

# Barbara Doyle, an Appreciation of Life Memorial Hike

By her friends and family



On October 31st last year, while on her descent from a day hiking on Lugnaquilla, Barbara Doyle first mentioned her desire to organise a fundraising event for Brainwave which was to incorporate a series of hikes. Barbara had lived with Epilepsy since she was a teenager and through determination, an excellent group of doctors and with advice she regularly received from Brainwave, Barbara lived a very fulfilling life. She was an amazing musician, a much loved teacher and a regular hiker. She also toured Africa, Australia and South East Asia.

However in the early hours of November 11th 2007, Barbara suddenly passed away in her sleep. Only then did her family and friends become aware of SUDEP (Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy). In the months after her untimely death, Barbara's close friends and family decided to fulfil her wish and continue to organise the hike she herself had initiated. It was decided to hike the last five mountains which Barbara herself had climbed and that it would coincide with what would have been Barbara's 31st birthday - June 20th.

All the proceeds were to be donated to Brainwave and in particular the area of research into and information about SUDEP. The initial response from friends and family was overwhelming, with an unbelievable number of people

interested in partaking in the hike. For Safety reasons the group was limited to 30 people. The first meetings were held with Brainwave in January and fundraising got underway in April. Ulster Bank got the ball rolling with a sponsorship of €5,000. The initial target was set at €20,000 but it became evident very quickly that the target was going to be shattered.



*Barbara's brother Ferghal, Shauna McGirl her 13 year old niece and Paul Byrne teaming up to cross the water near the base of Carrantuohill.*

On June 20th, after several weeks of training, the group departed from Keadue, Co. Roscommon at 7.30am. The first port of call was Benbulbin in Co. Sligo. The main group were joined here by a group of students and staff from Carn National School, Gurteen, one of the schools where Barbara taught in the months up to her passing. Leaving from Glencar Lake, the group proceeded up to their finishing point to

be greeted by a breathtaking view of the valley below and the surrounding mountains. After a short rest and the treat of a lament on tin whistle by close friend Mossie Martin, the group started their descent and journey on to Croagh Patrick near Westport.

Luckily the good weather stayed with them as they embarked on the steep incline. The promise of another lament at the summit by Mossie seemed to give the group an extra boost. Again the view of Clew Bay and its surrounds was spectacular and the group began to realise why Barbara loved hiking and being in the outdoors. The descent was less arduous and everyone was happy to be getting back on the bus for the long trip to Killarney that night.

Rising on the second morning at 7am, the group was greeted by lashing rain. It did little to damage morale and the group departed for the Devil's Ladder. What were normally just trickling streams had now transformed into rivers and a lot of group work was needed to ensure that everyone pressed on and completed the task at hand. At the top of the Devil's Ladder, visibility was very poor but morale was again boosted by the sing-song that broke out. Others on the mountain may well be forgiven for thinking this particular group was a little bit crazy!

The group pushed on and again everyone made it to the top. The view this time was non-existent but the group were quietly proud to have scaled Carrantuohill, the highest mountain. The descent was a welcome relief and the bus journey to Glendalough gave time for some much needed rest.

Having shown that torrential rain was no obstacle, day three produced very strong winds and a decision to alter the route of the first hike of the day had to be made. Glendalough and Lugnaquilla again produced some familiar faces



who decided to join them for this leg of the trip. Upon reaching the summit of Lugnaquilla, the rush of emotions was evident for everyone to see. That was where Barbara had made her decision to organise the fundraiser and it was also the last peak that Barbara had reached. The next stop was Barbara's graveside, possibly the hardest walk of the weekend but it was a fitting tribute to someone who was so inspirational to everyone involved.

The final call was to Roddy's pub in Keadue for the presentation of the raised funds. A great crowd turned out to welcome home and honour everyone's hard work. Spokesperson on the night, Paul Byrne gave a quick summary of the weekend and Barbara's brother John put together a beautiful presentation of pictures of Barbara spanning her short lifetime. Finally the overall figure was announced - €45,355 – and this was presented to Brainwave representative Agnes Mooney. The

group finally relaxed and enjoyed some well earned refreshments.

The family and friends of Barbara Doyle would like to thank the following people for making the weekend such a huge success:

Ulster Bank; McWeeney's bus hire in Dromad; Bernie Glancy, the team masseuse; the International youth hostel in Glendalough; The Railway hostel in Killarney; the South Court Hotel in Limerick; Finnegan's Bar and restaurant in Limerick; Roddy's pub in Keadue and the musicians that played there; Evelyn, Agnes and Peter from Brainwave and everyone who gave so generously to the fundraiser.

Barbara, your inspiration will always be with us. You have opened our eyes to the beauty of what surrounds us. You have forged friendships that will last forever and we know you stand with us on all of the summits of our lives. Barbara, our love for you knows no bounds.

*Brainwave would like to thank Brian Higgins, the Doyle family and all the climbers and supporters for all they have done to raise money for SUDEP research and awareness in Ireland. All the monies raised will be used solely for these purposes, starting with a call for research announced in October this year (see page 5).*

## Living With Loss Seminar

This year's living with loss seminar was held in The Galway Bay Hotel on October 4th. The seminar was the first regional meeting and was primarily aimed at those living in the western half of Ireland although families from all over Ireland attended.

Dr. Helen Greally, Senior Clinical Psychologist facilitated the day. Dr. Greally delivered an excellent presentation entitled 'A journey through grief'. Jennifer Preston from Epilepsy Bereaved spoke about the work that Epilepsy Bereaved are doing in the UK.

Finally, Kate Burke from Anam Cara, a bereavement support group for parents and siblings gave a presentation about the organisation and how their vision of peer support could help some of the families that had lost loved ones through SUDEP. Anam Cara has set up satellite support groups throughout the country that families can access. See [www.anamcara.ie](http://www.anamcara.ie) for more information.

To find out more about future 'Living with Loss Seminars', contact Aisling on 01-4557500.

## Volunteer for Brainwave

If you or a family member or friend would like to volunteer at Brainwave to help our fundraising activities, please complete and return this form to Brainwave The Irish Epilepsy Association, 249 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12. We'll get in touch with you soon.

- Participate in our Rose appeals (February and October)
- Participate in a marathon/ mini-marathon
- Church Gate Collections
- Organise an Event locally
- Donate goods/ services to Brainwave
- I'm undecided and would like to discuss volunteering opportunities further.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

The best time to contact me is: Morning  Afternoon  Evening