

Acknowledgements

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Scan the QR code, or visit the site below, to see the interactive digital map.



niarchive.org/royalconnections

Front Cover: Dunseverick Castle

Image courtesy of David Getty



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**



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Executive Office**

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Royal Connections Heritage Trail





Royal Connections Heritage Trail

Introduction

Connecting kings, queens, castles and kingdoms, the Royal Connections heritage trail offers a unique way to explore our fascinating landscape through the lens of history, archaeology and folklore.

From mythological princesses and dwarven tyrants, to medieval sites and modern monarchs, the Causeway Coast and Glens abounds with royal connections.

As part of our programme to mark the Platinum Jubilee year of the late Queen Elizabeth II, Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Services, in partnership with our local communities, have produced this heritage trail, linking together the many locations with a royal tale to tell.

Further information, photographs and aerial footage of the sites covered in this heritage guide are available through an interactive map on the Northern Ireland Community Archive.

niarchive.org/royalconnections

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1. Ballywillan Old Churchyard

In Ballywillan Old Churchyard, just south of Portrush, there is a gravestone at the southwest corner of the old church belonging to a Mrs Dorothea Ross, wife of John Ross, a merchant in Coleraine.

The Coat of Arms and writing on the gravestone have almost vanished with time and weather, but folklore tells us that Mrs Ross was the illegitimate daughter of King James II, who 'dallied' with Dorothea's mother while staying the night at a house locally when he was en route to the Siege of Derry in 1689.

Tradition also states that her gravestone was paid for by Queen Anne.

Directions

From Coleraine take the A26 Atlantic Road following the signs for Portrush. After approx. 6km turn right onto Magheraboy Road and proceed for approx. 1.5km. Ballywillan Old Church lies on the right near the junction with Ballywillan Road and Gateside Road.

Car parking is available at Ballywillan Cemetery on the Ballywillan Road.

Co-ordinates

55.1879, -6.6341

Image courtesy of Erin Honeyford



2. Bruce's Cave

There are two sites on Rathlin Island said to be connected with Robert the Bruce, King of Scotland – Bruce's Cave and Bruce's Castle. Bruce and his men, having fled Scotland in the autumn of 1306 after a series of defeats, took refuge on Rathlin Island.

Some versions of the story say they stayed in a cave and others say the castle. It was in the cave there that he supposedly encountered the spider, whose determination to rebuild its web encouraged him to return to his homeland to fight for the Scottish crown and independence.

Directions

Bruce's Cave is located in the cliffs near the East Lighthouse and Altacarry Head on Rathlin Island. The cave can be best viewed from the sea.

Please Note

The cave is on private property and is not accessible to the public.

Co-ordinates

55.3005, -6.1722
(nearest public access)

3. Coleraine

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II visited Coleraine on four occasions - in 1953, 1977, 2007 and 2014. In July 1953, the Royal Train halted at Coleraine Railway Station, where thousands of schoolchildren greeted the Royal Couple. Twenty-four years later, as part of the Silver Jubilee tour in 1977, the Queen visited the New University of Ulster, returning in 2007, to attend a Garden Party hosted by the Secretary of State.

In 2014, she laid a wreath at the town's war memorial in memory of all Irishmen who had made the supreme sacrifice in World War I.

Co-ordinates

Coleraine Railway Station
55.1337, -6.6626

Ulster University 55.1495, -6.6750

Coleraine War Memorial
55.1316, -6.6710



Image courtesy of Cuil Rathain
Historical & Cultural Centre

4. Dalriada School

In AD 502, Fergus, son of King Erc and Prince of the Dalriada kingdom in North Antrim, with his two brothers, Lorne and Angus, crossed over and founded the kingdom of Argyle ('the Eastern Gael'), or Scottish Dalriada, and so began the long history of Gaelic Scotland.

The kings of Dalriada had their seat at Dunseverick, a few miles from Ballymoney, and through them the British Royal House traces its descent from the high kings of Ireland. Dalriada School, founded in 1878, is named in honour of this kingdom.

Image courtesy of Dalriada School

Directions

Dalriada School is located in Ballymoney. From the A26 turn on to the B62 towards Ballymoney at the Portrush Road Roundabout. After approx. 1km turn right at the roundabout onto North Road and then take first right onto St James Road. Dalriada School is located approx. 100m on the left.

Please Note

This is a working school and there is strictly no access to either the school grounds or buildings.

Co-ordinates

55.0728, -6.5209
(nearest public access)



5. The Dark Hedges

The Dark Hedges is a popular landmark made up of curved beech trees which form intertwined patterns along a country road. Planted by the Stuart family in 1775, the canopy of trees once welcomed visitors to Gracehill House, the family's Georgian mansion.

