

Winter 2019 €3.95 UK£3.40 ISSN 0790 8008 Issue 132

Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

The potential of our uplands

Irish Uplands Forum report

The Nativity Trail

Walking in Mary and Joseph's footsteps


**Mountaineering
Ireland**

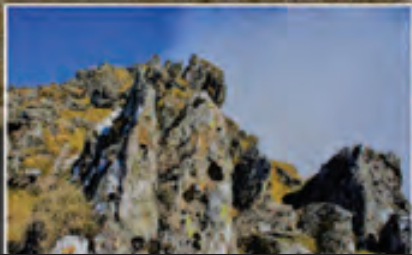
www.mountaineering.ie





BA Hons in Geography and Outdoor Education

Learning Through Adventure



www.gmit.ie/outdoor-education



COME & ENJOY THE DIVERSITY OF SPAIN

UNFORGETTABLE HILL WALKING TOURS IN UNDISCOVERED SPAIN

|| Picos de Europa || Montañas de Riaño & León || The Pyrenees Ordesa & Monte Perdido ||
|| Sierra Gredos, Monfrague & Salamanca || Alpujarra & Granada ||

www.rumboapicos.com/en/

Ireland contact (+353) 87 2248694 email: kevin@rumboapicos.com



Welcome

Céad míle fáilte! Christmas is here again! Well, in fact it seems to have been with us for some time now, with the seasonal decorations on display in the streets, etc. Weather permitting, when we get to the Christmas break, it is always a good time to get out into the hills to try to clear our heads and to counter the excesses that seem to go with the Christmas celebrations.

It has been another good year for Mountaineering Ireland. The CEO **Murrough McDonagh** and his excellent staff have continued to be very active in so many of the areas that are important to our sport on the island of Ireland.

This year's **AGM** was held in Irish Sport HQ in Blanchardstown. It was a very successful meeting, but it would perhaps have been more enjoyable had it been hosted by a member club, as has been the tradition in recent years.

The **Autumn Gathering** was kindly hosted in the Comeraghs by the **Kilmacthomas Walking Club**, who were celebrating their club's fifteenth anniversary. Congratulations to them on their anniversary but also for hosting such a successful Gathering, which was enjoyed by Mountaineering Ireland members from around the island (see report, pp8-10).

It has also been quite a special year for me personally, in that I was given **Honorary Membership** of Mountaineering Ireland at



We are always looking for articles from our members to include in the magazine.

the AGM for my work on the *Irish Mountain Log*. It was a great surprise to me but also a great honour. Over the more than fifty years that I have been involved in our sport, I have got so much out of it. I am immensely grateful to the members of the Board for nominating me for that life membership. I must also thank the other members of the Editorial Team for their support with the magazine, particularly **Peter O'Neill**, Literary Editor, and **Cóilín MacLochlainn**, who does the layout.

I would like to thank all of the contributors to our magazine this year for their support for the *Irish Mountain Log*. We very much depend on those contributions and are always looking for articles from our members to include in the magazine.

I will finish by wishing all Mountaineering Ireland members an enjoyable Christmas and New Year, and an active 2020 on behalf of the Editorial Team, and the Board and the staff of Mountaineering Ireland.

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

Heading towards the Back Castles on Slieve Binnian in the Mourne Mountains

PHOTOGRAPH
HELEN LAWLESS

ISSUE 132

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

Mountaineering Ireland

Mountaineering Ireland Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Dublin, No 199053.

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

Hot Rock Climbing Wall

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

Editor: Patrick O'Sullivan

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

Literary Editor: Peter O'Neill

iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie

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 Spring 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is: Friday, February 28th 2020.

Advertising: info@mountaineering.ie

Production: Cóilín MacLochlainn, environs@iol.ie

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

PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

CONTENTS Winter 2019

Walkers approaching the standing stone at Bearn na Madra in the Comeraghs during the Autumn Gathering in October. See story, page 8

News

- 5 Luggala Estate sold**
Helen Lawless reports
- 6 Mourne Heritage Trust AGM**
Nicky Hore reports
- 7 No hiking on a dead planet**
The Hillwalkers Club adopts an environmental policy. Michael Quinn reports
- 8 Autumn Gathering 2019**
A report by Brian & Eileen Coate and Nicky Hore
- 10 Notes from the Members' Forum**
A report by Siobhan Quinn
- 11 Remembering Nora Lynam**
- 12 Barrow Way Walk inaugurated**
'Get Ireland Walking' news from Programme Manager Jason King
- 14 Spring Gathering and 2020 AGM**
Ruth Whelan reports
- 16 Two women complete Irish summits lists**
Simon Stewart reports



Lynne and Noel Hanna on Manaslu summit

32 IRISH ASCENT OF MANASLU

- 17 Deadly disease found in Irish hares and rabbits**
Helen Lawless reports
- 18 Get Climbing Project**
Natasza Berlowska reports
- 19 Hiking in the Tyrol**
By Patrick O'Sullivan
- 22 UIAA 2019 Mountain Protection Award**
Patrick O'Sullivan reports
- 23 Ex-Gurkha climbs world's 14 highest peaks in 189 days**
- 23 Over 130 Himalayan peaks opened**
- 24 Donegal Climbifest 2020**
Alan Tees reports

Climbing

- 25 Precarious time for climbing walls**
Damien O'Sullivan reports
- 25 2020 Climbing Competitions**
Damien O'Sullivan reports
- 26 Lead Climbing Championship 2019**
A report by Damien O'Sullivan
- 28 Youth Trad Climbing Camps**
By Damien O'Sullivan
- 29 Climbing wall seminar 2019**
A report by Damien O'Sullivan

News Features

- 30 The uplands' potential**
By Helen Lawless
- 32 An Irish ascent of Manaslu**
By Noel Hanna & Patrick O'Sullivan

Features

- 34 The Nativity Trail**
By Regina Flynn

- 36 The Munro-bagging brothers**
By Chris and Michael Quinn
- 40 A walk in the woods**
Ronan Concannon reports on the 'Howl at the Moon' charity walk
- 44 Rock climbing on Owey**
By Conor McGovern & Chloe Condron
- 49 Summer Alpine Meet 2019**
A report by Patrick Duffy
- 52 Climbing in Kyrgyzstan**
By Freja Shannon

Regulars

- 56 Access & Conservation**
Helen Lawless reports
- 58 Training**
Jane Carney reports
- 61 Crossword Competition**
- 62 Books**
Reviews of recent books
- 66 The Last Word**
Christopher Quinn



Nastia Strizakova

25 2020 CLIMBING COMPETITIONS

Staff & Board

GENERAL ENQUIRIES

info@mountaineering.ie

STAFF

Chief Executive Officer

Murrough McDonagh,
murrough@mountaineering.ie

Administration Officer

Siobhán Quinn, info@mountaineering.ie

Hillwalking Development Officer

Ruth Whelan, ruth@mountaineering.ie

Access & Conservation Officer

Helen Lawless, helen@mountaineering.ie

Training Officer

Jane Carney, jane@mountaineering.ie

Training Office Administrator

Laura Griffin, laura@mountaineering.ie

Climbing Officer

Damien O'Sullivan,
damien@mountaineering.ie

Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland

Kevin Kilroy, kevin@mountaineering.ie

Project Coordinator, Indoor

Climbing/Social Inclusion Project

Natasza Berowska,
natasza@mountaineering.ie

GET IRELAND WALKING INITIATIVE

Programme Manager, Get Ireland Walking

Jason King, jason@getirelandwalking.ie

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND

BOARD OFFICERS

President

Paul Kellagher
president@mountaineering.ie

Chairperson

Paul Barron
chairperson@mountaineering.ie

BOARD MEMBERS

Imelda Buckley
(Chair of Finance, Audit & Risk Committee)
imelda-board@mountaineering.ie

Helen Donoghue
(Chair of Access & Conservation Committee)
helen-board@mountaineering.ie

Trish Kane
trish-board@mountaineering.ie

Colette Mahon
colette-board@mountaineering.ie

Michael Maunsell
mike-board@mountaineering.ie

Gráinne McLaughlin
(Chair of Hillwalking Committee)
grainne-board@mountaineering.ie

Clare O'Connor
clare-board@mountaineering.ie

Dawson Stelfox
(Chair of Mountain Training Board Ireland)
dawson-board@mountaineering.ie

Geoff Thomas
(Chair of Climbing Committee)
geoff-board@mountaineering.ie

Newsdesk



Luggala Estate sold

Iconic Wicklow Mountains landscape purchased by private buyer resident in Switzerland

By Helen Lawless

Following an initial report at the end of August, it has been confirmed that Luggala Estate in County Wicklow has been sold in its entirety to a private buyer.

Mountaineering Ireland campaigned, along with others, for the State to purchase the mountain lands of Luggala Estate as part of Wicklow Mountains National Park. The scenic estate, which includes Lough Tay and the mountains of Luggala and Knocknacloghoge, is surrounded on three sides by the national park.

For many decades – courtesy of the late **Hon Garech Browne** – members of Mountaineering Ireland have enjoyed selected access to the mountains, cliffs and valley of the Luggala Estate, while at the same time respecting the work commitments of the estate (filming, grazing, etc), the privacy of the

estate's guests and tenants, their residences and the main lodge as well as their grounds.

A press statement on behalf of the new owner and on-the-ground observation indicate that the new owner is maintaining the previous arrangements in relation to recreational access at Luggala.

The new owner of the property is **Luggala Estate Ltd**, which is ultimately owned by **L Padulli**, who lives in Switzerland. It has been reported that the sale price was in the region of €20 million.

Mountaineering Ireland has been in touch with the Directors of Luggala Estate Ltd and a meeting is planned to discuss and agree proposed changes, if any, to the existing access conditions, for the continued enjoyment of this special landscape by our members.

We hope to be able to report on progress in the next issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* ■



Walking by the Mourne Wall between Slieve Meelmore and Slieve Meelbeg

Mourne Heritage Trust AGM: a brief report

The Mourne Heritage Trust held its 2020 AGM at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre on October 16th last. **Nicky Hore** attended on behalf of Mountaineering Ireland and reports here.

In a nutshell, the **Mourne Heritage Trust** provides environmental services for the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), an area of 57,000 hectares.

At its AGM in Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, the Trust's Chairperson, **Desmond Patterson**, outlined the works undertaken by the Trust over the last year. These included heathland restoration, path repair work, wall restoration, the provision of new stiles and the release of red squirrels, plus other environmental and visitor management work.

The Chair of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, **Councillor Charlie Casey**, also addressed the meeting and highlighted the fact that the landscape of the Mourne AONB features prominently in the council's corporate plan, community plan and tourism strategy.

He also reflected on the many benefits that come from this special asset, including economic development through tourism, and the health and well-being gains from people enjoying the outdoors and the

biodiversity in this Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Two short videos were shown. One was on 'cribbing,' a method of stabilising an eroded forest path by using branches backfilled with aggregate. This method has been used on the Glen River path. The other video used the latest technology to deliver an 'augmented reality' experience telling the story of the Silent Valley.

Mountaineering Ireland has liaised with the Mourne Heritage Trust on the EU-funded ASCENT project over

the last few years. This project has now ended, but Mountaineering Ireland will continue to support the Trust with their work to improve the mountain experience for hillwalkers and climbers, and to engage with clubs, organisations and individuals who are active locally.

FIND OUT MORE Mourne Heritage Trust's online annual report, featuring more detail on the above and on other activities, can be found at www.caringformourne.com

Ballyhoura Trails Guide App launched

Last July, **Ballyhoura Country** officially launched the **Ballyhoura Trails Guide App** to help visitors navigate the looped walks in the area.

Famed for its beauty and wild places, Ballyhoura Country provides the perfect setting for an action-packed, activity-based holiday, giving walkers an opportunity to stroll through its medieval historical sites or unwind alongside its riverbanks. Stretching from north Limerick west to



Tipperary and south to north Cork, Ballyhoura Country encompasses **eleven looped walks** that provide spectacular scenery for hikers.

The app is intended to highlight the breadth of what

Ballyhoura Country has to offer. It allows visitors to instantly find out what is in their vicinity and the range of walks on offer. It also gives them the distance to the start point of their chosen trail.

There are numerous functions in the app. The user can choose a loop walk to explore based on distance, difficulty or their current location. The walks range in distance from 5km to 18km, and vary from easy strolls to challenging hikes on sandy roadways, woodland trails and forest paths.

With the app, you can learn about local heritage and folklore in parts of Cork and Limerick. No matter the trail, there is so much to explore and learn, with adventures

through historic sites such as the Battle of Darragh site and the Seefin Mountain climb, plus the ancient Ardpatrik monastery, remnants of a water mill and a holy well.

The Ballyhoura Trails Guide App is available on the Playstore for android and IOS in four languages (English, Spanish, German and French), making it accessible to visitors from around the world. The app is designed to function well even when you are in an area with weak internet access ■

No hiking on a dead planet

The Hillwalkers Club adopts an environment policy



Our blue planet rising on the moon

By Michael Quinn

Motivated by two urgent environmental challenges – the impact of the greater numbers involved in hillwalking, and the impending crisis of global and Irish climate change – **Michael Quinn**, Environment Officer with the **Hillwalkers Club**, started a process a year ago to develop an environment policy for the club.

Following consultation within the club and a talk by Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer, **Helen Lawless**, in March 2019, the Hillwalkers Club unanimously adopted the environment policy at its AGM in October.

The policy was guided by Mountaineering Ireland's *Good Practice Guide for Hillwalkers and Climbers*, the principles of 'Leave No Trace' and the report of the United Nation's **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** from October 2018.

The policy comprehensively

addresses a range of issues under two broad headings:

Ethical walking

- Safety, preparedness and food on the mountain
- Travel to the club coach
- Travel to the mountains
- Access to and courtesy in the mountains
- Litter on the mountains
- Treading lightly on the mountains
- Restoring mountain paths
- Linking with kindred organisations
- Supporting mountain communities
- Nurturing members' appreciation of nature and culture in the mountains
- Club administration: use of paper and plastic.

Climate change

- Predicted general adverse impacts on Ireland
- Likely impacts on mountain areas.

The environment policy of the Hillwalkers Club observes that solutions to the twin challenges of increasing pressure on the Irish uplands and the imminent climate change crisis are interconnected and complementary.

It concludes by stating that the Hillwalkers Club is dedicated to achieving an ethical approach to organised hillwalking and to making their serious concerns on climate change known to Mountaineering Ireland, to the Irish government and to international agencies, so that the worst predictions do

not occur.

Commenting on the new policy, **Helen Lawless** complimented the Hillwalkers Club and remarked that this should encourage all clubs to think about how we do our activities.

Helen added that clubs can also help to raise awareness that more sustainable management of Ireland's mountain environment can assist in addressing the challenges of climate change.

FIND OUT MORE The environment policy of the Hillwalkers Club is available for download on www.hillwalkersclub.com ■

Crossword results

The winner of our Autumn Crossword in IML 131 was **Aileen Clifford** from Tralee, Co Kerry, who won a Mambo 40m rope, a Petzl belay plate and a Boreo helmet, a prize worth almost €200 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 prize.

1	O	T	T		2	A		3	B	A	N	F	5	F	
	X					V			O		A			I	
6	M	A	L	L	O	R	Y		7	D	O	G			
	O					C				I				U	
8	U	9	L	T	R	A		10	E	R	R	11	O	R	
12	N	O										13	A	E	
14	T	Y	15	R	O	L		16	F	L	A	K	E		
	A		O		A				L					I	
18	I	C	U					19	C	R	A	N	N	O	G
	N		T		E				S					H	
20	S	L	E	D	S			21	K	A	R	S	T		



Participants on the Environmental Walk during the Autumn Gathering

Autumn Gathering 2019



This year's Autumn Gathering was hosted by Kilmacthomas Walking Club in the Comeraghs, Co Waterford, over the weekend of October 18-20th. The following reports are by **Brian and Eileen Coates** (Dingle Hillwalking Club), **Nicky Hore** (Blayney Ramblers) and **Siobhan Quinn** (Administration Officer, Mountaineering Ireland).

Kilmacthomas Walking Club hosted a very successful Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering based in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, over the weekend of October 18-20th.

The **Park Hotel**, Dungarvan, acted as base camp for the various forays into the Comeragh Mountains over the weekend, as well as being the venue for the talks and workshops, and for providing hospitality for the hungry and thirsty hillwalkers and climbers as they arrived back from their various outdoor activities.

The host club kickstarted the weekend on the Friday afternoon at the Coach House in Kilmacthomas, leading a group from there to Croughan Hill.

As others drifted into the hotel, some took themselves off for short walks to the likes of Croughan or dropped over to the local Greenway for a ramble or a cycle. By late afternoon the hotel bar was jammed with Mountaineering Ireland members from dozens of clubs around the island. Everyone looked delighted to be catching up with friends from this and other clubs.

There was a big crowd in the hotel for the evening talk. **Murrough McDonagh**, CEO of Mountaineering Ireland,

officially opened the Gathering. Then the host club's Chairperson, **Con Murphy**, welcomed everyone and introduced the guest speaker, **Grace O'Sullivan**, a Tramore native and Green Party MEP.

Grace gave an account, supported by photos, of her interesting life as a Greenpeace activist, an ecologist and an environmental activist, leading to her present role as an EU politician. Mountaineering Ireland members would certainly be in agreement with Grace that looking after our environment leads to much improved quality of life for all people.

Saturday morning was all go as buses transported people to hidden corners of the Comeraghs, to send them on their way to magical places like **Coumshingaun**, **Knockanafrin** and **Mahon Falls**.

There were nine walks of varying grades on offer, including the **Environmental Walk**, and the host club's leaders were helped by volunteers from **Comeragh Mountaineering Club** and **Dungarvan Hillwalking Club**. There was also an all-day scrambling skills session run by Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer, **Jane Carney**.

There was optimism as the

weather delivered lovely views early on, but low, grey cloud descended over the plateau, blocking the scenic vistas we had all prayed for. As we descended later to our transport, the weather seemed to mock us by lifting its cap slightly... but maybe also to say "Come back again"?

By Brian & Eileen Coates (Dingle Hillwalking Club)

Of the nine walks on offer on Saturday, we chose to join the **Environmental Walk** with its two multi-talented leaders, **Helen Lawless**, Access and Conservation Officer for Mountaineering Ireland, and **Jim Bowdren** from Kilmacthomas Walking Club.

Our first stop was just below the access to Mahon Falls to see the site where, in 2015, a local community group had created a track along the Mahon River with local funding from **Waterford County Council** but without any environmental impact study. Repair of the damage to this Special Area of Conservation (SAC) was begun in 2018 and is being monitored by Mountaineering Ireland and by local environmentalists.

The main part of the walk started at the Mauma Road and we headed up towards Farbreaga. To avoid the cold wind we lunched just below the ridge, beside an unauthorised



Grace O'Sullivan, MEP, with Con Murphy (Chairperson, Kilmacthomas Walking Club) after she delivered her talk at the Autumn Gathering

installation – a rusted container surrounded by scaffolding poles adorned with telecommunications dishes, sitting on the mountainside at about 700m.

A recurring topic during the day was the need for better awareness of the impact that people have on the landscape, walkers included. The route up to the broadband aerial was less pleasant at times because of the severe damage caused by quad bikes. The vegetation has been almost completely stripped away, leaving slippery, bare peat. Mountaineering Ireland generally advises walkers to keep within the damaged lines on our hills. We did so on the ascent, but on the descent we looked at the impact our footfall was having on the soft, wet peat on the steeper part of the slope and decided that, in those conditions, we would cause less disturbance to the peat, and be safer, by spreading out, well away from the existing path.

After lunch, we hiked across to the standing stone at **Bearna na Madra**, at 500m on the saddle between Farbreaga ('scarecrow' or 'ghost') and Seefin. We met up with some of the 'moderate' group, who had been on Seefin and who were returning by the route we had ascended.

As the views opened up through the mist, **Jim Bowdren** pointed out some of the Coumaraglin archaeological sites, many buried, unmapped or still unexplored in this historic landscape.

From Bearna na Madra ('the dog's gap'), we retraced our route to the broadcast mast and descended via Treenearla Commons to another standing stone a short distance from our cars.

During the day, we looked closely at tiny blue **milkworts**, identified **ling** and **bell heathers**, and associated them with dry heathland. We found **Sphagnum** moss and **cross-leaved heath** on the wetter heaths, and learned to identify a **raven** by its diamond-shaped tail.

This was a spectacular walk in typically changing weather, with



Participants listening to Grace O'Sullivan MEP as she delivers her presentation on Saturday evening

wide-ranging conversations en route. We covered tensions in EU policies for agriculture, tourism and the environment, the need for more ecologically friendly walking gear, and the low price of wool.

We enjoyed spectacular views and covered a variety of terrains: deep rifts of peat, rocky tracks and some 'wild' walking, where the help of guides and good navigation were essential.

On the saddle, we walked for five minutes without conversation to concentrate on our individual experience of being in the landscape and to engage more with our senses of touch, sight and hearing.

Overall, we had a memorable day in the Comeraghs with our two inspiring and generous leaders.

By Nicky Hore (Blayney Ramblers)

After changing and some refreshments, there was a well-attended **Members' Forum** on Saturday evening, where all issues were open for discussion. Firstly, **Paul Barron**, Chair of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland, congratulated **Kilmacthomas Walking Club** members on their organisation of the Gathering and praised all the walk leaders for their excellent work. He also mentioned the Mountaineering Ireland HQ office staff, most of whom were present, for their hard work in making the weekend so enjoyable. Staff members were then on hand to answer queries from the floor.

Insurance, access and training meets were among some of the items discussed.

Afterwards, the hotel served up a beautiful meal to a large crowd of hungry mountaineers. As we were digesting our food with a cuppa, we were served an extra course by the "French Chef," who entertained us with songs from Luciano Pavarotti to Joe Dolan and made us laugh all the way to the bar... where, indeed, he continued to croon for those who still had the energy to listen.

Sundays at these Gatherings are always quieter affairs. One group pored over **Ordnance Survey Ireland's 1:25,000 maps** and compared these with other similar maps available in order to give feedback to the OSi. The group looked at colouring, contours and other features.

This group then discussed ongoing issues of access to the uplands and got updates from **Helen Lawless**, Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer.

A separate workshop took place on club training, led by **Jane Carney**, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer.

The other choice was to join a walk along the **Greenway** from Durrow to Dungarvan. It was an informative and pleasant way to spend a Sunday morning. A local historian outlined the history of the disused railway, which the Greenway followed, with vivid detail of the building of the tunnel at Ballyvoyle and the viaduct over the River Dalligan.

