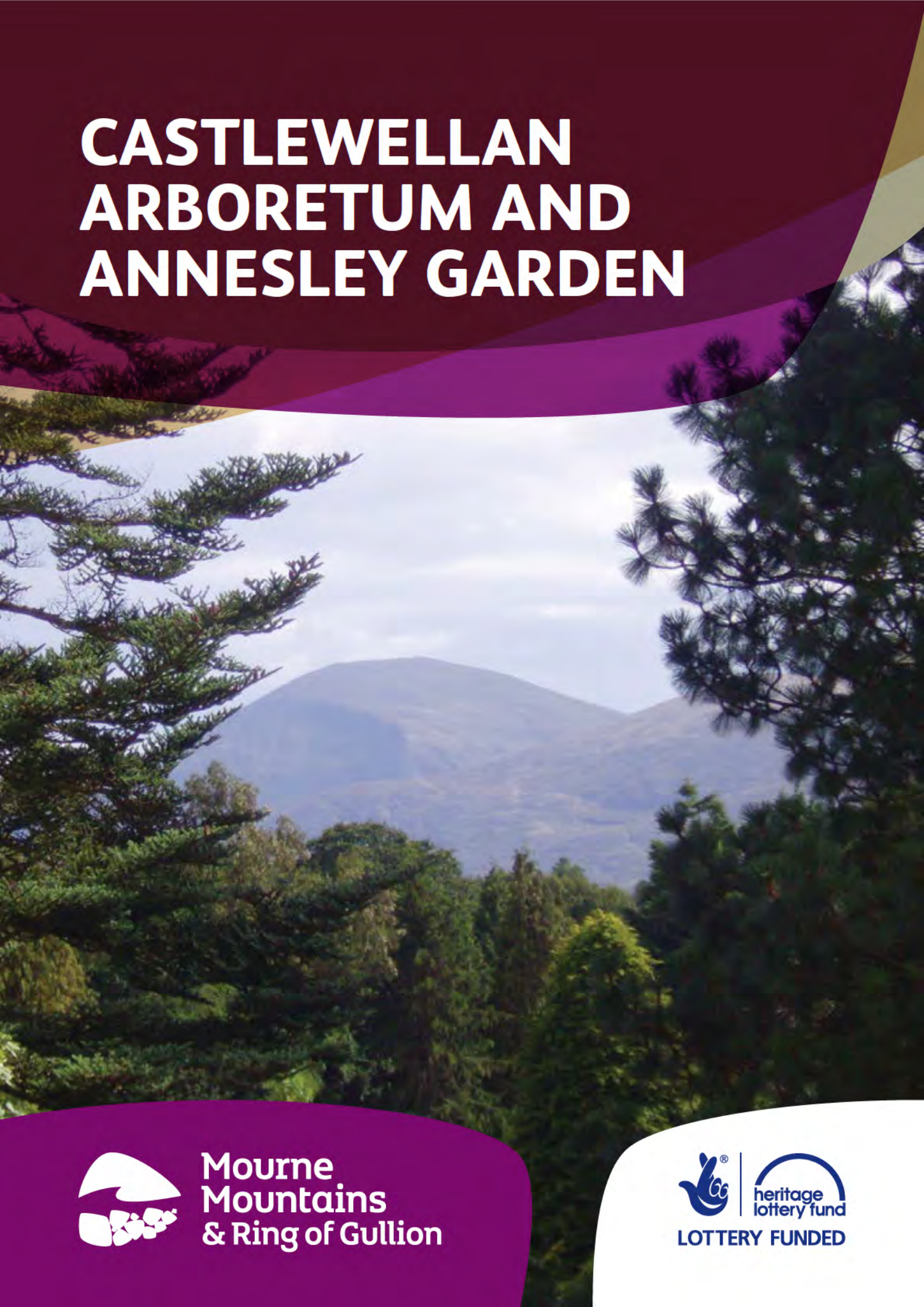
CASTLEWELLAN ARBORETUM AND ANNESLEY GARDEN



