



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 40
Number 1

Article 14

10-18-2021

A Holiday by the Sea: In Search of Cair Paravel

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Recommended Citation

Weems, Reggie (2021) "A Holiday by the Sea: In Search of Cair Paravel," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 40 : No. 1 , Article 14.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol40/iss1/14>

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Abstract

The Antrim Coast of Northern Ireland is traditionally recognized as an influence on the fictional, imaginative writing of C.S. Lewis. In particular, Dunluce Castle has often been acknowledged as a possible model for Cair Paravel in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. But Lewis's own description of the geography of Cair Paravel in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, coupled with several letters he wrote, suggests the possibility of another, earlier and more influential model for the Narnian capitol castle; that of the Bishop's Palace and Mussenden Temple at Downhill Demesne, adjacent to Castlerock, Northern Ireland.

Additional Keywords

Mythlore; *A Holiday by the Sea: In Search of Cair Paravel*; Reggie Weems; C.S. Lewis; *The Chronicles of Narnia*; Ireland; Cair Paravel; Myth

—. *Mere Humanity: G. K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien on the Human Condition*. 2nd ed. DeWard, 2018.

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A HOLIDAY BY THE SEA: IN SEARCH OF CAIR PARAVEL

REGGIE WEEMS

THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE GEOGRAPHY of Northern Ireland influenced the landscape of C.S. Lewis's Narnia (Hooper, *They Stand Together* 470-1). It provided "an endless source of imaginative inspiration [...] to help create the imaginary worlds of his supernatural fiction" (Bresland, *The Backward Glance* 107). This is particularly true of Dunluce Castle, "a likely source for Cair Paravel" (Duriez 22). And yet, it is not just "[a]mong the romantic ruins of Dunluce Castle [but also] the windswept beaches of the Causeway Coast, [that] we can detect something of the origins of Cair Paravel" (Bresland, *Northern Ireland* 19). But where specifically along the twenty-mile Antrim Coast of Northern Ireland might that be? Perhaps Lewis left a hint in a conversation among two of Narnia's monarchs.

As Lucy and Peter made their way "further up and further in" to true Narnia (*The Last Battle* XV.161), the pair recognized familiar territory, prompting Lucy to ask Peter where he supposed they were.

"I don't know," said the High King. "It reminds me of somewhere but I can't give it a name. Could it be somewhere we once stayed for a holiday when we were very, very small?" (XV.167)

For Lewis, that "somewhere" could very well be the quaint, tranquil, oceanside village of Castlerock, located on the rugged and picturesque Antrim coast of Northern Ireland, approximately 62 miles from his home in Belfast. There are several reasons to think this and that the Bishop's Palace and Mussenden Temple of Downhill Demesne adjacent to Castlerock may serve as an earlier and more influential model for Cair Paravel than Dunluce Castle.

CASTLEROCK

In June of 1900, Flora Lewis took her sons, Warnie and Clive, for their first holiday by the sea in the village of Ballycastle on the Antrim Coast of Northern Ireland. Although not yet two years old, a very talkative C.S. Lewis loved the seaside hamlet of Ballycastle and repeated “not going home” (Flora Lewis 2.310) every time his mother discussed returning to Belfast. Even though Flora was already looking for another house in Ballycastle to rent the next year, the family did not return, instead opting to holiday in nearby Castlerock in 1901.

Only twenty-five miles from Ballycastle, Castlerock is located in County Londonderry, also on the Antrim Coast where the River Bann, Ireland’s longest river, makes its entrance into the Atlantic Ocean on the eastern boundary of the community. Castlerock sits at the Western Gateway of the Causeway Coastal Route which hugs the northern Irish coastline from Belfast to Londonderry, Ireland’s second largest city and the only completely walled city in Ireland.¹ It is situated less than two miles from the hamlet of Articlave, only five miles from the much larger inland town of Coleraine and equally thirteen miles from its more famous neighboring oceanside towns of Portstewart and Portrush.² Its original claim to fame is the Hezlett House, a 17th-century thatched cottage, but it is Downhill Demesne with its Bishop’s Palace and Mussenden Temple that may have inspired Lewis’s Narnian imagination, particularly for Cair Paravel.

