



The Cave Hill Campaigner

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Cave Hill Conservation Campaign is awarded The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

It is now official that we have been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It was a difficult two months: we were told in April that we had been awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service but we were forbidden to tell anyone until the official release of the news on 2 June. Well done to all our directors for not breaching the injunction. But we can now celebrate the award.

And celebrate we should! The QAVS is regarded as the equivalent of an MBE, except it is solely for voluntary groups. It was initiated in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. It aims to recognise what the awarders call 'outstanding work'. To establish our suitability, we were subject to pretty close scrutiny over a number of meetings since October 2018 and the submission of a lot of documentation. We also had to submit two letters of support from people who knew our work. To this day, we do not know who nominated us but we will always be very grateful to her/him/them.

Make no mistake, this is a very prestigious award; after a preliminary vetting, around 800 groups across the UK were proposed for the award and after further close scrutiny 281 were successful. There will be an Award ceremony in Belfast Castle in September when the Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Belfast, Mrs Fionnuala Jay-O'Boyle CBE, will present us with symbols of our success - a piece of commemorative crystal along with a certificate with the Queen's signature.

The award is a recognition of the energy, enthusiasm and commitment of not only our 17 present directors but also the 30 or so past committee members who served over the thirty years since our beginnings in 1989. Volunteers do not seek reward and indeed, it is

not often that they get rewarded. But it is wonderful whenever their work does get recognised and rewarded - the work they do is to ensure that this present generation pass on Cave Hill to future generations in as good a condition as possible. They do this by helping to bring people to Cave Hill, telling them about the geology, archaeology, history and wildlife of this wonderful place and by planting wildflowers and trees, doing litter lifts, eliminating invasive species and carrying out wildlife surveys.

From now on, we are entitled to use the QAVS logo on our website, on all our stationery and publications. And we will do this with pride. After all, nearly sixty of us worked very hard over thirty years to achieve it!

Cormac Hamill



The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

The MBE for volunteer groups

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Plane Crash on the Hill

I was honoured to be asked by the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign back in 2017 to write an article on the Cavehill area during the Second World War. Due to its popularity I was once again asked to write on the subject of me finding a wedding ring that belonged to one of the ten American crew members who died in 1944 when their B17 Flying Fortress crashed into Cave Hill and its return to the widow in Louisville, Kentucky in 1996.

The past three years have been spent researching and writing with my good friend William Alan Lindsay who has already printed and published two books on aviation history during the Second World War in Northern Ireland. Our book entitled "42-97862" tells the true story of each of its crew members, their lives before and during their US Military training. It covers my in-depth personal journey in returning the ring and features over 400 illustrations in 300+ pages.

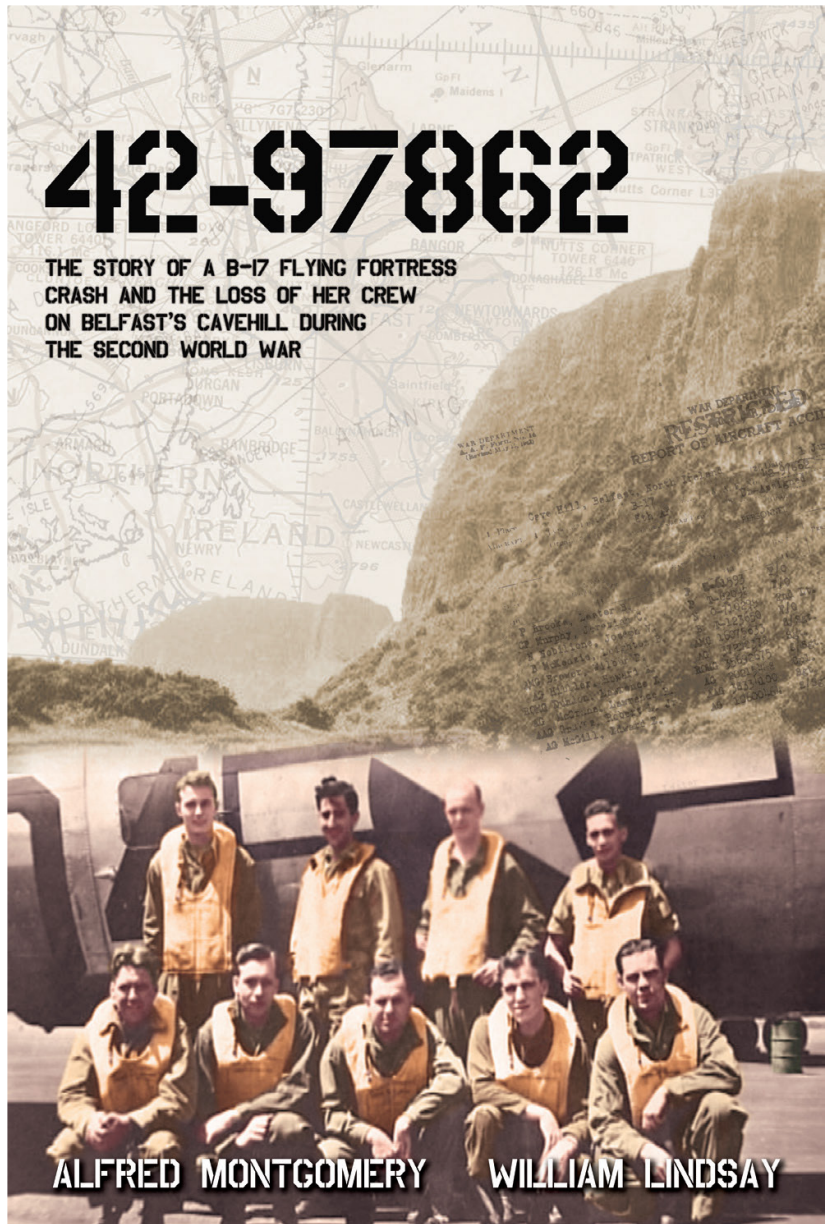
The book was published recently to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the crash on 1st June, when a memorial service was held at the memorial stone situated within the Belfast Zoo complex (for more details see separate article).

More details of the book can be obtained at:
www.cavehillbombercrash.co.uk

The ISBN is 9780957399334 and is available to buy from the website above. Just click the logo 'Lulu' on the website to place an order.

Will and I would also like to pass on our congratulations to all in the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign for winning the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service – well done!

by Alfred Montgomery



J.D. O'Boyle
M.V.B., M.R.C.V.S.

