



# The Trekker

Trekkers Mountaineering Club Glenageary Co Dublin [www.trekkers.ie](http://www.trekkers.ie)  
Edition 74 October 2022

## The birthday summer



Fiona O'Sullivan launched the month of Trekkers' 40th Birthday celebrations in June with a trip to the Hill of Uisneach, the mythological centre of Ireland in Westmeath, on June 2nd. Below from left: Trekkers hold Eudie's birthday letters on a windswept ridge in Kerry; outside the Mountain Meitheal hut in Wicklow, and at Tibbradden in the Dublin Mountains



### INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE

Chair's Notes: p 2

Birthday story: p 3

The Picos: p 4-5

Guide to Trekker Courses: p5

Climbing Carrauntoohil: p6,7,8

Profile: Fiona O'Sullivan: p12-13

Cleaning up in Wicklow: p20

Books, shows, recipe: 21, 22, 23

# Chair's Notes

## Dear Trekkers,

These are my final Chair's notes for our Newsletter -- and we have another bumper edition for you.

I would first like to mention all of our new members that joined the Club over the last few years. You joined at a unique and strange time for all of us with COVID and the restrictions associated with it.

I hope you all felt the warmth and welcome which I felt when I joined the Club a number of years ago. Trekkers is

and will remain inclusive and welcome diversity. The essence of any Club is rooted in its members, and we thrive because of you!

The spirit of respect, camaraderie and support the members give each other is exemplary. Our members contribute in many ways, from leading walks, serving on committees, running educational courses to helping recruit new members. But most of all -- being there, with and for the Club and each other.

There is a wealth of experience amongst the members of our Club and you are encouraged to get involved in each and every way you choose.

Thank you all for your support and engagement over the last three years.

Finally I would like to express my gratitude to all of the committee members from the last three years who have been amazing -- we all wish our successors every success in their roles.

**Fiona O'Sullivan**

## Editor's notes

Welcome to the October newsletter, where we continue celebrating Trekkers' 40th birthday. Other features range from reports on away trips to the Picos and Crete; a guide to the hillwalking courses being offered to Trekkers and former Met Eireann meteorologist Joan Blackburn on what hillwalkers need to know about the weather. The club now has 246 members, up from 190 this time last year: thanks to all my contributors and photographers. All contributions to the newsletter are welcome; just email them to me at [franorourke@gmail.com](mailto:franorourke@gmail.com). **Frances O'Rourke.**

## Trekker AGM

The first in-person Trekker AGM in three years -- following two years when it was held on Zoom -- will take place at 7.30pm on Tuesday October 11th in the National Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire. This will be Fiona O'Sullivan's last year as chair, as she stands down after three years in office. Amongst business to be discussed is a change to the club's Constitution to introduce the role of Membership Officer as a full member of the Committee. The Committee hopes that as many members as possible will attend.



## Chilling out with Eudie

Life Trekker member Eudie Power, left, was snapped recently demonstrating some yoga on a B- walk on the Little Sugar Loaf. Eudie has done 48 walks since last September.

## BOOTS FOR SALE

Ladies Scarpa Leather Terra GTX Hillwalking Boots Size 42 for sale. Worn once. Bought for €180, selling for €100. If interested, contact Judy Humphreys on 086 3739859.



# 40th celebrations lasted a month

Earth goddesses in Westmeath, coffee in Cabinteely and at last a summer party: how Trekkers marked turning 40

A mystery tour to the sacred centre of Ireland, a tour of Trinity, a Bloomsday walkabout in Deansgrange cemetery, a riotous party in the National Yacht Club, a coffee morning in Cabinteely Park and a windswept walk to Carrauntuohill – Trekkers celebrated the club's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in style in June. On top of which, Trekkers posed on hillsides all over Ireland throughout June with the 23 beautiful birthday greeting letters hand-painted by Eudie Power to pose for celebration pix.

Masterminded by chair Fiona O'Sullivan, the events were a reminder that Trekkers is going from strength to strength, 40 years after Shaun Trant led a handful of men up Djouce and Maulin in 1982. What we did:  
June 2<sup>nd</sup>: On the Mystery Day Tour – billed the Ultimate School Tour – Fiona and Pdraig O Fathaigh brought 40 Trekkers to the Hill of Uisneach, the mythological centre of Ireland near Mullingar, where tour guide Simon Tuite told stories of the



On Bloomsday, there was a tour of Deans Grange cemetery, where some people who inspired fictional characters in Ulysses are buried

earth goddess Ériu and the sun god Lugh, druidical ceremonies and Bealtaine fires. Unlike most school tours, the day finished with a glass of whiskey in Kilbeggan Distillery nearby.

June 7<sup>th</sup>: Trekker and former provost of Trinity John Hegarty and his wife Neasa led a tour of TCD which took in the Long Room Library and the Book of Kells and finished with a tour of the Seamus Heaney exhibition in the Bank of Ireland.

June 11<sup>th</sup>: After two years when we couldn't hold a Trekkers party, everyone let their hair down at the summer party in the National Yacht Club. Bouquets were presented to Mary Murray and Noreen and Terry O'Brien in recognition of their decades of contribution to Trekkers; there was a quiz and prizes for dancing – top prize going to Emer Spillane.

June 14<sup>th</sup>: A group of Trekkers went out on the second Pure Mile Clean Up to clean an area around Glenree.

June 16<sup>th</sup>: On Bloomsday, Myles Duffy and Dick Ryan took Trekkers on a tour of Deans Grange cemetery and told stories of some of the real people buried there who inspired fictional characters in Joyce's Ulysses.

June 21<sup>st</sup>: Mary Murray hosted a coffee morning in Cabinteely Park which was well attended by Trekkers old and new – Colette Dorgan, Noel O'Reilly, John & Susan Ryan and Paul Dempsey were amongst the several dozen Trekkers who met up.

June 25<sup>th</sup>: 11 Trekkers tackled the Coomloughra Horseshoe Loop Walk to Carrauntoohil – but were turned back before Beenkeragh Ridge because of very high winds. **See story by Gaye Maguire p.6**



Showing off our birthday letters on an A walk to Aughrim, left. Right: on a Social walk on June 15<sup>th</sup>

# A week in the Picos

A five day hike in northern Spain was challenging and amazing says **Alan Kane**

A group of 14 Trekkers recently spent a week in Northern Spain in the Picos mountain range, flying in and out of Santander airport. We used a Spanish company, 'Rumbo a Picos', who arranged everything for us and provided two guides to ensure we didn't get lost.

The Picos de Europa, as they are known, are spread over three provinces: Asturias, Cantabria and León. The national park, created in 1918, has high summits alternating with deep gorges and canyons creating spectacular scenery. There are over 200 peaks greater than 2,000 metres, with the highest being Torre de Cerredo at 2,650m. The rock is Limestone, similar to the Burren, with lots of caves and underground lakes.



Cliona above the clouds, above. Below: down the chimney



From

Our trip consisted of five days hiking with three nights staying in mountain huts, hiking from one to another. The huts are very basic, sleeping in bunk

beds in dormitories with minimum space between you and your neighbours on both sides. Ear plugs are essential and only go part way to blocking out the snoring that inevitably occurs. Food is wholesome with plenty of soup, beans and bread. There is no choice so you take what's on offer. No wifi or phone signal which means lots of good chats, games of cards and the odd beer or glass of wine.

