

Summer 2020 €3.95 UK£3.40 ISSN 0790 8008 Issue 134

Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

Before the lockdown

Trips to the Mourne and the Canaries

Getting going again

Covid-19 advice for hillwalkers and climbers


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Ireland**

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Welcome

Céad mile fáilte! I do hope you have all been keeping as well as possible in these difficult times? With the easing of the restrictions now, we will hopefully be able to resume our activities more completely as we move into the summer months.

We have some updated advice from Mountaineering Ireland about what the easing of the restrictions means specifically for hillwalkers and climbers in both jurisdictions (see pages 5-7). In the Republic certainly, where all travel restrictions have been removed, we should now be able to resume all activities, subject to being able to continue to effectively socially distance from others and to follow the other public health advice about hand hygiene, cough etiquette, etc. In the North, people are still being encouraged to stay locally, but the restrictions are easing there as well.

Clouds do sometimes have a silver lining and the lockdown has given us all time to catch up on outstanding jobs, do-it-yourself projects, etc. It has also given many time to be creative and to write welcome articles for the *Irish Mountain Log*. With the lack of news and a downturn in advertising, we have also been able to publish more of the articles that we have received, so we have a very full magazine.

The features that we have been able to include give accounts of pre-lockdown trips



With the easing of restrictions, we will hopefully be able to resume our activities as we move into the summer months.

in the Mournes and to the mountains on La Palma in the Canaries. There are also reports of trips undertaken last year to the Pyrenees, the Greater Caucasus and the Sonoran Desert area of Arizona, and of climbing on Malaga. Finally, there is also an account of a climb that was undertaken some years ago on Rysy Mountain in the High Tatras. I do hope there will be something for everyone in the house this time!

This has been a difficult time for us all but there has been a great sense of community, as we have all pulled together to do our bit to counter the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hopefully, now that the threat has receded somewhat, we can all get back to engaging in the sport we all enjoy. Keep safe!

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.

Contributors' guidelines can be downloaded from the Mountaineering Ireland website, 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.



ON THE COVER

Carrauntoohil from Caher in evening sunlight in the McGillycuddy Reeks, Co Kerry

PHOTOGRAPH
AIDAN ENNIS

ISSUE 134

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

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

Copy deadline for the Summer 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is: Friday, August 14th 2020.

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Printing: GPS Colour Graphics Ltd,
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PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

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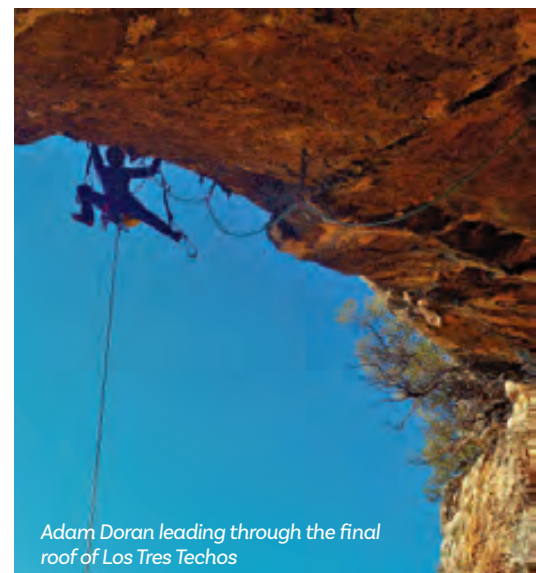
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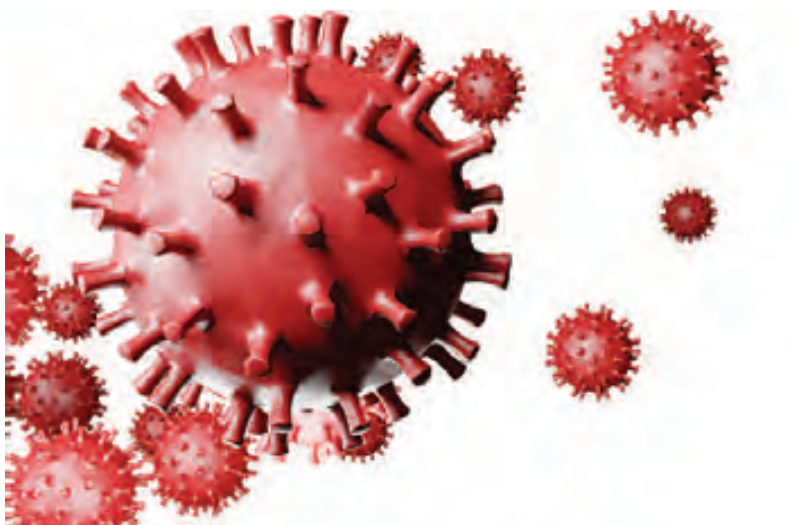
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Newsdesk



Covid-19 advice for hillwalkers and climbers

Mountaineering Ireland has the following advice for all members and affiliated clubs as we return to our activities



**By Murrough McDonagh
(CEO, Mountaineering Ireland)**

While the Covid-19 restrictions have been in place, hillwalkers and climbers all over Ireland have been very responsible in adhering to the relevant recommendations regarding refraining from engaging in their sports.

Throughout the crisis, Mountaineering Ireland has been reviewing what was possible in terms of hillwalking and climbing at each of the phases, as we returned to our activities in a safe and responsible way in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland has produced specific advice to support hillwalkers and climbers in making a safe return to activity in the

continuing presence of Covid-19.

Underpinning that advice is the general public health advice relating to social distancing, good hand hygiene, cough etiquette, etc, which still applies to reduce the possibility of further transmission of the coronavirus.

The purpose of the Mountaineering Ireland advice is to highlight the additional considerations that hillwalkers and climbers should be aware of in the presence of Covid-19. This advice builds on the established good practice in our sport which is commonplace among hillwalkers and climbers: checking weather forecasts, checking access arrangements, selecting routes that are appropriate for fitness, skill and experience, environmental awareness, etc. ➤

There are additional considerations that hillwalkers and climbers should be aware of with the continuing presence of Covid-19

Covid-19 advice for hillwalkers and climbers

The information provided below is intended to support **hillwalkers** and **climbers** in making a safe return to their activities in the continuing presence of Covid-19. Underpinning that information is the general public health advice relating to social distancing, good hand hygiene, cough etiquette, etc, which should always be followed to reduce the possibility of further transmission of coronavirus. The government is emphasising our self-responsibility in preventing another surge of the infection. With the incremental easing of the restrictions that have been in place, our personal responsibility to prevent the spread of the virus has increased conversely.

Mountaineering Ireland **training providers** and **award holders** are also being kept up to date on how to manage the gradual return to aspects of their work. Any **leaders** or **instructors** in hillwalking and climbing who wish to be included in those updates for led and instructed activity service providers, please send your email address to jane@mountaineering.ie.

Republic of Ireland: Phase 3

In Phase 2 of the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business, since June 8th we have been able to travel within our own county and up to 20km from our homes, if crossing a county boundary. Groups of up to fifteen people who were not from the same household could meet outdoors for organised activities such as sporting or other events.

Since June 29th, following an acceleration of the plan set out in the Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business, the key points in **Phase 3** for hillwalkers and climbers are:

- **Travel** – All restrictions for travelling within Ireland have been lifted.
- **Group size** – A slightly larger number of people can meet.
- **Indoor gyms** and **sports facilities** can open, including **indoor climbing walls**.
- **Larger gatherings** of people who are not from the same household can now meet outdoors for organised activities such as sporting or other events, if public health guidelines regarding social distancing are followed. However, Mountaineering Ireland would encourage members to have consideration for landowners and rural communities they are coming into contact with and keep the group size

small, ideally less than ten, but certainly not more than fifteen, as it is easier to find suitable parking and to maintain social distancing in smaller groups.

- **Landowners** and **rural communities**, who are normally welcoming of hillwalkers and climbers, may now have concerns about influxes of visitors. Please be considerate and plan your route to avoid homes and farmyards.

Phase 4 from July 20th is now the final phase. Larger gatherings indoors and outdoors will be permissible, but again with social distancing.

Northern Ireland: Step 2

Northern Ireland is now in Step 2 of a five-step easing of the lockdown – no dates for the different steps have been given.

Groups of up to ten can meet outdoors while maintaining social distancing. People are still being encouraged to walk or cycle where possible.

■ Step 3

- No changes relevant to outdoor activities.

■ Step 4

- **Indoor sports facilities** can open.

Covid-19 advice for hillwalkers on the island of Ireland

■ Before going hillwalking...

- Ensure that your group size is feasible for your intended location and route.
- Prepare and plan your route, and check that you can access the trails and hills.
- Continue to avoid car-pooling with people who are not part of your household or who you are not in regular contact with.
- Try to avoid busy times and popular locations.
- Carry a first-aid kit and be prepared to deal with minor incidents during your walk.
- Have a plan of action to maintain social distancing and good hygiene, if you must cross stiles, go through gates, or pass others on narrow paths.
- Only take dogs where they are permitted, and keep them on a lead at all times.

■ Parking

- If on arrival you find the car park is full or closed, have an alternative plan.

- Park in a way that will not obstruct the emergency services (who may need to use forest entrances), local residents accessing their homes, or local farmers who need to enter fields or farmyards.

■ While hillwalking...

- Walk within your capabilities in areas and on routes that are familiar to you.
- Be vigilant on 2m distancing when breathing hard during ascent, passing gates and going over stiles.
- Most paths are not more than 2m wide, so walk single file rather than abreast to avoid trampling of vegetation.
- Avoid holding or sharing anyone's poles or gear throughout the walk.
- Be especially mindful of not gathering around a map, at summits, or for photos.

FAQs

■ Can I go hillwalking?

Yes – subject to government restrictions.

■ Where can I go?

Again, follow government recommendations. In the Republic, in-county restrictions on travel have been removed. In Northern Ireland, stay local in accordance with government restrictions.

■ Who can I go with?

Again, follow government recommendations. Groups of up to two hundred can now meet outdoors in the Republic for organised activities such as sporting or other events, providing public health guidelines on social distancing are followed. For hiking, much smaller groups are recommended, ideally up to ten people in a group with a maximum of fifteen, as per standard good practice.

Key points

- Follow government and public health advice.
- Be socially responsible – do what you can to help reduce the transmission of the virus.
- Respect the wishes of landowners and local communities.
- Maintain physical distance from people not living in your household.
- Stay safe – choose routes that are well within you and/or the group's capability.
- Participants should keep to the same groups for activities. This will help limit contacts should a member of the group become COVID-19 positive.
- A log should be kept of everyone involved in these activities for contact tracing purposes.

Covid-19 advice for climbers on the island of Ireland

This advice aims to help climbers make a safe and responsible return to climbing in the presence of Covid-19. It should be considered in addition to your normal best practice. Apply common sense and use your experience and intuition as a climber to make sensible decisions.

Generally, stay safe, be cautious and choose objectives within your technical and physical limits to minimise the risk of accidents and injury and avoid putting pressure on the emergency services.

- Follow government recommendations and public health guidelines.
- Be socially responsible – do what you can to help reduce the transmission of the virus.
- Respect the wishes of landowners and communities in the current situation.
- Maintain physical distance from people not living in your household.
- Minimise your number of climbing partners.
- Maintain a log of who you climb with.

■ Before climbing...

- Continue to avoid car-pooling with people who are not part of your household or who you are not in regular contact with.
- Check that you can access the climbing area.
- Park sensibly and responsibly if driving to the climbing area.
- If the climbing area is busy, go elsewhere or return later.

■ While climbing...

- Give extra consideration to route or problem choice, erring towards the objectively safe and familiar.
- Carry some means of cleaning your hands, and do so before and after each climb.
- Carry a face-mask for times when physical distancing may not be possible.

■ Equipment

- Minimise the sharing of equipment.
- After climbing, quarantine your equipment for 72 hours, or wash it appropriately, before climbing again with another person.

■ Bouldering

- Spotting should be carried out by members of your household or by people who you are in regular contact with because of the close contact involved.
- Carry enough boulder mats to build a suitable landing.
- Avoid congregating in proximity with other groups.

■ Trad climbing and sport climbing

- To facilitate physical distancing, choose climbs with room at the bottom and top. If this is not possible, you can lower your partner before they reach the top.
- If you usually do not wear a helmet, consider using one to reduce risk of injury.
- It is not advisable to multi-pitch climb with someone who is not from your household at this time as it is unlikely you will be able to maintain adequate social distancing.

FAQs

■ Can I go climbing?

Yes – but subject to government restrictions.

■ Where can I go?

Again, follow government recommendations. In the Republic, in-county restrictions on travel are removed. In Northern Ireland, stay local in accordance with government restrictions.

■ Who can I go with?

Again, follow government recommendations. Groups of up to two hundred can meet outdoors in the Republic for organised activities such as sporting or other events, providing public health guidelines are followed, but for climbing much smaller groups are recommended, with a maximum of fifteen people in a group. In the North, currently, if climbing with people from outside your household, the maximum group size is ten, while maintaining social distancing.

*For further information, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website www.mountaineering.ie
Our advice will be updated and reissued as the situation develops*

The wait is almost over!

The long awaited and eagerly anticipated *Irish Peaks* guidebook is almost here!

Irish Peaks will be available to Mountaineering Ireland members towards the end of July (subject to no further business disruptions).

Irish Peaks celebrates Ireland's highest mountains through an inspiring collection of seventy-one hillwalking routes, contributed by Mountaineering Ireland members. These beautifully illustrated routes will encourage the reader to visit all of Ireland's main mountain areas.

Irish Peaks is being published by Mountaineering Ireland in tribute to the late **Joss Lynam**, who edited the original *Irish Peaks* book, published in 1982. One of Mountaineering Ireland's aims in producing this book is to promote responsible engagement with Ireland's mountains, an engagement that is based on understanding and respect.

With restrictions on outdoor activities and travel being lifted, the publication of *Irish Peaks* is well-timed for members planning a holiday in Ireland over the summer or autumn.

Mountaineering Ireland members get a 15% discount on the recommended retail price of €25.99. This means you pay €22.10 (plus postage & packaging charges). Order your copy now from: www.mountaineering.ie/shop



- ◆ 256-page hardcover guidebook, featuring 71 hillwalking routes across the island of Ireland
- ◆ Routes submitted by Mountaineering Ireland members, many from local clubs
- ◆ Illustrated with inspiring photographs and a map for each route
- ◆ Substantial introduction to Ireland's mountain environment
- ◆ Includes advice on access and safety in the mountains



Win a copy of 'Irish Peaks' guidebook

Take part in this competition to be in with a chance of winning a copy of Mountaineering Ireland's latest book

Mountaineering Ireland will shortly be taking delivery of its latest hillwalking guidebook, *Irish Peaks*, for sale to members and the general public. To mark this occasion, the *Irish Mountain Log* is running a competition to give readers an opportunity to win a free copy of the book. To take part, simply answer the following questions:

What is the highest mountain on the island of Ireland, and what is its height in metres?

Please send your answers by post to The Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*, **Irish Peaks Competition**, Mountaineering



Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, or by email to info@mountaineering.ie, to arrive not later than Friday, July 31st,

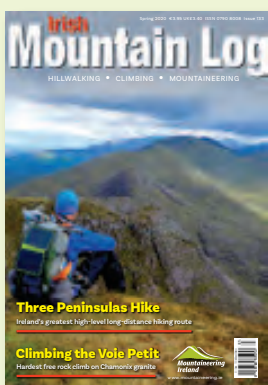
2020. Don't forget to include with your entry your full name, address, membership number, telephone number and email address. The winner will be contacted after the closing date and announced in the Autumn 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* ■

Correction to IML 133

In the article *Overcrowding on the Everest Trail* by Jim Ryan (IML 133, pages 46-47), there was an unfortunate error. It gave the impression that there was a shortage of beds and water in Gokyo, whereas the shortages were actually in Gorak Shep, just below Everest Base Camp. This was an editorial error and we apologise to the author.

Book reviewers needed

More volunteers are needed to add to our panel of potential book reviewers for the *Irish Mountain Log*. Current members of the panel are also asked to update their contact details with **Peter O'Neill**, the Literary Editor for the *Irish Mountain Log*, at iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie.



In recent years, the panel has shrunk as members have stood down or are no longer contactable. The book reviews comprise one of the most popular sections in the magazine and we need to maintain a good panel of potential reviewers.

The task is not too onerous. As books are received for

review, the Literary Editor circulates a list of them to the panel of reviewers. If you see a title that is of interest to you, you can offer to review it. Once reviewed, the books go into the Mountaineering Ireland library so that other members can read them.

If you would be willing to review an occasional book for the *Irish Mountain Log*, please contact Peter O'Neill at iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie with your areas of interest and your contact details.

Crossword results

The winner of our Spring Crossword in IML 133 was **Rosie McLaren, Sligo, Co Sligo**, who won a 3-Season Saros Sleeping Bag and a Thermarest Prolite Mat, prizes worth a total of €289.95 from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to arrange the collection of her prizes.

1	C		2	B		3	S		4	H		5	S		6	S
7	L	O	U	G	H	G	A	R	T	A	N					
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	F		E				E						E			
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3-Season Saros Sleeping Bag



Thermarest Prolite Mat



The Coillte forests (in green) in the Dublin Mountains Makeover

Dublin Mountains makeover welcomed

Coillte forests in the Dublin Mountains to be managed for people and nature

By Helen Lawless

Mountaineering Ireland has welcomed Coillte's decision to move towards management for recreation and nature in its major forests in the Dublin Mountains. These forests are vitally important recreational sites for Dublin's growing population, with Ticknock alone seeing an average of 550 visitors a day. The changes planned to the structure of the forests in the Dublin Mountains will create a much more vibrant natural environment, thus improving the quality of people's recreation experiences.

Through the **Dublin Mountains Makeover**, nine Coillte forests of over 900 hectares will transition away from the clearfell and replanting cycle, towards a different management model. Certain areas will be managed as continuous cover forestry, where selected trees are removed to allow more light to reach the forest floor, with planting of some young native trees to increase the diversity of species in the forest. This will lead to a multi-generational forest, which will

always have a canopy of trees. Areas that are not suitable for continuous cover forestry will be clearfelled in small sections and replanted with native tree species. These forests will subsequently be managed under continuous cover forestry.

The first phase of conversion started in June 2020 in Ballyedmonduff and Ticknock forests, with work planned for Cruagh, Barnaslingan and Carrickgollogan later in the year. Overall, this project will take many years, if not decades, but in time it should lead to the creation of a more appealing landscape and enhance the quality of people's recreation experiences.

The greater diversity of tree species will be better for wildlife. It will also bring autumn colours to the landscape of the Dublin Mountains. During the transition period some parts of the Dublin Mountains may not look pretty, but Coillte is asking people to think of this as short-term pain for long-term gain.

The forest conversion will be managed by **Coillte Nature**, Coillte's new non-profit

entity, in partnership with the **Dublin Mountains Partnership**. Recreation activities and the trail network in the Dublin Mountains will continue to be managed by the Dublin Mountains Partnership.

In 2017, **Mountaineering Ireland** contributed to a proposal from the **Dublin Mountains Initiative** for a fresh approach to the management of the Dublin Mountains forests that are used extensively for recreation. The Dublin Mountains Initiative set out a vision of diverse forests, managed primarily for recreation, without the use of clearfelling. Mountaineering Ireland would like to acknowledge the work of **Mark D'Alton** and the other members of the **Dublin Mountains Initiative** who have, over many years, championed the recreation value of these forests.

Mountaineering Ireland members around the country are already asking if this management model will be applied elsewhere. Coillte's response so far is that the Dublin Mountains forests are unique in terms of their proximity to the capital, their exceptionally high visitor numbers and the involvement of other stakeholders through the Dublin Mountains Partnership and the Dublin Mountains Initiative. The Dublin Mountains Makeover brings these forests into a much wider network of over 250 recreation forests across the country and 90,000 hectares of land that is managed with a focus on biodiversity.

FIND OUT MORE For further information see feature, page 40. See also www.coillte.ie/coillte-nature/ourprojects/dublinmountainsmakeover



Hilltop megalithic tomb damaged

Major concern over damage to monument and cairn-building in Wicklow Mountains

By Helen Lawless

During the Covid-19 crisis, **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS) staff in Wicklow have been busier than ever, protecting our mountains. Amongst other challenges, including battling devastating fires and tackling continued irresponsible use of off-road vehicles, the NPWS has been dealing with a spate of cairn-building on certain mountains within the Wicklow Mountains Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

One of the peaks most badly affected was **Lugnaquilla**, Wicklow's highest mountain. In addition to careful removal of the cairns, signage has been put in place at access points to Lugnaquilla asking people not to move stones to create or add to cairns. Lifting stones disturbs the habitats of insects and small mammals, and exposes the soil to erosion. The building of cairns also takes from the natural beauty of the mountains.

NPWS staff are also liaising with the **National Monuments Service** to agree how best to address recent vandalism to a megalithic tomb on the summit of **Seahan Mountain** on the Dublin/Wicklow border. Stones have been removed from the cairn, which is a national monument, to build a semi-circular shelter. It is a shame to see our archaeological heritage treated in this way.

As much of this activity took place during the height of the Covid-19 restrictions, those responsible may not be regular hillwalkers, but this does provide a reminder to us all of the importance of leaving the mountains as we find them.

Mountaineering Ireland extends its thanks to the **NPWS team** in Wicklow, and their colleagues in other areas, for their continuing efforts to care for Ireland's mountains. Mountaineering Ireland also acknowledges the cooperation of the **Defence Forces** (a key landowner on



Lugnaquilla) and the **National Monuments Service**.

As we gradually get back to the mountains that we are

familiar with, please let us know if you notice changes – good or bad – by emailing helen@mountaineering.ie ■

Training grants available



Mountaineering Ireland places a high value on training and the concept of self-reliance for walkers and climbers. We appreciate that cost can sometimes be a barrier to training. Consequently, Mountaineering Ireland operates a number of **grant schemes** to support clubs and individuals undertaking mountain training courses. **Mountain Training Board Ireland** (MTBI) administers these training grants on behalf of

Mountaineering Ireland. The grants are open to all Mountaineering Ireland members. There are two grant options available to most clubs:

1. A Club Training Grant to support clubs whose members are doing recognised mountain training courses such as **Mountain Skills** and **Mountain Leader**. Individual Members of Mountaineering Ireland can also apply for grants under this scheme.

