

30th Anniversary - Issue 50

IRISH *Trekker*



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

Contents

	Page
Looking For Old Trekkers	4
Hill Walking On The Moon	6
Blanket Bogs And Birr Castle	9
Jack Langan	11
Yes! ...We Have No Bananas	13
Looking Backward, Looking Forward	14
One Sleepless Night In Enniscorthy	15
Dick Needham – the Quintessential Trekker	17
Eric Lindstrom 1954 – 2005	19
Donegal Calling	21
There's More To Scotland Than Ben Nevis	25
Where The Mountains Of Mourne Sweep Down To The Sea – Climbing Slieve Donard	28
To Stop And Stare And Enjoy	30
Walking trip to Andalucia	32
Hiking in Heaven!!	36
Rambling In The Pays Basque Quest	40
Trekker Crossword	47
Photo Gallery	49

A Look Back

To mark the 50th edition of the Trekker magazine, we have decided to re-publish a random selection of articles from old editions of the magazine. In choosing these articles, we have endeavoured to get as wide a selection of authors as possible.

This selection is mainly of articles describing trips done by different groups of Trekkers over the years. However, as the archive of past Trekkers is far from complete, we can only reproduce articles from those past editions where we hold a copy, so if some article in which you had an interest is not included in this edition, this may well be the reason for it not being included. We hope you enjoy the articles included.

M. Cotter

IRISH
Trekker

Produced By
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Looking For Old Trekkers!

by Michael Cotter

I know that time is moving on and none of us is getting any younger, but no, I am not interested in finding the Trekkers themselves, but old copies of the Trekker magazine. Anyway, you're not old!!

One of our members graciously gave me a loan of their collection of the Trekker magazine, and the editions involved are;

No 8, dated September 1998,

No 9, dated December 1998

No. 10 Dated June 1999

No 16 Dated September 2001

No 20 Dated December 2002

No 23 Dated December 2003

No 25 dated August 2004

No 27 Dated May 2005

No 28 dated august 2005

No 29 dated December 2005

No 31 dated August 2006

No 37 dated January 2009

No 38 dated May 2009

No 39 dated August 2009

No 42 dated August 2010

No 44 dated May 2011

No 45 dated September 2011

If any of you have any of the missing editions, and if you would be interested in another look-back edition, perhaps you might lend them to me.

For comparative purposes, I am showing here the list of members of the Trekkers as per the oldest version of the Trekker magazine that I have, which is as of 2nd March 1998. Interesting to see how many are still Trekking away happily!

Armstrong, Michael	Furey, John	O'Duffy, Paddy
Barry, George	Gallagher, Eileen	O'Hegarty, Derry
Beegan Marian	Gillan, Tom	O'Reilly, Noel
Beegan, Kevin	Halpenny, Reggie	Owens, Philip
Behan, Carol	Hannon, Bill	Phelan, Marie
Berthiaume, Michelle	Kane, Jean	Pierce, Karen
Boyne, Nancy	Jack, Henry	Pike, David
Bracken, Brendan	Keane, Gerry	Ryan, Charlie
Brandon, John	Keegan, Annette	Ryan, Dick
Brandon, Clare	Kirker, Roger	Sexton, Jane
Brennan, David	Kirker, David	Simms, Maeve
Brennan, Brian	Lane, Barbara	Simms, Mike
Brennan, Ann	Lane, Michael	Stephens, Clare
Brett, John	Langan, Jack	Thompson, Ian
Byrne, Maura	Langan, Therese	Tinsley, Monty
Condon, Michael	Logan, Eugene	Tinsley, Evelyn
Crowley, Richelle	Mangan, Cindy	Trant, Fergal
Dorgan, Collette	McKean, Brian	Trant, Kieran
Dorgan, Michael	Moore, Jim	Trant, Ingrid
Doyle, Ronnie	Moore, Kevin	Trant, Shaun
English, Fred	Mulloy, Fergal	Tuthill, Tony
Fitzpatrick, Hilary	Needham, Dick	Walsh, Liam
Forde, Michele	Needham, Joan	
Furey, Ciara	O'Duffy, Maria	

Hill Walking On The Moon

From Issue No. 8 dated September 1998.

By Carol Behan



News in from Tranquillity base, 20 July 2019: To celebrate the 50th anniversary of man's first landing on the moon in 1969, the first Hillwalking Club established here The Lunar Trekkers, went on a scouting walk in the Appenine Mountains yesterday, and were rewarded by spectacular views of the early morning sun casting shadows over the Sea of Rains and lighting up the walls of its craters".

Pure fiction of course, but the thought occurred to me as I was reading one of my favourite astronomy books that sometime in the future there may indeed be hillwalking clubs on the Moon. Future colonists will need some form of recreation, and judging by the popularity of hill-walking here on Earth, they will, no doubt, take to it with great enthusiasm there too!

But what are the mountains like on our nearest neighbour? Anyone who has ever glanced at the Moon will notice that its surface consists of light and dark areas, the familiar "Man in the Moon" pattern. On closer examination, the dark areas are generally flat, circular basalt plains, formed when the Moon was bombarded by meteorites in the early days of its formation, between three and four billion years ago, and later flooded with lava which welled up from the interior and cooled rapidly. The light areas, in contrast, are highlands, dotted with craters, some of which are over a hundred miles in diameter. The mountains surrounding the craters are flat

plain can reach heights comparable to the highest mountains on earth, the highest, in fact, reaches 36,000 feet. As there is little or no atmosphere on the Moon, these mountains have never been subject to weathering or erosion.

Let's imagine a day's trekking in the Lunar Appenines. These mountains form the south-east boundary of one of the circular plains, called the Sea of Rains, and viewed from Earth, are located just north-west of the centre of the full moon. They form a curving chain 400 miles long, consisting of about 3,000 peaks. Of course, a day on the Moon lasts for 14 Earth days, so we'd better set off early in the Lunar morning, before the sun rises too high and the temperature becomes unbearable. Viewed from Earth, that would be when the Moon is at about first quarter, and the sun has just risen – in the west, as it happens! We'd be wearing space suits, of course, but despite their clumsy appearance, the weight of the suits would be no bother to us as the gravity on the moon is just about one sixth that of Earth, so we'd weigh much less than we do here. We'd be able to run and jump with an ease that an Olympic athlete would envy and ascending steep slopes wouldn't pose the slightest problem. In fact, all our walks would be A walks. We certainly wouldn't need wet gear – it has never rained on the Moon, and a biting east wind has never blown there. There wouldn't be any bogs or running water to slosh through, or peat hags to impede our progress. The ground underfoot is solid, covered by a layer of dust about an inch or two thick.

The scenery around us would be spectacular – we'd be surrounded by mountains reaching 18,000 feet high, with smooth, rounded tops, not jagged peaks, as we might expect on a planet with no weathering. Far below us in the Sea of Rains, we'd see some craters with the shadow in their interiors gradually shortening as the sun rose higher in the sky. We might even see a puff of gas from a volcanic vent emerge and quickly dissipate in the tenuous atmosphere. The colours around us wouldn't be as varied as here on Earth, but contrary to belief, the moon isn't entirely grey – there are subtle shades of blue, green yellow and even purple to be seen in the rocks.

Because of the lack of atmosphere, we'd be amazed at the sharpness of the shadows we cast and at the blackness of the sky above. Even in full daylight, the familiar blue skies of Earth would be non-existent, and the stars and planets would be easily seen shining with a steady light, and not twinkling as on earth. The most spectacular object in the sky would of course be the Earth, appearing four times the size that the full Moon does



to us, but at “last quarter” phase. We would easily follow its rotation, and identify the familiar green and brown continents, deep blue oceans, and white polar caps, as well as the clouds and hurricanes passing over them.

At the end of our six-hour walk, the sun would barely appear to have moved, while Earth would have made a quarter of its daily rotation. I don't know what sort of pub or hotel we'd finish at, but it could easily have been constructed in a small crater and covered with a dome-shaped roof, or else built completely underground, as a protection against cosmic rays.

We'd never forget that first walk- our experience would form the basis for all future walks, and would go down in history as one of the great explorations of the 21st century.

Famous First Lines

- Can you name the Book?

1. Call me Ishmael.
2. Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way
3. Riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs.
4. It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.
5. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair.
6. Someone must have slandered Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything truly wrong, he was arrested
7. Stately, plump Buck Mulligan came from the stairhead, bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed.
8. Somewhere in la Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny nag and a greyhound for racing
9. He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish.
10. Having placed in my mouth sufficient bread for three minutes' chewing, I withdrew my powers of sensual perception and retired into the privacy of my mind, my eyes and face assuming a vacant and preoccupied expression

11. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife
12. Granted: I am an inmate of a mental hospital; my keeper is watching me, he never lets me out of his sight; there's a peephole in the door, and my keeper's eye is the shade of brown that can never see through a blue-eyed type like me..
13. He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull
14. The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there
15. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth
16. In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since. 'Whenever you feel like criticizing any one,' he told me, 'just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had

Blanket Bogs And Birr Castle

From Issue No 9 dated December 1998.

By M.T.

*The Giant's Grave, Stonyman and Clear Lake,
Are among those what are hard to be found,
But if you don't try, you will never set eye,
On the beauty around Cadamstown.*

This stanza is part of a poem written by Patrick J. Culleton one of the most enthusiastic walkers of the Slieve Bloom Way. Whereas he was not able to be with the Trekkers on their recent trip, we were ably led on a 15 mile trek by Richard Jack, whilst Eddie and Peggy acted as sweepers to rein in the A team.



The terrain was extremely different from the Wicklow Mountain tracks. The first part was through woodlands with the trees in full autumnal colour and the waterfall on the River Barrow at Clamp Hole being particularly beautiful.

