“Curious Caverns”:
Cave Tourism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland

by
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A Thesis presented to
The University of Guelph

In partial fulfilment of requirements
For the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History

Guelph, Ontario, Canada
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ABSRACT

“Curious Caverns”: Cave Tourism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland

Caves were sites in Ireland’s developing tourist landscape during the nineteenth century. In this study, St. Kevin’s Bed, Co. Wicklow, the caverns around Cong, Co. Mayo, and the Mitchelstown caves, Co. Tipperary, are examined to illustrate how these destinations were incorporated within mass tourism from approximately 1830 to 1914. The tourism industry which developed during the nineteenth century highlighted caves and promoted them as both supernatural and natural spaces within wider landscape tours. As supernatural places, caves expressed Irish myth and folklore. Other sites prompted tourists to consider aspects of Irish history. As the century progressed, interest in and knowledge of geology expanded and caves became destinations where tourists could learn about new scientific developments and experience geological wonder. Travel literature prefigured caves as dynamic destinations able to fulfill the diverse desires of many tourists. However, developments in infrastructure were necessary for travelers to reach these sites. Steamboats ferried tourists across the Irish sea onto the island and an ever-expanding network of railways snaked their way across Ireland. The case studies featured here were all integrated into different tourist networks. St. Kevin’s Bed was a marker within Glendalough’s wider landscape, an established eighteenth century site. Cong was integrated into the developing post-Famine Connemara tour. The Mitchelstown caves were a
new landscape feature in the South of Ireland, discovered in 1833 and appealing primarily to the scientist. Ireland’s caverns were at once supernatural and natural spaces, often signposted as valuable stops on tourist itineraries.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I could not have completed this thesis without help from a great number of people. Thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Kevin James, for the initial encouragement that I pursue an MA, and for his constant advice, patience, and guidance through this entire process. I also need to thank Dr. Finola O’Kane-Crimmins for lending her time and expertise to the project, improving my work immeasurably. As well, I would like to thank Dr. Alan Gordon for joining the committee and engaging with my work in such a sustained manner.

In regards to my research, I need to thank Robert Scott for meeting with me to discuss Cong’s history and providing me with guidance and sources. Additionally, I should thank the staffs at the National Library of Ireland and Trinity College Dublin for granting me access to their sources and for help with navigating their extensive collections.

Thank you to my family and friends for all the support. Especially my mother, Veronica, for instilling the value of education into myself and my brothers, and to my brothers, Dillon and Jake, for their friendship and occasional editing. My good friends, Nathan Tidridge and Kyle Pritchard, were invaluable to me for debating my different ideas and during the project’s initial stages of development. My colleagues at Guelph were equally supportive, particularly Matthew Robertshaw and Jennifer McKay. Victoria Marshall provided me with excellent graphic design work and advice through the formatting process. Other friends contributed to the completion of this project by aiding me socially, such as Jefferson Shore, Jacob Newman, and Mackenzie Montgomery, who always gave me an outlet for positive distraction.

Finally, I need to thank my girlfriend, Amber Kayed, who has been an unwavering source of support through this entire process, from research, to writing, to revising, and even before the thesis defence. No one has dealt with my stress through this project as much as Amber, and truly the thesis would not be the same without her constant joy, happiness, and friendship in my life.
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I had reason to know, that there had been considerable exaggeration, on the subject of caves. I have seen no great curiosity about these things myself, having seen caves and mines in abundance.¹

Writing in 1834 about his travels through Ireland, Scotsman Henry David Inglis was less than enthused about journeying into another cave. In fact, Inglis skipped visiting the Mitchelstown caves altogether, instead supplementing his points on the site using various travel literature. However, perhaps the famous travel writer did not give caves the credit they deserve – or indeed that other writers offered. Whether used as hideouts for criminals, sanctuary for early Christians, or a subject of study for geologists, tourists expressed fascination for the meanings and uses of caves. Many caverns functioned as conduits for myth and legends, often promoted and popularised by modern literature. Other caves marked, and were implicated in, historical events, from ancient Ireland to the 1798 United Irishmen rebellion. Yet, as the field of geology grew, caves articulated new science, too. Ireland’s caves became places where academics and explorers could carve a name for themselves, both literally and figuratively. In caves, tourists could experience scientific developments, and successive scientists sought to recreate their predecessors’ travels and experiments. Legends manifested themselves at the supernatural cave while science and exploration emerged in the natural cave.

As both natural and supernatural points of the landscape, caves were dynamic spaces which drew countless tourists throughout the nineteenth century. Caverns were places where tourists applied aesthetic codes, but as the nineteenth century wore on, these aesthetic categories (the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque) were influenced by the Romantic movement and developments in the scientific world.² Beneath Ireland’s surface, tourists explored ancient myth or folklore, history, and new science. As the century progressed, more middle class travellers came to the island and satiated their desire for self-improvement at destinations, such as caverns,

¹ Henry David Inglis, A Journey Throughout Ireland, During the Spring, Summer, and Autumn of 1834, (London: Whittaker & Co. Ave Maria Lane, 1838), 84.
² The terms “caves” and “caverns” will be used interchangeably in this project for linguistic variety.
by gaining new knowledge. The tourism industry used legendary and scientific discourse to tap tourists’ natural and supernatural expectations of caves and feverishly promoted them as destinations in their own right, within wider tours, or as interesting stops on the road to elsewhere. At caves, Irish guides participated in creating the underground experience, taking tourists to and through caverns, and interpreting their myth, history, or folklore, as well as illuminating the space.

Ultimately, caves provide a window into the complex motivations and structure of Irish landscape tourism in the nineteenth century, especially as mass tourism grew in the post-Famine period. Legendary and scientific discourses influenced how aesthetic codes were applied to Ireland’s caves, as thousands of tourists visited them every year. These two discourses influenced how tourists prefigured landscape destinations, but also how they physically navigated caverns.

Creating Irish Tourist Destinations: Aesthetic Codes and the Role of the Romantic and Scientific Discourses

The Sublime, the Beautiful, the Picturesque, and Irish Landscape

While many eighteenth century theorists discussed aesthetic codes, the most famous works which defined these new ways of interpreting the landscape were Edmund Burke’s *Enquiry into the origin of our idea of the sublime and the beautiful*, 1757, and William Gilpin’s *Observations relative chiefly to picturesque beauty, made in the year 1776 on several parts of Great Britain, particularly the High-lands of Scotland.* 3 These theorists travelled across Britain and Ireland, especially the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands, to build the concepts of the

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sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque and defined premier sites to enjoy them. For Burke, terror was the ruling principal of the sublime, the incredible or awesome emotion, feeling, and mental engagement that a place could give its visitor. To Gilpin, the picturesque was what “would look well in a picture,” and ultimately became defined by balance, structuring how one looks at the environment. Landscape was transformed in the eighteenth century and Ireland was a key site in this process. Critically, many aesthetic theorists emerged from Ireland, such as Gilpin, Burke, and Thomas Gray, and Finola O’Kane argues that these Irish authors “rewrote the sense of place in literature.” Studying landscape aesthetics is essential to understand the growth of mass tourism in Ireland because, as William H.A. Williams states, Ireland was among the first countries defined by its scenic attractions.

The early history of aesthetic codes in Ireland and the creation of landscape had been heavily studied by a number of scholars, particularly O’Kane and Williams. O’Kane demonstrates that in the eighteenth century, Ireland’s landscape was defined and transformed “through the medium of books of views, guide books, memoirs, paintings, tourism and the changing practices of landscape design,” becoming beautiful and picturesque and then

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5 O’Kane. *Ireland and the Picturesque*, 9-11.


8 Williams primarily studies British travellers in Ireland and examines how aesthetics were applied to the island. Finola O’Kane studies aesthetics in Ireland from an Irish perspective, analyzing how Irish people constructed their landscape along the principles of the sublime and the picturesque. O’Kane’s primary subjects of study are gardens, country estates, and ruins.
progressing into the sublime and the romantic. As the eighteenth century advanced, conceptions of the environment continued to change. O’Kane’s work on urban and suburban environments illuminates what Williams refers to as part of the basis of tourism, landlords and their estates. O’Kane shows landlords were essential for developing the tourist infrastructure by improving roads and opening their estates to travellers. While aesthetic codes were first applied to landscapes in the eighteenth century, this practice continued to evolve in the nineteenth century. In his examination of the development of Irish tourism from 1750-1850, Williams shows that by the mid-nineteenth century, Ireland’s association with the picturesque was solidified, but other aspects of aesthetics were still influential.

In order to expand on the historiography of Irish landscape, this thesis brings the debates over aesthetics in landscape tourism forward into the post-Famine period of Irish history, examining how travellers and the tourism industry embraced aesthetic codes during the expansion of mass tourism. The tourism industry not only brought more visitors to Ireland, but also spawned a variety of different businesses to meet travellers’ demands. New businesses, such as guidebook companies, railways, and hotels, seized aesthetic language and theory to promote Ireland and they adapted it to the needs of commercial tourism. In a study of travel narratives from the Famine to “decolonization,” Spurgeon Thompson argues, similarly to Williams, that the picturesque became the defining feature of tourism in Western Ireland in the wake of the Famine because of the massive depopulation caused by starvation and emigration, emptying the landscape. However, the development of scenic tourism was tied more to cultural

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9 O’Kane, Landscape Design in Eighteenth-Century Ireland, 5.
10 Williams, Creating Irish Tourism, xv; O’Kane, Landscape Design in Eighteenth Century Ireland, 1. Examining the Castletown and Breckdenston estates, O’Kane argued that because of the upheavals in Ireland during the seventeenth century “the surrounding countryside identified the demesne as the exotic in a monochrome environment. The rigid formality of the rectilinear estate town, linked to the estate by the omnipresent avenue, contrasted with the conscious informality of the eighteenth-century landscape garden.”
11 Williams, Creating Irish Tourism, xv.
shifts and developing infrastructure in the West, rather than just the Famine. Using caves as case studies, one can examine the prevalence of aesthetic codes across Ireland and measure the growth of Irish tourism in the nineteenth century. Even though the picturesque came to define Ireland in the post-Famine period, visitors with the purpose of discovering more about the country still travelled with economic and political motives, beyond mere pleasure-seeking.

Glen Hooper asserted that this was part of the general desire post-Act of Union until 1860 to understand Ireland, as the country was perceived as a potentially “corrupting” element within the new state. Given the complex relationship between Britain and its “sister island” from 1860-1922, this desire certainly did not fade. Irish travel for economic and cultural purposes co-existed. Thompson provides unique insights into how scholars should frame the tourist experience in the nineteenth century, arguing that the Famine acted as a “wedge” that drove home the split between “political discussion and tourist discourse,” liberating the tourist from the responsibility of “explanation.” While tourists did not engage in “open talk,” their conscious pursuit of historic and mythic “Irelands” associated with caves demonstrates, albeit often superficially, their attempt to understand the Irish past that could express colonial abuse and violence. Ultimately, aesthetic codes were the defining feature of Irish tourism in the nineteenth century; yet they were also evolved as the century progressed from the influence of scientific developments and the Romantic movement, in the post-Romantic era.


16 Hooper, *Travel Writing and Ireland, 1760-1860*, 2.

17 Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 184-185. For example, Williams demonstrates that William Bennett, a Quaker who went to Ireland to administer Famine relief, also made time to visit the Mitchelstown Caves and the mountains of Donegal. Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 184-185.

18 Thompson, “Famine Travel: Irish Tourism from the Great Famine to Decolonization,” 166.
The periodization for this project runs from the 1830s-1900, with a few exceptions in source choices, to examine the development of caves as destinations in commercial tourism. At caves, the 1840s were not necessarily a watershed or “wedge” for changing perceptions that the decade has been in other scholarship.\(^\text{19}\) Hooper has proposed a periodization for how Irish travel writers should be studied: first, from 1760 to 1800, when the Home Tour was established; next, from 1800 to 1820 was a period of immense research and optimism about Ireland and the Anglo-Irish relationship; finally, from 1820 to 1850 experienced the realities of Union, which had not provided the anticipated “harmony,” as well as the Great Famine; 1850-1860, the post-Famine years, found a renewed optimism of Ireland’s potential, especially for English and Scottish investors: the land was emptied and ready for resettlement and exploitation.\(^\text{20}\) The 1840s are still important because of how the infrastructure for travel, specifically railways, developed in Ireland and travel became available to a wider segment of the population in that decade. Moreover, after the Famine, the proliferation of travel literature on Ireland certainly brought increasing numbers of tourists to the island. Yet these developments were not solely due to the Famine or confined to the 1840s. As well, perceptions of caverns changed with the introduction of new geology, but these scientific developments were part of a wider nineteenth century process. There is an inherent difficulty in crossing the Rubicon of the Famine, as the event had such far-reaching implications in Irish history, socially, politically, culturally, and economically. However, caves demonstrate that the Famine was not always a defining event in landscape tourism. In using this periodization and bridging formerly demarcated boundaries in Irish historiography, this thesis will be able to fully explore how caves were prefigured and constructed as sites during the growth of mass tourism.

\(^{19}\) Thompson, “Famine Travel: Irish Tourism from the Great Famine to Decolonization,” 166. For additional examples, see Williams, *Tourism, Landscape, and the Irish Character*; Hooper, *Travel Writing and Ireland, 1760-1860*; Thompson, “Famine Travel: Irish Tourism from the Great Famine to Decolonization,” 166.

\(^{20}\) Hooper, *Travel Writing and Ireland, 1760-1860*, 3-10.
Before moving forward, it is imperative to define mass tourism and to contextualize it within the wider history of travel in Ireland. Unlike the eighteenth-century grand tours, mass tourism represents the democratization of travel. Born in Britain, mass tourism began in the early nineteenth century with infrastructure improvements. Steamships in the 1820s, and railways, in the 1830s and 1840s, ensured that travellers could reach every inch of Britain reliably and affordably, although Irish infrastructure acquired a poor reputation. The emergence of a middle class during industrialisation lead to the spread of wealth across the social spectrum and increasing numbers of people were able to travel. The established tourist sites of the eighteenth century remained popular, but new destinations emerged out of the interests of these travellers. Outside transport, other elements of the tourism industry developed to meet these new participants’ needs. In the 1830s, guidebooks became a popular genre, planning routes and destinations for their readers. Guidebooks on Ireland existed from their inception as a genre, such as John Fraser’s guides, but other companies focused on the island later, such as John Murray who first published his *Handbook on Ireland* in 1864, immediately preceding the Dublin exhibition, and sold 15,000 copies of the first edition. Furthermore, in the 1840s, Thomas Cook created the modern touring package. Cook first brought tourists to Ireland in 1849 and then in 1852 introduced short and long excursions on the island. Thus, mass tourism should be understood as the democratization of travel paired with the emergence of the tourism industry: guidebooks, railways, coaches, steamboats, hotels, and guides, from the 1830s onward. Supernatural and natural caves were sites that remained and became popular during this period.

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21 Alastair Durie, “The Long View of Tourism in Scotland and Ireland: Contrasting Fortunes, 1800-1939,” in *Tourism Histories of Scotland and Ulster: Connections and Comparisons*, eds. Kevin J. James and Eric G.E. Zuelow, (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 2013), 18-20. In this comparison with Scotland, Durie analyzes how many tourists were frustrated at the poor quality of Irish travel infrastructure, some even calling it the worst in Europe.


23 Thompson, “Famine Travel,” 174-176.


The Supernatural Cave: Tourism and the Romantic Movement

The Romantic movement provided a new vocabulary and means for understanding the environment (land and landscape). Ian Ousby asserts that Romanticism influenced tourism by changing people’s perception of what was worth seeing or beautiful. Ireland did not have as many prolific or prominent figures in the Romantic movement as Britain, but these principles were applied across Irish landscape. Studies of Romantic authors have thoroughly entrenched their role in the emergence of tourism. Indeed, commercial tourism seized Romantic language and practices, adapting them in the post-Romantic period of mass tourism. The legendary discourses that manifested themselves at caves were imbued with Romantic vocabulary. Antiquarians and fiction authors further built the legendary discourse by popularising the lore, myth, and history of certain places, and building literary landscapes. Through their own writing and by adopting the writings of popular travelers, guidebooks constructed Romantic and supernatural caves. Antiquarians and archaeologists created new sites and imbued established items on the tourist itinerary with new meaning. Additionally, the supernatural nature of these caves established the atmosphere of a place, or the *genius loci*, with Romantic feeling. Inside caves, travellers found substantial sublimity, undoubtedly building a Romantic atmosphere.

Alongside the supernatural, caves also represented primitive homes. While some caves acted as hideouts for criminals or rebels, as geological features they presented locations where humans first sought shelter. O’Kane demonstrates that Ireland’s housing, or lack thereof, was a

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28 Interestingly, some of Ireland’s most famous antiquarians in the nineteenth century began their careers as landscape painters, such as George Petrie and William F. Wakeman.
persistent concern for travellers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In the late eighteenth century, Arthur Young asserted “all the lower ranks in this city [Dublin] have no idea of English cleanliness, either in apartments, persons, or cookery.” A century later, Édouard-Alfred Martel opened his book on Irish caves with a discussion on agrarian reform and government housing: “de particulières conditions sont imposées à leur habitants; leur nombre, au surplus, n’est pas égal, tant s’en faut, à celui des anciennes chaumières ruinées; les mornes debris de celles-ci abondent encore des campagnes.” Caves, especially those famous for their inhabitants, provided a site to engage with Ireland’s housing situation.

Outside Ireland, studies on caves have explored their Romantic and supernatural potential. Physical movement through caverns is important here, too, as the meanings and feelings that tourists derived from caves, and how they expressed them, were influential in shaping narratives of self, space, and other. The established literature on the cave as a Romantic space, outside of Ireland, is useful to understand how caverns continue to be defined by Romantic vocabulary and as supernatural places. Possibly the most famous cave in Britain during the nineteenth century, Fingal’s Cave was a famous tourist destination on the Isle of Staffa ever since James MacPherson’s Ossian was published in the mid eighteenth century. Jennifer Davis Michael asserts that Fingal’s Cave represented a central Romantic problem of transmitting nature into art, and the “concomitant paradox” of then judging natural sites to art’s standards, becoming a popular destination for poets and scientists. As the century progressed, other spaces continued to be imbued with supernatural meaning. Ruth Harris demonstrates the

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32 While caves have yet to receive a focused study by Irish historians, other destinations within landscape have been the focus of many historians, for studies of ruins and buildings, see Ousby, “A proper state of decay: ruins and ruin-hunters,” in The Englishman’s England, 92-126; Mandler, “The Wand of Fancy.”
supposed healing power at Lourdes, France, was a clear example of a supernatural grotto developing in the second half of the nineteenth century, albeit one that was coopted by the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{34} While Lourdes lacks some of the intense Romantic description present at other sites constructed during the heyday of the Romantic period, it still presents a fundamentally supernatural space. Certainly, the folklore found at some of Ireland’s caves could be indicative of popular belief in the period, similar to Lourdes. Yet there is an important caveat to this discussion: no matter how much caves were defined as Romantic/supernatural, the geologist, and later speleologist, was never divorced from caverns.

\textbf{The Natural Cave: Science in Nineteenth Century Ireland}

By the end of the eighteenth century, there was growing interest in science across Ireland and as the nineteenth century advanced, Ireland’s scientific community grew. It is critical to define and discuss the community because their interest and publications were fundamental in developing caves as destinations and increasing their appeal to the wider public. Scientific societies across the country were mostly limited to major cities: Dublin, Belfast, and Cork.\textsuperscript{35} From these centres, a developing middle class rallied around science as a defining element of their culture, where they joined and patronised local societies in their cities.\textsuperscript{36} Ireland’s universities continued to promote scientific understanding throughout the nineteenth century. Trinity College Dublin, founded in 1592, was a steady patron of geology both for producing graduates with an interest in the field and funding research on the subject. Moreover, the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{34} Ruth Harris, \textit{Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age}, (New York: Viking, 1999).
\item \textsuperscript{35} Juliana Adelman, \textit{Communities of Science in Nineteenth-Century Ireland}, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), 7.
\item \textsuperscript{36} Adelman, \textit{Communities of Science in Nineteenth-Century Ireland}, 7. This thesis focuses on these sorts of community groups which visited caves and seeks to connect research on caves to tourism and the growth of scientific interest. Research on science in Ireland as been rapidly expanding. For work similar to Adelman’s, but focusing on the Galway Mechanics’ Institutes, see Elizabeth Neswald, “Science, Sociability and the Improvement of Ireland: The Galway Mechanics’ Institute, 1826-51,” \textit{The British Journal for the History of Science} 39, 4 (Dec., 2006): 503-534. For a broader reading of Irish science as a colonial framework, see Nicholas Whyte, \textit{Science, Colonialism, and Ireland}, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999).
\end{itemize}
founding of the Queen’s Colleges across Ireland changed how scientific communities functioned, but also made education more accessible across the country. Large national bodies, such as the Dublin Society, promoted geology, too, for example employing Richard John Griffith to survey Leinster’s coal fields. Importantly, many of the same scholarly figures travelled between these various societies and institutions. To understand nineteenth-century Irish academics, one must note that Ireland attracted numerous well-known scientists from across Britain and continental Europe, both to take up positions in its most influential institutions, and to produce field work and academic research. Yet, this statement should not diminish the role of Irish involvement in the island’s scholarship either.

37 Adelman, Communities of Science in Nineteenth-Century Ireland, 7.
39 Dr. James Apjohn (1796-1886), featured in Chapter Three, was a good example of one such figure. Apjohn was a TCD graduate, Royal Irish Society member, University Professor of Chemistry, and Vice-President of the Royal Irish Academy, see Anon., “James Apjohn, M.D., F.R.S.,” The British Medical Journal, 1, 1330 (Jun. 26, 1886): 1244.
40 See, Englishmen George H. Carpenter and Robert Francis who were in charge of the Dublin’s Natural History Museum from the 1880s until the establishment of the Free State in 1922, see Juliana Adelman “Evolution on Display: Promoting Irish Natural History and Darwinism at the Dublin Science and Art Museum,” The British Journal for the History of Science 38, 4 (Dec., 2005): 415-16. Grenville Arthur James Cole was another Englishman who took up an academic position in Ireland. Born in London, Cole was appointed as a Professor of Geology at the Royal College of Science for Ireland in 1890. He became known for his cycling tours and fieldwork in Ireland, as well he cycled across much of Europe, see P.N. Wyse Jackson, “Grenville Arthur James Cole (1859-1924): the cycling geologist” in Four Centuries of Geological Travel: the Search for Knowledge on Foot, Bicycle, Sledge and Camel, ed. P.N. Wyse Jackson, (London: The Geological Society, 2007), 135-143. Martel is a clear example of an academic coming from abroad to study the island as he was commissioned to do so by the French government, see: É.A. Martel, “British Caves and Speleology,” The Geographical Journal 10, 5 (Nov., 1897): 500. Obviously, this list is not exhaustive, but should indicate to the reader that Ireland had numerous outsiders contribute to both its scientific research and institutions.
41 Dr. Robert Ball professor at Trinity College Dublin, “well known naturalist” see, Hector MacPherson, “General Notes,” Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific 26, 152 (January, 1914): 63. Ball’s sons, Sir Robert Stawell Ball and Valentine Ball were also involved in the scientific community. Robert the Younger was an astronomer who was appointed to by astronomer to the Early of Rosse at Birr Castle, Parsontown, Ireland in 1865 and, in 1874 he “was made Royal Astronomer for Ireland, which carried with it the directorship of the Dunsink Observatory.” He became a well-known populariser of the field and was knighted in 1886. At the time of his death Robert the younger was the Lowndean Professor of Astronomy at Cambridge, providing an example of the Irish contributing to larger British institutions, see Macpherson, “General Notes,” 63-64. Valentine was director of the Dublin Science and art museum by 1883, but not an RDS member, he was mainly appointed for his involvement in the Indian Geological Survey, see: Adelman, “Evolution on Display,” 416-417. Adelman also observes that the relative “Irish-ness” of science conducted at the Natural History museum has been a keen historiographical focus in the study of Irish science, see Nicholas Whyte, Science, Colonialism, and Ireland and Elizabeth Crooke, Politics, Archaeology and the Creation of a National Museum of Ireland: An Expression of National Life, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2000), 21; Adelman “Evolution on Display,” 416. Robert Lloyd Praeger was another influential figure in Irish science, co-founding The Irish Naturalist (with George H. Carpenter) and the Irish Field Club Union, uniting together Ireland’s various field clubs, see Adelman, “Evolution on Display,” 420, 422. Again, like above this list is not in any way exhaustive.
Geology as a discipline developed out of scientifically minded individuals who travelled to study unique landscape formations. First attracting interest in the eighteenth century, field work was considered an essential part of geological study, preceding its recognition as a field, and geologists have always held travel as an important element of research. Working in the late nineteenth century, É.A. Martel (1859-1938) is largely considered the father of speleology – the study of caves. However, geologists earlier in the century included caves in their research, and caves were important sites in the development of scientific understanding of the natural world and how the Earth was created. The sites which these early scientists identified, described, and disseminated information about could, in turn, attract the general public, including tourists. In fact, Ralph O’Connor argues that geologists of the early nineteenth century promoted geology as an open-air hobby which took its followers to mountains and “romantic caverns” to make science palatable to the “leisured classes.”

The value of a unique geological formation could be considered beautiful or sublime, building the reputation of a site or region and eventually transposing it into a tourist destination. This process was how the scientific lens helped define various sites, but it also helped imbue Romantic destinations with new meanings. Furthermore, O’Connor demonstrates that geology was portrayed as Romantic, between the extreme sublimity of astronomy and the small-scale beauty of botany. However, the field experienced a perspective shift in the 1830s when the British Association for the Advancement of Science, founded 1831, began to position science as a “national cultural resource” and the price of

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printing dropped dramatically, inducing all sorts of scientific periodicals; geology was “practiced and publicized with new vigour.”