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Commemoration

On 1 June 2019 a memorial service took place to commemorate those who died on Cave Hill on the 75th anniversary of the plane crash that took their lives. This took the form of a service at the memorial plaque within the Zoo complex and nine relatives of the families of those who died made the trip from the United States to attend. A group also visited the crash site itself. A full account of the event will be included in the next edition of the Cave Hill Campaigner. In the interim here are some photos of the occasion.



The memorial service takes place



Memorial wreaths are laid.



Relatives of the deceased, and some locals, visit the crash site.



The memorial plaque within the grounds of the zoo.

The Chalk of the Cave Hill

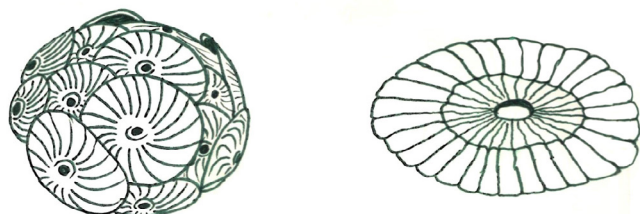
"And you, mountains and hills, O bless the Lord."
- Book of Daniel.



Sample of Cave Hill Chalk

The rock called Chalk

This fine-grained sedimentary rock is the most readily recognisable of all Irish rocks and there are several exposures of Chalk in the Cave Hill region. When fresh, it is pure white in colour and is composed of almost 100% calcium carbonate (CaCO_3). It can be scratched with a steel pen-knife and will 'bubble' when a drop of dilute hydrochloric acid is applied. Now often called the Ulster White Limestone, it occurs at many places in N. E. Ireland – particularly Co. Antrim. Note that blackboard 'chalk' and tailors' 'chalk' are not made nowadays from natural chalk, the former being composed of gypsum (hydrated calcium sulphate) and the latter from the very soft mineral called talc (hydrated magnesium silicate).



A very greatly enlarged drawing of a coccolithophorid showing its covering of 'plates' called coccoliths. (Sketch: Mr. P. S. Burns, Belfast.)

How did the Chalk form?

It formed on the bed of a warm shallow sea by the compression of the calcareous 'plates' (called coccoliths) of microscopic single-celled algae called coccolithophorids. In other words, the Chalk is a mass of microfossils! However, in order to see them, an elaborate device called an electron microscope, which

can give magnifications of many thousands, would be required. These algae first appeared in the seas around 220 million years ago and still live in seas today. They would obtain the calcium carbonate by absorbing it from the sea water. The purity of the Cave Hill (and Co. Antrim) Chalk would indicate that the sea, in which it formed, was relatively free from sandy, silty or muddy sediment.

The age of the Cave Hill Chalk

The Chalk of the Cave Hill, and that of N. E. Ireland, is around 80 million years old. (All the Chalk in N. Ireland is the same age.) It formed towards the end of the geological period called the Cretaceous. In fact, this geological period takes its name after the Latin word *creta* meaning 'chalk'. We can ascertain the age of the Co. Antrim Chalk because of the fossils – such as belemnites, bivalves, sea-urchins and ammonites – found in it. Almost invariably, the age of a rock is the same as the age of the fossils embedded in it. When the Ulster White Limestone was forming, Ireland would have been around the latitude of present-day southern Spain.



Examples of belemnite fossils. (Scaler length is 10cm.)

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www.cavehillconservation.org
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Why is the Chalk not found throughout Ireland?

With the exception of a small pocket of Chalk found at Ballydeanlea, near Killarney, Co. Kerry, the Chalk in Ireland only occurs in the north-east. It could be speculated that, around 80 million years ago, a warm shallow sea, in which the Chalk formed, covered most of Ireland. But, the main body of this rock only is present in N. Ireland today because the overlying basalt, which was extruded around 60 million years ago, prevented the total erosion of the Chalk.

Putting things in perspective

While the Cave Hill (and Co. Antrim) Chalk was forming on the bed of an ancient sea, dinosaurs, such as the carnivorous *Tyrannosaurus Rex* (the name meaning 'king of the tyrant lizards'), were expanding in number on land in North America and in Asia while the pterosaurs (flying reptiles) were kings of the skies. Worldwide, on land, the flowering plants were increasing in number and diversity to eventually become one of the most numerous living things on our planet. Conifers and ferns were quite common on terra firma around 80 million years ago. There was



A small Chalk exposure (below the dark basalt) on the right hand side of the road, from the Antrim Road, leading to Belfast Zoo.

no grass to be seen anywhere on the ground. Indeed, it was many more millions of years before grass did appear. The Himalayas did not exist and the Atlantic Ocean was only around half its present-day size. So, these points are worth reflecting on if you encounter the Chalk exposures on your sojourns around the Cave Hill.

Patrick Gaffikin.

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Come Alive at 7:45!

Cave Hill Country Park - A free leisure exercise centre on our doorsteps!

Cave Hill Conservation Campaign exists to protect the Cave Hill and this is so that visitors can enjoy every aspect of the country park. And how we do! The scenery, the flora, the fauna and the exercise opportunities.

We are increasingly aware of the positive benefits of keeping fit and being out in the open air. All the better that this is possible in a place where we interact with other people - also meeting the very important need for social contact. And no joining fees or entry expenses are demanded!

Every morning we have the dog walkers with their first steps of the day - a joyous event for dogs and owners. Dogs are such sociable animals that frequently the owners are known by their dogs' names. The health benefits of owning a dog are numerous and the park is a beautiful place for dogs and responsible owners.

Then there are the regular joggers with no need of machines to vary the slopes or the challenges. From the main gate to the top of the hill takes about 30 minutes moderate jogging - and is so beneficial. Opening hours are daylight dependent but jogging after dark is also done on the lighted paths and beyond.

Solo walkers and groups wander or walk briskly to the top, to the caves or part way - observing the changing seasons and the busy citizens below.

As a regular solo walker I love to see similar people walking with confidence up into the hill - no need to feel lonely, isolated or vulnerable when you are meeting others of all ages, shapes and sizes right through the hill. With three marked walking trails there is no need to worry about getting lost! Cave Hill trail, Green, is a challenging 4.5 miles; the Blue Estate trail is 2.4 miles taking about one hour while the Castle trail is 0.8 miles and a gentle walk. There are also orienteering and eco-trials with packs and maps available from Belfast Castle reception for a small charge.

With panoramic views to Scotland, Isle of Man, Stormont, Castlereagh Hills, Holywood, Belfast Lough, the Harbour and Airport and then to County Down, the Mourne and South Armagh hills - sure you wouldn't need to travel anywhere else!

