

# Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

## County high points

A challenge for Irish hillwalkers

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## Climbing in Monte Rosa

Six 4,000m peaks summited in four days

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Training sessions will take place at a climbing wall in Dublin on October 6<sup>th</sup>, November 10<sup>th</sup> and December 8<sup>th</sup>

The cost of a place on the Squad is €120 per climber

Photograph: Dave Hunt



For more info, see the Mountaineering Ireland website page [www.mountaineering.ie/youth/talentdevelopment](http://www.mountaineering.ie/youth/talentdevelopment)

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# Welcome

**C**éad míle fáilte! With the milder weather in Ireland and a heatwave in Europe, it looks like summer is here at last!

Firstly, I must apologise for the delay in getting this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* to you. It has been an unfortunate combination of factors that has delayed us in sending the magazine to the printers, and I am sorry for that delay.

The Mountaineering Ireland AGM was held in Sport HQ at the end of March and we report on that important meeting on pages 5-8. In the report, **Murrough McDonagh**, CEO of Mountaineering Ireland, discusses the motion passed at the AGM to increase the annual subscription, explaining the need for the increase, which comes into effect in November this year. Having run a small deficit for the last three years, Mountaineering Ireland needs to balance its books going forward so that it can continue to provide the same level of services to its members.

This issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* contains the usual wide range of material. In the features section, **David Barnes** reports on taking on the County High Points Challenge; **Peter Wilson** looks at the importance of the blanket peat that still covers much of our uplands; and **William Nolan** describes a trip to the Monte Rosa massif, where the group he was with



**Mountaineering Ireland has made a small increase to the annual subscription fee, an increase approved at the AGM.**

climbed six 4,000m peaks in four days.

We also have an account of an interview I did with **Noel Hanna** about his ascent of K2 last year, only the second successful Irish ascent of the 'Savage Mountain.' The interview also gives an overview of Noel's other incredible mountaineering achievements.

There are several shorter features that make good reading as well, including a report on what sounds like an excellent weekend in Joyce Country at Mountaineering Ireland's **Ecology of Mountains** workshop in May. There is also a very good account of the journey to becoming a Mountain Leader; a report on training a search and rescue dog; and a description of a club trip on the Beara Way.

I will close by hoping that we can all take advantage of the better weather and the longer days to safely enjoy our excursions into the uplands in the coming weeks.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**, Editor



## 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

Anni Huovien enjoying a climb on Fair Head, Co Antrim, during the Fair Head Meet (see report, page 16)

PHOTOGRAPH  
PAUL KELLAGHER

## ISSUE 130

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

### Mountaineering Ireland

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**Registered office:** Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Ireland.  
Tel: (+353 1) 625 1115  
Fax: (+353 1) 625 1116  
[info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie)  
[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

### Hot Rock Climbing Wall

Tollymore Mountain Centre  
Bryansford, Newcastle  
County Down, BT33 OPT  
Tel: (+44 28) 4372 5354  
[youth@mountaineering.ie](mailto:youth@mountaineering.ie)

### Editor:

Patrick O'Sullivan  
Tel: (+353 1) 837 8166 (pm, wknds)  
[iml-editor@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-editor@mountaineering.ie)

### Literary Editor:

Peter O'Neill

[iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie)

### Features Editor:

Aisling Spain

[iml-featureseditor@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-featureseditor@mountaineering.ie)

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**Advertising:** [info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie)

**Production:** Cólín MacLochlainn, [environs@iol.ie](mailto:environs@iol.ie)

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

### 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.

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## Staff & Board

### GENERAL ENQUIRIES

info@mountaineering.ie

### STAFF

#### Chief Executive Officer

Murrough McDonagh,  
murrough@mountaineering.ie

#### Administration Officer

Siobhán Quinn, info@mountaineering.ie

#### Hillwalking Development Officer

Ruth Whelan, ruth@mountaineering.ie

#### Hillwalking, Access

#### & Conservation Officer

Helen Lawless, helen@mountaineering.ie

#### Training Officer

Jane Carney, jane@mountaineering.ie

#### Training Office Administrator

Laura Griffin, laura@mountaineering.ie

#### Climbing Officer

Damien O'Sullivan,  
damien@mountaineering.ie

#### Youth Development Officer for

#### Northern Ireland

Kevin Kilroy, kevin@mountaineering.ie

#### Project Coordinator, Indoor

#### Climbing/Social Inclusion Project

Natasza Berlowska,  
natasza@mountaineering.ie

### GET IRELAND WALKING INITIATIVE

#### Programme Manager, Get Ireland Walking

Jason King, jason@getirelandwalking.ie

### MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND

#### BOARD OFFICERS

##### President

Paul Kellagher  
president@mountaineering.ie

##### Chairperson

Paul Barron  
chairperson@mountaineering.ie

#### BOARD MEMBERS

Imelda Buckley  
(Chair of Finance, Audit & Risk Committee)

imelda-board@mountaineering.ie

Helen Donoghue

(Chair of Access & Conservation Committee)

helen-board@mountaineering.ie

Trish Kane

trish-board@mountaineering.ie

Colette Mahon

colette-board@mountaineering.ie

Michael Maunsell

mike-board@mountaineering.ie

Gráinne McLaughlin

(Chair of Hillwalking Committee)

grainne-board@mountaineering.ie

Clare O'Connor

clare-board@mountaineering.ie

Dawson Stefox

(Chair of Mountain Training Board Ireland)

dawson-board@mountaineering.ie

Geoff Thomas

(Chair of Climbing Committee)

geoff-board@mountaineering.ie

# Newsdesk



Members of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland with CEO Murrough McDonagh (third from right) and members of the organisation at the AGM at Sport HQ on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

## New club membership fees approved

At the Mountaineering Ireland AGM in March 2019, a motion proposed by the Board to increase the fee payable by club members to €35.00 was passed by a substantial majority. There is no increase in the fee for club members aged under 23 years, which remains at €20.50. The special rate of €7.60, for a club member who is under 23 years and is the son or daughter of a registered member of the same club, also remains unchanged.

**This increase will be payable in the next membership year, i.e., from November 2019.**

The discounts for early payment and for clubs with over 200 members have been discontinued. The fee of €35.00 covers all of our benefits and services, including the insurance cover and receipt of the *Irish Mountain Log*. It will also no longer be possible for members to pay a lower fee by opting out of particular benefits or services.

The fee for those wishing to pay in sterling will be set by reference to the euro to sterling exchange rate in September annually and also possibly reviewed pending developments in Brexit.

This increase in the membership fees will help Mountaineering Ireland to:

- Deliver the Strategic Plan for 2018-2021, as mandated by our membership in 2018;
- Continue lobbying for improved and

assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers;

- Strengthen our support for clubs and hillwalkers by establishing a new Hillwalking Committee and ensuring that we have a fulltime Hillwalking Development Officer;
- Strive to ensure that mountain landscapes are valued and protected;
- Work with other relevant organisations to tackle upland path erosion;
- Develop and promote formal and informal training to meet the needs of hillwalkers and climbers;
- Encourage young people to participate in all aspects of mountaineering;
- Continue to ensure we get the highest level of benefits in our insurance policy at competitive rates;
- Offer an annual suite of membership events (Gatherings, Winter Lectures, Meets, Environmental Workshops, the Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture, Coaching and Training events, and Club Development initiatives).

If you require more information on this, please feel free to contact the Mountaineering Ireland office. Thanking you in advance for your support and wishing you and yours a very enjoyable and safe summer on the hills.

**Murrough McDonagh**  
**CEO, Mountaineering Ireland**

# Mountaineering Ireland AGM 2019: a report



This year's AGM was held at Sport HQ at the National Sport Campus in Blanchardstown, Dublin, on Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. It was an extremely positive meeting.

The AGM was chaired by the Chair of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland, **Paul Barron**. Paul welcomed everyone, thanked them for attending and called the meeting to order. The first items on the agenda were the adoption of the standing orders and the approval of the minutes of the 2018 AGM. After that, the President of Mountaineering Ireland, **Paul Kellagher**, gave his annual address.

Paul began by reflecting that we all go to the mountains and crags for a wide variety of reasons, for the peace and solitude that we find there, for the companionship of the like-minded people we meet, or for the serenity, or the challenge, or the sense of adventure they offer. The sense of adventure is a key value in our new **Strategic Development Plan**, but it has to be closely balanced against the skills we have or aspire to, in order to pursue our sport safely.

In 2018, Mountaineering Ireland developed the **Strategic Development Plan 2018-2021**. This plan resulted from a period of consultation, in face-to-face meetings and through seeking feedback from our members online. The plan sets out our purpose, vision, values and five strategic pillars for the years ahead.

During the consultation, many of our members emphasised the importance to them of continued access to our mountains. Without that access, hillwalking and climbing will become impossible. Continued free access to our mountains is at the heart of what we do. The growing pressure on our landscape has resulted in a challenging year. The recent issue of the planned sale of Luggala Estate highlights the fragility of the access that we currently enjoy, but there are now a myriad of other challenges to that access across the country.

Our access to hills and crags comes with



Paul Kellagher, President of Mountaineering Ireland, addressing the AGM. Murrough McDonagh (CEO, Mountaineering Ireland) to the left and Mountaineering Ireland Board member Irene Sorohan to the right.

responsibility. With increasing footfall, erosion is ever more evident. It is a challenge that will not go away and one that requires a coordinated response. Following a motion at last year's AGM and the excellent work of the working group, a **Hillwalking Committee** has been established (see report, page 24).

## Mountain Training Board

2018 also saw the successful first full year of operation for the new **Mountain Training Board of Ireland**. The new structure will allow the sharing of knowledge and experience across the island of Ireland to the benefit of the candidates on our training schemes.

The introduction of the new **Rock Skills** scheme at the beginning of this year complements our extremely popular **Mountain Skills** scheme. It recognises and addresses the needs of a rapidly growing population of climbers, whose introduction to the sport has been mainly through indoor climbing walls. The new scheme will assist those climbers in making a safe transition to our mountain and coastal crags, gaining the necessary skills for independent climbing.

The popularity of this aspect of our sport is evidenced by three very popular climbing gatherings that are held annually, the **Climbfest**, the **Fair Head Meet** and the **Burren Meet**.

Paul expressed particular thanks to **Murrough McDonagh** and the rest of the staff, who make all the services we deliver to our members possible. He also acknowledged our funders, **Sport Ireland** and **Sport Northern Ireland**, and all our members, who support our activities.

Ending his address, Paul stated that our volunteers are at the heart of everything that Mountaineering Ireland does and stands for. He paid tribute to his colleagues on the Board, and the

subcommittees and representatives on other bodies. He also paid tribute to the officers and volunteers in our clubs.

Paul then handed over to his fellow Board member, **Mike Maunsell**, to give the citation for an award to one of Mountaineering Ireland's volunteers, who Paul called 'an unsung hero.'

## New Honorary Member

An Honorary Membership was awarded to the present Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* for services to Mountaineering Ireland.

**Patrick O'Sullivan** has spent a lifetime pursuing various aspects of our sport, since starting mountaineering as a teenager in North Wales and Scotland. Apart from hillwalking and climbing in many different parts of Britain and Ireland and in the European Alps, he has lived and worked in many different mountainous areas around the world, including New Zealand, Nepal and Malawi, spending a total of twelve years living in Asia and Africa.

Patrick is retired now but, while he was working as a busy medical doctor, he also served as Treasurer of the then Mountaineering Council of Ireland for six years, was on the Board for many years and has been Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* for the last sixteen years.

In accepting the Honorary Membership from the President, Patrick expressed his sincere gratitude, saying he was overwhelmed by the gesture and that he felt he had already got so much from our sport and from being part of Mountaineering Ireland.

## Secretary's report

Murrough McDonagh, CEO, then gave the Company Secretary's report. The last Mountaineering Ireland Annual General Meeting was held at the Spring Gathering on March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018, in the Aherlow House



The Mountaineering Ireland Board, CEO Murrough McDonagh (at laptop) and ordinary members of Mountaineering Ireland at the AGM at Sport HQ, Blanchardstown, Dublin, on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

Hotel and Lodge, Co Tipperary, hosted by **Limerick Climbing Club**.

At the AGM, amendments were made to the Constitution, which were notified to the Company Registration Office.

A new Board was elected and eight meetings of that Board were held in 2018. We have continued to review our governance policy in the past year and are currently updating some of our processes and structures to reflect best practice in governance. We have created a new sub-committee of the Mountaineering Ireland Board, the **Finance, Audit and Risk Sub-committee**.

We have met the compliance standards of the governance code in 2018. All legal

and procedural requirements have been followed, including reporting and submissions to the Companies Registration Office. Mountaineering Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and is a sporting organisation supported by both **Sport Ireland** and **Sport Northern Ireland**.

Murrough concluded by saying that he felt the Board of Directors had acted at all times in the best interest and to the best of their capability with regard to the Mountaineering Ireland organisation, its members and other stakeholders.

## Financial statements

The financial statements for 2018 were

then presented by Board member **Imelda Buckley**, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Sub-committee, for approval, and the auditor was reappointed for 2019.

Several aspirant clubs were unanimously elected to full membership. They were **Hell Fire Rangers, Pathfinders Mountaineering Club, Mounse Youth Climbing Club, Gilford Youth Climbing Club, Glencree Walkers, We Walk Together, Kick Ass Adventures, Barryroe Walking Club, International Women's Club** and **Shannon Trekkers**. Paul Barron congratulated them all on their achievement and wished their members much pleasure as they progressed in our sport.

Mountaineering Ireland's statements regarding **Safeguarding** and **Anti-Doping** were read and approved by the meeting.

Finally, a motion that had been proposed by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland was approved by the meeting, namely that 'the annual subscription payable by club members in respect of the subscription year beginning on 1 November 2019 and each subscription year thereafter shall be as follows: club member aged 23 years and over - €35.00; club member aged under 23 years - €20.50; where a club member aged under 23 years is the daughter or son of a registered member of that club, a special rate of €7.60 shall apply.'

Mountaineering Ireland's **Annual Review 2018** was also presented at the AGM. The Annual Review provides an overview of key work achieved over the past year and can be read or downloaded from **www.mountaineering.ie**.

A **Members' Forum** followed the AGM. The Members' Forum is an informal meeting, which provides an opportunity for clubs and members to raise items for discussion ■



Patrick O'Sullivan being awarded Honorary Membership of Mountaineering Ireland by President of Mountaineering Ireland, Paul Kellagher (left) and Board member Mike Maunsell (right).

# Increase in Mountaineering Ireland club membership fee

This is just a short note to say thank you to our members for supporting the motion that was approved at the March AGM to increase Mountaineering Ireland’s club membership fee to €35 from November 2019 for the coming 2019/2020 membership year. This is the first increase to Mountaineering Ireland membership fees since 2007.

There is no increase in the fee for either club members aged under 23 years (which remains at €20.50) or for club members under 23 years who are the son or daughter of a registered member of the same club (it remains at €7.60).

Below is an infographic showing where our funding came from in 2018 and where we spent it to maintain the level of work we do to represent and support hillwalking and climbing in Ireland.



## Our 2018 funding came from two main income streams:



## Where we spent our 2018 funding:



In **maintaining the same level of service** to our membership over the **past three years**, we have incurred a combined **financial shortfall of €128,886**.

Therefore, our focus moving forward has to be on increasing our income, while at the same time expanding our level of activity to **deliver on the Strategic Plan adopted in 2018**. This includes **increased support for hillwalking** by establishing a new Hillwalking Committee and by appointing a fulltime Hillwalking Development Officer.

For further information on our audited accounts, please visit [www.mountaineering.ie/AboutUs/Downloads](http://www.mountaineering.ie/AboutUs/Downloads).

We sincerely **appreciate your continued support** in this process.

**Murrugh McDonagh, CEO, Mountaineering Ireland**



Launching the Waterways For Health programme on the banks of the River Barrow in Co Carlow in March

# Walking on water: waterways to health

By Jason King (Get Ireland Walking)

Research has shown that engagement with nature through outdoor activities can have a significant positive impact on an individual's health and wellbeing. **Get Ireland Walking, Waterways Ireland** and the **Local Sports Partnerships** from Kildare, Carlow and Laois are now launching a walking programme on canal and river routes across the three counties.

The aim of this programme is to immerse participants in a natural environment, enhancing their walking experience, with water providing the therapeutic element. A network of walking trails along the canals provides accessible and fun ways for families, groups, clubs and individuals to regularly get out into the outdoors.

This programme will facilitate this for targeted groups with support from County Walking Facilitators and coordinators from Local Sports Partnerships.

Waterways Ireland is keen to promote the activity of walking

on these paths and, where possible, to collaborate with and support Get Ireland Walking in its campaign to get more people more active more often.

As National Programme Manager with Get Ireland Walking, I am excited about this new programme. We live on an island surrounded by green and blue spaces, which provide a plethora of opportunities to engage with nature for improved health and wellbeing. This programme will consist of a series of walks for six weeks for three separate groups and service providers. Families, and addiction and cardiac care services' participants, will be targeted. We hope the experience for those who do participate will be enjoyable and fun.

Walking can result in physical, mental and social benefits. Walking gives an opportunity for the participants to disconnect from the rat race, to be still, to engage with themselves and to chat with friends and family. It helps break down barriers and lays the foundations for growth, better health and better wellbeing. The

accessibility of places to walk, and the amenities which surround us, can enhance our quality of life: this is the objective of the programme and the aim for all participants.

"Waterways Ireland has seen a huge increase in the number of recreational and tourist users on and along all our waterways in recent years," says **Sharon Lavin**, Head of Marketing and Communication, Waterways Ireland. "With the provision of our **Blueway** and **Greenway** trails, we have now created even more opportunities for people to try new recreational activities. This also offers greater health and wellbeing and social opportunities for many.

"For Waterways Ireland, the **Waterways for Health** programme, in conjunction with our partners in Get Ireland Walking and the Local Sports

Partnerships, is an ideal opportunity to encourage people to see inland waterways as a fitness and recreational opportunity. Through the Waterways for Health programme, they will develop skills to help them stay fit and healthy for life."

Waterways for Health kicked off on March 8<sup>th</sup>. We look forward to sharing with you the successes of the programme and to share our plans for further promotion of walking trails on Ireland's waterways.

The **Get Ireland Walking** initiative and **Local Sports Partnerships** are supported by **Sport Ireland** and **Healthy Ireland**. For more information on the partners and their services see the websites [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie), [www.waterwaysireland.org](http://www.waterwaysireland.org) and [www.sportireland.ie](http://www.sportireland.ie) (to find your Local Sports Partnership) ■



**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).





Members of Kilmacthomas Walking Club in the Comeraghs

# Gathering to be held in the Comeraghs

The members of Kilmacthomas Walking Club are celebrating their fifteenth anniversary this year and have offered to host the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering. They are keen to show off the beauty of their home turf, the Comeraghs, and the joys of walking there.



## Autumn Gathering

### Kilmacthomas Walking Club

By **Con Murphy (Chairperson, Kilmacthomas Walking Club)**

Kilmacthomas Walking Club, based in Kilmacthomas, Co Waterford, was founded in November 2004, so we are approaching fifteen years in existence. We currently have approximately sixty members.

Kilmacthomas is located at the base of the Comeragh Mountains, in the heart of County Waterford, halfway between Waterford city and Dungarvan. The club was formed to explore and appreciate the beauty of the local mountains.

The club normally meets on Sunday mornings in Kilmacthomas to carpool before heading to the walk location. Our walks programme is available on our website and any last-minute alterations are notified to club members via Whats App.

The natural beauty of the countryside in Waterford is often overlooked in favour of

other better-known tourist sites, which is a pity. Few other counties have such a variety of mountain, sea and river environments, all within such close proximity of each other and all so easily accessible. The club is fortunate to have all of this natural beauty on its doorstep.

The club likes to pride itself on its friendliness, and we accommodate walkers of all levels. Companionship is an important aspect of the club. Our mantra is **“It’s not a competition”** and we walk at a pace that suits all of our participants. We generally alternate between flat walks and hill or mountain walks every other week. Most of our walks take between two and four hours.

We walk primarily in the **Comeragh and Monavullagh Mountains**, but we also regularly go to the **Knockmealdowns, the Galtees, Slievenamon** and elsewhere, as well as doing flat walks throughout the south-east, along river, forest and coastal routes.

The club is conscious of its responsibility not to disturb the environment in which we walk and of the need to protect and conserve the landscape that we enjoy so much. It is important that we leave it so that others may also derive the same pleasures as we have from it.

The club encourages its members to improve their abilities in navigation, walk leadership and other mountain skills, while at the same time benefiting from improved health and fitness. We believe that it is very important to stop and enjoy the beauty around us. We are always grateful to the local agriculture community for their goodwill in allowing us access to such marvellous amenities.

We have a few weekends away each year and we celebrate Christmas and the summer with **nights out**. In addition, in most years the club plans a **walking trip abroad**. Previous trips have included sections of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela and visits to Snowdonia, the Dolomites and Nepal.

We have also organised **night walks** in the Comeraghs, which have been dependent on a full moon and clear skies. We are generally always happy to walk in our local mountains.





Knockanaffrin ridge in the Comeraghs

# The Comeragh Mountains



## Autumn Gathering

**Details of this year's Autumn Gathering for your diary**

**Date:** October 18-19<sup>th</sup> 2019  
**Base:** The Park Hotel, Dungarvan  
**Host club:** Kilmacthomas Walking Club  
**Location:** The Comeraghs, Co Waterford

**By Con Murphy (Chairperson, Kilmacthomas Walking Club)**

The Comeragh mountain range contains a number of peaks, including Monavullagh, Coumaraglin and Lyre Mountains, and stretches from Dungarvan in the south to Clonmel in the north.

There are a series of corries along the east and west flanks of the mountain range. The eastern face of the range contains cliff faces and corries, while the western face consists of a more gentle, sloping landscape. The entire mountain range is covered by Ordnance Survey Map No 75.

The mountain range contains only a few peaks, because the summit is a plateau. The highest point is 792 metres and is marked by a cairn, because otherwise it might not be located easily, as there is nothing to distinguish it from the surrounding area.

Once climbed, the Comeraghs may

seem an easy crossing, but there are many obstacles in the soft peat covering, such as wet bog, cuttings and rivers, all of which can be energy-draining.

When visibility is poor, good navigation skills are required to safely traverse the mountains, as there are few suitable landmarks to guide the way.

The Comeragh plateau is an eroding blanket bog with numerous peat hags, exposed gravel and wet bog areas. The plateau landscape might be compared to a lunar-type situation. Ground cover consists principally of grasses, peat, heather and ferns.

The attractions of the Comeraghs are the variety of landscapes that they offer, which include some of the finest corrie

lakes in the country, rivers, forests, valleys, waterfalls, cliff faces, ridges and rolling hills. There is a waterfall above the Sgilloge Loughs, where the prevailing wind can blow the water backwards to form a mist; that is referred to as '*sean bhean ag caitheamh tobac*.'

