



Newsletter

Issue 3 | Winter 2012

Slieve Gullion Trails to summit passage tomb finished in time for Winter Solstice Walk

**Ring of Gullion
Landscape Partnership
Scheme set to begin in
March 2013 and much
more...**

Inside this issue:

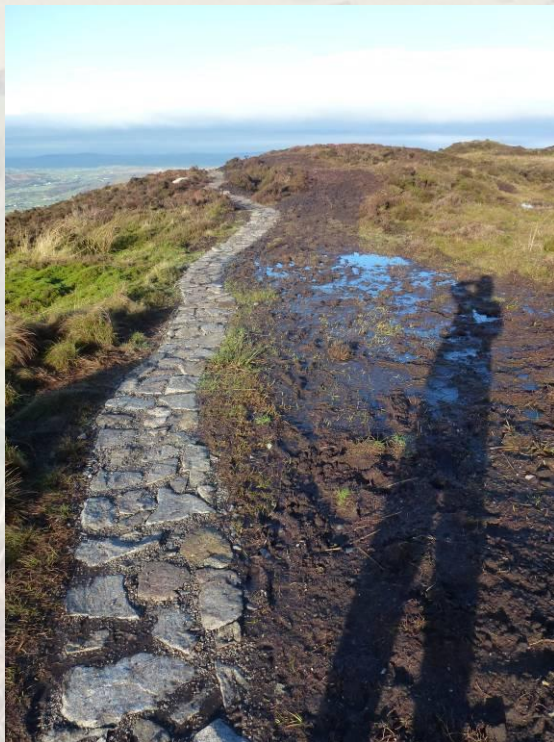
- 2 Slieve Gullion Trails project update
- 2 DARD update and review
- 3 Gap o the North Hill Walking Club
- 3 Waste Crime – How you can help
- 4 New name for Bell's Castle Restoration Group
- 5 Flying the Flag for Newry Maritime Association
- 5 Growing the National Biodiversity Database
- 7 Red Squirrel News
- 7 Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme
- 8 What's on At a Glance

Slieve Gullion Trails

Newry and Mourne District Council received funding from the European Regional Development Fund, INTERREG IVA Programme through the CASA Project. This project is managed by CASA (Castleblaney/South Armagh) Partnership who secured £1.3million funding development. Part of this funding is allocated for building a mountain trail from the Slieve Gullion Forest Drive to the summit of Slieve Gullion, the home of a 6000 year old passage tomb known as the 'Cailleagh Beara's house'.

Before work started the trail was extremely wet, boggy and the erosion getting worse, up to 10m across on some sections. A trail was laid out in order to halt this erosion. The work is environmentally friendly and caters for as many user groups as possible. The plans went out to public consultation before commencement and Newry and Mourne Council received some feedback that is now integral to the project.

The work started in June and the path construction took about 6 months. Marian O'Rourke, Project Officer for CASA, said, "The Slieve Gullion Pathway project is making great strides with plans to complete by the middle of 2013. We are delighted that this 'walkers' trail' will open up a new world to many people...the summit of Slieve Gullion. This is going to allow better access and bring more people to experience the beautiful Slieve Gullion summit where they will enjoy breathtaking views! Slieve Gullion is becoming a 'place to visit' for day trippers, walkers, hikers, local families, young and old. It is great to see that, whilst the facilities are being put to good use, this progress is also boosting trade in the local economy."



There are additional parts of the project yet to be realized: the Schools Heather Restoration project and improved Signage. Heather cuttings were gathered last

summer at the height of the heather growing season. These were then potted in rooting compost and are growing steadily in a greenhouse. Come the spring, when the heather plants are ready to be planted out, a workshop with some local schools will be carried out. Then school children can head up to the mountain and plant their very own heather plant – taking ownership of the mountain.

The last part of the project will be to fit the trail with improved signage. The team will be working in partnership with local groups, Northern Ireland Tourist Board and local and national recreation groups to see what signage will work best for Slieve Gullion.

