed they were not interested. I made contact with the US Military

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Cemetery in Cambridge, England and asked if it was possible to place the ring in Lawrence Dundon's grave, they agreed to place the ring within the turf of the grave. I had started to plan the trip across to Cambridge, England but with work commitments a few weeks had passed when I received a phone call from a columnist called Bob Hill from *The Courier Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky. He told me that he liked my story and wanted to run it in his column that week. Within a few days he telephoned me again to tell me that his column had a huge response and that he had found Ruth Dundon alive and well! Ruth Dundon, now Ruth Gillespie, had remarried and surprisingly still lived at the same address that I had mailed the letter to nine months previously.

The following night I received the telephone call that I had been hoping for, a lady with sweet, southern state accent asking is that Alfred Montgomery and when I replied yes she said "I believe you have something belonging to me and my name is Ruth". We talked for a short time about the lengths that I had gone to in trying to locate someone and she was very appreciative, I offered to get the ring sent by courier but she very quickly said no and asked if there was any way I could bring it out in person as she was afraid of it going astray again. I agreed that I would try and would talk to her again a few days later to let her know if I had any

success. I contacted a few American companies for sponsorship but no one wanted to be involved in anything to do with the darker days of World War Two.

I telephoned the *News Letter* and spoke to journalist Steven Moore. After telling him the story the *News Letter* agreed to cover the costs of the flights for Dawn and myself on the condition that Steven would travel with us to Kentucky to do an exclusive and I agreed to their request not to speak to any other press.

In September 1996 Dawn, myself and Steven Moore travelled to Louisville, Kentucky to return the ring, I entrusted Dawn to keep it safe and although I am not a nervous flyer having the ring in our possession whilst on several aircraft was more than unsettling. When we landed safely in Louisville, Kentucky

we all breathed a sigh of relief.

The following day we were to meet Ruth and return the ring at a ceremony that had been organised at the Baptist Tabernacle which was the church that Lawrence and Ruth had married in 1939. As we walked into the church Ruth and her eldest son Bill were there to greet us in the hallway. Ruth quietly asked if she could see the ring before we went in, her eyes filled with tears as I placed it into her hand she nodded and said "yes that is it". I knew then that the years of searching, letter writing and frustration were

worth it just to see the joy in this lady's face. Ruth handed the ring back to me and we walked into the main church hall where I officially gave it back to her, the person who had placed the ring on Larry's finger some 57 years earlier. Although it was to be an informal gathering all Ruth's friends and family together with over one hundred people including press and photographers had turned out to mark this momentous day. I was awarded honorary citizenship of Louisville, Kentucky and September 22nd is officially known as Alfred Montgomery day. The following day was filled with telephone and radio interviews and we felt like celebrities,



*The owner of the ring Lawrence E Dundon Radio Operator on board the ill-fated plane*

*The actual wedding ring with inscription and damage received in the crash.*



we were treated so well and understood the good southern hospitality which we had only heard about on previous trips to the states.

Dawn and I spent a few days with Ruth and we learnt more about her life with Lawrence or Larry as she fondly named him. She showed me the letters and photographs from a scrapbook she had made during his military service. The last time she had seen him was a few days before he was posted to Europe in 1944, he had called her to say he had a choice between land or air forces and he chose the latter, two weeks later he was dead. It was a week later before Ruth was informed by telegram. Daisy his mother was so distraught by the news she became ill leaving Ruth with the difficult decision not to have the body returned some three years later. Daisy died in 1956.

Ruth remarried in 1946 to Woody Gillespie and had four children but she never forgot about Larry and had her own wedding ring made into an engagement ring when he died. Woody later died in 1995 after a period of ill health and Ruth started to write a book on her life story which was full of wonderful memories of her time with Larry.

We would keep in touch by telephone taking it week about to call and Ruth almost became like a second mother to me. Dawn and I made frequent trips to Louisville, Kentucky in the following years, we tried our best and invited Ruth to visit Ireland but she never took us up on our offer - she had never flown and was frightened too.

Between September 1996 and the present day the story has maintained interest and carried on. I have given many talks to Schools, Historical Societies, numerous radio and television interviews. Two of the TV news reports can be found on you tube (B17 Crash Cavehill Relative Visit Part 1 and part 2). These were on two different occasions when surviving relatives of Lawrence Dundon (Radio Operator) and Joseph Nobile (Navigator) on the ill-fated aircraft visited the permanent memorial erected by Belfast City Council in the Belfast Zoo complex just metres from the actual crash site. Then of course we heard in 2004 that the framework of my story had been dramatised by writer Peter Woodward and director Sir Richard Attenborough, after they heard an hour long documentary on BBC Radio 4 telling my story. The film production was to start in 2006-2007 in various locations both here and stateside and most importantly some of the scenes

were shot on our own Cave Hill. The film *Closing the Ring* was a big success in the US and Australia and I had some input advising and consulting during this production.

In the Visitor Centre at Belfast Castle there is an excellent display case with fragments of the aircraft and an information board telling the story in brief. This is seen by many international tourists to Belfast and even those taking the Belfast City Sightseeing Bus Tours which now visit this location during the summer months.

Myself and William Alan Lindsay are in the final stages of compiling a full book on the crash, crew members lives before enlisting and of course much more detail on "The Ring Story". This should be published late 2018. If anyone has stories handed down or passed onto them over the years about the crash we would love to have them to include in the book and contact can be made through the *Cave Hill Conservation Campaign*.

Alfred Montgomery

Alfred Montgomery in the Visitors Centre, Belfast Castle





# Chairman's Report 2017/18

Our programme of introducing the Belfast public to all aspects of Cave Hill continued apace last year. We saw an increase in the numbers of people who came into contact with us. Our organized walks were attended by 321 people and our Facebook page has now nearly one thousand members, members who engage in lively debate and who reminisce and post all sorts of interesting photographs. Some of the photos are of outstanding quality. As usual we printed 3,000 copies of our annual magazine. We also hosted two clean-ups by firms in Belfast (Ernst & Young and The Housing Executive), facilitated by Belfast City Council and the Volunteer Now organisation. I also delivered a lecture on Cave Hill to over fifty members of Newtownabbey Ladies' Probus Club.

