

The Trekker

From a small group for a short few years ago, this has evolved into a thriving club with a membership of over 100 which is rapidly growing. For a membership of nearly 100 people...

The club has organized a range of activities for its members to enjoy. For example, the following shows a number of these and what to expect...

Perhaps the most popular activity is the weekly walks which are organized by the club. These are held on a regular basis...

Now that the club has a membership of over 100, it is possible to organize larger group activities. For example, the club has organized a number of weekend trips to various locations...



EDITORIAL

"Time Marches On," as the old American newsreel used to say. And so too do the Trekkers.

From a small group just a short few years ago our Club has evolved into a thriving Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club which is rapidly heading for a membership of nearly fifty people.

This has necessitated changes in the type of walk held in order to accommodate the differing fitness standards of those who wish to walk with us.

Further on in the magazine Shaun Trant outlines what these changes have meant for you the members and also our guest walkers.

Now that Autumn is upon us and evenings are getting shorter greater care is needed. Try not to lag behind when conditions are wet and misty as it is so easy to get lost from the group. Remember to carry a whistle so that should you stray contact can be made with the main group.

Brian Brennan
Editor

A Trekker on Mt. Blanc (15,722ft 4847 m.)

There are over 100 routes to the top of Mt. Blanc. Four of these have become established as "normal" routes which means that they are not too technically demanding. But they all require a high degree of fitness and acclimatisation. And if the weather breaks quickly, as it can and does, fierce winds and cold can make escape from its upper slopes a nightmare. There were five of us. Four, Kevin, John, Alan and I were old alpinists. The fifth, Tony, though new to the Alps, was a formidable "goer".

We first explored the Grand Mulets route. It was by a variation of this route that Mount Blanc was first climbed. We did not like the condition of the glacier with its complex crevasses and unstable seracs. Besides we needed to become more acclimatised to altitude. So instead we climbed Mt. Blanc de Tacul (a 4000m satellite peak) and the Aiguille d'Argentier, 3900m.

Then we had to await a "window" in the unsettled and steadily deteriorating weather. A brief "window" was forecast for Sunday night - Monday morning. We decided to go for it. We chose the Gouter route. Popular because the Gouter Hut is so high, it is, in my view, dangerous because of stonefall below the hut.

A short spin by train to Les Houches, a teliferique to the Belvedere and a rack railway to the Nid d'Aigle (7,828 ft, 2386m) and we were on our way. Kevin's description of the climb to the hut as "four hours of sweating and quiet cursing" was accurate except that it took Alan and me five hours.

We followed a trail which winds up steeply to a glacier. On the far side of the glacier is the Tete Rousse Hut (2 hours, 10,391ft). But we are heading for the Gouter Hut (12,524ft) so we climb diagonally up across the glacier and find ourselves at the foot of a notorious couloir. This featured a steep tongue of glacier between two rock ridges. It acts as a chute for all the loose rock from the ridges above. The couloir has to be crossed to reach the main ridge which climbs up

steeply to the hut. Crossing it is like playing Russian Roulette. You clip into a wire cable and cross as quickly as you can. Ian Travers, a very competent young Irish climber, was killed here a few years ago.

As we climbed the ridge became enveloped in cloud. The wind got up. The temperature dropped and rain, sleet and finally snow were driving across our faces. I was last and arrived wet and numbed. The hut was overcrowded and chaotic. The altitude was 12,524ft, 3817m.

By 1.45am we were up and getting ready. Breakfast was unthinkable in the chaos inside. So by 2.30am we were outside, crampons on, and moving. It was now a still clear night. There was a full moon. The snow was frozen hard. We crunched up the steep slope behind the hut and soon emerged on the glacier above. We could see the torches of earlier parties higher up on the Dome de Gouter. The effect was eerie. Kevin, John and Tony were somewhat ahead.

Breakfast after an hour consisted of water and a banana. We were beginning to feel the altitude. But there was a quiet beauty as the slopes took shape in the moonlight. Soon we were approaching the Dome de Gouter (14,118ft, 4303m). The eastern sky was lightening. The moon faded into the west and the sun rose dramatically over the Aiguilles Rouges in the east. It transfigured the summit snows and all the surrounding ridges.

