**The Ramblers - St Andrews & N.E. Fife Group**

In mid-September, members and friends of St Andrews & North East Fife Ramblers enjoyed their much-postponed group holiday based in Stranraer. Shortly after arrival at our hotel on day one, eight hardy souls who had travelled early took part in our Walks Co-ordinator’s mystery tour of the town. This consisted of a circular walk which, though taking less than an hour, was not without mishap. Having missed a left turn, the next one turned out to be a dead end. To add to the leader’s chagrin, several pubs along the route had to be disregarded due to an early dinner time. The walk provided good views of Loch Ryan, Agnew Park and the fine Church of Scotland building on Leswalt High Road, as well as a nice warm-up for the next two days.

The next day dawned pleasantly warm and sunny, and all eleven walkers opted for a 7-mile circular walk taking in part of the Mull of Galloway Trail. Starting from the lighthouse we followed a path along the western edge of Luce Bay which became slightly challenging as we descended over slippery stones to the shore at East Tarbet Bay. We then turned away from the shoreline and headed gently uphill beside the Kirk Burn, crossing the road and walking along a field edge to make our lunch stop. Our path continued through the pleasant woodland of Auchie Glen before joining a quiet road heading back towards the Mull. On our way your correspondent indulged in a little nostalgia, making sure that everyone duly admired the coastline of Counties Down and Antrim to the west. Back onto farm and then field tracks, despite the presence of waymarkers we managed to go slightly astray at the cliff top above West Tarbet Bay, though always heading in the right general direction! Having found the correct route, via the shore and then back up again, we completed the last, somewhat weary, stretch uphill towards the lighthouse and, more importantly, the café for a very welcome cup of tea and more fine views in the late afternoon sunshine. After dinner we concluded with a lively quiz, your correspondent having to deflect several challenges from four very competitive teams. A handful of usual suspects then adjourned for a nightcap and a much later finish to the evening than planned!

The following day brought the heavy mist and steady drizzle that had been forecast. While most of the group wisely decided to spend the day visiting nearby gardens and other places of interest, three determined folk kept to their plan to undertake most of the first section of the Southern Upland Way, a 10-mile walk from Portpatrick to Stranraer. Suffice to say, as we headed out of Portpatrick along the cliff top the views of the stunning coastline were somewhat restricted, and the sound of the waves crashing below us added to the slightly haunting atmosphere. The path took us down to and back up from the secluded bay of Port Mora, followed by a further descent at Port Kale. Here there was a familiar story: failing to find a waymarker, we turned inland onto a bracken-lined track which we followed for a short while before concluding that we were on the wrong path. On returning to the shore we found the correct route up steep steps (including some very big ones!) cut into the rock, which led us out of the bay and on to Killantringan lighthouse. There followed a prolonged section of walking on minor roads, mostly uphill it seemed, and when our route had finally levelled out we were ready to stop briefly for lunch. The cheerful farmer who found us loitering at his road entrance in the rain no doubt thought there were more sensible places to be on a wet day. Shortly after setting off again we turned onto a track leading to a moorland path where the going underfoot was much more forgiving. By this time the rain had finally stopped and the visibility improved, though not sufficiently for us to see the ‘big turbines of the North Rhins Wind Farm’ mentioned in the walk description. Then it was back to some more road walking before we left the Way and headed down the hill into Stranraer, completing a tiring but satisfying walk despite the adverse weather. Our final evening together finished considerably earlier than the previous one as varying degrees of tiredness from our exertions caught up with us. Our grateful thanks to Jim Coates for organising a very enjoyable holiday – especially as he and his wife will be doing it all again in mid-October, when it is the turn of a second group to make their trip to Stranraer.

For the time being we are still keeping our walks local to Fife, with a maximum of 15 people on each walk. Details of our walks – which are open to guests as well as members of Ramblers – can be found on our website [www.standrewsnefiferamblers.com](http://www.standrewsnefiferamblers.com)