



# The Trekker

Trekkers Mountaineering Club Glenageary Co Dublin [www.trekkers.ie](http://www.trekkers.ie)  
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## On top of the world



Trekkers celebrate going back to walking in May, nearly five months after walks had to be suspended. The B walk on May 21 went from Bray Head along the Belmont Way to little Sugar Loaf and return

### Celebrating 3,000 walks



Eddie Power with, from left, Cathal Drohan, Jane Cochrane, Roisin McEvoy, John O'Neill, Fiona O'Sullivan, Mary Murray, Noreen O'Brien and Gerry Fogarty on the 3,000th walk

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# Chair's Notes

A big thanks to the Editor for another bumper newsletter: it's well worth keeping – there are so many stories written by the members about their favourite walks, I love the variety and truly there is a walk for everyone. Also included are interesting features on walk-related matters not to mention our culinary and culture articles.

There are so many members back on the hills, doing reces, leading walks or for many of us, just turning up to follow. There is a great vibe in the club at the moment. We are very grateful to all the leaders over the last few months who have given their time and effort to keep our walks programme live. With reduced numbers allowed per walk it requires a lot of

commitment to have sufficient walks available on a weekly basis. As we know there is a huge amount of time and effort that goes into every walk from the idea of where, followed by the homework and plotting the route, the recce(s) testing the route card and eventually the walk itself. An extra thank you to the members who have stepped in at short notice to lead.

One of the recent highlights has been achieving our 3,000th walk and I am very grateful to Monty, Terry, Eugene and Noel, all early members of the Trekkers, together with other members who attended our celebration.

I am also delighted that we will have our memorial service together with B and C walks on

the 11th of September.

Quite a few people are on guest walks planning to join the Club: we look forward to giving them a warm and Trekker welcome over the next few months.

Lastly on your behalf I want to thank the Alan, Mark, Fran and in particular mention Dympna who will resign at the AGM, for all their hard work and dedication to the Club.

Dympna has had a particularly challenging year finding leaders for all the extra walks and in many cases leading the walks herself. I love when she reminds me "that we are just a walking club" – albeit a very special one.

Fiona

## Editor's Notes

Welcome to the third newsletter of 2021. We have reports of walks after lockdown, the celebration of our 3,000th walk, advice on organising away trips and lots more. Many thanks to all the contributors -- and particularly to photographers Paul O'Kane, Ciaran Mahon and Judy Humphreys

Fran

## Letters to the Editor wanted

We want feedback, opinions, suggestions: please email letters -- short and pithy please -- to [franorourke@gmail.com](mailto:franorourke@gmail.com), marked Letters

## Trekkers' tips

Trekkers often swap useful tips on their walks -- why not share them with everybody? For example,

**Use a plastic bag on your boot to pull on waterproof trousers**  
**Freeze a bottle of water for use as an ice pack on very hot days**

Members who have a tip -- or looking for advice or a tip -- should email [franorourke@gmail.com](mailto:franorourke@gmail.com), headlined Trekkers' Tips.

Tips will be included in the next newsletter



## Caption Competition

Please send suggested captions for Paul O'Kane's picture, left, taken recently on the Wicklow Way to: [franorourke@gmail.com](mailto:franorourke@gmail.com). There's a prize for the winning entry.



The winner of the April competition is Ronan White whose caption for Judy Humphreys' picture is: **Are you sure we read the map correctly?**

# From the sea to the mountains -- how Trekkers' story began

**Monty Tinsley** told the history of Trekkers in this speech at the celebration of its 3,000th walk in June

This is a very special and unique occasion as we mark the 3,000th walk of the Trekkers Mountaineering Club. Many of you know that the Trekkers emerged from the Sandycove Sea Scouts, when the support "the Dads" had given was not required as much. So, in 1982 this band of Sea Scouts left their boats, came ashore to walk inland and upwards.

Shaun Trant, the founder of this club, led Jack Langan, Ronnie O'Sullivan and Terry O'Brien for the initial walk up Djouce and Maulin on a cold November day as Terry O'Brien will testify. At the end of it the four warriors arrived in the pub in Kilmacanogue and to quote Shaun "they were cold, wet and miserable". However, in spite of their condition or maybe because of a few hot drinks, all agreed it was worthwhile and



From left, Noel O'Reilly, Terry O'Brien, chair Fiona O'Sullivan, Monty Tinsley and Eugene Logan at the celebration of Trekkers' 3,000th walk, held in Shankill before the start of two Wednesday Walks to the Scalp

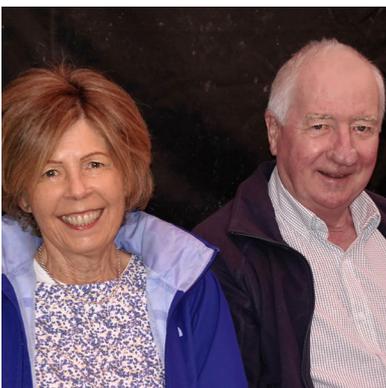
the venture should be repeated. And it has been, 3,000 times, in all weather conditions.

Shaun was particularly happy when the 100<sup>th</sup> walk was reached in December 1992, 10 years later. By way of explanation, I should say that during the first decade, walks were only once a month and always at A or A+ standard and never during July or August. The total number of members at that stage had only

reached 20 and many of them were only active for a short period of time.

The following year, a few new members were invited to join the Trekkers and it is good to see the Class of '93 represented today by Eugene Logan and Noel O'Reilly. During the next five years they spread the word and helped the membership to increase threefold. Thus, it came

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From left: Una Davis, Paddy MacManus, Noreen O'Brien, Mary O'Loughlin, Mary Delany, Eudie Power, Alan Kane and Kevin Carroll at Trekkers' 3,000th walk celebration held in the car park of Brady's pub, Shankill

## Trant's ethos: enjoy the outdoors, look out for fellow Trekkers

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to pass that the 200<sup>th</sup> Walk took place in June 1997 with both an A walk and a C walk.

As I am sure you know, the Trekkers have been well served over the years by so many willing and dedicated members leading from the frontline, in Committee or as the excellent reliable and knowledgeable foot soldiers. They ensure a bond of friendship develops to jell the Club together.

In that connection I would like to mention in particular Eugene Logan who not only introduced us to so many tracks and trails on the home circuit of Dublin and Wicklow, but also led us to climb many mountain peaks from Donegal to Kerry. Eugene along with Kevin Moore initiated the Wednesday walks and in recent years he set out the guidelines for the Social Walks.

As a result of his contribution he was conferred with the Trant Fellowship, the highest award the Club can bestow.

The ethos that Shaun Trant was anxious to imbue in all members of the Club was threefold:

- to enjoy and respect the great outdoors;
- be responsible for your own safety and
- look out for your fellow Trekkers.

On balance, I think that spirit of camaraderie has worked well, with the main commandment for everybody being:

Stay behind the Leader and stay in front of the Sweeper - Accidents can easily happen and often if that precept is forgotten. So the scout motto of Bi Ullamh still applies.

'Eugene Logan introduced us to so many tracks and trails, initiated the Wednesday walks and set out guidelines for the social walks'

I know Shaun would be delighted that the club has come this far in nearly 40 years and from four members in 1982, a total of 336 have participated during to date. I must thank Fiona and the current committee for deciding to celebrate this 3,000<sup>th</sup> walk.

## 'Ladies were severely buffeted'

Founder member **Terry O'Brien** marked the 3,000<sup>th</sup> walk reading excerpts from *The Hundred Walks*, a booklet prepared by founder Trekker Shaun Trant to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> Trekker walk in December 1992

Shaun Trant's descriptions of the walks were short and to the point, at times, amusingly cryptic.

"Djouce and Maulin from Crone. Continuous rain. Drank bottles of Smithwicks on summit of Djouce" reads the account of the very first walk in November 1982 . . . "Finished in Sweeney's pub in Kilmacanogue, cold and wet. Agreed to go again after Christmas." Jack Langan, Terry O'Brien, Ronnie O'Sullivan and Shaun Trant were the members of that walk.

Just over a year later, a walk around Mullaghcleevaun and Tonelegee, which took in Barnacullian reads "Swim in Lough Ouler with Charlie (Ryan). Finished in Lake View pub, Roundwood. Charlie sank in the

bog on Barnacullian and had to be pulled out." Conditions were "Wet, low cloud, poor visibility."

In June 1985, the lads (and it was still only lads) headed west and climbed Mweelrea mountain. "Walked back to Louisburgh. Dinner in Sheebeen. Charlie passed out, caused panic, recovered - 'Can't a fellow drop off to sleep when he wants to?'"

By the time of the "Ladies' Walk" (that was the headline) in May, 1987, Dympna, Noreen, Maria, Marion, Eileen and husbands walked from "Crone to Djouce — almost . . . "Cold day with showers of hail and high winds. Ladies were severely buffeted."

There were wet days, fine days and occasionally a "Glorious



Terry O'Brien . . . one of the four men on Trekkers' first walk in November 1982

day". On The Hundredth Walk on December 5, 1992, 14 men met in Roundwood following a walk from Crone up to Maulin Summit, round Djouce, Luggala car park to Roundwood.

