



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

For further details about the Ring of Gullion and the locality, please see www.ringofgullion.org or email info@ringofgullion.org

For further information on general touring, accommodation, short breaks and activity breaks please contact one of the following Visitor Information Centres or visit our website.

Newry Visitor Information Centre

Bagenal's Castle
Castle Street, Newry BT34 2BY
T: 028 3031 3170

Kilkeel Visitor Information Centre

Nautilus Centre, Rooney Road
Kilkeel BT34 4AG
T: 028 4176 2525

Visitor Information Point

Crossmaglen Community Centre
T: 028 3086 1949

Email: info@visitmournemountains.co.uk or visit www.visitmournemountains.co.uk

RingOfGullion

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www.ringofgullion.org



Cosán Choimeádaí Loic ó Loic Victoria go hIonad Amhairc Bharr an Fheadáin

Lock Keepers' Pad - Victoria Locks to Flagstaff Viewpoint



www.ringofgullion.org



The Lock-keepers' Pad starts at the Victoria Locks. It leads up the hillside through the forestry on the far side of the road (cross the road safely at the marked site). The route ends at the panoramic Flagstaff picnic site on Fathom, where you can join up with the Ring of Gullion Way, leading onto Anglesea Mountain heading to the Kilnasaggart Stone and beyond. From Victoria Locks, you can also get onto the Carlingford Greenway, along the Middle-bank, and walk back into Newry with the unique experience of salt water on one side of the trail and fresh on the other.

Please note that the forest trail passes a private house, please bear in mind that this is somebody's home and respect the family's privacy.

Stair Loic Victoria agus Chosán Choimeádaí an Loic

History of Victoria Locks and the Lock-keepers' Pad

The Newry Canal here at Victoria Locks is a ship canal that was built to link the Tyrone coal fields to the Irish Sea at Carlingford Lough. The canal was built in 1769 and was the first summit level canal in Ireland or Britain. Ships as large as 1000 tonnes could get right into Newry Port. The lock-keepers traditionally worked

part-time as farmers on the top of Fathom, walking up and down the Lock-keepers' Pad twice a day to open the lock gates when the tide was right. You can listen to more recorded stories about the lock and canal on the "U-Turn-around" machine on the canal quay.



Fiadhúlra ar Loic Victoria

Wildlife at Victoria Locks

Carlingford Lough here is where the river meets the sea and it is full of weird and fascinating creatures able to survive both salt and fresh water. Flocks of wading birds gather here to spend the winter, and in the mud, millions of tiny animals lurk and provide food for the birds. The lough can seem bleak and windswept, but

there is always something interesting to see whatever the season. Look out for the bright coloured legs of the redshank and the curved bill of a curlew. The canal, being freshwater, is a whole different world and is an internationally famous coarse fishery with trout, bream rudd, pike and perch regularly caught in its waters.

Fiadhúlra ar Chosán Choimeádaí Loic

Wildlife of the Lock-keepers' Pad



The Lock-keepers' Pad leads through NI Forest Service woodland; little streams line the route, and these run in spate after heavy rain. The woods have a large variety of species

growing in the different habitats. Look out for Rowan with its frothy white flowers in spring and orangey-red berries in autumn.

Sweet chestnuts are common along the route. This non-native tree only grows chestnuts big enough to eat after a hot summer, but look out for the prickly nut cases filled with tiny nuts every autumn. Other tree species dotted along the sunny edges of the commercial forestry include oak, holly, whitebeam, hazel, birch and ash.



photo of wood aven by Zoe Devlin ©

Listen and watch for blackbirds singing, wrens hopping along the ground, song-thrushes cracking snail shells on stones, and a flash of blue as jays fly through the trees. Rarer animals include the red squirrel and the elusive pine marten.

The trail passes right by a private house about quarter of the way up; this is the old forest workers house, we are very grateful for the kind co-operation of the residents, please respect their privacy as you walk past it.



photo of wood sorrel by Zoe Devlin ©

Woodland plants make the most of the sunshine on the edges of the path. The rocky cuts feature huge ferns, look out for them unfurling in spring in the classic shape of a crosier. Where trees have fallen allowing light in, usually the first plant to grow is the pink flowered Rosebay willow herb commonly known as blitz weed.

Also keep an eye open for the lime-green, lemon-tasting trefoil leaves of the wood sorrel in shady places. Lovely foxgloves are also a feature of this walk, along with the hanging seed heads and flowers of wood sedge.

Wood avens or herb bennet is common in the dappled shade, this straggly plant with little buttercup-like flowers produces a profusion of prickly red seeds that will attach themselves to your clothes. This plant was traditionally hung on doors to keep away evil spirits

Ionad Amhairc Bharr an Fheadáin Flagstaff View Point

With panoramic views of the region, Flagstaff View Point at Fathom Upper is an ideal site for visitors to take in the beauty of the Mournes, the Cooley Mountains and the Ring of Gullion. From here, you can see

across to the mountains of Mourne, the Narrow Water tower house standing guard at the mouth of the Newry River, Carlingford Lough opening out to the Irish Sea and the Cooley mountains.

Cruthú ár dtírdhreach The Making of Our Landscape

The shape of the countryside that you can see from here is a result of the differences in geology and the processes that have acted upon it. The Mournes are granite mountains formed over 56 million years ago from magma that cooled slowly underground and was later exposed by erosion. Granodiorite is a different rock and makes up most of the Cooley mountains; it is rougher and more broken than the smoother Mournes. The Ring of Gullion ring dyke formed when a large magma chamber emptied 58 million years

ago, the land collapsed above the void and cracked, magma flowed up into these cracks and solidified. This harder volcanic rock resisted millions of years of erosion that wore away the surrounding bedrock and it now makes a ring of small steep hills mirroring the shape of the ancient magma chamber. Carlingford Lough itself has a glacial origin, and the steep-sided valley which was first cut along a fault by the scouring of ice was later deepened by an outpouring of flood waters from an ice sheet over Lough Neagh.

Experience
Gullion!

www.ringofgullion.org



photo of bush vetch by Zoe Devlin ©

Stair Bharr an Fheadáin History of Flagstaff

The name Fathom comes from the Irish word an feadán meaning stream or watercourse, but it is as a viewpoint and beacon that this high place became famous over the centuries and was named after the flags that flew there. The first people to use Flagstaff as a look-out were the monks from Kileavey monastery who watched and warned of the Vikings coming up Carlingford Lough.

In the 18th century, Flagstaff was the haunt of raparée, outlaw and poet Seamus Mór McMurphy and it was up on Fathom that this Jacobite was captured by Johnson of the Fewes in a sting operation featuring spurned lovers, poetry and strong drink. To read the full story go to

www.ringofgullion.org, look for living history tab on the home page, then choose the share our stories option from the box and look for The Story of Seamus Mor Mac Mhurchaidh.

In the 19th century, the name Flagstaff became associated with an actual flag as signals were sent to the community of Fathom telling workers about ships moving up Carlingford Lough to the Port of Newry that needed unloading or piloting. The casual workers would have a better chance of a job by having advance notice and being first in the queue. It is also said that the flag was used to warn of customs officials in the area so smugglers could hide their illegal goods and operations.

Fiadhúlra Bharr an Fheadáin Wildlife on Flagstaff

The picnic site has a lovely network of paths, winding in and out of rocky outcrops. The rough grassland in summer is dotted with the 4-petalled yellow tormentil, purple bush vetch climbing towards the sun and the pea flowers of the meadow vetchling and birdsfoot foot trefoil.

The heathland habitat features heather and gorse bushes. The flowers attract many bumblebees,



photo of yellow tormentil by Zoe Devlin ©

