



The Trekker

Trekkers Mountaineering Club Glenageary Co Dublin www.trekkers.ie
Edition 69, January 2021

The Mountains of Mourne, what a wonderful sight

The Chronicles of Narnia were inspired by the Mourne Mountains, scenes in Game of Thrones were filmed here. Louise Martin describes her thrilling first hike in the Central Mournes last September



Banana break in the Annalong Valley where scenes from Game of Thrones were filmed. Aurimas Parsonis, far right, and Farranan Tannam, beside him, led a group of eight Trekkers on an A walk in the Mournes

In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks. JOHN MUIR

The old galvanised farm gate swung open at the trailhead and the hike began! YES! The excitement and anticipation of what would unfold before my eyes today was palatable. My first time to hike in Northern Ireland. My first time to hike the Mourne

Mountains, a granite mountain range in South East Co Down. I inhaled the fresh air deep into my core. I could not wait to see the shape of the landscape, the form of the majestic mountain range, the feel of the rock beneath my feet, its energy and touch to my fingertips.

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Slieve Binnion, a magical mountaintop

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I was not to be left wanting for anything!

Saturday morning. Early start. You can't be late for the Trekkers. A two-hour drive from south Dublin we met at the Carricklittle car park in the central Mournes. Great

hustle and bustle with the clicking of poles and the rustling of maps. Hikers coming and going, tying boot laces and organising rucksacks. Will I bring my wet gear? Will I not? I better! We set off through that gate to pastures greener.

Aurimas, setting a fast pace (ouch!) led us into the Annalong valley about 5km along the river to the base of our ascent. Gaye, who has fantastic knowledge of the area, pointed out all the different mountains that spread

out before our eyes. To the left and clockwise, Slieve Binnion 746m, Slievelamagan 704m, Cove Mountain 655m and Slieve Beg 596m. We will be hiking these mountains today but anti-clockwise. Ahead, Slieve Commadagh and Slieve Donard 850m (Northern Ireland's highest peak).

If you fancy a scramble and have a head for heights, this is for you. The Devil's Coach Road, a vertical 150m high gully that tears a chunk out of Slieve Beg, was just above us on the left. Maybe next time. Today we took an easier route to the top of our first peak, Slieve Beg, where we walked along the Brandy Pad for a while. An old smuggling route through the heart of the high Mournes, this path was used in the 1800s to transport, by pony, contraband from the coast into the valleys. If only the mountains could talk!

Cove mountain, the next ascent was made a little easier with Declan cracking jokes. Here at the top I got my first real appreciation of the magnitude of



The Silent Valley, above. Below, looking down into the Devil's Coach Road gully.



the famous Mourne wall. Crafted from local granite using dry stone wall techniques, it spans 22km over 17 peaks and it took 18 years to build. It is a listed building.

A very welcome lunch was had on Slievelamagan, our third peak. Here we were provided with unsurpassed 360 degree views of the whole range. We could see into distant valleys, reservoirs and lakes. The mountains of Bearnagh and Meelmore

stood proud before us across the Silent Valley. We were treated with views across the Irish sea with the Isle of Man and Lambay in the distance.

Our fourth and final mountain -- Slieve Binnion. A magical mountaintop landscape with rocky tors at the north and south ends. CS Lewis got his inspiration on this mountaintop to write **The Chronicles of Narnia**. The huge smooth boulders resembled

sleeping giants ready to open their eyes at any time. Legs tired and lungs busted, we made our steep descent along Mourne wall, reaching a welcome flat terrain; shutting that big farm gate behind us, we headed back to our cars. Bunched!

What a day. 18km over 7.5 hours. Total ascent, 1,085m. Clearly, one of the best hikes I have had this year. Thanks Aurimas and Farannan for arranging this awesome treat.

P.S It was so good I went back around again the following weekend.

Chair's Notes

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2021 compiled and edited by Fran. It's a fantastic read with several new features.

It is a challenging time for our members and their families so we hope you are all managing. To say we are chomping at the bit to get back up the hills is an understatement but while we wait the committee are working hard to plan and implement our agenda for the year.

Top of our priorities this year is to offer training in map reading and navigation. Alan and Mark have created a 12-week module course. Due to the fantastic response from members they will run two courses concurrently, starting at the end of January. We are very grateful to them for giving so much of their time to bring this course to members.

A little reminder: last August we sent the members Karen Doyle's (Maple Clinic) physio exercises for maintaining fitness during Covid – we will send them again as they are very useful to keep our flexibility.

Last but not least, Monty Tinsley, our keeper of records and club archivist, has brought to our attention that the 3,000th walk of the Trekkers is fast approaching. We are planning to celebrate this extraordinary achievement with details to follow.

We continue to follow Government guidelines as notified to us from Mountaineering Ireland and will be in touch with updates as they are received. Keep well.

Fiona

Editor's Notes

Welcome to Trekker newsletter number 69. In spite of being locked down for much of 2020, many Trekkers embraced the opportunity to get out as soon as restrictions were even partially lifted: reports include trips to Lugnaquilla, to Marino, to Waterford and even a coastal walk in the Canaries.

Veteran hillwalker Dick Ryan talks about the changes he's seen since he started hillwalking in the 1960s in our Trekker profile on page eight. And on pages 14 to 17,

Trekkers recommend books about walking as well as the books and TV films/shows that they've enjoyed.

Many thanks to Mary Murphy, for her invaluable help to me in producing this newsletter and to all the contributors. With luck, Trekkers will be able to get back out walking again soon and I'll be looking for pictures and reports for the next edition. Send comments, contributions and suggestions to franorourke@gmail.com.