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CASTLEWELLAN ARBORETUM AND ANNESLEY GARDEN

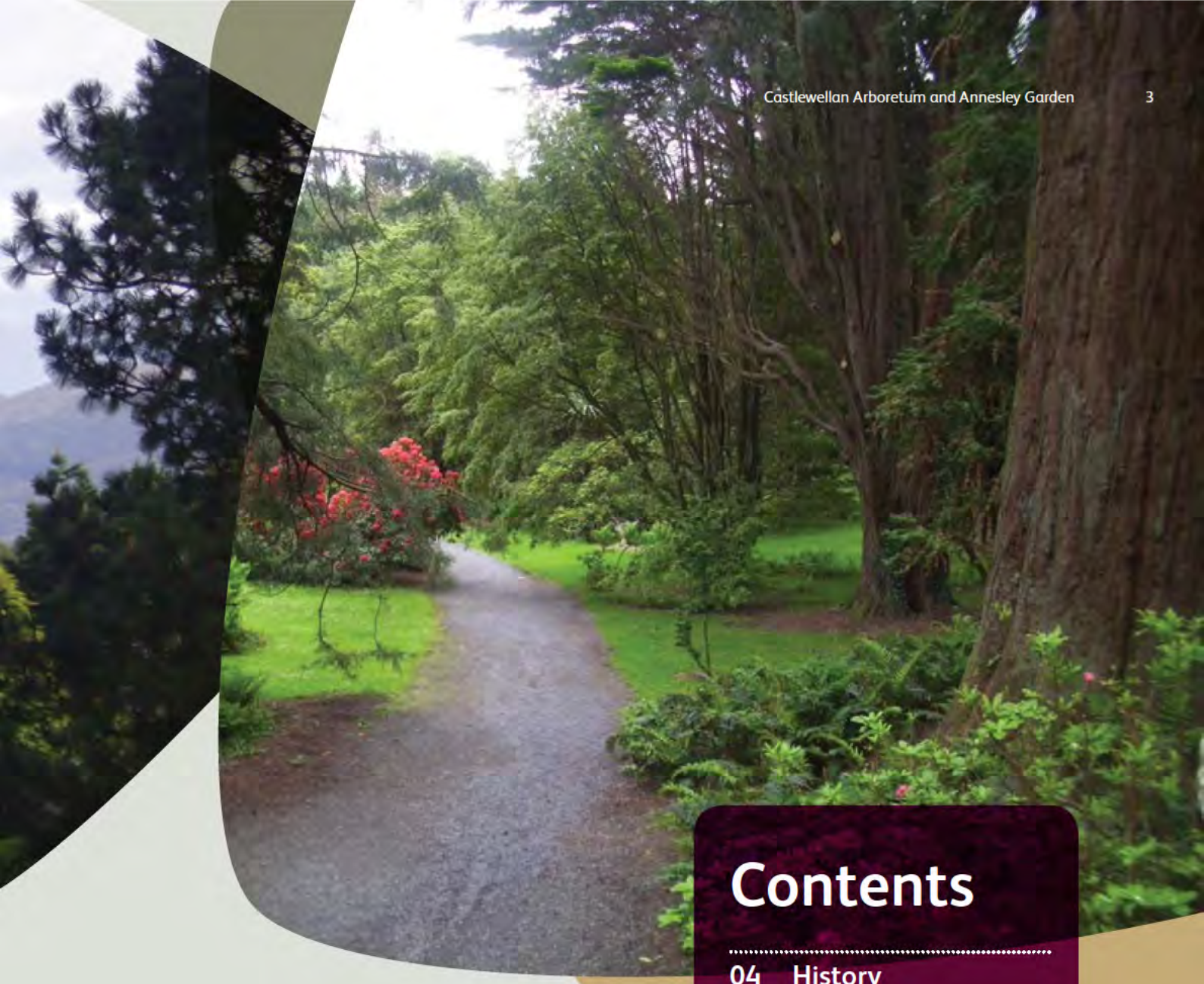
The Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden is situated north of the foothills of the Mourne Mountains in County Down, Northern Ireland. Severe frosts are rare due to the proximity of the Irish Sea, just six km (four miles) away. It is about 48km (30 miles) south of Belfast off the A24 road.

Surrounded by mature woodland and facing east and south it is well sheltered. The average annual rainfall is around 800mm. The soil is a fertile brown earth 50–100cm in depth, with a gravel sub-soil. Drainage is generally good.

The Annesley family bought the Manor of Castlewellan in 1741 and over generations improved the lands and developed the Town. This included planting thousands of trees, developing a unique Arboretum within and beyond the walled garden. In 1967, Gerald Annesley sold the demesne to the Ministry of Agriculture. Two years later the Forest Park was opened to the public by the Governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Grey of Naunton.

Since then the Arboretum, which had originally measured some 10 hectares, was extended to 45 hectares. Due to careful sourcing and selection of new plants that added to the many existing mature specimens, it now contains an internationally important collection of trees and shrubs, with many beautiful and rare species. The walled garden is now known as the Annesley Garden in tribute to the former owners.

Some of the important features of the Arboretum include the Annesley Garden,



Spring Garden, Rhododendron Wood, Autumn Wood, the Chamaecyparis collections at the Cypress Pond, and the area now known as Harrison Vista.

In recent times funding restrictions have meant the Arboretum and Annesley Garden has not received the professional care it requires. Many areas are overgrown and neglected but could be restored and brought back to their former glory. Funds need to be secured to restore, protect and develop them in the future.

There is much in the Arboretum to interest the horticultural and botanical connoisseur, to inspire the tree lover and to captivate everyone with its year-round aesthetic appeal.

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Please note that for some plants the previous nomenclature has been used for reasons of familiarity for the general reader.

History

The demesne dates from medieval times when the Maginnis family had a crannog or island dwelling on the north side of the lake. From the early 1500s they were among the most powerful of the Maginnis lordships in eastern Ulster with lands extending as far as Dundrum. Through various wars the family managed to retain their lands until they were purchased by the Annesleys in 1741.

The Annesleys set about improving the buildings and landscape. In 1750, after the death of his father, William Annesley laid out the town and a formal park which included the straight lime avenue which still survives close to the Grange, which was also built at this time. Mrs. Delany, wife of the Dean of Down, who was a tenant of the Annesleys, wrote in a letter to her sister that the Annesleys had *"walled in and planted with oak etc. three hundred and fifty acres of ground for a park. Near them is a large bleach-yard and Mr. Annesley is going to build a town"*.