"There was a lengthy discussion on selecting a name for the group . . . The name which was finally chosen was Trant's Trekkers or in abbreviated form, The Trekkers."

# Route cards, escape routes and how to use ViewRanger

**Alan Kane and Mark Taylor** explain everything about the 12-week map reading and navigation course they devised and taught this winter

"I learnt how to navigate doing coastal navigation in and off Sydney harbour, even how to use a sextant," says Mark Taylor, who with Alan Kane, devised the comprehensive map reading and navigation skills course followed by 22 Trekkers between February and July. From the sea to the mountains? "It's all about direction charts, longitude and latitude, how to use a compass," says Mark.

More conventionally, Alan Kane had done Mountaineering Ireland's Mountain Skills 1 & 2 courses run by Charles O'Byrne. Initially, the duo planned practical support for six members who had done O'Byrne's two-day navigation course, but wanted more training to put their learning into practice.

That was in February 2020. When the pandemic hit, they turned that plan into a series of online sessions, teaching things like preparing a route card and how to use ViewRanger. "That's when I converted Alan from using Garmin to ViewRanger, which is a free app," says Mark. The sessions were followed by a number of walks last summer, when restrictions lifted.

Encouraged by chair



"Students" Geraldine Boland, John Hegarty, Louise Martin and Farannan Tannam after finding the source of the Glencree River!!

Fiona O'Sullivan, who believed there was a strong appetite in the club for training in navigation and leadership skills, and by Charles O'Byrne's retirement, they began to devise a new course. In January this year, when they announced the course, they expected they'd get three or four Trekkers signing up – and got 22.

Devising the course from scratch was a major challenge, complicated by the fact that it had to be taught online. They divided the students into two groups of 11, ran two two-hour sessions a week for 12 weeks, on Tuesday and Wednesday nights – and gave them homework that they'd told the classes would take at least four hours a week. (It took some a lot more.)

They created and emailed students five comprehensive modules for the course, covering how to understand maps, how to use a compass, how to prepare route cards, how to use ViewRanger and additional navigation techniques.

The prospect of having to prepare a route card seems to scare a lot of Trekkers who've just heard about the cards – and did cause a lot of angst and hilarity amongst people doing the course says Alan, particularly the bit about planning an escape route. (Alan says route cards are simply a plan to give walk leaders a sense of the steps to be taken to get from A to B – and an escape route simply a plan of how to get out quickly if there's an incident on a walk.)

Working together before starting the course, they divided up course topics – Alan prepared the map reading and additional navigation techniques modules, Mark the modules for compass, route cards and ViewRanger. It became pretty much a full-time job for them for five to six months, teaching classes, preparing the next session, marking homework, exchanging information with each other.

## 'Confident leaders can enjoy a walk, not terrified of getting lost'

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It would have been better of course if they'd been able to bring their students out on the hills to put theory into practice as the classes progressed.

When restrictions on walking were lifted, they began a series of mentoring practice walks, which went on through the summer, enlisting the help of experienced Trekkers like Dick Ryan, John Casey, Aurimas Parsonis, Ita Lawton and Mary Murphy to help.

And although neither Mark or Alan were teachers in their working lives, they express the kind of delight that teachers feel when their students flourish. "We told them to pick walks they didn't know well, do their research – and some of them were elated," says Alan. "One of them is still floating from the positive vibes she got leading a new walk; another, who did an amazingly thorough job, said she's loving it."

This, they say, is the point of learning good navigation skills. "It isn't for everyone," says Mark, recognizing that a lot of Trekkers simply want a walk and the companionship that goes with it. "But it opens up so much for other walkers – it leads to them becoming confident leaders, they can enjoy a walk they're leading because they're not terrified they might get lost; they can go to places they wouldn't have been confident of leading before."

It is not necessary for Trekkers walking on known paths. That said, knowing how to use a compass and/or ViewRanger would be useful skills for all walkers – although it's agreed that you have to continue using a compass to really master the skill.

**Frances O'Rourke**

**MARK TAYLOR, originally from Australia, has lived in Ireland since 2011 and before joining the club in 2015, had done a little walking in France, Zimbabwe and Australia. He taught himself map reading and navigation skills on the basis that "if you're going to do something, do it properly". An A & B walker, he'd like to see more A & B walkers in Trekkers.**

**ALAN KANE joined Trekkers in 2018. He started hillwalking after retiring when he found that he didn't have to choose between golf and hillwalking. He learnt his map reading and navigation by completing Mountain Skills 1 & 2 with Charles O'Byrne and then took to the books and the hills to build on the learning and understanding. Despite numerous efforts to walk outside of Ireland he has not managed to do so, mainly because of the pandemic.**

## The day of reckoning

### From Zoom to blanket bog: Catherine Almond puts her knowledge into practice

Alan and Mark had prepared us well. The course had covered five modules over 12 weeks by zoom; understanding the map (grid references, scale, contours, mountain features), compass work (orienteeing, magnetic variation, bearings), route cards (distance, height, timing, bearings), ViewRanger (creating a route, recording and saving a track, syncing) and navigation techniques (the 5Ds, handrailing, back bearing, attack point,

spacing, triangulation). The 6<sup>th</sup> module – actual field work – was fast approaching.

So, the day of reckoning arrived, we were to put our zoom knowledge to the test.

I checked the weather forecast with trepidation, I was hoping for a bright, dry, Spring morning. The days leading up to D day had been very wet, in fact so bad the original dates for the field work had to be rescheduled due to the weather.

We were to meet at Cruagh Wood car park at 9.00am to avoid the crowds. I arrived (last as usual) to find the car park already full. People were obviously desperate to get out into the fresh air on the first "dry" day for ages. And guess what, I'd forgotten to bring my poles.

So much for double-checking the rucksack.

Our plan of action was to follow one of the routes we had been working on during the classes, Route 3 – Cruagh Wood car park, following forest tracks to the edge of the forest, on over open ground to Glendoo Mountain - both peaks, on to White Sands Mountain, skirting Cruagh Mountain, and back through Cruagh Woods to the car park. We'd prepared our Route Cards, we had our compasses and maps, our ViewRanger app switched on so off we set.

The woods at Cruagh are lovely, particularly for someone like me who delights in forest bathing, but after so much rain, although the forest trails

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# Rain, wind, mud -- we had a blast!

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were fine, once we got out onto open hills we discovered what blanket bog really is. The ground was literally saturated and we squelched our way across country.

Alan and Mark had planned exercises for us, testing our knowledge with map and compass reading, pacing, using ViewRanger, recognising

mountain features and all the many aspects of the course. We had a blast!! Despite rain, wind, occasional hail, mud, ankle deep sodden bogs and sunshine it was great to be out on the hills. I think we all passed with flying colours and I certainly felt invigorated and proud of my achievement.

Thank you to Alan and Mark and to all the Trekkers who made the course so enjoyable.



Cruagh Wood and Glendoo Mountain, above.

## Caught on camera



Friday walk, June



Powerscourt Deerpark, May



Social walk, August, Bull Island



Djouce Woods, May



Maulin, C walk, June



Nick's lookout: C walk, June



A walk, May



Social walk, July, Shanganagh



WW, July, Brady's to the Scalp

More pictures  
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# The end of the lockdown blues

A-walkers celebrated their first walk after lockdown on a day of mud and mists in May writes **Dermot Murray**

Throughout the car-journey to the beginning of the first trekker walk after lockdown, menacing clouds crowded the sky overhead while rain scratched threateningly against the windscreen, and I began to wonder what I had signed myself up for.

And yet, in spite of this, it was just so uplifting to be able to get out walking once again. After weeks of living an almost caged existence, there was a certain joy in being able to turn a blind eye to all of the limits and confines that the pandemic entailed, and the prospect of marching out onto the wind-swept open spaces of Wicklow was certainly an appealing one.

I believe I speak for everyone when I say that the lockdown left each one of us sluggish – in body, mind and soul. And so on this, the first post-lockdown walk, I resolved to shake off some of this sluggishness, by getting the leg-muscles warmed up and the heart beating (body), by discussing with others the route that lay ahead of us (mind), and by just getting out under the Wicklow sky once again (soul).

As we gathered at the car-park next to the Glenmacnass waterfall, maps were produced and discussions ensued. Had we stuck rigidly to the original



On their first walk back at the end of lockdown in May, a group of A walkers made their way from the Glenmacnass Waterfall to Scarr, Toneleagee and back across the swollen Glenmacnass river

plan, the first action of the day would have been to wade across a very swollen Glenmacnass river, as there was no satisfactory crossing-point.

Having negotiated the river, it was intended that we head off in the direction of Tonelagee and ultimately summit the mountain. But the decision was made at the outset to reverse the walk – and so we would now execute the loop in a clockwise fashion rather than an anti-clockwise one – and this meant that the Glenmacnass river would become our final obstacle for the day and not the opening one.

We left the car-park and walked into lingering mist. At length, the notched ridge of Scarr mountain loomed before us, almost like the battlements of some immense, fog-shrouded castle, and we followed the ridge before dropping out of the wind and then making the long descent to Paddock Hill.

