

May 2009 - Issue 38

IRISH Trekker



The Trekkers Mountaineering Club
Glenageary, Co. Dublin
www.trekkers.ie

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Acknowledgements

The Committee wishes to acknowledge the tremendous work undertaken for the Club by Pearse Connolly who has stepped aside after over seven years as a Committee member.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge and pay tribute to the excellent work of Paddy O'Duffy in producing the latest DVD, which is a very valuable addition to the historic record of the club.

Sincere thanks are also due to a number of people for their contributions to this issue of The Irish Trekker: members of the Committee; those who contributed articles: Owen McKeown, Ita Lawton, Henry Jack, Monty Tinsley and Gilbert Little; and, those who contributed photographs, Paddy O'Duffy and Owen McKeown.

Finally, sincere thanks are due to Caoimhe Mulhall for designing this issue.

T. Duff

Sympathies

Members extend their sincere sympathies to Tom, Mary and Dermot Murray on the death of Tom's mother Christina. May she rest in peace.

Welcome New Members

Trekkers welcome the following new members to the club:
Valerie Charlton
Josephine & Michael Cotter



Congratulations!

Congratulations to Catherine Walsh on the birth of her grandson Turlough.



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Walks programme from January to the end of April 2009

There were twenty-two planned walks for the period from the beginning of January to the end of April 2009. Over 150 members and guests took part in these walks. Two of the scheduled B walks had to be cancelled, one of these due to snow. Whilst acknowledging that the time of year is a factor in relation to the low numbers and that the number of cancellations is not usual for the time, there is a sense among members that in some cases there was room for improvement in the notification by walk leaders who should advertise the walk 10 days in advance of the walk and do their best to encourage sufficient members to participate.

Walk leaders are requested to consider new routes as a means of encouraging participation in walks. Details of the planned route should be advised to walkers in advance. Leaders are reminded to print off and complete the form for each walk, which is available on the Trekker website and it must be returned to the Club Treasurer, Marie McKeown.

Away Trips

The Committee has agreed on the following special away trips for 2009. These walks are for insured members only.

18 April 2009

South Leinster

Nearly 50% of our membership took part in this one day event with walks of both B and C grades. The former climbed Croghan Kinsella Mountain whilst the latter explored the Avoca Mines area. Thanks to Colette for organising this outing and to Brendan Bracken, Eugene Logan and Tom Duff for leading the individual walks. Everybody enjoyed the meal in the Woodenbridge Hotel afterwards. It was a great social occasion with plenty of opportunity to walk and talk.

8 to 10 May 2009

Mourne Mountains

Seventeen members have signed up for the trip to the Co. Down Mountains. A+ and C walks have been arranged for the Saturday and B and C walks for the Sunday treks. The trip is being organised by Gaye Maguire, with the help of a local guide, Marty McGuigan who will lead the group on the higher peaks whilst Monty Tinsley and the C team will be at a lower level. The group will stay in the Burrendale Hotel just outside Newcastle.

23 to 30 August

Northern Spain

Thirteen confirmed A/B walkers are listed for the trip to the Picos de Europa in the province of Asturias, northern Spain, with four on a waiting list. Brendan Bracken will now lead this band of interpid mountaineers.

6 to 11 September 2009

Connemara

Twenty-four Trekkers are listed for the trip to Connemara, with walks in the Twelve Pins area. The walks programme is being finalised. The trip is being organised by Monty Tinsley and they will stay in the Abbeyglenn Castle hotel, Clifden.

Memorial Stone

As announced at the Woodenbridge hotel on Saturday the 18th of April, it is proposed to erect a memorial stone to the deceased members of the Club. This would be sited in the garden beside the Glenmalure Lodge Hotel and would be unveiled after the Memorial Walk in July.

Training

Some initiatives are under way to organise training events – first aid, map and compass reading. It is hoped to organise a First Aid course in June. Discussions are ongoing with appropriate trainers at present.

