

COMMON GROUND

A creative community engagement by Carol Anne Connolly
commissioned by Greywood Arts

Glenbower Wood

, adjacent to the village of Killeagh in East Cork became a place of exploration for me in 2017 when I was invited by Director of Greywood Arts, Jessica Bonenfant to work on a project entitled Creative Killeagh. Creative Killeagh was devised as a reimagining of a popular traditional festival called May Sunday. Beginning in the 1830s when local landowners, the De Capell Brookes, opened up their land to villagers one day a year, the festival continued in various forms until it ceased to be in the early 1990s. It was Jessica's vision to engage the community in a creative collaboration examining Killeagh's past, present and future, with May Sunday as the principal thread. She invited artists Lisa Cliffe, Kara Sweeney and myself to work as an interdisciplinary team on creative initiatives with the local community for the 'May Weekend' in 2018.

I was immediately taken by Glenbower Wood as a site of enquiry, not only because of its beauty but also because over the centuries it has played an important role in the life and livelihood of Killeagh and its inhabitants. Saved from deforestation due to its topography of steep banks and ravines, Glenbower holds remnants of industrial, colonial and religious history in its place names, its plant life, architecture and archaeological artefacts.

The wood contains 30 hectares of mixed woodland that was purchased by the village through crowdfunding in the 1990s when the return of the woodland to private ownership was imminent. It is now maintained by a voluntary group- Glenbower Wood & Lake Ltd. Committee and is run as a not-for-profit. With this type of ownership being unique in Ireland I wanted to explore the significance of 'community-ownership', and with particular regard to recent infrastructural and arboreal damage, look at how communities can respond creatively to climate changes within their local ecosystems.

Common Ground is a publication designed to document the conversations, walks, events and workshops of the creative enquiry that formed ***Glenbower Talks, The Arboreal Book Club & Groundwork***. It presents the activities and engagements that took place and the creative ideas that emerged in response to historical and natural explorations of the woodland. Glenbower continues to evolve and regenerate and remains of significant importance to the local community. Having completed this stage of enquiry I hope to continue working in this wonderful and inspiring environment and on future collaborations with the local community.

I would especially like to thank Jessica Bonenfant from Greywood Arts for providing the opportunity and continuous support to work with the community of Killeagh and Glenbower Wood and sincerely thank all those who have been involved in this process.

Carol Anne Connolly



At Greywood Arts, we want to make meaningful experiences – or at the very least to put in place the necessary elements for curiosity to be explored and for compelling conversations to be had. Two years ago, we were at the beginning of our journey, testing the waters of how our community would respond to an invitation to collaborate. As newcomers to the village of Killeagh, we wanted to offer an opportunity to engage in creative activities that felt relevant to the people in this specific place, and the revival of the May Sunday festivities seemed the perfect entry point. The festival was already rich with fantastic traditions and clearly heavy with meaning in the collective memory of the village. Its origin in Glenbower Wood provided a lush setting to explore.

We met Carol Anne Connolly in the early days of the Greywood Arts venture, and impressed by her previous community art projects, we followed our instincts and asked her to get involved in the Creative Killeagh project immediately. Along with movement artist Lisa Cliffe and filmmaker Kara Sweeney, Greywood Arts made an ambitious application to Cork County Council's Creative Communities fund, and as rarely happens with such applications, we received exactly the amount of support we requested.

We began with walking in the wood, and with listening.

From the start, listening was key. Our role was to attentively receive the stories, memories and histories that were so generously shared with us. Each strand of Creative Killeagh was shaped in dialogue with the participants. In Carol Anne's work especially, the voices of the participants are essential.

Glenbower Talks set the stage for sharing the information collected about Glenbower Wood. Carol Anne is extraordinarily thoughtful in her approach, and the walks and talks opened up opportunities for collective reflection on this natural wonder at our doorstep. The Arboreal Book Club has framed a continuous dialogue around our multifaceted relationship with trees. Groundwork, supported by a second round of Creative Communities funding, made space for children, teens, and adults to deepen their knowledge of the woodland, and to cultivate their vision for this shared space. This phase of the project was very hands-on, asking participants to look closely, listen deeply, and dream big.

It has been a pleasure observing Carol Anne in her consideration of the wood, the people, and the concept of community ownership from myriad angles. Her process is contemplative and conscientious, but also driven by a sharp intellectual analysis that connects the dots in unexpected ways. There is a fundamental desire to connect with people, and to connect people with each other.

