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Portfolio Overview

The following portfolio contains three pieces of creative writing for three heritage contexts:

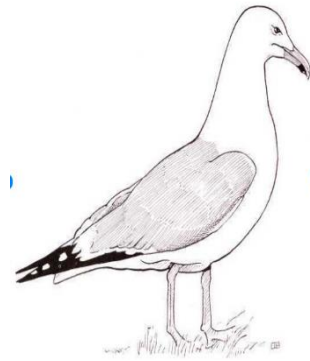
1. Henri the Herring Gull – a sample of a heritage trail aimed at primary school children
2. Back from the Brink – a pitch for a heritage documentary
3. Sunday Solidarity – a psychogeographic essay

Note: All images are illustrative only and intended for internal, educational use. All efforts have been made to credit the images. There is no intention to publish this content as presented

Henri the Herring Gull's Heritage Trail

Heritage Trail Context

Henri the Herring Gull's Heritage Trail¹ explores natural and cultural heritage sites along the coast of Northern Ireland. The trail's stories are based on Henri the Herring gull, who lives on the coast of Northern Ireland. She flies around visiting her friends who near selected heritage sites along the coast ('heritage hotspots'). The trail is designed so that people can visit one or many of the hotspots in any direction.



Henri the Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) Source :D. Otte after Tinbergen

The trail is written for primary school children as an educational aid that focuses on connections between cultural, and natural heritage.

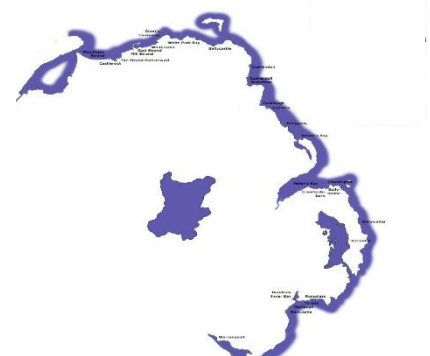
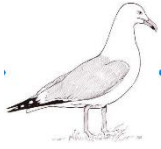


Illustration of Northern Ireland's coastline. Source: Man on a beach

¹ The full concept entails accessing Henri's Heritage App via a mobile device. Using the app to scan a QR code placed on-location, the user opens Henri's story for that heritage hotspot. The user can read or listen to the story, ensuring accessibility for multiple audiences. Once the user has read/heard Henri's story, they can access additional content such as archival images, audio files and feature pieces about the heritage hotspot. Using the device's geo-location, the app would suggest other nearby hotspots

1. Sample Heritage Hotspot - Rossglass Beach



Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) Source: D. Otte after Tinbergen

Hi! I'm Henri and I'm a Herring Gull who lives by the sea in Northern Ireland.



Sample of Irish Seaweeds. Source: Dublin City Council

Today I visited my friend Gary the Grey Seal on Rossglass Beach, and we could see all the way south to the Mourne Mountains. When I arrived, the tide was really far out so we could see all the rock pools and at least three different types of seaweed – how many can you see?



Grey Seal (Halichoerus grypus) Source: Wildlife Trusts UK

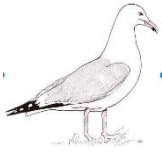
Gary said his new baby seal cousins would be arriving in Autumn. They're so small and shy when they're born, Gary said it's best not to disturb them or their mum and dad may get worried/ We best keep our distance!



Oystercatcher (Haematopus ostralegus) Source: RSPB

While we were playing on the beach, I saw my friends Olly and Orla Oystercatcher digging around for their favourite food – cockles. I always wonder what it must be like to have a long orange bill, I only have a short yellow one! Olly and Orla said they like it here so much they decided to stay all year, the rest of their family will join them in Winter when they fly back from Norway.

