

Guided Walking Trails (6.5 Km)



Woodland Trail (4km)

- Lore and History of Rath
- The Story of the Woods
- Bog Myrtle and Heathland
- Young Woodland
- Stone Circle
- River and Spawning Fords
- Famine
- Pond and Water Life
- On the Edge of the Woods
- Wildlife Corridors
- Flowers and Water Meadows

Ruachan Trail (1Km)

- Fairy Thorn
- The Salmon's Kingdom
- The Reddening
- Hedge and Cutover Bog
- Between Two Habitats

Loch Bran Trail (1.5km)

- Life giving Hedgerows
- Loch Bran
- Whins
- View from the Rath



Ruachan Trail (1 Km)



1. Fairy Thorn

You are just leaving the western car park at O'Loughlin's Farm. These lands have been used for low-intensity agriculture for many years. Cattle and some sheep were grazed outside all year round and artificial fertilizer was rarely used on the farm. At one time most local farms were managed using this 'low input' approach. The O'Loughlin farm is now a rare example of species-rich habitats containing many plants and animals that are now scarce in the wider landscape.

Just beside the car park, there is an old lone hawthorn tree. The Gaelic name for this tree is 'Seach Gheal' meaning white bush which comes from its profuse blossom during May.

Single Hawthorn trees feature widely within this upland landscape. Native Gaelic myth and legend has many references to the tree and its connection to the otherworld. Historically farmers have avoided damaging these trees in the belief that disaster would befall those who dared to dig up or cut down a 'fairy thorn'.

2. The Salmon's Kingdom

You are now on the banks of the Grillagh river. 'Griollach' means a wet and mucky area and is the name of a local townland through which the river flows. The Grillagh

river is used by Atlantic Salmon, which enter freshwater some 35 miles north through the mouth of the River Bann at Coleraine and make their way upstream in order to spawn.

The Salmon is a very important and revered animal in Gaelic culture known by the name 'Bradán'. The story of 'An Bradán Feasa', or The Salmon of Knowledge, tells of how Gaelic warrior Fionn mac Cumhail received the gift of knowledge from this ancient fish. Fionn himself has a close association with many local stories and place names both within the reserve and on the local Carn Tóchair mountain.



3. An Reddening

You are now beside a stone bridge in an area called 'Ruachan'. 'Rua' means red in Gaelic and its use here is likely to be in reference to the rust coloured land which is stained by naturally occurring ochre. This can be seen clearly leeching into the local ditches and streams, from which it was easily extracted for use. Ochre was one of the simplest and earliest used dyes and in view of the place name it is likely that people would have taken it from this area. Imagine a warrior, his hair and face dyed in ochre entering battle. Perhaps Fionn mac Cumhail himself stopped here to adorn himself with war paint before one of his epic struggles.

The bridge is regularly used by Dippers for nesting. Dippers are a medium-sized Blackbird with a white bib. The Dipper is more closely related to Blackbirds than other waterfowl, not what you might expect to see submerging itself in a stream. It thrives in fast flowing rivers where it dives to the bottom in order to feed on a range of aquatic invertebrates, which it catches by turning over stones and searching the river bed.



4. Hedgerow and Cutover Bog

Along the side of the path is an impressive mature hedge which is dominated by Holly. The ancient Brehon Laws which protected trees called Holly one of the most important trees of the forest. Unlike many plants, Holly produces male and female flowers, Holly trees are either male or female, with the crimson red berries only growing on the female trees.

Directly south of the path is an area of cutover bog. Peat or turf was a hugely important fuel in most parts of rural Ireland as for many centuries little wood was available due to the destruction of the woodlands during the 17th century following the Elizabethan conquest.

This piece of cutover bog has been long left to recover. Bogland plants have re-colonised the area. Bog Cotton, with its white fluffy cotton seed heads and grassy leaves are seen from late May each year. Later in the season the Bog Asphodel with its yellow star shaped flowers with six pointed petals are seen growing in the wetter areas of the bog.