We launched the commemorative plaque for the White Stone with a successful breakfast at the Castle in the presence of the Lord Mayor, Ald. Nuala McAllister and with Eamon Phoenix as key speaker. That plaque is now in place beside the white stone.

We are at present organizing a permanent exhibition in the Castle basement. This is the subject of a separate article in this Campaigner.

We also planted trees supplied by Belfast City Council and wildflower seeds supplied by Belfast Hills Partnership and we were also involved with Belfast Hills Partnership in clearing part of the overgrown pond in the Wallace Quarry and in getting rid of encroaching gorse on the shoulder of the hill. There is an area of Himalayan Balsam close to the Castle and we once more were involved in taking it out. We completed another year of our butterfly survey and for the second year in a row, it disappointingly indicated that the decline in species and numbers continues.

Cave Hill Country Park had its usual issues during the year - of dog control, vandalism and litter. BCC has put up some new litter bins and that must be welcomed.

But waste bins need regular emptying and too often, this doesn't happen. Petty vandalism unfortunately occurs frequently; the white stone has had inappropriate slogans written on it twice since we restored it.

Unfortunately, the presence of Ash Die-back has been confirmed within the Park and I'm afraid that over the next few years, we are going to have to watch all or nearly all of our ash trees die; there is no way of preventing this. We have expected this development for some time but now it is here. We expect to be involved in a programme to replace these losses with other native trees.

The issues of mountain bikes on Cave Hill are dealt with in a separate article in this edition.

I am once more grateful to my fellow directors of Cave Hill Conservation Campaign for their commitment and concern throughout the year. I want also to acknowledge the support of Belfast City Council and in particular the encouragement of the Outreach Officers. And of course, I am grateful to the members of the Campaign for their keen interest and support.

*Cormac Hamill*

## J.D. O'Boyle

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

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*Cormac McSparron leads archeology walk in September 2017*

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# The Legacy Of William Adair Caulfield

Allow me to take you on what I believe to be an intriguing journey into a lost but very important part of our local history.

Some of our readers may remember the article published in the 2016 issue *Painting the Stone* by Jacqui Corr (nee Caulfield). In her story, Jacqui gave an account as to how and why we had been searching for some of her family background. For those of you who may not have read it, Jacqui is the granddaughter of the late William Adair Caulfield, a postman, who lived locally at Cavehill Cottage with his family. During World War 2 William was commissioned by the then War Department to paint white a particular large rock on the forehead of the “Sleeping Giant” (Cave Hill) and keep it as such for the duration of the war. This was to act as a navigational aid for aircraft coming in to land at Nutts Corner Airfield and Langford Lodge military airbase. The oral evidence of Jacqui, her aunt Maureen and a 2008 article in *Your Place and Mine* by Alan Caulfield (late brother of Jacqui) enabled us to uncover further facts.

After the war the paint on the stone began to fade as the role it played during WW2 slipped into the annals of history. However, recently we have become aware of others who went up the hill in later years after the war to give it another wee lick of fresh white paint. A photo from 1950 taken on Cavehill Road shows the stone still somewhat white. A video evidence from 2008 shows that by then the white paint was fading again. To myself and other Belfast folk, without any background knowledge, it simply became known as ‘The White Stone’ as it did resemble a stone when viewed from down below. I was always of the opinion, as were others, that it was a huge chunk of limestone. Looking up from below it appears as one structure when in fact it’s three slabs of a basalt rock outcrop formed some 60 million years ago, and welded together, as it were, by volcanic action. The entire formation measures 5ft 8in high, 4ft 8in wide and 5ft 8in deep.

In more recent years the stone has been painted in various colours by some people from the surrounding areas to portray their different political persuasions. It went back and forth from red, white and blue to green, white and orange. Although on a few occasions it took on a very different lighter tone, for example, yellow/gold at Easter time, it showed up as pink for the Giro D’Italia and Gay Pride. Unfortunately, it always

seemed to revert back to the political colours we all know too well. Graffiti of the written type has also plagued its once proud standing.

In mid-April 2016 it became very noticeable that the stone appeared to gradually take on a brighter face from that of the grotesque caricature it had become thanks to the so-called graffiti artists. It had been covered in a mixture of colours, green, yellow, blue, white and pink plus with what looked to represent a set of awful big red lips painted right in the centre. Lots of handwritten graffiti was also present and blue and pink paint had also been daubed on a surrounding group of smaller basalt stones.

After investigating this very welcome change it was discovered that the stone had indeed been repainted white and each of the smaller stones in grey! A handwritten inscription had also been put in place on one of the smaller stones to the left stating “The White Stone has been restored in memory of the family who first painted it during World War 2”. Although we were unable to identify the person or persons responsible, the tribute would not go unnoticed.

In May 2016 Linda Stewart published a story in the *Belfast Telegraph* under the heading *Mystery* over the restoration of Cave Hill stone that guided pilots in wartime. Subsequently, a further article, by David Whelan appeared two days later in the *North Belfast News*.

With the sudden upsurge of interest in the White Stone, a motion was passed at a board meeting of Cave Hill Conservation Campaign on 8 June 2016 to submit an application to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) Historic Environment Division for recognition of the ‘stone’ as an historical landmark. Later that month

*Pink Stone*







*Graffiti on the Stone*

we were in for a very pleasant surprise when we were informed that the White Stone was to be added to the NIEA 'Defence Heritage' database of the Heritage Records & Designation Branch, Historic Environment Division for Communities. We are very much indebted to Philip Smyth, Archaeological Inspector, and his colleagues within the division who immediately recognised the stone for what it represented and had no hesitation in having it recorded and added to the Defence Heritage database as an historical landmark. It would also be added to the new Historic Environment map viewer. In November 2016 the White Stone was added to Facebook's Love Heritage NI. The stone is also registered and available on Google Earth and Maps.

The media continued its coverage with articles in The Irish News (11 November 2016) by Gareth McKeown and Belfast Telegraph (1 December 2016) by Rebecca Black.

