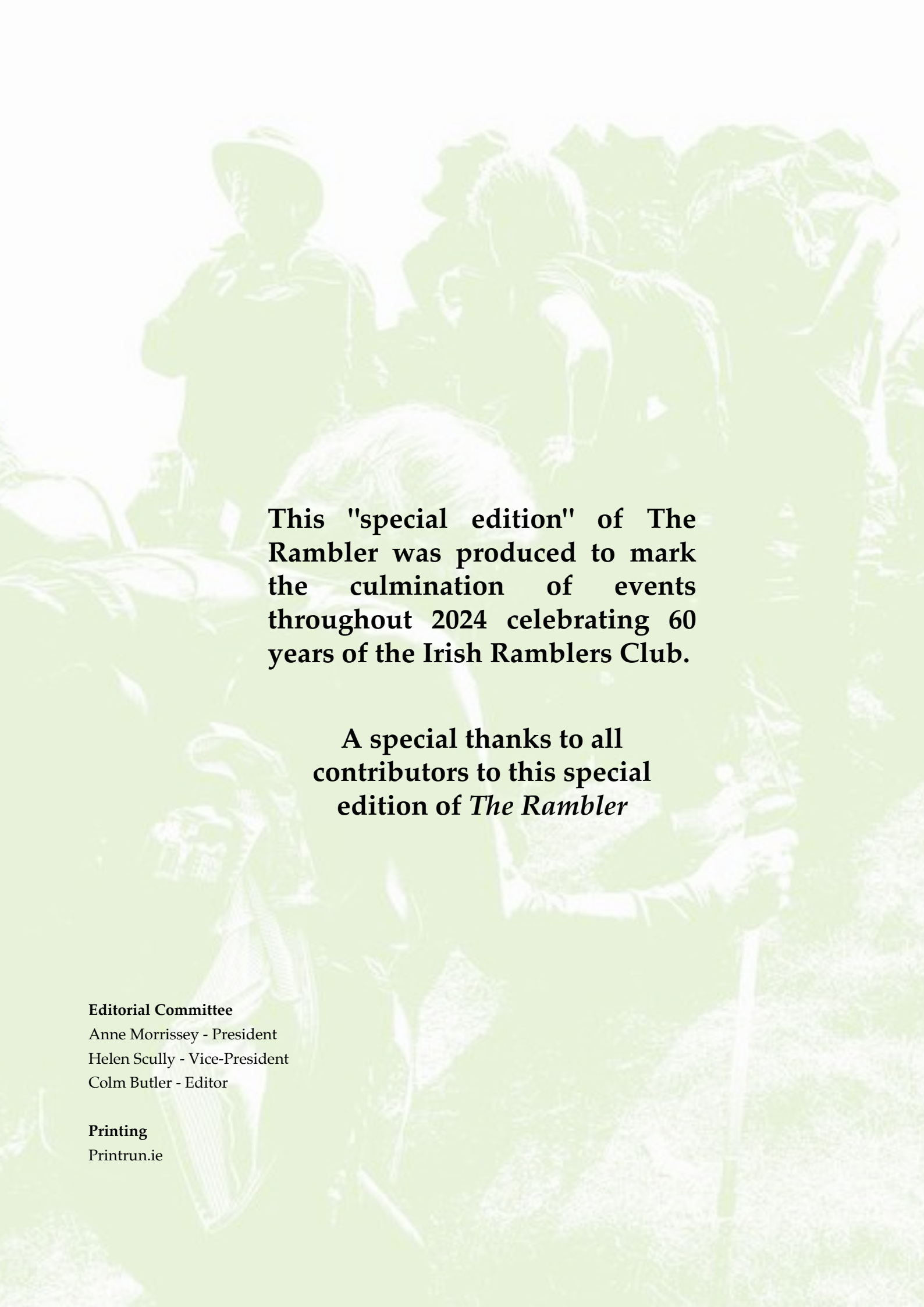




The Irish Ramblers Club
1964 - 2024



This "special edition" of The Rambler was produced to mark the culmination of events throughout 2024 celebrating 60 years of the Irish Ramblers Club.

A special thanks to all contributors to this special edition of *The Rambler*

Editorial Committee

Anne Morrissey - President

Helen Scully - Vice-President

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Printing

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Welcome from the President Anne Morrissey

It is my great pleasure and honour to be writing this message to members as we celebrate 60 years of the Irish Ramblers Club.

Founded in 1964 by a group of far-seeing Ramblers the club has gone from strength to strength growing from an initial membership of about 100 members to more than 700 today. It is a testament to the hard work of so many people over the years that the club continues to flourish. The 1964 mission statement is still as valid today as it was in 1964:

"To explore, enjoy and protect our beautiful countryside"

Now more than ever, as walkers, we are aware of our impact on the environment and are doing our best by carpooling and avoiding routes on the hills that can add to the erosion of the mountains.

As with any club, its membership has evolved over the years. Initially there was one hike per week on a Sunday, then two hikes, then four to sixty years later we now have up to 12 hikes per week, on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays with hikes to suit every level of fitness.

In addition to the weekly hiking programme, club members have organised holidays in Ireland and abroad, the biannual Lug Challenge Walk (last held in 2023), night hikes, and social events. In 2022, the first monthly 'Meet and Greet' social activity took place and is particularly enjoyed by members who are no longer able to walk on the hills.

It is interesting to reflect on how the club has communicated with members over the years. In the early days, a monthly hiking programme was typed and posted to members. When the membership became too large for one individual to manage, Enprint was initially contracted to print and then to print and post the Rambler to members in the early 1990s. The next change took place in 2011, when the printed Rambler was replaced by a digital Rambler firstly emailed monthly to members, and more laterally available to download from the website. The Club now has a very active website and a Facebook page

both of which are a great way to attract new members.

Digitisation of the Rambler has also meant that every previous edition of the Rambler is available for members to browse through and reminisce, and is a very interesting historical record of the Club. For newer members, I suggest picking a date at random to see what the Club was like then. Some things have not changed at all, such as our wish to enjoy hiking and socialise with fellow hikers, or indeed, have discussions about hiking grades.

It is great to see how the Club managed during the Foot and Mouth outbreaks in 1967/68 and 2001 and the Covid lockdowns in 2020 and 2021. You can read an interesting article about the latter on page 17 of this bulletin. Other challenges that have faced the Club over the years and continue to do so, are the appeals for more leaders, and our ageing profile. A

membership survey conducted during 2023 found that the mode Rambler is a female who walks a Grade 3 on a Thursday, is over 70

years of age, reads the Rambler regularly and walks at least monthly. As a follow-up to this, a members forum was held just before the AGM on 5 Mar 2024.

It is even more interesting to note on reading old Ramblers, that in the early days, the Club held an Autumn Rally every year just before the AGM! As I said, some things never change, and others just get reinvented!

On behalf of the Club, I thank all the people who have made it so successful over the 60 years, from members of the Executive Committee, to hike coordinators and leaders, training mentors, car security personnel, holiday organisers social events organisers and more. By reading old Ramblers I have also got a

great appreciation of the hard work and commitment of those members who have contributed to the Club over the years, many of whom are no longer with us.

If everyone does a little, a lot can be achieved!

Anne Morrissey





Presidents 1964 - 2024

1964 - 1967 Sean Quinn
1968 - 1971 Jimmy Murphy
1972 Dick Ryan
1973 - 1975 Brian Turner
1976 - 1977 Una Kinirons
1978 - 1979 David Herman
1980 Jean Boydell
1981 - 1982 Tony Clancy
1983 - 1984 Margaret Herman
1985 - 1986 Gerry Maguire
1987 - 1988 Helen Rohan
1989 - 1990 Milo Kane
1991 Ron Cunningham
1992 - 1993 Jim Forde
1994 John Kennedy
1995 Tim McKenna
1996 - 1997 Gay Needham
1998 Sheena Duffy
1999 - 2000 Seamus Smyth
2001 - 2002 Sheila Kane
2003 - 2004 Martin Dermody
2005 Ron Baker
2006 - 2008 Anne Morrissey
2009 - 2011 Finola McDonald
2012 - 2014 Derek Tracey
2015 - 2016 David Vipond
2017 - 2018 Bob Nugent
2019 - 2020 Paul Caffrey
2021 - 2022 Declan Murphy
2023 - 2024 Anne Morrissey

Presidents 1964 - 2024



Club Milestones

- 1964** - January 7 - Inaugural meeting for the newly formed Irish Ramblers Club and formal launch on January 9.
January 12 - The club's first hike from Rockbrook to Enniskerry.
October - The first Rambler Bulletin.
- 1966** - December 26 - First St. Stephens Day hike – Leader Kitty Murphy.
- 1967** - March 24 - First Rambler trip outside of Ireland (the Lake District).
IRC Choir, *"The Footnotes"* formed.
December 1967 to March 1968 - No hiking on the mountains due to Foot and Mouth Disease.
- 1971** - September 19 - First Autumn Rally.
- 1974** - Public buses replaced by "Carambles", from Burgh Quay at 11am every Sunday.
Feb 1 - 10th anniversary club dinner in the Clarence Hotel, cost £2.50.
June 22 - First Lug Walk for members completed by 19 members.
- 1975** - December 21 - First Whiskey Hike initiated by Dick Burke.
- 1977** - June 18 - First open Lug Walk – 104 starters with 89 finishers.
- 1986** - Lug Walk to be held every second year to reduce erosion.
- 1987** - Current Club Logo launched.
- 1992** - February - First time The Rambler was professionally printed by Enprint.
December 10 - First IRC Thursday hike – Leader John Douglas.
- 1995** - July 15 - First IRC Saturday hike – Leader Declan O'Connor.
December 26 - Kitty Murphy led the St. Stephen's day hike for the last time after 30 years. John Sweetman took over the hike from Kitty and led it from 1996 until 2022 - from 2023 onwards annual volunteers lead this hike.
- 1996** - January 14 - Current hike grading system introduced.
December 8 - First Amblers Hike.
- 1997** - April - The IRC became an approved Mountain Skills training centre.
- 2000** - October 8 - First Remembrance Walk in memory of deceased members.
- 2004** - January - Meeting at Burgh Quay discontinued with hikers meeting at the carpool location instead.
February 20 - 40th anniversary celebration dinner at the Red Cow Hotel, cost €40.
- 2005** - December - IRC Club website established.
- 2007** - January - The monthly walking programme became available online.
- 2011** - Online membership renewal and the circulation of the Rambler went electronic.
The "Spreading our Wings" programme was introduced.
- 2013** - September 18 - Car Security Working Group introduced.
- 2014** - April - 50th Anniversary celebration trip to Killarney.
September 20 - 50th Anniversary dinner at Jury's Hotel Ballsbridge, cost €45.
November 4 - Changes to club constitution agreed at 2014 AGM.
- 2015** - January - Final professionally printed edition of The Rambler.
September - New updated IRC website launched to include club archive.
October - The IRC hosted Mountaineering Ireland's autumn gathering in Glendalough.
- 2016** - April - Following a survey, hike start times moved from 11am to 10am for some and urban car pooling no longer being used.
November - Footnotes celebrate 50 years of singing in Elm Park Golf Club.
- 2017** - November 23 - Formal transfer of the Irish Ramblers Club Archive to Dublin City Library.
- 2018** - April - The Rambler gets a facelift.
May - WhatsApp Groups set up for each grade to encourage car pooling.
- 2019** - January - Insurance changed to Mountaineering Ireland.
March - Mountaineering Ireland Hillwalking group first meeting.
- 2020** - February 1 - First Hardy Soles Hike, which became Grade 6 in 2022.
March to July - Hiking programme suspended due to Covid 19 restrictions.
- 2022** - First walks for the Below 50's, now the Trailblazers, Mountain Panthers, and Meet & Greet.
- 2023** - Sharing of coordinators role in 2023.
- 2024** - February 10 - 60th Anniversary celebration dinner at Clontarf Castle.
April 15 - 18 - 60th Anniversary trip to Killarney.
November - Membership year changed from calendar year to November to October to coincide with Mountaineering Ireland membership year.



