

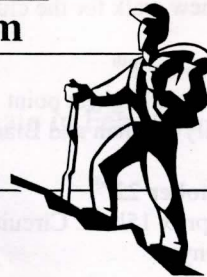
GALWAY WALKING CLUB

September 2006

www.galwaywalkingclub.homestead.com

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Note from the Chairperson



Hello Members,

We have had a fantastic summer and as usual a very busy one in the walking club.

We had memorable walks, some in glorious sunshine and others in torrential rain, but as always our members remain undaunted!

The club this year successfully managed the rambles, hill walks and short walks, offering something for everyone.

We had a very successful Table Quiz in April with the inimitable Noel Browne as Quizmaster.

We followed this with a trip to Snowdon, which provided some wonderful walking for the club, we were blessed with lovely weather for the peak and our efforts were rewarded with stunning views.

Our summer barbecue was held on a beautiful balmy evening in July in Cloonacauneen Castle and was a very enjoyable evening.

Six club members took part in navigation training organised by Kuros.

The annual marathon walk was the highlight of our year, held on a perfect day for walking and congratulations to Tom Rea and a very hard working committee for completing 10 years of organising this annual walk.

We have a busy Autumn schedule lined up too, with some great walking, a visit to Clare Island, a trip to Killarney for the October Bank Holiday weekend and our Christmas party to be held in Ballyvaughan on December 2nd.

Our website has been revamped and is constantly updated and I hope all the members are finding it useful.

Looking forward to the coming season, and as always thanks to our hard working committee and to you, our members who with your interest, enthusiasm and participation make this club so successful.

Martha Higgins
Chairperson

Committee

Chair person	Martha Higgins	087 9310081
Vice Chairperson:	Kuros Torkzadeh	086 8127534
Secretary:	Maire Joyce	0860726951
Treasurer:	Una Lalor	087 2234559
Membership Officers:	Eileen Letsome	0864066652
	Patricia Fleming	0871329934
PRO	Caroline Meaney	0876685523
Members:	Tom Huban	0857147134
	Julie O'Sullivan	0868575953

WALKING SCHEDULE

2006/2007

September 24th

A new walk for the club.

Partry Hills, South Mayo

Noel Browne

October 8th

18 Kms. Highest point 200m. 7km on road remainder on green road and track. Start between Ballyvaughan and Black Head .

Glenina

Veronica O'Toole

October 22nd

Approx 15kms. Circuit of the upper part of Lough Mask. Start point midway between Clonbur and Finny.

Upper Mask

Monica Quinn

October 29th

Weekend Away in Killarney

November 5th

Road walk

New walk in the Burren

Tom Huban

November 19th

17kms. Flat walk on minor roads, tracks and coastal path. Splendid scenery. Start walking at quarry past Leenane.

Killary

Martha Higgins

Saturday December 2nd

**Christmas Party in Ballyvaughan, walk led by Jerry Lalor,
No Sunday walk.**

December 17th

Last one before christmas so it's a nice short 2hour stroll near Bearna golf course. Start time will be 12noon from the golf course!

Last walk before Christmas, short walk in Bearna

December 31st, New Year's Eve Mt Gable

To get you ready for the festivities, there is a bit of a climb involved to a max height of 410m nothing too strenuous!

Tom Reddington

January 14th First walk of New Year in Cong

A club favourite, woods, track and road.

Noel Browne

January 28th

Approx 17kms mainly on road. Start at New Quay Pier. Good views over the bay.

New Quay

Caroline Meaney

February 11th

The recently opened road for pedestrians only, lovely views.

Old road, Cornamona

Miko Keane

Important Dates

AGM October 26th, 2006 Marriot Courtyard Hotel, Terryland.

Club Weekend Away, October Bank Holiday weekend, Killarney

Cheese and Wine evening, Tonery's Bar, December 14th.

Christmas Party, Hyland's Hotel, Ballyvaughan. December 2nd

Many thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter and to Mel Faherty for printing.

Hope you all enjoy reading it.

Martha

Short Walk Schedule

These walks will finish on October 15th for this year, resuming again in February 2007

September 17 th	Oughterard	Una Lalor
October 1 st	Kilcolgan	Phil Clerkin
October 15 th	Spiddal	Caroline Meaney.

