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Irish Mountain Log

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Climbing the Voie Petit

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Welcome

Céad míle fáilte! I hope you are all keeping well in these extraordinary times? We have a magazine that is full of reports of activities that we can probably now only dream about. However, life goes on! We may not be able to plan exotic holidays at present, but we can still go walking locally, as long as we can maintain our social distance from our companions.

We have a magazine that is full of inspiring accounts of activities in mountain ranges around the world. The features start with **Aidan Ennis'** account of the amazing hike he undertook in Kerry – the **Three Peninsulas Mountain Hike**. Almost as amazing is the story of the events that led up to that hike.

In addition, we have accounts of hiking in **New Zealand** and in **Nepal**, and then a description of a superb climb in the Alps, **Le Voie Petit**, the hardest free rock climb on Chamonix granite, which was undertaken by two leading Irish Alpinists, **John McCune** and **Freja Shannon**.

Finally, we have an update on the elusive **hen harrier**, with some amazing pictures of this very rare native bird in its breeding habitat.

Hopefully, there should be something in this issue for everyone in the audience!

It is a difficult time for us all and we have up-to-date advice from our CEO, **Murrough**



We can still go walking locally, as long as we maintain our social distance.

McDonagh, on hiking and climbing in the era of Covid-19 (see page 7). However, that advice is changing all the time and will be updated further on

www.mountaineering.ie as it develops. Our CEO strikes a note that is optimistic but that also emphasises the precautions we all need to take to protect ourselves, our family and friends, and most importantly the vulnerable people we know in our communities.

As we go to print at the end of March, we are still promoting events that are planned for later in the year on the basis that they have not officially been cancelled yet. The situation is changing day by day and it is likely Covid-19 will affect planned events for at least some months to come. Please do check the website **www.mountaineering.ie** regularly for updated advice and for updates on forthcoming events. Keep safe!

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor



Write for the Log

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

Contributors' guidelines can be downloaded from the Mountaineering Ireland website, **www.mountaineering.ie**.

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



ON THE COVER

View from Finneragh looking east towards Mullaghanattin on the Iveragh peninsula in County Kerry

PHOTOGRAPH
AIDAN ENNIS

ISSUE 133

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PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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



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Newsdesk



The Matterhorn

Alpinism now 'cultural heritage'

UNESCO recognises alpinism as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Alpinism is not only a physical activity requiring athletic qualities and technical expertise; it is also an exploration of fascinating landscapes and a quest for personal achievements. These exceptional characteristics, plus its historical and cultural backgrounds, make alpinism worth identifying as an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' of outstanding and universal human and social value.

In 2009, efforts were begun to get alpinism included on the **UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity** list. UIAA member federations were invited to lobby their respective governments to join the project. Three countries took the lead on this, France, Switzerland and Italy, supported by several other Alpine countries and also **UIAA, the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation**.

UNESCO finally decided at its General Assembly in Bogota in December 2019 to include alpinism on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Alpinism is now recognised by UNESCO as the art...

- of climbing mountain summits and faces by one's own physical, technical and intellectual strengths;

- of challenging one's own capabilities and expertise while negotiating natural, non-artificial obstacles;
- of evaluating and assuming measured risks;
- of self-managing, self-responsibility and solidarity;
- of respecting other people and natural sites.

The benefits of the inclusion of alpinism on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) list include:

- the existence of a precise description of alpinism's characteristics, agreed after many working sessions of the involved organisations, as an internationally recognised reference;
- recognising alpinism's specific and outstanding values;
- having an additional means of promoting the activity and its values;
- having a definition in place to avoid misuse of the term;
- having a duly signed engagement of the concerned states to support the promotion of the activity and to preserve responsible freedom of practice and access to sites.

The inclusion of alpinism on UNESCO's ICH list was welcomed by UIAA President, **Fritz Vrijlandt**, who said: "Alpinism deserves this recognition for its unique characteristics and its deep historical and cultural significance" ■

Be 'AdventureSmart'!

Welsh outdoor safety campaign goes UK- and Ireland-wide



AdventureSmart prompts people to ask three questions before they set off on a walk, hike or climb:

- Do I have the right **GEAR**?
- Do I know what the **WEATHER** will be like?
- Am I confident I have the **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS** for the day?

People enjoying the coast and countryside across Wales, England and, now, the island of Ireland, are being encouraged to be 'adventure-smart' with the launch of a new outdoor safety campaign, **AdventureSmart.UK**.

Mountaineering Ireland and **Mountain Training Board Ireland** have recently become partners of AdventureSmart.UK.

The AdventureSmart initiative began in Wales with funding from the Welsh government. Building on the established AdventureSmart Wales branding, a strong, eye-catching UK brand was then developed. It is hoped that the campaign can be extended to include the island of Ireland.

The aim of the campaign is to reduce the number of avoidable incidents that the rescue and emergency services have to deal with in the mountains each year, through the development and promotion of a comprehensive set of safety messages. The campaign is an innovative approach to communicating safety to the

many people who explore the UK. Mountaineering Ireland is delighted to be extending this campaign to the island of Ireland.

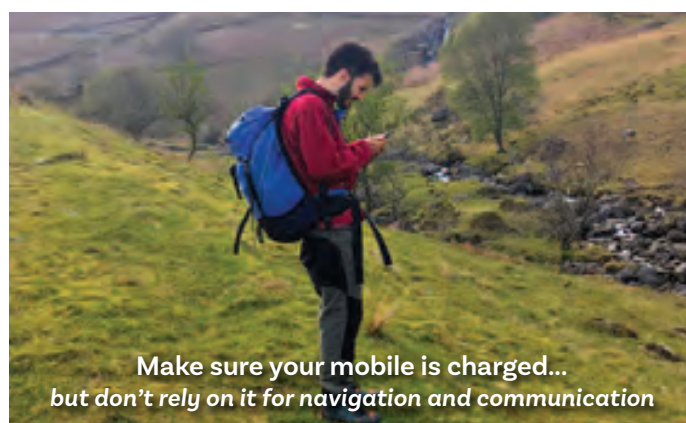
Whatever the activity, being adventure-smart is about considering a few simple things to help your day stay great, and to ensure that you return safe and sound, looking forward to your next adventure.

Experts from leading safety and sporting organisations have developed messages to provide the essential information needed for people to get outdoors, confident that they have prepared for a great day. So, always ask yourself:

- Do I have the right **GEAR**?
- Do I know what the **WEATHER** will be like?
- Am I confident I have the **KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS** for the day?

A new website, **www.adventuresmart.uk**, now linked to the Mountaineering Ireland website **www.mountaineering.ie**, provides all the information you need to answer these questions, including detailed information for the AdventureSmart regions. As a new partner organisation, we have joined forces to spread the AdventureSmart messages far and wide across the island of Ireland.

FIND OUT MORE For more information, visit the website **www.adventuresmart.uk** ■



Crossword results

The winners of our Christmas Crossword in IML 132 were **Sheila O'Sullivan, Carrigaline, Co Cork**, who won a pair of Scarpa Terra GTX boots, and **John O'Brien, Lucan, Co Dublin**, who won a Deuter Trail 30 backpack, prizes worth a total of €304 from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winners to arrange the collection of their prizes.

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Covid-19: please take these precautions

Mountaineering Ireland has the following advice for all members and affiliated clubs



By Murrough McDonagh
(CEO, Mountaineering Ireland)

In the face of the threat that is posed to public health by the **Covid-19 pandemic**, Mountaineering Ireland is following the advice being issued by the Government of Ireland as the situation develops. The National Governing Body recommends that all of its members and member clubs do likewise.

At this time, the advice from the public health experts is that everyone should limit social contacts and that all indoor events catering for one hundred people or more and outdoor events, where five hundred people or more are expected, should be cancelled until **at least March 29th**.

Mountaineering Ireland advises all members to follow this advice from the public health experts in their private lives and when participating in any mountaineering activities, in particular limiting social contacts and observing good hand and respiratory hygiene.

At this time, anyone who is symptomatic should self-isolate and contact their doctor by phone to arrange to be tested for Covid-19.

Postponed events

In line with this advice, the following events have been postponed by Mountaineering Ireland:

- **Youth Climbing Round 4** (scheduled for March 18th, 2020)
- **Spring Gathering 2020** (scheduled for March 27-29th, 2020)
- **The Wildflowers of Ireland Lecture** (scheduled for April 2nd, 2020)
- **Michael Fewer's Lectures** (scheduled for Dublin, May 12th, and Waterford, May 19th, 2020).

Club events

Mountaineering Ireland advises that all of its member clubs should observe the guidelines issued by the **HSE** in the Republic of Ireland and the **HSC Public Health Agency** in Northern Ireland. In particular:

- We encourage all attendees at meetings or other events that are held to maintain good social distancing practice and good personal, hand and respiratory hygiene by following the HSE guidelines on www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html or see www.bit.ly/coronaconditions.
- If you have travelled from other countries outside of the island of Ireland, please follow the guidance under the HSE website section on www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/advice-for-people-returning-from-affected-areas.html or see www.bit.ly/corona-return.
- If you have had contact with infected people, please do not attend any events.
- Anyone with flu-like symptoms should avoid the risk of spreading their infection, whatever that infection may be, by staying at home and recovering.
- For club events in Northern Ireland, please refer to the following guidelines for the HSC Public Health Agency: www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/covid-19-coronavirus or see www.bit.ly/coronanorthernireland.

Advice when planning to go out on the hills

- All clubs and members must take responsibility for their own actions.
- If you are heading out for a walk, a hike or a climb at this time, it is reasonable to suggest using familiar, low-risk routes, as you do not want to end up needing to call out the emergency services or be sent to hospital with the current pressures on the health sector across the island of Ireland.

- Do not go in large groups, and practice good social distancing throughout the day. There is plenty of space on the hills for everyone.
- If car-pooling, do not car-pool with people with whom you are not in regular contact, and avoid converging as a group for breaks, for photos and on summits.
- With schools closed and more people going out individually or in small groups, there is extra pressure for parking space. To avoid congestion, consider doing a walk around your local area or choose a less busy location.
- If you arrive at a car park that is full, please find alternative safe parking and never park in front of farm gates, or in any position that will obstruct the emergency services, farmers or other road users.
- If you do need assistance from Mountain Rescue, they will respond. Mountain Rescue teams are taking extra precautions at this time to protect their members and their families.
- To help support the government's advice on limiting social contact in cafés, restaurants, etc, if you're meeting in such places either before or after your activity, please ensure that social distance is maintained (minimum two metres between people).

Mountaineering Ireland will be reviewing the evolving situation on a day-to-day basis and will provide updated advice, when it is available, on the website, www.mountaineering.ie.

This is a time when we all need to be working together to reduce the threat that this new pandemic poses to our relatives and friends, our communities, our island and the world.

It appears that older people and people with chronic diseases are more vulnerable to Covid-19's more serious effects. We need to be aware of this when we are socialising and, if we are symptomatic, to self-isolate and to particularly avoid contact with those who are more vulnerable ■



Rapt audience at the 2019 Lynam Lecture by Sir Chris Bonington in Dublin in December

Chris Bonington: 'Life and Times'

Sir Chris Bonington delivers the 2019 Lynam Lecture to a full house



Lynam Lecture

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Sir Chris Bonington, the renowned British mountaineer, lecturer and author, delivered the 2019 Lynam Lecture to a packed auditorium in the Chartered Accountants Ireland lecture hall on Pearse Street, Dublin, on Thursday, December 18th, 2019.

The Lynam Lecture was inaugurated in 2011 in the memory of **Joss Lynam** (1924-2011), one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, in recognition of his



Chris Bonington with Joss Lynam at the Great Sugar Loaf, Co Wicklow, in 2007

enormous achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering in Ireland and overseas over some 60 years. During his lifetime, Joss initiated numerous developments in these different areas of our sport and was an inspiration to a number of generations of Irish mountaineers.

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

magazine for more than 20 years. Joss continued as the Literary Editor of the magazine up to the time of his death.

Since it was inaugurated in 2011, the Lynam Lecture has been delivered by leading national and international mountaineers: 2011, **Harish Kapadia**; 2012, **Dawson Stelfox**; 2013, **Stephen Venables**; 2014, **Clare Sheridan**; 2015, **Ines Papert**; 2016, **Paul Swail and John McCune**; 2017, **Frank Nugent**; 2018, **Paddy O'Leary**. All of these have delivered outstanding lectures that have reflected on the development of various aspects of our sport and how it might progress in coming years.



This year's lecture was opened by **Mike Maunsell**, chair of the Lynam Lecture Working Group. He reminded those present that the intention of the Lynam Lectures was to commemorate a great Irish mountaineer by reflecting on developments in our sport, in Ireland and abroad. He then introduced **Sir Chris Bonington** as the well-deserving recipient of the **2019 Lynam Medal**.

Sir Chris delivered an excellent and sometimes emotional lecture to a rapt audience of about 400 Mountaineering Ireland members from all around the country. His **'Life and Times'** lecture took us through his more than sixty years of climbing the world's highest mountains. He reflected on his successes and failures but also on the losses he had suffered in that time, both in his personal life and in his professional life as a mountaineer.

Chris wears his heart on his sleeve, and there were times when he was clearly quite emotional talking about some of the losses he had experienced.

Sir Chris had met Joss on several occasions at various meetings over the years, around Europe, at UIAA meetings and others, and including at BMC meetings in the UK. Chris reflected warmly on his meetings with Joss.

Chris was born in 1934 in Hampstead in north London and was brought up there. It was only in his teenage years, on his way by train to Holyhead to spend time in Dublin with his grandfather, that he became aware of mountains as he was passing through North Wales. He was struck by the challenges they presented, stark as the Carneddau appeared from that side. Chris's exploratory instincts were aroused. He found the Wicklow hills more friendly and he told us that the **Little Sugar Loaf** had been his first mountain climb.

After Christmas 1950, Chris hitched up to North Wales with a school friend and they attempted to climb **Snowdon** on the Miners Track, only to be hit by an avalanche off Crib Goch. He wasn't injured, but it was the most exciting day he had ever had.

Back in London, he started climbing at **Harrison's Rocks**. Then it was back to North Wales, where he attempted various routes that demonstrated his natural ability on rock, even in those early days. A winter trip to Scotland when he was eighteen saw him putting up three new routes when he teamed up with **Hamish MacInnes**.



Bonington, right, celebrates receiving his Lynam Lecture Medal award at the end of his talk

After school, he did his National Service, all the time pursuing his fascination with climbing and mountains, mostly in North Wales. After a couple of years' basic training he was commissioned in the Tank Regiment, based in Germany, where he spent another two years.

First visit to the Alps

In 1957, inexperienced as Chris was on snow and ice, Hamish MacInnes invited him to join him in an attempt at the first British ascent of the North Face of the **Eiger**. The weather was against them, but that seems to have been the start of repeated visits to the Alps to attempt early repeats of some of what are now classic routes. Failures in bad weather were followed by successes. In 1958, he climbed the **Bonatti Pillar** on the Dru with MacInnes, but he also teamed up with, amongst others, **Don Whillans** for the first time. The following year, he led a climb on the North Face of the **Cima Grande**.

In fact, after his introductory remarks, Sir Chris's rapid account of his more than sixty years of mountaineering became a 'Who's who' of mainly British

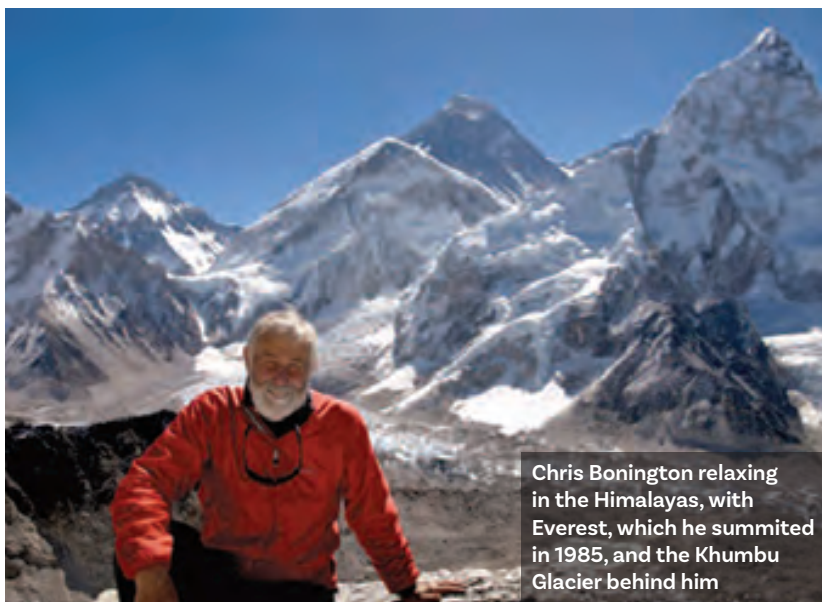
mountaineers he had climbed with, and of the significant climbs and first ascents which he had undertaken around the world. The **Freney Pillar**, the **North Face** of the **Eiger**, the **Walker Spur**, **Torres del Paine**, **Annapurna 2**, **Nuptse**, **Annapurna South Face**, **Everest SW Face**, **K2**, **Ogre**, **Shivling**, **Sepu Kangri**... the list is endless. All that, while still climbing at the highest grades at home and continuing to put up numerous first ascents on crags all over England, Scotland and Wales. He even put up a long new route at **Fair Head** with **Nick Estcourt**.

Turning professional

Chris was one of the first to make a living from his climbing, to become a professional mountaineer, not by guiding but by receiving an income mainly from lecturing and writing about his climbs, but also by getting sponsorship from companies such as **Berghaus**. He felt he was very much in charge of his own world when he was mountaineering.

He married **Wendy** and started living in the Lake District, where he still lives.

He reflected that when you are



Chris Bonington relaxing in the Himalayas, with Everest, which he summited in 1985, and the Khumbu Glacier behind him

engaged in a dangerous sport, such as mountaineering, there will be losses along the way. He has lost many good friends on the various climbs he has been involved in. He mentioned **Ian Clough, Mick Burke, Joe Tasker, Pete Boardman, Nick Estcourt** and the many others. He was quite emotional at times, talking about those deaths, but it was clear that he saw them as to be expected, given the seriousness of the routes he was tackling. He felt you still had to go on.

He also talked about his personal losses: his son, and his wife Wendy, who died of motor neurone disease in 2014.

Chris finally succeeded in climbing **Everest** (8,848m) when he summited with a Norwegian expedition in 1985. However, he felt **Shivling** (6,543m) in northern India had been his best climb because they had done it Alpine-style, as opposed to the big expedition siege tactics he had used on many of the bigger mountains he had tackled.

He talked about the joy of exploring and the need to keep a sense of adventure in life. The objectives may



Ruairi Shortt (grandson of Joss Lynam) presents Sir Chris Bonington with the 2019 Lynam Lecture Medal (with Mike Maunsell on left and Mountaineering Ireland President Paul Kellagher on right).

change as you get older but you can still feel a sense of adventure in the things you do, whatever age you are. He encouraged us all to do the most with what we have at the time.

He felt we are too risk adverse now. We need to be sensible, but adventure is an important part of our lives. We should all love the outdoors at whatever level we are at. He spoke about the joy that he and his new wife, **Loreto**, get from spending time together in the outdoors.

Who better to remind us of that than Sir Chris Bonington, given the adventurous life he has clearly led, as he recounted in his truly inspiring lecture.

After the talk, Sir Chris answered a wide range of questions from the audience. He was then thanked by the Mountaineering Ireland President, **Paul Kellagher**, for a truly outstanding talk, and presented with the 2019 Lynam Medal by **Ruairi Shortt**, Joss's grandson

History articles sought

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



In 2001, Mountaineering Ireland established the **Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society** in order to further interest in the rich history of Irish mountaineering and exploration. The society published two issues of the journal in 2002 and 2005, both edited by the late Joss Lynam. They were well received and contained much information of historical importance in the field. The journal was successfully revived in 2012 with Volume 3, and Volume 4 followed in 2015. Plans are

now afoot to produce a fifth volume next year, 2021. Next year will be the fiftieth anniversary of the national governing body for the sport of mountaineering on the island of Ireland, now Mountaineering Ireland. As with the previous issues, the journal will include fresh research as well as articles published elsewhere in order that, in Joss's words, "the *Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society* will be recognised as the best source of information on our history [and] that all important articles be found in it."

We are interested in receiving relevant material for the forthcoming issue. If you are interested in writing an article on an appropriate subject (or already have done so, even if already published elsewhere), please contact the editor, **Declan O'Keeffe**, at **caldeno@gmail.com**. Copies of issues 1-4 of the journal can be purchased from Mountaineering Ireland and through its website ■

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

Please note: a substantial discount is available for Mountaineering Ireland members on book purchases ordered directly from Cicerone



Declan Byrne, Project Manager of the SUAS Pilot Project, delivers a presentation at Glenasmole Community Centre

The future of Dublin Mountains hill farming

Wicklow Uplands Council reports on an information event held in Glenasmole, Co Dublin, in February

An information event entitled **'The Future of Hill Farming in the Dublin Mountains'** was held in early February in the picturesque south County Dublin townland of Glenasmole. Sixty people attended the event, which was jointly organised by the **SUAS Pilot Project** and **Teagasc**, to explore a range of topics related to hill-farming in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains and the issues affecting hill-farming communities throughout Ireland.

