

Heritage Trails at Colin Glen Forest Park/ Conairí Oidhreacht

Colin Glen offers Heritage Trails through a stunning wooded glen right in the city!
The Heritage Trail can be a circular stroll along the five bridges of the Colin Glen Forest Park . Or the more adventurous can follow longer trails into the Upper Glen and all the way to Divis Mountain (Managed by the National Trust).

Visitors can learn about:

- The Colin River's role in the Belfast linen industry
- The cultural heritage of the Belfast Hills
- Belfast and the United Irishmen in 1798
- The Penal Times and Mass rocks
- Old Belfast songs and ballads
- Treelore, folklore and the myths of Colin Glen
- The unique geology and dinosaurs of Colin Glen



Our trained staff offer guided tours for groups and schools.

Info. and map for self-guided trails available at the Forest Park Centre

There are also our Heritage Trail traditional music events that explore ballads and songs of the linen industry and the Belfast Hills.

Tá conairí oidhreacht ar fáil as Gaeilge fosta!

Self Guided Short Trails

Use the Heritage Trail Guide with the Forest Park Trail Map to self guide around the Lower Glen. The Heritage Trails follows the Colin River:
Leaving the Visitor's Center Car Park, you will soon come to the first of five bridges that cross the Colin River. Continue up-stream and cross at the Gamekeeper's Bridge. The next bridge is the Weir Bridge. Continue up-stream with the river on your left. The fourth bridge is the Tri-Bridge. You can cross the Tri-Bridge and return back down through the park, or explore more of Lower Glen using the Forest Park Trail Map.



Longer Trails

More adventurous walkers can continue up-stream to the Glen (or Cantilever) Bridge. This links the Colin Glen Forest Park to the Upper Colin Glen (a National Trust property) and connects to the Divis to Dixon Trail. This trail can be walked to Glenside Community Park, or all the way to Divis Mountain.

This trail takes in the heritage of the wider Colin area, and the Belfast Hills. The longer trails are strenuous. Walking boots and protective clothing are recommended.

Trained staff guides are available for all walks and tours of the glen.



The 1823 map of Belfast shows how the town was a perfect location for linen production.

The arc of the Belfast Hills provided many streams and rivers to power water wheels for the mills. The rivers also provided the huge amounts of water and lands needed for the bleaching process. The industry boomed. 'Linenopolis' developed rapidly. Belfast was the perfect port for linen export to the world. In 1800 the population of Belfast was around 20,000. By 1900 it had risen to almost 350,000 and Belfast was a thriving industrial city.



This 1904 map of Colin Glen and Suffolk shows the importance of the Colin River in linen production.

You can see: sluices, weirs, a mill race, mill ponds and huge bleach greens clearly marked. Suffolk Linen Mill is also marked along with Kilwee Bleach Works and a small beetling mill.

Colin Glen and Placenames.

The Colin River begins with a number of small tributaries that join at the Head of the Waters in the townland of Tornaroy. Here they create the Colin River. The river courses through the townlands of Hannahstown, Tornagrough, Slievengravery, Englishtown, Ballycullo, Tom-of-the-Tae-End and Dunmurry. Townlands on either side of the river include Lagmore, Poleglass, Twinbrook, Slievenacloy, and Mullaghglass. Most of the names are of Irish or Ulster Scots origins.



Logainmneacha

Tosaíonn abhainn an ghleanna nuair a thagann roinnt sruthanna beaga le chéile sa bhaile fearainn Tornaroy. Síleann an abhainn síos an gleann, ag dul trí bhaile eile fearainn. Feicfidh tú thíos go bhfuil baint ag an Ghaeilge, nó ag Albainis-Uladh, leis an chuid is mó de na logainmneacha seo. Seo cuid acu:

Hannahstown: is ón sloinne Albanach Hanna(h) a thagann an logainm seo. Tháinig an chlann Hanna(h) go Cúige Uladh idir 1640 agus 1690. Tá an logainm seo in úsáid ó 1780 ar aghaidh.

