

MOURNE RAMBLERS NEWSLETTER

March 2021

A message from the Editor

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

As we continue to exist under the current restrictions, it is difficult to accept that there have been no organised walks yet in 2021 for the Mourne Rambling Group.

Since the last issue of the group newsletter in November, sadly, we have lost a further two of our formerly most active members. I refer to the deaths of Brian Martin and Loretto Coyle, highly valued and hard-working members in the Mourne Rambling Group. This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to Brian and Loretto. Gerry Farrington, on behalf of Brian, and Gordon McCreery, on behalf of Loretto, have provided most appropriate articles outlining their lives including their value to the Mourne Rambling Group.

The last page of the newsletter reminds members of all who have paid for the year 2021.

Vincent Trainor, Editor

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NEW MEMBERS SINCE LAST NEWSLETTER UP TO AND INCLUDING
06 MARCH 2021

Mary McLaughlin, Jayne Simpson, Bernie Brown, Sharon Connolly.

We welcome these new members to the Mourne Rambling Group.
We wish them many years of enjoyable rambling.

We are delighted to welcome back to the group
Monica McClay, Nancy Quartey-Papafio, Dymphna Sands and Sarah Newell.

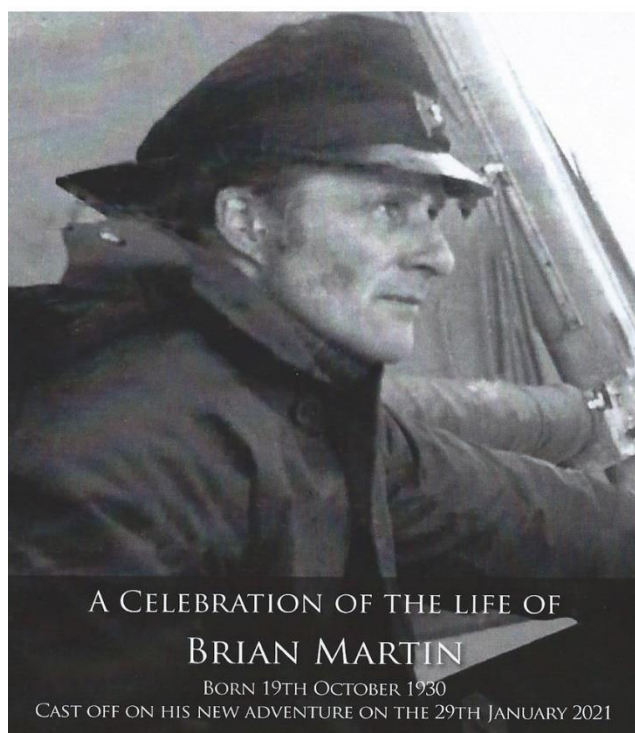
BRIAN MARTIN

Compiled by Gerry Farrington with frequent recourse to his son Kieran's spoken tribute at Brian's funeral.

Brian passed away on 29 January 2021, aged 90. He did so peacefully in a nursing home in north Belfast. His death was not Covid related, but due to a long and unimaginably difficult, very privately fought struggle with Parkinson's disease.

For more than a decade Brian was a colossal contributor to the Mourne Rambling Group leading A, B and C groups throughout the year in the Mournes. He led and also, until Harry Goodman joined him in a dynamic duo, organised a dozen or more 4-day trips to many of the mountain ranges in Ireland, and also to Snowdonia and the Lake District. Before he joined the Ramblers, he walked with the East Antrim group and had several Donegal Highlander annual challenge walks under his belt.

Brian was born in 1930. He was aged 9 when war broke out. The austerity of the 1930s and a war time childhood moulded and tempered Brian, as it did the rest of his generation. They were incredibly robust and stoic, able to endure without complaint whatever life threw at them. These strengths were to endure to see him through his final illness in locked down isolation from everyone, even his closest and dearest.



