

Burrenbeo Trust Monthly e-Newsletter March 2011 (No. 51)

Burren News

Welcome to our March Newsletter. The Burren is basking in some very pleasant Spring weather these days, just in time for the main calving season on the hills - and kidding time for the herds of feral goats. Farmers are reporting the first flowering of the féar Boirne (Burren grass or blue moor grass), a welcome sign that winter is ending. This month we look forward to some other signs of spring - the annual Burren Spring Conference for instance - as well as some new initiatives, such as the launch of the Burren ecotourism network and new work exploring the development of a Burren charter. We also have a report from Year 1 of the pioneering new 'Burren farming for conservation programme' which has succeeded BurrenLIFE. As



always with the Burren, there is a lot happening - read on to find out more. info@burrenbeo.com

The Burren - What is to be done? is the provocative title of this year's annual Burren Spring Conference to be held in Ballyvaughan on the weekend of March 11th to 13th. The conference will seek to explore the latent potential of the Burren as a place of heritage, of learning, of business and of inspiration and to look at models and methods through which this potential might be best realised. Conference Fee: 60 euro (50% of usual cost). anna@burrencollege.ie or phone 065 7077201. See page 5 for more details how you can get involved in this event and have your voice heard.

Eco-Beo 2011 Coming to a school near you The Burrenbeo Trust is launching its 2011 Eco-beo 'Our Burren heritage' course in schools this month. 75 young Burren enthusiasts from Oranmore, Doorus, Ballyvaughan and Fanore national schools are taking part in this exciting 20-week voyage of discovery about the Burren, following in the footsteps of several hundred children before them. This knowledge will hopefully foster a sense of pride, ownership and responsibility for the future custodians of the region. This month, Trust Coordinator, Brigid Barry will begin with an overview of the Burren, followed by the Burren's Geopark Geologist, Dr. Ronan Hennessy on Burren geology, then Zena Hoctor who will look at the archaeology and history of the region. Other interesting topics will follow in April - June. We are grateful to the Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Group and anonymous donors for their support in allowing Eco-beo to take place this year - an invaluable investment in the future of the Burren.

Geology Course The Burren & Cliffs of Moher Geopark Project in conjunction with the Burren Outdoor Education Centre are running a five-night introductory geology course throughout March. This course will take place at the Burren Outdoor Education Centre, Bell Harbour on five Tuesday evenings in March from 7.30pm-9.30pm. A fieldtrip in the Burren will be held on March 26th. The cost of the course is €50. For further information please contact Ronán rhennessy@burren.ie or call 065 7072295. Alternatively contact the Burren Outdoor Education Centre - 065 7078066

Brigid Hynes, RIP The Burren is in deep mourning following the passing of Brigid Hynes of Croughville, Carron, daughter of Paddy and Catherine, wife of Martin, mother of Maeve and Luke. Burrenbeo Trust would like to extend our deep and heartfelt sympathy to the Hynes family at their great loss.

The Burren - Ireland's Newest Ecotourism Destination This March will see the official launch of the new Burren Ecotourism Network. Over the last couple of years, 18 local businesses have been partaking in a training and assessment programme to be certified as one of only two ecotourism destinations in Ireland. The Network is offering visitors opportunities to engage with the protected landscape of the Burren in a manner which is sustainable both in terms of the environment as well as the community. Accommodation, food, farming, outdoor activities, culture and heritage are all part of the Network, tying together elements that make the area attractive to visitors looking for authentic tourism experiences. This programme has been facilitated by Burren Connect, sponsored by Failte Ireland and managed by Ecotourism Ireland. www.burrenecotourism.com or 065 7072295 for more info.



Getting ready for the big bloom! The Burren in Bloom festival 2011 has just launched its website www.burreninbloom.ie. On this website you will find a range of events and activities for all the family between 29th April-29th May. So look up the events page and get some dates in your diary or join Burren in Bloom on Facebook where you will receive regular updates on what is happening for the festival. If you want to contact the organisers please email info@burreninbloom.com

Heritage and History Training *My People, My Place, My Heritage* is a free training project and knowledge initiative to develop and deliver local heritage, genealogy, history and folklore training to the 46 parishes and sub-parishes that form the IRO south-east Galway Diaspora Pilot Project area. The lectures will take place from 7.30-9.30pm over 13 evenings from March to May in the Loughrea Spa Hotel. For more information go to doshea@irelandxo.com

Burren Farming for Conservation (BFCP) report strong progress The (BFCP) is a unique agri-environmental programme designed to conserve and support the heritage, environment and communities of the Burren. It is based on the findings of the BurrenLIFE Project, co-funded by the Depts. of Agriculture and Environment and managed by a 3-person team based in the Old Schoolhouse in Carron.