Destinations within the landscape were valued for their geological significance and constructed as a space for the scientifically-minded tourist. The unique geology of caves ensured that they were integrated into tourism networks. This scientific lens had a dual aspect of first putting certain caves on the tourist map, but also helping sites become part of the wider “improving holiday” popular with the British middle class. Travelling to a geological destination became a way to satisfy the human craving for knowledge. Irish and British businesses seized upon the desire to see science sites and applied it to their promotions of various places across the island. Caves were just one of many constructed landscape destinations, natural spaces where the tourist could benefit from and enjoy the Earth’s geological wonder.

Cave Tourism: Infrastructure, Irish guides, and Tourists’ Interactions

In order to visit a cave, one needed travel infrastructure (the steamship if they came from abroad, railways/coaches, and accommodation), as well as a guide or guidebook. As Alastair Durie observed, British travellers in Ireland were generally quite critical of the poor state of Irish travel infrastructure. However, by the end of the century there was an extensive rail network across Ireland and prior to this coaches took tourists to most parts of the country.


46 The idea of the improving holiday has been articulated by a number of different scholars. See, John K. Walton and John Beckerson, “Selling Air: Marketing the Intangible at British Resorts” in *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, Walton ed., (North York, Ontario, Canada: Channel View Publications, 2005), 61. Walton and Beckerson discuss the place of good air as being part of “the long-lived rhetoric of rational recreation which encouraged holidaymakers to enjoy finding out about the natural world as part of an ‘improving’ holiday experience, finding specimens to collect, classify, preserve and display.” This trend can more largely been seen as part of health holidays and how tourists used science to construct the importance of a site. For perceptions of environment and health in Scotland, and thus how science influenced tourism, see Alastair Durie, “To the Seaside” and “The Search for Health,” in *Scotland for the Holidays*. (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, Ltd., 2003), 65-108. While much research has been done on how popular perceptions of science led to the sea-side being considered a healthy space, the discourse of how science helped build destinations should be expanded to other types of landscape, caves included.

47 O’Connor, *The Earth on Show*, 73.

accommodation had mixed reviews, often becoming a space of cultural comparison, especially at the “Irish inn.”

Ease of travel and comfort of accommodation genuinely impacted how travellers decided whether a destination was worth visiting. According to many writers, the Irish inn was emblematic of Ireland and its culture, yet it was off putting for its filth, even if some travellers embraced the space and encouraged fellow travellers to lose their prejudices. Analyzing tourists’ use of travel networks to reach caves is critical to contextualize the place of caverns in mass tourism’s infrastructure.

At supernatural and natural caves tourists interacted with the physical space and its guides. Caves often required guided tours to take the tourist through the underground, but also to find the caves themselves. Therefore, guides completed a myriad of mediating functions at caves: taking the tourist to the cave and explaining its provenance, illuminating the cave through ritual and interpretation, and highlighting the space’s unique geological features. Studying the relationship between guides and tourists, as well as its interactions, shows how travellers participated in foreign environments. In his analysis of Kate Kearney and the mountain dew girls at the Gap of Dunloe, Killarney, Kevin J. James asserts that tourists embraced the inauthenticity of the tour by adopting an ironic tone while moving through the Gap, “what Erik Cohen has called ‘playful self-deception.’” Similarly, guides expressed and interpreted lore and history that caves possessed through storytelling and performances at caves. Tourists evaluated what they saw and participated in dialogues with their guide, at times playfully and ironically, and at other times seriously. The literature created in the wake of these interactions in turn informed and mediated future tourists’ trips to the sites as well as, imbedding specific guides

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52 James, Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland, 18.
within the destination. Irish guides served to both find and interpret caves for visitors, mediating their tour. Thus, without a thorough examination of the relationship between tourists and guides, discovering the tourist experience would be impossible. The tourist as a figure should not necessarily be viewed negatively. James asserts that tourists or their hosts are not monolithic: neither group is part of a fixed power balance, and tourism does not invariably constitute a form of colonialism, even if it is easy to find instances of tourists asserting themselves over natives. 53 Furthermore, Susan Kroeg argues, both the local Irish and visitors to their island participated in tourism as a reciprocal relationship, “albeit an economically unequal one.” 54 Tourists and hosts were both groups with agency during this period and through analyzing their relationship a more complete picture of how landscape was experienced can be uncovered.

At caves tourists navigated the site by physically moving through the space and evaluating their narratives of place: lore and science. By physically navigating caverns, tourists walked, climbed, and crawled in their predecessors’ paths, from fellow travellers, to scientists, to mythic saints. The physical difficulty and bodily experience of caves provided a sense of adventure, exploration, and discovery that was unparalleled at many landscape destinations. As visitors moved and paused within caves, they also navigated the sites imaginatively. Tourists evaluated lore; they imagined myths and legends that were relayed to them, especially if physical reminders of the lore were present. Alternatively, travellers imagined how these sites came into being over centuries, especially as knowledge of geology became more widespread. By navigating caverns, both physically and imaginatively, tourists truly engaged with these spaces.

Sources: Travel Writing

53 Kevin J. James, *Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland*, 9. For a larger debate on defining who tourists are, see Ousby, *The Englishman’s England*, 6. Ousby has some of the strongest points on the topic when he asserted distinctions between different “figures” of travel were perfunctory and “what is being proposed is not historical definition but a vision of a Golden Age.” In regards to terminology, this project uses traveller and tourist interchangeably to indicate anyone who went on a trip away from “home.”

Currently, the sources to examine cave tourism, and more specifically the natural and supernatural cave, are plentiful. Travel literature is a source base that provides great insight into how caves were prefigured in the minds of tourists as destinations in the landscape, as well as illuminating how tourists experienced these sites. Williams and Thompson have quantitatively studied how many travel narratives were published on Ireland in the pre- and post-Famine period by using the work of John McVeagh. Williams shows that from 1750-1850, around 570 travel accounts of Ireland had been produced, most written by British and Anglo-Irish authors. Between 1845 and 1923, 569 travel narratives and tourist guides were published about Ireland. McVeagh’s expansive (but, as he notes, not exhaustive) collection is an invaluable reference point for any study on travel in Ireland. Additionally, C.J. Woods’ synthesis of travel accounts is a critical resource for understanding travel writers. Woods catalogues around 200 writers, including their itineraries, modes of travel, and purpose of their trip. These sources provide essential context for understanding travellers in Ireland. Importantly, by analyzing the constructions of caves as well as the printed responses to these sites, how caves were promoted, prefigured, and interacted with, can be fully understood.

Historians have had numerous approaches to travel writers, a genuine strength for Irish tourism’s historiography. Hooper charts how travel writers tried to make sense of Ireland from the eighteenth century to the years immediately following the Famine. He contends that travel writers went to Ireland to explain the island’s economic difficulties and learn more about the

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55 Williams, Creating Irish Tourism, xi
56 Thompson, “Famine Travel,” 164.
57 C.J. Woods, Travellers’ Accounts as Source-Material for Irish Historians, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 14. Of Woods’ 200 travellers, 30 are Irish and 40 are Catholic. By mid century, travelers were increasingly middle class and women were no longer a rarity.
Williams explores how early Irish tourism drew visitors with more than just aesthetics. Like Hooper, he argues that in regard to the purpose of travel in pre-Famine Ireland, the sublime and the picturesque were regularly superseded by the need to know more about Ireland because of its political incorporation into the United Kingdom by the Act of Union, 1801. These early writers describing travel in Ireland informed many of their successors. While travel writers sought out Ireland for economic reasons and political reasons, the cultural aspects of their journeys, specifically their conceptions of landscape, require further study. Williams provides a welcome counterweight to Hooper by examining travel writers’ journeys in Ireland through a cultural lens. Similarly, Benjamin Colbert sees travel writers as cultural, growing out of the Romantic movement, and examines how Ireland fit into the phenomenon of the British Home Tour. Martin Ryle compares English and Irish writers in Ireland, showing that English writers compared the landscape with England seeking the emptiness in order to escape industry, while Irish writers sought the authentic, building the cult of the West. Roy Bridges also analyzed how tourists wrote their accounts, arguing that travel writers moved from the known to the unknown, borrowing a writing structure from travelogues in the eighteenth century that focused on exploration and scientific discovery. With the exception of Ryle, all these authors have focused the periodization of their studies exclusively on either before the Famine, the Famine itself, or the years immediately following the potato blight. Moreover, the historiography of the 1830-1900 period needs a more extensive examination of destinations and landscapes. By studying early writers then crossing into mass tourism proper, this thesis will

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59 Hooper, *Travel Writing and Ireland, 1760-1860*, 2. These travel motives manifested themselves in various government reports on the country, the Ordnance Survey, etc.
60 Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism: The First Century, 1750-1850*, xv.
carry the discussion on the cultural aspects of travel writing into the Post-Famine period and beyond.

One of the advantages of studying travel writing in Ireland during the nineteenth-century is that there were only a handful of highly influential texts. The tourists who recorded and published their journeys were few and they often had specific objectives or messages that they wished to convey. Thus, the scholars of travel writing are regularly examining the same authors, such as John Hervey Ashworth, Rev. James Hall, and Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall. Studying these authors provides an understanding how sites within the landscape were constructed in Ireland and how British travellers approached this landscape. The extensive scholarship on pre-Famine travellers in Ireland facilitates an analysis of how caves were constructed in the nascent Irish tourism industry. However, by bringing this examination forward into the era that witnessed the expansion of mass tourism, one can study how the aesthetics of landscape persisted and were refined. This is especially true considering that after 1850 travelling became a more middle class phenomenon and women were no longer rare participants.64

A close reading of guidebooks is essential to analyze the period of mass tourism because they sold thousands of copies and informed the great majority of tourists in Ireland after the Famine. Along with Irish guides, guidebooks were important mediating agents for cave tourism. First emerging in the 1830s, guidebooks were highly popular in Britain by the 1850s and were used both domestically and internationally.65 The Irish Tourist’s Illustrated Handbook for Visitors to Ireland in 1852, or “the Green Book,” was one of the first widely used travel guides in the post-Famine period.66 John Murray first published one of his famous guides on Ireland in 1864 and, as the decades continued, his guide surpassed the Illustrated Handbook in popularity.67

64 Woods, Travellers’ Accounts as Source-Material for Irish Historians, 14.
66 Thompson, “Famine Travel,” 166.
67 Thompson, “Famine Travel,” 173.
Numerous companies captured the imagination of tourists: Adam and Charles Black, along with John Fraser, and others, all created guidebooks that were used across Ireland. Thompson examines how guidebooks created narratives for travel and he demonstrates that by 1850 the picturesque had “entered common sense and had rooted itself as perhaps the most important element of tourist discourse,” guidebooks assured travellers that Ireland was now “safely post-political” after the Famine.68

Many scholars have commented on how the guidebooks structured travel in the nineteenth century. Caves were constructed as stops on various tourist itineraries and routes, being cited as interesting phenomena enriching to the traveller. In a study of Switzerland’s tourism industry, Laurent Tissot elaborates on the self-contained worlds that guidebooks created, expanding on Mona Wilson’s concept that the technology of tourism broke all contact between the tourist and the real world, with the exception of “‘the douanier, the hotelkeeper, the guide, and the beggar.’”69 Tissot shows that the guidebooks shielded tourists from anything that might be considered too foreign, in the interest of ensuring a comfortable experience for the tourist, easing travelling anxieties and comfortably showing the unknown.70 Additionally, because guidebooks plotted the routes for tourist travel, they demonstrate how many travellers were guided through the environment and shown “what ought to be seen.”71 Therefore, a study drawing on guidebooks can illuminate the tourist world, especially when coupled with a close reading of travelogues and other first-hand accounts or recollections. Studying Ireland’s guidebooks gives a more complete picture of what nineteenth century tourists sought and interacted with on their journeys through Ireland.

68 Thompson, “Famine Travel,” 166-168.
70 Tissot, “How did the British conquer Switzerland? Guidebooks, railways, travel agencies, 1850-1914,” 43.
Guidebooks were widespread and marketed towards middle-class travellers seeking a structured trip, making them a good starting point for any study of mass tourism. However, the inclusion of a wider range of sources is necessary to add another layer of depth to this thesis. Hooper notes that the definition of a travelogue is “slippery and fluid,” and, as James comments, the lines between guidebooks and travelogues “often blur.” Therefore, establishing a narrow definition of travel literature is unnecessary. Rather, by adopting Jill Steward’s conception of travel writing, which seeks to gather as many different types of literature under the umbrella of “travel literature,” this thesis achieves a better synthesis of how caves functioned as tourist destinations. To address Steward’s work more directly, the press is included in this thesis to gain a more complete understanding of the place of caves in landscape tourism. To expand on what can be included in travel writing, the work of academics on caves, especially their field work, is also featured here. The accounts of scientists and their subsequent scholarly publications are necessary for this thesis, especially considering many of their accounts read similarly to their less academic counter-parts. Travel literature is a unique and powerful tool to understand perceptions of the environment and what people looked for when they travelled to Ireland. As Williams states, travellers often did not go to Ireland for just the landscape or to perform socio-economic surveys, so looking at just a subsection of travel writing would leave this study incomplete. By exploring as wide a range of literature as possible (primarily guidebooks, travelogues, scholarly works, and the press) and finding the key sections on how caves fit into travel narratives, insight into how these natural and supernatural caverns were prefigured and promoted to the tourist is attained.

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72 Hooper, Travel Writing and Ireland, 1760-1860, 3. James, Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland, 11.
74 Williams, Creating Irish Tourism, xv.
An examination of travel literature reveals the legendary and scientific discourses developed by writers as well as their physical interactions with caves. There are limitations to this methodology as printed material can only reveal so much. Travel literature treated their readers as passive figures, encouraging them to see with their eyes and follow their routes. But as Williams notes, the Irish tour was complex and often included evaluations of non-scenic aspects of Ireland, such as poverty or agriculture. To not overemphasize the use of this source base, this thesis aims to analyze how caves as destinations were prefigured by travellers and the tourism industry for future visitors as well as assess travellers’ physical navigation of the space and their evaluation of legendary and scientific discourse they encountered.

To study Irish cave tourism, this thesis takes a case study approach using caverns from across the island, specifically the East, South, and West. Throughout the nineteenth century, each of these sites was a tourist destination which attracted countless travellers for diverse and different reasons. However, these sites are united by ideas surrounding their natural and supernatural value. Furthermore, as aesthetic codes in the late eighteenth and early-mid nineteenth centuries have been so heavily studied, this work brings the analysis into the period of mass tourism - that is, from the 1830s onwards, when more people were able to travel thanks to the expansion of travel infrastructure and the development of the middle class in Britain and Ireland.

The first case study is St. Kevin’s Bed, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow. The Bed is a small hole inside of the cliff face of the Upper Lake and supposed abode of its namesake saint for seven years. Valued for its expression of the saint’s life, this cave was also a part of the literary landscape because of Thomas Moore’s *Melodies*. Boats plied across the lake, ferrying tourists to the cave while guides recited Moore’s work in full. Glendalough’s short distance from Dublin and its sublime, picturesque, and Romantic scene meant that the cave was a popular destination.

75 Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, xv
throughout the nineteenth century. Notably, Glendalough was one of Ireland’s first major tourist destinations, alongside Killarney and the Giant’s Causeway; meaning the valley was an important stop on the national tour of Ireland in a way that the following case studies were not.

The second chapter analyzes the various caverns in the vicinity of Cong, Co. Mayo, presenting the opportunity to examine an area known for both its natural and supernatural spaces. The village of Cong sits on the isthmus between Loughs Corrib and Mask. The area is a Karstic region composed of carboniferous limestone, meaning that over thousands of years water flowed underground through the porous rock of the land, carving out different caverns which in time came to possess lore and history. The most popular of these sites was the Pigeon Hole, home to a myth of magic trout which a local woman described to visitors. However, the famous cave was also a space where tourists were able to see the apparent underground river running from the nearby lakes. The caves here are disparate and difficult to find, so guides brought travellers to the sites and entertained them with stories or performances. The environment was this region’s primary draw throughout the century, landscaped by the Guinness family, as tourists were rarely enthusiastic about the town itself, preferring to visit its twelfth century Abbey, the caves, or partake in the developing sport fishing industry.

The final chapter of this piece focuses on the Mitchelstown caves, Co. Tipperary. The caves are, in reality, two separate complexes. However, the tourism industry neglected the old cave, even though it possessed Irish folklore. Rather, the new cave, discovered in 1833, came

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76 M. Parkes, “A Summary Guide to the Caves of the Cong Area and Outlying Caves in North Co. Galway and Co. Mayo, with complete Bibliography,” Irish Speleology, 13 (1989): 2-7. The caves most interesting for tourists in the nineteenth century were Pigeon Hole, The Lady’s Buttery, the Horse Discovery, Kelly’s Cave, and Captain Webb’s Hole. However, the region has many more caves, some undiscovered or unnamed till the 1970s, but many simply not worth mentioning for travel literature, including: Wolves’ Hole, Ballyglunin Cave, Pollnadingdong, Black and Tan Cave, and St. Swithins Cave; if the area is expanded around Cong there are more outlying saves: Pollnasneachta, Rhinolophus Retreat, Newry Hole, Bunnadober Cave, and Pollnadympa, among some others.

77 Major guidebooks in the period which discussed the “Mitchelstown Caves” usually only described the new cave. John Murray’s Handbook cited Dr. James Apjohn’s description of the new cave, see Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, (London: John Murray,1866), 270-271. The Black’s guide to Ireland stated “there is an old cave which is seldom visited,” and continued to cite Apjohn’s descriptions of the new cave, see Black and Black, Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland, (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885), 151. John Faser’s Hand
to define what travellers expected of the “Mitchelstown caves.” The caverns are extensive, some of the largest in Ireland, and portions of its passages were unmapped or undiscovered until Martel’s visit in 1896. Ultimately, due to its considerable size and lack of folklore, the Mitchelstown caves were a premier site for the geologist and scientist. The cavern’s various chambers and features (pillars, stalactites, and stalagmites) became defined by scientific discourse, a true natural space. Yet, while the site was known for its scientific beauty, travelling through its chambers gave tourists and scholars alike an aesthetic experience which featured numerous sublime, picturesque, and beautiful scenes.

By taking a case study approach, this thesis unpacks tourism’s specific landscape construction and travellers’ interactions with these constructs across Ireland. Each chapter is structured first around how the site was promoted by travel literature, followed by an analysis of the development of tourism infrastructure at the site and surrounding area. Then, the role of guides as intermediaries is discussed, as is the function of caves as repositories for lore or scientific knowledge. Each chapter will conclude by studying travellers’ navigation of the narratives of the space and their physical movement through caves themselves, drawing on printed accounts. While Henry David Inglis and others like him may have found “no great curiosity” with caves, the overall consensus of these sites was that they could give their visitor a chance to commune with the supernatural and natural environment. But in the nineteenth century, Ireland’s caves functioned in diverse, complex, and overlapping ways, as places variously defined as sublime, beautiful, picturesque, Romantic, and scientifically pleasing. Certainly, Ireland housed many “curious caverns.”

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book mentioned the old cave, yet only described the new cave in any detail, see: John Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, (Dublin: James McGlashan, 1854), 293. Some travellers mentioned the myth of the old cave, for example John William Carleton explained the myth, but conflated the myth with the new cave, see John William Carleton, “A Month’s Fishing in Ireland,” The Sporting Review (edited by “Craven”), (1857): 40-41.

78 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1866, 184.
Chapter 1
“The regular thing to do:” St. Kevin’s Bed and Mass Tourism in Glendalough

Writing for Punch magazine in 1876, an anonymous traveller called his trip up to St. Kevin’s Bed “The regular thing to do,” referencing a “popular song” about travelling down the Rhine. However, upon reaching the cave, the tourist had a mild crisis trying to enter the bed. Unbeknownst to his guide, the writer was wearing “tight boots” with soles as “thin and as smooth as a razor strap.” He wondered to himself, “is St. Kevin’s Bed worth making? Can’t I read the description and say I’ve been there? Is any place at a great height above sea level, worth the trouble of the climb?” This traveller lampooned the stereotypical tourist experience at St. Kevin’s Bed. Attempting the climb the hill, and although actively encouraged by his guide, the traveller decided to not enter all together. While watching his guide perform the climb, it was clear that the traveller was less than ready to take any chances: “He is hanging on, apparently, by nothing, and stepping on less; and all this with a sheer descent below into the lake, and only a jutting point of rock, here and there, to give your body the occasional lift on the way down.” The tourist resolved, “’not in these boots,’ as I believe some song says… the fall would be unpleasant, and then- the wet clothes! No; no St. Kevin’s Bed for me.” As the guide tried to convince his guest to enter the Bed, Punch’s traveller wondered how Sir Walter Scott, with his limp leg, made it into the cave in 1825. The guide then assured “Lots o’ Ladies goes in there,” but this writer was resolute “as if this would induce me to risk it. I won’t budge an inch,” and the guide finally conceded “Well, Sorr… I won’t force you.” Yet, his guide still insisted on doing something to earn his money and “so sets to work, without being asked, to recite the whole of MOORE’s poem about Glendalough, commencing ‘By that Lake whose gloomy shore.’” 79

This exchange between Punch’s columnist and his guide is similar to thousands of other trips to the Bed. Literary allusions were ubiquitous as guides memorized Moore. Reciting the

poems in song became an expected feature of the Bed. The traveller’s allusion to Walter Scott was another literary reference, and numerous other tourists invoked Scott in their accounts of the Bed. Guides were imbedded into this literary world, too. Guides were necessary to help tourists into the cave, but their performances of Moore became a feature of visiting the site. The tourist above quoted his guide extensively and ensured that this Irish voice was written phonetically, demonstrating that Irish guides became integrated into their landscape tour, adding to the foreignness of the experience for outsiders. Ultimately, *Punch’s* traveller refused to enter the Bed, being frightful of the consequences if he fell, but as he observed, experiencing the site by entering the cave was “the regular thing to do” in nineteenth century Glendalough.

**How Texts Sell the Site**

To understand how St. Kevin’s Bed developed as a tourist site in the nineteenth century, one must recognize Glendalough’s position as one of Ireland’s first tourist meccas and contextualize its place as an eighteenth-century destination. Alongside the Dargle Valley and the Powerscourt estate, Glendalough helped shape Wicklow’s landscape and local tourism. Finola O’Kane shows that by the late eighteenth century, Glendalough was a destination with a similar status to Killarney and thoroughly integrated into the picturesque tours of Co. Wicklow.\(^80\) The area was always associated with early Christianity due to St. Kevin’s various churches and the broader history at the site; the Bed should be understood in this context.\(^81\) As well, Glendalough’s ruins were transformed into follies in the eighteenth century through the influence of the garden movement.\(^82\) Thus, the Bed was among numerous other attractions and never the

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\(^80\) O’Kane, *Ireland and the Picturesque*, 120.

\(^81\) Even at the turn of the century, Glendalough was being used for traditional Catholic festivals, like the Patterns. Ruán O’Donnell notes how these events were disrupted in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion in Co. Wicklow, see Ruán O’Donnell, *Aftermath post-Rebellion insurgency in Wicklow, 1799-1803*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000), 30 and 31 for a depiction of the Pattern.

\(^82\) For an example of a formerly religious site being transformed into landscape follies,” see: Tintern Abbey and Fountains in Ousby, Chapter 3 “A proper state of decay: ruins and ruin-hunters,” *The Englishman’s England*, 92-129.
only reason for visiting the region. Glendalough was a popular tourist site before mass tourism, with deep religious connections to early medieval Ireland because of St. Kevin’s churches in the valley that differentiate it from the two other case studies featured here, as well as from many other landscape tourism destinations.

St. Kevin’s Bed persisted as a popular tourist site within Glendalough’s landscape throughout the nineteenth century. In 1860 at Glendalough’s Upper Lake, traveller Aubin St. Helier asserted the cave was “the first thing to be visited.” Guidebooks had a similar evaluation of the Bed: Black’s Picturesque Tourist of Ireland insisted that entering the cave “has been the ambition of almost all tourists” and a local guide to Glendalough stated: “Into this Bed every visitor with the smallest flicker of human feeling must enter.” Travel literature prefigured St. Kevin’s Bed in the minds of travellers, just like any other destination in landscape tourism. By associating the cave with popular literature and literary figures, travel literature ensured a steady stream of tourists visited the cave. Guidebooks and other travel literature informed tourists of different routes through Glendalough and what they could expect for accommodation in the area, but they also built visitors’ expectations of the cave.

One of the major reasons for the cave’s popularity, outside of the region’s beauty and history, was its connection to literature. The role of writers in the Romantic movement in the creation of landscape cannot be understated. Wordsworth’s poetry built the Lake District; Scott’s writing constructed the Highlands. Yet, Ireland had no “Walter O’Scott,” instead the island had to make do with less popular but still successful authors. Glendalough was an early Christian site, but St. Kevin’s Bed was reinvigorated by Thomas Moore, a Catholic Irish poet from Dublin, who challenged the conventional religious associations of the site. Moore became

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83 Aubin St. Helier, Travels Not Far From Home: with a Preface which Ought to be Read, (London: James Blackwood, 1860), 85.
famous in the nineteenth century for composing the poetry accompanying the music of Sir John Stevenson to create what came to be known as *Moore’s Melodies*, which gained fame in the early nineteenth century. Moore’s association with United Irishman Robert Emmet led to his work being bound up with Irish nationalism, increasing its popularity. Moore’s Melodies, continually reprinted throughout the nineteenth century, made Britain and Ireland’s general public aware of St. Kevin’s Bed, even if they already knew of Glendalough. Knowledge of his work was so widespread that even in 1913 *The Times* could still claim “most people are familiar with the legends that have gathered around the by no means mythical Kevin” and cite Moore’s “well-known lines.” At Glendalough, Moore created a literary landscape, that is a place where tourists travelled to authenticate or experience what they read in novels, poems, or verse. The literary appeal to the cave was primary. The whole poem, presented below, was usually too long to put in guidebooks in full, so the most dramatic sections of the ballad were often selected and woven into the text.

By that Lake, whose gloomy shore  
Skylark never warbles o’er,  
Where the cliff hangs high and steep,  
Young Saint Kevin stole to sleep.  
“Here, at least,” he calmly said,  
“Women ne’er shall find my bed.”  
Ah! The good Saint little knew  
What that wily sex can do.