The rise of public and official interest in the history of the White Stone led the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign to propose in September 2016 that a plaque be installed at the location. In order to do so it was necessary to apply for permission from Belfast City Council as the site lay within the boundaries of Cave Hill Country Park. Permission was granted and McAdams Memorials were commissioned for the task. A provisional date for installation was set for the first week in March 2017.

Since we unveiled the story/history of the White Stone, a well deserved time of peace has reigned with it free from any graffiti etc. after being subjected to for many a year. Notably it had been given a little touch-up of paint now and again, nobody yet knows by whose hand! We know several people have visited the stone including mothers and fathers with their children. Some folk had even left little mementos such as a Remembrance Day cross, wee prayer cards and at Christmas 2016 a holly wreath was

*Mark Turner, Patrick Adams, Nuala McAllister and Cormac Hamill at plaque unveiling.*





placed at the foot of the stone, obviously in memory of a loved one. We have been made aware that the ashes of at least one person had been scattered in and around the White Stone. For all intents and purposes it seemed as though the stone had taken on another role, from that of its wartime involvement, to one of a symbol for peace, remembrance and maybe even reconciliation.

We had confirmation in January 2017 that the White Stone had received recognition by the Fellowship of Ulster Local Studies and registered under their 'Hidden Gems and Forgotten People'.

In February 2017 an attempt was made to dislodge the grey stones and indeed the White Stone from the very earth. The fools hadn't the brains to realise the stones are all a part of the entire Cave Hill basalt rock structure which was formed about 60 million years ago.

The Cave Hill Conservation Campaign, Belfast City Council and McAdams Memorials worked together for a period of months to design an appropriate memorial plaque. The official unveiling of the plaque (by the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nuala McAllister) took place in Belfast Castle on 11th August 2017 at a breakfast ceremony courtesy of Belfast City Council. This was attended by Cave Hill Conservation Campaign Board of Directors and fifty of its members. The Belfast City Council was represented by Mark Turner and the guest speaker was historian Dr. Eamon Phoenix.

The next challenge was installation (set for 1 September 2017) which presented us with a further challenge as to the best possible method of getting to the remote hillside location of "The White Stone" with the plaque and all necessary equipment. Thankfully help was at hand through our "Friends of the

Hills" Christopher McLaughlin of the Hightown Landfill Site and Quarry with his gallant crew. Christopher along with land-rover and two crew, Leigh and Brian, were put at our disposal and got the team with equipment, including a portable generator, to within 200 yards of the site with amazing efficiency. Equipment was then manhandled down the steep slope as it was absolutely impossible to get the land-rover any closer.

After approximately five hours the arduous task was successfully completed with the plaque positioned beside The White Stone and sealed over with a transparent, reinforced, shatterproof polyurethane shield sourced and supplied by Christopher McLaughlin. Let's all hope it will now be revered with all due and just respect!

You will no doubt agree that William Adair Caulfield has indeed left a legacy for each and every one of us to enjoy which will remain as a "Silent Witness" to watch over Belfast - this The White Stone of Cave Hill!

*Bran*



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*Christopher McLaughlin, Patrick Adams and Leigh Jones install the plaque*



# The Do-Do Tree In The Waterworks

In Graham Greene's *The Power and the Glory*, the writer says that 'Hatred is a failure of the Imagination'. I suppose he meant that instead of one response to problems there could be many. Rather than being stuck in the clichéd and predictable, one could let yesterday's thoughts die to embrace the new day.

This morning I woke to a flooded brilliance in the room. Wallpaper and paint took on different hues as the sun rose. Swans honked their way from the Waterworks and a dog barked in a garden opposite. When I paid attention to everything, my heart calmed and my mind grew still.

Downstairs the radio was on. Someone was talking about politics and identity. I listened for a while, made tea and stepped into the garden. Light and shadows everywhere. Inspector robin landed on food my wife had left out. He pecked away until a magpie flew down, took off in the direction of the sun. Then our cat appeared and black and white fluttered skywards.

This could be the story most mornings, but as confetti-like petals drifted from the cherry tree and landed on mossy bricks, my mind went back to Greene. The doors of perception felt cleansed and new. This

small space suggested I could spend a lifetime exploring it. No generalities here but everything as clear as laurel, cherry and flame of the forest. Inside, strident voices hammered on.

The Waterworks were as still as ever. Under a bridge lilies reflected sunlight. Nearby was the doo-doo tree with greens and blue and pinks like Christmas decorations. A girl stood on tiptoe tying a black one on on a lower branch. She laughed as I passed. Her child was in the buggy, his comforter gone at last. I said hello and wished him luck. Somewhere in the distance, bells knelled for Mass. Basalt Cavehill with its myriad of greens towered strong and clear.

This was my real politic, my naming of the parts: islands floating on the lake, a boat bobbing, ducks and swans parading and a man, still, fishing.

Here was the imagination's new beginning. No abstract talk or thought a response to memory. I recalled Greene again; Hatred is a failure of the imagination and saw the many choices. Pay attention to each unfolding moment so it dies of its own volition. If not, we can stay in the hole we have dug, instead of climbing imaginative ladders into the new day.

Tom Morgan

## Small Things

When I remarked to the two old boys in the park that I had not glimpsed the heron lately, they were beside themselves with disappointment:

'You missed him by five minutes. He flew across to the island.'

They cast about for fitting consolation.

'Have you seen the egrets?' I had not. 'There's two of them

lives in the Milewater stream. Keep an eye out for them'.

That's three pleasures:

the old boys

in their baseball caps delighting in small things,

the small things made precious by their delight,

to everyone who will listen, which today,

in this stretch of the park, is everyone.

Frank Ormsby

Poet and editor Frank Ormsby grew up in County Fermanagh. He was educated at St. Michael's College and Queen's University in Belfast and influenced by Seamus Heaney. His poetry collections include *The Darkness of Snow* (2017), *Goat's Milk: New and Selected Poems* (2015), *Fireflies* (2009), *The Ghost Train* (1995), *A Northern Spring* (1986), and *A Store of Candles* (1977).

As an editor, Ormsby has introduced readers to a wide range of Northern Irish poetry and prose written during the Troubles. He edited the literary journal *Honest Ulsterman* from 1969 to 1989 and several issues of the *Poetry Ireland Review*.