Brian lived a very full and adventurous life. He and his family hid under the stairs as most of the street was destroyed during the 1941 Belfast Blitz. Shortly afterwards, like so many of his generation, Brian was evacuated to the safety of a remote countryside location far from home. In his teens he developed a lifelong passion for the sea and seafaring. In 1947, aged 16, he joined the Merchant Navy as a trainee engineer. His love of the sea and his creative ability led him into designing and building boats culminating in four yachts all built in his own garden. In addition to sailing, Brian was passionately keen on motor sport. We always knew that Brian was at our Sunday walks when there was a yellow MG or red Audi in the car park.

His family recall his extraordinary versatility and incredible talent for building and fixing,

Above: Brian "casting off on his new adventure" on the front page of the order of his funeral service which lasted a lifetime. Indeed, our own Toni

Taylor can attest to his skill in repairing and restoring a well-loved, historically interesting *graip* (hay fork). Kieran says "There was very little he could not fix, from installing electrical systems and heating in the house, to overhauling and repairing motorcycle and car engines. It almost seemed that nothing was beyond his capabilities". Above all, Brian was an extraordinarily gifted designer and worker in wood; and he provided the family with an array of superbly finished items of furniture (see figure 7).

While sailing with the North Belfast Boat Club Brian met his wife, Claire. They married in 1961 and enjoyed many years of sailing in Strangford Lough, across the north channel to Port Patrick and the Galloway Coast. Their greatest passion, however, was to head for the Hebrides. Kieran recalls that for the three children, Sheelagh, Kieran and Barry, "every summer holiday consisted of a three-week adventure, and every year a different journey." Indeed, during those years only two annual trips to the Western Isles were missed, but this was due "to the next boat being a work in progress". Friends had their reward by helping to crew the creation that they had helped to build.

Brian also had an unusually eventful working life. He was first employed as a draughtsman, then as a precision engineer and designer. His robust resilience served him and his family well in his surviving a

succession of business closures, including the high-profile collapses of Mackie's textile machinery manufacturers in West Belfast and the aircraft construction company Lear Fan. For several years Brian and a business partner ran a boat building yard in Carrickfergus before it too faltered due to a chain of bankruptcies of their clients in the recession hit 1980s. It was then that Brian joined Lear Fan, following the closure of which he worked for North West Design where in their design department he acquired a patent for a seat belt buckle that allowed easy release in the event of an RTA. In the 1990s he continued working into his late sixties after finally having found a company that survived to retire from, RDF in Dunmurry. Here, once again he excelled at the cutting edge, in the design of life rafts and escape chutes. This led to various adventures testing the company's products, including jumping into the icy waters of Belfast Lough and the freezing North Sea in winter!!

So, before joining the Mourne Ramblers Brian had lived a full and adventurous life both on land and at sea. We only got to know him late on in his 90-year Odyssey. But oh boy, didn't he pack every minute into his so called "declining years".

Throughout his seventies Brian was a prolific and popular leader for the Mourne Rambling Group. He planned and led many of our Sunday 5-6 hour walks in the Mournes and more than a dozen 3-4-day trips away in Ireland, the Lake District and Snowdonia. He made many friends in the Group. He also worked tirelessly for the Mourne Heritage Trust erecting and repairing styles, clearing rhododendron and undertaking painstaking surveys of vegetation and mobile phone coverage.

Either with small groups of Ramblers, or as a duo, Brian and I scrambled and climbed together in the rugged Cuillin of Skye and amongst the amazing verticality of the Dolomites. There, in 2008 Brian in his late 70s was still clambering up steep snow and rock, much to the admiration and amazement of seasoned Alpine climbers. In 2004 he skippered an elite crew of Ramblers (Domnall McComish and Donald Bell) on a sailing cruise from Tobermory to Skye and back.

