



# The Cave Hill Campaigner

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## The Past Year – Doing and Achieving

All wild areas are under pressure from people, particularly those, like Cave Hill, which are on an urban fringe. Such areas are only maintained because there is a recognition that we need them but yet that very usage damages them. And because of the fine balance that has to be struck in their management, groups like our own are very necessary. We encourage and facilitate public usage but we also work towards mitigating the damage that public use brings.

It is a source of great satisfaction to me that, over the years, we have built up and maintained a group of directors who give their time and energies to allow us to offer a programme of activities which has expanded in number and variety over the last few years; we have also got a loyal group of members who support us through their subscriptions and by attending these activities.

In 2015-2016, we have not only maintained the excellent programme of Saturday activities we began three years ago but we have expanded them. As well as a varied programme of guided walks on nine Saturdays, we ran two very successful evening events in the Castle – a plant evening in May and a Halloween storytelling event in October. There were also two other evening events outside the Castle – a bat evening in August and a moonlight walk in September. All these events were well attended with an average of over twenty at our walks and many more at the Castle events. They were well advertised in *City Matters* and *What's On in Belfast* as well as on the *Belfast Hills Partnership* website.

We also liaised with two local primary schools – Park Lodge and Ben Madigan Prep to create a wildflower meadow. This is a three year project; last autumn we planted some yellow rattle seeds followed this spring by a full mixture of different other native flowers in an area of about 1,000 square metres. These seeds will take a further two years before they develop so the meadow won't be revealed in all its glorious diversity until 2018. We are hoping in the near future to link with other schools and community organisations to create further wildflower areas in the park and so move away from the idea of uniformly green parkland.

Our survey and conservation work continued. We were again part of a survey of the skylark and meadow



*Henry Bell guides a walk through Carr's Glen - April 2016*

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pipit population across the top of Cave Hill and, for the second year, we monitored butterflies on a transect which takes in the great limestone quarry, every week from April to September. We contributed seeds (of ramsoms and blaeberrys) to a new seed repository which is being set up for Northern Ireland. We combined for the second year with volunteers from the Ulster Bank and we spent a day in June cleaning Carr's Glen. So efficient were the forty or so volunteers who attended that there was time in the afternoon to clean up the wooded areas around the Castle as well. In August we joined Belfast Hills Partnership volunteers in lifting Himalayan Balsam from a site close to the Castle.

Our website, and in particular our Facebook site, are proving very useful as ways of bringing issues to light and of recording interesting facts and photographs. We now have 370 friends and there is a constant appearance of striking photographs and interesting discussions when issues arise.

Following our revision of our governance last year, we were called forward last October by the Northern Ireland Charity Commission for assessment and we are now registered with them. This is important in that it shows our affairs are above board and publicly accessible and it assures the public that we are constantly under official scrutiny.

I believe that our interest in Cave Hill and our activities on the hill are greatly beneficial; beneficial, first of all to ourselves in that our commitment encourages us to be out on the hill more often (we always learn from our guides and outdoor activity is always good for the soul); but beneficial also to the Cave Hill environment. Belfast City Council maintains Cave Hill Country Park but fiscal pressures mean that their resources are limited. And that is where we can help. We can highlight particular problems so that the resources are targeted more efficiently. And we can undertake conservation tasks ourselves.

Our public engagements have raised our profile and a lot of the public know of us and our activities. That public awareness and support gives us clout when we engage with public bodies and helps us ensure that Cave Hill remains a valuable and unspoilt resource for our fellow citizens. Belfast City Council acknowledge our contribution to this maintenance by recognising us as a Friends organisation and by subsidising our activities. I thank them for this support. That connection however, doesn't mean that we support the Council in all it does on the Hill; we have not forgotten the loss last year of the path around the zoo and we will continue to press for its restoration. I must also thank our directors and of course our members whose contributions ensure our independence and our future.

*Cormac Hamill*

*Directors Andrew Kerr, Sheila Johnston, Geraldine Birch, Andrew Thompson and Cormac Hamill at the Council's Big Lunch*





# Was McArt's Fort an Inauguration site? A Re-assessment.

Much scepticism has been directed at the proposal that a stone ceremonial chair with connections to the Clandeboy O'Neill and others once stood on McArt's Fort. This suggestion has been rejected partly because the stone ceremonial chair of the Clandeboy O'Neill was found in the 18th century close to their ruined castle at Castlereagh and is now in the Ulster Museum. It has also been suggested that a natural rock outcrop on McArt's has been transformed by delusionary and naive romantics into a ceremonial chair.