The panoramic views from the Stoneyman were rewarding. At a height of only 480 m, landmarks in 15 counties could be seen due to the flatness of the Central Plain. However, it was the next section of the walk over Blanket Bog that tested our limbs, our spirit and our boots. A break at the Cut offered pleasant relief – but the one at Riverview Inn, a watering hole at Cadamstown, was more welcome.

The C walkers started at Clonaslee and were led by Michael Dorgan. They had about three miles of road walking before joining the Slieve Bloom Way, passing the giant's Grave, en route for Cadamstown, Eamonn Mullens, a local walker stayed with this group and gave all participants the benefit of his knowledge of local history and the affairs of State.

Dinner at the County Arms hotel was very enjoyable and relaxing. No one complained of being awake all night!!

The Georgian town of Birr was explored on Sunday morning including a visit to the Castle to see the tallest Box Hedges in the world – over 300 years old and witness a demonstration of the working of the Great Telescope. A more educational trip.

Once again, thanks to Dick Needham for organising a great weekend in pastures new.



Key to Irish Obituary Writing

What They might say	Explanation ..
He exercised an enduring influence on the Ireland of his day	Had a letter published in the Irish Times
He espoused the National Cause when it was neither profitable nor popular	A Fianna Fail Hack
His erudition provided eloquent testimony of a well stocked mind	A civil servant with a drink problem
His was a love match	Put the maid in the family way
A convivial man with a fund of good stories	A Drunken bore
Though not a formally religious Man	Never darkened a church door in his life
An ardent Gael	Constantly brawling in Croke Park
Well connected family	An E.S.B. official
Financial wizard	Died in Switzerland
Of sound farming stock	Unshaven, never wore a collar & tie
Widely read	Bought Western People AND Con-naught Tribune
An engaging idiosyncrasy of Speech	Usually incoherent
A lifetime devotee of Gaelic Games	Never paid into Croke Park
He didn't suffer fools gladly	An ill-mannered bore
Essentially an outdoor Man	Played Golf in Greystones every Saturday
Contributed generously to Church Funds	Bingo Addict
Dedicated Mountaineer	Climbed Croagh Patrick 3 times

Gifted man of Letters	10 letters published in Kerryman & Examiner
A familiar figure in the rural community	A Bone idle layabout or Council Worker
A pillar of the business community	Inherited his Father's huxters's shop
He was devoted to the sport of Kings	A compulsive gambler
A man of many Parts	A cork man living in Dublin
A devoted family man	Spent Christmas day at home
He was called to the bar after a long, outstanding academic career.	Chronic university student
He was a legend in his own lifetime	He continually made a fool of himself

Jack Langan

From Issue No 16. Dated September 2001.

By Shaun Trant.

On 18th July 2001, in the early hours of the morning Jack Langan died peacefully and quickly. He died in Killarney while he was on a touring holiday. He was 80 years of age. As was to be expected, he died with his boots on.

Jack had an interest in all sports and outdoor activities and took an active part in many of them.

He came from Ballygar in Galway and had hurling in his blood. He had a powerful puck of a sliotar. I can bear witness to that, one day when we were hurling on the pitch in Sallynoggin, Jack, always generous, passed the ball to me. I was too slow to avoid his generosity and ended up with a broken cheekbone. He also played golf.

A member of Presentation Badminton Club for many years and chairman of the club for much of that time he was a regular badminton player. He also was a member of the Cluny Park Tennis Club. He loved playing tennis and continued playing until an operation to replace his hip slowed him down.

He had an interest in all athletics and was a long-term member of Blackrock Athletic Club. He was 60 years of age when he took up running. He started at the top. Encouraged by his friend Tommy Kelly, he prepared himself for the Dublin marathon. This brought out a fierce determination and great courage. Night after night throughout the winter months and into the following spring and summer, he ran around the block, a distance of something less than a mile, again and again until he had clocked up the mileage he needed. He was 63 years of age when he ran the marathon.

Whatever knowledge he acquired about any activity he liked to pass on to other people. His special job for Blackrock Athletic club was coaching young members of the club in throwing the discus.

Jack took to hill-walking and mountain climbing with his usual enthusiasm. He came to know the Dublin and Wicklow mountains well and he climbed most of the higher mountains in the West of Ireland and Kerry. His favourite

climb was Mount Brandon and Cloghane. He loved the valley of the Pater Noster lakes enclosed by the towering cliffs and great slabs of rock – even though he damn near lost his life one day climbing down into that valley from the summit of Brandon.

He was a founder member of the Trekkers Mountaineering club and played a major role in developing the club during its formative years. In keeping with his philosophy of starting at the top, Jack pushed the newly formed club into tackling the Lug Walk a 33 mile walk across 19 of the major summits in the Wicklow Mountains. On a June day, which was wild, wet and cold, Jack battled on to complete two thirds of the route at Wicklow Gap. There he was found to be in advanced state of hypothermia and was obliged to pull out.

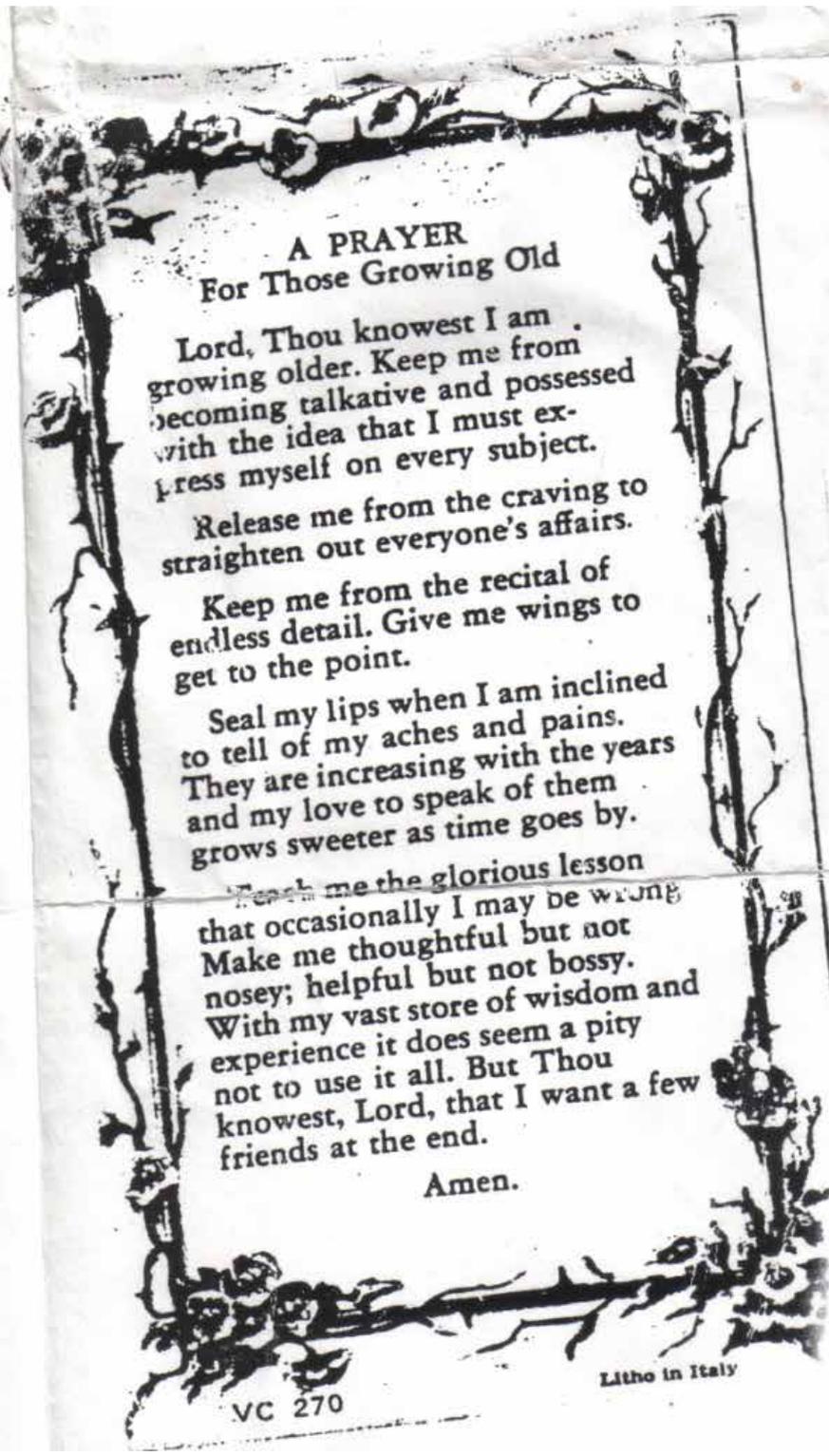
He took his interest in the mountains abroad and, again starting from the top, he carried out an incredible three-week trek in the Himalayas. He also walked in the Alps in France and in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco.

Jack was a gentleman in the full sense of the word. We all know how gentle and kind he was to others. His generosity had no limits. He was ever welcoming. But he was also a man of great determination and steel, when the occasion demanded it. His preparation for the Dublin Marathon and his trekking in the Himalayas brought that out. His heroes were the great explorers, men such as Shackleton, Scott and Tom Crean.

On one occasion he undertook a 28 – mile trek, The Bangor Trail, which went from Bangor Erris through the Nephin mountains to Newport in Co. Mayo. After 18 miles the main part of the walk ended and many people finished it there. At that stage Jack was in some distress after a long and hard day and the organisers suggested he call it a day. Jack's response was that he would complete the walk or die in the effort. Ten miles and four hours later he finished the walk.

Jack was a dedicated gardener with an expert knowledge of shrubs and flowers. The roses in his front garden and on the road outside his house have helped brighten up the road. But the people of Bellevue Road always knew that summer had arrived when Jack appeared on the road in his tennis shorts. We had long summers. I wonder whether summer will come to Bellevue Road next summer.