2. Sample Heritage Hotspot – St John’s Point



Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) Source: D. Otte after Tinbergen



St John's Church.
Source: Irish Lighthouse Commission



Pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) Source: Bat Conservation Ireland



St John's Lighthouse. Source: Irish Lighthouse Commission

- Hi! I’m Henri and I’m a Herring Gull who lives by the sea in Northern Ireland.
- This evening I visited my friend Barry the Pipistrelle Bat who lives in the trees beside the church ruins of St John’s point. Barry says the first church that was built here was almost 1,000 years ago! There was a whole village here back then, with a big house where monks lived. It was so important people travelled across Europe just to see it!
- Barry and his family love living in the trees because they can sleep upside down, hanging from the branches. I always wonder how they don’t get dizzy hanging upside down for so long. It’s probably because their brain works differently – they find food using their ears – imagine that!
- When it starts getting dark, Barry wants to go look at the old lighthouse nearby because he likes looking at the bright light flashing. It’s the only black and yellow lighthouse in Ireland. Barry says his grandpa remembers when the lighthouse keeper lived in the cottage at the bottom of the tower. The lighthouse keeper had to look after the huge lightbulb and foghorn whenever there was fog at sea. This warned the sailors about the rocks on the beach. How loud do you think the foghorn was?

3. Sample Heritage Hotspot – Kilbroney Forest Park



Herring Gull (Larus argentatus) Source: D. Otte after Tinbergen

- Hi! I'm Henri and I'm a Herring Gull who lives by the sea in Northern Ireland.



Old Homer, the leaning Oak. Source: BBC News Northern Ireland

- After my lunch today, I visited a very old friend – he's so old it's even in his name: Old Homer, the Oak Tree. Old Homer is over 200 years old!



The Giant's Causeway. Source: The Mirror

- He makes me laugh because he says the reason he stands at a funny angle, unlike other trees in the park, is because the giant Finn McCool leaned on him when resting on his way to the Giant's Causeway. But I think it's really because he has so many branches that he can't stand up straight. Can you count how many branches Old Homer has?



1 Aslan Sculpture, Narnia Trail. Source: Kilbroney Forest Park

- Old Homer tells me stories about the famous people that take shade under his huge branches. My favourite story is when C.S. Lewis dreamt of his story Narnia while sleeping at Old Homer's feet. C.S. Lewis said he was looking out over Carlingford Lough and saw Aslan, the lion, coming over the Cooley Mountains – can you imagine Aslan walking over the mountains?

Heritage Documentary Pitch

Back from the Brink – The story of Ireland’s rarest animal

2 x 60’



A herd of Old Irish Goats resting. Source: Old Irish Goat Society

Documentary Summary

An ancient Irish animal, on the brink of extinction, has been discovered living wild in Co. Clare. These animals lived in Ireland at the same time as the Vikings and are a vital connection with our past – they are living history. But without urgent help, the Old Irish Goat, one of Ireland’s rarest animals, risks being lost forever.

“Back from the brink” is a documentary series following the path of impassioned enthusiasts as they strive to protect a charming, charismatic creature. Located around Ireland’s beautiful and rugged coastlines, viewers will get a unique and rare insight into the highs and lows of trying to save an animal from extinction.

Weaving together a series of interviews with archival materials and ‘behind-the-scenes’ footage, this uplifting and optimistic two-part series will follow the presenter’s journey of discovery. The presenter will learn about the vital role the Irish goat has played in sustaining communities during The Great Famine. They will get ‘up close and personal’ with the animal itself by spending time at the project’s goat sanctuary. And they will explore the implications of saving, or losing, this rare, native breed by visiting relevant projects across the country.

Context

Instantly recognisable as cheeky and charming creatures, goats are a popular mainstay at many of the country's petting farms. Any walkers familiar with Ireland's mountain routes will know the excitement of an unexpected encounter with a herd of wild goats. But what is less well-known is that Ireland is home to one of Europe's last remaining populations of a truly wild and very ancient family of goats: the Old Irish Goat.

This documentary will increase the profile of the Old Irish Goat by showcasing the important role these animals have played in Ireland's heritage. It will also explain what is at stake if these charismatic animals are lost forever.

The Puck Fair/Aonach an Phoic ("the fair of the he-goat") is Ireland's best known and oldest festival. Thought to have its origins in pre-Christian, pagan festivities, the earliest written reference to festival is found in a Kings James I charter from 1613. The Puck Fair takes place in August at the same time as National Heritage Week providing a timely backdrop from which to tell the story of saving the Old Irish Goat.