You can follow the progress of the project by visiting www.ringofgullion.org/Projects/slieve-Gullion-Footpath-Repair-Project.aspx

Protecting and enhancing farm land in the Ring of Gullion AONB

Much of the Ring Of Gullion AONB is farmland, including heath, bog and woodland. These rich semi-wild habitats inter-mingle with neatly patterned fields and 'ladder farms' that rise up the heather-clad Slieve Gullion.

The AONB is also an Environmentally Sensitive Area, designated mainly for its 'dry heath,' a globally important type of heather moorland. Found across the EU, dry heath is particularly extensive in these islands. Outside the Mournes, Slieve Gullion is one of the largest dry heaths in NI. Its range of dry heath vegetation includes some plants that are scarce in NI, such as cowberry and western gorse. Dry heath is also an important habitat for many declining species like the skylark, the hen harrier and the Irish hare.

Much of the land in the Ring of Gullion AONB is managed by farmers who receive Single Farm Payment. In return they are required to protect their farm environments, including wild birds, flora, fauna and groundwater. They must maintain habitats and archaeological sites in 'good agricultural and environmental condition' and retain field boundaries and hedges, sheughs and walls.

About half the farm land in the area is also managed under agri-environment schemes. Participating farmers receive funding to help them undertake positive management of their farms' biodiversity, landscape and heritage features.

Habitats on farm land are also legally protected under the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations (NI) 2007. Therefore consent is required from DARD before carrying out land improvements on uncultivated or semi-natural land. Such improvements include drainage, ploughing and reseedling, harrowing, infilling, spraying or applying increased fertiliser.

For further information contact a Countryside Management Adviser at your local DARD office or visit:

www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/index/environment/countrysidemanagement.htm

Flytipping – Report it as soon as you can

There are many types of waste crime and illegal dumping or fly-tipping but fuel laundering waste is one of the worst. The toxic waste residue of laundered fuels, has become an increasing problem in the area. Dumping of fuel laundering waste has huge implications for us all. Laundered fuel has the potential to damage vehicles, costing their owners a lot of money. On top of that, the laundered waste that is left behind is damaging our health, our water, our land, our air, animals and fish.

Help stop the pollution – tell us what you've seen. If you see any dumping of any kind inform the Council as soon as you can. The waste will be taken away and cleaned up as best we can. The number to call is 028 3031 3100 or you can email the relevant Officer on health@newryandmourne.gov.uk.

You can also report it to the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Environmental Crime Unit on 028 9056 9453 or at environmentalcrime@doeni.gov.uk.

Gap o' the North Hill Walking Club Updates

The 'Gap of the North, Hill Walking Club' has been in existence for just over a year and its membership has grown from a modest group of locals wishing to access the Ring of Gullion, to a phenomenal group of almost 100 members. The stunning Ring is the focal point of the walking club, as it provides varied and challenging walks, which the club alternate with walks in the Cooley Peninsula, the Mourne Mountains and further afield. A recent trip to Donegal saw over 50 members climb to the summit of Errigal.

At the heart of the club is the desire for members to learn more about their local area's traditions and history. The Chairman, Seamus Murphy, has a boundless enthusiasm to find and record stories and histories, places, place names and folklore for posterity. The club may have located, with Seamus's tenacity, "Cofracloghy," a Neolithic burial site on Carrickbroad Mountain. Its exact location was forgotten for a generation.



The club recently helped organise a very successful National Trails Event with approximately 140 people taking part. It was one of the the biggest turnouts in Northern Ireland! The route followed forest trails overlooking Ravensdale, to Feede Mountain, which, after a short climb, provided spectacular views over Dundalk Bay, Moyra Castle and Slieve Gullion itself. Local Comhaltas musicians took along their instruments and walkers enjoyed their lunch whilst traditional tunes and airs drifted

across the hill top.

The club prides itself in encouraging everyone to walk and experience for themselves the beauty of the area, but also



believes in promoting respect and care for the environment so that future generations can share and enjoy the stunning Ring of Gullion.

