

Spring 2019 €3.95 UK£3.40 ISSN 0790 8008 Issue 129

# Irish Mountain Log

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## The three peninsulas hike

Final leg of 525-km mountain hike from Dursey to Dingle

## Irish success on 8000m peak

Galwayman summits on Manaslu

  
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# Welcome

With the mild weather that we have generally had this winter, it has been a good year for Irish hillwalkers and climbers so far.

This has been evidenced by the large numbers of people to be seen out at popular locations in the hills at the weekends. It augurs well for the coming months, as the days are getting longer and hopefully the temperatures will be even milder.

Spring is in the air and more people are getting outdoors. Despite the promises made last year, and recent positive statements, there has not been any progress in relation to the indemnity arrangement for **mountain access** areas. I understand that Mountaineering Ireland will be meeting with officials of the Department of Rural and Community Development this month to highlight the need to progress the promised **indemnity scheme** and to develop a new strategy to guide the development of Ireland's growing outdoor recreation sector.

This issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is full of interesting news articles, so thanks very much, as always, to all of our contributors.

The winner of our Christmas crossword competition is announced on page 19. There was a lot of interest in the competition this year, thanks (I am sure) to the excellent prize provided by **Basecamp**. We have another competition in this issue, again with a great prize from Basecamp (see page 65).

The features we have been able to include



## There has not been any progress on the indemnity arrangements for mountain access areas.

in this issue cover an interesting range of topics, from an account of the completion of a three-peninsula hike in the south-west of Ireland, to a report on the ascent of a sea stack off the Donegal coast, to reflections on mountain lists and on the presence of ravens in our uplands, to an account of a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary climb in Nepal commemorating the first Irish ascent of Everest.

We also have a low-key but intriguing interview with **Mike Keane**, an amazing man from County Galway who last year climbed Manaslu, an 8,000m peak in Nepal, at the age of 65 years.

In the news features, we have an update from Eimir McSwiggan, our 'ice queen,' who has had another very successful year on the world ice-climbing circuit, coming third overall in the world rankings for 2019. Congratulations to Eimir for that tremendous effort!

It just remains for me to wish you all well as you venture outside in the coming months.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**, Editor

## ISSUE 129

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

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### 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 the Mountain Training Board of Ireland administers a range of training programmes for walkers and climbers.



## Write for the Log

Contributions of features, news items and photographs for the *Irish Mountain Log* are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor at: [iml-editor@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-editor@mountaineering.ie).

Contributors' guidelines can be downloaded from the Mountaineering Ireland website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie).

To join Mountaineering Ireland and receive four issues of the *Irish Mountain Log* delivered to your door each year, please also go to the website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie).



### ON THE COVER

View from the Slieve Mish Mountains on the Dingle peninsula, Co Kerry, looking towards Castlemaine Harbour, Inch Strand and Dingle Bay.

**PHOTOGRAPH**  
AIDAN ENNIS



# CONTENTS Spring 2019

Margaret Tees on the walk-in (and paddle-in!) to one of the remoter Corbetts in Scotland (see story, page 41)

## News

- 5 Wicklow Way reroute at Crossbridge**
- 6 2018 Lynam Lecture: Paddy O'Leary**  
Patrick O'Sullivan reports
- 8 Get Ireland Walking: 'Ireland Lights Up 2019'**  
Jason King reports on the initiative's latest venture
- 10 First day on the job with great views of the Mournes**
- 11 Mourne Mountain Marathon**  
Jim Brown reports
- 12 Dark matters: dark sky parks**  
Georgia MacMillan reports
- 13 Clare Trail Wardens**
- 13 Wicklow club makes donation to Glen of Imaal team**
- 14 Glenmalure's invitation to hillwalkers**  
By Glenmalure Pure Mile Group
- 15 Sharing our outdoor spaces**  
Helen Lawless reports
- 16 Benefits from participating in sports**

- 17 Upcoming Women With Altitude event in Connemara**  
Ruth Whelan reports
- 17 The Climbers Inn reopens**
- 18 Lecture Series 2019:**
  - 1. James Forrest**
  - 2. Dawson Stelfox & Frank Nugent**Patrick O'Sullivan reports
- 20 Mourne bus shuttle service**
- 20 New website on outdoor activities in Northern Ireland**

## Climbing

- 21 Youth trad climbing camps**  
By Damien O'Sullivan
- 22 Depot Youth Cup 2018**  
Lucy Mitchell reports
- 24 The Youth Team's new coach**  
By Rob Hunter
- 24 Additional sponsor for Youth Climbing Team**  
By Damien O'Sullivan

## News Features

- 26 2019 Ice Climbing World Cup**  
Eimir McSwiggan reports
- 28 Weekend in the wilderness**  
Paul Mather reports on a Maynooth club's hike in the Nephin Begs
- 30 Climbing in Transylvania**  
Ian Lawler reports on a Dublin club's trip to Romania

## Features

- 32 The spirit of Everest '93**  
Gerry Galligan reports on an attempted first ascent of Phuleate peak in Nepal
- 36 The three peninsulas**  
Aidan Ennis describes the final leg of his great long-distance hike

- 41 Taking on the Corbetts**  
Margaret Tees on her obsession with 'bagging' summits
- 44 The Duke's Head**  
Iain Miller tackles an unclimbed sea stack in Donegal
- 47 An Irish ascent of Manaslu**  
Patrick O'Sullivan interviews Mike Keane about his Himalayan climb
- 51 Ravens in the Mournes**  
By Gerry Burns

## Regulars

- 54 Access & Conservation**  
Helen Lawless reports
- 56 Training**  
Jane Carney reports
- 58 Good Practice Guide (No 3)**  
By John Healy
- 60 Books & Films**  
Reviews of recent books and films
- 65 Crossword**  
Win a great prize in our Spring Competition
- 66 The Last Word**  
Tom Ballard, Andy Nisbet, Steve Perry, Seán Byrne, Robbie Robinson



Eimir McSwiggan competing in Saas-Fee

**26** 2019 ICE CLIMBING WORLD CUP



Alan Tees looks at Kyajo Ri from advanced base camp

**32** THE IRISH PHULETATE EXPEDITION



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# Newsdesk



Pictured at the opening of the new section of the Wicklow Way, from left: County Wicklow Partnership Rural Recreation Officer, Bryan Fennell, Mountain Meitheal Chairman, Robert Grandon, and Crossbridge Community Volunteers, Helen McDonald, Madge Kenny and Hugh Coogan.

## Wicklow Way reroute at Crossbridge

A new section of the Wicklow Way was recently opened at Crossbridge, taking the popular waymarked trail off the R747 road and removing the need for walkers to hike on a dangerous section of road from Tinahely to Crossbridge.

This project was coordinated by **County Wicklow Partnership**, who manage the national 'Walks Scheme' for the county, and is supported by the **Wicklow Way Partnership**, the management body for the Wicklow Way.

The Wicklow Way Partnership is comprised of representatives from Coillte, County Wicklow Partnership, Wicklow County Council, Dublin Mountain Partnership, Mountain Meitheal and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The majority of the work was done by the volunteer group **Mountain Meitheal** over the course of four weekends. These volunteers undertake projects to protect and conserve mountain and forest areas in Ireland. Their aim is to counteract the evident pressures on our fragile landscape by building and maintaining trails that are sympathetic to the surrounding countryside.

Additional support was received from

volunteers from the local community of Crossbridge, Wicklow County Council and the Rural Social Scheme, operated by County Wicklow Partnership.

"Projects like these are a verification of a community's goodwill to visitors to their local area," said **Bryan Fennell**, Rural Recreation Officer for County Wicklow Partnership.

"This reroute was made possible by the kind permission of a private landowner, who allowed us to reroute the Wicklow Way through their lands. This was a result of positive and active engagement with the landowner by the local community group.

"This new section of the Wicklow Way will help reduce the risk of an accident by removing the need for walkers to walk around a very dangerous bend in the road."

Bryan went on to acknowledge the tremendous work by the volunteer group Mountain Meitheal and expressed thanks for the goodwill of all private landowners currently providing recreational access through their lands for hillwalkers in County Wicklow ■



Attentive audience at the 2018 Lynam Lecture by Paddy O'Leary in Dublin in December

# "People, peaks and places: off the beaten track"

Paddy O'Leary delivers the 2018 Lynam Lecture to warm acclaim.



## Lynam Lecture

By Patrick O'Sullivan

**Paddy O'Leary**, a leading Irish mountaineer and author of *The Way That We Climbed: A History of Irish Hillwalking, Climbing and Mountaineering* (The Collins Press, 2015), delivered the 2018 Lynam lecture to a large, receptive audience in the Chartered Accountants Ireland lecture hall on Pearse Street, Dublin, on Thursday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

The Lynam lecture was inaugurated in 2011 in the memory of **Joss Lynam** (1924-2011), one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, in recognition of his enormous achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering in Ireland and overseas over some 60 years. During his lifetime, Joss initiated numerous developments in these different areas of our sport and was an inspiration to a number of generations of Irish mountaineers.

Joss Lynam's achievements included many mountaineering expeditions to the Greater Ranges and an outstanding voluntary contribution to the development of adventure sports in Ireland. Joss was known to many Irish and international walking enthusiasts for his many hillwalking guidebooks. He was also

the editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* magazine for more than 20 years. Joss continued as the Literary Editor of the magazine up to the time of his death.

Since it was inaugurated in 2011, the Lynam lecture has been delivered by leading national and international mountaineers: 2011, **Harish Kapadia**; 2012, **Dawson Stelfox**; 2013, **Stephen Venables**; 2014, **Clare Sheridan**; 2015, **Ines Papert**; 2016, **Paul Swail & John McCune**; 2017, **Frank Nugent**. All of these have

Mike Maunsell chairs as Paddy O'Leary takes questions with a photo of the late Joss Lynam on the screen behind them.



Photographs: Patrick O'Sullivan

been outstanding lectures that reflected on the development of our sport in Ireland and how it might progress in coming years.

This year's lecture by Paddy O'Leary certainly followed in that tradition. The lecture was opened by **Mike Maunsell**, chair of the Lynam Lecture Working Group.

Mike reminded those present that the intention of the Lynam lectures was to commemorate a great Irish mountaineer by reflecting on developments in our sport, in Ireland and abroad. He then introduced Paddy O'Leary as the well-deserving recipient of the **2018 Lynam Medal**.

## Major achievements

Paddy has been involved in mountaineering in one form or another for more than sixty years. Following the usual progression from rock climbing in Ireland and experience in the Alps, he started exploring the Greater Ranges and was the leader of the first Irish expeditions to the Himalaya and Peru.

He gradually moved from climbing on well-known peaks to exploring less well-known mountainous areas such as the Mountains of the Moon in Zaire, Bogda Ola, a sub-range of the Tian Shan Mountains in China, and particularly the districts of Kinnaur and Spiti in Himachal Pradesh, India.

Besides being the first western mountaineer to visit Kinnaur in over fifty years, he combined the crossing of many high passes with route-finding to previously unvisited peaks and attempting, occasionally successfully, to climb some of them. He has returned to Kinnaur many times and has taken a particular interest in the culture of its intriguing people.

Paddy was director of the **National Adventure Centre** at Tiglin in Wicklow for twenty years and was responsible for drawing up and implementing the syllabuses for courses leading to most of the leader and instructor qualifications that are now so much a part of our mountaineering experience.

Paddy was also a founding member of the **Spillikin Club**, as well as of the **Association for Adventure Sports** and also of the body that has become **Mountaineering Ireland**. He is to this day an active member of the **Irish Mountaineering Club**.

Paddy started his inspiringly reflective lecture by returning to his early days of climbing in Ireland, and then in the Alps in the 1960s and '70s, and describing how mountaineering had developed from there

in Ireland.

As Irish mountaineers became more experienced in the Alps, he explained, teams from Ireland attempted more difficult routes, such as the west face of the Aiguille du Dru (3,754m) in the French Alps, which **Emmett Goulding** and **Tony Ingram** climbed in 1961. Emmett went on to climb the Dru by all three of its major routes and became Ireland's leading alpinist.

From the Alps, Irish climbers started looking towards the Greater Ranges. Paddy led the first **Irish Karakorum expedition**, which attempted Rakaposhi's difficult north-west ridge in 1964. Other members of that expedition included **Emmett Goulding** and **Joss Lynam**. Rakaposhi (7,788m) in Pakistan had first been climbed by British climbers **Mike Banks** and **Tom Patey** in 1958, by the south-west spur and ridge route.

Paddy subsequently led the first **Irish expedition to the Andes** in 1968, where he and **Tony Ingram** made the first ascent of Chainapuerto (5,788m) in Peru.

Paddy and Joss later joined with Mike Banks in joint **Anglo-Irish expeditions**, the first of which was in 1989 to Jaonli (6,632m) in Garwhal, on which they were joined by **Alan Blackshaw**, and which was unsuccessful. Another was the expedition to Bogda Ola in China's Xinjiang Province in 1995, which Paddy was on again with Joss. That was more successful, with four summits being reached, including some first ascents.

## Climbing today

Having taken the audience through the development of Irish mountaineering at home and abroad to where Irish climbers were climbing 8,000m peaks and attempting ascents of unclimbed or infrequently climbed peaks in remote areas, Paddy then became more reflective about the modern trend towards queuing on trade routes on popular mountains and commercial expeditions.

He felt strongly that there were still many unclimbed 5,000 and 6,000m peaks in the world and it is to those that Irish mountaineers should now be turning their attention.

Paddy then talked about his explorations over twenty years of Kinnaur in **Himachal Pradesh**, where he said there were many unclimbed 6,000m peaks. He was the first mountaineer to visit that area after the initial exploration by **Marco Pallis** in 1933. He was struck by



Paddy O'Leary reminiscing about his early climbing days.

the culture there and over the years came to appreciate it.

Now in his seventies, Paddy O'Leary remains an active and enthusiastic mountaineer. He closed his inspiring talk by encouraging Irish mountaineers to explore and climb less-visited mountains rather than following the crowds on well-trodden paths.

After the talk, Paddy O'Leary answered some questions from the audience. He was then thanked by Mike Maunsell and presented with the 2018 Lynam Medal by **Ruth Lynam**, Joss's daughter ■

Ruth Lynam (daughter of Joss Lynam) presents Paddy O'Leary with the 2018 Lynam Lecture Medal.







The launch of Ireland Lights Up 2019 in Ballyboughal GAA grounds, Dublin, with GAA President John Horan (centre back, with arms raised) surrounded by members of the club. Karl Henry, fitness expert, *Operation Transformation*, and Joanne Cahill, Healthy Club Officer, Ballyboughal GAA, are to his right.

## Ireland Lights Up 2019

The GAA, Get Ireland Walking and RTÉ's *Operation Transformation* 'Light up Ireland' once again

**By Jason King (Get Ireland Walking)**

After the success of the inaugural 'Ireland Lights Up' campaign in 2018, the GAA was delighted to once again team up with RTÉ's *Operation Transformation* and *Get Ireland Walking* this year, to make exercise more accessible on dark winter nights.

More than 150 GAA clubs around the country had participated in this initiative in early 2018, with more than 5,000 walkers taking to their local GAA pitch. Each Thursday, club and community members were invited to come together at participating clubs to walk off the Christmas excesses, catch up with their neighbours and banish the winter blues.

Walking is proven to benefit both your physical and your mental health. GAA clubs are already becoming hubs for health promotion through their **Healthy Clubs** project, with at least one Healthy Club in each county.

In a bid to make exercise more accessible on dark winter nights, Ireland Lights Up saw participating clubs turn on their floodlights and lighting systems between 7.00pm and 9.00pm each

Thursday evening for a six-week period (January 17<sup>th</sup> to February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019), when *Operation Transformation* returned to our screens in the new year. This year saw over 260 clubs registering with *Get Ireland Walking*, 110 more than last year! The campaign is clearly going from strength to strength.

The launch of the campaign took place in **Ballyboughal GAA** club grounds, Co Dublin, a club that had taken part in the previous campaign.

**John Horan**, Uachtarán Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, said: "In every corner of the country our network of clubs plays a crucial role in contributing towards a healthier Ireland. The benefit of this initiative is that it appeals to young and old, players and non-players, with health benefits for everyone."

"The new year is always a time when people look to get out and be a bit more active. The Ireland Lights Up initiative allows them to do that safely within their own community and among friends. I'd be confident that we can meet the ambitious target of 10,000 participants that has been set for 2019."

Healthy Club Officer, **Joanne Cahill**, said: "We had no idea

what numbers we would get, but we had 150 walkers, maybe even more, every week in Ballyboughal. They were coming from everywhere, with cars backed up. There were groups of people, families, kids, people from all walks of life. The walking track in the club is somewhere you can go for a safe walk. There is really nowhere else around Ballyboughal and people don't like walking on the dark roads in winter."

**Jason King**, National Programme Manager of *Get Ireland Walking*, said: "Get Ireland Walking is delighted to be part of Ireland Lights Up 2019. More and more people now identify with the positive

benefits of walking. It is through initiatives such as this, in partnership with the GAA, that we can provide safe walking environments for communities and club members to stay active and engage with others, in particular, over the winter months.

"The walking tracks are not just for winter. When spring comes around, communities have a great base to build upon."

"It also provides a natural platform for walking groups to develop organically and locally, using other existing amenities in their counties such as rolling hills, forest trails, coastal walks, parks and greenways" ■



Pictured at the launch of Ireland Lights Up 2019 in Ballyboughal, from left, Richard Seaver (Ballyboughal GAA Club Chairman), Joanne Cahill, (Healthy Club Officer, Ballyboughal GAA), John Horan (GAA President), Jason King (Get Ireland Walking) and Karl Henry, fitness expert for *Operation Transformation*, pictured with juvenile members of the club.



# Comments from participating clubs

During the six-week period of Ireland Lights Up, *Operation Transformation* cameras visited a selection of participating clubs, with all clubs encouraged to capture their stories via videos and images for use on the show, GAA.ie, and RTE's various platforms.

**Members of Carrigallen GAA Club at the local launch of Ireland Lights Up 2019 in Carrigallen, Co Leitrim**



## Carrigallen GAA, Co Leitrim

Carrigallen GAA club in Leitrim recorded some of the highest numbers of participants over the weeks that *Operation Transformation* was being broadcast, and they have plans to continue. Club Secretary **Orla Sheridan** described the success of the initiative in the club:

"Carrigallen village in County Leitrim has a population of just under 400 residents. This year, Carrigallen GAA opened up its grounds for the first time to take part in the Ireland Lights Up initiative and the response from our community was amazing. We consistently had the highest number of participants of any GAA club in Ireland, peaking at 322. Thursdays in Carrigallen was all about the Ireland Lights Up walk.

"It was so rewarding to see people coming to the GAA grounds, some for the first time, children dragging their parents out, people in the community reconnecting and our more senior members demonstrating you can walk at any age. It was a fantastic community event, which we will certainly continue to participate in, in coming years."



**Walkers in Latton O'Rahilly's GAA Club grounds in Monaghan**

## Latton O'Rahilly's GAA, Co Monaghan

In Co Monaghan, **Christina Weldon**, Latton O'Rahilly's GAA Club Secretary and Healthy Club Officer, explained how Ireland Lights Up worked so well for her club:

"We got very big numbers participating even though the weather wasn't great. Most nights we had between eighty and 100 people joining in. It is a small community, but everyone really got behind it. All ages participated: the youngest was just over four, the oldest were in their 60s or over; around twenty few between 60 and 75 got out walking.

"We did two nights a week. We are a very rural club, six miles from the nearest towns, in Cavan and Monaghan, and just on the Cavan-Monaghan border.

We have a training pitch that you can walk around. We are three-quarters of the way there with our new purpose-built walking track. We hope to open that next year.

"We were trying to get people into the idea of walking before we open the new track, to get them used to it. It worked. What struck us was how two men, with limited attachment to the club, participated and were ready, willing and able to attend the walking sessions.

"One of them had no links to the club," Christina remarked. "The other man's grandchildren play for the club and he might go to the odd game; but as regards coming to the clubhouse, we would never have seen either of them there."

We look forward to supporting existing clubs registered with Get Ireland Walking – through signposting further initiatives, annual physical activity campaigns, and supporting the development of new walking groups through the GAA clubs.

We now have a great platform to build upon and a model to scale up. It also provides potential through new partnerships to mobilise other sporting clubs interested in promoting walking.

We want to take this opportunity to thank all clubs, their committees, their communities, our stakeholders and all of the walkers who have made this campaign such a huge success. Watch this space for further developments ■



**AUTHOR:** Jason King is Programme Manager of Get Ireland Walking. **Get Ireland Walking** is an initiative of Sport Ireland, supported by Healthy Ireland and hosted and delivered by Mountaineering Ireland.

**FIND OUT MORE:** To find out more about Get Ireland Walking, visit the website [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie), contact us on (01) 625 1109 or email Jason at [jason@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:jason@getirelandwalking.ie).





Mourne Rangers Katie Taylor and Marc Vinas Alcon resting at a stile on the Mourne Wall

## First day on the job with great views of the Mournes

Two brand-new National Trust rangers for the Mourne Mountains, Katie Taylor and Marc Vinas Alcon, need your help.

Imagine your working day started with a 4km hike to the top of Northern Ireland's tallest mountain, Slieve Donard. That's exactly the scenic commute two members of the **National Trust** team have been taking daily since March 1<sup>st</sup> in their new roles as Mourne Rangers.

**Marc Vinas Alcon** and **Katie Taylor** have the best 'office' view in Northern Ireland as they start a project to repair pathways on Slieve Donard and Slieve Commedagh. The project will last for two years and the National Trust are investing £250,000 to protect the landscape and improve the condition of paths.

Not only a source of literary inspiration, the Mournes are home to a varied range of rare plants and habitats which the National Trust works to look after on the highest parts of Donard and Commedagh. The

delicate montane habitat, dry heath and blanket bog, and the specialised species which thrive in these habitats, are part of why the mountains have been designated a **Special Area of Conservation**.

As the popularity of the Mournes has grown over recent years, winning recent accolades such as Northern Ireland's favourite walking destination, visitor numbers have increased. As this has happened, the delicate ecosystem of the Mournes has started to show signs of wear and tear and that's where the Mourne Rangers come in.

As part of the plan to create a sustainable path on Slieve Donard, the two-year project will see them repairing 'braided' tracks, where walkers have created multiple routes, and re-landscaping some of the areas around the upland paths to ensure protection of the surrounding environment.

It is a big job and Marc and Katie need help. They are looking for a passionate team of volunteers who love the Mournes as much as they do, to help them out.

Marc began as a volunteer at **Murlough National Nature Reserve**, and worked as a Boardwalk Ranger there last year, but found himself 'keeping an eye on the mountain' from his vantage point in the dunes.

The mountains remind him of his native Catalonia and he maintains that the rain here is gentle compared to the downpours in Spain. "I'm really happy to start this new adventure and new challenge," he says.