Before the Lewis family first visited Castlerock, Belfast newspapers were already advertising the village as a seaside holiday and resort destination. One announcement read,

Castlerock. – To Let, Villa, furnished; fronting sea; convenient to station, 8 apartments; bath. (Bill 270)

A trade directory of 1901 advertises Castlerock in this fashion:

[It is] a pleasant and rapidly rising watering place close to Belfast and Northern Counties Railway line, advancing in popularity year after year, as shown by the increasing number of visitors who annually patronize it. It has also become a favourite resort for Sunday School excursionists. [...] Though relatively small, it has a decided look of superiority. With the exception of several blocks of large houses, it is made up of detached

¹ Following The Royal Charter of 10 April 1662, The British Government and Unionists called the city Londonderry, which the High Court reaffirmed in 2007. Nationalists call it by its popular, informal name of Derry. The dispute about the name is representative of the Troubles endured by the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, also known as Ulster.

² These mileages are not “as the crow flies” but via the inland motorway. There is no direct, point-to-point, coastal route from Castlerock to Ballycastle, Portrush or Portstewart.

villas, each surrounded with tastefully laid-out gardens and grounds.
(1901 Belfast)

Flora arrived the evening before her first letter from Castlerock, written on Monday, 10 June 1901. She was accompanied by Warnie and Clive, ages five and two respectively (although Warnie would celebrate his sixth birthday there on 16 June), as well as Martha Barber, a 28-year old, unmarried, Presbyterian house servant and 21-year old unmarried, Episcopalian nurse maid, Eliza Anne Endicott. “Lizzie” was a recent addition to the Lewis household, made famous by Lewis in his autobiography as one of two blessings in his early childhood and the faultless woman who introduced him to Irish myth.³

DOWNHILL DEMESNE⁴

The next Monday, Flora wrote to Albert that she enjoyed a nice walk around the “cliffs” almost every evening but, for fear of accidents and daily storms, did not allow the children to accompany her (Flora Lewis 2.317). This implies that she walked to and perhaps into Downhill Demesne because Castlerock’s cliff leads directly to the Downhill cliffs and only they are within evening walking distance to Castlerock. But on Sunday, 28 July 1901, Flora wrote, “Yesterday was lovely; Lizzie took the children to Downhill yesterday, they were all pretty tired but it did them no harm; of course, Warren had the tricycle, but had to walk up most of the hills. Lizzie is a great walker and always takes them in a good way” (Flora Lewis 3.4).

It was Lewis’s first visit to Downhill Demesne. It was also, by his later correspondence, memorable—another bloom planted in the garden of his imagination. He trekked “up most of the hills” from Castlerock along walking paths that led into the tree-filled valleys and up the heather coated hills toward the walled-in Demesne. Going “a good way” would have placed Lizzie and the brothers on the lush, high grassed, sprawling, treeless meadow on which both the Bishop’s Palace and Mussenden Temple are immediately visible. Amidst that verdant backdrop, they stand Cair Paravel-like, a mythical castle and its impenetrable watchtower. From its stunning cliff high above the Atlantic Ocean, Lewis would have experienced, for the very first time, the intense, tangible scenery he would later describe as a “vision of huge, clear spaces hanging above the Atlantic in the endless twilight of Northern summer” (*Surprised by Joy* [Surprised] 73).

³ Lizzie was English but the Irish had no written language until the arrival of Christianity, making oral communication the basis of history, laws and folklore for an island historically rich in its spoken heritage.

⁴ A demesne is land, traditionally walled and attached to a manor that is retained for the use of its owner.

Duriez proposes that it was also in 1901 that Lewis “encountered beauty for the first time” in Warnie’s tin-lid garden (14). This would make that year decisively epic and intensely memorable for his young, burgeoning imagination. Downhill is no small garden, and he was no longer yearning for the “unattainable” (*Surprised* 7) long desired country of the Castlereagh Hills.⁵ Instead, he was standing in a land of invigorating, immeasurable beauty and intoxicating, romantic myth. Lizzie Endicott was the first person to regale Lewis with Irish myth and the first visit to Downhill provided the trio with the kind of majestic, mysterious, beyond-belief scenery perfect for expounding such enticing tales. The young Lewis’s imagination was undoubtedly mesmerized by the geography of Downhill Demesne and its crown jewels: the regal Bishop’s Palace and the magnificent Mussenden Temple.