Fran

CAPTION COMPETITION



What is happening to these Trekkers? Our caption competition is back – there'll be a prize for the winning entry. Send entries to Fran O'Rourke at franorourke@gmail.com labelled Trekker caption.

SAVE THE DATES

The Committee has agreed dates for this year's social events, Covid regulations allowing. They are:

Summer Social:

Saturday, July 24, National Yacht Club

Memorial Day:

Saturday, September 11, Glenmalure Inn

AGM:

Tuesday, October 19, National Yacht Club

Christmas Party:

Sunday, December 12, Killiney Golf Club

Letters to the Editor

We're starting a new Letters column in the next Trekker Newsletter: if you want to share your thoughts with other Trekkers, email your letter -- short & pithy please -- to me at franorourke@gmail.com

Have you ever climbed Lug?

Geraldine Boland and Ann Carroll recommend that all Trekkers should try climbing Wicklow's highest mountain



Alan Kane led seven Trekkers on a B walk up Lugnaquilla in August. Below right: a challenging descent via Fraughan Rock Glen

It was a sunny August day, with the lightest of breezes when Alan Kane led a group of seven enthusiastic Trekkers on a B walk up Lugnaquilla. With co-leaders Frances Gillen and Fiona O'Sullivan, we were well led on a rare day of freedom in a year of restrictions.

Parked at Barvore carpark in the Glenmalure valley, we set out for Art's Lough, crossing Bridge 1957. Visibility was excellent and our view of the corrie lake – Art's Lough -- was striking.

Climbing up Clohernagh (792m) was a steady pull, but the excellent views over Glenmalure valley as we made our ascent were memorable. Traversing the expansive ridge from Cloghernagh to Lugnaquilla has to be one of the most memorable final ascents in Ireland.

The cross winds here require an extra layer even on a summer's day. Often covered in cloud, we realised

how lucky we were to have perfect visibility in every direction from the Lugnaquilla summit.

Our descent via Fraughan Rock Glen was challenging, but with attention to stepping carefully in a terrain of rock and ferns, it is an excellent way of making this a circular route back to the starting point.

An advantage is that some sections of this descent run alongside the fast flowing Fraughan Rock Stream, with fine views of the Glenmalure valley and sounds of water tumbling over rocks.

Lugnaquilla is the highest mountain in the Wicklow Mountains National Park, and at 925 metres it is the highest point in Ireland outside of Co. Kerry. There are many potential routes up this mountain; a popular one is from Fenton's Bar in the Glen of Imaal. Climbing "Lug" is highly recommended to all Trekkers.



Route: Barvore carpark, Bridge 1957, Art's Lough, Clohernagh, Lugnaquilla, Fraughan Glen, return to Barvore carpark.
Total ascent: 910m
Length: 17km
Time: 6 hours

Waltzing around Marino

Trekkers visited the State's first housing project, an ancient churchyard and the Botanic Gardens on a northside walk. Mary Murphy reports

A ramble around the back streets of the north city suburbs may not at first sound enticing but as is so often the case, avoid the main drags and treasures await. From Clontarf Dart station, crossing diagonally the junction of the Malahide/Howth roads brings you into Marino, the area of the state's first significant public housing scheme built in 1924.

The initiative was modelled on England's "garden city" movement first envisaged by social reformer Ebenezer Howard, who saw the slums of the big English cities as "morally and physically corrupting"; he sought to replace them with out-of-town suburbs surrounded by green belts. The notion gained traction and was the model for housing projects across the world, Welwyn Garden City outside London being one of the first.

In 1914 a plan for 1,100 houses at Marino was initiated but the outbreak of the First World War and the upheaval at home delayed plans for the scheme. Before state intervention, the initiative to build homes for the working class in Dublin had been left to employers such as Guinness and private philanthropic groups such as the Iveagh Trust.

The movement towards providing the working classes with housing coincided with an increase in labour militancy: the lockout and strike of 1913 were directly linked to the living conditions of the Dublin working classes. The newly independent state inherited a dire housing problem, particularly in the capital. If a native government could tackle



Marino from the air: State's first public housing scheme was laid out in a radial plan. Below: Church of Ireland parish church, Drumcondra

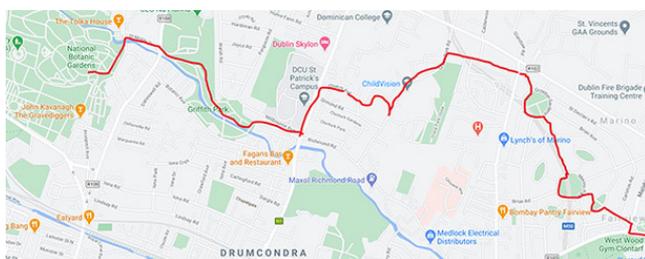


the housing problem with any degree of success, where the British administration had failed, it would serve as positive propaganda for the new state and it was hoped discourage social unrest.

Built over three phases the Marino project provided 1,500 homes and eventually linked Glasnevin and Marino to the coast with the completion of the "100 Foot Road", now Griffith Avenue, the longest tree-lined avenue with no retail outlets in Europe.

Each block in Marino had a different design with different frontages to break up the monotony of rows of similar houses. The houses were to be laid out in a radial plan – like the spokes of a wheel – allowing each home a view of the central green area.

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Waltzing around Marino: from All Hallows to Gandon's graveyard

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The Marino project was innovative and revolutionary in design but alas proved too idealistic and too expensive to be repeated.

However it was the beginning of a policy which was continued by the Fianna Fáil administration in the 1930s and 1940s with the building of large housing estates at Cabra and Crumlin.

Emerging onto Phillipsburg Avenue, we head for All Hallows. A seminary since 1842, All Hallows sent forth generations of young men, with missionary zeal, to every corner of the world.