From there, we briefly joined the Wicklow Way which brought us, in the fullness of time, to the south-easternmost part of the Brockaghs and we set

our sights on this long succession of hills and the forbidding shape of Tonelagee beyond.

But before we tackled this final behemoth, we paused for lunch; and just as we did so the mists parted miraculously like the drawing of a curtain, and we were treated to some sunshine and breath-taking views of peaks to the south.

Yet it was back into dense mist again as we proceeded doggedly uphill to the summit of Tonelagee, and from this point onwards we were subjected to some heavy bursts of rain, and the ground on our descent was greasy and treacherous.

But before we could complete our loop, there remained the small matter of the Glenmacnass river; and since there was neither bridge nor stepping-stone available to us, we simply had to brace ourselves for the task ahead and boldly wade into the swirling spate before us.

Needless to say the water was pitilessly cold; and to make matters worse, the

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## Hot drinks, hot dogs after wading through river

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rocks underfoot were uneven and slippery, while the not inconsiderable current did its best to upset the balance of everyone caught in its path.

Yet one by one we managed to reach the far bank in one piece and with just the lowermost parts of us wet and squelching.

Not far ahead of us lay

the car-park and the end of our walk. The circumstances brought on by the pandemic have forced many to adapt and to make the most of whatever opportunities happen to present themselves – and this was evident even here in Glenmacnass, despite the remoteness and the bleakness of the spot.

For a van had been set up with a metal awning to

shelter from the rain, and it was possible to purchase snacks and hot drinks, and even, if one was prepared to hang on a bit, a hot-dog slathered with ketchup and mustard.

Yet whether or not one decided to avail of this final indulgence, the activities of the day were a perfect way of shaking off some of the lockdown lethargy.

## A view from the suspension bridge



Trekkers on the Samuel Hayes bridge across the Avonmore River

## Aine Allen on a leafy walk through forest and wood to a new bridge that commemorates the man who built Avondale House

I cannot capture in words everything about this walk. It was a non-demanding C walk covering a modest 10.8 km and with a total ascent of just 250m but it was enjoyed for the blend of mood and place, as well as for the small measure of novelty that the new suspension bridge – The Samuel Hayes bridge -added to it.

We met in the generous parking area for Ballygannon Wood-Millennium Forest; the meagre 'P' sign is well obscured by the raggy edges of the wood 9.5 km south of Laragh, 1.5 km north of Rathdrum.

We set out from the parking area along the Jubilee Way but deviated from it after less than a kilometre onto a solid track, which on the day of our walk boasted a few simple signs for the Samuel Hayes Bridge (these signs were absent on the first recce and even now cannot be trusted to be pointing in the right direction!).

We left the track and took an almost hidden path down to the Avonmore River and walked along

the riverbank for some few hundred metres until the impressive new suspension bridge came into view. The bridge commemorates Samuel Hayes, an amateur architect who designed and built Avondale House. (<http://heritage.wicklowheritage.org/new-contributions/new-bridge-over-avonmore-named-for-samuel-hayes-of-avondale>).

We crossed the bridge as it swayed gently under experimentation by some members of our group! Just 1 km back upstream took us to a junction with the southerly end of the Avonmore Way as it bends into its final leg before going out to Stump of the Castle. We joined it but rather promptly moved off it to take a forest track leading us into the Blue Trail of Clara Vale.

There is an openness on these forest tracks: a pleasant mixture of shade and penetrating light amid the leafy laziness of the mixed woodland that opens unexpectedly here and there to allow views back into the hills.

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## Bridge opens up possibilities of longer walks on Jubilee Loop

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The walk continues its winding way, crossing a sturdy old footbridge over the Cronybyrne river, picking up the Green Trail for a while before reuniting with the Blue Trail that led us to the meeting of the Cronybyrne river with the Avonmore.

Here an inviting canopy of trees on the water's edge was too good to pass up as a lunch spot. We sat to eat and muse and listen to the gurgling encounter of the two rivers.

Moving on, now on the Avonmore Way, we crossed a more robust footbridge, hugging the bank of the river, passing more spots that provided the temptation to stop and enjoy the simple pleasure of a riverside seat.



Continuing onwards, we eventually arrived back at the suspension bridge. We crossed the bridge and now walked in woodland even closer to the river, enjoying the final moments of its calming sounds. We emerged onto the grounds

of Rathdrum Rugby Club and almost immediately re-entered the woods onto a short stretch of narrow boardwalk, leading us back to the junction where we had originally parted with the Jubilee Loop. And from there back to the car park.

This suspension bridge opens up possibilities for longer walks encompassing more of the Jubilee Way, or more of the Clara Vale trails

that could take in the picturesque little church at Clara Bridge. An additional attraction would be the spectacle of the bluebells of Spring or the colours of Autumn.

## Pearse's parklands and museum a hidden gem

### A Social Walk to St Enda's Park and the Pearse Museum was a beautiful day's outing says **Marion Goff**

Under the leadership of Noreen O'Brien, eight Trekkers met at the Sarah Curran Avenue, car park outside St Enda's Park and the Pearse Museum in Ratharnham for a Social Walk on a Saturday morning in July.

On arrival Noreen gave a very in-depth talk on the area and proceeded to the museum where she had pre-booked a group tour. To comply with Covid restrictions, the tour guide gave us a historical talk outside the building before we entered.

The Hermitage was originally built by Edward Hudson, a dentist, who signed a lease on the lands in 1786. Patrick Pearse and his brother William bought



the house and nearly 50 acres of beautiful parklands in 1913 to transfer their school, St Enda's, from Ranelagh to this ideal setting. The museum contains reconstructions of many of the original rooms ([pearsemuseum.ie/](http://pearsemuseum.ie/) [heritageireland.ie](http://heritageireland.ie/), D16 Y7Y5).

We lunched in the calming atmosphere of a formal garden surrounded by beautiful scenery, the scent of magnificent flowers, the sound of birdsong, then meandered onto the riverside walk with its cute miniature bridges and waterfall where I could hear "water lapping with low sounds by the shore".

### **Trekkers, left. in the grounds of St Enda's Park**

Noreen then led us to a walkway with its interesting follies. These ornamental buildings had no practical purpose but to serve as a conversational piece for the wealthy (and some of us not so wealthy!). Finally we retreated to the courtyard and finished off the trip with a lovely coffee.

It was a beautiful day: I discovered a hidden gem and certainly intend to visit it soon again. We were graced with lovely weather, good company, an excellent leader and perfect surroundings to feed the body, mind and soul. The social walks are very enjoyable and an excellent way of keeping in touch with old friends. There is now more intermingling with other walk grades and it is wonderful to meet and keep in touch. All members are very welcome.

# Tatras a place of pure beauty

## Gaye Maguire on why she rates a hike on the Polish/Slovakian border as one of the best

When Frances asked me to write an article on this topic, I thought – crikey, what a challenge!! Since walking is my primary hobby, I’ve walked forever. But when I narrow it down to my favourite walk with the Trekkers, there’s one that stands out a mile - the Valley of the Five Lakes in the Tatras mountains, on the border of Poland and Slovakia. I think Mary Dillon, Ita, Owen and Gilbert would agree – we still talk about it from time to time as being one of the best.

Owen and Marie McKeown organised a superb trip in June 2008 for a group of A, B and C walkers, no mean feat. We were based at the very comfortable Hotel Marilor in Zakopane, southern Poland, a town that Owen and Marie knew well, having done the recce there a few months before. We had five days of jaw-droppingly gorgeous hikes in a place of outstanding natural beauty. The Tatras are the highest mountains in Poland: we were in between the winter ski and summer hiking seasons, and nowhere was too busy.

On Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> of June, we all headed off up the mountains to an amazing lake at Morskie Oko, generally regarded as one of the most beautiful lakes in Poland. Here we had lunch in a huge wooden mountain chalet, followed by time spent just taking in the beautiful lake. At this point, the group split with the B and C walkers returning to Zakopane, and the A hikers heading up steep and uneven paths, through forest into the higher mountains.

It was a long haul up to the top of a ridge and way below us spread the Valley of the Five Lakes – it was just a stunning view of a valley of rocks, trees and melting snow that seemed to go on forever. Some couldn’t resist a snowball fight and it was so hot, we were thrilled to be able to cool down. The lakes themselves were crystal clear – it’s a place of pure nature at its best and looks as if it has not changed over a few centuries.

Our guide led us to a Hansel & Gretel type mountain hut called Piec Stawow, all wood and stone. We were pretty knackered at this stage, and a cold Polish beer did the trick. No one wanted to leave this amazing place – it was late afternoon and it would have been super to overnight and stargaze there.