Meeting at Renmore Church at 1.15pm for a 1.30pm departure.

Hill walks finish on October 15th and resume again in February.

Map Reading Course

A two day map reading course, organised by Kuros, took place over two Saturdays in May. Thomas McLoughlin led the course in which six members of the club participated (Loretta Needham, Anne Hession, Jackie O'Dowd, Regina Flynn, Carmel Kelly and Julie O'Sullivan). The first day of the course took place on a wet and windy day in Maimean and involved some basic compass reading, pacing and feature recognition. Day two took place in the Sheefry Hills. We had much more pleasant weather conditions but we felt Sheefry was a little too far from Galway for a day's walking. This day involved much more compass work. Our newly learnt skills were put to the test when we all took turns to lead short stages of the walk. Fortunately we all survived this little test and didn't manage to get too lost!

Generally, the group were happy with the course and Thomas has a very good way of explaining key concepts in layman's terms. However, it might be better to hold future courses over one weekend as it can be difficult for people to be free for two different Saturdays. Some follow up practise map reading work took place with Matt Flesk.

Julie O'Sullivan

Guidelines for New Members

The club has three different levels of walks:

Club walks, are held all the year round, and are mostly flat, but can have a climb of approx 300m, cover mixed terrain and will be at least 12k in distance. A reasonable level of fitness is required. Boots are required and the correct clothing.*

Hill walks are held from February to October. **NB** There is a separate sheet of guidelines for hill walkers and it is necessary to speak to the hill walking organiser Patricia Fleming.

Short walks are held from February to October and are no more than 2 hours in duration and are suitable for members who do have the time to stay out longer or do not have the level of fitness required for the other walks. Boots are recommended, but runners may be suitable in dry weather, and waterproof clothing is necessary.

Safety

Sporting activities have a degree of risk, and our leaders are voluntary amateurs who are willing to share their experience and knowledge with other club members to facilitate the clubs activities. Every member is ultimately responsible for their own safety.

*Clothing

Walking boots

Tracksuit bottoms – jeans are **NOT** suitable, shorts are optional in summer.

Good quality socks

T-shirts, or sweatshirts

Fleece jacket

Warm Waterproof jacket

Over trousers (essential in wet weather, and are also a great barrier in cold windy weather)

Hat and gloves.

Each member should try to have a small first aid kit with compeed plasters for blisters, ordinary plasters for small cuts, and paracetamol.

A good lunch and a hot drink are essential on club and hill walks.

Water is essential on all walks.

In summer sun screen is necessary.

Hello there. Greetings from Wales!

In our quest to climb the highest peaks in the U.K., we finally put a "tick" behind Snowdon (1085m or 3100 feet).

On Friday 28th of April about 50 of us set out on our journey to Wales. After a few "hick-ups" (including forgotten drivers-license and wrong suit cases) we all arrived safely in Llamberis. Special thanks go to Patricia Thornton who amongst others travelled over on Thursday in order to recce the walk.

On Saturday morning 25 of us gathered to climb Snowdon. A smaller, more ambitious group decided to tackle a ridge-walk, which would include the peak. We drove from Llamberis to our starting point the "Pen-y-Pass" car park. For anybody who would like to retrace our steps, I recommend to get there really early (!), as it gets busy quite fast.

From the car park we followed the "Pyg" track, which is quite clearly marked.

As we reached Llyn Llydow lake, there is a turn off to the right going straight up to Crib Goch. This is the start of the above mentioned ridge walk. Although we could see many following this path, this is not (!) for the faint hearted. A good sense of balance and strong nerves are highly recommended. (as some of our club members have experienced.) We continued along the lake and upwards to pass "Glaslyn" lake. After this we approached our final summit climb to reach the peak in glorious sunshine ready for our lunch. The views were magnificent and perched on a rather small plateau (again, it does get crowded here) we felt on top of the world.

Our descent took us along the miners track passing some of the old ruins going back to the hey-days of the local mining industry. Overall, the weather was fantastic with the paths well laid out and easy to walk on. Our total time for the climb was about 6.5 hours. (and we weren't rushing.) Afterwards, we debriefed in the café/bar at "Pen-y-pass" car park, relaxing over a pint or two. The majority of the group went their own way Saturday night enjoying a few local beverages.