When Jack finally left us, I am sure that he walked to the gates of Heaven. St. Peter was there to meet him and said "Come in Jack, You're as welcome as the flowers in May.



A PRAYER
For Those Growing Old

Lord, Thou knowest I am growing older. Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject.

Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs.

Keep me from the recital of endless detail. Give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains. They are increasing with the years and my love to speak of them grows sweeter as time goes by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong. Make me thoughtful but not nose-y; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom and experience it does seem a pity not to use it all. But Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Amen.

Yes! ...we have no Bananas.

From Issue No. 20 dated December 2002.

By BB

Dick Ryan, our current chairman, introduced me to the Trekkers. “Brendan, sez he” the word is out that your family want to see the back of you on a Saturday. Sad to say, Dick had a point. Something about the neighbourhood’s electricity being cut off the time I changed a fuse; though to this day I think it was a coincidence. As for the bonfire; well, it could happen a bishop.

My first hike took place on a beautiful autumn day, up around Glendalough, I think.

My new companions were a friendly bunch and everything went swimmingly until we stopped for a mid-morning break. Fifteen Trekkers produced fifteen bananas that they started to consume. “a’ha” I thought, “this walking club business is all a front; they’re probably some religious cult, who worship the banana and dance around a cairn at midnight. I think I’ll stick around.

Later that morning Eugene ambled up and we fell into conversation. At the time both of us were involved in house extensions. “I’ve just started putting on a Granny flat” says Eugene with all that entails; organising plumbers, builders electricians. How about that! If this man still has a granny on the go I’m definitely sticking around, she’s probably leading the “C” walk.

Lunchtime proved a welcome break, where I was introduced to the Club Founder, Shaun Trant. We chatted away pleasantly, though I never saw him out hiking again. I sometimes wonder about that...

....and now I’m on the Committee!

Proverbs and Quotations (sayings of the wise & Wilde)

*Moderation is a fatal thing; nothing succeeds like excess: Oscar Wilde
So many belonging to me lay buried in Kilbarrack, the healthiest graveyard in
Ireland, they said, because it is so close to the sea...*

Brendan Behan

*I learned long ago, never to wrestle with a pig, you get dirty; and besides, the
pig likes it.*

George Bernard Shaw

Irish Proverb: *You wouldn't worry about what people think if you only knew
how seldom they do!*

*I can always guarantee that the Irish Citizen Army will fight but I cannot guaran-
tee that it will be on time.*

James Connolly

*The trouble with her is that she lacks the power of conversation but not the
power of speech.*

G.B. Shaw

*Carpe diem! Rejoice while you are alive; enjoy the day; live life to the fullest;
make the most of what you have. It is later than you think.*

Horace 65BC to 8BC

*When's the last time you walked by a pub in Dublin and heard Irish music?
When's the last time you ordered a coffee and heard an Irish accent?*

Michael Flatley

It's my rule never to lose my temper till it would be detrimental to keep it.

Sean O'Casey in "The Plough and the Stars"

*The thought of a thousand people crunching celery all at the same time horri-
fied me!*

G.B. Shaw on refusing an invitation to a vegetarian dinner

I BELIEVE that God wants me to be president.

George W. Bush

I would like to thank Providence and the Almighty for choosing me of all people...

Hitler - Berlin, March 1936

Never put off till tomorrow what you can possibly do the day after. **Oscar Wilde**

The only thing to do with good advice is to pass it on; it is never of any use to oneself.

Oscar Wilde

Ireland is a country where you can waste a lot of time being punctual.

Success has a thousand fathers, failure is an orphan.

President John Kennedy

Forgive your enemies, nothing annoys them so much. **Oscar Wilde**

A man should never be ashamed to own he has been in the wrong, which is but saying in other words, that he is wiser today than he was yesterday.

Jonathan Swift

Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.

Blaise Pascal

The difference between a clever man and a wise one is that a clever man is smart enough to get himself out of a situation that a wise man would not get himself into in the first place.

When everyone is thinking the same, no one is thinking. **John Woden**

If love is blind then marriage is an eye-opener.

Contraceptives should be used on all conceivable occasions.

Spike Milligan

She wore far too much make-up last night and not quite enough clothes. That is always a sign of despair in a woman.

Oscar Wilde from 'An Ideal Husband'

One's first step in wisdom is to question everything – and one's last is to come to terms with everything

Georg Christoph Lichtenberg

Looking Backward, Looking Forward

From Issue No 23 Dated December 2003.

By Dick Ryan.

This is the time of year when it is customary to take a backward glance at the year coming to a close and to look forward to the twelve months ahead of us. The backward look sees highlights such as the Glenmalure weekend and the wonderful trip to Clonmel with its wealth of walking and socialising. The real highlight, in retrospect, was the great number and variety of walks, virtually every weekend throughout the year. The number of walks has almost doubled in two years to meet the varying needs of our members.

One of the challenges given to the new committee a year ago was to see if we could develop a way of attracting younger members into the club to provide a better age mix and to ensure the continuation of the Club into the future. To this end, special monthly walks led by club members were started in January and a number of people in the thirties age group, attracted mainly by word of mouth, participated.

Four of these have now joined the club as full members and others will be encouraged to join in the months ahead.

These monthly walks will continue into 2004 and will be designated as B walks with a 10.00am start open to all members (as well as the target age group of non-members). Don't forget that the one hour later start and the younger age profile imply a brisk pace.

Throughout 2004 we will attempt to put forward a walking programme that meets the requirements of as many members as possible and I would encourage leaders to try out new routes in new areas to complement the tried and trusted walks that we all love so much.

We have co-opted two members into the Committee – Roger Kirker who looks after the club's website and Pearse Connolly who will have responsibility for safety and training. Expect to see initiatives in these areas during the year. The Wicklow and Dublin Mountain Rescue Team has asked for volunteers for their call-out list when extensive searching is required. If you would like to volunteer, contact Pearse.

In conclusion, may I wish all of you a very happy and peaceful Christmas and a great walking year in 2004.

One Sleepless Night In Enniscorthy

From Issue No. 25, dated August 2004.

By Ita Lawton.



Recently, Kevin Myers sang the praises of Carlow and the majestic views from Slievebaun Hill. Not being as fit as the Trekkers, I guess he couldn't make it the one thousand feet higher to the top of Mount Leinster, where the views were even more astounding.

Twenty two Trekkers left Dublin on a bright and sunny morning at 9.00hrs. for a weekend of walking in Wexford/Carlow. After about two hours on the bus, the A walkers were very happy to dismount at Scilloogue gap with great anticipation and hope of getting to the top of Mount Leinster without hardship.

Brendan, our very able leader, briefed us well on the local history. It was interesting to see the house at the foot of the mount that was bombed in error by the Germans in 1941. We were informed by the present residents that two people were killed and three injured, compensation being paid later to the survivors.

It was a glorious day and although the going was tough at times, we marched on like true Trekkers listening to the larks and stopping every now and then to admire the spectacular views. The shimmering Comeraghs could be seen in the distance. Some were convinced that Slievenamban was clearly visible, but I have yet to be convinced! We reached the top at 13.55 and sat in the sunshine to enjoy a well earned lunch. Paddy got the local gossip from a couple of ladies who were also out walking for the day and were very familiar with the area, while Eileen was trying to bribe our leader with a chocolate Kimberly, who I believe, is very partial to them.

Dick Needham was telling jokes which apparently didn't impress Richelle. After a good rest we were ready for the downhill trek. Paddy got some

beautiful pictures of hang-gliders which looked very impressive in the bright blue sky. Because we were making very bad progress along the route, a very amicable bus driver came to pick us up and we gladly piled in and met up with the C walkers in Borris Golf club. They had just arrived after a good walk from Nine Stones to Borris. I believe they nearly had to push the bus at one stage but it did get them finally to their starting point.

We got back to the hotel just in time to have a quick shower and change for dinner. We all enjoyed a very pleasant meal. Afterwards, we retired to the lounge where there was plenty chat and music and where some of us used up the remainder of our resources of energy on the dance floor.

Those sensible enough to go to bed reasonably early were asleep before the racket started. The cute ones had rooms at the back of the hotel and slept soundly as well, but those who retired late were just in time to enjoy the noisy revellers leaving the hotel disco which continued well after 04.00 hrs.

However, we were all back in the restaurant at 09.00hrs for breakfast and the group boarded the bus again for a memorable walk along the river Barrow. With map and compass in hand, Pierce led the way! We started off in the lovely town of Graiguenamanagh. I believe it was from here that the famous, almost limbless Arthur of the McMurragh Kavanagh tribe boarded his boat which he sailed to Waterford, across the Irish sea, around the coast of Britain, and finally up the Thames to berth outside the Houses of Parliament and take his seat in the Commons.

We made our way the eight miles or so to the Georgian elegance of Borris. There was so much to see along the route; so much bird song to hear; fishermen in boats navigating the locks; rowers enjoying the beautiful day; the masses of bluebells shining brightly through the trees...We had lunch by one of the lock gates, and it was so peaceful and tranquil we were reluctant to leave.

We reached Borris around 15.00 hrs and enjoyed a drink in O'Shea's pub. For some Borris was just a watering hole before our journey back to Enniscorthy, but for Paddy it was a 'trip down memory lane'. Paddy's father served as a Garda in Borris for a couple of years from 1922!

We had another very pleasant meal at our Hotel in Enniscorthy before boarding our bus and making our way back to Dublin. It was a very pleasant weekend and many thanks are due to Kevin for organising everything so well and of course our very efficient walk leaders.

WORD PLAY

Each Word in Column “A” can be inserted into a word in Column “B” Make the right insertion and you’ll have another familiar word. e.g. ACE goes into MEND and gives you MENACED.

