

# The Ring of Gullion

A Newsletter for the Ring of Gullion  
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and  
The Landscape Partnership Scheme

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## Travel Back in Time this Summer

Councillor Naomi Bailie, Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is delighted to launch the Ring of Gullion Heritage Coach Tours starting on Saturday 18th July and running until Saturday 5th September. The fully guided coach tours take in the most impressive sights and monuments the Ring of Gullion has to offer.

Time travellers will have Una Walsh as a guide. Una, a Mullaghbane native, is one of the most passionate people in south Armagh. She has a wealth of knowledge about everything from the formation of Camlough Mountain 400 million years ago, the Ring Dyke around 60 million years ago, through Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze age, Iron age, early and late Medieval and Christian Heritage. Una is passionate about the townlands and knows them the length and breadth of south Armagh. Una is also a Geo-Ambassador and tutors on the Ring of Gullion Ambassador course.

Una will be leading visitors on a journey through the breathtaking landscape of the area whilst enlightening you about the rich natural, built, archaeological and cultural heritage, not forgetting the many myths and legends in which the area is steeped.

Chairperson Naomi Bailie said "This is a great way for everyone to learn about this area of outstanding natural beauty. With so many tours happening over the summer, there is no excuse not to visit this great region!"

Tickets are available to buy from Newry's Visitor Information Centre at Bagenal's Castle. Tickets are £10 for adults, £8 for OAPs and under 16 and students or £25 for a family of four. Tickets are also available by cheque, or reserve with a credit card; call 028 3031 3170 for more information.

If you would like to learn more about the Ring of Gullion and what's happening over the summer, visit the website [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org) or call into the office in Crossmaglen Community Centre, O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9AA Tel:-(028) 3082 8590.

## Townlands

If we were to suggest today that with one stroke of a legislator's pen we should remove something that is

unique worldwide to Ireland, would we be allowed to get away with it? Obviously not! Especially if this something tells the story of our history, genealogy, wildlife, geography and culture. Yet this is precisely what happened in the early 1970's with the replacement of townlands by rural road-names and numbers.

The loss of our townlands, purely for the convenience of government, cut a very immediate link between the people and their place; slicing through stories that were the genetic DNA and lifeblood of the oral traditions which had been collated intimately in the minds of the people. In the naming of one road alone: Longfield road, six townland names that told tales of elm-woods, sloe-woods, fields of caves, twin settlements and wooden bridges vanished.

But all is not lost and through the work of community groups and passionate individuals, townlands are back on the map. A comprehensive townland marking project has already been completed in the parish of Forkhill and Camlough Village. School projects in Forkhill and Mullaghbawn have raised the profile of these unique names and in Dromintee, classrooms have local townland names. The final piece in re-establishing the jigsaw of our townlands is set to be put in place over the next 4 years as the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership aims to erect carved stones on major roads in the area marking the townland boundaries they cross. As research progresses with local communities to define the boundaries precisely, each and every townland in the Ring of Gullion will have at least 2 name stones, helping to link each place firmly to its history and prevent the further loss of our place name heritage. If you, your community or your school is interested in regaining your townlands please contact Abby. [mcsherry@newryandmourne.gov.uk](mailto:mcsherry@newryandmourne.gov.uk).



# Restoration of Slieve Gullion Cairn A Resounding Success

Around 30 volunteers, accompanied by Historical Monuments Inspector, Martin Keery, and BBC Environment Correspondent, Conor Macauley, braved the windy climb to the summit of Slieve Gullion on the 16th May to restore Slieve Gullion Cairn. The cairn has been a victim of its own success; the increased footfall to the summit has resulted in stones being accidentally knocked down the steep slope of the cairn into the passage grave entrance, causing it to become increasingly blocked and leaving a scar on the cairn.

Working together, the volunteers redistributed the stones blocking the entrance back to the top of the cairn, covering exposed concrete on the top of the cairn and repairing the scar path which had developed. The volunteers enjoyed an interesting lunch break sheltering inside the 5000 year old tomb. If you would like to see footage of our volunteers in action, check out BBC News.

If you are visiting the cairn in future we'd appreciate it if you could climb to the summit via the gentler slope which faces the mountain path, return to the grass and walk around the cairn to access the entrance passage from the bottom, rather than climbing down the steep slope from the summit to the passage. If all visitors take this route it will ensure that damage to the cairn is minimised and the monument will stand for many thousands of years to come.

