

An Óige Hillwalkers Club

May 2009

<http://www.hillwalkersclub.com/>

THE HILLWALKER



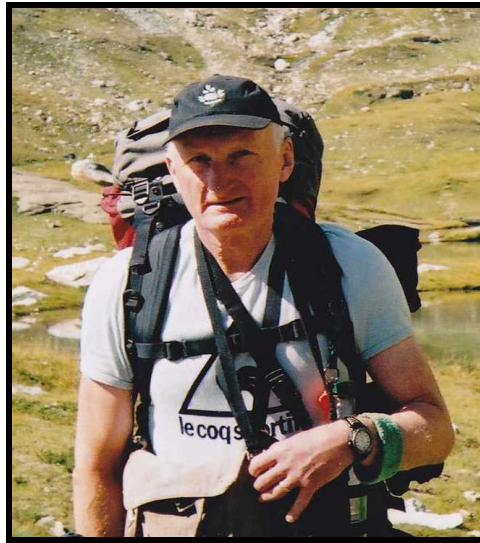
*Easter Trip to the Lake District:
Hard hikers descending from Grisedale Pike.
Photo: AnneMarie Keoghan*

In this edition

- Noel Kerley, R.I.P. 2
- May Hike Programme 3
- Hillwalkers Away: Easter Trip to the Lake District 4-5
- Letter to the Editor / Boot-Tax 6
- EXPOSED: Ex-Editor Assassinated 7
- Club News / Dates for your Diary 8
- Challenge Walks 2009 / Changes to 1:50,000 Maps 9
- Chamonix to Zermatt (Reprinted) 10-11
- An Óige News / Mountain Meitheal / Committee 12

NOEL KERLEY

R.I.P.



It is with great regret that we inform members of the recent death of Noel Kerley who passed away during Holy Week.

Noel was a most active member for many years of the Hillwalkers Club and served as a leader on a very regular basis. He was a dedicated walker who appeared every Sunday, only missing the Club's Hikes when he was walking or leading with the Ramblers or with his wife Ann's club Daon Scoil. He lent his expertise to planning and also leading certain Daon Scoil hikes as part of his yearly programme that encompassed specific individual "musts":- Bray to Wicklow coastal return walk, North Dublin Coastal walk, Blessington to Glendalough, South Leinster walk and of course, the Dublin and Belfast marathons. His one-man traverses of Wales and Scotland fully loaded with tent and supplies were legendary. He also had many hikes on the Continent, in Spain, the Pyrenees, the Vanoise, the Arolla Area with Kev Reynolds (the Cicerone Author) and of course, the Haute Route, which experience he shared with Hillwalker Newsletter and Mountain Log readers.

Noel also had a great interest in rail, road and sea transport and was a member of the Railway Records Society. He combined these interests in his meticulous planning of his continental trips. While the less intrepid traveller arrived at the start of the Haute Route via a direct flight to Geneva and a taxi to Chamonix, Noel's itinerary was Dart to Connolly, boat to Holyhead, train to London, Eurostar to Paris, train to some obscure connecting station in Central France, finally arriving two days later in Chamonix on the little red "Alpine Express" commuter train - two holidays in one. Another Noel characteristic was the "mandatory" requirement on arrival at the hike's destination, e.g. Zermatt, of a "chill out day" with a cappuccino and luxury ice-cream.

One Hillwalker activity in which Noel did not usually participate was the away Bank Holiday weekend. These weekends were reserved for hiking trips with Ann. It was indeed on the Monday of one such weekend that the start of Noel's loss of mobility occurred which rapidly confined him to a wheelchair and nursing home care. It is difficult to imagine the trauma of such a sudden change from a fully active lifestyle. Noel was, however, a very strong and positive personality who coped remarkably well. He remained fully in touch with Hillwalker activities through the Newsletter and kept his subscriptions to a range of Hillwalking magazines, planning the various trips he had sketched out for future continental forays. He was indeed working in his usual focused meticulous way on one such trip when he made his final journey on the Wednesday of Holy Week.

We should like to extend our sincere condolences to his wife Ann, his children and grandchildren.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam.

Frank O'Rourke

HIKE PROGRAMME May 2009

MEET: Burgh Quay

DEPART: Sundays at 10.00 am

TRANSPORT: Private Bus

COST: €12.00 (unless stated otherwise)

2nd pick-up point: *The bus picks up walkers who are already at the designated point. It won't be waiting and places cannot be guaranteed as the bus may be full at Burgh Quay.*

2nd drop-off point: *Where indicated in the programme below, the bus will drop off hikers at the 2nd pick-up point on the return journey, unless circumstances dictate otherwise. We regret that this is not possible on all routes.*

10 May 2009

---West Wicklow

Leader: Gerry Walsh

2nd pick-up & return drop-off points: Pond at Sean Moore Park on Tallaght By-Pass.

