



THE EARL BISHOP TRAIL

Charismatic Cleric



The Earl Bishop Trail
extends from the Giant's Causeway
to Derry/Londonderry linking up
places associated with the Bishop
(Frederick Augustus Hervey)

Peace

Northern Ireland - Ireland

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THE EARL BISHOP

Frederick Augustus Hervey (1730-1803), Bishop of Derry and 4th Earl of Bristol (hence, The Earl Bishop) was one of the most charismatic individuals to have lived in the North West of Ireland over the past 250 years. He was a man of many parts: he was consecrated as Bishop of Derry in 1768; he was a scientist with a deep interest in vulcanology; he was a collector of art; he travelled extensively in Germany, France and Italy; he was a linguist and spoke German, French and Italian fluently; he had a wide circle of friends including royal families, bishops, intellectuals such as Voltaire and ambassadorial acquaintances throughout Europe;



he took a keen interest in Irish politics; he was interested in Irish music; he was a builder of churches, residences, bridges and roads providing employment in financially difficult times; and he was a powerful proponent of religious equality.

A story is told that before Frederick's birth, his mother indulged in '*dancing, morning suppers, sharp wines and China oranges*' so giving rise to his colourful and mercurial nature. Lady Montagu coined the famous phrase that encapsulated the House of Hervey: '*When God created the human race, he created men, women and the Herveys*'. Outstanding above all of the Herveys must surely have been the Earl Bishop.

The Bishop died on the outskirts of Rome in 1803 and his remains were buried at his Ickworth Estate (Suffolk), where an obelisk was erected in his memory by the citizens of all traditions in Derry.



The Earl Bishop Trail extends from the Giant's Causeway to Derry/Londonderry, linking up places associated with the Bishop.



THE GIANT'S CAUSEWAY

Earl Bishop Trail

The Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland's first UNESCO Heritage Site, is a geological wonder and home to a wealth of history and legend. Two years prior to his appointment as Bishop of Derry, Frederick ascended Vesuvius and was nearly killed by an ejected rock that struck him in the arm.

The Earl Bishop had a volatile personality; his wife described his character as '*Reminiscent of Vesuvius*'.

When he arrived in the area as Bishop of Derry, he decided to further his enquiries into vulcanology. He employed an Italian artist, Antonio de Bittio, to make detailed sketches of the Causeway, which were circulated to his learned friends throughout Britain and Europe. The Earl Bishop did extensive research into the origins of the Causeway and promoted his findings to the scientific community and wider world.

He also visited Staffa Island on the Western Isles of Scotland with Bittio to confirm the links with similar columnar formations. In 1782, he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society for his efforts.



The Giant's Causeway by John Nixon (1750-1818), courtesy of Ballycastle Museum



Engraving of Giant's Causeway by Giacomo LEONARDIS after Antonio de BITTIO, 1807 - Reproduced by permission of the Geological Society of London



DOWNHILL HOUSE

Earl Bishop Trail

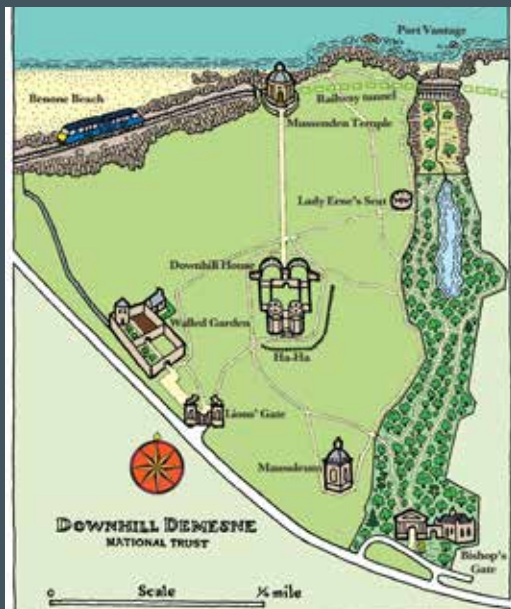
It was Frederick's interest in vulcanology which attracted him to Downhill. About 1775 he began to build his country house on a huge patch of wild moorland at Downhill. The finished design was largely the work of the Bishop's architect, Michael Shanahan from Cork. As the Bishop's collection of art grew so

did the need for space to display it and a new gallery was added to the House. It was the Bishop's intent to *'Make the County of Derry look like a gentleman'*.