Guest speakers from the **National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc** and the **SUAS Project** gave presentations on the ecological importance of our uplands, sustainable and profitable hill-farming practices and the appropriate land and vegetation management approaches for upland terrain.

There was much discussion about optimum grazing periods, flock sizes and breeds, and how best to create a sustainable upland farming model using a blend of modern and traditional farming techniques. The general consensus was that the role of upland farmers is of national importance in Ireland and contributes widely to the greater public good and enhances sustainable rural communities. It was agreed

that healthy upland habitats play a vital role in providing good quality water sources, preventing flooding and sequestering carbon.

After the presentations and an open discussion with attendees, many of the group travelled to a nearby hill to observe first-hand the many ecological factors affecting upland habitats. Surrounded by stunning mountain views and overlooking the Glenasmole valley and the 19th-century Bohernabreena Reservoir, the group assembled for a short guided walk within the Wicklow Mountains National Park.

Leading the large group was **Enda Mullen**, the Divisional Ecologist for the National

Parks and Wildlife Service, who pointed out many of the plant species in the biodiversity of the uplands and gave an overview of the impact recent fires have had on the area's sensitive ecology.

The attendees included farmers, participants in the SUAS Project and representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, with one group from Northern Ireland's upland partnership groups also travelling down for it.

Launched in 2018, the **Sustainable Upland Agri-Environmental Scheme (SUAS)** is a locally-led pilot project designed to address the decline in hill-farming activities and to promote sustainable


farming practices in the Wicklow and Dublin uplands.

Speaking after the event, **Declan Byrne**, Project Manager of the SUAS Pilot Project, said: "The importance of our uplands and the preservation of its healthy, thriving biodiversity really cannot be underestimated. The work of the SUAS Project is to discover and promote the best approaches and methods for land management, to create a better understanding of appropriate grazing and to better support hill-farming communities."

■ For further information on the **SUAS Pilot Project** go to www.wicklowuplands.ie ■



Enda Mullen (National Parks and Wildlife Service) speaking on the uplands above Glenasmole valley, Co Dublin



Donie Anderson leads a walk in the Castlekelly area of Glenasmole, Co Dublin

Upland farm walks in Dublin

Dublin Mountains Partnership is organising guided walks to connect people with the farm landscape in the Dublin foothills. The **Dublin Mountains Partnership** reports

At the beginning of March, the **Dublin Mountains Partnership (DMP)** started organising weekly walks through upland farmland in south Dublin to help people connect with farming and nature, and also to try to encourage the use of the walking trails in the area so that they might become sustainable.

The walks are led by Glenasmole farmer **Donie Anderson** with the assistance of his trusty sheepdog **Jess**. They give participants an insight into upland sheep farming as they walk along an historical trail in the Castlekelly area.

The walks will be organised weekly and are intended to connect walkers more closely with the area in which they are walking. In addition to talking about sheep farming and demonstrating Jess's skills in herding sheep and geese, Donie also talks about the history of the area,

including pointing out the **Fionn Mac Cumhaill Stone**. He also explains what the place-names in the area mean.

After the walk, participants are able to warm up in the **Glenasmole Community Centre**.

Everyone who has taken part so far has really enjoyed the walk, which has given them a greater understanding of the life of a sheep farmer as well as demonstrating the beauty of the area.

■ You can follow the **Dublin Mountains Partnership** on Facebook to find out more about the organisation and the walks they are organising.

■ **Please note:** walks may be cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis ■



Donie Anderson's trusty sheepdog Jess

Tracking the E8 from Dursey to Dublin

Marian Wallis completes an inspection of the Irish leg of the long-distance route from Cork to Istanbul

The E8 is a European long-distance route that now runs from Dursey Island, Co Cork, to Istanbul in Turkey. It is the task of the **European Ramblers Association (ERA)** to track the definite version of this walk.

The E8 in Ireland is a wonderful route that takes you from the wild Atlantic coast to the Irish Sea. The landscape tells its own story of myths, history, culture, language, traditions, music and commerce.

As the representative of Mountaineering Ireland's **Hillwalking Committee** on the European Ramblers Association's **E8 Working Group**, I found myself leaving home at 5.30am on a wet, stormy, October morning to drive to Dursey to begin the trek to Marlay Park, Dublin.

540 kilometres and 17,815m of ascent later, with help from family and four friends from the **Ballyhoura Bears**, I arrived in Marlay Park. The

route can be divided into the following stages:

It follows the Beara Way from Dursey Island to Allihies via the Garnish Loop; it then goes from Allihies on to Castletownbere, and from there to Adrigole, ending in Glengarriff.

From Glengarriff, I followed the Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí to join the Duhallow Way near Millstreet, Co Cork.

Heading east on the Duhallow Way, I passed through Bweeng, and then followed the Blackwater Way through Mallow, Killavullen, Fermoy and Kilworth, to meet the Avondhu Way shortly after Arraglin. It was here also that I finally left County Cork after a traverse of 300 kilometres, before joining the Avondhu Way.

Crossing the Knockmealdowns, I wound in and out of counties Tipperary and Waterford before finally arriving beside Bay Lough, a corrie lake near Clogheen, Co



Marian Wallis in Marlay Park, Dublin, on completing the Irish section of the E8 route. The final leg follows the Wicklow Way from Clonegal, Co Carlow, to Marlay Park in Rathfarnham, Dublin.

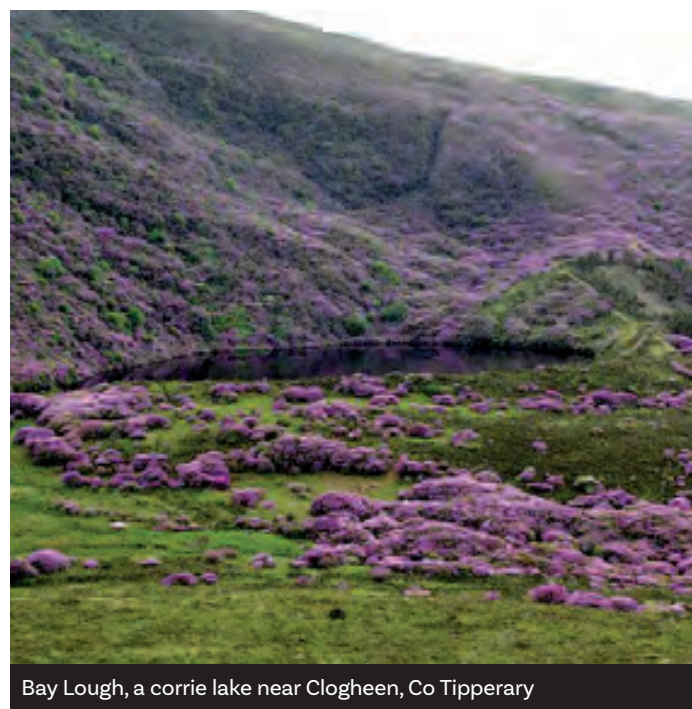
Tipperary.

From here, the East Munster Way took me to Carrick-on-Suir, Co Waterford. Leaving Carrick, the South Leinster Way led me through Mullinavat, Inistioge, Graiguenamanagh and Borris, to end in Kildavin, Co Carlow. Then it was 4.3km along a minor road to Clonegal, Co Carlow, where I joined the Wicklow Way.

I then followed the Wicklow Way to Dublin's Marlay Park, where I ended my hike of the

Irish leg of the E8.

The E8 in Ireland extends over seven counties and nine mountain ranges, descends into numerous valleys, crosses rivers and winds through forests to finally pass under the M50 and arrive triumphantly in Dublin. The walk reveals the many faces of Ireland and yet is testimony to the timelessness of our landscape and the richness of our history ■



Bay Lough, a corrie lake near Clogheen, Co Tipperary



AUTHOR: Marian Wallis is a member of Mountaineering Ireland's **Hillwalking Committee** and represents Mountaineering Ireland on the **European Ramblers Association's E8 Working Group**. Marian has now tracked the entire 540 kilometres of the Irish leg of the E8 European long-distance path from Dursey Island in Cork to Marlay Park in Dublin.

New members of staff

Mountaineering Ireland recently appointed a new Women in Sport Coordinator, **Ania Bakiewicz**



Ania Bakiewicz

Women in Sport Coordinator



Ania Bakiewicz

Mountaineering Ireland's new Women in Sport Coordinator, **Ania Bakiewicz**, was born near Szczecin, in Poland, on the edge of the Drawa National Park, where she spent her childhood, exploring the natural beauty of the forest and learning about the flora and fauna.

Ania graduated with an MA in archaeology from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, and for many years worked as a field archaeologist in the Cistercian Monastery in Bierzwnik, and in numerous other archaeological sites in

Poland dating from the Neolithic period to the late Middle Ages.

She came to Ireland in 2005 to work as an archaeologist, and her work brought her all over the island of Ireland and to a wide variety of sites, including Iron Age ring forts, burial sites and King John's Castle in Carlingford, Co Louth. She became immersed in Irish culture, mythology and traditional music, and enjoyed Irish food and, of course, the Guinness.

With the economic crash,

Ania transitioned to working in a coffee shop, rising to management level.

In 2013, she decided to get involved in outdoor education, initially at **Bray Institute of Further Education** and then on the Outdoor Instructor Development Programme in **Tollymore National Outdoor Centre**. During that time, she explored the Mourne, Donegal, Kerry and Wicklow mountains. Ania qualified as a **mountain leader, kayaking coach** and an **indoor and outdoor climbing instructor**. She particularly fell in love with rock climbing.

Since 2016, Ania has worked as an indoor climbing instructor in **Dublin Climbing Centre** in Tallaght. There, she worked with children and teenagers, delivering **NICAS (National Indoor Climbing Award Schemes)** classes, and taught the fundamentals of climbing to adults.

She still actively runs women's coaching sessions in Dublin Climbing Centre on Thursday evenings, overseeing the development of female climbers, many of whom started to climb there under her supervision and who have since progressed to being self-sufficient outdoor climbers.

Ania also coaches children from Mountaineering Ireland's **Climbing Development Squad**.

Ania spends all of her holidays climbing or bouldering in Ireland and abroad. She has explored the Isle of Skye and Mont Blanc. Ania loves going back home to the Tatra Mountains,

where she enjoys walking and rock climbing in every season. She especially enjoyed the winter mountaineering and ice climbing trip.

In January 2020, she joined Mountaineering Ireland as the **Women in Sport Coordinator**. Her role is to foster greater involvement of women in mountaineering as self-sufficient hillwalkers, well-trained climbers and coaches.

She wants to support women to become more involved in leadership roles in their hillwalking and mountaineering clubs. She wants them to be seen as potential mountain leaders, club officers and board members. She intends to encourage active participation of women in mountaineering events throughout Ireland.

Ania wants to promote Mountaineering Ireland's mission to women of all ages, from all social and economic backgrounds. She particularly hopes to ensure that teenage girls continue their participation in mountaineering into their adult lives. Ania would also like to support existing female mountaineers and promote them as role models to follow.

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CONTACT You can contact **Ania Bakiewicz**, Mountaineering Ireland's Women in Sport Coordinator, at **ania@mountaineering.ie** or phone her at **+353 (0) 87 755 5908** ■

Mountaineering Ireland recently appointed a new officer to Get Ireland Walking, **Linda Sankey**



Linda Sankey

Communications & Administrative Officer, Get Ireland Walking



Linda Sankey

Linda Sankey joined the **Get Ireland Walking** initiative in December 2019. She is from Dublin and, after leaving school,

she studied radio and television production. Linda then spent ten years working as a freelance television production manager. Her TV credits include *No Frontiers*, *About the House*, *Beyond the Hall Door*, *Garden Heaven* and various documentaries. Linda also worked in event management, working on *Riverdance*, as well as on various festivals and exhibitions.

After starting a family, Linda realised that she wanted to change her career path and took advantage of being at home to go back to college at night to study communications, web design and development. She then decided to work in the charity sector and worked there in communications roles for several years.

She loves visual inspiration and content, including graphic design, typography, branding and websites. Linda is never happier work-wise until she is redrafting and reinvigorating content and resources. She recently completed a certificate in digital marketing to keep her skill-set up to date.

Linda enjoys walking as she appreciates its accessibility. Her father has a neurological disease and is dependent on a walking stick, yet he goes for walks daily. That level of tenacity is inspiring to Linda. The self-care aspect to walking and the opportunity to clear your mind appeals greatly to her.

Linda's role in Get Ireland Walking initially is to develop a communications strategy, which will involve researching all the existing communications outputs to date and creating new objectives for the different communications channels. One of the most important aspects of the role for Linda is capturing stories and sharing them. Be prepared to hear more from Get Ireland Walking!

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CONTACT You can contact

Linda Sankey, Get Ireland Walking's Communications & Administrative Officer, at info@getirelandwalking.ie or phone her at **(01) 625 1109** ■



SKILLS WORKSHOP
23-24 MAY 2020
LARAGH,
COUNTY WICKLOW

SCRAMBLING
NAVIGATION
CLIMBING

TO BOOK:
WWW.MOUNTAINEERING.IE
00353 (0) 1 625 1112





The Woodlands for Health Programme

Taking a walk in the woods makes you feel better!

By Linda Sankey
(Get Ireland Walking)

With the success of the **Woodlands for Health** walking programme in Wicklow and Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, **Get Ireland Walking** coordinated the expansion of the programme in 2019 with its delivery to Kerry, Wexford, Laois, Sligo, Roscommon and Limerick.

Woodlands for Health offers a recovery-focused eco-therapy programme, which complements traditional mental health treatment and fosters the social inclusion of people who have experienced mental health difficulties. The concept of the programme is simple: taking a walk in a green space such as a local park or woodland makes you feel better.

The **Kerry Recreation & Sports Partnership**, with the support of the **HSE Health Promotion Department** and the **Institute of Technology, Tralee**, was instrumental in developing a feasibility study to pilot the programme in

Kerry. This study was completed by Kerry's Community Walking Development Officer. The twelve-week walking series commenced in spring 2019 and was held every Wednesday. The walks covered a wide geographical spread of locations across Kerry, encompassing woodland trails, including in Killarney National Park and Kilaclohane Woods, coastal walks and other walking routes, and generally lasted one hour.

Twenty-seven people in total participated in the walking programme, with an average of thirteen participants per week. The pilot group was a closed group. Participants were informed of the programme and invited to join it by their local HSE Kerry Mental Health Services team.

The programme was facilitated by Kerry's Community Walking Development Officer and Coillte staff, who welcomed the group, introduced the Coillte woodlands to them and also led some of the walks.

HSE mental health occupational therapists were present every week as walk leaders and to support the group. In addition, the Community Walking Programme Facilitator joined the walks at the start, middle and end points of the programme to monitor programme progress.

Transport

To provide transport, Kerry Recreation & Sports Partnership partnered with Local Link Kerry (Transport Coordination Unit), who coordinated the transport under their Social Inclusion Transport Support stream. Local Link Kerry contracted a local operator to provide transport for the group to and from the walking locations. Under this agreement, 50% of the cost of the bus was subsidised by Local Link Kerry and 50% by Kerry Recreation and Sports Partnership/Get Ireland Walking.

The agreement to subsidise the transport facilitated a sustainable programme model.

Participants reported that provision of the bus was fundamental to their ability to access many of the walks as most of the participants have no access to private transport. A central meeting point and time was agreed to convenience the participants.

Feedback

Participants:

Overall, the participant feedback was very positive and in favour of the group continuing. Below are some of their comments:

- Walking in fresh air...relaxed."
- "Exercise is key to good mental health."
- "Doing different walks in different locations...going for a coffee afterwards."
- "The variety of walks...and their short duration. The best were the Coillte and national park walks."
- "Meeting new people...having good conversation...helping each other."
- "I enjoyed spending time with friends and meeting



new people. I loved spending time in nature and looking at trees, etc.”

- “The atmosphere of walking in the woods was great.”
- “Going for walks that you would otherwise not get to.”
- “Walking in different locations...meeting others and chatting while walking...feeling energised afterwards.”
- “Talking to others.”
- “Getting a chance to lead walks, and interacting with others.”

HSE occupational therapists:

- “It was hugely rewarding to see the Woodlands for

Health programme engage people in the occupational therapy concept of doing, being and becoming.”

- “It benefited our clients so much, as they were able to fully engage in meaningful activity in their local communities.”
- “The occupation of walking allowed the constructed barriers between professionals and clients to be broken down, as everybody was an equal member of the walking group. Social barriers were eliminated and people engaged on a truly meaningful level through the occupation of walking.”
- “It was lovely to see people chatting and walking in a

woodland area and being part of a social group.”

Kerry Recreation & Sports Partnership:

- “To witness the extensive collaborative efforts made in implementing the Woodlands for Health programme, whereby all programme partners benefited holistically, was very rewarding.”

2020 programme

This programme will be run in 2020 on a quarterly basis and will encompass locally accessed woodland walks. Transport will be available for the less accessible woodland areas, e.g. Lyracrumpane Mass Rock Loop, Listowel, Co Kerry.

Participant benefits

To assess and monitor the participant health and physical fitness benefits associated with participating in the programme, it is planned to link it with the local **park runs** that were established in Kerry by Kerry Recreation & Sports Partnership and the local volunteer groups ■

Acknowledgments

Our thanks to HSE mental health occupational therapists **Caroline McCarthy and Catherine Fitzgerald**; to Kerry Recreation & Sports Partnership Coordinator **Córa Carrigg**; to the Community Walking Programme Facilitator **Askea Calnan**, and to **Coillte**.

Get active on family-friendly walks

By Linda Sankey
(Get Ireland Walking)

It can be hard to find the time to catch up on life at the weekend. The weekend is short and may be taken up with cleaning the house and ‘admin.’ Sadly, while we cannot give you more time or any incentive to do more active things at the weekend, we can suggest that you prioritise your activities to make the most of your time off: get out of the house and **go walking!** Take your family and take your dog! You will need some suitable wet weather clothes, of course, just in case, but try to leave the technology behind.

Getting out walking doesn’t need to be expensive or complicated. Think green and blue. I live in a very urban space and have a great local park almost on my doorstep, which I use a lot during the week, walking the dog. By the time the weekend rolls around I need something spectacular like a beach or a big open space to give my soul a lift.

Choose what works for you and your family. Don’t forget

there are six national parks in the Republic and nine Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Northern Ireland. You should also check out your local parks: there are many hidden gems that you may not be aware of, such as St Catherine’s Park in Lucan on the Dublin/Kildare border, where you can walk along a glacial ridge and play ‘Spot the Highland cattle.’ Yes, you read that correctly! The fifteen cattle were introduced to improve the biodiversity of the area.

The website **familywalksireland.com** is a handy database for buggy and family friendly walks. You could also take a woodland walk: check out Coillte’s webpage **www.coillte.ie/activity/walking**. There are twelve forest parks and 260 recreational sites across the Republic, with car parking and picnic areas.

Beaches are also fun, free places to walk with kids and dogs. It is impossible not to run up and down a sand dune and not enjoy it! You could also walk beside a waterway: see **www.waterwaysireland.org/things-to-do/walking**.

Or maybe you could take a walk on one of the four existing blueways: see

www.bluewaysireland.org.

Blueways are stunning trails running on and alongside lakes, canals and rivers.

If you need some digital assistance to get organised, try some useful apps.

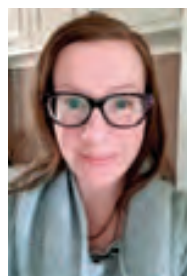
The **AllTrails** app is a free app that requires you to sign up and which will show you trails near your location. You can filter it for a more specific area. The trails are handily marked as easy, moderate or hard. The app allows you to download offline maps. The walks are tagged ‘kid friendly’ and ‘dogs on a leash,’ and there are useful reviews and tips for each walk. You can also turn the app into a GPS tracker so that you don’t

get lost.

You can also download the **Playground GPS Ireland** app, which will guide you to the exact location of more than 650 outdoor playgrounds, and you can combine the walk with fun in a playground. I tend to bribe my children with a promise to go to the playground post-walk.

If you fancy being more active, you can join a park run. These are free, available in nearly every park across the country and a good active start to the weekend. You can walk, jog or run! See **www.parkrun.ie**.

Ultimately, at the weekends, it is worth remembering that, while urban environments are filled with stimulation, natural environments are more restorative ■



AUTHOR: Linda Sankey is Communications Officer with Get Ireland Walking. **Get Ireland Walking** is an initiative of Sport Ireland, supported by Healthy Ireland and hosted and delivered by Mountaineering Ireland.

