

## **A History of Galway Walking Club 1994 – 2006**



**Maumturk Mountains, Connemara**

## ***Foreword by Pat Holland - chairperson of Galway Walking Club***

Galway Walking Club (GWC) is a club that was established in 1995. Its aim has always been to encourage walking, both in the hills and the valleys. Its ethos has always been inclusive and to make new and old members welcome. Great friendships have been the result of the Club's activities.

It has grown steadily to the point that there are now approximately 370 members. During that time many people have passed through the club, the growth of which is due to their efforts over the years.

The club has grown from a single walk once a month, to a situation where now we have 3 categories of hill walks, rambles, short walks and mid-week walks. Also in addition, many weekends are organised each year all around Ireland. These cater for social and walking activities. Many international trips have been organised all over Europe, as well as some of the seven major peaks around the world.

The club is indebted to Regina for writing the history of the club. It is always good to know where we have come from. Her efforts reflect the cooperative spirit that exists within the club. On behalf of the members, I would like to thank Regina for her efforts.

It was a privilege to research and write the History of the Galway Walking Club which I volunteered to do just before the Covid arrived into Ireland. Writing it whiled away the evening hours during the various lockdowns, but it did take much longer than I anticipated as I could not copy and paste any of the information contained within the newsletters. My method was to read each paragraph of the newsletters, memorised the content, paraphrased that and then typed same onto the Word document. Switching between the newsletter and the Word document was very time consuming.

Nevertheless, I really enjoyed the project and I believe it was an important one to undertake because of the longevity of the GWC, it is the largest walking club in Galway city and county, it is successful

and sustainable because of the spirit of volunteering and the dedication and commitment that has never waned of the committees, leaders, and members since its inception.

I must thank Anne Brindley who supplied the newsletters by e/mail.

To Tom Rea and Ellie Keating who read, corrected and added to the drafts. Also, to Mary Fahey and Ellie who supplied photos.

To Pat Holland who wrote the Foreword and to the GWC committee who supported the task from the beginning.

And last but not least Derek Naughton of RightPrice Ink who helped to put the final copy together.

Regina - August 2022.



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*In every walk with Nature, one receives far more than one seeks – John Muir* - an influential advocate for the preservation of wilderness in America and was also known as the Father of National Parks there.

**AUTUMN 1995** - The first GWC newsletter came out in Autumn 1995 and its first page was devoted to the surprise birthday party held on August 31<sup>st</sup>, post meeting, in the Galway Arms to mark Ollie Sammon's birthday. Mel Faherty and Steve Wright helped to decorate the room with banners and posters of photocopied photographs of Ollie. A merry night was had by all.

In this newsletter Ollie thanked the club committee, Mel Faherty for his printing and distribution of maps, lists of walks etc and to the two hosts in the Galway Arms, Mike and PJ.

In the words of Ollie

*"We walked together*

*Through every weather*

*And see this land*

*With a bending Stature*

*I walk in Nature*

*Now not alone"*

In this newsletter Ollie Sammon, the first Chairperson of the Galway Walking Club, wrote:

*"On a wet and windy Sunday in November 1994 a group of walkers were slogging their way through the Burren. Gone was the flora and fauna of which the Burren is famous, instead the entire coastline was awash in an eerie mist, one couldn't see the sea but could hear*

*the curling line of foam that slid up to the beaches. As we plodded along the geological remnants of the Ice Age, I turned to Tom Huban and said: "Tom, we should form a walking club in Galway" Tom turned towards me with rain dripping off his cap in torrents, and with a knowing look, he said, "It's something I have been thinking of for a long time" There it all began.*

An alternative account was that, on a late August day in 1994, Brian Mannion, Ollie Sammon and Ellie Keating were walking in the Burren which turned out to be a very wet day where the trio had none other than Ollie's big umbrella to take shelter under. As they lunched these 3 walkers talked about organising a walking club and following that Ellie put in an advertisement in the Galway Advertiser for a first meeting in the Galway Arms Bar. Tom Huban and Mel Faherty turned up along with a few others and that's when and where the club was formed.

In response to the advertisement in November 1994 a large group of people turned up at the meeting place at Blackrock, in Salthill. 84 or 94 people turned up for and so this large group was divided into 2 groups, to do both a long walk and a shorter one. One walker was overheard saying "I've never walked 7 miles before" and another remarked "Do ye have any maps?"

The second walk was on December 27<sup>th</sup> when a large group of walkers turned up again. "Our gear in general consisted of Penney's runners, raincoats and back packs. It was a very wet day, and everyone got soaked. Trevor ran a sports shop on Mainguard Street - he got great custom from this newly emerging club of walkers who bought their first pair of walking boots in his shop" Ellie remembers.

The Galway Arms became the meeting place for the Club's meetings, facilitated by Mike and P.J. This was to remain the Club's meeting venue for many years thereafter.

**COMMITTEE:** Chairperson 1995 - Ollie Sammon

Secretary - Ann Walsh - aka the 'Sheila' from Tazzie

Treasurer: Ellie Keating

Committee: Maura & Tom Huban, Trevor Dubber

Other active members/walk leaders were - Ruth Murphy, Noel & Ronnie Browne, Tom (?) and Sheila from Tazzie (aka Anne Walsh from Tasmania, originally)

The Galway Walking Club, by April/ May 1995, were venturing further afield with walks undertaken in the Burren, Leenane, Croagh Patrick et al. The first weekend away was to the Aran Islands followed by Inishbofin and the Giants Causeway. One group of members, all women, walked the whole of the Wicklow Way while another group explored the roads and public houses of Connemara over a Bank Holiday weekend. No further details of this jaunt were forthcoming!

A detailed account of the Castlebar Walking Festival was written by Steve Wright, who with Tom Rea, had agreed to help out as radio operators in the event of emergencies during the Festival. Little did they know they were expected to walk each and every day with the participants rather than being driven along!! Sore feet and aching bodies ensued for the four days of the Festival.

Brand new army boots were acquired by Tom and Steve and 'broken in' by doing a short walk around Headford Demesne. By Day 4 their

walking boots were tipped up to empty out the blood! Army boots not recommended for the Castlebar Walking Festival!

However, as a result, Tom and Steve caught the walking bug and have never looked back since.

In May 1995 the first of the weekly Wednesday walks began which started from the Omniplex cinema at 7.30pm and was well attended. Ann Walsh penned two very amusing accounts of walks, one a 7.30pm walk to Ballinduff Castle at which a large group of horses emerged in the darkness to frighten the life out of the walkers and then a planned Sunday walk from Kylemore Abbey to Maam, on which the walkers met a very hostile woman and her stick wielding large son spewing insults and colourful language at the hapless group.

The first Galway Walking Club Christmas Party was held in the Corrib Hotel, Oughterard attended by 40 members. The hotel owners, Michael Webb and his wife Joan displayed true hospitality to the Galway Walkers.

At this a Presentation of Club Awards took place. A photo competition took place and Ellie won First Prize. Tom Huban was presented with a stone inscribed "Slow Down Tom"

Music by Carmel Dempsey, spot prizes galore, great dancing and impersonations also occurred.

A budding poet, Ruth Murphy, penned a long poem on the "shenanigans" of the Galway Walkers in this newsletter.

*"Galway Walkers is the name of our troupe*

*And some might say it's a motley group*

*With people varied, short and tall*

*But mighty walkers one and all".*

In this newsletter Ollie quoted the words of the late Jim Blewitt, a fellow walker/friend who died in January 1995 - "New friends, new experiences, new friends, new beginnings. We are very privileged people indeed".

***"Joss Lynam (1924 - 2011) became the voice of Irish mountaineering on the international stage" (Dawson Stelfox, the first Irish person to conquer Everest)***

**Winter 1995:** The cover page of this newsletter was beautifully adorned with Christmas images and greetings. The club membership grew enormously in the first year of Galway Walking Club. From seven members at its inception, a year later the number had grown to 150 - 180 persons. The club chairperson Ollie Sammon stated that attendance at committee meetings continued to be good. Steve Wright and Noel Browne joined the committee as PRO and membership coordinator respectively. The Club perceived itself, at this early stage, as a walking group, not a mountain or hill walking group and the average length of the fortnightly walks were 9 - 14 miles.

In this winter newsletter, in a witty article, Ollie recounted his walk from Malin to Mizen Head that took him 18 days and 455 miles to complete, in the company of some friends. He met up with tourists, in-laws, old friends, and John B Keane of Listowel fame.

The Castlebar Walking Festival celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. Participant numbers continued to increase each year and hundreds of walkers from the UK and Europe returned each year to take part.



Steve Wright wrote an interesting article on the International Marching League (IML) which the Castlebar Walking Festival is affiliated to. The Castlebar Walking Festival was founded in 1967 and still takes place: plans are on its website for 2022.

This IML was founded in 1997 in Japan by the following affiliated countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Japan, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. There is no membership/affiliation fee regarding this IML.

After participating in the first IML a walker purchases an international walking passport which is stamped by the organisers to prove that the walker has fulfilled the necessary criteria. In the case of the Castlebar Walking Festival it would prove the walker had completed the four days of 40km rambles, four days of 40km or 25km days. Participation in a multi day event involved walking a minimum of 20km each day. The international walking passport idea is similar to the Camino passport.

More details can be found in this newsletter located in the Archive section of the GWC website. A list of affiliated countries offices and dates in respect of their international walking festivals was included in this newsletter which was particularly useful information.

Many Galway Walking Club members have participated in the Castlebar Walking Festival including the writer.

29 members bussed to Portstewart, Co Derry where they stayed the first night. The following day the group toured the Giants Causeway and climbed the 160 steps no problem at the Causeway Visitors Centre. A tour of Bushmills Distillery took place the following day and Maureen was selected to taste the 20 samples of whiskey produced here, which she did, and, according to the newsletter, didn't wake up for 2 days!!

