

September 2015 - Issue 56

# Irish Trekker



Snowdon

Trekkers Mountaineering Club  
Glenageary  
Co. Dublin  
[www.trekkers.ie](http://www.trekkers.ie)



## Welcome

Welcome to recently joined members - we wish you long and happy trekking.

- Aidan Bourke
- Una Davis
- Bill Godwin
- Mary Murphy
- Máirtín O Fainín
- Fiona O'Sullivan
- Sue Ward
- Ronan White

## AGM

Thursday 15th  
October

8.00 pm  
W.B. Yeats Room

Fitzpatrick's Castle  
Hotel Killiney

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## Chairperson's Greeting

Shay Murrain

The past months have been very eventful for the club - the membership continues to increase, the Wednesday walk goes from strength to strength, the attendances at the walks on Saturday are excellent and the number of foreign trips were all very successful. Well done all round. I take the opportunity to welcome the new members who contribute to the club with energy and enthusiasm. I hope you all enjoy the walking and camaraderie as much as we do. The summer party in the George Yacht Club was a new event and was very well received, the attendance was excellent. As part of the event Long Service Certificates were presented to members with 20 years' service. This was a new departure and was appreciated by the membership and recipients of the certificates. The event brought back many members who do not participate in walking at this stage but who contributed to the club over many years, we appreciate their efforts in the past. I encourage all members to become familiar with the reissued guidelines. Just a brief reminder - the AGM is on the 15th October and we look forward to a good attendance - see detail on this page.

## Editor's Note

*Many thanks to all who contributed, particularly Mary Dillon for her account of the Pyrenees, Emmet Oliver for his of Snowdonia, Monty for his compilation of long serving members. We include a piece on St. Anne's cemetery. Thanks to all who entered the caption competition, be sure to read and enjoy. Thanks too to photographers Owen, Breda, Myles, Gail - Enjoy - Niall*

Niall Humphreys; niallandeileen@gmail.com

## Snowdonia

*Emmet Oliver*

While they are both hemmed in by the same sea and tend to be incredibly wet, I was amazed at the stark differences between Snowdonia and the Wicklow mountains during a wonderful visit to the North Welsh region in April.



*Final ascent of Snowdon*

Having toiled for over a year through bog, heather and general moorland in Wicklow, Snowdonia represented a big step change, with lots of scree, crags and slate throwing up a different set of challenges.

While several peaks in Snowdonia are visible from Wicklow when visibility is good, they are worlds apart in terms of terrain and underfoot conditions.

For that very reason the group of Trekkers who undertook a three-day hike within Snowdonia National Park enjoyed this most inviting of diversions from our usual Wicklow/Dublin routes.

As my first overseas excursion with the Trekkers, one was a little apprehensive about the logistical challenges involved, but a trip to Snowdonia is just about perfect for the first timer.

The trip over on the Ferry from North Wall is very brief and within a few hours of leaving Dublin you can be standing beside the majesty of Snowdon itself, as well as other mountains in the range.

The group, led by Owen, was a nice mix of Snowdonia veterans and Snowdonia virgins (no smart comments at the back please!) and after fortifying ourselves on the first night at the congenial Princess Arms Hotel in Trefriw, near Betws-y-Coed, it was straight into our first intense work-out as we took on Snowdon itself on our second day in Wales.

While I was aware Snowdon was the highest mountain in Wales, you certainly realise you are taking on a mountain of some repute when the first landmark you encounter is a plaque to former British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, a great supporter of Wales, who

had his estate in the Welsh town of Hawarden

The route we took started at Bethania Car Park, going up via the Wadkin path, across the SE ridge to Snowdon Summit and returning by the Miners Path to Pen-Y-Pass and Pen-Y-Gwryd hotel, a 17km walk, with an ascent of 1,200 metres.

As our leader reminded us, chillingly, that is a big ascent and it is made all the more challenging when you start low down, near sea level.

Where were we starting I nervously asked? Low down and near sea level, came the reply!

Within a few minutes, heavy layers were being discarded as the temperatures started to rise and we took on the challenging terrain, which as described earlier was more rocky than boggy for us Wicklow regulars.