Format

The series will comprise two episodes. Each episode will delve into several aspects of 'goat life'. The overarching theme – connections - will highlight the interconnected nature of Ireland's people, places, and animals. By demonstrating strong, tangible connections that are still relevant today, the viewer will discover how Irish goats have been central to Ireland life for millennia.

- **Episode one will focus on the human side of the story:** it will show the role goats have played in Ireland's heritage, illustrating their significance to the Irish people, past and present.
- **Episode two will tell the goats' side of the story:** it will look at the evolution of Old Irish Goats, what makes them unique and why they should be saved from extinction.

Presenter

Colin Stafford-Johnson is an award-winning, internationally recognised Irish wildlife filmmaker and presenter. His personal passion for wildlife is evident from the 30 years he

has dedicated to sharing the wonders of the natural world with his audience. With an impressive back catalogue featuring films and documentaries made all over the world, Colin has also featured many well-loved shows based in Ireland including: Wild Ireland - Edge of the World; Secret Life of the Shannon; and Living the Wildlife and Wild Ireland. This gives him the breadth of knowledge and a deep personal connection to bring this story to life. As the main character of the series – alongside the goats - we will follow his journey of discovery as he walks and talks with the people involved in saving one of Ireland's ancient breeds.

Episode Detail



The Old Irish Goat was a staple in rural life all over Ireland until the 1900s. Source: Old Irish Goat Society

Episode 1 - History and Culture of Goats in Ireland



The Burren. Source: National Parks Ireland.

Episode one opens with an aerial view of the dramatic and lunar landscape of the Burren. As we slowly zoom in, we will see a series of dots on the horizon which, as we get closer, become a herd of goats grazing in the open land. The variety of coat colours observed in this herd inspired Ray Werner, goat expert, to describe seeing the animals wandering the Burren as if they were “strung out like a necklace of multicoloured beads.”

Colin’s voiceover will introduce the series by presenting the animals. As the only breed of goat in Ireland until the 1900s, Colin will share the goats’ significance to Ireland past. He will also explain how the introduction of modern European goat breeds and recent culling practices mean the ancient Irish goat was thought to have gone extinct. But a recent discovery found some Irish goats amongst a wild herd.

We follow Colin as he travels around a selection of places and projects demonstrating how goats are integral to the people of Ireland, past and future:

- a) Colin will drive to the scenic Mulranny Goat Sanctuary and meet the people at the heart

of the project. He will also get up close and personal with some of the animals themselves. The team will describe how they spotted the rare breed roaming wild across the Burren the several cold, wet and windy expeditions to get to the animals. We will celebrate with them in getting the Old Irish Goat



*The Mulranny Goat Sanctuary, home of the Old Irish Goat project.
Source: Old Irish Goat Society*

recognised as a rare, Irish breed - only the third time this has been achieved in 17 years. But the celebration is tempered as the goats still do not have any legal protection and with current culling practices reducing goat populations by 85% in the last ten years, the Old Irish Goats' future is very precarious.

- b) Colin visits the nearby Museum of Country Life, Co. Mayo, where he will talk to a

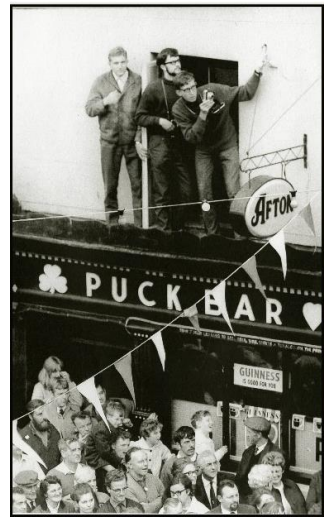


Goat market, Athlone, early 1900s. Source: Old Irish Goat Society

curator to learn how valuable Irish goats were to rural life throughout history. The curator will describe the role these goats played during the Great Famine and that they were important livestock to the Celts and Vikings using artefacts from the museum's archive. Colin will try his hand at playing the bodhrán (a well-known traditional Irish drum) which was made from hides of Irish goats.