Further on, the Greenway brought views of Clonlea Bay until it reached the Causeway, which was followed back into Dungarvan, having covered a total distance of just over 10km. Lunch was available in the hotel and then we all started our journeys home.

All in all, it had been a very successful and enjoyable Gathering, and it was great to see the weekend so well supported by members from all corners of the country. ➤



Participants on the coastal walk on Sunday

Autumn Gathering 2019... (cont'd)

Notes from the Members' Forum

Mountaineering Ireland's Administration Officer **Siobhan Quinn** reports on some of the issues raised at the Members' Forum on Saturday, October 19th, in the Park Hotel, Dungarvan, during this year's Autumn Gathering

■ An update on the sale of historic **Luggala Estate** in the Wicklow Mountains was requested by a member of Mountaineering Ireland.

Helen Lawless, Access & Conservation Officer, had the following information:

"The estate has been sold in its entirety (see also our update, page xx??).

Mountaineering Ireland has been in contact through the agent, requesting a meeting with the new owners. There has been only one statement from the agent, saying the new owners will continue the practice of allowing hillwalkers and climbers to use part of the land for recreational use."

■ **Donal O'Brien** from **Blackrock Hillwalking Club** requested that Mountaineering

Ireland communicate with both the club's secretary and the membership administrator by email about membership renewals, and not just with the administrator.

Initially, the system was set up for just one contact person per club, that being the person who administered membership renewals, as this provided the most accurate information.

There is now a separate role in the club administrator mode for secretary. The club administrator or club membership secretary must keep this role up-to-date to ensure that the club receives communication from Mountaineering Ireland.

■ **Alan Tees** from **Colmcille Climbers** asked for an update on the **rural indemnity scheme** which the Minister for Rural and

Community Development, **Michael Ring**, TD, had promised would be in place by the end of last year (2018). **Helen Lawless**, Access and Conservation Officer, said there had been disappointingly little progress. The indemnity would require legislation, which was a reason for the hold-up.

Mountaineering Ireland did put the option to the Department to go the commercial route, i.e., purchasing an insurance policy; this is currently being looked at.

Member clubs were encouraged to highlight to landowners the public liability cover under Mountaineering Ireland's

insurance, which protects landowners against claims arising from the negligence of our members. It does not cover the landowner's negligence or protect the landowner against claims from walkers and climbers who are not members of Mountaineering Ireland.

■ It was asked whether Mountaineering Ireland could purchase the insurance and try to recover the fee from the Department, but it was felt that that would go beyond the role of the national governing body.

■ Members were reminded of the **Club Support Meetings** taking place around the country. Individual members can benefit from the first half of such meetings, while the second half of the meetings is geared more towards club administrators.

■ There was a query about cooperation with the Scouts, which had been announced a couple of years ago by Mountaineering Ireland. There hadn't yet been any evidence of it, a member commented.

Jane Carney, Training Officer, responded, saying there was an existing memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Mountaineering Ireland and Scouting Ireland. An updated one was under review and in progress. Mountaineering Ireland was also working on an MOU with the Irish Girl Guides



Participants at Barnamaddra standing stone during the Gathering



Participants near Mahon Falls during the Environmental Walk on Saturday



Joss and Nora Lynam in Dalkey Quarry in June 2004 when the then 80-year-old Joss completed a charity climb on his birthday in aid of the Clinical Cancer Research Trust

Death of Nora Lynam, wife of the late Joss Lynam

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Mountaineering Ireland wishes to express its sincere condolences to the family and friends of **Nora Lynam** (née Gorevan), who passed away peacefully at Donore Nursing Home in Bray on November 6th. Nora was the wife of **Joss Lynam**, who predeceased her in January 2011. Joss was one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers at home and abroad,

and editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* for many years. He was a founding member of the **Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC)**.

Nora was also one of the early members of the IMC and they met at club meets and were married in 1951. Nora shared her husband's passion for the mountains and would often sit in on the *Irish Mountain Log* editorial meetings, when they were held in their home. She was a delightful hostess.

May she rest in peace ■







15-17th May 2020

The Burren, Co Clare

For all women who are interested in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering at all levels

Keep the date - more details to follow!



Pictured at the launch of the Barrow Way Walk event in Athy, Co Kildare, in September, from left, Cllr Mark Wall (Cathaoirleach, Athy), Syl Merrins (Coordinator, Kildare Sports Partnership), Peter Carey (CEO, Kildare County Council), Gerry Murphy (Laois County Council), Michael Brennan (Carlow County Council), John Boyle (Director, Waterways Ireland), Andrea Dalton (Mayor of Carlow), Anne Duff (volunteer, Laois Sports Partnership), Alice Carroll (volunteer, Laois Sports Partnership), Sean Ward (proprietor, Fisherman's Inn), Colm Ward (Fisherman's Inn), Deborah Foley (Kildare Sports Partnership), Martha Jane Kehoe (Coordinator, Carlow Sports Partnership), Hugh Fanning (Waterways Ireland), Sandra Corrigan (Carlow Sports Partnership), Jason King (Get Ireland Walking), Emma Jane Clarke (Sport Ireland), Majella Fennelly (Laois Sports Partnership), Damien McWeeney (Waterways Ireland).

Barrow Way Walk: inaugural event

Barrow Way Walk 2019 celebrated the European Week of Sport in September

By Jason King (Get Ireland Walking)

Friday, September 6th, 2019, saw the launch of the **Barrow Way Walk** at the Horse Bridge in Athy, Co Kildare. In attendance that morning were representatives from **Waterways Ireland, Sport Ireland, Get Ireland Walking, and Carlow, Laois and Kildare County Councils.**

The clue is in the name, the Barrow Way Walk, as in essence it was announcing a free event, held on September 29th, comprising a walk along the River Barrow in the three counties of Carlow, Laois and Kildare.

The event is the brainchild of Waterways Ireland and Get Ireland Walking, who developed the idea on the back of the **Waterways for Health** initiative.

Waterways for Health is a programme designed to

support and encourage participants in rehabilitation services to engage in gentle exercise in and around Green and Blue spaces.

The emphasis is on showing participants how to best

utilise the incredible scenery that Ireland is blessed with, in order to support and improve their mental and physical health. The benefits seen and vocalised by participants in this gentle outdoor exercise

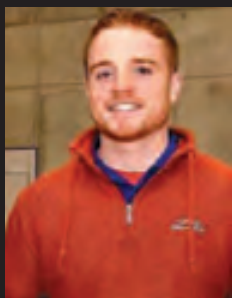
are immediate and extensive. In an attempt to involve as many people and as many demographics as possible, the Barrow Way Walk was born.

After linking in with the **Local Sports Partnerships** in



Pictured at the launch of the Barrow Way Walk event in Athy, Co Kildare, in September, from left, Andrea Dalton (Mayor of Carlow), Peter Carey (CEO, Kildare County Council), John Boyle (Director, Waterways Ireland), Emma Jane Clarke (Sport Ireland), Jason King (Get Ireland Walking), Gerry Murphy (Laois County Council).

Passionate researcher commences study with Get Ireland Walking



Dylan Power (pictured) is a PhD researcher with the Centre for Health Behaviour Research at Waterford Institute of Technology. Dylan's research is co-funded by Get Ireland Walking and will be conducted over the next four years. Before undertaking his PhD, Dylan worked at a climbing wall, where he managed an initiative, **Bun Go Bárr**,

which helped children and adults with disabilities to try climbing.

About this study

Ireland's **National Physical Activity Plan**, part of the Healthy Ireland initiative, contains a specific action to promote community walking programmes nationwide and explicitly prioritises a research programme to inform effective interventions. Little is known about the implementation and delivery process of community walking groups in Ireland or their link to public health, social inclusion, societal and enterprise outcomes. This research will evaluate sustainable models of implementation and the scale-up of community walking initiatives across a variety of counties in Ireland, using a system-based approach. Any questions about this research should be directed to Dylan at research@getirelandwalking.ie.

Get Ireland Walking is delighted to have Dylan on board and is excited to be working closely with him and his supervisors, **Dr Niamh Murphy** and **Dr Barry Lambe** from the Waterford Institute of Technology. Between them, his supervisors have an abundance of knowledge and expertise to support Dylan and to help steer this research over the next few years ■

Carlow, Laois Kildare, it was decided that the best time to hold the event would be during the **European Week of Sport**, September 23-30th, 2019.

With the backing of **Sport Ireland**, it was confirmed that this mass participation event would take place on September 29th, 2019. In order to accommodate all levels of fitness, mobility and time constraints, there were three routes of about five km, 10 km

and 18 km available within each county. The advantage of these walks was that each route had a meeting point and time when a bus would collect participants and ferry them to the start point of their respective walks.

Each person then simply had to walk back to their car at their own pace, with a walk leader, first aid support and a sweeper on every route. There were also hydration stations



Walkers enjoying the Barrow Way Walk on September 29th

present at the start and finish of the walks to encourage a 'leave no trace' approach – no plastic bottles were available on any of the walks.

Further to this, each registered participant was given a draw-string bag with some goodies provided by the **Local Sports Partnerships**.

When we factor in the uncertainty of the weather in the week leading up to the event, the turn-out was astounding. A huge success overall and something to build on for next year as part of the **European Week of Sport** and the **National Community Walking Day**.

Feedback

When we asked participants what they liked most about the 2019 Barrow Way Walk, they were delighted to share what they really enjoyed about it:

- It was very well organised and the route was lovely
- The water, fruit and bars provided along the way and the spread at the end
- They never knew there was a walk along the canal
- Getting out and about and meeting new people
- The beautiful surroundings
- A great initiative not tied to any fundraising, etc – i.e., walking just for the sake of walking
- Great to have a coach to take you to the starting point
- The scenery
- It was a superbly-run event
- It was easy, safe and so peaceful
- It was so relaxing and the atmosphere was lovely.

Roll on next year! In the meantime, why not get out and explore Ireland's waterways on the towpaths that overlook our stunning canals and rivers? You won't be disappointed! ■

- The company
- The peace and quiet
- The fabulous scenery, friendly organisers and friendly fellow-walkers



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

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





Enjoying the Wicklow Mountains in winter

Spring Gathering and 2020 AGM

By Ruth Whelan

The **2020 Annual General Meeting (AGM)** of Mountaineering Ireland will take place on Saturday, March 28th, 2020, at The Avon, The Burgage, Burgage More, Blessington, Co Wicklow, during the Spring Gathering weekend.

AGM timeframe

The timeframe for the AGM and Members' Forum is as follows:

5.00pm	Meeting of Honorary and Individual Members
5.30-6.00pm	Registration for Mountaineering Ireland AGM
6.00pm	Mountaineering Ireland AGM
6.45pm	Mountaineering Ireland Members' Forum

Motions and nominations

Mountaineering Ireland clubs and individual members are invited to put forward motions for discussion at the AGM and also to nominate members for positions on the board of Mountaineering Ireland.

Motions and nominations may be submitted by any member club or by any three full members. Board members are elected for a three-year term.

Motions and nominations must be submitted by email to Mountaineering Ireland's Honorary Secretary at secretary@mountaineering.ie or by post to **Honorary Secretary, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15**, to arrive not later than 5.00pm on Friday, February 28th, 2020.

Mountaineering Ireland strongly

encourages all clubs to send a minimum of two delegates to the AGM and to avail of their voting rights. Individual members also have voting rights and can attend too.

Spring Gathering

Next year's Spring Gathering will be based in Blessington over the weekend of March 27-29th, 2020. The **Wayfarers Association** from Dublin has kindly offered to organise the Spring Gathering as part of the club's celebrations for its fiftieth anniversary.

The Wayfarers are celebrating fifty years of hiking in the sun, wind, rain and snow, bringing people together with one thing in common: a love of hillwalking. Hiking is good fun, great exercise and it is good for you!

Who are the Wayfarers?

The Wayfarers are a very active and energetic Dublin-based hiking group with more than two hundred members. They do most of their walking in the Wicklow and Dublin Mountains, but also organise trips to other parts of Ireland and abroad.

Every Sunday, they offer four scheduled hikes: a short, an intermediate, an

intermediate+ and a long hike. From May to August, they also organise mid-week evening walks to take advantage of the longer days.

As an environmentally-aware club, they carpool to the start of their hikes in order to reduce congestion and their carbon footprint. The hikes are led by a member of the club with navigational experience. New members coming out for the first time will be buddied up with an experienced hiker for the day.

After an enjoyable day's hike, they all gather to socialise in a nearby café or pub.

Monthly bulletin

A monthly bulletin is sent to all existing members informing them of any new developments in the club and welcoming any new members. There are also articles about weekend-away trips and a hike schedule for the forthcoming month.

To join the **Wayfarers Hiking Club**, you can apply for membership via the website www.wayfarersassociation.com. All hikers are insured on hikes as members of Mountaineering Ireland ■

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 Cicerone guides and books, or the wider 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 members' discount. To place an order, ring the Mountaineering Ireland office on (01) 6251115 or email info@mountaineering.ie.

Joss Books

Wondering what to get that special person for Christmas?



Scottish Winter Meet

February 8-15th 2020
Onich, Scotland

Come along and develop your winter mountain skills, expand your knowledge and meet fellow walkers, mountaineers and climbers who enjoy snow and ice

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Call the Training Office on 01 625 1112 or email jane@mountaineering.ie

DISCOUNTS for early bookings and group bookings



Main photograph View from the slopes of Buachaille Etive Beag looking across Glencoe to Aonach Eagach Ridge. **Photograph by** Andy Ravenhill



Christine Gordon near
Croaghnaun on Achill Island

Two women complete Irish summits lists

By Simon Stewart and the
MountainViews Committee

Elizabeth Ashton (pictured below) has become the first woman to visit the summit of all the Vandeleur-Lynams, the 273 mountains in Ireland of 600m or more in height with a prominence of at least 15m.

Elizabeth completed her round in June this year. She is a member of the **MountainViews Committee** and has been visiting Vandeleur-Lynam summits since 2008. Our congratulations to Elizabeth, known as 'Liz50' on the **MountainViews.ie** website.

Another female first has been announced also, this one for completion of the Irish summits listed in Paddy Dillon's book, *The Mountains of Ireland*, which includes 212 peaks. **Christine Gordon** (pictured above) completed visiting those 212 summits on May 20th, 2019. Christine also claims to be the first woman to have climbed all the 2,000-footers in Britain and Ireland. Our congratulations to Christine, who visited her Irish list from Oct 2017 to May 2019.

Comparing the Paddy Dillon and Vandeleur-Lynam lists

The **Paddy Dillon list** was first published in 1992 by Cicerone, the prestigious UK walking guide publishers, as a list of

2,000-footers (609.6m) in the book *The Mountains of Ireland*. The final basis for selection of the summits was that of an "on-site appraisal" by the guidebook's author, Paddy Dillon, to use his own words. Even considering just the summits over 609.6m, some forty were not included. Overall, many hillwalking gems are missing from the list, such as Knocknahillion, Corcóg, Croaghan Kinsella and the Faha Ridge. Conversely, the Dillon list does include White Hill in Wicklow, a hill of slight prominence.

Paddy Dillon's book should be regarded today as an early inspiration but with an older list approach, produced without the benefit of the 1:50,000 maps that only became available later in the 1990s.

The MountainViews **Vandeleur-Lynam list** was formalised in 2009, based on the Joss Lynam incrementally developed tradition, which ended with his 600m lists (1997 to 2001). The **Vandeleur-Lynam list** was published in print form in 2013 by The Collins Press, Cork. It will also appear in the Mountaineering Ireland book *Irish Peaks*, due out shortly.

Many innovations have been incorporated in the Vandeleur-Lynam list on a continuing basis, including a non-

subjective definition, a prominence figure for all summits, and surveying for specific cases, as well as extensive user feedback.

MountainViews also publishes several other lists, mostly with bigger prominence requirements, such as for the **Hundred Highest** list.

A memorandum of understanding provides a basis for cooperation between MountainViews and Mountaineering Ireland, the national governing body for sports of hillwalking and

climbing on the island of Ireland. MountainViews is supported in the UK by the Database of British and Irish Hills and the Long Distance Walkers Association.

In summary, the modern Vandeleur-Lynam list contains 273 summits, and the Paddy Dillon book has 212. Summitting all on either list is an achievement which we should celebrate. We congratulate **Elizabeth Ashton** and **Christine Gordon** on being the first women to complete the respective lists of summits they chose to tackle ■



Elizabeth Ashton completing the Vandeleur-Lynam list

Deadly disease found in hares and rabbits

Public asked to report any sightings

By Helen Lawless (based on National Parks and Wildlife Service information)

A disease that is fatal to rabbits and hares but is of no risk to humans has been confirmed in the wild in Ireland for the first time. The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is asking the public to report any suspected cases that they become aware of in **rabbits** and **hares**.

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease (RHD) was first reported in domestic (farmed) rabbits in China in 1984, killing millions of animals within one year of its discovery. By 1986, this viral disease had been found in continental Europe and it has since spread globally, leading to significant mortality in wild populations of rabbits.

In 2010, a new, more virulent strain of this virus, **RHD2**, emerged in France. It causes death within a few days of infection, with sick animals having swollen eyelids, partial paralysis and bleeding from the eyes and mouth. In the latter stages, close to death, animals exhibit unusual behaviour and may emerge from cover into the open.

Dr Ferdia Marnell of the NPWS Scientific Unit outlined his concerns: "Rabbits are central to wild ecosystems, being the main food for many predators, from stoats to eagles, that in turn regulate other animal populations. A decline in our wild rabbits will have numerous knock-on consequences. Of further concern is the potential for the disease to spread



Irish hare: as the hare's eyes are set in the side of its head, its field of vision is almost 360°. During snowy winters, white or partially white hares can occasionally be seen in Ireland.

through the Irish hare population."

Native and unique to Ireland, the **Irish hare** is a sub-species of the mountain hare found throughout northern Europe. Should this disease prove as infectious and lethal here as it has done elsewhere in Europe, the impact on Ireland's hare population could be catastrophic.

Rabbit haemorrhagic disease can be spread by direct contact between animals, and also in faeces and urine. Due to the risk of disease spread, the NPWS

has suspended licences to capture hares for coursing, which may also help to ease pressure on hare populations in certain upland areas.

HOW YOU CAN HELP: Members of the public can help by reporting any signs of this disease in wild animals they come across to the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** by phone – **1890 383 000** – or by email – nature.conservation@chg.gov.ie – or you can contact your local **NPWS Conservation Ranger** ■

ETHIOPIAN HIGHLANDS TREK

Visit Ethiopia next October. Two weeks trip – seven days trekking in the Wollo Highlands. Stay with local communities and in hotels in three towns. Visit rock-hewn Lalibela churches, sail on Lake Tana and visit Blue Nile Falls. Also an opportunity to visit our project work in schools in Ethiopia. Flights, travel, trek, accommodation and excursions all included. Group of 12.

2 WEEKS
OCTOBER 2020
€2290

For information & bookings contact: Africa Direct,
21, Oliver Plunkett Street, Cork, Ireland
Tel: 021 480 6425, e-mail: africadirect@gmail.com



WILDERNESS LODGE, Glenmalur, Co. Wicklow

Base for Adventure Holidays in stunning Glenmalur
Well-Provided Self-Catering Apartments
Group Bookings for Hillwalking Clubs
<http://wildernesslodge.ie> and <http://wildirishwalkingholidays.com>
Telephone: 0404 46839 and 087 262 5549
Email: frankquinn24@gmail.com



Get Climbing Project: *climbing and health*

By Natasza Berlowska (Get Climbing Project Coordinator)

After a relatively quiet summer, when September finally arrived it felt like an explosion – an explosion of new energy, of new participants and of climbing adventures.

Hoping for some early autumn sunshine, we took our most experienced group of young climbers for their first outdoor bouldering session. The Miner's Village in **Glendalough** is a perfect location for someone who has never been bouldering outside, with easy access, safe landing zones and a wide selection of routes.

After four long hours of having fun, losing skin on the sharp rocks and getting wet during the river crossing (one person out of five is not bad!), it was time to walk back to the cars and head home. Despite being visibly tired (it is weird being with a group of teenagers

who are too exhausted to talk!), it was clear that the group had enjoyed the experience. So much so that they were asking for more!

Having a choice between another bouldering trip or climbing with ropes in Dalkey, they voted for the first option and, two weeks later, we were out again, this time in **Glendasan** near the Wicklow Gap. Despite the heavy rain a day before, the rock was dry, warm and perfectly suitable for challenging yourself on new grades.

In the meantime, with the beginning of the new school year, the indoor sessions have resumed. The new group from the **Killinarden Community Centre Youth Project** seems to really enjoy learning new skills at **Dublin Climbing Centre**, while a taster session organised for transition year students from **Killinarden Community School** resulted in the opening

of an additional group, which will continue climbing until Christmas.

There is a lot going on on the north side too: **Awesome Walls** in Finglas currently provides weekly sessions for young pupils from the **Aisling Project** in Ballymun and for an older group from **Ballyfermot Youth Reach**. On top of that, there is the process of recruiting for two more taster sessions for children from local schools, which hopefully will be finalised by the middle of November.

As many readers might be aware, each year in October a **Mental Health Week** takes place, which results in various events across the country. This year the **HSE Mental Health Services** in Tallaght, together with **Dublin Climbing Centre**, the **Irish Mountaineering Club** and the **Get Climbing Project**, organised a talk, 'Rock Climbing and Mental Health.' The discussion included not only

personal stories but also reports of medical research from Europe, where rock climbing and bouldering were used as a clinical intervention, particularly for people who had experienced depression.

After the lecture, which attracted approximately seventy people, there was a chance to try rock climbing for anyone who had never climbed before.

The Dublin Climbing Centre was really crowded that evening, not only full of people, but also full of laughter, joy and positive energy. It is reassuring that, even if we experience some difficult times in life or simply have a bad day, the climbing community is out there to help. It is worth remembering that, especially during the dark winter months ahead and, if you still have not tried climbing, you know where to go ■



Trying out some bouldering in Glendalough



Crossing the river in Glendalough



Hiking in the Tyrol

Irish Mountain Log makes an inspection visit to Erhwald in the Austrian Alps

By Patrick O'Sullivan

At the end of September, I was invited to join a Topflight hillwalking inspection tour to **Erhwald** in the Austrian Tyrol. Erhwald lies in a broad valley to the south of the **Zugspitze** (2,962m). It is on the border with Germany, where it is the highest mountain. In Austria, it is well down the list of highest mountains, the highest being the **Grossglockner** at 3,798m.