Rambler of the Year

Note there was no award in 2020 due to Covid

1984 Raymond Moloney
1985 Jim Forde
1986 Margaret Herman
1987 Francis Orr
1988 Sean Hammond
1989 Ray Cunningham
1990 Peadar O'Riordan
1991 Marie Daly
1992 Derry and Muriel O'Crowley
1993 Brian Turner
1994 Liam Reinhardt
1995 Gerry Brady
1996 Kevin O'Loughlin
1997 Ron Baker
1998 Fiona McDonald
1999 Jim Power
2000 Martin Dermody
2001 Oliver Doherty
2002 Tony Dixon
2003 Maura Roche
2004 Alexandra Dermody
2005 Catherine Fenton and Maurice Holly
2006 Eoghan Brangan
2007 Fergus Roche
2008 Brian Rooney
2009 Tom Milligan
2010 Jim Forde
2011 John Shackleton
2012 Clodagh Veale
2013 Angela Hickey
2014 Nollaig O'Ceallaigh
2015 Jack Morrissey
2016 Michael Cosgrave
2017 Michael Keogh
2018 Fergus Roche
2019 Jerry MacDonough
2020 not awarded
2021 Patrick Gray
2022 Herbert Herzmann
2023 Louis O'Donoghue

Hike Leader of the Year over the past 10 years

2015 Martin Rooney
2016 Mick Kennedy
2017 Martin Hackett
2018 Agnes Leonard
2019 Frances & Dermot Leahy
2020 No award - Covid
2021 Sheila Powell
2022 Lena Murray
2023 Martin Rooney

President's Award

2014 Jack Morrissey
2019 Geraldine Cleary
2021 Anne Geoghegan
2023 Simon Stewart

R a m b l e r A w a r d s



Seán Quinn RIP Founding President

We enjoy the greatest, most satisfying, lifelong recreation, as members of our wonderful Club enriched with priceless friendships, camaraderie positive energy, and good humour. Walking means so much to us, in so many ways. Our organisation and vibrancy are renowned. Long may it continue!

"Come walk with us, walk and be happy, healthy and free. Rambling is the perfect, enjoyable relaxation and sport, exercising the body and mind, promoting good health and energising the personality. When you take people outdoors, they fall in love with the countryside, are moved to protect it, and become environmentally aware."

As we celebrate our diamond jubilee, we recall the many shared, and personal memories of our hikes, holidays, and events, over the years, all embraced in good fellowship and fun. We also remember our dear friends who have passed on.



In 1964, when we were finding our feet, I said "Come walk with us, walk and be happy, healthy and free. Rambling is the perfect, enjoyable relaxation and sport, exercising the body and mind, promoting good health and energising the personality. When you take people outdoors, they fall in love with the countryside, are

moved to protect it, and become environmentally aware."

More than ever, I believe that these benefits are real and wonderful.

Mountains inspire us, we love to climb them and get their good tidings. Their sacred nature is



traditionally recognised; world-wide pathways to the Gods; the home of the Gods, they say. Everest comes to mind, "Chomolungma", mother of the earth. Ireland has sacred mountains go leór, including Croagh Patrick and Mount Brandon.

Over the years, we have contributed positively to relevant national issues, including national parks environmental awareness, conservation and rights of way, and helped others form new walking clubs. We have achieved some progress, but much remains to be done on many issues. In the future, we can continue successfully if we maintain our core values that have served us so well over the years - members' active contribution and participation in events, good organisation, team work, and helping each other especially new members.

Guím gach Rath agus Sonas ar bhaoill Cumann Siúlóraí na h-Éireann, anois agus sa toadhcháí.



Sadly, Seán passed away on September 16th 2024 and, in recognition of his significant contribution to the establishment of the Irish Ramblers Club, a natural oak commemorative plaque has been erected in the Remembrance Wood.



A momentous Year

In true Rambler fashion and in recognition of the Club's commitment to celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Club in 2024, discussions for the 60th year of celebration got underway in 2022.

Much research was conducted to establish the types of events favoured by Ramblers, and how best to celebrate the Club's longevity so that a myriad of good memories would sustain us throughout the next decade.

Huge tribute is due to the founding members who had the foresight in 1964 to establish the Irish Ramblers Club and who then oversaw its development into one of the finest walking Clubs in the country. Our excellent weekly hike

Our excellent weekly hike offerings together with a host of other activities, has seen the Club develop on an entirely voluntary basis into one of the best run Clubs of its kind in Ireland

offerings, together with a host of other activities, has seen the Club develop on an entirely voluntary basis into one of the best run Clubs of its kind in Ireland.

To oversee our 60th year celebrations, a 60th Anniversary Committee was established to make 2024 a truly successful and memorable celebration of our 60th year. The main Committee was augmented by smaller sub-committees who dedicated time and effort to specific events and activities. Our mission was to ensure that Ramblers would recall the Club's 60th



anniversary year with nostalgia - pleasure in our enjoyment of the schedule of organised events throughout the year, and sadness for the loss of some of our stalwart, well-remembered and much-loved members who had contributed so much to the Club and facilitated its continuance from 1964 to 2024 – and hopefully for many decades to come.

Consequently, 2024 was a year of celebration and loss – we lost our founding President Seán

Quinn (RIP) in September 2024. Seán was fondly remembered on Sunday October 13th 2024 at the Remembrance Wood, together with all other deceased members of the Club and a memorial plaque was erected on one of the benches as part of our 60th year actions.

So our 60th anniversary year turned out to be a year of great fun, powerful challenges, many displays of club loyalty and above all 'participation' from so many Club members.

Sincere thanks to every single Rambler who helped in any way in making the 60th anniversary year a success – nothing would happen without the level of commitment demonstrated!



The 60th Anniversary Committee

**Susan Cunniffe
Tim Kinsella
Anne Morrissey
Eileen Murphy
Helen Scully
Deirdre Stuart
Derek Tracy**

Helen Scully

Chairperson, 60th Anniversary Committee



The 60th Anniversary Programme

A Year of Commemoration

January 27th - The 60th year events got underway with Anne Morrissey's night hike up Lugnaquilla. Despite disappointing weather (well it was January!), seven hardy Ramblers completed the hike.

February 10th - Our Gala Dinner in Clontarf Castle – a really fun occasion incorporating the presentation of the 2023 Rambler Awards, music, dancing skits and poetry!

March 5th - A Town Hall Forum took place before the 2024 AGM in Wynn's Hotel. The Forum was held to identify the Club's Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats – report published in June 2024 issue of the Rambler.

March 16th - The first of Anne Morrissey's "*7 Summits Challenge*" – ascending 7 peaks, finishing in September. A very ambitious project in keeping with the Irish Ramblers Club commitment to providing hiking challenges to test the limits of Club members!

April 4th - Bog Restoration Day, under the guidance of Brian Kennan, 17 Ramblers volunteered for a day of very successful planting and restored native woodland in Glenasmole Valley.

April 14th - Five day outing to April 18th in the fabulous Great Southern Hotel in Killarney- this turned out to be one of the truly great highlights of our 60th.

May 8th - A strength and conditioning Fitness Event held in Knox Memorial Hall in Monkstown and attended by 40 Ramblers keen to ensure they hike into their 90's!

August 17th and 18th - Associate MS1 Training Events.

September 19th -The Charity Hike event supported by more than 200 people which raised in excess of €13K for the chosen charity.

October 13th - Remembrance Sunday in the Remembrance Wood - a very poignant occasion where deceased Ramblers were celebrated and newly forged pathways, wooden benches and gate sign available for all to enjoy.

November 2nd and 3rd - Associate MS1 Training Events.

November 19th - A Webinar to encourage Ramblers to undertake the qualification for the MI Mountain Leader Award.

December - Announcement of the establishment of a New Leader Buddy System.

January 24th 2025 - A Grand Finalé, Sixties -Themed, Dinner & Party to conclude the 60th celebratory year in true Rambler style.

Iron-on badges; Great Outdoor Vouchers and the 7 Peaks Awards - all subsidised by the Irish Ramblers Club.

A commemorative edition of *The Rambler* which we hope will be a treasured souvenir for our members.

Gala Dinner at Clontarf Castle February 10th



Whenever The Irish Ramblers Club take on a project the job is done well.

This was particularly so in the case of the 60th Anniversary Gala Dinner which took place in Clontarf Castle Hotel on Saturday, 10 February 2024!

Ferocious lions greeted diners at the entrance. Sentries, clad in suits of armour, provided a guard of honour as we made our way through the lobby. Drinks reception in the bar and then to the palatial surroundings of The Great Hall for dinner, IRC awards ceremony, entertainment and craic.

Our esteemed President, Anne Morrissey, welcomed all present and read a message from the Club's founding President, Seán Quinn, who has since sadly passed away (RIP 16.09.2024). How lovely it was to have that connection with the Club's beginnings sustained for so many years.

What a pleasure it was to catch up with friends on this grand occasion, some from the very early days of the Club, some friendships forged more recently. Many different eras from the Club's 60 years were represented among the happy, chatty, mingling Club members, friends and guests.

We made our way to the appropriate table guided by the beautifully designed table plan. As we took our places we noticed at each diner's table-space there was a badge combining the Irish tricolour with the Club's logo with reference to the period 1964 to 2024. This is intended to be attached to our rucksack or to the sleeve of our anorak. What a nice touch! "It's iron-on" the President announced.

Comments about the dinner ranged from "delicious" to "divine". After dinner the IRC 2023 awards presentation ceremony took place. The President read the citation for each category as listeners sought to identify the awardee. Did you get it right? How did your guess compare



Mary O'Connor is presented with her "New Hike Leader of the Year" award by Vice-President Helen Scully & President Anne Morrissey.

with the announcements which were: Rambler of the Year: Louis O'Donoghue; Hike Leader of the Year: Martin Rooney; New Hike Leader of the Year: Mary O'Connor.

Then we had Jerry MacDonough – MC extraordinaire! "Everybody on the floor for a Paul Jones", our intrepid Master of Ceremonies



announced. Soon the hall was rockin' to the rhythm of music as we exchanged our hiking boots for dancing shoes. This was interspersed with "turns" from the "audience" - songs, poems, stories, even a duet or two. All the while people bumped into people: "Goodness, I haven't seen you in years, how are you keeping at all?" So the evening went on and, even as the Cinderella hour struck, there was still a substantial section of the audience showing no sign of weakening.

"Have ye no homes to go to" - eventually it was time to go --- off we went tired but happy.

Did I say The Ramblers do things well? Great attention to detail, great organisation and planning, great implementation.



