

Mull of Galloway Trail
Project Reference No DG185

Final Report

In 2003 the Rotary Club of Ayr decided to create the Ayrshire Coastal Path to commemorate the Centenary of Rotary in 2005. The path was officially opened in 2008 and runs for around 100 miles from Glenapp to Skelmorlie. We heard about the path in 2006 and that the coordinator, Dr James Begg was keen for our club to extend it from Glenapp to Stranraer. In July 2007 the members of the Rotary Club of Stranraer agreed to create what became known as the Loch Ryan Coastal Path and which was officially opened by Alex Fergusson MSP in August 2009.

Dr Begg asked us to continue from Stranraer to the Mull of Galloway and the club decided to proceed. The members were keen to provide a long distance walking route which would provide healthy exercise for locals and visitors to the area. It was also hoped that additional tourists would be attracted and would benefit local businesses to a fairly remote area where unemployment is high and incomes are one of the lowest in the country.

After surveys were carried out the route was established. It leaves Stranraer via Cairnryan Road, Ladies walk, Westwood Avenue and then follows the Approach across the link road into the Culhorn Wood. There it follows the Southern Upland Way for a few hundred yards before crossing farmland to High Barnultoch. It then follows quiet minor roads to Clayshant. After reaching Luce Bay it follows the coast and takes in Sandhead, Ardwell and Drummore before ending at the Mull of Galloway. There are two short detours inland as it was not possible to keep to the shore line at Chapel Rossan and Grennan Plantation. Leaving the shore at these locations gives more variety of scenery and enhances the enjoyment of the walk.

A sub group was set up with various duties being allocated to different members of the club. Robert Clark, a retired Roads Engineer although not a Rotarian, was very involved in the Loch Ryan Coastal Path – his knowledge was invaluable and we were delighted when he agreed to again assist with Mull of Galloway Trail. He helped to survey the route, prepare estimates and tender documents and liaise with contractors.

John Enos one of the club members agreed to attend to press realises.

Rotarian Archie Bell designed the 10 information boards for the Loch Ryan Coastal Path and as very favourable comments were made about them it was agreed that he would design 14 boards for Mull of Galloway Trail. Again they give excellent information about local history with beautiful illustrations. Archie was able to obtain a lot of photographs and information about local history from his many contacts in the area and local ornithologists, Alan Johnston and Geoff Sheppard provided beautiful photos of birds which can be found around Clayshant and appear on the board at that location.

Rotarian Dave Kirkwood was responsible for the design and production of the leaflet. Like the one he produced for the Loch Ryan Coastal Path it is very attractive and informative giving descriptions of the route in both directions.

While Robert Clark supervised the work on the Loch Ryan Coastal Path which extended to 12 miles as the Mull of Galloway Trail is much longer the route was split up into five sections with different individuals being responsible for each section.

Once the route had been surveyed we approached landlords and tenants to obtain agreement. In most areas there was no difficulty with permission being readily given. However, there were situations where we had to look at alternatives for various reasons and at the end of the day where diversions from the original plan were necessary we feel that these have helped to give more variety of scenery and have enhanced the experience of the walker. We are grateful to all the landlords and the tenants involved in the route - without their cooperation there would be no Trail!

In September 2011 it was confirmed that funding from LEADER of £50,008 would be available on the basis that we had obtained matched funding of a similar amount. By that time Awards for All had agreed to a grant of £10,000 and The Robertson Trust donated £8,000. Stranraer and District Local History provided a grant of £7,000 on the basis that the funds were put towards the cost of information boards giving details of local history.

In kind contributions of a maximum 25% were allowed and Dumfries & Galloway Council agreed to build one of the bridges along the trail at an estimated cost of £15,000. A further in kind contribution of £9,960 representing the time spent by Rotarians on the project was accepted. The total was well in excess of this figure. To complete the match funding the Rotary Club contributed cash of £48. This brought the total budget for the project to £100,016.00.

The project ran from 3 October 2011 to 31 August 2012. The work on the Trail was put out to tender in October 2011. James Smith Fencing of Kirkcudbright erected 1,300 metres of fencing, 12 kissing gates, 5 bridle gates, a Bristol gate, 4 stiles and 73 waymarkers. The work commenced in February 2012 and was carried out efficiently with the quality of the work being of a high standard.

Donnan Construction was the main contractor for the general path works erecting three bridges, two sleeper bridges as well as stone infill and excavation work. The bridges were made in Stranraer by Robert McMillan, blacksmith, and with very competitive quotes from the two local firms we were able to keep costs down. Donnan Construction also cleared an area of very dense vegetation at no cost to the club. The vegetation had been impassable and Donnans did a tremendous job, also draining and cutting long grass.

Scott Signs provided signage and the information boards for the Loch Ryan Coastal Path. They have produced and erected the 14 boards along the route of the new trail as well as providing all the signage. The boards have again been much admired and many favourable comments have been made by the general public.

The leaflet was printed in Stranraer by the *Free Press* and it has been distributed to Tourist Information Offices and to many other locations where it will be readily available to the general public. It was decided to print an insert for the leaflet giving

times of busses from Stranraer to Drummore. Several local businesses agreed to place adverts in the insert.