Such scepticism takes scant account of evidence that points to the existence, up to 1896, of a stone feature on McArt's that had a chair-like appearance. This feature was first noted in a letter sent from Sir Samuel Ferguson of Belfast to Dr George Petrie of Dublin in September 1833. Ferguson wrote: *"on one of the arms of the seat a hole to all appearances artificial ... which is just the shape of the inside of a glove, and fits the right hand pretty exactly. The stone in which it is seems to have been brought thither. The others appear part of the rock."* It is highly unlikely that this glove-like feature occurred naturally in the rock.

Ferguson was not alone in drawing attention to this. In 1878, the Reverend J O'Lavery in his influential *History of the Diocese of Down and Connor* wrote that on McArt's *"there is a rude chair, formed by three huge rocks, which*

*was either a Judgement Seat or a Coronation Chair."*

In his book *As I Roved Out*, published in 1946, Cathal O'Byrne (1876-1957) described the feature on McArt's in terms similar to those used by O'Lavery: *"On the very verge of the precipice some large stones are piled together so as to form a seat."* Confirming Ferguson's earlier comment, he added that the seat stone *"was brought from some other place to complete the formation of the throne; the other portions of the seat were part of the rock."* He also noted that iron rail-posts had been installed on the Sheep's Path leading to McArt's at the time the structure was destroyed in December 1896 and that one of these had been used to lever the stone chair over the cliff.

O'Byrne claimed that this was carried out by people who took exception to a brief reference to the chair in the December 1896 edition of the Belfast nationalist monthly the *Shan Van Vocht*. Echoing Ferguson some 60 years earlier, the monthly reported that the structure had *"a cavity fitting the hand like a gauntlet"*. It was also noted (unsurprisingly given the publication's politics) that McArt's itself resembled *"the Phrygian Cap as depicted in an allegorical representation of liberty."*

Sceptics have argued that whatever was destroyed on McArt's was not a ceremonial chair. However, in an article in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*

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*McArt's Fort shrouded in mist.*



(JRSAI) for 1905 it was reported that a stone chair once stood on McArt's. The article recorded a trip by members of the society to Belfast, Mallusk and to other places in south Antrim in July of that year. Describing their journey along the Antrim Road, it was noted that McArt's is "*cut off from the hill by a great artificial trench, thus forming an impregnable fortress.*" The writer then stated that "*A rude, stone chair was on its summit.*" The use of the past tense suggests strongly that the chair was no longer to be seen on McArt's, supporting O'Byrne's claim that it had been destroyed some nine years earlier.

George Benn's *History of the Town of Belfast* (1877) described McArt's as "*an old historic spot ... the gathering place and secure retreat of the O'Neill's.*" Benn did not refer to a chair and provided no evidence to substantiate his interesting comment about a "*gathering place*".

What can be made of all of this? Ferguson, O'Lavery, the Shan Van Vocht, O'Byrne and the JRSAI agreed that a stone feature resembling a chair stood on McArt's. Ferguson and the Shan Van Vocht reported that it had a glove-like cavity in its right arm. Benn and O'Lavery also suggested that McArt's had a ceremonial purpose.

Recent archaeological consideration of Cave Hill supports this interpretation. Ruairi O'Baoill in *Hidden History Below Our Feet – The Archaeological Story of Belfast* (2011) stated that it "*could be that the site was a Gaelic inauguration site*" and noted the "*traditions of inauguration*" attached to it. Conor McSparron, an archaeologist with The Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork at QUB, has recently excavated earthworks located strategically between the former 19th century stone quarry and McArt's and suggested that these earthworks had a ceremonial function. He concluded that the summit of Cave Hill could be considered as "*a ritual landscape associated ... with inauguration*" and that "*the presence of a stone chair on MacArt's ... hints strongly at inauguration.*" Professor Elizabeth FitzPatrick in her *Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland c1100-1600* (published 2004) also accepts McArt's as a possible inauguration site. She notes that chairs constructed from dressed stone, or from exposed bedrock, are associated with inauguration sites, that the use of a throne "*however crude, was integral ... to some late medieval Irish septs*" and that the use of stone chairs was primarily a feature of inauguration in Ulster. The stone inauguration chair of the O'Neills of Tyrone on the hill of Tullyhogue was a good example but was destroyed in 1602 by Lord Deputy Mountjoy.

Two stone chairs have been identified near Belfast: the chair from Castlereagh linked to the Clandeboye O'Neill and a stone chair from the inaugural site of the Dal Fiatach

at Crew Hill near Glenavy. The structure on McArt's was not an isolated example but one of a group of three from a specific geographical context. If McArt's was an inauguration site, which group made use of it?

