

Dublin Mountains Partnership **- Guided Walk on 10th November 2018 -**

Twenty-one bodies set out on a guided walk, led by Volunteer Rangers Sam, Jesús and Paul, from Tibbradden Wood on a wet Saturday morning for a walk to Glencree. The walkers had been advised the previous day that the weather would probably be fair for the walk; however, the weather forecast, while not quite wrong, was incorrect in terms of when the fair weather might set in. Fortunately, all had been advised to bring warm and wet weather gear and gaiters, if available.

The walk took us into Cruagh Wood and up the board walk to Cruagh Mountain, but not before we came across some of the runners and officials who were supporting the excellent work of the Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Service in the “Run the Line” event.

After we reached Cruagh Mountain, the group turned south-east and onto Glendoo Mountain. The wisdom of wearing gaiters and good boots were obvious as we took on the very wet underfoot conditions from hereon in. Having reached the spot height of 590m, the mist on Kippure began to creep out from behind the clouds and it wasn't too long before the sun made a welcome appearance as well. We continued on what might well have been an ancient road or track following the saddle between Glendoo and Knocknagun Mountains. At “kettle point” we turned in a south-westerly direction down Bog Mountain where evidence of the cut bog and bog road, probably dating from the 1939-1945 “Emergency” period, are still to be observed. Shortly, an extensive track of the Military Road came into view along with the wooded area which screens from view of the old army barracks in Glencree. Time for a chat about the originals of the Military Road - it was commenced in 1800 in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion to put down those rebels who had fled to the protection of the Wicklow Mountains. The area was surveyed and the roads were built by Capt Taylor (whose father had built the military roads of Scotland previously to keep the Gaelic Scots under control). The Dublin/Wicklow Military Road was one of the first modern rural roads to be built in Ireland. Four army barracks were built along the road, and another in the Glen of Imaal, to house the British troops who would guard the area.

After descending from the high ground and crossing the Askabawn River, which was high from the previous day's rain, we made our way onto the Military Road and continued into the German War Cemetery in Glencree. The cemetery is the burial place for 134 German soldiers, sailors, airmen and civilian casualties who lost their lives in or near Ireland during World Wars 1 and 2. Some of the bodies were washed up on our shores. Following a short talk about the cemetery, one of the walkers, Eamonn Sinnott, related the story of how his grandfather, who lived in the family home on the beach in Kilmuckridge Beach in Co Wexford found the body of a German airman on the beach in 1940 and took it to the local undertaker who, after a service in the local Church of Ireland church, had it buried in a section of the local graveyard called the “Sailors Hole”, where washed-up seamen were buried. The name of the German airman was Franz Gunther and, following the laying out of the Cemetery in Glencree, he, along with the other remains, was reinterred here when the cemetery was laid out in 1961. Eamonn's grandmother, who had never seen the grave in Glencree, had asked Eamonn to lay flowers on the grave anytime he visited it.

As the following day, 11th November, was the centenary of the Armistice of the First World War, a minute's reflections was observed by all and this was followed by the laying of a floral wreath with tricolour ribbons by a Ranger and one of the walkers. The card read, as Gaelic and in English “*In memory of all those who died, military and civilian, in World Wars 1*

and 2. From the Dublin Mountains Partnership. The German Embassy had been advised of our intentions and was very appreciative of it.

On our way to the Armoury Café in the old army barracks, now The Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, we passed the house which Capt Taylor had constructed for himself when he was building the Military Road. In latter years, it was used by An Óige as a Youth Hostel but, sadly, that is no longer the case and the building is used as a private residence now. The Glencree Centre is now one of two of the five army barracks still in occupation – Aughavannagh is a B&B facility; two have, more or less, disappeared; the other is a ruin.

After departing the Armoury Café, we headed back along the Military Road in the direction of Dublin and enjoyed the marvellous views from the road both to the east and the west until we reached the Capt Noel Lemass Monument on the Featherbed Mountain. Time for another history lesson: Capt Lemass, a brother of Seán Lemass (former Taoiseach), had been involved in the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and the Civil War on the anti-Treaty side. He had escaped from prison during the Civil War and fled to England. When the Civil War ended, he returned to his job in Dublin Corporation but was kidnapped in broad daylight outside MacNeils Hardware shop, at the corner of Exchequer and Drury Street. His body was subsequently found on the featherbeds.

Shortly after the Monument, we turned off the road and headed towards White Sands Mountains on lands which have recently come into the ownership of the Wicklow National Park. Another stop for a short talk on the local bullaun stone and on the mound which is the boundary between counties Dublin and Wicklow. A Ranger mused that the mound was put there to protect Dublin folk from wild Wicklow men; however, a female walker from Wicklow had an opposing version. Onwards towards Cruagh Wood and back to Tibbradden Wood after a very successful walk with the Dublin Mountains Partnership.