



Cr: Gerard Mangan

THE FREEDOM OF THE KERRY MOUNTAINS

By B. Colvert

Who was it who said that 'it is a good thing that the car was not invented before the wheel'? It is a certainty that walking was not invented before our forefathers came down from the trees and we lost the use of our prehensile tails. Whoopee! At last Section Ireland is on to a winner. Looking into 2008 and beyond our members will be fitter, leaner, richer, comelier and live longer because of our new walking clubs; another good reason to join the International Police Association.

Walking is one of the hobbies being promoted by the IPA in Ireland for some years past. *Mar a deirtear bíonn gach tosnú lag*, but with the dedication of early pioneers success is assured and we now enter a new phase where the initial investment is beginning to pay dividends. To this end the National Executive decided to publish a calendar for 2008 which features recreational walking as well as being a medium to bring the many other benefits of IPA membership to attention.

Opportunities for walking begin at your front door, then, as your fitness and enjoyment develop you can introduce variety by walking in the woods, up the mountains, by the seashore; there is really no limit, you may eventually take on *Camino de Santiago*. Walking can be enjoyed alone, with your dog, with a friend or in organised groups. Age is not a deterrent, even poor health can be accommodated provided you pace yourself properly.

On a basic level a simple walk may begin by a short stretching exercise followed by an easy pace, building up to a vigorous stride with swinging arms, deep breathing and a happy expression on your face. Twenty minutes of intensity followed by a diminished effort does your physique the world of good and you have notched up your daily, minimum exercise. Some persons fancy music, others friendly conversation, many prefer solitude. Exercise for one hour a day and you will live at least twenty years beyond your Biblical span; your body mass will reach perfection and not only that but your quality of life will be enhanced. How much does it cost? I'm glad you asked that and I ask you in return to compare to compare 'free of charge' with the cost of any other hobby.

Dedicated walkers are like food gourmets ever seeking fresh delights and extended challenges. Organised walking holidays, walking festivals and themed walks present new opportunities. Many charitable organisations, that need funds to provide succour and mercy, organise spectacular sponsored walks where you may find yourself in congenial company on top of Kilimanjaro or Machu Pichu. The Four Day walking festival in Castlebar, Co Mayo has been a success each year since 1967; additionally several IPA Regions arrange a walking festival and these are on the increase; some include foreign visiting members of IPA. Another theme which enjoys association with religious occasions or rituals such as Croagh Patrick or Santiago de Compostela encourage people to enjoy social encounters as well as offering deep spiritual solace.

Serious walkers know by experience that careful preparation enhances the experience. Strong light boots with a firm platform and good ankle support are a wise investment. Thick socks with

no internal seams are best, some persons wear two pairs, a light inner pair and an outer thick one. Clothing to suit the season and the weather should be chosen, for warmth, several light layers help trap body heat. If you perspire your clothing should release the warm vapour but also protect you from showers until you reach a shelter. A woolly hat keeps the cranium and ears comfortable and in some circumstances your jacket should have a hood that can be tightened with a lanyard. In snow landscapes Polaroid sunglasses are essential. There are many proprietary types of walking staffs, I believe a serious walker ever has an eye for a free gift, they scan the fences everywhere for an ideal personal stick and fashion it carefully for use until nature's bounty provides a better one.

On more adventurous hikes pre-planning is vital. Purchase a good map and familiarise yourself with the co-ordinates. Relate the circumstances and terrain to basic requirements and consider bringing a compass, a cell phone, some plastic bags, safety matches, drinks or water purifier, multi purpose knife, string or cord, field glasses, flares and food. Plot the course, allocate responsibilities if your are with a party; advise a reliable person about your route and estimated time of arrival; make sure that your lodge or base is available at journey's end. Know where



Croagh Patrick

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rescue services operate and always be prepared for emergencies such as animal attack, injury or unforeseen weather conditions. To many people these precautions may seem extreme and possibly a deterrent to engaging in such walks, however when you have acquired the necessary skills you welcome a challenge and having accomplished your mission you scan the horizon for something more daunting.

The IPA calendar for 2008 will act as a daily reminder to take your daily walk; I hope it will encourage you to join an IPA walking club and if there is not one in your area contact Assistant Secretary General, Gerard Mangan at gerardmangan@eircom.net

Alternatively you can make an enquiry with Hobbies Secretary, Noel Geary at gearyn@iol.ie and as every member knows there is always a welcome by the staff at IPA House. Tel. 01 8302 907 or ipairish@indigo.ie

Get into <http://www.ipaireland.com> to discover all about IPA clubs and other benefits which are available, many of them free of charge.

Finally I offer a challenge to our readers who are gifted with imagination and a writing ability; please send me an e mail describing a walking adventure you have had or indeed imagined. Keep the feature short, about 250 words, and if possible include a photograph. This competition is open to members, spouses and children and should reach me before the 1st of February 2008. I offer a prize of €50-00. Send your entry to BRENDON K COLVERT, BEECHLAWNS, PETITSWOOD, MULLINGAR, CO. WESTMEATH if you have not got access to e mail, otherwise to colvertb@eircom.net

Exihleration

Where eagles dare

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