

Connemara trip May 2018

‘B’ Group

Leader : Andrew McKibbin

Followers : Mark McGinley, Bert Rima , Marie Hoeritzauer , Joe Wilson , Noel Rice , Pam Quiery , Dermot MacDermott , Domnall McComish and Ellen Greaney.

The ‘B’ Group enjoyed 3 stunning walks over the May bank holiday weekend in Connemara, gallantly led by Andrew McKibbin over forest track, bare crag and tussocky grass with a little bog thrown in, in South Mayo and North west Galway. We basked in glorious sunshine on all days and consequently the vistas were tremendous . To enjoy 1 such day in Connemara is a treat but we were really blessed to have 3 in succession.

On Saturday morning we eyed that day’s target , Mweelrea , from the hotel terrace ,at 8.30 its peak was masked by a thin veil of cloud but otherwise there was scarcely another cloud in the sky. Having driven around the north side of Killary, we parked at the newly renovated Delphi Adventure resort. We set off up the forest track, shortly after leaving the trees behind we took to the open hill onto the flank of Mweelrea, the terrain was grassy by times and boggy at others , as we climbed the view over the fiord below opened up to our left and over the broad glaciated valley to our right. After a steep ascent we gained the Southeast spur-Derreennawhinshin, then down to the saddle, there we lunched surrounded by flying insects which we figured were mayfly on their brief flight, could they really have made it up here out of the depths of Lough Lugaloughan 100metres below? Next it was more climbing to the summit of Mweelrea at 814m. From there we viewed the curve of Glasillaun beach on the rugged coastline on the south side of Killary with the Twelve Bens further on and beneath us, Silver Strand on its northern side. Then down again to the saddle at 645m, a brief respite then up again onto the arête to Ben Bury as we climbed we looked down into a steep drop to boggy lowlands, ahead of us was Doo Lough with green hills of Sheefry behind. As we walked towards Ben Lugmore we had a terrific view down onto the corrie track coming in from Doo Lough as it wriggled its way up an impossibly steep route up onto the arête. From here we could see our way back to Delphi laid out below us. Heading downwards southeast along a spur from Ben Lugmore East Top, we negotiated some difficult terrain, the worst of which was the aforementioned tussocky grass with its hidden holes and pools of water. Some of us went in deep and some lost sections of poles but we laboured on to the next obstacle- a stream to be crossed on a treacherous iron bridge but once that was cleared, the track homewards was just on the other side and we were happy to have our 1st peak bagged.

Stats: 14 Km ; 1250 m ascent ; 7.5 hours .

Next morning, Sunday, almost the same crew, minus Noel but plus Domnall , set out with Andrew to walk in the Bens, motoring in along the Inagh Valley, to our right we had the Bens ranged up beyond Lough Inagh while the Maumturks were to our left. We parked at Derryclare Nature Reserve, then followed the forest track to access the lower slopes of Derryclare. The ascent took us up gently at first, then more acutely over ice scraped bare rock slabs on a spur to the summit of Derryclare at 673m.looking northwards our next objective, Ben Corr was etched against a blue sky , it seemed just a little drop down to the saddle and a little climb up would have us there in a jiffy, but first some sustenance, while we munched on ham & cheese or should that be cheese & ham we took in the view below, of the broad Inagh Valley with the Maumturks stretching SE acing as its full stop, far out to the west lay the Aran Islands and to their south the suggestion of the Clare coast. Moving on down, we negotiated a lot of bare rocky slabs then up to reach the pinnacle of 711m . With Ben Corr at our back we set our face towards home , the route was obvious, a bare rocky spur stretching east down to the forested valley floor west of Lough Inagh, having stepped our way carefully

down we then dropped off the spur into a river valley with rough grazing, soon to be the summer quarters of a herd of bovines, which we met being escorted up by 2 young men cheerfully carrying materials to fence off the valley's mouth. We crossed the stream, then took the forest track back to where we left the cars earlier.

Stats: 11Km ; 880m ascent ; 6 hours

Monday's walk in the Sheefry Hills had long been one I myself wanted to attempt. Basically this is a ridge stretching east west, rising to 760m which is laced by corries on all sides each corrie drained by a many branching stream. The same core group toggled out but today, Joe & Donal absented themselves on other important business. Driving north we parked on a lay-by off the R335, north of Doo Lough. From there we walked up a gentle spur above Lough Alisheen, soon the grassy slope became steeper and the view more open as we neared the tabletop summit of Barrclashcame North Top, here we took a breather to appreciate the view of Mweelrea looming to the west with a black surfaced Doo Lough in between, while to the north beyond the coastal lowlands, lay Clew Bay with its many islands. Next came a demanding, steep stepped rise to Barrclashcame, a broad flattish top. Here we broke for lunch and again we were surrounded by insects, large olive green with darkish spots, they were to be seen later all along the sharp ridge as we walked towards Tieveummera. We continued on this ridge, on our left the corrie walls fell away steeply to where the peat hags took over, they in turn gave way to forested lowlands and beyond lay the coastal plains with islanded Clew Bay further north, ahead of us to the north east the chapel on Croagh Patrick glinted white in the sun. How did we get so lucky to enjoy such great walking with splendid views for the 3rd consecutive day? Following the ridge a little further, we then descended the steep grassy northern slope projecting onto the undulating peatlands, from above, examining our way west, we anticipated some yielding, wet boggy ground, but in fact it proved to be dry and firm as we made our way back, crossing a couple of deeply etched streams to descend again by the spur above Lough Alisheen to reach the cars on the R335. Some fancied a quick explore in Louisburg, others just wanted a shower, a rest and a drink back at the hotel. Another satisfying day!

Stats : 14Km ; 930m ascent ; 5.75 hours.

Ellen Greaney