In 2014, the college was wound down and the site sold to Dublin City University. Ironically it is now also the home of the new Drumcondra Education Together primary school. Is John Charles turning in his grave?

Exiting the back gate of the campus, you stumble across the Church of Ireland parish church of Drumcondra, reminiscent of one you would find amid open countryside, which of course it would have been when built in 1743.

The surrounding graveyard is resting place to, among others, architect James Gandon and Patrick Heeney, who composed the music of the national anthem.



A house in Marino

Continuing along Church Avenue, homeplace of one of our more recent leaders, Bertie, brings you onto the main Drumcondra road.

Not for long: cross at the site of the now demolished Lemons Sweet factory, the sight of which heralded that we were 'nearly there' to a small girl making the journey south to see Santa on 8 December.

Entering Griffith Park we amble through the park along the Tolka and continue along St Mobhi Avenue to emerge at the Botanic Gardens, always a joy to visit and which at the time of year we walked, October, were resplendent in autumnal colour.

Trekkers' first AGM on Zoom

The Trekkers' first Zoom AGM was held on October 20, 2020, with 95 attending online. The Chairperson acknowledged the frustration felt by members not being to join walks because of the 10-person limit because of Covid-19 restrictions.

A proposal to increase the number of walks each week was passed – and Gaye Maguire volunteered to lead walks in Wicklow for members resident in Wicklow.

The Chairperson acknowledged the immense contribution of the two outgoing Committee members Paddy MacManus, Treasurer and Mary Murphy, Publicity Officer and thanked them both for their contribution and commitment over the last three years.

Chairperson Fiona O'Sullivan, Secretary Alan Kane

and Walks Co-ordinator Dympna Thunder were declared elected unopposed; the chairperson welcomed the two new Committee members Mark Taylor, Treasurer, and Frances O'Rourke, Publicity Officer.

A number of members expressed their thanks to the Chairperson and the Committee for their work during the last year and for managing all the complexities that arose from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Chairperson thanked the Committee for their support during the last year and everyone for their attendance at the AGM.

A minute's silence was observed in remembrance of the late Brendan Bracken, Kevin Moore and Derry O'Hegarty who died in the last 12 months.

Darting to Howth

Patricia Duffy on social walks

It is thanks to the late Michael Cotter RIP that Social Walks began just a few years ago. These walks facilitated long-time Trekkers who, perhaps, were retiring from C walks. Subsequently other members enjoyed these walks including Trekkers:

- Recovering from injuries or operations.
- No longer comfortable with pace or hills on C walks.
- Just have time for shorter walk on that day.

Social walks average about 5km but can be shorter or longer, often with built-in flexibility on the day. Walking on flat paths, the pace is slower than C walks, with emphasis on pausing at views or items of interest. Starting early about 10am, most walks finish by early afternoon.

Carpooling, Dart, Luas, train or bus are used for non-local walks. A favourite of mine is a rambling walk from Howth Summit to the village via the inner cliff walk.

Meeting at Glenageary Dart Station at 10.30am, we travel to Howth Dart Station and take the 31 bus to Howth Summit. Refreshments are available at Summit Stores. This is followed by a very short walk uphill to the Summit car park to have lunch overlooking the sea.

We then proceed by the inner cliff path. The fresh



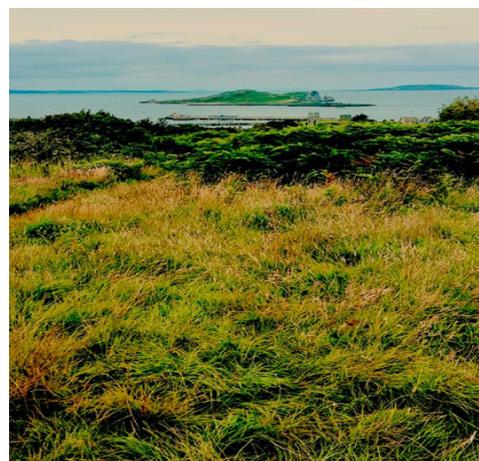
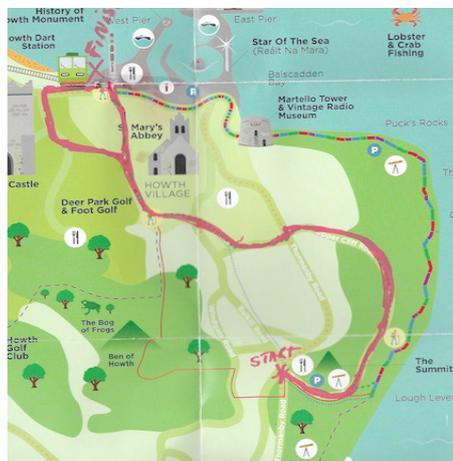
Social walkers on a trip to Howth.

sea air and the views of the sea and the Baily Lighthouse are magnificent. The route proceeds across Thornamby Road to Dungriffen Road joining the right of way from Howth Summit. There is a lovely viewing point near here which overlooks Howth Harbour, Ireland's Eye and beyond.

We cross Balglass Road to Balkhill Park and continue down towards Grace O'Malley Park and following path at edge of Deerpark. There are two choices here.

1. Going directly down to R105, turning right for refreshments at the open market opposite Howth Dart Station.
2. A longer route takes the path to the left at bottom of hill. This leads across Deerpark grounds to Howth Castle. Follow path to main gate at R105, returning right again to Howth Dart Station. Refreshments as before.

Boots or good walking shoes, raingear are desirable. Also bring a snack lunch if preferred as an alternative to purchasing at Summit Stores. This walk is mostly downhill for about 7.5km..