While the terrain is challenging, Snowdon is a busy mountain and this means there are plenty of distractions to keep things lively, including what appeared to be a mountain rescue helicopter doing some exercises in the air over our heads early on in the climb. We climbed away for several hours before breaking for lunch overlooking our eventual descent route. The views are simply stunning and the route itself is not too congested, so going at a moderate enough pace is possible.



*Carneddau and Llyn Idwal from Devils Kitchen*

As one expects the wind tends to get up a head of steam as you approach the summit and there was some minor scrambling near the summit too, to keep things interesting. Strangely enough the summit almost comes upon you unnoticed, but it comes as a shock in many respects too-as the crowds at the top are quite dense, even though the rooftop cafe was closed the day we visited and the railway appeared to be shut. Interestingly enough the railway is the only public rack and pinion railway in the United Kingdom.

At this point some Trekkers were feeling the pace, but the absence of said railway, meant there really was only one way down - via ones legs! Before the descent though, it was time for lots of pictures and yes, lots of selfies. Joe Devine even engaged in some outrageous photo bombing of us first timers!

The views are truly breathtaking and while Snowdon itself is spectacular, to see the other peaks layed out around you in the distance is jaw dropping. The best way to describe the view is that it looks like the scales on the back of dinosaur's or a crocodile's back.



The descent is a tough one too, with the drops between each individual rock pretty big, but again the views are immensely rewarding and you make good time, at least initially. The main factor slowing you on the descent is the sheer numbers ascending via the same route, many of them it must be said, wearing totally unsuitable gear for such a serious mountain.

Throughout the descent are a collection of lakes to your right which make the descent more than just a slog. Eventually, with sore feet and thirsty mouths, we all fell into the sweet embrace of the Pen-Y-Gwryd hotel, which has connections to Everest climbers and a fine collection of hiking boots hanging from the ceiling. I'd also like to complement them on their collection of wheat beers which went down well with this thirsty Snowdon survivor.

In contrast to the first day of climbing, which was mainly in sun and brightness, the second day's walk was an altogether different affair in terms of weather. Temperatures plunged and layers were being added hurriedly by our group as we pulled into Llyn Ogwen Car Park to take on Y Garn. This Trekker was suffering from a mildly damaged foot from the first day, so I was a little nervous about trying to spring up the initial ascent via Llyn Idwal, however I took modest comfort from the sight of the RAF Mountain Rescue vans in the car park earlier!

We spotted some rock climbers early in the ascent and took a time out to have a look at their technique- suffice to say, I won't be changing clubs/codes any time soon. The ascent this time around was tougher with lots of crags and some steep sections and a little scrambling thrown in for good measure. But again the views were eye watering

and a few hours into the ascent we were seeing our first snow on the ground. I shouldn't have been surprised by this as many parts of Snowdonia generally get snow until May and there was a clue staring me right in the face...er its called Snow-donia!

The summit at Y Garn was very windy and we didn't hang around, although we took some great photos and there was a real sense of achievement at battling through some pretty harsh elements. We then added to the walk by shifting on to the summit at Foel Goch and returning by the NE Ridge of Y Garn to our start point. The descent was very challenging as snow build up was considerable and footing had to be watched very carefully. A great display of team work was in evidence on this descent as Owen showed us some useful techniques



for descending in snow and not tumbling head first down a ravine! (Always good to know that I find!).

All in all it was a 12 km shift with a 1,050 metre climb. What was great about this walk was, we were only 24 hours from our first walk in the sun and brightness, but this was different altogether, but no less enjoyable. Again you

get a reward every time you descend a mountain in Snowdonia - a dazzling array of lakes to gawk at as you make your way down. Our reward this time around was a very pleasant beer or two in Betws-y-Coed, which is a surprisingly large town. (A great place also for buying hiking gear too I noticed).

The final day again provided variety as we got to take in a hike, but also a little history as we visited Bettgelart, a picture postcard town contained within the Snowdonia national park area. Owen devised an impressive route after an earlier route was scrapped due to serious weather warnings as we hiked the area around the Sygun Copper Mine, which while now closed, still seems almost alive in spirit. Much of the equipment of the miners is still scattered around and it is pretty evocative.

