

This is a short circular route. Castle Gardens was once the site of Lisburn Castle a 17th century fortified manor house built by the landlords of Lisburn, the Conways. The house and its contents were destroyed by the great fire of Lisburn in 1707. Nowadays the gardens are restored to their former glory with a wealth of heritage and wildlife to discover.



## Facilities

Toilet facilities are available on site. There are many areas where you can have a packed lunch including a covered pergola if it rains. There is also a café on site, as well as a play park.

Guided tours can be pre-booked by contacting Lagan Valley Regional Park.

Tel: 028 90491922

Email: [admin@laganvalley.co.uk](mailto:admin@laganvalley.co.uk)

Website: [www.laganvalley.co.uk](http://www.laganvalley.co.uk)

## Equipment needed for the trail

- Outdoor shoes & clothing
- Trail booklets
- Teachers guide
- Clip boards / pens / crayons
- ID charts
- Measuring tapes
- Minibeast jars (optional)
- Tray for collecting minibeasts
- Camera (optional)
- Paper cups/bags (optional)





## Stop 1 – Discovering Trees

Leaving the car park behind you will find many native trees along both sides of the sloping path. Encourage the pupils to explore these trees.

There are a number of native trees in this area; Scots pine, sycamore, ash, lime, horse chestnut and cherry.

Pupils can use their ID charts to correctly identify the trees by their leaves (in summer) and their buds (in winter). Pupils can also work out how old each tree is by measuring the circumference of the trunk and dividing this number by 2. The reason for dividing the circumference/girth by 2 is because trees grow on average about 2cm every year.

Other activities include: bark rubbings & leaf rubbings.



*Continue up the path as you walk along get the pupils to play the game below*



## Stop 2 – Texture Game

This is a great activity to do as part of a nature walk:

Pupils can do it in pairs or as part of a small group.

Give each pair a cup or paper bag with an adjective written on it e.g.

Hard	Soft	Wooden	Big	Square
Rough	Smooth	Damp	Tiny	Thick
Hairy	Prickly	Dusty	Round	Thin

Encourage the pupils to put different objects that match each adjective into the cup.

At the end of the activity get the pupils to form a circle and each pair can share their findings with the group.



*Before you reach the East Gateway at the top of the path, there is a good spot for finding minibeasts. It is opposite the last bench, in the leaf litter to the right of the path.*





## Stop 3 - In the Leaf Litter

This is a great place to talk about woodland ecosystems, insects, birds and mammals. You can get the kids to look for minibeasts and record what they have found in the table inside the trail booklet.



## Stop 4 - The East Gateway

This is part of the original castle wall. It is constructed from red sandstone and basalt stones. The Castle was built by Sir Fulke Conway in the 17th century. It was a fortified manor house and constructed of cadge-work (brick and timber). Unfortunately there is no evidence of what this castle would have looked like.

Sir Fulke died in an accidental fire at his home in March 1624 and as he had no direct heir he was succeeded by his elder brother Sir Edward Conway. Sir Edward, a soldier, died in January 1630 leaving his eldest son, also called Edward, in charge of the estate. He took over and repaired the house once again.

During the Great Rebellion of 1641, Sir Phelim O'Neill led a huge battle in Lisburn. While the Castle House remained unharmed the rebels reduced the town to ashes. It was then that the name of Lisnagarvey began to change to that of 'Lisburn'.

The Great Fire of 1707 halted the growth of Lisburn. Once again it was reduced to ashes, this time even the great castle fell to the flames. The castle was never rebuilt, but its gardens remained to become the property of the people of Lisburn in the later nineteenth century.

Ask the pupils to sketch how the Castle may have looked from the brief description in the trail booklet. The two dates required for the booklet are on each side of the archway; 1677 and 1991.