In order to publicise the Trail articles have appeared in the local press (*Free Press and Galloway Gazette*). It has also featured in *Dumfries and Galloway Life* and the Rotary District Magazine. Efforts are being made which hopefully will give further publicity in magazines and information regarding the Trail has been included in the website of the club and of the Ayrshire Coastal Path. A new website which will cover both the Mull of Galloway Trail and the Loch Ryan Coastal Path is planned.

Many members of the club worked on the route as well as a number of friends of the club. Before the contractors started work members pegged out the route showing the position of waymarkers, kissing gates and fences. Some of the local farmers also assisted with path work in certain areas.

It has been agreed that the Stranraer Campus of Dumfries & Galloway College will provide wooden plaques with the names of the four burns which will be affixed to the bridges.

We found that it was not possible to proceed at high tide along the side of the MOD property at Ardwell. After discussions with MOD officials it was agreed that a new fence further away from the shore would be erected at no cost to us. This was another example of the goodwill from so many sources.

All waymarkers have two Mull of Galloway Trail logos and some also have the Club logo. Logos and directional signs have also been fixed to kissing gates and bridle gates with the work being carried out by club members. The new attractive logo was designed by Rotarian Jim McLean who also designed the one for the Loch Ryan Coastal Path. These have been much admired and Jim was also responsible for designing and printing the invitations to the opening.

One of the big problems was the thick vegetation in many parts of the route. The Criminal Justice Department arranged for Community Service Workers to assist with this task. Unfortunately due to the tremendous growth over the summer months a lot of the strimming had to be repeated. Certain sections were cut by the Council and other areas were strimmed by Rotarians and friends.

Part of the Trail passes near areas of special scientific interest. One is at the Mull and another at Clayshant. Discussions were held with officials from Scottish Natural Heritage to ensure that walkers would not encroach on sensitive areas.

One of the attractions of the route is the many wild flowers starting with snowdrops in early springtime. Others include foxgloves, birds foot trefoil, red campion, wild roses, broom, hawthorn, primroses, hyacinths, wild garlic and many more.

Wild life is also an attraction including roe deer, red squirrels and seals in Luce Bay. The scenery is varied from woodland to open farmland and there are beautiful views over Luce with the Galloway Hills in the distance. The north coast of England and the Isle of Man can be seen as well as the Mountains of Mourne when the Mull is reached.

The trail has links with other long distant walking routes. As mentioned it joins the Southern Upland Way for a short distance and from Stranraer the Trail joins the Loch Ryan Coastal Path which in turn links with the Ayrshire Coastal Path from Glenapp to Skelmorlie. Two other Rotary clubs are in the process of continuing the route over the Erskine Bridge to Milngavie. From the Mull to Milngavie will be known as the Firth o Clyde Rotary Trail. The West Highland Way starts from Milngavie ending at Fort William where the Great Glen Way commences. This in turn connects to the Cape Wrath Trail which will give a continuous walk from the Mull of Galloway to the most north westerly point of Scotland and is know as the Scottish Chapter of the International Appalachian Way. It is hoped that the connection with the International Appalachian Trail will help to market the Mull of Galloway Trail and bring more tourists from home and abroad.

In addition to the in kind contribution the Council also provided help in many other ways. They confirmed their support from the outset and we have worked closely with the Access Officer, Karen Morley who has provided guidance and assistance during the project. All the directional signs were provided by the Council and also anti slip boards for the bridges. They have erected warning signs for motorists along the route where walkers will be on the road or crossing it. The Council also cut back vegetation at several parts of the Trail and provided some funding for extra drainage work which will give access for their cutting machine.

Kirkmaiden and Stoneykirk Community Councils confirmed their support for the project from the start and agreed that we could give presentations to their members. Presentations have also been made to WRI members, local schools and more will follow.

The final budget was on target with the final spend being £100,016.00. Arrangements have been made for funding to be made available for ongoing maintenance and any other minor works which may be required in the near future. Members of the club will carry out regular inspections of the Trail and any remedial work will be carried mainly by members of the club. The Council has also agreed to assist with cutting back vegetation and the services of the Community Service Workers will also be used for strimming vegetation.

As the major source of funding came from LEADER we were delighted that Maggie Gordon, Chair, Leader LAG agreed to officially open the Trail on 11 August 2012. This was a very successful event with the hall at Sandhead being near to capacity. A PowerPoint presentation was given and after the official opening a finger buffet was provided to the invited guests.

The LEADER issue selected in the application was healthy exercise and there is no doubt that many locals are already enjoying walking different sections of the route and many favourable comments have been made. Several sponsored walks have already taken place including one for a local church and the Rotary Club held one on 15 September 2012 which raised around £4,000 for Wateraid which will help to provide clean, fresh water and sanitation to 134,000 people in Malawi.

It is expected that more tourists will be attracted to the area which will benefit local businesses. We know that local hotels and restaurants have already had additional trade from locals and others who have walked the Trail.

The Mull of Galloway Trail has been a major project with a tremendous amount of work from Rotarians and others – we consider that it has all be very well worth while and hopefully it will be well used. It has been a great team effort by Rotarians and friends and has involved so many from the local community.