



This is the first of a series of pamphlets which have been developed in partnership with Roe Valley Ancestral Researchers and the Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme.

The content of this booklet was compiled and written by H. McCunn.

For more information on the Roe Valley Ancestral Researchers, go to: [www.roevalleyresearch.com](http://www.roevalleyresearch.com)

For further information on where to stay, places to visit or things to do, go to: [www.visitcausewaycoastandglens.com](http://www.visitcausewaycoastandglens.com)

For more information of the Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Area and the Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust go to: [www.binevenaghnaonb.ccght.org](http://www.binevenaghnaonb.ccght.org)

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## LARGANTEA

The statue in this area is of Cushy Glen, a late 18th and early 19th century highway man. He frequented the fairs in Coleraine noting the farmers who had made money and then waited to ambush them along the road on their way home. Many disappeared along this road (originally called the Murderhole Road). He was eventually killed in 1806 and his body, along with that of his brother, who was a cattle thief, were hung on the Hanging Tree beside Hezlett House. The bodies of criminals were often hung at a crossroads to confuse and disorientate their spirits.

This area of Binevenagh was popular in prehistoric times with many prehistoric burial sites, house sites and standing stones located nearby.

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## LIMAVADY WORKHOUSE

The Workhouse in Limavady opened its doors on 15th March 1842 and housed the poor and needy from Limavady and the surrounding area. During the Great Famine (1845-1849) it also offered outdoor relief to the aged and infirm. This allowed the workhouse to free up inside accommodation. It was built to house 500 people but by 1848 there were 950 paupers in residence. As was usual, men, women and children were separated and housed in different wings within the workhouse. In the grounds behind the workhouse there is a paupers' burial ground. In 1930 it became the Roe Valley Hospital, and it is currently the home of Limavady Community Development Initiative (LCDI) and Limavady Volunteer Centre.

Like a number of workhouses, it is said to have its ghosts – crying babies have been heard and there have been several sightings of a nurse in an old-fashioned cape.

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## ROUGH FORT

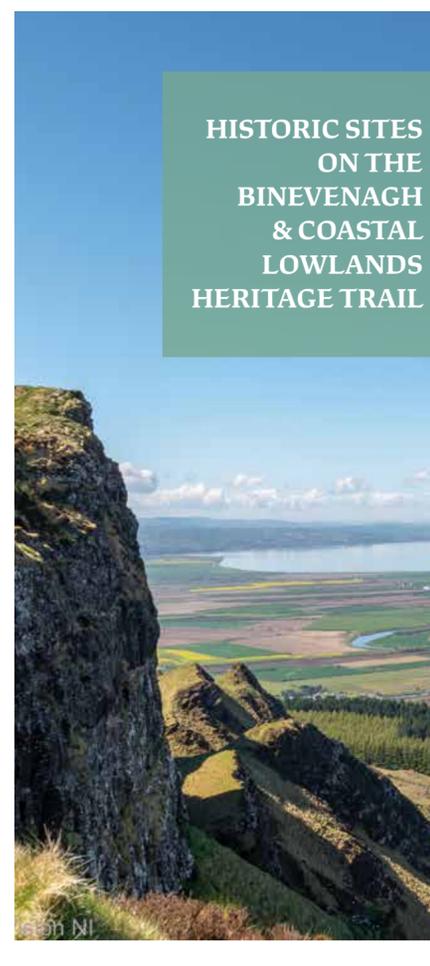
The Rough Fort is a circular earthwork, known as a rath or ringfort which dates to around 500AD. Rathes are one of the most common archaeological sites in Ireland, and this one is particularly well preserved. It has survived mainly because of superstition, as rathes were known as the haunt of the fairy. The surrounding earthen banks with the ditch in the middle would have protected the interior of the rath which would have housed families and animals.

In 1931, 6 urns containing bone and a fragment of a Bronze Age knife were found. These were probably part of a Bronze Age burial site. The exact location of the site is unknown, and no local memory of the discovery survives.

The trees were planted by the McCausland family who later gave the Rough Fort to the care of the National Trust in 1937.

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TIMELINE					
<b>PRE HISTORY</b>	<b>THE IRON AGE</b>	<b>EARLY MEDIEVAL PERIOD</b>	<b>C13TH</b>	<b>C16TH</b>	<b>C17TH</b>
Earliest evidence for human habitation in Ireland at Mountsandel, Coleraine	<b>Construction of the Giants Sconce</b>	<b>Deposition of the Broighter Gold Hoard</b>	<b>Stone church at St Aidans constructed</b>	Spanish Armada ship 'The Girona' is wrecked close to the Giants Causeway	<b>Hezlett House built</b>
Human first begin to use metal for tools and weapons		St Patrick brings Christianity to Ireland			
		<b>Rough Fort constructed</b>			
<b>C18TH</b>	<b>C19TH</b>			<b>C20TH</b>	
Downhill Demesne built	<b>The blind harper Denis O'Hampsey dies</b>	<b>Death of Cushy Glen</b>	<b>Sampson's Tower constructed</b>	<b>The Hilding is wrecked off the Magilligan coast</b>	
<b>Present Tamlaghtfinalaghan Church Built</b>	Napoleon is defeated at the Battle of Waterloo	Ordnance Survey Ireland	<b>The Hilding is wrecked off the Magilligan coast</b>	<b>Brighter Hoard Discovered</b>	
	<b>Limavady Workhouse is opened</b>	The Potato Famine in Ireland	Railway between Coleraine and Derry/Londonderry constructed	World War One and World War Two	
	<b>Hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' is written</b>				
	<b>'Londonderry Air' written down by Jane Ross</b>				



