

Mapping the Mournes

A PEACEPLUS project exploring language, landscape, heritage and creativity in the Mournes DEA







Exploring our shared heritage through place in Irish, Ulster Scots and the languages of newcomers with:

- walks
- mapping workshops
- inter-cultural arts
- celebrations of language

Mapping the Mournes

PEACEPLUS
Northern Ireland - Ireland
Co-funded by the
European Union | UK Government
Northern Ireland Executive
Rialtas na hÉireann Government of Ireland

kitabna
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Comhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

A project about place is always a project about people

Mapping the Mournes set out to celebrate the past, present and future of the Irish and Ulster Scots languages in the Mournes District Electoral Area, exploring the relationships between language, landscape, local heritage and community identity. Kitabna - Our Book collaborated with Queen's University Belfast, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and local artists to bring together a three-month programme.

Through a series of creative workshops, guided walks, conversations and shared experiences spanning summer to autumn, the project invited participants to discover the stories embedded in the landscape around them, and to reflect on their own connections to place.

Working with the place-name expertise of Dr Frances Kane, alongside local artists and practitioners, the programme brought together traditional skills, contemporary artistic practices, historical research and opportunities for informal learning.

From exploring historic maps and uncovering forgotten place names to working with copper, painting the Mournes, composing a sea shanty, weaving with willow and drumming in a re-imagined crannóg, the project created opportunities for people from different backgrounds to learn from one another, share their experiences and develop new relationships with the landscape and its languages.

At the heart of the project was a simple idea: that language and heritage are not only preserved in archives, maps and historical records, but also kept alive through creativity, conversation and the experiences of the people who inhabit a place.



Kitabna's connection to Northern Ireland

Although founded in Lebanon in 2014, and now based in England, Kitabna undertook several projects for the Northern Ireland Education's Intercultural Education Service over 2019-22. This included working with schools, children and teachers to create multi-lingual children's books celebrating the land and relationships across cultures and counties in Northern Ireland.

Our children's books can be read online anytime by following the link below:
www.kitabna.org/therapeutic-stories.html

Recruitment approach and communication

To recruit participants, we created a strategy of approaching local organisations linked to hiking, culture, arts, nature and heritage in the Newry, Mourne and Down council area, and in-person visits to bookshops, libraries, heritage spaces and community centres to flyer and personally invite people to join us. We worked with the council to share our events across social media, attracting a total number of 71 participants signed up from across the region, with 44 participants attending a total offering of 59 hours of community engagement.

Word of mouth helped, along with connecting to popular venues with strong community links.



Artists in Residence: supporting local talent in the Mournes

Kitabna advertised for three Artists in Residence to join us in facilitating the project, each from a unique language background (Irish, Ulster Scots, and a language that is new to Northern Ireland). Through national and local art galleries and social media, we received several applications and interviewed artists to find out how they wished to engage with our project themes of heritage, community and language in the landscape. Our four final artists often had connections to local venues, making it easy to offer our participants beautiful experiences.



Meet us!



Helen

Helen Patuck is Creative Director of Mapping the Mournes and founder of Kitabna - Our Book, working across literature, illustration and peacebuilding in the humanitarian sector with the UN and in the UK-European context



Cristina

Dr Cristina Martínez López has a background in TESOL and holds a PhD in language and place at Queens University Belfast and supports Mapping the Mournes as a Programme Assistant.



Frances

Dr Frances Kane researches at Queens University Belfast and has worked for years on the Northern Ireland Placenames Project. She brings years of experience to her role as cultural advisor and facilitator in Mapping the Mournes.



Sinead & Fintan

Sinead and Fintan Thompson have many years of experience leading walks in the Mournes area and beyond. They are longstanding members of The Down Danderers Rambling Club, and both currently sit on the board of the Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs

Our Artists in Residence



Claire

Claire Mooney is a silversmith and community based artist who explores the land and lore within her work. Inspired by people, their stories and the ever evolving natural environment her pieces aim to capture the changing sensibilities of the landscape and its communities.



Amanda

Amanda Kirkpatrick is the founder of Heart & Harmony CIC, a County Down-based social enterprise supporting health and wellbeing through creativity, connection and nature. With over 15 years' experience across community arts, music, events and wellbeing, Amanda creates warm, inclusive spaces where people can connect, express themselves and explore their wellbeing in a relaxed and supportive way. Her facilitation brings together creative activities, music, rhythm, therapeutic sound, nature connection and reflective practice.



Tom

Tom Gordon Mallory is a Belfast-born musician and sound designer now based in County Down — a jack of all trades, master of none, in his own words. Other than Singing he plays a wide range of instruments, including bouzouki, piano, guitar and bodhrán, and is drawn above all to telling stories through music. His work is shaped by the landscapes of County Down and a lifelong pull toward Irish mythology & folklore.



Soheil

Soheil Roohipour spent the last 11 years working with willow to weave baskets of all types and shapes. He has attended workshops in Ireland, North & South with Alison Fitzgerald, Hanna Van Aelst & Ciran Hogan, England, France & Spain, to learn various techniques and styles of baskets. This craft requires skill, patience and strong hands. Soheil loves making something functional, durable and beautiful that reduces waste and connects us to nature.

