

# MOURNE RAMBLING GROUP NEWSLETTER

## March 2025



In this issue we report on

- The death of Christine Mackle our president on 6 January of this year. The text is courtesy of the Anne Trainor and Shelagh Murphy
- Dingle trips present and past
- Training
- A call from the chair for new walk leaders
- The weather
- As well as reminding you of the renewal of your membership for 2025.

### **Death of our president Christine Mackle**

Shortly after Jim and Christine Mackle came to Kilkeel they began reading Clarence Chesney's Rambling Notes which appeared in the local newspaper the Outlook (as referenced in The Mourne Observer "celebrating 50 years of walking in the Mournes"); these notes described in detail the walk done the previous Sunday by a very small group. Jim and Christine were interested in getting to know the Mournes and asked could they join the group. This was in 1969 and Jim became Chairman in 1971 and continued in 1972/73. This shows that Jim and Christine were an integral part of the Mourne Ramblers almost from its beginnings. They hardly ever missed a Sunday, Jim leading on many occasions. Sadly, Jim died in 1984 but Christine continued walking in the group. Even when she no longer walked the interest never left her wanting to know where they had walked, who was there, what trips were planned etc. So it was no surprise that when she was asked if she would accept the role of President she was delighted to accept. We don't know what year this was.



She attended the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

## **Dingle Trip**

The Mourne Ramblers away trip to the Dingle Peninsula in May 2025 is almost upon us. It will take place from 18<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> May. This will allow for travelling down to Kerry on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> May, 3 full days of hiking on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, returning home on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

The travelling group currently numbers 30 and will be based in the Rose Hotel, Tralee for the duration of the trip. B Grade walks on the trip will be led by Andrew McKibbin and C Grade walks will be led by Ian Stuart and Peter McGowan.

If there is anyone still interested in attending but has not yet registered, there is still time to book a place. For 4 nights B&B plus 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. You can book a room by contacting either Larissa or Maeve at the Rose Hotel on 00353 (0) 667199100. Let them know you are part of the Mourne Ramblers Group. 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.

If you do book a room let either Noel Rice ([noelrice@btinternet.com](mailto:noelrice@btinternet.com)) or Peter McGowan ([ptmcgowan@btinternet.com](mailto:ptmcgowan@btinternet.com)) know as they are compiling a list of attendees and need your contact details for disseminating further information both before and during the trip. Also, if you are interested in attending but need more information before deciding please contact either Noel or Peter.

## **Training news from Ian Stuart**

### Navigation Training

Last year we ran 2 Basic Navigation Courses, one in August and a second in September, these were well attended with 9 members on each. Several people had to drop out due to conflicting commitments; with them alone we could nearly run another Basic course. We

will be seeking to schedule a course later this year so email me to express your interest in attending on either a Saturday or a Sunday.

A slightly higher priority is arranging a couple of Refresher Days specifically for those who attended the Basic courses, but equally open to any Club member who wishes to use a structured opportunity to practice what they have previously learned but may have not used sufficiently frequently. I will be seeking to identify suitable dates and will email the Club soon with more information. In the meantime, please let me know if you are interested in coming along. It would run from about 9am to around 4pm in the Mournes. You can get me at: [cjianstuart@icloud.com](mailto:cjianstuart@icloud.com).

### Leadership Workshop

Last year we flagged our intention to run a workshop for new and existing leaders, but time ran away on us and it didn't happen. Our objective is now to run the workshop on Saturday, 7<sup>th</sup> June. Maggie Pridgen has very kindly got us permission to use St John's premises in North Belfast on that day. I will be working out the detailed agenda for the day in the next couple of weeks. However, we will focus on route planning and people management skills rather than navigation or First Aid. If you would be interested in attending the workshop and are free on 7<sup>th</sup> June then email me at the above address.

## **A call from the Peter McGowan for new walk leaders**

Our club continues to grow year on year in terms of membership and to date we have endeavoured to provide a full programme of walks every Sunday. However, it has not been possible to guarantee a weekly walk for all grades from A to D due to a lack of leaders. In some cases, the programme is dependent on a small handful of leaders being willing to step forward time after time to lead the scheduled hikes.

We understand that not all members can make the commitment to become walk leaders. However, there are others who have the ability and experience to lead walks, and we would appeal to them to step forward and help us to deliver successful programmes for years to come.

Training and support will be provided, and existing leaders are happy to mentor and guide potential new recruits in the leadership role. There is an established support network among current leaders, and we regularly share ideas, thoughts and advice between leaders.

