

The Ring of Gullion

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

ISSUE 14
Summer 2017

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Cryptic Wood White © James O'Neill





The Ring of Gullion needs more Ambassadors

Are you passionate about the landscape or heritage of the Ring of Gullion? Would you like to share that passion with others, but aren't sure how, or lack confidence? The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership has the perfect opportunity for you to gain those skills, the Ambassador Training Programme, running from 2nd September to 9th October 2017.

The programme will give you training and support to share your interest in our natural, built and cultural heritage, which could potentially help you set up a part-time business or increase your already established business. Even if you would just like to give tours and presentations to your community, your school or other groups, this short Ring of Gullion Ambassador Programme will help you to build up your knowledge and give you the techniques, confidence and practical skills to lead a group, as well as entertain them. The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership has commissioned specialist trainers, to deliver the course in South Armagh and participants from this community are particularly welcome.

The Ambassador Programme classes and site visits will run over a combination of Saturdays, Mondays and weekday evenings. The course is open to everyone from young people hoping to improve their CVs, to tourism businesses and retirees. No previous qualifications or experience is required.

Upon completion, you will receive:

- An OCN NI Level 2 award in Tour Guiding
- Emergency First Aid certification
- Walking in your Community certification
- A Ring of Gullion Ambassador certificate

Full details are available in the Jobs & Training section of the Ring of Gullion website. Places will be limited, so please book your place as soon as possible. The course costs £65, which can be paid by cheque (made out to Newry, Mourne & Down District Council) or by calling into the Crossmaglen Community Centre, Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, and ask for anyone in the Ring of Gullion team.

“How to become a Hollywood Producer” returns

Young people from South Armagh, will once again have the opportunity to take their first steps onto the red carpet as part of the “How to become a Hollywood Producer” summer scheme, which returns this August.

The project will provide opportunities for young people to experience professional script writing techniques, learn how to design a storyboard and discover the world behind the camera from experienced producers, directors and camera operators. Additionally, the young people, aged 13 to 16, will engage in interpreting the ancient myths, legends and stories of the Ring of Gullion for a modern audience.

The aspiring artists and producers will use the skills they gain to create their own piece of cinematic storytelling, either animated or live action. The film will be presented at a black-tie premiere, to be held at the end of the scheme, and will be available on-line. If you would like to see the videos created last year, visit the Galleries section of the Ring of Gullion website.

The project aims to slow the loss of oral history in the area. By using modern media, young people can hear and tell the old stories in a way that engages them and their friends. Ancient stories will resonate with a new generation.

The summer scheme will run from 14th to 25th August (excluding the weekend) in Crossmaglen Community Centre. The cost of the two-week summer scheme, which runs daily from 9.30am – 4pm, is only £60 per young person. All the young people need to bring with them is a packed lunch and snacks. This scheme will undoubtedly be oversubscribed, so book early by calling Briege on 028 3086 1949 and set your child up for a rewarding summer experience.



Hit the road this summer with the Ring of Gullion Heritage Coach Tours!

With the hazy, lazy days of the summer to look forward to, it's time to look at getting out and about, discovering new areas of this great land. Have you heard of the Ring of Gullion, but don't know much about it? This summer, the Ring of Gullion coach tours will make their way gently through the rolling hills of South Armagh, visiting important built heritage sites. The Ring of Gullion Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a unique geological landform, unparalleled elsewhere in Ireland or the UK. The ring of low, rugged hills forms a 'rampart' around the heather-clad Slieve Gullion mountain.

The Ring of Gullion's mysterious reputation arises from its associations with legends and the wider area's rich archaeological heritage. It was along these roads and fields, and over these hills and mountains, that Cú Chulainn and the Red Branch Knights, the O'Neills and the O'Hanlons roamed, battled and died. You can hear some of these stories about Fionn Mac Cumhaill, Cú Chulainn and the Calliagh Berra on the tour. The Ring of Gullion is alive with history, awash in scenic beauty and bursting with culture.