The Bishop developed a landscaped park, covering some 400 acres and providing a setting for his new house. Frederick boasted that he had 150 men working on the park alone and remarked that: *'If we employ the idle, they will make no riots and if we can fill their bellies, they will no more open their mouths'*. The Earl Bishop showed his appreciation for his employees. He gave donations to those workers who had *'made a good road, or a good cabin or an ingenious pump'*.

When the Earl Bishop arrived in the area he was concerned that his rector was occupying a humble thatched cottage, now known as Hezlett House. He asked Shanahan to remedy the situation. A stately mansion, Dunboe House, was built for the rector at Articlave.

The old churchyard at Dunboe is part of the Downhill demesne. The tomb of the Bruce family, who inherited the Downhill estate, is located at the rear of the cemetery.





MUSSENDEN TEMPLE

Earl Bishop Trail

The most extraordinary building of all perches on a cliff-edge behind the House: Northern Ireland's most iconic building, the Mussenden Temple. The Temple is named after Frideswide Mussenden, Frederick's cousin once removed. Frederick was fond of Frideswide and waxed lyrical about the effect of her company saying it brought him *'Eternal springs and cloudless skies'*.

The Temple was created by Shanahan, and was modelled on the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli, near Rome. The building acted as an overflow library for the house and the large niches that you can still see in the interior walls contained book cases. The interior was once ornate and imposing, not the bare brick visible today. The building was constructed of local basalt and faced with sandstone, which came by boat from Ballycastle. James McBlain carved the basic structure, while his son David was responsible for the decorative work. The Bishop's coat of arms is over the door and the frieze is decorated with a quotation, in letters originally covered in gold, from the Roman

poet Lucretius, translated by Dryden as: *'Tis pleasant safely to behold from shore the rolling ship and hear the tempest roar'*.

From the Temple there is a superb view along Downhill Beach. Here the Bishop organised an annual race between the Church of Ireland clerics, rotund as they were well fed and watered, and the Presbyterians, described as lean, mean and hungry. It was obvious which denomination was going to be victorious each year, much to the delight of the Earl Bishop.



View from Temple of Downhill Beach, courtesy of L Blackwood



BISHOP'S ROAD

Earl Bishop Trail

The spectacular road, which travels across the top of Benevenagh to Limavady was a mountain access track for turf-cutting and sheep-tending in the Bishop's time. He undertook a reconstruction programme leading to its improvement. The construction offered employment to a large workforce and was a forerunner of the Famine Relief Schemes, which were introduced in the 1840s. Frederick brought work to an area that had virtually no sources of employment, with a constant programme of not only road construction but also wall, bridge, rectory and church building, which soaked up much of his church income. John Wesley, who was Frederick's guest on two occasions, commented that the Bishop was '*plenteous in good works*', which rendered him the idol of his people.

One of the best vantage points to appreciate the splendour of the Bishop's Road is at Gortmore Viewpoint, which provides stunning views over the flat lands of Magilligan, which were Glebe or Church lands, leased to the

Gage Family by successive Bishops of Derry from the 1630s.

This is a land steeped in mythology: Manannan Mac Lir, the Irish Neptune, lived in the depths of Lough Foyle and navigated its waters in a metal boat; Mangan of the Golden Slipper walked across the waters from Magilligan Point to Greencastle without getting his feet wet; the Banshee of the Roe roamed the heights of Benevenagh; and the fairies resided on the notorious Tunn Banks.



Manannan Mac Lir at Gortmore Viewpoint, courtesy of L Blackwood



ST. CADAN'S CHURCH

Earl Bishop Trail

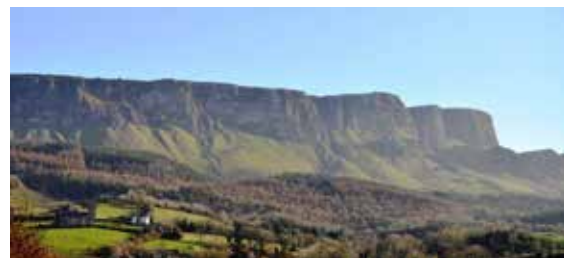
Until near the end of the 18th century the Church of Ireland community in Magilligan worshipped in the old Church at Tamlaghtard. In 1773 the Earl Bishop decided to erect a new church, St Cadan's, in a more central part of the parish. It is alleged that he built the church in this exposed location so that he could see who was attending church on Sundays from his residence at Downhill.