Crew Hill near Glenavy has been accepted as an inaugural site of the Dal Fiatach because of annalistic and other evidence but its destruction in 1099 by the O'Neill of Tyrone appears to have led to its abandonment. Conor McSparron has suggested that the Dal Fiatach may have adopted McArt's as an alternative ceremonial location. The Clandeboye O'Neill, who left Tyrone to conquer much of south-east Antrim and north Down between 1273 and 1340, may also have used the Cave Hill as an inauguration site. There is specific evidence to link them directly to the hill.

In July 1556, the Lord Deputy, the Earl of Sussex, passed through Belfast. His secretary reported that they "*camped underneath Banne Vadegane*" (Ben Madigan/Cave Hill) "*by Lisetolloh Arde*", a now obsolete place-name given to a fortified enclosure and small castle that stood on what is now the North Circular Road. He added "*On the hill of Banne Vadegane is a great cave wherein is the treasure of Clanneaboy.*" What he meant by this is entirely obscure but it links explicitly the Cave Hill and the Clandeboye O'Neill. Furthermore, the use of the present tense shows clearly that the O'Neill made use of the cave in 1556 - this



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was not a reference to some barely remembered tradition or legend. Given that the O'Neill used "*a great cave*" for security and/or ceremonial purposes, it would not be surprising if they also made use of the adjacent McArt's for inauguration. It is unclear when the fort was named for Brian Mac Art O'Neill who was killed near Belfast in 1601. In an Inquisition conducted by English officials in Belfast in August 1621, the fort was called Dunvallegan, the fort of Madigan, a reference to an Ulster chieftain who died in 855AD.

Research into inauguration sites gives particular weight to place-name evidence and the place-name *tulach* is especially important as it is often applied to a hill where an assembly or inauguration was held. Consequently, the place-name "*Lisetolloh Arde*" where the Earl of Sussex camped on the night of 8 July 1556 is highly significant. "*Lisetolloh Arde*" is an anglicised version of *lios tulach ard* which can be translated as *the fort of the high hill of the assembly*.

The article in the JRSAI (1905) identifies precisely the location of "*Lisetolloh Arde*". The JRSAI group travelled along the Antrim Road noting another fortification "*on the Lough side of the road, now known as Fortwilliam*." Then "*in full view of Ben Madigan ... in a field immediately adjoining the wall of Belfast Castle, a fine square fort with one fosse ... known as Lis-toll-gard*". There is only one

place the JRSAI group (and Sussex) could have been, where the Ekenhead Memorial Church now stands on the North Circular Road. During an Inquisition in Belfast on 30 August 1621 reference was made to "*Lisstollyarde, Dunvallegan, Balleoghign and Glengormlie*." Dunvallegan is clearly McArt's Fort, and Balleoghign is the townland of Ballyaghagan. Given the sequencing of these four townlands in the 1621 Inquisition, the location of *Lissetolloh Arde/Lisstollyarde*, and the local topography, the place-name "*the high hill of the assembly*" must surely refer to Cave Hill and McArt's Fort. That place-name also correlates perfectly with George Benn's 1871 description of McArt's as "*an old historic spot ... the gathering place and secure retreat of the O'Neill's*."

The written descriptions of a stone chair that stood on McArt's until 1896, the place-name *lios tulach ard* and recent archaeological research all indicate to a high level of probability that McArt's Fort functioned as an inauguration site for much of the medieval and early modern period, probably initially with the Dal Fiatach and later with the Clandeboye O'Neill. Contrary arguments based on little more than assertion are unconvincing and particularistic. The destruction by vandals in 1896 of that stone chair represents the loss of an important piece of the cultural and political history of Ulster.

Daniel McCall

# Walking the Belfast Hills

In 1989, the Save the Cave Hill Campaign (which later became Cave Hill Conservation Campaign) was founded at a public meeting in the Lansdowne Hotel. The immediate aim was to raise awareness that a prospecting licence had been issued to the Glenshesk Mineral Company to determine whether reserves of zeolites in the Cave Hill basalt were there in commercial quantities and so available for exploitation. The very first event we organised was a mass walk over the Belfast Hills from Hannahstown to Cave Hill. Our aims were twofold. We recognised that there was an unmet demand in Belfast to be able to walk the Hills but that the lack of waymarked trails and the military presence in the Hills deterred people. Organising such a walk would attract a lot of people and raise the issue of protecting Cave Hill. It would also highlight the need to create a publicly accessible route across the Hills.

Over the next three or four years our numbers on what became an annual walk, the Belfast Hills Walk rose to about 800. The threat to Cave Hill receded. But the issue of creating a proper route across the Hills got no further. We had asked permission from the farmers and landowners every year and that had been given. But in about the year 2000, one farmer in particular withdrew his permission. Even though we only needed to cross about 5 metres of his land, we were not allowed and any alternative route crossed land whose owners had always refused permission; there was no way round. That effectively killed the annual walk and it highlighted the issue of there not being a designated, protected and maintained public route across the Hills.