See how long it takes you to make up the remaining 14 pairs . 30 Mins is Fair, 25 Good and 20 Excellent

Column “A”	Column “B”
ACE	ARTERY
TIC	MAD
YEN	LATE
ERR	CUD
HIT	FEAR
ATE	SING
ILL	HAS
ISLE	MEND
LET	NEST
NOW	RUE
STAR	COTE
OPERA	PATE
THE	SOT
EVEN	TIER
UGH	WE

Dick Needham

– the Quintessential Trekker.

From Issue No 27, dated May 2005

Last month marked Dick Needham's retirement as Deputy Harbourmaster of Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company also saw him clock up over fifteen years with the Trekkers.

"I joined back in 1989" recalls Dick, "Shaun Trant had started the Club some years before with the nucleus of Kevin Beegan, John Furey, Paddy O'Duffy, the late Charlie Ryan and some others "Brian Brennan joined the week after myself and along with Paddy and myself remains active in the Club".

Dick remembers his first walk starting from the Pier Gates, while his second was the slightly more formidable Lugnaquilla!. "Generally the walks were twenty plus kilometres and transport was a Hiace van compliments of Tony Graham, who still looks after us".



The walks were of the "A" variety and we had "away" weekends in many mountainous parts of the country. "We had some great times and having spent most of my life at sea, it was a totally new experience".

Such was the growth of the Club that in 1995 it put in place a committee structure to run its affairs. Subsequently, a constitution was put in place as was membership of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland in 1997.

Dick served as the first “Walks Co-Ordinator” of the Trekkers. During his term of office, two trips were organised to Wales along with sorties to Kerry, Mayo, the Slieve Blooms and many other destinations. “We also broadened the membership and put in place a programme of “C” walks which have proved very popular and indeed have added greatly to the overall development of the Club”. Indeed, from that time Dick was able to entice his wife Joan onto the hills where she too has become an active hill-walker.

“As my successors Eugene and Kevin will know, the main part of the job is to put in place an attractive range of walks, ensure that there is a cadre of leaders to take them on and that the necessary links are maintained between the various levels of walkers. And of course that links are maintained with Tony Graham and his team who oil the wheels to get us there and back. I always received great support from the members who always backed my ideas and suggestions to take on new challenges.

Dick stepped down from the Committee in 1998 and continues along with Joan to be an active member leading walks and participating in Club activities.

Dick’s seagoing career started almost fifty years ago, in 1956 which brought him to many parts of the globe, particularly the Americas. He joined the B & I line in 1966 and was appointed Captain in 1972. “I enjoyed my life at sea immensely” says Dick “and being away from home a lot, I want to pay tribute to my wife Joan who had to take on more than her fair share of rearing the family.

With a family of four and two much loved grandchildren, Joan and Dick have added bridge and bowls to their hillwalking endeavours while we hear rumours of a regular golf outing comprising Dick along with amigos Shaun Trant, Kevin Beegan, John Furey, Paddy O’Duffy and Brian Brennan.

“It’s very heartening to see the Trekkers continue it’s great tradition and spirit and that we all take such pleasure and satisfaction in the great outdoors and the great friendships that we have made. Here’s to the next twenty years”.

Eric Lindstrom 1954 – 2005.

From Issue No. 28, dated August 2005.

By Paddy O'Duffy.

At about 11 a.m. on Monday 2 May 2005 Eric Lindstrom died suddenly of a heart attack just beyond the top of the Fraughan Rock Glen in Glenmalure. He was on his way to the top of Lugnaquilla, while checking out a walk on behalf of the Trekkers Mountaineering club.

Eric's wife Dreena is very grateful to the Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Service, the Gardai and individual hikers for their assistance following this sad incident. R.I.P.

Eric and Dreena came to Ireland from their native Canada eight years ago and joined our Club early in 2003. Against this background, we tried to make them feel at home in the Club. Very quickly they settled down and became our friends. Early on, it was clear they were top-class hill-walkers. We had so many happy moments on walks with Eric and Dreena. I will recall just a few such moments.

I remember April 2003, when they climbed Lugnaquilla for the first time. As we came down from the peak of Lug which is over 3,000 feet high and is the highest mountain in Leinster, I noticed that Eric and Dreena were holding hands, sharing the joy of their achievement in conquering Lug. Even though it was a dull day, I took a photograph of them on top of Carrawaystick with Lug in the background, while they were still holding hands. In this way, they established a desirable precedent in our group, but I am sorry to say that, so far, no Irish couple in the Club has followed their example in holding hands on our walks.

At our Christmas party last December, Eric thanked Brendan Bracken personally for organising the attendance of a local school choir to sing Christmas carols, which Eric enjoyed so much.

On 5 March 2005 one of our leaders, Mike Simms, led a difficult A walk from the Wicklow Gap through snow and ice to Lough Firrib, Turlough Hill, Glenealo Valley and Glendalough. Just before our lunch break, I fell into a heap of snow. Eric tried to pull me up, but in the process, he fell just beside me. We roared laughing at our misfortune. Later in the pub, he told Ita Lawton that he seldom had so much fun.

On 2 April this year, Eric and Dreena led a B walk from the Wicklow Gap to Camanderry, Turlough Hill and on to Glendalough on a lovely Spring day. This was their first experience as co-leaders of a walk in the club. At about 1.30 p.m. some of us were getting restless and dropped a few hints to our Sweeper (Dreena) about the need for an early break for lunch. In a jocular, formal manner, she approaches Eric and said "The Sweeper requests permission to speak to our Leader". Within 5 minutes we had the lunch break. After lunch I took a nice photo of the happy couple with Turlough Hill in the background. This photo was published in the May 2005 issue of the Trekker magazine in the week before Eric's death.

As Eric roamed the hills with us during the past two years, he admired the scenic beauty of the landscape and coastline of his adopted country, Ireland. Last year, Eric and Dreena were proud of the fact that they had become Irish citizens.

Eric was a very interesting, courteous and friendly walking companion with a wonderful twinkling smile. He always spoke directly and did not beat about the bush, and yet he was never dogmatic nor condescending. Clearly, he also doted on his two daughters, Virginia and Vicki.

We all miss Eric deeply in the Club. He was taken from us suddenly at such a tender age. I have no doubt that some day, we will join Eric again in the next life where he will have already planned a few interesting walks for us so that we can continue to ramble with him in the Promised Land. In planning these walks, I hope that he will make some allowance for most of the rest of us, who were less fit than he was.

The Trekkers say farewell to Eric, who was a wonderful Club Member. A large number of Trekkers attended his funeral service on 6 May. Following consultation with Dreena, the Trekkers arranged a special walk up Lug on 16 July last in memory of Eric. The Club has also decided to have an annual Lug walk in his memory.

As Dreena, Virginia and Vicki move their home back to Canada, we send them our best wishes and hope that they can join us again on our walks when they re-visit Ireland from time to time.

Donegal Calling

From Issue No. 29 dated December 2005.

By Monty Tinsley

*O night and day I'm dreaming of the Hills of Donegal,
The heather on the hillside and the sunshine over all.*

Whereas the above lines were written by an exile, the Trekkers could empathise with them even during their short sojourn in the North-Western county of Ireland.

The annual 'away trip' is the biggest event in the Trekker calendar. Since these trips started in 1985 they have taken place in various parts of Ireland and only twice in the land of the O'Donnells. Firstly, in the millennium year, when Errigal was the main peak to be conquered, and, this year, when Slieve League and the Blue Stack mountains were the focus of attention. With Kevin Moore and his wife Dympna at the epicentre, and scouts like Joe Murray and Eileen Gallagher in assistance, the 5 day trip was bound to be the success it was. This was the consensus by all, especially newcomers like Gerry and Helen Fogarty; Maura Byrne and Gilbert Little.

On the 5th September at 11.00 hours, with military precision that set the tone for the week, the Donegal coach left Killiney, and after a short circuitous route, it was headed North West with 23 foot soldiers on board. We arrived to find Baile Dun na nGall basking in sunshine and the Abbey Hotel a hive of business. Joe Murray and Gilbert Little arrived separately to complete our numbers. After settling in and surveying the immediate precincts of the Diamond, we had the first of our four evening meals. A fulsome main course – plenty of meat, two veg, plus potatoes – ensured nobody would go to bed hungry.

On Day 2 a convoy of Trekkers moved through the rugged countryside, past Killybegs – where the fishing fleet were tied up rather than on the high seas due to EU quota problem – onto Carrick, Teelin and finally Bunglass. On a beautiful day, this was a ideal location to take photos, with the highest cliffs in Europe as a backdrop. We availed of this to the full.



Female Trekkers explore One Man Pass.

At 12.15 hours, the A team, under the skilful leadership of Joe Murray, set off carefully to wind their way around these cliffs, reaching the summit of Slieve League along One Man Pass, and then returning by the slopes of Church Mountain and the Pilgrim Way. Michelle, razor sharp as ever, gave a new meaning as to why Jeanette and herself should not have been on One Man Pass. From the summit, Benbulbin could be seen on the South East and the cone of Errigal was visible breaking the skyline to the North.

'C' Company saves the day.

Meanwhile, C Company, smaller in number, moved slowly and talkatively on the roads around Crobane. They discussed football and hurling, flora and fauna, as well as general world affairs. They also went up part of the Pilgrim Way and then returned to the local pub – Cul a'Dúin – outside which was a notice that indicated it was selling Irish Coffee. However, to our consternation, it was closed. Maria was beside herself with thirst and worry as to how the A team would react to 'an doras dunta'.

However, our plight was discovered by means of the ever reliable bush telegraph and, about 10 minutes before the A team arrived, the pub opened, and like bees to a honey pot, customers appeared – and not all from the Trekkers!

Meanwhile, back in Donegal town....