Monty Tinsley led a B walk on 21 March 2009 that incorporated training in relation to map and compass reading (see article by Ita Lawton, page 9). The walk around the Trooperstown area provided an opportunity for members to update and practice their navigational skills.

Wicklow Uplands

Helen Lawless from Wicklow Uplands is seeking suggestions for improved public access to Coillte lands, as part of the Coillte Recreation Plan. It has been suggested, for example, that the road walk between the JB Malone Memorial and the Wicklow Way to Roundwood is an area that would lead to an improvement for walkers if it was converted to 'off-road'. The Committee invites suggestions from members and these should be forwarded to the Chairman, Monty Tinsley, who will forward same to Helen.

Trekkers Meitheal

A track of about two thirds of a kilometre running parallel to the road at Ballard, near Laragh, had become completely overgrown with gorse in recent weeks. A party of Trekkers led by Eileen Gallagher set about restoring this access to Trooperstown Hill, in early April. Thanks to the collective effort of this meitheal the track is usable once again.

Foot and Mouth Dinner

Please note the annual 'Foot and Mouth Dinner' organised by Eugene Logan will be held on 27th June 2009 at Glenmalure Lodge. Further details will follow in due time.

CHANGE OF NAME

At the recent AGM of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland the members voted to change the name to MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND. It was felt that the word 'council' was too stuffy and that structure was no longer part of the organisation.

Mountaineering Ireland is the National Governing Body for Mountaineering in the 32 counties with a membership of over 9,600, comprising of 130 Clubs and 1200 individual members.

The main aims of the organisation are to :-

- Represent the interests of walkers and climbers
- Improve and secure access to Irish hills and crags.
- Promote mountain training programmes and qualifications
- Encourage responsible and sustainable use of the mountain environment.
- Support members, and especially young people, in mountain skills.
- Provide appropriate services to members.

In the matter of access and conservation MCI has been involved with the Irish Uplands Forum. In conjunction with the Wicklow Uplands Council they hosted a seminar titled 'Local Involvement in Countryside Management'. One of their aims is to obtain access to the hills without interfering with local agriculture. The Trekkers are represented on the Wicklow Uplands Council by Pearse Connolly.

Over the past few years the MCI has been a major promoter of the 'Leave no Trace' programme via information in the Mountain Log and distribution of literature at various walking festivals.

The organisation also runs courses and workshops to promote safety on the hills. Further details about this Governing Body to which we are affiliated via membership of the Trekkers can be found on their website.



Scotland, Winter Wonderland!

By Owen McKeown



As regular walkers, we in the Trekkers are very lucky to live so close to Wicklow. We can be in some of the best walking country in Ireland in just 30 minutes thanks to Jerry and his magic bus.

Over the years we have managed to climb most of the peaks in the Garden of Ireland and have ranged over many other walking areas of the country.

After the Alps and Dolomites, always my favourites, my next preference must be Scotland that can be reached by air in as little as 40 minutes. With a hire car one can be in the middle of fantastic walking country within an hour of Glasgow airport.

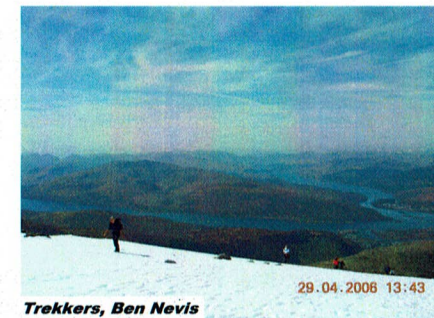
Scotland is in my opinion a walker's paradise with great variety from the waymarked trail such as The West Highland Way to giants such as Ben Nevis and An Teallach.

In addition the contrast between summer and winter can be stark. While some routes in summer can be an easy B walk, the same route in winter can become a major expedition requiring good equipment and confident navigation. For several of our early trips to Scotland we tended to go in summer, but in recent years, the extra challenge of winter visits have become more attractive. The often quoted comment that "there is no such thing as Winter Hillwalking in Scotland, it's Mountaineering laddie", has more than a grain of truth.