## HISTORIC SITES ON THE BINEVENAGH & COASTAL LOWLANDS HERITAGE TRAIL



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## INTRODUCTION

The stones that shaped our landscape have been used to build the forts, the towers, the churches and the houses all around us. If these buildings and places could speak, they could tell amazing stories about the area. This pamphlet hopes in some small way, to bring the historic sites of the area to life.

This pamphlet, focussing on historic sites, is the first in a series of three pamphlets designed to increase awareness and appreciation of heritage in the Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Landscape Partnership Scheme Area. The area, which stretches from Ballykelly to the Bann Estuary at Castlerock has heritage sites which date from the Prehistoric period through to the 20th century. The next two leaflets in this series will focus on defence heritage and natural heritage.

GPS co-ordinates are provided to help you navigate to each site.

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## TAMLAGHTFINLAGHAN

This beautiful church, dating from 1795, was built largely from donations. One of the main donors was Frederick Hervey, the Bishop of Derry, who later became the Earl of Bristol, and was known locally as the Earl Bishop. The first rector of the church was his relative Henry Hervey Bruce who went on to inherit Downhill Demesne. The surrounding graveyard contains several noteworthy graves.

### The Hamilton Grave

These were the ancestors of Nobel Prize winning author John Steinbeck. Steinbeck visited the area and said it was 'the seat of my culture, the origin of my being and the soil of my background.'

### Jimmy McCurry

Jimmy was the blind fiddler who allegedly played O'Cahan's Lament in the Main Street in Limavady. This melody is now known throughout the world as the Londonderry Air, popularised by the lyrics 'Danny Boy'.

### Commonwealth War Graves

Within the graveyard there are 31 commonwealth graves.

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## SAMPSON'S TOWER IN FARLOW WOOD

Farlow Wood was planted in the late 1700s as a cash crop and the Memorial Tower was a folly built in 1860 in memory of Arthur Sampson Esq, who was the agent for the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers, 4th in the ranking of the livery companies of the city of London.

The Tower is a listed building, approximately 18m high and built mainly of rubble and dressed sandstone. It is a combination of a round and square tower, with the round section containing a spiral staircase. A faded stone plaque above the door is barely readable but describes Arthur Sampson as a much-respected gentleman, a Justice of the Peace and a founder member of Limavady Workhouse.

The wood is in private ownership but Roe Valley Ancestral Researchers Ltd have permission to allow access to the Tower and the woodland, contact details are visible from the Farlow Road entrance.

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© The National Museum of Ireland

## THE BRIGHTER HOARD

The Brighter Hoard is a collection of gold artefacts which were found in 1896 by local man Tom Nicholl. He found them while he was ploughing the flat area of land which fringes Lough Foyle, just outside Limavady.

The hoard dates to the Iron Age (roughly the 1st century BC). It consists of a torc decorated with bird, horse and seahorse motifs, a small boat which resembles a curragh complete with oars, a bowl, several chains and bracelets. During the Iron Age, the sea level would have been higher, and the area where the hoard was found would have been under the sea when it was deposited. This has led some to believe that the hoard was an ancient offering to the sea god Manannán mac Lir.

The magnificent gold hoard is on display in the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin.

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## SWANN'S BRIDGE

While staying at Bellarena House (close to Swann's Bridge), Mrs Cecil Frances Alexander was inspired by the landscape and reportedly wrote the lyrics of the famous hymn 'All things bright and beautiful'

*'The purple headed mountain, the river running by',* refers to Binevenagh and the River Roe. *'The tall trees in the greenwood'* and *'the ripe fruits in the garden'* refer to the gardens at Bellarena House.

The natural landscape did not just inspire hymn writing. The area is home to many unique species of flora. In 1725, the Rev Innes noted in a letter to the Royal Society of London that Binevenagh mountain was *'a kind of physic garden which supplied them with medicines to be found in no other place.'*

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## ST AIDAN'S CHURCH

Situated below the basalt cliffs of Binevenagh, this medieval church site has possible connections to St Colmcille dating back to the 6th century. It is said that the remains of the Patron Saint of Magilligan, St Cadan, are buried at the ruined church which is thought to have been built in the 13th century. St Aidan's Holy Well located close to the church is reportedly a pre-Christian spiritual well whose water is said to cure all ills when applied to the afflicted area.

