

NICS RAMBLERS

Gortin

Sperrins Mountains

Friday 14th to Sunday 16th January 2022

BOOK DIRECTLY NOW

The NI Civil Service Rambling Club proposes to undertake a weekend of (not difficult) trail type walks (on Saturday 15th and Sunday 16th January) in the Gortin area of the Sperrin Mountains. It has been 3 years since our last very enjoyable time in Gortin. This is also a chance to have something to look forward to shortly after Christmas and to be socially together - after all the problems with Covid lockdowns.

The last time we were in Gortin (thanks to Val and Wally), we joined the Friends of the Glens on two of their walks – this is a thriving local community group who also do walks – see their Facebook page at the link attached [\(20+\) Friends of the Glens | Facebook](#) . Sean Harpur led everyone on the two excellent walks. The second walk (in the Barnes Gap) was added by the Friends of the Glen on the Sunday especially for us – and we ended up in a great Plumbridge Pub with loads of wheaten bread, generously provided by the owner (who is also a Friend of the Glen).

Sean has offered to run walks for us on both Saturday and Sunday – with our Club joining the Friends of the Glens walkers. I have invited Sean and his partner to join us for dinner in Gortin on the Saturday night – as a small token of thanks. In return for his kindness, I have offered (in the summer) to lead his Club on the wonderful walk between Port Ballintoy and the Giants Causeway.

The walks will not be strenuous and daylight hours are restricted. I suspect we will all be able to do a reasonable day's walking on the Saturday and a gentler walk on the Sunday. Alternatively, there are shorter walks (check out the web) and those wanting to have a purely relaxing weekend can visit local attractions such as the Ulster American Folk Park and Omagh Town. Most importantly, we will enjoy our good company as always.

Accommodation and meals

Gortin Village offers plenty to do with a number of national visitor attractions close by; places of interest to visit; and the warmth and humour of local people in the village pubs and restaurants. It is situated in the centre of County Tyrone.

Many will be staying in the 3-star Gortin Outdoor Activity Centre (which includes up to 2 self-catering houses (each with two bedrooms - one room with a double bed and one room with twin beds – I understand £80 per night per cottage) and also rooms in the hostel – 5 double bedrooms – I understand £20 per night per person) – see hyperlink attached - [Accommodation – Gortin Community Activity Centre \(gortincentre.com\)](http://gortincentre.com) for further details. The Club has stayed here before and enjoyed the facilities. We will be eating in the Centre as a group on Friday night (bring your own food and bottle). If rooms in the self-catering cottages/double bedrooms in the hostel go quickly (should you not wish to be in a bunk room in the hostel), the Centre will try and arrange B&B accommodation locally. There are also other accommodation options that you can investigate (e.g. Airbnb). I would encourage as many members as possible to stay in the Centre's accommodation – so we can all socialise easily.

In all cases, you will be responsible for booking your own accommodation. If you are staying in the Gortin Outdoor Activity Centre, the best way is to email them via their website [Contact Us – Gortin Community Activity Centre \(gortincentre.com\)](http://gortincentre.com) OR email them at info@gortincommunity.com (but your email might go into their junk email) and/or telephone them on 028 8164 8346.

Accommodation

There are various options:

- (1) & (2) In the accommodation run by the Gortin Outdoor Activity Centre. This accommodation ranges from two available self-catering houses (each with two bedrooms - one room with a double bed and one room with twin beds £80 per night per cottage); five double bedrooms in the hostel (I understand £20 per night per person); and bunk bedrooms in the hostel (I understand £20 per night per person). See below for more detail.
- (3) Airbnb accommodation – which you can consider, research and book online.
- (4) Other local accommodation - which you can consider, research and book online.

(1) Self-Catering Homes

The complex includes four 4-star self-catering houses that provide a homely atmosphere where traditional furnishings are complemented by modern amenities. All houses incorporate a spacious kitchen/dining area, living room, double and twin bedrooms, bathroom, separate WC and storage space.