In general, if one is after rugged challenging walks then there is plenty on offer. To give some idea of the sheer amount of big mountains in the Highlands, in Ireland we have 14 mountains that exceed 3,000 ft (915 Meters).

In fact there are 9 that are over 4,000 ft.

The highest mountains in Scotland are known as Monros, named after Sir Hugh T. Munro who in 1891 surveyed all the country's mountains above 3000 ft and produced the original classification of the Scottish Peaks.



Trekkers, Ben Nevis

Over the years and with advances in surveying, there have been several revisions to Munro's original listing, the latest being in 1997. Currently, there are 284 Monros as related above.

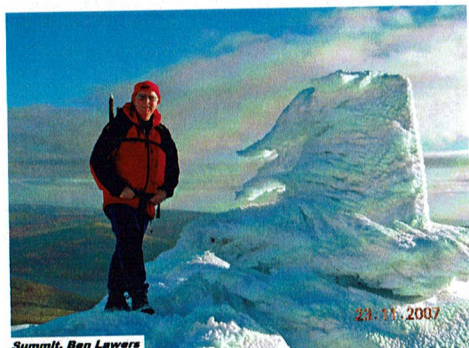
Climbing all the Scottish Monros, or 'Munro-bagging' is a popular pursuit amongst the climbing and hillwalking fraternity. The first recorded "bagger" to climb all the Monros was the Rev. A. E. Robertson in 1901 and since then, the Scottish Mountaineering Club has recorded over 2800 intrepid souls who have "completed", among whom is our own late George Barry.

Personally, I do not have any realistic prospect of ever doing the lot.

To date with only 65 completed, I would need another lifetime. However, over the next few years I hope to enjoy ticking off a few more. Perhaps 100 is a reasonable ambition.

Some of the Trekkers were on the trip in 2006 when we visited Fort William and the Cairngorms. On that trip we climbed Ben Nevis and Bynack Mhor and also did some scenic low level treks around Aviemore. Most of the Club enjoyed the opportunity to climb "The Ben" as Nevis is referred to by the locals. I would have to say that Nevis is not my favourite Scottish mountain. I would give that title to Ben Lawers though I must admit that the opinion is biased by the fantastic weather that we enjoyed on the summit in 2007!

To give an illustration of the changeability of the weather in Scotland in winter, the picture on Ben Chonzie was taken two days later in a 60 mph blizzard!



Summit, Ben Lawers

Over the past 20 years, I have been lucky enough to have visited the Highlands on at least a dozen occasions. These visits have included Skye, Glen Shiel, Locharber, Knoydart, Lochnagar, Cairngorms, Glen Shee, Glen Tilt and Glencoe. I generally travel as an informal group drawn from several clubs who are of a similar standard and who can basically



Summit, Ben Chonzie

get on reasonably well on a long hill day. We tend to consist of three Irish and a New Yorker that we acquired in Wicklow when he was working in Ireland.

Our most recent visit was in early March this year when we went to Glencoe with the intention of practicing our snow and ice climbing skills for a visit to the Alps this summer. This is one of the major attractions of Scotland for Irish climbers as at home the snow is very unpredictable and on the very odd occasion we do get decent coverage, you can't get to the mountains because of blocked roads. No such problems in Glencoe, we had six days ploughing through very soft powdery snow. (Exhausting). We managed to climb Buachaille Etive Beag and practiced belaying and abseiling in the Great Gully on Buachaille Etive Mor with a guide. The photo at the start of this article was taken from Great Gully. The views across Rannoch Moor were magic.

On a more sombre note, while this is a popular area, this is also the mountain where two Northern Irishmen and a Scot were killed in January this year. A guide is a sensible precaution.

Buachaille Etive Mor and Colre na Tulaich



Future plans include a trip in November this year when we hope to get to Torridon and Western Ross. This is the area of such famous peaks as Liathach, Ben Alligin and an Teallach. Planning for this one must wait till after our attempt on Mont Blanc in July. (Watch this space.).