Annette, Helen and Dympna explored Donegal town and made the best of the fine weather to avail of a 90 minute trip on the water bus. The dolphins were delighted. The weather on Wednesday was somewhat inclement but it was not a repetition of Killarney '04. 'C' Company had the better of the day, enjoying a convivial walk from the town to Harvey's Point Hotel, where they eventually met the A Company. John McGroary, a local walking guide, led this group of well-seasoned trekkers. While they went through the Blue Stack mountains, whose beauty could not be fully appreciated due to the low visibility, John gave them as much information as possible.

The walk started at an early Christian graveyard with its different burial formations. He then showed them the remains of a 1940's and '50 Ballroom of Romance. This was a source of much needed entertainment of the community and on a dry night, maybe a 'lift on the bar of a bike' home! John also explained the complexities of 'Turbury rights' and the various ways of cutting turf. Eventually, somewhat wet and tired, the troops arrived at Harveys Point Hotel and directly for the coach back to base for a quick shower and change of clothes.

Meanwhile, Dympna and the 'ladies who dine' went to Derry for the day. They did the city bus tour and even the Apprentice Boys' route as traversed along the Walls without any protest in sight!

The valley of Glencolumcille.

Thursday's expedition was to Glencolumcille and everybody boarded the coach, but with priorities in order, the first stop was Lidl for walking poles and equipment. It was Fr. McDyer who helped to raise the status of the parish in the 1950's and 60's by developing home industry to stem the tide of emigration. Today the fruits of his labour are more evident in the Heritage Centre than the factory floor. However, he gave the people a sense of self belief that has withstood the test of time.

All the walkers headed for the signal tower perched above the sea cliffs with a grand view of the North West Channel. It was built between 1804 and 1808 and garrisoned by the Redcoats to provide advance warning of any French invasion. The Battle of Waterloo in 1815 put paid to the possibility. After that, there was no official use until World War 2 when it was partially re-built and used by the LDF to forewarn of any Nazi invasion. This did not happen either, and Éire was safe!

Joe Murray took his group along the coastline to Port and returned over Faugher mountain to Bidy's pub. This time there was not shortened opening hours and the C Company were sitting outside in glorious sunshine replenishing lost fluids.



The coach driver made a very interesting and scenic diversion on the way home. He regaled us with details about the coastline, the people of the area, the mansions owned by local fish barons and other – some used only a few times a year. He also explained the current difficulties in the fishing industry with some boats leaving their catch in Norway rather than in Killybegs to avail of better EU quotas.

The last night ended with the usual diverse display of talent, both in song and verse. We are more than Trekkers, you know!

On Friday 9th September, the Trekkers returned to Dublin via Enniskillen and Cavan, having conquered some of the Hills of Donegal and their heather-laden bogs.

There's More To Scotland Than Ben Nevis

From Issue No. 31 dated August 2006

By Colette Dorgan.

It was with great excitement that I found myself on a flight to Glasgow, in the convivial company of other Trekkers, having arranged less than 24 hours previously to take Helen's place as, unluckily, she could not travel. It was a smooth coach transition to the village of Kingussie in the Cairngorm Mountains, situated amid the magnificent scenery of the Spey Valley. This area was captured on film in the T.V. series "Monarch of the Glen". The weather was pleasant, and we had time for a lovely circuitous ramble at the foot of "Crag Bheag" before our evening meal. The family-run hotel is renowned for its excellent cuisine, which we can all testify to.

Saturday dawned a bit cloudy, but soon cleared to a wonderful sunny day. Some of us even got a bit sunburned that day! Whilst one group was slogging their way to Ben Nevis, our bunch, under the leadership of Kevin and Marie began the day's walking on the Great Glen Way along the Caledonian Canal to Fort William. Distractions along the way kept us amused. One such was the sight of baby lambs, separated from their mother by a fence, attempting to return to the other side. One brave creature made a 'run for it' and you should have heard our cheers! Another lamb was less successful, despite its mother's loud encouragement. We carried on on our way, hoping it would succeed.



A local lock-keeper educated us about the canal, which is drained entirely and cleaned annually, and is 40 metres deep in sections. In summer, more than 30 pleasure-cruisers a day pass through each Lock. We viewed “The Lord of the Glen”, the size of a small ocean liner. The canal is a marvel of engineering: it descends almost 30 metres to the level of the river at Fort William. This was achieved by constructing its 8 Locks at descending heights, each at a lower level than the previous (of course if one were walking from Fort William, the levels would be in ascending order of height!). That evening, together for dinner, with the weary Ben Nevis pilgrims, events of the day were recounted and recalled.



On Sunday we journeyed by coach to Aviemore, a winter ski resort. An attraction at Aviemore is the Strathspey Steam Railway, restored and run entirely by volunteer steam-railway-enthusiasts (devotees with peak caps with an obsessive shine in their eyes). One such fanatic, a retiree from Malahide, mans the tiny ticket office. A trundle on the train to Broomhill was a quaint step back in time, and brought “Thomas the Tank engine” tales to mind of more than one passenger. From Broomhill we walked a forest trail to Boat of Garten. Glorious scenery, castles, snow-capped mountains, forests of silver birch glistening in the sunshine, sheep, so many sheep, and snow-white tiny baby lambs. Daffodils everywhere, garlanding the paths, along the roadsides, clumps in the fields, and at the bases of trees. We remarked particularly on the absence of both litter and graffiti on the excellently-maintained paths and cycle-ways. I spied my first Highland cattle. A large horned bull, lying low, chewing the cud, with his dutiful wife standing over him provoked much comment and hilarity! Back then to Aviemore on “Thomas the Tank Engine”, coach to Kingussie and another splendid dinner.



Monday's walk from Coylunbridge to Glenmore via Loch Morlich was led by Paddy. At Glenmore, we were treated to an audio-visual show in the Heritage Centre. Scottish wildlife preservation, conservation and re-introduction projects are priority, and wolves have been successfully re-introduced. "Wildlife Tourism" is on the increase in the Highlands. Later, we spotted whitish Cairngorm Reindeer, with very long horns, originally from Siberia. Nearby, animals we thought to be their fawns turned out in fact to be Soay lambs!

Our final day was spent mostly wandering-at-will in Glasgow. It rained hard that day, our first wet day. Cold, it was too, quite cold. Glasgow has plenty to see and do, in the line of museums, galleries and bookshops. I took a bus tour of the city, already homesick for the Highlands. I have many great memories of this trip to savour for some time to come, scenery, sights, places and people, including also the kindness and good cheer of my fellow Trekkers! Thanks to Paddy for supplying maps and of course, last but not least, a sincere and heartfelt "Thank You" to Owen and Marie for all the meticulous planning and organisation.

Where The Mountains Of Mourne Sweep Down To The Sea – Climbing Slieve Donard.

By Tom Duff.

From Issue No 37 dated January 2009.

On Saturday morning 3 May 2008, a group of eight enthusiastic Trekkers set out very early from Dublin and travelled to the Burrendale Hotel, Newcastle, Co. Down to begin a weekend of trekking in the Mountains of Mourne. The trip was well organised by Gaye Maguire. After checking in we began with a hearty breakfast which set us up for the day ahead.



We met up with our experienced guide Marty and set off for the first challenge of the weekend – to climb Slieve Donard which, at 850 m, is the highest mountain in Northern Ireland. We began our initial steep ascent at Bloody Bridge river, which was once a smugglers' trail, and along fairly good and well-marked tracks. Although Slieve Donard is some 75m lower in height as compared to Lugnaquilla in County Wicklow, it could be argued that the overall climb to the top of Donard is greater because it begins just above sea level, whereas the climb of Lugnaquilla commences at some 140 m above sea level (at least, that's our story).

The steep climb beyond the river took us towards the spectacular Mourne Wall which is some 35 kilometres long and meanders along and across the summit of fifteen mountains. The dry stone wall was built as a boundary

around the Mourne catchment and was intended to protect the water reserves of the Silent Valley reservoir. The building of the wall, which is about two and a half metres high and almost one metre wide, commenced in 1904 and was completed in 1922. The reservoir supplies water to most of County Down and to a large part of Belfast.

When we reached the wall it provided some shelter from a fierce freezing cold wind as we undertook the steep breath-sapping climb to the top of Donard, which was marked by a cairn and a tower which formed part of the Mourne Wall. At that point we met other climbers who had climbed from the Donard car park direction, a somewhat easier climb but also seeking shelter from the severe wind and rain. After our well-earned lunch break and brief rest we set out on our descent. Fortunately, the wind and the rain began to subside as we descended and we could then enjoy the marvellous sweeping views over Newcastle, its surrounds and across the Irish sea – just as the well-known Percy French song proclaims.

Everyone agreed it's hard to beat the north of Ireland – not only for its mountains and scenery but also for its porridge (just ask Tom Murray!!). Many thanks to Gaye for an excellent weekend of trekking, the highlight of which for me was climbing Slieve Donard.

To Stop And Stare And Enjoy

From Issue No 38, dated May 2009

By Henry Jack.

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

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

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

In time I felt the need to take more exciting walks away from these popular trails, so decided on seeking suitable company. This avoids the danger of accidents in isolated country, which made my family happy also! The disadvantage was it reduced my time to 'stop and stare'. Back in Dun Laoghaire I made enquiries. Luckily I met Dick Needham at that time and joined Trekkers. So here I am, enjoying the walking, the chat in great company, with help if needed, and time to observe my environment.

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



Walking trip to Andalucia

From Issue No 39, dated August 2009.

By Marelene Travers and Terry O'Brien.

In 13 May 2009 five intrepid walkers from the Trekkers (Marion and Kevin Beegan, Marelene Travers, Noreen and Terry O'Brien) set off from Bellevue at 4.30 a. To catch a flight to Malaga for a week's walking/sightseeing in Andalucia, a package holiday from The Travel Department. We had been on one of these previously to Lake Garda and Tuscany and both had been very successful. In all there were over 50 people on the trip and we met up with three people who had been on the previous holidays.