He received the Lawrence O'Shaughnessy Award for Poetry from the University of St. Thomas and a Cultural Traditions Award given in memory of John Hewitt. Ormsby taught at the Royal Belfast Academical Institution from 1976 until his retirement in 2010. He now lives in Belfast.



# The Cave Hill Basalt

*The [basaltic] lavas were erupted not only quietly but intermittently.*

*J. K. Charlesworth (1889-1972)  
former Professor of Geology, Q.U.B.  
(from 'The Geology of Ireland')*

Basalt, when fresh, is dark grey / black in colour. It is an igneous rock, formed when very hot (around 1,000°C) lava, from deep in the Earth, cools. Because it cools quickly on contact with the air, it is fine-grained: that is the crystalline minerals, from which it is composed, have little time to grow to any size. The individual minerals are generally so fine, they cannot be seen with the naked eye and are even hard to distinguish with a hand-lens. So how can we see them? For this, a thin-section of the rock is produced in the laboratory and then is viewed through a polarising microscope.



*Sample of unweathered basalt – 60 million years old*

Just under sediments, the floors of most of our oceans are composed of basalt, making this rock the commonest and, arguably, the most important igneous rock in the Earth's crust and huge areas of Mercury, Venus and Mars are basaltic, while basaltic lavas cover about 17% of the Moon's surface. This rock occurs extensively also on land. Just two examples are: the Deccan Traps of India and the Columbia River region of the northwest U.S.A. Closer to home, the basalt of N.E. Ireland forms the largest mass of this rock, of its age (Palaeogene), in these islands. The Giant's Causeway, which is the pre-eminent geological site in Ireland and which has fascinated scientists for hundreds of years, is composed of basalt of similar, but not exactly the same, composition as the Cave Hill Basalt (there are just minor differences in chemical composition).



*Samples of basalt from the Cave Hill. The small white 'specks' are zeolites*

## The composition of the Cave Hill Basalt.

The basalt of the Cave Hill is a mixture of chemical elements like oxygen, silicon, calcium, iron, aluminium, magnesium and smaller amounts of sodium, titanium, potassium, manganese and phosphorus. However, these do not exist in the rock in elemental form, but are present in various combinations, such as silicate and iron-magnesium minerals. It would be mainly the presence of iron that gives basalt its overall dark appearance and makes it relatively heavy (basalt has a higher density than, say, granite).

Minerals called zeolites (usually white) can be seen in the Cave Hill Basalt. As the lava was solidifying, gas bubbles trapped in the lava produced cavities in the rock. Much later, superheated water, containing dissolved chemicals, circulated through the rock and precipitated the zeolite minerals in the cavities. Over

*Picture of a (mostly) weathered basalt exposure, opposite to Zoo entrance.*





25 years ago, a Japanese company considered mining the zeolites in this basalt. But the endeavour did not materialise.

### When did the Cave Hill Basalt form?

Radiometric studies of this rock show it formed around 60 million years ago – during the Palaeogene Period - and the volcanism in Co. Antrim / Cave Hill is thought, according to magnetic studies of the basalt, to have lasted for about one million years or so. But it was not continuous. There would have been long periods of relative quiescence between lava eruptions.

### Connection between the Cave Hill Basalt and a famous book?

Legend has it that Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), during the time when he was based as Church Dean in Northern Ireland, reputedly gazed at the Cave Hill and depicted its shape as the profile of a sleeping giant – an impression that became the inspiration for his classic novel in 1726 *Gulliver's Travels*.

But even if geology isn't your 'cup of tea', for the exercise alone, the Cave Hill is worth a visit. And, unlike some other places of interest in Belfast (like the Titanic Quarter), there is no charge for access!

*Patrick Gaffikin*



*View of the Cave Hill Basalt from the Antrim Road.*

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# Romancing The Stone: The Cave Hill, Commemoration and Politics 1897-1898

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century drew towards its close, the Cave Hill became increasingly politicised. During the summer and winter of 1897, McArt's Fort was the dramatic setting for unionist and nationalist commemorations. Prior to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee on Tuesday 22 June 1897, the Belfast Newsletter carried advertisements from The Cavehill and Whitewell Tramcar Company offering the "*Best View Of The Illuminations On Cavehill, Carnmoney Hill, And Along The County Down Coast*". These illuminations were the celebratory bonfires planned for Cave Hill, Carnmoney and Knockagh.

On Wednesday, the Newsletter reported the large crowds on Cave Hill, at Whitewell and Bellevue and noted that the bonfire on McArt's "*was one of the principal – if not the principal – attractions of the Jubilee celebrations in Belfast.*" Preparations had been thorough – more than 200 wooden barrels had been brought to McArt's along with several barrels of tar and other combustibles. By 9pm, "*the whole surface of the hill was densely thronged with people.*" But this was "*as nothing compared to the numbers who sought to view the fire from the Antrim and Cave Hill Roads.*"

Following several days of unrelenting rain, Jubilee Day was clear but at dusk a dense mist settled on the hill. The Newsletter reported that, for those on the Antrim and Cavehill roads, "*... it must have been a serious disappointment that the haze which settled on the land after sundown prevented to a very large extent anything like a good view being obtained and a dense volume of smoke was about the most that was seen by watchers on the lower roads.*"

The bonfires on Knockagh and Carnmoney Hill could not be seen due to the "*dense bank of fog lying in the Carnmoney direction from Cave Hill.*" For those on McArt's, it was a different matter and as darkness fell the scene was "*magnificent and picturesque.*" The bonfire burned until about half-past one when the rain returned. The Antrim Road remained crowded with people until midnight. None of this impressed Alice Milligan, editor of the Belfast nationalist journal The Shan Van Vocht. In the July issue, she described the bonfire as "*the smallest and evidently the most economical possible. It was kindled on M'Art's Fort and burned feebly, being only seen as a faint glimmer through fog.*" The Freeman's Journal (Dublin) suggested that "*M'Art's Fort was evidently not the place for loyal celebrations.*"

Six months later, on New Year's Eve 1897,

McArt's hosted a very different commemoration when nationalists celebrated the arrival of 1898, the centenary of the United Irish rebellion. The next day, the Irish News reported the "*numerous and enthusiastic crowds*" that had accompanied the torchlight processions leaving Mill Street and North Queen Street and the bonfires in the streets off the Falls Road. It also reported the bonfire on McArt's lit by the 1798 Ulster Provincial Committee, describing how the organisers left the city at 5pm and arrived on McArt's ("*this historic spot*") at 8pm with some dozen tar barrels that were soon set alight.