In the years that followed, the Belfast Hills Partnership was created and it had and still has as one of its aims the creation of increased public access to the Belfast Hills. On the Board, there are directors from the farmers, from quarrying and waste-disposal interests, from the National Trust, from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, from councils and from the community. There are four community directors, of whom I am one. We four have always advocated a designated, waymarked and maintained route across the hills. But progress was glacial given the intractable opposition to the idea from farmers' representatives.

The community directors now regard creating access routes into and across the Belfast Hills as pressing. In October 2015 we held the first of what will be an annual meeting of community groups in areas fringing the

hills. At that meeting, the demand for a designated route across the Belfast Hills was clearly articulated. With that mandate, we have asked for meetings with the farmers, to no avail. We also asked for a meeting with Belfast City Council and as we awaited a reply, it emerged that the Council was also interested in creating access routes to the hills at the very point where we were blocked along with another access route above Whiterock Road. There is great hope that the Council may succeed in accessing funding for the creation of paths, interpretation panels and signage and also in solving the problem of the necessary permissions at these two points.

If they are unsuccessful and no progress is made by the end of 2016, we intend to reassess our strategy. We will consult with the communities and we'll consider mobilising public opinion; the demand for access is there and we need to articulate and direct it. The day cannot be far off when the citizens of Belfast and also visitors from farther afield will be able to enjoy the splendid scenery, history and wildlife of the Belfast Hills.

*Cormac Hamill*

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# Painting the Stone

On a summer's day in August- yes, there really was one - I joined a small group of people on a walk through Ballyaghagan Nature Reserve on Cave Hill. The walk was a gentle pace and took about three hours. On the way back to the Hightown car park we passed through an area known as Daddystown. This is where dwellings for the quarry workers were once located. There was very little remaining to see but our guide took us into a small wooded area and pointed out the outline of one such dwelling. It was a small area so only a few people at a time could go in.

Once I had had a look and noted how small the dwellings were, I went out of the woods to allow others to go in and look. As I waited on the path for the group to reassemble I thought I heard someone mention my family name! No, I must have been mistaken. I moved closer to the edge of the wood to listen anyway and sure enough I heard it again! I shouted, 'did I hear my family name mentioned?' A man, followed by our guide, emerged from the trees and asked 'Who are you?'. I explained my family connection and he said he had heard a story that my grandfather painted the stone at the top of Cave Hill every year. He was trying to trace an uncle of mine to confirm this story but, sadly, my uncle had passed away. I was able to tell him that I had grown up with that story, although my grandfather had died before I was born.

My grandparents had lived in the cottage at the foot of Cave Hill, after moving there following the Blitz. My grandfather, William Adair Caulfield, was a postman and covered a wide area on his route. He and my grandmother Nellie had four children - William, John (Jack), Desmond and Maureen. Jack told my late brother Alan that William was paid a small sum to keep a large rock at the top of Cave Hill (on the forehead) painted white as it was used as a beacon during the war for pilots landing at Nutts Corner airfield during blackouts when the lights of Belfast could not be seen. Maureen is the only surviving child. She too remembers her father painting the stone

white on a yearly basis but cannot recall him being paid for this!

The cottage was a small property and my grandparents kept goats and chickens. A regular visitor to their cottage was Rinty Monaghan, who used to call in for a glass of goats milk while he was out training! (see article on the next page)

My aunt recalls great parties at the cottage and remembers the names of a few neighbours - the Gardiners, the Liggetts and she also remembers Meadow Sweet Dairy, owned by the Spratts. I can remember a Mr Spratt delivering milk to us when I was growing up too! My father John and his brother Desmond both worked for the Post Office and the gentleman I met that day on the walk had worked with Desmond and knew of my father.

It was no accident that we met that day! I had only decided at the last minute to go on the walk and, since then, I have been on three further walks. I intend to be on all walks scheduled for 2016!

*Jacqui Corr*

*Autumn arrives on Cave Hill.*



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## Cavehill Cottage and Rinty Monaghan

John Joseph Monaghan, better known to boxing fans as “Rinty”, was the first boxer born and based in Belfast to become World champion. When he retired undefeated in 1950 he was flyweight champion of the World. At the same time he held the European, Empire, and British titles as well. Quite an achievement as in those days there were only eight boxing weight divisions, therefore there could only be eight champions. Indeed this was a time when any boxing fan could rhyme off all the champions of the world, unlike the present time, greats like Sugar Ray Robinson and Joe Louis and many more.

Part of Rinty’s training regime was to run from his home in Little Corporation Street up the Cave Hill – no state of the art gymnasiums in those days! He would stop at Cavehill Cottage to rest and get a supply of goat’s milk. The inhabitants of this cottage were William Adair Caulfield and his lady wife Ellen, better known as Nellie. William was a postman. A friendship was quickly formed between the boxer and the Caulfields.