Above: part of Howth Castle, the home of the Gaisford-St Lawrence family for over 800 years, which was sold in 2018. Right: a view over Howth Harbour to Ireland's Eye and beyond to Lambay Island

Rambling Man

Dick Ryan, a keen hillwalker at home and abroad for over 50 years, tells Frances O'Rourke how much trekking has changed since he started

Dick Ryan has always loved hillwalking – and his own love story began at the top of Lugnaquilla. "It's where I met my wife Helen: her friend was in Ramblers and persuaded Helen to come out one day – she had Cuban heels on all the way up Lug. We met, hit it off and the rest is history."

Dick, who celebrated his 80th birthday in November, had joined the recently-formed Irish Ramblers walking club in 1964 after moving from his native Limerick to Dublin aged 23 to work in Aer Lingus. Growing up "I was always out in the fields, looking at birds."

The Ramblers club modelled itself on the Ramblers Association in the UK and the Sierra Club in the US. It was early days for organised walking in Ireland, encouraged by JB Malone, who wrote a column in the Evening Herald. "There were no tracks in the mountains, we walked through heather around peat hags." It also involved long road walks after catching a bus from Burgh Quay to the hills, because no one had cars.

No one had fancy walking gear either. "Looking back at photos, one of the interesting things is that people wore ties, shirts, ordinary sports jackets. The raingear was awful, capes or oilskins; we had lots of ex-army equipment, hobnailed boots and no walking poles."

He eventually became third president of the Irish Ramblers and didn't join Trekkers until the 1990s "because it was local and had a bus within walking distance of my house". Dick had joined the IDA in 1969 and enjoyed walking on two foreign postings. He lived in Lesotho for three years in the late 1970s and says "it's fantastic hiking country".

Then his job took him to Japan for four years. "Hillwalking there is very well organised with fantastic maps and trails marked out. At the top of mountains you'll find an automatic machine serving cold beer. One day I saw a little old man struggling up with a motorised wheelbarrow with beer in it!"

Much has changed since his early days in Ramblers



Dick Ryan on a walk in Glencullen on the way to Raven's Rock

– the development of hiking trails in particular. "JB Malone had a long-term vision, was responsible for establishing the Wicklow Way." (Malone was later field officer of the Long Distance Trails Committee.) One of the biggest changes says Dick is the use of GPS "although I still prefer maps and compasses".

Dick, who was chair of Trekkers from 2002 to 2005, has seen the club grow in numbers over the past two decades, although not in the way the club expected. "We were worried at the lack of new members and started a youth group for twenty and thirtysomethings; we had a separate programme and training, but ultimately most drifted away. There's one survivor, Gaye Maguire."

Trekkers' initiative triggered an interest in different age groups, fifty and sixty-year-olds, "so we got a renewal of membership, but not in the way we expected".

One of his own favourite walks is in Blessington: "I love Blessington, Sorrel Hill, Black Hill and Lugnagun because of the mix of mountain, forest and lake, the great views."

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Profile Dick Ryan: Lacken Loop one of his favourite walks

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"And the clearing of the old Mass Path from Zellers in Lacken to the next valley is very exciting – it solves the problem of how to avoid a long road walk from Lacken to Lugnagun. Abroad, one of his favourite places to hike is in Kandersteg, south of Bern in Switzerland, where he brought Trekkers one year – "it has a mix of all grades of walk".

Dick retired from the IDA in 2004, but has been more than active since then: he's a keen birdwatcher and member of Birdwatch Ireland and a member and former chair of the Rathmichael Historical Society. He's gone for a walk every day during Covid and led several Trekker walks in



Left: Sorrel Hill

between lockdowns. "I just love being in nature, being in woods and mountains".

Fernhill car-park reopens

The new car park for Fernhill Park and Gardens opened in December 2020, having been delayed for a few months by the pandemic.

The entrance on Enniskerry Road/R117 is to the right, at the second set of traffic lights heading south from Lamb's Cross towards Stepside.

From the car park there is easy access to a public right-of-way, running from Burrow Road, just off the main Sandyford /Stepaside Road, to Barnacullia - close to the Blue Light bar, and the gateway to the mountains.

Fernhill is Dublin's newest public park, and is an impressive example of a small estate dating back to around 1823.

The house and gardens were bought from Nama by Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in 2015. They had been privately owned before being sold for development around 2008, but thanks to the Council are now open to everyone.

The Council is restoring and improving the gardens. They are worth a visit at any time of the



Trekkers shelter in the treehouse in Fernhill on a December walk. Below: inside Fernhill. Pictures: Paul O'Kane



year, but particularly from March when the rhododendrons and magnolias are in full bloom.

There are plans for a new café in the old coach-house, and for a three-storey tower block which will provide toilet facilities, staff and community facilities. A roof



terrace in the tower will provide good views over the coast of Dublin.

For more info – and a virtual tour of Fernhill – see www.dlrcoco.ie/en/parks-outdoors/fernhill-park-and-gardens.

Paul O'Kane

Staying in the loop in Wicklow

The recce was the best part of an overnight trip to Tinahely says Paddy MacManus



Because of the COVID-19 lockdown, we had to cancel a scheduled May trip to Tinahely, Co Wicklow. We replanned for the Wednesday walk of the 19th August (which turned out to be the day of the infamous "Clifden Golfgate"!) and 20th August. As it turned out, the recce was the best event for the seven of us involved in recceing the two loops of Kyle and Ballycumber.

The three loops in Tinahely are like Russian dolls. They all share the same start point and first leg of the walk for the lesser Mangan loop, the smallest third doll (scheduled for the Thursday the 20th August). Then at circa 5km, the split comes between the Ballycumber loop, the second doll, and Kyle loop, the top doll.

