

MOURNE RAMBLERS NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2024

A message from the Editor

Welcome to the latest edition of the Mourne Rambling Group newsletter.

I hope you will find something of interest in the following pages.

Thank you.

Vincent Trainor, Editor

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NEW MEMBERS SINCE LAST NEWSLETTER **UP TO AND INCLUDING 23 FEBRUARY 2024**

Barbara Carey, Severina Kelley, Sharon McAlinden, Catherine Armour,

Lillian Farrelly, Carmel McEvoy, Conall McEvoy,

Kathleen McEvoy, Stephen McParland, Andrew Wilson

We welcome these new members to the Mourne Rambling Group.

We wish them many years of enjoyable rambling.

WALKING BOOTS

Some people (probably new members) have been turning up to our Sunday walks wearing trail shoes or trainers. This is not acceptable.

As a hillwalking club, the terrain we cover necessitates the wearing of proper hillwalking boots, with ankle support (i.e. the boot should cover the ankle).

People who turn up without proper hillwalking boots will be turned away from the walk.

We have had a number of accidents in the hills even with people who are properly equipped, so I would ask leaders to enforce this rule, and I would encourage other walkers to back them up.

From now on, when a prospective new member says they want to go on a C group walk, I'll not only emphasise the need for proper hillwalking boots, but also warn them that they will be turned away from the walk if they do not have proper hillwalking boots. I'll also let the leader know that the new walker has been forewarned.

Peter McGowan



Post-Burn Learning Day

The Mourne Heritage Trust recently hosted a shared learning day to gain an insight from National Trust colleagues about their recovery work after the fire on Slieve Donard (April 2021).

Fire has devastating impacts for our unique wildlife and the habitats that they live in. Some species depend on heather and other iconic mountain plants for their entire lifecycle. Upland heather-based habitats are vital breeding places for certain species, such as birds that come from Africa to breed in our mild Mournes weather. Livestock also graze on our upland habitats, the mixture of heather, bilberry and other dwarf shrubs providing a nutritious mix for them. Not only does fire destroy the fragile soils, it also causes air pollution and releases more carbon into our atmosphere.

Key learnings from the day:

- The importance of the detailed research, monitoring and the partnership approach

between the National Trust and farmers in bringing cattle back on the upland landscape to help the recovery of mixed species and deter the dominance of nutrient poor tough grasses, such as Molinia (see photo below showing regrowth).

- The value of generational farming experience combined with new technology to collectively explore solutions to address damage caused by humans.
- The benefits of shared/partnership learning between MHT and the National Trust enriches and enables both organisations to better respond to threats to our landscapes. This ultimately helps us to support rural livelihoods across the Mourne and the wider AONB.
- The importance of livestock in managing our upland landscape and the need to respect their presence. This means keeping your dog on a lead at all times.

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TRAINING

This year we are planning to run training events across 3 key areas: safety in the hills, navigation and leadership. The UFRC is also planning to run a number of training events this year; details of these upcoming events should be sent out soon. We will seek to build on the UFRC navigation courses with events running outdoors.

Safety in the hills

In this area we aim to run two events: an Outdoor First Aid course with a trainer from REC primarily for our leaders and a Mountain Emergency Workshop which will be open to everyone.

Outdoor First Aid (aka REC Level 2 Emergency)

This will provide 16 hours of training over 2 days with a very practical, hands-on approach. In addition to dealing with first aid outdoors, the course includes a significant component on managing emergency situations and dealing with emergency services. On completion of the course you are certified for 3 years, which will be of interest to anyone thinking of hill/mountain leader training.

Mountain Emergency Workshop

I am waiting for an overview of content for this event, but it will be a one-day training event open to all Club Members. The intent is that this course will look at hazards, equipment, call out procedure, communications, group safety, hand over to emergency services, etc.

Navigation Training

When we last ran a basic navigation training course the weather put paid to us getting out on the hills to practise, so we intend to run a refresher course. The UFRC will be running several basic and advanced navigation courses during this year. We intend to dovetail with these with practical exercises out on the hills. The courses will be open to all club members who wish to learn and practise their skills in a controlled environment.

Leadership Workshop

We intend running another workshop for leaders this year. This will be an opportunity for new leaders and people who have yet to lead a walk with the club to meet with experienced leaders in an informal setting, to share knowledge, concerns and questions.

These courses are still at the planning stage and we will write to all members as the details are firmed up.

Ian Stuart

EMAIL RECEIVED FROM UFRC

Hi All,

I hope you are looking forward to the springtime and the longer days that will allow for even longer walks. There are 3 key things of note in this email including details of our Welcome Walk month of March, the Spring Gathering, and lots of available subsidised training session for UFRC affiliated clubs/members. Please take the time to read through and if you have any questions, please contact me.