Normally you would expect ideal weather in September in this part of Spain, pleasant temperatures, nice sunshine and great visibility. We weren't so lucky, it rained consistently for 2 of our days in the mountains so rain gear was essential. However, when the rain

**Continued on page 5**



From left: Joe in the clouds; playing UNO after a hike; sleeping in the hut

## Spectacular sights above the clouds

**Continued from page 4**  
moved on we were treated to wonderful views with some spectacular sights above the clouds.

The terrain in the Picos is challenging with most of it being rock and scree. Concentration was the order of the day to ensure you negotiated your way safely across the rock face

and over the gaps between the rocks. Occasional scrambling and use of ropes was required but with



The Hou Negro glacier

overcome the challenges that presented themselves. It's time to start planning the next trip!

great support from our guides we all completed the course safely.

The experience overall was amazing, with us all learning new skills and doing things that we hadn't done before. There was a great sense of togetherness within the group with members supporting each other to

## Alan Kane's guide to Trekker courses

### Training & Education

Since I became Training Officer last year, my focus has been to get courses up and running in the areas of Map Reading & Navigation, Leadership Training and First Aid. Below is a summary of what is now available to the membership.

### Map Reading & Navigation

Our focus here is to be able to offer a number of different options so there is something to suit all members regardless of their current knowledge/experience or the amount of time they have available

Members can now choose between self-study, external courses run by Mountaineering Ireland, and internal courses run by in-house trainers. Full information is now up on the website under the **Training & Education** pages.

All the material for the self-study is up on the website with lots of exercises to develop your skills: if you want to become competent and self-reliant in terms of navigation on the hills, you enjoy self-study and are prepared to commit time to the topic, then the self-study option is for you. The self-study materials

are also appropriate for anyone wishing to refresh on a topic, e.g. Route Card preparation and use.

For those who are a bit apprehensive about the world of Map Reading & Navigation or are put off by the terminology, we will run an internal course next February titled **Map Reading & Navigation Simple Beginner's Guide**. The aim will be to demystify the topic, explain and demonstrate the basic concepts and give members the opportunity to try and use the techniques.

### Leadership Training

This is an internal one-day course, currently run by Mary Murphy, John Casey and Farannán Tannam. It covers what is involved in leading walks in the club and what to do when presented with challenging situations. It does not cover Map Reading & Navigation. The course is a mix of classroom and practical sessions out on the hills primarily targeted at members who have not led walks or who are very new to leading walks.

### First Aid Training

This course is currently delivered by an external trainer who specialises in delivering courses

to outdoor clubs such as our own; her focus is on dealing with the type of scenarios that one can encounter out on the hills. It consists of two half-day sessions. We have run this course three times since September 2021..

### First Aid Refresher

We introduced an in-house refresher course in August this year run by Anne Hayes and Alan Kane. It is a three-hour half-day session in a local hall, targeted at those who completed the full course with the external trainer and focuses on being familiar with different components in the First Aid Kit, how/when to use them.

### Training & Education Pages on the website

Joe Murray has done a super job in developing the website to include the training section. Go to the **training & education info** page and the **courses available** page for more information.

### Thank you

I want to recognise the role played by the following members in preparing materials and delivering courses during the year, they have been brilliant  
John Casey, Anne Hayes, Mary Murphy, Joe Murray, Farannán Tannam and Mark Taylor.

# A ridge too far

A birthday expedition to climb Ireland's three highest peaks in a day was foiled by high winds. **Gaye Maguire** reports

Last June, the Trekkers enjoyed a very memorable weekend in Killarney, organised by Joe Devine, during which we marked the 40th Anniversary of the Trekkers. We figured that this time of year was perfect for tackling the Coomloughra horseshoe, climbing Benkeeragh, Carrauntuohill and Caher, Ireland's three highest peaks in the one day.

We figured wrong!!

With our guides led by Tony Nation, we battled gale force winds, sleet, rain and cold to reach the high point of Benkerragh. At that stage we should have been crossing a knife edge ridge across to Carrauntuohill.

Regrettably the decision was made to turn back. All were disappointed souls but relieved, especially when Kerry Mountain Rescue rescued a group on that ridge that afternoon. We still had a fab day, but the loop would have to wait another day.

We tried to be a bit innovative with the photos, marking the Anniversary with Eudie's lovely hand painted cards.

That evening, we celebrated the Anniversary with toasts to friends past, sharing happy memories and planning



new ones, including the Picos in September. Unfortunately some of our members missed the event due to COVID, but they were there in spirit!

Sunday proved to be a better day and we walked off the previous night's excesses on Mangerton, followed by the biggest ice cream cones we've ever seen. We wrapped up the evening tired and happy, over delish takeaway from Kate

Kearney's, looking forward to returning, and having another go ... maybe in the middle of winter we'll get a better day!!

Thanks to Pat Falvey for extending his hospitality in his mountain lodge, our home from home for the weekend, which added to the occasion. Thanks to all who took part in the celebration, and I look forward to heading out on the hills, planning more trips.

Night hike in February anyone??

**Also see: A first-timer climbs Carrauntoohil, page 7**



A group of A walkers tackled the Coomloughra horseshoe in Kerry -- and held up the letters in spite of high winds

## Welcome to new members



Sandra Waldron



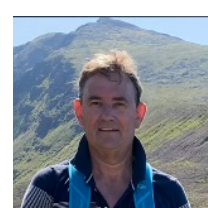
Orla FitzGerald



Eoin FitzGerald



Brian Twomey



Tommy Keane



Alan Waters

# A first-timer climbs Carrauntoohil

New Trekker member **Emma McGuire** celebrated her 33rd birthday by tackling Ireland's highest mountain

I joined Trekkers earlier this year and after a grand total of three guest hikes and two official member hikes, I decided I was ready to take on Carrauntoohil, our tallest mountain. In hindsight, this wasn't the finest decision I've ever made.

Having convinced myself that I was well-experienced, we set off to the MacGillycuddy's Reeks in early September. On the same day, I had turned 33 and had decided that doing something memorable was the best way to spend my birthday.

My partner Tony had agreed to come with me, being an agreeable sort, and I had assured him in the run-up to the hike that Carrauntoohil wasn't even really that high at just over 1,000 metres and sure wasn't that measly compared to any of our European neighbours' mountain ranges? He'd (once, accidentally and unknowingly) hiked to a glacier of 3,000 metres in the Alps with a Swiss friend, so he'd be well able! My first hike with Trekkers was Lugnaquilla, Ireland's fourth highest peak – and that was practically the same height! Be grand sure.

On our arrival to Cronin's



Yard, where we were staying the night before, we bumped into some Germans who had hiked the mountain earlier that day. Shaking their heads and glancing up towards its looming silhouette, they concurred they'd had a wonderful time, but with an orange rain warning coming into effect the next morning, they were glad they'd completed it prior. Wishing us well, they hinted that the encouragingly named "Devil's Ladder" wouldn't be easy going while wet. Chuckling at my stricken face, we retired to our tents for a night of uneasy sleep.

After packing up, we were ready to meet our

guide from Kerry Climbing. Spying the other hikers milling around, we identified our group and were introduced to our leaders, Pearse and his daughter

Orlaith. I discovered Orlaith was just starting 2<sup>nd</sup> year in school and that this would be her 92<sup>nd</sup> Carrauntoohil ascent. These two pieces of information alarmed and assured me in equal measure, though there was of course no reason to be worried. She and Pearse were wonderful, **Continued on page 8**



Top, Carrauntoohil, 1,038m high. Far right: waiting to take on Devil's Ladder and above, reaching the top of the Ladder.