The Shan Van Vocht described how the delegates "*lighted on the topmost peak ... the beacon fire that ... was to welcome in the Centenary of '98.*" As it died down, the delegates cheered the memory of Tone, McCracken, Neilson and Orr before returning to the National Club in Stephen Street. The Newsletter saw things differently. It reported the New Year's Eve festivities at the Albert Clock but was thoroughly unimpressed by the nationalist celebrations calling them a "*miserable fiasco*". No reference was made to the bonfire on McArt's.

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Eight months later, on 15 August 1898, Dublin hosted a massive nationalist celebration to mark the 100th anniversary of the 1798 rebellion. Central to the occasion were two dressed stones cut from Cave Hill to form part of a pedestal for an intended statue of Wolfe Tone at the junction of St Stephen's Green and Grafton Street. The stones, weighing almost one ton and costing £30, were sent from Belfast by train on the night of Friday 12 August and arrived at Amiens Street station on Saturday morning. The "upper stone" was taken temporarily to the site of the former Newgate Prison while the "lower stone" was taken to St Stephen's Green and was "immediately placed in position by bricklayers."

On the evening of Wednesday 10 August the stones had formed the centrepiece of a nationalist demonstration in Belfast organised by the city's '98 Clubs. The next day, the Irish News described how "an enormous crowd" had gathered on the Falls Road before the procession set off to celebrate the anniversary of the 1798 rebellion in the city that had played such a significant part in the United Irish movement. The Cave Hill stones occupied pride of place and were borne on a horse-drawn carriage "handsomely decorated, as indeed were the animals which drew the interesting burden, while placed in front of the vehicle was the

splendid banner of the Mary McCracken club."

The procession, with bands and banners, went via High Street, the docks and Millfield before returning to the Falls Road where the main speaker was Patrick McHugh, the Irish Party MP for North Leitrim. Joe Devlin, Patrick Flanigan and Michael McCartan, a Belfast solicitor and MP for South Down, were also on the platform. The Dublin and Belfast papers reported that the stones had been "hewn" or "quarried" from Cave Hill but McCartan said they had been "taken from M'Art's Fort". A week earlier, the Irish News reported a meeting of the James Hope '98 Club in the Foresters' Hall in Mill Street. Clearly referring to McArt's, a Mr

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Killen said that “the foundation stone (came) from that spot whereon stood the immortal three at the memorable picnic one hundred years ago.”

On 11 August, the Belfast Telegraph noted unenthusiastically “A Nationalist Fizz - To immortalize the remembrance of this renowned personage (Tone) the “Rememberers” of ‘98 have drawn from the Cavehill a choice substantial boulder which is intended to serve as the foundation stone for the projected monument.” The Irish News did not know whose idea it was to get the stones from Cave Hill. Its editorial of 11 August stated “From whatever source it may have arisen, the suggestion was a happy one”, complimented those who had “properly prepared” the stones and applauded the “remarkable display of enthusiasm and practical energy.”

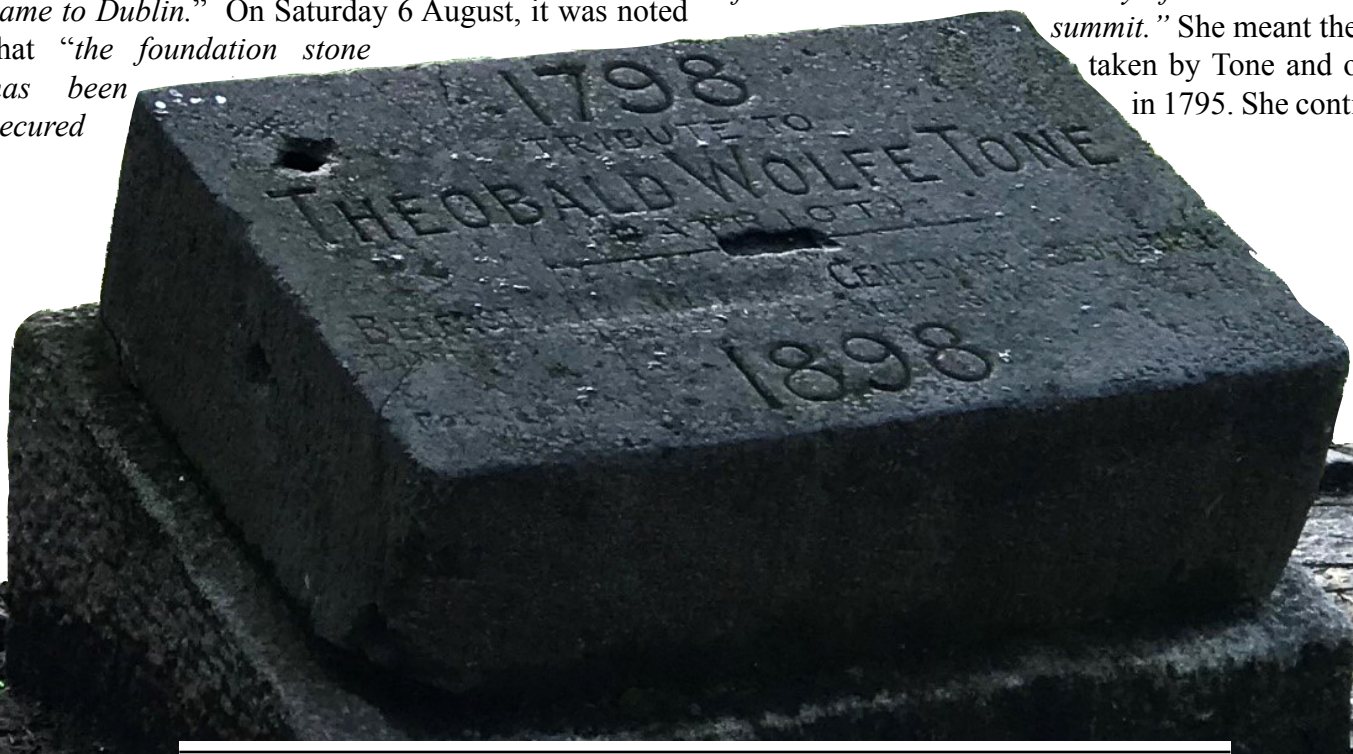
The campaign to have a statue of Tone began in February 1897. On 22 June (Jubilee Day) Alice Milligan proposed to the Centenary Committee that a statue should be commissioned. This was accepted unanimously but, as the statue could not be obtained in time, the foundation stone became the focus for the planned demonstration on 15 August 1898.