Warnie once revealed to Walter Hooper that Jack had pronounced the Carlingford Mountains of County Louth as “the loveliest place he had ever seen.” Hooper writes, “I felt, as we walked through the heather with the sun on our faces, that I had been plunged into the quiddity of Narnia. [...] It was Warnie’s belief that his brother had to a great extent modelled Narnia on this beautiful aggregate of gentle mountains and windswept coastline” (*Past Watchful Dragons* 74). The region of Kilney Park is certainly Narnian-like, with its fifty-ton Cloughmore (“big stone”) sitting at the 1000 foot summit above Rostrevor Forest, Carlingford Lough and the Cooley Peninsula.⁶ But the landscape of Downhill Demesne is equally Narnian, and Lewis was there as a very young and extremely impressionable child, many years before he climbed the slopes of Slieve Martin.⁷

Quietly hidden from the road on its southern border by treed grasslands and heather-draped hills, protected on its north by impenetrable cliffs and surrounded on the east and west by a vast, romantic 205 acres of volcanically rich flora, Downhill Demesne peacefully sits, as though intentionally lost, in the serene isolation of a mysterious, bygone era. Its natural beauty begs to be discovered and promises to engulf the imagination in mesmerizing, unquenchable wonder. Its naturally protected remoteness gave birth to its name, Downhill, from the Irish *dún* or Scottish Gaelic *dùn*, both meaning “fort.” Watered by abundant rain, it contains secret gardens of green and purple rhododendrons, white bog cotton flowers and the bright yellow

⁵ Lewis lived at Dundela Villas during the 1901 and 1904 holidays at Castlerock. His family moved into Little Lea in April of 1905, living there during his 1906 Castlerock holiday.

⁶ The look of the Legananny Dolmen in the townland of Legananny, County Down, and the geography of the Cloughmore above the village of Rostrevor, County Down, make both megaliths excellent candidates for the Stone Table.

⁷ It has been the joy of this author to visit each of these sites.

globeflower that would have been in full bloom when Lewis first visited.⁸ There are several, small, deep, almost-forgotten woodland valleys and wild, magical forests covered with thick overgrowth, much of it hidden by the innumerable and varied trees that canopy the lush jeweled green, seemingly infinite landscape surrounding the Demesne.⁹ Walking paths dart throughout and across the property, leading to mysterious destinations waiting to be explored. Except for the small section that has fallen into the ocean directly behind the Temple, the Demesne is encircled with a beautiful, four-foot, moss laden stone wall, creating the sense of a secluded, hidden and mysterious, yet-to-be discovered world-unto-itself. At the summit of it all, a vast, emerald green and treeless meadow of tall grass reaches its highest peak at the castle-like Bishop's Palace and then gently inclines downward, northward, toward Mussenden Temple, offering an unimpeded, almost-indescribable view of both structures. The northern horizon beyond the Demesne is painted by the unending Atlantic Ocean, over which the gentlest, most beautiful rainbows often rest with angelic ease.¹⁰

All of it sits majestically, and some of it dangerously, at the edge of a breathtaking 120-foot, basaltic bluff, a haven for an abundant population of wild sea birds. It overlooks a sweeping seascape of almost seven miles of uninterrupted wide beach and sandy coastline, stretching from the River Bann on the eastern border of Castlerock, under the base of the cliffs below Mussenden Temple, and to the far western point of the Causeway Coast at Magilligan Point. The magnificence of the horizon is multiplied by the view of the historic lighthouse at Mull of Kintyre on the southwestern-most tip of the Scottish isles, a mere twelve miles away and visible on a clear day, as are the Scottish isles of Islay and Jura, only twenty-five miles away. To a two-year-old Lewis, the 88,000 square foot Downhill mansion must have looked like a castle in ruins, romantically situated on a little hill, with Mussenden Temple majestically resting like a star, on the very edge of the sea.¹¹ If Warnie's tin-lid garden seemed magical and Dundela's garden appeared large, Downhill Demesne was an entire, mythical, other-world of endless, almost-unspokeable beauty and wonder.

