



Hillwalkers Club

# August- October 2015

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

THE HILLWALKER



*Neville in Corsica*

**The AGM will be held in The Teacher's Club,  
Parnell Square, at 20.00 on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> October.  
Please see additional details on pages 9 & 10**

### Committee 2014/15

<i>Chairman</i>	Frank Rooney
<i>Secretary</i>	Liz Carey
<i>Treasurer</i>	Lourdes Hernández
<i>Sunday Hikes Coordinator</i>	Simon More
<i>Membership Secretary</i>	Jim Barry
<i>Club Promoter</i>	Eugene Dudley
<i>Training Officer &amp; Administrator</i>	Ita O'Hanlon
<i>Club Social Coordinators</i>	Liz Carey / Eugene Dudley
<i>Environmental Officer</i>	Russell Mills
<i>Newsletter Editor</i>	Mel O'Hara

### Special thanks to:

<i>Webmaster</i>	Matt Geraghty
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## HIKE PROGRAMME

### June 2015 – August 2015

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**MEET:** Corner of Burgh Quay and Hawkins St

**DEPART:** Sundays at 10.00 am (*unless stated otherwise*), or earlier if it is full.

**TRANSPORT:** Private bus (*unless stated otherwise*)

**COST:** €12.00 (*unless stated otherwise*)

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**2nd pick-up point:** *On the outward journey, the bus will stop briefly to collect walkers at the pick-up point. Should the bus be full on departure from Burgh Quay, this facility cannot be offered.*

**Return drop-off point:** *On the return journey, where indicated, the bus will stop near the outward pick-up point to drop off any hikers. We regret this is not possible on all hikes.*

*If you wish to avail of the 2<sup>nd</sup> pick-up point, it is advisable to contact the hike leader or someone else who will definitely be on the hike, to let them know.*

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## 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.

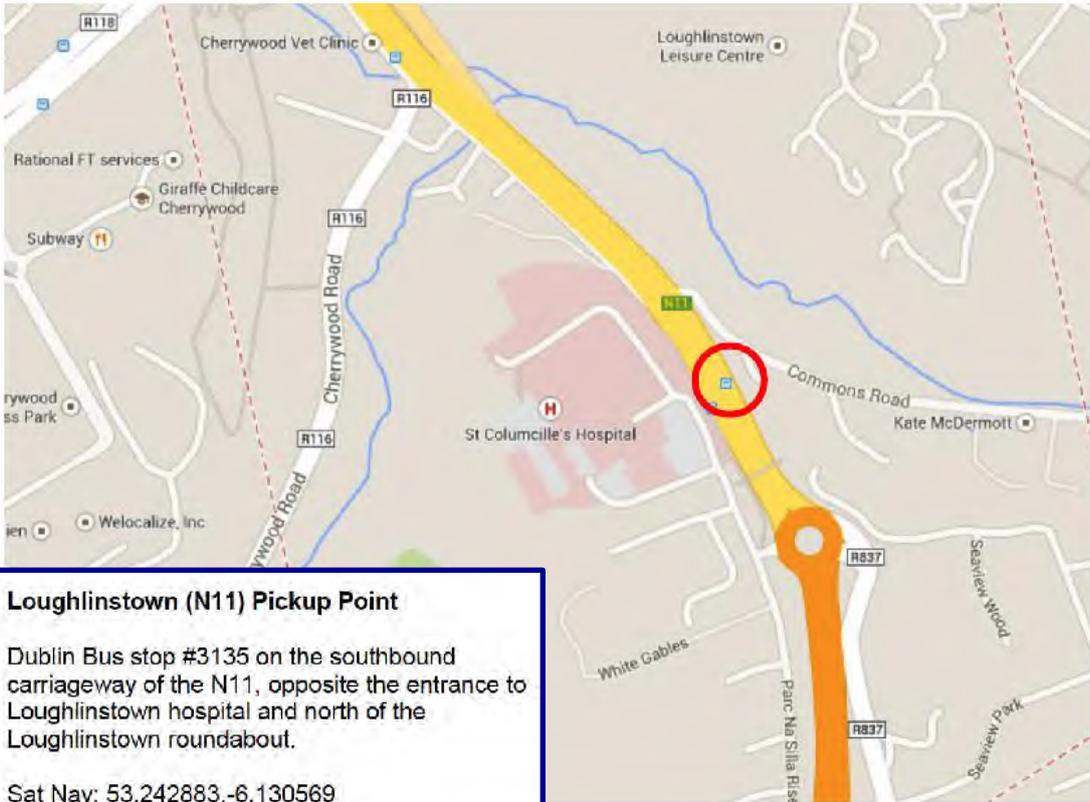
**CO-ORDINATION** If necessary, tickets are given out on Sundays to ensure that participants reserve a bus place as they arrive.

**LEADER** The leader has the right to refuse anyone who is not adequately equipped (e.g., without appropriate boots, rainwear, food, torch, hat, gloves, 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.

**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.

**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.

# The pick-up points



**Loughlinstown (N11) Pickup Point**  
Dublin Bus stop #3135 on the southbound carriageway of the N11, opposite the entrance to Loughlinstown hospital and north of the Loughlinstown roundabout.  
Sat Nav: 53.242883,-6.130569