Past Presidents of the Club at the Gala Dinner included – L to R Anne Morrissey (2006-2008 & Current); Ron Baker (2005); Jim Forde (1992-1993); Sheila Kane (2001-2002); Gerry Maguire (1985-1986); Milo Kane (1989-1990); Dick Ryan (1972)

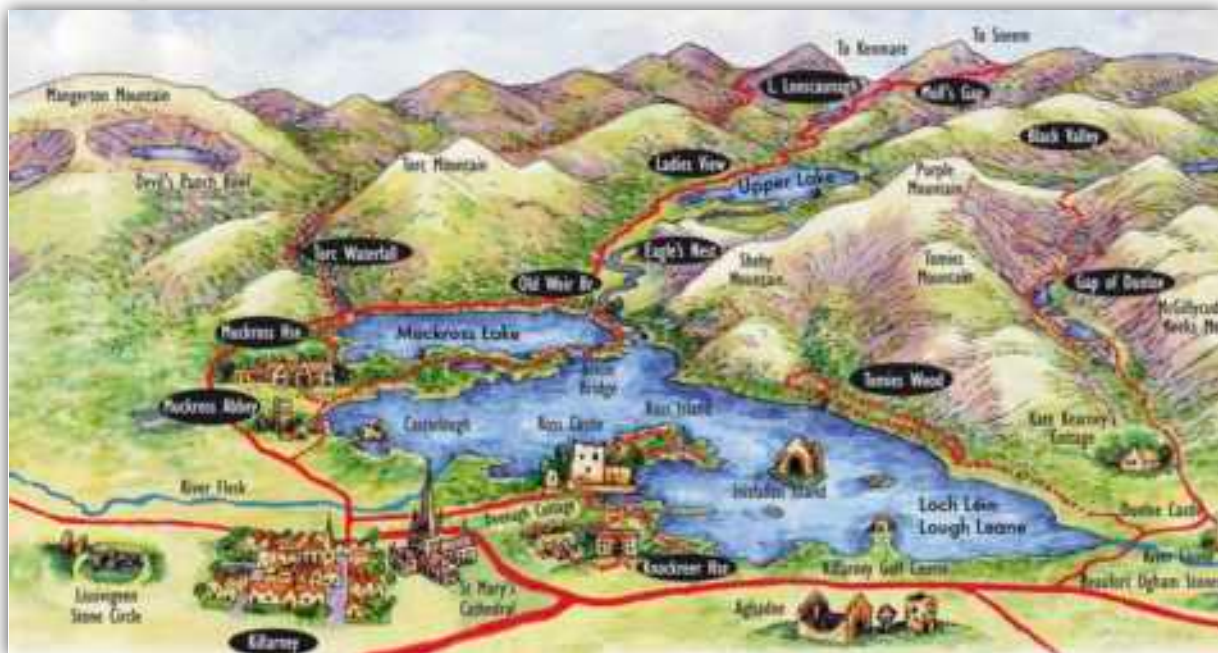
Huge thanks and congratulations to the 60th Anniversary Sub-Committee : Susan Cunliffe; Tim Kinsella; Anne Morrissey; Eileen Murphy; Helen Scully; Deirdre Stuart and Derek Tracy - your Midas touch turned the occasion to gold.

Dan Lynch





Getaway to the Great Southern Hotel Killarney April 14th – April 18th 2024



The 60th Anniversary Celebratory Getaway to the Great Southern Hotel in Killarney got underway with a detailed eight page brochure forwarded by email from the 60th Anniversary Committee a couple of days before the start of the trip. This full colour publication contained all the details needed about the hotel and its facilities (including leisure centre with gorgeous swimming pool



and stunning gardens); menus for the duration of the stay and of course the truly amazing hikes programme for all grades – the brochure also included a type of ‘map’ showing the various points of interest in Killarney and its surrounds – and the best part was that buses were provided to and from all of the hikes – what more could be asked for!



Most people decided to take the train from Dublin to Killarney as the Hotel is literally beside the train station. Tickets were booked on-line with Irish Rail which meant that most of the trains had a cohort of Ramblers full of chat and good humour in anticipation of a great few days ahead.

The hotel and its staff surpassed themselves – apart from a really competitive bed, breakfast and dinner rate, the Great Southern Hotel provided amazing rooms which many Ramblers enjoyed particularly after some of the more strenuous hikes; the staff were very obliging throughout our stay and the Ramblers thanked them in their usual generous manner.

Twenty well thought out hikes for the full range of grades were provided during the week by the Killarney Hiking Sub-Committee of Anne Morrissey (Chairperson); Eileen Murphy; Tim Kinsella, Fergus Roche and Mary O'Connor. In addition, Vera Kelly and Patricia McGuirk provided valuable local knowledge. Their collective efforts resulted in the Ramblers having a most enjoyable 4 days in Killarney. The weather was unseasonably good for the most part (though one Rambler described it as ‘Kerryesque’ – sun, rain, sleet blizzards, and some fierce gale-force winds on occasion!). Routes included Carrauntoohill; Torc Waterfall & Mountain; Devil’s Ladder; Mangerton; Devil’s Punchbowl; Old Kenmare Road; Cruach Mhor; Strickeen; Tomie’s Wood; East Reeks Circuit; Muckross Lake Circuit and Ross Castle.

The food in the hotel was top class and the gala dinner on the final night finished off the proceedings in really good cheer. The hotel provided the Ramblers Club with a dedicated dining room for dinner for the duration of our stay which contributed to the atmosphere of camaraderie and good humour.



Lots of positive reports emerged about the experiences on the hikes but, one of the most significant of these, congratulated the 52 Ramblers who summited Ireland's highest mountain Carrauntoohill which included the five octogenarian Ramblers who surpassed themselves with this wonderful feat of fitness!

a superb getaway worthy of our sixty-year-old club; the wonderful committee did a fantastic job and all of us had an unforgettable time

Apart from Carrauntoohill the range of hikes on offer was extraordinary and took much planning and foresight to provide an enjoyable experience for each and every grade – sincere thanks to the Killarney Hiking Sub-Committee for making this possible. Some comments about the hikes included *"the brave souls who went to Mangerton were almost blown off the mountain"*; *"lovely forest trails near Torc Waterfall to Torc Mountain – part of which was called Cardiac Steps (guess why!)"*; *"Torc Waterfall had plenty of water and looked accordingly dramatic"*; *"what variety in the*

Kingdom of Kerry – from boats to road walks, gardens, gullies and mountains" and many many more

But some sad news also – at one stage during a hike the sound of a helicopter was heard and sadly Susan Cunneiffe (IRC Secretary) had to be airlifted to hospital with an injured ankle – Susan expressed huge appreciation to all concerned including Kerry Mountain Rescue who responded with their usual high level of professionalism

All of Susan's Rambler colleagues passed on their best wishes to Susan for a full and timely recovery – the Irish Ramblers Club also sent a generous donation to Kerry Mountain Rescue.

The offering for the week included boat trips; hikes through forests; historical trips around Muckross House, Ross Castle and environs and much much more – Killarney has so much to offer and the Ramblers availed of practically all of it!

The farewell dinner on the last night was splendid; the Kerry Lamb tasted delicious (as one Rambler said, *"all the wind and rain obviously makes the meat tender and succulent"*); Louis O'Donoghue received the well-deserved Rambler of the Year award; spot prizes were distributed and entertainment in true Rambler style was provided.

Killarney was described as *"a superb getaway worthy of our sixty-year-old club; the wonderful committee did a fantastic job and all of us had an unforgettable time."*



Una Kinirons, first lady
President in 1976

Una Kinirons, is a very significant figure in the history of the Ramblers as she served as the First Lady President from 1976 to 1977, breaking barriers and paving the way for future leaders. Residing in Blackrock, County Dublin, she reflects on her past with a sense of nostalgia, particularly her involvement with The Ramblers, an experience that brought her great joy. Although her mobility has diminished over the years, the memories of traversing lush landscapes and bonding with fellow hiking enthusiasts remain vivid. We wish her well.



Charity Hikes Event & Fiesta September 19th 2024

2024 was a very special year in the history of the Irish Ramblers Club. Founded in 1964 and going from strength to strength over a sixty year period, it was felt appropriate that one of the 60th anniversary celebratory events should focus on giving to those less fortunate. Therefore, the Charity Hike Sub-Committee (Eileen Murphy, Fergus Roche, Anne Ryan, Anne Geoghegan, Kathleen Forde, Sheila Powell, Jerry MacDonough, Louis O'Donoghue and Dominic Gallagher) was set up to organise a Charity event with almost one hundred Ramblers participating on the hikes on September 19th 2024. Many others who didn't hike joined the celebration in the Brockagh Centre and looking at the



contributions to PAL (the chosen charity) it was estimated that the number who supported the event was close to 200. It was wonderful to see that the average contribution far exceeded the suggested amount of €30 which demonstrated a great expression of Rambler solidarity.

The sun shone (and continued to shine throughout the day) at the Brockagh Centre in Laragh as hikers congregated before the hikes to get a wonderful day's walking underway – all conducted in typical Rambler efficiency and good nature!



Comments on the charity hikes included *"thanks for a perfect hike on a wonderful day"*; *"wonderful and memorable 60th anniversary charity hike"*; *"that was a special one"*; *"great charity walk, good company and great weather"*; *"thanks to the Leader for such a marvellous walk today - panoramic views were amazing & fabulous weather"*.

The day culminated in a gathering in the Brockagh Centre for the post-hike Fiesta where a treasure-trove of stalls selling an array of food and craft goods was generously supported. This was followed by a gorgeous spread of great food which was accompanied by lots of social chit-chat and followed by an amazing musical extravaganza with



music from *Los Ramblers* which was enjoyed by hikers and non-hikers alike – Jack Morrissey in his inimitable fashion was a very worthy MC on the day.

The Fiesta Charity Hike Event was a great success and the Charity Hike Sub-Committee expressed huge appreciation to the Rambler Executive Committee for sponsoring the hire of the hall and the hot food provided on the day. All other food offerings and expenses were covered by the generous support of individual Rambler members – these included bakery goods and tasty salads and the inevitable administrative expenses.



Great tribute is paid to those who generously provided the craft and food items for sale on the day; to *Los Ramblers* for providing rousing Latin American music and to the Rambler guests who generously purchased the goods for sale and joined in the festivities in a very good natured and fun way – there were many unsung heroes behind the scenes and appreciation is expressed to all who had any part to play in the proceedings no matter how small – it all counts!



Los Ramblers - left to right: Liam Johnston; Enid Conaghan; Eadaoin O'Shea; John Sexton; Paul Caffrey; Jerry MacDonough; Anne Ryan; Pam Forde and Terry Leonard

It was a joyous occasion and testament to the spirit of community within the Irish Ramblers Club. The chosen charity PAL received in excess of €13,500 from donations and income from the craft and other stalls on the day. As PAL is part of Mission Cara, the Irish Overseas Aid Programme, the money raised was matched by an exchequer contribution which meant that the projects benefited by considerably more than the Ramblers €13.5K because of the IRC efforts – well done all!



The Seven Summit Challenges

As part of the Irish Ramblers Club's 60th anniversary celebrations, the club organised a personal challenge for members. Depending on their level of fitness and experience, the hikes aimed to bring participants outside their comfort zone and to give them experience of all the different types of mountain terrain that Ireland has to offer. From the more heathery hills in Wicklow, to the more stoney mountains of the Mourne, to some easy scrambling in Kerry and Mayo, and to hikes of 8 hours duration or more, it was hoped that everyone would feel a sense of achievement when they completed some, or indeed all the seven mountain challenges. In planning for the challenge, Seven different locations in Ireland were selected, which of course meant that there are a lot of other mountains, such as the Maam Turks, Mount Brandon, and the Twelve Bens, that could have been on the list, but for this challenge, were not included. While distances and cumulative elevations were provided in advance, this was indicative only, as the weather and the terrain determined the actual challenge of the walk.

Lugnaquilla March 16th 2024



Lugnaquilla is the highest mountain in Leinster at 925m and the highest mountain in Ireland outside of Kerry. There are many routes up to the mountain from the most popular route starting at Fentons pub in the Glen of Imaal to more challenging routes via the north or south prison gullies. The route chosen for this challenge was the Circuit of Kelly's Lough a total of 22km and 950m of climbing.

