

THE ANTRIM COAST ROAD

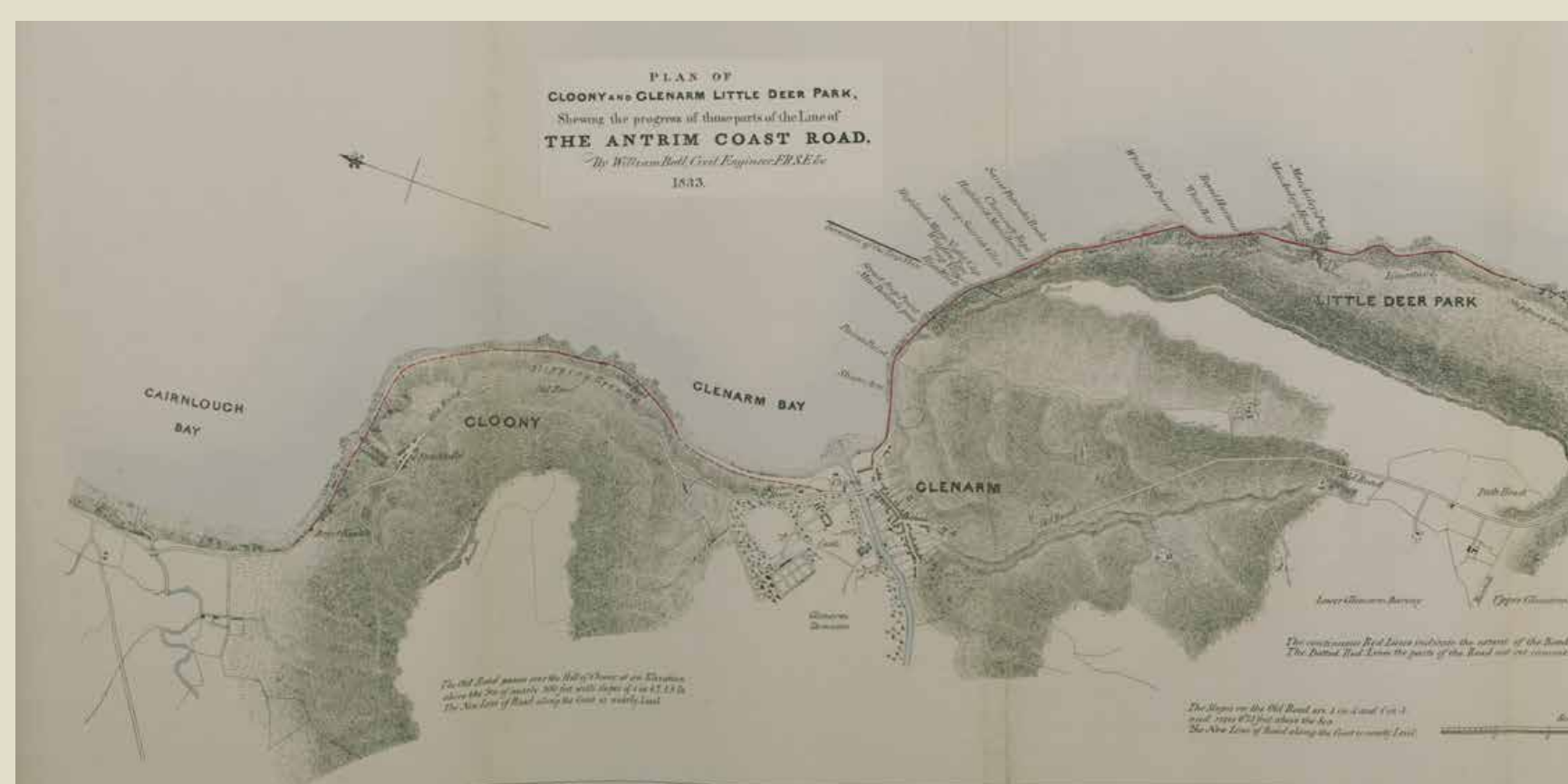
“A barren waste, asylum of a miserable and lawless peasantry” This statement was attributed to the Commissioner of Public Works in Ireland in describing the Glens of Antrim in the early 1800s. Due to its remoteness, the people of the Glens traded more easily with their neighbours in Western Scotland than with their compatriots inland. The Commissioner’s proposal was to build a road that would serve to provide work for the local peasantry and benefit trade. The 1798 Rebellion being a relatively recent event, the road would also provide ease of access for the military should it be required. And so, the Coast Road had its beginnings.



BELUM.U2168 Cushendun (c1828) Andrew Nicholl, 1804 – 1886
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Built by the Scottish civil engineer, William Bald, the Antrim Coast Road remains an amazing feat of civil engineering. William Bald had the novel idea of building the road along the foot of the cliffs, some of which were over 100 metres high.

The Coast Road was completed between 1832 and 1842. Today, north of Carnlough, the Largy Road ends with “Baldy’s Branch” leading down to the Coast Road. This local reference is a small tribute to the name of this great civil engineer who has given us one of the most beautiful coastal routes in Europe.



Courtesy of Institution of Civil Engineers



Courtesy of Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

The Coast Road made Cushendun more accessible and it became a fashionable resort for the “gentry” attracted by, among other things, sea bathing. ‘The Five Big Houses of Cushendun’ described by C.E.B. Brett in his book of that name (Lagan Press 1997) date from around this time.



HOYFM.WAG.2965 CUSHENDUN VIADUCT
W. A. Green © National Museums NI
Collection Ulster Folk & Transport Museum

A contemporary engineering work was the construction of the Glendun Viaduct. Built by Charles Lanyon between 1834 and 1839, and locally known as The Big Bridge, it crosses the Dun River and continues the Antrim Coastal route onwards to Ballycastle.



Courtesy J. Elliot

“Cushendun is cheerfully situated and the neighbourhood is frequented in the summer by gentlemen’s families who have bathing lodges there”

(James Boyle’s Ordnance Survey Memoir 1835),