Greywood Arts could not be prouder to have facilitated this project. It has brought our values to the forefront: working in collaboration with people of all ages, hearing their ideas, and responding creatively to what is important to them. Most significantly, many meaningful experiences were made. As we reflect on this chapter, we grow excited to see what is next in the collective shaping of our vision for Glenbower Wood, and for creativity in Killeagh.

Jessica Bonenfant

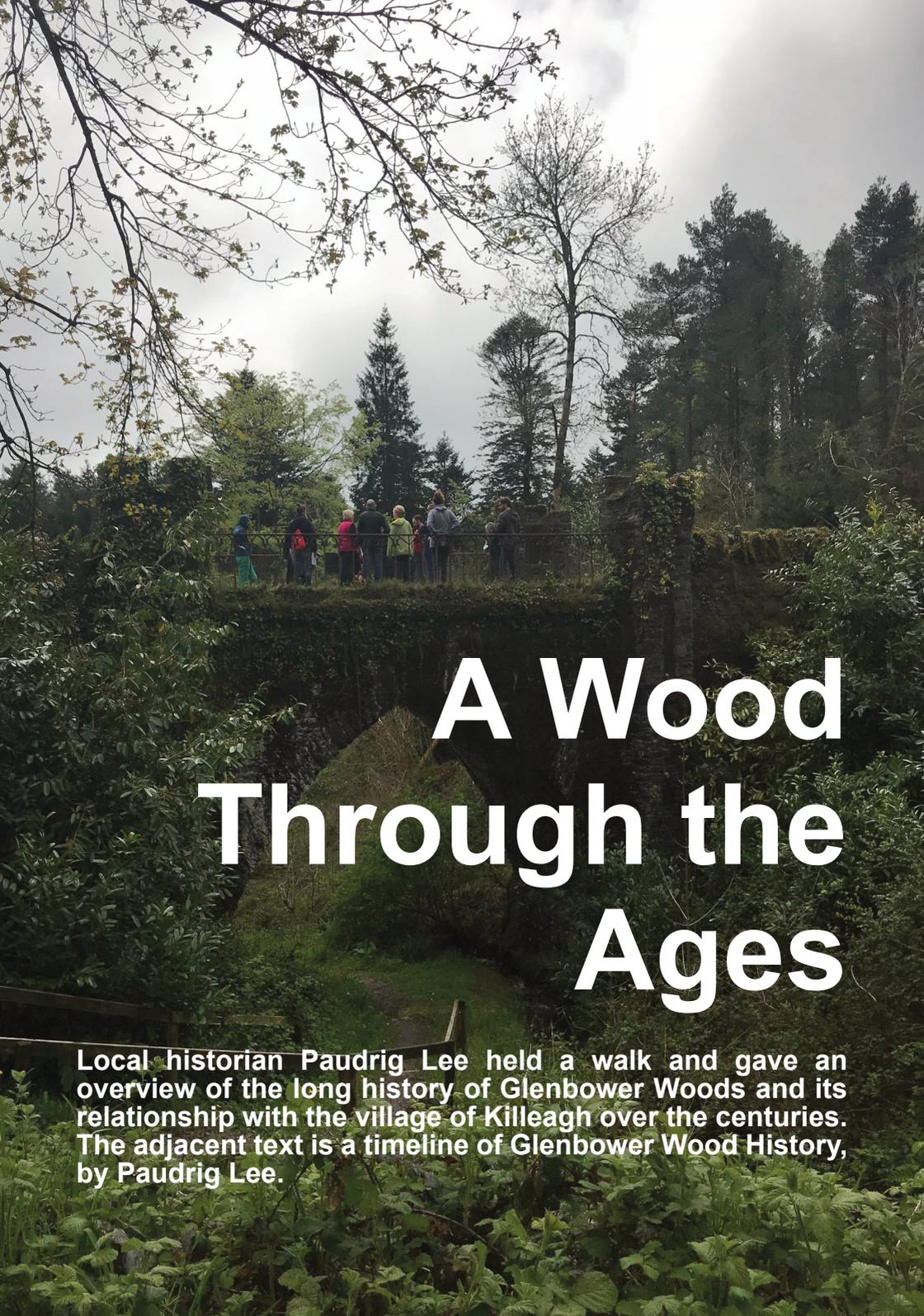


Glenbower Talks

Glenbower Talks was a creative investigation of Glenbower Wood. Its purpose was to create a platform for insight, inspiration and community discussion about the woodland through creative engagement initiatives.

The aim was to explore the layers of history, biodiversity & culture that exist in the woodland, to gain a deeper understanding of this place, to create conversations and build upon the knowledge gained.