‘Twas from Kathleen’s eyes he flew,-
Eyes of most unholy blue!  
She had lov’d him hers, nor thought it wrong.  
Wheresoe’er the Saint would fly,  
Still he heard her light foot nigh;  
East or west, where’er he turn’d.

On the bold cliff’s bosom east,  
Tranquil now he sleep at last;  
Dreams of heav’n, nor thinks that e’er  
Woman’s smile can haunt him there.

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But nor earth nor heaven is free
From her power, if fond she be:
Even now, while calm he sleeps,
Kathleen o’er him leans and weeps.

Fearless she had track’d his feet
To this rocky, wild retreat;
And when morning met his view,
Her mild glances met it too.
Ah, your Saints have cruel hearts!
Sternly from his bed he starts,
And with rude, repulsive shock,
Hurls her from the beetling rock.

Glendalough, thy gloomy wave
Soon gentle Kathleen’s grave!
Soon the saint (yet ah! Too late,)
Felt her love, and mourn’d her fate.
When he said, “Heaven rest her soul!”
Round the Lake light music stole:
And her ghost was seen to glide,
Smiling o’er the fatal tide.  

Guidebooks often used the first, second, or second last verses to present the Bed to readers. The most popular single excerpts were the first two lines: “By that Lake, whose gloomy shore/Skylark never warbles o’er,” but the sections that evoke Kathleen were cited often as well, especially “Eyes of most unholy blue.”

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the story, such as Black’s, “[b]ut the saint was proof against Cupid,” demonstrating a playful engagement with the story.\footnote{Black and Black, \textit{Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland}, 1885, 83} By opening with Moore’s melodies, guidebooks emphasized the literary connections to Glendalough’s landscape and promoted the experience of seeing the storied and Romantic hideaway of St. Kevin. They also buttressed Moore’s authority and extended knowledge of him.

Guidebooks, hotels, and railways capitalized on Moore’s popularity. Being the site of his famous work, the guidebook merely needed to invoke lines from his poetry to entice its audience. The Romantic language used by Moore was in the tradition of eighteenth century aesthetic codes used at Glendalough and the region continued to be constructed as an aesthetically pleasing landscape, “gloomy,” sublime, and picturesque. There is no doubt that Moore’s work was popular and helped drive the early Irish mass tourism industry. Some guidebooks were published with Moore as their sole focus, such as Samuel Rawle’s \textit{Landscape Illustrations of Moore’s Irish Melodies: With Comments for the Curious Part I}.\footnote{Rawle, \textit{Landscape illustrations of Moore’s Irish melodies}.} This demonstrates how literary figures were able to imbue an established site with additional meaning and how the travel writing industry capitalized on their popularity. Just as tourists journeyed to Scotland in droves to see the locations featured in Sir Walter Scott’s fiction, others came to Glendalough for the places and stories in \textit{Moore’s Melodies}.\footnote{Watson, \textit{The Literary Tourist}, 150-168.}

Moore was not the only nineteenth-century author used by travel literature to frame expectations of the cave for tourists; Rev. Caesar Otway, Scott, and Gerald Griffin’s descriptions of the Bed were found in numerous guidebooks throughout the period. Otway was an Irish Protestant clergyman, an evangelical, Trinity College graduate, and co-founder of both the

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Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine and the Dublin Penny Journal (with antiquarian George Petrie). Sir Walter Scott’s reputation as a novelist preceded him and Griffin was an Irish literary figure famous for writing The Collegians, a melodrama about a murder in Co. Clare which gave a realistic description of Irish life. Black’s used Otway’s description of the Bed because its “truth and accuracy is unsurpassed.” Black’s used the same two descriptions of the cave from Scott’s son-in-law, John Gibson Lockhart, and Otway in their discussion of the Bed through the whole nineteenth century, adding only a few lines of additional description. John Murray’s first guidebook on Ireland added Gerald Griffin’s work into the description of the cave, as well. Considering so many famous travellers and authors were writing about Saint Kevin’s Bed, the guidebook industry merely needed to pick out enticing quotes from these authors’ descriptions of the cave. By emphasizing the many celebrities who visited the Bed, tourists were told not only could they commune with St. Kevin’s legends as described by Moore; they could also follow in the footsteps of famous contemporaries. Guidebooks frequently cited Scott’s journey to the Bed, among others whose names were carved into the rock such as Otway, Lady Morgan, an Irish novelist who visited with Scott, famous travelling couple Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall, and Thomas Moore. The evocation of literary figures added yet another layer of meaning and depth to the description of the site, adding to the literary

94 Williams, Tourism, Landscape, and the Irish Character, 209.
96 Black and Black, Black’s Pictoriusque Tourist of Ireland, 1857, 72-73. The same description appeared in the company’s guides from 1871, 1885, and 1901.
97 For Otway’s description, see Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1865, 218; Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1854, 228. For mentions of Scott’s trip, see Knight, The land we live in, a pictorial and literary sketch-book of the British empire, 284. For William Mackpeace Thackeray's description, see Mahony, Tourist's Illustrated Hand-Book for Ireland, 38. Both Lockhart’s and Otway’s descriptions: Black and Black.
landscape developed by Moore. Furthermore, the inclusion of literary figures illuminates how contemporary celebrities helped to bolster this tourist site throughout the nineteenth century. The position of Glendalough as an eighteenth-century tourist destination and home to the ruins of St. Kevin’s churches meant that it was already an established site in tourist itineraries. However, the cave needed ongoing reiteration from contemporary figures to ensure it remained relevant among Glendalough’s numerous attractions and to the wider Irish tourism industry.

Guidebooks also transformed some of the literary themes which defined the site and shaped the presentation of the cave to tourists in the later nineteenth century. Moore’s Romanticism was adopted as an idiom through the nineteenth century and the development of mass tourism, but framings of the site changed, too. In 1854, Fraser’s *Hand Book* asserted that “[i]t is not, however, ‘wrapt all o’er in one perpetual gloom;’ it is frequently gloriously lit up by the slanting rays of the morning sun, or illumined by his more vertical noon-tide beams.”

Indeed, nothing demonstrates the reframing of Romantic description and legendary discourse more than when the same *Hand Book* decided to not just speak of legends, preferring to “avoid all those wild flights of fancy mixed up with silly colloquy and ridiculous legends, which have been too often substituted for patient research and sober description.” Fraser’s objective demonstrates the application of rational thought to landscape tourism. The picturesque dominated the period of mass tourism in the post-Famine era. Yet St. Kevin’s Bed demonstrates that the picturesque still defined parts of Ireland less affected by the Famine. Old destinations known for the picturesque still served tourists in that capacity. Moreover, the beautiful and sublime persisted and were continually used to describe landscape. This ongoing interpretation does not mean tourists stopped wishing to experience Moore’s Glendalough, but

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100 For further reading on the making of literary landscape see Watson, *The Literary Tourist*, as discussed in the introduction.
103 As already discussed in the previous chapter, see Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*; Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*. 
rather that new ways of seeing the environment could imbue such a well-established site. Picturesque beauty was emerging as more important than the concept of the lone Romantic figure.\textsuperscript{104} That being stated, discourses of legend and history continued to appeal to tourists in the later nineteenth century, alongside developing scientific discourses.

To fully understand how guidebooks marketed the historic aesthetic dimensions of the cave, it is useful to analyze the images employed to promote the region.

Figure 7. St. Kevin’s Bed. \textit{By that Lake whose gloomy shore, Skylark never warbles o’er.}\nAlfred Nicholson, engraved by Samuel Rawle, in Rawle, \textit{Landscape illustrations of Moore’s Irish melodies}, [N/D]: 32.

Figure 8. St. Kevin’s Bed. (Powell, \textit{Ward and Lock’s Tourist Guide to Dublin and Wicklow}, 73.)

\textsuperscript{104} Given that Glendalough was one of Ireland’s most popular tourist destinations, travel literature’s attempts to promote the experience of a solitary commune with nature would have been increasingly peculiar as the tourism industry developed and increasing numbers of travellers visited the site.
The first two images (Figures 7 and 8) here demonstrate how guidebooks constructed the image of St. Kevin’s Bed for tourists. The scene is picturesque and uses Romantic imagery, such as the solitary individual in Nicholson’s image engraved by Rawle. Both depictions portray a particular understanding of the cave and both were produced for use in guidebooks. While he did not originally create the first drawing, Rawle specifically engraved this image for his text on *Moore’s Melodies*. Given the target audience, it was clear both these images illustrate the landscape as Moore described it: gloomy and sublime.

Later in the century, Romantic descriptions could be much more muted. Looking at the photographs from the William Lawrence pictorial guide, *The Emerald Island Album Series: Counties of Wicklow and Wexford*, one can see how as the century progressed, so too did the motif of scientific or sober description. *The Emerald Island Album Series* explored Wicklow’s various tourist routes, highlighting sport, picturesque landscape, and much of Glendalough. The Lawrence firm was clearly influenced by scientific description compiled the photographs for their guidebook and composed their captions.

![Image of St. Kevin’s Bed, Glendalough](image)

Figure 9. St Kevin’s Bed, Glendalough.—Believed to have been excavated by St. Kevin out of the solid rock. Thirty feet above the Upper Lake. (William Lawrence, *The Emerald Island Album Series: Counties of Wicklow and Wexford*: ninety platinatone views with descriptive guide, from photographs by William Lawrence, photographic publisher, Dublin, (Dublin : The Emerald Isle Album Company, 1910), no page numbers available.)

While the aesthetic appeal of the cave barely changed through the nineteenth century, the motifs within the images did and their captions became more precise and scientific in their approach,
“Believed to have been excavated by St. Kevin out of solid rock. Thirty feet above the Upper Lake.”

Photo-realistic capturing of the site meant that extra figures or ambiance, (for example, the storm clouds in Figure 7) were not added to the scene, as in earlier engravings of the cave. The Lawrence photograph of the Bed was much in the tradition of his company’s other photographs, which sought to advertise Ireland’s picturesque landscape, particularly in the West. Scientific discourse did not supersede the legendary or historic, but rather these themes overlapped. Moore’s Glendalough never entirely receded, but the precision and doubt characteristic of scientific description was certainly applied to the cave by the turn of the century.

**Infrastructure**

Understanding how guidebooks constructed Saint Kevin’s Bed as a mass tourist site can be contextualised through a study of the infrastructure that allowed travellers to come in large numbers. Moreover, a brief examination of the tourism industry in Co. Wicklow offers a greater understanding of the cave’s place within Glendalough and Wicklow as a tourist destination. During the nineteenth century Co. Wicklow was second only to Killarney and possibly the Giant’s Causeway as a tourist destination in Ireland. The roads and routes through Wicklow were well trodden as tourists to Ireland had been visiting the county since the eighteenth century, especially because of its proximity to Dublin. As Henry D. Inglis remarked, writing on his 1834 journey, it was a “great advantage” for Dubliners “of being able, during a three days’ tour, to see so sweet an union of the beautiful and the picturesque, as many parts of Wicklow present… everything here is en petit; but it is a beautiful minuteness.”

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106 Photographic plates by Lawrence were used in the Midland Great Western Railway Company’s *Handbook to Connemara, Galway, Achill and the West of Ireland* alongside those of R.J. Welch, see Boran “Tools of the Tourist Trade,” 51.

travel writer who explored much of Europe, echoed Inglis a decade later, stating: “It is singular
that so wild a district should be found so near the principal city of Ireland.”¹⁰⁸ As the
infrastructure of tourism developed, increasing numbers of travellers came to visit the area
described by their guidebooks, and by Inglis, Kohl, and many other travel writers.

As already discussed, Glendalough was a tourist destination from the eighteenth century,
imbued with the aesthetic codes developed in that period and established as an important
religious site for the Catholic community. Just as cultural shifts impacted the site, so did socio-
political developments in the period, particularly the 1798 Rebellion which left an indelible mark
on the county’s communities as well as its tourism infrastructure. Before the Rebellion,
Wicklow had unprecedented economic growth; 1798 shattered that progress along with many of
the region’s towns and villages.¹⁰⁹ Once the disparate risings were crushed, Wicklow’s
remaining rebels took to the central highlands, being haboured in the homes of sympathizers,
digging hideouts into the ground, and seeking refuge in caves.¹¹⁰ To counteract the insurgency,
the military road through the Wicklow’s mountains was constructed (1800-1805) with the goal
of defeating the rebels and providing a supply route to for men, ammunition, and weapons,
should the French invade.¹¹¹ Later this road was integrated into Wicklow’s tourism
infrastructure, especially as the military began focusing on coastal defences, after 1803.
Presumably, in the post-Rebellion period, tourists were acutely aware that they were moving
through a once volatile space. As well, the presence of the military road along with the
transportation of many rebel leaders to New South Wales, must have made the region seem safe
to the traveller. Certainly, at the very least, a quasi-military picturesque developed along the

road that contributed to illuminating the history of the region as well as making tourists aware of the infrastructure implications of the Rebellion. This point is emphasized when the parallels between the Wicklow mountains and the Scottish Highlands are taken into consideration.

Evidently, resource extraction industry highly valued the land around Glendalough because of its position as a tourist destination. In 1890 the Glendalough estate along with the Luganure Mines, owned by the Mining Company of Ireland, went up for sale by auction. The notice which advertised the sale described the potential of the region’s forests and mines then mentioned that the estate included St. Kevin’s Bed, the Seven Churches, the Round Tower, and the “greater portion of the Lake of Glendalough,” 4,659 acres total.\textsuperscript{112} The advertisement began with an assessment of the monetary value of the land, through tree plantation and grazing, but also included information about the tourism potential of the area. First, the auction promoted the “shooting over the mountain - grouse, hare, &c,” as “valuable, and the rabbits are very profitable.”\textsuperscript{113} Next it discussed the landscape as a tourist attraction: “The Vale of Glendalough is world-renowned for its grand and picturesque scenery, and, being a most popular resort for tourists, would afford a magnificent site for a first-class Hotel or Hydropathic Establishment,” and concluded by situating Glendalough to Dublin, stating that the site was 9 miles from the Rathdrum Railway Station and 52 miles from Dublin.\textsuperscript{114} As the century progressed, the attraction of shooting became a popular tourist activity, and while Glendalough was still primarily associated with landscape tourism, new developments in the tourism industry still impacted how the region served visitors as a destination.

Local hotels capitalized on guidebooks’ marketing throughout the period. The Glendalough Hotel, closest to the two lakes, advertised using Moore’s work, stating: “This Hotel, situated in the most romantic locality of Wicklow… beside ‘The Lake, by whose gloomy

\hspace{1cm}^{112} \text{“Important Sales by Auction,” } \textit{Freeman’s Journal,} \text{ 28 July 1890, 8.}
\hspace{1cm}^{113} \text{“Important Sales by Auction,” } \textit{Freeman’s Journal,} \text{ 28 July 1890, 8.}
\hspace{1cm}^{114} \text{“Important Sales by Auction,” } \textit{Freeman’s Journal,} \text{ 28 July 1890, 8.}
shore. Skylark never warbled o’er.” Hotels emphasised Glendalough’s connections with Moore. While scientific analyses of the landscape emerged in the period of mass tourism, the Romantic themes used in advertising were still primary to alluring tourists as the locality was steeped in the Romantic picturesque. The same advertisement stated that the hotel had “Boats, Cars, &c., at a moment’s notice,” showing how hotels provided the essential services for going to the cave. 

Clearly hotels provided essential services for tourists wishing to see the bed, and also capitalized on its Romantic associations and atmosphere in order to draw in guests.

Competition over the tourist traffic was fierce, and at the turn of the century, a legal dispute over access to the Bed erupted when the owner of the Glendalough Hotel, Mr. Anderson, brought action against other hotel proprietors in the region, John J. and Jones Richardson. Anderson owned “the lands abutting the southern and eastern shores of the Upper Lake and the natural cave in the face of the rock overhanging the Upper Lake, well known as ‘St. Kevin’s Bed’,” and was intent on preventing his competitors from ferrying their visitors by boat across the lake and onto his lands. Undoubtedly, this was an attempt to monopolize the tourist traffic heading to the cave. Glendalough hosted thousands of travellers every tourist season in the nineteenth century, and by asserting claim over the land itself, a hotel proprietor fully associated his business with the site. Anderson was granted a perpetual injunction against the defendants after they failed to appear in court, preventing them from taking tourists across the lake and to the Bed. Interestingly, just a few months later the property was put up for auction by Andrew J. Koegh, explicitly advertising the cave in large font, separated from the rest of the text. St. Kevin’s Bed was a defining legendary marker of the region, closely tied to Moore’s literary

landscape and a definite destination for tourists. Evidently, local business capitalized on the region’s draws and competed with one other to dominate the tourist trade.

The Role of Local Guides as Intermediaries

Guides filled two major mediating roles that allowed St. Kevin’s bed to function as a tourist site. First, they relayed the stories of the cave to tourists and, second, they physically helped them get into the cave. Authors of travelogues often used an Irish voice to tell the story of the Bed, directly quoting their guides’ descriptions of the cave. The use of Irish narrators within travelogues lends an authenticity to the account of the journey and reveals the relationship between the tourist and their guide.

Similar to the guidebooks, guides themselves embraced the marketing of the Bed, anticipated what tourists wanted to experience at Glendalough, and tailored their tours to travellers’ interests. Guides were well known for their memorization and singing of Moore’s melodies. Kohl’s guide at Glendalough knew “Tommy’s” melodies, or Moore’s Melodies, off by heart. At the midpoint of the nineteenth century, guides were still able to connect themselves to the various celebrities who visited the Bed, capitalizing on the history of tourism in the region. In both Joseph Gatchell, an Irish Quaker who emigrated to America, and Kohl’s accounts of Glendalough, the travellers were approached by different guides offering tours, all claiming to have escorted Sir Walter Scott through the Seven Churches and to St. Kevin’s Bed. In Kohl’s case, his guide, George Irwin, claimed to have also escorted “her gracious Majesty, when she came here as a young princess with her royal lady mother, the Duchess of

121 Joseph Gatchell, The Disenthralled: Being Reminiscences in the Life of the Author; His fall from respectability by intemperance - and rescue by the Washingtonian society. (Troy: The Press of N. Tuttle, 1844), 22, see pages 6-14 for Gatchell’s background. Kohl, Travels in Ireland, 241. Gatchell’s guide was named “Winders” and Kohl’s went by “Irwin.”
Kent.” Guides gained illustrious and not-so-illustrious reputations, becoming deeply associated with the site. The Tourist’s Illustrated Hand-Book for Ireland referred to Gatchell’s guide, George Winders, as an “honest guide,” in contrast with Otway’s condemnation of Glendalough’s guides. At the time of the Illustrated guide’s publishing, Winders had died, so the guidebook recommended James Brough as a suitable, though not equal, replacement to Winders for his “extensive knowledge of all that is to be seen, and how to see it, as well as his acquaintance with the legendary lore.”

Undeniably there was a perception that some guides preyed on Glendalough’s tourists, and Walker’s Handbook actually called the guides “a great torment to visitors,” but certainly others were authorised by travellers and integral to the cave’s experience.

At St. Kevin’s Bed, guides recounted the story of Kevin and Kathleen, but they often added their own variants or additions to what Moore described. One guidebook said that the guides and boatmen “if not too busy will tell you stories galore of the wonderous [sic] things that happened to St. Kevin.” As Grace Greenwood, the pseudonym for American author and famous travel writer Sara Jane Lippincot, observed of the story: “But, according to our guide, ‘the saint, as he lay there on his back, coolly put his two feet agin [sic] Kathleen’s breast, and, without as much as a ‘by your lave, my lady’, kicked her into the lake.’” Kohl discussed the story of the Bed almost entirely through his guide’s voice, ending with an addition to Kathleen’s journey to heaven, “God also granted his [Kevin’s] prayer, that no one in future should be drowned in that lake. In fact, your honour, during the 1300 years that have passed since St.

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122 Kohl, Travels in Ireland, 242.
124 Mahony, The Tourist’s Illustrated Hand-Book for Ireland, 34
127 Grace Greenwood [Sara Jane Lippincot], Haps and Mishaps of a Tour in Europe, (Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1855), 104.
Kevin’s time, no human being has been drowned in its waters. People bathe here indeed without scruple.” These additions show how guides embellished the site’s mythologies in order to entertain guests and create additional layers to their performance, hopefully improving the tourists’ experience.

In their accounts of the cave, and indeed while moving through Glendalough, travellers often used the voice of their guide to narrate the journey. The use of Irish narrators gave an authenticity to the tales being told that the lore would lack if the writer merely restated the tale. The Irish voice ensured that the mythical tales remained foreign to visitors’ ears. Kohl provided an exact justification to his German readers for why he used direct quotes from his guide in his travelogue:

I record these words of George Irwin, not as the over-strained fancies of an ignorant individual, but because they perfectly represent the views, opinions, and far-and-wide believed traditions of the Irish people; and because, if we will not believe that there is any truth in them, we must at least believe in as great a wonder, a strange monomania to which an entire people has blindly resigned itself.129

Here Kohl framed himself almost as an ethnographer, stating that he was recounting the beliefs of an entire nation, but not acknowledging the place of these stories in the tourist experience. However, Kohl encouraged his readers to engage with the myths, ironically or otherwise. By recounting the tales through the voice of their guides, authors ensured that their tour seemed as foreign as possible, providing a fully exotic experience to their readers.

Guides acted as intermediaries and conduits through which tourists could engage with and challenge the Bed’s lore. There was certainly a good amount of banter between tourists and guides. Lord Norbury’s complaint about Moore’s Melodies was prefaced with a call and response dialogue with his guide, riddled with puns and other jokes. Known for his wit and often ribald humour, Norbury opened the piece by asking his guide where Kevin’s Bed was: ‘‘tis that hole in the rock there.’ ‘Oh! I see. The saint was a holy man, fond of being rocked to sleep,

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128 Kohl, Travels in Ireland, 249.
129 Kohl, Travels in Ireland, 245.
Gatchell had a similar experience when he challenged his guide’s story about Fionn MacCool escaping from a Giant at Glendalough, asking if he expected them to believe him. The guide responded stating that he thought they were English not Irish, “you can make the English blieve anything; tell them what you like, they’ll think it’s true.” These stories demonstrate how tourists knowingly participated in the exaggeration of legendary discourse. Notably, while guides were often portrayed as a nuisance or annoyance, they were rarely described as tricksters or hucksters, even if they did request tips, as Black’s insisted it was “necessary” to “come to a clear understanding with him [the guide] before setting off in his company.” Lore, history, and their interpretations by guides thus became a ground on which the guide and their guests could establish a relationship and the tourist could engage with what the landscape expressed, playfully or earnestly.

Moreover, guides were often complimented on their look or character. Greenwood detailed her guide “George Wynder, a wild, picturesque, long-bearded fellow, who proved to be very much of a character, and entertained us mightily by many wonderful ‘lagends.’” Winders worked as Gatchell’s “exceedingly garrulous conductor,” too. Evidently tourists wanted a guide who looked and acted Irish, even if this was an exaggerated caricature. Kohl gave a detailed and Romantic description of his guide, George Irwin:

He had a long, matted beard, frizzled-looking, and clinging round his chin and jawbones like wool; his features were very strongly marked; his cheeks weather-beaten and thin; his forehead high and wrinkled; beneath these wrinkles glowed a pair of eyes that gleamed in their sockets; and between all those wrinkles and ruins, a boldly-arched hawk’s nose raised itself. His words were rough, wild, and hoarse, and tumbled out over his tongue, like the wild


133 Black and Black, *Black’s Picturesque Tourist of Ireland*, 1857, 68.

134 Greenwood, *Haps and Mishaps of a Tour in Europe*, 103

bog-streams of Ireland over dark rocks and mossy stones; and his voice sounded as if it came from a hollow, and from an organ of speech wasted and worn for years by wind, rain, storm, and whisky. “That’s my name, your honour.—George Irwin, the guide of Glendalough. I have lived here from my youth in this wilderness, and know every corner of the place by heart. I know all the stories our forefathers have handed down from generation to generation to our days, and no one can tell what I know. ...There are a great many guides here, but none of them can boast of what I can... I do not remember ever to have had a more intelligent and entertaining guide than George Irwin, and I regretted nothing more than my inability to understand all the stories, anecdotes, and legends, which flowed from him like a shower.\footnote{Kohl, \textit{Travels in Ireland}, 241-242.}

Kohl’s description of Irwin connected him to the land, “the wild bog-streams,” “hawk’s nose,” and the guide himself promoted the idea that this is an altogether foreign wild place when he says that he spent his “youth in this wilderness,” building its Romantic ethos. Tourists sought difference and Glendalough’s guides became as much a part of the landscape as St. Kevin’s Bed, itself. Guides were genuine human beings immersed in a dialogue with tourists, but at the same time they portrayed as an outgrowth of the environment and landscape that travellers needed to experience.

**Caves as Repositories of Lore**

The stories and histories expressed by landscape tourism manifested the natural human desire for new knowledge, and in the context of travel knowledge about this “foreign” culture and its beliefs. The search for knowledge and self-improvement became a hallmark of middle-class holidays in the nineteenth century. Caves functioned as repositories of lore: stories, myths, and history. Therefore, caves represented a real space where travellers could improve themselves. St. Kevin’s Bed had the power to educate about early pre-reformation Christianity and its associated myths. Glendalough’s lore was grounded in early medieval history and developed out of the deep religious associations before the area became a destination within eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tourism.
St. Kevin’s Bed provided a physical conduit through which tourists could experience the life of an early Christian saint, so those who were interested in this history flocked to the valley. Antiquarians and archaeologists were necessary to popularize this history and many of them interpreted these sites, publishing research on the region of Glendalough. In many instances where caves had historic significance, antiquarians attempted to explain everything they could about them. As Marianne Sommer argues, antiquarians experienced caves much like the Romantic poets who earlier described them.\textsuperscript{137} Sommer argues that antiquarians reinterpreted caves in Britain, and Ireland’s caves were subjected to similar reimaginings. Antiquarians’ interest in St. Kevin’s Bed was often overshadowed by the ruins of the Seven Churches that the namesake saint built in Glendalough. While not necessarily the primary focus of these early archaeologists, many still made time to interpret this cave which lured in so many tourists.