By night the scene can be very different - last walk

for dogs before the evening lovers and sporting youth get going. But still a chance to see a bright night sky, stars and sunrises from east Belfast and take part in a guided moonless walk or greet the dawn chorus and the midsummer sunrise. For children 3-14 there is the brilliant Adventurous Playground.

On a recent trip we witnessed daily early morning open air group exercise for about 15 minutes. Yes the temperatures were a bit higher than Belfast but what a lovely way to start the day, to catch up with friends, getting fit and breathing cool morning air. Could this happen in Belfast at Cave Hill? What about 'come alive at 7.45'? Make your way to Car Park 2, meet greet, stretch, jump for 15 mins - then circuit round the castle or home for shower and off to school/work or a social breakfast - whatever suits. Maybe see you there!

Ann Marrion McCambridge



Use It or Lose It

At 388 metres above sea level, Cave Hill is not the highest point on the Belfast Hills - Divis is higher. But the Hill's mixture of deciduous and coniferous woodland landscape, Hazelwood, and Ballyaghagan Nature Reserves, as well as the parkland and formal gardens associated with the Castle, make Cave Hill, not only a defining feature of Belfast, but an extraordinary natural asset.

In 1820, Sydney Smith, the celebrated wit and Anglican clergyman, wrote to a friend advising her, as a means of combating low spirits, to be, "as much as you can in the open air without fatigue." Much nearer to our own time and place, the novelist Glenn Patterson, declared that after climbing over Cave Hill, you may not exactly return with a spring in your step, but he would be surprised if you didn't feel invigorated.

Both writers touched upon a central truth. Human beings are part of the natural world. Afflicted by the clamour of urban living, and increasingly pursued by the claims of electronic devices, in the open air all our senses expand. Even a few hours on Cave Hill, in the

realm of plants, insects and fungi, can help us to reduce stress, improve our mood and boost our general health. Simply being among the trees makes us more aware of the sounds and tones of nature, and contributes significantly to a sense of well being.

However, while such restorative care of ourselves is freely available, the resource that provides it is under threat. Creeping suburbanisation, vandalism and commercial encroachment are some of the more obvious challenges to a fragile environment. If this precious asset is to be safeguarded, there is an ever increasing need for co-operation between the general public who use the Hill, Belfast City Council which provides the resources to maintain it, and the Cavehill Conservation Campaign, whose members give of their free time to preserve, as their logo asserts, a natural and unspoilt environment.

The last word goes to Sydney Smith. "It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little. Do what you can". Why not join us?

Edward McCamley



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The Cave Hill Campaign 7

The Butterflies of Cave Hill

One of the joys of walking on Cave Hill is seeing bright little spots of colour dancing through the grass and shrubbery. Butterflies have a special appeal to people because of their colour and probably because we associate them with good weather, particularly with the impossibly long summers of our childhood. But there is also a general awareness and sadness that there are not as many butterflies now as people remember. People who are retired often talk of clouds of butterflies they remember from their childhood. Clouds of butterflies are now a vanishingly rare sight.

But impressions will not change policies; we need hard facts. And for those, we need surveys over many years. Throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland for the past number of years, there has been a concerted effort to gather butterfly facts. Different areas are being surveyed, Cave Hill is one of those areas and I am the surveyor.

I have a route, called a transect which starts at the Belfast Castle gardens, goes through the parkland, through the trees to the top of the Upper Cavehill Road, up the green road until it reaches the western end of the Wallace quarry and then returns through the bottom of the quarry, along the track to the back of the Castle and finishes at the south car park. Each week, from April to October, I walk this route and count the butterflies I see that fly through a notional five metre cube around me. I have been submitting counts for 5 years and it is the analysis of these, along with all the other transect walkers' reports which allow long-term trends to appear.

Butterflies are lovely insects and they occur in a huge variety of species and colours throughout the world. Northern Ireland is not particularly rich in species - we have 25. Ireland as a whole has 34, England has 57 and France has over 200. This is not surprising; the majority of butterflies are weak fliers and seas pose an insuperable obstacle to most of them. Of the 18 species on Cave Hill,

17 of them occur on my transect. The exception is the Grayling which occurs higher up the hill, not far from the caves. It is a slight oddity. Graylings occur predominantly on the coast and are increasingly rare inland in places like Cave Hill. There are 5 white species of butterfly on the hill; none of them is a cabbage white! There is no such butterfly. What we have is the Large White, the Small White, the Orange Tip, the Green-veined White and one which only exists in Ireland, the Cryptic Wood White. A little brown/black butterfly, the Ringlet, is bucking the trend; its numbers seem to be rising for reasons that are not yet entirely clear. The largest butterfly we have is the Dark-green Fritillary, a strong flier which can be easily seen at a distance. It has very little green – it appears a bright orange. The other strong fliers seen include the Red Admiral, the Peacock, the Painted Lady and the Small Tortoiseshell. My favourite butterfly of all is the Common Blue, a small butterfly easily overlooked. But it is a most wonderful blue colour when seen with its wings outspread. All the other butterflies we have – the Small Heath, the Holly Blue, the Meadow Brown, the Speckled Wood and the Small Copper are all lovely to see when caught basking or nectaring.

The statistics collected nationwide do show that butterfly numbers are in steep decline. That is now part of a broader trend. The overall insect population is falling, with ominous implications for farming and cultivation - insects are needed for plant propagation. While we can all do our bit by growing butterfly-friendly plants in our gardens, it will take major changes in farming practices to arrest the decline and that will take government action. Let's hope that's what happens.

In the meantime, go for walks on Cave Hill and when you see butterflies, wait until they settle and then look carefully and enjoy the shapes and colours of these wonderful additions to our varied landscape.

Cormac E Hamill



Small Tortoiseshell Butterfly



Cryptic Wood White Butterfly

Butterflies seen on Cave Hill



Common Blue Butterfly



The Peacock



Red Admiral



Speckled Wood Butterfly



Grayling Butterfly



Dark Green Fritillary

Chair's Report 2018/19

The mission statement on our new business cards says “preserving the Cave Hill as a natural and unspoiled environment”. In part fulfilment of that, we have carried out a number of tasks throughout the year. We planted over 200 hawthorn and rowan trees along with a few oaks behind Downview Park West just below the Castle. We sowed a wildflower meadow in the area behind the houses at the bottom of Downview Park West and it came up beautifully – until the Water Service in the winter put stones all over it to allow access to a culvert they were constructing! They have now removed the stones and will supply us with seed so we can restore the flowers. We helped volunteers from the Belfast Hills Partnership clear the path through the Wallace quarry and remove ragwort from Ballyaghagan at the back of Cave Hill. I walked my butterfly transect throughout April to October and reported our results to Butterfly Conservation.