The garden was laid out on the western side which can be seen on the Estate maps. Known as the 'upper garden', it was developed as a kitchen garden. The garden had two buildings, the remnants of which can still be seen today, the 'slaughter house' and the 'hanging house' attached to the outside of the north-west wall.

In the early 1800s, Richard, 2nd Earl Annesley (1741-1824), built himself a summer villa known as 'The Cottage' on the north shore of the lake. At the same time the surrounding demesne was transformed into the naturalistic landscape park we see today, most probably the work of the famous 'landscape gardener', John Sutherland, who was a family friend.

A generation later William Richard Annesley, 4th Earl Annesley (1838-1874), engaged Scottish architect William Burn to design the present Hiberno-Scottish-baronial castle. This was built above the site of 'The Cottage' on the north-east side of the lake and completed in 1858. The walled garden was

IMAGE 1
Estate Map circa 1800s. Reproduce with kind permission of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland T3793_3_391

IMAGE 2
Annesley Estate map showing the layout of the gardens. Extracted from Ordnance Survey map 1835 OS6-3-4-31

re-developed into grand pleasure grounds with fountains and glasshouses, complete with fashionable Victorian-style terracing. The terracing was designed by William Burn and completed in 1860. The steps were built of local 'Ballymagreehan granite' (blue granodiorite). The layout was regular with a long axis path linking both the old and new enclosed gardens.

A good deal of exotic planting was associated with this pleasure ground, for example ten giant sequoia (known to the Victorians as Wellingtonia), monkey puzzle trees and rhododendrons. During the 1860s conservatories and vineries were added in the north east corner and were erected by Gray, of Chelsea.

Hugh Annesley, 5th Earl Annesley (1874–1908), was described by his daughter Mabel, as working like a *"giant landscape gardener"*. He added plantations of conifers, creating pathways through the trees, and opened up vistas to the mountains and the sea. He built the Moorish Tower, one of two tea-houses in the park. He also planted 3,000 rare trees and shrubs and created an arboretum of international importance.

IMAGE 3
Hugh Annesley's photograph of tree planting, reproduced by kind permission of the Ogilvie family.

IMAGE 4
Cryptomina elegans

Hugh Annesley sitting in the Bothy Yard, reproduced by kind permission of the Ogilvie family.

IMAGES 1 & 2: The construction and completion of the Heron Fountain (with no herons yet), possibly taken in the 1890s, reproduced by kind permission of the Ogilvie family.

IMAGE 3: The Turner House, reproduced by kind permission of the Ogilvie family.
IMAGE 4: Hugh Annesley's photograph of the glasshouse in the lower garden, with his first wife in the right hand side of the photograph, reproduced by kind permission of the Ogilvie family.

Hugh was also a pioneering amateur photographer. His 35 albums of photographs, dating from the early 1850s when he served in the Kaffir War, are in Northern Ireland's Public Record Office. The Annesley Collection is one of the largest and most important collections of early photographs in Ireland. From a local perspective his photographs of the demesne are of great interest.

Hugh built up the gardens, the bothy yard and a range of glasshouses, three vineries, each 35 feet by 28 feet, and a cool conservatory; water was laid on in all the houses. The greenhouse above was known locally as the Turner House and was a most ornate glasshouse. It once stood in the Bothy Yard. By 1900 there were 22 glasshouses in the garden.

Behind the glasshouses were potting-sheds, fruit-room, mushroom-house, and beneath these the boilers and receptacles for coals. Adjoining this area was the forcing ground, several pits, with two nice span-roofed houses for cucumbers and melon.

Until his death, in 1908, Hugh Annesley devoted himself to building up the present tree collection both inside and outside the Annesley Garden. By the early 20th century there were over 3000 different species of rare plants from all over the world thriving in the hospitable climate at Castlewellan. Hugh Annesley wrote about the collection in his sumptuous book, *Beautiful and Rare Trees and Plants*, published in 1903. The collection has been maintained and added to over the intervening years by the Forest Service. It remains a significantly important Arboretum in Ireland, the United Kingdom and internationally.

The period after Hugh's death was difficult. His son Francis was killed in the First World War in 1914, his daughter Mabel then had to fight for ownership and rescue the demesne from death duties. She handed the demesne to her son Gerald who managed it, adding to the collection from time to time, until he sold it to the Ministry of Agriculture in 1967.

The Annesley Garden

Until the demesne was purchased by the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture the Annesley Garden housed the main collection of trees and shrubs, although there were still many fine specimens beyond the walls. Since then many new developments have taken place. However, the five hectare walled garden will always be the hub of the Arboretum with its outstanding collection. Sloping to the south it is sheltered on all sides by mature broadleaved trees and conifer plantations which play an important role in the range of species which may be grown.

The original entrance into the garden was very narrow, about the width of a moderately girthed person to squeeze through. The butterfly gates, made by Thomas Brown and Sons, Birmingham, were taken from the bottom of the herbaceous border to provide a 'grand entrance' to the gardens. Sadly, time has been unkind to the gates and many of the decorative metal butterflies have been pulled off and the gates now need complete restoration.