Finally, I would like to share with you two cherished memories of Brian. The first is set in the Mournes. We were accompanied by Kieran's dog, JR, and were passing a copse of Scots Pine. Startled by JR, a red squirrel ran up my trouser leg, onto the top of my pack, down the other leg and safely away into the heather. I can still see Brian's bemused expression as he tried to explain to me what had just happened. The second is of us overnighting at the top of a via ferrata on the crest of a Dolomite ridge in a five-person metal canister bivouac. We were being bombarded by deafening peels of thunder and blinded by flashes of forked lightning. I vividly recall Brian, always the technical professional, attempting to calm his four terrified MRG companions by explaining the miracle of the protection provided by a Faraday's cage.

Brian was a great walking companion. We shared a passion for the mountains and a liking for whisky. In the back of my mind, he will always be there in the hills, sitting on a "bum shaped" rock, and enjoying a snifter of his favourite malt distilled in the shadow of the Cuillin ridge. It is no surprise to learn from Kieran that Brian's wish is that part of his ashes should be scattered at sea and the other part in the Mournes.

To his friends in the Rambling Group Brian was affectionately known as "the wee man". The name may or may not have been an apt reflection of his physical stature but certainly and unquestionably in every other dimension Brian was a brave, resourceful and big-hearted giant to whom we, the Mourne Rambling Group, owe a huge debt of gratitude.



Figure 1 Brian & the MRG, Cuillin Ridge 2001 Figure 2 Brian and Eugene Daly, Cuillin 2002

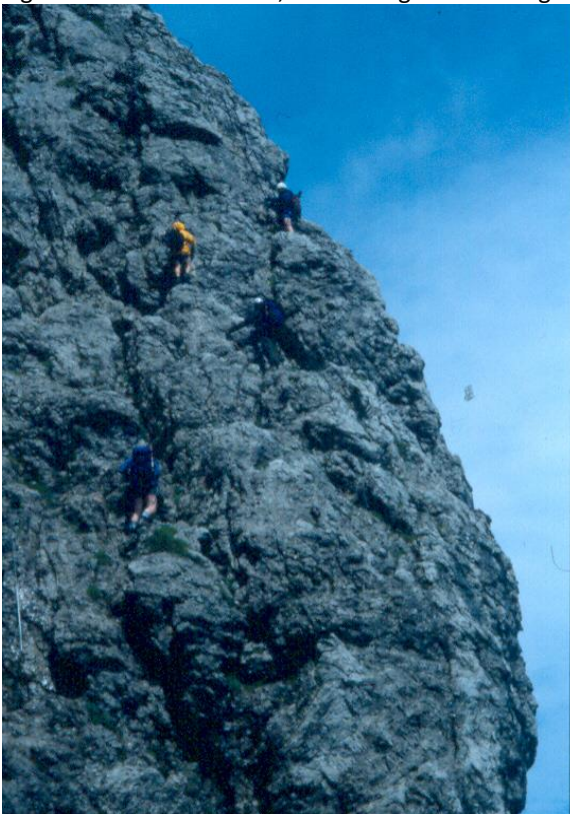


Figure 3 MRG* on Via Ferrata Zacchi 2001 Figure 4 Brian in the Pale di San Martino 2008
 * Brian in the yellow packlite

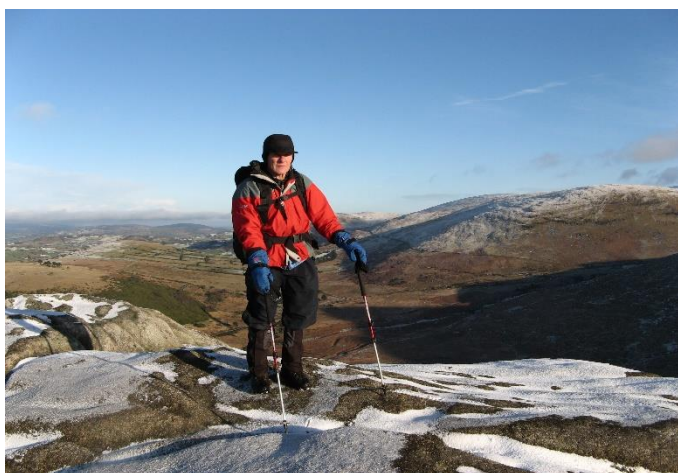


Figure 5 Hen Mountain Shortest Day 2009 aged 78 a few months after returning from the Dolomites



