



Galway Walkers Newsletter



Volume 5 Issue 1

SPRING 2000

Thanks Due...

There are many changes to the committee due to some members taking a well deserved rest from responsibilities.

Many thanks are due to Tom Rea, Noel Brown, Tom Reddington and Phil Clerkin for their trojan work over the last years.

The current committee has some new faces and some familiar ones. The retired members are still to be seen leading many a ramble on wet and sunny Sundays.

Ann Walsh read a review of last years AGM and outgoing chairman Tom Rea gave a review of club activities over the previous year.

New committee members were nominated and voted for.

After a discussion members present at the meeting voted to pay two pounds each before every ramble to cover general expenses on the day.

During the AGM walkers were advised that by joining the Mountaineering Council of Ireland they would also receive twelve months civil liability insurance for walking in Ireland and access to the BMC personal insurance scheme. All this as well as a quarterly magazine with lots of interesting articles.

Thanks to all who turned up!

CALLING ALL WALKERS

Thanks to all contributors to this years first newsletter. Articles are welcome from all walkers and their family and friends. I'm sure that everyone knows some budding writers who are just dying to be published - we can offer them that opportunity!

Subjects can be as varied as a recall of a memorable ramble with the club, a description of a visit to a walking festival, recipes, exercise and fitness advice, holiday stories and short stories or poems on any subject.

Due to popular demand each newsletter will continue to contain basic first walk advice plus additional information on hill walking and possibly some camping info to get ye all in the mood when the summer hits. Anyone interested in walking and camping on the western way some weekend? Any one who is planning a walking trip abroad and looking for company - look no further - just give us the details and wait for the replies!!!

Committee 2000

The club AGM was held in Jamesons Hotel, Salthill on 20 January 2000.

COMMITTEE 2000:

Chairman: Miriam Sheerin
087 23842112

Vice-Chair: Mel Faherty
086 8216800

Secretary: Ann Walsh
091 552050

Treasurer: Paul Maloney
086 8413031

Membership: James Sheerin
086 8139262

Ordinary Members:

Ann O'Connor 529447

Kay Smith 790485

Sharon Brennan 583992

Tom Huban 794802

(all are 091)

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New Year in China

Athlone - Dublin -
Heathrow - Beijing -
Xian

Deidre Hunt

Sounds exhausting already? Well, in theory we arrived 36 hours later. Xian, the home of the Terracotta Warriors, is a major cultural attraction.

It was quite an experience stepping into the museum which contains 6000 life-size terracotta warriors and horses. During the 16th century slaves were buried alive with the slave owners and aristocrats when they died. Later the slave owners had to stop burying slaves alive, using instead figurines as funerary objects.

We spent two days in Xian and found the climate unhealthy with fog and smog.

From Xian we flew back to Beijing. We arrived on New Years Eve and it was exciting to see the lights of the city and the exquisite 12 storey, 5 star hotel.

I would liked to have stayed in for the night (especially as I had been given a huge family suite room instead of a single room) but we were getting ready to ring in the New Year at the "Great Wall of China." Despite having come from an internal flight

we had to brace ourselves to catch the coach to be entertained with a performance of Chinese folk music, martial arts and Peking Opera.

The temperature outside was -3° C downwards. I think that we were considered lucky as the week before we came the temperature was -10° C. After the evening meal the group was transferred to "The Great Wall" for the New Millennium celebrations. Some were lucky enough to be able to get some very fine whiskey, which came in handy when climbing some of the wall in the dark. It was perishing cold up there but the countdown at the clock was brilliant. My friend and I managed to have coffee with some locals in a bar beside the wall, we were glad of the shelter.

After a bit of a lie in the next morning the sightseeing was good. The Forbidden City, Summer Palace, the Temple of Heaven and the Peking Opera.

The 2nd Jan the group headed for the "Great Wall of China" and the Ming Tombs. I think that at this stage I was heading for the hospital, where I was diagnosed with "acute bronchitis." That put a halt to my gallop for a few days, so much so that I couldn't fly back on the 4th Jan as planned. I missed "Dirty Nellies" the Irish pub that the group went to on

their last night, but at the same time I was getting a good rest for the extra week that lay ahead for me.

