

**ISSUE 19**  
**Summer 2019**

# 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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# Lúnasa Festival 2019

The Ring of Gullion Lúnasa Festival is back for its fifth year, with a mix of old favourites and new events.

Amongst the old favourites is the Geotastic Extravaganza, which this year brings two walking and roaring dinosaurs – Roary the T-Rex and Red the Raptor. Approach with caution; no one has been eaten yet, but there is a first time for everything!

Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training is also back with the opportunity to learn a selection of bush craft skills and our local Ambassadors are leading their wide range of walks around the area and over the mountain.

**New, for this year:**

- **Lazy Galivant over Gullion**

The perfect opportunity to explore the history and sights of Ireland's most mystical mountain from the comfort of a minibus. Local guides will enchant you with stories of the local myths, history and landscape.

- **South Armagh: An Alternative View**

The plantation of South Armagh and the relationships between landlords and tenants.

- **Feeding Your Senses and Celtic Footsteps**

Why not take time out of your busy summer schedule to participate in one of our slow adventures? Both events come complete with a wonderful home-cooked meal at a food artisan's cottage.



## Dorsey Archaeological Dig by Dr C McSparron

180 pupils from nearby schools and members of the public, joined archaeologists from the Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork, Queen's University Belfast, for an archaeological dig on a section of the Dorsey Ramparts. The dig ran for 12 days during April and turned up lots of interesting structural finds at the site situated in the townland of Dorsey, near Silverbridge.

The Dorsey Ramparts formed a huge kidney-shaped site, measuring approximately 800m by 400m, enclosed by tall ramparts, which in places are over 4m in height. It is thought that the Dorsey was the official gateway on the crossing point into the ancient province of Ulster at the time of the Red Branch Knights and Ulster Cycle myths. Oral history states it was the route of High King of Ireland, Brian Boru's, funeral procession from Tara to Navan Fort, along an ancient branch of the Slige Midluachra.

Previous excavations in 2002, uncovered the remains of three lines of burnt palisades, just inside the Dorsey, running west of and parallel to the Bonds Road. Radiocarbon dating showed them to be between 2,100 to 2,300 years old; possibly evidence of a set of wooden walls flanking an ancient road.

This year we attempted to find out if there were similar walls on the eastern side. A preliminary geophysical survey showed a magnetic signal which might be a feature. We excavated a trench along the line of the signal and found the remains of a burnt palisade, the same as those found in 2002. We identified at least three phases of building, burning and rebuilding. We collected samples from the burnt timbers in the palisade for radiocarbon dating and hope to establish that this eastern palisade is contemporary with the others. If it is, it further suggests that this is a branch of the ancient road from Tara to Navan Fort. The question remains why were the palisades burnt?

- The level of combustion seen in these palisades is too great to have happened accidentally;
- The fire had to have been large and sustained for a long time, which hints at some deliberate ritual act.

We do not unfortunately, have all the answers. We will however, be attempting to find any charred seeds within the burnt materials sampled from the palisade trench, which may indicate the time of the year the burning took place.

**For details of future findings, like/subscribe to our QUB - Archaeology at Queen's Facebook page and our Archaeology at Queen's YouTube channel.**



# Sensory Trail Launch

The Sensory Trail was officially opened on Saturday 8 June by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Chairperson, Councillor Charlie Casey, and members of Autism Families Newry.

You are warmly invited to explore the Sensory Trail on your next visit to Slieve Gullion Forest Park. Full information on the trail, such as what to expect and recommendations on what to bring to fully utilise the trail, can be found on the Ring of Gullion website under the **'Things to Do'** tab.



# Atlantic CultureScape Project Launched

The launch of a new EU project, Atlantic CultureScape, led by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC), will host international project partners on 3 July. The aim of Atlantic CultureScape is to develop sellable experiences rooted in the Atlantic Area's intangible cultural heritage in seven areas on Europe's Atlantic coast. The Council welcomed the £1.7 million funding from Interreg VB Atlantic Area with support from the European Regional Development Fund, earlier this year.

**This three year project involves:**

- Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Wales
- Rio Maior Municipality, Portugal
- Cork Institute of Technology, Ireland
- University of Vigo, Spain
- Regional Government for Cantabria, Spain
- Andalusian Agency of Cultural Institutions, Spain.

**There are also eleven associate partners involved, including:**

- Ring of Gullion Handcrafts and Art
- The Fiddler's Green Festival
- Tourism Northern Ireland.