We have found in the last two years that the best way of keeping Cave Hill clean is to enlist the help of corporations who wish to give their staff an activity day. We ran six such sessions over the year; we did the guiding and the employees lifted most of the litter. And when up to forty people cover the hill, it gets well cleaned!

Another effective way of preserving Cave Hill is to have the backing of the public. Our programme of 11 mainly Saturday walks brought over 250 people onto the hill last year. Apart from imparting interest and delight, these public walks increase the numbers of people who love and value the hill and this makes it easier to marshal opposition should any threats to the hill emerge.

I took schoolchildren from Park Lodge to spend a morning on Cave Hill on two days in June. I gave a lecture on Cave Hill to a conference at Queens’, to a church group in Ballynure and to the Belfast Naturalists’ Field Club in the Ulster Museum. We hosted a table at five outdoor events this year and talked to people and presented our literature. These talks and public events gain us some members but more importantly, they draw Cave Hill to the attention of the wider public.

We have also become more aware that we need to be prepared for difficulties when we bring the public to Cave Hill. And so we attended a variety of courses this year: a CVA (child and vulnerable adult) course, a Safetalk course in case we might come across distressed people on the hill and a very useful First Aid course.

We have asked for and been given an exhibition space in the basement of the Castle. We have prepared this and we are in the process of putting various objects found on Cave Hill into it.

One other thing we did during the year was to present our views on the issue of mountain bikes on Cave Hill to the North Belfast Working Group of Belfast City Council. The Council is currently considering how the use of Cave Hill by walkers and bikers can best be managed. As I reported last year, we had talked about this issue at our Board and had agreed that the Council needed to find a way of managing the problem without banning bikes and that is what we reported to the Committee. We are not specifically a walkers’ organisation; we have walkers and mountain bikers among our members and on our Board. We are of the view that if we all exercise care and consideration, all those who walk or bike on the Hill can coexist.



Return of the Dog Tag

Other minor and unfortunately regular problems occurred during the year: the problem of dog excrement is still as bad as ever. Signage threatening £500 fines have had no effect, probably because there is no evidence of enforcement. Boots on the ground constantly for a period and intermittently thereafter would certainly help alleviate the problem. The petty vandalism also goes on; our white stone was scrawled on a number of times throughout the year. And despite our best efforts, litter is always evident on the hill. There must be something in our local psyche that allows people to discard plastic and other more noxious rubbish on all parts of the hill. Until this attitude changes, we will have to keep organising litter lifts to prevent the hill becoming an eyesore.

I am once more grateful to my fellow directors of Cave Hill Conservation Campaign for their commitment and concern throughout the year. I want also to acknowledge the support of Belfast City Council and to the help we have had from the management and maintenance teams at the Castle; in particular we benefited from the encouragement and help of the Outreach Officers. And of course, I am very grateful to the members of the Campaign for their keen interest and support.

Conor E. Hamill

I have been walking about the Cave Hill for years and never knew that a plane had crashed on The Hill and 10 American airmen were killed. When I saw the documentary 'Return of the Ring' on Ulster Television in December 2007 I was fascinated with the whole story about Alfie finding the ring and the trouble he had returning it to its rightful owner. After the documentary I decided to try and find where exactly the plane had crashed.

I spent four weeks searching and asking people I met on the hill but I got nowhere. Then one day when I was walking my dog I noticed a lot of loose soil and evidence of where digging and scraping had taken place. I climbed up to investigate and noticed a bit of a ledge where someone had been digging - a small crack had formed on top of the ledge and looked like it was going to collapse. I put my stick down the crack and sure enough it collapsed, leaving me knee deep in soil. As I was clearing the loose soil away I noticed a small piece of metal with what I thought was lines on it. I picked it up and rubbed it a bit. It was very clear it was a dog tag but I didn't know which airman it came from until I got home that night and washed it.

The first name I saw on the tag was Lawrence ... then Ruth Dundon. I couldn't believe the dog tag was from the same airman that owned the ring Alfie had found. UTV were notified about the find and they got in touch with Alfie to make sure the tag was genuine. Alfie, who lives minutes away, came round and confirmed it was genuine. On Alfie's guidance the dog tag was returned to the niece of Larry Dundon, the only known relative left. Her name is Bonnie Hildreth and weeks later Bonnie phoned me to thank me for returning the dog tag and later sent me a lovely letter which I still have and treasure.

I very seldom go near the crash site anymore but if I do it's only to stand and think of the 10 American Airmen who lost their lives on that fateful day.

Jim McKeown

The dogtag of Lawrence E. Dundon

Return of the Dog Tag - Jim back at the crash site 2019



John Gray's "Cave Hill and the United Irishmen" (2018)

- a review

Marking the 220th anniversary of the United Irish rebellion, Gray's forty-two page booklet provides an overview of the history of Cave Hill. Despite its title, his focus is not exclusively on the United Irishmen and Cave Hill. Initially, he examines the years 1750 to 1791, then 1792 to 1803 and finally the controversial issue of commemoration up to 2018. He reviews in detail social, economic and political issues in the Belfast and south Antrim area and the rise of the United Irish movement in the early 1790s. The 1798 rebellion is given particular attention. Subsequent unionist and nationalist commemorative activity on Cave Hill and McArt's Fort from 1849 to 2018 is also explored.

Gray is particularly informative about the second half of the 18th century. His selection of primary source material from the Northern Whig, Northern Star and Newsletter is excellent. It explains much about the rise of the United Irish movement, highlights issues and events that are not at all well-known and illustrates clearly the social, economic and political tensions affecting Belfast and the south Antrim area. His use of detail is especially effective regarding The Hearts of Steel movement in the late 18th century, early 19th century disturbances on the Donegall estate, searches by military on Cave Hill in 1797 and Henry Joy McCracken's travails in the Belfast mountains following the battle of Antrim in 1798. Gray's investigation into different versions of the song "*The Belfast Mountains*" and his referencing of Seamus Heaney's poetry *The Betrothal of Cavehill* and Stuart Parker's play "*The Northern Star*" add range and interest.

