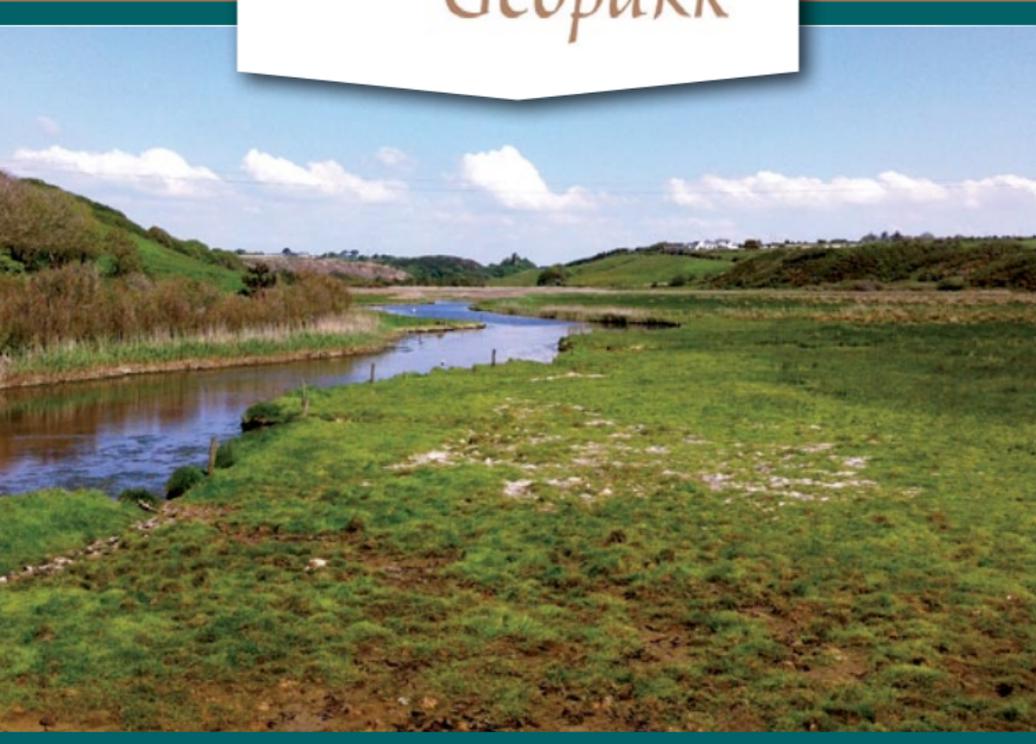




## Copper Coast Geopark



# The Annestown Heritage e-Trail

FROM BATTLES TO TRANQUILLITY

This guide is also available as a podcast at:  
[www.coppercoastgeopark.com](http://www.coppercoastgeopark.com)

This pamphlet or the podcast will guide you around a section of the Copper Coast Global Geopark introducing you to its rich heritage and geology. The walk will take in Annestown village and then take a looped route around the Anne Valley past Dunhill Castle, finishing back at the beach. It will take approximately 1½ hours in total.

## STOP 1

Starting at the car park that serves Annestown beach, to your left hand side when facing the sea, there is a slightly worn path that leads up the side of the cliff past the stone picnic table, which is one of a series installed by the Copper Coast Global Geopark in 2006. The line on the top of the table is a replica of the coastline along the Copper Coast which gets its name from the 19th century copper mines that lie further west along the coast road in Bunmahon. It comprises some 25 kilometres of spectacular coastline, consisting of scalloped beaches and coves, buttressed and enclosed by rocky headlands. Oceans, volcanoes, deserts and ice sheets all combined to create the rocks, and in Annestown the cliffs are made up totally of volcanic ash and blocks from explosions millions of years ago. There is a panel on the sea wall explaining more of the geology in the area.

It is not advisable to go up along this cliffside as there has been a great deal of erosion over the years. However what lies up at the top of the headland is the imprint on the ground of a promontory fort, which was a defensive structure most likely dating from the Iron



Age (circa. 300BC – 300AD) that used the steep cliffs as natural defences. This stretch of coastline has the largest number of these defensive forts of this type in Ireland but not much is known about their date or how they were used, whether the builders would have lived in the fort all the time or more likely retreating to the headland in times of attack. The island that has broken off the headland (Brown's Island nearest and Black Rock further out to sea), might also have been part of the fort. If you walk along the beach, following the cliff wall along to the left, you may be able to pick out the rise and fall of the bank and ditch in profile which was the only part of the fort the clan had to defend.