The garden area is divided into two by a high wall, selectively screened by the planting of trees and flowering shrubs, running from the entrance towards the greenhouses. It is further sub-divided by well planned paths, the main ones giving long straight vistas. Looking from the centre of the garden, where the two main paths intersect, the focus of attention is the ornamental fountains. The larger of the two, its stone herons patiently standing guard, was originally flanked by rich crimson Japanese maples, while the top fountain with its merboy stood among dwarf conifers, rhododendrons and azaleas. Today, the areas around the fountains and beyond, particularly the Merboy Fountain, require significant redevelopment.

Leaving the main entrance and taking the path to the right you come to the first set of steps that leads you to an area that has some of the oldest and tallest trees in the garden. The twin giant sequoia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum,* were

IMAGES 5 & 6
The photograph shows the entrance to the gardens and the original position of the gates, at the entrance of the herbaceous border.

5

6

planted in 1856. Their native habitat is confined to the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, California.

At the top of the steps is *Drimys winteri*, a South American tree from the temperate rain forests of Chile and Argentina. It flowers in May time with ivory white fragrant flowers. Its common name 'winters bark' reflects the fact that sailors in the past used an infusion of the bark to help to prevent scurvy. Close by is *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Lutea' which was planted in 1894. It is the mother of *X Cupressocyparis leylandii* 'Castlewellan' popularly known as 'Castlewellan Gold'. The father *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Aurea' was sadly blown down in the storms of 2013. Castlewellan Gold has made a great contribution to horticulture combining beauty and hardiness. Its discovery goes back to the winter of 1962/63 when the head gardener Mr. John Keown found a cone-laden branch of *Cupressus macrocarpa* 'Lutea' which had been broken off by snow. He extracted the seeds and sowed them. Among the seedlings his expert eye detected three which were worthy of selection and growing on. One was to become *X Cupressocyparis leylandii* 'Castlewellan' and millions of its offspring grace the gardens of Europe and even further afield. The three original seedlings still survive, now all mature trees, one in the garden and the other two planted in the western corner of the Autumn Wood.

The vista into the herbaceous border in the past and as shown in recent times.

The Heron Fountain taken in 2010.

The Merboy Fountain and planting in the 1970s.
Photograph courtesy of Patrick Mackie.

IMAGE 3
View of the garden from the top of the steps with the twin giant sequoia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

IMAGES 4 & 5
Davidia involucrata, the Dove or Handkerchief Tree.

This area was once the site of a large glasshouse, seen here in the photograph below taken by Hugh Annesley in the 1880s and how the area looks today. This area also has one of the oldest trees in the gardens, *Cupressus macrocarpa*, planted in 1850 and also one of the tallest *Tsuga heterophylla* (Western Hemlock). Growing beneath it is a self-sown seedling and together they are known as mother and child. A memorable sight in late May and early June is *Davidia involucrata*, the Dove or Handkerchief Tree from central and western China, with its profusion of pendulous bracts. This tree grows to 10 metres and produces glorious autumn colour.

There are two *Ginkgo biloba* in the gardens which is a very interesting deciduous conifer. It is also the sole survivor of an ancient botanical family whose ancestors occurred in many parts of the world, including Britain and Ireland about 160 million years ago; it is found in Southeast China. *Sciadopitys verticillata* is another living fossil, sole survivor in its family, and commonly known as the Japanese umbrella pine or parasol pine. It is a conifer of unique appearance and endemic to Japan. The apparent single linear leaves are in fact fused pairs arranged in characteristic dense whorls like the spokes of an

The glasshouse in the 1880s and how the area looks today.

umbrella, hence the common name. This is a slow growing tree and has reached only 11 metres in height in over 130 years. The specimen of *Juniperus recurva,* the drooping juniper, is from the Himalayas and the wood of this species is burnt in Buddhist temples as incense. The photograph shows the tree with glasshouses beside it. Today the glasshouses are gone but the tree is still growing healthily and is an Irish Champion.

The bottom area of the wall garden contains a few of Castlewellan's many champion trees, such as *Podocarpus cunninghamii* 'Aureus', *Podocarpus acutifolious, Dacrycarpus dacrydioides* the New Zealand white pine and *Prumnopitys taxifolia* the New Zealand black pine. *Pseudowintera colorata* the pepper tree, which is related to *Drimys*, has an unusual colouring of its aromatic leathery leaves; the underside is flushed pink and edged with dark crimson-purple. According to W.J. Bean (former curator of Kew) it is usually not more than two metres high in the wild and much smaller in cultivation. The Castlewellan specimen at four metres tall is reputed to be a British and Irish champion.

This corner of the garden has a variety of spruces. Perhaps the most graceful and striking tree, with its new golden foliage in spring and early summer is *Picea orientalis* 'Aurea', known as the Golden Oriental Spruce. There is also a beautiful medium sized pine growing here, *Pinus patula* from Mexico.

Adjacent to the Herron Fountain area there are other interesting trees such as the *Pinus parviflora*, a Japanese white pine which is a small to medium size pine in Japan and is one that is used in bonsai. The Nepal strawberry tree, *Cornus capitata,* from the Himalayas, is a multi-stemmed species of dogwood. The flower heads in midsummer are surrounded by sulphur-yellow bracts, to be succeeded in October by strawberry-like fruits. Nearby is *Pseudolarix amabilis*, the golden larch from Eastern China, which resembles the common larch and is deciduous and slow growing.

