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Irish Mountain Log

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Welcome

A year like no other is thankfully coming to an end. The Covid-19 restrictions have meant that we have not been able to engage in our sport for much of the year. However, while the pandemic is still ongoing, we have perhaps come to terms with it to a degree. Going forward, certainly, there is evidence that the spread of the disease is much less likely in the outdoors (see page 5 and also page 9), which is good for our sport.

We have again been able to publish more features than usual, because we have less news, but I hope we have an interesting selection for the Christmas read! Certainly, a good range of activities is covered.

A hike on the Ulster Way, Comeragh placenames, hiking in Iceland and Malawi, scrambling in the Cuillins and ice climbing in the Rockies are all included. Hopefully, something for everyone in the audience. We also have some more reflective pieces on hillwalking and the lockdown, how different members have reacted to and coped with it.

It is a time of the year when we do become more reflective, looking back on the year gone by and looking forward to the year to come. Hopefully the large numbers that were seen in the uplands after the first lockdown ended and the damage caused will not be repeated when the current restrictions are lifted.



We are looking forward to a hopefully more active 2021!

I would like to thank the other members of the Editorial Team very much for their support in this difficult year, Literary Editor, Peter O'Neill, Features Editor, Nicky Hore, and C  il  n MacLochlainn, who produces the magazine for us.

I would also like to thank the contributors on whom we depend so much for the content of this magazine. We are always looking for articles from all of our members, whatever your background or experience.

I hope that we can all celebrate Christmas and the New Year with family and friends in some way, while observing the necessary social distancing, etc.

2021 will be Mountaineering Ireland's fiftieth anniversary, so a lot to celebrate then, whatever happens!

On behalf of the Editorial Team, and the Board and the staff of Mountaineering Ireland, I wish all Mountaineering Ireland members a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year, and a hopefully active 2021!

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor

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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.



Write for the Log

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

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

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



ON THE COVER

Derryclare Lough, Twelve Bens,
Connemara, Co Galway

PHOTOGRAPH

JCWL GEOPARK PROJECT



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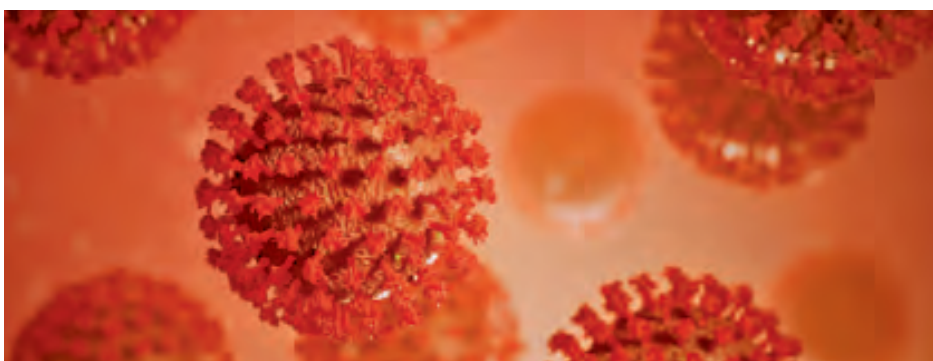
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Newsdesk



Covid-19 advice

Our latest advice for hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland



At the time of writing, the Republic of Ireland is at Level 5 and Northern Ireland is also at a high level of Covid-19 restrictions. However, this will certainly be changing in one or both jurisdictions in the run up to Christmas. In the Republic, in light of improving data on Covid-19 infections, hospitalisations and deaths, a relaxation in restrictions may be on the cards for the Christmas period. While the restrictions may be relaxed, everyone will still be well advised to continue to follow the public health guidance on respiratory and hand hygiene, the wearing of face masks, maintaining a social distance from other people, and limiting social contacts.

In light of data that shows that the spread of Covid-19 is much less likely in the outdoors (see page 9), Mountaineering Ireland has lobbied at national level to open access to the outdoors, even during the restrictions. Mountaineering Ireland requested that the government consider the following in its review of the current restrictions:

- Allow access to the outdoors for physical activity and wellbeing to be included in Levels 3, 4 and 5 of the **'Plan for Living with Covid-19.'**
- Allow people to travel for physical activity and wellbeing beyond the 5km and county boundary restrictions once the following conditions are adhered to:
- Social distancing of two metres is maintained

- Transport is in household pods only
- People travel directly to and from their chosen location for exercise
- Safe hygiene practices are maintained.

Mountaineering Ireland's Chief Executive Officer, **Murrough McDonagh**, noted: "Those involved in outdoor recreation activities recognise the considerable health and psychological benefits for people of having access to the outdoors, particularly in the current situation, providing it is done in a safe and responsible way. Our members have raised their concerns about not having access to venues for hillwalking and climbing during the lockdown.

"When they are carried out in a safe and responsible way, outdoor recreation activities within single households do not appear to cause increased transmission of Covid-19. We have requested the support of **Sport Ireland**, and asked the government at national level, to make changes in Levels 3, 4, and 5 of the current plan, to allow access for recreation beyond 5km from home and beyond county boundaries. Under the Level 5 restrictions in the Republic, we saw large numbers of people converging on the very limited public spaces within Co Dublin. Allowing people to responsibly engage in physical activity and wellbeing in the outdoors, in locations with far fewer people present, would appear to be a safer approach moving forward. What we are asking is that the **Plan for Living with Covid-19** be adapted to allow people enjoy the outdoors in a meaningful and responsible way" ■



Participants practicing navigation on a walk in the Sperrins during European Week of Sport

European Week of Sport: what a week it was!

Mountaineering Ireland marked European Week of Sport (September 23-30th 2020) with Women in Sport events – women hillwalking, women rock climbing and women trail running

**By Ania Bakiewicz,
Women in Sport Coordinator**

This year, Mountaineering Ireland and Women in Sport celebrated **European Week of Sport** with activities for women on hills and crags across the island of Ireland. And what a week it was!

The activities were funded by **Sport Ireland's Women in Sport** initiative and **Mountaineering Ireland**, partnered up with **Sport Ireland Outdoors, Local Sports Partnerships** and **Get Ireland Walking** to organise them.

The selected venues balanced accessibility with

beauty and solitude, showcasing a variety of local hidden gems. The programme spanned the whole week, with female instructors providing skill sessions to female participants. The activities were pitched at an entry level, encouraging women of all abilities to enjoy the stunning mountains with their families and friends.

Day 1

We kicked off the activities with two mountain walks in ideal weather conditions on Wednesday, September 23rd.

Maureen O'Brien, a member of the **South Eastern Mountain**

Rescue Association, led a group through the Galtee Mountains, introducing them to navigation, using a map and compass.

In the Wicklow Mountains, **Helen Lawless**, Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer, unlocked the secrets of the heritage sites along St Kevin's Way, showcasing the fauna and flora around Camaderry Mountain and generating interest in next year's **Women With Altitude** event.

Day 2

Thursday brought an abrupt change in the weather, with

pouring rain across the island of Ireland. I set off with my group to Glendasan in search of dry rock. With crash pads, climbing shoes and huge enthusiasm, we explored the boulders there. Unexpectedly, the sun came out and allowed us to climb. The group learned different foot placement techniques, climbing higher and getting more confidence with every problem.

In Altnadue Quarry, Co Down, **Kath Maguire**, an Outdoor Instructor, ran a rock climbing session with only one participant, but what a climber she was! **Susanna Gaynor** did not mind the rain and could

On the environmental walk in Wicklow



Bouldering in Meelmore, in the Mourne



Susanna Gaynor abseiling in Altnadue Quarry



not get enough of climbing and abseiling. She immediately joined the **Feel Good Factor Club**.

In Mayo, **Georgia MacMillan**, a Mountain Leader, took her group at night to the Dark Mayo Sky Park in the Nephins. Conditions were not ideal for stargazing, but it was very exciting exploring the mountains at night.

Day 3

The weather was mixed on Friday. **Rozzy Skuce**, a Duke of Edinburgh Provider, led a group along a scenic route between Glenshane and Mullaghmore in the Sperrins. She demonstrated navigation with a compass and map, introduced the women to Leave No Trace principles and pointed out the flora and fauna.

Michelle Hughes, an International Mountain Leader, led a navigation course around the slopes of Croagh Patrick.

In the Knockmealdowns, **Maureen O'Brien** outlined the emergency procedures that a hillwalker should know about.

Back in the Mournes, **Kath Maguire** led a scenic walk from Slievenaghlough to Slieve Commedagh, uncovering the natural beauty of the place.

That night, the skies in the Dark Mayo Sky Park were clear, allowing **Georgia MacMillan** to explain the secrets of the September star constellations over the Nephin Mountains.

Day 4

Saturday morning was clear and bright. In Connemara, **Michelle Casey**, Mountain Leader, led a walk around Benbaun and Benbrack, teaching the group the techniques of landscape photography.

Meanwhile in the Comeraghs, **Colette Mahon**, Mountain Leader, took a group walking and scrambling around Coumshingaun.

Back in Wicklow, I led a group of archaeology enthusiasts to the top of Baltinglass Hill to explore the Neolithic tomb and

the Iron Age Rathcoran hill fort.

In the afternoon, **Joanna McInerney**, Mountain Leader, led a group on an environmental walk through the Slieve Carran Nature Reserve in the Burren, Co Clare.

Day 5

On Sunday, Ireland celebrated **National Walking Day**, organised by **Get Ireland Walking** in partnership with **Mountaineering Ireland**. Many hillwalking clubs and independent walkers explored their local areas.

Day 6

The rain returned on Monday morning. In Altnadue Quarry, **Claire Hardy**, Rock Climbing Instructor, ran a climbing session, teaching body movement, abseiling and rope skills.

In the Galtees, **Maureen O'Brien** taught navigation skills on and off trails.

In the Knocknarea Mountains, Co Sligo, **Miriam Cunningham**, a running coach, introduced a group to mountain trail running, leading them up to the magnificent tomb of the legendary Queen Maeve.

Day 7

On Tuesday, the weather was again in our favour. Up north, **Rozzy Skuce** ran another interesting navigation walk in the beautiful Sperrin Mountains.

Claire Hardy took a group of enthusiastic women climbing on Meelmore Boulders in the Mournes, teaching footwork and body movement on the rock.

In Dalkey Quarry, Dublin, **Jane Carney**, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer, introduced a group to traditional climbing. It was fantastic to see women at different skill levels having a great time teaching each other how to tie in and lead climbing.

Day 8

Wednesday brought stormy



Rock climbing in Dalkey Quarry

conditions. **Claire Hardy** led an amazing walk along the Annalong River in the Mournes, teaching navigation in the fog.

Jane Carney led another climbing session in Dalkey during a well-timed weather window. The women challenged themselves to harder and longer climbs and enjoyed abseiling.

European Week of Sport finished with a great running session in the Glengarriff Nature Reserve in west Cork, led by **Tamela Maciel** and **Kristen O'Sullivan** from the **Cork and Kerry Runners**.

Despite September's temperamental weather and the disruption caused by partial lockdowns in Northern Ireland, Dublin and Donegal, Women in Sport's European Week of Sport events went ahead. One hundred and forty women successfully took part in twenty-four skill sessions delivered by fifteen female providers in nineteen different locations across twelve counties. The participants included Irish, English, Polish, Latvian and Brazilian women,

with ages ranging from 20 to 57 years. The sessions tested their mental and physical skills.

These events could not have gone ahead without all the instructors involved in the planning and execution of the programme, their knowledge of the local areas, and their skills and experience. They were role models for the participating women, and their energy and passion for the mountains left a huge imprint on the participants.

The feedback was positive and everyone agreed that they had had an exhilarating and educational week that had pushed them out of their comfort zones. Many participants expressed interest in signing up for the **Mountain Skills** and **Rock Skills** courses, and staying in contact with the instructors.

The positive feedback from the participants and the skills providers showed that there is a high level of demand among women for mountain skills courses delivered by female instructors and for more events of this type ■



AUTHOR: Ania Bakiewicz is Mountaineering Ireland's Women in Sport Coordinator.

FIND OUT MORE: To find out more about Women In Sport, visit the website www.mountaineering.ie/programmes.

Irish Peaks: the perfect Christmas present

Order online now at www.irishpeaks.ie

"Irish Peaks is a genuine landmark in Irish mountain publishing." – Peter Walker, MountainViews



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

Irish Peaks has been published by Mountaineering Ireland as a tribute to the late **Joss Lynam**, who edited the original *Irish Peaks* book, published in 1982. One of Mountaineering Ireland's aims in producing this book is to promote responsible

engagement with Ireland's mountains, an engagement that is based on understanding and respect.

Irish Peaks is just what you or your hillwalking friends need, if you are planning a hillwalking holiday in Ireland in 2021.

Mountaineering Ireland members get a **10% discount** on the recommended retail price of €29.95. This means you pay €26.95 (plus postage and packaging charges). Order your copy now from www.irishpeaks.ie.

Note: You can order up to **eight books** in a single shipment and only pay the delivery charge for one book. This is exclusive to orders to be delivered on the island of Ireland.

Key features

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

"Irish Peaks is a really attractive guide that makes the most of its large format, and more to the point makes you want to go and climb the hills." – Dan Bailey, UK Hillwalking

Outdoor sports and Covid-19

Outdoor sports are a low risk for spread of Covid-19, according to the UIAA

The Medical Commission of the **UIAA** (the International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation) has contributed to a new paper, "SARS-CoV-2, Covid-19 and mountain sports: specific risks, their mitigation and recommendations for policy makers."

The draft paper has just been released. It is one of the first dedicated to Covid-19 and outdoor and mountain sports. It has not been finalised or peer-reviewed yet, but given the immediacy and global prevalence of Covid-19 the authors agreed to make their findings available online.

The paper strongly supports the view that outdoor sports, including mountaineering, are low-risk for the spread of Covid-19, providing that basic precautions are adhered to, including social distancing, hand hygiene and face-

mask use, where appropriate, when close contact is unavoidable.

The paper is the result of a collaboration between international scientists and mountaineers from Scotland and other parts of the UK, Germany, Switzerland and the USA.

The authors report that searches of the internet and the medical literature, and consultation with mountaineering associations, have revealed minimal evidence for transmission of SARS-CoV-2 during participation in outdoor mountain sports. This is consistent with published evidence showing that, in general, outdoor-acquired SARS-CoV-2 infections are rare. They conclude that the risk of contracting SARS-CoV-2 infection during outdoor mountain sport activities is low.

They emphasise, however, that some situations indoors or in confined spaces,

linked to the practice of mountain sports (such as use of public transport or carpooling to get to mountain areas or staying in mountain huts), present risks for SARS-CoV-2 infections. These risks can be mitigated by avoiding high-risk situations and taking commonsense measures such as practicing good hygiene, appropriate use of face masks and, above all, maintaining social distancing as much as possible ■



Notice of 2021 Mountaineering Ireland AGM



The **2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM)** of Mountaineering Ireland will take place at 7.00pm on Monday, March 29th, 2021, at Irish Sport HQ, National Sport Campus,

Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, or via a virtual meeting platform, if necessary (exact details to be confirmed later).

The **time frame** for the AGM is as follows:

- 6.00pm Meeting of Honorary and Individual Members
- 6.30-7.00pm Registration for Mountaineering Ireland AGM
- 7.00pm Mountaineering Ireland AGM

Motions and nominations

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

Motions and nominations may be submitted by any member club or by any three full members.

Board members are elected for a three-year term.

Motions and nominations must be submitted by email to Mountaineering Ireland's Company Secretary at **secretary@mountaineering.ie** or by post to **Company Secretary, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15**, to arrive not later than 5.00pm on Friday, February 26th, 2021.

Mountaineering Ireland will advise members about the exact details of the AGM in the weeks leading up to the event ■

Honorary membership awarded

Terry O'Connor has been awarded honorary membership of Mountaineering Ireland



Terry O'Connor

large part in the delivery of the **Irish Mountaineering Club's** beginners' course for several years. Through much of the 1990s, Terry was part of the team that put in a huge amount of work organising and running the very popular **Irish Bouldering League**.

As his son **Daragh** became more interested in climbing, Terry's focus shifted towards the promotion and development of youth climbing. Terry established the **Winders Climbing Club**,

which since its inception has provided innumerable young climbers the opportunity to experience, enjoy and excel in climbing. Ultimately, Terry's talent as a coach led him to taking on the role of coach of the Youth Climbing Team.

On behalf of our members, Mountaineering Ireland would like to take this opportunity to thank Terry for all his dedication over the years to helping so many people develop their passion for all things climbing ■

Mountaineering Ireland is delighted to announce the awarding of Honorary Membership to **Terry O'Connor**, former coach of the Irish Youth Climbing Team.

Terry has played a huge role in the promotion and development of climbing in Ireland for over thirty years. His contribution to Irish climbing is incredibly far-reaching, encompassing aspects of our sport from Himalayan expeditions to local indoor bouldering competitions.

For the **1998 Irish Expedition to K2**, Terry accepted the role of Base Camp Manager. As a club member, Terry played a



Terry enjoying some bouldering in Fontainebleau, France

Tips on holding club meetings online

Many clubs are interested in holding a virtual AGM or other meetings. Here's how to go about it

Virtual meetings can be delivered just the same as face-to-face meetings, but there are a few things to consider in advance when planning to deliver virtually. Here are some **top tips** for delivering your AGM or other meetings online.

The benefits of meeting online

■ It's an opportunity for club representatives to have their say and to engage in progressing the direction of the club when face-to-face meetings may not be possible.

■ It's an opportunity to connect with club members who may not feel comfortable meeting in person or going on club walks at the moment.

■ Meetings can be recorded. This will allow you to go back and understand decisions that were made. It also gives those who couldn't attend the meeting an opportunity to watch back later.

Prior to the meeting...

There are a few important things to think about, even if your club has been using this technology for some time:

■ Discuss the options of a virtual AGM with your committee and find out which platform best suits your club's needs.

■ Make sure everyone you are planning to have involved in the running of the meeting is comfortable with going online.

■ Do a few trial runs ahead of time. Make sure to identify potential problems such as if the internet signal goes down, or people are not able to access it properly. Have a plan to deal with these issues.

■ An AGM should be run in accordance with the club's constitution, especially in terms of providing due notice to members and providing papers and a request for motions and nominations.

■ The committee, particularly the Chairperson and Secretary, should plan in advance how the meeting will run and who will be responsible for different functions – the same as for a face-to-face meeting but with different roles.

■ Ask members to confirm attendance ahead of time. This will also be an opportunity to find out what questions they might want to raise at the AGM. And it will give those who might be shy about speaking online an opportunity to raise their questions in advance.

Running your virtual AGM

■ Record the meeting. This will help to ensure transparency and will help the Secretary write an account of the meeting afterwards. Make sure at the beginning of the meeting that all attendees are aware the meeting is being recorded.

■ Identify who will be hosting the meeting. The host should be a different person to the one chairing the meeting. The host will manage the muting of participants, the 'raise your hand' if you want to ask a question function, the voting functions and counting of votes.

■ Depending on the size of the meeting, you could have a co-host to assist in taking the minutes as well as managing any questions or the chat box, etc.

■ The chat option may be removed, depending on what way you want to manage interaction with attendees.

■ Although questions can be asked during an AGM, they should be related specifically to items on the agenda.

■ Larger clubs may opt for premium functions: for example, a Zoom webinar offers options to conduct polls or votes. An explanation of how to use these functions should be set out at the start. It may also be useful to share a PowerPoint slide showing the rules as people are joining the meeting.

■ The Chairperson should take a roll call of those virtually present at the meeting, and confirm a quorum.

■ To make sure things run smoothly, have one person (the host) assigned to sharing the presentation and any documentation as directed by the Chair (such as the Chairperson's report, Treasurer's report, nominated committee members, proposed changes to the constitution, etc).

Voting options

There are many ways to manage voting, depending on the functions you have available:

■ You can use the 'raise your hand' function to confirm (or reject) a Yes vote or other proposal, similar to what you would do in a face-to-face meeting.

■ You can use the chat box for each individual to confirm their vote. Or you could use a paid-for function to conduct a voting poll.

■ Whichever option you choose, carry out a test with the audience at the start of the meeting to make sure everyone is clear on how to vote.

■ Set a time limit in advance as to how long each attendee has to vote, e.g. 60 or 90 seconds.

Communication

■ Keep communication clear by introducing speakers and asking members to state their name when asking a question.

■ At the start of the meeting, identify the rules of behaviour, or how attendees can engage during the meeting.

■ Make it clear that all participants will be muted and there will be a system to ask questions, when you will be unmuted. Some platforms have a "hand up" function. If possible, this should be used.

Your platform options

There are a range of platform options to choose from, depending on the size of your club. Here are three:

Zoom

- Free with up to 100 delegates
- Automatically ends after 40 minutes
- Paid options allow unlimited time for meetings
- Recording options available
- Available on various devices
- Screen-sharing and presenting options
- Chat options
- Functions such as Zoom webinar (with more functions for voting).

