



# Galway Walkers Newsletter



Volume 4 Issue 3

Winter 1999

## *Twas the night before Christmas*

Twas the night before Christmas  
When all through the house  
Not a creature was stirring  
Not even a mouse

The stockings were hung  
By the chimney with care  
In the hope that St. Nicholas  
Soon would be there

The children were settled  
Ali snug in their beds  
While visions of sugar plums  
Danced in their heads

And Mama in her kerchief  
And I in my cap  
Had just settled down  
For a long winter nap

When out on the lawn  
There rose such a clatter  
I sprang from my bed  
To see what was the matter

Away to the window  
I flew like a flash  
Tore open the shutters  
And threw up the sash

The moon on the breast  
Of new fallen snow  
Gave a lustre of midday  
To objects below



When what to my wondering eyes should  
appear  
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer  
With a little driver so lively and quick  
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came  
And he whispered and shouted and called  
them by name  
Now Dasher, now Dancer, now Prancer and  
Vixen  
On Comet, on Cupid, on Donner and Blitzen

To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall  
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all  
As dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly  
When they meet with an obstacle mount to the  
sky

So up to the house top the coursers they flew  
With a sleigh full of toys and St. Nicholas too  
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof  
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof

As I drew in my head and was turning around  
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a  
bound  
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his  
foot  
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes  
and soot

A bundle of toys he had flung on his back  
And he looked like a peddler just opening his  
pack  
His eyes how they twinkled, his dimple how  
merry  
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a  
cherry



## A Visit To Stormont

Our roving correspondent -  
Ann Walsh

An opportunity to visit the north presented itself - "Pavorotti at Stormont." I linked up with Galway Event Management and 40 of us made the seven hour journey to Belfast, stopping in Sligo and Enniskillen. The weather was dismal all the way and thoughts of an outdoor concert were not exactly ideal. However, miraculously the rain ceased and on a wonderfully clear evening a crowd of 15,000 was entertained by the great man. A very memorable occasion.

The following day I said farewell to the group who were returning to Galway. I decided to make full use of my journey north and caught "The Antrim Coaster" to Ballycastle, magnificent scenery all the way. There I caught the ferry to Rathlin Island. I stayed in the Island's guest house. The Island has 100 inhabitants and is unspoilt, with the focus for walking being it's lighthouses and bird sanctuary. One is encouraged to respect the island code i.e. keep to public roads & footpaths; don't go onto private land

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His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow  
And the beard on his chin was as white as the snow  
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth  
And the smoke it encircles his head like a wreath

He had a broad face and a little round belly  
That shook when he laughed like a bowl full of jelly  
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf  
And I laughed when I saw him in spite of myself

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head  
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread  
He spoke not a word but went straight to his work  
And filled all the stockings then turned with a jerk

And laying his finger aside of his nose  
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose  
He sprang to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle  
And away they all flew like the dawn of a thistle

But I heard him exclaim as he drove out of sight  
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

*Clement C. Moore*  
Originally entitled "The Visit From St. Nicholas"

### The 1999 club committee:

Chairman: Tom Rea  
093 35523  
Vice-Chair: Noel Browne  
091 791738  
Secretary: Ann Walsh  
091 552050  
Membership: Tom Huban  
091 794802  
Treasurer: Paul Maloney  
086 8143031  
Ordinary Members:  
Tom Reddington  
091 524126  
Phil Clerkin  
091 757460  
Miriam Sheerin  
087 2384212  
Mel Faherty  
086 8216800



Your Club Needs You!!

**AGM**  
20 Jan 2000

Jamesons Hotel,  
Salthill

New committee members are urgently needed. The three Toms and Noel have all reached retirement and must be replaced at all costs (is such a thing possible?)  
Give it some thought!!!



(Continued from page 2)

unless you have permission; don't damage dry stone walls by climbing over them; always use a gate or stile; take all your litter home with you.

In perfect weather I explored the island fully in two days but was glad to have stayed three nights. Kay and Dominic were perfect hosts at the Guest House and he manned the ferry also. The crossing is just  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour with great views of Fair Head in Antrim and the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland.

I visited the local school with its five pupils and

teacher Maureen from Co. Down. A visit to the Boat House Museum is a must and Islanders have done a magnificent job in harnessing their history. There is a Trust House also on the island which has been magnificently restored, it's accommodation superb. When in the North, if time permits, do visit Rathlin, it's a grand place to get away from it all.



## A Walk in Cong

Tom Rea

### Part One

The Cong - Clonbur - Golden Bay - Cong Walk seems to be a favourite ramble for many Galway Walking Club members. All too often, however, I feel we hurry through the countryside without appreciating it fully. We are so intent on walking we fail to notice the beauty of the unfolding landscape we traverse, the wonders of nature, its flora and wildlife.