2. A Club Mentor Scheme to support clubs that bring in an instructor to provide tailor-made training for their members.

Find more information about the training grant criteria and how to



Training provider Liam McCarthy

apply for a grant on the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie, on the **Mountain Training** page under **Training Grants** ■

Articles sought for history journal

Articles sought for Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society



By Declan O'Keeffe

In 2001, Mountaineering Ireland established the **Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society** (IM&EHS) in order to further interest in the rich history of Irish mountaineering and exploration.

The society published two issues of its journal in 2002 and 2005, which were both edited by the late **Joss Lynam**.

They were well received and contained much information of historical importance in the field. The journal was successfully revived by **Declan O'Keeffe** and **Kevin Higgins** in 2012 with Volume 3, while Volume 4 followed in 2015.

Plans are now afoot to produce a fifth volume next year. 2021 will be the fiftieth anniversary of the national governing body for the sport of mountaineering on the island of Ireland; that body is now **Mountaineering Ireland**.

2021 is also the centenary of the first British expedition to Mount Everest, which included **George Mallory** and was led by an Irishman, **Charles Howard-Bury**, whose family were from the King's County (now County Offaly).

The anniversary issue of the



North Face of Everest

journal will contain contributions on developments in key areas of our sport over the last fifty years, as well as fresh research and articles already published elsewhere, in order that, in Joss's words, "the *IM&EHS Journal* will be recognised as the best source of information

on our history [and] that all important articles be found in it."

ARE YOU INTERESTED? If you are interested in writing an article on an appropriate subject (or have already done so, even if it has been published elsewhere), please contact the journal's editor, **Declan O'Keeffe**, at caldeno@gmail.com ■

Local guides needed for walk videos



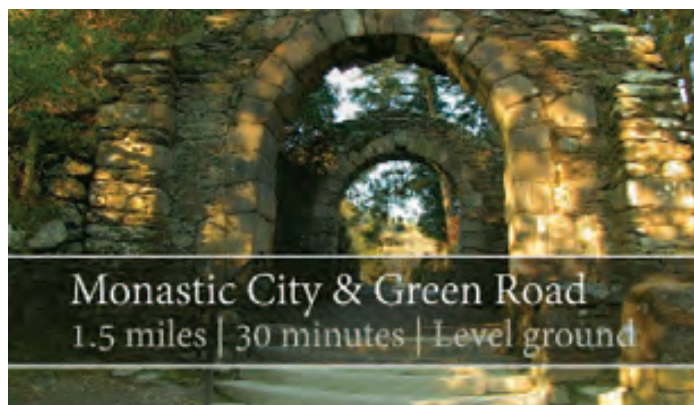
By Jake Mac Manus
(Director, Trek Ireland)

Since childhood, we have grown up with stories and, even now, talking with others helps us understand better our lived, shared experience. The same goes for the land. I have walked around Ireland for quite some time now and have always felt a stranger in the parts I visited. That is, until locals would open my eyes to what the land meant to them:

that would greatly improve my experience.

In 2014, I decided to film **nature walks** in Ireland and I asked local guides to share what they considered important about their locality with my viewers. I have filmed in Glendalough, in Killarney National Park, on the south Wexford coast, on the Aran Islands (as Gaeilge), in Burren National Park, on Fanad peninsula, in Wicklow National Park and in Dublin.

I want to visit more of Ireland's hidden gems to see what I've been missing, and I'm looking for local guides, anyone with a *grá* for their land, to take me on a scenic journey in their area. Long walks or short, flat, round or ridged, river, hill or forest, dale or glen, I want to hear about

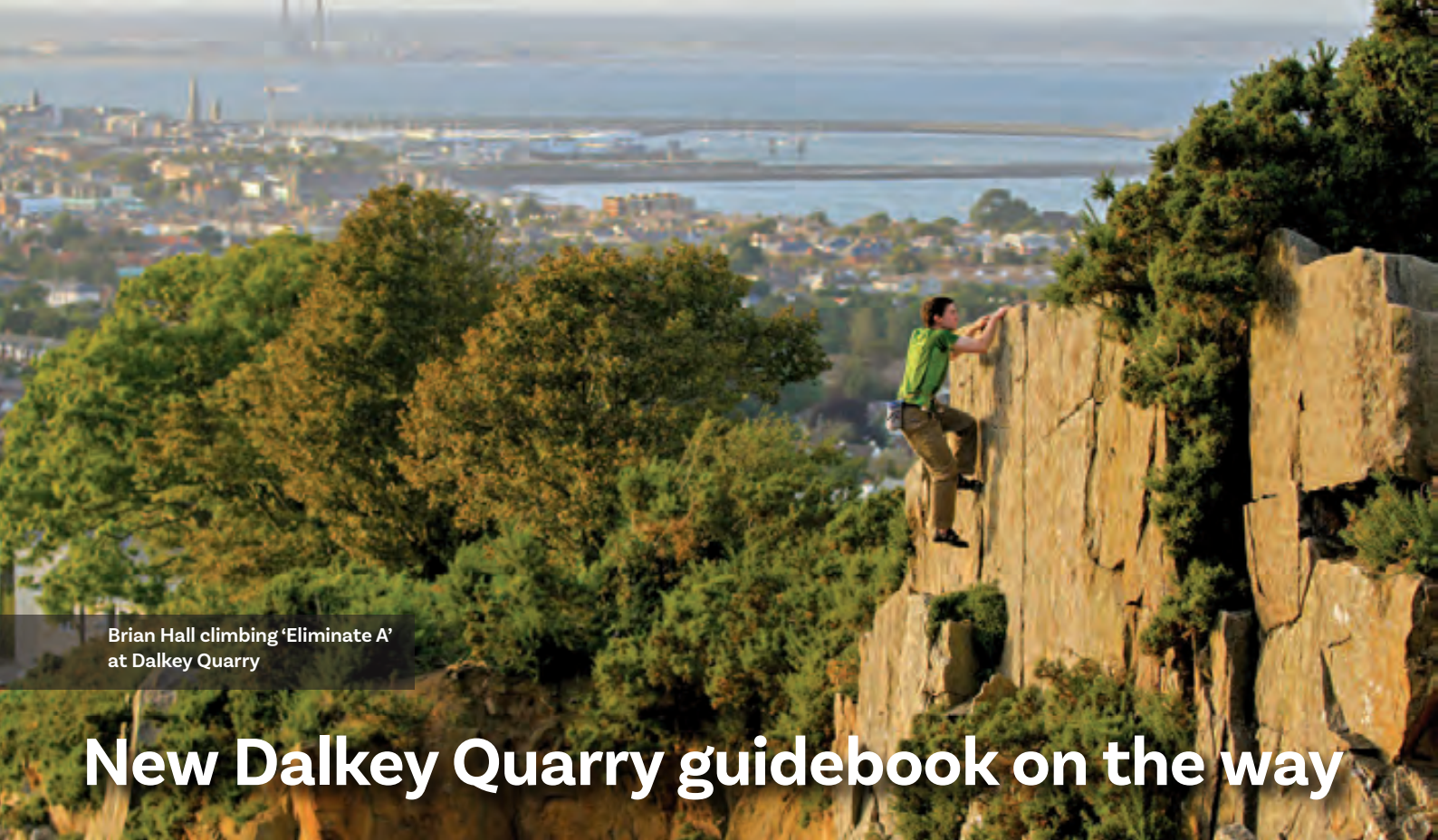


Opening frame of 'Monastic City' video, shot in Glendalough

Ireland's rich local history through your eyes while walking past ancient heritage sites, or spills of cut stones, an old mill or a deserted cottage, while hearing and seeing the rush of leaves overhead, or the hush of waves upon the shore, or the hum of bees on wide open fields. I am available

during spring, summer and autumn weekends and would love to visit the place you call home.

FIND OUT MORE For more information, please contact Jake Mac Manus at jake@trekireland.com or telephone **087 7745 257** or visit the website www.trekireland.com ■



Brian Hall climbing 'Eliminate A' at Dalkey Quarry

New Dalkey Quarry guidebook on the way

By Damien O'Sullivan

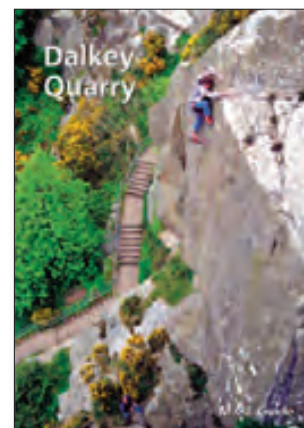
Work is underway on a new edition of the Dalkey Quarry rock climbing guidebook.

The current guidebook (pictured, right) was edited by **Ronan Browner** and **Howard Hebblethwaite** and published in 2005. It has served climbers well for a decade and a half but now needs to be updated.

A new edition of the Dalkey Quarry guidebook is now being prepared by **Howard Hebblethwaite** and **Conor McGovern**. It will include any changes and developments to routes in the quarry. The new edition will also take advantage of the significant improvements in photography and print methods to produce a more modern guidebook.

The editors of the new guide would welcome any input regarding new routes or corrections to the text of the current edition. The editors would also welcome high-quality climbing photos.

Submissions can be sent to Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Officer **Damien O'Sullivan** via email at damien@mountaineering.ie



Mountaineering Ireland ezine is back!

By Laura Griffin

If you have not received the latest **Mountaineering Ireland ezine newsletter** in your inbox by now, it is probably because your membership account settings do not allow us to contact you by email. Should you wish to receive future editions of the ezine, you simply need to opt in on receiving communications from Mountaineering Ireland by email. Changing your settings is simple and quick! You can change your settings independently in your Mountaineering Ireland account profile online. Simply log in to your profile, tick the box for **'I would like to receive Information via email from Mountaineering Ireland to keep up to date with news and information'** and hit the **'Update'** button. Done!

The Mountaineering Ireland ezine is a great way to keep up to date with developments in the Covid-19 recommendations for the return to the outdoors and in your national governing body! ■



Personal Details | Membership settings | Awards & Clubs | Notes | Digital Log

First Name *	Name
Last Name *	Last Name
Gender *	please select 1
Address Line 1 *	House number
Address Line 2 *	Street name
Town *	Town
County *	to be confirmed 2
Country *	ireland

☒ I would like to receive information via email from Mountaineering Ireland to keep up to date with news and information.

In addition to receiving general communications please let us know how else you would like to hear from us:

By phone: ☐

Receive Log: Can only be CHECKED at renewal

Ball Consent Fields

Password:

Confirm Password:

Discover your 'Climb-Ability'

Jasper Chisnall reports on accessible adventure for people with intellectual or mild physical disabilities

“I'm scared,” said Tom (not his real name), turning to his Mum.

“There's no need to be scared,” she replied, thinking he needed some reassurance.

“No... it's okay to be scared, because, if I'm scared, I can be brave!”

It is moments like these that prove just how powerful climbing can be.

Tom was part of the first **'Climb-Ability'** programme launched earlier this year by **Master Adventure**, a company that offers climbing instruction to all comers. The course was specially tailored, in conjunction with caregivers, to suit a small group of participants with autism or Down's syndrome. Tom had come to a profound conclusion: to be brave, you have to face a fear. After all, what is bravery without fear?

As Tom repeatedly showed his bravery, it was clear that climbing was a perfect exercise for him to increase his resilience. Here was someone challenging a genuine fear with a positive

attitude and, with encouragement, each week he overcame it, much to his own delight.

There is a real need for accessible and inclusive climbing programmes for people with disabilities, where participants can enjoy and benefit hugely from their experiences, which can also help them in their everyday lives.

Often I am asked 'Who can climb?' My answer is anyone who wants to. While that might seem somewhat flippant, there is truth to it. With the right attitude, a bit of creativity and some help, I believe anything is possible.

Realising that there can be many barriers to accessing inclusive sports, Master Adventure has worked hard to remove as many obstacles as possible to climbing, with all equipment provided free, and cost subsidies available when needed.

Understanding that climbing has the ability to positively impact people in many different ways, we believe that there are other groups that could benefit



from tailored climbing programmes. Currently we are planning to add an at-risk youth initiative called **'ROCK-Up!'** It is being designed to benefit groups of young people who are experiencing economic, social and/or cultural disadvantage in their lives.

Just like our 'Climb-Ability' programme, 'ROCK-Up!' will use climbing as a platform to explore personal growth opportunities by allowing participants to learn to

challenge themselves, work together and surpass their own limits. With our experience in leading and developing adventure activities, we look forward to seeing the impact this amazing sport will have on these disadvantaged young people.

Please note: The name of the participant was changed to protect the privacy of the individual involved ■



AUTHOR Jasper Chisnall holds instructor certificates in a wide variety of adventure sports, including the Single Pitch Award/Rock Climbing Instructor qualification and Wilderness First Aid, and has nearly eleven years of experience in working in the outdoor industry. He worked as a Multi-Activity Instructor, a Senior Instructor and an Activities Manager before setting up his own company, **Master Adventure**.

FIND OUT MORE For more information, see www.masteradventure.ie, email info@masteradventure.ie or phone 087 795 0747.

**MASTER
ADVENTURE**

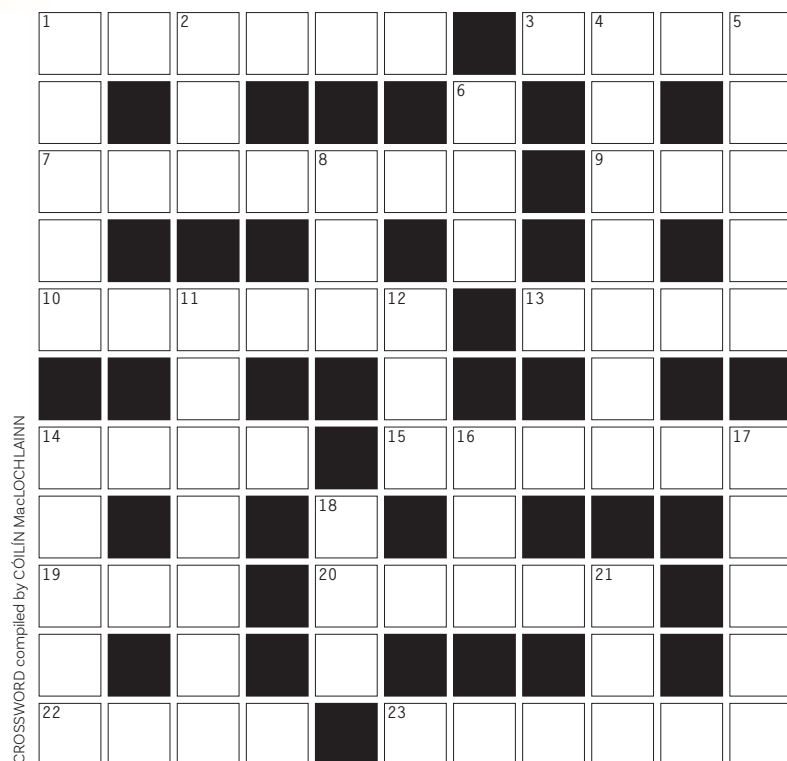


Summer Competition

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

WIN

a woman's or man's outfit (comprising 3 items) valued at up to €250

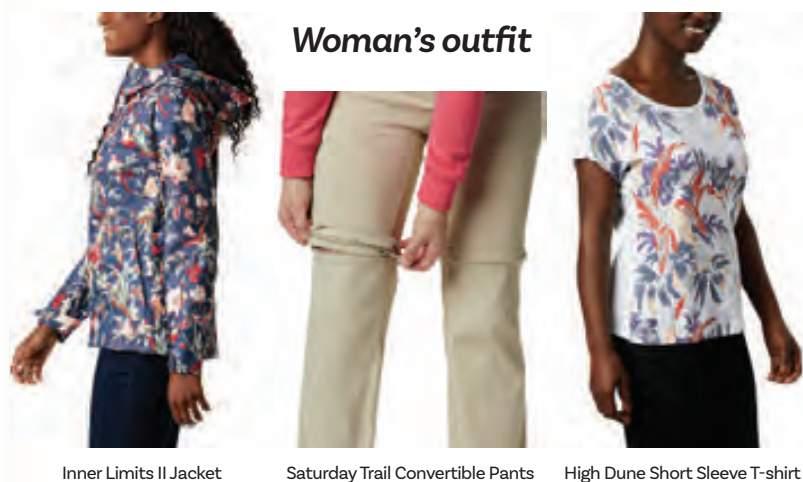


Clues Across

- 1 Gamebird associated with heather moors (6).
- 3 Large island in Inner Hebrides (4).
- 7 Athletic pursuit followed by some in the fells (7).
- 9 Breed of dog with wrinkly, short-muzzled face (3).
- 10 Remote Polynesian island famous for carved stone figures with oversized heads (6).
- 13 Project to combat illegal dumping in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains (1,1,1,1).
- 14 A demanding long-distance journey, usually on foot (4).
- 15 To move upward or climb (6).
- 19 French friend (3).
- 20 A monument of stones on hilltop, often contains passage tomb (5).
- 22 Another name for heather (4).
- 23 Dublin River that rises in Glenasmole (6).

Clues Down

- 1 Prickly wild shrub with yellow flowers, very vulnerable to fire (5).
- 2 Possess (3).
- 4 Dublin's highest top (7).
- 5 Large, soaring bird of prey (5).
- 6 Bronze, iron or ice, for instance (3).
- 8 Frozen water (3).
- 11 Dublin hill with passage tomb, seat of Finn (7).
- 12 An academy, royal and Irish (1,1,1).
- 14 A path or track across rough country for hiking or biking (5).
- 16 One of pair of long runners used to glide over snow (3).
- 17 Michael, rebel leader associated with Glen of Imaal in Wicklow (5).
- 18 A deed or performance (3).
- 21 To express agreement with slight downward movement of head (3).



How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a prize worth up to €250 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, or email it to info@mountaineering.ie, to arrive not later than Friday, August 7th 2020. Don't forget to include with your entry your full name, address, membership number, telephone number and email address. The winner will be announced in the Autumn 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.



Competition prize

Basecamp's generous prize is a woman's or man's outfit comprising a jacket, a short-sleeved t-shirt and convertible pants, all by Columbia.



Covid-19 pandemic gets more people walking

Three million adults are now walking for recreation in Ireland during the Covid-19 restrictions

By Linda Sankey
(Get Ireland Walking)

At the beginning of May, **Sport Ireland** published the first part of a report about research conducted by **Ipsos MRBI**, which revealed that Irish adults have adapted remarkably well in keeping up their sport and recreational walking habits during this difficult period. In fact, more adults are now active than previously, despite the restrictions, and the increase in recreational walking has been profound.

The survey was undertaken in three waves: 28 February to 9 March; 16 to 31 March; and 1 to 13 April, 2020.

The 'delay' phase of Ireland's response to Covid-19 commenced on March 12th with school closures, limited outdoor gatherings, working from home if possible, etc, while the 'stay at home' enhanced restrictions phase commenced on March 27th.

1,009 respondents took part in waves 1 and 3, while 1,003 took part in wave 2.

By wave 3, 78% of respondents were reporting that they were walking for recreation at least once per week. Extrapolating this to the entire population, it is roughly equivalent to an additional 500,000 regular adult recreational walkers compared to the numbers of

reported walkers during March and April of 2019.

Irish adults have adapted remarkably well in being physically active during this difficult period. More adults are now physically active than before the restrictions were introduced, with a substantial increase in the numbers walking for recreation.

The numbers running and cycling also increased during this period, while the closure of many sports facilities and curtailment of team-based sports caused a decline in personal exercise (gym-based activities), swimming and Gaelic football, among others.

● Increases were seen in

recreational walking among both genders and across all age groups, particularly among those aged under 45.

- Greater increases in recreational walking were seen in Dublin than in other parts of the country.
- Greater increases were also seen among those in the higher socioeconomic group ABC1.

Those who are active are more likely to report significantly better physical health than the inactive, evidencing the important role sport and physical activity play in the promotion of health across the nation.



You can read the full report at www.sportireland.ie/news/ireland-staying-active-during-covid-19-restrictions-sport-ireland-research or go to: www.bit.ly/covidactive.

The second part of the report was published on May 27th, 2020. It showed that the current participation rate in sporting activities is 51% among the adult population. The estimated number of adults walking for recreation has increased throughout the

crisis, increasing by a total of 18% over the five phases of the research.

The figure of 83% of adults now walking for recreation is the highest level ever recorded and is equivalent to over 3.1 million regular walkers in the country.

More than half (52%) of the adults in the population report that they are now engaging in sufficient levels

of activity to meet the recommendations in the **National Physical Activity Guidelines**.

A further promising finding from the report is that the combined effect of the increased participation in sport and recreational walking

means that the proportion of adults described as sedentary in the **National Sports Policy** has declined to 11%, compared to 22% during the same period in 2019. This is the lowest level of sedentarism ever recorded by Sport Ireland ■



Stay active and explore the outdoors

Family resource developed to help people explore nature on their doorsteps

Explore **#NatureOnYourDoorstep** and respect **#SocialDistancing**

● The resource booklet is supported by **Wildways Adventures**, **WildTime** and **Blackstairs Eco Trails** ■



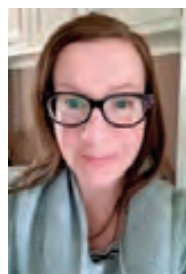
By **Linda Sankey**
(Get Ireland Walking)

Carlow Sports Partnership has developed a fun resource to help families to become outdoor explorers. These are outdoor challenges to help families stay active and learn about nature at the same time.

Being out in nature has many benefits, including relieving physical and mental stresses; it is also free and accessible.

You can do a garden scavenger hunt, a leaf or bark rubbing challenge, take the spring diary challenge or take the min-beast hunt challenge!

To download the four pdfs in this resource, go to: <https://tinyurl.com/yawtnuv2> or find them at: www.bit.ly/explorenature100.



AUTHOR: Linda Sankey is Communications Officer with 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, contact us on (01) 625 1109 or email Linda Sankey at info@getirelandwalking.ie.



Dingle Walking Festival re-scheduled

New dates: September 18-20th 2020

By Ethna Garvey

Like many other events, the **Dingle Walking Festival** has had to be re-scheduled this year. It is now going ahead over the weekend of September 18-20th 2020.