Microsoft Teams

- Up to 50 users on a call
- Recording options available
- Available on various devices
- Screen-sharing and presenting options
- Group and private messaging possible.

Google Hangouts

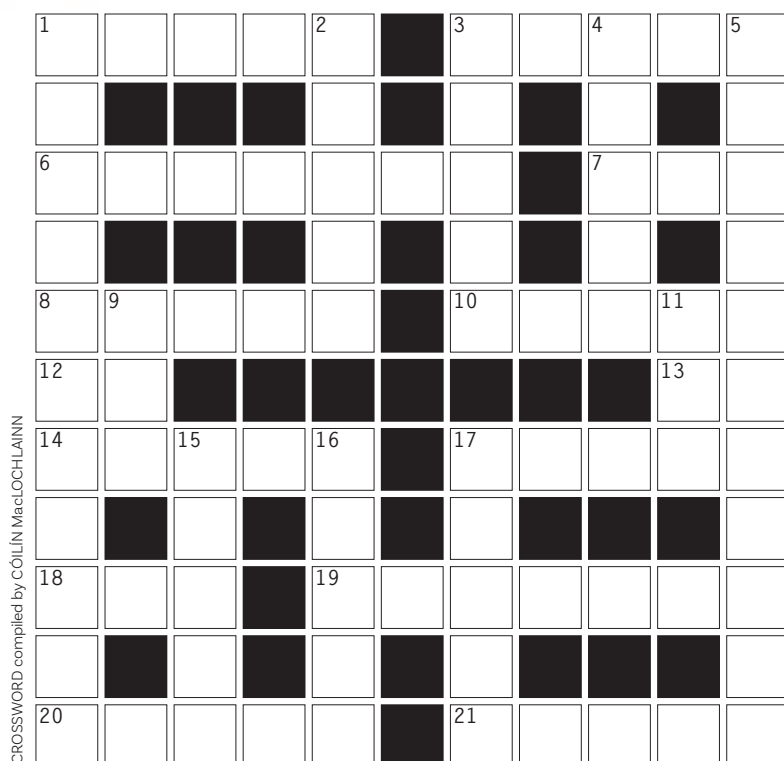
- Maximum of 150 users on a call (10 on a video call)
- Available on numerous devices
- Screenshare available
- Call recording available
- You need a Google account to organise a Google Hangouts meeting
- Options of platforms depending on the size of your club.

➤ For more information on how to run an AGM and what should be covered, see our Club Handbook at www.bit.ly/3nCZdEr ■



Basecamp Christmas Competition

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



Clues Across

- 1 Strong winds (5).
- 3 Very thin gap in rock formation used by climbers to find purchase on rock faces (5).
- 6 Nationality of peaks such as Scafell Pike (7).
- 7 Long, snake-like fish found in Irish waters (3).
- 8 Very strong wire to carry gondola to ski slope (5).
- 10 Watery discharge from nose or eyes (5).
- 12 Not off (2).
- 13 In short, South Africa (1,1).
- 14 Longest continental mountain range in the world (5).
- 17 Famous Antarctic explorer from Annascaul (5).
- 18 Mourne mountain, sounds like poultry (3).
- 19 Land of the free, home of the brave (7).
- 20 Crevices, often associated with crannies (5).
- 21 Transmits and receives broadcasts (5).

Clues Down

- 1 Strenuous horseshoe hillwalk in the Twelve Bens (11).
- 2 An English county (5).
- 3 Ireland's third highest peak, located in the Reeks (5).
- 4 Very narrow ridge separating two valleys (5).
- 5 Highest mountain on African continent (11).
- 9 Female found in bannister (3).
- 11 Denali is this country's highest peak (1,1,1).
- 15 Australian wild dog (5).
- 16 Coverings to protect shoes from wet while walking (5).
- 17 Cape island in very south-west of Ireland (5).



Icebreaker Men's 200 Oasis
Long Sleeve Crewe Top
plus Men's Icebreaker Oasis Leggings



Icebreaker Women's 200 Oasis Crewe Top
plus Women's Icebreaker Oasis Leggings



How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a prize worth €169.90 from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin.



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

Competition prizes

Basecamp's generous prize comprises a set of men's or women's Icebreaker Oasis Crewe baselayers (top and leggings), a prize worth €169.90.

2020 Lynam Medal

Dr Clare O'Leary, the renowned Irish mountaineer and adventurer, was presented with the 2020 Lynam Medal in October 2020 by Mike Maunsell, Chair of Mountaineering Ireland's Lynam Lecture Working Group, in Clonmel, Co Tipperary, where she lives.



By Patrick O'Sullivan

The **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture** was inaugurated in 2011 in memory of **Joss Lynam** (1924-2011), one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, in recognition of his enormous achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering in Ireland and overseas over some sixty years. During his lifetime, Joss initiated numerous developments in these different areas of our sport and was an inspiration to a number of generations of Irish mountaineers.

Joss Lynam's achievements included participating in many mountaineering expeditions



Joss Lynam in 2005

to the Greater Ranges and an outstanding voluntary contribution to the development of adventure sports in Ireland. Joss was known to many Irish and international walking enthusiasts for his hillwalking guidebooks. He was also the Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* magazine for almost 20 years. Joss continued as the Literary Editor of the magazine up to the time of his death.

Since it was inaugurated in 2011, the Mountaineering Ireland 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 2019, **Sir Chris Bonington**. All of these have been inspiring lectures that have reflected on the development of various aspects of our sport and how it might progress in coming years.

In light of the ongoing restrictions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided that it would not be possible to organise a formal presentation for this year's Lynam Lecture and that the 2020 Lynam Medal should be awarded to **Dr Clare O'Leary** on merit alone.

The first Irish woman to summit on Everest (8,848m) in 2004, and the first to climb an 8,000m peak, Clare has continued to push the boundaries ever since then of what has been achieved by Irish mountaineers.

Clare O'Leary is originally



Mike Maunsell presents Clare O'Leary with the 2020 Lynam Medal

from Bandon, Co Cork. She trained in UCC as a medical doctor and now practices as a consultant gastroenterologist and general physician in the South Tipperary General Hospital in Clonmel. Despite her busy career, she has still managed to take time out to go on various expeditions around the world since her success on Everest.

Everest attempts

Her first attempt at Everest was in 2003, when, ironically for a gastroenterologist, she

had to turn back between Camps 2 and 3 because of a stomach upset, or gastroenteritis, as she might say!

Clare returned in 2004 with the **Irish Wyeth Everest Expedition**, when she succeeded in climbing Mount Everest via the South Col route with **Pat Falvey**, **Pemba Gyalje**, and four other Sherpas. Prior to that success, she had already climbed **Kilimanjaro**, **Aconcagua**, **Mount Cook** and **Island Peak** to see how she reacted to altitude and to hone



Clare O'Leary on the Khumbu Glacier below Mount Everest



Clare looking towards the Hillary Step and the summit of Everest

her high-altitude climbing skills. In general, she has not experienced any serious problems at altitude, apart from perhaps developing mild headaches on summit days.

The Seven Summits

After climbing Everest, in 2005, Clare went on to be the first Irish woman to complete the **Seven Summits**, the highest mountain on each continent. She climbed **Denali**, **Elbrus** and **Kosciuszko**, and finished with **Mount Vinson** in that year, having already climbed **Kilimanjaro**, **Aconcagua** and **Everest** itself. That put her among the twenty women worldwide that had completed one or other of the Seven Summits lists by that time. In 2006, she became the first Irish woman to climb **Ama Dablam**, an iconic peak near Everest in the

Solu Khumbu in Nepal.

In 2007, Clare skied across the **Greenland ice-cap**. The next year, at the age of thirty-five, Clare became the first woman to ski to the **South Pole**. She went there with **Pat Falvey** on his **Beyond Endurance Expedition**, together with **Jonathan Davies** and **Shaun Menzies**. The team of four undertook the two-month-long expedition, hauling all of their gear in some of the harshest conditions on the planet, with sub-zero temperatures and constant snowstorms.

Clare's attempts to reach the **North Pole** unfortunately have all been thwarted. Her fourth attempt was in 2014 with fellow adventurer **Mike O'Shea**. If successful, Clare would have been only the second woman to climb the Seven Summits and reach



Clare O'Leary on the way to the South Pole

both poles. Since 2014, with climate change and the melting of the old ice at the North Pole, it has become almost impossible to ski there, as the new ice is unstable, insurance is unaffordable and it is impossible for planes to land on the ice in an emergency.

After their 2012 attempt to get to the North Pole was called off, Clare and Mike O'Shea began an ongoing series of expeditions which they called the **Ice Project** and in which they intended to make crossings of all of the world's major ice-caps. This has included crossings of the **Greenland ice-sheet**, the **Northern Patagonian ice-field** and **Lake Baikal** in Siberia. However, this has also been impacted by climate change and they have had to abandon the project.

In 2016, they cycled 2,500km through China, finishing in Tibet. The following year, Clare climbed **Baruntse** (7,129m) and **Mera Peak** (6,500m) in Nepal. In 2018, she did the **Lunana Snowman** trek in Bhutan, 350km over thirteen high mountain passes, and last year she was climbing in Peru.

Looking to the future, Clare, who still trains five or six days a week by running or cycling, says that she has turned to ski mountaineering as a way of continuing to explore the world's remote places.

With such an impressive list of achievements, Clare O'Leary's endeavours already have been recognised variously in Ireland and she was awarded an honorary doctorate in law by NUI Galway. Mountaineering Ireland is now recognising her contribution to our sport and to the participation of women in mountaineering and exploration by awarding her the **2020 Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Medal**.

Following the presentation of her medal in October by



Clare O'Leary at work

Mike Maunsell, Chair of the Lynam Lecture Working Group, Clare said, "It is a very great honour to receive such a prestigious award from Mountaineering Ireland. I have been lucky enough to travel all over the world on expeditions in the past number of years. These have often been physically and mentally tough, but I always loved the challenges they presented. On each of these expeditions, I worked as part of a team and I always had the support at home of great training partners, mentors, family and friends. I am grateful to all of them for their support. Thank you to Mountaineering Ireland for awarding me the 2020 Lynam Medal" ■



Clare on receiving an honorary doctorate in law from NUI Galway

National Walking Day a great success

An estimated 700,000 people took part in National Walking Day on September 27th

**By Linda Sankey,
Get Ireland Walking**

The first **National Walking Day** in Ireland took place on Sunday, September 27th, 2020, as part of the **European Week of Sport**. An estimated **700,000** people took part in the day. That was estimated through the hashtags that were posted on social media on the day.

220,000 people watching the show.

We would expect many people not to engage with the hashtags – older adults, for example – which would suggest that the numbers actually participating on the day may have been much higher than that stated above. Furthermore, schools were also invited to participate throughout European Week of



We were trending in Ireland on Twitter most of the day and had a phenomenal response to the feature on RTÉ I's *Nationwide* programme about National Walking Day on the evening of Wednesday, September 23rd, with over

Sport and more than 800 primary schools registered with Get Ireland Walking for that week, which would represent over **200,000** children who engaged in activities, including walking, that week.



Partners, stakeholders, Local Sports Partnerships and groups affiliated with Get Ireland Walking and Mountaineering Ireland were all invited and encouraged to participate in National Walking Day. They all engaged in various ways and shared our message and campaign across their platforms and membership. A case study is now underway to highlight the success of the campaign nationally and the impact that it had through using creative, paid social media advertisements, which were viewed over 4,700,000 times throughout the campaign.

Other indications of the initiative's success included the traffic flow to our website, with close to 50,000 hits, which also demonstrated the success of the campaign.

We aim to use the case study as a model for contemporary communication with our market but also to act as a toolkit for partners, including

other National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships, to use in their efforts to communicate effectively with their target populations.

Comedian **Jason Byrne**, Dublin footballer and All-Ireland winner **Kevin McManamon**, and camogie All-Ireland winner and player **Niamh Kilkenny** all featured in professional videos to promote the day, encouraging people to **#WalkYourArea** and **#WalkYourTown**, and find **#HiddenGems**. Jason even advised people to bring their grannies with them!

We also had professional videos of **Charlie Burke** from Coillte, **Katrina McGirr** from Waterways Ireland and **Ruth Whelan** from Mountaineering Ireland, shot in Coillte and Waterways Ireland amenities, asking walkers to be responsible outdoors and to be considerate!

For more about this initiative check out **www.getirelandwalking.ie** ■



Take our 21-Day Walking Challenge

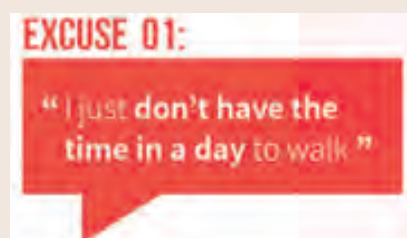
Get Ireland Walking has an incentive to help you make walking part of your daily routine



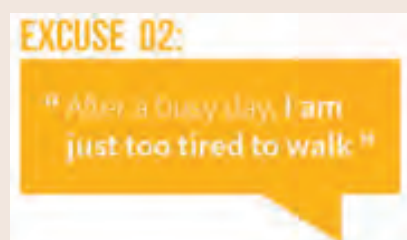
So you might not be able to get out and go to your favourite hills and crags now, unless you are very lucky where you live – so why not try something easier and closer to home, to help you keep fit and for your own well-being?

Get Ireland Walking has developed an easy **21-Day Walking Challenge**, which is perfect timing right now, given the current restrictions! You can easily walk in your area or town and, by the end of the 21 days, you will definitely want to continue to walk regularly!

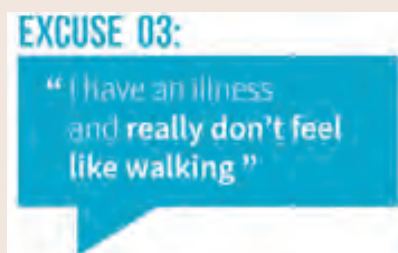
Your excuses, our advice



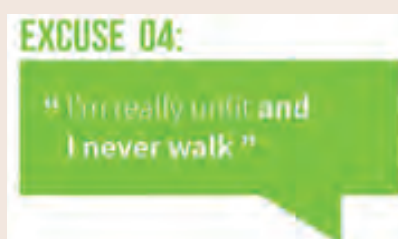
- **It only takes thirty minutes** of your time to do a walk that will help to maintain your health.
- **Just go out the door and start walking** – there is no extra time needed to travel to a venue or to prepare.
- **Try to fit walking into your daily routine** or use it as an opportunity to meet a friend and catch up. Let family and friends know about your plans and ask them to help you to stick to the routine.



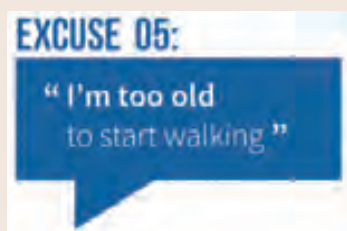
- **Try fitting in a walk when you feel most energetic** – this could be early in the day.
- **Walking will actually give you more energy.** Try it out and notice the difference in your energy levels for the day.



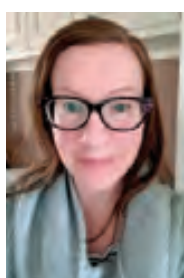
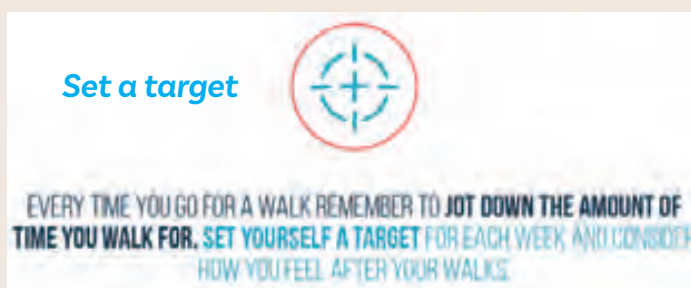
- **Talk to your doctor** about getting active at your next visit.
- You could also check out the health promotion organisations for **advice on your illness and walking**.



- Walking is one of the **easiest ways to get active**.
- You can **set your own pace** and the length of your walk.
- Over time, **you can gradually increase** both of these.



- **It is never too late** to start walking.
- **Walking regularly can help** to maintain your physical health.



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

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



"Visitors can leave their 'Stamp' on the National Famine Way, a new 165km trail in Ireland that doubles as a history lesson ... connecting cyclists and walkers with Ireland's emigrant past." – Condé Nast Traveller

National Famine Way launched

Historic 165km trail follows in emigrants' footsteps during the Famine

By Charlotte O'Connor,
Communications Officer,
Irish Heritage Trust

A new interactive outdoor experience, the **National Famine Way**, was launched in September, together with a 'passport' and an OSi map of the route. The National Famine Way is an accredited 165km **Heritage and Arts Trail** from Strokestown Park, Co Roscommon, through six counties to Dublin, mostly following the Royal Canal. A completion certificate is awarded at the end of the trail at **EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum**, where the Famine replica ship, the *Jeanie Johnston*, is located.

The trail, which goes along flat and well-surfaced paths, details the ill-fated journey of 1,490 emigrants, who walked from Strokestown Park to ships in Dublin in 1847, at the height of the Famine. With its captivating layers of history and culture, the trail is designed to be accessible to families, schools, casual walkers and cyclists, through to Famine and history enthusiasts.

It offers a safe, recreational option available 365 days a year, in a self-guided format

with signposting and trailheads along the route. The new 14-page **National Famine Way Passport & Guide** (together with the OSi map) highlights local historical landmarks and allows walkers and cyclists to record their progress with 27 **Stage Stamps** along the specially developed route.

The new Passport & Guide is centred around the journey of one of the original Famine walkers from Strokestown

Park, 12-year-old **Daniel Tighe**, who remarkably survived the horrific journey to Canada on one of the worst Famine ships. The route of the National Famine Way is marked by bronze sculptures of a pair of children's shoes (see photo). These evocative shoes symbolise the hopeful journey that the 1,490 emigrants embarked on, especially taking in the fact that two-thirds of them were children.



Bronze shoes mark each stage along the route

The Passport & Guide explains the historical and cultural landmarks along the route, broken down into distinct sections, from 1km to 15km, through Roscommon, Longford, Westmeath, Meath, Kildare and Fingal and finally ending in Dublin city centre.

Caroilin Gallery of the **National Famine Museum** and the **Irish Heritage Trust**, which cares for the property, commented: "As walkers experience the natural beauty of the National Famine Way Heritage Trail, the Passport & Guide and OSi map incentivises them to explore lesser-known sections by slowly unfolding the rich local history wrapped in the journey of the Famine emigrants."

"They will also be reminded of our history through a mix of evocative storytelling, song, art installations and cultural centres along the route. The Passport & Guide



Walkers by the Royal Canal on the National Famine Way

brings the historical journey of the 1,490 Famine emigrants alive by allowing walkers to follow in their footsteps 173 years later.”

Describing what walkers and families are likely to experience, **John O'Driscoll**, general manager of the National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park, said: “We look forward to welcoming official walkers, starting from the National Famine Museum, where they can get a real understanding of the Famine. The official Passport & Guide includes a 10% discount on the entrance fee for the National Famine Museum, as well as the *Jeanie Johnston* replica Famine ship at EPIC, The Irish Emigration Museum, and other museums along the route.”

The National Famine Way is an integrated collaboration between the **National Famine**



OSi has produced a trail map for each county along the route: this is the one for Westmeath

Museum, Waterways Ireland and county councils along the route. A **National Famine Way App** is currently being

developed and will be launched in the coming months.

➤ For more information see www.nationalfamineway.ie and www.strokestownpark.ie ■

‘Happy Hiking’ campaign announced

New Mountaineering Ireland initiative distributes advice to walkers on how to stay safe



By Ruth Whelan, Hillwalking Development Officer

Mountaineering Ireland is delighted to announce the **Happy Hiking** campaign, an initiative to promote safe walking in the Irish hills and countryside. This project was

initiated by Mountaineering Ireland’s **Hillwalking Committee**, originally with the intention of refreshing and updating the **Walk Safely** leaflet, which had gone out of print. Since that leaflet was issued, however, how we communicate and circulate information has changed, particularly since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is now very important to utilise the different platforms available to reach the right audiences.

Happy Hiking is aimed at all users of trails and uplands, but particularly first-time users, novices and tourists. Each time Covid-19 restrictions were eased, there was an above-normal influx of people to the uplands. So providing information on how to stay safe when walking in the Irish hills and countryside has never been more important. The

Happy Hiking material will be a useful resource for all and will include advice on planning your walk, what to bring with you, getting a weather forecast, who to call in an emergency, and so on.

As well as distributing leaflets to tourist offices, clubs, Rural Recreation Officers and other relevant bodies, we are also making the leaflet available digitally on the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie. It will be accompanied by digital promotional tools, which will be shared widely across primary tourism platforms and through direct online advertising targeting specific audiences.

