



IRISH GAZETTE



VOLUME 21 • NUMBER 3 • APRIL-MAY 2006

PUBLISHED BY ELLIOTT PUBLISHING, PO BOX 65782, ST. PAUL, MN 55165

Northern Ireland: the Giant's Causeway and much more

By Kathy Dougherty

Anyone contemplating a visit to Northern Ireland should plan to see the Giant's Causeway, located on the northern coast of the island. This geologic wonder, designated a World Heritage Site, is definitely worth the trip. From a distance, the dark, lumpy configuration might not seem to live up to its name. Up close, the soaring columns of interlocking rock, jutting into the ocean, takes your breath away. You have your choice of either scrambling among the flat-topped rocks or enjoying the views from the cliff-top walking paths above the Causeway.

The Giant's Causeway comprises 40,000 geometric col-

umns of basalt, packed tightly together like a jigsaw puzzle. The scientific explanation for this formation involves a volcano and fast-cooling lava. A more entertaining explanation involves an Irish giant named Finn McCool and his Scottish nemesis Fingal. Whatever the origin, the Causeway is a unique, family-friendly attraction that offers a bit of science mixed with folklore and stunning scenery.

The village of Bushmills is only two miles from the Giant's Causeway and is home to its own giant — the Old Bushmills Distillery. Licensed in 1608, Bushmills is reputed to be the world's oldest licensed whiskey distillery. Guided tours of the

facility are interesting, educational and, yes, you get to sample the product. If you're lucky (and loud) you may even be selected to participate in the Irish whiskey tasting contest.

The ruins of Dunluce Castle are another not-to-miss attraction on the Causeway coast. Much of the castle was built in the 16th and 17th centuries, but portions of the outer walls and towers are thought to date back as far as the 14th century. The castle's strategic location is evident as it clings to the edge of the coast. In fact, it's a bit too close to the edge: in 1639 the entire kitchen fell into the sea, taking most of the kitchen staff with it.

This is just a sampling of the sites and stories that Northern Ireland has to offer. For more information and assistance with planning a visit to Northern Ireland, contact KMD Consulting Inc. at kmdconsulting@juno.com.

