

# Irish Mountain Log

The magazine for hillwalkers and climbers

## ALPINE MEET

Returns to Ailefroide in 2014



### WINTER GEAR

All you need for cold weather camping

### UPLAND ARCHAEOLOGY

Last in the series

### LATEST BOOKS

Bumper review section

  
**Mountaineering  
Ireland**

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



# Spring Gathering and AGM

Sligo, March 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Hosted by Sligo Mountaineering Club



Join us for a weekend of walking and climbing in beautiful Sligo!



Mountaineering Ireland AGM 2014 will take place during the weekend in Sligo

# Summer Alpine Meet 2014



Ailefroide, French Alps

July 6<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2014

With the usual full range  
of courses on offer



Keep an eye on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) from the New Year on as more information becomes available



## ISSUE 108

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

### Mountaineering Ireland

Mountaineering Ireland Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Dublin, No 199053. Registered office: Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Ireland. Tel: (+353 1) 625 1115 Fax: (+353 1) 625 1116 [info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie) [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)

### Hot Rock Climbing Wall

Tollymore Mountain Centre Bryansford, Newcastle County Down, BT33 0PT Tel: (+44 28) 4372 5354 [youth@mountaineering.ie](mailto:youth@mountaineering.ie)

### Editor: Patrick O'Sullivan

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

### Literary Editor: Peter O'Neill

[iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-literaryeditor@mountaineering.ie)

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**Advertising:** Rozanne Bell, [rozanne@mountaineering.ie](mailto:rozanne@mountaineering.ie)

**Production:** C  il  n MacLochl  inn [iml-production@mountaineering.ie](mailto:iml-production@mountaineering.ie)

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

### PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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



# Welcome

The Winter issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is packed with Christmas goodies and finally ready to go!

We have some strong features. Of course, Christmas and the New Year is also a time when we might start planning our summer holidays, so we have an article about last summer's Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meet by Maureen Toomey, a first-timer, just to give you some ideas about how you could spend next summer.

An article by Simon Stewart extols the virtues of visiting pastures new in Ireland, using modern technology and a consultative approach to research the route first.

Martin Fitzpatrick finishes off his excellent series of articles on upland archaeology, bringing us up to recent times and looking forward at what might be seen as archaeological monuments from our time in the future. Then Declan O'Keeffe goes back in time to look at the contributions of Irish Victorian Alpinists to the development of the sport of alpinism. And finally, a short story for Christmas by Ian Baldwin!

Ensuring reasonable public access to upland areas continues to be a major challenge in Ireland. Worryingly for recreational users of the countryside, it seems from the recent Lissadell judgment that the burden of proof is set unreasonably high against anyone asserting a public right of way anywhere in the Republic of Ireland.



Mountaineering Ireland urges the Government to review the wider issue of recreation management in the Irish countryside

Mountaineering Ireland is continuing to urge the Government to review the wider issue of recreation management in the Irish countryside.

As this is the last issue of the year, I would like to thank all of our contributors for the material they have provided. As a membership magazine, we rely on that support.

On behalf of the editorial team of the *Irish Mountain Log*, and the staff and Board of Mountaineering Ireland, I would also like to take this opportunity to wish all of the members of Mountaineering Ireland an enjoyable Christmas and an active and safe New Year.

*Patrick O'Sullivan*

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor



## Write for the Log

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

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

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



### ON THE COVER

Heading for technical section of alta via between Rifugio Maria e Franco and Rifugio Citt   di Lissone, Summer Alpine Meet, July 2012

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
ALUN RICHARDSON

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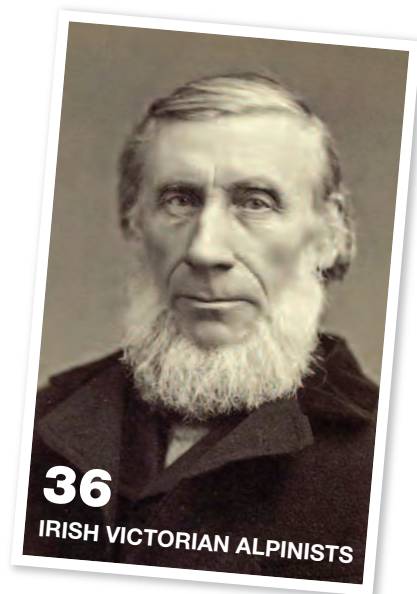
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# newsdesk

## Staff & Board

### GENERAL ENQUIRIES

info@mountaineering.ie

### STAFF

#### Chief Executive Officer

Karl Boyle, karl@mountaineering.ie

#### Hillwalking, Access

#### & Conservation Officer

Helen Lawless, helen@mountaineering.ie

#### Training Officer

Jane Carney, jane@mountaineering.ie

#### Talent Development Officer

Damien O'Sullivan,  
damien@mountaineering.ie

#### Accounts Administrator

Terry Canavan, terry@mountaineering.ie

#### Administrator

Una Feeney, una@mountaineering.ie

#### Member & Training

#### Support Administrator

Rozanne Bell, rozanne@mountaineering.ie

#### Get Ireland Walking Project Manager

Grainne Quinn,  
grainne@getirelandwalking.ie

### STAFF – TOLLYMORE

#### Youth Development Officer

Paul Swail

Email paul.swail@mountaineering.ie

#### Development Assistant (Youth)

Anne Kenny

Email anne@mountaineering.ie

### HONORARY OFFICERS

#### President

Ursula MacPherson

president@mountaineering.ie

#### Chairperson

Ross Millar

chairperson@mountaineering.ie

#### Honorary Secretary

(tba), secretary@mountaineering.ie

#### Honorary Treasurer

David Batt, treasurer@mountaineering.ie

### BOARD MEMBERS

Paul Barron

paul-board@mountaineering.ie

Frank Bradley

frank-board@mountaineering.ie

Bridget Conway

bridget-board@mountaineering.ie

Nicky Hore

nicky-board@mountaineering.ie

Ruairi Ó Conchúir (Chairperson

of Access & Conservation Committee)

ruairi-board@mountaineering.ie

Patrick O'Sullivan

patrick-board@mountaineering.ie

Irene Sorohan

irene-board@mountaineering.ie

Dawson Stelfox

dawson-board@mountaineering.ie

Alan Tees

alan-board@mountaineering.ie

Una Vejsberg

una-board@mountaineering.ie

Shay Walsh (Chairperson of BOS)

shay-board@mountaineering.ie



Ben Bulbin, Co Sligo

## Spring Gathering 2014

### Sligo Mountaineering Club will host the gathering on March 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

Sligo Mountaineering Club will host the 2014 Mountaineering Ireland Spring Gathering as part of the club's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

The event will take place over the weekend of March 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> and will be based in the Sligo Southern Hotel. The weekend promises to be a great social event, with plenty of opportunity to explore Sligo's mountains and coastline.

Sligo Mountaineering Club would like to invite representatives from all of Mountaineering Ireland's affiliated clubs to attend the event – put the date in your diary!

Registration for the Spring Gathering will be available on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) in the New Year.

### Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Mountaineering Ireland will take place at

9:30am on Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, in the Sligo Southern Hotel. The AGM is a key opportunity for members to engage with Mountaineering Ireland and to be involved in the administration of their representative body. We encourage all clubs to send at least two delegates to the AGM. Clubs with a membership of greater than 100 have additional voting rights.

The business of the AGM proper is for Mountaineering Ireland, as a company limited by guarantee, to report on the previous year's activities and financial position.

Mountaineering Ireland invites all members and clubs to consider motions for discussion at the AGM, and nominations for the Board. Motions and nominations must be submitted to Mountaineering Ireland's Honorary Secretary, secretary@mountaineering.ie, or by post to Honorary Secretary, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, to arrive not later than 5:00pm on Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014.

## AGM Programme, Sunday, March 9<sup>th</sup>

- 08:30 Meeting of Honorary and Individual Members, if required  
09:00 Registration for AGM  
09:30 Annual General Meeting 2014  
10:15 Members' Forum  
Followed by tea & coffee

### Agenda for AGM

- 1 Adoption of Standing Orders
- 2 Adoption of Minutes of the last AGM
- 3 President's Address
- 4 Honorary Secretary's Report
- 5 Presentation & approval of Financial Statements
- 6 Appointment of Auditor for 2014
- 7 Election of Board of Directors
- 8 Election to membership of Clubs and Associated Organisations
- 9 Nomination of Representatives to other organisations
- 10 Motion(s)

### AGM Standing Orders

- 1 The Proposer of a Motion or an amendment to it may speak for 5 minutes but not more than 5 minutes.
- 2 A Delegate speaking on a motion or an amendment to it may not speak for more than 2 minutes.
- 3 The Proposer of a Motion or an amendment to it may speak a second time for 2 minutes immediately before a vote is taken, but other Delegates may not speak a second time to the same motion.

- 4 When the Chair considers that the matter has been sufficiently discussed, the Proposer may be called upon for a reply and, when this has been done, a vote must be taken.
- 5 A Delegate with the consent of the Chair may move "that the motion now be put."

### Members' Forum

A Members' Forum will be held following the AGM. The Members' Forum, like the AGM, is for all members. With issues like the MAREX and Grid West projects, access to the countryside and other topical issues being discussed nationwide, this is a real opportunity for Mountaineering Ireland clubs and members to discuss matters of mutual concern and to contribute to how Mountaineering Ireland represents their interests going forward. All members are encouraged to attend the forum and are invited to submit items for the agenda.

### Agenda for Members' Forum

- MAREX, Grid West and other landscape impacts
- Access to the Irish Countryside
- Any other business



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NEW 1:25,000 MAPS

Ordnance Survey Ireland will shortly release the first in a series of 1:25k maps which it intends to publish over the next few years. The first map covers the MacGillycuddy's Reeks and Killarney National Park. It is proposed that the new series will provide selective coverage of the Irish landscape and will focus on those areas where a wide variety of outdoor activities takes place.