Englishtown: is dócha gur Shasanaigh seachas Albanaigh a chuir fúthu sa bhaile fearainn seo, rud a thug a logainm dó.

Slievenacloy: ciallaíonn seo sliabh na cloiche, agus b'fhéidir gur gallán nó carraig Aifrin ó aimsir na bpéindlithe atá i gceist leis an chloch.

Ballycullo: is ón Ghaeilge "baile chúil eo" a tháinig an logainm seo; is crann í an eo (yew tree).

Dunmurry: tagann an logainm seo ón Ghaeilge Dún Muirígh. Tá móta Normannach sa sráidbhaile a tógadh ar shean-dhún Éireannach.

Tom-of-the-Tae-End: logainm aisteach agus rúnda é seo. Is ionann Tom-of-the-Tae -End agus an chraiceann ina gcuirtear hagiois na hAlban. B'fhéidir gur thug plandóir Albanach an t-ainm ar an áit mar gheall ar a cruth agus a méid.

Suffolk: ní ainm bhaile fearainn é seo, ach ainm a thagann ó Suffolk House. Áit a raibh John Mc Cance ina chónaí go luath sa 19ú aois.



Useful Links/Nascanna:

www.belfasthills.org -
For info. on public sites around the Belfast Hills

www.nationaltrust.org.uk -
For info. On Upper Colin Glen, Divis and the Black Mountain

info@ulsterwildlifetrust.org -
For info. On Slievenacloy Nature Reserve

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Need a break from the city?
Why not come to Colin Glen Forest Park and walk the Heritage Trail through a stunning wooded glen?

Guided tours for groups and schools available
Info. and map for short self-guided trails available at the Forest Park Centre. Café and Car Parking facilities

How to find us:

By Car- The Park is situated on the Stewartstown Road just 10 minutes from Belfast City centre. Leave the M1 at Junction 3. Turn right off the slip road under the M1 bridge. Go to the 'T' junction at the end of Blacks Rd, turn left. The brown tourist sign directs you to the Colin Glen Car Park and Mona's café on the right.

Bus services (any Metro 10) and black taxis from Belfast city centre can also drop you at Colin Glen Forest Park Centre.
T: 02890 614115
F: 02890 601694
E: heritage@colinglenrust.org
W: www.colinglenrust.org
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Heritage Trails
at Colin Glen Forest Park



Colin Glen Forest Park Heritage Trails/Conairí Oidhreachta Ghleann Chollann

Colin Glen Forest Park Heritage Trails

Colin Glen Heritage Trails are adaptable for different groups. They can be tailored for children in and around the forest park, or extend to Glenside Community Wood and Slievenacloy Nature Reserve. We also offer longer walks to Black Mountain, Divis, and beyond. Sign up for one of our heritage walks and learn more about the Glen and the surrounding hills.

Conairí Oidhreachta Ghleann Chollann

Tá Conairí Oidhreachta Ghleann Chollann inathraithe - téann siad a fhad le Pobalchoill Thaobh an Ghleanna agus le hAnaclann Dúlra Sliabh na Cloiche, nó fíú siúlóidí is faide a fhad le Sliabh Dubh, le Dubh Ais agus ar an taobh thall dóibh. Tar linn ar na conairí oidhreachta agus foghlaim níos mó faoin Ghleann agus faoi na cnoic máguaird.



Dinosaurs and Fossils

The Glen's environment has changed through time. Over millions of years there have been dramatic changes in world sea levels and climate. Colin Glen was once covered in a deep sea. The Colin riverbed is the best place in Belfast to uncover dinosaur fossils!



Folklore and Treelore

There are many myths, fables, folklore and treelore associated with Colin Glen. In Irish folklore the fairies inhabit the secretive places in woods and along rivers. They made their fairy music, or *ceolta sí*, in glens. It was best not to disturb them or there would be a price to pay!