Rhododendron 'Cynthia', a cross between from *R. catwbiense* and *R. griffithianum*, is planted in this area. It was presented by Mrs Ruby Slinger in memory of her late husband Leslie. Leslie ran the Slieve Donard Nursery in Newcastle, until his death in 1975 when the nursery closed. Leslie Slinger took

IMAGE 1
Eucryphia glutinosa close to the Herron Fountain.

IMAGES 2
Abies numidica when it was about 20 years old.

over the nursery, from his father William, and was undoubtedly one of the finest plantsmen in Britain and Ireland and his contributions to horticulture have been many and varied. During the seventy year history of the nursery they named some 250 plants and some twenty cultivars. The nursery was a vital source of plants for Castlewellan and he and the nursery were missed greatly.

The Japanese maples planted at the Herron Fountain are *Acer palmatum* 'Atropurpureum' and *Acer palmatum* 'Osakasuki'. Close to the fountain is an old and stunning *Eucryphia glutinosa*, a deciduous shrub native to Chile. Here it flowers from August to October. After flowering the leaves give a outstanding autumn colour. This one is the mother of the *Eucryphia glutinosa* shrubs in the Eucryphia Walk. Hugh Annesley photographed and wrote about this plant in his book *Beautiful and Rare Trees and Plants*. He said, *"It bore a fine crop of seed pods in 1901 which it took 15 months to ripen, they proved fertile and we have now several hundred seedlings. Hitherto it has been somewhat rare in this country due to the difficulty of propagating it as it does not strike readily from cuttings. Both on the account of its hardiness and beauty I hope that it soon becomes more common in our gardens".*

At the other side of the path is the oldest Abies in the garden the Algerian fir, *Abies numidica*, which was planted in 1881. Nearby is *Picea smithiana*, the Western Himalayan spruce. Hugh Annesley recorded that it was grown from seed received from the Himalayas in 1868.

Just up this path from the Herron Fountain is the original Castlewellan Gold, *X Cupressocyparis leylandii* 'Castlewellan'. Beside it is another of Castlewellan's own, a stunning *Juniperus recurva* 'Castlewellan'.

On the other side *Parrotia persica,* the Persian ironwood from Northern Iran, has a very good autumn colour of crimson and gold. The remarkable and majestic multi-stemmed specimen of

Sequoiadendron giganteum planted in 1856 can also be seen in this area of the garden.

Other trees of particular interest in the bottom half of the wall garden include *Pinus montezumae*, a native of Mexico. It was named after the last King of the Aztec Empire, and is a beautiful pine with long sea-green needles.

Athrotaxis selaginoides, the King William pine native to Tasmania, grows in mountainous areas. Its common name is after William Lanney who was the last true Tasmanian Aborigine.

In addition to the conifer collection for which Castlewellan is noted, there are numerous fine broadleaved trees and shrubs. *Arbutus menziesii*, the noble Madrona of California, is a magnificent specimen at 16 metres tall. This evergreen tree has rich orange-red bark that when mature naturally peels away in thin sheets, leaving a greenish, silvery appearance that has a satin sheen and smoothness. In July it has panicles of white lily-of-the-valley like flowers which once fertilised develop into red berries. Of note among the many Magnolia species to be seen is *M.campbellii subsp. mollicomata*. The large pink to rose-pink flowers are followed in the autumn by hard coated orange seeds. *Magnolia campbellii* from the Himalayas is a wonderful specimen growing against the main wall separating the garden. It flowers in early spring before the leaves appear and has deep pink flowers going paler as they age. The Chinese evergreen magnolia with large leaves is called *Magnolia delavayi* and flowers in July and August. The flowers are creamy white to pink but each fragrant flower lasts only a few days. *Magnolia dawsoniana,* another interesting specimen, also comes from China where it grows at altitudes from 1400-2500m.

Juniperus recurva

Nepal Strawberry Tree, *Cornus capitata*

Picea smithiana, the Western Himalayan Spruce.

Juniperus recurva 'Castlewellan'

In 1947 the clipped Portuguese laurel along the exterior wall separating the main garden from the Spring Garden were replaced with Eucyphia species. The Eucryphia Walk is now a unique feature of the Annesley Garden. It is composed mainly of *Eucryphia glutinosa*, flanked with *E.cordifolia*. In late summer the profusion of white flowers with yellow stamens is an outstanding attraction. The flowers of the taller evergreen *Eucryphia cordifolia* continue into November. *Eucryphia glutinosa* not only gives us beautiful flowers but also outstanding autumn colours. Planted at the front are a few *Rhododendron thompsonii* which have dark red flowers in spring.