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

Walkers on the Dingle Way near Sleah Head on the Dingle peninsula, Co Kerry

Dingle Walking Festival 2020

By Ethna Garvey

Dingle Hillwalking Club (Cumann Sléibhteoireachta Chorca Dhuibhne) is organising this year's **Dingle Walking Festival** over the weekend of May 15-17th, 2020.

The Dingle peninsula in west Kerry is famous for its natural beauty and its stunning sea, cliff and mountain scenery. Hopefully,

these should be at their best this coming May, when the festival will take full advantage of this idyllic environment.

There is a wide variety of **accommodation** and **restaurants** in Chorca Dhuibhne to suit different budgets and every taste.

There will be **easy, moderate** and **difficult walks**. The difficult walks should prove a decent challenge for experienced,

regular hillwalkers. It is also planned to incorporate a **Mindfulness Walk**, a **Biodiversity Walk** and a **Historical Walk** into the programme.

We also hope to take full advantage of the many ancient **monastic** and **archaeological sites** on the peninsula, with a combined bus tour and walk to sites of interest around the Sleah

Head area.

We look forward to welcoming many old and new friends to our town in May 2020.

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

FIND OUT MORE: For the latest festival information, check www.dinglehillwalkingclub.com



Women With Altitude to celebrate its 10th anniversary this year

Falls Hotel, Ennistymon, Co Clare, May 15-17th, 2020

By Ruth Whelan

Women With Altitude (WWA) is a Mountaineering Ireland initiative to encourage women to take on greater challenges in mountaineering, be they personal, technical or leadership challenges. Established in 2011, this initiative promotes and facilitates women's participation by providing support with skills training and leadership development, inspirational role models and opportunities to network.

To celebrate the tenth anniversary of this initiative, we are going to the **Burren** and will be based at the Falls Hotel, in Ennistymon, Co Clare. This year's WWA event is all about building confidence on the hills and crags, where new participants and some familiar faces will come together to celebrate women in the mountains and continue to develop their skills and build confidence at all levels.

As part of the weekend and to celebrate ten years of Women With Altitude, we decided we would include a **panel discussion** session. The panel will consist of women who have been involved in Women With Altitude down through the years, be it as an instructor, a key speaker or an organiser. Such women are role models for other women in our sport and have been influential in progressing female participation in mountaineering.

Our panellists will include **Helen Lawless**, **Orla Prendergast**, **Sinead Pollock** and **Ursula MacPherson**.

To guide the discussions and make sure all your pressing questions are answered, **Colette Mahon** (Women With Altitude organising team member and instructor) will chair the discussion.



This is also a great opportunity for female members of clubs, who could potentially become great club walk leaders, to increase their confidence.

The event offers an open and welcoming environment where women will have the opportunity to develop their skills and gain knowledge from some of the country's top female instructors, and to meet and socialise with like-minded females interested in hillwalking and climbing.

This year's programme is bigger and better than ever, with a variety of courses to suit all levels of ability for both hillwalkers and climbers.

■ **Bookings are now open!**

Go to www.mountaineering.ie/events ■

Women with Altitude

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 - bookings now open!

The Falls Hotel



Attendees at the recent Wicklow Uplands Council meeting in Hollywood, west Wicklow

Recreation matters discussed by Wicklow Uplands Council

By Helen Lawless

The **Wicklow Uplands Council** recently held a meeting in Hollywood, west Wicklow, with a strong focus on matters related to recreation. Starting with the impact of off-road vehicle activity, discussion widened to the need for resources to manage the impact of the increased numbers of people visiting the Wicklow uplands for recreation activities.

■ *The Wicklow Uplands Council is a non-statutory organisation with a mission to support the sustainable use of the Wicklow uplands through consensus and partnership with those who live, work and recreate there.*

Brian Dunne, Co-ordinator with the Wicklow Uplands Council, began by outlining some of the positive things currently happening – a **trail connection** that will be in place **from Avondale House to Glendalough** by the end of this year, and the **upgrade work** being carried out on **St Kevin's Way**. In partnership with other organisations, including Mountaineering

Ireland, the Wicklow Uplands Council is leading a project to carry out a **path condition survey** in the Wicklow Mountains. The survey will identify path sections that are badly eroded and in need of repair, and provide an indication of the cost to do this work.

Off-road vehicle activity

Wicklow Mountains National Park Conservation Ranger **Ann Fitzpatrick** spoke about the increase in illegal recreational use of off-road vehicles in the Wicklow Mountains, which has escalated over the past two years. This is a concern because of ecological impacts: once the vegetative layer is damaged, soil is opened up to the action of rain and frost.

It is also a public safety issue, both on the hills and on upland roads, and it impinges on the experience of hillwalkers and other visitors. Members of the motorcycle trials community, who organise a number of permitted events in Wicklow each year, described the damage as deplorable and said they would work together with others to address the problem.

Ann emphasised the need for reports and encouraged people to phone the **Duty Ranger, 087 980 3899**, at weekends to report off-road vehicle activity, wildlife crime or other matters affecting the condition of the national park and the wider Wicklow Mountains SAC. If you are

unable to reach the Duty Ranger, phone the **Wicklow Mountains National Park Information Office, 0404 45425**. Do not text the Duty Ranger number, as your message will not go through.

Break-ins to parked vehicles

People were urged not to leave any valuables in parked vehicles and to **report all break-ins**. If crimes are not reported, it is more difficult for the Gardaí to justify continued patrols along roads in the uplands.

Parking

Walking groups were urged to **car-pool** and use **buses**, and not to park in gateways or in front of forest barriers (as the emergency services may need access). The requirement for additional parking in the Wicklow uplands was highlighted, as was the need for toilet facilities. As most hikers would pay for parking with some degree of security, this could be a **business opportunity** for a landowner in a suitable location.

Dogs in the uplands

A number of farmers in the Wicklow mountains lost sheep in 2019 as a result of dog attacks. While it was acknowledged that many of the dogs involved may have come from the locality, there is an ongoing issue of sheep being worried by hikers' dogs, with Scarr being mentioned as a particular problem area.

Additional signage was proposed. However, it was agreed that greater awareness and responsibility is needed amongst dog owners. This is something which may need a national campaign. In the meantime people were encouraged to view and share the classic 1980s TV advertisement *Bonzo Wants To Go Out*; you can find it at www.bit.ly/bonzowants ■

Photographs: Wicklow Uplands Council (WUC meeting), Helen Lawless (quad tracks)



Quad tracks on the summit of Slievemaan in Wicklow

New climbing wall to open at UL in May



By Martin Flood

The new state-of-the-art climbing wall currently under construction beside the University of Limerick Sports Arena is the latest addition to the already impressive range of sports facilities at the university.

The design offers a unique 360 degrees of walled climbing, somewhat resembling a gorge or cave, creating an almost enclosed feeling. The wall incorporates all elements of traditional indoor climbing up to Olympic standard, while also including a non-traditional SRT ledge (a facility for cave training) and an 18m vertical section, making it currently the tallest climbing wall in Ireland. It features:

- Total walled climbing: 708 sq m
- Main wall: 484 sq m
- Boulder wall: 126 sq m
- SRT ledge: 87 sq m
- Moon board: 11 sq m
- Speed wall
- Three auto belays.

The new wall is predominantly for lead and top roped climbing and meets the Olympic standard for indoor rock climbing. This is a truly unique wall, unlike no other in Ireland.

UL's **Outdoor Pursuits Club** supported a 2016 student referendum which enabled the construction of this facility and many other sports projects on campus. The new wall replaces the old



Artist's representation of the UL climbing wall beside the running track at the University of Limerick Sports Arena

Club, which was established in 1992, a climbing wall is considered a necessity. Throughout the college week, it is where club members can gather to climb and discuss all things related to their shared interest. Fuelled with the ambition of its dedicated

to see the wall being built and the ideas come to life. It is a credit to **UL Student Life, UL Sport, UL Buildings and Estates** and all of the other contributors and players in this ground-breaking university facility.

The wall is designed as a student facility. However, other climbers will be happy to learn that it will also be open to the public and operate commercially like other walls.

I am manager of the **UL Sport Adventure Centre** and I have been awarded the management of this facility. I am looking forward to liaising with the Outdoor Pursuits Club to address their needs, as well as being able to offer access to this amazing facility to other climbers in the Limerick area.

The wall is set to open in May 2020, with the official launch scheduled for September 2020, the start of the new academic year and the beginning of a new era for climbing at the University of Limerick ■



The UL climbing wall building almost completed

bouldering wall and provides the club with a new platform on which it can grow and advance.

For the Outdoor Pursuits

members, this club can only go from strength to strength now.

The project has been in the pipeline since 2010. Now, a decade on, it is truly rewarding



Martin Flood (centre) with members of the Outdoor Pursuits Club on the climbing wall construction site at University of Limerick



Aerial view of UL climbing wall under construction



Sarah O'Mahony climbing in the Burren

YOUTH TRAD CLIMBING CAMPS

Mountaineering Ireland will hold two Youth Trad Climbing Camps this summer. **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 take place again in the summer of 2020.

The Youth Trad Climbing Camps are aimed at climbers aged between thirteen and seventeen years. The camps are an ideal opportunity for climbers who climb indoors but 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 be in the **Burren, Co Clare**, and will run from Wednesday, July 8th to Friday, July 10th. The second camp

will take place in **Glendalough, Co Wicklow**, and will run from Monday, July 13th to Wednesday, July 15th.

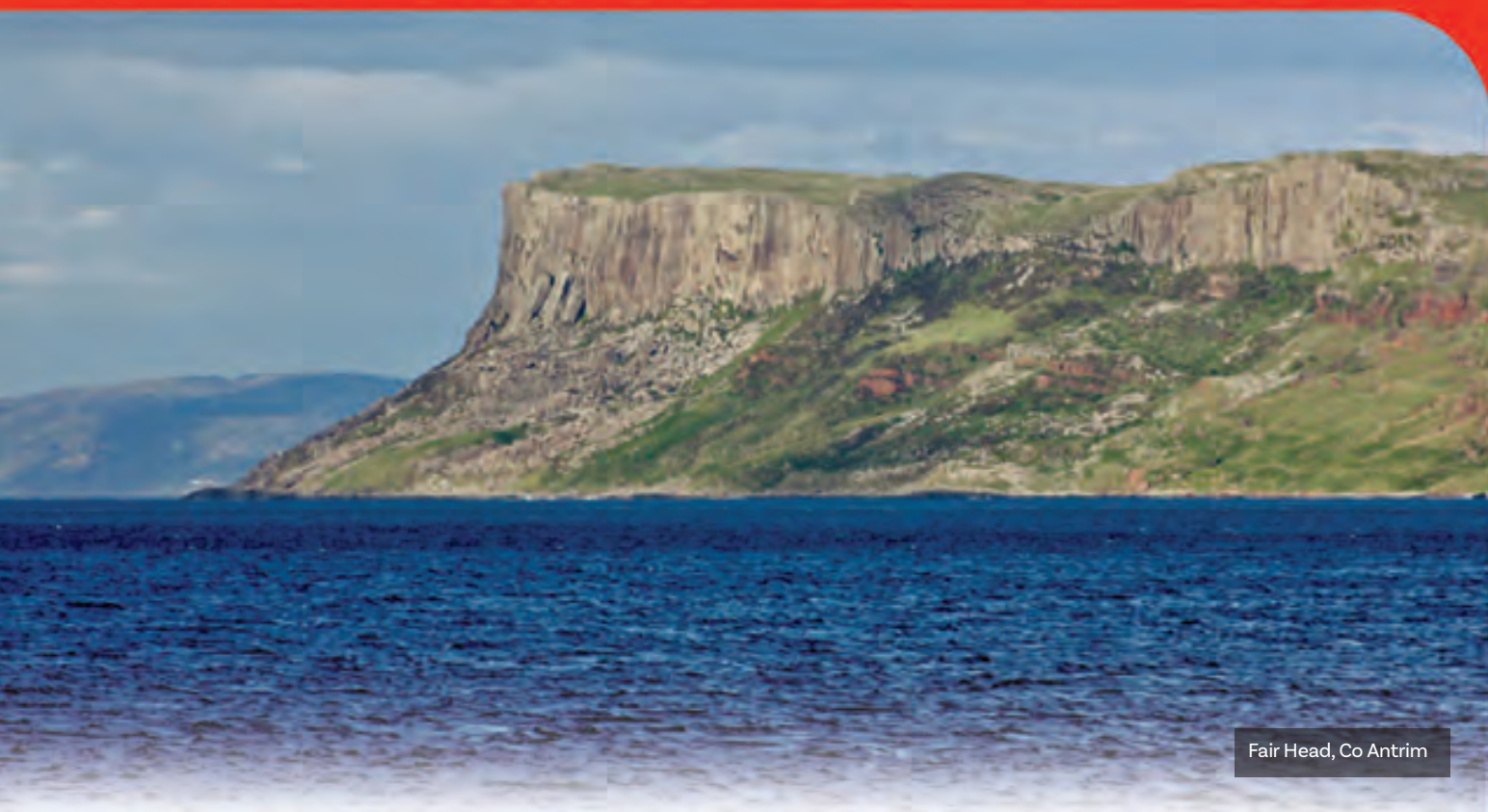
Both camps can accommodate up to ten climbers and will be staffed by five suitably qualified and experienced climbing instructors, giving an amazing instructional ratio of 2:1.

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

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



Daniel Flavin climbing in Glendalough



Fair Head, Co Antrim

CLIMBING MEETS 2020

Mountaineering Ireland is holding two climbing meets this summer. **Damien O'Sullivan** reports

Climbers have two great meets to look forward to in the first half of 2020, the **Climbfest** and the **Fair Head Climbers' Meet**. Both meets are organised by Mountaineering Ireland-affiliated clubs and are open to all climbers.

The **Climbfest**, held in Donegal, is the longest-running climbers' meet in Ireland. It is child-friendly and sociable, and is aimed at the average rock climber, beginners and indoor climbers who wish to extend their experience from resin to rock.

■ For more information on Climbfest, please go to: www.bit.ly/climbfest.

The **Fair Head Climbers' Meet**, held at Fair Head, Co Antrim, has become probably the biggest event in the climbing calendar. This year's meet is being organised by the **Dal Riada Climbing Club** and will take place over the June bank holiday weekend, that is from Friday, May 29th to Monday, June 1st.

■ For more information on the Fair Head Meet, please go to: www.bit.ly/fairheadmeet ■



Climbing at last year's Climbfest in Donegal



2019/2020 IRISH BOULDERING LEAGUE

Damien O'Sullivan reports on the results of the latest Irish Bouldering League series



The 2019/2020 Irish Bouldering League took in five fun-filled rounds across five great venues over the winter.

Each round featured thirty boulder problems for all competitors to attempt, ranging from relatively easy to extremely difficult. The overall results of the league were based on each competitor's top four results from the five rounds.

Here are the results from the 2019/2020 Irish Bouldering League:

Masters Male

- 1 Ricky Young
- 2 Tom O'Neill
- 3 Viv Vanderholst

Masters Female

- 1 Caroline Murray
- 2 Lynn Crampton
- 3 Mari Gleeson

Senior Male

- 1 Michael O'Neill
- 2 Ciaran Scanlon
- 3 Mark Scanlon

Senior Female

- 1 Nina Zhoie
- 2 Sarah Hoare
- 3 Anna Weidman



Brian Hughes climbing in an Irish Bouldering League event

Male Youth A

- 1 Sean O'Connor
- 2 Jude McInerney
- 3 Cillian Jennings

Female Youth A

- 1 Jessica McGarry
- 2 Ella Brown

Male Youth B

- 1 Eoin McLoughlin
- 2 George Lassov
- 3 Joshua Hoare

Female Youth B

- 1 Rhyna Conroy
- 2 Sarah O'Mahony
- 3 Faith Blaney

The Irish Bouldering League is very generously sponsored by **Rab** with the help of their Irish sales representative, **Paul Innes** of **Core Outdoors**.

The Irish Bouldering League is reputedly the longest running bouldering competition in the world, and with the continued support of the competitors, the host venues and the sponsors, it will continue long into the future ■



YOUTH CLIMBING CLUB MEET

25th & 26th July 2020

Cruit, County Donegal



Visit www.mountaineering.ie for more info



YOUTH CLIMBING CLUB MEET

Mountaineering Ireland is holding a Youth Climbing Club Meet in Donegal in June. **Kevin Kilroy** reports

Mountaineering Ireland wishes to invite members of **youth climbing clubs** from all over Ireland for a weekend of rock climbing on the beautiful Cruit Island in County Donegal on July 25th and 26th this year.

Cruit is the perfect place for sea-cliff climbing in a very family-friendly location – with golden sandy beaches, hidden sheltered coves, granite sea-cliffs and quality boulders... the island is a real haven for outdoor adventure.

For youth climbing club members who would like help to experience some of Cruit's classic climbs, there will be several rock climbing instructors on duty to help with setting top ropes, learning to lead climb or developing your

skills as a trad climber.

Spaces are limited for instruction over the

weekend. Please complete and submit the **online application form**



Diarmaid Taylor on his first traditional lead climb, The Bosun's Ladder*** Severe 4a on Neptune's Wall at Malin Beg during a Hanging Rockers Youth Climbing Club Meet in 2017

and **parental consent form**, if you wish to avail of any support with rock climbing as part of the meet. Mountaineering Ireland will get back to you to confirm your place before the end of April 2020. There will be no fee for instruction over the weekend for successful applicants.

The link to the **online application form** can be found on the Events page on www.mountaineering.ie.

■ If you have any questions about the meet, please contact **Kevin Kilroy** at kevin@mountaineering.ie.

■ **Kevin Kilroy** is Mountaineering Ireland's Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland ■



Competitor tackles strenuous move on North Face Wall

INTERVARSITY CLIMBING COMPETITION

Lauren Conlon (DCU Rock Climbing Club) reports on the 2020 Intervarsity Climbing Competition

Competition planning is no easy feat, especially when you're organising for three different venues, twelve different teams and over two hundred and seventy competitors. That was the task ahead of **Dublin City University Rock Climbing Club** when they were organising the 2020 Irish Climbing InterVarsities, held in Dublin on February 14-16th, 2020. Whatever the challenges, the event was a huge success by all accounts.

The proceedings kicked off on a rainy Friday night, February 14th, with a talk in DCU given by local climbers and hikers **Carl Lang** and **Ellie Berry**, otherwise known as **Tough Soles**. Their talk was an interesting and funny lecture about their recently completed behemoth of an

adventure, walking all the national waymarked trails in Ireland.

The next morning, the climbing kicked off bright and early in **Awesome Walls Dublin** with the first wave of students filtering in. On the day's agenda was the bouldering competition. With thirty fantastic problems ready to go, everyone was eager to climb. Due to the sheer numbers competing this year, the competition had to be split, with the **beginners** (those climbing for less than a year) competing in the morning and the **advanced** climbers (those climbing for more than a year) climbing in the afternoon, thus allowing them to lie in.

As the beginners began to hit their stride, the tops began to come in thick and fast. UCC's **Sinead O'Connell** notched up an impressive 137

points in the female beginners category, and **Oisín Butler** from TUD led the male beginners with 179 points.

With thirty fantastic bouldering problems ready to go, everyone was eager to climb

In the afternoon, the advanced categories kicked off with gusto. Soon all the problems were seeing tops, including an impressive first top on number 30 by **Andrew Woods**. In the advanced categories, QUB's **Dominic Burns** and DCU's own **Anna Weidmann** were the leaders after the completion of the bouldering round.

After a hectic day of bouldering, it was off back to DCU to hear our Saturday speaker, **Angus Kille**, and his 'Six Lessons of Climbing.' Each lesson explored one of Angus' many adventures, ranging from his time bolting in Brazil and his meeting with **Alex Honnold** mid-route on El Cap, to his first years projecting routes with a terrifyingly small rack. The Intervarsities' speaker is always a highlight of the weekend for everyone involved, and Kille was no exception. His funny, light-hearted and inspiring speech held everyone's attention, while giving a lasting impression of never losing the fun while climbing.

Sunday morning was another busy day, with the roped section of the competition. With two qualifying routes per category, it was a good test of



Female competitor in lead climbing competition

a climber's skill level, with each route testing the endurance and technical prowess of the competitors. The beginners had to deal with some tricky pinches on women's qualifier two, one competitor describing it as the 'Spicy Mustard' route for the category. Later visits to the wall showed us the route was graded 7a, which is a

testament to the skills on display from the new climbers.

Advanced climbers had plenty to consider on their routes, with the qualifying routes stumping many climbers below the final clip. The women had to contend with a big dyno before a delicate move up to an unfriendly crimp. Likewise, the

men had a tenuous climb up the face before a bold move over the overhanging lip of the North Face wall.

