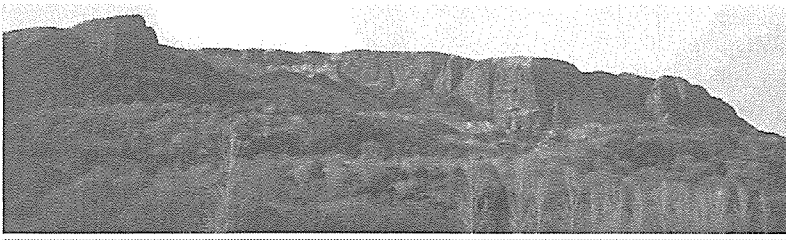


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Published by the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign • June 2002

WHERE IS THE BELFAST HILLS TRUST? Painfully Slow Progress

Achieving progress with regard to the conservation of the Belfast Hills would try the patience of a saint. Indeed, even the most miraculous of saints have rarely lived long enough to mount the kind of protracted campaigns needed to stop the damage in our Hills, let alone secure their future.

Last year, we wrote in this magazine with relative optimism on the steady steps towards the creation of a powerful Belfast Hills Trust, which was due to come into operation in late 2000. Meanwhile, in an indication of a new outlook by the City Council, we had been consulted on the drafting of a Management Plan for the Cave Hill. A year on, nothing has happened on either front.

Most worrying is the failure to advance the Belfast Hills Trust. Remember that the very notion of a Belfast Hills Trust only arose when the Labour Direct Rule minister got cold feet over earlier promises of a Belfast Hills Regional Park. It was with some misgivings that environmental groups such as our own entered the process to define the objectives and powers of a Belfast Hills Trust - we were determined not to be associated with a fig leaf disguise for the abandonment by government of its responsibilities towards the Belfast Hills. In the event, we judged that the model for the Belfast Hills Trust agreed in early 2000 was a powerful one, capable of making a major beneficial impact in the Hills.

Unfortunately, it was a model opposed by the hill farmers (represented by the Ulster Farmers Union), who walked out of the working party, and who have done their best to undermine the proposition with senior civil servants and politicians ever since. At the recent Belfast Urban Area Plan consultation meeting in respect of the Belfast Hills, it was clear that there is actually a lot of common ground between farmers and environmentalists in respect of what is going wrong in the hills. It simply is that farmers appear to oppose either a planning or a management framework for the hills.

Can it be that government, in the face of behind the scenes lobbying, have once again got cold feet? Since the Belfast Hills Working Party agreed its proposals in March 2000 we have heard nothing further. There has been some discussion of the body's constitution, and a warning here - one way to ensure its still-birth would be to pack it with the same government and public bodies which have failed the hills thus far and to exclude environmental and community interests. There is talk of setting up a shadow trust, but we have not been consulted about this. Who is to be represented on the shadow trust? Why is a shadow trust needed rather than the real thing? Will a shadow trust not be in a powerful position to determine the nature of the final body, perhaps as a perpetual shadow of what was originally intended?

Of course, all this may be the wildest paranoia. If so, let the Department of the Environment set all our minds at rest and declare its intentions, with an acceptable timescale.

Divis to be acquired by National Trust

Meanwhile, it is good to report that significant progress is being made in other ways. The National Trust, with Heritage Lottery Fund support, appears to be on the verge of acquiring Divis. This follows on the acquisition of Slievenacloy by the Ulster Wildlife Trust two years ago. Of course, one way to protect the hills is simply to encourage bodies such as the National Trust and the Ulster Wildlife Trust to acquire as much of the land as possible.

The National Trust has been at pains to work with as wide a range of hills interests as possible. In this respect it is anxious that a widely representative Belfast Hills Trust should come into being. It would be a tragedy if its plans were undermined by the failures of those who should be driving the Hills Trust project forward.

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The Cave Hill Campaigner is published by the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign, c/o 19 Giandore Avenue, Belfast BT15 3FB.

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Charting a Future for the Belfast Hills

continued from page 1

Cave Hill - no progress to report

Back then to the Cave Hill. The proposed management plan (see article), is now a year old and has yet to reach a Council committee! We don't think it is malice or aforethought. We have good relations with Council officers these days. The era of grandiose and destructive plans about which we were not consulted is now thankfully over. Perhaps the Cave Hill has merely slipped to a low level in Council priorities, and an under-resourced one at that.

If that is the case, it is a major failure by the Council, and in particular our North Belfast councillors, to make the most of a unique environmental asset which any other city would give its eye teeth for. Belfast claims to be anxious to encourage tourists and yet it remains a perilous challenge for any tourist, and many locals, to find safe ways up the Cave Hill. We have van-bound park rangers who can hardly reach first base in pursuit of bye-law breakers, such as the quad drivers who churn the paths and intimidate the walkers. In short, most of the old difficulties remain.

As for the Campaign itself, we are increasingly engaged in tree-planting and clearance of invasive species, as well as our annual clean up day. We are anxious to do far more, but to do so we need a positive Council management strategy to which we can contribute. We are meeting Council officers before our May AGM to see how far we can progress matters in the near future.

John Gray

The Sleeper above Belfast

Napoleon's Nose is a prominent feature of the Cave Hill. However, contrary to what is popularly believed, it is not the most prominent feature; it is not what is otherwise referred to as McArt's Fort. It is the hump which lies above the caves.