Weatherwise, September can often be a beautiful month in west Kerry, with wonderful, firm hillwalking conditions. The panoramic sea, island and mountain scenery in Corca Dhuibhne is, we believe, without parallel in Ireland.

The festival walk programme is the same as that described in the Spring 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* (IML 133). Each of the selected walks has its own special allure. Many people will be familiar with Mount Brandon and the Brandon range, but what about the views from Mount Eagle (Sunday's 'A' walk) on a clear day, looking out over Sleat Head, Blasket Sound and the Blasket Islands?!

After the coronavirus restrictions, we will all be chomping at the bit to get back on the hills... and can you really beat Dingle in September?

AUTHOR: Ethna Garvey is the club secretary of Dingle Hillwalking Club.

FIND OUT MORE: For the latest festival information, check

www.dinglehillwalkingclub.com

or email

dinglewalkingfestival@gmail.com ■



Dingle Hillwalking Club members ascending Mount Eagle

Hiking in lockdown – staying local



By Michael Guilfoyle

In numbers like never before, up and down our country, we are out there walking and strolling and dog-walking and cycling and jogging the roads and streets of our villages, our towns, our cities and our wildflower-filled countryside. We make a point of snatching neighbourly chats on the go, as if to compensate for the seemingly unfriendly wide berth we must give each other.

Our talk of the weather is upbeat and full of smiles and happy words. Voices are necessarily louder but nonetheless full of good cheer and greeting. We pause sometimes and peer into beautifully tended gardens. We admire exuberances of apple and cherry and lilac blossom and great walls of straining clematis and pendants of lovely yellow laburnum.

We see recently cleaned and painted garden gates and fences and fasciae, and we pause to congratulate our busily working neighbours on jobs well done. We thank those whose flowering garden shrubs hang generously over into our public space, as we peer upwards into chaotic marvels of pink and white blossom, patterning the bluest of skies above us.

We sit on a wall or a bench

along our way, open our little knapsacks and flasks and drink coffee, and say to ourselves that life isn't too bad. Sometimes, in sun-dappled green spaces, we stand and stare in wonder at beautiful beech trees, increasingly drenched in the most delicate of pastel greens. We listen quietly to suburban birdsong, seeming to us louder and more melodious than ever before.

We note to ourselves that anxieties that came with us on our way out have lifted a bit, those snatched chats and the walk and the beauty and order of garden and flower having worked a little magic for us. We know we feel the better for them. We are perhaps discovering the diamonds on our doorstep. Though we hadn't planned any of this, we find ourselves stilling our headlong rush hither and thither. We are stopping to smell the roses. We are pausing for breath.

Even for the hikers amongst us, whose weekend dreams are of full day outings to Lugnaquilla or snatched social scampers up Maulin, the



Geraniums in bloom

lockdown has brought us to an inner space, a micro-world of nearby places. We explore them with an unique and first-time mindfulness, finding simple beauty on corners of estates and walkways, on lovingly lawn-cut road margins.

We sometimes even feel an excitement as we approach a previously unvisited area, wondering what lies around the corner! We use our navigation skills to put our neighbourhood together in our heads, to tie in this area, this avenue, this estate, this crossroads with the next. We enjoy creating a mental image of the layout of our suburb or countryside, like some complex hike in some complex wilderness.

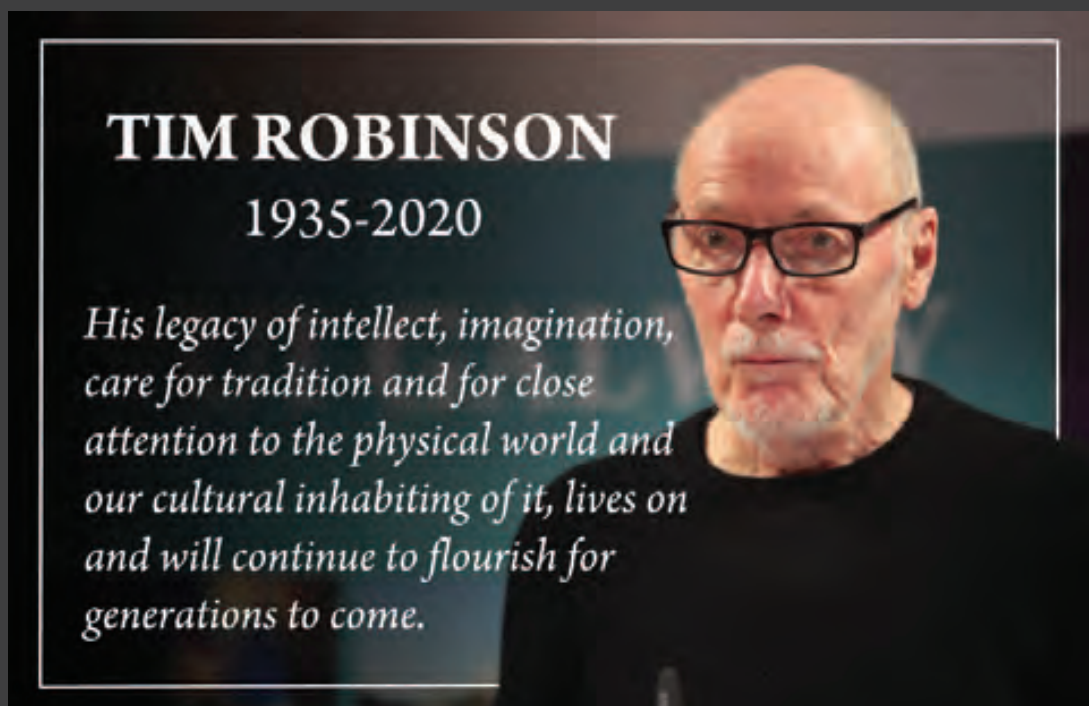
We check the circumference of our 2km or 5km inclusion zone and design happy loops within them. We employ Euclid to help us calculate the

theoretical maximum distance we can legally walk or cycle. We carry evidence of our designs with us, eager to show off our navigation skills and our socially responsible compliance to any questioning Garda!

The simple pleasure of all this is a revelation to us, more especially to those of us whose heads are usually heady with dreams of faraway places and our next exotic trip. It may be a revelation that will desert us in time, but I suspect it won't, inspired as it is in the sharp focus of traumatic times. Hopefully, it will stay with us and ease our transition towards a less frenetic, more relaxed and sustainable future. And perhaps it will equip us better to face the inevitable tribulations that lie ahead ■



Three Rock Mountain overlooking Dublin city and bay



Picture and quotation courtesy of Prof Daniel Carey, Director of Moore Institute, NUIG, accessed from <https://mooreinstitute.ie/2020/04/04/nui-galway-and-the-moore-institute-mourn-the-passing-of-tim-robinson>

By John O'Callaghan

Tim Robinson, 'Fear na Mapaí,' internationally renowned writer of place lore, cartographer, artist and mathematician, died from coronavirus on April 3rd, 2020, aged 85 years. In his latter years, Robinson had suffered from Parkinson's disease. He died in a London hospital two weeks after the death of his wife and collaborator, Mairéad Robinson. They had moved to London from their home in Roundstone, Co Galway, due to poor health.



To readers of the *Irish Mountain Log*, Tim Robinson will best be remembered for his hand-drawn maps of Árainn, the Burren and Connemara. The Burren map was published by **Folding Landscapes**, the company he and his wife Mairéad ran in Roundstone. It first appeared in 1977, with a second, updated edition being published in 1999. The map became the *vade mecum* for all walkers and explorers of the Burren uplands.

1988 saw the publication of *The Mountains of Connemara*:

A Hill-Walker's Guide, written and drawn by Tim with **Joss Lynam** and **Justin May**. This literally opened up new pathways for hillwalkers and was one of the first 1:50,000 maps to be published in Ireland.

Robinson gave a much fuller treatment of the place-names in his subsequent one-inch map of Connemara and accompanying publication, *Connemara: Introduction and Gazetteer*, published in 1990.

It was as a recoverer and restorer of native Irish place-names that Tim Robinson excelled. To him it was both an 'act of post-colonial reparation' and a way of life for over forty years.

In the 1991 documentary of his work, *Folding Landscapes: Tim Robinson, Fear na Mapaí*, filmed and produced by **David Cabot** and directed by **Michael Viney**, Robinson says: "I'm hooked on place names [...] I'd go to any lengths to fill in

some little corner of my picture puzzle of Connemara."

Long before authors like Robert Macfarlane were writing about a philosophy of walking and why we climb mountains, Tim Robinson was already out there, walking the landscapes of Árainn, the Burren and Connemara, deeply mapping these places and then drawing them, before documenting his thoughts and ideas. Like the poet Patrick Kavanagh, he

firmly believed that by paying very close attention to the local, one evoked the wonder of the universal.

In 1996, the Lilliput Press published a compilation of fourteen of his most brilliant essays. Entitled *Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara & Other Writings*, these essays include almost visceral descriptions of three of his favourite 'topographical sensations': crossing a pass, walking around an island and



Tim Robinson being interviewed at his home in Roundstone, Co Galway.

Summer 2020



Tim Robinson on a boat to Deer Island, Co Clare.

walking out to an island at low tide. Other pieces include a philosophical treatise of the tools of a walker's trade: the compass, the compass rose, the map, the ground and the space the walker occupies.

Tim Robinson had a deep appreciation and awareness of

cross references and bibliographical references for researchers to use.

In 2015, Manchester University Press published *Unfolding Irish Landscapes*, 'a comprehensive and sustained cross-disciplinary study of [Robinson's] work' that included his early career as a visual artist as well as his

cartography and topographical writing. With a foreword by Robert Macfarlane and a comprehensive introductory profile by the editors, this work also contains fourteen essays and one poem describing Robinson's oeuvre. It is a highly accessible publication and recommended reading for



everything he encountered. He remained eternally grateful to what he called the 'geophanic language' of the parts of Ireland that he explored in such depth and detail.

Tim and Máiréad expressed their gratitude in 2006 by donating their home in Roundstone and all of his archives to NUIG. The archive is now also available online to anyone wishing to explore the 8,000 place-names from Connemara alone, and is physically located in the James Hardiman Library in NUIG. All of the individual places have map references,

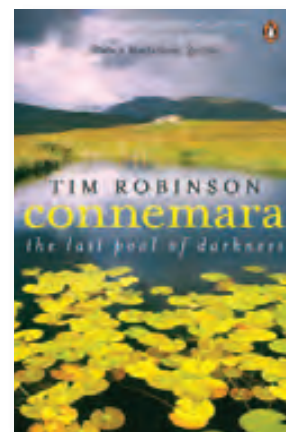


Tim Robinson in Connemara.

anyone seeking an overview of his life and work.

That said, his *Stones of Aran* diptych – *Pilgrimage* (1986) and *Labyrinth* (1995) – remain classic works. More recently, his Connemara trilogy – *Listening to the Wind* (2006), *The Last Pool of Darkness* (2008) and *A Little Gaelic Kingdom* (2011) – contain a combined total of eighty diverse essays on all aspects of Connemara.

Some autobiographical essays and his musings on space, place and time are contained in *My Time in Space*



(2001) and *Tales and Imaginings* (2002), both published by the Lilliput Press. Just last year, Tim released a compilation of some of his final essays in a book entitled *Experiments on Reality* (2019), published by Penguin.

In his account of the Twelve Bens, in the first volume of the Connemara trilogy, *Listening to the Wind* (2006), Robinson uses the description of the Gleann Chóchan horseshoe given in the 1988 guide as a framework for his account of the mountains. Conceding that he has never completed the circuit as a whole, his 'favoured mode of walking being not a single-minded goal-bound linear advance but a cross-questioning of an area, or even a deliberate seeking out of the foidín mearaí, the stray sod that is said to put anyone who treads on it wandering,' he has 'visited most points of the circuit at one time or another.'

Ní bheidh a leithéid arís ann ■



Members of the Feel Good Factor Club back on the hills again after the lockdown

RETURNING TO THE HILLS

We asked Mountaineering Ireland clubs what a return to the hills and crags after the lockdown would mean for them. Here is what **Kath Maguire**, Chairperson of the Feel Good Factor Club, had to say

The Feel Good Factor Club is a club for women in Northern Ireland that specialises in

hillwalking, climbing and mountain biking. It is based in the County Down area, where Mountaineering Ireland's guidelines follow the Northern Ireland Executive's **Pathway to Recovery**, which is currently in Step 2 (at the time of going to print).

As a club, it has been great to see so many newcomers out on the hills as restrictions have begun to lift. We know of the many benefits that getting out into the mountains can offer, and we see the club playing an important role in helping to upskill newcomers.

We are also concerned about the downside that the increase in numbers has brought to the Mourne – the increase in littering, blocking of country roads by inconsiderate parking, and an increase in mountain rescue call-outs. As a club, we can play a part in preventing this by sharing our

skills and experience to encourage safe practice and protection of the environment that we love to explore.

The following points highlight the club's journey through lockdown and the move into Steps 1 and 2, and how we adapted to the changing circumstances we were living through.

■ People are paramount

The Feel Good Factor Club is not just about hillwalking, climbing and cycling: it is also about the friendships and relationships that the members have with each other. That is the draw, the reason why people keep coming back. Throughout this whole pandemic, the club has also been about caring for its members. As a club, we have looked out for each other, while following the government advice to stay away from the hills.

While keeping apart, we have remained in contact, had group chats and video calls, and shared information. Most

importantly, we have checked up on each other. As on the hills, noticing changes in your club friends at this time has been important, and we have done what we can to help and support each other in these uncertain times. The mantra has been: **'If you are worried about someone, do something about it.'** You might be the only person that has noticed something is wrong, and your intervention could be appreciated and helpful.

■ Clear communication

In these uncertain times, communicating with our members has been important. As we are affiliated to two national governing bodies, which are both all-island bodies, **Mountaineering Ireland** and **Cycling Ireland**, it has been important to keep on top of any developments and to communicate them clearly to all club members. We find we can do this best on a private Facebook forum and through individual Messenger groups for climbers, walkers

and mountain bikers.

The guidelines from **Mountaineering Ireland** have been consolidated with the advice from **Mountain Rescue Ireland** and have informed our decision-making as a club, as to when and how best to resume our activities.

■ Don't overload

It is also worth remembering not to bombard club members with too much information. The advice from Mountaineering Ireland has been clear, so as a club we have just emphasised the following points to our members, as we have returned to activity:

- Come well-equipped to any club event so that you do not have to share or borrow equipment; be self-sufficient.
- Do not car-pool.
- If there are more than the recommended numbers for a single group, simply stay in separate socially distanced groups of the

recommended size. For example, in the North, the guidelines at the time of writing are for groups of up to ten people. So, for example, if twelve members turn up, walk in two groups of six.

- Go at off-peak times and to quieter locations.
- Climbers should climb with the same partner and not switch around, again minimising contact with other club members and their climbing equipment.

We give advice and then trust people to be guided by it. We already follow clear club procedures, so this gives us confidence in our practices.

■ Role models

As a Mountaineering Ireland club, we feel it is important to follow the advice we are given and not just go off and do our own thing regardless. At times this has been hard, as the mountains have been there right beside us throughout the lockdown. Out of respect for our friends in Mountain Rescue Ireland, as a club, we stopped all of our activities during the lockdown and prior to Step 1 of the return being initiated.

Now that we are back on our local mountains, crags and mountain bike trails again, it is

important to be positive role models. The club emphasises good practice. It is not just simply about following a group leader: each club member must come prepared for each club activity by wearing and carrying adequate equipment, in case we have the misfortune of having to deal with an accident or illness.

■ Have a flexible plan

Now that we have resumed our activities, our events are being communicated clearly to members on our private Facebook forum. Our planning takes account of any NI Executive changes that may affect the club. To plan ahead,

we advise club members to decide if they plan to attend an event at their level well beforehand. If we are expecting large numbers, we choose a location that allows for social distancing and the car parking requirements. We try to be flexible in our planning too. For example, if the weather forecast is unpleasant, we change our plans; we do not just go ahead regardless.

■ Be transparent: the virus is still here

The clear advice is to stay at home if you or anyone in your household is displaying COVID-19 symptoms. We encourage our club members not to come out on any activities and to stay at home if they are displaying any symptoms, no matter how minor. We encourage club members to be open and honest, and to inform a named person in the club if they are displaying any symptoms of COVID-19 on the day of a club meeting or on the days after attending a club event. We can then inform everyone who was at the

event of their potential exposure.

Good record-keeping is key. Our practice is to list the attendance at every club event on the club's private Facebook 'club coach forum.' Unfortunately, we have had to change our 'open door' policy and have restricted club events to club members only.

■ Future-proof the club

Being a Mountaineering Ireland club has huge benefits for us. The Feel Good Factor has always had an ethos of providing opportunities for our members to develop their skills so that they can participate safely and independently in all of the activities we engage in. The club continues to empower women in the outdoors by offering them upskilling opportunities, by facilitating access to courses at all levels, from beginner through to instructor training.

Finally...

Go slow, go easy and just enjoy being out together again on the hills and crags. It is why we do it! ■

► **Kath Maguire**
(pictured left with her son Ruairi) is the Chairperson of the Feel Good Factor Club.




Club members practicing social distancing on a hillwalk



Enjoying the hills again





Members of Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club on Mount Leinster in the Blackstairs Mountains

THE WEXFORD HILLWALKERS

A club profile prepared by the **Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club** committee

The **Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club** is based in the sunny south-eastern corner of our island. The club was founded in 1996 and currently has a membership of one hundred and forty, including both hillwalkers and climbers. The membership hails from all parts of County Wexford and beyond.

Wexford is fortunate to be surrounded by hills and mountains: the **Comeragh Mountains** in Waterford to the west; the **Wicklow Mountains** to the north; and, of course, the beautiful **Blackstairs Mountains** on our doorstep in Carlow.

The club's hillwalking season

starts in September, as members return from holidays and gear up for more adventures. We advertise an introductory walk locally in September, which often attracts many new people. It allows new walkers to sample our sport and to consider hillwalking as a recreational activity.

Our regular hillwalking schedule offers a choice of two walks each Sunday. A grading system ensures all members' abilities are catered for. Walks rotate between the three ranges mentioned above, and we also venture further afield to the **Galtees** and the **Knockmealdowns**, when the longer, brighter evenings tempt us.

Typically, walks are from four

to over six hours, and cumulative ascents vary from 500m to over 1,000m. Walker numbers each week vary, but usually twenty to thirty eager members gather to sign in, to car pool when that is possible, and to receive a briefing from the walk leader. The essential gear check, including adequate food and water, and head torches in winter, takes place before setting off.

Our club calendar includes a weekend in **Glenmalure** every February, exploring the beauty and diversity that the Wicklow Mountains have to offer, and immersing ourselves in the local hospitality.

The club also holds regular **full moon walks** at night, in the Blackstairs, and we travel countrywide to other mountain ranges on **public holiday weekends** in March, May and June.

The club also arranges **trips abroad**, with recent hiking trips to Wales, Austria and Spain, and to the island of Gozo (in the Maltese archipelago in the Mediterranean) for the climbers.

Our hillwalking season closes at the end of June, when we have an **end-of-year walking weekend** and social gathering before the passports are dusted off and

members pursue other interests during the later summer months.

Helping the hills

Our club activities promote the sustainable use of our mountain environment by:

- Using routes already afforded to us by local communities and landowners
- Leaders encouraging walkers to use existing tracks when walking
- Offering a choice of Sunday walks, which reduces the numbers on each walk
- Promoting the 'Leave No Trace' principles.

The **social aspect** of our club is also an essential element of membership. On our way home from walks, all compasses are similarly set and we invariably end up in some hostelry discussing how far and how high we have been. Members form links and friendships, and often organise their own outings throughout the year.

The club has an active **social agenda**, organising regular events, including ones promoting responsible recreational use of the mountains. Last January, we had a presentation from the wonderful **Barry Dalby** of **East**



Members of the club take a breather on a hillwalk

West Mapping, who gave members an insight into the mysterious world of mapping mountains. We learned that it was mostly about hard work!

In September, we had a presentation from a member of the **South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association** (SEMRA), who outlined the skillset required and SEMRA's vital role in the mountains, as the numbers enjoying outdoor recreation increase.

We also met Fia, a canine member of the **Search and Rescue Dog Association** (SARDA), and her human minder. Fia was in training then but has subsequently



A Sunday walk

September at the aptly named **Rocklands**, an outcrop on the outskirts of Wexford town, which offers some great climbs for new and

weekly trips to **climbing walls** in Dublin.

This year, the club's first **ski trip** took us to Austria's SkiWelt, adjacent to the beautiful and convenient town of Westendorf. Nineteen skiers took to the slopes and embraced the days and nights, both on and off-piste. Experienced and new skiers alike threw themselves with varying degrees of daring and trepidation down blue, red and the odd, accidental, black slope!

Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club is run as a voluntary club. It is affiliated to **Mountaineering Ireland**, and the club enjoys its support and expertise, when needed. Our club committee is very active in organising membership, walk schedules, trips and various events.

The committee encourages and supports members to increase their knowledge and skills for use in the mountains by promoting **Mountaineering Ireland's Mountain Skills 1 and 2** training and assessment,

and **first-aid courses**. Last year, the committee facilitated a two-year plan for walk leader support and development, to assist walk leaders in their role on Sunday walks.

The club has a strongly committed group of walk leaders, who have gained considerable experience over time, and others who have completed their Mountain Skills 1 and 2. Walk leaders plan their walks in advance, often doing a recce beforehand to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all.

The club is always looking to improve how the hills and mountains are used for recreation, and is always open to suggestions.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent restrictions have left many hillwalkers chafing at the bit to get out there again. Club activities have ceased and, like everyone else, we currently await whatever changes may be needed to allow us to '**Keep well, apart.**' Some members are posting virtual walks and links to films that will keep other members interested and in touch with the hills, and with the club, while we are in lockdown.

JOIN THE CLUB Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club welcomes new members and can be contacted through Facebook or by email at **wexfordhillwalkingclub@gmail.com** ■



Ladies of leisure enjoying a break

passed her training and assessment (see also, pages 26-27).