This new 1:25k **Adventure Series** of maps will be available in addition to the existing 1:50k **Discovery Series**. Mountaineering Ireland provided feedback on an initial draft of the new map.

Further information will be posted shortly on [www.osi.ie](http://www.osi.ie) ■

## Sligo MC cleans up below Ben Bulbin

### Litter-pick held at Luke's Bridge, below Ben Bulbin

Sligo Mountaineering Club, assisted by members of the Yeats Venture Scout Group, held their annual clean-up on Saturday, November 23<sup>rd</sup>. The focus for this year's event was the popular Luke's Bridge, which provides access to Ben Bulbin from the northern side.

This was a great opportunity for the club to give something back to the local farmers in the area,

whose land the club uses, and also a way of helping to maintain a clean mountain environment. The club was supported in the clean-up by Sligo County Council, who provided litter pickers, gloves and refuse bags, and also arranged for collection of the filled bags. The club's Environmental Officers, Fran Lynch and Joe Elliott, would like to thank all of the club members who gave of their time to assist in the clean-up ■



Sligo Mountaineering Club volunteers on their clean-up day in November

SLIGO MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



# 'Helping the Hills' study visit and seminar



Reeth village, Yorkshire Dales

## 'Helping the Hills' study group visit Lake District and Yorkshire Dales

Due in part to Ireland's wet climate and peaty soils, continued growth in outdoor recreation activities is damaging and degrading many of our mountains, with deep and wide eroded paths becoming more common. During 2013 Mountaineering Ireland continued the initiative started in September 2012 with the 'Helping the Hills' conference on the management of upland path erosion (*IML 104*, pages 8-11).

The purpose of the Helping the Hills initiative is to advocate a considered, quality approach to erosion management and to ensure that interventions do not detract from the character of the upland environment. It is hoped that Helping the

Hills will evolve to become a network of people and organisations sharing experience and knowledge in the use, management, funding and repair of upland paths.

In September, twelve people participated in a Helping the Hills study visit to the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, to learn from erosion control and recreation management experience in those areas. Learnings from the Helping the Hills study visit were shared with a wider audience through a one-day seminar in Dublin on November 14<sup>th</sup>.

At the seminar, presentations were made by a number of those that had been on the study visit:

- "The environmental sensitivity of upland areas and how this is

managed in the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales" – **Mike Maunsell**, *Mountain Research Ireland*

- "Observations on balancing the protection of sensitive landscapes with recreation and access to state-owned lands" – **Cathryn Hannon**, *Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht*
- "Lessons from the study visit on the technicalities of erosion management on upland paths" – **Jeremy Smith**, *Trails Inspector, National Trails Office*
- "The rationale and ethos which guides upland path work" – **Jack Bergin**, *Access & Conservation Committee member, Mountaineering Ireland*

Keynote speaker **Bob Aitken**, past Project Manager, Scottish Mountain Footpaths Project, who has more than 30 years' experience of addressing erosion in the mountains, gave his personal perspective, observations and suggestions on principles, priorities and structures for Helping the Hills and his comments on some of the current issues in Ireland's mountains. It is well worth watching the video of Bob's address on the website [www.helpingthehills.ie](http://www.helpingthehills.ie). PDFs of the other presentations are also online. A more detailed report of the study visit and seminar will be included in the next issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. **Helen Lawless**

## Scrambling menace in the Cooleys

### Help stamp out scrambling activity in the vulnerable peat uplands of the Cooleys, Co Louth

Damage and disturbance from scrambler bike activity continues to be a problem in the Cooley Mountains, particularly in the Clermont Cairn area.

As much of the Cooley Mountains is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), it is a criminal offence to damage the area. It is also believed that many of the vehicles used are

not fully roadworthy, or taxed and insured.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service is liaising with local Gardaí to tackle this problem. You can help by immediately reporting any scrambler or quad bike you see on the Cooley Mountains or on local roads to **Dundalk Garda Station** (042 938 8440) or the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (086 805 9240).

If you walk or climb in the Cooley Mountains, save both of these numbers into your phone now! ■

GRAEME MAIN



## Uplands forum plans for sustainable uplands

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



Irish Uplands Forum AGM in Roundwood, Co Wicklow, in July

### Forum AGM highlights importance of sustainable, community-based management of mountain lands

The Irish Uplands Forum (IUF) held its Annual General Meeting in Roundwood, Co Wicklow, on July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

Addressing the meeting, the chairman, Frank Nugent, reflected on the year and the continuing threat to the uplands posed by changes in farming practices and the decrease in farming in the uplands, which is linked to its economic viability.

The attendance at the AGM was poor, given the importance of the sustainability of the uplands in Ireland to recreational users, to upland farmers and economically to the country as a whole, with the revenue associated with hillwalking tourism.

In his address, Frank said it was ironic that, at a time when the Irish Uplands Forum had suffered the loss of some of its key players, many of the key original objectives of the Forum appeared to be becoming increasingly achievable.

The IUF's philosophy of sustainable, community-based management is increasingly being supported by many other bodies, including the Rural Recreation Section of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government.

Despite the lack of members, the IUF is still contributing on the ground, where it matters. It has been involved directly in

the consultations which are shaping the management model proposed to operate the MacGillycuddy's Reeks Mountain Access Scheme. Frank Nugent has attended several meetings in Killorglin with the local partnership, local farmers and state agency representatives to identify appropriate models for the management of one of our most visited mountain ranges.

At the same time, secretary Mary Tubridy has pulled out the stops to convert the IUF & Wicklow Uplands Council **Wicklow Vegetation Research Project** into a viable Rural Development proposal, which has attracted the attention of the Department of Agriculture and Food at a time when that EU programme is being finalised as part of the new CAP negotiations.

There is no doubt that the IUF needs some new members and must regroup to reposition itself in light of new groups, such as the **National Uplands Working Group**, which emerged from the energy created by an upland agri-environment seminar hosted by Mountaineering Ireland in October 2012.

The IUF still has an important role to play as a champion for consultation and community involvement in the management of Ireland's uplands.

Patrick O'Sullivan

► For more information see [www.irishuplandsforum.org](http://www.irishuplandsforum.org) ■

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### CLUB RENEWALS

Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank clubs for their supportive approach to the new online membership management system. Establishing any new system and introducing change brings its own difficulties, but club administrators and the feedback they have provided have helped us to fine-tune the system and improve the experience for everyone. Mountaineering Ireland will now extend the online discount for club renewals to January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, in recognition of the efforts of all club administrators. Thank you! ■

### MEMBERS CAN NOW CHECK THEIR RECORDS ONLINE

All members can now log in online, using their own email address and, if necessary, update their contact details or correct any personal information. Please note that members can only access their own personal records.

In order to log in, your email address needs to be associated with your record and, if you find that you can't log in, simply email [info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie) and we will link the two for you ■







View of PURE Mile, Crossbridge, Tinahely, Co Wicklow, joint winner of the PURE Mile Awards for 2012.

## PURE progress

### Progress made in combatting illegal dumping in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains

The PURE Project, a partnership project to combat illegal dumping and fly-tipping in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, has now been running for seven years. In that time the PURE office has received over 6,200 reports of illegal dumping, resulting in collections from more than 6,000 individual dumping sites and the removal of approximately 2,100 tonnes of rubbish from the landscape.

If you were to put all of that rubbish into standard household rubbish bags, you would fill over 300,000 bags. If you lined up each of the bags that PURE has removed from the Dublin and Wicklow uplands, they would stretch some 300 kilometres, which is longer than the distance from Glendalough to Cork.

Other PURE initiatives include an education programme, media activity, CCTV monitoring of dumping blackspots, and the PURE

Mile Awards for local communities.

Earlier this year the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched a new iPhone app ('See it, Say it'), which makes it easier for people to report any incidents of dumping or litter. Using the app, you can take a photo, add a few simple details and the app will then send your complaint details directly to the relevant local authority.

You can download the App from the iTunes App Store; an Android version is due to be launched shortly. **Ian Davis**

► If you come across litter or dumping anywhere in the Wicklow and Dublin Mountains, call the Lo-Call phone line, **1850 365 121**. This is an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) number which can also be used to report dumping anywhere in the Republic of Ireland ■



## Mountaineering Ireland Calendar Dates

- January 25<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> **Train the Trainers Workshop, Wicklow** (including evening of 24<sup>th</sup>)
- February 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> **Winter Meet 2014, Onich, Scotland**
- March 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> **Spring Gathering and AGM, Sligo**
- March 15<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> **Snowsports Week with Topflight, Gastein Valley, Austria**
- May 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> **Women with Altitude, Connemara**
- July 6<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> **Summer Alpine Meet, Ailefroide, France**

## Winter Lecture Series

We will be putting together a more extensive series of lectures shortly which will include talks from Frank Nugent on his new book, *In Search of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers: Irish Alpine Pioneers*. Please keep an eye on the Events page of the Mountaineering Ireland website.

A full programme of events is available on our website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) where you will find full details of all the events and lectures on the Events pages. Please put these dates in your diary.



Fly-tipping at Brown Hill, Aughrim, Co Wicklow



## Take the Women with Altitude challenge

ANNE KIERNAN



### Women with Altitude weekend, Leenane, Co Galway, 16-19<sup>th</sup> May 2014

It's much more than a women's weekend; Women with Altitude is about encouraging women who share a passion for the mountains to develop their confidence and push themselves further. Building on superb events in the Mourne, Donegal and the Wicklow Mountains, the fourth Women with Altitude weekend is set to take place in the beautiful and rugged landscape of Connemara from May 16-19<sup>th</sup> 2014. The theme for Women with Altitude

2014 is *Challenge Yourself*. The event is open to girls and women of all ages and abilities that are prepared to make a commitment to improve their skills and knowledge. With wonderful opportunities for hillwalking, climbing and scrambling, and Ireland's top female instructors on board (including the now legendary team from Gartan OEC), this event is guaranteed to inspire.

