

irish mountain log

THE MAGAZINE FOR WALKERS AND CLIMBERS IN IRELAND

No 90 Summer 2009

ISSN 0790 8008

€3.20 (£2.20)



**Mountaineering
Ireland**
www.mountaineering.ie

www.tollymore.com

*We provide a full range of
climbing, mountaineering
and walking courses*



Tollymore
Mountain Centre **sport**
Northeast Ireland

Tollymore Mountain Centre, Bryansford, Newcastle, Co Down, BT33 0PT

Tel: 028 4372 2158

Email: admin@tollymore.com

Glenbeigh horseshoe, McGillicuddy's
Reeks, Co Kerry, in mid-winter dawn light.
Photo: John Treacy (Tralee Mountaineering Club).

Organisational development

It's a time of continuing growth for Mountaineering Ireland

Welcome to the summer edition of the *Irish Mountain Log*, Mountaineering Ireland's flagship publication. I would like to begin by thanking the volunteers who, year in, year out, help to publish this wonderful magazine, telling your stories of adventure and friendship in the hills and mountains of Ireland and the rest of the world.

The membership base of Mountaineering Ireland continues to grow, as does the overall participation in our sport. Mountaineering Ireland itself, as an organisation, also continues to grow, and before the end of the year it is likely that it will have several additional staff positions as a result of the support of our members and the financial support of the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland. These new positions will include a part-time Mountain Rescue Development Officer for Northern Ireland. This post, which at the time of going to press is at the recruitment stage, will support the excellent work being undertaken by Paul Whiting, Development Officer for the Irish Mountain Rescue Association. It is in all our interest that the mountain rescue teams are fully supported and resourced.

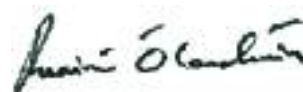
The Board will continue to do all in its power to support the work of the Irish Mountain Rescue Teams north and south.

Another new position is that of Talent ID and Coaching Development Officer which has been funded by Sport NI. This officer will focus on the identification of talented young climbers across Ireland and will create opportunities for them to develop their skills while developing resources and delivering workshops on coaching skills for people involved in instructing climbing. This new position will complement the work of the Youth Development Officer. The Board is delighted to inform members that Angela Carlin has been appointed to this new position. She will continue to act as Youth Development Officer until her old position is filled later this year.

Mountaineering Ireland's training office also continues to develop, with more providers coming on board to deliver approved BOS training schemes. The establishment of a more streamlined and efficient administrative structure has resulted in increased numbers undertaking formal training and

assessments, and has also resulted in the development of a Volunteer Training Officer network at club level. All clubs are encouraged to participate in this network.

As our membership base continues to grow, all members are encouraged to become actively involved with Mountaineering Ireland. The Board and staff look forward to seeing as many members as possible at this year's Autumn Gathering in Dingle, Co Kerry, where Cumann Sléibhteoireachta Chorca Dhuibhne (Dingle Hillwalking Club) have kindly taken on the hosting arrangements for this Meet to be held from 9 to 11 October 2009.



Ruairi Ó Conchúir
Chairperson
Mountaineering Ireland



WELCOME TO...

ISSUE 90

The Irish Mountain Log is the membership magazine of Mountaineering Ireland. The organisation promotes the interests of hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland

Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way
Park West Business Park
Dublin 12, Ireland
Tel: (+353 1) 625 1115
Fax: (+353 1) 625 1116
info@mountaineering.ie
www.mountaineering.ie

Hot Rock Climbing Wall

Tollymore Mountain Centre
Bryansford, Newcastle
County Down BT33 0PT
Tel: (+44 28) 4372 5354
youth@mountaineering.ie

Editor: Patrick O'Sullivan

Tel: (+353 1) 837 8166 (pm, wknds)
iml-editor@mountaineering.ie

Features Editor: Peter O'Neill

iml-featureseditor@mountaineering.ie

Literary Editor: Joss Lynam

Tel: (+353 1) 288 4672 (pm)
iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie

Advertising: Mountaineering Ireland
logads@mountaineering.ie

Production: C  il  n MacLochlainn
iml-production@mountaineering.ie

Printing: GPS Colour Graphics Ltd,
Alexander Road, Belfast BT6 9HP
Tel: +44 (0) 28 9070 2020

The Irish Mountain Log is published by Mountaineering Ireland four times a year – in March, June, September, December. The material published in the Log by the voluntary editorial team and contributors must not be taken as official Mountaineering Ireland policy unless specifically stated.

Copy deadline for the Autumn 2009 issue of the Irish Mountain Log is Friday, August 14th, 2009.

PARTICIPATION AND RISK

Readers of the Irish Mountain Log are reminded that hillwalking and climbing are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks, and be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Mountaineering Ireland publishes and promotes safety and good practice advice and through Bord Oili  nt Sl  ibhe (BOS, The Irish Mountain Training Board) administers a range of training programmes for walkers and climbers.



Features

20 Mountaineering Ireland:

What's in a name?

Ross Millar on what mountaineering means to him.

22 Next stop, America

Adrian Hendroff reflects on the best walks in Achill.

26 Ramabang: a first ascent

Gerry Galligan and Darach    Murch   report on the first ascent of Himalayan Peak 6135.

32 Ascent of Ama Dablam

Paddy Cave climbs Ama Dablam alpine style.

36 Traversing the Julian Alps

John Hurley and David Bourke on the Sligo Mountaineering Club's trip to the Julian Alps.

40 Climbing at Coumshingaun

Mick Walsh on a Waterford climbing Mecca.

44 Written in stone: what the mountains can tell us

Bernie Lafferty and Peter Wilson begin a new series on geology.

Regulars

6 News 12 IMRA news 48 Training
news 52 Access & Conservation news
53 Books 58 The last word

Heights of summer

At whatever level you engage in our sport, it seems to me that it is about adapting to safely meet the challenges that it presents, be they in the environment or within yourself.

Environmental challenges will include the terrain but also the weather conditions, which can be so unpredictable in Ireland. The challenges that present within ourselves will include our physical condition but also our mental state.

John Muir captured some of the reasons why we might engage in our sport when he said of Yosemite:

"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as the sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves."

In this issue, Ross Millar looks at what mountaineering means to him and emphasises the broad church that it is, encompassing as it does so many different activities. As if to emphasise that range of activities, Adrian Hendroff writes eloquently of the joys of walking on Achill, and Gerry Galligan and Darach Ó Murchú enthuse over the first ascent of Himalayan Peak 6135 and about exploring previously untrodden valleys around their peak. In the other articles, Mick Walsh looks at the pleasure to be had climbing in Coumshingaun, while Paddy Cave extols the virtues of an Alpine ascent of Ama Dablam, and John Hurley and David Bourke describe the excitement and camaraderie to be experienced on a Club trip to the Julian Alps. Finally, Bernie Lafferty and Peter Wilson explain what the mountains can tell us.

During the longer days of the summer, we should look to expanding our horizons and following in these writers' footsteps, whatever aspects of our sport you choose to engage in.

Patrick O'Sullivan

Patrick O'Sullivan
Editor, Irish Mountain Log



ON THE COVER: Looking into the previously unexplored Dibidibroki valley in the Spiti region of India in the aftermath of the first ascent of Peak 6135, named Ramabang by the expedition. Photo: Gerry Galligan.

THIS PAGE: Descending from Slieveanea on the Dingle peninsula, Co Kerry, New Year's Day 2009. Photo: Mike Keyes.

News

Get all the latest news at www.mountaineering.ie

Top job vacant

Chief Officer Stuart Garland moves on

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND'S first Chief Officer, Stuart Garland, who was appointed in February 2007, has moved on from the organisation.

Stuart joined the Mountaineering Council of Ireland, as it then was, at a time of considerable change in the organisation as it expanded and attempted to address the needs of its members more completely. Stuart's appointment was seen as a vital step in building a more complete team of professional staff, with the skills necessary to meet those needs, and furthering the organisation's development into a volunteer-directed, professionally managed and fully accountable National Governing Body.

During Stuart's term in office, the organisation has expanded so that it is better able to meet the needs of its members, and its profile has been enhanced, not least with our main funders,

the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland. The Board of Mountaineering Ireland wish Stuart all the best for his further career in the voluntary sector.

Following Stuart's departure, two Board members, Ross Millar and Deirdre McCarthy, agreed to provide management support to staff on an interim caretaker basis. Other Board members have continued to support the various substructures and committees of Mountaineering Ireland. At the same time, a process was initiated to recruit a new Chief Officer. Unfortunately, following first and second round interviews, this process was not successful in recruiting a suitable candidate and the post will have to be re-advertised later this summer. Various options are under active consideration to provide ongoing management support until the new Chief Officer is in post. – (*Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Chairperson, Mountaineering Ireland*)

Worth waiting for

Mournes guidebook available soon

THE NEW Mountaineering Ireland guide to rockclimbing in the Mountains of Mourne should be enough to convince anyone who hasn't climbed there to pay a visit to the area! It is the work of Ricky Bell, Craig Hillier and Simon Moore whose combined talents in climbing and photography, and extensive knowledge of the routes and the local area have been put to good use.

The new guide features plenty of full-colour maps and photo topos, so both the crags and the routes are now much easier to find. Route descriptions have been included (containing a lot of humour, as well as useful information), but they're now less crucial to the route-finding than in previous editions. The new guide features some really inspiring recent photos, mainly thanks to Craig, which capture some of the beauty and remoteness of the crag settings as well as some

milestones in Mournes climbing.

Another major change is the addition of boulder problems in several areas, including Binnian Tors, Hen and Chimney Rock. The bouldering information is not exhaustive, giving enough information to let you find the best areas and classic problems, but leaving plenty of scope for you to discover a few gems for yourself.

The guide will be available very soon from the Mountaineering Ireland office and the usual outlets – keep an eye on www.mountaineering.ie for details! – (*Angela Carlin*)



GENERAL ENQUIRIES

info@mountaineering.ie

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President

Alan Tees

president@mountaineering.ie

Chairman

Ruairí Ó Conchúir

chairperson@mountaineering.ie

Honorary Treasurer

David Batt

treasurer@mountaineering.ie

BOARD MEMBERS

Tomás Alyward

tomas-board@mountaineering.ie

Pat Kenneally

pat-board@mountaineering.ie

Vincent McAlinden

vincent-board@mountaineering.ie

Deirdre McCarthy

deirdre-board@mountaineering.ie

Jerry O'Dwyer

jerry-board@mountaineering.ie

Patrick O'Sullivan

patrick-board@mountaineering.ie

Ross Millar

ross-board@mountaineering.ie

Dawson Stelfox

dawson-board@mountaineering.ie

STAFF AT SPORT HQ

Administrator

Una Feeney

una@mountaineering.ie

Accounts Administrator

Terry Canavan

terry@mountaineering.ie

Training Officer

Tim Orr

tim@mountaineering.ie

Training Administrator

Kate Hebblethwaite

kate@mountaineering.ie

Access & Conservation Officer

Aodhnait Carroll

aodhnait@mountaineering.ie

STAFF AT TOLLYMORE

NI Youth Development Officer

Angela Carlin

angela@mountaineering.ie



**Mountaineering
Ireland**

New national grid on the way

OSi plans new series of 1:50,000 maps



ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND (OSi) invited Mountaineering Ireland and some other interested bodies to a consultation on Wednesday 20th May concerning their proposed new series of 1:50,000 maps.

Most importantly, the new maps will be based on the ITM grid (see picture) rather than on the familiar national grid.

Furthermore, the sheets will be 40km east-west x 20km north-south, and they will be printed *on both sides*.

ITM stands for Irish Transverse Mercator (the map is constructed on the same projection). The NI Survey will publish similar maps and the whole of Ireland will be covered in 69 double-sided sheets.

That's the bad news. The OSi appears to be determined on the new grid and the double-sided printing. However, they seem more agreeable on other matters:

1. The maps will have overlaps. They showed us a mock map with a 1km overlap along the top, but they agreed that this was too small. We asked for 2km overlaps on the north, and the same on the west. Nothing was agreed.
2. We complained about the poor representation of paths as compared with other maps (see review, page 54). They agreed they had to do better.
3. We didn't like the folding. If the map was made a little taller and all the text moved to the side or simply printed separately (how often do you look at it when navigating?), then N-S could be in a single fold.
4. The change in the grid is a problem. Errors of as much as 200m can occur in translating between the grids. Various suggestions were made, from printing on both grids in different colours for a transition period to simply putting the translation system in the margin. Guidebooks and older GPS will be the most affected.
5. We complained about the paper. They said they will use a higher grade paper,

slightly shiny and probably stronger. When asked about water-resistant paper, they said that previously it had not sold; we all said we'd never heard you could buy it and suggested that their marketing was at fault.

On the matter of publication, the OSi stated:

1. There will be some maps out before Christmas and maps for the complete island will be published in about 2½ years.
2. When the whole issue is complete, they will consider 'slab' sheets, special area sheets and larger-scale sheets.
3. Updating will be on a five-year rolling schedule.
4. The maps will look exactly the same as the current maps, apart from the new grid.

The consultation was organised by the Irish Walking Association and chaired by its President, Anne Morrissey. – (Joss Lynam)

Out with the old, in with the new....



Calendar of events

For more information about any of these events, please see the relevant section of this magazine or the events section of the website, www.mountaineering.ie.

Sat & Sun 1-2 August

Multi Pitch Award assessment, Wicklow

Sat 8 August

Single Pitch Award refresher, Clare

Sat & Sun 12-13 Sept

Volunteer Training Officer workshop, Donegal

Fri to Sun 2-4 October

Walking Group Leader assessment

Fri to Sun 9-11 October

Autumn Gathering, An Daingean (Dingle), Kerry

Sat & Sun 10-11 October

BOS Providers Symposium, Kerry

Sun 11 October

Environmental Officers training workshop at Autumn Gathering, An Daingean (Dingle), Kerry

Sat & Sun 17-18 October

Mountain Leader refresher workshop, Kerry

Sat to Mon 24-26 October

Mountain Leader assessment, Connemara

Sat to Mon 14-16 November

Mountain Leader assessment, Donegal



MCI promotes the principles of Leave No Trace

Walking festivals in Northern Ireland

Sperrins Walking Festival, 7-9 August 09

THE 13th SPERRINS Walking Festival will take place over the weekend of 7th-9th August 2009, with a range of walks on offer to suit all levels of ability, from family walks and activities to challenging hillwalks. It will take place in the heart of the Sperrins, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty straddling the borders of counties Tyrone and Derry. This year, in addition to the guided and self-guided walks on offer, there will be a two-day **Overnight Walking Adventure**, which will consist of a 47km walk over two days with overnight camping in a nearby forest. A range of social events will take place over the weekend so that walkers can relax and unwind in the evening after their day in the hills.

The walking festival provides an excellent way to discover the natural beauty of the Sperrins region, while at the same time learning about the region from the qualified guides who will be on hand.

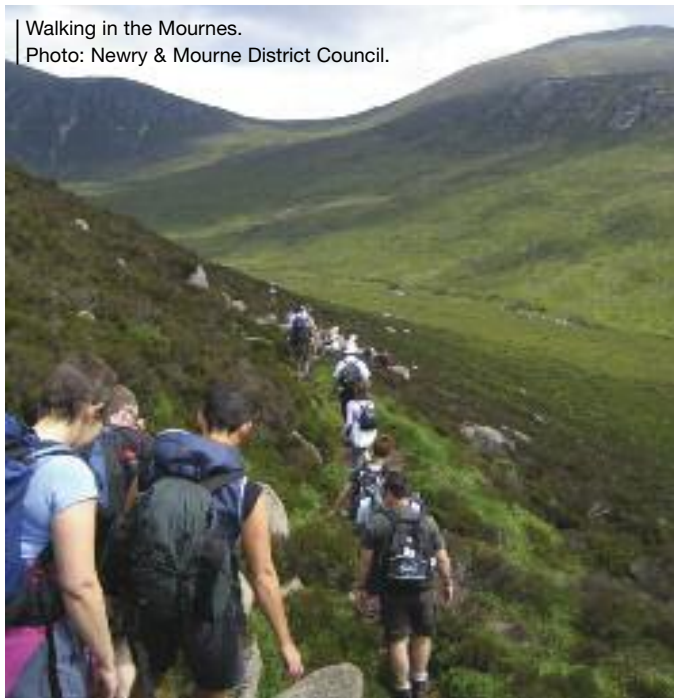
The festival base for 2009 is Gortin Activity Centre located in Gortin village, Co Tyrone. Gortin is ten miles from Omagh, the county town of Tyrone. The activity centre has both self-catering and hostel accommodation. There is also other accommodation close by in the region.

For more information, look at <http://www.walkni.com/Events.aspx> where you will find information on this festival and other outdoor events in Northern Ireland.

Wee Binnian Walking Festival, 11-13 Sep

YOU ARE INVITED to join the Wee Binnian Walkers for a weekend of walking and craic at this year's annual walking festival from 11th to 13th September 2009. This year's festival is based at the Killeavy

Walking in the Mournes.
Photo: Newry & Mourne District Council.



Football Club, Newry, Co Down.

With a reputation firmly established for great sociability, combined with an ability to put together a challenging walking programme, the festival offers guided mountain and lowland walks in the Mournes, Slieve Gullion and Cooley Mountains with varying distances and difficulty catering for all hillwalkers.

The Wee Binnian Walkers take great pride in the fact that the festival is organised and funded through volunteer efforts. – (Maeve Curran, Marketing Officer, Countryside Access and Activities Network)



Film on historic Eiger climb tours Ireland

THE NORTH FACE of the Eiger holds one of the most daunting reputations in the climbing world. The 6,000ft-high wall is notorious for its bad weather, loose rocks and the many tragedies that have been played out upon its face. In 1936, four Austrian and German climbers, Andreas Hinterstoisser, Toni Kurz, Willy Angerer and Edi Rainer, died on the north face of the Eiger in severe weather conditions during a retreat from Death Bivouac (3,300m).

The group's inability to reverse the Hinterstoisser Traverse, the avalanche that swept Hinterstoisser off the mountain and killed

Angerer and Rainer, and – probably most poignantly – the tragic death of Kurz just metres from rescue, are well known from Heinrich Harrer's classic, *The White Spider* (1960). Their fate on the infamous Murder Wall has entered mountaineering lore and contributed to Edward Lisle Strutt's 1938 proclamation that the Norwand was "an obsession for the mentally deranged" and "the most imbecile variant since mountaineering first began."

In 2008, film director Philipp Stölzl recreated the events of July 1936 in his film *North Face* (cert 12A). Over the summer, Access Cinema is

organising screenings of this film in various locations around Ireland. The confirmed dates for July/August are as follows:

July 21st The Kino Cinema, Cork city
July 29th The Abbey Centre, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal

Aug 5th Dunamais Arts Centre, Portlaoise
 For further information, visit www.accesscinema.ie or contact David O'Mahony, Programme Manager, Access Cinema, The Studio Building, Meeting House Square, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. Tel: 353 1 679 4420, email: domahony@accesscinema.ie.

Autumn Gathering

Dingle, County Kerry
Friday-Sunday 9-11 October 2009

The Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering 2009 is being hosted by Cumann Sléibhteóireachta Chorca Dhuibhne (Dingle Hillwalking Club) and will take place in Dingle, Co Kerry. Described by *National Geographic* as "the most beautiful place on Earth," the landscape of the Dingle peninsula is as spectacular as it is varied, with highlights including Conor Pass (the highest mountain pass in Ireland), Mount Brandon, the Blasket Islands, Fungi the dolphin and, of course, Dingle town itself.

The Autumn Gathering will be based in Benzers Hotel, Dingle. The programme will include a variety of West Kerry walks on Saturday, including the Brandon range, as well as moderate and easy alternatives. The Mountaineering Ireland dinner will take place on Saturday night, after which noted mountaineer, writer and broadcaster Dermot Somers will talk about his experiences of becoming the first Irishman to climb the six great north faces of the Alps, and his participation in expeditions to Himalayan peaks Changtse, Manaslu and Everest, amongst others. Following this, local musicians will entertain us long into Saturday night. And where better than Dingle to enjoy the craic after a hard day's walking or climbing!

On Sunday there will be a selection of activities including an archaeological walk, Mountain Skills workshop and climbing at Ireland's largest climbing wall "Play At Height." Updates on the programme of activities, accommodation options and directions can be found on the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie.

Friday 9 October 2009

5:00pm–8:00pm Registration for activities.
8:00pm An illustrated talk by Mícheál Ó Coileáin: **"Introduction to the Archaeology of Chorca Dhuibhne"**

Saturday 10 October 2009

8:30am–9:30am Registration for walks.
10:00–5:00pm Departure for five graded walks: (1) Brandon's eastern ridges; (2) "coast to coast" Dingle to Cuas via Mount Brandon; (3) the Coumeenare Lakes; (4) Brandon Point to Brandon Creek; (5) Cosán na Naomh (The Saints' Path) from Ceann Trá to Baile an Lochaigh.
5:00pm Return to Dingle.
8:00pm till late Mountaineering Ireland Dinner at Benzers Hotel, with illustrated talk by climber, writer and broadcaster Dermot Somers followed by seisiún.

Sunday 11 October 2009

10:00am–1:00pm Departure for a range of activities including short local walk of 2½ hours, a guided archaeological walk, indoor climbing at the Play At Height Climbing Wall (limited places) and free Mountain Skills session with Irish Adventures.
10:00am–1:00pm Mountaineering Ireland Environmental Officer Training Workshop.

Sas Creek on north coast of Dingle peninsula.
Photo: David Chippendale.

On Fachair na Monach, on north coast of Dingle peninsula.
Photo: David Chippendale.



Climber on Mt Brandon overlooks Brandon Bay.
Photo: Pat Scanlon.



Accommodation

Dingle has a full range of accommodation including campsites, hostels, bed & breakfast, guesthouses, holiday homes and hotels.
For a list of accommodation providers see:

www.discoverireland.ie/dingle and
www.dingle-peninsula.ie

Autumn Gathering Registration

(€10 Mountaineering Ireland members, €20 non members) €

Name

Address

Mobile Phone.....

Email

Membership Number

Club Name (if applicable)

Three-course dinner on Saturday evening including speaker and entertainment at Benzers Hotel (€38 per person) €

Vegetarian option ☐

Total enclosed €

Please return this form (photocopy if you wish), with payment made payable to Dingle Hillwalking Club, to: Noel O'Neill, Treasurer, Dingle Hillwalking Club, c/o Bank of Ireland, Main Street, Dingle, Co Kerry, Tel: (+353) 86 602 0515.

Himalayan climbing 2008

2008 climbing season one of tragedy in Pakistan

THE ALPINE CLUB of Pakistan has published the records of the 2008 expeditions in that country. Sadly, 2008 will be remembered most for the eleven deaths on K2, including our own Ger McDonnell, but the season also saw one first ascent.

Seventy-six expeditions were given permission to climb one or more peaks in Pakistan in 2008. Two expeditions were refused permission to climb peaks that were close to the Siachen Glacier because of the military presence there.

2008 was a very bleak year on K2, as eleven climbers died on that mountain on August 1. Attempting to summit the peak were 74 climbers from ten expeditions, but only 17 of them from six expeditions were successful.

Another five climbers died on Pakistan's mountains this year, one on Broad Peak, two on Nanga Parbat, one on Gasherbrum I and one on the Muztagh Tower.

However, 2008 also saw a first ascent by Italians Simone Moro and Hervé Barmasse, who were able to get to the summit Bekka Brakai Chhok (6,940m).

On Broad Peak, seven out of 12 expeditions were successful, with 29 climbers reaching the summit. On Gasherbrum II, 11 out of 17 expeditions reached the peak, while on Gasherbrum-I only four out of 12 expeditions managed to put climbers on the summit.

Reaching the peak of Nanga Parbat (8,125m) proved difficult for the nine expeditions which attempted the ascent



Bekka Brakai Chhok (6,940m) was summited for the first time in 2008.

this season, as only three teams were successful. One of the climbers who succeeded was Pakistani Nisar Hussain, who has now climbed all five mountains above 8,000 metres in the country.

Spantik Peak turned out to be an even bigger challenge as only one expedition from Italy reached the 7,027m summit, while 12 other expeditions were stopped by bad weather.