Each final route was a joy to watch, from the delicate cross through move on Male B to the acrobatic starting move on Male A

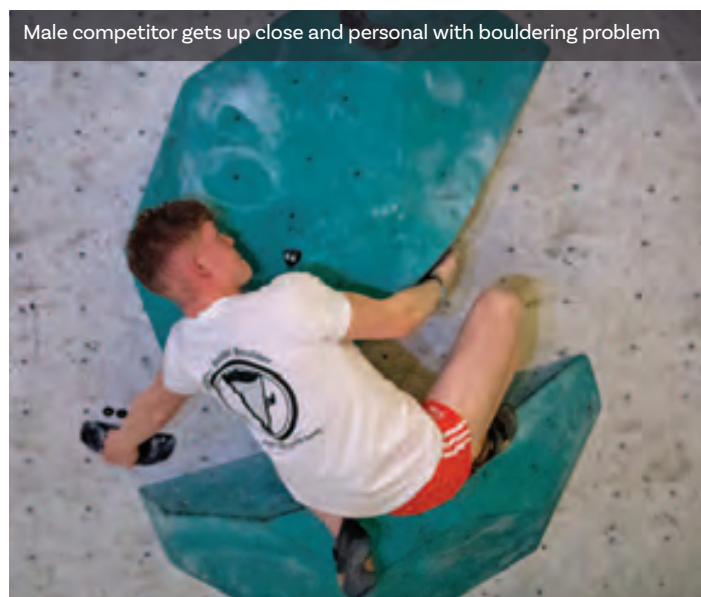
These qualifying routes did their jobs as the finalists were led into isolation for the finals, which was crowded since several similar scores left us with twelve going head to head in the Male B final. Each final route was a joy to watch, from the delicate cross through move on Male B to the acrobatic starting move on Male A, again showing the great work from the setting team led by **Chloe Condron**.

Our podiums were heavily Cork-based, with **UCC** taking

the top spot in three of the four individual categories, **Josh Bucher** in Male B, **Sinead O'Connell** in Female B, and **Elena Kasantsidis** in Female A. **Mark Scanlon** from Trinity was the only non-Corkonian of the victors, taking top spot in Male A.

With a near clean sweep, it's no surprise that **University College Cork** were the overall victors, taking the heavy marble slab and prizes provided by **Tenzing Natural Energy, Trespass, Great Outdoors, Snow & Rock** and **Firehouse Pizza**.

By Sunday evening all were wrecked and ready to head off on the sometimes long journey home, with our great slab of a trophy away south for the year, and **UCD** getting ready to host next year's events. All in all, a fantastic weekend was had by everyone who joined us, and overall the weekend was a great display of how strong the sport of climbing is at the college level ■



Male competitor gets up close and personal with bouldering problem



Helen Donoghue, Chair of the Access & Conservation Committee, addressing the Access & Conservation Forum last November

ACCESS & CONSERVATION NETWORK

Mountaineering Ireland has successfully launched its new Access & Conservation Network. **Helen Lawless** reports

The purpose of Mountaineering Ireland's new **Access & Conservation Network** is to allow members around the island to feed into policy development, submissions, or specific projects, without the commitment of being on Mountaineering Ireland's **Access & Conservation Committee**.

The network is made up of a sample of people already involved in different ways in Mountaineering Ireland's access and conservation work. The network should strengthen this work and improve the geographic reach of our activities.

A special forum to launch the network was held on Saturday, November 23rd, 2019, at Irish Sport HQ, Blanchardstown, Dublin. It was attended by 47 people who had travelled from all corners of the country (a similar number of people were interested but unable to attend on the day).

The format for the day was highly interactive, with a lot of discussion in small groups. Information on selected topics was presented on a series of wall charts to which participants added their comments and suggestions.

The event was designed and facilitated by members of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee, under guidance from new member **Noel Caffrey**. Active engagement by participants generated a buzz which lasted throughout the day.



Access & Conservation Committee member Orla Prendergast outlining Mountaineering Ireland's Helping the Hills initiative on upland path erosion

Challenges and solutions

Much discussion centred around how increased recreational activity in Ireland's upland and coastal areas is in many respects a positive development but how it also presents challenges. Participants identified a range of solutions to respond to these challenges, principally:

- The need to underpin the social and economic benefits of outdoor recreation with an investment in the management of outdoor recreation;
- Appropriate investment to mitigate the impact of increased activity on the natural environment;
- The need for a better balance between the rights and concerns of property owners and the responsibilities of recreational users;
- The need to establish and promote standards of good practice and to build expertise in recreation development and management;
- The need for Mountaineering Ireland to build political support for investment in hillwalking and climbing and outdoor recreation generally.

Poll on access

At the start of the forum attendees participated in a short poll on access. The results are shown below:

1. What is your view on the current state of access versus five years ago?

	Votes		Votes	
Much worse	0	A little better	11	
Worse	9	Better	1	
A little worse	11	Hugely better	0	
The same/no change	13	Don't know	1	

It is notable that across five years, which in terms of access is a short period, 20 participants believed the situation had got worse, against 12 believing it had got better.

2. How confident are you that access will improve in the next five years?

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	No change	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
0	0	3	9	9	2	13	7	2	0	0

There was almost a 50/50 split in response to this question, with 22 people confident that the situation will improve and 23 not confident of improvement, which is a cause for some concern.

Opportunities

A sense of opportunity permeated the forum. Participants identified growing recognition of the **health benefits** of outdoor activities and greater appreciation of the **natural environment** as creating a positive context within which Mountaineering Ireland could pursue the solutions identified above.

Ireland's upland areas are **vital natural assets**. At a time of climate crisis, and with traditional hillfarming in serious decline, there could be a new, valuable role for upland farmers in improving the natural resilience of our upland landscapes. More sustainable management of upland areas would enhance the provision of vital public goods, such as water supply, flood attenuation and carbon storage. Mountaineering Ireland will feed this into consultation on future supports for land management.

Responsibilities

The assumption of responsibility by hillwalkers and climbers was a recurring theme. This embraces taking responsibility for our own actions, especially in relation to access and relations with landowners; respecting the natural environment; and being conscious of making a contribution to the host community.

While there is reasonably good awareness of these responsibilities, there was a strong sense that more needs to be done to translate awareness into action, and to engender wider acceptance of these responsibilities.

To be effective in this area, Mountaineering Ireland may require additional expertise and capacity in communications.

Quality outdoor experiences

One session focused on capturing the characteristics of quality of outdoor recreation experiences. The results demonstrated a strong link between the quality of the natural environment and the quality of experience enjoyed. Mountaineering Ireland will advocate for further research on this linkage as it is important to protect the attributes that provide people with positive outdoor experiences.



Participants in Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Forum

Relationships

It was evident from the discussions that achievement of Mountaineering Ireland's objectives in relation to access and protecting the mountain environment is dependent on a variety of relationships. Looking after key relationships takes time, and this may have implications for the future allocation of resources within Mountaineering Ireland.

Suggested actions

Towards the end of the forum participants were asked to say what actions they believed should be a priority over the next twelve months. These included:

- Pursue the **indemnity arrangement** promised for Mountain Access Areas;
- Raise **conservation knowledge** amongst Mountaineering Ireland members;
- Help to achieve the effective running of **Comhairle na Tuaithe**;
- Continue to pursue the **Mountain Access** model of agree access;
- Develop the skills base for dealing with **upland path erosion**;
- Cooperate with **other recreational users** of the hills;
- Develop **relationships** with influential groups with a shared interest, e.g. Fáilte Ireland;
- Raise awareness of the value of the **upland environment**, and tie this into the **climate change** agenda;
- Seek a more rounded or **integrated approach** to managing upland areas;
- Look at how to **fund recreation**: impacts need to be paid for;
- Get **political**: support members to lobby politicians on our key issues;
- Recruit a **marketing and education** person to get messages out to a wider audience.

Conclusion

The event was successful in bringing the Access & Conservation Network to life, informing network members and securing feedback on Mountaineering Ireland's work in the areas of access and conservation.

Participants were supportive of the current direction of Mountaineering Ireland's work in these core areas, although it did highlight the need for greater activity on a number of aspects.

All outputs from the forum will be considered by Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee and used to inform future work plans within the framework of Mountaineering Ireland's current strategic plan.

A more detailed report of the 2019 Access & Conservation Forum is available on www.mountaineering.ie ■



Jim Sheehan, Aine McGill, Phil Fitzpatrick and Anne Brindley engaged in discussion on the future of Ireland's mountains

Furskotská Dolina, a national nature reserve in the Furskotská Valley

A TRIP TO THE HIGH TATRAS

Following a successful visit to the Krkonoše range in the Czech Republic in 2018, Galway Bay Hill Walking Club visited the High Tatras of northern Slovakia, on the border with Poland, in September 2019. **Paul Griffin** reports

The **Galway Bay Hill Walking Club** is a small club that was founded in 2016 by a group of like-minded individuals who enjoy spending time together while exploring the beauty of the Irish countryside. Membership is currently in the mid-twenties, with ten or twelve people going out on any given walk. We normally walk together and are fortunate to have an experienced leader amongst us who can navigate and also provide information about the geology and the flora and fauna of the areas we visit.

Getting there

The High Tatras region of northern Slovakia is within driving distance of Kraków. Therefore, we flew to Kraków and had a local taxi company lined up for the one and a half hour journey to the Tatras area. We arrived on the first Sunday of September and spent a full week there. Our base was in **Stary Smokovec**, a small town set in the foothills. We stayed in a small hotel, **Penzion Raimund**, 2km away in the village of **Vysoké Tatry** and travelled throughout the region by train, as it was accessible and reasonably

priced. Transport prices are competitive, with a seven-day train ticket coming in at €14.50. We found that the cost of living in Slovakia was lower than at home, making a week's break competitive in relation to other regions in Europe. Once we had a plan for the day, we accessed the start point for the walk without too much difficulty by getting the train to the nearest stop to the walk, which usually took less than thirty minutes.

Level of difficulty

The Tatra mountain range is a westwards extension of the **Carpathian Mountains** and offers an alpine experience in terms of mountain height and the general environment. Some of the mountains there are over 2,300m high, so a reasonable level of fitness is required. The most difficult climb (see Day 4, below) surpassed our experience on Connemara's Twelve Bens in terms of the difficulty level, while still being within our fitness level. The start of the walks was usually some distance above sea level, with 800m being the norm. Our approach was to walk on

mountain trails in the low hills and uplands initially, taking on some peaks later in our stay.

Day 1 Stary Smokovec to Slieszsky Dom

We set off from Stary Smokovec along a well-marked mountain trail in a comfortable 20°C. This section gave us exceptional views over the low Tatra range to a height of 1,670m. We saw some bluebell varieties and many other alpine flowers which we hadn't seen previously. There was also an abundance of wild blueberries scattered along the walking trails, which we enjoyed picking and eating as we went along.

After three hours walking, we arrived at **Slieszsky Dom chalet**, where refreshments were consumed and appreciated before returning by an alternative trail to Stary Smokovec.

Day 2 Strbske Pleso to Tri Studnicky

Strbske Pleso is a well-known ski resort in the winter season and is popular with Slovakian tourists for rambling in the off-season. We had some low

Slieszsky Dom chalet

cloud and drizzle that day, and for safety we stayed below the cloud. We walked into a forested hill area, passing the delightful **Jamske Pleso**, the second largest glacial lake on the Slovak side of the High Tatras, and then returned to the ski resort. We could see Rysy (2,503m) looming over us.

for a group photo.

On our return, we were lucky to spot a wild brown bear in the distance, unfortunately just a little too far away to photograph, but it gave the walk an extra sense of excitement on what was our most challenging day to date.



Fox seen on day 3

Day 3 Stary Smokovec to Téryho Chata

This day was a serious but lovely climb up to **Téryho Chata** (2,019m). The good weather held, which made it much easier, as the terrain was dry. The hills were rocky and there was a forested valley, described in one guidebook as one of the prettiest valleys in the Tatras. We all agreed that this was a 'peach' of a walk, as one of us described it on our Facebook page. We saw some beautiful waterfalls, namely **Vodopády Studeného Potoka** ('Cold Creek Waterfalls').

We came across a few wild foxes, which appeared to be on the lookout for an easy meal. They were tame and friendly.

After four hours climbing up through the beautiful valley, surrounded by some awesome scenery, we arrived at the highest 'chata' (or small café) in the High Tatras, called **Téryho Chata**. We stopped there for some refreshments, taking in the marvellous scenery and the opportunity

Day 4 Strbske Pleso to Bystra Lavka

This was a challenging climb, which took us past the impressive **Skok Waterfall**. From there, we continued up to **Bystra Lavka** (2,320m), one of the highest saddles in the Tatras, with magnificent views over Furkotská Valley. The route was exceptionally steep in places, requiring some scrambling and the use of fixed chains, and only the women and Ulrich (who led the hike) took on that challenge.

The train journey back was apparently quieter than usual, with some people nodding off. Later that night we men sat in awe as the women described the trials and tribulations of their day with great gusto.

Day 5 Tataranska Lesne to Herienok

This was a leisurely hike along a river valley to round off the week, with all walkers in attendance. We came across the flat riverbed with the beautiful cascades called



One of many cascades visited

Vodopády Studeného

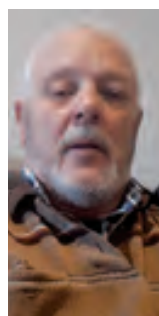
Potoka ('Cold Creek Waterfalls'). The leisurely day gave us a chance for some mindful reflection, as we savoured memories of our week walking in the mighty outdoors, with some fine food and drink to keep us going throughout.

The last day saw us mingling with the locals in **Poprad**, a medium sized town about half an hour away by train from our base.

By chance, we were there for the Hunters' Festival, a biannual event. We sampled local venison and various stews, as the Hunt Club members in full hunting outfits provided substantial food, which was consumed al fresco in the old town. We also saw some stylish weddings going on (apparently quite common on Saturday afternoons); they had a friendly air, and on one occasion we were invited to toast the bride! ■



Skok Waterfall



AUTHOR Paul Griffin is originally from Castlegregory, Co Kerry, where he grew up in the shadow of Mount Brandon and Beenoskee. His interest in hillwalking has grown over the past twelve years, with regular hikes in the Maamturks, the Twelve Bens and the Burren. He now lives outside Galway city. The **Galway Bay Hillwalking Club** can be contacted regarding membership at gbayhillwalk@gmail.com.

THANKS Thanks to Michal and his staff at **Penzion Raimund** for a magnificent stay, and to the **Milan Markoci** taxi service.



Juving School, in the Solu Khumbu District of Nepal, was established with aid from the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust

HAPPY GIVING BACK FOR 20 YEARS

The **Irish Nepalese Educational Trust** is celebrating twenty years of giving back to Nepal, with schools, community and environmental development businesses to its credit. **Chris Avison** reports

Anyone who has trekked or climbed in Nepal will know it is one of the most beautiful, yet one of the least developed, countries in the world. There are few roads in the mountainous districts, although this is slowly changing. The steepness of the terrain makes life very difficult for the farmers who work the land to feed their families. Many of them also try to eke out a tenuous living from portering and assisting tourists on their Himalayan trekking and climbing holidays.

Twenty years ago, the **Irish Nepalese Educational Trust** (INET) felt that supporting educational projects was an appropriate way to give something back to the people of **Solu Khumbu**, whose work with the first Irish Everest (and subsequent) expeditions had been so significant. Education is the key to combating poverty and to empowering people to improve their lives.

Some strong and lasting friendships have been made

between Irish mountaineers and trekkers and the Nepalis, without whose help their trips would not have been possible. These hardworking, resourceful and cheerful mountain people make a deep impression on all who meet them. Out of this serendipitous association between those who love the

mountains and those who live among them, INET emerged in 1999.

INET's main focus is the education of young children, together with associated community and environmental development. Schools for infants have been built in the Solu Khumbu

villages of **Phuleli, Rapchha, Nunthala, Kophu, Juving, Waku**, and **Hatemu** as well as community houses in the villages of **Chhee** and **Phuleli**.

INET also supports research into reforestation and growth of sustainable cash crops; this led to the introduction of beekeeping this year.

Please support the 20-year anniversary booklet

To celebrate INET's twenty years of work by dedicated volunteers in Ireland and their counterparts in Nepal, Chris Avison, one of the voluntary directors of INET, has produced a booklet elaborating INET's activities. Chris says: "It is wonderful how generous contributions from people in Ireland can make considerable improvements to the villages in Nepal's Solu Khumbu District. I really think this deserves recognition."

Copies of INET's 20-year anniversary booklet are available by contacting **Chris Avison** at avison@eircom.net. Also, if you can help INET continue its work in Nepal, please donate through www.idonate.ie or send a cheque (euro or sterling) to the **INET Honorary Treasurer, Valerie Burris, at 70 Woodlawn Park, Dublin D14 TH28**.



Small electricity schemes and irrigation, together with environmental education, greatly enhance opportunities for children and adults alike in these remote villages.

What began as an initiative of the Irish mountaineering community has found good-hearted support from the wider Irish community. Without generous contributions from Irish individuals, schools, clubs, groups and other organisations, none of this would have been possible.

INET is an entirely 'hands-on' voluntary charity, registered in Ireland. A small team of directors, who are all volunteers, fund all of their own expenses for the charity's activities, including their travel to Nepal.

Dawson Stelfox, MBE, who in 1993 became the first Irishman to climb Mount Everest, is INET's patron. Commenting recently on its progress, he said: "Over the last few years, and in particular after the devastating 2015 earthquakes, I have visited all of the INET-supported projects in Nepal and come away each time with an overwhelming sense of how our relatively modest funds have made such a significant difference to the lives and futures of the

people of these high Himalayan valleys. This is in no small part due to the resourcefulness and ingenuity of **Dhana Bahadur Rai** and his team, and it is always humbling to witness."

Dhana Bahadur Rai is from Phuleli village, and he was also on the successful 1993 Irish Everest Expedition, when he was chef at Advance Base Camp.

After the expedition, with financial help from his Irish

team mates and some German friends, he completed his education and qualified as a teacher.

Following a visit to Germany in the 1990s, Dhana recognised the value of kindergarten schools in rural communities. Working closely with INET, he organised the building of schools for infants in the aforementioned remote Solu Khumbu villages, well away from the popular tourist routes.

Dawson adds: "The Solu Khumbu has historically not attracted the attention that the areas closer to Everest have; the villages away from the main tourist trails still lag behind in investment. This is the main motivation behind our latest infants' school at **Hangkhula** village, which we will officially open next April."

Encouraging more mountaineers and trekkers

from Ireland to visit this very attractive area, he says: "There is no doubt that the work of INET over the last 20 years has greatly improved the prospects of these remarkable people. It is even more important for those of us who understand and value the power of mountain landscapes to go and visit Nepal and help them build a sustainable, 21st-century mountain community."

Commending the successful association with INET, Dhana is very enthusiastic: "We are very grateful to the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust and all the other Irish supporters who have helped us so much. All your remarkable educational contributions and valuable efforts in the lap of the Mount Everest region have become a glowing light in our rural villages.

"All these efforts are changing Himalayan rural lives for the better, by connecting us to the ever-globalising world. We are very grateful that you have been able to make such a big difference to our lives" ■



Solu Khumbu view from Juving



Dhana Bahadur Rai



Walking to school



► **Chris Avison** is a volunteer director of the **Irish Nepalese Educational Trust (INET)**. He is a long-standing member of Mountaineering Ireland, the British Mountaineering Council, the Wayfarers and Mountain Meitheal. He is also a former editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*.



Heading up towards Ben Nevis on day three

SCOTTISH WINTER MEET 2020

It seems you do not have to go as far as the Himalayas to experience 185km/hour winds and to be exposed to the risk of avalanches and frost nip. Winter mountaineering in Scotland may allow you to experience similarly challenging weather conditions. **Aron Barry** describes his participation in this year's Mountaineering Ireland Winter Meet, which was based in Onich, Scotland, in February.



The rental car was shaking as we sat at a viewing point in Glen Coe valley, staring across at Coire nan

Lochan, or what we could see of the corrie with the storm force winds of Storm Ciara shrieking around us. We were starting our first morning of a three-day Winter Mountaineering course with Mountaineering Ireland.

There were three of us doing the course with experience of winter mountaineering, which ranged from my own climbs on grade 1/11 winter routes in Ireland to virtually nil. **Chris Higgins**, a relaxed, gangly and quick-to-smile outdoors instructor from the Lake District, had been tasked with trying to impart some

knowledge to us over the three days.

When I looked in the back of the car for my gloves, my least experienced friend had already donned his climbing helmet, balaclava and ski goggles. The helmet was sitting four inches above his head, as his hat had a big bauble on top. This caused the chin strap to be firmly bedded into his balaclava-covered throat. With the ski goggles also partially askew on his face, he looked ridiculous. His rucksack was too small for all the winter gear, so it seemed a necessary evil that he should wear the gear he had brought. At that stage, we were all happy out. The place was so spectacular.