Our small team works closely with PEACEPLUS & Newry, Mourne and Down Council to bring together events this Autumn 2026

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European Union | UK Government
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iver of Rushes"
nna "the bulrush river"
n river"

mnə ˈrĭvər

himna River seems to derive from the Irish
ne is the gen. sing. fem. form of
hean; *Ó Dónaill* sv. *simhin*). Flanagan
iver name in Cos Kerry and Galway where it is
In the Co. Down example the *-mh-* in the original
delenited in the anglicized form Shimna (see
Lamagan).

An older name for the Shimna would appear to be
as is clear from Harris' description of the course of
From the North-side of Slieve-Neir, in the Barony
which uniting into one Form the River Hundock,
merick's Deer-Park near Tullamore, washes
Harris Hist. 143)

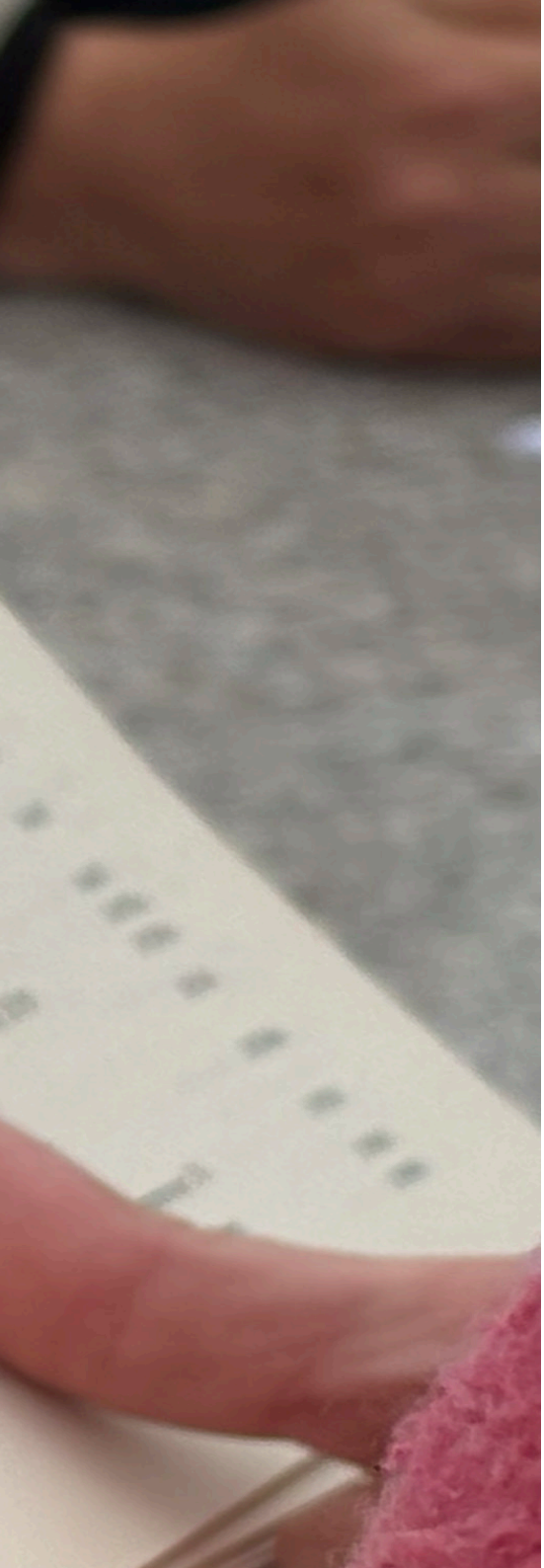
Spinkwee or Cascade River
J 3330

1. do 'spinjkwi
2. do 'kas'ke:d

Dinneen records *spinnc* and *sponc* which, he states, are both [illegible] for the
splimnc). *Ó Dónaill* has *spinc* and *sponc* "crag or cliff". Unfortunately, on the first two
crag or pinnacle" is not marked on any of the modern maps and names of this type
of a river. One cannot be sure that it was ever known as Abalone to those for whom
the Spinkwee River may be a hybrid form consisting largely [illegible]
definitely an English form; *cascade* is another word for waterfall.

Srupatrick
J 3828

1. Owrypatrick
2. Sancte Patricke Water
3. Owyn Patryke
4. Owenpatricke
5. Owne Patrick
6. Strew Patrick
7. Sruth Phadruig
8. Sruth Phadruig
9. Sruthan Paitre
10. sruth
11. sruthpatrik