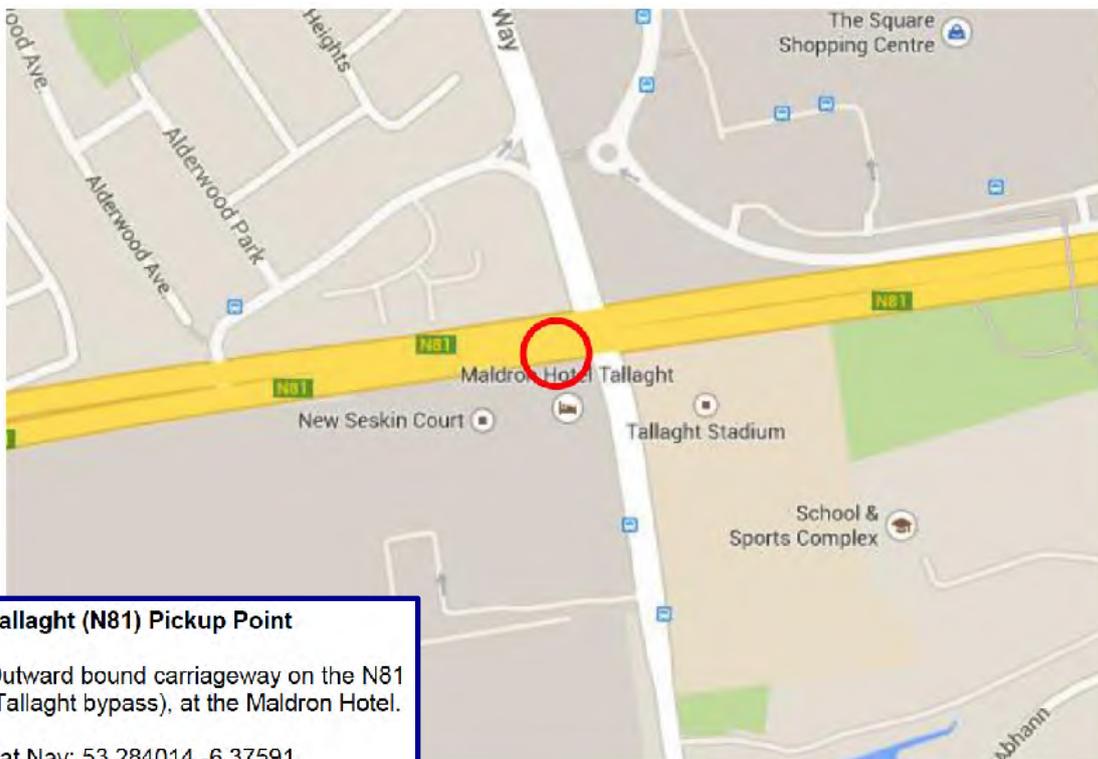


**Rathfarnham Castle (R115) Pickup Point**  
Dublin Bus stop #1304 on the southbound carriageway of the R115, close to Rathfarnham Castle and opposite Butterfield Ave.  
Sat Nav: 53.29935,-6.283815

**Swords (R132) Pickup Point**

Dublin Bus stop #5074 on the northbound carriageway of the R132 (Swords bypass), south of the Swords Road - Malahide Road roundabout, adjacent to a footbridge and close to Pavillion Shopping Centre.

Sat Nav: 53.453170, -6.215920.



**Tallaght (N81) Pickup Point**

Outward bound carriageway on the N81 (Tallaght bypass), at the Maldron Hotel.

Sat Nav: 53.284014, -6.37591

## ★★ Introductory hard hike ★★

The Hillwalkers Club offers an Introductory Hike, usually on one Sunday per month. Guests are welcome to join us on this hike, as long as they provide their name, address and contact details for our records, which will be taken on the day of the hike. Unless guests have their own personal hiking insurance, they are not insured. There is no need to book a place in advance, just turn up on the relevant Sunday morning. Guests can come on one hike without becoming a member of the club, but after that they must join the club.

Even though the name of these hikes is 'Introductory Hike', they should not be considered to be an introduction to hiking, but rather as an introduction to the Hillwalkers Club and its hillwalking activities. Therefore, participants need to have a good level of personal fitness and, ideally, have some prior experience of hillwalking.

All intending participants should be aware that hillwalking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or even death. By walking with the club, they are aware of and shall accept these risks. Moreover, they acknowledge that they wish to participate in club activities in a voluntary capacity and that they shall be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Please note that as guests of the club, they do not enjoy personal accident insurance, which is otherwise offered to club members through Mountaineering Ireland. Further details are available from Mountaineering Ireland ([www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/Insurance/default.aspx](http://www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/Insurance/default.aspx))

*For further enquiries contact 086 356 3843*

For Sunday hike leaders, the contact people for Mullally's Coaches are:

Austin O'Hagan, 086 466 4680 James Mullally, 086 383 7495 Micheál Martin, 085 102 2204

### Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> August 2015

**Leader:** Steve Buckney

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Maldron Hotel, Tallaght

**Route:** Black Hill car park \* Black Hill, Mullaghcleevaun \* East Top \* Duff Hill \* Cleevaun Lough \* Bolehemushboy Brook \* Track \* Ballynultagh

**Distance:** 18 km **Ascent:** 880 m

**Map:** OS 56, East West Mapping Wicklow Mountains West

### Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2015

**Leader:** Brian Madden

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

**\*\* Southern Blackstairs, Co. Wexford \*\***  
**\*\* Special price of €15 for the bus \*\***

Usual start time of 1000 at Burgh Quay.  
We will stop for a meal on the way back, and should be back in Dublin at about 2130

**Route:** Ballinlour (GR758355) \* White Mountain \* Cathier's Den \* Blackstairs \* Scullogue Gap (GR827477)

**Distance:** 17 km **Ascent:** 950 m

**Maps:** OS 68, East West Map of Blackstairs

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### Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2015

**Leader:** Udo Sap

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Maldron Hotel, Tallaght.

**Route:** Rathnabo \* Lugnagun \*  
Ballynultagh gap \* Blackhill \* Billy Byrne's  
Gap \* Shileshawn \* Moanbane \*  
Ballyknockan Car Park

**Distance:** 17 km **Ascent:** 560

**Maps:** OS 56, East West Mapping Wicklow  
Mountains West

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### Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015

**Leader :** Michael Quinn

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

**Route:** Aughavannagh Bridge \* Madwoman's  
Brook beneath Lugnaquilla's South Prison \*  
Lugcoolmeen \* Lugnaquilla \* Corriganarrig  
\* Corrigasleggaun \* Kelly's Lough  
\* Wicklow Way \* Glenmalure Lodge Hotel.