14th April 2024 Caurantoohill and 15th to 18th April



There were two opportunities to take on the challenge of Caurantoohill, the highest mountain in Ireland at 1039m on either the 14th April or on a suitable date between the 15th and 18th April when the club was in Kerry. As with any high mountain there are many approaches to the summit with the Coomloughra Horseshoe being one of the more challenging options as it involves the traverse of the Beenkeeragh Ridge. The group attempted the Coomloughra horseshoe on the 14th of April, but conditions were

not favourable so we did an out and back route to Caurantoohill via Cahir (14km, 1200m). On April 16th, two options to climb Carrauntoohill were offered. One group, led by Herbert Herzmann climbed Caurantoohill on April 16th, ascending Caurantoohill from the Hydro Carpark and descending via the zig zags, while another group led by Ger Cleary ascended via the Heavenly Gates and descended via the zig zags.



Mweelrea 4th May



Mweelrea is the highest mountain in Connaught at 814m. While the highest point is called Mweelrea, it is actually a massif with many other mountains close by, including Ben Bury and Ben Lugmore. With a short car split, we completed the Mweelrea circuit via the Ramp. There was some scrambling involved with some very rough ground towards the end, but as a classic route, and well worth doing the full circuit (17km 1300m)

Mount Leinster June 8th



The annual Blackstairs challenge organised by the Wayfarers Club takes place in May every year. This is a 33km mountain walk with almost 1700m of ascent, starting at Killanure and ending in Glynn, Co. Carlow. The IRC challenge was two thirds of this walk, (Blackrock Mt, Mt Leinster, Sculloge Gap, Blackstairs Mt) and involved a Car Split. (22km and 1200m climbing)





Donard July 6th 2024



Donard at 849m, is the highest mountain in Ulster. The route for the IRC 7 peak challenge started at Meelmore Lodge and went over Bearnagh, Slievenaglogh, Corragh, Commedagh, Donard, and return via the Brandy Pad and Hares Gap. There was an option to avoid Bearnagh and shorten the route, but on the day, everyone did the full walk. This is a well trodden route along the Mourne Wall, and we had a great walk with spectacular views. (20km, 1300m).



Errigal August 10th 2024



Errigal, at 751m is the highest peak in County Donegal. Errigal is also the most southern and the highest of the mountain chain called the "Seven Sisters" by locals. The other peaks of the Seven Sisters are Muckish, Crocknalaragagh, Aghla Beg, Ardloughnabrackbaddy, Aghla More, and Mackoght. Completing all 7 peaks is part of the Glover Highlander challenge walk which last took place in 2010 or so. For the IRC challenge, we completed 6 of the 7 sisters (we didn't climb Muckish) with a car split (18km, 1500m). Even leaving out Muckish, everyone was in agreement that this was the toughest hike of the challenge.



Galtymore September 7th 2024



Galtymore was the final challenge on the list of the IRC 7 summit challenge as it is one of two mountains in Ireland over 3000ft (918m) outside of Kerry. The route in the Galtees for this final challenge walk started at Kings Yard climbing to Galtymore and finishing near Cahir for a total of 28km and 1500m of climbing. This was the longest route on the challenge but the terrain was very good for the most part, so it was completed in just under 9 hours in reasonable weather.



By the end of the challenge, 36 members completed at least one of the challenge walks, with 7 members completing the full challenge, Nessa Friel, Gerry Daly, Kun McDonagh, Anne Morrissey, Rosemary Faulkner, Eunan Friel and Susan Kennedy, an amazing achievement. Well done to everyone.

Challenges completed	Number of members
7	7
6	0
5	5
4	2
3	1
2	3
1	20

139km walked
9500m climbed
57 hours 38 mins

Refurbishing & Upgrading the Remembrance Wood

When considering the IRC 60th anniversary projects, the Remembrance Wood (T 135 955) - a legacy from the 50th anniversary - seemed an obvious choice as an enduring symbol of the Club's spirit of friendship and its identification with mountains and nature conservation. After approval by the IRC Executive Committee and the 60th Anniversary Committee a budget was agreed.

The vision behind the original establishment of the Remembrance Wood in 2014 was very simple:-

To be a remembrance site for Ramblers who have died.

To "give a little back to the mountains we love" in recognition of the pleasure they provided over the years.



Great tribute is due to the initiators of the Remembrance Wood – Derek Tracy, Michael O'Neill, Nollaig O'Ceallaigh, John Sweetman and Mick Reidy, later joined by Milo Kane and Gerry Baxter. They were helped by many volunteers to undertake trojan work on the Wood from 2014 up to the present time – thank you!

Ron Baker, inspired by the Spanish "day of the dead" (when relatives celebrate the memory of their lost loved ones) initiated the first remembrance walk in the year 2000. It was adopted as an annual event at the 2010 AGM. When the Remembrance Wood project got underway in 2014, Ron was delighted to be asked to plant one of the first trees. See picture of Ron beside the tree he planted in 2014 from the 2023 Remembrance Sunday event - the tree has flourished since 2014 just like most of the trees in the Remembrance Wood.

60th Anniversary Refurbishment & Upgrade Work

Tim Kinsella & Helen Scully from the 60th Anniversary Committee, put a work programme in place and Tim agreed to manage the project. Permission was obtained from NPWS and the refurbishment started on August 29th 2023, when volunteers cleared ferns, debris and overgrowth - hard work but a fun day with



great progress made! Tim & Helen were joined on the day by Vincent O'Hagan, Kun Chen Donagh, Lucy Pei Joan Farren, John Burke and Dominic Gallagher. They did a huge job with a significant amount of overgrowth to clear and pathways to be cut to the central clearing – all done in a spirit of goodwill and camaraderie.



To prepare for Remembrance Sunday on October 8th 2023 work was also done on September 16th 2023 with much appreciated contributions from volunteers Ping Lui, Joan Farren, Dominic Gallagher, Deirdre Stuart Ide Ni Longaigh, Ruth Murphy, Kun Chen Donagh and Vincent O'Hagan.

Remembrance Day Sunday

October 8th 2023

This event was a great success and John Burke observed that "we had a wonderful Remembrance Sunday gathering today, in beautiful weather, at the Ramblers' Remembrance Wood that Michael O'Neill (RIP) helped so much to establish. We sat for about an hour, first in reading the list of the departed – 148 known names, 8 this year, including the most recent, our own Michael O'Neill. After the reading, there was a magical minute's silence in total





seclusion from the world among the nicely growing trees of the Wood. Even the birds fell silent. Then there was a session of music, stories, songs and recitation, led by Ron Baker whose own wife, Jessica Lennon (RIP) – sadly died also this year. Our Remembrance Day on Sunday October 8th 2023 was a poignant and uplifting occasion”.

Maintenance & Upgrading Work October 2023 to October 2024



Background work with NPWS resulted in permission for benches and the erection of a sign on the gate. On June 5th 2024 volunteers Tim Kinsella, Dominic Gallagher; Ide Ni Longaigh; Lucy Pei; Bob Nugent; Kun Chen Donagh and Helen Scully undertook the work – we now knew our jobs and just settled down to the task! This was followed by a further session on August 26th 2024 when volunteers Tim, Helen, Dominic Gallagher & Eileen Murphy carried out further work - benches were expertly assembled by master craftsman Tim; the central clearing was strimmed and the paths were trimmed.

Final preparations for the 2024 Remembrance Sunday took place on September 21st assisted again by Tim, Deirdre Stuart, Ide Ni Longaigh, Dominic Gallagher and Bob Nugent. As reported in the November 2024 Rambler, Remembrance Sunday on **October 13th** was a joyful event with all of the grades represented at various times throughout the day.



One could hear a pin drop as Ron Baker read out the names of the 165 deceased members of the Club (since 2000) after which there was a poignant minute's silence. Ron recited a poem crafted for the occasion, *"Times Gone By"*, before joining Declan Kinsella on guitar for an enjoyable musical interlude.

The 60th Anniversary work on the Remembrance Wood means that it is accessible on an on-going basis (no gate lock) for IRC members and their families to enjoy a moment of reflection, a picnic or just to appreciate the solitude of this beautiful space. Let us use it and appreciate it.

Finally, sincere thanks to Tim and his team of volunteers who together made this possible!

PHOTOS FROM REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY OCTOBER 13th 2024



Lock-downed Ramblers

An oxymoron is a contradiction in terms such as a lock-downed Rambler. While lockdown was hardship for nearly everyone, it was especially difficult for those of us who spend so much time just rambling in the great outdoors. Free spirits that we are, we all longed to escape the confines of the house to go wandering in the wilderness.

Some of us were lucky to live near a park within the set 2km. But since Dublin is the most densely populated part of the country, we kept bumping into neighbours and everyone else who was trying to keep their sanity and their social distance.

Our general sanity was under great pressure due to the prevalence of Cabin Fever. This includes the psychological symptoms one may experience when confined to the home for long periods. Symptoms may include restlessness, irritability and loneliness. I considered my mental health of more importance than literally obeying the dictates of the government in regard to totally staying in the house.

So, I did my own shopping and went outside as far as allowed, usually to a nearby park. But what a liberation when the 2km was upgraded to 5km. This was also helped by a certain app in the form of a circle over a map of Dublin. By putting your finger over your address in the middle of the circle, you could see how far the 5 km let you go. I suspect most of us were pleasantly surprised by how far we could go. But then the question was is it 5km as the crow flies or ... ? Also, does it mean one can drive 5 km and then start to walk? I suspect most people used a rather liberal interpretation.

This new distance allowed me cycle into a deserted city centre on a lovely sunny morning and enjoy "coffee at eleven and a walk in Stephen's Green." At the time I thought life does not get much better. But get better it did, as on my way home I actually met a fellow Rambler. We nearly danced for joy as we burst into conversation, keeping social distance of course. At last, a partial return to normal life or as the poet P. Kavanagh wrote "*wherever life pours ordinary plenty.*"

What was there to discuss? Were you in touch with X? and how is she/he? I was talking to Y who told me that Z had read a great book. Seen anything good on TV? Did you get Covid? Were you bad? When will the hikes resume? Will this pandemic ever end?

Emboldened by new found freedom, I longed to walk by the sea, a "little more" than 5 km. Conscience said it was too far but a more pressing voice insisted on the need to preserve mental health and avoid the dreaded cabin fever. By chance a friend appeared who also had to preserve her sanity, so travelling separately (in the spirit of the health directives) we ventured to the Bull Wall where (keeping social distance) we strolled on the beach and admired the extensive views over the city. Happy to report, both of us succeeded in preserving our sanity.

When talking to a friend in rural Mayo, and rabbiting on ecstatically about the newly allowed 5km, she told me "... *we do miles in Mayo*". Talking to other friends in rural Ireland, they were hardly aware of permitted distances, in kilometres or miles. Of course, people in rural Ireland had no problem keeping their social distance, while in Dublin we went around with metre sticks.

How did people stay occupied when confined to the house? Jig saw puzzles got very popular. Bingeing on TV. Doing keep fit while watching a zoom class. Noting how many Covid cases each week and comparing ourselves with countries doing badly. Eagerly watching the evening news in the hope of some liberation.

A new cottage industry sprang up making face masks. Members of the Irish Patchwork Society (IPS) used their artistic skills to design and sew hundreds of ornamental masks for various charities and residential homes. I was the lucky recipient of such masks from various friends.

An IPS project, which I participated in, was making fidget quilts for people with dementia in nursing homes. These people tend to fidget with anything within their reach, buttons, zips, cushions, their clothes, etc. So this quilt of a meter square fits on their lap and enables them to fidget with an assortment of items, tassels, key chains, buttons, zips, ribbons, whatever you have on hand. And I could recycle some of my fabric collection.