It is unclear just how many goats William and Nellie had, but it is known that one of them was called Beauty, maybe she supplied the milk which Rinty thrived on?



*William Caulfield and Rinty Monaghan*



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At the same time that Rinty was traversing the hill, his manager Frank McAlorum would position himself at a vantage point along with his binoculars and 'spy' on his charge to make sure he did indeed complete his training run. However, what Frank maybe did not know was that every now and again Nellie Caulfield would make Rinty a fry. Possibly the manager of a world champion boxer would not have approved of this act of kindness, but as history has shown it did not affect Rinty's success. On his return back home he would bring back goat's milk for himself and his family, apparently his children were not completely enamoured with the taste of it.

As most, if not all, of the boxing fraternity will know, Rinty won the world title at the King's Hall, Belfast in 1948. However not many people are aware of his association with Cavehill Cottage and William & Nellie Caulfield during his training over the years. It is fair to say they played their part in the history of boxing in this country. Sadly all three are no longer with us, but we should remember their contribution to the sport.

Cavehill Cottage is located just above where Upper Cavehill Road ends. It's visible beyond the metal gates and at the end of a tarmac driveway.

Rinty is survived by his daughters Rosetta and Collette, who have their own distant memories of the cottage. William and Ellen are survived by their daughter

*Rinty with Beauty the goat*



Maureen who was born in Cavehill Cottage.

We extend our grateful thanks to the Monaghan family circle for providing these unique historical facts and photographs. If not for them such a precious nugget of our local history may have disappeared forever into the annals of time.

*Gerard Brannigan*

*Dedicated to the memory of John Joseph (Rinty) Monaghan and William and Ellen (Nellie) Caulfield*



*Ellen Jane Caulfield with Rinty and Beauty the goat at Cavehill Cottage*



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## A Frail Glass – Helen Waddell in North Belfast



Helen Waddell

Helen Jane Waddell was born in Japan in 1889. She was the youngest child of an Irish Presbyterian minister, the Rev Hugh Waddell, who was a missionary and also lectured in the Japanese Imperial University. Urged by her father to share in the life and culture of the country, a recommendation she enthusiastically complied with, her childhood there was a happy one.

Helen's mother died in 1892 and a few years later the family (there were ten Waddell children) returned to Ireland where her father remarried. However, the Rev Waddell died in 1901.

After completing her secondary education at Victoria College, Helen went on to study at Queen's University from where she graduated with distinction in 1911. With great regret, instead of accepting a place at Oxford to research for a D. Phil., Helen felt obliged to live with her step-mother, and they eventually settled in 19 Cedar Avenue, in North Belfast. These years in a tall, thin house with no garden were the bleakest years of her life, and left a mark on her character and on her thought.

Helen's step-mother disapproved of her literary endeavours (she had already published two works on oriental themes), and urged her instead to write improving religious stories for children. Two of her brothers died in these years: George of heart failure in 1915, and Billy, who was a ship's doctor, when he was swept overboard during a storm. Mrs Waddell, despite a strong Temperance background, increasingly succumbed to alcohol addiction. Helen, lonely and despairing, wrote to a friend, *"did you ever in your life choose, and find the road you turned your back on, crossing your own road at intervals of years, so that every now and then you come face to face with a phantom self that might have been you?"*

Ireland in the years 1919-1923 was convulsed by increasingly embittered political division, and this weighed heavily on Helen's spirits as in Belfast hundreds of people were killed, and many thousands driven from

their homes in sectarian outrages. She believed that the unionist leader, Sir Edward Carson, was a sinister figure who had had a malign influence on Irish affairs; at the same time she deplored the Irish-Ireland zealots who insisted that the spirit of the people could only express itself properly through the Irish language.

Martha Waddell died in June 1920 and Helen left 19 Cedar Avenue where by now she felt that one of the few cheerful aspects of her existence was the fire in the grate. Accepted by Oxford University to undertake research in medieval literature, in 1924 she was granted a Fellowship at Lady Margaret Hall. These were the first steps to international recognition as a scholar and writer. In 1933 she published what was to become her best known book. *Peter Abeldard* is a novel, but it is also a meditation on love and on spiritual redemption. This story about a mediaeval scholar who, with disastrous consequences, falls in love with his student Heloise, was a huge success and was ultimately translated into ten languages. Its author was welcomed to 10 Downing Street, and to take breakfast with Queen Mary. Envious perhaps, another writer, CS Lewis patronisingly referred to her northern Irish accent, which she never lost, as a "quaint Belfast drawl."