As I write this, 13 years later, the brightest memories are of the breathtaking nature that surrounded us each day, and of everyone who travelled. The



Gaye Maguire and Trekker friends in the Tatras Mountains, 2008. Below: at a mountain hut

footbaths and snowball fights. The laughter and chats with such a varied group of people each day. The cheating - grabbing bikes near the end of a walk and cycling the last few kilometers. Neither Derry (O’Hegarty) nor Paddy (O’Duffy) had been on a bike in years, and it was a hoot. Great discussions about the local bears – never seen in person just their poo (and subsequent discussion around their diet of blueberries!). A group of young nuns in their 20s climbing Giewont – a 1,895m mountain above Zakopane -- full of the joys of spring in their cornettes, and a very flirty nun and priest – both in their 20s, which raised a few eyebrows! And super food and hotel to return to each night.

Owen and Marie, it was surely a trip I’ll never forget. I promised myself that I would return, and I have the map marked up and ready to do so.

**For further info on the Tatras:**  
[discoverzakopane.com](http://discoverzakopane.com)  
[www.poland.travel](http://www.poland.travel)  
[visitworldheritage.com](http://visitworldheritage.com)

**Away Trips: how to organise trips at home and abroad, pages 18-19**



# 'The first walk was the toughest'

Trekker couple Noreen and Terry O'Brien tell  
**Frances O'Rourke** how they became hillwalkers

WHEN Terry O'Brien was growing up in Patrickswell, Co Limerick, hillwalking was the last thing on his mind. He did cycle six miles each way to school in Mungret on a push bike, and when he moved to London to work when he was 18, he'd often walk home from the last Tube.

So he'd only hillwalked about half a dozen times before joining the first Trekkers walk in 1982, when he was about 36. That was with Sea Scouts: Terry and Noreen's three sons had joined other children in their neighbourhood in the Scouts and like other parents, they'd been roped into ferrying children to activities. Sean Trant, an athletic older neighbour who was a scout leader, first got Terry involved in hillwalking with the youngsters.

"The toughest walk I ever went on before that first Trekkers walk was with the Scouts. We went from Laragh, up the Brockaghs, Tonelegee, across the Wicklow Gap and Camaderry – I hadn't a notion where I was."

And then Sean Trant persuaded Terry to come with him and three other Sea Scout dads on that first walk up Djouce and Maulin from Crone Wood in November 1982.

Noreen's walks consisted mainly of "flogging up and down Dun Laoghaire pier". Like Terry, she hadn't done much hillwalking, although as a child she regularly walked the roughly 8km from her home in Portlaoise to the Rock of Dunamase. Their sons were



Noreen O'Brien, former Trekker chair and Terry, club founder

teenagers and "we couldn't both be out on Saturday".

She and Terry met when they both worked in Irish Life "on September 2, 1968 at about 4pm" and got married in 1971. They were the youngest couple on Bellevue Road, Glenageary, when they moved there in 1974.

Trekkers walked about once a month in the early days and Terry stayed with them but dropped out in 1987 because "it was hard to keep up between work, the kids and golf". "His first

love" adds Noreen wryly. She had her first taste of hillwalking in May of that year when Sean Trant was persuaded to organise "a ladies' walk" for wives of Trekkers.

"We went from Crone Wood but the walk had to be aborted before we got to the top of Djouce: none of us was wearing proper gear and we were just blown sideways; one of the women was small and slight and was blown off the boardwalk. We returned to the Silver Tassie soaked to the skin and drank port."

"Proper gear" seems to be a fairly recent innovation: in the 1980s, Terry remembers wearing really heavy, completely waterproof yellow rain jackets and really heavy, uncomfortable but really tough boots from JB Boylan. "They guaranteed you wouldn't feel anything through the sole." "I didn't have any decent gear at the start either," says Noreen. "I got my first boots there as well, and wore old tracksuit bottoms."

It wasn't until 2007, after Trekkers' 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, to which founder members like Terry were invited, that Noreen joined and Terry re-joined the club. By then, some women had become regular walkers and Mary Murray was Trekkers chair. "I really took to hillwalking," says Noreen, although she remembers ruefully that on an early walk, she tripped and fell. "Walk, don't talk" said Terry unsympathetically. Now, Noreen says "Sometimes, I've even issued

'One of the women was blown off the boardwalk . . . we returned to the Silver Tassie and drank port'

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## 'Definitely a need for more A and B walkers'

from page 12

that advice myself.

In 2011, she succeeded Monty Tinsley as chair. Her aim as chair was first, to "do no harm", to keep up the good work done by her predecessors Monty and before that, Mary Murray. The club had some success recruiting new members during her time – she placed ads in a local paper and the Dalkey community newsletter, even made an appearance on local radio. Unofficially, she used to

pull together the names of Wednesday Walk leaders for the club's walks co-ordinator and has a well-deserved reputation as being welcoming and helpful to new club members.

Both Terry and Noreen agree there's definitely a need for A and B walkers – who don't have to be as young as Terry was when he went out on that first Trekker walk. Noreen has always been a C walker, and says that the social side of Trekkers is a very important part for retired people.

# A silent amen on hallowed ground

## Paddy MacManus explores the new Lacken Mass Path

On Wednesday July 14th, 12 Trekkers gathered to explore the new Mass Path in Lacken, which was inaugurated earlier this year. On the drive down to Blessington, most of us experienced a torrential burst of rain, with the surrounding hills blanked out. As we approached Lacken, the rain stopped and a gentle steaming started.

The sun broke through as we left Lacken from St Patrick's Church. The Church, built in 1811, is modest in size and in the architecture resembling a crucifix. Leaving Zellers to its silence, we crossed the road to the footpath for 200m to a house with a gate pillar, marked "An Cruachan".

Just beside this, slightly overhung with the bountiful bush growth, is a swing gate marked "Mass Path". Over your right shoulder, looking back is a landlocked beached rowing boat now converted to a flowerpot, a splendid display of colours.

On the preceding recce, we chatted with two of the ladies tending this reincarnation. The reconstruction and maintenance of the Mass Path is the result

of the voluntary efforts of the Lacken Community. There is also a noticeboard relating the story of the path. In sunshine now, we 12 Trekkers commenced the steady ascent of the path. You pass through a series of "kiss" gates (darned Covid spoiling the opportunity to experiment), and swing gates. The path is circa 3m



12 Trekkers climbed the Mass Path from Lacken to Sorrel Hill

wide. Stone walls and earthen banks, shoulder high in parts, delineate the path.

The bushes, ferns, and gorse were busy with humming insects. The underfoot alternates between lush grass, loose stones, and the wider fields of sheep. Sometimes you are below the surrounding fields, like in an open tunnel and it is so quiet. Can you hear the stones whisper? The route is well marked. We reflect that St Patrick's Church and the Mass Path had parents and children, barefooted, passing during the Famine. Kinda hallowed ground, a silent

"amen" privately muttered. The views on this track unfold gently, continuously, like a large elegant green silk scarf, with the blues, red and yellows of the vegetation. The shadows of the clouds scurry across the long approach to Sorrel Hill.

We stop and chat to a group of local women from the Lacken, Blessington area. "A half day stroll and a good chat" was their happy chant. A helicopter circled and eventually landed on the summit, staying briefly, and departed. We dreamt of their gift of iced Chablis and ice cream at the summit! The heat and the climb making the simple of us a tad delirious. The scenery is a 360° glorious tapestry.

Descending from Sorrel's summit, the human drone of a hang glider, gracefully waltzing the breeze, collided with an image of barefooted children descending the stony Mass Path to their new church in 1811. We too completed our glorious "stroll" and "chats" with contentment. Another notch on the happy Trekker logbook. And an offering of "thanks" to the Lacken Community.

- **See Trekker newsletter Number 68 on the Mass Path and Trekkers website Walk Routes for Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021 for map and GPX details.**

# If you go down to the woods . . .

## Fergal Mulloy on everything you want to know about the trees we see on our walks in Wicklow.

*“The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now.”*

Chinese proverb

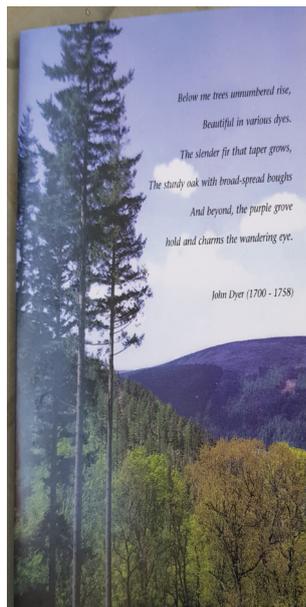
Unintended consequences of Covid 19 include the appreciation of the beauty and sounds of nature, the tranquility of forests and their benefit to mental health. Wicklow, being Trekkers normal playground, has, at 17.5 per cent, the highest percentage of forest cover in Ireland.

These tree-covered landscapes were mostly planted from the mid twentieth century onwards on land considered too poor for farming. Mainly on higher ground, these sites influenced the choice of tree species; hence the dominance of the less demanding conifer species.

The road network that emerged to serve these public forests has given the added bonus of several hundred kilometers, allowing safe and easy access for walkers.

Clearly the main constituents of a forest are trees. The species mix falls into two broad categories, broadleaf on lowlands mainly and conifer.