Research was conducted through meetings with members of Glenbower Wood & Lake Committee past and present, Killeagh Inch Historical Society and local experts. Based on these interactions and research, a series of creative exploratory walks and engagements were developed for the community and wider public that took place in Glenbower Wood over the May Sunday weekend 2018.



A Wood Through the Ages

Local historian Paudrig Lee held a walk and gave an overview of the long history of Glenbower Woods and its relationship with the village of Killeagh over the centuries. The adjacent text is a timeline of Glenbower Wood History, by Paudrig Lee.

Pre Christian times: Glenbower Wood has always been forested due to its topography, this can be confirmed from identifier plant species only found in ancient woodlands.

Pre Christian times: May Sunday festival folklore origins believed to occur from this period: Having its origins in pagan festival traditions, this festival continues to be celebrated on the first Sunday of May every year. It celebrates the starting of summer and for years was a courting festival drawing crowds from far and wide. In Cork City today you can see house names called 'Glenbower' after where couples originally courted and met.

Pre Christian times: The English name of Killeagh is thought to translate in Gaelic to Coill-Liath, meaning Grey Wood. This shows the significance the Wood had in the naming of the village associated with it. Villages and people needed woodlands to survive and sustain themselves, providing timber for shelter, agricultural implements/machinery, firewood, charcoal for smelting, bark for tanning etc. Woodlands needed to be managed for communities to survive.

1182: Killeagh and Glenbower Wood granted to Philip De Capell for his part in the Angle Norman invasion of Ireland, known as the Aghadoe Estate after the townland where they settled.

1182 – 1933: In the ownership of the De Capell family (later known as Supple and De Capell-Brooke)

Pre 1700: Glenbower Wood lake built. A mill has probably been in place in Killeagh village for centuries with the lake providing the head of water needed to operate it. Milling is an ancient industry, and Killeagh village is in a rich arable area providing corn.

1700: Earliest estate map of Glenbower Wood and Killeagh Village commissioned by William Supple.

1850's: Major improvements made to the wood by Sir Arthur De Capell Brooke, including a new roadway through the wood to the Aghadoe estate and Gothic archway bridge.

1850: 400 acres of forestry was advertised for sale, it having been planted over fifty years previous.

1860s: The man-made lake extended and made larger to accommodate enlargements in the local mill.

1880s: Women from the village used to work in the wood, stripping bark from oak trees to be sold and used in the tanning industry. This is an industry that was carried out in the wood for centuries.

1920s: The wood provided employment for many men from the village which operated up to three sawmills. The Phairs were foresters in the wood in the mid 20th century who lived in an area of the wood, today still known as 'Phairs Rock'.

1933: Glenbower Wood sold to the Irish State by the De Capell Brooke family.

1970s: The man-made lake in the wood provided water via the mill race to the flour mill in the village next to the river Dissour. This mill operated until the 1970s.

1988: Glenbower Wood lake dam breached over safety concerns after Hurricane Charlie.

