



Hillwalkers Club

December 2021

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

THE HILLWALKER



Club hike above Benleagh - 5th December - Photo Rosaleen Clarke

Game of Thrones

Many said it couldn't happen, most said it shouldn't happen ...but here I am back as your EDITOR! Way back in the day, amid a rare moment of shared sobriety, Matt Geraghty and I decided to bring the club into the dawning 21st Century by creating a website and digitising the paper & postal newsletter.

In a strange quirk of fate, I have returned to the committee, just as Matt is decommissioned after two decades service as webmaster. Thank you for your dedication to the club, long after a move to Cork and family commitments precluded active involvement in our activities.

And now without further ado, I introduce the recently appointed 2021/2022 Club Committee (best read while humming the theme to the Muppet Show...)

Committee 2021/2022

Chairman	Ruaidhrí O'Connor
Treasurer	Ruaidhrí O'Connor (temporary)
Secretary	Ruth Murphy
Sunday Hikes Coordinator	Frank Rooney
Environmental Officer	Ruth Murphy
Membership Secretary	Frank Carrick
Social Events Coordinator	Lisette Heijnen & Ursula Tipp
General Committee Assistant	Gavin Gilvarry
Weekend Away Coordinator	Søren Stuhr Mandrup
Training Officer	Frank Keoghan
Social Media Coordinator	Laura Grealish
Newsletter Editor	Warren Lawless

The Holly Hike

It wouldn't be Christmas without the Late, Late Toy Show ...and the Holly Hike!

This **Sunday December 19th**, Don Reilly will once again be leading us on the must-do event of the festive season, so dig out your Santa hats, bling up your backpacks with festive cheer and bring out your treats to share at lunch.

The club intends to hold a minute's silence at the cairn on Church Mountain, the highpoint of the hike, to remember deceased members of the club. We are over 28 years old as a club and it is good to remember those who we have shared our trails with, but who are with us no more.

We will be finishing at Hollywood village and while we naturally cannot organise the usual festive music and food platters this year, we will provide **ample time for you to avail of the pub** and its offerings.

Please note we will be holding a little **collection for our regular bus driver Keith**, as a thank you for his good natured reliability and his indulgence of our occasional need to quench a thirst after a hike. Please contribute a few euro when the hit goes round (or on Tom Hennessey's hike if you are not out that day). We assure you that 100% of all funds collected will in fact go to Keith, and not be diverted to any shady Committee off-shore accounts...

The now-normal method of online booking will apply (per forthcoming email from the Membership Secretary), so look out and book soon.

2021/2022 Membership

The annual club membership is up for renewal. Your club membership provides you Mountaineering Ireland insurance cover and also partially subsidises the club bus. See the club website for details:

<http://hillwalkersclub.com/online-membership/>

Payment is made the same way as for club hikes. Please ensure you comment your membership payment with your name and its purpose. The Membership Secretary will then be in contact with your Club & MI membership cards, when ready.

Forthcoming Club Hiking Activity

Apart from the Holly Hike mentioned about, the following traditional end-of-year activities are currently scheduled and will be notified in due course:

- ❖ 26th December St. Stephen's Day hike
- ❖ 1st January New Year's Day hike by Jim Barry (by private car transport)

Our *Sunday Hike Co-ordinator* is putting together a full programme of January hikes, including the chance to partake of a novel Night Hike. Details will be forthcoming, so watch your inbox!

A big **Thank You** to all those who have lead for the club in 2021 and made possible so many good days out. On that note, please see this important notice from our *Training Officer*....

Training News – Buddies & Aspiring Leaders

Leading a hike makes a big contribution to the club and brings enjoyment to your fellow-members. Without leaders the club dies!

Since the resumption of Sunday hikes following the lifting of restrictions, the same few members have consistently volunteered to lead hikes and it was sometimes difficult to find leaders.

There may be many reasons for this: levels of fitness and confidence have waned during lockdown; navigation skills etc have become rusty or individuals may simply not have been asked. There are a number of former leaders who are still consistently hiking and if any need refreshers, it's just a matter of letting me know and I can endeavour to make the appropriate arrangements.