⁸ These gardens are reminiscent of the garden Digory Kirke visited in *The Magician's Nephew*.

⁹ Incredibly, 300,000 trees were originally planted around the Demesne when it was first constructed.

¹⁰ The grass on the meadow at Downhill is reminiscent of the grass Lewis describes in *The Great Divorce*.

¹¹ This square footage estimate considers both stories.

THE BISHOP'S PALACE¹²

With no more histrionic headland in all of Northern Ireland, Downhill Demesne initially consisted of the Bishop's Palace, Mussenden Temple, a summer house, and a mausoleum.¹³ Also known as the Downhill Castle or Downhill House, the mansion was originally built by Frederic Augustus Hervey in the late 1770s as a gargantuan, 88,000 square foot home of castle-like properties and massive proportions, situated atop a lofty hill adjacent to and immediately west of Castlerock (1901 Belfast). The mansion is a three-story front, U-shaped, detached, symmetrical, multi-bay, two-story structure over a raised stone basement, set in the center of an expansive, stunningly picturesque meadow. Its exterior walls are constructed of locally mined basalt and rusticated sandstone ashlar. The primary entrance faces south, away from the Atlantic Ocean, but has a pair of rear wings leading northward into an emerald green, grassy backyard that extends to Mussenden Temple. During Hervey's lifetime, the house held statues and paintings by Raphael and Rembrandt, among others.¹⁴ In a 1785 letter, the Earl exclaimed, "Downhill is becoming Elegance itself [...]" (Price 72). Abandoned by its owners in the 1920s and serving as barracks for the RAF in World War II, the roofless castle now exists as a ruin of its former glory but is perhaps all-the-more romantically beautiful for it.

MUSSENDEN TEMPLE

Mussenden Temple is positioned approximately 1,050 feet behind and directly north of the Downhill House and is one of Ireland's most photographed and best-loved buildings. It is a "free-standing double-height single-storey over basement circular stone former library" ("Historic Building Details") positioned dramatically, precariously, even dangerously, on the edge of the 120-foot sheer cliff that "overlooks a vast seascape stretching from the Donegal in the east to the Western Isles of Scotland" (Price 1). The 307 yard Downhill Tunnel, a modern marvel constructed during 1845-6 on a steep curve under the Temple, provides train access from Londonderry to Castlerock. The Temple architect defined the structure as a "sixteen-sided room" with a slated domed roof, decorated on the outside with sixteen Corinthian columns coursed on an exterior of sandstone ashlar walling. It rests on a continuous sandstone base with a rough-hewn, coursed basalt basement used by Catholics as a small church during the

¹² To provide an overview of the Downhill Demesne with the Bishop's Palace and Mussenden Temple, the author offers this Internet image: <https://www.shutterstock.com/image-photo/mussenden-temple-downhill-demesne-coleraine-co-1132884659>.

¹³ The mausoleum was dedicated to the Earl's brother, George, but is actually a memorial and not a mausoleum because it is not a burial chamber.

¹⁴ Hervey was able to do all of this because, as the eccentric and flamboyant 4th Earl of Bristol, he became the Bishop of Cloyne in 1767 and the Lord Bishop of Derry, the richest diocese in Ireland, in 1768. He was the first Earl Bishop of the British Isles since 1067.

Protestant Hervey's lifetime. It was originally possible to drive a carriage around the thirty-foot backside of the Temple, but erosion felled its rear wall into the sea, and the Temple now rests on the extreme edge of one of Ireland's most scenic coastal cliffs.

Originally designed as a library, the interior walls were lined with books that were cleaned four times a year and kept from mildewing by a constant fire.¹⁵ A singular, southerly facing, 9x4 foot, square-headed door situated atop thirteen steps provides the lone entrance. The Temple stands 36 feet tall with a 30-foot circumference and possesses three, overly large 11x5 foot windows, two facing east and west along the beach and one facing north toward the Atlantic Ocean. An uninterrupted, seven mile stretch of wide, walkable, sandy beach lays directly under the unique, majestic, and awe-inspiring Temple.