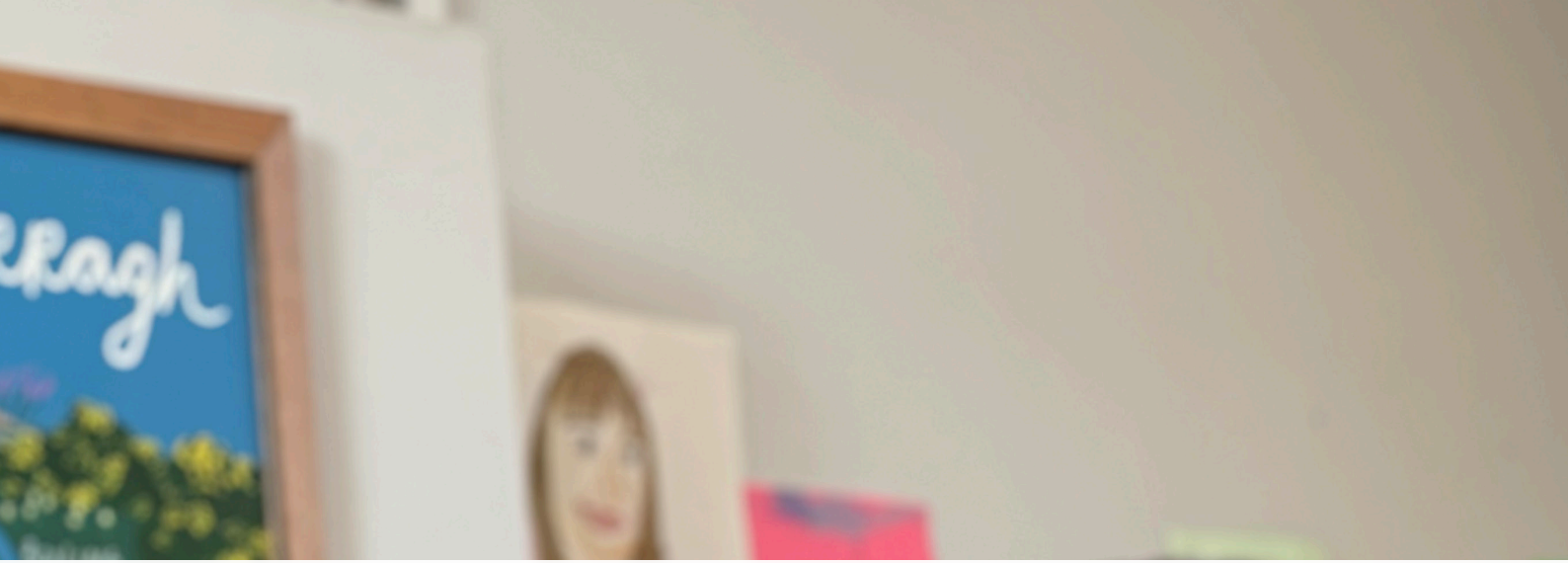
Queen's University Belfast and The Northern Ireland Placenames Project

One of our project's biggest inspirations is The Northern Ireland Placenames Project, which Dr Frances Kane at Queen's University Belfast worked on for several years. By linking the landscape to the language beneath it, be that Irish, Ulster Scots or other languages of settlers of Ireland going back thousands of years, it was a natural place to start. With a searchable database, participants were able to uncover the stories of their villages, towns, townlands and localities.

It's easy to link to the website here:

https://experience.arcgis.com


Moneydaf



Session 1: Mapping and the Moneydarragh Map

Moneydarragh Hub, Annalong | August 2026

Our first session took place at the beautiful Moneydarragh Hub in Annalong, a former school transformed into a thriving community centre through the fundraising and dedication of local people.

Today, the Hub provides a welcoming space for community gardening, creative activities, conversations and the preservation of local heritage and language. It is also home to the remarkable Moneydarragh Map, which records many local place names that have disappeared from contemporary maps.

Denise and Hugh from the Hub introduced participants to the map and the fascinating histories contained within it. Among the stories explored were the Boiling Well and the standing stone that gives Long Stone Road its name. The stone carries a history stretching from Neolithic times to more recent periods, when it was famously painted in green, white and gold, and red, white and blue, reflecting the identities of different communities.





Polly Garnett, from the Northern Ireland Science Festival, then introduced the history and techniques of Ordnance Survey mapping. Participants discovered how early surveys relied on local knowledge and labour, including the work of chain boys measuring distances across the landscape, and considered how local names could be lost or excluded during the mapping process.

The session also introduced digital resources, including the Northern Ireland Place-Name Database, offering participants new ways to compare historical and contemporary landscapes.

It was a fascinating beginning to the project, revealing how even a familiar road, field or stone can hold centuries of stories.









Session 2: The Names Beneath Our Feet

Newcastle | August 2026

Our second session took us into the streets of Newcastle, with the Mourne Mountains rising behind us, to explore the histories hidden within familiar place names. During a gentle guided walk, participants investigated how the anglicisation of Irish place names has sometimes obscured their original meanings, and how those meanings can still be rediscovered through research, local knowledge and close attention to the landscape.

Along the way, we uncovered references to animals, geographical features and striking moments in local history, discovering how much can be learned simply by looking more closely at the names of the streets beneath our feet.



From Frances' talk: Shanslieve or Seanshliabh is the Irish for 'old mountain'

Shanlieve and the neighbouring lake called Shanlough (seanloch, 'old lake') are thoroughly mixed up in the OSNB, so much so that Sean Shliabh, 'the old mountain', is recorded for both. As the second s in shliabh was lenited, it was decided to anglicise the name Shanlieve rather than Shanslieve, which had originally been suggested.
Why might it be called 'old'? Perhaps it was inhabited, cultivated or grazed long before any other in the neighbourhood, as suggested by Joyce. Additional context: This suggestion fits a wider pattern in place-names containing sean- ('old'), which can refer to land that was cleared or exploited relatively early and was subsequently thought of as the 'old' area when activity moved elsewhere.