Katie already knows the area well, most recently working on the Mourne Wall project with **Mourne Heritage Trust** and also appearing in the BBC programme *The Chronicles of Mourne*.

As well as the difficult physical work of repairing the paths and bringing the materials to the site each day, the project will face other challenges, as Katie explains: "Weather is going to be an issue. We can't always be guaranteed perfect sunshine when we're up here, and the path needs to be repaired whether there's a hailstorm or snow."

**Heather McLachlan**, Regional Director of the **National Trust for Northern Ireland**, said: "I'm delighted to see this project beginning, both personally and professionally. This fragile landscape needs to be repaired and protected for further generations and, as the UK's largest conservation charity, we will work to make sure that that happens, but we also want to balance conservation with access.

"On a personal level, I love the Mournes. You will often find me in this special place in all weather, walking with friends. I truly understand why thousands of others love this place so much and I'm passionate that the work Marc and Katie do will help those visiting to enjoy these amazing summits."

The rangers are hoping to recruit a team of volunteers to support the project, as well as enjoy the Mournes. "You can't come up here and not be reminded of all the fairytales you heard as a kid," says Katie. "They really are an amazing source of inspiration to get outdoors and enjoy this special place."

Next time you find yourself coming to the summit of Slieve Donard, stop and have a chat with Marc and Katie and take in the views ■

**VOLUNTEERING:** If this sounds like your dream job, give Murlough National Nature Reserve a call on **028 4375 1467** to chat about volunteering as a Mourne Ranger.

**MOURNE RANGERS:** Keep up with the Mourne Rangers and see the work they are doing on their dedicated Twitter account at **@NTMournes**.


**FIND OUT MORE:** For more information on the project, see **[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-mournes](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/the-mournes)**.

Slieve Commedagh



# Mourne Mountain Marathon

*Celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September this year*



A competitor in the Mourne Mountain Marathon passing a control point with Hen Mountain and the Mournes in the background

**By Jim Brown (Event Organiser)**

Next September will see the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of one of Ireland's longest-running mountain sports events, the **Mourne Mountain Marathon**.

Initially organised by the **Mourne Mountain Rescue Team**, the event grew rapidly in popularity. After being taken over by **Denis Rankin** and a team of volunteers in 1982, it became one of the main mountain marathons in the British Isles, attracting up to 250 teams and some of the best mountain runners from these islands and beyond.

The term 'marathon' is a bit misleading, as this is not a race over the classic distance but rather a marathon of endurance for teams of two, spread over two days, navigating a course through the

hills and camping overnight in some remote spot.

There are various courses to choose from, ranging from the easy navigation and leisurely pace of the D course, right up to the 'full on' running and technical challenges of the élite class.

There is also a one-day 'score' event on the Saturday, which simply challenges teams to get around as many markers as possible within a six-hour time-frame. There is no camping with the score class, so you have less gear to carry.

Thanks to **Jackson Sports** of Belfast, there are prizes for a whole range of categories.

A handicap system is used to keep the veterans on as level a playing field as possible, though that is probably not the

best analogy to use in relation to a mountain event!

There is also a parent/teenager category, which allows those over sixteen to seventeen to have a go.


While the majority of competitors come from a hillwalking background, they find themselves mixing with mountaineers, fellrunners and orienteers, all testing their navigational skills and mountain knowledge, exploring out-of-the-way corners of the fabulous Mountains of Mourne.

Back in the early days, organised mountain events were few and far between, unlike now, with a plethora of charity challenges and commercial events. However, the Mourne Mountain Marathon remains true to its original ideals and is still organised by a team of volunteer enthusiasts. With your support, we hope to keep going for many more years to come.

Many of you will have had a go at the event over the years and we would like to invite you back to join us for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. If you have never enjoyed the flutter of excitement of a competitive mountain challenge event in the company of a good friend, well, the weekend of September 21-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, is just waiting for you! ■

**AUTHOR:** Jim Brown is a member of Mountaineering Ireland.

**FIND OUT MORE:** For all of the information on the Mourne Mountain Marathon, check out the website [mourne2day.com](http://mourne2day.com).



Helen Pruzina and Fiona Petersen competing in the 2018 marathon



# Dark matters

The night sky is most visible from the uplands

By Georgia MacMillan

It has become a well-quoted statistic that, here in Ireland, over 50% of us can no longer see the Milky Way, our own galaxy, from our back gardens because of light pollution.

Fortunately, the remaining almost 50% of us can still enjoy that phenomenon as one of the many advantages of living in rural Ireland and the limited light pollution there. In that respect, the topography of our mountain ranges is a precious resource because of their inaccessibility to urbanisation and encroachment of artificial light. It is no accident that the only 'International Dark Sky' places on this island are in upland environments. These places are havens for recreationalists by day and increasingly so after dark. In Mayo, the Wild Nephin area and Ballycroy National Park enjoy the status of a gold-tier **International Dark Sky Park**, offering astro-tourism trade in the off-season with potential enterprises for local business and accommodation providers. It has sparked a myriad of creative events featuring winter experiences, including the **Mayo Dark Sky Festival**, a three-day feast of dark-sky activities for all the

family to enjoy.

The adventurous among us might seek more immersive experiences, such as a night under the stars in the wilderness of the Nephin Beg range. This type of experience is unique to rural Ireland.

The concept of Dark Skies is transferable to rural communities around the country as a sustainable project, providing attractive goals for biodiversity and climate action. The establishment of a network of Dark-Sky groups can influence decision-making by local authorities on the type of lighting used to illuminate their localities.

In addition to the increasing energy lost to sky glow, the growth of blue-rich (white) LED lights has begun a transformation of our streetscapes into 24-hour 'daytime.' This is, perhaps, a technological step too far in our diurnal evolution and has implications for ecology through its impact on nocturnal wildlife and our insect populations, as well as our own wellbeing.

Blue-rich light triggers our senses into daytime mode, telling our bodies it is time to wake up, suppress melatonin and get on with our daily habits. However, this



interference in our circadian (meaning 'about a day') rhythms can lead to health disorders.

The map of Ireland shown here is an attractive image taken from space of the light emitted from Ireland back in 2015. As one might expect, the naturally dark areas are typically mountainous or rural areas. However, this picture is changing rapidly and a quick glance online at

[www.lightpollutionmap.info](http://www.lightpollutionmap.info) will provide an idea of the spread of artificial light across the country in recent years.

The solution is simple: we can use less light and make informed decisions on how light is used in public places. The Danish concept of 'hygge' (meaning a feeling of coziness and comfort) seems to encapsulate this. If we can apply a strategy of hygge into our lighting design we could be on the road to reducing our light wastage and making our nightscapes more attractive and welcoming.

As with any advocacy, the route to change is not through hardline restrictions but

through engagement. Here in Mayo, we stress that light is not the pollutant, but it is the manner in which it is used that can lead to light pollution. We invite communities to experience the darkness of night while we still have this natural resource. Plan a night under the stars on a wilderness camp, take a moonlit hike or gaze at the Milky Way, if you are in the lucky 50%. As David Attenborough famously said, "No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced" ■

**AUTHOR:** Georgia MacMillan is a Mountain Leader and Mountain Skills provider. She represents Mountaineering Ireland on the Irish Uplands Forum.

#### Visit...

Mayo International Dark Sky Park  
[www.mayodarkskypark.ie](http://www.mayodarkskypark.ie)

#### Join...

Terra Firma for a stargazing safari  
[www.terrafirmairland.com](http://www.terrafirmairland.com)

#### Attend...

Mayo Dark Sky Festival  
November 1-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019  
[www.mayodarkskyfestival.ie](http://www.mayodarkskyfestival.ie)



# Clare Trail Wardens

Clare Local Development Company and Clare Sports Partnership expand Clare Trail Volunteer Warden Programme

County Clare has 420 kilometres of trails, including long-distance walking trails like the Burren Way and the East Clare Way; looped walking trails like the Lough Avalla Farm Loop and Ballyvaughan Wood Loop; and on-road cycling trails on Loop Head and around Doolin.

The trails are managed by a variety of local community groups – **Clare Local Development Company, Clare Walks Ltd** and **Clare Sports Partnership** – together with the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** and **Coillte**.

The Rural Recreation Officer for Clare, **Eoin Hogan** of Clare Local Development Company, explained that the biggest challenge with managing off-road trails such as Lough Avalla Farm Loop, the Burren

Way and the East Clare Way was finding out what the issues that needed addressing were, such as broken stiles and missing directional signs.

“The programme is expanding the already successful volunteer warden programme with an additional six trail wardens who will regularly patrol the trails and report any issues they find, so we can make sure the trails are maintained to the highest standards for all walkers to enjoy.”

**John Sweeney**, coordinator of Clare Sports Partnership, said that as part of their commitment to Get Ireland Walking and the National Physical Activity Plan, they were delighted to be able to collaborate with the Rural Recreation Officer for Clare,

Eoin Hogan, on this project.

“Recreational walking is an accessible and affordable way to take part in physical activity,” he said. “According to the latest Irish Sports Monitor, 66% of the adult population of Clare activity-walk at least once a week. Other research tells us that exercising in the countryside can have many benefits to both our physical and mental health.

“The many trails and looped walks in the county give real added value to Clare as a destination for outdoor activities and sports tourism. Without active monitoring and maintenance of these walks, this social and touristic product would diminish,” he said.

The additional trail volunteer wardens have committed to

walking the trails regularly in order to ensure that they are maintained to the highest standard. They will monitor the trails for misplaced signage, flooding or any deficiencies.

A full list of the trails and looped walks in County Clare can be found on

[www.clare-getsidetracked.ie](http://www.clare-getsidetracked.ie) ■

## CONTACTS:

**Eoin Hogan**  
(Rural Recreation Officer, Clare),  
[ehogan@cldc.ie](mailto:ehogan@cldc.ie),  
086 812 2030  
**John Sweeney**  
(Clare Sports Partnership),  
[john@claresports.ie](mailto:john@claresports.ie),  
065 686 5434

## FIND OUT MORE:

Information on trails:  
[www.clare-getsidetracked.ie](http://www.clare-getsidetracked.ie)  
Clare Sports Partnership:  
[www.claresports.ie](http://www.claresports.ie)  
Clare Local Development Company: [www.cldc.ie](http://www.cldc.ie)



Pictured at the launch of the Clare Trail Wardens Programme at the Lough Avalla Farm Loop Walk in the Burren: Melissa Jeuken (in front) and, standing from left to right, Eoin Hogan, Dixie O'Regan, Catherine Ryan, Helen Derham, Arlene White, Jess Buckley and John Sweeney.

# Wicklow club makes donation to Glen of Imaal rescue team

Members of the **Wicklow & Arklow Hillwalkers Association** recently visited the **Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team** base in Kilafin, outside Laragh, Co Wicklow, to present a donation of €500 to the team. The money had been raised through members each giving a voluntary donation of €1 every week until the target sum was reached. They made the donation to show their appreciation for the hard work of the volunteers of Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team.

The picture shows the chairperson of Wicklow & Arklow Hillwalkers, **Brian King** (second from left), presenting the cheque for €500 to Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team member **Seamus Holden**. To their right (left of picture) is the leader of Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team, **Christian Clotworthy** ■





# Glenmalure's invitation to hillwalkers

By Glenmalure Pure Mile Group

*"Call it what you like. But the spirit of place is a great reality."* – **DH Lawrence**

Anyone who has visited the valley of Glenmalure, and in particular those who have ventured as far as the townland of Baravore at the head of the valley, will know something of what DH Lawrence was referring to in the above quotation. This remote and rugged landscape creates the unique character and atmosphere that has drawn generations of hillwalkers, day-trippers and locals to this wild area, again and again, for no other reason than that they love it.

In recent years, the **Glenmalure Pure Mile Group** has taken the upper part of the valley under its wing, endeavouring to keep it litter-free while preserving and promoting its rich heritage.

On foot of several successful collaborative projects since 2015, the group's most recent initiative is the establishment of a way-marked trail traversing the three valleys of Glendasan, Glendalough and Glenmalure, taking in six key disused mining sites along the way and finishing (or starting) at the Baravore mine site. This trail is now nearing completion and will be known as **The Miners' Way**.

Along with the many visitors who come to Glenmalure year after year and who are

welcomed by the local community, there are a small minority of campers who engage in anti-social and anti-environmental behaviour, particularly around Baravore and Ballinafunshoge, both of which are important lead mine heritage sites.

In an effort to address this small cohort of people and the persistent and unacceptable problems that they cause, the Glenmalure Pure Mile Group spearheaded yet another collaborative initiative towards the end of 2018. Two round-table discussion meetings were held with relevant stakeholders, all of whom have their own relationship with Glenmalure and with Baravore in particular, including representatives from the Glenmalure Pure Mile Group, local landowners, Mountaineering Ireland, the Pure Project, Coillte, the Friends of Glenmalure (who maintain the hostel), County Wicklow Partnership, Wicklow Uplands Council and a local councillor.

It was felt that their combined efforts had the potential to make a real impact on the situation. Each group identified tasks which they could undertake and, at the start of 2019, those actions commenced.

## Invitation

The Glenmalure PURE Mile Group would like to invite hillwalkers to participate in this great collaborative effort. You can do that by adopting a 'caretaker attitude' whenever you visit Glenmalure and, by encouraging other people, either implicitly or explicitly, to do the same.

If you see evidence of anti-social or anti-environmental behaviour, we ask you to inform members of the Glenmalure Pure Mile Group by phoning or texting:

**Pat & Margaret Dunne**

at **(0404) 46249** or **087 410 9259**

or

**Charles O'Byrne & Pauline Emerson**

at **(0404) 46288** or **087 9234764**

In any situation of emergency, alert the **emergency services** by phoning **999** or **112**

The Glenmalure valley is a unique place and is much loved by all of us. Please help us to give something back to this remarkable landscape, which itself has given so much for so long. Thank you! ■

**AUTHORS:** Glenmalure Pure Mile Group

participates in the Pure Mile initiative run by the Pure (Protecting Uplands & Rural Environments) Project, which aims to foster a greater appreciation and awareness of our country roadscapes by rewarding and acknowledging local community efforts.

**FIND OUT MORE:** Visit the website [www.pureproject.ie/the-pure-mile](http://www.pureproject.ie/the-pure-mile).



Looking in the direction of Baravore in Glenmalure valley, Co Wicklow



Rubbish in Pure Mile litter bags awaiting collection after a one-day litter pick by volunteers in the Glenmalure Pure Mile Group



# Sharing Ireland's outdoor spaces

In the last issue (IML 128, p51), we asked for your ideas on how different recreational users in Ireland's upland areas can co-exist without conflict.

**Helen Lawless** presents some of the responses we received.

## The right way to climb a gate

**By Rodney Magowan  
(Spartan Red Sox Walking Club)**

As a farmer, landowner and hillwalker, can I make a practical point to those from big cities tramping across other folks' property free of charge?

Do not wreck our gates, please. Think. When climbing over a gate, climb at the hanging end. If you climb at the closing end, your weight helps lever up the hanging post. Eventually this means the gate no longer hangs correctly and comes loose.

Most farmers take pride in having properly hung gates, just as most city folk take pride in tidy gardens. One can waste most of a day trying to rehang a gate. Time, money and also goodwill to trekkers are wasted.

So, climb a gate correctly and do not clamber over sheep fencing that cost £8 a



**Gate with built-in stile** "A recurring issue between farmers and walkers is gates – if a walker comes across a gate that is open, should he or she leave it open? Did the farmer leave the gate open on purpose or was it a careless walker earlier in the day? The obvious solution is to install a **stile** or **kissing gate** adjacent to the gate, but in locations where there is not sufficient width to do this a gate with a **built-in stile** is a solution. In my time as Rural Recreation Officer for Kilkenny I had this gate (pictured), with a built-in stile, custom-made by Signiatec in Kilkenny." – **Eoin Hogan (Rural Recreation Officer for Clare)**

metre to erect. You will slacken the wire and posts to the delight of any passing sheep. Go around to the gate or stile.

## Sharing outdoor space with archaeological monuments

**By Fiona Maguire (Rosway Walking Club)**

Archaeological monuments form part of our shared history as a people and they reflect a variety of cultures stretching back through time. The people who created monuments in the uplands had similar motivations to ourselves. They recognised that mountains were special places, closer to the heavens, to the stars and planets, those constants which allowed our ancestors to navigate across continents and the world.

When you come across monuments on the hills, remember it is never okay to take stone from them to build your own mini-monument, light your fire beside them, graffiti them, use them as a toilet or climb up on top of them for a photo. Please share this with your fellow walkers and respect our culture.

## Respect the freedom of others

**By Inga Bock  
(Rural Recreation Officer for Donegal)**

For me, respect means that my freedom to do what I can, and where, ends where another's freedom starts. That means being aware of your surroundings and acting accordingly. Sadly, these days many people are so wrapped up in themselves that they hardly notice others.

People are outdoors for a variety of reasons, and once you are aware of that you are more likely to respect those who are out with different motivations to your own – for example, birdwatchers thinking they have spotted a rare species versus fitness groups with loud music to keep a rhythm.

## Engaging signage

**By Madeleine Doherty (Glenwalk)**

Appropriate signage at popular access points could help. Casual day-trippers don't know any of the issues or wonders surrounding our lovely hills. Giving them some interesting information could be the carrot that engages them with the more serious problems regarding access, behaviour around livestock and appropriate rubbish disposal.

On the other hand, there is an element of stubbornness in regular recreational users that needs to be addressed via education and encouragement. Letting them know what specific wildlife or fauna they can expect to see if they watch carefully and quietly as they walk, climb or cycle may pique their interest. Unusual facts regarding individual plants, animals or birds always raise interest ■

**MORE IDEAS:** If you have other suggestions for how we can share Ireland's upland areas amicably and responsibly, or you have examples of things you have seen or done, please email [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie). We may include these in a future issue of the magazine, or with your permission share the ideas on social media.

Stone row, Edenmore, Co Cavan





# Benefits from participation in outdoor sports

An international study has compiled significant evidence of the benefits of outdoor sports.

By Helen Lawless

Initial findings from the EU-funded **Benefits of Outdoor Sports for Society (BOSS)** project were presented at an outdoor recreation conference held at Tollymore Outdoor Centre last October. The innovative and collaborative BOSS project is an initiative of the European Network of Outdoor Sports; Mike McClure from Sport NI is part of the project team.

An international search for relevant research over the 15 years from 2002-2017 revealed 17,560 studies. After screening by the project partners, 133 studies were selected for data extraction. A majority (56%) of the studies selected were from the last five years.

The key findings from the studies are that outdoor sports:

- effectively combine the positive outcomes of physical activity and being in nature;
- significantly improve mental health and well-being, and there are a wide range of physical health benefits for individuals;
- are effective for intra and interpersonal development, and contribute to other social benefits, such as fostering active citizenship and crime reduction, and improving social inclusion;
- connect people with nature and improve environmental education and awareness;
- provide a broad range of sport and recreational activities and opportunities that both engage and provide benefits to people of all ages, social or economic background and ability;
- have few limitations to participation and are great for providing life-long and age-appropriate physical activity.
- that are normally carried out with a (strong) relation to nature and the landscape, and the core aim of which is to deal with natural elements rather than with an object;
- where the natural setting is perceived by users as, at most, only minimally modified by human beings;\*;
- that are perceived as (at least minimally) physically demanding;
- that are based on man or natural element power and are not motorised during the sport itself;
- that may use some form of tool (for example a surfboard, bicycle, skis, etc) or just involve the human body;
- that may include activities that have their roots in natural places but use artificial structures designed to replicate the natural environment ■

\* Does not have to be wild, just perceived as natural.

**FIND OUT MORE:** For more on the BOSS project see [outdoorsportsbenefits.eu](http://outdoorsportsbenefits.eu).

## Mental health and wellbeing

- ✓ General mental health status
- ✓ Quality of life and overall wellbeing
- ✓ Combatting mental illnesses and diseases
- ✓ Positive affective states
- ✓ Reducing negative affective states
- ✓ Control and coping
- ✓ Self-development
- ✓ Positive experiences
- ✓ Active and happy ageing

## Active citizenship

- ✓ Community benefits
- ✓ Integration and inclusion
- ✓ Volunteering
- ✓ Bonding capital

## Benefits



## Physical health

- ✓ General physical health and related factors
- ✓ Combatting diseases like stroke, heart attack and cancer
- ✓ Low injury rates and extended life expectancy
- ✓ Healthy ageing
- ✓ Subjective health perception
- ✓ Sun exposure effects

## Additional benefits

- ✓ Lifetime physical activity
- ✓ Accessibility
- ✓ Cognitive functioning
- ✓ Other multiple effects

## Crime reduction & anti-social behaviour

- ✓ Increase of pro-social behaviour
- ✓ Prevention and reduction of crime

## Education & life-long learning

- ✓ (Intra) personal development
- ✓ Interpersonal development
- ✓ Educational motivation and achievements
- ✓ Cognitive aspects to improve learning
- ✓ Environmental awareness and behaviour



# Women With Altitude event in Connemara

Head west for a weekend of inspiration, smiles and skills, May 17-19<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**By Ruth Whelan (on behalf of the Women With Altitude Organising Committee)**

The 2019 Women With Altitude event will take place from May 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> in the Killary Adventure Centre in Leenane, Co Galway.

The programme promises an action-packed weekend for hillwalkers and climbers of all levels, abilities and ages. The atmosphere at these Women With Altitude weekends is nurturing and encouraging, and celebrates everyone's achievements. Women leave with a greater knowledge and level of confidence, whether they plan their own activity or complete a course over the weekend.

As part of the weekend, we are delighted to announce that our keynote speaker will be **Ursula MacPherson**, a well-known name in Irish mountaineering. Ursula was Director of Gartan Outdoor Education Training Centre for twenty-seven years, is a past President of Mountaineering Ireland and was on the organising committee of Women With Altitude. She has many excursions and



Participants at last year's WWA weekend event in Glendalough, Co Wicklow, enjoying a hillwalk

expeditions behind her, both in Ireland and the Greater Ranges. Most of all, she is an advocate for adventure and fun in the mountains.

Ursula will kickstart our Saturday evening by taking us through some of her

most memorable experiences in mountaineering and her adventures along the way, a talk not to be missed ■

**BOOK NOW:** Go to [womenwithaltitude.ie](http://womenwithaltitude.ie) and sign up now for a fun-filled weekend before your preferred activity is booked up.

## SPONSORED

# The Climbers Inn reopens in the Reeks



Following refurbishment, the Climbers Inn in Glencar, near Killarney, Co Kerry, has reopened. The inn had previously been a haven for hillwalkers and climbers and a wonderful base for exploring the Kerry Way and the McGillicuddy Reeks, including Carrauntoohil.

The Climbers Inn dates back to 1879 and is one of the oldest walking and climbing establishments in Ireland. It is located in a glorious woodland setting right in the centre of Glencar in the Reeks district and

Spring 2019

still retains much of its old-world charm, which ensures that there is always a welcoming atmosphere.