1. Welcome Walk month!

As discussed at the Autumn Gathering/AGM, we have been planning to work alongside clubs and their existing walk programme to encourage non-members to engage with clubs and join them for a walk in the month of March. This is to grow the number of members in existing UFRC clubs in line with our funding priorities for Sport NI.

I will be promoting these sessions online, via our website, social media and hopefully through some additional media outlets, e.g. newspapers and radio. To do that, I need to know what walks are being used as a welcome walk session – e.g. suitable for a non-member to join. Please complete the attached event pro-forma with details of the walk/walks that you are happy to host new people at. This can be an existing walk in your programme or an additional session. Please return your forms with eligible walks to me no later than **Friday 23rd February 2024**.

In the pro-forma we will ask that you provide a best contact for non-members to message to let you know how many will be attending. This will help with planning and starts the process of getting to know a new prospective member.

I have also attached a graphic, that you can use for your own websites/social media pages or for texting out to club members etc. to spread the word. Example text to use alongside graphic: *“As members of the UFRC, Club name are hosting a welcome walk on date at location. We will be meeting at time and would love to welcome you to join. Please contact club member via text/email/phone and let us know if you’d like to come along. UFRC club members avail of lots of great benefits and walking/hiking/rambling is a super hobby and is even better in a group.”*

Feel free to edit as you please or add in some additional information about your club. If you’d like some help drafting some more posts, please shout me and I’ll be able to help!



2. Spring Gathering

The 2024 Spring Gathering will be held on Saturday 23rd March at Belfast Castle. The theme of the day will be Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and we will use the afternoon to walk around Cave Hill.

Please note, spaces are limited to 50, so we would ask that each club only send a few members, and if there are spaces left, we can open it up further. Please complete the registration form linked so that we know who to expect from which clubs.

<https://forms.office.com/e/2phmN8NgaS>

3. Training

UFRC is excited to announce several part and fully subsidised training sessions coming up. Thanks to funding from Sport NI, we have been building a training programme that members can avail of exclusively. Please note, these spaces are limited and on a first-come, first-served basis so please share with your club members. I will be sharing online.

Leave No Trace Training – 3 dates, all Fridays in Kilbroney Park

12 spaces each, fully subsidised (free)

- [29th March](#)
- [12th April](#)
- [31st May](#)

Mountain Navigation Skills (Basic and Advanced) – Tollymore

12 spaces each, 70% subsidised (£15 per member plus booking fee £1.96)

- Basic – Saturday 2nd March
- Advanced – Friday 22nd March

Additional Social Media training is also being sought out for a later date.

If you have any questions, please give me a call or an email.

(I am off on annual leave this Friday 16th February)

Best Wishes,

Kerry

Kerry Kirkpatrick
Development Officer
Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs

NOTICE BOARD

- Please let me know if you plan to attend the Slideshow in the Tollymore Outdoor Centre following the walk on Sunday 03 March. On that day the walks start from the Outdoor Centre. Following the walks soup and sandwiches will be served at about 3.00pm. It is planned to start the show at 3.30pm. Contact me at trainorvj@yahoo.co.uk
- Attached to this newsletter is a list of all members who have paid for 2024. There are 19 members from 2023 who have not renewed; not one of them has informed me that they are not renewing. There is a renewal form at the end of the newsletter should anyone wish to rejoin

Notes: New members must contact one of the New Members Officers, Fionnuala Carragher (Tel. 028 9079 5292) or Ray Gray (07929401817) in advance of submitting this form.

APPLICATION FORM

1. Membership is for a year or part of a year and subscriptions are due for renewal on January 1st.

2. Two types of membership are available:

Full membership for people intending to walk with the Group. Annual subscription is £20.
Associate membership for people who wish to retain links with the Group but who do not intend walking with the Group. Annual subscription is £5.

Please complete

Name(s): _____

Address: (Please print and **include your Post Code**)

Postcode

Phone No:

Mobile No:

Email address if available: (for receipt of newsletters and miscellaneous information from the committee. **Please write clearly**)

Please tick as appropriate:

I am a new member and I discussed my application with _____
On Date : _____

Walking Group Recommended (please circle or highlight) : A B C D

Membership fee of £20 per year (or part of year)

I have received a copy of the **Programme of Walks**

I have received and read the **Advice for Walkers**

If you wish to pay by cheque, please make it payable to Mourne Rambling Group.

Please, do not send cash in the post.

Return to: Vincent Trainor, 34 Grahamville Estate, Kilkeel, Co Down, BT34 4DD

Should you wish to avail of the option to pay your annual subscription by internet banking, bank details are as follows:

Account Name: Mourne Rambling Group, Sort Code 93-83-27, A/c No 12077183.

IBAN: GB81 FTBK 9383 2712 0771 83 BIC: FTBKGB2B

Please remember to include your name in online banking.

Please email Vincent letting him know you have paid.

trainorvj@yahoo.co.uk