Seanshliabh is also linguistically interesting as a close compound, where the two elements are joined directly together. Nearby Fionnshliabh (Finlieve), 'white mountain', is another example of this relatively small group of mountain names.



The walk concluded with a lovely shared lunch at Hugh McCann's, and a walk up Slieve Donard, where conversations continued about participants' different experiences of the Irish language, their personal connections to Newcastle, and their feelings about how places are named and remembered.

The session encouraged us to see the familiar landscape differently: not as a fixed geography, but as a place of layered histories, languages and meanings.





Session 3: Copper, Craft and Conversation

Annalong Crannóg | September 2026

Our third in-person workshop took place in the atmospheric surroundings of the traditional Annalong crannóg, part of Willowtree Glamping grounds, where participants were introduced to the art of working with the earth metal, copper.

Led by artist-in-residence and Annalong-based silversmith Claire Mooney, the workshop explored the possibilities of this beautiful natural material, with participants learning how to shape, hammer, texture and decorate copper to create their own personalised cuffs and bangles.

The process was both physical and creative. Some participants drew inspiration directly from the Mournes landscape, using rocks, moss and natural textures to make impressions in the metal.

As the sounds of hammering filled the space, conversations developed naturally between participants from different places and backgrounds. The shared activity created an easy, welcoming environment in which people could exchange stories, learn new skills and enjoy making something together.

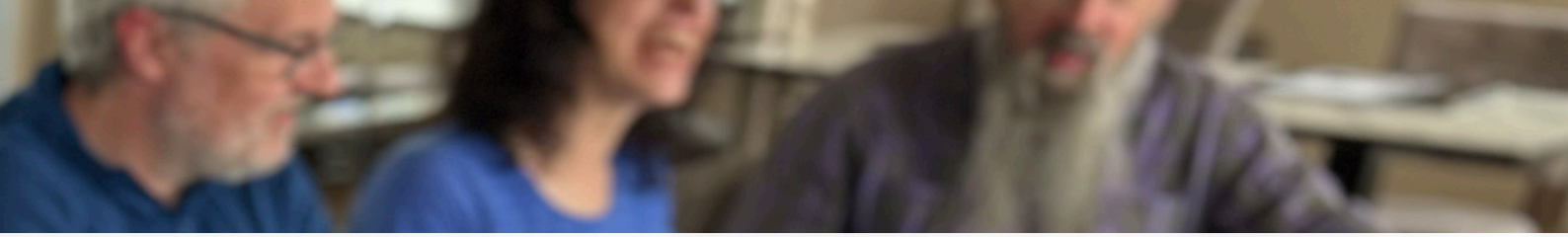
Each finished piece was unique, carrying the marks of its maker and, in some cases, the textures of the surrounding landscape such as moss and rocks from the surrounding Mournes provided on tables.











Session 4: Songs of the Sea

Warrenpoint Shoreline | September 2026

Our fourth workshop explored the history and traditions of sea shanties: working songs that once accompanied the rhythms of maritime labour. Led by artist-in-residence and trad musician Tom Gordon Mallory, the session introduced participants to the musical structures, themes and shared histories of sea shanties, including the well-known Leave Her, Johnny, Leave Her.

We then walked along the Warrenpoint shoreline, looking across the water towards the Mournes and exploring what the sea had brought onto the beach. The walk provided an opportunity to reflect on the relationship between the coastal landscape, maritime traditions and the stories passed down through song.

Returning indoors, participants began composing a sea shanty of their own. The process developed organically, beginning with a rhythm and melody and gradually building lyrics through collective suggestions, improvisation and conversation. The shanty followed a cadger, a travelling fish salesman, from port to port along the Mournes coastline, as he chased his elusive selkie.

It was wonderful to see how the words of our new song began to reflect discoveries from earlier sessions, including Selkie Island on the Moneydarragh Map and our exploration of the selkie myth. In this way, the workshop brought together different strands of the project, transforming shared discoveries about language, folklore and landscape into a new creative work.



"Catch the cadger"

Written by the Whistledown Whalers / Wailers

Verse 1

I heard the story port to port
His boat was covered in whelkies
In Annalong he first was caught:
Captured by a selkie!

I heard the story beach to beach
About there gulping haylon
Mourning the love he couldn't reach
His ocean-based companion.

Chorus

Catch the cadger out to sea,
It's Friday, there's no fish for tea!
Catch the cadger out to sea,
He's out there missing his selkie.

Catch the cadger out to sea,
It's Friday, there's no fish for tea!
Catch the cadger out to sea,
He's out there missing his selkie.

Verse 2

In Ballymartin he first was caught,
His net had a woman-shaped hole in.
He searched the pub, repairs were sought,
He'd drunk enough to drown in.

He stole a boat to get away,
Only a moon to guide him.
All the way to Kilkeel Bay,
A cask of rum beside him.

Chorus

Catch the cadger out to sea,
It's Friday, there's no fish for tea!
Catch the cadger out to sea,
He's out there missing his selkie.