Coumshingaun Lake is the largest lake in the Comeraghs. It covers an area of about fifteen hectares and has a vertical cliff face to the rear, which is 350 metres high, almost double the height of the Cliffs of Moher. Most of the lakes in the Comeraghs are corrie lakes or coums, which were formed by glacial movement during the last Ice Age. Not all of the coums contain lakes, though; Coum Eag, for example, is a dry coum. ➤



Coumshingaun, a jewel of a corrie in the Comeraghs



Sgilloge Lough in the Comeraghs

The high-level horseshoe walk above Coumshingaun is one of the finest walks in the south-east of the country and includes scrambling, a bit of bouldering and great views out to sea and inland to the Galtees and the Knockmealdowns on a clear day.

Adjacent to Coumshingaun are Crotty's Lake and Crotty's Rock, which was the hiding place of an eighteenth-century highwayman. Despite many years of searching, we have not found any of his rumoured hidden hoard. To the west of Crotty's Lake is Coum Iarthar, another fine example of a corrie lake, with a flat plateau overhead, a rear cliff wall and a lake entrapped by a moraine. There are a number of smaller lakes downstream from the main lake.

Continuing anti-clockwise around the perimeter of the mountain we come to Coumdula, and further on under Knockanaffrin is Lake Morha.

In the Nire Valley, we find the two Sgilloge Loughs, the two Coumalocha Lakes and, further on, Lough Coumfea. Over the mountain is a string of small lakes in Coumtae. Many of these lakes contain small brown trout, which may trace their ancestry back to the last Ice Age.

There are few defined tracks in the Comeraghs, but a number of marked ways have been established in the Nire Valley area. There are trailheads at the Nire car park (S 277 128) and at Curraheen (S 307 154) that give access to these tracks.

A tarmac path gives access to the waterfall at Mahon Falls, which is a very popular tourist attraction. Close to the Falls, the local community has developed

a pleasant walk in Crough (pronounced 'crew') Wood, which is a beautiful oak and beech forest straddling the Mahon River.

Much of the walking in the Comeraghs is on open ground, and maybe, if you're lucky, you will find some sheep tracks to ease the trek.

The Mahon, the Clodiagh and the Nire rivers rise in close proximity to each other in the plateau above Coumshingaun. Other rivers that rise in the Comeraghs include the Glasha, the Glenary, the Colligan, the Dalligan and the Tay.

The Comeraghs contain much evidence of past civilisations, with numerous standing stones, stone circles, barrows and fulachta fiadha. It is astonishing to think that we can walk today in an area that held a thriving community more than 4,000 years ago.

There are many remains of the built environment hidden in the hills, ranging from the above archaeological finds to deserted villages in Glenary and in

Corraun, an ex-British Army shooting range on Long Hill, old stone sheep enclosures and two disused, ugly MMD relay stations.

The Comeraghs are a most under-used amenity: it is possible to spend a weekend in them without seeing another human being. However, the walk into Mahon Falls and the low-level access to Coumshingaun can be very popular, especially at weekends.

To date, hillwalking has had little adverse impact on the mountain, but there are signs that this could change, especially on Coumshingaun ridge. The main activities affecting the mountains are sheep grazing, the burning off of heather and peat erosion. Lately, a track has been formed close to the Falls, along the bank of the Mahon River, that is causing increasing erosion. Attempts have been made to reverse this impact.

County Waterford is fortunate to have such a rich and varied mountain range ■

## Club Support Meetings 2019

Following on from the success of last year's Mountaineering Ireland **Club Support Meetings**, when we visited Sligo, Bray, Kerry and Derry, we plan to hold more meetings this year.

The meetings will follow a similar agenda to last year's, with **Ruth Whelan** (Hillwalking Development Officer), **Helen Lawless** (Access & Conservation Officer) and **Jane Carney** (Training Officer) from Mountaineering Ireland visiting Cork, Newry, Dublin and Galway to give clubs in each region the opportunity to raise club-related topics with them. The meetings will allow clubs to network with other clubs in their region, to share ideas and information.

Date	Location	Venue
25 <sup>th</sup> September	Cork	The Hibernian Hotel, Mallow, Co Cork
3 <sup>rd</sup> October	Newry	Mourne Country Hotel, Newry
21 <sup>st</sup> November	Dublin	Irish Sport HQ, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15
27 <sup>th</sup> November	Galway	Menlo Park Hotel, Headford Road, Galway

Refreshments from 7.00pm. Meeting time: 7.30-9.30pm.

# The hidden Comeraghs

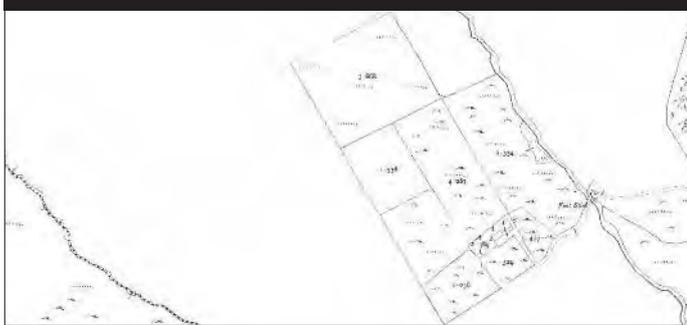
By Emily Shakespeare

The research that I recently completed into changes over time in settlement patterns in Kilrossanty parish in the Comeragh Mountains has been very interesting. By comparing historic Ordnance Survey maps with present-day aerial photography and cartography using GIS, I was able to create a picture of how settlements in this area have grown, declined or even disappeared since 1840.

slopes in the earlier maps, the outlines of fields, roads and buildings are clearly shown, whilst the detail on the other side of the boundary is sparse, only containing townland boundaries, streams and altitude markers. Fifty years later, the demarcation is even more pronounced: roads and rivers end abruptly on entering the blank, mountainous space. The message from these maps is, therefore, that there was no inhabitation above this line.

However, the plethora of

Doody's farm and the edge of cultivation as depicted on the 25" OS map



During the research, it became apparent that the historic maps were not telling the whole story and appear to have excluded dwellings for which there is clear alternative physical or anecdotal evidence.

Compiled by the British military in the 1840s, the 6" Ordnance Survey map was the first cartographic endeavour of its kind and enabled a comprehensive valuation of land in Ireland to create a new up-to-date tax system.

In the 1890s, a more detailed 25"-to-one-mile map was created to allow more accurate coverage of the land being sold off by Irish landlords who had suffered financially during the Famine.

Both historic maps have a boundary dividing cultivated and uncultivated land on mountain slopes, and the topographic detail differs significantly between the two areas. On the cultivated lower

archaeological evidence in the mountains shows that the land above this dividing line was lived in and was worked.\*

Temporary dwellings were also erected when families were evicted and urgently needed shelter (brácha), which left no mark on the landscape. Nor, in fact, did those dispossessed families who sought shelter in farmers' outbuildings or in field corners.

Booleying, or transhumance, is the agricultural tradition of taking cattle up to the high open lands to graze during the summer months. Booleying structures, an important extension of lowland settlement life, were also excluded from the official maps.

The floating island of 'Doody's farm' in the Comeragh townland on the 25" map is clearly outlined and its physical imprint still exists today, including some building ruins. Looking upslope around



1 km north, Ned Curran's farmstead also still stands and, although it is understood that it was occupied until the 1920s, it was not included in the official OS maps.

These omissions or 'silences' on the maps can tell us just as much about society at the time as what was included. By denying the existence of inhabitants living above the

line of cultivation, the maps performed an 'ideological filtering' of what would have been predominantly poorer Gaelic Irish families, reflecting the power and social structures of the time. The collective memory of this invisibility may have influenced the decision for Ned Curran's farm to be used as a safe house during the Civil War ■



## Further reading

Andrews, JH (2002) *A Paper Landscape: the Ordnance Survey in nineteenth-century Ireland*. Four Courts History Classics.

Harley, JB (1988) *Maps, Knowledge and Power* in Daniels, S and Cosgrove, D (eds) *The Iconography of Landscape*. Cambridge University Press.



**AUTHOR:** Emily Shakespeare is a PhD candidate at Waterford Institute of Technology, researching the landscape biography of Kilrossanty parish in the Comeragh Mountains. This research is part-funded by the **Irish Uplands Forum** and **Landscape Research Group**. Emily thanks all those in the local community who offered

their invaluable knowledge of the area. She can be contacted at [Emily.shakespeare@postgrad.wit.ie](mailto:Emily.shakespeare@postgrad.wit.ie) and on Twitter at [@emstar73](https://twitter.com/emstar73).

\* <http://webgis.archaeology.ie/historicenvironment>



## Carlingford Lough Greenway opened



By Pat O'Rourke

Greenways are being developed in many scenic locations on the island of Ireland that were not traditionally accessible. These trails are proving to be popular entry points to a more active lifestyle for people of all ages, supporting their overall health and wellbeing and connecting them with nature in a very real way.

However, while the rural landscapes through which they pass are a major part of this Greenways success, their links to urban centres are crucial elements in the progress to sustaining the increased mobility of the population into

the future.

The central aim of the **Carlingford Lough Greenway** is to inspire active travel, as it is planned to be a quality, off-road, cross-border Greenway trail between Newry city and Carlingford, a distance of 20 kilometres. This project primarily utilises disused railway line and canal bank infrastructure along the majestic shores of Carlingford Lough.

The idea started with the original section of Greenway, which had been developed alongside Carlingford Lough in 2013, between Carlingford Marina and Omeath. This proved to be very popular, with over 50,000 users per year on the 6-km trail. This original Greenway followed the line of the disused Dundalk, Newry and Greenore Railway, which was built in 1875/76 and on which the last train had travelled in 1951.

While I am working for Louth County Council, our local authority colleagues in Northern Ireland have been developing a plan for a trail heading south from Newry along the banks of the Newry Ship Canal, which dates from the 1740s. We combined our efforts and successfully applied for **EU Interreg** funding for a cross-border Greenway project from Newry to Carlingford.

The partners in this project are **Louth County Council, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council** and the **East Border Region**. Together, we have successfully secured over €3 million in funding to complete a 20km section of Greenway along Carlingford Lough by the end of 2020.

Last year, we opened another section of the Carlingford Lough Greenway from Newry south to Victoria Lock, located between the canal and the tidal Newry River.

This cross-border partnership is advancing the remaining 10km of Greenway to complete a quality trail from Carlingford to Newry, linking with the existing 30km **Newry Canal Way** walking and cycling trail.

The longer-term vision is to complete a quality offroad Greenway trail from Belfast to Dublin, which we boldly call the **East Coast Trail**.

While significant sections of land were in state ownership, the remainder of the trail was developed with the close co-

operation and agreement of the numerous landowners along the route. There were thirty-three landowners along the 2013 section of the Greenway, and there are at least twenty-four non-statutory landowners on the latest section of Greenway. This involvement of the landowners has developed into a genuine broad community buy-in to the Greenway.

The Greenway is the starting place for so many meaningful conversations, from heritage to sustainability, to simply getting better acquainted with this beautiful part of Ireland.

The Carlingford Lough Greenway is an important motivator for sustainable mobility in the population and increased partnership across the border. The cooperation of numerous landowners as the project has evolved has been a crucial element in this process. It is also opening opportunities for the local population to get out and be active, and inspiring all of us to consider behavioural changes in relation to our car use and ultimately to reduce our carbon footprint ■



**AUTHOR:** Pat O'Rourke is an executive technician in the Infrastructure Section of Louth County Council, working on the Carlingford Lough Greenway. He is a member of the **CROWS Hillwalkers** and of Mountaineering Ireland.



Mike Maunsell (second from right) representing the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission at the UN World Tourism Organisation's 4<sup>th</sup> Euro-Asian Mountain Tourism Conference, held in Germany in March. Also pictured (from left): Dirk Glasser, (Director, Sustainable Development Tourism, UNWTO); Sara Manuelli (Policy & Advocacy Officer, UN Food & Agriculture Organisation Mountain Partnership); Alina Szasz (Coordinator, Carpathian Mountains Sustainable Tourism Platform) and Matthais Jurek (United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP).



Mike Maunsell

## Mountaineering Ireland Board member elected Vice-President of UIAA Mountain Protection Commission



Mike Maunsell, a member of the Board of Directors of Mountaineering Ireland, was elected Vice-President of the **Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme (UIAA) Mountain Protection Commission** in May this year.

The UIAA, the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation, which is based in Switzerland, is the international governing body for climbing and mountaineering, and represents climbers and mountaineers around the world on a wide range of issues related to mountain safety, sustainability and competition sport. It was founded in 1932 and represents over ninety member associations and federations from sixty-nine countries on six continents. The UIAA represents the interests of over three million individual mountaineers, to promote the values of safety, self-sufficiency, and sustainability in mountaineering and mountain

environments.

Some of Mike Maunsell's work on the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission includes speaking at international conferences, as well as collaboration and advocacy work for mountain environments and communities.

Mike was a speaker and panellist representing the UIAA at the **UN World Tourism Organization's 4th Euro-Asian Mountain Tourism Conference**, held in Berchtesgaden, Germany between March 2-5<sup>th</sup> this year. His speech and panel Q&A covered how the UN's sustainable development goals and sustainable mountain tourism initiatives can be implemented in adventure tourism to protect local communities and fragile environments.

Mike was the keynote speaker at the international conference **Mountains: Cultures, Landscapes and Biodiversity**, held between May 10-12<sup>th</sup>. This conference was hosted by the Western Caspian University in Baku, Azerbaijan. It was attended by international academics, NGOs, researchers, government officials and UN agencies from thirty countries.

Mike spoke on the immediate and long-term issues facing fragile mountain environments

and mountain communities in the face of climate change and how these will impact on society in general.

Some of the recent collaboration and advocacy work of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission includes signing up to the five principles of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) initiative, Sports for Climate Action**. The five principles are:

- 1 Undertake systematic efforts to promote greater environmental responsibility
- 2 Reduce overall climate impact
- 3 Educate for climate action
- 4 Promote sustainable and responsible consumption
- 5 Advocate for climate action through communication.

As an observer organisation to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission has taken steps towards addressing climate-related initiatives within UIAA operations.

A Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed with the **International**

**Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA)**. The UIAA Mountain Protection Commission is collaborating with the IFMGA to implement new projects on training, education and sustainability guidelines for member associations and the mountaineering community.

The UIAA Mountain Protection Commission is also collaborating with the international network **Mountain Research Initiative** and with the **UN Environment Programme (EU Environment)** on training, education and sustainability projects.

Mike contributed to the environmental section of the UIAA's **Summer Alpine Training Handbook**, which is used by thousands of mountaineers visiting the Alps each year. He became a **Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society** in 2014 and works as a lecturer in environmental and geographical science with the Department of Applied Science at Limerick Institute of Technology. He is a former Chair of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee.

Congratulations to Mike Maunsell on his election as Vice-President of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission. Having a representative at that level in the UIAA is a great achievement for a relatively small organisation like Mountaineering Ireland ■

# Fair Head Climbing Meet 2019

The classic must-do routes saw a fair amount of traffic at this year's Fair Head Meet.

By Freja Shannon

The Fair Head Meet is everybody's favourite weekend! Well, certainly for those of us itching to escape the urban jungle on a Friday evening in a car filled to the brim with climbing gear, ropes, sun hats, beer, camping chairs... you name it. Climbers gathered from all corners of the world - France, Scotland, Wales, Sweden, the States, Australia, we even had a Kerryman this year! - to celebrate exactly that: Irish climbing.

Despite a dubious-looking

weather forecast a couple of days beforehand, those who committed to the weekend were rewarded with enough sunshine on both the Saturday and Sunday to tick routes off their ever-growing Fair Head tick-lists.

Classic must-do routes saw their fair amount of traffic with several ascents of **Jolly Roger**, **Hurricane**, **Cuchulainn**, **Ocean Boulevard** and **Hell's Kitchen**.

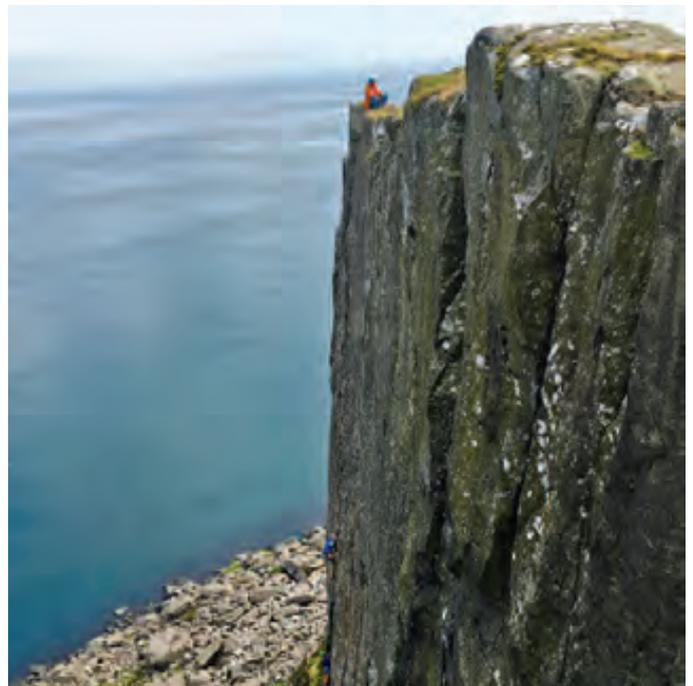
**John Orr** cleaned and climbed **Nightrider**, whereby word spread and **Conor McGovern** and **Paul Collins** snatched an impressive ascent right after.

**Michelle Dvorak** and **Harriet Ridley** showed some girl power with a double-onsight of **Track of the Cat**, and many walked in **Calvin Torrans** and **Claire Sheridan's** footsteps on their new route, **Heart and Soul**, which I have to say was definitely my favourite climb of the weekend!

The guest speaker, **Jorg Verhoeven**, and organiser, **Paul Swail**, danced up the iconic **Wall of Prey**, but that was to be expected, right?!

Those not quite feeling like hand-jamming or long belays had a great day out bouldering with **Rob Hunter** in Murlough Bay on the Saturday, in between the odd shower and swarms of midges.

**Jorg Verhoeven**, an incredibly accomplished Austrian climber, was invited as guest speaker on the Saturday night and left us all in



jaw-dropping awe. Speaking of his hard gritstone and Yosemite ascents, he provided more than enough inspiration to last us until next year's meet.

The evening was rounded off with a BBQ and a bit of a party to wrap up the weekend. I'm sure there were a few sore heads on the Sunday morning... a success, to say the least!

Massive thanks to **Sean** and the **McBride** family for their

incredible hospitality and for the use of their land; to **Paul Swail** for organising yet another memorable weekend in association with **Dal Riada Climbing Club**; and to **Jorg Verhoeven** for sharing his stories.

Last but not least, a big thank you to each and every one who attended this year's meet, for respecting the land and the people within it. Even the Portaloos weren't that smelly! ■

Paul Swail on Wall of Prey, Fair Head



**AUTHOR:** Freja Shannon grew up in the Burren, Co Clare, five minutes from the famous Mirror Wall, though she only started climbing when she moved to the French Alps at the age of 18. She has been based there since then, pursuing her dream of becoming a mountain guide.



## Galway Walk Marathon & Half Marathon, August 17<sup>th</sup>

By Anne Brindley (Environment Officer, Galway Walking Club)

“I was high as a kite after I finished, and I stayed like that for hours,” says **Peter Leonard**, Chairperson of Galway Walking Club, about his walking marathon experience in 2018.

Now in its 23<sup>rd</sup> year, the club’s annual walking marathon and half-marathon is coordinated by **Jerry Lalor**, who is passionate about outdoor activities and particularly about walking in Connemara.

From the departure point near the Our Lady of the Wayside Church, the first stage takes participants close to Killary Harbour. The second stage takes them along the old green road, looking across the mussel farm in the deep waters of the fjord towards Mweelrea (814m), the highest peak in Connacht, and ahead towards Leenane.

The third stage is the start of the half-marathon, near Toorenacona River. This is a glorious trek up the Inagh valley: to your left (east) are the imposing Maamturks, and to your right (west) na Beanna Beola (the Twelve Bens) with Benbaun (729m), the highest peak in Co Galway.

At stage 4, the Western Way joins the road (time to put on the runners?), leading to checkpoint 5 in Máméan car

park. Water bottles should be refilled here, as the highest point lies ahead. A 259-metre climb takes you to Máméan (the Pass of the Birds), a small chapel and stations, up to your left, which mark the spot where St Patrick blessed the West. From there, it is a gentle descent to the last checkpoint.

One last steep climb up the road. Aill na gCat is the cliff-face to the north. From there it is downhill all the way, meandering along a small country road with views of the Maam valley, the meandering Bealnabrack River and Joe Keane’s Pub, home of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Alexander Nimmo, engineer of roads and harbours from Sligo Bay to Galway Bay.

At the T-junction, turn right for Maam Community Centre, where a warm welcome awaits participants, hot soup, good food, tea and coffee, a certificate and the time to sit, take off their boots, stretch their toes and relish their achievement!

Good walking boots, a packed lunch, a water bottle and wet gear are essential. Join us for the most stunning, most scenic walking marathon in Ireland! ■

### FIND OUT MORE:

For further information and registration, go to [bit.ly/2XbivmF](http://bit.ly/2XbivmF).

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Project participants from Firhouse College and Killinarden Community Centre Youth Project at the competition in the Dublin Climbing Centre, Tallaght, in May, together with project instructors



# Get Climbing Project

**By Natasza Berlowska (Get Climbing Project Coordinator)**

After a long, cold winter and colder spring, it looks like we are finally being blessed with some warm weather. However, despite the hard-to-resist call to hibernate during the dark and windy months, the young participants of the **Get Climbing Project** kept working hard to learn new skills and become better climbers.

Shortly after Christmas, both **Firhouse College** and **Killinarden Community Centre Youth Project** came back to **Dublin Climbing Centre** with new groups of students, keen to find out what the rock climbing is all about.

Climbing is not only about swinging on ropes. It is about challenging yourself and finding powers that you did not know you had; powers that not only help you to fight your fears and overcome everyday problems

but also help you to find a safe space and friendship among the climbing community.

Most of the participants in the Get Climbing Project come from really disadvantaged backgrounds. Seeing them build their confidence and self-esteem week after week through participation in the project is truly an amazing experience.

From a climbing point of view, the participants who engaged most with the project mastered the skills so well that they now climb independently at their local walls, fighting with grades around the 6c mark.

At the end of May, both groups took part in a competition at the **Dublin Climbing Centre** wall, which included both top roping and boulder problems. The outcome was really good, as they not only climbed very well, but they also made new friendships. Participants from both groups



Some of the Killinarden Community Centre Youth Project participants in Tallaght after receiving their Get Climbing Programme Certificates

plan to climb together over the summer months.

In the meantime, the Get Climbing Project managed to reach outside the Dublin area and start an eight-week programme near Kilkenny in partnership with **Active Connections**. The climbing sessions took place in Ballykeefe Quarry and targeted, among others, young people with developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD). Rock climbing is known to be a great therapy tool for people with DCD, as it exercises the core

muscles, teaches balance and improves coordination through fun and challenge.