Prevent the spread of ash disease essential

The first finding in the north of Ireland of the tree disease Chalara, also known as ash dieback, has been confirmed in young ash saplings at five sites in counties Down and Antrim. The plants are all linked to continental imports.

Currently the only effective option to reduce spread of the disease is to remove all ash leaf litter from around the trees in the autumn and winter to reduce the local source of spores the following summer. There is some evidence from mainland Europe that leaf removal, possibly coupled with the lower humidity levels in parkland and urban tree environments, can significantly reduce and slow the impact of Chalara.

Further information on the disease and reporting findings is available at www.forest

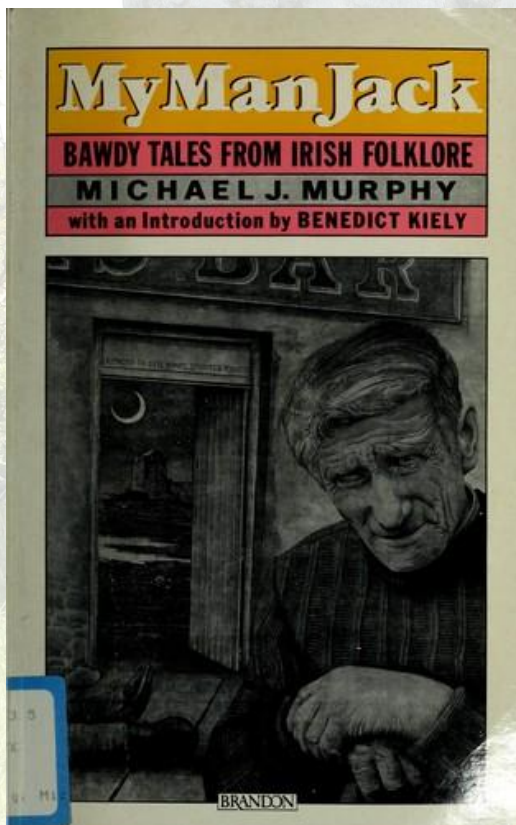


Michael J Murphy – 1913-1996

‘The last Druid of Sliabh Gullion’ (Benedict Kiely)

Michael J Murphy, writer and folklorist, was born in Eden Street, Liverpool, in June 1913. Both of his parents were from the parish of Dromintee, South Armagh, and when he was nine years old the family returned to Dromintee.

He attended the local national school until he was thirteen years old and he then went to work as a half-a-crown-a-day labourer with neighbouring farmers.



Michael's father, also Michael, and his mother, Mary Campbell, were accomplished storytellers. Michael senior, a seaman, was a friend of both James Connolly and Jim Larkin and was a strong socialist and republican.

So it was no accident that the young farm labourer developed an interest in folklore, customs, the plight of the

rural poor and the political problems of a divided country. Living and working in the shadow of Sliabh Gullion gave him an appreciation of landscape and of the mystic quality of his environment.

He began in the early 1930s collecting stories from the people around Dromintee, writing articles and short stories for newspapers and magazines, doing broadcasts for Radio Eireann and the BBC and when his first book 'At Slieve Gullion's Foot' was published by Harry Tempest of Dun Dealgan Press in 1941 he joined the Folklore Commission in Dublin as a part-time collector. He continued to work as a farm labourer, freelance writer and part-time collector of folklore for most of the 1940s.

In 1949 he became a full-time collector and moved with his wife Alice and young family to Glenhull, Co. Tyrone. Further work for the Folklore Commission brought him to the Glens of Antrim, Rathlin Island, the Mourne, Cavan, Fermanagh, Louth, Monaghan and back to South Armagh. In 1971 the Irish Folklore Commission became the Department of Irish Folklore, University College, Dublin.

He compiled, until his retirement in 1983, what is probably the largest collection of oral tradition by a single individual in the English-speaking world. These one hundred and fifty volumes are in University College, Dublin. Each volume has between three hundred and fifty and seven hundred pages. He kept a journal to accompany the material and compiled an invaluable glossary of Anglo-Irish speech.

Michael J. was also an accomplished creative writer and social commentator. He wrote six plays; a collection of prose poems; a large number of social and political articles and more than fifty short stories.