You can check this for yourself. The best place to view the hill profile is from the Antrim Road, above the junction with Fortwilliam Park. Seen from there, the profile of the hill is strongly reminiscent of a giant face on its back. If the sun is shining in the mid-afternoon, it throws a shadow into a gully beside McArt's Fort which then appears very like an eye; it takes little imagination to see the face in great detail. Try it! The nose is then seen to be above the caves.

This profile has been well known for many years. It has been suggested that it might have lodged in Jonathon Swift's imagination when he was a clergyman in Kilroot outside Carrickfergus in 1694. He must have been familiar with it and it just might have contributed to his creation of Gulliver. I think that this is highly fanciful but it is a nice idea.

The giant profile did inspire others however. Alice Milligan (1866 - 1953), a largely forgotten figure nowadays but well-thought-of in her day, wrote a poem extolling the mountains of Ireland and finished with a description of Cave Hill. Here is the last verse:

Look up from the streets of the city,
Look high beyond tower and mast,
What hand of what Titan sculptor
Smote the crags on the mountain vast?
Made when the world was fashioned,
Meant with the world to last,
The glorious face of the sleeper
That slumbers above Belfast.

Cormac Hamill



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Raising the Residents

A growing number of people in areas adjacent to the Antrim Road have been coming together in residents' associations. They are alarmed by rapid and often thoughtless development and its undermining of a sense of area identity. They are dismayed at the apparent indifference of the planning authorities, who succumb too readily to the demands of property developers and other commercial interests. Residents are increasingly showing that they are prepared to resist inappropriate development by direct campaigning.

The Cave Hill Conservation Campaign was founded in 1989 to counter threats to Belfast's most easily recognised landmark. The Campaign has subsequently extended its remit to participate in the more general strategy of protecting the hills that surround the landward reaches of the city.

Quick Profits

More recently, threats to the integrity of Cave Hill itself have been augmented by speculative and corporate targeting of residential areas surrounding the hill. In pursuit of quick profits, many of the larger houses in the area have been demolished in order to replace them with incongruous high-density housing developments. Allied to this is the iniquitous practice of some 'developers' who purchase older buildings and cynically either leave them to decay or demolish them. The sites are then abandoned and apart from the detrimental effect they have on the physical appearance of an area, they soon become locations for various forms of anti-social behaviour.

Another perceived threat to the area lies in the disturbing number of planning applications by telecommunications companies for the erection of transmitting masts with their attendant equipment along the line of the Antrim Road. The roof of the Lansdowne Hotel, the grounds of the Cavehill Tennis and Bowling Club, the area immediately adjacent to the former gate lodge of Belfast Castle at Strathmore Park (a listed building as well as a dental surgery), and the telephone exchange at Somerton Road are all sites where planning permission for such masts has been considered or conceded.

Residents' Associations

These and similar issues have prompted the formation of residents' associations in the Antrim Road, Fortwilliam, Cavehill, and Shore Road areas. The over-riding concern common to them all is to protect and where possible enhance the established residential character of their areas which they see as threatened by the seeming indifference of the planning service or civic officials to wholesale and unsympathetic transformation of the respective neighbourhoods.

Planning Submission

In April 2001 the Fortwilliam Action Committee made a submission to the preparation of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan. This reiterated the first guiding principle of the Regional Strategic Framework document in respect of a "people and community focused approach" to development. It argued what it and other residents' associations believed to be the case: that identity and a sense of place are qualities valued by urban communities, and that planning officials and private developers should be obliged to respect the desire to protect positive features of the local environment. It remains to be seen whether these commendable objectives will be acknowledged in respect of future development.

It has to be said that the prospects are not especially favourable. The recent and largely farcical review of the planning procedures refused to even consider the right of third party appeal - an essential element in planning decisions. As the editorial in a recent

issue of *Heritage Review* put it:

"Developers can appeal when refused permission, but 'third parties', that is neighbours and other people who may be directly affected by the development, have no redress. In the south of Ireland and many [EU] countries, there exists 'third party right of appeal', under which neighbours can object to a successful application and have a case looked at afresh."

Local Empowerment

To a large degree, the success of residents' associations requires the continuing personal commitment of the residents themselves. Involvement in such voluntary associations is an important way in which corporate greed and bureaucratic inertia can sometimes be successfully contested. The less people feel cocooned in their homes separated from their neighbours, and the more they become part of what has been described as patterns of purposeful social connectedness, the better they will be in shaping the circumstances in which they live. It is in the accumulation of many ostensibly small matters that the quality of life in neighbourhoods is profoundly affected and those best equipped to enlarge the sense of public space at this level are those who live there. The rise of the residents is one development that should be welcomed.

Edward McCamley

The Cavehill Residents Action Group has a website at: <http://crag-online.tripod.com>

'A Tory in Arms'

If a novel about love, adventure, intrigue, politics and torn family loyalties is your idea of a good read then try your best to get your hands on a copy of *A Tory in Arms* by John Heron Lepper.

The story is set in the early eighteenth century in the shadow of Cave Hill, a dangerous time for Catholics in Ireland due to the introduction of the Penal Laws, with local Jacobites still hoping for another rebellion, smugglers busy on the Antrim coast and the famous 'tory' or highwayman Naoise O'Haughan striking fear into all who dared travel along lonely country roads in the east Antrim area.

The novel spans five troubled years in the life of Robin Brown, the main character in the story. Before long he finds himself embroiled in battles of love, politics and family ties. His adventures inevitably lead him into contact with Naoise O'Haughan whose exploits across Knockagh Hill, Squires Hill, Carnmoney and Ben Madigan are legendary.