On Saturday 30 July 1898, the Memorial Committee reported that “... it was finally decided to approach our friends in sympathy in the vicinity of Cavehill, so memorable during the remarkable period of 1795. A letter was received from Mr Devlin, Belfast that he would secure the foundation stone and forward the same to Dublin.” On Saturday 6 August, it was noted that “the foundation stone has been secured

in Belfast and will be in Dublin on Thursday next.”

What can be made of this? The proposal to get the foundation stone from Cave Hill seems not to have emerged until shortly before the planned march. Joe Devlin then became involved. His boyhood friend, TJ Campbell, wrote in his *Fifty Years of Ulster 1890-1940*: “Devlin and other Belfast men ... sent to the capital a massive block quarried from the Cave Hill.” The inscription on the stone reads: “1798-1898 – Tribute to Theobald Wolfe Tone, Patriot. Belfast Nationalists to ‘98 Centenary Committee Dublin. Presented by Patrick Flanagan, Belfast.” Flanagan, a close associate of Devlin’s, owned the Crown Hotel (now the Crown Bar) and the Adelphi Hotel in Great Victoria Street. His obituary in the Irish News (Flanagan died on 4 January 1902) praised him as “a generous supporter of the National cause”. Did he finance the extraction and transportation of the stones to Dublin?

And whose idea was it to get the stones from Cave Hill? Alice Milligan, Anna Johnston and Henry Dobbin represented Belfast on the ‘98 committee in Dublin. All three (the latter two from North Belfast) and Milligan (who lived on the Antrim Road in the 1890s) had strong links with the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Milligan, who served on the Memorial Committee, was intrigued by Cave Hill and Wolfe Tone. She published his biography in 1898, noted the absence of a monument to him but continued “No such monument is needed whilst we have for ever before our eyes the majestic outlines of the hill sacred to the memory of a vow taken on its summit.” She meant the vow taken by Tone and others in 1795. She continued



The Wolfe Tone Memorial Stone from McArt's Fort, Cave Hill, Belfast. Photographed 15 December 2017 in Croppies' Acre, Dublin. The inscription reads: "1798-1898 – Tribute to Theobald Wolfe Tone, Patriot. Belfast Nationalists to '98 Centenary Committee Dublin. Presented by Patrick Flanagan, Belfast."





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in the style of the time *"The mountain is their monument. Look up at it in the evening when it lies outlined against the clear, cold northern heaven, like an effigy of some slain warrior carven in the darkest purple marble. Over the tombs of knights and kings ... (there is not) ... an image so great, and calm, and beautiful as this, and the roof over it is the ever-changing heaven with light of sun and stars, passing of clouds and mists, arching of rainbows, quivering of lightnings."* Someone who wrote like this about Cave Hill could well have been the person on the Memorial Committee who suggested that the foundation stone should come from McArt's.

Given the IRB's distaste for constitutional nationalism, *"our friends in sympathy in the vicinity of Cavehill"* may have meant Milligan, Johnston and Dobbin rather than Joe Devlin and his colleagues in the Irish Party. But the north Belfast group had neither the expertise nor the resources to get the stones from McArt's. Joe Devlin had contacts with both and it was he and Patrick Flanigan who had the stones cut, dressed and sent to Dublin.

On 16 August, the Irish News described the events in Dublin on Wolfe Tone Day, Monday 15 August: *"The hotels and lodging houses are crowded ... Never did the city present a more thronged appearance ... dense masses ... filling every thoroughfare from noon until sunset ... The city was en fete all day."* Leaving Parnell Square, the parade passed through central Dublin visiting sites linked to the 1798 rebellion before circling St Stephen's Green and finishing at the speakers' platform opposite Grafton Street. It took over an hour to pass a given spot. At its head, on a decorated carriage with a mounted escort, came the upper stone from Cave Hill. Next, led by Joe Devlin and Patrick Flanigan, came men and women from the '98 Clubs from across Ireland including some 2000 from Belfast. The platform party included constitutional politicians such as John Redmond and Joe Devlin as well as republican radicals

such as Maud Gonne and John O'Leary. O'Leary laid the stone with a trowel provided by the American grand-daughter of Wolfe Tone. The radicals took the opportunity to raise awareness of their cause while the constitutional politicians struggled to reconcile their principles with Wolfe Tone's militant republicanism. Maud Gonne complained that Redmond and his companions *"were eulogising Wolfe Tone and trying to keep the people from following his teaching."* The demonstration closed with a band leading the crowd in an enthusiastic rendition of "Who Fears to Speak of '98?" The Belfast Newsletter was outraged. On 16 August, it described the speeches as *"fustian rhetoric"*, denounced the *"hideousness"* of the demonstration, the *"open glorification of rebellion"*, the *"laudation of physical force"* and the *"disloyal Irishmen"* present.

Two trains carrying the Belfast contingent from Dublin arrived at Great Victoria Street at 11:30pm and 2am. The supporters who gathered to welcome the first train clashed with loyalist protesters singing Rule Britannia. The riot, involving *"severe stone throwing"*, centred on the area between the station and Wellington Place. Police and the onset of heavy rain eventually restored order. Not for nothing was Belfast described in 1898 as *"a most combustible town"*.