We would like to thank all the volunteers who took part on the day, with special thanks to Martin Keery. If you would like to get involved in volunteering in the Ring of Gullion, please contact Alison Henderson on 028 30861949 or email [info@ringofgullion.org](mailto:info@ringofgullion.org)



## Youth Ranger Programme

We are pleased to launch our first ever Ring of Gullion Youth Ranger Programme. It's an excellent opportunity for 14 to 17 year olds, from the Ring of Gullion, to gain experience in environmental management and outdoor adventure. Working alongside Landscape Partnership and East Coast Adventure staff, participants will learn useful skills such as map reading, canoeing, first aid and practical conservation techniques. Throughout the course participants will have the opportunity to explore the Ring of Gullion with knowledgeable leaders and gain insight into the landscape and heritage of the Ring of Gullion. There will also be plenty of opportunity to carry out practical conservation to improve the local environment.

The Youth Ranger Programme is ideal for young people who are passionate about the environment, or those who would potentially like a career working in an environmental field. The Youth Ranger programme is free and running on Mondays and Tuesdays in August, however we do ask for £50 deposit to secure a place. The deposit is refunded at the end of the course, as long as participants attend at least 6 out of the 8 sessions. For full information and an application pack please visit our website and follow the links through the 'Get Involved' tab. The deadline for applications is Friday 17th July.





# Meet the Team

## **Darren Rice, LPS Manager**

I am very excited to be delivering such an ambitious project. When developing the Landscape Conservation Action Plan in 2013, the community consultation was a key driver, that partnership approach is still key and it's one of the most enjoyable parts of my job. I am very fortunate to work with such a diverse range of individuals, groups, and organisations.



## **Therese Hamill, AONB officer**

My role is funded by the Council and the NIEA to implement the Ring of Gullion AONB Management Plan. My role aims to enhance the rich built, cultural and natural heritage in the area as well as increasing opportunities for public enjoyment of the special qualities of the AONB. I feel very privileged to work and promote this outstanding area with a great bunch of people.



## **Abby McSherry, Landscape Projects Officer**

Although I am not from here, Gullion has worked its way deep into my heart since I moved to the area 8 years ago. I'll be working closely with landowners and those that work the land to improve access and make sure that visitors and residents can both benefit from the wonderful resources our unique landscape offers.



## **Alison Henderson, Outreach and Volunteer Officer**

I am also something of a blow in, hailing originally from the North Coast. My passion for the area developed when I worked as the Education Officer on the Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism project. My role is to organise training opportunities for local people. I also coordinate a valuable pool of volunteers who freely give up their time to help us conserve the diverse Ring of Gullion environment.



## **Edel McGeeney, Administration & Finance Officer**

My job involves keeping track of the finances and ensuring the office is running smoothly. I find the myths and legends about the Ring of Gullion particularly interesting and I am looking forward to learning a lot more about the history and biodiversity of the area. I feel very lucky to be part of such an exciting project.



# Ring of Gullion Lúnasa Festival

This August the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership is co-ordinating our first ever Lúnasa Festival. The Festival is an excellent opportunity to explore an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, alive with history and bursting with culture. The Ring of Gullion is a unique geological landform, unparalleled elsewhere in Ireland or the UK and is listed on the 'Top 100 Geosites of UK and Ireland' along with the Giant's Causeway and the Cliffs of Moher.

The Festival is kicking off with the Forkhill Fleadh Rua, the only redhead festival in Ulster. The wide range of events over the month of August means we have

## From child's drawing to spectacular sculpture

June saw the launch of Camlough Public Art 'Con-Flux' by artist Holger Lönze. The starting point for this concept was taken from a child's drawing made during one of the initial workshops carried out by local artist Tracey McVerry. It follows the natural water cycle; a spectacular visual effect is created by the shaped and layered stainless steel mesh into the form of a cloud. The upper surface of the base is rippled to give a running water effect. For the passing traffic, the mesh creates a moiré effect of the cloud during the daytime, while internal lighting creates a spectacular illumination of the cloud at night. A metal strip runs from the base and represents the Camlough River flowing out of Camlough Lake.



something for everyone; from bus tours, to guided walks and talks, to craft and science activities for the children. Not to mention the Giant's Lair and award winning play park at Slieve Gullion Courtyard.

Why not join renowned story teller Frances Quinn and master fiddle player Gerry O'Connor to hear the stories and airs of Co. Armagh brought to life. Or you could dance the night away with Bothán at the Fleadh Rua céilí and the Pig Gig. If you'd like a more serene outing why not try one of our fully guided bus tours, taking in the highlights of the Ring of Gullion or an Xhale Meditation day retreat.