An interesting old tree in the top half of the walled garden is *Nothofagus fusca*, an evergreen southern beech commonly called red beech and native of New Zealand. Hugh Annesley writes about it in his book that *"I imported this from New Zealand in a Wardian case some years ago and it has grown rapidly here, making an annual growth of over a foot. It has small leaves, not more than half an inch long and it may be said to be evergreen, as the old leaves remain on the branches till the new ones appear, just before the old leaves fall they change a brilliant red, and the contrast with the light green of the young growth is very curious and pretty".*

In this area is the beautiful *Acer palmatum* that has outstanding colour in autumn but is equalled by the Katsura tree, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, as its leaves turn yellow, orange and pink and also has a smell of burnt sugar when the leaves fall. The Japanese plum yew *Cephalotaxus harringtonia* var. drupacea, also sometimes called Japanese Cow's tail pine, has 'plum like fruit'. Next to it is a *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, commonly known as the dawn redwood, and another unusual deciduous conifer. Before the 1940s it was only known by fossil records until one was discovered growing in central China.

The top end of the walled garden has the best views of the Mourne Mountains and also in certain areas the Irish Sea can be seen. The golden variety of the native Scots pine, *Pinus sylvestris* 'Aurea', is a pea green colour for most of the year but is a spectacular sight particularly during winter months when it turns golden. It can be found close to the Merboy Fountain.

Multi-stemmed specimen of *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

The beautiful long blue-grey needles of *Pinus montezumae*.

IMAGE 3
M.campbellii subsp. mollicomata.

IMAGE 4
The flower of *Magnolia dawsoniana*

Throughout the Arboretum there are some species of the Juniper genus to be seen. Gerald Annesley recalls that the specimen of the drooping Juniper, *Juniperus recurva* var. coxii, arrived through the post as a 2 ¾ inch (7cm) seedling in a match box around 1932. It is a native of Burma and the timber is favoured for making coffins. A black juniper, *Juniperus indico*, is an attractive tree with dark berries and is at the top of the basket steps near the Merboy Fountain.

A specimen of *Neopanax laetus*, a tender species from the North Island of New Zealand, at over three metres high, is regarded as the finest specimen in Britain and Ireland. Close by is *Podocarpus salignus*, known as the willow-leaf podocarpus, which originates from Chile where the timber is valued for building purposes. There are numerous Rhododendrons throughout the gardens but most have been planted for cosmetic effect. There are some interesting species such as *Rhododendron sinogrande*, which was discovered by

The clipped Portuguese laurel planted in 1890s by Hugh Annesley

The Eucryphia Walk as seen today.

George Forrest in 1913 and grows in the wild of West Yunnan, Northeast upper Myanmar and Southeast Tibet. Other notable species are *Rhododendron thompsonii, Rhododendron giganteum* (big tree rhododendron), *Rhododendron barbatum, Rhododendron decorum* and *Rhododendron arboreum.*

Bamboos are a feature of the Annesley Garden. As members of the grass family their tropical appearance improves and beautifies the garden. There were once some thirty species and the garden was known for its bamboos with thickets of *Arundinaria falconeri, A. fastuosa, A. japonica* and *A. nitida* adorning the garden at every turn. Bamboo is still present but needs to be replanted to regain the structure and elegance they once added to the garden.

We have only covered a small number of the wonderful and rare trees and shrubs in the Annesley Garden. There are many more waiting to be discovered.