I have to say I really enjoyed the trip; it was a delightful experience. The Topflight staff whom I met were all lovely people, and the group I travelled with gelled nicely, so the five-day introductory tour worked well, despite the differing interests within the group... and the craic was mighty!

A majority of the participants were members of hillwalking clubs who were looking at Erhwald as a possible destination for club trips.

Erhwald is a small Tyrolean village at an altitude of around 1,000m in the Wetterstein mountain chain in the **Tiroler Zugspitze Arena**. It is a popular skiing area in winter and is well-served with chair-lifts all year round. Topflight have a hotel there, the **Sonnenburg Hotel**, where they are able to offer packages to groups combining flights, transfers, accommodation and activities, mainly walking holidays in the summer and skiing holidays in winter.

We flew on an early morning flight from Dublin airport to Munich, from where we were transferred by coach to Erhwald. After about two hours we stopped at **Oberammergau**, site of the annual Passion Play. We then drove on to the Sonnenburg Hotel in Erhwald, arriving

there after about another hour.

The following morning, we walked through Erhwald village, heading up the valley towards the nearby village of **Biberwier**. We got onto one of the valley's many well-maintained hiking trails and gradually made our way up through the trees. We eventually came to a mountain hut, which was closed, and stopped for lunch at the foot of a wooden cross on a nearby rocky outcrop. The packed lunches provided by the hotel were very welcome. After an enjoyable break perched on the top of the outcrop, we made our way round to the cable-car station at **Sunnalm**. The track we walked in the afternoon was less well maintained but still easy to follow. We then took a cable car down to the lower station.

The options from there were to go by cable car or toboggan down to Biberwier. Many of us fed the inner child and took a toboggan, which followed an artificial run down. Once down in Biberwier, we set off walking back down the valley to Erhwald after a very enjoyable day.

The next day was forecast to be clear, so it was decided to go up the **Zugspitze** (2,961m). One group hiked up to the

For more information on Topflight holidays, see advertisements on next two pages

glacier below the summit, a hike that took them into Germany. The other group took the easier option of two cable cars to get up to the summit viewing platform. The summit group then descended in another cable car to the glacier behind the peak, before returning to the summit to take the cable cars down. It was another great day with impressive views all round.

On the third day the weather did deteriorate. We took the cable car up to **Ehrwalder Alm** and then hiked mainly on four-wheel-drive tracks up through the forest to the **Seebensee lake** at 1,653m.

On the last day, we checked out of the hotel and drove back to Munich airport and took our flight home, but not before stopping en route to walk through the impressive **Partnach gorge** in the Reintal valley.

Overall, the trip was an impressive introduction to what appears to be a great area for hikes of all grades. It is certainly one that I would like to visit again ■

Sonnenburg Hotel with Zugspitze (2,961m) behind



Spend your hillwalking holiday in the heart of Alpine Slovenia.

Alpine Slovenia is a world of friendly and accessible mountains and hills. Hiking and biking trails take you across the Julian Alps, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps and the Pohorje Hills to the highest peaks, rivers, lakes and waterfalls. The wide range of interesting and diverse trails will excite any hiker. Discover interesting trails with exceptional views and experiences which will stay in your heart forever.

Find out more at topflight.ie

Call **01 240 1753**, or email hillwalking@topflight.ie

Slovenia has more than 7000 km of marked paths with Kranjska Gora located between the Triglav National Park and the Karavanke Mountains making it an ideal base for hikers.

Slovenians are very keen hikers so the network of trails is extensive, well marked and maintained. There are a huge range of walks in the Kranjska Gora area with trails to suit hikers of all ages and abilities, offering the perfect opportunity to explore this spectacular alpine landscape.

Exclusive offer for Groups/Clubs



If you have a group size of minimum 20 people or more, we would be delighted to tailor make your Slovenian hillwalking holiday exclusively for your group. We will provide an itinerary for you by including mountain and walking guides, specifically for your group, with a choice of routes and hikes to ensure the best experience.

Your Holiday Includes

- ✓ Return flights from Dublin
- ✓ Coach transfers
- ✓ 7 nights accommodation in a 4 star hotel on breakfast & dinner basis
- ✓ Free access to in-door swimming pool
- ✓ 5 days guided walk with mountain / hiking guides
- ✓ Pre-arranged walking itinerary
- ✓ Airport taxes
- ✓ 20kg baggage allowance

Prices from €999 per person sharing

Preferred Travel Partner of



LICENCED BY THE COMMISSION FOR AVIATION REGULATION, TA 0532

Hillwalking holidays in the Austrian Tirol and the Italian Dolomites.

Experience a wonderful deluxe hiking holiday in the mountains and valleys the surrounding resort of Madonna di Campiglio, in the heart of the Italian Dolomites.

Enjoy unforgettable hillwalking tours in the beautiful Austrian Tirol resort of Ehrwald! Inspiring scenery and guided hikes will make for a truly unforgettable holiday.

Find out more at topflight.ie

Call **01 240 1753**, or email hillwalking@topflight.ie



★★★★ SUPERIOR

Madonna di Campiglio Deluxe Hiking Tour.

Explore scenic mountain trails surrounded by the towering peaks and lush meadows of the Italian Dolomites, one of the most spectacular mountain regions in the world. You will be based in the luxurious 4 star Superior Hotel Cristal Palace, a beautiful alpine-style hotel.

Your Holiday Includes

- ✓ Return flights from Dublin
- ✓ Return transfers by luxury coach
- ✓ 7 nights at the 4 star superior Cristal Palace Hotel, half board
- ✓ 5 days guided walk with local guides
- ✓ Use of hotel wellness and spa facilities
- ✓ 20kg baggage allowance and airport taxes

Prices from **€859** per person sharing

Available Dates: 24th June / 6th, 13th or 20th Sept 2020



Special Early Bird Offer!

€699pps for groups of 15 or more if you book by the end of Dec 2019.

Hillwalking Tour of the Austrian Tirol.

Create unforgettable memories, awaken your sense of adventure and immerse yourself in the epic Alpine landscape of Austria's Tirol with this incredible seven night hillwalking tour.

Your Holiday Includes

- ✓ Return flights from Dublin
- ✓ Return transfers by luxury coach
- ✓ Welcome drink on arrival
- ✓ 7 nights in the Sonnenburg Hotel with breakfast & dinner
- ✓ 5 local guided walks through the Zugspitze Arena
- ✓ A 'Tyrolean Evening' with live music
- ✓ A barbeque evening on our new terrace
- ✓ Expert Topflight tour manager
- ✓ 20kg baggage allowance and airport taxes

Solo Week - no single room supplement 30th Aug 2020

Prices from **€739** per person sharing

Available Dates: 24th or 31st May / 14th, 21st or 28th June
05th or 12th July / 2nd Aug / 6th, 13th or 20th Sept 2020

Exclusive use of the Sonnenburg Hotel for Groups/Clubs

If you have a group size of 30 or more, we would be delighted to book the hotel exclusively for your club. We will tailor make the itinerary for you by including mountain and walking guides, specifically and exclusively for your group, with a choice of routes and hikes to ensure the best experience the Austrian Tirol has to offer.



UIAA 2019 Mountain Protection Award

The Swiss Alpine Club's Alpine Learning Project Weeks has won the 2019 award

By Patrick O'Sullivan

In November, Mountaineering Ireland Board member and Vice-President of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission, **Mike Maunsell**, presented the annual UIAA Mountain Protection Award and grant funding of \$5,000 to the **Swiss Alpine Club's 'Alpine Learning Project Weeks'**.

The Swiss Alpine Club's project was confirmed as the seventh winner of the annual UIAA Mountain Protection Award at the UIAA General Assembly in Larnaca, Cyprus, on Saturday, November 2nd.

It was great to see Ireland represented in this year's final twelve nominees by the **PURE (Protecting Uplands and Rural Environments) Project**. Their work was promoted through the UIAA website and on social media.

The final twelve mountain protection projects were from countries around the world, including Nepal, Ecuador, Switzerland, Bolivia and Iran, with one worldwide project



Pictured at the award ceremony (from left): Michael Maunsell (Vice-President UIAA Mountain Protection Commission), Françoise Jacquet (President, Swiss Alpine Club), Frits Vrijlandt (UIAA President) and Irina Gladkikh (International Olympic Committee Director for the Winter Olympics)

among the finalists operating in Kyrgyzstan, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Russia, Oman and Poland (see our report in *IML* 131, page 14). Details of all the projects and the other awards are available on the UIAA website, theuiaa.org.

Shortly after the confirmation of the 2019 UIAA Mountain Protection

Award winner, Michael Maunsell made an exciting announcement regarding the future of the award. The 2020 and 2021 UIAA Mountain Protection Award will be partnered by **Bally**, the Swiss luxury fashion brand, founded in 1851, with a pioneering heritage in climbing and mountaineering.

When Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay made history as the first climbers to set foot on the summit of Mount Everest in 1953, Tenzing was wearing a pair of Bally boots.

Inspired by its heritage, the company's recent **Peak Outlook** initiative marked a long-term commitment to preserving the world's most extreme mountain environments.

Peak Outlook began in the spring of this year with the sponsorship of a critical clean-up expedition to the summit of the world's highest peak. Led by **Dawa Steven Sherpa**, the team of experienced climbers and guides, all of whom are native to Nepal's high Himalayas, the expedition successfully removed two tonnes of waste from between Everest Base Camp and its iconic peak, helping to return the landscape to its original pristine condition.

More information can be found on the UIAA website, theuiaa.org ■



Hannah Thomas, Global PR and Communications Manager with Bally, with Michael Maunsell, Vice-President of the UIAA Mountain Protection Commission, announcing a new partnership for the UIAA Mountain Protection Award

Ex-Gurkha climbs world's 14 highest peaks in 189 days

Nirmal Purja completes feat in six months and six days

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Nirmal Purja, an ex-Gurkha from Nepal, has climbed all fourteen of the world's 8,000m mountains in a record-breaking 189 days. **Shishapangma** (8,027m), the smallest of the fourteen 8,000m peaks, was the last of Purja's climbs.

Reinhold Messner was the first to summit all of the 8,000m peaks in 1986. It took him sixteen years, but he climbed all of the mountains without supplemental oxygen. In 2010, **Edurne Pasaban** became the first woman to complete the feat but used supplemental oxygen.

Purja also used supplementary oxygen for his climbs because of the challenge he had set himself.

Purja was born in the

Dhaulagiri region of Nepal and he climbed **Everest**, **Lhotse** and **Makalu** (the first, fourth and fifth highest peaks in the world) in just 48 hours. The record was previously held by **Kim Chang-ho** of South Korea, who took seven years, 11 months and 14 days to climb the fourteen summits.

Purja began the challenge when he reached the top of **Annapurna** on April 23rd, 2019. He achieved his success with the support of a rotating team made up of exclusively Nepalese climbers.

He reached the summit of **Mount Everest** on May 22nd, along with 320 other mountaineers. It was on that climb that he took his now famous photo of the traffic jam of climbers on Everest's summit ridge.

The achievement is



Shishapangma

extraordinary because of the uncertainties in the weather in the Himalayas, which can limit when a mountain can be climbed to a few days in the year.

Purja had to obtain a special climbing permit from the **China Tibet Mountaineering Association**

to complete the list of summits because China had closed Shishapangma to other climbers this season.

As well as undertaking his fourteen successful ascents this year, Purja and his team were also involved in the rescues of other climbers on two of those mountains ■

Over 130 Himalayan peaks opened

Indian Mountaineering Foundation confirms opening of 137 Himalayan peaks

By Patrick O'Sullivan

The **Indian Mountaineering Foundation** (IMF), a UIAA member association, has announced that the Indian government has agreed to the opening of 137 Himalayan peaks to foreign climbers.

Until these new measures were announced, foreign climbers had to seek permission from the Ministries of Defence and Home to climb these peaks. Foreigners can now directly apply to the IMF for permits.

The list of peaks includes Dunagiri (7,066m) and Hardeol (7,151m) in Uttarakhand; Kabru South and North in Sikkim (both 7,000m+) and Mount Kaliash

(6,400m) in Jammu and Kashmir.

Dunagiri is in the northwest corner of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary Wall. It was first climbed in 1939 by three Swiss climbers led by André Roch via the southwest ridge. In 1975, British mountaineers Joe Tasker and Dick Renshaw climbed a particularly difficult route on the southeast buttress in what was a significant milestone in alpine-style Himalayan climbing.

The decision has met with opposition in the Sikkim region, however. The government of the State of Sikkim has expressed its reservations about opening access to the holy mountains



Dunagiri

there, which include Kanchenjunga and twenty-three other peaks there. Further discussions are taking place about the inclusion of peaks in Sikkim.

The listed mountains are a mixture of trekking and mountaineering peaks. A

guide to applying and an application form for expeditions wanting to attempt any of these peaks can be downloaded from the IMF website, **indmount.org**. Peak fees for mountains in India have also been reduced significantly ■

Donegal Climbfest 2020

The Climbfest will take place in Maghery, Co Donegal, next May bank holiday weekend – put it in your diary!

By Alan Tees

Colmcille Climbers' Climbfest 2020 will be based in Maghery, about 3 kilometres west of Dungloe, Co Donegal, from Friday, May 1st to Monday May 4th, the usual May Day public holiday weekend.

The Cruit Island camping area is no longer available, but Maghery is only a twenty-minute drive from Cruit. Maghery offers a host of other climbing options and has superior facilities.

There is a camping area beside the community centre, with electric hook-ups, toilets, a pub and audio-visual facilities. The camp opens up onto the beach.

The chip shop will be open on Friday night for late arrivals. The nearest shops and restaurants are in Dungloe.

The climbing area at Crohy Head South is a 10- or 15-minute drive away, and closer again is the Breiste, for those who fancy a sea stack adventure.

The coastline is excellent for sea kayaking, and Arranmore Island is easily accessible in reasonable sea conditions. (If not accessible on the bank holiday weekend, there are lots of inland lakes to explore.)

For cyclists, the tour of Crohy Head is as good as anything in the country, but fairly strenuous.

Owey Island, Gola and the big inland crags of the Bingorms are all accessible, and pdf guides for Crohy, Cruit, Owey and Gola can be downloaded from the Unique Ascent website, <https://uniqueascent.ie>.

The Climbfest is the longest-running climbers' meet in Ireland, is child-friendly, sociable, and is aimed at the average rock climber, beginner or indoor climber who wishes to extend his experience from resin to rock.

We are supported by **Mountaineering Ireland** ■



Martin McGuigan on the first free ascent of Space Walker VS 4c (25m) on Crohy Head South, Maghery, Co Donegal

Precarious time for climbing walls

Damien O'Sullivan reports

The high cost of insurance is not a new issue for climbing walls. Recently, however, the exit of insurance providers from the Irish market has exacerbated an already difficult situation. Indeed, at the recent Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Wall Seminar, insurance was identified as the number one strategic threat to the climbing wall industry in Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland is working closely with the owners and managers of key climbing walls in the Republic of Ireland, representatives from the insurance industry, Sport Ireland and other interested parties to secure a viable and sustainable solution in order to maintain participation in indoor climbing.

Over the past decade or so, the growth in the provision of indoor climbing walls in Ireland has allowed for a huge increase in the number of people participating in indoor climbing. Research carried out by Mountaineering Ireland in 2016 indicated approximately 193,315 user visits per year and 30,000

individuals using climbing walls on a regular basis. The climbing wall industry has continued to grow over the past three years and, as a result, we could now have in the region of a quarter of a million user visits per year.

The difficulties posed by the increasing costs of insurance is not isolated to just the climbing wall industry in Ireland. Similar challenges are being faced by many businesses across the leisure industry. Notably, the challenges faced by indoor play centres has resulted in the closure of many businesses. The sector banded together to form **Play Activity and Leisure Ireland (PALI)**. Working together, the sector secured multi-year policies at a reduced rate.

It is the hope of Mountaineering Ireland that a sustainable solution to the current crisis will be found in the coming weeks and that climbing walls can continue to provide the climbing community with the opportunity to engage in a sport that is enjoyed by such a large and diverse range of people ■



Ger O'Sullivan climbing

2020 CLIMBING COMPETITIONS

Damien O'Sullivan reports

2020 Irish Youth Climbing Series

The Irish Youth Climbing Series is an ideal competition for intermediate and experienced young climbers. It is a key competition in the development pathway for young climbers, with many young climbers targeting their training and practice towards the Youth Climbing Series in order to qualify for the Grand Final.

Even more inspiring than the level of climbing on display at the Youth Climbing Series is the level of camaraderie between the competitors.

The 2020 Youth Climbing Series takes in four rounds – two bouldering rounds and two route climbing rounds – and is sponsored by **Great Outdoors** and **Mammut**. Details of the rounds are as follows:

Round 1	25 January 2020	Awesome Walls Cork	Bouldering
Round 2	8 February 2020	Dublin Climbing Centre	Routes
Round 3	7 March 2020	BoulderWorld Belfast	Bouldering
Round 4	21 March 2020	Awesome Walls Dublin	Routes

Competition entry is online only. For more information, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website.

2020 Irish Lead Climbing Championship

The 2020 Irish Lead Climbing Championship will take place at **Awesome Walls Dublin** over the weekend of October 17-18th. Competitors in Youth C and Youth B will compete on Saturday 17th, while competitors in Youth A and Senior will compete on Sunday 18th.

Competition entry is online only. For more information, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website.

2020 Irish Bouldering Championship

The 2020 Irish Bouldering Championship will take place at the Gravity Climbing Centre over the weekend of November 14-15th. Competitors in Youth C and Youth B will compete on Saturday 14th, while competitors in Youth A and Senior will compete on Sunday 15th.

Competition entry is online only. For more information, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website ■



Ciara Lawlor climbing at the championship

LEAD CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIP

Damien O'Sullivan reports on the 2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship held at Awesome Walls Dublin

Sponsored by **O'Driscoll O'Neil Insurance**, the 2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship took place at Awesome Walls Dublin over the weekend of October 19-20th. Climbers in Youth A, B and C categories competed on the Saturday, while climbers in the Senior category competed on the Sunday.

Saturday's competition for the younger climbers witnessed an impressive level of climbing. Most of Ireland's best young climbers were there to test themselves against a trio of challenging routes. They were joined by a contingent of strong climbers who had travelled from Scotland and England.

In **Male Youth C**, Cork Youth Climbing Club's **Sean Henchion** put on a huge display of climbing skill and determination to take first place ahead of the Belfast duo of **Archie Tolland** and **Zach McCune**.

In **Female Youth C**, visiting

climbers **Jessica Claxton-Daniels** and **Kasha Ogilvie** took first and third places respectively, with Dublin Cliffhangers' member **Caelin Lenehan** taking second.

The **Female Youth B** category was won by **Ella Marshall** with a very impressive performance on her final route. Dublin Cliffhangers' member **Rhyna Conroy** took second place ahead of Belfast's **Faith Blaney**.

In **Male Youth B**, Belfast climber **Reuben Aiken** climbed consistently and powerfully to finish on the top place of the podium ahead of two visiting climbers, **Theo Cassani** and **Luke Van Impe**, who took second and third respectively.

In **Female Youth A**, **Paola Neal-Fagan** and **Ella Brown** put on a great display of climbing and sports(wo)manship, with Paola taking the top spot on the podium.

In **Male Youth A**, Clare climber **Jude McInerney** took third place, visiting climber **Dom Donnell** took second and Belfast



Marcus McDowell climbing at the championship



Sam Monedero-Egan (top) climbing at the championship



Written by
Damien O'Sullivan,
Climbing Development
Officer

finished in third place, ahead of the chasing pack.

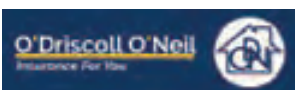
One of the most competitive groupings in the entire competition was the **Senior Female** category. Inspired by **Lucy Mitchell's** dominance of the competition for the past number of years, some of Ireland's strongest female climbers put their name in the hat to see if they could match Lucy's prowess.

Aisling Brennan, who made a very welcome return to the championship, finished neck-and-neck with **Caroline Harney-Ayton** on their final route. Third place went to Aisling as a result of a count back to the results from the qualification round. **Chloe Condrón** climbed quickly and decisively to take a very well deserved second place, finish high on the final route. It was, however, **Lucy Mitchell** who

again showed her determination, strength and skill to take first place.

Our thanks once again to **O'Driscoll O'Neil Insurance** for supporting the 2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship. Thanks to **Awesome Walls Dublin** for hosting the competition. Thanks also to the route-setting team of **Brian Hall, Rob Napier** and **Neil Byrne**. Thanks to everyone who assisted with belaying and judging. Finally, thanks to all of the competitors for putting on such a great display of climbing and sportsmanship.

The provisional dates for the 2020 Irish Lead Climbing Championship are October 17-18th, taking place at Awesome Walls Dublin. For more information and entering online, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website ■



climber **Marcus McDowell** took first place with one of the most exciting performances of the day.

Sunday saw the turn of the **Senior** competitors, essentially anyone over the age of eighteen. Despite the perennial low turn-out for this leg of the championship, the quality of climbing is really something to witness.

Ahead of the competition, the joint favourites to take first place in the **Senior Male** category were 2017's champion **Ciaran Scanlon** and **Michael O'Neill**. This year, Ciaran ranked first after the two qualification routes, but Michael set a very high point on the final route, one that Ciaran ultimately was not able to match. **Andres Pesquaria** put on a great show throughout the day and



Aisling Brennan climbing at the championship



Sarah O'Mahony climbing at Ailladie in the Burren

YOUTH TRAD CLIMBING CAMPS

Two Youth Trad Climbing Camps will be held in the summer of 2020. **Damien O'Sullivan** reports

Following on from the very successful reintroduction of the **Youth Trad Climbing Camps** in 2019, Mountaineering Ireland is delighted to announce these camps will again take place in the summer of 2020.

The Youth Trad Climbing Camps are aimed at climbers aged between thirteen and seventeen years of age. The camps are an ideal opportunity for climbers who climb indoors and who would like to begin learning some of the skills needed to climb outdoors. The camps are also ideal for climbers who may have already started to climb outdoors and want to progress their skills.

Two camps will take place. The first will take place in the Burren, Co Clare, and will run from Wednesday 8th to Friday 10th of July, 2020. The second camp will take place in Glendalough, Co Wicklow, and will run from Monday 13th to Wednesday 15th of July, 2020.

Both camps can accommodate up to ten climbers and will be staffed by five suitably qualified and experienced climbing instructors, giving an amazing instructional ratio of 2:1.