QR codes have become more popular and are being more widely used this year, so we have incorporated a **QR code** on the back of the leaflet. Simply scan the code using a

free scanner app. You will be brought directly to the **Hillwalking** section of the **Mountaineering Ireland website**. Here, you will find the Happy Hiking leaflet in a digital format, along with lots of other useful information on hillwalking.

➤ The Happy Hiking leaflet will be a valuable resource for **clubs** to share with new or potential members. If you are interested in receiving some Happy Hiking leaflets and/or information in a digital format for your club’s website or Facebook page, or if you know of other organisations who you think might be interested in sharing this material, contact ruth@mountaineering.ie for more details.

➤ This project was funded by the **Department of Rural and Community Development** through **FORUM Connemara** and by **Mountaineering Ireland** ■



Gathering sheep in the MacGillycuddy Reeks

Kerry UNESCO Biosphere Reserve now active

Reeks European Innovation Project tackling spread of rhododendron

By Eleanor Turner, Kerry Biosphere Officer

Kerry is home to one of only two UNESCO-designated Biosphere Reserves in Ireland. The **Kerry Biosphere Reserve** is located in the heart of the Kingdom. It was originally named the Killarney National Park Biosphere Reserve in 1982. The reserve underwent a review process in 2017, which resulted in an increase in the area covered and an accompanying name change. The Kerry Biosphere Reserve, as it is now called, covers an area of approximately 65,760 hectares.

Biosphere Reserves are learning places for sustainable development. They are sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. They are places that provide local solutions to global challenges.

The Kerry Biosphere Reserve includes areas that are subject to several existing environmental designations including **Special Protection**

Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHAs). Ireland's SACs and SPAs form part of the EU **Natura 2000** network of important ecological sites.

It is notable that the

biosphere designation does not impose further land-use constraints on these areas, rather it supports the conservation status, celebrates the area's culture and, on a global scale, shows the significance of the natural

resources we have here on our doorsteps in Kerry.

One project that is taking action within the Kerry Biosphere area is the **MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovation Project (Reeks EIP)**. The Reeks EIP project aims to improve the sustainability and economic viability of farming through practical actions and innovative solutions to address issues and to protect biodiversity in this Natura 2000 area.

Landowners in the MacGillycuddy Reeks face increasingly difficult challenges in farming this unique upland landscape. Encompassing over 8,000 hectares of Natura-designated, privately-owned land, rising to a height of 1,039 metres, farming in the MacGillycuddy Reeks is labour-intensive and economically unviable. With over 125,000 people visiting the Reeks annually to climb Ireland's highest mountain, recreational use adds to the challenges.

Aiming to address these issues, the Reeks EIP team is working with 33 farmers in the area. They have developed a **results-based**



Habitat awareness training with EIP project participants

payment system that rewards farmers for maintaining or improving their upland habitats.

An issue that is of great concern within both the Kerry Biosphere Reserve area and the project area for the Reeks EIP is the threat of invasive species, in particular

Rhododendron ponticum.

One of the innovations of the Reeks EIP project is their solution to this spreading problem. They have formed and trained a group of local farmers, who now work together treating rhododendron. Outreach events have been organised to raise awareness within local communities and to encourage people to manage the impacts of rhododendron within the EIP area.



The Reeks EIP delivering instruction on upland wildlife in Kilgobnet National School, Beaufort, Killarney, Co Kerry

If you'd like to learn more about how to treat rhododendron, watch a recent community talk on our YouTube channel, Kerry Biosphere.

➤ Kerry UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, with support from **Creative Ireland** and the **Environmental Protection Agency**, ran an autumn event series, launched on

November 5th, 2020, by Minister for Land Use and Biodiversity, **Pippa Hackett TD**. You can find out more on the **Kerry Biosphere Facebook page** ■

New committee chair appointed

David Pollard is the new Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee

By Helen Lawless, Access & Conservation Officer

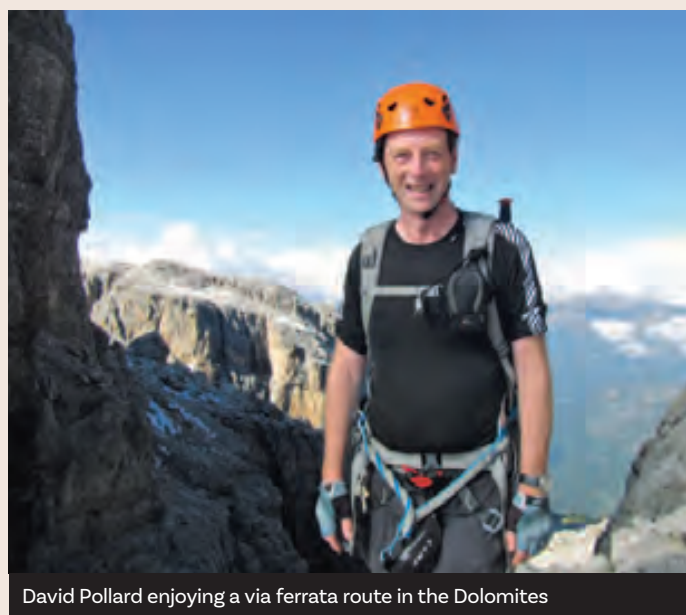
David Pollard was approved by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland as the new Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's **Access and Conservation Committee** in June 2020. As Committee Chair, David also becomes a member of **Mountaineering Ireland's Board**.

David is a life-long hillwalker and is an active member of both Wicklow-based **Club Cualann** and the **Dingle Hillwalking Club** in Kerry. He is a former member of **Cork Mountaineering Club** and **Galway Mountaineering Club**. He has walked extensively in Ireland as well as in Wales, Scotland, the Pyrenees, the French Alps, the Dolomites, the Jura, the High Tatras and Iceland. David joined the Access and Conservation Committee in May 2019.

The role of the Access and Conservation Committee is to advise and support the Mountaineering Ireland Board and staff in working towards Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation objectives:

- **To promote the conservation and responsible use of the mountain environment and coordinate action in conservation matters.**
- **To safeguard and secure access to mountain areas.**

On behalf of the Access and Conservation Committee, David expressed thanks to **Helen Donoghue** for her gracious leadership of the Committee for over two years, and for her deep interest in the work of the Committee, her vision and her strategic approach. We are delighted to say that even though Helen lives abroad for much of the year, she is remaining on as a



David Pollard enjoying a via ferrata route in the Dolomites

member of the Committee.

David also conveyed sincere thanks to **Jack Bergin**, who recently stepped down from the Committee after many years trying to keep us right on access and conservation matters.

The current members of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee are: **David Pollard (Chairperson)**, **Noel Caffrey**, **Helen Donoghue**, **Fióna Gallagher**, **Ursula MacPherson**, **Vincent McAlinden**, **Áine McGil**, **Orla Prendergast** and **Helen Lawless (Secretary)** ■



The deircs (cirques) and Maumtrasna plateau

Guth na talún – ‘voice of the land’

Explore our whispering landscape in the Joyce Country and Western Lakes region

By Michael Hegarty, Geopark Manager, Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark Project

There is a fascinating new development way out west in north Connemara and south Mayo to showcase and tell the stories of what lies beneath our feet and in our towns and villages.

Many readers will have heard of **Joyce Country**, but may not know that the wider region – on the Galway-Mayo border and the area both sides of Loughs Carra, Mask and the Corrib – has an outstanding geological heritage of international significance. So significant, in fact, that a new project is preparing the way for an application to UNESCO for Global Geopark status.

The **Joyce Country and Western Lakes (JCWL) Geopark Project** (*Tionscadal Geopháirc Dhúiche*

Sheoigheach agus Lochanna an Iarthair) **2020-2021** is a €1.19 million initiative promoting sustainable development of the area.

Supported mainly by the

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (Project Ireland 2040), it also has significant financial and in-kind support from **Geological Survey Ireland** (lead partner),

Údarás na Gaeltachta, Mayo County Council, Galway County Council, Coillte, Fáilte Ireland and a cross-community group, **JCWL GeoEnterprise**. The project is



Trish Walsh introducing participants to the karst landscape near Clonbur, Co Galway, during Mountaineering Ireland's 2019 Mountain Environment Weekend



Geopark field trip in the Lough Nafooney valley, Joyce Country

a major step forward after ten years of dedicated voluntary effort and community consultation.

The region includes the fantastic beauty of the **Maumturks, Maumtrasna** and **Partry Mountains**, glaciated lakes and meandering rivers, stunning karst landscapes to rival parts of the Burren, and much more. Cong, Clonbur, Leenane, Oughterard, Ballinrobe, Ballintubber and Tourmakeady are just a few

of the eighteen towns and villages ready to share their fantastic heritage and tell their stories.

The project model is about showcasing and educating people on the geological and wider heritage of the region, simultaneously creating potential tourism markets through attracting people willing to spend time in the Geopark, to linger and absorb rather than to drive through. This will encourage spending on local services and

resources rather than mass tourism – all helping to secure sustainable futures for our villages and towns.

What to see and do

The Joyce Country and Western Lakes region now has a brand and a striking new logo (see image). The attractive new website, **www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie**, is a treasure trove of information about sites of interest and our towns and villages. In the 'What To Do'

section there's a great range of activities and attractions, including walks, hikes and national trails, options for food and accommodation, and a slick interactive map to help you.

Other clickable menus have easily digestible details on the impressive geological story, landscape, habitats and wildlife, the people and culture, including the Irish language and the Gaeltacht, and a whole section on learning and education.

The project encourages visitors to explore the national walking trails of the region (including the Galway section of the **Western Way**, the **Seanbhóthar** and parts of the **Tóchar Phádraig**). The project is also a member of **Leave No Trace Ireland** and, as such, it promotes a collaborative and sensitive approach to highlighting local heritage, while respecting the rights of landowners and all others in the region.

So here it is, **Guth na talún** ... a great opportunity to learn what is beneath our feet and to explore our whispering landscape ■





Niamh Kennedy (Donegal County Council), Steven Doherty (North West Forest Services), Inga Bock (RRO, Donegal) and Frank Kelly (LEADER Rural Development Manager, Donegal Local Development Company) pictured at the recent start of development works on the IAT at Lough Eske, Co Donegal.

Funding for Appalachian Trail through Ulster

Funding has been secured to enhance the International Appalachian Trail (IAT) in Donegal. Meanwhile, cross-border collaboration is focusing on improving the user experience on the trail

By Inga Block, Rural Recreation Officer and IAT Coordinator in Donegal

Funding of €215,000 has been secured to carry out development and enhancement work on over 120km of the **International Appalachian Trail (IAT)** running through Donegal. The funding includes a grant of €161,000 from **LEADER**, €50,000 in matching funding from **Donegal County Council**, with other funding being provided by the **Rural Recreation Programme**.

The International Appalachian Trail in Ireland is approximately 485km (302miles) in length and runs from south-west Donegal to Larne, passing through six different council areas. The Trail starts at the spectacular **Slieve League cliffs**, passes through Glencolmcille and traverses the Bluestack Mountains in County Donegal before crossing into County Tyrone. Here it picks up the

Ulster Way, taking it through the Sperrins, along the stunning north coast and into the Glens of Antrim.

In Donegal, the trail runs from Slieve League, via Malin Beg, Glencolmcille, Port, Ardara, Glenties, Disert, Lough Eske, Clar and Leghowney, to the border with Northern Ireland at Kelly's Bridge.

Work on the development project has begun and includes:

- Improved trail waymarking
- Dedicated trailheads at key access points
- Trail information boards
- Additional trail infrastructure (e.g. stiles, fencing, seating, etc)
- Path development works at Lough Eske
- Trail art including sculptures along the way
- A Trail Maintenance and Monitoring App.

According to **Frank Kelly**,

LEADER Rural Development Manager, "the project aims to connect Donegal to the Derry City and Strabane District, as well as other local action groups throughout Northern Ireland, by improving a trail that will have both local and international appeal.

"This will help stimulate local economies by creating additional tourist amenities. It will also add value to the continuous work being carried out under the **Rural Recreation Programme** and the **Walks Scheme** in Donegal."

Work started to bring the Appalachian Trail to Ireland in 2009 and the route was launched on the ground here in 2013. We now have funding to enhance the user experience on the Irish section of this incredibly diverse international trail.

The Appalachian Trail is one of the largest trail networks in the world, with route 'chapters' in a range of

countries, including the United States, Canada, Greenland, Iceland, countries throughout Europe and ending in the Anti-Atlas Mountains of Morocco.

Paul Wylezol, Co-Chair of the International Appalachian Trail based in Canada, said, "The Ulster Ireland section will be an inspiring addition to the International Appalachian Trail story, and the commencement of works on the Donegal section of the walking trail is a significant milestone.

"With shared geological and cultural storylines, combined with uniquely Irish attractions, the developed Ulster Ireland section has great potential to attract a wide variety of North American walkers, from eco, geo and adventure tourists, to fans of the well-known *Game of Thrones* television series."

As well as improvements

INTERNATIONAL APPALACHIAN TRAIL

I A T · U L S T E R · I R E L A N D



to the Donegal section of the trail, five Northern Ireland councils will be making improvements to their sections as part of works costing over £600,000. The widespread investment is the result of a collaborative effort to ensure the overall visitor experience is improved across the entire trail for both locals and tourists.

By enhancing the visitor experience, the trail will have the potential to attract more domestic and international visitors, and, therefore, generate substantial economic

benefit for the businesses along the route and in the wider area.

As part of the effort to attract more local, national and international visitors, there is also significant investment being directed towards a project to promote the trail, worth almost £120,000. Marketing campaigns in Ireland and North America will be executed by **Outdoor Recreation NI**, an organisation with extensive experience in promoting walking trails to locals and tourists, towards the end of 2021 ■



crossword results

The winner of our crossword in IML 135 was **Margaret Skuce**, of **Ballydehob, Co Cork**, who won a Microlight Alpine jacket, a prize worth €229.95, from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to arrange collection of her prize.



Microlight Alpine Jacket (Women's)



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Eimear Henchion taking some air-time in Round 2 of the 2020 Youth Climbing Series

2020 YOUTH CLIMBING SERIES

Covid-19 confined the series to just three amazing rounds

The **Youth Climbing Series** continues to attract young climbers from all corners of the island who want to test themselves against a range of challenging boulder problems and routes. An exceptional show of young climbing talent and friendly rivalry is what makes the Youth Climbing Series such a special event.

The series is comprised of four rounds: two bouldering and two roped climbing. The top three climbers from each of the ten competition categories then go to compete alongside young

climbers from Scotland, England and Wales at the Grand Final.

Round 1

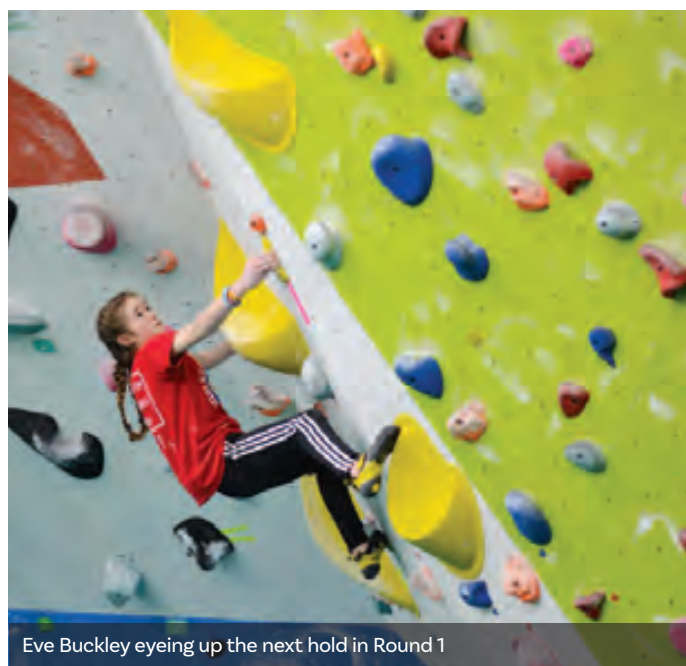
The **2020 Youth Climbing Series** began with a bouldering round at **Awesome Walls Cork**. Young climbers travelled from near and far to test themselves against a wide range of boulder problems set by **Chloe Condron** and her team.

Round 2

For the second round of the competition it was time for the climbers to put on their harnesses and test their



Written by
Damien O'Sullivan,
Climbing
Development
Officer



Eve Buckley eyeing up the next hold in Round 1



endurance and strength (as well as some jumping skills) in the **Dublin Climbing Centre**.

Round 3

Round three was hosted at **BoulderWorld Belfast**, where the climbers were treated to a suitably challenging range of boulder problems set by the in-house team.

Round 4

Round four fell victim to the dreaded Covid-19. Initially it was rescheduled to the end of the summer, then to the end of September, before finally being cancelled. The Grand Final also had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.

Acknowledgments

The Youth Climbing Series is only possible with a huge level of voluntary support from many of the competitors' parents, who assist with the judging and belaying at the competitions. Thanks to everyone who helped. A very special thanks is due to **John Henchion** and **Eléonore Conroy** who take on the huge task of running the competitions on the day.

The walls who host the Youth Climbing Series are vital to the competition's

existence. Without their support and goodwill, the competition simply would not happen. The competition's sponsors, **Great Outdoor** and **Mammut**, add greatly to the competition by providing the prizes, t-shirts and hoodies that the competitors value so highly.

The overall results for the 2020 Youth Climbing Series (based on the results from the three rounds) were as follows:

Male Youth A

1st Dillon McLaughlin
2nd George Lassoov
3rd Matthew Bourke

Female Youth A

1st Faith Blaney
2nd Amy Orr
3rd Amber Burns

Male Youth B

1st Reuben Aiken
2nd Daniel Creedon
3rd Sean Brown

Female Youth B

1st Caelin Lenehan
2nd Rhyna Conroy
3rd Bonita Thurston

Male Youth C

1st Patrick Galvin
2nd Oliver Szelag
3rd Sam Monedero



Joe Feeney fully focused in Round 3



Ciara Burgoyne at full stretch in Round 1

Female Youth C

1st Eve Buckley
2nd Clara-Caterina Mayer
3rd Freya O'Connor

Male Youth D

1st Daniel Shine
2nd Maty Petros
3rd Joe Feeney

Female Youth D

1st Ilmur Jonsdottir
2nd Olivia Scott
3rd Lilou Conroy

Male Youth E

1st Calum O'Connor
2nd Caleb Shine
3rd Eoin Galvin

Female Youth E

1st Lucy McClune
2nd Sieve Hoare
3rd Duaa Rejeb ■



Cork Youth Climbing Club enjoying a sunny day at Ballyryan, in the Burren, Co Clare, in July

SUMMER ROCK CLIMBING DAYS

Mountaineering Ireland held a series of Youth Climbing Club events in July 2020. **Kevin Kilroy** reports

Mountaineering Ireland organised several **Youth Climbing Club events** during the summer of 2020 in Ireland.

The events were held in **Dalkey Quarry**, Co Dublin; the **Mourne Mountains**, Co Down; **The Burren**, Co Clare; **Fair Head**, Co Antrim; and **Cruit Island**, Co Donegal.

The aim of these events was to help young club members to develop their skills and judgment on their journey towards becoming independent rock climbers, as well as providing them with a fun and safe opportunity to go rock climbing in Ireland.

Thanks to **Mountaineering Ireland** providing instructor staff time from **Damien O'Sullivan** (RCI) and **Kevin Kilroy** (MCI), as well as to funding from **Sport Northern Ireland**, these events were

subsidised to cost less than 50% of the standard cost. This enabled club members to attend more days and further develop their rock

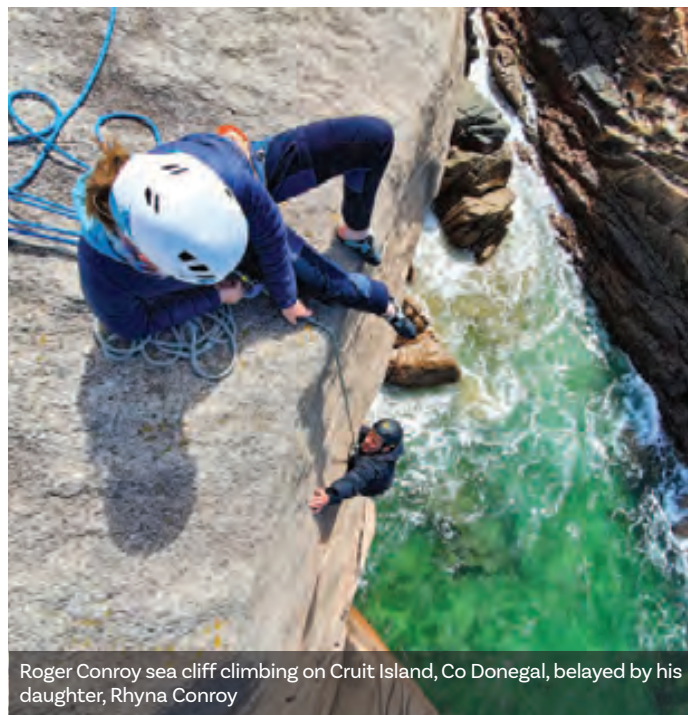
climbing skills.