Wicklow’s publicly owned broadleaf forests are mostly the remnants of ancient native woodlands such as Croneybyrne, Glendalough, Devil’s glen, and Coolattin, some of which had occasional broadleaf plantings dating back several centuries. Sessile oak is the dominant species in most of these areas. Unfortunately the high deer



Far left: the cover of Fergal Mulloy’s retirement thank-you card. Left: Djouce Woods

European and Japanese larches, these species are all native to the west coast of North America. The choice of these

numbers in Wicklow are having a serious impact on their natural regeneration, as can be frequently seen by the clear browse line (the line below which deer browse, about five feet) in most of Wicklow’s broadleaf forests.

Of the multitude of conifers species in the forests of Wicklow, Scots Pine (a two needled species, their copper or orange coloured upper bark in old specimens) is the only native conifer in Wicklow.

The specimens along the walk beside the upper lake in Glendalough, and the isolated specimens on Brockagh above, are excellent examples of Scots Pine. These trees are the remnants of that what was left after the Wynn family harvested the main crop during the First World War.

The dominant conifer species in Wicklow are Sitka spruce (sharp blue green leaves or needles), Douglas fir (soft blue-grey dark green needles with beech like buds), the two deciduous larches and on the highest, lodge pole pine. (Green with needles in bundles of two). Apart from the deciduous

species became necessary from the 1950’s onwards, as the only species available that could meet the strict national policy of not afforesting land that could be “better used” for agriculture. For many decades the maximum price of land for afforestation was fixed at £10 an acre, prompting one pundit at the time to say that a pair of men’s shoes cost more than an acre of land.

Not only was the price of land fixed, but also Land Commission Inspectors oversaw land acquisition for forestry purposes to ensure no agricultural land slipped through the net. This prevailed up to 40 years ago. In spite of the poverty of forest land, the average growth rate exceeded expectations. Most of the areas being harvested in Wicklow currently have a timber production that is two to three times the European average; giving a financial return, that unfortunately, shortchanged the original land owners.

The market value of wood although high, in many instances is dwarfed by the multitude of

**Continued on page 15**



Trekkers in the woods: Left, a Wednesday walk in July from Longhill car park into Djouce Woods. Right: an August walk in Glendalough

## Forests good for environment -- and visiting good for stress

from page 14

“Non wood forest products”.

The most obvious of these is the recreational value of forests, particularly those in the hinterland of urban populations. The accepted method of evaluating their recreational value is the “travel cost method” which is a calculation of visitor numbers and distance travelled. In 2019 there were an estimated 29 million visits to Ireland’s forests.

An interesting exercise for Trekkers would be to record the incidents where the forest component of a walk is dominant and multiply the number of participants by an agreed fraction of the bus charge. The result would show the hidden value of the forest to Trekkers and could give an unexpected result.

The national focus on atmospheric carbon places forestry in a unique position. It is the only industry that, after its initial establishment, adds to the annual store of carbon on its “factory floor”, by depositing atmospheric carbon.

The latest figures from 2017 shows that our forest estate has a carbon reservoir of 311.7 million tonnes. The dominant component of this is the forest soil (79%), while the living tree

biomass, deadwood, stumps and forest litter make up 21%. The amount of carbon that Ireland’s forests capture, or sequester, averaged 4.3 million tonnes per annum between 2006 and 2017. The national carbon footprint is estimated to be about 13.2 tonnes per annum, meaning that almost a third of the nation’s carbon footprint is sequestered by forests.

In these times of national awareness of the role trees play in relation to carbon, it is one of the great mysteries that the national tree planting programme, including broadleaf planting, has been reducing over the past few years and is now about 30% of what it was less than a decade ago.

A contributory factor for this is the high environmental constraints the Department of Agriculture places on planting new woodlands. Considering that Ireland is likely to face very heavy penalties under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change for failure to reach our carbon reduction targets, any reduction in our programme of forest establishment on environmental grounds is a bewildering oxymoron.

Finally there is strong scientific evidence from research across Europe that visiting a

forest can enhance psychological stress recovery and improve a person’s mood and attention span. In addition, enlightened forest management, which is now the norm throughout Europe, adds biodiversity of incalculable ecological benefit.

The combined contribution of trees and forests to our national well-being is therefore unique. The forest, which is a photosynthesis factory, is the only factory that adds a multitude of benefits to mankind when in full production. It harvests an ocean of air and emits no pollutants, an all round win-win scenario.

Enjoy your forests; after all you own most of them.

**Trekker Fergal Mulloy studied Forestry in UCD in the 1950s and spent his career in the Irish Forest and Wildlife Service that later became the Forest Service.**

**His career focussed mainly on forest management, wildlife conservation and forest research. He later worked at the European Forest Institute in Joensuu, Finland.**

**In 2000, he was honoured by the RDS by being declared the “forester of the millennium”.**

# Up in the zoological gardens

Trekker **Ann Keenan**, President of the Zoological Society of Ireland, writes about its history and plans for a Trekker walk

I am delighted to be given this opportunity to share some information about Dublin Zoo and a little of its history, purpose and vision and how the walks around the zoo have evolved during our 190 years.

Peter McGonigal and I will lead a walk in October which will include Dublin Zoo and I also encourage you to take any opportunity to visit and walk around the Zoo or Fota Wildlife Park in Cork, both of which are part of the Zoological Society of Ireland.

Dublin Zoo is the fourth-oldest zoo in the world. It opened on the 1 September 1831, on a 1.6-hectare site in the Phoenix Park. It remains in the same prime location in the green lung of the capital, close to the hustle of the city centre, albeit on a much larger footprint of 28 hectares. Dublin Zoo's animal collection was founded with a gift of animals received from London Zoo in 1831.

Since its foundation, the collection has focused mainly on large mammals, including big cats, great apes, elephants and hippos. Today, the Zoo cares for over 400 animals of more than 70 species.

The collection is organised along biogeographic regions with conservation of the species a core principle and our species are selected following a rigorous process which aligns with regional collection plans coordinated by

the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria.

As we count down to our bicentennial, we have set out a strategic direction for these next 10 years with the ambition to make the leap from a zoo that Dubliners love and can be proud of, to a national cultural attraction, with conservation and animal welfare at our core and with the vision to become a zoo-based conservation organisation of global significance.

Fresh from Alan and



A map of Dublin Zoo today, left and right, a map of the Zoo in 1839, eight years after it opened

Mark's excellent (if exacting!) 14-week Map Reading and Navigation course and with a dramatically improved understanding and love of maps, I felt duty bound to include some maps of the zoo and give some indication of how the walking experience has evolved. Also I wanted to pay tribute to Alan and Mark's excellent and professional course, materials and teaching and the not inconsiderable extra-curricular remedial support so generously provided to some of us (me)!

Above right is a map of the Zoo in 1839 and you can see

the very limited walks available on our much smaller site then. Entering the Zoo as noted on the map was through the turnstile in the quaint cottage ornee, still standing today, but not in use.

On our current map, on the left, you can see the way the Zoo has grown with the increased land given over the years by our landlords the Office of Public Works. The walks today take our visitors through many newly-developed habitats. Key to our visitor experience is keeping

our animals in species-appropriate social groups and presenting them in the most natural way possible by simulating wild habitats.

The original part of the Zoo is largely devoted to the biogeographic regions of Asia and the Neotropics, while the land around the upper lake showcases sub-Saharan Africa. Some of our more recent animal habitats, have attracted international attention and approval.

The Gorilla Rainforest, opened in 2011, was cited by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums as an example of how to design zoo habitats with the highest animal welfare standards in mind.

Dublin Zoo is the most-visited family attraction on the island of Ireland. Over the last 190 years we have welcomed almost 60 million visitors. The Zoo provides a gateway for people, particularly in urban areas, to engage with nature and wildlife. 2019 was the ninth year in a row that Dublin Zoo achieved more than one million visitors.

## Overwhelmed by support from the Irish public after Covid



Left: the Humboldt penguin and chick, native to Peru and Chile, is listed as Vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. Centre: a Southern white rhinoceros and calf, the largest of the rhino species and the third largest land mammal species in the world, has been classified as Near Threatened. Right: Jasmina is a female red panda, Dublin Zoo visitors' favourite animal. It is listed as vulnerable.

Many of you will know that both Dublin Zoo and Fota are charities reliant on income from the entrance gates. Both have suffered considerable financial hardship caused by the openings and closing due to Covid-19. The outpouring of support from the Irish public has been tremendous - we were overwhelmed and overjoyed by the reinforcement of Dublin Zoo and Fota as much loved and valued by the Irish public. We are also extremely grateful to the government for their

generous pledge of support.

Looking forward to offering a few walks which might include the Zoo for those of you interested.

**"I'll lead a walk in October which will include Dublin Zoo"**

**Ann Keenan has been on the board of the The Zoological Society of Ireland since September 2016 and became President in January 2021**

## Flat walk with views of mountain and sea by base of Ben Bulbin



A forest walk with views of sea and the Slieve League cliffs in Donegal is 15-minute drive from Sligo town

**By Geraldine Boland**

Are you looking for a walk with striking mountain and sea views, but prefer walking mostly on the flat? This forest loop walk is worth a visit. Located at the base of Ben Bulbin, it is only a 15-minute drive from Sligo town. One section tracks the edge of the forest with sea views opening up and the Slieve League cliffs in Donegal visible on a fine day. Here are the details of the Ben Bulbin Forest Walk (red route):  
Length: 5.5km

Ascent: 60m

Time: 90 minutes

Terrain: Forest loop track

Website: <https://sligowalks.ie/walks/benbulbin-gor-tarowey-looped-walk/>

Full details available on this site, including trail map, google map link for the carpark, and a video clip showing the views. Dogs on a lead are welcome.