I often ponder on the "reasons" given by people venturing beyond their restricted limits. One driver stopped by a guard and asked as to the reason for his trip said he was going for petrol. And came the reply, What do you need petrol for?

When supposed to stay within the Co Dublin boundary, I went to Wicklow. When stopped before Blessington, I said I was going to visit the grave of a dear friend whose funeral I could not attend due to Covid. "*No problem*", he said and waived me on. I subsequently discovered that anyone going to a cemetery was given permission to do so. Of course, no problem about "social distance" when visiting the dead.

What lessons did we learn from the pandemic? Perhaps to appreciate the blessings that we often take for granted. Perhaps to realise how inter-connected the whole world has become. Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine. (We live in each others' shadow.) Perhaps to realise both the fragility and resilience of us and our fellow human beings.

I conclude with another oxymoron, this time from Alexander Pope. He ends his Essay on Man with:

**Created half to rise, and half to fall
Great lord of all things yet a prey to all
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd
Man is the glory, jest and riddle of the world.**

Kathleen Forde





The past Decade and the Future of the Ramblers.

How many more big birthdays will we celebrate?

Ten years have gone by since our club celebrated its 50th birthday in the splendid Lakeside Hotel in Killarney. What has the future in store for the Irish Ramblers Club now that we are celebrating sixty years of its existence?

The Mountain Panthers have taken up the fight against geriatric decline by doing G2 and G3+ type hikes

In spite of the fact that the members are ageing with the club and that fairly few young people join, I did not notice much of a slowdown of activities in the last decade. True, the numbers on the G1 hikes have shrunk a little, but the other grades still have a strong followership.

The G5 and G6 are accommodating the changing age profile of our members and so do the Mountain Panthers. The latter have taken up the fight against geriatric decline by doing G2 and G3+ type hikes at a slower pace and occasionally veering off the beaten track.

Holidays in and outside the country have been going on as usual. Louis O Donoghue and Jerry MacDonough keep taking crowds to Crete, the Dolomites and other places and will, hopefully, continue to do so for some time.

However, John Shackleton and Jim Forde who organised holidays in Austria, Slovenia and in the Dolomites giving years of fun to their followers have become less active.

I have brought groups to the Austrian Alps in the past ten years, but since 2019, I have kept them rather small so as to make things more manageable. Sooner rather than later I may keep my frequently broken promise that *"this is my last holiday"*.

Will the club attract enough new members to replace those of us who will move from the departure lounge to the eternal hiking grounds? Will there be enough leaders for all the grades? And while there are still enough enthusiasts to organise holidays in Ireland not so many may be prepared to bring a group of hikers to the Alps, the Sierras or the Andes.

The ageing profile in itself need not be a bad thing. When I joined the Ramblers in the late seventies of the last century, it was a club for persons in the prime of their lives. Now it has become primarily a club for seniors, bus pass holders for the most part, with the occasional youthful hiker in his or her fifties or early sixties thrown into the mix. As long as enough such

youthful persons are coming into the club, its survival will be secured.

The Irish Ramblers have done their bit to raise environmental awareness

Apart from providing a wonderful service to its members, the Irish Ramblers have done their bit to raise environmental awareness and made valuable contributions to the development of the national parks and to hill walking in Ireland. They have also built up a formidable knowledge of the Irish mountains that can be passed on to future generations. The survival of the club is important for those reasons alone.

As sixty is now the new fifty and seventy the new sixty, the collective energy of the Ramblers should be sufficient to make for an exciting club even if the higher hiking grades get less populated and the lower grades more crowded.

People of a more mature vintage tend to have good administrative skills and make excellent committee members (I am an exception as my impatient temperament makes me a hopeless person on committees). So, there will be no dearth of secretaries, editors, coordinators and organisers. And, as everybody who joins will want to roam the hills, there will be no shortage of hikers either.

The problem may be that only very few members will be prepared to lead. And if there is no leader there is no hike. To be honest, I have no idea how to solve that problem. The club has been making it compulsory to attend mountain skills courses and encouraging potential leaders to go on recces with experienced members. But the results have been disappointing.

Perhaps we worry too much. Not everything can be planned. Sometimes things regulate themselves.

Since I was born under the star sign of Virgo, I tend to plan my holidays well in advance and to the last detail. However, quite often things turned out completely differently and yet everything has gone well. If there are too few leaders and hikes have to be cancelled more often, so be it.

A few weeks without hikes of a certain grade may send little shock waves through the community and may well cause some to come forward and take up the challenge of leading.

I hope that there will be members in the future to take on the task of organising holidays abroad and not simply book a trip with an agency.

Although there is nothing wrong with using the likes of Explore or British Ramblers, nothing matches the excitement of organising your own event and the satisfaction you get from it when it works out.





And for the participants it is a great experience to share the fun with members of their club. There is no better way to get to know your fellow hikers than by going on a club holiday in Ireland or abroad. When I was young and more prone to risk taking than now, I brought Ramblers and Wayfarers on holidays to Ecuador, a country about which I knew nothing before I went there for the first time. It was a risk worth taking.

Every walk in the hills should contain elements of an adventure

It is not as difficult to organise a hiking trip abroad as some may think. True, good guide books are often available only in the language of the country, but Google Translate has improved considerably since the days when its translations were like those of a bad student. If you google up a National Park in the Alps, a village or an area and ask for hiking suggestions, hut to hut walks, route charts etc. you will find a lot of good information. Hotels can easily be found through websites such as Booking.com or Tripadvisor.

Hiking is more than just walking up and down a mountain. Ideally, every walk in the hills should contain elements of an adventure. Trying out rarely walked routes or finding new ones is always exciting. I get great pleasure from doing recces with like-minded friends and veering off well-trodden paths, finding out where this re-entry or that forest trail leads to, and if it offers an alternative to the same old ways.

One can still find surprises even in our familiar Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. When Covid hit us and we were confined to a radius of 5 or 10 km, Sheila Powell and I spent a lot of time exploring variations of established routes and finding new ones in the Dublin Mountains.

I remember a time when the Thursday hikes only gave the starting points. The routes were a surprise. Perhaps we should re-introduce such a grade whose leaders keep the routes a secret or make them up on the day. It could be called GS or GA, S standing for surprise, A for adventure.

So, let us hope that the Irish Ramblers Club will continue to play a leading role in the adventure of hill walking and mountaineering for many decades to come.

Herbert Herzmann



Louis O'Donoghue (3rd from right) with Ramblers at Selva, Val Gardena Dolomites, in September 2024.



Wonderful days immersed in nature with The Ramblers

Hi all, firstly I'd like to congratulate our club upon celebrating its 60th Anniversary! As a member of The Ramblers I am very proud to be a part of the celebrations.

My name is **Lucy Pei Hensey (Yuying Pei, 裴育英)**. I have been living in Ireland since 1998 and a member of the club since 2014. It seems like a very long time ago now, but also it feels just like yesterday.

In ancient Chinese philosophy, we believe that humans should strive to live in harmony with nature

The reason I joined the club was that I felt I needed to start doing hill walking in Ireland. As a qualified Feng Shui master in China, I regularly travelled back to China to attend conferences seminars and special training events, which sometimes included special walks in the beautiful natural landscapes there.

You might be wondering why this would be a part of my practice and training. In ancient Chinese philosophy, we believe that humans should strive to live in harmony with nature and seek balance in life alongside nature.

For both the practices of Feng Shui and Chinese medicine, we believe that the philosophy is based on I-Ching, the regulation of the universe. It's all about having balance, the ying and yang and the five elements (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water). The elements embody all the qualities we encounter in nature and, through understanding the elements, we may begin to better understand both nature and ourselves, and how we are all interconnected.

We believe these are not only the foundation of Feng Shui and of Chinese medicine, but also the foundation and spirit of all nature around us, allowing us to be in

harmony with nature.

To give you a glimpse into this philosophy, here are some examples of things in the world which are associated with each element.

Water Element



This relates to Winter. It is associated with the colour blue, and the direction, an important aspect of Feng Shui, is North. Related body organs are kidneys and bladder. Bones also relate to water. The sensory organ is ears.

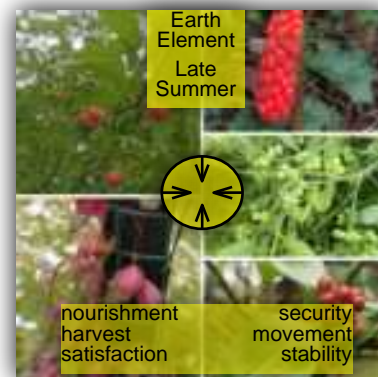
Fire Element



This relates to Summer, which might come as no surprise as it's a hotter time of year. The colour associated with this element is red and the related direction is South. It is linked with the heart, small intestine, blood vessels and the tongue.

Earth Element

This is associated with late Summer. The colour is yellow, while the direction is Centre. Organs related to the Earth element are the stomach and



spleen. Associated sensory organs are mouth, muscles and flesh.

Wood Element



The season of Spring - a time of birth and regeneration, is rooted in the wood element, and the colour green. The direction associated with the wood element is East. This element relates to many parts of the body, including the tendons, ligaments, the liver and gall bladder.

Metal Element

This element relates to Autumn, the colour white and the direction





West. It relates to the lungs and large intestine and sensory organs such as nose and skin.

I have found that when walking in the wild, I am free and away from the attachments of modern technological life which can separate us from nature.

This is an important basis of knowledge for Chinese medicine and acupuncture. When I am out walking in the hills, I can observe aspects of nature which are related to these elements and notice their changes and how they affect ourselves.

As a practitioner of Feng Shui and acupuncture, in order to excel in my profession, I need always to immerse myself in nature, to observe its changes from season to season in great detail and recognise how nature balances itself over time.

Over the years, I have found that hill-walking in Ireland has allowed me to improve as a Feng Shui practitioner, as I have been able to see the full beauty of nature's rhythms. This allows me to have a better sensitivity to the changes around me in nature. And by using my senses to identify colour, sound, odour, emotion, and energy affected by changes due to imbalance, I can set about helping to restore harmony and balance according to nature among all the elements within a person or locale.

I have found that when walking in the wild, I am free and away from the attachments of modern technological life which can separate us from nature. Hillwalking allows me to return and reconnect to nature in our most fundamental forms.

You may wonder how it is revealed to us that Spring relates to the wood element, since there are so many images, pictures and feelings associated with Spring.

But for all the variety of images, there are some that most of us will agree are the essential aspects of its nature.

Spring is a time of rebirth and regeneration and there is an energy and dynamic force that brings life and vigour to everything, surging out of the stillness of winter. Seeds thrust their way through the earth with astonishing strength. Plants unfold into growth. Country fields are full of young animals grazing.

Springtime is noisy and exuberant in contrast to the quiet of winter. In contrast, late Summer is associated with the Earth element when we begin to feel the transition from the warmth of summer to the chills of early autumn.

Flowers fade after a vibrant summertime but the colours and smells have served their purpose. The petals fall to give way to ripened fruit. All the warmth and energy of the summer has been captured by the flowers and leaves and now surrounds new seeds as store where they can find nourishment.

And so nourishment and harvest are two words which characterise

Ramblers' mental strength, and youthful attitude has surprised me because I have not encountered this anywhere else. It demonstrates Chinese philosophy in action.

the element of Earth. And the Earth like a mother provides us with all the nourishment we need to live throughout the year; nourishment for the mind, body and spirit.

Since I have started walking with the Ramblers Club, the members have inspired me greatly. In our philosophy, we believe that your mind allows you to do great things with your body. You can achieve things that you believe with your mind.

I had unexpectedly found this

philosophy in the real world by walking with the members of the Ramblers Club. The members are incredible in being so amazingly active and energetic into their older years.

