

Downhill Demesne outdoor property Access Statement

Mussenden Road
Castlerock
County Londonderry
BT51 4RP
T: 028 7084 8728
E: mussendentemple@nationaltrust.org.uk



Introduction

1. Situated on the North Coast of Northern Ireland the Demesne comprises of 90 acres of land in total made up of the main Demesne which has the ruins of the old Downhill House, the Mussenden Temple, Mausoleum, Walled garden, Belvedere and the Bishops Gate garden.
2. Mobile reception can sometimes be vague especially as you approach the Temple which is on the cliff edge. Emergency calls are to any of the emergency services (Fire, Ambulance, Police or Coastguard on 999).
3. Assistance dogs are welcome on to the site as are all dogs as long as they are kept under control and on leads, especially during the grazing of cows and sheep on the Demesne.

4. Visitors to the Demesne must be aware of the following. The paths from both entrances (Lions Gate & Bishops Gate) are made up of loose stone / gravel and are steep and uneven in many places. Access to the walled garden is restricted through a gateway which has a large step and is difficult to access with a pushchair or wheelchair. Access to the Bishops Gate garden is similar, however requests to open the main gate for access when the site is open is not an issue. The ruins are accessed via stone steps to the front that are slippery when wet, but access from the rear is by pathway. Access to the Temple is via 12 stone steps that again are slippery when wet (a grab rail is available on both sides of the steps). The route from the Temple to the Bishops Gate garden via the cliff wall path is steep grass slopes and very steep steps and a stile built into the outer wall. The cliff wall itself is approx. 3 to 4ft tall around the Demesne and there is a 120-150ft sheer drop on the other side. We recommend staying on the mown / gravel paths that are laid out across the Demesne.

Arrival & Parking Facilities

1. The site is located on the A2 (Coastal Route) that connects Coleraine and Limavady just 1 mile past the turning for the nearest village of Castlerock and on the right as you drive from Coleraine and the left from Limavady. There are brown directional signs from both locations. Parking is available at the Bishops Gate entrance however it is notable for being on a narrow road with limited space (max 30 cars parked on one side only). The Lions Gate entrance is located 200m after the Bishops Gate and is accessed through the stone pillars (this is not suitable for HGV's / 50 seater coaches / and some larger camper vans).
2. There are no designated disabled spaces at the Bishops Gate entrance, but there are 2 at the Lions Gate located to the right (and signed) in the car park.
3. The surface of the Lions Gate car park is loose fine gravel and there are spaces for approx. 70 cars in unmarked bays. A parking charge of £7.50 per car is payable by Pay and Display machine or by mobile phone PaybyPhone app and details are available on signage in the car park (NT members and disabled badge holders can park for free).
4. There is currently no transfer vehicle for disabled visitors.
Large coaches are able to drop visitors off at the Bishops or Lions gate entrances and

can, by prior arrangement park at Hezlett House car park less than half a mile away from the Demesne.

WCs

1. There is a disabled toilet located in the walled garden and accessible through the main gate and approx. 80m along a gravel roadway. There is currently an alarm at this. The toilet itself measures 1.4m x 2.4m and the layout is shown in the attached photographs. Also within the toilet there is a baby changing facility (also shown). The door is wide enough to fit a standard wheelchair and the inside is lit by fluorescent bulb. The hand dryer is automatic.





Visitor Reception

1. There are no visitor reception areas (from March 2021 the property will not be attended on a regular basis by National Trust staff) however, National Trust Rangers will continue to maintain the Demesne during weekdays.

Temple and ruins

The Temple and ruins are accessible from the Lions Gate car park via a roadway of medium gravel and up a relatively steep gradient. It is currently unsuitable for standard wheelchairs. The Temple is accessible by the same roadway but entrance to the Temple is by 12 stone steps. We currently have no large print brochures or signage but we are working on a virtual tour for the Demesne. Access to the ruins via the Bishops Gate entrance is limited to one fine gravel pathway up a steep slope and leading to a mown grass path. We would not recommend this route to our disabled visitors. Limited guided tours can be arranged by pre-booking during opening hours.

Catering

Catering on site is provided by a licensee (AL's Coffee) situated in the main cark at the Lions Gate. There is seating and picnic tables available for visitor use and the proprietor is very hands on and customer friendly and able to assist visitors. The catering unit provides coffee and light snacks and is open year-round. The catering facilities are accessible easily from the car park. The facility has no induction loop. The toilets in the walled garden are open when the catering unit is open and are serviced by the licensee.

Retail

There is no retail facility at the site.