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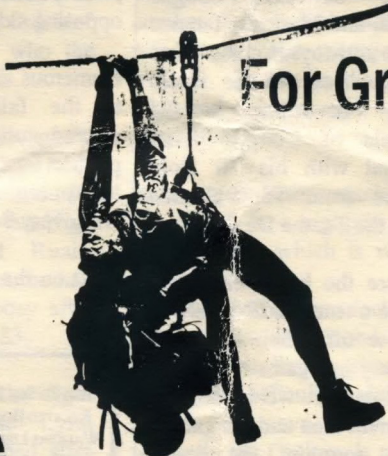
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(Continued from page 3)

If we knew the history, geology and topography of the region no doubt we would find our trips much more enjoyable.

What lies behind the unusual place name? What is the significance of a well constructed, though often neglected, footpath apparently in the middle of nowhere? Were we more inquisitive wouldn't we appreciate the countryside all the more?

Cong is an area that always appealed to me. As a youngster I frequently camped there and explored the caves, underground rivers and the beautiful woodlands. More recently my children, too, have come to know and appreciate its many attractions. A favourite picnic area is what they call "The Newt Place", the semi-dry canal behind the handball alley which itself is bounded by swiftly flowing rivers. Here newts, a tadpole like amphibian, can indeed be found in abundance. Bats may occasionally be seen in daytime - no, that's not a mistake - skimming over these rivers in their search for food. Ardnageeha ("the windy heights") is another much frequented spot of theirs where expeditions through bamboo "forests", swimming and barbecues

can take place in beautiful surroundings.

While describing the walk I would like to share some information regarding the area which I hope might whet your curiosity and encourage you to delve deeper into the glory of Cong.

The area is so steeped in history its difficult to know where to begin. Coming from Galway you will probably approach Cong via the village of Cross. Between the two lies the Plain of Moytura, (the plain of the columns or plain of the battalions) a fascinating area crammed with stone cairns, stone circles, standing stones, burial chambers and caves.

Here, between Loughs Corrib and Mask the famous battle of Moytura took place "in the year of the world 3303" according to the Annals of Cong. King Eochai with his Fir Bolg forces from Tara clashed with the Tuatha De Danann.

Before the battle each side chose a team of 29 youths to "show off" their skill and bravery in a game of hurling. The rules were slightly different then and the game a little rougher, the match finishing only when all the De Danann team were slain! Carn an Cluiche ("monument to the match") was erected over their burial site. It is

about 130 meters in circumference and 15 meters or so in height.

The following day the real fun began with an estimated 100,000 joining the party. At clocking out time the Fir Bolgs were ahead and each returned to base with an enemy head and a large rock. Just as many hill walkers add a stone to hill top cairns so the boys did likewise. Shortly after leaving Cross you may spot a signpost on the right hand side of the road pointing to Ballymacgibbon Cairn the result of their effort. It is only 130 meters in circumference and just 20 meters tall! One wonders what they did with all the heads? Interestingly there is a mention of Norwegian and Belgian participants in the fray on opposing sides.

Numerous other monuments to the fallen dead were erected during and after the pitched four day battle. Many are marked on O.S. Discovery Series Map No. 38.

Next on the left is a signpost

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ASK TO SEE THE RANGE OF WALK  
RELATED BOOKS AT THE GALWAY  
WALKERS LIBRARY IN TREK & TRAIL





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to Derry Quay. Is this the one referred to in the song lines "From Bantry Bay up to Derry Quay and from Galway to Dublin Town no maid I've seen like the bright colleen that I met in the Co. Down"? Somehow I have my doubts.

About 2km nearer to Cong on the left hand side of the road is a signpost pointing to Lisloughery Pier (Lios Luachra - the Rushy or Earthen Fort). This is perhaps best known for the Cong - Galway Boat Race held annually -- well almost annually. Before reaching the turn-off however you will have passed "the Daffodil Ranch" on the right hand side of the main road. I believe the owner Mike Holian was the first ever "King Culchie" but I don't know who the reigning champion is.

At the mouth of Lisloughery Bay is Illaunree (Oileán Rí or King's Island) a favourite "hideaway" for the last High King of Ireland Ruairi O'Conchubhair when he had retired to Cong Abbey after his abdication in 1183.

Nearer Cong on the right hand side is the Lynn Medical Centre named after Dr. Kathleen Lynn who was among the first Irish ladies to qualify as a Doctor and Surgeon. Her father was Rector in Cong. Although

appointed to the Adelaide Hospital in Dublin she was unable to practice there as her male chauvinist colleagues refused to work with a woman. She became interested in politics, was a member of the Labour Party under James Larkin and joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood. She served as an Army Medical Officer in the 1916 Rising looking after the troops barricaded in the Royal College of Surgeons. For this she was imprisoned for two years but was released to practice as a Doctor during the major 'Flu epidemic of 1918. She was President of Sinn Féin until 1926. Other noteworthy achievements were her founding of St. Uthens Hospital and the introduction of B.C.G. immunisation to combat Tuberculosis which was then a major scourge in Ireland. Dr. Lynn died in 1955 and was honoured with a state funeral.

