



NEWSLETTER

Clare Outdoor Club is 25 years old!

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IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- Summer Party on **26th June**. €30 pp to Eoin or John.
- Windsurfing lesson on **12th June**. Contact Damien asap.

Clare Outdoor Club is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year! Formed in 1985 by a small group of outdoor enthusiasts, it has grown over the years and now has over 100 members drawn from Clare and surrounding counties, and indeed from further afield.

We've been a multi-activity club right from the start. Walking and rockclimbing shared the early members' attention with caving and a variety of watersports. Whilst interest in other outdoor pursuits has waxed and waned over the years, the mountains and crags have been constant features on the club Calendar. It's good to note in our 25th year however that the wheel has come full circle and alternate weekends (and some weekdays!) are filled by anything from sea-kayaking to windsurfing, moonwalks, cycling, batwalks, archaeology walks, film- and slideshows and more leisurely rambles in our own back yard - The Burren and east Clare.

The social calendar is equally full! Weekends away to Donegal, Cork, Wicklow and Down are supplemented by trips to the mountains in places like Wales, Scotland, England, France, Spain and even as far afield as Poland. The highlight of the social calendar each year is the Summer Party. We used to feel confident

enough to schedule it as the Summer Barbeque but the past three years have forced an unwelcome re-think! We're keeping it local this year, heading to Doolin on 26th June, and in honour of the special anniversary we're hoping to renew acquaintances there with as many past members as possible.

Many club members continue to be active in their sports outside the formal club structure and we've had our share of representation in some of the most challenging environments worldwide. Over the past 25 years, club members have left footprints all over the Alps, Pyrenees and Dolomites, and have ventured as far afield as the Altai Mountains, Mt. Elbrus, Mt. Kenya Kilimanjaro, Island Peak, Everest Base Camp, Ama Dablam, Aconcagua, Mt. Fuji and Denali! We've also had members cycling, running, swimming, paddling and sailing all over the world.

Like everybody else in this age of instant communications, we've had to change with the times. Mobile phones are almost *de rigueur*, and a web presence is expected, but we've recently re-launched the online Forum and have started using internal subscription mailing lists to target information more effectively for sub-groups within the club. We've recently resurrected the club Newsletter, and as well as distributing it monthly to each member we make it available to

Latest photos

More new photos on the website -

- surfing,
- kayaking
- Mweelrea
- Donegal

download from the website, www.clareoutdoorclub.net . We also make use of an external photo-sharing website to archive members' photographs.

We've been delighted in recent years to welcome new members from overseas who have found themselves working and living in Clare and surrounding counties, both temporarily and long-term. Many bring lots of outdoors experience with them; others are simply glad of the opportunity to get out and explore the country while they're here; all are equally welcome.

None of this would have been possible of course without considerable investment by individual members in training in the skills that are essential for good

leadership and safety on the mountains, roads and waterways. Whilst the club is keen to encourage and happy to subsidise to the extent possible any training that will be transferable and of potential benefit to other club members, the ability to sustain the club will always depend on the personal enthusiasm of the members who commit to acquiring those skills, and we're grateful to past and present members who have made that commitment over the years. Our safety record is first class – long may that continue.

We've had a great first 25 years and we're looking forward to welcoming new members into the great outdoors over the next 25!

The Hen Harrier (Croman na gCearc)

The Hen Harrier is a medium sized bird of prey that's quite rare and found in our upland areas during the Spring and Summer months. It is estimated that there are between 132 and 153 pairs breeding in Ireland, mostly in the West and South-west. They are a very distinctive bird and not easily mistaken. The female is the larger of the pair with a brown colour and dark streaks on a bright buff underside. The male is even more distinctive with a grey body, white belly and black wing tips. They can be found hunting low over our uplands holding their wings in a shallow "V" searching for small birds such as Meadow Pipits and Skylarks and small mammals such as mice and shrews.

During the months of March and April the birds (usually the male) engage in spectacular aerial courtship display flights called 'sky dancing'. This involves repeated steep climbs and stoops at

great speed over suitable nesting habitat such as young forestry and bog.

In May and June the eggs are laid with an interval of two days between each egg. The female incubates the eggs for about a month, during which time the male brings her prey items. The transfer of food items is done in an amazing way. As the male approaches the nest he calls to the female, she rises off the nest and as she reaches him flips upside down and catches the prey from his talons.

The chicks fledge in late July and gradually begin to fly and start to hunt on their own. In August the harriers leave the hills and head to the less exposed lowlands for the winter.



Male Hen Harrier

Weekend away in Donegal

Once again, Donegal bucked the weather trend to ensure a third cracking June weekend away in a row for the club. We drove to Maghery in bright sunshine and so it continued until just after we had changed at the base of Errigal on Monday afternoon.

With more bicycles than cars parked at and in the holiday cottages, some of us wondered if we were in the right place. However, the COC Cycling Squadron very graciously agreed to humour us by wedging a short walk into their cycle on Saturday! The destination was the Poisoned Glen and the cyclists took off early to RV at the start point at Dunlewy. Unfortunately, due either to a small navigation error or a burning desire to have tea with Daniel O'Donnell's Mammy in Kincaslough, they got delayed en route and Dave Timlin was left contemplating his toes for an hour at Dunlewy. Following persistent prompting, the Training Officer will be revising the Navigation course to prevent a recurrence of this basic error; apparently "left, right, left" works every time. Incidentally, the Training Officer will be the first to sign up for the revised course, having made the same error as the cyclists!

