



NEWSLETTER

NEXT WALK

Sunday 23 April
Derryclare, Connemara

Leaders: **Conor Warner, 087 9800075**
Andrew Killeen, 087 8030979

Contact a leader by Friday night!

Meeting: 7:45am, Roslevan

MONTH AHEAD

Wednesday 26 April

Rock climbing for returning climbers

28 April–01 May

Achill Weekend Away

Sunday 07 May

Club walk - *Brandon, Kerry*

Sunday 14 May

Club walk - *Glencoaghan, Connemara*

Trip Report - St Patrick's Weekend

16-19 March



Another great weekend in Strandhill for the Clare Outdoor Club - our second visit - last being Paddy's weekend 2013. Although a little bit more precipitation was had, spirits were high.

The trip north started on Thursday (though for some who dream of cold beers and nice sunsets it started on Monday) as a handful of us made our way to Marble Arch Caves in Fermanagh. Little did we know that this gem of a place existed, nestled in the National Nature Reserve in the shadows of Cuilcagh Mountain. Good move from the COC to plan a visit there while we were based so close. It is one of three UNESCO Geoparks in Ireland, the other two being the Burren, Co Clare and The Copper Coast, Waterford. We took a tour of the caves that lasted about 45mins which is well worth a look if anyone is nearby. In fact, the whole park is so vast that a weekend in Enniskillen could easily be a good base to explore the park.

After our close encounters with Calcium Carbonate, we headed across the road and started our trek up Cuilcagh Mountain (665m). Life is easy on Cuilcagh, no gaiters needed here due to a 4k road that leads to the 3km newly opened boardwalk that leads you to the top, nearly! It was put in place to protect the blanket bog and make trekking to the top a nice family day out. Just what we needed get ourselves warmed up for the weekend. Weather wise, little did we know at the time, it was also the brightest day of the weekend with just a few showers on the way back to the cars.

On to Sligo that evening and by 6pm we were booked into Strandhill Hostel and Surf School, washed and sitting in the kind of open fire you can only dream of in the Stand Bar. This became our home away from home and great place over the weekend to watch Ballea do their best and Ireland once again do battle with the old enemy. And of course a few drinks and a bit of banter.

Friday morning was bleak, no sun to be seen and clouds sitting atop of Benbulbin. But at least we could see Benbulbin! The group split in two over breakfast and a number of members decided on staying local. They decided on taking the new path from the village up the side of Knocknarea (357m) to visit Queen Maeve's Grave. An impressive 10 metre high Cairn lies atop this hill that is believed to hide a Neolithic passage tomb, the resting place of the legendary Queen Maeve of Connacht. On descending the far side and visiting the legendary Glen, a 4km road walk took the walkers back to Strandhill and an afternoon of leisure around the seaside resort.



Twelve intrepid walkers decided on going for Benbulbin, in the hope that the day would be a little bit dryer than the next day. And so it turned out to be. Parking at Gortarowery Forest Park, the path was followed all the way to the Northwest side of Benbulbin, admiring the impressive rock formations that could have belonged in a Netflix fantasy series. The aim was to take a route up the gully, following the river. It was only 200m of steep climbing but all in all a very easy and fast way up. From there the visibility was low with some strong gusts of wind so a bee-line for the trig point at 526m was made. A very fast photo op at the top and we all turned on our heels to get out of the elements and get back to the top of the gully where we sat for lunch. Once off the gully, the rain started to be a bit more persistent and kept us company all the way to the cars, but we did make the top and we felt that we may have chosen the right day to conquer it.



We finished our St Patrick's Day Friday with a group dinner at The Venue bar and restaurant, which turned out to be a stunning meal and lovely way to have the full group in one place at the same time as that is no mean feat on a weekend away with over twenty people. Though very little green was to be seen!!

Weather wise, Saturday was bleaker again, no sign of Benbulbin in the distance but those who did not walk it on Friday headed for it in the hope that the day would improve and they could summit. Alas the weather was so bad that not a recess, spur or cliff could be seen from the car park. This visibility, the rain and some good local advice from a stranger forced the leaders to call a halt to the attempt and return to base. So each and every sole found a way to pass their day with seaweed baths, trips to Sligo town and walks to Coney Island. Queen Maeve's grave route was visited by those who had Benbulbin ticked off the list and being back at the hostel at 1pm, left plenty of time to prep for Saturday rugby. With perfect seats and perfect pints the day was set to relax and watch more history unfold, with COC members floating in and out all evening, eating, drinking and being merry, sure isn't that what a walking weekend is all about!

Huge thanks to Sean and Tommy for planning a great trip!

Walk Report - Knocknagussy, Connemara

Saturday 25 March



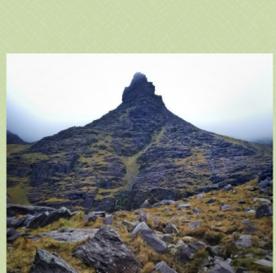
On the beautiful morning of 25th of March, 19 Club Members set off on the 'Moderate Plus' Knocknagussy route in Connemara. The route was in an anti-clockwise direction, to the north, starting and finishing at Keane's Pub, Maam Bridge.

The initial ascent, steep at times, took us up to Cnoc an Mhama. The temperate easterly breeze meant staying cool, rather than trying to stay warm, was the order of the day! During our leisurely lunch, we enjoyed brilliant Views of Mam Ean and the Failmore Horseshoe to the south. Our last climb of the day was up to Knocknagussy at 480m. From here, we started our decent to the road for Keane's, with more fantastic views of the Corrib as it reaches in towards Maam. Although 'Moderate' in Height, Knocknagussy proved top of the class in terms of scenery and enjoyment! Thanks to Aedamer and Sean for leading.

