

# The Ring of Gullion

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

**ISSUE 17**  
**Summer 2018**

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## IN THIS ISSUE...

Vote for Gullion in the  
National Lottery Awards

Lúnasa Festival Programme Launched

New Interpretation at  
Victoria Locks and Camlough



# Bessbrook Tram project near completion

We still remember the day when the battered and long-neglected tram was precariously crane-lifted from behind the old bus shelter on Sturgan Brae, where it had lain rotting for decades. Back then it seemed to be a dream that we would eventually see the tram fully repaired and ready to be installed, again by crane, in its final resting place under the motorway fly-over at the Egyptian Arches / Camlough Road roundabout, where it will provide a welcome sign to the Ring of Gullion. But sure enough, the time has come, and the tram will be lowered into position this summer. It took 18 months of hard work renovating, rebuilding and repainting, by the students of the Southern Regional College, to fully restore the tram. The tram will symbolise a gateway to the Ring of Gullion, and although this particular carriage did not actually run on the Bessbrook to Newry route, it will commemorate and celebrate this historic tramway and its heritage.

Inside the tram, painted in its original smart livery of maroon and cream, local artist Tracey McVerry has created an art installation of silhouettes of travellers cut from metal sheets to add a human touch to the tram.



## Vote for Gullion in the National Lottery Awards

We are delighted to tell you that the Landscape Partnership Scheme has been successful in the National Lottery Awards competition, and against 700 other entrants, is now in the final seven in the Environmental category... but the rest is now up to you. Between now and the end of July we need your vote!

To vote for us, please go to [www.ringofgullion.org](http://www.ringofgullion.org) and follow the links to vote via the website, there will also be a dedicated phone line. Retweets and other social media posting of our hashtag will also count as votes. Details of how to help will be on the webpage. Please spread this far and wide, get your friends, relatives and pet hamsters to vote for us. If you have an email address, you can vote.

Our main competitor is the Connswater Greenway in Belfast, but we are hoping that the community spirit of South Armagh and Down will beat the big city...so follow the link and support your local project.

## Planting for Wildlife



If you'd like to see more wildlife in your garden, smart choices for your herb patches and borders can give nature a helping hand. By making space for the minibeasts you can provide for the whole food chain, and you don't need an untidy garden to be wildlife friendly. Although leaving a part of your garden un-mown and undisturbed is best for wildlife, by choosing your plants carefully, an orderly garden can still provide for insects and all the things that feed off them.

- **Trees not only provide nesting sites but the fruit will attract birds and mammals,**
- **Hedges offer essential cover and wildlife corridors; wall climbers will also link gardens,**
- **Choose shrubs that flower at different times for visitors all through the year,**
- **Evening primrose are great for moths which in turn are a feast for bats,**
- **Don't forget your water feature: ponds are essential for frogs and newts, and birds will enjoy a drink and a bath,**
- **Choose native species if you can.**

If you want to see some of this advice in action, pay a visit to the nursery garden at Ti Chulainn where our Gardening with Wildlife course participants have created a beautiful garden great for insects, birds and people. According to the Plants for Bugs project the top plants to bring birds, bees and butterflies to your garden are:

<b>Sunflower</b>	The simple open variety with more pollen for bees and seeds for birds than the complicated double-petalled varieties
<b>Foxglove</b>	Bumblebees love a foxglove. Their blooms appear between June and September but remember: the plants are poisonous if eaten by humans or pets.
<b>Thyme</b>	This herb provides excellent ground cover, creating safe spaces for beetles and other invertebrates. Its nectar is also a favourite of bees.
<b>Lavender</b>	The calming scent of lavender on a sunny patio is a magnet for bees and butterflies. When the purple blooms go to seed, birds can tuck in.
<b>Honeysuckle</b>	This climber buzzes with life in summer, attracting nectar-loving insects including the hummingbird hawk moth. Warblers and thrushes enjoy the berries.
<b>Rowan</b>	This small tree appeals to thrushes with its red autumn berries.
<b>Ice plant</b>	These plants provide nectar later in the season and are a haven for hoverflies, bees and butterflies.
<b>Firethorn</b>	This dense red-berried shrub, often used as a hedge, can provide excellent shelter for birds
<b>Purple loosestrife</b>	This pink wildflower thrives in the soggy spots in your garden. Flowering throughout the summer it provides an important nectar source for long-tongued insects including eye-catching red-tailed bumblebees and elephant hawk-moths.