As the school year is ending and summer is here, it is getting close to the time to start planning the autumn events. For now, it is confirmed that **Ballyfermot Youthreach** will organise a group of participants from the early school leavers programme, who will be introduced to rockclimbing in October 2019. Apart from that, we are hoping to be part of **European Week of Sports**, which takes place in the last week of September ■



Project participants and trainer at the competition in May



Project participants on the climbing wall at the competition in May

Photographs: Patricia Kane (main photo and two at bottom of page), Natasza Berlowska (group with certificates)



Concept drawing of the new outdoor café space in Avondale courtyard

# New visitor attractions planned for Avondale

Re-development plan for Avondale House and Forest Park receives planning permission

**Coillte**, in partnership with **Fáilte Ireland**, has been granted planning permission to re-develop **Avondale Forest Park**, south of Rathdrum, Co Wicklow. This will see the enhancement of Avondale House and Forest Park, and set Avondale as a major visitor attraction within Ireland's Ancient East.

A new orientation space and visitor building connecting to 'semi-underground' and tree-top walks, open glades in the forest for creative arts and play, enhanced walking and cycling routes, and a café and restaurant, will all be part of the re-developed park.

The key theme for the project is *'Avondale: A place of Visionaries.'* This traces the origins of the estate from **Samuel Hayes**, the

'grandfather' of Irish forestry, with his extensive tree collection from around the world, through the **Parnell** years at Avondale and their family's vision for a new and emerging Irish state, continuing into the early 1900s with the establishment of Irish state forestry in the park. In a new **Irish Forestry Pavilion**, visitors will see and interact with how Coillte is innovating in the forestry business and leading with new technologies.

The project will include:

- Interactive educational technologies to be designed to promote learning about forestry, the bio-economy and biodiversity
- A 'living history' experience in Avondale House to bring to life the story of the Parnells

- New trails planned to explore trees from below and above the forest canopy
- An elevated timber lattice walkway 460m in length to be erected overlooking the forest canopy and the Avonmore River valley
- A state-of-the-art visitor centre on the Great Ride, with a new restaurant and café in the courtyard
- A new children's play area in the walled garden, with wild and creative play spaces throughout the park
- More car parking and a one-way indicated traffic flow, to allow visitors to access and leave the park more easily.

The project will cost approximately €8m to deliver

in the first phase. Later phases will include re-development of the 'Big Shed' into a venue for weddings, corporate events, concerts, etc. The Big Shed was Charles Stewart Parnell's rather extravagant cow-shed, with a roof modelled on Brighton Railway Station and restored by the OPW in the early 2000s. It is said that his mother regularly emptied the cattle from the shed and held large dances in the venue!

The re-developed Avondale House and Forest Park will be ready for visitors in late 2021 or early 2022, but in the meantime, Avondale remains open, providing enjoyable walking and cycling trails for visitors.

For more information see Coillte's website and for any queries, please email [avondale@coillte.ie](mailto:avondale@coillte.ie) ■

Photograph: Coillte

## Climbfest 2019 at Malin Head

By **Alan Tees (Colmcille Climbers)**

Ireland's longest-established rockclimbing festival, the **Climbfest**, took place on the May bank holiday weekend at Malin Head, Co Donegal, hosted by **Colmcille Climbers**.

There were the usual range of ages and nationalities climbing on the spectacular cliffs of Ireland's most northerly point. Despite the cold arctic winds, there were lots of climbers on the cliffs between Hell's Hole and the new fence.

Unfortunately, permission to climb on the superb rock beyond the fence was not forthcoming. In fact, the fence

Summer 2019

appears to have been reinforced. Nevertheless, there was plenty of space for everyone, and the event kicked off with a 'come and try it' for children at the conveniently situated **Bambas Buttress**, just below the **Tower**, with short routes like **'Yoda's Staircase'** and **'Vader's Corner'** being easy enough for the climbers and was most appropriate with the **Star Wars Festival** taking place locally.

There has been a huge increase in indoor climbing in Ireland and, for this reason, one of the objectives of Climbfest is to teach the skills of outdoor climbing and safety on real rock to those who are more used to

the comfort of moving on coloured holds in a warm and sheltered environment. There were a lot of experienced outdoor climbers and mountaineers on hand throughout the weekend to share their experience and show beginners the ropes, as it were.

Probably Ireland's finest easy-ish climb, first completed in the 1930s and recently named **'The Cutting Edge'**, was particularly popular, with many visitors carrying home euphoric memories of climbing on the superb, exposed, knife-edge ridge fifty metres above the sea and posing for the tourists on the last pinnacle.

There were many, many tourists there over the holiday weekend and it is a shame they cannot fully enjoy the wonders of the west side of Malin Head, including **Devil's Bridge**, due to the recent access restrictions.

Colmcille Climbers would like to thank **Mountaineering Ireland** for its support; **Café Bamba** for its excellent coffee (perfect for warming cold hands); and all who helped over the weekend; but most particularly we would like to thank the **Doherty family** and the **Sea View Tavern**, who provided the campsite and the warmest possible welcome for all who attended Climbfest over the weekend ■



A prize-winning photo in the category 'Action, Humour' from the competition held during the WWA weekend in Connemara in May. Photo: Freda Cunningham

## Women With Altitude: making connections

The Women With Altitude weekend in Connemara in May was a great success.

By Ruth Whelan

**Women With Altitude** is a Mountaineering Ireland initiative to encourage women to take on greater challenges in mountaineering, be they personal, technical or leadership challenges.

This year's Women With Altitude event was based in **Killary Adventure Centre**, in the beautiful landscape of Connemara, over the weekend of May 17-19<sup>th</sup>. Over ninety women from all

around the island of Ireland, with all levels of experience, attended, together with instructors and the organising team.

The weekend kicked off with some fun orienteering around the forest near the Killary centre, when all the participants got the chance to meet and mingle.

**Michelle Hughes**, a Mountaineering Ireland Provider, who lives and works in Connemara, introduced those present to the delights that the area has to offer, in a

**“Everyone enjoyed participating in the many activities on offer – such as navigation, scrambling, hillwalking and climbing.”**

fun and enthusiastic way. Although a Powerpoint projector was provided to illustrate her talk, the view from the centre also allowed Michelle to pinpoint the areas she was talking about right outside the window!

Up bright and early on Saturday morning, everyone enjoyed participating in the many activities on offer, which were suitable for all levels of ability, such as navigation, scrambling, hillwalking and climbing. The weather started off looking dubious, but it actually remained dry for the entire weekend.

**Ursula MacPherson**, the keynote guest speaker, entertained and inspired the captive audience, as she brought us through a lifetime of adventure and fascinating experiences all over the world, kayaking, biking and even flying planes, but predominantly mountaineering. The variety of expeditions and climbs she has accomplished to date was truly inspirational.

After a delightful dinner, the winners of the photo competition were announced. A big thank you to the **Great Outdoors**, who provided a gift for our



**AUTHOR:** Ruth Whelan is an Organising Committee member of **Women With Altitude** and the Hillwalking Development Officer of **Mountaineering Ireland**.

**FIND OUT MORE:** To find out more about Women With Altitude, visit the website [www.womenwithaltitude.ie](http://www.womenwithaltitude.ie).

keynote speaker and wonderful spot prizes for our photo competition.

To top the evening off, some night navigation enthusiasts, led by **Maike Juergens**, headed out to explore Connemara by head torch-light.

Prior to another day full of activities such as trail running, an environmental walk, scrambling, climbing and a lowland leader taster session, women were put into groups based on where they mainly did their activities. This was to get some feedback from the participants but also to facilitate networking and encourage them to commit to doing something afterwards to progress their skills, based on their experience during the weekend.

A feedback survey sent to the participants after the event showed that over 70% of them had never been to a Women With Altitude weekend before. Overall, they felt that the event was welcoming and inclusive for women of all ages, abilities and experience. Ninety per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they had learned new skills and that knowledge was shared.

85% stated that as a result of this weekend they would try more challenging activities in hillwalking, climbing and/or mountaineering.

Special thanks are due to the **Killary Adventure Centre staff**, who were exceptionally friendly, efficient and accommodating over the weekend. Thanks also to our wonderful instructors and



Poppy Wilson instructing at Pat's Crag overlooking Killary Harbour

award trainees, **Orla Prendergast, Jane Carney, Helen Lawless, Michelle Hughes, Michelle Casey, Poppy Wilson, Julie Reeves, Ursula MacPherson, Colette Mahon, Trish Kane, Joanne McCandless, Kelly O'Reilly Smith** and **Ursula Timmins**, whose enthusiasm, knowledge and expertise encouraged and inspired participants to further develop their own skills.

Finally, a special thank you

to the other members of the organising team, **Colette Mahon, Rita Connell, Maike Juergens, Grania Peden** and **Maeve McKeever**, who worked seamlessly behind the scenes to make sure everything ran smoothly.

On behalf of everyone who attended the Women With Altitude weekend, I would like to thank **Sport Ireland** for providing funding to support and subsidise this event to enable women to

experience or develop their mountaineering skills of choice. The funding also enabled four bursary candidates, who were selected from the applications submitted, the opportunity to participate in the event for free.

Depending on the availability of funding, we hope that we can make next year's tenth Women With Altitude event even more special. Watch this space! ■



The Women With Altitude weekend was supported and subsidised by Sport Ireland. Great Outdoors provided photo competition prizes and a gift.

## Sir Chris Bonington to give the 2019 Lynam Lecture



### Lynam Lecture

**Date:** Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Venue:** Chartered Accountants House, 47-49 Pearse St, Dublin 2

By Patrick O'Sullivan



Sir Chris Bonington

The **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture** was inaugurated in 2011 in the memory of **Joss Lynam**, one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, in recognition of his enormous achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering in Ireland and overseas over some sixty years. During his lifetime, Joss initiated numerous developments in these areas of our sport in Ireland and he was the inspiration for a number of generations of Irish mountaineers.

Since it was inaugurated, the Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture has been delivered by leading national and international

mountaineers. We are pleased to announce that this year's lecture will be given by the legendary British mountaineer **Sir Chris Bonington**.

Sir Chris started climbing in 1951, at the age of 16. He made the first British ascent of the North Face of the Eiger in 1962 with Ian Clough, and led the first ascent of the South Face of Annapurna in 1970, the most difficult climb achieved in the Himalaya at that time.

Chris then led the successful expedition making the first ascent of the South West Face of Everest in 1975, and he reached the summit himself with a Norwegian expedition in 1985.

Sir Chris celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup>

birthday in 2014 by repeating his climb of the Old Man of Hoy, in the Orkneys. Sir Chris knew Joss Lynam and they had a shared passion for the mountains.

**Tickets** and further information about this year's Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture, which promises to be fascinating, will be available on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) soon. There will also be more information in the Autumn 2019 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* ■



Joss Lynam

## Challenge walk for over-70s

A group of hikers from the **Irish Ramblers Club** is organising an over-70s sponsored challenge walk in Glendalough on September 26<sup>th</sup>. To our knowledge, this is the first time that an over-70s challenge walk has taken place in Ireland.

There are four different grades to suit most over-70s: 10km, 15km, 20km and 22km walks, with corresponding ascents from 350m to 1,000m.

The club wants to encourage older hikers to continue to enjoy the mountains, and for new over-70s to take up the challenge and enjoyment of engaging with the hills.

Their motto is "Don't let the old person in." The club members aim to try to keep fit and healthy for as long as they can.

**INFORMATION AND BOOKINGS:** For more information and a registration form, please contact [hardyannuals@gmail.com](mailto:hardyannuals@gmail.com) ■

*The 'Hardy Annuals'*  
Sponsored Challenge Walk for the Over-Seventies  
Glendalough, Thursday 26 September 2019

€25

Four options: 22km-ascent 1000m  
20km-ascent 860m  
15km-ascent 660m  
10km-ascent 300m

All proceeds go to Partnership America Latina  
Visit [www.palcharityprojects.ie](http://www.palcharityprojects.ie) for more details  
To register, email TomMilligan at [hardyannuals@gmail.com](mailto:hardyannuals@gmail.com)



Chris Bonington and Pertemba on the 1975 expedition to climb the SW Face of Everest



Two riders on the Ballinastoe Trail, Roundwood, Co Wicklow

## Big boost for mountain biking in Ireland

An investment of €13.5m for international mountain biking centres and trails is announced

**Coillte**, in partnership with **Fáilte Ireland**, has secured funding to develop Ireland as one of the best mountain biking destinations in the world.

In February, an **International Mountain Biking Proposition for Rural Ireland** was announced by the **Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, TD**, as one of

the successful bids under the **Rural Regeneration and Development Fund**. The project will see investment of over €13.5m in trails and visitor facilities.

The project will comprise four national trail centres across seven counties, and over 300 kilometres of trails at these centres.

The trail centres will be located in Ballyhoura

(Limerick/Cork), Coolaney (Sligo), Slieve Blooms (Offaly/Laois) and Ticknock & Ballinastoe (Dublin/Wicklow).

The project aims to generate visitor numbers of over three million over the next 10 years.

As the centres are located in rural and some remote areas, the economic impact of the development will be significant, with visitors

generating a spend of more than €22 million per annum. An estimated twenty communities around the country will see the effect of increased visitor numbers in their area.

The project will be delivered over a three-year period and each site or additional trail development will be opened to the public as it is completed ■

## 2018 sports capital grant drawn down



Mountaineering Ireland has been allocated €51,000 in the **2018 Sports Capital Programme** allocation announced recently by the **Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD**.

The allocated funds will be used to purchase equipment to be used for hillwalking and climbing. The

equipment will be used by Mountaineering Ireland in the delivery of training sessions, meets, competitions, etc.

In addition to Mountaineering Ireland's allocation of €51,000, three Mountaineering Ireland affiliated clubs have received funding. **Dublin Cliffhangers** have been allocated €10,429, **Tullow Mountaineering Club** has been allocated €3,507 and **Sligo Mountaineering Club** has been allocated €2,829 ■



Some para-climbing equipment from Equal Adventure



The recently established Mountaineering Ireland Hillwalking Committee (from left): Roy Madden, Louise Nolan, Declan Murphy, Grainne McLaughlin, Margaret Collins, Marian Wallis, Ruth Whelan, Russell Mills, Chris Evans. Missing from photo: Veronica Kelly.

## Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee

Following a motion at Mountaineering Ireland's 2018 AGM from the Irish Ramblers Club to establish a hillwalking committee, a hillwalking working group was established. Over the next seven months, the working group developed terms of reference and a workplan for the proposed committee. These were approved by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland in January 2019, and a Chairperson and a Secretary were appointed.

Committee members were recruited by an invitation to the membership to express interest in the role and to outline their relevant experience. After some deliberation, eight members were selected and the **Hillwalking Committee** held its first meeting on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019.

The members of the new Hillwalking Committee are from a wide geographical spread and collectively offer a broad range of skills and experience.

**Gráinne McLaughlin** (Board Member and Chairperson) and **Ruth Whelan** (Mountaineering Ireland staff member and Secretary) are joined on the committee by **Chris Evans, Declan Murphy, Louise Nolan, Margaret Collins, Marian Wallis, Roy Madden, Russell Mills** and **Veronica Kelly**.

Short biographies follow, so that members can see the range of experience that the committee members bring to their role.

### Gráinne McLaughlin



Gráinne McLaughlin (Chairperson) has been a member of the **Irish Ramblers Club** since 1995 and has served on the committee of that club, both as New Members Secretary and as Training Officer.

She is retired and enjoys spending as much time as she can hiking, both in Ireland and abroad.

Gráinne joined the Board of Mountaineering Ireland in 2018 and chaired the working group which drew up the terms of reference and workplan for the newly formed Hillwalking Committee. She is looking forward to working with her committee colleagues on interesting and relevant issues during her time as chairperson and hopefully contributing positively to the development of hillwalking in Ireland, both now and into the future.

### Ruth Whelan



Ruth Whelan (Secretary) was Mountaineering Ireland's **Membership Development Officer** and for the past five years her responsibilities have

included increasing the membership of both hillwalkers and climbers and

supporting all members by coordinating services, gatherings and events, while also supporting the development of existing and new clubs.

To better align Ruth's role with Mountaineering Ireland's current strategic objectives, she will continue to be responsible for the above, but her role will now focus on developing hillwalking and supporting hillwalking members as the new **Hillwalking Development Officer**.

When Ruth first moved to Dublin, she completed the Four Peaks Challenge with some colleagues to raise money for charity. That cemented her love for mountains, by emphasising the companionship, remoteness and tranquillity that hillwalking offers. Her main areas for walking these days are around Wicklow and in the Comeragh Mountains. She has also climbed Kilimanjaro and walked and climbed in the French, Italian and Austrian Alps.

### Chris Evans



Chris Evans has been an active and enthusiastic hillwalker for the last fifteen or so years, following a career in teaching sport and fitness in further education. After being introduced to the hills by colleagues from work, he decided to

complete the **Mountain Leader** training and then went on to complete the then new **Hill and Moorland Leader** qualification at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre in 2014.

Since then, Chris has been teaching navigation and other outdoor skills to students in the Banbridge, Co Down, campus of Southern Regional College in Northern Ireland. Chris hopes that, during his time on the Hillwalking Committee, he will be able to represent the opinions of young people and to develop structures that facilitate and encourage their participation in hillwalking.

## Declan Murphy



Declan Murphy started hillwalking with his parents, who were enthusiastic hikers, and continued with it in the scouts and later with friends, mainly in the Dublin and Wicklow area but also in the west of Ireland and in the English Lake District.

Since his retirement from teaching in 2014, Declan has been hillwalking regularly with the **Irish Ramblers Club**. He has seen first-hand the huge changes in the sport: the numbers on the hills; the many paths and boardwalks; the erosion caused by hillwalkers; and the advances in technology with downloaded routes and GPS. He feels that the map and compass, and basic navigation skills, are not valued or used as much now as they should be.

## Louise Nolan



Louise Nolan is an active member of a Dublin hillwalking club and has been a member of Mountaineering Ireland for several years. She is a former Irish National Rally and International

Rally Group N Champion, and is now a regular hillwalker, hiking five to six times a month in the mountains of the 32 counties.

Louise feels that her experience and passion for the sport make her believe that, without a plan, hillwalking will not develop in a way that is sustainable for the mountains or for the people who love to hike in them. Access and the environment are important issues for her and she believes that we must encourage hillwalking with responsibility.

## Margaret Collins



Margaret Collins – Mags to some people – started walking in the Slieve Blooms with her father and her family when she was very young. In 2003, she joined **Glenwalk Hillwalking Club** and for approximately twelve years hiked with them every second weekend, becoming a walk leader.

Margaret did **MS1** and then **MS2**, and also taught on Glenwalk's map-reading weekends. She really enjoyed her time with Glenwalk and met many like-minded people there. She has hiked with friends all over Ireland and in Europe.

In 2008, Margaret completed the Camino, walking on her own the 800 kilometres to Santiago de Compostela. In 2015, she left Ireland and travelled around South and Central America and also went to New Zealand. She returned to Ireland in 2018 and got a job as a hiking tour guide in Kerry. She is passionate about hiking and conservation.

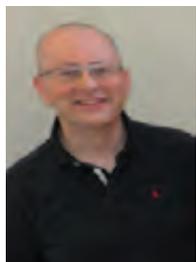
## Marian Wallis



Marian Wallis is a native of the Ballyhoura Mountains, a former member of **Limerick Climbing & Walking Club**, and currently a member of the **Ballyhoura Bears**. She has worked, travelled and walked in Africa, as well as in Europe and Ireland. For most of her life Marian has been actively involved in agriculture.

As both a landowner in a scenic area and an avid walker, Marian is interested in the future of hillwalking in Ireland as a co-operative enterprise between those who work the land and those who seek to spend their leisure time in the countryside. For her, walking in the mountains is a celebration of inner peace, tranquillity and a 'oneness' with creation.

## Roy Madden



Roy Madden has been an active member of the **Wayfarers** for fifteen years and has been on their committee for eight years, gaining a good insight into the challenges involved in

running a busy Mountaineering Ireland member club. He has hiked all over the world and enjoys challenge walks, having particularly fond memories of the Glover, the Galtees Walk, the Lug Walk and the Art O'Neill Walk.

Roy works as an IT manager and takes a lot of interest in how his club presents itself online via its website and social media. He is interested in working with the new Hillwalking Committee and in assisting Mountaineering Ireland to enhance the contents of its website, and its social media presence, to better appeal to hillwalkers.

## Russell Mills



A native of the Welsh borders, Russell Mills fell in love with the local hills at an early age, enjoying the quiet solitude of wild places, whether they be mountains, valleys or forests. Having spent

over forty years discovering the mountains of Wales, Scotland and Europe, Russell is now based in Dublin, where for the last seven years he has been a full-time **hiking guide** and **Mountain Skills provider**. He has also served on the committee of the **Hillwalkers Club** for five years and is currently their Training Officer.

Russell joined Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee to represent Mountain Skills providers and commercial guides, as well as to try to make a personal contribution to the future of hillwalking in Ireland.

## Veronica Kelly



Veronica Kelly is a member of **Wexford Hill Walking and Mountaineering Club** and has been an active hillwalker with the club for ten years. Currently she is the Club Secretary. Veronica is a psychology lecturer at

the Institute of Technology, Carlow.

Her interest is in the area of positive psychology and health and wellbeing. Being in the outdoors is an important way to benefit wellbeing psychologically.

Veronica hopes that through her role on Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee she can contribute to more people discovering the benefits of hillwalking ■

## SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS



The SARDA Ireland team on a training day

# TRAINING SEARCH DOGS

The Search and Rescue Dog Association, SARDA Ireland, has two newly qualified search and rescue dogs. **Sheelagh O'Malley** reports on their work and how they are trained to mountain rescue standard.

**M**ountain Rescue Ireland is busier than ever as an ever-growing number of people take to the hills for outdoor pursuits, inevitably resulting in an increasing number of emergency callouts.

Any member of a mountain rescue team who trains and responds to callouts has signed up to a way of life that involves dropping whatever they are doing

with their family or work, or in their own time in the mountains, to respond to a callout.

They do that because, firstly, there is a need for the service, and secondly, because they love it. All mountain rescue teams are made up of a wide variety of people from all walks of life, each bringing their own particular skills and experience to the team.

**Jarlath Folan**, from **Galway Mountain Rescue Team**, is a perfect example of this. Jarlath has been a member of the Galway team since 1997 and he trained and qualified his first search dog, **Hugo**, with the **Search and Rescue Dog Association, SARDA Ireland**, in 2010.

Hugo was a lovely springer spaniel. He loved his job and, together with Jarlath, responded to callouts all over Ireland until his retirement in 2014.

**Syd**, Jarlath's newly qualified search dog, is a handsome black labrador with a soft

nature and a massive work drive.

I have been a member of the **Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team** for eleven years now, and my recently qualified search dog, **Rowan**, is a very cute little collie cross, and fiercely smart.