The **climbing season** usually kicks off with a trip in mid-March to a warmer clime like Spain. Our club climbers meet weekly from May to

experienced climbers. We also organise regular **weekend trips** to other climbing areas, including **Dalkey Quarry** and **Wicklow**, during the summer. In winter, climbers take to the indoors to help maintain skills over the colder months, with



Members of the Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club geared up for a hike

SEARCH & RESCUE DOGS



Handlers Gerry Tobin and Martina O'Kearney Flynn with their dogs Fia and Ella

DOGS TO THE RESCUE

Two new search dogs have qualified for the Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA) Ireland. **Edelle Doherty**, PRO, SARDA Ireland, reports

Although the mountains have been quieter lately due to the COVID-19 restrictions, members of the **Search and Rescue Dog Association** (SARDA) Ireland have still been busy attending callouts to search for missing people within their local communities.

SARDA now has two more dog teams that have recently qualified, which has further increased its ability to respond rapidly to callouts for missing person searches across Ireland.

What is SARDA Ireland?

The Search and Rescue Dog Association Ireland is a voluntary 999/112 emergency search and rescue organisation concerned with the training, assessment and deployment of search and rescue dogs to search for missing persons. SARDA Ireland currently has six qualified dog teams, fifteen trainee dog teams and about ten 'dogbody' members.

Our dog teams, each of which consists of a handler and dog, can search anywhere in Ireland. They are effective in mountains, woodlands and rural and urban areas, and on waterways and

shorelines.

SARDA Ireland recently qualified two new search dogs: **Fia**, handled by **Gerry Tobin**, and **Ella**, handled by **Martina O'Kearney Flynn**. Fia and Ella, along with their brother **Cody**, who is one of our trainee dogs and is handled by **Sean Owens**, are all from the same litter.



Ella

How do the dogs search?

Scientists estimate that a dog's scenting ability is over 10,000 times better than that of a human. Dogs can locate and follow air scent over large distances, with some dogs demonstrating a scenting capability over a distance of half a kilometre. These dogs offer an invaluable service during searches as they provide a way of searching large areas quickly.

Fia and Ella are both **air-scenting search dogs**. An air-scenting search dog works off-lead and often at a great distance from the handler. Their job is to find a human scent and to alert the handler that they have found someone; they do this by barking and leading the handler to the person.

Search dogs can work day or night in all kinds of weather and are especially effective where human sight is most limited: in the dark, in dense woods or heavy brush, in debris, underground or in snow. It is estimated that just one dog can do the work of fifty human searchers, making a dog an invaluable asset during a search.



Fia

Training a dog

Typically, it takes at least two years of intensive training to prepare a dog for qualification and, even then, many do not make the grade. The training is methodical, and each dog must initially pass a stock test and an obedience test to make sure that they will not become distracted while searching. Following on from this, the dogs are trained until they can search for hours under a variety of conditions.

Gerry Tobin has never doubted his newly-qualified search dog's ability: "Fia is the most focused dog I have every handled; she has no 'off' switch. She constantly wants to work to get her reward. Our dogs see searching as a game with the best reward at the end, usually to play with their favourite toy, or to receive a tasty treat, depending on how each dog is motivated."

Martina O'Kearney Flynn, the owner of Ella, has had a few challenges to overcome in addition to training: "Ella is actually owned by my children, **Caoilfhionn** and **Kearney**, who kindly agreed to allow me to train her as a search and rescue dog. When she was just under one year old, Ella was hit by a jeep and her hip was dislocated. At the time, I realised that all I really wanted was for Ella to survive and that anything else would be a bonus. By that stage she had stolen the hearts of everybody in our family. Thankfully, she did survive and made a complete recovery. After getting through that, she raced through her training and qualified about six months before I was expecting her to."

Search dog assessment

All SARDA Ireland dog teams are assessed by external assessors from the

National Search and Rescue Dog

Association (NSARDA) in the UK, over three days. Our handlers and dogs have extraordinary demands placed upon them during the assessment, which replicates real-life search scenarios.

A reliable indication by the dog is essential. Should a dog fail to indicate a find to the handler for any reason, the team will fail the assessment.

Comprehensive coverage of the search area is also important. Should the handler and dog fail to cover the area in a comprehensive manner, they will be required to complete one or two additional search areas in a satisfactory manner in order to pass the assessment.

Once qualified, our search dogs are internally assessed during training weekends, and are externally reassessed every three years to ensure that the team remains effective.

When looking back on the assessment, Martina remembers how grateful she is to have a dog like Ella: "Thanks to a very smart dog, who for some mad reason just wants to do whatever I ask, there was no pressure on us to pass the assessment. With that in mind, we found ourselves enjoying what we love to do together: we searched the mountain and found the people.

"All I know is that I have the dream dog, who made it easy. However, this was also thanks to **Mick Grant**, SARDA Ireland's Training Officer, who guided us along the journey, and also to **Gerry Tobin** for finding Ella."

SARDA Ireland: an invaluable asset to our communities

SARDA Ireland has spent over 450 hours responding to callouts for over 140 missing persons since 2016. In many of these callouts, SARDA Ireland was tasked by **An Garda Síochána** to search for a person who went missing from their local area or home.

More than two-thirds of these searches were not in mountainous or upland environments, showing that SARDA Ireland offers a significant service not only to mountaineers and hillwalkers but also to the general public.

SARDA Ireland was set up in 1987 as a registered charity (No 20029982) and is a member of **Mountain Rescue Ireland** and the **National Search and Rescue Dog Association (NSARDA)**, the umbrella body for the UK and Ireland.

Acknowledgments

SARDA Ireland would like to thank the landowners – **Coillte** and the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** – who give us



Handler Gerry Tobin with his dog Fia and daughter Ellie

permission to train on their lands. We would also like to thank all of our **volunteers**, who give of their valuable time for the organisation, and particularly our 'dogsbody' volunteers, who hide for our dogs during training exercises.



AUTHOR Edelle Doherty is the PRO of SARDA Ireland and also a dogsbody. When acting as the latter, she hides in the mountains for the search dogs to find her during exercises. She says she gets to nap on the hillside and be woken up by an excited dog, so what's not to love?!

FIND OUT MORE If you would like to find out more about SARDA Ireland, or to join the organisation, please visit www.sardaireland.com, follow it on Facebook, or contact the PRO, Edelle Doherty, at PRO@sardaireland.com ■



Brian Bateson training some clients in Glendalough

EVERYONE CAN USE SOME HELP

Brian Bateson explains why it's a good idea to hire a qualified outdoor instructor or leader

Speaking as a climber and a climbing instructor, I have also been massively impressed by the efforts of many of my peers, who have been creative in trying to support the training needs of the climbing community during the lockdown by developing tutorial videos, hosting zoom sessions and writing technical articles to post online.

These have been useful in assisting climbers to continue upskilling, in creating discussion about best practice, or just in inspiring

the community to appreciate how much good climbing we have on our doorstep, even if it is sometimes a little wet.

I have also seen plenty of comments from climbers who have learned something new, or simply a more efficient way of doing something, through an online portal. Be it navigation, rope work or a climbing technique, if you can learn that much from looking at a screen, imagine what you could learn in person!

That brings me to the point of this article, which is why I think it is a good idea to hire an instructor, not just for when you start out climbing,

but at multiple stages throughout your climbing progression.

* * * * *

Ask yourself if there is a technique you use frequently that you know could be done better? The current way works okay, but you instinctively know it could be done better, more simply or more efficiently. Of course there is!

Personally, I learn great new techniques from other instructors all the time and I have hired more experienced ones to upskill me in areas I was unsure about.

Do you know what you don't know?

Sometimes you don't know what you don't know! There can be a knowledge barrier just as much as a physical barrier to progression in climbing. A climbing instructor can help progress your learning with structure and purpose.

As a climbing instructor, I visit many crags during an average year. I regularly see inexperienced climbers making potentially serious errors in their rope management or in their gear placement. Many times I have deliberated whether to offer advice to someone I don't know at a crag. This can be risky, but it comes from a place of genuine concern for safety, as opposed to trying to 'police' the crag.

On plenty of occasions the advice has been welcomed and appreciated, but on a few it has been rebuffed, not always politely, which makes me less likely to say something the next time. If there is imminent danger, I will still intervene, though.

What can an instructor do?

A good climbing instructor should be able to tidy up messy knots and rope work, create efficiencies in your climbing technique and gear

► **Brian Bateson** is a passionate climber, a qualified Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI) and a member of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI). He runs a company called **Climb It** – see www.climbit.ie.



placement, or show you problem-solving or rescue scenarios that every climber should be aware of, to stop smaller issues becoming a rescue team call-out.

Hopefully, this article will come across as a good advertisement for my profession. While I do make my living from instructing, I don't want to seem to be drumming up business when it is actually not needed. For the most part, the climbing community is safe and clued in.

Whenever I show a climber a new rope system or self-rescue technique, they usually comment that they would have figured out something like it to solve the scenario. Indeed, they probably would have figured something out, given enough time. However, time might be a valuable commodity in a rescue situation and, in the heat of the moment, we don't always



Acquiring navigation skills

perform like we think we will.

Who should you hire?

You have many choices, so do some research first as to what areas you would like to upskill in and who exactly is qualified and insured to teach you those skills.

If you are not sure, then

contact a climbing instructor and ask for advice. I am always happy to point people in the right direction.

I am a qualified **Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI)**.

That means, among many things, I can teach trad lead climbing, multi-pitch climbing, bring you guided sea-cliff climbing, or guide you on roped scrambles.

However, I am not allowed to bring you walking or climbing in the snowy winter conditions of Scotland or to the Alps. These would be the respective roles of a **Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (WMCI)** and an **International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations (IFMGA) Mountain Guide**.

To list what each Leader, Instructor or Guide is qualified to do would be another complete article in itself. You should be familiar with these qualifications, if you are interested in hiring an outdoor climbing professional.

There is a recognised pathway explaining the qualifications on the **Mountaineering Ireland website**. Use it to make sure that the person you are hiring has the qualifications and experience they need to instruct you in what it is you want to learn.

Also, it would be good to

learn about the **Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI)**, the professional association of which I am a member, and others like the **British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML)** or the **British Mountain Guides (BMG)**.

The benefit of hiring an AMI member is that you can be sure that the training you are getting has a stamp of approval for its quality.

We look at qualifications all the time when we hire accountants, solicitors or teachers, so why not hire a qualified professional climbing instructor to refine your climbing skills?

When the current restrictions are finally lifted, there will no doubt be a huge uptick in outdoor activities in Ireland. For many, they will be getting re-acquainted with the outdoors, but for plenty more, they will be entering a world with which they may be unfamiliar.

Hopefully, both the experienced and inexperienced users of the hills will consider hiring a qualified climbing instructor or mountain leader to upskill their abilities in the outdoors. In a time when mountain rescue teams and emergency departments will already be stretched, being self-sufficient in the outdoors will be more important than ever ■



Learning to navigate in fading light or overcast, cloudy conditions

EXERCISES FOR CLIMBING

Rob Hunter and Veronica Lee help us to keep fit during a time of restricted activities due to the Covid-19 pandemic

Climbing is a sport for all that attracts people from all walks of life. Ultimately, the fulfillment it provides is unique to each individual.

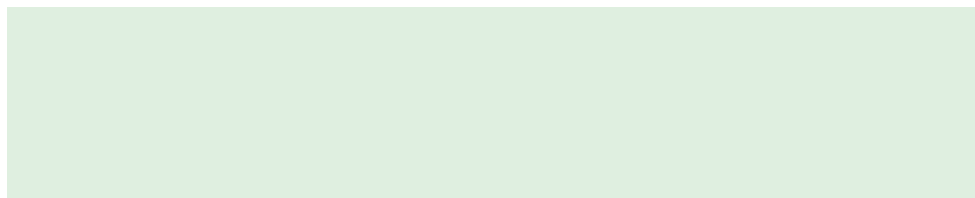
During these unprecedented times, we have an opportunity to reflect on why we enjoy climbing and the elements that motivate us to practice and train for this sport. Not only does it help us to maintain our physical health, but it helps us to develop resilience, improve our mental wellbeing and develop lasting relationships.

However, during the lockdown, all of us have had to adapt our lives to a new flow and routine where climbing is not an option. Because of that, we have put our thinking caps on and developed some exercises that will maintain some of the strength and skill elements for when we return to our sport.

Circuit training

These exercises should be performed as a circuit, and collectively they will provide a **full body workout**. For a more progressive routine, perform three circuits, resting three minutes between each circuit.

Before commencing the exercises, please perform a **warm-up**; you can check out our **YouTube channel** for a comprehensive warm-up.



Cossack Squats

Aim

- Builds single leg strength.
- Mobilises hip, knee and ankle joints.
- Replicates transference of weight when performing rock-overs when climbing.

Instructions

- Starting with feet wide, toes pointing out at 45°, transfer weight from side to side.

- As you squat down to one side, imagine you are sitting back onto a chair, keeping your back straight. Make sure the knee stays in line with the foot.

- Aim to touch the floor with your fingers or hands while keeping your back straight.

Reps

Eight repetitions with each leg.



Arm Openings

Aim

- Strengthens the anterior chain (hip flexors, abdominals).
- Replicates climbing on steep terrain where full body tension is required.

Instructions

- Sit towards the edge or middle of the seat with the back-rest on the left side.
- Gently hold the back-rest with the left hand, and lift feet up in a tucked position.

- Engage the core, rolling back onto the tailbone, to extend both legs, and reach out with the right hand. Imagine you are reaching for a hold.

NB: It is really important to keep a **dish position** in the lower back. This means the abdominals are working to keep the lower back from arching away from the chair.

Reps

Eight repetitions on each side.





Glute Bridge

Aim

- Strengthens the posterior chain (calf, hamstrings, gluteals, trunk extensors).
- Replicates heel hooking when climbing.

Instructions

- Place the left heel on the edge of the chair. Elevate the right leg into the air.

- To start, keep both arms on the floor. To make it harder, raise both arms in the air.
- Drive through the left heel to lift hips up as high as one can. Hold at the top for a count of three, and then lower with control.

Reps

Eight repetitions on each side.



Reach For The Sky

Aim

- Develops cross-body tension from upper limb to opposite lower limb.
- Develops pressing strength for mantles.
- Mobilises trunk, hip, knee and ankle joints.
- Replicates pressing into a rock-over in climbing.

Instructions

- Sit beside the chair, with the left hip close to the chair; the leg should be straight.

- Bend the right knee so that the foot is close to your groin.
- Palm of left hand is on the chair, right arm is up in the air.
- Now, pressing through your left palm, rock over onto the right foot.
- Continue pressing through the left palm to assist the drive up through right leg, keeping left leg straight and off the floor.
- During the drive up, imagine reaching for a hold with the right hand.

Reps

Eight repetitions with each leg.



Side Hip Raises

Aim

- Strengthens the oblique slings.
- Strengthens shoulder stabilisers.

Instructions

- Start with the left elbow below the left shoulder, both feet/ankles resting on the chair. **NB:** For comfort, have the

- right foot crossed in front of left foot. Rest right hand on hips.
- Drive through the left elbow and shoulder to lift hips up as high as you can; hold for a count of three.
- Then lower, but only so that the hips are below the chair and not touching the floor.

Reps

Eight repetitions on each side.



BEFORE THE LOCKDOWN

Gerry Burns had a final fling in the Mourne Mountains before going into lockdown

The realisation that the COVID-19 outbreak was going to be a very serious problem came to me slowly, as it appears to have done to most people in Ireland. Once that realisation finally dawned, a friend and I decided to head for the hills before the pandemic struck, recognising that access to the mountains would in all probability be closed off after that.

We left Armagh city, heading for the Carrick Little car park on the Head Road, high above the village of Annalong. We got there shortly after 10.00am on roads that were already getting quieter. It was a picturesque setting from which to start a hike. The route we were taking was a reasonably long one, following the long central spine of the high Mournes. It provides stunning views across the Ben Crom Reservoir far below, and across the beautiful Annalong valley.

We left the car park with the sea far below us, glittering in the early morning sun, and with the Isle of Man clearly visible out on the horizon. We were heading north along a rough gravel track leading to the mouth of the valley, a walk of about fifteen minutes.

This is the land of the 'stone ditches,' with all of the fields surrounded by stone walls. A lot of these walls

Above: Slievelamagan, Cove Mountain and Slieve Beg; the ravine on the latter is the Devil's Coachroad.

Below: At the top of the Devil's Coachroad.

are constructed from sizeable boulders, with gaps surrounding most of the stones large enough for a person's arm. The wind fairly whistled through these as we passed.

Uplifting view

The view beyond the metal gate that gives access to the valley never fails to lift the spirits, with the mountains on both sides reaching down like two long, outstretched, welcoming arms. On the right



➤ **Gerry Burns** is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland. A writer and poet, he has written for the *Irish Mountain Log* in the past. He is a retired librarian and a regular visitor to the Mourne Mountains, close to where he was born in Warrenpoint, Co Down. Gerry now lives close to Richhill village in County Armagh.



were the two **Seefins, Round** and **Long**, with **Rocky Mountain** beyond. On the left sat the massive bulk of **Slieve Binnian**, the third highest mountain in the Mourne range, at 747m. Its jagged crest makes it one of the easiest mountains in the range to recognise from a distance.

The renowned **Mourne Wall**, built in the early 1900s to protect the water catchment area, rises up on the left at this point, offering a direct route to Binnian's summit, but our trek was taking us around the mountain's flanks.

We passed Annalong Wood on our right, where quite a few of the trees had been burnt some years ago. The track is stony and boulder-strewn and you are inclined to keep your eyes on the ground as you walk, rather than look around you at the stunning scenery. The route crosses a couple of streams where, depending on the time of year, the amount of water to be crossed can vary widely. In any case, care is necessary to avoid a soaking!

The approach to Slievelamagan

The track forks here, the right-hand trail going up the main valley between **Slievelamagan** and **Rocky Mountain**. On our path to the left, the incline increased and we passed the strangely-named rocky outcrop **Percy Byshe**. There is no certainty about how it gained this name, but one suggestion is that the poet Shelley's ship was driven in along the County Down coast by a storm. He came ashore and, while waiting for ship repairs to be carried out, walked here on several occasions and used the outcrop as a suitable place for contemplation and perhaps even composition. Who knows which of Shelley's poems had their origins here?

The track then ran over and between a mixture of boulders and heather, and became very boggy in places, a result of recent wet weather. Further along, we reached **Blue Lough** on our right at the foot of Slievelamagan, its colour obviously determined by the colour of the sky. It is a pretty place and a popular place for a break.

Standing at 704m, **Slievelamagan** consists of Annalong granite, its dark colour due to the high quantities of dusky quartz found in its makeup. This particular granite underlies almost the entire upper basin of the Annalong River. Looking up at it from our track, its rocky surface gave it an almost intimidating presence.

Above: Looking down the Annalong valley.

Below: On the way up Slievelamagan, with the Silent Valley reservoir below.

This was the mountain, incidentally, that was most used by the American warships based far below in Carlingford Lough for gunnery practice in the lead-up to D-Day. It is hard to imagine the peace of the valley echoing to the roar of exploding shells, but even now relics of the Second World War turn up in this area, mostly spent rifle shells but occasionally an unexploded larger shell! ▶





Continuing on from Blue Lough, often crossing watery and boggy ground, and with **Slieve Binnian** on our left, our route turned right to ascend **Slievelamagan**. It is always worth going a little further over the valley crest to look across at the sheer rocky face of **Ben Crom**, with the Ben Crom reservoir far below. It is a dizzying sight and, particularly on a windy day, a place where you need to be well grounded!

Ascending **Slievelamagan**, you will quite often find yourself desperately searching for the best route to follow. The going took us up through quite dense heather, and there were countless boulders, often hidden, everywhere, so care was needed. It was well worth the effort, however, for the summit gives clear

Above: **Slievelamagan, Cove Mountain, Slieve Beg and Slieve Commedagh viewed from the Annalong valley.**

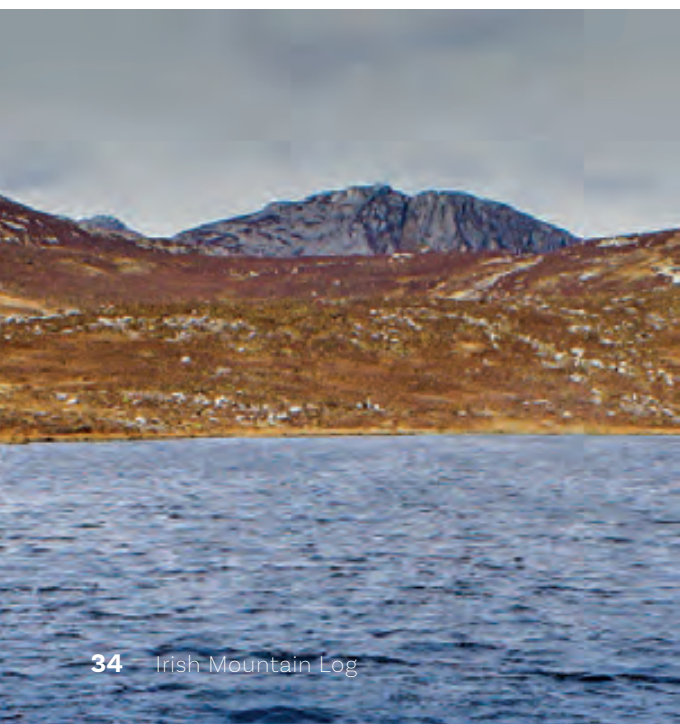
Below left: The Blue Lough below Slievelamagan.

Below right: On the rock-strewn path to Lamagan col.

views on all sides, particularly on a day like we had. There were twelve of the highest mountains in the Mourne within sight, all rising above 600m. They form a circle, which is broken only on the southern side by the deep valleys of the Kilkeel and Annalong rivers.

A broad ridge links Slievelamagan to **Cove Mountain**, the next mountain on our list to the north-east. It is generally believed that the mountain's name is a derivation of the word 'cave.' Its rock face is popular with rock climbers and it has a reasonably accessible cave on **Lower Cove**. The summit cairn sits on a granite platform at 655m.

Slieve Beg, the final climb, was undoubtedly the highlight of the day, although it falls just short of the





600m list, at 596m! The slopes are thickly covered in heather, and the path we followed was often quite indistinct.

The summit provided wonderful views right down the Annalong valley. The mountain also featured a mighty array of granite buttresses guarding the top of a steep gully known as the **Devil's Coachroad**.