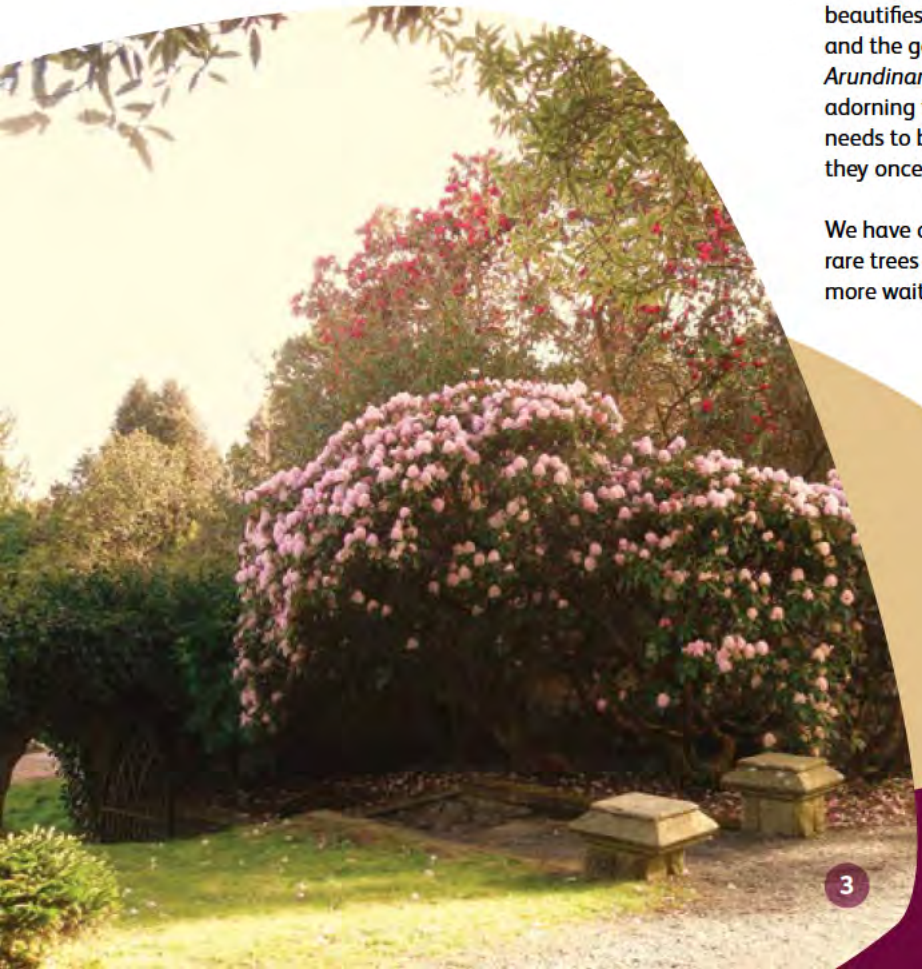

IMAGE 1
Nothofagus fusca

IMAGE 2
The golden variety of the native Scots pine, *Pinus sylvestris* 'Aurea'.

IMAGE 3
Rhododendron 'Christmas Cheer'

The Glasshouses

Many of the glasshouses originally constructed in Hugh Annesley's time have gone. The three remaining glasshouses were built over one hundred years ago. Between 1976 and 1980 they were reconstructed by Forest Service workers. All three houses were restored again in 2013. The largest is a lean-to type about 30 metres long and in three interconnecting sections and used to have a permanent display of tender plants. In addition there was a free flying collection of small tropical birds. The house contained ponds with aquatic plants of various kinds and it is hoped that this can be recreated in the near future.

IMAGE 4
The main glasshouse in the 1890s

The terrace taken in the 1970s, photograph courtesy of Patrick Mackie.

Spring Garden

The layout and planting of the Spring Garden was commenced in 1972 and completed in 1974. Formerly an area of derelict scrub and pheasant rearing pens it has been transformed into an attractive feature. The main visual effect is created by the extensive selection of spring flowering trees consisting mainly of *Prunus* and *Malus* species. The garden is in two different levels achieved by building a dry stone wall creating a 'ha ha', which was once clothed mainly in Aubretia and Iberis. Circular steps connecting the two parts are on the site of the old game keeper's cottage, demolished in 1969. The north facing wall separating the Spring Garden from the Annesley Garden has been covered in collections of *Chaenomeles* (Japanese Quinces), *Hedra* (Ivy), and *Pyracantha* (Firethorn).

The Spring Garden taken in the 1980s.

Prominent use has been made of a natural water course by creating three ponds, which in turn provide the pleasant sound of running water. Future continuity with neighbouring areas has been attempted by planting prominent coniferous species. These in turn will screen, protect and highlight both early flower and autumn colour of the flowering crabs and ornamental cherries.

Dwarf Conifer Beds

The Dwarf Conifer beds taken in the 1980s

Dwarf conifers became very popular in the 1970s. They provide a sense of scale and stability in the smaller areas that was once provided by full size evergreens. As the popularity of these plants has grown, so has the need to display and enlarge the collection within the Arboretum. The extensive collection occupies four long, curved beds. Planting commenced in 1976 to achieve beauty of colour and form for the whole year round. It quickly matured into an attractive feature with several outstanding specimens.

The Lawson Cypress has given rise to innumerable cultivars, among which are several good dwarf forms. One of the most commonly planted dwarf conifers is *C. obtusa* 'Nana Gracilis'. Its neat, shell-like sprays of dark green foliage cluster to form a Japanese effect. One of the best narrow growing Lawsons must surely be *C.lawsoniana* 'Columnaris', which forms a narrow pillar of bluish-grey, most effective for landscaping and as a focal point in the beds. It is to some extent the counterpart of the well known Irish juniper, *J. communis* 'Hibernica', though never so slender or compact.

In contrast, the dense mat formation of *Juniperus procumbens* 'Nana' creeps slowly over the contours of the bed. A promising dwarf conifer from Holland, *Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star', stays dense and squat the year round. Its beautiful blue-grey foliage is reminiscent of *J.squamata* 'Meyeri', from which it originated. Another conifer to remember, *Platydadus orientalis* 'Rosedalis' is spectacular with its change of colour three times in the year. In winter it is purple-brown turning in spring to bright butter-yellow, then to light green in summer.

This is another part of the garden that requires renovation.

Rhododendron Wood

The Rhododendron Wood has an area of approximately two hectares and contains a selection of both hybrid and species Rhododendron, all in a setting of mature conifers and hardwoods. In the shelter and dappled shade, afforded by the beech, oak and pine, tender camellias, replanted from a greenhouse in 1979, are thriving. Large numbers of deciduous azaleas, planted in the same year, have responded to ideal conditions.

On the edge of the area is a concrete pond of some 1000 sq metres which is the perfect foil for the back cloth of rhododendrons and mature conifers, mainly *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* 'Lutea'. This pond was completely reconstructed in 1979 by Forest Service workers. It is edged with the sword like leaves of the New Zealand Flax, *Phormium tenax*. This area has now become completely overgrown due to lack of maintenance. Across the pond is *Fitzroya cupressoides* which is a long-lived conifer native to the Andes mountains of southern Chile and Argentina. Further up is the *Pinus montezumae*, a native of Mexico and Central America.