Figure 6 Slieve Bearnagh 2013, aged 82 still striding out Figure 7 Brian's design and woodwork



Figure 8 Slieve Meelbeg January 2011 aged 80

Loretto Coyle – Tribute

Right from school and college days Loretto was always into adventure and sport. At St Dominic's it was hockey and tennis. At UUJ it was hockey and netball. At Liverpool University she got the climbing bug and had her first taste of Scottish Munros. During her summer breaks she would head to the Alps to test and improve her climbing skills. Somewhere along the line she got into kayaking to add to her list of skills. Having played for Pegasus Netball at UUJ, she was selected for the NI Netball squad, and during her years on the team she was lucky enough to tour with them to the West Indies and New Zealand, where she was hosted by a couple who thereafter became lifelong friends. Loretto subsequently hosted them on a 3-week car/camping trip around Scotland and Ireland, and Loretto and I in turn visited them in New Zealand in 1998 for a hiking / cycling holiday. After netball she started playing basketball, and it was during a fun game that she landed awkwardly and smashed her knee – which left it weak thereafter and invariably painful on long difficult mountain descents.

As a lecturer in PE at St Mary's University College, Loretto accompanied her students on adventure and camping trips to the Pyrenees and encouraged them to experience the mountains and outdoor life in general. One of her frustrations was that despite her insistence that her talented footballing male students should attend these trips, on occasions she was overruled by the College and Football hierarchy who judged that County Football priorities trumped student trip participation. Another frustration was the reluctance of male students to embrace the teaching of dance to primary children, something that Loretto considered particularly important for their development. For several years Loretto also arranged and accompanied students on Erasmus Exchange programmes to Europe and to Boston USA.

It was not until 1988 that Loretto discovered the Mourne Rambling Group. Almost immediately she became a regular Sunday walker, and soon thereafter an A group leader, committee member, and, with David Oldfield, instructor on the first MRG training programmes. For many years she was the organiser of the Annual Slideshow and the Annual Christmas Dinner, and took the Chair in 2004/5. She was also involved in the early MRG website design and for several years liaised with the Mourne Heritage Trust.

Loretto particularly enjoyed the Donegal trips organised by David in the nineties. In one memorable trip to the chalets at Malin, she arrived late one Friday night, traipsed into a chalet, threw her gear on a bunk, only to be told by some bemused Germans that she was in the wrong chalet. Later Loretto organised trips herself, including weekend camping overnights on Rathlin, and bank holiday weekends to Donegal and Mayo. One memorable trip was to Leenane. No nice Leenane Hotel in those days! Accommodation was a bit more spartan – with members lodging in different B&Bs each with one or two bathrooms to support 8 or 9 people! The walking was definitely A group standard. The long Maam Turks route, notoriously tricky to navigate in misty weather using old Half-Inch maps, did indeed win the day as we went astray somewhere mid-route. Not to be outdone, after a late return to our B&B and a late dinner, 8 of us drove 10 miles through the mountains to Lough Nafooeey to find a pub with music, where we were able to waltz and ceilidhe dance the night away! There wasn't a stiff bone in the body next day.

Loretto's influence on the MRG can perhaps best be summed up by some examples from the many messages of support which Loretto's family and I have received in the last few days:

- *I will always remember the patience and kindness she showed me as a new walker.*
- *I have very fond memories of walking in the Mourne with Loretto and was inspired to take on some great mountain challenges.*
- *Loretto was a shining light of accomplishment, skill and empathy, and a long list of other admirable qualities.*
- *A walking friend who gave freely of her skills, knowledge and companionship.*
- *Loretto was inspirational – her heart of adventure, mischief and love for life spilled out.*
- *Memories abound of Loretto, striding gracefully over rock and heather, and scrambling blithely and effortlessly along the airy Cuillin ridge of Skye.*
- *She had such a force for life, and her adventure and enthusiasm for all outdoor activities will be missed by all of MRG.*

Apart from MRG Sunday walking and trips away, Loretto and I enjoyed over the years many walking, trekking, cycle-touring, ski-touring and snowshoeing holidays abroad, always on the lookout for a dancing opportunity. Sadly, Loretto's illness put all that on the back-burner. I will miss her.

