



Brandon K. Colvert

By B. Colvert

The Magic of Sligo

Occasionally IPA Journal makes a foray into the Regions seeking hidden gems to encourage our members and visitors to travel to the area and enjoy the delights on offer. The last tour ventured into Dolmen & Plains in February. The miserable weather through the summer proved to be too daunting for additional treks; IPA Journal challenges our readers to forward ten good reasons why your locality should be featured in future editions. This month Sligo/Leitrim in Colmcille Region lures me.

PA Journal has two correspondents; Joe Lynch (Magnetic North) and Dave McEllin (North by Northwest) so you might well ask what more can be discovered? Those two are members of the Executive Committee and together with the Regional Chairman, Joe Storey, Tom Lyons, Michael Reynolds, Michael Kearns, Willie Maye (NEC) Et Gerard Murphy, Colmcille is well represented. It takes courage to try and gild the lily but even the casual visitor will be astonished at the variety of attractions in Sligo. That is one of the reasons why an IPA holiday home has been established there at 125 Millbrook, Riverside.



Second floor apartment just minutes walk from the city centre

In a short pleasant stroll from the IPA apartment, along the Garavogue River, one is in the heart of the city with shops, restaurants, theatres, museums, art galleries and the wonderful old Dominican Monastery founded in the 13th century.

Sligo Cathedral City is easily reached by car, coach, train or by air. Within a short drive from the city one can enjoy spectacular scenery, seaside, lakes, mountains, castles,



Panoramic view of Glencar waterfall

prehistoric sites, hill walks and just across the Leitrim border beautiful Glencar waterfall.

Picturesque Rosses Point offers a long sandy beach. Nearby is the links golf course renowned for the West of Ireland Golf Championship at Easter. On the shore is the excellent Yacht Club that has hosted national and international events in Sligo Bay. A short journey northeast of Rosses Point is Drumcliffe the site of an ancient monastery founded by St Colmcille AD 575 and nearby the grave of W B Yeats (1865–1939) bearing the epitaph *Cast a cold eye on life, on death, Horsemen pass by*. A short drive to the west is Lissadel House, open to the public. The estate has the largest winter refuge for the barnacle goose, in Ireland; it is said that cunning Irish fisher folk contrived to get a dispensation from Rome to evade the strict Friday abstinence by seeking permission to eat *báirneach*. This sortie north of Sligo has not exhausted the treats the area has to offer, indeed you could spend many days visiting Mullaghmore, Classiebawn, and even a boat trip to Inishmurray to visit the famous monastery founded by St Molaise in the 6th century, where Colmcille's penitential journey began.

West of Sligo City is the Strandhill peninsula jutting out into Sligo Bay. I would suggest that a visit to Carrowmore is a must for visitors to this area. In the 19th century Carrowmore had 150 stone-age



Ponies for hire near the Knocknarea hill walk



View of Knocknarea with Queen Maeve's cairn on top

tombs some of which are from the pre 4000 BC era. It is easily the largest necropolis in Europe. From Carrowmore you observe Knocknarea, 329m, on top of which is Queen Maeve's cairn, reputed to be the burial mound of the legendary Queen of Connaught whose cattle raid (Táin Bó Cuailgne) inspired the masterpiece of Irish saga literature; the story – the earliest vernacular epic in western literature – is more than 12 centuries old. The trek to the cairn is a popular hiking route with a well defined path on the south-eastern flank of the hill taking about an hour in the ascent. It provides wonderful views of the nearby

mountains and the coastline. At the base there is a car park and an assembly point for pony trekkers, some of them being available for the ascent to the cairn. (www.irelandonhorseback.com)

At Strandhill there is a small international airport offering connections to ten ports in Britain & Scotland, with Lorient in France and all over Ireland. (www.aerarann.ie/travel_information/destinations.htm). The Sligo North/West Aero Club is based here. Strandhill has a very challenging links golf course under the looming Knocknarea. It is also renowned for the huge breakers that provide an exciting challenge for surfers.

In this brief introduction to the beauty and pleasures of Sligo I wish to urge the reader to explore the City and the surrounds; I promise you will be amazed and delighted especially when you discover hidden gems. As an example I will direct you to a spectacular location that can be found only by the most diligent search. As you traverse the Strandhill to Ballysodare road you leave the speed limit sign behind; about 1.5km along the road you will observe a narrow spur road to your left, drive up the hill and about 1.5km on you will find a small car park on your right hand side. Walk down the hill for about 75 metres and you will find a very obscure entrance with iron gates on your left. Proceed with caution, there may be fairies about, as you descend into 'The Glen' you are surrounded by mystery as you gaze in awe at the valley framed by the cleft in the crag. If you can drag yourself away from this 'The Hidden Ireland' be assured that there are many

more treasures and adventures to lure you back Sligo, more thrills than you will find in Alfred Hitchcock's film 'North by Northwest'.

The Editor invites comments from visitors to Sligo or pictures for inclusion in Picture Parade. Likewise if you believe your area has something special to offer our readers please correspond; there is always room in our 'GUEST' column for new talent.



The Glen

Strandhill Aero Club