In his \textit{Handbook to Irish Antiquities}, 1896, Irish archaeologist William F. Wakeman discussed the various sites in Glendalough, especially the Seven Churches. However, when describing “the greater and more generally interesting ruins of this celebrated glen… numerous relics, such as crosses, monumental stones, &c. Which a visitor should not overlook,” St. Kevin’s Bed was the only artefact mentioned by name, continuing “That it [the Bed] is altogether a work of art cannot be satisfactorily demonstrated.”\textsuperscript{138} Wakeman described the physical characteristics of the Bed, pointing out that it has been artificially enhanced and stating that “it is said” to have been a place of contemplation for St. Kevin and additionally St. Laurence O’Toole.\textsuperscript{139} Wakeman’s addition of St. Laurence O’Toole demonstrates how antiquarians attempted to expand on the information and stories about various sites. This point is


\textsuperscript{139} Wakeman, \textit{Handbook to Irish Antiquities}, 164. Interestingly, O’Toole is now a part of the current mythology of the Bed, see Marian Dowd, \textit{Archaeology of Caves in Ireland}, (Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2015), 216.
compounded by the fact that travel literature in the previous century never mentions O’Toole’s connection to the Bed.  

Again, the context of the cave within this wider religious site is important to recognize. The naming practices of the region more generally point to efforts to make history and geology analogous to contemporary reality. St. Kevin’s Kitchen, the first church built in Glendalough, combines with the Bed to give the impression that the valley was a genuine home of the saint, even if it may not have looked like that to visitors. As well, considering the Bed was St. Kevin’s abode, it fully expressed the nature of caves as primitive huts and shelters. The cave was at once a condemnation of how Catholic saints lived as hermits, being the size of a “small oven” fitting at most three people, but could also act as a means of critiquing how the Irish lived and the contemporary housing conditions on the island. Naming practices tie the cave to the other features of a Glendalough tour and its position as the literal Bed of St. Kevin expressed primitive shelter. In addition to a storied history from the medieval period, the Bed expressed mythical lore and possessed certain virtues or “potent charms,” building the legendary discourse of the site.

An engagement with the myths or powers of the cave further demonstrates how tourists sought

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140 MacAllister and Dom, *A Guide to Glendalough*, 8. The MacAllister and Dom guidebook was the only guidebook surveyed in this thesis which mentioned O’Toole’s use of St. Kevin’s Bed. The MacAllister guide emphasizes the point of Antiquarian influence because it was published sometime after Wakeman’s book. Occasionally the other guidebooks mention the O’Toole’s as a powerful family in Wicklow or the O’Toole chieftains’ burial ground.

141 Fraser, *Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland*, 1854, 229. An additional layer to the expression of the Bed as a place of shelter is that 1798 Rebellion leader Michael Dwyer may have used the cave as a hideout. Dwyer’s story appears in some travel literature, see: Black and Black, *Black’s Picturesque Tourist of Ireland*, 1857, 74; Rawle, *Landscape illustrations of Moore’s Irish melodies*, 47. Some travellers also discussed the story, for example Lord Norbury. It is worth noting that Norbury helped crush the rebellion, persecuting 1798 rebels as a lawyer and later supporting the Act of Union as a politician. Even as Norbury engaged with the history, he did so comically and superficially, commenting on the orange colour of the moss, referencing the popular symbol of Protestants, “‘very strange retreat for a rebel, with so much orange liking about the cliff?’” to which his guide responded “‘Tis true for you, my right honourable Lord - and the Orangemen were right near taking Dwyer,” see Rawle, *Landscape illustrations of Moore’s Irish melodies*, 47. Wicklow’s 1798 rebels did use the area of the Seven Churches in the post-rebellion period, too, see O’Donnell, *Aftermath*, Appendix 1. By 1900 Dwyer was still associated with the Bed in some capacity as there were drawn depictions of him in it, see O’Donnell, *Aftermath*, Plates 147. Dwyer’s story, which recounted the rebel leader escaping from a regiment of Highlanders by jumping out of the cave and swimming across the lake, inserted another layer of authentic history to the site, even if much travel literature did not describe his place at the cave.

and interacted with the supernatural. It was also an example of the playful irony that tourists engaged in while on holiday. In a short guide to Wicklow and St. Kevin’s Bed, 1835, Major Cosby detailed the virtues of the bed through poem titled “The Sequel” and the explanation that “[m]y poem properly ends with the catastrophe of Kathleen’s death; yet it would be incomplete if I did not more fully explain the virtues of the bed.”

Since this sad story it is said,
That those who lay in Kevin’s bed,
When in the straw shall have no dread;
All their thoughts and anxious care,
May my first born be an heir;
Now surely it is somewhat hard,
If prudent girls, who wish to guard
Against contingencies of life,
When they become a wedded wife;
Who boldly every danger brave-
The bed, the rock, and watery grave-
Should it in taunt to them be said,
So you have been in Kevin’s Bed;
When, in fact, it’s but a test
Of active limbs, who can climb best;
But let me not forget the rest,
How man by children may be blessed;
And great estates not pass to others,
For want of heirs in elder brothers

A charming woman in despair,
Whose husband anxious for an heir;
Hearing how much her neighbours said,
Of wond’rous charm of Kevin’s bed,
Resolved its virtues she would try,
And husband with an heir supply;
The place is barren, bleak, and wild,
Yet produced is many a child;
The saint complying with her prayer,
In due time appeared the heir;
And now a lovely babe in white,
Who is the father’s dear delight;
She held up to the mystic bed,
And to the saint thus pious said:
My vow I made and I am bound,
The church to give an hundred pound.

143 Major Cosby, *Kevin’s Bed, A Descriptive Poem of Various Scenery in the County of Wicklow, in Ireland; and Legendary Tales of St. Kevin. To Which is Added, a Correct Guide as to Distances and Accommodation*, (Dublin: Philip Dixon Hardy, 1835), 54.
144 Cosby, *Kevin’s Bed*, 54-56.
Archaeologist T.O. Russell’s 1897 tourist guidebook to Ireland’s antiquities, which explored Ireland’s trove of archaeological sites, mentioned the cave’s virtues, stating: “It is said that if *novelles mariées* succeed in getting into this dark and dismal cavern, they are sure to be blessed with large families.” Russell also critiqued the myth, tongue-in-cheek:

> Why such a belief should be current is not easy to understand, because St. Kevin, after whom the cavern is called, not only had no children, but was a decided woman-hater. If he did not drown Kathleen, he at least whipped her with nettles, a thing that no gallant man would think of doing to a girl who loved him. It will, however, be the general opinion of most of those who read this version of the story, that St. Kevin “served her right.”

While T.O. Russell could not understand the place of women in the bed, Grace Greenwood interpreted the reason for the lore in her travelogue, “it may be that the saint displayed, at the last, this especial graciousness towards our sex, in reparation for the slight he put upon it in the most ungallant yet most renowned act of his life.” The cave actively expressed hagiography, history, and myth and solicited a variety of responses from tourists. St. Kevin’s Bed acted as a physical conduit through which tourists were able to engage with, ironically or not, a different religious order and foreign histories of pre-Reformation saints.

**Travellers’ Navigation of the Cave**

Examining how tourists navigated St. Kevin’s Bed provides a unique window into how travellers embraced the physical challenge of entering the cave, but also how they evaluated the lore given at sites with historical, religious, or mythical significance. Undoubtedly the Bed was a focal point or site to be visited within the wider picturesque tour of Glendalough. The cave’s physical properties and narratives of place made it a combination of the natural and supernatural environment, both challenging and rewarding to visitors. By entering the Bed, men and women

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evaluated Kevin’s climb, his rest, and the position from where he propelled Kathleen to her death.

A visit to St. Kevin’s Bed was primarily inspired by literature and religious history. Even in the later nineteenth century, when mass tourism intensified, Moore’s Melodies and the other literary works centred on the Bed were important to travellers, and many of them discussed being able to see the scenes that Moore and others described in person. As mentioned above, guides memorized the songs associated with the Bed and usually sang them to tourists, sometimes to their intense consternation. Over time, some tourists grew tired of the same singsong throughout the region, such as Lord Norbury who, in recounting a conversation with his guide, stated “Moore’s songs haunt me as if I had murdered them in singing.” Still, Moore provided the dominant interpretation of the cave, even if the kitsch was unbearable to some travellers.

Many travellers commented on St. Kevin’s treatment of Kathleen. Greenwood called Kevin’s murder of Kathleen “ungallant” and asserted that she preferred Griffin’s poem of the events to Moore’s work for giving Kathleen “true maiden purity.” Greenwood tarred Kathleen as well, stating “her conduct was scarcely in the rules of strict feminine decorum.” Critiquing St. Kevin was inconsequential: he was a man who had died centuries before people started visiting the cave and represented a pre-Reformation Christianity that many Protestants were uncomfortable with. Additionally, he was Catholic saint who Moore had already portrayed negatively. The story of St. Kevin unceremoniously killing a woman evidently made some visitors uncomfortable.

148 Black and Black, Black’s Picturesque Tourist of Ireland, 1857, 74. This conversation is told through the footnotes of the guidebook.
149 Greenwood, Haps and Mishaps in Ireland, 103-105.
150 Greenwood, Haps and Mishaps in Ireland, 104. Gender divisions were not suspended at the cave either. St. Helier detailed “‘A small, miserable-looking cottage… inhabited by an aged woman of the name of Kathleen, who formerly acted as guide [This situation is similar to Kate Kearney and the mountain dew girls described by Kevin James]. Her daughter now takes her place. When she saw us, she ran round and came up to St. Kevin’s bed before us, scampering barefoot along the rocks as nimbly as a goat. Her profession seems now to be limited to assisting the ladies up the rock, and escorting them safely into the bed of the departed saint.’” (see, St. Helier, Travels Not Far From Home, 86.) While evidently not all tourists made it up to the Bed, a vast majority of them used their guides to get in.
Other tourists to St. Kevin’s Bed emphasized human interactions on their journey. To get to the cave, one needed to take a boat across the Upper Lake and then be helped into the Bed; travellers’ navigation of the cave were heavily focused on the relationship between themselves and their guide both through stories and physically moving into the space. Experiencing St. Kevin’s Bed was as much an interaction with locals as it was an engagement with the landscape and its associated lore. Travellers had to cross the liminal space of the Lake over to the shore of the Bed, symbolically entering a past world.\textsuperscript{151}

![Figure 10. Ascent to St. Kevin’s Bed, Glendalough. - An admirable illustration of the difficulties to be surmounted by the venturesome tourist to desires to say he lay in St. Kevin’s Bed. (Lawrence, The Emerald Island Album Series Counties of Wicklow and Wexford.)](image)

There was certainly some element of danger to visiting the Bed, as climbing into the cave was the most difficult part of the journey, even with the assistance of guides. As seen in the photograph above (Figure 10), one needed to climb up the face of the rock and shimmy around the edge over the water. The caption for the image of the ascent to the Bed read “An admirable illustration of difficulties to be surmounted by the venturesome tourist who desires to say he lay

\textsuperscript{151} For further reading on liminal space and tourism, see Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts, eds, \textit{Liminal Landscapes: Travel, experience and spaces in-between}, (New York: Routledge, 2012).
in St. Kevin’s Bed.”\textsuperscript{152} In reading various travelogues, there was no clear consensus whether getting into the cave was easy or not. \textit{Punch}’s anonymous traveller was not altogether on his own, as St. Helier commented that “St. Kevin must have been remarkably sure-footed, as he probably got in and out of his diminutive habitation without the assistance of a guide and a false step would have precipitated him into the dark waters beneath.”\textsuperscript{153} Greenwood called the climb “difficult and somewhat perilous.”\textsuperscript{154} When St. Helier discussed whether women could enter the Bed, he stated it was “a feat not altogether unattended with danger to the fairer sex, the ascent being slippery and steep whilst the cave looks almost perpendicularly over the lake.”\textsuperscript{155} Others believed the climb was quite easy, such as Rev. Caesar Otway who, when assessing the geography of the space, stated: “Here the guides make much ado about proposing their assistance; but to anyone who has common sense and enterprise, there is no serious difficulty, for by the aid of certain holes in the rock, and also points which you can easily grasp, you can turn into this little artificial cave; which, in fact is not bigger than a small baker’s oven.”\textsuperscript{156} Fraser’s \textit{Hand Book} tried to ease the nerves of travellers by quoting Otway’s claim that guides were quite adamant no one had drowned in the lake since Kathleen, again evoking local lore.\textsuperscript{157} Interestingly, different travellers describe the cave’s height above the water, asserting any distance from a few feet to fifty feet.\textsuperscript{158} The Bed sits just under 10 metres above the lake, or 33 feet.\textsuperscript{159} The reason for height differences could be due to mere miscalculation, but it speaks to how high up the cave seems for some tourists when they were inside it, especially to those who

\textsuperscript{152} Lawrence, \textit{The Emerald Island Album Series Counties of Wicklow and Wexford}.
\textsuperscript{153} St. Helier, \textit{Travels Not Far From Home}, 86.
\textsuperscript{154} Greenwood, \textit{Haps and Mishaps in Ireland}, 103.
\textsuperscript{155} St. Helier, \textit{Travels Not Far From Home}, 86.
\textsuperscript{156} Fraser, \textit{Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland}, 1854, 228-229.
\textsuperscript{157} Fraser, \textit{Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland}, 1854, 228.
\textsuperscript{158} Greenwood asserted that the cave was 30 feet above the water, but the more nervous narrator of \textit{Punch}’s story insisted it was as high as 50 feet, see Greenwood, \textit{Haps and Mishaps in Ireland}, 103; Anonymous “Happy-Thought Notes in Ireland,” 151.
\textsuperscript{159} Dowd, \textit{Archaeology of Caves in Ireland}, 216.
were too afraid to make the climb. This element of danger, or at the least, physical difficulty speaks to what kind of an adventure the cave provided and how travellers navigated the site.

Conclusion

Glendalough was one of Ireland’s first tourist sites. The region’s beauty was an enduring draw to many travellers and, from the eighteenth century on, the site hosted increasing numbers of foreign and domestic visitors. St. Kevin was intrinsically connected to the various monuments that possessed his name, including the Bed. Even when the nineteenth century dawned, the region’s deep religious connections never faded. As the century continued, the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque were all aesthetic codes one could find in Glendalough. This region’s landscape brought as many visitors as its history and legends.

Moore’s Melodies added yet another layer to the tourists’ visit, and from their publishing, St. Kevin’s Bed was bound with Moore’s lines. Glendalough became a literary landscape. Businesses seized these new associations and regularly used them to promote the area to potential customers. But lore functioned differently here: the valley’s historic and religious connotations ensured that the legendary discourse was never wholly mythical. Still, tourists and contemporary celebrities flocked to the Bed to hear guides recite Moore and to climb into the cave for themselves, seeing where the saint propelled his temptress to her death. Overall, St. Kevin’s Bed was a small cave in the wider tour of Glendalough and Wicklow, one of Ireland’s premier tourist destinations in the period of mass tourism. Yet the Bed’s stories and promises still attracted countless tourists in the period and was undoubtedly one of the more popular sites in Glendalough.
Chapter Two

“Of interest to the antiquary, the man of science, and the simple pleasure seeker”:
The Caverns at Cong

In the early 1830s Samuel Lover left his horse in the village of Cong, Co. Mayo, and proceeded about a mile on foot to the Pigeon Hole cave. He described his visit to the cave in detail with both vivid Romantic language and mathematical precision.

Very rude steps of unequal height, partly natural and partly artificial, lead the explorer of its quiet beauty, by an abrupt descent, to the bottom of the cave, which contains an enlightened area of some thirty or forty feet, whence a naturally vaulted passage opens, of the deepest gloom. The depth of the cave may be about equal to its width at the bottom: the mouth is not more than twelve or fifteen feet across; and pendent from its margin clusters of ivy and other parasite [sic] plants hand and cling in all the fantastic variety of natural festooning and tracery. It is a truly beautiful and poetical little spot, and particularly interesting to the stranger, from being unlike any thing [sic] any else one has ever seen, and having none of the noisy and vulgar pretence of regular show-places, which call upon every moment to exclaim ‘Prodigious!’\(^{160}\)

Lover described a sublime and beautiful site outside the usual tourist haunts, as Cong certainly was not an established tourist site in the same way as Glendalough during the early nineteenth century. Within the cave Lover found an “elderly and decent looking woman” collecting water from the nearby subterranean stream (running from Loughs Mask to Corrib) who took it upon herself, with the aide of her great-grandson, to be his guide.\(^{161}\) The child collected turf “which soon flickered and blazed, while the kind old woman lighted her faggots of bog-wood at the flame.”\(^{162}\) The woman wound the flaming wood around her head akin to an “Eastern head-dress” and looking like “some Sybil about to commence an awful rite.”\(^{163}\) The woman shouted, showing Lover the cave’s echoes, and flung the straw into the underground river, illuminating the water and the rest of the cave as it flowed away down to Lough Corrib. Lover wrote: “The

\(^{160}\) Samuel Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, (Dublin: W.F. Wakeman, 1832), 33-34.
\(^{161}\) Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 34.
\(^{162}\) Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 36.
\(^{163}\) Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 37.
effect was most picturesque and startling: it was even awful. I might almost say, sublime!”

However, the otherworldly scene was not the only reason this cave became famous.

The woman took Lover back to the “enlightened” area of the cave where water from the stream pooled. She instructed Lover to try and see the white trout swimming in the sunlight and told him that he needed to see the fish, or else he would never be married. Lover questioned her asking if this “fairy trout” or the fairies generally “would not be so spiteful;” the woman silenced him and added “never speak ill, your honour, of the good people -- beyant all, in sitch a place as this.” Then, the fish appeared. Lover guessed that it must like swimming in the sun, but when his guide replied “Oh, no, Sir… the people here has a mighty owld story about that trout,” he insisted she tell him. The woman sat Lover down and began recounting the legend.

There was wanst upon a time, long ago, a beautiful young lady that lived in a castle up by the lake beyant, and they say she was promised to a king’s son, and they wor to be married: when, all of a suddent, he was murthered, the crathur, (Lord help us,) and thrown into the lake abow (*Above), and so, of coorse, he couldn’t keep his promise to the fair lady, -- and more’s the pity.

Well, the story goes, that she wint out iv her mind, besake av loosin the king’s son -- for she was tindher-hearted, God help her, like the rest iv us! -- and pined away after him, until, at last, no one about seen her, good or bad; and the story wint, that the fairies took her away

Well, Sir, in coorse o’t time, the white throut, God bless it, was seen in the sthrame beyant; and sure the people didn’t know what to think av the crathur, seein’ as how a white throut was never heerd av afore nor sence; and years upon years the throut was there, just where you seen it this blessed minit, longer nor I can tell -- ay throuth, and beyant the memory o’ th’ ouldest in the village.

At last the people began to think it must be a fairy; for what else could it be? -- and no hurt nor harm was iver put an the white trout, antil some wicked sinners of sojers (*Soldiers) kem to these parts, and laughed at all the people, and gibed and jeered them for thinkin’ o’ the likes; and one o’ them in partic’lar, (bad luck to him!-- God forgi’ me for sayin’ it!) swore he’d catch the throut, and ate it for his dinner -- the blackguard!

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164 Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 37.
165 Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 38.
166 Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 39.
167 These asterisks indicate Lover’s own footnotes.
The soldier took the trout home and attempted to cook it “little thinkin’ what was in store for him, “the haythen”…

-- but, my jew’l the minit he put his knife into the fish, there was a murtherin’s screech, that you’d think the life id lave you if you heerd it, and away jumps the throut out av the fryin’-pan into the middle o’ the flure (*Floor); and an the spot where it fell, up riz (*Arose) a lovely lady- the beautifullest young crathur that eyes ever seen, dressed in white, with a band o’ goold in her hair, and a sthrame o’ blood runnin’ down her arm.

Lover took the time to engrave an image of the story’s climax (below, Figure 11). The magic woman scolded the soldier for taking her out of the river and “he thrimbled like a dog in a wet sack,” begging for his life.

![Image of The White Trout](image)

Figure 11. The White Trout- Look where you cut me you villain. (Samuel Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 29.)

‘I was on duty then,’ says the lady; ‘I was watchin’ for my threu love, that is comin’ by wather to me’ says she; ‘an’ if he comes while I am away an’ that I miss iv him, I’ll turn you into a pinkeen (*Stickle-back), and I’ll hunt you up and down for evermore, ‘while grass grows or wather runs.’

The soldier continued to beg.

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168 It is unknown whether Lover engraved this image on site, but it may have been made afterwards, as some editions of his work do not include this image.
‘Renounce your evil coorses,’ says she, ‘you villian, or you’ll repint it too late; be a good man for the futur, and go to your duty (*The Irish peasant calls his attendance at the confessional “going to his duty.”) reg’lar. And now,’ says she, ‘take my back and put me into the river agin, where you found me.’

‘Oh my lady,’ says the sojer, ‘how could I have the heart to drownd a beautiful lady liek you?’

But she vanished and all he saw was the trout on the floor. Quickly, the soldier ran the fish back to the cave and threw it into the water.

The minit he did, the wather was as red as blood for a little while, by rayson av the cut, I suppose, until the sthrame washed the stain away; and to this day there’s a little red mark an the throut’s side, where it was cut (*The fish has really a red spot on its side).

Well, Sir, from that day out the sojer was an althered man, and reformed his ways, and wint to his duty reg’lar, and fasted three times a week-- though it was never fish eh tuk an fastin’ days; for, afther the fright he got, fish id never rest an his stomach, God bless us--savín’ your presencce. But any how, he was an althered man, as I said before; and in coorse o’ time he left the army, and turned hermit at last; and they say he used to pray evermore for the sowl of the White Throut.  

Lover’s account of the White Trout myth was re-published throughout the nineteenth century and many tourists went to the Pigeon Hole to see both the underground stream and search for the mythical fish, and thereby immerse themselves in the natural and supernatural aspects of the cave. And, once the Guinness family began landscaping their growing Estate in the area, increasing numbers of tourists visited the region. Henry Coulter explained that “[t]he ground on which the village is built is completely cavernous” as Cong sits on Karstic limestone. This environment ensured that, as William Wilde, the father of Oscar Wilde, doctor, archaeologist, and Royal Irish Society member, stated that “water is everywhere… except where man tried to turn it – into the monster dry canal”. Caves were everywhere, too; some had mythic significance, such as the Pigeon Hole, while others were valued for their history or scientific peculiarity. Pigeon Hole was the most famous cave in the region for tourists,

169 Lover, Legends and Stories of Ireland, 40-44.
as it was at once a natural and supernatural space. The legendary and scientific discourses which
imprinted landscape were not necessarily at odds, but rather were quite complementary,
especially at Cong’s caves. Cong became famous for its geology, and this can largely be
attributed to the scientific and Romantic draws to the region. Henry Coulter’s primary purpose
for visiting Western Ireland was economic, surveying the potential of agriculture and fisheries in
the region, but even he had comments on the value of Cong to the tourist, asserting that “Cong is
a place possessing many features of interest to the antiquary, the man of science, and the simple
pleasure seeker, who can content himself merely with enjoying the beautiful scenery and
inspecting the strange natural phenomena which are here presented to him.”\(^{172}\) Cong was a
relatively small destination within the wider scope of Irish tourism, yet it still serves as a
valuable study of natural and supernatural landscape tourism in the nineteenth century.

How Texts Sell Site

According to travel literature, many aspects of the Romantic aesthetic code were
represented through Cong’s caverns. The village of Cong was never the principal attraction to
tourists visiting the isthmus between Loughs Mask and Corrib; the major draw to the town was
its surrounding natural environment. Cong was part of the Connemara tour, one of the most
popular tourist routes in the post-Famine period.\(^{173}\) The area’s association with the Connemara
circuit and physical location on Karstic limestone between Loughs Mask and Corrib was at the
heart of how guidebooks promoted the site: “The sound of the waters flowing underground is
distinctly heard.”\(^{174}\) Other guidebooks excluded Cong from the circular route, but added it as a
detour for the region, usually under the heading “excursions from Galway,” but importantly still

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\(^{173}\) Thompson, “Famine Travel,” 167-169.

\(^{174}\) Anonymous, *A Week in the West of Ireland*, (Dublin: Hodges and Smith, 1850), 12.
functioned as mediating agents. Furthermore, Cong was always discussed in terms of the wider region that surrounded it. Cong’s Irish name is frequently mentioned by guidebooks: “Cong (Cunga, an Irish word, signifying a neck), is a village on the isthmus separating Loughs Corrib and Mask,” contextualizing the village/isthmus in relation to its surrounding lakes. Much travel literature describes it as “on the way to Joyce’s country”; Fraser’s *Hand Book* framed Cong similarly in relation to the famous picturesque region: “It is on the confines of Mayo and Galway, and may be said to be the central pass into Joyce country and Connemara.”

The trip was advertised as part of the wider Connemara route but also as a quick day trip from Galway. The region had many draws and was promoted in a multitude of ways: the Halls contended in their *Handbook to the West*, regardless of the route to Cong, the area “must be visited: and the day so spent will be well spent.”