They now welcome a multitude of tourists; a result of the location featuring as the 'Kingsroad' in the HBO series *Game of Thrones*. The land at Gracehill had been given by King James I to his cousin, who drowned on his journey to Ireland. The estate was then passed to his grandson, William Stuart, and remained in the family for generations.

Directions

The Dark Hedges is located on Bregagh Road, between Ballinlea Road and Ballykenver Road. From the A26 turn onto the B147 Kirk Road to Stranocum, continuing for approx. 10km onto Ballinlea Road. Bregagh Road is located on your right.

Please Note

Vehicular access to Bregagh Road is restricted; use the nearby carpark.

Co-ordinates

55.1349, -6.3815

Image courtesy of Erin Honeyford



6. Drumceatt

Drumceatt Mound, also known as Mullagh Hill and Daisy Hill, just outside Limavady, is traditionally held to be the site where the great Convention of Drumceatt was held in AD 590.

It was attended by all the petty kings of Ireland and by King Aidan from the Irish colony, the Kingdom of Dalriada, Argyll in the Land of the Picts. St Columba and Aidan travelled from Iona to attend. Aidan received his independence from the High King of Ireland at the Convention and the small colony expanded to become Scotland.

Directions

From the A2 bypass at Limavady turn onto the B69 at the roundabout following the signs to the Roe Park Resort. Park at the hotel, walk around it to access a pathway at the rear of the building leading to a brick wall and up a moderate slope. Take a pathway to the right along the edge of the golf course to the Mullagh Hill (100 metres in height), the site of the Convention.

Co-ordinates

55.0380, -6.9581

Image courtesy of Causeway Coast
and Glens Museum Services

7. The Priory of Dungiven

The priory stands on the site of early churches founded in the 5th and 7th centuries. The O'Cahans invited the monks of the Augustinian Order to found a monastery here in the early 1100s.

Within the priory is a magnificent tomb, said to be that of Cooley-na-Gal O' Cahan, decorated with images of gallows, Scottish mercenaries. Sons of Scottish and French nobility and royalty came here to be educated both academically and militarily.

The legendary, Finvola the Gem of the Roe, is interred somewhere in the surrounding graveyard.

Directions

The Priory is signposted at the east end of Dungiven off Chapel Road. Turn onto Priory Lane where limited car parking is available. The Priory is approx. 400m down a gravel and concrete path with a footbridge over the new A6 dual carriageway.

The site can also be accessed from Bleach Green.

Co-ordinates

54.9174, -6.9217



Image courtesy of Causeway Coast
and Glens Museum Services

8. Dunseverick

One of the five great royal roads from Tara, seat of the high kings of Ireland, led to Dunseverick.

The first castle on the site is said to have been built by Sobhairce, who ruled Ireland with his brother Cermna Finn. The great fortress, on an outcrop of rock surrounded on three sides by the ocean, is named after him - Dun Sobhairce, now Dunseverick.

The site has long been important; it was a manorial centre of the Earls of Ulster, a stronghold of the O'Cahans and later in the 1560s, of Sorley Boy MacDonnell.

Directions

Dunseverick Castle is located along Causeway Road. From Bushmills follow the signs for the Giant's Causeway, taking the A2 Whitepark Road. After approx. 1.75km turn left onto Causeway Road. Follow the road for approx. 6km and the carpark for the site is on the left (55.2376, -6.4494).

Co-ordinates

55.2384, -6.4483

Image courtesy of David Getty



9. Garvagh Pyramid

Garvagh forest is the location of a structure more commonly associated with Egypt and the pharaohs - Northern Ireland's only pyramid.

The pyramid was erected by Lord Garvagh in the 19th century, after he had taken the Grand Tour of Egypt. It was intended as his burial vault but was never used as he died in France in 1840; his wife chose not to be buried in the pyramid and it was later sealed shut.

The pyramid, set on a raised platform 21 feet square, stands 21 feet high.

Directions

Garvagh Pyramid is located in Garvagh Forest a short distance west of the car park. The forest car park is located just off Garvagh's Main Street at Ballinameen Bridge over the Agivey River.

New cycling and walking trails, managed by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, have been developed in the forest.

Co-ordinates

54.9791, -6.6909

Image courtesy of Samuel Cole



10. The Giant's Sconce

The Giant's Sconce, on Sconce Hill, with extensive views in all directions was the ideal location for a hilltop fort.

The oval Iron Age hilltop fort, 50m by 30m, with walls between 5m and 8m thick, is thought to be the ancient fortress of Dun Ceithirn – Ceithern's Fort.