The Women with Altitude organising team is currently developing a programme that will include lots of activities on the hills and crags, opportunities for skills



development, and workshops and talks. Most of the activity will take place between Friday evening (May 16<sup>th</sup>) and Sunday evening (May 18<sup>th</sup>), but for those who can stay an extra day, we'll be out again on Monday the 19<sup>th</sup>. The programme should be online around the end of January 2014.

We look forward to welcoming new and familiar faces in Leenane. We're keen to have more of those under-25 years old involved and we would love to see as many clubs as possible benefit from Women With Altitude (for this reason there may be a restriction on the numbers registering from any one club).

► Join the email list on [www.womenwithaltitude.ie](http://www.womenwithaltitude.ie) and we will let you know when the event programme is available. You can also find us on **Facebook** by searching for **Women with Altitude Ireland**. If you are willing to make the commitment to challenge yourself in 2014, then Women With Altitude is for you! ■

## Walking to good health

### Get Ireland Walking is offering advice on setting up walking groups

Get Ireland Walking is continuing to encourage an ever-increasing number of people to get active by going walking in their local community. Information on all things to do with walking – from finding a route or a group, to safety tips, to advice on setting up a walking group – can be accessed through the Get Ireland Walking website, [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie).

More and more people are choosing to walk in groups around our cities, towns and villages to gain health and social benefits from their physical activity. Get Ireland Walking has developed resources to support people to set up and develop local walking groups. The free Get Ireland Walking insurance scheme is proving to be very popular amongst groups. The scheme provides public liability cover for registered volunteer

walk leaders and group co-ordinators. The cover is limited to public paths, public roads, lowland walking trails, and looped walks below 300 metres.

The Get Ireland Walking initiative is working in collaboration with its partner organisations to unify and enable the efforts of all recreation, sporting and health promotion agencies and associations interested in promoting walking.

On December 11<sup>th</sup>, senior representatives of the following organisations signed a **Partnership Commitment Agreement** to affirm their organisation's commitment to working towards the achievement of the vision and objectives of Get Ireland Walking:

- Irish Sports Council
- Health Service Executive (Health Promotion & Improvement)
- Mountaineering Ireland



- Age and Opportunity
- Arthritis Ireland
- GAA
- Ireland Active
- Irish Heart Foundation

► To find out more about Get Ireland Walking, or to register your Walking Group, contact **Grainne Quinn**, Project Manager, Get Ireland Walking, (01) 625 1109, [www.getirelandwalking.ie](http://www.getirelandwalking.ie), [info@getirelandwalking.ie](mailto:info@getirelandwalking.ie) ■





Boats in Church Bay, Rathlin Island.  
Photo: Richard McAleese Photography

## Rathlin good walks!

*Four new quality walks on Rathlin Island, Co Antrim*

**F**our new quality walks on Rathlin Island, the most northerly inhabited island in Ireland, are now ready for walkers to explore.

The Ballyconaghan Walk, Kebble Cliff Walk, Kinramer North Walk and Kinramer Trail join the already existing Rathlin Trail and Roonivoolin Walk to provide walkers with just over 30km of way-marked walking on the island. They allow walkers to easily explore this unique island, which is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Situated 10km off the northeast coast of Northern Ireland, Rathlin's greatest attraction is arguably the great variety of birds that grace its shores. Just 8km from east to west and 5.5km from north to south, the island is home to tens of thousands of seabirds, including guillemots, kittiwakes, puffins and razorbills and it has a world-renowned RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) centre.

Walkers can also enjoy the comical antics of puffins and seals from the island's cliffs in spring and early summer. In addition, walkers can expect to be treated to some magnificent views of Donegal, the north Antrim coastline, the island of Islay and the Mull of Kintyre in Scotland.

With over 30km of walks on Rathlin and a whole host more on the mainland's north coast, this is a great place to enjoy a short walking break. There are a number of exclusive discounts and offers available at walker-friendly accommodation in Ballycastle, and elsewhere on the north coast of Antrim. These offers can be found on the WalkNI.com website.

► Rathlin Island is accessible by ferry throughout the year from Ballycastle. Contact **Rathlin Island Ferries** for travel times on 028 2076 9299 or visit the website [www.rathlinballycastleferry.com](http://www.rathlinballycastleferry.com)





## Ireland's Alpinists remembered

**Frank Nugent launches new book on Irish Alpinists in history**

Mountaineer and polar explorer Frank Nugent has launched a new book, *In Search of Peaks, Passes & Glaciers: Irish Alpine Pioneers*, a companion volume to his earlier, similarly well-researched and authoritative *Seek the Frozen Lands: Irish Polar Explorers 1740-1922*.

The launch, which was held in the Teachers' Club in Parnell Square, Dublin, was attended by many of Frank's mountaineering and polar exploration companions from his various expeditions.

The new book was formally launched by Dawson Stelfox, the first Irish person to climb Everest, who reflected on the important but often unsung contributions Irish

climbers had made to Alpine and polar exploration.

Frank is an experienced mountaineer, polar explorer and expedition leader and a former Chairman of the then Mountaineering Council of Ireland (1997-2000). He was deputy leader of the first successful Irish Everest Expedition (1993); followed in the footsteps of Shackleton across the Island of South Georgia (South Arís Expedition 1997); and sailed the North West Passage in the wake of Crozier and McClintock (Northabout Expedition 2001). The book has been a labour of love for Frank and the research for it, which has included making repeats of Alpine routes pioneered by Irish climbers, has taken several years. See review, page 47. **Patrick O'Sullivan**



Frank Nugent signing copies of his book at the launch

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN

## K2 disaster book and film launched

**Important new book on K2 disaster launched in Ireland**

Kerryman Pat Falvey and his Nepali co-author Pemba Gyalje Sherpa have launched their new book, *The Summit: How Triumph Turned to Tragedy on K2's Deadliest Days*, in Ireland.

At the launch in the 53°North store in Carrickmines, Dublin, after an introduction by Pat, who has himself summited Everest twice, Pemba Gyalje talked about the disaster that happened on K2 in August 2008, when eleven climbers died, including Ger McDonnell.

Pemba is an ethnic Sherpa from the Khumbu area of Nepal, at the foot of Everest. He has now summited Everest seven times and was among those who reached the top of K2 on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2008. He pointed to the recipe for disaster that there was with people from many different countries, and with differing languages and levels of ability, all desperate to reach the summit.

On the summit day, because of the poor technical ability of some of the climbers, they were slow getting to the summit but, because of their summit fever, they ignored the previously agreed turn-around time.

When things started to go wrong, the poor communication between the different nationalities added to the problems. Pemba talked matter-of-factly about the deaths that he witnessed and his actions as he tried to save some of the members of his team, the Norit Dutch K2 International Expedition, who were trapped in the Death Zone above the Bottleneck.

Ger McDonnell was with the Norit Expedition and had made the first Irish ascent of K2. Pemba was very clear that Ger lost his life while trying to save two South Korean climbers.

While they were launching the book, the film of the book, *The Summit*, was already on release in Ireland. The film is based on actual footage from those

involved in the disaster but includes perhaps 10% of re-enactments of events by the Sherpas involved, which were staged on the Eiger, where it was felt the terrain was most like that high up on K2.

Pemba came across as a modest, unassuming person. He is now a qualified UIAGM guide. He said that, after the disaster on K2, he did not want to go back

there and his family asked him not to climb any more 8,000m peaks. However, writing the book and making the film had been therapeutic for him and he now felt he wanted to climb above 8,000m again, possibly on Cho Oyu, Everest or Shishapangma. Given his track record, there is no reason to think that he won't. **Patrick O'Sullivan**

Pemba and Pat Falvey at the book launch in Carrickmines



PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



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## Autumn Gathering 2013

*Ger Canty reports on Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering 2013 in Kenmare, October 18-20<sup>th</sup>*

The Kenmare Walking Club was proud and honoured to host the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering for 2013 in Kenmare, Co Kerry. On the club's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it was fitting that Mountaineering Ireland came to Kenmare, the "Gateway to the Kerry Mountains."

The club set up an organising committee led by Chairman James O'Farrell along with Pat O'Sullivan, Kathleen Lynch, Jane O'Brien and Peter O'Sullivan. They coordinated with all club members to set up the various walks, workshops and events and organise the logistics. The club gratefully accepted some extra help from members of Killarney Mountaineering Club.

The weekend began on the Friday night with a wine reception hosted by the Kenmare Walking Club at the Carnegie Arts Centre in Kenmare. This excellent facility was ideal as a meeting centre.



Autumn Gathering participants on the Glanbeg Lake Circuit

We then had a talk by Gerry Galligan on his book *Climbing Ramabang*, an extensive diary of his travels in India and his return overland to Ireland.

Early on Saturday morning, after a tea/coffee and barmbrack reception at the Carnegie Arts Centre, the participants were bused to

the various hillwalk starts. While the weather was not very kind to us, nevertheless we held six walks successfully. They were:

**Coomnadiha:** Glantrasna and Coomnadiha, and over Cummeenanimma to Knockagarrane (9.9km, 724m ascent)

**Glanbeg Lake Circuit:** A ridge walk over Tooreennamna and Lackawee (11.4km, 964m ascent)

**Killaha/Dromanasig:** Killaha Mountain to Barrduff and Knockeirka (9.4km, 617m ascent)

**Torc Mountain/Old Kenmare Road:** Part of the Kerry Way with optional climb of Torc Mountain (14.5km, 929m ascent)

**Carrauntoohil:** Brother O'Shea's Gully, Carrauntoohil, Heavenly Gates (11.8km, 1,050m ascent)

**Reeks:** The Bone, Carrauntoohil, Heavenly Gates (12km, 1,050m ascent)

We had planned seven walks, but because of high winds making the narrow ridges of Beenkeragh and Cruach Mór dangerous, we changed these walks to the Bone and Carrauntoohil route. With the quality and experience of our club walk leaders, this was done seamlessly.