Looking in the opposite direction, facing out to sea, there is another headland jutting out in the distance. This is called Dunabrattin, situated just beyond Boatstrand, around 3km away, and is the largest promontory fort in the county, covering around 6 hectares.

Head back to the car park and on your right are the remains of a lime kiln which dates from the early part of the 19th century. It was used by local farmers to heat limestone which was then broken up and spread as fertiliser on the land.



## STOP 2

Head out of the car park and turn left towards Annestown village. Keep on the left, going over the bridge and several metres up the hill on the same side, is a large imposing cream-coloured building, Annestown House, built in 1770. This was traditionally the local landlord's home and in 1830 it was owned by a man called Rev John Palliser. His nephew Capt. John Palliser (who lived in Comeragh Lodge near Kilrossanty) was an eminent Victorian explorer, having many adventures including travelling to the Mississippi-Missouri River and across the Western Plains. In his book *Solitary Rambles and Adventures of a Hunter* John Palliser describes sharing a passage along the way with the Barnum & Bailey Circus and a very interesting passenger:

*"I found on board some very pleasant and entertaining fellow-passengers, and was not a little surprised, on entering the state-cabin, to hear the most unnatural shrill little pipe exclaiming, "Waiter! Bwing me a Welsh wabbit:" after some difficulty I discovered its possessor, who, creeping from under shawls and ladies' workbaskets, scrambled into the middle of the saloon, stuck his Lilluputian hands into his little pockets, and looked at us as much to say, "What do you think of that?" We found General Tom Thumb a very amusing companion...sprucely attired in a little mid-shipman's dress, his tiny patent-leather boots the miracle of a fit."*



He later received support from Dr Livingstone and left for a 2 year expedition to survey and map the Canadian North West. Over two years, Palliser and his companions explored the entire region between Lake Superior and the Pacific Coast, lending their names to various landscape features as they "discovered" them, such as Palliser's River, which descends down the Rocky Mountains and Kicking Horse Pass, so called because one of his companions received a serious kick from his horse. The most famous landmark that he named was Palliser's Triangle, which stretches for a thousand miles along the US/Canadian border and north for around 500 miles.

The house continued to be passed down through the family and has seen illustrious visitors such as Larry Hagman, aka JR Ewing, Maeve Binchy, and Jackie Kennedy used the facilities here in 1963 when she was holidaying nearby. It passed out of the family hands in 2010.

Continue walking up the hill through the village. Today Annestown is a quiet, genteel holiday village but during the early 1800s it was a pretty rough place with mass unemployment and fighting between rival gangs was common. A contemporary account 'Origins of the Factions ' by Sylvester Murray has this very descriptive passage

*"As the... men arrived, much shouting of abuse at the opposing group took place, battle cries were raised and the preliminary challenge was given. This was done by the leader who 'did a wheel' by trailing his coat along the ground. The other side formally took up the challenge by standing on the coat and a free for all ensued in which bystanders also took part. The women sometimes put stones into their stockings and went in to help their menfolk."*

The local magistrate, Henry St. George Cole, installed a garrison in the village as a way of maintaining order and soon the jails were full, though the fighting continued. And so he decreed that the 5 pubs in the village be shut because the gangs are using them as meeting places late at night, which is exacerbating the violence, which is why Annestown today is the only village in Ireland without a pub.

The cream-coloured two storey house with a blue door across the road was the site of the old police barracks. It was closed in 1920 during the Irish War of Independence and burned down the following day. It was later rebuilt as a private house, and is still known by its original name of The Barracks.

## STOP 3

At the water pump (look out for the donkeys in the field just beyond it) cross the road to have a look at the Church of Ireland St John the Baptist Church built in 1822, and where some of the family of successive landlords were married and commemorated. Notably, it was here that the famous atheist, Richard Dawkins, author of the controversial *The God Delusion*, married his first wife in 1967.

