

# Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING

## **Irish Peaks published**

Large format guide to hundred highest mountains

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## **Arderins mountain list**

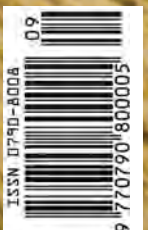
All Irish mountains over 500 metres: a lifetime challenge

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**Mountaineering  
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**Serving the hillwalkers and  
climbers of Ireland since 1971**







# Welcome

**C**éad míle fáilte! I hope that you have continued to stay safe over the summer. The Covid-19 restrictions have been eased somewhat, allowing us to get back to the hills, albeit in a controlled way while ensuring social distancing. As we go to print, the situation has deteriorated and there are likely to be increasing restrictions around the country on social contacts in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus.

While relevant news is fairly limited at this time, we do still have a very full magazine. We have a short report on this year's AGM, which was held virtually at the end of June. This important meeting was well attended virtually, with over fifty members logging in online.

The **Annual Review** for 2019, which would normally have been circulated in hard copy at the AGM, is included in this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. Hopefully, that will give more members a chance to read this excellent review by the staff of Mountaineering Ireland of their activities in 2019 "working for and representing hillwalkers and climbers" on the island of Ireland. As CEO **Murrough McDonagh** says in the review, it was "an extremely busy and enjoyable year for Mountaineering Ireland."

It has continued to be busy for Mountaineering Ireland in 2020, with the long-awaited publication of *Irish Peaks*, a hillwalking guidebook to routes on Ireland's one hundred highest peaks. This is a



## The Arderins list of Irish mountains presents a lifetime challenge to hillwalkers

fabulous, beautifully produced guidebook and a fitting tribute to Joss Lynam, who edited the original *Irish Peaks* book in 1982. Hearty congratulations are due to **Alan** and **Margaret Tees**, who drove the project, and to **Helen Lawless**, who brought the book to publication. The book can still be purchased at a member's discounted price through Mountaineering Ireland's website.

The other big news is the agreement between Mountaineering Ireland and MountainViews to promote the **Arderins list** of Irish mountains 500 metres or higher as a "lifetime challenge akin to the Sottish Munros." This is a welcome development for hillwalkers and will hopefully take some of the pressure off the usual honeypots, where the footfall pressure is environmentally unsustainable.

Despite the lockdown, so far it has been an exciting year for Mountaineering Ireland, with several important events held successfully. Hopefully, we will be able to continue to get out into the uplands in some manner during the coming months. 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](mailto:iml-editor@mountaineering.ie).

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

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



### ON THE COVER

Towards Tievummura (762m) and Tievenabinnia in the Sheeffry Hills, County Mayo. Photograph taken from *Irish Peaks*.

PHOTOGRAPH  
MARGARET TEES

## ISSUE 135

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

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### PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

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Fleeting shadow highlights Brassel Mountain, an Arderin of 575m (50m prominence) nestling under the main ridge of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks

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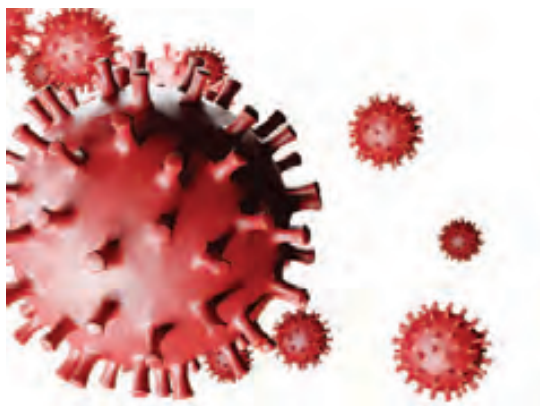
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## Covid-19 advice

Our latest advice for hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland



With the easing of restrictions on movement and socialisation in July, we have been able to return to the hills and crags of Ireland, albeit in a somewhat restricted way, with the need to still maintain social distancing and with limits on group sizes.

The benefits to the environment of our prolonged absence and the general reduction in footfall in the uplands were very evident, with the growth of the vegetation surrounding paths and on the paths themselves.

We must always remember that Covid-19 is still in our communities and that we all need to continue to play our part in keeping it under control. We have changed the way we live and the government is hoping that, as the restrictions are eased on our personal and social lives, we will maintain those changes in terms of increased hand hygiene, improved cough etiquette, adequate social distancing and restricted socialisation.

This is where personal responsibility has to come to the fore. We must all do our best to reduce the spread of this virus, particularly as we head into the winter months and probably until we have a safe and effective vaccine.

Mountaineering Ireland continues to encourage a safe and responsible return

to hillwalking and climbing. We have produced specific advice to support hillwalkers and climbers in making a return to activity in a safe and responsible manner in the continuing presence of Covid-19. That advice is available through our website,

**[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)**.

Underpinning that specific advice for hillwalkers and climbers is the general public health advice issued by the government on reducing the transmission of Covid-19 and any further possibly local restrictions that the Department of Health feels are necessary as the situation develops.

Mountaineering Ireland's advice is aimed at all hillwalkers and climbers. The purpose of that specific advice for hillwalkers and climbers is to highlight any additional considerations that we should be aware of while engaging in our sport in the presence of Covid-19. It builds on the good practice which is already commonplace among responsible hillwalkers and climbers, checking the weather forecast, checking access arrangements, selecting routes that are appropriate for the fitness, skill and experience of the people you are hiking or climbing with, environmental awareness, and so on.

Mountaineering Ireland is continually reviewing our **Covid-19 Advice for Hillwalkers and Climbers** document and the summary sheet. The most recent versions of these resources can be accessed via the website, **[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)** ■





Large grass-covered prehistoric cairn on the summit of Seahan in the Dublin Mountains, showing where stones were recently removed (right) to build a dry-stone shelter (centre foreground). An Ordnance Survey trig-point is located on top of the cairn

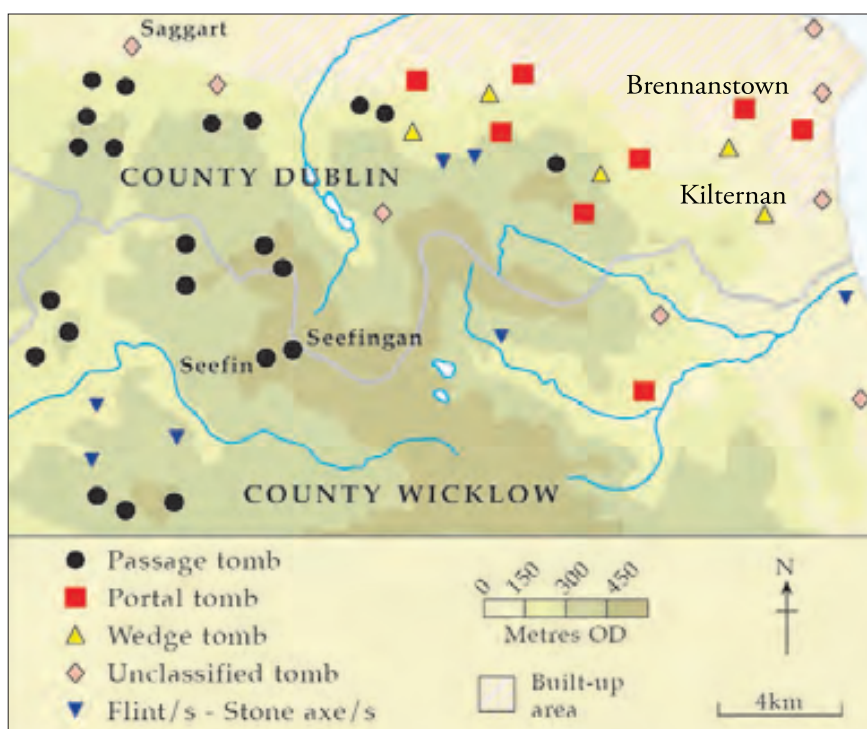
## Cairn on Seahan mountain damaged

Hillwalkers are urged to report any damage they find to prehistoric monuments in the hills

**By Geraldine Stout (National Monuments Service)**

Within the south Dublin and north Wicklow uplands, the cairns of prehistoric passage tombs crown the western and northern summits of the mountains, forming a coherent territory (see map). These cairns (artificial hills of loose stones) contain the funerary remains of the earliest farming communities in the region.

Cairns are legally protected by the State under the National Monuments Acts. However, in the last year the **National Monuments Service** has received several concerning reports from the public about damage to one particular cairn, on Seahan mountain, County Dublin (Recorded Monument DU024-047----). Intrusive, dry-stone shelters have been built on the periphery of the monument, using the stone from the cairn.



Dry-stone shelter on the cairn



Originally, cairns were placed over the burial chamber to protect the human remains, so removal of these stones can result in remains being exposed. The shelters have since been dismantled under archaeological supervision by National Monuments Service staff.

We know that the vast majority of visitors to these mountains are respectful of these monuments. We would ask that, if mountaineers notice any damage to any of these cairns, they report it to the **National Monuments Service** by phoning **01 888 2000** or emailing **[nationalmonuments@chg.gov.ie](mailto:nationalmonuments@chg.gov.ie)** as soon as possible ■



# The Arderins list

We announce an official list of Irish summits for hillwalkers on the island of Ireland

By Ruth Whelan (for the Arderins Subcommittee)

**Mountaineering Ireland** and **MountainViews** have collaborated to develop an all-island list of Irish mountains capable of acquiring the status and recognition of the Scottish Munro list.

A working group comprised of members of Mountaineering Ireland's **Hillwalking Committee** and members of **MountainViews** was set up to develop an official list of Irish summits. Both organisations were concerned to avoid encouraging any development which could be detrimental to the unspoilt nature of Irish hills or to the environment. They were also conscious that the uplands in Ireland are used by hillwalkers in a very patchy way. The Wicklow area, the Mournes and the Reeks are arguably overused, while equally exciting hills in many other areas are virtually unused. An accepted list might encourage a more evenly spread usage.

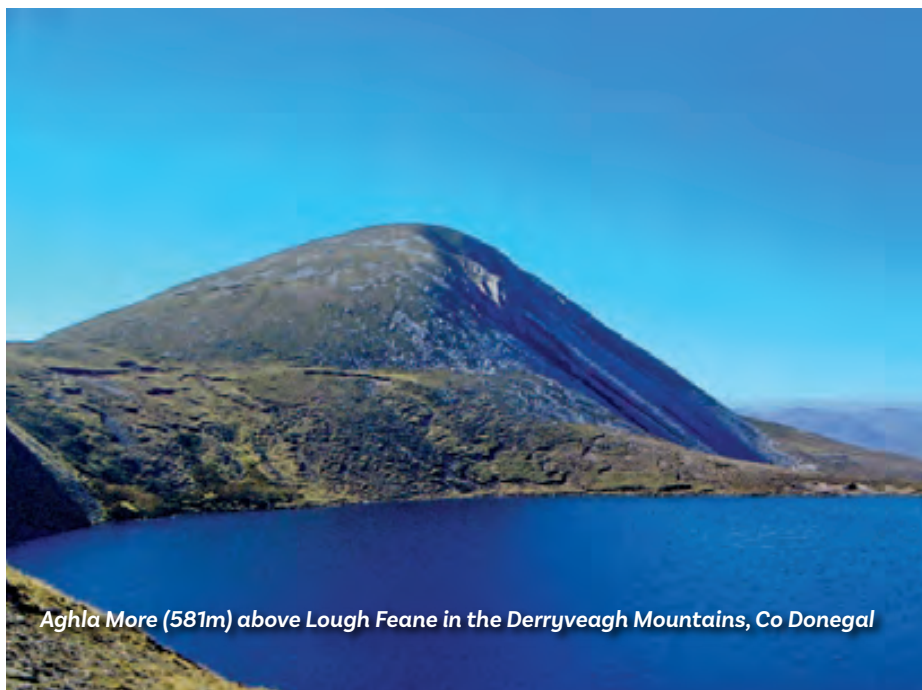
## The vision

The vision was to arrive at an agreed list of Irish hills, defined according to certain criteria, which would encourage hillwalkers to explore upland areas throughout the island, without compromising the wildness, uniqueness and environment which give Ireland its character.

The members of the Working Group were mindful of the success of projects such as the **Munros** in Scotland and the **Highpointers** lists in the US. They saw the **Arderins** as being the premier list, the extent and nature of which, and the effort which it took to complete, providing hillwalkers and clubs with a serious challenge usually undertaken over a lifetime of walking. It was therefore agreed that the Arderins list was the most appropriate for Ireland's official mountain list.

## Arderins

The Arderins is a list of 406 mountains that are 500m or greater in height with a prominence of at least 30m, which is objective and capable of being easily



*Aghla More (581m) above Lough Feane in the Derryveagh Mountains, Co Donegal*

expressed and understood. The term 'Arderin' is symbolic, meaning 'the height of Ireland' in Irish, as well as being the name of a hill located close to the geographical centre of the island.

## The value of the list

- **Environment** Spreads the environmental impact of hillwalking over a greater number of areas. Certain areas bear a disproportionate amount of hillwalking activity in Ireland and are consequently the most environmentally impacted. The list is geographically wide-ranging on the island, with twenty-six of the thirty-two counties represented, and it includes many challenging peaks.
- **Hillwalking as a sport** Supports, increases awareness of and promotes the further development of the sport of hillwalking. Encourages young people to see hillwalking as a challenge. Develops skills of fitness, navigation, self-reliance and route-finding. A list of mountains provides a framework for discussion of routes, summit advantages and disadvantages, access issues and culture.
- **Health** Supports the development of walking as a wellness activity.

- **Rural development** Enhances the viability of more remote communities by bringing visitors. Helps raise interest in the archaeological and cultural heritage of the area, and stimulates the development of the very rudimentary support facilities required for this activity.

## Challenge yourself: walk the Arderins

Hillwalkers can log Arderins as they complete them on the Mountaineering Ireland or the MountainViews websites. There will be recognition of successful completion of the Arderins on an ongoing basis. To date (as of August 2020), nine hillwalkers have completed all 406.

Generally, responsible hillwalkers enjoy unhindered access to Ireland's mountains and upland areas, due to the goodwill and tolerance of the landowners. Maintaining access and good relations with landowners and local communities is a shared responsibility among hillwalkers. Even though some routes are well-established, this does not confer a legal right of entry.

For further information please go to [mountainviews.ie](http://mountainviews.ie) or [mountaineering.ie](http://mountaineering.ie)



# Mountaineering Ireland holds virtual AGM

Mountaineering Ireland's first ever virtual Annual General Meeting was held online on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020



By Patrick O'Sullivan

Given the difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of ensuring social distancing, etc, the **2020 Annual General Meeting** (AGM) of Mountaineering Ireland was held online via Zoom at 7.00pm on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. It was chaired by the Chairperson of the Board, **Paul Barron**.

## Agenda

- Adoption of Standing Orders
- Adoption of Minutes of the 2019 AGM
- President's Address
- Election to Full Membership of Aspirant Clubs
- Company Secretary's Report
- Approval of Financial Statements for 2019
- Appointment of Auditor for 2020
- Statements regarding Safeguarding and Anti-doping
- Nominations for election to the Board of Mountaineering Ireland

Almost fifty members participated in the meeting, including delegates from the following clubs:

- Arklow and Wicklow Hillwalkers
- Beanna Beola Hillwalking Club
- Blarney Walking Group
- Blayney Ramblers
- Clare Outdoor Club
- Cumann Siúil Cois Coiribe
- Cork Youth Climbing Club
- Dublin Cliffhangers Youth Climbing Club
- Galtee Walking Club
- Galway Walking Club
- Glencree Walkers
- Glenwalk
- Irish Mountaineering Club
- Irish Ramblers Club
- Kick Ass Adventures
- Mid Tipp Hillwalkers
- Middleton Hillwalking Club
- Na Sléibhte Hillwalking Club
- New Ross Ramblers
- Peaks Mountaineering Club
- Queen's University Belfast Mountaineering Club
- Rosway Walkers
- Skerries Walking Club
- Swilly Hiking Club
- The Trekkers Mountaineering Club

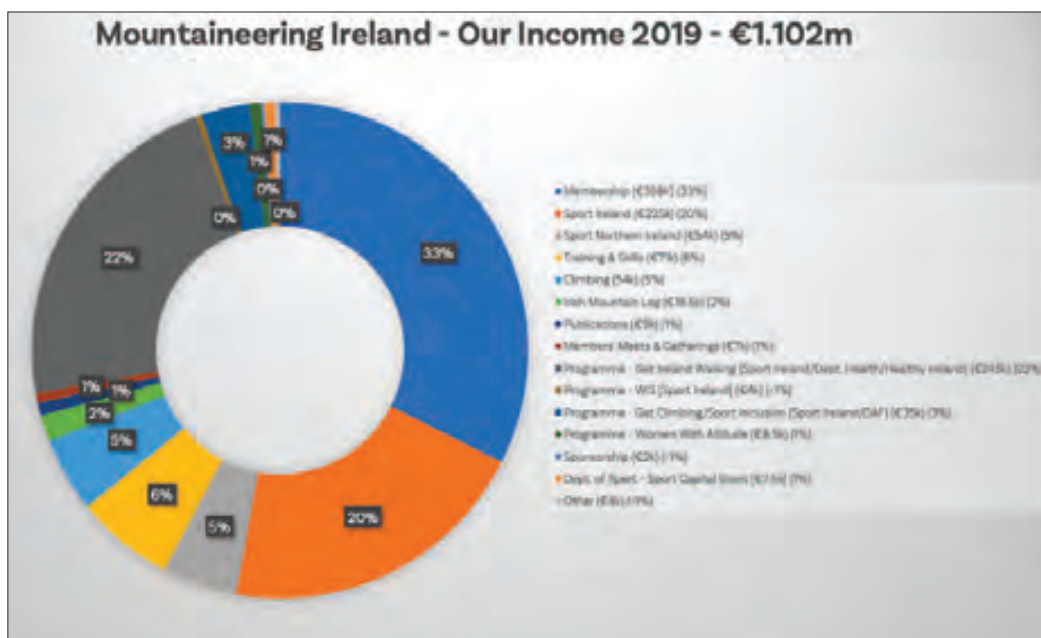
The Standing Orders were adopted by the meeting, as were the minutes of the last AGM, held on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019, in Sport HQ in happier times.

The President, **Paul Kellagher**, was unable to join the meeting and his report was taken as read. CEO **Murrough McDonagh** presented the Company Secretary's report, which demonstrated that the Company had observed good governance during 2019.

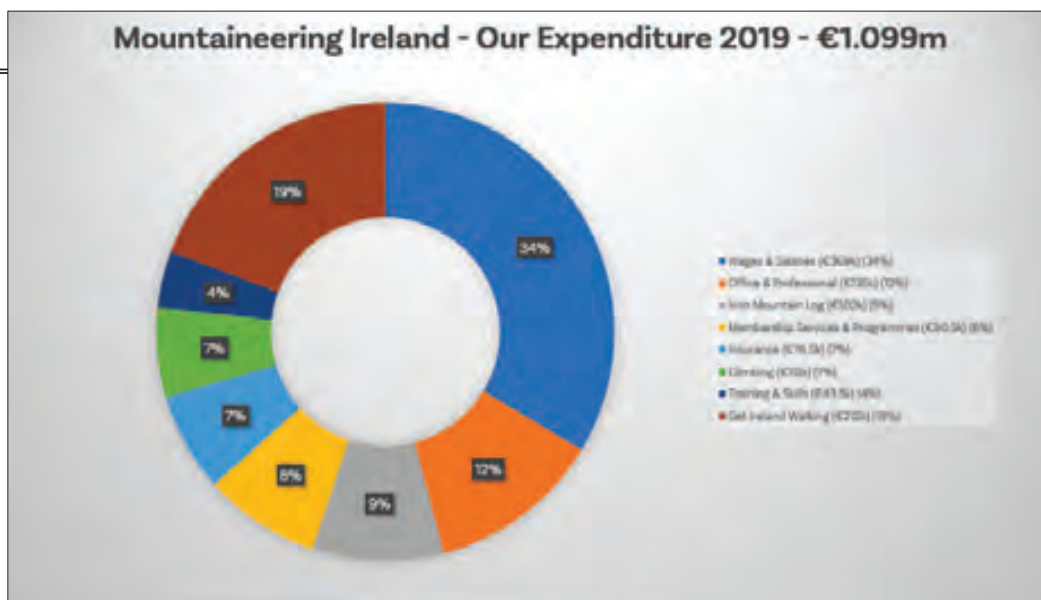
The main business of the meeting was the approval of the company's audited Financial Statements for 2019 by the members, so that Mountaineering Ireland could be seen to be accountable to its members and also meet the requirements of the funding bodies and the Charities Commission.

The audited accounts for the year were presented by **Imelda Buckley**, Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee. They showed that, despite the challenging times we are going through, Mountaineering Ireland had encouragingly ended the year with a small surplus of just over €3,000, undoubtedly as a result of careful budgetary control throughout the year by the CEO and his staff. The full audited accounts can be seen on **www.mountaineering.ie**.

Mountaineering Ireland's statements on safeguarding and anti-doping were approved by the meeting. The meeting







also elected **Noel Caffrey**, a long-standing member of the Irish Mountaineering Club, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Company.

The AGM agreed to grant full membership to the following eight clubs:

■ NCIC Community Climbers

- South East Climbing Club
- Red Cow Mountaineering Club
- Trekking NI
- Queen's University Belfast Mountaineering Club
- Knocklyon Hillwalking Club
- Valeo Hiking Club
- New Ross Ramblers

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland extended its thanks to the members who participated in the AGM and to those who watched it live on YouTube. Thanks were also given to the staff team, who organised the logistics for Mountaineering Ireland's first ever virtual AGM ■

## A trailblazing climber's memoir is published



Clare Sheridan's new book, *Uncoiling the Ropes: The Memoir of a Trailblazing Irish Climber*, has recently been published by Mweelrea Press. It will be of great interest to many Mountaineering Ireland members as Clare's story spans over half a century of Irish mountaineering history.

As a child, Clare fell under the spell of wild Irish landscapes and went on to become a regular hillwalker at a time when

few people ventured into the hills, unless they were out searching for sheep.