To minimise contact between groups from different households with respect to Covid-19, one

instructor was teamed up with one family household. The necessary sanitation steps were also put in place to protect the instructors and the family groups.

At **Dalkey Quarry**, many young members from the **Dublin Cliff Hangers** were supported by instruction from **John Healy** from Cork and **Mhairi Baird** from Kerry. The instructors reported high levels of enthusiasm among their students to be back rock climbing again after a long break from regular climbing. They were further impressed by the young climbers' desire to learn and understand fully how to stay safe when operating on the short but technically challenging traditional routes on granite that Dalkey Quarry offers in abundance.

In the **Mourne Mountains**, climbers from the **Mourne**



Roger Conroy sea cliff climbing on Cruit Island, Co Donegal, belayed by his daughter, Rhyna Conroy



Lilou Conroy enjoying a family sea cliff adventure on Cruit Island, Co Donegal, in July

and **Gilford Youth Climbing Clubs**, and families from the Belfast area, teamed up with local instructors **Claire Hardy, Jonny Parr, Eamon Quinn** and **Mike Smith** to visit accessible crags such as **Altnadue Quarry, Spellack, Hen Mountain** and **Pigeon Rock**. It was fantastic for the coaches to work with families from the local youth climbing clubs as they progress to climbing independently on the crags in the Mournes.

At the **Burren** in County Clare, **Cork Youth Climbing Club** members enjoyed four days with instructors **John Healy** and **Mhairi Baird**. Glorious west of Ireland sunshine was enjoyed on all but one of the days, on which more time was spent focusing on rope work and gear placement for lead climbing and abseiling.

Some of the instructors took full advantage of the long evenings to enjoy their own adventures on the Ailadie sea cliffs, with **Mhairi Baird** leading her first of a

new grade on the classic corner of **Pis Fluich**. Congratulations, Mhairi!

At **Fair Head**, the **Gregg family** rescheduled their second Mournes climbing day, opting for a dry and sunny Fair Head with **Kevin Kilroy** and **Claire Hardy**.

Oliver Gregg (aged 15) had

been diligent in his lockdown training, alongside his family, and it paid off for him big time with ascents of **December (HVS)** and **Toby Jug (E1)**. Oliver was only getting warmed up at the end of Toby Jug and could probably have kept climbing throughout the night! It was



Written by
Kevin Kilroy,
Youth Development
Officer

a fantastic opportunity for the instructors to introduce a keen and talented young climber to the world of Fair Head.

On **Cruit Island** in County Donegal, families from the **North West Climbing Team, Belfast Youth Climbing Club, Hanging Rockers Youth Climbing Club** and **Cork Youth Climbing Club** teamed up with instructors **Iain Miller** and **Neil Busby** for four days exploring the perfect pink granite sea cliffs and developing their library of trad climbing skills. Cruit is an ideal venue for young families, with an abundance of high-quality routes across the grades in a beautiful coastal setting.

■ For a list of all of Mountaineering Ireland's **youth climbing clubs**, please visit the 'My Local Club' link on the website homepage **www.mountaineering.ie** ■



Aoibheann Taylor climbing on the amazing granite in Albatross Zawn, Cruit Island, Co Donegal.



PUT A LID ON IT!

Damien O'Sullivan on the benefits of owning and wearing a modern climbing helmet

Think of someone driving a motor-bike in Ireland. They would certainly be wearing a helmet.

Then think of the last time you saw someone ice climbing or climbing in the Alps. Again, they would be wearing a helmet to protect their head. Now think of the last time that you were out trad-climbing. Were you

wearing a helmet? Were the other people at the crag wearing helmets?

Climbing has changed so much since the days of *'the leader shall not fall.'* Modern ropes and harnesses allow us to try harder on rock, and falling is now a regular part of trad-climbing for a lot of climbers. When trying hard on a trad route, there is a lot going on. Often there are two



Written by
Damien O'Sullivan,
Climbing Officer

ropes to manage – perfect to go behind a leg. Gear to the left, gear to the right, protruding blocks, little ledges – all ideal to create an awkward fall. It is easy to envisage a fall where you get flipped upside down by your rope and, in that situation, it could be your head that takes the brunt of the fall. So, why not protect it?

Now, I want to be upfront with you. I am going to encourage you to consider parting with some of your money to buy a new climbing helmet. Modern climbing helmets are extremely comfortable and offer amazing levels of protection. I believe that climbers are more likely to wear a modern helmet and that it will provide

you with more protection than the older models.

I used to be ambivalent about wearing a climbing helmet when trad-climbing; sometimes I would wear one, sometimes I would not. I do not remember if this was an active decision or just a passive reaction to where I was climbing and who I was climbing with. Now I always wear my helmet when trad climbing. Why the change of attitude? I put it down to three main things.

Firstly, I have learned how easy it is to get a serious brain injury and to suffer the lifelong repercussions of such an injury. While standing chatting to friends outside a pub, a friend of mine got a punch in the head from a



Old-style helmet that sustained a severe blow in a climbing accident

passer-by who mistook him for someone else. Totally unexpected a punch, he stumbled, fell, and hit his head on the ground. The assailant had run off. There seemed to be no obvious injury, no blood, nothing apparently serious – just a punch, a fall, and a bang on the ground. However, it was serious. Later that night, my friend was in a coma and undergoing brain surgery. For weeks the prognosis was bleak and there were no signs of response to stimuli. On the day that he was to be transferred to a ward for people in a permanent vegetative state, his eyes began to flicker. That was the beginning of a long, slow and very difficult healing process that, five years later, is still far from complete. All of that from a head injury from a fall that would be considered very small in comparison to the falls any of us could have when we are climbing.

The second reason I now wear a climbing helmet far more frequently is that my safety is now not just my own concern. In the past few years, I have become a husband and

a father, and my safety is also the concern of my family. Climbing has always been a part of my relationship with my partner, not always a good part, mind! My wife does not climb, but she knows how important it is to me – it is part of what makes me! In the early days of our relationship, it was a balancing act between spending quality time together and me getting my climbing fix so that I would be tolerable! More recently, with the arrival of a baby, that balance has shifted again. Although I do not have as much time to get out climbing, I have managed to have some great days out with friends over the past two years. Now when I put on my climbing helmet, I am not just doing it for myself, I am doing it for my wife and daughter. I just wish that I had always worn a helmet and saved my own parents from worrying about me.

The third reason to wear a helmet relates to the developments in climbing helmets. Climbing helmets are now so light and comfortable that I cannot come up with any reasons why not to wear



Helmets are so light and comfortable now there is no reason not to wear one

I have witnessed how easy it is to get a brain injury and to suffer the lifelong repercussions

one. My current helmet, a **Petzl Sirocco**, is so comfortable that I often forget that I have it on. It is very well vented, with more than enough airflow for anything an Irish summer could shine at it. It is light, almost unbelievably so. Despite being so light, it seems to be more than robust enough to survive life in and out of rucksacks. No doubt, in a few years' time some genius will come up with even better technology that will allow climbing helmets to become even more wearable and protective. For now, I think it is fair to say that there are a range of helmets available, which are highly wearable and will not negatively impact on your climbing performance.

If you climb and are the proud owner of a helmet that you choose not to wear more often than not because it is uncomfortable to wear, now –

as in Christmas time – is the perfect time to start dropping some hints that a new climbing helmet would make a great present!

There is a great range of climbing helmets available from companies like **Petzl**, **Mammut**, **Black Diamond** and **Edelrid** in climbing shops such as **Great Outdoors**, **Alpine Sports** and **Jackson Sports**. Do your research and find a helmet that suits your own needs. If possible, try on different makes and models. Ask other climbers what type of helmet they use and what they think of it. Speak with a staff member in your local climbing shop and get their advice too. Aim to buy the best helmet that you can afford – or, to put it another way, aim to buy the helmet that you are most likely to wear.

Thanks to **Petzl**, **Mammut**, **Black Diamond** and **Edelrid** you can be in with a chance of winning a climbing helmet. To be in with a chance, please go to www.mountaineering.ie/climbing/helmets and keep an eye out on the Mountaineering Ireland Facebook and Instagram pages ■



If you get flipped upside down, your head might take the brunt of the fall



THE LURE OF THE HILLS

Marian Wallis first became aware of the magic and mystery of the hills during her youth, in the Ballyhouras

The hills and mountains are like magnets, which pull us upwards and challenge us to explore beyond the horizon.

We are intoxicated by the expanse of the mountains, the colours, the rainbows, the sudden shafts of light casting mysterious shadows, the fascinating rock formations, the mists steaming in the sun, the high ridges bridging reality and enchantment, the untamed wilderness, and the reward of reaching the summit.

The lashing rain, the bone-chilling wind or the icy flutter of snow are of little consequence at that time, as our senses are entrapped by the grandeur and wonder of these remote landscapes. It is then we are humbled and silently acknowledge that we are in the presence of greatness.

For all who love the mountains, this is the face of the Sacred. Since time began, people have looked at the mountains as the gateway between Heaven and Earth. From Peru to Nepal, and from Hawaii to Australia, mountains appear in the myths, stories and legends of many cultures. In Ireland, we have our own Celtic tradition of holy mountains, with **Errigal, Croagh Patrick** and **Brandon**. Like those ancestors of old who sought out the mountains, surrounded by their majesty, ferocity and uniqueness of creation, we are more alive and more in rhythm with our breath, our consciousness and our bodies. On the summit, free from the clutter and noise of everyday demands, we learn to stop and be silent in the moment. The hills are constant, permanent and eternal. Here we belong.

Hillwalking takes us to places we might otherwise have not visited. We adventure in every province at home in Ireland, but many also cross continents to walk in the shadows of the great mountains, including, for example, **Mont Blanc, Mount Kilimanjaro, Machu Picchu** and **Mount Everest**. We are enriched by interacting with indigenous people around these mountains, and with their cultures.

wildlife and plants we no longer recognise.

Every summit gained adds to our inward journey; our achievements add to our confidence; new skills encourage us; and new friendships, born out of shared sweat and tears on the ascent, are precious. We have new relationships with our companions, with the hills and mountains, but mostly with ourselves.

THE HILLS ALLOW THE ANGUISHED TO ESCAPE THE SUFFOCATING EXPECTATIONS OF A WORLD NO LONGER FAMILIAR.

Our walks in Ireland are no less enriching as we cross a landscape littered with stone circles, standing stones and other ancient monuments. These remind us that we stride through history and myth, connecting with

When fun and hope are lost to the pain of tragedy, the hills are steadfast. They embrace the broken-hearted with solitude and stillness. They soothe with natural melodies and rhythm, allowing the anguished to escape the

HILLS AND MOUNTAINS INVITE US TO VISIT THEIR SUMMITS AND TO LOOK BEYOND ... TO ADVENTURES AND CHALLENGES.

suffocating expectations of a world no longer familiar.

The repeated mantra of 'one step at a time,' as you struggle uphill, becomes the physical focus of one's existence, and distracts you from your inner pain. As you stumble, curse and cry in agony, this mantra becomes the code to help you navigate the new reality. Each summit reached is another handrail for you to grasp and to stand a little straighter.

The hills have always played a part in my life, as I was reared at the foot of the Ballyhoura Mountains. There I found fun, mystery and magic. Myths became real, as we followed the path of Fionn and his men, gazed down on the valley to which Oisín returned from Tír na nÓg, scrambled over outcrops of rocks, and felt on top of the world. I was enthralled. There, on the slopes of Blackrock, began a life-long passion, which has shaped and enriched my last six decades.

Hills and mountains invite us to visit their summits and to look beyond. They offer the possibility of adventures and challenges. Even when we go back to the same hill or mountain, it is different. Every walk we do has its own distinct sky, colours, sounds, challenge and craic. There we can make memories and celebrate our achievements, free of our everyday cares. We are awakened to the joy of living ■



► **Marian Wallis** is a member of Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee.





KICKING WITH BOTH FEET

Gerdette Rooney describes completing a seven-week continuous walk along the Ulster Way in 2002, four years after the signing of the Peace Agreement

In late summer of 2002, I took a notion to walk the entire 1,070 kilometres of the **Ulster Way**, which circles Northern Ireland, with a spur going into the Republic in County Donegal and a short detour into my home county of Monaghan. By then, I had climbed many peaks and hiked to Everest Base Camp, but it was time to explore my own turf and follow the 'yellow man' signposts.

Sadly, Ulster has been synonymous with the Troubles, but this ancient province of Ireland proved to be an area of outstanding beauty for hikers.

I walked solo, wearing the bright yellow t-shirt of **Aware**, the Northern Ireland charity which supports people who experience depression. This was in memory of my late mother, **Clare Rooney**, who suffered this debilitating condition for many years following the death of my brother **Cathal** in a car accident. I understood only too well the impact of depression on immediate family and how helpless one can feel to help and provide adequate support.

Above: Gerdette (front row, fourth from left) at her send-off at the Sliabh Beagh Centre, Monaghan, on August 10th, 2002.

Below: An old sweathouse or 'teach alluis' in County Fermanagh.

On my hike, I would rattle my bucket at events I happened on, and target small businesses in towns on the route.

I set out on August 10th, 2002, from the **Sliabh Beagh Centre** in north Monaghan, where a large group of family, friends and representatives of **Aware** cheered me off. The local walking group accompanied me across the pristine blanket bogland of **Bragan** to link up with the Ulster Way. It was an area I knew well from my childhood, as we had collected turf there and picnicked near a Mass Rock from the Penal Laws era.

In the afternoon, my cheery companions left me to continue on the quiet boreens of the **Clogher Valley** and, for the first few days, the Ulster Way darted back and forth across the border.

► **Gerdette Rooney** is originally from Monaghan and now lives in Sydney, Australia. She is an avid traveller and has hiked in many parts of the world, including into Everest Base Camp in Nepal and Tibet, on the GR20 in Corsica, and on the Waitukubuli Trail in Dominica. Gerdette has also climbed Kilimanjaro and Kinabalu. Her first travel book, **Womadic Wanderers: Stories of a Compulsive Traveller**, will be published soon.





I carried an official letter from Aware as well as police permits sanctioning public collections. A bikers' rally in **Glaslough** village was a good beginning, where riders in the pit stop and the audience lining the route were generous and supportive.

Growing up on the border, and knowing the subtle psychology of being either Catholic or Protestant, was advantageous in understanding the little innuendos of many situations I would find myself in. I didn't care 'which foot a person kicked with,' as they say in Ulster to define your religious persuasion.

To minimise detours off the main route for a bed, I carried a bivvy bag and asked local farmers if I could camp on their property. It was this decision that would bring the greatest joy on the walk. Past suspicions didn't prevent people offering a 'quick cuppa' that often evolved into marathon counselling sessions at kitchen tables. The guessing game would commence, figuring out which foot I kicked with, a slow comedy I learned to enjoy. With a quasi-Northern Irish accent and a strange name, I wasn't easy to box. However, once they had got the measure of me, I was frequently offered a comfy bed, sometimes under the glaring eyes of Ian Paisley, hovering above me on the wall. On visiting the toilet in one house, a portrait of the Queen watched my every movement. My hosts and I joked about it the following morning.

Above: Map of the Ulster Way (the Donegal sections are not shown here).

Below: The disused Ulster Canal in 'bandit country' in County Armagh.

The first week was pleasant walking on quiet country lanes amongst gently rolling hills and tranquil lakes, frequented by fishermen. In this 'bandit country' of south Armagh, each village I came to had its Orange Hall and the churches of the two persuasions, with either the Union Jack or the Republican tricolour flying from poles, depending on the majority in the locality. However, kind people everywhere told sad stories of pain and loss to a stranger.

I got fitter by the day and soon averaged thirty kilometres most days, with a rest day each week. To avoid blisters, I wore cushioned trainers on the roads and changed into sturdy boots on rough ground. ➤





The terrain varied greatly, ranging from minor lanes to forest tracks, stunning coastal paths and wet bog. In poorly signposted regions, my compass became my best friend; and it required twenty-one Ordnance Survey maps to cover the entire walk.

The **Mourne Mountains** were the first taxing wilderness area that I had to navigate, with heavy rain across a constant up-and-down boggy traverse of barren moorland. **Batt's Wall**, constructed in Famine times, served as an excellent landmark in poor visibility. The wall was built some eighty years before the **Mourne Wall**, which it joins at the top of **Slieve Muck**. I dried out at a friend's farm that night, where I earned my keep assisting in the Caesarian section of a heifer!

The picturesque shores of **Strangford Lough** were a wildlife haven and, after two weeks' walking, the 'yellow man' led me through the grounds of **Stormont Castle**. I collected my Northern Ireland permit, and the security guards contributed to the worthy cause.

The Ulster Way took me through some dodgy areas renowned for sporadic sectarian violence in the past. I met young 'cider-heads' with glazed eyes in a park, but they wished me well on my journey. In an area with burned-out cars, where idle youths eyed me suspiciously, I just beamed and waved. Trusting that humanity is fundamentally good is a premise of mine when travelling alone, and I was never once afraid during the walk.

Leaving the bleak **Belfast Hills**, I crossed the **Sallagh Braes**, detouring around the infamous **Sinking Bog**, a graveyard for livestock where I didn't want to meet my own end. Before descending to the lovely **Glens of Antrim**, the views across to the **Mull of Kintyre** in Scotland were breathtaking and the 'ladderfield' method of cultivation intriguing, a touch of Asian terraced rice paddies in Ulster.

I struck lucky that my walk coincided with the **Auld Lammas Fair** at **Ballycastle**, where I bought a different 'yellow man,' divine-tasting honeycomb toffee that boosted my energy levels! My bucket speedily filled as I mingled with farmers at livestock sales and crowds gathered listening to street musicians.

Above: Batt's Wall in the Mourne Mountains.

Below: Gerdette at Helen's Bay, Co Down, where she 'cat-sat' for a bed with the Sheldon family.

The weather turned wild on the stunning **north Antrim coast**, with only the screech of seabirds for company. The track descended to slippery, bouldered beaches, where rough swells battered chalk stacks in the tiny bays. I was relieved to sight the organ-pipe cliffs and basalt steps of the **Giant's Causeway**, signifying the end to a crazy day.

I didn't linger at the famous rocky site, as the **Bushmills Whiskey Distillery** nearby beckoned and, as my father's favourite drop, I toasted his memory on a wee dram and warmed my jaded bones.

I stayed with the **Doaks** nearby, a family beset by tragedy when their daughter was murdered in 1985 by the IRA. Parents **Jean** and **Beattie** coped with their grief by doing positive work in uniting a bitterly divided community. These strangers to me, who had good reason to be prejudiced against Catholics, became dear friends. We discussed ordinary lives, whether Protestant or Catholic, and wondered how it could all go so wrong in a small province like Ulster. I was delighted to learn years later that both were decorated by the Queen for their outstanding efforts.

I had walked over 600 kilometres and, looking





leaner and tanned by the wind, I headed into the **Sperrin Mountains**, which was the most solitary section of my entire walk. I thought rumours of gold in the remote hills must be true, noticing one or two grandiose Spanish haciendas in the middle of nowhere. I reflected that this was the new face of affluent Ireland, as no one was ever at home, the owners hitting the urban sprawl to cover the high mortgages of the time. Often a lonesome dog whimpered when I knocked at a door looking for water.

I met a lonely farmer one day as I struggled to hop forward on a muddy and puddled nettle track. **Jim** heard me swear in frustration and approached for a chat. “No one wants to stop and talk anymore,” he complained. “Everyone is too busy.” I felt sorry for him and, as I listened to his woes, it was a valuable lesson on the purpose of my walk.

I had an extraordinary experience stepping back in time near **Pettigo** in Donegal.

The terrain was through confusing forestry and I had strayed off the correct path. As the light faded, I jogged down a firebreak, hoping to clear the forest. A dog barked and I emerged sweating and scratched into a clearing where a woman stood in a cottage doorway. Mary thought me a scared deer and I only stopped shaking after two pots of tea! The collie dozed by the turf fire and, in the dim light of an oil lamp, **Mary** related her story. She lived alone with no electricity, running water or toilet, fearlessly content with the company of her dog and her books. Later, she led me by torchlight to the main road, wishing me God speed for my

Above: Wild moorland on the Sallagh Braes in County Antrim.

Below: View of spectacular Antrim coastline (before the wind began to howl).

walk. It was a rich encounter with a welcoming stranger.

The weather turned damp and miserable as I walked north through the **Bluestack Mountains** to the coast again, climbing **Errigal** on a rare fine day. In a small village, the unexpected generosity of a small businessman reminded me why I was walking. A dear friend of his, heavily in debt, had committed suicide the day before. The man was devastated by the tragedy, regretting that he hadn’t noticed his friend’s troubles. There were tears in his eyes as he handed me a fat cheque for Aware.