Our plane landed pretty well on schedule around midday and after a pleasant one and a half hour coach trip through mile after mile of olive trees we arrived at our destination, a medium-sized town called Cabra about midway between Granada and Cordoba. Cabra is Spanish for goat and we saw plenty of evidence of herds of these in the following days; it even has its own hospital which came in very handy as you will see later on!! There was very little evidence of tourism in the town and we seemed to be the only holidaymakers around; also, there was little or no English spoken.



As the main attraction of this holiday was walking we will quickly describe the sightseeing trips. First, we went to Cordoba, home of the fantastic mosque (Mezquita) which is beautiful and large but low structure completed prior to 1200 AD; along came King Ferdinand around 1250 AD and built a huge and overbearing Christian cathedral within the Mosque. The second trip was to the city of Granada to view the Alhambra, a Moorish palace constructed during the 14th century; our guide's commentary was frequently enhanced by Noreen and Terry who visited this during their honeymoon a long long time ago! Both trips are definitely worthwhile.

Our first walk was to the Sierra Subbeticas National park, located a few miles from Cabra. The walk was about 10 – 12 kms on a track through a canyon with limestone formations on both sides; it was a beautiful and quiet place, meeting only a handful of other walkers. We finished in a really beautiful small town called Zuheros where we had a welcome drink (or two). During the trip we all heard our first cuckoo of the year who continued cuckoo-ing constantly for at least an hour and we all agreed that we had heard enough for this year anyway! There were also many vultures and eagles soaring overhead. Unfortunately, we had a casualty, a lady called Gwen, fell on a level track and broke her knee-cap and was treated in the aforementioned hospital and unfortunately was confined to the hotel for the remainder of the holiday; she had to be stretchered out by four firemen who absailed into the gorge!

Our second walk was in the same general area, with about half in very pleasant open countryside and the remainder following much the same

route as the first and again finishing in Zuheros but in a different pub! Unfortunately, we had our second casualty when our good friend Noreen slipped and broke her right wrist. Again, this was x-rayed and 'plastered' in the local hospital and this meant that she missed the final walk, but she did make it to Granada.

Our final walk was located about 100 kms south near to the town of Antequera in a place called El Torcai, a mountainous area of limestone, very similar to the Burren but much more dramatic. The walk itself was on a meandering path through the rugged area with limestone columns all around and lots of wild goats to be seen. This area was fairly commercialised with a large number of school kids on various field/nature trips who were much more interested in practicing their English with our group. There is also a Visitor centre with the usual video show, shop, etc. The hotel, located about 2 kms from the town, was very well 'appointed' with a good swimming pool, a nice bar with very friendly staff and cheap drink. We also discovered a little 'sheebeen' (aptly named by Kevin) close to the hotel, selling even cheaper drink and we had a good sing-song, etc on the final night. The food in the hotel was just ok. Our experience of the Spanish health system was very favourable; Noreen's wrist was sorted out in about one and a half hours and all free including medication (luckily we had E111).

A major complaint was the organisation of the walks. These were supposed to have been graded A, B and C as we are used to and as was done on our previous walks to Lake Garda and Tuscany; for various reasons the guides would not break up the group which naturally became strewn out over at least a kilometre on the walks and this was very unsatisfactory and was a major complaint by many in the group. We would endeavour to get assurances on this before going on a similar holiday in future*

All in all it was a very enjoyable week apart from the two accidents. The walks themselves were about C to B+ grade but a bit tricky in places with some moderate climbs and set around 1000 metres high. The weather was excellent and not too humid while walking, made all the better in the knowledge that the weather in Ireland was dreadful at the time!

**The Travel Department has acknowledged that there were problems on the holiday and that it was not up to the usual high standard. They have issued a voucher for 100 euro towards the next holiday to everyone who wrote a complaint.*

Trekkers On Tour – The Nine Glens Of Antrim.

From Issue No 42 dated August 2010.

By Cliona McCarthy.

A group of adventurous Trekkers in May 2010 took to the road north and ventured for the first time to the nine Glens of Antrim to walk in the footsteps of the Fianna in the kingdom of Dal riada. Some weeks previously, Monty and Evelyn completed the ultimate trip reccy, a weekend away to the planned location, that is Carnlough in Co. Antrim. Duly satisfied with the location and wonderful environs, promising a great selection of walks and hikes, another connection was made, A Rock boy was proprietor of the Londonderry Arms Hotel. Without delay the booking was made and deposit secured.

The group of sixteen, both B and C walkers, set off for Carnlough at various times on Friday evening 7 May. Some were very ambitious and took in the Giants Causeway en route! Myself and Gaye left work shortly before 4pm and were pleasantly surprised to find the journey took less than four hours from Dublin. The group all met for pre-dinner drinks, followed by a lovely meal in a hotel restaurant. Some of us were not



allowed to sit with the grown-ups on the first night, but good behaviour would earn us a seat at the BIG table the next night! Our guide for the weekend, Cowper Lynas, arrived for a briefing session after dinner and walk plans for Saturday and Sunday were made.

An early night was had by all but some of the group managed to squeeze in a little nightcap before turning in. Surprise, surprise, Karl had disappeared for an early night too, but not quite, he had taken on the task of checking out suitable pubs and clubs for the Trekkers to visit on Saturday night and arrived back armed with local knowledge. There was a promise of great nightlife for Saturday's 'après-hike'!

Start time was agreed for the next morning was 10.30 and we all assembled outside the hotel. Packed lunches had been prepared by the hotel so we were all ready to go. The B group, which included myself, Gaye, Maeliosa, Brendan, Ita, Karl, Tom, Paddy and Bob joined forces with Cowper and his Saturday morning hiking group. The C group which was Monty, Evelyn, Marie, Catherine, Sheila, Hilary, and Aidene gathered and took a few cars in the direction of Fair Head. Our B walk headed off at 10.50 from the village of Carnlough. We made our way up Gartford Lane which was a lovely but steep track up to the Garron Plateau which divides two of the nine Antrim Glens, namely Glencloy and Glenarriff, the latter being known as the Queen of the Glens and is a classic example of a U shaped glacial valley.

It didn't take long to reach open boggy ground and get our first sight of the very distinctive Slemish Mountain to the SW of County Antrim near Ballymena. As the story goes, this is where St. Patrick worked as a boy minding cattle for the local chieftain. Our trek brought us up Craigfad Lough which is actually two lakes on top of the plateau where we stopped to take in the magnificent views over the Glens and out east and north to Scotland. Paddy's stepping stones, a lump of rock, just off the coast was clear to see, and also the outline of the Mull of Kintyre and the near hills of Scotland. We continued over open bog across the Cranny Water and had lunch in the sun at the Peat house.

After lunch we made our way across Pollan Burn onto a track with many barbed wire hurdles to cross. Lucky for us, Cowper had an ingenious prop with him, a piece of 'wavin' pipe to cover the potentially dangerous fence as the agile Trekkers leaped over. We finished by visiting Cranny Falls and followed the Old Mine train tracks back to Carnlough and

awaited the return of the C's. They arrived shortly and had also completed a wonderful walk in the area of Fair Head, traversing the Grey Man's Pass looking out to Ratlin Island. Some of us thirsty Trekkers found a little bistro with a sun terrace and quenched our thirst with some chilled vino, others gathered in the hotel bar for a few welcome pints, and some even made it to evening vespers. So before rendezvous time there was quite a lot of z z z z's arising from the LDA Hotel as tired Trekkers grabbed forty winks before dinner.

Everyone enjoyed another lovely meal in the Trophy Room at the hotel joined by Cowper as guest for dinner. There was plenty of chat about the day's walk and plans were firmed up for Sunday. As already mentioned, Karl had recce'd the hotspots of Carnlough, so without further delay the thirsty Trekkers hit the town in search of the craic. The Waterfall was the chosen pub, a lovely little gem, which, of course, served Guinness. We soon saw the attraction, as Karl drew our attention, not once but thrice to the collection of ????? on the ceiling...the mind boggles, but at least, it stopped him from serenading Hilary who was out for the night no matter what. Paddy shared some very interesting stories of his mis-spent youth chasing local girls around the bogs of Offaly.

Sunday morning was once again a beautiful day, not as sunny as Saturday but less of a chill in the air. Cowper arrived to meet us all at 9.30 with one enthusiastic walker from his Saturday group. Despite concerns from some of our crew about the very early start, it was a happy bunch that were packed and ready to go. The plan for Sunday was for the group to drive to Laragh Lough in Glenarriff so we headed on up the stunning Antrim coast. Our hike from LL took us up to the Glenarriff Waterfall where we had a spectacular view and took photos. After one hour walking, the group split at the upper car-park and the B group set off still on a track, in the direction of Trostan. Our route took us to a forest and we followed the Moyle Way gradually upwards through an enchanted fairytale woodland to the open Plateau and a moderate climb to the summit of Trostan (550m). This County top is almost lunar in its bare rocky state, compared to the green rich boggy uplands we had previously traversed. Although not warm, we were able to add a few layers and have lunch sitting by the Trig Pillar on the top. Such amazing views towards Agnew's Hill and Slemish to the south, the village of Cushendall could be seen framed by the dramatic slopes of Lurigethan and Tievebulliagh and Kintyre just about visible on the horizon.

Our trek took us almost six hours over 12K and brought us back to the Glenarriff Park where we stopped again to take in the beautiful views of the Glen. There were some other items of interest on route, of curiosity I should say. A certain three-sided hut looked like an outside toilet, so very quickly there was a queue. In fact, it was a type of toilet, a facility for emptying treated matter from visiting camper vans. Some of our Trekkers were very interested in this freak of nature!!!!