Route: Drumreagh* Lobawn* Wexford and Kavanagh Gaps* Table Mountain* Arts Cross* Oakwood *Garryknock Bridge.

Distance: 19km **Ascent:** 750m

Map: OS 56, Harvey

17 May 2009

---Lugnaquilla to Glenmalure

Introductory Hillwalkers Hike

Leader: Ciarán King

2nd pick-up & return drop off points: Bus stop before the roundabout at Loughlinstown.

Route: Barravore Car Park * Fraughan Rock Glen * Lugnaquilla * Cannow Mt. * Camenabologue * Table Track * Barravore CP.

Distance: 15.5km **Ascent:** 900m

Maps: OS 56, Harvey

GENERAL HIKE NOTES

PARTICIPATION Mountaineering is an activity with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants should be aware of and accept these risks. People who take part in our club activities do so at their own risk and are responsible for their own actions and involvement.

EQUIPMENT It is essential to bring good rain gear (both jacket and over trousers) and to leave cotton t-shirts and jeans at home! Boots must be sturdy with proper ankle support and a rigid non-slip sole such as Vibram.

24 May 2009

---Annual J.B. Malone Memorial Walk

Leader: Martin Fagan

2nd pick-up & return drop-off points: Bus stop before the roundabout at Loughlinstown.

Route: Ballinastoe Wood Lower (GR 194 078) * J.B.Malone Memorial * White Hill * Djouce * Coffin Stone * War Hill * Dargle River * Tonduff South * Maulin * Crone Wood * Knockree Y.H.

Distance: 16km **Ascent:** 750m

Maps: OS 56, Harvey

Volunteers needed (see p. 12)

31 May 2009

---June Bank Holiday Weekend

NO SUNDAY HIKE

CLUB TRIP TO ERRIGAL YH

See notice on page 8.

7 June 2009

---Art's Lough & St. Kevin's Way

Introductory Hillwalkers Hike

Leader: Jim Barry

2nd pick-up & return drop off points: Pond at Sean Moore Park on Tallaght By-Pass.

Route: Oakwood * Glenreemore * Lough Firrib * Art's Lough * Conavalla * Table Track * Table Mountain * Three Lakes * Ashbawn Brook * St Kevins Way track back to Oakwood.

Distance: 17km **Ascent:** 650m

Maps: OS 56, Harvey

LEADER The leader has the right to refuse anyone who is not adequately equipped (e.g., without appropriate boots, rainwear, food, hat, gloves, torch, spare batteries & bulb, etc). The leader may alter the route from that described in the program. The leader sets the pace of the hike and walkers are expected to obey the leader's instructions at all times.

CO-ORDINATION If necessary, tickets are given out on Sundays to ensure that participants reserve a bus place as they arrive.

WALKING STICKS AND RUCKSACKS Remember that walking sticks and rucksacks cannot be brought onto the bus and must be stowed away in the boot during the journey.

Club members interested in leading a hike,
please contact Gerry Walsh:
hillwalking@hotmail.com

HILLWALKERS AWAY

Easter Trip to the Lake District, Cumbria



Hikers getting ready after lunch. Photo: Jim Barry

Thursday, April 9

Despite Jim Barry's meticulous preparations, the logistics were almost undone on the morning of departure. There was last minute news of the cancellation of the boat sailing due to poor weather conditions (too windy). 50-plus telephone calls ensued, putting everyone on hold. Fortunately, the cancellation was reversed reasonably quickly, and the boat departed just two hours late. A €15 Stena voucher per head was a surprise consolation. We collected our bus (and driver) at Holyhead, and had a speedy journey to Ambleside, stopping for refreshments at a motorway service station en route.