**Sheila O'Sullivan**, the aunt of the present owners, successfully ran the inn for the past sixteen years but sadly passed away in January 2018. She was a very well-liked and respected lady, and always had a warm welcome for anyone who came through the door.

The Climbers Inn has been extensively refurbished and can now provide excellent en-suite rooms, newly renovated hostel accommodation and a drying room for wet clothes and kit; there is a bar, shop and post office on-site also.

With affordable, spacious and clean rooms, the Climbers Inn can provide guests an ideal starting point for exploring the McGillicuddy Reeks and the surrounding areas. Then, after a day's sightseeing or climbing, you can relax in the newly refurbished lounge bar, with its

welcoming stove fire, and have a meal there. Whether seated inside next to the cosy fire on a winter's day or relaxing in the summer sunshine at the outdoor tables, you can expect great service.

The inn can also cater for small or large groups, with a set menu of their choice or finger food. Contact the Climbers Inn for the special group rates. Guided hikes can also be arranged with a leading local guiding company, **KerryClimbing.ie**, as part of your package ■

See also advertisement, page 67





Knocknadobar, the last mountain summited by James Forrest in his round of the Vandeleur-Lynams. Inset: James Forrest



## Lecture Series

Mountaineering Ireland hosted three guest speakers last winter as part of its Winter Lecture Series. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports

# James Forrest: a tale of many peaks

In autumn 2018, Englishman **James Forrest** completed a continuous round of the 273 **Vandeleur-Lynam summits** in Ireland (peaks with a height of at least 600 metres and a prominence of 15 metres) in just forty-six walking days (see IML 128, page 30). It was the first time that this had been done. At Mountaineering Ireland's request, James returned to Ireland in January this year to give a series of lectures about his achievement.

The lecture which I attended in the Mourne Country Hotel in Newry, Co Down, was reasonably well attended. James gave a very interesting and entertaining account of his adventures. He said that he was a committed hillwalker... it would be hard to argue with that!

He was brought up in Birmingham but, in 2016, he

went travelling for six months, ending up in New Zealand. When he returned to the UK, he moved to the Lake District. In 2017, he climbed all 446 of

the **Nuttalls** in England and Wales in six months, the fastest known time for a round of those mountains. Nuttalls are defined as peaks above 2,000 feet (609.6m) in height and with a prominence of at least 15m (49.2ft). James finished that round on Scafell Pike and has a book coming out soon about his adventures, *Mountain Man*; it will be reviewed soon in the *Irish Mountain Log*, probably in the Summer 2019 issue. His achievement was all the more impressive because he was working at the same time and just climbing the Nuttalls in his spare time!

With last year's round of the

273 Vandeleur-Lynams in Ireland in just forty-six walking days, James had some more impressive statistics to report. He said that he found the Irish mountains generally more rugged than those in England and Wales, and that route-finding was more difficult here. He completed the Vandeleur-Lynams on his own, in a series of multi-day itineraries, during which he wild-camped. The greatest number of peaks that he climbed in one day was twelve, and he climbed twelve on four of the forty-six days. He estimated that he climbed the height of Everest every week for the eight weeks of his round. He finished his round by climbing **Knocknadobar** (690m) on the Iveragh peninsula in Co Kerry, on a suitably rainy day.

What did he learn? James seemed quite reflective during his enjoyable presentation but, to sum it all up, he paraphrased the words of Alfred Wainwright from *The Western Fells* when he said: "Hills are eternal" and "there are lots more challenges out there." You certainly wouldn't bet against him going on to overcome any further challenges he takes on!



James Forrest with members of Blaney Ramblers after his lecture at Mourne Country Hotel in Newry, Co Down, in January.



# Stelfox and Nugent: a tale of one peak

First Irish ascent of Everest, May 1993: the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lecture



Dawson Stelfox MBE



Frank Nugent

At the beginning of November 2018, **Dawson Stelfox** and **Frank Nugent** gave an excellent lecture in the Teachers' Club in Parnell Square, Dublin, to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first Irish ascent of Everest on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 1993. The crowded lecture was organised by Mountaineering Ireland, but all of the proceeds went to support the ongoing work of the **Irish Nepalese Education Trust** ([www.inetireland.ie](http://www.inetireland.ie)).

The 1993 Irish expedition with eight climbers was attempting to climb Everest from the northern, Tibet side. Dawson and Frank had made an attempt at the summit the day before, on May 26<sup>th</sup>, but had returned to their high camp below the North Ridge at about 25,000ft in high winds. They set out again the following morning at 5.30am but, having struggled with illness and problems with his oxygen supply, Frank decided

to turn back before the Second Step.

Dawson carried on, overcoming the Second Step on his own and summiting after twelve hours of climbing, to become the first Irish climber to reach the top of Everest at 8,848m. He was there on his own for about twenty minutes. There was no wind and he still remembers the awesome view from the "top of the world." Reaching the top is only half the journey and Dawson talked about the difficulty he had finding his way down. With impressive persistence and what he called "a survival instinct," he finally got back to the tent at about 11.00pm, after an eighteen-hour day.

A further attempt at the summit the next day by Robbie Fenlon and Tony Burke was unsuccessful due to the deteriorating weather conditions.

The talk then turned to the legacy of the 1993 expedition. The **Irish Nepalese Educational Trust** was set up in that year and, over the years since that successful expedition, it has supported people in the Solu Khumbu region, just below Everest, by building and funding schools in that area. This work has been led by **Dhana Khaling**



Dawson Stelfox, left, and Frank Nugent at Advance Base Camp after successful ascent of Everest



Dawson Stelfox heading for the Second Step on Everest in May 1993

**Rai**, who was a commis chef with the 1993 expedition but is now a community leader who manages the work of the INET in his district.

Impressive as Dawson's solo ascent of the Second Step and the terrain above that to the summit of Everest was – and even more than that, his safe descent in challenging and deteriorating conditions – the ongoing support that has been offered subsequently by

INET to people living in remote villages in the Everest area is even more impressive. Twenty-five years on, that support continues, with all donations received being used to directly benefit the people of Phuleli district.

Check out the Irish Nepalese Education Trust on [www.inetireland.ie](http://www.inetireland.ie) for further information about the work of the registered charity and how to donate ■

## Crossword results

The winner of our Christmas crossword in IML 128 was **Tim McKenna** from Templeogue, Dublin 6w. Tim won a Rab Microlight Alpine Jacket from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the Basecamp store in Dublin to arrange collection of the winner's prize.

1	B		2	T		3	S		4	L		5	W		6	A
7	W	A	I	N	W	R	I	G	H	T	S					
	L		R		A		O		O		P					
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15	I	C	E			17	F	I	18	S	S	U	R	E		
	V		B				R			U		L				
19	V	1	A	F	E	R	R	A	T	A	S					
	Y		Y				D			F		S				



## Mourne shuttle bus service

### Get creative with your Mourne walks

If you are accustomed to hiking in a loop to get back to your vehicle, you probably know, too, the pleasure of being able to do a linear route, without the complications of a car drop.

With little or no public transport available in mountain areas across the island, the service offered by Peter Magowan in the Mournes is a real treat.

Plan your route, contact Peter and he'll pick you up in the morning at the end point for your walk and then shuttle your group to the start-point in his 16-seater minibus.

The Activities in Mourne Shuttle Service (AIMSS) costs between £3 and £5 per person, depending on the number in the



group and the distance of the shuttle ride.

For example, Peter Magowan could collect a group of 8-10 walkers in the Carrick Little car park, shuttle the group to the Ott car park from where you could walk in to Doan, down to the Ben Crom Reservoir, up Slieve Binnian, down by the Mourne Wall and back out the Carrick Little track to your cars. The cost would be £3 per person, which seems a small price

to enjoy such a varied route.

That is just one possibility. With the help of this service, there is scope to devise some really attractive linear routes in the Mourne Mountains. A good take-up of the AIMSS service would also mean fewer cars lining the roads in the Mournes ■

**CONTACT:** Peter Magowan, 075 1641 2076, or through Facebook at AIMSS Activities in Mourne Shuttle Service

## New website on outdoor activities in Northern Ireland

### Website aims to help people discover the outdoors

A new website, **Outmore NI** (<https://outmoreni.com>), has been launched in Northern Ireland, designed to help people find outdoor trails and places across the province.

Outmore NI has been built around an interactive map, which showcases a huge number of outdoor locations across Northern Ireland, including almost 500 walking routes, 124 cycling trails, 18 mountain-biking trails and nine canoe trails.

There are also 22 beaches, 82 parks, 26 nature reserves, 43 forests and 41 other venues included on the map.

The aim of the website is to assist tourists and those engaging in outdoor recreation in Northern Ireland to decide where to go and what to do.

Outmore NI's mapping was built with Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland's



The mapping on Outmore NI covers the entirety of Northern Ireland

platform and is accurate enough to scale down to one inch. It is easy to navigate, quick and highly intuitive. Each dot on the map represents an outdoor place or trail, and clicking on a dot provides all the information needed to plan a trip to that location.

OutmoreNI was created by **Outdoor Recreation Northern Ireland**, with support from **SportNI, NIEA** and

### Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI).

The website is mobile-friendly, so it can be checked for other trails and places during your travels.

New trails are being added to Outmore NI all the time and the website hopes to make it as easy as possible for people to discover the great outdoors that are waiting to be explored in Northern Ireland ■



# Climbing

Eleanor Lawrence climbing at Ailladie, Co Clare

## YOUTH TRAD CLIMBING CAMPS

Two youth trad climbing camps will be held in the month of July this year, writes **Damien O'Sullivan**

To help more young climbers experience some of the amazing rock climbing that there is available in Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland is running two **Youth Trad Climbing Camps** in the month of July this year. The first will be held at the amazing sea-cliffs at **Ailladie** in Co Clare and the other in the beautiful **Glendalough** valley in Co Wicklow. These three-day

outdoor climbing camps are for young climbers who may have gained a love of climbing indoors on a climbing wall and are keen to climb outside on real rock. The climbers will be introduced to and helped to develop some of the skills needed to become competent and confident trad climbers. The skills covered will be tailored to each individual participant's age and prior

experience. The camps are ideal for young climbers aged twelve or older who have climbed indoors and are keen to get some experience on rock. Each camp will have a maximum of twelve places and will be staffed by three suitably qualified instructors. The cost of each camp is €250 per person: this includes instruction, food and accommodation. The first of

these camps will take place at Ailladie from July 9-11<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The second will take place at Glendalough from July 16-18<sup>th</sup>.

► For more info and to register interest, go to Events section of Mountaineering Ireland website or contact Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Officer, Damien O'Sullivan, at [damien@mountaineering.ie](mailto:damien@mountaineering.ie) or on 01 625 1117 ■

Photograph: Damien O'Sullivan

*The mountains creek.*

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*Listen for the horizon  
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This is The Carry Moment™  
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Marcus McDowell competing in the finals of the Depot Youth Cup in Birmingham last September.  
Photo: Eddie Cooper

## DEPOT YOUTH CUP 2018

A team from BoulderWorld Belfast participated in the Depot Youth Cup in Birmingham last September. **Lucy Mitchell** reports.

**W**hen we were standing in the departure lounge on the Friday afternoon, all the hard work had been done. We were leaving Belfast with a team of fifteen determined young climbers, four nervous parents and two proud coaches.

The travel all went smoothly and we arrived at our hotel in Birmingham only three hours after getting dropped off at the airport in Belfast. That evening, it was dinner and a trip to the cinema for the climbers and parents, and a trip to the venue, the **Depot Climbing Centre**, to get everyone signed in and to check out the wall for the coaches. Then, finally, a discussion of tactics, a calming of any nervousness and off to bed for a good night's sleep.

The next morning went as

every pre-competition morning does, with the classic Premier Inn breakfast followed by going through a quick checklist before we left: shoes (tick), chalk (tick), team kit (tick), food (tick), courage (double tick).... Let's do this!

We arrived at the Depot to find over two hundred other competitors there: it was going to be a tough one!

We were quick off the mark in getting warmed up in the upstairs training area, out of the way of the chaos, and soon enough it was time to start: twenty qualifying problems, four hours, three attempts.

It is a tough job being a competitor and, regardless of how ready you are, it is always four hours of inevitable highs and lows, happy faces, sad faces, ecstatic faces and distraught faces.

In normal everyday climbing,

falling on the last move but doing it on the second go would in many cases seem very positive, but, when those three points disappear when they could have got you into the final, it can be hard to pick yourself up from that.

On the other side of the coin, when you flash a problem that secures you a final spot, it is hard to wipe that smile off, your face, but it is also important not to get complacent and slip off one of the more comfortable climbs.



Some members of the BoulderWorld Belfast team warming up





Daire Oglesby competing in the finals (winning bloc)



Lucy Mitchell is a full-time coach and route-setter at BoulderWorld Belfast. She has been climbing for around nine years and currently holds the senior national title in both Boulder and Lead for 2018. However, she is currently more excited by climbing outside, mainly sport climbing and bouldering and the odd trad route.

**Marcus McDowell** held his own, topping the first boulder, managing a bonus on the second boulder with an incredibly hard 'beta' sequence at the start, and finishing off his round cruising the third boulder like it was 5+ (note: only one other competitor managed it) to get a superb but understandably annoying 4<sup>th</sup> place finish.

In Youth C Female, **Bonita Thurston** was leading the way on the first two boulders in convincing style against some very big names indeed. The third round came and all we shall say is that, on the day, the third boulder just wasn't for her. She dropped to third place and we will never speak of that problem again... except to say she did it first go the following day!

Finally, Youth D Male, which kept us on the edge right up to the bitter end, with **Daire Oglesby** putting on the show of his life and clinching victory in the final ten seconds of his

rotation to gain the one and only top of their final problem.

Podiums and presentations followed, and the dinner venue was chosen by the winner!

The following day, we were back at the wall for a bit of reflection, a bit of fun and a lot of training. We worked on some of the problems from the competition and then, as always, tried to climb all the blocs in the centre. Between us, I'd say we gave it a pretty good go, with **Zach McClune** clinching the coveted 'last man standing' award seven hours later!

A short walk, a train ride and another smooth flight later and we were back in Belfast, totally shattered!

A huge thank you to the **Depot Climbing Centre** for organising and hosting a stand-out competition; to the parents who gave up their weekend to come and help; and to the young climbers, who put in the hours and gave it their all! ■



Bonita Thurston competing in the finals

In the end, when the buzzer went, what was done was done and everyone had given it their all.

## Opening results

For some, it was their first British competition and simply being there was an experience. Some were there to improve on top twenty results and push for top ten, and a handful were there, having consistently made podiums in Irish competitions, wanting to compete with the best in Britain and see where they stood.

The moment of truth, the results:

Six top 20, six top 10, **one heartbreaking 7<sup>th</sup> place** (the top six make the finals) and three finalists: **Marcus McDowell, Bonita Thurston** and **Daire Oglesby** (Youth A Male, Youth C Female and Youth D Male, respectively).

Off to 'Isolation' we go....

Behind closed doors, the finalists warmed up, ready to

take on the competition wall and a final three climbs.

The competition wall was revealed and the final climbs tweaked to ensure a thrilling display of the talent that was about to be unleashed on them.

The rest of the team watched on in anticipation, cheering for their team mates, brushing the holds for the competitions and putting our guys at ease when they walked out to face the crowd; a few familiar faces can make all the difference.

## Final round

It was a well-set final round: a mix of powerful moves, slippery slopers and crazy crimps. All categories were closely matched. I wish I could describe the next two hours in detail but the headlines were as follows:

In Youth A Male, notably the fiercest category of the competition with problems up to 7c being flashed,



Rob Hunter (in front, squatting) on a visit to Fontainebleau with the Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Team

## THE YOUTH TEAM'S NEW COACH

In taking over the role of Youth Climbing Team Coach from Terry O'Connor, **Rob Hunter** has taken on the responsibility of coaching the top young Irish climbers, who aspire to compete at the very highest level. A well-known climber with over thirty years' experience, Rob has established a huge number of boulder problems all over Ireland. Below, Rob shares some of his background and motivation and discusses his philosophy about his new role.



Rob Hunter

I was blessed to have active parents and, from as far back as I can remember, the whole family regularly went hiking all around Ireland. Hiking led to scrambling, and scrambling led to climbing. Climbing walls didn't exist back then, so my dad would take me and my two brothers climbing on a local viaduct and on brick walls to let us practice our skills. I was eight years of age!

We progressed to climbing on the awesome granite tors and cliffs of the Mourne Mountains. Every time I return to the Mournes, I remember those amazing days playing in the mountains with my family.

The Mournes are the perfect classroom for climbers, a place where they can experience the cool touch of Mourne granite and learn to pinch 'nothing' crystals and to 'believe' in your feet.

As well as climbing, my brothers and I played other sports with children in the estate where we grew up. I firmly believe that having a strong foundation in many sports and physical activities enhanced our physical literacy and climbing movement.

My brothers and I quickly became addicted to climbing and pleaded with our parents to build a climbing wall in our bedroom so that we could climb every day. We had holds on the walls and ceiling and used the beds as crash pads. Looking back, I think this is when I found my love for bouldering – no rope, just focused movement. As time moved on, and thanks to a few local climbers such as **Ricky Young** and **Paul McArthur** who gave of their time selflessly, I was able to get out

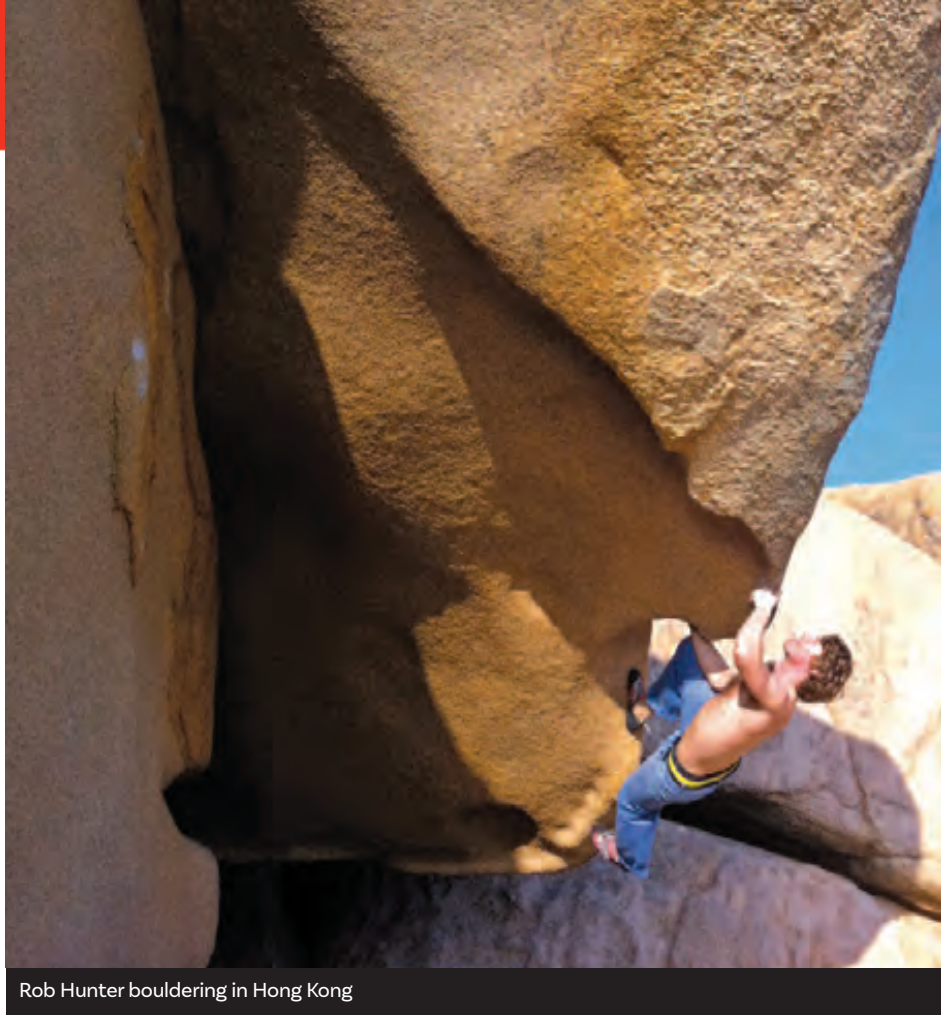
climbing at more and more crags and began to compete in the early Irish Bouldering League competitions in the 1990s.

The Irish Bouldering Leagues back then were not in any way like today's competitions, with their volumes, wild dynamic moves and parkour-style movements, but they were great gatherings of climbers of all abilities from around Ireland, buzzing social events and a great atmosphere to compete in. These were a great opportunity to meet other climbers and learn new tactics and movement at the competitions.

I kept a journal of my training and used to write on photographs and detail my movement of certain projects. I always enjoyed the process of training, preparing and competing, and this eventually led to the opportunity to compete in one of the early Boulder World Cup competitions in 1994. I won the first Irish Bouldering Championships in 2010 and I have continued to compete nationally and in UK-based competitions, such as the CWIF, French regional competitions and IFSC World Cups in the past ten years.

Coaching climbing for me was something I have always done every time I went





Rob Hunter bouldering in Hong Kong



Written by  
Rob Hunter,  
Youth Climbing  
Team Coach

periodisation and keeping the climbing training engaging and fun.

My motivation to coach other climbers stems from reflecting on my own climbing career and arriving at the conclusion that the years I spent without coaching have most definitely had an impact on the time taken to fulfil my own potential. Having been involved with the **Climbing Development Squad** since 2011 and the **Youth Climbing Team** since 2014 has meant that I have been able to share my passion for rock climbing with young climbers and hopefully reduce the time it takes for the current generation of young climbers to perform at their best.

I am delighted and honoured to take over the role as Coach of the Youth Climbing Team from Terry O'Connor. I aim to facilitate and support young climbers in making their goals purposeful, impactful and enjoyable. I will continue to ignite passion in these athletes and nurture their self-belief and confidence. Rather than focusing on the end of the road, I'd like them to focus on what's along the road itself. In the words of the legendary coach John Wooden, "success comes from knowing that you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming" ■

climbing, whether it was trying to find out how I could improve my own performance or discussing methods of movement and progress with friends.

My first step into structured coaching came when I started coaching alongside **Eddie Cooper** with the **Northern Ireland Youth Climbing Team**. This was a fantastic learning environment and it was very focused on performance climbing and

competitions.

As I have gained more experience in coaching, I have found that how I coach has changed a lot. The more I learn about coaching, the more I find out I don't know! It's a constant downward spiral, as I love to study coaching, strength and conditioning and sports therapy. Through years of experience and study, I have developed strategies of my own on planning,

## Additional sponsor for Youth Climbing Team

By Damien O'Sullivan



The **Gravity Climbing Centre** in Inchicore, Dublin, has come onboard as an additional sponsor for the Youth Climbing Team for the 2019 season.

The Gravity Climbing Centre has committed to providing not

only the venue but also the route-setting for the essential competition-style boulder problems for the Youth Climbing Team's training sessions, which take place on a monthly basis approximately.