# Positivity needed as Devil's Ladder became the Devil's Waterfall

## Continued from page 7

knowledgeable guides and after a few minutes with them, we were comforted in knowing we were in very capable hands. (It didn't hurt that Pearse is a member of Kerry Mountain Rescue, just in case things turned south.) Less reassuringly, when we mentioned we were from Wicklow he asked if we were "ready for a real mountain"!

With rain threatening, we approached the Devil's Ladder through the atmospheric Hag's Glen, Orlaith explaining that despite its name, the Devil's Ladder is the easiest way to ascend Carrauntoohil, "but that doesn't mean it's easy!" At the bottom, Pearse offered us much needed words of encouragement, as torrential rain began belting down, making any excessive communication difficult. A positive attitude was sorely needed as we snaked up what had become the Devil's Waterfall, at times up to our knees in water as it poured down the steep gully. Peeking backwards at how far we'd come with my legs turning to jelly, I



Torrential rain on Carrauntoohil cleared eventually, treating climbers to wonderful views

figured the best way was clear up at this point and continued scrambling. Reaching the top was a great relief and from there we had another, (but much easier), 30-minute climb to the top of the mountain itself.

By this point, the rain had cleared and while we were immersed in fog at the summit (this is Ireland after all), we were treated to wonderful views on our descent, this time via the "zigzags". The MacGillycuddy's

Reek mountains stretched out in all directions and there was even a peek of Bantry Bay on our right.

In comparison, the return was straightforward and Pearse kept us entertained with the fascinating local mythology, history and geology. We were struck by how impeccable the environment was, encountering no litter on our outing, despite the amount of visitors to the mountain totalling 250,000 last year. This is hugely down to the team at Kerry Climbing and other local guides encouraging you to leave absolutely no trace – including the likes of biodegradable materials - and even advising against the collections of stone piles created by other hikers, which is not a natural formation.

Though we may have bitten off slightly more than we could chew, it was a truly exhilarating climb and something I'd highly recommend. I've thoroughly enjoyed beginning my hiking journey and looking forward to adventures for years to come.

## Out on the hills



Clockwise from top :left: walking near Malahide in July; C walk on Avonmore Way; Lacken to Sorrel Hill, August; and in Carlingford after A walk in July





# The search for the Brown Bull

The legendary brown bull of Cooley was nowhere to be seen on a hike in Carlingford, reports **Padraig O’Fathaigh**. But Trekkers in Tinahely met an all-too-real black and white bull

Ten brave Trekkers headed for Carlingford on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, lead by Geraldine Boland with the support of co-leaders Gilbert and Padraig. For those who may have forgotten, the brown bull was the legendary animal belonging to the former King of Ulster, stolen by Queen Maebh of Connaught in what is known as The Cattle Raid of Cooley or An Táin.

According to legend, this animal was so large that 150 men could shelter in his shade from the midday sun and had a vicious temper when removed from his beloved Carlingford. No wonder that this writer was more interested in encountering more of the splendid ice-cream that he had enjoyed on the recce rather than any large animal – legendary or otherwise.

The planned route was that we would start from the access point for The Deserted Village, continue to Barnavave or Maebh’s Gap before heading for the Summit of Slieve Foye for a spectacular view of Carlingford Lough, the Cooley Peninsula and the Mourne Mountains, which do indeed run down to the sea. It was then intended that we descend from near Eagle’s Rock to the Táin Loop and back to Carlingford. As it happened, weather reports in the previous week forecast possible rain and so Geraldine planned a backup hike that turned out to be a most enjoyable day away despite some rain.

On the Saturday morning

we all met in Carlingford and leaving one car in the Tourist Office car park, we headed for the Deserted Village. We paused at the Deserted Village while Geraldine gave a brief history of the village. Interesting that the ruins include a “sweat lodge”, which would not have been uncommon in a previous era in other villages.

Briefly continuing the speculation as to whether it was



**The legendary brown bull was stolen by Queen Maebh of Connaught in the story known as An Tain, the Cattle Raid of Cooley. Image from stairnaheireann.net**

a sweat lodge or a small holding pen for animals, we continued to Barnavave (in our quest for the brown animal).

When we arrived at Golyin Pass, where we would have turned to climb Slieve Foye, the rain and mist had descended with significant cover on the top of Slieve Foye. The leaders decided that we would continue on the alternative route which was back along the Táin Way towards Carlingford as the descent from Eagle Rock would be particularly

hazardous on wet ground.

On arrival above Carlingford, Geraldine lead us on the Táin Trail I gave some brief commentary on the historic structures of Carlingford including King John’s Castle and Taaffe’s Tower. We stopped for a brief lunch in the carpark below Eagle’s Rock. As we continued down towards the coastal greenway, the rain stopped and we enjoyed lovely sunshine on our leisurely walk back to Carlingford.

When we arrived back in Carlingford, the drivers were ferried back to the start point below the Deserted Village to retrieve our cars before heading for the lovely coffee shop in Carlingford.

It was particularly fortunate that no large animals were encountered and perhaps the most intimidating thing was the size of the splendid ice creams from the shop beside the coffee

shop. Thank you to Geraldine for leading and to Mary Cadogan, Mary Darcy, Paul C, Bernardine B, Dermot M, Ann C, Gilbert L and Cliona for great company. The original route is still to be enjoyed and there are rumours that Geraldine might lead us on it before the year is out.

**See Trekkers’ close encounter with a real bull on Paddy MacManus’s annual trip to Tinahely, page 10**

# Tinahely on the hoof

First Trekkers met a small field full of cows, then a huge bull, on an annual August away trip. **Paddy MacManus** reports

The recce in July was perfect. On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> August, 18 Trekkers, B and C, sallied forth in good cheer, a dry, balmy day. After 75 minutes I realised something was adrift: we should have been on a gully like path, descending towards a marker pole. Instead, we were ascending. Puzzlingly, it seemed we had no choice; the bracken was high and covered the path in lots of places.

Since July the path had become more overgrown, with little wear. Quickly I went ahead, around a corner and into a small, enclosed area with an exit on the far side. I spotted 12 or more cattle, cows, calves, some upright and others hunkered down on the ground. The only way forward was through them. The conversation babble of the group had dropped to intermittent murmurs.

A glance back showed me anxious faces. We and the cattle looked at one another. A farmer's daughter expressed concern about walking between the calves and their mothers. I led us in a retreat, looking for the reced path.

Frustratingly, I could see the marker post and the gully

path, and we were on the wrong side of it. And I could see a new breach in the recce path. Conversation levels were back to normal decibels. In two groups 20 metres apart, we descended to flatter ground. Then, from a break in the brambles, 50 metres away in our direction of travel, IT APPEARED.

A lumbering beast, a huge



**No one stopped to take a picture of the bull Tinahely . . . but this is what he looked like.**

black head and body. I muttered to my recce member, "that's a big snot it has hanging from its nose". The strangled, reply was swift, "that's a ring in his nose, the snot is a rope, that's a bull". Confirmed immediately by another.

The conversation buzz

was silent. I felt anxiety in the air. I asked the co-leader to lead the immediate group out of sight behind the next high brambles. I waited for the remainder to close the gap between us. I asked them to quietly follow those ahead.

During this time the bull stared all the time in my direction but suddenly he turned, sniffing the air on his right, in the direction of his harem. His huge profile of black muscle with a white band in the middle, separating his front and back, turned and began to saunter away with startling agility towards his precious joys.

He was a majestic sight. I decided to reverse completely to the other side of the last safe gate. It became clear the recce path had been altered with a battered, rusty gate, marked "NO ENTRY".