Flora did not mention Downhill Demesne again during the 1901 visit.¹⁶ But the family returned to Castlerock from June to August of 1904 and stayed at Clifton Terrace, a block of apartments still standing near the train station and only yards from the train tracks, presenting a fascination for both boys. The 1901 letters reveal the extremely close relationship between Lewis and Lizzie, but she married on 18 April of 1904 and remained that year in Belfast with Albert, Lewis's father, while the rest of the family holidayed again in Castlerock. Her absence must have been a great loss to young Lewis, but her influence was perpetual and is legendary. In a letter, simply headed "Wednesday," Flora mentions, "The boys have set their hearts on walking to Downhill this afternoon [...]" (Flora Lewis 3.19). Her letters do not cover every day or event of the '01 or '04 holiday, but she must have walked to Downhill Demesne and along the beach under it on multiple occasions.

Flora and the boys returned for a third and final holiday in Castlerock in September of 1906.¹⁷ Warnie was eleven, and Lewis was almost eight. It appears that the family arrived on Monday, 3 September, and walked to Downhill exactly a week later, witnessing a convoy of twelve pheasants flying above them, the most Flora had ever seen together (Flora Lewis 3.74). Once again, this Castlerock holiday probably afforded Lewis innumerable visits to Downhill Demesne. On the Saturday after the 13th, Flora wrote,

We went to Portrush again yesterday; they [the boys] wanted to go to Dunluce and to the white rocks where there is a cave to be seen; we had

¹⁵ In 1802, the recently widowed Arthur McMackin, wrote to Hervey who was at that time, living in Italy, complaining that he had never been paid for cleaning the books and requesting remuneration.

¹⁶ They left Castlerock on Wednesday, 31 July at 12:40 and arrived in Belfast at 3:00pm.

¹⁷ The family holidayed at the French seaside resort of Dieppe in 1907, and Flora, too ill to travel in the summer of 1908, died on 23 August of that year.

a very nice day and they enjoyed it. The bridge you have to cross at Dunluce is quite a dangerous place without any climbing; it was there that Mr. Lanyon was killed, I did not like going over it at all, and I would not have taken the boys if I had remembered what it was like; however they were not nervous about it, so it was not so bad. (3.74)

It was, as will be noted, Lewis's only childhood visit to Dunluce Castle.

DUNLUCE CASTLE

Once described as "the strongest piece of this realm, situated upon a rock hanging over the sea" (Breen 84), Dunluce Castle has been dramatically and perilously situated on a craggy and vertical cliff on the North Antrim coast overlooking the Atlantic Ocean for more than four hundred years. It is one of Ireland's best-known castle ruins and "arguably Northern Ireland's most iconic monument" (Breen 1). Like Downhill, its name is derived from the Irish *dún* or Scottish Gaelic *dùn*, meaning "fort," and *Dhúinlis*, meaning "fortified residence" (Mills 165). The castle is almost perfectly situated in between the two oceanside villages of Ballycastle and Castlerock.¹⁸

Dunluce rests on a basalt stack formed by the upward movement of volcanic gases and magna through faults on either side of the stack, making the promontory on which it rests practically an island. It is separated from the mainland by a deep chasm and accessed by a bridge. A third fault formed a sea cave under the castle large enough for a small rowboat to pass through in the calmest of weather, but it was never sufficient as a landing place. The seascape, eighty-two feet beneath the castle, is defined by a wide embayment with significant wave action. The seabed immediately underneath the castle consists primarily of mixed coarse sediment deposits, i.e., black rock and sand. The northern perpendicular cliff makes both the castle and shoreline altogether inaccessible, and the steep, grassy eastern and western cliffs makes it extremely difficult, if not dangerous, to navigate up to the castle or down to the shore.¹⁹ The rocky seabed directly underneath the castle and to its immediate east and west renders the "beach" uncomfortable, even challenging, to walk and impossible to play on, and the tidal action makes swimming dangerous.