Catch the cadger out to sea,
It's Friday, there's no fish for tea!
Catch the cadger out to sea,
He's out there missing his selkie.

Some of our participants were keen to identify (and taste!) “scurvy grass” or sea spinach, a plant growing abundantly on the Carlingford Lough shores.



Session 5: Painting the Mournes

Annalong | September 2026

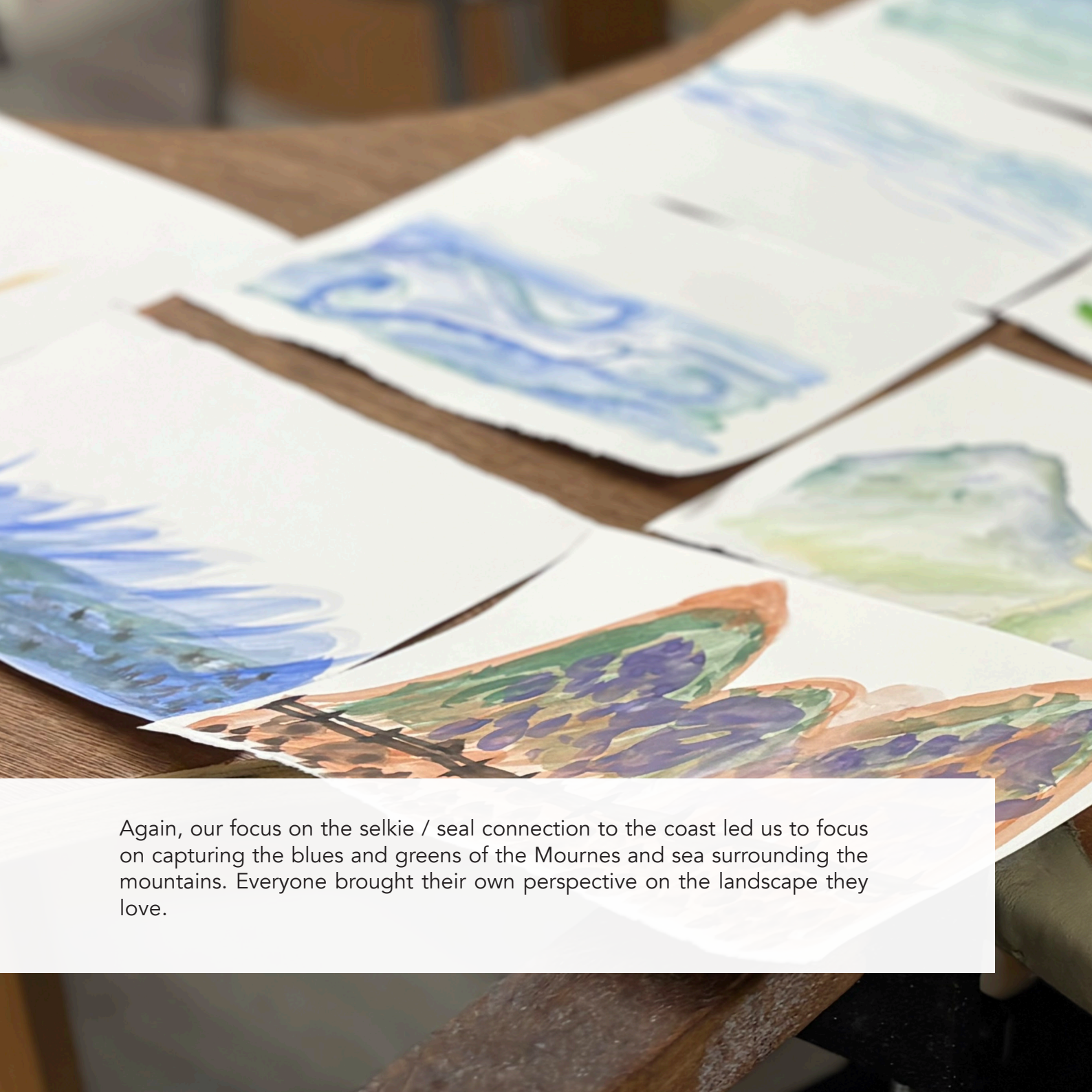
An additional creative workshop invited participants to explore the colours, textures and atmosphere of the Mournes through watercolour painting. Working with paint and paper, participants were encouraged to capture their own impressions of the landscape, experimenting with colour, form and the changing qualities of light.

The session offered another way of engaging with place, allowing participants to respond to the mountains and surrounding environment through personal artistic expression. It also demonstrated how the landscape can be understood and communicated through many different forms, from historical place names and oral traditions to music, craft and visual art.









Again, our focus on the selkie / seal connection to the coast led us to focus on capturing the blues and greens of the Mournes and sea surrounding the mountains. Everyone brought their own perspective on the landscape they love.



Session 6: Taster of the Irish Language

Annalong | September 2026

At the Caifé na Mara Irish Language Centre and Cafe in Annalong, participants were offered a more formal introduction to the Irish language, alongside an exploration of its history and contemporary significance.

Kathleen shared an introduction to the history of Irish in Ireland, creating space for participants to reflect on the changing relationships between language, identity and community.

