

# Geological tour of the Antrim Coast and Glens

Friday 8 - Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2017

Leader: Dr Fiona Meade

The Antrim Coast records over 600 million years of geological history, from Precambrian Dalradian rocks to Mesozoic chalk and spectacular Palaeogene volcanism.

**Day 1:** Beginning, around lunchtime on Friday, in the Antrim Coast and Glens Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty we will explore the Precambrian basement that underlies the region (metasedimentary and metabasic rocks of the Dalradian Supergroup). We will visit the spectacular Devonian puddingstone conglomerate that forms the Cushendun caves. We will make our way to our accommodation on the Causeway Coast via the beautiful Antrim Glens, stopping by the mysterious vanishing lake of Loughareema on the way. *Will it be there?!*

**Day 2:** We will visit the Lower Jurassic rocks at Whitepark Bay, and hopefully find some ammonites, belemnites and bivalves. We will see the post-glacial land-slips which define the shape of the local landscape. Moving up the stratigraphy we will examine the Cretaceous Ulster White Limestone (chalk). We will see the interaction of Palaeogene volcanism with the chalk in vent complexes at White Rocks. We will end the day at the Portrush Sill, where a sill intrudes fossiliferous Jurassic rocks. This is a world-renowned site from the Neptunism v Plutonism debate of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.

**Day 3:** We will visit the Ballintoy Harbour. We will see the Ballintoy Fault and brecciated chalk. Here the chalk is intruded by the impressive Bendo dolerite plug and we will visit the intrusion contact. We will discuss mining of the metamorphosed chalk and see several lime kilns. We will spend the afternoon at the Giant's Causeway, a World Heritage Site, further exploring the basalts of the Palaeogene Antrim Plateau and looking at the morphology of the spectacular Causeway Tholeiites.

**Day 4:** We shall spend the morning visiting further sites of geological interest before finishing around lunchtime

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**Logistics/accessibility:** Exposures are easily accessible using beaches and coastal paths, with some longer, flat, walks. Access to the visitor centre at the Giant's Causeway is free to National Trust and NTS members, bring your card if you are a member.



Cushendun caves © J. Tweed



White Rocks © F. Meade



Bendo Plug, Ballintoy © F. Meade



The Giant's Causeway © Chmee2