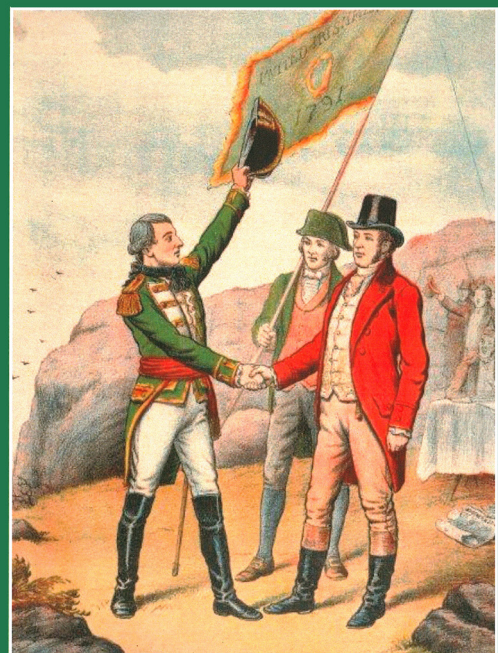
He is on less secure ground when he challenges nationalist perceptions about the history of Cave Hill. If, as he claims, United Irish leaders in Belfast could have had "*no notion of later nineteenth century theories that it (McArt's) was the crowning seat of the O'Neills*", why, as he himself has mentioned, was the term "*The Throne Lands*" used to describe the holdings of 18th century Presbyterian farmers near Cave Hill? And why would Stewart Banks, the seven-time Sovereign (Lord Mayor) of Belfast between 1755 and 1778, take the trouble (as reported in the Dublin Penny Journal of 22 December 1832) to remove a probable 16th century inauguration chair of the Clandeboyne O'Neill from their ruined stronghold at Castlereagh, transport it to Belfast and set it into the wall of the Butter Market? Both examples point clearly to an awareness in Belfast of inauguration on McArt's and at Castlereagh.

Gray also takes issue with late 19th century Belfast

nationalism and the manner in which its principal adherents sought to advance their political objectives during the centenary of the 1798 rebellion. He sees, rightly, that the commemorative events of 1897-1898 are central to a nationalist perception of Cave Hill but the sometimes disparaging way in which he writes about those with whom he disagrees is accompanied by errors of his own. He does not accept that an inauguration chair once stood on McArt's and denounces (not unreasonably) exaggerated claims linking it with the United Irish leaders. Phrases such as "*the notion of a throning seat*", "*the 'throne' on McArts Fort*" and "*the would-be Irish throne*" indicate that he sees an inauguration seat as a fantasy springing from the fevered imagination of idealists like Alice Milligan, the delusions of Sir Samuel Ferguson and the "*heart warming*" stories of Cathal O'Byrne. He ignores (or is unaware of) the archaeological, historical and contemporary evidence that points to just such a feature on McArt's. The chair, if that is what it was, was pushed over the cliff and destroyed in October 1897 and not about December 1898 as Gray claims.

The Belfast-based archaeologists O'Baoill and McSparron suggest that McArt's was possibly a late medieval inauguration site. Professor Elizabeth FitzPatrick (*Royal Inauguration in Gaelic Ireland*, 2004) also lists

Cave Hill and the United Irishmen



John Gray

McArt's as a possible inauguration site and notes that "the use of a throne, however crude, was integral to late medieval Irish life". She describes some of these structures as "crude chair-like monoliths". George Benn stated in 1877 that McArt's had been a "gathering place" for the Clandeboye O'Neill while O'Laverty described the feature on McArt's in 1878 as "a rude chair, formed by three huge rocks". Similar descriptions came from Sir Samuel Ferguson in 1833, Alice Milligan in 1896 and Cathal O'Byrne who reported that a seat stone taken "from some other place" had been inserted into the bedrock while "other portions of the seat were part of the rock". These descriptions are broadly in line with what the English cartographer Richard Bartlett saw in 1602-1603 when he sketched the O'Neill inauguration chair at Tullyhogue, County Tyrone. He noted that it consisted of "4 stones in the manner of a chair". The seat was formed from the natural bedrock and the sides and back were of inserted cut stone. Andrew Nicholl's 1828 painting, currently in the Ulster Museum, shows a massive stone outcrop (now almost entirely gone) on the highest point of McArt's precisely where contemporaries said the chair stood. Gray makes no reference to any of this.

Gray is wrong to claim that Arthur Griffith and members of the Belfast branches of Cumann na nGaedheal

ascended Cave Hill in June 1798. They certainly did not go there in 1798 or even in 1898, as Gray may have intended. Cumann na nGaedheal was not founded until September 1900 and Arthur Griffith's "pilgrimage" (as he called it) to Cave Hill took place on 20 June 1903, the 140th anniversary of Tone's birth. Griffith's report of his visit was published in the United Irishman on 27 June 1903. Gray ignores (or does not know) that Griffith stated that the iconic oath of 1795 was not taken on McArt's but elsewhere on the hill. That claim surely merits attention in any serious study of the Cave Hill and the United Irishmen but is not even mentioned by Gray.

Gray is also wrong to claim that Alice Milligan could not obtain a site in Belfast for a statue of Wolfe Tone. He confuses loyalist opposition to a nationalist march in Belfast on 6 June 1898 with her proposal to the Memorial Committee in Dublin that a statue should be erected "in a prominent position in the metropolis." Tone's statue was never intended for Belfast.

Referring to the huge nationalist demonstration in Dublin on 15 August 1898 (featuring a large block of basalt cut from Cave Hill to form the plinth of a future statue of Tone) Gray is again wrong to claim that "Humiliatingly the site was appropriated for the Dublin Fusilier Boer War memorial". The membership card of the Wolfe Tone and Ninety Eight Memorial Association, photographs of the site, letters from Spencer Harty (the then Dublin City surveyor) and even a reference by James Joyce in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, all show that the site was in an open space at the top of Grafton Street and not where the Dublin Fusiliers Arch stands at the entrance to St Stephen's Green.

The "Mr Dobbin" who proposed the republican resolutions on McArt's on New Year's Eve 1897 merited additional comment. Henry Dobbin was one of the leading IRB men in Belfast and with Alice Milligan and Anna Johnston represented Belfast on the 1798 centenary committee in Dublin.

There is much to commend in John Gray's booklet, particularly the interesting insights it offers into agrarian unrest, Belfast society, the 1798 rebellion and the United Irish during the closing decades of the 18th century. Key elements of his section on commemoration are, in comparison, compromised by questionable hypotheses, factual errors and omissions and by his failure to even consider evidence that does not support his assumptions. A much more thorough pre-publication edit should also have been undertaken to remedy the grammatical errors evident throughout the booklet.