The cost of the three-day camp is €275 per climber. The price includes instruction, specialist equipment, accommodation and food ■

Information and bookings

- For more information and to book a place, please contact Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Officer, **Damien O'Sullivan**, by email, damien@mountaineering.ie, or give him a call in the office on (01) 625 1117.



Daniel Flavin climbing in Wicklow



Speakers Nate McMullan and Adrian Dumas (both standing) at the seminar

CLIMBING WALL SEMINAR

Damien O'Sullivan reports on Mountaineering Ireland's climbing wall seminar held in October

Supported by **Petzl** and **Lyon Equipment**, the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Wall Seminar took place at Irish Sport HQ over two days, October 8-9th. The seminar was aimed at anyone with an interest in climbing walls, including owners, managers, coaches, instructors, route-setters, technical advisors, etc. The seminar was well attended, with approximately forty delegates representing climbing walls from all over Ireland.

The current challenges faced by climbing walls and the wider leisure industry was a hot topic over the course of the two days. Thankfully, the content of the seminar was themed around improving operating standards and reducing risk within climbing walls.

Geoff Thomas opened the seminar with a very engaging and interactive session delving into the strategic strengths,

weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the climbing wall industry in Ireland.

Ray Greene followed with a sobering presentation on risk assessment and management within the climbing wall environment.

Climbing wall standards guru **Nate McMullan** provided a primer on the European standards that cover climbing wall structures.

Rounding out the first day of the seminar, **Scott Haslam** from the **Association of British Climbing Walls** provided an overview of industry best practice and trends in relation to customer inductions.

The second day of the seminar began with **Adrian Dumas** of **Petzl** outlining how the choice and utilisation of equipment can impact on the safety of both customers and staff.

Pete Stacey, a highly experienced and respected

figure in the outdoor industry, presented a talk on the employers' responsibility in managing staff at their walls.

Ben Humphris of **Climbing Compliance** presented a talk on the role of a technical advisor as a source of advice and support to climbing walls.

Closing out the seminar, I summarised the content of the two days and facilitated the delegates in creating short-term and medium-term action plans for their climbing walls based on what they had learned from the seminar.

Feedback

Results from a follow-up survey completed by delegates indicated that the

presentations were relevant, that there were ample networking opportunities and, most importantly, that as a result of the seminar most delegates intend to make changes to the operating procedures at their climbing wall.

Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank **Petzl** and **Lyon Equipment** for supporting the event. Thanks also to all of the presenters for sharing their time and expertise.

The **2020 Climbing Wall Seminar** will take place at Irish Sport HQ on Wednesday 7th and Thursday 8th of October. Further details will be released in due course ■





THE UPLANDS' POTENTIAL

Some of the attendees at the launch of *A Profile of Ireland's Uplands* at the Royal Irish Academy, Dawson Street, Dublin, in October

A new all-island, socio-economic profile of Ireland's upland areas, commissioned by the Irish Uplands Forum, highlights Ireland's upland areas as national assets and emphasises the need for policies that respond to upland strengths and challenges. **Helen Lawless** reports

A new report from the **Irish Uplands Forum**, *A Profile of Ireland's Uplands*, was officially launched in the Royal Irish Academy on Dawson Street, Dublin, at the end of October by **Virginia Teehan**, CEO of the Heritage Council.

The report gives an overview

of the status of Ireland's uplands across a broad range of indicators, providing a strong evidence base for policymakers to enhance our uplands as areas supporting vibrant communities.

This profile of Ireland's uplands is based on a townland-by-townland classification of Ireland's

uplands, using natural science criteria, including elevation and natural vegetation cover.

Through a series of maps, the report shows how land character and location are associated with a range of demographic and socio-economic features. For example, uplands along the western seaboard tend to

have older populations and are structurally weaker, demographically and economically.

The report illustrates the inter-dependencies between upland areas and lowland populations, including the increasing appeal of the uplands as spaces for recreation.

Not surprisingly, it shows that those upland areas which are better connected with urban centres have a stronger demographic profile and greater economic activity.

Uplands in Northern Ireland emerge as being more dynamic and vibrant than those in the Republic. Looking at the socio-economic characteristics of your favourite upland areas will give you a different perspective on the places where you walk and climb.

Vital public goods

A picture of changing land management practices



Frank Nugent, Chairperson of the Irish Uplands Forum, speaking at the launch of *A Profile of Ireland's Uplands*

emerges from the profile. There has been a decline in the number of people farming, an expansion of pastureland at the expense of natural vegetation, an increase in commercial afforestation and new industrial uses such as wind-farm development.

Undeveloped land is seen by some people as a waste, or not having value, whereas in fact these areas provide significant benefits to society that are not associated with intensively farmed land.

Land in Ireland's upland areas is, in the main, privately owned, either individually or jointly. Yet our uplands are a significant national asset, and investment in sustaining them is in our collective interest.

A strong theme in the report is the potential for more sustainable management of upland areas to enhance the provision of public goods, such as water supply, flood attenuation, carbon storage, biodiversity and recreation opportunities, for the benefit of all of our population.

There could be a new, valuable role for upland farmers in improving the ability of Ireland's uplands to deliver these vital ecological services. This model would play to the natural strengths of our upland areas, but it requires a major



Pictured at the launch of the report in the Royal Irish Academy (from left): Caroline Crowley (researcher); Brendan O'Keeffe (researcher); Helen Lawless (Mountaineering Ireland); Jim Sheehan (Mountaineering Ireland & Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC)); Frank Nugent (Irish Uplands Forum); Virginia Teehan (Heritage Council); Louis O'Byrne (WUC); Tom Byrne (WUC); Brian Dunne (WUC); and John Medlycott (WUC).

policy shift.

The report notes that hill farms are more dependent on **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** payments for the provision of public goods than are other farms, yet the payments associated with the provision of public goods represent a shrinking proportion of farm subsidies.

The next round of CAP, due to start in 2021, offers a timely opportunity to better align agricultural policy with public-good imperatives in other areas, notably in ameliorating climate change and arresting biodiversity loss.

Investment needed

Currently there is no national policy for Ireland's uplands; the focus remains sectoral across many areas, including agriculture, environment, planning, recreation and tourism.

The report calls for an integrated policy approach to the uplands, including a programme of support for upland partnership groups.

The **Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC)**, frequently held up as a leading exponent of this partnership model, would not still be in existence were it not for the modest core

Hill farmers could have a valuable new role in improving the ability of upland areas to deliver ecological services.

funding it has received from the **Heritage Council** over the past twenty years.

In a statement welcoming the report, Mountaineering Ireland highlighted the need to invest in looking after Ireland's upland areas so that these important areas can continue to provide benefits for all of society.

The investment needs range, from managing the impact of increased recreation activity in upland areas to supporting hill farmers to manage their land in a way that improves the delivery of ecosystem services.

Mountaineering Ireland also called on the Irish Uplands Forum to bring together a coalition of interests in the uplands to agree the specific policy measures that are needed.

FIND OUT MORE A Profile of Ireland's Uplands was written by Brendan O'Keeffe and Caroline Crowley. The report, produced with funding assistance from the Heritage Council, can be downloaded freely from the Irish Upland Forum's website at [bit.ly/irishuplands](https://irishuplands.org/publications) or at <https://irishuplandsforum.org/publications> ■



Brian Dunne (Wicklow Uplands Council) and Virginia Teehan (CEO, Heritage Council) at the launch of the report



Mt Manaslu (8,163m)

AN IRISH ASCENT OF MANASLU

Northern Irish couple Noel and Lynne Hanna summited on Mount Manaslu (8,163m) without supplemental oxygen in September. Based on material provided by Noel Hanna, **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports on their ascent of the world's eighth highest mountain

Noel and Lynne Hanna from Derry in Northern Ireland were successful in their attempt to climb Mount Manaslu together, without the use of supplemental oxygen, in the post-monsoon season this year. **Manaslu** (8,163m) is located in the Nepal Himalayas and is the eighth highest mountain in the world. This was a spectacular achievement. In comparison, Everest has a

height of 8,848m or is more than 700m higher, but every minute spent in the 'death zone' above 8,000m is life-threatening.

Lynne and Noel arrived in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, on Friday, September 6th. After spending only one night in the city they started off for Manaslu early the next day. They were with a group of climbers who were supported by **Mingma Sherpa's** company, **Seven Summit Treks**.

After two days travelling in jeeps, they reached the village of **Besiahhar**, from where they started their trek to Manaslu Base Camp.

The group trekked through the villages of Dharapani, Tilije, Bhimathang and Samagaon and reached Manaslu Base Camp, located at 4,800m, on Friday, September 13th.

After a rest day, Noel and Lynne decided they were sufficiently acclimatised to do a carry of food and cooking gear for the higher camps to Camp 1 at 5,800m the following day, Sunday, and then to return to base camp and rest for a couple of days.

On Wednesday, September 18th, Lynne and Noel left base camp and trekked to Camp 1 to spend the night. Weather conditions were not good and over two feet of snow fell that night.

They heard there was a high risk of avalanche between Camps 1 and 2, so they decided to stay another night in Camp 1 rather than risk moving up to Camp 2 in the deep snow.

At 5.00am on Friday,

September 20th, the Hannas left Camp 1 for Camp 2 at 6,400m, which they reached after four hours.

They were feeling good, so, after a couple of hours' rest in Camp 2, they decided to carry on to Camp 3, at 6,800m, to spend the night there.

After spending one night at Camp 3, the pair returned to base camp to rest for their planned summit push.

Summit push

After two nights' rest at base camp, Lynne and Noel set off at lunchtime on Monday, September 23rd, for their attempt on Manaslu. After spending one night in Camp 1 and another at Camp 3, they arrived at Camp 4, at 7,400m, at 4.00pm, ready to rest there for a few hours before leaving for their summit push on Thursday, September 26th, at 2.00am.

Noel had decided to leave at this earlier (??) than usual time because they would be attempting the climb *without* supplemental oxygen. As a consequence, it was likely they would be slower than climbers



Noel and Lynne at Camp 1



Camp 1

using supplemental oxygen, and he did not want them to be caught up in the queues for the summit.

At 10.30am on Thursday, September 26th, Lynne and Noel stood on the 8,163m summit of Mount Manaslu, having achieved their aim of climbing it without supplemental oxygen.

As the top is only halfway through the climb, they took some photos and videos and celebrated for 15-20 minutes before starting their descent.

They stopped in Camp 4 for half an hour before continuing on down to Camp 3, where they took a well-deserved rest.

Early the next day, the couple

continued on down to base camp, where they celebrated their success with a bottle of champagne.

After spending only two weeks on the mountain, the couple had achieved what they had set out to do. They had climbed Mount Manaslu, the eighth highest mountain in the world, without using supplemental oxygen.

The two then left base camp to trek down to Samagaon, from where they were able to get a helicopter-ride back to Kathmandu.

In making this climb, **Lynne Hanna** became the first woman from the island of Ireland to summit an 8,000m

peak without the help of supplemental oxygen.

As a couple, it was also Lynne and Noel's first ascent together of an 8,000m mountain without using oxygen.

They had already climbed Mount Everest together twice before, using supplemental oxygen, once from either side of the Tibet/Nepal border.

Noel has so far been to the summit of Everest nine times and was also the first person from the island of Ireland to successfully summit and descend K2 (8,611m), which he achieved in July 2018 – see our report in the *Irish Mountain Log of Summer 2019* (page 45).

Ten years previously, Limerick-man Ger McDonnell had been the first Irishman to climb K2, but he very sadly lost his life on the descent.

New Himalayan peaks opened

The Indian Mountaineering Foundation, a UIAA member association, has announced that the Indian government has agreed to open 137 Himalayan peaks to foreign climbers.

Until these new measures were announced, foreign climbers had to seek



Lynne below Camp 2

permission from the Ministries of Defence and Home to climb these peaks. Foreigners can now apply directly to the Indian Mountaineering Foundation for permits.

The list of peaks includes Dunagiri (7,066m) and Hardeol (7,151m) in Uttarakhand; Kabru South and North in Sikkim (both 7,000m+); and Mount Kaliash (6,400m), all in Jammu and Kashmir.

The decision to open new peaks to climbers has met with some opposition in the Sikkim region. The government of the State of Sikkim has expressed reservations about opening access to the holy mountains there, which include Kanchenjunga and twenty-three other peaks. Further discussions are taking place about the inclusion of peaks in Sikkim.

The listed mountains are a mixture of trekking and mountaineering peaks. A guide to applying, and an application form for expeditions wanting to attempt any of these peaks, can be downloaded from the Indian Mountaineering Foundation website, **indmount.org**.

Peak fees for mountains in India have also been reduced significantly ■



Lynne and Noel on the summit of Manaslu on September 26th, 2019



THE NATIVITY TRAIL

Regina Flynn travels to Palestine with a group of friends to walk in the footsteps of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem... the 160-kilometre Nativity Trail

The idea of walking the **Nativity Trail** in the Occupied Palestinian Territory of **West Bank** captured my imagination when I first heard about it last year. I had never visited Palestine, but the names of the cities and regions there were known to me through my childhood learning of the catechism and my familiarity with notable events in the Bible, as well as through the media.

This was a unique opportunity to see for myself the culture, struggles and lives of ordinary Palestinians. Furthermore, the opportunity to walk all **160 kilometres** of the Nativity Trail in glorious sunshine, in the company of a group of like-minded individuals, was irresistible.

Palestine is a unique tourist destination as it is home to the three major monotheistic religions of Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Hundreds of thousands of tourists from all over the world visit holy sites in Israel and Palestine every year, mainly on large tourist buses, whizzing from one holy site to the next.

Not us. We were going to follow in the footsteps of Mary and Joseph on their journey from Nazareth, the city of the Annunciation, to Bethlehem, the city of the Nativity, where that original journey ended and the Christian faith had its beginnings.

Following the Nativity Trail is an opportunity to understand the geopolitical situation in the Holy Land by observing it while walking through the valleys and mountains of Palestine. It gives participants the chance to have a first-hand experience of the situation on the ground.

A group of thirteen friends from all over Ireland formed to travel to Palestine in late September this year.

Above: The group's Nativity Trail guide, Nadal, leading the group across the hills on day five of the walk.

Below: Goats heading home through a Bedouin village on the West Bank.

Having successfully negotiated the immigration counters in Tel Aviv airport, the group, now numbering twenty, met in our hotel in Nazareth in the late evening. The itinerary for the trail was distributed to the group.

Unfamiliar words, such as huwara (checkpoint) and wadi (gully), had us struggling to understand what they meant. Luckily, three of the group had already worked in Palestine, so they became our 'experts.'

The journey begins

And so we began our ten-day journey, guided by **Nadal**, a 50-year-old Sunni Muslim who was born in a refugee camp and still lives there with his family. His guiding, organisational skills and grasp of the complex history and struggles of his homeland was profound and inspiring.

In order to let us adjust and to go easy on us, our first morning was spent visiting the holy sites of the **House of Mary** and the **Church of the Annunciation** in Nazareth. In the church, vivid painted mosaics depicting the Annunciation are featured on the walls, each one from different countries worldwide. No representation from Ireland was visible.

In the afternoon, we crossed through our first checkpoint at Jalameh in order to travel to Jenin. The checkpoint was a forbidding, bare concrete structure with no security personnel visible. The turnstile was



➤ *Regina Flynn has been an enthusiastic member of **Galway Walking Club** for several years. This club is located in an area surrounded by some great walking country in the west of Ireland. It has almost 350 members and will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2020. Regina is also a keen traveller who tries, as frequently as possible, to participate in walking trips overseas.*





narrow and dirty and would preclude anybody in a wheelchair, or a parent pushing a buggy, from going through it.

Passing through this checkpoint, and all of the others on the West Bank, is a twice-daily (or more) ordeal for thousands of Palestinians, one which they have to endure in order to go into Israel to work or to visit relatives and friends.

The third day was to be our first on the Nativity Trail and, being keen walkers, we were itching to start. That evening, some of us were likewise itching to finish!

The 18km trail that day was uphill and challenging, while the hot sun beat down on us. Litres of water were drunk, but we had some breaks as Nadal stopped us to view the landscape and to give us a background account of the area we were passing through. The rolling, golden hills were dotted with olive trees and, on occasion, we could see the red roofs of an Occupied Territory village high up in the hills.

The following days of walking were shorter in duration as the hot sun continued to beat down on us. Hiking through the hilly terrain took us through areas of enormous rocks and desert, and over hills, revealing breath-taking landscapes, valleys, groves, orchards and mountain springs.

The golden, sandy colours of the hills seemed to me as if the images of the landscape in the Bible had sprung to life. Looking down at the vast Jordan River valley, dotted with orchards and fertile lands, you could see over thirty farms and military settlements. This strategically vital area has been seized by Israeli settlers, and Palestinians farming in the area have to make do with depleted water sources, as the available water has been re-routed for the use of the settlers.



Above left:
A Bedouin musician playing the traditional rababa musical instrument.

Above right:
The group taking a break in the searing sun.

Below left:
The amazing vista of the Jordanian valley desert.

Below right:
Descending the wadi (dried river gorge) to sea level at Auja Spring.

The following days continued to be as revelatory as the early days of the trek. Staying one night with a Christian family, another with a Muslim family and a third night in Nadal's refugee camp (Fara'a), as well as another with a Bedouin family high up in the hills, introduced the group to different aspects of life on the West Bank as well as giving us personal face-to-face encounters with local people. The hospitality was legendary.

I learned that tourist bodies in Palestine believe all historical, touristic and holy sites are shared between Israeli and Palestinian territories, so tourists are urged to visit both Israel and Palestine, which is just and fair.

Walking the Nativity Trail was an opportunity to meet a diverse range of people: Franciscan priests on Mount Tabor, Muslim clerics at village mosques, Greek Orthodox monks in desert monasteries, hillside farmers and their families, small-town shopkeepers and craftspeople, Bedouin shepherds watering their flocks at ancient cisterns, and many other interesting people.

The Nativity Trail is not just a trip; it is an experience and a journey of dialogue, openness and interaction with new people ■





THE MUNRO-BAGGING BROTHERS

When they were compiling their hiking programme for 2019, the **Quinn** brothers, **Chris** and **Michael**, selected a total of twelve Munros to attempt from the Cairngorms, Monadh Liath, Knoydart and Glenfinnan mountain ranges. They booked accommodation in Newtonmore, Knoydart and Corpach in June and, in order to reduce the number of hours they would have to spend trudging on land rover tracks to gain access to some of those hills, they took their trusty mountain bikes with them, fixed to the rack on their car, on the ferry from Belfast to Cairnryan.

Sadly, after authoring this article with his brother Michael, Chris died suddenly while out walking with his daughter **Emma** on Mweelrea in September. Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to Chris's family and friends (see also 'The Last Word,' page 66) and we publish this last article by Chris in his memory.

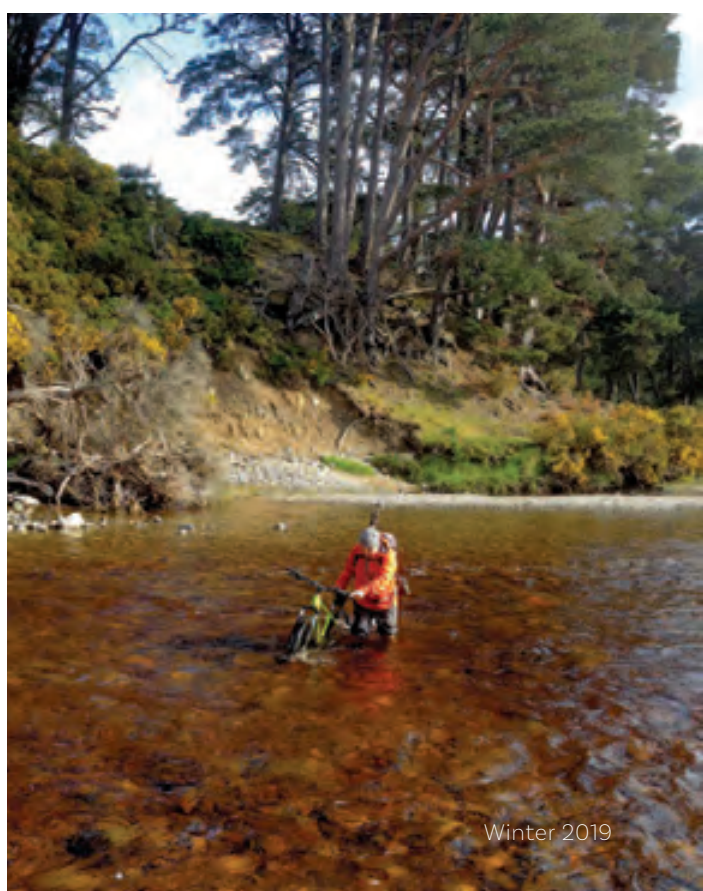
The Cairngorms and Monadh Liath

After the 320-km drive from Cairnryan to the Strathspey Mountain Hostel in Newtonmore, we had time to suss out Tolvah in Glen Feshie, on the western fringes of the Cairngorms, the start of our first hike the next morning.

By 8.00am the next day we were speeding on our bikes for six kilometres along a tarmac road to ford the River Feshie at Carnachuin. We donned garden clogs and, using the bikes as moving props, got across the river without undue difficulty.

Above: Trig point on Larven summit, Knoydart.

Right: Chris fording the River Feshie with bike at Carnachuin.



➤ From Dublin, Quinn brothers **Michael** (66) (left in picture) and **Chris** (63) began bagging Munros in 2007. When this article was written, they were approaching the 200 mark on their way towards completing the 282 designated mountains over 3,000 ft (914m). Chris developed his mountain skills in the Defence Forces during the 1970s, and Michael is the Environment Officer of *An Óige Hillwalkers' Club*. Their main guide is Steve Kew's *Walking the Munros* (Cicerone).

THEN ON DAY TWO WE BAGGED THREE MUNROS IN A RESPECTABLE TIME OF NINE HOURS.

Next, there was a long uphill bike push to nearly 900 metres on a steep land rover track, but we got a fine reward, with just a short climb up to the Munro summit, **Mullach Clach a'Bhlair** ('peak of the stony plain') (1,019m), which we reached at 11.00am.

Returning to the track, we could cycle part of the way towards **Sgor Gaoith** ('windy peak') (1,118m). Thereafter, we hiked to its eminence, lording over **Loch Einich** (600m) below. Even in the mist, the view across to the flanks of the giant **Braeriach** (1,296m) was spectacular. We met only five other Munro-baggers en route, two couples in their thirties and a woman of our own vintage en route from Braeriach.