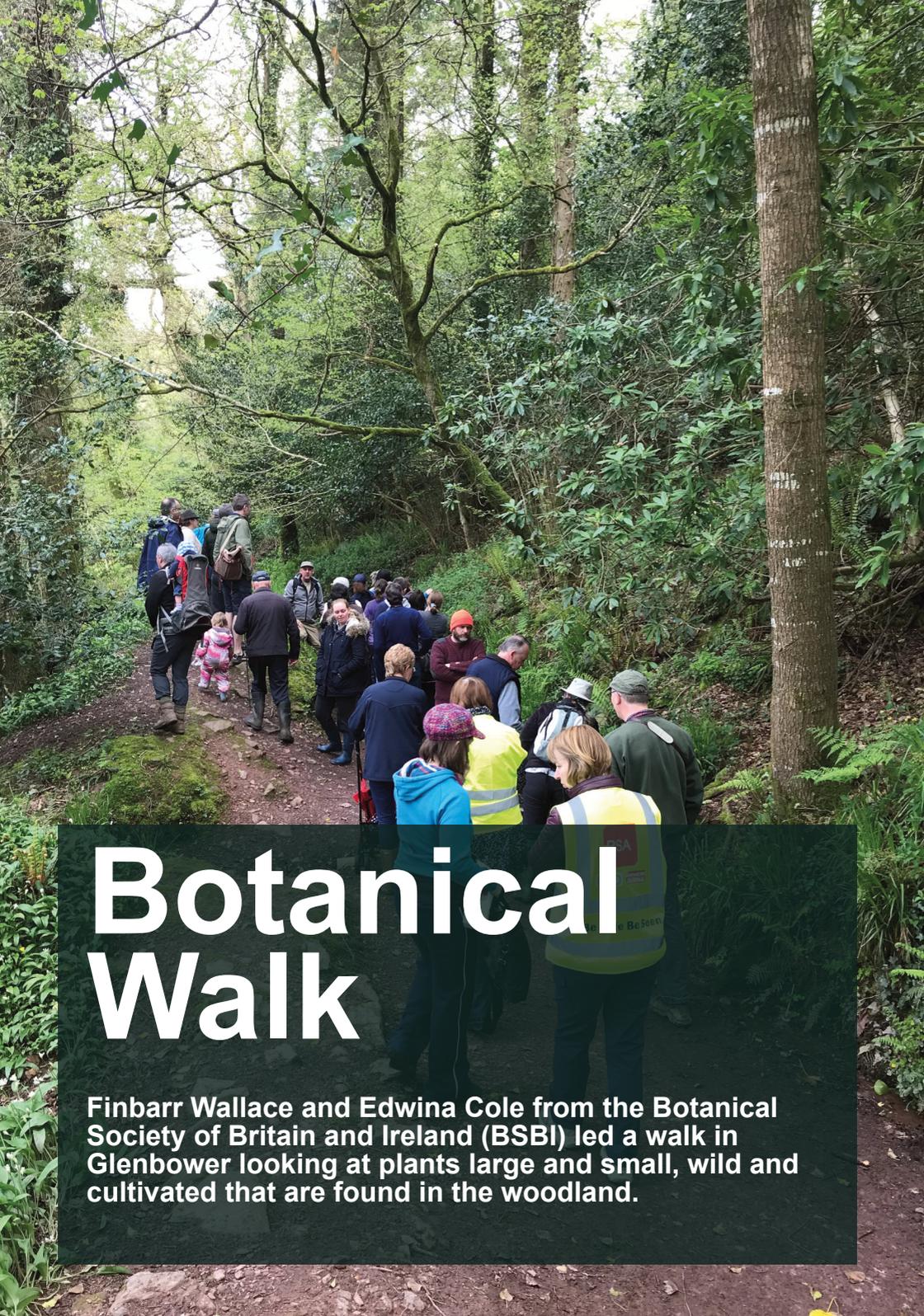
1990: Glenbower Wood & Lake Committee established and purchased 33 hectares of Glenbower Wood to secure it for the community and future generations. Its initial goal was the reinstatement of the Lake. Coillte own the remainder of the wood.

1995: Improvements made to the wood including a new footbridge.

2009: Playground built at the entrance to the wood.

2018: May Sunday Festival celebrated as a festival of creativity in conjunction with Greywood Arts.

2019: Glenbower Wood & Lake Ltd continue to manage the woodland. Coillte who own the remainder of the wood will replant the wood with native trees after felling of existing non-native species.



Botanical Walk

Finbarr Wallace and Edwina Cole from the Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland (BSBI) led a walk in Glenbower looking at plants large and small, wild and cultivated that are found in the woodland.

Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*)

Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*)

Enchanter's Nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*)

Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage (*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*)

Pignut (*Conopodium majus*)

Ramsons (*Allium ursinum*)

Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*)

Slender St John's-wort (*Hypericum pulchrum*)

Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*)

Woodruff (*Galium odoratum*)

Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*)

Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*)

Yellow Pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*)

List of some flowering plants to be found in Glenbower Wood, taken from MSc. Ecological Assessment Dissertation 'Ecological Assessment of Glenbower Wood'. By J.F.K Wallace, B.Sc

Mapping Under Trees

Mapping Under Trees was an intergenerational workshop designed to create a collaborative map of the natural surrounds of Glenbower forest playground on May Sunday.



The Forgotten Wisdom of Trees

A record of a tree walk held in Glenbower Wood during Heritage Week 2018 by Ted Cooke

Anciently, 'Killie' was a very early Church founded by Ila, a contemporary of St. Finn Barre – modern Killeagh derives from Cill Ila. The word 'Cill' found in so many Townlands' names derives from the Latin 'Cella' – a Cell or Shrine.

The present long abandoned Church of Ireland at the foot of Killeagh's Main Street is all that remains of her memory – this church being dedicated St. Ila. The site is believed to have been her original foundation.

Ila is better honoured as St. Ives of Cornwall – described as her 'Chief Church' – several Holy Wells dedicated to this Irish Saint still exist in the vicinity of St. Ives and Cambourne. Plouye (Parish of Ila in Brittany) recalls the widespread veneration for Ila, an early martyr to the Cornish Pagans.