So, with our noses so close to the ground that they were scrapping tar off the car park in an effort to avoid getting swept away, and one of my friends in a pair of trousers that were no more waterproof than a box of teabags, we set off for Coire nan Lochan.

After a half hour of being battered by the wind and rain, we gained some degree of shelter as we progressed upward alongside a torrent of water moving downward through the V-shaped valley that we were climbing on our way to the corrie.

After an hour, we were walking through wet, heavy snow. An hour and a half in, we stopped for a quick breather. We were just below the corrie and had reached the first decent depth of snow. My friend with the absorbent trousers was saturated, but said he was still warm. It had been a mild morning, but temperatures were set to drop as the day continued.

We progressed along by the river for another couple of hundred metres. Then, just before stepping out onto it, we saw the slide path of a grade I/II avalanche. It was hard to spot. The fresh avalanche had gone straight into the river below us and had been consumed, leaving

no debris as evidence. It was a wet slide, caused by the weight of the snow itself as it got heavier with warming temperatures.

We moved on up cautiously by the side of the avalanche path, with everyone's feet coming down a little bit lighter now on the snow beneath us.

As we rounded the last steep ground before the corrie, we were met with a view of the peak, **Stob Coire nan Lochan** (1,115m) and a gale so strong that it would rip the nose hairs clean out of your nostrils. More striking than the peak and the wind, however, was the sheer abundance of avalanches. Every gully and face visible was marked with the track of a snow slide, slides with headwalls of four or five feet that could easily hurt you and even bury you.

Chris sat us down and we went through the dynamics of these slides and the weather that had led to them

occurring. This was an invaluable lesson, as although I had done avalanche courses in Canada, seeing a snowpack similar to what you can get in Ireland releasing so readily and with such volume made me realise that we should take our own coverings of snow in Ireland a bit more seriously, when we are venturing out on them.

As we plodded across the corrie in snow thigh-deep in places, the cold began to set in. Temperatures were dropping. The wind was cutting, carrying sharp snow into your face so strongly that, for every five paces you took, you would be pushed back two. The frequent howling gusts made everyone, including Chris, halt and squat on the ground until they had passed. Later, we found out that the wind had been recorded at 115mph (185kmph) on nearby Aonach Mor (1,221m).

We were heading for a piece of snow among all of the avalanche debris that would be safe to work on. Half an hour later, when we reached the base of the chosen slope, the party was a fragment of its former self. My ski goggles had been

ripped clean off my head, as I had turned away from a gust, and were now more than likely somewhere near Aberdeen. Our inexperienced and ill-equipped friend was cold. The lack of sound waterproof gear had taken its toll on him. With everything wet, and the dropping temperature and storm force winds, there was no way for him to retain heat. My other friend was also beginning to get cramps in the cold. Even Chris had fallen into a snow-covered hole among the boulders and twisted his knee.

Although we had clearly already learnt some invaluable lessons, everyone was still determined to get some skills-based learning in, as we had made it that far. In the following hour, we set about digging bucket seats, learning how to do body belays, setting snow anchors and dragging each other around the slope. By the end of the hour, the rest of us were toast. However, our inexperienced friend was shaking uncontrollably. We were now worried about his well-being, as he had started mumbling his words. So, we fired everything into our rucksacks and were blown out of Coire nan Lochan by the



Course instructor Chris Higgins under the North Face of Ben Nevis

185kmph gusts back down onto the trail leading to the car.

The following two days of the course were slightly less epic. We had a solid day of rope work in the stunning and

very sheltered **Glen Nevis**.

Then, the final day took us in under the imposing north face of **Ben Nevis** to practice the skills we had learnt and to observe the changing snow pack. We were well prepared for conditions by that final day and had learnt a lot from Chris, who was very receptive to all of the annoying questions I had.

The experience is one that I would highly recommend to anyone who wants to get out and do some more serious routes in the winter. Scotland is sublime, even blessing us with sunshine as we made our way back through the snow-covered Highlands on the return journey to Glasgow.

As to the frost-nipped team member; let's just say that his soaking wet underpants, along with the freezing temperatures and a gusting windchill factor of minus ten, had him very worried by the end of the first day! ■



It wasn't all bad weather during the meet, as evidenced by this picture of participant April Heaney on Aonach Eagach

THREE PENINSULAS MOUNTAIN HIKE

Aidan Ennis hikes across the mountains of the Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas

We were falling. Two brothers, tethered together, falling together. We had climbed **Cima Grande** in the Sexten Dolomites via the Dulfer Route, up the towering West Face. On the summit we enjoyed the warm sunshine and spectacular views before descending. The descent was going to end in catastrophe, with both of us battling for our lives in the gravest situation possible.

One year earlier, I was in Killarney after a weekend hiking trip and had bought a new large-scale map of Kerry. A route immediately jumped off the map. It was a continuous line of mountains, starting from Dursey Island on the tip of the Beara peninsula and following the Cork-Kerry border along the Slieve Miskish, Caha, Shehy and Derrynasaggart Mountains to Caherbarnagh.

From there, the mountains swing abruptly westward to continue over the Paps, Mangerton, Mullaghanattin and the Dunkerron Mountains, all the way to Waterville.

Above:
Carrauntoohil and
Beenkeragh from
Caher.

Below: The late
Colm Ennis checks
out the route on
the Campanile
Basso in the
Brenta Dolomites.

I looked at the channel in between the Beara and Iveragh peninsulas – the Kenmare River – and immediately I went digging for the 1:50,000 maps. It looked possible. I called the route the **Great Kenmare River Horseshoe**.

The following summer of 2011, my brother **Colm** and I headed to the Brenta Dolomites for a traverse of **Via delle Bocchette**, an Alpine-style via ferrata. En route, we climbed **Campanile Basso** (2,883m) and planned to finish our Dolomites expedition in Tre



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





Cime di Lavaredo with a climb on **Cima Grande** (2,999m), the central and tallest of these three iconic mountains.

It was a beautiful day, we had the mountain to ourselves and the climbing was superb. On the summit, we could see two climbers on **Cima Piccola**, opposite us.

We started our abseils to descend to a notch between the two mountains. We reached our last abseil point; the ground was twenty metres below. Colm recalled that at about halfway down the abseil something happened to the rope. He checked quickly; his abseil device was engaged. We had both checked the anchor. *It had failed.* Colm was falling to the ground below.

I was clipped into the anchor. I have no memory of the fall. I lay unconscious on the rock-strewn ground as darkness approached.

Having survived the fall, I would not survive a cold night on the mountain. I had broken my back, pelvis, sacrum, left upper arm, left orbit and most of my ribs. My spleen was bleeding, there was a deep gash on my right temple, and I had a very serious double-lung injury.

Colm regained consciousness. His back was broken and his left arm shattered into uncountable fragments. Somehow he managed to locate the phone in my small climbing backpack, but the enclosed space between the two mountains had no phone reception. It was a desperate situation.

Above: Route of the Three Peninsulas Mountain Hike.

In unimaginable pain, Colm dragged himself to a higher vantage point where he was able to attract the attention of the two climbers we had seen earlier. They were from the Czech Republic and, with their help, the alarm was raised. We only ever learned one of their names – **Jakob**.

The local mountain rescue team, **Soccorso Alpino Alto Adige**, and a rescue helicopter with a doctor on board were on a training exercise nearby that day. I was airlifted just before dark. Over thirty mountain rescue personnel risked their lives to save our lives that night.

I woke up in intensive care, on the flat of my back, with wires, tubes and drains variously attached to my body.

In time, the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe became a goal for my recovery. First, I had to get through the next hour, the next day and the next week. For those two weeks in intensive care, the doctors in Belluno's **San Martino Hospital** fought hard to keep me alive.

After an air ambulance back to Ireland, and a spell in **University Hospital Waterford**, I walked into my home with one crutch. The next day, I struggled to get my spinal brace on, but got out of bed and carefully made my way to the kitchen. I placed a capsule in the coffee machine and pressed the button. The coffee slowly filled the cup and stopped. A rich crema settled on top and a wonderful aroma instantly filled



THIS WAS GOING TO BE THE LONGEST CONTINUOUS MOUNTAIN HIKING ROUTE I HAD EVER ATTEMPTED.

In June 2018, I returned to Killarney. The mountain hike from Killarney to Dingle took four days to complete, over a distance of 159 kilometres. I finished the walk, but the route still felt unfinished. A continuous 'through hike' of the three peninsulas now became my dream, to link the mountains of the Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas in one continuous hiking expedition.

On June 1st, 2019, I stood looking over at **Dursey Island**, Co Cork. It was my third time to begin the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe. The cable car took me over to the island and I quickly made my way to **Cnoc Bólais** (252m). There was no view, and low cloud enveloped the summit signal tower. Thirty minutes later I was back on the cable car and ready to start the hike in earnest. **Emily**, my wife, and **Alex** were waiting for me on the mainland with hot coffee.

I thanked Emily for her support for my crazy expedition. Emily reassured me that it wasn't crazy: "It's just who you are."

With that endorsement for my hike ringing in my ears, I said my goodbyes and set off. Emily may not have thought it was crazy, but I knew what was ahead. It was going to be the longest continuous mountain backpacking hiking route I had ever attempted. I was not taking anything for granted and, like any good adventure, there was no guarantee that I was going to complete the route.

My main strategy for keeping injury-free was to restrict my distance to 36km to 40km per day and to keep my pace steady.

Day 1 38.8km

My first summit was **Knockgour** (488m) in the Slieve Miskish Mountains. I then followed the ridge to

the room. Then, without warning, I broke down crying, not because of the effort or the pain... but because I was alive.

Eleven months of recovery, physio and training later I was keen to do a long-distance hike again. I was not yet ready to tackle the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe, and I was uncertain how my back would cope with a pack on it.

I devised a route from Strangford, Co Down, along the Lecale coastal trail to Newcastle, over the Mourne Mountains to Newry and along the Cooley Mountains to Carlingford, Co Louth, a distance of 183 kilometres. I completed it in five days. Just over a month later, my son, **Alex Jakob**, was born.

The following year, two years to the day after the accident, I ran a marathon and finally felt ready to tackle the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe. It was June 2013.

However, everything did not go to plan and I shortened the route. It was still 150 kilometres and still a horseshoe, but not the route I had originally envisaged. Maybe I was just not ready, not strong enough? I was going to have to reassess and return.

In June 2017, I stood on the shore of Lough Leane in Killarney after ten days of hillwalking. I had finally completed the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe. It had taken me seven days to complete, and six wild camps. I continued for another three days to the remote Black Valley at the back of Killarney National Park.

The complete 366-kilometre route that ended in Killarney looked like two giant horseshoes when viewed on a satellite map. I called this ten-day mountain backpacking route the **Beara-Iveragh Double Horseshoe**.

I knew immediately on reaching Killarney that my hike was finished, but not complete. The MacGillycuddy's Reeks ridge beckoned and, from the summit of Carrauntoohil, the **Dingle peninsula** would be clearly visible, 'the finest of the great mountain-promontories,' as once observed by the famous Irish botanist **Robert Lloyd Praeger** (1865-1953). I would have to return and continue the expedition, which for me had now become the **Three Peninsulas Mountain Hike**.

Above: Early morning soft light and shadows on the Beara peninsula.

Below: Lough Garagarry and Lough Leane, Killarney, viewed from Stoompa Mountain, near Mangerton.





Miskish Mountain before stopping at a waterfall on the slopes of **Maulin**. I had been walking in heavy rain for several hours at that stage and was glad to climb into my tent.

Day 2 36.4km (new total: 75km)

Maulin was my first summit on day two, followed quickly by **Knocknagree** and a descent to the **Glas Loughs**. From these lakes, I would be following the Cork-Kerry border along a mountain ridgeline for the next three days.

By 9.00am, I had reached my high point for the day, **Hungry Hill** (685m), making my arrival time at the **Healy Pass** perfect. I thoroughly enjoyed a morning coffee and a chat with **Donal**, the owner of **Don's Mountain Cabin**, nestled into the mountainside just below the pass.

I thanked Donal for the hot drink and set off, initially up to **Knockowen** (658m), past the lakes of **Ram's Hill** and along the Caha Mountains, in very windy conditions, to **Turner's Rock Tunnel**.

My camp for the night was just another four kilometres away at the peaceful and exotic-sounding **Lough Nagarriva** (Irish: Loch na Garbha).

Day 3 37km (new total: 112km)

It was a beautiful Monday morning; soft light and long shadows cast along the ridge. The unmistakably lush **Garinish Island** could clearly be seen in Glengarriff Harbour below.

I paused briefly, crossing a small mountain road at **Priest's Leap**, before climbing **Knockboy** (706m) in the Shehy Mountains, County Cork's highest point.

During the walk to **Bealick** (535m), just above Gougane Barra, the weather settled back to regular heavy showers, a pattern that would continue for many days.

I continued hiking along the Cork-Kerry county borders over undulating ground, before calling it a day on **Knockbwee** summit (461m) in the Derrynasaggart Mountains.

Day 4 43km (new total: 155km)

I sheltered from the wind and rain below the

Above: View from Finnararagh looking back along the ridge towards Mullaghanattin.

enormous telecommunications mast at **Mullaghanish** (649m) and boiled up a coffee. A short distance later, at the head of the Clydagh valley, the route reached its most easterly point, above Millstreet.

After climbing **Caherbarnagh** (681m), I finally left the invisible Cork-Kerry border to reach the twin peaks of **The Paps** (694m), before stopping at a wet but passable wild camp on the lower slopes of **Crohane**.

Day 5 39km (new total: 194km)

The southern end of the slender **Crohane Lake** was my first major feature on day five, followed by a steep climb up to **Lough Fineen**. From the summit of **Stoompa** (705m) another approaching heavy shower was visible over Killarney.

I walked along the cliff line above the scenic Horses Glen to **Mangerton** (839m), before following a necklace of lakes across **Dromderalough Mountain**.

Windy Gap and the wide-open spaces of the **Glas Loughs** led me over to **Moll's Gap**. It was late in the day, and Moll's Gap was deserted.

I pushed on and followed a small mountain road up the Owenreagh valley, finally reaching the **Ballaghbeama Gap** as the mountains darkened around me.

Day 6 26km (new total: 220km)

It was a beautiful morning as I climbed the long, undulating ridge to **Mullaghanattin** (773m). I stopped to take off my jacket, and I put on sunscreen for the first time since beginning the hike. Moments later, I was hastily grabbing my waterproof jacket as a heavy hail shower covered the ground in a white, icy carpet.

After the shower passed, there were spectacular views of the Beara peninsula, the Kenmare River and most of the mountains on the Iveragh peninsula.

I continued along the ridge to **Finnararagh** (667m) and on to **Coomcallee** (648m), past countless high mountain lakes. With views stretching across the bay to Dursey Island, this was one of my favourite sections of the walk so far.

By the time I had arrived at **Lough Sallagh**, overlooking Lough Currane and Waterville, the weather had turned cold and wet again. ▶



IT WAS AN EPIC ADVENTURE THROUGH SOME OF THE MOST REMOTE AND BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES IMAGINABLE.

to the south and the Dingle peninsula to the north.

Below me was **Lough Cummeenapeasta** and, further along, sunshine illuminated vibrant green patches of the **Hags Glen** and glistened off **Lough Callee** and **Lough Gouragh**.

I reached **Carrauntoohil** (1,038m) at 7.00pm and started the descent to Lough Eighter via **Caher** (975m).

Across the bay, the sun was setting behind the mountains of Dingle, colouring the sky in a smouldering orange glow.

Day 7 17km (new total: 1237km)

The halfway point of the hike was Waterville. I had planned to arrive early in the day, sort out my gear and restock my food supplies. It would almost be a rest day.

I followed the ridgeline to **Eagles Hill** (549m) and on to **Beenrour** (418m), before descending into **Waterville** at midday. I had completed the Great Kenmare River Horseshoe section of the route and was still on schedule.

Day 8 34km (new total: 271km)

After a fine breakfast in the Butler Arms Hotel, I followed the Kerry Way along a ridgeline to **Knockavohaun** (371m), before gradually descending to the River Ferta. From here, it was just a few kilometres to the start of the pilgrims' route to **Knocknadobar** (690m).

Soft evening sunlight shone through the clouds as I reached the summit of Knocknadobar. The views all around were magnificent, with Valencia Island, Doulus Bay and the mountains of Iveragh on one side, and Dingle Bay on the other. I descended to the **Glendalough lakes** for the night.

Day 9 41km (new total: 312km)

A dramatic rain shower darkened the sky over Dingle Bay as I made my way around to Kells. It was a short climb to **Been Hill** before I followed the Glenbeigh Horseshoe ridge to the high point of **Coomacarra** (772m) and continued to the pass of **Bealach Oisín**.

A brisk walk along a mountain road brought me to the last climb of the day, a col below **Broaghnabinnia** at the head of Caragh valley.

Day 10 29km (new total: 341km)

A bright and sunny morning made for a very pleasant walk down the Cummeenduff Glen and through the **Gap of Dunloe**, reaching Kate Kearney's Cottage in perfect time for a morning coffee.

After a birthday pint of Guinness, I headed for the zig-zags at the start of the Reeks ridge, once described by the Irish botanist and explorer **Henry Chichester Hart** (1847-1908) as 'the grandest bit of mountaineering to be met with in Ireland.'

The ridge ahead spectacularly wound its way to Carrauntoohil, with the Beara peninsula clearly visible

Above:
View from
Knocknagantee,
looking over
Sneem, with the
Beara peninsula in
the distance.

Below: **Lough Cummeenapeasta** from the Reeks ridge, with **Lough Callee** and **Lough Gouragh** in the distance.

Day 11 38km (new total: 379km)

This was the link section to the Dingle peninsula. The route ahead was a road walk to **Killorglin** before continuing to **Milltown** and on to **Castlemaine**.

An hour after leaving Castlemaine I reached **Knockmoyle** (427m). The link was complete: I was on the Slieve Mish mountains and at the start of the Dingle peninsula.

From Knockmoyle, I followed the ridge to **Glanbrack Mountain** before climbing to the high point of the day, **Baurtregaum** (851m), and on to **Caherconree** (835m).

My camp for the night was a kilometre further on at the impressive **Caherconree Fort**.

Day 12 29km (new total: 408km)

I continued along the Slieve Mish ridge from Knockbrack to **Cnoc na Stuaice** (481m), spectacularly situated overlooking Inch Strand and Castlemaine Harbour.

A small country road allowed me to regain the mountains near **Knocknakilton**. I followed the ridge to **Reamore**, above Lough Anascaul, in windy conditions, before stopping at **Loch Dubh**.





Day 13 38km (new total: 446km)

The alarm went off at 5.00am. It was raining as I climbed the gentle gradient of **An Cnapán Mór** (649m) before navigating to **Sliabh Mhacha Ré** and descending to the **Connor Pass**.

It had become exceptionally cold and I needed a hot drink. I sheltered in my tent and put on an additional base layer and my lightweight down jacket. I now had every shred of my available clothing on me.

Refuelled and now warm, I headed along the ridge to the summit of **Brandon Mountain** (952m). I did not linger at the summit cross but immediately started the descent, in very poor visibility, to the col far below.

Más an Tiompáin (763m) rose into the cloud ahead. It was the last mountain on the Brandon headland. I launched myself up the final summit of my hike.

All that was left to do after that was to walk along the quiet tracks of the Kerry Way to **Gallarus**,

Above: Lough Eagher, Coomloughra Lough and Lough Eighter from Caher.

Below left: Wild camp at Loch Dubh below An Cnapán Mór on the Dingle peninsula.

Below right: Aidan on Más an Tiompáin, the last mountain on the Brandon headland.

where I planned to stay at the Campail Teach an Aragail campsite for the night.

Day 14 15km (new total: 461km)

It was Friday, June 14th, 2019, and the last day of my hike. After an early morning visit to **Gallarus Oratory**, I walked the peaceful Saints Road to **Ventry**, where I had a morning coffee break at the local post office shop.

The last six kilometres were along the Dingle Way. I arrived in **Dingle** just after midday, completing my continuous walk of the **Three Peninsulas Mountain Hike**.

Hiking the mountains of the Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas was an epic adventure through some of the most remote and exceptionally beautiful landscapes imaginable.

In terms of the scale and distance, the richness of the countryside and the spellbinding scenery, there is surely nothing quite like it. This hike is simply the best mountain backpacking route in the world ■



TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING

Tongariro National Park on New Zealand's North Island is the country's oldest national park. It is a dual World Heritage site, being rich in both cultural identity and dramatic, awe-inspiring natural scenery, which includes the volcanic peaks of Mount Ngauruhoe (2,291m), Mount Tongariro (1,967m) and Mount Ruapehu (2,797m).

The Tongariro Alpine Crossing is a world-renowned trek through the park that is one of the most popular in New Zealand. **Greg Butler** decided to attempt the 19km day hike in September last year, while he was in New Zealand to visit his daughter. The crossing passes over the volcanic terrain of the multi-cratered active volcano Mount Tongariro and passes the eastern base of Mount Ngauruhoe.