We recalibrated our walks for the rest of the trip, achieving satisfactory lengths and ascents. We added to the concepts of Escape Routes, Plan Bs, with "making it up on the hoof"!! The locals in the pub knew exactly the bull and described him as "a grand fella, and placid"!!



Left: the Lough OULer circuit, July. Right, Climbing the Little Sugarloaf in August



# Back to the Blackstairs

Trekkers climbed to the summit of Mount Leinster in August. Pdraig O’Fathaigh reports



Thirteen members of The Trekkers enjoyed an outstanding day hiking in the Blackstairs Mountains on August 20<sup>th</sup> under the leadership of Geraldine Boland and Declan Coughlan.

The day dawned bright but cloudy in South County Dublin with a favourable forecast for South Leinster. Car-sharing had been arranged and after a pleasant 90-minute drive we met at the Nine Stones Car Park, which is approximately nine kilometres west of Bunclody.

We could all see the magnificent scenery from the carpark which made us all the more anxious to get underway. Geraldine gave a brief description of the route and introduced Emma, Stefanie and Brigid who are relatively new members and also welcomed Mary-Lou back from her travels.

The first section of the walk was a 2km road walk before taking to the hill with an uphill section along the side of Kilbrannish South Forest. This forest is owned by Coillte and in Irish is either Cill Breatnais or Coill Breatnais meaning either Walsh’s Church or Walsh’s Wood. After a strong ascent we stopped for a banana break and took in the scenic views of the lowlands below. We then continued towards the summit of Mount Leinster along the vehicle service

## Hiking in the Blackstairs Mountains. Below: the August hike was led by Geraldine Boland and Declan Coughlan

road. The summit stands at 796 metres with a transmission mast 122 metres tall on top.

After the ascent, we were all happy to enjoy the walk along the wide ridge taking in the views of Carlow and Wexford below. The ridge walk gave us the breath to fall into companionable conversation while we headed for

The last known sighting of a wolf in Ireland, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was on Mount Leinster. I am happy to report that there was no sighting on Saturday and to celebrate that fact, after a day of trepidation, this writer consumed an ice-cream from the van in the car park before heading back to Bunclody Golf and Fishing Club.

At the club, Geraldine and Declan had arranged that we have access to the superb locker rooms to shower and change. Then after enjoying drinks and an excellent meal to fortify us, we set out on our return to Dublin.

The facilities at the club are really good and the staff were

very welcoming. I can happily recommend it to any members. hiking in the area and perhaps even as a venue for a future bigger club outing.

A very sincere thank you to Geraldine and Declan for a really great day away. Thank you also to Anne Hayes, Brigid McKeever, Mary-Lou Hartford, Emma McGuire, Stefanie Keane, Aine O’Donoghue, Aine Allen, Farranan Tannam, Gaye Maguire and Paul Conlon for excellent company on the mountains.



Black Rock Mountain.

Once we reached the cairn on Black Rock Mountain, we retraced our steps for a few hundred metres to enjoy our lunch at the ruined shepherd’s cottage before continuing back to the summit of Mount Leinster.

After a brief section of the vehicle service road, we then walked along tracks over open ground, finishing with a section that handrails the Raheenkyle forest edge back to the car park at Nine Stones.

# Fiona's mountain highs

The number of Trekkers' weekly walks has doubled and 50 new members have joined since Fiona O'Sullivan became chair three years ago. As she stands down, she tells **Frances O'Rourke** about her hopes for Trekkers' future

"When you get down to the bottom of a mountain at the end of a walk, when you're out with the group, in whatever weather – it's a high."

Fiona O'Sullivan has been an enthusiastic club member since 2015 and became Trekker chair just five months before Trekkers faced probably what was its greatest challenge – keeping the club alive during the pandemic, when we couldn't walk.

"Amongst the best things we did was to adhere to Government guidelines, to notify members every time our rules changed – and getting back on the buses as soon as we could. I give Mark, our treasurer, the credit for that."

Another development was the creation of the Map Reading and Navigation Course created by Alan Kane and Mark Taylor. "The amount of time and dedication they gave to that course was extraordinary – and it might not have happened but for the pandemic. And the newsletter became so important, keeping communication between members."

Fiona was a very proactive chair: on her watch, the number of weekly walks doubled; a Future Directions survey was held to find out what members want for the club; a new post of Training officer has been created and

Training & Education courses have been formalised as well as First Aid Courses and the Map Reading & Navigation course. She organised celebrations for the Club's 3,000<sup>th</sup> walk in June 2021, and for its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in June this year.

But, she adds "nothing would have been achieved over the last three years without the incredible support of the Committee who dedicated an enormous amount of time and energy to keeping the club alive and vibrant: I am indebted to Mary Cadogan, Anne Hayes, Alan Kane, Mark Taylor and Fran O'Rourke for their commitment and passion for the club."

Most dramatically, the membership grew from 190 to 245: the effect of an article on

**'I hope that new members - especially the younger members - continue'**

Trekkers in the Irish Times "was dramatic. There was a lot of work involved [to induct people who contacted us after that] but the club continually needs new members. I'd like to see that consolidated this year, hope that new members -- especially the six to 10 younger members – continue. And I'm very glad that the Social walks are now firmly established."

Now that Trekkers is



**Trekker chair Fiona O'Sullivan: important to maintain club's ethos of friendliness, camaraderie and respect**

much bigger "It'll be important to maintain the club's ethos of friendliness, camaraderie, respect. It's also great to have people willing to volunteer their time to sit on committees or volunteer to do jobs that come up – for example, the Pure Mile project, the

people organising the leadership and first aid courses and the social committee that organised the summer social – I think every event should have that.

"The social calendar of the Trekkers is a very important part of the club, from the annual Memorial Day to the summer social and Christmas party."

Fiona is proud of these achievements but adds "We have to be careful not to

## 'I'd never ever have done this if not for Trekkers'

overcomplicate this – after all, we are only a walking group!"

She grew up in Tramore, the Comeraghs being the nearest mountains, but hadn't had much experience of hillwalking. Her friend Trekker Lucia Shelly urged her to join and she went on her first guest walk in 2015. She'd been running her own tour company from 1988, a business she fell into nearly by accident.

She was working full-time at home when she was asked to help out guiding some French tourists who were arriving in Ireland. "I'd no training, told the group everything I knew about Dublin and couldn't talk on the way back." But she did more tours – one involved meeting a group in Rosslare after a terrible storm and brought them to Glendalough in November. "There was no one in the hotel but the manager, Pat Casey, was incredible."

"Something clicked: I went off to do a course and set up a company, Custom Ireland, with a coach driver, specialising in high end business tourism."

Coming up to 60, she decided it was time to step down, set up a tourism consultancy as an exit strategy – and took on a six-month job with Trinity College Dublin. She's been there for seven years, although she keeps planning to retire. It's a job that involves, amongst other things, organising facilities for conferences, taking care of visiting stars filming in Trinity, most recently Russell Crowe.

As well as all that, she's been a volunteer for mental health charity Aware for the past five years and is now on its board.

Highlights of Fiona's time in Trekkers include an away trip led by Shay Murrin to the Sierra

Nevada in 2016 and a Brendan Bracken-organised trip to Mt Leinster: "We stayed in hostel-type accommodation and he'd arranged for a woman to make meals for us in a pub attached to the hostel.