He died at Walterstown, Castlebellingham, Co. Louth, on May 18th 1996 and is buried, along with Alice, in Darver cemetery.

Many of Michael J Murphy's writings are housed in the archive room of Ti Chulainn Cultural Activity Centre in Mullaghbane.

You can find out more information about Ti Chulainn Cultural Activity Centre by visiting www.tichulainn.com.

Bell's Castle Restoration Group expands to become Slieve Gullion Buildings Preservation

The Slieve Gullion Buildings Preservation Trust is a trust which has been recently set up to focus on historic buildings of interest in the Slieve Gullion area. Our aim is to restore both listed and unlisted buildings within the small villages which make up South Armagh. These include Meigh, Sliverbridge, Jonesborough, Mullaghbane, and further afield. We aim to bring these buildings back to their former glory and prevent them from falling into a state of disrepair. There are so many buildings our group can focus on which have seemingly been allowed to fall into rack and ruin. Armagh is well known for its political past and it is due to this that there has been a lack of funding and investment in the area, which our group wants to fight against and bring tourism to our beautiful County of Armagh; in particular to South Armagh.

Our group kicked off its campaign to save Killeavy Castle situated at the foot of Slieve Gullion. The castle has recently been up for sale and we are waiting to hear the results of this. Until then we are looking for other projects. Our next meeting to discuss the castle and future projects will be on Thursday 10th January at 7:00pm in Slieve Gullion Courtyard. Everyone is welcome to attend. We are also hoping to elect a committee at this meeting so anybody with a general interest in our local heritage is more than welcome to come and join in.

For more information on our group please contact slievegullionbpt@gmail.com.

Flying the Flag for Newry Maritime Association!

Newry Maritime Association (NMA) is a group of people committed to the preservation and active promotion of our rich Maritime Heritage.



Our waterways, initially the Clanrye River and then laterally the Newry Canal, were key drivers in the social and economic development of Newry. The canal sustained a plethora of diverse industries such as breweries, distilleries, mills and foundries. It was an arterial route for the transportation of goods to and from Mid-Ulster.

The most important was coal, much in demand in the commercial and domestic sectors. Several coal importers had premises at Albert Basin and along the canal. Established in 1852, Joseph Fisher and Sons became the biggest and best known in the trade locally and they built up a fleet of ships to service both their own business and also that of outside concerns.

Until the 1940s Fishers owned 15 ships employing up to 150 seamen. The dangers of the job are mirrored by the fact that 17 Newry ships were lost, resulting in a heavy loss of life.

The seamen came mostly from Newry, Gullion, Mourne and the Cooley peninsula. However, the townland of Fathom became synonymous with seafaring with one name a constant feature - Hollywood. Almost every family in Fathom could claim to have at least one sailor. The O'Keefe family boasted five brothers, all captains, just pipping McParlands who had four master mariners in their family. Sadly there are no active seamen in Fathom today.

Newry Maritime Association meets in Newry Arts Centre on the first Monday of each month at 7pm. New members are always welcome.

For more information contact: James McArevey, Research and Public Relations Officer. Tel: 07521788574, email: jmcarevey@hotmail.co.uk

Growing the National Biodiversity Database

Got problems with pesky house mice as the weather gets colder? No one likes to admit that the little critters have got in again, but the familiar grey flash behind the sofa or even worse, in a larder, is common to many houses at this time of year. But before you get out the poison or the traps, Abby McSherry, working for the Action for Biodiversity Project in Newry and Mourne, asks that you record that you have seen a mouse for the National Biodiversity data centre.

People might be aware that rare animals and birds need to be recorded and that scientists need to know the whereabouts of a Siberian warbler or a lesser spotted blue nosed tree jay (please, if you see one of these let us know as we just made it up!) but our common or garden creatures are generally missed out as no one bothers to notice them. They are just there in the background. House mice are particularly under-recorded. It doesn't matter if the animal recorded is alive or dead – no really! The National Biodiversity Data Base also records mammals that have been killed on the road. The sad sight of a beautiful badger or red fox dead on the side of the road is a useful indication that somewhere in the area there are living badgers and foxes. With nocturnal animals road kill is often all anyone will see.