The warning sign at the Devil's Staircase confirmed that this was a serious hike:

'STOP: Are you really prepared to continue? Have you considered the weather, your equipment and your fitness?'

I was about ninety minutes into the **Tongariro Alpine Crossing** and the almost 20km, nine-hour trek was about to get difficult. My excitement about the possibility of completing this bucket list goal was tempered by apprehension and uncertainty about what lay ahead.

Above: One of the Emerald Lakes passed on the descent from Red Crater, with steam rising from the ground, an indication that the area is volcanically active.

Before leaving Ireland for New Zealand, I had questioned my ability to complete this trek. I emailed two companies who arrange guided walks in the national park. I felt the need to tell them that, though I was an experienced trekker, I was 72 years old and a slow downhill walker. I received the following replies:

'As a self-professed slower person, it is advisable to book a private guided trip. Slowing down others on the downhill can be especially frustrating.'

The second reply was more encouraging and the one I opted for:

'You do not need a guide. The track is very well marked, and you sound more experienced and fitter than many who complete this hike.'

What they didn't mention was the 'many' I was more experienced than were mainly international backpackers in their twenties or early thirties!

Setting off

I took the 5.30am shuttle bus from **Taupo** to the starting point of the trek, **Mangatepopo** car park at



➤ **Greg Butler** is a member of Mountaineering Ireland and lives in Cork. He began hillwalking in Ireland with the **Lee Valley Walking Group** in his early fifties. On turning 65, he turned his attention to high-altitude trekking. He has been to Kilimanjaro, Everest Base Camp, Mount Elbrus and Annapurna Base Camp, and has completed the Camino Frances, the 780km pilgrims route from St Jean Pied de Port in France over the Pyrenees and through the north of Spain to Santiago de Compostela in Galicia.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC RANKED THE TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING AMONGST THE TOP TEN ONE-DAY HIKES IN THE WORLD.

1,120m. There was an air of excitement as my fellow trekkers set off at a brisk pace. Several of them were poorly equipped for an Alpine environment, where changeable weather can bring wind, rain and cold during the day. Tee-shirts, shorts and trainers were common, but youth was on their side! I had packed for all conditions, and throughout the day I went from woolly hat, gloves and three layers of clothing, to shorts and tee-shirt.

My slow, steady pace meant that many people passed me, greeting me with a mixture of sympathy and admiration. I knew from experience that I would meet several of them later, as they tired, and the trail got more difficult.

The first hour was a relatively easy walk up gently rolling hills through the glaciated **Mangatepopo valley**, bounded by a **lateral moraine**. I was immediately struck by the loveliness of the landscape, a flower garden of colourful Alpine plants, with clumps of tussock grasses, large mountain daisies and mosses – delicate plants flourishing in a harsh environment. The sun rising over **Mount Ngauruhoe** dominated the skyline – ‘**Mount Doom**’ to *Lord of the Rings* fans.

Above: Greg Butler and Mount Ngauruhoe, or ‘Mount Doom.’

Below: Lateral moraine in Mangatepopo valley, with blooming heather in foreground.

The trek became more challenging approaching the **Devil’s Staircase** – a steep climb of 370 steps to the **South Crater** (1,650m). Plant life was limited on rough tracks of ancient and modern lava flows. It was encouraging to look back down the Mangatepopo valley and see how far I had come.

The scramble up the **Red Crater Ridge** was the most strenuous part of the trek, and turning back was not an option. I recalled the advice of my mentor, ‘Slow, short, steady steps, and no stopping.’ ➤





The ridge was steep and narrow, exposed to high winds, with vertigo-inducing drops on either side. The trail was not well formed, with loose rocks and gravel underfoot. I saw some very nervous walkers hanging on grimly to a steel support chain to avoid slipping. No one was passing me on that section! A young Indian lady offered me her hand on a particularly tricky bit and, though I could have managed fine, I gladly accepted her kindness.

Above: View of Oturere valley and Red Crater from the summit.

Below: Red Crater (left) and on the summit of Red Crater (right).

The climb to the summit of **Red Crater** (1,886m) left me momentarily breathless, but I was rewarded by a sight I shall remember as one of the most breathtaking I have ever seen on a mountain. There was an unobstructed view that included the **Red Crater** itself, the **Oturere valley** to the east, the **Emerald Lakes** below, and beyond them the shimmering **Blue Lake** above the Central Crater. The calm, cool, blue-green lake-waters belied the explosive violent eruptions which had created them. I imagined this was the scene that enthused *National Geographic* to rate the **Tongariro Alpine Crossing** as one of the top ten one-day hikes in the world.

There was a short, difficult descent to the **Emerald Lakes** and **Central Crater** on loose rocks and scree. Here, people were slipping and sliding,





with the odd person taking a tumble and hurting their pride. The steam rising from the ground in many places and the sulphurous smell of rotten eggs indicated that I was on an active volcanic part of the trail.

I stopped for a rest, a snack and to take photographs, but not for too long, as I was only at the halfway point, and I was worried about the 4.00pm deadline to catch the return bus. I crossed the **Central Crater** before climbing to the **Blue Lake**. This lake is Tapu (sacred) to the Maori people and it is disrespectful to touch, eat or drink around its shores. Looking back at the hazardous descent from the Red Crater summit brought a smile to my face at my achievement in negotiating it without incident.

Above:
The zig-zag descent down the Rotopaunga valley, with Lake Taupo behind.

Below:
The Blue Lake.

The trail wound around the walls of the Central Crater and I began the long zig-zag descent down the **Rotopaunga valley**, passing the **Ketetahi** shelter. The hut is no longer used for overnight accommodation, following damage that resulted from the 2012 volcanic eruption at **Te Maari** crater, which spewed ash kilometres into the sky and rained rocks down on the shelter. This is an active **volcanic hazard zone**, with billowing funnels of steam venting from the crater and a warning sign advising quick movement through this section of the trail.

Lake Taupo in the distance fills the caldera left by a massive volcanic eruption 26,500 years ago, when the effect on the skies would have been visible from Rome to China. Tongariro's dynamic landscape, combining beauty and violence in the same place, is a reminder that nature's cataclysmic events could happen again.

When I read the Tongariro Alpine Crossing described as 'New Zealand's best one-day hike,' I had high expectations. I wasn't disappointed. There was an added sense of achievement in doing it alone, which allowed more time for reflection on how lucky I was to be in that wondrous place. There was also a sense of camaraderie and fun, with the occasional words of support and sympathetic glances from strangers, and even a round of applause from a group of five Asians upon my arrival at the Red Crater summit!

Why I did it

Why did I do it? Because it was hard, and to hold back 'bent old age' a little longer. Once started, I never really doubted my ability to complete the trek, though as a 'self-professed slower walker' I had some concerns about my 4.00pm return bus deadline, which I made with minutes to spare.

The best reason of all for doing it was the sheer joy of it! ■



Guidebook writer **Jim Ryan** shares some tips about making the most of your time in the Everest area

In 2006, I visited **Everest Base Camp** (EBC) in Nepal. When I returned to the Everest trail in October 2019, I was staggered by the increase in the number of trekkers and the other changes that had occurred.

The Nepalese are good at keeping statistics. Way back in 1979, 3,600 trekkers visited **Sagarmatha (Everest) National Park**. That number jumped dramatically over the turn of the century, so that in 2005 the number of trekkers surpassed the 20,000 mark. By 2014, it had reached 97,000.

There was a sharp drop-off in 2015 due to the earthquakes in the region, and there was only a partial recovery in 2016, but the number had risen again to almost 100,000 by 2018.

The statisticians expected that, by 2019, the annual number of trekkers visiting the Everest area would reach 125,000.

The peak month for trekkers in Sagarmatha National Park is October, with November close behind. By comparison, the April/May/June season attracts half the autumn number.



Overcrowding on THE EVEREST TRAIL

In 2006, you stopped in tea-houses. These were run by families and the number of bedrooms was rarely more than five or six. You got to know the family and took pictures of the children. These tea-houses are gone now, replaced by enormous lodges and hotels, each capable of accommodating up to fifty trekkers. The family no longer lives there. Instead, the lodge is manned by hired maids and cooks.

Above: On the Everest trail above Namche Bazaar, heading for Thyangboche.

In **Namche Bazaar**, the Sherpa capital, and below that, you are now likely to be accommodated in a twin-bedded room with a western-style toilet en-suite. Above Namche, the conditions are not so good. Perhaps you will have to share an Asian toilet and a small hand-basin with twenty other trekkers.

Fire safety in these hastily constructed buildings is non-existent. At night, before you retreat to your cold bedroom, seats nearest the stove in the dining hall will be at a premium.

Out on the trail these days, when you are sensibly walking up the Everest trail 'bistari, bistari' (slowly, slowly) to allow for acclimatisation, a large group may overtake you as another group descends, going the other way. Your group may be broken up and your guide will try to reassemble the party.

Thirteen years ago, you had the time and the inclination to stop and pass the time of day with those you met on the trail. Now there are so many people that you will walk past them with barely a smile.



► *Jim Ryan is a member of Bishopstown Hillwalking Club in Cork. He is the author of several guidebooks: Carrauntoohil and MacGillycuddy's Reeks: A Walking Guide; The Mountains of Nerja; Aconcagua and the Southern Andes; and Scenic Walks in Killarney.*

Then, you may be ascending at a pace you feel comfortable with, when you hear from behind, 'Excuse me, please,' from a trekker who may be better acclimatised than you or just in more of a hurry and ignoring the advice they have received about going slowly to allow for acclimatisation. The trekker wants you to move off the trail, out of the way.

Tourism is a major source of income in Nepal and there are certain fixed charges you will have to pay en route to Everest. The Nepal entry visa will cost you €50 on arrival in the airport, and obtaining it will delay you in three separate queues for up to two hours. You can cut an hour off that by applying for your visa online beforehand.

There are also entry fees for visiting many cultural and religious sites. If you decide to wander around **Durbar Square** in **Kathmandu**, it will cost you €8 just to pass the barrier. Incidentally, the largest of Durbar Square's temples, the one with the erotic carvings on its struts, was totally demolished in the 2015 earthquake.

The entry fee for Sagarmatha National Park is now about €27. Out on the Everest trail, it will cost you four or five euros to charge your phone (electricity is from solar panels), and another eight to ten euros for a Wi-Fi connection. Best value is to buy a **Nepalese sim card**, which will give you coverage virtually anywhere in Nepal. A bucket of warm water to wash yourself with will set you back five euros per person.

Whereas in 2006 you queued at Kathmandu airport for the flight to **Lukla**, these days the airport at Kathmandu is undergoing redevelopment; so you will have to drive five hours on a bumpy, dusty road to the small airport at **Ramechhap** in order to fly the fifteen minutes to Lukla, at least until May.

In October 2019, we decided to go north-west from Namche to **Gokyo**. The trail was quieter, but the accommodation at Gokyo was at bursting point – too few beds for the number of trekkers. There was also a shortage of fresh water.

Crossing the **Cho La**, a mountain pass at 5,420m, to get back onto the Everest trail, was strenuous. Everyone wants to visit Everest Base Camp, but there is nothing there except possibly a few tents.

On your way back, as you descend from Namche in the early morning, you first of all meet a line of yaks coming against you on their way up, loaded with



Above: On the Everest trail, heading for Phakding.

Below: Half an hour from Everest Base Camp.

supplies, baggage, etc. You could be halfway across one of the cable bridges (there are eight of them on the Everest trail now – two above Namche and the other six below it) when the yaks start towards you over the bridge and you have to retreat.

Then you meet donkeys and mules interspersed with porters for the next hour until you come across the first wave of trekkers on their way up, having spent their first night after landing in Lukla at **Phakding**. You look at their stressed faces. "Am I going to overcome these feelings of nausea or will the altitude get to me?" If you are devilish, you will feel like saying "You think this is hard? Well, it's going to get a lot worse!"

Your trekking company will have advised you that your tip at the end of the trek is discretionary. It isn't! The porters in particular may be paid little by the trekking company and they will depend for their livelihood largely on your tip.

However, if you thought that Everest Base Camp was the biggest tourist draw in Nepal, you would be mistaken. Well ahead of EBC, many of Nepal's one million annual tourists go to the national parks at **Shivapuri**, **Chitwan** and **Bardiya** in the hope of seeing tigers and other exotic species ■



THE SMALL WAY, AND OTHERS...

John McCune, with Freja Shannon belaying, climbs the Voie Petit, the hardest route in Chamonix

was delighted to climb the **Voie Petit** (450m, 14 pitches, 8b) at the end of September last year. It was a real treat to send this famous hard route at the end of a very busy summer. Bolted by **Arnaud Petit** in 1997, the route was first freed by **Alex Huber** in 2005. It remains the hardest free rock climb on the Chamonix granite.

During the year, I did a lot of guiding work, which is great, but sometimes it is hard to find time and energy for personal projects. Over July and August, I had a few days off and managed to climb some good routes. In the middle of the summer, I had a little break when **Jonny Baker** and I climbed **Arnaud Petit** and **Nina Caprez's** new route on the Grand Capucin, **L'or du temps** (450m, ABO, 7c+). It's an

Above: The view from the Bonatti Ledge on the Voie Petit.

Right: Jonny Baker on the L'or du temps route on the Grand Capucin.



➤ **John McCune** is from Newry, Northern Ireland, but he currently lives in Chamonix, France. He has climbed all over the world, big wall free climbing in the Alps, Yosemite and Patagonia. He works year-round as an IFMGA mountain guide. He is a passionate off-piste skier, mountaineer and rock climber, and loves sharing his knowledge and expertise with others. For more information, visit his website, www.mccunemountaineering.co.uk.



IF I COULD GET A BELAYER, I MIGHT REACH THE BONATTI LEDGE AND FINISH THE ROUTE THE NEXT DAY.

incredible line, following steep cracks and corners with the crux going through a steep, juggy roof. I had met Nina on the cable car one day and she really recommended trying it. It was awesome to onsite the entire route.

The day after, Jonny and I climbed **Echo des Alpagnes** (ED, 7a), which is an older classic but one of the best routes at that grade in the Mont Blanc Massif.

In August, I managed to finish off some old business, climbing the roof crack **Ma Dalton** (7b+). The famous roof crack is the hardest route on the South Face of the **Aiguille du Midi**. It was great to keep the motivation up and pull some great moves that I had tried before but hadn't managed to free at that time. It is the **Separate Reality** (in Yosemite) of the Alps, but I thought it was substantially harder.

At the end of the summer, I was looking forward to a bit of time off to really try the Voie Petit. I kept two weeks in September free and did some pull-ups and hang-boarding throughout my last few weeks of work. When that time off eventually came in mid-September, it wasn't looking very likely.

Firstly, I thought I had damaged my backside in an enthusiastic 'bumslide' coming down the final snowslope off the **Aiguille du Peigne**. I had a lot of pain, which thankfully improved, but I wasn't sure how hard climbing would feel. By taking care, I was able to finish all my work. However, I got sick on the last trip to Mont Blanc and had to spend my first three days off in bed. Then I couldn't get anyone to try the Voie Petit with me. All of my regular partners were busy or away on other trips, but I was still determined to try to make it happen.

I managed to get a crack at it and spent two days up there with a keen young Chamoniard, **Tom Lafaille**. It was great to figure out the moves, particularly on the 8b pitch, but he wasn't feeling up to the route that time, so we didn't get much further up the route than that pitch.

I came down, inspired, but feeling frustrated that it wasn't going to happen this year. It was going to be a massive project for me. The days were getting shorter and I had taken on a bit of rock guiding work that started in six days, but the weather was still perfect. I had to try to do it.

I figured I should rope solo up as high as I could and try to figure out some of the upper pitches. One thing that I had discussed with Tom was the way in which **Caroline Ciavaldini** had climbed it by bivouacking on the **Bonatti Ledge** and finishing the top pitches on the second day. I thought I could do all of the bottom section now. I just needed to get to the top bit.

I went up on my own for a day and rope soloed up the **Direct du Capucin**. From there, I was able to swing into the 7c+ pitch that follows the 8b.



Above: John McCune climbing the roof crack Ma Dalton.

I managed to figure out the beta for that. I thought that, if I could get a belayer, I'd be able to climb all the pitches up to the Bonatti Ledge, then bivi there and climb the rest of the route the next day.

Below: Freja Shannon cleans the 8b pitch of the Voie Petit.

When I got back down to the bottom, I met my friends **Freja Shannon** and **Heather Florence**, who had just climbed the **Bonatti Route**. I happily tied into their rope for the return trip across the glacier back to the Torino hut. Freja was buzzing from her day in the ➤





mountains and volunteered to belay me sometime on the Voie Petit. I was delighted with that and we made a plan to attempt the route at the end of the week.

Final attempt

I had a rest day and then went back up to the climb with Freja on the Friday morning. I felt much better and was quite optimistic. Freja's positive energy was encouraging. The first pitches all went well; there were a few 6s and a fairly bold 7b. Generally the route was protected with the notion that, if you are there to climb 8b, then the grade 6 bits don't need to be protected much and the grade 7 bits can just be a bit spicy. It was all quite engaging. I hauled the big bag as efficiently as possible so as to save my energy for the harder pitches, but it was always on my mind that the 8b was going to require a big effort.

The 8b pitch started up a very aesthetic, open book corner, which was protected with a few spaced bolts. The climbing was technical and very much about precise footwork, stemming up the smooth blank walls, with my right foot pushing into one wall and my left foot pushing into the other. Stemming can get you past completely blank sections of rock and provide a much-needed rest in a spot where there are no jugs.

At the top of the corner it got steeper and the corner was capped with a huge roof, with a rounded crack running through it. There was a bouldery crux with steep, powerful moves until I could layback out of the top. I stuffed in a few cams and gained a positive stance where the angle eased back again.

Above: The tecnica corner at the start of the 8b pitch on the Voie Petit.

Climbing these big moves at nearly 4,000m altitude was much more challenging than if it was at a sports crag in the valley far below.

I climbed as smoothly as I could up the corner and I had to try really hard through the overhang. I didn't think I would have the energy to have multiple goes at this pitch, so it was a relief to do it first go. It was one of those incredible climbing experiences where

Below: John on the upper pitches of the Voie Petit.



CLIMBING BIG MOVES AT 4,000 METRES IS MUCH MORE CHALLENGING THAN TAKING ON A SPORTS CRAG IN THE VALLEY BELOW.

you manage to execute every move perfectly and then have this extra dream-like strength, that you only find pushing your body beyond its normal limits with an adequate dose of adrenalin. At one point, my foot slipped. I cut loose with my hand in a poor jam and somehow managed to not become unstuck. I just pressed my toe back on again and finished the moves. I was absolutely ecstatic to have done that pitch but I knew that I had to keep calm and carry on because there were a lot of hard pitches to go still.

A superbly technical 7c+ pitch was next. It wasn't steep but it had very small holds, which were very abrasive on the skin of my fingers. It was very reminiscent of pulling up on the tiny crystals of a hard trad route in the Mourne. Thankfully, this pitch went first go too, so I didn't have to worry about the skin on my fingertips getting too thin.

There was just one more hard pitch before we reached the Bonatti Ledge, where we would spend the night and get some rest. That pitch was a tricky 7b+ and I promptly fell off. It had a little boulder move that I hadn't anticipated. I figured it out on my second go and thankfully managed to continue with relative ease up the rest of the pitch.

This got us up to the large sloping Bonatti Ledge. We excavated some rubble and moved some rocks around to make a nice flat spot to sleep on. It was surprisingly warm and it was much more pleasant than sleeping in the tent on the glacier had been on previous occasions. The light was incredible and it was a beautifully still night. We watched an episode of *Father Ted* and drank a few cups of tea. It's bizarre to be in such a place and have 4G signal to stream. I can't imagine what Bonatti would think. Dinner was freeze-dried instant meals. Then I had a look at the 8a pitch above the ledge, which I hadn't been on before, to figure out the moves for the next day's climb.

Topping out

When I was ready the next morning, I gave the 8a pitch a go on lead and redpointed it at the first go. The rest of the pitches were more moderate but on absolutely perfect golden granite. There was one tricky 7b pitch, which I knew I had to onsight to get Freja back down in time for the party she wanted to go to in Chamonix. I had to fight hard. It was no pushover but I squeezed those crystals tight and stayed focused to the end.

Topping out on the route was really special in the perfect crisp autumnal weather with a huge sea of cloud below and all over Italy. We took a summit selfie and then got going on the abseils, determined to make the last cable car down. We got down to the cable car station in good time and had some



Above: John on a 6c pitch high on the route.

Below: John and Freja on the summit of the Grand Capucin.

cappuccinos there, before going on down to Chamonix in time to go to an end of season party.