If you are very careful you will see the murderous 'Drúchtin Móna' or Common Sundew, a beautiful little plant that catches tiny flies in its sticking glandular tentacles. The trapped flies are now doomed as the plant slowly digests them to augment its nutrient intake from meagre, wet peaty soils.

5. Between Two Habitats

As we cross this pathway we are almost on a transition between two habitats. To the west we have the cutover bog dominated by plants that thrive in acidic nutrient poor conditions. To the east and up the hill we are looking at an acid marsh which is dominated by rushes, sedges and grasses. Two flowers that grow in profusion on this flush are Lady's Smock and Devil's Bit Scabious. Lady's Smock has delicate lilac coloured flowers which adorn the area from May and it is the most important food plant for the caterpillars of the Orange Tip Butterfly, while its flowers are important for many butterfly and insect species.



The Devil's Bit Scabious is hugely important in late summer and early autumn period as its blue/purple globulous flowers are very rich in nectar. The plant is also important food plant for the delicate Marsh Fritillary Caterpillar and the exclusive food plant of many other beetle and sawfly species. In the past Scabious was an important medicinal herb traditionally used as a cure for skin conditions such as scabies and scrofula. The globulus blue/purple flowers of Scabious also offer a late summer nectar and pollen feast for many of our insects.



Drumnaph Nature Reserve



Introduction

Míle fáilte go Tearmann Dúlra Dhroim nDamh Welcome to Drumnaph Nature Reserve

The reserve is an exciting collaboration between the Woodland Trust and Carntogher Community Association. The Woodland Trust owns approximately 80 acres of Drumnaph Wood, which is located to the eastern side of the reserve. This section contains both ancient woodland and newly planted woodland as well as some wetland habitats. Carntogher owns 130 acres in the western section of the reserve and within which is located the former O'Loughlin farm and a patchwork of ecological habitats including ancient woodland, wildflower meadows, ancient grazing habitats and wetlands. The use of the site is closely monitored and managed by both organisations for the enjoyment of the local community and visitors alike.

The reserve represents a range of habitats that were once common

throughout Ireland, but which are becoming increasingly rare and isolated within an intensively farmed environment. Drumnaph represents an important sanctuary for our biodiversity and the sheer range of inter-linked habitats within the reserve mean that this is a very important site that is effectively a microcosm of our ancient landscape.

The reserve also contains three ancient settlement structures, called raths. It is also likely that other ancient places of our ancestors exist within the woodlands, waiting to be rediscovered. Drumnaph, the ridged hill that runs from north to south through the middle of the reserve, gets its name from Gaelic - the primary language of the local community for thousands of years and into the first part of the 20th century. This name is based on two elements: Droim, meaning a ridge, and Damh, meaning a stag, thus giving the meaning the 'Ridge of the Stag'.

Examples of what you will see on the reserve



Acorns of the Sessile Oak

Ancient Woodland Habitat

Local knowledge, backed up by research into ancient maps, suggests that woods or 'coillte' have been on Drumnaph for well over 400 years and probably thousands of years. These woods were once part of the vast oak forest of Gleann Con Chadhain and An Choill lochtarach that covered much of the area west of the Bann to the Sperrin Mountains and north as far as Coleraine. Much of the forest of the area was felled following the Elizabethan conquest of Gaelic Ulster towards the end of the 16th century to fuel the subsequent plantation of English and Scottish settlers.



Small Copper Butterfly



Sundew

By the end of the 17th century most of this vast forest had been felled and only inaccessible pockets such as Droim nDamh remained. Today Ireland is still the least wooded country in Europe, so important ancient woodland sites like this one are hugely important, both ecologically and culturally.