Anne Walsh wrote an amusing alternative article on this weekend in Portstewart.

The background to this October 1995 walk was to attempt the Kylemore Lake to Maam Cross Challenge again as an aborted attempt had been made in the previous August. This group risked incurring the wrath of an unfriendly family living en route. The group finished the walk unscathed but with a lengthy tirade of abuse ringing in their ears.

Tom Rea dispensed excellent tips and advice on choice of footwear, dealing with blisters, and determining directions through one's wristwatch in a two page article for the newsletter. Examples are: (i) Never dry boots in direct heat or in front of a stove or open fire, stuff them with newspaper (ii) footwear should be bought in the afternoon or evening to allow for feet spreading due to weight bearing and (iii) potassium permanganate is a lifesaver for hill walkers and ramblers, in the event of an emergency.

The reader will have to read Tom's article to understand why!!

*Winter Deep*, the *Great Outdoors* and *Radar* shops (pre e/mails and Internet the schedule of walks were displayed in these shops) took out large ads for their shops in the newsletter, aptly enough, as perhaps these shops had Christmas or New Year sales.

A variety of members Anne Walsh, Mary Bennett and Padraig Farrell wrote great reports on the Club's visits during the year to the Giant Causeway, and Inisbofin.

The AGM was scheduled to take part in its usual venue, the Galway Arms, on January 25<sup>th</sup>, 1996,

***To walk in Nature is to witness a thousand miracles – Mary Davis, A U.S. based spiritual teacher.***

**Spring 1996:** The Club's AGM took place in the Galway Arms on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 1996 and attracted a crowd of 57 members to it. The meeting followed the usual procedures of the Chairperson's report, the Secretary's report and the Treasurer's report followed by the election of Club Officers and committee members.

Ollie Sammon was elected Chairperson, with Noel Browne as Vice Chairperson. Anne Walshe was elected Secretary and Steve Wright to the post of Treasurer.

PRO: Ellie Keating (replaced by Kay Smyth)

Membership Officer: Tom Huban

Committee Members: Muire Mc Loughlin, Mel Faherty, Ann O Connor

Yearly membership stood at £5 which included the postage costs of each newsletter produced being posted to the Club members.

A trip to Guadalupe, Spain was planned through a Spanish member, Arturo, who owned 2 hostels in Guadalupe at the time and a saving club was set up by the committee. Guadalupe is a small town 200kms west of Madrid and the trip was planned to be of 8 - 10 days duration.

The club wanted it to be a low cost holiday and it was planned to travel early May. Ryanair had arrived on the aviation scene in 1984 but didn't extend its flights to Europe until 2004. So, a midweek fare from Dublin to Madrid cost £250. A hefty sum in those days.

Guadalupe is an area of great historical and cultural significance and, combined with walking in the region, it promised to be an exciting holiday for the first European adventure for the Galway Walking Club... This trip was to be the foretaste of many European and global adventures for the Galway Walking Club in the following years.

A list of walks from April to July was printed in this Spring 1996 newsletter; the walks were all rambles and held every two weeks. The walks took place in Connemara, The Burren and Co Galway.

The practice of holding club meetings at 8.30 on the Thursday night prior to the rambles was initiated in this quarter, a practice which continues to this day.

The first official walk of the New Year took place around Ballinahinch Castle, and Ollie wrote a detailed article, accompanied by a map, on the history of the Castle. Thirty six hardy walkers participated in this circular walk around the lake, a distance of eight miles. The weather conditions were wet and windy so on completion of the walk members sought the comfort of the log fire inside the Castle. Some others trod around the grounds of the Castle and were enchanted by the terrain and its beauty.

Two reports were written by Anne Walsh on the rambles in Killary and the Neale. The Killary walk was led by Mary Ryan and Noel Browne led the Neale walk. Both walks concluded in the well known hostelrys of Keane's Pub at Maam Bridge and Gibbons pub.

Much to the amusement of the walkers who had parked their cars in the pub car park earlier, and Fintan the barman, the Garda had raided Gibbons pub, at 2.30pm, in the belief that the pub was full, which prompted the few punters in the premises to exit, fast.

On both occasions the "debriefing" concluded with a sing song.

One weekend away (author of this report unknown) was to Killary Harbour, consisting of 22 members who had booked their accommodation in Killary Lodge. Suffice to say the weather was horrible for the duration of the weekend but this didn't deter the hardy walkers who withstood the challenges of the weather and got

out into the great outdoors each day to walk and climb parts of the Western Way. The scenery is magnificent and so too was the food, accommodation and hospitality offered by Mary and staff in Killary Lodge.

Anne Lantry wrote a report on participating in the "Go Ireland" Killorglin Walking Festival over the New Year, at which 130 walkers turned up to participate. She opted to walk the Kerry Way, from Kells to Glenbeigh - a four hour trek - while others opted to climb Carrantuohill and the remaining folk opted for bird watching at Rossbeigh beach. The weekend was very enjoyable, according to Anne, and everyone participated to the full in each day's activities as well as the important socialising each evening.

On May 22 four women walkers from the Club undertook a 7 day walking trip on the Wicklow Way. This Way starts in Marlay Park in Rathfarnham, South Dublin and ends at Clonegal on the Wexford border. The group bussed to Dublin and started walking ending up staying in Kiltiernan Cottage the first night.

Over the following 6 days the group reckoned they walked 160kms considering detours. The writer stated that while the Way is a lovely trail, it was such a pity that the Wicklow Way was so poorly marked.

Another report of a weekend away was written by Steve Wright and Ollie Sammon. Steve wrote about the weekend walking in Co Offaly, along with several members of the club who joined Tom and Maura Huban, in their fundraising efforts for Tom's trip to Goa, India with MS Ireland, one of the many fundraising walks Tom undertook over the years for charities. The two days walking were through the Slieve Bloom Way.

Mention must be made also of Mel Faherty who continued to contribute articles to the newsletters, photocopy, print and create

stationery and posters for the Galway Walking Club free gratis and for no payment for many years.

The *Great Outdoors* and *Radar Stores*, both outdoor clothing shops, continued to advertise in the Galway Walking Club's newsletters.

***The world reveals itself to those who travels on foot - Werner Herzog - a German motion picture director.***

The summer 1996 edition of the GWC newsletter displayed an artistic cover page of beautifully illustrated wildflowers that one might come across on the rambles. Unfortunately, the artist isn't identified.

The Club's first holiday abroad was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1996 in Majorca. Ellie organised it and wrote to the Spanish Tourism Authority to get maps in preparation for this trip. Among several other walks the group completed the Inca walk and Valldemossa. The group wore t - shirts (bearing the slogan International Walkers of Ireland) and hats made and designed by Ellie and Ollie Sammon.

A schedule of walks from July to October was listed in this newsletter with an accompanying outline of rules for the Club's organised walks. Central to these rules was that walkers must be members of the Club; additionally, walkers had to sign the indemnity book prior to the commencement of the walks.

For more distant walks a bus would be hired on the assumption that the bus would be full. A full bus would help to defray costs incurred in the hire of it. At this time, the club were negotiating with MCI to obtain insurance for leaders of walks only.

In preparation for the Castlebar Walking Festival scheduled to take place in July the club took a bus to Castlebar to be met by Ernie (Sweeney), the guide, who led the Galway crew on a walk near the

Burren Mountain across bog land. After lunch, the walkers took a hill and bog route which didn't exert the group and they reached Castlebar at 6.20pm. The group thanked Ernie for his leadership and his knowledge of the archaeology and history of the walk.

Ernie pointed out to this group the Rules of the Road ie more than 20 walkers should walk on the left side - a smaller group of 2 or 3 walkers should walk on the right side, well spaced out.

Steve Wright wrote the article on this walk.

Walks evolved into hill walking this year as well as rambles.

Social events took place, one being a bbq in Ti Gearoid's pub in Oranmore, costing £2 and children could attend free of charge!!

The Galway Walking Club also created its own tee shirts for the princely price of £4. Has anyone got one of these I wonder? It surely would be vintage, not too old at 25 years. I believe Tom Rea has a few different varieties of Club tee shirts.

Members participated in the Castlebar Walking Festival and an early venture into hill walking involved a few members tackling the Sheefry Hills, two of whom, Tom Rea and Loretta Needham, were to progress to climbing hills and mountains, not just in Ireland but all over the world.

A remarkably interesting article by Ann Gannon described the concept of the "Participation Mystique" derived from Jung's collective unconscious which states the environment holds clues to our own inner psychological development. The landscape holds symbols that resonate with our inner development. Connecting with the natural landscape such as trees arise because what we see outside mirrors something in our psyche. This theory of the

"Participation of the *Mystique*" suggests that the landscape resonates with our inner symbolic life.

Identification with the natural world was a normal way of life for "primitive" societies. Therefore, the landscape was part of their soul. In Ireland holy wells, stone circles, cairns and special landscapes are part of our landscape. "We are still connected to the extent we enjoy a Participation *Mystique* to the countryside" Ann observes.

A day away walking the Bangor Erris Trail on its tenth anniversary was written by Anne Walsh who, with Steve Wright and Tom Reddington represented the club on this auspicious occasion. The Nephin Beg Mountaineering Club organised this anniversary walk of 40kms long. One hundred and forty walkers turned up to participate on this day.

Five checkpoints were scattered throughout the walk which initially, consisted of bog and stony ascents and terrain. After the first checkpoint the track meandered through magnificent ranges of mountains (the Nephin Beg range) and luckily, dry bogland. At the halfway point, the track became more difficult as rocks and boulders marked the track.