Friday, April 10

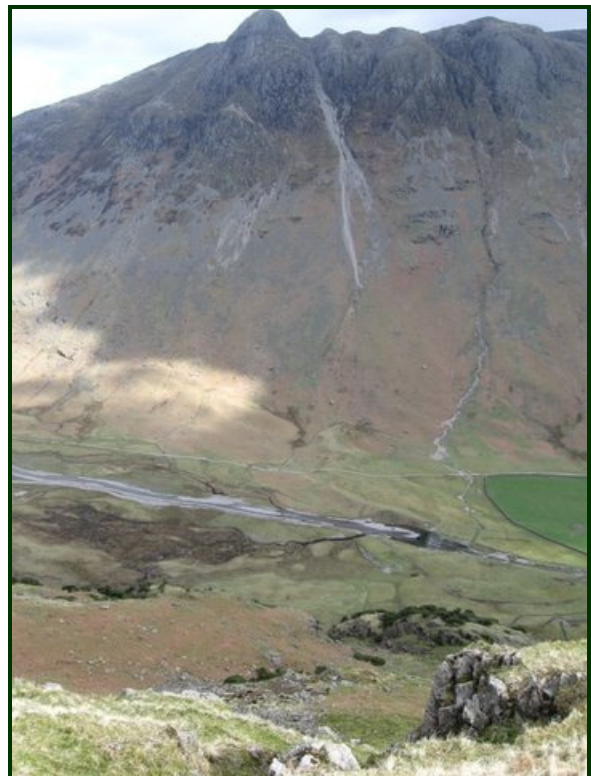
Following a hearty breakfast (Good Friday forgotten!), we headed for Keswick in the Northern Fells. The Mods went further on, taking in Ullock Pike, along the shoulder of Skiddaw, by Carl Side and Dodd and ultimately back to Keswick. Tom Kenny's group started near Braithwaite (west of Keswick), focused on the first peak, Grisdale Pike (791m), entailing a steep rocky ridge to the summit. On to Hopegill Head (770m), taking in a drop to a col below the striking Hobcarton Crag. We swung south from here, quickly passing over the insignificant Sand Hill, and dropped down to Coledale Hause for lunch. Here, there was a stunning view down Coledale Valley, extending away beneath us to the East, clearly revealing our homeward

path. However, after lunch we went westward out and back to Grasmoor – at 852m, the highest peak of the day, but in fact, a very simple ascent. Unfortunately, the day was cloudy, so the anticipated views below of Buttermere and Crummock Water did not materialize.

Nonetheless, there were many exciting vistas throughout the day, especially looking back at conquered peaks, always a rewarding experience. Back to Coledale Hause, and then a long and tedious descent of Coledale Valley, the only point of interest being the Force Crag Mine and its nearby waterfall, Low Force. Back to Braithwaite and a short visit to Keswick, a pretty Lakeland town, equally as spotless as Ambleside.

Saturday, April 11

After a short bus journey to our start at Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel, nestling under the Langdale Pikes, the Mods under Jim went west to Stool End Farm. Beyond that, they took the very long track called The Band which leads steadily uphill to the ridge (Three Tarns) below Bowfell, and then on to a very rocky track to the rugged summit at 903m which gave access to a famous panoramic view, notably of the nearby Scafells, the highest peaks in England.



*Rugged mountains and steep valleys in the Lake District.
Photo: Jim Barry*

Meanwhile, Tom's group went south, up by Redacre Gill and, after some scrambling, reached Pike O'Blisco (705m), a rocky knoll

with commanding views in all directions. An easy descent to Red Tarn, followed inevitably by a good track rising westwards between Cold Pike and Great Knott, eventually led to the Crinkle Crag, five remarkable multi-cairned rocky outcrops. The second Crinkle is the highest of them – Long Top (859m). As we approached we were faced by an obstacle called The Bad Step. Tom decided (wisely!) that this might be insurmountable for some (!) and took the easier option to the left, which led to the summit more circuitously. We also sampled the other three distinctive buttresses of rock, the last being Gunson Knott (815m), before dropping to the col at Three Tarns, and then ascending to Bowfell. Like the Mods, we descended on the grassy ramp, The Band. For many, this was the highlight of the weekend. The route is considered as one of the classics of the Lake District.

Sunday, April 12

This was Easter Sunday and a gloriously sunny day which brought out hordes of walkers. Jim took the Mods from Thirlmere up to Grisedale Tarn and then on a very steep section to Fairfield (873m), and subsequently back to Grasmere.



Ascending from Grisedale Tarn. Photo: Jim Barry

Tom's party started further up Thirlmere, at Stanah, and quickly gained high ground on a steep track, reaching a major ridge junction at Sticks Pass (750m). Following an easy climb to Raise (884m) from where there was a stupendous view of the cliffs of Helvellyn ahead, framed by a horizontal line of snow at summit level – truly majestic. From Raise we moved on to the next rise, White Side (863m) and then steeply on to Helvellyn Lower Man (925m). Some thought it should be re-christened Higher Man! Finally, a gentle climb to the main summit of Helvellyn – at 950m the third highest in the Lake District. It is reminiscent of Lugnaquilla, in that there is a

huge spacious grassy area in the vicinity of the summit.

Leaving the summit, we were almost strolling to the lesser peaks of Nethermost Pike (891m) and Dollywagon Pike (858m), followed by a sharp descent on a stone track to Grisedale Tarn (539m). From here, we continued south, now on Wainwright's famous Coast-to-Coast Trail, following a mountain stream, Tongue Gill, all the way down to the road near Grasmere, and to a welcome hostelry for long cold drinks. Both parties met at Grasmere for the short journey back to the hostel.