With the weather deteriorating, the group were happy to stay lower this time around, with a 10KM climb of about 476 metres. It was a real tonic after the two previous days tough hiking and the Trekkers are at their best when we have to improvise! We are also at our best when

sneaking off to buy souvenirs and I apologise for corrupting fellow Trekker John Casey by persuading him to go into a shop to buy some trinkets as the group waited around in the car park anxiously! I suppose it could be explained away as part of his official sweeping duties, which as we all know he takes ever so seriously.

After that it was a quick dash back to the hotel to pick up the gear and our two nominated drivers Joe Devine and Owen got us back to the ferry port at Holyhead in perfect time. Thanks to both of them for the driving duties during the four days, it was wonderful and they were both so generous to take on the job in the first place.



Overall Snowdonia was a fabulous jaunt and while punishing in parts, the views and terrain are simply breathtaking. The Welsh people you encounter are also so warm and friendly that my only regret was by-passing this part of north Wales all those years ago on long drives towards England.

This is a mountain range with mountains of all shapes and sizes, literally. But more than that, the region itself is a hiker/walker's paradise. Everywhere you look are walkers, or walker's shops, or walker's signs or walker's hostels. It seems at times half the walkers in England have decamped here, to sample these incredible mountains. I don't blame them.

## Guidelines

The Committee recently reissued the Guidelines by email and on the members section of the website. We encourage everyone again to familiarise themselves with these - they are organic and updated regularly in the light of members needs and experience.

The guidelines cover ***Leading Club Walks, Ordering Buses, Participating in Club Walks, Role of Sweeper, Leading Away Trips, Participating in Away Trips, Managing Injuries.***

In the interest of safety we particularly emphasise the need to support the roles of leader and sweeper in ensuring that all walkers are accounted for and any problems addressed.

# Trip to Carros de Foch Spanish Pyrenees

Mary Dillon

We began our six day tour of the Carros de Foch on Tuesday morning in Espot, following a long journey up into the Pyrenees late on the previous evening. The Carros de Foch crosses the Aigües Tortes in the Aiguestortes I Estany de Sant Maurici National Park and is one of the most beautiful parts of the Spanish Pyrenees. The national park is over 140 sq km and is brimming with hundreds



*Aigüestortes means twisted waters in Catalan*

of mountain lakes, cascading streams, speckled with cool clear ponds and roaring waterfalls. The Carros de Foch, otherwise known as Chariots of Fire route, is over 55km and makes a total elevation gain of over 9km, which we truly felt at times. The trail was devised 15 years ago by Miguel Sanchez i Murcia the keeper of the Ventosa refuge as a



test for super athletes or sky runners as they are called, who complete the route in one day.

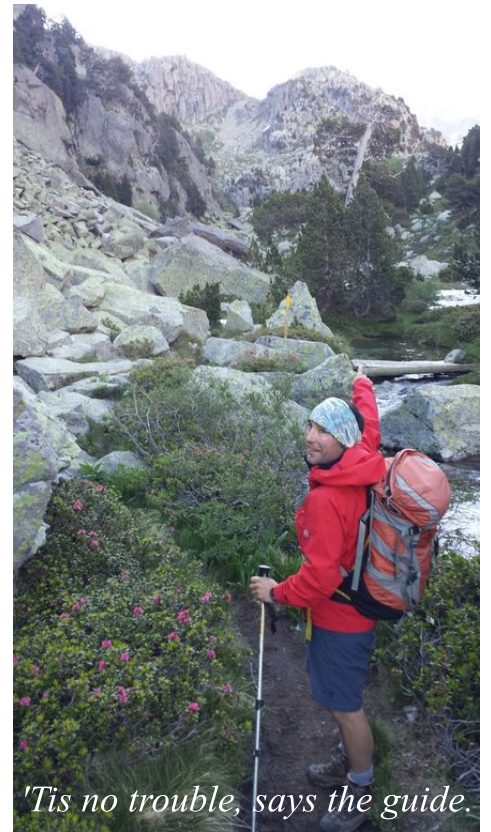
Armed with our delicious lunch from the local deli we began our trek in Espot, on a cloudy Tuesday morning, looking up in trepidation at the peaks all around us. This first 11km leg took us up along gentle tracks and paths, in the shadow of the famous landmarks the Grand and Petit Encantat (Enchanted Mountains) to the Sant Maurici lake. Much of this time was spent adjusting our bags and getting used to the unaccustomed weight we were carrying. Following a tasty lunch we headed up through woodlands passing the Cascade de Ratera arriving mid afternoon at the Refugio d'Armitages, getting in just before one of the few rain showers of the week. Being newbies to the refugio routine our guide Miguel put us through our paces and showed us the ropes of hut