Rainbow over the Kerry mountains during the Killaha/Dromanasig Walk



Both the Carrauntoohil and the Bone walks started and finished at Cronin's Yard. We are grateful, as always, to John and Esther Cronin for their hospitality to our guests.

On Saturday night, washed, refreshed and ready to go again after a tough day on the hills, all attendees met again at Con's Marina Restaurant for an excellent dinner. The craic was mighty, with over one hundred people attending the function.

On Sunday morning, along with the Members' Forum, we held workshops on "The Uplands of Ireland," "Attracting Younger Members to Clubs" and "Outdoor Cooking."

## WORKSHOPS

### 'Uplands of Ireland'

Dr Alan Mee, co-ordinator of the White-tailed Eagle Project, gave us information on the birdlife of the uplands and their habitats.

Flor McCarthy of the IFA's National Council described the advantages for farmers of being pro-active with approaches and car parks, and the benefits hillwalkers bring to the farming community.

He also mentioned farmers' genuine concerns regarding the presence of dogs on the hills.

Flor McCarthy and Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Chairman of the National Uplands Working Group, outlined issues with farming and management of the uplands. It was evident that both the upland farmer and the hillwalker had much in common. This is reflected in the joint approach now being pursued at government level to develop a national support mechanism and policy which will protect the uplands with appropriate farming methods. The upland farmer is the key to



Members of the Board and staff of Mountaineering Ireland with other representatives (left to right): Ruairí Ó Conchúir, James O'Farrell (Chair, Kenmare Walking Club), Allan Mee (Project Manager, White-tailed Eagle reintroduction project), Flor McCarthy (farmer & IFA representative), Ross Millar, Karl Boyle, Helen Lawless

maintaining this magnificent but fragile environment for all of us, our children, and for our children's children, to appreciate and enjoy.

### 'Attracting Younger Members to Clubs'

Jane O'Brien (Kenmare Walking Club) chaired this workshop. Some of the setbacks highlighted were the questions of responsibility and insurance vetting.

There was a need to target families with young children and, indeed, young adults not involved in mainstream sports.

Promotion of walking clubs should also be encouraged using social media, open days and targeted advertising.

### 'Outdoor Cooking'

Kenmare is renowned as a centre of excellence for food preparation, with quality food served in an array of restaurants. Two chefs from the Park Hotel, Colm O'Sullivan and David Espagnat, instructed fourteen "students" on the art of haute cuisine for the campsite. Using a single gas stove and Trangia, they created two sumptuous meals – wild mushroom

tagliatelle and chicken with a tomato and tuscan bean stew. Both meals were prepared and cooked in fifteen minutes – just right for the hungry camper. They are signed up for our next camping trip!

We hope everyone who attended the Autumn Gathering enjoyed it as much as we did. It was great to meet with friends on the mountains, so don't be strangers; come and join us again in Kerry!

► Ger Canty is President of the Kenmare Walking Club ■



Participants on the 'Outdoor Cooking' workshop with chef from the Park Hotel, Kenmare (left)





## Weekend in Connemara

*Limerick Climbing Club takes on the Maumturks in west Galway. Tina Cadogan reports*



Members of Limerick Climbing Club who took part in the challenge (left to right): Tom O'Brien, Breda Farrell, Frank McMahon, Margaret Harty, Brid O'Brien, Tina Cadogan, Cyril Doran, Mary Neligan, John Dillon

site with a holy well and chapel dedicated to St Patrick, we stopped to re-fuel our bodies, taking in the best of the weekend's weather.

After Maumeen, we had a 400m climb to Binn Chaonaigh (633m), followed by Barrslievenaroy (702m). This section is better known as the Middle Maumturks. From Barrslievenaroy, we made a tricky descent on scree to reach our campsite at Lough Maumahoge. The first day's walk took 7½ hours.

After reaching the campsite, it wasn't long before dinner was being served in the various tents, with a variety of foods for all tastes. After a late night in Frank McMahon's Disco Tent, we settled down for some rest in this very remote part of Connemara.

Last June bank holiday weekend, Limerick Climbing Club attempted the Maumturks Traverse on a trip arranged and led by John Dillon. The hike was a good test of endurance for the ten club members who took part.

Although the Maumturks Traverse can be completed in one day, we took the option of doing it over two days, which gave an opportunity for wild camping to the adventurous members of the group. For the overnight stop, we had the choice of camping near the corrie lake of Lough Maumahoge, which is situated in a rugged col in the heart of the Maumturks, or of staying in the beautiful village of Leenane. The campers among us set up our tents on the Friday night, enabling us

to do the hike without the additional weight of our camping gear in our rucksacks.

On the Saturday morning, the whole group met in Leenane, in somewhat damp conditions. From here, we took a bus to the start of the walk at the highest point on the road between Maam and Maam Cross.

Upon reaching this starting point, the sky began to clear for what was to be a most enjoyable day in the hills. Full of anticipation, the first climb of the day, Corcog (609m), was completed at good speed. From Corcog, the group headed to Mullach Glas (622m) and onto Binn Mhor (661m), where we had great views of the Twelve Bens.

At Maumeen, a pilgrimage



The club members enjoyed great views of the Twelve Bens



On the Sunday morning, we awoke to beautiful views of the lake. A cuckoo could be heard from afar. After consuming a hearty breakfast of porridge and sausages at the campsite, the group headed out for Leenane, covering the second section of the Maumturks. Maumeen Mountain (541m) was first on the list.

As the morning progressed, it brought mist and poor visibility. The Maumturks are notorious for being difficult to navigate at the best of times, so the more competent navigators in the group took the lead, bringing us along the ridge with cliffs which links Maumeen Mountain to Letterbreckaun (667m).

Maumturkmore (448m) was next, then down to the Col of Despondency and finally, everyone dug deep for the steep climb up Leenane Hill (618m).

Having successfully achieved our mission for the weekend, we descended Leenane hill towards Leenane village itself, overlooking the shores of Ireland's only fjord,



On the descent to our campsite at Lough Maumahoge

Killary Harbour. The second day was completed in seven hours.

We relaxed on the Sunday evening with a celebratory dinner in the beautiful setting of Leenane House Hotel, where we reflected on the success of the weekend. This was followed by a lively session of music in the nearby lounge.

We returned with tired bodies to Lough Maumahoge early on Monday afternoon to collect our tents before heading home.

► See the club's website at [www.limerickclimbingclub.ie](http://www.limerickclimbingclub.ie) ■

## Support for Mountain Rescue

Earlier this year, Limerick Climbing Club demonstrated its support for the important work of mountain rescue when it made significant donations to two of Ireland's mountain rescue teams.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, after a short walk up Caher in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks, the club presented a cheque for €750 to Damien Courtney, PRO for Kerry Mountain Rescue Association (KMRA), in Cronin's Tea Rooms.

The donation was from club funds and money raised at a Limerick Climbing Club Cards Night organised by club treasurer Maureen Toomey last November. The money was to be put towards purchasing a new vehicle for KMRA.

Then, on April 20<sup>th</sup>, before the club's annual clean-up day in the Galtees, it took the opportunity to present the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association with €750 ■



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# Nepal Day 2013

The Nepalese community gathered at Farmleigh in September for Ireland's first ever Nepal Day. **Chris Avison** reports

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



Nepalese singers and dancers entertain the gathering with traditional song and dance routines

People often think of Nepal as a land of eternal snows, where heroic mountaineers and Sherpas plant flags on the roof of the world, or perish in the attempt. However, as anyone who has been there will tell you, there is far more to Nepal than just the ultimate challenge for mountaineers.

There is Nepal's unique landscape, from the tropical Terai to the lofty Himalaya; the cultural diversity; but above all the unforgettable people who make it such a remarkable country.

Still one of the least developed nations in Asia, Nepal has a proud history of independence. Despite many divisions between rich and poor; urban and rural, lowlands and highlands, and more recently King and country, a certain 'unity in diversity' binds the country together.

Nepal has been affected in many different ways by its recent civil war. However, Nepalese people mostly remain stoic and fatalistic, accepting whatever befalls them. Any suffering caused by the recent civil strife is not

something they wish to bother visitors with. It is very hard, if not impossible, to meet an unfriendly face in Nepal.

On September 29<sup>th</sup>, nearly ten thousand visitors to Farmleigh in Dublin's Phoenix

Park experienced this incredible friendliness for themselves. The Nepalese Ambassador to Ireland and the UK, Dr Suresh Chandra Chalise, launched Ireland's first ever Nepal Day, organised by the Nepal Ireland Society. Everyone enjoyed the Nepalese music, dancing and food, an extensive photographic display of all that Nepal has to offer the visitor, as well as talks by three of the several Irish men and women who have successfully climbed Mount Everest.

Nepal Day 2013 was the brainchild of Dr Jane Fenlon, a founder director of the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust (INET) and also Vice-President of the Nepal Ireland Society (NIS). Deepesh Man Shakya, NIS President, Alison Irwin, Emma Lynch and the rest of the NIS team, as well as many others, ably supported her.

In her welcoming speech,

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



It was a big family day-out for the Nepalese people living in Ireland





Everest summiteers: Pat Falvey (left) and Cian Ó Brolcháin at Farmleigh



Visitors enjoying Nepal Day at Farmleigh

Dr Fenlon outlined the background to the establishment of INET, a charity born out of the first successful 1993 Irish Everest Expedition. She described the role of Dhana Khaling Rai, the twenty-two-year-old cook-boy at Advance Base Camp, who, with financial help from the 1993 Irish climbers, went to university and qualified as a teacher. Benefiting from this educational support, Dhana is now on the local schools' management committees and also works in a voluntary capacity as INET's local director in Nepal.

During the Nepal Day celebrations, INET recognised Dhana's sterling work for the Rai people of his local village, Phuleli, in the lap of Mount Everest. Ben Graham handed an illuminated address to Dawson Stelfox, the Patron of INET, to present to Dhana. Alison Irwin and her eldest

son Ben raised a considerable sum of money for INET (see *IML 102, News*) to provide a scholarship fund for local children from Phuleli and neighbouring villages. Dawson brought the address out to Dhana whilst on holiday in Nepal last October.