Climate change pioneer

Irish mountaineer led way in climate change research

IRISH PHYSICIST and mountaineer John Tyndall was fascinated with Alpine glaciers, particularly the Mer de Glace (see picture), which in the 1800s was a deep river of ice stretching down the northern slopes of Mont Blanc and spilling into the Chamonix Valley. This fascination led him to study the formation and movement of glaciers.

Tyndall first visited the Alps in 1848 and could hardly stay away after that, climbing Mont Blanc several times, soloing Monte Rosa and making the first ascent of the Weisshorn. He might even have made the first ascent of the Matterhorn if his guide had not cried off at the last moment.

The concept of the 'greenhouse effect' had first been proposed in the 1770s and French researchers in the early 1800s suggested that certain gases in the atmosphere prevented radiant heat escaping from the Earth. In 1859, Tyndall investigated this and showed that carbon dioxide and water vapour were particularly good at blocking heat

radiation. He demonstrated that these gases were responsible for absorbing most of the heat trapped by the atmosphere, stating that 'The radiant heat of the sun does certainly pass through the atmosphere to the Earth with greater facility than the radiant heat of Earth can escape into space.'

Unlike Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published six months after Tyndall's work, Tyndall's findings did not produce any revolutionary changes in thinking at that time. In fact, although he was aware of the carbon dioxide being produced by the Victorian coal fires and factory chimneys, he did not suggest that this might affect the Earth's climate. He would have found it difficult to accept the current belief that humans are responsible for climate change. He would also be saddened when he saw the extent of the recession of his beloved glaciers today as a result of the greenhouse effect which he had demonstrated.

However, in present times, Tyndall



The Mer de Glace glacier below Mont Blanc as seen in an illustration from 1826 when it was at its maximum size.

would also have been able to look closer to home for evidence of climate change. A recent report by the Heritage Council and Fáilte Ireland points out that rising sea levels and the increasing strength and frequency of storms are likely to increase coastal erosion, putting some coastal paths under threat and indeed the cliffs themselves, so that in the longer term it is not only the glaciers that will be affected by the rising temperatures.

Left to right: William Reilly, Fin O'Driscoll and Saoirse 'SiSi' O'Driscoll on the summit of Elbrus (5642m) in June 2009. Photos: Fin O'Driscoll collection.

Father and daughter climb Europe's highest peak

FIN O'DRISCOLL

IN JULY 2008, 16-year-old Saoirse (SiSi) O'Driscoll and Fin, her father, climbed Kilimanjaro (5895m), Africa's highest mountain. This year, they set their sights on Mount Elbrus (5642m), Europe's highest peak, and they successfully climbed it in June this year. SiSi, a fifth-year student in Newbridge College in Kildare, is the youngest Irish female on record to have climbed both Elbrus and Kilimanjaro and she is keen to focus on even higher peaks in the great mountain ranges of the world.

Russia's Mount Elbrus is located in the Western Caucasus Mountains, near the border with Georgia. It is a strato-volcano that has lain dormant for over 2,000 years and, at 5642m, is about 800 metres higher than Mont Blanc. It is technically more difficult than Kilimanjaro and is one of the 'Seven Summits,' the highest peaks on each continent, which include Kilimanjaro in Africa and Mount Everest in Asia.

Flying to Moscow first, accompanied by friend William Reilly from Co Wicklow, we then took an internal Aeroflot flight 1,200km south to Mineralnye Vody, a crumbling industrial town located west of the Caspian Sea. A hair-raising four-hour ride in a rattling minibus got us to Azau, a remote village in the foothills of the Caucasus. After two days acclimatising on nearby peaks, we went to the base camp for Mount Elbrus in the Barrel Huts at

3700m. These simple metal barrels provide very basic accommodation for climbers on the slopes of Elbrus.

Spending two more days acclimatising with day climbs to Priyut (4200m) and Pastukova Rocks (4700m), we were ready for the summit attempt. Elbrus is over 1000m higher than the neighbouring peaks and so generates its own unpredictable weather systems. Frequent storms cause whiteout conditions within hours, June temperatures drop to as low as -40°C and an average of 30 climbers die on the mountain each year.

Fortunately for our Irish team, a suitable weather window was forecast and we set off at 4:00a.m. on our summit day. We had to negotiate a 7-hour climb on snow and ice, using crampons, ice axes, harnesses and ropes. As dawn broke on an exceptionally clear morning, our group witnessed a dramatic spectacle as the mighty peaks of the Caucasus lit up one by one and glistened in the blinding sunshine. We reached the summit before midday, by which time the temperature had increased from a numbing -25°C to a relatively comfortable -10°C and an incredibly clear day with azure blue skies allowed fantastic views into bordering Georgia and Chechnya.

After taking the all-important photos at the small summit monument, we descended the mountain as quickly as possible as the afternoon clouds rolled in.

After celebrating our success with several other climbers in Azau the next day, we then went back to Moscow for relaxation and sightseeing. The mighty capital of the Russian Federation is a vibrant and blingy bastion of capitalism, a far cry from the simple lives of the Russian villagers in the Caucasus, which appear to have changed little since the Communist era.

We booked the trip with Pilgrim Tours in Moscow (www.pilgrim-tours.com), a well renowned company for Elbrus expeditions. I have climbed extensively in the Alps, Andes and Himalaya and plan to accompany SiSi in her attempt to climb all of the Seven Summits. We have now completed two of the summits and the next on the agenda is Denali (6194m) in Alaska, North America's highest peak.



IMRA News

Get all the latest news at www.mountainrescue.ie



PAUL WHITING

In 2008, IMRA's twelve member teams responded to **214 incidents**, involving a total of 14,200 person-hours by the volunteer team members. These incidents are analysed in IMRA's *2008 Incident Report*, which was released along with the *2008 Annual Report* in April. Both are available from the Publications page of the IMRA website, www.mountainrescue.ie. In the second quarter of 2009, IMRA's teams responded to an estimated 73 incidents.

In May 2009, a number of IMRA team members attended the **Young Social Innovators (YSI) Exhibition** at the RDS. YSI gets young people (15-18yrs) involved in actions which help improve the lives of others in their community. It involves thousands of young people in hundreds of projects and social enterprises which are youth-led, team-based and action-focused (see www.youngsocialinnovators.ie). IMRA took a stand at the YSI Exhibition to promote Mountain Rescue as a deserving charity for which young people can fundraise. An information pamphlet was launched, *Mountain Rescue in Ireland*, which can be downloaded from www.mountainrescue.ie.

In early June, IMRA was visited by **Greg Newton** of the New South Wales State Emergency Service (www.ses.nsw.gov.au). Greg is a Team Leader of one of the largest State Emergency Service (SES) units in New South Wales (NSW), with over 100 members. Like the IMRA teams, the SES units are made up entirely of volunteers. In New South Wales, the types of emergencies that SES units respond to and skills they train in are truly impressive. These range from road accidents to technical rope rescue, storm damage repairs, swift water rescue, search management, urban and rural fire fighting through to alpine search and rescue. The training of each unit is shaped by the needs of their local communities. Team members then train in particular rescue skills. Greg's unit in Queanbeyan is located on the border between the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and NSW and is less than two hours' drive from the major ski fields of NSW. He has fifteen members who are trained as Alpine SAR specialists capable of being deployed for 48 hours in SAR operations before needing to be relieved.

In June, IMRA ran its newly developed **'Team Leaders' Course.'** In mountain rescue, the Team Leader is the person in charge during a callout. Most Team Leaders in Ireland serve a three-year term after working their way up over a number of years, gaining experience and taking on increasing responsibility. The Team Leaders had felt that a forum where a number of scenarios could be discussed in a round-table fashion by past, present and incoming Team Leaders, would be a great development and support. The course was run at the Scouting Ireland camp at Larch Hill over the weekend of June 26-28th. The IMRA Training and Development Group, which developed and facilitated the course, is currently reviewing the evaluation forms but the informal feedback received so far has been very positive.

IMRA was represented at the 50th Anniversary conference of the **Mountain Rescue Association of North America**, held in Mt Hood, Oregon, in June. This sort of representation is important to IMRA as it helps to raise its profile internationally and also allows new techniques, equipment and technologies to be introduced back here in Ireland. IMRA will celebrate its own 50th Anniversary in 2015. – (Paul Whiting, dev-officer@mountainrescue.ie)



Members of IMRA with students from RCS Dungloe, Co Donegal, demonstrating casualty packaging. IMRA members are Diarmaid Scully (Glen of Imaal MRT, back row left), Declan Cunningham (Dublin & Wicklow MRT, back row right) and Liam McCabe (IMRA Chair and member of SEMRA, front row right). Photo: IMRA.

Volunteers sought

Mountain rescue in the southeast

THE SOUTH EASTERN Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA), the local mountain search and rescue team in the southeast of Ireland, is looking for volunteers. If you live in the area, are interested in the outdoors, and want to learn new skills and help people, then you can find out more by logging on to our website at www.semra.ie or emailing us at info@semra.ie. Successful applicants will commence their training programme in September. – (Jimmy Barry, PRO, SEMRA, www.semra.ie)



SHOW **YOUR** SUPPORT FOR OUR VOLUNTEER RESCUE TEAMS....

OPTION
1

Wear our
t-shirt



€20
PLUS P&P

OPTION
2

Put our sticker
on your car



€5

PLUS P&P

OPTION
3

Purchase a
subscription



€30

OPTION
4

Join our
supporters club

A year's subscription
to 'Call Out', a t-shirt
and 2 car stickers

All for...

€50

Get four copies of 'Call Out' mailed directly
to your door for a year. Your subscription
goes to supporting our teams.

ORDER FORM

Please pay by bank cheque or postal order made payable to
"Irish Mountain Rescue Association (IMRA)" and send to the following address

**'Call Out' Magazine, Irish Mountain Rescue Association, SportHQ,
13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12, IRELAND**

If you are ordering option 1 please include €5 for postage and packaging

• Please tick your required choice

Option 1 ☐ Option 2 ☐ Option 3 ☐ Option 4 ☐

• If purchasing a t-shirt please specify your size by ticking the box below

S ☐ M ☐ L ☐ XL ☐ XXL ☐

Name:

Address 1:

Address 2:

Town: County/State:

Postcode: Country:

Email:

Phone Number:

☐ Postage & Packaging

☐ Sub-total (cost of chosen option)

Promotional Code: **mklog200902**

☐ Suggested donation (€25)

Date:

☐ Total

Signature:

Leave No Trace

The first two principles

BEVERLEY PIERSON

LEAVE NO TRACE IRELAND promotes better use of the outdoors, encouraging recreational users to not only 'leave no trace' of their presence but to respect the land which they use for recreational activities. The programme is based on seven key principles which act as a backbone for all its promotional work and for teaching the practices of Leave No Trace. The seven principles of Leave No Trace are:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Be Considerate of Others
- Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- Leave What You Find
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimise the Effects of Fire

Plan ahead and prepare

The first principle of Leave No Trace is 'Plan Ahead and Prepare.' Some consider this principle to be the most important one because it involves thinking about your trip/activity before you set out. If you do this, it is less likely that you will be inclined to create damage or cause impacts, because you will be well prepared. It also acts as the stem for all the other principles because they all build on this one. Not planning ahead and preparing when using the outdoors could affect all your efforts to adhere to the other six principles.

In fact, most of us already practice this first principle – checking the weather before we go, carrying suitable gear, repackaging food, etc. It is important to remember how important it is to do these things beforehand. If we didn't, we would be so unprepared in the outdoors that we would cause impacts that we wouldn't otherwise have done.

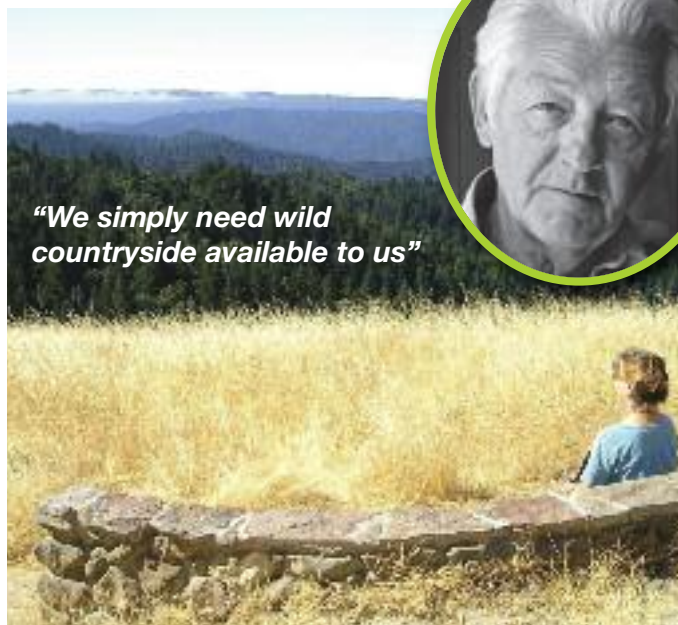
Think about where you are going. Some places require permits, or access may be restricted in some places during the breeding season of birds and other wildlife. Use websites, guidebooks and other sources of information to check if your activity is permitted in the area you are visiting. Keep group numbers small, for environmental and safety reasons. If you are on a camping trip, think about where you are going to get water, dispose of waste, cook your dinner, etc.

"Good planning is living the experience in advance."

– **Sir Edmund Hillary**

Be considerate of others

The second principle, 'Be Considerate of Others,' focuses on having respect for the land, wildlife and others when using the outdoors, therefore making it a pleasurable experience for everyone. By teaching this principle, Leave No Trace introduces people to the 'soft' skills of how to reduce their impact, meaning that people have to think about how they will do things to reduce their effects.



"We simply need wild countryside available to us"

Wallace Stegner bench overlooking the Santa Cruz Mountains, California.
Inset: Writer and environmentalist Wallace Stegner (1909-1993).

As more and more people are using the outdoors for recreational activities, there is more and more pressure on us to share our space and to make it pleasurable for everyone to use. A negative experience can cause people to associate it with the particular place and to create damage, in turn ruining the experience for someone else. The little things are often the most important – simple courtesies such as a friendly greeting all make a difference and create a positive experience about a particular area.

Simple things to remember are:

- If biking or horse riding, pass others with care.
- Not everyone loves dogs, so remember to keep your dog under effective control, especially near farm animals.
- Using loud technical equipment not only disturbs others but it also disturbs wildlife – let nature's sound prevail!
- Respect those working and living in the areas you choose to visit – rural landowners have a long tradition of providing reasonable access for people to enjoy the outdoors. Therefore, respect their wishes and treat their property as you would your own. If you don't, access may be denied!
- Be careful not to disturb the equipment of farmers and others who derive their income from the land, and be considerate when parking – you never know when a farmer or the emergency services may need access to certain parts of the land.

"We simply need wild country available to us, even if we never do more than drive to its edge and look in...for it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, as part of a geography of hope." – **Wallace Stegner**

For more information on Leave No Trace, please visit www.leavenotraceireland.org. Look out for the following principles – 'Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife' and 'Travel and Camp on Durable Ground' – in the next edition of the *Mountain Log*. – (Beverley Pierson, Development Officer, Leave No Trace)



Standards in high places

The moderation of BOS Training Assessment standards

It's tough at the top.
Photo: Tim Orr.



Did you know?

- Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS), the Irish Mountain Training Board, has approved over fifty providers nationwide to deliver its training and assessment schemes.
- BOS currently has over two and a half thousand registered candidates on its training database.
- BOS provides ongoing support to over eight hundred individuals holding leadership awards in the Republic of Ireland.

Why BOS training?

There are many individuals and organisations offering mountain training across Ireland of great standard and quality. However, BOS, as part of Mountaineering Ireland, the National Governing Body (NGB) for mountaineering, is the only organisation approved by the Irish Sports Council to deliver both leadership and personal proficiency skills leading to nationally recognised qualifications within the Republic of Ireland.

What are BOS standards?

In conjunction with international mountain training bodies, BOS standards are compiled and delivered, utilising best practice teaching standards around syllabi that are internationally approved and recognised. The ongoing evolution of best practice guidelines and the continual upkeep of the syllabi are an important part of the awards structures that BOS shares a role in developing.

Who moderates the standards?

Within the Republic of Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland is recognised as the Irish Sports Council's NGB to monitor and moderate mountain training standards. Within the structure of Mountaineering Ireland, the Board of BOS is a sub-committee that oversees the delivery of training and assessment standards. The active and continuous management of these standards are administered through the full-time Training Office of Mountaineering Ireland.

How are they moderated?

All BOS-approved providers have signed up to a formal agreement to deliver their approved courses under common best practice guidelines. These agreements are reviewed every three years. Providers must demonstrate their current relevant experience, including their attendance at official Continuing Professional Development workshops. Training and assessment reports are submitted to the Training Office by providers for all courses run, and a quarterly report is delivered to the Board of BOS. Most importantly, the Mountaineering Ireland Training Officer makes on-the-ground moderation visits to all providers actively delivering within their current approval period. This process of active moderation results in an official report compiled for both the individual provider and the Board of BOS.

How to find out more about the standards

We continually update and add information to the Training and Safety section of Mountaineering Ireland's website, www.mountaineering.ie. There you will find current information on BOS, its approved providers and the moderation of standards process. – (Tim Orr, Training Officer)



On yer bike!

More cyclists good for each other

Like walking, cycling is good for us and now research has shown that the more people who cycle, the safer it will be.

Countries in Europe with high levels of cycle use, such as Denmark, are far safer to cycle in than those with less cycle use. Research has shown that doubling the numbers who cycle will reduce the risks of cycling by about a third. In the UK, for instance, London has seen almost a doubling in cycling since 2000 and cycling casualties have fallen by a third since 1994-'98. This increased safety in numbers has been even more dramatic in the Netherlands where a 45% increase in cycling between 1980 and 2005 has been accompanied by a 58% decrease in cycling fatalities. This has been attributed to drivers being more aware of cyclists, there being more chance that a driver is a cyclist themselves and better able to understand how their driving may affect other road users and the fact that more cyclists leads to greater political will to improve conditions for them. – (CTC)

Are you tick aware?

Jenny O'Dea on the threats from ticks and how to avoid them.

Spring is such a beautiful time of year – the budding trees, the blossoming flowers, the bouncing new-born lambs. But are you aware of hidden dangers lurking beneath? It is at this time of year that insects and bugs come out of hiding, and amongst them there is one group which is now thought to pose an increasing threat to people enjoying outdoor activities, the ticks.

Ticks are born as small, six-legged larvae less than one millimetre in size. They feed on the blood of small rodents such as mice or on birds. The larvae then begin to moult, develop two more legs and mature into nymphs. These nymphs begin to search for larger animals on which they will mature into adults, feed and mate. They are able to detect carbon dioxide from passing animals and lay in wait in tall grasses, bushes and overhanging branches. Unfortunately, humans, pets, farm animals as well as wildlife are prey for the waiting ticks, which will attach themselves to their prey.

Lyme disease

The dangers with tick bites are becoming more widely known among the medical profession, and local government officials and politicians are being encouraged by groups of people who have suffered as a result of tick bites to become more aware of the diseases these ticks may carry. One such disease is known as Lyme disease or borreliosis. This is a potentially debilitating illness, if not recognized during the early stages. Following a tick bite, one of the tell-tale signs of having contracted Lyme disease is a rash, sometimes showing as a bull's-eye ring around the bite. However, this rash is not always present in all patients and it may even appear away from the site of the bite. Some patients may develop flu-like symptoms and a fever, which will also indicate possible infection.

In some cases, the patient may be asymptomatic, whereby they are carrying Lyme disease but have no outwardly obvious symptoms. Ill health may only occur years later following another illness or period of stress when the person's immune system may be affected, allowing the Lyme disease to overcome the body's defences. This results in disseminated Lyme disease, the symptoms of which can mimic multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue syndrome or Parkinson's disease. The disease can lead to joint pain, weakness, muscle aches, pelvic pain, visual problems, numbness, tingling, tremors, headaches and heart problems, and can even result in paralysis and loss of sight.

If detected in the early stages, Lyme disease can be treated effectively with antibiotics. If you have recently been bitten by a tick and notice a rash, do not hesitate to get it checked out immediately. In its later stages, Lyme disease will need more aggressive and longer term antibiotic treatment to control it. The longer the infection, the harder it is to cure.

Prevention is better than cure

Of course, prevention is better than cure. Simple measures to



reduce the risks among climbers and walkers of being infected include:

- Wearing long trousers, tucked into the socks or boots, and long-sleeved shirts, if walking in grassy, bushy or wooded areas
- Applying a tick repellent to any exposed skin and spraying it onto outer clothing before any countryside activities
- Inspecting the skin and clothing for ticks after walking in grassy, bushy or wooded areas
- Removing a tick as soon as possible after being bitten, by grasping it as close to the skin as possible
- If the area where a tick was attached becomes inflamed, consulting a doctor for advice about treatment
- Consulting your doctor if you develop a rash or become unwell and letting him know that you have been exposed to ticks

If you'd like more information, there is a group on Facebook called 'Tick Talk Ireland' who have sections on research articles, testing, tick removal and Lyme disease symptoms. Also, be sure to check out the eye-opening documentary DVD called *One Tick Away* produced by BADA UK (Borreliosis and Associated Diseases Awareness UK). Ordering details can be found at <http://www.bada-uk.org/products/dvd.php>.



Have you seen this bird?

Information on Ring Ouzel sightings sought

For a fifth season in succession, hillwalkers are being asked to report any sightings of Ring Ouzels they have when out in the hills.

From sightings in previous seasons, the picture that is emerging is one of the small-scale survival of this bird in the McGillicuddy's Reeks, with a few pairs having been seen in Donegal as well. It may also be surviving in the Brandon area and possibly the Caha Mountains. There is little information from Mayo, and it appears to be extinct in Sligo/Leitrim and Waterford. The well-walked Mourne and Wicklow Mountains reveal extremely few sightings early in the season, probably only birds pausing on migration to Scotland.

The Ring Ouzel is very easy to recognise. The male is like a Blackbird

with a conspicuous broad white crescent band across its lower throat. Paler areas on its wings give it a slightly shabby look and its beak is partly yellowish (not the orange of a male blackbird's). Its song comprises mainly of a rather simple piping quite different from the Blackbird's. The female resembles the male (unlike in the Blackbird's case), but looks shabbier, less dark, has an off-white crescent and a scaly appearance due to pale edges to its body feathers.

Since mountains are inherently rather poor in species variety, they attract relatively few birdwatchers and it is a great help if hillwalkers and climbers who visit these areas can report any sightings they may make plus, if possible, the sex of the birds and what the birds are doing (singing, carrying nest material or food,



etc) and submit them to the Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel (IRBBP), contact details below.

Any information on sightings will be most welcome. Please contact Paul Hillis, Honorary Secretary, Irish Rare Breeding Birds Panel, 61 Knocknashee, Dublin 14; telephone: 01-2986344; e-mail: jphillis@eircom.net.

Hostel re-opens in Glen of Imaal

Mountain Ventures hostel is fully refurbished



LOCATED AT the foot of Leinster's highest peak, Lugnaquilla (926m), the Mountain Ventures hostel is the ideal place for adventure off the beaten track in some of the most remote and scenic parts of the Wicklow Mountains. Following its extensive refurbishment, Mountain Ventures re-opened in June 2009. The lodge is located near Donard, deep in the Wicklow Mountains, and can cater for up to 30 guests. Relax in front of the huge open log fire after a great day on the hills and avail of comfortable and cosy dorms. The newly renovated lodge now offers fully en-suite rooms (2, 4 and 6 bed) and self-catering facilities, and can organise outside catering for groups of

10 or more. For evening entertainment, guests can relax in the comfortable common room or take a trip down to the Imaal Bar for a pint or two. Mountain Ventures can also arrange a number of outdoor activities in the Wicklow Mountains, including guided walks with local guides, rockclimbing, orienteering or Mountain Leader courses. All rooms are en-suite and rates start at only €18 per night. Facilities include free pick-up from Annalecky and luggage transfer, drying room, linen, BBQ area and WiFi. There is a 10% discount offered to all Mountaineering Ireland members.

For more information, please visit www.mountainventures.ie or contact Aaron Byrne, Mountain Ventures, Glen of Imaal, Co Wicklow, tel: +353 (0)45 404 657, mob: +353 (0)86 361 4151, email: info@mountainventures.ie.