Helen Waddell never returned to North Belfast. Her work is suffused with the conviction that suffering and negation are a necessary part of existence if it is to be whole, and that a refusal to accept this, is a refusal to face life. It is not difficult to see how this conviction was shaped by the desolate years she spent at 19 Cedar Avenue.

Helen Waddell died in 1965 and is buried in the Presbyterian Churchyard, Magherally, County Down.

The commemorative blue plaque later affixed to the house in North Belfast was removed by an owner of the property.

Edward McCamley

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## Childhood Adventures

The Cave Hill was visible from the end of the street where I lived and one summer after careful planning (which involved telling our parents we were away to play football) we headed off with ample food supplies, 2 rounds of bread wrapped up in Kennedy's loaf paper, to conquer the mountain. I believe we were all around 9 years of age but each felt man enough to undertake the journey. The route took us up through Ballysillan fields past a farm near the Deerpark Road belonging to a family called Price who had all sorts of chickens/ geese/ ducks plus 2 ferocious dogs, they also had some cattle roaming about the fields.

After supplementing our food rations with rhubarb stalks quietly removed from the garden plots at the rear of the upper Oldpark Road we resumed our journey, we did not know the proper way to the Cave Hill but childhood logic dictated to us that as it was always in front of us it had to be the way up.

Then up past Buttermilk loanen, so called due to rain washing lime down the road from the Lime quarry around the bend on the Hightown Road, we proceeded

onwards into Carr's Glen following the river up past another farmhouse which had an old air raid shelter at the rear which we were told was called the postman's knock and everyone had to prove themselves by leaping across it, some did not make it and suffered badly when falling into the nettles at the bottom.

Further up while still following the river we apparently missed the right hand turn towards the Cave Hill but instead discovered a huge waterfall called the 40ft which we observed had trout swimming in a pool at the bottom of it, later when we were older we had great fun climbing up the side of this waterfall which emerged onto a laneway up near Hightown quarry.

Retracing our tracks we found our way to the quarry at the bottom of Cave Hill and noticed a man watching something near the top of the quarry, he explained he was watching birds called sand martins which were nesting in holes near the top, he then showed us the remains of an old railway track running along the complete length of the quarry past the forest and down the Cave Hill Road which he explained was how they transported the quarry

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*Joseph Lavery in 1947 (marked by an arrow) with his friends in Northwick Drive, Ardoyne. Photo taken by Joseph Lavery Snr.*





rock into the town.

The man showed us a track called the Sheep's Path to take us to Napoleon's Nose and we headed off up the side of the forest, tired, but excited at the same time as we kept stopping, taking in all the wonders we could see across the city dominated by huge clouds of factory smoke. We could even see the roofs of the houses where we lived far in the distance. We made it to the top and collapsed on the summit and then gorged on our lunch packs while marvelling at the views stretching out from Belfast Lough.

On the way back we followed a different track towards Hightown quarry and got the shock of our lives when passing a sandbagged hut. Two men jumped out on us shouting to put our hands up, they had rifles and it turned out they were B Specials guarding the explosives used in the quarry blasting, I am now aware that it was 1956 and it was because an IRA border campaign was on. It was our first journey to the Cave Hill but certainly not the last as we roamed every inch of it for years to come.

A few years later (again in the summertime) we came across two cottages in which a group of boy scouts used at weekends, the scoutmaster was called Mr Clyde and apparently the low buildings were simply referred to as Clyde's Cottages. Mr Clyde was very friendly and it

was him who told us the cottages were situated between places called Daddystown and Mammystown and that long ago the men worked in both nearby quarries. He also invited us to take part in all the scout activities such as making plaster casts of all the local wildlife footprints i.e. hares, rabbits, foxes, badgers, hedgehogs and also a wide collection of birds eggs. After regular visits we also knew the names of all the various tree types.

It being called the Cave Hill it did not take us long to discover why, and more importantly where, the caves were situated. We clambered down the path towards the caves and crawled up into the first big one, what excitement as we wondered how they lived and did they bury any treasure there? Would we find any spears and shields if we dug holes, our imaginations ran wild and we were ecstatic at our first visit to the caves, but, boys being boys, we determined to climb the remaining four caves at our next visit. Our dreams were short lived however when, upon arriving at Napoleons Nose, we could see firemen on the cliff above the higher caves using ropes to rescue two boys stuck above the third cave. The police warned us never to climb up as the rock was loose and crumbly but when they went away we found how to get to the second cave and left it at that.