- c) Colin will travel to The Puck Fair, Ireland's oldest festival. He will talk to the festival organisers who will explain the various origin stories of the fair. He will then follow the Goat Catcher into the Kerry Mountains as they try and capture this year's King Puck – the wild goat brought down to 'oversee' the fair. Colin will also mingle with revellers enjoying live music in the centre of the festival.

In recent years, concerns have been raised about The Puck's welfare. Colin will talk to an animal welfare expert to understand proposed changes that would ensure the animal's welfare and safety.



Revellers at the Puck Fair c. 1960s. Source: The Puck Fair Committee

Episode 2 –The Evolution & Ecology of Old Irish Goats

Episode two will open with an aerial view of Howth Head – the iconic Dublin landmark and



*Goats and their herder on Howth Head.
Source: Old Irish Goat Society*

part of the Dublin Bay UNESCO Biosphere. Mirroring the opening of Episode one, the viewers zoom in to focus on several small, fuzzy dots which turn out to be goats grazing in the heathland. Colin’s voiceover will remind us of the animals’ plight and the project trying to protect them.

We then follow Colin as he travels around a selection of projects looking at the evolution of the Old Irish Goat and its habitat:

- a) Colin will visit Melissa Jeuken, the goat herder leading the ‘Howth Head

Conservation Grazing Project’. Old Irish Goats grazed this headland for hundreds of years until they were removed in 1950s. This had an unexpected impact – gorse fires ran wild.

With the current pressures from climate change, it is imperative that solutions are found to mitigate its damage to animal and human life in the area. The project puts Old Irish Goats out graze in the very delicate ecosystem to control invasive species and manage wildfires. Colin will accompany

Melissa while she tends to the herd, highlighting how the unique features of the small, stocky Old Irish Goat distinguish it from other types of goats. Its short legs mean it moves differently to modern goat breeds so it can navigate Ireland’s rocky terrain. Its thick cashmere undercoat and long beard and sideburns ensures it is well protected from the Irish weather.

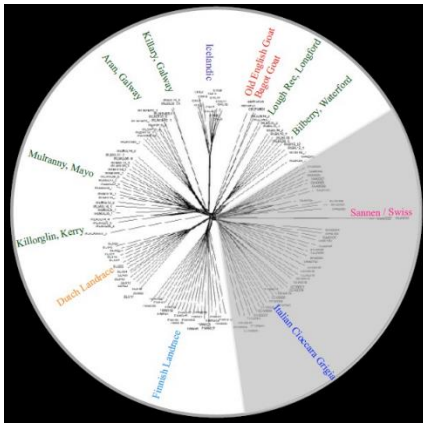
However, not everyone is so happy to see these goats grazing on their land. Colin will talk to some frustrated, local farmers who tell of the damage their crops have



Melissa Jeuken, goat herder, tending to her herd on Howth Head. Source: Reuters

sustained when grazed by wild goats and why they think reducing numbers through annual culls are necessary.

- b) A crucial part of the project to protect the Irish Goats was to officially establish



Genetic distances between different goat breeds. Source: Old Irish Goat Society

whether they have a genetic profile distinct from other goat families. According to the UN *"Animal Genetic Resources are the most valuable and strategically important assets a country possesses. They are the animal breeder's raw material and amongst the farmer's most essential inputs"*. So, safeguarding Ireland's genetic lineage is vital for the project, and for Ireland. The people at the Mulranny Goat Sanctuary collected DNA samples from the herd as well as historic samples

from the Natural History Museum. The Smurfit Institute of Genetics, Trinity College, Dublin completed the genetic analysis so Colin will visit the Institute and talk to a geneticist who will walk us through the latest DNA technology used in the Old Irish Goat project.

- c) Colin will visit Newbridge House and Farm – a Georgian house and working farm. He will meet with Ray Werner, a world-renowned goat expert. Ray has spent 60 years studying goats and other ancient livestock across Europe, his enthusiasm and knowledge is second-to-none. The herd of goats at Newbridge Farm contains several different breeds, so as Ray and Colin walk through the paddock, Ray will show how the Old Irish Goat differs from other breeds. The variety of colours and patterns seen in the Irish goat breed is unique. Ray's ground-breaking research shows that the Old Irish Goat migrated to Ireland from northern Europe before the land-bridge between Ireland and Great Britain was submerged beneath the Irish Sea. This means they are more related to the cashmere goats of Asia than other European breeds...making them very unique indeed and adding to the cause to protect them.