MCofS membership reaches 10,000

THE MOUNTAINEERING Council of Scotland (MCofS) has published its 2009 Annual Report in which it announces that membership levels have broken through the 10,000 barrier. The number of unique visitors hitting their new website has also reached 10,000 in a month for the first time.

The MCofS Annual Report is available online ahead of the MCofS AGM, which is being held at Glenmore Lodge near Aviemore on Saturday 5th September.

For further information, contact Chief Officer David Gibson on +44 1738 493 947 or go to the MCofS website at www.mcofs.org.uk.



Youth bouldering season

Round-up of the Youth Competitions

ANGELA CARLIN

THE NI YOUTH Climbing Series rounds at Ganaway Activity Centre (Millisle), The Ozone climbing wall (Belfast) and Gortatole OEC (Fermanagh) are over and this year, for the first time, the top ranking competitors from those competitions will be competing in the British final, at the Westway wall in London.

Round 1 at Ganaway got things off to a good start. There were impressive performances in the 8-10 age group, with winners Eleanor Lawrence and Saul Calvert both flashing everything to get a maximum score of 480 points!

In the 11-13s, Kate Monaghan won the girls, while the boys category was closely contested with just three marks separating the top three: Jamie Rankin, Evan Lassov and Ciaran Curran. In the 14-16s, Katie Maxwell dropped just two points to finish 1st, with Rachel Cooper 2nd and Vanessa Woods 3rd. In the boys category, a 5ft roof, some slopy holds and Ricky Bell's route-setting made a challenging combination, but Tim McGlinchey and Andrew Colligan both made it past the overhang to finish two points apart on 473 and 471 respectively.

Round 2 was at the Ozone and, after the high scoring round at Ganaway, the difficulty of the routes and problems had been upped considerably by the route-setting team of Eddie Cooper and Ricky Young. In the 8-10s, Eleanor Lawrence and Victoria Colligan finished very close on 473 and 470 points respectively, while Saul Calvert hung on to 1st place in the boys.

In the 11-13s girls, Niamh Mullan took 1st place, while in the boys 1st went to Evan Lassov, 2nd to Jamie Rankin and 3rd to Darragh O'Connor. In the 14-16s Rachel Cooper took 1st place in the girls on full points, with Katie Maxwell 2nd. In the boys, Tim and Andrew were again in the lead, this time drawing for 1st place; Tim was ahead in the bouldering, but Andrew made the final holds of the hardest route, though didn't quite manage to clip the chain! A special mention should also go to David Hopkins in 3rd place; an amazing achievement considering that David had just a few months of climbing experience!

Gortatole is always a great venue for the final qualifying round, especially as the over 14s are leading routes, allowing us to use the 'too steep to top-rope' middle section of the wall. In the 8-10 girls, Eleanor (1st) and Victoria (2nd)



Tim McGlinchey on the 14-16 boys final route at Ganaway.



Eleanor Lawrence, winner in the 8-10 yrs girls at the Ozone.
Photo: Stephen Colligan.

performed better than ever, with high scores on difficult routes. In the boys, the top three finished in a different order this time, with David Lassov 1st, Saul Calvert 2nd and Martin Cervenka 3rd.

In the 11-13s, 1st girls went to Kate Monaghan again, while local climber Lisa Sheridan came 2nd. In the boys, Eoin Acton put in an excellent performance to finish 1st, while Jamie Rankin took 2nd.

In 14-16s, Rachel Cooper dropped just five points to come 1st, with Katie just two points behind. In the boys, Andrew and Tim came 1st and 2nd respectively, to end up joint first again in the overall ranking. To see the full competition results online, visit www.indoorsout.co.uk.

As always, the Youth Climbing Series relies heavily on the goodwill and support of the venues, route-setters, sponsors and volunteers. Special thanks go to Eddie Cooper, Ricky Young, Ricky Bell and Joe Walls, and also to Ganaway, The Ozone and Gortatole, and to Cotswold for the prizes.

The next step for all those who finished in top places will be in London on June 20th, when the Northern Ireland qualifiers will be up against around 200 competitors from England, Scotland and Wales in the British final at the Westway wall. Good luck to everyone who is competing!

Internationals to be held in Scotland

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH competitions are to be held in Scotland this year and next year. On the 19th-20th of September 2009, the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, at Ratho, will host a round of the European Youth Championships. In 2010, the same venue will host the six-day World Youth Climbing Championships.

The construction of new competition walls at Ratho have allowed the venue to host major climbing competitions as well as being a great place for the growing number of talented Scottish competition climbers, such as Natalie Berry, Robert Mackenzie and Jonathan Stocking to train.



Holds competition

ST DAVID'S Outdoor Sports Club, Mountmellick, Co Laois, was winner of the **Entre Prises** Climbing Holds competition organised last winter. The picture (above) shows the team members and their award-winning wall with Entre Prises climbing holds. The wall was constructed by www.bolderclimbingwalls.com and was part-funded by Great Outdoors. See www.mountaineering.ie/news for more. – (Warren McIntyre)



Global Youth Summit gets underway

IF YOU ARE between 14 and 30 years old and an active climber or hiker, then one of this year's UIAA Global Youth Summit events might be for you. So far, six events are planned for the summer months: a climbing camp in Romania, a Russian rockclimbing festival, treks in Italy and South Africa, and ascents of Mount Elbrus in Russia and Mount Kazbek in Georgia, with further events planned. The first event of 2009, a ski-touring camp in Slovenia, has already taken place, with 21 participants from seven different countries.

The events are coordinated by the UIAA Youth Commission and organised by UIAA member federations. While some of the events are aimed at young teenagers who want to join a trek in mountains below 2,000m, older mountaineers can take part in an ascent to the highest peak of Europe, supported by experienced leaders. You can find all the information, including age limits, registration deadlines and costs, on the Global Youth Summit calendar on www.theuiaa.org/global_youth_summit.html. Before you book for any event, you should check with the Department of Foreign Affairs for travel advice on the country you are planning to visit.

New international link

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND has affiliated to the IFSC (International Federation of Sport Climbing). This means that Irish climbers now have the possibility of applying for athlete licences to take part in European or international competitions. For further information on the IFSC, see: www.ifsc-climbing.org.

THE STORE TO EXPLORE



SALOMON

Quest 4D Boot

Salomon's pioneering new taking foot offers incredible support, comfort & performance. Leather & fabric upper combined with a waterproof GORE-TEX lining & Salomon's new 4D sole unit.

€160



MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT

Morpheus Jacket

A lightweight GORE-TEX Pro Shell jacket with a fantastic fit. Mountain equipment's renowned design ensures that all the features perform seamlessly well in all conditions. The hood alone describes a special ventilation & microclimate.

€269



THERMA-REST

NeoAir Mattress

The revolutionary new NeoAir is the lightest air mattress available and packs in a tiny size. Its unique design also makes it up to 4 times warmer than any other air-inflated air mattress. Comes in 6 sizes and 100lb test weight. Test and check out the comfort!

€129



ACT Trail 32 Backpack

A brilliantly thought and made from Deuter featuring an extra large top carry zip at the front that gives total access to the contents without opening the lid. A great day or multi day pack with built in raincover, pole loops & mesh pocket.

€85



SCARPA

Camba USB

A true mountaineering shoe, it is suitable for Scottish moorland, alpine ascents, AT&MT, granite & ice usage. Exceptional performance & durability. Men's size 4-10.5

€319



GREAT OUTDOORS

www.greatoutdoors.ie
chatham street : dublin 2 : 01 6794293



Mountaineering Ireland: What's in a name?

Ross Millar

Bearnagh in
the Mourne.
Photo: Ross
Millar.

Let's get the definitions out of the way first – the perceptions may be harder. For definitions I used to turn to the large *Oxford English Dictionary* on my shelf. However, I find that now I increasingly google Wikipedia.

This is controversial for some as Wikipedia is a peer-edited, totally open, internet-based reference encyclopaedia and there is intense debate as to whether that fact makes it more accurate and user relevant or

whether it is thus inherently 'flawed.'

This free, multilingual project operated by a non-profit foundation is written collaboratively by volunteers around the world and is currently the largest and most popular general reference work on the internet. The foundation actually only employs eight staff to deliver the vision of its founder, Jimmy Wales, but has thousands of associates and many times that actively inputting material. Wales had a simple vision: "Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the sum of all human knowledge."

So what does Wikipedia say about mountaineering? Let's see...

"Mountaineering is the sport, hobby or profession of walking, hiking, trekking and climbing up mountains. In Britain, the term hillwalking or fellwalking is normally used to describe the recreational practice of

walking or climbing in hilly or mountainous terrain, generally with the intention of visiting the tops of hills and mountains. The Mountaineering Council of Ireland defined the activity on their website."

I didn't make this up! That is what has just come up on my screen. So, apart from pleasure that the MCI somehow featured, let's leave all this defining here because it's obvious that the common thread to mountaineering is mountains and we could argue definitions all day.

Jimmy Wales wasn't the only person with a vision. John Muir had a vision that drove him to lobby presidents and devote his life to the preservation of wilderness areas in the United States. Can you imagine what rampant capitalism would have done to those areas had they not been established as the world's first national parks, dating from Yellowstone in 1872? What did

John Muir have to say about mountains?

"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves."

If you want a good read about mountains and what they have historically meant in the context of our human desire to understand and to explore, I definitely recommend Robert MacFarlane's book *Mountains of the Mind*. Just a short extract from his book to give you a flavour:

"Mountains...challenge our complacent conviction, so easy to lapse into, that the world has been made for humans by humans. They reshape our understanding of ourselves; of our own interior landscapes...they quicken our sense of wonder. The true blessing of mountains is not that they provide a challenge or a contest...it is something gentler and infinitely more powerful; they make us ready to credit marvels."

Understanding and living this ethos is to me what mountaineering is about. It makes no difference whether you think of yourself as a walker, climber, rambler or whatever tag you wish to put on yourself, it is the love of mountains and the mountain environment that surely is our common bond. I have little time for debates or indeed arguments as to who we represent. It is what we represent that matters. John Muir understood this. The connection with nature and with our physical and inner selves, the fundamental bonds that are formed, the shared experiences, the companionships, these are the things that matter. But we need access to our mountains to be such 'mountaineers.'

Following its approval at an Extraordinary General Meeting at the Autumn Meet in October last year, the Mountaineering Council of Ireland launched its next Strategic Development Plan. We did so with an awareness that the use of our mountains is growing, not just through those who wish to escape the fabricated human world but because of increasing awareness about our physical and mental health, and the desire to get our adrenaline going, however we choose to do that and in whatever form that is compatible with that fragile environment.

Thus the MCI Board had proposed to the membership that we re-focus

our efforts on increasing participation in our sport and facilitating performance pathways for all our members. Ours is a lifelong sport and our membership is more diverse than any other National Governing Body's. Having identified gaps in our current capacity, we see the need for more resources for hillwalking and coaching than exist within our current staff structure. I know from the meetings I have been party to that our members and our main funders, the two sports bodies, support the thrust of that plan.

At the MCI Autumn Meet last year, hosted and organised to a very high standard by Cork Mountaineering Club, this plan was formally adopted. At the Meet, I was asked time and time again "Are you in the MCI?" The enquiry was always well intentioned but the implication was that I was 'one of the Council.' The name did evoke this inner sanctum idea and what I always wanted to reply was a reworking of the words of John F Kennedy when he urged Americans to "ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country," thereby galvanizing a generation dedicated to public service. The MCI was all of us, and that is the message we increasingly must live.

Asked the equivalent question – 'what can you do for the MCI?' – the answer for our membership is surely not simply that we pay our fees. I am not suggesting that we all have to be activists but I believe that we (collectively) cannot afford to be complacent. John Muir understood this. We take much for granted in terms of access to our hills and the quality of that upland environment. There is no one out there to fight our corner but ourselves and, thankfully, as an organisation we are well recognised and highly regarded by the powers that be, not least by our funders. A bit like as with Wikipedia, some would argue that we are not purist enough and that we need to be more confrontational. I disagree. We have taken a conscious decision to work with landowners and land managers and respect their position. That does not detract from our desire to secure access and to deal with real, practical issues. We believe in a right of access to unenclosed uplands and we continue to work towards that.

We now know the detail of the funding we have received from the

sports bodies for the coming year in the context of a time of recession and institutional meltdown. At the Autumn Meet, the Board had already taken steps to ensure our financial health as a member-based organisation. Now that we employ staff, we must think well ahead. However, we, all of us, have a part to play. It is only by coming together and making our voices heard and through asserting our role as a National Governing Body that we can ensure so much we take for granted. This is not a time for division or semantics.

As an organisation, we are not simply about insurance or discounts. These are important elements of membership, but surely what we really are about is that common bond of the mountains and the need to protect and preserve our ability to use them? That is why we should all be in Mountaineering Ireland.

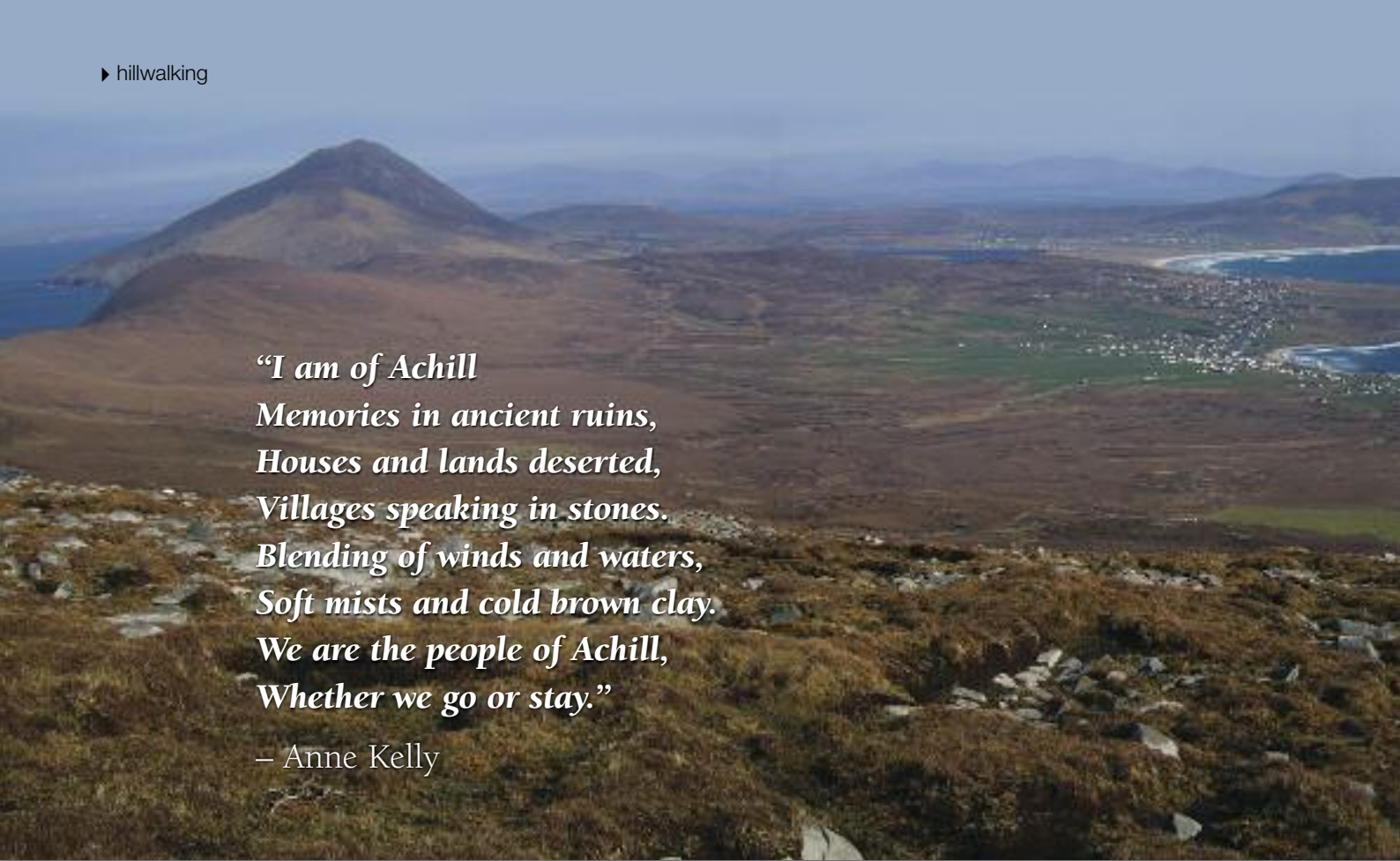
So, what's in a name? We need to be proud of all being mountaineers as defined by Wikipedia. We need to be as open to change as that charity's own associates and users make it. Like Jimmy Wales, I would say debate is healthy.

To vary Jimmy's vision: "Imagine a world in which every single person on the planet is given free access to the mountains and the rewards this brings."

In concluding, I would urge you to think about what our mountains mean to you and how you would feel if you could no longer go there, for whatever reason. I started going up mountains when I was a Cub Scout and then a Scout. I have continued all my life. My other lifelong passion is photography. I will thus leave with the words of the man I regard as the master:

"No matter how sophisticated you may be, a large granite mountain cannot be denied – it speaks in silence to the very core of your being." – **Ansel Adams**

Ross Millar is from Belfast and has been a mountaineer since an early age. He was Honorary Secretary of Mountaineering Ireland until recently when he stepped down to assume the interim position of Caretaker Manager.



*"I am of Achill
Memories in ancient ruins,
Houses and lands deserted,
Villages speaking in stones.
Blending of winds and waters,
Soft mists and cold brown clay.
We are the people of Achill,
Whether we go or stay."*

– Anne Kelly

Next stop, America

Adrian Hendroff reflects on the best walks in Achill

Achill panorama.
Slievemore (left)
to the Minaun
cliffs (right).
Photo: Adrian
Hendroff.

A light breeze brushed my cheeks in the warm sunshine. I closed my eyes and soaked up the atmosphere. Alone, amidst gloriously spacious views, serenity beckoned. Eyes back open, I slowly began to savour and trace the unending circular panorama. The cobalt blue waters of Blacksod Bay to the north with Belmullet in the distance. An uninterrupted vista back to the mainland due east dominated by the distant Nephin Beg range. The hilly Corraun peninsula to the southeast and Croagh Patrick farther away still. To the south, the unmistakable outline of Clare Island and its highest point, Knockmore. Then the prominent Minaun

Cliffs between that and the inviting Trawmore strand closer at hand. The still calm waters of Keel Lough and the sprawl of holiday homes at Keel closer still. Then, before a complete circle was traced back along the intricacies of the delightful coastline returning to Blacksod Bay, the eyes stop, transfixed on the massive bulk of Croaghau, a "little stack" perched at the edge of the world, dominating the view west of Slievemore's 671m summit where I stood.

Indeed, on a fine day, the view from the top of Slievemore is probably the most spectacular and commanding in all of Achill's 148km² spread of island. The name Achill was said to have originated from the Gaelic word 'acaill,' meaning eagle. One of the

earliest references to the island was in 1235 when the *Annals of Loch Cé* referred to 'Eccuill' or Eagle Island. Leaving the eagle's-eye-view from the summit, I descended its slopes, reversing the route of my ascent. But there is much more to Slievemore other than its summit. Along its southern slopes, around the 70m contour, sits the haunting and evocative remnants of an abandoned village. Consisting of 80-100 now roofless stone dwellings, the Deserted Village is a powerful testament to a traumatic period in the island's history, the Irish Famine of 1845-49. However, based on excavation studies of cottages and ceramics found in them, the village would have dated back to 1750, almost a hundred years before the Famine. According to Teresa MacDonald, a leading Achill archaeologist, "There were various folklore tales about it, but nobody knew when it was built or when it was deserted, even though it was occupied 150 years ago. People say it was used as a booley¹ village, and it was – but only after it was deserted.



The last memory of it was as a booley village, and so that idea stuck and people did not go further than the Famine.”

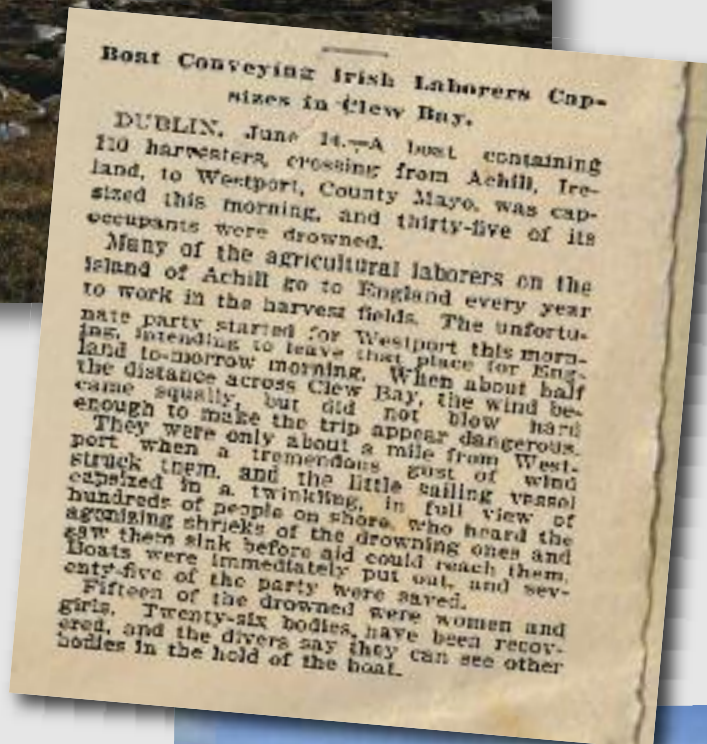
There may be truth that the Famine had a role to play. Based on a document *The Irish Famine*,² James H Tuke, a Quaker from York, stated: “Whilst upon the island of Achill, I saw a memorable instance of this mode of proceeding, at the wretched fishing village of Kiel. Here, a few days previous to my visit, a driver of Sir Richard O'Donnell, whose property it is, had ejected some twenty families, making, as I was informed, with a previous recent eviction, about forty. A crowd of these miserable ejected creatures collected around us, bewailing, with bitter lamentations, their hard fate. One old grey-headed man came tottering up to us, bearing in his arms his bedridden wife, and putting her down at our feet, pointed, in silent agony to her, and then to his roofless dwelling, the charred timbers of which were scattered in all directions around. This man said he owed little more than one year's rent, and had lived in the village, which had been the home of

his forefathers, all his life. Another man, with five motherless children, had been expelled, and their “boiling-pot” sold for 3 shilling. Another family, consisting of a widow and four young children, had their only earthly possession, a little sheep, seized and sold for 5 shillings.”

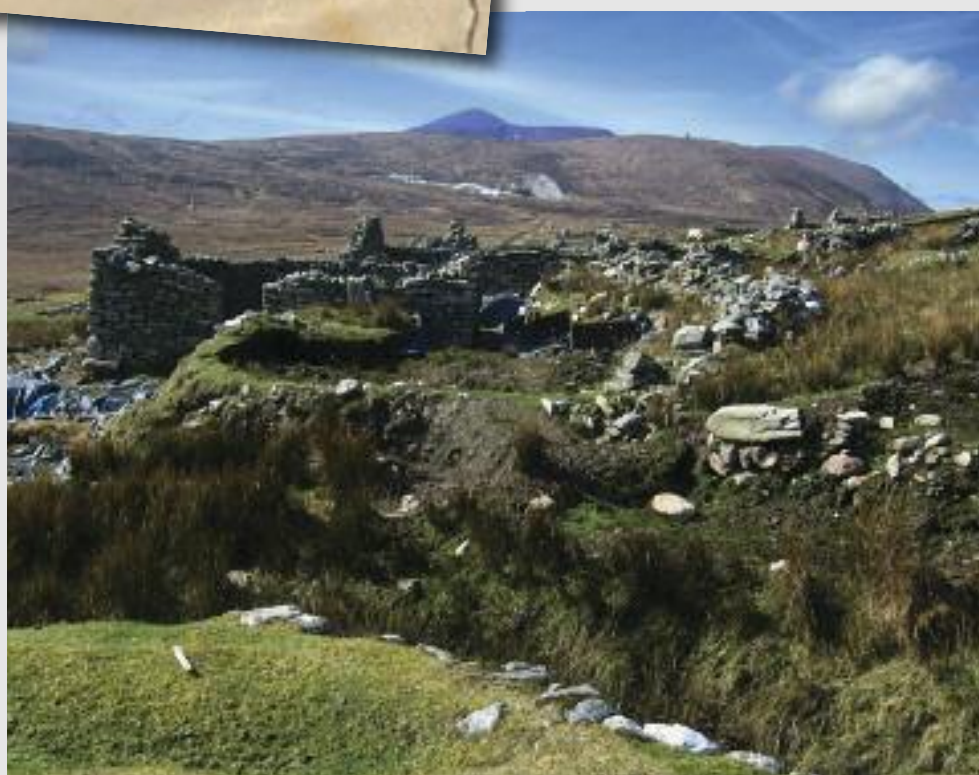
The cruel scourge of eviction, poverty and hardship probably contributed to the ebb of emigration that was to follow. But even emigration was not to be a ticket to salvation. Tales of ‘coffin-ships’ were prevalent. These were crowded and disease-ridden ships that carried emigrants across the Atlantic, and

many probably never made it to land on the other side. The Atlantic became the ‘Famine Graveyard’ for countless men, women and children. And if not lost to the ocean, they became food for the sharks.