Practical Navigation Exercises

By Ita Lawton

21 March 2009, was an unusual day for the Trekkers. Instead of the usual B walk Monty included some navigational exercises in the walk. After we left the bus near the Avonmore River, Monty invited us all to take out our maps. He explained a little about contours and shading, after which we followed the route for a short distance. Having learned how to take a bearing, and with individual help from more experienced trekkers, we set off to the top of Trooperstown Hill on a direct bearing.

At the top we were broken into three groups, each with a navigation assignment. Each assignment had an "aiming off" element, otherwise they were straightforward navigation exercises. Then the fun started. After some grouping and consultation, each group took off on its assignment. Although some mistakes were made, the most important thing is we all made it back to the designated point in reasonable time.



Talking with people afterwards, it was apparent that everyone felt they learned a lot from the day, and that we should do exercises like this more often. We had four potential new members in the group who also found the exercise most interesting. Fortunately, no Trekkers got lost!! All agreed that the training was a good success and that it should be repeated and built upon at regular intervals. Thanks to Monty.

To Stop and Stare and Enjoy

By Henry Jack

Why do I join a 'C' walk? It allows me ample time to pause and look around. What is the advantage? Continuing my general education but in pleasant company.

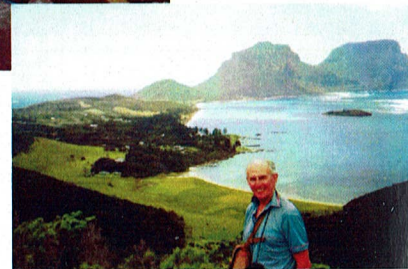
In my early years we always walked, when convenient, for exercise and to admire our surroundings. After I was married, we started the family walking, as soon as they could, which we really enjoyed, as it was fun. Like all children, they asked questions about anything and everything, so it became ongoing education, not only did they learn, so also did we! On our frequent stops, they learnt observation and appreciation of the country around them, about changes in nature and wildlife, with the different times of the year. When they were older, they learnt to use maps and compass to move over the land and eventually on water! This gave them self-confidence, to measure their ability to travel any distance and in safety. We, as a family always had great fun with this activity, and I became aware of the advantage to 'stop and stare'.

Following the death of my wife, I covered many distances by foot and on my own, and on retirement, extended my walks to other countries, sometimes in company but many solo trips, which required plans to cover and unforeseen accidents. This allowed me to enjoy new areas to 'stop and stare', but on well used tracks while on many trails overseas, you check-in and out with official wardens, who soon know when you may be in trouble! Walking on your own has the advantage of seeing more wild-life, they do not hear you approach.

In time I felt the need to take more exciting walks away from these popular trails, so decided on seeking suitable company. This avoids the danger of accidents in isolated country, which made my family happy also!

The disadvantage was it reduced my time to 'stop and stare'. Back in Dun Laoghaire I made enquiries. Luckily I met Dick Needham at that time and joined Trekkers. So here I am, enjoying the walking, the chat in great company, with help if needed, and time to observe my environment.

There is so much to see while walking. The shape of the land, interesting rocks, fine trees and beautiful plants, the changing colours, so well balanced which we should note and apply when choosing paints to decorate a room. Look at the signs left by mammals, the flight of birds, the sounds of water running in streams and rivers, while overhead, the changing moods in the sky. I can remember my elders from the past saying, 'you are never too old to learn', and so to the 'C' walkers, thank-you, for helping me continue with my love, to 'STOP and STARE' while enjoying your pleasant company.



Where are we???

Oh it is on the map!!

By Monty Tinsley

Most of us are familiar with notice boards around cities and tourist trails that show a map of the area. They all have one thing in common. A red spot with the words -YOU ARE HERE. On a recent Navigation exercise we discovered where we were, see Ita's article for further details.

Whether trekking or mountaineering a little bit of local history, spotting flora and fauna as well as picking out landmarks can make a walk more interesting.