Garden

The Bishops Gate Garden, The Bog Garden has limited access for wheelchair users due to the steep slopes in some parts of the garden. The pathways are fine gravel and seating is available at the entrance to the garden. A map of accessible routes is available on line.

Contact details for more information

T: 028 7084 8728

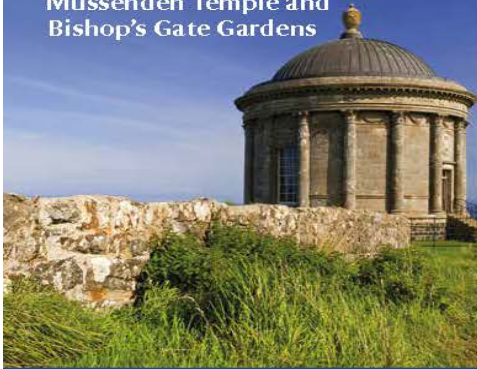
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Date 25th March 2023

Map: See below on next page for visitor leaflet & map.



Downhill Demesne, Mussenden Temple and Bishop's Gate Gardens



A warm welcome awaits...



A stunning cliff-top estate built by a Bishop

Downhill Demesne, with its sheltered gardens, iconic cliff-top landmark and striking ruins of a headland mansion, bear testament to the eccentricity of the Earl Bishop who once made this his home 300 years ago.



The Earl Bishop

Downhill began to take shape around 1772 when the Earl Bishop Frederick Hervey (1730-1803) began an ambitious building project.

Frederick inherited the title of Earl of Bristol in 1779, after his brothers died. But there's much more to Frederick than his titles. The facts tell us that Frederick married Elizabeth Divers at 22 and that they had five children. He was appointed Bishop of Cloyne by his brother - the 3rd Earl - in 1768 and only one year later as Bishop of Derry.

The Earl Bishop was an eccentric and colourful person. He had an eye for the ladies and was reputed to have had many affairs, earning the nickname 'the English Casanova'.

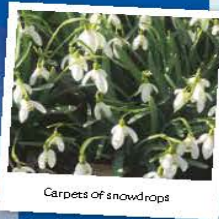
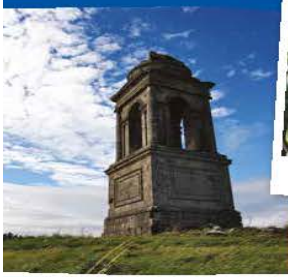
Society described the Earl-Bishop as 'that abominable wicked old fellow', 'a most excellent companion, pleasant, intelligent, well read', 'a shallow stream, rapid noisy, diverting but useless'. King George referred to him as 'that wicked prelate'.



The flamboyant Earl Bishop

Don't miss

- Uninterrupted views of the Donegal Coastline
- Children's play and nature trail at Bishop's Gate
- Snowdrops, bluebells and wild garlic in Spring
- Weekly garden tours in July and August
- Great programme of events
- The old Ice House and Dovecote



Carpets of snowdrops



Facilities and access

Admission free
Car park charges apply at Lion's Gate car park all year around

Catering
Refreshments available at Bishop's Gate
Al's Coffee bar at Lion's Gate

Toilets
Toilets located at Lion's Gate and Bishop's Gate.

Awe inspiring views, colourful gardens and events all year

Nearby National Trust properties

Portlaoise Strand
Giant's Causeway
White Park Bay
Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge

Places of interest

- 1 Downhill House**
Built around 1774, now lies in ruins.
- 2 Walled Garden, Dovecote and Ice House**
Provided the big house with food.
- 3 Mausoleum**
Erected between 1779 and 1783 in dedication to the Bishop's brother George, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.
- 4 Mussenden Temple**
Built between 1783 and 1785 by Michael Shannahan, planned to be a library.
- 5 Belvedere**
Was built for the Bishop's daughter, Mary, as a summer house for her to enjoy the view.
- 6 Black Glen Pond**
Created in 1840s by the excavation and construction of a dam. It also provided the family with food.
- 7 Bishop's Gate**
Built in 1784 to replace Lion's Gate as the principal entrance to the Demesne.
- 8 Lion's Gate**
Built around 1780 as the original entrance to the Demesne.
- 9 Hezlett House**
Home to the Hezletts in 1766 and stayed within the family for the next 200 years.
- 10 Bishop's Play Trail**
Interactive Nature and Play Trail.



Mussenden Temple and Downhill Demesne are now preserved for your enjoyment by the National Trust. The paths shown on the map will help you to experience Downhill for yourself. Look out also for the many Explorer paths throughout the Demesne.

- Notes**
- Strong footwear recommended
 - Open water feature
 - Uneven paths and steps
 - Please close all gates
 - Dogs must be kept on leads

