

Nature's bounty

A self-guided walk in the foothills of the Mourne Mountains



Explore the lower slopes of Slieve Donard above Newcastle
Discover how different natural resources have been exploited
See how the landscape has been changed by human activities
Consider how we can sustain our use of the environment

www.discoveringbritain.org

*the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks*





This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

Contents

Introduction	3
Practical information	4
Route map and stopping points	6
Directions	7
Credits	11

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Cover image: Slieve Donard and its forested lower slopes above Newcastle, Albert Bridge, Geograph (CCL)

Nature's bounty

Discover a wealth of natural resources in the Mourne Mountains

Rock, soil, trees, rivers. These are some of the basic natural resources found across the countryside. They have also been exploited by humans throughout history.

This walk explores a spectacular hillside where 'the mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea'. Hidden in and around the Donard Forest is evidence of how this landscape has been used – and abused.



Explore a granite quarry and find out how the rock was transported down the mountainside. Find out why forested land was once cleared and has now been replanted. Learn about the impact of the hooves of cattle and sheep when they graze the land. Discover how the pure and plentiful water of the mountains is captured and transported away.



The 'pleasure grounds' of an old aristocratic estate reveal how people liked to enjoy nature's beauty but also how they manipulated it.

There's also an opportunity to think about how best to balance landscape conservation and protection with public access and recreation.

This fascinating walk takes in a forest, moorland and a river glen. Along the way there are some spectacular views to enjoy of the coastline and surrounding mountains.

Top: Thomas' Mountain Quarry © Howard Lunn
Bottom: Glen River © Jenny Lunn

Practical information

Location	Newcastle, County Down, Northern Ireland
Start and finish	Newcastle harbour, South Promenade BT33 0EZ
Getting there	<p>Car – Newcastle is about 30 miles due south of Belfast, 15 miles southwest of Downpatrick and 20 miles east of Newry.</p> <p>In Newcastle follow the one way system along the main street. At the end continue along the A2 main coastal road south (signposted Kilkeel and with brown signs for ‘Mourne Coastal Route’.</p> <p>After about half a mile, look for the Harbour House Inn on the left side. Here the road rises slightly with Newcastle Yacht Club on the left. On top of the rise, take the left fork (Quay Road). You can park by the wall on Quay Road or continue to the bottom and turn left into the free car park by the harbour.</p> <p>Bus – Newcastle is served by buses from most towns in the region. Alight at the bus station and either walk to the start (less than a mile) or catch a regular shuttle bus along the South Promenade to the harbour. Check with Translink before travel www.translink.co.uk</p> <p>Bicycle – Newcastle is at the end of National Cycle Route 99 which runs from Belfast south through County Down</p>
Walk distance	3 miles
Level	Challenging – Although the walk is not long, there is a steep ascent and descent with some uneven ground.
Terrain	Gravel path up mountainside (with steps), clamber onto loose quarry rocks (optional), uneven grassy path above forest, gravel track through forest, uneven rocky path down through forest (can be wet and slippery), short walk on pavements and paths along promenade.
Conditions	<p>Always be prepared for rain in the Mourne. Most of the walk is under the cover of trees but the middle section on the mountainside is exposed.</p> <p>Wear strong walking footwear; a walking pole may be useful for the ascent and descent.</p>
Best time to go	Visit on a clear, dry day in order to enjoy the views!

Suitable for

Families – But note the steep ascent and descent.

Dogs – A great walk for energetic dogs.

Refreshments

There is nowhere to stop en route. At the end of the walk (between Stop 16 and 17) there are a few shops and cafes, as well as The Harbour House Inn. There are also plenty of places for refreshment in Newcastle town.

Toilets

Public facilities on South Promenade between Bath Lane and the harbour.

Places to visit

Slieve Donard – An extension to this walk is to divert at Stop 14 and follow the Glen River uphill rather than downhill and climb some or all of Slieve Donard, the highest of the Mourne Mountains.

Recommended for experienced walkers only.

www.walkni.com/walks/344/slieve-donard-via-glen-river/

Silent Valley – Head Road, Annalong, BT34 4HU

Visit the spectacular reservoir nestled in the mountains that supplies Belfast's water and see parts of the Mourne Wall that protect the catchment. It is a 20 minute drive south from Newcastle first following the signs for 'Mourne Coastal Route' and shortly before Annalong turning right to follow the brown signs for 'High Mourne Scenic Loop'.

In the grounds is a network of marked trails, as well as play areas

Open daily from 10am to 6.30pm (May to Sept) and 10am to 4pm (Oct to April); entry charge for cars £4.50.

www.discovernorthernireland.com/Silent-Valley-Mountain-Park-Kilkeel-Newry-P16373

Delamont Country Park (four miles northeast of Downpatrick off the A22) 200 acre park on the shores of Strangford Lough with excellent walks and views; includes the enormous Strangford Stone.