The Kyle loop brings you to the top of the hills, commanding views of the rolling valleys and lesser ascents and the home to seven wind turbines and a Met Eireann weather data collection point. The views are absorbing and the shifting light of the clouds enthralling. Mind you, the steady monotonous hum off the turbines' blades is the modern version of the ancient Chinese torture of dripping water onto the forehead of a spreadeagled, chained prisoner.

On the recce we had warm sunshine and little wind. On the Kyle recce at one stage of an ascent, the path was choked with briars and overgrown hedges. It was a feature for the two recce groups that the tracks showed signs of little use, lush grass, no footprints in the bits of mud, and hedges

Walking the Ballycumber Loop in May 2019. Nineteen Trekkers enjoyed a repeat overnight trip to Tinahely in August 2020 but heavy rain cut it short

encroaching. But the Tinahely Co-op has done a great job of replacing rickety styles and gates.

On Tuesday 18th August, eight of us travelled down to the hotel and dined in a nearby pub. It was a lovely afternoon and evening, but the forecast was a wee bit forbidding. Nineteen of us gathered after breakfast, including the daytrippers.

The rain radar and data showed the prospect of an easing in the steady downfall, with bursts of greater intensity. Eventually just before noon, 90 minutes later than planned, we started off during a lull in the rain.

We broke into a group of nine for the Kyle loop and 10 for the Ballycumber. This helped the management of group size and social distance. After the first 40 minutes we emerged from some shelter into open country. The rain was steady and fast, the wind F3-4, gusting. The visibility was worsening. Rain, uisce, aqua and every other language for the same rain, rain.

The decision was taken to abandon Kyle, and to leave the wind turbines to their lonely posting. We attempted to keep the rear of Group 1 and the Leaders of Group 2 in view. But the drop in cloud and steady misty soft rain put paid to that aspiration as visibility was flicking between 50 and 100 metres. We were thoroughly soaked through but in gallows humour.

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In the loop in Wicklow: laughter after rain

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The final descent with no shelter to the flat was over a field of head high ferns (last year this field was rough flat grass). The 1950s apocalyptic science fiction novel *The Day of the Triffids* crossed my mind. But this was also the field with the bull and his harem. I hadn't a clue if they were present in the mist, but they were not present on the recce.

Four hours later we were back into the warmth of the hotel and its facilities. And the radiators worked

to dry out my clothes for the next day.

Fifteen stayed overnight and we had a great meal; the hum of conversations and laughter and good humour hung in the air. At the breakfast on Thursday with a bad forecast for the day, we abandoned the shorter Mangan loop. The winds were increasing, and heavy rain was forecast. On the way home I experienced two heavy cloudbursts and cross winds on the motorway.

Will I try again next May? COVID-19 willing, YES!

Guiding the way

Geraldine Boland takes a self-directed walking holiday in Waterford



The Ardmore, Co Waterford, cliff path walk

I have missed my walking holidays this year and the prospect of a Trekkers away trip is unlikely for some time. So what options are open to those of us who like holidays with the primary focus on walking?

The November/December 2020 level five county travel restrictions lifted on 19/12/2020, allowing an opportunity for John and I to have a four-night break in County Waterford pre-Christmas. Choosing self-catering accommodation in Lemybrien in the foothills of the Comeraghs, we aimed to enjoy the mountains and coastline.

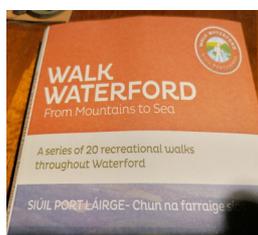
There are a wide range of hill-walks in the Comeraghs, Galtees and Knockmealdowns, but I tend not to hike in unfamiliar mountain ranges without a guide.

Instead, I was impressed by the number of C-walk opportunities at lower levels. Waterford tourism have published a county walking guide -- **Walk Waterford: From Mountains to Sea** -- with 20 walks detailed, rated from easy to strenuous/difficult. We picked this up at a tourist office.

Highpoints of some of the easy walks that we tried

from this guide were:

- The cliff walk path at Ardmore
- Mahon Falls
- The Waterford Greenway from Durrow to Dungarvan (https://visitwaterford.com/vw_listing/waterford-greenway/)
- Colligen Wood in Dungarvan (we didn't get to do this recommended walk).



There are also a range of beach walks, which in winter have a certain charm. These walks are also suitable for Wednesday social walkers.

We were lucky to have a mini-break in the short reprieve between level five travel restrictions. Waterford is very familiar to many Trekkers, but for those of us for whom it is new, the county is worth exploring for a wide range of self-directed walking opportunities. Some useful websites are:

www.visitwaterford.com

www.discoverireland.ie/walking

www.irishtrails.ie



The Maspalomas Dunes in Gran Canaria, above, lead to the Maspalomas Lighthouse, below

Walking on sunshine

Gran Canaria has blue skies, guaranteed sun, breathtaking views and a variety of great walking trails. Trekkers Georgina Bryan and Jim Bourke describe a coastal walk into a desert

As a beautiful escape from the unpredictable weather in Ireland we would highly recommend Gran Canaria. When it's too hot to venture into the mountains, there is an amazing easy walk along the coast from San Agustin to Maspalomas Lighthouse and back – 15km, three-and-a half-hours, not including lunch.

For the walk we recommend good walking sandals or runners. Shorts, T shirt, peaked cap, a light backpack with plenty of water and of course Factor 50 sunscreen.

We recommend starting this walk, walking to the west on the promenade by quiet and peaceful Las Burras Beach which has been receiving the Blue Flag quality award year after year. Its waters are renowned for their high quality in terms of purity, water temperature and cleanliness. It's beautiful for swimming in all year round, with the water temperature always about 20 degrees Celsius. And there's a beach hut café on the sand that serves delicious, very reasonably priced hot and cold food.