Although some people were still shell shocked from their ridge walk (and pints) about 35 of us gathered on Sunday for a "short" stroll. This walk took us to Betws-y-Coed. (east of Snowdon) and was more or less laid out as a forest ramble. This ramble took us from the village through forests and back along a lovely river to our starting point in the town. We walked for roughly four hours, which included a lunch near "Llyn" lake. If I was doing the route again, I would certainly work with a full size local map in addition to the guidebook. We managed to do a round trip, but struggled sometimes keeping to the described walk. (The book we used was Pathfinder guide, Snowdonia). A quick word on this town itself, for anyone interested in walks around Snowdon, I suggest staying here rather than Llamberis. It's a much nicer town with plenty of shops catering for the keen walker (and not stuck in a 1970s time warp).

We concluded the trip with a communal meal on Sunday in the Llanberis Dol Peris Hotel. I would like to specially thank Martha Higgins and the committee for the excellent organisation of this well-planned weekend and also for maintaining steady nerves throughout (and while chasing dinner menus....).

With regards
Kuros Torkzadeh

From Le Puy en Velay to Saint Jean Pied-de-Port, the GR65 in France

18th June - 17th July 2006

Anne Brindley

In 950 Godescalc, Bishop of Le Puy en Velay in the centre of France, left Le Puy on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. Accompanied by porters, clerics, knights, jugglers and a motley crew, he did not go around mountains but at 'em and up 'emforcing generations for the next 1056 years to penitentially follow in his footsteps.

Now the GR65 follows (more or less) the route for 750 km to the south west from Le Puy to Saint Jean at the foot of the Pyrenees before joining the Spanish Camino francés. The markers are a white stripe over red stripe on trees, telephone poles, fences. Le Puy is built on extinct volcanic cones and the first part of the route in the Haute Loire is up 500 metres, down 500 metres, up 400 down again so the first few days are tough going! The plateau d'Aubrac is really lovely, like a green Burren, with the highest point at 1385 metres and populated by the Aubrac cow, a honey coloured black eye-lashed elegant-horned cow! From the Haute Loire to the Lozère and into the Aveyron with pointed roofs of grey blue slate, curved and overlapping like fish scales, beautifully pointed stone houses in clusters perched on the sides of hills and usually beside a river like the Allier or the Lot, geraniums and petunias, each one more picturesque than the one before, a bit like illustrations in a fairy tale with the castle and church in the centre.....St Chély, St Côme d'Olt, Espalion, Estaing and finally to Conques.

The romanesque Abbey of Conques is simply beautiful. A monastic settlement since 800 AD or so the monks had the umbilical cord of Jesus as a relic to attract the crowds but business was really slow. Meanwhile in Agen (about 200 km to the west) there were the relics of Sainte Foy who, as a young girl, was martyred in October 303 by having her body torn apart by oxen. So the monks of Conques sent one of their brothers to live in the community in Agen. After two years there he stole the relics of Sainte Foy and took them back to Conques. They turned out to be a real crowd pleaser leading to the building of the Abbey in the 11th and 12th centuries.

From Conques to Figeac over hills and through valleys and the rooftops changed from grey slate to the flatter red rooftops of the south. From Figeac to Cahors along the shaded paths under the dwarf oak trees of the Quercy (home of the truffle, saffron and the straw hat Maurice Chevalier style) and then into the open white limestone and into Cahors, once a Roman settlement and surrounded on three sides by the Lot river.

From the Lot to the Garonne et Tarn to the Gers in Gascony, to the Béarn and the Basque country. Small towns, former Gallo-Roman settlements, medieval fortified towns with cathedrals and abbeys, Romanesque or southern Gothic, the beautiful cloister in Moissac, the tympanum in Condom, tiny chapels in the middle of nowhere. Fields and fields of glorious sunflowers, each individually expressive; vineyards of

the Armagnac; miles and miles of fields of corn towering high on both sides, the duck and geese farms of the Gers; the blood red roofs and shutters on whitewashed farmhouses against the green hills and valleys of the Basque country.

A lovely walk!