Daniel McCall

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Was the United Irish oath of 1795 really taken on McArt's Fort?

(Arthur Griffith's visit to the Cave Hill in 1903)

Many climb Cave Hill for the spectacular view from McArt's Fort and some have recorded their visit in a written form but few have provided as interesting an account as that of Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin. On Saturday 20 June 1903, Griffith, Bulmer Hobson and members of the Belfast branches of Cumann na nGaedheal climbed Cave Hill in memory of the 140th anniversary of Wolfe Tone's birth in June 1763 and Tone's visit to the hill in 1795. Griffith described his own visit as a "pilgrimage".

Cumann na nGaedheal, founded by Griffith in 1900, brought disparate nationalist groups into a unified body that evolved into Sinn Féin in 1905. His account of his visit to Cave Hill was published in *The United Irishman* on 27 June 1903. Four years after his sudden death in 1922, an edited version appeared in *The Voice of Ireland*. Griffith's report is vividly descriptive and recalled a day in May or June 1795 when Wolfe Tone, Henry Joy McCracken, Thomas Russell, Robert Simms and Samuel Neilson (all members of the United Irish movement) met on McArt's Fort, in what was later called The Cave Hill Compact, to agree "never to desist in our efforts until we had subverted the authority of England over our country, and asserted her independence." All those there that day were Protestant: Tone and Russell were Anglicans from Dublin and Cork; the others were Presbyterian, McCracken and Simms from Belfast, Neilson from Ballyronney. Russell and McCracken would die on the scaffold having failed to realise their political objective while Tone would take his own life in prison. The oath taken that day in 1795 has been invested with much historical significance but Griffith's account of his visit in 1903 stated, quite unexpectedly, that the oath had not been taken on McArt's but elsewhere on the hill.

Griffith's wrote: "*The sea-mist crept up the Lough and, mingling with the grimy smoke of the factories, brought premature night upon Belfast ... Away to the open sea the Copeland and Lizard lights flashed intermittent warnings ... From the summit of the Cave Hill the sunset sky still flamed dimly behind Ben Rory, but the gleam was fading. Such was the scene when the Belfast branches of Cumann na nGaedheal gathered at MacArt's Fort to commemorate the anniversary of Wolfe Tone's birth. The "Constitutional Nationalists" of the city were conspicuous by their absence.*"

The name Ben Rory was obsolete in 1903 but Griffith's reference to the setting sun places it to the west of Cave Hill. In July 1556, the Lord Deputy, the Earl of Sussex, led a military expedition through Belfast to Crumlin before returning by way of what his secretary called "a great hill called Banne Rory" from which they could see Scotland. A map of 1570, referred to in O'Laverty's *Diocese of Down and Connor* (1878), places "Banne Rory" approximately where Divis is today.

Griffith continued: "*We had arranged to light a beacon fire ... but to raise huge tar-barrels and stacks of wood to the summit of Cave Hill is not an easy task. Still the delay was more than we had bargained for and as new recruits reached MacArt's they were sent down to hurry the fuel-bearers. Suddenly the Cave Hill came into view of the toilers, towering beyond a bay of blackness, and on the summit a great fire was soon blazing. Many figures were silhouetted against the glare, and the tune of "A Nation Once Again" came clearly across the intervening space.*"

Presently, members of the Cumann na nGaedheal retired from MacArt's Fort to the precise spot where, on the summer day in 1795, the first vow of the United Irishmen was taken. Brands from our big fire on the Fort were brought to illuminate the scene, which was one to stamp itself on the memory of all who saw it. Another feature of this gathering was the representation of various creeds and classes – Protestant and Catholic, artist and artisan, businessmen and labourers. Finally, all present repeated the pledge which Wolfe Tone and his friends had taken in the same place generations before."

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Griffith's 1903 article contained information edited out of the 1926 publication. In 1903 it was noted that *"Most of those present were open to the taunt of youthfulness which the O'Connellites flung at the men of '48, but older men were also present, including the veteran, Mr Robert Johnston."* Johnston, who knew Griffith well having accompanied him to Paris during the summer of 1900 to meet with Maud Gonne and French sympathisers, was a timber merchant who then lived at Lisnaveane, a large terraced house adjacent to the junction of the Old Cavehill and Antrim Roads. He was a leading member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), served as Ulster's representative on its Supreme Council and was known to the authorities for his support of *"a strong physical force movement."* In 1903, Griffith reported *"By unanimous consent Mr Johnston presided and the earnest speech which he delivered was worthy of the occasion."* Bulmer Hobson and a Mr Jamieson, both representing The Protestant National Society, also spoke that night.

Griffith's comment that the group left McArt's to go to *"the precise spot where ... the first vow of the United Irishmen was taken."* comes as a very considerable surprise. It has been axiomatic that the oath was sworn on McArt's but those on the hill that night in June 1903 knew, or thought they knew, that it had been taken elsewhere. Unfortunately, Griffith did not identify the *"precise spot"* on Cave Hill where he and his companions renewed the oath.

There was nothing in the 1798 centenary celebrations in Belfast and in Dublin to suggest that the oath had not been taken on McArt's. One of the best-placed commentators in 1898 was Alice Milligan, co-editor with Robert Johnston's daughter Anna of the nationalist monthly *The Shan Van Vocht*. Alice was deeply involved in all things relating to Tone, the United movement and the 1798 rebellion. Her interest in Cave Hill and McArt's was intense and personal. She saw the hill as a memorial to Tone and the United Irish, accompanied friends and visitors to McArt's and was involved in the planning for the large nationalist cente-

nary parade in Dublin in August 1898. She had strongly encouraged participating '98 Clubs to commission banners showing McArt's *"as a reminder of the vow of Tone."* In 1898, she had written in *The Shan Van Vocht* that McArt's was precisely where Tone and the others had taken that iconic oath in 1795.

Yet just five years later, advanced Belfast nationalists believed that the 1795 oath had been taken elsewhere on Cave Hill, probably on the summit beside the ruined cairn. What had persuaded Robert Johnston, the principal speaker that night, to leave McArt's and go elsewhere on the hill to retake the oath? Johnston was born in 1844 and it is possible that he or his associates had spoken to people (or their descendants) who had been involved in the republican movement in Belfast in the 1790s and who knew where the oath had been taken. Given the switch of locational emphasis between 1898 and 1903, some particularly persuasive evidence must have emerged during or after the 1898 celebrations to suggest that McArt's Fort was not where the oath had been taken. Given his standing in the republican movement, Robert Johnston was hardly the kind of man to abandon McArt's unless he had been persuaded so to do by the strength of the evidence put to him.