A slight descent to the Col du Dome and up the steepening slope to the Vallot Refuge. The Vallot is an aluminium box anchored on a rock outcrop. It is squalid and smelly but it has saved many lives. We slumped down near it. Ice rattled in our waterbottles. The sandwiches prepared in Chamonix were uneatable. Another banana would have been welcome.

The wind was freshening so we moved on. Stops were now more frequent. The air was thinner. We climbed the narrowing and steepening Bosses ridge (14,919ft) and then traversed the "knife-edge" ridge passing the rocks of La Tournette on the right. Where it widened we collapsed exhausted. More water and ice. Three figures were descending towards us. Kevin, John and Tony. They had

reached the top at 7.15am. "Another hour to the summit." We wished each other luck and they moved down.

Our ridge veered east and narrowed. A false summit and then moving slowly, stopping often for breath, we climbed the last three hundred metres to the summit. It was 9.20am. The sun was well up and the day was clear. Yet it was bitterly cold with the wind-driven spindrift stinging our faces. Our position was superb. It overlooked famous peaks and ridges on every side - including the great Penning peaks in the east.

But we were in no mood to linger. A few drinks of ice and water, two quick photos (only one of which came out) and we began the descent. Once we had safely negotiated the icy "knife-edge" the tension relaxed and we rested often. We reached the Gouter Hut about 2pm. A bowl of tea and three lumps of sugar revived us and we continued down.

The descent from the hut over the "easy" rock scramble was nerve-racking. The sleet and snow of the previous evening had frozen to hard ice. We had stowed away and strapped on our ruck-sacks our rope, crampons and ice-axes. It took nearly three hours to reach the couloir. A last fright when some rocks whizzed past as we crossed. Then we traversed the glacier and trudged wearily down to the rack railway. Fortunately the trams were still running when we got there.

Bill Hannon

*"I can see how it might be possible for a man
to look down upon the earth and be an atheist,
but I cannot conceive how he could look up
into the heavens and say there is no God."*

Abraham Lincoln

IRISH BROADCASTING DOCUMENTS NO.1

"... Going for the DG's Job" - 1925 Style

In October 1925 when the first interviews were held by the Civil Service Commissioners for Dublin Broadcasting Station Director, the interview board was divided. Four members of the Selection Board which included among others, the Directors of the BBC John Reith and Percy Pitt a BBC Engineer, were in favour of appointing William George Fay of the Abbey Theatre, but Fay did not secure enough votes. It became necessary to set up a second board.

PS O'Hegarty the Secretary of Posts and Telegraphs and Chairman of the Selection Board who had favoured Fay's appointment was not pleased. He did not want a Civil Servant running broadcasting. He wrote to the Secretary of the Civil Service Commission that a Civil Servant would be "less likely to work hard than a person wholly dependant upon making good in Broadcasting . . . The applicants will probably be all officers whose long training in a sheltered and far from the madding crowd occupation has made them quite unfit for the ordinary rough and tumble of a business undertaking . . ." both Hegarty and his Minister JJ Walsh felt that unless an appointee gave up his Civil Service position he would have either his pension or his post to fall back on and this would affect this commitment to broadcasting. The second time round, the successful candidate was Seamus Clandillon an Inspector in the National Health Insurance Commission. He became the first Director of the Dublin Broadcasting Station in November, 1925.

From Access, RTE Staff Magazine

JUNE 1996 - WEEKEND WALK

This year the club's June weekend walk took place on the Dingle Peninsula. We had a party of twenty. The gods were kind to us and gave us wall to wall sunshine from start to finish. Assembly was at Bellevue Road at 0600 hours for the transport to Heuston Station where we took the 0730 train to Tralee. We are grateful to Gerry Keane, who as always, when the group travels by train, had made perfect arrangements for our comfort and convenience.

Arriving in Tralee we were met by coach and hit the road for Dingle where we stopped for lunch prior to proceeding to Cahertrant just west of Ventry to start the day's walk. We walked along track overlooking the sea towards Sleah Head, passing the well known "beehives". These are stone constructed buildings shaped like a beehive. Descending down a steep hill which forms part of Sleah Head we joined the tarred road, stopping for minerals and afternoon tea in a cafe, and then continued on to our destination for that day, the Granville Hotel in Ballyferriter. It was a very hot day and after 9 miles everyone was glad to sit down. Fred and Eugene, who had come down by car joined us here. After dinner that evening someone suggested that a visit to a local hostelry might be appropriate. There was unanimous agreement.