The Black Bull of Colin Glen

The Black Bull of Colin Glen is a famous traditional story that tells of Den McGaw and his battles with the fairy folk of Colin Glen.

...Bhí an Tarbh Dubh sna sála air, ag satait an talaimh lena chrúba dubha agus ag scoilteadh na gcnoc le tréan a fheirge!

'Linenopolis'

Colin Glen was important in the linen industry from the 1700's. By the 19th century Belfast had become the world centre of linen production. It had the advantage of the many rivers and streams that flowed from the Belfast Hills. Irish linen was Belfast's major export and it was famous throughout the world. Belfast was even known as 'Linenopolis'. In the 19th century a linen mill was established on the Suffolk Road by the McCance family. The river was diverted along an aqueduct or 'mill race' and the water turned a wheel that powered the mill. The remains of the 'mill race' can be seen at the weir bridge. The old mill still stands on Suffolk Road. Water wheels used in mills were an ancient form of 'hydro-power'!

An Línéadach Éireannach agus Stair Ghleann Chollann

Bhí baint mhór ag an Línéadach Éireannach i stair Abhainn Chollann, Ghleann Chollann agus Ghleann an Lagáin. Thóg William McCance léas ar thalamh i nGleann Chollann ón Mharcas Donegall in 1793, agus bhí an talamh sin an-chuí le línéadach a dhéanamh agus a bhánú. Bhí clann McCance ábalta an t-uisce a ghlacadh ón abhainn a bhí sa Ghleann amach ar bhóthar uisce leis an roth mór ar an mhuileann a oibriú. Thug an roth fuinneamh don mhuileann, atá go fóill ann ar bhóthar Suffolk!



Bleach Greens

The Glen was a perfect location for 'bleach greens' and the old bleaching process that turned brown linen white. The McCance family ran a large estate and managed the Glen for generations.

Bhain McCance úsáid as an Ghleann le héin a chothú fosta agus scaoil cuairteoirí don spórt iad!



McCance's Glen

John McCance (1772-1835) is the best known member of the McCance family. He inherited Colin Glen and the Suffolk estate. There is even a famous Belfast ballad about John McCance:

'At the foot of Divis mountain my dwelling is to be seen where there runs a purling stream besides my father's green, well covered o'er with linencloth which was wrought round Tandragee and purchased by the young McCance, and a boy named Darby Gray' - **Young McCance**

Colin Glen Forest Park centre was officially opened in 1993 and is today an important community education resource that explores the rich heritage of the Colin area. Colin Glen is the main gateway to the Belfast Hills and it is a site of natural beauty in the heart of the city! The ancient Glen is like a time machine. It tells a micro-history of Belfast city and the Lagan Valley. On our heritage trails you can travel back through time to explore the linen industry, the Industrial Revolution, the 'Penal Times', the rebellion of 1798, and further - to the world of fossils and the ancient archaeology of the Belfast Hills.

Oscloaíodh Páirc Foraoise Ghleann Chollann in 1993 mar áit do chuiditheoirí agus do pháistí scoile a bhíonn ag foghlaim faoi cheantar an Ghleanna. Tugann daoine 'scamhóg ghlas Bhéal Feirste' ar an Ghleann mar coinníonn sé an t-aer glan.



The Glen was once a dark, scarred and neglected place with sites known as Eastwood's Tip and Rosbotham's Tip. Paths could not be walked and the Colin river was choked with pollution and waste.

Bhí poill bhruscair sa Ghleann darbh ainm Poll Bruscair Rosbotham agus Poll Bruscair Eastwood. Cheannaigh an rialtas an talamh sna 1980í agus thosaigh sé ag glanadh fhad agus leithead na habhann. .