Their mental strength, and youthful attitude has surprised me because I have not encountered this



anywhere else. It demonstrates Chinese philosophy in action. It has inspired me hugely and pushed me to go further, to believe in myself and to not give up. The members are the most exceptional people I have ever met, and incredibly kind. I am lucky to have been able to be a part of the club. It has furthered my own personal growth journey.

This 60th anniversary for the Club is a significant one, showing a successful long running club. But, also, in the Chinese zodiac cycle, 60 years marks the beginning of a new cycle, signifying renewal and rebirth. So I send my best wishes to the Ramblers club, for another 60 years of success and enjoyment. I hope that new members will be as inspired by the club and its members as I have been, and will immerse themselves in the spectacular natural sights of Ireland.

See you all on the hills very soon!

Lucy Pei Hensey
(Yuying Pei, 裴育英)



How to Stay Fit For Hillwalking

In an ideal world, hillwalkers would have the freedom to enjoy their favourite hobby every day and in perfect conditions. Sadly, most of us have to fit our walking around jobs, family and the fickle weather.

So how can we stay in trim when we're not on the hill? From specific exercises and stretches to general tactics for staying active, here are some tips for keeping fit for hill walking, in between the walking.

Keep Cardio Fit

Cardiovascular fitness, keeping heart, lungs and muscles strong, is very important for your enjoyment of hill walking. If you are in good cardiovascular shape you will find it easier to walk longer distances in the hills, carry heavy loads for longer, and cope with the demands of hiking up and down slopes.



Looking down over the Rest and be Thankful from Beinn an Lochain

You can maintain this type of fitness by doing exercise that makes you out of breath for at least 30 minutes per day.

Cardiovascular workouts might include running, cycling, swimming, aerobics or brisk walking.

Walk when you can

You might not always be able to walk in the mountains but you can still walk wherever possible to help maintain your cardio fitness.

Try to choose walking over the use of the car or public transport where possible. For example, you could get off the train one or two stops before your usual journey end and walk the rest of the way.

Alternatively, why not park your car a mile or two from the office and walk the rest of the commute? Walking the kids to school, or to the shops, or walking and talking with a friend instead of sitting in a café adds extra cardio value, too.

Leave the lift alone

Scottish mountain guide [Steve Fallon](#) is a big fan of taking the stairs rather than the lift. He says: "Climbing steps or stairs is very similar to walking up hills. So if you walk the stairs instead of taking a lift whenever you can you are keeping your legs and lungs fit for hill walking."

You could use steps as a way to exercise the leg muscles in preparation for days in the hills, too. Find a long set of steps indoors or outdoors and walk or run repeat sets. Make sure you keep your body upright, with hips forward and chest up as you walk fast or run up the steps. You can use your arms to drive you forwards, too.

Count your steps

If you lack the motivation to walk for fitness try keeping track of your steps with a step counting gadget, such as a Fitbit. Set a goal, perhaps 10,000 steps each day, and

see how your incentive to walk improves simply because you do not want to be beaten by a gadget!

Why not compete with family members or friends each day or over a week to see who walks the most steps?

A quick blast

Doing a little exercise but hard and fast is better than doing nothing at all. Walkers can benefit from a 20-minute brisk walk, especially if you include hills, or a short but challenging run a few times a week. The claim of high intensity interval training, known as HIIT, is that it's more effective than a longer period of normal or "comfort zone" cardio because the intensity is higher and you are able to increase both your aerobic and anaerobic endurance while burning higher levels of fat, but only for a short time. For a HIIT session, you should start with a warm up, such as a walk or easy jog, and then alternate moderate intensity with high intensity intervals. It's important to be in good health before you start this form of exercise but it can be a good way to stay in shape with limited spare time.

Stretch for flexibility



Yoga - great for the flexibility and core strength you need on a hill day. Photo: Rob Greenwood

Linda Canning, an osteopath and movement specialist, believes that walkers will greatly benefit from "keeping feet, ankles, hips and pelvis in good nick". She says: "All the joints that help us to walk need to be well aligned, mobile, strong and flexible. Improving balance and keeping your legs mobile and strong will make the hills easier. This will help to prevent early fatigue, too. To achieve a body with good balance and proprioception, there are easy exercises that should be performed every day."

Linda, of [Bearsden Osteopaths](#), suggests that walkers should do daily stretches of muscles including the calves, shins, hamstrings, pelvic muscles (gluteal and hip rotators) and lower back, as well as the "much neglected" hip flexor muscles (iliopsoas).



Quad stretch



Hamstring stretch



Linda says: "Doing these stretches after cardiovascular exercise, even just light walking, is usually more beneficial."

She also believes that activation and mobility exercises are important for walker. Linda says: "If you're a beginner, strength and mobility work should start with floor exercises to help activate the gluteal muscle. I also work with walkers on deep abdominal – or "core" – activation exercises, which help to support the trunk After that we would move to more functional upright exercises, such as lunges and squats."



Calf stretch . . .



. and with knee bend to stretch achilles

Exercises you can do at home

Strengthening leg and hip muscles will be of great benefit when walking in the hills. Stronger muscles help to avoid the pain of lactic acid build up and to avoid potential injury by straining muscles.



Calf raise

Calf raises to strengthen the calves

Stand with you feet hip width apart and rise up on to the balls of your feet. Slowly lower your heels to the floor. Repeat five times. You can make this harder by performing single leg raises.

Heel drop to prevent burning shins

Stand on the edge of a step or the curb and on the ball of your feet, and lower your heels. Try to maintain balance as you do so. Repeat five times. Again, you can make this harder by performing single heel drops.



Heel Drop

Toe raises to work feet and shins

Sit on a chair with your feet flat on the floor. Lift just your toes, then lift the rest of your foot, but keep your heels on the floor. Then slowly lower your foot and then your toes. Repeat 10 times.



Lunges for all-over leg muscle strength



Stand with feet hip width apart. Take a big step forward with the right foot, then slowly lower the left knee towards the floor. Make sure the right knee is at 90 degrees. Push into your right foot and stand back up, bringing your left foot forward at the same time. Do this eight to 10 times each side.

Squats for thighs and glutes

Stand with feet in a fairly wide stance; slightly wider than the hips. Position feet straight and forwards and then lower your butt down into a squat position, as if sitting down on a chair.



Keep the back straight and your chest up as you look forward.

Go as low as you comfortably can without lifting the heels off the ground. Then slowly come up to standing again. Repeat 10 times, aiming to go a bit

lower each time.

If you follow some of the above methods, the chances are you will enjoy your hill walking days a lot more when they do come around!

Attending regular yoga or Pilates classes is also highly recommended for walkers who want to stay fit and flexible for the hills.

This article has been reproduced with kind permission from author Fiona Russell, UKH - UKhillwalking.com. Fiona Russell – better known as Fiona Outdoors – is a widely published outdoors and adventure journalist. Based in the Scottish Highlands, she is an all-round outdoors enthusiast with favourite activities including trail running, mountain walking, gravel cycling, wild swimming, sea kayaking and back-country skiing

Aside from her own adventures, Fiona's biggest aim is to inspire others to spend more time outdoors and exploring, especially through her writing. Find out more at [Fiona Outdoors](http://fionaoutdoors.co.uk). (fionaoutdoors.co.uk)



Mountaineering Ireland: A valuable partner for the Irish Ramblers

One wild and windy day, as I struggled for breath on the steep and slippery climb up Toneleeg, I was asked: “What has Mountaineering Ireland ever done for us?”. As if my heart wasn’t beating fast enough already, I signalled using my frozen index finger, that I would answer as soon as I had sufficient breath.

“Well, apart from building the mountains in the first place...”, I quipped through the gale at the summit “... Mountaineering Ireland has made many, many valuable contributions to the lives of Ramblers, such as ...”. Sadly

government in 2013 reversing a decision to sell the harvesting rights to Coillte forests which could have changed Coillte’s open forest policy and affected access in most of Ireland’s uplands.

2. Following the Wicklow Way case (Wall v NPWS) MI sought changes to the Occupiers’ Liability Act, which was amended in July 2023, further reducing duty of care on landowners and incorporating the principle of voluntary assumption of risk in Irish law for the first time.

Area of Value	Description
National Representation	- Represents the interests of hillwalkers nationally and lobbies to government
Supporting and Developing clubs	- Provides advice and support to clubs and individual members
Access	- Maintain and improve access to places where we enjoy hillwalking
Training	- Educate and provide skills, safety training and advice; administer the qualifications and awards scheme
Protecting the mountain environment	- Be a voice for the protection of the mountain landscape
Mountain Log	- Quarterly magazine with news, features, training updates and more
Insurance	- Accident insurance for members, liability insurance for clubs and committee, landowner damage insurance
Discount scheme	- Up to 25% discount in more than 60 outlets and venues
Grants	- Funds available for activities of interest to hillwalkers; training grants
Misc Events	- Lynam award, Autumn gathering

my voice hoarsened and my rambling answer fell on deafened ears. Hence I feel compelled to re-answer the question here with a little more composure and structure.

Mountaineering Ireland (MI) has a dedicated permanent staff of 12, along with countless volunteers, working on a broad range of areas delivering a great deal of value to all hillwalkers and climbers, including us Ramblers and the many other walking clubs around the country. In the interest of brevity, I include an overview table, above, and some of the most noteworthy examples.

“Yes, but in reality, what does National Representation really mean?”, I hear you ask. As a national representative body, Mountaineering Ireland represents the interests of hillwalkers in a wide range of campaigns, submissions to Government on policy changes, addressing erosion on the mountains and supporting other national bodies, such as the Wicklow Uplands Council, and the National Parks & Wildlife Service in their work. Some specific examples are listed below:

1. MI was central to a campaign which resulted in the

3. During 2021-22 MI ensured the needs and concerns of hillwalkers were fed into consultation on the Masterplan for Glendalough and Wicklow Mountains National Park which was published December 2023.
4. In 2016 MI successfully lobbied for the Government to purchase lands at Glenasmole as part of Wicklow Mountains National Park. When Luggala Estate went on the market in 2019 MI lobbied Government to purchase the mountain lands of the estate as part of the National Park. Although the State’s bid was not successful, MI has established positive relations with the new owners at Luggala, an example of many stakeholder relationships that MI nurtures for the benefit of its members and the wider hillwalking community.
5. As an active member of Comhairle na Tuaithe since its establishment in 2004, MI has contributed to many projects, including a publication on access rights and responsibilities and the pilot Mountain Access Project. MI lobbied for a National Outdoor Recreation Strategy which was included in the current Programme for Government and



published in November 2023. MI was represented on the steering group that developed the Strategy and is now actively involved in the delivery of many actions within the strategy.

6. MI delivers an annual programme of environmental awareness days, including a day with Ramblers in 2014;
7. To help protect access, livestock and wildlife, MI has been to the fore in calling for responsible dog control including radio and television appearances to highlight the damage caused by uncontrolled dogs. MI has provided support to farmer Pat Dunne and his family following the assault by a dog walker in Glenmalur in March 2023.

MI has striven over the last 10 years to encourage the sustained involvement and participation of women in all aspects of mountaineering, including hillwalking, at all levels of experience.

"That's all very well", I hear you say, "but apart from a long list of national representation stuff - improving access, discounts, insurance, Mountain Log, and annual events, what else has MI ever done to benefit hillwalkers?"

