

## A WALK AROUND THE ISLAND

There was a stronger breeze than I expected as I walked along the causeway. I was accompanied by Chloe, my Springer Spaniel. She walked about seven or eight yards in front of me as usual. The Lough water was well below the top of the causeway on this warm June afternoon. Soon afterwards the sun broke through the clouds.

I sat down on the first seat I came across on the path around the island. There was a very clear view of Scrabo Hill and Scrabo Tower, but only a limited view of Newtownards. The Lough water lapped onto a stony beach about twenty yards from where I was sitting. It didn't take Chloe long to find the water, and she splashed along in front of me. From time to time she came back to check that I was still there. She padded along the path in both directions before heading back to the water. A large light brown dog joined her to play some games. Then he left to rejoin his owner.

I looked across the water at Scrabo Hill and Tower which were both bathed in sunshine; but behind them there was thick cloud.

Chloe was still splashing about in the water. I wondered if she would splash water around my car on the way home!

A number of small planes took off from Newtownards Airport and circled around above my head. I enjoyed watching them as I relaxed in the sun. I wondered if one of them was my neighbour who has a grass landing strip behind my cottage.

A man wheeled a child in a pram with small wheels past me. Just as well it's not muddy, I thought, as the pram would probably not make it around the island. I had a brief discussion with a lady about my recent visit to Scrabo Hill. She was surprised to hear that I was nearly locked in the Tower. A visitor from London told me that she comes over to explore the Strangford Lough area whenever she can. She wished me good luck with my writing.

Although I was reluctant to leave this warm spot, it was time to move on. As I gathered up my 'stuff' I realised that Chloe had disappeared. She must have followed someone around the island. I set off through a narrow passage of hawthorn bushes covered in white blossom towards the south

of the island. There I found a familiar dog playing in the water with some children. She was reluctant to join me, and soon disappeared again.

I continued on to the west of the island, and sat down on a seat facing the old and new car parks. Where had Chloe disappeared to this time? I walked gingerly over to the nearby cliff and looked along to the causeway. A wet white dog was standing near the end of it. I yelled out to her and she set off at top speed along the stony beach. Soon afterwards she arrived at my side from the opposite direction. She must have circled around to avoid the cliff face. I put her on the lead straight away and tied it to my seat.

I was aware that the Lough water was now very near the top of the causeway. We'd better head home quickly before it's too late, I thought. As the end of the causeway was surrounded by water, I had to do some judicious rock hopping even to get onto it. We walked along the causeway until we came to a substantial pool of water. I removed my trainers and socks and paddled barefoot through the pool. Chloe wondered what all the fuss was about. At least I know that I have the cleanest dog in the neighbourhood!

Eric Browett  
June 2010