**Distance:** 20 km **Ascent:** 830 m

**Map:** OS 56, Harvey, East West Mapping  
Lugnaquilla & Glendalough

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### Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2015

**Leader:** John Costigan

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Maldron Hotel, Tallaght

**Route:** Stranahely Wood \* Table Track \*  
Camenabologue \* Cannow Mtn. \*  
Lugnaquilla \* Camara Hill \* Banana road \*  
Fenton's Pub

**Distance:** 18 km **Ascent:** 900 m

**Maps:** OS 56, Harvey, East West Mapping  
Lugnaquilla & Glendalough

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### Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2015

**\*\* Introductory Hard Hike \*\***

**Leader:** Tom Hennessy

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

**Route:** Glendalough visitors carpark \*  
Military Road \* Cullentragh \* Lugduff \*  
**Miners** Track \* Glendalough visitors carpark

**Distance:** 19 km **Ascent:** 730 m

**Maps:** OS 56, Harvey, East West Mapping  
Lugnaquilla & Glendalough

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**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Leader:** Rúaidhrí O'Connor

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Maldron Hotel, Tallaght

**Route:** Dwyer McAllister Cottage \* Keadeen  
\* Slieveveagh \* Ballinabarney Gap  
\* Ballinfoyle \* Ballineddan \* Slievemaan \*  
Muddy Floor \* Camarahill \* Fentons.

**Distance:** 18.5 km Ascent: 1000 m

Maps: OS 56, Harvey, East West Mapping  
Lugnaquilla & Glendalough

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**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Leader :** Donal Finn

**2nd pick-up & return drop-off point:**  
Maldron Hotel, Tallaght.

**Route:** Circuit of Glenbride: Ballinagee  
Bridge, Gowlan Brook, Mullaghacleevaun  
West, Billy Byrne's Gap, Moanbane, Silsean,  
Ballyknockan

**Distance:** 14km Ascent: 600 m

**Map:** OS 56, East West Mapping

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**Sunday 25th October 2015**

**No Sunday hike  
Weekend away in the Mournes**

**Simon More and Chris Byrne  
are arranging a great trip to the Mournes**

**See Page 28 for details**

## Club news and events

### Annual General Meeting 2015

The Annual General Meeting of the Hillwalkers Club will be held in the Teachers Club (*Club na Múinteoirí*) on **Friday 16th October**, starting at 8pm.

The AGM agenda is on page 10 of this newsletter.

Nominations are invited from members to serve on the Hillwalkers Committee for 2015 / 16..

If you are interested please contact Club Chairman Frank Rooney (mobile: 087 988 6520 email: rooneyfrank32@eircom.net) or any other committee member to discuss what is involved in being a committee member.

Interested persons should complete the NOMINATION FORM on page 10 and return it to the club secretary, Liz Carey, Dunany, Santry, Dublin 9, D09 A5N4 by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015

### Club membership

A current Hillwalkers Club membership card is a requirement for participation in the Sunday hikes **NO CARD – NO HIKE**

Membership cards are checked before boarding the bus.

Thank you for your co-operation and support with the membership card checking.

*Guests may sample only one hike before taking out membership*

**Club membership should now be taken out and renewed on the club website see**

<http://www.hillwalkersclub.com/membership-application-form.php>

**and membership for 2015 – 2016 will be open from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015**

**If you have any difficulty using this facility please contact**

**Membership Secretary, Jim Barry, [barryja@eircom.net](mailto:barryja@eircom.net)**

### Hillwalkers Club social events

A tour of **Teelings Whiskey Distillery** has been arranged for **Thursday September 24<sup>th</sup>** at 6.30 p.m.. *Further details on p 27 of this Newsletter.*

There will be a **Fancy Dress Night Hike** on **Friday October 30<sup>th</sup>** with all profits going to help the Syrian refugees. *Further details on page 29 of this Newsletter.*

### October Bank Holiday weekend

The October Bank Holiday weekend trip will be based in Newcastle, Co Down with walking in the Mourne. Bookings open for existing Hillwalkers Club members on Monday 31<sup>st</sup> August and will open for An Óige members on Wednesday Sept 9<sup>th</sup>.

Further details on p 28 of this Newsletter.

### Christmas dates for your diary

The Christmas Party will be in Glendalough on **Saturday: 12<sup>th</sup> December**.

The Holly Hike will be on **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December**

**Hillwalkers Club AGM**  
***8.00 p.m. on Friday October 16<sup>th</sup> 2015***  
***The Teachers Club,***  
***36 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1***

**Agenda**

1. Welcome
2. Secretary's Report
3. Treasurer's Report
4. Sunday Hike Co-ordinators Report
5. Membership Secretary's report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Club Promoter's report
8. Training Officer and Administrator's report
9. Social Co-ordinators' report
10. Environmental Officer's report
11. Newsletter Editor's report
12. Any other business / summary
13. 2015 committee nominations and approval
14. Meeting close

**Nomination Form for 2015 - 2016 Hillwalkers Club Committee**

I nominate .....for a position on the committee of the Hillwalkers club for the 2015 – 2016 membership year

Signature of Proposer .....

Signature of the Secunder.....

I accept the nomination

Signature of the Nominee .....

All the above signatories must be current members of the Hillwalkers Club

Please return completed form to club secretary, Liz Carey, Dunany, Santry, Dublin 9  
by 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015



## Environmental notes

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Hello Everyone,

If you have ever stared at the bog moss your feet are soaking in, and wondered what it is called, or maybe wanted to know the name of that strange looking plant that you saw at lunch on Tonduff, then the folks at “Moors for the Future” might have just the App for you.

They have produced four great Apps for your smartphone, moorMOSS, moorPLANTS, moorSIGHTS and moorWILD.