Descending, we retrieved our bikes and it was a matter of just hanging on grimly to control the bikes in the descent on the loose and heavy gravel. Only then could we appreciate the morning's slog up. Again, we took the plunge into the river. This time it was trickier to stay upright, with bikes downstream on our right.

No bikes were required on day two for the 24km horseshoe we were attempting, encapsulating three Monadh Liath hills: **A' Cailleach** ('the old woman') (945m), **Carn Sgulain** ('hill of the basket') (920m) and **Carn Dearg** ('red hill') (945m).

We started from behind the hostel by the River Calder, where a path led due north past an old tin bothy and up to **A' Cailleach**. The route on to **Sgulain**, a steep down and out of an incised glen, got lost in soggy peat, but there was a generous reward at the summit – the remains of a fence of rusty iron



Above:
Descending
from Sgor
Gaoith.

Below: View
from Sgor
Gaoith over
Loch Einich to
Braeriach,
Cairngorms.

stanchions to use as a handrail along the high 7km traverse towards **Carn Dearg**.

Along there, we met a lone **ptarmigan** (pictured), splendid in its darker summer plumage, and three mountain hares in brackish coats, sporting white tails. We also met four young walkers from Aviemore and one young woman with a Labrador puppy looking out from her mountain bag. A raven had left us a souvenir on top of Carn Dearg, a sturdy coal-black feather.



Ptarmigan, the brothers' favourite Munro bird

The descent led towards the key escape route from the valley below – the wooden bridge over the Allt Fionndraigh – and back out to the banks of the Calder. It was a rewarding day for us, with three Munros bagged in a respectable time of nine hours.

Our Monadh Liath Munro on day three was well named: we accessed **Geal Charn** ('bright or happy hill') (926m) by crossing the Garva Bridge that spans the young River Spey, west of Laggan village, just a thirty-minute drive west from Newtonmore. A handrail path by Allt Coire nan Dearcag led to a ridge that rose gradually onto a long plateau and the summit's large cairn.

Up there, the wind was howling, obliging us to don hooded jackets and gloves, but that took little away from the pleasant five-hour hike on the huge, high moorland, the sight of a monarch-of-the-glen stag deer on a far ridge and the sound of the gushing waters of the Allt on the fine descent.

Over the sea to Knoydart

So inaccessible are the three Munros of the Knoydart peninsula that we had to take a ferry from the port ➤





of Mallaig, Lochaber, to get to our base at Knoydart Lodge in the village of Inverie.

Day four was dedicated to bagging the acclaimed **Ladhar Bheinn** ('hoof mountain') (1,020m), known as **Larven**. We began with a 5km bike ride to the limit of the land rover track at the eastern end of Dubh-Lochain. We then hiked on for four kilometres to the high launch-point for these hills, Mam ('mountain pass') Barrisdale.

A darting mountain hare welcomed us to the steep slopes, but soon our full attention was required for bouts of scrambling and careful navigation to gain the ridge, an exposed arête with three peaks. We were drawn out to the trig point on the furthest top, but it is the second which is the Munro.

While lunching there, we were joined by three athletic walkers, including a geologist. She told us that these lofty rocks had once been laid down in a

Above: Chris shows the way from Luinne Bheinn to Meall Buidhe, Knoydart.

Below left: Rainbow, as Michael checks out the route on Meall Buidhe summit, Knoydart.

Below right: Chris tidies boulderfield, Glen of Dubh-Lochain.

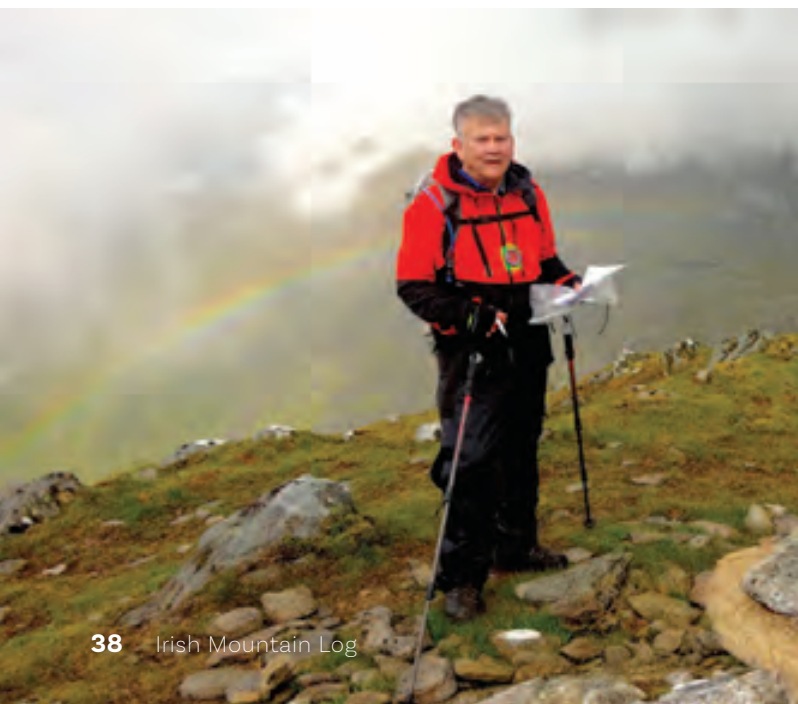
riverbed. On the descent, we met a woman accompanied by a sprightly little dog, named Kerry in honour of having been born on St Patrick's Day.

The final obstacle of the day was encountered on the bike journey home: some Highland cattle. Ignoring all entreaties to move off the track, they obliged us to dismount and pull the bikes up and over a deep ditch.

Back on the bikes the next morning at 7.45am, we again headed towards Mam Barrisdale, the gateway now to **Luinne Bheinn** ('hill of fierceness') (939m) and **Meall Buidhe** ('yellow mountain') (946m). With a more easterly exit point from the day's circuit, we dropped the bikes beneath a monument before Dubh-Lochain. As we walked alongside the loch, we were wowed to see midstream three **red-throated divers**.

It was a long haul up the first top, with some scrambling, and we didn't summit until midday.

It was even tougher going over to **Meall Buidhe**,





ON MEALL BUIDHE THE SCRAMBLING FORCED US TO STOW AWAY WALKING POLES.

When we reached the car, we peeled off saturated gear, mounted our bikes on the rack and rushed off to the luxury of Mansefield Guest House at Corpach, where the Australian proprietors **Bev** and **Toby Richardson** pampered us during a two-night stay.

Fuelled by hearty breakfasts and with gear fresh from the drying room, we returned the next morning to the wind and rain for our seventh and final day's Munro-bagging, aiming for **Sgurr nan Coireachan** ('peak of the corrie') (956m) and **Sgurr Thuilm** ('peak of the hill') (963m).

Our starting point was at the entrance to the Glenfinnan estate, beneath the **Glenfinnan viaduct**, the 19th-century, multi-arched, thirty-metre-high railway bridge that features in the Harry Potter films.

Biking in along the broad 4km tarmac road, we were greeted by the estate's senior ranger, who advised us that in the prevailing conditions we could expect poor visibility and high winds on the ridge between the Munros.

So it proved but, having bagged **Sgurr nan Coireachan** with its stone enclosure and trig point, a clear path and iron posts helped us navigate the intervening cols and tops, which included **Meall an Tàrmachain**, named for our favourite Munro bird, the **ptarmigan**. Alas, not even one ventured out that day.

We abandoned the iron posts route in good time to turn for **Thuilm's** summit, from where careful navigation in the soup-like conditions was required to gain the south-west ridge and the wet but faithful path back towards the bikes. As we sped along on the smooth tar, the **Glenfinnan viaduct** suddenly appeared out of the clouds, like a Highlands Arc de Triomphe, to hail the safe and successful end to our trip ■

where the scrambling forced us to stow away walking poles, but there was a just reward when we finally got to the top at 3.20pm: a singing skylark and a full rainbow, indicating the showery weather. We had hailstones at times, but visibility was good and the cool temperatures were welcome.

Our navigation downhill to the west went to plan, and even when, as expected, the path disappeared, a compass bearing helped us to pick up the lower path that led to Druim.

We passed the bothy at the bottom of Gleann Meadail and gingerly crossed over a high, wooden bridge, which was rotten in places, above the Inverie River. Then a short walk led us back to the bikes. All told, it took us thirty minutes short of twelve hours, but Knoydart's magnificent three were now in the bag!

Below: The Glenfinnan viaduct, with steam locomotive crossing it.

Glenfinnan near Fort William

The early ferry out of Inverie had us back in Mallaig in good time to drive east along the A830 and stop before Loch Eil. We immediately set out northwards for Munro number ten on the trip, **Gaor Bheinn** ('great rough hill') (987m), known as **Gulvain**.

We biked in on a solid track for 6km, but then it was a steep zigzag climb up to Gulvain's south top at 858m. From there – with rain and wind howling like demons – we ground on through a stone field to a tall trig point and then went down a sharp fall before the final kilometre push up on a narrowing ridge to the summit. No wonder Gulvain is described as a shy peak, hidden behind such defences!

Then we had to turn to face directly into the elements and battle back along the route of ascent. We did benefit from an hour's respite from the rain and could snatch a late lunch at 4.45pm, while the midges did their worst. Still, back on the bikes, we sped out at full tilt on the wet track and skimmed over greasy bridges.





A WALK IN THE WOODS

Ronan Concannon tells the story of Howl at the Moon 2019, a newly inaugurated annual fundraiser in aid of the Galway Mountain Rescue Team

"Everybody through. We did it!"

Standing at the edge of the forest with midnight approaching on the night of Saturday, October 12th, with a big smile on his face, **Simon Dring** was remarkably cheerful for someone who had already put in a fifteen-hour day and who still couldn't be sure exactly when he would see his bed. His cheerful statement drew a line under a year-long effort by members of **Galway Mountain Rescue Team** to organise and deliver the most ambitious fundraising event in the team's 44-year history.

Galway Mountain Rescue Team (GMRT) was founded in the 1970s and provides a 24/7 search and rescue service across the remote and mountainous areas of counties Galway and Clare. In 2018, its forty-two volunteers contributed 4,055 person-hours free of charge to provide this vital service.



➤ **Ronan Concannon** is a Galway native and a twenty-year veteran of **Galway Mountain Rescue Team**, most recently serving as the team's **Public Relations Officer**. Having hiked and climbed across Ireland and Europe, he still feels most at home in the wilds of Connemara.

Above: Aerial view of Galway Wind Park with the lights of Galway city visible in the distance.

Below: Volunteers recording walker numbers at checkpoint.

While the funding position of GMRT and its fellow mountain rescue teams has improved in recent years, their annual calendars still need to contain multiple fundraising activities in order to ensure that the teams can continue to operate effectively.

One of the long-term goals of GMRT is to establish a dedicated base for its operations in the Galway area. Over its history the team has bounced between temporary solutions. Currently the team shares an industrial unit with the Galway unit of the **Irish Red Cross**, which serves as a secure garage for





Above: Light painting under the full moon.

Below: Team members consult their checklist as they monitor progress of participants.

IN TOTAL, 322 PEOPLE TOOK PART IN THE WALK TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE GALWAY MOUNTAIN RESCUE TEAM.

Cloosh Valley, south-west of Oughterard. Construction on the development, a joint venture between SSE and Greencoat Renewables, began in 2015 and the wind farm went into commercial operation in 2017. In addition to the installation of 58 wind turbines supplying electricity to over 140,000 homes, the project also saw the creation of the

both organisations. While this represents a significant step up from the previous accommodations the team has used over the years, it still falls short of the standard of facility that the team needs to maintain its operational readiness. The current location lacks sufficient space for drying and maintaining rescue gear, much of which is still stored in members' garages and spare rooms. There is no space for training either, leaving the team to use a borrowed classroom to conduct training and hone members' skills.

With the existing funds provided for the routine running costs of GMRT, it had become clear that an additional stream of funding would be required. Looking at the success of adventure events as fundraising activities both within the mountain rescue community and in the wider non-profit area, it was decided to explore the possibility of creating a new large-scale fundraising event to support the project.

A newly formed fundraising sub-committee was given the task of designing an event. While the idea of a night walk was considered early in the process, the discussions about possible locations took some time. A wide variety of options were considered, including Diamond Hill and various sections of the Western Way. Finally, **Galway Wind Park** was chosen as the most suitable prospective location to host the event, and the idea of a moonlight walk emerged. A lunar calendar was checked, a suitable date on which a full moon might appear was selected and, with that, Howl at the Moon was born.

Galway Wind Park is located in Connemara's





Galway Wind Way. This 48km network of recreational trails with interpretive signage crisscrosses the valley, providing a variety of routes for walkers and cyclists and giving spectacular views across Connemara.

With the venue and date settled, the process of planning the event began in earnest. With the support of **John O'Sullivan**, his colleagues in **SSE Airtricity** and **Coillte**, permission was obtained to use the Galway Wind Park for the event on the night of Saturday, October 12th. A detailed event plan was drawn up and roles were assigned to some willing

Above:
Participants' cars parked at the start of the course in Galway Wind Park.

Below: Some participants enjoying the walk.

volunteers. Contact was made with other teams running similar events to learn from their experiences, and a fact-finding delegation attended the 2018 **Long Way Round** event held annually in the Comeraghs by the **South East Mountain Rescue Association**.

Numerous route options within the Galway Wind Park were walked and debated before two routes were selected to provide participants with the option of a 9km or a 17km night walk.

Mountain rescue teams are highly skilled and adaptive organisations that can operate in a wide variety of terrains and conditions. Logistics expertise is necessary to react and deploy the right personnel with the right equipment to an incident site with little or no warning to complete an effective rescue operation. That said, teams tend to be highly mobile, with a relatively light footprint. This event would pose a totally new kind of challenge in that it required the facilities to register, dispatch, monitor, feed and provide any necessary medical care for up to 400 participants in a gravel car park with no power or running water at a trailhead 9km from the nearest town.

Preparations continued through 2019, kicking into high gear towards the end of the summer. With sponsors reluctant to engage with what was as yet an unproven concept, the team decided to treat the first year as a proof of concept. The overall financial goal was to break even and determine if the event was a viable fundraiser. Crucially, the team also needed to demonstrate that it had the capability to successfully stage an event that would draw participants out into the wilds of Connemara on a chilly October evening.

Finally, the big day arrived. Team members supported by willing family and friends descended on the trailhead early on the Saturday morning. The WhatsApp group had pinged late into the previous night as plans for equipment pick-ups, food drop-offs and last-minute requests circulated within the team.

Once the site had been secured, two large Defence



Forces' tents were pitched and a spider's web of hazard tape was employed to give structure to the registration and catering zones. A few heavy showers during the morning were only a minor cause for concern, with most forecasts suggesting that 6.00pm to midnight would be dry and that there was a strong chance of a clear sky, allowing for views of the full moon.

Meanwhile, a kilometre away in the canteen of the Galway Wind Park operations building, the catering team was firing on all cylinders. Sandwiches, carrot cake, apple tart, cupcakes and bracks were assembled and prepared for the participants. Tea bags and milk were readied to slake the thirst of participants as they crossed the finish line, together with plenty of biscuits for dipping. Meanwhile, loads of wine gums and jellybeans were divided up for deployment to the various checkpoints along the route for those participants who needed a little sugar boost to get them around the course. Fruit was also on offer, although the most popular offering on the night was the homemade flapjacks.

Around 4.30pm, with preparations nearing a close, the team gathered for a briefing and a welcome slice of pizza. When asked how she was feeling, Registration Manager **Mary O'Shea** said, "I could probably do with a nap," when almost on cue the first participants crested the hill on the road from Oughterard and it was action stations.

The short-handed car parking crew were saved by the timely arrival of a **Search and Rescue Dog Association** delegation, who had been training nearby all day. They swooped into action to help for a vital couple of hours.

The full route for the Howl at the Moon 2019 walk was 17.1km long with an altitude gain of 384m.

The shorter option (the northern half of the full figure-of-eight route) was 9km long with an altitude gain of 185m.

Both routes ascended from the trailhead to the ridge on Seecon and then passed beneath Turbine 13 at approximately 250m before following a narrow trail through the forest back to the valley floor. From there they followed along the shore of Lough Seecon back to Checkpoint 2, located at a junction with one of the access roads.

The shorter route began its return leg from this point by looping around the base of the hill and then back into the forest for the darkest section of the route. The longer route continued south from the checkpoint, crossing the river and heading to Turbine 38 before looping back to rejoin the shorter route at Checkpoint 2.

Despite the team's modest expectations for the first year, ticket sales were brisk right up to an hour before the event. In total, 322 people took part in the walk. As the moon rose over the hillside, participants strolled, jogged or ran through the woods, watched over by walk marshals. They drank in the views across the valley with the lights of Galway twinkling in the distance and they craned their necks to take in the wind turbines, rising like giants from the forest and slowly revolving their arms in the moonlight.

The checkpoint teams recorded their progress



Above: Map of the Howl at the Moon walking routes.

and offered a word of encouragement or a handful of wine gums as they passed. Most of all they relished the silence of the wilderness on a glorious autumn night. As one participant put it, "It was very peaceful and felt like being a part of something special."

At the end of the night, as the volunteers gathered in the catering tent to grab a leftover sandwich, GMRT team leader **Rory Sherlock** summed up the evening: "We've done a number of things here. We've laid down the foundations for what we hope will be a multi-annual event. I think that could become quite an important element of our team calendar – and not just our fundraising calendar but our training calendar. Putting something together like this is important. It exercises all sorts of skills that we use on a regular basis in terms of logistics, radio communications, navigation, etc. So, we have done that really well and I think we can build on that as the years go by."

So, if you go down to the woods in Galway Wind Park in October 2020, you might be in for a surprise and, if you're lucky, a couple of flapjacks ■

Find out more

For information on **Howl at the Moon 2020**, please visit www.howlatthemoon.ie

For details of the walking and cycling trails on offer in Galway Wind Park, visit the website www.coillte.ie/media/2018/05/Galway-Wind-Way.pdf



ROCK CLIMBING ON OWEY

Conor McGovern and **Chloe Condrón** report on their week rock climbing on the granite sea cliffs of Owey Island off the west coast of Donegal in September 2019

New routes on Owey Island

By **Conor McGovern**

This September, I decided to take up an invitation to go climbing on Owey Island, a remote island about 300 acres in size, lying off the Donegal coast near Kincasslagh. It is ten minutes by boat from Cruit Island. This turned out to be

one of the best trips I have had to date, with sensational weather and climbing, and great company.

Above: Conor McGovern on the first ascent of Midnight Lobster* E7 6b.**

I was one of five Irish climbers who were tasked by Sheffield-based film company **Coldhouse Media** to help them make a film about climbing in a wild and remote place off the west coast of Ireland. After a short recce mission by two of the Coldhouse crew in June, Owey Island was chosen as our destination.

We had all heard tales of Owey Island's amazing, clean sea-cliff routes with endless scope for new lines, and we soon got to know the five Coldhouse crew who were working with us. We set sail in mid-September and stayed on the island for seven nights.

Even without the climbing, the island is a special place, with possibilities for hiking, kayaking, caving, fishing and swimming during the day, as well as good craic to be had in the evening. We settled into a bunkhouse in the tiny village and made friends with the locals and with Angus and Pio, the cow and goat that reside on the island. We had to wait out two days of heavy rain, but we were rewarded with five days of glorious sunshine after that.

The first route I climbed on Owey was John McCune's E5 **Immaculata** on the sensational **Holy Jesus Wall**. This wall is a dream, with steep, well-protected climbing on pristine granite in an awesome



➤ **Conor McGovern** started climbing with the **UCD Mountaineering Club** about eight years ago. He likes all types of climbing but is a trad climber at heart. He enjoys doing new routes in Ireland and repeating classics both at home and abroad.

situation. It doesn't get better: this is one of the best routes I have done in Ireland, or anywhere. On the same day, **Kevin Kilroy** climbed **Nothing to Fear**, a 3-star E4 on the **Wild Atlantic Wall**.

It was clear that Owey had some of the best trad climbing around. It also has a lot of unclimbed lines and underdeveloped crags.

There is tremendous new-route potential on the island, and five new pitches were added by four climbers in the space of a few days. Spotless Atlantic-washed granite walls make new routing a breeze, and unclimbed cracks, corners, faces and overhangs are littered all around the island. As a result, we shifted our focus to new routing while we were there, and made many abseils and explorations around the island.

Iain Miller has established many routes on Owey and hundreds of others around Donegal. He had his eyes on a potential hard pitch on **The Blade** stack on the north-east side of the island, but unfortunately, after two good attempts, he returned empty-handed.

Michelle O'Loughlin added a beautiful pitch to the left of an existing E6 on the **Blank Spink**, giving **Temple of Boom** E7. Climbed 'ground up' after abseil inspection, this line has hard, well-protected face climbing in a mega atmosphere. Definitely a new classic and a great addition to the climbing Owey has to offer.

Chloe Condon went in search of her first new route and, after all the heartbreak that can come with this style of climbing, she added a brilliant E5 on the Wild Atlantic Wall: **A Feather in the West** has technical climbing on some of the best rock in Ireland and is the first of many new routes to come from Chloe.

Kevin Kilroy had unfinished business from his last trip to Owey in 2014, when he and **John McCune** made unsuccessful ground-up attempts on the massive lip traverse left of the last belay ledge on **Rainshadow** on the **Sron buttress**. After checking out the line and moves on a rope, Kevin made the first ascent of **Lip Rider**, E6. After the lip, the pitch



Above: Kevin Kilroy on the first ascent of **Lip Rider***** E6 6b, with Conor McGovern attentively belaying below.

Below: Sunset celebrations after Michelle O'Loughlin's first ascent of **Temple of Boom** E7 6b.

THERE IS TREMENDOUS NEW ROUTE POTENTIAL ON THE ISLAND, ON SPOTLESS, ATLANTIC-WASHED GRANITE WALLS.

continues up a spectacular corner, giving some of the best exposed climbing in Ireland.

I was lucky to second Kevin's route straight after leading another new pitch below, **Midnight Lobster**, E7, giving a brilliant link-up of the now two hardest pitches on the buttress. This has brilliant bold face climbing and then follows the crux of the existing route, **The Itchy Nose**, for a few metres and branches off to gain the atmospheric belay of **Rainshadow**.

Two days later, I filled in another missing gap on the Sron buttress, which was the slab on the Sron feature itself. **The Lobster Link** is an E3 traverse pitch that links existing multipitch routes on the crag.