St Cadan's formed part of Frederick's building programme and bears striking architectural similarities to many churches all over his diocese. His building programme was to earn him the title, *'the edifying Bishop'*.

St Cadan, who was venerated by the people of Magilligan, became a great disciple of St Patrick and for his devotions he was made a bishop in the middle of the 6th century. He journeyed to the island of Bute in western Scotland, where he lived a hermit's life. From here he founded several churches throughout Scotland. Cadan died on Bute but his body was brought back and buried in Magilligan.

The churchyard has a number of impressive family graves of local landlords such as the McCauslands and Gages. To the right of the entrance gate is a little grave dedicated to Captain Jargerson, skipper of a Norwegian brig. He was drowned when his vessel perished at Benone in 1878.

Just outside the churchyard stands a one-storey brick school (pre-1854) in Tudoresque style. It would be tempting to think that the Bishop was responsible for its construction.



St Cadan's Church with Benevenagh in the background, courtesy of L Blackwood



ST. AIDAN'S CHURCH

Earl Bishop Trail

No trace can be found of the original church established by St Colmcille in the 6th century but the ruins of a medieval church stand on its foundations. The medieval church was used as a place of worship for the Church of Ireland community until 1773 when a new church, St Cadan's,

was erected by the Earl Bishop in a more central part of the parish. He bestowed the old church on the Roman Catholic community, a provocative decision during the time of the Penal Laws. The Roman Catholic



Denis O'Hampsey, courtesy of the Sam Henry Collection, Coleraine Museum

community made use of it until 1826, when the present Church of St Aidan was built.

Tradition connects St Aidan with the original church at Tamlaghtard. St Aidan established an abbey at Lindisfarne in 635AD at the request of the King of Northumbria. After the Synod of Whitby (664AD) St Colman, who succeeded Aidan as abbot, withdrew from Lindisfarne taking with him the relics of St Aidan; these were deposited at Tamlaghtard.

The grave of Denis O'Hampsey stands alongside St Aidan's grave. Denis (1695-1807) was one of Ireland's most distinguished harpers. The Earl Bishop, who had a deep interest in Irish music, gave him three guineas and land to build a cottage in Magilligan. A close relationship developed between the Bard and the Bishop; the Bishop was a frequent visitor to his humble cottage and Denis was invited to Downhill Castle to entertain the Bishop and his guests.

Nearby is a holy well, which had its origins in pre-Christian times.



TAMLAGHTFINLAGAN

Earl Bishop Trail

Tamlaghtfinlagan Church was built between 1791-1795 at the joint expense of the Earl Bishop and a landlord, John Beresford. When the church was being built the Bishop counselled Beresford against making it too large. *'A small congregation in a large building,' he said, 'would be as uncomfortable as ridiculous. The building should decorate the country if it cannot receive it, and at least be a monument and an example to posterity how well the Squire and the Bishop could draw together'.*



John Steinbeck by McFadden Publications, Inc; (Public domain) via Wikimedia Commons

Jane Ross annotated the melody for the first time. Nearby is the grave of Tom Nicholl, a

ploughman who discovered the Broighter Gold Hoard in 1896. There is also the grave of the Hamiltons, who were the ancestors, on the maternal side of Nobel Prize winner for Literature, John Steinbeck.

When the Bishop died in 1803 he left all his Irish possessions to his nephew Rev Harry Bruce, who ran his estates during his absence abroad. Harry was in love with the daughter of the Barnards, who refused to let the young couple marry as Harry had no career prospects. The Bishop intervened, making Harry Rector of Tamlaghtfinlagan and thus giving him a regular income and the prospect of marriage.

The Fishmongers, who received an estate at Ballykelly during the Plantation of Ulster (1609), constructed many fine buildings in the village such as the Presbyterian Church.



Ballykelly Presbyterian Church, courtesy of J Hunter



ST. COLUMB'S CATHEDRAL

Earl Bishop Trail

Frederick Augustus Hervey was consecrated as Bishop of Derry at Saint Columb's Cathedral in 1768; the Cathedral was built between 1628 and 1633 by the Honourable the Irish Society. The building played an important role in the Siege of Derry in 1689, when two cannons were placed on the Tower for the defence of the city.