This support from the Gravity Climbing Centre, which is in addition to the established support from **KPMG**, will allow the members of the Youth Climbing Team to prepare better for the upcoming season of targeted competitions. These will include the **European Youth Cup**, the **European Youth Championships** and the **Youth World Championships** ■



Jessica McGarry of the Youth Climbing Team





## 2019 ICE CLIMBING WORLD CUP

The UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup 2019 travelled to the countries of South Korea, China, Switzerland, Italy, France and the United States. It would be **Eimir McSwiggan's** fourth year competing in the full series and she was determined to make it her best to date. She takes up the story....

Photographs: UIAA



**S**erious training for ice-climbing usually starts for me in August, after taking a good break from the ice axes for the spring and summer rock-climbing season. However, this year was a bit different in that I made a decision to train straight through, taking advantage of every opportunity I could to better my skills. Even after that extended training, I still felt the competition season was approaching too quickly and I was worried that I hadn't prepared enough.

The season kicked off in my home ground of **Cheongsong, South Korea**, where I live now. There is a certain advantage to climbing in familiar territory, without the stress and fatigue associated with travelling and jet-lag.

In addition, the new UIAA competition format of two open qualification routes (instead of the previous single on-sight attempt) was a change unanimously welcomed, giving the competitors

a better chance to settle their nerves and get accustomed to the route-setting and competition holds before competing.

The qualifications and semi-finals went smoothly in Cheongsong and I was comfortably through to the final round. After a good night's sleep, I was back in the isolation tent with the other seven finalists, waiting for the route preview.

This invaluable eight minutes is when you first get to see the route, take notes and make a plan of action for your climb. The route looked difficult, but doable, and for the first time in World Cup finals I felt confident I could make it to the top, or very near there, if I climbed fast enough and didn't make any errors.

The first five metres looked so straightforward that I didn't really give them a second thought... and that was to be my major downfall. Six seconds into my climb and I was back on the ground. I had slipped off the third hold, mainly because my mind was ahead of myself, thinking of the harder moves ahead.

It was heart-breaking at the time, but that is all part of the sport, and I had to learn what I could from it, move on and focus on the next competition in China.



## “THIRD PLACE IN DENVER PUT ME THIRD IN THE OVERALL WORLD RANKINGS FOR 2019”

Four days later, we arrived at the venue in **Hengsui, China**, which resembled the set of a magical winter fairytale land. A new wall in a new venue always makes for a level playing field for all competitors.

The low angle of the giant arched wall lent itself to a lot of technical moves on small metal holds, something the Russian route-setters are specialists in. With a few shock falls in the semi-finals, it was anyone's game and everyone left in the competition was clearly out to win.

With the memory of falling in Cheongsong fresh in my mind, I started off the final extremely cautiously and I was at least halfway up the wall before I found my rhythm, but I was able to recover and get high enough to secure second place... my first medal of the season!

Next stop was **Saas Fee, Switzerland**. The Swiss competition wall is famous for natural granite holds, long traverses, rotating ice barrels, fun and unforgiving routes. Every competitor appears to have a love-hate relationship with this place and there is always anxiety in the air as the competition begins.

I had a solid semi-final climb, but, unfortunately, I just missed out on a place in the finals.

As a fitting tribute to the 20<sup>th</sup>-year anniversary of the Swiss World Cup, young **Yannick Glatthard**, dubbed 'Swiss Air' for his antics, brought the house down with an incredible gold medal-winning performance in the men's category, while **Yoonsun Shin** of Korea secured her first gold medal of the season in the women's.

The European leg concluded with competitions at **Rabenstein, Italy**, and at **Champagny-en-Vanoise, France**, both well-established, popular outdoor structures with a lot of ice... a novelty to climb on these days in Ice Climbing World Cups!

Russia and Korea continued to dominate the field. A well-fought fourth place in Rabenstein and a somewhat less well-fought eighth place in Champagny still left me with a chance of overall bronze for the season, if I could up my game in **Denver, Colorado**, the final competition of the season.

At this stage, fatigue had really taken hold and I made a decision to go back home to Tyrone to rest and recuperate before travelling to Denver. It was exactly

Eimir McSwiggan front-pointing on the competition wall in the semi-finals in Saas Fee, Switzerland, in the third round of the 2019 Ice Climbing World Cup



what I needed. Within a few days of resting and running in the hills, I got my energy back and was able to put in a solid week of training on a small training wall I had built in the barn there last year.

Refreshed and re-energised, I headed for Denver. Nothing could have prepared us for what lay ahead. There were over 12,000 people gathered in the very centre of downtown Denver to cheer us on as we navigated an elaborate structure of huge hanging volumes set high above a stage. The atmosphere was electric. But when I qualified in third place in both the qualification rounds and semi-finals, I felt hopeful.

The final route felt hard from the start and, after struggling for over two minutes on a single move, I finally made it to the roof section with just over two minutes left on the clock. I was well behind the other competitors and already pretty pumped, but I knew I had to hold on and keep moving. With a shift in focus and the crowd willing me on, I was able to pick up the pace. As I was lowered, I knew from

the cheers that it was enough to make the podium ... I was so relieved!

That third place in Denver won me the bronze position in the overall world rankings for the entire 2019 season, behind Russia's **Maria Tolokonina** and Korea's **Yoonsun Shin**.

The season couldn't have ended better for me, and I sincerely thank Mountaineering Ireland and the climbing community back home for the incredible support they gave me through the winter, as always ■



► **Eimir McSwiggan** is a native of Gortin, Co Tyrone, who worked as an architect in Dublin until 2010, when she moved to South Korea and started ice-climbing there. She has competed in the UIAA Ice Climbing World Cup for the last six seasons and promotes the sport in Ireland when she visits here.



View towards Glennamong at sunrise on the second day

# WEEKEND IN THE WILDERNESS

Members of Maynooth Hillwalking Club enjoyed a wild camping expedition in the remote wilderness of Ballycroby National Park and the Nephin Beg range in Co Mayo in August 2017. **Paul Mather** reports.

**A**s we approached Newport on a calm August morning, we caught our first glimpse of the Nephin Beg range, home to Ireland's first designated wilderness area and some of the most remote mountains in the country. Our planned route for the weekend would take us on a 41km trek from the start of the Bangor Trail in Bangor Erris, south through the heart of the Nephins via Slieve Carr, Nephin Beg, Glennamong and Corranabinnia, to finish on the slopes of Bengorm overlooking Clew Bay.

Our group consisted of four members of Maynooth Hillwalking Club – **Birgit Berkenkopf, Tom Sheehy, Donal Dillon** and me, **Paul Mather**.

As we drove further into Mayo towards Bangor Erris, the vastness and beauty of this wilderness area and the enormity of the trek ahead of us became more apparent, with blanket bog and mountains spreading out as far as we could see.

### The Bangor Trail

The Bangor Trail provided a gentle introduction to our trek.

This ancient route was used as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century and was the main route from Bangor Erris to Westport for people and livestock in olden times. We followed the trail as far as the Fiodán Dubh stream and then began our first ascent, onto **Knocklettercuss** (370m), which provided a taste of the vistas to come. From there, our route across the bog took us to **Maumacholly** (364m), where we disturbed a solitary fox in the wilderness, who was very surprised to have visitors.

## WE CLIMBED NEPHIN BEG, WITNESSING A BEAUTIFUL SUNSET OVER ACHILL.

After crossing the saddle above the trout-rich Loch na mBreac Caoch, we stopped on **Marafar** for a well-earned lunch before continuing upwards to **Slieve Carr** (721m).

The EastWest Mapping 'Wild Nephin' map, which we used for our route, provided great detail about place-names and the original names of the mountains. As we approached

Slieve Carr, Bangor Erris, where we had started, now seemed very far away across the wilderness.

The route from here to our intended campsite was now all downhill, a welcome relief with the heavy backpacks. The next three kilometres were a pleasant gradual descent and a beautiful view awaited over Scardaun Lough and beyond to Nephin Beg.

Following our steep descent, we set up our tents near Scardaun Lough on the slopes of Nephin Beg. Local folklore claims that this was where Dáithí Bán, a mythological giant turned highwayman, would ambush rich travellers returning from markets on the Bangor Trail just below the lake. We were also ambushed on occasions by numerous midges, who appeared as soon as the wind dropped.

Free of backpacks for now, we climbed **Nephin Beg** (627m) to witness a beautiful sunset over Achill and the west coast. To the east, Nephin mountain stood on its own, disappearing into the darkness. The true extent of



In Newport before setting off for the Nephins (left to right): Donal Dillon, Paul Mather, Birgit Berkenkopf, Tom Sheehy



the wilderness area was now evident, as the only lights in view were on distant Achill to the far west.

## Wild Nephin wilderness area

The morning of our second day brought a beautiful sunrise over the wilderness and magnificent views west over a mosaic of small lakes and pools towards the Atlantic Ocean and south-west towards our longest ascent, Glennamong, with Corranabinnia beyond.

An 8.00am start brought us down along the Scardaun River to meet the Bangor Trail once again, which we followed south for 3km. When we reached the Maumaratta valley close to the Lough Avoher shelter, we stumbled upon ancient roots in the bog.

The Wild Nephin wilderness area was covered in Scots pine forests approximately 4,000 years ago, which disappeared over time as the climate became increasingly wetter. Many of the roots have been preserved from decay underneath the bog.

We then crossed the fast-flowing Bawnduff River to

begin the long, gradual 4km ascent of **Glennamong** (628m). The cloud and mist had now descended but, fortunately for us, it cleared before we reached the summit, opening up new vistas of Lough Feeagh to the south, with Nephin mountain appearing once again to the east.

The going became easier then and, following a traverse across the ridge above the corrie lake of Loughaphuill, we reached **Corranabinnia** (716m), which gave us our first view of Clew Bay, Croagh Patrick and the Sheeffry Hills beyond.

## Final destination

With tired legs, we were glad

to see our final destination 7km away in the distance. As we carefully descended the rocky slopes, we headed towards our final climb of the weekend, **Bengorm** (582m).

On our final descent along the southern slope of Bengorm, we passed the Mass Rock and stopped by a stream to cook a meal, as we had now been walking for nine hours.

Rejuvenated, we crossed the Western Way on the lower

slopes of Bengorm to finish our hike in Slievemaha forest on the Greenway.

On our trek, we had covered 41km through the wilderness, with a total ascent of 2,080m, and could feel the effects of the exertions required during our two days' hiking. We were four weary hikers, but we left the Nephin Beg wilderness area with some wonderful memories of a true Irish wilderness experience ■

Paul and Donal survey the route from Glennamong across to Maumykelly



➤ **Paul Mather** is a Mountain Leader and a member of Mountaineering Ireland. He resides in Co Kildare and is an active member of **Maynooth Hillwalking Club**, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year.



Descending from Corranabinnia towards Bengorm, with Lough Feeagh beyond



Descending from Bengorm, with Clew Bay beyond



# CLIMBING IN TRANSYLVANIA

Members of the Dublin Cliffhangers Youth Climbing Club visited Transylvania (in central Romania) last May to climb in the spectacular Turzii Gorge. **Ian Lawler** reports on a most enjoyable trip.

**A**fter the success of the Dublin Cliffhangers Youth Climbing Club's trip to Saint Jeannet on the Cote D'Azur over Halloween 2017, everyone was receptive to the idea of another overseas trip. Andrei Gontaru, one of the dads in the club, suggested Transylvania and, specifically, the spectacular-looking Turzii Gorge.

The omens were auspicious, as there was now a direct flight to Cluj Napoca, the unofficial capital of Transylvania, which was only forty minutes' drive from Turda, the nearest town to Turzii Gorge. We booked flights for the week of the May bank holiday. Temperatures would be in the 20s and flight prices were low, while both would increase significantly in June. Within two weeks, we had nineteen club members signed up: eight children and eleven adults. Andrei got to work on finalising the local arrangements.

The thoroughness of Andrei's preparations became apparent as we made our way from Cluj Napoca airport to Turda in our hire car, with a detour to one of the only craft beer shops in the city!

The beers provided a nice accompaniment to dinner as we discussed plans for the next morning with our guide, Florin Vulturar. First up was to be a four-pitch via ferrata in the karst limestone gorge, Grota Lui Hili, which would bring us up from the floor of the gorge, along the base of Turnul Ascutit (Sharp Tower), up through a huge cave and onto the ridge line up to the crest. It was classified as

**Above:**  
Members of  
the Dublin  
Cliffhangers at  
Turzii Gorge.

**Below: A young  
Cliffhanger on  
a via ferrata in  
Grota Lui Hili.**

easy but it certainly looked strenuous.

The next morning, we were greeted by clear blue skies and rapidly climbing temperatures, which reached 27°C by the time we arrived in the gorge. We stopped on the hill above the entrance to the gorge to take in the spectacular view and then headed down into the gorge itself. The gorge has a small stream at the bottom of it that seems to have cut a deep and narrow channel through the limestone outcrops, which rise a few hundred metres over the surrounding area.

The trail in ran along the river, with towering cliffs



➤ **Ian Lawler** returned to climbing after a thirty-year absence from the sport, having originally climbed in the late 1980s when he taught at an outdoor activity centre.





rising up on either side, and crossed back and forth over a number of suspension bridges. High above us was the inspiring sight of a pair of climbers tackling one of the 10+ pitch monster routes on the imposing cliffs. After crossing back over the river for a fourth time, we struck out up a steep path up to a terrace with great views of the river backed by a crag, the Little Castle, or Cetateaua Mica, of which more anon.

A series of scrambles brought us to a loose scree slope at the base of the Sharp Tower. Crossing it provided an interesting challenge to reach the first pitch of the via ferrata, a very steep trail up towards the cave. We regrouped at the base of the second pitch and divided into teams of three.

The second pitch proved straightforward, but it was the third that provided most enjoyment and excitement, charting a course up, across and left to a crux requiring a wide step out left and up. Florin placed a rope ladder specifically for the children, as it was a bit of a stretch for some.

A 10m climb was followed by an airy traverse right across the back of the cave to the belay stance and the start for the final pitch, a straightforward 20m climb. While it was possible to abseil down, we opted to finish the route by topping out via a nicely exposed scramble up the ridgeline to the summit.

There was a sense of satisfaction amongst the group and particularly the children, who had been brilliant, showing great spirit on a tough and long climb. Florin topped off the day by placing the Cliffhangers' flag on the cross for all to see. Then we made the twenty-minute walk back down for some very welcome refreshments. Everyone slept soundly that night!

The next day, it was time for some proper rock climbing and we headed to the crag we had passed the previous day, the Little Castle. While the main route, Scoala Turdeana 5, was three pitches, we decided to rig a top rope for the first pitch and two adjacent climbs of a similar grade to get everyone climbing. Not content with these, Sean Brown led a tough 6a, showing serious determination on a difficult crux.

We retired to a small restaurant at the head of the gorge for lunch and, while refuelling, a series of thunderstorms rolled in, cutting short our day.

We concentrated on two smaller, nicely shaded crags close to the gorge entrance over the following two days and also had the bonus of the river for splashing and cooling down in, most important for the children!

Having plenty of parents to belay proved a bonus for those who wanted to do a bit of climbing, and each morning two were able to get in an extracurricular route with Florin.

Keith Johns and I were first up with Creasta Sansil, a five-pitch 5+ route across the gorge from the Sharp Tower. It was a beautiful route, with varied climbing, a fantastic aspect and views over the gorge. Keith and I were very pleased with ourselves afterwards. The next day, it was the turn of Rob Brown and Paulina Szlag on Peretele Suspendeda, a 2-pitch 6a nearby.

Our trip wouldn't have been complete without a visit to the main local attraction, the Salina Turda, an old salt mine. This meant a rather hurried departure from the crag on our last day. We were too late to try out the ferris wheel or go boating on the underground lake, but the setting was certainly spectacular. It was a great finish to a fantastic trip, one which I think will become another fixture in the club's climbing calendar ■



**Above: Keith Johns climbing the Creasta Sansil, across from the Sharp Tower.**

**Below: Members of the Cliffhangers climbing at the foot of the gorge.**

## Travel information

**Getting there:** Blue Air fly directly from Dublin to Cluj Napoca. The flights were €80 (plus €60 per 20kg checked bag). Turda is a forty-minute drive from the airport. We booked our hire car through [autoeurope.ie](http://autoeurope.ie), an aggregation website. Our Opel Astra cost €50 for five days.

**Accommodation:** We stayed in a 3-star hotel in Turda, which was €35 per night for a family room sleeping up to four. We arranged a set menu each night and this came to €10-12 per head per night, including beers.

**Guidebooks and guides:** *Dimension Vertical: Climbing Guidebook Romania* has a reasonable section on Turzii Gorge. There is also a decent account on [summitpost.org](http://summitpost.org). However, you will struggle to find some of the descent paths without local knowledge, so we found the services of a guide really helpful and, of course, having native speakers also made life much easier!





# THE SPIRIT OF EVEREST '93

The first Irish ascent of Mount Everest was made in 1993 via the north ridge route from Tibet. To mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that landmark achievement four Irish climbers decided to go to the Everest region of Nepal in 2018 to attempt a previously unclimbed peak there. **Gerry Galligan** reports on their attempted first ascent of Phuletate peak (5,597m) in the Solukhumbu District between April 12<sup>th</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

In 2017, after some research, I located an area worth exploring in the Khumuche Himal. The Khumuche Himal is a chain of peaks with an elevation in the range of 5,400-5,750m on the eastern side of the Thesebu Khola valley, which lies approximately 10 kilometres north of Namche Bazaar in the Sagarmatha National Park.

One peak in particular stood out, **Phuletate (5,597m)**. Expeditions to peaks below 5,800m in Nepal do not require permits and, hence, are easier to organise.

By way of background, the Thesebu or, as it is more popularly known, the Kyajo valley, first came to

**Above: Base camp in the Thesebu valley, Nepal, with the southerly aspect of the conical west pillar of Phuletate in the centre background.**

prominence in 2009, when a Czech-Slovak team made the first recorded ascent of **Kyajo Ri (6,186m)** via its south-west ridge, and also the first ascent of **Teningbo (5,839m)** via its north face. Kyajo Ri is situated at the head of the valley. It is the highest peak and the only 6,000m peak there.

In 2012, a New Zealand team attempted a new route on the north-east face of Kyajo Ri but were thwarted by continuous spindrift avalanches. In 2014, a Russian-Ukrainian team established a new route on the east face of the same mountain. It has since been climbed via the south-west route by several parties and this is now considered the normal route. Otherwise, no attempts have been recorded on any other peaks in the valley.

The 2009 Czech-Slovak team reported other worthwhile objectives south of Kyajo Ri in the 5,400-5,800m range – peaks such as **Kapsale**, **Chhedan** and **Phuletate**. That is what piqued our interest.

Early in 2018, a team of four was assembled, led by **Frank Nugent** (deputy leader of the 1993 Irish Everest



➤ **Gerry Galligan** is a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club. Gerry's book, "Climbing Ramabang: one Irish climber's explorations in the Himalaya and his overland trip home," is available in bookshops and online.





## TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, ONLY TWO PEAKS HAD BEEN ASCENDED IN THE THESEBU VALLEY.

Expedition) and including Donegal-based climber **Alan Tees**, Greenland veteran **Paddy O'Brien** and myself, **Gerry Galligan**. Plans were finalised for an expedition in the pre-monsoon season of April-May.

Besides Frank Nugent, another link to the 1993 expedition was our Nepalese agent, **Dhana Khaling Rai**, who managed the logistics, portage, cooks, accommodation and supplies for our expedition. Dhana had been a cook on the '93 Irish Everest expedition and had impressed all of the Irish team then, as he continues to do now. He has also been central to the work of the **Irish Nepalese Education Trust** in the twenty-five years since then, project-managing the building of schools and health centres in the lower Khumbu.

### The expedition begins

In April 2018, we flew to Kathmandu, on to Lukla and then trekked north to the old trading nexus of **Namche Bazaar**. The economic importance of the traditional salt trade with Tibet has long since been overtaken by tourism, with trekkers coming to Namche Bazaar from everywhere other than Tibet. Too many helicopters and Everest-gazers, and too much Western influence there, meant that we were glad to escape from there further into the hills. The 10km trek north from Namche Bazaar

**Above: Setting up advanced base camp with the wedge-shaped Kyajo Ri (6,186m) in the background.**

**Below, from left: Expedition team members Frank Nugent, Paddy O'Brien, Alan Tees and Gerry Galligan.**

into the Thesebu Khola valley was grand, with no shortage of spectacular mountain views and Buddhist chortens and prayer flags to be seen. On the way, we spotted the occasional danphe, also known as the Himalayan monal, a native pheasant that is the national bird of Nepal.

At base camp in the Thesebu valley, we met a Russian party led by well-known alpinist **Yuri Koshelenko**; they were attempting to climb the normal route on Kyajo Ri. However, poor, dense snow had repelled their efforts. ➤







Phuletate is an attractive triangular peak on the east side of the valley and, like all other peaks in the area, is very challenging technically. Our intention was to establish an advanced base camp (ABC) to its west, at 5,000m, past a headwall.

With our porters, we carried loads up the headwall to a central stash point beneath a prominent boulder. Later, Alan and I moved these loads a short distance to establish the ABC next to a frozen lake.

The terrain above the headwall in the upper valley was snow-covered. The Russians had established a fixed rope for three pitches on the headwall, to aid movement, that we used and augmented.

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, Alan and I left ABC to recce a possible line starting west of Phuletate. However, as the Russians had found, the snow conditions were poor, with a thin crust covering loose, unconsolidated snow beneath.

We plodded eastwards to the lower north-west flank of Phuletate. We spotted a possible line, a long, meandering route up a ramp to the north-west face, followed by a traverse to a col beneath the north ridge. There was no direct access to the north col. There was nothing easy on offer on this peak, but we felt that if the col was reached, climbing up the north ridge might be feasible, at least to a shoulder below the twin-summit crown.

We pressed on towards the ramp. Progress on the snow was grindingly slow, to the point of impossible. Both of us agreed that conditions were too bad and a traverse across the face in such conditions would be too dangerous.

## West pillar of Phuletate

Instead, we turned our attention to the peak's west pillar. We pushed across the lower reaches of the west ridge on hazardous slopes to gain a minor col between the west ridge and the west pillar. We ascended the pillar on easier ground on the north-east to gain the

**Above:**  
Abseiling  
back down  
the headwall.

**Below: Frank  
(in red coat)  
participating in  
Puja ceremony  
at base camp  
with local  
guides and  
porters.**

summit of approximately 5,150m. As yet, it is unknown whether there have been any previous ascents of this pillar.

As there was no prospect of conditions improving, we returned to ABC and, the following day, retreated to base camp.

Although the weather was generally good during our stay in the valley, the poor snow and mountain conditions compounded the challenging technical nature of the peaks. We also didn't have enough time to mount another approach or attempt another objective.