John Heron Lepper had this book published in 1916. He may have gained inspiration for his novel from Francis Joseph Bigger's publication in 1895 *Aneas O'Haughan, the Outlaw of Squires Hill* or indeed from popular folklore of the time. Heron himself was born in Carrickfergus in 1878. He was educated at Blair Lodge in Scotland and Trinity College, Dublin. Although trained as a barrister it is believed he never practised.

A Tory in Arms was one of four novels he had published. He also published short stories and a book entitled *Famous Secret Societies*. During most of this period he was living in London where he had moved at the beginning of the First World War. He was employed for a time in the Ministry of Information which was followed by a spell in the Admiralty. He was an accomplished linguist, fluent in German, French and Spanish and indeed helped in the compilation of a number of dictionaries.

From 1943 until his death he was librarian and curator of the library and museum of the Grand Lodge at Freemason's Hall in London. His funeral was held at Holy Trinity Church, Kingsway, in January 1953.

Ruairi Clenaghan

The Cave Hill Country Park

The Cave Hill Country Park is the largest area of publicly owned open space in the Belfast area. It has come into public ownership in a series of purchases by what is now Belfast City Council, between 1911 and 1988.

The first acquisition was Bellevue, which was the main depot of the Cavehill and Whitewell Tramway Company from 1882. The tramline and the 32 acre site of Bellevue were acquired by Belfast Corporation in 1911 for the sum of £64,500. The Bellevue pleasure gardens were opened in 1920 and soon became a popular destination for day trippers on the tram.

In 1922, the adjoining 46 acre site of Hazlewood was acquired for £7,000. It was decided to reinstate the lake which had once surrounded the ancient crannog, and this was completed by June 1924. However, the most significant development of the site was the building of a zoo, which was opened in March 1934 and attracted over 285,000 paying visitors that year. In May 1936, the art-deco Floral Hall was opened. It soon became popular as a ballroom and entertainment centre, and had 130,000 visitors in 1947.

Belfast Castle was built by the third Marquis of Donegall and occupied in 1870. The estate was enclosed with stone boundary walls and an extensive tree-planting programme began in the 1880's, which eventually transformed most of the estate from open farmland into woodland. In 1934 the Shaftesbury family sold the entire 200 acre estate to Belfast Corporation for £10,750 and the site was officially opened in July 1937. In 1951, the small area of land between Belfast Castle estate and Hazlewood was acquired, enabling visitors to walk from the Castle gates at Downview Park West to the area of Belfast Zoo.

The next purchase was in 1978, when Carr's Glen was acquired. This area had become an unofficial dump and had to be cleared of rubbish. However, the glen, with the stream running through it, is a natural woodland habitat with high conservation value.

The final acquisition (to date) was in 1988, when the 350 acre area known as Ballyaghagan was acquired from the Wallace Estate for £125,000. This area stretches along the top of the Cave Hill, from Hazlewood to the Hightown Road.

The Cave Hill Country Park was formally established in 1992, when a grant from the European Regional Development Fund enabled the establishment of a heritage centre on the second floor of Belfast Castle and way-marked trails throughout the area. The total cost of acquiring all of the land was approximately £200,000 which works out at less than £300 per acre. Most people in Belfast would probably agree that it was public money well spent.

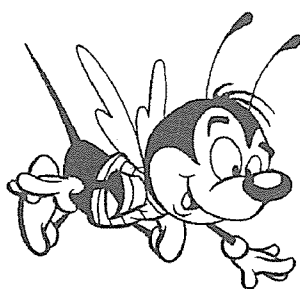
The total area now consists of 750 acres of moorland, heath, grass meadows, rock face and woodland. It contains a variety of important wildlife habitats and a large number of species of plants, animals and birds. Since the late 1980's the woodland areas have been actively managed with a view to conservation. This ongoing programme has included the removal of rhododendron and sycamore, which are invasive alien species, and their replacement by planting large numbers of native species such as birch, oak and scots pine. (See the article on woodland management for more details.)

The "right to roam" has been recognised in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act in Great Britain, which will come into force in 2003-4. Unfortunately, due to a combination of political inertia and vested interests, it is unlikely that similar legislation will be enacted in Northern Ireland in the foreseeable future. This means that areas of publicly owned land, such as the Cave Hill Country Park, will remain the most important points of public access to the countryside. As such, the park should be cherished and appreciated by the people of Belfast.

Editor

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Cave Hill Country Park: Management Strategy Report

This report was produced by John O'Boyle of Bryson House and Dermot Hughes of the Ulster Wildlife Trust in March 2001. It was funded by Belfast City Council with two aims: (1) To reflect opinion on the management of Cave Hill Country Park. (2) To suggest a framework for future management and development of the park. At present, Belfast City Council have not responded to the report. The full text of the report is available on our website at www.cavehill.freeuk.com

Main Recommendations

- (1) Natural and built heritage: Develop a biodiversity management plan, to include woodland, hedgerow and grazing. Consider reintroduction of native species such as Red Squirrel and Irish Hare and monitoring / control of alien species such as Grey Squirrel and Magpie.
- (2) Public access: Adopt a minimum standard for path maintenance, signage and public access.
- (3) Enforcement and wardening: Develop volunteer watch, implement signage / interpretation, consider zoning mountain bikes.
- (4) Education: Develop programmes to highlight the resources of the park - biodiversity, geology, archaeology, history.