MJ Tansey

Walk Report - Carrauntoohil, Kerry

Sunday 02 April



Weather forecast was promising as we departed for Kerry before 8am. Ann Howard "played a blinder" with getting people away promptly - next stop Killarney, and then on to Cronins Yard to start our assault of Carrauntoohil.

The sun was shining as we got our 28 C.O.C members together in the crowded surrounds at Cronins. 4 people announced that they were planning a "sneak-off" to do Howling Ridge. Ann and I wished them well as we assembled our group.

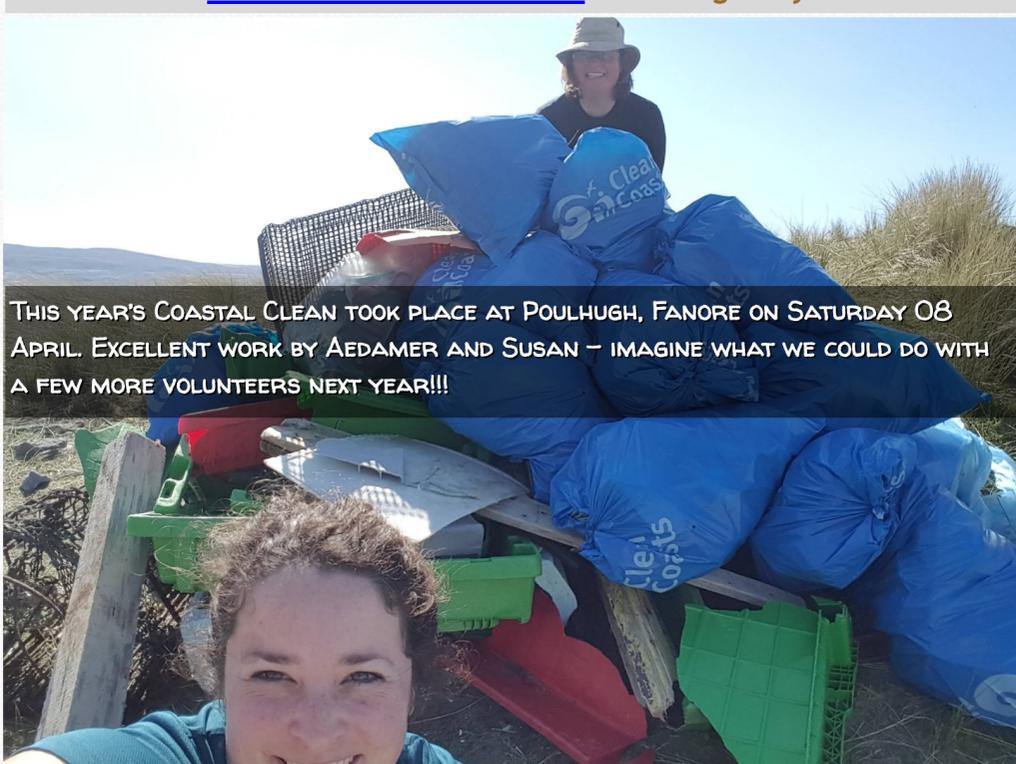
A leisurely stroll into the Hags Glen ensued after crossing the bridges over the Gaddagh river. The sun was still shining when we passed under the Hags Tooth and on up to the lake under the Eagles Nest where we stopped for lunch - one member announced that its one of the most beautiful place shes ever seen.

Rested, fed and watered we were ready for O'Sheas Gully, leading onwards and upwards in sunshine to the junction of Beenkeeragh and Carrauntoohil. As we approached the summit the fog descended and some people still firmly believe that the sun does not shine there !We lingered for a while, took photos of each other and then a famous person was spotted - more photos were taken with him !

The descent to the Hags Glen via the Heavenly Gates was uneventful - the fog "burned off" and the sun shone again as the 2 lakes and the splendour of the East Reeks were revealed. Walking out the Glen we reflected on a superb day on the mountains. Thanks to you all for your input.

Breda Duggan.

To see more photos from the walks, check out the www.clareoutdoorclub.net website gallery.



THIS YEAR'S COASTAL CLEAN TOOK PLACE AT POULHUGH, FANORE ON SATURDAY 08 APRIL. EXCELLENT WORK BY AEDAMER AND SUSAN - IMAGINE WHAT WE COULD DO WITH A FEW MORE VOLUNTEERS NEXT YEAR!!!



Experience an evening of extraordinary short films from the world's most prestigious mountain film festival at the Town Hall Theatre, Galway on Wednesday 10 May or at glór, Ennis on Saturday 13 May. Here is what it says on the website:

"Follow the expeditions of some of today's most incredible adventurers, see amazing footage of adrenaline packed action sports and be inspired by thought-provoking pieces shot from the far flung corners of the globe."



THIS MONTH LOOK OUT FOR:

wheatears

This is the month when the Wheatear, a summer visitor from Africa, arrives back into the country. It is a small mainly ground-dwelling bird that hops or runs about. If you're out walking and you see a bird with a white flash of feathers as it flies away low to the ground it's likely to be a Wheatear. Its most distinctive i.d. feature is its white rump and upturned black 'T' shape on its tail seen when in flight. Also look out for the dark zero-like eye mask. The Irish name, Clochrán, translates roughly as 'stone bird'. This may have come from its call that sounds like a 'chack', or two stones banging together or it's habit of nesting in and perching on stoney places like walls.