Anne

Expedition Elbrus **from 10th to the 26th of June**

Eric Hannagen and Tommie O'Connor

The following was the make-up of the team:-

Gavin Bate	Managing Director, Adventure Alternative Limited and expedition leader.
Andrea Panin	Moscow Guide
Sasha	Mountain Guide and Guide in Cheget and Sochi
Ibrahim	Elbrus mountain guide
Nadia	Our cook on Elbrus
	Kremlin Guide

Tom Rea, Loretta Needham, Jerry Lawlor, Noel O'Meara, Gerard Mangan, Michael Laffey, Micko Keane, Pat Holland, Peter Curran, Eric Hannagen, Tommie O'Connor

Our trip started at 6.00 a.m. on Saturday 26th June on a bus from Galway to Shannon, an Aer Lingus flight to Heathrow and then with Aeroflot onwards to Moscow. To our delight/relief Gavin and Andrea were there to meet us off the flight. Thanks to Gavin's diligence with the paperwork we got through Immigration without any hassle. Having exchanged our Euros for Roubles, at an exchange rate 45 to the Euro we were whisked off to the Delta Hotel. A hour later we were checked- in and had started acclimatising with the local beer.

We spent Sunday and Monday exploring Moscow with excellent guides provided by Gavin. We used the Metro for most of the travelling around the city, an amazing system, and at a cost of 15 Roubles (€0.30) per journey the best way to travel around Moscow. The stations were spotless and each a unique work of art! – With marble platforms, statues and murals. The city was dripping with history, icons, paintings and art. The

beauty of Cathedral Square was very impressive; we walked on cobble stones through the Kremlin and Red Square and finished the tour at St. Basil's cathedral.

Back in the Hotel it was time for a quick pint and a shower (in that order) before we set off for the Moscow State Circus. This was again a very enjoyable and worthwhile excursion. Then back to the hotel for more drink. Some "counselling" was undertaken by Jerry, ably assisted by Tommie on a forlorn American in search of "love", this crews hidden talents were coming to the fore!

On Monday, again an early start back on the Metro - we headed for Victory Park, with its vast layout of fountains and vast arsenal of military hardware including tanks, aircraft etc. We ate in My-My(Moo!Moo!) traditional Russian restaurant where the food was fantastic, and then back to the hotel to get ready to go to the theatre.

The Bolshoi theatre was being renovated at the time so we went to a dance extravaganza, which was also a good experience. Back to the hotel where we had to ready ourselves and pack for an early start the following morning for the trip to Mineralne Vody.(MV). Of course a few stayed a little longer than others in the bar recounting the days events and doing more "counselling" with the American...it was beginning to bear fruit!

On Tuesday around 10am we boarded the flight to Mineralne Vody on schedule. We arrived, after a 2 hour flight in what seemed to be an old army airfield. The contrast with Moscow was quite startling. We packed into two transport vans and started our five hour journey to the Baksan Valley and the "Mountain" - but stopped after 10 kilometres for nice grub and drinks. Our destination was Cheget a little village at the end of an alpine valley surrounded with snow capped peaks.

Next morning Wednesday it was time to start our acclimatisation for the challenges ahead. We walk up Cheget-Karabash mountain and reached a height of about 3,000 metres. We crossed some small ice fields before returning whence we came. Gavin took the opportunity to point out where trekking turned into climbing as we looked across at a ridge that led to the summit! Back down to welcome barbequed lamb salad and beer.

The next day, Thursday we headed up steep winding zigzag trail past some poor farms to lovely forest trails gradually changing into rock, screed and snow. The main features of this climb were the first views of Elbrus -At the top of this mountain is an observatory that is still used by the Russians, but was built by the Nazis when they occupied the region. Back to base in Cheget and a welcome sauna - to prepare for the move to Azau and start to prepare for ascent of Elbrus!

Friday the 16th, we headed for the hire shops to sort out the hire of poles, Snow boots, ice axes and crampons. Then onto the cable cars, our objective was to reach Garabashi, the Botchki Barrels, at 3,800 metres.

The Barrels (accommodation) were very comfortable and heated by electricity. We met our cook Nadia – a lovely bubbly and energetic woman who was to be our cook on the mountain. All took a shine to her ... maybe it was because she was Russian, blond, a ski instructor, and a great cook.

Saturday the 17th, we climbed up to the Priut 11 hut at 4,157metres and came back down – this was part of our acclimatising routine!