The session also opened up a particularly meaningful conversation about access to language learning. One participant, who had grown up in a Protestant community, shared how she had always been curious about learning Irish but had never felt that it was something available to her. It was only later in life, after moving to Dundrum, that she felt able to begin exploring the language.

Other participants shared their own experiences, revealing the many different ways that people encounter, understand and connect with Irish.

These conversations reflected one of the project's central ambitions: to create welcoming spaces in which people could approach local languages with curiosity, regardless of their previous experiences or knowledge.




CAIFÉ NA MARA
CAIFE LE CÚPLA FOCAL
morelli



Session 7: Walking, Language and Wellbeing

Annalong Coastal Path | September 2026

Our seventh in-person session was originally planned as a walk to Dunnywater. However, with only one participant attending, we adapted the session into a more informal coastal walk from the Caifé na Mara Irish Language Centre along the Annalong Coastal Path.

In the autumn sunshine, we followed the path beside the sea, taking time to reflect on our connections to the Mournes, our relationships with the Irish language and the role of walking in supporting our wellbeing. Although smaller than the previous gatherings, the session offered a valuable opportunity for a more personal conversation, demonstrating the importance of flexibility and individual connection within a community programme.

It was also a reminder that exploring landscape and language does not always require a formal workshop or structured activity. Sometimes, walking together and sharing stories can be equally meaningful. Artist-in-residence Claire Mooney then facilitated a needle felting workshop, introducing us to capturing the Mournes in wool form.



Session 8: Discovering Ulster Scots

Kilkeel | October 2026

Our first October session took place in Kilkeel, where the Schomberg Society at Reivers House welcomed participants for an introduction to the Ulster Scots language and its history in the region.

The session explored the arrival of Scottish settlers in Ulster and the development of Ulster Scots, a variety of Scots rather than English, which is recognised under the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022.




SCHOMBERG
SOCIETY
PROUDLY PROMOTING ULSTER-SCOTS!
FREDRICH HERMAN
(THE DUKE OF SCHOMBERG)



Session 9: The Mournes on Film

Newcastle Community Cinema | October 2026

On a beautiful sunny day in October, participants gathered at Newcastle Beach for a walk along the shoreline, followed by an afternoon of historical film and place-name exploration at Newcastle Community Cinema.

The walk offered an opportunity to enjoy the coastal landscape, take photographs and reflect on the mountains rising above the town. We then moved indoors to the cinema, which had been hired exclusively for the group, to explore how the Mournes have been documented and remembered through film.





experience.arcgis.com

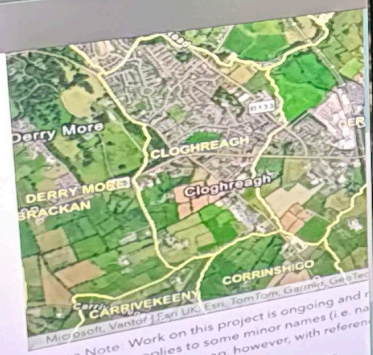
Place-Name Info | PlacenamesNI

he steep slope'

in early documents but it must be very old as it preserves nazalisation after the old neuter *droim*, a feature which
lisation would not be normally expected after a genitive singular noun as in **Lios Droma Cuillinn* so that the first
t', must have been added to a pre-existent name *Droim gCuillinn* 'ridge of the steep slope', perhaps without the
ent *gullion* (et var.) is often translated as if it were from *cuileann* 'holly tree' but T.S. Ó Máille has convincingly argued
n *cuilleann* (genitive *cuillinn*) 'a steep slope' (Ó Máille 1960).