As you walk along the promenade, the sea is on your left and low sized buildings on your right.

The promenade walk is safe and wide and there are some occasional well-made steps (and ramps if preferred) along the way. As you proceed, the 5km long golden sand Playa del Ingles Beach comes into view.

When the promenade ends you enter the Maspalomas Dunes, a wild place incredibly breath-taking

due to its beauty and range of ecosystems. Its 1,000 acres are protected by the Canarian government as a nature reserve of special value. It includes a fantastic beach, a dynamic sand dune system, palm grove and a brackish lagoon. This mix of desert and oasis is at the southern tip of Grand Canaria and surrounded by the Maspalomas resort. You cannot get lost as you are guided by wooden posts which lead you to the Maspalomas Lighthouse.

The Dunes are Europe's only slice of the Sahara Desert and stretch over 6km to the Lighthouse. Don't be surprised as you near the Lighthouse to see people strolling -- part of the Dunes backs onto a nudist beach!

It's wonderful to reach Maspalomas because there is the promise of a gorgeous lunch, drink and relaxation awaiting. But first walk straight to the Lighthouse: there is a plan to open a museum and exhibition centre there.

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Walking on sunshine: back to nature with a swim in the turquoise sea

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Make your way back home along the beachfront: you don't particularly need shoes as you can paddle most of the way home.

Halfway back you come across the nudist beach: feel free to strip off and jump into the warm turquoise sea, discovering the rare exhilaration of being truly present in nature.

There are many health benefits to swimming naked -- including a more positive body image and

higher self-esteem -- and sea water has antiseptic properties that help to heal skin.

There is something very special about walking near the sea: coastal walks do wonders for physical and emotional well-being -- and there are many bars, cafes and restaurants to stop at on the way.

Hopefully some of you will be able to come to Gran Canaria soon and we can lead you on this walk.



For more information on walking in Gran Canaria, see www.grancanaria.com/turismo/en/nature/mountain-sports/trekking

Winter walks



Walking in Co Dublin: Glencullen, above and below and left, social walk along the Dodde



In the news . . . in the news. . .

THE GOVERNMENT is proposing to introduce a pilot public insurance scheme, to be administered by local authorities, to indemnify landowners against being sued. This will "involve the introduction of an insurance policy in MacGillycuddy's Reeks in the first instance, which might then be expanded", Minister for Rural and Community Development Heather Humphreys told the Dail in December.

This replaces plans, first proposed in 2009, for a blanket indemnity scheme to protect farmers against insurance claims when they open their lands to walkers. "Indemnity has been a long running issue for farmers in upland areas. It was far too complex to provide a blanket indemnity scheme," the Minister said. In a statement to the Sunday Times on January 3rd, her department said that a pilot scheme would be rolled out in MacGillycuddy's Reeks this year subject to agreement with insurance providers on detail and cost.

COILLTE NATURE -- a new, not-for-profit branch of the State-owned forestry company -- has begun work on an R&R (Remove and Replant with Native Woodland) site in Ticknock. Clearfelling 2.5ha of mature Sitka spruce and Corsican pine began on January 12th and was due to last for approximately three weeks as part of the second year of operations of the Dublin Mountains Makeover.

Converting the area in Ticknock will enhance the habitat for wildlife, enrich the forest's recreational appeal and bring more autumn colour to the hills, says Coillte Nature. See www.coillte.ie/visiting-ticknock-year-2-of-the-dublin-mountains-makeover-begins-in-ticknock

The Summit, How Triumph Turned To Tragedy on K2's Deadliest Days by Pat Falvey and Pemba Gyalje Sherpa published by Beyond Endurance Publishing

This is a great read about climbing the world's second highest mountain, with an Irish interest, as one of the climbers was Irish.

Alan Kane

The Living Mountain by Nan Shepherd, 2014, published by Canongate

Shepherd spent a lifetime in search of the "essential nature" of the Cairngorms in Scotland: her quest led her to write this classic meditation on the magnificence of mountains. I found this book a little treasure.

Mindful Thoughts for Walkers by Adam Ford, 2017, published by Leaping Hare Press

Whether the walk is a daily stroll or a brisk hike across the mountaintops, this is a lovely reading companion.

Everest Expeditions: Chris Bonington, published by W&N, 2003.

Chris Bonington's three classic accounts of his expeditions to scale the summit of Everest. Magic!

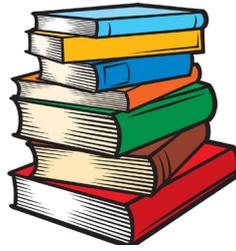
Ita Lawton

The Salt Path by Raynor Quinn, published by Penguin

True story about a couple who become homeless and make an impulsive decision to walk the 630-mile coastal path from Somerset to Dorset

Una Davis

Touching the Void: The True Story of One Man's Miraculous Survival by Joe Simpson, published by Vintage Publishing



BOOK BEAT

Trekkers choose books about walking

The first book I read that awoke my fascination with adventure trekking was **Touching the Void**, which recounts Simpson and Simon Yates's successful but disastrous and nearly fatal climb of the 6,344-metre (20,814 ft) Siula Grande in the Peruvian Andes in 1985. A short book and complete page turner.

Exploring Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way by David Flanagan and Richard Creagh, published by Three Rock Books

Information in a book about the west coast's best sights includes details of dozens of signposted walking trails, from gentle strolls along sandy beaches to tough hikes.