One yet intuits 'the peculiar un-Roman character' and the enthusiasm for ascetic monastic traditions filtering through from the Eastern Mediterranean, in the Killeagh vicinity - relicitinal from Ireland's original Church. And like another of Cloyne's ascetic women, St. Gobnait's Wood of Ballyvourney also possesses a 'Glenbower' within the Oakwoods. The 'Deafening Glen' at Killeagh likely refers to the thundering water-course that plunged through the Wood – regrettably now drained during Coillte's encumbering since 1989. In the interim a local Community Woodland Committee have assumed responsibility for the 35 or so acres of mixed woodland. In St. Gobnait's 'Gleann Badar', folklore recalls that she frequently recluded to a deep fissure in the steep gradients within her Hermitage Wood – where no sounds reached.

Our Heritage Walk commenced with a tree-planting of a fine potted Wild Cherry Tree in the corner of the Playground/Carpark that comprises the entrance to Glenbower Wood. Described as being of 'remote antiquity' by the 5th century (P. Joyce), the Brehon Forestry Codes (Bretha Comaithcheasa) divided trees into four 'Classes' of seven. 'Wild Cherry' was the seventh of the Second Class and named 'Idath' (phon. Ida).

The countrywide abundance of the 'stones' of Wild Cherry at excavation sites suggests it was a food plant – similar to Crabapple and Hazel (both of the First Class of Seven – described as 'Airig Fedo' – 'Lords of the Wood').

The provenance of our Cherry tree is the 'Ulster Cherry Seed Orchard' – a Co. Down Nursery dedicated to sourcing and propagating various stocks from vigorous wild sown Native Trees.

The prolonged 'Heatwave' (causing Soil Moisture Deficit) together with compaction required extra time and energy to achieve satisfactory site preparation – a 'must' to ensure sound root development in the face of what increasingly resembles a Climate Change of near stupefying proportions driven by rising Carbon Concentrations (402.3 p.p.m. July 2018).

We measured the girth of a very odd Oak tree in the Playground corner (GPS 26251.943734 – 7.99318). A maiden Oak (never coppiced or pollarded), likely mid-nineteenth century @ 262 cm girth at shoulder height. Odd because the trunk at 2.5 metres height takes, inexplicably, a 90 degree quite perfect lean. Neither callous bark nor scar tissue are discernible at the angle where the trunk grows horizontal – suggesting that what we observe is not a lateral limb compensating for the catastrophic loss of the tree's crown. No acorns were visible – but the leaves (hairless beneath) presented closer to our Sessile Oak form – markedly stalked with little or poorly developed ear-lobes adhering to the leaf stalk.

Our second specimen Oak nearby personified our Sessile form – acorns without stems and clearly stalked leaves. Additionally, and unlike our Common Oak with its lowly forking trunk, here was a classic central trunk several metres up (c. 5) without fork.