## Greenway link to Fathom along Lock-keepers' Pad

In May, the Middlebank section of the Carlingford Lough Greenway was opened. This long-awaited route links Newry City Centre with Victoria Locks. We are now proud to announce the near completion of works allowing walkers to add a beautiful extra stretch to their walk by joining the Lock-keepers pad leading from Victoria Lock to the Flagstaff Viewpoint on Fathom. This heritage-rich trail was once walked twice-daily by the traditional lock-keepers living high on Fathom Mountain as they operated the canal lock on the coast.

The route zig-zags up through Fathom Forest along a woodland track lined with sweet chestnut, oak and rowan. Mountain streams tumble over fern-lined rocky cuts and foxgloves and rosebay willow herb add purple dashes to the dappled shade. A short road walk at the top then leads to the Flagstaff viewpoint with its heath, and flower-strewn grass, an ideal site for a picnic looking over one of the best views in South Armagh. Please note this trail is for walkers only and passes a private dwelling; please respect the householder's privacy.



## Lúnasa Festival 2018

Dinosaurs, Celts, fairies and singer/songwriter John Spillane are all visiting the Ring of Gullion this August, and you should too!

The Ring of Gullion Lúnasa Festival (3rd – 26th August) is bigger and better than ever. It all kicks off with 'An Experience with John Spillane (3rd & 4th)' for fans of trad-folk music. There will be an opportunity for adults to get tips on song writing and children will have the chance to sing with John; all culminating in a concert featuring John Spillane, local children and musicians.

Families once again have the opportunity to team up with the Slieve Gullion fairies to foil the Calliagh Berra's latest plot, at Newry, Mourne & Down District Council's Footsteps in the Forest (4th & 5th). Dinosaurs will be coming to life in the shape of Roary, our pet tyrannosaurus, at the Geotastic Extravaganza (11th) with plenty of hands on opportunities to learn about our geotastic geology, from volcanoes, to earthquakes and fossils. Take a step back in time with Cultured Celts (18th) and learn about what life was like in Iron Age Celtic Ireland. You'll have the opportunity to see superb sword fighting, try your hand at axe throwing and hear tales of famous warriors.

Other opportunities include, trying your hand at the traditional Irish crafts of straw craft (14th) and Carrickmacross Lace (18th). You can delve into local history and stories at the weekly Monday Memories events or get back to basics, learning survival skills at Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training on Saturdays.

Why not stick our handy calendar on the back page on the fridge so you don't miss a thing? Full event details and booking can be found on [ringofgullion.org/events](http://ringofgullion.org/events)



## Big congratulations to our latest contingent of Ring of Gullion Ambassadors

Our final group of Ring of Gullion Ambassadors have completed their Open College Network (OCN) Northern Ireland Level 2 Award in Tour Guiding. Congratulations to everyone involved and thank you for all your hard work.

The Landscape Partnership has trained 49 Ambassadors for the local area. Many of the Ambassadors will be running events and guided walks during the Lúnasa Festival so if you would like to hear some of their stories, come along.

# Intergenerational Project

In October 1944 Michael J Murphy wrote: *"It is unfair to say that the younger generation do not love the Irish traditions when they have not had a proper opportunity to hear them or take pride in them".*

(From: *Can we not call back the Ceilidhe House?* Hibernia October 1944)

May saw the beginning of an exciting intergenerational project involving collaboration between St. Mary's P.S., Mullaghbane; St. Oliver Plunkett's P.S., Forkhill; Dromintee P.S. and St. Joseph's P.S., Meigh. Inspired by Michael J's words, the schools have implemented a project linking the storytelling skills of old with the digital skills of the present day. Pupils, parents, grandparents and even great-grandparents, have come on board to share family stories and traditions through Digital Story Telling. The pupils are providing the digital skills, and the older generations are contributing the stories from the past. Through this sharing, tales and artefacts long forgotten will be recorded, photographed and collectively edited to form a film which will be shown at the opening of this year's 'Michael J Murphy Winter School' in November.

The short films will be used at a later stage as teaching tools. They will not only enhance pupil's knowledge about their local area and its history but also help develop coding skills. Each film will have a QR code attached, and these will be displayed on a floor map. Pupils will learn how to programme "Spheros" (small robots) to enable them to navigate from location to location to activate the codes.