There are many outstanding trees and shrubs to be seen in this area, for example the two huge *Eucalyptus urnigera* which are striking trees, with cinnamon and grey bark. Planted in 1974, a Turkish hazel, *Corylus colurna*, is over five metres tall. Groups of *Rhododendron barbatum*, with attractive peeling coral bark have masses of crimson red flowers in February. One of the finest species of Rhododendron is *R.grande,* at least 11 metres high and multi-stemmed. When it is in full bloom, its large clusters of waxy white flowers are a wonderful sight, but unfortunately they are rather easily burnt by spring frosts. Nearby and of a similar height, is *Rhododendron falconeri*. Numerous seedlings of this species grow in many parts of the garden. *Torreya californica*, the Californian nutmeg, is another spectacular tree and is a British and Irish Champion. *Olearia paniculata* with its bright, olive-green undulate leaves bear a strong resemblance to a neighbouring *Pittosporum tenuifolium*. *Gunnera chilensis*, the Chiliean Rhubarb, surrounding a small woodland pond, has a decidedly tropical appearance in the summer with leaves two and a half metres across.

Torreya californica, the Californian nutmeg, is a spectacular tree and is a British and Irish Champion.

IMAGE 1
Lady Annesley and her daughter Mabel in the 1880s, with the Bothy Yard beyond.

IMAGE 2
The pond behind the Bothy Yard as seen today.

Autumn Wood

The Autumn Wood, covering four hectares, lies to the west of the Castle and alongside the lake. It was originally designed as a pleasure garden around the Annesley Cottage. Significant additional planting in this area began in 1969. There is a collection of *Acer, Betula, Crataegus, Quercus* and *Sorbus* plus many individual species. There were once mown grass paths which allowed for easy access.

A magnificent mature fern-leaved beech, *Fagus sylvatica* 'Asplenifolia' 20 metres high stands majestically (see image 1 above). Of all the forms of beech, surely this is the most handsome. The foliage tends to revert here and there but on the whole it is stable.

A box hedge marks the site of the Annesley Cottage built at the end of the 1800s. It was Regency style, single-storey dwelling with five bays on each side. It was demolished around 1866 after the Castle was built.

Cercidiphyllum japonicum could be termed a harbinger of autumn and by mid-October its pink leaves are sparse. Alongside, the red oak *Quercus rubra* provides colour through to mid November.

Along the lake shore the buttercup yellow leaves of the Norway maple, *Acer platanoides*, glow among the dark Norway spruce, *Picea abies*. The narrow, spire-like growth of the grey birch, *Betula populifolia*, appears well suited to a confined space.

IMAGE 1
The Fern Leaved Beech *Fagus sylvatica* var. *heterophylla* 'Aspleniifolia'

ARBORETUM KEY

1. Annesley Garden
2. Rhododendron Wood
3. Dwarf Conifer Beds
4. Spring Garden
5. Pinetum Collection
6. Sequoia Grove
7. Harrison Vista
8. Autumn Wood
9. Long Wood
10. Chamaecyparis Collection
11. Winter Garden

Cypress Pond
Chamaecyparis Collection

The Cypress Pond was described as a 'new' pond in 1886. The *Chamaecyparis* or False Cypress is often referred to under its old name Cupressus but the latter name covers a different and distinct group of species. *Chamaecyparis* is one of the most widely grown and planted genera and has produced a wide range of cultivars, varying considerably in height, habit and colour.

The collection was commenced in 1969 and was promoted by the desire to realistically perpetuate the old name of the location 'The Cypress Pond'. The trees have matured giving beauty of form and colour. A certain amount of licence has been taken by including the occasional maple and birch species to add colour and stem effects.

The trees were planted in threes and the strongest would have been left to grow on by removing the weaker two trees. However, this thinning did not take place and as a result the area is now a jungle of plants.

Harrison Vista

This area was planted as an extension to the Arboretum in the mid 1970s during the period when Sam Harrison was the Arboreta Forester. It is now known as Harrison Vista in recognition of its creation by that outstanding plantsman. It extends below the Annesley Garden into Drumbuck Wood and covers some five hectares. The Chinese tulip tree *Liriodendron chinense* is one of many attractive and unusual trees in this part of the Arboretum. Other notable trees include rare species of oak including the variegated Turkey oak, *Quercus cerris* 'Argenteovariegata'. There is also a wide a range of Eucalyptus species and other unusual genera.

IMAGE 3
Harrison Vista

While recent years have seen areas become overgrown, trees blown down or lost to a variety of natural diseases, the heart of this magnificent garden and arboretum remains. The community of Castlewellan, garden enthusiasts and tree specialists will continue to work to save and restore this horticultural and arboricultural gem.

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The original text was written by Sam Harrison when he was Head Forester at Castlewellan and Tollymore in the 1990s. Sam has helped to update it with the assistance of Dr Mark Johnston, Alwyn Sinnamon, Robert Trotter and Dr Sally Montgomery.

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We are particularly grateful to the Ogilvie family for their kind permission to use the photographs of Hugh Annesley, as they too love the garden and look forward to its restoration.

IMAGE ABOVE
The Head Gardener, Thomas Ryan, standing beside *Sequoiadendron giganteum*, circa 1900.

Mourne Mountains & Ring of Gullion

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