And where are the Cave Hill stones now? The Irish News stated on 15 August 1898 that they were to form the pedestal of Wolfe Tone's statue *"whenever the patriotic spirit of the country may chance to provide one."* That did not happen. In November 1925, the stones, considered a traffic hazard, were removed and the upper stone was later taken to The Croppies' Acre, now the 1798 Memorial Park near Phoenix Park. The Croppies' Acre is believed to be the burial place of many of the United Irish executed in Dublin following the failure of the 1798 rebellion. The upper stone from Cave Hill is still there.

Daniel McCall



## Exhibition in the Castle

A number of items associated with Cave Hill have come to us in the last couple of years and it struck us that they should be put on display for the wider public. We have been offered a space in the basement of the castle and we are looking forward to adding to the existing exhibits.

We have the axe which Rinty Monahan used at Cavehill Cottages when he was out training on the hill and we have a mediaeval axe-head found some years ago below an uprooted tree. We also have some flint scrapers and musket balls found on Cave Hill. The Ulster Museum have kindly allowed us to replicate the gold bell-ended bracelet found in 1993 and we are hoping to make a copy of the Cave Hill Diamond, now in the possession of the Linenhall Library. But I am certain that there have been other finds over the years.

If anyone has any item associated with Cave Hill which they might want to donate or give as a long-term loan, we would be delighted to put it on display with appropriate acknowledgement. The exhibition should be available before the summer and we hope it will expand over the years to come.



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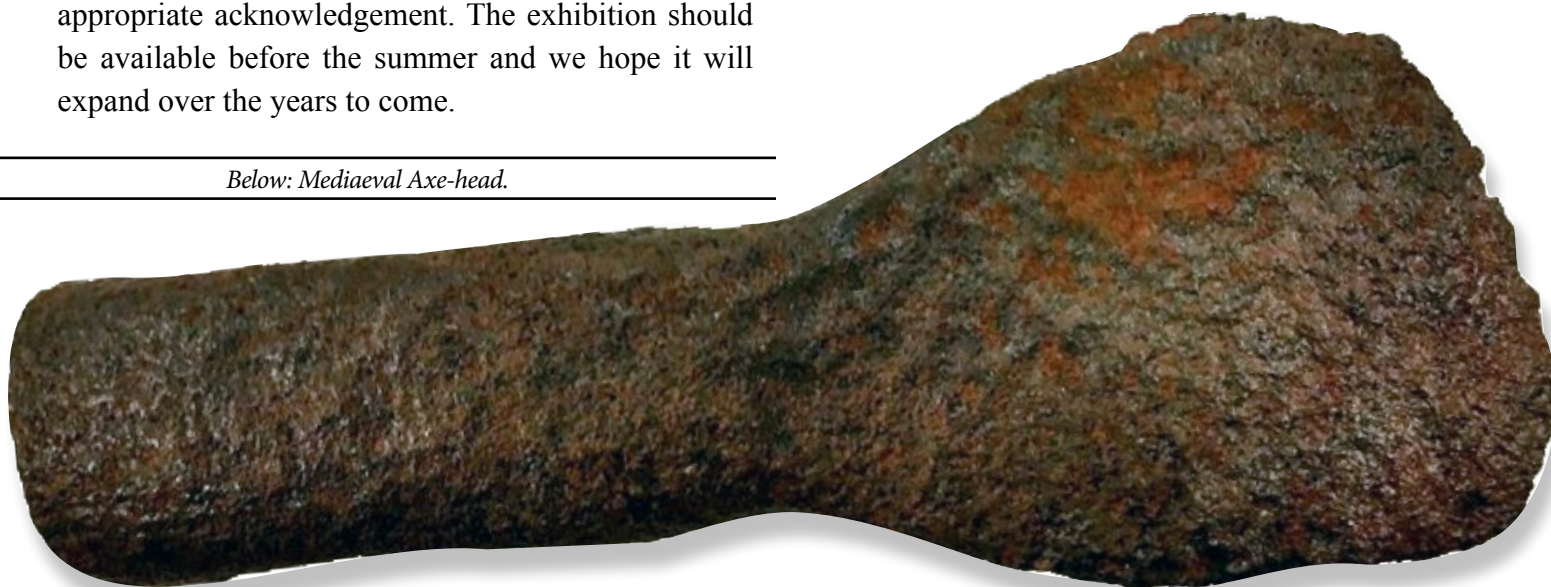
*This is a copy of a gold bell-ended bracelet found near McArt's Fort in 1993 which dates back to around 1,500 BC. The original is in the Ulster Museum.*

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*Below: Mediaeval Axe-head.*

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# Mountain Bikes

The issue of mountain bikes on Cave Hill has long been with us but it has recently been thrown into prominence by the resolution at present before Belfast City Council to ban them completely. This has given rise to a lot of media interest and a lot of debate among members of Cave Hill Conservation Campaign. Our directors have talked about this issue before and it is clear that there is no easy answer. We regret the presence of mountain bikes on Cave Hill due to the danger of collision they present and to the path erosion and environmental damage which occurs. But we have to face the reality that there is a demand for mountain bikes and that Cave Hill will always attract them.

My personal experience is that in the presence of walkers, the majority of bikers do ride with consideration. And the majority of walkers do tolerate their presence. For many years it has been in everyone's interests to allow this *modus vivendi* to exist; it wasn't perfect but it worked. Unfortunately, in the last two years or so, the activities of a small number of individuals, both walkers and bikers, have escalated to the point that the situation cannot continue as it was. Threats have been issued, underhand actions have been taken and aggression shown.

Some of our members would be strongly of the view that there should be no place for mountain bikes on Cave

Hill. But it would be fair to say that a greater number would see the presence of bikes as inevitable and thus a problem which requires managing. The coexistence of fast-moving bikes and walkers on the same narrow paths cannot be tolerated; it is inevitable that there will be a collision and someone, more likely the walker, will be badly hurt. That points to the necessity of holding bikers to a code of conduct whereby they do not ride "in a manner which is unsafe or likely to cause damage to the park or give reasonable cause for annoyance or alarm to other persons in the park" as stipulated in the bye-laws. While this might be expected of the majority of bikers, it is our experience that there exist some riders who have paid and would pay little attention to this ordinance. And it is hard to see how obeying this bye-law could be enforced.