Family friendly activities including outdoor adventure playground and miniature railway.

Open every day from 9am to dusk; charge for car parking.

www.discovernorthernireland.com/Delamont-Country-Park-Killyleagh-Downpatrick-P2883

Tourist information

Newcastle Visitor Information Centre

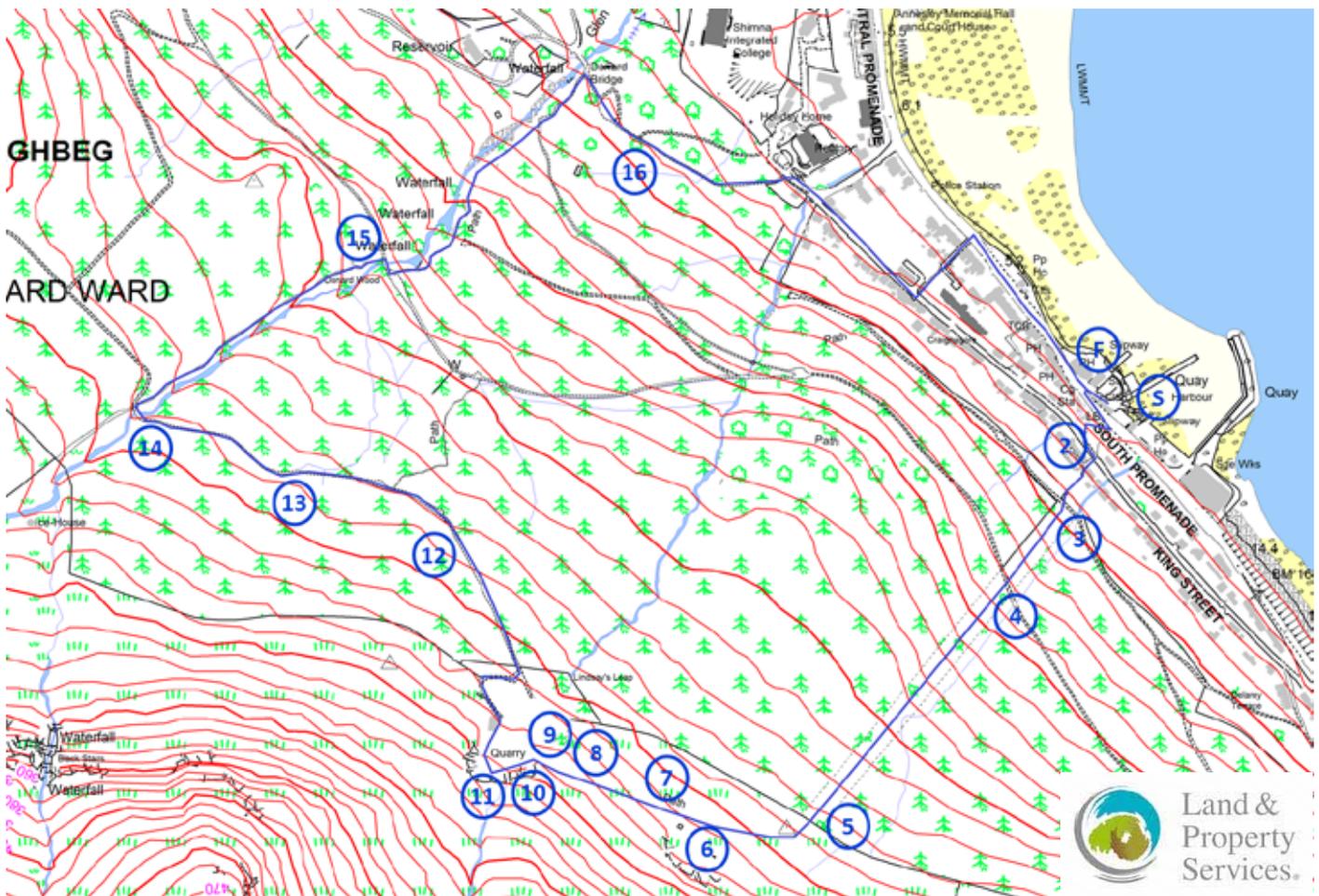
10-14 Central Promenade, Newcastle BT33 0AA

Open all year

Discover Northern Ireland – The Mourne Mountains

www.discovernorthernireland.com/mournes

Route map



Stopping points

- | | | |
|---------------|-----|---|
| Start | 1. | Newcastle harbour |
| | 2. | View from King Street across bay |
| | 3. | First crossing of paths on bogie line |
| | 4. | Second crossing of paths on bogie line |
| | 5. | Top of bogie line by wooden shelter |
| | 6. | Millstone Quarry |
| | 7. | Path above forest |
| | 8. | Stile |
| | 9. | Viewpoint |
| | 10. | Thomas' Mountain Quarry |
| | 11. | Waterfall in Thomas' Mountain Quarry |
| | 12. | Path through Donard Forest |
| | 13. | Circular stone structure in Donard Forest |
| | 14. | Upper bridge over Glen River |
| | 15. | Middle bridge over Glen River |
| | 16. | Annersley Demesne |
| Finish | | Newcastle harbour |

Directions

Listen to each track then read the directions in the boxes below to get to the next stop

1. Welcome to the Mournes

Newcastle harbour

Directions 1

From the harbour carefully cross the busy main road (Kilkeel Road) to the steep grassy slope signposted 'Granite Trail'. Follow the zigzag path or steps up the hillside to the next road (King Street). Stop here and turn back to face the sea, enjoying the view down to the harbour and across the bay.