For full details visit our website or collect an events guide from tourism outlets around the Ring of Gullion.

## **The Ring of Gullion – The place to be this August!**

In July we will see the launch of Alan Burke's Flax Flower – an impressive six metre high stainless steel stem, with reflective blue petals. This art recognises the importance of the linen industry in the area, and its location is important as the pond was key to feeding the industry in Bessbrook.

This project is funded through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland - Building Peace Through the Arts programme.



## **Volunteer Profile**

### **What's your name?**

Éilis McSherry



**Éilis McSherry**

### **How long have you been involved in volunteering in the Ring of Gullion?**

Since I was about 12 years old, so 4-5 years on and off, mainly in the winters

### **Why did you choose to volunteer within the Ring of Gullion?**

I used to just go along with my parents when they volunteered and I would look after my wee brother and just muck around with him making dens for him, but then I started helping out a bit, mainly clearing branches off the paths and starting to learn to use the tools, now I can use all the hand tools and safely fell quite big trees. I love the Ring of Gullion and Cooley in Louth (I also volunteer in Louth). I want to help to look after it and I also like that it gets me outdoors and is better than the gym for keeping fit.

### **Can you tell us your favourite memory of volunteering?**

The last time we went out we were clearing quite big cherry laurel trees from along a path and being able to plan where it would fall and getting to shout "timber" and see it crash down was brilliant. I can take out all my aggression on the trees. My next favourite time was when we were clearing litter which was hard work and seemed never ending and I was just wondering why we bothered and then a little red squirrel came out right in front of us and spiralled up the tree. It was the first time anyone had seen a red squirrel in that wood for years and I thought "that is why!"

### **What do you like to do when you're not volunteering?**

Well I am still in school starting my senior cycle; I'm doing leaving cert soon so I do have to study at least a bit. I like to hang out with my friends, listen to music, facebook and snapchat, go horse-riding and of course I love a cuddle in the evening with my favourite pets, Brie and Lucybrown, my rats. Ratties make great pets and even though people usually think "yeuch", fancy domestic rats (different from wild rats) are really cute, smart and clean.

### **If this sounds like you, get involved as a volunteer with the Ring of Gullion and Cooley AONBs!**

Volunteering offers you a chance to make a real and visible difference to the wildlife and landscape; learn new skills, meet like minded people, discover habitats and heritage, and enjoy the outdoors. So, whether you have a skill you would like to share, or wish to learn something new, get in touch and we'll find a place for you or your group. All we ask in return is enthusiasm and a willingness to learn.

Register with Alison Henderson at the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme on **028 308 61949** or [info@ringofgullion.org](mailto:info@ringofgullion.org).

You can also get in touch through



**Ring.Of.Gullion**



**Ring\_of\_Gullion**





## The Ring of Gullion's new website launched

On a fresh May morning on the shores of Camlough

Lake and at the foot of Camlough Mountain Chairperson of Newry Mourne and Down District Council Councillor Naomi Bailie officially launched the Ring of Gullion's new website, [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org), with Slieve Gullion Councillor Roisin Mulgrew and designer Paudie Fearon from Wibble Web Design & Development.

The website revamp is part of The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership, a Heritage Lottery Fund programme to conserve and enhance some of the region's most treasured landscapes.

Wibble Web Design & Development worked closely, over a number of months, with the Ring of Gullion team to create a modern, aesthetically pleasing and mobile friendly website that conveys the beauty of the region and the array of activities and projects that are currently available to people.

Chairperson Naomi Bailie said, "We are lucky to have three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in our council area and this new website is a great resource for the Ring of Gullion AONB. It's really encouraging to see further development of the area that has come on in leaps and bounds in the last few years."

Paudie Fearon, owner of Wibble Web Design & Development said, "We are extremely proud of this project. As a relatively small, local business working on such a large website was of huge importance to us."

## The Ring of Gullion funded until March 2016

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council are happy to announce the Ring of Gullion is one of 21 environmental projects which has benefited from the Department of Environment's Natural Environment Fund (NEF). This funding will enable the Ring of Gullion AONB to continue until the 31st March 2016.

The Council received £49,000 of the £1.25 million NEF fund which will allow the Ring of Gullion AONB Officer to continue in post and provide part-funding for Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme projects. The funding helps protect the Ring of Gullion AONB landscape, species and access to the countryside. Key projects will be a review of the Ring of Gullion AONB Management Plan, wildfire awareness, maintenance of the Ring of Gullion way, and an invasive species mapping project.