Orange Tip Butterfly on Lady's Smock

New Woodlands

The sections of young trees were planted in 1998. These new woods will form the mature forests of the future. Where possible, the Woodland Trust supports natural processes, allowing woodland to develop gradually. However this can include coppicing – a traditional form of management where trees are cut down and harvested, and then allowed to re-grow before the process is repeated. Overtime this can help encourage the native ground flora and its associated species such as the Silverwash Fritillary and Speckled Wood butterfly.

Important sanctuary for our biodiversity and effectively a microcosm of our ancient landscape.

Acknowledgements

The purchase and management of Drumnaph Nature Reserve have been made possible thanks to funding from the Heritage Fund and Northern Ireland Environment Agency.



Drumnaph Nature Reserve has been developed in partnership with The Woodland Trust and Carntogher Community Association.

The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. Find out more at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

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Carntogher Community Association
Find out more at www.ancarn.org

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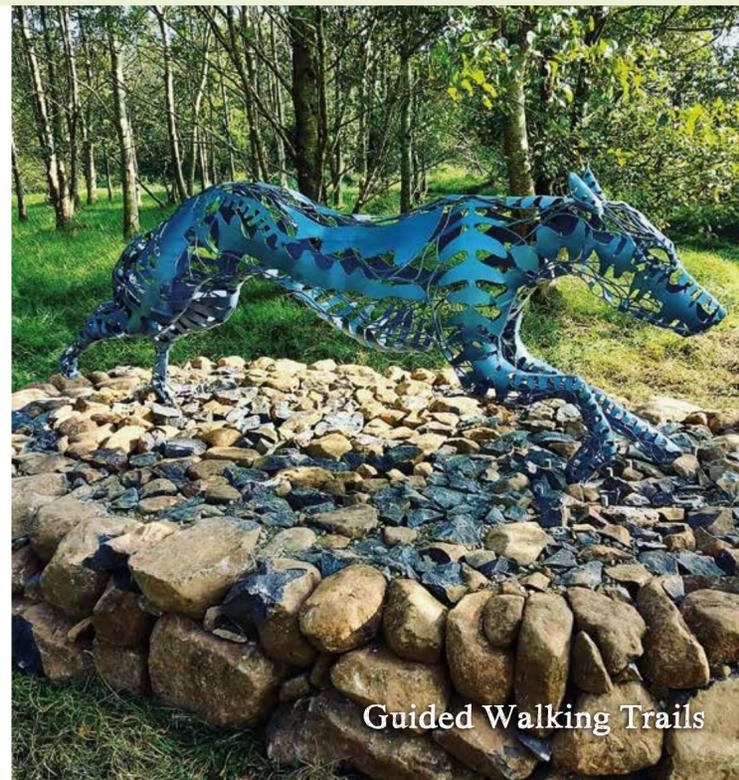
- Only 1 mile away at An Carn Community Centre -
- An Croí Coffee House & Bistro
- An Teach Glas Accommodation
- Siopa An Carn Gift Shop
- An Coire Arts Centre

Tag us, check in and post photos of your visit online



www.drumnaph.org

Guided Walking Trails



Loch Bran Trail (1.5 Km)



6. Life giving Hedgerows

You are now moving through grassland which is typical of the local agricultural landscape, akin to the pasture dominated landscape we see throughout much of Ireland. While this area is not as rich in plant and animal species as the rest of the reserve, mature hedgerows offer important habitat for many plants, insects, birds and mammals. Hedgerows are perhaps the most important wildlife habitat in Ireland today and act as a haven for much of the woodland floor plants that would have existed within the ancient woodland. However, poor management and removal is threatening many once common species that have grown to depend on them. Over 100 species of insect feed on Hawthorn. It's white flowers are important for pollinating insects, its berries feed many of our mammals while flocks of local and migratory birds depend upon it throughout much of the winter.

As you leave the fields you will enter an area of acid grassland and wet flush. This is a very species rich habitat containing species such as Meadow Thistle, an indicator of old longstanding acid meadows. With flowering plants such as Orchids, Lesser Spearwort, Lady's Smock and Scabious, to mention but a few, this area supports a wide variety of pollinating insects.