Ceithern was a descendant of Niall of the Nine Hostages, the legendary High King of Ireland. The Ulster Cycle, a medieval collection of Irish legends, refers to the fort as a royal site.

Directions

The Giant's Sconce is located in Springwell Forest. From Coleraine take the A2 Castlerock Road. Turn left onto Kings Road then right onto the Carthall Road. After about 400m go straight across the roundabout and continue along the B201 Windyhill Road for approx. 7.25km. There is a forest track on your right with space to park one or two cars (55.1054, -6.7946).

Co-ordinates

55.1079, -6.7911

Image courtesy of Binevenagh and Coastal Lowlands Partnership Scheme



11. Glentaisie

Glentaisie, the northernmost of the nine Glens of Antrim, is named after the legendary figure of Princess Taisie, who was gifted the lands and the Dun of Taisie at Broomore as a wedding gift from her father, King Dorm/Donn of Rathlin.

During her wedding celebrations to Conghal, heir to the kingdom of Ireland, King Nabgodon of Norway arrived to claim her for his bride.

Having heard reports of the beauty of Taisie he was eager to make her his queen. In the great battle which ensued King Nabgodon was killed.

Image courtesy of Erin Honeyford



Image courtesy of Ballycastle Museum

Directions

From Ballycastle take A44 towards Coleraine/Ballymena. Follow the sign post for Glentaisie, taking left onto B15 Hillside Road. Glentaisie lies to the north of Knocklayde Mountain.

Co-ordinates

55.1832, -6.2745

12. Gortnamoyagh Inauguration Stone

Located in Gortnamoyagh Forest, it is said that this stone was used in the medieval period for the inauguration and crowning of local chieftains.

There are well worn indentations where the chieftain's feet and the heel of his spear would have been placed during the ceremony. The site has also been referred to as St Onan's Rock, the Giant's Track, Shane's Leap and St Adamnan's Footprints.

One of the local stories about the rock said that a giant leaped from the rock to the old church at Errigal, a distance of some 800 metres.

Image courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Services



Image courtesy of Rebekah Stewart

Directions

From A29 Carhill Road take B64 Churchtown Road from Garvagh (signposted to Dungiven), after approx. 2.75km turn right onto Ballyrogan Road. Travel approx. 0.5km turn left onto Gortnamoyagh Road and there is a forest track on the left, with space to park one or two cars (54.9793, -6.7417).

Co-ordinates

54.9756, -6.7421

13. King of Ballycastle

Until 1971, a mysterious statue group stood overlooking the tennis courts in Ballycastle. The statues were said to have been brought to Ireland from India and, according to local legend, depicted either river gods or, more commonly, a group of devils.

Now housed in Ballycastle Museum, recent research suggests that the statues date to the 2nd-1st century BC, much older than previously thought. Rather than devils, the statuary probably show an armoured Greek king or god and two female figures (perhaps nymphs); a legacy of the campaigns of Alexander the Great, long before the British domination of India.



Image courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Museum Services



Image courtesy of the Chronicle & Constitution archives

Directions

The remaining statue fragments are on display in Ballycastle Museum, 59 Castle Street, Ballycastle, Co. Antrim BT54 6AS. The museum opens seasonally, check opening times at <https://niarchive.org/ballycastlemuseum> or by emailing cms@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk.

Co-ordinates

55.2004, -6.2517

14. King's Fort

King's Fort, at the foot of Donald's Hill, near Drumsurn, commands a strong defensive position with magnificent views up the Kilhoyle Valley towards Dungiven, south to the Sperrin Mountains and across the Foyle Valley to the west.

King's Fort, its old name was Dun Conchubaire, is an early medieval (c. AD 400-1100) royal site steeped in local legend. One story tells of the demise of the witch Meabh; another, that Brian Boru ousted the Danes from the fort. It is one of the best-preserved ringforts in Ulster and the *OS Memoirs* described it as "a Danish fort of wonderful strength and large dimensions..."

Directions

From the A37 Broadstone Road from Coleraine to Limavady, take the Drumsurn Road and continue for approx. 8km. Turn onto Kilhoyle Road and continue for approx. 2km.

Please Note

The site is located on private property, however, the Ulster Way passes nearby and is sign posted from Kilhoyle Road.

Co-ordinates

54.9897, -6.8449 (nearest public vehicular access)



Image courtesy of Causeway Coast
and Glens Museum Services

15. Lurigethan

Lurigethan stands tall above the village of Cushendall with the plateau forming one side of the Queen of the Glens, Glenariff.