"There is big drive to record mammals in Ireland and these records will be published in an All Ireland Mammal Atlas in 2015. To record a mammal – a house mouse or something more attractive like a red squirrel or even a sighting of a dolphin just go to www.mammals.biodiversityireland.ie and follow the links there. It will take about 30 seconds to make a record." says Abby.

"Counties Down and Armagh are right towards bottom of the list for the number of records – let's get them moved up by getting recording" she continued. *Action for Biodiversity is funded by the European Union's INTERREG IVA Cross Border Programme*



Ring of Gullion 2013 Calendar

The Ring of Gullion photo competition is now in its second year and has established itself as a popular annual event in South Armagh. As part of the project thirteen pictures are chosen to feature on the calendar. Prizes in the past have been generously donated by local businesses and Newry and Mourne Council. Thanks again to all of this year's sponsors. Prizes were kindly given to us by: The Slieve Gullion Springs Spa and Resort, Mullaghbane; Rascals Laser Quest, Forkill, and Newry and Mourne District Council. All the entrants were exhibited in the Sean Holywood Arts Centre in Newry and the feedback was great from all those who saw the exhibition. If you didn't get a chance to enter this year's competition, see our events section below. The word is next year's theme will be 'Heritage' - so get snapping!

You can pick up a copy at the following places: Newry Tourist Information Centre, Crossmaglen Tourist Information Centre, Crossmaglen Community Centre, Mullaghbane Community Centre, Dorsey Community Centre and from Camlough Heritage Society. There is a limited supply, so hurry! If you don't get a copy you can download one from the link below and print it yourself.

www.ringofgullion.org/Publications/2013-Ring-of-Gullion-Calendar.aspx

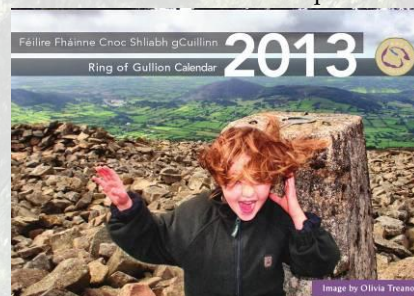
This year's Competition Winners are:

Over 14s

First : Olivia Treanor. Second : Sean Downey. Third: Brian Magennis.

Under 14s

First : Chris Downey. Second : Conor McCann. Third: Moya Winters.



Dulra

Is ceann téide suntasach é talamh glas na hÉireann d'éin imirce, tearmann tábhachtach atá inti don éagsúlacht mhór éan uisce i rith an gheimhridh, ealaí, géanna agus lachain go háirit. Tagann na milliúin éanlaith uisce an t-aistear aduaidh gach Fómhar le drochaimsir Chiorcail an Artaigh a sheachaint abhus in Éirinn. Baineann siad buntaiste ollmhór as na deiseanna bia a chuireas lochanna, oitreacha láibe, talaimh phortaigh agus fiú páirceanna peile ar fáil dóibh. Tá cósta an Dúin agus Loch Cairlinn ar na háiteanna is oiriúnaí dá leithéid sa tír seo. Filleann na héin fhiáine chun a gcuid tailte pórúcháin ó thuaidh i bhfiántas na hÍoslainne agus na Graonlainne san Earrach. Baineann siad leas as laethanta fada an Artaigh le linn shéasúr an ghoir chun a gcuid éillíní a dhéanamh réidh láidir dá gcéad chuairt go hÉirinn agus an cúrsa ar fad a thabhairt chun críche arís.



If you would like to learn Irish, or add to that which you know already, contact the Irish Language Unit in Newry and Mourne Council for more information on 028 3031 3258 or gaeilge@newryandmourne.gov.uk.