Zones

The report divides the total park area into three zones, namely:

- (1) The upper plateau: Ballyahagan, McArts Fort area,

Hazlewood.

- (2) The middle slopes: caves area, estate woodland, quarry area.

- (3) The lower park: Carr's Glen, Belfast Castle and parkland.

Each zone is described and its positive and negative features are considered. For example, the Hazlewood area has high nature conservation value but the track behind the zoo is unsightly. The woodland areas have good to moderate nature conservation value, but there are litter and mountain bike problems, and a woodland management plan is required. The main recommendations for each area are as follows:

Upper plateau

Ballyahagan: Monitor grazing, restore Benn's Cascade viewpoint, control dog mess, tipping and scrambler / quad activity. Implement a hedgerow management regime.

McArts Fort area: Implement erosion-control measures, including appropriate planting. Consider installing a direction-finder. Investigate a proper path link to Collinward. Implement a grazing policy which will reduce the fire-risk. Control scrambling / quad activity through regular wardening and police liaison.

Hazlewood: Upgrade the existing access route which skirts the zoo boundary. Uncover Nance's Path as an additional access route from Bellevue to the country park.

Enforce exclusion of scramblers from upper slopes.

Middle slopes

Caves area: Sponsor a competition to find the most cost effective and environmentally sympathetic solution to the sheep's path / scree problem. Consider restoring the ground level below the first cave, which has dropped significantly due to erosion.

The estate woodland: Implement a woodland management plan. Police mountain bike activity. Clean litter hotspots regularly.

Quarry area: Provide geological and industrial history interpretation.

The lower park

Carr's Glen: Plan for a thorough upgrade of access from Carr's Glen and Horseshoe Bend areas.

Belfast Castle and parkland: Clear laurel to improve conservation value. Improve and upgrade access opposite Gray's Lane.

The Way Ahead

The report accepts that there are significant resource implications in putting the management strategy into action. These will include the drawing up and implementation of management plans in respect of public access and wardening, education, biodiversity and woodland. It recommends that Belfast City Council should find additional resources but should also seek partners, such as The Ulster Wildlife Trust, Conservation Volunteers, the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign and the Belfast Hills Trust, when it is in existence. It concludes by urging the Council to publish a timeframe for implementation of the recommendations.

Editor

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The Chichester family in Belfast

Early Days

The Chichester family, Earls and Marquesses of Donegall and for four hundred years connected intimately with the growth and development of Belfast have gone. They have left us two parks, Ormeau and Cave Hill and a raft of street names. The present holder of the title, the seventh Marquess lives in Waterford and takes no great interest in Belfast.

The local connection began over four hundred years ago with the appointment of Sir John Chichester of Raleigh in Devon as Elizabethan governor of Carrickfergus, at a time when the English were seeking to extend their influence in Ulster from sea-supported colonies such as Carrickfergus and Newry. This had provoked a general uprising by the native Irish under Hugh O'Neill in the period 1593 to 1603. Sir John Chichester was captured in a battle with Randall MacSorley MacDonnell in 1597 and beheaded.

His brother Arthur came to Ireland shortly after, perhaps to avenge his brother. He had served against the Armada in 1587-88 and was a captain under Sir Francis Drake. In November 1600 he laid waste to the countryside for twenty miles around Carrickfergus. Chichester's scorched-earth policy was consistent with the strategy adopted by Lord Mountjoy, the Lord Deputy of Ireland, against O'Neill.

After the collapse of the Ulster rebellion in 1603, Arthur Chichester was appointed Governor of Carrickfergus and shortly after, he became Lord Deputy. He was rewarded for his part in the suppression of the Ulster rebellion by being made Baron Chichester of Belfast in 1612. He was granted great swathes of land in Ulster, including much of the land around Belfast, previously held by the O'Neills of Clondeboye. Despite his title, he preferred Carrickfergus to Belfast, built a large house there, called Joy Mount and was buried in St. Nicholas' Church in 1624.

Arthur Chichester left no male heirs and the title passed to his brother Edward. His son in turn, Arthur, became the first Earl of Donegall in 1646. This Arthur had six sons and at least six daughters through three marriages. It is a telling comment on the life expectancy of the time that all six sons and at least four daughters died young. So the title of second Earl passed to his nephew Arthur. He fell foul of King James II and was attainted in 1689, but the Williamite conquest led to his lands and title being restored.

Arthur's son, another Arthur was third Earl and was killed fighting in Spain in 1706. His son, Arthur again, was born in 1695 and succeeded as fourth Earl. It was three of his sisters who were killed in the fire in the first Belfast Castle (in the centre of Belfast) in 1708. His mother, left homeless, returned to Fisherwick in England with the fourth Earl and his surviving siblings. This Arthur died childless in 1757 and the title of fifth Earl passed to his nephew Arthur (again!). The fifth Earl was created a peer as Baron Fisherwick in 1790 and was also granted the additional title of Marquess of Donegall in 1791. He died in 1799.

His influence over Belfast seems to have been positive. The town was carefully controlled by him and leases were granted which obliged tenants to build houses of particular quality and style. He paid for fine public buildings such as St Anne's cathedral and the Assembly rooms. He gave land for the Poor House and for the White Linen Hall, and helped to fund the Lagan Canal.