## The language of Slieve Gullion

Did you ever get a sceilp, a dunch, a dúdóg or a gonc? What's a thalya?

Were you ever in the Clawnyeh, Borrawolly, Flurry's bog, Gleann Dubh, Lisavaney, Ballyclanowen or the Móin Ríbe?

Did you ever cap a cow, langle a goat, brer a ditch, build an adag or coup a yoke (in the shuck)?

How did your granny pronounce Dromintee, Faughilotra, Gallagher, O'Hare, Lenahan, Collins, Kenny or Keenan, floor, board, door?

Were you ever called an amadán, gulpin, bawkie, shibby, snathy, jaurie, gom, caldarach or a wee skitter?

When you were a girseach or gasún, did you come in from playing in the back street covered in clabair? Did you cár when your mammy washed your face?

We want to make a collection of local words, expressions and pronunciation for the Michael J. Murphy Winter School in the autumn, and we want your help. Where did Irish linger longest, where do we pronounce English as Shakespeare did?

Can you add to the lists above? Who do you know that could?

Please send words or expressions to me at [ssmurphy@eircom.net](mailto:ssmurphy@eircom.net)

## Moving towards a legacy for the Landscape Partnership

Even though the Landscape Partnership scheme is winding up, plans are still being laid for future community and tourism development in the region. Major plans are underway for the CultureScape project, which will develop a range of sellable assets and experiences rooted in the intangible cultural heritage of the area, with the overarching aim of enhancing the lives of those who live, work and visit here. We are proposing a partnership between this area and similar rural regions in Wales, Portugal, Ireland, and Spain. An application for €2 million has been made to the Atlantic Area European Development Fund, and we will find out if we have been successful in November. If we are, we will be starting work in January.

The work of the Ring of Gullion AONB will be supported if a funding application to the Environment Agency is successful. This backing will cover three years of the AONB officer's wages and project costs. This valuable capital will provide the foundations for many other planned projects.

Finally, community groups who want to apply for funding to continue the great work of the LPS will be able to get help from staff at two organisations new to the area. Ann Grant who has started working in South Armagh for the Rural Community Network and Janine Knox who is working with the Big Lottery in the area; both welcome contact. Ann Grant ([ann@countdownrcn.com](mailto:ann@countdownrcn.com)), will be available to work with community groups to develop their ideas and guide them in making their applications to the right bodies. This will be a vital service linking grassroots organisations with a range of funders. Meanwhile, Janine Knox ([janine.knox@biglotteryfund.org.uk](mailto:janine.knox@biglotteryfund.org.uk)) will be trying to get more uptake from local communities to apply for Big Lottery programmes such as Awards for All, People and Communities, and Empowering Young People.



## Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for South Armagh

Outdoor Recreation NI was commissioned by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, through the Ring of Gullion Partnership to develop an Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for South Armagh.

This study was commissioned to:

- ensure that the area can maximise on the Council's plans to become the Outdoor Recreation Capital of Ireland,
- spearhead action in the area to fit in with wider strategies,
- recommend where notable investment in activity products should take place which would also be marketable for tourism and
- assist the Council to deliver actions within the 'Outdoor Recreation Action Plan for Northern Ireland – Our Great Outdoors' (2014).

To view the action plan visit the Ring of Gullion website and click on publications. If you would like to get involved in the South Armagh Outdoor Recreation Forum, email [info@ringofgullion.org](mailto:info@ringofgullion.org) or ring 028 3082 8590.



## Outdoor recreation development in the Ring of Gullion – Red Branch Bushcraft

Over 18 months ago Dairmuid Farmer established Red Branch Bushcraft, at a small wooded site on the edge of Forkhill, offering a range of bush-craft experiences for young and old alike.

Red Branch Bushcraft has gone from strength to strength offering a range of birthday party packages and school holiday camps for children. At the camps, the children learn how to safely use tools to light fires, how to look after fires responsibly and how to build waterproof shelters. On some of the longer camps, they can even put their bivouac to the test by staying in it overnight! It is a fantastic opportunity for children to get into the outdoors, learn new skills and about the world around them.

Diarmuid can also cater for adult groups as well. Bush-craft would make an excellent team building day or a hen/stag party with a difference. If you'd like to learn more about what Red Branch has to offer, check out: [www.redbranchbushcraft.co.uk](http://www.redbranchbushcraft.co.uk)



## Plans for five-star visitor centre at Slieve Gullion

Visitors to Slieve Gullion have long asked for additional services and work on a customer toilet block and visitor information facility is nearly complete. However, park users, be they tourists, locals, schools or tour groups would like to know more about the area and its heritage, so the long-abandoned and derelict Hawthorn House will be developed into a dedicated visitor and interpretation centre.