In the decades since then, Clare has been a very active climber, both in Ireland and abroad (in the Alps, the Himalayas and the Americas) and her experiences, along with those of her husband Calvin Torrains, give a unique perspective on many of the achievements, trends and debates that have shaped the development of Irish climbing.

The book is available from the Mountaineering Ireland's online store at [www.mountaineering.ie/shop](http://www.mountaineering.ie/shop) and from The Dublin Climbing Centre at [info@dublinclimbingcentre.ie](mailto:info@dublinclimbingcentre.ie).

*Uncoiling the Ropes* will be reviewed in the Winter 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

And Clare still really values a day out in the Irish hills! ■



Clare Sheridan on Orpierre in the Hautes-Alpes, France



# Be 'AdventureSmart'!

Get the skills and be safe on your mountain adventures

By Jane Carney  
(Training Officer)

As announced in the Spring 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* (IML 133, page 6), **Mountaineering Ireland** and **Mountain Training Board Ireland** have recently become partners of **AdventureSmart.UK**. People enjoying the coast and countryside across the island of Ireland will now be encouraged to be 'AdventureSmart,' with the launch of this new Ireland and UK outdoor safety campaign.

The aim of AdventureSmart is to reduce the number of avoidable incidents which the rescue and emergency services have to respond to each year through the development and promotion of a comprehensive set of safety messages. This is an innovative approach to communicating safety to the many people who are exploring the outdoors in Ireland.

Whatever the activity, being AdventureSmart is about considering a few simple things to help your day stay great and to ensure that you return safely and looking forward to your next adventure. Experts from leading safety and sporting organisations have developed these messages to provide the essential information needed for people to get outdoors, confident that they have prepared for a great day.

People are prompted to ask three questions before they set off:

- 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](http://www.adventuresmart.uk), is now linked to the Mountaineering Ireland website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie), and provides all the information that people need to answer these questions.

As a new partner organisation, we have joined forces with the existing partners to ensure that the AdventureSmart messages are spread far and wide on the island of Ireland, to try to



Mountain Skills training in Wicklow Mountains with Wayne Jenkins

prevent potentially avoidable incidents in upland areas here.

One way for people who are returning to the Irish upland areas after the lockdown (or maybe just going there for the first time) to be sure that they can answer the questions posed by AdventureSmart is to spend time in the hills with a registered training provider, a Mountaineering Instructor.

Irish providers have all prepared for instructing clients in the new 'normal' that has

followed the end of that initial lockdown. Below is a positive account of one such interaction.

## A few words about my experience training for Mountain Skills

By Simon Holmes

I did Mountain Skills 1 and 2 courses with **Wayne Jenkins** and it was a great opportunity to refresh and adapt my navigation skills (I'm a PADI divemaster) and to learn and build confidence in the mountains.

As an enthusiastic outdoor photographer, I was keen to learn some new skills to help with this, and Wayne's classes and on-the-mountain training were great in that respect. His years of experience in the hills and with mountain rescue are very clear in his training sessions. His down-to-earth approach also ensures that everyone can follow the syllabus and pick up lots of practical tips along the way.

As well as having a great time in the classes and on the mountains, the training courses provided a nice mix of learning and socialising to ensure that the whole experience was both educational and enjoyable.

I would highly recommend taking a Mountain Skills course with a registered training provider to make sure you have the appropriate knowledge and skills for your safe return to, or for your safe first visits to, the hills ■





**EUROPEAN WEEK OF SPORT 23 – 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**#WOMEN HILL WALKING**  
**#WOMEN ROCK CLIMBING**  
**#WOMEN TRAIL RUNNING**

**20 EVENTS IN 20 LOCATIONS NATIONWIDE THROUGHOUT THE WEEK!**  
**ALL ACTIVITIES ARE FREE!**  
**EXPERIENCED FEMALE OUTDOOR INSTRUCTORS**  
**NO PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE NEEDED**

**#BEACTIVE**  
 Get the taste for outdoor adventure & the healthy lifestyle.

Places are limited!  
 Visit [www.mountaineering.ie/EWOS](http://www.mountaineering.ie/EWOS)  
 Register on Eventbrite

Logos: Mountaineering Ireland, SPÓRT ÉIREANN SPORT IRELAND, #BEACTIVE, 20x20, #WomenInSportIE

# European Week of Sport: September 23-30<sup>th</sup>

Celebrating women in hillwalking, rock climbing and trail running

**By Ania Bakiewicz (Women in Sport Coordinator)**

**Mountaineering Ireland** and **Women In Sport** are inviting women of all ages and abilities to take part in the **European Week of Sport**. Join us on the hills and mountains nationwide and celebrate the stunning outdoors on your doorstep.

Challenge yourself to hill or trail walking, scrambling, trail running or rock climbing. Learn new skills like landscape photography and the basics of navigation using a compass, map or

even the stars. Deepen your knowledge about the environment and heritage in your local area. Discover the proper technique for footwork while running the trails. Learn how to move on the rock and what gear to use. Learn about the weather.

All activities are at an entry-level, so do not worry: you are well able for it!

Bring your daughter or your mother along. Make new 'outdoorsy' friends and get the taste for the outdoor adventure and healthy lifestyle locally.

Twenty events are running in twenty

locations nationwide, so there is no need to travel too far.

All activities are run by female outdoor instructors, the experts from your local areas.

**FIND OUT MORE** Places are FREE but limited! To find out more about the events being held during the week, visit [www.mountaineering.ie/EWOS](http://www.mountaineering.ie/EWOS).

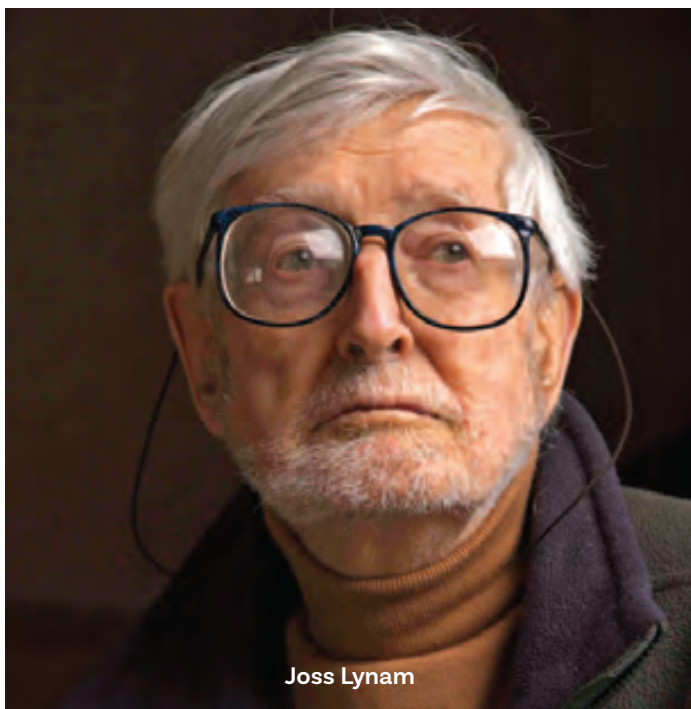
**TICKETS** For free tickets, apply on **Eventbrite** ■





# Covid-19 memories to be collected

Trinity College Dublin library is seeking memories from Mountaineering Ireland members



Joss Lynam

By Jane Maxwell  
(Trinity College Library)

Trinity College Library, Dublin, has been collecting "Covid-19 memories" from the university's community since the lockdown. The library is the custodian of the archives of **Joss Lynam**, a founding member of the Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC) and, in his memory, it is proposed to extend an invitation to members of Mountaineering Ireland to get involved in the project.

The project has gone beyond being only about Covid-related experiences. The wider purpose now is to

capture a snapshot of sports people's lives in Ireland in 2020. The resulting records will be preserved into the future to become available for researchers interested in life in early 21<sup>st</sup>-century Ireland.

## What kind of records or stories are welcome?

The memory doesn't have to be about the pandemic. It can be a story about sport in your own life or in the life of someone in your family. It can be about your parish or your club. You might have a story about an object – a medal or a pair of boots. You might even like to record your thoughts about sports generally.

## What formats are welcome?

We welcome stories in any format and any length. It could be a photograph with a little bit of commentary, or a recording made on your phone. Ideally, you would let us interview you. This would involve a preparatory call or email to discuss what you want to talk about and to give you the terms and conditions, followed by a virtual interview.

## What will happen to my record?

This is a joint project between the Library of Trinity College

and the Digital Repository of Ireland. The records would be shared between the two bodies and stored in our digital repositories, so that they can be easily used in the future.

## How do I find out more?

The project leader is Dr Jane Maxwell, Assistant Librarian, Manuscripts & Archives Research Collections, Trinity College Library, Dublin, and she will be happy to answer any questions you might care to send to [mscripts@tcd.ie](mailto:mscripts@tcd.ie) ■



## crossword results

The winner of our crossword in IML 134 was **James McBrearty**, of **Feeny, Co Derry**, who won an outfit comprising a jacket, short-sleeved t-shirt and convertible pants, a prize worth up to €250, from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to arrange collection of his prize.

1	G	R	O	U	S	E	8	S	4	K	Y	5	E
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22	L	I	N	G		23	D	O	D	D	E	R	

## Man's outfit



Rain Scape Jacket

Triple Canyon Convertible Pants

Zero Rules Short Sleeve T-shirt



# DEALING WITH CALL-OUTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



A mid-year report from **Ruth Cunniffe**, Public Relations Officer for Mountain Rescue Ireland

**M**ountain Rescue Ireland teams responded to 61 incidents in the first quarter (Q1) and 57 incidents in the second quarter (Q2) of 2020. In comparison to the same quarters in 2019, when Q1 saw 75 incidents and Q2 saw 95, there were approximately one-third fewer call-outs in the first half of 2020. This decrease can be directly related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on activity in the hills and elsewhere.

Ireland went into lockdown at the end of March but, even prior to that, people had been requested by the government to restrict their movements, which reduced call-outs in Q1.

In Q2, during the lockdown, the number of call-outs was also reduced. As soon as the restrictions were lifted in June, however, and people returned to the hills and mountainous areas again, the number of incidents increased. The full details of that increase will be reported in our third quarter statistics.

Apart from the impact on the number of call-outs, the pandemic also affected the way in which mountain rescue teams had to work. Updated guidelines were introduced for teams in the first half of 2020, with new personal protective equipment (PPE) recommended to be used and revised risk assessments to be undertaken for each incident.

The response to call-outs now involves more preparatory work than ever before:

- Assessment of the patient now includes a Covid-19 questionnaire;
- Assessment of the responders, now with added Covid-19 questionnaire;
- Multi-layered PPE to be used by both responders and potentially the patient, based on circumstances;
- Decontamination of all mountain rescue kit used in call-outs – enhanced regime of decontamination cleaning;
- The enhanced decontamination process can potentially make response times longer, if there are multiple incidents in the one day;
- Delayed access to incidents –since



the restrictions have been lifted, there has been an increase in road traffic in scenic hotspots, for example, at entrances to mountainous areas and national parks. This has caused delay in responding to incidents.

Here is a view from one team on the direct impact of Covid-19 on their work:  
**John Kavanagh, Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team (DWMRT),** reports:

“DWMRT has been impacted significantly by Covid-19. During lockdown, it was noticeably quiet. DWMRT responded to three incidents in the month of April, a significant decrease from the norm. That lack of activity proved beneficial, as it gave time for the difficult task of sourcing personal protective equipment (PPE). We also developed Covid-19 operating procedures, and trained our team members, during that time.

“Restrictions were eased in late May and, following that, our activity level

increased steadily through June and July. DWMRT responded to 25 incidents in August alone, in stark contrast to Covid-19’s quiet entrance.

“Operationally, our procedures are also quite different now. We restrict the number of rescuers at an incident, which makes the jobs of those who are there more difficult. Initial contact with a patient is dominated by PPE, temperature readings and taking the time to ascertain if they pose a COVID-19 risk. Rescuers are now required to wear face masks and eye protection, as well as the helmets and gloves that comprise our normal stretcher-carrying PPE. Carrying a stretcher is a difficult task; doing it on a warm summer’s day, wearing full PPE, with restricted numbers of rescuers, is one memory of COVID-19 that will stay with our team members.

“A call-out is not complete now until all of our team members have sanitised appropriately, our equipment has been thoroughly cleaned and dried, and the PPE has been properly disposed of” ■



# Celebrate walking!

National Walking Day, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020

By Linda Sankey  
(Get Ireland Walking)

We are calling on people all across the country to join our **National Walking Day** on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020, when we will be celebrating walking as part of **European Week of Sport**.

**Get Ireland Walking** is supported by **Healthy Ireland** and **Sport Ireland** and hosted by **Mountaineering Ireland**.

To find out more about the day, visit

[www.getirelandwalking.ie/nationalwalkingday2020](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie/nationalwalkingday2020).

Welcoming the launch of this event, the Minister of State with responsibility for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, **Frank Feighan, TD**, said:

"As a nation, we are all consciously aware of the great difficulties which our country is facing at the moment, due to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. This prolonged period of national emergency has at times often had a negative impact on our overall wellbeing. During this time, walking has been one of the simplest and yet most beneficial exercises that thankfully has remained available to us. Sometimes in life it's the simplest things that make the biggest difference.

"Our research has shown that people have been deriving great benefit from walking during this time. As a result, I am encouraging people of all ages and fitness levels to continue with the great strides they've been making towards a healthier Ireland. I want to thank Get Ireland Walking for organising this great event and

I would encourage everyone to take part with their family and friends."

The Chief Executive of Sport Ireland, **John Treacy**, encouraged as many people as possible to take part in the day:

"Sport Ireland has conducted research throughout the period of Covid-19 restrictions which shows that an unprecedented number of people are now walking regularly," he said.

"What is really encouraging is the number of young people taking part in recreational walking, in particular in the 15-24 age group where participation has jumped from 51% to 89% during the restrictions.

"National Walking Day is a fantastic initiative and I encourage everyone, no matter what your age or ability, to get out and be active on September 27<sup>th</sup>."

Get Ireland Walking's Programme Manager, **Jason King**, said:

"We're encouraging everyone in Ireland to celebrate walking on September 27<sup>th</sup>! Five months



into our 'new normal,' we can all agree that one of the most important tools for all of us to sustain and facilitate living in a pandemic has been regular walking. We're asking people to explore the **#HiddenGems** in their community and **#WalkyourArea**."

"Sport Ireland's ongoing Covid-19 research initially showed that an additional 500,000 people were walking in Ireland. The second phase of the research has shown that the number of adults walking for recreation has increased throughout the crisis and is now equivalent to over 3.1 million regular walkers.

We are asking everyone to walk in celebration of the power of walking and because we can!

"Our National Walking Day encourages everyone to walk within their own community at a time and place that suits them. We are working with the network of **Local Sports Partnerships** to help you walk locally on September 27<sup>th</sup>.

Local Sports Partnerships will also provide advice on where to walk in your local area. You will be able to use Coillte amenities, Waterways Ireland's waterways and blueways, Sport Ireland's outdoor trails, and national parks across Ireland.

## How to participate

To find out how to participate, simply visit

[www.getirelandwalking.ie/nationalwalkingday2020](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie/nationalwalkingday2020).

## Celebrate and share

Share a photo or video of your walk with us on social media.

Tag **@GetIreWalking** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, your Local Sports Partnership, and don't forget to use the hashtags **#BeActive**, **#NWD2020**, **#WalkYourTown**, **#WalkYourArea** and **#HiddenGems** ■



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# Be Active and Take Notice!

National Walking Day 2020 provides an opportunity for many to improve their mental health



**AN ADDITIONAL 500,000 ARE WALKING REGULARLY AS A RESULT OF COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS.**

Walking has changed for people during the Covid-19 pandemic, in line with the need to comply with the necessary social-distancing recommendations. Those who were self-isolating were even unable to walk outside their homes.

Indeed, the commonest request from those who were self-isolating was to be able to walk locally. The simple ability to get out and walk has been a panacea for all.

Sport Ireland's ongoing Covid-19 research showed us initially that an amazing additional 500,000 people were walking. The second phase of the research has shown that the number of adults walking for recreation has increased throughout the crisis and is now equivalent to over 3.1 million regular walkers.

The report also shows a strong uptake in recreational walking amongst those under the age of 35. In the 15 to 24 age group, participation jumped from 51% to 89% during the restrictions.

**Mental Health Ireland**, one of the partners of Get Ireland Walking in National Walking Day 2020, promotes **Five Ways to Wellbeing** as simple actions we can all take each day to better maintain and improve our mental health and wellbeing. The Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

- **Connect**
- **Be active**
- **Take notice**
- **Keep learning**
- **Give**



National Walking Day 2020 is promoting two of the Five Ways: **Be active** and **Take notice**. We are asking participants to take a walk and be mindful on National Walking Day.

## Why walking?

Positive mental health helps us to cope with daily life and contributes to our overall wellbeing. It is experienced when we can realise our own abilities, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and contribute to our communities.

depression and anxiety. Physical activity in general can help change chemicals in our brains, which can result in a positive mood change. There is also evidence to suggest that exercise can bring about a sense of greater self-esteem, self-control and the ability to rise to a challenge.

## Take notice

It is easy to rush through daily life without stopping to notice the world around us. Walking regularly can help us to maintain an equilibrium in our

own thoughts and feelings and in relation to the world around us. It can also help us to appreciate the simpler things in life. This can also help us to focus our minds on one thing at a time.

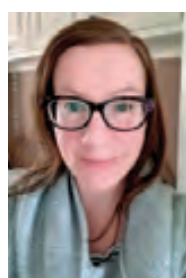
Self-awareness and knowing what makes us happy, sad, angry or excited are very important in being able to look after ourselves during good, and not so good, times. Awareness of feelings also helps us to more easily notice signs of stress or anxiety in ourselves and helps us to develop better coping mechanisms.

- Take a mindful walk and notice one thing you have never noticed before.
- Notice your breath in your body.
- Notice the sounds around you.
- Notice nature around you: focus on colours and the feeling of plants and grass.
- Use your different senses.

When you walk on **National Walking Day**, or indeed any time you go walking, remember to walk with self-awareness and mindfulness ■



Being active is good for our physical and mental wellbeing. Walking has been shown to help maintain better mental health and to improve our sense of wellbeing. Regular physical activity is associated with a greater sense of wellbeing and lower rates of



**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](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie), contact us on (01) 625 1109 or email Linda Sankey at [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie).



# Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture 2020

This year's Lynam Lecture will be virtual

Mountaineering Ireland is delighted to announce that, despite the uncertainties related to the Covid-19 pandemic, plans are afoot for the **2020 Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture** to go ahead, albeit in a virtual format. The date has not been settled yet, but the planning is in an advanced stage, with a leading Irish mountaineer the likely recipient of this year's **Lynam Medal** (pictured).

**Joss Lynam**, who was one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, passed away in 2011. The Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture was inaugurated later that year in recognition of the enormous contribution he had made to the development of our sport on the island of Ireland.

Joss' own achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering over some sixty years, including his participation in many expeditions to the Greater Ranges, made him one of the best-known



mountaineers in Ireland. During his lifetime, Joss also initiated any number of developments in all aspects of our sport and he was an inspiration to several generations of Irish mountaineers.

Joss was known to many Irish and international walking enthusiasts for his many Irish hillwalking guidebooks. He was also the editor of the *Irish Mountain*

*Log* for more than twenty 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; and most recently, in 2019, by Sir Chris Bonington. All of these have been outstanding lectures that have reflected on the development of various aspects of our sport and how it might progress in coming years.

Further information about the forthcoming virtual Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture will be put on the website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie), in the ezine, and on other social media platforms in the next month or so ■

Photograph: Patrick O'Sullivan

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Corraun Hill (524m) on the Corraun peninsula, Achill, Co Mayo.

# THE ARDERINS

What are the Arderins? And what is their significance? A special report by the **Arderins Subcommittee** (members of Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee and MountainViews)

**M**ountaineering Ireland and the hillwalkers' website MountainViews.ie are jointly promoting the Arderins, a list of the 500m mountains on the island of Ireland, as a lifetime challenge for hillwalkers. (The official announcement of this news is on page 7 of this issue.)

So, how much do you know about these mountains, which are located all over the island of Ireland? Do you know how many you may have climbed? No? Well, that's a good reason to have some form of official list of these mountains, so you can see your progress.

Enter the **Arderins** list! The mountains included on the list are all 500 metres or more in height and have a prominence or drop of 30 metres. In other words, you have to go down at least 30 metres from one mountain in order to go up the nearest higher summit. There are 406

such mountains scattered around Ireland, with only six counties not having at least one. The name Arderins was chosen as it is the name of a mountain in the middle of Ireland, whose name origin means 'the height of Ireland.'

The list was defined by MountainViews in 2009 to develop the earlier **Vandeleur-Lynam** list of mountains as a lifetime challenge spread to more mountain areas. The greater prominence requirement of 30m removes some places from the list which don't really look like separate mountains.

Another driver for the development of this list was to have a list of Irish mountains approximately similar in difficulty to Scotland's **Munro** list, which has 282 peaks based on a minimum height of 3,000ft (914m). Ireland has around fourteen summits of this height and so, to make a comparable list, more peaks of a lower height are needed.

The outcome is the **Arderins** list with 406 peaks of 500m. Like the Munros, the idea is that these peaks should provide a lifetime personal or club challenge.

There are a variety of strategies for attempting a list like the Arderins. For many, it can start with visiting local summits and finishing all in the nearest mountain area, such as the Mourne, the 'Dublin/Wicklows' or the Knockmealdowns, and then moving onto another area. For others, it is to walk your way up a shorter list such as the **Highest Hundred**, as featured in the recently published, splendid *Irish Peaks* book from Mountaineering Ireland. All of these are Arderins and, if you are visiting them, you quickly learn that a bit of route-tweaking will also get you to neighbouring Arderins not on the Highest Hundred list.

Perhaps you or your club already visit some of the

remoter mountain areas, for example in Connemara or north-west Donegal? A bit of planning can change routes to ensure reaching all of the local Arderins. Nothing worse than leaving that one place you will have to make a special trip to get to later!

Is the total of 406 summits still a bit daunting? Well, it depends on how you look at it. We have already mentioned intermediate challenges like the Highest Hundred, which are all worthwhile in their own right and which can act as stepping stones, if you want to go further. Then again, the Arderins are deliberately meant as a lifetime challenge like the Munros.