I plan to introduce a range of training during the next year based around a buddy system. This will commence with a basic navigation course using map and compass, conducted by club members within the club. It will be aimed at those who would like to lead but lack the skills or confidence to do so.

To begin, we need four aspiring leaders and four experienced leaders to buddy up. So, please volunteer now in either category. If you don't make it to the first group, your name will be listed and you can participate in a following group.

Following the initial training, aspirant leaders will undertake to co-lead a hike with their buddy. Having successfully completed this hike, any issues arising will be addressed. The aspiring leader will then do a recce with any other leader and on their subsequent lead they will be shadowed by their buddy. This is a learning exercise and it's no problem if mistakes are made. It is preferable to make errors in this situation as it is still a learning exercise.

The new leader should now be able to lead a hike in familiar terrain remembering that there is always back-up in the event of difficulties as there will be experienced leaders or former leaders on every hike. Even experienced leaders are constantly learning.

The new leaders will then receive further training in other aspects of hill – walking in due course. I hope to commence training in January 2022 and have four new leaders up and leading by early spring. If the scheme is successful, it can be repeated and there is no reason why the majority of club members should not eventually be able and confident to lead.

So, if you are an experienced leader and are prepared to buddy – up, please let me know. It would be a significant contribution to the future of the club. And, most importantly, if you would like to lead and have never done so before, please contact me. It is really satisfying to be confident in the hills.

Frank Keoghan

Club Training Officer

frankkeoghan2 [at] gmail.com

GAP Biking Event

Ruth booked us into the GAP Adventure Bike Park in Glencullen for the morning session on Saturday 13th November. There were 7 participants: Udo Sap, Aidan Cooney, Ursula Tipp, Mary Grimes, James Cooke, Ruth Murphy, Tara Russell

The staff couldn't have been nicer and more patient when welcoming us and kitting us out with our full suspension Nukeproof 2021 mountain bikes that each come with a full-face helmet, elbow pads and knee pads included in the EUR30 cost. There are 16 downhill trails ranging in increasing technical difficulty from intermediate to expert (two blue runs, five red, five black).

We were very lucky with the weather, dry and mild - almost too warm considering we were unable to book the 2 euro lift passes due to COVID and had to endure several perspiration-filled pedal-ups to the top of the mountain before each hair-raising, thrilling descent!

Ruthless Ruth and Mad-for-Speed Mary soon left us in their dust as they hungrily pounced on the first blue trail of the day. Mary was not seen for the rest of the day, probably because she was travelling at the speed of light. The rest of us adopted a more cautious approach, which didn't prevent the odd tumble on high berms!

Thankfully we all made it up and down the mountain a few times to explore the blue trails, which provided more than enough adrenaline for our introductory trip.

We enjoyed coffees and delicious burgers at the on-site café after our session ended at lunchtime.

No doubt we will go back again to crush the red and black trails! We're just waiting for the bruises to disappear!

For more details, see <https://www.thegap.ie/>

Tara 'Trail Terror' Russell





MI Leadership Training Event

On the 28th of November, 7 club members met in Glendalough for a club leadership training day by Niall Ennis from Mountaineering Ireland. This group of brave hikers faced harsh winds and a sub-zero chill factor with a sprinkle of snow, all to test their leadership qualities and brush up on their map and compass skills.

Those attending were: *Fiona Mullaney, Tom Hennessey, Lisette Heijnen, Udo Sap, Tara Russell, Brian Farrell and Mary Chambers.*

Countless real scenarios of what can go wrong on the mountain was discussed, and possibly even more important how to avoid these situations. Taking a grid-reference, pacing and aiming off are now all familiar topics for the attending members as these concepts were not just discussed but tested during the day.

All attending took turns leading a different part of the hike. Halfway up Brockaghs, Udo gave an Oscar worthy acting display as he was secretly appointed by Neil to play the part of stubborn hiker with ankle problems. Mary dealt with this situation like a born leader, and soon the group could continue their journey.

At the top of Brockagh East we practiced walking on a bearing, preparing for a possible situation where visibility is poor. All members managed to find their way to the Col safely, compasses still clutched in their freezing hands. Upon return to Glendalough they were disappointed to discover a closed coffee/hot chocolate stand. However, the day turned out to

be a great success and all praise goes to *Nail Ennis* as he is an exceptionally knowledgeable natural leader and the member's attending were all positive: 7 out of 7 would recommend this training to other club-members in the future!!