Even in the light of projected development and transportation during post-Famine Achill, tragedy was not far behind. A study of OS Map 30 would reveal an old dismantled railway ending at Achill. This extension of a



Deserted Village.
Slievemore, Achill.
Photo: Adrian
Hendroff.





Above: Lough
Nakeeroge and
Annagh Strand.
Photo: Adrian
Hendroff.

Right: Croaghaun
to Slievemore
route. Note
location of
Deserted
Village.
Map: C  il  n
MacLochainn

railway from Westport to Achill in 1894 brought high expectations to this already depopulated region. However, as fate turned out, the first train brought home the bodies of the Clew Bay drowning victims. Eventually in 1937, having not been profitable, the railway company decided to discontinue the service.

However, due to the Kirkintilloch Burning Disaster, the line was forced to reopen and the final train arrived with the ghastly burned remains of the corpses of those who died. Even more chilling is the notion that this was prophesied by Brian Rua    Cearbh  in in the 17th century.    Cearbh  in was an Achill man born in 1648, and the story goes that he vividly saw in a dream, among other things, "carriages on iron wheels emitting smoke and fire would carry dead bodies to Achill both at the beginning and end of a new era of transport."

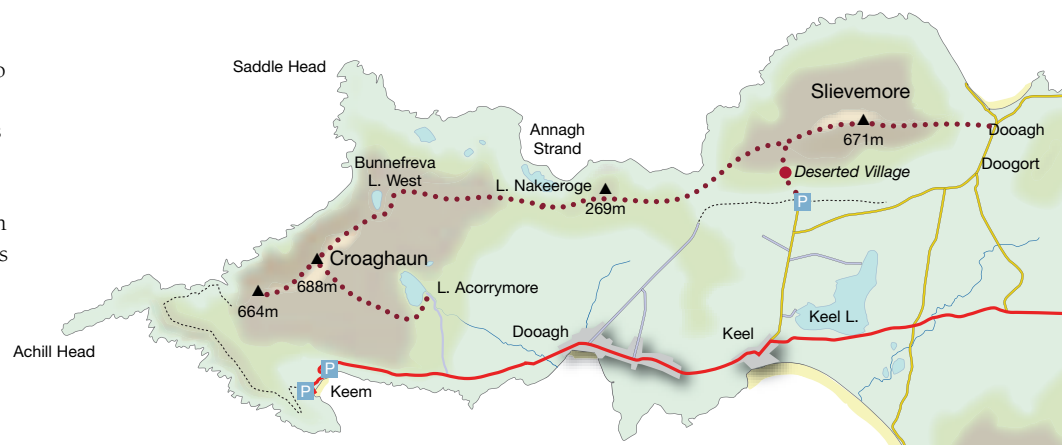
This somber mood and eerie lament was what probably encapsulated my feelings during my first visit to the island many years ago. The unceasing rain, blanketing gray mist, wild crashing waves and katabatic winds

were highlights as we drove from Achill Head to Keem Strand. The final stretch of road provided occasional glimpses of unhindered drops to the sea and feelings of mountains sensed but not seen offered some sort of impetus to return.

Subsequent visits felt like a curse lifted. Under the warmth of the afternoon sun and cloudless sky, the settled weather revealed another side of Achill to me – silvery-white cliffs, velvety mountains, purple heathlands and the deep blue sea. On days like these I would imagine that among some of the islanders of centuries past the hope of better days lived on. Even among the majority of islanders present today, an honest and simple life still prevails and has its own attractions in comparison to the rat-race of the 21st century on the

mainland. Robert Lloyd Praeger, in his brilliant book *The Way That I Went*,³ describes Achill as having a "strange charm which everyone feels but none can fully explain."

One of my favourite routes in Ireland is the exhilarating Croaghaun–Slievemore coast walk. Starting at the end of the road at Lough Acorrymore (F 579 058), walk up to spot height 202m on the southern end of the lake, then from there gradually ascend the spur to the normally wind-blasted summit of Croaghaun (688m). Views from the top are expansive: a panorama of Slievemore, Keel Lough and the Minaun cliffs to the east, and the mountains of Mayo and Connemara farther away along with many islands. In centuries past, sightings of golden and white-tailed sea eagles were





reported on its lofty heights until 1912. At the summit, optionally traverse the curved ridge south-westwards to its pyramid-shaped subsidiary summit (664m) where views of Achill Head and back toward the summit are astounding. The rest of the route is straightforward and takes in the intricate and shattered cliff-line above the Atlantic. Retrace steps back up to the summit, then follow the handrail with sea-cliffs dropping on the left and magnificent views of Saddle Head opening up as height is lost. Be aware of crumbling edges and continue to descend while passing above five stunning corrie lakes of various shapes and sizes. One such lake, Bunnafreva Lough West, is a jaw-dropping suspended corrie lake with swooping cliffs down to where it is perched precariously at over 300m and then from there plunging precipitously to the sea below (see photo). Continue eastwards, to pass the final and lowest corrie lake in all of Ireland, romantic Lough Nakeeroge (18m) which sits snugly above Annagh Strand; then up or around humps and bumps after that, as you fancy (I do recommend ascending spot height 269m though!), to later arrive at the col at F 625 074. From here, head straight up the spur to the summit of Slievemore (671m). Then continue east steeply down the spur toward Dooagh strand, or trace back steps west then drop down to the Deserted Village and finally to the car park by Slievemore cemetery at F 639 072.

Another short gem of an (evening) excursion is a drive up the minor road from F 690 019 to park beside the masts and then take a short leisurely stroll up to Minaun summit (466m) where a statue stands erected and where views of Croaghnaun, Slievemore and the island are breathtaking. From the summit, even Inishturk and

Inishbofin can be seen on a clear day, but the most rewarding time to spend here is at sunset, to leave persistent worries of everyday life behind by watching the golden sun sink slowly into the ocean west of Achill Head.

It was at the end of one of my visits to Achill that I decided to walk south-west from Keem strand up to the ridge-top above Moyteoge Head on a clear but windy day. From here, views out to the sea and cliffs are majestic, in union with Croaghnaun's sheer 470 vertical metres rise over 1km from the two little lakes at F 547 050 to its summit. Continuing along the ridge, I edged my way out to Achill Head as far as F 528 056 and due to prevailing winds decided to go no further. Here, I felt closer to the sea than ever before. As I stared out into the Atlantic beyond, I realised if I possessed superhuman ability to swim the ocean, I would eventually end up in America.

It was then that I imagined the wanderings of a young, rebellious and adventurous lad of centuries past, due to curiosity or necessity, reaching this point whereupon he wondered what lay beyond the horizon. Then

later my thoughts drifted back to Slievemore graveyard and I recalled reading somewhere that a team of archaeologists found something here which gave them an insight into the Famine and emigration. Teresa MacDonald quotes in an interview in *The Mayo News*,⁴ "This man must have gone to America, come back and erected a slab to his father who had died in 'Black '47'. His father's name and his name are on it – they were Mangans – and right across the centre of the stone in capital letters was 'AMERICAN CITIZEN.' He must have taken great pride in the fact that he went to America, made money, came back and erected this stone for his father. It is these types of discoveries which continue to surprise."

Adrian Hendroff is a member of Mountaineering Ireland and has extensive hillwalking experience in Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland. His mountain travels abroad include Iceland, Romania, the French Alps, the Pyrenees and the Dolomites. He is on the committee of the Walkers Association of Ireland and has contributed several articles to the Irish Mountain Log.

References

1. A booley village is one that is occupied for only part of the year to allow cattle to graze on fresh pasture.
2. *The Irish Famine*, Peter Gray, Harry N Abrams, Inc, New York (1995): *Mass Evictions During Famine*.
3. *The Way That I Went*, Robert Lloyd Praeger, Hodges, Figgis, Dublin, and Methuen, London (1937).
4. "Digging Up The Past," *The Mayo News*, 19 August 2008.

Croaghnaun summit from its southwest top.
Photo: Adrian Hendroff.

Saddle Head and Bunnefreva Lough West.
Photo: Adrian Hendroff.



Summit of Ramabang (Peak 6135) seen from Bauli Khad valley in the Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh, India.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.

Ramabang: the first ascent

Gerry Galligan and Darach Ó Murchú report on the first ascent of Himalayan Peak 6135 in the Debsa valley in Spiti.

Last summer, Gerry Galligan, Darach Ó Murchú, Paul Mitchell and Craig Scarlett travelled to India to attempt the first ascent of Peak 6135, an unclimbed Himalayan peak in the Spiti region of Himachal Pradesh. Gerry Galligan takes up the story...

With little Himalayan knowledge, contacts or experience, many months of preparation went into our expedition – time well-spent on mountaineering and historical research, fundraising, obtaining permits, planning logistics, engaging agents, and so on. Picking the brains of old hands in the Irish and Indian mountaineering scenes was also critical.

We settled on a target, an attractive six-thousand-metre mountain, Peak 6135, in the Debsa valley, a little known area near the Tibetan border. This place is best known by the local shepherds who graze their flocks of sheep and goats there in the summer months. Other than those shepherds, very few humans had explored this region or had much knowledge of the

several tributaries of the Debsa river. The two exceptions were a British explorer, Kenneth Snelson, who in 1952 along with J de V Graaff and Dr EA Schelpe, part-explored the head of the Debsa, and Paddy O'Leary's Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC) team who in 2000 attempted to find a pass linking the Debsa to another valley of significance in the area. The IMC team did not find the pass but did make the first ascent of a fine peak, Kangla Tarbo 1 (6315m), in an adjacent valley. Anyway, suffice it to say that the Debsa valley still offered plenty to do.

Whatever we ended up doing, one thing was agreed – it would be a fully self-reliant expedition attempted in a pure style with no high altitude porters or Sherpas and no assistance from anyone other than ourselves. We

would carry everything, with porters and donkeys only used to carry supplies from the roadhead, up the valley to Base Camp, a distance of 23km.

On 31 May 2008, we left Dublin for Delhi and then spent two days travelling in buses and jeeps to get to Sagnam, a village within striking distance of the Debsa valley. Along the way, we picked up a Liaison Officer (LO) and two cooks and then met up with our porters and donkeys in Sagnam.

The Spiti region is Buddhist and our visit to the monastery at Tabo made a big impression on us, with colourful thankas, 1,000-year-old frescos, and other evidence of the rich Buddhist heritage there.

Three days later we reached a confluence, Thwak Debsa, where we

located a freshwater supply and established our Base Camp. On the way, we had encountered two hazardous nalas or rivers, the crossing of which might have posed problems, one having a broken bridge, the other having no bridge, but both were eventually overcome.

I was interested to discover Thwak Debsa means 'place of stoney summits among glaciers' in Spitian. We were fascinated to see how the locals harnessed the barren landscape to create fertile oases in which to grow their crops of potatoes, barley, peas and mustard seed by an ingenious system of irrigation and river control. Physically and culturally, Spitian are more Tibetan than Indian. We found them a friendly, frugal and happy people, with plenty of time to salute strangers with a smiling 'Julay,' and to chat or offer help if it was needed.

Our trek in to Base Camp (BC) had allowed us to gently acclimatize, going from 3600m at Sagnam to 4250m at Thwak Debsa. Nevertheless, further acclimatisation was essential prior to tackling any of the peaks in the area.

After a rest and organisation day at BC, myself, Paulie, Craig and our LO did a recce halfway up the East Upper Debsa and deposited two Advance Base Camp tents at the base of the SW ridge of Peak 6135.

An examination of the ridge indicated that it would be a feasible climb – but not without difficulty. A steep tower halfway up at 5500m would pose a problem, with three potential options, and the summit snowfield appeared steep in places. But of greater concern to us was the approach to the ridge which necessitated two river crossings, one at our BC confluence, crossing the West Debsa nala, and the other at a 150m waterfall feeding the East Debsa nala at the base of the ridge. As we were to find and practice over the coming weeks, river crossings were best done in the early morning, before any snowmelt from feeding glaciers increased water volume and velocity. We also rigged a tyrolean traverse across the West Upper nala confluence in order to be able to retreat from the East Upper valley in the evenings when returning to BC.

On June 14th, Darach, Paulie, Craig and I set out for our first objective – that of potentially the first crossing of the two heads of the Debsa valley from west to east, and then back to BC. It was an acclimatisation exercise, but

First ascent facts

Peak: Peak 6135, East Upper Debsa valley, Spiti, Himachal Pradesh, India

Coordinates: N 31° 57'30" E 77° 53'10"

Type of rock: Sedimentary shale & slate

Date of first ascent: 22 July 2008

Proposed Name: Ramabang

Route: SW ridge

Grade: Assez Difficile (AD)

First ascensionists: Gerry Galligan, Darach Ó Murchú, Paul Mitchell

also an exploration Snelson hadn't done. The col lies adjacent to the Kulu-Spiti mountain divide, the major chain of peaks in the region. Travelling light, we progressed two-thirds of the way up the West Upper Debsa to an altitude of 5100m. However, two nights of rain and cold plus our inferior bivvy bag shelters and the uncertain weather put paid to our chances of a col crossing. Owing to his waterlogged bag, Paulie fell particularly foul of the cold wet conditions and we retraced our steps to BC. All was not lost, however –

acclimatisation was achieved and the distinct tracks of two snow leopards were discovered across the glacier as we padded back to camp.

On June 18th, we began our attempt on Peak 6135, with the four of us ferrying loads up the West Upper Debsa to the base of the peak (See Map 1, page 29). However, this exertion and that of the previous col attempt had tired us all and so the next day was declared a rest day. The following day, with everyone refreshed, we continued manhauling loads up to ABC at 4800m, to the top

The team at Base Camp.
Back row (L to R): Craig Scarlett, Paul Mitchell, Masthi (Liaison Officer), Darach Ó Murchú.
Front row (L to R): Manbadhur (cook's assistant), Gerry Galligan, Raj Kumar (cook).
Photo: Gerry Galligan Collection.





On the trek in to Base Camp.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.

of the waterfall flowing down into the East Upper nala. Weather and mountain conditions were promising.

On June 21st, we left ABC and began ascending the peak via the south face of the ridge, up tons of rust-red scree. We found a rib and gully and scrambled 150m onto the ridge crest. It was tough going, with each man hauling 18-20kg, the heat building up and the ground loose and unpredictable underfoot. Overall the rock quality in Spiti is poor – a sedimentary mix of shattered slate and crumbling shale; dreadful stuff. Often we pined for the firm, familiar granite of Wicklow. Nevertheless we moved up the ridge, scrambling over tors and slipping regularly.

Our ears became accustomed to the distant roar of the Debsa nala and the constant clatter of tumbling rock underfoot, like delph falling off a kitchen table. It was unpleasant, slow and breathless climbing. The only encouraging aspect was the settled spell of weather. That said, we made progress and edged closer to the crux at 5600m, the 100m tower of unknown difficulty. Our plan had been to scale this problem or traverse around it by its righthand side and then make camp on a safe flat section above it, but it was getting late, mid-afternoon, and our bodies were tired, so we opted to make camp on a small saddle below it.

Darach Ó Murchú takes up the story:



he alarms called at 3am to a bitterly cold dark frosty morning on our perch at 5500m on a mini-col

below a rock tower, the crux of the route. There were grumbles of resistance from some quarters but we slowly rose and got it together. A fresh coat of snow covered the ground outside. Craig was exhausted from the previous day and bravely decided to forego a summit attempt. Thus we re-assessed our plan and reduced our equipment needs.

When we eventually shifted, progress was slow, but steady, with the altitude keeping a reign on our pace. Pauli took the lead on the tower, dispatching any difficulties with ease, putting in runners and enjoying it. We moved together on the rope so the middle man clipped in and out, the final one collecting gear. The run out was serious and the loose and unpredictable rock, which we constantly cursed, required utmost concentration. Shouts of “rock below” were the norm as the poor unfortunate below dodged and tried not to get knocked off. Relieved, after 150m of climbing, we exited on a rib close to the top of the tower where we were able to unrope, walk across to a col and continue scrambling on the rocky ridge toward the summit.

It was now a glorious day and we could finally see what lay ahead and saw what might be the summit area. The time estimates for the remainder of the route were running through my head. Of course they turned out to fall short; the ridge was deceptively long and the summit snow slopes turned out to be slow going. Each of us had our high and low points of energy, but a good rest stop and some energy food picked us up again. There were some enjoyable bits of scrambling on the ridge before the snow took over and crampons and ice axes were put to use.

We snaked our way up the final 300m, a monotonous 40-50° snow slope, altering techniques so as not to overtire, the slope getting steeper the higher we went. It was nice to move freely but it was a slog, counting steps till the next respite. As we neared the top, energy and enthusiasm built up with the anticipation of our achievement, a dream being realised. I was trying to keep cool as it is prudent to remember that only half the work is done when the summit is reached. We gathered at a minor col next to the summit rocks at mid-day, the dizzying east face almost not visible as it fell away below. The view was amazing, euphoria accentuating the beauty. We were the only people on a mountain in a 30km radius and we were at least seven days from civilisation. We clambered awkwardly onto the summit rocks of about 7m high and savoured the moment....

* * * * *

After looking around, we took some pictures and then descended, making easy work of the snow slopes and descending in twenty minutes what had taken two hours to climb. We made our way steadily down the ridge, only a few loose rock holds giving a scare or two. We roped up again for the descent of the technical section and arrived back at high camp at around 5pm, to be congratulated by Craig. The four of us got into the three-person tent after dinner, a cosy arrangement, and were asleep by 7pm, satisfied with the day's activity.

The following day we sauntered down to ABC, retracing our route down the SW ridge. We panned out in the sun for a few hours, getting sunburnt in the process but glowing internally from our achievement. The next day was a struggle. We carried all our gear back down to Base Camp in

one go, carrying close to 40kg each, deceiving ourselves that we'd do a gear drop along the way, but not being able to face the drudgery of trudging up again. At BC, our triumph was celebrated with a small bottle of Jameson and a cake our cooks baked. High spirits prevailed!

The summit sortie had taken five days from Base Camp with an additional day of load-ferrying beforehand. Funny how you can climb five mountains in a day back home, but it was the converse out there, with a lot of hard work and some pain and discomfort. No complaints, though; a thoroughly rewarding effort. The route was highly enjoyable, despite the character of the rock, a good mixture of scree/rubble scrambling combined with large pillar and tor climbing (sometimes bypassed by a traverse, sometimes climbed directly), leading to the tower technical section (of traverse, chimney, ramps, snow patches, blocks and ledges), upper ridge and the final summit snow field. On occasion moderate scrambling on piles of large loose blocks was 'exciting;' on other occasions (such as the initial 200m scramble to gain the ridge proper) the climbing was a delight with conveniently found hand-holds and the rare relief of the security of sound rock.

Gerry Galligan resumes the story:

During our rest days at BC, two Rampur shepherds brought their flock of 400 sheep and Kashmir goats into the valley. It was a strange but wonderful sight, seeing so many fine animals milling around camp. Considering the occasional hardship we mountaineers face, without question these men and their animals endure more prolonged discomfort – they had crossed many mountain passes and glaciers during a 25-day journey, fighting off predators, living rough and constantly dealing with the elements. They would remain in the Debsa for two months, prospering on the high grasses, after which they would return to Rampur for the winter, another epic journey. A long, hard, lonely existence, but a healthy one. We could only admire them.

Having made the first ascent of our peak, we agreed to propose the name "Ramabang" for it, meaning 'place of Rama.' This for one main reason: I could find no other mountain in the

On the summit rocks.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.



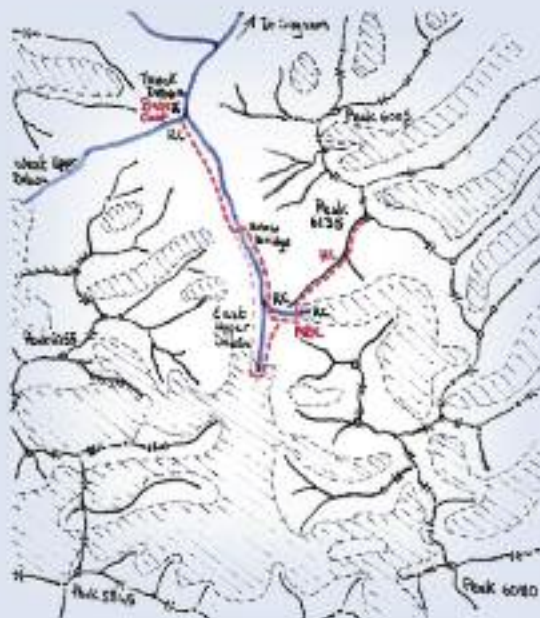
"We climbed awkwardly onto the summit rocks of about 7m high and savoured the moment..."

View from the summit.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.



Indian Himalaya dedicated to Rama, one of the great characters of Hinduism and the hero of the Hindu sacred text, the *Ramayana*.

We were all delighted at having climbed this mountain. Our expedition was a success. But there was still one more challenge to take on, the exploration of a neighbouring valley, the Bauli Khad. To our knowledge, no one had explored this valley, let alone reached the head of it to cross a col into its bigger



Map 1. Route followed from Base Camp to ABC to summit of Peak 6135. Map: Darach Ó Murchú.



Venturing into the unknown.
The Bauli Khad valley.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.

neighbour, the Dibibokri. Would we be the first to do it?

On June 28th, Darach and myself left BC for a recce of the area (see Map 2, page 31). Paulie was immersed in solving the many bouldering problems around Thwak Debsa and was not to be moved, and Craig was resting up with a swollen toe. Our excursion began badly with intermittent showers of rain forcing us to take cover under our tent flysheet. Later that afternoon, we realised we had taken a high route on the west wall of the valley mouth directly from Thwak Debsa, unexpectedly forcing us to descend 100m to the valley floor. What with the poor weather, the misdirection and the endless poor rock, we frequently had reservations about continuing, but we managed to get some of the way up the valley by evening and make camp at the snout of the glacier. Once the weather had cleared we were immediately enchanted by the sight to the south of the high conical summit and fine lines of a snow-tinged peak, rising majestically from a massif: Ramabang, *our* mountain. We were chuffed.

The next morning saw blue skies, and the col at the head of the valley was crystal clear. To the right adjoining it lay a huge 6507m unclimbed tower with many serrated ridges and steep snow-filled gullies. On the opposite side was a high wall of treacherous hanging glaciers and crumbling rock, guarding the valley basin. An impressive, contrasting amphitheatre. A gradual snow slope

led to the col, which we plodded up. It was hard, slow going, particularly given the reflected heat of the morning sun. By 11am we made the col and ascended it. It wasn't technical and placed us at 5600m. A lovely sweeping view of the Dibibokri with its many large peaks revealed itself. We took it all in. Descending to this valley was feasible. An axe, a pole and the comfort of a rope would do.

After two days' rest back at BC, Darach, Paulie and myself set out to cross this col and trek down the Parvati valley. We were lucky with good weather. On our second day out at 10am we crossed the col without difficulty and entered the Dibibokri. Several crevasses had to be negotiated prior to reaching the main valley. Hot and tired, we took a rest below the giant wall of the Kulu-Spiti divide. However, our slumber was interrupted by a rock the size of a television set tumbling down the wall towards us. We were lucky. It narrowly missed Paulie; I never saw him move so quickly.