In 2014, a MountainViews member and strong walker, **Simon Byrne**, visited all the Arderins (plus a few more). He did it in 101 day-trips (not consecutively). Spread over, say, twenty-five years (1,303 weeks) and allowing that not everyone walks quite the way





Awe-inspiring north face of Slievenashaska South Top (Sliabh na Seasca, Mullach Theas) (566m) in the Dunkerron Mountains, Co Kerry

he did, that means something like five well-chosen routes a year. (For route ideas you can view every one of Simon Byrne's trips recorded as a track at MountainViews.ie: he is known as **simoburn** and all his tracks are prefaced with 'PMG'.)

Environmentally, spreading hillwalking over a greater number of areas will relieve the pressure on the higher honey-pots, as a disproportionate amount of hillwalking activity in Ireland

is localised to a few, small, well-known areas. With the recent reduction in use of the hills during the lockdown, it has been possible to see evidence of improvement in paths and tracks, and the re-establishment of growth, which is unparalleled in recent times. Maybe there is an upside to Covid-19 from the point of view of nature!

A specific benefit of the Arderins on an island like Ireland is that their extensive spread to forty-three mountain areas widens the

range of places you need to visit and places you may base yourself in. It's a win-win situation for both hikers and accommodation suppliers, as well as the environment.

## Try the Arderins for a lifetime challenge!

Lists such as the Arderins provide a framework for discussion of areas to select, routes, access issues and culture. As you or your club seeks to visit mountains in an optimum 'summiteering' fashion, you will find that your navigational skills and knowledge of compass and GPS work will improve to the betterment of both self and club. Funnily enough, once you have visited several places in a mountain area, getting to the remainder efficiently can become an interesting route challenge, which has been likened to putting pieces in a jigsaw. It all fosters independence and self-reliance in individuals

and groups, which is always desirable and relieves the pressure on our overworked mountain rescue teams. Developing these skills is also one of the aims of hiking clubs, so the benefits are there for all – clubs, individual members or just the casual walker.

As with all hillwalking, follow both commonsense and the rules for access, environment and land management. Specifically for the Arderins, many have multiple ways up and choosing the less well-known can be more interesting and less likely to cause path erosion.

The Arderins Subcommittee is made up of members of Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee – **Margaret Collins, Grainne McLaughlin, Declan Murphy, Louise Nolan and Ruth Whelan** – and members of MountainViews – **David Owens, Simon Stewart and Peter Walker**.

You can view the list by searching for 'Arderins list' on the websites ■



Keadeen (653m), an Arderin and Vandeleur-Lynam in the Wicklow Mountains





# ANCIENT MONARCH

Don Baldwin goes for a ramble on Mount Leinster

**T**all and sombre, like an ancient monarch surveying his fertile kingdom, **Mount Leinster** (*Stua Laighean*) has long looked out upon the rich land of south-east Ireland, watching impassively as each new wave of settlers came to claim this verdant land, before they, too, were swept away by the passage of time.

This is a lush land of gentle hills and generous valleys, a territory steeped in ancient history. Blessed by temperate climes, it is a land worth having, a place worth fighting for, and many powerful kings have vied for ownership of this coveted prize, all under the steady gaze of *Stua Laighean*, the 'Arch of Leinster'.

Wexford and Carlow's highest mountain can easily be approached from several suitable locations.

**Bunclody** is perhaps one of the nearest, situated eleven kilometres north-east of the mountain. If you take a third-class road off the N80, heading west out of Bunclody and marked 'Mount Leinster,' it will take

**Above: Smooth, tarmacadammed ascent to the summit of Mount Leinster.**

**Below: Cairn of an unknown king on the summit, complete with latter-day trig point.**

you towards the **Corrabut Gap** (Carroll's Crossroads). This scenic route will provide you with excellent views of the well-tended countryside and give you a real taste of the Ancient East.

After eight undulating kilometres you will arrive at **Carroll's Crossroads**. Turn left there onto a well elevated mountain road, which forms part of **The Leinster Way**. Another three kilometres will then take you to your final destination, the spacious **Nine Stones car park** (GR 817 546, OSI Discovery Series Sheet 68), where you can enjoy the stunning landscape which stretches out below, a mere fifteen-minute drive from Bunclody.

The origin of the Nine Stones is uncertain; one legend connects the monument to nine shepherds



➤ **Don Baldwin** started mountaineering with the Irish Permanent Defence Forces, as a member of the 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Dundalk, Co Louth, training in the Cooley and Wicklow Mountains. He also served with the 46<sup>th</sup> IRISHBATT in the mountains of South Lebanon. Since then, he has completed several mountaineering courses in Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, including the WGL. Don is also an avid scuba-diver, writer and Advanced Adventure Sport Instructor.







who were killed on the mountain during a storm. Whatever their true purpose actually was, only these nine stone sentinels can truly say, as they continue to quietly guard their secret by the valley side of the road, a little further on from the actual car park.

Beside the car park is a substantial metal gate, usually closed, blocking off access to the tarmac road which leads up to the large telecommunications mast clearly visible in the distance. Do not be tempted to drive up the narrow road, if the gate is open: public access is on foot only. Walkers can use the ample space between the boulders to the right of the gate.

A 'No dogs' sign often seems to be ignored by dog owners, who seem unaware that lurking just beneath the fur of every domestic dog is the wild blood of its not too distant ancestor, the wolf.

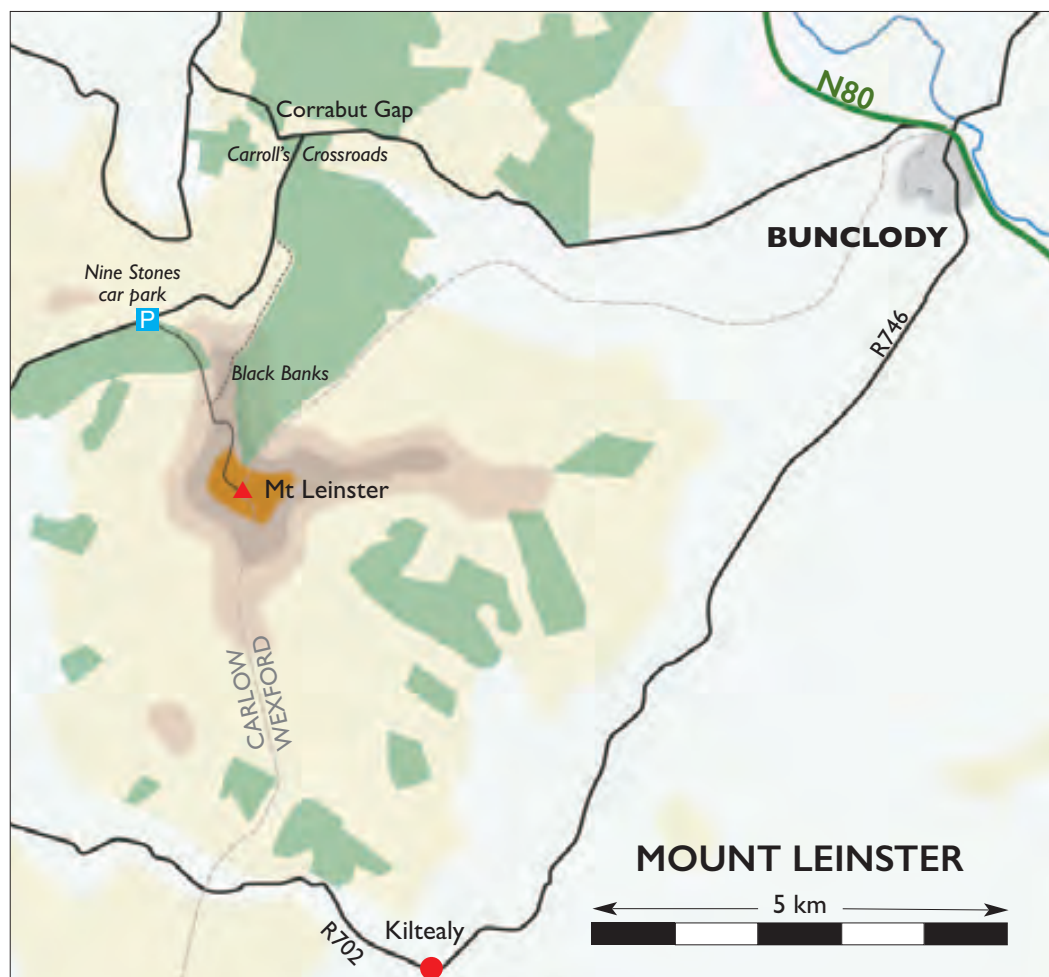
In fact, the last authenticated case of a wolf being killed in Ireland was on Mount Leinster in 1786, by **John Watson** from Ballydarton, near Fennagh in County Carlow. The Watson family were landlords who had founded the Tullow Hunt. Watson, a sheep farmer who was Master of the Hunt, was so enraged by the killing of his sheep by a lone wolf, which had its den on Mount Leinster, that he tracked the animal down with a pack of wolfhounds and brutally dispatched the sorry creature, thus ending Ireland's long association with the 'Son of the Countryside' (*Mac Tíre*, the Irish for wolf).

It wouldn't do to tarmac every mountain road, but it

#### **Above View of the Blackstairs Mountains from the summit of Mount Leinster.**

sure is nice to get the odd one. Smooth road or rugged trail, for me, 'going to the mountains is going home,' as **John Muir** wrote. It's a matter of head down and work those legs on this section as labouring lungs do their best to keep up. The incline is fairly unrelenting but, with sumptuous scenery to distract you, the hour to the summit passes in no time at all.

The mast and compound fairly dominate the summit. Although the incongruous structures look completely out of place in their natural surroundings, the mast does appear to be an impressive piece of engineering. ➤



Map: Colín MacLochlainn



## MOUNT LEINSTER



The summit is surmounted by a cairn and a trig point that sit off to the north of the compound in the shadow of the mast. The cairn itself is tumbled down and neglected now, its owner a Leinster king who fell in battle at the foot of the mountain, his name long forgotten.

The adjacent compound does occupy a large section of the mountain top, so you do have to do a bit of a 'shimmy' around it to fully appreciate the overall view, but it is well worth the effort.

Straddling the Wexford/Carlow border at a lofty 795m, and strategically overlooking Ireland's south-eastern approaches, **Mount Leinster** has witnessed many seminal moments in Irish history. If mountains could talk, what a tale this one could tell. Off to the north-east lie the tentative foothills of the Wicklow Mountains, with the Wicklow massif emerging beyond. To the north-west in Leighlinbridge, County Carlow, buried beneath layers of history, lies *Dinnrighe*, the ancient royal seat of Leinster, nestled by the sleepy banks of the River Barrow. *Dinnrighe* had been founded by *Sláinge*, son of *Parthelón*, leader of the ancient Parthelonians. *Sláinge*'s cairn still rests on **Slieve Donard**, previously named *Sliabh Sláinge* before the occupant in the adjacent cairn, Saint *Dónairt*, a disciple of Saint Patrick's, later went on to lend his name to Ulster's highest mountain.

To the west, near Ballyfoyle in County Kilkenny, and hidden underground is the old Celtic otherworld, the 'Cave of Alders.' It is better known today as the infamous **Dunmore Cave**, where nineteen women and

**Above: Crest of the Black Banks.**

**Below: Descent from the Black Banks.**

twenty-five children died in terror after the Dublin Vikings tried to smoke them out during a slave raid in 928 AD.

Towards the south, beyond the sleek outline of the Blackstairs Mountains (*Na Staighrí Dubha*) stands **Hook Lighthouse**, the oldest operational lighthouse in the world. It guides mariners past the perilous Hook peninsula and into the sheltered waters of Waterford Harbour. Yet long before the old lighthouse stood guard, back in the dawn of time, Cesair, a granddaughter of Noah, led a small group of fifty women to this deserted inlet, along with her father Bith and her husband Fintan. Bith's heather-draped barrow lies on the bleak summit of **Slieve Beagh** in County Monaghan, the cairn all that now remains to mark the brief passing of these sorry exiles.

Of course, the Hook peninsula also staged a more ominous landing, that of the Anglo-Normans who made their first military landfall on the small headland of Baginbun in 1170; hence that sorry lament:





*"At the creek of Baginbun,  
Ireland was lost and won."*

The Norman leader **Strongbow** later savagely stormed Waterford, where he married **Aoife**, the daughter of the expelled Leinster king who had enlisted him, **Dermot MacMurrough**.

Finally, off to the east is the historic town of **Ferns**, the last resting place of Dermot MacMurrough, the broken cross above his grave a symbol of the shattered land he left in his wake. In a desperate bid to regain his Leinster kingdom, 'Dermot of the Foreigners' had offered Strongbow his daughter and succession to his provincial throne, and by extension to King Henry II, who duly pressed his claim. The rest, as they say, is history, albeit a very sad and bloody one.

Having consumed the panoramic views, retrace your steps back down the mountain road for one kilometre until you reach a rutted 'wagon track' (GR 824 534) striking out cross-country towards the north, gently ascending to an area dubiously called the **Black Banks**. Forests guide you on either side across a rolling 'prairie' of pale 'hungry grass,' supporting precious little wildlife, until you finally reach the summit of a small knoll at 644m. There is a possible escape route here to your left, descending back towards the access road. If that is not for you, press on north along the fence on your right until you clear the knoll proper, then you will find a rugged trail descending tight along the forest fence.

The Black Banks is aptly named, as this steep fractured path is the stark opposite of the smooth tarmac ascent enjoyed earlier. It is certainly an occasion which requires you to take the rough with the smooth! This ragged track is a dangerous combination of loose stone, wet bedrock, greasy grass and boggy pools. So, gaiters on and heads up!

Vocal ravens make for pleasant companions along this section of the walk, as they proclaim their ownership of the Scots pine forest beyond the fence. In Scotland, the Scots pine is known as *Clársach nan craobh*, or 'The Harp of the Trees,' on account of the musical sound that the wind makes through its long, needle-like leaves. That soothing sigh is quite audible here as you pick your way adroitly down this tricky little hill.

At the foot of the hill the trail turns abruptly left and gradually descends towards two large boulders, situated near the side of the road that you drove up earlier (GR 831 555).

Here, I fit on my high-viz jacket and pause for a while to say farewell to my wild surrounds, a little reluctant to rejoin the busy world. To quote **Henry David Thoreau**: *"I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time"* for *"I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude."*

Finishing your walk with a gentle ascent is hardly ideal, but that's the way of it here. In consolation, the spruce trees at the car park,



**Above: Final stretch: from the boulders back to Nine Stones car park.**

**Below: 'Son of the Countryside:' a European grey wolf, the species that existed in Ireland until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and was last seen on Mount Leinster.**

peeking over the nearby hill, don't seem all that far away. Have a care along this section of road, as some motorists barrel past, oblivious to the effect their wake might have on a walker perched precariously on the edge of a narrow mountain road!

This is a wonderful, moderate, five-hour hike, with a nice mixture of terrain and track underfoot. The scenery is spectacular in every direction and there certainly is an air of the ancient east about this place.

That being said, it is hard not to feel a keen sense of loss for our native wolf, here where this harried creature met its final harrowing end. Indeed, you can almost discern an air of abhorrence hanging heavy upon these hushed slopes, that Mount Leinster should forever be remembered as the notorious site of that last unholy slaughter.

Back at the car park, I pause to admire a kestrel hovering above the patchwork of fields below, with its latticework of hedgerows. I take comfort that nature finds a way to adapt, to survive. Perhaps someday we might also find a suitable space for the wolf, just as we have done for the golden eagle, sea eagle and red kite. Then, our wild brother might reclaim his rightful place as the iconic *Mac Tíre*, 'Son of the Countryside' ■







## SIX FAVOURITES

**Richard Creagh** discusses some of the mountain landscape images he has captured

**W**e have all been captivated by the stunning scenes we have seen while out walking and climbing on Irish hills and crags. The chance to be present for those moments is a big part of the reason many of us head out, and especially so for those of us who like to bring some sense of them home as photographs.

**Above: 'Brandon Peak,' Brandon, Co Kerry.**

However, anybody who has planned photography in the hills will know how rare it is for all the elements to line up as you want them to. While we can have control over the precise composition of a photograph, there is only educated guesswork to try to bring ourselves to these places at the right time, when the light and weather conditions will add the much needed magic that can transform a scene. Luck plays such a big part in taking photographs, especially as landscape photographers tend to find blue skies boring and cloudy days, especially in the mountains, are so much more unpredictable.

It is best to be flexible and not have tunnel vision for a particular shot, lest you end up blinded to sights you didn't plan for. However, when the plans come good, it is very satisfying indeed.

The shots that follow are some of my preferred photos from my walking and climbing life, a mix of planned and spontaneous scenes from great days out in beautiful places.



➤ **Richard Creagh** grew up in Cork but now lives in west Kerry, where he splits his time between the sea and the hills. You can see more of his images on his website, [www.richardcreagh.com](http://www.richardcreagh.com).



## ■ Brandon Peak

I have a big framed print of this image above my office desk to remind me of an enchanted afternoon. It is a rare case of a specific scene from my mind's eye turning out more or less exactly as I hoped it would. A few weeks before I made this image, I was up there before dawn. I crossed the ridge to Brandon Peak, but I couldn't find any decent compositions there. I should have stayed put on An Góráin; from there the ridge looks more defined and I knew that at either end of the day the low sun would split it into a fine light-and-shadow line rising to Brandon Peak's shapely summit. A dark sky would complement the low warm light, or maybe a cloud inversion could add some magic. A fresh fall of snow would be the icing on the cake, but already I was getting carried away with a scene so rare that, even if it did happen, the chances were slim that I'd find myself there at the time.

Less than a month later, I was slowly slogging upwards through heavy hail showers towards an invisible summit. My friend carried on to Brandon Peak but I stayed put this time, settling myself next to an untrodden snowdrift, the contours of which were barely visible in the flat light. The cloud slowly cleared and bright beams of pristine light began to spread out over west Kerry, fighting with the wind-bent sails of huge hail showers blown in from the sea. It was among the most mesmerising light shows I'd ever seen. I could

Above: 'Sea of Sandstone.'  
Richard Cussen  
on the Bishop's  
Move at Seven  
Heads, Co Cork.

hardly believe it when a gap seemed to be opening up on the horizon and no more cloud was drifting in to block it. I turned back to the view towards Brandon Peak and, shortly afterwards, a pale pink glow lit the summit slopes and spread down along the ridge to where I stood, elated.

It is a simple photo, really; there is no technical camera work involved, no filter and no use of slow shutter to render some sense of fantasy or mystery. It's just a lucky combination of variables that I happened to be there for.

## ■ Sea of Sandstone

In this photograph, Richard Cussen is examining the way upwards on The Bishop's Move at the Seven Heads in West Cork. This is a fairly obscure sandstone crag, too brittle and too dependent on low tides and calm seas to ever get very popular. The setting is scenic and the lines are often quite strong, particularly here on the main wall. For this image I scrambled out to a barnacled reef to get a front-on view of the cliff and its pleasing geometric geology. Even Richard's rope and limbs seemed to match the straight lines of the crag's cracks, a nice example of the climber being shaped by the contours of the cliff. Such subtle adaptations always seem necessary to me, if we hope to get through these steep places. ➤





## ■ Winter Still

A self-portrait from a stunning day in the Brandon range. The skyline here is the Faha Ridge, reflected in one of the paternoster lakes beneath the summit of Mount Brandon. Like most of my preferred images, there is nothing fancy happening here from a technical point of view. I'm not particularly interested in injecting drama into scenes either with the camera or with editing software afterwards. I prefer to find scenes that are inspiring enough as they are and just try to present them truthfully.

The rarity of days like this in such beautiful surroundings is enough to make them special. There was nothing to be added that wasn't already there; sights like this don't need embellishing.

## ■ Eastern Reeks Ridge

My friend Will Dowling moving west to east along the Reeks. I like this photo because it reminds me of all the reasons why I find being in the mountains so enjoyable. The simple hugeness of hills impresses us all; that feeling of being small and insignificant can be strangely liberating, freeing us from the often overwhelming worlds we occupy in our minds into spaces where trivial preoccupations are crushed under the weight of space and time the mountains occupy. Those huge lengths of time are as evident in this image as the size of the hills is; the bands of buckled rock that

Above: 'Winter Still.' Self-portrait at Faha Ridge in the Brandon range, Co Kerry.