Councillor Naomi Bailie, Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council said "The Council and the staff managing the Ring of Gullion AONB & Landscape Partnership would like to express their thanks to all the councillors, everyone who signed our petition and wrote to the Minister and officials who worked so tirelessly for the Ring of Gullion when the Natural Heritage Grant was cut in March. We were overwhelmed by the positive feedback from members of the public all over the world and closer to home in regard the work we had been carrying out and the importance of the Ring of Gullion area."

Environment Minister Mark H Durkan said "My officials will organise further workshops with key natural and built heritage partners in the summer and autumn to discuss how we can all continue to deliver against key environmental outcomes which include protecting our landscapes, habitats and species and providing opportunities for each of us to explore, enjoy and cherish our environment in the North. Be assured, I will continue to keep seeking ways to find funding for the benefit of our environment."



## Ring of Gullion Lúnasa Festival

Join us this August in beautiful and charismatic South Armagh for the events below...



**Fleadh Rua**  
August 1, 2015

**Pig Gig**  
August 22, 2015



and much,  
much more!

**Ring of Gullion -  
The place to be this August.**

With at least one event everyday in August there is something for everyone.

Visit [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org) or call 028 3082 8594 for full details.

The festival is part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, through the Landscape Partnership Scheme.





## New Ambassadors for South Armagh

The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme organised its first Ambassador training course and saw fifteen new Ambassadors graduate in the Spring. The course helped to build up knowledge and stories and also gave the techniques, confidence and practical skills to lead a group as well as entertain them. The ambassadors can now give tours and presentations for the community, schools and other groups. The course also gives tips on how to set up part-time businesses.

Ann Ward, a graduate and owner of new business Xhale said “as a native of Slieve Gullion, the Ambassador course was a great opportunity to develop my skills in leading a walking group while enhancing my knowledge of the magnificent biodiversity, geology and literature associated with the area. The experience was a wonderful affirmation of how magical the Ring of Gullion is. It provides the perfect backdrop for my meditation classes and day retreats”

The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership commissioned specialist trainers to deliver the course in south Armagh ranging from Geology Survey for NI, Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism, Butterfly Conservation Trust, Southern Regional College, Outdoor Recreation NI, and St John Ambulance as well as our local guides: Una Walsh, Kevin Murphy and Des Murphy.

The Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020 sets out growth targets to increase our visitor numbers to 4.5 million, the employment supported by tourism to 50,000 jobs, and the revenue generated by tourism to £1 billion for the Northern Ireland economy. This is a growth industry and there are many opportunities for guiding visitors, especially for anyone with a second language skill.

Kieran Swail, i3 Research Lecturer in Tourism from the SRC told us “During the training ambassadors exhibited a real passion for welcoming visitors to the Ring of Gullion and wider region. The skills and knowledge gained will help to meet the needs of both international and domestic visitors interested in the culture and heritage of the region.”

The ambassador course will be run again April 2016, places are limited so check [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org) in January, for information on how to book your place. The course is subsidised and costs £50; non-refundable.

## Alien Invasion

**Invasive species are becoming a real problem in Northern Ireland, not only for our biodiversity but also for our economy and in some cases they can even impact our health. The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme is currently working with volunteers on a project to map the location of any invasive species present in this area and to create a management plan to tackle this problem.**

As part of this, surveys will be carried out at a number of different sites within the Ring of Gullion and our volunteers have recently attended a training day to help prepare them for this. We would also like to encourage the public to learn more about invasive species and to watch out for them when they are out and about in the area. Anyone who spots an invasive species can report their sighting online on both the CEDaR and Invasive Species Ireland websites. These reports are useful when planning control measures to ensure that species are contained before they can cause any serious damage. More information about invasive non-native species, what to look out for, and how to report them is available on the Ring of Gullion website.