The 'Dollywagon Five' or should it be 'Five dollies on the wagon'? Photo: AnneMarie Keoghan

Monday, April 13

For the record, it was a day's journey home, via Holyhead. At Dublin Docks, Jim arranged for our driver, Dave, to transport us up to George's Quay, a fine central location for disembarkation.

Apart from the outstanding beauty and endless variety of walks in the Lake District, Ambleside YH is an attractive venue. The food and service were fine, and the accommodation and facilities very comfortable. The town is a pleasure to visit with attractive shops and houses built with local stone. One cannot find a building out of character in this special environment.

Finally, deserved thanks to Jim for organizing everything so well and for his hikes, and to Tom for his leadership, thorough and thoughtful as always. Everyone is very grateful to both.

Pearse Foley

For more photos from this year's Easter trip visit www.hillwalkersclub.com

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Below you can read the latest letter received from the anonymous Ex-Editor and further unsolicited, ahem, contributions.



★★★ *Page Three Five* ★★★

Dear Editor,

Whilst in the last newsletter I bemoaned the lack of smutty or scandalous content, I was shocked to see how quickly you acted on my complaint.

I draw your attention (and that of our less-sensitive readers) to Page 5 of April's edition, where clearly displayed in FULL COLOUR are several scantily clad persons, showing nearly as much flesh as Mick Heneghan at an An Óige party.

I always thought I would be the first to break this publishing taboo and can only commend the new, sleazy angle you are steering "The Hillwalker" in.

Yours admiringly,

Anonymous Ex-Editor

Editor's Response:

Dear Anonymous Ex-Editor,

We are glad you are delighted with the April edition of the newsletter. However, we regret to inform you that from this month, we are reverting back to "full coverage" of hillwalkers' endeavours.

While we welcome your contributions past, present and future as a demonstration of our commitment to democracy and freedom of expression, we would urge our readers not to fall for this kind of propaganda and seek first-hand information from the more serious sections of the newsletter as well as from our fabulous website, www.hillwalkersclub.com.

Finally, in the interest of diversity, we would encourage readers to send in their own comments and observations on club matters.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara Sudrow
Newsletter Editor

Boot-Tax

Never ones to stand still in a crisis, the Committee have reacted swiftly to the growing economic storm. As the club deficit mounts and income drops, a number of severe cuts and taxes have been introduced. First off, the free bus for over-80s has been revoked. This has produced furious protest from the OAP section of the club, led by Brendan "Red" Dempsey. He has since led a fierce protest on Ormond Quay, waving his placard, heckling committee members and trying to let the air out of Jim's tires. "It's disgraceful, at my age I'm entitled to a free ride", the Mountain Goat has declared. The pain is not just his to feel.

An emergency boot-tax (one euro per lace-hole) has been announced and all post-hike pints in the Palace will carry a 50 cent "Patriotism Levy". One ingenious fund-raiser has been the installation of a metered-microphone on the bus, ensuring a steady flow of pennies from Mr. Barry. All navigation errors whilst leading are also to be fined €50. This measure is to be back-dated to 1999 and bailiffs are already in hot-pursuit of Eoin Moroney, Joe Gilvarry, Philip Hayden, Tom King, Brian Flynn, Stephen James (believed to have fled the jurisdiction), et cetera, et cetera...



The higher echelons of the Committee are also doing their part: scandalised by past exposure of their extravagant life-style in this newsletter, they have promised to sell at least three of their overseas apartments and review whether they really need one sports car each. And in a show of real solidarity, all Junior Committee Members have been ordered to resign and await reappointment. Among those facing the chop are the Junior Committee Member (JCM) for Tea-Making (Don Reilly), JCM for Weather-Forecasting and Astrology (Dave McCann) and JCM for Polishing Boots (Cyril McFeeney), plus the posts of Club Masseur and Club Chauffeur. All these posts had been defended at the time of creation as vital to the work of the club but were always viewed in cynical quarters as blatant brown-bag bribery and their passing will not be missed.

So fellow club members, be prepared to do your bit, make that tea-bag go further, stitch that goretex jacket, and learn to make coddle from yer old boots.

Warren Lawless

Ex-Editor Assassinated

Shocking reports have come in of an attempted character assassination attempt on our glorious ex-Editor!!!

EXPOSED, the newsletter's entertainment team, was granted an audience with the illustrious one as he recovered in his Mediterranean villa.

Exposed: So Warren...

Ex-editor: Please call me Editor Supreme or El Supremo.

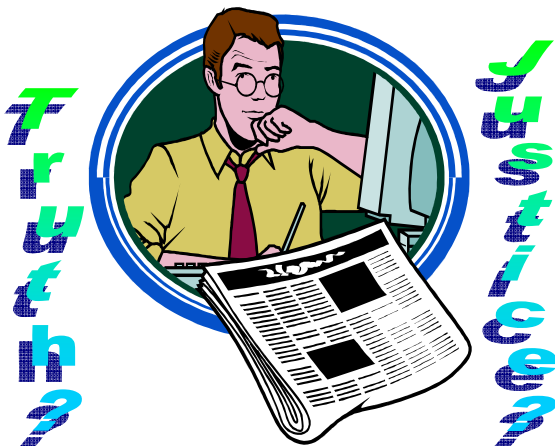
Exposed: Em, okay. Soooo, El Supremo, when did you first become aware of the plot against you?