Sunday the 18th, we climbed back up to the Priut while our gear was carried up on the rat-track (track machine). It was much colder now and we practiced ice-braking with our ice axes and using our crampons.

The views throughout were fantastic! We were also very lucky with the weather.

Monday the 19th, we climbed up to the Pastukhova Rocks at 4,690 metres. We crossed an ice field and got great practice with ice-axe and crampons. Came back and I think most of us were knackered after it.

The question was when to summit. Computer forecasts were good for Sunday night/Monday morning, but the local guides didn't agree. Gavin had a meeting with them and the consensus was to go for Monday night/Tuesday morning. This was proved right as the winds came up early Sunday morning and some climbers were beaten back from the summit.

Tuesday the 20th, breakfast at four o'clock and gone at 5.30 a.m. Beautiful clear conditions and no need for the head torches. We followed a line of sticks in the snow and plodded on up through the ice-field. The sun was coming on our right and gave off a fantastic glow as it rose above the ice-field.

We proceeded around the East Elbrus cone. When we proceeded to the saddle it emerged that we had to climb the flank to get to the West Elbrus summit,

At the saddle, which is a col between the two summits, we rested for a while and had some food. We then traversed up the side of the west cone – one deliberate step after another – gasping for breath. Eventually reaching the plateau where we could see the mound of the summit in the distance. At this point, Gavin was putting marker flags in the snow to ensure a safe descent if the weather deteriorated. We learned afterwards that there were two corpses on the mountain from an accident in May in which eight climbers lost their lives in one day.

We reached the summit at around 2.00 p.m., always a very special feeling. And after coming to terms with our emotions and the customary photographs, we were off down again.

Weather was extremely calm and clear on top. Bare hands taking pictures was not possible as it was very, very cold. Gavin was now anxious to get everyone back down as quickly as possible so we did not delay too long.

On the way down we regrouped at the saddle and had a rest. We proceeded steadily down and crossed the ice-field which seemed to go on for ever. We trekked back to the Priut while Gavin assisted in the rescue of a girl. We arrived back at around 6.30 p.m. exhausted and exhilarated and relieved to have everyone back safely.

Wednesday the 21st. Back down to the hotel in Cheget for the first shower in five days and a pint (in that order). We walked down from Priut and some of us walked on down to Mir while some took the chairlift. That night we had our celebration dinner a sing song and a few well deserved pints. Jerry made a little speech, thanked Gavin and all his team for the excellent organisation of the expedition and made a contribution on our behalf to Gavin's Charity.

Also on hand was a photographer who had taken pictures of us on the summit and he had them for sale in excellent presentation packs and cd!

Next morning, it was time to leave the Baksan Valley and the mountains. Gerard, Eric and Gavin headed back to Mineral Vody (MV) and home while the rest headed for Sochi on the Black Sea- and a bit of R&R.

Our trip to Sochi was also a great experience. We boarded an overnight train in MV that would take us to Sochi. The Sleeper train was scheduled to leave at 8.30 p.m. on a beautiful balmy July evening. Waiting on this massive train platform one had a sense of Europe in the 1940's with these gigantic trains and steam gushing and the young Soldiers (now peacetime reservists) saying farewell to their families.

As the train departed we had a few games of 25 (45 if you're from Cork) and then it was into the bunks of which there was four per cabin , and before long there were zzzzzzzzzzz flying all over the place.

We arrived in the beautiful city of Sochi at 8.00am on Friday which meant we had a full day ahead of us to explore the city and to get a swim in the Black Sea. As luck would have it, the city was in party mood as it officially launched its application to host the 2012 Winter Olympics, so we made the best of it and also picked up free T-shirts on the way.

Saturday morning, still no let up on the pace we arranged to go White-water rafting. After a brief introduction to the sport and some safety advice we were loaded on to the raft. The two big men Pat Holland and Jerry Lalor were strategically placed and the rest of us were told to "spread out". It was then, shortly after take off as we battled the waves and struggled to avoid the Rocks that our only near catastrophe occurred. Jerry, who was doing lookout as well as providing ballast, was almost thrown overboard as we battled severe turbulence. Luckily for Jerry he was carrying all our money, so there was no way we were going to let him go down. After a heroic but unsuccessful attempt by Pat Holland, Michael Laffey managed to grab him by his money belt and haul him in. Panic over, we got to the finish without any more drama. Then it was up to the mountains for a picnic and a few beers.