## UPCOMING TRAINING COURSES

**VIDEO EDITING** – 7th, 21st and 28th September 6.45pm–9.15pm  
Crossmaglen Community Centre - £5

**WORLD HOST TRAINING** – 17th and 24th October 10am–5pm  
Crossmaglen Community Centre - £35

**SOCIAL MEDIA TRAINING** – 20th and 27th October 7.30–9.30pm  
Crossmaglen Community Centre - £5

**YOUTH RANGERS** – Every Monday and Tuesday in August  
- visit [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org) to apply





# What's on!

When	What	Where
Every Saturday from 18th July until 5th September 10.15am – 4.30pm	Ring of Gullion Historical Coach Tour	Meet at Bagenal's Castle
10th July 10.30am – 3.30pm	Wider Countryside Butterfly Survey Training	Crossmaglen Community Centre
31st July 7pm – 8pm	Launch of Lúnasa Festival of Craft	Hawthorn Suite, Slieve Gullion Courtyard
1st–16th August 9am – 7pm	Lúnasa Festival of Craft	Hawthorn Suite, Slieve Gullion
1st August 12pm – late	Fleadh Rua	Forkhill
2nd August 2pm – 5pm	Blaeberry Sunday Picking & Picnicking	Carrigatuke View Point
2nd August 7pm – 9pm	Accolade Choir – Voices from Around the World	St. Joseph's Chapel, Meigh
2nd August – 7th August	Teac Mallon Festival	Teac Mallon, Meigh
3rd – 7th August & 10th – 14th August 9.30am – 2.30pm	Crafty Kids Summer School (5-11)	Hawthorn Suite, Slieve Gullion Courtyard
3rd August – 7th August	Arts, Crafts & Games Summer Workshop (4-10)	Red Balloon Creative Studios, Bessbrook
4th August 2pm – 4pm	Celebrating St. Moninna	Killeavy Old Churches, Meigh
4th August 7.30pm	Lúnasa Lecture – How the Great Famine Affected S. Armagh, Dr. Gerard MacAtasney	Ti Chulainn, Mullaghbawn
5th, 12th, 19th, 26th August	Guided walks with the Ring of Gullion Ambassadors	Various
6th August 11am – 4.00pm	Ring of Gullion Butterfly Safari and Picnic as part of Big Butterfly Count (contact Ring of Gullion office to ask for moth traps for the 4th Aug)	Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard
8th August 10.30am – 4.30pm	ROGHA Coach Tour of Local Arts & Craft Studios	Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard
9th August 10am – 5pm	Wood Turning Workshop	Padraigh Carragher's Studio, Mullaghbawn
9th August 2pm – 5pm	Bessbrook Charity Family Fun Day	Bessbrook Pond
10th – 14th August 11am – 12pm	Messy Play Summer Workshop (0-3)	Red Balloon Creative Studios, Bessbrook
11th August 6.30pm – 9pm	Pottery Workshop – Make a Vase	Hawthorn Suite, Slieve Gullion Courtyard

When	What	Where
11th August 7.30pm	Lúnasa Lecture – Adventures in Ireland & further afield, Dermot Somers	Ti Chulainn, Mullaghbawn
13th August 10am – 12pm	Go Wild in the Ring of Gullion – Discover Derrymore	Derrymore Estate, Bessbrook
17th– 21st August 11am – 2.30pm	Drama with Charmaine McBride (4-10)	Red Balloon Creative Studios, Bessbrook
18th, 19th, 24th & 25th August 10am–4pm	Xhale & Awaken Your Senses – Meditation Day Retreats	Hawthorn Suite, Slieve Gullion
18th August 7.30pm	Lúnasa Lecture – A story of Fire & Ice, Dr. Kirstin Lemon	Ti Chulainn, Mullaghbawn
20th August 10am–1pm	Wildflowers of Ring of Gullion	TBC
20th August 10am–3pm	Waste Education on Wheels!	Slieve Gullion
21st – 23rd August	Camlough Lake Water Festival	Camlough
22nd August 5pm to late	The Pig Gig	Cullyhanna
27th August 10am – 12pm	Go Wild in the Ring of Gullion – Precious Ponds	Jonesborough Community Centre
27th August 2pm – 4pm	Go Wild in the Ring of Gullion – Pond dipping	Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard
27th August 8pm – 10pm	Stories & Aires from Co. Armagh Frances Quinn & Gerry O'Connor	Ti Chulainn, Mullaghbawn
30th August 10am – 4pm	Sacred Sites tour of S. Armagh & Ring of Gullion	Meet at Canal Court Hotel, Newry
30th August 10am – 4pm	Gap o' the North Famine Wall Walk	Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard
11th September 7.00pm	Creatures of the Night Picnic	Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard. Booking essential
12th September – 9.00am (if have moth trap) 10.00am (Nature surgery and Nature walk)	Nature surgery and walk– get all your nature questions answered!	Meet at Slieve Gullion Courtyard. Booking essential
23rd September 5.00pm	Deadline for Ring of Gullion Photography Competition 2015	
October	Red Squirrel Month	TBC

For even more events, to book and for more information check  
[www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org)