Looking across from the top provided a dramatic view of **Slieve Donard**, but looking down through the gully into the valley far below is not for the lightheaded! Some trekkers attempt to climb up and down the gully, but there are a lot of loose rocks, and extreme care is needed in order to avoid causing a serious rockfall. It is certainly not a route that the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team would encourage people to take.

Our route then took us down past one of two large cairns at the rear of the mountain and on to the **Brandy Pad**, one of the old smuggling routes through the mountains. We also passed close to the wonderfully named rock towers on the side of **Slieve Commedagh**: the **'Castles.'** From there, the descent down into the valley was steep and, after recent wet weather, it was particularly difficult in places. Care was needed at all times to avoid slipping and falling. It was a long, slow descent on the lower slopes of Slieve Beg, but the views were always rewarding, particularly looking up into the Devil's Coachroad as we passed beneath it.

Below: The remarkable granite formations, the Castles, on Slieve Commedagh.

We followed a path down the valley, parallel to the course of the Annalong River, with the huge granite flanks of Cove Mountain and Slievelamagan towering above us. We had to cross a couple of streams. After wet weather, these can be particularly difficult to cross. We finally rejoined the track below the Percy Bysshe outcrop and retraced our steps across Binnian's imposing flank to the car park.

Since that last foray into the mountains, we have more or less been confined to our homes while the coronavirus has rampaged around the globe. We have heeded the advice of the health experts and stayed away from the mountains. In view of that, I am very glad we managed that one last hike into the Mourne Mountains. I hope that, before too long, we can get back there again ■



TREKKING IN THE HIGH PYRENEES

Paul Murphy describes a trekking holiday to the High Pyrenees with six friends last June, or, to use his subtitle, “The Magnificent Seven go to Lourdes for the cure.”

Last year, **Brian McNelis** and I planned a trek in the High Pyrenees in the summer with five other members of **Limerick Climbing Club**: **Noel Clarke, Gerry Lombard, Fintan**

McAvinue, Mike O’Sullivan and Mike Quirke. We flew into Lourdes Airport and headed for Cauterets, a 19th-century spa town and ski resort with classical Belle Époque buildings, located thirty kilometres away in the Pyrenees, 1,000m above sea level.

Saturday, June 22nd, 2019

We caught the bus to **Pont d’Espagne** (1,460m), shouldered our packs and started trekking up the **GR10** (long-distance Atlantic-Mediterranean route on the French side) to our first mountain refuge. As the June heatwave was underway, we had a quick beer at Lac de Gaube. After some sweaty hours, we reached **Refuge des Oulettes de Gaube** (2,146m) and encountered our first **izards** – Pyrenean chamois.

The landscape hereabouts is simply stupendous. Sitting on the terrace, we enjoyed a right royal view up to the **Glacier des Oulettes**, beneath the peak of **Grand Vignemale** (3,298m). We would summit her little sister, **Petit Vignemale**, a week later.

The communal dinner that evening was kidney bean stew. I will leave the dormitory auditory and olfactory scene that night to your fertile imagination.

Above:
**Admiring the
Grand Vignemale
at dusk.**



After dinner, we unleashed our secret weapon: **Gerard**, like Pearl, is a singer, and stands up when he plays the piano. Some Spanish folks requested a song in Español, resulting in a raucous chorus of *Feliz Navidad* (hence Noel’s nickname) just before we were sent to bed by the guardian.

Sunday

A big pull up to **Col des Mulets** (2,591m), across some extensive snowfields, sorted us out before we stepped from France into Spain. No hard border here. On top, we chatted to some Spanish guys doing the **Haute Route Pyrenees**.

Next, we zigzagged down the **Ara River valley** (Gerard tried unsuccessfully to walk on water – Ara, go on!) until we found the correct track and joined the **GR11** (Spanish equivalent of the GR10) to **San Nicolas de Bujaruelo** (1,558m). This place has been an important base for crossing the Pyrenees since medieval times, as evidenced by the beautiful single-arch bridge.

Then it was another 3km downhill to our night’s lodgings at **Valle de Bujaruelo**; it was eight hours’ walking in all that day.



► **Paul Murphy** is a retired IT manager and a botanist. He joined the **Limerick Climbing (& Crochet) Club** in 1984 after completing the Annapurna Circuit. He is a recent Chairperson and current walk leader with the club. Paul has hillwalked regularly at home and in Britain and also in Australia, Borneo and the USA and has trekked in Corsica (GR20), the Alps, Nepal, India and Pakistan.

Monday

Crossing the Rio Ara, we followed it downhill through beautiful woods to its junction with the **Ordesa Gorge** – Spain's Grand Canyon. This truly lives up to its name, particularly as you go higher.

Now we were travelling uphill again. A break at **La Pradera** was welcome before proceeding by a series of impressive waterfalls to where the vistas opened up to some lovely cows-with-bells meadows.

After some bridal veil-like falls, a series of switchbacks eventually brought us crawling into **Refugio de Góriz** (2,195m) with its magnificent panoramas. A feast of chick peas (Oh no!), and so to smelly bed, after another eight hours on the trail.

Tuesday

The plan was to climb **Monte Perdido** (3,355m), the third highest Pyrenean peak, and return to Góriz that night. The following day was to be over the **Brèche de Roland** (2,807m) and down to Gavarnie. In order to facilitate a strenuous eight-day trek, we were travelling light – we had walking poles and ice axes, but no crampons.

Before departing, I just asked the guardian about the snow conditions on the Brèche for the following day. She was quite emphatic and warned us that, due to recent snowfall, we would be daft to attempt the route without crampons. Uh-oh! Major rethink required.

We consequently decided to backtrack down the Ordesa Gorge (worth seeing twice), to overnight in **San Nicolas de Bujaruelo** and cross back into France via another pass, the **Puerto de Bujaruelo**, and so down to Gavarnie.

Rather than completely retracing the previous day's route, we enquired at the hut about public transport from the roadhead at La Pradera up to Bujaruelo. The guardian pretended to be shocked. "Sure, aren't you here for the walking?" she mocked.



Above: Map of approximate route taken on the trip.

Below: Paul crossing a pass en route in the Pyrenees.

We eventually reached Bujaruelo – lots of **marmots** and **alpine choughs** were seen on the way – enjoyed a pleasant meal there and met a South African couple, one of whom was a direct descendant of Charles Stewart Parnell.

Wednesday

Adios España, as on this day we crossed back into France via a rugged route that is part of a camino from Lourdes, decorated with appropriate scallop-shell symbols.

Halfway up, we encountered a jolly 88-year-old. It transpired that he was not a peregrino, as I had assumed, but a geologist who had got married (a second time) in Galway in order to save money. Don't ask; we didn't understand it either!

We crossed the border at **Puerto de Bujaruelo** (2,273m) and lunched with our new South African friends. **Vultures** circled above the valley on our way down towards **Gavarnie**. This is one of the most spectacularly situated villages in Europe. The magnificent **Cirque** towers above the valley (imagine Coumshingaun on steroids) and is enhanced by its wonderful waterfall and the **Brèche de Roland**, a more dramatic version of the Devil's Bit.

That evening, we had a great time, accompanied by our eager-to-please accommodation manager. He spent the entire time fishing for an invitation to Ireland. He is now enjoying a very fulfilling Burren life in Bell Harbour, Co Clare.





Thursday

Another supposedly easy day with light packs, as we were staying a second night in **Gavarnie**. On the way out of town for our day trip we admired a plaque dedicated to an Irishman, **Henry Russell** (1834-1909), who pioneered Pyrenean climbing. Read all about him in Rosemary Bailey's *The Man who Married a Mountain* (Bantam, 2005).

Up through beautiful beech woods, meadows

Above:
Ascending a snowfield on the way to Col de Mulets.

Below: Some trumpet gentians *Gentiana acaulis*.

populated with alpine flowers and more clanging cows. Arriving at **Refuge des Espuguettes** (2,027m), it was 36°C, and 39°C in the valley below! All the media were warning elderly folks to remain indoors and to definitely *not* partake in vigorous exercise – and our combined ages were 432!

This hut enjoys a commanding location looking up at the **Brèche de Roland**. Fittingly, the refuge entrance was barred by two big burros acting as bouncers. Once past these intimidating mules we enjoyed a lazy lunch and yet another well-deserved beer.

We returned to Gavarnie via the Hotel du Cirque, right under the waterfall. Simply stupendous.

Later that evening, we decided to shorten the next day's serious hike to **Refuge de Baysellance** at 2,651m. The decision was made to get a taxi to Barrage d'Ossoue at 1,834m. We got a phone number from the tourist office and appointed Gerard to ring as he was the most cunning linguist among us. He duly rang the number. The rest of us noticed the waitress from the café across the road going "Kooooowweeeee" and gesticulating wildly at us. The taxi-man was drinking in her café and she copped that it was Gerard ringing from all of 10m away.

Friday

We got dropped off at the **Barrage d'Ossoue**. This is a superb valley and is still a summer site for transhumance, evidenced by hundreds of sheep – a sort of reverse Burren booley.

Halfway up the valley we heard a helicopter. It had a net hung underneath with supplies for the refuge. It made maybe ten such journeys, and we imagined that our reputation had preceded us and that they were stocking up on crates of beer and a piano for the Paddies.





GAVARNIE IS ONE OF THE MOST SPECTACULARLY SITUATED VILLAGES IN ALL OF EUROPE.

Above: Cirque de Gavarnie.

Below: Bird's-eye Primrose *Primula farinos*.

After returning to the col, we trekked down the rough track to **Oulettes de Gaube Refuge**. We then retraced our steps to Pont d'Espagne and took the bus down the valley to **Cauterets**.

Sunday

A minibus returned us to **Lourdes** where we visited the sights, enjoyed the old town and watched Limerick win the Munster Hurling Final. It was a fitting end to an enjoyable adventure with friends. Oh yes; still not cured, though, so I'll have to return ■

Thirty minutes before arriving at the hut we came across three deep caves. Initially, we presumed they were mine entrances. It turned out that they – **Grottes Bellevue** – were commissioned by our friend **Henry Russell** as a high bivvy base from which to explore the **Vignemale massif**.

As for the **Refuge de Baysellance** dorm, the H-Blocks would have been cushy and comfortable compared to this hellhole. It was stuffy, smelly, damp, cramped and crowded. Gerard was violently shaken awake in the middle of the night when his neighbour in the next bunk objected in gibbering Franglais to his loud snoring. Gerard promptly boxed and wrestled with him. In the morning they pretended that it hadn't happened and studiously ignored one another at breakfast.

Saturday

We reached our high point on Saturday. The **Hourquette d'Ossoue** is an impressive pass at 2,734m above the refuge. We dumped our gear there and most of us headed up the zig-zag scree slope towards **Petit Vignemale**. Despite its name, it's not that "petit" at 3,032m, and it proved an enjoyable challenge, with superb views from the summit.





Have you heard?

The Dublin Mountains are getting a Makeover

Coillte Nature, the not-for-profit wing of Coillte, is putting people and nature first in the Dublin Mountains by transforming 910 hectares of forest – an area larger than the Phoenix Park



Starting in June 2020 and continuing over the long term, the **Dublin Mountains Makeover** will see nine of Coillte's most popular forests move

towards a new 'close to nature' management approach.

This involves applying **Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF)** principles in the existing forests, as well as the creation of new native woodlands in areas where CCF can't be done. It will enhance and create habitats for wildlife, enrich the forests' recreational appeal for people and improve the wider landscape's aesthetic value.

What is the Dublin Mountains Makeover?

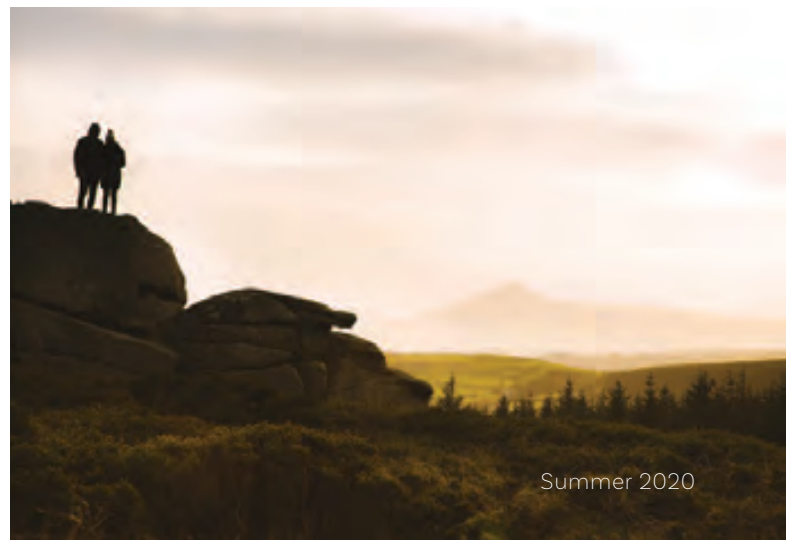
Coillte owns and manages around half of the forests in the Dublin Mountains, with the remainder managed by private forest owners. When this land was first planted with trees between the early 1940s and late 1960s, Dublin was a much smaller city and nobody thought much about outdoor recreation in forests. Today, these forests are among the most important recreational sites for a growing urban population seeking fresh air and green space: Coillte's most popular forest, Ticknock, sees over 550 visits a day.

Until now, Coillte has managed these areas primarily for timber production. But because of their popularity and proximity to the city, it's time to move recreation and nature higher up the agenda.

Through the Dublin Mountains Makeover, nine Coillte forests will transition away from the clearfell and replanting cycle

towards a different model. Multi-generational forests managed under Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF) principles will maintain their green canopy on a permanent basis and, in areas where this isn't possible, timber production species such as Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine trees will be removed and replanted with native species such as Scots pine, birch, rowan, oak, holly and willow to provide habitat for nature and bring autumn colours to the hills.

Work will start on the Dublin Mountains Makeover in June 2020 and will continue for many years, possibly decades. It will be a slow and careful process, conducted in a way that minimises disruption to local residents and visitors, while locking in benefits for nature, recreation and the landscape that will be enjoyed by generations to come.



How will the Makeover affect forest users?

To improve biodiversity and recreation, we need to fell some trees and plant new ones. We know that tree felling machinery in forests, timber lorries on local roads and the diversion or temporary closure of trails can be disruptive. That's why we're asking everyone who loves the forests to endure some short-term pain for long-term gain, so that we can create beautiful, diverse forests for the future. We'll do our best to keep everyone informed by:

- ◆ Making regular updates on our website www.coillte.ie/coillte-nature
- ◆ Sharing project updates and background information in our quarterly newsletters
- ◆ Posting key dates and locations on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram (search for Coillte on the social media platforms you use)
- ◆ Engaging with local and national media (newspapers, radio and TV)
- ◆ Putting up signs on-site to show what we're doing, where, when, why and how
- ◆ Holding information days, walks, talks and other events (as soon as COVID-19 restrictions allow).

What is Coillte Nature?

In order to achieve Ireland's goals for nature, transformational change is needed. Coillte has 30 years' experience in forest stewardship and land management, and employs a diverse team of dedicated people with a deep, practical knowledge of what transformational change represents on the ground. It is clear to us that a meaningful response to the climate and biodiversity emergency demands action across our organisation, and we are committed to that.

But we also recognise that we have responsibilities beyond our current scope of activities. That's why we have determined to deliver **projects of scale** with a strategic environmental focus through a new and innovative non-commercial lens. **Coillte Nature**, the not-for-profit wing of Coillte, was launched in June 2019 with a mandate to deliver that focus.

Its aim is threefold: to undertake impactful projects that create, restore, regenerate and rehabilitate biodiverse habitats across Ireland by partnering with public, private, non-governmental and community stakeholders; to manage those habitats for ecological and recreational value in perpetuity; and in doing so, to maximise the ecosystem services they provide to people for the benefit of everyone, now and into the future. We have four strategic themes:

- ◆ Regenerating urban forests for the benefit of people and nature
- ◆ Restoring important biodiversity areas by investing in major habitat improvements
- ◆ Rehabilitating ecosystem services by bringing sensitive or degraded lands into better health
- ◆ Reforesting our landscapes by planting new native woodlands on unforested land.

Continued next page...

The Dublin Mountains Partnership's Recreation Vision



Friendly shared spaces for all ages with provision for walkers, runners, dog walkers, mountain bikers, equestrian and accessibility.



Sustainable walking, mountain biking and equestrian trails. A draft recreation master plan is being developed for Ticknock which will link with the Dublin Mountains Makeover plans.



Improved walking and cycling links to forests, a 7-day public transport service. A critical review of car-park provision has been initiated.



Positive impact on local communities. Actively working to minimise negative impacts such as illegal parking, littering and sheep-worrying incidents through collaboration, education.



Celebrate the Dublin Mountains, their history, ecology, traditional farming, forestry, protected sites and species, through guided walks and educational resources.



All achieved through collaboration between partner organisations, supported by the Dublin Mountains Partnership's Volunteer Ranger Service and following Leave No Trace Ireland principles.

For more information about the Dublin Mountains Partnership, visit www.DublinMountains.ie



Dublin Mountains
Partnership





What we are doing in 2020

Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Makeover, planned for completion in 2020. Key: CCF = Continuous Cover Forestry; R&R = Remove & Replant; Mix = Remove & Replant with a mix of native and non-native trees.

Types of forest management in the Dublin Mountains Makeover

◆ CCF = Continuous Cover Forestry

CCF involves selecting individual or small groups of trees to cut down in order to create space in the canopy so that light can hit the forest floor. This enables young trees to grow naturally from seed and increases the structural diversity of the stand while maintaining a permanent canopy cover. In some places we will also plant young native trees to increase the number of different species.

◆ R&R = Remove & Replant

R&R involves removing the existing trees in the normal clearfell way and replanting them with native woodland species like Scots pine, oak, birch, rowan and holly. This will improve the landscape value by bringing autumn colour, and will increase the biodiversity of these stands dramatically. More species equals more wildlife.

◆ R&R-mix = Remove & Replant with a mix of native and non-native trees

Some areas are higher up and more exposed to the wind, with wetter soils. This makes it more difficult for native woodlands to grow. In these areas, the replanting will include a mix of Sitka spruce along with native trees like birch and rowan.

We're undertaking a major project to remove invasive rhododendron, laurel and dogwood species across an area of 30 hectares. This will benefit the biodiversity of the site by providing space and light for lots of different species of ground flora to grow and allowing the woodland to regenerate naturally. We will also improve the habitat by felling the non-native conifers (Norway spruce, western hemlock) and non-native broadleaves (beech, horse chestnut and sycamore) that have spread into the area.

Additional works in the area beyond the alluvial habitat will see an adjacent plantation removed and replanted with native woodland, and thinning in the recreational forest areas to encourage natural regeneration of native species and improve structural diversity.

◆ The second Coillte Nature project is the 'Midlands Native Woodland' project – a collaboration with **Bord na Móna** that is exploring ways to mimic natural processes and speed up the regeneration of woodland habitats on higher, drier areas of cutaway bogs.

While the overarching objective of the Bord na Móna Rehabilitation Strategy for these areas is to re-wet wherever possible, native woodlands do form part of the overall habitat mosaic, especially in areas that are unsuitable for re-wetting (e.g. mounds, ridges, steep slopes and other raised areas that lie above the flood zone).

But the cutaways are among the most problematic sites on which to establish trees: extreme exposure, low biological activity in the peat, high acidity, low nutrient availability and the presence of deep peat present technical challenges that necessitate a steep learning curve in terms of how we get trees to grow. For this reason, the project team will be led by nature and seek to replicate the succession patterns of the natural woodlands that have already begun to regenerate on or near these cutaway bogs.

FIND OUT MORE To learn more about Coillte Nature and our work, visit our website www.coillte.ie/coillte-nature and sign up to our newsletter to stay up to date with our work ■

Other Coillte Nature projects

Along with the Dublin Mountains Makeover, Coillte Nature is currently working on two further projects for 2020.

◆ The first is 'Restoring Hazelwood' – a major initiative focusing on one of the finest alluvial woodlands in the country. Located in the floodplain of the Garravogue River near Sligo town, Hazelwood's wet woodland is a rare and extremely important habitat for biodiversity that provides a home for many specialist water-loving plants and wildlife.

HIKING ON LA ISLA BONITA

Michael Guilfoyle enjoyed a terrific backpacking break on 'La Isla Bonita,' or La Palma in the Canary Islands, in March, just before the Covid-19 lockdown

The virus seemed a million miles away on that beautiful early March morning on La Palma. Indeed, for **Aongus Ó hAonghusa, Sean McBride** and myself of the **Lung Gompas Hiking Club**, it was as if we were in a world of our own, almost oblivious to its creeping menace.

For the previous two days we had explored the deep, forest-floored Caldera de Taburiente. Now we were standing high up on its rim, with the distant mountains of Tenerife, La Gomera and El Hierro between the bluest of skies and an island-lapping sea of cloud.

We had taken a taxi up a million hairpins from the town of Los Llanos on the west coast of **La Palma**, 'La Isla Bonita,' to the **Roque de Los Muchachos**, the highest point of the island at 2,421m.

Above: View from the rim of the Caldera de Taburiente on the island of La Palma, with the island of El Hierro visible in the distance.

Right: Sean McBride and Aongus Ó hAonghusa above the floor of the Caldera de Taburiente.

All around us were white-domed night-sky watchers, at least seven astronomical observatories from a variety of European nations, there to peer into the heavens of the consistently clearest and most dramatic of night skies in Europe. ➤



➤ **Michael Guilfoyle** is a founder member of the **Lung Gompas Hiking Club** and lives in Dublin. He has hiked in the Alps, Pyrenees, Scotland, Wales and Iceland and has trekked in Kashmir, the Canary Islands, Nepal, Morocco, Vancouver Island and Patagonia. He has summited many Alpine 4,000m peaks, including Mont Blanc and Gran Paradiso, as well as summiting on Toubkal and Ouanakrim in the Atlas Mountains and most Pyrenean tops over 3,000m.



Released from the taxi into the busy summit car park and not yet shouldering our heavy backpacks, we wandered the safe, prepared walkways around the stark volcanic outcrops that give the summit its name. Like excited kids in a visual candy store, we didn't know where to look! The blues, whites, blacks and greens of sky and cloud-seas, and of the wide and wild **Caldera de Taburiente**, burnt black and shattered over aeons by a violently restless Earth, and now floored and softened by ancient primeval forests of Canary pine, all competed for eye and camera lens.