"Brendan – who died in 2019 – "was fantastic". She'll also never forget being caught in a whiteout on Tonleagee with Michael Lane and Mary Murphy and in terrible weather on Lugnaquilla on a recce with Frances Gillen and Alan Kane. "Visibility was atrocious but I felt safe, because on both occasions we were with experienced leaders."

Fiona has had her share of injuries – "I've had whiplash, vertigo, a broken wrist twice – but I've never been taken off the mountain. I've been lucky. And I'd never ever have done this if not for Trekkers."

## Remembering Trekker friends

### Monty Tinsley on the 13th memorial day in Glenmalure

On the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022 the Trekkers gathered in Glenmalure to remember past members who had died.

The role of honour now lists 21 Trekkers who have passed on whilst still members, starting with Joe English, a brother of Fred who died in 1995. Marian Beegan was the special guest this year as her husband, Kevin died last April.

Fiona O'Sullivan acted as M.C. for the proceedings



**Noel O'Reilly sings Avondale at Trekkers' Memorial day in September**

and welcomed everybody to the ceremony. Then Anne Hayes

read the Ode to our departed Trekkers and Gerry Fogarty laid the wreath at the Memorial.

The only new addition to the Ceremony was a special reflection written by Susie Kennedy. It appropriately expressed the ethos of the Club and all those who have helped to develop and sustain it.

Once again, the event concluded with a splendid meal in the Glenmalure Hotel.

# Blessington's turbulent past

Blessington is the gateway to many of our popular walks. **Sean Boyne**, who has family roots in the area, tells its story

For many Trekkers, Blessington is the gateway to the mountains of north-west Wicklow. The town, like some adjacent areas, has a turbulent history. Blessington was founded by Michael Boyle, Archbishop of Dublin and Chancellor of Ireland, who acquired extensive lands locally in 1667.

The oldest building is the Church of Ireland church, St Mary's, consecrated in 1683. Later, members of the Hill family, related to Archbishop Boyle, became the landowners, taking the title Marquess of Downshire.

My great-grandfather was a tenant of the Downshire estate. He did not always have an easy relationship with the landlord's agent William Owen, who lived in the Agent's House – that's the Georgian building, now unoccupied, next door to St Mary's. However, it appears that Owen, who died in 1890, was quite a lenient agent by the standards of the time.

Just across from St Mary's, off the main street, is a pair of



piers. These marked the entrance to the parkland and deer park where stood the Downshire mansion. The big house was burned by the rebels in 1798 and never rebuilt.

Crucially, Russborough House, one of the finest 18<sup>th</sup> century houses in Ireland, and a regular port of call for Trekkers walking the Blessington Greenway, survived. It has been suggested that Russborough, seat of the Earl of Milltown, was

spared because a couple of his sons were sympathetic to the United Irishmen. Russborough was later the home of wealthy art collector Sir Alfred Beit and his wife Clementine, and the stately home became notorious for a series of art raids. Clementine was a cousin of the colourful Mitford sisters; another cousin married Winston Churchill.

Driving from Blessington towards Lackan, where the recently-restored Mass Path is popular with Trekkers, one encounters, in the area of Knockieran, Dwyer's Brook, a small bridge now by-passed.

This is where a rebel called Dwyer was reportedly beheaded during the 1798 rebellion. He was said to have been a scout for a major rebel camp on Blackmore Hill. Further along the road, to the left, is Carrig Lane – it was doubtless along this lane that General Sir James Duff brought his artillery when his forces attacked the

**Continued on page 15**



Top, St Mary's, Church of Ireland church, Blessington. Above left, Blackmore Hill, site of a rebel camp in 1798. Right: piers that marked the entrance to the Downshire mansion, Blessington, destroyed in 1798

# Rebels, hangings -- and an amnesty scheme



Left, Russborough House. Right: the former Downshire estate Agent's House, beside St Mary's church, Blessington

## Continued from page 14

rebels on the hill on 31 May 1798.

As a boy on holiday at my grandparents' farm at Sroughan, I was brought to see the Camp Well on the southern slopes of Blackmore – according to local tradition, the rebels were camped around the well. The area was later planted with forestry.

As a boy I was fascinated by a cairn on top of the hill – this was the site of a gibbet where, in 1788, Watt Reid was hanged for murder. The site is marked on EastWest Mapping's 'Wicklow Mountains West' map.

During 1798, crown forces occupied St Mary's church. One of the senior British Army officers who operated in and around Blessington was Glasgow-born General Sir John Moore. One of the more humane of the British officers, he operated an amnesty scheme.

If you were a rebel, or

suspected of being a rebel, and if you surrendered your arms and swore allegiance to the king, you would be given a protection certificate.

Three of my Clarke forebears were among more than 1,200 locals who availed of the amnesty, and back in the 1950s I saw fragments of their actual protection papers – they had been found in a thatch roof at Sroughan. Each document was signed 'John Moore, Lt. General', Blessington, 22 July 1798.

Moore departed Blessington at the head of his forces at 4 o'clock on the morning of Sunday, 25 August to travel to the west – the French had landed in Mayo.

After Moore left, the town was guarded by yeomanry, who barricaded themselves in St Mary's when a large rebel force led by General Joseph Holt, who had a camp at Whelp

Rock, Kilbeg, raided the town to carry off livestock. Moore was killed in 1808 in Spain during the Peninsular War, and is immortalised in the poem, 'The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna'.

In more recent times, a major event for West Wicklow people was the building of Poulaphouca Dam and hydroelectric station, creating, in 1940, Blessington Lake, now a vital reservoir.

The following year, 1941, local people received a reminder of the world war when an RAF bomber crashed on Black Hill, in the area of Kilbeg. The four RAF men were buried with full military honours, accorded by our own Defence Forces, at St Mary's churchyard.

A memorial marking the crash site will be familiar to many hill walkers.



Left: after the Mount Leinster walk, July; right, Boyne Canal walk, July



# Hiking in the heat in Crete

The scent of thyme, patches of snow: **Dermot Murray** on the wonderful trip to Crete

It is a Wednesday morning in the heart of May, and I find myself scrambling over a landscape of abrasive rocks, prickly vegetation, and scattered copses of shade-giving trees. There is a punishing sun overhead and the pungent scent of thyme is carried on the air.

It is day number three – and walk number two – of the Trekkers trip to Crete, and I feel we are being put through our paces. Our guide for the day, Jean, leads us now over this somewhat alien terrain, as we resolve to follow the marked trail to the Kallergi shelter which lies – in our imaginations at least – some kilometres above and ahead of us.

Jean points out griffon vultures overhead (soaring, thankfully, and not circling) and as we gain height we come across expanses of drifted snow: their presence, it must be said, is nothing short of miraculous given the temperature of the day, but similar drifts can be seen adorning the surrounding mountains like patches of gleaming whitewash.

Finally, after what seems like a long time, we reach the



Thirty-one Trekkers went on a hiking holiday to Crete in May. Below, the spectacular Samaria Gorge, the highlight of the holiday

shelter – but we are appalled and shocked to discover that we have only journeyed a paltry 4.9 kilometres! Scrambling in the sun, it seems, is slower and more demanding than the more familiar endeavour of walking at a steady

delightfully slow-paced town of Paleochora in the south. Crete itself is a long, narrow strip of land and is mountainous, with its highest peaks easily out-towering the like of our own Carrauntoohil.

The opening walk had served as an opportunity for the guides to get some idea of who we were and what made us tick as walkers (and we would come to know and trust Yves, Alice, Valerie and Jean over the next 10 days). From that point onwards, we were presented with a choice of two walks each day, more or less equivalent to the familiar B- and



C-walks. Many of the following treks brought us right into the midst of unusual natural features, including cliffs, caves and a variety of shadowy gorges, of which the Samaria Gorge was undoubtedly the most spectacular.