This collaborative work will allow regions to confront shared challenges and exploit shared opportunities through sharing knowledge, expertise and innovative ideas for bringing products to market. The products will be conglomerated into an Atlantic Area Route, allowing the project to raise the profile of the Tourism and Heritage sector through transnationally organised marketing and produce a lasting legacy for the project.





# Time's up for the Ring of Gullion's Alien Invasive Species

For the past four years a group of hardy volunteers have worked alongside Partnership staff to remove harmful invasive species from the Ring of Gullion. The most harmful offender, by far, is the Giant Hogweed, which volunteers have almost succeeded in eradicating from accessible areas. However, there are certain inaccessible patches, so the Partnership applied for and have been awarded, funding from NIEA and NMDDC to implement the Invasive Species Action Plan. The funding will allow us to pay contractors to deal with the hard to reach invasive species.

During last winter the volunteers were able to start removing the thick screen of cherry laurel from the entrance road to Slieve Gullion Forest Park. It is hoped to slowly expand the cleared area year on year, until the cherry laurel and rhododendron are gone.

There are many reasons for this removal:

- Cherry laurel and rhododendron are both alien invasive species from Asia.
- They have no biodiversity value for our local wildlife and actively hamper the growth of native trees and ground flora by having cyanide in their leaves and harbouring harmful tree diseases.
- Clearing the forest entrance will brighten the entrance and improve views of the area, making it more enticing for visitors.

As the cherry laurel and rhododendron are cleared, ground flora such as wood sorrel and bluebells should return in the second spring, followed more slowly by hazel, holly and other native tree saplings.

If you know of any Giant Hogweed or Japanese Knotweed, please contact the Ring of Gullion office so that we can add it to our clearance schedule. Check out the Biodiversity section of our website for information on these species, including their identifying features.



Giant Hogweed



Japanese Knotweed

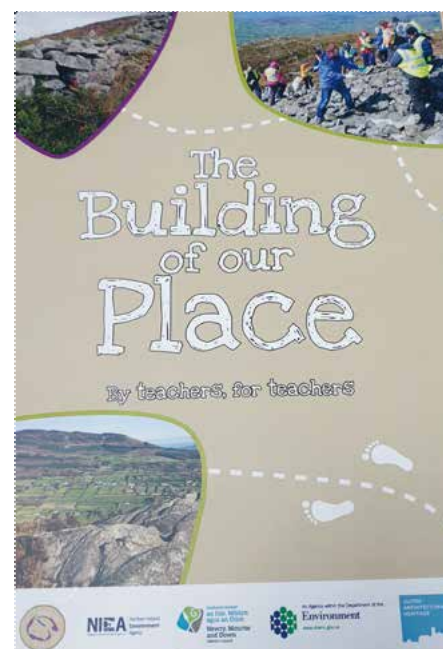
# New Built Heritage Text Book for Primary Schools

We are pleased to launch our new, curriculum linked, text book, *The Building of our Place*, for local primary schools, which was designed for teachers, by teachers. The book tells the story of the human habitation of the Ring of Gullion via the buildings that were built from the Stone Age (4000 BC) through to the Victorian Period (AD 1837). Each time period contains sections on:

- What we built
- How we lived
- What we made
- A selection of classroom activities
- Recommended sites for a field trip.

The purpose of the book is to enable teachers to teach the history of the area using the varied and diverse range of historical buildings that are present in the Ring of Gullion, along with a few from nearby areas. Hopefully it will enable children to get out and explore more of their local area more often, instead of travelling further afield.

Printed copies of the book will be provided free to local primary schools, however, if you would like one of your own, a digital copy can be downloaded from the Publications section of the Ring of Gullion website.



# Bluebell Lane Officially Opens

Cllr Mark Murnin, former Chairman of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council officially opened Bluebell Lane Glamping site, Mullaghbane, on Saturday 18 May. The launch event included arts and crafts, bushcraft, music and storytelling. Later that evening over 150 invited guests were treated to a fabulous line up of music provided by traditional group, Teorainn, followed by a spine-tingling performance by renowned singer-songwriter, and friend to the family, Declan O'Rourke.

The site, situated off the Tullymacrieve Road, boasts a self-catering cottage together with four handcrafted glamping pods, state of the art facilities, children's play park and a designated area for campervans, caravans and tents.

Padraig (the owner) commented, "We are delighted to finally and officially open Bluebell Lane to the visiting locals and tourists alike. We have something very special here and a truly unique experience to share. This place is a hidden gem and we encourage culturally curious explorers to come and experience a little of what we have to offer".



