

More holiday crowds and another chance to have an ice cream. The castle on its dolerite pedestal has seen it all: the Votadini in the iron age, the Romans' beacon, the Anglo-Saxon fort, the Norman one, the first artillery defeat of a castle during the Wars of the Roses (at the hands 'our lot'), Armstrong's restorations, and now the coach trips. More modern but still interesting were the many wartime pillboxes and extensive anti-tank installations along this coast.

Hearing we were there, Derek jumped in his car and drove to us and straight past us before realising his error and doubled back to take three back to the bunkhouse. Richard the Younger continued along the coast to Bundle Bay and returned by inland rights of way to Springfield Farm (a mile or so inland from Seahouses). Two other pairs took a more direct route back from Bamburgh along paths and tracks to complete the round. Altogether about 17 miles but with little ascent compared to our usual routes.

It was another lovely evening inland and after a meal and some wine those wishing to chat moved outside leaving others to doze in the bunkhouse's comfortable chairs. Several of those attending had returned from Bulgaria just a week earlier so there were plenty of tales to tell from that trip. As on the night before, our group was earlier to bed than most others on the site and much earlier to rise. After the day's exercise all slept well.

The forecast was for a good morning and worsening afternoon weather so a 730 breakfast was called for.

It was 753 when King Oswald gave Lindisfarne to St Aidan for his monastery and it soon became a place of pilgrimage.



It was 950 when many of us set out on the Pilgrims' Way route across the sands from that Holy Island back to the mainland. A 1245 low tide should allow ample time for the crossing following the poles.

The President chauffeured some to the start and lingered to snap our departure. Removing footwear at the start we heard a persistent low moaning noise and thought it might be the wind over the sands but it turned out to be a couple of colonies of seals on a sandbank. Half-way across, we met lain going the other way. He turned to join us but declined to climb the refuge tower as we passed it. Other 'pilgrims' were wallowing in the silty hollows and getting 'clarted up' but with firmer footing we sidestepped the problems and remained unbesmirched. The 'sensible' advice is to join the 1954 motor causeway when you reach the South Low River at Beal Sands but we decided to give it a try and it 'went' at knee-depth rinsing the silt off our legs. Less than two hours for the crossing even at our leisurely pace.

The President and First Lady elected to stay on firmer ground, walking past Lindisfarne Castle to visit Gertrude Gekyll's

walled garden, then continuing to the impressively tall pyramid at Emmanuel Head passing a profusion of wild flowers along the way, including wild orchids, and striking black and red five-spot burnet moths pupating among the plants. Meanwhile, Mick had headed south for a walk over Windy Gyle in the Cheviot and Richard the First was visiting the Alne Valley Railway, just outside Alnwick, then mounting the recumbent giant lady Northumberlandia working from head to toe before going to George Stephenson's birthplace cottage near Wylam. Derek was checking that part of yesterday's route around Low Newton. Later Dotti was going mountain biking before camping in wet conditions. Richard and Michael checked out the view of Holy Island from Lowmoor Point hide then visited Druridge Bay for a stroll and a cuppa.

Certainly a different type of meet.

One of our Club characters and senior member, WCIC, is fond of saying "There's nothing so ex as an ex-president." I appreciated the truth of this when I was designated meet leader for this meet and realised I was Club's the third choice. The previous two having had to withdraw on account of work commitments.

MS



Part of the crew near Bamburgh

Attending:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| John Whalley, President | Dorothy Heaton |
| Carol Whalley | Richard Gowing |
| Mick Borroff | Derek Smithson |
| Philip Dover | Michael Smith |
| Evelyn Dover, Guest | |

Mourne Mountains

24th -26th July

By Friday evening 12 members and guests had arrived for the Club's annual long walk, at the Mourne Lodge in Attical using a variety of routes. The Whalley's and Hick/Marriotts took the ferry from Stranraer to Belfast.

Dover/Horn/Boroff and Taylor flew from Leeds to Belfast and hired a car. The Smiths also rented a car but flew into Dublin from Robin Hood. The arrangements were less complicated for our Northern Ireland member and meet organiser, Tim, who simply had to navigate from Ballycastle.

The Mourne Lodge (Cnocnafeola) is a community run hostel with, as its Director, volunteer Mairead White MBE, a retired cookery teacher. It seemed an onerous job requiring great commitment to run such a business as a volunteer. The Lodge does employ a small number of locals and was providing work experience for two young French girls.

We had a warm welcome albeit only in the friendly sense (it was distinctly chilly temperature-wise) but it was a idiosyncratically run. One returned from walking to find previously cast aside dirty walking trousers and T shirts neatly hanging in the wardrobe and suitcases re-packed, zipped and relocated: whilst the bathroom was left untouched.