Ex-editor: The plot began in Clonmel, on the October weekend last year. My suspicions should have been aroused when Clonmel Hostel turned out to be the four-star Hotel Minella. "Oh, the hostel was booked out" was the hastily muttered excuse of a Committee member when I sought explanation for this extravagance.

The ambush took place as we finished our first day's hike, an epic circuit of Galtymore. Sunset had fallen as I strolled along the forest track, stopping to admire the early stars and planet Venus, taking in the beautiful silence and natural darkness of the countryside. As I approached the bus I was suddenly blinded by head-torch beams, as cries of "He's here, we found him" went up from a group of walkers. "Um, Tom what's all this about? I was just on the track, taking it slow, spare the knee, you know?" No use! I had been declared missing in action. My explanations were drowned out as I boarded the bus and a mixture of applause, jeers and groans went up. I spotted several Committee members exchanging glances and smiling knowingly.

Exposed: Surely not! Isn't this paranoia? Your past articles have laid into the Committee somewhat...

Ex-editor: No, purely to keep them honest. Using the newsletter as an exacting standard of truth and justice and all that (that's what my legal team told the judge anyway).



I reflected bitterly that night that my name was mud. Whereas before my position as Editor guaranteed a measure of fear, fawning and grovelling from the club members, now I was exposed to the abuse of the mob.

Throughout the weekend, rumours reached me of goings on in the bedrooms, from racy lipstick messages on mirrors, to hair-dryers being used to dry things they've never been designed to! I was shocked to see members in their bathing suits frolicking in the hot-tub and drinking champagne in the sauna. And all this in plain view! Before, my reign of terror, ahem, I mean truth, would have exposed these goings on in our newsletter. But without that threat hanging over them, people were going wild.

Was this really the same group that had endured the privations of pre-sanitation Ben Lettery, or squeezed twenty to a room in Club Atlantic? Where was the hardy hillwalker spirit gone I wondered, as the only spirits I saw were the bottled ones passed around on the bus. Standards had clearly fallen, from Hillwalking Club to "Latte Club".

Latte Club Latte Club



The sniping continued throughout the weekend: "I heard someone was lost on the hills?... No, there were three helicopters involved in the rescue... Yes, they had to carry him over Galtymore... was delirious and drunk and that was BEFORE the walk even began..."

As I overheard the Chinese whispers at dinner, I thought to myself that there was something familiar about all this. It was then that I saw through the cunning plan at work: the Committee were using my own tricks against me! A devious campaign of mud-slinging and debased lies, designed to destroy my reputation and render blunt any effort to expose the new lows they had sunk the club to in my absence. "Touché", I thought, "a scheme worthy of myself." But it has back-fired! My humiliation that weekend is now a source of inspiration and symbol of why I should return to write for the newsletter. Not for truth, not for joy, but for petty, glorious revenge. Tremble, ye mortals, I'M BACK!

Exposed: Em, thank you, El Supremo. You can stop waving your arms around now.



CLUB NEWS

Sponsored Parachute Jump 2009 OMANS in Flight



Thank You to All
Who Contributed to Our Appeal
We did the jump on Sunday 5th April
from 10,000 feet and lived
We raised nearly € 5,000.00 to date
All monies raised will go to the following
registered charities:
Cancer Clinical Research Trust
Dyslexia Association of Ireland
Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland
GO RAIBH MAITH AGAT



Newsletter Archive Appeal

We now have newsletters archived on the website as far back as 2001:

<http://www.hillwalkersclub.com/archive.htm>

Do you still have copies of older (printed) newsletters? If so, would you consider lending them to us for a short while, so that we could scan them and add them to our website? Your contribution would be much appreciated by all club members!

Contact: barbarasudrow@eircom.net

Ideas for B-B-Q 2009

In the past few years, the club organised a summer B-B-Q in June. Actually, it wasn't exactly a barbeque, with pizzas instead of

sizzling sausages, but by all accounts, it was a successful venture nevertheless.

This year, we are planning to run a similar social event towards the end of summer, with food, music and hiking. If you have any specific ideas or suggestions, please email them by Friday, 23 May, to barbarasudrow@eircom.net.

Lost & Found

Paul Farrell found a Black Ladies Long-Sleeved, Half-Zipped, Hiking Top on the Lake District bus after it arrived back in Dublin. It's a Size 12, Marks & Spencer top.