On the next day, to test my energy, I walked to Tiananamen Square which was twenty five minutes from the hotel and is the largest square in the world. I thought I would get a taxi back but I believe that it's the hardest place to get transportation out of. I walked back again at a leisurely pace. A very impressive place no doubt but a place which you could do with a group.

In between resting time after that I made my way to the Silk Market where I did a bit of bargaining and went on my own tour of the "Great Wall of China." I was well rested by my return home on the 11th Jan. It was snowing as I got my taxi to the airport and the taxi driver was wondering if he could get extra money from me because of the hazardous conditions. The aeroplane was ready for take-off back to Heathrow but take-off it didn't - for two hours we were left waiting in the plane, we were snowbound. That's it for now folks, been there, done that!



A Spring Walk in Newquay

Ann Walsh

A group of fifteen optimists made their way to the car park at the rear of Linnane's Pub in Newquay. It was a soft day as we commenced our walk, making our way along the coast to the Martello Tower.

On previous walks in this area we would take a break at the tower but on this occasion it was a sea of mud. We proceeded with the help of gale force winds to the church in the hope of being

afforded some shelter, to have lunch.

The best we could do was find a corner behind the church where we dined in style as we observed palm trees swaying in the breeze. Looking after our welfare, and his, was our trusty cattle dog who had adopted us enroute. He too had a gourmet lunch.

Comments such as "it's so windy it would blow the wind out of your tea" and "you're lucky - it's blown my tea away" just about summed up the weather conditions. However morale remained high.

As we recommenced our walk making our way along the green road we all looked somewhat inebriated as we battled to remain upright in the strong winds.

Safety in numbers was the name of the game as we linked arms with whoever was close by, great craic! By the time we arrived back at Linnane's Pub we felt justified in enjoying some refreshment. Recovery was rapid to say the least.

Another enjoyable day with the Galway Walking Club, it sure beats watching T.V.

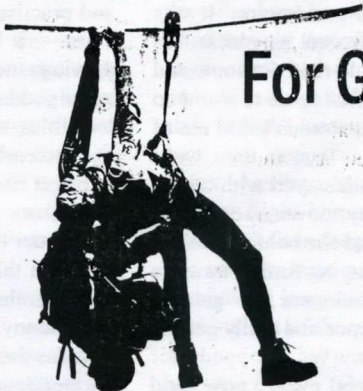


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our turn came and were freezing, so naturally I fell over twice because I was literally frozen solid.

Out of the dozen in our class that first day one had dropped out from injury by the next morning and two to change resorts. From then on we lost a person each day to injury and we began to feel very nervous about who would be next.

One woman was wiped out by a maniac who came flying down the hill out of nowhere, totally out of control and moving far too fast. He never made a sound so she didn't have a chance, she couldn't see him coming. It all happened so fast that no-one had a chance to call out to warn her. The next thing we knew she was a crumbled heap on the snow and he falling all the way down the hill. Apparently when he hit her, her shoulder became dislocated but it seems that it popped back in when she hit the ground. She was terribly shocked and frightened but luckily she did recover in a few days. She even skied again, very slowly and carefully, on the last day. Although still very bruised she said that if she didn't ski again before going home she thought that she would lose her nerve and never come back.

On Tuesday I had made the mistake of going up to the blue (scary beginner) run too early in the morning and the

skiing was terrible. The surface was too frozen to get a grip on. However I did meet up with a few very nice English women about halfway down and finished the run in their company which was much better than skiing those conditions alone. After lunch I met up with them and their husbands at the chair-lift when I was going for a second attempt at a solo run. We were chatting on the way up & one couple asked if I had attempted the run which went along by the lift route and I said no but that it looked like fun. They said that if I wanted to give it a go they would accompany me all the way down so I said yes.

It was a blast, very steep in places but also much wider than the runs I was used to so there was always lots of room to manoeuvre. It was badly frozen in places but you could read the snow and know what spots to avoid so that you wouldn't skid out of control. True to their word they both stayed with me all the way down, he out in front and she behind, both of them staying further away as they could see me gaining confidence and really getting into it. We stopped for breathers every now and then and they were very encouraging about my ability. It was only when we got to the bottom that they told me it was a red (intermediate) run.