But if you prefer being beside the fire on winter nights you can learn Irish from the comfort of your armchair by visiting www.easyirish.com

Wildlife

Ireland is a significant destination for migratory birds during the winter, an important sanctuary for a variety of water fowl, especially swans, geese and ducks. Millions of these waders come here from the north every autumn to avoid the bitter weather of the Arctic Circle. They benefit greatly from the feeding opportunities provided by lakes, mudflats, bogland and even football pitches. The Down coast and Carlingford Lough are amongst the most suitable places in the country for this sort of migrant. The wild birds return to their northerly breeding grounds in the wilderness of Iceland and Greenland in the Spring. There they make the best of the long days of the Arctic summer during the nesting season to ensure that their chicks are strong and ready to embark on their first flight to Ireland and complete the cycle of life again.



Helping garden wildlife is fun - and it couldn't be easier. On Saturday 26th we'd love you, your friends and family, to get involved in Big Garden Birdwatch with us at Slieve Gullion Courtyard. Big Garden Bird Watch is the world's largest wildlife survey!

See below for more details or check out www.ringofgullion.org/What-s-On.aspx

Landscape Partnership Scheme – Heritage Lottery Funding

Newry and Mourne District Council has received an earmarked first-round pass of £980,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) through its Landscape Partnership (LP) programme for the Ring of Gullion project. The project aims to conserve built and natural heritage; increase community participation in local heritage and increase access to, and learning about, the landscape and its heritage.

Development funding of £60,200 has also been awarded to help Newry and Mourne District Council progress its plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

The partnership aims to address the threats and opportunities to protect the landscape of the Ring of Gullion; raise awareness and encourage local community involvement in the historic, cultural and environmental features of the Ring of Gullion. The partnership will create more opportunities for physical, intellectual and sensory access to the Ring of Gullion and highlight its recreation potential, local culture and its internationally important biodiversity and geology. This will ensure that high quality up to date training and skills required to address the above are all available locally.

The scheme will provide training opportunities in local heritage skills and for historical and heritage guides as well as many other opportunities for local communities to benefit from.

The Ring of Gullion is one of only a few small areas in Ireland to have so clearly retained its local identity. People have lived in the area for over 6,000 years and have expressed their feelings about the landscape through the ages in local literature, poetry, music, folk history and art. This thriving cultural heritage has survived to the present day. The shared traditions of the people, in their virtually enclosed landscape with its historic frontier, have forged a unique culture which is warm, friendly and welcoming.

Darren Rice, Ring of Gullion Officer, said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support. This partnership will provide educational and community benefits that are of interest to everybody in the Ring of Gullion. The Council would also like to thank everyone involved in the application- a fantastic team effort!"

Explaining the importance of HLF's support, Paul Mullan, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Northern Ireland, said:

"The Ring of Gullion is one of the most distinctive landscapes in Ireland. This project seeks to reconnect people and place as well as helping to open up an area which has been overlooked for many years. With the Landscape Partnership scheme we will see many exciting initiatives being developed to encourage a greater appreciation and understanding of the area."

Ring of Gullion Red Squirrels

The Northern Ireland Squirrel Forum has launched an online squirrel recording platform with the support of the National Museums of Northern Ireland - Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR) and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA).

Red Squirrels are under serious threat of local extinction due to habitat loss, competition from the non-native grey squirrel and diseases spread by contact with grey squirrels. With money being very limited across the environmental sector we have to target our resources carefully. We rely very heavily on the excellent work of our volunteers operational in local Red Squirrel groups, such as the Ring of Gullion Red Squirrel Group. You can help by reporting red and grey squirrel sightings to us via our website www2.habitas.org.uk/squirrels/

If you are not directly involved in a Red Squirrel Group and you are interested in taking part we can help you find your nearest group.

Contact Darren for information about the Ring of Gullion group and Jon Lees 028 905 69551 (Squirrels@doeni.gov.uk) for Red Squirrel groups outside the Ring of Gullion catchment.

Ring of Gullion Red Squirrels Go Nuts!

As part of National Red Squirrel Week, Tollymore and Ring of Gullion Red Squirrel Groups, together with Ring of Gullion Officer and Biodiversity Officer for Newry and Mourne District Council were at Slieve Gullion Courtyard

finding out all about our much loved native red squirrel!