**Nearby:** Drumcliff (W.B. Yeats grave), Rosses Point, Strandhill beaches.

# Up up and away

From Tinahely to the Tatra Mountains, Trekkers love going away to walk. We ask -- what's the best way to organise a trip

The marvellous thing about organising away trips says longstanding Trekker Monty Tinsley "was discovering parts of Ireland you'd never discover otherwise. The best for me was the total surprise of Donegal, walking the Blue Stacks and Slieve League, some of the highest sea cliffs in Europe".

Away trips have been a highlight of club membership for many Trekkers over many years. But who organises the trips, what's involved, what's best practice – and do the organisers get to enjoy themselves?

The "Organising Away Trips" guideline document on the Trekker website reflects the collective experience the club has acquired over many years, and it makes a major distinction between organising away trips in Ireland/UK and away trips outside of that. Only away trips approved by the Committee can use Trekkers' resources – the website, email addresses – to organise a trip.

Although the elements to be organised – including accommodation, meals, transport, level of walks planned, walk leaders, health and safety provisions, costs – are similar, the club now strongly recommends "that the organisers of Away Trips outside of Ireland/UK engage the services of a specialist travel company or specialist local agency . . . Participants liaise directly with the travel company/agency to reserve their places on the trip and to book flights etc."

Whether a trip is at home or abroad, organising away trips



Trekkers in the Tatra Mountains on the Polish/Slovakian border, 2008. Below: trip to Dingle, 2019

demands attention to detail. Paddy McManus, who led two trips to the Yorkshire Dales and in August, his third successful away trip based in Tinahely, Co Wicklow, says "My main advice is to get the concept of the trip clear – is it for B walkers, C walkers, or for both. Go to the area yourself to get a sense of whether it will work – my holiday was my recce. Negotiate hotel rates and block book rooms.

"Pick a leadership team of people who will recce with you in case you have to pull out. And I'd

be reluctant to go above 15 or 16 people."

A good model is for people to split the organisation, as John Hegarty and Malachy Hanley did when they organised a trip to Dingle in 2019. Malachy and his wife Ann organised the logistics (accommodation, meals, transport) while John and Neasa Hegarty recced all the walks.

There were 40 on the trip, and a mix of C and some B walkers. John stresses a point made by most away walk organisers – the importance of being flexible and

having a plan B for days when weather makes a walk inadvisable.

The numbers on a trip is an important consideration: some Trekkers who've successfully led large trips (30 to 40 people)



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# Standout trips to Italy, France, Burren, Donegal

## from page 18

away agree that 15 would be an ideal number. They include experienced Trekker Owen McKeown, who led an away trip to the Tatras mountains on the Polish/Slovakian border in 2008. (See Gaye Maguire's article page 11) There were 32 people on the trip, a mix of A, B and C walkers and some non-Trekkers, some spouses of Trekkers. With his wife Marie, also a Trekker, they reced the area – which he'd visited with another walking club – worked out the walks and "roped in Dick Ryan for the C walks".

It was successful – but Owen says that now he would recommend taking only 15 people and if taking 30, to divide walkers into two groups with different leaders. He would also strongly back the club's policy that organisers of trips outside Ireland/UK hire a travel agency that "professionally organises the whole package".

Shay Murran says that for overseas trips "Ideally, the organiser should already have overseas walking experience with Trekkers or similar. They need to find a local guide who can describe the height/length of walks equivalent to our A/B/C walks. You need a minimum of two, ideally three, leaders in case one goes down. And it's absolutely essential that people on the trip have private health insurance." A number of organisers emphasise how important it is for people going on a trip to be honest about their medical condition, which should be provided in confidence to organisers in advance.

Shay adds that while it's good to hire local guides, "you have to remember you're the

leader. On one trip, the agreed guide was replaced with another who didn't stop for a walker in trouble".

An away trip works best, thinks Mary Murray – who initially went to Tenerife on a trip organised by Shay, then led several there herself – if you have a small number of people walking at about the same level. Standout trips for her include several organised by the late Brendan Bracken, one in particular to Italy. In 2007, Dick Ryan organised a trip to Kandersteg in Switzerland which was very successful, but also very demanding: he took 30 people of differing levels of walking ability plus some non-walkers to an area he and his wife



The Cirque du Gavarnie, France

Helen loved. He reced and led B walks, deputising an experienced leader to lead C walks, and organised transport by rail rather than bus.

The late Michael Cotter and his wife Josephine organised two trips -- one for 15 people, the next for 40 -- to southwest France in recent years. Their extreme attention to detail made the trips memorable. Says Josephine Cotter "It's a big commitment but we liked doing it as a couple, loved going to remote parts of France and saw a recce as our holiday. We enjoyed the trips, although you always feel very much on duty."

In Ireland, says Monty Tinsley, local walking groups and local hotels were the main point of contact for finding local guides, bus companies and so on.

Noreen and Terry O'Brien say you need to begin organising "nearly six months before you even launch the idea" of a trip away. They have led two five-day trips to the Burren, leading a mix of B and C walks themselves. They learnt that it's important to get the hotel to arrange packed lunches – one year they hadn't and it slowed things down in the morning. And Noreen emphasises that it's important to make it really plain that it's not the leader's job to address problems people might have with the hotel. "On other trips, we'd observed leaders being driven demented by people asking things like 'Is this all I'm getting with my main course?' " She and Terry admit "You never enjoy the trip quite as much as when you're one of the gang."

"The devil is in the detail," says Myles Duffy, who with Kevin Carroll organised a trip to Donegal in October 2019 for 40 Trekkers. He and Kevin reced this away trip over three days in August 2019, found guide Michael McGarrigle, organised an accommodation package with the Central Hotel in Donegal town and transport to and from a mix of B and C walks in the Blue Stack Mountains and Slieve League.

In spite of quite a lot of torrential rain, it was a great success. From the start, planning and discipline – checking times of meals and so on – is key says Myles. He enjoyed the trip and co-organiser Kevin says "I'd absolutely do it again. It does take effort, but it's worthwhile."

'Not the leader's job to address people's problems with hotel'

# Ticks: how to avoid, how to treat

Tick activity is more-or-less continuous in Ireland from summer into autumn and can cause minor irritation or a more serious illness like Lyme disease. **Aine Allen** explains

THERE are two main types of Tick-Borne-Disease (TBD) that we hear about with reference to humans and it is very important to distinguish between them. The type that concerns us in Ireland is Lyme Disease, also called Lyme Borreliosis (LB). The other is Tick-Borne-Encephalitis (TBE), a viral infection most prevalent in the Baltic states, Czech Republic and Slovenia and not at all detected in Ireland or GB. TBE is a more severe disease and a vaccination is available to combat it in the most affected regions. More detail on TBE is given in Ref.5, but we need not concern ourselves with this any further, except to be aware of its geographical reach and the risk we may be exposed to by travel to the affected areas.

**The Infection:** Lyme Disease (LB) is caused by a bacterium that is transmitted by a particular tick species, the castor bean tick (*Ixodes ricinus*). The host for this tick species is most commonly the red, fallow and sika deer. The human incidence of LB in Ireland is between 50 and 100 cases per year, predominantly in the west of Ireland but there is some anecdotal evidence of cases in Wicklow. Tick activity is more-or-less continuous in Ireland from summer into autumn.

The main tell-tale of infection is the bullseye rash (Erythema migrans): this appears in 80 to 90 % of cases. It can appear from two or three days after infection up to a month after infection. Infection can also be associated with flu-like symptoms.

The infection can be treated with an antibiotic and complete recovery is usually the

result. In cases where the bullseye rash does not appear the disease can be more difficult to diagnose. And in rare cases infection can lead to more complicated outcomes. (See references 1 – 4 for more details).

**Preventing Infection:** It is recommended to keep your body covered (long pants, long sleeves, hat etc.) but the tick can still find a way in to your skin. You can use an insect repellent on exposed skin. There is a relatively new DEET-free formula that contains Picaridin as the active ingredient (e.g. 'smidge', which also repels mosquitoes, horseflies and midges).

A small electronic device, called an 'ultrasonic tick repeller' has recently become available. It is about half the size of a matchbox and it emits ultrasonic waves (above our audible range) that supposedly disorientate the ticks within one to three metres of it. Some are single-use with a life of about 3,000 hours; others come with a rechargeable battery. The main brand is 'Tickless'. The devices range in price quite considerably (from €28 to £41) and appear to be out of stock in some online stores. An Irish supplier is SPORTSDEN in Navan (store.sportsden.ie). Others are 'tickless.com' and Amazon.