Rowan came to me through a dog rescue organisation, **Protecting Pound Dogs**, which I contacted through social media when looking for a suitable dog to train. During my two years with him, Rowan has changed from being a nervous little fellow into a friendly, smart and talented search dog.

What Syd and Rowan both have in common is their rigorous training, which starts with basic obedience training and then continues with testing with livestock, what we call stock-testing.

As we obviously cannot deploy dogs that have an interest in sheep, cattle or deer, search dogs are trained by their handler to ignore these animals; they are then stock-tested by sheep farmers. If a dog does not pass

the stock test, its search training is discontinued.

If these hurdles are cleared, however, the fun part for the dog starts in earnest. Having developed the dog's play drive as much as possible through regular games with a toy, we then train the dog to bark for their reward. This is the basis of the find sequence, which is built up bit by bit.

Ultimately the sequence consists of the dog locating the 'casualty' by their scent in the air and then returning to the handler and indicating the find by barking, after which the dog brings the handler to the 'casualty.'

Qualified dogs are willing to work for hours on end – just to get a game of tug or fetch! Meanwhile, the handler's job is to plan the search, to direct the dog and to make sure that the search area has been covered completely.

SARDA Ireland dogs are tasked with a huge variety of situations, such as helping to find missing dementia patients and lost or injured people in different environments. They can also be used for locating

recently deceased individuals.

Air-scenting search dogs are capable of covering large areas of ground very quickly and do not require daylight to work. All our dogs are qualified to **'mountain rescue search dog standard'** which means that they can work in any type of area, be it coast, forest, farmland or high ground. As working in the mountains is obviously the most technically challenging of these terrains, it is the focus of a lot of our training. This also means that any handler of a mountain rescue search dog must be a 'mountain-ready human.'

Training a search dog is a hugely rewarding, time-consuming and sometimes perplexing experience. After training Rowan I have come to the realisation that the dog is actually training the handler, not the other way around. We are just a bit slow to understand the dog. It is basically really simple: they want to find the person in the area because they love the reward, which usually comes in the form of a game of tug or playing with a ball.

Rowan and Syd are part of a bigger team. SARDA Ireland currently has three other

## “Search dogs help find lost or injured people and missing dementia patients”

qualified dog teams: **Mick Grant** with his search dog **Ziggy**; **Louise Burgoyne** with **Lyla**; and **Éadaoin O’Gorman** with **Murphy**. These three handlers are all members of the **South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA)**. SARDA’s dog teams generally respond to taskings from An Garda Síochána, the Irish Coast Guard and other mountain rescue teams.

All these dogs will continue to work for as long as they are physically able and, after their retirement, they will live out their days as members of our families. Just in the last couple of years we have sadly lost two qualified dogs due to illness, and another as a result of their retirement. **Dexter** was an amazing retriever cross who was trained by **Gerry Tobin** of SEMRA. This dog team was magic to watch in action and made it all look deceptively easy. RIP, Dex.

**Catherine Kelly** lost **Lily** to a sudden but devastating illness. Catherine and Lily were a



Sheelagh O’Malley training Rowan, her search and rescue dog

super team, and we all learned a lot from them. RIP, Lily.

**Jarlath’s** dog **Hugo**, by then retired, passed away in 2017 and is fondly remembered by all that were lucky enough to meet him. **Pauliina Kauppila** (who is a member of **Castletownbere Coast Guard**), retired **Koiru** (affectionately known as **Granny Pup**) two years ago after 7½ years of service. It is not polite to talk about a lady’s age, so let’s just say Koiru is happily retired in beautiful west Cork.

Because the working life of a dog is relatively short (depending on the dog’s breed and conformation), we continually support the next generation of trainee dog teams. In order to keep the whole SARDA team vibrant and motivated, it is vital that we keep training up and qualifying

search dogs. Thankfully, we have a good few promising pups progressing through the training stages at present.

We cannot train without volunteer **'dogsodies'**, those remarkable individuals who hide in their bivvy bags on a cold mountainside or in a forest while the dog teams go about locating them. Some go on to train their own dog, but some do it simply to support SARDA Ireland, with no intention of ever training a dog. **Alun Saunders**, a member of **Bray Strollers Walking Club**, is a perfect example of this. He is Rowan’s biggest fan, and Rowan loves finding him more than anyone else.

We also owe big thanks to all **landowners**, **Coillte** and the **National Parks and Wildlife Service**, who give us permission to train on their lands ■



Jarlath Folan with Syd (right) and another search and rescue dog



➤ **Sheelagh O’Malley** is a member of the Search and Rescue Dog Association, SARDA Ireland. She is also a member of the Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team.

# ALONG THE BEARA WAY

The Clody Loafers spent a week walking on the Beara Way last summer. **Geraldine Dunne** reports.

**W**e are a small group of enthusiastic walkers from Bunclody, Co Wexford, who meet each week for walks on Mount Leinster and in the surrounding areas. We call ourselves the **Clody Loafers**. We are all members of Mountaineering Ireland and **Tullow Mountaineering Club**.

During one of our regular walks, we decided that we would like to arrange a week's walking in Ireland for the group. We decided to attempt the Beara Way at the end of June. The **Beara Way** covers a distance of 196 kilometres in the counties of Cork and Kerry on the most south-westerly tip of Ireland. It goes through rugged landscape, which is breathtakingly beautiful, and reaches out into Bantry Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

Our walk leader, **Catherine Cowman**, made enquiries about transport and accommodation, as we wanted to avoid bringing our

own cars. She contacted **Christopher Stacey** of **Footfalls Walking Holidays** and asked him if he could arrange a walking holiday package for the group. He arranged the trip's itinerary, accommodation, transport and guiding information, and he joined the group for the week. Clody Loafers had previously walked with Christopher on Ben Nevis, Snowdon and Scafell Pike, so we were confident that we would have a well-organised walking holiday.

## **Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> of June**

Our journey began when the Footfalls minibus picked up our group of fourteen walkers from Bunclody and transported us to Castletownbere, Co Cork, where the group stayed for two nights in a local guesthouse. After we arrived in Castletownbere, we decided we would like to visit Bere Island the next day.



Ardnakinna Point Lighthouse, Bere Island

## **Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> of June** *Bere Island: walk 12 km; ascent 420 m*

We enjoyed a relaxed walk around Bere Island, with a pleasant, short ferry trip over and back. We walked along old abandoned roads and grassy tracks through a rocky wilderness, which led us to **Ardnakinna Point Lighthouse** and on to the ruins of a **Napoleonic Signal Tower**. Such towers were built around 1806 to protect the south and west coasts of Ireland by keeping watch for any sign of invading ships. From there, we had magnificent panoramic views of **Bantry Bay** and **Bearhaven Harbour**. The seascapes were stunning in the clear sunshine and the sea breezes were appreciated.

## **Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> of June** *Glengariff-Adrigole: walk 18 km; ascent 280 m*

We started our walk from Glengariff and went through the **nature reserve**, which covers some 300 hectares, with the dominant habitat being old oak woodlands. We took a short detour to **Lady Bantry's Lookout**, where we had some wonderful views, and finished in **Adrigole** on the shores of Bantry Bay.

## **Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> of June** *Dursey Island*

We changed the itinerary again this day, when the group decided to skip the Adrigole to Allihies section of the Beara Way and go over to **Dursey Island** by the cable car, which takes up to six people. That is the only way to get to the island from the mainland.

As we walked on the island, we came across the ruins of **Kilmichael Church** and graveyard, and a signal tower offering beautiful views of the Skelligs to the north and Mizen Head to the south. Another view from Dursey Head was of Calf Island with its disused lighthouse.

Dursey was another picturesque island and the walking was relaxed. After returning to the mainland, we had a quick, breezy walk around to **Garnish Point**, finishing at Garnish pier, with a chance to cool our feet in the clear Atlantic water. A few of the group even took a swim.

## **Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> of June** *Allihies-Eyeries: walk 12 km; ascent 490 m*

The group set off from Allihies, where we walked past the disused mines on the **Allihies Copper Mines and Mountain**



Members of the group take a break between Castletownbere and Eyeries

## “We had beautiful views across Coulagh Bay to the Kerry coastline.”

**Mine Trail.** This trail continues along old disused roads, winding by the side of **Miskish Mountain** to beautiful views across **Coulagh Bay**, the Kenmare River and beyond to the Kerry coastline.

The temperatures were climbing and the highland breezes were welcome as we walked on the lower tracks between biodiverse ditches profuse with fuschia, foxgloves, honeysuckle and ferns, which trapped the heat. The walk finished in the pretty village of **Eyeries**.

Later on that evening, we met up with a Tullow Mountaineering Club group, who were staying and walking on the Beara peninsula for the week. We swapped stories and enjoyed the evening together.

**Thursday, 28<sup>th</sup> of June**  
**Eyeries-Lauragh: walk 27 km; ascent 950 m**

The group left early for this, the longest stage of the



View across Coulagh Bay to the Kerry coastline on the Iveragh peninsula

week's walk, with temperatures of around 30 degrees. A few of the group knocked 3 km off the start by avoiding the coastal loop down to **Pallas Strand**.

The group continued walking inland along by **Lough Fadda** (Long Lake). As we were about to approach the quaint village of **Ardgroom**, we had beautiful views of Ardgroom Harbour, Kenmare River and across to the MacGillycuddy Reeks. After a short break there, we soldiered on in the heat and crossed over the

border into County Kerry, walking along old mountain roads with **Keecragh** and **Tooth Mountains** in sight, and further on to a group of standing stones known as **Cashelkeelty Stone Circle**.

We continued along this trail, meeting a narrow path lined with rhododendrons following our way down into a forest, and eventually crossing over the Croanshagh River. Not far from here we arrived at the village of **Lauragh**. The minibus brought us to our accommodation in Kenmare.

**Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> of June**  
**Lauragh-Kenmare: walk 19 km; ascent 987 m**

Because of the heat, we decided to take 5 km off the road-walking at the start of the day's walk. Our driver dropped us off at Drombohilly Lower, near Tousist, to start with the soft mountain underfoot. This final walk of the week included the highest and toughest climb in hot conditions, onto **Knockgarraiff Mountain**.

The views from the top were spectacular, across to the Kenmare River, looking down

onto **Cloonee Loughs** Lower, Middle and Upper, and **Inchiquin Lough**.

After walking for a while, we saw the **Glaninchiquin waterfall** in the distance. Following the trail around to the left of **Derrysallagh**, it was not long till we reached the start of our soft descent, eventually meeting up with the main coastal road and finally reaching our destination, crossing over the bridge into Kenmare town.

**Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> of July**  
**Return to Bunclody**

Overall the standard of the way-marking on the Beara Way was excellent and the route was easy to follow. The vegetation was lush and colourful, and the scenery was spectacular. Each village we passed through had its own characteristics and all of the houses were decorated in vibrant colours.

The weather was exceptional, making the underfoot ground conditions a lot drier than usual and, in the evenings, we had some spectacular sunsets. The accommodation, food and west Cork hospitality that were arranged for us were excellent ■



Passing the disused copper mines between Allihies and Eyeries



➤ **Geraldine Dunne** has been a member of **Mountaineering Ireland** and of **Tullow Mountaineering Club** for the past seven years and is currently the club's **Environmental Officer**. She walks most Wednesday nights with the club - around **Mount Leinster, Kilbrannish, the Blackstairs, Brandon Hill, Lugnaquilla** and other parts of **Wicklow**.



# THE DELIGHTS OF JOYCE COUNTRY

**Aine McGirl** reports on a very successful weekend of learning about the mountain environment, enjoyed by club representatives and training providers.

**T**he **Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark** project area played host to Mountaineering Ireland's **Ecology of Mountains** workshop in May this year and what a playground we had for the weekend! From geology to plants and birds to the array of human interactions with the landscape, it was all there for us, an enthusiastic group, eager to explore, led by experts through an interesting and unique landscape. The entire weekend felt like being on a guided treasure hunt of the flora, fauna, geology, history and archaeology concentrated in this area.

The base for our weekend was the lovely village of Clonbur, in the shadow of Binn Shléibhe. Community pride in the village is obvious, not least in the venue for our evening talks, the wonderfully restored **All Saints Heritage Centre**. Involvement of the local community is fundamental to the Geopark group's work towards sustainable development of the area. The theme of community connection is epitomised by **Trish Walsh**, Director of **Petersburg Outdoor**

**Top: Participants on the Ecology of Mountains weekend overlooking the Srahnalong Valley on Maumtrasna.**

**Education Centre** and voluntary chairperson of the Geopark project.

Parts of this community are under threat. On our visit to **Joe Joyce**, sheep farmer and sheepdog breeder, he spoke of the vanishing way of life for upland sheep farmers, which caused him to diversify into an area of interest, breeding pedigree sheepdogs. We were entertained, not only by **Spot**, being expertly manoeuvred to herd sheep around various obstacles, but also by the dogs not asked to work, as they bounded around their pens clearly communicating 'pick me, pick me.'

**Below: Identifying flowers on the limestone pavement in Clonbur Woods.**



▶ **Aine McGirl** is an avid hillwalker, a Mountain Leader and a member of several walking clubs across Ireland. She loves exploring and learning about nature and is studying environmental science at UCD. She has recently joined Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee.



Photographs: Harm Deenen (overlooking Srahnalong Valley), Helen Lawless (identifying flowers)

We were charmed by the sheepdog puppies at just three weeks old, and Joe kept a close eye to ensure none were spirited away inside a rucksack!

## Rock formations

The geology of the Joyce Country is complex and, over the weekend, various rock formations were interpreted for us by **Trish Walsh**, **Kevin 'Geo' O'Callaghan** from GMIT and Joyce Country geologist **Benjamin Thébaudeau**.

The limestone pavements in Clonbur Woods, with their unusual egg-box pitting, are a remnant of Ireland's tropical history (when the continent lay in the lower latitudes).

The colourful chert-containing boulders and the amazing pillow lava formations on Bencorragh, near Finny, point to the processes of mountain-building and volcanic eruptions that are being replicated today under the Pacific Ocean.

Evidence of the last Ice Age abounds in the many corrie or cirque lakes in the area.

It is upon this geological base that the blanket bog of the area formed. High rainfall caused iron in the soil to accumulate in a layer called an iron pan. This impermeable layer led to waterlogging and the formation of peat. The iron pan layer could be seen clearly where a profile of the peat and underlying soils was exposed. We also saw pieces of charcoal under the iron pan, suggesting that the forests which covered the area thousands of years ago had been burned.

With input from GMIT's **Orla Prendergast**, **Trish Walsh** shared her passion for the history of the people of the area as we searched for booley huts, used when our ancestors grazed their cattle on the hillside during the summer months. It is believed they made butter and a soft cheese as a means to preserve the milk, reminding me of my childhood book, *Heidi*, and her times in the hills herding goats.

## Birdlife

The sheep farmers in the area are not the only endangered species, as the variety of birdlife in these uplands is low. Ecologist **Jackie Hunt** gave us three ways to spot birds, either in the flesh, from their song or call, or by their droppings. Skylarks, meadow pipits and wagtails made an appearance, but just one snipe revealed itself. Red grouse droppings were found on the plateau of Maumtrasna, where a golden plover was also heard calling.

The limited birdlife is reflected in the poor survival of predator birds in the area, despite the passionate work of National Parks and Wildlife Service ranger **Irene O'Brien** and her colleagues. Irene described lots of adversity and adventure in her role, recording, ringing and monitoring iconic species such as merlin, peregrine, kestrel and hen harrier. I was in awe, and a



**Top: Trish Walsh explaining the geology of Joyce Country; note the egg-box pitting of the limestone pavement.**

**Below: A volcanic outcrop with red and green chert.**

little envious, of her job and the breath-taking spots she must access to record these species. Sadly, her wonderful photos of adults and little fluffy chicks were as close as we got to raptors over the weekend.

## Plantlife

Being up close and personal to plantlife was the highlight of my weekend and, with **Rory Hodd**, we were expertly led on our treasure hunt. From flowers to grasses to mosses and liverworts, the rare and unique plant life of our uplands was identified in abundance.

In a short few steps seven different grasses were shown to us. These included mat grass, which is full of silica, so sheep don't graze it. There were lots of flowering plants, including the ubiquitous tormentil, as well as the occasional lousewort. ➤



## MOUNTAIN ENVIRONMENT



I learned that heath milkwort was also known as ‘*Na deirfiúiríní*’ or the four little sisters, referring to the four different colours of flower – blue, white, pink and mauve – and we saw all four. We found wild strawberry in flower, in a location to be kept under wraps until harvesting! We found species that grow only in the west of Ireland, including St Dabeoc’s heath, as well as the more recently arrived, but now widespread, invasive species New Zealand willowherb. The latter reminded us of the constant threat to our plantlife, much in evidence in the

**Top left: Kevin examining soil layers so as to interpret the sedimentary history of the valley.**

**Above right: Rory Hodd describing upland grass species to participants on the Ecology of Mountains weekend.**

**Left: Insectivorous plants sundew and butterwort on wet, peaty ground.**

**Below: Aine McGirl admiring an ancient pine stump exposed in the blanket bog below Bencorragh.**

We also saw the randomness and precariousness of nature, with the common haircap moss that is only fertilised when drops of water carrying the male sperm from specially adapted ‘splash cups’ successfully land on female plants, or the tiny island of base-rich soil precariously positioned on a boulder in a fast-moving stream and acting as home to upward of fourteen higher plant species. It was a fascinating adventure, made all the more absorbing by using a hand lens to see into this micro-world.

It was a jam-packed weekend of exploration and discovery, with a group passionate about the outdoor world, including many Club Environmental Officers.

In Sunday’s wrap-up session each participant said how they would share the knowledge gained on the weekend. My mission is to share what I can with hillwalking companions, to inspire their curiosity in our uplands, and, of course, to keep on exploring!

### Acknowledgments

Mountaineering Ireland extends thanks to all who contributed to the Ecology of Mountains event, particularly **Petersburg Outdoor Education Centre**, the **Outdoor Education** programme at **GMIT Mayo**, and **Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geo Enterprise** ■



profusion of flowering rhododendron seen on the local roadsides.

As we explored banks and ledges we heard some great stories, like that of **Ellen Hutchins**. She lived in Ballylickey, Co Cork, and was Ireland’s first female botanist, in the early 1800s. She was chronically ill for most of her life and died before the age of 30. Despite her short life and concentrating her efforts near her home on Bantry Bay, she made several botanical discoveries, some of which bear her name and earned her an international reputation. We found one of her liverwort discoveries, *Herbertus hutchinsiae*.





**Trish Walsh** describes the value of the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark Project and how the Ecology of Mountains weekend was the kind of educational tourism to best promote it.

Geoparks help to tell us the fascinating stories of geological, social, cultural and economic history of specific areas. Elevated to UNESCO status since 2015, there are now 140 Geoparks across the globe.

Why would rural communities in the west of Ireland wish to gain this designation? For the most part, it is because they have equal status to World Heritage Sites but don't carry any legislative responsibility or impose restrictions on people, landowners, farmers or industry.

They also promote economic and social development, business and job creation, based around tourism and small- or micro-enterprises in food, crafts and the arts.

The designation essentially becomes a marketing tool to promote the locality for tourism, increasing visitor numbers, which in turn helps drive economic activity and boost employment.

The Joyce Country and Western Lakes area obviously requires some impressive geology to earn this designation. What was enjoyable about Mountaineering Ireland's recent Ecology of the Mountains weekend was how it showcased exactly what the area has to offer, and we only had time to see a portion of it.

On the Friday evening, participants were amazed to see the unique

**Above:**  
**Trish Walsh**  
**(centre) with**  
**participants on**  
**the hills above**  
**Finny.**

**Below: Ged**  
**Dowling standing**  
**on an outcrop of**  
**pillow lava.**

weathering patterns on the limestone pavement on the shores of Lough Mask. They also saw what ancient woodlands in Clonbur look like.

Saturday focused initially on glacial features; this was followed by an exploration of the ecology of uplands on the Maumtrasna plateau, and especially its flora.

Sunday was all about an ocean that no longer exists, and rock formations called pillow lavas, and their associated flora, while the alternative walk focused on fulachta fiadha, a Bronze Age hill fort, volcanic breccias and red and green chert.

There seemed to be a general consensus that it was a great area for hillwalking and for learning about the environment, which is exactly the result that the local group who are driving this project wish to hear, as promoting educational tourism is a key element on the road to Geopark status.

A Joyce Country and Western Lakes project website is now up and running at [www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie](http://www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie) and a Facebook page is also set up at [www.Facebook.com/JCWLG](http://www.Facebook.com/JCWLG).

The website has a 'Discover the Geopark Project' menu, including local attractions, towns and villages, things to do, maps, trails and itineraries.

Under the 'Our Geopark Project Territory' tab you will find details on the geological history of the area, landscapes, habitats, wildlife, culture and people. There is also a 'Learning and Resources' section being developed, so keep returning to the website as information is added and updated ■



► **Trish Walsh** is the Chairperson of Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geo Enterprise and Director of Petersburg Outdoor Education Centre.



Sandy beach at Lough Shannagh

# BECOMING A MOUNTAIN LEADER

**Fergal Harrington** describes how he successfully completed the **Mountain Leader (ML) Award** programme.

I would imagine most readers of the *Irish Mountain Log* have more hillwalking experience than I had in January 2017, when I signed up for the **Mountain Skills** training programme!

The little experience I had was of sections of the Kerry Way, where I first discovered the peaceful beauty and immersive feeling of being out on the hills. Of course, back then, I didn't have any aspirations of becoming a Mountain Leader, but I hoped that completing **Mountain Skills 1 and 2** in January and February 2017 would allow me to explore more of our uplands. In fact, it actually opened up a whole new world to me.

By October 2017, I had completed the requisite fourteen mountain walks and had passed the **Mountain Skills Assessment**. As my experience grew, so did my desire to share the beauty and freedom of the mountains with others, and I began considering undertaking the **Mountain Leader (ML)** training programme, to give me the skills to look after others in the mountains.

Firstly, I completed a **Remote Emergency First Aid Certified Course (Rec 3)**, which is valid for two years. Via the Mountaineering Ireland website ([www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)), I signed up for the **Mountain Leader Training 1 and 2** programmes.

**ML1** took place between December 7-9<sup>th</sup>

2017, in Connemara, where we based ourselves in Leenane.

ML1 includes both classroom and outdoor elements covering mountain weather, route-planning, leadership responsibilities and first-aid emergencies, as well as day and night navigation, movement over steep ground and self-location techniques.

Conditions were challenging and memorable. In my notes, I recall writing 'Need better hat or balaclava for protection from the blizzards' which we experienced in the Maumturks.

Invigorated with positivity from ML1, we set up our lakeside camp the following weekend for the **ML2** training at Coomyanna, just outside Sneem, Co Kerry. This was my first ever wintertime camp and, I thought to myself, it was cool. The colours and stillness of the sunrise were breathtaking and I felt privileged to be there.