7. Loch Bran

You are now looking south across Loch Bran, named after one of the huge mythical hounds who belonged to the Gaelic hero Fionn mac Cumhaill. Fionn's nephews, Bran and his brother Sceolán were transformed into 'conríocht', the shape of a dog, before they were born. A local legend tells how Loch Bran gets its name from a mythological event when Fionn and Bran were hunting a stag. In the ancient folklore, deer are often magical creatures associated with the 'lucht sí' or fairy folk and this story may be a remnant of a more extensive tale within this tradition. As the story goes, the stag strangely disappeared into the ground, but the hound refused to give up and began to dig down after it. The resultant huge pit filled with water and drowned the dog and the deer remained under ground. The loch became 'Loch Bran' and the nearby ridge became 'Droim nDamh' – meaning the Ridge of the Stag. The hill directly to the north on which you stand is said to be the spoil heap from the creation of the loch and is known as 'Mullach Bran', Bran's Summit.

Today Loch Bran has grown over with mosses, rushes and sedges and is a great example of a transitional mire, surrounded by low-lying bog land. The vegetation is dominated by Sphagnum or bog moss. The build up of moss in waterlogged

conditions over many centuries creates peat. Bog moss acts like a sponge and soaks up as much as 20 times its own weight in water so helping to keep the bog surface wet. The bogs of Ireland are hugely important in storing water from heavy rainfall, which is then more slowly released. The cumulative effect of drainage of many of our Irish bogs has undoubtedly contributed to major flood events in our farmland and towns in recent times.

Sphagnum, which is known as 'Súsán' in Gaelic, has many traditional uses. It has antiseptic properties and was used as a wound dressing during the First and the Second World Wars.



8. Whins / Gorse

Standing on the hill we look south across Loch Bran bog and behind us lie large areas of whin shrubs. Whin bushes are both a benefit and potential problem on the reserve and they are managed to prevent them encroaching across other important habitats.

Whin bushes are leguminous, which means that they capture nitrogen from the air and use it as their own natural fertiliser. This helps whin thrive and outcompete almost any other plant on poorer, drier soils. The net effect of whin growth is that it can quickly spread and enrich the soil and this can damage nutrient-poor ecosystems such as the bog land around Loch Bran.

Whin however is also a very important plant for many species. Its bright yellow blossoms providing essential pollen and nectar to several species of bee and other insects, especially early in the year, when little else is available. Whin is ideal for a range of nesting heathland, downland and farmland birds, including the Stonechat Linnet and Yellowhammer. The dense structure also provides important refuge for these birds in harsh weather.

The amount of whin on the reserve is controlled to maximise the wildlife benefit from this important species, while not allowing it to encroach on to other sensitive habitats.

9. View from the Ráth

You are now alongside the site of an ancient Rath known as 'An Ráth Ard'. Half of the Rath has been removed by the creation of the field in which you are standing and the other half remains to the west. Superstition would say the Rath should be left alone for fear of displeasing the otherworld, so who knows what misfortune fell upon the people who damaged this one.

On a clear day there are wonderful views from this area. To the east across the lower wood there is the unmistakable shape of 'Sliabh Mis' or Slemish, the mountain on which Saint Patrick is said to have been kept as a slave tending pigs. Further north and east the large wind turbines are on the Antrim Hills around Loughgiel. In the far south east you can see 'Sliabh Crúibe', Slieve Croob in Co Down.

The large mountain in the south is 'Sliabh gCallann' or Slieve Gallion which is close to Cookstown and of course the mountain dominating the western view is 'Carn Tóchair' (Carnatogher).



The eagle represents the eagle of 'Glenn Lolair', Eagles Glen, also known as Glenuilin which is only a short trip north and west over the mountain. The stone with the hound and the stag represents the ridge running through the reserve, Drumnaph, 'the Ridge of the Stag'. The dog is Fionn mac Cumhaill's magical hound Bran who is said to have died while hunting the magical deer. He is remembered in the Loch Bran portion of the reserve. The loch is now a very dangerous quaking bog mire having been gradually overgrown through many centuries.