The Walker: On Finding and Losing Yourself in the Modern City by Matthew Beaumont, published by Penguin Random

A literary history of city walking, a ramble through the history of an underrated pastime. (See review <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/03/books/review-walker-matthew-beaumont.html>).

This and the two philosophical books below might interest a few people.

A Philosophy of Walking by Frédéric Gros, published by Verso

Leading thinker Frédéric Gros charts the many different ways we get from A to B in a French bestseller.

Wanderlust by Rebecca Solnit, published by Penguin

Thought-provoking exploration of walking as a political and cultural activity.

Fiona O'Sullivan

An Bóthar go Santiago by Micheál de Barra published by Cois Life Teoranta

An Irish pilgrim presents his thoughts and experiences in the form of a diary – written in Irish -- of his pilgrimage on the Camino Frances, including references to the Irish connection. The text is embellished with lots of small colour pictures of salient features along the route. The style is light and entertaining, yet surprisingly informative and also reflective and the Irish is very accessible.

Áine Allen

Irish Peaks published by Mountaineering Ireland

Mountaineering Ireland's new guide to hillwalking on Ireland's highest mountains is a large format hardback that deals with the highest one hundred peaks in Ireland. See irishpeaks.ie.

A Walk in the Woods by Bill Bryson, published by Black Swan

Humorous account of travel writer Bill Bryson's attempt to walk the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail.

Frances O'Rourke

What Trekkers are watching

Baptiste, Netflix: Spin-off from British drama *The Missing* stars Tchéky Karyo as French detective Julien Baptiste. Season 2 (with Fiona Shaw) due to be released by BBC this year.

Frazer Meredith

Crash Landing on You, Netflix: A paragliding mishap drops a South Korean heiress in North Korea -- and into the life of an army officer, who decides he will help her hide.

It's Okay to Not Be Okay, Netflix: Korean romantic drama centred around mental health issues. Korean dramas are great escapism and easy watching. You need to give them some time as they are slow burners.

Itaewon Class, Netflix: another K-drama, this one in a business setting, i.e., a start up-pub trying to compete against the big boys. Popular as it feels warm and has a message it wants to deliver.

Schitt's Creek, Netflix: Canadian sitcom about wealthy family fallen on hard times was lockdown hit

Kim's Convenience, Netflix: Sitcom about a Canadian-Korean family who run a corner shop

Judy Humphreys, Sue Ward

Call My Agent, Netflix: Talent agents scramble to keep their stars happy in a light French romp. The sitcom series is total entertainment with some surprising elements! Series 4 just starting on Netflix.

Susan Ryan

Trump an American Dream, Netflix: Four-part British documentary explores the journey of Donald Trump through five decades. Very interesting but only one season.

Josephine Cotter



The *Queen's Gambit*, above, and *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, below: two of the shows recommended by Trekkers



The Trial of the Chicago 7, Netflix: Political/legal drama about the 1969 trial of anti-Vietnam war protesters.

Dympna Thunder

Wanted, Netflix: strangers Lola and Chelsea become partners on the run when they witness a murder. A lighthearted but at times tense Australian series

The Queen's Gambit, Netflix: series based on a gifted female chess player -- but you don't need to understand chess to enjoy it.

Patrick Howlin & Mary Dolan, Dympna Thunder

Game Change, Sky Atlantic.

Political drama made in 2012, about the selection and campaign of Sarah Palin as John McCain's VP selection in the 2008 election. It could be said that it laid the foundation for the current Trump movement /pandemic afflicting the US political scene.

Kevin Carroll

The Francis Street Photographer, RTE Player: Just a week left to watch this heartwarming social history of *The Liberties* as recorded by John Walsh, who ran a photographers' studio at 50 Francis Street, Dublin 8, at the back of his wife's grocery shop.

Catherine Almond

What Trekkers are reading

Force of Nature, The Lost Man and The Dry by Jane Harper: three murder mysteries by Australian crime writer Harper which I really enjoyed.

As You Were by Elaine Feeney: tragicomic tale of a thirtysomething mother with a terrible secret is brilliant, full of great characters and dark humour.

Mary Murphy

Apeirogon by Colum McCann: novel set in the West Bank in the heat of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is poignant, poetic, tragic yet uplifting, definitely my book of the year.

House of Glass by Hadley Freeman: author's family memoir explores 20th-century Jewish experience. Currently reading -- promising but too soon to tell.

Susan Ryan

Big Sister, Little Sister, Red Sister by Jung Chang: story of three women at the heart of 20th Century China by **Wild Swans** author. Very detailed but stuck with it and enjoyed.

This is Happiness by Niall Williams: gentle coming-of-age story in rural Irish village.