etiquette! The first nights were a challenge as we coped with the first days of altitude discomfort and the interesting sleeping arrangements! By day 3 we had the strategy down to a fine art with the best beds bagged by early evening.

## Day Two

An early start to get the best of the day we headed to the Port de Ratera where we picked up the GR 11, the high Pyrenean route which traverses the Pyrenees on the Spanish side. The walking was relatively easy taking in a wonderful vista of rocky peaks all around us. Snow was still very much in evidence and provided some slippery traverses in parts en route to our second refuge – the Colomers refuge. Many of the refuges were quiet at that time and it generally made for more comfort giving us time and space to catch up on our chores.



*'Tis no trouble, says the guide.*

## Day Three

The day started with a climb to the Porte de Caldes, with the sun high in the sky. We took in the spectacular views making our way down through the beautiful lakes. There are over 450 lakes in the national park area with the typical dark blue colour lending an almost tropical view to the area. The general silence, without birdsong is striking in

this high Pyrenean terrain where there is very little vegetation and one has to look carefully to see animal life. We heard marmots frequently during the trek with the odd sighting of chamois. After a good days hiking we arrived to the sunny sheltered



Ventosa I Calvell refuge where we spent a pleasant few hours on the terrace outside relaxing and doing our chores. From here we had a lovely panoramic view down on Estany Negre and west over the Pyrenees. At this stage we were settling into the routine of lights out early and our bunks were a welcome place for weary bodies.

## Day Four

Today was the big day that Miguel had been preparing us for all week – the traverse of the Col de Contraix at 2,749m. This was one of the most challenging days especially the long morning climb through the boulder fields. There was much scrambling to reach the top but we were well rewarded with the spectacular views of a moon like world of sheer rock as far as the eye could see. Luckily there were good snow fields ahead which made the descent more interesting and easier. Walking down through the lower meadows and pastures we arrived at the refuge Estany Llong in the late afternoon where we sipped our coffee in the sunshine and relaxed into the rhythm of the evening refuge routine.



## Day Five

We set out on one of the longest days through the spectacular tarn sprinkled region. The sun was high and we had most beautiful views of dark pools and infinity lakes as we made our way along. At lunch we had an opportunity to swim in the refreshing water of Estany Tort one of the largest lakes we passed. This area is an important region for hydroelectricity and the Colomina refuge where we were heading to, had been built by one of hydroelectric companies to house employees. Franco visited the park in September 1955 to open a number of these hydroelectric power stations and later that year the region was declared a national park by decree. The route today takes one along the remains of the old narrow gauge train track left behind by the engineers. The walking was refreshing and relaxing in contrast to the earlier days of steep climbs and descents.



## Day Six

We began our final leg from Colomina back to Espot, with an early start in the crisp morning air. The lakes glistened in the sun as we picked our way along the lakeshore paths and climbed to the Collada de Capdella. We passed many of the sky runners on this route as it is a popular weekend activity here. We stopped for lunch at the popular refugio J.M. Blanc to shelter from the mid-day heat. The afternoon heat built as we made our way down to Espot through the trees which provided



much needed shelter from the developing heat wave. We spent our final night in Rialp where we enjoyed the luxuries of life.

## Caption Competition

Thanks to those who entered the Caption Competition and provided such a variety of captions. Very hard to choose a winner, even with such a select selection panel (the Committee). The choice was by no means unanimous.