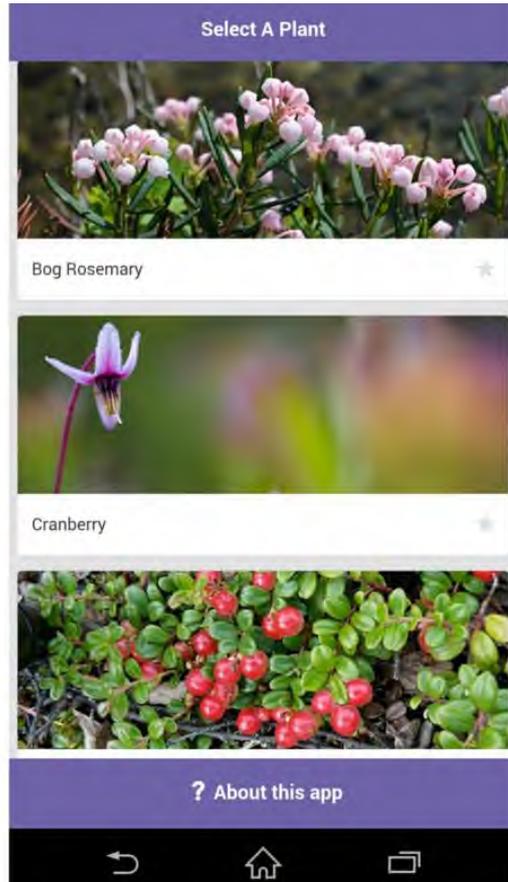
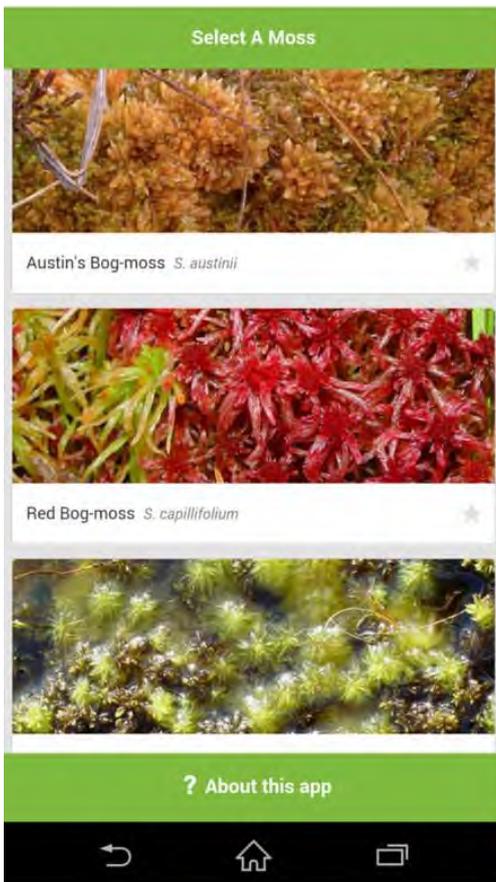
This is a great resource to help identify and learn about the wonderful mosses, plants and wildlife we see around us when out hiking.

Ireland has around 8% of the world’s blanket bogs, and is the most important country in Europe for this unique habitat. These bogs are also a refuge for rare plants and invertebrates, and should be better understood and protected.

The apps have high quality images and lots of information on all the common flora and fauna to be found on the moors and bogs.

You can download them from their website by clicking the link below:

<http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/node/704>



See you out on the hills, happy hiking.  
Russ Mills  
Environmental Officer

## Upstream on the Barrow Way

by Kevin McGinley

It was for the purposes of a reconnoitre that took us to the Barrow river. I had been asked to assess what canoeing conditions would be like there.

We took the J J Kavanagh bus to Carlow and then a local one (Kilbride's) to Graignamanagh and intended to walk upstream; we arrived at our starting point in the declining light of early evening. We already knew that there was much of interest there: the remains of a 6<sup>th</sup> century church, the restored 13<sup>th</sup> century Cistercian abbey, the arched bridge which featured in the '98 rebellion. Whatever of the history, the beauty of the place is striking: the broad river lined with pleasure boats below the town and, in the background, Mount Brandon. However, our landlady told us that boats are moored and left unattended at the mercy of rising flood waters as, indeed, are quayside buildings.

The beauty of the river walk is, however, of a different kind and scale. Fortuitously, it was a dry, sunny day so the contrast of the tree and bank greens and vibrancy of the colours were all the stronger. It reminded me so much of that part of the Camino walk as you climb from O'Cebreiro towards Galicia.



*A Weir Barrier along the Trail*

*Photo – Kevin McGinley*

And so it continued! Around every bend was more of the same and hardly a soul in sight, just the very occasional cyclist - the perfect opportunity 'to wash out the mind', if

there is such an expression. The riverbank track was good and the grass had recently been cut. We learned that there is a proposal to lay a separate cycle track but this is meeting much opposition, amongst which is a prominent lady media figure from the area. But, the track takes cycles perfectly well as it is. My view, for what it is worth, is that we must resist that mentality that seeks to tarmac or concrete over open spaces in the name of 'so-called progress' or 'development'.

About 200 years ago the Barrow was 'locked' to bypass shallows and rapids and, thus, enable navigation. So, there is a lock every mile or so. You forget about them after a while and just notice that the 'river' has become rather narrow. Then, you realise you are not on the river at all but on the lock 'run' that precedes the lock and gives way to a weir below which are the shallows or rapids. The weir barrier walls are often quite broad and places of beauty often enhanced by the presence of a heron on the barrier. Once you're in sight, it retreats to a safer location.

Naively, my expectations for the walk were that there would be occasional coffee-stops at hamlets or clusters of houses on the way, just as there were on the Camino. There was no such thing along the 26km stretch from Graignamanagh to Bagnelstown. At one stage we had to ration the water: one gulp at each lock. There was the possibility of walking off the track along a narrow but busy road to Borris but we opted instead to proceed to Goresbridge, further on and just off the track.

Near Bagnelstown, we met a local man walking his four, very enthusiastic, spaniels. We chatted as one does in these circumstances and he asked if we had seen much wildlife, like foxes and otters. We'd seen neither and he showed us a picture of a fox and her cubs playing on a hillside nearby. We also talked of the birds: the goldcrest, kingfisher and the wren all of which he had taken time to identify from books such as the one I was clutching most of the way. I sensed from him that reserve of great physical strength that some rural dwellers have. Anyway, on hearing that we had no accommodation arranged in town, he gave us a lift to a pub where you could get a 'good feed' and information about B&Bs - none of which was in town. Between the pub owner and the landlady, we were transported from pub to house, house to pub and back again; and in the morning from house to the Barrow via a shop to replace a mislaid hat. 'That's country people for you!' someone said on hearing of the story.

And we followed the track up to Carlow. (Characteristically, our B&B there was booked in advance by our landlady in Bagnelstown.) The scenic walk continued as before: weirs, locks, woodland, herons, birdcalls. The remarkable thing is that we met no knapsacked walkers except for a straggle of about seven about 6 kilometres from Carlow, our finishing point. Entering a town, after such an experience is always an anti-climax: the noise, the cars allowed to speed through narrow streets which people are then reluctant to live in as a result. When will we as a society ever learn, I thought to myself.