On Sunday it was a flight back to Moscow and home on Monday. All agreed that it was an excellent trip and a great experience. Our thanks to Gavin and his team who did an unbelievable job. My thanks to Eric Hannigan who was responsible for putting the majority of this piece together; I just added a few little titbits, hope he does not mind..

Tommie.

Diamond Hill

Martha Higgins

The work on Diamond Hill in Connemara National Park in Letterfrack was controversial with local people who were doubtful if the work was worth the money.

Clearly the result of the work is wonderful and an excellent example of what can be done for walkers all over Ireland and in particular the West of Ireland which is very poorly developed for walking.

We visited Diamond Hill on a lovely sunny day in June, there were 27 of us so we took it slowly, enjoying the fresh air and the views around us.

We sat on top for an hour to enjoy our lunch in the warm sunshine with beautiful vistas on all sides and in particular the picturesque Kylemore Abbey and Gardens beneath us.

We made our way slowly downwards and had coffee in the lovely courtyard back at the centre. Led by Elaine we then went on to Lettergesh beach where the many brave folk among us went for a swim.

It was a super day out. Well done to all concerned in making Diamond Hill a great success story.

I would really recommend it for a family day out or a place to take visitors to the area.

There is a small charge to use the park, but there are several other less challenging walks in the park to suit all levels of walking.

THE 10TH MARATHON

(From behind the scenes)

*The Planning Started Friday
The Team Put Up the Signs,
Provisions Bought In Tesco
The Best of Cheese and Wines.*

*Then All Up Bright And Early
On Saturday To Start
Signing Up The Punters,
150 Did Take Part.*

*We Filled Up All The Buses
And Sent Them On Their Way,
Then Off To Man The Checkpoints
In Charge, Of Course, Tom Rea.*

*There Was No Need For Leaders
With Miko In The Lead,
But Fair Play To The Sweepers
Who Performed That Thankless Deed.*

*Thank God The Day Was Gorgeous
Bad Weather's What We Dread!
With Walking Boots And Runners
They Got Over Paddys Bed.*

*A Certificate From Martha
And A Platter Quite Divine,
Was Awarded To Each Entrant
As They Crossed The Finish Line.*

*The 10th Marathon Was A Huge Success
The Committee Are In Heaven
But I Suggest They Introduce
DRUG TESTING IN '07!!!!*

Caroline Meaney



Galway Walking Club 10th Anniversary Marathon

**Marathon Co-ordinator Tom Rea and Galway Walking Club Chairperson Martha Higgins
with the 10th Anniversary Cake.**

**A New Walk in Cornamona or was it Blackberry
Picking...!**

Martha Higgins

Twenty seven of us arrived at Mac's Bar in Cornamona to meet Miko Keane for a new walk for the club. On our way Monica pointed out the lovely Golden Bay, and one of our walkers assured us it was a nice as any view she recently saw in the celebrated Lake District in England.

Despite a bad weather forecast, we were blessed with a lovely day, great walking and some stunning scenery. Walking along the lanes on our way

back, the smell of turf smoke evoked memories for us and we talked about living in rural areas again and if we could settle down away from our cappuccinos and lattes now! The day was tinged with the poignant knowledge that summer is almost gone and this would be our last summer walk for this year.

It seems like I have never seen so many luscious juicy blackberries and our walk could easily have become a blackberry picking expedition! Our sweeper got seriously distracted at one stage as the main group waited beside the newly whitewashed holy well and shrine. As we waited and chatted we saw Elaine coming with a bag filled with blackberries accompanied by our sweeper Brigid with tell tale purple hands!!

Debriefing in Cong on the day that Mayo played Dublin in the All Ireland semi final was not easy, we were lucky to get a cup of tea! As we chatted Elaine pondered on who wrote about Blackberry picking, was it Seamus Heaney? And indeed it was:

*Late August, given heavy rain and sun
For a full week, the blackberries would ripen...*

We had a wonderful day out and with a bit of distance added to it, this walk is destined to become a club favourite. And next year, I think we will have to have a day out devoted to Blackberry Picking!