On Saturday the coach took 16 of us to Ballydavid from where we started walking around the shore, climbing over the ridge between Masatiompan and Mount Brandon, finishing up in Brandon village. This walk was a distance of 12 miles, climbing to 2000 feet. Whilst awaiting the coach there was time to spare so Fred and Eugene went for a swim. The coach came and brought us to our three guesthouses in Stradbally. That night we ate in Tomasion's Restaurant. Four of the group, Mary, Jack, Michael and Liam did not walk this day but went to see "Fungi" the dolphin in Dingle. Sunday dawned and thoughts rapidly turned to the big one, that of course was Mount Brandon. Memory is a strange thing. For some of our party kept repeating that this was a comparatively easy climb, they had not bother the last time they went up it. It should be noted that they did

not go up this time. Ten of us headed off to the mountain. The first approximately 2000 feet are a steady slog and just when you are making your own slow pace, thinking this is not as bad as one feared, the bad news hits you, nearly literally, when you look up and see that the next 1000 feet is almost vertical with a zigzag path. Eventually we reached the top and it is well worth the effort for the views are absolutely magnificent. Here we split up into two groups, the more hardy taking the long climb over Brandon Peak and down the tracks into Dingle, a stiff enough trek with the distance being 11 miles. Michael, Liam and myself took Bill's advice and opted for the easier route down to the village of Brandon Creek from where we were picked up and returned to Dingle.

The other ten members of the group opted for the trip to the Blasket Islands. They were taken by coach to Dunquin where they boarded a boat to take them out to the island. The day was spent enjoying the walks and scenery of the island.

On Sunday night 14 stayed in the Alpine Hotel and 6 stayed in O'Neill's guesthouse. We ate that night in the same place where we had our lunch on Friday, the Half Door Restaurant. The food was excellent.

Monday morning came and time to return home. Said our farewells to Fred and Eugene who were staying on. The coach took us back to Tralee where we had 2 hours before the train. People split up and went their own way meeting again at the station. Arriving in Dublin we were met by the coach and taken home.

One of the most important aspects of the annual June Weekend is the ability of the walk leaders to keep us on the right track (no pun intended) at all times and to be able to take control of a sizeable group. This task was very adequately handled by both John and Bill.

At the Dublin end as usual Tony Graham looked after the transport, whilst in Dingle Moran's Coach Hire gave very good service.

THE TREKKERS' WALKING GRADES

For some years after the formation of the Trekkers, the standard day's outing was "a day in the mountains". This usually consisted of a walk lasting up to 8 hours, traversing one of more mountain summits and encompassing a minimum of road walking. It was held once a month, usually on the second Saturday of the month. The pick-up time was 9am.

When a more formal group structure was set up in January, 1995 one of the changes made was the introduction of a second monthly walk, less demanding than the standard walk. It was designed to offer an alternative, less exacting, choice to existing members. It was also seen as a means of facilitating persons who wished to take up hill walking but were concerned that they would not meet the demands of the standard walks.

The existing standard walk was designated an A walk and the new walk was graded B. The special features of the B walk were;

1. The pick-up time would be 9am, as for the A walk.
2. It would involve a full day in the mountains but would probably finish earlier than the A walk.
3. The walking would be largely on forest roads and tracks. Walking on rough, open ground and steep climbing might be necessary at times but would be kept to a minimum.

The A walk continued on the second Saturday of the month; the B walk was allocated the fourth Saturday.

The new B walk was an immediate success and highly popular. Dick Needham's report at the AGM in January 1996 showed that the A walks had an average attendance of 11.4 person during the previous year, while for the B walks the average attendance was 14. This pattern continued during 1996.

During 1996 the growing popularity of hillwalking suggested that there might be a place for a third grade, less demanding than the B walk. The demand was seen to come from persons, whether existing members or outsiders, who were attracted by the prospect of walking in the hills but who did not wish to be involved in anything lengthy or demanding or rough. In September, 1996 the C grade was introduced. Its special features were;

1. The pick-up time would be 11am.
2. It would take place on the same day as the A walk. Both walks would finish in the same place at about the same time.
3. It would be confined to forest roads and tracks and there would be no severe climbing.

The first C walk took place on the second Saturday in September, 1996. Kevin Beegan led a group of 9 persons on a circular route by forest road and tarmac from Glemalure Hotel, returning to the starting point, where they met the A walkers who also finished in Glenmalure.