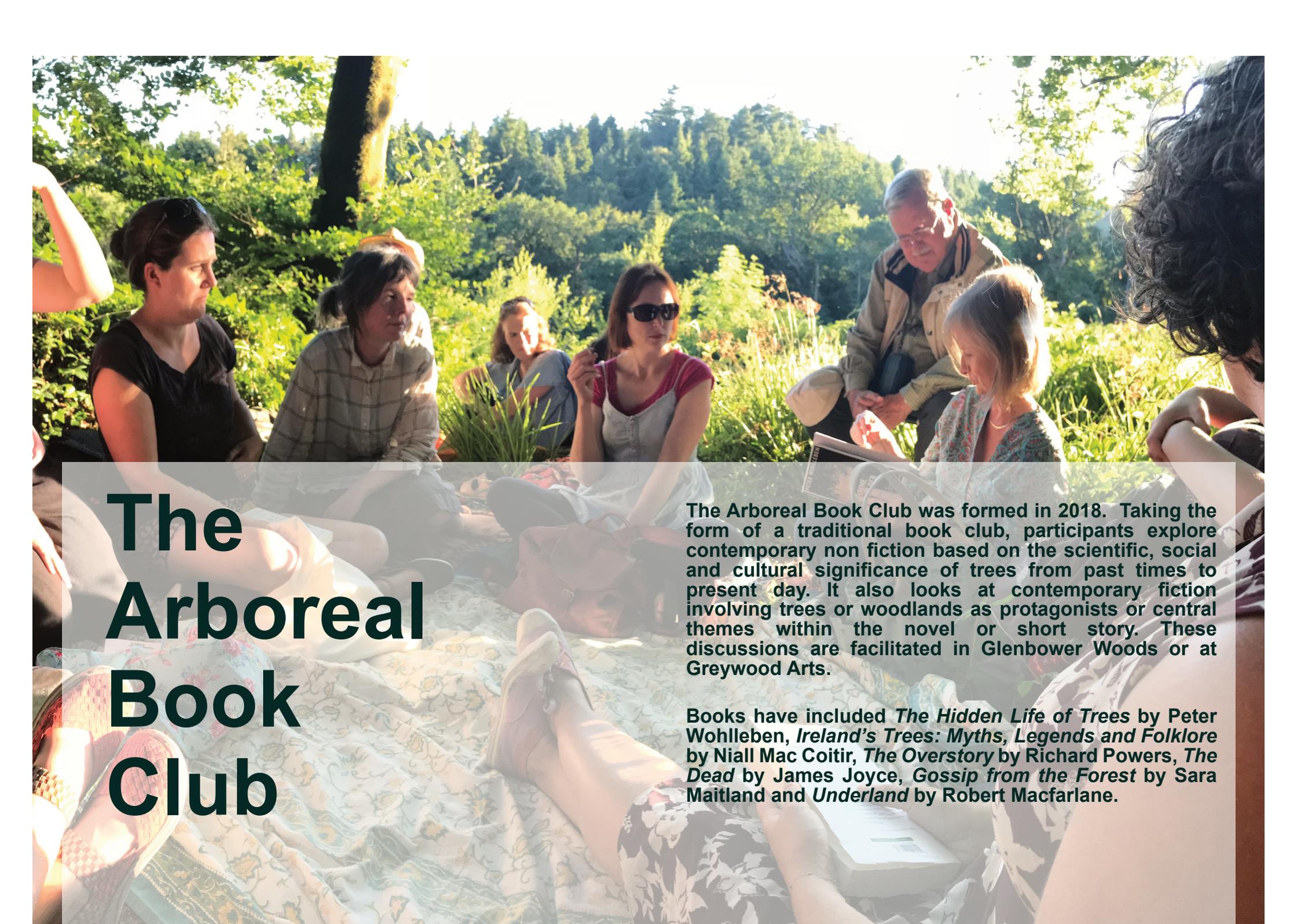
Glenbower is bounded on one side by an avenue of mature trees the length of c. a kilometer, with a former millrace running parallel woodside.

Apart from the enormous ecological/habitat value of this 'corridor' running astride an old-growth Woodland (mapped and little altered since 1703), it remained beyond our reach to divine any pattern of tree species distribution. 'Impulsiveness' is absent among the designed landscapes of 17th – 20th century Ascendency Ireland. Yet, here we observe residual segments of mature Beech Ranks interspersed with short sections of mature Holm Oak, then solitary massive Oak Trees occurring in patterns (equidistance), many presenting as massive copses – then full grown Ash Trees and more Beeches (some passed over from old age and others at 'end of life' phases) – and all under storeyed with wilds own Elder, Holly and teenage Beech and suckering Elms. Afterthoughts, likely from mid-nineteenth century include Lime trees and Bay.

The 2:00 – 4:30 pm event easily morphed – eye lenses and spangle galls and silk button galls – tree identification and respective ecological values – ivy and its unquantifiable contribution to Irish Nature – Decomposer Fungi and the matter associated with our quest to understand the Earth and wonder at its biodiversity –and pay closer attention to the 'Presence of Life'.

Still on the avenue at 6:00 pm, our lesson on the day – the diversity within this avenue of indigenous; naturalized and exotic Trees; bryophytes and epiphytes and associated fauna – all acting as one organism – our glimpse into the Forgotten Wisdom of Trees.

Ted Cooke, 2018



The Arboreal Book Club

The Arboreal Book Club was formed in 2018. Taking the form of a traditional book club, participants explore contemporary non fiction based on the scientific, social and cultural significance of trees from past times to present day. It also looks at contemporary fiction involving trees or woodlands as protagonists or central themes within the novel or short story. These discussions are facilitated in Glenbower Woods or at Greywood Arts.

Books have included *The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben, *Ireland's Trees: Myths, Legends and Folklore* by Niall Mac Coitir, *The Overstory* by Richard Powers, *The Dead* by James Joyce, *Gossip from the Forest* by Sara Maitland and *Underland* by Robert Macfarlane.



GROUND WORK

Groundwork was a series of workshops whose purpose was to expand the conversation about the future of the woodland initiated in Glenbower Talks.

A series of experimental drawing, photographic and design thinking workshops aimed to connect individuals on a deeper level to the forest through close looking and listening and to aid in the process of reimagining the future of the forest and ideas about community infrastructure in the woodland.

Groundwork workshops took place with different local groups in the woodland, exploring woodland form, structure, colour and material. This series of workshops took place over the spring and summer of 2019 with an art group from St. Fergals Primary School in Killeagh, a workshop for teenagers and a series of adult workshops.