Winter camping requires having the appropriate gear, most of which I had borrowed but which I have since purchased for myself. Good winter camping skills are essential for the **Mountain Leader**



Deciding on the next challenging leg (from left): Conall Ó Fiannachta, Barry Hannigan, Ronnie Smith and Fergal Harrington



► **Fergal Harrington** is a marketing professional from Shankill, Co Dublin, with a passion for the outdoor life. He is the owner of *Alaind Lodges* in Sneem, Co Kerry, where he offers walking holidays via his website, [alaind.ie](http://alaind.ie).

**Assessment**, which involves a three-day and two-night mountain expedition. On completion of ML2, our debriefing greenlighted us for the consolidation phase in preparation for the ML assessment, the next of which would be held in November 2018 and March 2019.

ML Assessment candidates must build up their experience by logging hundreds of hours and kilometres in different mountain conditions and unfamiliar terrain. Like most assessment candidates, I used the digital log on Mountaineering Ireland's website. It takes a bit of getting used to, but if you use the system from the start it will save you time and effort as the assessment date approaches.

I recommend reaching out to qualified leaders, as their insight and experience is invaluable and, to the ones I approached, I am immensely grateful for their generosity in giving of their time and knowledge.

I had the opportunity to observe on both Mountain Skills 1 and 2 courses, which I found a great opportunity to refresh my own practical skills, to watch how other trainers managed their groups and to hear the aspirations of those attending the course.

The log book requirements, i.e., the consolidation period, is undeniably a considerable commitment, which is why I opted to aim for the later March 2019 assessment. However, once you set yourself goals and targets, you can and will complete the consolidation and, importantly, the sense of achievement along the way is sweet.

As I built up my log, I began switching my focus to leading others, which I found most satisfying and rewarding. As part of the requirements, I organised a weekend expedition to Kerry, which was my opportunity to put all of my skills into practice. I organised the accommodation and the days' activities, including route-planning in the Dunkerron Mountains, with contingencies for both deteriorating weather and the group's ability.

Our group of six had different levels of experience but all thoroughly enjoyed themselves; they especially enjoyed the sights of wild goats and white-tailed eagles on the cliff faces, the friendly banter, the crystal-clear views across Iveragh and west Cork, and, for some, the optional extra day's climb to the snow-covered summit of Carrauntoohil.

With my logbook requirements complete, I nervously looked forward to the **Mountain Leader Assessment** between March 8-11<sup>th</sup> 2019 in the Mourne Mountains. We had some pre-assessment written assignments to complete on environmental, flora, fauna and best practice and policies topics, which required quite a bit of study.



Second night's Moyad Road campsite near Pigeon Rock

## Assessment

The group of seven candidates and two assessors (Kieran O'Hara and Ronnie Smith) gathered on the evening of Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, at Meelmore Lodge, not far from Tollymore, Co Down, where introductions were made and the structure of the weekend discussed.

On the Saturday morning, with our gear double-checked, we split into two groups, each with an assessor. From here on, the objective was to know where you were always, regardless of who was leading the navigational leg.

Initially, I felt panic. I should have done better on my initial navigational leg. Surprisingly, however, I realised the assessors were not only assessing but also offering helpful advice when appropriate.

Quickly, my fellow candidates and I found our rhythm and we grew in confidence as we perfected our pacing, timing and feature-reading abilities, notwithstanding being loaded up with heavy backpacks.

Being able to always point to your current location on a map requires constant focus, but it made the time to reaching our campsite pass quickly. The weather was harsh, with gusting winds and

driving snow, but it all added to the satisfaction of what we were aiming to achieve.

When navigation or leadership issues arose, we resolved them quickly and learned from them. It is this concentrated learning opportunity that is the overriding benefit of the assessment weekend. We had a nervous wait to learn the outcome of the assessment, but it was clearly evident how much it meant to all of us.

I intend to use my new Mountain Leader qualification to attract walkers for active holidays to my B&B accommodation in Sneem, Co Kerry ([www.alaind.ie](http://www.alaind.ie)). With my professional skills and liability insurance cover in place, I will be leading guests through some of the most beautiful upland areas in our country so that they have fabulous lasting memories to take away.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank all those who supported me along the way to becoming a Mountain Leader, particularly **Alan Mordaunt, Milly De Buitléar, Wayne Jenkins, Niall Ennis** and, of course, **Sneem Walking Club, Tim Orr, Kevin O'Hara, Ronnie Smith** and **Mountaineering Ireland** ■

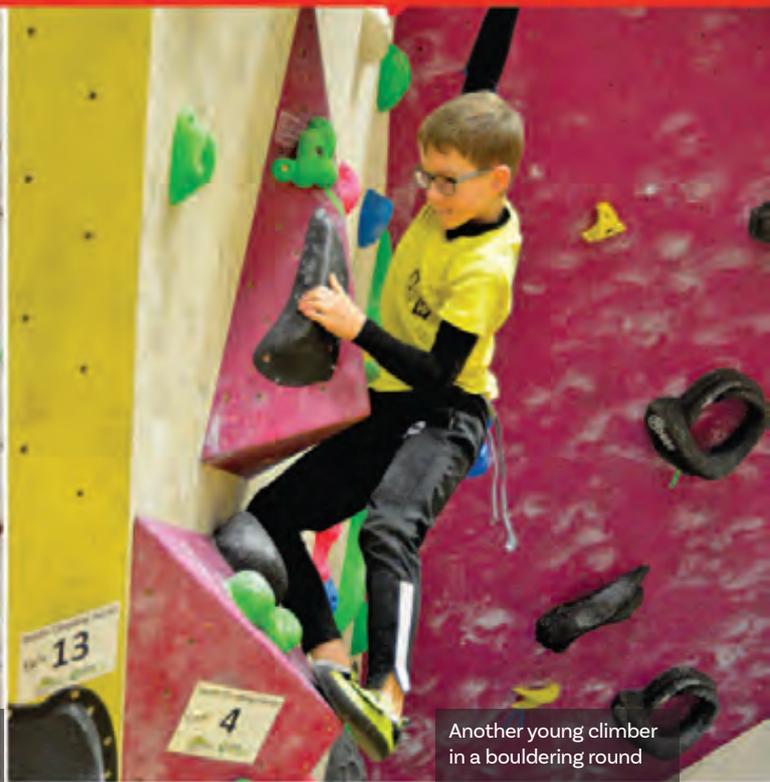
Tired but happy: newly qualified Mountain Leaders (from left) Conall Ó Fiannachta, Barry Hannigan and Fergal Harrington.



# Climbing



Keira setting up for a big move at Awesome Walls Dublin



Another young climber in a bouldering round

## 2019 YOUTH CLIMBING SERIES

A competition report by **John Henchion**

The new format for the **2019 Youth Climbing Series** was warmly welcomed by all who participated in this year's competition. The change saw competitors focusing on one discipline on the day rather than having to do both bouldering and routes on the same day, as in previous years. It allowed route-setters more opportunity to set interesting problems and routes, as well as making the day more streamlined and enjoyable for the competitors and their parents.

The opening round took place in January at the **Dublin Climbing Centre**, with over 125 children competing in bouldering across the various age categories. Large numbers in many categories saw some very close scoring and a very high standard of climbing.

Round two took us to the amazing **Foyle Arena** in Derry for the first round of the route-climbing element of the competition. With the best

three scores to count for the four rounds, it was important to get at least one good score in the first two rounds to be in with a chance to qualify for the Grand Final. The round saw a large turn-out in Derry and some very strong climbing across all categories.

The third round saw the competitors back for a round of bouldering at the newly extended bouldering wall at **Awesome Walls**, Cork, which greatly impressed all of those visiting it for the first time. The growing popularity of bouldering was evident from the numbers entering the competition there.

The fourth and final round in Ireland saw the climbers taking on routes at **Awesome Walls**, Dublin, with many still looking to qualify for the Grand Finals, and most not knowing if they were successful until the results were announced.

Over the four rounds, many of the usual names reached the podium, but it was great

to see some fantastic performances by some climbers new to the competition scene, and the ongoing growth of the Youth Climbing Series.

The new format allowed for a new venue for the UK and Ireland Grand Final, ending a run of many years travelling to Ratho, Edinburgh. This year the competition was split over two days and two venues in Sheffield. Saturday saw everyone visiting the new bouldering wall at **The Depot**, while Sunday saw the routes taking place at **Awesome Walls** in Sheffield.

For the fourth year in succession, Ireland had a category winner, with **Matthew Murray** taking first place in Boys C, to add to his win previously when in Boys E. His brother, **Dylan Murray**, also kept up the family honour,

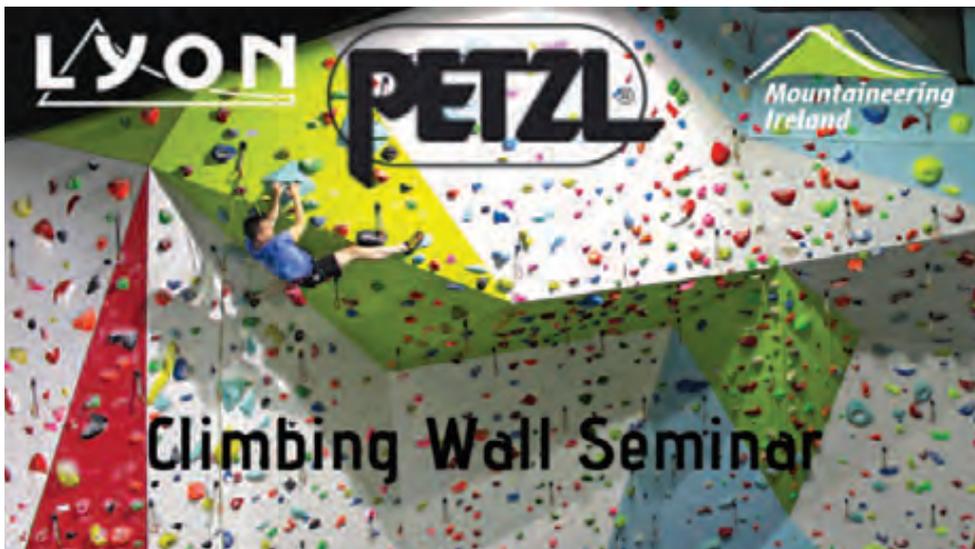
making the finals on both Saturday and Sunday and finishing 4<sup>th</sup> overall in Boys E.

There were many fine performances by members of the Mountaineering Ireland team over the weekend, with other finalists on the Sunday including **Ilmur Jonsdottir** (6<sup>th</sup> overall), **Sean Henchion** (5<sup>th</sup> overall) and **Bonita Thurston** (joint 12<sup>th</sup> with **Faith Blaney**).

Already thoughts are turning to 2020 dates and venues. Given the overall success of the new format, it can be anticipated that there will only be minor changes ahead.

As always, thanks must be given to our sponsors, **Great Outdoors**, **Mountaineering Ireland**, the host walls, the route-setters at each venue and to all the parents who volunteered to help run the events on the day ■





## CLIMBING WALL SEMINAR October 8-9<sup>th</sup>, 2019

A Climbing Wall Seminar is being organised by Mountaineering Ireland in association with Petzl and Lyon Equipment.

The seminar is aimed at anyone who has an interest in climbing walls, including owners, managers, coaches, instructors, route-setters, technical advisors, etc.

The seminar will take place on October 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> in Blanchardstown, Dublin. Further details will be made available shortly.



# BURREN MEET

September 6-8<sup>th</sup>, 2019



The Burren is an expansive, rocky limestone landscape, making it a prime destination for trad climbers. This year's Burren Meet is an open club event organised by the **Dal Riada Climbing Club** and the **Irish Mountaineering Club**. The meet will take place over the weekend of September 6-8<sup>th</sup> and will be open to all climbers. Youth climbers can attend, provided they have suitable adult supervision.

There is plenty of accommodation available in Doolin and the nearby village of Fanore. Guest speakers will be scheduled for Friday and Saturday evening – details will be announced closer to the date. It is a short distance along the coast from either Doolin or Fanore to the roadside crag at **Ballyryan**. Here you will

find routes graded from VDiff to E1, making it a great place to practice lead climbing and to set up a few bottom ropes.

We will also explore some other crags at **Ailladie**, such as Dancing Ledges and, for the more experienced climber, the Aran and Mirror Walls, which are a short distance from Ballyryan.

Although the meet does not include any formal instruction, Dal Riada and Irish Mountaineering Club members will be happy to share their climbing experience with you.

Lots of other options are available, including superb bouldering down at the seafront, so be sure to head to the Burren on September 6<sup>th</sup> for some mega rock climbing!

Further information will be available closer to the date.

# IRISH BOULDERING CHAMPIONSHIP

The 2019 Irish Bouldering Championship: a report by **Damien O'Sullivan**

The 2019 Irish Bouldering Championship took place at the **Dublin Climbing Centre** over the weekend of April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>. Youth climbers competed on Saturday and the Senior climbers took their turn on the Sunday.

The setting team of **Rob Hunter, Chloe Condron** and **Brian Hall** had the task of setting the qualification and final round boulder problems for each of the categories. The Dublin Climbing Centre's open layout bouldering wall and Mountaineering Ireland's stock of climbing holds allowed the setting team to set a very modern, exciting style of boulder problems.

Saturday's competition was an amazing show of impressive young climbers from all over Ireland as well as several visitors from England. The competition included climbers in Youth C

(age 12-13), Youth B (age 14-15) and Youth A (age 16-17) competition categories.

Each competition category had a selection of eight boulder problems to attempt in their qualification round. The climbers were well tested in the qualification round, with only two climbers - **Sean O'Connor** and **Marcus McDowell** in Male Youth A - managing to reach the top of all eight problems.

At the end of the qualification round, the top five climbers in each category progressed on to the final round. For the final round the climbers were given four boulder problems to attempt.

In Female Youth A it was a very close contest between **Anna De Souza** and **Paola Neal-Fagan** for first place. Anna secured first place in the end by needing fewer attempts. **Jessica McGarry**

took third place, scoring one less top.

The final round for Male A was an even tighter affair, with **Sean O'Connor** and **Marcus McDowell** reaching the top of all four problems on their first attempts, requiring a countback to the qualification round to give Sean first place. **Tommy Myles** took third place with three tops.

In Female B, it was again extremely close between **Faith Blaney** and **Rhyna Conroy**. Faith took first place by requiring fewer attempts to score her Tops and Zones. A strong performance from **Bonita Thurston** was enough for her to secure third place.

Male Youth B was again too close to call in the final round, with both **Luca McDowell** and **George Lassov** topping all four problems on their first attempt. A countback to the qualification round was

needed and went in Luca's favour. **Seán Brown** put in a very strong performance in the final, finishing in third place.

In Female C, **Caelin Lenehan, Eabha Hallissey** and **Eve Buckley** were in flying form, scoring all four Tops and Zones in the final, only to be split on the number of attempts. Caelin took first, with second and third going to Eabha and Eve respectively.

**Sam Monedero-Egan** capped off a great season with a win in the very competitive Male C category, followed by **Zach McCune** in second and **Fionn O'Connor** in third.

On Sunday, the Senior climbers took their turn on the problems set by Rob, Chloe and Brian for the competition. They had a qualification round of twelve boulder problems, followed by a final round of four. Although the numbers of climbers competing in the Senior section of the competition was low, the quality of the climbing was very high. Through the qualification round both **Lucy Mitchell** and **Victoria Watterson** looked to be in contention for the top spot on the Senior Females podium. **Trish Fox** was also climbing well and was kept in focus by **Christina McInerney** and **Lia Peare-Kavanagh**.

In the Senior Males, **Daragh O'Connor, Ciaran Scanlon, Michael O'Neill** and **Mark Scanlon** were in strong form, topping all twelve of the problems in the qualification round.

In the final round for the Senior females, **Lucy Mitchell** made light work of three of the problems to secure first

Photograph: Tom O'Neill

Victoria Watterson and Darragh O'Connor





Ciaran Scanlon

Photo: Tom O'Neill

place. **Victoria Watterson** topped two problems and scored the Zone on all four problems to finish in second place. **Trish Fox** kept her cool

and climbed smoothly, scoring two Tops and two Zones to complete the podium.

The final round for the

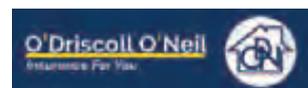


Written by  
Damien O'Sullivan,  
Climbing Development  
Officer

Senior males was a challenging affair, with a noticeable increase in the level of difficulty of the problems. **Michael O'Neill** and **Ciaran Scanlon** were both climbing well, with Ciaran showing great determination. Despite their best efforts, and those of the setters, there was no stopping **Darragh O'Connor**, who scored three Tops in just six attempts and three Zones in five attempts to take the top spot on the podium.

Thanks to everyone who assisted with the judging of

the competition over both days. Thanks also to the setting team of **Rob Hunter**, **Chloe Condon** and **Brian Hall** for going above and beyond the call of duty to create a great set of problems. In addition, thanks to the **Dublin Climbing Centre** for hosting the competition. Finally, special thanks to **O'Driscoll O'Neil Insurance** for sponsoring the competition ■



# 2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship

19th & 20th of October



The **Irish Lead Climbing Championship** provides an International Federation of Sports Climbing (IFSC) style of lead climbing competition for Irish climbers. This championship is one of the two national championships run by Mountaineering Ireland. The **2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship** takes place at **Awesome Walls Dublin** over the weekend of October 19-20<sup>th</sup>. Youth climbers compete on the Saturday and Senior climbers on the Sunday.

The Irish Lead Climbing Championship is an excellent competition for spectators to enjoy. Come along and see some top climbers in action.

For more information and to enter online, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website page [mountaineering.ie/climbing/competitionclimbing/irishleadclimbingchampionship](http://mountaineering.ie/climbing/competitionclimbing/irishleadclimbingchampionship) or go to [bit.ly/2XfSx6w](http://bit.ly/2XfSx6w).



# YOUTH CLIMBING TEAM

A report by **Damien O'Sullivan**

The International Federation of Sports Climbing (IFSC) European Youth Cup in bouldering is a key focus for the members of the Mountaineering Ireland Youth Climbing Team. The competition attracts the top young climbers from the climbing nations across Europe. The standard of climbing is always exceptionally high, with many of the competitors making the transition to senior international level. **Janja Garnbret**, the winner of the 2019 IFSC Boulder World Cup, was a very recent competitor in the European Youth Cup! Under the guidance of



The Youth Climbing Team on a visit to Portugal



Jude McInerney

the Youth Climbing Team's Head Coach, **Rob Hunter**, training sessions for the Youth Climbing Team took place monthly during the winter. The **Gravity Climbing Centre** provided the venue for those training sessions and assisted with the cost of setting bespoke competition-style boulder problems for the team members to train on.

In addition to these competition-practice focused sessions, the team members also took part in a competition-climbing sports psychology training session with the renowned Austrian sports psychologist **Madeleine Eppensteiner**.

This year, the European Youth Cup took place across three rounds, in Portugal, Austria and Bulgaria. Rob Hunter was

enthused by the performance of the team members at the competitions. He noted that the individual competitors' performances were steadily improving and progress was being made towards moving up the rankings.

Like many sports, the results of a climbing competition do not always tell the full picture. Bouldering competitions are scored on the number of Tops and Zones achieved by each competitor, so even if you are only a millimetre off the hold you may as well be a metre off it.

The team will continue to train over the summer in preparation for the IFSC European Youth Cup which takes place in Brixen, Italy, in September ■

# BLANKET PEAT

**Peter Wilson** explains the origins of blanket peat and why this remarkable substance deserves our respect and protection in the mountain environment.

**Above: Blanket peat terrain occupying the low, broad ridges of the north Sperrin Mountains.**

**Below: Detail of a pine stump exposed by peat erosion. The scale bar is 30 cm in length.**

It goes without saying that every hillwalker in Ireland must have experienced blanket peat terrain at some time because it occurs in all our upland areas. Commonly referred to as bog, it is extensive and thick on the gentle slopes that surround the hills and on the broad ridges and plateaux that characterise summit areas. Only where the slope gradient exceeds about 20-25 degrees is this thick peat normally absent.

Because of its ability to retain water, peat-covered ground makes for rather soft and tiring walking. This is even more so where bog vegetation has been denuded and walkers are faced with acres of black peat, often dissected by gullies. There are numerous stories of walkers sinking up to their knees or hips, having stepped on what they thought was firm ground. Extrication can be a slow and dirty business.

However, even if you haven't experienced the delights of cold, waterlogged peat on your inner thighs, you will at least have had peat oozing into your boots at some time. For these reasons, much cursing and swearing is frequently directed at peat, even by the most mild-mannered of people.

Nevertheless, peat is also a remarkable substance, providing, as it does, a record of former climate and vegetation, and a habitat for plants and animals, without which our uplands would be much poorer.

In addition, peat is hugely important in relation to the environment. The ability of peat to retain water and regulate its release is of great significance, as is the role it plays in carbon storage and greenhouse gas control.

## Before the peat

Peat was not always present on the hills. As the uplands emerged from the last episode of glaciation, lower hill-slopes had a cover of glacial sediments, with steeper slopes and summits showing much more of the rock skeleton than they do now. Gradually, as the climate continued to warm, the hillsides were colonised by trees and shrubs, some of which extended onto the high plateaux.

The remains of these ancient woodlands can sometimes be seen where peat has been cut away by humans or eroded. At lower levels, much of the woody material consists of the tough stumps and roots of pine. At higher levels, tree remains tend to be less frequent at the base of the peat, but where present they usually consist of pieces of birch, which are softer and more fragile than the pine. In contrast, the so-called bog oaks are generally associated with the raised bogs that occupy low-lying areas of the landscape, particularly the midlands.

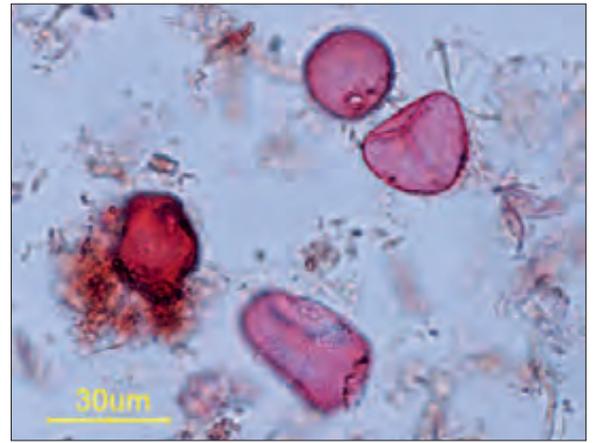
## Climate change or human impact?

The replacement of the upland woods by heathland species and the extensive accumulations of peat occurred at different times in different areas. ▶



▶ **Peter Wilson** is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland. He is a lecturer and author in aspects of the physical geography of mountain regions.





Pollen grains extracted from blanket peat (clockwise from top): grass, *Sphagnum*, sedge, hazel. Photo courtesy of Dr Gill Plunkett, Queen's University, Belfast.

because of the waterlogged conditions and the lack of oxygen in the bog. If you pull a lump of peat apart, the leaves, stems and fruits of plants that once grew on the bog surface will be seen. These are sometimes sufficiently well preserved to be identified without the use of a microscope or hand lens. Various heathers, grasses, sedges, bilberry and mosses (especially *Sphagnum*) make up the bulk of most blanket peat.