In October there was a second C walk, starting at Annamoe and ending in Glendalough. This time there were 10 persons on the C walk, the majority of them recent recruits to hillwalking. Later in the day they joined the Trekkers who were on the A walk which also finished in Glendalough.

The grades of walk which are now in operation are:

A Walk Takes place once a month on the second Saturday of the month. Pick-up time 9am. Walk is mainly on open, often rough ground; crosses one or more (sometimes several) mountain summits; lasts from 5 to 8 hours, depending on the time of year and the hours of daylight available.

B Walk Takes place once a month on the fourth Saturday of the month. Pick-up time 9am. Walk avoids rough ground and uses forest roads and tracks. Lasts 4 to 6 hours. A typical B walk would be a section of the Wicklow Way.

C Walk Takes place once a month on the same day as the A walk. Pick-up time 11am. Finishes at about the same time and in the same location as the A Walk. Lasts about 4 hours.

The walk grades are kept under regular review. The C walk is tentative at this stage and experience over the next couple of months will determine whether it should be retained and, if so, whether it needs to be adjusted.

**TROODOS MOUNTAINS
CYPRUS 1996**

Mount Olympus at 6400 feet is the highest peak in the Troodos range of mountains situated in the Southern (Greek) part of the island. The climb is not particularly difficult but it is long when approached from the Limassol or South side. However, the northern approach is considerably steeper. Our group which was led by a local guide started out early in the morning. There are many small mountain villages on the way and these were very welcome as the day at 28 degrees Celsius was very hot and we were able to stop for a cool drink. One of the great advantages of this climb is that it is not necessary (due to the climate) to carry wet gear, or is there any need to carry lunch as this can be purchased in any of the villages. At approximately 4000 feet the grunting and groaning started and we wondered whether we would be able for the last 2000 feet. Unfortunately, one cannot climb to the very top for security reasons as there is a NATO Signal and Radar Station on the peak. Eventually, thoroughly exhausted, we reach the permitted limit at 6000 feet and were pleased to find yet another small village where we could partake of refreshment. Our guide, a fluent speaker of the English language, explained to us that our coach was old and was really not fit for this climb any longer but would be alright as the rest of the trip was downhill.

Brian Brennan

Congratulations

*Marian and Kevin Beegan
on the birth of their second grandchild,
"Joseph Caoimhin"
First son for Paul and Anne*

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WALK LEADERS 1997

Walks take place on the 2nd (Grade A) and 4th Saturday (Grade B) of each month except July and August. **A new Grade C walk is being introduced.** This will take place on the 2nd Saturday in conjunction with the Grade A walk. The Deputy Leader of the A walk will lead the C walk. There will be a certain amount of flexibility required of members to make this new system work. In order to maintain the sociable aspect of the walks, the A & C walks will finish up in the same place near enough at the same time.

If any member is unavailable on their allocated day, they are to arrange a swop with another member and please notify Dick Needham accordingly.

Walk Leaders should notify Kevin Beegan on the Tuesday preceding the walk in order that he can arrange transport.

Date	Walk	Leader & Tel.		Deputy Leader & Tel.	
11/1	A	B. McKean	281 9717 h 668 4181 w	J. Brett	285 3358 h
25/1	B	M. Armstrong	285 2434 h 456 8111 w	P. Furey	295 6682 h
8/2	A	F. Trant c/o	285 3979	P. O'Duffy	280 4789 h
22/2	B	K. Trant	282 7591 h	N. O'Reilly	280 9929 764 4815
8/3	A	S. Trant	285 3979 h	R. Halpenny	285 5976
22/3	B	B. Brennan	285 5700 h	D. O'Hegarty	280 8335
12/4	A	E. Logan	285 2548	F. English	280 4363 459 7704/451 6411 w
26/4	B	K. Beegan	285 1698 h 677 6881 w	J. Brandon	285 9563 677 6881 w
10/5	A	D. Kirker	282 0971 h 289 8441 w	M. Tinsley	285 2126
24/5	B	W. Hannon	285 3327 h	J. Moore	285 5035 h
7.6	A	J. Furey	289 3045 h 838 5527 w	C. Furey	289 3045 h
June W/E on the Leitrim Way & Benbulbin		R. Needham		284 9571 h 280 1130/280 8074 w Fax: 280 8062	