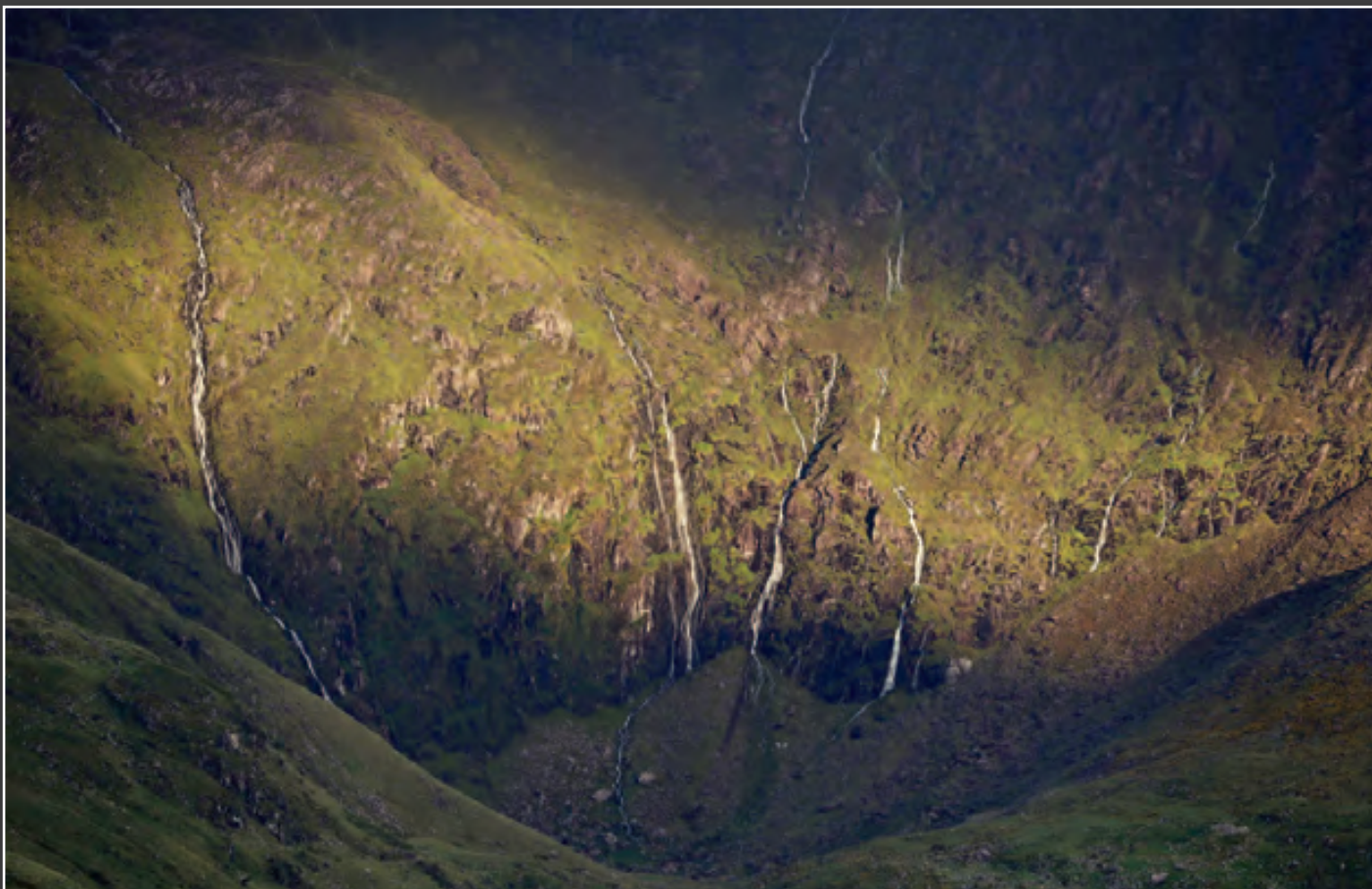
Below: 'Eastern Reeks Ridge.' Will Dowling in the McGillycuddy Reeks, Co Kerry.

Will is scrambling over are clear indicators of the momentous forces that shaped the Reeks into their present state over unimaginable spans of time, and continue to do so at a speed too slow for us to see.

The mountains also command a wide range of observation in the present tense; from the attention to their smaller ripples and edges required to navigate safely over their steeper sides, to the huge, broader views that stop us in our tracks, mountains can keep us rooted in the here and now







at every scale of their details. These wider perspectives help me to sort through what is and is not so important in life, and I see them all in this photo now that I have been tasked with writing about what it is I like about certain images that come to mind as favourites.

This image reminds me of the pure pleasure of time spent in the hills with good friends, moving freely over exciting, exposed terrain, feeling fit and free to navigate the world whichever way you want, something that seems harder to do in the lowlands.

**Above: 'Mountain Wall' On the south-east slopes of Brandon Peak.**

**Below: 'Dream Morning' Looking towards Brandon Peak at sunrise.**

## ■ Dream Morning

Looking towards Brandon Peak at sunrise in midwinter. It is all contrasts; the hard, immobile edges of the hills all in shadow versus the soft and sunlit edges of clouds drifting past, changing the scene by the second. Cloud inversions are hard to beat for that feeling of being transported to another world. This was one of the better ones I have been lucky enough to see ■

## ■ Mountain Wall

Steep streams in spate on the south-east slopes of Brandon Peak. I made this image early one morning after a night of heavy rain in August. Most of these streams are thin trickles of water much of the time, barely visible across the four kilometres this view is seen from. Having noticed them fill up after previous downpours, I planned to come back when early sun might quickly precede heavy rain. The clouds drifting by on this particular morning brought welcome contrast to the warm, low sunlight, adding dramatic lighting to a dramatic landscape, made briefly more alive by all that rushing whitewater. The scale of the scene can be hard to make out at first, but, if you look closely, you can see fence posts along the rim of the corrie. The falls on the left are about 200m high, from where they steepen to where they spill into the small lake hidden there, Loch an Mhúinín.





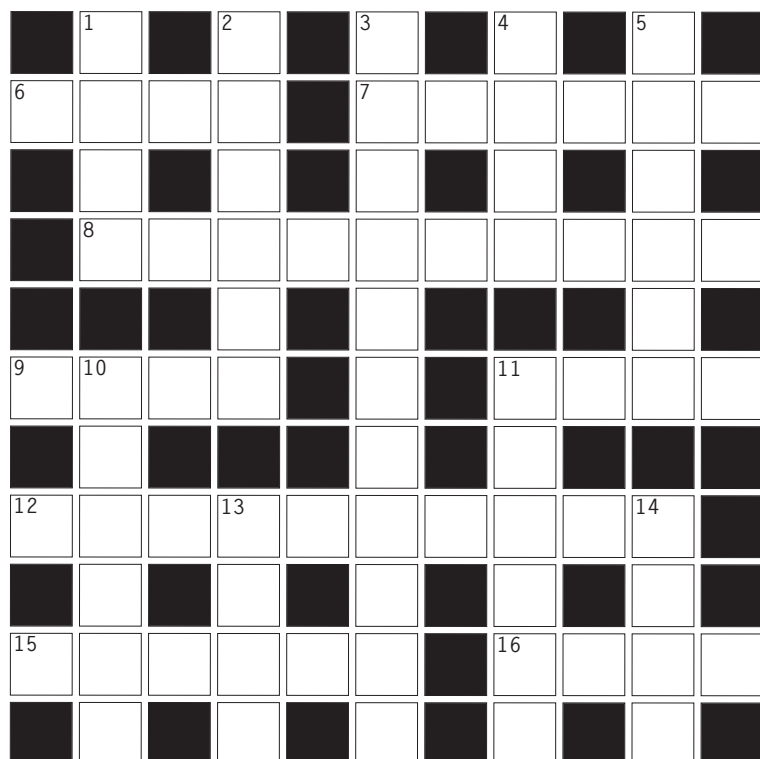


# Crossword

## BASECAMP Crossword 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

- 6 Style of rock climbing pursued by 3 Down (4).
- 7 A person that leads club trips, for example (6).
- 8 Was present prior to, or preceded (3-7).
- 9 Not up, but county in Northern Ireland (4).
- 12 Fabled hill overlooking Sligo town, reputedly where Queen Maeve was buried (10).
- 15 To walk leisurely, ramble (6).
- 16 River flowing through Enniskillen to Ballyshannon (4).

### Clues Down

- 1 A journey, perhaps to stumble (4).
- 2 Longest river in Great Britain (6).
- 3 Daring American rock climber best known for his free solo ascents of big walls (4,7).
- 4 Glen below Carrauntoohil, also peat structures found on mountain tops (4).
- 5 Village in Connemara, or alcove (6).
- 10 Elaborately or sumptuously adorned (6).
- 11 Mount Ararat is highest mountain in which country? (6).
- 13 This mount is the highest in New Zealand (4).
- 14 Largest river in Tuscany (4).



Microlight Alpine Jacket (Men's)



Microlight Alpine Jacket (Women's)



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

### How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a prize worth €229.95 from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin 1. 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, November 8<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie). The winner will be announced in the Winter 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

### Competition prize

Basecamp's generous prize is a men's or women's Microlight Alpine jacket worth €229.95.



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**Working for  
and representing  
hillwalkers and  
climbers**





**“ There were many successes for Mountaineering Ireland in 2019 and much progress was made on our Strategic Plan’s goals. Our membership continued to grow, reaching over 14,000, with 191 member clubs.”**

*Mountaineering Ireland gratefully acknowledges the funding that it receives from Sport Ireland, its Women in Sport programme and the Dormant Accounts Funding, and from Sport Northern Ireland, and from Healthy Ireland for the Get Ireland Walking programme.*

# Mountaineering Ireland Annual Review 2019

Last year was an extremely busy and enjoyable one for Mountaineering Ireland, with many successes and many positive developments coming to fruition. As we continue the journey of delivering on our current Strategic Plan’s goals, which are all aimed at supporting our membership of hillwalkers and climbers and increasing our service capacity, we have seen some great progress in that regard. In addition, as we expand our reach to attract new members, 2019 has seen us continue to develop our governance and best practice structures, all supported by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland. We have also made progress in the important areas of child protection and safeguarding, and in improving our capacity to communicate effectively with our members.

One remarkable achievement in 2019 was the formation of a Hillwalking Committee in early March. Chaired by Grainne McLaughlin, they hit the ground running. That also coincided with the appointment of Ruth Whelan to her new role as Hillwalking Development Officer.

Our membership continues to grow and 2019 saw ten new clubs affiliated, bringing the overall membership to 14,020 as of October 31st, which included 191 clubs and 1,770 individual members. The annual increase in membership that has occurred since 2017 has us on track to increase our membership by 25% by 2021, as per the goal in our Strategic Plan.

The 2019 annual programme of activities for our members included an extremely well attended Women With Altitude event. With over ninety participants, it was one of the largest such events that we have organised. The Autumn Gathering, hosted by Kilmacthomas Walking Club in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, was also a huge success. Our annual Club Support Meetings were held in the four provinces, with representatives from more than forty-five clubs in attendance.

Another highlight of the year was the Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture, which was delivered by Sir Chris Bonington (pictured opposite) to a captivated audience of more than four hundred members, making it the first ever Lynam Lecture to be sold out.

In the spring of 2019, Alan and Margaret Tees commenced the work of putting together Mountaineering Ireland’s *Irish Peaks* book, supported by Helen Lawless and Zest Creative. This project took all of their time and energy, right through to completion. It is truly a magnificent piece of work and I am pleased to say that it is available to buy now from our website.

The three annual Climbing Meets, supported by Mountaineering Ireland, continue to grow in size. The Fair Head Climbing Meet is one of our biggest

events and, in 2019, attracted around 350 people. As always, it was hosted by the wonderful courtesy of the McBride family, who continue to support the development of climbing at these amazing cliffs. The Climbfest in Donegal and the Burren Climbing Meet were also well attended and had about eighty participants each. Rob Hunter took on the role of Head Coach from Terry O’Connor for the Youth Climbing Team.

In 2019, there were also increased pressures and challenges faced by climbing walls, with increasing insurance premiums. Great credit must go to the Climbing Committee and Damien O’Sullivan, Climbing Officer, who have continued to work closely with the sector, providing support and ensuring high standards are maintained through close work with wall owners, insurance companies and the Association of British Climbing Walls.

Our Access and Conservation Committee and the Access and Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless, have continued to work diligently to support access and promote responsible use of our upland areas. There was a positive development also, with a new chairperson coming into Comhairle na Tuaithe in June and a new mandate for the body.

In 2019, we focused a lot of energy towards new opportunities in locations like the Luggala estate and building relationships with the new owner, and in



promoting the principles of Helping the Hills in popular locations, where trampling and path erosion are ever more evident, like Slieve Donard, Errigal, Croagh Patrick and Cuilcagh.

An exciting and welcome initiative saw the establishment of an Access and Conservation Network with over one hundred members, allowing them to feed into Mountaineering Ireland's policy development, submissions and specific projects.

In the past year, we have also seen significant work completed by the Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI), supported by the Training Officer, Jane Carney, and by Laura Griffin, the Training and Membership Support Administrator.

Also in 2019, we saw the completion of the MTUKI Climbing Awards Review, the revision of the climbing awards, and the launch of the new Rock Skills Personal Proficiency Scheme, the Indoor Climbing Assistant award and the Rock Climbing Development Instructor qualification.

Almost seventy members enjoyed some wonderful Alpine experiences in the Mont Blanc massif, where the 2019 Summer Meet was located. It was extremely positive to see four Irish Mountain Guides work on the Meet. The Meet focused on having a strong youth attendance, resulting in 44% of the overall numbers attending being youths. 2019 also saw the continued developments of partnerships with Mountains for the Mind, Adventure Smart and the Irish Girl Guides.

Across Northern Ireland, our Club Development Programme, delivered by Kevin Kilroy, the Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, has continued to provide support and direction in the development of both hillwalking and climbing clubs there, with a keen focus on involving young people. Our Get Climbing Programme offered nearly 1,000 climbing and hillwalking opportunities to young people during 2019, all under the watchful supervision of Natasza Berlowska.

During 2019, we continued to monitor progress as set out in our Strategic Plan. We continued to develop and nurture key relationships with our core funders in Sport Ireland, Department of Health, Healthy Ireland and Sport NI. These funding streams are channelled towards helping us to achieve our strategic goals and developing improved collaborations with our partners to ensure we meet our Strategic Plan's objectives. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all our funders.

The year 2019 saw some small changes in our staffing. At the end of December

Natasza Berlowska moved on from her role in the Get Climbing initiative, Ruth Whelan moved into the Hillwalking Development Officer role and Laura Griffin moved into the Training and Membership Support Administrator role. At the end of 2019, Linda Sankey joined the staffing team in the role of Communications and Administration Officer with Get Ireland Walking. I would like to thank Natasza for her contribution to the Get Climbing programme and wish Ruth, Laura, and Linda all the best in their new roles.

During 2019, we also saw some movement in the Board, with Irene Sorohan and Simon Walsh stepping down to focus on work commitments, and Geoff Thomas coming in as the new Chairperson of the Climbing Committee. I would like to thank both Irene and Simon for their support and contributions to Mountaineering Ireland, and I welcome Geoff in his roles as Board member and Chairperson of the Climbing Committee.

I want to pay a special thanks to Jason King for his commitment and dedication to Get Ireland Walking during 2019. He carried the responsibility for the programme nearly singlehandedly during the year. I must also thank Siobhan Quinn, our Administration Officer, for her enormous contribution as the first point of contact in our office, for her support to our clubs and members, and for offering her expertise in supporting my priorities.

I also want to acknowledge the massive contribution made to Mountaineering Ireland by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, chaired by Imelda Buckley, which all goes on in the background, mostly unnoticed, and the excellent work delivered by IFT Financial Management in providing our accountancy requirements. Our National Children's Officer, Gerry Gorman, also worked away diligently behind the scenes and must be acknowledged for his essential contribution. Thank you all very much.

In conclusion, I would like to record my sincere gratitude to all our steadfast volunteers, our subcommittees and working groups, our dedicated staff team, all our Directors, the Chairperson of the Board Paul Barron and our President Paul Kellagher, who contribute to and together deliver an effort far greater than the sum of its many parts. It is a pleasure to serve and lead you, and thank you all for your continued support.

Murrough McDonagh  
Chief Executive Officer



**“ The progress made by the newly established Hillwalking Committee and by Mountain Training Board Ireland in 2019 was impressive.”**



SPÓRT ÉIREANN  
SPORT IRELAND







# Supporting and Developing Hillwalking

## Growing our membership and developing hillwalking

Mountaineering Ireland's new Hillwalking Committee commenced work in 2019 and held four meetings. The last quarter of 2019 also saw the appointment of a Hillwalking Development Officer to solely focus on developing hillwalking and supporting hillwalkers to ensure their needs are met.

A number of projects were commenced by the Committee in 2019, including re-engaging with OSi to improve communications and to work with them on their plans for future maps. We would like to thank all our clubs that have provided feedback to date, which will help improve the quality of mapping for upland areas, with specific information provided for walkers and climbers.

The Irish section of the E8 walking route has been tracked and can be completed in either direction. It incorporates a number of Ireland's own long-distance National Waymarked Trails including: The Wicklow Way starting from Dublin, The South Leinster Way (The Barrow Tow Path), Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 of The East Munster Way, Stage 1 and 2 of The Blackwater Way (The Avondhu Way and Duhallow Way), The Kerry Way and finally The Beara Way in west Cork.

Ten new clubs were affiliated with Mountaineering Ireland in 2019, bringing the membership up to a total of 14,020, which includes 191 clubs and 1770 individual members as of October 2019.

## Strengthening our support for hillwalkers

In 2019, four Club Support Meetings were held around the country, where Mountaineering Ireland staff met with members from over forty-five clubs from Cork, Dublin, Galway, Newry and the surrounding areas. The meetings provided a great opportunity for all club committees to meet Mountaineering Ireland's officers, while also facilitating information sharing between clubs and providing an opportunity for club committees to receive relevant information that will help in the running of their club.

Two Members' Forums were also held last year, one after the AGM at the Spring Gathering and the other during the Autumn Gathering. These forums, where clubs and individual members can put forward items to be discussed, are a key

part of Mountaineering Ireland's democratic process. They are often the catalyst for the review of a policy or for a campaign or action to be launched. Some of the topics that were raised last year concerned developments re Luggala Estate, club administration, an indemnity scheme for landowners and general insurance queries.

Support was also on hand to ensure that club committees have sufficient information to follow best practice within their clubs, with an emphasis on providing information about new regulations in relation to GDPR and Safeguarding to help ensure protection for both clubs and their members. A toolkit is being developed to support clubs in attracting and retaining members. The first step was initiated by circulating a survey to all clubs to identify their needs and what resources they require to use the toolkit. Funding was also secured to reproduce a Walk Safely leaflet to be published in 2020.





## Building greater relationships

Many meetings were held throughout the year with both new and existing members, engaging with potential clubs on a one-to-one basis and in groups. Mountaineering Ireland staff also attended various events, such as the Killarney Mountain Festival, where both members and potential members visited the stand to learn more about Mountaineering Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland has also continued to host gatherings, providing important opportunities for members and the wider mountaineering community to come together and share their passion for the mountains.

Kilmacthomas Walking Club hosted a very successful Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering based in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, on October 18-20th, 2019. The event opened with a talk from Grace O'Sullivan, a Tramore native and Green Party MEP, who gave an account supported by photos of her interesting life as a Greenpeace activist, an ecologist and environmental activist, to her present role as an EU politician. There were various walks, training sessions and workshops on offer throughout the weekend.

A number of talks were organised for members throughout the year, starting with James Forrest, a freelance adventure and travel writer from Cumbria in England, who toured Dublin, Thurles and Newry at the start of the year, talking about his completion of the Vandeleur-Lynam list of 273 Irish peaks of 600m height or more in just fifty-six days.

December saw a full house of in excess of 400 people attending the Mountaineering Ireland 2019 Lynam Lecture and Award. Sir Chris Bonington gave a very personal account of his life as a mountaineer and it was very fitting that he was presented with the 2019 Lynam Medal for his lifetime's contribution to mountaineering.



## Website and social media

The website continues to be a valuable resource for both individual and club members. It offers relevant information, documentation and resources to ensure our members are informed and up to date with Mountaineering Ireland's activities and endeavours.

Mountaineering Ireland's social media presence continued to grow, with increasing activity across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook continued to be a popular means of engaging with members and the public, with over 17,930 followers on Facebook and one post reaching 184,437 users.

## Women in Sport

The 2019 Women With Altitude event was based in Killary Adventure Centre in the beautiful landscape of Connemara over the weekend of May 17-19th. Over ninety women from all over the country, with all levels of experience, along with instructors and the organising team, were in attendance. A feedback survey sent out to the participants after the event showed that over 70% of participants had never been to a Women With Altitude event before. Overall, the feedback showed that the event environment was welcoming and inclusive of women of all ages, ability and experience. 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new skills and that knowledge was shared, and 85% stated that as a result of this weekend they would try more challenging activities in hillwalking, climbing and/or mountaineering.

## Safeguarding

As per the Children First Act 2015, anyone who has access to minors (persons under eighteen years) in a service, coaching or training capacity must undertake a Safeguarding Level 1 Course.

Mountaineering Ireland endeavours to encourage clubs to support youths to enjoy our sport. Safeguarding Level 1 workshops were run as a service to our members in 2019. These workshops are available when the demand is sufficient. All clubs that have youths participating are required to conduct a risk assessment and to display their Safeguarding Statement. Mountaineering Ireland's safeguarding statement and policy can be found at: <https://www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/GardaVettinginClubs>.

## Hillwalking Committee

A lot of this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee. The members of that committee in 2019 were: Grainne McLaughlin (Chairperson), Ruth Whelan (Secretary), Margaret Collins, Chris Evans, Veronica Kelly, Roy Madden, Russell Mills, Declan Murphy, Louise Nolan and Marian Wallis.

## FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about any of the activities mentioned here, please contact Ruth Whelan, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Development Officer, on [ruth@mountaineering.ie](mailto:ruth@mountaineering.ie).





# Supporting and Developing Climbing

## Climbing meets

Climbing meets provide all climbers with an opportunity to come together to climb, share knowledge and make new partnerships. The meets are organised by a host club with support from Mountaineering Ireland.

## Climbfest

Organised by the Colmcille Climbers' Club, the 2019 Climbfest climbing meet took place at Malin Head, Co Donegal, over the May bank holiday weekend. Three days of dry but breezy weather provided an exhilarating start to the climbing season.



## Fair Head Climbers' Meet

Under the stewardship of Paul Swail, the Fair Head Climbers' Meet has grown into one of the biggest events in the Irish climbing calendar. The 2019 meet was organised by Dal Riada Climbing Club, supported by Paul Swail. As well as three days of great climbing, the attendees at the meet were treated to two inspiring talks: Freja Shannon spoke on the Friday evening and Dutch climber Jorg Verhoven spoke on the Saturday, to enthusiastic audiences.

## Burren Climbing Meet

Jointly organised by the Irish Mountaineering Club and the Dal Riada Climbing Club, the Burren Climbing Meet has grown in popularity. Last year, a good

weather forecast drew a larger than expected crowd, who were rewarded with perfect climbing conditions. On the Saturday evening, the meet's guest climber, Angus Kille, gave a hugely entertaining insight into his climbing progression.

## Youth Trad Climbing Camps

With the aim of introducing young people to trad climbing, two Youth Trad Climbing Camps were held in July, the first in the Burren, Co Clare, and the second in Glendalough, Co Wicklow. Under the guidance of the camps' main instructors, Angela Carlin and John Healy, the young climbers developed their skills, based on their prior experience and their own personal goals.