Both the climbers and the film crew all tried really hard that week. Simple living on the remote island was humbling and we all learned something from that. The film should be around twenty-five minutes long and it will be free to view online at www.Pertex.com in spring 2020.

Iain Miller has a pdf guide to the island available for free on his **Unique Ascent website**, as well as for all the other crags in Donegal.

I'd like to extend a big thank you to the locals of Owey Island for making us feel so welcome with their endless gestures of kindness.





Above: The view across to the Donegal mainland from Owey, with Cruit Island across the sound. Errigal is the most prominent peak on the horizon.

A new first: 'A Feather in the West'

By Chloe Condron

A visit to the islands off the Donegal coast has been on my wish list for a long time. The west coast of Ireland is a precious place to me, so when an opportunity arose for me to go on an adventure to Owey Island with a mixture of friends and strangers, it felt like one of those moments when the world is giving you a nudge.

As a climber, I feel like I am always in a state of growth. Trips like this, with new people to a new place, often make me nervous because I know I'll be far out of my comfort zone. I tried very hard not to think about it but as the time crept closer, so did the nerves. My objective for the trip was to find a

new line and do my first ever first ascent. New routing is a goal which has been floating around in my mind for quite some time now, but with so many existing classics around the country I hadn't had the chance to pursue it.

The first three days were challenging. We waited on the mainland for a weather window to make the crossing but, with an uncertain forecast, everyone was a little apprehensive. **Kevin Kilroy, Conor McGovern, Michelle O'Loughlin and Iain Miller** all brought a high level of experience and skill to new routing that I haven't developed yet, so I couldn't help but feel out of my depth.

When the swell eventually eased, we made the passage over to Owey. The first thing that struck me while walking up the track to the village was how quiet and remote it felt. Despite how close the mainland looked, it seemed like we were in another world. I had never expected to encounter that so close to home.

As the week went on, I watched the rest of the team find their groove, but struggled to find my own. Maybe I didn't have the eye or the nerve to find a good line? It was during our third day on Owey that I first spotted a potential new route. The day opened with a storm and I spent it dangling high above the sea. It was exposed, wet and so windy that the rope was thrashing about above my head. With 50 metres of it flying all around me I learned my first lesson - use a rope bag!

On the second spin down the route, the storm



➤ **Chloe Condron** is from County Offaly. She started climbing seven years ago with the UCD Mountaineering Club and soon after that started working at Awesome Walls Dublin. Over the last few years she has gained experience in bouldering and in sport and trad climbing. Currently, Chloe is working as a route-setter and manager. She has climbed in the US, Morocco and the Alps, but Wales and Spain are two of her favourite places.



After breakfast, I walked to the crag myself with the intention of checking out the bottom of the route and then hopefully giving it a go. To my disappointment, the route that I had held such high hopes for turned out to be littered with bad rock. It seemed that there was no end to the number of blocks I could pull off – I had simply hit a band of bad rock. After several hours trying to clean the line, I accepted that it was time to walk away or, in this case, jumar away.

Knowing that the days were ticking on, I was a little inconsolable that evening. As everyone else narrowed in on their projects, my objective was slipping away and my morale seemed to be going with it.

Two more friends arrived that day, **Neil Byrne** and **Anastasija ('Naskja') Strizakova**. Before the sun set, I walked around the island with Neil looking for a piece of rock that could be a contender. It is pretty tough to suss out lines on Owey, because the rock is overhanging almost all around the island, and so the sawns are your best friend.

After some walking, we wandered down a slab that was suspended over the sea. Across from the slab was a massive semi-detached piece of rock. On the side facing me was a steep featured face, seemingly full of potential lines. Right there in the middle, however, was a striking groove line that culminated in a rising traverse over a system of roofs with the Atlantic raging some sixty metres below. Could this be the line I had been searching for?

The next day, I shouldered my rucksack and aimed straight for it. I spent the entire day on abseil linking moves and inspecting the rock on the route. Waves pounded below as I swung around in space above the sea. It was wild and steep and the climbing was technical, exposed and intricate. ➤

kicked up a notch and I was forced to retreat back to our cottage. The experience had been a little wild and left me tired and a bit harrowed. Mostly, though, I was psyched and eager to get back out the next day. Despite the intimidation, I had found my feet and hoped I would be doing my first new route the following afternoon.

Below: Sea stacks and arches. Iain Miller made an unsuccessful attempt on the Blade stack, just right of centre.



DONEGAL ROCK



I abseiled straight to the bottom and, within an hour, was confident I had found the missing link. At the top, my anxiety melted away. I sat in the sun, cleared my head and took in my surroundings.

The zawn faced west out across the Atlantic and the sun shone steadily over the golden granite. There were six of us there, all quietly enjoying our last few hours of serenity. Running through the moves of the route one last time in my head, Michelle gave me a feather for good luck. The process wasn't complete yet, but I felt ready to see it through.

Despite finding it challenging to link up on previous days, I found my flow and it felt as though I floated up the wall as it glowed in the sun. I topped out with just an hour to go before our boat left for mainland. Sitting there, I took a moment to fully appreciate the entire experience, feeling lucky and proud to have climbed such an inspiring feature.

As I sat at the top, different route names came to mind. I wanted the name to reflect the experience. In the end, I called it **'A Feather in the West.'** Finding and then climbing this route was a much more involved and absorbing experience than I could have imagined.

Owey Island was the perfect host and I was very fortunate to have shared the experience with a great group of people. I haven't even mentioned the music, the local hospitality and the fishing that also played such a great role in making my time there unique. I want to say thanks to everyone that I shared the island with. I think we all left knowing that we had experienced something special ■

The path I was working on weaved up through a multitude of different terrains. I worked it using ropes at two different locations to access it, but I couldn't access the very bottom. There was a ledge forty metres down that seemed the natural start for the route and it required an additional abseil location to reach it. Eventually, I linked it all, except for the first five or so metres, and then decided to retire for the evening.

The following day, I woke up excited and eager to get back out. I left early with the intention of finding a link for the bottom of the route, resting and then finally giving it a go.

Many hours later, while the sun set, I sat on the slab opposite the line, disheartened. I had been trying the bottom five metres the entire day and still could not find a link. I sat there staring at the wall and weighing up my options. Tomorrow would be our last day on the island. That morning would be my final chance to negotiate the lower section of the route, hopefully leaving enough time to climb the route in the early afternoon. Sitting there, I decided there was one last option that I hadn't tried yet. I spent that night solemn with focus, visualising sequences over and over in my head.

I was optimistic and focused walking in, aware that I only had one more shot. After quickly rigging a rope,

Above: Chloe Condron inspecting her first new route on abseil prior to leading it: A Feather in the West* E5 6a.**

Right: Michelle O'Loughlin after completing the first ascent of Temple of Boom, E7 6b. Possibly the hardest female first ascent of a traditional rock climb in Ireland to date. And in good style too – ground up after abseil inspection. Michelle clocked some big air miles falling onto gear before her successful ascent.





SUMMER ALPINE MEET 2019

American **Patrick Duffy** travelled to Chamonix to take part in Mountaineering Ireland's Summer Alpine Meet on his first ever visit to the Alps

As a climber from the US who was over in Ireland this year for the first time (on a work assignment), my priority was to research the climbing possibilities here. My first climbing trip was to Fair Head in County Antrim and it fairly blew me away. It was quite the introduction to Irish climbing – we sent some of the classics and watched the sun set over the coast, while swapping

Above: The Aiguille du Midi towering over Chamonix at sunset.

stories and sharing our future climbing aspirations.

When I mentioned that I had always wanted to climb in the Alps, one of the guys recommended checking out **Mountaineering Ireland** and the **Summer Alpine Meet** that it hosts each year.

When I got back to Dublin I did some research. It turned out that registration ended the next day, so I made up my mind on the spot. I was going. A day later, I was officially a Mountaineering Ireland member and had a ticket booked to fly to Geneva.

As the event neared, my excitement rose and my anxiety mounted. I had shipped all my climbing gear from my home in the States, and the US Postal Service (USPS) had lost the package in transit. After many painstaking calls to the USPS, the Royal Mail and An Post, I finally tracked my gear down and was able to collect it, just hours before my flight.

In retrospect, I would have been better off renting gear from one of the many climbing shops



► **Patrick Duffy** describes himself as a weekend warrior, in the truest sense of the term. He works as an aerospace consultant from Monday to Friday and spends his weekends in the mountains. His job takes him to new places regularly, which allows him to explore different mountain ranges. He is thankful for organisations like Mountaineering Ireland which have made exploring these ranges possible. He is currently preparing for an expedition to Alaska in 2020. Follow him on Instagram @Pat_Duffy.



in Chamonix, but alas, that is with hindsight's 20-20 vision.

Retrieving my gear may have been complicated, but getting to Chamonix was a breeze.

A cheap flight from Dublin and a quick van ride put me in Chamonix – ‘the birthplace of modern alpinism.’

When I stepped out of the transfer van, my jaw hit the ground. Above me, towering granite spires shimmered in the evening alpenglow. To my right, the monstrous **Mont Blanc** cast its shadow over the valley. To my left, the world-famous **Aiguille Du Midi** shot into the sky, painted pink by the setting sun. Seeing all of that, I knew I was in for quite a week.

**Above:
Climbers
heading down
onto the
glacier after
exiting the
Aiguille du
Midi.**

First morning

The crisp Alpine air woke me on the first morning. Excited to meet up with my climbing partner **Hugh McCann**, I got out of my tent and found him in the campsite. Hugh and I had enrolled together on the **advanced Alpine course** to hone our skills and learn

how to move more efficiently over Alpine terrain.

I had met Hugh only a few weeks earlier when we went to the Mournes together to try to get a few routes in. We were forced to retreat when we were met by a barrage of golf ball-sized hailstones. Fortunately, that weather did not follow us to Chamonix.

We got a text from our guide and instructor for the week, **Paul Swail**. ‘Pack light, meet at the gondola,’ it read.

I stuffed my pack full of my usual Alpine kit, which was tailored for the remote ranges I was used to back home. Paul’s text made me question my gear choices. Maybe it was a bit on the heavy side?

Upon arrival, his comments confirmed my thoughts. ‘We’re in the Alps, guys. How could you possibly have such big packs? They need to be about one-third of that size before we leave.’

Hugh and I audited our packs, shaving them down to a fraction of their initial weights.

When I got on the gondola, Paul’s comments made more sense. We went from valley floor to almost 4,000 metres in a matter of minutes. Back home in the Cascades, that approach would have taken the better part of two days, with overnight packs. Not in the Alps: we were on the glacier in the amount of time it normally took me to sort my gear. No, this was not a place to go for a wilderness experience – but what it lacked in remoteness, it made up for in the quality of the climbing.

Over the next week, Paul took us all over the Alps around Chamonix – from ridges in Switzerland to the glacier connecting Italy and France.

The theme for the week was simple: move fast and pack light. Paul pushed us to move quickly and to think critically about how to maximise our efficiency. I truly appreciated the freedom the course provided. There was no curriculum, no itinerary – just real-world experiences and real-time feedback.

Both Hugh and I learned a lot from Paul and by the end of the week we were feeling quite confident in our ability to move efficiently on a variety of Alpine terrains. ➤

**THERE WAS NO SHORTAGE OF OPTIONS.
THERE WAS ALWAYS SOMEONE A FEW
TENTS AWAY EAGER TO GO WITH YOU.**



Summer Alpine Meet – everyone was in the same spot, at the same time, with the same objective – to climb.

I had booked a course initially for the week to ensure I would have a partner every day but, to my surprise, I ended up spending most nights turning down invitations to join other parties. There was no shortage of options. Whether it was an overnight Alpine objective or a day at a crag, there was always someone a few tents away who was eager to go with you. Truly, a climbers' paradise!

A special thank you to **Jane Carney, Laura Griffin** and all the other people from Mountaineering Ireland involved in organising the meet. Their hard work brought a lot of great people together for an excellent summer adventure.

In addition, a well-deserved thank you to **Paul Swail** and the rest of the hardworking guides at the meet, who dedicated their time to helping the participants learn and improve their Alpine skills.

See you next year in Saas Grund in Switzerland! ■



Above: Hugh McCann and Patrick Duffy on the traverse of the Grand Perron, learning how to move quickly on Alpine ridges.

Right: Clocher-Clochetons spire, Planpraz, seen from Cosmique Arête route.

When our time with Paul was up, we decided to reward ourselves by spending our last day in climbing a true classic – the **Arête des Cosmiques**, a famous Alpine line that finishes by climbing up onto the viewing platform at the top of Chamonix's most famous gondola, the one on the **Aiguille du Midi**.

Because of this, there was an audience for the entire climb – watching, pointing and snapping selfies. As I led up the final pitch I caught a glimpse of the onlooking tourists above. "Only in the Alps," I chuckled to myself.

As we crested the final pitch and stepped onto the platform, we got a round of applause and a few high fives from our spectators. I enjoyed my five seconds of fame, but was equally happy to be done explaining what an ice axe was.

While the climbing at the Alpine Meet was undoubtedly fantastic, the camp life was arguably more enjoyable. Each day, we returned to camp with new stories, eager to put our gear away and discuss the day's events with fellow climbers over a nice French meal – gourmet, by camping standards. With each passing night, my 'to do' list increased, as I was inspired by tales from other climbers of their adventures that day. Life was easy in the campsite. I only wish I could have stayed longer.

Someone to go with

Often the hardest part about climbing isn't the rock nor the conditions – it is simply finding someone to go with. That was the beauty of the Mountaineering Ireland

■ International Climbers Meet in Yosemite

Are you interested in a similar climbing trip to the United States? Every October, the **American Alpine Club** hosts an **International Climbers Meet** in **Yosemite National Park**. This meet offers six days of climbing in the spectacular Yosemite valley, an educational programme, catered gourmet meals, big-wall clinics and nightly social campfires.

This event is highly sought-after, so there is an application process and submissions are due by the end of May each year. International applicants receive a discounted rate to offset travel costs and to encourage global participation. With direct flights from Dublin to California, it is a trip that deserves a spot on every climber's tick list! Visit www.americanalpineclub.org/international-climbers-meet for more information. I hope to see you there!



CLIMBING IN KYRGYZSTAN

Three climbers took part in the 2019 Irish Kyrgyzstan Climbing Expedition, which tackled some difficult climbs in the Ak Su Valley. **Freja Shannon** reports

Kyrgyzstan was a country I had barely heard of, let alone imagined I would ever set foot in. When I told friends and family where I was going on my next climbing trip they looked at me with raised eyebrows and confused frowns.

"Kyrgyzstan? Are you sure? Is it safe? What about that Caldwell lad who got kidnapped?" I would then sigh and assure them it was (probably) safe and that the incident with the American team happened before I was even born!

I had vague notions of Central Asia being a prime rock-climbing destination through skim-reading

Above: The striking granite peaks of Ak Su, showing Sleslova Peak (4,200m) in the middle, which Brian and Freja free-climbed via 'Perestroika Crack' – a highlight of the trip!

articles here and there about remote Yosemite-like walls in that relatively unexplored corner of the world. It wasn't until a close friend of mine showed me actual photos of the granite spires there that I put my foot down and decided it was where I was headed next.

The 'with who' and the 'when' followed shortly after. It turns out that it doesn't take long to convince someone to fly across the globe with you and go big-walling! **Brian Hall** was onboard after about ninety seconds, and **Paul Collins** showed his enthusiasm with a simple thumbs up on Facebook Messenger and something along the lines of "Yeah, I'm in. I don't have much signal at the moment, but book me flights and I'll go!"

Six months later, we were taking over Paul's living room with piles of gear and freeze-dried meals, meticulously weighing everything to make both the airline and the donkey baggage allowances.

"Four ropes, two jumars, double rack, pitons. Freja, do you really need that jar of peanut butter?" Finally, after several repackings and mugs of Barry's tea, we were dropped off at Terminal 2 in Dublin airport and ready to go. Sadly, my peanut butter didn't make the cut!

We arrived in **Osh**, the second largest city in



➤ **Freja Shannon, 22, is half-Irish and half-Swedish and grew up on the west coast of Ireland in the heart of the Burren. She moved to the French Alps at the age of 18 and now spends most of her time there, battling her way up some mountain or granite crack, and pursuing her dream of becoming a mountain guide.**



Kyrgyzstan, located in the Fergana Valley in the south of the country, in the early hours. The airport was bustling and alive, with airport police strolling around with batons in their hands, but with glints in their eyes and big open smiles, exposing the odd missing tooth. I liked the country instantly.

Upon collecting our baggage, it turned out one of the bags hadn't made it onto the connecting flight from Moscow and we would simply have to come back the following day to pick it up. Disappointed, but too jetlagged to care, we hopped into a taxi and made our way to our guesthouse to await further news.

Unfortunately, the bag didn't arrive the next day, or the day after that, nor the one after that either. Bored

Above: Paul petting a shepherd's dog on the approach into the Ak Su Valley. Snowy peaks in Tajikistan are visible in the background.

Below: Freja and two Brazilian climbers who shared basecamp studying topos and scoping potential lines to climb.

THE INTIMIDATING PEAKS LOOKED A LOT FRIENDLIER IN DAYLIGHT...

with waiting and dying in the 45-degree heat, we decided to start the trip without the bag in the hope that it would arrive. Little did we know that we wouldn't see that yellow haul bag for another three weeks.

Reaching the wild mountains

After a very long, very bumpy and very sweaty jeep ride down the Pamir Highway we pulled into a tiny little village called **Ozgurush** where we would start the trip for real. Ozgurush is the last village you come to before entering the wild mountains of the **Batken region**, located only miles from the **Tajikistan** border. With a population of about one hundred, we soon got to know the locals and were welcomed with warm smiles and incredible hospitality. Through the inevitable communication issues with the villagers, I was presumed to be an American journalist – I don't think I have ever been in so many selfies!

Nevertheless, we enjoyed our last fresh meals and the comfortable beds in a guesthouse before packing all our food and gear onto the donkeys and following a trail made by the local Kyrgyz men, heading deep into the valley.

We reached basecamp in the pouring rain three days later and, after the nonstop walking, we were all a bit deflated.





Above: Paul seconding one of the first pitches of Perestroika Crack in the early morning. Basecamp is almost visible near the boulders by the river.

Below: A bivvy spot at the top of Sleslova peak – we're glad we didn't have to sleep there for a night! The peaks in the distance are Peak 4810 (4,810m), 1,000 years of Russian Christianity (4,500m) and Kotina (4,200m).

Highs and lows of the walk-in

In the three days of the approach, we experienced enough highs and lows to last us a lifetime. Unexpected thunderstorms, rough stomachs, never-ending slogs over high mountain passes, sleeping on the ground in shepherd's huts, little kids running out from wooden shacks offering us fermented mare's milk (which, by the way, did not aid the already dubious belly-aches) but all that while surrounded by the most beautiful landscapes you could ever imagine – fast-flowing rivers with makeshift bridges, napping in alpine meadows glistening in the sun, cooking over open fires at night and getting to know the porters and sharing stories, despite not speaking a word of each other's languages.

I remember lying in my tent on our first night

at basecamp and thinking if the trip ended now I would still be happy, regardless of the climbing.

That first night I was also scared, having caught a glimpse of what I was proposing we climb in the flesh and feeling the hostile energy from the walls surrounding us, almost as if the mountains were saying "Go on, I dare you." I fell asleep with the rain spattering on the roof of my tent, thinking there was no way we were going up there.

The next day welcomed us with scorching sunshine, and it pretty much stayed like that for the whole of the rest of the trip. We built a basecamp, dried our clothes and gear and familiarised ourselves with the area. The intimidating peaks the night before looked a lot friendlier in daylight and we spent much of the afternoon peering through binoculars to see what we could climb.

Missing Mountain

Itching to get our hands on rock, we packed our bags for a repeat of **'Missing Mountain'** 6b, a 580m route first climbed in 2001 by Stefan Hiermaier, Michael Meyer, Lutz Wenzel and Radan Svec on **Pamir Pyramid**, a pyramid-like peak topping out at 3,000m.

With a vague red line drawn on a photo, Brian set off on the first pitch and didn't stop until halfway up the route, where we were met by a thunderstorm. Seeing no reason to retreat, we sat in the rain for a couple of hours, hoping it would clear. We topped out that afternoon in the sunshine, buzzing from the climb and the reassurance that maybe we were a fair match for these mountains after all.

Perestroika Crack

By some miracle or other, the missing bag was delivered to us in basecamp one morning as we were having breakfast – fried onions and naan bread (we ate a lot of onions, in fact five kilos of them). We saw no reason to wait any longer as we now had the use of our long-lost stove and various other essential bits. A couple of hours later we were slogging our way up to bivvy at the base of **Sleslova Peak**.

The brilliant **Perestroika Crack** towered above us. The sun was just rising, and the morning was calm... almost too calm. We woke from our bivvy in silence, each of us not daring to express any intimidation or fear. This is what we came here to climb and we would get to the top of it, no matter what. Brian must have drunk too much coffee that morning as he jumped on the first pitch without hesitation.

Soon we were whooping our way up the bottom half of the tower, catching up with the sun's first rays on the golden granite. Even though hauling proved quite an effort, we reached our five-star accommodation in good time and napped in the sun. I'll never forget closing my eyes just as the sun was setting over the mountains opposite us. I had to pinch myself because of the beauty of it all and this incredible opportunity to be an invisible speck on a ledge in the middle of it. No one knew we were there and, although it should have felt lonesome and perhaps scary, I had never felt so content.

This feeling of contentment soon subsided with an horrendous off-width for breakfast. Paul decided he didn't feel so well and stayed on the ledge, while Brian



and I fought our way to the top. A fight indeed – the 6c pitches proved no easier than the infamous 7b pitch. Brian freed the route; I gave up somewhere on the second day with very cold fingers. Nevertheless, we topped out on the spectacular summit with an amazing view of the entire massif – we could even see into Tajikistan!

With no food or water left we began the abseil descent. To our dismay, we were forced to chop our rope, which put a spicy spin on things – ever passed a knot in the dark?!

We finally collapsed back into our basecamp nine hours later in the middle of the night, utterly worn out but delighted with our climb.

I think the most impressive part of it all was Paul's patience sitting on the ledge for fourteen hours with only half a bar of chocolate!

And finally...

We ended the trip on a high from our ascent of Perestroika Crack. The next couple of days were spent packing up basecamp and waiting for our porters to return and collect us, in order to walk back out of the valley. Beer has never tasted as good as when we got back to the guesthouse in Ozgurush where it all started – though I don't think any of us have eaten onions since!