Dawson Stelfox later gave a fascinating account of being part of the first successful Irish Everest Expedition in 1993. Vividly describing the final summit day when he had the entire mountaintop to himself, Dawson reminded the audience that getting down safely is an equal challenge to climbing up. He also mentioned there are thousands of unclimbed peaks over 6,000m remaining in the Himalayas, representing real challenges, as well as the ever-popular Mount Everest.

Pat Falvey spoke next, with tales of derring-do while

climbing Mount Everest on several occasions, including two successful summit climbs.

Recent Irish Everest climber, Cian Ó Brolcháin, also described his successful ascent of the mountain in May 2012 whilst raising funds for Cystic Fibrosis Ireland.

A Nepalese photographic exhibition created by NIS was on display, with over a hundred images showing all aspects of Nepalese life and scenery. The photos and frames were all produced in Kathmandu and hung in the gallery at Farmleigh by a small team of volunteers from

INET and NIS.

Ireland's first Nepal Day was a resounding success for both visitors and organisers. Farmleigh is an excellent venue and the Office of Public Works contributed significantly to the day's success. Roll on, Nepal Day 2014!

► Chris Avison is director of the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust.

► For more information, visit the website of the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust at [www.inetireland.ie](http://www.inetireland.ie) and that of the Nepal Ireland Society at [www.nepalireland.org](http://www.nepalireland.org) ■



Ben Graham with the illuminated scroll for Dhana Khaling Rai with the INET team behind (left to right): Yvonne Lee Cooper, Chris Avison, Dawson Stelfox, Valerie Burris, Jane Fenlon



Some Nepalese children at the gathering in Farmleigh





## Listed heights, fresh delights

How summiteering can lead to pastures new. *Simon Stewart reports*

For some years now, MountainViews.ie has shared know-how on Irish hills and mountains. As well as informing, the website allows users to record what they have climbed.

This year saw two members of the MountainViews community complete the **Arderins**, a standardised list of 500-metre summits on the island of Ireland. Currently, 404 summits have been identified as meeting the requirements to be on this list – which are having an elevation of 500 metres and at least a 30-metre prominence or drop from the top. Completing the Arderins takes you to forty-three upland areas out of the total of sixty in Ireland.

The first person to finish the Arderins was Brendan O'Reilly; and later, Adrian Hendroff completed them (see *IML 107*, page 30).\*

Brendan said: "Having summited my final top in November 2012 – Tooth Mountain in the Cahas – a friend mischievously quoted: 'When Alexander saw the breadth of his domain, he wept, for there were no more worlds to conquer.' That's certainly not the way I viewed things. While I have thoroughly enjoyed my 27-year marathon to complete the Arderins, I don't see why summit-bagging has to stop. There are hundreds more "Carns" or "Binnions" in Ireland; and abroad, more **Munros**. It's hard to beat that feeling when you arrive at a summit you have never climbed before."

\* By as early as 2004, as many as four other people had reached much the same summits as the Arderins using their own lists; and about twenty-two have summited a 600m or a slightly easier 2,000-foot list.



Three people have finished the **Vandeleur-Lynams**, a list of 269 mountains in Ireland which meet the specifications agreed in 2009 with the late Joss Lynam, which are a 600m summit with a prominence of at least 15m. I am glad to say that I joined this group of finishers myself in October of this year. It's a bittersweet moment to finish such a list since, in finishing it, you lose one handy reason to stretch yourself. However, it worked for 45+ years for me...and there are other lists!

List-completing or summiteering is big in a number of countries. In the US, the broadly equivalent "Highpointers" have over 6,000 paid-up members.

Munro-bagging operates on a huge scale in Britain, with 5,000+ having finished them.

MountainViews also cherishes shorter lists such as the twenty-seven **County Highpoints**, the one-hundred **Local Summits** (local to where you live) and the **Hundred Highest**. Some thirty-five 'MVer's' have logged all the County Highpoints, the most recent being Margaret O'Sullivan:

"Completing the County Highpoints provided opportunities to walk in areas where I was unaware that there were any particular attractions for the hillwalker. Two spring to mind...Slieve na Calliagh (Meath), with its wonderful

passage tomb, and Mullaghmeen (Westmeath), with the huge beech forest and remnants of our famine past – truly eye-opening possibilities."

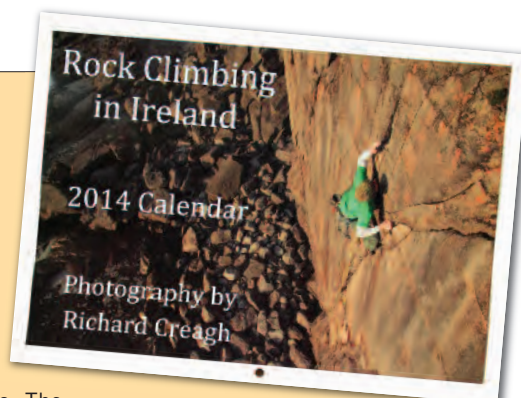
Try summiteering yourself. While walking with a club or friends, you can often incorporate some new tops. The website gives loads of info about them all. Marking what you have done often surprises!

MountainViews also has a book and it annually awards certificates to finishers. Some 1,600 users record their climbs using the website.

► Simon Stewart is the publisher of MountainViews.ie ■

### Irish climbing calendar 2014

Photographer Richard Creagh, who is originally from Cork, has just published a climbing calendar: *Rock Climbing in Ireland: 2014 Calendar*. It is the first of its kind in Ireland and displays the variety and quality of climbing we have on the island of Ireland. Richard has tried to cover all of the different disciplines that we have in the climbing world here: traditional and bouldering; mountain crags and sea-cliffs; long routes in the bigger hills and shorter roadside venues. The calendar costs €10 + €2.50 p+p from Richard's website, [www.richardcreagh.com](http://www.richardcreagh.com).







## G-Force: Ireland's newest bouldering competition

Ireland's newest bouldering competition, G-Force, took place for the first time on Saturday, November 9<sup>th</sup>, at Gravity Climbing Centre in Inchicore, Dublin 8.

By 10:00am, around 120 competitors had assembled to have a go at the G-Force qualification round. Twenty-five problems had been set in a circuit for this round, hard enough to separate out those good enough to qualify for the semi-final, but easy enough to allow everyone to score and to have fun trying.

The first score-card was returned after just two hours by Dominic Burns, the only competitor to end the qualifying round with a full 250 points! Meanwhile, everyone else continued to battle it out for a place in the semi-final or just to enjoy trying the problems with their friends.

Sixteen men and sixteen women went through from the qualifying round to the semi-final. The competitors had to climb four bouldering problems, courtesy of the

BRIAN GEISSEL



Michelle O'Loughlin in action at G-Force. She won second place in her category.

route-setting team of **Percy Bishton, Andy Long** and **Juan O'Raw**. There were many excellent performances, especially considering that for the majority of competitors the isolation and the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) format were completely new experiences.

After the semi-final, there was a few hours of respite for the finalists, as they tucked into a BBQ while the competition wall was re-set for the final. Competitors also had a chance to look through their goodie bags, courtesy of **Edelrid, Wild Country, Beyond Hope** and **Beta Climbing Designs**.

The finalists lined up and started their observation of the final problems at 7:00pm. The crowd started cheering and the DJ cranked up the volume. It was clear that there were a few nerves, especially for those who weren't accustomed to climbing in front of a crowd of this size (or volume!) but, as soon as the final was underway, the nerves were forgotten.

Ronan Browner kicked off

the final with a stunning flash of the slab but, as things got more powerful in the steep section of the competition wall, Nathan Phillips and Dominic Burns really started to come into their own.

Rachel Carr clinched victory in the Women's with a flash on problem 3, but the battle for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> saw stunning displays of climbing and tenacity from all of the female competitors, right down to the last problem.

The final results were: **Rachel Carr, Michelle O'Loughlin** and **Lucy Mitchell**, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Female category, and **Nathan Phillips, Dominic Burns** and **Eddie Barbour** in a similar order in the Male category.

G-Force was a great day for everyone, competitors and spectators alike, and it is hoped that it will be the start of an annual event that will take the standard of competition climbing in Ireland up a notch.

The management of Gravity Climbing Centre would like to thank all those who helped to make the bouldering

competition a success, including sponsors **Edelrid, Wild Country, Red Chilli, Beyond Hope, Metolius** and **Evolv**. Also a huge 'thank-you' to all those who assisted with the judging, especially **Graeme Alderson**, and to **Bru** from Le Cercle Productions, who will be releasing a video of the competition highlights soon! ■

Darragh O'Connor in action



BRIAN GEISSEL

Niamh Costello in action



BRIAN GEISSEL





## Junior Irish Lead Climbing Championship

The O'Driscoll O'Neil Insurance Junior Irish Lead Climbing Championship in October was a terrific event

**T**he O'Driscoll O'Neil Insurance Junior Irish Lead Climbing Championship took place at Awesome Walls in Finglas, Dublin 11, on Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. The need to run a specific junior championship is reflective of the huge growth in youth climbing in the past few years.

Thirty-four young climbers competed in eight separate categories. The categories are set by the competitors' year of birth and gender. The eldest climbers, born in 1994 and 1995, competed in the Junior category. The youngest competitors, born in 2000 and 2001, competed in the

Youth C category.