Some weeks later the best climber among us called Charlie decided after studying the cliff at Napoleon's Nose he was going to climb it as he noticed a narrow fissure running up the cliff face. Nothing would deter him and he sent some of us to the top of the Nose in case he needed help near the summit. In what seemed a long time and us dreading the arrival of the firemen

*Joseph Lavery today still exploring the Hill with grandchildren Eoin aged 8 and Dylan aged 4*



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to rescue him (Oh, the shame and embarrassment of it) he suddenly popped his head over the top and asked if someone would run back down to the bottom of the cliff to find one of his baseball shoes which had fallen off. We collapsed in fits of laughter but Charlie was our special hero forever and a day.

Easter Monday was a must visit for us as we crept through the forest and lay hidden in the trees while watching those who we believed were rich kids rolling their hard boiled and painted eggs down the slope to the rocks above the Zoo, we would then dash out and collect them before tearing back into the forest with the cries of little girls screaming after us!

We spent the whole Easter holidays in the Zoo but never once paid to get in, we had found an old spade and in a very secluded place we dug a hole under the iron railings and slipped in among the crowds. We also discovered later why Charlie was able to treat us all to ice creams when he admitted bribing other boys we knew to share their pocket money with him to let them under the fence.

I think it was about 1960 when one of our group's father told him about the warplane crashing into the cliff during the war. It took weeks and weeks of searching with torn jackets and trousers, cuts and bruises and unbelievable nettle stings before we came across part of the remains of the plane.

One day a group of students were gathered on the nose and the teacher was explaining to them all about the history of the area, especially McArts Fort, we tagged along and listened, fascinated about tales of Brian McArt



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and the stone used for crowning the O'Neill's long ago which now it appears lies smashed under the Nose. This story was followed by a long narrative about Henry Joy McCracken and his hideout before his capture near Carrickfergus after the 1798 battle near Antrim.

A short distance from the Nose there is another rise just above the caves and from this spot if you turn in a 360 degree circle you can observe the most wonderful landscape from the Sperrins range in Counties Tyrone / Derry, to Slemish mountain, the Braid valley, start of the Antrim Plateau, then to Carrickfergus, the mountains in the east coast of Scotland, the ancient O'Neill lands of Clandeboy, Strangford Lough, the Castlereagh Hills, the Mourne mountains, the Lagan Valley, the Dromara Hills, the Divis Range and Lough Neagh.

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*Joseph Lavery*

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## Picnicking on Cave Hill in the 1960's

As newlyweds, my husband and I came to live in North Belfast in the early 1950s. We always enjoyed the views from the front of our house up over Cave Hill and from the back, down over Belfast Lough and to the County Down hills.

We became members of the very busy Seaview Presbyterian Church and both taught in the Sunday School there for many, many years. For several years I taught a senior class of 10 to 12 girls. On Sundays there would be crowds of folk walking along the Shore Road to attend church and we made lots of friends on the way. Sometimes we would walk up and down three times on Sundays: firstly for morning service, then back again for Sunday School in the afternoon and then again for the evening service.

On fine Sunday evenings, I remember there would also be many people out for walks along the Antrim Road, Donegall Park Avenue and the Shore Road, as few folk had cars then and there was little else to do.

During the 1960s, each summer I would take my Sunday School class of girls up to the Cave Hill for a picnic. On the Saturday morning, I would make up batches of sandwiches. I remember salad sandwiches always went down well as well as those of cheese and of ham. I wrapped them up in greaseproof paper to keep them fresh for the trip. I also made little buns as they were easy to hand out. To drink, we had glass bottles of diluted orange juice and also bottles of lemonade.

The girls would walk up from the Shore Road and all meet up at my home. Then we would all walk up to and

along the Antrim Road, going up into the Country Park at what was then the old Post Office entrance. This is now the exit road from the Adventure playground. We went that way because it was less steep and we were loaded down with our food and drinks. Sometimes my husband came to help carry our picnic things up onto the Hill, but having done the heavy work he would return home! But each girl helped to carry something.

We would walk up the Hill chatting happily so the journey passed quickly. The girls stayed together so I had no worries about losing any! After walking along the path, through the trees, we emerged into the sun and sat on the flat grass in front of what we called Napoleons Nose, (McArts Fort). There, we would eat our picnic, sing choruses and chat together enjoying the wonderful view! The girls would point out landmarks and places they knew. Stories would be told of what they could see. One girl or another would start to sing and we would all join in happily.

The time was not long going in before we headed back, lighter loaded now as the girls seldom left any edibles to be brought back! Tired and replete we would wander back to my house and from there, the girls would depart, walking home!

Picnicking on the Hill was not official Sunday School policy, but with few folk having cars, this was a treat for us all. I doubt if you could do this today so easily, as then we had never heard of risk assessments and we certainly didn't have the girl's parents written permission to go on the trip! But their parents knew where they were and knew me as one of the Sunday School teachers so everyone was happy with the arrangements.