All in all, the trip was a great success and we did some stellar climbing in an incredible mountain range. Funnily enough, it's often not the climbing you think about when you reminisce about trips like this – it's the people you meet and the cultures and the experiences you encounter along the way, which really stick in your memory. I feel lucky to have spent time in Kyrgyzstan and I cannot wait to see what's next!

We would like to give our massive thanks to **Mountaineering Ireland, Hotel Doolin** and the **Austrian Alpine Club** for supporting this trip ■



Above: Freja and Paul enjoying the midday sun high up on the first bivvy of Perestroika Crack after a tough day of hauling. Rumour had it that the ledge could sleep six people, but it was cramped for three!

Below: A very backed-up belay found en route. Who knows how long those pegs have been there.



Expedition factfile

Expedition team

■ **Brian Hall** is 28 years old and spends most of his time either making cups of tea in his van or hanging off some gnarly route in the Burren.

■ **Paul Collins** is 26 years old and spends most of his time working in Awesome Walls Dublin or on climbing trips, be it to Fair Head or to Yosemite.

■ **Freja Shannon** is 22 years old and now spends most of her time in the Alps, battling her way up some mountain or granite crack.

Main climb

■ **Perestroika Crack**, Sleslova Peak, 4,200m
First free climbed by **Lynn Hill** in 1991
Length: 900m
Grade: 7a/7b
Style of ascent: free, traditional
One night bivvy

Ak Su Valley

The Ak Su Valley is located in the Batken region of Kyrgyzstan, giving way to increasingly popular big walls. Climbers, mainly Russian, come here for the compact granite cracks and huge routes – some over 1,200m in length and at altitudes up to 5,000m.

The valley is usually approached via **Ozgurush** village in a three-day trek, joining some of the popular trekking routes in the area. Worth a visit, that's for sure!



Upland management

Learning from Cuilcagh

Summit restoration work planned for 2020



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Hillwalking,
Access &
Conservation
Officer



Part of the trampled area at the top of the Cuilcagh boardwalk. The current viewing platform was created as a short-term measure. Options are being considered for a possible redesign of this 'arrivals area.'

Cuilcagh is a mountain transformed. It is the highest mountain in both Fermanagh and Cavan, once defined by its wildness and quietude ... but today it is the wooden stairway affixed to the side of the mountain that identifies Cuilcagh.

At the top of the stairway, an extensive area of bare peat, its cover of vegetation worn away, bears testament to the impact of excessive footfall.

Beyond this, the impacts of human activity are less obvious but easily found – trampled vegetation, litter caught in crevices and wet wipes behind rocks.

There are positives, too: the number of young people on the boardwalk and the benefit that this visitor activity has brought to local businesses. But could this type of economic gain have been achieved without such great cost to our landscape and natural environment?

Environmental walk

On October 12th, 2019, Mountaineering Ireland members from ten different clubs converged on Cuilcagh for an environmental awareness hike. On a sunny autumn day, participants experienced the natural beauty of Cuilcagh and also learned about the challenges in managing increased visitor

activity on the mountain.

Our group was hosted by **Simon Gray** and **Róisín Grimes**, who are employed by **Ulster Wildlife** to work on the **CANN project**, a cross-border environmental initiative working to preserve priority habitats and species. Simon and Róisín explained the history of the site, the explosion of activity following social media exposure in 2017, and what the current plans are for Cuilcagh.

Current arrangements

In response to continued erosion from high visitor numbers in the area at the top of the Cuilcagh boardwalk, and between there and the summit plateau, new arrangements were put in place this year to manage visitor activity in a way that should minimise further damage.

Visitors to the boardwalk are now asked to keep to the designated path and to remain within the confines of a viewing platform constructed at the top of the boardwalk in 2018.

Hillwalkers who want to visit the summit of Cuilcagh are requested to take other routes on the mountain and to avoid using the boardwalk, to prevent further environmental damage in the area immediately beyond the viewing platform.

Future plans

The viewing platform at the top of the boardwalk, which has been partially successful in containing the impact of visitors, was only ever intended to be a short-term measure. Options to manage the top of the boardwalk are currently being explored as part of the CANN project. Participants in the recent event were encouraged to contribute their thoughts on a possible redesign of this 'arrivals area' to provide a better ending to the boardwalk.

In response to the impact of trampling on the montane heath habitat on the summit plateau, conservation work is planned to narrow and restore the trampled area. This should be implemented in spring 2020, under the CANN project.

Key lessons

Discussion on the day helped participants to see the Cuilcagh boardwalk from different perspectives, and also to understand how each intervention at Cuilcagh since the 1980s has necessitated further infrastructure.

It's a story that provides many lessons for the management of other mountains. Key learnings from the recent event included: ➤

RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

Five ways to park smarter

More people are enjoying the outdoors, as evidenced by the increased pressure for parking space. With busy days ahead over the Christmas holidays and early in the New Year, what can we do to ease the pressure for parking space?

■ Carpool

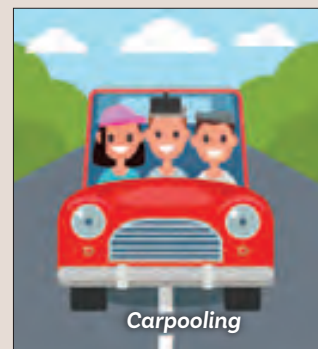
This is the big one and many clubs are fantastic at it. Carpooling saves valuable space in car parks. This means less congestion on narrow roads and fewer farmers frustrated by people parking in front of their field gates. Carpooling also reduces carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. CO₂ is one of the greenhouse gases believed to be most responsible for the global warming which is occurring. Transport is by far the largest source of energy-related CO₂ emissions in Ireland.* In 2017, it was responsible for 39% of CO₂ emissions. It is also the sector where CO₂ emissions are growing the fastest.

■ Mind the gap

Make sure space isn't wasted between cars in unmarked car parks by parking close to another vehicle, even if you have to ask people to step aside or to close a car door.

■ Avoid the crowds

You know the spots that are likely to be busy; so can you approach the same mountain from a different start point or, better still, make a point of exploring quieter areas?



■ Arrange your own parking

Is there a community centre, farm or other premises where your group could get agreement to park? Consider making a donation for parking. This might even inspire the opening of a car park for hikers and climbers.

■ Bus it

Could your club hire a bus, even occasionally? Lots of people inside one vehicle makes good sense and it opens up opportunities for linear routes in the mountains. Challenge yourselves to do at least one outing a year using public transport ■

*www.seai.ie



Simon Gray showing how sphagnum moss, the building block of our blanket bogs, can hold 20 times' its weight in water. The photo includes ecologist and TV presenter Anja Murray plus representatives from ten different Mountaineering Ireland clubs.

- Without due care, interventions to facilitate recreation can end up transforming the essential quality of a mountain.
- Those considering any development in a mountain area should put the environment first, as it is irreplaceable, and consider all aspects of the project, including parking, toilets, communications, possible knock-on impacts and ongoing maintenance.
- There should be consultation with landowners and other interested parties, including local clubs.
- Social media has become a major driver of outdoor activity. Land managers, local councils and nature conservation authorities need to be able to respond quickly

to upsurges in activity, as otherwise significant damage might result.

- Blanket bog and montane heath have very poor resilience to footfall. Generally, it's best to keep within a damaged line rather than widening the damaged area. Be especially mindful of the tendency for groups to spread out on broad summits and ridges with low vegetation.

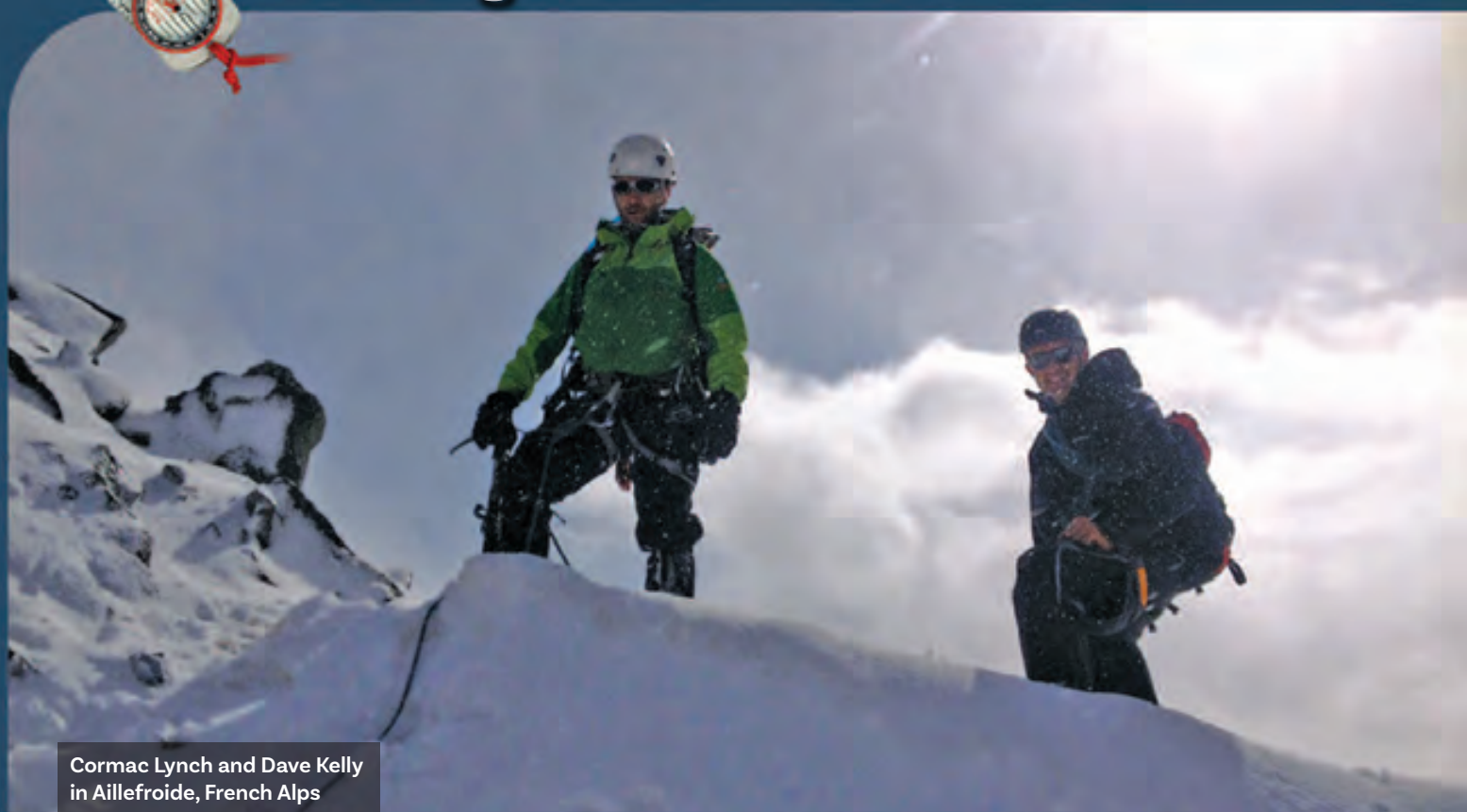
Mountaineering Ireland is committed to protecting Ireland's mountain environment, while also promoting responsible participation in hillwalking and climbing. It is our view that this can be achieved through strategically-directed investment in infrastructure, education and recreation management.

THANKS: Mountaineering Ireland extends thanks to all **participants** who took part in this environmental awareness walk, to **Simon Gray** and **Róisín Grimes**, and also to the **Marble Arch Caves UNESCO Global Geopark**.

FIND OUT MORE: For additional background information on Cuilcagh, download the pdf at bit.ly/3388Z6H ■



Training



Cormac Lynch and Dave Kelly
in Aillefroide, French Alps

Recent and upcoming events

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



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

■ Winter Meet 2020

Inchree, Onich, Scotland, February 8-15th, 2020

Bookings are open now

The Winter Meet information talk took place in Basecamp, Dublin, on November 22nd. There is a short video on the Mountaineering Ireland Youtube channel covering the key aspects of the meet, which will be based in Inchree, Onich, Scotland. There is already snow on the ground there! Please book early. Information packs and booking forms are available on the website.

■ Alpine Meet 2020

Saas Grund, Switzerland, July 4-18th, 2020

Alpine Meet 2020 will take place in **Saas Grund, Switzerland**, where free lift passes for resident visitors are just one of the many benefits of this fabulous location. There, we will continue to offer courses to improve your mountain skills and opportunities to meet others and expand your skills repertoire as alpinists.

Over sixty-five members attended the summer meet this year, with many availing of the Alpine walking, mountaineering and climbing courses that were on offer. Others took the opportunity to learn to lead climb or to experience Alpine huts and trails for the first time.

The Alps offer a lifetime of new venues to explore, which are accessible and can satisfy the requirements of clubs, individuals, families and students, whatever their needs and aspirations. The meet sees the experienced mentoring the



Saas Grund, Switzerland

inexperienced in an apprentice-style pathway, and others following the more formal guide/client approach.

The Saas Grund Valley is rich in well-signed trails, mountaineering routes, climbing venues, accessible huts and a range of accommodation options, including campsites.

Make your next year's Alpine trip plans now and sustain your motivation by making preparations, perhaps even undertaking a little training ahead of the meet, at home or in Scotland.

The courses are organised for the meet by Mountaineering Ireland at cost and are not for profit. They are just one of the many benefits of your Mountaineering Ireland membership ■

See you in Saas Grund, July 4-18th, 2020!

Training awards and registration fees



In Wicklow Gap on the Train the Trainers Workshop in November

■ Increased registration fees

Increases to the registration fees for the leadership and instructor awards came into effect on January 1st, 2019, when a registration fee was also introduced for the skills schemes.

Providers, please continue to support your candidates through the **registration process**. Screenshots from the website can be very helpful to candidates and can clarify the distinction between scheme or award registration and joining the national governing body, i.e. paying for Mountaineering Ireland membership.

■ Leadership and Instructor Award registration fees will be increased from €50 to €52 (from £45 to £47).

■ Rock Skills Scheme registration fee for over-18s: €22 (£20). (Under-18s free.)

■ Mountain Skills Scheme registration fee for over-18s: €22 (£20). (Under-18s free.)

■ Indoor Climbing Assistant registration fee: €22 (£20).

■ Climbing Wall Development Instructor fee: €69 (£57).

■ Rock Climbing Development Instructor fee: €69 (£57).

■ All award and scheme candidates can avail of the reduced Mountaineering Ireland membership rate of €30 at the time of registration ■

News for members, candidates, providers

■ Mountain Training UK name change

It was agreed in support of the full membership of Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) that the **Mountain Training UK** organisation should henceforth be known as **Mountain Training United Kingdom and Ireland (MTUKI)**.

■ MTUKI Walking Awards Review

This review has commenced. We have composed a stakeholder and provider questionnaire, which has been shared widely. Please contact the office to request the link, if you are a stakeholder or provider and have not received it.

■ Final call for Training Grant applications

Please submit your Training Grant applications for the December 2019 MTBI meeting. New applications are now being accepted for Quarters 3 and 4 for review in December 2019.

■ Club Training Officers Workshop

Please book early for the Club Training Officers Workshop running on February 1-2nd, 2020 in the Mourne. See the events section on the website for more details.

■ 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](#) on the Mountaineering Ireland website ■

Key dates 2019

- 2nd December MTBI Training Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 6th December Senior Providers Workshop (CPD), Sport HQ, Dublin
- 18th December Lynam Lecture: Sir Chris Bonington is talking at Chartered Accountants Ireland, 47-49 Pearse St, Dublin 2, at 7.30pm

Key dates 2020

- 13th January MTBI Training Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 28th January Summer Alpine Meet Information Evening, Basecamp, Dublin, 7-8pm
- 30-31st January Train the Trainers, Northern Ireland
- 1-2nd February Club Training Officers Workshop, Wicklow
- 8-15th February Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland (note revised date)
- 29th February Rock Skills Induction Workshop, Dublin/Wicklow
- 6-9th March Mountain Leader Assessment (venue to be confirmed)
- 9th March MTBI Training Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin
- March/April MTUKI Meeting, Glenmore Lodge, Cairngorms (TBC)
- 23-24th May Skills/CPD Workshops in Teaching Navigation, Scrambling & Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 8th June MTBI Training Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 4-18th July Summer Alpine Meet, Saas Grund, Switzerland
- 12th September MTBI Training Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin

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



Robin Beadle, UIAGM Mountain Guide, in the Alps



Training

News for providers

■ We have added a new page to the Mountaineering website for **First Aid Provision** for the Mountain Training Awards and Scheme requirements. Please contact the Training Office if you wish to add a relevant link to this page.

■ **Sport Ireland Coaching** is to share a data protection (GDPR) update with providers.

■ The **MTUKI Walking Awards Review** has commenced and we are seeking your email comments for the next MTBI meeting.

■ We are seeking any final comments on the **Provider Handbook** and agreement review. The latest version will be posted on the website shortly. If you spot any current errors, please contact the Training Office.

■ We are calling for applications for **Accredited Training Groups (ATGs)** (formerly called 'Organisations'); **Cappanalea Education & Training Centre** and **Tollymore National Outdoor Centre** currently hold this status. ATG status is open to all providers or groups of providers. Please contact the Training Office for details.

■ A new provider induction course for the new **Rock Skills Scheme** is to be run in the new year. Please contact the Training Office for details.

■ For upcoming **CPD events** see the calendar.

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

■ **Data Protection Slides.** Providers are reminded to use these slides when delivering any ML, SPA, MPA, LLA and L1 CC courses.

■ Providers are again reminded to start populating course reports early to flag any issues pre-course, such as candidates with lapsed membership or other council membership (such as the BMC or MS), those not registered and those using the wrong email or membership number. Colleges and outdoor courses are asked to submit fully completed manual registration forms well ahead of any courses (6-8 weeks) ■



Training on a recent skills workshop in Connemara

Mountain Training Board Ireland seeks new members

Two vacancies exist for members on **Mountain Training Board Ireland**. Application form and details are available on the website, or contact Training Officer **Jane Carney**. A sincere thank you to the two outgoing members – **Colin Gibbon** (18 years' service in various roles) and **David Batt** (two years' service).

Update to rock climbing module on instructor training courses

Outdoor courses available in Ireland that offer Quality and Qualification Ireland (QQI) awards and modules need to be aware of the recent changes to the Single-Pitch Award QQI Level 5 and 6 modules. Mountaineering Ireland has four modules within the QQI listings:

- Level 5 Mountain Skills
- Level 4 Rock Skills
- Level 5 Single-Pitch Award Training
- Level 6 Single-Pitch Award Assessment.

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

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

Please contact the Training Office to discuss the transitional arrangements for candidates and the course requirements for trainers and those managing outdoor course provision. The **Training Officer, Jane Carney**, can be contacted for further details on (01) 625 1112 ■

Stay safe out there!

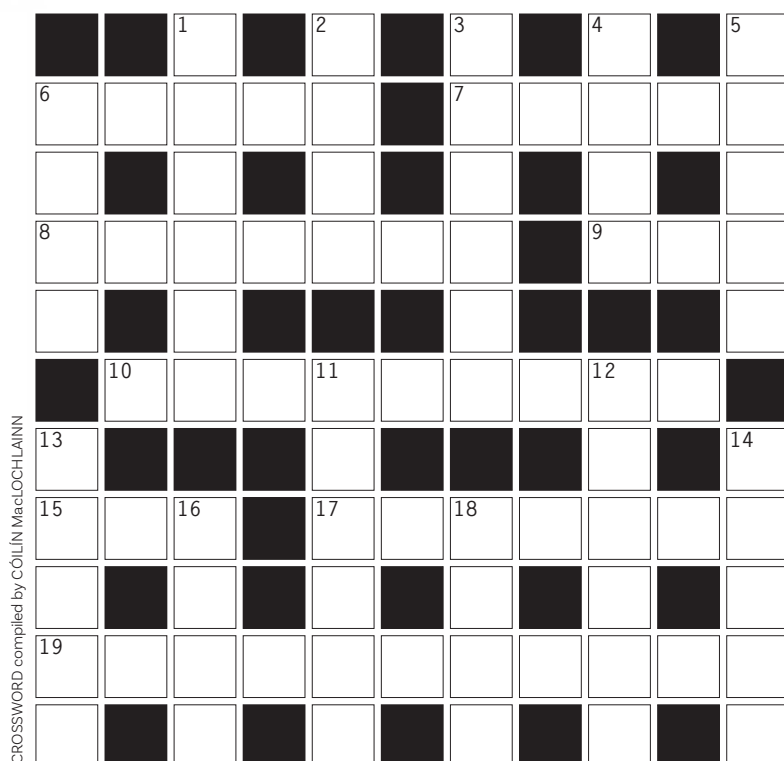


Qualified providers with Mountaineering Ireland Training Officer Jane Carney at a recent Providers CPD workshop in Glendalough, Co Wicklow



Christmas Competition

Win one of two great prizes from **Basecamp** if your correct completed entry is one of the first two drawn from the hat!



Clues Across

- 6 A block forming part of limestone pavement, also first name of spaghetti westerns' superstar (5).
- 7 A sharp mountain ridge, typically alpine (5).
- 8 The Khumbu one, above Everest Base Camp, is a highly dangerous, chaotic, crevassed icy glacier (7).
- 9 A resort hotel or locality with mineral spring (3).
- 10 A well-known prominence on the ridge leading north from Tonelagee in the Wicklow uplands (6,3).
- 15 Old-fashioned heat storage stove and cooker (3).
- 17 Flying insect often drawn to cowpats (4,3).
- 19 A narrow mountain pass in the eastern Reeks of Kerry, very popular with tourists (3,2,6).

Clues Down

- 1 With 3 Down, a much-visited glen with reservoir in the Mourne, named for its quietness (6,6).
- 2 An active volcano in Sicily (4).
- 3 See 1 down.
- 4 Named after its monster, this Scottish loch (4).
- 5 To protect a climber by passing a rope through a friction-enhancing device (5).
- 6 Metal or plastic clasp for holding together papers, etc (4).
- 11 To fall asleep briefly or unintentionally (3,3).
- 12 Arderin is the high point of this Slieve Bloom county (6).
- 13 A series of connected mountains or hills (5).
- 14 The late Mary _____ Moore was a US sitcom star (5).
- 16 Most famous central European mountain range (4).
- 18 A village north of Finglas, Dublin, rhymes with fall (4).



Deuter Trail 30 backpack (€115)



Scarpa Terra GTX boots (€189)

How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win one of two prizes worth €115 and €189 respectively, from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin.