1. MI hosts the *"Get Ireland Walking"* programme, now in its 10th year, with two staff members working on this national initiative to get more people active through walking.
2. For the past three years, MI has been running a Club Leadership Programme offering free training to clubs to develop new walk leaders and up-skill those already leading walks. The Ramblers availed of free training in the past.
3. MI has striven over the last 10 years to encourage the sustained involvement and participation of women in all aspects of mountaineering, including hillwalking, at all levels of experience. For this, Women With Altitude was set up to promote and facilitate women's participation by providing support with skills training and leadership, inspirational role models and opportunities to network.
4. The Happy Hiking programme provides advice and skills training to new and less experienced hikers.
5. While Mountaineering Ireland has made some important contributions to the Irish Ramblers, it hasn't been all one-way. The Ramblers were instrumental in establishing the Hillwalking Committee within MI through a motion tabled by Simon Stewart at the MI AGM in 2019. This committee has been chaired in the interim by Ramblers: Gráinne McLaughlin was the founding

chairperson, I am current chair, and Declan Murphy and Louise Nolan have been committee members. Other Ramblers who have served on the Board of MI include Frank Bradley, Milo Kane, Jerry O'Dwyer, and Helen Donoghue, who is a current member of the MI Access & Conservation Committee.

6. Many Ramblers have submitted interesting articles to the Mountain Log, circulated to over 16,000 each quarter. The Log welcomes trip reports, helpful articles and club profiles. Feel

free to submit your article to IML-Editor@mountaineering.ie

7. Ramblers have also submitted content for the award winning Irish Peaks book, based on the MountainViews (mountainviews.ie) list of Ireland's highest hundred mountains.



So, at the end of the day, we really need Mountaineering Ireland working on our behalf. A lot of what they do is behind the scenes but is highly important, especially over the long term. Through our strong partnership with MI, the Irish Ramblers have continued to influence and contribute to the development of our sport in Ireland. Contact me at brian.c.kennan@gmail.com if you are interested in becoming a member of the Hillwalking Committee of MI.

Brian Kennan



The Ramblers Home & Away

Travel perspectives for the future - Exploring some options

When people talk about the Ramblers Club, they comment on the range of hikes available every week; the extent of the choice; the level of detail provided in the Hiking Calendar and the wonderful monthly Rambler with its array of information. They then go on to talk about their delight and appreciation that there are 'away trips' organised, both home and abroad.

In recent years, there has been some speculation as to whether those wonderful Ramblers who currently organise trips including Jerry MacDonough, Herbert Herzmann, Louis O'Donoghue, Peter Buckley, Anne Ryan, Jim & Carol Doyle, Anne Morrissey and more recently Elaine Dardis will still be 'up for the challenge' of organising such trips going forward.



Ramblers who organised very exciting trips in the past like John Shackleton, Jim Forde and Fergus Roche appear for the most part to have put away their 'travel agency hats' and it is a huge tribute to their efforts that they organised as many trips as they did for as long as they did.

Everyone seems keenly aware that the level of organisation required for such trips is unlikely to continue indefinitely so what options do we have? We are, of course, absolutely delighted for the above selfless Ramblers to continue to organise their Rambler trips in the most cost-effective way we have come to appreciate but at some point we may need to explore other options so these folks can take a break!

So what options do we have? Can we call on some of our newer (*possibly younger?*) members to step into the breach and maybe start organising trips – in this respect huge tribute to Elaine Dardis who took up the mantle for the first time in 2024 by organising some trips in Spain's Sierra Nevada and some other 'newbies' who organised trips closer to home. Those with the interest and the time to consider getting involved in arranging trips for Ramblers are recommended to try and organise some 'home' trips before venturing further afield. But if we look at trips abroad, are there organisations which could help a novice organiser? Well the good news is yes there are and outlined below are a **sample** of these and the types of hiking trips which they offer.

OrbisWays primarily organises self-guided walking holidays; **Orgaya** offer guided hiking trips and **HF Holidays UK** a mixture of both plus HF also cater for rail adventures; special interest holidays and discovery tours to name but a few. **KE Adventure**, **Exodus Adventure Travels** and

Explore Worldwide have offerings further afield.



www.orbisways.com – **Orbis Ways** offers a huge range of **self-guided** walking holidays including Caminos and self-guided walking holidays in Italy; Germany; Switzerland; France; Slovenia; Croatia; Spain; Scotland; Portugal and many more.

The walking holidays they offer are from the starting point to destination with route maps, accommodation and luggage transfer all included in the price – travellers arrange their own flights and transport to the accommodation on the first and last day. They have very defined difficulty levels which are clearly stated for each holiday. Experience of them has shown that where distances on some days are outside comfort levels these can be changed and **OrbisWays** are amenable to tailoring the trip to suit the needs of the group (*within reason*). Accommodation is in good class 3 star hotels or pensionés and invariably clean and comfortable. Prices for 7 day self-guided trips which include route maps, itineraries, luggage transfer and accommodation including breakfast are very competitive.

Contact was made with **OrbisWays** regarding the possibility of organising a trip for up to 40 Ramblers and we were informed that this can be accommodated with the following discounts applying: Groups between 6-10 (7% discount); Groups between 11-20 (10% discount) and Groups +21 (15% discount). **OrbisWays** need the person organising the holiday to provide them with: Main contact person (the organiser); Potential number travelling; Room types and number: (Single, Twin or Double, triple); travel route - (here you can find all routes: <https://orbisways.com/en/>) and travel dates.

When this information is provided, a quotation will be formulated and sent to the organiser. You can 'phone Orbis in Ireland on 01 920 3732.



The next is a company in France: - **Orgaya Voyages à pied** <https://www.orgaya.com/> who organise holidays on somewhat the same basis as OrbisWays but in this case the walks are primarily **guided**. The hikes in the **Mercantour National Park** have been highly recommended and cost effective - and hikers usually fly to Nice Airport where pick-up is arranged to the hotel and a choice of two hikes per day with guides is offered in some cases.

Ascent levels and distances are stated and mini-buses to starting points and end points each day (additional cost – depends on which hike chosen each day). **Orgaya** offer a range of destinations but the author only has personal knowledge of Mercantour National Park. The minibuses cater for 24 or 32 seats; a choice of two daily walks (different levels of difficulty) with a maximum of 15 hikers on each and half board in the 3 star hotel/pensione. Well worth a look and perhaps contact them for a discussion <https://www.orgaya.com/contact/>

HF Walking Holidays UK <https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/> also offer a range of holidays for groups and again group discounts apply. **HF Holidays UK** offer a mixture of **guided & self-guided**



walks plus also cater for rail adventures; special interest holidays and discovery tours to name but a few.

Whilst the offering on their website includes flights, they would agree an amount to be deducted from overall price for those travelling from Ireland.

For UK holidays there is an option to take over one of their holiday 'houses' for the group from Ireland – all dependant on the holiday chosen. There is a charge for the 'group' to join HF Holidays as a group which amounts to c.£100. Discounts apply for group bookings.

Have a look at their website and if you are interested in pursuing a group booking then contact **Paige Robson** Travel Consultant - **Phone** +44 (0)208 732 1265 **Web** hfholidays.co.uk **HF Holidays Ltd**, Unit 1, 1st Floor, Imperial Place, Maxwell Road, Borehamwood, WD6 1JN

For the more adventurous among us, there are a number of well-established travel companies that members have travelled abroad with over the years. One such organisation is **KE Adventure**.

The club has gone on trips to South America, the Aiolis Islands and many other locations with KE Adventures. If there are enough Ramblers, it is possible to have a dedicated trip for members.



Alternatively, anyone can join an existing trip and travel with like-minded people. Details of their trips can be found at:

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

Other commercial travel companies that members have used for walking holidays by members include **Exodus Adventure Travels** at: <https://www.exodustravels.com/> and



Explore Worldwide at <https://www.exploreworldwide.eu/experiences/walking-and-trekking-tours>

As with KE Adventures, you can travel on your own,



in a small group or have a bespoke trip for the club if there are enough interested people.

In Conclusion

The above information is provided by way of an introduction to group or individual bookings with **HF, Mercantour, OrbisWays, KE Adventure, Exodus Adventure Travels and Explore Worldwide** – if you decide to pursue a trip with any of these entities, it is up to you as trip organiser to establish the *exact conditions and inclusions* for the trip you are planning – the above is being provided just to give Ramblers an idea of what is available.

This article sets out a range of options which Ramblers may not be aware of – it still requires a Rambler or Ramblers to step up to organise the trip; decide which flights will get Ramblers to the destination in time for the pick-up (if appropriate) but the advantage is that the hikes are arranged – in some cases guides are provided and in others route maps are included for self-guided tried and tested routes. There are many similar providers – those referred to in this article are simply the ones with which the author is familiar.

If you decide you would like to fly to a specific destination and organise accommodation and hikes for yourself or a group, accommodation can be arranged with www.booking.com or other on-line accommodation providers.

For your hikes there are wonderful books called **Sunflower Walking Guides** and a range of these are available on Amazon – most of them give in-depth information on a large range of walks including distance and ascent. Just put **Sunflower Walking Guides** into the search box of Amazon UK and you will be brought to a range of guides including walks in Gran Canaria; Majorca; Madeira; Lanzarote; Pyrenees; Sorrento, Amalfi ... and many others.

So over to you – the WORLD of hiking awaits!





Nutrition On The Hills

*What to eat or not to eat
that is the question!*

This article deals with the importance of nutrition and hydration planning for hillwalking.

Fuelling for the hills

The meals and water consumed days prior to, and the morning of, a hike supplies the body with the fuel reserves required for an exertion. Food planning should be taken as seriously as health, safety and route planning. A nutrition plan should reflect the grade and length of the walk. For this article, let's presume the walk is a high endurance activity in excess of 4 hours. To fuel adequately for days on the hills consider the following three factors:

1. Hydration: Aim to drink at least 2-3 litres of water a day leading up to the hike. Hydration is especially important in the period 1 to 2 hours before starting a hill walk. For adequate hydration drink 500ml of water with a pinch of salt on the morning of the hike to allow time for excretions of excess ingested water.

2. Carbohydrates and fats are the bodies preferred sources of energy and fuel. Try to consume 8-10g of complex carbohydrates per kg of bodyweight for each day in the period 2-3 days prior to the hill walk. Increasing complex carbohydrates will improve glycogen levels which will aid endurance. Complex carbohydrates are foods like whole wheat pasta, brown rice and jacket potato (provided the skin is consumed) along with lean protein and vegetables of choice. Dietary fat is needed to provide important fatty acids and fat soluble vitamins for essential functions related to exercise, including controlling inflammation, maintaining a healthy immune system and bone health. Dietary fat are foods like avocado, fatty fish, nuts, seeds, butter and olive oil.

3. Breakfast: Breakfast should be finished not later than 1 – 1.5 hours before the beginning of the walk to allow digestion. Keep fibre to a minimum to avoid unplanned toilet breaks. Breakfast should include 1g of carbohydrates per kg of bodyweight and 20–25g of protein. Foods such as oats, rye, multi grain or wholemeal bread, avocado, eggs (poached, boiled or scrambled), natural Greek yoghurt, granola, berries and bananas are great breakfast options. They are also good sources of carbohydrates, fats and protein. With the exception of bananas, the above foods are low GI (Glycemic Index) which provide a sustained release of energy.

Eating large amounts of food before a hike is not recommended. A full Irish Breakfast, for example would be hard to digest forcing the body to work harder than necessary.

Hiking involves a mixture of high intensity and low intensity exertion as the terrain changes and also requires a mixture of foods to help balance sugar levels and, in particular, to avoid sugar spikes and crashes.

Fuelling on the hills

The intensity of the exercise will dictate what fuel (carbohydrates and/or fats) the body burns. Carbohydrates are the main fuel source for the body during high intensity exercise.

Hiking involves a mixture of high intensity and low intensity exertion as the terrain changes and also requires a mixture of foods to help balance sugar levels and, in particular, to avoid sugar spikes and crashes. When choosing foods to take walking, aim for a good weight to energy ratio. Foods that are high in carbohydrates and have a low GI have a good weight to energy ratio.