Double Bedroom



Self-Catering House Dining/Lounge Room

The Gortin Accommodation Suite is fully equipped with all the home comforts where guests can relax in front of an open fire that compliments the central heating or soak up the winter sun and fresh country air from the patio and garden furniture.

(2) Hostel Facilities

There is a top quality 40 bed Hostel offering both Family Accommodation and Bunk Rooms. The Hostel includes a large fully equipped and modern kitchen that can cater for 40 people, a comfortable TV lounge room with open fire, drying room and laundry facilities.



Hostel Lounge/Dining Room

Bunk Rooms



Each bunk room sleeps 6 people

Each Bunk Room includes 6 beds with individual secure lockers, bathroom and separate W.C. Bed linen is available for a small charge.

Family Rooms

The Hostel Family Room Accommodation provides a large bedroom with a double and twin beds and en-suite bathroom. Each Family Room is dressed in bright country colours and accompanied with pine furnishings



Family rooms sleep 4 people

The cost, when staying at the Activity Centre, will be approx. £20 per person per night (although for those staying in the self-catering cottages it might be more, if less than 4 people are staying in a cottage) – if you wish to stay in one of the two self-catering houses it will be for you to agree who you will share with.

Meals

On the Friday night, as on all our previous trips to Gortin, we will each bring food to eat (and to share) – so we will be eating/drinking/socialising in the communal lounge of the Centre's Hostel. A key aim of this trip is to socialise together.

On the Saturday night we will be eating in a pub restaurant/bistro in the village which has been excellent value in the past. I will reserve places once numbers are known. Some of you may wish to self-cater.

For those wishing a breakfast, I am told this will be possible at the Auld Bank Coffee Shop ([The Auld Bank Coffee Shop in Gortin - Restaurant reviews \(restaurantguru.com\)](#)) – I would suggest this is pre-booked so they know the numbers for which they should cater. Otherwise, you can self-cater.

We will sort out any detailed food arrangements later.

Getting there

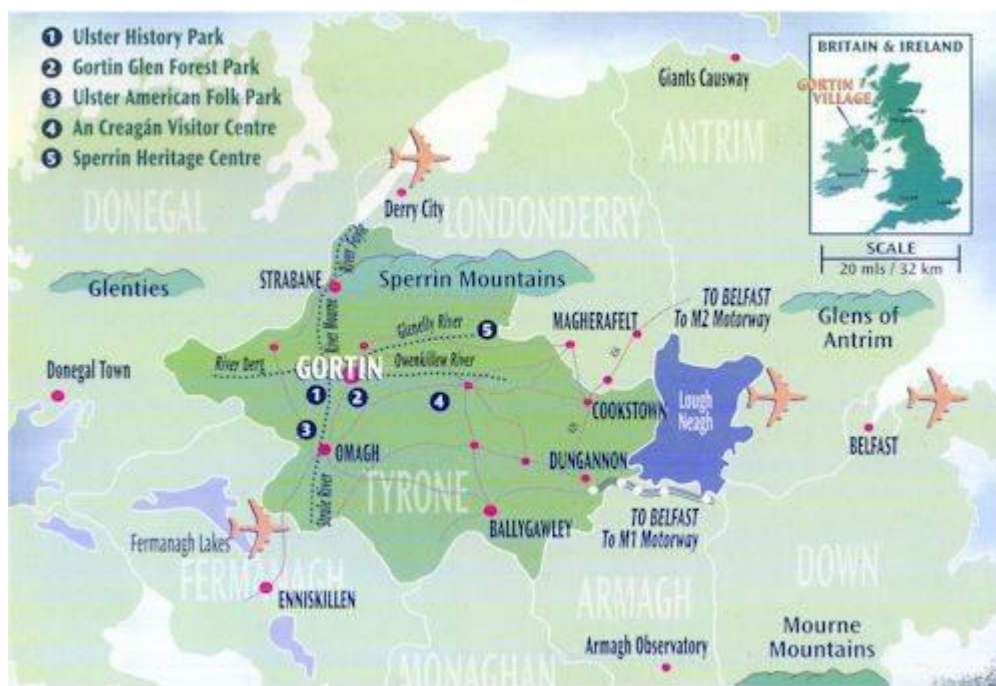
Gortin lies 10 miles north of Omagh in the centre of County Tyrone. (35 miles west of Cookstown and approx. 20 miles south of Strabane). [See Map](#) below.