Our lovely day finished back in the LDA where Cowper and William joined us for coffee before we left for Dublin. Ita realized that the Antrim air had chilled her out so much that she had left her handbag in the hotel lobby that morning. Thankfully, it was spotted and was waiting for her behind reception. Sheila wasn't so lucky with her missing dancing shoes Cinderella must have left the ball in a rush, they never turned up. The C group had already headed for home as their walk had finished earlier.

Thanks to everyone who had a part in organising this trip, in particular Monty who took a lot of time and effort into research and planning. It was a lovely place to explore and a great time had by all. I have no doubt that everyone would like to return some day to the Glens of Antrim.

Hiking in Heaven!!

From Issue No 42 dated August 2010.

By Gaye Maguire.

I first visited Nepal in October 2007 and the Annapurnma region captivated me instantly. Unfortunagtely, the only thing I saw the week I was visiting that part of the country was a five second glimpse of Annapurna 1 peak – that was it – for 7 days it rained, rained, rained. But that glimpse spurred me on to ensure I returned.

In October 2009 I had the opportunity to visit Nepal for a second time. So I knew exactly what I wanted to do – The Annapurna Circuit and Annapurna base Camp (otherside known as ABC). This time I was not part of a group – I was doing a Great Garbo on it and hired a porter Kishna & guide Bikram. Bikram had also been Gilbert Little's guide back in 2007, so he came highly recommended.

The entire route is approximately 300 miles long and starts in a dusty village called Besisahar. It goes anticlockwise, so everyone starts from the one place. Even if you are on your own, as you make your way through the villages each day, faces start becoming familiar, and gradually you get to know people who are doing the route pretty well. It's the perfect world – you can have as much time to daydream as you want, and if you prefer conversation, you can hook up with people. Days generally start with wake-up call around 6.30 or 7 am with most of the walking done by lunchtime. For the afternoon, you'd generally catch up on the washing, mooch around the village, go for an afternoon dander around the place, and see what treasures were there to be found. Dinner was usually around 6 pm and bed and sleep by 7. OK, so I actually am known for going to bed early at night, but even for me this was nuts! However, as you climbed higher in altitude, air got thinner and you just had less energy. It was a lovely relaxed feeling, and I've never slept so well.

As you proceed, you're almost going back in time with every step you take, and then suddenly in a medieval village, there's a sign for "The Break Up" – starring Jennifer Aniston in the local "cinema" (tiny room with flickering projector). Electricity is to be found in most places now, but is in very short supply and very low wattage – you just manage without it. Most of the cooking is done over fire, and it's fascinating to see the women cook up a storm in tiny spaces with so little. In recent years they've spent a lot

of money upgrading plumbing etc., so most tea houses have got proper loos – whether they're effective or not is questionable in some places, but I found a huge improvement this time.

The route continues onto what I can only imagine Canada to be like – beautiful forests, starting to run autumnal, fabulous waterfalls, rivers and vast valleys. I absolutely fell in love with a Buddhist Temple in Upper Pisang – seriously if you ever go there make the effort and hike up here. It's a wonderful homage to a community with very little, building something of such immense beauty, while still retaining the incredible serenity of a Temple. Monang was also another highlight here – this is a busy trading post and centre of a lot of the remote treks. It's a village of two halves – tea houses at the entrance to the village and stone houses for the locals – built to accommodate the animals on the ground floor and the families on the floor above. This part of the country gets very cold in the winter so I guess they need all the heat they can get. Conditions from here on were very basic, and an eye opener. Co-incidentally, it was probably the most beautiful part of the hike as it was pretty quiet and the scenery was spectacular.

The mountains are not called mountains unless they are at least 1,000 m high. If you're lower than that, they don't even bother to name them. They couldn't believe that we had only one "mountain" in Ireland. Everywhere you look, there is another magnificent mountain – it is impossible to describe their effect. The highest is Annapurna 1 at 8,091 m and to say we were star struck looking at her is an understatement. My personal favourite is Machhapuchhre (otherwise known as Fishtail) – it's a hold mountain and has never been climbed, so it's special.

The higher up the route you go, the more bare the ground gets until you hit the snow at the higher parts. Then it's over the highest point in the trek, the Thorung La Pass which, at 5,416m high is an achievement in itself (never again...ok until next time maybe!). You descend into Mustang and even hearing that name was making me dizzy. I would have liked to venture further into this part of the country, but you need a special visa and also there's no teahouses, etc., you'd have to camp (no thanks, not in that cold!).

Heading back south the vegetation becomes greener and lush very quickly and we hiked along the Modi Khola and beside Dhaulagiri, another enchanting mountain. Marpha was a beautiful, beautiful town famous for

its apple production, and well worth a visit. Then for the second highlight of the trip – meeting Sorcha Ryan and Judith Poynton in Ghandruk for the second two weeks of my hike – to Annapurna Basecamp. They arrived on time in the middle of nowhere and after two weeks on my own, it was just wonderful to catch up with them, and the goss from home. I hadn't met any of my friends since the previous July, and so it was a very special time for me.

So began the second and last leg of my trip – this was through stunning forests, terraced fields, steeply falling to vast rivers below. It's a busier route than the first two weeks, but still enjoyable. The tea houses again were great and you met such a variety of people, all sharing the same passion. The highlight here was definitely Annapurna Basecamp – we were extremely lucky with the weather. The following there was the first snow storm of winter, so timing was perfect. It's a very enchanting spot, very peaceful and humbling. There are various memorials to climbers who didn't make it back from their pursuit and I guess it just puts life of a mountaineer into perspective.



The weather is just perfect at mid October to mid November. The days are warm but never baking hot (due to altitude). The evenings are cold, and of course, get arctic the higher you go up. At one point my fingers froze so much I thought they had frost bite and I about -15 degrees up there and

seriously, so cold I couldn't even sleep. But that extreme cold only lasted a few days. You tend to be wearing all your clothes by the time you hit the high points – and end up wearing the same clothes during the day and in bed – sounds awful, but it was just too cold in some places to actually change into jim jams, hat socks, gloves, cowl, etc. Also, the higher up you go, the more basic the accommodation is. Everywhere is relatively clean, but the loos can be a bit of a problem – imagine trying to get to the loo in the dark (with a torch) over ice, and trying not to fall! Imagine the shame of breaking a leg using the loo, and not being able to hike!!

Food everywhere is fabulous – everything is organic and grown on the spot. One of my fondest memories is asking for pumpkin soup for lunch in a little tea house in Lete. I was resting in the courtyard looking up at Nilgiri (6,839m) and the next thing the woman of the house passes through with a pumpkin in her hand. 40 minutes later I had my pumpkin soup! The best tomato soup in the world was to be had in our teahouse in Ghandruk – it's worth going there for the soup alone! And I can't mention the food without mentioning Judith – I can slag her about her healthy appetite but by the time that we reached our last teahouse in Landruk, a little crowd had gathered around to watch us clear the table of our feast – we did that- we're convinced that word of Judith's prodigious appetite had spread before us!

Other highlights:

- Bikram and Kishna, two absolute gentlemen who looked after me so well on my trip. I'm hoping I can link up with them for another trip some time in the future;
- The trees turning gold – i thought I'd have missed autumn so was thrilled when I didn't.
- Kathmandu's garden of Dreams – one of my favourite places in the world – a little haven in the chaos of Kathmandu; and
- Watching people try to ride horses when they were too sick to walk! Priceless.

Nepal has everything – it's safe for women to travel to on their own, people are extremely welcoming and gracious and I've never once been hassled by a local. The food is fantastic and the headspace is never better there. A true Buddhist way of life in the hills just captivates your soul and you're in another world literally for the time you stay there. Magic!!

Rambling In The Pays Basque Quest

From Issue No 44 dated May 2011

By Bob Curran.

When I heard that my daughter Louise and her family were moving from Brussels to Biarritz I thought that I had it made. Biarritz, the famous seaside resort in the South of France; lots of beaches, sunshine, vineyards and fields of yellow grain, like those in the Van Gogh picture that hangs on the wall before me as I write. As the plane came in to land I noticed that the landscape was not what I had expected; it was too green. But then, airfields never have the same landscape as the surrounding area. So we drove to Louise's house about 20km away and I went to bed after a meal.

Next morning I got a surprise as I looked out the window. Everywhere was green apart from the red roof of the big barn beside the farmhouse across the road. There were cattle chewing the cud and beyond them more green fields and farmhouses, then a line of hills with forests. It looked like Wicklow or perhaps Cavan. Not a vineyard in sight. I would just have to make the best of it. The first place I went to was the town of Hasparren about 25km east by south of Biarritz and 1km from Louise's house. It's a pleasant town with a bookshop a bakery, a cosy friendly bar, a micro brewery (in the South of France?) which brews, among other beers one with the splendid name of Bob's beer. When I put a Basque beret on I could pass for the guy on the label. And I like the beer as well!



Louise guided me on my first walk on the hills near Hasparren. There are two marked walks on heath land, both taking about two hours, with about 6km and an ascent of 200m. The introduction satisfied me that pleasant walking was to be had here. The ground was dry and not broken and the landscape is pretty and varied. Next, Louise drove me to Biarritz where a very nice friend of hers, Miata, lives. After I had seen the town, an attractive Edwardian place, Maite brought me to La Rhune. This is a steep imposing peak of 905M, 20 km south of Biarritz, from which much of the western end of the Pyrenees range, in France and Spain, can be seen. The summits there can be identified, with their heights, with the help of a stone bearing circle. There are cafes and souvenir shops on the summit, though not so many or so ugly as to ruin the place. There is also a rack on cog railway to take you up and down if you don't feel up to the ascent, which is demanding enough, say a B plus in our system. I did it twice, with and without the help of the railway , and found it very enjoyable.