Other travel writers discussed this landscape’s reputation, too. Contemporary celebrities, especially literary figures, played an important role in promoting caves, as they did at St. Kevin’s Bed. However, at Cong the influence of celebrities was much less notable, and guidebooks rarely mention their names. Despite William Wilde’s assertion that Lady Morgan and Lover made the Pigeon Hole famous, none of the guidebooks or travelogues ever mention the two travellers or use their writing to promote the destination. There are, however, notable exceptions. Wilde’s documentary work on Lough Corrib and its surroundings was evidently influential, as numerous guidebooks cited him and quoted his descriptions of Cong and the

176 Shaw, *Shaw’s Tourist’s Picturesque Guide to Great Britain and Ireland*, 38. The word isthmus or variants on it are used in numerous guidebooks, see Anonymous, *A Week in the West of Ireland*, 11; John Bradbury, *Connemara, and the West Coast of Ireland*, (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1871), 56.
177 Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall, *Hand-books for Ireland. The West and Connamara*, (London: Virtue, Hall, & Virtue, 1853; Dublin: James McGlashan, 1853), 73. Travelogues mention Joyce’s country, as well, see Coulter, *The West of Ireland*, 150.
179 Mr. and Mrs. Hall, *Hand-books for Ireland. The West and Connamara*, 67.
Bradshaw’s guide further suggested Wilde’s work for detailed descriptions of Cong’s attractions and for woodcuts of the caves, among other attractions. Like St. Kevin’s Bed, contemporary figures were used to lend more interest to the sites and to actually describe them. However, at Cong, there was less popular literature to invoke on the region, as it was not a destination unto itself such as Glendalough. The guidebooks advertised the picturesque, sublime, and beautiful landscape more generally and there was no need to summon popular literature.

Guidebooks described Cong and its caves by interweaving legendary and scientific discourses. There is no contesting that Cong’s environment and landscape were frequently framed as a Romantic space. As Fraser’s guidebook asserted: “The wretched village of Cong is romantically situated at the upper end of Lough Corrib.” Cong’s caves were associated with the supernatural, too. The supernatural and sublime built an awesome atmosphere, or genius loci. The power of sublime atmosphere is evident in how guidebooks describe the trip down into the Pigeon Hole. Black’s described the cave as “deep, dark unearthly looking,” and insisted in a footnote that “red and blue lights should be fired” in order to see into the space, lending a sense of adventure to the experience. Paterson’s called Pigeon Hole “a deep and gloomy chasm.” For tourists the sublime built this supernatural space. Aesthetic codes and Romantic imagery also heavily influenced images of the cave. For example, John Bradbury’s guide to the West included an image of the Pigeon Hole (below, Figure 12), which included two travellers sitting

181 For the use of Wilde to describe the region, but not necessarily the caves, see George Bradshaw, Bradshaw’s Illustrated Handbook for Tourists in Great Britain and Ireland, (London: N/A, 1876), 22; E.B. Ivatts, Guide to the Western Highlands (Connemara), (Dublin: D.W. Carroll, 1869), 3; George Shaw, Shaw’s Tourist’s Picturesque Guide to Great Britain and Ireland, specially prepared for the use of American Tourists, (Boston: Estes & Lauriat, 1858), 38. For the use of Wilde’s quotes about the caves, see D.A. Brosnan, Haverty’s Irish-American illustrated almanac, (New York: P.M. Haverty,1880), 73-75. Wilde’s work was also used to describe the Moytura Caves, see Bradshaw, Bradshaw’s Illustrated Handbook for Tourists in Great Britain and Ireland, 23.
182 Bradshaw, Bradshaw’s Illustrated Handbook for Tourists in Great Britain and Ireland, 22-23.
183 Fraser, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 294. Fraser, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1844, 432. Fraser, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1854, 497.
184 Merrylees, Paterson’s Guide Book to the United Kingdom, 152.
by the water and a single young girl hiding behind rocks. The drawing used shading to create a
dark atmosphere that was penetrated by sunlight in places.

Figure 12. The Pigeon Hole. (Bradbury, Connemara, and the West Coast of Ireland, 59.)

Furthermore, guidebooks mentioned, if only briefly or in passing, various legends
associated with the caves, and advertised visiting them as a way to commune with mythic or
historic Ireland. For example, C.S. Ward’s guide to Ireland discussed the area in the context of
the two lakes and the water which runs underground and through many caves, but also stated
“these shafts have fanciful names.” Murray’s Handbook elaborated, claiming the region was
“teeming with natural curiosities, which in former times would have been considered as
bordering on the supernatural,” contrasting their contemporary period with the otherworldly and
ancient beliefs of locals and asserting modernity and rationality. The use of “former times”
demonstrates that by going to the cave the tourist could become a sort of time traveller. Shaw’s

185 C.S. Ward, Thorough Guide Series. Ireland (Part II.) East, West, and South including Dublin and Howth,
(London: Dulau & Co., 1888), 188.
John Murray 1878), 214.
referred to the Pigeon Hole as “the abode of the sacred trout,” but did not expand. Murray’s also stated that upon reaching the bottom of the cave, “When the tourist’s eyes get fairly accustomed to the semi-darkness, he will perhaps be fortunate enough to detect in the river, which runs babbling by him, the blessed white trout which always frequent this same spot, and to catch which was an act of impiety too gross to be committed.” The legend persisted throughout the centuries; in 1885, Black’s wrote of the myth: “a legend states that a pair of sacred trout inhabit the pool” and quoted “Dr. Ball’s” account of the fish. While presumably the Pigeon Hole’s fish were interesting unto themselves for being a part of a natural anomaly, these trout became interesting to the guidebooks and thus the tourist because of their mythical and supernatural associations.

In regard to scientific interest, Cong’s caves were important stops on the tourist itinerary because they provided a window into a unique geological area, specifically the stream running between the lakes. Travel literature cited the Pigeon Hole as a place where one could see the river running from Lough Mask to Lough Corrib. In 1844, Fraser’s Hand Book stated the stream between the two lakes “is visible in several places on the passage; but the most remarkable opening is the Pigeon Hole… by the assistance of a light, the course of the stream can be traced in its caverned bed for a considerable distance.” E.B. Ivatts only described the caves in relation to the underground stream which passed through Cong, but mentioned other caves which held lore: the Ladies Buttery, the Horse Discovery, Webb’s Hole, and Pigeon

187 Shaw, Shaw’s Tourist’s Picturesque Guide to Great Britain and Ireland, 38.
189 Black and Black, Black’s Picturesque Tourist of Ireland, 1857, 293; Merrylees, Paterson’s Guide Book to the United Kingdom, 152; Pembroke Fetrige, The American Traveller’s Guides: Harper’s Hand-Book for Travellers in Europe and the East, 86; Pembroke Fetrige, The American Traveller’s Guides, 86; Bradbury, Connemara, and the West Coast of Ireland, 60; Ward, Thorough Guide Series. Ireland (Part II.), 188; Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland. Fourth Edition, 1878, 215; Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1866, 184; James Fraser, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1838, 293–294; Fraser, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1844, 432; Fraser, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1854, 497; Shaw, Shaw’s Tourist’s Picturesque Guide to Great Britain and Ireland, 1858, 38; Anonymous, A Week in the West of Ireland, 12.
190 Fraser’s, A Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland 1844, 432.
The guidebooks offered scientific explanations for the caves and accompanying river, such as Murray’s *Handbook* in 1866:

> The visitor should explore the natural curiosities of Cong, chiefly caused by the vagaries of the river connecting Lough Mask with Lough Corrib. Although the distance is really 4 m., its apparent career is only ¾ m., as the remainder is hidden underground with but few tokens of its presence. The country to the N. of Cong, as far as Lough Mask, is a series of limestone plateaus of carboniferous, though, according to some geologists of Silurian age. Whichever it may by, it is singularly perforated and undermined, and at approach to its subterranean beauties is permitted at the Pigeon Hole.  

This same guide included the Pigeon Hole under an index section titled “Points of Interest for the Geologist.” The 1878 version of Murray’s *Handbook* added more scientific vocabulary and removed doubtful phrasing of the same passage possibly assuming knowledge on the part of the traveller.

> The visitor should explore the natural curiosities of Cong, chiefly caused by the vagaries of the river connecting Lough Mask with Lough Corrib. Although the distance is really 4 m., its apparent career is only ¾ m., as the remainder is hidden underground with but few tokens of its presence. The country to the N. of Cong, as far as Lough Mask, is a series of carboniferous limestone plateaus, singularly perforated and undermined by the solvent action of the free carbonic acid contained in the river water. The subterranean river, and the lofty tunnel through which it flows, is accessible in several places.

There were numerous caves near Cong which nourished scientific discourse. The Horse Discovery cave acquired its name from a farmer and his horse breaking through weak limestone and uncovering the cavern. The Horse Discovery was just one of the area’s scientific sites that showed off the unique properties of a Karstic region. Bradbury’s told the story of the cave and then gave additional reason to visit it as “it is said to be the largest cavern in Ireland.” In the scientific interpretation of Pigeon Hole, the cave’s value came from the underground stream that

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193 Murray’s, *Handbook for Travellers in Ireland*, 1866, xxxiii
195 John Bradbury, *Connemara, and the West Coast of Ireland: How to See them for Six Guineas*, (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1871), 58-59. Although, larger cave systems had been discovered at this point, including the focus of the next chapter: the Mitchelstown Caves.
ran through it, giving visitors the experience of seeing a natural geological feature, or as one guidebook called it “this extraordinary freak of nature.” But undoubtedly the stream was sublime too, especially when guides illuminated it with turf. The scientific draw then changed the function of guides too, as the educated traveller who sought scientific landscape interpreted the cave themselves. That being said, Murray’s still encouraged the procurement of a guide, considering “‘The Ladies’ Buttery,’ ‘Webb’s Hole,’ ‘Kelly’s Cave,’ and the ‘Priest’s Cave,’ are other openings all difficult to find without a guide.”

At Cong, the literary landscape was not a large part of tourist desire. Travellers came to see the myth popularised by Lover and experience natural and supernatural spaces. Yet geology was an equal draw to this place. Cong was promoted to tourists using both the legendary and scientific discourse, which while different provided complementary experiences. The Pigeon Hole grotto, promoted more than any other cave, was popular for its Romantic and sublime qualities and the presence of the natural river, but it was also just a mile from the village and fairly accessible due to the presence of steps leading into it. Bradshaw’s guide mentioned that the Pigeon Hole cave was the “most accessible” of Cong’s caves, while Fraser’s commented that “the descent, about sixty feet, is not difficult.” The accessibility of the cave, coupled with its short distance from the town, may explain its popularity outside of the stream and the myth. Other guidebooks mentioned notable caves in the region, but usually only discussed them briefly. For example, Bradbury’s guide to Connemara suggested seeing the Horse discovery cave first, but failed to describe it in any detail. However, there is no doubt that the principal cave of the region, and “the one best worth visiting,” was the Pigeon Hole. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Cong’s Abbey became the defining monument of landscape tourism,

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196 Shaw, Shaw’s Tourist’s Picturesque Guide to Great Britain and Ireland, 1858, 38.
198 Bradshaw, Bradshaw’s Illustrated Handbook for Tourists in Great Britain and Ireland, 22. Fraser’s, A Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1844, 432.
199 Bradbury, Connemara, and the west coast of Ireland, 58-59.
200 Ward, Thorough Guide Series. Ireland (Part II.), 188.
after its restoration by the Guinness family. Most guidebooks discussed the history and provenance of the Abbey along with the stories associated with it which expressed pagan Gaelic Ireland and early Christianity in Connacht. As one guidebook asserted in 1876, the ruins of the Abbey were Cong’s “chief attraction.” By the end of the century, Russell’s guide to Ireland’s antiquities only discussed the Abbey, and while that was a major landmark for antiquity it is still interesting that Russell chose to neglect the history of the caves. The caves functioned similarly to the Abbey and the Cross, representing pre-Norman Ireland and Early Celtic Christianity, yet they became a more minor attraction as other focal points rose to prominence.

**Infrastructure**

Travelling to Cong was more challenging than to Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, given the town’s Western position away from Dublin. The Midland Great Western Railway Company’s trains never made it to Cong, and the closest railway stop to the village was Ballinrobe. The map of their railway lines demonstrate how extensive their routes were in the West by the end of the century (below, Figure 13).

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201 Black and Black, *Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland*, 1871, 291. This reconstruction was specifically due to the patronage of Sir B.L. Guinness, M.P. for Dublin. Previously guidebooks did discuss the history of the Abbey but in briefer detail, see Fraser, *Hand Book*, 1838, 293. All the guidebooks surveyed here mention the Abbey, usually with a discussion of its history, albeit in varying amounts of detail. Guidebooks also began to mention the Cross of Cong once it was placed in the Royal Irish Academy. Overall, the Guinness family played a vital role in the landscaping of the region around Cong and improving tourists’ expectations of the place.


205 However, Cong was included in this railways company’s advertisements as part of “cheap circular tours.” As well, other hotels in the wider region ran cars to Cong, like the Leenane Hotel, “at the head of Kilery Bay.” See Bradbury, *Dublin and the county of Wicklow*, 128 (railway advertisement) 124 (hotel advertisement).
Many travellers went to Cong by road, but it was more common for tourists in this period to travel across Lough Corrib by steam. The water route to Cong was undoubtedly popular. Coulter wrote in 1862 of the steamer Father Daly: “in the summer season the traffic is considerable, and the steamer plies constantly during that period of the year from Galway to Cong and Maam for the accommodation of tourists,” and concluded by stating the local gentleman were arranging to have a second steamer on the water for the following March. But the local hotel also facilitated travelling to the village, as in 1870 it ran a daily (Sunday excepted) two-horse car to bring tourists from Maam, helping travellers avoid the problems of missing post cars. In fact, hotel owner James Burke, in conjunction with a “Mr. Kennedy”, also ran a daily “Long Car” to Clifden, further tying Cong into the Connemara circuit and wider Connemara tourism infrastructure.

206 Coulter, The West of Ireland, 150. “Mr. Thomas Persse, of Galway” and “Mr. Benjamin Lee Guinness (who is the proprietor of large estates in the vicinity of Cong).” It is important to note that there was an increased traffic of goods and visitors according the Coulter. Additionally, he mentioned that the Father Daly steamer returned a 14 percent dividend on investment despite “the rather irregular and capricious way in which it has been managed,” see Coulter The West of Ireland, 153. The second steamer was commissioned as an advertisement for an excursion to Cong, 1867, was using “the favourite Steamer “EG Linton” at a rate of 3s (the Carlisle Arms Hotel was receiving the guests at 2s) “Excursion to Cong,” Tuam Herald, 20 July 1867.

207 “Carlisle Arms Hotel, James Burke,” Mayo Examiner, 4 April 1870. “Carlisle Arms Hotel, Cong..” Ballinrobe Chronicle (Ballinrobe, Mayo, Ireland) 4 June 1870. A similar advertisement is found in “Carlisle Arms Hotel” Mayo Examiner (Castlebar, Mayo, Ireland) 11 April, 1870. The same article can be found in the following dates for the Mayo Examiner, see 18 April, 1870, 25 April 1870, 6 June 1870, 2 May 1870, 16 May 1870, 20 June 1870, 27 June 1870, 4 July 1870, 11 July 1870.
Another unique aspect of Cong’s tourism is that the region was largely developed as a
destination by the Guinness family, particularly Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness; the estate’s role in
constructing tourist routes was generally much more muted in the nineteenth century, especially
with the rise of mass tourism and the creation of new businesses. As already mentioned, the
Guinness family restored the famed Abbey in Cong, which Otway had described as “all
dilapidated,” in 1839. But the estate was also responsible for expanding the popular Ashford
Castle and building a tower which provided views over Loughs Mask and Corrib. Moreover,
B.L. Guinness helped make the caves more accessible by building steps down into the Pigeon
Hole. While travellers gave positive appraisals of the Guinness estate in the period, Cong itself
provided a more challenging experience for tourists.

General comments on the village were far from kind. Between travelogues and
guidebooks, the labels for Cong were harsh: “wretched,” “miserable,” and “dirty” among
other descriptors, were all colourful adjectives used by travel literature to discuss the village.
As one visitor commented: “one wonders how anyone can be found self-denying enough to make
it [Cong] a residence… Cong and its neighbourhood is the stupidest little bit of country under the
sun.” Considering the town was described in such negative terms throughout the period,
clearly the real reason tourists visited this area was for the surrounding natural and supernatural
environment.

A tourism infrastructure developed rapidly around Cong, but the village itself was slower
to adopt its features. In the period under study, Cong was home to one hotel, the Burke

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213 For “Decaying and destitute” and “filthy,” see A. Wandekes “Waifs from the West,” *The Nation*, 28 October 1871.
Hotel/Carlisle Arms, and any tourists who stayed overnight in the village stayed here.215 As Coulter stated, “Mr. Burke’s hotel, and one or two other houses, are the only respectable ones in the place.”216 Compliments were also found in the hotel’s visitor book: “I have found this hotel exceedingly comfortable, landlord (Mr. J. Burke) kind and attentive; in fact, every one about the house anxious to please.”217 While some travellers had complimentary comments for the hotel, others were not impressed and tarred it along with the village. On a walking tour in 1865, Englishman William Whittaker Barry stated he had no choice of accommodation: “I put up at Burke’s inn, the only hotel in the place, or I should have selected another, as I had been warned against this one.”218 The major complaint with Burke’s hotel was that it and its owner were dirty. Kevin J. James tracks perceptions of the Irish inn during the period, and the Carlisle Arms was wholly representative of how Victorians imagined Irish culture and backwardness.219 Ireland’s inns were a “micro-space” which expressed “Irishness,” an extension of Otherness, not the “insular world of the luxe hotel.”220 Mocking the certificate from Lord Carlisle’s visit which testified “to the cleanliness and comfort of this hotel,” Barry asserted that Burke “was not clean-looking. The same condition of things pervades his hotel… At any rate this testimonial is now used as a cloak to cover a multitude of ----. Well, never mind, poor Lord Carlisle is dead. I only wish these others were dead too.”221 Guidebooks offered similar criticism, as Murray’s

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215 The hotel was expanded in this period. In 1870, James Burke advertised that his hotel has been “entirely remodelled and enlarged at considerable expense, and can now afford First-class Accommodation to Thirty Persons,” see: “Carlisle Arms Hotel, Cong,” Ballinrobe Chronicle, 4 June 1870. A similar advertisement is found in “Carlisle Arms Hotel” Mayo Examiner, 11 April 1870; 18 April 1870; 25 April 1870; 2 May 1870; 16 May 1870; 6 June 1870; 20 June 1870; 27 June 1870; 4 July 1870; 11 July 1870.
216 Coulter, The West of Ireland, 149. The other houses he mentioned were most likely Ashford Castle or other nearby estates as there was only one hotel in the town throughout the nineteenth century.
217 “Tourists in Cong,” Ballinrobe Chronicle, 22 July 1871. Although, as James observed, the visitors book at British and Irish hotels could often become a never-ending series of praises for the hotel and its owner, especially considering the owner had ultimate control over what the book contained, see James, “A British Social Institution,” 58.
219 James, “The Irishness of the Irish Inn,” 4-6.
221 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 151. In the article cited above, James also analyzes how travellers mocked Irish inns’ attempts to portray themselves as luxury hotels. See, James, “The Irishness of the Irish Inn,” 5.
Handbook in 1878, called the hotel “small, dirty, and miserably overcrowded when the Galway boat arrives.” While the hotel may have been dirty, these attitudes could merely be part of what James asserts as the Briton’s socio-cultural appraisal of a Gaelic space. Certainly, Burke’s inn was an essential institution in the development of tourism to Cong.

Outside accommodation, the Carlisle Arms was essential to helping tourists visit the caves. Burke had a map of all the region’s caves “together with their respective distances, &c., framed in the coffee-room of the hotel,” and probably offered guides to take tourists. Guides who did not live near the caves may have tried to pick up patrons outside of the hotel. Barry’s experience with guides echoes this theory: “on emerging from the inn, in order to have a quiet look at the place, I was at once pounced upon by a guide as his lawful prey. After in vain endeavouring to release myself from his clutches, I thought it better to enter into a treaty of capitulation.” The hotel was the centre of tourism traffic in the area and facilitated travellers by pointing them to the caves and, perhaps inadvertently, to Irish guides. The case of the Carlisle Arms also demonstrates how hotels adapted to new business, meeting the needs of travellers and integrating themselves into tourism networks, complementing the work of the Guinness estate in the area.

Barry remarked that “at Irish inns the innkeeper is always called ‘the Master’” and, while James Burke’s hotel had been criticised on a number of issues, he was certainly a master of advertising. Burke advertised across multiple media and, evidently, Cong’s landscape and natural beauty was still a major selling point in the second half of the nineteenth century. Burke’s advertisements in Bradbury’s guidebooks to Dublin and Wicklow asserted that “the natural beauties and curiosities of Cong are many” and listed the variety of interesting caves

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222 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1878, 214.
224 Bradbury, Connemara, and the West Coast of Ireland, 108.
225 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 145.
226 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 145.
“‘Pigeon Hole,’ ‘Ladies Buttery,’ ‘Captain Webb’s Hole,’ ‘Kelly’s Cave’ &c., are in themselves worth seeing.”\textsuperscript{227} Burke advertised in local newspapers, as well. When promoting the renovation of his hotel to tourists, Burke asserted “The Antiquities and Far-famed Natural Curiosities of Cong are too well known to require any mention here.”\textsuperscript{228} Undoubtedly, Burke understood that those reading a guidebook for Dublin and Wicklow may have been interested in landscape, and he tailored his advertisement to their desires. The exact same advertisement also appears in Bradbury’s guide to the West of Ireland.\textsuperscript{229} On Burke’s death, 16 November 1878, the \textit{Ballinrobe Chronicle} called him “the enterprising and popular proprietor of the Carlisle Arms Hotel,” and Burke’s hotel continued to adapt to the changing nature of the tourism industry.\textsuperscript{230}

In the late nineteenth century, tourism to Cong became heavily focused on sport. Sportsman and Irish travel writer William Hamilton Maxwell stated that “there are no waters in Great Britain, with the exception of the river Shannon, where larger pike are caught than those takes in Loughs Mask and Corrib,” and went on to state that 30 and 50 pound pike were not uncommon.\textsuperscript{231} Maxwell continued: “the trout in those loughs are also immensely large. From five to fifteen pounds is no unusual size, and some have been found that have reached the enormous weight of thirty.”\textsuperscript{232} An announcement of the fishing season spotlighted “Captain

W.F. Fosberry and Captain Malone, Westmeath” who were staying at the Carlisle Arms for killing “245 trout and eleven salmon in the neighbouring fishing ground.”\textsuperscript{233} Clearly the region was gaining a fishing reputation, and local hotelier Burke capitalised on this in his advertisements, too. Using regional newspapers, the entrepreneur targeted tourists interested in fishing on the lake and demonstrate the changing nature of tourism at Cong. The focus of tourism in this region was the landscape, but travellers now sought out a landscape of sport, as well. Therefore, while caves were enduring destinations for Cong’s tourism, with shifting cultural interpretations of environment, came new values for these sites and new tourists.

**The Role of Local Guides as Intermediaries**

Guides were deemed necessary at Cong to help tourists find the region’s various caves, especially the more hidden caverns. In many cases guides continued to act as interpreters and mediators of the visitor’s journey. As Murray’s suggested, “the tourist should engage the services of a guide, who generally has a legend for every spot, and a reason for everything.”\textsuperscript{234} However, Cong was a small village with a largely Irish-speaking population and not a major destination like the Giant’s Causeway or Killarney which ensured that the number of guides was quite small, not an industry unto itself like at Glendalough. The primary language of Cong during the nineteenth and early twentieth century was Irish; as Wilde wrote, “except the gentry, nearly every person, young or old, in this parish speaks the Irish, and many do not use any other tongue.”\textsuperscript{235} Thus, if one could not speak English, it was difficult for them to work as a guide. Cong’s guides led tourists to the caves and transmitted their lore; as well, they illuminated the caves for travellers through dynamic spectacles. Primarily there were two types of guides at

\textsuperscript{233} “The Fishing Season,” *Mayo Examiner* (Castlebar, Mayo, Ireland) 29 May 1876. The same notice is found in “The Fishing Season,” *Tuam Herald* (Tuam, Galway, Ireland), 3 June 1876.
\textsuperscript{235} Wilde, *Lough Corrib*, 186. Wilde had first-hand knowledge here as he helped with the census in 1851, see Wilde, *Lough Corrib*, 186.
Cong, the old woman who stayed at the Pigeon Hole and the rest, who took visitors to the various other caverns around Cong as well as to the abode of the elderly guide.

Most guides at Cong were similar to those found at Glendalough during the nineteenth century, explaining lore and taking tourists to the sites. At Cong around the 1860s, for instance, a man often described only as “Mick” worked in this manner. On his trip to Cong, Barry neatly summarised Mick’s role in the tourist experience: “having surrendered myself into Mr. Mick’s hands, I prepared to see with his eyes and hear as he would have me hear.” 236 Without a doubt Mick was a well known and popular guide, as there was a comment about him in the Carlisle Arms hotel book stating “[b]ut Mick was charming!” and Murray’s Handbook from 1866 specifically mentioned that travellers should use a guide “who rejoices in the name of Mick.” 237 The guide’s primary purpose was taking customers to and into the caves, providing an interpretation or legend of it, such as at Webb’s Hole: “Mr. Mick had a curious though not over-nice story, in verse” of Webb’s Hole. 238 Here the relationship between guides and their guests can be interpreted as an exchange. The guide conveyed a foreign experience through their actions and words, and the tourists received and evaluated the information they had been given. At the end of his tour with Mick, Barry stated that “Mr. Mick certainly proved a most original and entertaining guide, having all kinds of stories about the curiosities of the place, and the visitors, and their appreciation or non-appreciation of them.” 239 Just as George Irwin and others became associated with St. Kevin’s Bed, Cong had its famous guides who were able to provide an authenticating experience, too.