A total of 117 Burren farmers are taking part in Year 1 of the BFCP, extending over a very impressive area of habitat including 34.4% of the Black Head/Poulsallagh Complex SAC, 48% of Moneen Mountain SAC and 34.3% of the East Burren Complex SAC. A plan for each farm has been prepared by a trained advisor (from a panel of 15 such advisors). The average payment per farm plan in year 1 is €5,645.

Works completed in year 1 include scrub removal (c.55ha of scrub), stone wall repair (17,831m of internal walls), water provision (131 troughs, 15 storage tanks, 6 pumps, water harvesters etc), gate installation (158 gates), feed equipment (41 feed bins, 78 troughs) and habitat restoration work (protecting springs, clearing rubbish). Farmers contribute 25%, 50% or 75% of the cost of works depending on the task. In addition to this, the BFCP has developed a highly-innovative 'bonus payment' for the production of species rich grassland by farmers. Based on a careful assessment of the site, each SAC/Annex I field is given a score from 0-10 on which an area based payment is made. Better management means higher scores and more money - suggestions on how management can be improved are included in the farm plan. In year 1 of BFCP, over 700 fields were scored, with most scores falling within a range of 6-8 out of 10. www.burrenlife.com for more info on this pioneering programme.

Burrenbeo Trust Events Calendar for March 2011 (print and post!)

Tues, 1st March. Kilnaboy. The XPO heritage talk for March will be *Exciting Archaeological Discoveries at Glencurran Cave, Kilnaboy* with archaeologist Marion Dowd at 8pm in XPO. All are welcome and admission is free of charge. For more information contact 087 292 54 87.

Sat, 5th March. Kinvara. *Mardis Gras* comes to the Kinvara Community Centre at 8pm. With RYE, The Jim McKee Band and the John Conneely Quartet. All takings go to local charities. Come along for great music, dance and dressing up. For more information go to www.kinvara.ie

Sat, 5th March. Kinvara. The *Rock and Road* 10km and half marathon starts from Kinvara pier at 11am. For more information go to www.rockandroad.ie

Sun, 6th March. Fanore. The Burrenbeo Trust March walk will be with Mary Howard on the theme *Blackhead's Ringfort and its surroundings*. This will meet at 2pm outside St. Patrick's Church in Fanore. Email trust@burrenbeo.com or phone 091 638096 for more information.

Thur, 10th March. Ennis. *Reduce your heating costs* is a free event by Kilnaboy renewable energy company about alternative heating in the Temple Gate Hotel @5pm. www.ensoleir.com

Fri, 11-13th March. Ballyvaughan. The Burren Spring Conference this year is *The Burren - what is to be done?* will take place at the Burren College of Art. €60 for the weekend. For more information go to www.burrencollege.ie

Fri, 11-13th March. Ballyvaughan. *A walking weekend* with Tony Kirby. Food, accommodation and walking €165. For more information contact info@drumcreehyhouse.com

Sat, 26th March, Tuam. *Folklore and Oral Heritage Seminar* take place at Synod Hall, Tuam. For more information contact Marie Mannion on mmannion@galwaycoco.ie



Neolithic wedge tomb, Gleninsheen.

Burrenbeo Trust News & Updates

Trust's Monthly Walk This month's walk is with walking guide and heritage enthusiast, Mary Howard. Please meet outside St. Patrick's Church in Fanore at 2pm on the 6th March. This walk is open to everyone. It is free for Burrenbeo Trust Members and a donation from non-members. Be prepared for Irish weather- warm and waterproof clothes are recommended! Please note that there is a hill walk involved. No dogs allowed due to cattle being on winterage. For more information please email trust@burrenbeo.com or phone 091 638096. The Trust is grateful to the Mattie Shannon for his fascinating walk to the Doolin Court tomb in February.

Burrenbeo Trust's Monthly Talk for March will be with storyteller collector and translator, Caoilte Breathnach who will be showing images from the Robert Creswell's Archive of *Kinvara in the 1950's*. This will be held at the Burrenbeo Trust Centre in Kinvara at 8.30pm on the 18th March. This is free for Trust members and €5 for non members. For more information contact trust@burren.com or 091 638096. The Trust is grateful to Micheline Sheehy Skeffington for her insightful talk on *Turloughs - vanishing lakes or vanishing fields* in February.