Sunday Solidarity

Between my finger and thumb / the squat pen rests snug as a gun

Seamus Heaney

"Stay right at the fork to turn left" barks Google Maps from my mobile phone. "That doesn't make any sense at all", "must be an Irish direction" teases my English friends. Our mobile sardine can negotiates Belfast's M2-M3 junction for the fourth time that morning. Driving from streets of sort-of-suburbs towards the office towers and grand halls in the centre of town, you don't expect to encounter the imposing grey pylons and tangled up runways of a major motorway junction. But then that sums up Belfast: unexpected and entangled.

We navigate the city's Sunday streets, made easier by the traffic-free, bright-and-crisp, autumnal morning. "Where is everyone?", "probably hungover" the stereotyping persists. I try pass off my scowl as the furrowed brow of concentration, instead of the familiar rankle these comments raise. How is it these days, when identity politics garner so much feverish attention, some identities are instantly protected by swathes of vitriolic Twitter armies, yet others seem to fall outside the radar of woke? My English, white girlfriends will discuss, at length, the injustices inflicted on them by the patriarchy. Social inequalities zoom in and out of focus, often dictated by recent Guardian headlines. Pronouns and proverbs all cautiously articulated avoiding offense or affront. But, somehow, shouting "top o' the morning" while brandishing a pint of Guinness in the face of an Irish person on St Patrick's Day is an acceptable annual tradition. It's probably because we're so busy 'having the craic' that we don't have time to get offended.

Swallowing the barbed retort sitting on the tip of my tongue, I decide to focus on driving and deciphering which of the three right turns is the right, right turn. The car turns in to the road with an eclectic mix of old commercial workshops dappled with new red-brick apartment blocks. The low-rise skyline allows the slightest glimpse of the grassy hill behind the city. If you'd told me 30 years ago that I'd be driving into the Shankill Road in a southern-registered car packed with English people, I'd probably have looked at you with incredulity and confusion: in what world would I be spending a Sunday morning showing friends around the Shankill Road just for the lolz? The world as it is in 2022, apparently. A world where

popular post-pandemic activities involve congregating in front of the now (in)famous murals that waymark Belfast's religious, cultural and historic divides.

Arriving at our destination, we try to figure out where to park to ensure we get the 'best' view of the Solidarity Wall; a decorated exemplar of a network of specially constructed barricades that criss-cross the city, Belfast's so-called peace lines. Understandably, my friends turn to me for direction, I am 'Irish' after all. But growing up in Dublin in the 80s and 90s with a Catholic Irish mother and an Atheist English father, I'm as disorientated here as the rest of them. We opt for some empty car park spaces outside the two-storey industrial buildings across the road from the Wall.

Our confidence that we've picked an approved (safe?) spot is assured by the multiple black cabs dotted about. Capitalising on the Trip Advisor-fuelled fascination with the 'Black Cab Tours of Belfast' these native, knowledgeable cabbies can be spotted driving groups of tourists all over the city. Quickly spying an opportunity to tour-by-proxy, we surreptitiously shuffle over to shadow one of the groups. But our grand plan is quickly foiled by our inability to decipher the thick Belfast accents dispersed by wind and idiom.

So, we set off on our own: intrepid, ill-informed, and in awe. We walk slowly and not-quite-steadily to the end of the wall nearest us that corners the Falls Road. From there, the colourful, hand-painted murals that line the first 400m stand in stark contrast to the murky, grey surrounds. You could be forgiven for detecting a slight festival vibe with the neon spray-painted wording and the occasional bout of bunting affixed to the slabs of concrete. But then you spot the gnashing, gnarly teeth of the closely coiled barbed wire that tops the length of the wall and you're quickly reminded of where you are. We all seem to notice this at the same time; in unison we button up our jackets and secure our scarves against the chill.