However, we were there for a little bit more than just the sightseeing. Our plan was to walk the **GR131**, the most dramatic of the long-distance walking routes on this island, all the way down to its culmination at the southern tip of this island at the lighthouse of **Faro de Fuencaliente**. So, we shouldered our packs and soon left the car park and the last of the observatories behind us, easily picking up the markers for the GR131.

We walked around the rim of the wonderfully high

Above: Pico Bejenado (1,844m), across the floor of the Caldera de Taburiente.

Below: The sun about to rise over Mount Teide on the distant island of Tenerife, seen from the rim of the Caldera on La Palma.

segment of the GR131 for day walkers from **El Pilar**. Initially, the craters were scarred and steep and shattered and dramatic, erosion not having had a chance to work on them.

Further on, the hills and old volcanic outcrops were more gentle, their smooth black flanks seemingly sucking the sunlight out of the sky. The ground was littered with volcanic ejecta and patches of pine needles and cones, and the hillsides were softened and coloured here and there by scattered clumps of Canary pine, a dramatic contrast of green on black.

On our last day, we lunched in the airy and fresh village of **Fuencaliente**, before the final segment of the GR131, the long descent of 700m to the lighthouse and the Atlantic. On the way, we walked through another shattered volcanic landscape and the site of the most recent of the island's volcanic eruptions, that of **Teneguia** in 1971.

The lighthouse area was a real treat, made all the more so by an excellent tapas meal and a celebratory bottle of local red wine served in a very well appointed restaurant beside the salt drying beds at the **Punta de Fuencaliente**.

All the time on this segment, and indeed on each day of this really wonderful multi-day hike, we travelled well-maintained and marked paths, sometimes stony and sometimes, but rarely, requiring care, and mostly floored with soft pine needles, black volcanic sand and fine dust.

Okay, we were backpacking, with tents, food, cooking and sleeping gear, and that's not everyone's idea of fun! For us, though, the debate is eternal: independence and flexibility, and opportunities to experience wild moments in wonderfully wild places versus travelling light but with commitments to logistics and lodgings.

For me, even at 73, the heavy lifting can be a small price to pay for magical moments like sitting outside the tents at 2,200m on the stillest of nights as a pink and red sunset fades to a sparkle of stars, watching a silent sunrise over a sea of clouds beside **Mount Teide** (3,718m) on distant **Tenerife** and falling asleep to the soft sighing of the prevailing trade winds high up in a canopy of Canary pines. These are literally



THE HEAVY LIFTING OF BACKPACKING WAS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR THE MANY MAGICAL MOMENTS.

unforgettable experiences, rarely available and well worth passing up the odd forgettable comfortable bed and sit-down meal for – and, of course, a lot cheaper!

La Palma is a very beautiful and unspoiled island, one of the furthest out of the Canary Islands in the Atlantic from the African coast and easily accessible by ferry and air from Tenerife. Its meteorology gives it, and indeed the whole archipelago of these ‘Fortunate Islands,’ as the Romans knew them, very stable and comfortable weather all year round.

Above: Michael on Pico de la Nieve (2,240m).

Below left: The GR131 near Refugio de Los Roques.

Below right: Michael at Punta del Fuencaliente.

Compared to the busier islands nearer the African coast, it is an ideal place for those who prefer quieter and more unconventional chilling, along with hiking and walking in lovely landscapes.

I stayed on for four days after my walking companions went home, hired a car and toured the island. I just loved it, especially the geologically older north coast with its high perched towns, its deeply wooded gorges or ‘barrancos,’ and green hillsides. The island-circling road, the **LP02**, rarely touches the sea, given the difficult coastal topography, but twisty detours down to the wild Atlantic coast near **Fuencaliente**, **Garafia** and especially to **Fajana** near Barlovento on the north coast are well worth taking.

As I flew back from La Palma and then from Tenerife, just before Spain went into lockdown, I wondered when I and we all will get back out to such wonderful places, and mentally booked a long hangout on ‘La Isla Bonita’ for a happier time! ■



IN THE GREATER CAUCASUS

John O'Callaghan goes hiking in the Kazbegi and Svaneti regions of Georgia

In the early summer of 2019, I fulfilled a long-standing ambition to visit **Georgia** and walk in the **Greater Caucasus Mountains**. This spectacular mountain range, longer and higher than the Alps, has much to offer hillwalkers and climbers.

While accounts of climbing Europe's highest peak, **Mount Elbrus** (5642m), predominate in the literature, there are many more fine mountains to experience in the Caucasus. The whole range extends for 1,200km between the Black and the Caspian Seas, forming a divide between Europe and Asia, although this is disputed by many Georgians, Armenians and Azeris, who consider themselves more European than Asian.

To facilitate the trip, I enlisted the services of **Trek Georgia** (see www.trekgeorgia.com), a small independent company based in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. **Dito**, our guide, was extremely informative on all aspects of Georgian culture and heritage, as well as being an excellent mountain leader.

As it was yet early in the year (May 24th–June 6th), most of the high passes were closed due to late spring snowfalls, so the itinerary was confined to exploring the **Kazbegi** and **Svaneti** regions, the most

Above: The Sameba (Trinity) Church in Kazbegi with Mt Kazbek (5,033m) and the Gergeti glacier beyond.

Below: Gveleti Waterfall, near Dariali Gorge, close to the Russian border.

developed in terms of providing food and accommodation for walkers. The more remote and less developed regions of **Tusheti** and **Khevsureti** offer further possibilities for 'expedition' trekking.

Kazbegi

The Kazbegi area is a five-hour drive north from Tbilisi along the Georgian Military Highway. This is the main artery for most of the road cargo between Russia and Georgia, and the countries to the east and south – Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iran.

It was a relief to arrive in **Stepantsminda**, formerly called **Kazbegi**, the nearest town to **Mount Kazbek** (5,033m). First impressions were that the town is still



➤ **John O'Callaghan** is a member of **Clare Outdoor Club**, based in Ennis. Originally from Westport, Co Mayo, he enjoys reading and writing about mountains almost as much as hiking in them. A former member of Mountaineering Ireland's Executive Committee, John has been hillwalking at home and abroad for almost thirty years.



ONE OF THE MOST SCENIC TREKS WAS TO THE SAMEBA (TRINITY) CHURCH BELOW MOUNT KAZBEK.

in its infancy as a tourist hub and some buildings are deteriorating and badly in need of refurbishment. In contrast, the relatively new Orthodox Church overlooking **Dariali Gorge**, and the nearby Customs Post before the Russian border, were very modern. We did a short hike up to **Gveleti Waterfall**, near the frontier.

One of the most scenic treks was to the **Sameba (Trinity) Church** that stands sentinel over **Stepantsminda**. From there, we followed a ridge above the church to an altitude of 2,960m from where the rapidly-retreating **Gergeti glacier** was clearly visible. The outline of **Mount Kazbek** was partially visible in the clouds, but the route to the hut, perched on the edge of the moraine, was impassable due to risk of avalanche.

The next day, we drove up to the village of **Jutta** (2,150m), which lies at the head of the **Sno Valley**, and from there took a trail which led up to a giant amphitheatre overshadowed by the multi-pinnacled **Chaukhi Mountain**. The Roshka Pass had not yet opened for 2019, so it was not an option for us to continue to **Shatili**, the 9th-century stone town in the **Khevsureti** region.

Before leaving the Kazbegi region we completed another hike, similar to our own Croagh Patrick pilgrimage here in Ireland. This was up to the **Lomisa Church and monastery** located on a col (2,400m) overlooking **South Ossetia**. Every year, on the Wednesday in the week after Pentecost, several thousand people make a pilgrimage to this church to celebrate Lomisoba. In the era of Ottoman invasions (in the 16th century) a sacred icon of St George miraculously attached itself to the horns of a bull called Loma, which then led the enslaved Georgians back to their homeland from Turkey. The monastery was built in homage to the bull.

Svaneti

The drive across the country from Kazbegi to **Mestia** in the **Svaneti** region can be a long day, circumnavigating **South Ossetia** and **Abkhazia**. It is best to break the journey by overnighing in **Kutaisi**, Georgia's second city and former capital of several historic kingdoms.

Before leaving Kutaisi, we detoured 8km to the northeast to visit **Gelati Monastery**. This was founded in 1106 and is a former cultural hub of Georgia's medieval 'golden age,' and also the burial place of King David, known as 'The Builder.'

The mountain valleys in Svaneti were full of their spring colours, and the honeysuckle fragrance of the **yeli azaleas** *Rhododendron luteum* pervaded the whole countryside.

Svaneti is most renowned for its square defence towers, called **koshi**, dating from the 11th to 13th centuries.



Above: Chaukhi Mountain (3,842m), above Jutta village in the Sno Valley, in the Kazbegi region of Georgia.

Below: Map of Svaneti area, northwest of Mestia.

Once in **Mestia**, it was a short drive of 7km to the trailhead for the **Chalaati glacier**. This was a very pleasant short hike to the source of the Mestia River, which tumbles down from Chatin-Tau Mountain (4,412m). Geographers have recorded and dated the receding lengths of the glacier on boulders in the riverbed.

Mestia is a quintessential mountain town and the best base from which to explore the wider Svaneti region. We stayed for five nights in a guesthouse just off the main square. There was plenty to see and do in the town and great food in the local restaurants. Laila was an exceptionally good one and included a two-hour display of traditional Georgian music and dance. There was an ethnographic museum with an eco-friendly roof garden that was well worth visiting.

As the weather was good, we headed to **Ushguli** first thing on the morning after our arrival. The road is in such poor condition and the exposure so acute that the journey may only be attempted in dry weather, and a 4x4 vehicle is a must. The drive to this unique area, the highest permanently inhabited settlement in Europe at 2,200m, is not for the faint-hearted.

The sheer number of 12th-century Svanetian tower-houses, some in perfect condition, standing tall in each ➤





THE NUMBER OF 12TH-CENTURY TOWERHOUSES IN USHGULI IS TRULY REMARKABLE.

of the four villages was truly remarkable. **Ushguli** was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1993 due to its antiquity and remoteness.

While there, we enjoyed a wonderful hike along the Enguri River to the foot of **Mt Shkhara** (5,193m), Georgia's highest mountain. We sat for a long time admiring the **Shkhara glacier**, enjoying the tranquillity and solitude of this beautiful place.

Above: Ushguli village of Chazhashi with cluster of Svan towers from the 11th and 12th centuries.

Below left: Mt Shkhara (5,193m) and the Shkhara glacier from Ushguli.

Below right: Mt Ushba's twin peaks (4,710m, 4,708m), Georgia's toughest and most dangerous climb.

The next walk was located close to the village of **Maseri**, in the Dolra River valley. From the **Grand Hotel Ushba** a pleasant woodland trail wound up to the **Shdugra (Ushba) Waterfall**, which flowed down to the west of **South Ushba peak** (4,710m).

En route, we overtook two border guards heading up to their post for a tour of duty, and we also encountered a small group of Czech hikers who had camped there overnight. They were hoping to reach Mestia via the **Guli Pass**, a snow-filled pass that is usually not passable until late June. At the western tip of the **Ushba glacier**, which was the terminus of our hike,





only the southern top of the iconic twin peaks of this mountain was visible.

The next day, both Ushba peaks were in sight for most of the day. The walk was to the **Koruldi Lakes**, the longest walk of our trip. We attained the **Ushba plateau** (2,740m), where the lakes lay in frozen splendour. **Mount Tetnuli** (4,858m) was also clearly visible away to the east.

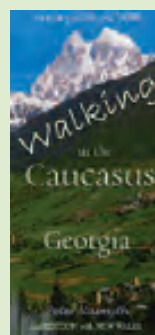
I highly recommend **Trek Georgia** to anyone planning a hillwalking holiday in the Greater Caucasus ■

Above: The 'airy' road to Ushguli.

Below: John O'Callaghan (right) with guidebook author Peter Nasmyth outside the Prospero's Books store in Tbilisi.



Further reading



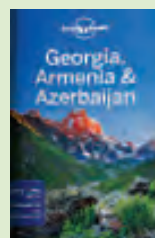
Walking in the Caucasus: Georgia, by Peter Nasmyth, from MTA Publications, London (2013); 2nd edition with new walks.

Please don't call it Soviet Georgia: A journey through a troubled paradise, by Mary Russell, from Serpent's Tail, London (1991).

Georgia in the Mountains of Poetry, by Peter Nasmyth, from Routledge, London (2006); 3rd edition.

Georgia, Armenia & Azerbaijan, from Lonely Planet (2016); 5th edition.

Altai Adventure, Irish Mountain Log, No 76, Winter 2005, pages 36-37.



Maps

Georgia Caucasus Mountains (1: 400 000) from TerraQuest (2017). It includes Kazbek trekking map (1:50 000) and Svaneti trekking map (1:75 000).





TRAVERSING RYSY MOUNTAIN

Rysy is a mountain in the High Tatras, in the eastern part of the Tatra Mountains, lying on the border between Poland and Slovakia. Rysy has three summits: the middle at 2,503m; the north-western at 2,499m; and the south-eastern at 2,473m. The north-western summit is the highest point in Poland; the other two summits are on the Slovak side of the border. **Kevin McMahon** and his climbing partner, Noel Dowling, climbed the mountain one summer.

I spent the first week of June 2015 with a group of friends on a walking trip to the Slovak High Tatras. Over the course of our stay we did a variety of walks based around the Tatranská Magistrala (Tatras Highway), the main waymarked path in the High Tatras, which runs along their southern slopes for 42 kilometres. These were easy to moderate graded walks and suitable for the fitness level of our group.

In addition to enjoying these walks, which

Above: The Polish summit of Rysy Mountain (2,499m) on the border of Poland and Slovakia.

meandered through very scenic areas at altitudes from 1,000m to 2,000m, myself and a long-time walking and climbing companion, **Noel Dowling**, had also come with the intention of climbing at least one of the higher peaks. This objective was more difficult than we had anticipated since the higher peaks and paths on the Slovak side are meant to be closed from November 1st until June 15th. Even after that date, a number of the peaks can only be climbed with a qualified mountain guide.



➤ Sadly, after he submitted this article, **Kevin McMahon** passed away on January 15th, 2016, on top of Lugnaquilla in the Wicklow Mountains, doing what he loved best. Kevin was an Individual Member of Mountaineering Ireland. He had been interested in mountaineering since the late 1950s, when he was a member of the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland's 58th (Donnycarney) Troop. In 1979, he joined the then **Arderin Hillwalking Club**. In the late 1980s, he was involved in starting a hillwalking

group for SIPTU staff. The group now consists mainly of retired SIPTU staff and friends who go walking in the Wicklow Mountains. The group also organises weekends away and a trip to a mountain range abroad each year. After he retired, Kevin took the opportunity to climb a few big mountains abroad, including Mont Blanc and Aconcagua.

Kevin McMahon: born April 18th, 1948; died January 15th, 2016

The restrictions are in place to protect wildlife and because of the danger from avalanches. To find out what, if any, options were open to us, we paid a visit to the National Park information centre in **Stary Smokovec**, which is also staffed by members of the Slovak mountain rescue service. Here, we were pleased to learn that there was a degree of flexibility in the winter/spring walking restriction rules, particularly if we were members of a climbing club (which both of us are).

The man from mountain rescue advised us that our best and, in fact, only option was to climb **Rysy peak** on the Slovak-Polish border. He said it would be okay for us to ascend Rysy on the Polish side and descend on the Slovak side. He also advised us to bring our climbing club cards with us in case we were stopped by the mountain wardens. Given that Rysy is waymarked and has the added attraction of being the highest mountain in Poland, we asked no more questions and decided we would go for it.

With the assistance of a very friendly receptionist at the **Horsky Hrebienok hostel**, we discovered that a public bus departed from Stary Smokovec bus station at 6.00am. Our hostel receptionist offered to get the night porter to drop us down to the bus station by car the following morning. The offer was appreciated and accepted. The distance to Lysa Polana is 37km and the price of the bus journey was only €2.50 per person!

The real start of the climb

At **Lysa Polana** (at 1,000m), we began the eleven-kilometre walk up along a forest road to **Morskie Oko** (1,395m), regarded as Poland's most beautiful lake and the real start of our climb up Rysy. Two kilometres into our walk to the lake we reached a large car park and the entrance to the National Park, where we paid a €3 admission fee.



Above: Kevin McMahon, left, and Noel Dowling at Morskie Oko lake with Rysy in the background.

Below: A cataract or cascade on the mountainside.

WE HIKED FOR ELEVEN KILOMETRES TO REACH THE START OF THE CLIMB.



We were now accompanied by throngs of people all heading in the same direction as us. While some were intent on climbing Rysy (the equipment strapped onto their backpacks made this clear), we subsequently discovered that most were here for a religious festival that was taking place at the lake.

When we arrived at **Morskie Oko**, we went into a roadside restaurant and ordered breakfast – Polish pancake and cottage cheese: just what we needed to sustain us for the climb ahead! Breakfast over, we walked around the lake to the start of the waymarked path up Rysy. The day was now bright and sunny – the perfect weather for our climb.

From Morskie Oko, we climbed up a stone path to a higher lake called **Czarny Staw pod Rysami** (1,583m). From there, we could see the snow slopes we had to ascend and other walkers ahead of us making their way up the mountain.

At that stage, we put on our crampons and took our ice axes in hand and began the long slog up the first snow slope.

As there were already good footsteps made by previous walkers we had no route-finding problems and the going was reasonably easy. ➤



**ON THE SUMMIT AT 2,499m,
WE JOINED OTHER CLIMBERS
HAVING SNACKS AND TAKING
PHOTOS IN THE SUNSHINE.**

the High Tatras, we started our descent. As a precaution, I had taken a compass-bearing the day before from the summit to the first feature we needed to reach on the way down – a col at 2,337m. The col is not visible from the summit and, while there were red-and-white markings on boulders along the route, you needed to take your time to pick them out. If the summit had been enveloped in clouds it would have been very difficult and highly dangerous to try to locate the col without a good compass bearing to guide you to it.

The next objective on our way down was the **Chata pod Rysmi** (2,250m). We had been told that this refuge was closed until June 15th, when restrictions on climbing Rysy from the Slovak side would be lifted. To our surprise, it was open and serving food and refreshments, including the best of Slovak and Czech beer! Although tempted, we gave the beer a miss and instead bought some water.

Above: View of Staw pod Rysami and Morskie Oko lakes from the Rysy summit climb.

Right: Kevin on snow slope above Staw pod Rysami, heading up Rysy.

After approximately one kilometre we crossed over a small ridge and then headed up another, steeper snow slope, which ran up into a gully.

Part of the way up the gully we could see that other climbers had got off the snow slope and were making their way up a bone-dry granite ridge with the aid of fixed chains. As some loose stones began falling in our direction, having been disturbed by climbers ahead of us at the top of the gully, we also got off the snow slope onto the ridge.

Reaching the summit

We took off our crampons and climbed the remaining one to two hundred metres to the summit with the aid of the chains. While this section was steep, it was relatively safe, provided you had a good head for heights.

On reaching the Polish peak of **Rysy (2,499m)**, the highest point in Poland, we joined a number of other climbers sitting on the rocks, having snacks and taking photos. Just a short distance across from us was the Slovak peak of **Rysy (2,503m)**.

After a fifteen-minute break for snacks and time to appreciate the surrounding views of



While we encountered a small number of snow-covered areas on the way down, they were easy to traverse and didn't require crampons. The absence of significant snow on the Slovak side compared with the Polish side is down to the fact that it is on the southern side of the High Tatras. The incline on the Slovak side is also less steep.

After Chata pod Rysmi, we descended to the **Zabie Plesa lakes** and on our way negotiated a 20-metre slab of bare rock protected by fixed chains. Once you take care, this slab of rock is easy enough to descend.

The last lap

After Zabie Plesa, the waymarked track became much more visible as it zigzagged down the mountain, first through dwarf pine and then through full-sized forest, finally reaching **Popradské Pleso** (1,494m), a beautiful glacial lake located on the Tatranska Magistrala.

From there, we walked for fifty minutes to the Popradské Pleso tram station and took a tram back to Starý Smocovec. Stops and breaks included, it took us eleven hours to walk from Lysa Polana to Popradské Pleso tram station. At the Horský Hrebienok hostel, we had a well-deserved shower before joining the rest of our walking group for dinner.

Our hike had been a demanding but very rewarding traverse of the High Tatras in really perfect weather conditions. We would recommend Rysy to anyone looking for a challenging but reasonably safe summit climb in the High Tatras ■



Above: Kevin McMahon, left, and Noel Dowling on top of Rysy's Polish summit (2,499m).

Below: Another view from the summit of Rysy.



LOS TRES TECHOS

Seán Fortune tackles Los Tres Techos ('The Three Roofs') in El Chorro, Málaga, in southern Spain, along with climbing companion Adam Doran

My eyes flicker open. It's still night, but my view is as clear as in the day. A full moon, hidden from view behind the ridgeline, illuminates the world with a clear, pale luminescence. Transfixed by the moon's cold gaze, the Earth seems frozen in place, a monochromatic painting in which only we move. Hanging on a portaledge high above the ground, we are but gnats on the wall, puny beings who should have no place up here. Far above, the cave roof lies in shadow, an intimidating monster guarding its secrets for tomorrow.

I turn and peer over the edge at the silvery panorama below. The moonlight illuminates the

Above: Seán Fortune leading through the roof of the second cave.

canyon with a cold, clear glimmer. Casting weird shadows, arêtes seem sharpened, hidden faces deepened and the drop to the belly of the gorge seems much farther. Only the faint sound of the gurgling river below, seemingly still from here, gives any note of life. Held suspended in this immobilised cathedral, to move and disturb the tranquillity seems almost blasphemous. A small gust rocks the portaledge slightly, and I turn again. Facing up to the heavens, a few of the brighter stars sparkle through the bright moonshine. Burrowing further into the warmth of my sleeping bag, I grin internally as my thoughts and gaze drift upwards towards tomorrow's adventures.

* * * * *

Aiders, daisychains, portaledges, nuts... "Jesus, what sort of a sport climbing trip have I gotten myself into?" I wonder, as I stare at the usual packing mess piled on the bed. "Why can't I just be bringing a nice simple set of draws and a rope?!"

Still, though, a slight ripple of excitement – or dread, I'm not quite sure which – runs through me as things start to come together. A year ago, we had bailed on **Los Tres Techos** after I saw the size of the caves from a neighbouring route and we decided to adjourn.