Nevertheless, we were able to enjoy the Thesebu valley, which, particularly above the headwall, is spectacular. We did a short recce of this section in poor visibility and found the remains of a stone porter or gaddi shelter, some interesting large, granite boulders and the footprints of an as-yet-unidentified







## WE HAVE YET TO CONFIRM IF ANYONE ELSE HAS CLIMBED PHULETATE WEST PILLAR.

animal crossing a frozen lake. It should also be noted the predominant rock type here is granite – satisfactory climbing material.

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, we broke camp and trekked back to Namche. The rest of the team travelled on with Dhana to his village, Phuleli, and met that other notable stalwart of the '93 expedition, **Dawson Stelfox**. Their intention was to inspect the work funded by the **Irish Nepalese Education Trust (INET)** and celebrate its achievements. However, I was curious to see what Phuletate looked like from the neighbouring valley to the east, the Dudhkoshi valley.

### Dudhkoshi valley

I left Namche for a three-day recce of this valley and wasn't disappointed. The views from the settlements of Dole and Lopharma were impressive. Although there was far less snow on that eastern side and an approach to the north col of Phuletate looked easier, the mountain showed little in the way of a feasible climbing route.

I returned to Namche Bazaar, journeyed on to Lukla and rejoined the others later in Kathmandu.

It had been a relatively short visit to Nepal but it was an enjoyable and insightful one. Despite our lack of success on the mountains, in many other ways the expedition demonstrated that the spirit of '93 lives on,

**Above: Gerry on the west pillar of Phuletate with the summit in the background.**

stronger than ever, be it in terms of the desire to explore further these wonderful mountains or in terms of our interest in the health, education and welfare of the local peoples we met ■

**Below: Alan and Gerry at base camp.**

➤ *The Irish Phuletate Expedition, Nepal 2018, was sponsored by Mountaineering Ireland and the Irish Mountaineering Club.*





# THE THREE PENINSULAS

**Aidan Ennis** hikes the final leg of his 'Three Peninsulas Mountain Enchainment.'

In June 2017, after ten days of walking, I stood on the shore of Lough Leane in Killarney. My hike had started at the highest point on Dursey Island. The route was an 'enchainment' of the Slieve Mish, Caha, Derrynasaggart, Mangerton and Dunkerron Mountains, all the way to Waterville.

(Enchainment, an anglicisation of the French word *enchaînement*, meaning 'linking,' is the climbing of two or more mountains in one outing). I called this section of the hike 'the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe.' It was 257 kilometres long and took seven days to walk, with six wild camps.

The second section of this hike continued for another three days, initially along the Kerry Way linking Waterville to Caherciveen, before breaking off to hike the Glenbeigh Horseshoe Mountains to Glencar. After crossing over to the Black Valley, I then followed Esknamucky Glen through Killarney National Park.

The complete 366-kilometre route looked like two giant horseshoes when viewed on a satellite image.

**Above: At the Old Weir Bridge, Killarney National Park.**

**Below: Taking in the view from the Slieve Mish Mountains of Castlemaine Harbour and the mountains of the Iveragh peninsula.**

I called the whole ten-day mountain backpacking route the **Beara Iveragh Double Horseshoe**.

I knew immediately on reaching Killarney on that hike that my journey was finished but not complete. Across the lake, Purple and Tomies Mountain beckoned. Beyond the Gap of Dunloe and hidden from view lay 'the grandest bit of mountaineering to be met with in Ireland,' as the McGillicuddy Reeks ridge was once described by the botanist and explorer HC Hart. From the summit of Carrauntoohil, the Dingle peninsula would be clearly visible, 'the last and in some ways the finest of the great mountain-promontories,' as observed by another famous botanist, Robert Lloyd Praeger.



➤ **Aidan Ennis** is a long-distance ultralight hiker who has walked and climbed extensively in Ireland, Scotland, the Alps, Dolomites and Nepal Himalaya. He has completed the 800-km Haute Randonnée Pyrénéenne, the Chamonix to Zermatt Haute Route (200km) and an epic ten-day completion of the Scottish Cape Wrath Trail (326km) with his brother, the late Colm Ennis.











## NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT DAY, I GASPED AT THE VISTA.

Castlemaine Harbour, Inch Strand and across to the Reeks while walking along the ridge from **Lack Mountain** (485m) to **Knockmore** (585m).

I descended at Emlagh to pick up the Kerry Camino for a few kilometres through forestry before rejoining the mountains near **Knocknakilton** (423m). The ridge walk that followed along the cliff line of **Glenteenassig** under clear blue skies was Dingle sky-walking at its best. **Stradbally** (798m) and **Beenoskee** (826m) could be seen to the north, with the cliffs, woodlands and still lakes of Glenteenassig valley below them. To the south, the coastline and mountains of the Iveragh peninsula were visible across Dingle Bay.

On Stradbally summit the beautiful blue Loch an Chaoim below appeared to float high above Brandon Bay. A few minutes later I was on Beenoskee, and not for the first time that day I gasped at the vista. Both sides of the Dingle peninsula could be seen, along with the entire Slieve Mish range as far as Tralee. Below me, waves rolled in on the sweep of Fermoy beach. Further on, the Magharee Islands could be seen off Garrywilliam Point. I was spellbound by what John Millington Synge once described as 'this new wild paradise.' I reluctantly left the summit and descended to a grassy upland plateau before crossing to Loch Dubh at the base of An Cnapán Mór, my wild camp for the night.

I fell asleep looking out the open tent door. Loch Dubh was perfectly still and the reflections of the cliffs above it in its water made for a perfect evening and an idyllic wild camp. I was woken by a blast of wind sending the door peg into the tent. There was a change of weather on the way.

I would have to return and complete the expedition, which was now becoming 'The Three Peninsulas Mountain Enchainment.'

### Completing the enchainment

A year later, I was walking around Lough Leane again. My biggest concern that day about my planned route was the dense rhododendron I was going to encounter. I was sure I could find a way around or through it, but how much time would I waste in an already long day?

Fortunately, I picked up a deer track at the far side of the Old Weir Bridge, which skirted the rhododendron forest. The summit clouds on **Purple** and **Tomies Mountains** cleared slightly as I started my descent to **Kate Kearney's Cottage**.

I walked into the bar and ordered a coffee, a pint of water and a pint of Guinness (it was my birthday, after all!) and was off walking again twenty minutes later, making good progress up the zig-zags and onto the Reeks ridge.

Low clouds enveloped the entire ridge and it was almost 10.00pm before I touched the summit cross of **Carrauntoohil** (1,039m). I descended about 140m in the direction of **Caher** (1,001m) and found as sheltered a spot as I could to wild-camp. It had been an epic first day covering the 37 kilometres from Killarney to Carrauntoohil.

The next day, an early start had me descending Caher to Lough Eighter. I set a fast pace on the flat roads to the well-spaced coffee breaks in Killorglin and Milltown. It was early afternoon before I reached the high point on a mountain road near Knockmoyle just above Castlemaine. I was now on the Slieve Mish Mountains, the start of the Dingle peninsula, and began walking along a mountain ridgeline to the big climbs of the day, **Baurtregaum** (851m) and **Caherconree** (835m).

My wild camp for the night was at **Caherconree Fort** (653m). The fort dates from the Iron Age and was reputedly built by Cú Roí mac Dáire, legendary sorcerer and King of West Munster. According to legend, he could set the stone walls of his fort spinning to deter any intruders. Even without this defence, the small, triangular refuge of about two acres (0.8 hectares) had walls up to three metres high and four metres thick on its landward side, and sheer cliffs protecting its other two sides.

On day three, I had breath-taking views across

**Above: Taking in the view from Glenteenassig across Dingle Bay to the Iveragh peninsula.**

**Below: Loch an Chaoimín on Stradbally Mountain with Brandon Bay in the distance.**







**Above: Loch an Chaoim, nestled below Beenoskee Mountain.**

**Below: Wild camp on the shore of a perfectly still Loch Dubh on the lower slopes of An Cnapán Mór in the Slieve Mish Mountains.**

Next morning, the alarm went off at 5.00am. I peered out through a gap in the tent door. The clouds were low, it felt colder, and it was misty and windy outside. I packed up and got going. I needed to get to the Brandon ridge as early as possible in the deteriorating weather. I climbed the gentle gradient of **An Cnapán Mór** (649m) before navigating to **Sliabh Mhacha Re** and following the spur along the **Maughanablagher** cliffs to **Connor Pass**.

At the pass, I took shelter from the wind and rain behind the wall of the car park and boiled up some water. I needed a hot drink and some food before heading off along the ridge to **Brandon Peak** (840m) and **Mount Brandon** (952m). Refuelled, I made good progress and was soon climbing the grassy slopes of **Gearhane** (803m). After Gearhane, a narrow ridge led to Brandon Peak. I began walking along the ridge through swirling clouds, strong winds, rain and hail that stung my eyes. ▶







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## IT HAD BEEN AN ADVENTURE WITHOUT COMPARE, IN A LANDSCAPE WITHOUT EQUAL.

Brandon ridge. It stood like a sentinel guarding Brandon Head and glowered down at me. I ignored its brooding demeanour and launched myself up its rock-strewn slopes. After reaching the summit cairn, I hid behind it and paused for thought.

In my mind, I had planned an idyllic wild camp on Brandon Head, looking out at the Atlantic, the sun a deep orange colour as it sank below the horizon. I imagined sitting there with a coffee, the perfect end to a long-distance hike. However, the weather in the mountains does not care for your plans. In an instant, the mountains can turn from paradise to a world of chaos with buffeting winds, stinging hail and cold, unwelcoming clouds. On those days, it is about focusing on the route ahead, staying safe and, yes, enjoying the exhilaration and challenge of being on high mountains. You just have to accept that this is the way it is.

I descended carefully to the col below and headed for Dingle. I didn't want the expedition to finish, but I had run out of mountains. My Three Peninsulas Mountain Enchainment had come to a wild and explosive end, but it had been an adventure without compare, in a landscape without equal.

The total distance from Dursey Island to Dingle is 525km, with the four-day Killarney to Dingle section clocking in at 159km.

\*\*\*\*\*

I had finished the walk, but the route still felt unfinished. A continuous through-hike of the enchainment is now my dream, linking the wonderful mountains of the Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas in one single expedition ■

I suddenly remembered the last time I was on Brandon Peak. It was snow-covered, in perfect winter conditions. I was climbing the superb East Ridge of Brandon Peak on the last Saturday in November 2010. I was with my brother, **Colm Ennis**, and our good friend, **Peter Britton**. The following day, we completed a rare winter ascent of Mystic Ridge. It was an intense weekend with once-in-a-lifetime conditions among snow-capped mountain scenery and blue skies. Tragically, Colm and Peter died four years later, while descending from the Dent du Géant in the Mont Blanc Massif.

It is impossible to disentangle such powerful memories that are interwoven with places... nor should we. However, the moment caught me completely off guard, a swirling barrage of memories flashing inside my head, as the intensity of the storm increased around me. Every muscle in my face seemed strained by overwhelming emotions. My legs struggled against the full force of a storm at 3,000ft, my arms were tight and my hands clenched, gripping my walking poles to maintain balance. I tried to focus on the ridge ahead and reached the summit of **Mount Brandon** a short while later. I dived behind the rocks of the huge Brandon cross and took some water and an energy bar to steady myself.

I was glad to be finally descending, to escape the maelström. There was a short climb up **Píaras Mór** (748m), before a final descent to the col and the Arraglen Ogham Stone. It was raining heavily now, and the clouds ripped across the col. I could see the base of **Masatiompan** (763m) rising into the cloud. It was the last mountain on the

**Above: Aidan's brother, the late Colm Ennis, on the superb East Ridge of Brandon Peak on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**

**Below: Aidan reaches Dingle and the end of his hike.**







# TAKING ON THE CORBETTS

Are mountain list 'tickers' pioneers, nerds or adventure seekers? **Margaret Tees** explores the question with particular reference to her own obsession with bagging summits in Ireland and Scotland.

**Above: Margaret Tees with her kayak, with Beinn Sgritheall (974m) in the background.**

**T**he urge to tackle certain mountains of certain height in certain places can be hard to understand for most people. I had climbed quite a few **Munros** (Scottish mountains at least 3,000 feet (914m) high) before I became aware of

**Joss Lynam's list** of all the separate 600m+ mountain tops of Ireland. As a member of a mountaineering club, and with a variety of other mountaineering friends, I had found myself walking in all the 'honeypot' areas in Ireland before I became aware of 'The List.' This list has since taken me to every mountain range, and several notable individual peaks, in every corner of the country.

So here I am now, doing the **Corbetts** (Scottish mountains between 2,000 and 3,000 feet, or 762m and 914m), much to my husband's chagrin. He enthusiastically helped me to complete my last few Munros, but was not about to start again on the Corbetts: "Those boring, second-rate hills! How many did you say? 222? You won't live long enough!"

Well, that was a big mistake! There are a few which may be deemed boring, but the Corbetts, unlike the Munros, have a definition that includes a minimum prominence of 152m (500ft), making them steeper, more isolated (rarely two together and never ridges of four!) and usually lacking any tourist tracks.

Conferring with my longstanding mountaineering friend Gertrude, we compared our existing Corbett acquisitions (you get some of them when you do the Munros, whether you like it or not!) and we are currently working methodically through areas where we both have targets in common, disregarding any adverse properties they may or may not have.

On the other hand, my husband Alan is now conceding that they can be interesting and certainly tough climbs and are frequently hard to get in to. Last summer, we went to Knoydart, which involves either a ferry trip to Inverie on the south of the peninsula, or a three-hour backpack in from Kinloch Hourn from the east. Either way, we would have a ►

► **Margaret Tees** is a hillwalker, mountaineer and a member of the North West Mountaineering Club. She has 'completed' the Munros in Scotland and more recently has been taking on the Corbetts, also in Scotland.







long walk in to gain two Corbetts. Bringing a kayak with us – a two-man ‘ride-on’ (more suitable for Blue Flag beaches) on which Alan had carried out necessary modifications to carry camping equipment and rucksacks – we found ourselves at Corran, a small settlement on the north side of Loch Houran, quizzing the local boatman about tides, currents, weather and whether there were any monsters.

Appeased, we set off the following morning on flat-calm water under a cloudless sky to the opposite shore. We beached at the mouth of a stream, behind Eilean a’Phobaire, at the bottom of a rising gorge. A quick change into walking gear and 1½ hours later we summited **Beinn na Caillich** (785m), at the extreme northwest edge of Knoydart.

Returning to the kayak, we continued along the southern side of the loch and courtesy of the incoming tide, gained the entrance to Barrisdale Bay, our campsite for the night. The following day we walked down Barrisdale Glen to reach the summit of **Sgurr nan Eugallt** at 895m. Returning to the bay, we lazed in the late afternoon sun, cooked our evening meal and waited for the incoming tide to float us off, which happened around 8.30pm. We had a glorious paddle back across the slackening tide and cruised into Corran pier as the final rays of the sun disappeared below the horizon. Here ended our forays into northern Knoydart; I still have several more mountains to climb in the nearby Glen Dessarry area – but that’s for another day.

The good weather continued, so on we went to our next port of call on the shores of Loch Cluanie. The water level was quite low, due to the dry spring, and it didn’t look too intimidating, although I wondered if it was permissible to paddle on a public water supply. Alan just raised his eyebrows and

**Above: Alan Tees on the long walk in to Beinn Loinne.**

**Below: On a long pull up a gully on Beinn na Caillich.**

pushed the kayak into the very calm, inviting water. We crossed again in no time and once more ascended almost directly to our awaiting hill, **Beinn Loinne** (789m) – no traipsing through endless forestry for us! Another smooth crossing, arriving back to enjoy bacon butties from an enterprising burger van (we were parked beside A87 main road to Skye).







Our next stop was at Loch Quoich after the long drive through Glen Garry. We passed many amazing Corbetts on the way and I was beginning to think I might have to live till I'm ninety.

We arrived at the track down to the water promised on our map, only to find it unsuitable for vehicles. The following morning brought another sunny day. Portaging the kayak down the track didn't prove too difficult, as there wasn't too much gear, since we weren't staying over.

I enjoyed the crossing, although it was a little choppy in parts and we had much further to go than the earlier crossings. The mountains were towering around us, Munros I had previously done, and finally there was **Sgurr an Fhuarain** (901m), my little Corbett amongst the giants. The ascent from the stony beach was straightforward and, as we gained the top, we gazed around in wonder. What a cracking day!

Alan was so inspired he set off westwards to climb a Munro, **Sgurr Mor** (1,003m). I could see him as he made quick progress and I had not long reached the kayak before he came circling around the bottom of the mountain to join me. He had met another single walker on the ridge. We realised that this was the only other human being we had come across during all our time in these remote mountains.

As we paddled back, a group of kayakers were carrying gear down to the same place we had launched from. This worked out very well as not only was one of them Irish, all of them were rugby players (from Rugby)! They helped us to carry our gear uphill to the parking place. So ended another great day, and another great trip.

In conclusion, lists are great motivators. Every mountain has many facets, so when following a list there are always options for the approach, the ascent and the descent. For me, this is adventure

**Above: Loch Cluanie, like a mill pond.**

**Below: Margaret on the summit of Sgurr an Fhuarain (901m)**

## FOR ME, LISTING IS ADVENTURE MOUNTAINEERING... BREAKING NEW GROUND.

mountaineering, stretching my own mountaineering skills, spreading my personal footfall and breaking new ground. Should I be fortunate enough to survive the Corbetts, there are still some of the Irish **County Tops** to do. Don't mention this to Alan! ■







# THE DUKE'S HEAD

**Iain Miller** tackles an unclimbed sea stack in Donegal with climbing partner Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich.

**“**I may have found you an unclimbed sea stack, if you're interested?” came a text message from Marble Hill resident and all-round good guy, noble brother Ian Parke. “You have my complete and undivided attention. Do tell, Sir,” was my instantaneous reply.

The Duke's Head is a twenty-metre-high sea stack off Dundonnell Head, which is just north of Marble Hill beach in Sheephaven Bay, Co Donegal.

The sea stack is set in a perfect little amphitheatre of surrounding sea cliffs. Directly inland from 'The Duke' is the mouth of a huge, hidden sea cave or sea arch, which runs under Dundonnell Head for over one hundred metres.

At the back of the cave is a perfect 'pirate's treasure' raised shingle storm beach. It is from this

**Above: Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich views the Duke's Head from the mouth of the sea cave or arch on Dundonnell Head. Note the sea stack's resemblance to a man's head.**

**Right: Iain's dinghy on storm beach on south side of Dundonnell Head.**

subterranean vantage point that the sea stack was named, as seen from inside the cave the stack looks very much like a classic, medieval duke's head.



➤ **Iain Miller** is a qualified Mountain Instructor and an NGB awards provider based in County Donegal. He has more than thirty years of experience in mountaineering worldwide. He has completed the Munros and has more than 600 first ascents in Donegal and the Orkneys to his name. He specialises in leading adventure climbs, notably on sea stacks and sea cliffs. He is the author of Mountaineering Ireland's *Rock Climbing in Donegal* (2015) guidebook and the *Rock Climbing in Donegal* (2013) app. For more details, visit his website, [www.uniqueascent.ie](http://www.uniqueascent.ie).





## A first look

The day after receiving Ian's text, I launched my kayak from Marble Hill beach and went for a look. The plan was to do a recce to see what would be involved in getting to the top of The Duke.

Launching from Marble Hill, I paddled with an easterly wind and tetchy north-easterly seas. I rounded Dundonnell Head and followed the coast to the lair of The Duke. A final, narrow, steep-sided and slightly bouncy channel took me into the amphitheatre.

Alas, the stack's close proximity to the surrounding cliffs was creating a whitewater rage around its base. A semi-submerged skerry was helping to create an

**Above: Fiona inside Duke's Cave.**

**Below: Approaching the stack from the landward side.**

## SEEN FROM INSIDE THE CAVE THE STACK LOOKS VERY MUCH LIKE A MEDIEVAL DUKE'S HEAD.

almost continuous wall of white water in the channel between the stack and mainland Donegal. Landing on the stack was not an option at this stage and so a visit to the sea cave with a good look at the possible landward access became the next objective.

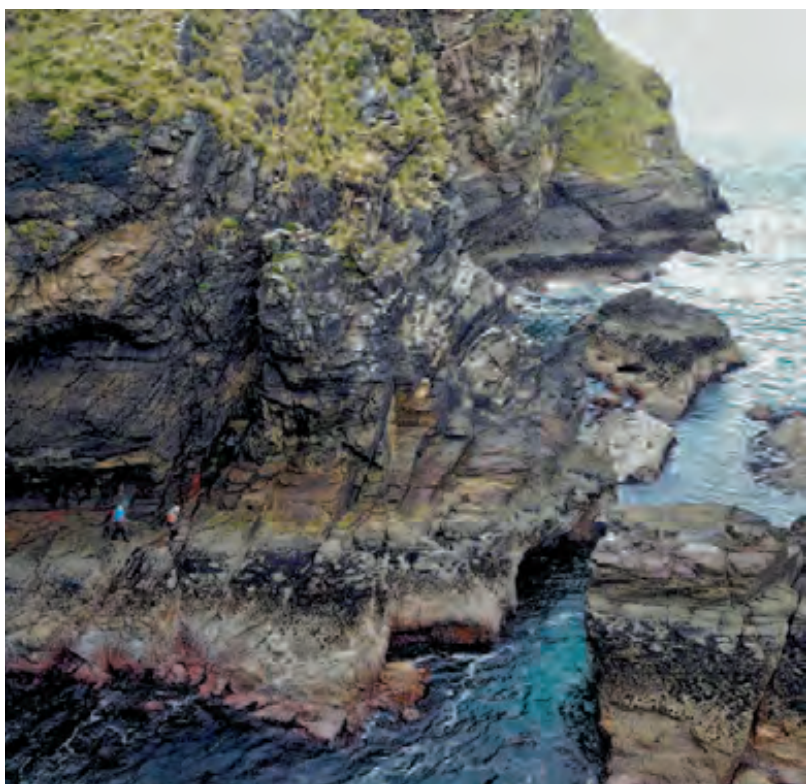
## Another wee look

A couple of days later I made a return trip, this time in the company of Ian Parke and a local climber, Fiona Nic Fhionnlaich. Ian was our local access guide as the clifftop approach is a veritable minefield of fenced fields, commonage and other potential access problems. Our cunning plan that day was a clifftop recce.

We crossed the fields to an outstanding viewpoint above the monster cave overlooking The Duke. Alas, it became immediately obvious that Neptune was still in residence in the amphitheatre. A swift decision was made to abandon any attempt that day and have another look the following day.

As the tide was around mid-ebb, we decided to pay a visit to the storm beach at the back of the cave. Fiona and I descended the near-vertical grass to the non-tidal ledges at the landward base of the stack. From here, the channel between us and the stack was suitably atmospheric with a constant churning of white water; attempting a crossing that day would most definitely have ended badly. A visit to the back of the cave looked a much more promising option.

