

WALKING SERIES TAKES PLACE OVER FOUR WEEKS

By MICHEÁL Ó DOMHNAILL

A series of interesting and healthy walks on Knocknarea and at Killaspugbrone will take place throughout the month of June and a limited number of places are available FREE to the public.

The walks will take place each Wednesday over a 4 week period beginning on June 9th and ending on June 30th and will be guided by experts in the fields of archaeology, mythology, flora and fauna, heritage, walking tourism and healthy living.

The walks will take place in the mornings and will be completed by around lunchtime.

The Sligo Walking Series is being organised by Sligo County Council and Keep Well Sligo, and members of the public are invited to apply via email to healthyireland@sligococo.ie if they are interested in taking part.

Because of current Covid-19 restrictions, groups will be limited to 15 in total per walk, so it's expected that places will fill up quickly. As a result, people are encouraged to get in touch soon to book a place.

"It's aimed at people who are used to walking, are interested in local history and folklore and are flexible in terms of their availability," says Marcella McGarry, Healthy Sligo Co-Ordinator. "The walks will take place every Wednesday morning, and so will suit those who have some free time or perhaps can take time off work."

As anyone who climbs Knocknarea knows, it can be a challenging climb and a good level of fitness is required.

However, for these guided walks, there will be regular interval stops where the guide will provide information on the local environment.

This will enable walkers time to catch their breath and take on refreshments.

"The focus is on a gentle upland ramble rather than a strenuous workout," says Michael Carty of Sligo Walks, who along with Trailgazers are also supporting this event.

"While we wouldn't encourage people to take part without asking themselves if they are fit enough, for anyone who is used to walking or hiking, this should be a great morning of activity and learning combined."

The walking guides are all experts in their fields. The first walk will be led by Auriel Robinson of Seatrails, who regularly leads walks for groups and individuals throughout Sligo. She will focus on the geology and geography of Knocknarea, the mythology relating to Queen Maeve and the challenges of developing sustainable tourism.

The second week will focus on the coastal area of Killaspugbrone, where the flora and fauna of the Killaspugbrone Coastal Loop will be explained by Michael Bell of Nature Learn.

The third week will be guided by archaeologist Stefan Bergh, who will discuss the Neolithic landscape of Knocknarea and the Coolera Peninsula, with a particular emphasis on Queen Maeve's Cairn.

And the final walk will be led by Marion McGarry, who will focus on some of the dwellings and habitations located on Knocknarea, as well as the different ways people who lived on Knocknarea adapted to life there over the centuries.

"We're really looking forward to the walks," says Marcella McGarry. "It's an opportunity for us to get out and about and the very fact that we can organise public events, even on a small scale, is a positive step back towards normality. Healthy Sligo is delighted to be involved, and the mix of interesting discussions and healthy outdoor exercise is something we're all looking forward to."



One of the series' walking guides Stefan Bergh leading a walk on Knocknarea.



Killaspugbrone loop.



Booking for the walks is now open by emailing healthyireland@sligococo.ie. Walkers are asked to confirm their availability, and to indicate which of the walks they'd like to participate in.

The public are reminded that due to Covid-19 the walks series will be only available to walkers who have registered in advance and have received confirmation from the organisers.

Walkers will have to complete Covid-19 pre-registration in advance of each walk and

all walkers are reminded to bring their own refreshments, as well as wearing suitable hiking boots and wet gear.

The Sligo Walking Series

June 9th - Auriel Robinson of Seatrails on the geology, geography and mythology or Knocknarea and on sustainable tourism.

June 16th - Michael Bell of Nature Learn on the flora and fauna of the Killaspugbrone Coastal Loop.

June 23rd - Dr. Stefan Bergh of NUIG on the Neolithic landscape of Knocknarea and the Coolera Peninsula and the archaeological importance of Queen Maeve's Cairn.

June 30th - Dr. Marion McGarry of GMT on the habitations, customs and heritage of Knocknarea and its inhabitants.

For information on walking in Sligo visit SligoWalks.ie for trail information, maps and advice.