The Burrenbeo Walks and Talks series is supported by LA 21 Agenda funding.

Burrenbeo Conservation Volunteers (BCV) The Burrenbeo Trust is grateful to Kate Lavendar Duncan in taking over the coordinating role of the BCVs, ably aided by Sharon Parr and Stephen Ward. February was a busy month with two outings for the BCVs; one at the Marsh Fritillary site with Jesmond Harding and the other at Caherconnell with archaeologist Michelle Comber. The BCVs would like to thank both of these experts for their time in organising very successful events. March will bring more exciting adventures for the volunteers. For more information the activities of the volunteers register on burrency@gmail.com. Also join Burrenbeo Trust on Facebook to see photos and activities of the volunteers. The BCVs are grateful for the **James Devitt Hardware store** in Ennistymon for sponsoring some scrub-cutting equipment to the group this month.

Burrenbeo Trust building Cafébeo is closed until further notice, however, the Burrenbeo Trust team are still large at work from Monday-Friday 9am-5.30pm. If you wish to speak to a member of the team either knock on the door or call 091 638096.

Be connected Don't forget to join the Burrenbeo Trust on Facebook so you can get weekly updates on what is happening in the region!



Burren Spring Conference 2011 - Have your say!

The Burren - What is to be done? is the provocative title of this year's annual Burren Spring Conference to be held in Ballyvaughan on the weekend of March 11th to 13th. The conference will seek to explore the latent potential of the Burren as a place of heritage, of learning, of business and of inspiration and to look at models and methods through which this potential might be best realised.

According to Dr. Brendan Dunford who is a member of the Conference organising committee, 'The Burren has so much to offer to so many. But some of us feel that we need to be far more proactive in deciding what it is we want for the Burren and being a bit more determined in actually pursuing it. Otherwise we will never realise the full potential of this wonderful place and we run the risk of having to react all the time to what others decide is best for the Burren - rarely a good idea if some past experience is anything to go by. So this conference seeks to look at what other regions are doing, to imagine what the Burren might be, and to take the first steps to getting there - for instance by working together as a community on exploring the development of a charter for the Burren'.

Some of Ireland's most inspirational and visionary speakers will set the scene at this conference, outlining their vision for the Burren. Dr. Conor Newman, CEO of the Heritage Council, Prof. Kevin Whelan co-author of 'Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape' and Prof. Gabriel Cooney, head of Archaeology at UCD will be among those to share their perspectives on 'what can be done'. Some select international guest speakers have also been invited to talk about 'what have others done' in better managing their regions. These will include Susanne Forslund who works closely with communities in the Swedish Island of Oland, which shares many similarities with the Burren and is now an official World Heritage Site. Prof. David Gibbon, a long-time visitor to the Burren with over 40 years of global research experience, will outline some interesting UK models of landscape management and lessons learned from consultation with different stakeholders.

In a new departure for this year's conference, delegates themselves are being challenged to take to the podium and summarise what they themselves would do about the Burren. This will be part of a 'Petcha Kucha' session, a method of presentation developed by architects in Japan in 2003 which entails 10 presentations, each lasting 6 minutes. The idea is to share a lot of ideas without any one person taking all the time available - the architects who started it said all architects talk too much! For delegates who prefer to express their opinions less forthrightly, a 'world café' style discussion is being organised to allow them to elaborate their collective vision for the Burren.

One particularly interesting and relevant input will be from Burren-based heritage consultant Zena Hctor who will describe some work which is currently getting underway on the development of a Burren Charter. This is a ground-up initiative which aims to bring a wide range of sectoral interests together to forge a common vision for the future of the Burren. Working from a core collective of local organisations, including Burren IFA, Burren Connect, Burrenbeo Trust, the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme as well as Clare and Galway County Councils, this Heritage Council funded project hopes to work with groups and organisations across the Burren and beyond to develop a shared vision for the Burren and to make real progress to realising this vision.

According to Dr. Dunford, 'This conference will only really work if lots of local people show up and really start to engage with the other speakers, delegates and themes. We really hope that as many local people come along as possible - to encourage this, the cost of the event has been halved and we have allocated plenty of space for good dialogue between the speakers and the delegates. We also feel that the theme of the conference is one of great practical significance for the communities of the Burren, their landscape and their future'.

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