Derry was the one place where the Earl Bishop could do no wrong. When he returned to the city in 1790 after a long absence on the continent, he was met by an all-out civic celebration. In his speech to the people of Derry he proclaimed that for a Bishop *'The softest down in his pillow is the love of his fellow citizens and their applause the brightest jewel in his mitre.'*

The Earl Bishop brought enlightenment to Derry and religious tolerance permeated the life of the city during his period in office. He also made many practical contributions to the city: he was responsible for the construction of the first bridge at Derry; he contributed to

the building of the Long Tower Chapel; and he refurbished the Bishop's Palace.

The Earl Bishop added 21 feet to the original tower above which he erected a tall and elegant spire. The whole structure had to be taken down; the tower was replaced in 1802 and the spire about 20 years later.

William Alexander was installed here as Bishop of Derry and Raphoe (1867-1896); his wife, Cecil Francis was one of Ireland's greatest hymn writers. She composed some 400 poems, some of which were set to music including *'There is a Green Hill Far Away'* and *'Once in Royal David's City'*.



Interior of St Columb's Cathedral, courtesy of St Columb's Cathedral



ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH

Earl Bishop Trail

The Earl Bishop was a strong advocate of emancipation for Roman Catholics and was instrumental in the preparation of the first Catholic Relief Acts. With the support of the Bishop, Father Lynch began building Saint Columba's Church in 1784. Prior to the construction of the Church, Father Lynch had said Mass under a hawthorn tree, which stood close by. Hervey donated £200 to the building fund.

Father Doherty fostered the tradition that Saint Columba's Church occupies the site of the original monastery founded by Saint Colmcille in 546 AD. He rebuilt the Church in the 19th century and installed magnificent stained glass windows, telling the story of Saint Colmcille's foundation of the monastery.

The Bishop built a Casina (Italian for 'little house') on his estate a short distance from his palace in open countryside outside the walls. Remarkably a replica of the Casina still survives to the present day. The Bishop planted an avenue of Spanish chestnut

trees to landscape the Casina. The seeds or seedlings were possibly brought back by him from Italy, where the tree grows in abundance. This delicate tree has an aversion to wind and frost, but one has survived here due to its sheltered location.

The estate was acquired by the Derry Diocese in the 19th century and it was here in 1879 that Saint Columb's College (now the site of Lumen Christi College) was constructed. The Long Tower area takes its name from the medieval Round Tower, which survives to this day in the grounds of the College.



*High Altar St Columba's Church
courtesy of L Blackwood*



ST. FINIAN'S CHURCH

Earl Bishop Trail

The Earl Bishop built St Finian's Church at Greencastle in 1782 on an elevated site with its entrance facing the Foyle. It is said that the Bishop viewed the attendance of his congregation by telescope from his residence at Downhill House.



*Shoreline walk from Greencastle to Moville
courtesy of J Hunter*

The Church takes its name from St Finian, who established a monastery in the seventh century nearby at Cooley. At the entrance to

the site at Cooley stands a high cross with a carved hole at the top. There is a local tradition that if a wish is made and a stone is thrown through the hole then the wish will come true. To the rear of the graveyard is a small rectangular building known as the Skull House. It may have been used as a mortuary.

Greencastle is a vibrant fishing village, which takes its name from a Castle, built in 1305 by Richard de Burgo, the Earl of Ulster, as a base for Norman power in the North West. The Castle, which guarded the entrance to Lough Foyle, was named Greencastle because of the greenish stone from which it was built. Close by is a Martello Tower, which was built in 1810 for defence against a perceived threat of a Napoleonic invasion. Two defence towers were constructed at the mouth of Lough Foyle, one at Greencastle and another on the opposite side of the Foyle at Magilligan.

A shoreline walk extends south from Greencastle to Moville, the home of the ancestors of Field Marshall Montgomery.



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For further information visit:

www.earlbishopstrail.com
www.niarchive.org

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Front cover image:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Mussenden_Temple_ overlooking_Downhill_beach._Northern_Ireland.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mussenden_Temple_overlooking_Downhill_beach._Northern_Ireland.jpg)

Back cover image:

Mussenden Temple from Bishop's Road, courtesy of J Leug