The fourth stone shows Seán Crosach Ó Maoláin, a local man who lived much of his life as a roaire or highwayman in the early 1700s. Seán's journey from the son of tenant farmer to a life on the run started with the eviction with his family from their small farm early in his life. Like many from the Gaelic classes Seán had no option but to begin a life on the margins of the new post-plantation society, not willing to conform to the landlords who he saw as land robbers and whose families had, little more than a century earlier, seized the land in most of Ulster. Seán often gave much of what he stole to the poor of the area.

The stone with a wolf, the hare and the eagle represents a story of the local townland 'Alt an Mhadaidh Bhacaigh' (The steep glen of the lame wolf). An old woman who lived in the glen helped an injured wolf, dressing his wounds and caring for him until he was well. The wolf returned to the wild and the old woman never saw him again. Sometime after, a great snow storm blocked the glen and many people starved of cold and hunger, trapped in their homes. During this time a lone wolf was seen everyday leaving a hare at the old woman's door until the snow's grip abated.

One of Seán's most celebrated stories was one of his legendary escapes from British soldiers when being taken to Derry to be put on trial. While passing over Carnatogher Mountain, Seán asked the soldier to remove his manacles and he would show them three leaps that would astonish them. True to his word he leapt three times and then disappeared down the slopes to freedom with the soldier chasing him. Later in the chase Seán made another leap across the precipice at Ness Wood, an area that is still known as 'Seán's Leap'.

The next stone with the Salmon, ship and sun is in sorrowful remembrance of the thousands from the area, and indeed the millions of Gaelic people who were forced

to leave their lands, family, language and culture to place their hope in a better future in lands beyond the sea and sunset, never to return.

The last stone contains symbols of the ancient ones, those who invented Ogham Craobh, the ancient writing system and alphabet based on the names of trees. The notches on the side of the stone spell the name of Droim nDamh, written in ogham. The cuacha symbols are also based on ancient carvings in rock found throughout Ireland and beyond, again remembering our ancient cultures and tribes going back through time.

Stony rivers offer excellent habitats for young salmon which thrive in fast shallow water.



15. River and Spawning Fords

You are on a path on the banks of the Griollach River. This area is known as 'Béal Eochraí' which means the mouth of the spawning area reflecting the start of the area most used for the spawning Salmon. Spawning usually peaks in December although can occur from November to January. The deep water at the bend here, which has been carved out by the current also acts as an important staging area for Salmon and Trout on their way further upstream. Stony rivers offer excellent habitats for young Salmon which thrive in fast shallow water.



16. Famine

If you look carefully into the trees directly to the south you may just see the ruin of an old house. This is all that is left of a little house which was home to Sally 'Allen' Bradley, one of the last occupants of this area. Local tradition tells that many families lived in and around the edge of the woodland prior to the great famine in the 1840s and that they succumbed to starvation, immigration and eviction. Old maps from the 1800s indicate several small homes in this area, all eking a meagre living from tilled plots with a few stock, which most likely grazed the woodland. This demonstrates again that the Drumnaph area has been in constant flux with changing land use impacting on the history and ecology of what is now the reserve.



17. Pond and Water Life

This is the fen and ponded area on the reserve. This wetland was drained and almost lost when a stream on the other side of the path was lowered and deepened as part of the Department of Agriculture's drainage policy. The loss of wetland habitat threatened many species

Woodland Trail (4 Km)

Collectively known as Drumnaph Wood, the wonderful mix of habitats here comprises wetland, recently planted woodland and ancient woodland – an extremely rare and precious resource.