Sound Collection

We will take a walk through the woods in silence. Below we will make a list of all of the things we can hear.... you can describe the sounds any way you want to, a word, a sentence etc ...

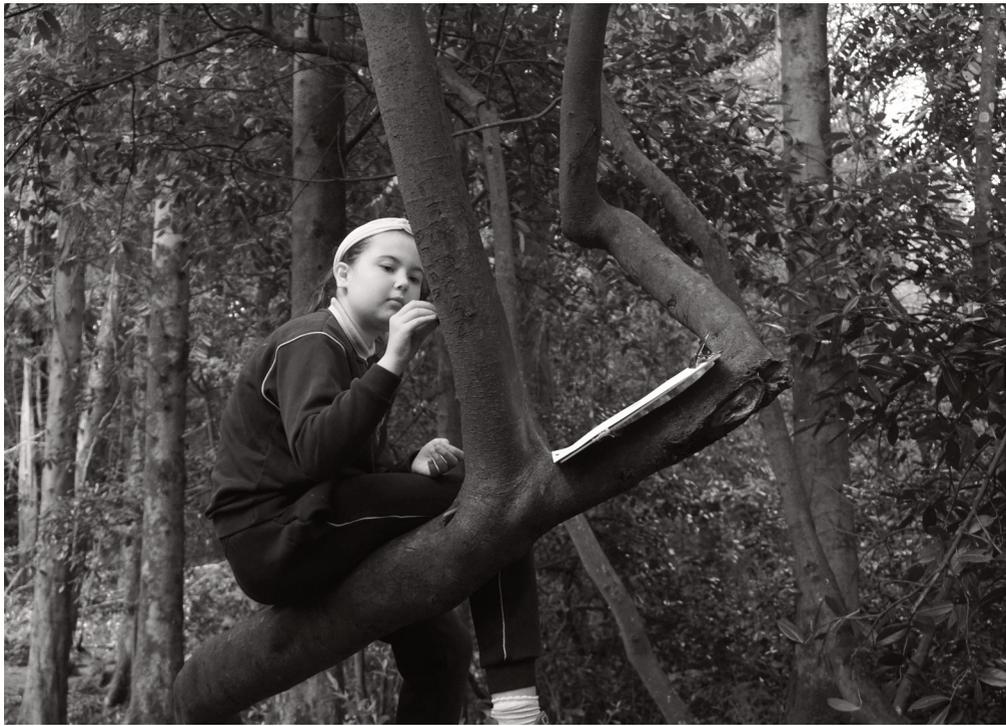
- Crow - (Caw, caw)
- Unidentified bird - (twit)
- U bird - (Hoo hoo - hoo hoo hoo repeat) Pidgeon
- Breeze - (Whoosh)
- River - (Bubbling whoosh)
- U bird - (drrrr di-di-di-di)
- U bird (dii dur-dur-dur-dur)
- U car - (not sure how to explain this one)
- U banging on wood - (tk tk tk tk)
- U bird - (dii ddi)
- U bird - (increasing volume - dididididi dudu)
- U bird - (di da di du fi du di du)
- Leaves rustling - (whoosh - crackle)
- Grass rustling - (blue bubbles)
- Odd rhythmic banging - (dudu du dudu du)

Jey → U = unidentified

- U bird - (drrrr)
- water river - (Whoosh bubbly - foster)
- Creaking pine trees - (creak)
- Creaking Pines banging into each other - (clank)
- Cow - (Moooo)
- Garlic rustling - (crumple)
- Plastic rustling - (crackle)
- U bird - (didudidudidiandi repeat)
- Adam - (Ahhhh!)
- Me - (chuckle)
- Slower river (bubbles, no whoosh)
- U bird - (du dididi)
- Stone in river - (Plop) Thank you, Adam.
- Wooden planks - (Bork bork)
- us speaking about the sounds - (chatter chatter, blah blah)



Close looking exercises and natural pigment making activities from woodland plants and materials.