The 1900 letters imply that Flora and Albert visited Ballycastle before the 1901 family holiday there, and they may have visited Dunluce Castle at that time, because Flora remembers the dangerous bridge in her 1906 letter. But there is no record of Lewis at the castle before 1906. This means, as will be noted from

¹⁸ Google Maps locates Dunluce Castle at 14.7 miles from Castlerock and 14.4 miles from Ballycastle (accessed 23 August 2020).

¹⁹ In recent years, a stone-stepped staircase with handrails was built on the Castle's western slope to make the cave and beach below more accessible, but it is still quite a climb.

his own correspondence, that he visited Dunluce Castle for the first and only time as a child, five years after his initial visit to the Bishop's Palace and Mussenden Temple at Downhill Demesne. It is no wonder that Downhill Demesne made a greater, more lasting impression than Dunluce Castle.

THREE LEWIS LETTERS ABOUT CASTLEROCK

One early evidence of Lewis's memories and the influence of Castlerock is seen in a 1914 letter he wrote to his father, Albert, on the occasion of a school assignment. Eight years after his last childhood visit to Castlerock and long before the creation of Narnia, one of Lewis's favorite Malvern College teachers, Henry Wakelyn Smith, or "Smugy" as Lewis nicknamed him, offered his class three options for an assignment. Lewis wrote,

This week he has set us a job at which I hope to be able to do something.

The alternatives were,

- a poem in imitation of Horace asking a friend to stay with you at the most beautiful spot you know.
- b A picture of a specified scene from Sophocles.
- c An original ghost story.

As you have probably guessed, I chose the first. I invited an imaginary friend to stay at Castlerock. As that would be impossible in verse I changed it to Moville, which is a little village near the former, as you remember. I treated the cliffs, seas, etc. at some length, and have taken pains over it. It is to be shown up tomorrow, and I hope it will be a success. (C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters* I.49)

Of all the many places in Ireland, England, and France that he knew and loved, fifteen-year-old Lewis chose to invite his imaginary friend to "the most beautiful spot" he knew, Castlerock. Because he could not rhyme the name of the village however, he changed the location to Moville, fourteen miles from Castlerock in the Republic of Ireland.

His attention to detail, e.g., "I treated the cliffs, seas, etc. at some length," implies Downhill because Castlerock's western hill leads up to the cliff at Castlerock and immediately to the cliffs at the Demesne. The idea that he had "taken pains over it" may speak to his desire to excel as a poet. It could be that he wanted to make the best possible grade. But it may also provide further evidence of the memorable influence of Castlerock and Downhill Demesne above that of Dunluce Castle.

The next year (1915), Lewis received a letter from Arthur Greeves about his own visit to Portrush, another oceanside village only three and a half miles from Dunluce and approximately fifteen miles from Castlerock. From Great Bookham, sixteen-year-old Lewis responded,

I wish indeed that I had been with you at Portrush, of which your description sounds most attractive. I once visited Dunluce Castle years ago when I was staying at 'Castle Rock', but being a kid did not of course appreciate it as much as I would now. (*Collected Letters* 143)

As previously noted, not every day or every event of the '01, '04, or '06 Castlerock holidays is covered in Flora's letters. But Lewis's letter to Greeves confirms that he only "once visited Dunluce Castle" as a child, and Flora's letter confirms it was during the 1906 holiday. Moreover, Lewis acknowledges that he "did not of course appreciate it" at that time, even though he valued it more at sixteen. This is in great contrast to his exalted view of Castlerock at that age.

Greeves visited Northern Ireland again the next year (1916) and must have used hotel letterhead that evidenced his location on the Antrim Coast. Lewis began his reply,

I was rather surprised to see the note paper of your last letter, and certainly wish that I could have been with you: I have some vague memories of the cliffs round there and of Dunluce Castle, and some memories which are not vague at all of the same coast a little further on at Castlerock, where we used to go in the old days. (*Collected Letters* 188)

The phrase "where we used to go in the old days" corresponds to Peter's "somewhere we once stayed for a holiday when we were very, very small." And it is even more interesting that Lewis has "some vague memories" of Dunluce Castle but "some memories which are not vague at all," i.e., definite, clear and memorable impressions of the coast at Castlerock. There are several reasons why it made a greater impression on him.