Entries were:

*"Pah! What kind of a way of getting around is that? Now, whenever we come across an obstacle - ah! Now we're talking! Gazelles! Mountain goats!"* - Dermot Murray

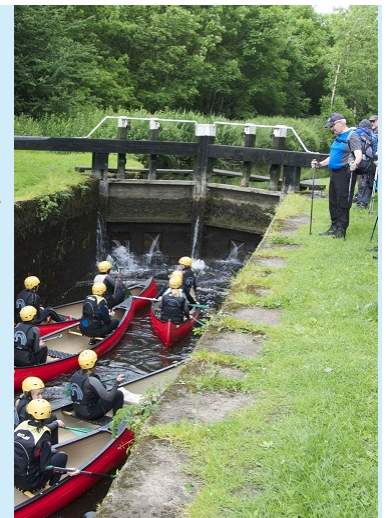
*Lock! Canoe Jam.* - Conor Stephens

*Trekker contemplates 'Spot the difference competition!'* - Marion Jennings

*"Good thing I saw them before I unzipped my fly"* - Aidan Bourke

*"Grab onto my pole and I'll get you out of there!"* – Judy Humphreys

*"The view is much better up here guys"* – Judy Humphreys



And the winner is ..... *Aidan Burke*, to whom goes the free bus ride.

(One that occurred to the editor was: *"You really want this lock filled with water? That will be €500 in water charges."* Karl adds, quick as ever ... *"Well, we won't pay"*)

# St Anne's Graveyard, Glenasmole

*Mostly from*

<http://source.southdublinlibraries.ie/bitstream/10599/4914/1/Bohernabreena%20a%20walk%20in%20time.pdf>

A favourite Trekker walk, starting at Bohernabreena, brings us through St. Anne's Graveyard as we ascend from the reservoir towards Glenasmole. It is a beautiful little graveyard, reputed to be one of the oldest in Ireland, capturing the imagination and with stories to suit. An excellent account of it and other facets of the area is given in a local book which is on line at the website above.



## ***The story of the font***

Just inside the gate is a large stone Holy Water font, damaged on one side and weighing almost a ton. There is a story that a rich landowner thought that it would make a handy drinking trough for his horses, so he ordered his men to move it to his yard. They objected to meddling with it, but he insisted. When the horses were yoked to it they strained until the reins and traces broke but the font did not move. They were yoked again and one of them reared and badly injured the steward. The landowner still insisted and one of the horses dropped dead. In desperation he took up a sledge and broke the side of the font, saying it would never hold water for anyone else.

The Church was actually called St. Santan's not St. Anne's. It was mentioned in Rome by Pope Innocent III in 952 and was confirmed as a church in 1216. Destroyed around 1294 it was in use again in 1541. It was apparently planned to be rebuilt at the time the article was written (in the 1990s?) but this obviously came to nothing. The article has a photograph of a fine statue of an angel as one gravestone - this is now badly damaged.

There was a practice of bringing dead babies from the cities for burial there.

In 1940 the Dublin Board of Health decided to close St. Anne's Old Cemetery on account of its close proximity to the Corporation Reservoir; the Council closed the cemetery for burials with the exception of the seventeen widowers or widows whose partners were already buried there.

At the funeral it was customary to carry the coffin around by the walls and then back to the grave.

## The Strangers' Corner

On entering St. Anne's graveyard, the corner furthest away on the right hand side was known as the 'Strangers Corner'. In this section people who had no burial plot were buried, as were the bodies of members of families who came to reside in the district from other parts of the country. One of the headstones in this part of the graveyard (unfortunately no longer visible) read:

*Here the body of someone lies  
Nobody laughs and nobody cries  
Where he came from and how he fares  
Nobody knows and nobody cares.*

(As a footnote - this verse (with 'Abraham' rather than 'someone' and 'where he has gone' rather than 'where he came from') was composed by Abraham Newland, the Bank of England chief cashier 1782-1807, whose signature appeared on the English banknotes of the time. Notes were known as 'Abraham Newlands'.