From Belfast, travelling the M1, by passing Dungannon and Ballygawley, travelling through Omagh. Upon entering Omagh, go straight ahead through 2 sets of traffic lights. You will

Gortin Accommodation Suite fronts the main street in the village of Gortin. The accommodation is more than halfway down the main street on the left-hand side, next door to the Pedlar's Rest restaurant (& opposite Gortin Garden Centre and the Gort Inn). Look out for the blue and yellow signs on Gortin's Main Street. Please report to reception between 9AM and 5PM, Monday to Friday and in the evenings (7 - 10PM) when you can

come to a crossroads (Omagh Bus Station on the left-hand side), take a right at the crossroads following the signs for Gortin. Follow this road (for 15 minutes, 10 miles) until you arrive at the top of Gortin village. Take a right turn and travel down the main street of Gortin village.

telephone our on-call staff from reception. At weekends, you will be directed to our on-site warden in the Hostel building (Drumlea Suite).



Possible walking itinerary

NOTE – THAT SEAN HARPUR OF THE FRIENDS OF THE GLENS WILL BE LEADING ON WALKS HE WILL SELECT FOR HIS WALKING GROUP – WHICH HAS A WIDE RANGE OF WALKING ABILITIES.

The section below is more for information – should Sean or I be run over by a bus....

WalkNI has a good selection of walks in this area – see [Home - WalkNI](#)

For example, the Craignamaddy Circuit (<http://www.walkni.com/walks/479/craignamaddy-circuit>) is almost certainly the one we did on our last visit to Gortin. We could also consider completing part of the Ulster Way – the route from Lough Bradan to Gortin (a total of 31 miles) has a number of sections we could complete – see details and map at hyperlink attached <http://www.walkni.com/ulsterway/sections/lough-bradan-to-gortin/> . Note that for those not wishing to do the full walks they would be able to do a single section of the Ulster Way or one of the much shorter walks at the WalkNI website link. Should a full section of the Ulster Way be undertaken by some members, this walk will be

demanding (although it is helpful to partly walk on quiet roads) and given this trip is in January, such a walk would start promptly after fairly early breakfasts.

Full winter walking gear and hiking boots are essential on ALL Sperrin Walks.

Ulster Way walks in this area could be as follows:

- (1) Sections 1 and/or 2 on one day.
- (2) Sections 3 and/or 4 on another day.

Section Number	Description	Approximate Distances (miles)
1	Lough Braden Forest (B72 entrance) to Junction of Bullock Park Rd and Kirlish Rd	8
2	Junction of Bullock Park Rd and Kirlish Rd to Junction of Cashty and Aghafad Rd	7
3	Junction of Cashty and Aghafad Rd to Junction of Knockmoyle Rd and Glenpark Rd	8
4	Junction of Knockmoyle Rd and Glenpark Rd to Gortin	8

What now?

Club organiser – Michael Carson– contact Michael by email (******) or my mobile number is 07*****.

This part of Northern Ireland is very pleasant, even in winter/early spring and well worth a return visit. The Club had great winter breaks there in 2005, 2021 and 2018 – in 2005 we had a BBQ in some very heavy snow! In 2012 we shared a bring-your-own buffet on the Friday.

If you have any queries or require additional clarification on any point, please do not hesitate to contact me as above.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Remember, it is for you to book your own accommodation and to arrange who (if anyone) you may wish to share with. Let me know when you have booked and where you are staying.