The Shaftesbury Connection

George Augustus, his son, the second Marquess was born in London in 1769 and died in 1844. He was constantly in financial

difficulties despite an annual income of £30,000 (about two to three million pounds today). In 1795 he married Anna, daughter of Sir Edward May, a moneylender who also ran a gaming house. He got George Augustus released from debtors' prison in 1795 and offered his daughter Anna in marriage, an offer which George Augustus could hardly refuse. The couple came to Belfast in 1802 to escape his debtors and brought the May family with them. They lived in a large house in Donegall Place opposite the Robinson & Cleaver building.

In 1807 the family moved to the second Belfast Castle at Ormeau. Donegall's debts were now enormous- £250,000- (about £20 million now). However, he continued his father's policy of public benevolence, providing land for, among others, the Royal Belfast Academical Institution and the Gasworks.

In 1818, he arranged for his eldest son, George Hamilton, to marry a daughter of the Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the richest men in England. A week before the ceremony, Shaftesbury learned that Donegall had never been properly married and that George Hamilton was therefore illegitimate. (Anna May had been underage at the time of her marriage should have had the permission of the courts in 1795 but this had not been sought.) The marriage to Shaftesbury's daughter was abandoned. Three years later, a parliamentary change to the marriage law legitimised George Hamilton, who married Harriet, daughter of the Earl of Glengall in 1822 and succeeded to the title as third Marquess of Donegall in 1844.

The burden of inherited debt plagued the third Marquess. Practically the whole of the town of Belfast was gradually sold off and the only lands left to Donegall were Ormeau and the deer park on the slopes of the Cave Hill.

Belfast Castle

The third Marquess decided to build a new home and Belfast Castle was completed in 1870. (See article on buildings.)

The third Marquess also succeeded where his father had failed in allying the Donegall family to the Shaftesburys. His daughter Harriet married Lord Ashley, eldest son of the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury in 1862 and restored the family fortunes. Harriet inherited the estate (but not the title) and Belfast Castle became part of the Shaftesbury estates when the third Marquess died in 1883.

As the third Marquess had no sons, the title passed to his brother Edward, dean of Raphoe who became fourth Marquess. Dermot Richard Claud Chichester, seventh Marquess, born 1916, is his direct descendant and still lives in Waterford. And yes, he has a son called Arthur!

The family gradually lost interest in Belfast and after the death of Harriet, the contact declined. The Shaftesburys lived on their substantial estates in England. The troubles in 1922 led them to break contact entirely. In 1934, the Chapel of the Resurrection, designed as a family mausoleum, was presented to the Church of Ireland, part of the Castle grounds were sold for housing and the Castle and the rest of the grounds were presented to the city.

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The caves: an old tradition

Most people have heard of the legend of the pied piper of Hamelin. This is an old continental legend but it was brought to prominence by Robert Browning (1812-1889) in his poem, published in 1842. But could he have been inspired by the caves on Cave Hill?

Or could he have come across a similar legend applied to our own caves on Cave Hill?

Robert Young in his book "Historical notices of Old Belfast and its vicinity" published in 1896 quotes an old poem "Sea Piece" by John Kirkpatrick published in London in 1760, long before Browning. It relates to Cave Hill.

Here, as Tradition's hoary legend tells
 A blinking piper once, with magic spells,
 And strains beyond a vulgar bagpipe's sound,
 Gathered the dancing Country wide around;
 When hither as he drew the tripping rear
 (Dreadful to think, and difficult to swear!)
 The gaping mountain yawned, from side to side,
 A hideous cavern, darksome, deep and wide:
 In skipped th'exulting daemon piping loud,
 With passive joy succeeded by the crowd;
 The winding cavern, trembling as he played,
 With dreadful echoes rung throughout its shade;
 Then firm, then instant, closed the greedy womb,
 Where wide-born thousands met a common tomb.
 Even now the good inhabitant relates,
 With serious horror, their disastrous fates;
 And, as the noted spot he ventures near,
 His fancy, strung with tales, and shook by fear,
 Sounds magic concerts in his tingling ear:
 With superstitious awe, and solemn face,
 Trembling, he points, and thinks he points the place"

The caves, of course do not go far enough into the hill to warrant



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the description "hideous cavern, darksome, deep and wide". Nevertheless the poem does illustrate, perhaps, how these relatively inaccessible caves exercised the eighteenth century mind.

Could Browning have been familiar with Kirkpatrick's work?

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The Buildings of Belfast Castle Estate

Belfast Castle

In 1862 The third Marquis of Donegall decided to build a new house in what was then known as the deer-park on the lower slopes of the Cave Hill. The Donegall fortune had dwindled to such an extent that his wealthy son in law, Lord Ashley, son of the famous Earl of Shaftesbury, had to underwrite the building costs. The building is in the then popular Scottish Baronial style, and passed to the Shaftesbury family after the death of the third Marquis. In 1934 the castle and estate was presented to Belfast Corporation. During the Second World War, it was used as a naval command centre. An extensive refurbishment programme was carried out in the 1980's and the building was re-opened to the public in 1988.

Chapel of the Resurrection

This was also built by the third Marquis in 1869, as a memorial to his son who had died in Naples. It was then in the castle grounds and is now in Innisfayle Park. Unfortunately, this building is now a virtual ruin.

Gate lodges

The main approach to the castle was from its gate lodge at the junction of Strathmore Park and Antrim Road. This building is now a dental surgery and housing development occupies most of the land between it and the castle. The next gate lodge stands at the bottom of the lane below Park Lodge Primary School. It was a post office for many years, but is now a private residence. At the bottom of the lane above the school (opposite Guy's shop) is another gate lodge. This was the gate lodge to Martlet Towers, which stood a few hundred yards up the laneway known as the Sheeps' Path.