As we marched down the valley we examined the fortress that is the divide between unclimbed Peak 6507 and the Dibibokri Pyramid. It is a high impenetrable bastion. I couldn't help recalling the 1956 expedition of British climbers Peter Holmes and Garret Walker and how they managed to descend it from the Khamengar valley. They had been climbing and exploring the nearby Ratang valley and were hoping to follow Snelson's route from the head of the West Upper

Debsa to the Parvati. But without a map, they were well off track. Two valleys off track. But they managed to get to the Parvati despite not having eaten for days. It was quite a feat – descending the divide without food and only primitive gear. Nerve-wracking in the extreme. We could only take our hats off to them and be thankful for our knowledge and in not having to follow them. They were desperate brave men.

There must be 100 square kilometres of moraine waste in the Dibibokri. Hundreds of thousands of rough red boulders and stones. And it felt like we trampled over every one of them as we made our way south to the Dibi Ka nala. It was hard work and the loads on our backs didn't help. But our toil was rewarded once we reached a confluence, and the lush greenery and an abundance of sweet-smelling flowers lifted our spirits. From here to the Paravati was a pleasure as we followed an easy shepherd track and admired the wonderful array of buttercups, forget-me-nots, poppies and juniper bushes in full bloom under our feet. It was quite a contrast to the harsh rocks and glaciers of the previous weeks that we had become accustomed to.

Two days later, we reached the village of Khirganga and immersed ourselves in the hot sulphur baths there. Our expedition was over. We were delighted with what we had seen and what we had achieved. A first ascent and a new route over a pass from the Debsa to the Parvati.

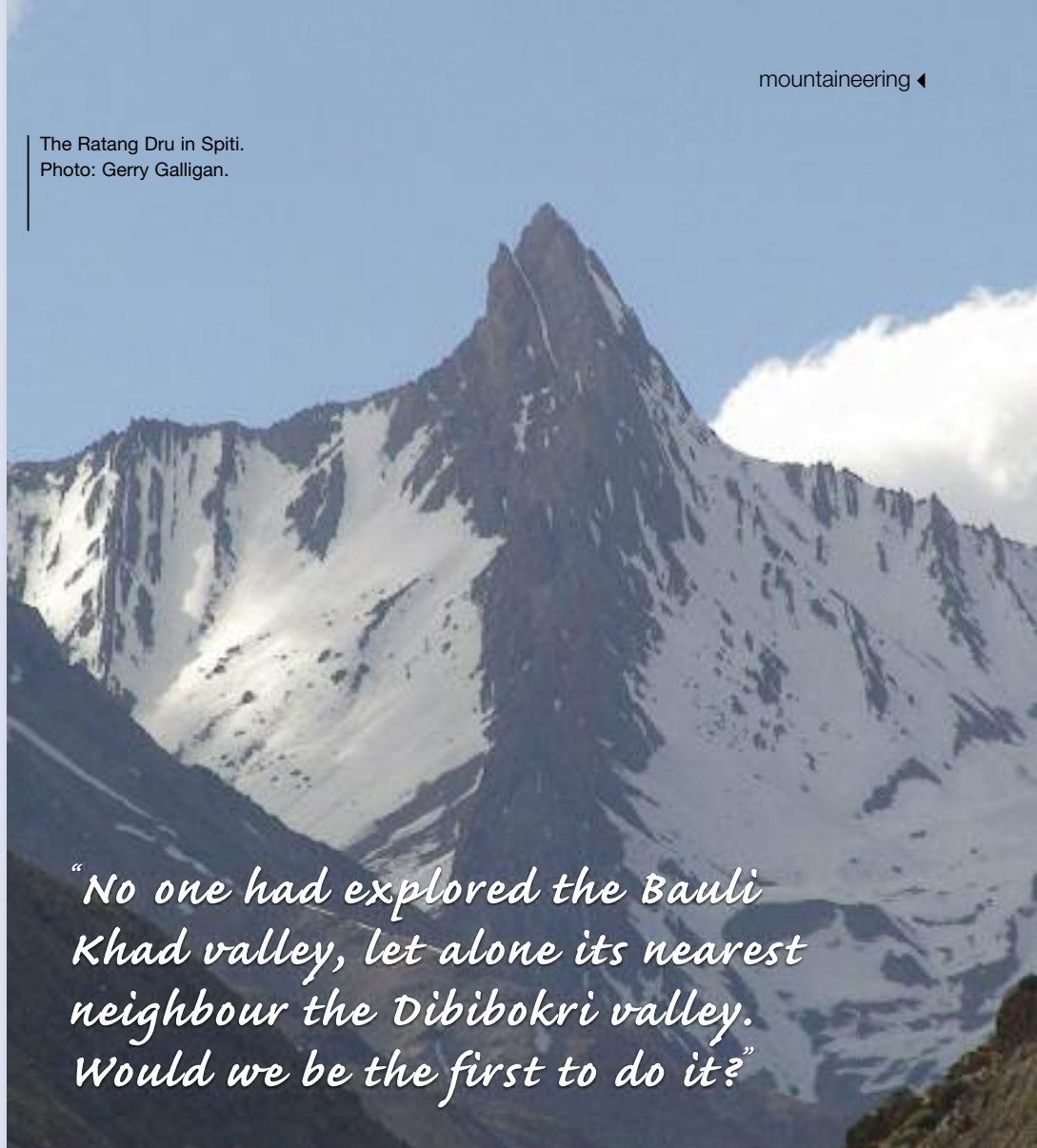
Certainly Spiti and Kulu, its people and mountains had been kind to us, four lads who had never been to the Himalaya before. Most definitely these experiences will remain with us for many years. And who knows, it may not be long before we make a return trip to the area again.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks to the many individuals, family and friends who helped make this expedition possible with their support and advice, along with the following organisations: Lowe Alpine, MCI, IMC, Glenwalk and Summit Sports. ■

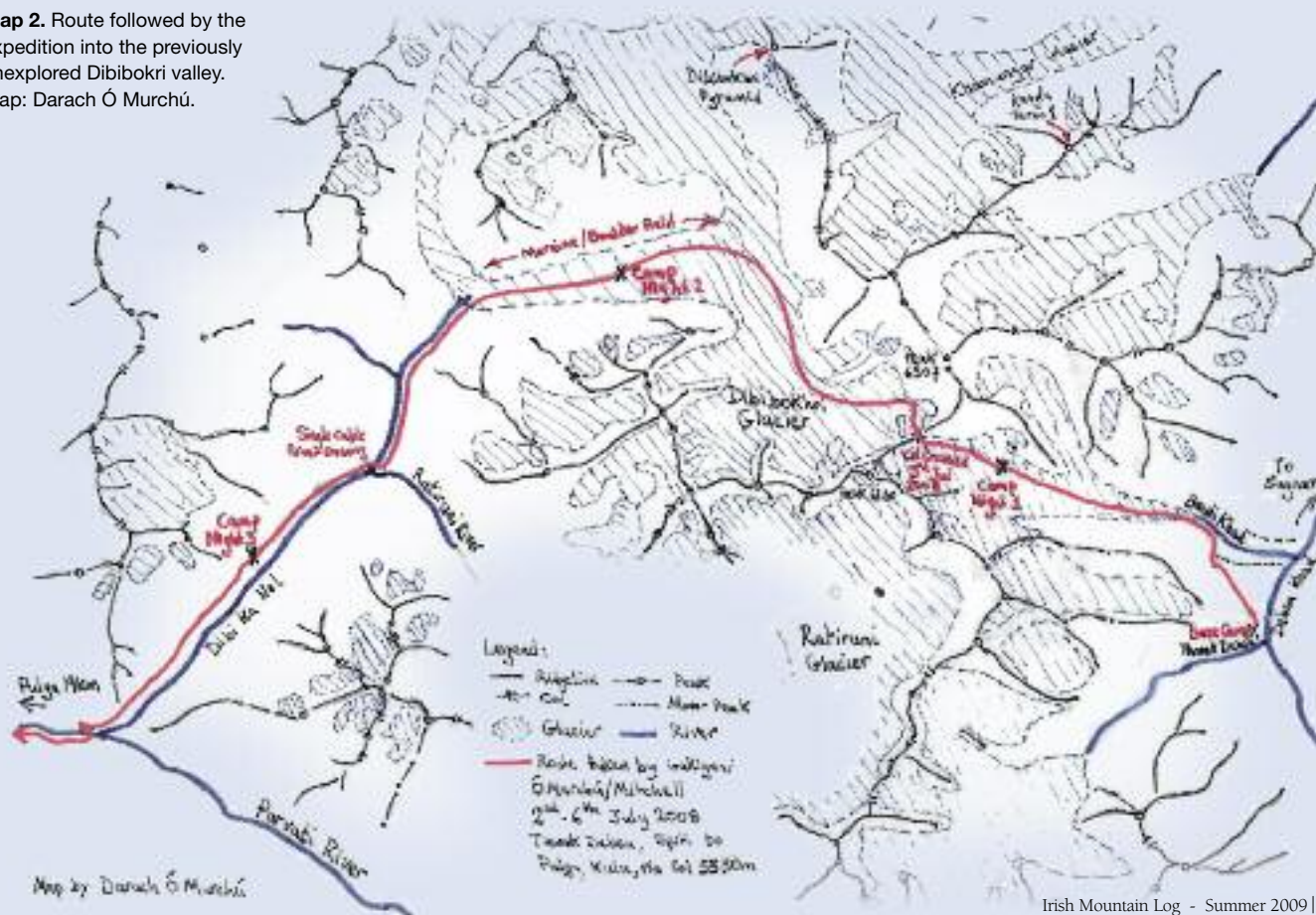
Gerry Galligan is a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC). He is a keen mountaineer, enjoying rock, ice and alpine climbing anywhere. Darach Ó Murchú is also a keen mountaineer, enjoying rockclimbing and hillwalking. A member of Mountain Meitheal and the IMC, he holds both the Winter and the International Mountain Leader Awards. He is a freelance instructor and a Leave No Trace Master Educator. He can be contacted at: domurchu@hotmail.com.

The Ratang Dru in Spiti.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.



"No one had explored the Bauli Khad valley, let alone its nearest neighbour the Dibibokri valley. Would we be the first to do it?"

Map 2. Route followed by the expedition into the previously unexplored Dibibokri valley.
Map: Darach Ó Murchú.





Ascent of Ama Dablam

Paddy Cave climbs Ama Dablam alpine-style

Ama Dablam
from the yak
herding station at
Dzonglha.
Photo:
Paddy Cave.

T “I don’t know if that will be possible. Perhaps for Lobuche, but for Ama Dablam...I’m not sure,” was the response of the Nepalese trekking guide when we stated our plans for our trip and ultimately to climb Ama Dablam (6812m). We had explained that we were going to follow the popular trekking circuit up to Gokyo Ri and over the Cho La Pass to climb Lobuche East, before heading on to climb Ama Dablam and then trekking out.

This was okay, but it was the style that he doubted, as we planned to carry all that we needed for the whole trip in our packs, including our mountain gear. That, coupled with the fact that we planned to climb Ama Dablam in one continuous push without stocking high camps, left him doubtful.

Of course, we knew it was definitely possible to approach this trip in alpine style. Many Himalayan ascents had been done like that, although it did make us wonder just how challenging it might prove to be. To add to the difficulties, we were bringing a rack and ropes and were adamant we would free-climb the route, avoiding the use of any of the fixed ropes that are commonly in place on the SW Ridge of Ama Dablam. Although we were set on this type of approach, we had chosen the route as something

classic to do and that would give us the chance to gain a feel for climbing in the Himalayas, as it was our first trip there.

My climbing partner Mike Thomas and I had flown into Kathmandu in Nepal in November of last year, spending some time buying dehydrated food and other supplies there that would be expensive or hard to get later. We had then flown to the little airstrip at Lukla in the Solu Khumbu. We were quite surprised, as we trekked down from Lukla to the first village, at how few climbers there appeared to be. Most of the foreigners we met were trekking, with the exception of two expedition groups, one destined for Lobuche also, and the other for Pumori. However, they had originally planned to do Ama Dablam also, but had changed their

“We planned to climb Ama Dablam in one continuous push, carrying all our gear and without stocking high camps. We would also free-climb the route, without any fixed ropes.”

plans due to a big ice-fall that had just come off that peak. We had heard about this ice-fall but had decided that all we could do was go up there and have a look for ourselves. Things will often fall off big, snowy mountains, after all, although in the case of an expedition where someone is paid to be responsible for others and summit hopes are high, a plan B might well be justified.

Walking up the Khumbu valley in the coming days provided continuous interest. New peaks were coming into view all the time and the whole place was fascinating in every way – the people, the culture and the mountain environment.

On the third day of trekking the cloud broke and we got our first view of Ama Dablam, the translation of this name being ‘the Mother and Pearl Necklace.’ It is called this because of the ridges stretching out on either side of the peak, which are curved and outstretched like embracing arms, and because of the blue jewel, the ‘Dablam,’ that hangs in the centre of the upper face like a pendant. This jewel shone beautifully in the sun, though we knew that we should treat it with caution as many expeditions had walked away from the mountain since the massive ice-fall a few days previously. In fact, no one had summited yet this season. We were also aware of the catastrophe that had taken place at Camp 3 on 14th November 2006 due to an ice-fall from the Dablam. It’s fair to say that we had a lot of respect for the hanging serac that dominates the upper face. However, having seen Ama Dablam looming majestically up-valley, our motivation was higher than ever and we became fixed in discussion about the climb. We noticed how the importance of making the summit was increasing for both of us when usually it was the quality of the climb and overall experience that would be the main motivation. Indeed, the battles that are followed by retreats often gave the best experiences. But here, the summits had a sacred lure to them. They are sacred to Hindus and

Buddhists, and for them are the domain of various deities, but for me they seemed to touch another world, a high place where everything stood totally still, a place where you felt totally privileged to be.

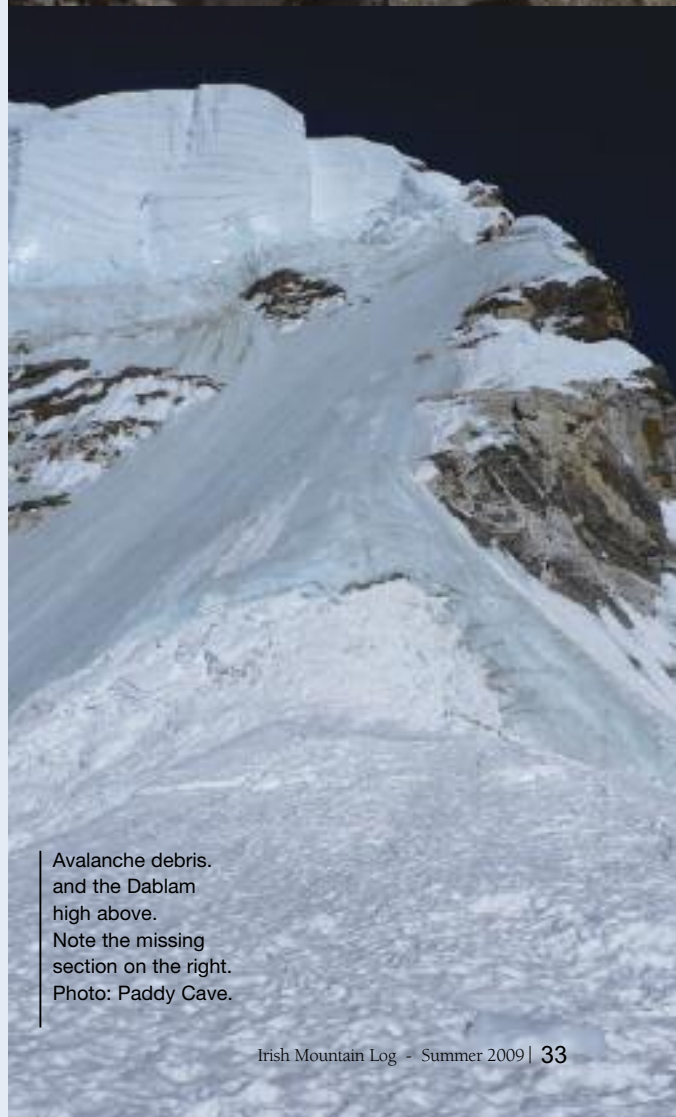
Before we attempted to climb Ama Dablam, though, we had a plan to go up the Gokyo valley, ascend Gokyo Ri (5357m) and then cross the Cho La Pass (5450m) before heading up to climb Lobuche East Peak (6090m). This, we hoped, would get us adequately acclimatised for Ama Dablam so that we would have no altitude problems on the ascent. The trek took us through some great places such as the village of Dole, where we chose the smallest lodge we could see, something which had become normal practice to avoid the crowds. We enjoyed great food and a yak-dung stove, which was welcome after a day of snowfall. Dried yak-dung burns incredibly well and it was necessary to use it for heat and for cooking there because of the lack of tree-wood, even at that altitude in the Khumbu. Our hostess produced some dishes from the open hearth in her kitchen, which was totally blackened by smoke, that would put my finest efforts at home to shame.

Lobuche East Peak

Having crossed the Ngozumpa Glacier and dropped down off the Cho La Pass some days later, we stayed at Dzonglha, a summer yak-herding station below the huge north face of Arakam Tse. We then moved down to the lower base camp for Lobuche East Peak. Now eager to get climbing and get the arms moving, we cached our excess gear and set off for a high camp on the shoulder. The following day we went to the summit via a route which included a brilliant ridge traverse to the true summit of Lobuche East. The climb got us in climbing mode and gave us the chance to check over the gear. We also realised how much food is eaten at altitude. Having run out of food on the first day and done the summit day without any food, our Happy Trekker granola bars were not going to do the



Ama Dablam on the trek in.
Photo: Paddy Cave.



Avalanche debris and the Dablam high above.
Note the missing section on the right.
Photo: Paddy Cave.

“Mushroom Ridge gave us some fairly airy climbing, as it had formed particularly narrowly; it later collapsed on a Sherpa.”

job for Himalayan climbing, but they are light....

After some rest days, we trekked to Ama Dablam Base Camp. We had no base camp, though, except for our single skin tent, which wasn't all that spacious. We were surprised to hear that a new lodge had just been built beside Base Camp and decided to use it. We were the only guests, perhaps because it wasn't known about yet, or the expeditions found it cheaper to set up a base camp. The Base Camp atmosphere is also a key part of the experience for many, so maybe the lodge would remain quiet?

The owner of the lodge, who had been a climbing sherpa and made many ascents of Ama Dablam and Everest as well as other mountains, was very hospitable to us. He told us about the mountain and explained that he no longer worked as a climbing sherpa since his brother had died at Camp 3 in 2006. His sense of loss was clear, though his passion for

climbing still surfaced at times during conversation. He was more encouraging about our plan, and thought a free ascent would be good, although he had not climbed it this way. He thought, though, that the Yellow Tower would be very tricky in big boots and with a big bag and gloved hands. He was relatively correct about that.

In fact, the SW Ridge route is graded about Ed1 when climbed free, though the presence of fixed lines, often in reach, meant a stubbornness was needed to make the ascent as cleanly as possible. The fixed lines also offer a line of retreat and reduce the commitment of the route, something which is not necessarily desirable. A comment was made about cleaning the route and restoring it to its original state as we climbed it, though this might not have made us the most popular people back at Base Camp. We also discussed the use of the in-situ gear. At times it was useful to clip in to some of it for protection and quick belays...but were we happy with that? If we were climbing in the Alps, we often clipped in-situ belays and pegs, so we decided that we were okay with it. The 'speed against good style' compromise was met to our satisfaction.

These types of decisions were of great importance to us. For both of us

it was important to approach the climb with the intention of climbing it in the best style we could, and this helped us make our decisions about how we climbed the route. For example, we carried no jumars (for ascending fixed lines), we took just enough food for a straight up-and-down approach, and we modified and selected kit for its light weight and minimal qualities rather than for sustained comfort. Setting off on the climb with this mindset helped to avoid the temptation to use the fixed ropes or make any changes to our plans in order to reach the summit more easily.

Camp 2

The free-climbing on the route turned out to be of high quality. The first two days up to Camp 2 provided good-quality scrambling, ridge traversing and rockclimbing, all on superb golden rock. In the end we were pushed to use some fixed gear on the Yellow Tower pitch after an attempt to free it and eventually had to do it in the dark with our head torches. This gave us access to Camp 2, which is perched on a prominent tower on the ridge. We arrived there to find empty tents filling the best spots and very quickly decided to make ourselves at home in one. It seemed like a palace after our small

Ama Dablam looms in the distance, viewed from the shoulder camp on Lobuche East Peak. Photo: Mike Thomas.



bivi tent. This may not be the done thing on the mountain, but we decided to do it very quickly. After all, can it really be the done thing to pitch tents on the few spaces available in such a place and leave them there throughout the season, often empty?

We decided that we would attempt to summit the next day. We made this decision for a couple of reasons: firstly, we felt good and thought that avoiding an extra night of sleeping high could only be good, and secondly, it seemed a good idea to avoid using Camp 3, which is extremely exposed to ice-fall from the Dablam.

The following day, we set off on snow and ice, with two rock pitches to access the Grey Tower. The climbing varied, though it was of continued interest, and the section known as the Mushroom Ridge gave us some fairly airy moving together, as it had formed particularly narrowly, as a Sherpa informed us later after it had collapsed on him. We moved through the avalanche debris at Camp 3, commenting on how fortunate it was that no one had been camped there when it had happened. We had heard that Camp 2.9 was a safer option lower down which is often used now, although due to the lack of space there the use of Camp 3 was still often necessary.

Summit day

We climbed solid blue ice under the Dablam. Although the angle was not that steep, the climbing there was quite demanding due to the hardness of the old ice that had been exposed, as the falling ice had stripped away the neve. Passing under the Dablam was a matter-of-fact type of experience. At this stage, we had made the decision to climb under it as it seemed to have settled since we had been there. While climbing under it, the steepness and overwhelming size of the Dablam left no room for debate as to what the outcome of a collapse would be for us, so it was just a matter of minimising our time on the exposed ice slope below it. Pulling around the Dablam and crossing the Bergschrund – that is, the final crevasse below the summit slopes – gave us access to the upper snow slope. This was all climbable by daggering up with our axes, though the altitude did force us to pace ourselves.

The final steps onto the summit



took me out of the flow that I had become engrossed in. The realisation that I was looking across the Himalayas, past Everest and Lhotse and into the distance, seeing no break in the jagged horizon line, was surreal. These were mountains that I had often read about and recognised in some cases, including various routes up them.

It is hard to put into words what such places are like or what it is, exactly, that motivates climbers to go to such lengths for such an experience. Of course, it is probably different for all who do stand on a summit. For me, the quality of the climbing and the line taken up the mountain were important, and also the style in which I climbed it. The summit experience was separate to all that. It was an experience detached from the climb, the climbing ethics, the style or anything I'd usually think about on completion of a route. It was a brief visit to another pristine and awesome world.

Looking back at my summit experience on Ama Dablam, I wonder if that experience was shared by all

who summit, or does it depend on the climbers' perceptions of what they are actually doing? It brought me closer to understanding how expedition tactics – that is, using the fixed lines and bringing the mountain into the comfort zone of those who might not attempt it on their own – could still deliver such an experience when on the summit. I wondered whether the feeling on the summit was related to the approach that someone took to climbing the mountain in general? Whatever approach is chosen, though, such places will always retain their impartial serenity and will continue to draw many climbers, using many different tactics, to their tops. ■

Paddy Cave is a freelance Mountain Instructor, originally from Newtownards, Co Down. He lives in the Lake District and is interested in all aspects of climbing, mountaineering and the outdoor environment. He particularly enjoys trad rockclimbing, mixed climbing and alpine climbing. He would like to thank TradeTalk, the online equipment comparison site, for their support on this trip.

Entering the Grey Tower on summit day. Photo: Paddy Cave.



En route to
Dolic Hut.
Photo: David
Bourke
Collection.

Traversing the Julian Alps

John Hurley and David Bourke

John Hurley and David Bourke of the Sligo Mountaineering Club report on their club's trip to the Julian Alps in Slovenia in July of last year.