Gordon McCreery

LORETTO COYLE OBITUARY

This obituary appeared in the Down Recorder and Mourne Observer.

Well known local educator and outdoor enthusiast Loretto Coyle passed away peacefully on 14 February. A former pupil of St Dominic's Grammar School in Belfast, she studied PE at the University of Ulster and subsequently gained a Master's degree in Education from Liverpool University. A keen sports student, she spent summers climbing in the Alps and was selected to represent Northern Ireland in netball, including touring with the team in New Zealand and the Caribbean.

Loretto's professional career in education spanned almost 30 years as lecturer for sports and physical education in St Mary's University College. Her caring and vivacious personality enabled her to make strong lifelong friends throughout her career, and she will be remembered warmly by generations of today's teachers in Northern Ireland to whom she imparted her love of sport, mountains and the active outdoor life.

Loretto settled in Newcastle in 1992 where she became an active part of the local community. She had a particular interest in local social and cultural heritage and was a member of the Lecale and Downe Historical Society. She played golf in the Royal County Down Golf Club, sang in the Mourne Community Choir and was a leading light in the Mourne Rambling Group.

Early retirement in 2006 allowed her to focus on a rich programme of energetic pastimes, including as a qualified mountain guide for international and local visitors to the Mourne. As a Blue Badge Tour Guide, she also provided knowledgeable backgrounds to some of our most beautiful and historic locations farther afield, most often for cruise ship visitors to Northern Ireland.

Her zeal for the outdoors and travel also took her around the world. Together with her partner Gordon, Loretto had numerous memorable cycling, walking and winter sports holidays abroad, including in the Dolomites, the Alps, the Pyrenees, in New Zealand, the Andes and the Rockies. But she had a special affection for the Mourne, and most Sunday mornings could be found hiking local mountain trails with Gordon and the Mourne Ramblers.

Coming from a large family herself, Loretto had many nieces and nephews who were able to spend summer holidays in Newcastle. She shared her love of County Down by organising and hosting enjoyable active outdoor experiences for them, and later, for their own children. In any given August, she could be seen with up to a dozen eager youngsters - climbing up Slieve Donard, walking along Murlough Beach or cycling between Dundrum and Newcastle.

Full of life and energy, and a music lover, Loretto was also an accomplished dancer. Until her illness with cancer in 2019 she shared her love of dance by teaching Salsa, Ballroom and Latin classes in the Annesley Hall for a faithful band of local dancers who will miss her greatly. She also worked with many prospective newlyweds to choreograph their "First Dance". Loretto and Gordon would regularly spend Saturday evenings at the Burrendale Hotel hoping that the live music would be suitable for dancing, and they would take to the floor at every opportunity, although in truth, Loretto could dance to any music.

Loretto had a strong Christian faith which underpinned her vitality and love of life. Her lively and generous spirit will be deeply missed, not only by Gordon and her family, but also by a wider circle of friends across County Down and beyond, with whom she shared her many enthusiasms.

Thanks

On behalf of both myself and the Coyle family circle, in particular sisters Ita and Ursula, who cared for Loretto during her last 6 months, I would like to thank all members who sent cards, letters and emails of condolence. The family and I have really appreciated, and indeed been humbled by, the many kind words and tributes received. We hope to respond individually in due course.

Many thanks.