In later years when I would meet some of these girls, now women with families of their own, they would often reminisce about these trips with me and the good times we had picnicking on Cave Hill all those years ago!

*Sheila Macklin*

*Picnicking on Cave Hill:*

*Alison, Joyce, Christine, Terry, Elizabeth, Valerie & Lyn*



*The Cave Hill Campaigner 14*

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*Our April 2016 clean up carried on despite the weather...*

*...and look what was achieved on a horrendous day!*



## Ben Madigan

We climb on the mountain's back,  
Scrub and thicket, shoulders bare,  
Across its nape onto its head –  
Balding, fuzzy here and there.

Caves in its cliff seem sightless eyes  
And rivulets its tears  
Replenished from the rainy skies.  
People over thousands of years  
Have thought this mountain lives.  
It seems to breathe, it gives  
Us kindly of its ancient self.  
On its brow's looming shelf  
We tremble as if in a quake,  
And feel the mountain shake.

Seán Haldane grew up on the slopes of Cavehill and there are poems set there in *Desire in Belfast* (Blackstaff, 1992) but this one is so far unpublished. Haldane lived for many years in Canada and now lives in London. He has mainly earned his bread through clinical neuropsychology but has published widely in poetry, essays, and most recently in fiction.

## The Rotary Club of Belfast - Fortwilliam



We have been fundraising for almost 35 years to raise money for charities at home and abroad.  
We also engage in activities within the community to change lives for the better.

### **Locally we have organised and run in recent years:**

Youth Leadership competition for 16-18 year olds, from the schools in the area and ultimately 24 candidates are selected to represent Ireland (North and South) and visit the European Parliament, meet other young people from EU states and take part in a debate in the Parliament chamber.

Tea parties for local residential homes.

Car ballot to raise money for Children's Hospice.

Food collections for St Vincent de Paul and Salvation Army.

Days out for children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

### **Further afield we help:**

The Shelterbox charity which provides humanitarian relief after disasters.

Fundraise for victims of polio and HIV worldwide.

Our work is endless and we could do so much more with additional support. If you are interested in our activities or have time to spare, please get in contact. It's time and effort well spent.

*Will you Join Us?*

**Please contact us on 07715 716 349 or 07972 529 814 for more information.**



# Guided Walks in 2016 – Come And Join Us!

We will be running a series of guided walks on Cave Hill. Most of these walks will be from 10:00 to 13:00 on the third Saturday of each month. Participants should be equipped for inclement weather and wear suitable footwear. Children and young people under 16 must be accompanied by a suitable adult.

Most walks will have a theme where an expert will talk about a particular aspect of the Hill. All walks are free.

For more information, contact us: Website: [www.cavehillconservation.org](http://www.cavehillconservation.org)

Email: [cormachamill@cavehillconservation.org](mailto:cormachamill@cavehillconservation.org) Phone: (028) 9029 1357

Date	Times	Meet at	Theme	Legend
Saturday 18 June	1000-1300	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>Meet the Birds</b>	Get up close and personal to some of our native birds. Licensed bird ringer Aidan Crean will catch, ring and release them and allow us to see them in beautiful detail.
Monday 20 June	0400-0700	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>Summer Solstice</b>	Join Cormac Hamill for a very early walk to the top of Cave Hill to catch the sunrise on the longest day.
Saturday 16 July	1000-1300	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>Butterflies</b>	Find and examine some of our most ravishing wildlife in the company of Catherine Bertrand and learn some of the mysteries of their lives.
Friday 19 August	2100-2200	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>Bats</b>	Aidan Crean will introduce us to these enchanting nocturnal animals during an evening dander to find them.
Saturday 20 August	1000-1300	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>History</b>	John Gray knows a lot of the history of Cave Hill and he will share this on a walk to McArt's Fort near the top of the Hill.
Saturday 17 Sept.	1000-1300	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>Foraging</b>	Phil Simpson has a fund of practical knowledge and plant lore. We'll walk in his company to see what useful plants we can find.
Saturday 15 Oct.	1000-1300	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>Geology</b>	Kirsty Lemon is an enthusiast for her geology profession and she will delight in explaining the geological origins of Cave Hill on this walk over the hill.
Friday 28 Oct.	1930-2230	Front door of Belfast Castle	<b>The Sky at Night</b>	This will be moonless and if the weather is kind, we should be treated to a great view of the heavens.



## CALLING ALL MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS!

If you are a member wishing to renew your membership for 2016, or a new member wishing to join, it's never been simpler! Please attach a cheque to the form below and send it to:

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*All e-mail addresses will be kept secure and only used to communicate with our members*

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☐ If you are a current British taxpayer, please tick here (we will then be able to reclaim the income tax already paid from the Inland Revenue. Ticking this box will not cost you any more money, but will benefit the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign.)

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