Return down the hill and take the lane to the left just before the large pink house, and you are now walking along the Anne Valley. The white and red cottage on the left hand side used to be a forge where a blacksmith lived and worked.



Before the bridge and coastal defences were built the sea would have filled all this lowland area right up to the castle that can be seen in the distance. According to local folklore, Lady Anne (from whom the village and valley get their name) threw herself from the rocky promontory and was drowned in the river below.

## STOP 4

Mid-way along the valley is a 3 metre high monument known locally as the steeple. It is not known for sure what it was built for but there has been some speculation. Some say it marks the grave of a favourite dog of a visiting dignitary, others that it marks a fairy mound which exudes special energy or a commemoration of a local family. The most likely reason is that it was either a shipping marker to mark the rocks underneath it or a range marker for enemy ships approaching the castle. During World War II, or the Emergency as it was known in Ireland, the local source of fuel was this bog which stretched along the valley from the castle to the sea.



Looking ahead you will see the imposing sight of Dunhill Castle perched on top of a cliff. The original castle was probably built by Sir Robert le Poher, who came with Henry II in his invasion of Ireland in 1171. It is easy to see how the area got its name of Dún Aill or Fort on the Cliff. This Le Poher or Power as the family name became, were infamous in the 14th century for launching many attacks on Waterford City for over 150 years, finally being defeated in 1461.

In 1649 Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army attacked the castle as part of the English conquest of Ireland. Legend has it that the lord of the castle, John le Poer was away at the time defending his other castle in Kilmeaden – about 12km away – and so it was up to his wife, Gyles Fitzgerald to stage the defence against the British forces, which she did so valiantly and bravely on the ramparts day and night urging on the garrison to resist to the death. In his poem 'The Siege of Dunhill' John Williams vividly describes the scene.



*"Behold the hill where Cromwell stood;  
His cannon stretching for a mile,  
Fired from this spot on fair Dunisle,  
But from its walls of ancient name,  
A thundering answer quickly came,  
Again! Again! Its cannons roar,  
And foes are falling by the score;  
Again, again, its gunners cry –  
"Death to a Celt or victory."*

*Had they for days poured from the hill  
A ceaseless rain of shot and shell,  
Till walls and towers and tumbled down,  
These men could still have held their own,  
Well fortified in front and flanks  
By rocky steeps and sloping banks,  
With but one opening from the rear,  
They had not anything to fear,  
For it could have been by a score,  
Held 'gainst three thousand men, or more*

And so the castle's defenders seemed to have been successful as Cromwell's forces eventually decided to cut their losses against what must have seemed an impossible target, lifted the siege and prepared to march away to an easier victories. Celebrations were in order, but the lady of the castle was still cautious with the enemy still so close to hand and so only allowed them to drink buttermilk. Not happy with this and preferring something stronger, one of her soldiers signalled the surrender of the castle to the besiegers, who turned back and took the castle and the Countess was killed. The soldier who betrayed them was hanged as a traitor whilst Cromwell's troops stayed on in the castle until August 1650 when they continued in their quest to subdue Ireland. It is thought that they blew up part of the castle and neighbouring church as they left.

## STOP 5

You can go in through the gate across the road, cross the clearing and further along, there are some quite steep steps leading up to the castle which is situated on your right when you reach the top. There is an alternative route without the steep steps if you pass along the road keeping the castle on your left hand side, follow the road up to the left past the concrete boulders.

Continue up the hill, past another set of concrete boulders and head to the left through the gates – remember to close the gates behind you. Continue up that slope and you will come to the castle on your left hand side.

Whatever route you have taken, when you reach the top you will come to a clearing. This may have been where the medieval village of Dunhill stood, which would have consisted mainly of a string of wooden houses.

## STOP 6

Turning so the castle is behind you, follow the path across the field which will take you to the remains of the ancient parish church of Dunhill. This was also destroyed by Cromwell's troops by gunpowder on their departure from the castle in 1650. What is left today is the west gable wall which has a pointed doorway and the east chancel wall. If you can, pick your way carefully along the path and go through what is left of the doorway – mind your head! Part of the stairs that would have led up to the tower can be found behind the wall - this strong tower would have acted as living quarters for the priest.