I really enjoyed it, it was the first really good run I had had since I got there and I felt that I was regaining what I had been capable of in Tahoe. We went back up the mountain and skied to one of the cafes where the guys had beers and I introduced the women to real hot chocolate with cream. There I bumped into some of the Irish contingent including one of the girls from ski class and I spent the rest of the afternoon on the blue run with her.

Afterwards I brought them to lovely cafe that I had found near my hotel and we had hot wine and pickled onions and olives while the guys tried a variety of strange beers.

On Wednesday morning I was taking a few runs down the bunny slope to warm up and practise my turns before class. I knew from the previous morning that it was not a good idea to go up the long blue run that we were used to early in the morning because it would be like skiing on corrugated iron. It was better to wait for the sun to warm things up a bit and unfreeze the top layer of ice. The bunny run was not as steep as the red runs and a lot shorter than the blue but was very narrow, only about five yards in places. I was on about my fifth run down and was concentrating on one particular movement when I

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must have lost concentration for a split second and had left my turn later than I should. I was very close to the edge and a drop into trees and so I tried to turn immediately but wasn't really in position for it and my right leg didn't turn. I twisted my knee very badly and found myself on the ground in a lot of pain which faded quickly, thank goodness for the body's natural pain-killers and shock. A few people went past but they probably thought that I was resting and I wasn't capable of speech. After a while I realised that I had to get myself down the hill because there was no sign of any one coming. The hardest part was turning my skis because I was facing the wrong direction.

Once I got up I was able to move to the other edge of the run (where I couldn't fall off the edge because it was uphill) and slide down the hill using my good leg. I had wondered why on the first few runs we did Luca had us skiing/sliding sideways down the hill controlling our speed, now I was very grateful that I knew how to use my edges so well. It was about half a kilometre to the bottom of the run where I found somewhere to sit and wait 'til I saw someone from my class. She sent Luca over to me and he brought

me into the first-aid station. From there I went down on the cable car, myself and a lady who had damaged her hip. We were both ambulated to hospital where we were poked & prodded & x-rayed by a very cranky doctor whose English was as poor as my Italian and I have to admit that by this stage I was feeling very shaky. My resort rep arrived and after my leg was immobilised I was sent to another hospital about forty miles away for more poking and prodding but by much nicer doctors who smiled and didn't talk about big needles and draining knees like the earlier one. My leg was immobilised again and it was time to go back to Bormio. It was beginning to sink in that I wouldn't be hill-walking as planned the day after I got home.

I had thought that after a few days rest the strange immobiliser, called a back-slab, would come off but now my rep was talking about having to arrange another flight home because I wouldn't fit in the plane! In my strange state of mind I was having images of my leg sticking out of the plane and strapped to the wing and I hadn't even taken any painkillers yet! When we got to town we had go shopping for pants to fit over the leg, pick up my shoes from the ski-hire shop, go to the drug store and buy

crutches. So I am now the (proud?) owner of a fine pair of designer Italian crutches. The leg has improved and I can drive now which is great.

Apparently I have some ligament and a little cartilage damage, also a lot of muscle wastage from the time spent immobilised so I have a lot of work to do to rebuild the leg and it is all very boring work! It won't put me off skiing though, at least I don't think it will. And I have to admit that Bormio was a very pretty little town to be stuck in, even on crutches, I was very glad of that pretty view out of the hotel front window. It is strange though to think that before this accident I was capable of spending five or six hours out in the hills of Connemara and that now if I can make it half way up the prom in Salthill I'm pleased with myself.

Now, where will my next adventure be???

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Alpine Adventures

Hop-Along-Miriam Sheerin

School essay - On my holidays I went skiing in the Italian Alps - my school compositions were never that exciting! However I did go for a week at the end of Jan to a little resort called Bormio. It was three hour bus ride from Bergamo airport through the most beautiful mountainous countryside. The flight itself was wonderful from a scenery point of view because we flew over the Swiss and Italian Alps -- WOW!!! They just stretch for ever and ever, and they have the most amazing knife edge ridges, very dramatic and enticing - we'll have to have a club outing there!

