

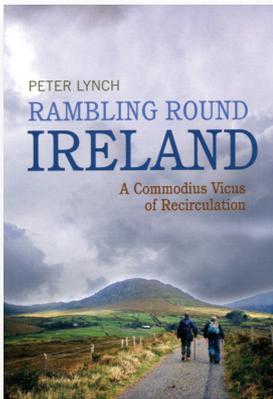
Books

Literary Editor Peter O'Neill presents reviews of some recent publications



Full of sense of place and history

Bill Hannon



Rambling round Ireland

By Peter Lynch
The Liffey Press (2010), 300pp
60 colour photos
ISBN: 978-1-905785-91-9
€17.95

Peter Lynch has produced a fascinating book. It is full of a sense of place and of history. It has knowledgeable commentary on wildlife and local traditions, on architecture and geology, and on their interactions with communities and individuals.

The walk was interrupted by family, social and professional commitments, so that it took thirteen years to complete. He was accompanied for much of the walk by one or other of his three 'walking buddies.' Sadly, in a poignant coincidence, I attended the funeral of one of these buddies, Mark Draper, before I saw this book or realised the connection.

The walk begins at the Martello Tower at Sandycove, Dublin, with a brilliant evocation of the opening scene of *Ulysses*, and thereafter Ireland's writers and poets are never far away.

The sub-title of the book is *A Commodius Vicus of Recirculation* – a quote from the opening lines of *Finnegans Wake*. This sets the tone, which is leisurely, with time for stopping and observing, for explorations and adventures. "There is something of interest at every turn," he says. Climbers will be interested to come across two complementary references to Elizabeth Healy's *Literary Tour of Ireland* – a beautiful book.

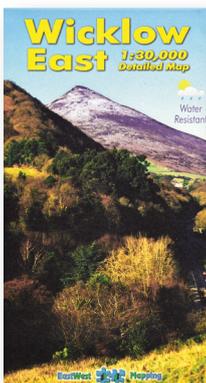
It was a revelation to learn of the range and antiquity of the castles, monasteries, friaries and "fortified houses" scattered about the countryside. Sometimes signs of the remote past are juxtaposed with these. Coming down from Knocknarea and following The Sligo Way, the author relates: "The impressive isolated mound of Knocknashee appeared ahead. A fortified Bronze Age hilltop township was discovered here as recently as 1988 by the OPW during a survey of Sligo. It is among the most significant archaeological discoveries in Europe in recent decades. A deserted trail sloped gently down through the forested area to the village of Collooney. ... Not far on was Tullaghan Hill, also known as Hawk's Rock, an inspiration for Yeats' symbolic play *At the Hawk's Well* about Cuchulainn's search for wisdom." These shifts in time from era to era keep the imagination lively.

Peaks don't figure much in these rambles, though he did climb "The Devil's Mother" to savour the view of Killary Harbour and the Mweelrea. As life and "love is in the valleys," the author focused there and on remote habitation and people.

It seems that abandoned railways exist all over the country. Some are legendary. There was the unique engineering achievement of the Monorail from Listowel to Ballybunion and, of course, the West Clare Railway. Some abandoned lines have potential for walking and cycling paths and should be preserved from unprincipled opportunists. The line from Collooney to Claremorris (closed in 1975) was mostly clear but the author had to climb numerous barbed wire fences. Towards Collooney, some buildings had been erected on the line. "I cannot believe," he wrote, "that planning permission for these was granted."

So, altogether a great read. It is also a reminder of many rewarding walks, which one can enjoy again with fresh insight, and to me of the many places in our country which I have not yet explored. When I get around to these rambles, I will definitely have Peter Lynch's book in my hand.

4th map in series



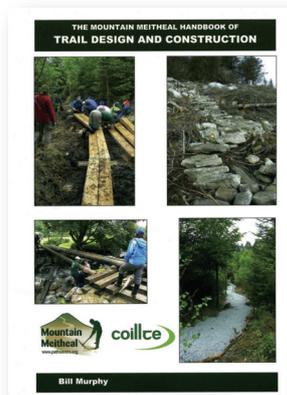
Wicklow East 1:30,000 Detailed Map

By Barry and Clive Dalby
EastWest Mapping (2011)
ISBN: 978-1-899815-29-6
€9.95 inc VAT at 13.5%

The final sheet in the series of four maps covering the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. See the Autumn 2010 issue for a detailed review of the previous two sheets, Wicklow Mountains West and Lugnaquilla and Glendalough, covering also the common features of the series, including the less usual 1:30,000 scale. These maps are available

from larger bookshops and outdoor shops. They're also available from www.eastwestmapping.ie, with an additional charge for p&p. The full set of four maps can be ordered from that website for €35 incl. p&p.

Handbook on trail-making



The Mountain Meitheal Handbook of Trail Design and Construction

By Bill Murphy
Mountain Meitheal (2011)
96pp
ISBN: 978-0-9568452-0-7
€15 incl. p&p; available through the website www.pathsavers.org

This is a revised edition of the handbook that was originally reviewed in the Spring 2007 issue.