There are 23 inscribed headstones surviving in the graveyard, ranging in date from 1753 to 1821. Burials of both Roman Catholics and members of the Church of Ireland took place in this graveyard, including Henry St. George Cole who was responsible for closing the pubs in Annestown village. A new Catholic church was built in Dunhill village in 1820 and a Church of Ireland church in Annestown in 1822, and so from then on the people of the different religions were buried separately.

A lot of these headstones are decorated with objects associated with the story of the crucifixion or Passion of Christ. The best time to see them is in the late morning when the sun is at a sharp angle to the stone or if it is a dull day then it will help if you use a torch. See if you can find 30 pieces of silver which represents the money paid to Judas Iscariot when he betrayed Jesus; or the cock and pot – representing an early legend in which

Judas Iscariot's wife declared that the cock she was cooking was more likely to fly out of the pot than was Jesus to rise from the dead – whereupon the cock promptly obliged; or a bucket which was used to hold the nails and jar to catch the blood of Christ. These designs are particular to this area in the late 1800s.

Retrace your steps back along the path and head towards the castle. Turn left to head down the slope towards the gates. There is a stile to the right of the gates to climb over otherwise remember to close the gates firmly behind you. Turn right onto the road and walk downhill past 2 sets of concrete boulders. At the bottom of the slope, there is an opening in the wall, just before the bridge. This path was developed by a group of farmers in 2013 and leads right up to Dunhill village. At the village end of the pathway are some specially built wetlands that treat the village and some of the surrounding farms' waste water in a completely environmentally friendly way. This area is a world leader in these so-called Integrated Constructed Wetlands. At the other end of this path there is also a self-cleaning pool and an amphitheatre. Designed to be wheelchair and buggy friendly, the pathway was laid adjacent to the river Anne and a series of ponds were constructed in recent years. The valley area is now a wildlife reserve and hosts a range of protected wildlife species, such as swans and herons or even an otter if you're lucky. The walk (depending on your speed) along this path takes around one hour to and from this spot.



## STOP 7

Continue over the bridge, follow the road and then turn right at the junction to follow the single track road which will take you along the other side of the valley. As you walk you will see Annestown village perched on the hilltop away to your right.

## STOP 8

At the end of this lane, just past the farm, look directly across the road and in the field about 250 metres away is a prehistoric standing stone, which is thought to date to the Bronze Age (c. 2000-1000 BC). There are a number of these stones in the county, though this one has suffered the test of time and is now leaning over at a 45° angle. Not much is known about standing stones, though it is thought that they would have been markers of ancient routes through the land, meeting places or perhaps territory indicators. Some have been excavated and found to have been memorials or grave markers. Please be aware that the stone is standing on private property, and permission from the owner is needed to have a closer look.

## STOP 9

Turn right down the hill onto the road signposted towards Annestown, you will reach the car park for Annestown beach where we started this journey.



We hope you enjoyed your tour around the Anne Valley and invite you to visit the Copper Coast Global Geopark Centre, which is 8km along the coast road to the west at Bunmahon, where you can learn more about walks in the Copper Coast Global Geopark and enjoy some refreshment. Teas and coffees are also available in the Dunhill Ecopark (mon.-fri.) located in nearby Dunhill village. We look forward to you and your friends visiting the Geopark again in the near future.