The defensive qualities of the site were apparent to the ancient rath builders of Ireland, and a prehistoric promontory fort can be found on the summit.

Legend says that Finn MacCool and Ossian were born on Lurigethan. The fort is said to be the fortress of the warrior Goll Mac Morna, Finn MacCool's arch enemy. Goll (one-eyed) lost an eye in a battle in which he killed Finn's father.

Directions

From Cushendall follow the signpost for Glenballyemon Scenic Route onto the B14 Ballyemon Road. Follow the road for approx. 2.5km and there is access to Lurigethan Mountain by foot via a small gate on your left (co-ordinates 55.0669, -6.0849).

Co-ordinates

55.0635, -6.0795

Image courtesy of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council



16. Mountsandel

Mountsandel, on the east bank of the River Bann, today enjoys the claim to being the site of the earliest known settlement in Ireland. However, the site was one of the chief residences of ancient Ulster and often featured in the stories of long-ago heroes.

Mountsandel may be a corruption of Kilsanctum, a church built by Sir John de Courcey in 1197. Some sources say that Mountsandel, Dundha Bhean, also called Rathmore Magh Elinue, built by Conarie Riada at the end of the first century was an ancient palace of the kings of Dalriada.

Directions

The site is located in Mountsandel Wood, off Mountsandel Road. From the A26 Newbridge Road, at the Wattstown Roundabout follow the signpost for Mountsandel on to the Knocklynn Road. Continue approx. 800m to the end of the road and turn right. The entrance to Mountsandel Wood is approx. 300m on the left; there is a small car park at the entrance.

Co-ordinates

55.1163, -6.6641 (Mesolithic site: 55.1166, -6.6629)

Image courtesy of Causeway Coast
and Glens Museum Services

17. Robert Quigg VC Memorial

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II unveiled the statue commemorating Sergeant Robert Quigg V.C., in Bushmills, on 28 June 2016.

Private Robert Quigg, 12th Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions on 1 July 1916, the opening day of the Battle of the Somme. He went out seven times looking for his platoon commander, Lieutenant Harry Macnaughton, who was reported missing, and on each occasion brought back an injured soldier.

The life-size bronze statue dressed in WW1 uniform, standing 'at ease' holding a rifle, stands on a plinth of seven Causeway stones, representing the seven soldiers Robert Quigg rescued from the battlefield.

Directions

From Bushmills follow the signs for the Giant's Causeway. The statue is located on the B147 Main Street/ A2 Whitepark Road, approx. 150m beyond the war memorial.

Co-ordinates

55.2074, -6.5236



18. Royal Portrush Golf Club

Royal Portrush Golf Club, originally called the County Golf Club, was formally opened in 1888. The club was granted permission by The Duke of York (later King George V) in 1892 to use the prefix 'Royal' in its name.

In 1895 the club changed its name to Royal Portrush Golf Club. Queen Elizabeth II visited Royal Portrush clubhouse during her 90th birthday tour in 2016.

According to local legend, 'The War Hollow' on the golf links at Royal Portrush, was the scene of a battle between the chieftains of the Route and Magnus Barefoot, King of Norway, in AD 1102.

Directions

From Portrush take the A2 Bushmills Road and Royal Portrush Golf Club is situated approx. 500m on the left.

Co-ordinates

55.1996, -6.6357



Image courtesy of Nick Wall

19. Slaghtaverty

In a field in Slaghtaverty, a townland near Garvagh, there is a prehistoric cairn, Sleacht Abhartach (Slaght Averty) or the Dwarf's Grave. This is the setting for the story of Abhartach.

Abhartach was a local chieftain who was greatly feared by his people. They eventually called on a neighbouring chieftain, some say Finn MacCool, to rid them of the evil little man. Abhartach possessed magical powers and the chieftain had to slay him three times before he was finally vanquished.

Some say Arbhartach drank the blood of his victims, and it has been suggested that this story was the inspiration for Bram Stoker's Dracula.

Directions

From Garvagh take the A29 Carhill Road (signposted for Cookstown). After approx. 1.5km turn right onto the Magheramore Road. Continue for approx. 2.7km along Magheramore Road, Tirkeeran Road onto the Glen Road. The cairn is located in a field approx. 500m up Slaghtavery Lane (on your left).

Co-ordinates

54.9602, -6.7196 (nearest public access)



Image courtesy of Causeway Coast
and Glens Museum Services

20. St Guaire's Parish Church, Aghadowey

Set on a site of great antiquity, the current church dates from 1797. St Guaire, thought to be a corruption of Jerome, is said to have founded a monastery here in the 7th century. It was noted in 1622, that the church was in ruins and was to be repaired. The church was rebuilt in 1797 with a tower and spire.