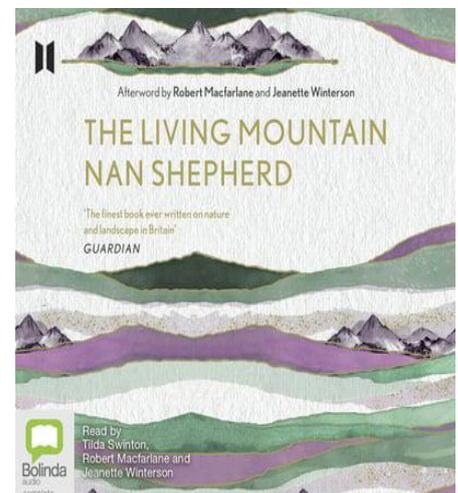
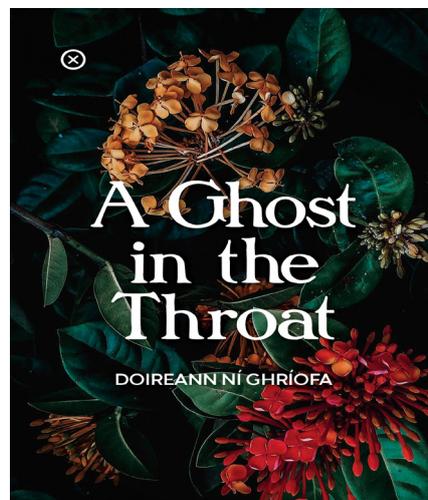
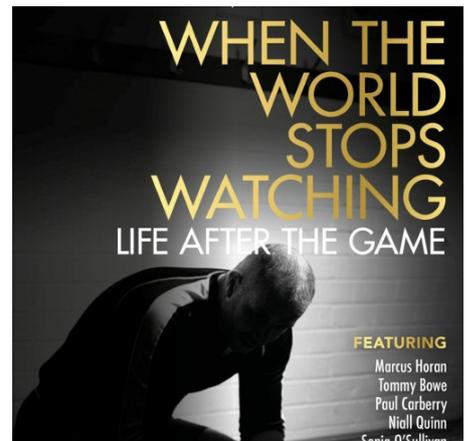
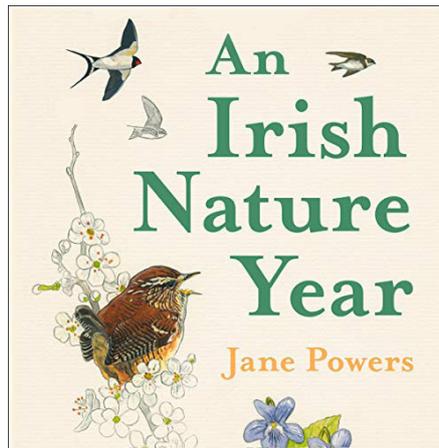
The Singapore Grip by J G Farrell: final book in Farrell's end-of-Empire trilogy.

Stasi: The Untold Story of the East German Secret Police by John O Koehler: good insight into East Germany

Maeve O'Donnell

An Irish Nature Year by Jane Powers: I'm reading an entry a day; it keeps me aware of the outdoors!

A Ghost in the Throat by Doireann Ní Ghríofa: am



hooked on highly original book which combines memoir with an exploration of Ní Ghríofa's connection with the 18th-century Cork poet, Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill.

Áine Allen

This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger: four orphaned children escape an American Indian boarding school in 1932.

Pachinko by Min Jin Lee: epic historical novel following a Korean family who eventually emigrate to Japan.

Judy Humphreys

A Single Thread by Tracy Chevalier: a woman left alone after WW1 joins a guild of embroiderers in an English cathedral. Best recent book.

The Vanishing Half by Brit

Bennett: Identical African-American twins whose lives diverge after leaving their small Louisiana town. A good read.

Valentine by Elizabeth Wetmore: novel which explores the lingering effects of a brutal crime on the women of one small Texas oil town in the 1970s. A good read but bleak.

Josephine Cotter

The Living Mountain by Nan Shepherd: Beautifully and poetically written classic about mountains, it's one book I pick up every so often and re-read a chapter.

Anne Hayes

Everyday is Extra by John Kerry: revealing memoir by former US presidential candidate

Continued on page 17

What Trekkers are reading

Continued from page 16

in 2004, later Secretary of State. It gives a great sense of American politics down through the decades and helps me to understand the outrageous behaviour of many Republican senators in their response to Trump's shenanigans.

Conal Harvey

Snow by John Banville: Mary really liked it, but me less so – too much like his Benjamin Black stuff for the real Banville enthusiast!.

When the World Stops

Watching by Damian Lawlor: a nice compendium of retirement stories of Irish professional sports people we all know.

War – How Conflict Shaped Us by Margaret MacMillan: book by historian Professor MacMillan on how the human history of conflict has transformed the world we live in.

It's based on the mistaken belief that we have been at peace since 1945, while in fact there is a war going on every year. Interesting perspectives on our world.

Amongst Women by John McGahern: when Mary was bored with current stuff, she went to

our bookshelves and selected to re-read – tough subject, brilliant writing.

Patrick Howlin & Mary Dolan

Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell: Historical novel connects death of Shakespeare's son with the birth of Hamlet.

The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides: psychological thriller about a woman's act of violence against her husband

I am Pilgrim by Terry Hayes: a superspy races to save America from oblivion.

Days without End by Sebastian Barry: two young soldiers, one an Irish emigré, find intimacy while fighting in America's Indian Wars and Civil War.

The Alice Network by Kate Quinn: Historical novel inspired by the story of the Alice Network, a covert group that worked after World War II to infiltrate German lines in France.

A Long Petal of the Sea by Isabel Allende: A doctor and his brother's wife find refuge in Chile following the Spanish civil war.

Una Davis

Another Fine Mess: America, Uganda and the War on Terror by Helen C Epstein: story of how Western leaders' single-minded focus on the War on Terror and their naïve dealings with strongmen are at the root of much of the turmoil in eastern and central Africa

Diary of an MP's Wife by Sasha Swire: indiscreet political memoir by wife of former Tory minister.

Trio by William Boyd: wryly humorous novel set in the 1960s as a film is being made

The Storm Before the Calm by George Friedman: provocative book on the future of the US

Hear Our Defeats by Laurent Gaudé: novel about battles lost and won.

A Terrible Country by Keith Gessen: funny, perceptive novel about the US raised son of Russian émigrés, who goes back to Moscow

A Gentleman in Moscow by Amor Towles: novel follows the story of Count Alexander Ilyich Rostov and his life in the Moscow hotel where he has been under house arrest for 32 years.

Ronan White



From the mountains to the sea: Trekkers on the route from Brady's to the Scalp