Throughout the development of peat, slightly warmer and drier climatic phases have alternated with slightly cooler and wetter ones. These changes are evident in peat profiles. Layers that show a high degree of plant decomposition reflect warmer and drier conditions, while layers in which plant remains are better preserved indicate cooler and wetter phases.

By examining the full thickness of peat at any location the vegetational history of the site can be established. Changes in the former vegetation over time can also be determined by treating samples of peat with reagents that digest the peat but preserve pollen grains. These pollen grains can tell us which plants grew on the bog and in the surrounding area.

Why the woodlands declined at the expense of heath and peat has been debated for many years. Some scientists believe a change to cooler and wetter conditions caused the trees to die. Others point the finger at woodland clearance and the subsequent decline in soil fertility brought about by Neolithic and Bronze Age farming communities some 6,000-2,500 years ago, as appears to be the case at the Céide Fields in north Mayo. There are yet others who think the change resulted from a combination of the two.

Radiocarbon dating has shown that the spread of blanket peat on lower mountain slopes coincided with both climatic deterioration and prehistoric agricultural activity. However, on high ridges and plateaux early agriculture was probably a less important factor. Deterioration in the climate is the probable cause of peat growth in those locations.

In the east of the country, upland blanket bog generally occurs at elevations above about 250 metres, while in the west it is found above 150 metres. This east-west difference reflects the greater rainfall amounts at lower levels in the west. Furthermore, lowland blanket peat is extensive across ground below 150 metres, and even along the coast in western counties because of the high rainfall.

The term blanket bog is a very appropriate one because the peat extends and wraps itself across the landscape, following the natural undulations of the terrain, just as a giant blanket would do if cast across the hills. In the uplands blanket peat can attain thicknesses of 2-6 metres.

### Peat composition

Peat is made up of the partially decomposed remains of plants. They haven't decayed completely

**Above: Pine stumps exposed by peat-cutting in Donegal.**

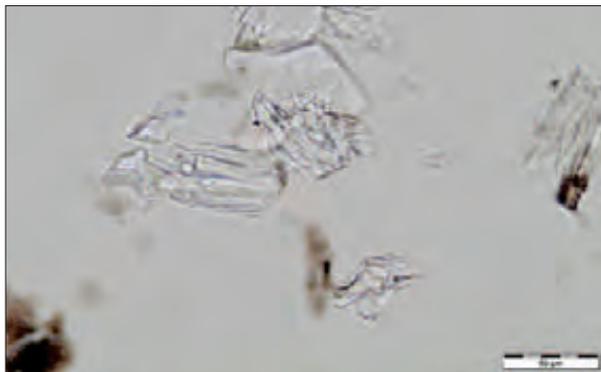
**Below: Lowland blanket peat at sea level on Achill Island.**





Another material that has been found in blanket bogs is volcanic ash or tephra from Icelandic volcanoes. These volcanoes have erupted many times over the past few thousand years and some of the ash has travelled towards Ireland. A recent example was the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in April 2010, which caused widespread disruption to air travel in northern Europe. When ash eventually falls from the atmosphere some lands on bogs; it gets trapped and incorporated into the peat mass as the bog grows.

**Above: An example of severe peat erosion - hags and groughs - on Benleagh in the Wicklow Mountains.**



Glassy particles of tephra from blanket peat in the Mournes. The tephra is from an eruption of the Icelandic volcano Hekla 4,300 years ago. Photo courtesy of Dr Gill Plunkett, Queen's University, Belfast.

**Right: Water emerging from a sub-peat tunnel in the Mournes.**



**Below: Bog burst scars on Crocknalaragagh, Co Donegal.**

Although invisible to the naked eye, tephra can be extracted and its chemistry analysed to ascertain which volcano it came from. The associated peat layer can be radiocarbon dated to establish the timing of the eruption. Climate scientists and archaeologists have been able to link Icelandic eruptions with societal changes in Irish history and prehistory.

## Peat erosion

The erosion of peat can be seen today on most of our hills and should be of concern to all who use the uplands, whether for recreation or to earn a livelihood. It is not a simple task to explain why and when erosion began in any particular area. Radiocarbon dating indicates that eroded peat was accumulating in lakes in Donegal and Wicklow between 1,500 and 3,000 years ago. Eroded areas must have been extensive during the era of Scandinavian settlement; the terms 'hags' and 'groughs' for vegetation-capped residual





peat masses and the adjacent gullies are of Norse origin.

Although the loss of some upland peat is the result of turf cutting, the badly eroded areas are usually linked with vegetation disturbance and changes in the flow of water, such as may be seen in popular hillwalking areas. If the surface vegetation is damaged by trampling or overgrazing, the exposed peat becomes susceptible to frost action in cold spells and to drying and cracking in warm periods. In both situations, the peat is broken up and can then be removed by the wind or by water flow during heavy rain. In the latter circumstance, a gully can soon be formed in the peat, and there is then little to stop it from deepening and widening.

Gullies can also be formed by water that flows in tunnels beneath the peat. As these sub-peat tunnels enlarge, the ground surface subsides along the line of the tunnel, surface vegetation is disrupted and peat becomes exposed to the influences mentioned above.

An alternative mechanism is the natural instability of the peat as it thickens. Depending on the gradient of the slope, peat thickness and degree of decomposition, a peat bog may become unstable and begin to disintegrate by slow downslope movement or creep. This may be almost imperceptible but, as it progresses, tension gashes may open up at the surface. Phases of erosion and healing are apparent from detailed examination of many bogs.

A more spectacular and rapid form of peat erosion is the so-called bog burst or bog slide. This usually occurs on moderate to steep slopes during high intensity or prolonged rainfall. Due to the excess water, the peat mass becomes unstable and moves downslope rapidly, sometimes taking fences, footpaths, trees and even roads with it. Some of these 'landslides' can extend for several hundreds of metres; they leave a depressed area, from which the peat has moved, and a tongue of peat debris deposited farther downslope.

One of the most severe cases of peat erosion in Ireland can be seen on the summit of Trostan in Co Antrim. There can be no doubt that this plateau was



**Top: The bare stony summit of Trostan, Co Antrim – the end product of peat erosion.**

**Above: The common sundew, an insectivorous plant of boglands.**

**Below: Peat erosion adjacent to the western cairn of Galtymore.**

once peat-covered, for around its margins there are peat hags 1-2 metres in height.

Likewise, the western cairn on the summit of Galtymore on the Cork/Tipperary border overlooks an area from which peat is being removed rapidly and may eventually disappear completely. When and how this erosion started and how long it has taken to reach this state is not known.

### Consequences

Areas from which peat has been totally stripped make walking much easier, but there are several costs involved with peat erosion. As erosion takes place, walking actually becomes more arduous. Bare, wet peat is more difficult to traverse than vegetated peat. Eroded peat gets into streams and clogs spawning beds, and, if excessive, can kill fish. It is deposited in reservoirs and reduces their capacity, and discolours the water. An absence of hill peat means that water flow from uplands to lowlands is no longer regulated by storage and slow release from the peat. An increased incidence of flooding is a likely consequence. And the removal of peat means a loss of habitat for plants and animals that are adapted to the bog, such as the insectivorous sundews. We are also losing the record of recent climate and landscape changes that is locked up in the peat bogs ■



# AN IRISH ASCENT OF K2

**Patrick O'Sullivan** interviews mountaineer extraordinaire Noel Hanna from Northern Ireland about his successful ascent of the world's second highest mountain, K2, in July 2018 in an amazing 24 hours that saw three Irishmen summit on the 8,611m mountain.

**Above: K2, from the south side.**

**Right: Noel Hanna earlier this year.**

**N**oel Hanna was the first Irish mountaineer to climb K2 since **Ger McDonnell** made the first Irish ascent of the 'Savage Mountain,' as it is often called, on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. Ger, who hailed from Limerick, sadly lost his life on the descent while trying to assist some Korean climbers who had got into difficulty on the mountain.

K2 is known as the Savage Mountain because of the difficulty of the ascent. It has the second highest fatality rate among the 8,000-metre peaks, with about one person dying on the mountain for every four who reach the summit.

Noel is 51 years of age and comes from Dromara, Co Down. He summited K2 (8,611m) on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018, with a group from **Ascent Himalayas Treks & Expeditions** led by **Mingma Tsiri Sherpa**, who was making his second ascent of K2.

The following day, **Jason Black** (47), from Letterkenny, Co Donegal, also reached the summit (see report, *IML* 127). He was climbing with a **Madison Mountaineering** expedition. One of their guides, who also reached the summit, was **Robert Smith**, another Irishman. Rob Smith was born in Omagh, Co Tyrone, and started climbing in 1989. He has been guiding professionally for twenty years and now lives in Fort William, Scotland. His most noteworthy ascents as lead guide have included Mt Everest, Cho Oyu, Carstensz Pyramid, Mt Vinson and Mt Elbrus. ▶



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



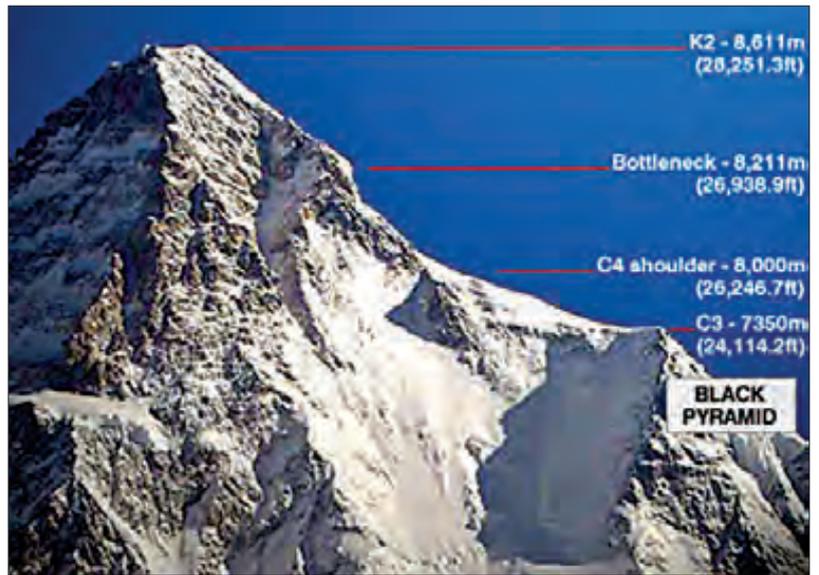
## ASCENT OF K2

### K2: more difficult than Everest

K2 is situated in the Karakorum region on the border between Pakistan and China. It is also known as **Mount Godwin-Austen** and as **Chhogori** in Balti and Urdu.

The mountain, at 8,611m, is the second highest in the world after **Everest** (8,848m), but it is considered a more difficult climb than Everest because of the more extreme weather that it is exposed to as a result of its isolated and more northerly location, the higher risk of avalanches and falling rocks, and the steep rock sections that must be climbed.

Ascents are made during July and August because of the milder weather then. So far, the mountain has not been climbed in winter, although there have been attempts by Polish and Russian teams.



Noel Hanna had made two previous attempts on K2 before his climb last year. In 2015, he got to K2 Base Camp above **Concordia** (5,670m), at the base of the mountain. The team he was with established an Advanced Base Camp at Crampon Point, two hours up the glacier from Base Camp, but an avalanche wiped out that camp and they lost all of their gear.

In 2016, he spent two days at Camp 1 on K2 in a summit push, when an avalanche took out Camp 3 in the morning. Fortunately, the Sherpas were in Camp 2 at the time, which was sheltered.

No one summited on K2 in 2015 or in 2016. Noel didn't return in 2017, but he went back last year to make another attempt at climbing this most challenging mountain.

### Meeting Noel Hanna

When I met Noel Hanna in January 2019, he had already summited on Everest eight times – seven from the Tibet side and once from Nepal. He said it was cheaper to climb from Tibet.

Noel was born and bred in Co Down, and still lives there. He started climbing when he got involved in long-distance racing. He entered and won the **Himalaya 100 Mile Stage Race** in 1997, at the age of 29. The race gave him great views of four of the Himalayan giants and it ended in Darjeeling, with its splendid views of **Kangchenjunga**. That got him interested in other adventure races.

In 1999, he entered an 'eco-challenge' on **Mount Tronador** (3,554m) in Patagonia, a region straddling the border of Chile with Argentina, in an Irish team of four: two from the south – **Ursula MacPherson** and the late **Tommy Flanagan** – and two from the north – **Frazer Crawford** and **Noel** himself. They had to summit Mt Tronador as a team, and that started him climbing.

Subsequently, he entered other eco-challenges around the world. He also went climbing in South America with his wife **Lynne** and some friends.

Noel then decided to attempt the **Seven Summits Challenge**, a challenge to climb the highest peak on each of the world's seven continents. He decided to take it a step further and to go back down to sea level by his own efforts, hiking, running, cycling or skiing, from the summit of each of the seven peaks, after each climb.

## NOEL HAD MADE TWO PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS ON K2 BEFORE HIS SUCCESS LAST YEAR.

He climbed **Aconcagua** (South America) in 2005 and afterwards cycled to Concon in Chile on the Pacific Ocean.

He attempted **Everest** (Asia) in 2005 and got to the North Col. Unfortunately, he developed a retinal haemorrhage there and had to descend. Noel has had no serious problems with altitude since then and he summited on Everest for the first time in 2006. He does get headaches, though, if he ascends too quickly. He went straight into base camp on Kanchenjunga at 5,500m in 2018 and got headaches, but he had no other problems. From Everest, he cycled from Base Camp in Tibet via the Friendship Bridge to Kathmandu and then on to the Bay of Bengal.

He climbed **Mount Elbrus** (Europe) in 2007 and cycled to the Black Sea at Tuapse after coming down.

From **Kilimanjaro** (Africa), Noel cycled to the Kenyan coast at Tanga.

Also in 2007, after summiting **Denali** (North America), he cycled to the sea at Anchorage, Alaska.

After he climbed the **Carstenz Pyramid** (Australasia) in Indonesia in 2008, Noel trekked and cycled to the sea at Nabire.

From **Mt Vinson** (in Antarctica), he skied and walked to the frozen sea at Hercules Inlet over Christmas and the New Year in 2009-2010.

### Trek into Concordia

When Noel set out to climb K2 towards the end of June 2018, he first travelled to the roadhead at Askole (3,000m) and then trekked into Concordia. That was a week's trekking, plus rest days. **Concordia** (4,690m) is located at the confluence of the Baltoro and Godwin-Austen Glaciers. Apart from K2, three other 8,000m peaks are accessible from there: **Broad Peak**, **Gasherbrum 1** and **Gasherbrum 2**.

**Far left, top:** Route to summit of K2 from the south side.

**Far left, bottom:** Noel Hanna as guest of honour attending Nepal Day at Farmleigh House in Dublin in September 2018.

**Right:** Noel Hanna in January 2019.

**Below left:** Rob Smith, who summited on K2 in 2018.

**Below right:** Jason Black, who also summited on K2 in 2018.



**K2 Base Camp** is on from Concordia at 5,650m on the Godwin-Austen Glacier, below the south face of K2.

It is two hours from K2 Base Camp to **Crampon Point** at the end of the glacier, at the base of the Abruzzi Spur, where some expeditions place their Advanced Base Camp at 5,680m. Noel found that climbing from Crampon Point to **Camp 1** (6,085m) on K2 was a straightforward snow plod.

From Camp 1, the route continued up the Abruzzi Ridge on mixed snow and rock terrain for 500m to ▶





**Camp 2** at 6,700m. This part of the route included ascending the **House Chimney**, a 30m chimney that splits a rock wall.

The climb from Camp 2 to **Camp 3** (at 7,240m) on the **Black Pyramid** was the most technically difficult section of the route, Noel said, with mixed climbing on rock and ice on vertical cliffs.

The climb from Camp 3 to **Camp 4** was a relatively easy ascent on steep snow slopes to the start of the **Shoulder**. Camp 4 (7,500m) was at lower altitude this year, below the crevasses and well below the Bottleneck (8,211m).

### Going for the summit

The team left Camp 4 at 9.00pm and reached the summit of K2 successfully at 7.30am. To reach the summit from Camp 4 they had to make a traverse to the **Bottleneck**, possibly the most dangerous part of the climb. It is only a 50-metre climb, but it is vertical blue ice. They were on fixed ropes and some of the climbers were not carrying an ice axe. There were fixed ropes from the top of the Bottleneck, along the traverse below the seracs and up the **Summit Dome** to 100 metres below the summit.

Noel summited K2 and went straight back down to Base Camp the same day.

Despite his speedy descent, Noel had to wait

**Above: Noel Hanna on summit of K2 in July 2018.**

## THE TEAM LEFT CAMP 4 AT 9.00PM AND SUMMITED AT 7.30AM.

three days in Base Camp for the porters to arrive from Askole to carry out the expedition's gear.

### Future ambitions

Noel says he didn't suffer from altitude sickness on this trip, and did not even lose his appetite when he was high on the mountain. He said he eats everything and ate well on the whole trip. He did not lose weight on the mountain and remained at his usual 70kg.

Noel says that he keeps healthy and doesn't feel that he is slowing up. When he is at home, Noel goes to the gym five times a week for one to two hours, and he goes running three or four times a week.

When I asked Noel about his future plans, he said he would be attempting Everest from the Nepal side in 2019 and that he then planned to attempt the mountain without oxygen in 2020 with Lynne, also from the Nepal side.

In 2016, he and Lynne became the first couple to have climbed Everest from both sides ■



## Summer competition

Win a great prize from **Basecamp** if your correct completed entry for this puzzle is the first drawn from the hat!

1		2		3					4	
								5		
		6				7				8
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21			22							

CROSSWORD compiled by PATRICK O'SULLIVAN

### Clues Across

- 1 Irish mountains of 500m+ with prominence of 30m (8).
- 4 Managing director in Maryland, perhaps, in short (2).
- 6 A small roll (3).
- 7 Adult male (3).
- 9 To feel unwell, or sicken (3).
- 10 Exposed rock mass of jointed and broken blocks (3).
- 11 Type of restaurant where cowboys are not welcome? (6).
- 12 Vessel for holding cremated remains (3).
- 13 Hot brown beverage favoured by the Irish (3).
- 14 An easy gallop (6).
- 16 Climbing protection (3).
- 18 Any peak in most famous European range (3).
- 19 Lodging place for travellers (3).
- 20 Ireland's number one cycling event (3).
- 21 A peak that recently received second Irish ascent (2).
- 22 Coastal landform excellent for climbing (3,5).

### Clues Down

- 1 First 8,000m peak ever to be climbed (9).
- 2 Our capital city (6).
- 3 Climbers are usually \_\_\_ together for safety while climbing (5).
- 5 Small insect (3).
- 7 Mountain range in Connemara (9).
- 8 Twelfth highest mountain in the world (5,4).
- 13 Maun\_\_\_, highest peak in the Partry Mountains (6).
- 15 A stiff bristle growing from ear of corn (3).
- 17 Soft metal (3).

MSR Elixir 2 Tent (two-person)  
€300.00



### How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a tent worth €300.00 from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin.

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, August 24<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 Autumn 2019 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

### Competition prize

Basecamp's generous prize offer is for an MSR Elixir 2 two-person tent worth €300.00.



Basecamp Outdoor Store, Dublin and Kilkenny  
Website: [www.basecamp.ie](http://www.basecamp.ie)



# COUNTY HIGH POINTS ODYSSEY

**David Barnes** takes on the all-Ireland county high points challenge to raise funds for the Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team.

**F**or several years, I have been dipping in and out of hillwalking and mountaineering, but I have never really taken on any challenges or major climbs. Mostly, I've been just hiking around my local mountains in Donegal, when I could, and taking part in some adventure races.

One day in 2015, while on my family's annual Hallowe'en cycling trip to Westport along the Western Greenway, I purchased a book that listed all the county high points on the island of Ireland: *Ireland's County High Points: A Walking Guide*, written by Kieron Gribbon. I intended to work my way through the list, but I did not really believe I would ever climb all of them.

The guidebook sat on a shelf for two years, as life flew by. One day in late 2017, I came across an article about a young nine-year old boy called **Dillon Lynch** who had become the youngest person to climb all the county high points in Ireland. Inspired by Dillon, and hoping to inspire my children and the young people in my scout group, the **12<sup>th</sup> Sligo Ballintrillick Scouts**, I decided to take on the challenge.

With the decision made to go for it, I knew I would need a source of motivation to complete the challenge

**Above: View of Carlingford from Slieve Foye in the Cooleys, the County Antrim high point.**

**Below: David and members of Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team on Truskmore, the first high point of the challenge.**

within a certain time frame. One lazy Sunday, while browsing Facebook, I came across a recruitment post for the **Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team**. I had toyed with the idea of applying to join this rescue team a few times, but had always held back as I knew I didn't have the time to commit properly. Now, however, I saw an opportunity to raise money for the team by doing something I loved, to my own schedule, while also ticking something off my bucket list.



➤ **David Barnes** is from Bundoran, County Donegal, and is a member of the **Sligo Mountaineering Club** and a scout in the **12<sup>th</sup> Sligo Ballintrillick Scouts**. He has had a love of the hills since the early 1990s, when his grandfather took him to scout out hillwalking routes for foreign students staying in Bundoran during the summer.



## “THE MOST PHYSICALLY TOUGH HIGH POINT FOR ME WAS GALTYMORE, WITH ITS WET AND SLIPPERY GRASSY SLOPES.”

After speaking to the Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team, I set myself four goals:

- To raise at least €2,000
- To begin with Truskmore in Sligo-Leitrim
- To finish with Errigal in my home county of Donegal
- To complete the challenge in 2018.

At 10.00am on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the challenge began, when I took on Truskmore on the Sligo/Leitrim border.