Further details on how to book can be found on [www.bluebell-lane.com](http://www.bluebell-lane.com) or by contacting Padraig or Sharon on +44 (0)28 3088 9104.

## 'Eyes on You' - Litter Reduction Initiative

The landscape of the Ring of Gullion is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and it's not hard to see why when you go for a drive or walk through the area. However, it is being marred by unsightly litter often dropped or thrown out of car windows by careless or lazy individuals.

In a bid to improve the litter situation in the area, the Partnership will be piloting an 'Eyes on You' litter reduction initiative. The initiative is based on the success of using reflective eyes on street lamps, trees etc to reduce dog fouling in previously high fouling areas across Northern Ireland. It's hoped that the effect will be the same on litter bugs.

Throughout this year, the river walk section of Mullaghbane village will be used as a pilot area. If successful, the initiative will be rolled out to other high litter areas within the Ring of Gullion. So far, the pilot area has been cleared of litter to the best ability of Conservation Volunteers; the steep river banks prevent a complete clean, even with 8ft long litter pickers! Most of the litter was wrappers and drink bottles from the local shops. With our comparatively blank canvas, we will

wait three months before the litter will be collected and surveyed to give a baseline for a 'normal' amount of litter. Sticky eyes, posters and an awareness raising campaign will then be implemented and the results recorded after three and six months to see what impact the campaign has had.







## ASCENT – A Journey to Sustainable Management in European Uplands and Natural Environments

In 2016, five European countries representing seven sites, with over 500,000 annual visitors, came together, connected by a shared goal – to protect and sustainably manage their respective upland sites and natural areas. ASCENT is a multi-region project rooted in collaboration, sustainability, conservation, international learning and the power of communities working together. On 26 June the closing conference was hosted by Donegal County Council in Dungloe. The conference report: ASCENT – A Journey to Sustainable Management in European Uplands and Natural Environments was launched and distributed to all stakeholders.

Throughout the project, partners worked collaboratively to share and implement best-practice solutions for the sustainable management and conservation of their respective upland areas. This included examining the common environmental challenges and the best way to involve local communities. The project ensured its policies for the management of protected areas aligned with the priorities of the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme. Towards the end of the project, ASCENT explored how to raise awareness of the value and vulnerability of sensitive landscapes and thereby change user behaviours. The impact of ASCENT in the journey to sustainable management has been far reaching.

## New Arts & Crafts Trail Brochure

Ring of Gullion Handcrafts and Arts (ROGHA) is an artist collective based in the South Armagh area. The collective supports and promotes professional artists living and working in the area, whilst encouraging a positive arts experience for the local community and visitors alike.

ROGHA has developed a promotional brochure, showcasing the rich arts and crafts of the area, with support from the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership. The high quality, visual brochure locates each artist within the Ring of Gullion, showcasing their artwork and studio. Visitors can use the brochure to find information on a given artist or to develop a self-guided tour of the studios.



## Build your own Bee House



There are over 220 wild species of solitary bees in the UK, all of which make individual nests for their larvae instead of living in hives. Provide them with this simple bee house and in return the bees will pollinate your garden flowers and vegetables.

### You will need

**A wooden box or empty plastic bottle, bamboo sticks, secateurs, and a hook.**

1. Take a wooden box and remove one side, or alternatively cut the top off a large plastic bottle. An old bit of piping would also be ideal. This will become the container for your bamboo sticks.
2. Cut the bamboo sticks to the same length as the depth of your container. Ideally use different widths of bamboo, as bees can then choose between the sizes.
3. Pack the bamboo sticks tightly into the container.
4. Attach a hook to the back of your bee house. Hang or place in full sun, facing the south or south east. Your bee house must be at least a metre off the ground and free from surrounding foliage.