Reporting on the fire lit on McArt's by nationalists on New Year's Eve 1897, Alice Milligan had written that the group *"assembled on the summit of Cave Hill and lighted on the topmost peak of M'Art's Fort the beacon fire that throughout Ireland was to welcome in the Centenary of '98 ... the very spot whereon Wolfe Tone stood when he made his vow to win our country back her independence."*

And therein lies the problem: Alice Milligan wrote that people assembled on the *"the summit of Cave Hill"* and that a commemorative fire was lit on the *"topmost peak of M'Art's Fort"*. These locations are not the same. McArt's Fort is not the summit of Cave Hill. So, where exactly was the *"very spot whereon Wolfe Tone stood when he made his vow"*? Tone wrote in his journal that the oath had been sworn on *"the summit*

of *M'Art's Fort*". Did he mean the highest point of McArt's - Alice Milligan's "*topmost peak*" - or did he mean the actual summit of Cave Hill? The summit, with its collapsed Bronze Age cairn and mound, lies a short distance to the north-west and provides a 360 degree panorama over Antrim and Down and across Lough Neagh to the Sperrins. That night in 1903, did Arthur Griffith, Robert Johnston and their associates go to the summit of Cave Hill to renew the 1795 oath before returning to McArt's? And, if they did, why did they do so? The answer to that is now unresolvable but clearly they had been persuaded that McArt's Fort was not the correct location.

But there is a further twist to this story. Griffith's visit to Cave Hill did not feature in the Irish News, a paper usually ready to report events linked to its perception of the national interest. Extensive coverage was given instead to a street demonstration in west Belfast on 19 June to celebrate Joe Devlin's return from the USA. However, on 30 June, the newspaper reported on "*Decoration Day*", an event organised annually (since 1894) by The Henry Joy McCracken Literary Society when its members placed wreaths on the graves of those connected to the 1798 rebellion. On Sunday 28 June 1903, eight sites were visited in and around Belfast but the final location is of particular interest. The Irish News reported "*On the summit of Cave Hill a circle of heather was placed to commemorate the ascent of Wolfe Tone during June, 1795. This concluded a day's tribute to the dead who fell for Ireland.*" Intriguingly, that heather wreath is reported as having been placed on the summit and not on McArt's Fort.

So, did Wolfe Tone and his companions take their iconic oath on McArt's or on the summit? Tone's note that it was taken on "*the summit of M'Art's Fort*" is topographically ambiguous but McArt's seems to have been the accepted location for the taking of the oath until 1903 when Griffith's report of his visit to Cave Hill with Cumann na nGaedheal suggested otherwise. The report in the Irish News stating that the commemorative wreath had been placed on the summit rather than on McArt's confuses further the question of where the 1795 oath was actually taken.

Griffith's concluded his account: "*Towards half-past one the sunken beacon-fire was scattered, and all of us descended by the winding paths amongst the rocks down to the Antrim Road. A column of fours was here formed with military precision, and at the order we stepped smartly out towards the City of Belfast. On the Cave Hill the embers smouldered in the cold light*

of early dawn and below the silent landscape emerged from the dripping mist. But in the city streets there resounded the tramp of marching men, whose feet beat a rhythm to strains of stirring music."

This final paragraph in 1926 modified slightly the United Irishman report of 1903 in which Griffith described Belfast as "*the ultra-loyal city of Belfast*". His concluding sentence in 1903, compared to the edited version in 1926, conveyed a darker sense of things to come: "*But in the city streets there lingered an echo of marching men, and in dreams their feet beat a rhythm to faint strains of battle music.*"

Daniel McCall

Extracts taken from:

- The United Irishman, of 27 June 1903
- The Voice of Ireland (Glor na hEireann) – A Memorial of Freedom's Day By the Foremost Leaders, William Fitzgerald (editor) 1926.



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Thirty Years of Making a Difference

In the 30th year of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign we have been lucky enough to be awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. This is a fitting time to look back at what we have achieved over the last three decades.

Back before the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign was formed in 1989, there had been a number of protests against planned developments in the area. In 1979 there had been public indignation when a plastic ski-slope was proposed in the Castle grounds. In the following years there were protests about quarries and the encroachment of house-building. The official re-opening of the Belfast Castle in 1988, after many years of renovations, also caused an atmosphere of uncertainty as locals expressed concerns as to the proposed future use of the building.

Against this backdrop it was almost a certainty that locals would express outrage in 1989 when a prospecting license was granted to the Glenshesk Mining Company by the Department of Economic Development. A 'Save the Cave Hill' group was quickly set up to oppose this and was supported by North Belfast councillor Tom Campbell (Alliance Party) who was one of its strongest advocates. The first public meeting of the new group was held in Belfast Castle on 23 November 1989 and John Gray became chairperson and led efforts to stop mining.

Jubilation ensued when Glenshesk announced that it had been unable to find commercial quantities of the mineral zeolite for which it had been drilling and was

consequently abandoning any future interest in mining on the hill. The 'Save The Cave Hill' group decided to rename themselves the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign now that the hill was 'saved' but were determined to keep a watch for future threats to the hill and its surroundings.

It wasn't long until these started to appear. In 1996 there was plans to build a 135 bed hotel on Cave Hill in a 2.96 acre site which the City Council had proposed to sell to a developer for only £500,000. This was successfully opposed as was a crazy idea to construct a cableway from the Shore Road to the summit of Cave Hill.

But the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign's successes were not just restricted to opposing things. We pressed for better co-ordinated management of the Belfast Hills and were pleased to see the Belfast Hills Partnership established. For a number of years the Cavehill Conservation Campaign and the Belfast Hills Partnership participated in a walk across the Belfast Hills and established a user survey which provided data on who was using the Cave Hill and for what reason. We also started an annual litter pick which has now been operating for over 20 years. As well as organising walks, the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign has been involved in tree planting and in various positive schemes on the hill such as the Maze project, the creation of a herb garden behind the Belfast Castle and the creation of wild flower meadows.

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organisations, with local schools and community groups. We lead team building days for interested organisations and promote the Cave Hill and its natural beauty through a series of talks to other organisations. And it's not all about the present either. We try, through this magazine and other sources, to capture the stories of the hill and its people, to preserve these for future generations.