This is not, nor is it suggested to be, a hill walkers' walk. Nevertheless, members should be aware that there exists on the island, a long river valley which, at times, seems close to how nature in the wild looks like. It is nearly 200 km long and you can canoe, cycle - or even walk - along most of it.

It exceeded my expectations and I would be surprised it wouldn't yours!

Kevin McGinley

The *Grande Anello de Sibillini* (GAS) is an official circuit of the Sibillini mountain range in Central Italy, north east of Rome but nearer to the Adriatic coast. It is similar to the Wicklow Way in that it combines country roads, wood trails and, hillside tracks, although the average height is higher. It had been proposed by Mark as an off-the-beaten track alternative to previous club trips to Alpine/Pyrenean style terrain.



*Photo – AnneMarie Keoghan*

The pre-trip lead-in was filled with the usual preparations and worries about fitness and equipment with some frantic buying and packing and re-packing. There was also the hassle with transporting walking poles and many of us pooled resources (though for future reference, one single group bag to hold all poles for those taking their bags on a hand-luggage may save money plus the hassle of disassembling/reassembling). It helped that Mark arranged for us to be able to store spare clothes in the hotel that was to be our last night's destination, ensuring we did not inflict the odours of our travels on the innocent victims of Visso or Rome.

That evening, as I re-assembled several walking poles I had transported, James remarked that that we were like a group of assassins putting together the weapons of our trade, and was blown away when I produced my sawn-off toothbrush, the latter an effort to shave off a few grams of weight by removing an excess length of handle. Every little helps! Carina picked up the best bit of equipment in Rome, a lovely fancy hat that added a splash of style to all our photos. We were met at Rome airport by both Carina and Mark (alternatively known on the holiday as *IL Capo*). Both had been sneakily acclimatising for the trip, Carina in Rome and Mark in Greece, where he had attended the wedding of Hillwalker Paul Miney (all the best to you and your wife, Paul).

The first night saw us enjoying balmy weather sitting and chatting outside our hotel and was a nice relaxing start to the holiday. We even managed to drink the hotel out of our beverages of choice.

*Il Capo* had arranged a private bus to take us north-east from Rome to our starting point in the Sibillini national park, the charming old town of Visso. Here we tasted the real heat we would be facing in the days ahead and prepared for it with a liberal application of *gelato*.



*Il Capo – Photo Frank Keoghan*

The continent had been undergoing a heat-wave for several weeks at this stage and the prospect of walking in over 30 degrees had caused many of us consternation but we were re-assured by Mark's "Ah sure, it'll be grand". It is a testament to the extreme heat that even Soren dropped his normal head-to-toe black attire and wore shorts.

While some of the gang took longer to acclimatise and struggled initially, everyone seemed to have adapted by the mid-point. I was surprised how well I coped overall, as my own 'Operational Lifetime Guarantee' is voided in temperatures over 26 degrees. To battle the heat, we made all possible use of shade when stopped, good head and body protection, with shades and plenty of water. On top of this, on Mark's advice, most of us were taking Dioralite to ensure a replenishment of the salts we were losing from sweating. So overall, a condition that could have crippled our endeavours was successfully overcome.

One other side-effect of the heat was that thunder and lightning arrived on three of the days and took place in the early afternoon (1pm) rather than the late afternoon you would expect in the Alps. This forced us to get the skids under us on those days.

There were one of two moments when for short stretches conditions were suddenly breathless and furnace-like. The network of *fonti* were a life saver and allowed us to regularly top-up our water supplies and soak hats and clothes to help keep cool. Note: although well-marked on the map, not all *fonti* were guaranteed to have flowing water (roughly 1 in 4 were defunct or unfit for drinking from).



*On the trail – photo AnneMarie Keoghan*

### **Day 1 Visso to Cupi - 12km, 800m**

Our initial stage was along an ancient pilgrim's path and had a nice interlude at the Sanctuary of Macereto, where we enjoyed lunch in the cool shade, a mini water fight and the history and pleasant cool of a chapel. We enjoyed lovely local beers upon arrival at our first, comfortable village rifugio and a number of us undertook stretches under the excellent guidance of Eithne. One testament to the heat was that despite the lure of a new, unknown location, I felt no urge to explore the village, leaving it instead to the cool of next morning. Competition at dinner that night was fierce as some of the men ate like there was no tomorrow and no one else to share the food with. The hysterical highlight had to be Corina's birthday celebration: Terry had tipped us all of to be ready to sing and when the lights dimmed and a large candle-lit cake appeared we duly obliged, singing with great gusto...only to see the cake sail pass to a family at the next table. The look on Corina's face: priceless. We did Take 2 when her own slice of birthday cake emerged later and the family generously sent over part of their cake to share with the table.

## Day 2 Cupi to Fiastra - 10 km, 500m

Gentle tracks took us around pleasant hillsides with interesting wildflowers followed by a gradual descent to Rifugio di Tribbio. It was along this trail that Frank lost his beloved Aviator shades, of 40 years, having only boasted of their survivability. Fortunately, we are a club experienced in finding and losing and nobly Mark went back, scoured the hillside and re-united Frank with his prized possession. We collapsed in a heap within the gardens of our rifugio and one of my favourite photos of the trip is us all sprawled out in a mass of legs, bags and bodies on the lawn, snoozing, swinging, reading and relaxing, the very embodiment of a hyper-active, elite hiking group.

Eventually a number of the group stirred themselves to action and took off for a swim in the lovely waters of nearby *Lago del Fiastrone*. Others enjoyed food or explored a nearby castle.

Needless to say the evening brought a fine meal...eventually, as there was a *retrospectively* comical mix-up (a.k.a. the Fiasco at Fiastra) with the owner going off to a distant village to collect four of our group when in fact he was meant to drop four members off later (as the hostel only fitted sixteen). This left the rifugio short-staffed and us hungry and, worse still, wine-less(!) but when we eventually got served, we were well fed. Poor Mark was a bit stressed-out by the whole thing but thankfully Inés came to the rescue with translation skills and between them arranged superior, well-deserved accommodation for Frank and Terry (nothing to do with the cake mix-up I'm sure Terry!).