The ancient woodland has seen centuries come and go. With a helping hand from old maps, estate records and natural features, it has been traced back as far as 1599. Its close canopy of Hazel and Holly is interspersed with some fine old Oaks. One of these, McCartney's Oak, is named after a grazier who lived in the 1860s and is said



10. Lore and History of Rath

Directly to your west, on the crest of the hill stands an ancient rath known as 'Lios Sceoláin', which is another reference to the Fionn mac Cumhaill legends. According to mythology Sceolán and Bran were twins of Fionn mac Cumhaill's aunt, Tuireann, who in one account was magically transformed into a dog when pregnant and gave birth to her sons as the famous hunting hounds of Gaelic tradition, Bran and Sceolán.

Raths or Ring Forts were built by our ancestors. While many of them were fortified homesteads they were also used for keeping cattle, other livestock and storing crops. Rath is common in the Irish landscape and lend their name to many places. For example, the town just

to have sheltered under the tree during the summer months.

Rush meadow buffers the ancient woodland, and almost 30,000 native trees have been planted in the fields further north. All provide a thriving haven for wildlife, from Sparrowhawks and Buzzards to Otters and the Irish Hare. Springtime visitors receive a colourful greeting from the Wood Anemone, Wood Sorrel, Bluebells and Primroses that carpet the ancient woodland floor.

south of Drumnaph is Maghera which comes from the Gaelic 'Maichaire Rátha', meaning the plain of the rath.

Often Rathes were constructed within sight of one or more other Rathes. This meant if one homestead was attacked, others nearby could be quickly alerted and come to their aid. With three raths on the reserve and at least 10 in the vicinity, it is likely that this was an association of related families who recognised the benefits of strength in numbers.

11. The Story of the Woods

You are now in the ancient Drumnaph Woodland. The woodland is dominated by Hazel, with some large Oak trees and more rarely, Elm trees, most of which have been destroyed by Dutch Elm Disease that has encroached into the woodland over the past 20 years.

Drumnaph Woodland is certainly old, much older than the trees themselves. The ground flora which is rich in wood Anemone, Bluebells and Pignut indicate a mature forest floor that has been here for many centuries and probably thousands of years. These woods were once part of the vast oak forest of 'Glenn Con Chadhain'

in the area so the wetland was dammed to maintain its higher water levels. The path along the river is, in fact, the dam, with overflow pipes controlling the water level. These dam structures and overflow pipes have saved this wonderful wetland. Indeed, many small ponds and wetlands have been created, maintained or enhanced. These offer an increasingly rare habitat to frogs, newts, dragonflies and a myriad of other plants and animals, which otherwise would have been lost.

18. On the Edge of the Woods

You are at the woodland edge, the border between the dark forest and the open countryside. Just before you leave the wood you will notice an engraved limestone pillar. This marks the way to McCartney's Oak about 200 metres to the south, the largest and oldest tree on the reserve. McCartney was reputed to be a travelling tin smith who could read and write, when most could not. He spent the winter as a guest in houses or houthouses locally and during the summer he made his home within the woods next to the large Oak. It is not known exactly when McCartney lived within the area but local research suggests that this was most likely to be in the second half of the 19th century.



The fringe habitat on the edge of the woodland is critically important in ecological terms to many of our bird, insects and mammals, especially bats. On warm summer evenings this area is alive with bats feeding on the many flies that

drift on the wing along the woodland. As night gives way to day, the bats will be replaced by swallows, martins and swifts who continue to feed on the flies during daylight hours. By taking separate shifts bats and birds can feed on the same food sources, but do not directly compete. The area of shrubs, briars and rank grasses was once a bog land area, but draining of local streams has reduced the water level and allowed other non-wet loving plants to encroach.



19. Wildlife Corridors

You are now standing beside an old hedgerow, which once divided two fields, but is now the middle of the new woodland. While some ancient hedgerows along townland boundaries and along boundaries of old clan territories do exist, most hedgerows in the south Derry area were not planted until the early 1800s in order to enclose fields. This current hedge is certainly old, but not likely to be ancient, however its mature Hawthorn trees, occasional Ash along with bramble margins make it a very valuable habitat in which plants, insects, birds and mammals thrive.