This year, it is one of our first objectives and, a

➤ **Seán Fortune** started climbing a little over three years ago with **UCD Mountaineering Club** and quickly got addicted. He now spends most of his time trying to make up for the years preceding his discovery of climbing by researching or dreaming about an ever-growing list of routes he will probably never get around to doing!



Photograph: Adam Doran

BOLT THREE FINDS ME DANGLING IN MID-AIR, SUSPENDED BETWEEN THE TWO ARMS OF THE ADJUST.

couple of days after making it back to the sunny winter paradise of **El Chorro** in Málaga, southern Spain, we make an early start. Traipsing from the campsite down winding roads through the sleepy village, the sky starts to burn behind us, fiery tendrils stretching forth into the inky pre-dawn blackness as the sun reclaims its throne.

An hour later, we are standing at the base of the first cave, the others thankfully hidden from view. A wee skeleton pit of leftover vulture lunch beside us does nothing to inspire confidence as we rack up, wondering – not for the first or last time – what the hell we are getting ourselves into. The odd bit of extravagant French freeing is hardly the highest level of preparation for a nearly 400m aid route, but this seemed the next logical step. Right?

The first pitch, indeed most of the first day, is my lead, and consists of a long traverse from the base out and up through the mouth of the first, smallest cave – although ‘smallest’ doesn’t seem like the most appropriate word, looking around the train station-sized cavity in the cliff.

I’ve borrowed my friend Paul’s Evolv Adjust (a positioning device with two adjustable arms) and his words of advice echo in my head as I set off: “Don’t weight them both at the same time. It’s really hard to get out of.” With this in mind, I set off carefully and smoothly, for about a bolt. By bolt two, I’m tangled, and bolt three finds me dangling mid-air, suspended perfectly equally between both arms of the Adjust!

Many expletives follow as I faff about, aided (pun fully intended) by sniggers and comments from **Adam Doran**, lying comfortably on our inflatable portaledge. I finally figure out how to extricate



Above: Los Tres Techos, with vultures circling above.

Below: How to do a hanging belay in style! A snug Adam Doran.

myself and move on... for about two bolts, till a déjà vu occurs. It takes over half the pitch before I make any semblance of coherent progress, but things start to progress relatively efficiently from there on.

A short scramble on the second pitch is followed by a mix of free climbing and aiding for a couple of pitches up the second, larger cave, to a sensational exit from there out through the roof of the cave.

The **Caminito del Rey** – a dangerous high-level walkway situated directly across the gorge from us – is filling up with its daily dose of walkers, and many stop to gaze at what must make an interesting sight – three caves, two eejits and one haul bag hanging in space, with what must look like a bright swimming-pool lilo attached to it.

Four pitches up, we’re at the base of the humongous third cavern, which stretches above us with space to fit both other caves twice over... and then some. It’s an awe-inspiring feature, the circling **griffon vultures** above only adding to the atmosphere.

Walking around the cave to where the route picks up again, we take a quick break from the afternoon sun, in a superbly located little bivvy cave, before Adam takes over leading, linking two bolt ladder pitches up the right sidewall of the cave to where we pitch camp for the night.

With one portaledge already up from use at hanging belays, getting the second out and joining them together runs surprisingly well. Within an hour we’re settled in for the night, watching the light drain from the sky. Shattered but satisfied, we enjoy an old-school Alpine dinner of chorizo, a block of cheese, a hunk of stale-ish bread and a solitary can of Cruzcampo. The other one sadly ➤



BIG WALL CLIMBING

came to its demise, at the start of our trip, in my bag, when it burst all down my pants.

Although I still think we were crazy for buying inflatable portaledges, I can't help but be impressed by their light weight, their simplicity and their comfort; they are a huge step up from the hammocks we slept in on a nearby route twelve months earlier.

After an uneventful if somewhat unexpectedly bright night, we enjoy a gourmet breakfast of the remains of the previous night's dinner, before entering the crux pitches of the route.

Head-spinning exposure

Following a nice bolt ladder pitch up the right side of the cave, a long pitch leads Adam to an insanely exposed belay right at the back of the cave roof, shared with some less than enthusiastic pigeons.

Seconding the pitch, the exposure grows as I move away from the comfort of the sidewall into the expanse of the roof. Adam warns me of a small death block as I approach the belay, which I promptly carefully avoid. As I press off the ledge that it sits on, the entire shelf detaches and my feet pop into the void as a monster block tumbles free under me and spins down into space. Heart thumping, I busy myself clipping into everything I possibly can within arm's reach, as Adam watches the block tumble for a worrying number of seconds before it thumps into the dirt at the base of the cave with a solid 'Whooommmppphhh!'

Vaguely satisfied with my roughly 72 attachment points, I sit back, heart racing, as I calm myself, the eyes of the Caminito walkway far below providing an unnerving audience, fixated on the crazy men raining down rocks on the far side of the gorge.

It's a couple of minutes and many unsuitable words later before I recover and make the last few moves to the belay, where the main topic of discussion is what common piece of household equipment could possibly best describe the block. The top portion of a split fridge-freezer, if you must know!

On most other routes, anything following that incident would be anticlimactic, but the final aid pitch takes us into the wildest of positions that either of us has ever been in. I've been hidden from it, standing on the portaledge and belaying Adam, but, as I lower the bags and ledge out, the exposure becomes all too real. Aiding straight out through the centre of the roof, the lack of contact with rock makes my head spin – literally, at times, as I pirouette slowly in space, a single ladder my only connection with the rock on occasion.



Above: Seán seconding up through the third cave. The big block that got pulled off can be seen on the left-hand side.

Below: Seán aids through the last roof. Note where base of third cave drops off to the caves below.

Emerging into direct sunlight at the lip is incredible, the world opening up around me. The sense of being but a speck in space, a miniscule dot on the wall, is awe-inspiring. I take a rest from the still surprisingly physical action of aid climbing to admire the monster vulture egg sitting on a ledge not five metres to the side. I have the more comfortable view; Adam, on climbing up, disturbed the nesting mother who, thankfully, took literally to the flight aspect of flight or fight – otherwise the crux of the route could have been entirely different! On the plus side, it turns out he can aid a lot faster than he initially thought.





MY FEET POPPED INTO THE VOID AS THE MONSTER BLOCK TUMBLED FREE.

As I lead up the last grade V scramble to top out, dirty, dehydrated and dishevelled, a feeling of elation and satisfaction overcomes me. Also hunger, definitely hunger. Still, though, over the last two days we've learned a lot. Not just in completing the climb, but in doing it in style and with relative efficiency; this gives us a feeling of completeness that will take a while to fade. Or so it seems, as within an hour of the walk-off, talk is already turning to our next adventure, a trad route down in the gorge itself with a bit of an horrendous approach. Ah, sport climbing holidays... what could be more relaxing? ■

Above: Adam at the final belay before he and Seán topped out. The Caminito del Rey walkway is visible on the far side of the gorge.

Below: View from the top of the last cave.

Useful information

Location El Chorro is a fantastic spot for a winter sport climbing holiday. We went in mid-January, with dry weather and temperatures around the mid-teens for the best part of a month, but any time from October to May seems to suit.

It has a range for everyone, with climbs starting from around 4a and upwards into the 8s. There's a great mix of single-pitch and multipitch, with a lifetime's climbing within walking distance (mostly 5-60 minutes' approach) and no car needed, although it would open up wider possibilities.

For **Los Tres Techos** itself, approach via the train tunnels is technically not allowed, so you can't hop over the train fence at a green electricity box located in the car park just beside the Los Albercones crag, then head down spacious tunnels with plenty of room for both climber and train, if needed, till you reach the base.

The two main campsites are **Finca la Campana** (get the paella!) and the **Olive Branch**, while there are lots of private house rentals also. Cheap flights go to **Málaga**, and a train runs from there to Chorro for around €12-€14 return.

Rack/route Aid gear (daisies and ladders each) and 15-20 quickdraws. All A1 or easy free climbing (Grade 4/5). We had a pair of rock shoes that got occasional use, which was handy, but not necessary. Bolts generally in pretty good nick and belays all well bolted. A good high-quality topo can be found on **cartowall.com**. For those wishing to bivvy, there's a really nice little bivvy cave at the back left of the base of the third cave.

Walk-off Head back and climber's right from where you top out, heading down slopes till you hit a vague trail that brings you over the ridge rightwards. From there, head down and left, following your nose towards a cave-side white house till you hit cairns; then follow on downhill till you end up joining better trails and end up back on the road off the Caminito.





Increase in physical activity seen during time of Covid-19 restrictions



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Hillwalking,
Access &
Conservation
Officer



The Fearon family from Darkley, Co Armagh, enjoy their local community trail in Darkley Forest.

It may seem ironic that, when we cannot partake in our normal hillwalking and climbing activity because of the Covid-19 restrictions, research has shown that many people have ‘found’ the outdoors at this time. Can this new participation be sustained into the future?

Being limited to exercising within a 2km or 5km radius of home helped many people realise the outdoors starts on their doorstep. Reduced traffic levels and fine spring weather made the exploration of our local patch a more enjoyable experience, with many of us walking somewhere we had never been before, within half an hour of our home. At the same time, people who didn't previously engage in physical activity ventured outdoors too.

Sport Ireland research

Research conducted in the Republic by Ipsos MRBI, on behalf of Sport Ireland, from the beginning of March up to mid-May, has found that the proportion of Irish adults walking at least once a week for recreation has increased throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, reaching 83% in

May. Participation in cycling and running has also increased, and the percentage of people that are inactive is at its lowest ever (11%).

There has been a strong uptake in recreational walking among those under the age of 35, particularly in the 15-24 age group, where participation has jumped from 51% to 89% throughout the restrictions (see the Get Ireland Walking report on page 16 for further details of this research).

Northern Ireland survey

A survey conducted by Outdoor Recreation NI in the first half of May found a similar pattern of increased engagement with the outdoors in Northern Ireland during the period. It also illustrated the benefits of this activity, with 84% of respondents feeling physical

health benefits and 90% reporting benefits relating to their mental health and wellbeing. More than three-quarters of respondents to the Northern Ireland survey (79%) agreed that spending time outdoors made them feel closer to nature, with survey participants who engaged in outdoor activity more frequently reporting a higher level of connection with nature.

The value of outdoor recreation

The importance of outdoor recreation in supporting physical and mental wellbeing was emphasised in a Sport Ireland Outdoors statement on May 18th, to mark the re-opening of many public amenities. That was the first opportunity for people from different households to engage in outdoor activities together (while adhering to Government guidelines).

The Sport Ireland statement and its accompanying guidelines for exercise in the outdoors were endorsed by thirty-four different organisations with a role in facilitating and promoting outdoor recreation activity. This nationwide approach to a safe and responsible resumption of outdoor recreation activities was commended by **Mountaineering Ireland** who, along with others, had contributed to the development of the Sport Ireland guidelines.

Mountaineering Ireland CEO **Murrough McDonagh** thanked Sport Ireland for their leadership and welcomed this collective recognition of the outdoors as a valuable amenity for all members of society to enjoy. Murrough also encouraged people to exercise personal responsibly, so as to help ensure that our gradual return to the outdoors goes smoothly.

Looking ahead

As people start to travel again, increased participation in outdoor activities has brought some challenges in terms of traffic congestion and litter, as well as providing lessons for the longer-term management of outdoor recreation.

The Outdoor Recreation NI survey indicates that many of those who have engaged in outdoor activities during the Covid-19 period intend to continue this activity, with 51% of people saying they

expect to spend more of their free time in the outdoors when the Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

One need that was clearly evident during the Covid-19 outbreak was for people to have space for outdoor recreation close to home, perhaps through a network of **community trails**, ideally off-road. A greater emphasis on developing and improving our 'green infrastructure' would deliver multiple benefits – such as providing corridors for wildlife and reducing transport emissions, in addition to improving opportunities for recreation.

Covid-19 has set the direction for increased participation in hillwalking, climbing and outdoor recreation activities. That in turn raises the question of what measures are required to support that increased activity.

Mountaineering Ireland believes this should be addressed through the development and implementation of a new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy** to manage the increased demand for outdoor recreation, in a way that provides quality outdoor recreation experiences, protects fragile environments and creates opportunities for rural communities and landowners to benefit from this activity.

A clear National Outdoor Recreation Strategy will support social and economic recovery, especially in rural

areas; it will help ensure best value is gained from investment in the sector; and it will improve the quality of life for all our people.

Mountaineering Ireland welcomes the recent commitment from the **Department of Rural and Community Development** to develop a National Outdoor Recreation Strategy and we look forward to participating in that process.

More information

Sport Ireland research

<https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2020-05/covid-and-sport-apr-2020-v2-22-may-2020.pdf>

or go to www.bit.ly/sportirelandcovid

Outdoor Recreation NI survey

<http://www.outdoorrecreationni.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Engaging-with-the-Outdoors-during-COVID-19-Lockdown-in-NI-Report.pdf>

or go to www.bit.ly/outdoorrecreationNI

Sport Ireland statement and guidelines

<https://www.sportireland.ie/news/stay-local-stay-apart-stay-safe-in-the-outdoors-0>

or go to www.bit.ly/SportIrelandstaysafe

EPA report on integrating green infrastructure into spatial planning

<https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/biodiversity/Prepress%20final%20web%20.pdf>

or go to www.bit.ly/EPAbiodiversity ■

Nature nurtures

In 2020, many of us have had more time to observe the unfurling of spring, to notice butterflies and bees, to hear the birdsong and to admire the beauty of the wildflowers, which can be discovered in urban and rural areas.

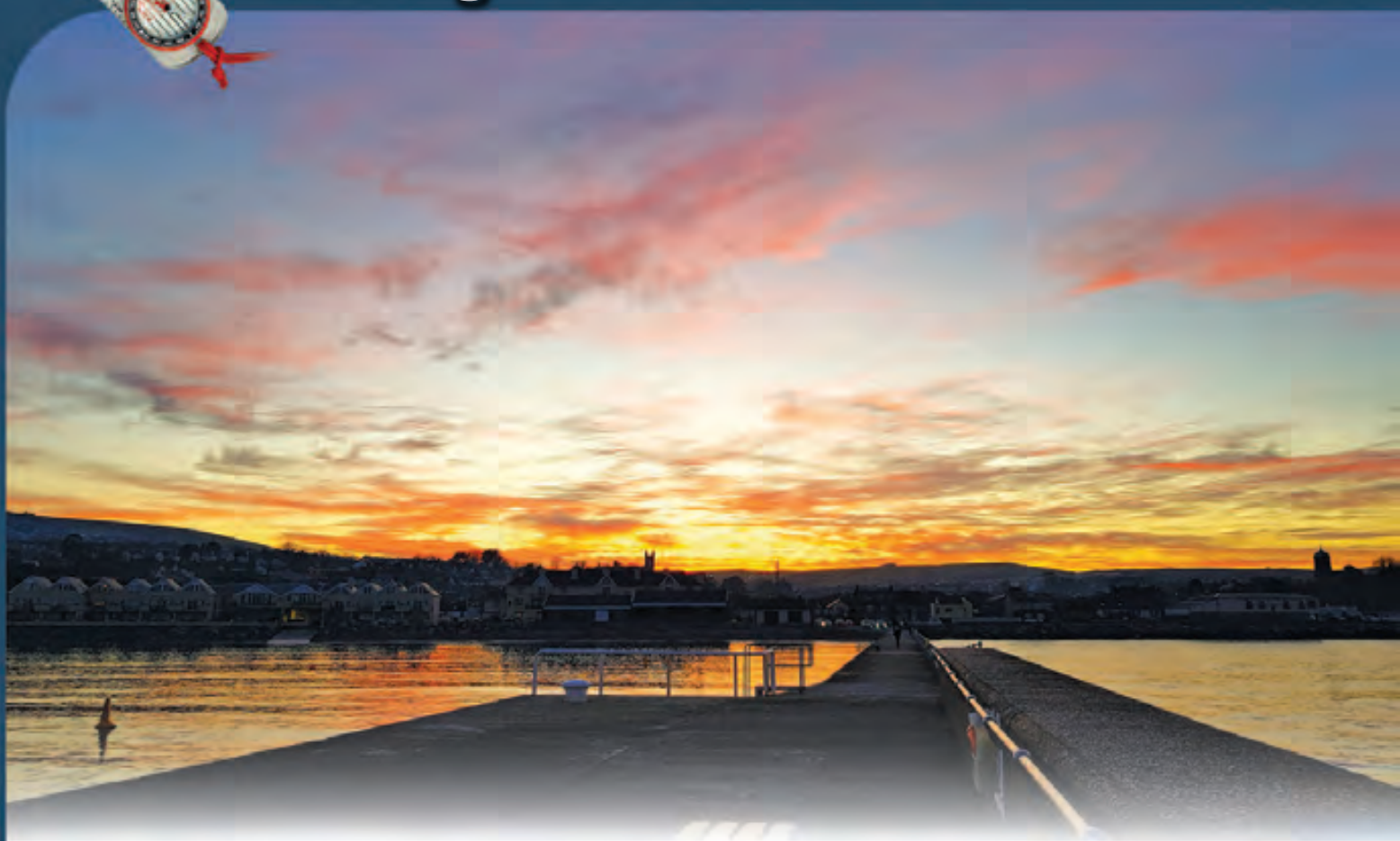
Over the last few months, I've been looking at the wildflowers that grow around where I live in the Wicklow Mountains, photographing them on my phone and posting on Instagram, along with some information about each flower. Here's an example:

Heath spotted orchid – Isn't it amazing that we have such beautiful flowers growing in the hills? This photo was taken in a boggy field; but the flower also grows on heath. The flower spike is about 5cm high on a stem of approximately 15cm (some plants are taller). Flower colour varies from white through shades of pink and mauve. The patterning on the frilly flowers varies too. The 'spotted' in the name refers to the long, pointed leaves, which have dark spots. Orchids grow very slowly, taking several years to flower. They have tiny wind-blown seeds, effectively carrying no food supply, and they partner with a soil fungus which helps the roots of the orchid to access nutrients.

For more examples, follow [helen_lawless_mountains](https://www.instagram.com/helen_lawless_mountains) on Instagram ■



Heath spotted orchid



Sunset at Wicklow Harbour, Co Wicklow, within Training Officer Jane Carney's Covid-19 5km restriction zone

Recent and upcoming events

Jane Carney reports on training news and events run by the Training Office



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

■ Summer Alpine Meet 2020

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Summer Alpine Meet planned for Saas Grund, Switzerland, has been cancelled. It is planned to move this event to 2021.

The Summer Alpine Meet courses are run at cost and are not-for-profit. They are just one of the many benefits that you can get from your **Mountaineering Ireland** membership.

See you in Saas Grund in 2021!



Saas Grund, Switzerland

News for members, candidates and providers

■ Training Grant applications

January-June 2020 applications have been reviewed. All applications were successful. We are now accepting applications for the July-December 2020 period.

Thank you for your applications for support for training activities.

■ Club Training Officers Online Workshops

Club Training Officers will be receiving invitations to attend online club training sessions to support, develop and refresh in-club skills.

■ Download these useful training guidelines

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

■ Covid-19 guidance on safe return to activity

Please see the Covid-19 guidance for the safe return to activity; this is being updated regularly on the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie ■

News for providers

■ First Aid Provision during Covid-19

Please see the Mountaineering Ireland website for guidance on **First Aid Provision** for the Mountain Training Awards and Schemes requirements. Also check update emails for guidance. The usual protocols apply in relation to checking whether the scene is safe and using PPE for protection. There will be additional guidance shared as it is received.

■ Delivery of NGB awards

In March, all Mountain Training UK and Ireland Providers were asked to cease delivery of NGB awards for the foreseeable future. I would like to thank all providers for their compliance and support of this decision. We will continue to provide updates as the Irish and British Governments' advice progresses and eventually permits the phased return to participation, leading and instruction.

During the gradual return to work, I would remind trainers to be on high alert to the effects of this extended absence. Double check, verbalise safety checks, risk assess bearing COVID - 19 in mind as an additional factor. As trainers, we are experienced in dynamic risk assessment, decision making and creative delivery, so we are well placed to adapt to a new way of working.

■ Move to the MTUKI Candidate Management System (CMS) for training course reporting

Six provider workshops have been delivered in the use of the Candidate Management System (CMS) for course reporting. Awards records have been updated and IDs set up for all MTBI providers.

Guidance information for providers is available in the Training Office. If you have not done so already, please log in to your MT account to familiarise yourself from the perspective of the candidate and the trainer. Add some logbook entries, and look over your training and assessment records. The new system will require some time to get used to; the workshops were helpful with familiarisation.

■ Providers are asked to take the opportunity to check their **course report list**, complete and submit any outstanding reports, and delete any that did not run ■

Please contact the Training Office to discuss the transitional arrangements for candidates and course requirements for trainers and those managing outdoor course provision.



Another view of Wicklow town at sunset during Covid-19

Photograph: Jane Carney (sunset)

Summer 2020

Key dates 2020

- June, July, August Online Skills Workshops: Navigation & Rock Climbing (See website for details)
- 27-28th June Online MTUKI Meeting
- 12th September Online MTBI Meeting
- 20-21st Sept Online Providers Workshop
- 26-27th Sept Skills/CPD Workshops in Teaching Navigation, Scrambling and Rock Climbing, venue TBC
- 20th October Winter Meet Information Evening, venue TBC
- 30th Oct-2nd Nov Mountain Leader Assessment, venue TBC
- 7-8th Nov MTUKI Meeting, venue TBC
- 30th Nov MTBI Meeting, venue TBC
- 4th December Senior Providers Workshop, venue TBC

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

Venues will be confirmed based on the prevailing Government guidance. Online options will be used as alternatives, where face-to-face meetings are advised as inappropriate.

Training awards, registration and provider updates

■ Registration and reporting for the skills schemes

Provider training has taken place to facilitate an improved reporting and registration system. This will continue to support candidates, trainers and the administration staff throughout the training record pathway.

Screen-shots from the website can be very helpful to candidates and can clarify the distinction between scheme or award registration and joining the Council, i.e. Mountaineering Ireland membership ■

Please contact the Training Officer, Jane Carney, on (01) 625 1112 for further details

Stay safe out there!