Each competitor climbs two initial qualifying routes. The routes are designed so that they get progressively more difficult the higher the competitor goes. The higher the competitor gets on the route, the more points he or she gets. The top-ranked climbers after the two qualifying routes then get to climb on the final route. The two qualifying routes are demonstrated for the competitors and they are allowed to watch each other as they climb. However, competitors who reach the final must climb the routes on-sight. There is no demonstration of climbing

### Irish Lead Climbing Championships

Results, Juniors, Dublin, Awesome Walls, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2013

#### Junior Male

1. Ciaran Scanlon
2. Andrew Colligan
3. David Mulcahy
3. Sean McBride

#### Junior Female

1. Vanessa Woods
2. Hannah Hayes

#### Youth A Male

1. Dominic Burns
2. Eoin Acton
2. Jamie Rankin

#### Youth A Female

1. Niamh Hebblethwaite
2. Caitlin Miskelly
3. Lauren Maxwell

#### Youth B Male

1. Jack Flynn
2. Philip Murphy
3. Saul Calvert

#### Youth B Female

1. Eleanor Lawrence
2. Ellen Griffin
3. Victoria Waterson

#### Youth C Male

1. Carson Carnduff
2. Conor Orr
3. David Nessans

#### Youth C Female

1. Anna Nelson
2. Sakara Thurston
3. Hannah Armstrong

Competitors at the Junior Championships at Awesome Walls, Dublin, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Photo: Joxeba Goe





the routes and climbers are put in isolation so that they cannot observe the other competitors.

Awesome Walls was packed with climbers on the day of the competition. They were treated to a real spectacle of climbing when it came to the final rounds. The young climbers pulled out all the stops to get as high as they could on their climbs. It was inspiring to watch!

The routes for the competition were set by **Terry O'Connor, Eddie Cooper** and **Lucy Mitchell**. The setters did a great job and, at the end of the competition, the competitors were well divided in all the categories. The competitors also really enjoyed climbing the routes.

The competition was very generously sponsored by **O'Driscoll O'Neil Insurance**, Mountaineering Ireland's

insurance agents. The competitors were delighted with **Great Outdoors'** sponsorship of the prizes, with many of them rushing to the shop as soon as the prize-giving was over. **Awesome Walls** were again also fantastic supporters of the competition.

As well as the commercial sponsors and supporters, there was a vital input from a number of volunteer helpers on the day. A competition like this needs belayers, judges, video-camera operators and administration helpers to make it run safely, fairly and smoothly. Thanks to everyone who gave of their time to make the competition such a success ■



JOXEBA GOE



Ciaran Scanlon in action at the Junior Championships on October 19<sup>th</sup>

## New finger board launched

*Review by Kieran Creevy*



Savage Outdoors is a new Irish company, and this massive finger board is the first product they have launched.



### Savage Finger Board

[www.savageoutdoors.ie](http://www.savageoutdoors.ie)

€125

#### Pros

- Made in Ireland by Irish climbers.
- Well thought-out design. It's obvious that the Savage finger board (no specific name has been chosen for the model so far) is the result of a huge amount of research done on other finger boards on the market and an extensive knowledge

of rockclimbing training methods. The sheer number of holds and variety of grips that can be employed on this board beggars belief and will humble almost any climber. For starters, there are the usual jugs and pocket holds, from full-hand jugs to one-finger, one-knuckle horrors. To this they've added slopers and pinch grips; and finally there are attachment points for campus boards or a TRX system.

#### Cons

- None





Leaving the beautiful Rifugio Tonolini on the last day

Photograph: ALUN RICHARDSON

# Summer Alpine Meet trek

**MAUREEN TOOMEY** went on a five-day trek at the meet in Italy last summer

**L**ast March, Tina Cadogan and I started planning our trip to the Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet. We have both been active members of Limerick Climbing Club for several years now and we thought it would be nice to attend the meet, having heard great things about it from fellow club members. So we booked our flights, a hire car, the campsite and places on a five-day guided trek during the week we were going to be at the meet, and we were ready to go!

The meet certainly lived up to our expectations and, in fact, surpassed them in every way. We had a fantastic time. We did some great climbing with amazing views, met some fabulous people and generally had a ball!

\* \* \* \* \*

In July, Tina and I flew to Milan and then drove to the campsite chosen by Mountaineering Ireland as the base for the meet. The campsite was a short walk outside the village of Temù, at the base of the Rhaetian Alps in northern Italy. We stayed in the campsite when we were not trekking. There were about fifty people from all over Ireland there at any one time during the meet – members of other clubs as well as independent members of Mountaineering Ireland. Everyone was extremely friendly. Some people were on

Mountaineering Ireland-run courses or treks, like us. Others were trekking or climbing peaks in groups by themselves.

We had signed up for a five-day trek across Trail No 1, which crosses the Adamello Park in the heart of the Rhaetian Alps. The Alta Via del l'Adamello is a journey into Italy's past, via the remains and signs of the White War which, for four years, witnessed Italians and Austrians battle each other at over 3,000 metres' altitude in unimaginable conditions during World War I.

The Adamello Trek is about 70km long and is split into five stages. Each day involved a difficult trek of 7 to 8½ hours' duration, passing through a wealth of different habitats. Although the walk was generally fine for medium-to-fit hikers, there were some short exposed and difficult sections. In fact, because of the amount of snow in the Alps that summer, our guides told us it was a difficult trek and an introduction to Alpine Mountaineering in one!

Crampons, ropes, ice-axes and lots of nerve were required at times. We stayed in mountain huts along the way. We had a lovely group of seven people and two guides. It was an absolutely amazing experience and our guides were top class. The following is a day-by-day account of our holiday.





Waving goodbye to Refugio Maria e Franco, from Derna Passe, Day 2

MAUREEN TOOMEY COLLECTION



Taking in the view on the climb to Passe di Poia, Day 3

MAUREEN TOOMEY COLLECTION

## DAY 1

We flew from Dublin to Milan on Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup>, and drove for about three hours to get to our destination. It was a beautiful drive through rustic little towns and along Lago Isla.

Once we arrived at the campsite, a beautiful, well-maintained campsite with bales of hay lining the long entrance, we set up our tent. The views were of mountains, forests and mountain villages in all directions. Later that evening, we met our guides, Helen Russell and Alun Richardson, to get a run-down on the trek and to check our gear.

### Adamello Trek, Stage #1:

#### La Resega to Rifugio Maria e Franco

The following day, Monday, we had a very early start. After a night of heavy rain – some of the small amount

**‘The meet lived up to expectations – in fact, it surpassed them in every way!’**

of rain that fell during the week– we packed up our tents, ate some breakfast and got our gear ready to head off at 7:00am. We picked up some of the others in the village of Temù. Everyone seemed very friendly. After stocking up on food, we began an hour-long drive to the beginning of our trek.

We began walking from La Resega, Val Savio. We passed through or by a variety of terrains – forests, lakes (i.e. Lago D’Arno) and rivers – and saw a beautiful array of local wild flowers in full bloom (Paths 20, 20A and 89).

As we ascended, we had to plough through a lot of snow to reach our lodgings for the night, at Rifugio Maria e Franco, at the Derna Pass. The trek took about 7½ hours and was quite hot at times, before we hit the snow. The guardian of the refuge came down the snow to meet and greet us! We were the only people staying there that night. We quickly got to know each other over a drink, sitting by the hot stove, reading books, playing cards and sharing the one dorm. The food in the refuge was delicious.

### Trek Stage #2:

#### Rifugio Maria e Franco to Rifugio Lissone

We started early on day two, to avoid the thunderstorms that were predicted for that evening. We put on our crampons before leaving the refuge, to tackle the snow. Within a few minutes I found myself up to my waist in snow and had to be dug out by Alun Richardson, using an ice-axe! Care had to be taken at times, crossing the snow.



### THE AUTHOR

Maureen Toomey has been an active member of Limerick Climbing Club for the last seven years and is currently Club Treasurer. She loves the outdoors and most activities associated with them. She was an electronic design engineer in a past life but is now a primary schoolteacher, having made the transition a few years ago.

MAUREEN TOOMEY COLLECTION



On the final stretch of our last day (Day 5)





Above the wonderful Maria Franco hut

We took off our crampons as we approached Passo di Campo at 2,298m (Path 1). After a short break, we started along the Ignaga ridge, which is the most exposed and hardest section of the entire trek, passing Passo di Gnaga at 2,525m on the way. The ridge had recently been equipped with wire cables and steps. The view onto the Adamello glacier from here is supposed to be spectacular on a clear day but, because of the heavy fog when we were there, our visibility was poor. Probably just as well with the steep drops surrounding us! Various World War I remains were evident during the trek.

We had to do a glacier crossing just before we

arrived at our destination, Rifugio Lissone, after seven hours of trekking. Unlike the previous night, we had to share the accommodation with about seventy Italian teenagers, who were on a retreat with several priests!

### Trek Stage #3:

#### Rifugio Lissone to Rifugio Prudenzi

We began day 3 of our trek with another early start. This stage is highly interesting from a geological perspective. The wonderful Valle Adamè is a textbook example of a U-shaped valley. The enchanting Adamè River springs from Alpine meadows at altitude and has cut its way deep into the valley floor. After about an



A happy team outside the Rifugio Tonolini (2,450m) after a long day crossing from the Rifugio Prudenzi



hour, we decided to have an early morning coffee stop at Rifugio Adamè. This quaint little place served wonderful coffee and hot chocolate, which we had next to a warm stove.

The ascent from there to the Passe di Poia at 2,810m was challenging due to its length and the altitude gain, crossing large boulder-fields along the way. The views were stunning, however.

When we reached the pass, we decided to put our crampons on and rope up for the steep snow descent on the other side. It was nerve-wracking beginning the initial descent, especially at the front of the rope!

We took our crampons off after descending into the next valley where we finished the day's trek with a nice leisurely walk to our lodgings for the night – at Rifugio Prudenzi. It had been another seven-hour day. We were the only people staying there and we entertained ourselves over a few drinks, eating dinner and playing various games. There was a spectacular thunder and lightning storm as we went to sleep.

#### **Trek Stage #4:**

##### **Rifugio Prudenzi to Rifugio Tonolini**

The fourth day was an interesting stage because of the fauna we saw, which included a rare snow grouse. After another early start, we launched into a 583m climb to the Miller Pass at ~2,750m. Here we had to put on crampons and rope up on a ledge that was little bigger than a dining table!