There are two bells in the tower, the older bell is dated 1695 and was presented by Queen Anne to her chaplain, Reverend Robert Gage. The descendants of Reverend Gage presented the bell to the church.

Directions

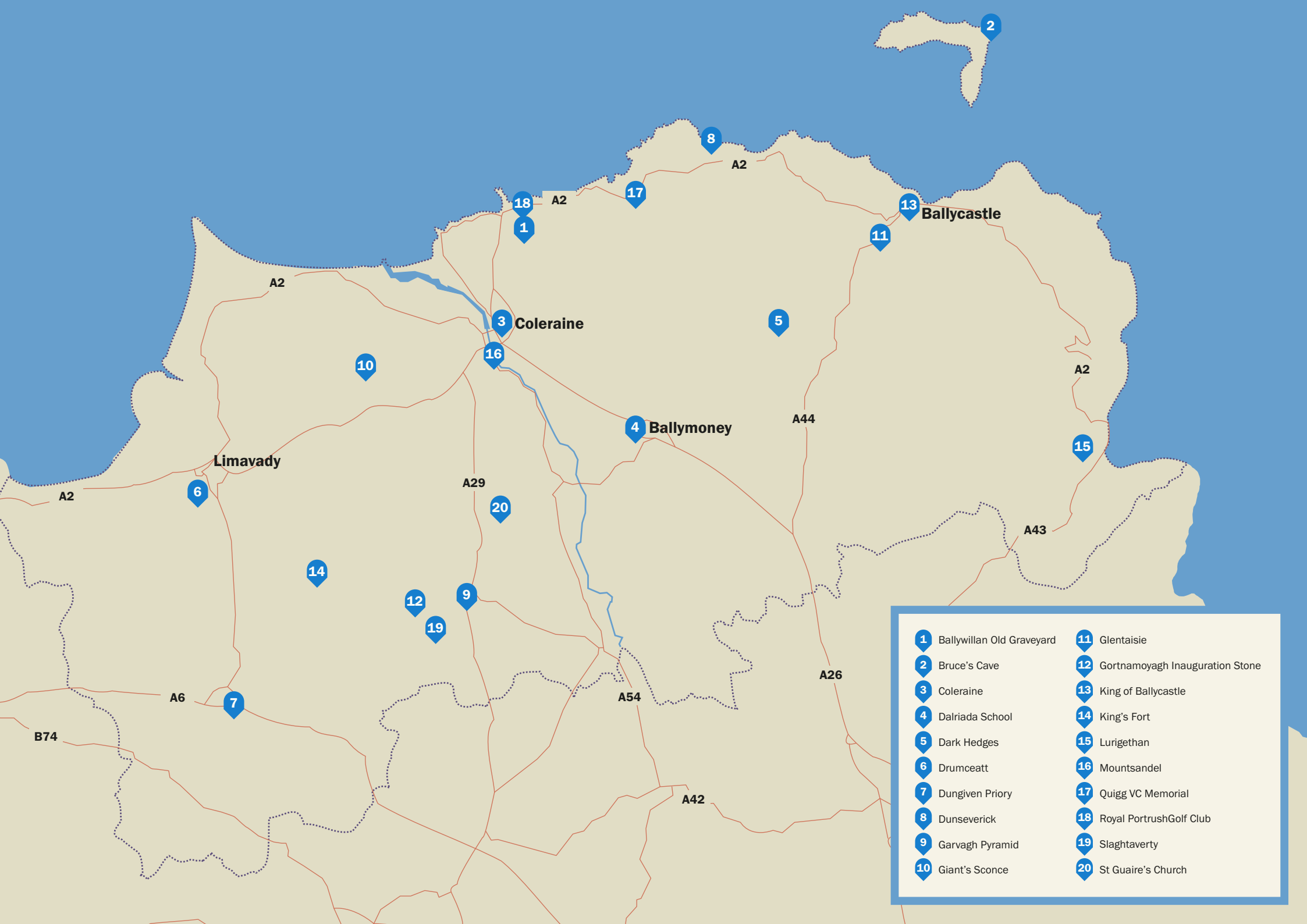
From Coleraine take the A29 Drumcroon Road, after approx. 7.5 miles turn left onto Greenhill Road. Follow the Greenhill Road onto Ardreagh Road and the church is located on the left approx. 200 metres after a sharp left.

Co-ordinates

55.0291, -6.6576

Image courtesy of Causeway Coast
and Glens Museum Services





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