Louise and I then climbed the peak of Ursuya 678m, 6km south west from Hasparren. Ursuya is classified as a 'massif' in the local guide book, understandably so since the peak and the surrounding hills cover a wide area. From a distance the massif outline seems familiar; it would fit into an Irish landscape. Up close it is different. There are a number of mapped paths on Ursuya of varying length with estimated lengths up to five hours. On Ursuya I saw 'Pottoks' for the first time. These are wild horses of varying colours, somewhat like those our Travellers have, living in groups on the hills. Their survival on terrain which is also used for sheep pasture is remarkable.

Our next climb was up Baigura, 897m. There are tracks to the summit from the principal [points of the compass. A ridge goes south of the summit with two other peaks of over 800m. The valleys around are about 300m above sea level. A zig zag track assists in the approach from the north-west. We didn't quite make the summit because mist and rain set in. The summit then looked quite Irish, but neither of us felt like going from the sunshine into Celtic gloom.

A longer walk, which we didn't finish, is up Artzamendi, 926m. It lies 15km south-west of Hasparren. We started from Pas de Roland, almost north of the summit, from which two tracks lead to the summit. One of them, the easy way which we took, is partly by road. It takes longer, which is why we didn't make the summit, even though we could see it clearly. We will return!

Overall, our rambles were like walking on a drier sunnier version of Wicklow, with lots of other hills in all directions, plenty of easily identifiable tracks and few other walkers. The landscape to the north, with farms and many houses, was pretty. There are also marked tracks on the coast. South of Biarritz lies the other resort of St. Jean de Luz, which I prefer to Biarritz. The latter is open to the Atlantic rollers which makes swimming uncomfortable, though surfing is frequently feasible. St. Jean de Luz is on a sheltered bay and has a good beach on which one can lie after the walk of 12km from Biarritz. I also followed the track around the southern side of the bay, and then on down for 8km to another resort, Hendaye, which faces Spain over an inlet. There is also a coast walk north from Biarritz from which the interesting old town of Bayonne on the Adour river can be reached. On the coast walks the changing views of the sea, the sea cliffs, ships and foothills of the Pyrenees took all my attention.

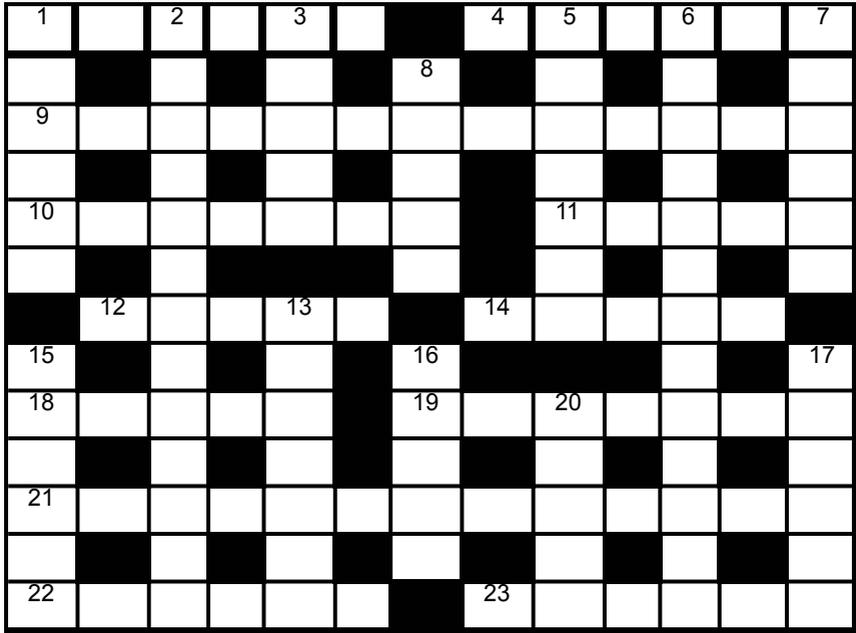
To judge by the facilities provided, walking in the area is popular. However, I saw no groups and few individuals. The name of the area is Pays de Basque Ouest – western Basque area. There are walkers' maps, cartes de randonnees in French, at the 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scales, published by the Institut Geographique National. Tracks are well marked and mapped. A guide book for 42 walks in the area indicates there are more than 4800km of marked pathways, including 1000km of main hiking routes, in the 'Department' of the Pyrenees Atlantique. For a beginner like me, with only limited French, reading the maps can be demanding. The landscape has its ups and downs, and the network of tracks and roads is complex. The practice of giving the names of many, but not all rural houses adds to the density of information on the maps. You have to search carefully to find the essential information for your walk.

While French is the language most used in the area, most of the house and place names are in Basque. Basque names are not easily remembered. The Irishman who could remember the name Menditpikobizkarra would deserve a prize. One can, of course adopt a version which one might remember, Menditip for example for the one above. For Artzamendi one version might be Artsawonder, which is more polite than another version that occurred to me. (No attempt to guess what it is, please!). Many of the buildings in the towns and the countryside are half timbered, with the timbers painted either dark red or green. They look old, and no doubt, some of them are, but many must be relatively modern. There are quite a few wooded areas locally, which could explain why half-timbered houses did not die out, as it did in Ireland and England. The initial impression that the trees look the same as in Ireland is dispersed when one looks more closely. It would have been helpful to have a forester, say Fergal Mulloy, who could have identified the unusual looking specimens. An unusual bird which is often to be seen is the vulture. Its survival is remarkable, all the more so when one thinks of the risky life the few Irish eagles live. Pottoks and vultures add a touch of Wild West flavour to nature in the area.

So good walking, swimming and food and drink and fair land and seascapes to stare at for hours. What more could a man want? Thanks Louise and Maite.

Trekker Crossword

Niall Humphries



Across

- 1 You travel like a trekker (6)
- 4 'e and I bled for our lunch (6)
- 9 Home for a Spring bird (4,2,1,6)
- 10 Lug more than Djouce, your highness (7)
- 11 We get our feet wet but not by these salty flows (6)
- 12 This is short going up the mountain, longer coming down (5)
- 14 It's not Normandy but every leader must prepare for them (1-4)
- 18 Egged on for lunch in Lanzarote? Spanish omelette? (5)
- 19 Ladies at Christmas Party, a little hen party? (3,4)
- 21 What Trekkers do on sail boats? (5,3,5)
- 22 Runs at heavenly sight on a night walk. (6)
- 23 What's William anyway, a sitting duck? (6)

Down

- 1 'When icicles hang by the wall ' (6)
- 2 Every trekker's nightmare (4,2,3,4)
- 3 Each year the hags ... (5)
- 5 Trust, never let a leader be ... (7)
- 6 Even in Summer we aren't this hot! (5,2,3,3)
- 7 It's latin I, the leader, no one else counts! (6)
- 8 No year is complete without this (5)
- 13 Dressing down? (7)
- 15 Mountain huts (6)
- 16 It's secret, deep in my bag, what I will find? (5)
- 17 Never this! Even in India we are all the same in Trekkers! (1,5)
- 20 An uncomfortable realm at walk's end. (5)

Email your answers to Michael Cotter at cantobre@eircom.net

Caption Competition



Email your best caption to Michael Cotter at cantobre@eircom.net

Thanks to Paddy O'Duffy for giving us these photos



1984 - Mweelrea, Co. Mayo



1985 - Lug



1988 - Glendalough

1988 - Croaghan, Achill



1989 - Aughavannagh to Glendalough



1989 - Glenmalure



1990 - Benbawn



1991 - down from Mount Brandon



1992 - Glenmalure



1992 - Killarney



1991 - Paddy, Jack on Carrauntuohil



1993 - Lug



1993 - the Dingle Way



1994 - Galway



1995 - Ballyvaughan



1997 - Snowdon, Wales

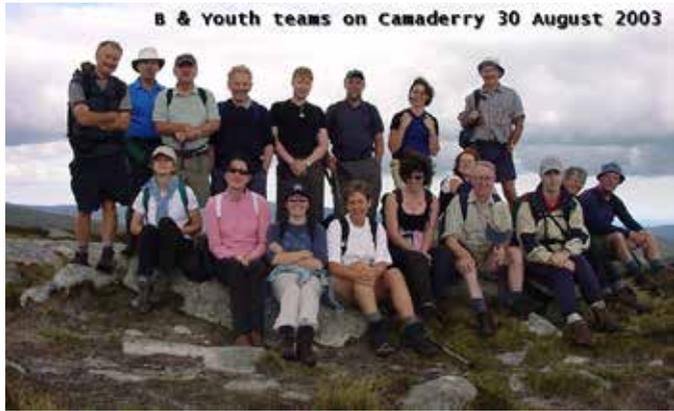
1997 - Snowdon, Wales



2001 - Carrauntuohil

2002 - Benllettery



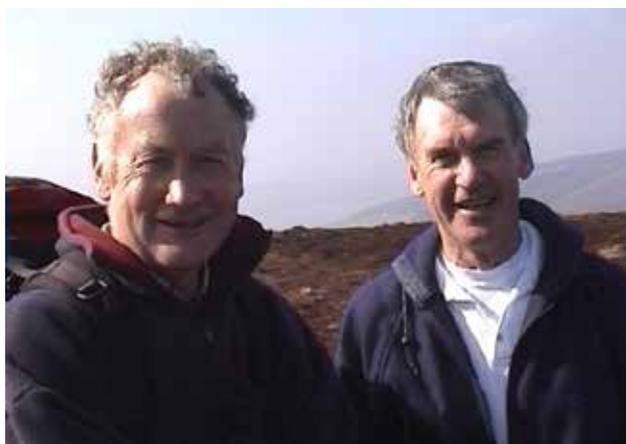


2003 - Camaderry



2003 - Lug, led by Bill

2003- Slievenamon



2003