Within the graveyard is buried Denis O'Hampsey (1695-1807), a famous traditional Irish harpist who was blind from the age of 3. He used the traditional fingernail technique of playing on his famous bog wood harp made by Cormac O'Kelly in 1702. In 1745 he reportedly played O'Cahan's Lament for Bonny Prince Charlie. On his death bed he gifted his harp to Henry Hervey Bruce, and it is now housed at the Guinness Brewery in Dublin.

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## TAMLAGHTARD

This Church of Ireland Parish church was built by the Earl Bishop in 1783 and is sometimes called St Cadan's in reference to the 5th/6th century follower of St Patrick. St Cadan left the Magilligan area and journeyed to Scotland, becoming a hermit on the Isle of Bute. He became the Patron Saint of Magilligan and his remains were brought back to the area and are said to be buried at the site of St Aidan's Church.

To the right of the entrance gate are the graves of the victims of the Hilding shipwreck. The Hilding was a Norwegian Brig, sailing from Glasgow to the West Indies, which wrecked in January 1878 at the entrance to the 'Londonderry River', (now known as Lough Foyle). The skipper, a crew member and a passenger died.

Some local historians are still in touch with descendants of the Norwegian crew.

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## GORTMORE VIEWPOINT

This statue of Manannán mac Lir was erected in 2015 and created by Game of Thrones sculptor John Sutton. Both Downhill Strand and Binevenagh were used as filming locations for the hit television show.

Manannán mac Lir, is a king and warrior in Irish Mythology and is often referred to as a sea god. It is said that he used the sea mist as a cloak of invisibility to hide his home and had a magical boat called Sguabe Tuinne which could self-steer as well as a horse that could ride over land and sea. It is possible that the Brighter Hoard was an offering deposited to the sea god and representations of the hoard can be seen on the statue.

On the opposite side of the road from the statue is the walk down to Gortmore viewing point. It is worth the few extra steps to take in the stunning views of Magilligan point, Lough Foyle and Inishowen.

GPS: 55.149498 -6.877538



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## DOWNHILL DEMENSE

Downhill Demesne consists of the big house (known locally as the castle), Mussenden Temple, the icehouse, dove cote, Mausoleum and Bishop's Gate Lodge. It was built in the late 18th century by Frederick Hervey, the Earl Bishop. He built on this headland as it allowed him to travel both to his cathedral in Derry and to his other great interest, the Giant's Causeway. During his travels throughout Europe, he collected many artworks. As a result, his house at Downhill was decorated with beautiful frescoes, statues and paintings by famous artists such Raphael, Rembrandt and Rubens.

The son of his cousin, the Rev. Henry Bruce inherited the estate when the Earl Bishop died and the Bruce family lived here until the mid-20th century. During the Second World War, the house became a billet for the RAF. In 1980 the castle was acquired by the National Trust.

\*National Trust charges apply.

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## MUSSENDEN TEMPLE

The temple sits high on the cliffs above the Atlantic Ocean and Downhill Strand. Completed in 1785, it was part of the Earl Bishop's estate and was named after his first cousin's daughter, Mrs Mussenden. It was originally used as a library and so a fire was kept burning in the basement of the temple to prevent the library of books from getting damp. The Earl Bishop also allowed the basement to be used for the celebration of mass during the catholic emancipation in the 18th century.

The Latin inscription around the outside of the temple, translates to "Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore, the rolling ship and hear the tempest roar."

Mussenden Temple was acquired by the National Trust and since 2007, civic weddings have been held there.

\*National Trust charges apply.

GPS: 55.162671 -6.8138114



© H. McCunn

## HEZLETT HOUSE

This 17th century thatched cottage was originally a farmhouse or rectory. In 1761 Isaac Hezlett bought the house and it was lived in continuously until taken over by the National Trust in 1976. It was built on a framework of five 'crucks'. These are curved pieces of oak which formed the rafters and sides of the house and gave it stability. The crucks sit on a bed of rock and the walls are constructed around them. The roof was originally thatched with flax, although today it is thatched with reeds.

In 1976, the National Trust acquired the house. Many original features still remain such as the open fire and its functional crane. Marble busts and statues from Downhill Demesne are currently housed in one of its outbuildings.

The large, sweet chestnut tree along the roadside is known locally as the Hanging Tree. \*Presently, the house is not open to the public, but can be viewed from the road.

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© Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust

## GIANT'S SCONCE

Originally called Dún Ceithirn or Dún da Bend, the 'Giant's Sconce' is an Iron Age hilltop fort. The hilltop would have originally been fortified by a thick stone wall which still survives in places. Within the fort there is also a well and possibly a souterrain (an early medieval stone tunnel). The site was clearly very important place in early medieval as it is mentioned in many ancient Irish texts. In fact, in the 'Ulster Cycle' - a medieval collection of Irish legends and sagas, the site is referred to as a 'royal site' and in the 7th century, it was reputedly the site of a number of battles.

The Giant's Sconce is difficult to access by foot but can be viewed from the Windyhall Road.

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