We tied in and racked up in the mouth of this huge cave. To get to the storm beach in the semi-darkness at the back of the cave involved a greasy, wet







Photographs: Ian Parke (Fiona on stack), Iain Miller (selfie)

traverse above the semi-submerged boulders about twenty feet below. This took us to a short abseil and downclimb to the less submerged boulders in the last 50 metres of the cave. A further subterranean boulder hop took us to the distant shores of the pirate's cove. From there, the outside world looked very far away.

## The ascent

The following day, with much calmer seas, Fiona and I once again found ourselves on the sea-level non-tidal platforms facing The Duke. We had opted to repeat the previous day's vertical grass descent and this confirmed our opinion that this was an awful way to descend.

The short sea passage across the narrow channel was flat calm and so we inflated the dinghy and set

**Above: Fiona atop the Duke's Head.**

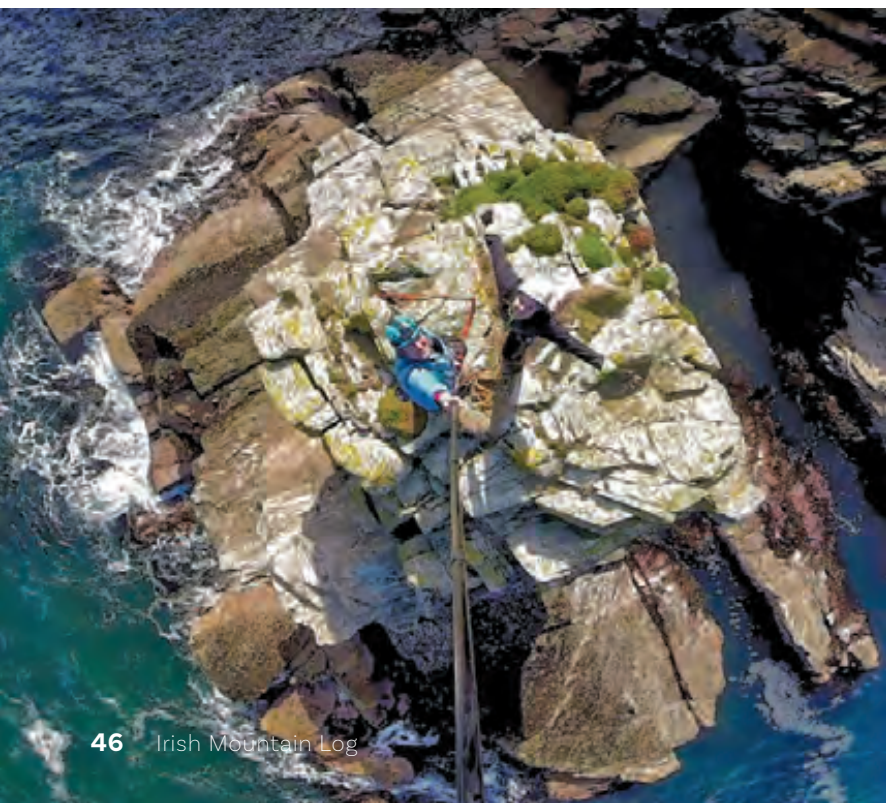
**Below: Iain and Fiona taking summit selfie.**

sail to the larger tidal platforms below the east face of the stack.

On the seaward face, we climbed the large stepped corner which was the most obvious full stack height feature. This stepped corner provided an excellent climb to a very square and flat-topped summit.

In the strong easterly winds, the summit of the stack was not in the lee of the surrounding sea cliffs, so simply standing on the summit was a bit of a wobblefest.

After the obligatory summit photo session, we rigged the abseil and returned to sea level and our mighty vessel. We opted for a slightly longer passage across the mouth of the cave and climbed a series of ledges back to terra firma ■



## Route descriptions

### The Duke's Head

This twenty-metre sea stack lies hidden in a small amphitheatre of defending sea cliffs and near-vertical grass slopes at the mouth of a huge sea cave just off Dundonnell Head, Co Donegal at grid reference C 062 382 on OSi Map No 2.

Access is easiest by sea from Marble Hill beach and involves an excellent 3km round-trip paddle. The base of the stack catches all north-west to east sea motion, with the narrow channel between the stack and mainland Donegal funnelling any motion to prevent safe landing.

### Duke's Corner, S 4a, 15m

Climb the full stack height seaward-facing corner on the north (seaward) face of the stack.

**Iain Miller, Fiona Nic Fhionnlaoich**  
**March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018**





# AN IRISH ASCENT OF MANASLU

**Patrick O'Sullivan** interviews Mike Keane, who is thought to be only the fourth Irish person to have summited on Manaslu, the world's eighth highest mountain.

**Above: Mount Manaslu viewed from Manaslu Base Camp (4,700m) with Ascent Himalayas tents in the foreground.**

**M**anaslu (also known as Kutang) is the eighth highest mountain in the world, rising 8,163 metres (26,781ft) above sea level in Nepal. It is located in the Mansiri Himal in the west-central part of Nepal, about forty miles to the east of Annapurna. The mountain's long ridges and glaciers offer feasible approaches from all directions to the peak that towers steeply above the surrounding landscape. The name Manaslu means 'mountain of the spirit.'

Manaslu was first climbed on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1956, by **Toshio Imanishi** and **Gyalzen Norbu**, members of a Japanese expedition. Just as the British consider Everest 'their mountain,' Manaslu has always been thought of as 'a Japanese mountain.'

As of 2008, there had only been 297 successful ascents of the peak and 53 fatalities, making it then the fourth most dangerous 8,000m peak, behind Annapurna, Nanga Parbat, and K2. The number of ascents has increased dramatically in recent years, with increasing numbers of climbers attempting the mountain pre- and post-monsoon, and now a total of more than 1,100 ascents. However, being avalanche-prone, it remains a dangerous mountain to attempt to climb.

I met **Mike Keane** in October last year at the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering, when it was hosted by the Galway Walking Club in Clonbur. He had just returned from a successful ascent of Mount Manaslu in the Nepal Himalaya.

Mike was 65 years old when he went out to Nepal in September last year to attempt to climb Mount Manaslu. He has been hillwalking for many years in Ireland and looks on the Maumturks as his 'home ground.' He lives near to Clonbur and has been walking with the **Galway Walking Club** for twelve or more years. He has also been a member of the **Maumturks Walking Club** since it was founded ten or twelve years ago and is also a member of the **Lake District Walking Club**.

He thinks of himself as a hillwalker but he also likes walking and climbing on snow and ice as well. ▶



▶ **Patrick O'Sullivan** is the Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*.





Mike Keane has been very active in mountaineering terms in recent years. In 2012, he climbed **Mount Elbrus** (5,642m) on his own and then he went on to climb **Mont Blanc** (4,808m) in 2013. He has also successfully climbed **Kilimanjaro** (5,895m) and he has attempted **Aconcagua** (6,961m), but he didn't manage to summit on that occasion.

Mike went to Everest Base Camp and climbed **Island Peak** (6,189m) post-monsoon in September 2014. In 2016, he climbed **Denali** (6,190m). He found that climb tough, as there were no Sherpas or porters there and you had to carry all your own gear, pulling it on a sledge. The team he was with did rotations between the base camp and the higher camps to help with acclimatisation. He had occasional headaches but kept his appetite and had no other altitude-related problems.

Mike went to **Manaslu** for the first time in early September 2017. He had found out that **Peter O'Connell**, who is also from Galway and had climbed Everest in May 2013, had trained for that ascent by climbing Manaslu. He went with a team from **Ascent Himalayas**.

They drove from Kathmandu for twelve hours to a village on the approach to Manaslu. It took seven days from there to get to Manaslu Base Camp (MBC) at 4,700m, including one rest day, staying in villages along the way. They spent a good bit of time in Base Camp because the weather was so bad. When it improved, they did four rotations on the normal route via the north-east ridge: MBC to Camp 1 at 5,700m and return; MBC to Camp 1 and sleeping there the next day; MBC to Camp 1, then on to Camp 2 and sleeping there, returning to MBC; followed by three days' rest in MBC.

While there, Mike developed an upset stomach and was too weak to jumar

**Above: Climbers snaking up between Camp 1 to Camp 2 on Manaslu.**

**Below: Manaslu Base Camp.**

back up the mountain. He decided to return to Ireland and felt he would never get back to Manaslu. However, back home, he thought about it a lot and eventually decided to go out there again in 2018.

## Second attempt

Mike signed up with Ascent Himalayas again and left Ireland on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. After a day in Kathmandu, when he met the Ascent Himalayas team and his gear was checked, they drove out again for the twelve hours to a tea-house in the hills. They then repeated the seven-day trek in to Manaslu Base Camp, including the rest day. After resting in MBC for a couple of days, they started their rotation climbs on Manaslu, again climbing on the normal route via the north-east ridge: MBC to Camp 1 and back down; MBC to Camp 1, sleep there and then back down; MBC to Camp 2, sleep there and then back down. Mike did not use Diamox but felt he was acclimatising well.





## MIKE HAD A SHORT NIGHT AND LEFT AT 1.00AM FOR THE SUMMIT WITH THE OTHERS.

While they were in MBC, bad weather had been forecast and 2-3 feet of snow fell higher up on the mountain. They waited for three days after that in MBC, as Manaslu is so avalanche-prone. The fixed lines were put in by four Sherpas on September 25<sup>th</sup>. By then, there were almost two hundred climbers there plus the climbing Sherpas and the support teams.

There were two clients with Ascent Himalayas that year, Mike and an Australian, **Wesley Robert**. The Ascent Himalayas team is led by **Mingma Tsiri Sherpa**, who visited Ireland a couple of years ago. He has climbed Everest nineteen times. The chief climbing Sherpa on the mountain was **Furtemba Sherpa**, who was assisted by **Thundu Sherpa**.

The Ascent Himalayas team shared their kitchen with another company, **Imagine Treks and Expeditions**, which had three clients.

In the end, the climbers waited in MBC a total of five days for the snow to settle. When they felt it was safe, they set off to Camp 1 on their summit bid. First Camp 1, then Camp 2 and then Camp 3 at just under 7,000m, where they started using supplementary oxygen while sleeping.

Climbing above Camp 3 the next day, Mike used supplementary oxygen and wore his down suit.

At Camp 4, at 7,400m, they had a short night and left at 1.00am for the summit. It was really cold and Mike had all his gear on again. He felt the climbing that day was fairly easy on the steep, frozen snow, with the fixed ropes and no ice walls to be overcome. You just clipped on to the fixed line and used jumars on the steeper parts. The route zig-zagged up to just below the summit at 8,163m, which Mike reached at 7.05am on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Mike then joined the queue of climbers waiting to stand on the actual summit, with room for only two or three people, to have a photo taken. The queueing climbers were in the shadow of the summit ridge and it was very windy. With the wind chill, it was about -20°C. In the end, he waited for two hours and ten minutes before he got his chance to stand on the summit. He was there for about three minutes with Thundu and Wesley. It was very windy. Furtemba took the desired photos and then they were heading back down. Mike said that there was little feeling of joy at his success. He realised he was only halfway and that they still had to get down.

They left the summit at 9.15am and clipped into the same fixed line that they had climbed up on. They went back down to Camp 4 and then, after a break, carried on down to Camp 2 and then on down to Base Camp, all in the same day. They reached MBC at 10.15pm and had been using headlamps for three hours at that stage.

The kitchen staff had prepared a celebratory



**Above: Mike Keane at Camp 2 (6,400m).**

**Below: Climbers below Camp 2.**

meal but Mike said that he was so tired that he couldn't eat. He had a couple of bottles of a soft drink and went to his tent. It was freezing, at -5 to -10°C, even at Base Camp, and there was frost in the tent but, as soon as he lay down, he went to sleep.

More than one hundred climbers were successful on Manaslu in the 2018 post-monsoon period. ▶







Sadly, one of the successful climbers died when he became separated from his team on the descent.

After his descent, Mike's focus was on getting home, as he had been away for one month at that stage. Mike has been married for more than forty years and knew that his wife, who is very supportive, would be worrying about him.

Mike Shea is a very quietly spoken and unassuming person. When he is not climbing mountains, Mike is a hillfarmer and keeps mountain sheep. He also works for Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Talking to him, he is very modest about his achievements so far. He says that he lives a simple life and doesn't smoke or drink. He first ran a marathon in Dublin in 1988 and since then has run several marathons and half-marathons. He also competed in the Gaelforce West adventure race eleven times in a row.

When I asked him what his plans for future adventures were, he simply said that he just wanted to climb Binn Shléibhe (Mount Gable) and that he loves being out in his local mountains.

However, Mike thinks he is the fourth Irish person to climb Manaslu and, at 65 years of age, that he is also the oldest Irish person to have summited an 8,000m peak. Given his success so far, I am sure that there is more to come! ■

**Above: Climbers above Camp 3, heading for Camp 4 (7,450m).**

**Below: Mike Keane on the summit of Manaslu (8,163m), with Wesley Robert behind.**

**MIKE IS THE OLDEST IRISH PERSON TO CLIMB AN 8,000m PEAK: HE REACHED THE SUMMIT AT THE AGE OF 65.**







# RAVENS IN THE MOURNES

Following the breakdown of his marriage, **Gerry Burns** found solace in hillwalking, especially in the Mourne, where he got to know and love that classic bird of the wild uplands, the raven.

## Above: Raven

**T**he Mountains of Mourne are probably more well-known around the world than any other group of mountains in Ireland. The melody and words of Percy French's most famous song have painted a vivid picture of what is now an Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty, with mountains that 'sweep down to the sea,' as the song goes.

No visitor to the area can fail to be impressed by the lofty majesty of Slieve Donard and Slieve Commedagh, forming, as they do, such a dramatic backdrop to the beautiful seaside resort of Newcastle.

Today, Mourne is officially recognised as an area of great contrasts, with high and low peaks, sweeping plains, open countryside and dense forests, a craggy coastline interspersed with miles of golden beaches, and glorious sunshine one minute and heavy rain the next.

However, the heart of modern-day Mourne is undoubtedly the 'High Mourne,' a ring of twelve granite peaks that cluster round Slieve Donard, which, at 850m (2,790ft), is the highest peak in Ulster. These mountains were shaped by the movement of glacial ice during the Ice Age, which gave them their impressively craggy profiles.

People come to the area each year in their thousands – regular visitors, day-trippers, weekenders and holiday-makers – and many of them never venture too far into these mountains. Then there are the mountain lovers, of whom I count myself as one, who constantly feel the call of the mountains and who try to get out into them as often as possible, whether it is to walk or to climb.

People go into the mountains for all kinds of reasons; mine initially was as a means of escape, I suppose. Early retirement, which I hadn't really

➤ **Gerry Burns** is a retired librarian who lives near Armagh city but spends as much time as he can walking in the Mourne Mountains. He is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland.



Photograph: Diliiff (raven)





been prepared for, was quickly followed by a marital breakdown. I knew that I was seeking something when I went into the mountains, but I had no clear idea of what it was. Solitude, a time to be alone with my thoughts, peace of some kind, a new sense of purpose or direction... any or all of those, I suppose.

I walked, I climbed, I stopped and looked, I listened and, in doing so, I feel that over time I have established some kind of communion with the mountains.

When I say that I listened, it was probably the unusual calls of the birds, which regularly performed intricate aerobatics above the summits, that caught my attention. It was my first conscious encounter with ravens. Generally speaking, you hear ravens before you see them. They have a very distinctive call and it is one that I now love to hear on my way into the heart of the mountains.

It isn't easy to describe the raven's call. A crow's call is generally described as a 'caw,' while the raven's call sounds more like a 'kruk' or a 'cronk'. It is a much deeper sound than the more familiar sounds that crows make. I have to say that at times it has sounded to me almost like a mocking laugh, especially on those days when the weather conditions are at their worst and I'm wondering why I didn't stay at home or in one of the seaside coffee houses!

Ravens are part of the corvid family of birds, which includes the various black crows as well as the more colourful jays and magpies. In this country, the crow family includes rooks, choughs, hooded crows with their grey mantle, and jackdaws, smaller than the others, with a grey nape and strange, slightly disturbing, silvery eyes.

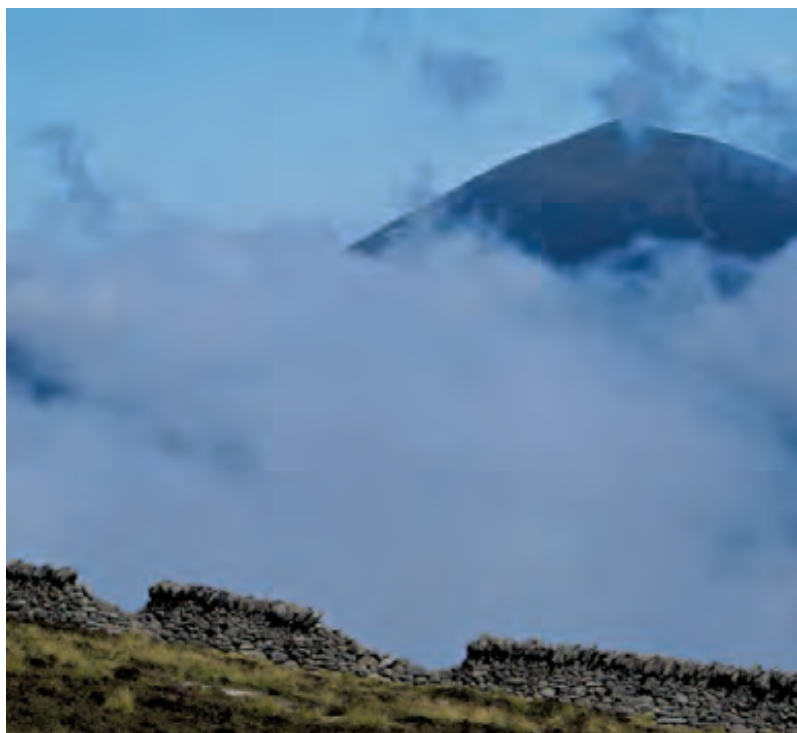
Collectively, they are all recognised as being hardy, adaptable, intelligent birds, but scientific tests have

**Above: Granite tors high in the Mournes.**

**Below: The Mourne Wall with Bearnagh mountain in the background, partly obscured by low cloud.**

proven that the intelligence of the raven far surpasses that of the others.

Ravens are born survivors... and they have had to be! Nowadays, the uplands and mountains of Ireland are where you are most likely to come across them, as they certainly aren't commonly seen elsewhere. The reason for this is that, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ravens came to be regarded as scavengers, as birds that spread disease and as enemies of farmers and shepherds. In towns and cities, they were seen as vermin and, as a result, they were hunted almost to the point of extinction. They were frequently seen in flocks,







scavenging on dead bodies in the aftermath of battles and, as such, they became associated in many people's minds with death and misfortune. Ravens became hated, as well as feared. Bounties were placed on their heads and their nesting sites were destroyed.

Remarkably, this situation was allowed to continue until 1981, when ravens finally gained protection in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Thankfully, their numbers are now increasing. According to the



Royal Society for the Protection of Birds there are currently 7,400 breeding pairs in the UK and Ireland. It's not a huge number, but it does take a long time for a species to recover from near annihilation!

People often ask, how do you recognise a raven? Among other members of the crow family, it isn't that easy. After all, they look like crows but, when the two are seen together, they are quite a bit bigger and can weigh about three times as much as the average crow. That makes quite a difference. Ravens are big birds. Their beaks are bigger and heavier than a crow's and they have a wider wingspan. The wingspan of most mature ravens is close to four feet.

Another helpful identifiable trait is that ravens generally fly in pairs, while crows usually fly in groups. A raven's tail feathers while in flight form a definite wedge shape, while a crow's are spread like a fan. Like most other members of the crow family, ravens are black, but that doesn't do justice to the variety of colours in a raven's plumage, including a whole spectrum that extends through deep purple, to greens and blues. Not surprisingly, the Irish word for a raven is *fiach*, a word and a name frequently given to black-haired people.

As someone who has grown used to living alone, I have tended to avoid the mountains at the weekends,

**Above: Gerry Burns taking in a view of the Silent Valley in the Mournes.**

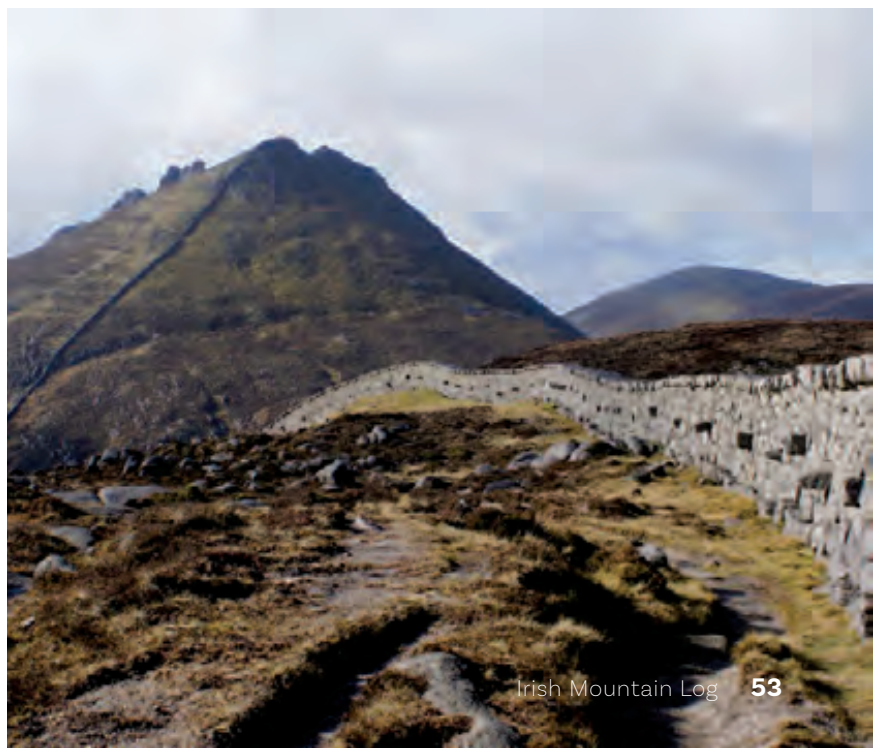
**Left: A raven in overhead view, showing its distinctive wedge-shaped tail.**

**Below: Bearnagh mountain and the Mourne Wall in sunny weather.**

**I OFTEN FIND MYSELF ALONE ON THE HIGH PEAKS, BUT I NEVER FEEL LONELY THERE.**

when they can become busy. In going into the mountains midweek, I have frequently found myself utterly alone on the high peaks, but I cannot say that I have ever felt lonely in those circumstances. What I have felt most is an all-encompassing sense of peace and well-being. At times like this I become much more conscious of the presence of the ravens.