Martlet Towers

Martlet Towers, a green-roofed stone mansion, was built in the 1840's by Joseph Magill, a successful linen merchant. Magill had married into the Nash family, who had owned land between the Cave Hill and the Greencastle shore, including the present golf course, for many years. The old Sheep's Path ran along the present laneway towards the caves, and was a popular walk for the citizens of Belfast on their way to merry-making on Cave Hill, especially at Easter. Joseph Magill attempted to block this ancient right of way, and lost in the famous court case which followed. He later went bankrupt, and his land was absorbed into the castle estate. Martlet Towers became a tenement for estate workers and was eventually demolished in the 1950's.

The terrace of six houses opposite the entrance to Gray's Lane was also occupied by estate workers.

Park Lodge

The site now occupied by the primary school was originally a substantial house built in 1860 by Captain William McAteer, and named Saint Helena, the island where Napoleon had died and which McAteer had visited. At one time, there was a wooden statue of Napoleon on the top of the central tower of the house, which was later bought by the Baird family, founders of the Belfast Telegraph, who renamed it Park Lodge. The house was used to demonstrate the use of gas masks during the Second World War, and in 1958 it became a primary school. It was demolished in the 1970's to make way for the present school building.

Ben Eden

Ben Eden was built in 1849 on the site now occupied by Saint Clement's Retreat House, which stands above Saint Gerard's Church. In the 1890's this house was owned by the Whitlas of Queens University Whitla Hall fame. The site was acquired by the church in 1951 from Major Adley. (The rest of his land was

acquired that year by Belfast Corporation to complete the link between Belfast Castle and Hazlewood.) Parts of the original farmyard buildings still survive.

Diane Hunter

NEWS ROUNDUP

Belfast Hills Walk Cancelled

Due to organisational difficulties, the Belfast Hills Walk, which was scheduled for Sunday 15 September, has had to be cancelled. It is hoped that the new Belfast Hills Trust will be in a position to organise a full hills walk during 2003.

Webwatch

Some interesting websites:

The Woodland Trust has established nearly 50 community woodlands in the short time it has been active in Northern Ireland: www.woodland-trust.org.uk

Mammals of Northern Ireland is a major new source of information on our local mammals. The site is run by the Ulster Museum and includes distribution maps, history and conservation issues in respect of both native and introduced species: www.ulstermuseum.org.uk/nimars

The Cavehill Residents Action Group (CRAG) is a local group dedicated to the preservation of the built environment: <http://crag-online.tripod.com>

Northern Ireland Environment Link is an umbrella organisation to which many local environment groups, including ourselves, are affiliated: www.niel.demon.co.uk

And of course our own website is frequently updated and contains a lot of information about the Cave Hill and the current issues. It also contains articles from previous editions of this magazine: www.cavehill.freeuk.com

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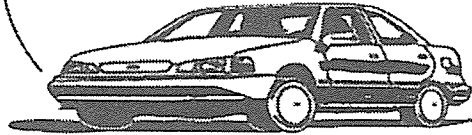
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Cave Hill Quiz

We will publish the correct answers on our website (www.cavehill.freeuk.com) after our AGM has taken place on 23rd May.

- (1) Name the home of Sir Samuel Ferguson which was later to become a hospital.
- (2) How many caves are there on the Cave Hill?
- (3) What name is given to the deep hollow area below the caves?
- (4) Who led the United Irishmen at the Battle of Antrim and later sought shelter on the slopes of the Cavehill?
- (5) The poem 'Mountain Shapes' which ends with a description of the Cavehill was written by whom?
- (6) The carved wooden figure of which famous European was placed on the roof of Park Lodge?
- (7) During which years was the Belfast Castle built?
- (8) Where is the highest peak along the Belfast hills found?
- (9) Sir Samuel Ferguson's novel *Corby MacGillmore* tells of a battle between the MacGillmores and which Norman family?
- (10) An early advertisement promoting the Bellevue Gardens compared them to which great wonder of the world?
- (11) Finn McCool is said to have lost what while walking over Cavehill one day?
- (12) Name the path which is the main access route to McArt's Fort from Belfast Castle (which today is in a dangerous condition)?
- (13) In which year was Naoise O'Haughan executed?
- (14) The Cavehill and Whitewell Tranway began running trams from Chichester Park to Glengormley in 1882. What type of power was used to run the trams between 1895 and 1906?
- (11) What is the website of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign?

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The Cave Hill Maze

It seems a long time since I first wrote about my proposed millennium project, which was to design and plant out a maze on the site of the old rose garden in the grounds of Belfast Castle. I am delighted to be able to let readers know that the Cave Hill maze has now been completed and hopefully will greatly enhance the castle grounds. For those not familiar with the area the maze is sited just to the north of the Adventurous Playground.

When I first embarked on my project I had little idea at all of the work and expense involved and am very much indebted to Agnes McNulty of Belfast City Council for her help in securing funding to enable the idea to become a reality.

I looked at various maze designs and decided on a unicursal (closed-curve) labyrinth. This means that the labyrinth has no junctions and consists of a single path leading from the entrance to the goal. There are three main forms of unicursal labyrinth; classical, Roman and medieval Christian. These forms share a hidden characteristic: internal rotational symmetry. The design was drawn by Eamonn Twomey and also transferred to the ground by him, with the assistance of Brian, Graham, Andrew, William and Jonathan.