## Recognition of Long Serving Members

*Compiled by Monty Tinsley*

*This year the Trekkers introduced a certificate award to honour individuals who have been members for 20 years. Their example and dedication are an inspiration to the rest of us.*

*(If you are wondering why there are no ladies here - once upon a time this was a men's walking club.)*



SHAUN TRANT (1982)

One of the four founder members Shaun laid down the ground rules of the Club and oversaw its controlled expansion. He was our 1st President in 1995, following the passing of the Constitution.

PADDY O'DUFFY (1983)

Paddy has made a major contribution to the Club over the past 33 years. His photographic archive is the envy of many Mountaineer and Hiking Clubs. We are indebted to him especially for the Silver Jubilee Video, issued in 2007 and his annual video for many years after that.

### KEVIN BEEGAN (1985)

Kevin was Treasurer of the ad-hoc committee set up to formalise the functions of the Club and draw up our Constitution. He took over from Shaun as the 2nd Chairman.

### JOHN FUREY (1985)

John was the first Secretary of The Trekkers. His technical knowledge ensured that Compass Navigation became an integral part of the Club. The text book data he prepared has been the basis of ongoing instruction that is available for all members.

### BILL HANNON (1985)

Bill led many challenging walks within Ireland. He climbed both Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn in the Alps as well as trekking across the Khumba Glacier from Everest base camp and the 'Exum Route' in Wyoming, a long committing rock climb, that included a 20 hour round trip to find their tent in fading light.!

### IAN THOMPSON (1986)

Ian was one of the first members to graduate from the A walks to the C walks and when that was not possible he made sure to attend as many social functions as possible.

### DICK NEEDHAM (1989)

While Dick was Walks Co-ordinator the concept of assistant leaders was established, primarily to encourage new members to recce and lead walks. That system is still in existence to this date. Dick organised the first 'Away Trip' for the Trekkers when he led a group to visit Wales in 1997.

### BRIAN BRENNAN (1990)

Brian joined the Trekkers in 1990 and became part of the ad-hoc Committee prior to being the elected Publicity Officer of the Club. In this role he initiated The Trekker Magazine.

### DAVID KIRKER (1991)

David was one of the fittest members of the Club, a good member to have on a trip when the weather turned bad and navigation by compass was required.

### NOEL O'REILLY (1993)

According to our web-site Noel has walked 1500km and ascended 35,000m and that is only in the last 6 years. However one reason he has retained his long membership is because of the camaraderie that exists before, during and after each walk. This ethos of 'being there for each other' is an essential ingredient of any vibrant club.

### EUGENE LOGAN (1993)

Eugene's scouting experience in organisation and training proved to be invaluable to the Trekkers particularly as Walks Co-Ordinator from 2000 -2002. One of Eugene's biggest contributions to the Club has been his ability to find out new and interesting walks at lower altitudes throughout the country.

### FRED ENGLISH (1993)

Most of the walks undertaken by Fred in recent years have been in the C category but his skill in people management and discovering new routes have helped to widen our walks portfolio.

### REGGIE HALPENNY (1994)

Like so many of our members Reggie featured regularly on our weekly walks for more than a decade. He then became an Associate Member to avail of the Club's social activities.

### MONTY TINSLEY (1995)

Monty has played his officer part in the Club, firstly as Publicity Officer when he even advertised The Trekker Magazine on the top of Carrauntoohil and secondly when he was Chairman from 2008 to 2011. He also organised many trips in various parts of Ireland

### DERRY O'HEGARTY (1995)

Derry joined in 1995 and he participated to the full for very many years. He was always one of the first to put his name down for a place once a walk had been announced. His broad knowledge of so many wide and diverse subjects always ensured a lively discussion on all the Treks.

### FERGAL MULLOY (1995)

Fergal is one of Ireland's foremost foresters. His knowledge of trees and all things arboreal has added greatly to the enjoyment of many walks. If only we could retain a fraction of the environmental education he dispersed.



# PHOTOS



Lugnaquilla -  
Wednesday Walk



Croghan Mountain



Memorial Day