The tours kick off on 2nd August 2017 with Una Walsh 'the mastermind of the history of the Ring of Gullion' as your tour guide. The coach will leave Bagenal's Castle, Newry, at 10.30am and return at 4.30pm, every Wednesday and Saturday in the month of August. The Ring of Gullion Heritage Coach Tour is a great introduction to this area, a hidden gem of Northern Ireland. Every year, we are inundated with positive reviews about the tours.

Last year, one visitor commented:-

"We highly recommend this tour for anyone who wants to experience a historical insight into the culture and folklore of this area of outstanding beauty. The tour guide's passion and knowledge of her heritage and culture was engaging, uplifting, and a very positive experience. To think that from the center of Newry you are only a 20-minute drive from a monument older than the pyramids!"

Another told us, "My husband and I had the great pleasure, last Saturday, of joining the tour. The tour guide, Una Walsh, was amazing, her enthusiasm, knowledge and passion for her countryside was entertaining and informative; a non-stop flow of history, geography, geology and folklore, all brought to life in a gripping fashion."

So, call up a few of your favourite travel companions or family members and get booked on these outstanding heritage tours. Escape for a while on this relaxing coach tour of South Armagh, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. **Tickets start at £12** for adults and there are concession tickets available. **Booking is essential** via the Ring of Gullion website: www.ringofgullion.org/events, if you want a guaranteed seat.

Works to start on Lock Keeper's Pad

Did you know there is a tiny bit of the Ring of Gullion AONB that is actually at the seaside? The boundary touches the sea at Victoria Locks, on the upper reaches of Carlingford Lough, directly below Fathom Mountain and the Flagstaff Lookout. The traditional footpath down the steep hillside linked the two areas and also linked two communities: the mountain farmers, and the sea-going merchant navy and port workers - the ties between them have been strong for centuries. The new trail up this hill, which will be called "the Lock Keepers Pad", has just received planning permission and works will start shortly.

New pedestrian safety areas will be built on either side of the road and walkers will be guided to cross the road at the safest place; allowing them to walk from the historic Victoria Locks to the stunning viewpoint at the

top of Flagstaff. This path will follow the same route that the Lock Keepers would have walked from their homes at the top, down to the Lock, to open it twice a day with the tides. New audio interpretation, recorded on an innovative "U-Turn round" unit, powered by a windup handle, will tell stories about the lock, canal, Fathom and the wildlife.





Lúnasa Festival Schedule 2017

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

Let the Giant Adventures continue!

Continue your EPIC giant adventures across the Newry, Mourne and Down region, by joining us for the third annual Lúnasa Festival. The festival is a month-long, community-led festival, part funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, through the Ring of Gullion. The festival is running from 30th July to 27th August 2017; opening with the revived Flagstaff Fiesta. With over

31	1 Lúnasa Lecture 20.00 – 21.30	2 Wild Wednesdays – Autism Families get Back to Nature 11.00 – 13.00 Heritage Coach Tour 10.30 – 16.30	3
Serendipitous Session 12.00 – 14.00			
7 Strawcraft 10.00 – 16.00 Candles in pots workshop 19.00 – 21.30	8	9 Wild Wednesdays – Pond Dipping 10.00 – 12.00 Heritage Coach Tour 10.30 – 16.30	10 Trekking Thursdays 18.30 – 21.30
14 Geotastic Extravaganza 10.00 – 16.00 Good Dinosaur Showing 12.00 – 13.30 Candles in Pots Workshop 19.00 – 21.30	15	16 Heritage Coach Tour 10.00 – 16.30 Wild Wednesdays – Creatures of the night 20.30 – 22.30	17 Trekking Thursdays – Gap o' the North 14.00 – 16.30
21	22	23 Heritage Coach Tour 10.00 – 16.30 Wild Wednesday – Running Waters 10.00 – 12.00 Calm Waters 13.00 – 15.00	24 Trekking Thursdays – Mythical Mullagh 14.00 – 16.30
28	29	30	31 ROGHA Art Exhibition

Guided Bus Tours & Walks – Join our friendly and knowledgeable guides for a guided bus tour, walk or hike. A guided tour is a great opportunity to delve a little deeper into the rich heritage and landscape of the Ring of Gullion.