The resort I had chosen was a small town. Livigno, which is much better known was about an hour further down the road and it's the main attraction for people who really concentrate on the apres-ski (debriefing to you and me) which meant that Bormio was quieter and had no lager-louts. My hotel was a small and lovely family run place with a great view out the lounge windows straight onto one of the ski slopes although it was a bit in the distance.

The town had narrow hilly cobbled streets and a good selection of small restaurants

and cafes, many of which I can highly recommend.

The ski school was up the mountain at 2000m, you have to travel up by cable car - very James Bond. We had classes for two hours every morning and our fabulous instructor was called Luca, although I have to admit that he sounds most exotic than he really was. It was two days before we knew that he could smile! It only took about ten minutes to walk to the "funivia" for the cable car in the morning but it took a bit longer to walk back - oooh those aching muscles. There were twelve people in my ski class on the first morning although that number rapidly went down, and I do mean went down - hard, with ouches. The conditions were far from ideal.

My previous skiing experience was at Lake Tahoe in America, where we had lots of snow. It was the winter that California nearly got washed into the sea and every time it rained near the coast it snowed in the mountains so there was a lot of fresh snow and deep powder. However, in Bormio, it had not snowed since Christmas so a lot of runs were closed and those that were open had no powder or loose snow, it was packed as hard as ice. There were snow makers working all night, every night but that sort of artificial snow has a

high water content and therefore freezes very quickly. Suffice it to say there were no soft landings! Our resort rep had wisely brought us all to the ski hire shop the night we arrived so that we wouldn't be wasting time on our first morning and it was an opportunity to meet with those in the same tour group as me.

I went up in the cable car early the first morning because we had been warned that it being a Sunday there would be big queues. I remembered how to put on the skis and managed to move around without falling over which I thought was pretty clever. Bravely I headed in the direction of the bunny slope to watch the strange button/drag lift which I had not experienced before. A couple of Aussies told me how it worked and off I went, nervously balanced on the lift and concentrating hard so as not to embarrass myself by falling off. The first run was a bit nerve racking but I began to get the feel of it all after a while, I could slow down and control my turns so I began to relax a little.

After a while they began to organise the classes which meant that we all had to line up and do our stuff in order for the instructors to put us in appropriate classes. Unfortunately some of us had been waiting for more than half an hour by the time

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Your Club Needs You!!

Do you know of any interesting walks in your area?

Do you know of any good walking festivals?

Can you think of any good week-end away places?

If you have answers for these or any other questions let us
know at any club meeting or walk or

E-mail the mag at: gwc.miriam@oceanfree.net

Meetings

Meetings are held every
second Thursday (the
Thursday before the
rambles) in **Tonerys Bar**
98 Bohermore at 9.00pm
sharp.

The next few dates are:

April 13th

April 27th

May 11th

May 25th

June 9th

Walking schedule and
first day walking
information contained on
attached leaflet...

The views expressed in this newsletter

do not necessarily represent those of the

GWC or the editor.

A Stroll in Cong

Ann Walsh

Twenty walkers made their way to the Abbey in Cong and commenced walking at 11.15am in fair weather. The pace was steady as we made our way to the Pigeon Hole where a short break was taken, then we were back on the track making our way through the woods.

We had some fun negotiating the deep water in one of the big tunnels - our visitors must have thought that we were daft altogether to be walking in these conditions. Then the rain commenced

and did not let up for the remainder of the walk.

Tree felling in the forest rendered the track very muddy which is a great pity. By the time we reached our lunch spot at Clonbur we were grateful that the service station was closed as it's canopy provided us with much needed shelter & it's petrol pump stands became seats, bless the proprietors they had provided a picnic table there as well. We didn't delay having lunch with still some distance to go. After lunch the group was well spread out and the pace slow with the rear group.

After regrouping a few times those up front decided to keep going as the weather was too miserable to be standing around. By the time we arrived back the rain had eased and we made out way to Dannagher's Pub to dry off and enjoy some refreshments, a very welcome open fire greeted us.

Despite the bad weather the morale of the group remained high. Alas! Some of the newcomers had not brought a change of clothing but that didn't dampen any spirits.