It was a perfect end to the summer and I felt really lucky to have climbed the Voie Petit. The following week the weather turned poor and it was apparent that we had summited at the last opportunity for the year ■





THE HEN HARRIER

Cromán na gcearc, or *Circus cyaneus*, the silver ghost, is a stunning and iconic upland bird of prey, writes **Mario Mac Rory**

For many years, it has been a privilege of mine to observe and photograph the Irish **hen harrier**, predominantly in the Comeragh Mountains, Co Waterford. In 2015, I obtained a licence from the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS) to photograph these majestic birds in their natural habitat. Encountering these birds has led to my involvement in several hen harrier surveys, most recently the **Irish Hen Harrier Winter Survey** – see www.ihhws.ie.

The hen harrier is such an elegant bird to behold, one that deserves conservation and adoration. Capturing these striking birds in images allows us a glimpse of their true coloration. The male hen harrier has a blue and grey upper body with a pale white

Above: Two standing stones in the Nire Valley, Co Waterford. Hen harriers hunt in valleys like this one, with plenty of heather.

Inset: A female hen harrier (not to scale).

underbelly and striking jet-black wing tips.

The female is the larger of the two, displaying a beautiful rich brown plumage with a white rump and brown and white rings on her tail. It is these markings on the tail which give her, and indeed the lookalike juveniles (whether male or female), the moniker ‘ringtail.’

Their beauty is made all the more profound by their piercing yellow eyes, which turn from dark brown (in the case of female chicks) or smoky grey (in the case of male chicks) to amber to yellow as they get on in years. The difference in size between the male and female hen harriers is so striking that it was once thought they were different species.

Capturing images of these majestic birds has posed many challenges over the years, given their vulnerability and rarity. Respecting their natural habitat is first and foremost. Hen harriers are ground-nesting birds and use tall heather and young forest areas to nest in during the breeding season. The female has the added protection of a plumage which allows her to blend almost perfectly into the heather – she has natural camouflage.

It was thought for a long time that hen harriers deserted their upland haunts during the winter, but

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the **Irish Hen Harrier Winter Survey** has shed much-needed light on their habits, national distribution, habitats and conservation requirements. The non-breeding season, also referred to as 'normal time,' accounts for 66% of the year – or eight out of 12 months. There is also movement between Ireland and other countries, including the UK, and vice versa.

During the winter months these stunning birds can be found at roosting spots, sharing this space with other harriers and several other bird species. These are vitally important sites and, along with the hinterland that sustains the harriers with food through the winter, deserve great attention in terms of conservation effort.

Come March and April, love is in the air and the hen harriers perform their famous courtship displays. After finding a partner, they settle down to nest and to try to rear their young, during the summer months.

As an avid wildlife photographer and a keen conservationist, I have had the opportunity to watch these stunning birds display both their unique 'sky dance' and their incredible 'food pass.' In spring, the male hen harrier attempts to impress the females with an acrobatic courtship display called the **sky dance**. This is an incredible spectacle, and can last for some time. It involves the male bird soaring high into the sky (higher than any other



Above: Adult male hen harrier in heather and bracken.

Below: A hen harrier food pass: the male (left) has dropped a chick (possibly a skylark) for the female to catch in mid-air.

bird), free-falling, spinning and somersaulting. It is an alluring performance of agility, strength and prowess.

Watching this spectacular show, one might think that the male is out of control and has gone too far! However, the male pursuer is so intent on captivating his audience that he swerves inches from the ground, rising with pride and determination. Often, female hen harriers, not to be outdone, partake in these beautiful displays of speed, strength and endurance. It is moments like these that are truly mesmerising to witness and to capture through a photographic lens.

Another spectacular trait of these agile hunters is the **food pass**. Their diet consists of small birds, such as the **meadow pipit** and **skylark**, and small mammals, including **frogs**, **voles** and **mice**. The male bird will carry his quarry in his talons, calling to his chosen female as he approaches the nest area. The female will rise to meet him, and as they approach each other she will somersault upside down, and the food will be passed from his talons to hers, mid-air! It is a fascinating sight to behold and to capture. Witnessing these spectacles and sharing those photos have only amplified my ➤

THE HEN HARRIER FACES MANY CHALLENGES, STEMMING PRIMARILY FROM HABITAT LOSS.





passion for the protection of these striking birds.

Sadly, hen harriers face many challenges, primarily stemming from habitat loss and fragmentation. The most obvious and longest-lasting change has been the replacement of natural and semi-natural habitats with non-native industrial conifer plantations, most often comprised of **Sitka spruce**. This directly impacts their breeding numbers but also their ability to rear young, given that nests in or near forestry are far more likely to be predated.

The hen harrier is an indicator species, so its decline reflects a wider decline of various other species that once shared this land in greater numbers – **red grouse, curlew, skylark, golden plover, meadow pipit, marsh fritillary** and many more. However, thanks to the good work of some dedicated people in the **NPWS** and the **Department of Agriculture**, progress has been made in some areas with the introduction of the **Hen Harrier Project** and the **GLAS scheme**, with subsidies being given to farmers in protected areas to encourage more sustainable practices of ecological farming.

Back in the 1970s there were about 300 pairs of hen harriers breeding in Ireland. As a result of various pressures, the hen harrier is now an endangered species, with one of the smallest populations of any species in Ireland. Results from the national breeding survey of 2015 confirmed only **108 breeding pairs**, and who is to say the decline hasn't continued since. For comparison, approximately 130 pairs of curlews and 160 pairs of corncrakes are still found breeding in Ireland.

Under the **EU Birds Directive**, Ireland is obliged to take measures to protect all wild birds and their habitats. However, the needs of commercial forestry,

Above: Young female hen harrier (in second calendar year).

Below: Adult male hen harrier hunting.

agriculture, the wind energy industry and wildlife conservation can often appear to be in conflict, but it need not be that way. Looking back, has the last 30 to 40 years of policy been of any real help to the small farmers (the managers of this landscape) or the hen harrier? Both have declined significantly, all replaced by forestry. The new **Common Agricultural Policy** offers great potential to turn this around for a more sustainable and positive future – but there needs to be vision from our leaders and indeed from local people in upland areas. Hillwalkers and climbers have a role too – to report any sightings of hen harriers, to spread word that these magnificent birds are an asset to our landscape, and to add their voices to the call for an agricultural policy that supports more sustainable management of Ireland's upland areas ■



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Upland management

Hill path repair works

Funding announced for path repairs on Croagh Patrick and Errigal



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Hillwalking,
Access &
Conservation
Officer



Marc Vinas Alcon from the National Trust and Matt McConway, Upland Access, on the new section of path at the Glen River in the Mourne. The path was hand-built, within the damaged zone, using material found on-site.

Mountaineering Ireland has welcomed the recent announcements of funding for path repair work on both Errigal and Croagh Patrick.

Minister Michael Ring TD has announced funding of €480k from the **Department of Rural and Community Development** for a two-year project to put a sustainable path in place along the pilgrim route on Croagh Patrick.

The **Croagh Patrick** project will have a strong emphasis on training, which will also help to build capacity nationally in upland path construction techniques. The Croagh Patrick project will also include public engagement actions and assistance from volunteer groups.

Funding of €500k has also been announced to provide sustainable access and for habitat restoration on **Errigal**. The project will be accompanied by measures to develop Dunlewey as an information and service hub for those planning to climb Errigal. The Errigal project is being funded under the Department of Rural and Community Development's **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)**, in collaboration with **Fáilte Ireland**.

In both cases, Mountaineering Ireland has worked with local members and

other stakeholders to develop appropriate repair solutions in response to worsening path erosion on these iconic mountains. The solutions arrived at are largely based on using local materials to produce a sustainable path which will fit into its landscape setting, in keeping with the **Helping the Hills Guiding Principles** for the management of upland path erosion – see www.helpingthehills.ie. Small examples of the type of work that is planned can be seen on both Errigal and Croagh Patrick.

As both these projects already have planning approval, Mountaineering Ireland is hopeful that work will commence over the coming months.

Other areas

Path erosion is also being addressed in other areas. In recent months, some excellent work has been done on the Glen River path up towards **Slieve Donard**, under the auspices of the **National Trust**. The work is being carried out to help protect the landscape and habitats on Northern Ireland's highest mountain. It also provides a better experience for those using the path.

In Kerry, the **MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum** has carried out

restoration work on the path up **Strickeen**. The work, which is also funded under **ORIS**, has been done by a local team trained in upland path construction techniques. The Forum is seeking resources for further path work in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks.

Meanwhile, Mountaineering Ireland is working with the **Wicklow Uplands Council** and other partners to commission a path condition survey in the Wicklow Mountains. The survey will identify path sections that are badly eroded and in need of repair, and provide an indication of the cost to do this work.

While combatting path erosion is a key part of ensuring that the increased footfall on busy mountains is sustainable, it should be addressed within a wider management framework. There will be need for long-term path maintenance and measures to address other aspects of recreation management, such as parking and engagement with visitors. It is welcome to see this incorporated in many of the above initiatives.

Mountaineering Ireland looks forward to working with other stakeholders to help deliver these important projects ■

RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

Controlling your canine companion

Dogs are great company and they help ensure that their owners get plenty of exercise.* However, man's best friend can sometimes be a source of problems. The key to avoiding these problems is choosing an appropriate place to exercise your dog and keeping your dog under control.

The **Wicklow Uplands Council** has recently highlighted that the farming communities of counties Wicklow and Dublin experienced a number of serious incidents involving multiple sheep losses in 2019. While this damage is often caused by dogs which stray from neighbouring properties, the presence of any dog close to farmland or on the hills is a major concern for farmers, and as a result dogs are now not welcome across most upland areas in Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland asks all dog owners to:

■ Respect and be aware of farm animals and wildlife

Ensure that your dog is under effective control at all times, i.e. they should come at first call. The presence of dogs, even with playful intent, is likely to cause great anxiety to wildlife and farm animals. Pregnant females and very young animals are especially vulnerable. Without successful breeding, our populations of **hares, hedgehogs** and **hen harriers** will only go one way. Consider too that most of our upland birds nest on the ground.

***TILDA (2019)** *Associations of pet ownership with health and wellbeing in community-dwelling adults aged 50 years and over in Ireland*. Download this report as a pdf at www.bit.ly/tildapets.

In **sheep**, anxiety caused by the presence of dogs during the lambing season is the main cause of stillbirths and miscarriages, which can occur two to three days later. The dog's owner can be held liable for the financial losses that result.



■ Observe and respect local signage

Leave dogs at home if accessing land where sheep or other livestock are present or close by. Many landowners forbid dogs entirely, whereas others, including the State, may request the use of leads.

■ Take responsibility for your dog's waste

Dog waste, once bagged, must be disposed of properly. Failure to clean up is a public health concern and an offence under Section 22 of the Litter Pollution Act.

■ Share this advice with others

Enjoy the outdoors responsibly with your dog! See also www.wicklowuplands.ie/guidelines-for-responsible-dog-control-published or go to www.bit.ly/controlyourdog ■

Northern Ireland Environment Strategy

"It is a fundamental premise of a civilised society that everyone should have the right to live in a healthy environment, with access to sufficient and appropriate environmental resources for a healthy life. Northern Ireland's environment is its most important asset and it is crucial to each and every one of us."

The opening statement above set the context for a discussion document published last autumn by the **Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)** seeking input to Northern Ireland's first **Environment Strategy**.

Mountaineering Ireland made a substantial response to the discussion document in which it called for:

- A **proactive environment strategy** and the adoption of its aims across all government departments
- An **environmental engagement** theme

to communicate the value of a better environment

- Recognition of **recreation** as an accepted land use
- An Integrated **land use strategy** to provide a foundation for good decision-making
- Policies and schemes to recognise upland areas as important **natural assets**
- The production of an **Environment Bill** for Northern Ireland, including legally binding emissions targets.

You can read the **full submission**, including the rationale for these points, on Mountaineering Ireland's website – or go to www.bit.ly/strategydoc to download the pdf.

Mountaineering Ireland extends its thanks to those members who contributed to this submission, particularly Access and Conservation Committee member **Vincent McAlinden** ■



Slieve Bearnagh in the Mourne Mountains



Training

Winter scene on the Antrim plateau

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

The 2020 Winter Meet coincided with Storm Ciara, making for very challenging conditions, with near-constant precipitation and winds in excess of 100 km per hour on summits and ridges. With skills acquisition a priority, finding safe, snow-covered, sheltered terrain became the initial focus, with all teams heading for various corries along the striking **Glen Coe** valley.

Early in the week, each of the four teams compared notes on conditions, weather and skills covered. The first day was a battle against very high winds and heavy rain, and prevented any team from coming close to summiting. Decision-making in winter can be complex in good conditions, but tough conditions forced participants to make some difficult choices in order to select appropriate routes that challenged them but were still safe.

The meet typically sees a mixture of independent mountaineers and others partaking in courses to become more independent and skilled. Meets are an ideal way to gather together people who share an interest in experiencing winter conditions, for example. Evenings are spent reading guidebooks, sharing beta, discussing options and enjoying the craic.

Based in Onich in Glen Coe, **Inchree Chalets** looked after our team well, providing excellent drying room facilities, accommodation, an on-site bar and a restaurant. Groups gathered in the evenings to share details of their day's adventures and to make plans for the day ahead.

The winters in Scotland seem to be changing, with the snowline rising ever higher, year on year. In response, our activities are diversifying, with visits to the indoor ice-climbing wall becoming more frequent, as with the options to go scrambling or rock climbing.

There are no guarantees of winter conditions in Onich any more, so we need to prepare to go mountaineering in a broader sense, which may involve climbing, scrambling or walking on ice, snow, mixed or bare terrain. This requires planning ahead, followed by dynamic risk assessment, decision-making and judgment calls ■

■ Summer Alpine Meet 2020

Youth bursary places available for aspirant Alpinists aged from 18 to 25 years old

Saas Grund, Switzerland, July 4-18th, 2020: bookings open!

Of the 65-plus members who attended the 2019 Summer Alpine Meet, 50% were in the youth category, aged 18-25 years. We believe this was due to a **very generous bursary** donated to Mountaineering Ireland for youth Alpinists. We are excited to announce that this donation has been promised again for 2020!

The youth Alpine bursary supports young, aspiring Alpinists and helps to subsidise course costs for those availing of the Alpine walking, mountaineering and climbing courses. Your first trip to the Alps should be seen as the start of a lifetime of new adventures. Mountaineering Ireland is keen to support our future Alpinists.

This year's Summer Alpine Meet **information evening** took place in **Basecamp**, Dublin, on January 28th and was very well attended. **Helen Lawless** and I, **Jane Carney**, presented details of the meet and answered questions on the format and content.

Saas Grund was the venue of Mountaineering Ireland's successful Summer Alpine Meet in 2015. It boasts the potential for wonderful adventures for walkers, climbers and mountaineers. In addition, participants can benefit from free lift passes, which helps balance the costs of camping and eating out in Saas Grund.

As always, Mountaineering Ireland offers a range of short and long courses at the Summer Alpine Meet, providing opportunities to meet others and to develop your Alpine skills and experience... and, of course, to enjoy the mountains!

The Summer Alpine Meet sees the experienced mentoring the inexperienced in an apprentice-style pathway, though many follow the more formal 'client and guide' approach.

The Saas valley has well-signed trails, mountaineering routes, climbing venues, accessible huts and a range of accommodation options, including campsites. Book early and have something to look forward to for longer!

Train, plan and prepare to get the most out of your trip. Well done to those who came to Scotland for our Winter Meet ahead of their trip to the Summer Alpine Meet this summer.

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

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

Guidance on responding to Covid-19 (coronavirus)

Providers are directed to follow the Government's guidelines on **Covid-19 (coronavirus)** as they develop and to keep an eye on our website for guidance. As always, please contact the Training Officer as required, to discuss items such as ratios, remote training options and social distancing.

Please note our additional website page in the Training section, **'Reasonable Adjustments'**, which provides generic guidance on reasonable adjustments to courses to facilitate appropriate delivery and the meeting of requirements.

In response, the training office has cancelled face-to-face Provider training events. Remote training in the use of the new CMS (candidate management system) will continue ■

News for members, candidates and providers

■ Mountain Training UK (MTUK) name change

The Mountain Training UK organisation has now become **Mountain Training United Kingdom & Ireland**, or **MTUKI**.

■ MTUKI Walking Awards Review commences

We have received responses from many to the stakeholder and provider questionnaire and are summarising the findings in preparation for the next steps. Thank you to everyone who completed the questionnaire.

■ Training Grant applications

New applications are being received for January-June 2020. Thank you to all those who responded with applications for late 2019; all applications were successful.

■ Club Training Officers Workshop, Tollymore, Mournes

This well attended workshop, held on February 1-2nd, 2020, covered a diverse syllabus including ropework for climbing and scrambling, and mountain navigation. The next Club Training Officers Workshop will be run in **November**. See the events section on the website for 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 of the Mountaineering Ireland website.

■ Partnership with AdventureSmart

Mountaineering Ireland and Mountain Training Board Ireland have entered a partnership with **AdventureSmart**, a new outdoor safety campaign that aims to reduce the number of avoidable incidents which the rescue and emergency services have to deal with each year, through the development and promotion of a comprehensive set of safety messages. For more information, see our news item, page 6.

■ 'Mountains for the Mind' campaign

Mountain Training Board Ireland and Mountaineering Ireland have agreed to support the **'Mountains for the Mind'** campaign run by *Trail* magazine: see www.mountainsforthemind.co.uk. The campaign promotes the mental health benefits of the outdoors, creates an online community of interested participants and offers inspiration, advice, meets and now training, a really important aspect of this partnership ■

Key dates 2020

- 2-4th April Train the Trainers, Wicklow
- 5th April Providers CMS Training Day, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 14th April Providers CMS Training Day, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 3rd May Providers CMS Training Day, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 15-17th May Women with Altitude event, Burren, Co Clare
- 18th May AMI Trainee Workshop: crag (AMI rep Jonny Parr), Mournes (details on MT website)
- 19th May AMI Trainee Workshop: mountain (AMI rep Jonny Parr), Mournes
- 23-24th May Skills/CPD Workshops in Teaching Navigation, Scrambling and Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 2nd June Rock Climbing Instructor Award-holders update workshop, Burren, Co Clare
- 8th June MTBI Training Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 8th June AMI Trainee Workshop: crag (AMI rep Jonny Parr), Fair Head
- 9th June AMI Trainee Workshop: mountain (AMI rep Jonny Parr), Fair Head
- 27-28th June MTUKI Meeting, Tollymore, Mournes
- 4-18th July Summer Alpine Meet, Saas Grund, Switzerland
- 20th July AMI Trainee Workshop: crag (AMI rep Jonny Parr), Wicklow
- 21st July AMI Trainee Workshop: mountain (AMI rep Jonny Parr), Wicklow
- 12th September MTBI Meeting, Mournes
- 20-21st Sept Providers Workshop
- 26-27th Sept Skills/CPD Workshops in Teaching Navigation, Scrambling and Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 20th October Winter Meet Information Evening, Base Camp, Dublin, 7-8pm
- 30th Oct-2nd Nov Mountain Leader Assessment, venue TBC
- 7-8th Nov MTUKI Meeting, Plas y Brenin, North Wales
- 30th Nov MTBI Meeting, Sport HQ, Dublin
- 4th December Senior Providers Workshop, Sport HQ, Dublin

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



Training

News for providers

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

Workshops will be run to train providers in the use of the Candidate Management System (CMS) for course reporting. As award holders, you already have a Mountain Training ID, and as providers of the shared awards, you also have a MT Provider ID. I will be sending guidance information to all providers shortly in preparation for the move to the MT CMS, which will happen in the next 3-4 months. Please log in to your MT account to familiarise yourself from the perspective of the candidate, add some logbook entries and look over your training and assessment records. It will require some time to get used to the new system and the workshops will be more beneficial if you have familiarised yourselves with your own MT accounts. Workshop dates will be emailed shortly. Please contact the Training Office if you need help locating your MT ID or logging in.

■ 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.

■ Regarding the **MTUKI Walking Awards Review**, we would like to extend our thanks to all who completed the stakeholder and providers questionnaire.



■ The latest **Provider Handbook** and agreement are on the website for viewing and reference.

■ We are calling for applications for **Accredited Training Groups (ATGs)**; **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** was run on February 17th, 2020. 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, and **evidence of assessment forms** for all pass candidates of the ML, RCI, MPA, LLA and Level 1 Climbing Coach awards. These should include useful feedback and actions.

■ 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 courses moderation visit

Training awards, registration and provider updates

■ Registration fees for the skills schemes

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 Council, i.e. Mountaineering Ireland membership.

■ 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).

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

■ Congratulations to provider **John Healy**, who will be running the first **Indoor Climbing Assistant** course on the island of Ireland ■

Stay safe out there!