The two hardy walkers (Steve's or other GWC members progress wasn't referred to in this report by Anne) continued walking towards the remaining checkpoints and eventually began the last part to Newport, of nine miles. The going was tough, wrote Anne, and the road seemed endless. After 10 hours of walking Anne and Tom were glad to reach Newport and welcome refreshments.

35% of participants finished the complete walk and all received a Certificate for their efforts.



The pedometer that Tom wore clocked up 14103 steps, a great endeavour for our two experienced walkers.

Steve Wright contributed a descriptive report of how he, Tom Rea, Loretta and Anne Walsh who, one day in early June, decided to tackle the Sheefry Hills. The weather was fantastic, hot and sunny. The first obstacle was the crossing of the Glenummera River followed by a steep ascent of 772 metres to reach the actual top of the hills. Superb views of Mweelrea and Ben Gorm greeted them on their way. Subsequently the group walked 6 kms along a narrow ridge with jaw dropping drops, not for the faint hearted. Croagh Patrick was spotted along the walk. The next peak was 600 metres, and the descent was achieved by sliding down on one's bottom, clever thinking there, surely.

The final stretch was walking along a gentle boggy slope towards Sheefry Bridge. More than 2 litres of water was consumed by each individual so Steve recommended, for future walks, to carry in excess of that.

This walk sounds idyllic and, given the description of the weather, more like climbing in Italy or Spain.

***“Hiking is a bit like life:***

***The journey only requires you to put one foot in front of the other...again and again and again.***

***And if you allow yourself the opportunity to be present throughout the entirety of the trek,***

***you will witness beauty every step of the way,***

***not just at the summit” – Author Unknown***

### **Autumn 1996 Newsletter:**

The front page of this newsletter was adorned with super pencil drawings of old Galway, author unknown. A schedule of walks from November 1996 to January 1997 was outlined. Just an opinion but details are clearer - written on hard copy - than on a text, methinks.

A big group of Galway Walking Club members turned up at the official opening on October 26<sup>th</sup> of the new shop Trek and Trail which replaced the Radar store on Mainguard Street. The new owners Aideen and Trevor were members of the GWC. The opening was conducted by Calvin Torrans, an **Irish rock climbing legend from Bray Co Wicklow**. A 10% reduction was offered to Galway Walking Club members which was a welcome initiative.

Walks continued on a fortnightly basis but in this period a Hill Walking Group was formed consisting of 14 members and so too did the Short Walks begin. Galway Walking Club shared the costs with the UCHG walkers of hiring a bus and leading the walks so this proved to be a collective, collaborative initiative. Hill walks were organised to occur on the same day as the Short Walks. This practice continues to the present day.

The short walks proved to be popular with the members, on one walk in Corofin, fifty members turned up. It seemed the Ramble numbers began to decrease except for a die hard core number of walkers. It was puzzling as to why and where the usual large number of ramblers had gone to? This development impacted on the costs of hiring a bus and it became difficult to justify this due to the small number of walkers participating in the rambles. More support was needed to justify hiring a bus for these rambles.

Two weekends away had to be cancelled due to insufficient interest on the part of the members. So, the club decided to cease collecting money and organising accommodation for away trips. It was decided that a core group would organise weekends away and other walkers can join this group and organise, themselves, their own accommodation.

Plans to get the trip to Guadalupe in Spain underway was also faltering due to insufficient interest on the part of the members. The 10-day holiday would cost £21 pps per day and would have consisted of pony trekking, organised walks and sightseeing accompanied by Arturo who owned his own vineyard and would act as guide for the duration of the trip.

The Galway Walking Club newsletter featured an article on Global Positioning Systems which had begun to be an affordable handheld navigation tool and had advantages over compasses. This was described as being a state of the art tool for walkers. The price ranged from £219 - 310.

Always up for an adventure, Ann Walsh agreed to participate in the Ultimate Killary Challenge. To take part on this a team of four persons had to raise £1000 which Ann and her team did. Six activities had to be chosen by Ann and her team which they did - mixing and matching their choice of activities from the two categories: Classic and Mindbenders.

Nine other teams participated and at 10.30am the fun started. At event two, i.e. cycling, Ann came a cropper on her bike landing on her face, over the handlebars, and was repaired by Dr Tom Rea, who else! A description of the day's activities is too long to write about here but suffice to say it was a long, tough day of ingenuity, implementing the activities with imagination and skill and thinking

outside the box. Nevertheless, it was full of fun too. That evening the 10 teams and organisers sat down to a buffet meal followed by a prizegiving ceremony. Ann got a special prize due to her tenacity in continuing with the challenge despite her bike injury. Runners up received a prize too and Ann and her team were awarded a dinner for four with wine. The article is well worth reading in this newsletter, find it on the GWC Archive, the writer suggests.

Steve Wright decided to revisit Castlebar with twenty four other walkers from the Club. A bus was hired to take the walkers to Castlebar where they were met by Ernie, their guide. The first peak the group encountered was the Burren Mountain which stood at 950 feet, and which gave them excellent views. Following this the group traversed rough boggy terrain and jumped across boggy furrows. Fencing was another obstacle on this hill walk. In all the walk took four and a half hours and the group covered a distance of 9km. The group expressed their thanks to Ernie and to the bus company, Murphy's Coaches, that provided a warm comfortable bus back to Galway.

Several walk reports were furnished by various walkers and published in this newsletter.

The afore mentioned Tom Rea was appointed chairperson of the Western Region of "Keep Ireland Open" - a national organisation fighting to keep rights of way open.

***The best view comes after the hardest climb. Author Unknown***

**The winter 1996 Newsletter** stated that the membership of GWC amounted to 255 people which was an increase of 105 members from 1995. Meetings continued to be held in the Galway Arms. While attendance at meetings was good, the chairperson of the Club, Ollie Sammon, pleaded with members to be more supportive of weekends

away and of functions organised by the committee. Two weekends away had to be cancelled this year due to lack of support.

The Club decided to insure its leaders this year with MCI (the Mountaineering Council of Ireland). Individuals could, if s/he wished, also get insurance from MCI.

The hiring of a Bus ceased to be a contentious issue when a set time for the bus to leave on completion of the walk or climb was agreed. But the problem still remained, that often walkers booked a seat but then didn't turn up to occupy this seat. So, the Committee were firm in asserting that seats had to be paid for by the members whether they turned up or not.

This year the Club introduced a wide ranging set of guidelines to ensure good governance of it with comprehensive guidelines put in place.

The club's AGM was scheduled to take place in the Jameson Hotel, Salthill in January 1997.

Ollie Sammon wrote an amusing article on "A Lighter Side of Walking" outlining comic incidents in the first few years of Galway Walking Club existence. This article was accompanied by a short quiz.

**Walks:** With the introduction of the short walks in the summer of 1996, numbers on the rambles decreased in popularity.

Regarding the Hill walks, co-operation continued with the Regional Hospital (UHG) and Thermo King Hill Walkers who, each Sunday, hired a bus and headed to the hills. The meeting point was the Mass Path close to the Regional Hospital as it was known then.

**Social Events:** A summer bbq was held and the Christmas social took place in the Trapper's Inn to which 75 members attended. Special guests were Ernie Sweeney, a walk leader in the Castlebar Walking Festival, Frankie Greally, Managing Editor of Walking World Ireland and Paddy Dillon, Contributing Editor Walking World Ireland (*where were women on this panel of guests?*) Various leaders/walkers such as Tom Huban, Tom Rea, Tom Reddington and Ollie Sammon received prizes for their participation in club activities.

A surprise wine and cheese party was held at the Club's last meeting of 1996 for members who attended this meeting. A little inducement perhaps!!

*Walking World Ireland* was a bimonthly publication for hill walkers in Ireland. The magazine was published in Portarlington and was Ireland's principal hillwalking, trekking and adventure walking magazine, published 6 times annually since 1993. It published a wide range of glossy magazines, books of maps, books on walking trails in Europe and in Ireland. About 35 publications were issued; it seems to have ceased publication 10 years ago. It also outlined established and newly opened walks around Ireland.

GWC seemed to have been very enthusiastic about this magazine as it was the only Irish commercial walking magazine at the time apart from the Mountain Log which targeted Mountaineering Council of Ireland members only (now Mountaineering Ireland)

*TREK & TRAIL* sports shop continued to advertise in this newsletter joined by *The Great Outdoors* on Eglington Street (now *booley*) and *River Deep*, *Mountain High* on Middle Street, the latter two still trading today.

Ann Wilkinson wrote about her 4 days walking the Wicklow Way in early November with her sister and two nieces. They started the

walk in relentless rain and soon to be muddy terrain. The rain continued and before they entered Glencullen forest Dublin city could be seen, bathed in sunshine but not so for these sodden, intrepid walkers. They eventually reached their b/b near Roundwood. The second day involved the foursome crossing the swollen, cold Knockree River in bare feet. They had magnificent views all this day, over Powerscourt Deer Park. The following 2 days involved some stops and starts due to the lack of markers and directions on this Wicklow Way. But Ann concluded by saying the 4 days were memorable and she vowed to return the following year to finish the Wicklow Way.

Ollie Sammon wrote a short philosophical piece on freedom, returning to nature and to the environment that bred us.

He also reviewed two books for Christmas reading. "No Hurling at the Dairy Door" and "Beach Music"

The Galway Walking Club attracted the attention of the Garda Siochana on 2 separate occasions this year. Sighting a bus full of guys and gals with rucksacks, sticks and walking gear in Castlebar, the Drug squad in Castlebar entered the bus to search for drugs believing the passengers were the druggie kind! The second occasion was outside a pub in Neale where the Galway walkers had parked their cars. So, the Guards raided the pub, alas nobody was inside. It would have been a different matter if they had returned a few hours later!!

