

# MOURNE RAMBLING GROUP NEWSLETTER

## December 2024



### In this issue we report on

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As well as reminding you of the renewal of your membership for 2025.

### **TRIBUTE to VINCENT TRAINOR**

Vincent joined the Mourne Ramblers in 1976 and his untimely death in September 2024 brought his long association with the Mourne Ramblers to an end.

Vincent loved walking and there was no better place to enjoy this than in the Mourne Mountains where he was born and reared. When a neighbour recommended that he join the Mourne Ramblers he did not hesitate, and the Sunday walks became a major part of his life. Over the years Vincent led A, B and C walks and laterally he was a regular leader of the D walks. When he retired from teaching, he walked with a small group on Thursdays. He could name every mountain and hill, rivers and streams, in the Mourne Mountains.

During his time with the Ramblers spanning 48 years, he held the position of Chairman for 6 years, and 31 years as Treasurer, a position he held right up to his death.

In his role as Treasurer, Vincent was meticulous in his record keeping. He collated the annual subscription from the members and subsequently would always have an up-to-date list of the total membership. He made a point of welcoming newcomers and he took the opportunity to do so at events such as at the annual picnic.

Apart from his role as Treasurer Vincent took on the responsibility of much more. It is only when he is not here that one realises the work he did and the contribution he made to the success of the Club. Every year he distributed the Programme plus the Ulster Federation of Rambling Clubs Affiliation Card to all members.

He often went early to the start of walks to do so in person, to save postage!! He put together the Newsletter, answered various queries about the MRG and was generally the go-to-person when information about the Ramblers was requested. He also liaised with Rambler groups from the South who wanted to join the Mourne Ramblers for the occasional visit. He always made them very welcome.

Over the years he organized the social functions in many different venues. In recent years the Christmas dinner and slide show were held in the Burrendale Hotel and after Vincent's death the Manager of the hotel told me that after each event Vincent always sent an e-mail expressing thanks for the lovely meal etc.. This was very much appreciated. The last event he organised, prior to his death, was the AGM in Tollymore Mountain Centre held on the 3rd of November.

When the restrictions after Covid were eased and before things got really back to normal Ownie (McManus) Vincent and I walked most Sundays in Kilbroney Park and continued to do so for many years. It is hard to believe that both Ownie and Vincent died the same year 2024. May their spirits be for ever in the mountains.

Vincent's legacy to the Mourne Ramblers will never be forgotten. He was a highly regarded member as shown by the number of Ramblers who attended his funeral. We offer our sympathy to his wife Anne whom he met in the Mourne Ramblers and to his sons Ronan and Justin and their families.



May he rest in peace.

Shelagh Murphy

## Decisions taken at the AGM

At the AGM a new 12 person committee was elected with Peter McGowan as chairperson, Robert Marshall as secretary and Jen Rainey as treasurer. The other elected members are Ray Gray and Fionnuala Garragher (for vetting new members) and as representatives of the various walking grades Robert Campbell, Noel Rice, Paula Hays, Bert Rima, Roisin Franklin, Ian Stuart and Harry Goodman. Robert

Roulston has been providing valuable input in updating our website and will continue to do this for the committee. Maggie Pridgen will continue to work with George Acheson to update the facebook page. One of the major decisions apart from the routine business was the adoption of a motion to donate £2000 to the Mourne Mountain Rescue Service for their new headquarters building in Newcastle and to keep the membership fee at £ 20 per annum. The club has had another very successful year providing 11 A walks (average participation 6.6 members), 33 B walks (average 7.5 participants), 20 C+ walks (average of 12 participants), 52 C walks with on average 19.3 walkers and 47 D walks with on average 7.3 walkers. There also was a successful outing of 34 members to Connemara. The total membership stood at 187, an unprecedented high at the beginning of November of this year. We must be doing something right to attract so many new members.

## Away trip to Dingle in May 2025

Mourne Rambling Group has planned an away hiking trip to the Dingle Peninsula in May 2025. The trip will be from 18th-22nd May 2025 which will enable 3 full days of hiking on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, returning home on Thursday 22nd May. Whilst most of the hiking will take place in the mountains of the Dingle Peninsula, the group will be based in the Rose Hotel in Tralee for the duration of the trip. For 4 nights B&B plus a 3-course meal each evening, the hotel rates are €397 per person sharing (pps) in a twin room, €377 pps in a triple room and €557 for a single room.

If you are interested in going on this trip, you can book a room by contacting Larissa at the Rose Hotel on 00353 (0) 667199100. The hotel will request a valid debit/credit card to guarantee the booking but will not charge the card until the day of arrival. Please note that, as with most hotels, there are terms and conditions around cancellations so you should check what period of notice is required for free cancellation when booking. When you have booked a room, please let Peter McGowan or Noel Rice know so that we can compile a list of all members who plan to make the trip.

## Mourne Mountain Rescue Team cheque presentation

The Mourne Mountain Rescue Team was the first to be established in Ireland in 1962 and consists entirely of 36 volunteers all living close to the Mourne Mountains. Now they are fund raising to build their own new storage space in Newcastle. The new store, which will be located at Shan Slieve Drive and Bryansford Road, at the foot of the Mourne Mountains, will also provide the team with the space it needs to develop a new facility, future-proofing the organisation and its ability to continue providing a lifesaving service. The committee proposed to donate £ 2000 to the Team as we have had to call upon them a few times during the last few years and to show our appreciation for their work. A motion to do so was endorsed by the membership at the AGM and the presentation took place on 1 December at Meelmore Lodge where 46 club members joined 16 of the MMRT volunteers for the presentation of the cheque.



It was a great turn out and the chairpersons of both expressed their appreciation for the donation and the work done by the volunteers. We hope to call upon them as little as possible.



## The Council's Mourne Gateway proposal for the Mourne Gondola

The Mourne Gateway project was first consulted upon in 2017 and in 2023 both Mountaineering Ireland and UFRC expressed their opposition to the proposal to establish a large visitor centre in to be reached by gondola from Donard Park. The council's website can give an impression of the current proposal for which consultants have been appointed (<https://www.newrymournedown.org/mournes-gateway>). Helen Lawless for Mountaineering Ireland has done a lot of analysis of similar mountain gondola plans and was able to demonstrate that in almost all cases where this has been done in the UK or Ireland, they have failed to generate the projected numbers of tourists and hence the costs of running these operations has been substantial. The council hopes to attract 365,000 people a year to the attraction, but this seems unreasonably optimistic when the Nevis Range Cable car reaches 200,000 including skiers and the Cairngorm funicular having  $\pm$ 150,000 visitors. It will offer a 5 min gondola ride and visit to an and a look from the visitor's centre to the admitted beautiful view of the Newcastle, the Murlough area and Dundrum. However, on many days the visitor will not be able to see this view and then it is likely that a trip to an interpretation centre with information about what you could have done in the Mourne, but not from out with the centre, is going to be a disappointing experience for a price tag of £25 pp or more. What one does with possible 3-4000 visitors on a day like that is not well addressed in the proposals. It would be much better for tourism and tourist spend in the Newcastle area if the lower parts of the mountains were developed into well sign posted tracks where families could walk safely without having to consult maps. New walks could be developed by a greenway between Bloody Bridge and Donard park and the linking of Tollymore Park with Donard park by a short stretch of an easy accessible path or walkway. Facilities for mountain biking could also be improved in the area by uplifts to Drinahilly where one could also establish zip lines and other activities such as mountain biking.

At present there is a petition organised by Any Garden against the current gondola proposal at



<https://my.actnowni.org/petitions/stop-the-mourne-mountains-gondola-project>.

**Please consider signing it.**