In addition, many group leaders would be happy to let you 'shadow' them during a walk to give you a sense of what it's like to lead: what decisions they have to make, how to gauge the fitness level of the group, keeping up group morale, and changing the route due to considerations of the weather or the make-up of the group. You'll learn quickly you're never on your own!

To find out more about what's involved, we would ask anyone who may be interested in becoming a walk leader to contact the appropriate committee representative for their grade for an informal chat:

A/B Group - Robert Campbell - [RobertPCampbell@hotmail.com](mailto:RobertPCampbell@hotmail.com)

C Group – Peter McGowan – [ptmcgowan@binternet.com](mailto:ptmcgowan@binternet.com)

D Group - Fionnuala Carragher - [f.carragher21@gmail.com](mailto:f.carragher21@gmail.com)

## **A Dingle Trip from the Archives C group report from Ray Gray**

Ten of us at varying times made up the number on this trip from 26-30 May 2017 - Alice McParland, Hilja McMahon, Toni Taylor, Mary O'Dea, Noel Rice, Gabriel McAuley, Kingsley Thompson, Norman Patton, Dermot MacDermott and Ray Gray. The aim of the C Group was to cover the same walks as the B Group, but at a much easier pace. None of us are getting any younger, particularly yours truly!

### **Day 1. Stradbally and Beenoskee**

This was our opening bid. The weather forecast, although for dry weather, predicted mist on the tops. As these hills are local to Annascaul where we were based we did not wish to venture very far until we had the "feel of the mountains" This proved to be a great day and an excellent opener. We covered 16km with over 1000m of ascent. This was accomplished in seven and a half hours which gives a clue as to our steady pace! The only downside was that we did not enjoy much in the way of views above 600m due to the mist.

### **Day 2. Carrauntoohil**

This was the big day! The weather forecast was much improved and for once became reality. Our route was through the Hag's Glen and up the Devil's Ladder. Our return was via the Zig Zags. This added a couple of kilometres onto the journey but was much preferred to descending via the Beenkeragh Ridge. We left that to the B Group! The walk was 13.5km with well over 1000m of ascent. We were on the hill for just short of 8 hours. Quite a day!

### **Day 3. Slieve Mish Mountains**

This was another day with a poor weather forecast. Although it remained dry, again the mist was a problem the higher we climbed. There were one or two clear spells where spectacular views were to be seen, albeit briefly. This walk started and finished at sea level and included the summits of Bautregaum, Caherconree and Gearhane. We covered over 14km and ascent was a little short of 1100m. We were on the hill for 7 hours and it was another enjoyable day.

To conclude, I would like to express my thanks to Andrew McKibbin for organising the trip and also to personally thank Norman for assisting me in leading the C Group.

I look forward to next year!

## Terrible weather

Who doesn't like to complain about the weather, but I think it was a first in a long time in the history of the Mourne Ramblers that all walks were cancelled on Sunday 23 February due to the prevailing weather conditions, mixture of rain, cold and wind. This follows on from storm Eowyn on 26 January when just 7 brave walkers made it out. The damage of the latter storm is still not cleared up in terms of trees that have fallen. All groups still encounter situations of walking over, under or around fallen trees and the amount of tree damage is so great that it is likely that this will persist for the foreseeable future as indicated in the excerpt of the Mourne Heritage Trust Newsletter.

Unfortunately, it doesn't look as if this is the end of the storms. The continuing global warming makes storms more and more intensive and "energetic". As all indicators of sustainability are getting worse rather than better, it is likely that we will see more damage and more intensive storms. Unfortunately no good news on this front.

### Excerpt from the Mourne Heritage Trust newsletter

*"The aftermath of Storm Darragh in December was daunting enough, but when Storm Eowyn followed swiftly in January, our team faced an even greater challenge. The relentless winds and torrential rain left a trail of destruction across Castlewellan, Rostrevor, and the surrounding green lanes, demanding an immense clean-up effort.*

*In Castlewellan, fallen trees blocked key routes, and debris was scattered across roads and pathways. Our team worked relentlessly to clear access routes, ensuring that essential passage was restored as quickly as possible. Rostrevor also suffered severe damage, with roads and trails obstructed by fallen trees and branches. Clearing these areas has been a major undertaking, requiring heavy equipment and coordinated efforts to manage the sheer scale of the debris.*

*Beyond these locations, the green lanes that crisscross the countryside were left impassable.*

*While immediate hazards have been addressed, the full impact of Storms Darragh and Eowyn will be felt for years. The scale of destruction is immense, and though recovery efforts continue, the damage to the landscape and infrastructure is far reaching."*

REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY DONE SO!!! Only £20, a steal!