2. From fishing village to fashionable resort

View from King Street across bay

Directions 2

With your back to the sea cross King Street and follow the path to the left of the terrace of houses signposted 'Granite Trail'. Go up the steps, through the archway and up more steps. Stop when you reach the first crossing of paths.

3. We love to bogie

First crossing of paths on bogie line

Directions 3

Continue straight on up the steep, straight path. Stop at the next crossing of paths where you will see the replica slipe to the left. Look a little closer at the granite blocks that have been used to construct the steps of the path ahead.

4. Magma and minerals

Second crossing of paths on bogie line

Directions 4

Continue straight on up the steep, straight path which is a mixture of steps and stony track. Take care as the rocks and gravel underfoot can be slippery. Stop when you reach a wooden shelter at the top.

5. Are you calling my hut shoddy?

Top of bogie line by wooden shelter

Directions 5

Go over the stile or through the gate and continue straight ahead up the mountainside leaving the forest behind. After about 20 metres the path curves around to the right. Here you have a choice. You can stop here and look straight up at the large piles of stones ahead.

Alternatively, you can make your way straight up the path through the grass and heather to the base of the large piles of stones. Carefully clamber up, taking great care as the rocks can be loose. On top of the stones is a plateau area that you can explore and go across to the quarry face. There are also excellent views (on a clear day).

6. Who wants to be a millionaire?

Millstone Quarry

Directions 6

If you climbed all the way up to Millstone Quarry, retrace your steps back down the path. At the bend in the path above the top of the bogie line, turn left. Follow the path as it traverses steadily up the hillside with the forest on your right. Stop about halfway along this path.

7. Stone walled

Path above forest

Directions 7

Continue along the path. Stop when you reach the stile.

8. Booleying

Stile

Directions 8

Go over the stile or through the gate. About 20 metres ahead along the path is a viewpoint marked by a granite pillar.

9. Natural beauty

Viewpoint

Directions 9

From the viewpoint follow the wide gravel track uphill. Stop when you reach the quarry.

10. Memorial stones and millennium stones

Thomas' Mountain Quarry

Directions 10

Walk around the left side of the quarry to the waterfall.

11. Plentiful and pure

Waterfall in Thomas' Mountain Quarry

Directions 11

From the quarry, go back down the wide gravel track. Follow the bend round to the left and downwards towards the forest. About 150 metres down the first straight section of track inside the forest, look on the left side for a wide gap between the rows of trees.

12. Mind the gap

Path through Donard Forest

Directions 12

Continue on the track down through the forest. After the first long straight downhill section, the track bears to the left and flattens out. It then rises up a small hill. About 50 metres after the brow of that hill look on the left side for a large round stone construction about 10 metres back from the track.

13. Going underground

Circular stone structure in Donard Forest

Directions 13

Continue on the track which undulates and bends through the forest. Stop when you reach a bridge over the Glen River.

14. Invisible enemies

Upper bridge over Glen River

Optional walk extension – If you are feeling energetic and want to climb Slieve Donard cross the bridge, turn left and follow the riverside path uphill. Be warned: this is the highest peak in the Mournes and will add about another two hours to your walk.

Directions 14

Cross the bridge and follow the gravel track as it bears round to the right (do not take the rock steps immediately to the right of the bridge which just lead to a viewpoint of the waterfall). After about 30 metres where the main track bears to the left, take the narrower path on the right which leads down into the woods. Follow this path downhill always keeping the river on your right. Stop when you reach the next bridge.

15. Pleasure gardens

Middle bridge over Glen River

Directions 15

Cross the bridge and turn left to continue downhill on the riverside path, this time keeping the river on your left. This path is rocky and steep so take great care. When you reach the next bridge (Donard Bridge), do not cross it but turn right and follow the main track away from the river which leads through a woodland known as Annersley Demesne. Stop part way along this path.

16. The pursuit of leisure

Annersley Demesne

Directions 16

Follow the path until you reach King Street. Go right (effectively straight ahead) onto King Street. Look on the left for a sign for Bath Lane. Follow the steps down to the lane. At the end, cross over the main road and turn right onto the promenade path. This takes you back past the Harbour House Inn to the harbour.

17. Use or abuse?

Newcastle harbour

Directions 17

This is the end of the walk.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

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