Arts & Crafts – Jump in and explore a world of creativity with our range of have-a-go sessions and classes for adults and children. It's a fantastic chance to try something new or improve existing skills.



30th July – 27th August



WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
<p>ual Ring of Gullion Lúnasa Festival. The Lúnasa Gullion Landscape Partnership.</p> <p>30 events, there is something for everyone.</p>		<p>29</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Flagstaff Fiesta 13.00 – 17.30</p> <p>Tí Chulainn Trad Session 17.00 – 20.00</p>
	<p>4</p> <p>ROGHA Art Expo starts Launch 19.30, Daily all month 09.00 – 19.00</p> <p>Tí Chulainn Cinema Club TBC</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Heritage Coach Tour 10.30 – 16.30</p> <p>Murder Mystery Experience 10.00 – 12.00</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Blaeberry Sunday 20.00 – late</p>
<p>Learn to paint for kids (+7) 11.00 – 12.30</p>			
<p>11</p> <p>s – Two villages</p>		<p>12</p> <p>Heritage Coach Tour 10.30 – 16.30</p> <p>ROGHA Studio Tour 10.30 – 16.00</p> <p>Feeding Your Senses 11.00 – 14.30</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Famine Wall Hike 10.00 – 14.00</p> <p>Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training 10.00 – 16.30</p> <p>Felt Flower Workshop 15.00 – 17.00</p>
<p>2017 Camlough Lake Water Festival Various</p>			
<p>18</p>		<p>19</p> <p>Heritage Coach Tour 10.30 – 16.30</p> <p>Mindfulness Walk 10.00 – 14.00</p> <p>Nuno-felt Scarf Workshop 10.00 – 16.00</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Booley Site Hike 10.00 – 14.00</p> <p>Nuno-felt Landscape Workshop 15.00 – 18.00</p>
<p>25</p>		<p>26</p> <p>Heritage Coach Tour 10.30 – 16.30</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Last Mountain Community Hike 10.00 – 14.00</p> <p>Glassdrummond Wildlife Picnic 11.00 – 14.00</p>
<p>Fleadh Rua Various</p>			
<p>Come and join us.</p> <p>The Ring of Gullion – The place to be this August</p>			
<p>The information above is correct at the time of print and every care has been taken to ensure accuracy. However, the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership cannot accept responsibility for any errors, omissions or changes, which may occur.</p>			



Wild Wednesdays – Put on your explorer's outfit and have a Wild Wednesday, learning about what creeps, flies and swims in the Ring of Gullion.

Something a little bit different – Raise the flag at the Flagstaff Fiesta, rub shoulders with a live T-rex at our Geotastic Extravaganza and celebrate all things red at the Fleadh Rua, our red-head festival.

Marvellous Model Memories

Memories were kindled and now burn bright within the Bessbrook community following the two recent events held in Bessbrook Townhall, as part of the Bessbrook Model Village Project. This Heritage Lottery funded project, which is managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, aims to engage with the local community to better interpret Bessbrook's heritage and build a picture of the village that will cross generations.



At a launch event held on 6th June 2017, guests were treated to colourful stories from speakers Alf McCreary and Graham McAleer. Both men grew up in Bessbrook and worked in the mill and shared vivid memories of the village that shaped their lives.

A show and tell event took place on 4th July 2017. Local residents were invited to bring items of historical significance along and have them analysed by museum curators. On the night the items were photographed and scanned and will be added to a Living History database, which will be available online.

A piece of art titled 'Now and Then' has been created as part of this project and during June local primary school children enjoyed the chance to view it. This sensory art is the result of extensive engagement and input from the local community and includes poetry extracts and felting pieces, created by the participants. It is available to view in Bessbrook Library.