Poems and photos illustrate best of Donegal's hills and coasts



DONEGAL'S ATLANTIC WAY

By Michael Sugrue

Privately published (2019), 208pp, 25 poems, 200+ images, €35.00 (hdbk), ISBN 978-1-913069-15-5

Donegal's Atlantic Way is a 208-page coffee-table book of striking photographs, containing more than two hundred images illustrating the rugged beauty of Donegal, combined with twenty-five poems relating to the pictures. The book takes the reader photographically through the day in Donegal's great outdoors, from dawn to dusk.

The author and photo-grapher, Michael Sugrue, is originally from Galway but, after

twenty years working in Australia, he and his wife returned to Ireland and made Donegal their home. Michael works as a surgeon in Letterkenny General Hospital, a job which you would imagine would keep him fully occupied, but, as with many busy people, he has found time also to explore Donegal as a walker, cyclist, canoeist and surfer. He also writes poetry and takes photographs.

He is a member of the **Swilly Hiking Club**, and some of his photographs were inspired by his hikes with members of that walkers' group in Donegal.

The photographs in this book are all excellent, visually and technically. They illustrate very clearly the moods of some of the more striking parts of Donegal. As a mountaineer, the shots of the upland areas of Donegal did, of course, attract my attention, but there are many beautiful shots of Donegal's coastline as well. There are some particularly striking shots of Errigal from unusual views and in different seasons, but there are also some beautifully atmospheric shots of Fanad Lighthouse and of wrecks on the Donegal coastline.

The poems that are associated with the various photographs are generally quite thought-provoking. In *Oh Errigall*, Michael writes:

*"Symmetrically sublime.
An isosceles triangle of might.
Sitting on toasted tufts of grass
Burnt by frigid winds.
Its volcanic-like summit silent."*

What a lovely description, one which you can immediately relate to. The words are very precise, the words of a scientist and an artist. This is certainly a book that I will want to revisit.

Donegal's Atlantic Way can be purchased in shops and pharmacies around Donegal. It can be ordered through the website www.donegalhospice.ie, or by phoning Isobell on **087 238 9607**.

The income raised from sales of this book will be donated to three charities, **Donegal Mind Wellness, Letterkenny Hospice** and **Breast Centre Northwest Research & Development**.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

Amusing story of orphan Sherpa girl's journey to Everest



MUSA MASALA: MOUNTAIN GIRL OF THE HIMALAYA

By Tatiana Havriliuk, Michael McLaughlin & August Johnson

Illustrated by Julie Ramirez

Musa Masala (2018), 76pp (hdbk), many illustrations, €40.00, ISBN 978-1-543968-51-4

Musa Masala: Mountain Girl of the Himalaya is the story of an orphan Sherpa girl who leaves Namche Bazaar, the

Sherpa capital where she lives, and treks to Everest Base Camp. On her trek, Musa (Nepali for mouse) meets some new friends and learns more about the world around her. The striking illustrations bring Nepali culture and her trek to life.

The authors and artist are donating all proceeds from the sale of the book to the **Wongchhu Sherpa Memorial Hospital Fund** (the hospital is located in Kamding, in the lower Solukhumbu region of Nepal). Wongchhu Sherpa, like Musa, was an orphan who found his calling in the mountains.

This is a very striking book, which I certainly enjoyed reading. The story is quite amusing, but I was a little

disappointed that the trek to Base Camp seemed to be a little shortened, going, as it does in the book, from Tengboche monastery to Gorak Shep and missing out the usual staging posts of Pheriche and Lobuche.

However, the authors, who know the area very well, having worked at the **Himalayan Rescue Association's** Emergency Room at Everest Base Camp, do say that the trek normally takes up to seven days, from Namche Bazaar to Everest Base Camp.

There is actually a surprising amount of information in this book about trekking in the Everest area, life at altitude and the Sherpa culture. If you have

been there, this book will be a pleasant reminder of some of the things you will have experienced. If you are going there, it will give you a feel for the place.

For Musa, her journey to Base Camp expands her horizons, and shows her the exciting world that is waiting out there for her.

Musa Masala is an educational platform dedicated to safe, healthy and culturally aware mountain travel.

The book can be purchased through the Irish section of the Musa Masala website:

<http://musamasala.com/musa-ireland-nepal>.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

Top writers on rock climbing describe the greatest British routes and their history



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



HARD ROCK: GREAT BRITISH ROCK CLIMBS FROM VS TO E4

Compiled by Ian Parnell

Vertebrate Publishing (2020, 4th edition), 256pp, colour photos on every page, with many full-page shots, £39.95 (hdbk), ISBN 978-1-912560-29-5

Hard Rock was first published in 1974, compiled by **Ken Wilson**. It featured sixty British rock routes ranging in difficulty from Very Severe (VS) to Extremely Severe (XS).

There were seven routes at VS, varying from three to seven pitches each in length; twenty-four routes at Hard VS (HVS), varying from one to eight pitches in length and finally, at the upper end of difficulty, twenty-seven routes at the XS grade from one to nine pitches in length, with the hardest climb being an E4 grade. There were also two aid routes. Many of those routes were at the sharp end

of what it was possible to climb at that time.

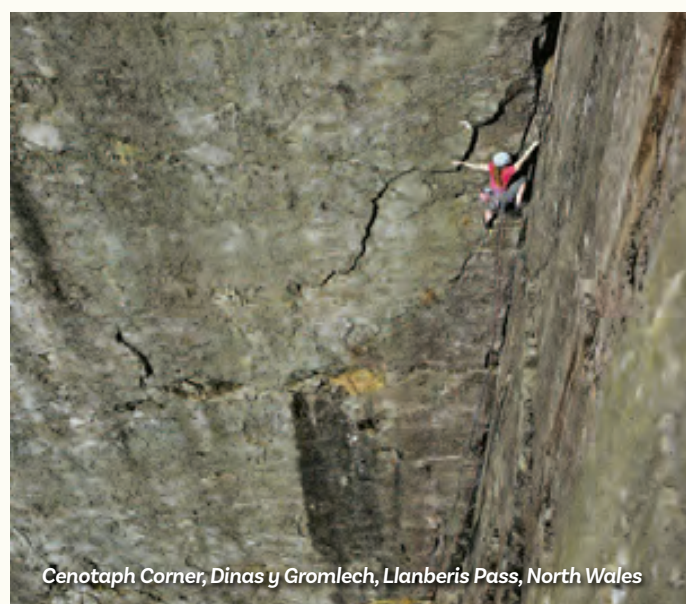
The compiler of that first edition, the late Ken Wilson, did not see his creation as just a guidebook (the large format ruled it out of that category anyway), nor did he want to produce more accounts of the people who put up these routes and their adventures on the first ascents.

Instead, he recruited the cream of British writers to write about different routes, telling the combined story of their place in the landscape, their features and their climbers, because these are the elements which come together to convert a nondescript piece of rock into a climb with a life and history of its own.

Now, forty-six years later, a new compiler has produced a fourth edition of the book. **Ian Parnell** has kept fifty of the original routes and added a further thirteen. The two aid routes from the first edition have also been included again, with the original descriptions by **Doug Scott** and **Dave Nicol**, although both routes have since been climbed free. The cliffs of Pembroke have been added.

This book is in large format and weighs in at 1.7kg, so it is not something to be read in an armchair or carried to a

crag. The only comfortable way to read it is to put it on a table (preferably full height), pull up a chair and get lost in its wonders. In many ways, this volume is reminiscent of **Heinrich Harrer's** *The White Spider*. Although these books



Cenotaph Corner, Dinas y Gromlech, Llanberis Pass, North Wales

can both be read in one fell swoop, that is not their real value. Their excellence lies in the fact that either can be taken up at any time, opened almost at random, and a gem of writing and an interesting story discovered. They can both aptly be described as "books for life."

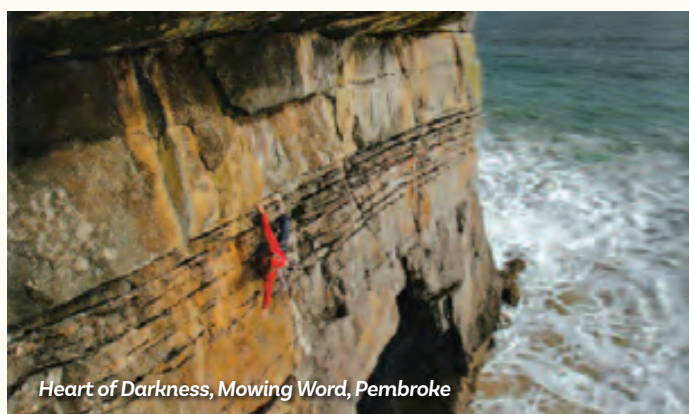
The photography in the new edition of this book is magnificent. Panoramic shots of crags show up their architecture in all of its majesty. Detailed shots of climbers on particular sections of routes capture the essence of that particular section of the climb and the nature and texture of the rock, and help us to feel that we are almost there with them. There is at least one photograph on each page, and they all supplement the writing excellently.

Contributions come from such illustrious names as **Hamish McInnes**, **Nick Estcourt**, **Al Alvarez**, **Jim Perrin** and our own **Phil Gribbon**, as well as the likes of **Martin Moran**, **Eleanor Fuller** and **Ema Alsford**. It is pointless to comment on the standard of the writing. These are the writers who have created the standards.

This fourth edition of *Hard Rock* is certainly an appropriate sequel to its classic predecessors. It is a "book for life" and one you will want to return to repeatedly in the years to come.

Sé O'Hanlon Relict* mountaineer and a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club.

*Relict: "A thing which has survived from an earlier period or in a primitive form." – Oxford English Dictionary



Heart of Darkness, Mowing Word, Pembroke



Account of a climbing tragedy in the Karakoram range



THE LAST BLUE MOUNTAIN

By Ralph Barker

Vertebrate Publishing (2020, a reprint of 1959 1st edition), 214pp, 7pp b&w photos, 2pp maps and sketches, £12.99 (ppbk), ISBN 978-1-912560-42-4

When I first read this story over sixty years ago, I was

deeply saddened by its recounting of one of mountaineering's most cruel tragedies. Now, that sadness is leavened by an appreciation of how a mistake in high mountains can lead to a confusion of misjudgements and a tangle of fateful accidents. Ambition and technical competence, combined with inexperience and time constraints, can be mercilessly confronted by the impersonal savagery of high-altitude conditions. Human frailties and heroism are exposed when, as **Ed Douglas** says in his introduction, "character and fate intertwine."

In 1957, four members of Oxford University Mountaineering Club, led by outstanding Himalayan veteran **Tony Streather**,

attempted the ascent of unclimbed Haramosh, a 24,270 ft (7,397 metres) peak in Pakistan's Karakoram Mountains.

This book, by a non-mountaineer, deals well with the usual preparations, the build-up of camps, delays caused by bad weather, and the gelling of a team of diverse characters. There are insightful descriptions of terrain – e.g., "hemmed in on all sides by mountains like a monstrous dry dock" – of the idiosyncrasies of individual climbers and the notoriously difficult Hunza porters.

This book is almost a classic, but it is only in the last 90 pages that it approaches greatness. Two of the team are caught in an avalanche which flings them over 200 metres

down steep slopes and over an ice cliff. Thus begins an almost unbelievable tale of benightments, lost equipment, a series of falls, rescuers becoming victims, death at the very moment of deliverance, horrific frostbite injuries, and heroic sacrifice.

Two of the team die, another's life is shattered. Streather's strength of physique and character prevents further deaths, but he also makes a grave error of judgment.

This is one of a series of well-received reprints of important mountaineering books by **Vertebrate Publishing**, to whom we should be grateful.

Paddy O'Leary Member of the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC) and a traveller to little-known mountains.

This fictional account of an Alpine climb is a classic of its kind



NORTH WALL

By Roger Hubank

Vertebrate Digital ebook (August 2019; first published in 1978 by The Viking Press, New York), £4.99, ISBN 978-1-912560-56-1. Also available as a paperback, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-912560-57-8

Alpinism is an odd pursuit, its own theatre of the absurd, so a work of fiction set in that world will naturally be an odd sort of book. This one is odder still because the climb that is

the focus of the story is on an Alpine north face that doesn't exist, although it is apparently based to some extent on the first ascent of a route that did become one of the classic north faces of the Alps. Also, some of the features of the route are taken from other well-known Alpine climbs. Add to that the changes in techniques, gear and climbing culture since the era of its setting and it all adds up to an almost vestigial story, hanging on in spite of evolution.

If that seems unfair, it's not meant to. I enjoyed its oddity, the casting back to great climbers, and the times that made them so; and the recognisability of even the fictional names.

It took a few pages longer than normal for me to feel that way, but that just added to the story in the end. The story had created the rhythm

of an Alpine route before I noticed it, with those stages and turning points of anticipation, tension and relief ebbing and flowing. In fact, there are quite a few turning points, as the climbers deal with storms and injuries, rockfall and human failings.

During some of the troughs between the pitches leading to the peak, the characters wander into thoughts and exchanges about their motivations to climb and the dilemmas that they bring, or the seminal events of their climbing lives. At points, it doesn't feel like they're on a north face any more but could be on a country road, by a tree, in the evening, waiting for Beckett to decide if they can finish the route or not. You'll have to take your seat at the edge of the stage and see how they get on.

I read the ebook version of

this classic tale during the lockdown. The digitalisation of classic books like this one by **Vertebrate Publishing** will certainly make the mountaineering classics more accessible for anyone with an historical bent.

Kevin Duffy Rock climber and mountaineer. Follow him on his website, www.kevinandedel.com.

Note: This ebook was received for review as an ePub, a format popular with libraries but not supported by many popular e-readers, including Kindle. It is also available in Kindle, but an easy solution to our problem was available through **Calibre**, a cross-platform open-source suite of ebook software, which can be downloaded from <https://calibre-ebook.com> and which will convert ebook formats on Windows, Linux and Apple Mac. – **Peter O'Neill**, Literary Editor

William ‘Billy’ Ireland

Exuberant climber with a passion for the mountains

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, **William ‘Billy’ Ireland** was one of the great characters on the Irish climbing scene. He left an indelible mark, creating probably the hardest new alpine route on a major mountain by any Irish climber.

In 1980, Billy and a Swedish friend, **Ulf Björnborg**, made the first ascent of the **North Buttress of Mount Hunter** in the Denali range of Alaska, by the objectively dangerous west flank, a route that is unrepeatable to this day.

The year before, Billy had made the first Irish ascent of the challenging **Cassin Ridge on Denali** itself. After surviving days in a storm on the summit, he wrote a fine article about it for this magazine.

Billy was also involved in the rescue of **Simon McCartney**, stranded at high altitude on Denali with cerebral oedema, an epic story told in McCartney’s book, *The Bond*.

Billy was from modest, working-class Belfast roots. His brother, **Boyd**, recalls:

“As a teenager, Billy would drag me along rock climbing in the Mourne or on the Antrim coast, where he assured me I would love it. Only after our climb was completed would he tell me the grade.”

“I managed No 3 Gully on Ben Nevis with a friend in the wild winter of 1977, while Billy ticked off harder routes. It was on that trip that I finally understood my brother’s passion.”

“Billy was exceptionally good with his hands. His first job was as an apprentice joiner, before getting an apprenticeship at Harland and Wolff. He would come home from his shift with a bag of pitons and ice screws that he had ‘knocked up’ at work.”

Tragically, his friend Ulf was killed soon after the climb on Mount Hunter. That had a devastating effect on Billy, from which he never fully recovered, and which made him reluctant to talk about their remarkable climb.

I climbed with Billy in Ireland and Scotland for a few intense years, and we did some routes in the Alps in 1978, but I struggled to keep up with his full-on relentless enthusiasm and commitment. At the end of that

summer, Billy stayed on in Chamonix, and he makes a cameo appearance in **Victor Saunders’s** book *Elusive Summits* as the rumbustious, party-loving, flat-sharing ‘plongeur’ working at the Hotel Blaitière.

One of my best experiences with Billy also became an article in the *Irish Mountain Log* in 1981, describing forty-eight non-stop hours with him in a wintry Mournes. They started with an attempt to bypass army security around the Silent Valley. Billy was convinced the wall of the Ben Crom dam was frozen sufficiently to ice-climb up it. We set off security alarms, were stopped by the UDR, were let go when we convinced them we were not terrorists and, of course, we failed to climb what was no more than a thin smear of verglas.

However, we did a few other first ascents of frozen waterfalls that weekend, roaming the Mourne searching for ice. It was a typical Billy adventure – somewhat ill-advised and full of risk, but carried off with his trademark exuberance.

That free-for-all, full-on lifestyle was founded on a deep passion for the mountains and the intensity of experience they offered him, and he retained that love for wild spaces even after he withdrew from hard climbing.

His brother Boyd recalls:



Billy Ireland on Mount Hunter

*“Billy eventually settled down with his wife **Mary**, but occasionally the ‘bug’ would bite again. He later became a teacher and a photographer, an ‘Artist in Light,’ leaving his family with a treasure trove of thousands of photographs.”*

*“He built and flew a microlight aircraft, and built a home for Mary and their five children, **William, Mary, Craig, Ryan** and **Ruben**. He was a deep man, who did not wear his heart on his sleeve. He found it hard to express his emotions, but passion for all good things burned fiercely in him.”*

Dawson Stelfox

William (Billy) John Ireland: born December 17th 1953; died April 4th, 2020



Billy Ireland en route to Denali

Frank Quinn

Well-known publican, excellent host and worldwide trekker



Frank Quinn with fellow Roving Soles on Lugnaquilla in 2010

Frank Quinn, mountaineer, publican, hotelier and proprietor of the Wilderness Lodge in Glenmalure, died peacefully in early April at his home in south Dublin at the age of 70 years, after a long period of illness.

Originally from Pomeroy, Co Tyrone, Frank had three brothers and three sisters, one of whom predeceased him. He was a former physical education teacher. He had a degree in physical education from City University New York and a Master's from New York University, and he had lived in New York with two of his brothers for some years. After his return to Ireland, he lived and worked in Dublin for many years, where he and his family owned various well-known

pubs, including Toners on Baggot Street and the Lansdowne Hotel on Pembroke Road.

In 2015, with his wife, **Maura**, he established **Wilderness Activities Ireland**, based in the Wilderness Lodge in Glenmalure, Co Wicklow, with the aim of helping other people to experience the delights of the Wicklow Mountains.

Frank set a world record with his three brothers in 1980 when they ran the New York Marathon, the first time that four brothers had completed a marathon. They repeated the feat in 2013, when they all ran the Dublin City Marathon for a charity, **Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Ireland**. Frank subsequently continued to support MS

Ireland and was quite focused on fundraising for the charity in recent years, raising significant amounts through events held in the various establishments he owned, and through sponsored treks. He allowed the charity to run a fundraising burger bar in the grounds of the Lansdowne Hotel on the days of international rugby matches.

A very experienced mountaineer, Frank had hiked all over the world, including in the Drakensberg Mountains of South Africa, in the north of



On Brockagh in the Wicklow Mountains in 2008

Thailand, to Machu Picchu in Peru, in the Grand Canyon in USA, on the Camino de Santiago and on Mount Kilimanjaro in East Africa. He had also trekked in the Annapurna region of Nepal and on the Pico de San Juan Mountains in Cuba. Always one for a challenge, in April 2010 Frank trekked across the island of South Georgia in Antarctica, following the epic route taken by **Tom Crean** and **Ernest Shackleton**.

Here in Ireland, Frank was a lifelong member of the **Roving Soles Hill Walking Club**. His smile and corny jokes will be greatly missed by all the Soles who knew Frank and enjoyed his company.



Frank was an excellent host at the Wilderness Lodge in Glenmalure, where he tried to give visitors a chance to experience the wonderful surroundings and to get a sense of adventure. The many hillwalkers who stayed there found Frank interested in their adventures and keen to offer helpful advice. If his guests mentioned that they intended to climb Lugnaquilla, he was known to pull out a local OS map with the intricate route from Glenmalure through the forest already marked on it and would happily lend the map for the day. Later, he would gladly chat with his guests about the day they had had out on the mountain. He also enjoyed leading people on walks in the valley and was very friendly with all those lucky enough to stay in the Wilderness Lodge.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to Frank's wife, Maura, and to his family and friends on their great loss.

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

Frank Quinn: born June 24th, 1949; died April 9th, 2020



Frank at the Lansdowne Hotel, Pembroke Road, Dublin




Frank in South Georgia, April 2010

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Lost and found

Found: a set of walking sticks
at the base of Galtymore
on March 26th, 2020

Please contact Jim Ryan
on 087 2514 114
to recover these sticks
if they belong to you



(These
are not
the sticks
that were
found)

Advertise in the Irish Mountain Log

Support the national governing body for hillwalking
and climbing on the island of Ireland and reach
12,000+ members

The magazine is also on sale in outdoor shops and
newsagents throughout the island

Contact Siobhan Quinn at info@mountaineering.ie to
arrange advertisement or to receive a rate card



Books, guides and maps to meet all your needs...

Mountaineering Ireland continues to provide the
book service previously operated by Joss
Lynam. We can supply you with guidebooks
and maps to almost any part of the world.

For the walker, there is a large collection of
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selection of books and guides distributed
by Cordee which also includes many
climbing guides. Books reviewed in the
Irish Mountain Log can usually be
purchased through Joss Books with a
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ring the Mountaineering Ireland office
on (01) 6251115 or email
info@mountaineering.ie.

Joss Books





Irish Peaks, Mountaineering Ireland's new hillwalking guidebook, will be available in late July. It is a must-have hardback with route descriptions and a beautiful collection of images covering the hundred highest peaks on the island of Ireland. Pre-order at: www.mountaineering.ie/shop



Irish Peaks will be delivered to members who have pre-ordered it towards the end of July. The book has been produced in memory of Joss Lynam, who died in 2011 and who made a significant contribution to the development of hillwalking and climbing in Ireland. Joss edited the original *Irish Peaks* that was published in 1982. This new book contains descriptions contributed by Mountaineering Ireland members of more than seventy routes taking in the summits on the MountainViews list of Ireland's Highest Hundred Mountains.

The recommended retail price is €25.99. However, there is a special 15% discount for all Mountaineering Ireland members who order through the Mountaineering Ireland shop, which means you pay €22.10, plus postage if it has to be posted out to you. To order your discounted copy, please visit www.mountaineering.ie/shop.