Darren Rice, Ring of Gullion officer said, "The red squirrel is such a fascinating animal. We have lots of them in the Ring of Gullion but not many people have seen these elusive creatures." He added, "Although numerous in the Ring of Gullion, they are under threat from habitat fragmentation and the encroachment of the non-native grey squirrel."

Danielle Begley, Biodiversity Officer explained, "The grey squirrel is not a native to this island and they put the reds under pressure. The grey squirrels feed earlier and later in the year than reds." She continued, "The greys also carry a very nasty pox virus. It doesn't affect them but if reds contract it, they enviably perish"

Anne and John McComb from the Tollymore Red Squirrel Group showed the children and their parents what squirrels eat, where they live and even had some quizzes and games. Tufty, the Red Squirrel, was also on hand to show the kids what squirrels get up to. When the children found all the larch cones nibbled on Hawthron Hill during the nature walk, they were sure that red squirrels lived on Slieve Gullion.

Briege Roe, a member of the Ring of Gullion Red Squirrel Group, continued, "I hope this is just the beginning of our exploration of how we can help the squirrels in the Ring of Gullion."

To find out more about squirrels in the Ring of Gullion log onto www.ringofgullion.org and click on the groups logo.

Rianta na bhFilí agus Siúlóidí Eile - The Poets Trails and Other Walks

The Ring of Gullion lies within a region long associated with an ancient frontier that began with the earliest records of man's habitation in Ireland. It was along these roads and fields, and over these hills and mountains, that Cúchulainn and the Red Branch Knights, the O'Neills and O'Hanlons roamed, battled and died. The area, which has always represented a frontier from the ancient Iron Age defences of the Dorsey, through the Anglo- Norman Pale and latterly the modern border, is alive with history, scenic beauty and culture. This area reflects the mix of cultures from Neolithic to the present; while the rolling countryside lends itself to the enjoyment of peaceful walks, excellent fishing and a friendly welcome at every stop.

This is the scene for which the new 'Poets' Trails and other Walks' booklet was published. In it you will find out lots of information about how to get around, and where the information panels are and each page has some local facts. So what better way to spend your Christmas break than walking around the rolling hills of South Armagh and finding out about its rich history.



You can download your copy, in English or Irish, from this link - www.ringofgullion.org/Publications.aspx

What's on in the Ring of Gullion January 2013 - June 2013 at a glance

Activity	Day	Date	Venue	Time	Booking Required
Big Garden Bird Watch	Saturday	26 th January	Slieve Gullion Walled Garden	2pm-4pm	No
Build your own Owl Box	Saturday	16 th February	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	2pm-4pm	*Yes - www.ringofgullion.org
Ring of Gullion third annual Photography Competition		2 nd March-27 th September	The Ring of Gullion AONB		Submit online at www.ringofgullion.org
Ring of Gullion Historical Coach Tour	Saturday	6 th April	Start/finish at Bagenal's Castle, Newry Museum	10.30am-4.30pm	*Yes - www.ringofgullion.org
Slieve Gullion Ramble	Saturday	20 th April	Meet at the top car park on the forest drive of Slieve Gullion	10am-2pm	*Yes - www.ringofgullion.org
Wild about Wildflowers	Saturday	4 th May	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	2pm-4pm	*Yes - www.ringofgullion.org
Ring of Gullion Biodiversity Funday	Saturday	25 th May	Slieve Gullion Courtyard	2pm-4pm	*Yes - www.ringofgullion.org
Ring of Gullion Historical Coach Tour	Saturday	1 st June	Start/finish at Bagenal's Castle, Newry Museum	10.30am-4.30pm	*Yes - www.ringofgullion.org

To keep up to date and find out more information about the Ring of Gullion and our events; 'like' us on Facebook; 'follow' us on Twitter and check our website regularly. Information is true at time of print. Please check the website before making plans.

**Please note that booking will only open one month before date of event.*



t - 028 3086 8900

w - www.ringofgullion.org

O'Fiaich House, 25-26 O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9HG