There are approximately 1,800 beech trees planted on the site, with some 350 bags of organic farmyard manure being dug into the ground (ask Eamonn and Billy about that!). Approximately 250 wooden posts and 400 metres of wire netting were used in the fencing which gives protection and support to the trees.

The centrepiece of the maze is a cat mosaic, under which we have buried a time capsule. This was designed and created by Primary 7 pupils from Ben Madigan, Park Lodge and Cavehill primary schools in January 2001. Local artist Angela George was the brains behind the finished design and was also responsible for transferring the pupils work from the classroom to the actual site. I would like to convey my thanks to Angela for her help in the project.

There were quite a number of people involved in the ground preparation for the tree planting and I would like to thank them all for their help. I feel that special mention has to be made of Eamonn and Billy who worked in all weathers and who gave me loads of moral support when I wondered if it would ever be finished. The day of the actual planting, Thursday 7 March 2002, dawned sunny and dry and was great fun with the Primary 7 pupils from Park Lodge and Ben Madigan Primary Schools (along with their teachers) very enthusiastically digging and planting the beech trees under the watchful eye of numerous helpers. Unfortunately the Primary 7 pupils from Cavehill Primary were not able to be with us due to other school commitments. I would like to thank the staff and pupils from the three schools for all their help and support throughout the project.

Finally I would just like to say a very big thank you to everyone involved in the creation of the Cave Hill Maze (that includes those involved in providing refreshments) and I hope it gives lots of pleasure to many people for years to come.

Louise Wilson

Making a Difference

Did you know that treecover in Northern Ireland is the lowest in Europe? Trees account for only 7% of land here and native trees make up a small portion of this. 'So what?' many people will ask.

As you will know trees are essential in the production of oxygen, to counteract global warming and to provide a habitat and food-source for local animal and bird-life. But while every tree helps, some do a far better job than others...

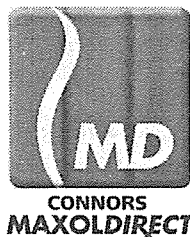
The so-called 'native' trees (such as alder, hazel, elm, oak and birch) are species that naturally found their way to Ireland many thousands of years ago and so are well adapted to our local climate and soil. As a result, these trees support a higher number of birds and insects than introduced species, such as sycamore, horse chestnut, and the sitka spruce so beloved of the Forest Service. An oak will support 284 different types of insect while a horse chestnut will only support 4 species. This is why environmentalists campaign for native trees to be planted as opposed to introduced species. After all, if trees are going to be restricted to 7% of land we might as well get maximum environmental benefit from the ones we do plant.

In an effort to make a difference, Cave Hill Conservation Campaign committee member Katherine Hall and myself have been working actively to increase the number of trees in the Belfast Hills. In conjunction with Bryson House, we are responsible for the planting of over 19,000 native Irish trees on a fifty acre site on the airport road. By creating and maintaining a new forest we are trying to do our bit towards improving the environment in which we all live.

The Cave Hill Conservation Campaign has recently become more actively involved in tree planting in the Country Park and on the Castle Estate. We are hoping to increase the percentage of native trees and decrease the number of non-natives to help make the Cave Hill that bit more special. If you would like to get involved in tree planting or would like further advice on trees please contact the Campaign.

Each one of us can help by planting one more tree in our garden. Maybe you could plant a birch instead of a Japanese cherry? It might not have blossom, but it will look just as well for the other 50 weeks of the year and it will contribute much more to the environment. What better gift could you leave to the next generation?

Martin McDowell



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The Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

The Cavehill Conservation Campaign was represented at the BMAP Belfast Hills consultation meeting held in Belfast Castle, and has subsequently made a submission to BMAP. Following the failure of the planning service to proceed with a local area plan for the Belfast Hills, the Metropolitan Area Plan is likely to provide the framework for planning policy in the area for the next twenty years.

All those concerned with the hills were disappointed by the 'Issues' document which formed the basis of the consultation exercise. It referred to the hills as no more than a backdrop to the city in the language of the weak and failed reports of decades ago. Both at the meeting and in our submission, we have emphasised the importance of the Cave Hill and the Belfast Hills seen in their total context.

In respect of the Belfast Hills generally, we were involved in the preparation of the detailed submission made by the Belfast Hills Committee. Broadly speaking, the emphasis in this is on the need for a planning designation, or designations, covering the entirety of the Belfast Hills, and capable of protecting the environment with statutory force. The preferred option would be to have the entire area designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its proximity to a city area strengthens the case for this. A fall back position, which is fully detailed, is to have the hills protected by a range of different designations, which though more complex, should have the same effect.

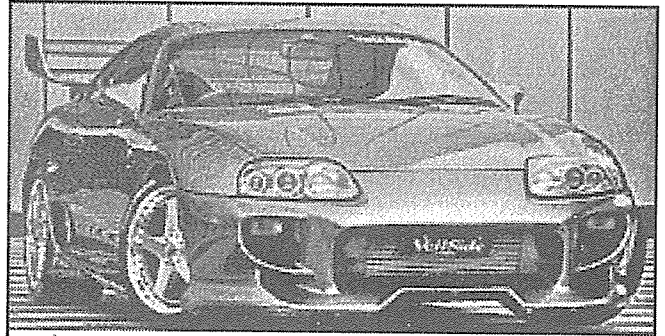
With regard to the Cave Hill we have argued as follows:

Taken as a whole, the Cave Hill includes the most dramatic scenery within the Belfast Hills and has parkland, forest, cliff, moorland, and stream habitats, and archaeological sites and historical associations, all of great diversity and importance. It is also the most heavily used part of the Belfast Hills for recreational purposes, partly because most of it is in public ownership, but also because of its immediate proximity to the city and its intrinsic natural attractions.