## Irish Bouldering Championship 2019

Results	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Senior Female	Lucy Mitchell	Victoria Watterson	Trish Fox
Senior Male	Daragh O'Connor	Ciaran Scanlon	Michael O'Neill
Female Youth A	Anna De Souza	Paola Neal-Fagan	Jessica McGarry
Male Youth A	Sean O'Connor	Marcus McDowell	Tommy Myles
Female Youth B	Faith Blaney	Rhyna Conroy	Bonita Thurston
Male Youth B	Luca McDowell	George Lassov	Sean Brown
Female Youth C	Caelin Lenehan	Eabha Hallissey	Eve Buckley
Male Youth C	Sam Monedero-Egan	Zach McClune	Fionn O'Connor

## UIAA Ice-Climbing World Cup

The 2019 UIAA Ice-Climbing World Cup proved to be the most successful to date for Eimir McSwiggan. Eimir opened her season with an 8th place in South Korea before taking 2nd place in China. In the three European rounds, Eimir was placed 9th in Switzerland, 4th in Italy and 8th in France. Coming into the final round, the chance of a place on the overall podium was high for the County Tyrone climber. In a stunning and nail-biting performance, Eimir took 3rd place in the USA and with it secured an overall world ranking of 3rd.



## Youth Climbing Team

Following five years of service, Terry O'Connor stepped down from the role of Youth Climbing Team Coach. In advance of stepping down, Terry worked closely with Rob Hunter to facilitate a smooth transition.

Throughout 2019, Rob worked closely with members of the Youth Climbing Team, providing focused training sessions to help the climbers prepare for competitions as well as supporting the climbers at IFSC competitions.

## Youth Climbing Series

With a new format for 2019, the Youth Climbing Series comprised four rounds. The series opened at the Dublin Climbing Centre with a bouldering round that attracted almost 130 competitors. Round two took place at the Foyle Arena, round three at Awesome Walls Cork and round four was held at Awesome Walls Dublin.

The top three climbers in each of the competition categories over the four rounds then competed in the BMC Youth Climbing Series Grand Final, which took place in Sheffield over the weekend of April 27-28th.

On the Saturday, two climbers qualified for the final round of the bouldering competition, Matthew Murray in Male Youth C and Dylan Murray in Male Youth E. On Sunday, six climbers qualified for the final round, Bonita Thurston in Female B, Caelin Lenehan in Female C, Sean Henchion and Matthew Murray in Male C, Dylan Murray in Male E and Ilmur Jonsdottir in Female E. All six climbers performed very well, with Matthew securing first place overall in his category.

## Irish Bouldering Championship

The 2019 Irish Bouldering Championship was hosted by the Dublin Climbing Centre over the weekend of April 6-7th. The results are shown in the table on page 34.

## Irish Lead Climbing Championship

The 2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship took place at Awesome Walls Dublin over the weekend of October 19-20th. The results are shown in the table on this page.

## Climbing Wall Seminar

The Climbing Wall Seminar attracted owners, managers and staff from a wide variety of Irish climbing walls. The seminar focused on issues relating to compliance with relevant safety standards and their significance to the very hot topic of insurance.

With presentations from several leading authorities such as Nate McMullan and Pete Stacey, the attendees were given current and pertinent information on how to best operate their climbing walls.

## Climbing Committee

Mountaineering Ireland's work in climbing is guided by the members of the Climbing Committee. The members of the committee in 2019 were:

Simon Walsh (Chairperson - resigned March); Geoff Thomas (Chairperson - from March); Peter Wood; John Healy; Ricky Bell; John Harrison; Angela Carlin (resigned March); Clare Sheridan (resigned March); Kelley Smith (from September); Chloe Condron (from September) and Damien O'Sullivan (Secretary).

### Irish Lead Climbing Championship 2019

Results	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Senior Female	Lucy Mitchell	Chloe Condron	Aisling Brennan
Senior Male	Michael O'Neill	Ciaran Scanlon	Andres Pesquaria
Female Youth A	Paola Neal-Fagan	Ella Brown	
Male Youth A	Marcus McDowell	Dom Donnell	Jude McInerney
Female Youth B	Ella Marshall	Rhyna Conroy	Faith Blaney
Male Youth B	Reuben Aiken	Theo Cassani	Luke Van Impe
Female Youth C	Jessica Claxton-Daniels	Caelin Lenehan	Kasha Ogilvie
Male Youth C	Sean Henchion	Archie Tolland	Zach McClune

## FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about Mountaineering Ireland's work in climbing, please contact Damien O'Sullivan, Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Officer, on [damien@mountaineering.ie](mailto:damien@mountaineering.ie).





# Training and Skills



## Mountain Training Board Ireland

In 2019, Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) continued to administer quality assured, internationally recognised mountain training awards and schemes on the island of Ireland, delivered by qualified and experienced trainers, who underwent regular moderation and met CPD requirements.

The Mountaineering Ireland Training Office provides an annual suite of member offerings: national and international meets; multi-discipline skills workshops; club training officer workshops and regional meetings; mentoring opportunities; and award scheme provision.

MTBI are in a unique position, providing and developing both formal and informal training, and, by consulting with stakeholders, reviewing current provision and determining the way forward. We promote self-reliance, and inspire participation and adventure through skills development, thus facilitating enjoyment and safety.

## Training for clubs

Regional Club Training Officer meetings and workshops continue to target in-

club training by bringing clubs together to share ideas, inspire training and promote development within clubs. Thank you to the numerous volunteers involved.

The doubled training grant fund prompted more applications and was promoted at the regional meetings, leading to more training provision and an improved training ethos within clubs. The successful role models that emerged serve to inspire others to follow.



## Skills series and training resources

Online resources increased, as did participant engagement with the skills videos, presentations, library and training literature. They can be found on the website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie), in the training downloads section and are beneficial to clubs, individuals, candidates and providers.

## Training Providers

An increase in training providers covering the island of Ireland has increased provision and diversity of courses. Providers have been updated and inducted in the new and revised climbing awards. Candidate numbers continue to grow.

Annual Providers Workshops support high training standards and are delivered by the Training Officer. The benefits of gathering providers together are many and allow for: updates; sharing of learnings; development of skills and techniques; discussion of syllabi, teaching and instruction methods; and induction for revised awards. Continued professional development (CPD) events are essential to not only meet association and training board requirements, but also to feed the desire for knowledge and to appeal to the enquiring mind.



**“ Mountain Training Board Ireland administers quality assured, internationally recognised mountain training awards and schemes on the island of Ireland.”**

## Links with Other Organisations

### Mountain Training UK and Ireland

The DLOG system, which runs in parallel with the Mountain Training UK and Ireland (MTUKI) Candidate Management System, continued to evolve and increase functionality for our organisation. Communication between the two systems allows for transparency within the home nation's training boards and transferability for candidates of UK and Ireland shared awards.

Mountaineering Ireland and Mountain Training Board Ireland continued as full voting members of Mountain Training UK

and Ireland. The Mountain Training Climbing Awards Review was completed and the Walking Scheme Review commenced. The collaborative work between all the training boards across the UK and Ireland has maintained the consistent momentum essential to develop the existing awards and to add new schemes and awards to the suite of shared awards already on offer.

### Sport Ireland Coaching

Mountaineering Ireland has four awards on the Sport Ireland Coaching Adventure Sports Framework and one award on the Sport Ireland Coaching Framework. Work on this continued throughout 2019.

### Membership of Mountain Training Board Ireland

Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) administers quality assured, internationally recognised, mountain training awards and schemes on the island of Ireland. The members of MTBI also influence the direction of the work of Mountaineering Ireland's Training Office. The Board's members in 2019 were Dawson Stelfox (Chairperson), Kevin O'Callaghan, Alan Mordaunt, Colin Gibbon, Kate Thompson, Stephen Creber, Lorcan McDonnell, David Batt, Joe McKnight, Kieran O'Hara, Alan Fairweather and John Cousins, and Jane Carney was the Secretary.

Registrations	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<b>Award</b>					
Mountain Leader Award	94	98	76	124	87
Hill & Moorland Leader	2	2	6	20	26
Lowland Leader Award	45	88	77	71	75
Expedition Module	-	-	48	71	75
Rock Climbing Instructor (Single Pitch Award)	69	122	142	116	95
Rock Climbing Development Instructor	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	1
Multi Pitch Award	7	3	2	10	2
Climbing Wall Instructor	28	34	53	77	97
Climbing Wall Development Instructor	6	7	2	36	17
Level 1 Climbing Coach	9	18	2	23	16
Mountain Skills Registration	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	574*
Rock Skills Registration	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	56*
Mountain Skills Participation	1,236	1,187	1,089	1,120	712
Rock Skills Participation	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	43
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,496</b>	<b>1,559</b>	<b>1,497</b>	<b>1,668</b>	<b>1,246</b>
<b>FUNDamentals</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>91</b>

\*Not included in the total

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on any aspect of training, please contact Jane Carney, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer, on [jane@mountaineering.ie](mailto:jane@mountaineering.ie).



# Improving Access and Protecting the Mountain Environment

The mountain, crag or coastal environment, and access to these places, are fundamental to hillwalking and climbing, and to the quality of the experiences we enjoy. Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation work focuses on two strategic objectives:

- To strive for improved and assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers.
- To be a voice for the protection of mountain landscapes.

## Improving Access

Mountaineering Ireland actively works to improve and secure reasonable access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers. Mountaineering Ireland acknowledges and appreciates that in the majority of hill and coastal locations the public enjoyment of privately-owned land is available, mainly due to the goodwill and tolerance of the landowners, rather than access being based on any formal arrangement.

Increasing participation in outdoor recreation activities, whilst on many levels a very positive development, is exerting greater pressure on this largely unmanaged situation. Examples include roads blocked by parked cars, reduced privacy for local residents and the visible impact of increased footfall on our fragile upland environment.



## Comhairle na Tuaithe

Recreational access in Ireland is within the remit of Comhairle na Tuaithe, the national advisory body on outdoor recreation. In June 2019, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring TD, appointed Dr Liam Twomey as the independent Chairperson of Comhairle na Tuaithe and presented Comhairle members with a renewed mandate for their work, both developments which Mountaineering Ireland welcomed.

## Mountain Access Project

Mountaineering Ireland continued to push the Department of Rural and Community Development for progress on the indemnity arrangement promised to landowners in the two pilot Mountain Access Areas – the MacGillycuddy Reeks and Binn Shléibhe near Clonbur, Co Galway. The Mountain Access project is designed to provide clarity regarding access, based on the voluntary agreement of landowners in an area. With greater support from government, this model of agreed access has the potential to expand to other areas.

## Luggala Estate

Autumn 2019 brought news of the sale of Luggala Estate, which includes the mountains of Knocknacloghoge and Luggala, to a private buyer based abroad. Mountaineering Ireland had positive engagement with the new owners and, in the initial months, access continued as previously.

## Dog control

In September, Mountaineering Ireland responded to public consultation on dog control in Ireland with a submission highlighting the connection between dog control, outdoor recreation and access for hillwalking and climbing.

## Northern Ireland

Following consultation in 2018, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs produced a discussion paper on a review of access legislation, which Mountaineering Ireland and others provided feedback on.

## Moor Hill Quarry

Discussions took place with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council about the opportunity to develop Moor Hill

Quarry near Newry as a venue for climbing. The quarry is owned by the council. In December, Mountaineering Ireland submitted a detailed Options Appraisal to the council.

## Active at national and local level

Recreational access in Ireland is an evolving situation. Mountaineering Ireland is an active player in discussions, north and south. Mountaineering Ireland's input to national-level discussions on access is strengthened by knowledge of local issues and by solutions being found at local level. Local and national action must continue to support each other as we actively consider options for managing recreational activity and securing access for the decades ahead.

## Mountain Environment

### Helping the Hills

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

Mountaineering Ireland started the Helping the Hills initiative in 2012 to raise awareness of upland path erosion and to highlight the need for skills and investment in this area (see [www.helpingthehills.ie](http://www.helpingthehills.ie)).

During 2019, Mountaineering Ireland made an input to a number of upland path projects. Planning consent was secured in 2019 for habitat restoration and sustainable access paths on both Croagh Patrick and Errigal.

Mountaineering Ireland also liaised with the National Trust team working on the Mourne Path Project and participated in site visits to discuss work proposed for the Glen River path.

## Upland management

Ireland's mountains inspire, shape and enrich the recreation experiences enjoyed by hillwalkers and climbers. The character of the mountain environment

is being altered all the time by changes in land use, including changes associated with recreation activity. Mountaineering Ireland's vision for the future of Ireland's mountains, agreed by members in March 2017, is that Ireland's mountain landscapes will be valued and protected as environmental, cultural and recreational assets.

Mountaineering Ireland works towards this vision through written submissions, and engagement with other organisations that share a concern for upland areas.

Towards the end of 2019 Mountaineering Ireland contributed to discussions arising from the publication by the Irish Uplands Forum of an island-wide socio-economic profile of Ireland's upland areas. The report calls for an integrated policy approach to address the challenges facing Ireland's uplands, with upland partnership groups, such as the Wicklow Uplands Council, having a central role.

## Empowering Members

Respect for the wonderful, but fragile environment enjoyed by hillwalkers and climbers, and being a positive voice for its protection, is one of Mountaineering Ireland's core values. Mountaineering Ireland undertook a range of activities in 2019 to help expand the community of people passionate about Ireland's mountain, crag and coastal environment, and to empower more members to take action to protect these special places.

### Environmental awareness

In conjunction with GMIT Mayo, Petersburg OETC and Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geo Enterprise, Mountaineering Ireland hosted a successful Mountain Environment weekend in Clonbur in May, with participation from 14 separate clubs and a number of training providers. Further one-day environmental awareness events were held in the Caha Mountains, the Wicklow Mountains, on Cuilcagh and in the Comeraghs.



### Club Environmental Officers

Mountaineering Ireland urges all its affiliated clubs to appoint an Environmental Officer, who can help to raise awareness within their club and act as a point of contact with Mountaineering Ireland on access and environmental matters. In turn, Mountaineering Ireland provides email updates, advice and training workshops. If your club is not receiving this information, please get in touch.

### Access and Conservation Network

In 2019, Mountaineering Ireland formed an Access and Conservation Network to allow members around the island to feed into policy development, submissions and specific projects without the commitment of being on Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee. More than one hundred people responded positively to an invitation to join the network and forty-seven people participated in a special forum held at Irish Sport HQ in November to launch the network.

### Access and Conservation Committee

All this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee. The members of the committee in 2019 were: Helen Donoghue (Chairperson); Helen Lawless (Secretary); Jack Bergin; Noel Caffrey (from October); Fíona Gallagher (from May); Ursula MacPherson (from May); Mike Maunsell (resigned February); Vincent McAlinden; Aine McGirl (from May); David Pollard (from May) and Orla Prendergast.

### Collective effort

Mountaineering Ireland is grateful to the many members who contribute to our Access and Conservation work, as Club Environmental Officers, as Mountaineering Ireland representatives on other organisations, through committee involvement and, importantly, through personal action to protect access and the mountain environment. This collective effort is vital, if Mountaineering Ireland is to deliver on its strategic objectives.



## FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about any of the activities mentioned here, please contact Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer, on [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie).



# Club Development Programme Northern Ireland and **Get Climbing Initiative**

In May 2017, Mountaineering Ireland launched a Club Development Programme for Northern Ireland after securing funding for a four-year period through Sport Northern Ireland's Sporting Clubs initiative. The aim of the programme is to support and develop climbing clubs in Northern Ireland. Kevin Kilroy is employed to deliver this programme as Club Development Officer, based at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre in County Down.

## **Developments made within third year of the programme**

Twelve clubs in Northern Ireland received training support to help their members develop skills across a broad range of areas within mountaineering – from injury prevention workshops and route setting training to traditional rock climbing and hill skills courses. A total of 852 learning opportunities were provided to club members and prospective club members in year three.

Youth development is a key aspect of the programme. Club events, such as the Mourne Youth Trad Fest, hosted by Oisín and Emma Hallissey, and the Mourne Youth Climbing Club, have helped more young people to experience rock climbing in Ireland thanks to the generosity of a strong volunteer team and initiative club committee. Now in its second year, Trad Fest saw twenty young climbers and twenty volunteers take to the crags of the Mourne in small teams, to return in the evening to the Hallissey family home ('basecamp' for the weekend!) to share each others' stories of the day's adventures on the Mourne granite.

Sport Northern Ireland's Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, as well as local businesses and self-employed instructors, provided club members with many services throughout the year, from delivery of NGB training courses, climbing wall maintenance and route setting, as well as instruction and coaching on club trips and training days.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere thanks to everyone who played an active role in this year's club development programme for Northern Ireland.



## **Get Climbing**

This programme continues to engage with young people aged from nine to eighteen years from hard to reach communities and has grown year by year, since it commenced in 2017.

Funded via Sport Ireland through the Dormant Accounts Funding stream, this programme aims to introduce young people from disadvantaged communities to indoor and outdoor climbing. Its intention is that all the participants will achieve an NICAS Level 1 qualification, as well as experiencing taster sessions on the hills.

Last year saw 163 participants benefiting from this sports inclusion programme and, in total, the Get Climbing programme provided 934 climbing opportunities to participants in 2019.

## **FIND OUT MORE**

For more information on the Club Development Programme in Northern Ireland, please contact Kevin Kilroy, Mountaineering Ireland's Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, on [kevin@mountaineering.ie](mailto:kevin@mountaineering.ie).

For more information on Get Climbing, please contact Ania Bakiewicz, Mountaineering Ireland's Women in Sport Coordinator, on [ania@mountaineering.ie](mailto:ania@mountaineering.ie).





# Get Ireland Walking Initiative



Get Ireland Walking continued to reach communities and partners in 2019 with walking programmes, resources and concepts shared throughout our networks.

Many challenges exist as the initiative grows and expands but, with much will and vision, we strive to succeed in all areas of our work. New programmes and projects were developed, all in partnership, with some real positive outcomes to build upon next year.

With a new team now on board, the possibilities and vision are very much alive. Through innovative thinking and delivery methods, the initiative aims to continue to grow and to place itself as a leader in physical activity promotion.

## Programmes

### Active Community Walking Programme

Partner: Local Sports Partnership (LSP)

- 73 Active Community Walking Groups
- >800 participants

### Schools Walking Project

Partner: ASF, LSP

- >900 ASW Packs circulated to primary and special schools
- Plans in place with our partner to mobilise schools throughout the year via nudges and active weeks.

### Men's Sheds Initiative: Sheds ag Siúl

Partner: IMSA

Provided training and support for four counties (Waterford, Kildare, Limerick and Louth) in 2019. This walking programme provided the physical activity component of the Sheds for Life research. The programme and research continue into 2020.

### Woodlands for Health

Partners: MHI, LSP, Coillte, UL

Following on from the success of the programme in Wicklow and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Get Ireland Walking coordinated and supported the expansion and delivery in 2019 to Wexford (x 2), Laois, Kerry, Sligo, Roscommon and Limerick, and added Cavan as a new site. Multiple new sites have been identified and sought. National scale-up discussions are now planned for February 2020, through a wider WFH Forum programme.

### Waterways for Health

Partners: Waterways Ireland, LSPs in Laois and Kildare

Following the success of the Woodlands for Health Programme and the evident benefits of exercising in nature, a small pilot programme was established, facilitated by Laois and Kildare LSPs, to support clients of Cuan Mhuire Addiction Treatment Centre in Athy, Co Kildare. The partnership with Waterways Ireland and the LSPs once again showed the impact agencies can have when working closely together. The feedback from participants and staff was moving, so much so that the possibility now arises of integrating a walking programme into the treatment plan for all clients as part of their recovery.

## Research

An energetic young researcher has been selected through an Employment Based Programme between Get Ireland Walking and Waterford Institute of Technology. The purpose of his research is to create a blueprint for walking promotion in County Cork that reflects all aspects of walking. The post is also supported by the Cork Local Sports Partnership and their team of officers.

To support the research, Get Ireland Walking is now funding a Walking Development Officer, who will provide insight into the delivery, facilitators and barriers around programming for walking in addition to generating stakeholder engagement and buy-in.

To date, forums have taken place with walkers and communities by transport and mobility types. Next steps include developing a system map for Cork early in Qtr 1, 2020. International experts will also advise on the process in Qtr 1, 2020.

## Other supports

Get Ireland Walking provides free Walk Leader Insurance for groups and signposting to training opportunities for interested people. Fact sheets and other resources, including hats, 21-day Challenge Cards and Get Active, Go Walking leaflets, are also available, plus phone and online support.

By the end of 2019, 1,908 Registered Walking Groups and Clubs had been established by Get Ireland Walking:

- 566 Community Walking Groups
- 442 GAA clubs
- >800 schools
- >100 Men's Sheds.

## FIND OUT MORE

For more information on the Get Ireland Walking Initiative, please contact Jason King, the Get Ireland Walking Programme Manager, on [jason@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:jason@getirelandwalking.ie).





# HIKING IN CRETE

**Aongus Ó hAonghusa** describes some great walks on the Greek island of Crete

Crete, the largest of Greece's islands, is a great hiking destination. Its mountains may not match the height of the Alps but it has numerous rugged, remote and rarely visited peaks, many in excess of 2,000 metres high. Its mountains are crossed by tracks and are challenging to walk in, while its south coast also warrants exploration. Together, they can provide a memorable experience.

The island is some 260 kilometres in length from east to west and only 60km across at its widest point. Due to its strategic location it has a long and interesting history, and it has been invaded and fought over for millennia. The island has many archaeological and religious attractions, which can add interest to any holiday visit.

Crete is easily accessible from Ireland with direct flights from Dublin and Belfast to the island's largest city, **Heraklion**, and its second city, **Chania**, both located on the north coast.

The island's high mountains fall into three distinct geographic areas. **Psiloritis** (Mount Ida) is the highest

**Above: The stone chapel of Timios Stavros on the summit of Psiloritis (2,456m).**

point (2,456m), located in the centre of the island. The **Lassithi Plateau** area (900m) is to the east, and the large wilderness area of the **Lefka Ori** (White Mountains) lies towards the west of the island.

The south coast is undeveloped and is wild and beautiful; it has the **Samaria Gorge** – perhaps the island's best-known visitor attraction.

The European **E4 long-distance trail** traverses the island and is a well-marked route of over 400km that passes through all of the high mountain areas and along the south coast. The path, a mixture of old trails and tracks, is generally of good quality and navigation is normally easy as it is well marked with yellow and black paint on rocks or poles. The terrain can be stony and rough at times, but underfoot conditions are generally good.

Water is a critical issue here. Springs and cisterns are to be found in key locations that are marked on maps. They are generally reliable, but purification tablets should be carried, just in case.