The best practice is to examine your body as soon as possible after returning from an outing in the mountains. After the tick attaches, it takes several hours for the bacteria to multiply sufficiently and become infective – at least four but up 48 hours.

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The dog (or castor bean) tick, *Ixodes ricinus*, common in Ireland.



The 'bull's-eye' rash of Lyme disease on arm of five-year-old girl.

After the tick attaches, it takes several hours for bacteria to multiply'

# If you develop a rash, you need antibiotics

## from page 20

The tick can be carefully removed using tweezers. Some people suggest applying some olive oil to it first. The main thing is to remove it intact, from as close to the skin as possible (there are special tweezers available in pharmacies). Never crush the tick with your fingers. You might like to confirm the identity of the culprit by photographing the tick and comparing it with an image of *Ixodes ricinus*. Dispose of the tick by putting it in alcohol, flushing it down the toilet, or placing it in a sealed plastic bag.

Do I need antibiotics? If you develop a bulls-eye rash, you need antibiotics. If you do have a rash but are unsure of how long the tick has been attached to you, then it is advisable to go to your doctor as soon as possible, for them to decide if

antibiotics are needed. It is worth noting that it is a specific antibiotic that treats Lyme disease, so it is not advisable to self-prescribe antibiotics that you might have left over from other occasions!

## References

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# Return to Glenmalure

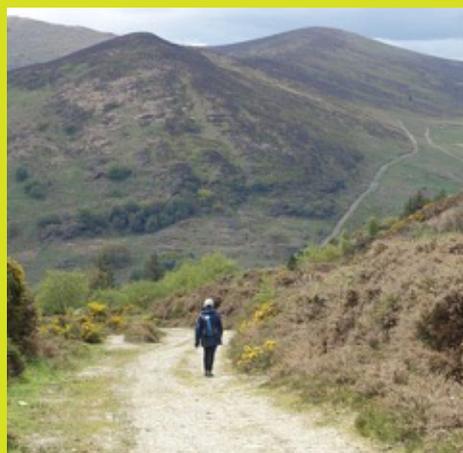
## A trip to prepare for a return to hillwalking evoked many memories for **Patrick Howlin** and **Mary Dolan**

Back in Spring, and anxious to rejoin the Trekkers as soon as fully protected, we realised our walks in leafy suburbs might not be the best preparation. So a return to Glenmalure seemed in order.

There was another reason why a visit was timely. Each year we decorate a Christmas tree on the Military Road in memory of Mary's parents. But this year we were unable to return to "undress" the Bridie and Tommy Tree due to the Covid restrictions. Traditionalists, we are uncomfortable if decorations are not down by January 6th, and we hate seeing trees in the wild with "forgotten" decorations. So we were anxious to remedy the situation if the Wicklow winter hadn't done it for us.

We had a house for a few years in the Glen and we "trained" for the New Zealand Milford Track by walking up

Carriglinneen, the "mountain" behind the house, to the Shay Elliot car park on the Military Road. With past performance as



a comparison we would see what shape we were in. Technically a private way, it has the advantage of being rarely used by hikers, and is a steady slog up to the summit.

Anticipation mounted as we emerged from Roundwood and the bright yellow gorse on the hillside looked like it

was about to surge down the mountain in front of us. Into Laragh, full of the usual cyclists, and onto the Military Road. This road, built by the British to contain those wild Wicklow patriots, never really delivered on its promise, but we are most grateful for its presence.

The initial Glendalough side of the mountain always seems quite refined and then as you enter the Glenmalure side, it suddenly gets wilder. And at the Shay Elliot car park the vista opens up to the entire Glen, in all its glory. Are we really just an hour from Dublin, that vibrant capital city? This is why we, and many others, live here rather than Paris or New York! Had we forgotten this during the lockdown? Maybe.

We spot our little tree, and far from looking sad, it stands proudly, still remarkably adorned, and has also produced its own

**Continued on page 22**

## Wild strawberries, wild horses and a home in the Glen

### from page 21

lovely pale green spring shoots at the ends of the branches. Taking down the decorations is usually a chore but this time it was joyous. We, and our little forest tree, came through the winter a little battered, but still standing. We quickly removed the decorations, gathered up the ones scattered around, and moved on.

Our route on this occasion was in reverse. We started at the peak and walked down Carriglinneen, and then back up. We noticed lots of trees felled and new ones planted. There is controversy around Coillte, but for us they manage the land, allow access, and generate income while they are at it. Seems reasonable.

We have so many memories along this walk. Such as the time, the only time, we found wild strawberries, the taste of which will live with me forever; Patrick has promised me a number of things from his childhood. The strawberries delivered. I still await field mushrooms gathered at dawn!

No sign of the "wild" rescue horses that roam the mountain. One time we fed them on the way up and neglected

to keep anything back to give them on the way down. Being followed by three large boisterous demanding horses as we rushed to the next gate was a little scary.

We come to the quarry belonging to the local man who owns most of the land. The cross section visible of the mountain



reminds us of what we are actually walking on underneath the peaty track.

The familiar piney smells are there and the sound of birds, though not so much, drowned out, maybe, by the runoff of water tumbling down the hill to the Avonmore Beg river on the valley floor.

We are at the beginning of habitation now. Like a dog on his rounds we check everything for changes in our absence. And then what would have been our normal route down to the valley floor is interrupted. The road that used to

bring us down to our house has been deemed an "unapproved road" (well, yes, it was) by the council, and is now piled up with rubble and impassable. Some slight relief here – this steep, straight, "unapproved part" of the road was the real prep for the Milford Track. You hit it early and hard. And it proved its worth when we got there. So, we turn, and head back up the hill to Shay Elliot.

Now our mettle is tested. We huff and we puff. But we are cheered that we are still alive and kicking and we can still leg it up there. What we have (temporarily) lost in pace, we make up for in enthusiasm. And we feel we are ready to get back into action.

Before we hit, maybe, 60, on our birthday, we tended to look back at years lived. Now we are at an age when we look forward to the years we have left, however many that may be. And we want to live these years to the full. So bye bye restrictions.

And when we go out with the Trekkers, as happy C and Wednesday Walkers, what we encounter, the characters; the chat; the walks; the beauty of the Irish landscape. This is livin', folks!

## Summer walks



# Broccoli and baked feta

Why bake bread when you can bake cheese?

**Judy Humphreys** on two of her favourite lockdown recipes

## Fried Broccoli with Black Olives: Serves 4

Once you have tried this you will never want to eat broccoli any other way! The saltiness of the anchovies and olives go very well with the bitter greens.

### Ingredients

3 tbsp olive oil  
1 clove garlic chopped  
3 or 4 anchovies chopped  
1/3 tsp chilli flakes (optional)  
400g tenderstem broccoli  
50ml water  
A handful of black olives



### Method

Heat the oil in a large saucepan, add the garlic, anchovies and chilli flakes and fry gently for 2-3 minutes. Add the broccoli and water, cover the pan and cook for 10-15 minutes, throw in the olives and serve.

I serve this with Baked Salmon dardes, put some crème fraiche on top of each piece, sprinkle some dried dill and bake for 18 mins.

## The Original Baked Feta Recipe

While Ireland was baking bread I was making this Finnish recipe which went viral during lockdown. It became impossible to find Feta in the shops it was so popular. It has now become one of my go-to dishes. There are lots of variations on how to improve the original recipe, my advice is don't, why spoil perfection!



500g cherry tomatoes  
4 garlic cloves chopped (optional)  
Black pepper  
Salt  
Bunch fresh basil leaves

### Method

Coat the bottom of a baking dish with olive oil. Place the whole feta block on top of the oil. Chop the red chilli and put on top of the feta. Pour more

olive oil on top.

Place the tomatoes and garlic around the cheese and mix with the olive oil. Add the pepper and salt. Bake at 200 C for 15 mins in the middle rack. Turn the heat to 225c and move the dish to the upper rack and use the grilling mode for another ten minutes.

Cook the pasta al dente. Take the feta from the oven, add the basil leaves and mash the feta into the tomatoes, add the cooked pasta and serve.

## Baked Feta Pasta, serves 3-4.

### Ingredients

450g Wheat pasta, I use fusilli  
One block Feta 200g  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1/2 red chilli

### **The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah:**

A portrait of America and the American dream as seen through the eyes of one woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.

### **The Memory Police by Yoko Ogawa:**

First published in Japan 25 years ago and now translated into English. Beautifully written, this haunting and surreal book was short listed for the Booker Prize in 2020. A fable about an island where disappearance is a way of life.

### **How Much Of These Hills Is Gold by C Pam Zhang:**

This debut novel is seen through the eyes of two Chinese orphans struggling to survive in America during the Gold Rush.

**Judy Humphreys**

### **Permanent Record by Edward Snowden:**

The best book I read in the last year is Snowden's very well written, utterly gripping though amusing account of his life -- and of the lead up to his disclosure of the sheer extent and implications of mass surveillance by US Government agencies. This is the testimony of a highly intelligent, thoughtful, conscientious and courageous man, who knew that his career and life would be destroyed as a result of his bravery.