Even more so than at St. Kevin’s Bed, at Cong the guide became part of the scene and performed elaborate rituals to show tourists the cave. As Susan Kroeg argues, Irish guidebooks

236 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 145.
237 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 148. Murray’s, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1866, 184. In later editions of Murray’s mention of Mick the guide is removed (he may have died).
238 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 147.
239 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 148.
relied on human guides, dehumanizing them and inserting them into the text to provide an immediacy of tourist experience.240 The woman who lived in a cottage next to Pigeon Hole is the clearest example of this at Cong. James’ analysis of Kate Kearney as a tourism and landscape figure has echoes here. James asserts Kearney was no unusual “literary-cum-tourist figure” and that there were many other “‘lake ladies’” across Britain and Ireland.241 Old women or younger attractive girls became wholly associated with sites; this case presents a “cave river lady” instead of a “lake lady.” Like Lover’s elderly woman, travellers frequently mention the presence of an old “hag” following them into the cave or found already inside it. Whether this is merely Lover’s guide – now much aged – is difficult to tell, because guidebooks referenced her until 1885 (although this is a reprint) and mentions of her in travelogues continued until at least the time of Wilde’s writing, in 1867. 242 Black’s 1885 guidebook commented that “[a] woman from a neighbouring cottage generally follows visitors into the cavern and lights it up with a flambeau, with the aid of which we can see the glistening of the water in the recesses of the cavern.”243 Otway provided more detail on this woman: “Babby Burke by name, I hope will long live to be the appropriate accompaniment of this cave, it would be no show without her--she is a garrulous and self-sufficient old hag, as she ought to be…”244 The Halls labelled her a “villainous looking libel on ‘the sex’ as it has ever been our lot to encounter.”245 Most travel accounts of the region mention the woman in some capacity, and while many do not specify if she spoke to the tourists or told stories, it was most likely assumed that she participated in the transmission of lore, as Lover, Otway, and Wilde all mention her voice. The Halls discuss how

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241 James, Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland, 31.
242 For travel literature which mentions the old woman as a guide or her cottage, see Coulter, The West of Ireland, 154. Wilde, Lough Corrib, 201; Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 146-147; Belton, The Angler in Ireland, 104; Mr. and Mrs. Hall, Hand-books for Ireland. The West and Connamara, 72-73; Black and Black, Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland, 1871, 293; Black and Black, Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland, 1885, 204.
243 Black and Black, Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland, 1885, 204.
244 Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 206.
245 Hall, Hall’s Hand-Book for the West, 72.
their “aged crone” of a guide brought straw and turf into the cave to illuminate the river, but
Wilde vividly described the woman’s performance at Pigeon Hole in detail.

Lo! Presently on top of one of these immense blocks stands for a moment a weird female figure, bearing a lighted flambeau, the genius loci - the Meg Merrilies of the scene. Away she slits - darkness again, save the reflection of the light on the stalactitic roof above; then, emerging from an unobserved passage, she stands on another and more distant crag, with her long white locks, and pale aged face, personifying the banshee of the ancient Firbolgs. She hurls stones into the deep pools beneath, and utters a loud wail, that reverberates through the cavern, till the repeated echoes fade in the distance, and we watch the lurid light of the expiring glossogs she has thrown on the waters, as they float on through these subterranean caverns to the lake, or to rise in the great mill pond of Cong. “that’s the Pigeon hole, yer Honour.”

Other travellers described the woman’s rituals in similar ways, inscribing her in the site. Barry wrote that the woman was “waving the tapers and looking exactly like one of the Witches in that scene in Macbeth.” This elderly woman was integrated into legendary discourse and a part of the supernatural experience at the Pigeon Hole. Her performance was at once frightening, but also exciting and exotic. Notably, Mick also used tapers to illuminate other caverns in the region. While the scientific interpretation of sites robbed guides’ ability to interpret caves, guides’ functions of transmitting lore and taking tourists to the caves were invariable and constant.

The Caves as Repositories of ‘Lore’ and Scientific Knowledge

The caves at Cong represent an intermingling of legendary and scientific discourses in framing them as sites of interest and discovery. While the caves offered lore of mythical beings and histories of oppression, persecution, and rebellion, they also provided unique insights into the developing scientific world of geology, particularly of a Karstic region. Caverns here expressed pagan myths as well as more recent history. The mythic legends associated with

246 Wilde, Lough Corrib, 201.
247 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 147.
248 Barry, A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865, 146-147.
Pigeon Hole have been amply discussed, but there was much more lore in the region. Otway was one of the first major travel writers to visit Cong and his descriptions of the regions’ caves offered vivid and informed latter writers.249 “Robber’s Hole,” or Captain Webb’s Hole was “a chasm about ten feet long by four wide, down which, when you looked, you saw a heard below, about one hundred feet, a stream urging its course.”250 As at St. Kevin’s Bed, travellers used the Irish voice to give authenticity to their tales. Padsey, Otway’s prepubescent guide, asserted Captain Webb’s Hole was used by “the greatest robber and mutherer that ever was known in Connaught… His was to seize the traveller, and then bring him off the road to this hole, and here rob and strip him, and then toss him down where no one could go looks after the corpse, or ever hear what became of it.”251 However, Padsey then described how “Davy the divil” was tricked by a woman he tried to rob. When forced to strip her clothes, the woman told “Davy” that if he was a “dacent man” he would not watch her undress; he obliged, turning his back and “my lady gives Davy a push and down he goes.”252 Priest’s Hole was allegedly used to execute Catholic priests during the times of the Penal Laws. Kelly’s Cave was supposedly named after a rebel from 1798 who sought refuge there. However, there are other theories regarding its artificial enhancements, such as religious activities in the medieval period or landscaping of the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.253 Unquestionably, these two caves expressed lore from various and difficult periods. The Horse Discovery cave was where a farmer, his horse, and plow literally fell through the earth. And finally, the Ladies Buttery was the location where women stored butter. There is a certain banality to some of these places, but they demonstrate a physical

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249 Wilde, Wilde’s Lough Corrib, 202. Indeed, Wilde wholly deferred to Otway when he sought to describe the caves in his writing, “most of the legends…have been graphically related by that most entertaining of all Irish tour writers, Caesar Otway.”
250 Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 215-216.
251 Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 216.
252 Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 217.
253 Dowd, The Archaeology of Caves in Ireland, 237. The artificial features include stone benches, steps down to the cave, and a gate across its entrance. Charcoal and animal bones have been found in the cave and there is a pool of water at the rear of the space. For a map of this cave, see Dowd, The Archaeology of Caves in Ireland, 238.
invocation of the use or discovery of the space. As well, the names of all the caves around Cong helped connect them to the travellers’ reality, even if they were, as one guidebook asserted, “fanciful.”

Antiquarians and archaeologists visiting Cong were usually focused on the Abbey, the Cross, or the various myths of the Tuatha Dé Danann associated with the plain of Moytura. The Abbey was well known as a monument of early Christian Ireland, restored by B.L. Guinness. Otway compared the Abbey to the famous Abbeys of Tintern, Bolton, and Fountains in England. Given that caves were seen as the homes of the old pagan Irish gods, liminal spaces to the Celtic Otherworld, and contemporary residences of fairies, the mythically minded tourist could find much of interest in the region. Where antiquarians and archaeologists engaged with the caves, they did so in a more limited way. In an article on magic wells in Ireland’s Northwest, archaeologist William F. Wakeman, who studied the curiosities at Glendalough, stated that “no western archaeological fact” has been “so amply proved as ‘Well Veneration’… still found existing in Ireland, in portions of Scotland, in Wales, and in some degree England.”

Wakeman asserted that the worship of wells and sacred pools (as he classifies it) was “essentially Asiatic in birth” and compared worship in India to the legend of sacred trout generally across Ireland, using Tober Kieran as a case study. Wakeman then related the story of Pigeon Hole, including “Dr. Ball’s” experience with the trout. However, Wakeman merely used the legend of Pigeon Hole among other “wells” to discuss sacred trout and their connections to Asia generally, and does not critique the myth directly. The comparisons that Wakeman made with Asian myth are interesting as it furthers the idea of Ireland’s Western caves being isolated and

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254 Ward, Thorough Guide Series. Ireland (Part II.), 188.
255 Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 209.
257 Wakeman, On Certain Wells Situate in the North-West of Ireland,” 365-367.
258 Wakeman, On Certain Wells Situate in the North-West of Ireland,” 368. Dr. Ball’s full story of the trout is told below.
foreign spaces, separate from “enlightenment” and “civilization.” In his guide to the antiquities of Ireland, Wakeman encouraged visitors to Glendalough should see St. Kevin’s Bed because of its antiquity and potential express the ancient Ireland. At Cong, the Pigeon Hole expressed ancient Ireland surviving in contemporary folklore.

While antiquarians were more focused on the Abbey and Cross of Cong, geologists flocked to Cong’s caves in droves. Many scientists published work on the various caverns in scientific journals and newspapers to disseminate their research, especially as the number of geological focused institutions and journals grew. Geologists and speleologists were interested in the caves as natural features of Cong’s environment; therefore, they sought out more than just the well-known caves with associated stories. Speleologist É.A. Martel directly stated that the purpose of his work on Irish caverns “ce volume presentra un double aspect, pittoresque et technique a la fois, qui n’est pas pour plaire a tout le monde.”

Importantly, Martel sought out other caves in the region and discussed them in detail, such as Priest’s Hole going beyond the usual scope of travel literature; he even found a new cave, mapped alongside Pigeon Hole (below, Figure 14).

![Figure 14. Gouffres du Parc d’Ashford à Cong. (Martel, *Irelande et Cavernes Anglaises*, 100.)](image)

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Interestingly, Martel still acknowledged the myths of the area and cites where readers can find more details on them. At Pigeon Hole, Martel translated Murray’s guide to describe the cave: “la scène est tout ensemble mysterieuse et pittoresque.” Martel had written the caverns’ seminal text and it was not until the 1980s that speleologists managed to document every cave in the region.

Caves with little to no mythic or scientific value were rarely discussed by guidebooks or travellers. The Ladies Buttery and the Horse Discovery Cave generated interest with their names. Travel literature that mentions either of these caves usually only tells the story of a horse falling through the earth and leaves the Ladies Buttery as self-explanatory. Murray’s *Handbook* mentioned the Horse Discovery over the numerous other “curious caverns” because it “contains stalactites.” As Barry stated of the two “they are, however, simply caves, and nothing more.” “[S]imply caves:” surely this is the best way to describe a site which does not function as a repository for lore, history, or scientific knowledge and existed as neither a supernatural nor natural point of interest. Without such putative value to the visitor, whether for scholarly or leisure purposes, or both, caves merely melded into Ireland’s larger landscape.

**Travellers’ Navigation of Caves**

Cong’s caverns provided myriad different physical and imaginative navigation for tourists. At these caves, many travellers discussed the scenes presented to them. However, the motivations and objectives of travellers in post-Famine Western Ireland require examination in order to fully understand the purpose of travel in this period. After the Famine, the West became increasingly popular among tourists. This was in part due to the cultural and literary movements which sourced it as the primary destination to find authentic Ireland, as well as developing

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261 Martel, *Irelande et Cavernes Anglaises*, 99
263 Barry, *A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865*, 146.
The reimagining of the West is particularly interesting when contrasted with Henry D. Inglis’ 1834 journey around Lough Mask, Cong, and Lough Corrib, when he said that the region possessed no “very striking scenery.”

Certainly the post-Famine period saw Western Ireland become a popular tourist destination and Cong was a part of this process, if a small part. Cong did still have a place in this narrative, especially when Wilde credited the Famine with reinvigorating the village, if only for bringing in new land owners:

new blood was infused, and new life and energy thrown into the country. And now, the old Abbey of Cong, and the adjoining estates, with many a mile to westward of this famed locality, have been purchased with the produce of ability, honest industry, and successful commercial enterprise.

Moreover, many saw the socio-political situation in Ireland as an opportunity and took the chance to write accounts encouraging heavy economic investment, especially John Hervey Ashworth and George Preston White. The picturesque predominated in the West, but as caves demonstrate, the aesthetics of the sublime and the beautiful were regularly sought by tourists and travel writers.

Accessing the caves was usually quite easy. This was sometimes facilitated by artificial features at the sites, such as the stairs descending into the Pigeon Hole. As Barry asserted: “This place used to be very difficult of descent, but, through the kindness and forethought of Mr. Guiness [sic], steps down to the cave have been made, so that the most timid of lady might now descend with ease and safety.”

While still promoting a sense of adventure or danger with a 60 foot descent, the Pigeon Hole was accessible to all travellers, both men and women. Many of the other caves in the area were simple to walk into, with little physical difficulty. Although, the

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265 Inglis, *A Journey Throughout Ireland*, 53. Inglis may just imaginatively deficient, or at the very least not appreciative of landscape as much as his fellow travellers.
266 Wilde, *Lough Corrib*, 169. Wilde was most likely principally referring to the Guinness family.
267 Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 189-190.
268 Barry, *A Walking Tour Round Ireland in 1865*, 146-147. The gendered nature of entering these sites is a constant theme through this thesis and, undoubtedly, numerous travellers felt the need to inform female readers whether they would be able to move through or into these spaces.
steps of the Pigeon Hole surely provided tourists with some sense of adventure and liminality as they descended into this supernatural and Romantic space.

Many people visited the caves for their beauty alone; as Belton stated, “we rode over to Cong, to see its celebrated caves.”269 From the descent into the Pigeon Hole to the performance of the guide, the entire cave was constructed as a genuinely supernatural space. The Halls mentioned the “honey suckle and wild roses, growing in the richest profusion along the walls of the hole.”270 Coulter commented on the picturesque lichens, moss, and ivy of the sides of the descent into Pigeon Hole and continued: “whilst the cavern through which the water flows with a gentle murmuring sound is lost in impenetrable gloom, until the guide, waving a torch of wheaten straw, illuminates its rugged sides and deep recesses with a fitful glare, producing a striking effect.”271 Gloom and the sublime were also omnipresent motifs for travellers who visited the cave.272 Writer and educator Jane Marcet (née Haldimand) asserted that watching the cave become illuminated through the straw and work of the guides, “had a curious effect on the mind.”273 Even George Petrie, an archaeologist, asserted that the caves were “gloomy and terrific as the legends connected with them… but the most beautiful are those through which rapid streams flow among rocks.”274 The gendered presentation of the cave dweller helped establish its Romantic atmosphere by creating an altogether foreign looking scene. Once inside the cave, one could find numerous local peasant women washing clothes or collecting water,

273 Haldimand, *The Heiress in her Minority; or, the Progress of Character*, 429.
setting the scene for the visitor. Wilde looked “down the flight of steps up which that graceful girl is rising, with a pitcher of water on her head.” Otway described a similar scene:

two not so uncomely young women were beetling clothes below, and as they stood in the sun-light, with its beams sparkling from their beetles while with vigorous arms they struck the linen at their feet, and their sturdy strokes sent their many echoes through the cavern-- they really formed a fine group.

The supernatural atmosphere was primary to the Pigeon Hole. As they moved through the cave, tourists absorbed the entirety of the scene around them.

Some tourists directly engaged with the supernatural myths and lore that the caves possessed, imaginatively navigating the space while physically moving through it. Numerous literature cited above recounted “Dr. Ball’s” story of visiting the Pigeon Hole and engaging with the myth of the trout in full:

Desirous of testing the superstitions of the country people then present, and at the same time awaking the echoes of the cavern, I proposed firing a pistol at the trout. On presenting it, they turned their heads, and at the moment I was about to pull the trigger a small cloud obscured the sun, and I lost sight of the fish; nothing daunted, I fired, and the sun shone forth at once again, and displayed the trout unscathed. I have no doubt the accidental occurrence of tis momentary obscuration has tended to confirm the country people in their belief.

Other travellers only mentioned the myths or failed to acknowledge them at all in their writing. When Ashworth visited Pigeon Hole, he did not directly address the myth of the cave, but alluded to it when he stated that “I noticed several fine trout swimming in the current.” The caves’ physical features created a marvelous natural space, but the supernatural motifs of the

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275 Wilde, Lough Corrib, 201. Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 205. Notably, I have found no evidence of travellers speaking with these women who washed clothes, in any capacity. It could be assumed the women were monolingual Irish speakers or that because they were not directly involved as guides, they did not participate in the interpretation of the cave, like the elderly Babby Burke, and therefore did not warrant elaboration.

276 Wilde, Lough Corrib, 200.

277 Otway, A Tour in Connaught, 205.

278 Black and Black, Black’s Picturesque Tourist of Ireland, 1871, 293; Black and Black, Black’s Tourist Guide to Ireland, 1885, 240; Hall, Hall’s Hand-Book for the West, 72. Travelogues also repeat Dr. Ball’s story, see Hall, Ireland: its Scenery, Character, &c., 375. While this is my own speculation, the Dr. Ball so frequently cited was most likely the famed man of science and father of the popular Sir Robert Stawell Ball and Valentine Ball as the Halls referred to him as “the naturalist of Dublin,” see Hall, Hall’s Hand-Book for the West, 72.

279 John Hervey Ashworth, The Saxon in Ireland: or, the Rambles of an Englishman in Search of a Settlement in the West of Ireland, (London: John Murray, 1851), 75.
cave added another layer of depth to attract tourists. Rather, the playful engagement with myth demonstrates that tourists enjoyed the additional layers of information facilitated by the tales. In regards to the old woman’s ritual in the cave, Williams observes that tourists at the Pigeon Hole were usually a passive audience, who watched and, in Wilde’s case, failed to question that this was how the woman earned “a pittance. Tourists seldom think beyond the show.”

The Halls called the woman’s act “very startling; and is worth a far longer pilgrimage to see.”

Tourists also engaged with the new scientific discourses on the caves. Ashworth’s description of Pigeon Hole specifically examined the cave in the context of its role as a Karstic region between the two major lakes: “you find yourself gazing with astonishment and awe at the subterranean chasm through which the vast waters of Lough Mask empty themselves into Lough Corrib.” Here Ashworth imaginatively navigated the role of the natural world in creating the space he stood in, while also contextualizing it within the wider region. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Maxwell’s account of sport fishing in the area did not discuss the myth of the cave, but did cite it as a place to see the subterranean river flowing from Mask to Corrib. He quotes “Daniel” in a footnote stating “there is a descent of sixty-three steps… at the bottom runs a clear stream, in which the trout are seen sporting in the water; these fish are never known to take a bait, but are caught with landing-nets,” never mentioning their mythic significance or consequences of removing the fish from their home.

Coulter discussed a cave similar to the Pigeon Hole, which was rendered “interesting from the large number of stalactites depending from it roof; and attached to all these curious places are numerous romantic legends with which the guides entertain or bore the visitor, as the case may be.”

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280 Williams, Creating Irish Tourism, 116.
281 Hall, Ireland: its Scenery, Character, &c., 375.
282 Ashworth, The Saxon in Ireland, 75.
283 Maxwell, Wild Sports of the West, 64.
284 Coulter, The West of Ireland, 154.
illustrates how legendary and scientific discourses were not in competition, but became representative of the different caves depending on the interests of the tourist. Importantly, the interpretations often informed one another. When Martel visited the Pigeon Hole, his goal was to research the cave from a scientific and geological perspective. However, Martel used Black’s guide and Murray’s Handbook in his work, meaning that he had absorbed thoroughly Romantic descriptions of the cave. This further shows how Romantic and scientific interpretations intermingled and informed one another in narratives of these sites.

Difficult history is rarely if ever discussed by tourists and superficial when included, demonstrating that not all lore was part of tourists’ imaginative navigation of caves. Clearly, the process of creating destinations for mass tourism sanitized the history of various spaces. As Thompson argues, travel narratives in the post-Famine period attempted to be apolitical by not discussing the controversial events that caused the Famine or radical agrarian reform movements. Kelly’s Cave, named after a 1798 rebel, was known for its connection to the tumultuous period which culminated in the Act of Union. Yet it was largely discussed from a scientific perspective. Wilde observed Kelly’s cave as a natural space in his categorization of the region’s caves, stating Kelly’s Cave was a “good example of the mixed variety already referred to, in which the natural and artificial were combined; for, while it is evidently a huge cleft formed by nature in the rock, portions of the wall in front and on the sides are undoubtedly artificial.” These artificial enhancements provided proof of the space being used by historical figures as shelter. Yet he failed to discuss the provenance of the cave’s name in any detail or speculate on who may have inhabited it. Similarly, the Priest’s Hole was seldom if ever mentioned by travellers. In both Kelly’s Cave and Priest’s Hole, the caverns’ lore expressed difficult histories that were damning of British colonial policy. Just as the Rebellion

286 Martel, Irelande et Cavernes Anglaises, 16. “Murray, Handbook... in Ireland, in-12; Londres, 1878,” and ”Black Guide to Ireland, in-12; Londres 22e edition, 1895.”
287 Wilde, Lough Corrib, 209.
contextualizes Glendalough, its far-reaching implications in the nineteenth century are key for understanding tourists’ lack of engagement with the site. The Rebellion was brutally crushed and the subsequent Act of Union set the stage for Anglo-Irish conflict till the formation of the Free State, 1921. Priest’s Hole expresses colonial government’s unease at dominating a Catholic population and surely reminded tourists of the history of the penal laws in Ireland, if they visited the cave at all. Certainly, for tourists visiting the region, visiting a cave that was at once a natural and supernatural phenomenon had a larger draw than going to a cave where they needed to understand the complex and violent history of the two islands. Evidently, imaginative navigation had its limits, and especially when tourists had so many other sites to engage with, these more difficult spaces were left to the wayside.

Conclusion

When Wilde described Cong, he said that “[t]here is water everywhere,” and no statement is more representative of the region as a tourist destination. The caves’ legendary and supernatural lore was expressed through the water and the streams which tunneled through the Karstic limestone created a geologically unique natural environment. The water that carved many of Cong’s caves became a defining feature of tourism, also piquing the interest of those who were curious in the cave as a geological phenomenon and natural space. The region’s caves offered a dramatic representation of the interplay of science and legend in landscape tourism, in which caverns became a focus for simultaneous forms of inquiry and loci for supernatural and geological discourses of wonder.

Cong was not a major tourist destination on the scale of Killarney or Glendalough, but it routinely drew travellers’ interest as tourism infrastructure grew around Connemara and the West in the post-Famine period. The Guinness Estate, which bought and landscaped so much property

288 Wilde, Lough Corrib, 161.
at mid century, developed the region as a tourist destination, but not without the influence of the local hotel, which sought to capitalize on the tourist trade. Guides benefitted, too, working to interpret the spaces for their eager visitors. While not the most popular destination in the nineteenth century, the growing numbers of travellers to Cong were always able to find something of interest to them; from science, to myth, to history: Cong caves had everything a landscape tourist could desire.
Chapter 3
“a natural marvel - the most singular in Great Britain”: the Mitchelstown Caves

Travelling to the Mitchelstown in August 1895, É.A. Martel, the “celebrated French explorer of caves,” had a mission.289 Before studying in Britain and Ireland, Martel had established his career in the field of geology across continental Europe. As an advocate for the study of caverns, Martel was keenly aware of the power of tourism, and stated that the reason his attendance at the Sixth International Geographical Conference, as the delegate for the Society of Speleology in London, was to “attract the attention of English scientific men and tourists” to all that could be done and discovered in their caves. Martel was commissioned by the French Minister of Public Instruction, Raymond Poincaré, to go on a “scientific mission” to investigate and compare Britain and Ireland’s various cave networks to his other European studies.290 Through his work in Britain and Ireland, he stated that he hoped “to succeed in arousing in England a favourable extension of all kinds of subterranean researches, as [he had] already had the pleasure of succeeding in doing in France.”292 In regards to Ireland, these journeys culminated in Martel’s Irlande et Cavernes Anglaises, 1896, with Mitchelstown featuring as one of its main chapters along side Pigeon Hole and some of Ireland’s most impressive other caves.293

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289 H. Lyster Jameson, “On the Exploration of the Caves of Enniskillen and Mitchelstown for the R.I.A. Flora and Fauna Committee,” The Irish Naturalist 5 (1896): 93. Interestingly, the same names of different academics consistently reappear in this chapter. The editors for The Irish Naturalist were George H. Carpenter and Robert Lloyd Praeger who appear later in different publications and accounts on the cave. Additionally, many of these different men were also members of the Royal Irish Academy throughout their lives. The Irish scientific community was, in some way, quite self-contained. As well, when writing on the caves, the academics of the 1890s regularly cite one another.


291 Martel, “British Caves and Speleology,” 500. Before visiting Ireland, Martel had explored caves in the Pyrenees, France, Germany, Austria, Slovenia, and Italy.


293 Other caverns on Martel’s itinerary included: The Marble Arch, Arch Cave, and the underground rivers of Galway and Clare. However, in this monograph, Martel also included England’s caves, exploring Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Gaping-Ghyll, the Bagshawe Cavern, among others. Therefore, the genuine focus of Martel’s work in Ireland was the Marble Arch, Cong’s caves, and the Mitchelstown Caves. The rest of his journey was rather touristic as he includes chapters on various ruins and Abbeys, such as Clonmacnoise, and spotlights “l’architecture celtique.” Martel also visited the Lakes of Killarney and Dublin and its “environs,” see Martel, Irlande et Cavernes Anglaises, 490-493.
Martel was no leisure tourist. As a scientist, he travelled with a specific purpose and a number of different accoutrements. Henry Lyster Jameson observed that Martel travelled around Ireland with “copious equipment of cave-exploring apparatus. This consisted of a canvas boat, some hundreds of feet of rope ladders, a light portable folding wooden ladder, ropes, axes, compass, barometer, telephone, maps &c.”

Of all the case studies presented here, Mitchelstown is undoubtedly the most difficult to physically move through. On average, tours through the cave lasted around two hours, but Martel “spent six hours visiting all the accessible corners, and drawing out the short topographical survey.” This journey was not without difficulty, as Martel expressed certain sections of the cave, some of the “prettiest”, were “quite impracticable to tourists,” and that certain portions of cave were “nearly impracticable to ladies”; at one point he and his guide actually became lost. Here Martel separated himself from other travellers by virtue of his purpose for discovery. Moreover, he further distinguished himself by gendering this space, asserting the place of men in exploration. While this motive for travel was certainly evident at times around Cong, it was not an expressed motivation amongst the writers who recounted their visits to Glendalough. The Mitchelstown caves allow us to excavate the meaning and motif of exploration, especially as it relates to the scientific understanding of the cave as a natural phenomenon.