Lisette Heijnen (photo by Fiona Mullaney)

Ranging Far & Wide

For many of us, it seemed at one stage this year that the Dublin Hills was the very height of excitement and adventure. Since then though Michael Quinn's successful club forays to Scotland and Armagh are some of the more exotic places members have roamed this year of continued restrictions. It is been great to learn of the many individual and small-group expeditions privately undertaken by members this year, hiking and camping all manner of hills and trails across the island, from Kerry, Tipperary, Donegal, Leitrim, Fermanagh, Mourne, Achill, Nephins, Connemara, the Burren, Comeraghs, etc, etc (plus the Black Forest and Le Reunion).

It is encouraging to learn about your own adventures further afield, so please contact if you would like to write a short account of any trip in Ireland or abroad that you think will inspire and entertain your fellow hikers.

Core Club Principles

While close observation of some of the club's membership could rightly lead one to believe that we are a club devoid of morals or principles, the following are some basic general guidelines, drawn from Leave No Trace and the Good Practice Guide, which the club will continue to apply in its hikes:

Safety and preparedness on the mountains

- Safety on the hills is our priority at all times.
- All members must have suitable attire with appropriate clothing of gloves, hat, coat, leggings, boots along with food and water. Head torches should be carried in the winter months.
- Members should be fit for hard hikes.
- We accept the risk that is inherent in hillwalking, and take responsibility for our own safety.
- Our hikes are all led by experienced volunteer leaders. The leader will always lead the hike so that they can set the pace. A back leader will also be appointed. It is important that all hike participants stay between the hike leader and the back leader at all times.

Treading lightly on the mountains

- We will strive to walk on rock, stones or the most durable surface available, rather than on vegetation or soft ground, where practicable and safe.
- We will walk along the centre of mountain paths to avoid widening, and encourage members to wear gaiters to make it easier to follow muddy paths.
- We will avoid taking short cuts on zigzag paths as this creates new lines for run-off of water and increases erosion.

- We leave no litter whatsoever. You carry it in, you carry it out.

Please ask for more details if new (or existing) members have any questions on the above.

For further **newcomer** and **environmental policy** details, please see

- ❖ <http://hillwalkersclub.com/fags/>
- ❖ <http://hillwalkersclub.com/about-us/environment/>

Thank you for your co-operation.

Cultural Revolution

Since time immemorial (c.1996) the members of the club have disgorged from the bus and charged into the Palace Bar, slathering at the mouth for pints and crisps. There is a several life's worth of stories to all the goings on that have transpired in there, birthdays celebrated, legs shaved, hearts broken, laughs and gossip shared, friendly glares exchanged with the shushing ballad band, and it holds a dear place in our hearts.

However, due to the current situation, the club has found more spacious accommodation (and pizza) in Doyles. Already we are being greeted with a nod and a wave by staff and ushered to our regular tables. That said, we all miss barman Dave's charming smile and manners, and I am sure we will return more often to our spiritual home.

Missing In Action

As regular club hikers will have noticed, we have been bereft of the good company of many stalwart members of the club this year.

We are all adjusting to the current extraordinary times and taking things at a pace that is best for ourselves, so naturally people are returning to the fold at a different pace. If you are in contact with any of our noble band, please extend to them the Club's good wishes and tell them we look forward to seeing them back in future, fit and healthy.

On that note, lawyers for Mr. P. Hayden have issued a statement strongly denying that his continued absence is in any way connected to an ongoing spell in Mountjoy for a cycle-rage incident involving the Presidential cavalcade. The authenticity of several videos issued by his legal reps (purporting to show him attending An Óige council meetings or re-wilding the lands of Knockree Hostel) have been challenged on the grounds of making use of dummies and poorly disguised stand-ins.

Remember, anyone with news worthy material can contact me in confidence at Editorial_Gossip_Rumours_Scandal@hillwalkers.com (or my regular email account wkmlawless [at] gmail [dot] com).

Warren Lawless