Confusion was followed by a pleasant walk up the glen to a steep gully at the southern end where we topped out for a mini-lunch. Cian McGuinness applied a very heavy layer of sunblock to his left leg before we set off westwards towards Slieve Snacht (678 m). The route took us through part of Glenveagh National Park; we spotted a deer close by on the skyline at one point but the only evidence of eagles was a single feather picked up en route. The tops of Errigal and Muckish were beginning to disappear in cloud, so the race was on to get to Slieve Snacht before it too disappeared. We lost! A steep northwest descent was followed by a 3 km. walk across dry(ish) bog to the start point (6.5 hrs), whereupon the cyclists left instructions to get the salads washed and the casserole simmering and got on with the main business of the day, returning by the direct route to Maghery. A delicious lamb casserole (thanks, Christine!) and chocolate cake (thanks again, Christine!!) left us in no state to walk to the only pub in Maghery (150 m. by the direct route!) and as the cyclists were tired a lift was out of the question.

On Sunday, we figured incompatibility was no

shame, so while the Squadron buzzed off to drink coffee and eat ice cream by the sea (0 m!), the true blues headed for Slieve League (595 m). Joined at Bunglas by Michael Murphy, fresh (NOT!) from the Rory Gallagher Festival in Ballyshannon, this select group took the cliff walk to the top taking in the usual short sharp scramble about a third of the way up, and the exaggerated drama of "One Man's Pass" near the summit. The weather being so good we decided to complete the horseshoe, returning by Lergadachtan Mountain (5.5 hrs).

Meanwhile, draining every coffee machine in North West Donegal as they went, the cyclists did the Cloughaneely circuit via Dunlewy, Creeslough, Dunfanaghy (for retail therapy) and Gortahork. Odometers reading 99.3 km on return to Maghery (9 hrs), they just didn't have the legs to complete the ton!

Thanks to Jim McHale we had an excellent recommendation for dinner in Dunglow. Unfortunately we got our timing badly wrong, missing the highlight of the weekend trad festival there - the bonamh race on Main St. We dined well but the day's exertions were just a bit too much for Mike McGrath who was only saved from falling into his dessert by the quick reactions of his neighbours at the table. An emergency transfusion was administered back in Maghery where he made a full recovery, but a desultory effort by some local musicians couldn't persuade us to stay for more than a couple of drinks.

The Met. Office was forecasting a break in the weather on Sunday afternoon, so after making sure that the houses were left sufficiently "nice" to meet the owner's exacting standards, we opted for a quick assault on Errigal (751 m). A steady plod on the scree-covered "tourist route" took us to the top in just over an hour. After a quick lunch and a review of Saturday's route, almost all of which we could see from Errigal, we raced the approaching weather front back to the cars and won with minutes to spare!

Thanks to Mary and Colette who organised the accommodation, Christine, Fiona and Agnes who kept everybody well fed, and the Fates who looked after the weather, it was another successful weekend away for the club.



Topping out on

Errigal

Don't forget!

Next Sunday is the big one - Glencoaghan Horseshoe. Bring plenty to drink. Forecast looks ok so far, but be prepared!

Special greetings
to all past
members of
Clare Outdoor
Club on the
occasion of our
Silver Jubilee.

Thanks for
keeping it going
and here's to the
next 25!

CLARE OUTDOOR CLUB

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www.clareoutdoorclub.net/phpbb2/index.php

A Frosty Encounter with a Beatle (by Shane O'Grady)

Another modest whitewashed cottage perched anonymously at a harbour in Clew Bay. Little would one suspect as to what is purring away inside; a fridge 40 years old is surely an antique, but the story goes that it's still working away, keeping the back rashers and bainne úr chilled - unlike its former owner, a certain John Lennon, one time Beatle and Clew bay resident. Imagine the early 1970's, and a time when himself and his confidants whiled away months, perhaps even a year on a converted bus. Surely not luxury, but a colourful existence nonetheless in this idyll far away from the normal life of a pop icon.

There are many islands just like this one which is the resting place for Mr. Lennon's fridge. Some say there is 1 island for every day of the year, and during our 2 days of paddling, we meandered east and west, between, and sometimes over a good few of them.

Our guide and local, Ali Donald set the course on a fine sunny afternoon on the North side of Clew bay. Over the next 24 hrs, our flotilla of 11 kayaks, fully loaded with tents, pots, pans, Frisbees, and enough food to feed a small army negotiated our way through the maze of islets on our way towards Westport quay.

Overnight we made camp at a deserted village on Derinish Island, set at the westerly extent just before the bay spills out into the infinite Atlantic. The wet weather deteriorated as the first embers were lit, but any discomfort was kept outdoors by the warmth of the Teepee. The Teepee itself is a true revelation and would surely make for consideration by anyone tiring of the discomforts of conventional camping.

Ravenous appetites were quelled by the piping hot fare served up by our host. The time on the island continued to be dominated by the gourmet offerings,

and after a four course meal, and a fry-up on Sunday morning, we took leave of our island home, heavier and less buoyant than we had ever been before. 11 lone kayakers in multicoloured craft under the shadow of a towering Croagh Patrick.

Stopping for lunch at a beach, and having downed some freshly salvaged oyster, we boarded our craft for our final journey. A curious mix of sunshine, a favourable tide and a billowing westerly sent us home with little need to paddle. Back into Westport, not a converted bus in sight. Only multicoloured kayaks. Roll up for the next mystery tour. That forty year old fridge is surely worth a return visit.

Clare Outdoor club were guests of Ali Donald (Saoirse na Mara (<http://www.irelandwestseakayaking.com>))

Photos from the trip on the website.



Stranded on Derinish