With six shared county high points, the challenge would involve climbing just twenty-six summits, as follows (in order of decreasing height):

### County high point:

**Carrauntoohil** (1,039m)  
**Lugnaquilla** (925m)  
**Galtymore** (919m)  
**Slieve Donard** (850m)  
**Mweelrea** (814m)  
**Mount Leinster** (794m)  
**Knockmealdown** (793m)  
**Kippure** (757m)  
**Errigal** (751m)  
**Benbaun** (725m)  
**Knockboy** (706m)  
**Sawel** (678m)  
**Cuilcagh** (665m)  
**Truskmore** (647m)  
**Slieve Foye** (588m)  
**Slieve Gullion** (573m)  
**Trostan** (550m)  
**Moylussa** (532m)  
**Arderin** (527m)  
**Brandon Hill** (515m)  
**Seltannasaggart SE** (412m)  
**Cupidstown Hill** (379m)  
**Slieve Beagh East Top** (373m)  
**Corn Hill** (278m)  
**Carnbane East** (276m)  
**Mullaghmeen** (258m)

### County or counties:

Kerry  
Wicklow  
Tipperary/Limerick  
Down  
Mayo  
Carlow/Wexford  
Waterford  
Dublin  
Donegal  
Galway  
Cork  
Derry/Tyrone  
Cavan/Fermanagh  
Sligo/Leitrim  
Louth  
Armagh  
Antrim  
Clare  
Laois/Offaly  
Kilkenny  
Roscommon  
Kildare  
Monaghan  
Longford  
Meath  
Westmeath

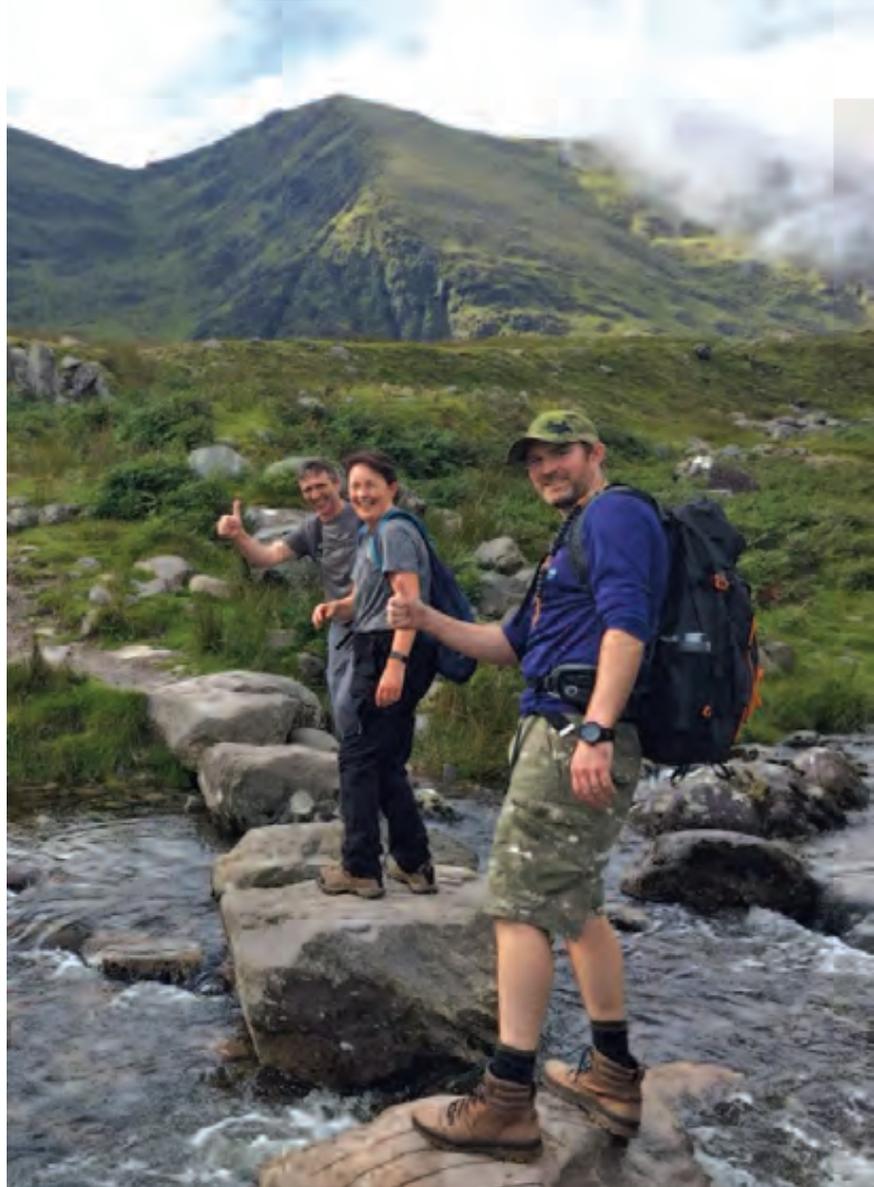
Since completing the challenge, I have often been asked what was my favourite high point, or the hardest high point, or the most enjoyable. These are difficult questions to answer, but I have tried my best in the paragraphs below.

I suppose the most physically tough climb was on **Galtymore**. I took the northern approach, and the difficulty I experienced was mainly because of the steep, wet and slippery grassy slopes, along with a biting cold gale at the top. While there, I messed around with frozen hands trying to set up my camera. In the end, after the tripod had fallen over three times and the lens had been damaged, I resorted to a selfie to record the ascent.

Beginning my descent, I met an interesting chap who had recently left his comfortable nine-to-five job to start up his own business doing something he enjoyed: running adventure tours along the Wild Atlantic Way and beyond. ➔

**Right:**  
**Lugnaquilla,**  
**the County**  
**Wicklow high**  
**point.**

**Below: In the**  
**Hag's Glen on**  
**the ascent of**  
**Carrauntoohil**  
**(from left):**  
**Eamonn**  
**Mitchell, Aine**  
**Mitchell and**  
**David Barnes.**



## COUNTY HIGH POINTS



Further down, I fell a few times on the slippery grass, but I did also help three farmers round up some sheep and load them into a trailer.

One of the most enjoyable experiences of the challenge was when I was climbing on **Slieve Foye**, in the Cooley Mountains, Co Louth, with a friend of mine. When we were above 450m, clouds engulfed us, making the summit tricky to find, with many false summits lurking in the mist. We finally reached the real top, took the photos we wanted and were getting ready to descend when a lone figure emerged from the haze. It was a friendly lady, whose descent we joined, as it was much quicker than our planned route. It turned out this lady was none other than **Josie Kieran**, who in 1998 had reached the south summit of Everest, the highest peak ever attained by an Irish woman at the time.

Experiences with friends made for some of the best craic during my round, such as on **Benbaun** in Connemara, where we had the best views; on **Mweelrea**, Co Mayo, which I had to reschedule twice

**Above: Kippure, the County Dublin high point, at sunset.**

**Below left: View from Knockboy, the County Cork high point.**

**Below right: David on Mount Leinster, the County Carlow high point.**

due to weather; and, of course, on **Errigal**, which concluded my journey on a perfect December day.

For **Carrauntoohil**, myself, several friends, and a few friends of friends, stayed in a quirky B&B the night before. Over a few drinks, they taught me how to play 25, which I am assured is the national card game of Ireland!

In October, feeling the time slipping away, I planned a three-peak weekend, an experience that took in **Slieve Beagh** (Monaghan) and **Kippure** (Dublin) on the Friday and then concluded with **Lugnaquilla** (Wicklow) on the Saturday. I stayed with a good friend in Rathdangan, Co Wicklow, on the Friday night and we walked off Lug the following day, via Slievemaan, directly to his house, and celebrated and reminisced over a few drinks in the local pub afterwards.

Overall, however, my most enjoyable climb was **Trostan** (Antrim), as my wife and children joined me and we made a glamping weekend out of it, visiting





## “EXPERIENCES WITH FRIENDS MADE FOR SOME OF THE BEST CRAIC DURING MY ROUND.”

Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge and the Giant’s Causeway.

Throughout, it was a fabulous experience, and a testing one, both physically and logistically. I climbed many of the summits alone and others with my family or friends. I met many likeminded people – on the hills, through social media and, of course, amongst the Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team folks themselves.

Some peaks I climbed quickly and purposefully; others, I rambled up or made the trip into a weekend or family outing, even finding some geocaches along the way.

### A challenge most could take on

There are countless mountaineering articles focusing on much more extreme challenges than mine and which, for many readers, would be impossible to realise. However, I believe that some Irish challenges such as this one, while they are not ‘a walk in the park,’ can be realised over time by almost any reader.

At 11.00am on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018, after driving a total of 9,600 kilometres, hiking 170 kilometres and raising over €2,800 for the Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team, my little dream was finally realised. I can honestly say that on each summit I was as proud as punch, and afterwards had a great sense of satisfaction in crossing it off in my logbook. On that final afternoon, standing on top of Errigal, I might as well have been on top of the world!

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank everyone who accompanied, followed, supported or donated to me during my journey ■

**FIND OUT MORE:** If you are interested in getting more details of this challenge or want to ask David Barnes any questions, you can contact him via his challenge-dedicated Facebook page [www.facebook.com/chp4slmrt](https://www.facebook.com/chp4slmrt).

**Above:** View from summit of Benbaun, the County Galway high point, looking towards the north-west.

**Bottom:** Daniel Barnes, Rachel Barnes, Brenda Rooney Barnes and David Barnes on the summit of Trostan, the County Antrim high point.

#### Book, maps

- *Ireland’s County High Points: A Walking Guide* by Kieron Gribbon
- Ordnance Survey Ireland’s Discovery Series maps

#### Websites

- [www.maps.google.com](http://www.maps.google.com) (for vehicle navigating to start locations)
- [www.highpointireland.com](http://www.highpointireland.com)

#### Devices

- Garmin GPS Map 62s (weatherproof GPSR with all-Ireland OSi maps)
- iPhone 7 (For photos and navigation via ViewRanger)
- Sony Xperia XA1 (for GPS track recording via ViewRanger)
- Nikon D3400 and tripod (for taking summit photos)

#### Applications

- PeakHunter (Official Partner GPS Recording App of High Point Ireland)
- ViewRanger (GPS Navigation App with OSi Map Tiles)
- c:geo (Geocaching Android App)





# CLIMBING IN THE MONTE ROSA

**William Nolan** jumped at the opportunity to join three Austrian alpinists last year on a trip to the Monte Rosa massif, located in the Eastern Pennine Alps and straddling the borders of Italy and Switzerland. Here, he describes the hikes and ascents they completed over five days in August.

In January 2018, I was invited to join two Austrian friends, **Manfred Steiger** and **Stefan Tschirk**, on a trip to the Monte Rosa massif, which they were planning to make in August. A cancellation by one of their usual climbing companions meant that they needed someone else to join their rope for safe glacier crossings. I jumped at the opportunity. For the first couple of days, we were also going to be joined by another friend of theirs, **Tobi Helberg**.

The plan was to ascend eight of the twelve 4,000m peaks in the massif during our five-day trip, most of which we could safely climb on our own. However, the main objective of the trip was at some stage, when the conditions were right, to attempt the **Liskamm Traverse**, an extremely narrow and dangerous ridge.

We had booked three guides to accompany us on the Traverse, as we felt it was beyond our abilities to attempt it unguided. Tobi was leaving before we planned to attempt the traverse, so we would have a guide ratio of 1:1. The other summits could be attempted

**Above: View from the summit of Punta Giordani (4,046m) showing the five other peaks scaled on the trip.**

in any order, according to conditions, and would be used for acclimatisation.

## Day 1: August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2018

After flying into Malpensa airport in Milan, we collected our hire car and set off to the Staffal cable car station in the Aosta Valley. With our heavy packs, we boarded the first of the three cable cars that would take us to the higher Alps for our five-day tour. Looking down from that first car, I could see a wonderfully remote trail winding up through the forest below. I would have loved to trek up on this almost hidden trail, but there was no point wearing ourselves out on the first day.

**Below: Summit of Balmenhorn (4,167m) with statue of Christ on the top.**



► *William Nolan is a Mountain Leader based in Ireland and is the owner and lead guide of Wilderness Adventures. He leads group hikes throughout Ireland and also runs navigation courses.*



When we reached the top cable car station, we still had an hour's hike to reach the **Mantova Hut** at 3,498m on the Garstelet Glacier. We had lunch there and then headed outside to refresh our crevasse rescue techniques and conduct a full gear check, as the following day would be busy, with an early start. However, the weather changed to heavy showers of hail, which forced us inside again. We were already feeling the effects of the altitude and the thinner air. Everyone was in bed by 9.20pm, but the thunderstorms kept me awake most of the night.

## Day 2: August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2018

We woke at 4.00am, sorted our gear and ate breakfast. We were returning to the same hut that evening, so we didn't need to take everything with us. The first peak on our list was **Vincentpiramid** at 4,215m. We only stopped briefly on the summit before descending to the col again.

Next, there was a steep ascent to the bottom of the rocky summit of **Balmenhorn** (4,167m). We climbed about 15-20 metres up a vertical rock section. On the summit, there was a huge statue of Christ looking down on the emergency shelter located just below the summit. From there we could see the Liskamm Traverse in all of its glory. It looked incredibly difficult.

After clambering back down from the summit, we crossed a snowfield towards our next goal, **Corno Nero** (4,322m) (also known as Schwarzhorn). This was the most exciting summit of the day.

We reached the bottom of a 60m-high outcrop, which had a 60- to 65-degree ice face on the right and sheer rock on the left. The left option would require some difficult rock climbing, but the level of exposure, with a drop of thousands of feet, made this option extremely dangerous. We decided to attempt the ice face. Manfred summited first and belayed us as we followed him up.

Front-pointing with crampons is very tiring on the

**Above: Looking towards Vincentpiramid (4,215m) as a helicopter flies past.**

**Below: The climbing team on the summit of Vincentpiramid (from left): Manfred Steiger, Tobi Helberg, Stefan Tschirk, William Nolan.**

calves, and the burn was intense, but we carried on, traversing the narrow rock ridge to the summit. A slip there would have been fatal, so we kept tied on while we were on this summit. The views were truly spectacular, but we couldn't stay too long. The forecast was for thunderstorms and this was no place to be during a storm. To descend from there, the ice face was too risky, so we decided that an abseil off the rocky face was safest.

The face was too high to make it in one go. We abseiled off the top into thin air, swinging on the rope until we reached the snow below. There we secured ourselves to an ice screw, untied from the first rope, connected to another and abseiled down the rest of the way.

By the time we were down safely and the ropes had been retrieved it was noon, too late to attempt another summit as the weather was already closing in. We made a speedy descent and arrived back at the Mantova Hut for lunch. ➤





The rain started as I sipped my coffee peacefully and looked out at people still high on the mountains, glad to have my day done.

## Day 3: August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2018

The alarm rang at 4.30am. We needed to pack up everything, as we would be staying in another hut that night, ahead of our attempt on the Liskamm Traverse the following day.

We headed up the same glacier as the day before, but encountered far more traffic on the route this time. Soon we were in crevasse territory and it wasn't safe to overtake. We got stuck in behind a long queue and had to move very slowly. This was extremely tiring on my legs and by the time we reached the col I was almost exhausted. To my relief, everyone else felt the same and we decided it was best to head cross-country to get ahead of the posse.

It worked and soon we were standing looking up at the mighty **Parrotspitze** (4,432m). I had seen photos of it before I got there, but they did not do it justice. A super-narrow snow ridge with huge drops on either side led us up to the spectacular summit. Descending the ridge took a lot of concentration, as the snow was fresh and soft.

Once down, we went over to **Ludwigshöhe** (4,341m) along another, shorter snow ridge. We took a few epic photos from there before going down and then heading to **Gnifetti Hut**, which, at 3,647m, was at a higher altitude than the Mantova Hut. We arrived there at 11.30am, leaving Tobi, who was departing, with time to spare, having summited two 4,000m peaks in seven hours. Not bad for a morning's work!

During lunch, our guides for the Liskamm Traverse contacted us. The forecast wasn't good for Thursday or Friday, with more thunderstorms predicted and a lot of snowfall overnight. The weather window would be five hours at the most, but it would take us around seven hours to do the traverse.

The guides reckoned there was only a 50% chance of

**Above: Corno Nero (4,322m). The team abseiled off the rock section on the left on the descent.**

**Below: William begins the abseil off Corno Nero.**

success. For me, the decision to cancel was easy, as the risk was too high, but the others were undecided. They phoned the guides again and, after another conversation and some deliberation, they also cancelled, feeling that the window was too tight even if they set out earlier.

## Day 4: August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

The alarm was set for 5.30am, to allow us to have a nice lie-in. However, loud thunderstorms kept us





**“IT WAS STILL SINKING IN THAT WE HAD JUST SUMMITED SIX 4,000m ALPINE PEAKS IN FOUR DAYS.”**

awake for long periods during the night. From the window we could see a huge line of torchlights ascending the glacier, even more than the previous day.

Thankfully, we were going in the opposite direction. We packed up everything and descended past the Mantova Hut. Our objective this morning was Punta Giordani.

We found the descent route down a rock face to a glacier. This was great fun, climbing down using the fixed ropes almost via-ferrata style. It was only at the glacier that I realised we were totally alone. No queues of people anywhere. Heaven! The crossing of this glacier was excellent, with hard ice underfoot. We covered the ground very quickly. The ascent proper felt unending and slow as we plunged shin-deep at times into the soft snow on the 55-degree slope.

Eventually, we made the summit of **Punta Giordani** (4,046m), which involved a short but extremely exposed scramble to a small statue of the Madonna. From there, the view was extraordinary. We were looking at the previous five 4,000m summits that we had ascended. Our original plan had been to ascend from there up a rocky spur to the summit of Vincentpiramid and descend back down the first glacier past Mantova Hut, but none of us wanted to encounter that traffic again.

In the end, we went back down the way we had come up and went directly towards the cable car station.

We took two cars down, but the trail I had seen the first day was still on my mind. We decided to skip the final cable car and walk down the trail from there. It took us over an hour to get back to the valley and it was tiring

**Above: A view of the ridge of Parrotspitze (4,432m).**

**Below: William and Manfred descending from the summit of Ludwigshöhe (4,341m).**

but it was worth every second. This felt like a proper ending to an expedition, returning triumphantly into the valley like some sort of Alpine heroes of old. Time to ditch the bags and find the first hotel with room for three extremely happy mountaineers, who were well overdue a shower!

It was still sinking in that we had just summited six 4,000m peaks. For me, the highlights were ascending the razor-sharp ridge to the wonderfully exposed summit of Parrotspitze, and the truly brilliant trek down into the valley through lush green forests. This trip had it all: glacier crossings, rocky climbs, climbs on snow and ice, difficult ridges, traffic, and good and bad weather.

However, the most important thing had been making that decision to cancel the Liskamm Traverse. The Traverse had excited me and dominated my thoughts for a long time, but I have no regrets about making the decision. For me, safety always comes first.

The Traverse can wait ■





## Access updates

# Cuilcagh Mountain



Written by  
Helen Lawless,  
Hillwalking,  
Access &  
Conservation  
Officer



Trampled area at the top of the Cuilcagh Boardwalk, spring 2019

In response to continued erosion from high visitor numbers in the area at the top of the Cuilcagh Boardwalk, and between there and the summit plateau, plans are being put in place to manage visitor activity in a way that minimises further damage. Visitors to the boardwalk are kindly asked to keep to the designated path and to remain within the confines of the viewing platform at the top of the boardwalk.

Mountaineering Ireland is asking hillwalkers who want to visit the summit of Cuilcagh to take other routes on the mountain and to avoid using the Cuilcagh Boardwalk, to prevent further environmental damage between the viewing platform and the stile, so as not to encourage others onto the fragile summit plateau.

The current platform was created as a short-term measure and a redesign of this end point or destination area is currently being investigated. Line definition and conservation work is also

planned for the summit plateau. However, this won't be implemented until next year.

Mountaineering Ireland is planning an **environmental awareness day** at Cuilcagh Mountain to take place on Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, in conjunction with the CANN project.\* This event is aimed primarily at Club Environmental Officers but will be open to other members interested in understanding Cuilcagh's complex story. This study visit will provide an insight into the sequence of events that has led to the current situation, as well as an opportunity to learn about the special features of Cuilcagh's natural environment. Places are limited; if interested, please email [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) ■

\* The CANN Project is a cross-border environmental project which is working to preserve priority habitats and species at a number of sites across Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland, including at Cuilcagh Mountain. CANN is supported by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme.

# Gleninagh, Twelve Bens

The Bodkin family, who own Gleninagh in the Twelve Bens, have asked that climbers and hillwalkers not park along the access road to their farm, which is often used by people going into Carrot Ridge and up to Maumina and Benbaun.

In recent times, the Bodkins have had problems with access along the roadway to their farm being obstructed by parked vehicles, hence this request for people not to park anywhere along the access road.

It is also no longer possible to park outside the unoccupied

house on the way into the Bodkins' farm, due to changes made around that house.

Hillwalkers and climbers are still welcome in Gleninagh, but they are asked to respect the Bodkins' request by getting dropped off or car-pooling and finding a suitable location to park along the Inagh Valley road. As parking space along that road is very limited, Mountaineering Ireland is working with the local Rural Recreation Officer to see if a parking solution can be found ■

# RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

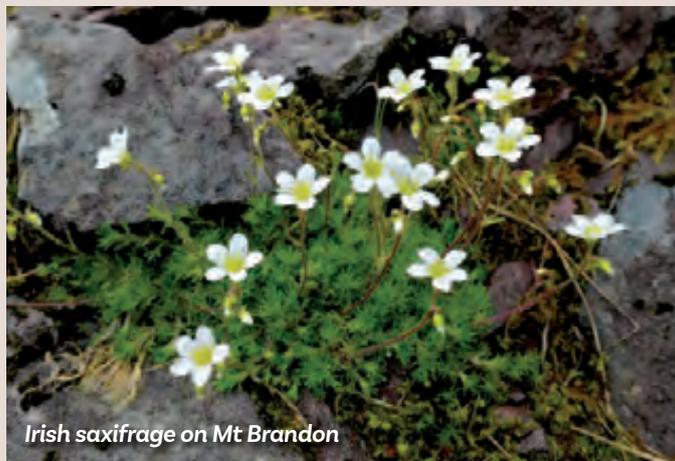
## Watch your footing

Hillwalking and scrambling on steep, damp and rocky terrain sometimes brings us into places where we're delicately balanced; places where nature is delicately balanced too.

Due to their inaccessibility to grazing animals, cliffs, steep slopes and gullies are places that provide a vital refuge for rare plants, which are often small and inconspicuous.

Nature's ability to withstand the impact of footfall is limited by thin soils and the shorter growing season in the mountains. Higher rainfall levels, combined with steeper gradients, means that the erosive action of water is more significant.

An example is the Eisc on Mount Brandon, which holds an important



Irish saxifrage on Mt Brandon



Irish saxifrage growing beside the path on the Eisc, Mt Brandon

population of the rare and beautiful **Irish saxifrage** (*Saxifraga rosacea*), more noticeable over the summer when it is in flower.

On fragile terrain like this, where the impact of recreational activity is greater, we have an added responsibility to enjoy the mountains with care.

We can reduce our impact on vulnerable habitats and species by:

- Keeping within the existing path line and not short-cutting on zig-zags;
- Using steep and badly eroded routes in ascent, rather than descent,
- Avoiding these routes when ground conditions are wet;
- Keeping group size small.

Enjoy the mountains responsibly this summer! ■

## Fresh mandate for Comhairle na Tuaithe

### Dr Liam Twomey appointed as Chairperson

Mountaineering Ireland welcomed the announcement in June by the Minister for Rural & Community Development, Michael Ring TD, of a new mandate for Comhairle na Tuaithe, the national advisory body on outdoor recreation.

Minister Ring also introduced Dr Liam Twomey as the new Chairperson of the Comhairle. Dr Twomey brings valuable experience to this role, both as a former TD and through his work in general practice.

The rejuvenation of Comhairle na Tuaithe follows

the Minister's reflection on a 2016 review of the Comhairle and discussions last year with Comhairle members.

Responding to the recent meeting, Mountaineering Ireland Chairperson Paul Barron said: "It's great to see Comhairle na Tuaithe coming alive again, and especially good to see the health and well-being benefits of outdoor recreation reflected in the new mandate for Comhairle na Tuaithe.