**The January 1997 Newsletter was devoted to presenting the Galway Walking Club Constitution. See Appendix 1**

***"And into the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul."***  
**- John Muir, c 1988**

**The Spring 1997** newsletter revealed that 120 persons attended the AGM in January 1996. It was at this meeting the Galway Walking Club Constitution was introduced to the members. Each item of it was proposed and seconded by the members. The Constitution came into effect at the end of this AGM.

Other points were raised by the attendees such as the pace of the walks and the need to stop to take photographs on scenic routes. Interest was expressed in reopening the club's library - Aideen Smyth took responsibility for this. Interest was also expressed in having short lectures before club meetings on topics such as map reading, navigation skills and other interests.

**Election of Officers:** Tom Rea was elected as Chairperson with Noel Browne continuing to be Vice Chairperson. Loretta Needham became Secretary with Steve Wright continuing as Treasurer.

Tom Huban continued as Membership Officer while the late Ann O' Connor, Mel Faherty, Muire Mc Loughlin and Tom Reddington formed the rest of the Committee.

**WALKS:** A full calendar of 24 walks was outlined in this newsletter with effect from March 6<sup>th</sup> until June 29<sup>th</sup>, a mix of hill walks and short walks. An article in the newsletter featured a "how to" operate a GPS and how to map trails etc. Tom Rea (no surprise there!) and Trevor Dubber were already in possession of two different makes of GPS and were probably proficient in using them too.

Tom was also chairperson of the Connacht branch of the Keep Ireland Open (KIO) campaign. KIO was formed in response to access problems caused by the division of land and fencing of commonage. In 1995 a large fencing project on the south of Kylemore Lough was successfully contested at the planning appeal stage by KIO. Several instances of fencing and preventing access were reported in this



newsletter, the most controversial one being the fencing of Durlas commonage near Croagh Patrick. Mayo County Council then decided that planning permission should have been sought for this fencing.

To highlight the issues KIO invited a large number of serving politicians to come out on walks to see the lack of access walkers were experiencing. Nobody responded to the invite illustrating the apparent complacency of these politicians.

The 4 day Castlebar Walking Festival again featured prominently in this edition. This Festival was founded in 1967 and so the Castlebar Walking Festival celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.

It was reported that, in 1996, over 1500 walkers participated in this festival mainly from continental Europe, Australia, America and Japan. It was also noted that hundreds of walkers from the UK and Europe returned each year to take part.

The Festival consisted of road walks (10, 20 & 40 kms) and a cross country ramble of approx. 6 hours duration. Many Galway Walking Club members have participated in the Castlebar Walking Festival including the writer.

Steve Wright wrote an interesting article on the International Marching League (IML) which the Castlebar Walking Festival is affiliated to.

This IML was founded in 1987 in Tokyo, Japan (October 29, 1987) by the following affiliated countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, Luxembourg, Japan, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. There is no membership/ affiliation fee regarding this IML.

After participating in the first IML a walker purchases an international walking passport which is stamped by the organisers to

prove that the walker has fulfilled the necessary criteria. This international walking passport idea is similar to the Camino passport.

More details can be found in the Spring 1997 newsletter located in the Archive section of the GWC website. A list of affiliated countries offices and dates in respect of their international walking festivals was included in this newsletter which was particularly useful information.

A very amusing report from Una O' Connell writing about the walk to the Hill of Doon, Oughterard late January 1997. Una's recommendation at the beginning of the article was" If anyone suggests you should go there, certain steps should be taken before proceeding. Namely large ones in the opposite direction"

Expecting to be walking 18 miles on road in her brand new shiny Nikes, Una and the group were directed to go through wet boggy ground with grass up to their knees, PLOD, PLOD, PLOD, across streams, uphill, downhill, over fences, crossing streams, miles of road to finish and at 6.30pm the last of the diehards arrived back to the Corrib Hotel exhausted, dirty and muddy. Signposts directing the public to the Hill of Doon were scattered across the area, but the elusive Hill of Doon never materialised for this group!!

The Hill of Doon must have inspired one of the Club's walkers to write as Muire Mc Loughlin also wrote a poem in this newsletter which concluded with the following memorable lines:

*"Our third attempt to the Hill of Doon*

*Earned an award of the wooden spoon...*

*Anticipation of the Doon was thrilling.*

*Our colleague Matt knew more than we*

*For on his back a sleeping bag we see*

*So, check your maps - no - not the flat*

*We'll rename Doon the Hill of Matt"*

A weekend away in Achill in April was also promoted in the newsletter for the princely sum of £40, pps, 2 nights b/b and one dinner.

Ellie Keating promoted, in this newsletter, a 14 day hiking trip in Peru due to take place in September. The group number was limited to 18 persons. One of the highlights was a 5 day camping trip in the Machu Pichu range. The package included flights and accommodation. Oh, to do this now would be heaven.

Good, relevant reports of walks the Galway Walking Club still do, such as Corkscrew Hill, Maumeen and the Cong walk were described in this newsletter.

Trek & Trail recommended using walking poles, which, it is believed, increases endurance, performance and safety with less effort and stress on major leg joints and the lower back.

***"We don't stop hiking because we grow old -***

***We grow old because we stop hiking."***

***- Finis Mitchel - an American mountaineer and forester based in Wyoming.***

**1997 Summer Newsletter** -It was announced in this newsletter that the Sunday short walks were suspended due to a lack of interest and lack of leaders but would resume if there was sufficient interest. The Wednesday walks continued as normal at

7.30pm. Each walking group was divided into 3 levels, the fast walkers and the medium walkers led by a leader and the slower paced group would be accompanied by a sweeper. Walkers were pleaded with to respect the leaders' directions.

Rules of the Road were stated again and suggestions on how to manage bickering and contentious issues were outlined.

In the days of no *what's app* and *email* the monthly schedule of walks were advertised in the three local outdoor gear shops, the local newspapers and broadcast on the then Radio Galway's Community Diary.

The GWC also had set up a lending library in the Trek and Trail shop on Mainguard Street. Members had to produce their membership cards to avail of this service. In the writer's view, this was a great initiative as guidebooks on walking can be quite expensive to buy and this ensured and probably encouraged walkers to explore and investigate walking further afield as far as Europe, South America, and Eastern Europe/USSR.

A trip to Kerry and a further trip on the Shannon were planned for Autumn 1997.

Loretta Needham wrote an entertaining report on her preparation and participation in the 12 Bens Challenge which was a fundraiser for the Clifden Hospital and Mountain Rescue. Michael Gibbons, the Clifden based archaeologist, led the training from April 6<sup>th</sup> - June 1<sup>st</sup>.

Loretta was joined by Og, Una, Patrick and John King from the Galway Walking Club. Gruelling training took place over the next two months, sometimes with the Clifden Walking Group and sometimes with the UCH Group and Thermo King.

Preparation: Climbing the Central Maumturks and four of the Twelve Bens, Glencoaghan Horseshoe were duly undertaken by the Galway Walking Club in April and May. This latter climb challenged the Galway group more so than previously, training with the Clifden walking group had got more serious and intense and then to cap it all, Loretta fell and required two stitches in her chin. The group questioned their ability to do twelve peaks in one day and declared Michael Gibbons to be "mad, a mad Connemara man, he had been too long in the mountains!"

Training resumed. On May 3<sup>rd</sup>, the group headed to the Maumturk Walk in foggy, gloomy conditions. Twice Loretta got lost and eventually finished the Walk aided by a torch in the dark and rain. Undaunted the group went on to participate in the Bellcorrick Walk in Co Mayo and further afield in Wellingborough, UK, by doing the Waendel Way. Finally, the Galway walkers met with the Clifden group on a practice run, to climb the Bens, Loretta wearing her Mayo colours which brought her luck as Mayo beat their rivals Galway in Tuam, a victorious end to the day for Loretta.

Loretta jumped out of bed at 05.15 am to prepare for this mammoth challenge ahead of her.

She and Ann Wilkinson registered and with 75 other walkers were driven by bus at 07.30am to start walking toward Ben Lettery. They were advised to carry 2 - 3 litres of water so their rucksacks were heavy. Weather conditions were good for walking, being mild, windy and not too hot.

During the day, the Mountains kept rising to meet the walkers, the walkers in turn kept climbing and climbing one after the other. Then Loretta believed it's a myth that there are 12 Bens, she counted 19.

Climbing Mam Dearg was a tough challenge as there were 4 remaining peaks to climb. Participants could opt out at this point, but Loretta and Co were determined to finish which they did. What an achievement.

At 9.30pm she finished the tough walk of the 12 Bens sore, bitten, sunburnt, scratched but exhilarated. Later, participants, including Loretta, Dymphna Murphy and Michael Gibbons were treated to 2 celebratory cakes provided by Foyles Hotel, in Clifden.

It was an awesome climb and probably plenty more have done this challenge since.

Michael Gibbons, the Clifden based archaeologist, wrote a fascinating article in this newsletter on the history of Connemara encompassing its geology, landscapes, its first Settlers, Viking raiders and medieval castles. Well worth reading.

**The Club's issue of November 1997 was a 3 page information sheet** reminding readers about the annual Christmas social planned to take place in the Salthill Hotel, December 5<sup>th</sup>. The Club subsidized the cost of every sold ticket by £5.

The club's AGM was scheduled to take place on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1998. A full list of walks ranging from November 16<sup>th</sup> - January 22<sup>nd</sup> was included in this newsletter, including a singles walking weekend in Glencar, in November 1997. An imaginative idea at that time, to acknowledge our participation in the club.

Future events for the following year were stated by the club chairperson, Tom Rea, with plans to continue walking new routes discovered such as East Clare, the Croagh Patrick range and the Miners Way to name but a few. New rambles were named also for example, the Cleggan area, the Curlew mountains, and Omey Island.

Links with other walking groups such as the Beanna Beola, groups in Co Clare, Thermo King and the Regional Hospital group would continue, and other walking festivals and events would be promoted during the year.