I detoured over to **Tory Island** where the king, **Patsy Dan Rodgers** [who passed away in 2018], greeted me warmly in his unique accent, which reminded me of childhood days in the Ranafast Gaeltacht. The island is rich in myth and legend, and a wild cliff walk took me to **Balor’s Fort**, home to a one-eyed giant in pagan times and now inhabited by nesting gannets. ➤



ULSTER WAY



a quiet prayer to my mother and thanked my feet for getting me this far with only a few blisters.

Waking to a pea-soup mist on the lake, my ferryman arrived at 8.00am and I embraced the last leg of my walk, spiritually enriched and with renewed vigour in my step.

The **Fermanagh** region of Northern Ireland is a hidden gem of striking limestone cliffs, peaceful lakes and wooded estates with historic yew trees. It was magical one day to come across an old Irish **sweathouse**. These earth-and-stone saunas were

I was on a mission to score some 'blessed Tory clay,' supposed to get rid of rats. It must be blessed by a member of the **Duggan clan**, and, sure enough, I met the shaman elder himself in the pub and was given my little holy pouch for the price of a pint! However, I confess that the rats in my shed continued to multiply!

September days were getting shorter in the sixth week of my walk. It is said that solitude, as opposed to loneliness, can benefit the mind, body and soul. I had permission to spend a solitary night at **St Patrick's Purgatory** on **Lough Derg**, as the pilgrim season had just ended. This would be the spiritual element to my walk – food for the soul.

In the evening, I left the fading light of the basilica to watch a glorious sunset over the surrounding hills and I sat by the shore until a crescent moon rose over the dark waters. The feeling was as good as any monastery in the Himalayas or ashram in India. I said

Above: View of Errigal (762m) in County Donegal.

Below left: On the Sliabh Beagh Way with members of a local walking group.

Below right: Gerdette with the late King of Tory, Patsy Dan Rodgers, on Tory Island, Co Donegal.

primarily used for treating arthritis but also helped with fertility problems and psychiatric disorders. How I wished this one was still in use to heal my aching joints!

There was exhilaration, yet reluctance, arriving back at my starting point on September 28th after seven weeks walking. It was time to abandon the tranquillity and peace of nature for the noise and bustle of real life and work. My walk raised over €7,000 for Aware and I requested that the monies raised help deal with youth suicide and post-natal depression, two issues I came across often on my journey.

As a hiker, I felt immensely uplifted to have walked in beautiful landscapes, but the real reward was the memory of engaging with the people of Ulster, whose kindness, warmth and hospitality were legendary and would remain with me forever ■

In memory of my mother, Clare Rooney (1928-2000)



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WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Michael O'Donoghue delves into the meanings of the Comeraghs' place names

What's in a name, indeed. The **Comeraghs**, like everywhere else in Ireland, have a variety of place names. The vast majority of the names are Gaelic in origin, but many have changed over time.

The Comeraghs have always been a remote, barren place and this has greatly helped to preserve the old names.

Here in Waterford, we owe a great debt to **Canon Patrick Power** for the Trojan work he did in researching, recording and explaining so many of our local place names. Canon Power understood the importance of place to a rural people. In his book *The place-names of Decies*, published in the early 20th century, he gives us a wonderful insight into the many influences, both natural and human, that have shaped the names of the places around us, down through the ages.

Above:
Coumduala (Com Dubh Fhalla, 'hollow of the black cliff') from Cnoc an Aifrinn.

Anglicisation

Many place names were nearly lost in translation with the arrival of English as the spoken language in the mid-19th century. However, Canon Power's great understanding of Irish enabled him to make intelligent and almost always correct interpretations of the anglicised names we were left with. Before him, **John O'Donovan**, working for the Ordnance Survey as Master of Antiquities, visited 62,000 townlands and recorded 144,000 place names in the 1830s and 1840s. Scholars like O'Donovan, Power and **Patrick Joyce** all emphasised that the present form of many Irish place names was derived from the ancient Irish names as they were spoken, not written. For example, from *Sliabh na mBan* in Irish, you now have Slievenamon in the anglicised version.

The 19th century saw the rapid replacement of Irish by English as the vernacular in Ireland. Tens of thousands of native speakers died out or emigrated during and after the Great Famine. The National School system – or *The Murder Machine*, as Patrick Pearse called it – introduced in 1831, greatly encouraged parents and children alike to turn their backs on the old language. The Catholic Church and influential political leaders like Daniel O'Connell did likewise. It was against this background that young Kilkenny man John O'Donovan was charged with preserving as many of the old place names as possible, and he did so by putting a huge emphasis on preserving the sounds in the old names as spoken by native speakers. The Brian Friel play *Translations* gives us a great insight into this chapter of our cultural history.



➤ **Michael O'Donoghue** lives near Rathgormack, County Waterford. He is a founder member of the **Rathgormack Ramblers** and has led walks in Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales.



Early Celts: the bestowers of names

The language of the early Celts, who came to Ireland in about 500 BC, was a forerunner of old Irish. The Celts were fond of naming places from features in the landscape around them. Most of the place names in the Comeraghs today have an Irish language source, with many referring to physical features, which suggests that the names are quite ancient and go back to early Celtic times. Power tells us “Irish place names are the simplest of simple things.” Much can be derived from the townland name, according to Power. It has, he says, “the hoary antiquity of centuries.”

Root words

Probably the most common root word in the Comeraghs is **com**, which means ‘marshy hollow.’

Above: Stuaicín Garbh (‘rough rock pinnacle’) above **Coumshingaun**.

Below: Bóthar na Socraide (‘the funeral path’) near **An Bearna** (The Gap).

Since there are at least fourteen large marshy hollows on the mountains, scoured out by glaciers, it is not surprising to see the name Comeraghs applied to the place. **Coum Knockaun** means ‘hollow of the hillock;’ **Coumduala** (Com Dubh Fhalla), ‘hollow of the black cliff;’ and **Comalochas**, ‘hollow of the lakes.’

Cnoc, a hill, and **carraig**, a rock, are two other important physical-feature root words.

Knockavannia means ‘hill of the milk;’ **Knockanaffrin**, ‘hill of the Mass;’ **Carricknagower**, ‘rock of the goats;’ and **Carrigeen**, ‘little rock.’

Rocky ribs are represented by the words **stuaic** and **cruach**. You have **Stookeenmeen**, ‘smooth rock cone,’ and **Stookeengarriff**, ‘rough rock cone,’ above Coumshingaun. There are two Cruacháns on the Comeraghs: **Cruachán Paorach** near Clonea ➤





(where the Powers of Curraghmore are buried) and **Cruachán Déiseach** above Dungarvan.

Cluain, meaning ‘meadow,’ **gleann**, ‘glen or valley,’ **cúl**, ‘recess’ or ‘corner,’ and **currach**, meaning ‘marsh,’ are other physical-feature root words. You have **Clondonnell**, ‘O’Donnell’s meadow,’ **Glendalough**, in the Nire valley, ‘valley of the two lakes,’ **Coolnalingady** near Rathgormack, ‘recess of the long lake’ or ‘recess of the lake of the robbers,’ and **Curraghduff**, on the plateau, meaning ‘black bog’ or ‘black marsh.’

Root words relating to water include **loch** (**Lough Mohra**), **glaise** (**Douglas**, ‘dark river’) and **uisce** (**Iske Sullas**, ‘water of light,’ near Coumshingaun).

Words indicating a passage through the mountains are represented by **mám** and **bearna**; both words mean ‘gap.’ The **Mauma Road**, from **Bóthar an Mháma**, is a gap between **Cruachán Déiseach** and the **Monavullaghs**, while **The Gap** (**Béal an Bhearna**) is a col between the Comeragh plateau and the Knockanaffrin ridge, through which an old funeral route between the Nire and Rathgormack passes.

Animals and birds were also popular for place names.

Carrigshanean means ‘rock of the old birds,’ **Coumfea**, perhaps ‘hollow of the deer,’ **Cournagappul** (near Colligan), ‘hollow of the horses,’ **Davbeg** (near Kilrossanty), ‘small ox or stag,’ and **Glenary** (near Clonmel), ‘valley of the shepherd’ (aoire). The word ‘Nire’ itself possibly comes from the old Irish word for cow (**uidhir**). **Coumshingaun** may mean ‘hollow of the ants.’

Above: An Seanbhean (‘the old woman’) waterfall above the **Sgilloges** in the Nire valley.

Below: Top of Comlara, or **Com Ladhair** (‘hollow of the junction’), looking towards **Knockanaffrin**.

Vegetation root words include **móin**, meaning ‘turf,’ and **coll**, ‘hazel.’ **Aitinn** is ‘furze,’ **seascann**, ‘sedge,’ and **fraochán**, ‘whortleberry (bilberry).’ You find **Monavullaghs** (‘turf on the summit’), **Colligan** (‘hollow of the hazel’), **Coolattin** (‘recess of the furze’), **Curraghteskin** (‘sedgy marsh’) and **Kilfrehan** (‘church or wood of the whortleberries’).

The early Irish were a superstitious lot, hence the appearance of names relating to fairies and mythical characters. **Carraigsheegowna** may mean ‘fairy rock of the calves,’ **Shanballyanne** may refer to Áine, a Celtic goddess (with **Shanbally** meaning ‘old townland’); while **Seefin** is ‘Finn McCool’s seat.’

There are some root words relating to settlement, some of them going back a long way. **Rath**, as in **Rathgormack** (‘Cormac’s fort’), was an earthen ring





fort from the early Christian period. **Graig**, as in **Graigavalla** ('village on the route') was a name used for a village often associated with early monasteries, though 'Graig' here may also mean rock.

Buaille is a very interesting root word. It was used in pre-Viking times to mean 'a summer herding or milking place,' as in **Boolabrien** in the Nire valley and the **Boolas** near Rathgormack. Leave out the 'u' and you have **baile**, which came to mean 'homestead' and eventually 'town', e.g. as in **Ballymacarbery**.

There are some place names connected with people. The O'Briens from Thomond got land around Kilrossanty in the 15th century. As a result, you have **Lemybrien** and **Mahon Falls** (Mahon, or **Mathún**, was a common first name amongst the O'Briens).

Crotty's Lake is named after the 18th-century robber **William Crotty**. **Knockaunapeebra** (Cnocán a'piobaire) above Coum Mahon means 'piper's hill.'

There is little evidence of recent invaders influencing place names (Viking, Norman or English planters), though in the Nire valley you have Curtiswood and Russelstown, while in Kilrossanty you have Roxboro and Newtown Palliser.

Focal scoir

Mar fhocal scoir – or, as we say in the fairly recent language we speak, "as a parting word" – the place names around the Comeraghs today have evolved and are constantly evolving. What we have now is probably a small enough percentage of the names that were once known before the

Above: The Boolas (Na Buailí, 'the herding places') and their Pater Noster Lakes from the Comeragh plateau.

Below: Seefin (Suí Fhinn) on Monavullaghs with modern hut and Bronze Age cairn.

arrival of modern times. Just think, what do we know about the language spoken in Ireland before the arrival of the Celts? What were our places called then?

Canon Power refers to the name often used by scholars when writing about the earliest settlers in Ireland, **Ivernians**, and from that some of the names given to this land – **Hibernia**, **Érin**, etc. What, if any, evidence have we got of times back then? Power believed that the names of many of the rivers of the Déise "defy analysis." It is difficult to see a Celtic or Gaelic origin in rivers' names such as **Lingaun**, **Tay**, **Brickey**, **Lickey**, **Funcheon** or **Dalligan**. The language and place names of the 'Neolithic Aborigines' were wiped out by the Celts and, in turn, our Irish place names are now in decline. What will we have left in another century or two? That is a sobering thought! ■



THE WARM HEART OF AFRICA

Regina Flynn visits the Mulanje Massif in Malawi in south-east Africa

"On earth there is no heaven, but there are pieces of it."
– **Jules Renard**

The young guide looked at me expectantly and introduced himself as **Leason**. He said that he was an accredited guide for the nearby **Mount Mulanje**, which is also known as the Mulanje Massif, a range of over twenty peaks. I had arrived in the nearby town of **Mulanje** in the south-east of Malawi only two hours earlier, after using various modes of transport to get there from the country's capital, **Lilongwe**. The almost 400km journey had taken all day, using a fast, non-stop coach going south from Lilongwe to Blantyre, followed by a series of local minibuses of dubious mechanical prowess heading to Mulanje, packed with passengers, babies and the occasional hen.

Malawi is a small, landlocked country located in south-east Africa. It is about one and a half times the

Above: Mount Mulanje.

Below: Small fishing boats on Lake Malawi.

size of Ireland, but one-third of its surface area is taken up by **Lake Malawi**. In 2018, it had a population of just over 18 million people, with 85% of that population living in rural areas.

Malawi is one of the ten poorest countries in the world, with half of the population living below the poverty line and 25% living in extreme poverty. High unemployment, poor governance, alarming levels of HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, a lack of natural resources, poor quality of education provision and the subsistence farming practiced by the majority of the population contribute to the poverty of the Malawian people.

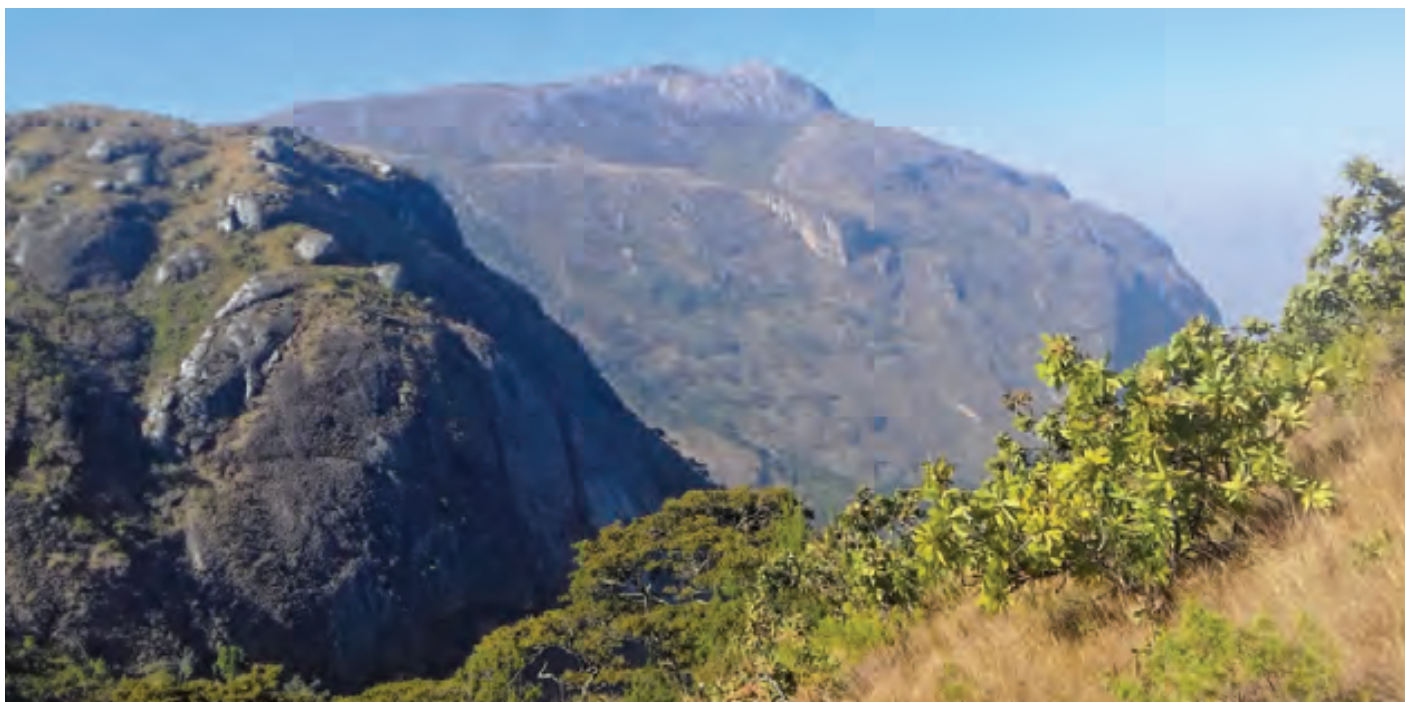
Nevertheless, it is a country of stunning beauty, home to Lake Malawi, the great Shire River, the Shire Highlands, which include the Zomba Plateau and the Mulanje Massif, and game parks.

I was going to **Mount Mulanje** to go hiking for three days in that magnificent range of granite peaks, the



➤ **Regina Flynn** has been an active member of **Galway Walking Club** for several years. She is also a keen traveller, who frequently participates in walking trips overseas.





highest in central and southern Africa. The peaks stretch up to just over 3,000m, with the highest peak, at 3,002m, being **Sapitwa Peak**, as Leason informed me. It is part of a protected area measuring 22 km by 26 km.

Today, villagers, families and small farmers continue to live around the massif in one of the highest rural population densities in Africa. Much of the area consists of rolling grassland at elevations of 1,800m to 2,200m, intersected by deep, forested ravines. Many of the other individual peaks reach heights of over 2,500m, including **Chambe Peak** (2,557m), the West Face of which is the longest rock climb in Africa.

Ten basic huts are dotted throughout the range for hikers to sleep in and in which a fire is lit for light, heat and cooking purposes. A caretaker is responsible for each of these huts; hikers and guides carry their own food and the caretaker collects MK3,000 (€3) for each night's stay. Apart from the **Church of Central**

Above: Sapitwa Peak (3,002m), the highest peak in the Mulanje Massif.

Below: Regina Flynn on the Lichenya Plateau.

Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) hut, Hope's Rest Cottage, where I was to stay the first night, these huts are all maintained by the **Mountain Club of Malawi (MCM)**.

Guides and porters are necessary, as both the ascent and descent are very difficult, covering varying forms of terrain, often with rocks and boulders. The paths are often barely visible and there are no landmarks to guide a lone hiker, so groups of local people, both men and women, are employed to clear the way.

Leason had come to the **Mulanje Motel**, where I was staying, to offer his services as a guide at the standard rate of US\$25 per day. An hour later, we had wrapped matters up and had arranged to meet at 7.00am the following day. I was chuffed. Within one day I had travelled a long distance from Lilongwe, had found a place to stay, had organised a three-day trip to Mount Mulanje and was about to embark on a great adventure.

Packing only the minimum of clothing, food and a sleeping bag, I set off from the Mulanje Motel with Leason the following morning. For the first four kilometres we walked through a tea estate. Mount Mulanje presides over many tea estates, for which the area is noted. According to Leason, Prince Charles owns many of these estates! Malawi's high unemployment rate is partially attributed to the closure of tea factories, which has had a devastating impact in the region.

The Lichenya Plateau

Soon after we got through the tea estate, the ascent began in earnest. Leason had explained to me that we would follow the **Boma Path** from Mulanje town up and across the **Lichenya Plateau**. This was a very tough climb, sheer and steep, consisting mainly of huge boulders and rocks that involved extensive scrambling. These boulders and rocks straddled streams and waterfalls, whose waters were cold, spring-like and delicious to drink.

It was probably the hardest climb that I have ever done, outdoing Mount Kilimanjaro. It was so sheer and





Mozambique and South Africa, for use by artists and craftspeople. Authorities seem to turn a blind eye to this lucrative practice.

Another exhilarating day ensued. The splendour of the encircling granite and limestone peaks, the lack of human activity, the stillness and quietness of the landscape, the space and the bush combined to create a timeless, magical, mindful experience. Yes, the climb was hard and arduous. I think it was the hardest that I have

a lot of scrambling was involved; and the boulders were big and quite intimidating. There were few branches to clutch on to, but the local guides climbed in loafers, brown runners or open sandals, without qualms and seemingly without minding their own safety. Those guys were amazing, but their income is sporadic and precarious.

The sun shone all day. At about 2,000m, after climbing almost 1,300m, I was getting weary and it was time to call it a day. The **CCAP Hope's Rest Cottage** (1,981m) was a welcome sight. The hut contained a bench, a table and chairs, and had room for up to eight hikers to stay. A thin mattress on a wooden frame was my bed. Everywhere was spotlessly clean, maintained by the caretaker, **Henderson**.

Huge logs burned in the large fireplace. I boiled the kettle and pots for rice and pasta. One other hiker shared the accommodation, **Juris** from Barcelona. **William**, his guide, had hauled a live chicken up from Mulanje. I didn't witness its killing outside the hut, but Juris and William were eagerly anticipating their two-course meal of chicken soup followed by chicken with rice. They polished off the pot and I wasn't offered any!

The majestic peaks, the silence, the purity of the air and even the open latrines and the makeshift shower filled me with a sense of awe. Darkness fell at 6.00pm and, soon after, the sky was luminous with thousands of stars twinkling brightly. I felt very near to the sky and it was as if I could reach out and pluck the stars from it.