The only alternative then is to designate an area where mountain bikes could be ridden and kept separate from the great majority of walkers. But bikers would have to agree that biking elsewhere on the hill would not be allowed and the Council would have to find ways of enforcing this. If such an arrangement worked and settled tempers then everyone might be able to use and enjoy the wonderful environment of Cave Hill in all its diversity and richness.

*Cormac Hamill*

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*Staff from the Housing Executive who carried out a clean-up on Cave Hill in March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2018*





## Namaste!

Imagine a place to which access is free, and where, if you regularly spend a little time, you will feel better, look better, reduce your risk of falling victim to cardiovascular illness, as well as debilitating emotional conditions such as anxiety and depression.

This is neither utopian nor exaggeration. There are indeed such places. They are called public open spaces, or in everyday language, parks.

Belfast has over forty public open spaces, and Cave Hill Country Park with its prominent skyline, romantic castle, and its woodland, is near you, dear reader. It is one of thousands of green spaces all with their own character and history, and their development as the architect and journalist, Rowan Moore, points out, is one of the great achievements of modern democracy. Royal Parks, Deer Parks, and their urban equivalents were once the preserve of monarchs, aristocrats and plutocrats. Now, in these public spaces, citizens are free to exercise their bodies and refresh their spirits, take pleasure in nature and enjoy the company of others.

All such activities, as claimed at the outset, make us feel better, look better, stimulate our imagination - and even boost the local economy by attracting tourists. The Danish architect and writer, Eiler Rasmussen, in his praise of parks, says that they are, "wonderlands of unrestrained imagination" as they serve to deliver those who visit them into a world of physical and emotional

liberation. Parks provide a release from the cares of the everyday world with its ceaseless striving for the acquisition of more 'stuff' which rarely (if ever) offers the enduring pleasures that, for example, a few hours on Cave Hill gives.

Situated 370 metres above sea level, Cave Hill Country Park has an area of 350 hectares which encompasses moorland, heather, rocky outcrops and mixed woodland, with an abundance of wildflowers and native fauna. Beyond its peak there is access to other Belfast hills, and below the castle, the land sweeps down to Belfast Lough. Here indeed is a place which affords a huge measure of rest and repose to the spirit.

Such public spaces are under constant threat. Developers and other commercial interests are constantly pressing for housing development and for quarrying rights. Equally insidious is the possibility of environmental degradation from fire-setting, littering and other forms of anti-social activity. The recent controversy surrounding the respective rights of bikers and walkers is another such challenge to the democratic promise of unfettered access to all. If we wish to secure for future generations these extraordinary amenities, active citizens should support the partnership between public ownership and voluntary oversight which manages and conserves our public open spaces.

*Edward McCamley*

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# Rescue!

Some of you may be aware of a rescue that took place on the Cave Hill on Sunday 8 October last year. After running away after a rabbit during a family walk, Princess, a Jack Russell terrier cross, was stranded for over 24 hours, unable to get back down the steep cliff face. Donal McDaniel, a Director of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign, was out for a walk with friends when they were alerted to noises from the cliff that alerted them to Princess' presence.

Here's how events unfolded:

1. Princess Trapped on Grassy Ledge



2. The fire brigade assess the situation

3. And the rescue begins



4. Princess looks calm as her rescuer approaches.

6. Relieved to be back in her owner's arms!

5. Back up the cliff, Princess' ordeal is nearly over.



Photos courtesy of Donal McDaniel.



# Guided Walks in 2018:

We will be running a series of guided walks on Cave Hill. Most of these walks will be from 10:00 to 13:00 on the third Saturday of each month. Participants should be equipped for 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.  
All walks are free.

For more information, contact us: Website: [www.cavehillconservation.org](http://www.cavehillconservation.org)  
Facebook: Cave Hill Conservation Campaign

Email: [cormachamill@cavehillconservation.org](mailto:cormachamill@cavehillconservation.org) Phone: (028) 9029 1357

Date	Times	Theme	Legend
Saturday 19 May	1000-1300	The Birds of Cave Hill.	Get up close to some of our native birds. Licensed bird ringer Aidan Crean will catch, ring and release them and allow us to see them in beautiful detail. Meet at the Castle.
Saturday 16 Jun	1000-1300	Forage on Cave Hill.	Phil Simpson has a fund of practical knowledge and plant lore. We'll walk in his company to see what useful plants we can find. Meet at the Castle.
Saturday 23 Jun	0400 - 0700	Solstice Walk	Greet the sun at dawn on a summer solstice morning before most of Belfast has stirred. Meet at the Castle.
Saturday 21 Jul	1000-1300	The Flora of Cave Hill.	Karl Hamilton will guide us on a plant identification walk in the Nature Reserve in Ballyaghagan at the back of the hill. Meet at the entrance to the Park at the top of the Hightown Road.
Saturday 18 Aug	1000-1300	Butterflies of Cave Hill.	Cormac Hamill will lead a group along his regular butterfly transect in the expectation of finding some of the 17 species regularly found on Cave Hill. Meet at the Castle.
Friday 7 Sep	2100-2300	Bats of Cave Hill.	Aidan Crean will introduce us to these enchanting nocturnal animals during an evening dander. Meet at the Castle.
Saturday 22 Sep	1000-1300	The Rocks of Cave Hill.	Kirsty Lemon is an enthusiast for her geology profession and she will delight in explaining the geological origins of Cave Hill on this walk over the hill. Meet at the Castle.
Tuesday 9 Oct	1930-2200	Cave Hill by Night.	We have picked a moonless night to try to get the best view we can of the heavens (clouds permitting!) Meet at the Castle.
Saturday 20 Oct	1000-1300	The Archaeology of Cave Hill.	Local archaeologist Cormac McSparron will lead a trip to the various remains on the hill from the Neolithic period to the early Christian period. Meet at the entrance to the Park at the top of the Hightown Road.



## CALLING ALL MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS!

If you are a member wishing to renew your membership for 2018, or a new member wishing to join, it's never been simpler! Please attach a cheque to the form below and send it to:

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☐ If you are a current British taxpayer, please tick here (we will then be able to reclaim the income tax already paid from the Inland Revenue. Ticking this box will not cost you any more money, but will benefit the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign.)

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*Walkers enjoying the Dawn Chorus walk on 5th May 2018*