Therefore I would suggest that during every walk the leader would ensure some educational information is given to the participants. One way of doing this is to show everybody exactly where they are on the map and also show the route taken and the distance yet to be traversed. This will help people learn a bit more about map reading



Understanding the symbols on a map is the first step towards navigating a course. However it is only practise that will ensure accuracy. I would also suggest that everybody looks at the route map before, during and after the trek. It is an invaluable exercise. The majority of our walks are in the Wicklow area and these are covered in Sheet No 56 of the Ordnance Survey series. This is the most useful map to have in your kit.

Furthermore, on A walks, I would suggest that all participants use their compass and the leader informs them of the bearing on which he/she intends to travel. It is an easy way to learn and will raise all our skill levels. This will also ensure that members will have the necessary confidence to lead walks which is essential for our growing membership.

THE JOYS OF SNOWSHOEING

By Gilbert Little

A Winter skiing holiday can give the impression that every mountain slope has been converted into a ski run and every valley into a holiday resort to support the ski industry. Amid this urban mountain sprawl the only way to come into contact with the wilderness is for the risk-loving to go off-piste or the super fit to go cross country skiing.

There is an alternative however, where the walker can go safely into a remote valley, far removed from the skiers, and roam through quiet uninterrupted snow touched only by the last fall and the recent foot prints of a passing fox or deer. On a family skiing holiday in Morzine in the French Alps between Christmas and the New Year I decided to give snowshoeing a lash by booking myself in for two afternoons and one full day session.

While snowshoes of old looked like tennis rackets, the technology has now moved on and consists of a stiff plastic mould which fits onto a standard walking boot and has crampon-like spikes for extra stability. A key feature is that the snowshoe is hinged at a single point on the ball of the foot (see photograph) so the heel of the snowshoe flaps freely. When walking in snow therefore when you lift your foot the heel of the snowshoe stays in the snow thus creating a groove as you move forward.



The snowshoe is slightly wider than a walking boot and therefore one's stance has to be with the feet wider apart than normal. First attempts at walking therefore are similar to a cowboy who just got off a horse, bandy legged. The movement feels like walking across peat hags with loosely fitting dustbin lids. With practice the initial tendency to step on your own snowshoe and trip over can be avoided.

And so to the walking... each of us were given one walking pole (I would have preferred two for better stability). The approach to the mountains is the same as for skiing - ie. via Gondola or Chairlift, shoulder to shoulder with the skiers travelling up to the high slopes. The difference is that while the skiers start their descent on designated slopes, snowshoers can head off into the true wilderness. Very soon we were away from green, blue, red or black signs and into remote valleys with deep snow and difficult

terrain with trees and other obstacles through which skiers just could not go. Occasionally we crossed a path used by cross country skiers, but mostly we were wading through a couple of feet of thick snow.

The format for the walks was the same as normal (ie. a leader and a sweeper at the back) with all walking initially in normal duck formation. Soon the penny drops that the leader is the one who has all the fun (ie. he/she gets to walk in the snow for the first time and everyone else just walks along in his/her groove). Hence people tend to fan out across the mountainside so that each can carve out their own personal track. It's at this point that the real joy of snowshoeing emerges - ie the feeling of being the first person in that valley, on that day, to walk on that particular snow fall. Given the natural silence that always prevails with heavy snow the overall sense is of peace and tranquillity. Such profound thoughts are soon dispelled however by the sheer effort it takes to pump through a couple of feet of snow on a sustained basis.

The one day trip was brilliant, the distance obviously further and the terrain more demanding and we got to do some ridge walking. Definitely an A Walk however.

So, the verdict on snowshoeing? The advertising blurb says it's the fastest growing mountain pursuit, but they would say that. For me it's a definite for a Trekker on a Winter break in snow capped mountains and I will certainly do it again. On the other hand for those Wicklow peat hags on a rainy Saturday afternoon, there is nothing like the real thing!