After being in bed the previous night at the unearthly hour of 7.20pm, I welcomed the early 7.00am start the following morning. The sun shone brightly again and we set off to climb the nearby **Chilemba Peak** (2,365m).

Chilemba Peak

Yellow and purple flowers danced in the slight breeze while large cacti dotted the landscape. Sounds of tree-cutting could be heard and I was informed that they were poachers who are illegally wiping out the indigenous cedar tree unique to Mount Mulanje. Hardy young men carry the blocks of wood down the mountains where it is sold in neighbouring

Above: Boulder-strewn hill on the Lichenya Plateau.

Below: Hope's Rest Cottage, the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) hut.

ever done, again on a par with the final ascent of Kilimanjaro, but it was intriguing, exciting and challenging.

MCM's **Chambe Hut**, where we stayed that night, was located at an altitude of 1,860m. Firewood was available but it was suggested by the caretaker that hikers should not burn too much of it. Hence another early night was called for. It was also the custom of the guides, porters and caretakers of the huts to eat a hot meal of their staple nsima (maize) early in the evening and then to sleep, so it was implied that visitors should do the same. I was on my own in the hut, so there was no company except the stars.

When the last day of the trip finally dawned, it could not come soon enough, as I had been in bed since 6.00pm the previous night! We set off on the downward journey. I was nostalgic and lonely, and did not want to leave this magical, inspiring range of mountains. The crossing of streams and rivers proved challenging, but we made it safely to the bottom, where I paid MK1,000 (€1) to the **Likhubula Forestry Office** for the three-day adventure.

For a climbing experience, for a low-cost expedition and for the sheer adventure of it, I would highly recommend a trip to Malawi's Mount Mulanje. I certainly enjoyed my visit to this memorable mountain range ■





MAGICAL HIKING IN ICELAND

Lar Matthews has warm memories of a trip to Iceland

I had always regarded Iceland as a place for real mountaineers to go to, but not for the likes of hillwalkers like myself. However, when I got an opportunity to go there in the first week of July 2006 with a group of friends, I grabbed it.

The country's spectacular beauty is the stuff of legends, and the strangeness of its landscape is awesome. Iceland is quite new in terms of how the Earth is developing, and visiting there is akin to taking a geological trip through recent history. It is interesting to learn about Iceland's geology in the context of its receding glaciers. Indeed, some people say that it is like visiting the moon.

We landed in the world's most northerly capital city, **Reykjavik**, replete with its wooden houses with blue, green, red and white roofs. I recommend going up on the roof of **Hallgrímskirkja**, a church with a great view of the city. ➤

Above:
Landmannalaugar
landscape.

Right: Gullfoss
Waterfall.



➤ **Lar Matthews** is a veteran of over 60 years' mountain hiking experience, throughout Ireland and beyond. He is still an intrepid hillwalker and is an occasional writer.



Early on, one of the real surprises there was coming out of a pub at 11.30pm and seeing the sun still shining on the top storeys of the buildings around us. There were nearly 24 hours of daylight when we were there, so some found it a bit difficult to sleep at night. However, the sun disappears there from November to February, when there is the opportunity to see the Northern Lights.

Iceland is not a cheap place to holiday. A pint of beer was the equivalent of around €10 and, when two of our party ordered puffins in a restaurant as a starter, they found out that it was a rather costly entrée, at €28 each!

We took a full-day tour to **Thingvellir National Park**, where the great Atlantic Rift tears Iceland apart along the tectonic plates. We also visited the powerful **Gullfoss Waterfall** and the very impressive **Strokkur Geyser**, which erupts with boiling water every ten minutes to a height of a hundred feet – certainly a ‘wow’ moment! **Warning:** don’t stand downwind of it!

Fimmvorduhals trek

The trek over the **Fimmvorduhals mountain pass** is listed as one of the twenty best treks in the world by *National Geographic* magazine, and is only open for a few short months of the year. We were transported to **Thorsmork** by a high-chassis eight-wheel bus with six-foot diameter wheels, as we had to drive through rivers four feet deep in places.

When we started walking, we were in light clothes, but, as we climbed, we put on extra layers. After several hours we came to a dodgy, knife-edge arête with long drops on either side.

Later, we had to traverse a one-foot-wide narrow shelf on the side of a high cliff where the wire

Above:
One of the many stunning waterfalls on the Fimmvorduhals Trail.

Below:
Skogafoss Waterfall, the last waterfall downriver on the Fimmvorduhals Trail, at the end of the route.

handrails had been swept away, presumably by an avalanche. Some of the group found this very testing.

Nearing the top of the pass, we found it difficult to find the hut, as the mist was right down on us and the waymarks were covered in snow, but we were lucky to see some footprints, which guided us to the hut where we were staying.

Hut sleepover

The hut was located in a very precarious place on the highest point of the pass. Tons of rocks were piled against it, up to the sills of the windows, to stop it being blown away. The **Eyjafjallajökull** volcanic eruption in 2010 created two new craters there and destroyed the hut. The ash it emitted disrupted air travel for ten million people, and the locals were very much affected by the sulphur dioxide gas.





Landmannalaugar hike

On another day, we went to **Landmannalaugar** ('the people's pool'). This is a geothermal area flanked by rhyolite rock, steaming hot springs, black lava, green moss, red iron, and blue-green mountains, a perfect setting for a great day's hike!

We went for a four-hour walk through the strange, sprawling lava fields, with sulphur vents all around. We finished with a dip in one of the hot geothermal pools.

On our way back to the hotel, the bus driver pointed out some car tracks on a hillside that had been created by an off-road vehicle twenty years ago. The tracks were still visible, which underlined the fragility of the environment in Iceland.

The Blue Lagoon

The **Blue Lagoon** geothermal spa is surreal, with steam rising among the jet-black lava formations. This was a great way to finish a magical holiday, so different from anywhere I have hiked before ■

That night, we stayed in the hut and were rocked to sleep by the wind shaking it. We had to melt snow for our drinks and meals, as there was no running water. The toilets, which included a unisex urinal, were holes in the floor with barrels underneath, which had to be transported down to the coast periodically to be emptied.

The next day, the mist was still down when we were leaving the hut and, to make things worse, it was raining and windy on our way down to **Skogar**. We came to a ford in the river, which was impassable, so we backtracked and were lucky to find a footbridge. It was just as well, as otherwise we would have had to return to the hut, even though it was booked out for that night.

Arriving in Skogar, we were allowed into the reception area of the local museum to change into dry clothes and then literally had to pour the water from our boots outside.

Above: Thingvellir National Park landscape.

Below: Hot steam rises amongst snow-covered black rhyolite mountains on the Landmannalaugar Trail.

Trekking in Iceland

By Nicky Hore, Features Editor

Iceland's most popular trek doesn't actually have a name. It consists of the **Laugavegur Trail**, which runs south from Landmannalaugar to Thorsmork, and then continues as the **Fimmvorduhals Trail** to Skogar on the south coast.

As Lar Matthews describes in the main article, it is possible to start sections of the trail from either end or from Thorsmork. The Laugavegur Trail is 55 kilometres long and the second section over the Fimmvorduhals Pass is 22km. Usually the full 77km trek is completed over six or seven days.

Most trekkers use the services of travel companies for transport from Reykjavik, to book accommodation in the huts, and for the expertise of their guides.

Independent travel is another option, however, and camping is also possible. Both options keep the costs down, but they require good preparation.

Food and a sleeping bag need to be carried on the trek, as the mountain huts are basic, though warm and dry.

The weather can change quickly in Iceland and, in the summer, despite up to twenty-three hours of daylight, it is advisable to carry full rain gear, wind proofs and additional warm clothes. River crossing shoes will also definitely be required, and the boots that you wear to walk in the Irish mountains would be ideal for trekking in Iceland ■



SCRAMBLES IN THE CUILLIN

Alan Tees scales some of his favourite peaks in the Cuillin on the Isle of Skye

It was July 1974 and we were in retreat from the Coire Lagan, an impressive corrie in the Cuillin, on the Isle of Skye. My more experienced partner, **Billy Plews**, had decided that to go beyond Collie's Ledge in poor visibility, with a rookie who didn't know what an abseil was (never mind not knowing how to do one), was at best inadvisable.

Although I didn't actually get to see the Cuillin on that occasion, I was captivated, obsessed even. I used to fantasise about walking out of my boring job in Ballymena, catching the early boat to Stranraer and driving non-stop to Glenbrittle, then a grim, midge-infested backwater on Skye. It is better now, some say.

I have been back quite a few times since, more often than not with others whose main objective was a complete traverse of the main **Cuillin Ridge**. I joined them once, but opted out about halfway along. Don't get me wrong, I love scrambling. I also like Victoria sponge but I wouldn't consider eating a whole cake at one sitting. Better one slice of the Cuillin at a time, methinks, and savour it.

The peaks that caught my eye there weren't always the highest. First, it was **Sgurr an Fheadain** from the Sligachan/Glenbrittle Road, its striking profile split by

Above: Sgurr na h-Uamha, Isle of Skye, Scotland.

Below: Bathers in the Fairy Pools (the biggest tourist attraction of the Cuillin) with Sgurr an Fheadain behind.

the aptly-named Waterpipe Gully. Then it was the crenellated summit and seamed flanks of **Sgurr na Stri**, best viewed from Elgol. And finally, **Sgurr na h-Uamha**, a spur of Sgurr nan Gillean towering over Harta Coire. Because of their modest heights, these beauties are often clear when all above and behind are hidden in the murk.

Sgurr na Stri (494m)

This peak has a very long approach from, well, anywhere, so it is best to take a boat in from **Elgol** to **Loch Coriusk**. You can cross the Coruisk outflow on stepping stones in most conditions and follow the coastal path, with one bad step, which isn't that bad, south-east along the base of the mountain to a broad, grassy saddle (GR 504 186). The SSE buttress gives a 2-star, grade 2/3 scramble to the summit, which is well described in the Scottish Mountaineering Club's *Skye Scrambles* guide. I think I just followed my nose, choosing or avoiding



➤ **Alan Tees** has been a member of Mountaineering Ireland for over forty years and is a past President. He is an all-round outdoor enthusiast and an instigator of the *Glover Highlander* and the *Climbfest*. He likes to climb during the warmer months and to hillwalk for the rest of the year. Alan edited the 2001 *Donegal Rock Climbing Guide*, produced the *Scrambles in Ulster and Connacht* guide, and more recently assisted in the production of *Irish Peaks*.





obstacles, to the summit, which is greatly fissured with great boulders. If the main ridge is obscured, there are still amazing views down over stunning **Loch Coruisk** and out to **Rhum** and **Eigg**. Best to descend north and then west to the stepping stones, hoping you are in time to catch the last boat out. The alternative doesn't bear thinking about, unless you can get into the hut.

Sgurr na h-Uamha (736m)

I first noticed this peak from Druim nan Ramh above Loch Coruisk, its K2-like profile rising from **Harta Coire** and totally eclipsing all its loftier neighbours. I was back a couple of years later but, being on my own, I opted to pass on the Harta Face and take a rising traverse from Glen Sligachan to the connecting ridge between it and Sgurr Beag, leaving only a short climb to the top. It looked wet, slimy and exposed, so I opted for another ascent of the easier **Sgurr nan Gilleann**. I would like to go back and do either the **Naismith Parker route** on the **South Ridge** or the **Pilkington Route**, the original route of ascent in 1887, both grade 3 scrambles.

Sgurr an Fheadain (689m)

Another shapely spur of the Cuillin, most often viewed from the twisty, single-track Glenbrittle Road (if you can take your eye off the road for long enough), and driven past many times en route to some more lofty objective. Pointy and cleft by **Waterpipe Gully**, it presents a unique profile. It finally got onto my 'must do' list for the 2020 post-lockdown Scottish trip. When we got there, we had to dramatically rethink our preconception that we were approaching a low-profile, unfrequented mountain. Directed into a massive new car park and charged a fiver, we joined the hordes descending a well-constructed path to the **Fairy Pools**, a series of small cascades and pools in the river emanating from the base of the mountain.

Our remote mountain was now the backdrop for a million selfies, as the Fairy Pools have become the main tourist product of the Cuillin and Skye. Prior to this there was little in the Cuillin for the tourist to take

Above: Sgurr na Stri from Elgol.

Below: Bidean Druim nan Ramh from Sgurr an Fheadain.

home, other than perhaps a murky photo and a few midge bites. It is easy to draw some comparisons with **'The Stairway to Heaven'** in Fermanagh, which is certainly also a catchy name and image, circulated on social media, that draws huge crowds. However, the pools are natural and were always there. Whilst there are any number of similar pools all over Scotland, these just got handed celebrity status.

Leaving the snappers and dippers behind to the mercy of the midges, we climbed **The Spur**, a 2-star grade 2 scramble taking the ridge left of Waterpipe Gully, with no need for a rope. We had the route to ourselves, though on our descent there were three other parties on it. A fine short day and a good taster to Skye scrambling, with parking and the approach now much easier, provided you don't mind the crowds.

No longer an obsession, the Cuillin nevertheless still have an ongoing attraction for me and I would really like to go back there again in 2021, when the current Covid-19 crisis has been sorted out. It would be nice to stick around long enough to go to all the places I have never visited before. That would not just be the Cuillin Ridge, but also the remote, inaccessible corries, the gullies and the ramps, to really get to know the Cuillin ■



ICE CLIMBING IN THE ROCKIES

Naoise Ó Muircheartaigh goes ice climbing with friends in the Canadian Rockies

Note: Canadian Ice Climbing Grades

Winter Ice – WI (from WI1 to WI7)

Mixed climbing, ice and rock – M

Mount Dennis, Field, British Columbia

It was a 5.00am start in mid-February, 2019. Four of us had travelled to climb ice and mixed routes on **Mount Dennis** in British Columbia. The weather was cold and calm in the valley, although we saw signs of wind high above, not an uncommon occurrence but potentially dangerous with movement of the snow cover on the faces.

After a little deliberation, we decided the risks were acceptable and marched into our routes along the fringes of an avalanche debris field. **Pilsner Pillar** is graded Winter Ice 6 (WI6), with the crux pitch forming a 40m dead-vertical and free-standing pillar

Above: Naoise Ó Muircheartaigh on P2 of Whiteman Falls (WI6).

Right: Naoise on Physiotherapy (WI5, M7), Evan Thomas Creek.



➤ **Naoise Ó Muircheartaigh** is a native of the Kingdom of Kerry and took to the mountains from a young age. He has walked and climbed extensively throughout Ireland and around the world. Having been introduced to winter climbing by his mentors growing up, his passion for committing and technical climbing has naturally led him to search for steep winter routes.



of dripping wet and chandeliered ice. It is a formidable beauty and a testament to the skill and nerve of the first ascensionists in 1978, who had nothing like the aggressive curved-shaft ice tools or the fast-placing screws that modern innovation has afforded us.

Leaving the belay cave through a hole in the pillar, we could hear **Doug Hollinger's** progress as his grunts and kicks echoed through the hollow ice, and he occasionally cursed a stuck tool or the lack of solid ice for protection. Ice crashed down as he cleared a vertical path through the wet chandeliers.

Reaching the top, shivering and soaked to the jocks, Doug belayed **Ben Sanford** up, leaving him there at the top of the climb to shoot pictures of **Taylor Sullivan** and I ascending Traditional Ale. As we roped up, heavy spindrift spilled down alongside the route. We briefly discussed the possibility of something bigger coming down, but we felt safe in the overhanging terrain and carried on. Doug scurried back to the car to dry out.

Traditional Ale (WI5, M7) climbs steep mixed ground by the Pilsner Pillar, finishing up a free-hanging dagger and joining the top half of the pillar to finish. Balancing my mono-point crampons on little edges and searching above for thin hook placements, I scratched my way up the steep rock to gain the dagger, and higher, to some rusty old pegs, which I happily clipped.

At the top, Ben and I delighted at the climbs, as I belayed Taylor. I felt his weight on the rope and tried to call out. However, except for the faint sound of cursing carried on the wind, communication was impossible owing to the noise from one of the Rockies' massive trains, which was passing below. Knowing it would be passing for quite some time, and figuring that Taylor had swung into free space beneath the overhang, I lowered him to the ground. Then I, set up an abseil and descended, leaving Ben on the spacious ledge.

Several metres down a free-hanging abseil, having cleared enough daggers for a safe retreat, I heard a noise. It was that deep grumbling sound that I had read about and heard of in stories but until then never experienced myself. There was no mistaking what was to come. My insides clenched in nervous tension. Seconds later a tsunami of snow erupted from the top of the cliff, the bulk of which was luckily sent sailing over my head. The torrent of snow pummelled me as I clung to the rope. I was gripped



Above: Ben Sanford beneath the Stanley Headwall.

Right: Gerry Dumouchel (left) and Taylor Sullivan following the team's 'FA' (first ascent) of Sick Day (WI3, M2) on Storm Mountain.

out of my mind, every gap in my clothing filled with cold snow. Daggers from above rained down, narrowly missing me.

Glancing down, I saw Taylor and Ryan running for cover as the slope they were standing on was dragged into the debris. I saw Ryan lose his footing and get dragged towards the churning mass before my sight ➤



ICE CLIMBING



was obscured by powder in the air. The sky darkened and the deafening noise grew more violent for what seemed like an eternity. After it passed, light powder dust was still settling and the air was filled with shouting, as we checked in with each other.

Amazingly, Taylor had managed to catch Ryan, who was now sitting clutching an injured knee but otherwise unharmed. We roared up to the top, but heard nothing from Ben. The bloody train was still passing below! Minutes passed as we scanned the debris field, shouting and searching for a red jacket amongst the mangled trees and scattered rocks.

"Aye, mate?" Ben's unmistakable Australian accent drew our gaze upward. What a relief to see his head sticking out from the top of the route! He had taken cover under the rock I was anchored to, as the avalanche roared past. Checking in with each other on the ground, it became apparent what had happened to Taylor. He was missing half a front tooth after getting too close to the back of his ice tool when it popped off a delicate placement. With only a missing tooth and some torn ligaments between the four of us, we had escaped very lightly and had learnt some important lessons about the power of the mountains.

Winter ice climbing in the Canadian Rockies

The Canadian Rockies are a range of astounding beauty, a true wilderness in places, the likes of which is uncommon in western Europe. Flying into Calgary over the prairies, you are confronted by a wall of mountains as far as the eye can see, hiding lifetimes of skiing and climbing of every discipline,

Above: Naoise bridging the dagger on Cascade Kronenbourg (WI5).

Below: Naoise and Ben Sanford on Rainbow Serpent (WI6).

if you can find your way into them.

Climbing there is always an adventure, often requiring long ski approaches or 4x4 driving with no lifts or phone service, adding to the feeling of exposure. It has long been a testing ground for ice climbers, and a winter climbing paradise.

The western Rockies take the brunt of the heavy maritime snow, leaving a lower volume of crisp, dry powder to be dropped over the eastern side. Freeze-melt cycles of cold temperatures, sometimes extreme, and warm Chinook winds bring to life some of the most spectacularly sculpted ice lines imaginable. There are steep ice spills over sheer mountain faces everywhere you look. Long mountain ice lines like **Polar Circus** (WI5), steep featured pillars like **Curtain Call** (WI6) and ephemeral lines such as **Sea of Vapours** (WI6/7), that can come and go in a





matter of days, tell a story of daring ice climbing spanning half a century.

Since the late 1960s, visionary pioneers of our discipline, such as Swiss climber **Urs Kallen** and South African/Canadian **Dave Cheesemond**, along with American **Jeff Lowe** and his contemporaries from the mid-1970s, have left an historical mark through these routes, each generation laying the groundwork for the next, shaping the great alpinists of our time, such as American **Steve House** and the late **Marc-André Leclerc** from Canada.

Moving to the Rockies

It was a single photograph that prompted me to move to the Rockies in 2018 – a photograph of **The Sorcerer**, a stunning 210m streak of WI5 ice set in the back of a limestone amphitheatre in the Ghost River area of Alberta. At the time, I knew little about where the route was and felt that it would be well above my abilities. Nevertheless, I was looking for somewhere to go, so I went.

I had a lot to learn and was incredibly fortunate to make solid partnerships early on and to be welcomed into a climbing community full of people more than willing to share their knowledge. While working as a ski patroller at one of the resorts, my climbing partners and I started ticking our way through the classics and, much to our delight, up through the grades.

Thanks to a solid climbing partner, with no shortage of psyche, we climbed the goal route of **The**

Above: Naoise on Rainbow Serpent (WI6).

Below: Ben Sanford after a successful climb on Ice Nine (WI6).

Sorcerer sooner than we expected, which was a huge confidence boost for what was to come. Our elation that day was flattened a bit after we drove the pickup through a river ice-shelf and had to spend a night out in -25°C.