First, Lewis enjoyed his three childhood trips to Castlerock during that idyllic time frame before his mother's death. His letter reveals that repeated visits to that part of the Antrim Coast cemented the impressionable memory of that bygone era. It is easy to understand how the child in the adult Lewis returned to the happiness of Castlerock in the creation of *Cair Paravel*.

Second, Lizzie was also present the first time Lewis visited Downhill. One can only imagine how she reinterpreted the very Irish geography of Downhill Demesne, as well as Bishop's Palace and Mussenden Temple, for Lewis in her highly impressionable storytelling. It has been suggested that he honored Lizzie in Prince Caspian's nurse, who was taken away from the young monarch for sharing fantastical stories about the magic of Narnia and a talking lion named Aslan. But even her replacement, Doctor Cornelius, who continued Caspian's education in fairy and myth, may be a kind nod from an older Lewis

to his childhood nursemaid.²⁰

Third, the 1901 holiday was also the first time Lewis realized his nursery longing: roaming in a Narnian-like land where every imaginative sense was engaged. Warnie states that when his younger brother first visited the seaside, he had no sense of proportion and interpreted the unending, horizontal vastness of the ocean as a vertical wall of water.²¹ And Lewis returned there twice more during that formative period of his childhood.

All of this points to Castlerock as the “somewhere we once stayed for a holiday when we were very, very small” and the Bishop’s House and Mussenden Temple of Downhill Demesne, not Dunluce Castle, as the earliest influence for Narnia’s capital castle. Even more powerful evidence is found in Lewis’s own description of Cair Paravel.

CAIR PARAVEL IN THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE

The capital of Narnia, Cair Paravel, is descriptively mentioned in four of the seven books in *The Chronicles of Narnia*. It is first introduced in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* as the seat of the ruling Pevensies siblings during the Golden Age of Narnia. In *Prince Caspian*, the children find the island castle in ruins but hear that Caspian X rebuilds it to its former grandeur. In *The Silver Chair*, Jill Pole and Eustace Scrubb ride centaurs to the capital and hear the ancient tale of Cair Paravel. And in *The Last Battle*, Cair Paravel is captured by the Tisroc of Calormen.

Lewis’s two most illustrative descriptions of Cair Paravel are in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. These better describe Downhill Demesne than Dunluce Castle. He writes,

And Peter with his sword still drawn in his hand went with the Lion to the eastern edge of the hilltop. There a beautiful sight met their eyes. The sun was setting behind their backs. That meant that the whole country below them lay in the evening light—forest and hills and valleys and, winding away like a silver snake, the lower part of the great river. And beyond all this, miles away, was the sea, and beyond the sea the sky, full of clouds which were just turning rose color with the reflection of the sunset. But just where the land of Narnia met the sea—in fact, at the mouth of the great river—there was something on a little hill, shining. It was shining because it was a castle and of course the sunlight was reflected from all the windows which looked towards Peter and

²⁰ Dr. Cornelis’s dwarfish and human blood may speak to Lizzie’s English birth but Irish upbringing.

²¹ This may be the source for the thirty-foot wall of water that separated the Silver Sea from Aslan’s Country.

the sunset; but to Peter it looked like a great star resting on the seashore.
(XII.125-26)

Next day they began marching Eastward down the side of the great river.
And the next day after that, at about teatime, they actually reached the
mouth. The Castle of Cair Paravel on its little hill towered up above them;
before them were the sands, with rocks and little pools of salt water, and
sea weed, and the smell of the sea, and long miles of bluish-green waves
breaking forever and ever on the beach. And oh, the cry of the sea gulls!
(XVII.178)

One is disappointed to read these descriptions of Cair Paravel while standing at Dunluce Castle.²² The only corresponding likeness is that Dunluce is a literal castle “on a little hill” that could be described as “resting on the seashore” with seagulls flying around it.²³ There are no forest, hills, valleys, winding river, or miles of sand or waves, as described in Lewis’ fictional capital city. The small beach beneath Dunluce does have some pools of water and seaweed but is composed primarily of black, volcanic rocks.²⁴

