

Heart stopping paths

Consisting of nearly three miles of heart-stopping paths, bridges and tunnels along the magnificent Gobbins cliffs, just a few feet above the waves of the Irish Sea, it was commonly regarded as the most audacious cliff walk in Ireland, if not Europe.

It had many more visitors than the Giant's Causeway and was described in an advertisement as a "new cliff path along the Gobbins, with its ravines, bore caves, natural aquariums.... has no parallel in Europe as a marine walk".

Pictures of the path and the bridges constructed are currently on display at the Ulster Museum and available on the front of this booklet. The path was also covered in the recent BBC Two Series "Coast".

Disrepair

The path fell into disrepair during the Second World war and closed back in 1962. You can see bits of the old walkway from the boat.

With many birds finding "The Gobbins" as their home it is a area often visited by bird watchers.

Whilst derelict and only accessible by boat it remains an amazing testament to the Victorian entrepreneurial spirit, which still brings so many of us to the coast.

Revival?

Larne Borough Council have been lobbying for the path to be restored to its original glory for the last number of years. £30,000 was spent in 1995 on a Feasibility Study to establish if restoration was practical. The total possible cost for restoration is estimated at £6million.

Both NI Tourist Board and Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment have been actively considering whether to fund the project for the last number of years but with other competing funding priorities such as the Giants Causeway Visitors Centre nothing has materialised.

Andrew Muir, September 05

QueerSpace



Gobbins Trip

Sunday 18 September 2005

Souvenir Guide

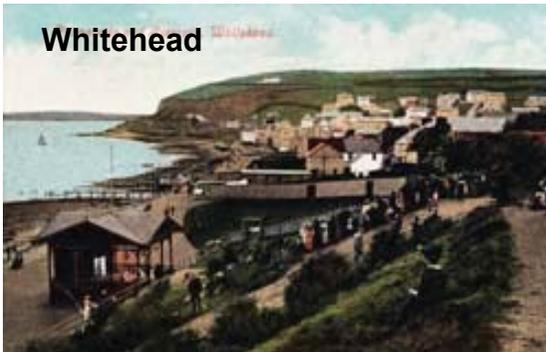


On the right track

The history of the Gobbins is closely related to the development of railways across Northern Ireland in the late 1800s.

The Belfast and Ballymena Railway opened in 1848 from Belfast to Ballymena, Randalstown and Carrickfergus. The name of the company was changed to the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway in 1860.

In 1862 the Carrickfergus and Larne Railway opened and the Larne and Stranraer steamboat service to Scotland began. The extension from Carrickfergus to Larne was important not just because of the cross channel traffic but also due to Whitehead, a pretty seaside town on the east coast of County Antrim, Northern Ireland, lying almost midway between the bustling town of Carrickfergus and the busy port of Larne.



Whitehead is located at the base of Muldersleigh Hill, at the entrance to Belfast Lough, on the Irish Sea, it lies in a small bay between the limestone cliffs of Whitehead and the black volcanic cliff of Blackhead, with the Blackhead lighthouse on top, marking the entrance to Belfast Lough.

Once the railway was extended from Carrickfergus to Larne via Whitehead the town quickly developed as a destination for tourists from Belfast and as an ideal place for the well off people to live and commute to and from Belfast each day via the speedy and reliable train service.

Dean Berkeley Wise

In 1890 the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway (BNCR) acquired the line and Dean Berkeley Wise was appointed, at the age of 35, as Civil Engineer. Berkeley immediately introduced numerous tourist developments on a scale rarely seen before or since.

Besides his normal railway work, he found time to build tea rooms, promenades, beaches, band stands, paths and footbridges at beauty spots along the various lines. He also extended hotels and planned golf courses. In 1889 Glenariff Glen was leased to the railway and opened to the public that summer. Two years later Wise designed and opened a tea room there.

He built the paths and footbridges linking Whitehead and Blackhead now known as "The Gobbins" in 1892.

Berkeley unfortunately retired through ill health in 1906 and died three years later aged 56 in sight of Portrush station. He is probably best remembered for the Gobbins Cliff Path which was opened in 1902.



Blood on the rocks

In 1642 the British army and a group of "planters" attacked the local Irish Magee clan driving the women and children over the cliff edge from their ancient home lands unto the sharp rocks below. Some say even to this day you can see the blood stains on these rocks!

The caves at the bottom of the cliffs are also known to have been used to smuggle all sorts of terrible stuff such as alcohol!