***“Of all the paths you take in life,  
make sure a few of them are dirt.”***

***– John Muir a mountaineer and known as the Father of the National Parks in the United States.***

**APRIL 1998** The AGM in January 1998 elected Tom Rea as Chairperson, with Noel Browne continuing to be Vice Chairperson. Lyn O' Sullivan became Secretary with Una O' Connell assuming the post of Treasurer.

Tom Huban continued as Membership Officer while Ann O' Connor, Og Cunningham, Peter Martin and Tom Reddington formed the rest of the Committee.

Several rambles were reported on in this newsletter ie Cashla Bog, Ballinahinch, and Caoran na gCaorach. Details were provided on the activities of Beanna Beola, the Clifden based walking club, whose Hill walks were held on the same day as the Galway Walking Club's rambles.

This newsletter also featured a good selection of Walking Festivals taking place around Ireland as was a description of the upcoming rambles for April and May.

The Connacht branch of Keep Ireland Open continued to be active and a massive Day of Action was planned for June 28<sup>th</sup> on Ughool Beach, Co Mayo protesting against an illegal foreshore fence and an unco-operative landowner. A sea borne invasion of the beach was due to take place on that day.

The building boom was alive and kicking in 1998 as planning permission was sought to build 40 houses and a bar in the Delphi Valley. An earlier appeal to build eighty houses, a bar, and other buildings was refused in this Valley. KIO objected to the alternative appeal, as well as 200 other objections.

An amusing feature by Loretta Needham, detailing her few sojourns to Kerry, in 1997, the first one (a recce for the Club) in August in the wake of her beloved Mayo's defeat to Meath (1997). The group stayed in Ann O' Connor's Tralee home. The recce was completed on the following day and the group planned to climb Mount Brandon on the Sunday, but weather conditions disallowed this. Nevertheless, the Connacht Champions Mayo got the Cup that afternoon. A happy weekend for Loretta and other Mayo walkers.

On Loretta's second trip in October 1997, she was greeted by a sea of green and gold flags waving triumphantly in the Kerry countryside. Kerry had triumphed over Mayo in the All-Ireland Final a month before. She was there to climb Mount Brandon while other walkers were preparing to walk the Dingle Way. Mount Brandon is the third highest mountain in Ireland, standing at 3127 feet. The starting point was Tom Crean's pub, the mighty Antarctic explorer. The group opted to climb via the western route and reached the top of Mount Brandon in two hours. There were magnificent views en route of the Blasket Islands, the Kerry coastline, and the Dingle peninsula.

Another Kerry spot for walking was briefly highlighted in this newsletter, ie Glencar and the Climbers Inn, a hostel/pub in the area. And a further Kerry weekend away was planned for May 1<sup>st</sup>, Kenmare. On May 2<sup>nd</sup> intrepid hill walkers were planning to climb Carrantuohill. Low level walks were planned also for the weekend.



Tom's Twits advising walkers on how to prevent blisters was a comic list of "do's and don'ts" The author is suspected to be a well known GP walker in the club!!

The Spice Girls entertained the party goers at the 1997 Christmas Party but were advised after their performance not to give up their day jobs!! The group had gone on to do various things in the meantime but were ready to do another performance any time the Club wished!!

MCI launched its environmental policy in 1998 that were mainly similar to KIO's policies which strengthened the access issue and other environmental concerns.

The Galway Walking Club were on the move in this season, fortnightly meetings were transferred to Tonerys pub in Bohermore as the Galway Arms was demolished, one of the subscribers to this newsletter admonished the members to remember the change in venue and "not to be coming along and looking at the big hole that was the Galway Arms!!

We are still there!

***"Because in the end,  
you won't remember the time you spent working in an office  
or mowing the lawn.***

***Climb that goddamn mountain."***

***– Jack Kerouac –***

***an American novelist & poet.***

**1998 August Newsletter:** The newsletter opened with an invitation to members to participate in this year's marathon scheduled to take place on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. The entry fee was £10, including bus transport from Oughterard to the beginning of the marathon at the Inagh Valley Lodge according to this newsletter. All funds raised was donated to the Keep Ireland Open organisation. A week later the club's annual bbq took place in Kelehan's, Bushypark.

A list of walks from July to October were printed in this newsletter. I imagine all the content of all the newsletters over the years had to be typed, corrected etc and such a hard task for volunteers to take on. Their dedication and commitment is memorable. Pat, GWC chairperson, referred to this spirit of voluntarism and dedication in the Foreword of this history.

Short Walks continued to take place each Wednesday, the rambles on Sundays as well the Hill Walkers. Hill walkers from the GWC continued to hill walk with the UCHG group on Sundays also.

The three outdoor sports shops continued to advertise in the newsletter which perhaps brought in some revenue for the club.

A very funny report of the East Clare way was written by the Editor of the newsletter, including Tom (Rea) misplacing his mobile phone in Scariff, which, thanks to the local Gardaí, was retrieved safely for Tom. The newly established East Clare walking group were anxious to lead the GWC on this route so a 3 hour trek, led by Bob, across bogs and a 6 mile road walk constituted the ramble. Needless to say, the first three hours were boggy and wet. After lunch a brisk pace was set and much to the chagrin of the writer, at 5 pm another five miles had to be walked before reaching Peppers Pub.

Great fun was had in Peppers pub at the end of the ramble and in the bus returning to Galway where Loretta entertained the passengers with her 48 verse poem about Achill!!

The active KIO held its AGM in Galway which was addressed by our now President Michael D Higgins and Barrister Peter Bland who spoke on the legal aspects to Rights of Way. Some changes took place at the National Committee level. The AGM heard that Mayo County Council had still not taken any action in relation to illegal fencing near Croagh Patrick. But thanks to the efforts of KIO no further fencing of uplands and no division of commonage will take place.

Bairbre Ann Mulry realised her long held dream of visiting Peru and on return she wrote a full account of her trip in paperback, copies of which she sold for £1, proceeds that she donated to missionary work in Peru. A truly philanthropic gesture. Not only that, Bairbre raised £5,500 for the missionary work of Irish and Australian priests working with the poor in Lima. Seeing the missionaries work and the poverty of their parishioners brought home to Bairbre the abundance of our life here in Ireland. The Inca trail was the highlight of Bairbre's visit, she was accompanied by knowledgeable guides who guided the group to 11, 200 feet where the Incas were dispossessed of their lands and homes by the Spanish invaders.

A weekend away was planned for Donegal in October in Glenveagh Park with Mount Errigal to be climbed.

Who wants Passion? Well, you can have it if you bake the easy passion cake recipe featured in the newsletter!

*"I like being near the top of a mountain.*

*One can't get lost here."*

– ***Maria Wislawa Szymborska - Polish poet and recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize for Literature***

**OCTOBER 1998 NEWSLETTER:** This was the last newsletter for 1998 and it was a jam packed edition. The Marathon, the annual BBQ, and a weekend away in Donegal had all been successfully completed as well as the regular walks and hill climbs. The fortnightly meetings in the club's new venue, Tonerys in Bohermore, were going well and attendance at meetings was satisfactory.

No details of the weekend away was reported in this newsletter but no doubt some shenanigans took place. Slieve League and the Blue Stack mountains were tackled.

The club's collaboration with the Regional Hospital and Thermo King Walking Clubs continued and climbers met at 9.30 am near NUIG. The social club organised a bus and passengers paid £5 each. Hill climbs took place in Mayo, the Burren or Connemara and a stop on the way home for an hour was usual.

Walks from November through to January was listed. Four photographs of Galway Walking Club members at the top of Croagh Patrick are featured.

**October 1998 Newsletter:** An account of Peter Martin's visit on August 30<sup>th</sup> to the Giants Causeway features in this newsletter alongside a detailed historical report of the origin and formation of one of Ireland's foremost attraction. Peter and his companions decided to walk the 5 mile route to Dunseverick Castle along the upper cliff face. Peter described the views and the whole

experience as breath-taking. The basaltic columns cut out of the dry cliffs, the remains of old kelp pits and drying walls are visible. He also commended the tourist centre there which stocked lots of interesting information and plenty of maps showing the many short walks one can take.

An excellent 2 page feature gave handy hints and tips on walking with children - author unknown. Perhaps a parent.

Berna Reddington took pen to paper to write a great account of her walk in the Samaria Gorge, in Crete. This gorge walk is one of the longest in Europe, 18kms, but in Berna's estimation, being such an experienced and strong walker herself, it wasn't terribly long at all!!

What makes this gorge so spectacular is the immense height of the surrounding mountains, the 600 metre depth of it and its extreme narrowness - at one point it is only 3 metres in width.

Berna described the day's walking in vivid terms beginning with the flower filled roadsides, snow-capped mountains, hairpin bends and sheer drops the group began the descent through scented forests of cypress and pine, sparkling streams, birdsong, tall leafy trees and fragrant herbal scents. The Samaria Gorge is a National Park and is staffed by helpful park rangers, water taps and benches to take a breather.

Swimming and an ice cold beer awaited the walkers after their walk and sometime later their ferry headed towards another port as the sun was setting on the Libyan sea.

This newsletter concluded with a fascinating article on the flora of the Burren written by Mike Fogarty. In this Mike points out that over six hundred species of different plants and ferns - more than

three quarters of Ireland's entire native flora - is found in this giant rock garden of the Burren.

The 1999 AGM was scheduled to take place in Jameson's Hotel in January and the Christmas party was due to take place in the Menlo Park Hotel at a cost of £15 for dinner, disco and a bar extension.

***Let's wander where the WiFi is weak"*** - **Written** by Maria Stoyanova a Bulgarian travel blogger.

**MARCH 1999** Newsletter reported that the AGM in January 1999 elected Tom Rea as Chairperson, with Noel Browne continuing to be Vice Chairperson. Ann Walsh became Secretary with Paul Moloney assuming the post of Treasurer.