We flew to Salzburg as there were no direct flights to Slovenia that suited our group. Arriving late in the evening, we spent the night there before setting off the next morning for the three and a half hour journey to Slovenia by train.

The train passed through beautiful alpine countryside as we ascended towards the Slovenian border and much time was spent admiring the

unfolding scenery of mountains and snow gullies. The spirits were high at the thoughts of the pleasures that lay ahead on the high slopes of the Julian Alps. Once across the border we made our way to the ski resort of Kranjska Gora by bus where we took time to top up on some supplies and have a good lunch before we set off for our first, short two-hour hike up the Planica Valley. We passed through some lovely meadows and on up past the Planica Ski Jumps to arrive at the Tamarju Hut (1108m), where we stayed for the night.

We were all up bright and early the next day, and left the hut at 8:20am

for our first real day's hike. The morning started with a mist and, looking up to the high ridge above, it seemed impassable. Our target that day was to climb the 800m to the summit of Slemenova Spica, which stands at 1911m. The ascent took us up alongside the Tamar waterfall and into a steep rocky gully with patches of snow. After a short scramble up this gully, we reached more open terrain. We soon arrived at the summit, our first major achievement of the trip. From the summit we enjoyed the superb views of the Tamar valley and the surrounding peaks of the North West Julian Alps. We then descended

along the well marked path to the Vrsic Pass, 1611m. A paved road which was built by POWs in World War I crosses over the Alps at this point. This road has fifty hairpin bends as it snakes up and over the col. It also features a Russian church.

From the pass, a short walk brought us to the Postarski Dom which stands with a commanding view at 1688m. On arrival, we were delighted to be greeted by the resident manager, who was expecting us. The hut had undergone a recent upgrade and had a cosy feel. We spent the afternoon lazing around, enjoying the surrounding scenery and speculating about the days to come.

When we woke the following morning the view from the hut was obscured behind low-lying cloud and heavy mist and rain, with the odd rattle of thunder and flashes of lightning. The weather forecast was not so good for the day ahead. The path from the hut rose steadily along the western flanks of Prisonjnik (2547m) and then descended to the southern side to make a long traverse, crossing occasional gullies. At one

point, we came to a steep snow-filled gully which seemed uncrossable and did not appear to have been traversed this season. We all breathed a sigh of relief when the last person crossed over safely. The visibility became extremely poor, which made it difficult to navigate.

We arrived at a snow-filled gully and could not find the way forward. Having attempted to climb out through a steep, wide trackless gully of scree and loose stones, it became evident that we were off course. We made a decision to descend, and after a brief search found the correct route, which was almost blocked by a bank of snow. Back on course, we continued onward and upward, scrambling over slippery hail-covered rock with the occasional hand cables giving some much needed assistance. Upon reaching the high pass of the Planja saddle at 2543m, we abandoned any plans for Mount Razor and descended to the Pogacnikov Hut, 2050m. This again called for caution as some of the descent route was barred by banks of residual snow. We safely arrived at the

“We soon arrived at the summit of Slemenova Spica (1911m), our first major achievement of the trip.”

hut as the skies cleared and the sun broke through. At the hut, the spirits soared when we were greeted by a large ceramic stove, with the opportunity to hang up the much sodden gear. It had been a long day, involving nine hours in all, with over 750m of altitude gain. The hot food was most welcome and any thoughts of a late night soon disappeared into the usual snores..... Oh, where are those ear plugs?!

The next morning the sun shone as we set off from the hut. A flock of Ibex greeted us not far down the path. The foul weather of yesterday was soon forgotten as we scrambled over slabs of rock with the usual hand cables, reaching the Dovska Vrata pass at 2180m. The next part of the route took us up and over the summit of

John and David discuss tactics.
Photo: Deirdre Lavin.





Changing
landscapes.
Photo: David
Bourke
Collection.

Bovski Gamsovec (2392m). We climbed up steeply on a narrow ledge with some rather scary exposure, but with the assistance of cables we never felt in danger. At one point the climb brought us up through a narrow chimney, which we just managed to squeeze through. At the summit cairn, we were overawed by the panorama of the surrounding summits. We took the opportunity to take lots of pictures. The descent route was via a zigzag path through alpine meadow. It was hard not to keep stopping to view the multitudes of flowers that adorned the path.

We reached the valley floor at the Lukna Pass (1750m). From there, we ascended along a well designed, old military road that climbed up in a switchback manner until we reached what was now a familiar sight, a snow gully! The traverse was not difficult as a path had already been made across it. Ascending across some more scree,

we finally arrived at the Dolic Hut with its tremendous location perched on the Col at 2151m. The hut had no showers and in fact it was hard enough to wash your face from the one tap with only a trickle of water. The hut was much busier than the previous ones, as it is on the climbing route to Triglav and is used for a stop-over for those who have come up from Lake Bohinj. In all, we had hiked over seven hours that day, with an altitude gain of 700m.

We discussed the plans for the next day and reached a consensus, with seven of the group opting for an attempt, weather permitting, on Triglav, while the remaining members chose to explore the Seven Lakes Valley. We agreed that we would regroup at the Seven Lakes Hut the following night. The hut keeper told us that the usual departure time for the Triglav climb was 5am and suggested that, for us Irish, we would not need to go to bed at all. However, in the end sense prevailed and we rolled onto the matrazenlargers at about 9pm.

Those of us heading for Triglav left the hut at 5:15am, leaving the remaining members of the group to enjoy another couple of hours' sleep before they set off for the Seven Lakes Valley. Even though the sun had not

risen at that time, it was still fairly bright and we headed off up the trail, crossing over some snow and traversing an ice gully. After this, it was onto much drier ground and, as the sun rose, casting beautiful shadows on the surrounding peaks, we felt the excitement of the challenge that lay up ahead. Within an hour and a half we arrived at the Planika Hut (2401m). At this point we stopped for a short break and looked up at the imposing ridge of Triglav.

We soon set off up on the path across the lower scree slopes. Then we climbed up through a narrow gully, assisted by the hand cables, to reach Mali Triglav (2725m), the lower summit and mid-point of the ridge. The summit was now within reach and once more we progressed along the narrow ridge, protected by hand cables. It was then a steep pull up onto the summit of Triglav at 2864m, the highest point in the Julian Alps. The views were magnificent without a cloud in the sky. Out came the cameras and the flags. No one was left out – Sligo, Ireland and even Mayo.

After an hour on the summit, during which we witnessed the helicopter rescue of an injured woman back down the ridge being lifted off, which was a chilling experience, we decided it was time to descend and

“It was a steep pull up onto the summit of Triglav (2864m), the highest point in the Julian Alps. Out came the cameras and flags.”

make our way back to the hut with the intention of collecting our gear, which we had left behind that morning. We retraced our steps and arrived back at the Dolic Hut at 12:30pm. Over lunch we considered the long trek down the Seven Lakes Valley. After much thought we reached the consensus that it was beyond us that afternoon and that the sensible thing was to stay the night in the Dolic Hut and start out early the following morning. Having reached this decision, we all relaxed and rested for the afternoon, and we did not need any bed-time call that night.

After a good sleep, we were raring to go at 7:15am. Leaving the Dolic Hut behind, the path ascended up to the Col Cez Hribarice at 2358m. From this point it was all down-hill. The terrain at the Col is a wilderness of jumbled limestone, with few trees and some hardy colourful flowers. A small flock of Ibex grazed on what little grass it could find on the hillsides. We descended into the head of the valley where we encountered the first of the lakes. Passing round the head of this small pond we found the path heading south. Midpoint along this path we came to what is called the "Kidney Lake" by its shape, the longest and deepest of the seven lakes. The landscape changed once more and there were similarities to the Rocky Mountains of North America, with the rocky peaks and larches

beyond the lake. We saw a number of marmots darting for cover among the limestone flags. Close to mid-day we reached the Triglavski Huts (1685m) (Seven Lakes Hut) where the other members of our group had stayed the previous night. We enjoyed a much welcome break for lunch there before setting out again for the final leg of our journey.

We were now down at tree level and passed through some lovely old forest of beech and spruce. Upon reaching the beautiful Crno Lake with its magnificent setting and blue waters, we set our sights on the steep descent of 750m down the difficult face of Komarca. The sheer drop down into the valley is heart-stopping and called for extra care as we progressed downwards assisted by ropes in some places along the way. Finally we reached the valley floor and crossed the Savica River.

We were soon on our way to Bled, passing the shores of Lake Bohinj to reunite with the other members of our group for an overnight stay just outside the town of Bled. We shared our experiences of the previous day and caught up on each other's happenings. Later on in the evening, we all enjoyed some good cuisine at a local restaurant in Bled.

After an excellent breakfast, we caught the train back to Salzburg, arriving in the city on a rather wet afternoon before a late evening flight

brought us back to Dublin after our rewarding trip.

The club's trip to the Julian Alps of Slovenia had had something for everyone, the botanist, the ornithologist, the geologist, the naturalist, the hillwalker and the mountaineer. Most of all, it had everything for those who liked to share their enjoyment of the countryside and the wild places with good friends. From small beginnings to difficult days scaling heights, we learned many lessons, overcame obstacles and had immense enjoyment and great craic. Most importantly of all, we all came home safely to our friends and families. It was a great end to a wonderful trip that will be remembered for a long time. ■

David Bourke and John Hurley are both active member of Sligo Mountaineering Club and enjoy hiking throughout Ireland and also in various part of Europe, including the Austrian, Swiss and French Alps.

Maps

Nationalpark Triglav 1:35 000, published by Freytag & Berndt. Triglav 1:25 000, by Planniska zveza Slovenije.

Useful guidebook

The Julian Alps of Slovenia (a Cicerone Guide), by Justi Carey and Roy Clark.



Some members of Sligo Mountaineering Club at Pogacnikov Hut. Photo: Deirdre Lavin.

Harry Fogg
climbing
Talking God, one
of the two hardest
routes at
Coomshingaun.
Photo: Peter Britton.

Climbing at Coomshingaun

Mick Walsh



he first time I climbed at Coomshingaun, it just scared me. It was my first summer climbing outdoors. The hike to the crag wrecked me before I even started climbing. I was pointed up Crooked Smile HVS, but I had no idea what I was getting into. The climbing was bizarre, unlike anything I'd done before.

After struggling for ages to place my very first hex in the uncooperative conglomerate, I eventually committed to the traverse. I'm not sure what I did but it probably resembled a 360 degree twist at some point. At the top of the route I struggled to find a belay while others shouted up advice.

After that day I wasn't inspired to return to Coumshingaun. In six hours I'd been exhausted, intimidated, off route and just generally scared by the place. In my opinion, at the time I thought Dalkey was the best crag in Ireland. This place was definitely no Dalkey.

However, a few months later, I was back in the Coum, still pretty inexperienced, but keen. Everyone who climbs in Coumshingaun talks about a route called Emperor's Nose in revered tones. It is *the* classic. I'd looked up at it before but never thought I'd be climbing it. I still wanted to, though. I asked Stephen and he said I should try it.

The nerves were bad on the walk up. They weren't helped by the slagging I was getting about how I'd be giving everyone the entertainment of a good fall.

Racking up, still nervous, and yet again I didn't know what I was getting into. I started up, scrabbling in the jams with my inept technique. Bits of lichen were getting stuck in my eyes. I got to where the crack closed. I'd been told about this move; I knew what I had to do. I thought: "This looks nuts." I was terrified. It just didn't look like it was going to work. I placed the highest piece of protection I could get in, but it didn't help the fear much. Nothing was left to do but to commit. With my left fingers in the crack, I stretched across and down as far as I could to a flat hold on the arête. Once I touched it, I knew I had to swing across. I let go with my left hand. It worked. In a blur, I mantled onto it and continued up easier ground to the top. Sitting on my soft grassy belay with a warm buzz, looking out towards the lake, this time I thought, "I like this place."

Three years later, it's December, it's freezing and it's pouring rain. I've hiked up on my own this morning with 15kg of ropes in my bag. I'm now sitting in a home-made belay seat somewhere on the North Cliff, prising off loose rock with a loaned ice axe and scrubbing at the moss with a wire brush. I'm obsessed,

jumaring up and down the ropes all day, with only one thought in my mind, "Will it go?" Coumshingaun does this to people.

It's a relatively unknown mountain crag in the Waterford Comeragh Mountains. There are at least sixty routes in the Coum altogether. The three cliffs surround one of the finest examples of a glaciated coum in Europe. The smallest of these is the South-facing Cliff. It has mostly easier routes and a nice sunny aspect. The Back Cliff is huge, adventurous and fairly undeveloped. The North-facing Cliff is where the best climbing is found. It is a steep band of cliffs with cracks in smooth, sheered-off walls, corners and airy arêtes.

Throughout the Coum the rock is solid conglomerate, which takes excellent gear. Just don't put all your

“I looked up at the classic, the Emperor's Nose. I'd never thought I'd be climbing it. I still wanted to, though.”

trust on pebbles, with fewer attached to the face than protruding from it.

The climbing season is the same as in most areas in Ireland (a very short one). Due to the seepage from the bog plateau which forms the summit of the Comeragh Mountains, the general rule is to wait until after a few days of dry weather.

Back Wall of Coumshingaun.
Photo: Colm Ennis.





Gerry Fogg
on Atom
Ant Wall.

“Stephen Gallwey and Jack Bergin developed the best cragging wall in the Coum: Atom Ant Wall.”



North Cliffs
from Back Cliff.
Photo: Peter
Britton.



The first recorded climb in Coumshingaun was Ariel Route, V Diff 130m, completed in 1952 by Frank Winder

and Sean Rothery on the South-facing Cliff.

In the 1970s, local man Stephen Gallwey started exploring the area. He also decided to write his college thesis on cliff vegetation, which handily allowed for lots of abseil inspections. Original interest was looking towards the large Back Cliff. Its unbroken central section was the objective and, as the guidebook says, ‘An easy way could not be found and eventually serious rockclimbing had to be considered!’

Over the next few years, Stephen, along with Owen Jacob and Ed Hernstadt, produced a steady stream of new lines, the finest being the classic Emperor’s Nose, E2. Next to it is Owens’ excellent Dark Angel corner at HVS. Throughout the 1980s, Stephen, with keen newcomer Jack Bergin, developed the best cragging wall in the Coum: Atom Ant Wall. It has five super routes from E1 to E3. Around this time Jack also put up the enjoyable Ansty’s Desire, HVS, Cúinne Flaithiúlach, HVS, and Perpetual Motion, E2.

The hardest routes

The hardest routes to date in the Coum are Stephen Gallwey’s two test pieces, Sleep of Reason and Talking God. Climbed after abseil inspection and cleaning, he gave the routes a very unconfirmed grade of E3 6a and has spent the last twenty years trying to find someone to climb them.

Recently, things have become a lot busier in the Coum, with many new climbers discovering the grassy “soft as your couch” belay ledges surprisingly combined with excellent climbing. Peter Britton and Colm Ennis made the only known continuous ascent of the adventurous Back Cliff (300m). The first attempt by the pair, in unfavourable conditions, resulted in a massive fall where the leader ended up below the belayer. As if that wasn’t enough, after an abseil retreat they sat down for some lunch at the base of the cliff. A dead sheep fell from above, landing right next to them, showering them and their sandwiches with maggots!

Away from the Back Cliff, myself, along with Damian O’Sullivan and Hugh Hennessy, put up three routes, the best

of these being Stone the Roses, E3, which I obsessed about after two days' cleaning last winter. I climbed it on a freezing day in early April after dragging Damian down from Dublin to belay in a hail shower. I was heading off to the States for a long trip and was afraid that a summer of looking at a clean new line would be too tempting for certain others.

Putting up new routes

The keenest new developers at the moment are the Fogg family. Gerry's admirable pure onsight ethics (digging the mud out of cracks as he goes) resulted in Colours on the Water, E3, which has since been retro-abseil cleaned. Just last year they put up four new routes in the Coum itself. He has also climbed numerous new routes all over the Comeraghs with his son, Harry, and his daughter, Hannah.

Last summer, Harry Fogg made two impressive onsights of the hardest routes in the Coum. He repeated the intimidating Talking God seventeen years after its first ascent, grading it at approximately E4. He also made the second ascent of Sleep of Reason, which had been waiting an amazing nineteen years. On his first attempt, he tried to follow Stephen's original line but couldn't work out the sequence and backed off. He returned and climbed a direct line up the arête. He reckons, "I can't grade it because it's beyond anything I've led before." Anyone who's seen him at the Irish Bouldering League competitions can have a guess at the grade!

The future

As for the future, there's potential for many bolder routes leaving the obvious crack systems and also a lot more lines on the Back Cliff to explore. As always, I am looking forward to the summer, which is definitely going to be dry! ■

Mick Walsh is a member of the Rathgormack Climbing Club and has been climbing for the past four years. He's climbed all over Ireland and spent six months climbing in the States and Canada last year. His favourite places to climb are Fair Head, the Burren and, of course, Coumshingaun.

Howard
Hebblethwaite
on Satanic
Majesty.
Photo: Damian
O'Sullivan.



Information

Location: Comeragh Mountains,
Co Waterford

Driving distances:
3 hours from Dublin
1½ hours from Cork/Limerick

Rock type: Conglomerate

Length of routes:
From 20m cragging to big
300m adventures

Guidebook: An interim guide from
1995 edited by Jack Bergin and
Stephen Gallwey (out of print).
Some information on climbing.ie

Approach: One-hour hike from
Killclooney Wood, where there
is parking



In the first of a new series of articles Bernie Lafferty and Peter Wilson explain how we can better understand the geological history of the Irish mountains.

Written in stone

What the mountains can tell us



Our mountain landscapes are like vast natural cathedrals where all the histories of time are simultaneously on display. Everything that is underfoot can be explored like a chapter in a great history book, which will reward the reader with a deeper understanding of these exciting and inspiring environments.

Brandon
East Ridge,
Dingle peninsula,
Co Kerry.
Photo:
Peter Wilson.

Landscape history is complex and, stretching back hundreds of millions of years, not one likely to be unravelled in the course of a weekend in the hills. However, there are many clues to the past in the uplands, and if

you 'get your eye in' you will be surprised at how much an individual landform (e.g., a scree slope or a moraine) can reveal about its history.

Although the inherent complexity of the uplands is inescapable, being able to identify and interpret distinct features is not only likely to be extremely useful in understanding local landscapes but can also help make sense of distant mountains, which at some time may have been subjected to similar processes and events.

Uplands, as with all landscapes, are vulnerable to the perception that they are largely stable backdrops on which extraneous environmental processes play out. But landscapes are themselves dynamic and all too often susceptible to environmental and human pressures.

By the 1970s, increased awareness about soil degradation, mass

movements and rapid loss of diversity in upland areas was beginning to alert society to the fragility of these mountain environments. Since then, major research programmes aimed at combatting these effects have been initiated. However, the outcome of research often gets caught up in the eddies of academia and may take some time to reach mainstream audiences.

We all depend on the quasi-stability of our landscape and environment. It seems appropriate, therefore, that in tandem with the more formal research literature, information about research outcomes be featured regularly in more accessible literature.

If we understand the subtleties of the uplands we are better placed to appreciate the implications of natural or human impacts on their stability and, by implication, better placed to assess the appropriateness, or

otherwise, of the strategies employed by those charged with ensuring their sustainability.

In many cases our understanding of upland landscapes is informed largely by what is remembered from geography textbooks. While such texts have their uses, very often they present landscapes as static and well understood environments. The reality is quite different.

There are many questions still unanswered and many yet to be asked, so it is good to be curious. It's good to walk over loose rock and boulders and wonder why this patch has no vegetation when there is vegetation on similar material close by, or to look up and wonder what the hill looked like before all that 'stuff' fell off, what made it collapse, anyway, and when did it happen? The answers are not always as obvious as they may at first appear.

Natural history is as important in providing a context for contemporary landscape studies as human history is in making sense of current political or cultural dynamics and their trajectories. In landscapes, the rich interplay of many pasts is exhibited in one vista. The job of the geomorphologist is to explore landforms and consider the combination of events and processes that are most likely to have given rise to the

contemporary landscapes.

In this series of articles on mountain landforms, we have adopted a chronological framework – moving initially through our deep geological heritage and towards present-day landscape dynamics and events.

A jigsaw puzzle of rock

Ireland as an entity did not exist in the deep geological past, but approximately 2,500 million years (ma) ago its foundations were being laid down in the southern hemisphere. The present sequence of rocks and its northern mid-latitude position result from ancient Earth surface processes and, significantly, plate tectonics – where the rigid crustal plates 'floated' on the less rigid molten mantle.

Because the Earth's crust comprises a number of plates of differing density moving at different speeds, their

progress across the surface was punctuated by dramatic episodes of continental collisions, opening and closing of oceans, and lengthy episodes of volcanic activity. Geological speaking, Ireland is now relatively quiet, but events and processes operating in more 'active' parts of the world today provide snapshots of the conditions that prevailed here millions of years ago.

In *Nature in Ireland*, John Feehan usefully likens Irish geology to a jigsaw puzzle of rock, each piece set in place at a different moment in geological time. The character of each rock type is a consequence of an amalgam of processes operating across time. Hence the rock record is a very valuable archive offering glimpses into a distant past and the range of environmental events that contributed to the shaping of the landscape we know today.

“ There are many clues to the past in the uplands and if you ‘get your eye in’ you will be surprised at how much individual landforms such as a scree slope or a moraine can reveal about its history. ”



Slieve League, Co Donegal. Photo: Peter Wilson.



Mournes,
Co. Down.
Photo: Peter
Wilson.

The oldest of the upland rocks in Ireland, referred to as Dalradian, were laid down approximately 700 ma ago as sediments in a rift basin similar to the rift-bounded Red Sea of today. Sequences of sediments eroded from an even older land mass gradually settled out of the shallow marine waters as the energy of inflowing rivers diminished. Fine sediments were winnowed away by tidal and wave processes, while the heavier, more resistant, quartz-rich sands accumulated in thick layers. Fast forward then through to the present day to where the sand accumulations of the rift basin are now the impressive uplands of metamorphic rocks that characterise parts of Connemara, Mayo and Donegal.

Due to plate tectonics, the intervening 700 ma were interspersed with colliding and diverging continents. The associated stress and heat pressures induced by these extreme events compressed and

distorted the initially loose sediments into rock masses and eventually huge folds of metamorphic rocks. The quartz-rich sands are now the distinctive hard white quartzite mountains of Muckish, Errigal, Croagh Patrick and Beanna Beola. The well-known Connemara Marble is derived from lime-rich muds which overlaid the sands as marine conditions changed.

How our granites were formed



One of the principal rock deforming and mountain building events was the Caledonian Orogeny.

It occurred approximately 400 ma ago at the closing of the ancient Iapetus Ocean which separated the northern portion of Ireland, then part of the continent of Laurentia, from the southern portion, which was part of micro-continent of Avalonia.

As the continents collided, the geological foundations of Ireland were set in the midst of tumultuous igneous activity, metamorphism and rock deformation. The style of deformation varied across the island. In Donegal, the rocks behaved in a relatively rigid fashion, with the main form of strain being expressed in NE-SW trending faults into which intrusions of magma cooled slowly and formed the granites that underlie the Blue Stacks and Derryveagh Mountains. The granite hills of Wicklow are of similar age and origin.

In the west and east, the more ductile rocks were subject to folding. The Longford-Down zone is typified by steeply dipping, overturned and even inverted beds. Upright folds and large-scale faults characterise the Leinster hills.

The Old Red Sandstones

Throughout these turbulent times Ireland, situated on the southeastern margin of the newly formed continent, was steadily moving northwards. The land surface was above sea level and in transit between 30° and 10° south of the Equator, with an associated arid climate.

Like the sub-tropics of today, environmental conditions were extreme. Flash floods transported great masses of eroded silt, sand and

“ The pieces of this remarkable jigsaw are beneath your feet as you walk in the hills, and the evidence for how those pieces came into being is also there. The timespans involved are sometimes difficult to comprehend. ”

gravel southward into Munster and Leinster. Prevailing winds entrained the sands and gradually large and highly mobile dunes moved across the landscape in a similar manner to modern Saharan features.