The Mitchelstown caves are two separate complexes formed out of Karstic limestone, similar to Cong; yet tourists and scientists entirely gravitated to the new cave which Martel explored. The old cave, as it is known, had been a marker in the landscape from the eighteenth century. However, the old cave was “seldom visited;” the real draw to this region was the new

296 Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 103-104. Martel remarked that his guide had only been in the caves once, as a child 25 years earlier, and “completely lost his way.” Martel claimed to have brought them back on course using his plan and a compass.
297 Black and Black, Black’s Tourist’s Guide to Ireland, 1885, 150.
cave, discovered in 1833 by a local man quarrying rock who “observed that several of the smaller pieces slipped through a fissure in the rock and disappeared,” after which he made an entrance and began exploring. In fact, by the early twentieth century, the new cave was “the only one shown to visitors.” William Bennett, an English Quaker visiting Ireland to assist with Famine relief, concisely described these extensive caverns:

the caves may be described as a series of great chinks in the limestone rocks, at different depths, opening out into chambers of various forms and dimensions, all connected together by the several ramifications. These are variously incrusted with stalactitic formations, and mimic architecture more or less perfect; some depending from the roof like enormous icicles or chandeliers, depositing the like matter underneath, and thus constantly approximating, until, having met, they assume the form of pillar supporting the roof.

Martel, like most tourists after 1833, paid no attention to the old cave, preferring to devote all his time to exploring the full extent of the new cave. This was a scientific mission. He sought vainly to find the subterranean river, mentioned by previous scientists, “the so-called ‘river’ is a pool of stagnant water ten yards long by half a yard or one yard in depth and width.” But he noted the different features of the cave, constructed a map, took temperatures of the air and water, and compared what he saw to the rest of Europe’s caverns.

While the purpose of Martel’s journey was one of scientific analysis, he still related experiences with coordinates in the aesthetic categories as tourists did for 70 years prior to his arrival. Importantly, he was guided through the country with the use of popular travel literature. The bibliography of his seminal work on Ireland includes 24 different tourist guidebooks and travelogues. Thus, Martel still saw Ireland through the lens of travel literature and he made regular comments on the picturesque nature and value of the different places he visited; he even

301 Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 103.
303 Martel, *Irlande et Cavernes Anglaises*, 16.
opened his major book with a section titled “la vraie Irlande,” in where he sought to describe true Ireland.\textsuperscript{304} “True Ireland” is a rather loaded term and it demonstrates that Martel had an almost ethnographic approach to his trip on the island, making him comparable to many of travellers in the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{305} Clearly, Martel was a man with scientific goals, but his travel was also similar to his predecessors both in what he tried to describe of the country and how he experienced it. Martel was one of many who refined the scientific lens at the Mitchelstown caves and helped establish their value to tourists and the scholarly community alike. The Mitchelstown caves appealed to the scientist, but also invited, through the textual material that long framed them, a Romantic apprehension of the place. While tourists visited St. Kevin’s Bed to live and see \textit{Moore’s Melodies} and authentic historic/religious sites or Cong to witness the mythic trout and subsequent guide’s performance, at Mitchelstown tourists found a piece of a newly developing scientific landscape: the natural cave.

\textbf{How Texts Sell the Site}

The caves were considered an integral site within a wider trip through the countryside of Waterford, Tipperary, and Cork, often either on the way to Killarney or on the return journey from the famous destination. Fraser’s \textit{Hand Book} discussed the caves in the context of the Limerick-Waterford road, while describing the area around Cahir “a place of considerable thoroughfare,” with “many inducements to tourists,” including the caves.\textsuperscript{306} Similarly, another railway guidebook stressed the importance of the Waterford, Dungarvan, and Lismore Railway, as it was “a direct connection with the Lakes of Killarney”, and a traveller could pass through Fermoy “for the Mitchelstown Caves and Araglin Glen, \textit{Ballyhooly}, and \textit{Castletownroche}”

\textsuperscript{304} Martel, \textit{Irlande et Cavernes Anglaises}, 1.

\textsuperscript{305} For another quick example of this present in this thesis, see the quote from Kohl describing his guide, George Irwin, in chapter 1.

\textsuperscript{306} Fraser, \textit{Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland}, 1838, 112.
before reaching Mallow Junction. But, like the other two case studies in this work, the Mitchelstown caves also developed into a tourist destination because they were promoted through intertwined Romantic and scientific discourses. These caves differ from others, however, in how much emphasis travel literature placed on their scientific value. The Mitchelstown caves were possibly Ireland’s premier cave destination, competing with the Marble Arch, Co. Fermanagh for the distinction. Yet, the caveat to this discussion is that the cave was not part of a hugely popular tourist landscape, like St. Kevin’s Bed in Glendalough. While an interesting site, the caves unquestionably were not as famous as Killarney or Giant’s Causeway.

The Mitchelstown caves were an entirely natural cavern. Scientific language infiltrated travel literature’s promotions of the cave, but guidebooks and travelogues invoked Romantic categories to illustrate the experience of moving through the space. Understandably, the caverns were primarily famous as an expansive geological phenomenon. The first written mention of the caves came in 1833 and 1834 from The Dublin Penny Journal, which was the most successful Irish newspaper in the first half of the nineteenth century. The first entry gave an account of the cave, informing readers of the difficulties of travelling underground, as well as to point out the geological phenomena that could be seen once “the eye becomes a little used to the gloom… as you proceed, the scene becomes more and more interesting, the rocks being covered in many places by brilliant spar.” The Dublin Penny Journal’s second article on the caves focused on the geology of the caves and cited an Irish authority in the field. Dr. James Apjohn, Trinity College Dublin graduate, Royal Irish Society member, University Professor of Chemistry, Vice-President of the Royal Irish Academy, and award-winning academic, published on the caves, including drawings and a map, in addition to his description of the site. Apjohn employed

308 Adelman, Continuities of Science in Nineteenth Century Ireland, 169.
specific language, using measurements and precise descriptions of the sizes of various chambers and features of the cave. Importantly, travel literature seized onto Apjohn’s account of the cave, despite the accounts of two other travellers in that same article. Similar to how travel literature used celebrity descriptions of supernatural caves at Mitchelstown they used a “scientific celebrity” in Apjohn to explain the natural space. Later in the century, the geological attractions of the site predominated, as the caves were featured in Murray’s introductory “Points of interest for the Geologist,” alongside the Pigeon Hole.

The many invocations of Dr. James Apjohn’s description of the caves solidified the construction of the cave as a place to experience increasingly popular geology. Apjohn’s voice was a regular feature of guidebooks and promotional literature throughout the nineteenth century, often quoting sections such as this passage, featured in *The Dublin Penny Journal* and borrowed from his talk on the subject to the Geological Society:

The lower middle cave, at which we have now arrived, is one of very considerable magnitude. In shape its ground plan resembles a matrass [sic] or bottle with cylindric neck and globular bottom, the diameter of the latter being ninety-five, and the length and diameter of the former seventy-two and forty-two respectively… Stalactites of a small size depend from the roof, and a sheeting of sparry matter is observable all along the joints of the limestone, and covers beneath many part of the floor, where it is usually superimposed upon a very fine red clay, which would appear to have been washed down by water filtering from above before the interstices of the arch were sufficiently closed by calcareous incrustations. The floor of this cave is strewed with large tetrahedral blocks of limestone.

Murray’s *Handbook* used Apjohn’s description, and then added its own note: “The stalactites and the stalagmites are the principal beauties; and of these there are every variety, from the slender

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311 One from a “correspondent” and the other from a “Mr. Nichols.” Interestingly, Apjohn was elected to the Royal Irish Academy’s Committee of Science in 1833, so this may have given more weight to his account, see “Appendix No. IX: Account of the Royal Irish Academy, for Audit, from 1st April 1849, to 31st March, 1850,” *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (1836-1869), Vol. 4 (1847-1850), 13. Apjohn even discovered and analyzed a new mineral in 1838, subsequently named after him “Apjohnite,” see Anonymous “James Apjohn, M.D., F.R.S.,” 1244.


column of spar to broad sheets, like drapery, so thin as to be transparent.” The use of “stalactites and stalagmites” assumed that the reader has some geological knowledge. In 1885, Black’s almost solely used Apjohn’s description of the cave. When Rev. Canon Courtenay Moore was asked to “contribute a sketch of these celebrated Caves” for the Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society in 1894, he admitted that he would make “no attempt to give any scientific explanation of the origin of the caves” and reaffirmed his position, stating “that task we must leave to our betters.” Evidently Apjohn was one of Courtenay Moore’s “betters,” as even though he presented his research nearly 70 years before Moore wrote on the caves; Apjohn’s sketch was included in the final footnote of Courtenay Moore’s piece, with the explanation that he received a copy of the Dublin Penny Journal article without enough time to edit the descriptions in his work.

Scientific discourse could be used to illustrate geological wonder and geological wonder was capable of being Romantic. Despite writers’ invocation of scientific language and Romantic vocabulary was also used to attract visitors to this site, just as was employed at St. Kevin’s Bed and Cong’s caverns. The geological features of the new cave were always praised for their beauty and sublimity. As well, travel literature used scientific language to explain the Romantic features of the cave, such as Fraser’s Hand Book, which asserted that the limestone formations were impossible to describe fully:

It would far exceed our limits to attempt anything like a detailed account of the interior of the caves; nor could the most accurate drawing, or the most minute, vivid descriptions, convey the mind anything like the extraordinarily beautiful and fantastic forms which the spar has assumed in stalactites descending from the vaulted roof, in stalagmites springing from the prismatic blocks which form the rugged pavement, in many places uniting with the stalactites and forming the most graceful pillars, and in crystallizations along the walls, assuming all the soft and varied folds of the most ample drapery.

314 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1864, 270.
315 Black and Black, Black’s Tourist’s Guide to Ireland, 1885, 151.
318 Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1838, 113-114.
Mr. and Mrs. S.C. Hall were more concise when they called the limestone passages “a natural marvel - the most singular in Great Britain.”  Courtenay Moore decided to “speak of it only from the standpoint of scenery, and because of the number of object of interest both archaeological and geological in its vicinity.” Even though Moore only used the scientific analysis of Apjohn in a footnote at the end of his piece, his argument that the Irish should see local natural phenomena was undoubtedly inspiring, as the following year, the Dublin, Cork, and Limerick Field Clubs visited this underground space and cited Courtenay Moore’s piece in their report on animals found in the new cave.  Evidently, Romantic description still had a place in framing the Mitchelstown caves to potential visitors, who arrived alone and in parties, but primarily to explore this new site of geological wonder. While there was no supernatural value to Mitchelstown, there was an aesthetic beauty to this natural space in addition to its scientific significance.

The publishing and republishing of different images of the caves show the influence of the Romantic movement on travel literature’s advertising of the cave. The articles on the cave in The Dublin Penny Journal presented two different types of images: drawings of the various geological features within the space, such as stalactites or stalagmites, and a topographical map. The drawings of the geological features and chambers of the cave are suffused with Romantic and sublime imagery. The etching from the first article written on the cave includes a lone solitary figure illuminating the cave (below, top right, Figure 16). The others, featured in the

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321 George H. Carpenter, “Animals Found in the Mitchelstown Cave,” Irish Naturalist 4, 2 (February, 1895): 25. Carpenter’s work was also read before the Dublin Naturalists’ Field Club, December 11, 1894. The field clubs were scientific societies interested in natural history, open to the educated middle class people that were led by professionals like Carpenter or Praeger, see Adelman, “Evolution on Display,” 422-427 for how scientific elites control clubs, 413 for how the middle class were involved with the clubs.
1834 article, show pillars, stalactites, stalagmites, and chambers of the cave lit up with gloomy darkness in the background.

Figure 15. above left. (A. Nichol, Esq. in “Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown,” The Dublin Penny Journal 3, 130 (December 27, 1834): 201.) Figure 16. above right. “The Extraordinary Cave Recently Discovered on Lord Kingston’s Estate,” The Dublin Penny Journal 2, 61 (Aug. 31, 1833) 65.) Figure 17. below left. The Crown Cavern. (A. Nichol, Esq, “Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown,” The Dublin Penny Journal 3, 130 (December 27, 1834): 204.) Figure 18. below right. The Four Courts. (A. Nichol, Esq, “Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown,” The Dublin Penny Journal 3, 130 (December 27, 1834): 205.)

All the images from the 1834 article were drawn by “A. Nichol, Esq.” in pencil who also wrote an account of the caves for the Journal. Nichol had drawn the images with the assistance of four boys holding large candles, he also recollected that while 40 people went through the cavern in the two days he spent underground, not once did a tourist take notice of him, see page 202 from the same article. Interestingly, candles were the preferred
The *Dublin Penny Journal*’s map reinforced the idea of adventure, as it had numerous patches marked as “unexplored” and, compared to the maps from 1895 and 1908, was relatively small (in order below from earliest to latest, 1833 (Figure 19, *Dublin Penny Journal*), 1895 (Figure 20, Martel), 1908 (Figure 21, Harold Brodrick). When Martel mapped the caves there were notable differences in the style and detail (see below). Martel’s map was covered in different markers indicating slopes, heights, difficult passages, and more. Remarkably, Martel did not map the old cave. Perhaps the extensive undiscovered portions of the Mitchelstown new cave was what drew him there, a chance to build his reputation, or perhaps maps of the old cave were readily available. Brodrick’s approach to the caves was much more detailed and systematic, as he defined the two caves as distinct spaces and included maps for each, individually and side by side superimposed over the landscape (see below). Alternatively, the new cave was always considered much more interesting for its geology and a more worthwhile site to visit overall, while the old cave was valued for myth, but not much else. Unlike Cong and St. Kevin’s Bed, literature and mythology played no obvious part in making this cave a destination. Just as maps and drawings of the caves spread across Britain and Ireland, throughout the century, the tourism industry integrated this space into the larger infrastructure networks of the islands.

object for illuminating the dark recesses of the cave as, according to Percival Wright, “the extreme narrowness of some of the passages in the cave renders the presence of torches quite unbearable,” see Percival Wright, “Notes of a Visit to Mitchelstown Caves,” in “Proceedings of Societies- British Association,” in *The Natural History Review* 4, 3 (1857): 233.

Figure 19. Map of Mitchelstown Caves. ("Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown," "The Figures of the Map express the depth in feet below the line of section A.A." *The Dublin Penny Journal*, 207.)

Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 100. This is a fold out map in the journal just ahead of Martel’s article.

Infrastructure

The Kingston Estate, a powerful family in the South of Ireland, owned the lands that the caves were on, among many more acres. However, enormous debts of the family affected the economic fortunes of the area. While reminiscing about his holiday nearly 30 years earlier, John William Carleton wrote about his second fishing trip to the area in 1857: “the property, which was most extensive, has been lately much divided, being sold in the Encumbered Estates Court to pay the debts, the interest of which so accumulated in the years of the famine and potato disease as to eat up the best part of this splendid property.”

Though the caves were split from the Kingston Estate in 1851, they often fit into a wider landscape tour of the region which included the Kingston Estate and the Galtee Mountains. Similarly, Fraser’s Hand Book discussed the primary attractions of the area as “the Galtees, Glen of Aharlo,” and “the Caves of Mitchelstown”

Just as St. Kevin’s Bed and Cong’s caves were integrated into wider local landscape tours, so too were the Mitchelstown caves, a site, among others, which had the “improving” qualities many tourists sought.

When promoting the caverns in 1894, Rev. Courtenay Moore stated of the new cave that “its remoteness from railways was no doubt the cause of its being hitherto a terra incognita to the tourist.” He was not entirely correct, as tourists had been travelling to the caves since the 1830s. Still, there was a general consensus that the limestone phenomenon at Mitchelstown were an “out-of-the-way a place” for the traveller, to use Carleton’s turn of phrase; unlike St. Kevin’s

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325 Carleton, “A Month’s Fishing in Ireland,” 40.
326 Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1854, 293.
327 Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1838, 112.
Bed, a destination in its own right, or Cong, an optional stop in the popular post-Famine Connemara circuit.\textsuperscript{329} The caves are about seven miles from their namesake, Mitchelstown, technically in the “townland of Coolnagarronroe.”\textsuperscript{330} However, there were other nearby towns - all with good accommodation, as Fraser’s \textit{Hand Book} stated: “The caves are nearly equidistant from Cahir, Clogheen, and Mitchelstown; and at these places there are good inns, and post-horses.”\textsuperscript{331} Tourists often moved through the area either from Cahir-Mitchelstown-Fermoy or the reverse. Murray’s \textit{Handbook} included the caverns as the last leg of its 29th route, “\textit{Youghall to Cahir},” encouraging tourists to visit the natural phenomenon from Cahir.\textsuperscript{332} Yet the caves were always associated with Mitchelstown, and just as Murray’s includes the caves under “Mitchelstown in its “places of interest” section, this sub-section focuses more heavily on infrastructure development around Mitchelstown, as the namesake and closest urban centre.\textsuperscript{333}

By road, the area was well served by the famous “Mr. Charles Bianconi and the travelling cars that bear his name.”\textsuperscript{334} The Halls asserted that across Southern Ireland, circa 1840, Bianconi “has now, running daily, forty-five double cars - this is, cars running up and down from the same places and travelling over 3600 miles daily,” including Mitchelstown, Cahir, Clonmel, and Fermoy, among 124 other towns.\textsuperscript{335} As well, the caves were on the road route of a public car to Mitchelstown, as William Bennett commented that his party missed this car, giving them more time to explore the Kingston estate.\textsuperscript{336} Overall, travelling in 1847, Bennet concluded that the roads of the area “were excellent where not interfered with by the public works.”\textsuperscript{337}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{329} Carleton, “A Month’s Fishing in Ireland,” 40.
\bibitem{330} Fraser, \textit{Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland}, 1838, 112.
\bibitem{331} Fraser, \textit{Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland}, 1838, 114. Although in terms of distance this statement is incorrect
\bibitem{332} Murray, \textit{Handbook for Travellers in Ireland}, 1864, 270.
\bibitem{333} Murray, \textit{Handbook for Travellers in Ireland}, 1864, lxi.
\bibitem{334} Hall, \textit{Ireland: Its Scenery, Character, &c.}, Volume II, 76.
\bibitem{335} Hall, \textit{Ireland: Its Scenery, Character, &c.}, Volume II, 78.
\bibitem{336} Bennett, \textit{A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland}, 111.
\bibitem{337} Bennett, \textit{A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland}, 111. Public works here refers to Famine relief.
\end{thebibliography}
There were no direct railway connections to Mitchelstown until the early 1890s, but Fermoy functioned as the *de facto* train station for the Karstic region. When Mitchelstown did have a full station built, it was serviced from Fermoy by “numerous daily trains.” The rest of the region was connected by the end of the century too, as the Great Southern and Western Railway Line guide, *The Sunny Side of Ireland*, stated: “The Caves at Mitchelstown may be visited from Fermoy, Lismore, or Clogheen, and if the visitor is sojourning at any of these places he should find his way to these wonderful formations.”

![Figure 22. Great Southern and Western Railway. (O’Mahony and Praeger, *The Sunny Side of Ireland*, 1898 (1897), 6.)](image1)

![Figure 23. Connections of the Great Southern and Western Railway Throughout the British Isles. (O’Mahony and Praeger, *The Sunny Side of Ireland*, 1898 (1897), 7.)](image2)

As the Great Southern and Western Railway maps (Figures 22 and 23) show, even though Mitchelstown was a part of the railway network, its station was an offshoot and not on a major line. But, as these two railway maps demonstrate, the Mitchelstown caves and their surrounding

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340 Look just North-West of Cork to find the Mitchelstown station.
countryside were still fully incorporated into a much wider and established network of travel and tourism throughout Britain and Ireland.

Mitchelstown’s hotels were generally praised for their quality, and the area had a good reputation for its accommodation throughout the nineteenth century. The Irish inn, with all of the prejudices and perceptions tourists held of it, was at Cong a hindrance to the growth of tourism. Alternatively, in Glendalough or Mitchelstown, commercial hotels enhanced the tourists’ appraisal of a destination. Similarly, at Mitchelstown and Cong, the local Estate and emerging tourism businesses played an important role in developing tourism to their respective regions. Inglis discussed accommodation at Mitchelstown alongside his evaluation of the caves when he asserted that “the inn at Mitchelstown, is of superior excellence, that is the best point to visit them from.”341 In fact, Inglis was enthralled with the hotel at Mitchelstown, as he concluded the section on the area with more commentary on it:

Let me not leave Mitchelstown, without doing justice to the excellence of the hotel, - which, I really think, has not a fault. Excepting in some parts of Scotland, I have never eaten such breakfasts as at Mitchelstown. As for dinners, no one could desire better. I shall not soon forget Mrs. Sing’s dressed lambs’ heads, or rhubarb pies;- wine and whiskey are alike worthy of the dinner that precedes them; and, in civility, accommodation, and moderate charges, Mitchelstown Hotel must satisfy every one.342

Inglis’s enthusiasm for this hotel may have owed to the region reminding him of Britain: “Few thatched farm houses are to be seen. They are mostly stone slated houses, built in the English mode,” Carleton, writing in 1857, also claimed there was a “good hotel in Mitchelstown some five-and-twenty years ago.”343 In 1864, Murray’s Handbook listed the primary hotel as the Kingston Arms and overall praised the area as “a very neat, pretty little place in an elevated valley between the Kilworth and Galty Mountains, which arrive immediately above the town in splendid abruptness.”344 Bennett described the Kingston Arms in his assessment of the village

341 Inglis, A Journey Throughout Ireland, 149.
342 Inglis, A Journey Throughout Ireland, 160.
343 Inglis, A Journey Throughout Ireland, 144; Carleton, “A Month’s Fishing in Ireland,” 40.
344 Murray, Handbook for Travellers in Ireland, 1864, 269.
“Mitchellstown [sic] is a much larger and better place than I had anticipated. The lodge offices form a long range on one side of a large square in the centre of town, and the Kingston Arms Hotel occupies nearly another.”345 In the 1890s two hotels were still operating in the town. Courtenay Moore asserted: “Excellent accommodation can he had at Fitzgerald’s and Ahem’s Hotels in the New Square,” The Sunny Side of Ireland railway guide added “Accommodation fair at Ahearn’s or Fitzgerald’s.”346 Hotels and pubs were a further part of cave tourism infrastructure at Mitchelstown because they outfitted the tourists. Fraser’s Hand Book promoted “Skelly’s House,” a pub near the cavern entrance, where tourists could acquire all the necessary supplies.347 Mitchelstown’s hotels were the antithesis of what many tourists expected from the Irish inn: built in English style and large, with quality food and moderate prices. Contrasted with evaluations of Cong’s single hotel, it is clear that accommodation at Mitchelstown was considered superior. For tourists, the town and hotels’ architecture rendered them familiar and the prices for food and accommodation met their expectations. Undoubtedly, the hotels improved evaluations of the region and constructed it as one that while foreign, still had the amenities of “home.”

The Role of Local Guides as Intermediaries

As already mentioned, given that the caves were so large and extensive, guides were considered necessary to take tourists underground and through the various chambers. These tours lasted around two hours. Ultimately, from the caves’ uncovering, locals were able to find work at the caves. Shortly after the caverns were discovered, Fraser’s Hand Book argued that the caves should have an admission price, as there was “considerable trouble imposed on the tenant”

345 Bennett, A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 111.
346 Moore, “The Mitchelstown Caves (with Plan.),” 140; O’Mahony and Praeger, The Sunny Side of Ireland, 1898, 303-306. The spelling difference of Ahem/Ahearn between the two sources is inexplicable.
347 Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1838, 113; Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1854, 293. The Dublin Penny Journal’s Mr. Nichol recorded that Skelly’s Inn was one mile from the caves and his children worked as guides, see “Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown,” The Dublin Penny Journal, 202.
who was appointed by the Earl of Kingston, also known as Lord Kingsborough, to take tourists underground.\(^{348}\) However, “Gorman,” as he was referred to by travel literature,\(^ {349}\) had the cave under lock and key, extracting “a small fee” from tourists in order to show the space.\(^ {350}\) As Nichol claimed, Gorman “realizes something handsome by acting as guide.”\(^ {351}\) Thus, the local population participated in the creation of this site as a destination and made a living off the throng of travellers; this was increasingly important in the post-Famine economy, which was recovering from massive emigration and death caused by the successive crop failures.

Mitchelstown struck a balance between the contrasting fortunes of guides at Cong and Glendalough. The Mitchelstown caves were at once associated with the tenant family who lived on the land, but also locals were able to work within the complex.

Living near the caves clearly gave inhabitants some claim over taking tourists through the cave, but that does not mean other community members did not work as guides. In his introduction to the caves, Bennett claimed that “they were discovered fourteen years ago, quite accidentally, by the man who acts as guide.”\(^ {352}\) However, Bennett was not led through the underground passages by this guide, seeing as he was the first visitor of the season; instead his party mustered “a man and a boy to carry the candles, and a couple of lasses who knew the caverns.”\(^ {353}\) So, this complex had no restrictions on who could act as guide or be in a guiding retinue regardless of age or gender. Murray’s 1864 guidebook observed that one could “procure guides, and change dress” at public houses closer to the caves.\(^ {354}\) Similar to the caverns at Cong, any man, woman, or child was able to work as a guide at the site. Yet, there is a distinct

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\(^{348}\) Fraser, *Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland*, 1838, 113-114.

\(^{349}\) Later in the century, references to who discovered the cave change Gorman’s name. A man named Condon was also cited as working as a guide; so, the two figures may have been conflated by later authors, see “Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown,” *Dublin Penny Journal*, 202. The same article claims that Condon and two boys were the first to explore the cave in earnest after its discovery by Gorman. Martel changed the guide’s name to Cowden, see Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 101.

\(^{350}\) “Stalactite Cavern at Mitchelstown,” *The Dublin Penny Journal*, 203-204.


\(^{352}\) Bennett, *A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland*, 108.

\(^{353}\) Bennett, *A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland*, 108.

difference in that the guides’ primary function was merely to show and illuminate the cave for visitors who were able to interpret the site and its features for themselves, similar to how tourists in Cong did not rely on guides to contextualize the underground river therein, just the trout swimming in its current.