Far from seeing ravens as birds of ill omen, I have always felt a sense of reassurance in their company and have always enjoyed watching their aerial acrobatics. I can't say that I have always experienced feelings of peace and tranquillity on my many rambles through the mountains, particularly on those occasions when the wind, rain and cold blotted out all feelings but those of survival. On balance, however, I would have no hesitation in saying that, at a time of intense turmoil in my life, the mountains and the ravens have been my salvation. Now I can no longer imagine the mountains without them ■







## Enabling sustainable enjoyment of Errigal Mountain



Written by  
Helen Lawless,  
Hillwalking,  
Access &  
Conservation  
Officer

Planning application submitted for upland path work and habitat restoration



Errigal Mountain, Co Donegal.

With increasing footfall on Ireland's mountains, trampling and path erosion are ever more evident. This is a concern for Mountaineering Ireland members, both in terms of damage to the mountain environment and in how erosion detracts from the quality of our recreational experiences. As hillwalkers and climbers, we contribute to this problem and we also need to be part of the solution.

Mountaineering Ireland started the **Helping the Hills** initiative in 2012 to raise awareness of upland path erosion and to highlight the need for skills and investment in this area. The **Helping the Hills Guiding Principles** were agreed

in 2014, setting out a consistent, quality approach to addressing upland path erosion (see [www.helpingthehills.ie](http://www.helpingthehills.ie)). Mountaineering Ireland's work in this area is continuing through involvement in a number of projects around the island and by encouraging skills development and information sharing.

In the winter 2018 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* (IML 128), we provided an update from Croagh Patrick. In this article we report on progress on Errigal, where **Donegal County Council** and the **Errigal Stakeholders Group** are moving closer to addressing the erosion on the mountain.

For the last four years,

Donegal County Council has led the EU-funded **ASCENT** project, which involves partners from five countries (including Northern Ireland) working together to address the management of increased visitor numbers on fragile natural environments.

As part of the ASCENT project, planning permission is currently being sought for habitat restoration to enable sustainable access to Errigal Mountain. The proposal is for a hand-built aggregate path to provide a durable route along by the stream, stone pitching on the steeper, badly eroded part of the mountain and 'light touch' work to define a sustainable line between these two sections and along the summit crest.

The proposed route is slightly longer than that currently used by many people, but this is necessary to avoid sensitive bog habitats to the left of the stream. This will mean that

those climbing Errigal will experience a wider range of views, as well as more stable and sustainable ground underfoot.

With the ASCENT project due to end in August 2019, other funding will need to be secured for the upland path work at Errigal to be carried out. Therefore, it may be a few years yet before a repaired and managed route is in place. To help prevent further damage **in the meantime**, visitors to Errigal are encouraged to walk from the car park along the right-hand side of the stream up to the col between Mackoght and Errigal, and to ascend to the summit from there, keeping within trampled or eroded lines as much as possible.

Mountaineering Ireland has worked with Donegal County Council, the local community and the other members of the Errigal Stakeholders Group over a number of years, combining input from national level with the knowledge of members in



# RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

## Photograph wildlife responsibly

Our encounters with wildlife in the uplands make for some really memorable experiences but, with the breeding season underway, birds and animals are now more vulnerable.

Most species are exposed to additional risk while seeking food for their young. Coping with changeable weather uses up precious energy too, and disturbance by humans could be the tipping point.

Our enthusiasm to get a better view or to capture the perfect picture can disturb and harm wildlife, especially at sensitive times in their life cycle. If a bird or animal reacts to your presence by moving away or calling, you are too close and should back off.

The length of time you spend close to any nest site should be considered as it may interrupt a bird's feeding cycle. All birds of prey, but especially eagles, have excellent long-range vision, so while you may not think you are too close, you possibly are. If lingering to take photographs, it is best to wear clothing that blends with the environment and to use a hide so as to limit intrusion.

Even greater care is required with the use of drones as birds and mammals may stop foraging if there is a drone nearby. Birds of prey have been known to attack drones, presumably because they see them as a threat.

Disturbance of seabird colonies on cliffs and off-shore islands is an escalating problem. Photographers deliberately entering colonies to get the 'ultimate' shot of a puffin or gannet often disturb the adult birds, leaving eggs and chicks vulnerable to predation. The great black-backed gulls and herring gulls are eagerly waiting in the wings for easy pickings!

Due to the potential for disturbance, it is illegal to photograph or film any wild bird, or a protected animal, on or near its breeding place, without a licence.

The key point in photographing wildlife with respect is to prevent disturbance by keeping your distance. We all want to take pictures that we can be proud of; please photograph wildlife sensitively and responsibly ■



Dennis Golden of the North West Mountaineering Club looking at path erosion on Errigal.

the area, particularly **Ursula MacPherson** and **Dennis Golden**.

A vital piece of work to be completed over the next few months is the development of an **integrated management plan** for Errigal. In addition to setting out how the path on Errigal will be delivered and managed, the plan will examine the relationship between Errigal

and the village of Dunlewey, and make recommendations regarding facilities, services and the provision of information to visitors to the Errigal area.

The plan should provide a roadmap towards the vision agreed by the Errigal Stakeholders Group: 'To facilitate the responsible enjoyment of Errigal in a way

that protects the mountain's special qualities and benefits the local community.'

➤ Find out more about the proposals for Errigal on the web page [www.donegalcoco.ie/community/ascent](http://www.donegalcoco.ie/community/ascent).

➤ Mountaineering Ireland members with ideas or suggestions to feed into the management plan for Errigal should email Helen Lawless at [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) ■

## Errigal Visitor Monitoring Survey

In August 2018, members of the Errigal Stakeholders Group working with Donegal County Council staff conducted a Visitor Monitoring Survey at Errigal.

Responses were gathered on-site through an app and an online survey for those who had recently climbed the mountain.

- There were 541 valid responses. As some surveys were completed on behalf of groups, the responses represented 1,773 visitors to Errigal.
- 80% of respondents were from the island of Ireland. Of these, almost 50% were from Donegal and 30% from Northern Ireland.
- Motivation to climb Errigal: (1) the scenery and landscape (32%), followed by (2) health and fitness (20%) and (3) because it is the highest mountain in Donegal (19%).
- 70% of respondents had visited Errigal before.
- The survey found an average spend of €59 per person for those who visited Errigal Mountain.





## Recent and upcoming events

Brief reports on training news and events of note run by the Training Office



Written by  
Jane Carney,  
Training Officer

### Meets

#### Mountaineering Ireland Winter Meet

■ **Onich, Scotland, February 17-23<sup>rd</sup>, 2019**

The 2019 Winter Meet attracted members to the colder conditions of Scotland in winter for winter walking, mountaineering and climbing skills courses. Whilst the conditions offered less than the usual amount of snow, they still gave plenty of opportunity to keep the participants in the courses interested. The skills courses on the Winter Meet are a benefit of membership and designed to promote independence and develop confidence in winter conditions. As always, participants were able to access help with their decision-making and planning from a number of experts on hand to consult with during the meet.

Following the promotion of the meet to youth members, we were delighted to see a strong youth presence at this year's meet. The Training Office is fully committed to supporting youth participation in all of our international meets. The reduced rate courses have been designed specifically to attract younger members. The Mountaineering Ireland Training Office's push to encourage youth participation in our meets continues with further youth offerings at the 2019 Alpine Meet, to be held in Argentière, Chamonix, France, this July (see below).

#### Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meet

■ **Chamonix, France, July 6-20<sup>th</sup>, 2019**

The 2019 Alpine Meet will continue to encourage youth participation, which will be supported by the provision of bursary-subsidised places for 18 to 25-year-old Mountaineering Ireland members. With this in mind, Chamonix, the largest French mountaineering area, was selected for this year's meet as an area attractive to all who enjoy walking, scrambling and climbing in Alpine regions. We welcome families, youth, club and individual members to access this wonderful area and all that it has to offer at this meet. There really will be something for everyone.

#### ■ Bursaries for young alpinists

Mountaineering Ireland has received a donation specifically to provide financial support to encourage 18 to 25-year-olds to participate in the Introductory, Intermediate and Advanced Alpine Training Courses being run as part of this year's Alpine Meet. The three or five-day courses are being run by Irish UIAGM International Mountain Guides John McCune, Paul Swail and John Orr, and are the perfect way to learn or develop the skills of alpinism. Places are limited, so if you are interested, study the course details and apply as soon as possible using the Alpine Meet booking form, stating that you are applying for the **Youth Alpinism Courses** ■

### Award registration fee increases

Increases to the registration fees for the Leadership and Instructor Awards came into effect on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, when a registration fee was also introduced for the Skills schemes.

- Leadership and Instructor Award registration fees will be increased from €50 to €52 (£45 to £47).
- Rock Skills Scheme registration fee for over-18s: €22 (£20). (Under-18s free.)
- Mountain Skills Scheme registration fee for over-18s: €22 (£20). (Under-18s free.)
- Indoor Climbing Assistant registration fee: €22 (£20).
- Climbing Wall Development Instructor: €69 (£57).
- Rock Climbing Development Instructor: €69 (£57).
- All candidates can avail of the reduced Mountaineering Ireland membership rate of €30 at the time of registration ■

UIAGM International Mountain Guide John McCune



### News for providers

Providers are reminded to continue to submit **course reports** in a timely manner and **evidence of assessment forms** for all pass candidates of the ML, SPA, MPA, LLA and Level 1 Climbing Coach awards should include useful feedback and actions.

- **Data Protection Slides.** Providers are reminded to use these slides when delivering any ML, SPA, MPA, LLA or L1 CC courses.
- **Online Registrations for Skills schemes** is now live.
- Providers are again reminded to start populating **course reports** early, to flag any issues pre-course, such as candidates with lapsed membership, those not registered and those using the wrong email or membership number. Colleges and outdoor courses are asked to submit **manual registration forms** well ahead of any courses (6-8 weeks) ■





Some of the participants at the Mountaineering Ireland Winter Meet in February

## News and offerings for members

■ Online registration is now live for the personal proficiency schemes – Mountain Skills and Rock Skills. The €22 fee includes:

- Access to the full Mountain Skills Scheme training and assessment, or the Rock Skills Scheme
- A digital Logbook
- A paper Logbook (given to the providers)
- A copy of Mountaineering Ireland's magazine, the *Irish Mountain Log*
- A training record account, to store training records, which will carry with them, should they become Mountaineering Ireland members
- Discount Mountaineering Ireland membership offer of €30, at the time of registration
- A certificate of attendance at training.

■ **CALL OUT** Please submit **training grant applications** prior to the June 2019 Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) meeting.

■ **Skills workshops** are ideal for clubs and individuals to expand skills and knowledge, which can be brought back to share with your club or apply to your personal mountaineering adventures.

■ Please see the **National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders** and the **Good Practice Guidelines for Hillwalkers**, available on the Training pages/Training Downloads on the Mountaineering Ireland website.

■ **Youth participation** is a key focus for the **2019 Summer Alpine Meet**, where **bursaries** are available for youth members. Families, clubs and individuals are all welcome at the meet ■

## Update on rock climbing module on instructor training courses

Outdoor courses available in Ireland that offer Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) awards and modules need to be aware of the recent changes to the Single-Pitch Award QQI Level 5 and 6 modules. Mountaineering Ireland has four modules within the QQI listings: (1) Level 5 Mountain Skills; (2) Level 4 Rock Skills; (3) Level 5 Single-Pitch Award Training; and (4) Level 6 Single-Pitch Award Assessment.

The changes to the climbing awards need to be adopted by those offering the Level 5 and 6 Single-Pitch Awards. The key changes are:

- The experience requirements pre-training and assessment are now to include indoor and outdoor sport climbing leads. (The fully bolted outdoor sport climbing venue, Altnadue Quarry, Castlewella, is now open.)
- The duration of the training course has increased from two to three days (20 to 24 hours, to include one full day at a climbing wall).
- The introduction of two new and additional modules: (1) Teaching Skills and (2) Managing an Assistant.

Please contact the Training Office to discuss the transitional arrangements for candidates and the course requirements for trainers and those managing outdoor course provision. Please contact the Training Officer, Jane Carney, for further details at +353 (1) 625 1112 ■

## Key dates 2019

- 10<sup>th</sup> April Summer Alpine Meet Information Evening, Basecamp, Jervis Street, Dublin (7-8pm)
- 24<sup>th</sup> May Summer Alpine Meet preparation workshop, Wicklow
- 24<sup>th</sup> May Rock Climbing Development Instructor Induction. Tollymore National Outdoor Centre
- 25<sup>th</sup> May Skills Workshop: Navigation, Wicklow
- 25<sup>th</sup> May Skills Workshop: Scrambling, Wicklow
- 25<sup>th</sup> May Skills Workshop: Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 26<sup>th</sup> May Skills Workshop: Navigation, Wicklow
- 26<sup>th</sup> May Skills Workshop: Scrambling, Wicklow
- 26<sup>th</sup> May Skills Workshop: Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 1-2<sup>nd</sup> June Fair Head Climbing Meet
- 10<sup>th</sup> June MTBI Training Meeting
- 28-30<sup>th</sup> June MTUK Meeting
- 6-20<sup>th</sup> July Summer Alpine Meet, Argentière, Chamonix, France
- 2<sup>nd</sup> September MTBI Training Meeting
- 14<sup>th</sup> September Skills Workshops (Navigation, Scrambling, Rock Climbing), Wicklow
- 15<sup>th</sup> September Skills Workshops (Navigation, Scrambling, Rock Climbing), Wicklow
- 20-21<sup>st</sup> Sept Skills Providers workshop
- 16-17<sup>th</sup> Nov Student Training & Safety Seminar. Tollymore National Outdoor Centre
- 2<sup>nd</sup> December MTBI Training Meeting

Please see the website or contact the Training Office on (01) 625 1112 for further details. Please book early!

Stay safe out there!

## More for providers

■ A date for the new **Rock Climbing Development Instructor** induction is on the calendar above. Contact the Training Officer for more details on requirements.

■ New guidance notes for **Bouldering** and **Managing Assistants** are soon to be available on the website: please consult for information.

■ All scheme registrants have been allocated a **Mountaineering Ireland number** in place of the old MS number. Candidates will have received an email to this effect.

■ Providers should order **Mountain Skills Packs** and **Rock Skills Packs** in preparation for their MS & RS course candidates. Support materials, certificates of attendance, logbooks and a copy of the *Irish Mountain Log* are included. There will be no longer a cost to the provider. Candidates will also have access to the digital log as part of the registration fee ■



Sophie Fries making the transition to outdoor climbing with a trad lead

# No 3: GOING OUTSIDE

In the third in our series of Climbing Good Practice Guides, Mountaineering Instructor and Climbing Coach **John Healy** offers his advice on the transition from climbing indoors to outdoor trad leading.

**T**he last decade has seen a marked increase in the number and quality of climbing and bouldering walls around the country. As a result, there is now a much larger number of people being introduced to climbing indoors. In this article, I present some advice on how indoor climbers can develop the skills to enjoy the wonders of trad climbing outdoors.

In making the transition to climbing outside, there is a lot to learn, but the rewards are great. There are also now many opportunities to get the information and training needed.

In broad terms, there are three approaches to acquiring the knowledge and experience to become an independent

and competent climber: professional instruction; peer-learning; and self-taught.

## Professional instruction

Qualified climbing instructors have a depth of knowledge and experience of both climbing and teaching climbing to allow them to tailor a training course to fully suit the needs, expectations and prior knowledge of the student.

During a training course, they can provide the learner with the equipment they need, help them climb at suitable venues, and give advice and direction to maximise their learning experience.

For learning to lead-climb outdoors, you should choose an instructor who holds the **Mountain Instructor Award or Certificate** (MIA or MIC) and is

a member of the **Association of Mountaineering Instructors**.

As with any professional, you should always check for qualifications, experience and insurance details. While professional instruction will have a cost in the short term, the value is in the focused fast-tracking of learning, safety management, access to equipment and to advice on a clear pathway forwards.

## Peer learning

There are many climbing clubs around the country (see [mountaineering.ie/localclub](http://mountaineering.ie/localclub)) who are eager to attract and develop new members and climbers.

The majority of today's experienced climbers probably learned their craft through an apprenticeship with more experienced clubmates or friends, and it remains a vital part of developing any climber's ability.

Clubs are a great way to access or borrow equipment while learning; to tap into the knowledge of experienced climbers; and to discover the many excellent climbing venues around the country in

the company of like-minded people.

The climbing-club learning option won't be as focused as hiring an instructor, but it offers many benefits to those eager to learn.

## Self-taught learning

For those who have difficulty affording or accessing instruction or climbing clubs, there are now numerous books and online resources for learning about the techniques and equipment for climbing.

While the upfront costs might be helpful or prohibitive, hopefully the pitfalls will become obvious pretty quickly.

The climbers will be fully responsible for their own safety while learning. It can be difficult to know which advice is best, especially when it comes from the internet.

The advice of an instructor or experienced local climber can save time and money when purchasing equipment.

## So, what is the best approach?

A blend of all three – instruction, peer-learning and learning over the internet – is probably best.



➤ **John Healy** is a Mountaineering Instructor and Climbing Coach, who works throughout Ireland. He is a member of the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Committee and is the Training Officer for Cork Climbing Club.



Some professional instruction at or near the beginning would be useful, to get you introduced to leading. This could be followed by going along with experienced climbers to both lead and second climbs to help you build on your skills, gain familiarity with equipment, rope systems, general crag safety, etc, until you start to go out on your own, purchase your own equipment based on your own experience and knowledge, and become independent.

## Some things to avoid

Be careful purchasing equipment online. There is an increasing amount of counterfeit or dangerous climbing equipment for sale online. The best advice is to go along to an outdoor shop or, if buying online, buy from dedicated outdoor or climbing websites. Avoid second-hand gear unless you know the seller or an experienced climber, who can check the equipment first hand – it might be cheaper, but it might not be safe!

It is becoming increasingly common for climbers to top-rope routes. Becoming a lead climber outdoors will greatly enhance your climbing potential and you will learn the skills more quickly by leading routes within your ability and seconding routes that are more difficult (there is much to be learnt from watching and following a competent leader) rather than by top-roping climbs you are not prepared to lead. Outdoor bouldering is a great way to develop and improve your climbing skills on

real rock, if that is one of your goals. Also keep in mind that top-roping popular routes greatly frustrates other climbers who are waiting to lead them!

## What do you need to lead outside?

One of the most commonly asked questions is what equipment do you need to get started. Assuming you are already lead climbing indoors, here is a suggested list of equipment to get you going outdoors:

■ **Helmet** – With the wide range of brands and styles available, you will be able to find one that is comfortable and looks good! Wear a helmet.

■ **Comfortable shoes** – If you climb at the wall in a pair of tight high-performance shoes that you take off after a route, then you should consider getting a pair that are a little more comfortable to get you through the learning phase. You will be wearing them for longer periods, probably on easier terrain and will learn better if comfortable (and you won't get the high-performance shoes wet or dirty!)

■ **Rope** – A 50/60m rope, between 10 and 10.5mm in diameter, is ideal for getting started.

■ **Hardware** – A basic, beginner-friendly rack of climbing gear should have a full set of nuts (generally 1-11 nuts in a set, depending on brand), a nut key, 3-4 hexes, 3-4 cams, 3-4 120cm slings, 4-5 locking carabiners and 10-12 extenders or quickdraws ■

Fiona Maxwell climbing her first trad lead in Ballyryan, Burren, Co Clare



## Where to go climbing outside

Here are some suggestions for climbing venues that are great for those starting out leading:

### ■ Dalkey Quarry, Dublin

The quarry is easily accessible in south Dublin and is probably the most popular climbing venue in the country. Used by many climbers, instructors and clubs, it is a good place to start.

### ■ The Burren, Co Clare

While the sea-cliffs of Ailladie are largely suited to the more experienced, the inland cliffs of the Burren offer many options for learners. The crags at Ballyryan, Leabanahaonbo and Aillwee Cave are excellent for beginners.

### ■ Ballykeefe Quarry, Co Kilkenny

This small venue only has a handful of trad climbs but the ease of access, and the fact that it can be dry and sunny even in winter, make it a useful place to get to know.

### ■ Forest-view Butress, Spellack, Mourne Mountains

A small crag but with several climbs to choose from and a short walk in (by Mournes standards!).

### ■ Cruit Island, Co Donegal

Described by many as an 'outdoor climbing wall.' Many short climbs at friendly grades, situated in a beautiful place... what more could you want starting out?



John Edwards climbing on the Kerry coastline





## Terrific new map from East West Mapping



### COMERAGH 1:25,000 MAP

By Barry Dalby

East West Mapping (2019), €12.50 (paper), €19.50 (encapsulated in plastic)

This East West Mapping 1:25,000 scale map of the Comeraghs is a detailed, historical record of the area. It is available printed on

ordinary paper or on durable, waterproof paper (essentially paper encapsulated between two sheets of clear plastic).

The attention to detail on the map in recording the local historical names is remarkable. Barry Dalby leaves very few stones unturned in his eagerness for accuracy and his sensitivity to local knowledge. Barry has extensive information on the East West Mapping Facebook page explaining the place-names on this map and the history behind them.

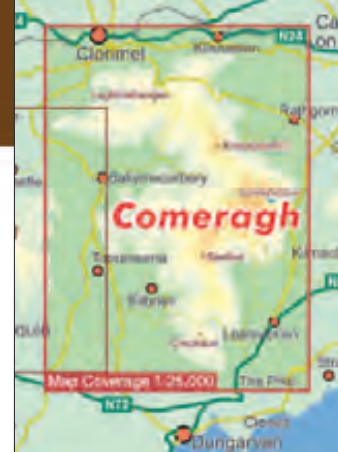
Parking and lay-bys are clearly marked, the latter with advice to 'not block the road.' The 'boots' symbols, showing locally accepted access points onto the open mountain, will be particularly welcome to those new to this area. Details on fencing,

embankments and other features (previously non-existent on available maps) will save many headaches when accessing and exiting the mountains.

Grid references on this East West map are clearer than on previous ones.

A relatively new direction for East West Mapping is that the contour interval is five metres. This has two main advantages: firstly, it gives a lot more detail on slope change; and secondly, at first glance, the number of contours or spacing in a grid square will give the same impression of slope gradient as looking at a 10m interval on a 1:50,000 scale. This detail about slopes is terrific for anyone involved in navigation training.

Rock climbing areas are



marked on this map and can be further researched through climbing.ie. Lowland Leader enthusiasts will find numerous suitable trails at the northern end of this map. Archaeology students will enjoy exploring the details shown in the Coumaraglin and Glenanore areas.

A phone app will be available shortly for this and future East West maps.

Enjoy exploring the Comeraghs with this terrific resource!

**Colette Mahon** Mountaineer, climber, member of Wexford Hillwalking & Mountaineering Club, member of Board of Mountaineering Ireland and the WWA committee

## Why do we walk? The real reasons and the lesser known



### WALKING: ONE STEP AT A TIME

By Erling Kagge

Viking (Penguin Books) (2019), 177pp, 15 colour plates, £10.00 (hdbk), ISBN 978-0-241-35768-2

This book is small in size but mighty in content. With 143 pages of text, excluding end-notes, it can be read in one sitting. This is not a criticism;

the language flows effortlessly from start to finish and the author's passion for his subject is evident.