These Narnian portraits do, however, perfectly portray Downhill Demesne with its Bishop’s Palace and Mussenden Temple. The land surrounding the Demesne and leading to the hill on which it rests is completely comprised of “forest and hills and valleys.” A “castle” rests at its crest. It is one half mile west of the River Bann, easily visible from the Temple as it pours into the Atlantic and an exact model for “the great river” that snakes its way through the countryside, or, as Susan recalled Cair Paravel in *Prince Caspian*, sitting “at the mouth of the great river of Narnia” (II.13) just as Castlerock does the River Bann.

Mussenden Temple is made of tan ashlar sandstone, a sand-sized mineral, quartz or feldspar crystallization that, combined with its three very large windows, ensures that sunlight is “reflected from all the windows which look towards [...] the sunset,” and also to the east and north. This brilliant reflection gives it the exact appearance of “something on a little hill shining” and a “great star resting on the seashore.” And the very wide beach beneath Mussenden Temple consists of seven miles of uninterrupted “sands, with rocks and little pools of salt water, and seaweed, and the smell of the sea and long miles of bluish-green waves breaking forever and ever on the beach.” Cair Paravel is everything the Bishop’s Palace and Mussenden Temple are in the Downhill Demesne at Castlerock, Northern Ireland.

²² Research into another source or model for Cair Paravel began when this author did just so.

²³ In *Prince Caspian*, only Dunluce, like Cair Paravel, lies in ruins.

²⁴ A staircase to the east side of the Castle has been constructed to access the beach and cave.

On multiple occasions, Flora and her boys walked the “long miles of bluish-green waves breaking forever and ever” along the beach of Downhill Strand. The boys undoubtedly climbed on the rocks and played in the little pools of salt water. They most certainly stopped directly under Mussenden Temple to admire its beauty and then returned to Castlerock from the Downhill train station. It is no wonder that Lewis returned to those happy, indelible memories when he constructed Cair Paravel.

CONCLUSION

Downhill Demesne is a perfect model of the enchanted land that C.S. Lewis had longed for since his Strandtown nursery days of looking out at the lush, emerald green hills outside his home. At the age of two, he left the pollution and noise of industrial, black and white Belfast for the variegated symphony of Castlerock’s quiet, starlit nights, the sound of wind blowing through tall grass, crashing waves against ceaseless beaches, a beautiful yet ruined castle, a towering temple and seagulls cawing through an unending northern sky. His family vacationed there on two other occasions, visiting the Bishop’s Palace and Mussenden Temple multiple times before his single childhood visit to Dunluce Castle. His fictional description of Cair Paravel describes Downhill Demesne far more accurately than Dunluce. And his correspondence reveals that Castlerock made an enduring impression on him.

Downhill Demesne is literally and figuratively wonder-full, and the dream of Narnia was there, waiting to awaken in a young Lewis. Its landscape repetitively seeded the fertile soil of Lewis’s budding, childhood imagination, eventually blossoming into the Narnian capital castle of Cair Paravel. If Dunluce Castle has any claim as an inspiration for Cair Paravel, Downhill Demesne at Castlerock has a prior and more substantial claim: the Bishop’s Palace as the earliest model for Cair Paravel and Mussenden Temple, its star.

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JANE AUSTEN'S *LADY SUSAN* AS A POSSIBLE SOURCE OF INSPIRATION BEHIND C.S. LEWIS'S *THE SCREWTAPE LETTERS*

SONG (JOSEPH) CHO

“THE HARD CORE OF MORALITY AND EVEN OF RELIGION seems to me to be just what makes good comedy possible” (370). Thus writes C.S. Lewis in his short article “A Note on Jane Austen.” Lewis examines the four heroines of *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *Northanger Abbey* and writes that all four characters “painfully, though with varying degrees of pain, discover that they have been making mistakes both about themselves and about the world in which they live. [...] All realize that the cause of the deception lay within” (362). Lewis continues by highlighting that “in all four the undeception, structurally considered, is the very pivot or watershed of the story” (363).