After the initial steep descent, we made good progress. Once we reached Rifugio Gnutti, in the Valle del Miller, we stopped for refreshments and kicked off the boots! After that, we began a nice gradual climb past a beautiful lake to Rifugio Tonolini.

After an 8½-hour day, we had a celebratory drink sitting outside the refuge, which was super, with the best tiramisu I've ever eaten! The location was amazing, surrounded by mirror-like lakes and mountains, and with ibex roaming around. We had a great evening with infectious laughter and ended the night with a disco using head torches on intermittent settings!

#### **Trek Stage #5:**

##### **Rifugio Tonolini back to campsite at Temù**

The last day of the trek, Friday, was interesting anthropologically. Val d'Avio is noteworthy for its impressive hydroelectric reservoirs, the industrial archaeology and, above all, the majestic north and west faces of Monte Adamello. At 3,554m above sea level, the peak juts out from the Adamello glacier. It is the biggest in Italy and the only one in the Alps to feature the typical Scandinavian plateau glacial configuration.

We began our trek with an ascent through boulder-fields, snow and ice to the Passo Premassone at 2,835m. We had a panoramic view at this point. After a break to admire the scenery, we roped up and began our descent, taking great care on very icy snow on the other side of the pass. We passed beautiful lakes, rivers, waterfalls and forests on our way down. As we



Going up the exposed ridge past Monte Campello and on to the Rifugio Lissone

joined a dirt track for vehicles, we saw our first vehicle in five days! After a seven-hour hike, at the official end of the trek, a van had been arranged to take us back to the campsite. This drive was an experience in itself – not for the faint-hearted!

We were sad to finish the trek. It had been an amazing five days – out in total wilderness with stunning views. We had a celebratory dinner that night in the village of Temù.

The remaining two days were spent exploring the tiny village, visiting the excellent World War I museum, catching up with fellow climbers and sunbathing or reading by our tents! We had a barbeque, slide-show, Irish dancing and singsong on the Saturday night.

Overall, it was a fantastic week with great fun, climbing experiences, views, food and excellent guides. We would highly recommend anyone to give it a go. Even if you go alone, it will not take long to make friends! ■

**'It had been an amazing five days – out in total wilderness with stunning views. We were sad to finish our trek.'**





Lackabane and Tooreenbaha on the south ridge of the Cummeengeera Horseshoe in the Caha Mountains, seen from the Glanmore Lake side

All photographs by: SIMON STEWART

# Circuit of Cummeengeera

**SIMON STEWART** identifies a route encompassing seven summits in the Cummeengeera Horseshoe in the Caha Mountains of Cork and Kerry. He shares the route with fellow hillwalkers on the website [MountainViews.ie](http://MountainViews.ie)

**I**n several visits over the years to the Caha Mountains on the Beara peninsula in counties Cork and Kerry, I had experienced their unique qualities. On some of these visits I had been on the Cork-Kerry border, but I had not continued beyond Hungry Hill to Cummeengeera. Reading about the Cummeengeera Horseshoe, however, had whetted my appetite.

Another motivator was my desire to climb all of the Vandeleur-Lynams, the 269 summits that meet the criteria laid down by Joss Lynam and published by [MountainViews.ie](http://MountainViews.ie). These summits are of 600m elevation or more and have a minimum of 15m drop or prominence. There are two of them on the Cummeengeera circuit and more from other lists of summits, particularly if you choose to visit the summits at the ends of the horseshoe, as we did.

We were also interested in accurately establishing the heights of the summits. For this purpose we had access to a 'differential' GPS, which can generally measure to an accuracy of 10cm. Uniquely, much of the Cummeengeera circuit is at around 600m, so accurate measurement might or might not change the status of some of the mountains there. [MountainViews](http://MountainViews) has surveyed over eighty Irish summits so far in this way.

For those interested in photography, there is huge potential in this area. The land and seascape needs

direct sunlight to bring out the colours, and clear air to exploit the huge views. While this is a rare combination in Ireland, you can sometimes get lucky.

We had got used to continuing bad weather in the endless winter of 2012/13 but, when the five-day forecast for the weekend of June 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 was good, we took the opportunity to travel to Kenmare and do the walk.

## Getting ready

In the past, we have relied solely on maps and guidebooks to plan our routes, and we used both for this trip. However, we can now also get data from the ever-increasing resources of [MountainViews.ie](http://MountainViews.ie). In this case, a contributor to the website had shared a track around the inner (western) part of the Cummeengeera circuit. We could see where he had parked, what his route was, how he crossed the river and that he took just over five hours to complete it. However, we were interested in also visiting the summits at both ends of the ridge, which he hadn't been to. These are Knocknaveacal and Tooreenbaha.

Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access and Conservation Officer, was able to confirm one vital part of the route from club experience. This was that you can start on the Beara Way just south of Lauragh, which provides access to Knocknaveacal via the rough ground on its north side.



For the walk's end, we studied the OSi 1:10,000 map and air photo that MountainViews incorporates. From the last proposed summit, Tooreenbaha, the land looked moderately steep, but the air photo showed likely ways through crags.

The next challenge was the substantial Drimminboy River. The mapping shows a bridge, handy when coming northwards off Tooreenbaha and not near any houses or cultivated fields. We decided to give this bridge route a try, although there were other possibilities. We were not sure about ownership and didn't find anyone about to ask at the beginning of the day, nor when we crossed it at the end.

## The early rewards

Climbing Knocknaveacal on a good day is a treat. Ascending brings a widening view of the Kenmare 'river' and the multiple ridges of the Iveragh peninsula displayed as a long panorama. Nearer is one of the most perfect small summits in Ireland,

namely Knockatee. Famously, Richard Mersey, who wrote one of the best books about walking in Kerry, *The Hills of Cork and Kerry* (Sutton Publishing, 1987), started climbing hills with an ascent of Knockatee in a sort of rite of passage. He is commemorated on the summit. Currently, Mersey's stories are a bit scarce, but you can easily read up on nearby places like Knockatee in MountainViews. Knocknagullion, opposite on Iveragh, has colourful associations: it had guest appearances from the first head of M15, and former President Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, and Big Bertha, the oldest cow in the world.

For photography that day, some of the ingredients were right – for example, the great view of Knockatee's top seen over the sea inlet of Kilmakilloge with good, slightly diffuse sunlight but significant amounts of white mist somewhat bleaching the colour. As against that, the mist served to separate the summit, at 7km away, from the background, at around 30-35km. ▶



## THE AUTHOR

Simon Stewart is the publisher of the Irish hillwalking website [MountainViews.ie](http://MountainViews.ie). Since writing this article, he has completed his round of the current list of the 269 Vandeleur-Lynams.







Iveragh peninsula, Co Kerry, as seen from the Beara peninsula

Knocknaveacal's north side resembles a striking trident of ridges pointing to the sea. There had been speculation on MountainViews that it could be classified as a summit in its own right rather than just a spur off the nearby Tooth Mountain (same name, different language). Apart from the Vandeleur-Lynams, MountainViews maintains a family of lists, including one list that is relevant here, the Arderins. To be a summit of the Arderin class, it would need an elevation of at least 500m and a drop or prominence between it and Tooth of at least 30m. Our initial measurements established that this is narrowly true. In fact, there may even be two independent summits, separated by a steep-sided col.

Following Tooth, we reached Coomacloghane. A bottle at the top contained a memorial to one Teddy Sheehan, with a soggy log of people who had visited. We dried, signed and returned it. Marked at 599m by the OS, this would be an obvious candidate for a Vandeleur-Lynam were it to turn out to be over 600m – and indeed it seemed to be, though we will be confirming all of our measurements. In the meantime, if you want to climb the Vandeleur-Lynams, don't miss this possible addition if you are nearby!

The broad ridge south is undemanding walking but visually rewarding. Across the Kenmare 'river' is the biggest of the Kerry peninsulas, Iveragh, and in particular the Dunkerrons range, some 56km long. In summiteering, we walked much of this over the years. The view becomes a tapestry of remembered adventures. At Fermoy, just north of Sneem and under the ridge from Coomnacronia (aka Com na Cróine, 'hollow of the red cow') to Finnararagh (aka An Corrán), we met a friendly farmer who guided us to a place to park in his yard. He insisted on giving us country bread and ham sandwiches, large and free, before showing us the way across his land to the lonely lake at Coomnacronia. On the way back from visiting our three target tops, he appeared on the hillside with a big quad, so big that he scooped the two of us up and brought us to our car.

Much better known is Mullaghnattin, sometimes called the Matterhorn of Kerry because of its shape as seen from the east. It is still a striking sight from the Cahas, though less angular and made less solitary by Beann to its southwest. It makes a memorable circuit, but the access story is different there from Fermoy, so you should research it before going.

MountainViews has information about the area



Surveying Coomacloghane





which may help – including information about Beann South Top and An Cnoc Riabhach.

Reaching Eskatarriff by way of the ridge (part of the border between Cork and Kerry), we confirmed its height of 600m. The views here are increasingly dominated by the South Cahas with Maulin and later Hungry Hill being well-known landmarks.

It was then we came upon the most dramatic shape of the day, Eskatarriff East Top, which sits like a bear's molar rooted in the Cummeengeera valley headwall. The north-facing cliffs of Cummeengeera are the steepest slopes on the circuit, and Eskatarriff East Top really shows them off. Climbing it is easy via a grassy slope, but then you are surrounded on three sides by drops of up to 300m.

Beyond Lackabane – another Vandeleur-Lynam at 602m – the ridge sharpens to a near knife-edge spur northeast. Tooreenbaha (Tuairín Beatha, 'little field of life(?)') is not named on the OS 1:50,000. However, in the latest reprinting (4<sup>th</sup> edition), like other summits of sufficient prominence, it has a circular marker to make it easier to identify the top on the ground. MountainViews, which supplied the data for these markers, has a page about each, including information about the name. Interestingly, Tooreenbaha also has an excellent photographic viewpoint for Knockatee.