Tom Huban continued as Membership Officer while Phil Clerkin, Miriam Sheerin and Mel Faherty joined Tom Reddington to form the rest of the Committee.

Three of the Committee were progressing in the mobile technology field being contactable by their mobile numbers.

At this AGM membership fees were increased to £10, and the Constitution was changed to allow for associative membership, which cost £5 per year.

Tom Huban wrote about his trek in South Africa with eighty two other Irish fundraisers for MS Ireland - £3350 had to be raised by each participant in order to take part in this challenge in South Africa. This trip was led by Fr Jack aka Frank Kelly, the actor.

To acclimatize the group were based at the base of Drakensberg Mountains and 3 days of walking and climbing ensued in wintry, drizzly conditions. But heading south to Port Elizabeth the sun cream came out with the sun and the group were very happy.

The group's guide was a wiry thin Afrikaner named Jan who guided the group through old wagon trails and indigenous forests. Finally, the final day dawned with the challenge of reaching the summit of Table Mountain. This mountain reaches 1300 metres above sea level. The route was through shaded forest trails culminating with a seemingly impassable rock face, however the group ascended through a narrow crevice and arrived unexpectedly at the summit.

Spectacular views and glorious scenery awaited the walkers, of Cape Town and Robben Island where the famous political leader Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 17 years, mainly in solitary confinement.

The group were sad leaving this beautiful country and all expressed a wish to return to it.

A weekend away in Achill and Donegal town took place during 1999, the latter event well described and well written by Ann Walsh in this newsletter.

Roscommon featured heavily in this newsletter as Paul Campbell wrote about the Club's participation in the Suck Valley Waymarked Way starting at Castlecoote and ending in Ballygar. This Suck Way consists of 4 stages, 62 kms and unites the counties of Galway and Roscommon. The Club decided to walk Stage 4. They travelled by bus and pooled cars. Starting off from Castlecoote, the thirty six person group walked along green pastures and plenty of stiles to climb. 14 miles of a walk lay ahead the well marked Way. Lunch was in the scenic Athleague where the Athleague Castle could be seen across the river. Near Mount Talbot the group crossed the bridge that divides the two counties. The owner of Nestors bar in Ballygar, where the walk finished, believed the Galway Walking Club was the first large group to trek the final stage. Paul was very impressed with this Suck Valley Waymarked Way.

Miriam Sheerin wrote about participating in the Curlew Walking festival at which 106 walkers turned up the first day to take part in either the short option or the longer walk which all the hardy Galway walkers did. Miriam returned the next year to take part in this festival and she was very impressed with the walks and the local historian, Frank Tivnan who regaled the walkers with local, social history of the Bricklieve and Curlew mountains.

Demonstrating that the Galway Walking Club were active in national organisations two members represented the Club in Ennis at the National Walking Routes Conference. Topics ranged over several important areas such as Insurance and Public Liability, Rights of Access and the setting up of Long Distance Routes. It was noted that the East Clare Way of 12 miles cost £100,000, of which 25% had to be raised locally.

*And into the forest I go,*

*To lose my mind and find my soul."*

*- John Muir*

Copy this quote!

**SUMMER 1999.** The summer 1999 newsletter opened with an article written by Mary McCann on the 10 day trek she took in Spain in May this year, with 57 other pilgrims, from Somport to Santiago.

*"La Luna de Pamplona*

*Is a full Pamplona moon*

*I'm talking to Amanda*

*And thinking of a tune*

*Amigos de Irlandais*



*Around me in this room"*

The weather was very variable on their route, lots of rain by all accounts but the spirits were high and there seemed to be good singers and musicians in the group so, for Mary, it was a highly enjoyable walking experience. She caught the bug and has since returned to walk the Camino, on many occasions.

A full schedule of events ranging from September to end of January 2000 was listed in this newsletter. The third Annual Galway Walking Club Marathon took place on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August. A fine number of 106 walkers registered and the weather was kind for this 26 mile marathon. Most of the walkers completed the 26 miles. Sweepers were equipped with radio sets and shown how to use them for the duration of the marathon. The Civil Defence helped out and even supplied an ambulance which wasn't needed, thankfully.

Phil Clerkin and Maura Huban were described as the quickest butterers in the West transforming 11 sliced pans of bread into tasty sandwiches, consumed after completion of the Marathon in the Corrib Hotel.

The Galway Walking Club continued to strongly support the Keep Ireland Open campaign. This summer KIO launched its website presenting its policies on access to the countryside. KIO was increasingly concerned about the proliferation of roadside fencing and the payment of REPS grants even though planning laws are being ignored.

Another contributor to the newsletter, self-described as a friend of Anna Conboy, wrote about their coastal walking trip in Wales. She and Anna encountered wonderful Welsh hospitality on their walk finishing up in St David's city. The two walkers recommended in this article a future trip by the Galway Walking Club to St David's to

avail of the surrounding coastal walks and a ferry trip to Ramsey Island.

The Club's weekend away was spent in Achill and the witty article describing it was written by the late Deirdre Hunt, R.I.P. A variety of walks took place culminating in a dinner, music and banter in the Achill Sound Hotel. On the last day, "Mel had a pilgrimage going to the House of Prayer and there was no talking them out of it. Matt was leading a walk on the beach and Tom Rea was still thinking about it"

Exploring the Mourne Mountains with the Mourne Ramblers was the subject of a detailed article written by Marie Doran including the Ordnance Survey map of the area climbed by the group. Steep ascents to Shanlieve, continuing on to the Mourne Wall and ascending once more the Eagle and Slievemoughanmore mountains. The group finally descended onto the Windy Gap. A challenging and arduous day for the walkers.

The newsletter finished off with a page of black and white photos accompanied by witty captions

It's worth noting, that in pre internet/email days, the proposed schedule of events/ walks, hill walks etc were circulated to the attendees at committee meetings by the relevant committee and were typed or handwritten on a double sided single sheet. Three print colours were used to show if the proposed events were local, national or international. Such dedication and hard work by all the committees, over the years of GWC's existence, is awesome, to say the least.

***"You Can't Climb Up A Mountain, With Downhill Thoughts."***

- Dr Seuss an American writer and illustrator of popular children's books

**The winter 1999 newsletter** opened with the original version of Clement C Moore's "Twas the night before Christmas

When all through the house

Not a creature was stirring

Not even a mouse".

The Galway Walking Club's Committee remained as before: Tom Rea as Chairperson, with Noel Browne continuing to be Vice Chairperson. Ann Walsh became Secretary with Paul Moloney assuming the post of Treasurer.

Tom Huban continued as Membership Officer while Phil Clerkin, Miriam Sheerin, Mel Faherty joined Tom Reddington to form the rest of the Committee.

New members were being sought to go on the Committee and the AGM was scheduled to take place on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000, in the Jameson Hotel, Salthill

The Club's roving correspondent, Ann Walsh, spent two days on Rathlin Island exploring and walking it and was intrigued by the island's history and way of life. At that time, the island had a population of 100 people. The island even contained a Boat House Museum and a Trust House offering superb accommodation.

Tom Rea wrote a fascinating article on the history and nature of the Cong - Clonbur walk which had become a favourite walk of the Club. He recounted the famous four day battle of the Battle of Moytura (the plain of the columns or plain of the battalion) in which the Tuatha de Danainn fought with King Eochai and his Fir Bolgs from Tara. You will have to read this newsletter to find out who won. It's a detailed account of the rich history of that area which has

preserved stone cairns, stone circles, standing stones, caves and burial chambers.

The famous Dr Kathleen Lynn is remembered in Cong as her father was a Rector there. The indomitable Kathleen Lynn who, among other duties, tended to the wounded in the 1916 Rising and who introduced BCG immunisation to combat tuberculous that was raging in Ireland then.

Ann wrote an account of the 2 day North Glens Walking Festival that took place in October this year. 160 walkers took part in this festival. Four walkers from the Galway Walking Club chose to walk the longer walk of 18 kms from Castlegal to Shanvaus. Magnificent scenery encircled the walkers who encountered, en route, twelve barbed wire fences to climb. The following day the GWC quartet undertook the longer walk from Glenade to Glenaniff. A 4000 year tomb was an interesting feature with a standing stone.

Our strong Galway group even took to the floor that evening to demonstrate their Irish dancing prowess. On that note Ann would strongly recommend this festival.

Trek & Trail continued to advertise in the newsletter, its location being Mainguard Street, the same street as Mountain Warehouse is located today.

***“Camino, in my view, is a metaphor for your own life...”***

**— Diana-Maria Georgescu** - Founder President of Women Esteem International

In the **Spring of 2000** newsletter, it was revealed that members had voted, in the 2000 AGM, to pay £2 before each ramble to cover for the general expenses of the day. This seems to be quite a costly fee but is good value if it covered car sharing.

The members were also advised at the AGM that, by joining the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) they would also receive a year's civil liability insurance for walking in Ireland, access to the BMC personal insurance scheme plus quarterly MCI high quality walking and mountaineering magazine.

Thanks were expressed to outgoing Tom Rea, Phil Clerkin, Noel Browne and Tom Reddington for their outstanding work on the Committee. Miriam Sheerin assumed the role of Chairperson, Mel Faherty became Vice Chair, Ann Walsh continued as Secretary with Paul Moloney saying on in the post of Treasurer.

James Sheerin took over from Tom Huban as Membership Officer while Kay Smith, Sharon Brennan and the late Ann O' Connor (R.I.P.) joined Tom Huban to form the rest of the Committee.