ANNEX – THE ULSTER WAY - SHOULD SEAN AND/OR MICHAEL BE KNOCKED DOWN BY A BUS

Lough Bradan to Gortin – 31 miles

Section Number	Description	Approximate Distances (miles)
1	Lough Bradan Forest (B72 entrance) to Junction of Bullock Park Rd and Kirlish Rd	8
2	Junction of Bullock Park Rd and Kirlish Rd to Junction of Cashty and Aghafad Rd	7
3	Junction of Cashty and Aghafad Rd to Junction of Knockmoyle Rd and Glenpark Rd	8
4	Junction of Knockmoyle Rd and Glenpark Rd to Gortin	8

Start at the entrance to Lough Bradan Forest and follow a wide forest track into the trees. Use waymarkers to navigate through several junctions until you reach the northern boundary of the forest after approximately two hours. The track continues for a short way across the bog to Lough Lee and Lough Hill Wind Farm.

Look out for waymarkers on the right leading northeast across Bolaght Mountain. There is no formal path here and the ground is uneven and often wet; it is important to follow the waymarkers carefully on this section. From the top of Bolaght Mountain there are incredibly far-reaching views encompassing most of counties Donegal and Tyrone. Descend across bogland onto an old turbary track to reach a tarred road, thirty minutes from Lough Lee.

Descend along this road through hedgerows of hawthorn and fuchsia to a junction. Turn right and continue along a minor road, enjoying fine views throughout. Turn left after approximately forty-five minutes and descend through a crossroads to the B50 Drumquin-Castledearg road. Turn right and proceed carefully along this road for fifteen minutes to a left turn. Turn left again shortly afterwards, and then follow a straight road for forty-five minutes, climbing up through the village of Drumlegagh to a crossroads.

Turn right and then left before descending into the southern reaches of the Baronscourt Estate. Pass a pretty church and continue along a minor road through forest and up onto the B84 Drumquin-Newtownstewart road. After a couple of hundred metres, turn right and then left into Upper Cloonty Wood. Climb steadily along a forest track through several junctions and into Manus Wood. Turn right onto a road for a short distance and then left onto another forest track leading into Cashty Wood. After fifteen minutes turn right at a crossroads and climb steeply for thirty or forty minutes, passing a wind farm, on the way to the triangulation pillar on the summit of Bessy Bell.

From the pillar cross the stile some 200 metres to the west and continue descending in a southeasterly direction, keeping to the right of a fence. Cross a stile and walk beneath the turbines of Beltany Windfarm. Pick up a track and go down through fields using a series of stiles. At the bottom turn right along a track and follow this down to a deserted farmhouse where the road becomes surfaced. Now descend steeply for a few minutes to the Castletown Road. Turn right and walk along the road for fifteen minutes before turning left down a very steep and narrow lane. Cross the A5 with care and follow another lane down to a bridge over the River Strule.

Once over the bridge, continue up a lane to join a minor road after five minutes. Turn right and follow a series of quiet country roads for the next hour and a half to the B48 Omagh-Gortin road. Turn left and walk along the B48 for a short distance before turning right onto a minor road that leads steeply uphill towards Glengawna and Gortin Glen Forest Park. After twenty minutes the road becomes a forest track. Keep left at track junctions and continue to climb. Fifty minutes from the start of the forest track it levels out and then descends gently to the Gortin Glen Forest drive. A narrow gravel path on the right leads uphill for 50m to a lookout with excellent views to the west and southwest.

Turn right onto the forest drive and follow it down through the parking area of the forest park to the B48. Turn left and walk downhill along the road for a short distance before turning right onto Lisnaharney Road. Follow this for a few minutes and then turn right onto a forestry track. Follow the track uphill and over the shoulder of Crockanard before descending to the B48 once more. Cross the road and turn right onto Lenamore Road, passing Boorin National Nature Reserve and the conspicuous twin lakes of New Lough and Oak Lough. After climbing steadily for twenty minutes the road begins to descend steeply, with fine views of the Sperrin Mountains. At the bottom of the road turn left onto the B46 and walk west for ten minutes along the road into the village of Gortin.