- a. Whole food bars – high in protein, carbohydrates and fats for a hit of long lasting energy. Check nutritional information on energy bars as some contain excessively high amounts of sugar. Nakd bars, 9 Bar, Bounce Ball and Homemade Flapjacks are better choices.
- b. Trail mix – A mixture of nuts, seeds, dark chocolate and dried fruit are ideal. Avoid dried fruit like mango or pineapple which contain high amounts of sugar.
- c. Sandwiches – are a good choice and a source of carbohydrates. Avoid white bread. Fillings such as cheese, butter, eggs, cold meats, tuna, nut butters, and pickle are good sources of protein and fats.
- d. Olives – Are a good source of mono-saturated fats.
- e. Sugary snacks and processed foods – such as sweets, jellies, chocolate and biscuits are high GI foods that will achieve a quick release of energy for a very short period of time. A common mistake in nutrition planning is consuming too much sugar and processed foods which causes energy spikes and crashes. Packing a sugary snack of choice, however, is recommended as part of emergency rations. **RULE OF THUMB TO HELP BALANCE SUGAR LEVELS** – Eat a savoury food with a sweet food (e.g., sliced apple with peanut butter/nut butter, grapes and cheese, peanut butter and jam sandwich, banana and wholemeal bread, oatcakes with cheese or hummus).
- f. Water – is essential in nutrition planning. Avoid fizzy drinks. Drink 250ml per hour on the hills and add in an electrolyte for longer and hotter days.



- g. Tea or Coffee – A flask of warm tea or coffee is a good choice in small amounts. Be mindful as both are diuretics.
- h. Soup – is also easy to digest and is a slow release food.

N.B. – Always have enough food and water in case of emergency delays such as accidents, injuries and getting lost.

Refuelling after the hills

There are 5 main goals particularly after intense exercise:

1. Rehydrate – Drink 2 litres of water in the 2 hour period after completion of the hike. (the water content in alcohol is somewhere between 40% and 60% and unfortunately is not suitable for hydration!). Sipping fluids will maximise fluid retention. On hot days add an electrolyte or a pinch of salt to avoid cramping.
2. Replace Glycogen Stores – Eat 1g of carbohydrates per kg of bodyweight within 30 minutes of completion of the hike to maximise recovery and replace glycogen stores.
3. Rebuild Muscle – Eat within the first 2 hours of completion of the hike. Try to consume 20 – 25g (female) 25g – 30g (male) of protein to help replace and rebuild muscle. Eggs, fish, meat, , broccoli and dark green leafy vegetables, (Kale, Collard Greens, Spinach, cooked Cabbage, Watercress, Romaine Lettuce, Swiss Chard Rocket Salad, Peas,) etc. are all good sources of protein. Magnesium is key for muscle protein syntheses and should be provided in the overall diet. Whole wheat, spinach, quinoa, almonds, cashew and avocado are all great sources.
4. Reduce inflammation – Anti-inflammatory foods such as Omega 3's (fish oils), cherries, pineapples, green veg, turmeric, garlic and cinnamon may help reduce inflammation.

5. Sleep – A minimum of 8 – 9 hours' sleep is recommended to aid recovery and guarantee pleasant dreams of "the hills are alive with the sound of music"!

Food for fuel and food for fun

Nutrition is completely individual. One plan does not suit all. What works for one may not work for another. Tips to create strategies for fun fuel adventures and a healthy balanced diet are:

1. Consume a plant centric diet with or without meat and fish with plenty of variety with whole grains, unprocessed foods and 2 – 3 litres of water a day.
2. If a big day of hill walking is planned eat slightly more in the 2 – 3 days leading up to the event.
3. Start the day by:
 - a. eating a mixture of carbohydrates, fats and protein;
 - b. drinking water and staying hydrated; and
 - c. keeping fibre to a minimum.
4. If enjoying easy non strenuous days out, a small snack will be sufficient.
5. Refuel when your walk has finished with real food snacks to help control hunger.

Finally, and most importantly eat the good foods you like and enjoy!

Eavan Fitzsimons

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Nourish Me
NUTRITION AND HEALTH COACH





What it means to be a member of a voluntary organisation

"MEN WANTED - for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return doubtful, honor and recognition in case of success".

No, this is not an ad seeking new members for The Irish Ramblers Club. It is, of course, the ad allegedly placed in The London Times by Ernest Shackleton in his efforts to recruit volunteers to join with him in exploring Antarctica. There is some controversy about whether this ad was ever actually placed but, for the purpose of this article, let's assume that it really did appear. It is further alleged that Ernest Shackleton received about 5,000 responses. Is this about extreme volunteerism? Well, if so, does it matter? Are there degrees of volunteerism? Yes. What about organisations like The St. Vincent de Paul Society, Alone and many other voluntary organisations whose title and public image would give the impression that everybody involved does what they do for free. We know, however, that such organisations may have some employed staff who work for pay. But it would be fair to say that they are primarily populated by people, the vast majority of whom work with no expectancy of a financial return.

Commercial organisations prioritise profit, with employees working for pay. My accounting lecturer emphasised that gross profit must be positive advising against jobs that don't meet this criterion even if benefits like lunch vouchers are offered. Many companies have volunteer-run "Sports and Social Clubs," which can enhance the company's image and employee morale, along with the traditional office Christmas party.

Considering the hybrid model, I've sung in an amateur choir accompanied by a professional orchestra. When discussing the performance's appeal, an orchestra member mentioned, "Oh, I just play for pay," which made me realize that making music might be more enjoyable when unpaid.

The Irish Ramblers Club exemplifies a purely voluntary organisation. With around seven hundred members, no one is paid, and some are inactive while others serve on committees, with some acting as hybrids by contributing occasionally.

I remember a time in The Ramblers when there was much talk about "The seventeen percent" - where someone speculated that those who made things happen amounted to seventeen percent of the membership. The rest either enjoyed the fruits of that dedication or did little. A certain approach to analysis could reveal that, wanting to enjoy the activities of The Club, we all realise that unless we make it happen, there will be nothing to enjoy.

When a hike category coordinator retires without a successor, The Rambler notifies members that hikes in that category will pause until a new coordinator is found. This is reasonable. Thankfully, such gaps are often brief, as our love for hiking inspires members to volunteer for the coordinator role.

Reflecting on Ernest Shackleton's promise of honor and recognition, it's evident that The Irish Ramblers Club rewards the effort we invest in it (forgive the cliché!). At the end of each walking day, leaders receive gratitude. Coordinators are often reminded that their contributions are vital for the Club's ongoing activities. Those who organize weekends and Club holidays are admired for their dedication, hard work, and planning abilities. Car minders are appreciated for ensuring security and peace of mind while hikers explore the hills. And certainly, those on The Executive Committee are regarded as the finest of the group.

There are many ways to get involved in the Irish Ramblers Club voluntary set-up – all it takes is making an initial contact with those currently involved and asking how you could be of help!

So, what about the seventeen percent? Is that figure valid today? You might like to do some research and figure out what percentage of the Club's vast membership is active in voluntarily keeping things ticking over. Maybe it could be the subject of a quiz on the evening of the Club's Grand Finalé Dinner? Or maybe it could provide food for thought for any members of the Club who have been reluctant to get involved in a meaningful way to date.

All it takes is first of all a commitment to do some small thing for the Club – for example, a hiker could ask leaders on hikes if they could accompany them the next time they are going on a recce; or they could volunteer to do car security; or volunteer to join the Executive Committee to get to know the ropes and then take up a more challenging role at a later date; or they could ask themselves if they could organise a trip away – firstly in Ireland – to test the waters and obtain help from others experienced in this area by partnering them in their current endeavours.

There are many ways to get involved in the Irish Ramblers Club voluntary set-up – all it takes is making an initial contact with those currently involved and asking how you could be of help. No offer of help is ever turned down. Make 2025 the year when you will do something concrete for your Club, no matter how small. Every effort by every single volunteer adds up.

Volunteerism is alive and well in Ireland and certainly in the sixty year old Irish Ramblers Club. Be ambitious to be among the 17% percent or maybe in 2025 strive to be part of an enlarged 20% effort – it's in YOUR hands.

Dan Lynch



Visiting summits on a list, eh?

Why would I want to do this?

We all enjoy a good group hill walk. It's what the club is about: a way to be with nature and to exercise on a well-chosen route, in the company of friends. The leader brings the group on a prepared walk. Routes are generally well defined, familiar and lead to a pleasant occasion.

It's a structure that works. However, the model tends to limit navigation and research mostly to the leader. If you like the particular experience of visiting a place for the first time, of exploring on your own, then you'll need a different mindset to help you get there. Books, articles, maps can inspire. Many also like summiteering (aka bagging) as it gives a reason and structure for going to new places. If you visit all of the summits on a list, that gives some additional satisfaction, but the main benefit is the journey rather than the destination.

The Local 100 is an obvious one for Ramblers to consider

Some of the lists of summits are life-long challenges. Completion doesn't sit well as an ambition for many Ramblers who only got actively involved from later in life, but there are shorter lists where you can enjoy the benefits and you can use longer lists as suggestions. The Local 100 is an obvious one for Ramblers to consider. It includes all the summits based on where you live, which for most Ramblers is going to be somewhere in Dublin. If you walk with the club much, you'll have visited places near Glendalough or Djouce or the Great Sugar Loaf.

But there will be many you haven't tried including the less well-known mountains like Saggart overlooking west Dublin, or Down's Hill near Greystones (not a great view on the top, but great pub grub at the end). If in North Dublin, have you visited places like Hill of Slane or Mount Oriel?

Another popular list to try is the County Highpoints: the highest land in each of the 32 traditional counties of Ireland. Because some counties share highest points there's only 27 of them. They are a huge mix of the highest to relatively small summits such as Mullaghmeen situated in a beech forest in county Westmeath.

If you like the particular experience of visiting a place for the first time of exploring on your own, then you'll need a different mindset to help you get there.

Summiteering Ramblers

Some Ramblers have been at list visiting for years. For example Anne Morrissey, our president, has completed both the Arderins (the premier list for Ireland with 408 mountains) and the Munros, the Scottish list. (Former member Mel O'Hara also completed both these lists). Robert Garrett has completed the Munros. In 2023 Margaret O'Sullivan completed the Vandeleur-Lynam list (275 summits of 600m). Personally I did the VLs in 2014 and the Arderins in 2022. No doubt there are other members who have completed lists – do tell.

Suggestions for leaders.

Summiteering is a great way to find new places to bring groups. Inspired by visiting my "Local 100" previously, I lead a walk last year, including Ballycumber near Tinahely. There's more like it in South Wicklow/North Wexford such as Annagh Hill, Croghan Kinsella and Moneyteige.

Wild exploring.

If you are relatively new to hillwalking and up for it you might like to explore some wilder areas from the Cahas to North Antrim to Central Dingle. Some of the best days I have had were in the Bluestacks – wild, almost unused, with memorable challenges on untracked land. You might also consider Irish Peaks, a book published by Mountaineering Ireland which has gorgeous pictures, lots of detail etc. It is based on Mountain Views "Highest Hundred" list.

MountainViews.ie and summiteering.

For many years, I have operated MountainViews.ie, a website about the mountains, hills and islands of Ireland with shared information and tracks. We include a series of lists and also a means by which you can log which places you have visited.

So, for example, you could log how many of the Local 100 you have done as a result of club walking and see what remains.

You'll need to create an account to do this, however it is quick and free. Thousands of people use the website to log their visits and the number increases annually.



Simon Stewart

Photo Gallery - Ramblers at large