Time and physical processes cemented the fluvial and aeolian (wind blown) sediments into the Devonian Old Red Sandstones that characterise the uplands of Munster today. Folding of these rocks into the east-west-trending mountains of Kerry, Cork and Waterford occurred during the Hercynian Orogeny (300 ma ago). Lugnaquilla is topped by Old Red Sandstones, an indication that these rocks were previously more extensive and have been removed from vast areas by later erosion.

The limestone areas

During the Carboniferous Period (350-330 ma ago) a biologically-rich sea invaded equatorial Ireland, from the south. The vast areas of limestone that characterise almost half the surface geology of Ireland originated in this sea. As in the Bahamas today, thick accumulations of limy muds developed as marine life died and sank to the bottom.

Gentle uplift resulted in a change from a deep, clear sea to shallow muddy waters, which accumulated silts and sands, and eventually swamp forests. To walk across the Burren is to walk across this ancient sea bed.

Likewise in Fermanagh and Sligo, although in places the limestone still retains a thick capping of the shales and sandstones, as on Cuilcagh and Truskmore.

The Earth movements of the Hercynian Orogeny, that marked the end of the Carboniferous Period, left all of Ireland above sea-level and erosive processes began to wear down the newly created landscape. The limestones, shales and sandstones suffered particularly badly, being completely stripped from some areas, but elsewhere limestone remnants tell us of the former extent of Carboniferous strata.

We can now jump about 250 ma, and several geological periods, because this long interval and the rocks that formed during it are not represented in the Irish uplands. The Tertiary period beginning about 65 ma ago witnessed widespread igneous activity, and northeast Ireland was a sector of the North Atlantic Igneous Province.

Northern Ireland basalt

As the Atlantic Ocean widened, pushing North America and Europe apart, the submerged crust got considerably thinner and allowed large masses of magma to migrate from the mantle towards the surface. In parts of Down, Armagh and Louth the magma intruded into rocks of Silurian, Devonian and Carboniferous age,

cooling to form granites, gabbros and granophyres. The Mourne, Slieve Gullion and Carlingford ridge are all products of this activity.

In Antrim and Derry, great outpourings of magma from volcanic vents formed the thick layers of basalt that underlie about one-third of the area of Northern Ireland. The basalt hills rise from the streets of Belfast and extend, as the Antrim Plateau, to the north coast. In the west of the province, from Binevenagh to Benbradagh, the basalt forms a prominent scarp line overlooking the Foyle lowlands.

The pieces of this remarkable geological jigsaw are beneath your feet as you walk in the hills and the evidence for how those pieces came into being is also there. It might take a little while to recognise the 'signs' that tell you what has been going on, and the time spans involved are sometimes difficult to comprehend, but the characteristics of the rocks – from the individual grains to the entire rock body – have influenced the processes that have carved the hills into the landscapes that we enjoy today. ■

Bernie Lafferty is an independent environmental consultant based in Northern Ireland.

Peter Wilson is a lecturer in Environmental Science at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, and an MCI member.



Errigal,
Co Donegal.
Photo:
Peter Wilson.



The latest advice and information from Tim Orr, Training Officer



TIM'S BLOGSPOT

Free taster sessions

Throughout July, August and September, Mountaineering Ireland will again be promoting free taster sessions in climbing and hillwalking. These short introduction sessions allow candidates to explore their interest in various aspects of

mountaineering and hopefully encourage them to follow on and seek further training in those areas of interest. More information, dates and booking can be found on the "Free Taster Sessions" section of the Training and Safety pages of www.mountaineering.ie.

Your experience shared

Would you like to share your training or assessment experiences with others? We are now looking to include under the Training and Safety section of the website informative pieces from candidates who have completed one of the BOS training or assessment schemes. These pieces are to help future candidates get a feel for what may lie ahead in their future endeavours and should be between 500 and 1,500 words. If you have a training experience to share, contact me at tim@mountaineering.ie.

BOS training grants

Due to a lack of clarity about the grant awarded by the Irish Sports Council to Mountaineering Ireland for 2009, a decision has been taken by the Board of BOS to suspend the delivery of its individual and club grant system until such time as the allocated funds are determined and secured.

Adventure sports framework

During the past twelve months, Mountaineering Ireland and seven other National Governing Bodies for adventure sports have met on a monthly basis with representatives of the Irish Sports Council and Coaching Ireland, to steer a process to create a national framework of qualifications in adventure sports across Ireland. The proposed future structure will allow for a clearer cross-sport tuition process within the adventure sport industry and for a better quality control system to be approved under the Irish Sports Council.



Kate Hebblethwaite,
Training Administrator

Assessment dates

A number of workshops and training assessments will be taking place in the coming weeks and months, as well as the first Mountain Skills Providers' Symposium.

Assessment dates have now been arranged for the Multi-Pitch Award (MPA), Walking Group Leader (WGL) and Mountain Leader (ML) awards, as follows:

1-2 August: MPA assessment

2-4 October: WGL assessment

24-26 October: ML assessment (Connemara)*

14-16 November: ML assessment (Donegal)

*This assessment is fully booked out, but we are pleased to announce a second ML assessment date in November after the record sell-out of places for the October assessment.

Refresher Workshops

As more people undertake and graduate from official mountaineering courses, BOS recognises the importance of continued and sustained support for trainees and award holders alike. To this end, a variety of Refresher Workshops have been arranged to provide an opportunity for those about to undertake assessment, or for those who have passed their assessment, to refresh their knowledge and skills:

11 July: Multi-Pitch Award (MPA) refresher workshop

8 August: Single-Pitch Award (SPA) refresher workshop

17-18 October: Mountain Leader (ML) refresher workshop

These workshops are designed to maintain, improve and broaden knowledge and personal performance. They are also officially recognised as Continuing Professional Development (CPD) workshops, the means by which BOS-approved Providers develop the personal qualities required in their professional work. The Training Office is currently creating new official CPD logbook pages which will soon be available on request.

BOS course entrants 1992-2009

We continue to be heartened by the number of people contacting us to apply for Bord Oilúint Sléibhe (BOS) mountain training award schemes. Here are the numbers of entrants for the period 1992-2009:

Total entries	2,625
Mountain Skills (MS) Training	(not available)
MS Assessment	1,612
Mountain Leader (MLA) registered	1,528
MLA holders	387
Single Pitch Award (SPA) registrations	633
SPA holders	179
Rock Climbing Leader (RCL) registrations	392
RCL holders	158
Multi Pitch Award (MPA) holders	48
Walking Group Leader (WGL) registrations	98
WGL holders	17

Club training officers

Voluntary Training Officers workshops

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND is committed to responding to the mountaineering needs of its members. One such need that has emerged from discussions with many clubs is ensuring that all their members are trained in the skills necessary to safely enjoy a day in the mountains.

In response, Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS), the Irish Mountain Training Board, is working towards having Volunteer Training Officers (VTOs) in all Mountaineering Ireland-affiliated clubs. The role of these officers will be to liaise with Mountaineering Ireland's Training Office in promoting mountain training – both formal and informal – within their clubs.

As a first step toward achieving this, a number of weekend workshops are being organised throughout the country. These workshops are an opportunity for clubs' nominated Volunteer Training Officers to come together with Mountaineering Ireland to discuss their club's training needs and to work towards establishing an effective training support structure.

On 12-13 September, BOS will be organizing a VTO weekend in County Donegal. This will be run from Gartan Outdoor Education Centre (www.gartan.com). We will be holding further workshops throughout the country in 2009 and 2010.

Would you like to become a VTO?

The workshops are open to any club member who may subsequently be willing to act as a Volunteer Training Officer (VTO) for their club. These individuals would also act as a direct link between their club and BOS, keeping BOS informed of any training needs that may arise and passing on future training information to club members.

There are twenty places available on the course and two representatives from each club are encouraged to attend. Although only one of these need act as their club's Volunteer Training Officer, it would be beneficial to have two people trained in passing on the skills learned to their club's members.

What the workshops will cover

It is not the aim of these sessions to teach basic skills but to demonstrate how to pass them on to others. Participants should, therefore, have some prior knowledge and experience of the mountain environment to at least Mountain Skills training or equivalent standard.

The workshop will initially recap personal skills and will then progress towards learning how to coach others and how to organise club training events and programmes. The VTO support structure will also be outlined. It is hoped that representatives will subsequently pass on the information learnt at the workshops to their fellow club members. In this way, training information can be widely disseminated among clubs. These weekends will also provide participants with information on formal mountain training schemes such as the Mountain Skills, Mountain Leader and Single-Pitch Awards.



Outdoor session on a VTO workshop in Gartan, Co Donegal, earlier this year. Photo: Tim Orr.

Yes! How do I book?

Anyone interested in attending this workshop and acting as their club's Volunteer Training Officer should initially get in touch with their club's chairperson or secretary and have their name put forward. A booking form should then be completed (one per applicant) and returned to Mountaineering Ireland's Training Office by Friday 14 August, along with full payment.

Places will be allocated on a 'first-come, first-served' basis. Further information about this workshop and a booking form will be available on the Mountaineering Ireland website through the workshop area of the Training and Safety pages.

Booking forms can also be posted out on request by contacting Kate on (01) 625 1117 or email kate@mountaineering.ie.
– (Tim Orr, Training Officer)

Successful training providers

Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) has welcomed a number of newly qualified Providers. Darach Ó Murchú, Elizabeth Doherty, John Healy and Katie O'Connor have all been approved to teach Mountain Skills Training, while two current Providers have been approved to augment their current instructor remit – Rhys Llywelyn to provide Mountain Skills assessment, and Samantha Shelley to teach Mountain Leader training. Many congratulations to all.

Our BOS Providers continue to maintain the high standards of formally recognised training, with recent assessments for the SPA and ML seeing a large number of candidates successfully qualifying as fledgling rock and mountain leaders. BOS would like to extend its congratulations to all of these qualifiers, listed below. – (Kate Hebblethwaite, Training Administrator)

Single Pitch Award

Vicky Cleary	Carl Mogensen	Daniel Rawat
Jack Doyle	Stuart Montgomery	Ciaran Walters
Darina Gallova	Tomas Ó Braoin	Mikael Witkowski
Lloyd Kelly	Diarmuid Ó Briain	

Mountain Leader Award

Tadhg Boyden	Damien Daly	Barry Speight
Richard Casey	Terrance Glancy	Robert Tierney
Diarmuid Crowley	Martin Jones	Declan Tracy

Mountain Training

Training Officer Tim Orr outlines the Mountain Leader Training (Northern Ireland) award schemes

Group leader and multi-pitch schemes

Mountaineering Ireland is an all-Ireland organisation. However, mountain training on the island of Ireland is administered by two separate bodies, Mountain Leader Training Northern Ireland (MLTNI) in the north and Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) in the south. Both are supported by their associated Sport Councils – Sport Northern Ireland and the Irish Sports Council. The MLTNI schemes are delivered through Tollymore Mountain Centre, while in the south BOS approves and moderates a number of independent providers to deliver its schemes.

As Mountaineering Ireland is the National Governing Body for the sport of mountaineering in the island of Ireland, having two training boards has complicated the delivery of training. In 2008, the then MCI commissioned an independent consultancy firm to deliver a report on the possible future options for mountain training. This report was delivered to a joint meeting of MCI and BOS in December 2008, and a clear breakdown of the current standing and future options for mountain training in Ireland was presented. Following this meeting, the MCI invited members of both training bodies to select representatives to join a working group with an independent chairperson to look at the way forward. This working group will meet a number of times over a twelve-month period and then deliver its recommendations for the future of mountain training on the island of Ireland.

MLTNI and BOS: the differences

It is comforting to recognise that the similarities between these independent bodies and their associated schemes far outweigh the differences. It is also



important to realise that nearly all differences centre around the administration of the schemes and that the schemes' syllabi, practical delivery and end results are generally similar. This stems from a healthy cross-pollination of trainers, candidates and overseeing governors.

The bigger picture

Along with the current review in Ireland, there are also changes taking place further afield. Other national mountain training organisations and federations are continuing to work together to simplify the administration of their training schemes and make them more comparable. International mountaineering federations attend global seminars in a bid to understand and share their similarities and differences. I personally believe that, with the current events taking place in Irish mountain training, we are at the forefront of this process.

The MLTNI award schemes

In the last three editions of the *Mountain Log*, we presented a breakdown of the

current training schemes administered by BOS. Their similarity to the MLTNI schemes are apparent from an examination of the syllabi. The administrative process and pathway to these awards is, however, somewhat different, leading to some discrepancies in cross-border recognition. There are also a number of additional awards that are not administered through BOS. Below is a breakdown of the MLTNI awards delivered through Tollymore Mountain Centre:

The WGL Award

The Walking Group Leader (WGL) Award meets the needs of leaders, teachers, instructors and those who lead others on hill walks on open moorland and terrain without steep broken ground. It is an ideal stepping stone for those who may wish to progress to the Mountain Leader Award at a later stage. The minimum experience required to gain entry to the scheme is 20 logged hillwalks. The WGL consists of a three-day residential training

Your guide to mountain training on the island of Ireland

course and three-day assessment. It is similar to the scheme administered by BOS, but the BOS scheme is not currently recognised as equivalent to the scheme provided in Northern Ireland.

The Mountain Leader Award

The Mountain Leader (ML) Award is intended for those who wish to lead others on hillwalks in Ireland and Britain. It is ideal for teachers and youth leaders as well as those who operate in the club environment. The purpose of the Mountain Leader Award is to promote the safe enjoyment of the hills. The scheme provides training and assessment in the technical and group management skills required by those who wish to lead groups in the mountains, other than in winter conditions. It integrates training, personal experience and assessment in a variety of conditions in mountainous country.

Since its introduction in 1964, the ML scheme has become recognised by Education and Library Boards, the statutory youth services and the national and voluntary youth organisations as providing technical competence in this field. Valid throughout Ireland and the UK, it is a national yardstick against which standards are measured. The minimum experience required to enter the scheme is 20 logged 'quality days' in the Irish or British mountains. Training is residential in Tollymore and consists of three two-day courses or one five-day course, followed by a five-day assessment. Successful candidates are granted the ML Award. The award is a prerequisite for many higher level mountain training schemes. BOS also administers a Mountain Leader scheme, which is currently recognised as equivalent to the ML, which is provided in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

The CWA Award

The Climbing Wall Supervisors Award (CWA) is a basic award for those who

supervise others on artificial climbing walls and abseil towers. It provides a basic level of competence for those in a position of responsibility for providing these activities. Minimum entry requirements are fifteen previous visits to at least two different climbing walls, the ability to lead routes on a climbing wall and an interest in supervising others. The course consists of a two-day training course and one-day assessment. At present there is no equivalent award in the Republic of Ireland.

The SPA Award

The Single Pitch Award (SPA) is a leadership award for those who lead others and run rockclimbing sessions on single-pitch crags. The SPA has been designed to provide a level of basic competence for those who are in a position of responsibility during single-pitch rock climbing activities. It is primarily concerned with good practice, leading to safe, quiet enjoyment of the activity. Minimum entry requirements are fifteen logged named climbs as leader, with evidence of leading to 'Severe.' The training course is run residentially over a weekend and includes climbing wall sessions on Friday and Saturday evenings. This is followed by a two-day assessment. Successful candidates are awarded the Single Pitch Award. This is a MLTUK syllabus but the scheme is administered and run in Northern Ireland by the MLTNI. BOS also administers a Single Pitch Award scheme, which is currently recognised as equivalent to the SPA provided in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK.

The Rockclimbing Leader Multi-Pitch Award

The Rockclimbing Leader Multi Pitch Award is a leadership award for those who wish to lead others on multi-pitch climbs. Candidates must successfully complete the SPA before progressing to the RCLA training course. The BOS Multi-Pitch Award is currently recognised as

equivalent to the scheme administered by MLTNI.

The MIA Award

The Mountaineering Instructor Award (MIA) is the minimum award required for those who wish to instruct mountaineering and climbing activities in the British Isles. Candidates must register with the UKMTB – requirements include twenty multi-pitch climbs of VS or higher as leader, plus twenty quality days as leader in charge of a group. Trainees must complete a nine-day training course and five-day assessment – successful candidates are awarded the MIA. This is a MLTUK syllabus and is provided by the three National Mountain Centres in the UK, Tollymore, Plas y Brenin and Glenmore Lodge. There is no MIA scheme available in the Republic of Ireland.

The WML Award

The Winter Mountain Leader (WML) Award is for those with an interest in the leadership of others in winter conditions. It is administered by Mountain Leader Training Scotland (MLTS). The pre-requirements for entry to the scheme include the Mountain Leader Award and at least twenty quality mountain days in winter conditions, the majority of which must be in Scotland. It is available through Tollymore Mountain Centre. There is no WML scheme available in the Republic of Ireland. ■

Find out more

For further information on the MLTNI schemes, please contact:
Trevor Fisher, Secretary MLTNI,
Tollymore Mountain Centre,
Bryansford, Newcastle,
Co Down BT33 0PT
Tel: 048 / 028 4372 2158
Email: Trevor.Fisher@tollymore.com



The latest news compiled by Aodhnait Carroll, Access & Conservation Officer

Scotland open for access

HEBE CARUS

ACCESS EVERYWHERE with some exceptions versus official access in few areas with some exceptions – that is the dichotomy I realised existed after my day with members of Mountaineering Ireland at their Scottish Winter Meet in March. Scotland follows the former and Ireland, England and Wales the latter.

As the Mountaineering Council of Scotland's Access & Conservation Officer, I had the pleasure of spending the day with Mountaineering Ireland on my home patch. Discussing access issues all the way up Coire nan Lochan in Glencoe, a grade 1 winter route, while trying to keep up with Aodhnait Carroll, Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Officer, was a challenge. I learnt that we seem to be at opposite ends of the access spectrum of permissiveness. Access rights were made statutory in Scotland in 2004. Until then the situation had been somewhat fuzzy where access users worked on the assumption that unless they were asked to leave, they were not breaking the law. Now, if access users (any mode of non-motorised use) act responsibly, by following the guidance in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, they have the right to be almost everywhere in Scotland on/under/above land and inland water. There are a few exceptions. For example, you cannot have a picnic on someone else's lawn. It has not been a magic fix for some of our longstanding issues at some locations, and only last weekend I



On the Scottish Winter Meet, March 2009.
Photo: Aodhnait Carroll.

cycled past a sign saying "Danger, Snakes," there to scare people away from a large country house, but things are improving.

On our walk in Glencoe, we witnessed the damage that thousands of feet on the hillside can do. Thousands of pounds have been invested in repairing this erosion. This is not to be confused with facilitating access by constructing paths to make it easier for

people to access the mountains. The mountaineering community in Scotland very much believes mountaineering is about physical challenge and retaining wildness. However, across Scotland we are increasingly challenged by windfarms and bulldozed tracks in areas that mountaineers do not believe are appropriate but cannot prevent because the areas are not officially protected through designation. Some are even occurring in nationally or internationally protected areas.

I hope all attendees at the Winter Meet enjoyed their visit to Scotland. Anyone coming over to Scotland should take a look at the Scottish Outdoor Access Code so that they know what responsibilities their access rights depend on (see www.outdoor-access-scotland.com), and the more detailed advice at www.mcofs.org.uk/access-and-conservation.

All countries have their challenges. I have been sold on a visit to Ireland, but I think I will do a bit of investigation about where I am allowed to walk and climb before setting off. – (Hebe Carus, Access & Conservation Officer, Mountaineering Council of Scotland)

Workshop at Autumn Gathering

Training workshop for Environmental Officers



Dingle
Sunday 11th
October 2009
9:30am-1:00pm

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND is pleased to announce the second annual Environmental Officers' training workshop, which we are running in conjunction with the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering, which is taking place from Friday to Sunday, 9th-11th Oct 2009, in Dingle, Co Kerry.

The workshop will consist of a 'Leave No Trace' Awareness session, a discussion about Mountaineering Ireland's Environmental Policy, an explanation of Occupier's Liability in relation to recreational users, and a chance to discuss any other environmental or access concerns that your club may have.

This year's Autumn Gathering will be hosted

by Cumann Sléibhteóireachta Chorca Dhuibhne (Dingle Hillwalking Club). The training workshop will run from 9:30am to 1:00pm on the Sunday.

The Autumn Gathering will be acting as host to the Environmental Officers' workshop, so we would encourage all Environmental Officers to join us for the whole event. However, if this is not feasible for you, attending just the workshop is also an option.

If your club does not currently have an Environmental Officer, this would be a great time to appoint one and send them along.

Please contact us at Mountaineering Ireland to let us know if you can attend. We can be reached at (01) 625 1115 or feel free to e-mail me at aodhnait@mountaineering.ie. We look forward to seeing you all there. – (Aodhnait Carroll)

On the Scottish Winter Meet in Glencoe, March 2009.
Photo: Darach Ó Murchú.

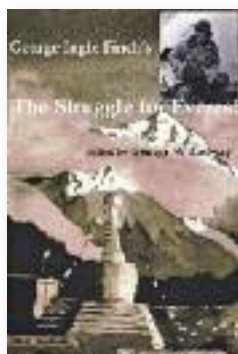


Books

Literary Editor Joss Lynam presents reviews of some recent publications.

Fascinating book on early Everest expeditions

John I. Murray



George Ingle Finch's *The Struggle for Everest*

Edited by George W Rodway
Carreg Ltd, 232pp
57pp with 68 b/w photos,
5pp of Finch's diary,
3pp diagrams, 2pp maps
Stg£ 20.00 ISBN 978 0 9538631 6 7

In recent years Everest has become overrun by commercial expeditions bringing hundreds of would-be summiteers to both the north and south

approaches. Here is a blast from the past when the mountain was still virgin territory.

Never before published in English, this absolutely fascinating volume first appeared in Germany in 1925 under the title *Der Kampf um den Everest*.

George Ingle Finch was born in Australia in 1888. His family relocated to France and he was educated privately in Paris and later at the Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zurich, graduating with a gold medal in technical chemistry. Fluent in French and German, he also became a highly proficient alpinist, putting up a classic new route, The Terrace, on the North Face of the Dent d'Herens without guides. He was definitely at a remove from the British mountaineering establishment but his credentials were too

good to be ignored and he was invited to join the first Everest expedition in 1921. However, internal jealousy caused him to be dropped at the last minute.

Being a chemist, Finch was quite familiar with, and a strong advocate of, oxygen and its use as an aid in high-altitude ascents. He was selected for the 1922 Everest expedition and with Geoffrey Bruce reached a record height of 8,300 metres. At this time he became aware of the benefits of oxygen both as an aid for sleeping and as a protection against cold. Of the 1922 team he was unquestionably the most able climber and the best informed about oxygen. His advice on oxygen was sought for the 1924 expedition, but again he was dropped from the team. In an appendix, Steven Venables gives a reassessment of this remarkable man and considers that had he been on the 1924 team, with he and Mallory as the summit pair, the outcome could well have been a success.

Despite his differences with the Alpine Club, Finch subsequently had a brilliant career in Britain at The Imperial College in London and he became a member of the prestigious Royal Society. On the retirement of John Hunt as president of the Alpine Club, Finch succeeded him and served for the period 1959-1961.

While the book covers all three Everest expeditions in the years 1921-1924, the main event is the 1922 expedition. Tightly written and well illustrated with many photos not previously published, it evokes a bygone time. The detailing of the oxygen apparatus is, like Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, a model of clarity and brevity. The 18-page introduction by John B West and the reassessment by Steven Venables complement the original text.

For all who appreciate the origins and development of high-altitude mountaineering, this is a must.

Mountain skills DVD to complement hands-on training

Tim Orr

Hill Walking Essentials: Skills and Techniques for Hill Walking

DVD video by BMC,
MCofS and MLTE
Slackjaw
40mins documentary,
100 mins technical
£19.50
ISBN 978-0-903908-14-6

I had always felt it would be great if we could produce some user-friendly video footage of our Mountain Skills scheme. Some

back-up material for candidates to take home with them, or maybe just a good advert for what you could expect from participation in the scheme. The *Hill Walking Essentials* DVD,

produced jointly by the British Mountaineering Council, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and Mountain Leader Training England, almost fits perfectly what I had envisaged.

Navigation, clothing and equipment, weather, mountain rescue and an introduction to leadership awards make up just some of the comprehensive information packed into this two-hour-long DVD.