The island is well served by an extensive, good-value **public bus system**. Bus routes radiate from the larger towns on the north coast, with good intercity services. Bus services into and across the mountains are less frequent, but with careful planning it is possible to access the different areas.

The western end of the south coast is served by regular **ferry services**, which connect the coastal villages, while local boats allow access to key starting points for walks.

**Accommodation** in the high mountains is limited. While the mountains are farmed and populated, villages are rarely situated above the 1,000m level. Rooms are generally available in these villages, and even the smallest village will have a taverna serving



➤ **Aongus Ó hAonghusa** has been hillwalking for over 40 years. He has walked in most of Ireland's upland areas. He has also walked extensively in Scotland and in the Alps, the Pyrenees, Iceland, Corsica and Morocco. He is a member of **Lung Gompas Hillwalking Club** and a former member of **UCG** (now **NUIG**) **Mountaineering Club**.



food and drink. While there are a number of mountain refuges, only one – **Kallergi mountain refuge** in Samaria National Park in the Lefka Ori – is manned. There appears to be no restrictions on wild camping.

Maps of varying quality are available for the main walking areas, while Cicerone's excellent guidebook **The High Mountains of Crete** describes most of the key walking routes.

Be warned! Crete can be very hot in summer, especially close to the coast. However, in the high mountains the temperature can be more comfortable, particularly if there is a hint of a breeze.

Cretans are friendly and welcoming and will endeavour to provide advice and assistance, even through language barriers.

My experience of Crete is based on two visits to the island. In August 2014, I spent a week exploring part of the Lefka Ori, the Samaria Gorge and a stretch of the south coast, while in August/September 2018 I spent twelve days on the island, visiting the Lassithi Plateau and Psiloritis and making a return visit to the south coast.

### **Psiloritis (Mount Ida)**

The village of **Anogia**, the access point for **Psiloritis**, is reached by a direct bus from **Heraklion**. This bustling

**Above: Early morning in Lassithi.**

**Below: Dikti (2,148m), the highest point on the Lassithi Plateau.**

agricultural village sits at 738m on a steep-sided spur. There is no public transport beyond Anogia. I negotiated with a taverna keeper to take me to the end of the road at **Nida**, the access point for Psiloritis, for a fee, the local taxi not being available!

Nida is a plateau at 1,400m and is in the heart of sheep country. My camping spot was by a spring that provided excellent drinking water – a spot I shared with other trekkers.

**Psiloritis** (2,456m) is some 1,000m above Nida and 8km away. The path to the summit is obvious as it is well travelled, winding its way through rocky arid ➤







ground, though never steeply. Eventually I emerged on the main ridge of the mountain with the top clearly obvious in the distance. A high-level traverse leads to the summit, which is dominated by the stone chapel of **Timios Stavros**.

The views from the summit are stunning, with Heraklion, the north and south coasts and virtually all of Crete being visible.

I returned the way I had come and camped again at the spring – on my own this time.

Next morning, I hitched a lift back to Anogia, then took a bus to Heraklion and spent a welcome overnight in a hotel.

## Lassithi

The **Lassithi Plateau** sits at about 900m and is fertile and intensively farmed. It is ringed by mountains, the highest point being **Dikti** (2,148m). The plateau can easily be accessed by bus from Heraklion. I began by visiting the nearby **Katharo Plateau**, which I accessed from the village of **Kritsa** (400m). A road from the village leads up to **Katharo** (1,100m), to the east of **Lassithi**, in some three hours. The only rain experienced over my two trips led to an early camp in woods below Katharo.

Next morning brought me to the plateau itself and a refreshing break at a taverna. I picked up the **E4** here and followed it to the remote village of **Selakano** (930m) and another welcome rest at a taverna. The E4 heads deep into the heart of the wilderness and I camped wild below the pass of **Asfendami**.

The next day, I continued up to **Avasami Pass** (1,810m). Here, I was able to leave my pack and take in the summit of **Dikti**, reaching the top in some ninety minutes. The view from the summit was worth the

**Above left:**  
**The heart of the White Mountains.**

**Above right: At a narrow point in Samaria Gorge.**

**Below: Marker pole on the E4.**

effort, particularly down to the Lassithi Plateau with its ring of mountains and hills.

A long descent brought me to **Agios Georgios**. I camped at the edge of the village and treated myself to dinner at a taverna.

An early start was needed next morning in order to catch the early bus to Heraklion. By then the village, and indeed the whole plateau, was alive with farming activity – the harvest being in full swing.







## Lefka Ori (White Mountains)

It is immediately obvious how **Lefka Ori** got its name, 'White Mountains,' as from a distance the rocky limestone tops and slopes appear white. Taking a bus from the coastal village of **Hora Sfakion** (reached by a direct bus from **Chania**), followed by getting a very welcome lift from some other walkers, I was able to reach the heart of the mountains below **Roussies**, access point for the highest peak of the Lefka Ori, **Pachnes** (2,453m). This peak is an easy pull from Roussies, as a backpack can be left on the main path. The top itself is a windy spot, but with great views.

My route continued through the mountains to a shepherd's hut at **Katsiveli**, with a welcome, if somewhat dubious, water supply. My camp that night was near another deserted hut at **Potamos** (1,800m). Now on the **E4**, my route the next day took me westwards on a good track to reach the easy summit of **Melendaou** (2,133m), another excellent viewpoint.

A steep descent off this top on rough ground led to a forest service road, which eventually passed the **Kallergi mountain refuge** (1,680m), situated above the **Samaria Gorge**. Continuing downwards, I reached the roadhead at **Xyloscala** (1,240m), the starting point for the descent of the gorge. I camped nearby and had an early start the next morning to try to get ahead of the crowd.

Access to the **Samaria Gorge** is controlled and a fee is charged. The descent route is some 18km in length and requires about five hours. The path is steep at first but is well-maintained. Eventually, it levels off and you enter the steep-sided gorge proper – in places you can almost reach out and touch both sides at the same time.

**Above: Scenic view on the south coast of Crete.**

Eventually you emerge from the gorge at the edge of the village of **Ay Roumeli**. Only reached on foot or by boat, this village comes alive around midday as the first walkers of the day emerge from the gorge. It remains busy until evening time, when the last boat leaves. Camping is possible at the smaller of two beaches, and there are plenty of restaurants and shops in the village.

## The south coast

The **E4** branch along the south coast can be accessed by bus from **Chania** at a number of locations, including **Paleochora**, **Sougia** and **Hora Sfakion**. Other villages, such as **Ay Roumeli** and **Loutro**, are only accessible by boat or on foot. In addition to quality walking and stunning scenery, there is much historical interest, with numerous churches and derelict Turkish forts to see along the way. The ancient ruined village of **Lissos**, near Sougia, still has clearly visible ruins of long-abandoned temples and churches.

The E4 path meanders along the coast, crossing over headlands and dropping down to villages and beaches. No coastal walk is complete without a swim or two! Camping is possible at most villages, otherwise rooms are generally available.

The walk from **Paleochora** to **Hora Sfakion** will take three or four days, but boats can be used to skip sections. **Hora Sfakion** is a busy tourist hub, being the main ferry port for this part of the coast, with connecting buses leaving for the north coast cities. At the end of my 2018 trip I took a lunchtime bus to **Chania**, having time to explore that historic Venetian port city before heading to the airport for the flight home ■





# IN THE SCHWEIZERLAND ALPS

**Harry Harbison** makes a traverse of the Schweizerland Alps in East Greenland

**G**reenland has held a mystical attraction for me for a long time. This has arisen from reading the various accounts of early explorers and hearing the tales of Irish sailing friends, who have travelled there more recently, going as far north as Scoresbysund on the east coast. Indeed, I was part of a crew that sailed from Newfoundland to Sisimiut in Disco Bay on the west coast in 2015, although we did not get the opportunity to explore the hinterland or mountains in that part of the country on that occasion.

As 2019 dawned, I felt it was time to satisfy the yearnings I still had. After much research, I joined up with **Pirhuk Greenland Mountain Guides** for a seven-day traverse of the **Schweizerland Alps** in East Greenland.

**Above: Tasiilaq Fjord.**

**Below: Fin whales in Tasiilaq Fjord.**

In the second week of August, I took a flight from Dublin to Iceland's capital, **Reykjavik**. After an overnight stay there, a transfer to the domestic airport was followed by a flight to **Kulusuk Airport**, one of only two airports on Greenland's east coast, with just a gravel runway surface. Kulusuk is a small settlement on an island of the same name in the North Atlantic off south-eastern Greenland. We flew there in a 40-seater aircraft. During the flight, I gradually met the other expedition members, who hailed from Montana, Boston and the UK.

In **Kulusuk**, with a population of approximately 240 people, you will see no conventional cars. Transport is by quad bikes, with trolleys or trailers for goods.



➤ *Harry Harbison is originally from Dublin and has lived in Limerick since the 1990s. He is a member of **Limerick Climbing Club** and has hiked and climbed extensively in Ireland, the Alps and northern Spain, in addition to making trips to Nepal, Patagonia, New Zealand and, most recently, Greenland. He has also sailed extensively in the North Atlantic - Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland and Spain - including making an Atlantic crossing.*







A half-hour walk from the airstrip brought us to the lodge of **Matt** and **Helen Spenceley**, who have run their lodge and Pirhuk expeditions for almost twenty years, in this very remote part of the world.

As with large parts of Greenland, the coast in this region is characterised by long, deep fjords with numerous islands and archipelagos.

## We set off

We made a 7.00am start the following morning. With rucksacks loaded with stoves, fuel, food, tents, climbing and personal gear, we headed for the docks and a two-hour boat trip into the network of fjords.

We made our way to the entrance of **Tasiilaq Fjord**, where we were dropped off to commence our traverse of the Schweizerland Alps. En route, we ran into a spectacular pod of **humpback whales**,

**Above: Dry glacier bed.**

**Below: Climbing the glacier.**

followed by a pod of **fin whales**, magnificent sights and a great start to our trip.

Throughout the boat trip, there was an impressive vista of peaks, glaciers, hanging valleys, small icebergs and sea ice. The Schweizerland Alps were named by a Swiss explorer who was one of the first outsiders to visit the region.

With all the packs ashore at Tasiilaq Fjord, we headed up a valley to the south-east to gain the snout of a glacier descending into the valley from the peaks above us. After a short glacier crossing (no crampons required) we descended a valley on the far side, continuing back to fjord level, where we camped for the first night.

Next morning, after a breakfast of porridge, we followed the shore of the fjord and took a quick swim in water that felt surprisingly warm at around 8°C. After a lunch of wraps, dried meat, cheese, raisins and relish, we turned inland and progressed for several kilometres along a glacial floodplain, with a healthy torrent of water coming from a distant glacier, which was our next target. We camped on a sandy site just below the foot of that glacier.

The following morning, we went northwards onto the ice and climbed 750m up the glacier, the lower reaches of which were characterised by dry ice up to the snowline at around 650m. From there, we put on crampons and roped up as a single group.

The going then slowed up significantly, with constant detouring around crevasses for up to 5km of trekking. All around us there were impressively jagged peaks, with glaciers coming down from side-valleys. As the area is so infrequently visited, only the very highest peaks have names and less than 10% have been climbed. Similarly, the glaciers are so numerous that only the largest have names.

On reaching the plateau, we continued north-eastwards across the ice-fields to find a suitable site to camp.

## Night-time bear-watch

Camping in this part of the world is accompanied by the essential night-time bear-watch. Each person in the group took a one- or two-hour turn on the watch ►







roster. Our protection consisted of a supply of mini-flares to scare any **polar bear** away, should it approach the camp. The last resort would be the rifle carried by our guide, **David**. In his three years in this region he had yet to use the weapon.

The sighting of a bear would have brought the trip to a quick end as these curious but aggressive animals will continue to return to a camp, even after being scared away temporarily by flares. The gun is a weapon of last resort, and preferred practice is to immediately trek to the nearest point of extraction and call for collection by boat via the satellite phone.

The only maps available of Greenland are at a scale of 1:250,000 and therefore lack much detail. The notes include a warning that magnetic north is 23 degrees west, but gives no indication of the annual change in variation.

Summertime weather is dominated by a high-pressure zone centred over the country. Occasionally, low-pressure zones can bring a degree of wind, rain and lower visibility, but we were fortunate not to experience that. Daytime temperatures of 11-13°C were well above the norm of 7-9°C, dropping to 1-2°C at night. Apart from morning mist, the days were clear, without a cloud in sight.

A comparison of a map published in 1993 with one published in 2015 shows the dramatic changes in position of the glacier faces and the very significant impact of climate change on the region.

## First ascent

Next morning, with crampons on and roped up, we selected a peak for climbing. There was no known record of the peaks in this area having been climbed previously. We estimated the height at about 920m. Peaks in this area are not as high as further inland, the highest in the region being in the order of 1,200-1,300m. Again, there was no spot height information on the map.

As we approached a long snow-slope to the summit, it was topped with cornices and snow debris at the bottom. A change of plan focused on an

**Above: On the summit.**

**Below: Wading through one of many glacier rivers.**

alternative, adjacent peak, again with no spot height, no name and no record of a previous summit.

A snow-slope led onto scree and a rocky col before a short scramble to the summit.

The surrounding vista of peaks, with near-vertical walls, glaciers as far as could be seen, and ice-caps, valleys and distant fjords and icebergs, was a truly awesome sight. With little or no breeze and with mild temperatures, we took some time to soak it all in before descending back to camp.

## Camping at Kaarale Glacier

After a leisurely lunch (same menu as previously), we broke camp and headed down a north-eastwards-running glacier in a zig-zag fashion towards the head of the **Sermiligaaq Fjord** and the adjoining **Kaarale Glacier**. This is one of the most active glaciers in the region, with constant claps of thunder as chunks of ice and small bergs continuously calve into the fjord.

We camped at the foot of the glacier, where we







found the first signs of life since the start of the trip – the footprints of an **Arctic fox** and also of many **geese** at their summer residences along the adjoining shores. We ate dinner while watching the calving glaciers on the opposite side of the fjord.

Next morning, we trekked south-eastwards along the shore of the fjord. We crossed numerous streams, some of which required removal of boots and socks. At the foot of one glacier, the probing of a walking stick could not find the bottom of one stream. The only solution was to climb up the side of the glacier, traverse over the top and abseil down the far side, adding two to three hours to the day.

At the outer reaches of the fjord we picked out a campsite on a rough, grassy area behind the shore. We pitched the tents there and got the stoves up and running to cook one more freeze-dried dinner.

I was first on the bear-watch roster that evening as everyone else hit the sleeping bags. The hour's bear-watch did leave one alone to absorb the silence. The night-time light was more like twilight and, although the air is clear, it was not dark enough for stars to be visible. The silence was interrupted by the sounds of the calving from the surrounding glaciers. The ice and bergs were moving towards the mouth of the fjord as a result of the outgoing tide and would drift inwards again later in the morning as the tide turned.

## Second ascent

Next morning, on our last day, we again picked out a peak to tackle. As we were close to the coast the surrounding peaks were lower in elevation. None had been named, so it was a case of selecting one from those around and finding a suitable route up it. The terrain consisted of boulders, loose rock and scree.

**Above:**  
**Descending from the summit towards camp (in right-hand corner).**

**Below: View on descending towards the Sermiligaaq Fjord.**

We passed some small lakes with pristine clear meltwater, perfect reflections of the surrounds and no discharge stream during the drier summer period.

We eventually reached a ridge which led onto our chosen summit in perfect conditions. The vista was again superb, with large glaciers at the head of the fjords, bergs and ice drifting seawards, peaks as far as it was possible to see and, towards the south-east, the open sea of the **Denmark Strait**. As the conditions were mild, we again took time to soak in the whole landscape.

We descended to our campsite, had one last mug of coffee and packed our gear. Our rendezvous boat arrived and we boarded for a two-hour high-speed ride back to Kulusuk. Our traverse was over and I felt privileged to have had the chance to explore this remote area with so many potential mountaineering objectives ■





# CLIMBING THE NOSE

**Paul Collins** tackles The Nose on El Capitan in Yosemite National Park

**A**s a climber, you'll always remember the first time you drove into Yosemite Valley. The road winds along the Merced River, through the forest, passing formations that make the crags at home look insignificant. Then you emerge from the trees and there is **El Capitan**. It is the largest wall of rock you have ever seen, towering 3,000 feet (914m) above the western end of the valley. As you stare up at the wall, you begin to pick out the features you have read about or seen in Reel Rock films. Then you spot the climbers and they put the scale of the wall into perspective. Any thoughts you had of just rocking up and climbing it begin to fade! El Capitan has two main faces, the South-west (on the left when you look at the wall) and the South-east. Between the two faces is a massive prow that is 2,900ft (884m) high. **The Nose**, one of the first

**Above: Martin leads up towards Sickle Ledge on Day 1 on the Nose.**

technical routes climbed on El Capitan, is a 31-pitch aid route at 5.9 C2 VI, which follows that prow. The first ascent was made by **Warren Harding, Wayne Merry** and **George Whitmore** in 1958. It took them 45 days spread over 18 months.

**Lynn Hill** made the first free ascent in four days in 1993 and went back the following year to free-climb it in 24 hours.

Most parties these days take between three and five days to climb the route. However, the speed record on the Nose is now under two hours (1.58.07) and is held by **Alex Honnold** and **Tommy Caldwell**.

## Heading for Yosemite

**Martin Dunne, Bren Rodgers** and I arrived in California at the beginning of September 2019. We climbed in the High Sierra before going on to Yosemite National Park. In Yosemite Valley, we got a site in Camp 4 and set off climbing. We planned to climb as much as possible during our stay and hoped to attempt the Nose on El Capitan. Early in the trip, Martin and I went up the Regular North-west Face route on **Half Dome**. Martin climbed with **Hugh Irving**, and I went with **Conor McGovern**, both of whom we had met in the States.

Martin and I had both stared up at 'El Cap' before, having been in the valley the previous year. Some of the initial shock that comes from seeing that immense wall for the first time had worn off, but climbing it was still an intimidating prospect. Both of



➤ **Paul Collins** started hillwalking in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains at a young age. He started climbing in college when he joined the **UCD Mountaineering Club**. Since then, he has done a lot of trad climbing around Ireland and has also climbed in North Wales, the Alps and the US. He is a member of the **Dal Riada Climbing Club** and currently works at **Awesome Walls Dublin**.



## WE HAD NEVER CLIMBED A BIG WALL WITH SO MANY BACK-TO-BACK PITCHES OF DIFFICULT CLIMBING.

us had climbed long routes before, but never a big wall with so many back-to-back pitches of difficult climbing. We had done some preparation at home before flying out – nothing too structured, essentially aid-climbing in Dalkey Quarry and hauling very light bags. Climbing Half Dome had allowed us to practice the necessary techniques. We were psyched, but we were still total novices in terms of big wall climbing!

Everything we would need had to be packed into one haul bag. There is no water on the wall, so all the water you need must be hauled. After studying the topo, we reckoned we would spend three to four days climbing. We packed about 21 litres of water – there would be no excessive tea drinking on the wall! In terms of food, it was tinned fruit for breakfast with peanut butter bagels and loads of Clif Bars for during the day. We got lucky when a climber in Camp 4 gave us a bag of out-of-date freeze-dried meals. They are light and easier to haul than canned chilli.

On the wall, there is a strict Leave No Trace ethic, so all your waste needs to be bagged and taken up with you. We bought a 'poop tube' from a guy in the parking lot. Your poop bag goes into this section of



**Above: Martin leads up towards El Capitan Tower on Day 2.**

**Below: Paul Collins, left, and Martin Dunne in front of El Capitan after climbing the Nose route in the centre of the rock face behind them.**

drainpipe, which has a lid and a sling, and can be clipped below the haul bag next to the portaledge. Pretty simple.

Also, into the haul bag, we packed sleeping bags, warm jackets, a small stove and emergency gear for sitting out any bad weather. Including the portaledge, we were going to be hauling close to 40kg on our first day.

### October 9<sup>th</sup>, 4.00am

It was time to go! The familiar feeling of apprehension rose inside as El Capitan loomed over us in the darkness. Martin racked up and began leading the first pitch. After a while I heard him call down that the lead line was fixed and he was ready to haul. As the bag left the ground, I followed. We were on the wall!

Martin took the first block of five leads, which brought us up the initial steep slabs to **Sickle Ledge**. The sun rose as he started the second pitch and soon it was hot on the wall. Throughout the day the sun beat down on us and we had to be careful not to drink too much of our water too soon.

We swapped over and I took the next five leads. The wall steepened and we had to pendulum across to reach **Stoveleg Crack**. At the time of the first ascent, pitons large enough for these hand-and-fist cracks didn't exist, so, instead of using pitons to ascend the cracks, Warren Harding had hammered in ➤







the metal legs from an old wood-burning stove back in the day. We continued up this crack system until we arrived at **Dolt Tower**. As the sun left the valley, we hung our portaledge and settled in for our first night on the wall.

### October 10<sup>th</sup>, 9.00am

Light crept down the wall towards our ledge as the sun rose above the valley. After the climbing and hauling of the previous day, we were feeling pretty worked, so we weren't in a huge rush to get moving. We ate some tinned fruit and bagels, dismantled the portaledge and got everything packed away. It was another sunny day, but cooler now that we were higher on the wall.

Martin was back in the lead. Two pitches took us to **El Cap Tower**, another big ledge. His third lead was the obligatory free-climbing crux of the route, a 5.8 chimney (about HVS). If you're aiming to free the entire route, there are much harder pitches, the crux being 5.14a, but this is the hardest pitch you must free and there is no option to aid climb it instead. You chimney up between the wall and a huge flake, the **Texas Flake**. There is no gear; you just have to climb. Martin dispatched it quickly and soon we were standing on top, looking up at Boot Flake.

**Boot Flake** is another massive flake, one that appears to be detached from the wall on all sides, so who knows how it's still on the wall! To get to it, Martin climbed a short bolt ladder, followed by some tricky aid on cam hooks, before climbing the flake itself. As I followed Martin's lead, cleaning the gear, the exposure of the situation hit me. Wow, we were high up! I continued up the rope feeling a

**Above: Martin hauls the bag up the Boot Flake, while Paul ascends the rope to clean the pitch. The American team are on the next belay to the left.**

**Below: Martin cleaning the gear on the pitch above Camp IV ledge at the beginning of Day 3.**

bit shakier than usual. The crack system we had been climbing ended and now we had to pendulum across the wall to reach a new crack system to continue upwards, the **King Swing**.