"Bessbrook has a rich tapestry of history that is at risk of being lost in the digital age. That is why this project is so important. As a resident of the village, the launch night offered the opportunity to reminisce with old friends and the Show and Tell event was equally enjoyable, with many different artefacts on show." said Roisin Mulgrew, chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

The social history of a unique village is held in people's memories and this project aims to keep these memories alive and preserve them for future generations.



© Patrick Moan



Midsummer Wildlife

Midsummer is a wonderful time to get out and about, exploring the countryside, with wildlife of all types out there waiting to be discovered. So, what do you need to look for and where?

Well, despite the earlier drought, we'll start with wetlands! Riverbanks, pools and boggy patches are all going to be teeming with life in late summer. Watch where you are standing though, as some of that life includes mini froglets, which move away from the water and into grass during damp weather. The whole ground can look like it's moving at times! The pond at Slieve Gullion Forest Park held a good store of tadpoles this spring so keep an eye out along the Giant's Lair trail or in the play-park. July is a great time to see dragon and damselflies hunting, look for the big brown hawkers, their rust coloured wings glistening in the sunlight. Cashel Loughs, the river running through Forkill and the ponds on the Forest Drive of Slieve Gullion are great for dragonflies. Also, keep an eye out for other strange looking flies such as caddis and stoneflies that might be perching on water plants.

Swift nestlings are near to fledging during July and it won't be long after they make their first flight that they head away from Ireland towards the warmer south. Make the most of watching their dazzling aerial displays overhead as they gather in small screaming groups.

Bramble flowers are a major attraction to bees, some attractive beetles including longhorns and of course, butterflies, like speckled wood and meadow browns, are common in the bramble patches. Also, keep a look out for other rarer butterflies like the cryptic wood white or the emerald-coloured green hairstreak and let us know if you see them.

If small multi-legged wonders are not your thing then the late summer is a good time to spot hares playing in the fields, as the young move out of their surface nests. A hare's litter may consist of three or four young and a female can bear three litters a year. Other mammals worth looking for in the Ring of Gullion are of course the red squirrels and the pine martens who are all busy producing cute offspring!

We would love to hear your wildlife tales, join our Facebook group: Ring of Gullion Nature Watch, to share your pictures and experiences, or have your questions answered.



Goat



Pine Marten

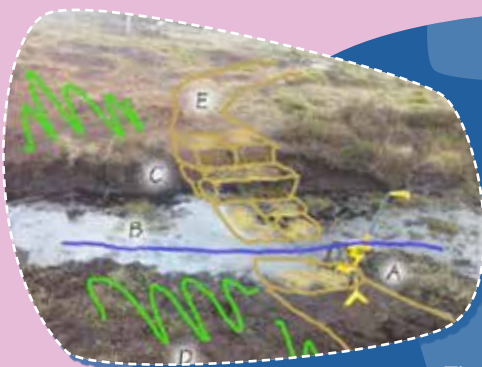
Many a marten macks a muckie

Are you lucky enough to live in the Ring of Gullion? Have you noticed some new visitors to the area? No, not the tourists, visitors of a furrer kind - the pine marten. Until recently, the pine marten (a relative of the stoat and otter) was one of Ireland's rarest mammals. In recent years, it has made a comeback and sightings of this native mammal are on the rise. This has led to the folks at Ring of Gullion HQ ask the question: how many pine martens live in the area? As a lapsed scientist, my first instinct is to make up a number on the spot and pretend I know something; my second is to remember my training, put out remote cameras, collect pictures of pine marten and do fancy maths to get a

more realistic estimate. Therefore, in February this year, that is what we did. Cameras were put out at 50 locations between Carrickastickan and Camlough, and in May, we started sorting the 1000s of images collected. In amongst the pictures of birds, badgers, foxes and mice we got plenty of pine marten.

So, how many are there? Once we figure out what we had written on the back of that envelope we will tell you. In the meantime, you can check out the report at www.ringofgullion.org or come along on the 7th October to our Red Squirrel Fun Day and ask me in person.

By David Tosh and Josh Twining



South to North summit trail moves a step closer

For anyone that has ever sunk up to their oxters in the peat mud on the top of Slieve Gullion, attempting to walk from the south cairn to the lake and beyond, the news that a new trail is a step closer will be welcome.