- A few descriptions of eventful walks and holidays undertaken by members of the Club had unexpected endings. An account of a dream sightseeing New Year holiday to China by the late Deirdre Hunt (R.I.P.) described her first week in China visiting Xian, the home of the Terracotta warriors. The group found the weather there unhealthy, full of smog and fog. A flight to Beijing brought the group to this immense city for the New Year and the New Year was rung in on the Great Wall of China. Deirdre was in fine fettle to do lots of sightseeing in the following days even though the temperature hovered under the 0 minus C scale. However, Deirdre's holiday ended with her falling ill with acute bronchitis, in the second week. Her illness meant she had to delay her return to Ireland by a week. But in true Deirdre fashion she visited Tiananmen Square, the Silk Market and did her own tour of the Great China Wall. Hazardous conditions and heavy snow delayed her take off

from Beijing airport back to Heathrow, but Deirdre took this all in her stride.

- A spring coastal walk in Newquay almost blew fifteen walkers off their course as they battled to stay upright with muddy conditions and strong gale force winds, but they survived by linking arms as they walked and as Ann Walsh who wrote this article remarked, "another enjoyable day with the Galway Walking Club, it sure beats watching TV"

A further witty article by Miriam Sheerin recounted her skiing trip to Italy that began with wonderful days of skiing and ended in her being involved in an accident, needing crutches, and having some cartilage and ligament damage.

Ann Walsh described a group walk of twenty walkers taking part in a very wet and muddy walk in Cong. Oh the Irish weather. Don't you love it?

Hiking in the mountains is therapeutic because it 'Alps' clear your head - Funny mountaineering quotes:-

**September 2002** Fond farewells from the GWC Committee and members were extended to Ann Walsh who returned to her native Australia in September. Anne acted as Secretary and Treasurer in the club for several years and wrote many articles for preceding newsletters.

This newsletter concentrated on the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Galway Walking Club marathon which took place on August 6<sup>th</sup> this year and which turned out to be a wet and windy day.

Walkers took off from Killary close to 09.00. The weather was inhospitable and to everyone's surprise 125 hardy souls participated. 83 of the walkers finished the marathon and refreshments were on offer at different stages and at the completion of the event. One participant jogged the whole 26 miles. The marathon route was slightly changed and so the final boggy walk to Oughterard was avoided this year, instead a 4 mile road walk completed the route. Each participant received a certificate of achievement and Maureen O Hara with other members, provided the catering, no, not *that Maureen*.

Tom Rea was acknowledged for his work in organising his sixth Marathon.

A page full of photos of familiar faces finished off this newsletter.

**January 2003;** A new committee with Noel Browne as chairperson, Tom Huban as Vice Chair, and Aisling Keenan as Secretary. Joining the Committee were Monica Quinn as Treasurer, Membership Officer was Patricia O'Toole, and the Club's PRO was (Veronica) Ronnie Browne. Tom Reddington, Mary Murphy and Jerry Lalor made up the remainder of the Committee.

Tom Huban, with Mel Faherty, Gearoid, Joe and some others, undertook a 10 day walking trip from Cusco to Machu Picchu in October 2002 to raise funds for MS Ireland. Their first three days were spent in Cusco to acclimatise to the 2,600 m altitude and to meet the guides. The first two days the group took shortish walks but on the third day they climbed to a further altitude of 3,750m. This was quite tough, and Tom described his heart as racing at 150mph.

The following days the group climbed, trekked and bussed across the Land of the Incas, viewing spectacular scenery, ancient churches,

statues and sculptures, along the banks of different rivers and through small and lush farmlands. On Day 13 the group of fifty five began their ascent to the Lost City of Machu Pichuu, one of the great wonders of the world. In 2007, Machu Picchu was voted one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in a worldwide internet poll.

Machu Pichuu stands at 2,400 m above sea level. Looking down the valley across the Andes a car appeared as a dot, such was the height. When the explorer Hiram Bingham III encountered **Machu Picchu** in 1911, he was looking for a different city, known as Vilcabamba. This was a hidden capital to which the Inca had escaped after the Spanish conquistadors arrived in 1532. Over time it became famous as the legendary Lost City of the Inca. The Peruvian Government excavated it in recent years, and it is a worldwide tourist attraction. The group were sad to finish their adventure and ended their time in Peru back in Cusco before flying home.

Several photos accompanied Tom's report in this newsletter. A fuller description of this walk can be found in the Archive section of the Galway Walking Club website.

Closer to home Jerry and Una Lalor took a weekend trip to Newcastle, Co Down to walk in the Mourne Mountains. They undertook Slieve Donard (2800m) on their first day with two guides who pointed out places of interest along the route. This mountain has paths thanks to helicopters dropping bags of stone to build the paths.

On Saturday night and Sunday, it poured rain, nevertheless, the group decided to walk the following day. Una opted to take the intermediate route while Jerry participated in the strenuous route. When Una finished the walk Ann, the guide, brought the group to



Electric Hill, reversed her car down the hill, turned off the engine and magic, the car rolled back up the hill!!

It was a very enjoyable weekend for the Lalors.

Mountaineering Guide's guidelines for Good Practice for Walkers on page 6 of the newsletter is as relevant today as it was in 2002.

The Great Outdoors and River Deep Mountain High continued to take out full page advertisements for their shops.

**April 2003 Newsletter.** The newsletter opened with an entertaining account by Aisling Keenan of her and Deirdre King's participation in the Glen of Aherlow Walking Festival. 150 walkers came from all over Ireland to take part.

There were three grades of walks: Hike- 19km/400m

B Walk 8 kms/500m - 74 hill walkers opted to climb 3 peaks in the Galtee range, Galtee Mor, Beag and a third peak. Also, Nature walks for families.

Aisling and Deirdre opted to do the 19km walk which took them across the Galtee mountains for 6 hours. They were joined by eight other walkers. Their leader, Mike, was very knowledgeable in local history and geography. Fog shrouded the Glen as they walked but this had lifted by the afternoon. The group lunched by Lake Muskry.

Breathtaking scenery enveloped the group and the green pastures and old tree lined avenues stood in direct contrast to the Burren and Connemara which were Aisling's and Deirdre's usual stomping ground. At the completion of the walk soup and sandwiches awaited the participants. The two Galway walkers connected with other walkers from the Ballyhoura Walking Club and the Festival committee, so phone numbers were exchanged promising to meet again.

From April 27<sup>th</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> a comprehensive list of walks was presented in this newsletter. Alongside the list was a reminder about the Annual Table Quiz, the quizmaster being Noel Browne.

Bobby Cunningham wrote a great report of walking in China and the Great Wall. On arriving into Beijing and the 522 bedroom 5 \* hotel where he would be staying in for the duration of the trip, Bobby was enchanted by the sights and sounds of this spectacular city. The week flew by with visits to Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Temple of Heaven and the Summer and Winter Places.

Galway Walking Club participated in this year's St Patrick's Day Parade. The theme was "Galway, Capital of the Irish Language" The day started off with sunshine and the club's banner, made by Ronnie Browne, looked very well, inscribed with the words, "Club Siul na Gaillimhe" 700 lollies and 1000 leaflets were distributed on the route and the Club received a great reception from onlookers. The event raised the Club's profile, and it also was a fun and enjoyable activity.

On the May Bank Holiday weekend (2003) a group from the Galway Walking Club headed to Newcastle, Co Down where the Mountains of Mourne sweeps down to the sea. Most of the group stayed in Newcastle colleges in top quality self catering accommodation.

At the initial stages of the climb of Slieve Donard (2800m) the weather was kind but rapidly deteriorated to the extent that visibility was non existent. Fog, wind, and rain accompanied the driving rain. Some of the group had to turn back. The stone wall built up to the top is a good landmark to follow as well as it offered some shelter. The conditions returning to base were atrocious, but the group were guided so well by Marie and Anne.

The group met for dinner at 8pm and so were in bed early. The next day the weather conditions had not improved so a variety of activities took place, although a die-hard few did a walk in the Mournes.

In the afternoon, the sun came out and some of the group did a 10 mile walk along the Lagan in Belfast. Great fun was had that evening when a singsong and dance took place in the cottages in which everyone participated.

The writer of this article declared that everyone had a fantastic weekend and promises were made to return to the Mournes.

**September 2004:** The September 2004 newsletter marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Galway Walking Club.

Jerry Lalor assumed the role of Chairperson with Tom Huban acting as Vice Chairperson.

Kay Smyth was the Secretary and Veronica O Toole as Treasurer

Membership Officer was Una Lalor and the PRO was Aisling Keenan.

Deirdre Langan and Monica Quinn constituted the remainder of the Committee.

This newsletter acknowledged the first decade's achievements of the Galway Walking Club including the Club Marathon in which 160 walkers took part. Walks up to the following May were outlined in this newsletter, good forward planning!!

Monica Quinn wrote a witty account of the Club's ten day trip to the Czech Republic / German border. The group had a bus at their disposal from the time they arrived until departure time at the airport. Tom Huban had organised this trip and it seems to have

been memorable and great fun. Accommodation was excellent and the 17 km walk to Shetzna was the highlight of all the walks.

The ambience of the city and a visit to the State Opera House to hear "Don Giovanni" fulfilled the visitors' dreams.

Loretta Needham wrote a long, excellent report of her and her companions (Tom Rea, Elaine, Matt Flesk, *aka Baboo*, Marie, Gerard Mangan, Gavin Bate (leader) trip to climb Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Africa's highest mountain. Note from Tom Rea: "In Swahili, Baboo was a term of respect for older people and because of Matt's grey hair this suggested he was old and wise. So, the chief offered Matt cattle in exchange for "his women" (Loretta and Elaine) Indeed he offered more for Elaine as she was pale and blonde!!

The group, between them, also visited Zanzibar, Masai Mara, Lake Nakuru in Kenya, Mombasa, and other exotic places. I would suggest we all read this report as it's really well written with both detailed, witty and sobering descriptions of the Machame Trail up Mount Kilimanjaro and slums in Nairobi.