Nonetheless, we were keen for more of it, so we got cold and scared on many more routes throughout the Rockies, including dream climbs of mine, including **Rainbow Serpent (WI6)** and **Ice Nine (WI6)**.

We worked our way through a progression of steep ice routes over two winter seasons, leading us to some wild routes and unforgettable experiences, from encounters with wolves, new routes, successes, failures and the odd close call. Still, we only scratched the surface; there are lifetimes of climbing to be done in the Rockies ■





Club Support Meetings

Several Club and Member Support Meetings were held by Zoom during September 2020



Written by
Ruth Whelan,
Hillwalking
Development
Officer



This year's **Club Support Meetings** were held online due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. Four meetings in total were held during the month of September, one for each province, to enable clubs to engage with other clubs in their region.

The main purpose of the meetings was to provide clubs with an opportunity to raise questions and concerns, to network with other clubs in their region, and to share knowledge and experiences. Clubs were asked to submit any specific topics they wanted to discuss in advance of the meetings to ensure that all meetings were

tailored to the clubs' needs, but all topics were addressed on the evening.

The meeting was hosted by **Ruth Whelan**, the Hillwalking Development Officer, supported by **Damien O'Sullivan**, Climbing Officer, **Helen Lawless**, Access and Conservation Officer, and **Jane Carney**, Training Officer, who were all on hand to answer any specific questions the clubs might have.

Overall, fifty clubs were represented at these meetings, with lots of interaction from everyone present, and an array of topics discussed.

Key points

Covid-19 Updates and concerns as of September 2020

There was a lot of discussion on how clubs were managing with the restrictions, parking concerns, group sizes and trying to keep numbers low.

One of the main topics discussed throughout was that of **car-pooling**. There was lots of conversation around possible solutions to this issue that is being faced by clubs. Mountaineering Ireland has raised the issue with **Sport Ireland** for clarification, to see if there are any safe options for

sharing a car with someone from outside of your household.

Sport Ireland advised that you should not share private vehicles with people from outside your household. If this is not possible, such as in the case of an emergency, face coverings should be worn when sharing a vehicle.

The advice from the government is that car-pooling with anyone from outside your household could potentially increase the risk of catching Covid-19. Therefore, it is not advised to car-share.

The practicalities around additional advice for **contact tracing, recording and**



Gathering for a navigation course on Croagh Patrick during European Week of Sport in September

storing data, and following and enforcing government guidelines, were also discussed. Lots of clubs are getting interest from new members, but a number of them are not in a position to take them on due to capacity.

The difficulties in running AGMs at the moment, and how best to approach them, were discussed.

The discussions also looked at whether there were any changes to **access** due to the current restrictions.

Restrictions on **climbing** were also considered, and the impact they have on young people training for competitions.

It was also highlighted that many of the problems currently arising from the influx of people to the hills are being caused by other users of the hills and not necessarily members of Mountaineering Ireland. Members can help the situation by becoming advocates for Mountaineering Ireland's messages, or be our eyes on the ground for issues related to **access, littering, parking, group size and behaviour, and responsible recreation.**

Other general discussions included details on what **resources** are available to

clubs, including the additional **online training supports** available on **www.mountaineering.ie**, details on the **training grants** that are available, and on **GDPR guidelines**, particularly in relation to Covid-19.

Ways to **retain club members** and to bring in **new members** were also discussed, and how training within clubs, and fostering independence amongst club members, can support this.

Action from meetings

- The names and details of **club contacts were circulated** to those in attendance at each meeting, so that clubs could connect with each other at a local level.
- We communicated **clarification** on our advice on Covid-19 concerns.
- We published **advice on how to run AGMs online** and circulated this to all clubs.

Note: At the time of writing, the Republic of Ireland has moved to **Level 5** of Covid-19 restrictions. Mountaineering Ireland continues to engage with Sport Ireland to seek

clarification on the practical implications of the Level 5 restrictions for hillwalking and climbing.

Mountaineering Ireland is also engaging with the government to seek an amendment to the **domestic travel restriction of 5km** in Level 5, to allow hillwalkers and climbers to participate in their activities in a safe and responsible manner in the longer term of living with Covid-19.

The physical and mental health benefits of hillwalking and climbing are well documented. Research indicates that outdoor environments pose a low risk of Covid-19 transmission. Considering these two factors together provides a strong basis for reconsidering the 5km restriction, which effectively prevents our activities and other physical

activities from taking place.

We would urge all clubs to remain in contact with their members, particularly those who may be more isolated due to their living circumstances.

Mountaineering Ireland is here to support all clubs and members, so please contact us directly if we can be of any assistance.

At the start of November, Mountaineering Ireland launched a series of **online chats, presentations, skills workshops and lectures**. These events hopefully will help us to keep in touch throughout lockdown and keep our passion for hillwalking and climbing alive.

● **Keep an eye on our website and social media pages for further events that may be added** ■

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

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

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

Joss Books





Minister rejects Sperrins windfarm



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Access &
Conservation
Officer

Mountaineering Ireland welcomed the news on October 26th, 2020, that Northern Ireland's Infrastructure Minister, **Nichola Mallon**, had refused permission for the largest ever application for a windfarm in Northern Ireland. The 33-turbine Doraville development was proposed for a location to the south of the **Glenelly Valley**, at the heart of the **Sperrin Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB). The application was rejected because it would cause considerable harm to the landscape interest of a large part of the Sperrin AONB and to its unique archaeological, cultural and tourism assets.

This decision vindicated the concerns expressed in Mountaineering Ireland's 2017 submission on this application. Mountaineering Ireland's submission was made in the context of supporting the principle of sustainable, renewable energy development, but also adhering to our strategic objective to be a voice for the protection of mountain landscapes. A greater diversity in renewable energy sources, improvements in grid capacity, better energy storage solutions and the re-powering of older windfarms will all assist in achieving the UK target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050, without the further loss of undeveloped scenic landscapes.

The scale of the Doraville proposal (33 turbines of 136 to 149 metres in height) and its central location within the AONB were key concerns. This huge wind factory would have industrialised an important scenic landscape and detracted from the quality of visitor experiences in the Sperrins into the future. In September 2019, Mountaineering Ireland emphasised these and related concerns to a Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) public inquiry on Doraville. The Minister's decision was in line with the PAC recommendation.

Windfarm proposed in the Mournes

News of the refusal of the Doraville application came on the same day that Mountaineering Ireland Board member **Dawson Stelfox** presented Mountaineering Ireland's concerns



'The 19 turbines in the Brockaboy windfarm in the northern Sperrins have an overall height of 136m.

regarding proposals for a windfarm near **Hilltown** in the western Mournes to Newry Mourne and Down District councillors. Dawson highlighted that the proposed windfarm would be 'industrial exploitation' of part of the **Mourne AONB**, an area that has been so designated in recognition of its scenic beauty.

The Mourne proposal is for eight turbines with an overall height of 142.5 metres at **Gruggandoo**, south of Hilltown. This is the third attempt by the same developers to secure planning approval on this site. In examining the latest proposals, Mountaineering Ireland identified issues with the landscape and visual impact assessment submitted by the developers. Mountaineering Ireland is strongly of the view that this development would completely undermine the integrity of the AONB designation in the Mournes and that it would be unacceptably damaging to the visual amenity and landscape character of the area.

The development would also diminish the quality of current and future recreation experiences in the Mournes, thereby reducing the economic benefit that recreation and tourism bring to the area. Mountaineering Ireland submitted a robust objection to the proposal in October 2020, complemented by

observations from a chartered landscape architect.

As the proposed Gruggandoo windfarm is considered to be regionally significant, it needs to be decided on by the Department for Infrastructure. Although Newry Mourne and Down District Council's Planning Officer advised that the council should recommend that the Department refuse the application, councillors instead decided to vote on a motion calling on Minister Nichola Mallon to refer the application to a public inquiry before the Planning Appeals Commission. That motion was passed overwhelmingly by the councillors, so it now seems likely that Mountaineering Ireland will have to prepare its case for a public inquiry on this application.

While the Sperrins decision is extremely positive, both these applications bring into focus the weak legal protection for Northern Ireland's most highly valued and exceptional landscapes.

Read our submissions

Mountaineering Ireland's submissions on the Doraville and Gruggandoo windfarms can be accessed on the Downloads page within the Access and Environment section of www.mountaineering.ie ■

RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

Many happy returns

This has been a tough year for everyone. Especially tough for those who have lost loved ones, and for those who have lost their jobs. For hillwalkers and climbers, missing the activities we love has been another dimension to a difficult year.

Those who got back to the mountains and crags over the summer experienced the wonderful feeling of returning to their happy place – the sense of space, the air, the views and the physical exertion. The period of absence made

the experience sweeter. We will all get back there again.

When we do, let's extend our appreciation to the landowners and local communities in Ireland's upland and coastal areas. It has been a tough and worrying time for them too. For those in popular locations, add to that the sense of being overwhelmed by visitor numbers, traffic congestion and having to deal with the litter left behind by a minority of people.

When reconnecting with the places you love, try to include a socially distanced chat with someone living there. Listen to how it's been for them and put yourself in their shoes. As cafés and other businesses in upland areas re-open, they will need our support. Take the opportunity to express your gratitude for the enjoyment we get from our time in the mountains. Those conversations will help ensure we all have many happy returns ■

Current Access & Conservation activities

In the last issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* (IML 135, pages 38-39), we provided an overview of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation work in 2019. Here, we briefly outline a selection of projects we're currently involved with.

National Outdoor Recreation Strategy

Mountaineering Ireland is participating in a Working Group tasked with developing a new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy**. The new Strategy will provide a vision and an overarching framework for the growth and development of outdoor recreation in Ireland.

Review of the Walks Scheme

Mountaineering Ireland is providing input to a current review of the **Walks Scheme**, under which landowners are paid to maintain sections of designated walking routes on their land. Our input has been mainly in relation to the potential for a Walks Scheme model for the uplands, and how this could be linked to **Comhairle na Tuaithe's Mountain Access Project**.

Wicklow Upland Path Condition Survey

Working with the **Wicklow Uplands Council, Wicklow Mountains National Park** and others, Mountaineering Ireland has been involved in commissioning a path condition survey of over 100km of eroded hillwalking routes in the Wicklow Mountains. The survey will identify paths and sections which are in need of repair and prioritise these.



Heath Milkwort, one of the species included in the new *Walking With Wildlife* leaflet. This low-growing plant, found on acid, peaty soils and blanket bogs, flowers from May to September, but flowers may be found during the winter. **Photograph:** Zöe Devlin

Croagh Patrick

Mountaineering Ireland has provided support to the **Croagh Patrick Stakeholders** group in its recent recruitment of a team to undertake path

repair work along the **Pilgrim Route**. Work should be happening on the ground by the time you read this.

'Walking With Wildlife'

Mountaineering Ireland is currently updating its popular, and long out of print, **Walking With Wildlife** guide to key flora and fauna in Northern Ireland's uplands. Versions of this laminated fold-out guide will follow later for the **east**, **west** and **south-west** of the country.

● If you have queries on these or other aspects of Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation work, please contact helen@mountaineering.ie ■



Training



Scenes from Dalkey Hill and Quarry during the European Week of Sport in September

News for members

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



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

Forthcoming meets

We are planning for the usual Mountaineering Ireland meets next year, but obviously whether or not we will actually be able to hold them will very much depend on how the Covid-19 pandemic progresses in the coming months.

■ Winter Meet 2021

The 2021 Winter Meet is planned for **Inchree, Onich, Scotland, February 13-20th, 2021**. Bookings are open!

The online information evening on October 20th, 2020, went well and was well attended. An information pack and the booking form are available on the website. There is a short video on the Mountaineering Ireland YouTube channel covering the key aspects of the meet. There is already snow on the ground there! Please book early. See you there, government guidance permitting! ■

■ Summer Alpine Meet 2021

The 2021 Alpine Meet is planned for **Saas Grund, Switzerland, July 3-17th, 2021**. Bookings are open!

An online information evening at 7.00pm on January 25th, 2021, will provide all the details for this event.

Youth bursary places will be available for aspirant alpinists aged 18 to 25 years for 2021

Of the 65-plus members who attended the Alpine Meet in 2019, 50% were in the youth category, aged 18-25. This was undoubtedly due to the very generous bursary received by Mountaineering Ireland for youth alpinists in 2019. We are

excited to announce that this support has been promised again for 2021. The **Youth Alpine Bursary** supports young aspiring alpinists and helps subsidise course costs for those availing of the Alpine walking, mountaineering and climbing courses. Your first trip to the Alps should be seen as the start of a lifetime of new adventures. Mountaineering Ireland is keen to support our future alpinists.

Saas Grund offers free lift passes for resident visitors, just one of the many benefits of this fabulous location.

We will continue to offer courses there and opportunities to meet others and expand your skills repertoire as alpinists.

Participants can avail of the Alpine walking, mountaineering and climbing courses. They can also learn to lead climb and experience using Alpine huts and trails for the first time.

The Alps offer a lifetime of new venues to explore, accessible to meet the needs, aspirations and abilities typically sought by clubs, individuals, families and students. The meet sees the experienced mentoring the inexperienced in an apprentice-style pathway, and others following the more formal guide/client approach.

Courses are run at cost and not for profit, and are just one of the many benefits of your Mountaineering Ireland membership.

See you in Saas Grund, July 3-17th, 2021, government guidance permitting!

Please consult the Mountaineering Ireland website, **www.mountaineering.ie**, for more information, to book and for updates ■



Women climbers in Dalkey Quarry during European Week of Sport

European Week of Sport 2020

Mountaineering Ireland participated in this year's **European Week of Sport** by organising twenty introductory rock climbing sessions in twenty different locations under the **Women In Sport** banner.

As the national coordinating body for European Week of Sport in Ireland, **Sport Ireland** coordinated the events in this year's European Week of Sport, which ran from September 23rd to the 30th. There was a mixture of online and offline events available in different sports to cater for the needs of everyone in these difficult times, helping everyone in the country to **#BeActive**.

In 2019, an estimated 110,196 people took part in over 800 events in Ireland during the week.

Sport Ireland hoped that this year's event would inspire even more people and provided funding to multiple flagship events as well as local events run by Local Sports Partnerships.

European Week of Sport is a European Commission-led initiative, which aims to increase the level of participation in sport and physical activity in the EU. European Week of Sport aims to tackle the inactivity crisis and reduce obesity levels by encouraging Europeans to embrace a healthier and more active lifestyle. In Ireland, many of the events held during the week were also supported by **Healthy Ireland** ■

News for providers

■ In September, delivery of the **NGB awards, instruction and leadership** ceased in the Republic of Ireland due to the Covid-19 restrictions, but remained possible in Northern Ireland. I would again like to thank all providers for their cooperation and support during this second cessation of work. We will continue to support providers and candidates pending their return to business and training in the future. The Training Office will continue to monitor and update as the situation develops.

■ Protocols during Covid-19

Please see the latest guidance on the Mountaineering Ireland website and check update emails. During any permitted course delivery, trainers are verbalising the need to stay 2m apart, engaging in good hand hygiene and wearing face coverings where necessary and practical.

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.

Key dates 2020-21

- 4th December Online Senior Providers Workshop
- 25th January Online Summer Alpine Meet Information Evening, 7-8pm
- 30-31st January Train the Trainers, Wicklow/Mournes (TBC), Covid-19 guidance permitting
- 1st February Online MTBI Meeting
- 13-20th February Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- 5-8th March Mountain Leader Assessment
- 13th March Online MTBI Meeting
- May Skills Workshops (TBC)
- 8th June Online MTBI Meeting
- 3-17th July Summer Alpine Meet, Saas Grund, Switzerland
- September Skills Workshops (TBC)
- 19th September Online MTBI Meeting
- 30th November Online MTBI Meeting

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

All events will adhere to the current government guidance; online options will be used as alternatives where appropriate. Events may only run if permitted by the current government guidance.

Stay safe out there!

Call to action

■ We are looking for further presenters for online sessions. Please contact the **Training Office** to express your interest.

Please contact the **Training Officer, Jane Carney**, with any training queries, on 01 625 1112 or 01 625 1115 ■

Training awards and registration

■ **Registration** for training **courses** remains open, and **courses** are running in Northern Ireland, but they have ceased in the Republic of Ireland due to government restrictions, except for second-level and third-level education courses.

■ We are back to exploring our 5km radius for recreation, relaxation, wellbeing and adventure. Providers and leaders have enjoyed a brief period of return to course delivery, which we hope will be the case again shortly. Participants and candidates will again need to wait for a return to the mountains ■

Training continued next page...



All the benefits of walking, on hills or on the flat



IN PRAISE OF WALKING: THE NEW SCIENCE OF HOW WE WALK AND WHY IT'S GOOD FOR US

By Shane O'Mara

Bodley Head (2019), Norton (2020),
Vintage (2020), 224pp, £6.99 (pbk),
ISBN 978-1-784707-57-6

As Professor of Experimental Brain Research at Trinity College Dublin, the author, **Shane O'Mara**, is the ideal expert to explain all about walking to us: how walking upright on two feet is a uniquely human skill that defines us as a species, an

incredibly miraculous skill, which we take for granted; how walking evolved over millions of years; and how recent research is now revealing how the brain and nervous system perform the mechanical magic of balancing, navigating in a crowded city and using our inner GPS system. Our upright posture changed our relationship with the world, including our social world.

This is a very interesting read for all walkers, which is just about everyone. This popular recreational activity is good for mind and body, and good for our muscles and posture. It helps to protect and repair organs and can slow or turn back the ageing of our brains. With our minds in motion, we think more creatively, our mood improves and our stress levels fall. As our lives are becoming increasingly sedentary, there are risks to our health. We must start walking more, whether up a mountain, down

to a park or in our normal daily activities, to work or for the shopping. We and our societies will be better for it.

I liked how the value of social walking is stressed, rambling with friends, particularly in the great outdoors, making new friends – for many Ramblers, a partner for life! What better, more natural way to meet your true love! With even more walking and rambling groups available, all ages can access the walks or climbs that suit them best. Walking makes us more social by freeing our hands for gestures to signal meaningfully to others. City dwellers should explore and avail of the many enjoyable rambles in and close to urban areas.

Quotations from some famous authors and philosophers are enriching for the reader. For example, "Every day I walk myself into a state of wellbeing, I walk away from every illness, I know no thought so burdensome that

one cannot walk away from it," wrote Danish philosopher **Søren Kierkegaard**.

William Wordsworth composed many of his lovely poems while out walking, showing the vital relationship between movement of the body and the flow of creative thinking. He said that walking brings a clarity of thinking, of creativity, of mood.

Walking is a lifeline, a wonderful, useful, enjoyable and worthwhile recreational activity that is freely available to all of us. As the author says, "It is the simple, life-enhancing, health-building prescription we all need."

This interesting book is an excellent read for all walkers, whether lower level ramblers or hill and mountain climbers. It is also a strong encouragement to others to get involved now, in their own best interests.

Seán Quinn Hillwalker, Founder-President of the Irish Ramblers Club, member of Mountaineering Ireland and An Taisce, life-member of An Óige, founder-member of Na Coisithe

Training (continued from previous page)...

News for members

■ Online Skills Workshops

These workshops are proving to be very popular and are attracting good numbers. Please book online for these free sessions on a diverse range of topics to support us all through these strange and restrictive times.

Free to members, €10 for non-members!

If you are planning to book four sessions, why not join Mountaineering Ireland and attend all of these workshops for free.

Make an evening of it!

Why not watch a video or the live session with your fellow club members from the comfort of your own homes? You could also get together on Zoom afterwards to share a post-session analysis with members of 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.

■ Training Grant applications

Please submit applications for the June-December period.

■ Please see the newly launched **Happy Hiking** leaflet (formerly the **Walk Safely** leaflet) on the Mountaineering Ireland website.

■ Please continue to 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 continue to note and observe the **Covid-19 Guidance** updates on the Mountaineering Ireland website.

■ Please provide those newer to the outdoors with **positive role models** for responsible and safe recreation, particularly in relation to taking home your litter, leaving no trace, camping responsibly and parking considerately, and in relation to route selection, being properly equipped for the terrain and possible weather conditions, checking the weather forecast and learning the necessary navigation skills.

■ Please continue to help **share these messages** and inform others ■

Irish climbing legend who broke down barriers produces an inspirational memoir



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



UNCOILING THE ROPES: THE MEMOIR OF A TRAILBLAZING IRISH CLIMBER

By Clare Sheridan

Mweelrea Press (2020), 200pp,
8 pages of photos, €18.99 (ppbk),
ISBN 978-1-78846-159-7

I don't remember the first time I met **Clare Sheridan**, author of *Uncoiling the Ropes*. She simply seemed to materialise at the same time climbing took centre stage in my life. I would see her and her husband, **Calvin Torrans**, climbing together at the wall and I just knew that they were two legends in Irish climbing. More importantly, however, they were also two welcoming, friendly, fun members of the climbing community.