A 31-strong group of Trekkers had undertaken to travel to Crete, based first of all in the city of Chania and, later, in the

**Continued on page 17**



# Samaria Gorge the highlight of the holiday



Trekkers pick their way through the 1,200 metre-deep Samaria Gorge

## Continued from page 16

This particular walk – and in my view the highlight of the holiday – featured a 1,200 metre descent into a corridor of gashed and layered rock, in places only three or four arm-spans across, while we steadfastly picked our way along the river running through the deepest part of the gorge, crossing and re-crossing it countless times.

Naturally, all of these exertions gave us all a ravenous appetite, and this was satisfied

each evening by availing of the restaurants of both Chania and Paleochora. The most memorable meal of all, unquestionably, was the final one, as we were treated to an extravagant banquet that was furthermore rounded off by a raucous (but vastly entertaining) singsong, as might have been enjoyed on the Trekkers trips of old!

Many thanks must go to Mary and Nick for all of their organising skills.

## Holiday Facts & Figures:

**Organised by:** France Outdoors

**Cost:** Ryanair flights about €300, pick-up from airport, two hotels, travel to walks, gala meal at end: €1,060

**Meals:** roughly €25 for dinner each evening.

**Absolute must-do:** the Samaria Gorge.



Left, near Lough Dan in June. Above: Trekkers celebrating our 40th birthday in Tibradden in June ran into DLRCCO Cathaoirleach Lettie McCarthy, centre, at the Council's launch of its Monumental Mountain's archaeological project

# What hikers need to know about weather

Former Met Éireann meteorologist and weather forecaster **Joan Blackburn**, who joined Trekkers after retiring last summer, explains what to look out for before going on a hike

Trekkers leading walks are always mindful of weather conditions, especially in winter. Wind speeds get stronger as you walk higher, temperatures drop, sudden mists can appear, so leaders need to know when and where it's safe to walk. Even if you plan to walk "low and local", it's always advisable to check the forecast.

That's why they need to download the Met Éireann App which forecasts expected conditions out to 10 days ahead. It's scientifically the most accurate for Ireland says Joan Blackburn: "Modern day weather forecasting divides areas of the globe into a grid and then uses computers to solve the mathematical equations governing the motions of the atmosphere at each grid-point. Met Éireann's grid resolution for the region around Ireland is just 2.5km and it is the highest resolution of any model in operation.

"The reason Met Éireann can have this very fine mesh grid, is that it's a local area model and only deals with the small geographical area stretching from the near Atlantic to just east of the UK, whereas the global models cover much of the globe and have coarser grids.

"For forecasting out to 60 hours, Met Éireann uses their own fine mesh model, but beyond that to 10 days, the European ECMWF model (the European

Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts) is used. This is regarded as the best global model. Met Éireann is part of the European consortium which constantly refine and operate this model."

So -- walk leaders need to download the Met Éireann App, and learn how to use it. They should also sign up for Met Éireann alerts/notifications for particular areas they're likely to be walking in.

The first thing is to check whether there are any weather

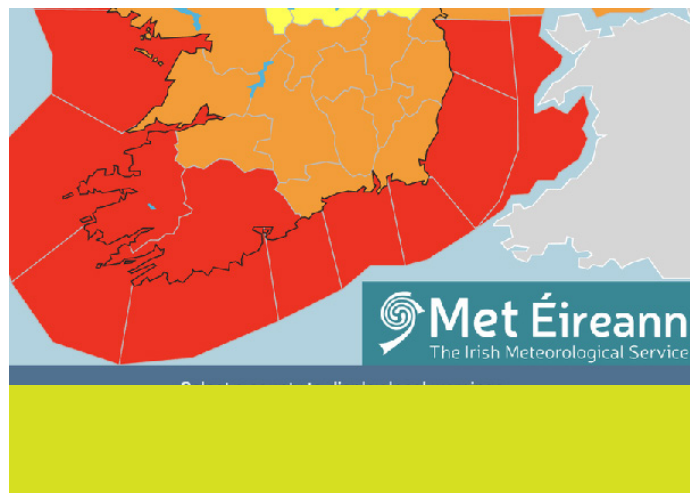
into operation after you finish your walk, but always be aware that winds will be strengthening before the warning time actually starts. Take note of the wind direction and speed. You need to know that wind speeds at 2,000 to 3,000ft (600 to 1,000m) can be double the wind at sea level and in general, speeds given in the warnings are for low levels." Then there's rain: "A lot of our rain comes from the Atlantic, from the southwest and west, and we live a charmed life walking the hills and mountains in the east

compared to western areas. However, we will get the worst of any rain coming in from an easterly direction. If the rain is coming from the west, you're probably sheltered much of the time. Heavy rain is often regarded as 2mm to 4mm an hour.

"Walkers need to know the difference between rain and showers. Rain is prolonged and usually brings with it a low cloud base (bad when walking in the mountains). Showers can be heavier/more intense but usually pass

over fairly quickly and often the cloud base is not very low for long periods. But beware -- heavy showers can bring thunderstorms and lightning with squally winds. If the forecast says 'A band of rain coming in', it means there could be low clouds and poor

**Continued on page 19**



This winter's Storm Eunice, above. Walk leaders should download the Met Éireann app, which forecasts conditions out to 10 days ahead

warnings: Joan says "Trekkers should be mindful of official Met Éireann weather warning. Each coloured warning is explained and appropriate action advised on [www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie) in the section warnings explained. Always check the validity time of the warning, it may come

# Winds rise, temperatures drop as we go higher

from page 18

visibility for the mountains ."

When walkers are out and about, and wondering about rain, Met that gives rainfall Radar, "the only app that will show you where it's raining at the moment and the direction in which the rain is moving".

Joan adds that hillwalkers should always look out for hill mist or fog ( low cloud base) that will occur in humid conditions and in frontal zones ( areas of rain). "So watch out on the TV for the fronts and also the region on the weather charts between the warm front (red barbs) and the cold front (blue barbs). Southerly winds will often bring

humid conditions which may well result in hill mist of fog, whereas Northerly winds generally bring much fresher and clearer air and higher cloud base. Also, it's good to note as we go higher it gets colder, often with a temperature drop of 2 degrees per 1,000ft (300m). In spring, winter and late autumn, this can mean rain at lower levels and snow higher up."

"So, in summary the weather in the mountains is usually more adverse than at lower levels, Winds are stronger, rain is heavier, there is a greater risk of lightning and a greater chance of snow if the temperatures are fairly low, all the more reason to tune into the forecast, either on radio, TV

Joan Blackburn was a weather forecaster with Met Éireann for nearly 40 years, before retiring in the summer of 2021. From Tipperary town, she used to climb the Galtees on Sundays. She got her job as a weather forecaster after studying physics and maths in UCD: "I was always interested in the weather; weather forecasting is based on the dynamics of the Atmosphere, and we forecast the weather by solving the mathematical equations that govern the motion of the Atmosphere on a continuous basis. It's a 24/7, 365 days-of-the-year job.

Met Éireann staff continuously monitor, analyse and predict weather conditions for Ireland and I enjoyed greatly my years in Met Éireann doing a job I loved."