*Guess Who ? - Photo Mark Campion*

## Day 3 Fiastra to Bolognola - 20 km, 1200m

The morning started with the rituals of packing, filling water from the village fountain and wondering why the bag felt so heavy! We wandered along the road past the lake (now sporting a strange new sign in English "Please no pasty white bathers, grazie"), stocked up on treats and began our ascent, with regular use of roadside fountains. Ali felt the lure of a rest day and detached from the group, but her day almost took on the guise on the book she was reading, *The Prisoner*, as her efforts to secure a taxi to the next village proved fruitless, though she eventually escaped.

We had a long, hot, lovely day, tough and thirsty at times but very rewarding, with beautiful meadows and a lovely view of Pizzo di Meta (1576m), which Kevin and I popped over to visit. Hot on the heels of the group (and I mean hot, japers my feet were melting!) we admired a fantastic group of sixteen Lesser Kestrel, hunting en masse above the meadows. An amazing, large golden-dotted spider had been admired by the group beforehand. We caught up with the group in a bar where we quenched our thirst. We would all have been very thirsty earlier on the hike but Eithne saved the day singlehandedly (stupid tap... I'm still not bitter).

We checked into our next rifugio and enjoyed plenty of banter and skit amid the chores of washing, unpacking and scrubbing up the clothes. It was that evening we enjoyed the culinary highlight of the trip, and there were many contenders. As the holiday went on, we had soon realised that our daily trek was only half the battle as the evening brought another challenge as we struggled bravely over the meal mountains, pasta peaks, gelato gaps, skewer slopes and vino valleys.

The dining was the finest I have experienced on holiday and was far in excess of what one expects on a hut-to-hut trip. No complaints as the hiking gave a good appetite and a need to keep the engine fuelled, but even the dinner-time heavy-hitters (Brian, Kevin, James, Soren and myself) were raising our hands to refuse offers of more food and patting well-padded bellies.

That evening's meal in Bolognola was presided over by the very friendly and expressive Theresa (aka *Mama*) who took evident pride in her kitchen's wonderful cooking. The 16-layer lasagne was especially worthy of note. She must have thought a few of us looked thin and needed fattening up as the endless flow of food threatened to overwhelm even the keenest of appetites.

Here is the courses we got for just that one meal: Soup & Croutons, 16-layer Lasagne (*belissimo!*), Funghi tagiatelle, Beef, Courgette in parmesan, Pickled aubergine, Assorted salads, Courgette & artichoke "chips", Cake & fruit-salad desert, Tea, coffee, complimentary grappa, plus strawberry & rum liqueur, the latter enjoyed on the balcony, amid lots of chat and laughter. It is almost with shame I recount this tale of excess, as I think of Neville's recent Corsican epic, and him subsisting on boiled snake and bootlaces.



*Photo - Frank Keoghan*

#### **Day 4 Bolognola to Rubbiano – 16 km, 480m**

More sun, more pleasant trails, nicely wooded for long stretches, though one short exposed section (exposed to sunlight) had us panting and collapsing into a barn for shelter. The highlight of this day for me was the crossing of the *Torrente Ambro*, whose bridge had been swept away. No problem to Il Capo, who planted himself mid-river like a mighty oak and ferried all across safely, all alas save Eithne, who enjoyed a refreshing splashabout. Thankfully the only thing swept away were Catherine's shades and a replacement pair was immediately provided. Next up, we reached a fantastic tower-house, and its magically landscaped gardens. A fair few people were tired by the last couple of kilometres but as ever we found good refreshment and food at our destination in the village of Rubbiano.



*Mark and Warren struggle to resist the temptation to dunk Carina*  
Photo - Frank Keoghan

#### **Day 5 Rubbiano to Altino – 13.5 km, 750m**

This was short, straight-forward section and the club were down and refreshed before the thunder and rain that day. I arrived in later after an enjoyable detour.

Mark having mentioned that the nearby *Infernico* as one of the finest gorges in central Italy, I took a notion to get up early that day. I slept outside to escape the inferno in the men's dorm, resting on a tender bed of blankets. I was greeted next morning first by a friendly local dog and then by a stunning fiery red sun-rise. Getting my backpack out of the rifugio was itself an adventure, as I discovered I was locked out and had to do a 'Spider-man' job and climb in a first floor window.

A half-hours walk in the heat-free morning brought me to the start of the gorge, which was truly impressive, with roaring water and sheer mountains rearing overhead. A couple of siestas were enjoyed before I finally turned back to collect my excess gear from the rifugio and follow the GAS route to our next stop. I only met two runners at the start of the gorge but coming out there was a steady flow of tourists and hikers (as the path continues up to the surrounding mountains).

My only disappointment was a lack of wildlife encounters, as the national park has wolves, boar, wildcats, porcupines and occasionally bears, and I had hoped I might have some sighting by virtue of my solo, early-morning effort.

To my great happiness, when I reached Altino, I had been assigned a bunk bed with my dear friend Frank and it took all Tom's practised diplomatic skills to keep open warfare from erupting as we sniped at each other (to Tom and James' amusement). A great meal that night, interrupted briefly when it emerged our dormitory front-door was locked and the key missing. Suspects were taken out by Brian and water-boarded in the village trough until a confession and key was forthcoming. Some of us rounded off the night with a fun game of poker. 'Card Shark' Cooke took on 'No-Tells' Terry and 'Lay Them Out' Lopez, while 'Call-Your-Bluff' Tom took down my audacious bid for victory with a spectacularly empty hand. The stakes were high and the betting furious as the table piled up with hiking-boots, walking poles and even precious Compeed plasters. Next day Inés claimed her Leki sticks had been stolen but it was secretly rumoured she had sold them to pay off her gambling debts. We threatened to begin a nightly poker session but never did find the time or energy (it's tough work all this fine dining, em, I mean walking).



*Working up an appetite ??? – Photo Anne Marie Keoghan*

### **Day 6 Altino to ???**

This was an adventurous day. The morning saw us strolling pleasantly along beautiful wooded trails with good views of the central mass of the Sibillini, detouring to view a medieval church. It was just after this that Il Capo, deep in conversation, achieved the rare accomplishment of losing both the route and most of the group (who went the right way). Unperturbed, he pressed ahead with his remaining loyal followers. No doubt it was a cunning ploy to separate the wheat from the chaff.