*Go through the archway, taking the path to the left. Make your way to the monument (Wallace Memorial) in the centre of the gardens.*





## Stop 5 – Wallace Memorial

Sir Richard Wallace was Lisburn's greatest benefactor. His heir, Sir John Murray Scott gave Castle Gardens to the people of Lisburn. Designed by a Belfast company, Robinson & Co., the monument was paid for by public subscription as a thank you to Sir Richard Wallace. Its inscription reads

*“to perpetuate the memory of one of whose delight was to do good and in grateful recognition of his generous interest in the prosperity of the town.”*

### The Birds of Castle Gardens

The memorial is in a central location surrounded by large native trees. This is a good spot to start to look for the wide variety of woodland and garden birds that live here. Ask the pupils to use their spotter sheets and tick off any birds they can see.



Exit the memorial and turn left. Walk straight ahead, taking the next right towards the terraces.



## Stop 6 – The Terraces

Of Dutch influence, the building of the terraces began in 1656. Residents of the Castle used the walled terrace gardens for recreation purposes. They would have been adorned with flowerpots and specially commissioned patterned tiles. In their heyday there would have been orchards aplenty. At the bottom of the terraces was a pond stocked with fish.

Ask the pupils to find their own spot to sit quietly and listen to the world around them. They can complete the table in the trail booklet sorting the sounds they hear into two categories; natural and unnatural. After about 5 or 10 minutes ask them to form a circle so they can discuss their findings.

### The 17th Century Perron

This is a large double staircase leading from the bowling green to the first garden terrace. The perron was only discovered during an archaeological dig. The shaded area below may have been used to sit away from the sun or for plant displays. The perron was a high status structure, which was popular in European gardens at the time.



As you exit the terraces, make your way to the central gardens. You will see the Crimean Cannon located in the centre of the park.





## Stop 7 - The Crimean Cannon

This Russian cannon was captured at the Battle of Sebastopol. Admiral Meynell, a former MP, presented it to the people of Lisburn in 1858. Made of bronze many such cannons were melted down, some were used to make the Victoria Cross medals. Pupils can look at this artefact to find out information regarding its history.



*Located beside the Visitor Centre which was an old WW2 air raid shelter, you will see a plaque that identifies Lord Robert's Oak. Challenge the pupils to find this tree.*



## Stop 8 - Lord Robert's Oak

Field Marshall Lord Roberts was affectionately known as "Bobs" and known as the "Wellington of the Victorian era". He served in India under General John Nicholson. In 1903 he came to Lisburn to view Nicholson's memorial in Lisburn Cathedral. Cheering crowds gathered as he arrived to plant the sapling oak tree. Lord Roberts became Chief of the British army.

Oak trees are widespread throughout Lagan Valley Regional Park. They are deciduous, broadleaved trees that can support more species of wildlife than any other Irish tree. They have lobed leaves and rough bark. You can identify oaks in winter by their bark and brown coloured buds.

**Stories:** Known as, 'The King of the Trees', oak trees are a symbol of strength. The acorns were often used for fattening pigs.

**Uses:** Oak wood was valuable and was used for making ships.

Ask the kids to examine the bark; it is a perfect habitat for minibeasts. Oak trees are great for talking about food chains. Ask the pupils to complete the 'life in an oak tree' activity, other activities include: bark & leaf rubbings.



*Carry along the path until you reach Egret Fountain.*





## Stop 9 - The Fountains

### **Egret Fountain**

Not much is known about this object. It depicts three egrets and foliage. The fountain has been retiled and the plumbing fixed to restore it to its former glory.

### **Wallace Drinking Fountain "Les Wallaces"**

Les Wallaces were drinking fountains commissioned by Sir Richard Wallace for the people of Paris during the Franco-Prussian war. Designed by Wallace and made by Charles Auguste Lebourge, the four graces adorn the fountain - kindness, simplicity, charity and sobriety. Fifty fountains were donated to Paris and five given to the people of Lisburn. Now only two remain in Lisburn, one in Castle Gardens and one in Market Square. The others were melted down during the 1939-1945 war effort.

Each of the female figures has a slight difference in the way they are pointing their leg. See if the class can spot this difference?



*Leave the gardens through the gate and you will find Lisburn War Memorial*



## Stop 10 - Lisburn War Memorial

This memorial was unveiled in 1923 built to honour the men from Lisburn who died in the Great War. Names of those who died in World War II were then added to it. The bronze statue of victory is by Henry C. Fehr.

Ask the pupils to find out facts from the inscriptions on the monument.