The focus for the long walk was the Mourne Wall Walk. The wall was constructed to prevent incursion by sheep and cattle into the catchment area of the Silent Valley reservoir. It also provided employment during hard times in the early 20th century. The wall is impressive and in parts looks like a military installation with turrets. On average the wall is about 1.5 metres high and nearly a metre thick.



It is 22 miles (35 km) long and passes over fifteen mountains including Slieve Donard the highest in Northern Ireland. However this was insufficiently challenging for our member from Dacre who proposed a variation - the Eastern section which only skirted one mountain should be dropped and the central ridge which included four more tops should replace it! In fact this proved to be an excellent suggestion as the scenery was superb.

The first party of Smiths, David and Beth were dropped off at the Silent Valley car park at 7.00am and immediately set off to do the walk anti clockwise. They didn't hang about because although it was clear and sunny there was a brisk wind and it was chilly. The second party of Mick, Richard and Roger set off clockwise. After an hour or so party 1 were puzzled why they couldn't see the others. Perhaps we should have had a discussion before we left. Typical YRC!

The clockwise route is described by Mick:
"Mick, Richard, Roger left the car park at 0715 and with no sight of the previously dropped-off party, headed across the reservoir dam to commence a clockwise round of the twelve peaks over 610m along the High Mourne Ridge. The Mourne wall was quickly reached and after some gymnastics to cross it, we negotiated a wide section of blanket bog with just one pair of wet feet. Roger had a near-miss after a large granite boulder detached itself at a hole in the Wall. The first summit of Slievenagloagh followed soon after.

The Wall was then followed over Slieve Muck, Carn Mountain and Slieve Loughshannagh to a switchback over

the first three 700m peaks of Slieve Meelbeg, Slieve Meelmore and Slieve Bearnagh.



Richard Taylor and Roger Horn on Slieve Muck

The latter is topped by a large tor reminiscent of the northern Arran ridges necessitating a scramble to stand on its summit. After another bite to eat at Hare's Gap, Roger decided to ease his foot cramps and descend to return via the Ben Crom and Silent Valley reservoirs.

Mick and Richard continued, passing Michael and Helen on the slopes of Slievenagloch (the second one!) on their anti-clockwise route. The long ascent over Slieve Corragh to the watch tower on Slieve Commedagh was completed, bringing Slieve Donard into our sights. Richard elected not to follow the Wall up Donard, but descended to follow the path beside the two reservoirs back to the car park. Mick ground his way up the steep flight of steps beside the Wall to the Donard summit with its trig point unusually sited on top of the watch tower. Numerous school children were passed again on the descent back to the col before heading southwest to tackle the remaining third of the circuit, leaving the Mourne Wall at this point.

A somewhat gentler traverse below The Castles crags following the old smuggler's trail of the Brandy Pad led Mick to another col and then up to the summit of Slieve Beg and the Devil's Coachroad over to Cove Mountain. The sixth 700m peak of Slievemagan was brought underfoot before a long descent to a col overlooking the Ben Crom dam. Another long climb up to the final 700m summit tor on Slieve Binnian passed a group of boulderers at The Back Castles (at this point Mick could have happily borrowed their climbing mat for a well-earned snooze). The Mourne Wall was regained and followed steeply down to Wee Binnian and Moolieve which was bypassed to access the track close to the dam.

Mick thankfully reached the Silent Valley gates at 2115 where Tim was waiting to whisk him back to the Mourne Lodge for a late dinner. For the statistically minded the GPS data for Mick's Mourne: were 36.1km distance, 3,033m cumulative ascent, overall time 14 hrs with 11.5 hours moving at an average speed of 3.1 km/hr."

The anti-clockwise team initially moved together. We didn't meet many people at all until bumping into the Presidential party. After the Devil's Coachroad, David and Beth chose to

traverse the Brandy Pad to Hares' Gap and return via the Silent Valley as did Helen after climbing Slieve Donard, Commedagh and the ridge to Hares' Gap. The view of the Mourne Wall climbing (again!) Up Bearnagh was a step too far. In fact all but two of the seven who set out for the long walk and 11 walkers in total returned by the three hour Silent Valley 'shortcut'.



Richard Taylor and Roger Horn following the Mourne Wall towards the summit tors of Slieve Bearnagh

Michael continued anticlockwise and was rather miffed at getting his feet wet descending from his final summit - the aptly named Slieve Muck. He arrived back at the hostel at 19.10 - a 12 hour day.

Everyone had a long day out. The Presidential party as Carol writes, " ... left the Mourne Lodge in Attical very early on Saturday morning. Paul Dover, Tim Lofthouse, John and I were in Tim's car as we arrived at a very windy Silent Valley Mountain Park. No-one was around, except the gate keeper, who informed us that the park wouldn't open for a couple of hours, but he let us in and wouldn't accept any money.