The importance of the Cave Hill as a natural asset demands that it should be statutorily protected as a whole from intrusive development. The case for such protection in the upper areas is obvious but is equally necessary in respect of the perimeter or surrounding apron, in so far as this remains intact, and which is an indispensable part of the setting of the hill.

A starting requirement for planning policy in respect of the Cave Hill is maintenance of the existing Green Belt line and in particular on the city side of the hill. We would point to areas where encroachment has already gone too far, and must go no further namely; at the Horseshoe Bend, in Ballysillan, at the Upper Cave Hill Road, to the West of the Antrim Road, at Glengormley, and in particular on the hillside of the Upper Hightown Road. We would re-iterate that while some of terrain concerned may only be of limited environmental value in itself, the overall setting of the hill remains of paramount importance.

John Gray



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Woodland Habitat Survey and Management Proposals

This report was drawn up for Belfast City Council by the Ulster Wildlife Trust. It was completed in 1987, but most of it is still relevant and its influence can be seen in the clearing and planting programmes which the Parks Department has followed in subsequent years.

The report includes a detailed survey of the animal, bird, butterfly, plant and fungi species to be found in Belfast Castle Estate. It also contains detailed information on the geology and drainage of the area. It notes that red squirrels have been absent since 1973, but the report predates the arrival of the grey squirrel in the late 1990's. However, this confirms that the reds were absent for at least 20 years before the greys appeared.

Woodland management

The report contains detailed woodland management notes. It emphasises the conservation value of native tree and shrub species (such as oak, ash, birch, scots pine, hazel, blackthorn and holly) and the lack of such value from alien species (such as sycamore and rhododendron). The latter two are singled out as undesirable, due to their ability to spread rapidly and crowd out native species. Rhododendron's evergreen foliage also casts a dense shade which prevents any ground flora from establishing and renders its areas virtually sterile. Sycamore was introduced into England and Ireland about three hundred years ago and has spread rapidly, at the expense of less aggressive native species.

The ideal woodland from a conservation point of view is one that is diverse in native species with a variety of age structure. The woodland area of the castle estate is mostly the same age, having been planted in the late 1800's. However, the major planting efforts of the past 15 years and future years will gradually change this. The report identifies eight distinct types of habitat and recommends management priorities for each:

Habitat management proposals

Rhododendron and laurel fringes

The report notes the prevalence of these species behind the castle and in the area of the main driveway. It recommends complete eradication and replacement with native species.

Amenity grassland

It is suggested that much of the grassland in the lower castle estate could be converted into spring flower meadows with the help of a more sympathetic mowing programme.

Wet woodland

Sycamore is often the dominant species and should be removed and replaced with damp-favouring native species, such as birch and alder.

Large mixed woodland

The report notes that this type of habitat, which covers much of the area of the estate, has two problems - sycamore domination and Dutch elm disease spreading. It recommends clearance of both the sycamore and the diseased elms.

Scots pine areas

This is found on the upper slopes below the escarpment. Most of the trees are towards the end of their lives and there has been little natural regeneration. Managed replacement will be necessary.

Larch areas

The larch is the remnant of a plantation. Notes are as for scots pine areas.

Grassland and scrub

These areas include a range of wild flowers, grasses, elder and hawthorn. Sycamore is starting to colonise and should be removed. Spiny shrubs such as blackthorn and hawthorn should be planted in clumps to improve the habitat for birds. Grass cutting along the path edges may help more wild flower types to establish.

Bracken-dominated areas

The report notes that bracken has become established in some of the grassland areas, but doubts that its removal would significantly enhance the wildlife habitat.

The story since 1987

It is evident that the Parks Department of Belfast City Council has acted on many of the recommendations in this report. Much of the rhododendron in the vicinity of the castle has been cleared (most notably the area immediately behind the castle itself) and replaced with birch and other native species. Many of the large sycamore trees have also been felled. Unfortunately, Dutch Elm Disease killed all of the elms, which then had to be felled. Some of the stumps have started to grow new shoots.

The ground flora, such as bluebells and wild garlic, have benefited from this programme. Also, many hundreds of native trees, principally oak and birch, have been planted. This will improve the wildlife habitat for decades, if not centuries, to come.

However, much remains to be done. There are still large areas of rhododendron. Sycamore remains a problem over much of the estate, colonising gaps left by the elms, and also re-growing from the stumps of felled trees. The best that can probably be said is that a start has been made in the right direction. Undoubtedly, resource limitations have prevented more rapid progress in the 15 years since the report was handed to the Parks Department.

The future

The Campaign plans to be actively involved in helping to improve the habitat in the years to come. In a small but (we hope) significant way we can help to make up for the inevitable limits on Council resources. We have been planting trees for several years and have recently become involved in clearing sycamore and laurel, under the direction of the Parks Department. The potential for planting and clearing remains enormous, but the prize will be a much better wildlife habitat in the years to come, and more interesting walks in the woods!

Editor

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