Later in the century, travel literature named the family who occupied the nearby farm to guide prospective visitors. The only change in Murray’s guides from the 1864 to the 1878 edition was their suggestion of guides became more specific:

Not far from which point is a public-house, where the visitor to the caves should make inquiries, or at the Skeenarinky National School. The caverns are in the charge of Tim Mulcahy, the cottier tenant upon whose farm they open. He is a very civil, obliging, and intelligent guide. Time will be saved by going directly to his cottage.355

Evidently the Mulcahys were still working as guides in the 1890s, as Courtenay Moore also suggested visiting their farmhouse and procuring their services.356 However, the Mulcahys did not have a monopoly over guiding people through the underground passages, as Martel and Bennett both had irregular guides. These extensive caverns evidently supported a number of different members of the community; men, women, and children were all able to act as guides underground to varying degrees. As the century progressed, travel literature established the Mulcahys as the premier guides for the site, similar Mick at Cong or George Irwin at St. Kevin’s Bed.

While the new cave did not have a famous mythology or origin myth, due to its relatively recent discovery and geological focus, its chambers and features had different names that the guides could explain to their customers. Even when banal, the names of chambers and formations expressed recent history or made geology analogous to reality. Presumably the guides were able to tell the stories of how each chamber or feature acquired its name, such as

when Bennett named various objects in the cavern: “the £50 pillar, from that sum of money having been refused for it”\textsuperscript{357} There were a multitude of features, as Murray’s \emph{Handbook} stated: “The principal features are the Drum, the Pyramid, the Table, the River, the Organ, the Garret Cave, the Kingstown Gallery, the Land Cave; all of which are duly pointed out by the guides.”\textsuperscript{358} \textit{The Sunny Side of Ireland} listed a different number of key areas

The different chambers of the larger caves, of which the Kingston gallery is the most beautiful, have been named: ‘the House of Lords,’ ‘the House of Commons,’ ‘the Cross of the Four Roads,’ ‘the Scotchman’s,’ ‘O’Leary’s,’ and ‘O’Callaghan’s’ caves, ‘the Altar,’ ‘the Closet,’ ‘the Cellar,’ and ‘the Garret,’ the smaller objects of interest within have been called: ‘Lot’s Wife,’ ‘Mary Queen of Scots,’ ‘the Bed of Honour,’ ‘the Cat and Kittens,’ ‘the Flitch of Bacon,’ &c.\textsuperscript{359}

Evidently, these imaginative and lively names compelled the visitor to think about how the natural world mirrors the artificial or vice-versa, influencing how the landscape was perceived and mentally constructed. As at Cong and Glendalough, the naming practices reflect efforts to make geology analogous to familiar sites and structures. Other spaces, like the Chapel, were named by explorers (Martel in this case, perhaps because the “the thinnest of curtains and the finest of needles of brilliant white carbonate of lime” reminded him of stain glass).\textsuperscript{360} Portions of caves could be named after explorers, such as when a party of speleologists revisited the old cave only to find “A. YOUNG 1778” carved into stone and dubbed the chamber “Young’s Gallery,” after the famed traveller and agriculturalist.\textsuperscript{361} Martel listed other examples in supposedly unexplored sections of the new cave, such as “Raymond, May, 1840” and “Brogden (whose name has been given to the last corridor), 5 October, 1868.”\textsuperscript{362} Guides were able to tell visitors whose footsteps they were walking in, as well as act as a repository for allusions to

\textsuperscript{357} Bennett, \textit{A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland}, 109.
\textsuperscript{358} Murray, \textit{Handbook for Travellers in Ireland}, 1864, 270.
\textsuperscript{359} O’Mahony and Praeger, \textit{The Sunny Side of Ireland}, 131.
\textsuperscript{360} Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 104.
\textsuperscript{362} Martel, “Mitchelstown Cave,” 104. Brogden was a “prominent and principal member of the Irish Land Company” which bought Lord Kingston’s lands and became “owners of the celebrated Mitchelstown Cave,” see “A Generous Act,” \textit{Freeman’s Journal}, 21 January 1871.
contemporary interests. Mitchelstown was an extensive show cave with countless noteworthy features; St. Kevin’s Bed and the caverns at Cong were not able to present anything of this scale. Yet, guides were required to explain the lore of Cong’s caverns and St. Kevin’s Bed, while at Mitchelstown there was no lore. The Mitchelstown caves had a variety of known sites within their passages whose names, told to visitors by guides, expressed various entities from the British state to domestic animals, a much different experience from Cong or St. Kevin’s Bed which had much deeper lore.363

Guides went beyond merely leading people through the cave; they helped produce and reproduce the caves as centres of Romantic discourse through mediating the trip. Bennett recollected that when the main guide who showed up, he ordered the girl working as a substitute guide to put a candle behind “a semi-transparent screen of stalactite, in order to bring out its fine hues, and the ruddy light, mellowed by the gloom into a soft glow, fell upon the rich sun-burnt features of her full bust- miniaturized in by the fretwork in the distance - with a tone and colouring I have never seen approached by any work of art, and perfectly inimitable.”364 The guides’ functions were not as elaborate at some other caves, but with playful and clever use of light they were able to take advantage of the variety of stalactites, stalagmites, and pillars to create truly inspiring images for their tour group. Essentially, guides were able to enhance the natural features of the cave. Again, Mitchelstown’s guides needed light to take tourists through the cave, and, similar to how the guides at Cong illuminated the cave often through elaborate performance, these guides were able to take advantage of the various features of the new cave to add another layer to the Romantic experience and atmosphere of the trip. Unlike the “hag” at Cong, Mitchelstown guides were not able to take advantage of Irish myth or supernatural feeling. However, the new cave functioned as a thoroughly natural space of geological wonder and

363 Important to note, I have not found any evidence of guides explicating the geology of the area.
364 Bennett, A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 110.
beauty, even if this was not necessarily “Irish.” The guide at natural caves functioned differently than at supernatural ones, mediating the experience rather than creating it themselves.

**Caves as Repositories for Lore and Science**

While G.E.H. Barrett-Hamilton wrote that the Mitchelstown caves, when first discovered, “were believed by the peasantry to be an entrance to this nether world” of “Tir-na-nog” or fairies, these claims were never seized on by travel literature to promote the site and rarely, if ever, mentioned by visitors to the caverns.\(^{365}\) The new cave was always constructed as a space for the scientist and scientifically curious tourist. Indeed, academic societies played a large role in exploring and promoting underground spaces. These societies were drawn to the cave for their scientific value, both from the geological features inside as well as its fauna. The continual citation of Dr. Apjohn’s description reflected the focus of the caves as a geological and scientific wonder; following this framing, Britain and Ireland’s scientific societies continued the research the caves. In August of 1857, E.P. Wright and A.H. Haliday explored the caverns, “the object of the visit being to examine whether any of the curious blind animals, so well-known inhabiting the Carniola and other caves, would be found in Ireland”; their findings were widely published.\(^{366}\) Wright and Haliday compared the insects to those on the continent and found noticeable differences, stating that “it is not improbable that the only known inhabitant to our caves may be peculiar to our own country.”\(^{367}\) By the end of the nineteenth century, local scientific societies and professionals were visiting the caves to study their geological formations,

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\(^{366}\) Wright, “Notes of a Visit to Mitchelstown Caves,” 233.

\(^{367}\) John, F.S.A. Timbs, *The Year-Book of Facts in Science and Art: Exhibiting the Most Important Discoveries and Improvements of the Past Year; In Mechanics and the Useful Arts; Natural Philosophy; Electricity; Chemistry; Zoology and Botany; Geology and Mineralogy; Meteorology and Astronomy*, (London: W. Kent & Co., 1858), 259-260. Wright, “Notes of a Visit to Mitchelstown Caves,” 234. A few years later, in 1861, Wright found “a white podura,” without sight, the same as he and Haliday found at Mitchelstown. Wright presented a paper on the insects in Slovenia to The Dublin University Zoological and Botanical Association, see “The Dublin University Zoological and Botanical Association,” *The Morning Post*, 26 December 1861, 3.
as well as their inhabitants. Henry James Lyster, who travelled with Martel, found five specimens which he then displayed at the Science and Art Museum in Dublin, demonstrating how the cave contributed to public scientific education. Martel’s trip has already been discussed, but another example was a day trip of the Dublin, Cork, and Limerick Field Clubs, which met at the caves to search for “a number of peculiar, subterranean fauna,” reliving Wright and Haliday’s experiments. Even after Martel’s extensive exploration, he concluded “the cave of Mitchelstown may still be considered as a worthy object for interesting future work and research.”

Thus, throughout the nineteenth century, the new cave was of serious interest to the scientist, in ways that Cong and certainly Glendalough were not. These various publications were able to keep the caverns within scientific discourse but also justified their scientific value to the wider community and tourism industry.

Interestingly, the cave did not allow visitors to analyze the early shelter of human beings, as there were never any human remains found there. There were other caves in the region where human remains were found, such as the Dunmore cave, Co. Kilkenny, which managed to attract considerable attention from the press, tourists, and scientists. As a destination, the Mitchelstown new cave could not harness this interest and, rather, was forced to rely on its geological attractions and flora to draw in visitors.

Explorers and scientists were drawn to the cave for its potential to develop their careers. Explorers were able to name various chambers and features of the cave, while scientists could analyze both the physical and biological features in order to make advancements in their

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371 The Dublin Penny Journal did a feature on the Cave of Dunmore a year before the discovery of the Mitchelstown new cave, see “The Cave of Dunmore,” The Dublin Penny Journal 1, 10 (1 September, 1832): 73.
372 The famous Dr. William Buckland also travelled to the cave before he visited Mitchelstown, see: J.G. Robertson, “Cave of Dunmore,” in The Natural History Review: A Quarterly Journal, Including the Transactions of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society, Cork Cavierian Society, Dublin Natural History Society, Dublin University Zoological Association, and the Literary and Scientific Institution of Kilkenny as Authorized by the Councils of these Societies. For the Sessions 1853-54, 1 (1854): 169.
respective fields. For the general population, scientific curiosity could be satiated by travelling through the caves and observing natural phenomena that were so widely publicised in local society journals, large scientific journals, and travel literature. Local amateur science societies were important here as their journals kept encouraging people to visit the natural curiosity and their members went through the chambers together as social outings. The Mitchelstown caves were an essential for the growth of local Irish interest in geology; they not only represented a place to experience developing scientific research, but were also one of the most extensive cave systems on the island. However, Mitchelstown was not a site within literary landscape or one that was a repository for Irish myth, history, or folklore. Just as St. Kevin’s Bed came to be seen as primarily supernatural space, the new cave was singularly defined as a natural cavern, home to science, beauty, and the sublime.

**Travellers’ Navigation of the Cave**

Without any myth or history, tourists’ navigation through the Mitchelstown new cave was forced to reflect its position as an entirely natural space. The cavern’s narratives of place were confined to scientific advancements; however its sheer size and expansiveness provided tourists with a physically challenging space unlike the two other case studies. Travellers visiting the caves navigated developing scientific knowledge at, arguably, Ireland’s premier cave site in the nineteenth century. Yet, by examining tourists’ printed responses, their journeys underground at the Mitchelstown caves were suffused with Romantic and sublime vocabulary. Notably, there were different types of tourists to the cave, including academic professionals and pleasure seekers on holiday, but their physical interactions with the cave and reactions to the sights were similar.

Due to the sheer size of the Mitchelstown caves, travel literature promoted aspects of physical navigation, adventure, and exploration, that sites at Cong and St. Kevin’s Bed lacked.
Before tourists even stepped foot inside the caves, they needed to change their clothes into “coarse overall dress, including cap, and a few candles; and they may arrange their dress before and after visiting them either at Skelly’s or Gorman’s house.”372 This undoubtedly gave travellers a different experience from merely entering a cave in their regular attire, as they were encouraged to do at Cong or Glendalough, even if at times that attire was not deemed appropriate. Additionally, large portions of the cave were apparently unexplored and certainly unmapped until the 1890s and 1900s. Before Martel and Brodrick’s mapmaking expeditions, the cave was still actively being explored. Mitchelstown was thus a rather different cave than the other smaller, well-mapped case studies in this thesis. The elements of size, adventure, and exploration entirely separated Mitchelstown from other caving destinations. As Bennett mentioned, in the year before his trip in 1847, one of the “curtains,” a thin and near transparent sheet of rock that forms similar to a stalactite, was broken through and “Lord Kingston Hall” was discovered.373 For tourists, travelling through the cave must have felt like being on the frontier of scientific discovery and exploration. As Bennett commented: “There are twenty-four large chambers, besides many smaller ones, and three miles of gallery in all, at present discovered; several of which have never been traced to the end, and additions are being made every year.”374 The cave was so large that by 1888, C.S. Ward’s guidebook was writing tour routes for within the cave itself.375 Therefore journeys through the cave became a way of experiencing the

372 Fraser, Hand Book for Travellers in Ireland, 1838,113. These two houses were outside of Mitchelstown, on the road to the caves.
373 Bennett, A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 110.
374 Bennett, A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 110-111.
375 Ward, Thorough Guide Series, Ireland (Part II), 86. “From the Diamond Rock (above) is reached the Cathedral (120 ft. by 30 ft. and 30 ft. high), and at its south end are cross-passages. That to the south is short, and as well as the west passage (80 yards) is without interest. The short east passage leads to the Ballroom (40 ft. long) and the Four Courts with, among other curious forms, one called the ‘Giraffe.’” Thus far there is no difficulty. A Tortuous passage leads to O’Leary’s Cave, which is larger but uninteresting, and from it is reached a low cave (10 ft. square), from which depends the deep toned ‘Bell.’ Hence with some difficulty the ‘chimney, is reached. This is a hole from 2 to 3 feet across, and about 6 feet long, giving access to an exceedingly cramped passage which leads to the Scotchman’s Cave (40 ft. long), which the guide will show off from his candle. From this, O’Callaghan’s Cave (featureless) is entered, and form it a narrow rift and passage lead to another (nameless) cave with fine stalactite. Returning to the ‘Chimney’ and taking another passage, a cul de sac is passed in which, on a ledge, dwell the only known inhabitants – tiny white worm-like creatures. Presently, a pool formed by the drippings is reached, and to pass beyond it involves wading through 2 or 3 feet of water. If
advances of cave exploration and scientific development, and also potentially participating in them, too.

Travel literature invoked an element of danger in entering this cave system, amplifying the sublime experience. Black’s warned that the expedition “should never be undertaken without the assistance of one or two guides.” Touring these caves took a comparatively lengthy amount of time, around two hours, and the prolonged journey through the underground likely added to the sense of adventure and feeling of the sublime. As Fraser’s *Hand Book* stated, “It will require, at least, two hours to see the caves even in the most cursory manner; but apart from the geological interest, the admirer of subterranean scenery will find employment even for a whole day.” Murray’s *Handbook* added that the caves could take up to three hours and that the traveller “will have to undergo a considerable amount of rough walking, squeezing, and slipping.” The difficulties of “rough walking” were echoed by numerous travellers and certainly provided the visitor with some sense of accomplishment or triumph. St. Kevin’s Bed was only able to hold three people at a time, barely fitting the number of guides required for a tour at Mitchelstown. Cong’s caves were larger, but still none took two hours to see, following a well-trodden path, while Mitchelstown mixed novelty with adventure and danger.

At Mitchelstown, travellers embraced the struggles of exploration. Scientist E.P. Wright remembered when being unable to “walk nor creep,” his party laid flat on the ground and were forced to “wriggle through, at which, if the guides saw one, from want of practice, not expert, they would kindly give you a slight pull, and make you feel all the horrors of being

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metamorphosed into a wedge.\textsuperscript{379} Wright also recalled passing “along some sloping precipices, that even the memory of being once over them is not pleasant.”\textsuperscript{380} The difficulties of moving through the caves were not for every traveller, as Edmund Phipps asserted in a tangent disparaging cave tourism: “I also prefer the upright position, the boasted privilege of man, to the creeping, crouching mode of procedure, which an occasional blow on the head hints to the cave explorer is most expedient on these occasions.”\textsuperscript{381} While other sites in Ireland offered some physical difficulty, the other case studies spotlighted in this thesis demonstrate nothing close to a two hour trek underground in difficult terrain and certainly the sense of adventure they imparted on visitors was much different. In fact, the entrance to the cave disappointed Bennett because it did not live up to his expectations of adventure:

[the entrance’s] position is truly disappointing. I had anticipated a clamber half up the side of the mountain, and then some vast rift or chasm, not attainable without difficulty and danger. Their entrance is close to a small village in a plain field, by something like an abandoned quarry, and in no way remarkable.\textsuperscript{382}

Others were dissatisfied at their lack of time underground, including one Englishman, the assistant in natural history at the Dublin Science and Art Museum, and co-editor of the Irish Naturalist, George Carpenter, who, when travelling with the Dublin, Limerick, and Cork Field Clubs, complained “the time at our disposal was only two hours - far too short to explore all the galleries and chambers - and we did not reach the underground river, in which Dr. Wright and Mr. Haliday sought vainly for blind crustaceans.”\textsuperscript{383} Carpenter’s case is interesting as his group was attempting to retrace the experiments, research, and explorations of Haliday and Wright some thirty years earlier. The idea that the caves had unexplored and unknown passages must

\textsuperscript{379} Wright, “Notes of a Visit to Mitchelstown Caves,” 233.
\textsuperscript{380} Wright, “Notes of a Visit to Mitchelstown Caves,” 233-234.
\textsuperscript{381} Edmund Phipps, “A Summer in Bavaria,” in The New Monthly Magazine and Humorist, ed. Theodore Hook, (London: Henry Colburn, 1839), 392. While Phipps was in a Bavarian cave, he was reminded of his trip to the Mitchelstown caves and this quote followed.
\textsuperscript{382} Bennett, A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 108.
\textsuperscript{383} Carpenter, “Animals Found in the Mitchelstown Cave,” 26; Adelman, “Evolution on Display,” 411, 420 (Robert L. Praeger was the journal’s other editor and he was equally passionate about the Field Clubs).
have been alluring and exciting to adventurous tourists. Even when Martel visited the cave in the 1890s, “the plan of it [the cave] remained unfinished. It was supposed to contain a subterranean river, and many unexplored passages.” Martel may have spoiled some of the allure and mystique of exploration once he had mapped most of the cave. Martel did leave his reader with the conclusion that there was more exploration to be done; he alluded to a possible passage beyond a collapsed section and the expanded vision of the space may have encouraged more geologists to visit. By 1908, Brodrick mapped the rest of the cave, definitively proving that the new and old caves were separate complexes and changing the nature of exploration at the site. Certainly, physical navigation at the site was considered a challenge for the tourists, and was genuinely quite sublime, especially compared to other sites in Ireland which were much more accessible and easy to visit.

Natural caves were able to combine scientific and aesthetic discourse into geological wonder. Travellers did not necessarily shy away from this combination; Carpenter asserted that the cave “will not disappoint either geologist or artist in search of interesting or beautiful forms among its arches, pendant, and columns.” While there were differences between the professional geologist and regular tourist, they both experienced the cave in remarkably similar ways, supporting Sommer’s argument that even scientists with purely academic objectives still felt Romantic emotions moving through a cave. Professional geologists in the cave could interpret much of what they saw on their own and certainly their analysis would have been much more in depth than other travellers, but the feelings invoked by the journey were similar to tourists, even if those feelings worked in concert with professional instincts. The geological features were considered beautiful. Carleton asserted that “[t]he stalactites hanging from the roof

386 Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 104.
of several of these caves are exceedingly beautiful; in some places uniting with stalagmites rising from the floors and forming beautiful columns of spar." Bennett concluded that “some of the spar is very beautiful, and it is altogether one of the most wonderful specimens of Nature’s handy-work under ground.” Even those with professional scientific backgrounds were taken aback by cave’s the beauty. Martel had a similar remark about the power of nature when he wrote of “the Chimney,” a feature of the cave, that “the subterranean waters have accomplished there a singularly complicated work of mining.” Martel commented on the picturesque value of the cave, too, writing:

> From a picturesque point of view the cave of Mitchelstown is much inferior to those of Adelsberg, Dargilon, Padirac, Han-sur-Leese, etc. Its height vault is only ten yards high; the galleries of Kingston, Sand Cave, and the Cathedral are nevertheless very remarkable in form… Prettiest stalactites, which would look well in any cavern, are situated in Brogden’s Cave, the access to which being very difficult is quite impracticable to tourists.

Interpretations of the Mitchelstown caves were mainly driven by the visitor and thus accounts the place were fully imbued with Romantic and scientific discourse. Geological wonder provided tourists with an entirely different space to imaginatively navigate. As travellers moved through the cave, they must have thought of the sheer size of the space and their position underground in the bowels of the Earth itself. Thus, navigation of the new cave was wholly different from at Glendalough or Cong and absolutely representative of what a natural cave imparted to its visitors.

**Conclusion**

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391 Bennett, A Narrative of a Recent Journey of Six Weeks in Ireland, 111.
393 Martel, “The Mitchelstown Cave,” 103. In another piece Martel continued to make aesthetic commentary when he echoed these same assertions “I have found that the famous Mitchelstown Cave (county Tipperary), though one of the largest in Great Britain (1¼ mile extent), is certainly much inferior in beauty to the best Austrian and French caves, such as Adelsberg and Dargilan,” see Martel, “British Caves and Speleology,” 505. These same passages appear in Martel Irlande et Cavernes Anglaises, 151.
The Mitchelstown caves were cast as scientific and Romantic wonders. Travel literature used both scientific and Romantic/aesthetic codes to define and describe the cavern, often employing them in tandem. But visitors never wrote poetry on the caves as they did at St. Kevin’s Bed, and they were never earnestly or explicitly promoted as a space for Romantic feeling, even if descriptions of the site made Romantic allusions, as other supernatural caves were. The geological features of the new cave, the main reasons for its fame, were widely considered beautiful natural curiosities, whereas the allure of difficulty, crawling, and climbing built the expectation of a serious adventure in the mind of the tourist. The new cave was large, expansive, and, for most of the nineteenth century, unexplored. Like Martel, academics and scientific societies were interested in the cave because they saw it as a place of intellectual engagement more than wonder, where one could experience a geological phenomenon that was relatively local, in Ireland’s largest cave at that.

Mitchelstown was surely out of the way from the nineteenth century’s usual tourist haunts and the caves were in fact 6 miles from their namesake. The site emerged as an interesting stop at the Kingston Estate and eventually transformed into an expansive show cave by the end of the century. In part this was due to the efforts of explorers, but also scientists who regularly published research on their findings into the space. The role of local hotels and guides cannot be diminished, as their constant work to supply and guide tourists created a cave destination that functioned in entirely new ways from the old supernatural spaces.

The Mitchelstown caves were different than the two previous case studies; yet their similarities illuminate wider ways in which caves were prefigured, navigated, and explored, imaginatively and physically, in the nineteenth century Ireland. Overwhelmingly, tourists to the cave experienced the sublime and being in a dark space for an extended period of time seemed to inspire the same emotions in all visitors, academic or otherwise. Moreover, sensations in caves were often related in a vocabulary that derived from well-established aesthetic codes and
categories. However, scientific developments throughout the century drew tourists to the site in ways that aesthetic codes at destinations were unable to do. The scientific discourse and advanced geological knowledge played a much more important mediating role here, allowing visitors to interpret the caves for themselves, as well as helping illuminate the Romantic features of the cavern. At Mitchelstown geology and aesthetics intertwined to create an entirely natural space, largely devoid of any supernatural associations and defined by aesthetic codes as well as scientific discourse.
Conclusion

In 1834 when Henry D. Inglis visited Glendalough, Cong, and Mitchelstown, he perhaps never had considered that people would be travelling to these regions’ caves nearly 70 years later. Yet tourists, in large numbers, continued to visit caverns throughout the nineteenth century, as transport networks and technologies developed, guidebooks proliferated, and the tourism business sector expanded. The growing number of travellers from the 1830s into the post-Famine period, and their diverse interests, changed how sites were consumed by visitors and promoted by hosts.

While the construction of caves as either supernatural or natural through familiar aesthetic categories and codes continued throughout the period, a developing culture of scientific discourse, networks and knowledge impacted how tourists and the tourism industry appraised and promoted landscape. Caves were integrated into the improving holiday sought by many middle-class travellers, as they functioned as repositories for lore and science. Travel literature described some sites with vocabulary that was both scientific and mathematical in its precision. Legendary and scientific discourses co-existed, and were even entwined in some appraisals of sites. Even though one discourse may have been more predominant at one destination, it is always possible to find the other in any close reading of travel literature. The case studies presented here became popular often for the reason that they could be both supernatural and natural. As well, the mediating agents which influenced the articulation of these discourses worked similarly at each site. The developing and changing application of aesthetic codes in the post-Famine period demonstrates that the sublime and the beautiful were still valuable in constructed landscape; and, how destinations were prefigured and promoted was still an ongoing and negotiable process.

Analyzing travellers’ navigation through the physical properties and narratives of the cave further emphasizes how ongoing this process was. The journey into Ireland’s caverns was
infused with supernatural sensation and mental engagement. Underground, tourists were in near complete darkness, often with only a hint of sunlight or candles/torches to illuminate the space, a resoundingly sublime and Romantic experience. But, travellers also needed caves to be interpreted for them and Irish guides became a mainstay of cave tourism. Through elaborate rituals, guides explained the myth, folklore, or history of the space and also added to the otherworldly atmosphere of the scene. The guides’ role as intermediaries in the caves imbedded them into its experience. Furthermore, ways in which caves were integrated into the wider networks of travel infrastructure across Ireland demonstrates their place in either the established or new tourist routes in the period of mass tourism, especially after the Famine. Caves variously represented natural and supernatural Ireland, acting as conduits through which tourists experienced mythic, early Christian, modern, and contemporary Ireland, as well as the developing field of geology. In addition to the experiences promised by the Romantic and scientific interpretations of caves, their role as repositories for lore and science meant that caverns endured as places of pilgrimage throughout the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, how “curious caverns” were created as destinations and how tourists navigated them illuminates aspects of mass tourism in the nineteenth century. Caves supplied places to narrate ancient and contemporary Ireland, influenced and prefigured by developing aesthetic codes that provided their visitors with occasion to reproduce Romantic experience, and also to self-fashion as scientific travellers, too.
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