The woodland has ground flora which is rich in wood Anemone, Bluebells and Pignut indicating a mature forest floor that has been here for many centuries and probably thousands of years.



and 'An Choill lochtarach' that covered much of the area west of the Bann to the Sperrin Mountains and north as far as Coleraine. Much of the forest of the area was felled during the 17th Century following the Elizabethan conquest of Gaelic Ulster to fuel the subsequent plantation of English and Scottish settlers. By the end of the 17th century most of this vast forest had been felled and only inaccessible pockets such as Droim nDamh remained. Today Ireland is still the least wooded country in Europe, so important old woodland sites like this one are hugely important, both ecologically and culturally.



12. Bog Myrtle and Heathland

You are now on a slight rise where to the north there is an area of dried-out former bog which is now dominated by tussocks of heather and rank grasses. An important plant here as well as other parts of the reserve is the aromatic Bog Myrtle, a small shrub which has long been used to deter biting insects and to flavour foods. Bog myrtle is also used in beer making.



20. Flowers and Water Meadows

You are at the eastern edge of the Drumnaph Community Nature Reserve. The two fields that lie on either side of the entrance lane to the car park are examples of the diversity of the management carried out here. These fields are very rich meadow habitats and during the summer have a profusion of flowering meadow plants, sedges and grasses that form the base of an ecosystem that in turn supports myriad of insects and animals that depend upon this rich and diverse habitat. Between March and August each year you can see many rare flowers that have disappeared from most of our countryside. These include the beautiful delicate Yellow Rattle and tiny white, blue, yellow and purple Eyebright. Both of these little plants have a secret, they are semi-parasitic, feeding on the roots of grasses thus reducing their growth. By doing this Yellow Rattle and Eyebright reduces grass dominance and allows other diverse plant species to colonise grasslands, in doing so they create species rich and wildlife rich meadows. No wonder conservationists call these plants the 'meadow makers'.

Would you like to be part of 'Friends of Drumnaph'?

Friends of Drumnaph are involved in the direct conservation within the reserve and will help manage and deliver a range of proposed projects over the coming years. We would encourage anyone who is interested in helping deliver any of these initiatives or just interested in finding out more information about the reserve to contact An Carn 028 7954 9978.



13. Young Woodland

These young woods will form the mature forests of the future. Almost 30,000 native trees have been planted here; mostly Ash, Oak, Hazel and Rowan. Planted in 1998, the young trees have flourished and already tower over walkers. Importantly, these young natives buffer the nearby ancient woodland, providing an extended habitat for some precious species of wildlife – from butterflies to buzzards. Stop and look at the woodland floor: scatterings of Bluebells and Lesser Celandine are indicators and reminders of the wood's ancient origins.

14. Stone Circle

You have just arrived at a rath which is known by the local people as 'Lios na Sí'. 'Lios' is another Gaelic word for a rath and 'Sí' is the word for the fairy folk. There is a tradition in Gaelic that you never use the word 'Sí' out loud as it was disrespectful and could bring misfortune. Instead these otherworld beings were often spoken of as 'na daoine maithe', meaning the good people.

Just across from Lios na Sí is a modern stone circle. Stone circles are part of our ancient past and remind us of our connections to our ancestors many thousands of years ago. This new stone circle was created by the local community in homage to local folklore. The engraving on the stones reflect the traditions, history, mythology and culture of the community surrounding Drumnaph and the broader area.

Reserve Rules

Paths

Our pathways have been developed in order to facilitate access to all the major habitats and ancient sites. Three routes have been suggested depending on the distance you would like to walk.

Respect

We ask that you show respect for this important site by:

- Not damaging or picking plants
- Keeping pets on a lead when in designated areas or near to livestock
- Taking your rubbish home with you
- Closing gates after you

A thriving haven for wildlife, from sparrowhawks and buzzards to otters and the Irish hare.