Glen Bridge/
Droichead an Ghleanna

Tri Bridge/
Tridhroichead

Weir Bridge/
Droichead na Cora

Game Keeper's Bridge/
Droichead an Mhaoir

Suspension Bridge/
Droichead Crochta

Colin Mass Rock

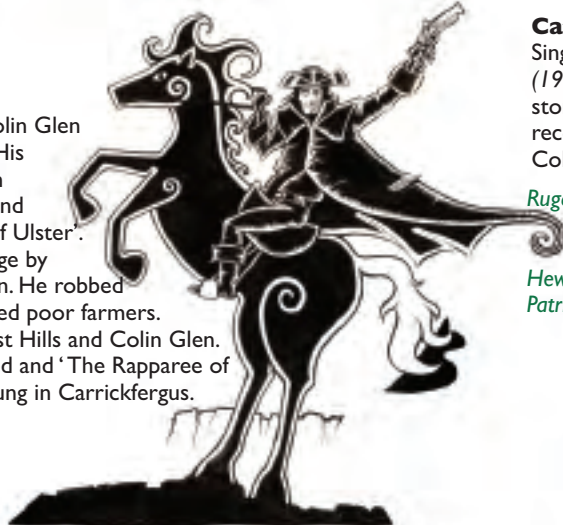
During the 'Penal Times' of the 17th and 18th century Catholic mass was banned. Priests were often captured and killed by 'priest hunters' working for the English Crown. Belle Steele was a Presbyterian woman from Poleglass who would keep watch as mass was said in secret at the 'mass rock'.



'An raibh tú ar an charraig, nó an bhfaca tú féin mo ghrá, nó an bhfaca tú gile agus finne agus scéimh na mná, nó an bhfaca tú an t-úll ba chumhra is ba mhíle bláth, nó an bhfaca tú mo vailintín, an bhfuil sí a cloí mar 'táim?'

-Amhrán Gaeilge faoi Charraig an Aifrinn.

The Highwayman of Colin Glen was Ness O'Haughan. His farming family had been dispossessed of their land during the 'Plantation of Ulster'. O'Haughan took revenge by becoming a highwayman. He robbed the rich and often helped poor farmers. He hid out in the Belfast Hills and Colin Glen. In 1720 he was captured and 'The Rapparee of the Belfast Hills' was hung in Carrickfergus.



Cathal O' Byrne (1876 - 1957)

Singer, poet and author of *As I Roved Out* (1946), he was one of Belfast city's great story tellers. Many of his tales and sagas record the legends, myths and history of Colin Glen and the Colin area.

Rugadh O' Byrne in 1876. Chuaigh sé isteach i gConradh na Gaeilge i mBéal Feirste agus idir na cairde a bhí aige bhí John Hewitt, Roger Casement, Maud Gonne agus Patrick Pearse.



Mill Workers

Mill workers laboured for long hours in harsh environments for little pay. Many men contracted chest infections from flax dust, or 'pouce' during the 'roughing' and 'hackling' process. In spinning rooms workers also contracted 'mill fever' and many bronchial disorders. Mills were not pleasant places to work!

Old Bleaching Process

Bleaching needed a constant supply of water and lots of land. The cloth was bleached outdoors on 'bleach greens'. As engineering and technology developed the bleaching was done indoors by new chemical processes.



The McCance family also used Colin Glen for gamekeeping and bird shoots. One gamekeeper was called Miller and he came from Scotland. He planted much of the laurel you see in the Glen today. It was used to hide birds such as pheasant and partridge. The old gamekeeper's bridge was a toll bridge to Hannahstown that cost a penny to cross. Today it is a penny wishing bridge to remember Miller. Drop a penny and make a wish as you cross!



Over 150,000 tonnes of rubbish was once dumped in Colin Glen and 1,000's of tonnes removed from the river during the clean up! A Boeing 747 aeroplane weighs about 100 tonnes - imagine the effort to clear this mountain of waste!



The army of volunteers and staff worked tirelessly. Soon over 5,000 metres of trails were constructed along with five bridges. People could now walk the Glen again!



60,000 of the trees in Colin Glen were planted by school children from all over Belfast. With their help the forest slowly came to life and breathed again. A sanctuary for wildlife and the community was created and continues to grow.