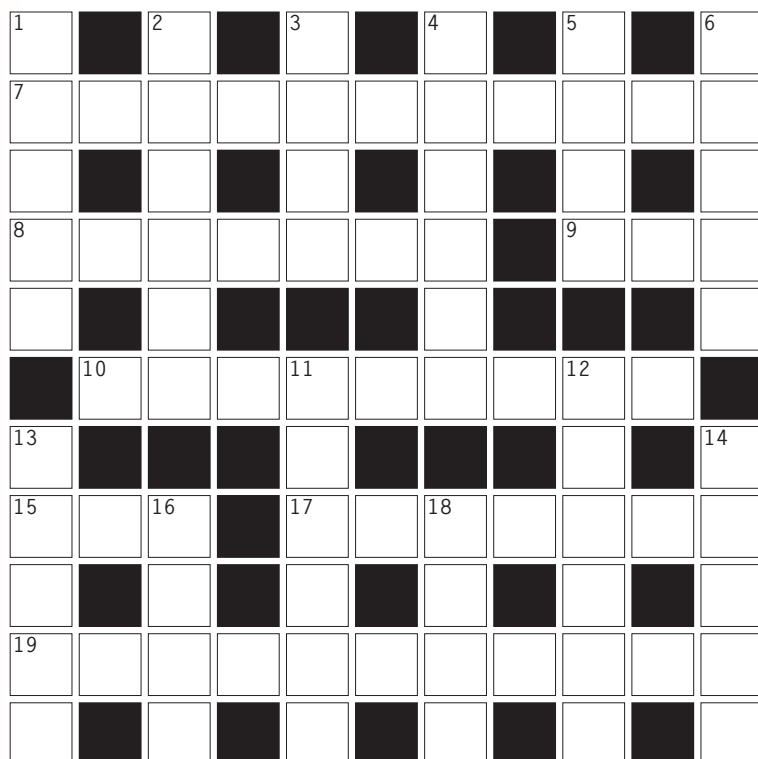


Crossword

Spring Competition

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

CROSSWORD compiled by COLIN MACLOCHLAINN



Clues Across

- 7 Donegal lake associated with well known outdoor training and education centre (5,6).
- 8 To lose the right to something (7).
- 9 A break or opening between mountains, such as at Dunloe in Kerry (3).
- 10 To acquaint two (or more persons) with each other (9).
- 15 Native tree whose wood is used to make camáns (3).
- 17 North American mammal famous for 'bandit mask' face pattern and ringed tail (7).
- 19 To express appreciation or gratitude for something someone has done for you (11).

Clues Down

- 1 A high, steep face of rock (5).
- 2 Famous limestone karst landscape in Clare (6).
- 3 Covering for foot, often of leather (4).
- 4 Ceased moving, at least temporarily (6).
- 5 Male deer, typically antlered (4).
- 6 Small gamebird associated with wet grassland, rises abruptly when flushed and zigzags away at speed (5).
- 11 To provide a new cover to top of house (2-4).
- 12 Rain-bearing atmospheric masses, may be fluffy (6).
- 13 Actual name of cocoa bean species (5)
- 14 Kerry village on the south side of the Ring of Kerry (5).
- 16 To walk a good distance, often across hills or through rural area (4).
- 18 Still, or nearly still, often in reference to weather (4).



3-Season Saros Sleeping Bag



Thermarest Prolite Mat



How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a prize worth €289.95 from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin.

Cut out this page or photocopy it and send your completed entry to The Editor, Irish Mountain Log, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, to arrive not later than Friday, May 8th 2020. Don't forget to include with your entry your full **name, address, membership number, telephone number** and **email address**. Entries can also be emailed to info@mountaineering.ie. The winner will be announced in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

Competition prize

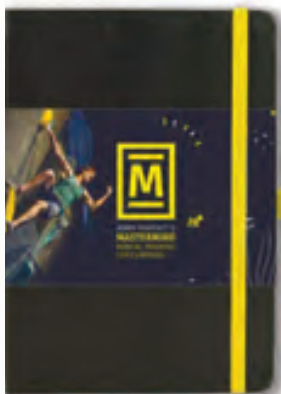
Basecamp's generous prize is a sleeping bag and mat combo. This comprises a 3-Season Saros Sleeping Bag (with straps to attach to a mat) and, to complement it, a Thermarest Prolite Mat that Basecamp paired up with the sleeping bag.



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



How mental preparation can lead to success



MASTERMIND: MENTAL TRAINING FOR CLIMBERS

By Jerry Moffatt

Gimme Kraft (2017), 285pp, €31.75, ISBN 978-1-912560-96-7

There aren't a lot of books out there which deal with the psychological aspects of climbing, so I was excited to see what **Jerry Moffatt** had to say on this topic. Jerry is a world-renowned climber, who made many hard first ascents in the 1980s. In *Mastermind*, he has

drawn extensively on his own experience, as well as having input from **Chris Sharma, Adam Ondra, Margo Hayes, Mayan Smith Gobat** and others.

On first picking up *Mastermind* I was really struck by the amazing job the designers and publishers had done. The book is beautifully produced and looks more like a journal (and it is partly intended to be used as such). There are lots of inspiring photos and cleverly designed graphics highlighting quotes and learning points, as well as space for the reader to make their own notes and record their goals and successes.

I quickly got stuck into the first chapters – 'Mind Control,' 'Success' and 'Motivation.' The book is broken into quite short sections, and a lot of the focus is on competition climbing and hard redpointing. If that's your interest and you've not read



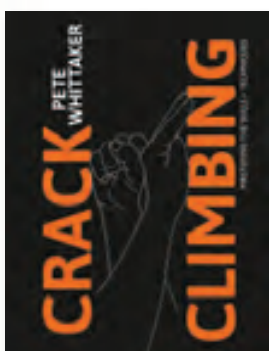
much on sports psychology, you should find this informative. After a few chapters, however, I felt that these became repetitive and would have benefitted from more depth of information and less themes.

The last section of the book

takes a completely different format, with nearly seventy pages of short articles contributed by around thirty different climbers, from every discipline. These climbers describe their most powerful experiences of success (in everything from world championships to Patagonian big walls) and explain how they prepared mentally for these challenges. It was this part of the book that I found most informative and inspiring. It's clear that there's no one recipe for mental success in climbing. The mental approaches described were as varied as the climbers themselves and their incredible achievements, but they do have common themes and ideas which anyone can use to improve their own climbing.

Angela Carlin Climbing wall manager, instructor and coach. Enjoys trad climbing, sport routes and bouldering

All you need to know about climbing cracks



CRACK CLIMBING: MASTERING THE SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

By Pete Whittaker

Vertebrate Publishing (2020), 320pp, many illustrations and photos, £25.00, ISBN 978-1-911342-76-2

When I decided that I wanted to start rock climbing, I didn't know anyone who climbed and there were no clubs accessible to me. I found a

colleague in the same situation and we borrowed a rope and nuts from a former climber, headed to Dalkey Quarry and started climbing.

In the intervening years, I like to think I've upped my game somewhat. Part of that process was a crack climbing masterclass with **Tom Randall**, who is half of the **Wideboyz**, a partnership specialising in crack climbing, particularly awkward, frightening, frustrating off-widths. The other half of that partnership is **Pete Whittaker** and this book is his accumulated knowledge of how to climb all manner and widths of cracks – and quite an accumulation it is too. There are methods and strategies for jamming, moving on from jams, cracks in faces

and corners, protecting the climb and protecting the bits of yourself that you might stick in the cracks.

It is all in an easy-to-read and easy-to-absorb format, though it might take some time to assimilate the amount of information that is given.

Easy as it is to read and understand, the book is all about practicing the skills. It really needs to be put into action to be of use – read it, try it, make it work for you, add the methods to your repertoire.

With few enough places in Ireland that offer a concentration of jamming cracks in the way that English gritstone crags or US sandstone towers do, there's little enough opportunity to

practice. You may need to seek out cracks or find indoor walls that have cracks, but that makes a book like this all the more worthwhile, as you can make the best of whatever chances do come your way and, if you head for any of those crags, you might find yourself better prepared when you get there.

The best thing I can say to recommend this book is that I'll be putting in some effort to practise the skills that are described in it, so I've ordered my own copy – and lots of tape!

Kevin Duffy Rock climber and mountaineer. This summer, he is heading to the Alps to attempt to climb fifty 4,000m mountains. Follow him on his website, www.kevinandedel.com

Well-known writer on Irish hillwalks reveals his passion for local history, old and new



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



WILD STORIES FROM THE IRISH UPLANDS

By John G O'Dwyer

Currach Books (2019), 196pp, one map, no photos, €14.99 (ppbk), ISBN 978-1-782189-12-1

What I enjoyed most in reading this book was **John G O'Dwyer's** great storytelling. His passion for history is equal to his love of walking and climbing, and he has combined it with folklore and legend to produce accounts

of the lives of adventurous people from the early saints, Patrick and Brendan, to modern times.

With the uplands in the background, O'Dwyer recounts tales of rebels fighting the English during the ever-changing political turmoil of the last four hundred years. The isolated mountain regions were suitable places for political gatherings, and for fugitives on the run to hide.

Hillwalkers in the Comeragh Mountains will enjoy the story of **William Crotty**, of Crotty's Lake fame, who was evicted from his farm and became a Robin Hood-type outlaw.

Challenge walkers will know of **Art O'Neill**, but maybe not the political machinations of the Elizabethan era surrounding his tragic flight across the Wicklow Mountains.

We all know Slievenamon for its lovely song, but we learn here the fascinating history of the Anglo-Norman **Butlers** and the Young

Irelander **Thomas Kickham**, who was buried without a priest in attendance.

However, the stories' heroes are not all dead and gone. The writer meets **Fr Uinseann** of Mount Melleray Abbey on the slopes of the Knockmealdown Mountains,



Howling Ridge, Carrauntoohil, The Reeks, Co Kerry

who has a detailed knowledge of Cistercian history. He also meets **Fr Frank Fahey** of Ballintubber Abbey, who revived the ancient Christian pilgrim route from the abbey to Croagh Patrick.

We are then brought into the modern climbing scene with the exploits of independent-minded Kerryman **Con Moriarty**, including the first ascent of Howling Ridge. Then the writer looks at the colourful life of free solo climber **Mike Reardon**, a frequent visitor to Ireland and a rebel in all aspects of his life, who tragically died in an accident while soloing on Valentia Island.

Kerry Mountain Rescue also gets its story told, with tales of courage, showing the commitment the volunteers

have to protecting us all.

Finally, the writer pens a personal essay addressed to the **Burren**, a place formed over millennia but shaped by humans, who have the capacity to destroy all of Ireland's uplands. John G calls for a long-term sustainable approach to support a healthy interaction between us and the uplands.

With John G O'Dwyer's knowledge of history and his ability to describe the landscape, this is a book which, despite a few annoying typographical errors, I definitely recommend to anyone who cherishes our heritage.

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



Statue of St Brendan the Navigator in Fenit, Co Kerry



Mountain Views' 2019 annual is full of great reads

THE SUMMIT ANNUAL No 5, 2019

Edited by Simon Stewart

Mountain Views (2020), 60pp, many colour photos and maps, €16.00

A new *The Summit Annual* from Mountain Views has been published, downloadable free at

www.mountainviews.ie/annual/2019. Printed copies are available from Mountain Views, priced €16.00 plus postage.

The same high standard of previous annuals is maintained by editor **Simon Stewart**, with photographs of superb quality.

There are articles from home (on the Beara peninsula; Sturral in Donegal with a five-year-old; Achill; Carrowteige in Mayo; and Ireland's best and highest waterfalls) and abroad (the Faroe Islands, the High Tatras

of Poland and Slovakia), as well as articles on the first year of **Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee**, on completing lists, on challenge walking, and on gear.

It also includes a review of the new Galtee and Knockmealdown maps from EastWest Mapping (see also our review, below), a poem celebrating the Burren, and a proposal for yet another hill-list, the 119 significant peaks of Britain and Ireland.

It is all rounded off with Irish and international photo galleries. There should be something here for everybody.

Peter O'Neill Literary Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*



Two excellent new mountain maps from EastWest Mapping



GALTEE and KNOCKMEALDOWN

Two new 1:25,000 maps from EastWest Mapping

EastWest Mapping (2019), paper, €12.90, ISBN 978-1-899815-49-4 and ISBN 978-1-899815-47-0

These two maps, together



with the **Comeragh** map reviewed in *Irish Mountain Log* No 129 (Spring 2019), complete a series of three detailed maps of the south-east region. As well as standard paper folded sheets at €12.90 each, waterproof laminated maps

at €20.50 each are also available.

A digital map version covering all three areas (1,735 square kilometres) is also available for download at €33.99 from the EastWest Mapping App.

Anyone like myself, who first went to this area armed with the then best available mapping – the half-inch OS series – can only marvel at the ease of navigation afforded by these new maps. The painfully slow, stooping in a stream bed, progress downhill through dense forest in Glengarra Wood in the hope of encountering a forest road and then the R639, which I still remember from my first excursion, could have been almost completely avoided with a

map showing those forest roads. Using a modern map, I could have seen that the stream bed I was following was almost parallel to a forest road, just out of sight through the dense planting. Those half-inch maps are thankfully now a distant memory, thanks to OSi and EastWest Mapping. No tears need be shed.

These two maps are reviewed at greater length in *Mountain Views* 2019 annual, *The Summit* (No 5), reviewed above.

Those with a particular interest in local place-names will also find an interesting discussion of place-name sources in that annual.

Peter O'Neill Literary Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*

Exploring our landscapes, history and wildlife



IRELAND THROUGH BIRDS: JOURNEYS IN SEARCH OF A WILD NATION

By **Conor W O'Brien**

Merrion Press (2019), 250pp,
monochrome illustrations, €16.95
(pbbk), ISBN 978-1-785373-05-3

Having visited three continents, it dawns on first-time author Conor O'Brien (who lives in Wicklow) that he hardly knows his native land. So, being a keen birdwatcher,

he decides to combine a quest for some twelve Irish birds he has never seen with walks in various parts of Ireland.

His quest takes him to all four provinces, uplands and lowlands, islands, rivers and coasts, and results in *Ireland Through Birds*, which was nominated for best Irish-published book of the year in the prestigious **An Post Irish Book Awards 2019**.

[Spoiler alert: he doesn't find all of his target birds; most are rare or elusive and he looks in only one area for each one, presumably to limit his research to specific places.]

Surprisingly, he fails to find a **cuckoo** in a known haunt for them in Connemara, apparently because it is summer's end and the birds have stopped calling.

That in no way takes from what is a most satisfying read, as O'Brien is a gifted writer who ably combines the thrill of the hunt with fascinating insights into the places he

visits. Places are a reflection of their history, he writes, and it's hard not to get a feel for history everywhere you go. The very fate of the birds is often tied up with human history, land use and geology.

And so, in his search for **red grouse** in the Wicklow hills he delves into how the Military Road was built to quell rebel factions in upland fastnesses. He also explores how upland afforestation has deprived red grouse of much vital heather habitat, not only in Wicklow but across the country.

Searching for **ring ouzel** in the Gap of Dunloe and the Black Valley in the Reeks of Kerry, the presence of jarveys prompts him to describe how Queen Victoria essentially founded Ireland's tourism industry by taking a pony ride through the gap in the 1860s.

On visiting Glendalough to look for **goosanders** – a highly elusive duck, but one he finds very quickly – he recounts

stories of St Kevin, who founded the Early Christian monastery there, and the miners who settled there in the 1800s to tunnel for silver and lead, and who stripped the valley bare of its native trees.

In Carton demesne in County Kildare, it is the FitzGerald, an Anglo-Norman family rewarded by Strongbow with land and titles, that pique his interest as he searches for **barn owls**. He is rewarded only with hearing a **long-eared owl** (pretty good!).

First and foremost, however, this is a book about birds, their habits, their history and the threats they face. But such is the skill with which O'Brien wields his pen it sounds more like poetry or drama than a work on wildlife conservation. His vivid descriptions bring every scene to life, and the words he uses are unlike any I have ever read on these subjects. Quite remarkable.

Cóilín MacLochlainn Designer of the *Irish Mountain Log*



WICKLOW WAY

By **Jacquetta Megarry & Sandra Bardwell**

Rucksack Readers Guides (2019, 3rd edition), 72pp, 95 colour photos, 13 full-page maps showing different sections of the route in detail (1:35,000), €14.99, ISBN 978-1-898481-90-4

GREAT GLEN WAY

By **Jacquetta Megarry & Sandra Bardwell**

Rucksack Readers Guides (2020, 6th edition), 80pp, 100+ colour photos, 13 pages of maps (1:35,000), £13.99, ISBN 978-1-898481-87-4



The Wicklow Way is certainly an excellent hike, travelling down as it does through the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains the 130km from Marlay Park, Dublin, to Clonegal. Much of the route is over 500m and in reasonable weather gives great views of the surrounding countryside and mountains.

New editions of two guides

This new edition is a well-written detailed guide to the Wicklow Way, section by section, each with a detailed map. The guide also gives all the advice you might need to plan your hike, and background information on places of interest, the geology and the flora and fauna to be seen.

This user-friendly guide is in the standard Rucksack Readers pocket-sized format and printed on rainproof paper. It updates the previous editions to map the changes that have occurred to the route in the last couple of years. Certainly the changes that have occurred in the section above Loch Dan down to Oldbridge are well mapped and clearly documented in this new edition.

The Great Glen Way runs 124km

through Scotland's Great Glen, from Fort William to Inverness. It follows the Caledonian Canal and passes by four Highland lochs, including Loch Ness. It is a low level route but there is a high level alternative section of the route that goes up above Loch Ness and sounds quite challenging.

The guide is again in the Rucksack Readers' standard user-friendly format and is updated on the previous edition to encompass the recent changes in the route. While I haven't yet walked this route, I would certainly be happy heading off on the Way from Fort William armed with this guide, with its detailed route description and the clear maps.

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

Ed Drummond

Visionary British climber



Edwin Ward-Drummond, an English climber and poet of considerable notoriety, died in California last year at the age of 73. He had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease twenty-five years before that, but continued to climb and be active until almost the end.

In his day, Ed Drummond was one of the most visionary figures in British climbing history, and he has left a legacy of stunning routes and some outstanding writing.

After qualifying from Wolverhampton Technical High School, Ed Drummond studied philosophy at Bristol University, qualifying in 1967. He lived in Clifton, the part of Bristol that is adjacent to the Avon Gorge with its sheer limestone crags. From 1966, Drummond climbed there, putting up several hard routes, including **Last Slip** (E3, 5c, 40m, 'a superb, bold and memorable climb on a blank wall'), **Krapp's Last Tape** (E3, 5b, 35m, 'an Avon rite of passage') and **Equator** (E2, 5b, a girdle of the Main Wall).



He also wrote two guidebooks, *Avon Gorge* and *Extremely Severe in the Avon Gorge*, and developed a grading system based on (among other things) technical difficulty and the availability of protection.

In the late 1960s, Ed moved to Bangor and turned his attention to North Wales where, having climbed two of the hardest routes at that time on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu ('Cloggy') near

Snowdon Peak – **The Boldest** and **Great Wall** – he moved his focus to Gogarth on Anglesey. There, he put up a route that is still recognised as a classic, **The Dream of White Horses**, now graded as only HVS, 4c, but which is often still described as 'one of the best routes in the world'!

He put up many other often outrageous lines there, including **The Moon** (E3, 5c), which was described as 'another crumbling horror' in *Mountain* magazine.

Despite his successes, Drummond's climbing style was sometimes controversial, as he seemed to have no issues with using aid to facilitate his progress when necessary, much to the disapproval of his peers at that time.

His classic routes were all later free climbed, but it is important to remember that, in those early days, routes were not cleaned before the first ascent and there was frequently much loose rock on them.

Ed moved on from North Wales to Sheffield and started climbing in the Peaks, where he seems to have cleaned up a few aid routes himself as well as putting up some classic new routes of his own. In the early 1970s, Ed overcame some of the great last problems on grit.

Attention turned to big wall climbing and he put up another classic at the 350m sea cliffs of St John's Head on the Isle of Hoy,

The Longhope (E7, 6c), which was later dubbed 'the hardest sea cliff climb in the world' and 'Britain's only big wall climbing'.

After a couple of failed attempts at big wall routes there in the previous years, Drummond finally succeeded in putting up a route on Norway's 1,050m Troll Wall, the tallest vertical wall in Europe, where he climbed **Arch Wall** in a marathon 21-day ascent in 1972.

In 1981, he attempted to solo **North America Wall** on the Nose at El Capitan in Yosemite. After fourteen days and three pitches from the top, he was trapped in a storm and had to be rescued.

In the early 1990s, Ed developed Parkinson's disease. He continued to hike and climb, and was able to travel to Britain in 2016 to visit the Isle of Hoy, site of probably his greatest climb, **The Longhope**. But he became increasingly disabled and developed cancer. He survived for years but finally succumbed in April 2019.

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

Edwin Ward-Drummond: born May 14th, 1945; died April 23rd, 2019



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