

Stephen Shellard

Killantringan Lighthouse

Writers' Walks



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Stephen Shellard is a retired FE lecturer. He has lived and worked in Dumfries for over 40 years. He was born in 1953 in Newry, Co. Down

He is an occasional blogger and has published a memoir, Remembered Fragments, drawing on his experience of coming of age in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s.

*I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur
Extremes meet – it's the only way I ken
To dodge the curst conceit o' bein' richt
That damns the vast majority o' men.*

Hugh MacDiarmid (A Drunk Man Looks At A Thistle extract)





Writers' Walks



From Dunskey Castle to Killantringan Lighthouse via the coastal path and Portpatrick.

Distance: 6.8 miles, there and back.

Terrain: Variable

Time to walk: approximately 2hr 30 mins to 3hrs.

The one-way trip is just under 3.5 miles, starting along the cliff top then descending to Portpatrick. Portpatrick is a busy tourist destination for the reason of its obvious picture postcard charm. Its setting, beneath the cliffs, is dramatic. Still visible are the remnants of a quay which served as the dock for a ferry service to Donaghadee, visible less than 20 miles across the channel

At the northern end of the Port, steep steps climb to the top of the cliffs giving access to a path along the indented coastline heading north. From there you meander, dropping down into little bays and crossing over small headlands, until finally reaching Killantringan Lighthouse. As you approach the lighthouse, at low tide, you may see the wreck of the Craigantlett, forced onto the rocks by gale force winds in February 1982

There are plenty of things on which to reflect as you walk, quite apart from the glories of the view and the restless clash of rocky coastline and tidal ebb and flow; apart from the diversity of flora and fauna; apart from the salt air, the soundtrack of gulls, guillemots, shag and other species prized by twitchers—though I confess I'm largely blind to them.

There have been tensions and exchanges crossing back and forth over this stretch of water for many centuries but we should also remember the linguistic struggles, with both Ulster Scots and Lowland Scots fighting for their place alongside the dominance of standard English in a landscape still redolent with Gaelic names from an all but forgotten history.

Perhaps all this turmoil may explain why, in thinking about this walk, lines from MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* come to mind.