It seems Tom, in a timely and relevant manner, popped the question to Loretta at Uhuru Point at the top of the mountain. I wonder was Tom wearing his usual walking gear, shorts, at 19339 feet, frostbite cold, thin air, and very high altitude? I checked with Tom - No he wasn't!! The proposal was, according to Loretta, over in a flash as Tom had to accompany a member of another group down the mountain who was feeling poorly.

Tom's Recollection: "After proposing on one knee, I collapsed onto two and threw up. My first time to get altitude sickness. On the assisted way down, I caught up with another GWC walker who drew me aside to say:

**"I remember going out at midnight**

**As we did to reach the breach (the gap before the final ascent)**

**before the ground thawed - I admit to being confused**

**Am I on the Maumturks or the Twelve Bens?"**

Ray O Keeffe submitted an article on the Club's annual external two week walking holiday which took place in the mountainous resort of Lake Molveno and then in the romantic resort of Lake Garda.

Torrential rain disrupted the group's walking schedule by two days but on one day the group climbed one of the Dolomite peaks in the region, led by Shay Finneran. Tom Reddington led another day's walking which included a cable car ride and very narrow ledges. Sightseeing to Austria, Venice and Verona also was fitted in.

The second week in Riva resort, the largest resort on Lake Garda, and the group embarked on walking each day. On one occasion a mighty storm blew over Lake Garda which lasted for thirty minutes. It seems Lake Garda is quite famous for its spectacular storms.

This newsletter concluded with an account of the yearly Galway Walking Club Marathon by Aisling Keenan, the Club's then PRO. Walkers from over 18 clubs participated this year. This Marathon is recognised by the International Federation of Popular Sports (IVV Awards).

The success of this Marathon was due to the immense voluntary effort by the Marathon Co-ordinator (Tom Rea) the Club Committee, the Club's members, and helpers.

Saturday August 14<sup>th</sup> dawned and committee members arrived at 06.30am at the Maum Community Centre to start preparations for the day.

Once registered, the walkers were bussed to the start of the Marathon at 08.00am

Walkers could choose to partake in the Half (13 miles) or Full Marathon (26 miles). Refreshments were handed out to the participants at different stages of the marathon. At 20 miles the final checkpoint marked the beginning of the ascent, which concluded with a 3 mile road walk.

Soup and sandwiches made by the super cooks from the Club awaited the walkers and then people partook of a sup in the nearby Joe Keane's pub that has, no doubt, the best views in Ireland.

**September 2005** - The Committee outlined in this newsletter had changed slightly from 1994.

Jerry Lalor was in his second year as **Chairperson** – Kuros Torkzadeh was **the Vice Chairperson**

**Secretary:** Martha Higgins

**Treasurer:** Veronica O Toole

**Membership Officer:** Una Lalor

**PRO:** Aisling Keenan

**Members:** *Maire Joyce*

*Tony O' Connell*

*Caroline Meaney*

As usual a list of the walks for the following few months were displayed in the newsletter. The walks were situated in Clare and Connemara, mainly The GWC Annual Western Way Marathon, its 9<sup>th</sup>,

took place in August and it was very successful. Tom Rea again co-ordinated this event helped by Marta Higgins.

Monica Quinn wrote a tribute to Deirdre Hunt who passed away in her home in Athlone, Deirdre was an active member of the GWC and was a keen swimmer, tennis player and loved horses. Many members of the club attended her funeral in Athlone which her family really appreciated. May Deirdre Rest in Peace.

Martha wrote about the club's few days in Scotland (April 2005) where 31 of the club's members climbed Ben Nevis without any bother, a separate group did a shorter walk in the area. Kuros led the group and Martha described the feelings of the group when they reached the top where deep snow awaited them. No visibility and eerie was how Martha described the scene. Most of the group slid down on their posteriors and had great fun. On the following day, the group were taken for a walk near Fort William to view a gorge and the Steal waterfall. Unfortunately, on the way back Martha twisted her ankle while crossing a river and she still had to face crossing a wire bridge. Nevertheless, the party continued that night with a Scottish night of music and song in a local pub.

All agreed that it was a fantastic, memorable weekend. Some photos of this weekend are featured in the newsletter.

Anne Brindley wrote about her Camino de Santiago, the French one, which she walked, all 800kms, in one month. (June, July 2005). Her witty report was punctuated by impressions, sights and sounds of the animal kingdom she encountered on the trail, the refugios (hostels) where the cacophony of human sounds culminated in an orchestra of bunk beds creaks, snores, snoring, no sleep. All of us who have walked the Camino can identify with this. What an amazing achievement to have walked this huge distance in one month.

A priest offered the peregrinos the following blessing: "You are travelling on the road of stars to Santiago de Compostela, the field of the stars. When you finish you will be one of those stars, a terrestrial one, who will bear witness to the road you have travelled, to the journey you have made".

To finish off this newsletter the Club's witty poetess (Caroline Meaney) penned a 10-verse poem to mark the weekend:

*Verse 3: "Stage One of our Journey was the shores of Lough Fee*

*Our pace was unsteady as sleepy were we*

*The 26 miles seemed daunting thus far*

*I was glad to see Gerry with supplies in his car.*

*Final Verse: Fair Play to Tom Rea and his excellent Team*

*We finished the Marathon and conquered a dream*

*The pint in Keane's pub never tasted so sweet*

*Then off home to Galway to tend to me feet"*

**September 2006:** By then, Martha Higgins had assumed the **Chairperson** role with Kuros Torkzadeh as **Vice Chairperson**. Maire Joyce was **Secretary** and Una Lalor filled the **Treasurer** post. **Membership Officers** were Eileen Letsome, and Patricia Fleming. Caroline Meaney was the **Club's PRO** while members were Tom Huban and Julie O' Sullivan.

The 091 telephone numbers were no longer listed as contact telephone numbers for the Committee group, everyone possessed a mobile number by 2006.



The Galway Walking Club were very fortunate to have the printing it needed, ie the newsletters and posters done by Mel Faherty who continued this important task from the time the Club was established.

In all the newsletters reviewed there's a clear and concise summary of the different levels of walks offered by the club and guidelines issued regarding walking gear and fitness. This is commendable.

A large group of fifty GWC members went to Wales in April to conquest Mount Snowdon which they duly did while a separate hardy group continued on to walk the ridge path that, according to Kuros, was not for the faint hearted and required a good sense of balance and strong nerves.

Another member of the club, Anne Brindley, undertook a 750 km, month long Camino in France beginning in Le Puy en Vesay and ending in St Jean at the foot of the Pyrenees, the GR65 route. The Camino seemed to be a glorious experience walking through medieval fortified towns, full of monasteries and cathedrals, cloisters, vineyards, fields with colourful wildflowers swaying in the wind, cornfields, and duck and geese farms.

*Expedition Elbrus:* Eleven members of the Club (Pat Holland, Tom Rea, Loretta Needham, Miko Keane, Jerry Lalor, Noel O'Meara, Tommie O' Connor, Peter Curran, Eric Hannagen, Gerard Mangan, and Michael Laffey) took a long haul flight to Russia in June this year to spend 16 days sightseeing round Russia, two days initially, in Moscow which was described as "dripping with icons, history, paintings and art". Their two days in Moscow included the State Circus and a visit to a dance extravaganza.

Day 4 saw the group flying to Mineralne Vody to reach *the Elbrus Mountains* which the group wanted to conquer. They began their

acclimatisation by climbing the *Cheget Karabash Mountain* (3000m) - known as Helicopter Pass because it was believed that supplies were dropped to mentally ill people who were abandoned there with no supervision.

The following day the group got their first glimpse of this famous mountain. Five days of acclimatisation for the ascent followed, using snow boots, ice axes and crampons, quite different from climbing in the Burren.

In consultation with the local guides the group started off in the middle of the night to begin their big adventure. They traversed the east Elbrus cone and proceeded onto the West Elbus summit. Movement was slow and the group were gasping for breath due to the altitude. The group reached the summit at 2pm. What an achievement.

The trip was organised and led by Gavin and his team from Adventure Alternative Limited and the group considered him and his team to be excellent guides and leaders.

So then the group headed to Sochi on the Black Sea for some R & R including a white water rafting trip that almost ended in disaster, involving wallets and a fall into the water. Whew.

The group stayed in the Knackra Hotel in the village of Cheget - a wag from the group remarked "we stayed in the Knackers Hotel in the village of Shag It"

All agreed it was an exhilarating and unforgettable experience.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Marathon was marked by a poem written by Caroline Meaney. The last verse went like this: "*The 10<sup>th</sup> Marathon was a huge success*"

*The committee are in heaven*

*But I suggest they introduce*

*DRUG TESTING in 07"*

A large, delicious cake was produced at the marathon to celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The marathon took place in perfect weather this year. One hundred and fifty walkers from all over Ireland took part. Tom Rea was, once again, this year's Marathon Co-ordinator.

Twenty seven members of the club climbed Diamond Hill and went for a swim afterwards.

The final article in this newsletter described a new walk in Cornamona led by Miko Keane which turned into a blackberry expedition for a few of the walkers. This was the day that Dublin was playing Mayo in the All-Ireland Football Final, (guess who won?) so getting a cup of tea in Cong was a challenge. Elaine recalled some lines of Seamus Heaney's poem "*Late August, given heavy rain and sun*

*For a full week, the blackberries would ripen...."*

Unfortunately, no further newsletters for the following years are available in the Archives. However, minutes of following meetings since 2006 are available and if anyone wants to continue this history by referring to them, it would be great.

Due to GDPR it isn't possible to include photos in this History.

The Constitution of the Club is included.

Regina Flynn, August 2022