As well as hillwalking, Joan plays golf, swims most days in the sea – she lives in Blackrock, Co Dublin -- and is learning to play bridge. She met her husband Pat Clarke, who was also a weather forecaster, in Met Éireann



Above: Edudie Power by the Avonmore River in June. Right: A walkers on the Tain Way in July



# Cleaning up in the Wicklow hills

Pure Mile is a project to keep roadways in Wicklow litter free. Mary Dolan and Patrick Howlin on Trekkers' first day volunteering

We went to spend a few hours on the Featherbed helping out Pure Mile and ended up having an unusual and interesting day. The Featherbed is always a source of fascination, full of vast bleak beauty and hidden secrets. And here we are prodding the surface with our pincers and readying to fill our blue bags.

Geraldine kicked off the day, making sure we understood our role was first and foremost to keep safe, avoid hazardous waste and leave the terrain better than we found it. And off we went: Paddy & Cathal on one route; Nuala & Pat in another direction: our team was comprised of Fiona and ourselves, Mary & Patrick – all under Geraldine's watchful eye, and she did fill blue bags too!!

We soon developed a rhythm punctuated by the odd weird find. Mostly it was the expected: beer bottles, coffee cups and lids, aluminium cans, plastic bags, crisp packets and of course the newest form of litter – masks. There were a surprising number of unopened bottles. I don't think, in our wild youth, we left behind much more than empties. Different world!

Fiona made the intriguing finds of the day, all possibly related. First up was a burnt out car, followed by a purse with all its contents still inside. It was all photographed and recorded for reporting to the authorities afterwards. And no, she didn't find any bones! Hopefully the owner of that purse has long since replaced the contents and moved on.

The stream of passing cyclists complimented and encouraged us in our task and the motorists took great care and nodded approvingly. The sheep ignored us!

All this sounds a bit mad, but it was hard not to get absorbed in the job and wonder at the secret lives we were clearing up. On the way back in Geraldine's car, Fiona spotted a missed bit of litter and we all fumed. That will be for another day.



Trekkers who took part in the Pure Mile litter pickup in September, top, in June, middle -- with Ian Davis, Pure Mile Project Manager -- and on the first day in May, bottom

## THE PURE MILE PROJECT



The first group of Trekkers joined The Pure (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) Mile project run by Wicklow Mountains National Park in May. Since then, Trekkers have been involved in two more litter pickups. It is the same special area of conservation that Pure Mile asks us to clear each time: we pick up small litter items only from 9km of roadways in an upland area near Piperstown Hill, NE of Glenasmole Reservoir and NW of Whitesands Mountain. Catherine Almond, supported by Geraldine Boland, organised Trekkers' involvement in Pure left, Mile, an environmental, community, heritage initiative that encourages communities and groups in rural areas to adopt a mile, or miles, of road, and keep this area litter/rubbish free. Next pick up will possibly be in Spring 2023, to be confirmed. Anyone interested in finding out more, please contact Catherine Almond.

**The Shadow of the Wind by Carlos Ruiz Zafron**

Barcelona 1945: A city slowly heals from its war wounds, and Daniel, a bookseller's son, finds solace in a mysterious book ... storytelling at its best!

**The Marriage Proposal by Maggie O'Farrell**

From the author of **Hamnet**, this is the fictional retelling of the short life of Lucretia de Medici, who was forced to marry a powerful and much older Duke. Compelling reading.

**Foster by Claire Keegan**

A small girl is sent to live with foster parents on a farm in rural Ireland where she finds a warmth and affection she has not known before. The film **An Cailin Ciuin** is based on this book.

**The Fountain of Silence by Rita**

**Sepetys**

Madrid 1957: under the fascist dictatorship of General Franco, Spain is living in repression and silence, and hiding a dark secret.

**Una Davis**

**Intimate City: Dublin Essays by Peter Sirr**

A collection of essays that recount Sirr's flâneries across a Dublin of past and present. Tracks and trails of old and new, well-known and hidden - a mix of facts, mini-histories and literary street-maps of poets and writers - all collectively reflect the city's spirit. Would appeal to those with an inquisitive eye.

**A Place of Greater Safety by Hilary Mantel**

A historical novel focusing on the experiences of three central leaders of the French Revolution, Danton, Robespierre and Desmoulins. Modern re-interpretation meticulously researched. Lengthy.

**Patricia Byrne**

**Horse by Geraldine Brooks**

A sweeping tale that uses the true story of a famous 19th-century



**BOOK  
BEAT  
What  
Trekks  
are reading**

racehorse to explore the roots and legacy of slavery. It's not just an animal story—it's a very moving story about race and art and a great tale of love between boy (growing to man) and horse.

**Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus**

Laugh-out-loud funny, shrewdly observant, and studded with a dazzling cast of supporting characters, the book is as original and vibrant as its protagonist. I did laugh out loud!

**Ann Keenan**

**Sorrow and Bliss by Meg Mason**

Martha's life should be perfect; she's smart, beautiful, clever. She has a husband who loves her. But she finds it hard to be happy. She is a talented writer but barely works. She is 40 and is adamant she doesn't want to be

a mother. All of her relationships are complicated; her husband leaves her and she's practically friendless. Since her late teens she has been afflicted with regular bouts of deep sadness and brokenness and neither she, nor anyone else, knows the reason why. Can Martha find a way to alter her future? Why I enjoyed the book: I found it a very engaging read; it is beautifully written. For sure the theme is a serious one, but it is written with a light touch and is often hilariously funny, with some brilliant one-liners.

**Fionnuala Martin**

**Great Hatred by Ronan McGreevy**

The slaying on 22 June 1922 of Co Longford native, Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson (1864-1922) outside his London residence at Eaton Place by two London-based IRA men is cited as the catalyst that started the Civil War six days later – an internecine escapade that cost our fledgling State close to €50 million and threatened it with bankruptcy.

McGreevy's book discusses the question of whether Michael Collins had originally ordered Wilson's assassination but later rescinded the order. Collins came under severe pressure from London to oust the anti-Treatyites from occupying the Four Courts, and it was this, it's argued, that really triggered the Civil War. Wilson's two assassins, Reginald Dunne and Joseph O'Sullivan, were hanged in London in August 1922 and their bodies reburied in Deans Grange cemetery in 1967.

Wilson, the Unionist MP for North Down when he retired from the British military in January that year, had huge influence with the British government: he was implacably opposed to Home Rule, convinced that it was

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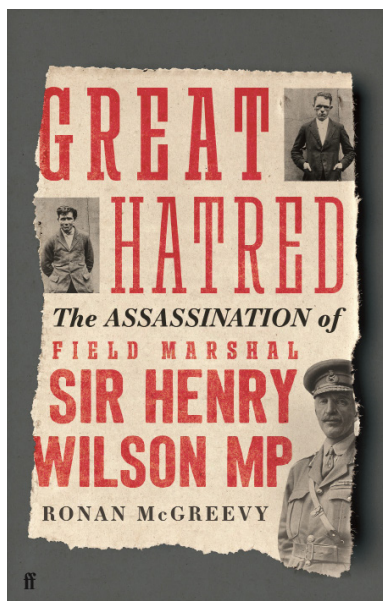
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utterly incompatible" with imperialism and that no compromise was possible without compromising the capstone -- that in 1914 Wilson saw Ireland as being -- which kept the British Empire intact.

Wilson had been regarded as one of four architects who guided Britain to a bitter victory in World War I. He was the youngest non-royal promoted to the rank of field-marshal in the British Army, since the promotion in 1813 of the former Prime Minister, Dublin-born, Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington (1769-1852).