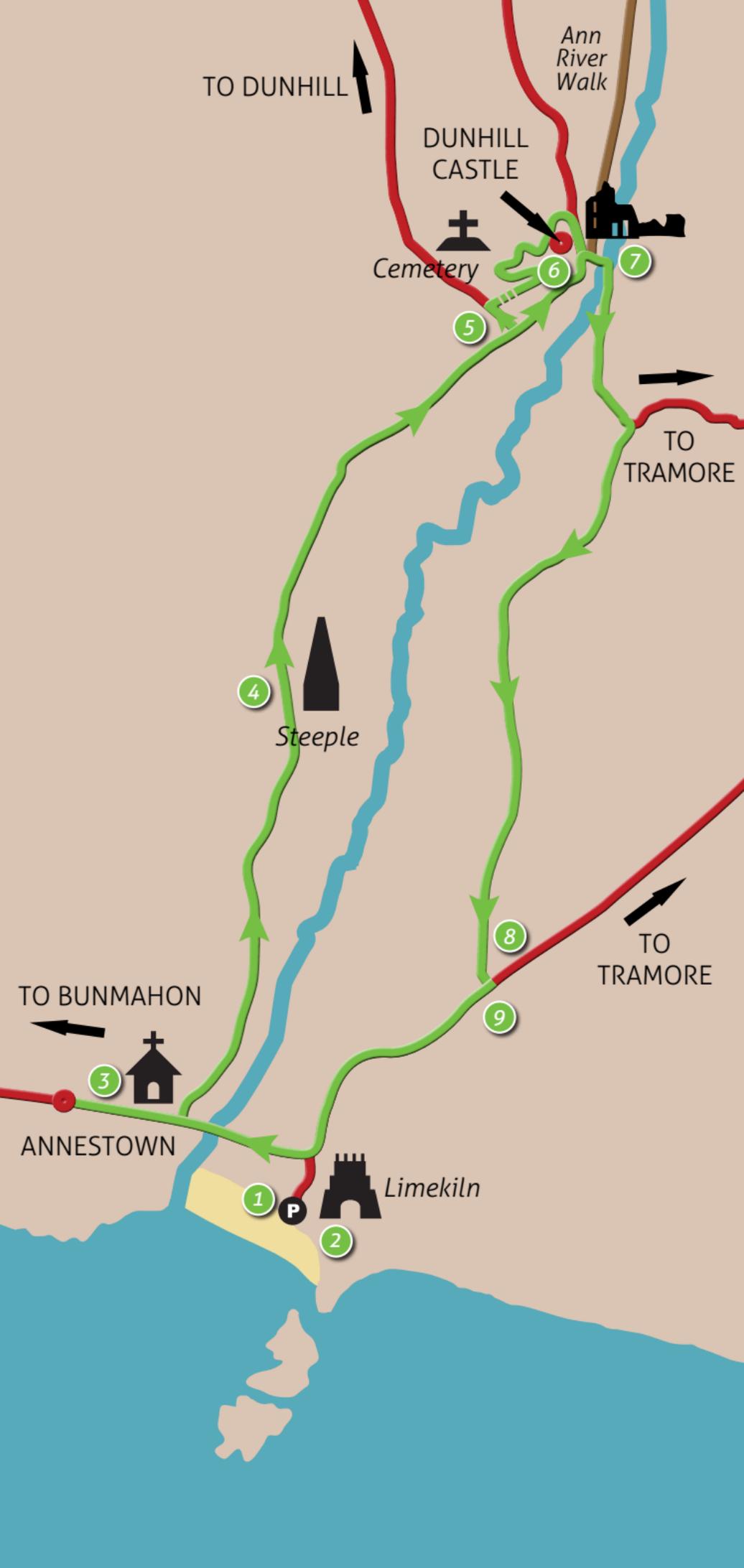
This podcast was produced by Remember When for the Hercules and Metal Links Interreg Projects, in association with the local communities of Annestown and Dunhill. The Metal Links Project is an initiative of the Copper Coast Global Geopark and the Hercules Project an initiative of Dunhill Rural Enterprises Ltd. Both are part funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) through the Ireland Wales Programme 2007-2013 (INTERREG 4A).



**Copper Coast Geopark Centre,  
Bunmahon, Co. Waterford:**

Mining Heritage exhibition, Café, Internet  
Access, Rest rooms, Wheelchair access.





TO DUNHILL

Ann River Walk

DUNHILL CASTLE

Cemetery

TO TRAMORE

Steeple

TO TRAMORE

TO BUNMAHON

ANNESTOWN

Limekiln

3

1

2

5

6

7

4

8

9

P



**WATERFORD**

**YOU ARE  
HERE**

**Copper Coast European Geopark**

**DUNGARVAN**

**MOUNTAINS**

**N25**

**N25**

**N25**

**N25**

**R628**

**R672**

**R671**

**N72**

**R673**

**R673**

**R673**

**R628**

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