My lead and I tried not to look down the wall as Martin handed me the gear. This was going to be wild! Martin lowered me till I was hanging below the Boot Flake. I took a moment to get psyched, then began running back and forth across the wall, the gear jangling on my harness. The aim is to swing across the blank section of wall to reach another crack system about 33 feet (10m) to the left. On my first attempt, I didn't quite make it. My climbing shoes slipped on the glacier-polished granite and I was suddenly tumbling back across the wall. What a crazy pitch! I made it next







## WE CLIMBED THE THIN FLAKE UP THE BLANK WALL WITH 2,000 FEET OF AIR BELOW US.

attempt and continued up the new crack system above me.

With the wilder pitches of the day now behind us, we continued up the wall. One long vertical pitch, and then a leftward traverse, brought us to the Camp IV ledge. It was getting late in the day, so we set up our portaledge. From the ledge, we watched as climbers moved about on the wall below. As the sun set, they became little dots of torchlight.

### October 11<sup>th</sup>, 11.00am

We were finally on the move! While packing our gear, a team had appeared from an adjacent route and moved ahead of us. This unexpected delay allowed us a more relaxed morning but cast doubts on us topping out that day.

First up for me was a relatively easy pitch above Camp IV, then next up was **The Great Roof**. The pitch begins by climbing a right-facing corner, which slowly leans to the right, becoming a thin crack at the base of the roof.

The wind picked up, sending our ropes sailing across the wall. At the

**Above: Paul above the Great Roof climbing the Pancake Flake. Well worth clipping the aiders away at this one; it goes at about E2.**

**Below: Martin leading up towards Camp VI on Day 3.**

belay, we sorted the gear, nervously hoping the few clouds that had appeared were not an indication of bad weather approaching.

We were still in the sun as I began the next pitch, **Pancake Flake**. This is one of the pitches that it is well worth having a go at freeing (it goes at about E2). You climb the thin flake up the blank wall with 2,000 feet (610m) of air below you! The top third of the pitch is harder and, along with the next pitch up to the Camp V ledge, involves some awkward aid climbing.

Now that we were above The Great Roof, climbing in an enormous dihedral, the wind had died. Martin took the lead and took us to the **Glowing Spot**, and then on to the Camp VI ledge. ➤







The sun was leaving the wall as we reached Camp VI. It was beginning to get dark but, after the slow start that morning, we felt like continuing. Martin got us up the **Changing Corners** pitch and then we swapped leads again. The belay above the Changing Corners was definitely the most uncomfortable on the route, the only hanging belay we came across!

In the dark, the wall was cooler, which made progress feel easier. Another pitch of aiding took us to the **Wild Stance**, a small foot ledge to belay from with 3,000 feet (915m) of air below! All we could see

**Above: At the summit tree the morning after topping out on the Nose at 4.00am.**

**Below: The Nose route on El Capitan.**

were the headlights of the occasional car driving through the meadow below and the head torches of other teams on the wall.

Martin's head torch had run out of battery at the last belay and he had cleaned the pitch, using just the light on his phone. One more pitch to go. After a short crack, a bolt ladder took us through some steep ground to an easy slab. At the final belay, I couldn't hear Martin but, after some general confusion, tugging on ropes and getting the haul bag stuck more than once, we both made it to the final belay. We coiled our ropes and then dragged our haul bag and portaledge up to flat ground beside the summit tree.

My watch told me that we had topped out at 4.00am. I thought it was around midnight! We ate some funky barbeque-flavoured freeze-dried gloop, then found a flat spot of ground and fell asleep.

## October 12<sup>th</sup>

We woke in the morning as the dazzling sun rose over Half Dome. With aching bodies from three days of climbing and hauling, it was a slow morning. While we ate the last of our food, **Lynn Hill** and **Nina Caprez** appeared. They'd been camping on top. Pretty cool to meet the person who first free-climbed the Nose and someone working on freeing it.

We lazily sorted and packed our gear, then descended the **East Ledges** back to the valley. We had just climbed the Nose in three long days and we were well psyched! What were we going to climb next? ■





# WHERE CACTUS IS KING

**Kevin Higgins** goes hiking in the Sonoran Desert area of Arizona

**T**he colour scheme of many trips to big mountains is generally the brilliant blue, white and grey of sky, snow and rock. It is something of a change to visit a mountain region of reds, browns and golds as in the **Sonoran Desert** area of Arizona. Of course, the brilliant blue sky is a constant there, and I had an opportunity to take a few day-hikes in this amazing and varied landscape.

The state capital, **Phoenix**, stands at about 300m above sea level and, within the city limits, there are a few significant hiking areas. **Papago Park**, a municipal facility, offers up to a half-day's steep hiking, even scrambling. It has a few climbing routes on what looks like horrible conglomerate rock, but gives extensive views across the city and towards **Camelback Mountain**, which rises to 825m.

Named for the shape of its outline – which resembles a kneeling camel – Camelback offers a number of substantial hikes and about sixty trad and sport rock routes on a sandstone conglomerate that has been described as 'petrified mud'.

The proximity of Camelback Mountain to Phoenix city centre (it is about twenty minutes to downtown) means that it is a very popular hiking area, with well used and waymarked trails. However, the summit routes are not to be underestimated and rescue situations are fairly regular. A summer temperature that soars to well above 40°C is often a factor in such

**Above: View of the Sonoran Desert, some thirty miles west of Maricopa, Arizona.**

**Below: Camelback Mountain near Phoenix.**

emergencies, hence the level of regulation and advice that is administered to visitors; it is a desert, after all.

However, the constant sunshine and pleasant temperatures in March make for delightful hiking. Parts of the routes are quite steep, with some exposure, although not only of the climbing kind, since some of the hikers seem dressed more for the beach than for the mountain! The level of winter sunshine means that Phoenix is a destination for winter rock climbing, with about eight hundred routes of different styles in the region.

Also within the city limits is **South Mountain Park and Preserve**. This offers up to eighty kilometres of desert hiking where, just a few minutes from the trailhead, the city suburbs are lost to view and one can easily imagine the scene from a Western movie where a cowboy rides over a low ridge into a cactus-studded canyon before being ambushed by a gunslinger hidden behind boulders. ➤



➤ **Kevin Higgins** is a member of the **Tyndall Mountain Club**, based in Kilkenny. He has been hiking and climbing in Ireland and abroad for many years. He has a particular interest in the history and folklore of Irish mountains and mountaineers.





## ARIZONA



Less than an hour's drive to the northeast is the **McDowell Mountain Range** (McDowell Sonoran Preserve), the highest point of which is **East End** at 1,240m. The range is a sacred marker to the native people. It offers rugged and spectacular hiking on about 350 kilometres of trails, as well as climbing on about 200 rock routes on the rough-grained desert granite formations.

A destination for both hikers and climbers is **Tom's Thumb**. This is a prominent 43m plug of desert granite that perches atop a ridgeline. It is visible for miles in all directions. Originally called 'The Dork,' it was rechristened Tom's Thumb in honour of climber **Tom Kreuser** who made the first ascent in 1948. Its summit cannot be achieved without some serious climbing. Just getting to it involves spectacular hiking, and it makes an iconic destination and a 'must' on a climber's tick list.

A couple of hours east of the city lie the **Superstitions**, a range of mountains steeped as deeply in lore and stories as any Irish range. It was a

**Above: Tom's Thumb Trail in the McDowell Mountains.**

**Below left: Jumping cholla cactus.**

**Below right: Approaching the Superstitions.**

base stronghold of a branch of the Apache tribe, and stories of battles and massacres abound. A movie, *Lust for Gold*, starring Glen Ford, recounts the story of the Lost Dutchman Mine, for which many have searched in vain.

Desert hiking necessitates precautions, not least against the ubiquitous cactus. One variety of cholla cactus is the **jumping cholla cactus**, named for its seeming ability to jump from place to place to attack. Although not literally able to jump, it drops pieces and fragments very easily, if only lightly touched.

Once, when I was only wearing sandals, it 'jumped' and a large piece attached itself to my foot. Trying to remove it by hand means that the barbed spines grab on to one's hands as well as one's feet.

Luckily for me, we were at the park entrance where a helpful warden was nearby. "This will hurt," were his words, as he took out a large, toothed, comb-like instrument that enabled him to grip the





## THE GRANITE DELLS PROVIDE HUNDREDS OF CLIMBING ROUTES ON SKIN-RENDING ROCK.

spines of the plant. It hurt alright, as with a sharp tug he removed the offending cactus, leaving me with a blood-spattered foot. Despite this misadventure, we were able to continue into the foothills of the Superstitions, not finding any lost gold mines but managing to avoid any further cactus massacres.

North of Phoenix and close to the town of Prescott is the vast field of granite formations known as the **Granite Dells**. This is where the waters of the dammed Granite Creek have backed up to form small lakes among the extensive granite intrusions in the surrounding sandstone. The spheroidal weathering of the granite has produced interesting formations of balancing boulders, towers and cliffs that provide up to seven hundred climbing routes 'on skin-rending rock.' The texture of the rock is so coarse that even a little easy scrambling takes a toll on the fingers. That is a small price to pay for a day exploring in this hidden gem of rock formations that, although not within the Sonoran Desert region, has its share of cactus varieties to avoid.

A little further north, near the town of **Sedona**, and also slightly outside the Sonoran Desert, lies the aptly named **Red Rock State Park**. This is a 286-acre nature preserve and environmental education centre surrounding the spectacular butte of **Cathedral Rock**.

The list of prohibited activities is a long one and includes rock climbing. This is unfortunate, as the park's iconic feature, the hugely impressive Cathedral Rock, seems to have endless climbing possibilities. However, the rock hound is well catered for in nearby **Oak Creek Canyon**, regarded as the little cousin of



**Above: Climbing is prohibited on the hugely impressive Cathedral Rock.**

**Below : The Granite Dells.**

the Grand Canyon, where there is a great variety of routes on sandstone, limestone and basalt.

Without leaving the park, a variety of interlinked trails give about 10km of easy hiking to points that provide spectacular views of the striking landscape. It is also possible to continue out of the park into the surrounding **National Forest** for more extensive hiking.

The iconic **saguaro cactus** is another native of the Sonoran Desert, the only place in the world where it grows in the wild. It is a feature of almost every desert hiking trail in the region. In reality, it is a tree of the desert, as it grows up to about 25m in height and can hold, literally, a ton of water. Its flower is the state flower of Arizona, and the plant is emblematic of this region of the country... where cactus is king ■





# CLUB & MEMBER SUPPORT MEETING

Ruth Whelan, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Development Officer, reports on the key topics discussed at the Mountaineering Ireland Club and Individual Member Support Meeting held online on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

**W**e would like to say a special thank you to all of the members who attended and engaged in our Club and Individual Member Support Meeting on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020. There were over ninety participants, with over fifty clubs represented.

## KEY TOPICS

### CATEGORY 1 Covid-19 topics

- **Car-pooling** Car-pooling is deemed to be incompatible with social distancing. Members should avoid car-pooling with people who are not part of their household. There is no exemption for those engaging in outdoor recreation activities.
- **Car parking** It is advised to arrive early, at less busy times (e.g. during mid-week) and at less popular destinations, in order to avail of the limited spaces in car parks. It was noted that most car parks are experiencing higher than normal

use and that members must park responsibly at all times. It was also suggested to have a Plan B ready in case you cannot park at your first-choice location.

- **Guests on walks** Some clubs raised the question of allowing guests as part of the taster sessions. It is important to limit your social circles right now, so it was suggested that it may not be appropriate to expand your club at the moment, while getting back up and running. It was also noted that Mountaineering Ireland's position for group size is that groups should preferably be of fewer than ten people, but certainly no more than fifteen per walk.
- **Contact tracing: Sport Ireland Declaration** It was confirmed that clubs need to keep a record (either electronic or on paper) of those going on their walks, that all members going on a walk must answer the three questions, and that clubs should retain this information for four weeks. If a member develops COVID-19

symptoms on or after a walk, that member must contact either the HSE or the NHS. It is the HSE or the NHS who will conduct the contact tracing on behalf of the individual, and not the club volunteers. This information is available on both the Mountaineering Ireland and Sport Ireland websites.

### CATEGORY 2 Climbing topics

- **Advice on sharing and cleaning climbing gear** There are three options here: (1) give the equipment out to the club members to hold onto, or (2) allow 72 hours before the equipment is used by another member, or (3) in line with the manufacturer's guidelines, wash with the correct type of soap, detergent or warm water (as per the suggested temperature) and allow to dry before the next member uses the equipment.
- **What is the best way to maintain social distancing measures when climbing?** It was suggested to only



have a small number in your climbing group (e.g. four climbers) and to limit your social network or group of climbers, ideally to that same number of four people.

## CATEGORY 3

### Access topics

- **Do clubs still have access to landowners' land, and are there any restrictions due to Covid-19?**

It was suggested that members continue to be respectful to landowners, to park responsibly, to avoid farmyards and houses where possible, and to ensure group sizes are ideally of ten persons or fewer, but no more than fifteen. It was also noted that members must be mindful that most rural and upland communities have not had many people in their area since March and may be nervous if seeing groups of people returning, plus we all need to be conscious of the concerns about community transmission of Covid-19. Access concerns at one location in west Cork came to a head due to a group of more than twenty going through during the Covid period.

- **Dogs, litter** We also recommend that dog owners only take dogs where they are permitted and that people be responsible for their own litter.

- **National Parks and Wildlife Service's planning application for developments, including parking and walking trails, in Connemara National Park** It was confirmed that Mountaineering Ireland has received feedback from a number of members and local clubs and will submit observations on this planning application, highlighting points that are welcomed, but also some concerns about the proposals.

## CATEGORY 4

### Training topics

- **When are Mountaineering Ireland providers re-commencing their training activities?** There is currently a phased return of providers' service on certain awards and schemes. So if you have specific queries, please contact either the training provider or Mountaineering Ireland for more information.



- **When are the outdoor education centres opening again?** The centres are currently starting to re-open, so it is advised to contact them directly or visit their individual websites for more information.

- **Is first aid and self-rescue appropriate for our members to offer?** This is a personal decision concerning whether or not you are comfortable to give first aid or administer self-rescue. Should outside assistance be required, please call Mountain Rescue or the Coast Guard. This is a personal choice for each one of us to make, and the usual PPE protocol of wearing gloves should apply. Additional PPE such as a mask and apron should be added to your first-aid kit.

## CATEGORY 5

### General members topics

- **Insurance cover** There have been no changes to our insurance policy relating to the Covid-19 pandemic over the past number of months.
- **Membership fees** Our membership fees structure remains the same. New Individual Members can register at any time and club members' renewals commence for the period from the 1<sup>st</sup> of November to 31<sup>st</sup> of October on a twelve-month basis. New club members can register for the first time on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and avail of a special offer of 14 months membership for the price of 12 months.
- **Insurance rebate** It was confirmed that the amount per member, agreed with our insurance provider,

was €0.44 per month per member and, over the period of three months, was €1.33 per member. The Board of Mountaineering Ireland agreed to retain this rebate as a contingency for loss of income due to the global pandemic and to allow for a new revised year-end budget. It was also noted that the resources and costs associated with the processing of each refund would be considerable.

- **Membership cards** It was confirmed that Mountaineering Ireland is actively looking to replace the hard plastic ID cards for members with one that is more environmentally sustainable and cost-effective. It is planned to have the new cards available for the new season of 2020/2021 and they will be made from recycled laminated cardboard. It was also noted that the electronic membership card's functionality will be incorporated into the new membership database, currently being developed, and will be there as an option if Mountaineering Ireland wishes to avail of it in the future.
- **Club membership renewals** It was confirmed that Mountaineering Ireland, as part of its update and development of its website, membership database and training database, will be allowing for bulk uploads of memberships from large clubs, all aimed at offering more support to the end users, our club volunteers.

If you would like to discuss any topics in more detail, please contact the relevant staff member or email [info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie) ■





# Training



On a descent in the Mourne

## News for members

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



Written by  
Jane Carney,  
Training Officer

### Forthcoming meets

#### ■ Winter Meet 2021

The 2021 Winter Meet is planned for *Inchree, Onich, Scotland, February 13-20<sup>th</sup>, 2021* ■

#### ■ Summer Alpine Meet 2021

The 2021 Alpine Meet is planned for *Saas Grund, Switzerland, July 7-21<sup>st</sup>, 2021* ■

### Training awards and registration

■ **Registrations** are open and **courses** are running. More than ever, we see people taking to the outdoors for recreation, relaxation, wellbeing, adventure and exploration. Providers and leaders are back delivering, and the demand is high.

Participants and candidates can now continue on their training pathways towards personal skills proficiency and/or qualification as leaders and instructors.

■ Work continues to facilitate an improved **reporting and registration system** to support candidates, trainers and the administration staff throughout the training pathway. Screenshots from the Mountaineering Ireland website can be very helpful to candidates and can clarify the distinction between a scheme or an award, registration and/or joining the Council, i.e. Mountaineering Ireland membership ■

### News for candidates, providers and members

#### ■ Training Grant applications

Please submit applications for the June-December period.

#### ■ Club Training Officers Online Workshops

Club officers have received invitations to attend online club training sessions. Please book online for these free sessions and help to support, develop and refresh the skills in your club.

■ Please see the **National Guidelines for Climbing & Walking Leaders**, and the **Good Practice guidelines for Hillwalkers**, available on the Training pages/Training Downloads on the Mountaineering Ireland website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie).

■ Please see the **Walk Safely** leaflet on the Mountaineering Ireland website.

■ Please share the **AdventureSmart** message, and the three questions to ask yourself before heading out to the hills and crags, with those less experienced than yourselves in the outdoors.

■ Please see the **Covid-19 Guidance** updates for the safe return to activity, on the Mountaineering Ireland website.

#### ■ Good practice messages

Thank you for providing those newer to the outdoors with positive role models for responsible recreation, particularly in relation to taking home your litter, leaving no trace, camping responsibly, parking considerately, route selection, being properly equipped, checking the weather and learning the skills necessary for exploring the outdoors.

Please help by sharing the good practice messages and informing others about them ■





Climbing in Glendalough

## News for providers

■ In late June and July, we were delighted to announce a phased return to delivery of the **NGB awards, instruction and leadership**. I would again like to thank all providers for their cooperation and support during the cessation of work in the Covid-19 lockdown. We will continue to support providers and candidates as they return to business and training. The Training Office will continue to monitor and update as the situation develops.

■ During the return to work, I would again remind trainers to be on high alert to the effects of this extended absence. Double-check, verbalise safety checks, and risk-assess with Covid-19 as an additional risk factor. Our thanks again to the trainers, who are superbly managing the additional aspects of risk assessment, decision-making and creative delivery.

### ■ Protocols during Covid-19

Please see the latest guidance on the Mountaineering Ireland website and check our updating emails. During course delivery, trainers are verbalising the need to stay two metres apart, practice good hand hygiene and wear face coverings where necessary.

Online platforms are being used for briefings, preparatory sessions and to provide interactive classes, to help remove or reduce the need for indoor sessions. Protocols for equipment cleaning have been adopted and participants are completing pre-course questionnaires.

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

Providers are to continue to use the existing reporting system until the go-ahead to switch is given. A huge thank you to providers for completing or deleting any outstanding course reports.

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

*Stay safe out there!*

## Key dates 2020

- 23<sup>rd</sup> September Online Club Support Meeting
- 24<sup>th</sup> September Online Club Support Meeting
- 23-30<sup>th</sup> Sept European Week of Sport: 20 activities in 20 locations, celebrating women in hillwalking, climbing and trail running
- 26-27<sup>th</sup> Sept Skills/CPD Workshops: Teaching Navigation, Scrambling and Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 27<sup>th</sup> Sept National Walking Day
- 4<sup>th</sup> October Online Club Training Officers Workshop, 7-9pm
- 10<sup>th</sup> October Mountaineering Ireland AGM, 6-8pm
- 11<sup>th</sup> October Online Club Training Officers Workshop, 7-9pm
- 18<sup>th</sup> October Online Club Training Officers Workshop, 7-9pm
- 20<sup>th</sup> October Online Winter Meet Information Evening, 7-8pm
- 25<sup>th</sup> October Online Club Training Officers Workshop, 7-9pm
- 30<sup>th</sup> Oct-2<sup>nd</sup> Nov Mountain Leader Assessment, venue TBC
- 7-8<sup>th</sup> Nov Online MTUKI Meeting
- 28-29<sup>th</sup> Nov Train the Trainers course, Wicklow, Covid-19 guidance permitting
- 30<sup>th</sup> Nov Online MTBI Meeting
- 4<sup>th</sup> December Online Senior Providers Workshop

## Key dates 2021

- 30-31<sup>st</sup> January Train the Trainers, Mournes, Covid-19 guidance permitting
- 13-20<sup>th</sup> February Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- 5-8<sup>th</sup> March Mountain Leader Assessment
- 7-21<sup>st</sup> July Summer Alpine Meet, Saas Grund, Switzerland

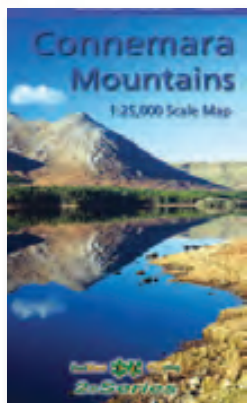
*Please see the website for events and bookings or contact the **Training Office** for further details.  
Please book early!*

*All events are based on the latest government guidance; online options will be used as alternatives where appropriate. Events may only run if permitted by the then current government guidance.*





## EastWest Mapping issues Connemara Mountains map



### CONNEMARA MOUNTAINS 1:25,000 scale map

EastWest Mapping, 25 Series (2020, 1<sup>st</sup> edition), €12.90 (paper version), €20.50 (encapsulated, water-resistant), ISBN 978-1-899815-51-7

Hot on the heels of the Galtee, Comeragh and Knockmealdown (2019), Lugnaquilla and Glendalough, Wicklow South and Wicklow South East (2018), Achill & Corraun and Clare Island (2016) and Wild Nephin (2015) '25 Series' maps from EastWest

Mapping, comes the Connemara Mountains 1:25,000 scale map, available in paper print, water-resistant (encapsulated) and digital editions.