Contact: Paul Farrell, 086-1713982

Support Sunday Hikes

Our monthly bus statistics have seen an improvement over the last few months and we are happy to report that the money collected for the hikes is currently covering most of the bus expenses. With the holiday season approaching fast, please continue to show your support for the Sunday Hike Programme.

Many thanks!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

June Bank Holiday Weekend

29 May – 1 June 2009

Errigal Youth Hostel

Organiser: Frank Rooney

**This trip is now fully booked.
Waiting list only!**

Meet: Friday, 29th May at Georges Quay (beside Tara Street Dart Station) at **4 pm**.

Carpathian Mountains in Romania

4th - 14th July 2009

Leader: Frank Rooney

Day hikes each day, approx. 6-8 hours hiking per day. A good level of fitness is required. Rest days available.

Locations: 1 day in Bucharest, 5 days in Sinaia and 4 days in Sibiu

Accommodation: Hotel accommodation in Bucharest and Sibiu; hostel accommodation in Sinaia.

Limited places available.

Enquiries: rooneyf@eircom.ie

CHALLENGE WALKS

The Walkers Association are posting regular updates on these walks on their website. Make sure to check for important new information there or follow the contact details given for each event.

11 May 2009 Moyle Challenge Walk

Organised by the Northern Walking Partnership this 12-mile walk takes in forest and road and pretty summits including Slievenanorra with wonderful views of the Antrim coast.

Registration for this walk is now closed.

<http://www.walkersassociation.ie/node/201>

23 May 2009 Blackstairs Walk

Distance: 26 km **Total Ascent:** 1,525m

The Blackstairs Walk is organised by the Wayfarers Association. It is a mountain walk along the Carlow Wexford Border following the Blackstairs ridge; it starts at Killanure and ends at Byrne's Pub in Glynn.

Contact: Eileen Kavanagh, tel. 01-8336610 or email: eileenkavanagh10@eircom.net

<http://www.walkersassociation.ie/node/40>

23 May 2009 Clare Burren Marathon Challenge

Distances: 6, 13.2 & 26.2 miles

Organised by the Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Club, this challenge has three variations of walk covering road, off-road and the lovely Burren in full bloom.

Completed entry forms and payment must be received by 10th May; see website:

<http://www.clareburrenmarathonchallenge.com>

13 June 2009 Mourne Way Marathon

Marathon Run and Challenge Walk, both 26 miles, incorporating a half-marathon run and a 10k run/walk; route fully waymarked.

Registration closes 31st May. Details from:

<http://www.mournewaymarathon.com>

6 June 2009 Gus Tobin Galty Walk

Distance: 24 km **Total Ascent:** 1,300m

This is a long distance walk for experienced walkers. It is a substantial route on high ground so you should be adequately prepared and equipped. There are 6 manned checkpoints, four of which are on hills. When windy, Galtymore will remove all cobwebs!

Contact: Seán Costello; tel. 056-7761626; Email: scostello21@eircom.net

<http://www.walkersassociation.ie/node/124>

20 June 2009 Lug Walk

Distance: 53 km **Total Ascent:** 2,290m

The Lug Walk usually takes place on a date as close to the longest day in the year as possible - this is a long walk! Water is provided at checkpoints which helps to keep one's weight down. If the weather is good there will be wondrous views all day; if the weather is doubtful, however, a long day's intense navigation is sure to ensue.

Some changes for 2009 will be published soon; check out the web details:

<http://www.walkersassociation.ie/node/465>

Changes to 1:50,000 maps

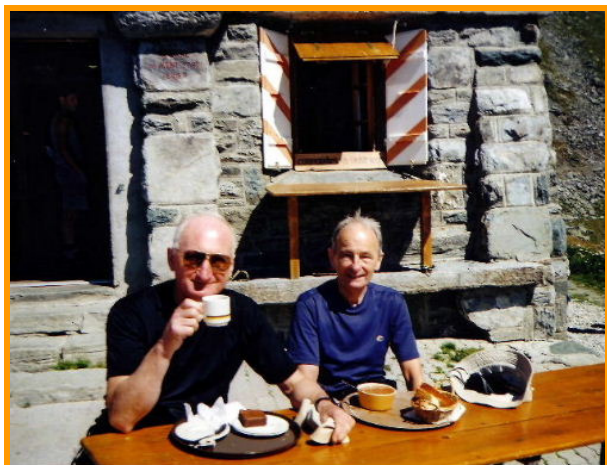
The Ordnance Survey of Ireland (OSi) are planning to bring out a revised 1:50,000 map series. As part of a consultation exercise they have asked the public for their opinion. One of the issues is that they plan to use the all digit ITM grid for Ireland which differs from the existing "Irish Grid". Further implications are that the number of maps will reduce by 20 to 69 sheets and the new sheets will be double-sided.