Mountaineering books are my 'go to' and I've read many, but Clare's book resonated with me more than most. In fact, I think my husband might be getting sick of hearing about it! As I write this review, I am 35 weeks pregnant and many of my sentences recently have begun "Clare climbed the Cuillin ridge when she was 30 weeks pregnant, so I should be able for..." (insert non-midwife-approved

outdoor adventure here), or "Clare and Calvin brought their two-week-old baby camping, so we should...", or sometimes I just gesture towards the book mid-argument with a simple "Don't limit me!" and we burst out laughing.

Mark Twain once said, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." At less than 200 pages, *Uncoiling the Ropes* is relatively short, and I don't know how Clare did that – I'm guessing a combination of natural talent, hours upon hours of work and careful editing. She

sensationalism. Clare is not the hero of her own story and I loved that about the book. Serious climbing in Ireland, Yosemite, the Alps, the Himalayas, the Andes and Alaska is recounted well, but unremarked upon, leaving me, the reader, to find it all the more remarkable.

Unexpectedly for me, though, it is not the impressive climbs in this book that will stick with me; it is the attitudes to life that permeate through them, the raw passion for the outdoors, and the resilience and good-naturedness in the face of



Clare Sheridan below the Dibona on the Écrins massif

somehow manages to interweave three inspirational climbing stories here: her own, Calvin's and the one of their shared partnership. She does this succinctly and modestly, with no fluff, no embellishment and no

adversity.

At a time in Ireland when women were telling other women "girls don't climb," and it was accepted as fact that, even in the rare cases when they did, they would never have the strength to climb hard routes, Clare

climbed anyway and pretty soon she climbed hard.

When Calvin was told he'd never climb again, he was back on the rock within a few short months. Yes, we hear stories like this all the time, but what came through uniquely for me in this book was the lack of bitterness or anger. Clare and Calvin didn't climb out of spite, because others said they couldn't. They climbed because they loved it and because they knew they could.

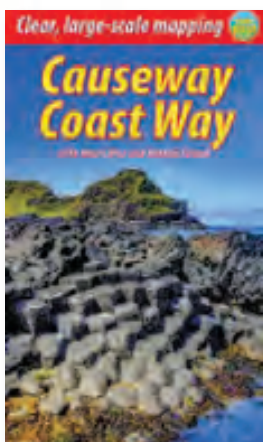
I should point out here that this book has something for every reader. You don't need to have a connection with climbing to enjoy it. What is written about life in Ireland (north and south) since the 1950s alone is more than enough to merit the read.

Uncoiling the Ropes inspires; whether it is to climb harder, take up climbing, delve deeper into Ireland's history, or simply ditch the excuses and push yourself that little bit more in life, depends on you. For me, I have to lace up my running shoes, even though I can no longer see my feet, because that's what Clare would do!

Vanessa Kirkpatrick Climber, past member of IMC, has climbed on big walls in Yosemite and Zion and in places like Kenya, Namibia, Oman and Saudi Arabia



Guide to north Antrim coast covers all the bases



CAUSEWAY COAST WAY, WITH MOYLE WAY AND RATHLIN ISLAND

By Eoin Reilly

Rucksack Readers (2020), 72pp, many colour and b/w photos, and maps, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-898481-93-5

Rucksack Readers is an Edinburgh-based publisher specialising in guidebooks for long-distance walks in the UK and Ireland. Having already

covered the Kerry, Dingle and Wicklow Ways, they now turn their attention to north Antrim with a circa six-day itinerary that combines the rarely-walked **Moyle Way** 26-mile (42km) with a trip to **Rathlin Island**, followed by the comparatively popular 32-mile (52km) **Causeway Coast Way**.

Older guidebooks suggest connecting the Antrim Hills Way with the Moyle Way to create an even longer walk. Sadly, the loss of access over the Garron Plateau now means anyone tackling this route faces a 10-mile (16km) road march.

Back to the review: there are excellent photos and maps for each of the routes, along with detailed step-by-step instructions – hardly needed on the Causeway Coast but helpful for the poorly signposted Moyle Way, especially the very boggy upland section between Trostan and Slieveanorra. There



The Giant's Causeway

is also detailed and up-to-date information on everything from wildlife, accommodation, transport and the geology of the Giant's Causeway, through to local history and locations from the ubiquitous *Game of Thrones*.

Some readers might welcome encouragement to wander a little further from the waymarked route. The Moyle

Way passes close to the summits of both **Trostan** and **Knocklayd**, but both the route and this guidebook visit neither. Otherwise, this is perfect for anyone seeking a comprehensive guide to the area, especially the first-time visitor.

James Butler Member of Mountaineering Ireland, hillwalker and runner, based near Ballymena

Guide to Land's End loop walk details every twist and turn



LAND'S END CIRCUIT

By Max Landsberg

Rucksack Readers (2020), 72pp, many colour photos and 1:35,000 maps, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-898481-92-8

This is another handy guide from Rucksack Readers. It covers a 68-km (42-mile)

section in Cornwall of England's longest waymarked long-distance trail, the **South West Coastal Path**. The path's origins were to facilitate the coastguards, who moved from lighthouse to lighthouse, patrolling for smugglers. The first section of the trail opened in 1973 and it now stretches across four counties for more than 1,000 kilometres.

The South West Coastal Path's **Land's End Circuit** takes 3-6 days to walk, and the guide's OSI map-like dimensions would be spot on for this type of an outing. In terms of weight, it is more fly swatter than door-stop. Coupled with rainproof paper and spiral-bound, open-flat pages, the Rucksack Readers format is a good design, more comfortable to hold than the



Land's End, Cornwall

ubiquitous smartphone.

Despite its handy size, the guide contains sufficient practical information for planning and preparation, plus some history and a summary of key features of the circuit itself. Almost half of the guide's 72 pages describe the route in detail, using turn-by-turn

walking directions in text, and an abundance of photographs and 1:35,000 maps.

I recommend this guide. It would be a welcome aid to a walk in this beautiful part of England.

David Ridgeway Hillwalker based in Dublin, has previously walked parts of the South West Coastal Path

Winter ascents of the world's highest mountains



WINTER 8000: CLIMBING THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS IN THE COLDEST SEASON

By Bernadette McDonald

Vertebrate Publishing (2020), 272pp, many b/w photos, 16pp of colour photos, £24.00 (hdbk), ISBN 978-1-912560-38-7

The author of *Winter 8000*, **Bernadette McDonald**, also wrote *Freedom Climbers*, the story of the generation of Polish climbers who were among the first to climb a number of the 8,000m peaks. That makes her particularly

well placed to write this book, because Polish climbers were the pre-eminent climbers in the second stage of that race, making the first winter ascents of those mountains. Her knowledge of that generation is used to great effect to tell the stories of the teams and individuals that made those ascents, and the tragedies and triumphs that occurred.

The later phase of climbing the 8,000ers in winter saw the arrival of climbers like **Simone Moro** and **Alex Txikon**, who also sought Polish experience and teammates to add winter pedigree. That continuity carried on into one of the more harrowing stories of that period, involving **Élisabeth Revol** and **Tomasz 'Tomek' Mackiewicz**, a Polish climber who was living in Kildare at the time. It is grimly rivetting. It can be hard for any book to convey the difficulty of climbs of any kind, to describe the suffering without sensationalism, but



Élisabeth Revol and Tomek Mackiewicz in their last photo together

I'm not sure I've ever read a book that did it so well. The story of Elisabeth and Tomek in particular stands out.

There's now just one 8,000m mountain left without a winter ascent, **K2**. The last major attempt on it was a Polish expedition that involved some of the strongest alpinists in the world today, including **Denis Urubko** and **Adam Bielecki**. It might have been fitting that Polish climbers closed the book, but that attempt ended

in arguments, accusations and breakaway solo bids as the harsh conditions took their toll. Another winter expedition to K2 has recently been announced. Everyone on the mountain from this December is going to need all the luck and good weather they can get if they're going to force McDonald into rewriting the final chapter of this excellent book.

Kevin Duffy Rock climber and mountaineer

Gripping account of tragic climb on Nanga Parbat



TO LIVE: FIGHTING FOR LIFE ON THE KILLER MOUNTAIN

By Élisabeth Revol

Vertebrate Publishing (2020, 1st English edition), 160pp, 8pp colour photos, 3pp maps, £24.00, ISBN 978-1-839810-17-6

To Live gives a succinct, gripping and powerful account of the tragic events that occurred on **Nanga Parbat** less than two years ago, when **Élisabeth Revol** and **Tomasz 'Tomek' Mackiewicz** found themselves alone on the summit of an 8,000m peak in winter, with Tomasz blinded and ill.

Excellent authored, Élisabeth Revol writes with a directness and clarity that matches her style in the mountains; within the first twenty pages you are drawn into the building horror of their situation. What follows reads almost cathartically.

Revol's account of her struggles is written with an immediate feel that allows you to comprehend the anguish, fear and confusion she goes through. This intense immediacy is broken nicely in places with interspersions of thoughts from present-day Revol, which provide more context.

I remember those events unfolding at the time and the insane media coverage they got. These recent memories, along with Tomek's life here in Ireland, make it hit a bit closer to home than many other similar stories, but, if anything, it only adds to the power of the narrative.

Throughout it all, Revol's love and respect for both her climbing partner and the mountains is clear. Even while describing her descent, her first thoughts are about Tomek and she almost minimises her own heroics to survive. It is only when you take a step back that you can really put her efforts into context.

Overall, a captivating book that I felt was an honest and genuine tribute to Tomek, whilst acting as a sobering reminder of how little things can add up in the mountains.

Seán Fortune Climber and member of UCD Mountaineering Club

Training manual that sets out the basics really well



THE CLIMBING BIBLE: TECHNICAL, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL TRAINING FOR ROCK CLIMBING

By Martin Mobråten & Stian Christophersen

Vertebrate Publishing (2020), 368pp, circa 400 colour photos, £30.00 (hdbk), ISBN 978-1-912560-70-7

As standards in climbing rose, competitions became more

popular and people were drawn into the sport through climbing walls, as well as via traditional routes such as clubs and outdoor centres. A training culture developed. Part of that evolution was a growing body of literature as climbers wanted to find out how to get the best out of themselves and their time at the crag or wall, rather than just pitching up and hoping to improve. Books like *Training for Climbing* by Eric Horst, and Dave McLeod's *9 Out of 10 Climbers Make the Same Mistakes*, helped the training culture to gain a toe-hold in climbers' minds.

The latest addition to that canon is *The Climbing Bible*. The book harnesses the knowledge of authors with 40 years of climbing between them and

years of experience coaching national climbing teams. One of the authors, **Christophersen**, is also a physiotherapist, and that expertise is reflected in the book's treatment of climbing injuries.

The book is jammed with techniques, physical and mental training and injury prevention advice to get you into a position to climb when ready. It also has chapters on tactics and roping in the right partners to take all that training outside. There are suggested training plans for a structured approach to training, but you can still apply a lot of the lessons, even if you want to just lay back and enjoy it without taking that route.

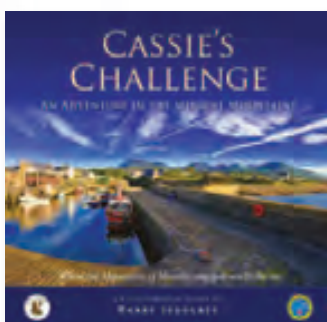
If that all sounds a bit dry and technical, it's not really. It is just the basics set out really

well for anyone who needs advice about getting the most out of their climbing ability. It is a fairly comprehensive book that should take anyone a long way from their first route towards whatever grade they aspire to, while helping them to avoid falling into bad habits or not falling into good ones.

As the authors note, the knowledge of training for climbing is still in the foothills, so they have added a suggested reading list and some websites that should tie in with continued learning. However, I suspect that this book will be sufficient for most climbers' training needs and it should be a while before they top out and need something more.

Kevin Duffy Rock climber and mountaineer

Popular route for completing fifty tops in the Mourne



CASSIE'S CHALLENGE: AN ADVENTURE IN THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS

By Harry Teggarty

Self-published with S Design/Sean McCrystal (2018), 100pp, many colour photos and map, £10.00 (ppbk). All proceeds to go to **Mourne Mountain Rescue Team**

This is a lovely book for anyone who walks or runs in the Mourne. Despite a small minority of mountain runners who will take on the challenge of completing the fifty mountain tops in twenty-four

hours, the author has sensibly broken down the hillwalk of 93km with 6,193m of ascent into seven linear routes. These could reasonably separately be done as day walks.

Plenty of route details are given about all of the walks, and the author's local knowledge and love of the Mourne shine through. The routes do not always follow obvious lines but will interest those with a more adventurous mind. The route maps are from the 1:25k map and show the general line, but walkers should be able to navigate themselves. As a **Mourne Mountain Rescue Team** volunteer himself, the author emphasises the careful planning and personal mountain skills that are essential before embarking on any trip into the mountains.

There is a multitude of the author's own photos, which is a record of the landscape in itself, including a couple of



On the Cassie's Challenge route in the Mourne

Cassie, his late, mountain-loving dog.

The author has completed the self-designed challenge twice. There is a list (short!) of those who have completed the challenge in under 24 hours, both supported and unsupported. Anyone interested can log on to **cassieschallenge.com**, but I can also see great interest among hillwalkers in taking on

the challenge of completing the route in sections.

This interesting book is available through the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team's website, **www.mournemrt.org/product/cassies-challenge**. Proceeds from sales will go to support the team in its important work.

Nicky Hore Hillwalker with Blayney Ramblers

The 2020 mountain book awards

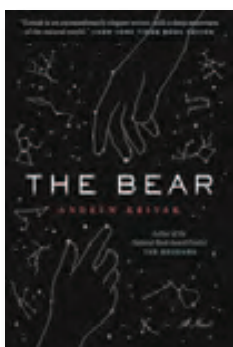


The **2020 Banff Centre Mountain Film and Book Festival** took place in early November. The winner of the Banff Festival's **Grand Prize** for the Mountain Book Competition was *Raven's Witness: The Alaska Life of Richard K. Nelson*, by **Hank Lentfer**. That book also won the **Jon Whyte Award for Mountain Literature (Non-fiction)**.



Lentfer's book is a biography of a modern-day John Muir set against the backdrop of Alaska's wilderness, native cultures, the writing life and friendships rooted in nature.

Among the other awards at Banff, the **Adventure Travel Award** went to *Labyrinth of Ice: The Triumphant and Tragic Greely Polar Expedition*, by **Buddy Levy**.



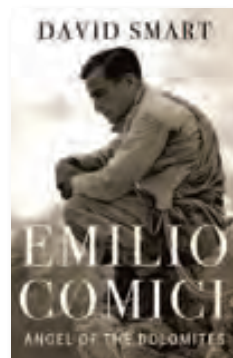
The **Mountain Fiction and Poetry Award** was won by *The Bear*, by **Andrew Krivak**; the **Mountain Environment and Natural History Award** went to *Wild Himalaya: A Natural History of the Greatest Mountain Range on Earth*, by **Stephen Alter**; the **Guidebook Award** to *Crack Climbing: The Definitive Guide*, by **Pete Whittaker** (already reviewed in the *Irish Mountain Log*); the **Climbing Literature Award** to *Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites*, by **David Smart**; and the **Special Jury Mention** to *Himalaya: A Human History*, by **Ed Douglas**.



Among the other finalists were *Sky Dance*, by **John Burns**, and *Winter 8000: Climbing the world's highest mountains in the coldest season*, by **Bernadette McDonald**, both already reviewed in the *Irish Mountain Log*. In the **Guidebook** category, *Down: The Complete Descent Manual for Climbers*, by **Andy Kirkpatrick**, was also shortlisted.



As I write, the winner of the **2020 Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature** has yet to be announced. With twenty-two entries from Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, New Zealand and the USA this year, five books have been shortlisted. These are:



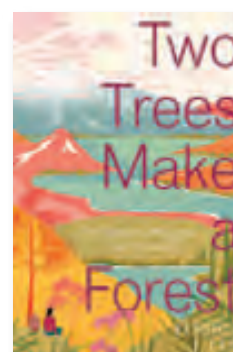
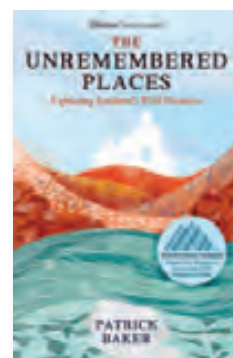
The Unremembered Places: Exploring Scotland's Wild Histories, by **Patrick Baker** – a lyrical exploration of Scotland's regions of 'rumour and folklore,' of hidden places and often-forgotten tales.

Where There's a Will: Hope, Grief and Endurance in a Cycle Race Across a Continent, by **Emily Chappell** – a book that deftly captures the physical and psychological intensity of ultra-distance cycling.

The Uncrowned King of Mont Blanc: The Life of T Graham Brown, Physiologist and Mountaineer, by **Peter Foster** (also already reviewed in the *Irish Mountain Log*) – an intricately researched biography of a Scottish mountaineer, whose contributions to climbing history on Mont Blanc and other mountains have long deserved a close look.

Slatehead: The Ascent of Britain's Slate-climbing Scene, by **Peter Goulding** – an in-depth history of the climbs and characters of British slate quarries.

Two Trees Make a Forest: On Memory, Migration and Taiwan, by **Jessica J Lee** – a poetic and deeply moving account of Taiwan's mountains, waters and forests.



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

Coping with the challenges of Covid-19

Claire Griffin has been seeking refuge in nature during the lockdowns

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, I have realised that nature can offer positive coping mechanisms. The challenges of a pandemic include intensified emotions of frustration, isolation, worthlessness and uncertainty, which threaten mental well-being. Experts suggest that these negative feelings can be combatted by returning to nature and keeping active in the outdoors. I would certainly agree. In rediscovering my locality, I have had numerous uplifting experiences, acquired new knowledge and walked nearly 800 kilometres!

As a volunteer with the **South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association**, and an active member of two hillwalking groups, I have, for a long time understood the importance of the outdoors as a salve for the soul. However, with the lockdowns, this has meant coming down from the hills and exploring a variety of walks in my native Kilkenny.

Even under the tightest of restrictions, gardens and nearby parks have provided abundant natural charms. The secret is to be receptive and to employ all the senses. Look, listen, taste, touch and smell, and nature will reveal itself accordingly.

Throughout these challenging times I have wondered at rainbows, enjoyed tumbling waterfalls and been struck by amazing cloud formations.

I stood by as deer walked nonchalantly past, a red squirrel munched on an acorn and an otter deliberately checked me out. I spied a stoat on its errands before strolling through clouds of damselflies and butterflies on a sun-drenched riverbank. I heard not one but two cuckoos, fairly assured that I would hear none at all this year. I found myself compelled to learn the identification of cloud genres, constellations, bumblebees



and butterflies, particularly when, like a heroine in an animation movie, I sat amid lots of the latter but could not name them.

I learned, too, that mice are extremely vocal when almost trodden upon, and whoever coined the phrase 'quiet as a mouse' never met that little chappie.

I witnessed at close quarters an aerial battle between a herring gull and a heron, a bird I am more used to seeing standing sentinel.

Likewise, two duelling jackdaws settled their dispute right at my feet,

having fallen out of a tree above my head. I passed along as a white egret eyed its fellow river birds over fishing rights, and later was overjoyed to spot a kingfisher, having not seen one for a long time. I watched families of swans mature from small cygnets early in the year to adult birds in recent weeks. There were, however, some less agreeable encounters ... with a cranky goose, nettles, midges and swarms of St Mark's flies.

We, who are hillwalkers and enjoy the outdoors, know that sunshine follows

showers and that nature withdraws in the autumn, only to return again, refreshed and full of vitality, in springtime. The Covid-19 challenge will also pass and we will again be able to return to our normal hillwalking activities. In the meantime, celebrate the small things and embrace the positive and therapeutic qualities that the outdoors offers. Oh, and I intend to reach 1,000 kilometres, continuing to commend nature as I walk on by ■



AUTHOR Claire Griffin is from Kilkenny and is a member of Tyndall Mountain Club and the Kilkenny Hillwalkers. She has hiked all over Ireland and in many other countries in Europe. She is also a member of the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA), which she joined in 2011.



Scottish Winter Meet

February 13th-20th 2021

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

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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

DISCOUNTS for early bookings and group bookings



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



Mountaineering Ireland SUMMER ALPINE MEET

July 3-17th, 2021, Saas Grund, Switzerland

For details see www.mountaineering.ie
or contact jane@mountaineering.ie
00353 (0)1 625 1112

SUBSIDISED BURSARY PLACES for 18 to 25-year-olds



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.

In his review of *Irish Peaks* in the *Irish Mountain Log* (No 135, Autumn 2020), 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 €29.95. However, there is a special **10% discount** for all Mountaineering Ireland members who order through the official online website, which means you pay €26.95 plus postage, if it has to be posted out to you. To order your discounted copy, please visit www.irishpeaks.ie.