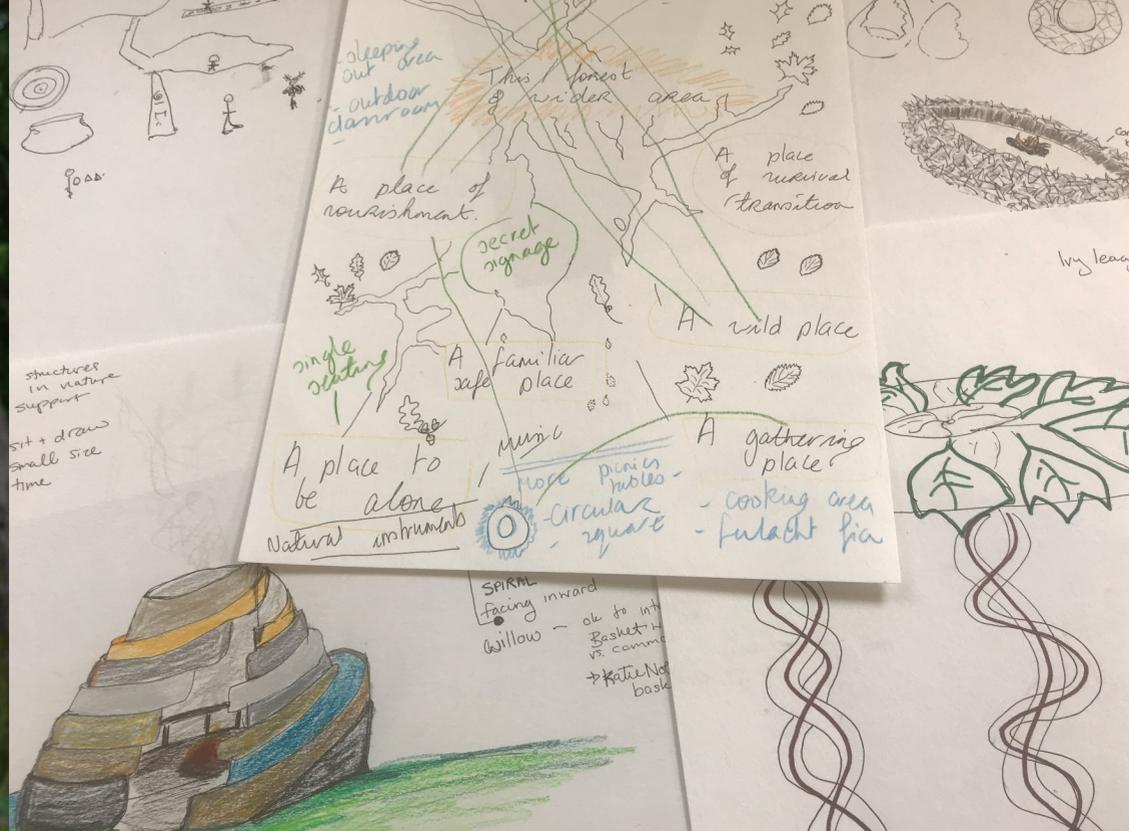
Photography workshop and drawing activity using natural materials





Some Future Design Ideas from workshop participants

- Water tap/fountain for users of the wood
- Promote wood as bird watching site/Bird hide
- New bench design inspired by woodland wildlife
- Zip line
- More benches, picnic areas, fire pits/cooking areas
- Picnic area becomes more of a gathering space
- 'Leave no Trace' signage
- Pagoda / Pavilion made from storm felled trees
- Communal area shaped like a birds nest
- Orchard at playground
- Sensory walk signage in the wood
- Place to sleep in trees
- Camping areas
- Tree slides
- Ways to climb trees
- Rites of passage
- Shelters inspired by natural forms
- Forest food community garden
- Fulacht Fia
- Wild swings
- Outdoor classroom
- Tree top walks



Future designs workshop

WOODLAND SURVEY

In order to grasp an understanding of what the wood means to the wider community a survey was carried out at the May Sunday festival in 2019 which asked members of the public their thoughts and opinions on the wood. Presented are samples of some questions and their answers.

What does 'community owned' mean to you?

This place is owned by people, it is a good thing to own it but this also comes with a responsibility for it.

Community means everyone working together to create a common goal.

Developed, maintained, sustained by and for the people. A source of pride for the community.

Would you like to see any changes or additional amenities in the wood?

Plant more trees.

Bridges and huts rebuilt and made safe. More information on plants and trees.

A detailed development plan.

Eco education resources and facilities.

What is your vision for the future of Glenbower Wood?

To grow with the community.

Should more intergenerational community activities take place without impacting on the environment that would be wonderful.

Some more huts and picnic locations set up inside the wood to stop at and appreciate nature.

To continue to flourish & be a kept part of the community.

That it continues to be administered in a positive manner by the community (Well done to you all!)

What impact does Glenbower Wood have on you and your community?

It helps children experience natural outdoors.

It gives me a space to get away from everyday life. It helps the community to mix & create no divides.

It is an important physical embodiment of what a community is about.

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Groundwork Art Groups

St Fergals National School Group

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Thanks to

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**Cork
County Council**
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí



Greywood Arts
where creativity lives

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