We took the road that led us past the Silent Valley Reservoir and up to a granite dam marking the bottom of yet another reservoir, this one by the name of Ben Crom. There we ascended a very steep path immediately on the right which took us up to intercept the Slieve Binnian path. That's where we bumped into Helen and Michael; closely followed by David and Beth who joined us for the next stretch as Helen and Michael disappeared ahead of us.

The path was rocky and indeterminate but after a hard slog we reached the top of Slievelamagan, followed by Cove Mountain, which is where we stopped for a quick look over Devil's Coachroad, before ascending Slieve Beg and our long awaited lunch. The weather was much improved by now and we'd all got rid of our heavy winter clothing and looked almost summery.

As we descended the path towards Slieve Donard, we stopped at the old smugglers route (Brandy Pad) to marvel at the magnificent granite tors: the Castles. It was there we decided, as we happily chatted and basked in sunshine, that we'd make our way back along Brandy Pad towards Hares' Gap and the Mourne Wall. As we approached the Wall we

caught sight of Michael and Helen coming off the ridge - Michael disappeared onwards whilst Helen and Roger joined us for the last leg of our journey.

After a quick greeting, we set off traversing the edge of Slieve Bearnagh, gradually descending towards Ben Crom Reservoir, pausing only to cross the River Killeel, then back down to the Silent Valley and our awaiting car."

All but one of the party (and we did save him some dinner) assembled at 7.45 for a veritable feast of a meal provided by Mairead and her team. She certainly put the skills from her early career to good use. Wholesome soup; homemade bread: salad followed by a main course choice of fish pie or pork - not forgetting the dessert of ginger/kiwi cake and raspberry trifle with "4 tablespoons of Napoleon brandy" - just the ticket after such an energetic day.

There was some hobbling as people moved very capily to the dining table and it was quite reassuring that even our youngest guest by at least 40 years was not moving easily!

All had taken advantage of the opportunity to extend their visit to Ireland. On Friday the Leeds fly drive team had completed an 18 km walk in the south west Mournes including the heathery dome of Eagle Mountain (638m) and the summits of Shanlieve (627m) and Finlieve (579m). It provided a rather intimidating view of what was to come on Saturday's long walk route.

A bog road led back towards Attical where Paul according to Mick "happily investigated a combined potato farm and microbrewery". The Smiths on Monday did the three 'bird' tops (Hen; Cock and Pigeon) of the Western Mournes. The President and Carol drove off to Connemara to visit friends. Two parties visited the Giant's Causeway and other attractions of Antrim and the Sunday washout 'forced' visits to the Bushmills distillery and a pub in Belfast.

Prior to arrival in the Mournes the Smiths had visited Skerries and stood in the exact spot where Percy French was inspired to write 'The Mountains of Mourne', ".....he's wishful like me, To be back where the dark Mourne sweeps down to the sea."

Clearly our President fully intends to be back as Mairead was muttering that he had left with his room key!

The scenery is good. It's a super area and well worth a visit. Our thanks to Tim for organising the meet and for his ferrying of people to the start and finish of the walk. Also thanks to Tim and his wife for accommodating four members when they moved north to explore the delights of County Antrim.

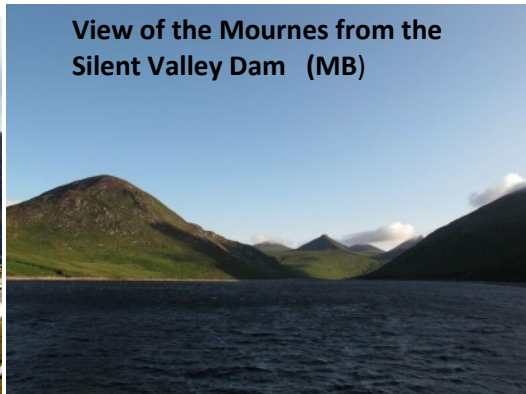
This is your scribe's first meet report since Saas Grund in 1987. I guess it was OK for female guests to be in Switzerland because it was 'foreign'. Nevertheless publication of the article in the club journal was described by some as 'the thin end of the wedge' The wedge must have been a bit thicker than they feared because it's taken another 28 years to make my second contribution as a now fully paid up member of the YRC!