"There is an opportunity now for the Department of Rural & Community Development to adopt a

leadership and coordination role to ensure that Ireland's outdoor recreation sector evolves in a way that is positive for participants, landowners and local communities, and that is environmentally sustainable."

Mountaineering Ireland has been a member of Comhairle na Tuaithe since the body was established in 2004 and has made an active contribution to the work of the Comhairle, especially in relation to the Comhairle's pilot **Mountain Access Project** and the development of a booklet on access and occupiers' liability.

The rejuvenated Comhairle na Tuaithe will have responsibility for advising the Minister on a wide range of matters relating to the future development of Ireland's growing outdoor recreation sector. Comhairle na Tuaithe is meeting again shortly to agree a clear vision for its work and to start the process of developing a new work programme.

The Department of Rural & Community Development is also establishing an inter-departmental working group on outdoor recreation as part of its new structures ■



## 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 Alpine Meet

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

The 2019 Summer Alpine Meet, with its strong youth participation focus, has drawn 50% of its participants from the 18 to 25-year-old age group. Their attendance is being facilitated by a very generous bursary fund, which substantially reduces the overall costs for the attendees. The standard of applicants ranged from the very experienced to the virgin alpinists. The meet will serve to plant the seeds of a desire for further Alpine adventures in a cohort of enthusiastic young participants.

The Alpine Meet expands the skill-set of walkers and climbers primarily based in Ireland, with the Scottish Winter Meet serving to develop their winter techniques. Therefore, Mountaineering Ireland offers skills training for Alpine walking, mountaineering and climbing alongside shorter duration refresher workshops in glacier travel, crevasse rescue, movement skills and learning to lead climb, boulder and scramble. The Alpine setting provides something for all, including families, students on a low budget and experienced and inexperienced participants. Tracks are well signed, huts provide accommodation and food in the high mountains, and campsites keep costs low and give access to the remote areas of the Alps. Every Alpine trip made and Alpine area visited offers a unique adventure opportunity that can keep you busy for a lifetime.

The courses are run at cost and not for profit, and are just one of the many benefits of membership of Mountaineering Ireland ■

### Training awards and registration fees

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.

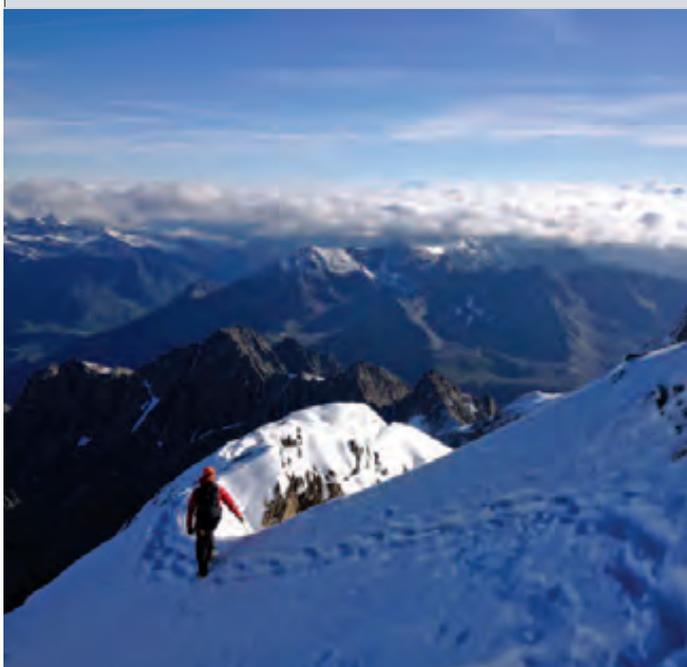
- Leadership and Instructor Award registration fees will be increased from €50 to €52 (£45 to £47).
- Rock Skills Scheme registration fee for over-18s: €22 (£20). (Under-18s free.)
- Mountain Skills Scheme registration fee for over-18s: €22 (£20). (Under-18s free.)
- Indoor Climbing Assistant registration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

### News for providers

■ **IMPORTANT: QQI (formerly FETAC) Level 4 Rock Skills stays.**

The QQI Rock Skills Module will remain as a QQI offering. It had been proposed that it would be removed from the QQI list. This will not happen and the module remains. The Level 4 Rock Skills aligns to the NGB Rock Skills Introduction and Intermediate, launched in January 2019.

- The **provider handbook and agreement** are being reviewed and edited, and the latest version will be posted on the website shortly. If you spot any errors, please contact the Training Office.
- 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, RCI, 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, RCI, MPA, LLA or L1 CC courses.
- 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 before) ■



Photograph: Jane Carney Collection



Trainer at the Tollymore Mountain Centre outdoor wall

## 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 (Rock Climbing Instructor) 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, Castlewellan, 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. The Training Officer, Jane Carney, can be contacted for further details on (01) 625 1112 ■



Indoor class at Tollymore Mountain Centre

Photographs: Jane Carney



## Key dates 2019

- 6-20<sup>th</sup> July Summer Alpine Meet, Argentière, Chamonix, France
- 6-8<sup>th</sup> Sept Burren Climbing Meet
- 8<sup>th</sup> September MTBI Training Meeting, Belfast
- 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 Mountain and Rock Skills Providers Workshop
- 8-10<sup>th</sup> Oct MTUK meeting, Plas y Brenin
- 15-17<sup>th</sup> Nov Student Training & Safety Seminar, Tollymore National Outdoor Centre
- 2<sup>nd</sup> December MTBI Training Meeting
- 6<sup>th</sup> December Senior Providers workshop (CPD), Wicklow/Dublin
- 30-31<sup>st</sup> January Train the Trainers Workshop
- 1-2<sup>nd</sup> February Club Training Officers Workshop
- 15-23<sup>rd</sup> February Winter Meet
- 6-9<sup>th</sup> March Mountain Leader Assessment

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



Training at the outdoor wall at Tollymore Mountain Centre

## News for members

■ Induction for the new award, Rock Climbing Development Instructor, took place on May 24<sup>th</sup>, based in Tollymore National Outdoor Centre. It is envisaged that 2-4 courses per annum will be offered by the providers of this award.

■ Thank you to those who submitted **Training Grant applications** for the June 2019 Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) meeting, and congratulations to all successful applicants. New applications are now being accepted for quarter 3 and 4 for review in December 2019.

■ The **Skills workshops** were a great success in May and bookings are open for the September courses.

■ 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 ■

*Stay safe out there!*

Negotiating the traverse on pitch 4 of Great Gully Ridge, Fraughan Glen, Glenmalur, Co Wicklow

# No 4: CLIMBING MULTI-PITCH TRAD

In the fourth in our series of Climbing Good Practice Guides, rock climber **Clare Sheridan** offers her advice on climbing multi-pitch trad routes.

**Y**ou are sitting in the sun at the top of the crag, well pleased with your lead. You climbed confidently, got good gear in without too much faffing around and then made short work of setting up a solid belay anchor. Time to bring your second up, and maybe it is time also to think of moving on to multi-pitch routes.

Mastering multi-pitch trad will give you access to some of the best climbing that Ireland has to offer, as well as helping you develop skills that are the basis for all serious mountaineering.

### Skills you will need

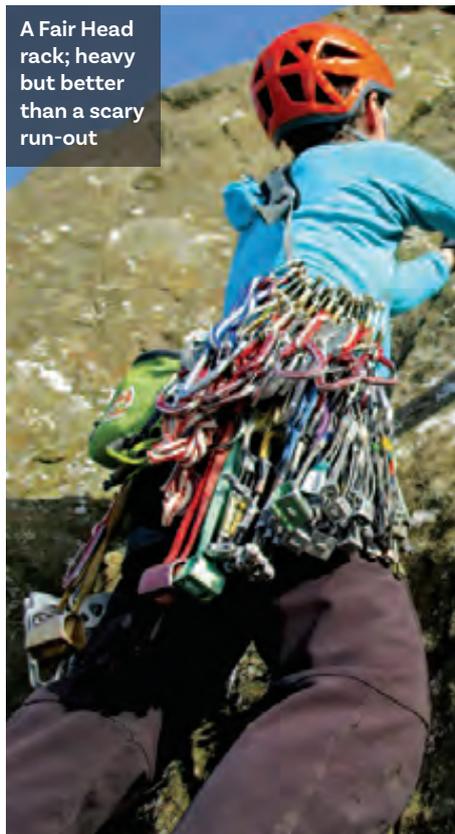
So, what additional skills do you need? As well as knowing how to place protection, build anchors and belay efficiently, you'll need to develop some expertise in the following:

- Constructing a belay on steep rock
- Route-finding

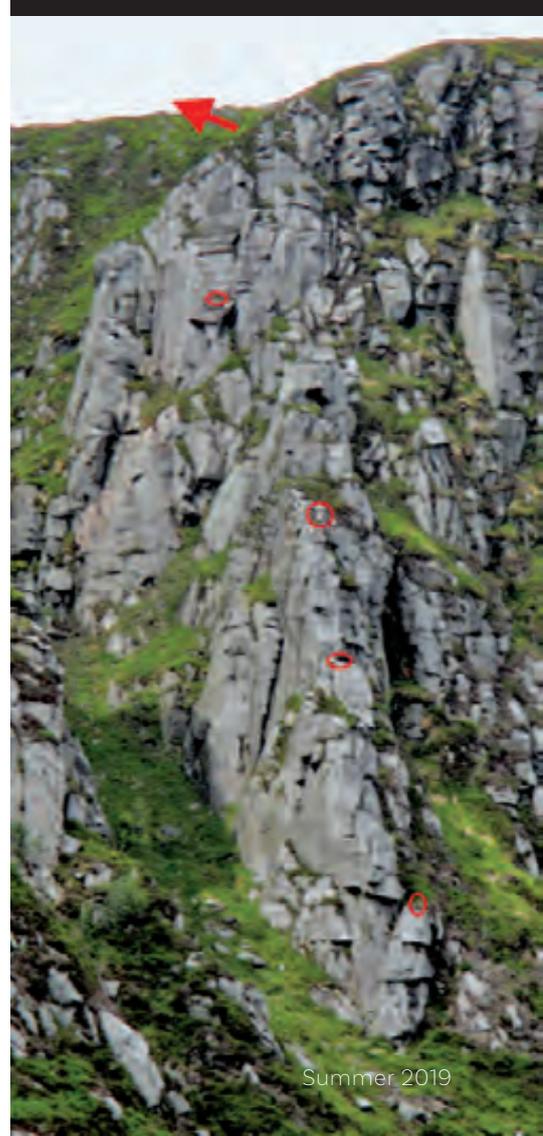
- Rope management
- Escaping the system/self-rescue
- Retreating/abseiling/descending.

Whether these skills are learned from a climbing buddy, an instructor or from the internet (see 'Going Outside,' IML 129), you'll need to practise them and check your systems in a low-stress environment like Dalkey Quarry before

A Fair Head rack; heavy but better than a scary run-out



The five-pitch Great Gully Ridge route



► *Clare Sheridan is a rock climber and alpinist and is a member of the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Committee.*

putting them to the test on a long climb.

When you start up a big rock face, you are committing to an environment whose demands will go well beyond the technical difficulty of the climbing. So, keep it simple when choosing your first multi-pitch route – pick a two-pitch climb that has a straightforward approach, a ledge to belay on, an easy-to-follow line that can be viewed from below, and an uncomplicated walk-off descent.

### The gear you will need

In addition to your single-pitch rack, you will need extra gear on longer climbs for the setting up of belays. Beyond that, your rack for multi-pitch routes comes down to the type of climbing involved (is there any specific gear recommended in the guidebook you are using?). together with your own preferences and the depth of your pockets.

The protection you would use in a Fair Head hand-jam crack is obviously different to what will fit snugly in a shallow crack in Glendalough, but you will still carry the same basic rack, as there will always be a variety of placements and you will need options for the belay anchor.

The multi-pitch rack I use is the

following, with the choice of doubles depending on the type of climbing:

- Belay device with screw-gate carabiner
- Two half ropes
- A full set of nuts plus doubles of sizes 3 to 7
- Cams: 0 to 5 DMM Dragon cams, or 0 to 4 Black Diamond, plus some doubles or hexes in the middle sizes
- Slings: 1 x 240cm, 3 x 120cm, plus 4 screw-gates
- Quickdraws and extenders: 6 x 18cm, 4 x 25cm, 4 x 60cm
- A bandolier/gear sling
- Nut key
- Two prussiks.

### Always think ahead

Your mid-climb belay should be rigged to cope with an upward as well as a downward pull.

The rope needs to be managed so that it will run smoothly for the leader, and it must not be let slip below the belay, where it could snag.

The leader should put in a runner as soon as possible above the belay so there will be no shock loading on the anchor in the event of a slip.

You may be gone for some time, so,



Pitch 3 (crux) of Great Gully Ridge

before you leave the ground, is there anything else you might need – route description, windproof, shoes for the descent? ■

The second pitch of Chieftain, Fair Head, Co Antrim



## Recommended multi-pitch routes

Of the hundreds of multi-pitch routes in Ireland, the following three might be a good place to start:

■ **Quartz Gully** (HS) is an excellent introduction to the climbing in **Glendalough**, its two pitches running up the fine stretch of granite that forms the main face.

■ **Fair Head** is best known for the demanding Extremes that creep up its soaring cracks and steep walls, but its most popular climb, **Chieftain**, is a very reasonable VS.

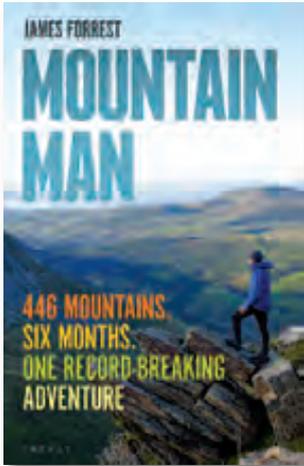
It follows grooves and cracks for two pitches up the spectacular main face near the Ballycastle descent gully and, with its easy access and comfortable belay, it is well worth a visit.

■ Back to Wicklow and, for a grand day out, it would be hard to beat **Great Gully Ridge** (HS) in **Glenmalure**. Set high on the side of the beautiful **Fraughan Glen**, it gives 140m of pleasant, well-protected climbing in short pitches with comfortable belays. It also gives valuable mountaineering experience, as you have to decide which approach you'll take (none of them are handy) and which descent (ditto) and whether you'll put your trust in the proliferating fixed gear.

Whatever you decide, it will be your own choice and your own responsibility as you make the most of an adventurous day in the mountains. – **Clare Sheridan**



## Completing a round of the Nuttalls in just six months



### **MOUNTAIN MAN: 446 MOUNTAINS. SIX MONTHS. ONE RECORD-BREAKING ADVENTURE**

**By James Forrest**

Conway (2019), 264pp, £16.99, ISBN 978-1-84486-563-5

Tired of feeling unfit, unmotivated and unhappy, James Forrest decided to do something to change all of that. Others in the same situation might go on holiday, start a diet or take up a new hobby, but Forrest decided to climb 446 mountains in six months.

He chose to take on the Nuttalls, hills over 2,000ft in England and Wales, named after Anne and John Nuttall, who were the first climbers registered as having climbed all 446 in 1990 (257 in England and 189 in Wales). Many people have since replicated that achievement, but none in as little as six months.

This book describes the author's plan to complete the challenge during weekends and days off from work. To save time, he carried a tent named 'Dennis' and wild-camped in the hills.

Forrest describes his plans for the challenge and the considerable preparation involved. He changed jobs and downsized his home, as



The highest of the Nuttalls: Snowdon (1,085m), viewed from Glyder Fawr.

his income dropped.

He managed to spend only £45 on kit for the trip; he even wore his other half's old hiking boots and carried a fifteen year-old rucksack.

The tone of the book is light and humorous, as Forrest relates his adventures in an entertaining and self-deprecating way. He charts

the highs and the lows of the challenge. There were some very low points along the way. Some walks were best described as miserable slogs through inhospitable hill country, and that is something all hillwalkers will be familiar with.

Complete with colour photos, this is an enjoyable

read, and it will be particularly enjoyable for readers familiar with the peaks he visited. The challenge in describing an adventure such as this is to maintain interest for the reader. He manages this by keeping the descriptions of each peak short and humorous.

Forrest encourages anyone who wants to, to get out there and make their own adventure. He managed to complete this challenge while working and moving house. The story is certainly inspirational, but I think I would have been tempted to skip a peak or two, if the weather was bad and no one was following along to check whether I had done them all!

Completing this challenge demonstrates a high level of motivation on Forrest's part, as well as a love of the outdoors and a keen sense of adventure, and that comes across in this well-written book.

**Pamela Harbison** Hillwalker and a member of Tredagh Trekkers, a hillwalking club based in Drogheda, Co Louth



James Forrest in the Reeks of Kerry during his round of the Vandeleur-Lynams in 2018 (see 'Round the Vandeleur-Lynams,' IML 128).

# Personal stories from fifty Cicerone authors



## CICERONE: CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF ADVENTURE 1969-2019

Contributing editor:

**Kev Reynolds**

Cicerone Press (2018), 160pp (hdbk), colour photos on most pages, £25.00 (ppbk), ISBN 978-1-78631-030-9

This is one of those books that gave me a lovely surprise when I opened it. Cicerone, publishers of over 400 guidebooks, have compiled fifty stories from over forty of its authors, who have contributed to Cicerone over the last fifty years.

All of the contributors have a passion for the outdoors and each one recounts a personal story (each one can be read in a few minutes) from their travels. These short stories all have one thing in common – adventure. Not necessarily dangerous, but having an interest in the unknown ahead.

Readers will not have to be collectors of the successful Cicerone guidebooks, that have helped many trekkers, trail walkers, mountaineers and cyclists find their way safely, to enjoy this entertaining coffee-table book. Dip into these pages and you might find Kev Reynolds, probably the most prolific guidebook writer, enjoying a trek with his daughter in the Bernese Alps; Aileen Evans gazing across the Irish Sea to the Mourne Mountains from the summits of the Isle of Man; Allan Hartley, one-time president of the Austrian Alpine Club,



A picture from the chapter 'The Cicerone story: from then to now' (clockwise from top left): Walt Unsworth, Dolomites, 1976; Dorothy Unsworth and the children climbing on the glacier, Zermatt, 1964; Brian Evans on Gimmer Crag, Langdale, c1962 (photo by Tony Greenbank); Brian and Aileen Evans, Upper Wortley, Leeds, c1957.

recounting his honeymoon in the Stubai Alps; Madeline Williams on horseback in the wild Tien Shan of Kyrgyzstan; or Alan Hinkes summiting K2 on his third attempt.

The stories are grouped in sections for the UK, Europe (unfortunately no adventures in Ireland) and worldwide, though Jim Ryan, Irish mountaineer and writer, recounts a tale on Aconcagua,

when he is ordered by the leader to descend even though he feels fit and strong. He returns the following year as he had a stone from Carrauntoohil to deposit on the Andean summit.

There are a few additional tales of mishaps and misadventures while the authors were researching routes for their guidebooks. Dan Bailey's tale of being hit



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



by lightning on the Cobbler in Scotland is one of those unlucky/lucky incidents.

The photos are fabulous. Every place visited in the book has photos taken by the authors, and many are full page-size for maximum effect.

An interesting chapter in the book is on the history of Cicerone. Its success has largely been attributed to the passion of co-founders Brian and Aileen Evans and Walt and Dorothy Unsworth, and later the present owners Jonathan and Lesley Williams. They are all keen outdoor enthusiasts and, except for the Unsworths, who are deceased, have also written for this book.

The stories and landscapes in this compilation will inspire you to get into the outdoors immediately and start checking out new guidebooks to far-flung places.

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



Sample story from the book: 'Signal Forbes' by Kingsley Jones

## Irish deaths on Everest

This has been a bad year so far for fatalities on Everest, with a total of eleven known deaths there in the pre-monsoon climbing season. Sadly, two of those who died were Irish climbers.

**Seamus 'Shay' Lawless**, a Professor of Artificial Intelligence at Trinity College Dublin, was 39 years old and married with one daughter. He was attempting to complete the Seven Summits challenge when he died in a fall from the Balcony at 8,200m, just hours after successfully summiting on Everest by the South Col route from Nepal.

Shay, who lived in Bray, Co Wicklow, was raising funds for Barretstown children's charity. An attempt to locate his body was abandoned in the severe and deteriorating weather conditions, to avoid further loss of life.

**Kevin Hynes**, who was a 56-year-old from Galway and married with two children, had reached Camp 3 on the Tibetan north side of Everest and was descending. He died in his tent at the North Col at 7,000m during the night, probably from altitude-related problems. Kevin was attempting to climb Everest for the second time, having previously summited on Everest and Lhotse from Nepal.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Shay Lawless and Kevin Hynes on their tragic losses ■



Shay Lawless



Kevin Hynes



Mt Elbrus (5,642m) from Gum-bashi Pass

## Irishman dies on Mt Elbrus

**Alan Mahon**, a forty-year-old father of three from Monasterevin, Co Kildare, was in a group of ten climbers who were attempting to climb Russia's Mount Elbrus (5,642m) from the north side when he died at the end of June.

The group included four other experienced Irish mountaineers, who all descended safely. Mount Elbrus is the highest mountain in Europe.

The climb had been carefully planned and the group were camped just below the summit at 5,300m, considering how they should summit, when the weather changed earlier than had been expected. In the severe weather conditions that ensued, with a white-out and very strong winds, the group took shelter in a nearby emergency hut.

After two days there, they decided to descend when there was a break in the weather. It is understood that Alan became unwell during the descent. A mountain rescue team was summoned and made attempts to evacuate him, but sadly his condition deteriorated and he died on the mountain on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to the family and friends of Alan Mahon following his tragic death ■

## Crossword results

The winner of our Christmas crossword in IML 129 was **Noreen Caulfield** from Gorey, Co Wexford. Noreen won a pair of Scarpa Terra GTX boots from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to tell her how to arrange to collect her prize from Basecamp.

1	S		2	P		3	S		4	L		5	T		6	A	
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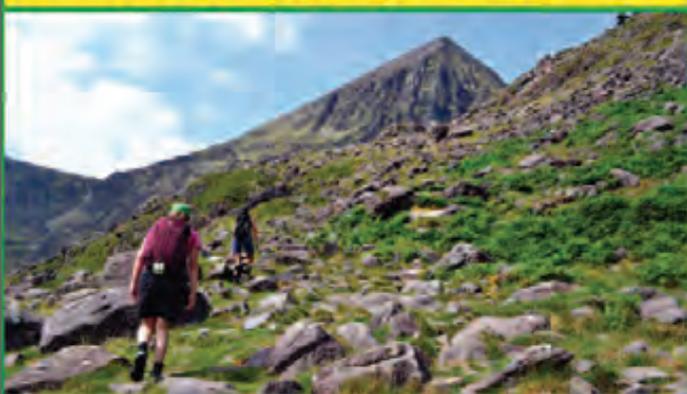
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