*Useful things signposts - Photo Anne Marie Keoghan*

As part of his reward for their display of loyalty, Il Capo allowed one of his inner-circle to carry his bag while he went in search of his lost flock; there was fierce competition from the men, but Eithne beat them off to win the honour

For our roadside lunch that day, the group availed of stalls selling local produce. Unfortunately they weren't selling up to date weather forecasts, as post-lunch we were suddenly caught out by a deluge of rain, hail, thunder and lightning. As we took protective measures, there was some nervousness and anxious glances at the sky but also madness, music and mirth, group hugs, a plank-off and hail-ball fights. We survived our ordeal and continued our descent, admiring the misty formations on the hill-sides below us. It was with expectations of well earned rest that we reached our rifugio at Colle...only to be replaced with a collective groan when we found out there had been a mix-up and we were actually staying 7 kilometres back, at a rifugio we had passed shortly after lunch! At this stage a number of our group were either tired or hobbled with sore foot, so we arranged a lift for them. Two others decided no more and paid for a night at Colle. That left seven volunteers, Inés, Eithne, Catherine, Grainne, Soren, Mark and I, to walk back the way we had come, thankfully *sans* storm. It was a sign of how use we were getting to our backpacks that none of us availed of the option to offload gear onto those taking the 'ambulance' to the rifugio. That said the last kilometre was a tough push and I was past tired by the time we got to Rifugio di Alpino. However, my spirits lifted immediately as we were met with applause from the rest of the gang, with Frank handing out beer to each of us. Best beer ever!

## Day 7 Rifugio di Alpino/Colle to Campi Vecchio

This was one of my favourite days walking, with a good mix of terrain. The previous days adventure required a route alteration as it was rightfully deemed too mind-numbing to walk the next section a third time: instead we made a detour across the *Piano Grande* along beautiful meadow-land that in parts looked like something out of an *Impressionist* painting. The group (minus two irresponsible tearaways) climbed up to a col. Meanwhile, Kevin and Ali set out along the GAS from Colle, enjoying a day of co-operative, map-reading. Five of us, *Gruppa Aquila*, were allowed off the leash to storm the nearby Monte Patino (1883m). As we retrieved our bags at the pass, the early rumble of thunder in the distant meant no time for further stops to rest or admire the views as we fast-hoofed it down out of any potential danger. We caught up with the rest of the club at Campi Vecchio and then entered...paradise! I had never stayed at an *agriturismo* before and had imagined something like a basic hostel with an allotment. As we walked through the solid, old world splendour of *Fonte Antica Agriturismo* my jaw dropped, we must be in the wrong place, the state of us, just how many towels were in the bathrooms? And then the pool room (where Mark and James displayed clear evidence of a misspent youth), the fine dining room and the amazing breakfast and the garden where one could relax and order meat and cheese platters with your drink. Suffice to say, to stay there longer would have been no hardship.



*Frank Mark and James in good form -Photo AnneMarie Keoghan*

## Day 8 Campi Vecchio to Visso - 10 km, 350m

I found the last day's walk charming. It had a short, sharp climb that had us sweating and gasping but this was followed by a comfortable siesta in leafy shade (with, unorthodoxly, some musical accompaniment). The track then descended gradually through the wooded Valle di Visso.

Many people's feet were sore at this stage: it was a curious thing, but while the heavy boots a few of us wore were uncomfortably hot at times, our feet were in good condition, whilst the lighter trekking boots seemed to cause blisters or sore soles for a number of people.

Special mention must be given at this point to Ger, who did most of the GAS in her sandals. The most beautiful aspect of the trail was the abundance of butterflies which flitted about. I had never seen so many in one place. When we neared the end of the trail close to the outskirts of Visso, I was hesitant to continue and leave the beauty and quiet of the valley and re-enter town life, so I opted for a siesta and enjoyed the sight of butterflies alighting on me and my gear as I half-dozed.



*Carina - best hat competition winner? – Photo Mark Champion*

Eventually I slowly arose and followed the track back into Visso, where I celebrated the completion of 140km along the Grande Anello with a slap up meal and some wine. As I wandered in search of my friends, I appreciated how charming historic Visso was. Eventually I caught up with Shauna, Grainne and Catherine having some refreshments in the main plaza, then retired to my room for a rest. Our groups evening meal included hearty good wishes to Shauna on her upcoming nuptials. We then retired around the corner to a cafe-bar where we enjoyed cocktails in the balmy evening. Ever the leader, Il Capo was quick off the mark to spot our hotelier Enzo and invite him over for a drink, thereby ensuring our curfew would not fall so swiftly.

As we sat outside at midnight, I was struck by how calm and civilised Italian society was, with neighbouring tables occupied by the elderly and families with young children strolling about with no signs of ruckus (beyond two drunken Irish females arm-wrestling furiously, to the amusement and shouted encouragement of all around. Can't bring ya anywhere!); contrast that with Saturday nights at home and one felt all Europe could become a bit more Italian.



*Nothing left to eat but 2 bales of straw – the Hillwalkers must have passed this way  
Photo Brian Murphy*

Next day, at our final meal of the holiday, we had a grand slap-up lunch in Visso and for entertainment we had “The GAS Awards 2015”. There were many categories and winners, and only a few can be mentioned here, but the full video is available from Ger and will be broadcast on a TV3 Exposé special later this year:

**In both the Best Poker Player & Most Innovative Use of a Bidet categories:** Tom  
**Best Female Arm-Wrestler:** Grainne, no Shauna, no Grainne, No don't fight over it!  
**Best Dressed Male (Evening Wear Category):** Terry  
**Best Dressed Female (Most Wardrobe Changes Category):** Catherine  
**Longest Plank and Most Innovative DJ Award:** Soren  
**Loudest Whistle Award:** Lourdes  
**Most Artistic Heat-rash (Legs Category):** Shauna but closely contested.  
**Best New Wildlife Discovery (Camera Category):** Anne Marie

And special mention must be made of Kevin as the only member of the group who, due to the enforced alteration on the second last day, did the full official GAS route.

Whether on the trail, at the dining table or in the dormitories, there plenty of craic and more than can be captured in this humble account. As one person put it, it was a Hillwalkers trip so you never knew what was going to happen next. Or as Catherine said “Well, this is certainly different from any other trip to Italy I’ve heard about”.