The existing, undefined track is seriously eroded and forms an unsightly scar on the top of this beautiful mountain. Walking the mountain can be quite risky in poor weather when the deep peat hags or holes loom up unexpectedly out of the mist. Even in dry weather, the worn surface, littered with large boulders, cracks and steep cuts does not make for pleasant walking.

The image above shows a particularly bad section of path, with plenty of deep, wet mud for the unwary to get stuck in. The route of the new path is shown in yellow, including proposed steps down to and over a soak away from the summit lake, which is highlighted in blue. The areas highlighted in green, will be landscaped to repair the damage currently present, as well as highlight the route of the path to walkers.

Recently, experts from "Walking the Talk", a company with many years of experience in designing upland trails, undertook an in-depth survey of the route. Their recommendations include relocating existing boulders to create safe steps and innovative techniques, such as, using sheep's wool as a base for the new trail. It is hoped work will start in the autumn. Contractors will use modern techniques to reduce damage and disturbance to the mountain, including helicopter flights to bring aggregate to the precise spot it is needed. The end result will be a sustainable, ecologically sound and attractive path, that will safely allow the 31,000 walkers who brave the summit each year, to extend their walks and make the most of this lovely area.

What's on!

When	What	Where
August		
Sunday 30th Jul - Sunday 27th Aug	Lúnasa Festival	Over thirty events across the Ring of Gullion
Friday 11th - Sunday 13th	Camlough Lake Water Festival Various swimming races and Try-a-Tri	Camlough Lake Contact: www.clwf.eu
September		
Saturday 2nd - Monday 9th Oct	Ring of Gullion Ambassador Programme	Across the Ring of Gullion Cost: £65
Saturday 16th 11am - 3pm	Volunteer Opportunity - Vegetation Clearance	Jonesborough Forest
Sunday 24th 12 noon	Smile Mile	Camlough Lake Contact: www.clwf.eu
Saturday 30th 10am - 4pm	Volunteer Opportunity - Repair Slieve Gullion Cairn	Slieve Gullion mountain
October		
Saturday 7th October 1pm - 4pm	Red Squirrel Celebrations	Slieve Gullion Forest Park
Saturday 7th October 11am - 3pm	Volunteer Opportunity - Seed collection and processing	Along Newry Canal & Tí Chulainn, Mullaghbane
Saturday 21st October 11am - 3pm	Volunteer Opportunity - Vegetation Clearance	Location TBC

These details are correct at the time of printing, however changes can occur; please check the website for up to date information.



For even more events, to book and for more information check www.ringofgullion.org

Crossmaglen Community Centre,
O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9HG

E - info@ringofgullion.org

T - 028 308 28590

News in brief

1. The Ring of Gullion team are working hard to put together an accredited Woodland Management course for the winter. The course will cover all aspects of woodland management from tree identification, through seed collection and propagation, to what do with forest products. If this sounds like something you'd be interested in keep an eye for updates on our website, or sign up to our emailing list.



2. The cairn atop Slieve Gullion mountain is once again in need of some restoration. A group of volunteers, supervised by NIEA Archaeologist Martin Keery, will be climbing the mountain on 30th September to carry out work to repair the damage caused by the thousands of visitors the cairn receives each year. Since many hands make light work, we are warmly inviting anyone who would like to lend a hand. Please visit the Events section of our website for more information and to register.
3. The second annual Footsteps in the Forest event, held at Slieve Gullion Forest Park, was a resounding success attracting a whopping 9,500 visitors. Those who participated in the larger than life, guided walk around the Fairy Trail, helped Finn the Cool Fairy and his friends to find the five golden rings necessary to defeat the evil Calliagh Berra and rescue Finn Mac Cumhaill. Other highlights included magic shows, live music and lots of arts and crafts to try your hand at, not to mention tasty food.
4. We are happy to report three pairs of swifts have been nesting in the tower we built in Derrymore Estate two years ago, hopefully more pairs will follow suit.