Photo Gallery



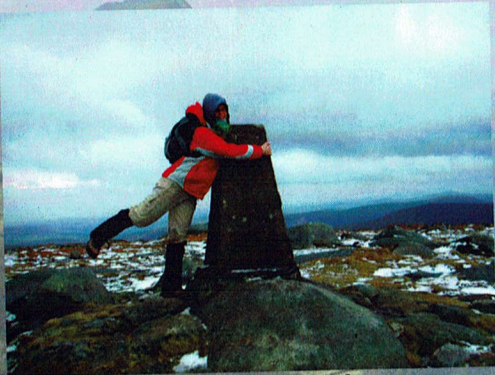
**Paddy, Dermot, Mary and Judith
Near Turlough Hill
14th Feb 2009**



**In Conference:
Paddy, Mike & Ita
near Glendalough
14th Feb 2009**



**Come and Get me!!!
Owen near Turlough Hill
14th Feb 2009**



**Cliona at the top!
Tonglague Walk
11th Jan 2009**



**Near Newtownmountkennedy
11th Feb 2009**



**Eugene admiring the sculpture
18th April 2009**



**Great Start to the New Year
C walk
3rd Jan 2009**



**Braving the Elements!
Tonglague
11th Jan 2009**



**2 Catherines
C Walk
3rd Jan 2009**



**Group exploring Belfast environs
11th Nov 2008**



**Monty on his knees!
Near Clara; B Walk
4th April 2009**



**Group enjoying the sun
near Woodenbridge
18th April 2009**



**Three Chums!
Gaye, Brendan & Gilbert near Waterfall
Glenmaluire
7th March 2009**



**Trying to stay standing
Croghan Mountain
28th March 2009**



**Marlene, Tricia, Marla
Trooperstown Area; C Walk
14th March 2009**



**Armed Trekkers clearing the way!
1st April 2009**

Programme of walks - 2/05/09 to 29/08/09

Date	Grade	Start	First Leader	Second Leader	Third Leader
May					
2	B	09:00	Derek O'Neill	Mary Murray	Angela McCracken
(Trip to Mournes 8th to 10th May)					
9	C	11:00	Roger Kirker	Cindy Mangan	Maura Byne
16	A	09:00	Owen McKeown	Shay Murran	Dermot Murray
23	B	09:00	Paddy O'Duffy	Tom Duff	Brian Brennan
	C	11:00	Eugene Logan	Catherine Minogue	Marie Comiskey
30	BY	09:00	Judith Poynton	Dermot Murray	Barry Walsh
June					
6	B	09:00	Eileen Gallagher	Terry O'Brien	Conor Stephens
13	A	09:00	Mary Dillon	Joe Murray	Niall Humphries
	C	11:00	Liam Walsh	Shella Cantwell	Fergal Molloy
20	NIL				
27	(F and M Dinner)				
	B	09:00	Sorcha Ryan	Monty Tinsley	Michael Cotter
	C	11:00	Eugene Logan	Ann Little	Noel O'Reilly
July					
4	C	11:00	Kevin Beegan	Colette Dorgan	Catherine Walsh
11	A	09:00	Mike Sims	Mary Murray	Maeve Sims
18	(Memorial Walk)				
	B	09:00	Ita Lawton	Paddy O'Duffy	Pearse Connolly
	C	11:00	Dick Needham	Evelyn Tinsley	Kevin Moore
25	B	09:00	Monty Tinsley	Cliona Carey	Philip O'Neill
August					
1	NIL				
8	B	09:00	Niall Humphries	Tom Murray	Conor Crowley
	C	11:00	Freddie English	Marlene Travers	Noreen O'Brien
15	A	09:00	John Murphy	Terry O'Brien	Joe Murray
22	C	11:00	Eugene Logan	Dick Ryan	Mary Delany
29	B	09:00	Shay Murran	Roger Kirker	Dermot Murray
	C	11:00	Myles Duffy	John Furey	Hilary Fitzpatrick

Any changes to the walks programme should be notified to the walks
Co-Ordinator Colette Dorgan