Gordon



MEMBERS 2021

The list below contains the names of all members who have paid for 2021 (up to and including 06 March 2021). Please check to see if your name is on the list. If your name is not on the list and has been omitted, please accept our apologies. Please contact the Treasurer on 078 3512 8564 for clarification. If you wish to renew your membership for 2021 and have not already done so, the Treasurer would be grateful to receive your sub.

Abernethy	William	Hanna	Maire	Newell	Sarah
Acheson	George	Hanratty	Patrick	O'Neill	Sheena
Aitken	James	Henderson	Helen	Overend	Martin
Appleton	Philip	Herbison	Olwen	Patterson	Wendy
Black	Julian	Hughes	Seamus	Patton	Norman
Bolwell	Andy	Hughes	Teresa	Pettyfer	Mel
Brett	Adam	Hughes	Thomas	Pridgen	Maggie
Brett	Annie	Hulme	Joan	Proctor	Ian
Brown	Bernie	Jackson	Deenagh	Quarthey-Papafio	Nancy
Browne	Gary	Kelly	Pat	Quiery	Pamela
Browne	Geraldine	Kennedy	Alison	Quinn	Carmel
Buck	Malcolm	Kennedy	Stephen	Quinn	Poillin
Calvert	Joan	Keown	Ann	Ragg	Judith
Campbell	Robert	Knox	Victor	Reid	Ken
Carragher	Anna	MacDermott	Dermot	Rice	Noel
Carragher	Fionnuala	Mackey	Francis	Rima	Bert
Cauley	Irene	Magowan	Reg	Roulston	Robert
Chapa	Patricia	Magowan	Rodney	Russell	Trevor
Connolly	Patricia	Magowan	Terry	Sands	Dympna
Connolly	Raymond	Marshall	Robert	Scott	Barry
Connolly	Sharon	Matson	Neill	Simpson	Jayne
Conway	Martin	McAllister	Catherine	Smyth	Hazel
Curtin	Philippa	McCauley	Gabriel	Smyth	Raymond
Daly	Paula	McCavera	Dora	Sochor	Cecilia
Devlin	Malachy	McClay	Monica	Stapleton	Alan
Doran	Marie	McClelland	Gillian	Steele	Paul
Drinkell	Denis	McComish	Domnall	Stevenson	Graeme
Dunlop	Anne	McCreery	Gordon	Stuart	Ian
Farrington	Gerry	McDermott	Mary	Taylor	John
Franklin	Roisin	McGowan	Peter	Taylor	Toni
Gilmore	Seamus	McKenna	Vincent	Templeton	Helen
Goodman	Harry	McKibbin	Andrew	Thompson	Kingsley
Goodman	Stephen	McLaughlin	Mary	Trainor	Vincent
Gray	Ray	McLean	Bernard	Tumilty	Pat
Greaney	Ellen	McMahon	Hilja	Turley	Briege
Green	Wilf	McParland	Alice	Tweed	John
Gribbin	Rennie	Miskimmin	Mark	Wales	Jackie
Gunn	Philip	Moore	Anne	Watson	Linda
Hall	Brenda	Mulvenna	Conor	Webb	Donna
Hamilton	Joan	Murphy	Shelagh		119

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS 2021

Ciaran Hanna, Liam Dean, Liz Osborne, Robert Osborne, Anne Trainor

HONORARY MEMBER Christine Mackle (President)

Membership Renewal Form (January 2021)

Mourne Rambling Group

* **Name(s):** _____

* **Address:** (Only include if amendments are required)

* **Postcode** _____

* **Phone No:** _____

* **Mobile No:** _____

* **Email address** if available: (for receipt of newsletters and information from the committee)

Please let us have the email address where you wish to be contacted.

Please tick as appropriate:

☐ Full Membership at £25 per year (or part of year)

☐ Associate Membership (non-walking member) at £5 per year (or part of year)

Return to:

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

(Cheques made payable to Mourne Rambling Group. Please do not send cash in the post.)

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.

Please remember to include your name in online banking.

Please email Vincent letting him know you have paid.