From this end, the first greeting is from Nelson Mandela who beams down at us from his vantage point 2m up, proffering freedom and ends to apartheid. The balaclava'd PLO soldier in the next mural looks less assured as he clings to his rifle. His scowl, if not visible behind his mask, is palpable. The neighbouring set of comrades are less recognisable, no longer household names except in their own homes and that of their enemies where the war is still raw and unfinished, despite what Westminster would have us believe.

We continue to weave our way along the Wall, alternating our vantage points between touching-distance close and surveying from the opposite side of the road. It's almost as if the necessary perspective for each painting will suddenly become clear if we find just the right spot from which to view it. Myriad static flags and banners wave at us and painted petition websites call for our signatures. We share our observations with each other. These are mostly about the different artistic styles displayed throughout the multitude of murals. It's like we are causally taking in a gallery on our way to the museum's coffee shop, our middle-class privilege protecting us from The Struggle.

Suddenly we're forced to alter our path. We are almost half-way along the wall now and confronted by a huge steel gate. It's probably 30cm thick and sitting at a 45-degree angle across the road - halfway closed or open, depending on your preference. It is optimistically decorated with a string of cartoonish characters that look like they're holding hands in glorious unification. The obstruction forces us to reorientate. We look behind us, the entirety of what we've seen adding some weight to our shoulders. "Is this part of the wall?" my friend asks. I shrug and suggest we keep going until we see bare bricks.

We regroup and then notice there's another huge gate a little further along. This one is flush against the Wall, making its "Road Closed" sign visible. It slowly dawns on me what we're looking at: a somewhat ironically named Integration Point. One of a pair in a series of gates that sporadically intersect the Wall. They are used in 'peak season': the season in which, often triggered by memorial or political events, the unrest and rioting and violence spikes out of control. During these periods, the gates are closed, ensuring a continuous physical separation between the communities that live either side. I walk up to the hinges, there's no sign of any rust.

Unsettled and unnerved, I try to distract us by sharing the only half-piece of knowledge I can scrape together. I point to the "No Surrender" and "Tiocfaidh ár lá" slogans painted, I now realise, either side of the gates. The former, I explain, is used by the Loyalists-Unionists to help us understand they are not prepared to give up their bit of the island. The latter is Gaelic and means 'our day will come'. It's the rallying cry of the Republicans-Nationalists, helping us understand that one day, they intend to get back their bit of the island. On my phone, I bring up an internet image showing a coffee mug with "Tiocfaidh ár Latte" printed on it in bright green. Showing the group, I explain that it's merchandise that was for sale this

summer at the main nationalist political party conference. I seem to find it a lot funnier than the others. I excuse myself by reasoning that when you grow up with this backdrop, you find the humour where you can.

Failing to lighten the mood, I encourage us to walk to the last part of the wall. The main feature now is a cascade of red poppies trailing along the wall. Some painted in various sizes, others attached as fabric, plastic or metal wreaths. These poppies frame the printed, photographic military memorials that have replaced the hand-painted mural styles of earlier. Contemplating this stark stylistic change, I glance along what's left of the Wall before it turns a corner to a run-down residential estate. For the final 100m, the tones have become muted, the palette predominantly red, white and blue and Churchill's bowler-hatted form bellows out from the brickwork.

Struggling to connect with the ostensibly British militaria, I eventually smile and utter an audible 'aww' when I see Mo Mowlam's warm, welcoming lop-sided face looking into the middle distance. My friends turn around to see what's invoked this reaction. I explain that Mo Mowlam was the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the 90s. Swiftly noting the indifference with which this fact is received, I follow up quickly elaborating on the crucial role she played in the peace negotiations that resulted in the historic Good Friday Agreement. "Of course it would take a woman!" admires my friend, we all nod in triumphant agreement.

I figure it's probably time to go now: we've completed the Wall; cold hands are being shoved deeper into pockets and it's been at least two hours since breakfast. The optimism of the Good Friday Agreement feels like an appropriate note on which to leave – we are on holiday after all. As we head back along the wall towards the car, our pace considerably swifter on return, the groups of tourists have multiplied. As we pick our way around them someone ponders out loud "So Mo Mowlam was the only woman involved in the Troubles, was she? Those men washed their own balaclavas and fed their own children, did they?" Tired and quiet, we climb back into the car, reminded of our own battles.