Immediately before reaching the school is a signpost to Kelly's Cave which is well worth a visit.

Although barred by a locked gate any walker used to barbed wire fences should have little difficulty gaining access. This cave, a hideout for Kelly the Outlaw, is part natural and part artificial. If you continue along the path you will come to a beautiful water hole, an ideal spot for a picnic or indeed a swim.

This is part of a river which appears and then disappears through the porous rock.

Nearby is the notorious Captain Webb's Hole. Legend has it that this rogue used to dispose of his lady companions by dropping them down this hole to the underground stream below. The last wily female complained of the surrounding nettles and brambles and while clearing them he was nudged into the hole himself.

Across the road over the high wall are two more caves "The Ladies' Buttery" - presumably a cold store for milk and butter - and "Horses Discovery" - which as the name suggests was discovered by an unfortunate horse who while ploughing fell through the roof which had collapsed from the weight.

**Tune in same time, same channel for the next installment...**





# North Leitrim Glens Walking Festival

Ann Walsh (roving again)

22<sup>nd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup> October

The festival opened on Friday evening with story telling and music by the Two Chairs Theatre Company, Nuala Hayes presented the stories of Mary Lavin and was accompanied by Ellen Cranitch on flute.

Saturday started with a choice of two walks - strenuous (18 km) and medium (13 km). The Galway Walking Club was represented by four members and we chose the longer walk (naturally!). After registration at The Glens Centre in Manorhamilton we were transported by several mini-buses to the start of our walk - the route was Castlegal to Shanvaus.

The scenery was totally magnificent as we made our way to the summit of Castlegal (also known as Copes Mt.), with views of Sligo Bay, Drumcliffe (horsemen pass by) and Glencar Lake.

With 77 walkers in the group it was well spread out as those up front set a cracking pace. Great variety was had in this walk and the weather was very kind to us.

Barbed wire fences were our only obstacle which,

towards the end of the walk, became tedious. We had to cross 12 of them but it felt like twenty. Apart from that it was a great walk and took five hours to complete. Our transport was readily available to return us to Manorhamilton.

We chose to have dinner in Macguire's Pub but I had gone beyond feeling hungry we had to wait so long. We did enjoy the crack though while waiting. Traditional music was good when it eventually commenced.

Sunday also started with a choice of two walks - 18 km and 12 km. Again we chose the longer walk, the rendezvous again was the Glens Centre and transport for the 74 walkers kept the mini-buses busy.

The route was Glenade to Glenaniff. The walk commenced in the Glenade valley and followed a bog road to Keelogue's Mountain, which should have afforded magnificent views of the valley & Donegal Bay but alas, visibility was poor at that point due to low cloud. The walk then meandered round several picturesque lakes, magically the clouds cleared and we enjoyed beautiful sunshine and were able to marvel at the magnificent scenery when we stopped.

The pace was pretty steady and again we had barbed wire fences to negotiate but farmers here were considerate and stiles made life easier. Terrain was

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(Continued from page 6)

different to Saturday's - heather and bog. A 4000 year old tomb was an interesting feature with a standing stone. The walk descended into Glenaniff valley and finished with a lovely river walk. Another great day's walking.

Debriefing took place in Macquires Pub. With dining facilities rather lacking in Manorhamilton we decided to go to Sligo and enjoyed a magnificent meal in The Ark Hotel, with complimentary liqueur, very economical too! We returned to the Glens Centre for the Ceili which went on 'til 1.30am with some fine displays of set dancing. We did the Walls of Limerick and the Siege of Ennis and that was enough.

Monday was the final day with just a 3 hour ramble in Glenfarre Forest, along the shore of Lough McNea, with views of Fermanagh. Our own transport was required and approximately 30 walkers took part.

So ended a very well organised festival - they even organised the weather too! Pity the traders in Manorhamilton didn't support the Festival by having food more readily available to the 160 walkers who took part.

Accommodation was excellent, we stayed in Lake

View B&B at Glencar, seven miles from Manorhamilton. Yes! I would recommend this festival!

Is there an issue that bugs you?

Do you have outdoor gear to sell?

Stories, horoscopes, advice, poetry...we will accept nearly anything - we're not fussy!



The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of the GWC or the editor.

## 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:

Dec 9th

Jan 6th

**Jan 20th AGM**

Feb 3rd

Feb 17

## WALKS

Seanna Feistin Dec 12

*Wine Walk - Dec 19*  
*Mamean*

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