Working with the Belfast City Council has been largely a positive experience for us. When we took the decision to become a friends organisation in 2009 it gave us access to a better working relationship with representatives of the council who could advise and help us in ways to achieve our goals. It gave us access to funding and also gave us a positive way to make our views known to the council.

The positivity of the last decade was marred a few years ago when the Belfast City Council agreed to let Red Bull run a high speed race down the slopes of Cave Hill irrespective of the potential environmental damage. It was the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign which persisted to make its voice known to all interested parties to ensure that the damage was not as significant or catastrophic as it could otherwise have been. And now bikes are back on the agenda due to an ongoing dispute between walkers and bikers. As Cormac Hamill pointed out in last year's issue of this magazine "*the activities of a small number of individuals, both walkers and bikers, have escalated to the point that the situation cannot continue as it was*". Let's hope that this issue is resolved as quickly as possible and that harmony can be restored on our hill. Through all the events described above the Cave Hill has always stirred up strong feelings. And maybe that is the way it should be.

Martin McDowell



The dedication of our volunteers is summed up well in the following words by one of our early committee members Louise Twomey.

"Although I grew up in the shadow of the Cave Hill, I never walked on it until I was in my early 30's and acquired two springer spaniels, Monty and Holly. Every day, rain hail or shine, the three of us walked the hill and we all loved it! I usually parked opposite Guys shop, just in front of the gate lodge, and that is how I struck up a great friendship with Pat Kirkwood who lived there all her life. Her father was chauffeur to The Bairds who lived in Park Lodge and who launched The Belfast Evening Telegraph in 1870. Pat and I shared a great passion and love of Cave Hill and wanted to give something back to it. In the early 90's we joined the Cavehill Conservation Campaign and Pat took on the position of secretary, a post I took over when ill health forced her to retire from the Committee although she retained her great interest and love of the hill.

During our time on the committee we weathered some threats to the Cave Hill, among them the suggestion of a ski lift being installed! The protection of the Cave Hill was always top priority of all members of the group and indeed that remains the focus to-day. Although I stepped down from the committee in 2004 I still take a keen interest in all that happens on our 'jewel in the crown' and remain a member. We are so fortunate to have such an area of natural beauty on our doorstep and it is beholden to each and every one of us to look after our beautiful Cave Hill."



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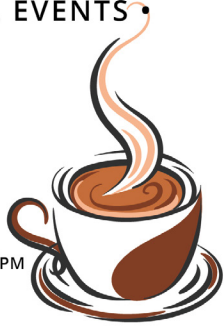
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Committee Members

Over the last three decades lots of local people have served on the committee of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign and we take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work and dedication of the following individuals. This is as comprehensive a list as we could compile – apologies in advance if any names are missing!

Cormac Hamill	Albert Dolan
John Gray	Albert McCracken
Catherine McWilliams	Phil McGrory
Pat Kirkwood	Philip Allen
Katherine Hall	Martin McDowell
Louise Wilson (now Twomey)	Geraldine Birch
Diane Hunter	John Cross
Eddie McCamley	Joe Nagle
Peter McCloskey	Ann Marrion
Ruairi McClenaghan	Bernie Finan-Morgan
Maura Murphy	Marc Schiltz
Michael O'Reilly	Brian Callaghan
John Gribbin	Olaf Hvattum
Sheila Johnston	Maeve Holly
Brian Flood	Geraldine Leonard
Donal McDaniel	Deirdre Lavery
Daniel Gaughan	Breige O'Hare
Andrew Kerr	Andrew Thompson
Thomas McKinstry	Brendan Fulton
Eamonn O'Gorman	Anne MacTernaghan
Gerard Brannigan	Darren Houston
Jim McAllister	Caroline Keyes
Andrew Graham	Bernard McClure
Anna McAleavy	

Albert Dolan, a founding member, shares his views on the formation of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign and why its continued existence is important:

“At the initial meeting held in Belfast the concern was mining of the resources which appeared to exist close to the surface on Cave Hill. The clamour was overwhelming as there was an assumption that there was money behind the proposed development. This enthusiasm was catching and I was caught up in the rush. We decided to establish an organisation to co-ordinate action and give an impetus to the idea of opposition and to ensure that the group’s existence would be self perpetuating. We managed to motivate volunteers into taking on posts within the group and I am still there as treasurer from day one.

As someone who lives close to the Cave Hill Country Park I am still interested in the activities of the Cave Hill Conservation Campaign and am pleased to see them associated with clean-ups, tree planting and other environmental work. The incorporation of the group as a legal body in its own right, with its own constitution, has been very important for us as has the publication of the Cave Hill Campaigner to disseminate news about our activities as it generates enthusiasm.”

“It was an honour to serve on the committee with passionate and enthusiastic directors for ten years. Throughout this time there was a huge surge in the breadth of the work being done by the committee from encouraging conservation to collecting and displaying important historical artefacts found on the hill.”

Maeve Holly

Guided Walks in 2019:

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
Facebook: Cave Hill Conservation Campaign
Email: campaignerccc@hotmail.com Phone: (028) 9029 1357

Date	Times	Theme	Legend
Saturday 20th July	10:00 - 13:00	The Flora of Cave Hill	Karl Hamilton will guide us on a plant identification walk in the Nature Reserve in Ballyaghagan at the back of the hill. Meet at the entrance to the Park at the top of the Hightown Road. Grade: E.
Saturday 24th August	10:00 - 13:00	Forage on Cave Hill	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. Meet at the Castle. Grade: E.
Friday 6th September	20:30 - 22:30	Bats of Cave Hill	Aidan Crean will introduce us to these enchanting nocturnal animals during an evening dander. Meet at the Castle. Grade: E.
Saturday 21st September	10:00 - 13:00	The Archaeology of Cave Hill	Local archaeologist Cormac McSparron will lead a trip to the various remains on the hill from the Neolithic period to the early Christian period. Meet at the entrance to the Park at the top of the Hightown Road. Grade: E.
Saturday 28th September	19:30 - 22:00	Cave Hill by night	We have picked a moonless night to try to get the best view we can of the heavens (clouds permitting!). Meet at the Castle. Grade: M.
Saturday 19th October	10:00 - 13:00	Fungal Foray	Karl Hamilton will try to allay some of the fears we all share about this fascinating and very necessary group of organisms. Grade: E.

Easy Walks are grade E. Challenging walks are grade M.



CALLING ALL MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS!

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