However, it was Longford-born Wilson's local connections that attracted my attention. He spent all of 1888 at his family's Dublin residence, Frescati House in Blackrock, convalescing from an eye injury inflicted in an assault in Burma the previous year when he was a 24-year old junior army officer. When convalescing, he enjoyed racing his father's large yacht, Saraband, in Dublin Bay and was an active member of the Royal St George Yacht Club.

Sir William Orpen (1878-1931), who was an official war artist at the Western Front during WWI, and spent his childhood in Stillorgan, recalled frequently observing Wilson and his brother Jemmy at Blackrock Railway Station that summer. "I remembered how when they appeared on the platform of the little railway station a sort of hush spread over a little crowd. Such perfect figures; such perfect clothes. Sir Henry always with a rain-coat thrown over one shoulder, always with his yellow gloved hands clasped behind him."



Wilson met his wife, Cecil Mary Wray, at a Kingstown regatta. They were married in Christ Church opposite The People's Park on 3 October 1891. The Wray family owned a 450-hectare estate called Ardamona next to Lough Eske Castle near Donegal Town, which is now designated a nature reserve featuring native oak woodland.

Wilson was interred in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral London beside two other Anglo-Irish titans of the British military: Field Marshal Garnet Wolseley (1833-1913), born in Golden Bridge, Inchicore; whose brother Frederick York Wolseley (1837-1899), born in Kingstown, was creator of the original Wolseley cars. Golden Bridge House became a convent and the now notorious industrial school from 1880 until it closed in 1983.

The second titan, his old friend, Field Marshal Frederick Roberts, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Roberts (1832-1914), was a member of a prominent Waterford family and Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Ireland from 1895 to 1900.

Roberts successor as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland was Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught (1850-1942), seventh child of Queen Victoria who, for many years, maintained a liaison with Leonie, Lady Leslie (1859-1943) of Castle Leslie, Co Monaghan, sister of Jennie Churchill (1854-1921), mother of Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), Secretary of State for the Colonies when Wilson was assassinated.

**Myles Duffy**

## Gail's Thai Curry

This recipe was passed on to me by Gail Clark, who many of you may remember as a Trekker and I remember as a great cook. Gail just threw everything into the pot so add or subtract as you will. It's a very simple one pot dish, always a bonus in my home.

### Ingredients

You can make this with chicken pieces or assorted fish chunks.  
1 tin coconut milk  
Stock (fish, chicken or vegetable)  
Mae Ploy green curry paste (a large heaped tablespoon)  
Thin soya sauce or fish sauce (for



salt flavour)  
Thin strips of hot chilli peppers  
Heaped teaspoon of sugar  
Onions  
Keffir lime leaves, maybe 4 or 5  
Vegetables, any combination of

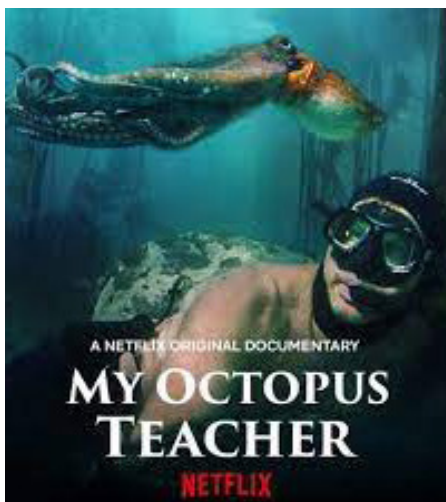
cut-up aubergine, mushrooms, peppers, green beans, mangetout, potato or anything else you fancy.

### Method

Throw everything in the pot and simmer very slowly until the vegetables are done. When cooked, add the raw fish chunks, stir and bring back to a simmer and you are done. If using raw chicken, add while the vegetables are cooking.

Serve with Basmati rice.

It's always better the next day



**My Octopus Teacher, Netflix**  
Strange name but great stuff! This Netflix documentary features a naturalist photographer and filmmaker during a time of professional crisis in his life. His name is Craig Foster and he lives on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean on the Western Cape of South Africa.

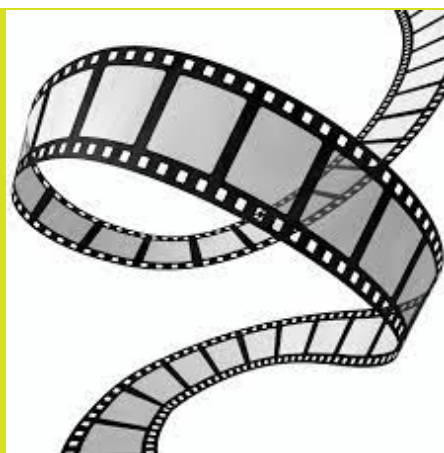
When we meet him he is suffering from burnout and quits work. Then he falls in love and this is the story of his amazing love affair. This unique relationship is "conducted" on the ocean floor, and Foster has to learn to free dive because his love interest would have been scared away by scuba diving gear.

It is a unique and amazing story and the cinematography is superb. Long before it got a best Documentary Oscar in 2021, I had already awarded it my most favourite nature programme and love story -- a joy to watch and watch, time and time again. It may not stay on Netflix for long more so don't miss it.

**Pat McGettrick**

### **The Life Ahead, Netflix**

This film was released in 2020 and is the third adaption for screen of the novel **The Life Before Us** by Romain Gary. This version is based in Bari, Italy. The lead, Madam Rosa, is played by Sophia Loren, then aged 86, and the film is directed by Eduardo Ponti, her son.



# SHOWS What Trekkers are watching

Madame Rosa is a former prostitute who takes in children of "working women". We discover in the course of the film that she is a Holocaust survivor. She has a tough exterior and takes no nonsense from her charges but this masks a caring and fragile side. With huge reluctance, she agrees to take an 11-year-old orphan from Senegal, Momo, into her home. He has had a chequered past and by now is very street-wise and damaged and is selling drugs on the street. Relations, to begin with, are very fraught. He causes turbulence among the other children in the house.

Madame Rosa is very firm with him. She inveigles a friend, a gentle, wise Muslim shopkeeper called Hamill, to give Momo some work. Hamill guides the boy, showing him kindness and tolerance. The relationship between Rosa and Momo gradually starts to improve and



their bond becomes deeper.

Then, quite suddenly, everything shifts. Through a series of unforeseen circumstances, things begin to change. I don't want to spoil the story by telling you any more, so I will just recommend that you watch it).

Reason I recommend this film: worth watching for Sophia Loren's performance. She is amazing and was nominated for several awards. A number of other great performances, especially Ibrahim Gueye as Momo; lovely storyline. At times predictable, but has many beautiful moments.

**Fionnuala Martin**

### **Extraordinary Attorney Woo, Netflix**

This is the latest Korean worldwide hit. Topping Netflix's most watched non-English shows for weeks. The story of the first Korean attorney with autism, written with empathy, the actress in my opinion is just amazing.

### **Only Murders In The Building, Disney Plus**

This is a mystery comedy series starring Steve Martin, Martin Short and Selena Gomez. The three try and solve a murder that has taken place in their apartment block. Lots of cameos and very funny.

**Judy Humphreys**

# Photo finish



Trekkers enjoying themselves at the summer party in June. Above left: Mary Murray and Noreen O'Brien were presented with bouquets in recognition of their many years of service to Trekkers



Above left: Gaye Maguire and A walkers. Right: Young walkers on one of their guest walks in March this year. Thanks to regular photographers Paul O'Kane, Vincent Heagney, Ciaran Mahon, Breda O'Hara, Judy Humphreys and Sue Ward, with apologies to any whose names I haven't included