*The motley crew – photo Carina Fitzgerald*

As our triumphant and contented *Gastronauts* boarded the plane back to Ireland, we bid farewell to a lovely country, a good group spirit and powerful heat. The shock to our systems when we arrived back to a mere 12 degrees in Dublin need not be imagined (it was the same day I think that Simon’s hike was being power-hosed in the Mourne).

When all deductions had been made from the group purse, it was found that we had a surplus, but rather than re-distribute it back to the group, it was proposed, and readily agreed to, that we should donate the sum to the worthy cause of earthquake relief work in Nepal.

Thanks as ever to Mark for organising and leading the trip, and to all who contributed to the group’s enjoyment, be it with humour, mischief, adventure, knowledge, warmth, kindness, patience or friendship. Viva Il Capo! Viva il Grappa, Viva il Gas!

*Text – Warren Lawless*

## **Neville conquers the GR20**

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While Warren and accomplices were eating their way around the Monti Sibillini, Neville Ransome was enjoying himself on an inspirational trip across one of the toughest walking routes in Europe, the GR20. The GR20 is a 180 km route which traverses the island of Corsica from the North West to the South East. Most mortals take 15 days to complete the route but Neville only allowed himself 13 days. This was achieved, by twice combining two normal stages into one, in one case making a hike of 32 kms with 1500m of ascent. Also, not content with the regular 10,700 metres of ascent, Neville included some variations such as the ascent of Monte Cinto, 2,706m, the highest mountain in Corsica.



*Beds a superfluous luxury for Ironman Neville*

Because the refugios get mixed reviews regarding both food and bedding, Neville decided to be independent and carried his own sleeping accommodation in his rucksack. He also did his own cooking and, as the camping ground was often either rock hard or rock itself, I suppose he needed the tough days with the resultant heavy pack to ensure a good night's sleep!

Congratulations Neville on an awesome, remarkable achievement.

**WANT TO VISIT DUBLIN'S ONLY OPERATING  
DISTILLERY  
THE FIRST TO OPEN IN OVER 100 years ??**

**The Hillwalkers Club have organised a tour of the**

**Teeling Whiskey Distillery  
In  
Newmarket Square, Dublin 8**

**(only 2 minutes walk from St Patricks Cathedral)**

**Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup> @ 6.30pm**

**For €12 only**

**You get a unique opportunity to experience true whiskey production; a guided tour when you see all the machinery, stills (handmade in Italy), samples of ingredients – followed by guided whiskey tasting, nibbles and more.**



To book a place, e-mail Eugene Dudley - [dudley@hotmail.com](mailto:dudley@hotmail.com)

Bus routes include:- 27, 49, 54a, 56a, 77a, 77x, 150, 151



## October long weekend 2015

# Walking in the Mournes

*Friday 23-Monday 26 October*

**Leaders:** Simon More and Chris Byrne

There will be two organised walks each day, *aimed to suit members of the Hillwalkers and fit hard-moderate walkers*. The walks are planned throughout the Mourne mountains.

The relevant map is either OSNI's Mourne Country Outdoor Pursuits Map or Harvey's Mourne Mountains map, each 1:25,000 scale

**Hotel accommodation:** Donard Hotel and Golf Links House, both in Newcastle, Co. Down

**Cost:** €265, payable in full at the time of booking, which includes twin-share hotel accommodation, meals and bus transport. You will need sterling for any purchases over the weekend.

**Bookings open for Hillwalker members on Monday 31 August**  
**Bookings for other An Óige members open on Wednesday 9 September**

Payment for the weekend is through the Club's Paypal system. Please go to the Club website ([www.hillwalkersclub.com](http://www.hillwalkersclub.com)) then click on 'Event Booking' (towards the bottom of the left list), selecting 'October long weekend' to pay €265 in full. *Bookings are not secure until payment in full has been made.*

Payment queries to the Club Administrator: Ita O'Hanlon, [itaohdubs@gmail.com](mailto:itaohdubs@gmail.com).

**Meals:** Breakfasts (Saturday, Sunday, Monday), lunches (Saturday, Sunday and Monday) and dinners (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) are included in the price

**Bring:** Suitable walking boots, rain gear, walking gear, warm clothing, towels, toilet gear, flask, torch, first aid kit, camera, binoculars etc.

**Meeting place/time:** Luke St (off George's Quay) at 1545h on Friday 23 October

**Return:** Arriving back into Dublin at approximately 1800h on Monday 26 October

Photo: "Mournes wiki". Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Commons - [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mournes\\_wiki.jpg#/media/File:Mournes\\_wiki.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mournes_wiki.jpg#/media/File:Mournes_wiki.jpg)

# Hillwalkers Club Fancy Dress Night Hike

## Friday October 30<sup>th</sup> 2015



Friday October 30<sup>th</sup> 2015 - meet at Bray Dart Station between 6.00 and 6.30 p.m.

Hike the Bray Head Loop led by the man himself – Don Reilly.

Cost €20

All profits go to the Syrian refugees...I appreciate that there are causes closer to home but these people have suffered more than most and really need our help.

Cost includes cakes and tea/punch afterwards...hopefully we'll have a small marquee set up near the end of the hike afterwards.

If the weather's good the plan is to hike while wearing your costume...but if the weather's bad we might skip that idea and just wear the costumes afterwards. We'll make a decision closer to the time.

Afterwards we're adjourning to the Harbour Bar in Bray from 9.00 p.m. for a few jars and some music and song courtesy of Seán Treanor and his Roving Minstrels...the latter needs to be confirmed.

The last dart back to the city centre leaves at 11.20 pm...sure, we might even reconvene in the city centre afterwards.

To sign up contact James Cooke at [jjacooke@gmail.com](mailto:jjacooke@gmail.com)

Thanks  
Mark, Ines and James.

P.S. No dogs allowed!

**Some photos from Frank Keoghan's hike 5<sup>th</sup> July**

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*Philip surveys Fraughan Rock Glen*



*Michelle & Simon in Fraughan Rock Glen – photo Brian Madden*



*Gerry Walsh with his Galtee Challenge / Crossing medal - photo Brian Madden*