Kagge's topic is walking in all its manifestations. Whether the daily commute to work, a ramble in the local park, a rather unpleasant expedition through New York sewers or a walk to the South Pole, the author's thesis is the same: walking is good for the body, as well as for the soul.

He provides a philosophical underpinning for his ideas, quoting freely from an eclectic mix of long-distance walkers, mountaineers, astronauts, poets and neuroscientists.

He talks of walking through his native Norwegian forests, of pilgrimages completed, of following in the footsteps of Joyce's Leopold Bloom round

the streets of Dublin, and of Adam's ramble round the Garden of Eden.

He discusses how the blind walk, how a child takes her first steps, how the author himself has often walked away from his problems, and how getting lost on a hike can be a positive experience.

He notes how cockroaches walk differently while ill, and how serial killers often choose their victims by the way they walk.

Kagge's own views on walking, as well as those he quotes in the book, are unvaryingly positive. He asks a famous heart surgeon what he has learned from studying thousands of beating human hearts. The answer: 'Go for a walk every day.'

He describes a man walking down a street who, while trying to remember

something he has forgotten, automatically reduces his speed. He debates the connection between the words 'motion' and 'emotion,' and he urges us not to choose the path of least resistance to avoid a boring life.

Early in the book the author poses the seemingly simple question, 'Why do we walk?' The rest of the book is an attempt to answer this question.

This book should be compulsory reading for anyone who dares to venture outdoors.

**Vernon Buckley** Hillwalker and a member of Rathgormack Ramblers Hillwalking Club, living in Co Waterford



# Great walking guide to Mourne and Cooleys



## THE MOURNE AND COOLEY MOUNTAINS: A WALKING GUIDE

By Adrian Hendroff

The Collins Press (2018), 160pp  
numerous photos, €15.00 (ppbk),  
ISBN 978-1-84889-346-7

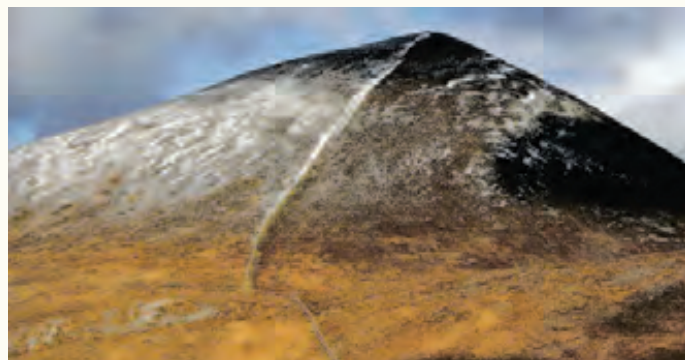
The Collins Press has already published ten guidebooks by Adrian Hendroff, which have proven very popular. This one, I expect, will be no exception. Hendroff is well known for his mountain photography and, although there are numerous excellent photographs here of the Mourne and Cooley Mountains, the book concentrates on the hillwalking routes.

My first impressions of this guidebook were good: it is a handy size for a rucksack and all the routes are laid out clearly, with a quick-reference route guide at front.

The print style stands out: heavy font is used for the grid references and the sections within each route description are clearly defined by headings and coloured boxes.

The coloured maps showing the routes are basic, but clear for use as a quick reference. As highlighted by the author in the introduction, "the use of detailed maps is imperative" and he lists the available OS maps.

There are nineteen routes described in the Mourne



A snow-lined Mourn Wall running down the southern slopes of Slieve Donard, as seen from Rocky Mountain.

section, including one on Slieve Croob, an outlier to the north, but one which is recommended for its extensive views. Two of the routes are 'challenge walks' – the Mourne Seven Sevens and the Mourne Wall Challenge.

The Cooleys section has six routes plus a walk on nearby Slieve Gullion, a fascinating area of historical and geological interest.

In addition, there is a route location map, an explanation of the walk grades, the usual but very important information on access and safety, and a few useful contact details.

Newcomers to the area will welcome the introductions to the two main areas, covering the general landscape and history. Humans have put their mark on the Mourne, from the Neolithic burial chambers to the century-old Mourne Wall. The Cooleys are steeped in the legend of the Táin Bó Cuailgne.

The book has been written to be used in the mountains. The routes are well chosen and the descriptions are quite detailed. The total ascent and walking times suit the average hillwalking group and would be perfect also for visiting walkers.

The writer does not always pick the routes found in

other books or on the internet, and has been imaginative but safety-conscious in picking a way from starting point to destination and back. For example, he includes Millstone Mountain with his route to Slieve Donard (Route 2).

Lesser-walked areas are included like Spaltha (Route 15) and Anglesey Mountain (Route 25). The two challenge walks also have good detail.

There is additional information on the flora and fauna, plus local items of



Literary Editor  
Peter O'Neill  
presents reviews  
of some recently  
published books.

**Buy now**

This is the book we  
recommend most  
highly from our  
spring 2019  
reviews

interest. It is good to see local businesses being supported as many walks start and finish at places that provide the walker with well-earned sustenance as well as parking facilities, e.g., Meelmore Lodge, Silent Valley; Carrick Cottage Café at Carrick Little; and the Lumpers Pub at Ravensdale.

As a regular hillwalker in both these areas, I would happily have this guidebook in my rucksack and would recommend it for any hillwalker visiting this fascinating mountain area.

**Nicky Hore** Hillwalker, member of Blaney Ramblers, and past Honorary Treasurer and Board Member of Mountaineering Ireland

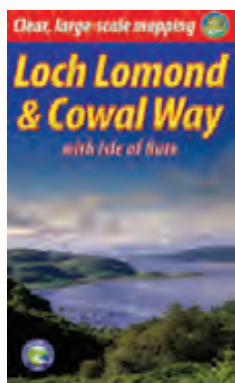


Sample route map





## Guide to Scottish long-distance walk on Cowal peninsula



### LOCH LOMOND & COWAL WAY WITH ISLE OF BUTE

By James McLuckie, with  
Michael Kaufmann

Rucksack Readers (2019), 72pp, 95  
colour photos, 13 maps, £12.99,  
ISBN 978-1-898481-85-0

This long-distance-walk guide, which is both pleasing to the eye (there are 95 excellent colour photos) and sturdy enough to carry (rainproof paper throughout), is a revised version of the Cowal Way Rucksack Readers series publication (2009, 2016).

The Cowal peninsula lies 50 kilometres west of Glasgow, surrounded by sea and hills. It has much to recommend it – natural beauty, deep peace and wilderness. Paradoxically, it is very accessible and almost unknown.

Alongside information on planning the walk, such as a walk profile, terrain and

gradients, days and stages, waymarking, tide awareness, and bus and ferry routes, the guide now also includes fascinating details about history, heritage, wildlife and habitats.

The route described by the book is the 92 kilometres from Portavadie in the south-west to Inveruglas in the north-east, and it takes five or six days to complete.

At the beginning, the terrain is fairly low-level with quiet roads and farm and forest tracks, but it gradually undulates higher, to gain the cairn on the crossing to Coileasan, this being the

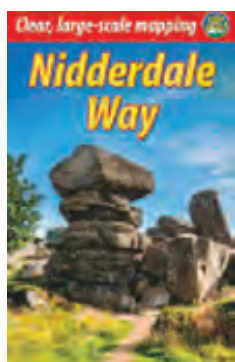
highest point on the walk at 500m. From here, it is mostly a descent to the shores of Loch Lomond.

The book includes a five-page feature on the Isle of Bute, which consists of a map of a 48-kilometre long-distance footpath, the West Island Way, and has details about the various tourist attractions on the island.

The guide is good value at £12.99.

**Margaret Tees** Mountaineer and a member of the North West Mountaineering Club

## Guide to Nidderdale valley walk in the Yorkshire Dales



### NIDDERDALE WAY

By Beth Rimmer

Rucksack Readers (2019), 72pp, 95  
colour photos, £12.99,  
ISBN 978-1-898481-84-3

Nidderdale is one of the least known valleys in England's Yorkshire Dales. It boasts impressive natural features such as Brimham Rocks, Guise

Cliff and How Stean Gorge. The Nidderdale Way is an 87-kilometre circuit through the valley, much of it beside the River Nidd. The route starts and ends in the market town of Pateley Bridge and can be walked comfortably over four to six days.

This Rucksack Guide to Nidderdale Way is of the usual

high quality of their other guides and is printed on rainproof paper. It contains all of the information that you would need to plan this hike, including contact details for accommodation and transport.

**Peter O'Neill** Literary Editor,  
*Irish Mountain Log*

## MountainViews annual another stunner with great content



### THE SUMMIT 2018

Editor: Simon Stewart

MountainViews (2019), 62pp, many  
colour photos

A new MountainViews Annual Newsletter has been published, downloadable at [mountainviews.ie/annual/2018](http://mountainviews.ie/annual/2018) and also as a printed book for €15 from [blurb.com/b/9275493](http://blurb.com/b/9275493).

As with previous annuals, the selection of included articles falls to the editor, with articles covering home and abroad, as well as issues of access and more general topics such as the triangulation and mapping of Ireland.

Home articles include the Inishkeas and walking every National Waymarked Trail in Ireland. Articles covering areas abroad include Sarek, the Swedish wilderness some may have met while walking the somewhat better known Kungsleden, and Mount Elbrus.

The trials encountered trying to take a

Chamonix cable-car with an infant may bring back memories for anyone who has had experience of a determined and inflexible French bureaucrat. (For the record, the parents were in compliance with medical and UIAA recommendations, as also evidenced by a similar trip two days earlier on a different cable-car with a different ticket attendant).

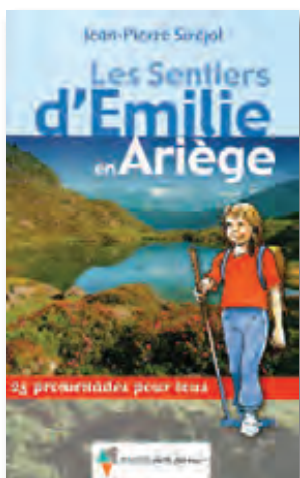
The articles included in this annual are the editor's selection, but hopefully there will be something in it to please everyone.

The quality of the photographs in the annual is again superb, particularly the eight-page Irish and International Gallery of members' photos.

**Peter O'Neill** Literary Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*



## Great guides to family-friendly walks in France



### LES SENTIERS D'EMILIE Guidebook series in French

Rando Editions, 64pp, many maps and illustrations, €7.95

This is not a review of a new book, but rather an overview of a series of almost one hundred French guidebooks, which contain family walks in various parts of France, designed very

much with children in mind.

The walks are typically looped, last around two and a half hours and are about 3 to 4 kilometres in length. Most walks have some points of interest to capture the imagination of junior walkers. These can be man-made features, like a menhir (standing stone), a dock, a castle or a bridge, or natural features, such as lakes, a waterfall or a spectacular cliff.

Each book contains twenty-five walks spread over sixty-four full-colour pages, with two or three pages per walk. For every walk, there are a few photos, usually a half-page of text in French and a clear, half-page map of the walk.

There is usually a sketch map with directions to the location of the start of the walk, and always an expected duration, distance and height gain.

As the books cover France,

the walks often follow sections of marked PR or GR walks or have other signage or markings (beacons, or balisage in French). Any such markings are highlighted too.

While the books concentrate on hills and mountains, they also feature coastal areas, river valleys, and more. Pretty much every tourist area of France has an edition of Emilie's Trails devoted to it. For example, the Roussillon edition has coastal walks with headlands, beaches, towers and forts, and also lots of ideas for walks in the Pyrenees featuring hilltop churches, dramatic gorges and abandoned villages.

In contrast, the Vendée edition has few hills but lots of canals, ruined blockhouses, windmills, abbeys and, best of all, the dolmen de la Frébouchère.

Our family likes these



guidebooks so much that we order them for each area before we go, or we rush into the bookshop at the hypermarché to buy the local ones for each new area we visit.

**Paul Walsh** Hillwalker, member of Glenwalk Hillwalking Club

## Scotland's mountains and its adventure sports in pictures



### WILD LIGHT: SCOTLAND'S MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPES

By Craig Aitchison

Vertebrate Publishing (2018), 160pp, many colour photos, one map, £25.00, ISBN 978-1-911342-81-6

### EXTREME SCOTLAND: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY THROUGH SCOTTISH ADVENTURE SPORTS

By Nadir Khan

Vertebrate Publishing (2018), 184pp, many colour photos, £25.00, ISBN 978-1-911342-90-8

I am not an avid collector of coffee-table books, but guidebooks are a different matter. Ask me about somewhere I went fifty years ago and the chances are that I can still lay my hands on the guidebook, unless some scoundrel has borrowed but not returned it. So how would I make the decision whether or not to buy one of these two books?

The decision to buy for myself now generally turns on whether a book evokes particular memories and, for myself, I have not really

spent sufficient time in Scotland to tempt me to buy one of these. However, if I had spent an adequate amount of time in Scotland, one of these hardback coffee-table books would certainly merit consideration. Similarly, if contemplating the purchase as a present for a Scotland aficionado, these two would be serious candidates.

These are books to buy for the photographs, not the text. Both are the work of serious photographers. Craig Aitchison specialises in panoramic images of the Scottish Highlands and his book is comprised almost entirely of these, with very little text outside of the brief captions. The photographs rely on light and scenery, rather than any human interest.

Nadir Khan, by contrast, concentrates on human subjects on his photographic journey through Scottish adventure sports, which is focused mainly on winter, but with sections on spring, summer and autumn. The adventure sports included are mainly hill- or mountain-based, with whitewater canoeing and surfing making an occasional appearance. I do not think that this would be a book for that diver friend, for example.

Light and scenery again play a part, but human activities are at the core of everything. The photos are interspersed with some short essays and poetry, and brief notes on composition and gear.

These are two well-produced coffee table-style photographic books from Vertebrate Publishing, well worth looking at, if you have good memories that the excellent photographs can help you to revisit.

**Peter O'Neill** Literary Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*





## First free solo ascent of Free Rider

### FREE SOLO

**Directed by Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and photographer Jimmy Chin**

PG, general release, 99 minutes

American Alex Honnold is the subject of this excellent biographical documentary, which I saw at the Irish Film Institute in Dublin in December.



Honnold is well known in the climbing world for his solo ascents of countless big wall routes in the last decade.

The film focuses on Honnold's 2017 free solo ascent of **Free Rider**, a 3,200 feet (975m), 5.12D route on the main face of **El Capitan** in Yosemite National Park in California. The climb is a four-pitch variation of the Salathe Wall route, avoiding the two 5.13 pitches on that route. This was the first free solo of a route on El Capitan and was completed in three hours and fifty-six minutes.

Honnold is thirty-three years old now and was born in Sacramento, California, where he started indoor climbing at the age of five. After leaving school and spending a fruitless year at the University of California, Berkeley, he started living at home and driving around California, climbing. In 2007, he bought a van in which he could live, allowing him to follow the weather and climb year-round.

The film focuses on his physical and psychological preparations for his solo ascent of Free Rider, intertwining information about his earlier years and his current personal life, and also about how the film crew did their job while being aware that Alex might fall to his death while they were filming him.

Honnold is also aware that the crew

could distract him when he is climbing and that his blossoming relationship with his girlfriend might also be a distraction at a crucial moment.

To counter all of this, the best location for each of the film crew is considered and agreed, and he makes many roped ascents of the route, compiling detailed notes about each pitch on the climb.

Honnold makes one attempt but gives up after a few pitches because it 'doesn't feel right.' Then finally, after two years of preparation, he makes the first free solo ascent of Free Rider in just under four hours.

The filming is excellent throughout, giving a good feel for the vastness of the face and the exposure, while also allowing a close-up view of some amazingly fluid moves, considering the situation and the difficulty of the climbing. Certainly, this is a film that climbers should see, but it is also one that will be of interest to hikers and mountaineers with a broader interest in the sport.

In fact, after I saw this film, it went mainstream on general release and was successful in the 2019 Oscars, winning the Documentary (Feature) category.

**Patrick O'Sullivan** Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*



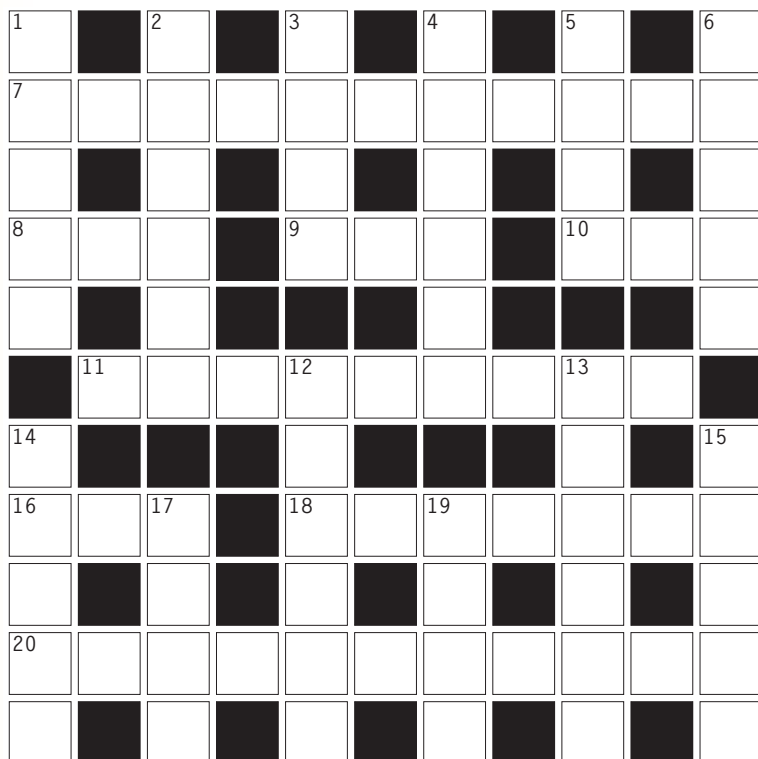


# Crossword

## Spring competition

Win a great prize from **Basecamp** if your correct completed entry for this puzzle is the first drawn from the hat!

CROSSWORD compiled by PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



### Clues Across

- 7 A person who climbs mountains for sport (11).
- 8 A singular Mt Blanc, Weisshorn or Matterhorn (3).
- 9 One of a pair of rounded hills near Killarney (3).
- 10 Piece of worn cord or rope left on climbing route (3).
- 11 An exciting enterprise, usually in the great outdoors (9).
- 16 A spike driven into a crack or seam in rock (3).
- 18 Largest city in Alberta, famous rock climbing centre (7).
- 20 Dormant volcano, highest in Africa (11).

### Clues Down

- 1 A sloping foothold on smooth rock, could be stain (5).
- 2 How wall climbers feel in competition, full of air? (6).
- 3 A short stretch of vertical rock that blocks a climber's route, e.g., below the summit of Everest (4).
- 4 Conical shelled creature that sticks to seashore rocks (6).
- 5 A 'home from home' in the outdoors (4).
- 6 A sharp mountain ridge, produced by glaciation (5).
- 12 To settle or lodge in a tent for the night (6).
- 13 Ballyporeen was the ancestral home of this former President of the United States (6).
- 14 A sharp point of rock or of metal (5).
- 15 Scenic Alpine region on Italian-Austrian border (5).
- 17 A very strong wind (4).
- 19 A length of rope connecting belayer and climber (4).



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Cut out this page or photocopy it and send your completed entry to The Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, to arrive not later than Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup> 2019. Don't forget to include your full **name, address and membership number** with your entry as well as a **telephone number** or **email address** at where you can be contacted. The winner will be announced in the Summer 2019 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

### Competition prize

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# The Last Word

## Andy Nisbet, Steve Perry

Two die in fall on Scotland's Ben Hope



Andy Nisbet

**Andy Nisbet** and **Steve Perry** were killed in an accident in February on Ben Hope, Scotland's most northerly Munro, where in recent years they had put up a number of new winter routes. The pair seemingly fell from the upper slopes of the mountain, having completed the route they were climbing.

**Andy Nisbet** was one of Scotland's best-known climbers, a prolific climber of new routes – he was said to

have made over a thousand first ascents – and heavily involved in the writing of the Scottish Mountaineering Club's climbing guidebooks. He was a mountain guide and a past President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. He had been an instructor at Glenmore Lodge. His love of pioneering new routes was illustrated in an article he contributed to the 2018 *SMC Journal*, where he wrote with enthusiasm of his introduction to the possibilities of Ben Hope by **Steve Perry**.

**Steve Perry** was raised in Yorkshire, but had moved north to live in Scotland, staying close to Ben Hope. He made two exceptional mountain journeys, spending seven-and-a-half months walking from Land's End to John o' Groats, taking in every 3,000ft mountain in England, Wales and Scotland on the way.

Two years later, in the winter of 2005-6, he made the first continuous winter round of the Munros on foot. Steve was a well-regarded climber, summer and winter, and in 2013 spoke to Andy about a possible ice line on Ben Hope, which led to the two enjoying a fruitful partnership developing the considerable potential of these little-visited cliffs.

Nisbet and Perry climbed elsewhere and, only the week before their unfortunate deaths, had put up a new Grade VIII route on Lurcher's Crag in the Cairngorms.

Our condolences to their families and friends on their loss.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**



Steve Perry



## Tom Ballard

British climber dies on Nanga Parbat

British rock climber and alpinist **Tom Ballard**, aged 30, died on Nanga Parbat (8,126m) in late February or early March while attempting to make a winter ascent of the ninth highest mountain in the world by a new route with his Italian climbing partner, **Daniele Nardi**, aged 42. Their bodies were discovered on the mountain at 5,900m in early March but they had not been in contact for more than two weeks at that stage.

Ballard was the son of mountaineers **Jim Ballard** and **Alison Hargreaves**. His mother had made the first solo ascents of the six Alpine north faces in a single summer season and, in 1995, made the first female solo ascent of Mount Everest

without oxygen. She died in a climbing accident on K2 later that year.

Tom Ballard was a regular competitor on the UIAA Ice Climbing World Tour, representing the UK at the World Cups in the 2016, 2017 and 2018 seasons. He was considered to be one of the most gifted climbers of his generation and, in 2015, became the first person to solo-climb the six major north faces in the Alps in the same winter season. Our condolences on this tragic loss.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**

*Tom Ballard: born October 16<sup>th</sup> 1988; died February/March 2019*

## Two walkers die in the Mourne



**Seán Byrne**



**Robbie Robinson**

In separate incidents, two walkers were tragically killed in falls in the Mourne Mountains in January. The first accident occurred on Wee Binnian just before mid-day on Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The second death happened an hour later on Slieve Commedagh. Conditions in the Mournes that day were said to be poor, with strong winds and low cloud.

The two men were later named as **Seán Byrne**, who was from Camlough in County Armagh, and **Robbie Robinson** from Banbridge in County Down. The rescue services were called but the men were both pronounced dead at the scenes of their accidents.

Our thoughts are with their families and friends and we offer them our sincere condolences on these tragic accidents.



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