**Now simply watch and wait! Make sure your bee house stays dry and consider moving it during the winter months to protect any nesting bees. If you're interested in homes for other wildlife, check out the 'How to Help' section on our website.**



# Highlights of the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership



Habitat Protection, Restoration and Creation



Protecting  
Slieve Gullion Cairn



Lock Keepers' Pad



Know your Townlands



Signage and  
Interpretation



Cultural Heritage Festivals



Oral History  
& Storytelling



The Building  
of Our Place



Showcasing  
Gullion's Heritage



Wildlife Safari



Camlough & Bessbrook  
Heritage Trails



Slieve Gullion  
Sensory Trail



Slieve Gullion Summit  
Trail Restoration



Traditional  
Countryside Skills



Ambassador Training



Historical Coach Tours



Volunteering and Youth Rangers



# What's On!

## Lúnasa Festival 2019: 2 – 31 August

### Friday 2

12pm-4pm Waste Beater Bus

### Saturday 3

10am-5pm Lazy Galivant over Gullion

### Sunday 4

10am-3pm Fused Glass Ogham Workshop

10am-2pm Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training

### Tuesday 6

10am-5pm South Armagh: An Alternative View

### Wednesday 7

10am-5pm Lazy Galivant over Gullion

### Saturday 10

10.30am-4.30pm Historical Coach Tour of the Ring of Gullion

12pm-2.30pm Slieve Gullion Murder Mystery Experience

### Sunday 11

10am-2pm Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training

10am-1.30pm Famine Wall Hike

### Wednesday 14

10.30am-4.30pm Historical Coach Tour of the Ring of Gullion

11am-4pm Wild Wednesdays - Pond dipping

12pm-4pm Go fly your Kite

### Saturday 17

10.30am-4.30pm Historical Coach Tour of the Ring of Gullion

11am-5pm Geotastic Extravaganza

### Sunday 18

10am-2pm Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training

10am-2pm Booley Site Hike

### Tuesday 20

2pm-4.30pm Gap o' the North Walk

6.30pm-9.30pm Wander through the Centuries

### Wednesday 21

10.30am-4.30pm Historical Coach Tour of the Ring of Gullion

2pm-4pm Nature Detectives

### Thursday 22

12pm-4pm Community Tribal Drummers

2pm-4.30pm The Hidden History of Mythical Mullaghbane

### Saturday 24

11am-2.30pm Feeding your Senses

### Sunday 25

10am-2pm Zombie Apocalypse Survival Training

10am-1pm Historical Hike - The Last Mountain Community

10am-3pm Fused Glass Lantern Workshop

### Wednesday 28

10.30am-4.30pm Historical Coach Tour of the Ring of Gullion

### Friday 30

7pm-10pm Céilí Dancing at Lúnasa

### Saturday 31

10am-4pm Celtic Footsteps

For more events and up to date information visit: [ringofgullion.org/events](http://ringofgullion.org/events)

## News in Brief

There are three native cold-blooded (herpetofauna) species in Northern Ireland: common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) and common frog (*Rana temporaria*). Two of these, common lizard and smooth newt, are designated as Northern Ireland Priority Species. Although widespread declines have been reported, there is a lack of data for amphibians and reptiles in Northern Ireland. Take part in the What's in your Pond citizen science project, to help us identify where these species are in the area. We hope to get the Herpetological Society of Ireland back to help us survey for common lizard in Slieve Gullion over the summer. Keep an eye on the website if you would like to help.

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Anne-Marie is working as an intern on the Atlantic CultureScape Project until the end of September. She is originally from the northern coast of Brittany and will bring a diverse range of skills to the project.  
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Josh Twining, a PhD student at Queen's University Belfast, is studying the recovery and ecology of the European pine marten in Ireland. He will be working with the Partnership during the summer to undertake some research into the secret life of pine martens. This will be done during the night and in the early morning hours so if you see him or meet him at these times, don't be alarmed. He has a licence to carry out this work and no pine marten will be harmed by it.  
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James Algeo-Orr is a Master student from Queen's University Belfast who is completing a 12 week work experience with the Ring of Gullion Partnership. He will be working on carrying out a range of surveys on wildlife conflict in the area including birds, dragonflies and butterflies. If you would like to help James with the surveys, please get in contact with the office.  
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Newry, Mourne and Down District Council was successful in its application to the NIEA's Environment Fund. The Council was awarded £147,430 to deliver the Ring of Gullion AONB and Strangford Lough & Lecale AONB Action Plans over the coming year. Keep an eye on social media to learn more about new projects to get involved with.  
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The Partnership are aiming to increase the content on our YouTube channel. We are developing playlists on the channel. Please subscribe and like the clips. Also, if you have any videos you would like us to add, please email the link to [info@ringofgullion.org](mailto:info@ringofgullion.org).

**Crossmaglen Community Centre**  
**O'Fiaich Square, Crossmaglen, BT35 9HG**  
**E: [info@ringofgullion.org](mailto:info@ringofgullion.org)**  
**T: 028 3082 8590**



**Ring of Gullion**  
Landscape Partnership



Supported by  
**The National Lottery**  
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