Basecamp Outdoor Store, Dublin and Kilkenny
Website: www.basecamp.ie

Competition prizes

Basecamp's generous prizes comprise a Deuter Trail 30 backpack (available in blue, black and red) at €115 and a pair of Scarpa Terra GTX boots at €189 (available in both men's and women's styles).



Fictional but near-true tale



SKY DANCE: FIGHTING FOR THE WILD IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

By John D Burns

Vertebrate Publishing (2019), 404pp, no maps or illustrations, £9.99, ISBN 978-1-912560-26-4. A Kindle version is available for £6.83

The title of this book derives from the courtship flight of the hen harrier, a beautiful but increasingly scarce predator in the Scottish and Irish uplands. From the subtitle, one might

infer a worthy (and wordy!) account of nature conservation in Caledonia. Were a purchase to be made on this assumption, the buyer might perhaps be pleasantly surprised by the complex plot which unfolds between its covers and by the author's evident passion for our sport and for its wild environment. In his own words, "while this might be a work of fiction, that doesn't mean it isn't true."

Of Liverpool origins, Burns has lived in Inverness for over thirty years and climbed in Scotland and abroad for many more. He has written several books, the first of which, *The Last Hillwalker*, enjoyed considerable success some years ago. Live appearances, including storytelling and readings from his books, are a regular feature and reflect a Dickensian virtuosity in his work, which this reader much appreciated. Heroes, heroines



Male hen harrier

and their opposites are vividly described. John Burns wears his conservationist's heart very much on his author's sleeve.

Two emblematic upland creatures and their interaction with over two dozen colourful characters begin and end this tale. The killing of a harrier and the release into the wild of two lynxes are defining events in the plot. The first of these has regrettably occurred several times in an Irish context and the latter might eventually result from proposals under consideration for parts of our western landscapes.

My interest in this book derives from my sighting of a stunning blue hawk (a male hen harrier) in the King's River

valley of Wicklow many years ago, when the forests there were young. That was within one kilometre of where I later saw an even rarer nightjar. Together with seeing a soaring golden eagle over Skye's wild Quirang, these sightings represent the high points of my fifty years of nature-watching in the hills.

While such a large book could hardly be described as unputdownable, I would strongly recommend it as entertainment for several long winter evenings.

Milo Kane Member of the Irish Ramblers Club and a hillwalker, including in Scotland. A former Chair of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee

An English translation of a classic of French literature



FIRST ON THE ROPE

By Roger Frison Roche

Vertebrate Publishing (2019, a reprint of first edition), 250pp, no photographs or maps, £14.99, ISBN 978-1-911342-45-8

As someone who practically eats books, I thought I had read every possible

mountaineering-related story out there. So how could this critically acclaimed translation of this 1941 French classic have escaped my clutches?

Many mountaineers write books, but not all are writers in the truest sense. Roger Frison Roche was a rare gem, being both guide and journalist, he successfully straddled two worlds. His evocative writing and intimate knowledge of every pebble, crevasse and bergschrund plunges you deep into the heart of the Massif du Mont Blanc and Les Aiguilles Rouges as they were one hundred years ago. It will be particularly interesting and nostalgic for anyone who has ever visited the region.

Frison Roche paints a vivid picture of the Chamoniard people and life in the valley at

that time. He describes scenes that would be considered idyllic by any of us who are drawn to the hills. The mountains are great equalisers and, here, people were judged on their own merit rather than their power, money or even gender. We catch a glimpse of how the Compagnie des Guides de Chamonix came into being almost two hundred years ago, the apprenticeships, deep friendships and support in your hour of need – whatever that may be.

The novel is primarily based around one family and their complex relationship with the mountains. It navigates tragedy and several heart-stopping moments of near panic which compel you to keep turning page after page.

It ponders the pain and sorrow that mountains can inflict. But throughout, you will encounter love, warmth, sheer determination and a strong sense of the indefatigable human spirit. It's unsurprising, then, given the era it was first published in, that it became a French classic.

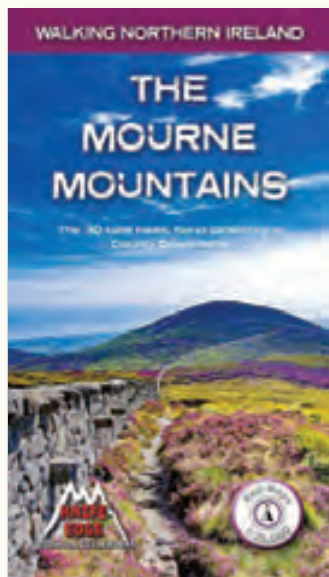
It's unfortunate that a map of the area isn't featured in this publication. I would recommend you have the relevant IGN maps to hand if you can, so you can navigate along with the protagonists in the story and truly immerse yourself in it.

Cindy Doyle Lover of coffee, mountains and cold places – in that order. Mountaineering Ireland family member

The thirty best hikes in the Mourne, handpicked by a County Down local



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



WALKING NORTHERN IRELAND: THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS

By Andrew McCluggage

Knife Edge Outdoor Guidebooks (2019), 136pp, many colour photos and maps, £13.99 (ppbk), ISBN 978-1-912933-03-7

The author, a keen walker, travel writer and photographer from County Down, states on his website that he wanted to publish guidebooks that were different. He found other guidebooks boring and says that their sketch maps were just not good enough.

So far, Andrew McCluggage has written and published three guidebooks on trekking in the Alps, including ones on the Tour du Mont Blanc and the Walker's Haute Route, but this is the first one on home ground.

It comprises descriptions of thirty walks, including three low-level ones. The classic routes are, of course, included, such as the routes on Slieve Donard and Slieve Binnian, for example, but the guide also describes

interesting routes in less walked areas, such as the Seefins, Spelga and the western Mourne.

So, what marks out this publication as different? The main thing is the route maps. The publishers use 'Real Maps,' as they call them, reproducing sections of the OSNI 1:25,000 Activity Map and overlaying them with the routes.

The routes have numbered waypoints, which correspond to the text, so it is easy to see where you are when reading directions.

The text has quite a lot of detail, which I found good in

the mountains.

The introductory sections inform readers about the local heritage, be it the Mourne Wall, Tollymore or the *Game of Thrones* filming locations. Good practical advice is found in the sections on accommodation, the seasonal weather, getting there and around, the general information from Mountain Rescue to charging electronic devices, and what you need to do and bring to be safe in the mountains, plus the tasters on wildlife, plants and geology.

This book is aimed mainly at the first-time visitor to the



on the righthand side with a photo or text on the left, although every page is colourfully identified with the walk number.

Also, there are a few small discrepancies between route maps regarding walk numbering.



regard to access points, in particular. You would need the book in hand regularly to follow its directions.

McCluggage also states on his website that he wanted loads of colour – and he has got it. Maps are reproduced exactly as the original, and routes and waypoints on the maps are colour-coordinated with the numbered sections of text. The very scenic photographs are printed to show off the best colour in

Mourne ("We hated having to buy both a book and a map" – from his website) and there is plenty of information for anyone unfamiliar with the Mourne. The writer has done a lot of research on every walk, and hillwalkers will find great comfort in following his routes and great satisfaction, too, in completing any of them.

I have a small quibble over the layout of some walks, where the walk title page is

Overall, I found this a welcome addition to the many books on the Mourne. As a lover of these mountains for many years, I can recommend this book to the general hillwalking community, including more seasoned regulars. Readers certainly won't find it boring.

Nicky Hore Hillwalker with Blayney Ramblers and regular visitor to the Mourne. Past Honorary Treasurer and Board Member of Mountaineering Ireland



Fascinating biography of a leading British Alpinist



THE UNCROWNED KING OF MONT BLANC: THE LIFE OF T. GRAHAM BROWN, PHYSIOLOGIST AND MOUNTAINEER

By Peter Foster

Bâton Wicks (2019), 220pp, 16pp photos (b&w, sepia and one full-colour photo), £14.95, ISBN 978-1-898573-82-1

This is a fascinating book about the life and times of **T (Thomas) Graham Brown**, unsung hero of British mountaineering in the interwar years. His three routes on the Brenva Face of **Mont Blanc** were groundbreaking for their time, being bold and

uncompromising, and put him at the forefront of British Alpinism.

At the same time, he was involved in cutting-edge climbs in North America, and others in the Himalayas. That was impressive for a man said to have “no great technical ability” for climbing.

T Graham Brown was born in Edinburgh in 1882 and was unexceptional in his school years. However, in medical school in Edinburgh he qualified with honours as a doctor but then found his forte as a physiologist. The importance of his research findings into the neuro-physiology of locomotion was only recognised much later.

He started climbing while working in Manchester after the First World War. From climbing in the Lake District he moved on to guided climbing in the Alps, where he met **Frank Smythe**, with whom he put up two routes on the Brenva Face of Mont Blanc.

However, as with so many other things in his life he felt

his contribution to those routes was not recognised and he subsequently engaged in a lifetime feud with Smythe.

Later, he put up a third route on the Brenva Face to complete his triptych.

It seems to have been ‘love him or hate him’ as far as many prominent mountaineers of the time were concerned. He feuded with **Winthrop Young**, but had a good relationship with **Charles Houston**, with whom he made the first ascent of **Mount Foraker** in Alaska.

So much of his life was contradictory. He was on the expedition that made the first ascent of Nanda Devi in the Garwhal Himalayas. **Bill Tilman** and **Noel Odell** summited, but Graham Brown felt his own contribution went unrecognised. An attempt on **Masherbrum** was not successful and it seems he managed to alienate everyone on that expedition.

He was editor of *The Alpine Journal* from 1948 until he was sacked in 1954 for dwelling too

much on the past, allowing his feuds with various members to influence what he published, and for a failure to meet publication deadlines – strange in someone as precise as he otherwise appeared to be.

Later, he was elected president of **Edinburgh University Mountaineering Club**, where he was popular with the students, going to many of their meets, and he continued to climb well into his seventies.

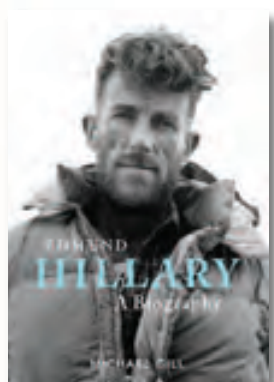
He passed away in 1965, controversial to the end, even in his bequests.

T Graham Brown was an important British mountaineer in the interwar years and was a leading Alpinist. His incredibly full but controversial life has been very well documented by physician and climber Peter Foster in this excellently researched book.

However, be prepared to spend time working your way through this readable but very detailed book. It will be well-rewarded.

Patrick O’Sullivan Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*

An exhilarating Hillary biography



EDMUND HILLARY: A BIOGRAPHY

By Michael Gill

Vertebrate Publishing (2019), 500pp, colour & b&w photos throughout, €29.90, ISBN 978-1-911342-96-0

Everyone knows something about how Everest was first

summited, but if you need a crash course in the story then this biography of Edmund Hillary does the job admirably.

Okay, 500 pages does not sound like a crash course! But author Michael Gill’s simple and engaging style makes this a pulsating, highly enjoyable read.

He does not draw breath until the John Hunt-led British expedition of 1953 is on the brink of putting Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing on the summit. At that point he recounts the intriguing history of the failed expeditions of the 1920s, which ended with Mallory and Irvine losing their lives near the summit.

He then returns to Hillary’s story. Communication between

Hillary and Tenzing was rudimentary on the climb; they trusted each other’s ability. Hillary proffered his hand on the summit; Tenzing threw his arms around him.

A late bloomer in the romantic stakes, Hillary romanced Louise Rose and married her a few weeks after his ascent, before bringing her on the first of many visits to the States. Michael Gill was given access to the Hillary archives and uncovered the love letters they swapped in the weeks prior to the expedition.

While Hillary won his place on the British expeditions for being stronger than most at altitude, ironically he was struck down by altitude sickness on every future high climb and had to give them up.

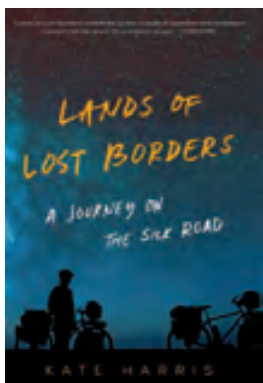
Hillary and Louise had an idyllic marriage, raising three children in Auckland, New Zealand. They set up a foundation to build schools in Nepal, but tragically, Louise and their youngest daughter Belinda lost their lives in a plane crash in March 1975, devastating Hillary.

Hillary invited Michael Gill, a young New Zealander who had trained as a physician, to take part in an expedition to study acclimatisation in the Himalayas. Gill was part of Hillary’s subsequent adventures, working as a photographer and filmmaker, and they became lifelong friends.

A thumping good read, and a brilliant Christmas present.

Cóilín MacLochlainn Designer of the *Irish Mountain Log*

The mountain book awards for 2019



And the winner of the **2019 Boardman Tasker Award** is... *Lands of Lost Borders* by **Kate Harris** – “a gripping account of an epic journey, fraught with difficulties and dangers, made by the writer and her partner following the old Silk Road through many different countries.”

We have probably all got ourselves at some time into a situation which, with hindsight, might have been better avoided. Very few of us can have illegally slipped into Tibet by bicycle, evading checkpoints by slipping under the barrier in darkness at 3.00am on a moonless night!

I've now started reading *Lands of Lost Borders* on

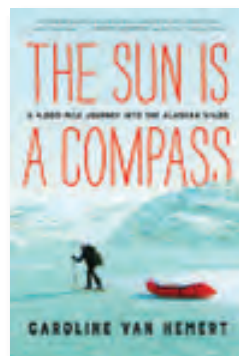
Kindle (the Kindle edition includes the account of that illegal crossing into Tibet).

My only gripe so far with the Boardman Tasker Awards is the presumption that we are all glued to Twitter – the award was announced first on Twitter and only showed up days later on www.boardmantasker.com.



The winner of the Grand Prize at the **2019 Banff Mountain Book Competition** in October was *Down from the Mountain: The Life and Death of a Grizzly Bear*, by **Bryce Andrews**, a book on conservation that has been described as a chilling page-turner.

Among the other awards, the Adventure Travel prize



went to *The Sun is a Compass: A 4,000-Mile Journey into the Alaskan Wilds*, by **Caroline Van Hemert**.

The prize for Mountain Literature (Non Fiction), The Jon Whyte Award, was won by *Waymaking: An Anthology of Women's Adventure Writing, Poetry and Art*, by **Helen Mort, Claire Carter, Heather Dawe**



and **Camilla Barnard**, which was reviewed in the Winter 2018 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* (page 63).

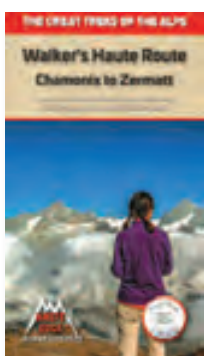
The Mountain Fiction & Poetry prize was won by *The Equilibrium Line*, by **David Wilson**, also already reviewed in the *Irish Mountain Log* (Autumn 2019, page 62).



Although very different, all five books are certainly worth considering for Christmas reading.

Peter O'Neill Literary Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*

Very useful guide to a bucket-list Alpine hike



WALKER'S HAUTE ROUTE: CHAMONIX TO ZERMATT
By **Andrew McCluggage**

Knife Edge Outdoor Guidebooks (2019), 152pp, many colour photos and maps, £14.99, ISBN 978-1-912933-02-0

An excellent new guidebook from new publishers Knife Edge Outdoor (see also the review of their Mournes guide in this issue, page 63). Lavishly illustrated on durable paper, yet still easily packed, this should be an essential companion for anyone contemplating the **Walker's Haute Route** – 206 kilometres-long, with twelve mountain passes and thirteen route variants.

I particularly liked the way the route is described in 23 stages, allowing grouping into

six options, ranging from a leisurely fourteen-day option to a ten-day option for very fit walkers only.

Maps and all necessary planning information are provided, including the important but sometimes overlooked opening and closing dates for mountain refuges. In addition, there are contact details and facilities for all accommodation, sorted by route stage.

There is a brief travel section, which prompted an amused recollection of travelling to

Zermatt in winter more than fifty years ago and being told by a prominent but now defunct Dublin travel agency that I would not be able to return to Zurich by train “as the trains do not run in winter”! This guidebook now provides the information that trains run regularly directly from Zermatt to both Zurich and Geneva airports (although I think there was one change involved to get to Zurich airport all those years ago).

Definitely a bucket-list hike.

Peter O'Neill Literary Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*

Christopher Quinn

Irish Jolly Rambler and Scottish Munro bagger



Chris Quinn at Art's Lough on June 19th, 2017

Christopher 'Chris' Quinn died suddenly while climbing with his daughter **Emma** on Mweelrea, Co Mayo, in September this year. He was 63 years old.

Chris grew up in Fairview, Dublin, and from an early age was blessed with a sound sense of direction. When he joined the Irish Air Corps in the 1970s, his training in aviation technology included map and compass studies that were to serve him well in his favourite hobby, hillwalking.

In the late 1990s, while he was working with Team Aer Lingus, he invited some friends and family to join him on the Wicklow Way. After that, he led regular walks throughout the Dublin and Wicklow mountain ranges. Such was the spirit of friendship that sprang up among the informal group of about thirty regulars that gathered for these walks that we adopted the name **Jolly Ramblers**.

Chris established an annual December 28th outing to climb Lugnaquilla, Co Wicklow, to work off the festive turkey and pudding, and soon he was organising other trips to Ireland's other highest mountains, and across to Scotland, England and Wales.

In 2007, after a visit to the Isle of Skye's towering Black Cuillin ridge with my brother, where we braved for the first time knife-edge ridges and extreme exposure, Chris and I decided to undertake a new challenge, Scottish Munro-bagging. Because of our ages (we were then in our fifties) and work commitments, Chris (pictured) devised a 15-year programme and prioritised four groups of Munros: (1) the 'ropey' ones – for which he hired professional guides for short sections in the Torridons, Glencoe, and again on Skye for our memorable rock climb and abseil in 2016 on the Inaccessible Pinnacle; (2) eight over-4,000-footers; (3) the Cairngorms plateau; and (4) those Munros located



Chris Quinn, centre middle, with some Jolly Ramblers on the Wicklow Way

north of the Great Glen – the long geological divide that runs from Inverness to Fort William and separates the northern from the southern Highlands.

In total, we brothers had made seventeen trips over the thirteen years, with some Jolly Ramblers making cameo appearances on some of them. Chris's dedicated commitment to the odyssey never faltered. This he demonstrated in 2018 when our seven-day itinerary took us to the high Achna-shellach, Dundonnell and Fisherfields hills in the remote north-western Highlands. Due to an ankle injury, I could only hike for four days, but Chris bravely climbed on alone to bag eleven more Munros.

Our appreciation of the Highlands' wildlife grew with every trip. Our efforts were rewarded not just by the scenery but by being able to witness the grace of deer, the speed of hares, the call of cuckoos, the song of skylarks, the explosive rise of grouse, soaring ravens and sightings of our favourite Munro bird, the **ptarmigan**. Fittingly, as we descended from this year's last hill, Stuchd an Lochain, in Glen Lyon on August 18th, a pair of ptarmigans flew past as though in a final farewell on Chris's 203rd Munro.

Guards of honour were formed by members of Mayo Mountain Rescue Team at the foot of Mweelrea and by Jolly Ramblers after Chris's funeral Mass.

May he rest in peace.

Michael Quinn

Christopher Quinn: born May 20th, 1956; died September 4th, 2019




Chris Quinn, on far right, with Jolly Ramblers on the summit of Carrauntoohil in August 2005

HILLWALKING

TENERIFE

GUIDED WALKS FOR CLUBS & GROUPS

SEE THE MOST REMOTE AND HIDDEN PARTS OF TENERIFE



5/6 DAYS WALKING (ALL GRADES)
 Cost includes Airport Transfers and Road Transport on the Island, Accommodation, Daily Guided Walks (a happy hour get together each evening before dinner).
All for only €385

Tel: 00353 87 257 1570
WWW.WALKINGTENERIFE.COM
 Email Martin: martin@walkingtenerife.com

pat falvey


Worldwide Adventures
 - Fully licensed and bonded -



Ireland, Kilimanjaro, Everest Base Camp, Elbrus, Aconcagua, Antarctica etc

Ireland's leading Adventure Company
 for over 20 years.

Tel: +353(0) 64 6644181 • Email: info@patfalvey.com
www.patfalvey.com




CROATIA

HILLWALKING / CLIMBING / ADVENTURE PACKAGES

Explore the beautiful unspoiled landscape of Croatia. The Dinaric mountain range running from north to south, parallel to the coast, provides the perfect backdrop for superb hillwalking and climbing challenges. A variety of Adventure Packages may also be provided to include any combination of Hillwalking, Climbing, Rafting, Kayaking, Sailing, Canyoning and Diving. While experiencing these challenges, enjoy the stunning views over the Adriatic and the islands therein.

All grades of walkers and climbers catered for.
 Accommodation (close to the waterfront), airport transfers, daily transport and professional guides/instructors provided.
 Book own flights, available daily from Dublin/UK to Croatia.



"I would highly recommend this tour for its mixture of great walking, beautiful coastline and cultural experience"

For more information: **www.enjoydalmatia.com**
 Contact: **info@enjoydalmatia.com**
00353 86 778 5777

John Keo Walking Tours



Walking Holidays in Nerja Spain



www.HikingWalkingSpain.com
 (0034) 647 273 502
John@HikingWalkingSpain.com
 Individuals and Groups

7-14 March 2020: €650 NERJA Walking Holiday
 21-28 March 2020: €580 FRIGILIANA Walking Holiday



The 'Irish Peaks' book is coming...

With the Christmas period now upon us, why not pre-order the highly anticipated new hardback guide to Ireland's highest 100 peaks? Including colour maps, photographs throughout and with unique introductions to all 100 routes by members of Mountaineering Ireland, this guidebook will be hugely welcomed by all hillwalkers



With a recommended retail price of €25.99, all members of Mountaineering Ireland can avail of our special limited discount of 15% off the retail price - so the book is yours for only €22.10! A postal delivery charge will be applied if you choose to have the book posted to your chosen address by An Post.

The official launch of *Irish Peaks* will take place at the Mountaineering Ireland Spring Gathering, hosted by the Wayfarers Association Hillwalking Club in Blessington, County Wicklow, at the end of March 2020.

To order your copy of *Irish Peaks* now, please visit www.mountaineering.ie