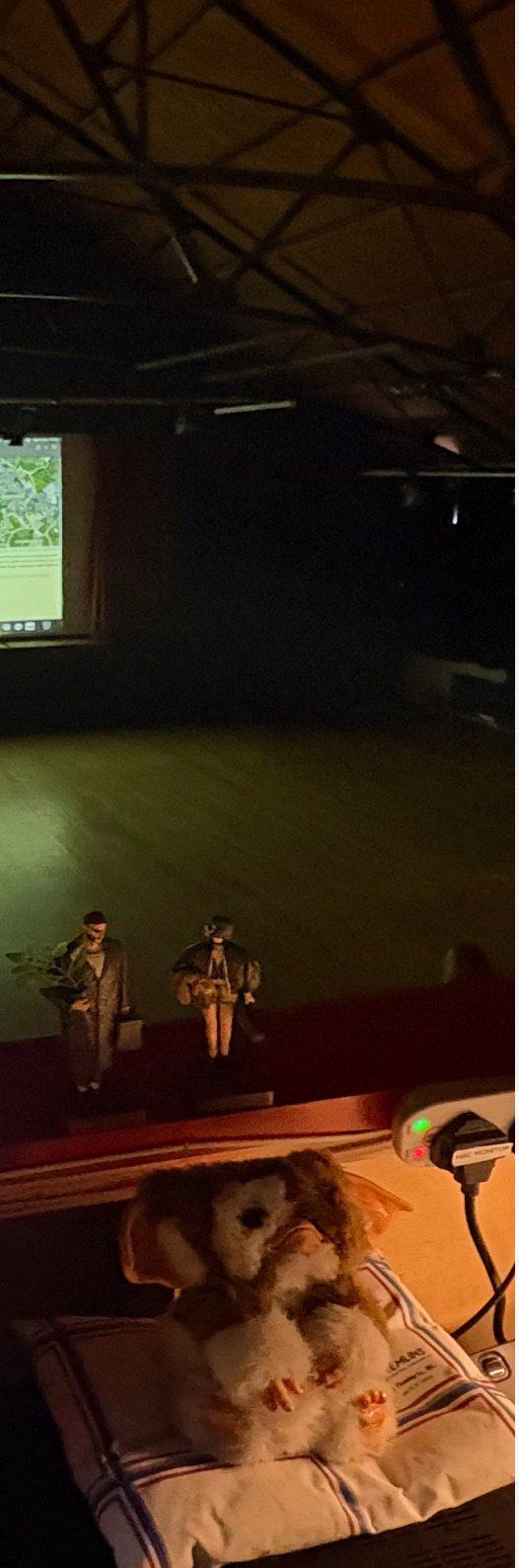
orthern Ireland vol. I p. 29

ween Armagh and Down in 1961.



Please Note: Work on this project is ongoing and
location. This applies to some minor names (i.e. na
may be located on the map, however, with referen

Click here for instructions for the map viewer.



Historical footage brought the landscape's industrial and social history to life, including the construction of the Binnian Tunnel and the cutting of granite in the mountains. These films prompted reflections on the people whose labour shaped the region and the ways their experiences continue to live on in local memory.

Using the cinema's large screen, we also explored the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project, investigating the histories and meanings of participants' own towns and townlands. Some of these discoveries revealed stories reaching back as far as two thousand years.

It was particularly special to move between the Mournes as they appeared in historical footage and the mountains we had enjoyed together in the autumn sunshine.

The session combined heritage learning with opportunities for wellbeing, photography and social connection. Participants appreciated both the chance to spend time outdoors and the unusual experience of having a cinema entirely to ourselves.



Session 10: Reading the Land

Kilkeel Library and Online | October 2026

Our October book club brought participants together at Kilkeel Library to discuss Land by Maggie O'Farrell, a literary work exploring the history of Ireland through themes of mapping, family, grief, loss and belonging.

For several participants, this was their first experience of a book club. We therefore adopted a simple, welcoming format, beginning with a synopsis of the book before inviting everyone to share their impressions, questions and reflections. One participant also joined online, allowing her to contribute despite being unable to attend in person.

The discussion connected closely with themes explored throughout Mapping the Mournes, particularly the history of Ordnance Survey mapping and the people whose contributions were often overlooked in official accounts. Participants reflected on the work of chain bearers, whose labour was essential to measuring and recording the landscape, and on the ways historical narratives can erase the experiences of those who helped create them.

The book also opened up conversations about the Irish Famine, intergenerational grief, family histories and the relationship between people and the land. One particularly meaningful part of the discussion explored how systems of oppression, and the withholding of resources necessary for survival, continue to resonate with events around the world in 2026.

Participants drew connections between the historical experiences represented in the book and contemporary questions of justice, displacement and belonging. These reflections created a space for thoughtful exchange, allowing people to connect through shared values of care, compassion and concern for others.

The session demonstrated the power of literature to deepen our understanding of place, not only through the history of a particular landscape, but through the human experiences that shape our relationships with land across generations.





Session 11: Weaving Together

Moneydarragh Hub, Annalong | October 2026

Our penultimate workshop brought us back to the welcoming surroundings of Moneydarragh Hub, where local Iranian-Irish basket weaver and artist-in-residence Soheil Roohipour introduced participants to the traditional craft of willow weaving.

Using willow grown in Somerset, participants learned how to work with this wonderfully flexible and versatile natural material, weaving structures that could be used to hold onions and garlic in the kitchen, or as decorative holders for plants.

Soheil introduced the practical skills of shaping, bending and interlacing willow, as well as the patience and concentration involved in creating something by hand. As we worked, conversations turned to the traditions of singing during communal labour, drawing connections with our earlier sea shanty workshop and the ways rhythm and song have historically accompanied different forms of work.

The workshop also prompted discussions about other local weaving traditions, particularly the making of St Brigid's crosses from reeds gathered around lakes and waterways, including areas near Spelga Dam.

Working in the same room as the beautiful Moneydarragh Map offered another opportunity to explore the area's place names and heritage. For participants visiting the Hub for the first time, the map sparked fresh questions about community-led mapping projects and the importance of preserving local knowledge.

The session brought together craft, conversation and landscape, demonstrating how traditional skills can connect people with natural materials, cultural practices and one another.





Session 12: Rhythms of the Mournes

Annalong Crannóg | October 2026

Our final workshop took place in the beautiful surroundings of Annalong Crannóg, where musician Amanda Kirkpatrick led a lively and welcoming session exploring group drumming, singing and rhythm. Participants were introduced to different percussion traditions, including the Irish bodhrán and the Lambeg drum associated with Ulster Scots and wider Northern Irish cultural heritage.

Through a series of accessible exercises, Amanda encouraged everyone to experiment with rhythm, repetition and call-and-response patterns. Participants practised different ways of playing before coming together in a circle to create shared rhythms and explore the possibilities of collective music-making.



