

ARDS NIPA PANEL 2024/25

1. Newtownards is a town with a great history. In 540AD St Finian founded Movilla Abbey and the area flourished as a monastic site. It survived the Viking raids around 820/830 AD but when Henry 8th came knocking at the door in 1542 the dissolution of the monasteries was too hard to withstand. The town we know today as Newtownards was founded by Hugh Montgomery in the early 1600's, as part of the plantation of Ulster. It quickly grew up into the market town we know.
The Town hall of the photograph was started in 1765 and finished in 1770. The ground floor being the towns 1st market area. The Ards market still happens weekly but is very different from the 1700's - no livestock for a start.
2. Newtownards now hosts numerous cycle races, which happen throughout the summer and are enjoyed by many - men in pink lycra, what's not to like?
3. The walks around the Kiltonga Nature Reserve (where you might meet Mr Robin who is always ready to pose), Killynether Forest or indeed the Lead mines are often why people come to Newtownards today and only after a long walk do they venture into the town or shopping centre for a well earned coffee.
4. Fishing is a sport that many in Newtownards are very fond of and a number of fisheries have been set up in and around the town.
5. Head south out of Newtownards and you will quickly come upon Comber, another town that came about in the 1600s due to the Plantation of Ulster. Its initial industries of Linen and distilling have long gone, leaving traces of the heavy industry behind in the mills that are dotted around the town. Nowadays farming has become one of the main sources of income in the area. Indeed, the monthly farmers market is well worth a visit. In early summer you can pick up what locals call New Potatoes or Earlies, indeed Comber Earlies, enjoy the status of protected geographical indication (PGI) since 2012 and are grown by the Comber Earlies Growers Co-Operative Society Limited i.e. in the same way as Cornish Pasties.
6. Head North out of Comber and you will eventually come to the bright lights of our newest City, Bangor. One of the main attractions of Bangor is its Walled Garden and is well worth a relaxing stroll. It's also a great place to take photographs
7. or indeed to put up an easel, get out the paint and brushes and lose yourself in natures beauty. When you tire of that just walk a few yards to the Walled Garden Café.
8. As beautiful as the colours are in the Walled Garden nothing prepares you for the spectacle that is the Aurora Borealis, as was experienced by thousands of people all across the Island of Ireland. Many of our members went to Donaghadee in October and enjoyed a great light show.

9. If a spectacular light show doesn't float your boat Donaghadee also has horse racing on the beach, a big life boat, the Chunky Dunkers and the scrumptious Pier 36 or if you want to slum it, The Captains Table.
10. Waterways have always played a big role in the Ards Peninsula story and this is particularly true of Portaferry and its sister town Strangford, where the Ferry enables people to live in one area and go across the water to work or school.
11. Portaferry has a history of small scale boat building, which continues to this very day.
12. All work and no play makes for a very boring life but thankfully we don't have very far to travel to the Ice bowl on the outskirts of Dundonald.

The North Down and Strangford peninsula is a beautiful and historic area. Its soils and seas have provided countless generations with food, employment and relaxation. People have also adapted to embrace the technology driven occupations. This is a really great place to live.