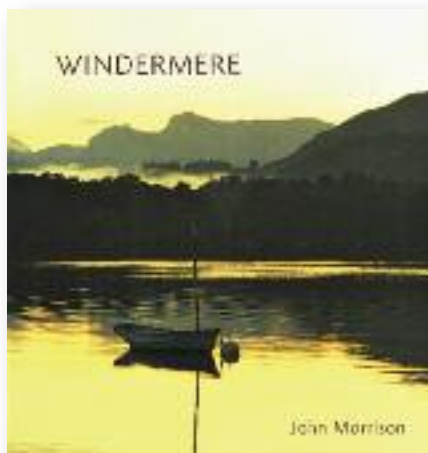
Presented around some of the most stunning mountain landscapes in Scotland and England, the extremely relaxed and reassuring style of presentation follows two walkers as they walk, scramble and explore the classic mountain scenery.

The forty-minute documentary is extensively supported by over an hour of technical chapters that can be viewed individually as required. The chapter on ticks alone makes this DVD a worthwhile investment of your time, although maybe not for the more squeamish viewers.

This is another high quality production from film makers Slackjaw, whose collaboration with the mountaineering councils and training bodies have produced a package that I would highly recommend to all regular users of the uplands environment. Although not a substitute for hands-on practical training, it will undoubtedly support and complement it as a good introduction or follow-on reminder of lessons learnt.

A book of pictures mainly...but what pictures!

Joss Lynam



Windermere

BY John Morrison
Frances Lincoln, 125pp
Nearly all pp colour photos
£16.99
ISBN 978-0-7112-2869-6

In my youth I devoured all the Swallows and Amazons books, but I loved most of all the Lake District ones, based on the amalgam of Windermere and Conistone. Then, when I was working in the Lake District in the fifties, we lived in a cottage on the flank of Loughrigg, with a view down Windermere almost the same as the view on the top of

page 79 (surely it deserved a full-page spread?). So I am delighted to be reviewing a book full of such fine pictures of Windermere and its surroundings.

There are a few pages of text, enough to cover briefly the development of Windermere from a wilderness lake to its present state as a tourist hot spot. It has been a constant battle (familiar?) between developers and environmentalists; Wordsworth objected to everything, the author complains, but he's glad the railway got stopped at the station called "Windermere," 1.5 miles from the lake. The railway brought "uneducated persons" but it also brought the tycoons from Lancashire who built the fine houses dotted along the east shore of the lake. The motor car brought much bigger crowds, but the designation of the Lake District as a National Park in 1951 has helped retain its unique character.

But this is a book of pictures, and such wonderful pictures. They range from views of the lake from the surrounding hills to a pub scene of a man with a glass of beer in one hand, a dog in the other, watched by a supercilious stuffed pheasant. The author makes good use of sun: he has found sunset moments

when the surface of the lake looks to be burning at white heat, and when the sun, glinting through the trees, turns the moss on a wall vivid green. There are shots of yachts, launches (motor- and even steam-), swans, mansions, amazing sunsets. There's a superb panorama, taken from Nab Scar, of Rydal Water and Windermere, the hills between in every shade of green. Finally, facing a page of text describing the author's youthful holidays, there is a scene of the head of an island with a tall tree that must surely have been the inspiration for Ransome's Wild Cat Island.

Perhaps a little too much use of sunsets, but otherwise a supremely good introduction to the most beautiful area of England. And all for £16.99!



The kind of map we've been waiting for

Joss Lynam

The Dublin & North Wicklow Mountains: A Detailed Map 1:30,000
EastWest Mapping
€9.95 ISBN 978-1-899815-23-4

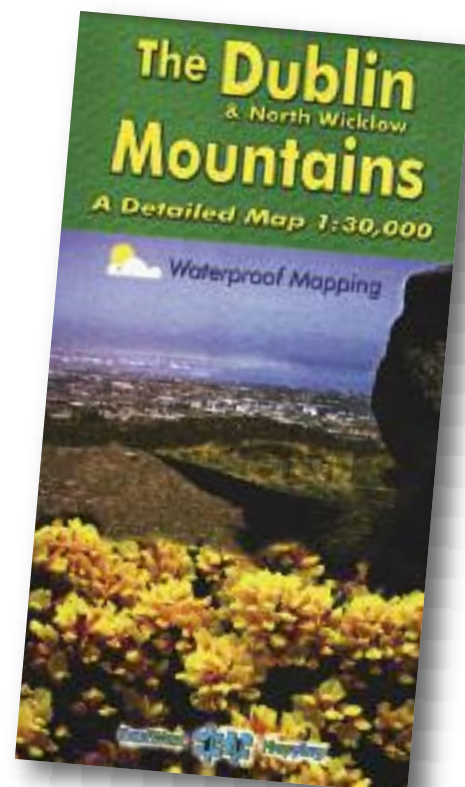
This is a superb piece of cartography, the kind of map that walkers have hoped for. The larger scale as against the OSI 1:50k has allowed the mapper to include a mass of valuable detail.

Perhaps most valuable is the delineation of tracks and paths, five grades of them; it will need a more experienced walker than me to find a path that is missing. But there is much other information, so much that each time I look at the map I spot something new: car parks, of course, but also lay-bys, place names everywhere in English and Irish, alternative names, crags marked, a little pair

of red boots marks where there is access to the open hillside, National Monuments, County Wicklow Heritage Sites, Geological Heritage Sites (e.g. in small print, granite/schist junction).

However, nothing is perfect; in this case it is the contouring that is imperfect. The V.I. is 20m, with index contours every 100m; it is not a serious fault in the rolling Wicklow Mountains, but we have been spoilt by the 10m photogrammetric contours on the Discovery series.

Enough, except to say that the map is printed on one side of a water-resistant, tear-resistant paper, and to hope that Barry and Clive Dalby (whose pictures appear on the top left corner of the map) keep busy on the other three sheets they have promised us: Wicklow Mountains West, Lugnaquilla and Wicklow Mountains East.



A life less ordinary: one of Ireland's first rock climbers

Paddy Barry



In Search of Islands: A Life of Conor O'Brien

By Judith Hill

The Collins Press, 126pp

Some colour, many b/w photos & sketches

A4 h/b €30.00 ISBN 978-1-90517265-88

Conor O'Brien was of privileged Anglo-Irish background. He was English-educated and, after qualifying as an architect, returned to Limerick and then went to Dublin. There he moved in a comfortable pre-First World War

social world. He spanned the ambition of Irish Nationalism and Empire, seeing no contradiction between his part in the running of 600 guns ashore in Kilcoole for the Irish Volunteers and his subsequent service in the British Navy.

His mountaineering is alluded to; probably hillwalking in Ireland and Wales. Unfortunately, detail is lacking. But interestingly, there is a group photograph which includes himself and Mallory.*

It is as a yachtsman that O'Brien stands out. He first learned the sailor's craft from the working boatmen of his family base in Foynes on the Shannon and Derrynane in Kerry. Boldly, in a Tilmanesque move, he bought *Kelpie*, a heavy seagoing yacht. In her he sailed the west coasts of Ireland and Scotland, with some gun-running as an aside.

He was small in stature but assertive in appearance; he was, after all, a descendant of the Thomonds of Munster. He took particular delight in sailing and climbing barefoot.

Saoirse was built for him in Baltimore. This 42-footer was on the lines of the sea-proven Cape Clear working boats of the time. In her, during 1923-25, he did a circumnavigation of Ireland, then still unusual in such a relatively small vessel. This remarkable voyage was hampered by both shortage of funds and

companionship. O'Brien was not an easy man to sail with, his crew leaving ship with alacrity.

This journey brought him fame and the beginnings of a subsequent career in maritime writing. From this platform he held forth, always insightful, questing, querying, without self doubt, the essence of the adventurer that he was.

Ilen was built in Baltimore under his direction for The Falklands Islands Company (and is now home and being restored; see bigboatbuild.com).

At the age of forty-seven Conor married English artist Kitty Clausen, with whom he had seven happy years before she died, too young. He lived out his days on Foynes Island, family nearby, writing prodigiously, until his death in 1952.

Con Collins, publisher, has again done us a service with this fine publication.

***Joss Lynam says:** *I can't let this go; in the second of two articles in the "Climbers Club Journal" before the Great War, he withdrew an earlier pejorative report of rockclimbing in Ireland and, after HC Hart, he was the only person to realise that there was plenty of rock for climbing in the country. So he was a hero to the founders of the IMC who would certainly have made him an Honorary Member if we'd known he was still alive.*

First three of six excellent new pocket guides

Joss Lynam

Mountaineering in Remote Areas of the World

ISBN 978-0-7136-8691-3

Mountain Walking and Trekking

ISBN 978-0-7136-8687-6

Rock Climbing

ISBN 978-0-7136-8690-6

Rucksack Guides series, edited by Alun Richardson

A & C Black, each 144pp, many colour photos

Each £7.99

These are the first three of six pocket guides all edited by Alun Richardson. They cover the same ground as the sections of the same names in the book *Mountaineering – The Essential Skills for Mountain Walkers and Climbers* that was very favourably reviewed by Calvin Torrains in *Irish Mountain Log No 88*, and the other sections in three-book form are promised for the autumn.

These new booklets are an excellent idea. The source book is large and heavy, suitable for study at home, definitely not to have in your pocket when, for instance, you are on the crag and trying to lower off an injured climber.



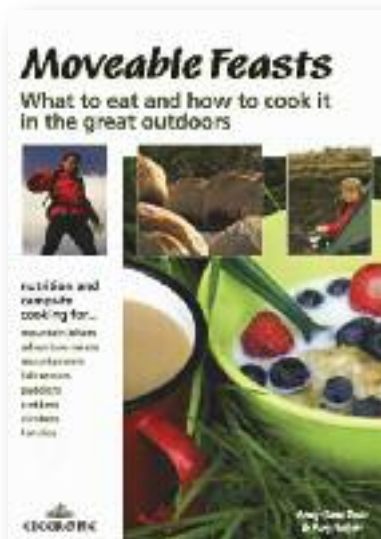
The booklets are 160x200mm in size and about 8mm thick, yet a careful check showed that they had all the information in the "parent book," though in some cases it was juggled around, for example 'scrambling' has moved from 'Rockclimbing' to 'Mountain Walking and Trekking.'

I must mention again the very clear sketches by George Manley.

If you failed to get the parent book from an aunt, as Calvin suggested you should, then these booklets are a very good alternative, smaller, lighter, but of course more expensive – £49.94 for the set.

Ingenious advice on eating and cooking al fresco

Gillian Costelloe



Moveable Feasts: What to Eat and How to Cook it in the Great Outdoors

By Amy-Jane Beer & Roy Halpin
Cicerone, 285pp
Many colour illustrations and photos
£14.95
ISBN 978-1-8528-534-6

Moveable Feasts is an all-encompassing guide to cooking in the great outdoors. It could be your first step on the journey to becoming a happier camper. Aimed at all types of intrepid

adventurers, from holiday-goers to serious mountaineers, it is a fool-proof compact handbook for those who like their grub. Useful guides offer advice on choosing the most practical and economical cooking equipment. It lists the clever little things we tend to forget when packing, covering all the essentials required for cooking, eating, storing and disposing. Handy equipment checklists are even provided for people like me who tend to pack everything but the kitchen sink!

Hydration and good nutrition are covered in detail – very useful for those taking part in endurance events. The book lists a huge variety of foods suited to camp cooking and backpack travel. One of the most useful chapters covers packing, storage and transportation – there is an array of useful tips sprinkled throughout.

Another excellent chapter covers mistakes, mishaps and misfortunes, including first aid, repairing equipment and even what to do when you've forgotten the corkscrew!

The second section of *Moveable Feasts* delights the reader with an abundance of tasty recipes, proving that camp cooking need not be boring or bland. There are nearly 100 recipes, which include breakfast, freshly baked bread, hearty dinners and even healthy snacks. There are plenty of recipes that will appeal to children and even the fussiest of eaters. There is an interesting section on getting the most from your surroundings by sourcing fresh, wild produce. You can even impress the gang by getting them all around the campfire for a fondue party made with cheese or Mars bars – take your pick!

All in all, this book is a compact source of ingenious advice for anyone cooking al fresco. *Moveable Feasts* is a great companion for all types of campers – it will appeal to seasoned campers and novices alike. Whether off to a music festival or trekking halfway up a mountain, I don't think I would venture out camping again without a quick flick through this little gem.



Lunch in the hills.
Photo: Tim Orr.

Skills and safety tips for ski mountaineering

John Breen



Off Piste Essentials: The Skills and Techniques for Off-piste Skiing and Ski-touring

DVD video by Plas Y Brenin in association with the BMC and Mountaineering Council of Scotland
Documentary 45 mins, technical chapters approx 180 mins
£19.50 ISBN 978-0-90390813-9

This DVD is aimed at educating and inspiring those that want to move away from the piste and sample backcountry skiing. It is in two parts.

The first part, entitled "Essentials," is

a 45-minute documentary filmed in the Silverretta region of Austria. It follows a group of friends on a ski-touring expedition in which the various skills necessary for safe off-

piste skiing and ski mountaineering are presented in an easy style. It projects the image of a group that, with the right amount of essential equipment, the necessary skills and the judgement to use them wisely, can be self-sufficient and have the confidence to strike away from the lifts, escape the crowded pistes and have a fantastic week of skiing, carving their own tracks while experiencing the beauty and solitude of the mountains that can only be dreamt of in the confines of a resort.

The second part of the DVD is a series of technical chapters which expand on the skills covered in the documentary. These include: equipment, planning, safe travel, skinning uphill, understanding snow, defensive skiing, avalanche survival, rescue techniques, and finally, use of a rope. These chapters vary in length from four to thirty-six minutes and cover the various skills in more detail than the documentary. The information is presented in a progressive and informative format.

While a DVD cannot cover all the detail that a book can, this production is comprehensive. It would be a useful addition to any ski tourer's library, particularly for refreshing the skills at the start of the season and prior to embarking on a backcountry trip.

Useful, but you would need a good map as well

Linda Ó Loideoin



Yorkshire Dales North and East

By Dennis & Jan Kelsal
Cicerone, 247pp
53 colour photos, 44 maps
£12.00 ISBN 978-1-85284-509-4

The Yorkshire Dales is where I began my hillwalking, and reading this book brought back many happy memories. Most of the walks included in this book are based within the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Some of the more easterly

walks are just outside and well worth having a go. The majority of the walks are fairly short at just a couple of hours, but the authors have laid out the book in such a way that you can easily combine two walks and have a full day of enjoyable walking.

The walks vary from 'no experience required' to 'only for the experienced.' Some of the walks also include a bit of scrambling, but where possible the authors have tried to offer an alternative to the scramble. Having walked in the Dales I know that it is not always easy to avoid a scramble and, indeed, to me this added to the enjoyment. Small maps of the walks are included, but you would really need a good map of the area as well.

The authors have an excellent introduction to the area, ranging from the geology to the history (ancient to modern) and the impact of humans on the local scenery – well worth a read by itself. They have also included within many of the walks a small section on local interest which adds to the enjoyment.

Guide to a lesser-visited range in Italy

Joss Lynam



Italy's Sibillini National Park

By Gillian Price
Cicerone, 181pp
48pp colour photos, 25 sketch maps
£12.95
ISBN 978-1-85284-535-3

"Little known to foreign visitors, the Sibillini, in Italy's central Apennine chain, comprises soaring limestone mountains and awe-inspiring natural landscapes inhabited by wonderful wildlife."

So writes experienced guidebook writer Gillian Price, and she goes

on to prove it with this little guide. "When to go," she tells us, "is any time between spring and autumn."

It is easily accessible by air to Ancona on the Adriatic Coast, but could also be combined with a trip to Rome. Once you get there the bus services are good, as usual in Italy. The sketch maps in the guide are fairly basic, but 1:25,000 maps are available locally.

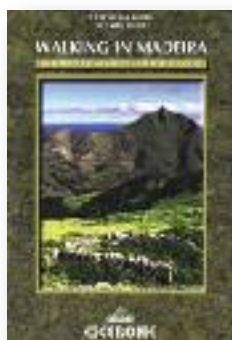
The Grande Anello (the Great Ring) is an eight-day, 120km trek round the perimeter of the park, with accommodation in rifugi (hostels) in small villages. Trips into the central mountains can easily be made.

Twenty-one walks are also described, mostly of four hours duration or less. They take full advantage of the limestone rock, with canyons, waterfall and caves. Some take you onto the summits of the main ridge which, although it is easy going, can be dangerously windy.

The guide is well-illustrated and comes with all the usual Cicerone appurtenances.

Tropical hillwalking just three hours from Ireland

Declan Cunningham



Walking in Madeira: 60 Routes on Madeira & Porto Santo

By Paddy Dillon
Cicerone, 320pp
Numerous colour photos & sketch maps
£14.00 ISBN 978-1-85284-531-5

This walking guide is a great companion for the would-be visitor to Madeira or Porto Santo, whether you've been lucky enough to go there before or not. The book is now in its second edition and includes several important updates like the excellent network of road tunnels

that help explorers get around that little bit easier. Also included are details of the new waymarked trails that have recently been developed.

Due to the impressive nature of the terrain, most of the walks presented are linear and it's recommended to use buses or taxis to get around. In fact, the author suggests that hiring a car could ruin a walking holiday, and offers details of local transport for each walk. Many walks lead from one to the other so are easily extended into multi-day trips.

The author, Paddy Dillon, is a prolific guidebook writer with about forty other titles to his credit. His unique style of data collection involves using a palm pilot into which he inputs the most current data about each walk literally as he does them. This means very accurate and detailed walk descriptions so you won't put a foot wrong.

Interesting sections about the history, geology, flora and fauna help you get a better feel for the place, and that, coupled with such a variety of walks from woodland tracks to cliff-hugging trails, mean there is enough to entice even the hard-to-please trekker.

The island seems so comprehensively covered that even for a repeat visitor a trip to Madeira with this guide as company means not just having your synonymously named cake but eating it too!

Derry O’Crowley

An inveterate traveller with legions of followers

AFTER AN EXHAUSTING night flight followed by a sullen bus ride, checking into a strange hotel room in the small hours was wearisome, but after a short night’s sleep came the awakening with the warm Mediterranean sun streaming in, breakfast by a beach overlooking an azure sea and Derry O’Crowley bouncing in, having already done a deal with some strange Greek or Turk for transport, bus or hired cars, at some great price.

We were on another Derry holiday and enthusiasm and anticipation were coursing through our veins as we looked forward to two weeks of excitement and joy among friends. Derry brought us out of our cocoons and into the mountains in Mallorca, Crete, Turkey and the Canaries. In spite of the occasional blips, such as buses that broke down late at night in remote places or cars where the driver’s seat became disconnected from the floor, we clamoured to go back for more and to be part of one of his groups. He took on the world and brought us with him.

On a boat trip off Bodrum, Derry insisted on taking a ride on a big inflated banana. In Cala San Vicente, in spite of the red flag, he had to get into the roaring waves and we ended up

gathered around his bed in the local hospital.

He would talk of the early days, of summers in a cottage under Art’s Cross, of developing an interest in the outdoors, and of butterflies and raptors, trees and cones. Then, later on, of leaving work at one o’clock on Saturdays and cycling out to hostels for the weekend. In the 1950s, he and his wife Muriel were taking groups skiing in Norway. So they were ready in the 1960s to bring provisions on skis to the RTE engineers on Kippure, isolated in deep snow. By then he was regularly bringing groups to Italy, Greece, Egypt and Turkey, while also bringing his own family camping all over Ireland.

In the 1970s, Derry and Muriel joined the Ramblers. He was soon giving us of his energy and experience. He promoted the 10:30am start (up until then it had been 11:00). He started the Amblers, led hikes, ran weekends, encouraged good equipment, map-reading, bootlace-tying and looking after new members.

He was also now taking cycling more seriously. He joined the Vets and regularly cycled 100km in preparation for the Wicklow 200, which he helped to organize and took part in. After

retirement, he and Muriel cycled for some months in Turkey. They cycled the Camino from Bilbao to Santiago; they cycled from Faro to Lisbon, and also cycled in the US.

Derry’s latter years were hard, when he lost his good health, watched over Muriel in her final illness and then experienced the subsequent years of loneliness.

He was an Alexander the Great, and we were his devoted legions. In the seventies, he brought a group into Persia, in a mini-bus without air-conditioning, to the golden city of Isfahan and then proceeded to set off across the desert towards the Persian Gulf! There was a mutiny – and wisdom prevailed; but unlike Alexander, Derry continued to take on many other projects and, for those of us who got caught up in them and in his zeal, our lives were the richer for it.

May he rest in peace.

John Sweetman (courtesy of *The Rambler*)

Derry O’Crowley, born 1924, died 2009.

Derry O’Crowley.
Photo: Tony Carroll

Feargal Lyons

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to Joe Lyons and his family on the untimely death of his son Feargal.

Margaret Sweeney

We are sad to report the tragic death of mother-of-three Margaret Sweeney from Dundrum, Dublin, after a fall on Mweelrea in County Mayo. The Board of Mountaineering Ireland extends its deepest sympathy to Margaret Sweeney’s family and friends.

El-Hierro
Glorious Undiscovered Little Island

7-DAY ESCORTED TRIPS - OCTOBER-MAY

La Palma *La Gomera* *La Hierro*

Holiday includes:
Ferries Transport
Accommodation (apart) Daily Walks
Barbecues Swims €425

Walk For Fun - In The Sun!

Tel: 086 604 9836 (Summer)
Tel: 0034 922 719 261 (Winter)
Email: sdwtenerife@eircom.net
www.shane-gray.com

Book your Tenerife flights online early with Ryanair or Aer Lingus and avail of lower than ever fares. Holiday includes all ferries, transfers and transport, accommodation and daily guided walks.
Price €425

irish mountain log
The magazine for walkers and climbers in Ireland

To advertise in the Irish Mountain Log

telephone: (+353 1) 625 1115
email: logads@mountaineering.ie

Mountaineering Ireland
www.mountaineering.ie

A World of Adventure!

Mt Elbrus - Russia £1390 | Kilimanjaro - Tanzania £1195
Mt Kenya - Kenya £650 | Africamp - Kenya £1695
Kinabalu - Borneo £1250 | Aconcagua - Argentina £2300
Everest Base Camp - Nepal £1195

Beat the credit crunch with our sterling prices, and beat the blues with our great trips and personal service! Call today to discuss dates.

Tel: 048 70 83 1258 (ROI) | 028 70 83 1258 (NI)
Email: office@adventurealternative.com

Ireland's Leading Adventure Company!
www.adventurealternative.com

ADVENTURE ALTERNATIVE + Volunteering Holidays in Kenya
Charity Expeditions Youth Expeditions
expeditions · treks · safaris

Guided & Self-guided Walking Tours
Short Breaks ♦ Day Walks ♦ Mountain Skills Courses

www.walkinghikingireland.com

Christopher Stacey
Footfalls Walking Holidays
Email: info@walkinghikingireland.com
Tel: 0404 45152
Mob: 087 269 8659



our insurance isn't available for *all* mountaineers

BMC insurance will give you peace of mind, wherever you travel.

- All premiums held at 2008 rates
- Further discounts for online purchases
- Policy details sent straight to your mobile phone (when you apply online)
- Special rate for couples

Mountaineering Council of Ireland (MCI) members (Individual and Club Members) can take advantage of the BMC's insurance as a benefit of their membership. **Please quote your MCI membership number or club name on application for insurance.**

INSURANCE YOU CAN TRUST

www.thebmc.co.uk/insure
BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL
177-179 Burton Road, Manchester M20 2BB
T 0161 445 6111 F 0161 445 4500
E insure@thebmc.co.uk





FIFTY THREE DEGREES
NORTH

THE ADVENTURE STORES

PERFECTION!

FOR THE BEST QUALITY AND CHOICE OF WALKING & HIKING
CLOTHING AND GEAR, VISIT - WWW.53DEGREESNORTH.IE

ADVENTURE STARTS HERE

WWW.53DEGREESNORTH.IE



FIFTY THREE DEGREES
NORTH

THE ADVENTURE STORES

SPECIAL OFFER!

15% OFF ALL RRP's WHEN YOU SHOP ONLINE
PLUS FREE DELIVERY ON ALL ORDERS OVER €200

BLANCHARDSTOWN: (01) 824 9156 | CARRICKMINES: (01) 214 9352