As is the case in all of Barry Dalby's publications, this is a very attractive, easy to read, fold-up map that will be a boon to anyone who walks regularly in the Twelve Bens and the Maumturks. It also covers the Ben Choonas and most of the Devilsmother/ Maumtrasna massif as well. I am looking forward to referencing it as often as the superb Wild Nephin and Achill Island maps that I have derived great pleasure from over the past four or five years.

One of the first 'new' place names that surprised me was Mulnahogue, replacing Binn Idir an Dá Log. I queried this with Barry and read his blog (<https://eastwestmapping.ie/mulnahogue>) outlining his

reasons for going with this new name, but I'm not completely convinced that now is the time to revert to an almost 190-year-old name in favour of one that has been in general use and accepted for the past thirty-five years!

Binn Idir an Dá Log has been the accepted name for this peak on all of the maps of Connemara produced since at least 1988, i.e. Robinson's, Harvey's and OSI's. All guidebooks (including the newly published *Irish Peaks*) and walk descriptions refer to it as such. Therefore, why change it now? However, this is a minor quibble.

Taking into account that Barry was still working on the publication of this map during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic, the map is full of interesting sites of geological, historical and heritage interest. Local loop walks, mountain biking and cycle trails are all symbolised and recorded.

I particularly like Barry's use of ground-condition symbols – notably for cliffs and crags – and the contour intervals every five metres; these must have presented a challenge for the cartographer.

Barry dedicates the new map to the late **Tim** and **Mairéad Robinson** and he acknowledges their work as one source of his place names, along with 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century print maps and survey records, and the Schools Collection from the Heritage Council.

This new map is a great resource, packed with useful snippets of information, and I highly recommend it. As someone who spends a lot of time walking the hills of south Mayo, I look forward to the publication of EastWest Mapping's map of that area.

**John O'Callaghan** Member of Clare Outdoor Club and Mountaineering Ireland, experience hillwalker and mountaineer, widely travelled

## Guide to Tour du Mont Blanc suited to 21<sup>st</sup>-century travel habits



### TOUR DU MONT BLANC By Kingsley Jones

Vertebrate Publishing (2020), 120pp, many colour photos & maps, £16.95 (pbpbk), ISBN 978-1-912560-72-1  
Also available as an E-book

**TOUR DU MONT BLANC**  
**Guidemap by Kingsley Jones**  
Vertebrate Publishing (2020), 1:40,000, £14.95, ISBN 978-1-912560-97-4.  
Includes essential information on the TMB and GPX file downloads

This is the Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) in the modern world. In

the past, the Irish hillwalker has been used to the traditional 'Alpine trek' being served up in neatly packaged days to be fitted into a fortnight's summer holiday. In this informative guidebook, Kingsley Jones, award-winning writer, mountaineer and guide, has found a way to interest the current wave of outdoor enthusiasts, who look at the mountains from different perspectives.

Are you a walker, a trekker, a fastpacker or a trail runner? Naismith's Rule, which makes allowances for the distance to be covered and the ascent to be made, is modernised here with customised timings to become the Jones-Ross formula. The Jones-Ross formula is quite straightforward:  $Time = (Distance/Flat Speed) + Adjustment for ascent + Adjustment for descent$ , but the author has worked out

detailed timings for the four categories of mountain-goers and has transposed them onto the route. The prospective TMBer decides which category they fall into, and how many hours they wish to do each day, and uses the guidebook tables to plan the full route. Then, the relevant mountain huts, which are all listed, can be booked. In addition, all other aspects of venturing onto the TMB are covered.

So, off you go with this handy guidebook in the sidepocket of your rucksack. The waypoints (instructions), all 165 of them, are clear, precise and numbered. There are also 34 timing points to help you plan your days, as well as to check on how you are doing.

Between the waypoints, you will find information on accommodation and brief notes on places of interest that you

pass. The nine variations are well detailed and clearly marked on the map sections, which are taken from the 1:40,000 companion map.

This guidemap, printed on both sides, is full of essential information, which is also in the book. However, if you like to spread your map out on the table, this map is for you. It packs a lot in compared to your usual map, with the route divided into five sections, including timing points. Both guidebook and guidemap are published in a refreshingly new style, which suits this classic route, which attracts large numbers each year from the wider mountaineering and outdoor community.

**Nicky Hore** Member of Blayney Ramblers, hillwalker, trekker (or maybe just a walker, using the Jones-Ross formula!)



# Mountaineering Ireland's new guide to routes on Ireland's highest one hundred peaks



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



It has been said that a guidebook description should be a combination of information and inspiration. If that is to be the yardstick, *Irish Peaks* more than makes the grade. This beautiful book has obviously been a labour of love for all involved, and the result is a quality publication from cover to cover.

Let's start with the information. In terms of the routes selected, the book deals with the highest one hundred peaks in Ireland, which takes any selection subjectivity out of the picture. The key details of each route are presented visually in a two-page spread at the beginning of each walk. We are given some inspirational photos, the place names in Irish and their meanings, and a 1:50,000 map with the route marked on it. Summary ascent details are also given in a clear

graphic style with relevant map references, available parking and alternative routes.

As the book is a large format hardback, it is not one for sticking in a rucksack. However, a mobile phone photo of the relevant pages will give you all the information you need to take with you. The descriptions of the walks are well edited and stylistically diverse due to the variety of contributors, from those that are purely directional to others that take a more anecdotal approach. There are also very concise and interesting sections on Ireland's upland environment, covering geology, flora and fauna.

However, in my opinion it is at the inspirational level that this book shines. Firstly, the quality and selection of photographs throughout is simply stunning and will fill many a pleasant night by the fire, contemplating future trips to the mountains. Some contributors enhance the route descriptions in a way that gives you the urge to experience these wild places for yourself. John O'Callaghan has an extended quote from Praeger's *The Way That I Went*, describing the Nephin Beg Range as '...the very loneliest place in this country...', an appropriate quote to

accompany the directions to climb Slieve Carr, Ireland's most remote mountain. Peter Wilson weaves the local geology into the description of Errigal, such that one can almost feel the chill wind off the retreating glacier.



Loughs Cummeenapeasta, Callee and Gouragh from the Reeks Ridge

On the route to Masatiompan in the Brandon range, one passes over Sauce Creek, some 300 precipitous metres below. We are informed that people lived down on the shore up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is worth the trip there alone to witness and contemplate such a location for human habitation.

The Irish place names given truly capture the essence of places and can give pause for thought or a smile, such as Cnoc na gCainte (Hill of Conversation) and Tóin le Gaoith (Backside to the Wind). Such names and meanings are presented in a beautiful graphic style for all routes and also neatly interwoven into some walk descriptions.

Finally, *Irish Peaks* is most of all a deserved homage to **Joss Lynam**, who edited the original edition of *Irish Peaks*, which was published in 1982. Some newer participants in mountaineering and outdoor activities in Ireland might not

have heard of Joss, who passed away in 2011. **Patrick O'Sullivan's** excellent and warm biography of Joss in this book will give an understanding of his dedication and love for the hills, and how, in many ways, this book is the culmination of much of what he was about and will form part of his legacy.

Congratulations and many thanks are due to **Margaret and Alan Tees**, who herded the many cats to gather the route descriptions that are the basis of this book. **Helen Lawless** must also be commended for the huge amount of work she put in to bring this excellent book to publication.

If you love or are even curious about Ireland's uplands and wild places, this book has to be on your shelf.

**Mike Keyes** Hillwalker and climber, member of Limerick Climbing Club, past Chairperson of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (now Mountaineering Ireland)



Mweelrea, Co Mayo





## One man's favourite climb on each of seven continents



### SEVEN CLIMBS: FINDING THE FINEST CLIMBS ON EACH CONTINENT

By Charles Sherwood

Vertebrate Publishing (2020, 1<sup>st</sup> edition), 180pp plus 30pp of colour photos and sketches of the routes, £14.95 (ppbk), ISBN 978-1-912560-85-1 (book), ISBN 978-1-912560-86-8 (Ebook)

*Proof that it is indeed the journey, and not the destination,*

which matters when it comes to the best climbs.

*Seven Climbs* is Charles Sherwood's first book and describes his experience in finding and conquering the finest climbs across the seven continents. The selection is, of course, subjective, but, as we learn, Sherwood's climbing credentials span four decades and the most diverse landscapes across the globe. The seven climbs, therefore, are a connoisseur's selection, ranging from the well-known 1938 route on the North Face of the Eiger in Switzerland, through other popular routes on Ama Dablam, El Capitan, Alpamayo, Mount Kenya and Mount Cook, to the lesser known and lesser frequented coast-to-coast traverse of the Salvesen Range in South Georgia.

Sherwood's descriptive style allows you to get to know him and his various companions. Indeed, you almost feel you are part of each expedition. Each climb is described in a manner that is both technically interesting and entertaining for all levels of mountaineers and possibly even non-mountaineers. For example, the description of an earlier failed attempt to climb the North Face of Eiger had me laughing out loud, while other challenges or 'situations' he describes had me on the edge of my seat. We learn how the tenacity and perseverance developed on the wall have served Sherwood elsewhere in life.

There is also a deep respect for the pioneers of these climbs, including those which ended in tragedy. This is one of many reasons why Sherwood's

wife has apparently agreed not to read the book!

*Seven Climbs* also pays homage to the mountain ranges and their inhabitants, who make it possible for international climbers to climb in those ranges. We learn a lot about the high-altitude dwellers of Kenya, the Cordillera Blanca and the Himalaya. As a very tangible gesture of gratitude, the author's gross proceeds will be donated to the **Himalayan Trust UK** and its work in supporting the mountain people of Nepal.

The book itself is beautifully produced and includes photos from each of the expeditions, as well as sketches to illustrate the routes and pitches. I would highly recommend this entertaining read.

**Eleanor Byrne** A hillwalker, who enjoys trips to far-flung locations, and an Individual Member of Mountaineering Ireland

## Reprints of two classic books on historic climbing expeditions



### KONGUR: CHINA'S ELUSIVE SUMMIT

By Chris Bonington

Vertebrate Publishing (2020, reprint), 210pp, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-912560-78-3

### TIBET'S SECRET MOUNTAIN: THE TRIUMPH OF SEPU KANGRI

By Chris Bonington & Charles Clarke

Vertebrate Publishing (2020, reprint), 218pp, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-912560-77-6

These are paperback reprints of two classic titles by Sir Chris Bonington, the recipient of the 2019 Lynam Medal. The first, *Kongur: China's Elusive Summit*, is a typical Bonington 'expedition' book and gives very detailed descriptions of the people, places and climbing experiences encountered during the first ascent of that mountain in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It was fascinating to read about the work involved in an undertaking like that back in

1981, given the remoteness of the area. The book gives a great insight into the local people, their lives and the hospitality they showed. The book is based on personal diaries and discussions with those involved. It shows the determination and mindset of the climbers during the planning, reconnaissance and ascent of Kongur (7,649m). All does not go smoothly: descriptions of river crossing and descent accidents show how close they come to disaster. The book goes into some detail in describing the medical research aspect of the climb, which will be of particular interest to climbers going to high altitudes. The appendices are also interesting, especially the ones on health and equipment, and those on food.

The second book, *Tibet's Secret Mountain: The Triumph of Sepu Kangri*, also tells of the trials and tribulations of

planning and organising climbs, in this case making a reconnaissance and conducting two expeditions to a remote mountain range in Tibet in 1996-1998. The reader can almost feel the remoteness and the associated problems in negotiating the hostile terrain. However, this is not a pure climbing book, as only about 10% is about actual climbing. The rest is almost all Clarke's input from his personal diaries and experiences.

The descriptions of medical incidents are unique, showing how remote and vulnerable they and the locals were. Rescue, in time of emergency, would have been impossible.

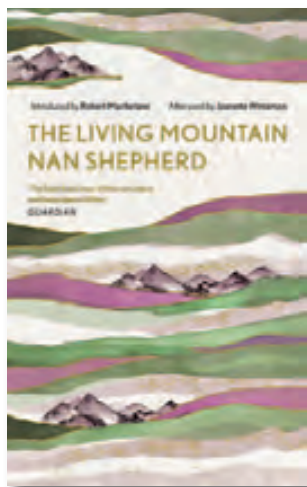
The books both make good reading, even at this distance in time, but the inclusion of a map or even a sketch in both books would have helped readers understand more clearly the locations of the mountains.

**Denis Reidy** An experienced mountaineer who has climbed in the Alps, Himalayas and Andes





# Arguably the finest book on the Cairngorms ever written



## THE LIVING MOUNTAIN: A CELEBRATION OF THE CAIRNGORM MOUNTAINS OF SCOTLAND

By Nan Shepherd

Canongate Books (Canons imprint re-issue 2017, first published 1977), 160pp (ppbk), £9.99, ISBN 978-0-857861-83-2

While the Scots hillwalker, writer and college lecturer Nan Shepherd (1893-1981) travelled widely in Europe and South Africa, she was essentially a dedicated localist. She lived all her life in the village of North Cutts, within a few miles of the Cairngorm Mountains – north-east Scotland's majestic Arctic granite massif.

She attended Aberdeen High School for Girls, obtained a degree from Aberdeen University in 1915 and lectured in English for the next forty-one years at Aberdeen College of Education.

Nan Shepherd authored three modernist novels, *The Quarry Wood* (1928), *The Weatherhouse* (1930) and *A Pass in the Grampians* (1933). Yet, it is her *The Living Mountain* that continues to enthrall so many of us who have had the privilege and pleasure to tread in her footsteps. She wrote the manuscript in the latter years of the Second World War, but, following receipt of a negative reply from her publisher, it lay in a drawer for over thirty years.

When Shepherd returned to it in 1977, she wrote:

*'Now an old woman, I begin*

*tidying out my possessions and, reading it again, I realise that the tale of my traffic with a mountain is as valid today as it was then. That it was a traffic of love is sufficiently clear; but love pursued with fervour is one of the roads to knowledge.'*

To achieve her aim of revealing the mountain's substance, its strength and its feasts for all five of the human senses, she ordered her slim masterpiece of just 108 pages into twelve short chapters, commencing with 'The Plateau.' Even though the Cairngorms National Park of 4,528 square kilometres boasts fifty-five Munro tops (each over 914m), she asserts that the plateau is the true summit of these mountains. The towering tops are mere eddies, separated from one another by fissures and deep descents across the expanse of the massive plateau.

For half the year the plateau is covered in snow and, by June, when clumps of Silence – moss campion – burst into brilliant pink, it is blanketed in lichens and sedges. Hardy ptarmigans live up here all year long, and small, colourful dotterels fly in from Africa to breed and feed on the plateau's bounty of summer growth.

To best appreciate the Cairngorms' substance, 'their lift, their proportions and bearing,' she recommends viewing them from the slopes of Geal Charn in the neighbouring range of the Monadhliaths, across the Spey valley. She describes the sensation:

*'One watches the high panorama opposite settle into itself...It enchants me like a juggler's trick. Every time I come down, I want promptly to go back and see it all over again.'*

Shepherd loved the mountain's water for its flashing gleam, its musical sounds, its slap against her body as she forded streams – but she feared its power when snows melted or rain lashed down incessantly:

*'The water which streams down the hillsides, tears deep grooves in the soil, rolls the boulders about, brawls, obliterates paths, floods burrows, swamps nests, uproots trees, and finally, reaching more level ground, becomes a moving sea.'*

Her eleventh chapter, 'The Senses,' is a revelation. She insists that all senses must be deployed, commencing with the ear. Occasionally on the plateau, the silence is almost absolute in mist or snow, or on a September dawn. She recalls the sound of a soft thud. A tawny owl had landed on her tent pole and turned his head to stare at her, before melting away 'so silently that, had I not been watching him, I could not have known he was gone.'

The palate can ingest the glorious flavours of wild berries, chiefly the blaeberry (bilberry) and the cloudberry, whose name and taste are dreamlike.

Similarly, the scents – fragrances of pine, birch, bog myrtle, juniper and wild thyme –

mean nothing at all on the page; they are there to be smelled.

The eye held a great potency for Shepherd. The sight of cloud formations, the bark of naked birches, a golden eagle sailing upwards to a crag, a wavering rainbow and the plunging line of mountain cliffs are but a few of her memorable images.

However, touch was the most intimate sense of all. Cold water stung her palate, frost stiffened the muscles of her chin and she walked through long heather to feel its wetness on her bare legs. She used her hands to feel the rough surfaces of cones and bark, the smoothness of stalks and feathers, the scratchiness of lichen and the blunt blow of tumbling streams. She rejoiced in walking barefoot on grasses and sun-dried mudflats.

Most mountaineering books have been written by men, often imbued with a sense of 'summititis,' as they recount tales of conquering the highest and remotest of pinnacles. Shepherd, too, admits that she once had been fixated upon making for the summits, until she met a walker on mighty Braeriach (1,296m), who took her aside to the 'incredibly withdrawn and tranquil' corrie, Coire an Lochain. To bear witness to the hidden loch you must stand almost on its lip. Like 'white threads,' it has two cataracts: one falls from the brim of a hanging ridge to feed it, as the other drains it from below. She came away a wiser walker, grew to approach the plateau in circles, and came to believe:

*'The mountain gives itself more completely when I have no destination, when I reach nowhere in particular, but have gone out merely to be with the mountain, as one visits a friend with no intention but to be with him.'*

Nan Shepherd's sensuous book is available to borrow from libraries, or to purchase for a modest sum in the best of bookshops or online.

**Michael Quinn** Environment Officer, An Óige Hillwalkers' Club





# The Last Word

## Joe Brown

Rock climbing great who made first ascent of Kangchenjunga



Joe Brown climbing on Gogarth, March 1970

The pioneering British rock climber and world-class mountaineer **Joseph 'Joe' Brown, CBE**, died peacefully in his home in Llanberis, North Wales, in mid-April at the age of 89 years. He had been unwell for some time.

Known as 'The Human Fly,' Joe Brown put up many now classic routes in Snowdonia and the Peak District in the 1950s and '60s, at grades that were at the cutting edge of difficulty at that time. In 1955, at 24 years of age, he made the first ascent of **Kangchenjunga** with **George Band**, after overcoming some sections of what was then the hardest climbing done at that altitude. At 8,586m in the eastern Nepal Himalaya, Kangchenjunga is the third highest mountain in the world.

The following year, Joe made the first ascent of the west summit of the **Muztagh Tower** (7,276m) in the Karakorum with **Ian McNaught-Davis**. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, Joe Brown is considered by many authorities to have been the best British rock climber of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, in a tribute to Joe, **Sir Chris Bonington** wrote "He was one of the most brilliant innovative climbers the world has seen and a very special human being."

Born in Manchester in 1930, Joe was the youngest of seven children. His father died when he was an infant and he was raised by his mother. As a teenager, he was expelled from the Scouts and started exploring the countryside, camping and climbing in the quarries. At the age of 16 years, he went climbing at Kinder

Downfall, having read about it in Colin Kirkus' book *Let's Go Climbing*.

After leaving school, he trained as an apprentice plumber and builder. He was enlisted in 1949 and spent eighteen months in the Royal Army Ordnance Corp, where he seemingly spent his spare time climbing with friends.

Joe was a member of the **Valkyrie Climbing Club** and a founding member of the **Rock and Ice Climbing Club**. In his book *Hard Rock*, Ken Wilson said that Brown had 'brought to climbing a rare combination of attributes: keenness, patience, strength, technical ability, eye for a line, competitiveness and, above all, a subtle and mysterious charisma.'

Don Whillans was an early climbing partner. Don lived in Salford, a neighbouring city to Manchester. They were among the first of a new breed of post-war climbers from working class backgrounds, in contrast to the middle to upper class backgrounds of the climbers who had led the sport of climbing in the early days before World War II.

After the war, Joe pushed the standards of British rock climbing to new heights, often with his friend Don Whillans. In 1951, Joe made the first ascent of **Cemetery Gates** (E1) in the Llanberis Pass at Dinas Cromlech with Whillans, and the following year added the now classic test piece **Cenotaph Corner** (E1) nearby. In the Peak District, his test pieces included the **Unconquerables**, **Elder Crack** and **Great Slab**.

In the Alps, Joe climbed **Fissure Brown** on the West Face of the **Aiguille de**



**Blatière**, which was one of the hardest single mountain pitches climbed at that time.

Joe contributed to the development of new types of climbing protection by creating some of the first 'nuts' by drilling out the thread from nuts and putting a sling through the centre. He also helped to develop some important items of climbing gear, including the 'JB' helmet and the Joe Brown rucksack. In 1966, Joe Brown opened his first shop in Llanberis and subsequently opened two others in Snowdonia, including one at Capel Curig.

Joe published his autobiography, **The Hard Years**, in 1967. Now a classic, it describes his many notable rock climbs in the UK, as well his ascents of some of the toughest mountains in the world.

In 1957, Joe Brown married **Valerie Melville Gray** and they had two daughters. He was awarded a CBE in 2011 for services to rock climbing and mountaineering. Joe died at his home in Llanberis on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to Joe Brown's family and friends on their loss.

May he rest in peace.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**

Joe Brown: born September 26<sup>th</sup> 1930; died April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020



Muztagh Tower in the Karakoram, Pakistan



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## Irish Peaks Competition The results



The winner of our *Irish Peaks* Competition in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* was John Sweeney, of Ballyshea, Craughwell, County Galway.

The correct answers to the competition were Carrauntoohil, 1,038.6 metres.

Our congratulations to John, who receives a copy of Mountaineering Ireland's new *Irish Peaks* guidebook (see review, page 62).



## 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.







*Irish Peaks*, Mountaineering Ireland's new hillwalking guidebook, is now available for purchase through Mountaineering Ireland's website. It is a must-have, large format hardback with route descriptions and a beautiful collection of images covering the hundred highest peaks on the island of Ireland. The book can be ordered at: [www.mountaineering.ie/shop](http://www.mountaineering.ie/shop).

In his review of *Irish Peaks* in this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*, Mike Keyes, past Chairperson of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (now Mountaineering Ireland) says: "If you love or are even curious about Ireland's uplands and wild places, this book has to be on your shelf."



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

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