OSi have initiated an online questionnaire in conjunction with the Walkers Association. The WAI are arranging a consultation meeting with OSi, to be held on 20th May. Places are strictly limited and preference will be given to representatives of organisations who have an interest.

You can access the OSi survey here:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=GBjx81BNP5Pq1tbjf818Xg_3d_3d

CHAMONIX TO ZERMATT The Walkers' High Route



This article first appeared in the November 2005 edition of The Hillwalker. It is reprinted here in memory of Noel Kerley, pictured above with his walking companion, Frank O'Rourke.

During September 2005, two (reasonably) stalwart members of the An Óige Hillwalkers Club (Noel Kerley and Frank O'Rourke) did the traverse of the Chamonix to Zermatt Walkers High Route. By any standards, this is a spectacular route – it is also a very tough one, and while we started out with the purest of thoughts and intentions regarding the taking of shortcuts, using mechanical aids, etc., this very commendable line of thinking came to be modified by practicalities as the trek progressed. As we both arrived in Zermatt whole and entire – if somewhat the worse for wear – we assume we did most things right. Kev Reynolds' book on the route was our staple guide.

The weather throughout consisted of wall-to-wall sunshine (most days) so it was shorts, t-shirt and sun-lotion (lots of) all the way. There was a hell of a lot of climbing involved to cross many mountain passes and the subsequent long descents over rough tracks were just as strenuous. We saw many parts of Switzerland which were well off the beaten track which were scenes of total devastation due to glacial action, rock falls, etc. These areas bore no resemblance whatever to the chocolate-box image tourists usually have of Switzerland. Also, in the earlier stages there were times when we both felt we had bitten off more than we could chew, but this feeling passed as the trek progressed and we both settled into it.

Frank flew to Geneva and caught a bus to Chamonix while Noel travelled overland (as he usually does), via Holyhead, London, Eurostar to Paris, and overnight train to the Alps. We both met up at Chamonix railway station about 09:30 hours, ready to commence Day 1. After full and

weighty deliberation we decided to have a "cuppa" first while we wound up our willpower to face the perils ahead. The scenery was already terrific and we hadn't yet covered one metre of the trip.

DAY 1 was an easy "breaking-in-gently" day as far as Argentiere, mainly through woods alongside the River Arve.

DAYS 2 & 3 were serious stuff and taxed us fully. From Argentiere we had a long uphill slog to the Col de Balme where we stood with one foot in France and the other in Switzerland – this was the border and we were in Switzerland for the rest of the trip. After a comfortable overnight in Trient we faced another brute of a day to get to Champex. We went the hard way via the Fenêtre D'Arpette involving about 1,400 metres of height-gain alongside the Glacier du Trient – quite a sight, but in hot sunshine all day. After a short break at the top for a snack, we continued with a long strenuous descent to Champex, a delightful village alongside a small lake. It is probably true to say that at this point our morale was at its lowest and we both felt in poor shape.

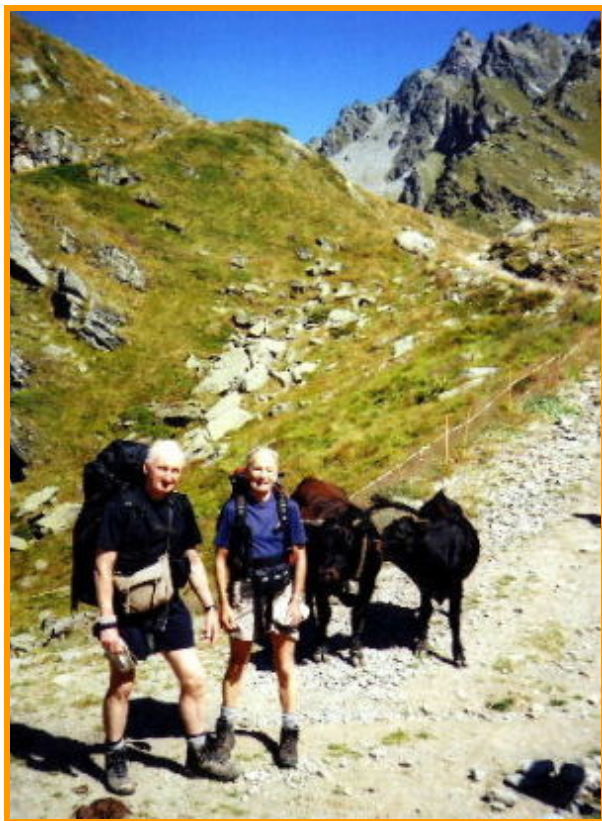
What helped hugely at this stage was that **DAY 4** to Le Chable was a relatively easy day – short distance (13k), very pleasant pastoral terrain and little uphill stuff – in fact, quite the contrary as our destination was 700 metres lower than our starting point, and trees provided much shelter from the sun. This evening we stayed in a small hotel and enjoyed a little bit of luxury – very, very nice. Things were looking up.