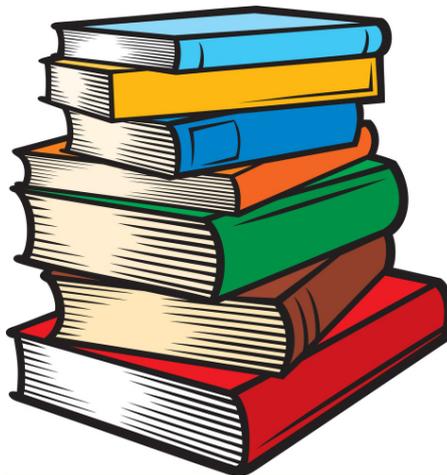
**David Bourke**

### **The Vanishing Half by Brit Bennett:**

Spanning the 1950s to the 1990s, this novel follows the lives of identical twin sisters growing up in US's Jim Crow South, both searching for freedom in a segregated society. One decides to pass for white and block out her past completely. Compelling reading, leaves one aware of racial issues that linger still.

### **The Thursday Murder Club by Richard Osman:**

Four members of a retirement village set out to solve a murder. Engaging,



## **BOOK BEAT What Trekks are reading**

entertaining and very funny . . . and maybe inspiration for those of us on the retirement road to get up to mischief!

### **Blindness by Jose Saramago:**

A city is hit by an unexplained plague of "white blindness". As the epidemic spreads, we see the disintegration of society. Plenty of helplessness and misery but also the resilience of the human spirit. You won't take your sight for granted after reading this!

### **Caste by Isabel Wilkerson:**

This non-fiction book looks at the Indian, Nazi and American caste system with special attention to racism in the United States . . . the daily indignities, humiliations and harassments suffered by people of colour. An eye-opener. Ouch.

### **The Girl with the Louding Voice by Abi Dare:**

Unforgettable story of a teenage girl growing up in a small Nigerian village who longs to get an

education so that she can find her "louding voice" and speak up for herself. It's about the power of fighting for your dreams.

**Una Davis**

### **Girl Woman Other by**

### **Bernardine Evaristo:**

2019's Booker prize winner (shared with Margaret Atwood) tells the interconnected stories of 12 British black women -- it's great. (A latecomer to the BorrowBox app, I'm listening to the book on Audible and thoroughly enjoying it.) Resonances of Zadie Smith's White Teeth. A nice change from Stalingrad!

**Susan Ryan**

### **Exploring Ireland's Middle Kingdom by Valerie Pakenham:**

Recently, when visiting a friend in Westmeath, we were given a copy of Valerie Pakenham's new book. Valerie is now 83 years old and this is her latest publication, begun during the first lockdown and published this year. It is a small book -- 142 pages - which is subtitled "a guide to the ancient kingdom of Meath".

It is full of interesting historical detail, drawings and photographs of ancient and not so ancient monuments, buildings, gardens and landscapes in and around what was once Ireland's middle kingdom, Midhe, which stretched at one point from the Shannon to the Irish Sea.

During our short visit to Longford and armed with Valerie's book, Dara and I were able to follow her directions to Aughnacliff Dolmen, Grainne's Bed, Ardagh House and the Gothick Clocktower, Tullyally Castle gardens, Fore Abbey and St Feichin's church all in one day.

If you're at all interested in Ireland's ancient relics and their history this is a lovely little book to browse through.

**Catherine Almond**



**Sandra Oh in Netflix drama The Chair. Right: Martin Freeman in Start Up**

**Bosch:** Seven seasons of gripping police drama based on the novels of Michael Connelly about an LAPD homicide detective. On Amazon Prime.

**Goliath:** Billy Bob Thornton plays a burned-out LA attorney who gets a second chance. The fourth and final season is due to be released on Amazon Prime on September 24<sup>th</sup>.

**My Mister:** A young woman and a middle-aged man develop a sense of kinship in this Korean drama. On Netflix.

**Judy Humphreys**

**Call my Agent:** Gentle slightly nuts French humour! A team of Parisian showbiz agents try to keep their clients happy. On Netflix.

**Gaye Maguire**

**The Good Doctor:** Drama about the struggles of an autistic boy to become a surgeon. On Netflix

# TV SHOWS

## What Trekkers are watching

**Start Up:** Gritty drama follows unlikely tech entrepreneurs behind a brilliant idea -- a revolutionary, unregulated digital currency called GenCoin -- and a powerful corrupt FBI agent ("Sherlock" star Martin Freeman) who can make or break those he

comes in contact with. On Netflix. **Clickbait:** Gripping darker-side-of-technology drama about disappearance of a family man after a video of him is posted online. Compelling watching. On Netflix.

**Georgina Bryan, Jim Bourke**

**The Chair:** A new six-part comedy series about the appointment of the first female chair of the English department at a university. Stars Sandra Oh (Greys Anatomy). I have yet to watch but it has got great reviews. On Netflix.

**The Parisian Agency -- Exclusive Properties:** Five-part reality series follows the Kretz family, who own a luxury property business in Paris, where they help wealthy clients buy and sell fabulous homes in France and abroad. On Netflix.

**Fiona O'Sullivan**



**Billy Bob Thornton and Nina Arianda in Netflix drama Goliath, left. Right: a scene from reality series The Parisian Agency**

I listen to podcasts every morning to make the time spent stretching repetitively more fun. Especially when I am feeling stressed, **On Being with Krista Tippett's** podcast can be ameliorating. The podcast explores spirituality by interviewing thinkers and innovators from various walks of life. It usually begins with a bio on childhood and inherited religious traditions and then they move to explore spirituality in a way that relates to the interviewee's life experience and personal journey. Most episodes are about 50 minutes long. Here are some of my favourites.

**Acoustic Ecologist Gordon Hempton:** Silence and the Presence of Everything, <https://onbeing.org/programs/gordon-hampton-silence-and-the-presence-of-everything/>

**David Steindl-Rast:** How to be grateful in every moment (but not for everything), <https://onbeing.org/programs/david-steindl-rast-how-to-be-grateful-in-every-moment/>

**Joanna Macy:** A Wild Love for the World, <https://onbeing.org/programs/joanna-macy-a-wild-love-for-the-world/>

**Epigeneticist Rachel Yehuda:** How Trauma and Resilience Cross Generations,



## PODCASTS

### What Trekkers are listening to

<https://onbeing.org/programs/rachel-yehuda-how-trauma-and-resilience-cross-generations-nov2017/>

**Poet David Whyte:** The Conversational Nature of Reality, <https://onbeing.org/programs/david-whyte-the-conversational-nature-of-reality/>

**Ocean Vuong:** A Life Worthy of Our Breath, <https://onbeing.org/programs/ocean-vuong-a-life->

[worthy-of-our-breath/](https://www.imf.org/en/News/Podcasts/All-Podcasts/2019/09/15/value-of-whales)

Some other nature podcasts I have loved include:

**The Value of Whales and Every Other Breath:** a conservationist and economist team up to discuss how conserving whales can both save the planet and be economically viable. (30 minutes). <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Podcasts/All-Podcasts/2019/09/15/value-of-whales>

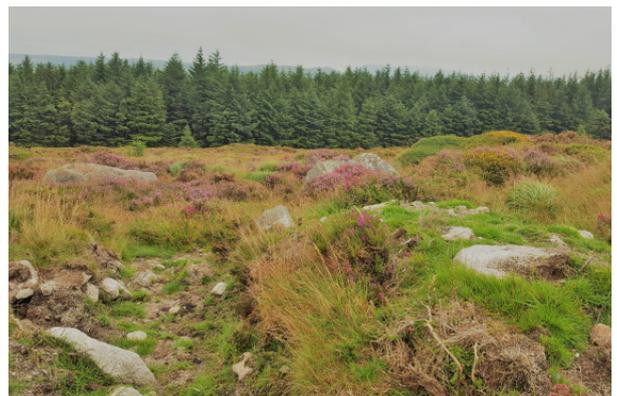
**The Susurrations of Trees:** A BBC producer teams up with author Bob Howard to talk about the distinctive sounds of different tree species and how they sing to us (30 minutes) [https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000b6sm?ns\\_mchannel=social&ns\\_source=twitter&ns\\_linkname=radio\\_and\\_music&ns\\_campaign=bbc\\_radio\\_4](https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000b6sm?ns_mchannel=social&ns_source=twitter&ns_linkname=radio_and_music&ns_campaign=bbc_radio_4)

And -- a hopeful essay about creaturely migrations to counteract ecological grief (50 minutes): <https://emergencemagazine.org/essay/creaturely-migrations-breathing-planet/>

Hope you enjoy!

**Ide Corley**

## Up to the hills



# Photo finish



Top row: Eileen and Brian on Ringsend walk, August, left. Right: Gap Loop Walk, June.  
 Middle row: Leaving Fairycastle, July. left. Right: WW Maulin, July.  
 Below, right: Tibbradden Zipit car park, June  
**Pictures: Paul O'Kane, Ciaran Mahon and bottom row, Judy Humphreys**

Left: Sue's lucky find in Glendalough.  
 Below: the Avonmore River