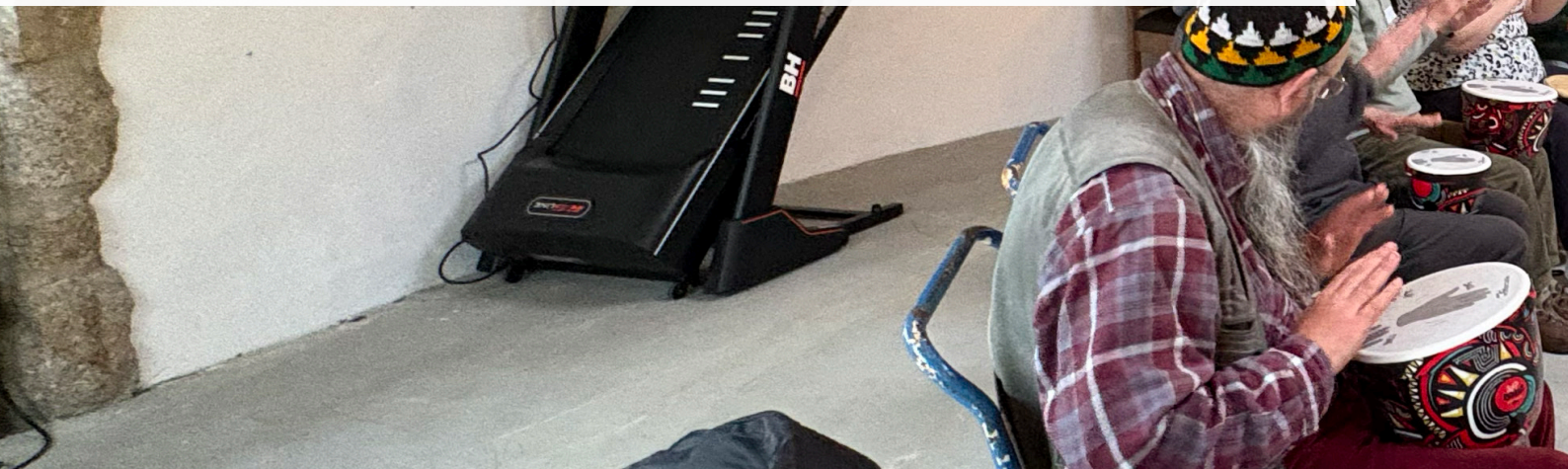
The crannóg provided a particularly atmospheric setting, its traditional structure creating a wonderful acoustic environment for the sounds of drums, voices and laughter.

Alongside the music, we took time to reflect on the programme as a whole, discussing the many skills and experiences participants had shared, from coppersmithing and basket weaving to songwriting, historical mapping and language learning.

Participants reflected on how they had come to know one another through the workshops, the enjoyment of trying unfamiliar activities and the opportunities the programme had created for learning, creativity and connection.

It was a fitting conclusion to Mapping the Mournes: a morning of shared rhythms, conversation and celebration that brought together the creative and social dimensions of the project.

The session also highlighted the positive contribution that making music together, spending time in welcoming community spaces and developing new relationships can have on participants' sense of wellbeing.




BOURDEAUX
FRANCE

The Legacy of Mapping the Mournes

The legacy of Mapping the Mournes will live on in the relationships, knowledge and invitations it has helped create. Some of the project's most meaningful effects may be harder to measure. Participants have formed friendships, and many have said they would like to keep meeting.

One lasting connection will be our WhatsApp group for former participants. This will remain live and a place to continually share events, insights and updates, and to keep in touch with the people and places encountered through the project.

Participants have also been introduced to local artists and their work, including Claire, Soheil, Amanda and Tom, and can continue to attend their workshops. They have learned about the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project and its website, which can be explored at any time, and discovered Kitabna's multilingual books celebrating Northern Ireland.

The project has opened doors to local cultural organisations and their future programmes: the Irish-language centre and café at Caifé na Mara; the Schomberg Society's celebration of Ulster Scots at Reivers House in Kilkeel; and the activities of both centres.

Participants have also gained an introduction to PEACEPLUS activities generally through our programme, and to the Northern Ireland Science Festival's Maps and Memories project through Polly Garnett.

A further legacy is a continuing attentiveness to place names: the Irish, Ulster Scots and other languages that can be found hidden in streets and beneath our feet. Dr Frances Kane's work, alongside place-name activity in Newcastle, has encouraged participants to notice how much history and language a familiar landscape can hold.

The Down Danderers Rambling Group, affiliated with the Ulster Ramblers Association and led by Sinead and Fintan, may offer another way for those connections to continue, with former participants hearing about future walks.



Feedback from participants...

"As a protestant I wasn't given the opportunity to learn much about Irish Culture and Heritage in school or growing up. As someone newly established in the Mourne Area, after relocating 5 years ago, this project has helped me learn more about the place I now call home, about Irish Culture and Heritage and given also given me an insight into Ulster Scotts. It's all been very interesting and give me a new sense of appreciation."

"I enjoyed the mix of people who attended the events, and found a positive mix of people as we explored areas of County Down where I found spaces I normally don't get to find."

