

After completing the Denis Rankin Round last year I needed another target and I heard of Cassie's challenge through the friends I train with. I was very lucky to have supported Stephen Bickerstaff on a few of his many Denis Rankin rounds and was blessed that he was happy to share the Cassie's route with me. over a few weeks we did two to three sections of the route every weekend and so I felt ready to attempt my challenge on the 16th April. Lucky also for me was that Stephen was ready to attempt a third Cassie's challenge as he had already done it in both directions.

I had great support lined up and was surprised on the day by others who came to support us both. big thanks to Stephen Bickerstaff for coaching and encouraging me every step. Susan Lambe, who has completed a staged walking Cassie's, for her help and goodies as she took the early morning shift at the Lamagan col. Kathleen Monteverde for inspiring me, Craig McCauley for shouting at me, David Bell for all his encouragement, Pearse Brogan for never stopping talking, Ricky Cowan for coming out to help. Billy and Peter Reed for inspiring and supporting us, Paul Nixon for giving up his time and encouragement, Philip Ward for getting me over the last few mountains, Harry Teggarty and Stewart Cunningham for all their support and encouragement.

This has probably been the toughest challenge to date but so rewarding. Denis Rankin and now Cassie's challenge!! two of the toughest challenges in the Mourne. I would also like to thank everyone who supported my Just Giving page, raising money for the Mourne Mountain Rescue. Also a big thank you goes to my running club BARF, for all their encouragement and advice over the last few years, 4 months of training has payed off.

Starting at midnight, we had a lovely full moon and though the morning would later bring some mist the night section was clear and dry. Stephen B and I soon had company from Craig and Pearse in the early hours bringing lots of craic. Susan brought food and drinks to the Lamagan coll. Then we met David and Ricky running part of the fourth section. As we descended to the Ott car park where Stewart and Kathleen had food and tea for us I was starting to fade a bit. Kathleen joined us for 5th and 6th section and we plodded on, over beautiful, less trodden terrain. Stephen had a stash just before the river Bann crossing and we sat for a while before facing Slievenamiskan which from this direction is a long tough climb. Half way up we saw two red coats, walkers maybe? as we got closer we recognised Billy Reed and his son Peter. Billy was just back from his Northern Traverse so we had plenty to chat about. I'm very much a people person and having this distraction was like two Duracell batteries giving me the energy to keep going. As we descended Hen mountain we knew Stewart and Harry would be joining us for the 6th section which also lifted the spirits. Now the last 2 times I had climbed Rocky I had found a golf ball, random! Kathleen was talking about the chances of this happening when she spotted another golf ball, what are the chances. All these distractions all helped and we were making good time. on Eagle mountain I had a not so wee tumble, those who saw it thought that was game over, but I bounced back with a small amount of blood, more angels being kept busy that day. As we descended Pigeon mountain I was amazed and encouraged by the crowds there, just the last section, nearly there. Paul Nixon had come to do the last section with us a pleasant surprise, he said he would only do a mountain and a half but ended up going the whole way back to Annalong. he said the craic was too good to turn back. Another surprise was Philip Ward at Silent valley who encouraged us over the tough end climbs of Moolieve, Wee

Binnian and Binnian, then it was all downhill with a three mile road section to Annalong which is always tough for mountain runners. Pearse and Craig were once again on support as was Harry and Stewart. Stephen B was pushing and encouraging to keep the pace up to the end, the sacrifice and hard work had paid off. Not an easy challenge but so worth it, an epic adventure and so much fun with our support team. Happy memories, will be talking about this adventure for a long time. Special thank you to Harry for organising and writing a book that has superb guidance for anyone wanting to do this.