Plans have been submitted for the renovation of the house that dates back to the 1820s. Bat surveys will be carried out over the summer to ensure any development will not adversely affect wildlife. Interpretive planning has also been started to design the interior displays. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have retained the interpretation company, Image Makers, to plan interactive exhibitions on the geology, archaeology and living history of the area. Locally based feedback has been vital in developing these designs, and further opportunity to have a say will be available. These designs will form part of an application to Department for Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs for £500,000 to actually carry out the work, with the project planned to start at the end of 2018, continuing for 18 months.

# Putting down roots in the Ring of Gullion

The Woodland Trust wants to hear from landowners who have an interest in planting trees.

Michael Topping, the Woodland Trust's Outreach Adviser, outlines the charity's current tree-planting offers.

Michael says, "Northern Ireland has a mere 8% woodland cover, compared to the European average of 46%. But with collective efforts, we're working to redress this. We're planting new woodland and encouraging farmers and landowners to bring the beauty and benefits of woodland to their doorstep."

**To help get your planting underway, the Woodland Trust can offer you:**

- tailored advice,
- grants and funding and
- trees and protection.

## **MOREwoods: for land over 0.5 hectares**

Whether you want to plant a shelterbelt or harvest your own wood fuel, we'll visit your site to take a look at where you want to plant and:

- help you design your woodland and select the most appropriate species mix,
- produce a bespoke site report and
- assign a dedicated Project Officer who'll help guide your application from start to finish.

If you plant the trees yourself, we'll contribute at least 60% of the costs. If you would like a contractor to plant the trees and provide a weeding service for the first two years, we'll contribute 50% of the costs.

## **MOREhedges**

MOREhedges is intended to support connectivity in the landscape.

We can help with funding if you're planting new hedgerows on your land. We can subsidise 60% of the cost if you plant more than 100 metres of new hedging with a large tree growing through every six metres.

## **Trees for your farm**

Make agroforestry a part of your farm. Improve soil and water quality, give shade and shelter to livestock and reap the benefits of a year-round crop.

Trees: a minimum of 250 trees – up to half of your trees can be fruit or nut species

Species: our advisors will help you choose the best species for you and your land

Protection: we will help you choose the correct protection for your trees

Advisor: a site visit, and one-to-one advice

Cost: fully-funded if eligible

## **And if you're thinking really big: for land over 5 hectares**

We'll point you in the direction of government grants (up to 100% funded).

## **Get in touch**

For more information call Michael on 079 9056 7014 or email: [michaeltopping@woodlandtrust.org.uk](mailto:michaeltopping@woodlandtrust.org.uk)



## Sophie's tall tales

Sophie and her Granda have been out and about around the Ring of Gullion over the last few months. The conversations that cheeky, celebrity-fixated, iPhone-mad, Sophie has with her long-suffering and knowledgeable granda have been immortalised on two new pieces of interpretation recently erected at Victoria Locks and Camlough Lake. The pair's conversations feature on new audio story devices called U-Turn around machines which are unique, wind-up, dynamo powered digital sound stores that can hold up to eight different spoken stories. Sadly, Sophie and her Granda are not real people just fictional characters created to explain various features and tales that were selected by the local communities.

At Camlough, Sophie suggests creating a winter resort complete with hot-tubs and a cable car when she discovers that the area was covered with a kilometre of ice during the Ice Age. Later Granda, chatting about the hydroelectric tunnel on the lake, admits that "you should never let the truth get in the way of a good story".

At Victoria Locks, Sophie compares her Granda's online shopping habit with his description of the once-thriving shipping traffic on the Newry Canal and goes on to complain that she can't get reception on her phone while he tries to get her to look at the wildlife on the lough.

Newry, Mourne and Down Councillor Barra O'Muiri and his daughter Róisín acted the stories in English and in Irish at local recording studio Take Six. Each talking post carries four different conversations in each language and the audio format means that much more information can be given than with a traditionally written interpretation panel and the technology of the devices does not use any mains electricity, so it is green and sustainable.



