

## **IAH Fieldtrip to Northern Ireland**

The weekend fieldtrip in October has now become a well attended annual event. This year's trip was to Northern Ireland and the IAH were guests of the Department of Civil Engineering at Queen's University Belfast.

To initiate the weekend on the Friday evening an Open Forum was held in the Canada Room at Queen's on general issues of hydrogeology in Northern Ireland. A keynote talk was presented by Warren Wood of the United States Geological Survey on key research areas within the USGS. The area of interest was then brought closer to home by Des Lyness of the Department of the Environment in Northern Ireland who outlined their work and Peter Bennett of Hydrogeological and Environmental Services who explained the general hydrogeological features of interest in Northern Ireland. Donal Daly then concluded the talks linking in the aquifer vulnerability work of the GSI after which an open discussion was held. The Department of Civil Engineering kindly sponsored a cheese and wine reception after the forum.

Saturday morning was spent visiting the disused quarry site at Magheramorne, Co. Antrim. This site has recently had a landfill proposal rejected on ecological grounds and Peter Bennett outlined the hydrogeological investigation conducted for the environmental impact statement of the planning application. The fieldtrip continued up the Antrim coastline via some outcrops at Larne to lunch at Carnlough. During the afternoon research work on the karstic flow systems through to several chalk springs was outlined by Stephen Barnes of QUB and the impressive blocked sink system at Loughareema was visited before the trip finished up at Ballycastle.

After an enjoyable dinner on the Saturday evening close to QUB, Sunday was spent visiting the Strangford Lough area southeast of Belfast. The potential for saline intrusion through the Sherwood sandstone underlying the area was outlined by Bob Kalin. This could have disastrous consequences for groundwater supplies currently being heavily used at Newtownards. The evidence of subsidence due to the pumping was visited before the morning finished up at Scrabo Tower where the Sherwood Sandstone and overlying Dolerite units can be clearly seen.

The weekend gave hydrogeologists from both sides of the border a chance to meet in an informal and enjoyable environment. For many it was a fresh look at aquifer systems not seen in southern Ireland in some very beautiful areas.

The IAH would like to thank Bob Kalin and the Department of Civil Engineering at Queen's University Belfast for hosting the fieldtrip, in addition to Peter Bennett, Mark Cooper and Stephen Barnes for their invaluable contributions.