HJS

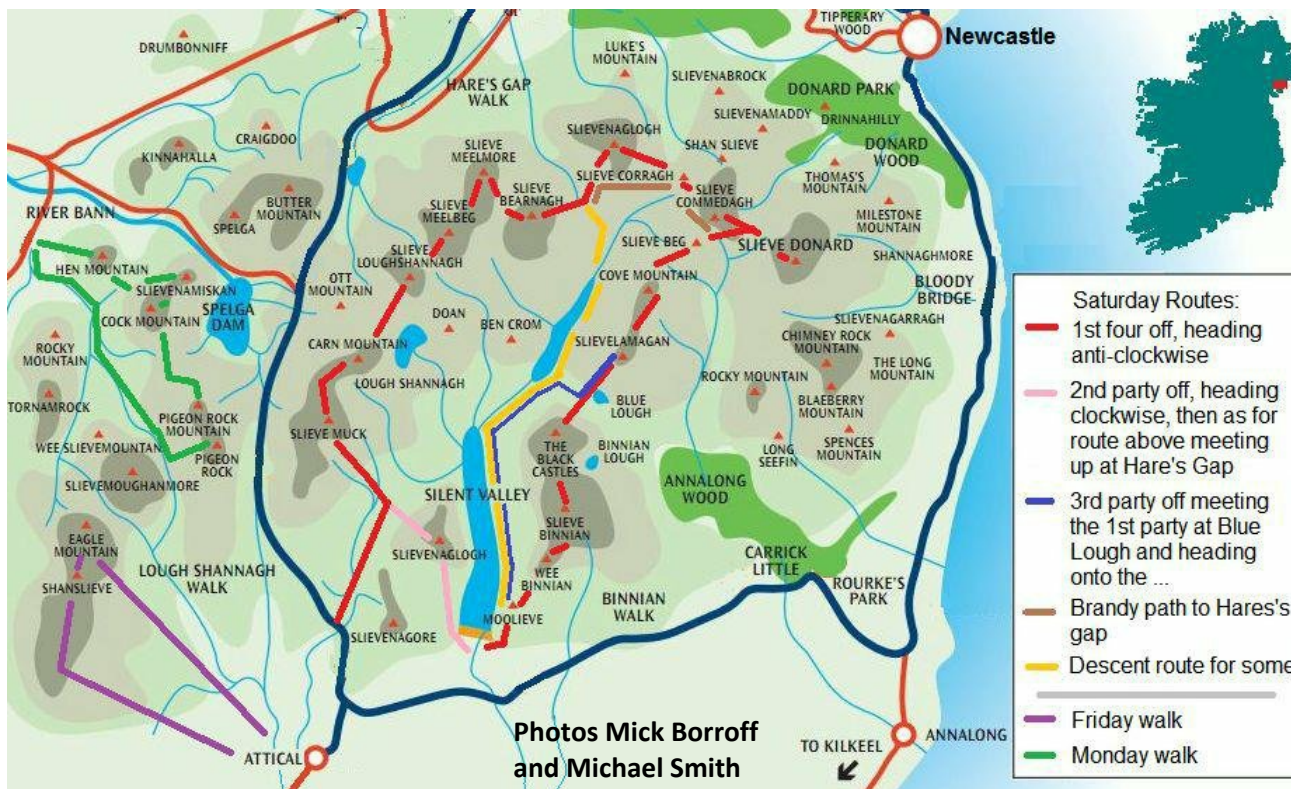
Slieve Bearnagh (MS)



View of the Mourne from the Silent Valley Dam (MB)



- Attendance
 John Whalley - President
 Carol Whalley
 Mick Boroff
 Paul Dover
 Roger Horn (PM)
 Richard Taylor
 Beth Marriott (G)
 Christine Marriott (G)
 David Hick
 Tim Lofthouse
 Helen Smith
 Michael Smith



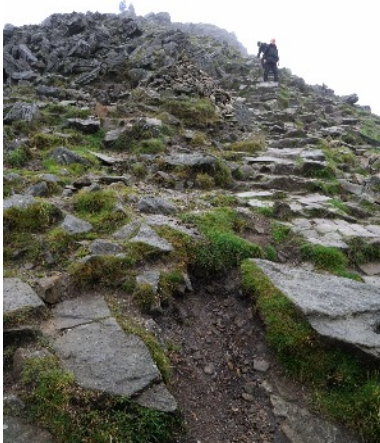
INTRODUCTORY MEET, LOWSTERN

Aug 28 -30

The meet began on Thursday evening with the arrival of contingents of Dovers and Devenports.

On Friday, a day of increasing showers, they all ascended Ingleborough via Gaping Gill, reaching the summit in cloud and rain. They descended in two parties by various routes to Newby and then back to Lowstern, a total of 13.5 miles.

By Saturday morning the rest of the meet had arrived, representing an age span certainly over 65 years. Excursions onto the local hills were made; one intrepid pair of mature mountaineers made a direct assault on the SW face of Ingleborough, reaching the summit after much travail.



Photos John Whalley