DAY 5 to Cabane du Mont Fort was 9k and – on paper at least – looked a very tough day with a long steep climb straight from Le Chable to Les Ruinettes, about halfway along. At this point we decided to get practical and had no difficulty whatever in agreeing to say "up yours" to that long climb and letting a bus and cablecar do the hard work instead of our legs and lungs. These brought us as far as Les Ruinettes and we then thoroughly enjoyed a magnificent walk along the tops to the Cabane du Mont Fort where we arrived during the afternoon. We had a very pleasant hour or two sitting on the terrace in the sunshine with the Mont Blanc range spread out in the distance. The day was terrific and the sunset was excellent.

DAY 6 to Cabane de Prafleuri was the first day of the trek spent in totally wild and desolate terrain. We went over 3 passes (or cols) and each involved quite an amount of uphill slogging. The downhill stretches that followed were equally strenuous. The final col – Col de Prafleuri at 2,965m – was the highest point on the trek. We didn't quite hit 3,000m anywhere. The Cabane de Prafleuri is located in what remains of a vast derelict quarry and the terrain all around has been totally eroded by glacial

action over the years. The entire area was a scene of utter devastation.

DAY 7 (16k) brought us to Arolla via Lac des Dix and a diversion to the Cabane des Dix, where we had a lunch stop. We then crossed a glacier via a marked route and had a tough climb to the Col de Riedmatten, a difficult stretch over a chaos of rocks and boulders carrying backpacks. It was then downhill all the way to Arolla to our next little bit of luxury in the Hotel du Glacier.



Noel and Frank in shorts and T-shirts, ready to tackle another mountain pass.

DAY 8 was a relatively short (10k) and easy day to La Sage. We use the word “relatively” because there was nothing short or easy on this trip, but compared to the others this was not a bad day.

DAY 9 to Cabane de Moiry was a case of “back to normal”. A steep climb to the Col du Tsate, downhill to the Val de Moiry, then a tough and long slog up to the cabane, spectacularly situated overlooking the Moiry Glacier which is right alongside. The cabane was rather basic – no hot water for showers and outside loos, but we were well fed and slept soundly.

DAY 10 was 14k to Zinal and our first day to suffer rain, but this happened right at the very end of the day. Again, this had been not a bad day, with a couple of hundred metres climbing to the Col de Sorebois. We then used a cable car to avoid a steep, knee-jarring descent through

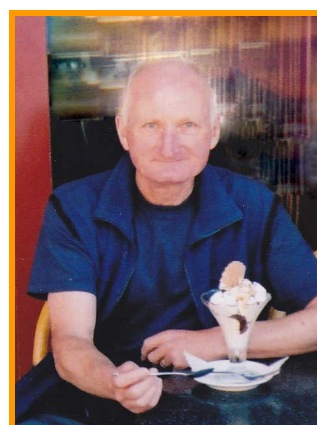
the forest to Zinal and had another little “fix” of luxury in a hotel.

DAY 11 was back to bright sunshine again and several hours of climbing to the Forcletta pass, at 2,874m. The descent brought us into the German-speaking part of Switzerland for an overnight in Gruben.

DAY 12 was a “missed” day. It was raining heavily from early morning and visibility was very poor. As we had 1,000m to climb to the Augstbordpass we decided to by-pass this stage using a taxi, a cable car, two trains and a bus, and eventually ended up in Gasenried for our next overnight. Gasenried is situated near the start of the Europaweg, a 31k high route which runs all the way along the side of the valley called the Mattertal to Zermatt, and this comprised our final two days on the High Route.

DAY 13 was 14k of high-level walking, along the Europaweg to the Europa Hut, situated at 2,220m above the Mattertal. This should have been a spectacular walk but for the entire day (bar the final hour) we saw absolutely nothing but thick cloud and mist – it was sitting on top of us all day long. The frequent waymarks were the only thing that kept us going in the right direction.

DAY 14 brought us back to sunshine again for our final day on the High Route, which comprised 18k of very pleasant walking with Zermatt in the distance steadily getting nearer, and the Matterhorn putting in an appearance at long last. We had a lunch stop halfway along at a lovely Alpine hamlet, and on arrival at Sunnegga, high above Zermatt, we used the Sunnegga Express funicular railway to bring us down to Zermatt, which it did in minutes as against a couple of hours of descending on foot.



Noel in “chill-out mode” at the end of the trip.

It was with a sense of great satisfaction that we spent our final night in Zermatt, the Chamonix to Zermatt High Route now behind us. A memorable experience!

Noel Kerley & Frank O’Rourke