# Traditional Woodland Management

During the winter months, in between snowfalls and storms, an intrepid bunch of learners joined Clive Lyttle, from Welig Heritage Crafts, for a traditional woodland management course. The course covered all aspects of woodland management, from identifying trees in the winter, growing trees from seed, looking after hedges and wooded areas, and creating living willow structures.

The course involved a little bit of theory and a lot of hands-on practical work, with plenty to show for the effort involved. The willow dome the participants built at Slieve Gullion Forest Park is already a big hit with visiting children. The hedge-laying section of the course was even filmed by BBC Home Ground; something of a novelty for all involved.

At the end of the course, participants had the opportunity to try their hand at willow weaving, spoon carving and pole lathing; just a few of crafts that can be carried out on wood products from a well-managed wood. Overall, the course demonstrated how you could look after your own section of trees, be it a small wood or hedgerow, for useful timber while still keeping it a suitable home for wildlife.



Hedge laying at Glassdrummond Wood



Hand-crafted products from sustainably managed woodland



Creating a willow dome at Slieve Gullion Forest Park

## Visitors from the North to Gullion and Mourne

The Ascent Project delivered another successful knowledge-sharing trip when partners from Donegal, Finland, Norway and Iceland visited the Ring of Gullion and the Mourne Mountains in April. The week took the partners to explore some of the sites where work is being carried out to encourage the sharing of knowledge and experience.

The group climbed Slieve Gullion to look at proposals for repairing the erosion around the route from the South Cairn to the lake. They also got their hands dirty doing some heavy lifting on the mountain and met the team from McGowan Upland Path Contractors who have been engaged to do the remedial work on the summit. The hard graft continued as the Scandinavians got involved in some excellent path work at the Glen River on Slieve Donard, where they also studied heathland regeneration.



A thematic seminar was held at Tory Bush Cottages where the ASCENT project members discussed the formation of desire lines and formal paths, how Northern Ireland can cope with rising demand for upland tourist infrastructure and how this can be funded. They also looked at the costs and benefits of machine built compared to hand built paths and how the work could be delivered most efficiently. However, the visit wasn't all tough activity and hard thinking, the team was well entertained by local musician and Gullion Ambassador, Colleen Savage and friends, with an evening céilí featuring virtuoso uilleann piping, fiddle playing and singing, rounded off with Icelandic folk tunes and dancing.



# Lúnasa Festival Schedule 2018

3<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> August



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				3	4	5
					Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training 10.00–14.00	
					Celtic Footsteps of Killeavy 10.00–16.00	
				An Experience with John Spillane Various		
				Footsteps in the Forest 10.00–18.00		
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Monday Memories – Archaeology of Derrymore 19.00–21.00		Wild Wednesday – Pond Dipping 10.00–15.00 Wisdom from Mythology 18.45 – 20.00	Gap o' the North Walk 14.00–16.30	Film Screening – Dancing at Lughnasa 19.30–21.15	Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training 10.00–14.00 Geotastic Extravaganza 10.00–16.00 Heritage Coach Tour 10.30–16.30 Feeding your Senses 11.00–14.30	Famine Wall Hike 10.00–14.00 Magical Mountain Hike 11.00–16.30 Prehistoric Potters 19.00–21.30
Serendipitous Session 12.00 – 14.00						
					Camlough Lake Water Festival Various	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Monday Memories – Tales of the Harp 19.30–21.00	Try-it Tuesday Strawcraft 10.00–16.00	Wild Wednesday – Nature Detectives 10.00–12.00 Michael J Murphy – A Writer in his Homeland Walk 19.00–21.00			Cultured Celts 10.00–16.00 Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training 10.00–14.00 Murder Mystery Experience 10.00–14.00 Heritage Coach Tour 10.30–16.30 Carrickmacross Lace 10.30–16.00 Céilí Dancing at Lúnasa 19.00–22.00	Booley Site Hike 10.00–14.00
					Glass windchimes & light catchers 10.00–16.00	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Monday Memories – The Land and People around Slieve Gullion 19.00–21.00	Try-it Tuesday Basket Weaving 10.00–17.00	Heritage Coach Tour 10.30–16.30 Wild Wednesday – Mystery Mammals 19.30–20.45 Poetry & Stories of Slieve Gullion Life 18.45–20.00	Mythical Mullaghbane 14.00–16.30		Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training 10.00–14.00 Heritage Coach Tour 10.30–16.30	Last Mountain Community Hike 10.00–14.00 Shakespeare in the Woods 11.00 – 14.00



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

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