Descending from Tooreenbaha turned out to be easy enough, though it is heavily vegetated towards the bottom of the slope. The route follows a stony track across uncultivated land and over a bridge to the public road. At the upstream parking, you are likely to be asked to pay €4 a head for access and use of a bridge, a charge almost unique in the Irish uplands. No demand was made of us to pay anything for the route we took. However, the walking distance is longer.

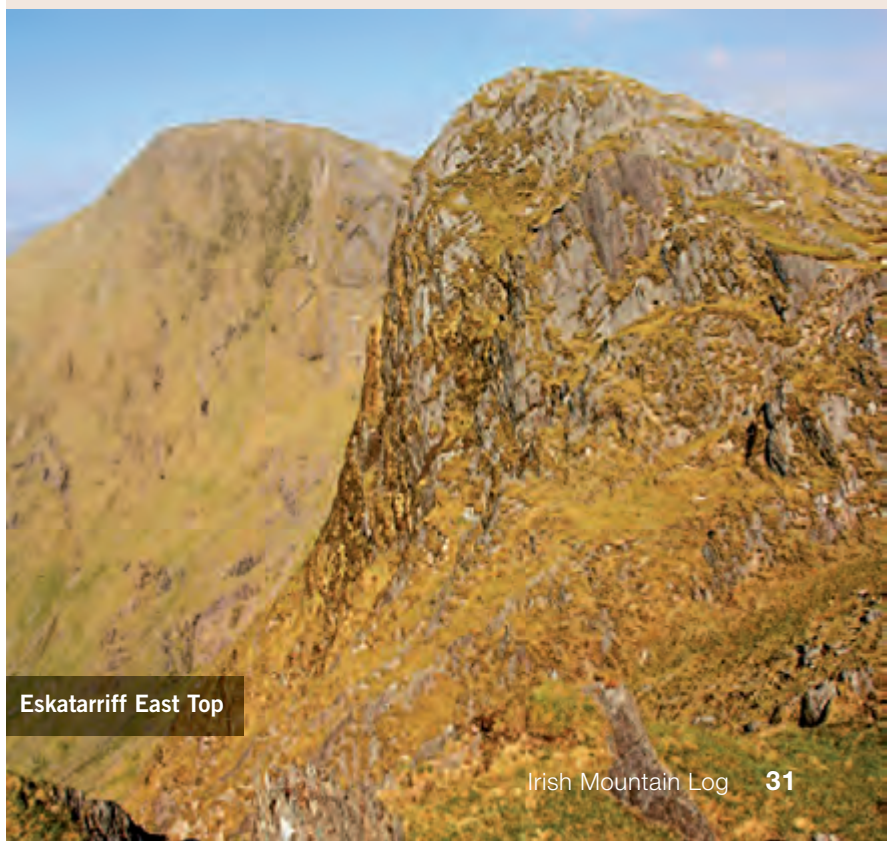
## To wrap up...

As a summiteer, I do indeed like marking off a listed summit, a step further on whatever I am working on. However, a walk like this also means an opportunity to try somewhere new and share the experience. MountainViews helps in doing both. As well as helping with planning hikes, as described earlier, the website analyses an uploaded track to create stats, a start icon on the map and a colour-coded display, based on walking speed, for the map.

So far, we share some 500 tracks around Ireland created by over fifty users and of use to everyone planning on walking them. The complete track for the circuit described here (17.8km, 1065m climbing) is available to view on MountainViews and to use in a GPS, and it is possible to add further comments or local information. It is also nice to see what other people have said about a place. For example, a comment from 2004 confirmed our impression of Eskatarriff East Top, saying "Just beyond Eskatarriff, this summit [Eskatarriff East Top] is much more dramatic than its bigger brother to the west."

In conclusion, this was a really great day-walk, visiting seven summits with great stories, great views, if a little misty, and the tantalising likelihood that some of the summits could be identified as having a higher status ■

**'Eskatarriff East Top is easy to climb...but you are surrounded on three sides by drops of up to 300m'**



Eskatarriff East Top



# TREKKING THROUGH TIME

## Part III: 12<sup>th</sup> Century to Recent Past

Archaeologist **MARTIN FITZPATRICK** concludes his series of articles on the monuments that may be encountered in the Irish hills.

**T**he aims of this and previous articles in this series (see *IML 106* and *IML 107*) have been to detail the features of archaeological interest that may be encountered during hikes in the Irish uplands, and to encourage all users of the hills to assist in preserving upland monuments by appreciating, respecting and reporting them.

If you are uncertain of the status of a monument that you encounter, you can check it online at **[www.archaeology.ie](http://www.archaeology.ie)**. This online facility also allows for the reporting of new monuments. The database records all monuments on a county basis from the earliest period to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, many of the features we encounter in the Irish hills post-date the 17<sup>th</sup> century and as such are in many cases not part of the archaeological record.

As the people who use the uplands today, we have an opportunity to ensure that all monuments, irrespective of age, are respected, identified,

catalogued and ultimately protected for future generations.

This article deals with archaeological monuments from the 12<sup>th</sup> century through to the recent past, and it speculates what 'present day' features might form part of this list in the future.

An introduction to some monuments of the medieval period is followed by a general insight into post-17<sup>th</sup> century features. The vast number and range of known sites from this period necessitates that they be divided under broad headings. It is hoped that highlighting some examples will encourage users of the hills to take note of the features they come across and, that by working together, we may be able to identify and record them.

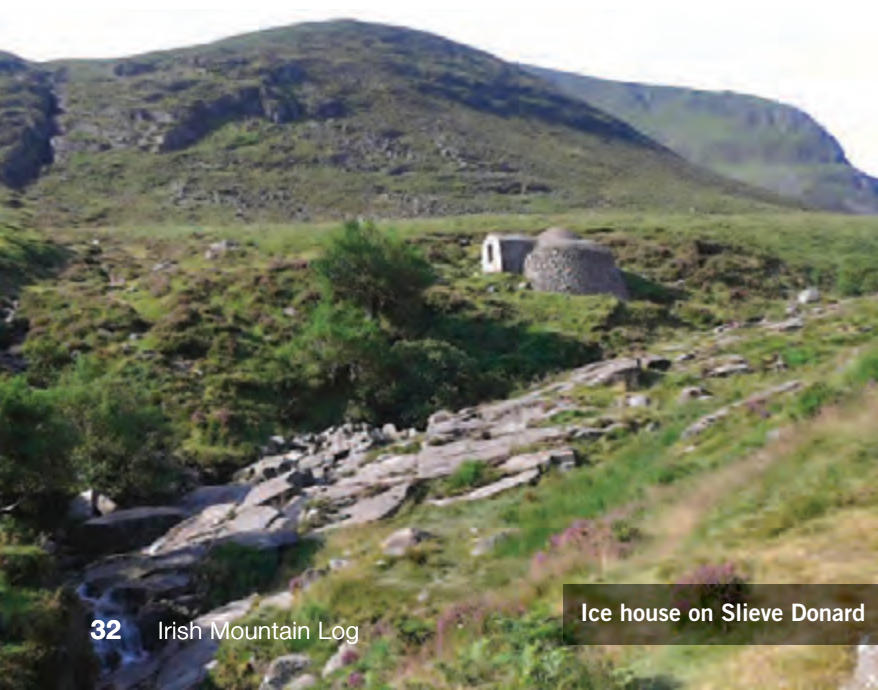
### RELIGIOUS ORDERS AND THE ANGLO-NORMANS

The 12<sup>th</sup> century saw dramatic changes in Ireland with the arrival of the Anglo-Normans and new religious orders from continental Europe. The Cistercians first settled at Mellifont in County Louth in 1142 and within ten years over thirty Cistercian monasteries had been founded throughout the country. While many were not associated with the uplands, some, such as at Corcomroe, Co Clare, nestled on a hillside and are a reminder today of the changing face of the Irish landscape.

The monasteries, which were usually situated in isolated locations, played a major role in agricultural development as in many cases the surrounding lands were cleared and reclaimed. The influx of continental monastic orders included the arrival of Franciscans, Augustinians and Dominicans during the medieval period.

The 12<sup>th</sup> century also saw the arrival of the Anglo-Normans who, by the end of the century, had

All photographs by: MARTIN FITZPATRICK



Ice house on Slieve Donard



conquered much of the country. This period saw the construction of manorial villages, stone castles and walled towns.

It is difficult to determine the extent of upland settlement during this period. However, it is likely that ringforts and promontory forts were occupied continuously, while archaeological excavations in the Beara peninsula have dated hut features and charcoal kilns to this general period.\* We can assume that the Anglo-Norman invasion pushed some pre-existing cultures to the mountain fringes.

## 14<sup>th</sup> TO 16<sup>th</sup> CENTURY

The 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were periods of unrest during which there was sustained resistance from the Gaelic Irish to occupation. By the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this had resulted in Anglo-Norman control being restricted to walled towns and the Pale. The Gaelic resurgence is highlighted by the existence of over fifty inauguration sites throughout the countryside. They are generally located on elevated sites or low hills and are found in association with mounds, sacred trees, ringforts and inauguration stones.

The 16<sup>th</sup> century, however, saw the English administration regaining control over much of the country, and vast tracts of land were transferred to immigrant landlords. It was in the aftermath of successful planting and the success of the Williamite Wars that demesne landscapes developed and flourished, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century on. These estates often incorporated palatial houses with associated gardens and landscape features. Killeavy Castle demesne on the eastern slope of Slieve Gullion, Co Armagh, Powerscourt estate in County Wicklow, and Muckross estate in Killarney, Co Kerry, are but some examples of estates in mountainous regions.

It is hardly surprising that remnants of these estates' features are often encountered on our rambles. The ice-house on the approach to Slieve Donard in the Mourne is a good example.

An important and interesting database on the 'Landed Estates of Connacht and Munster from 1700 to 1914' is available at [landedestates.ie](http://landedestates.ie).

## UPLAND FARMING AND THE FAMINE

The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the privatisation of former communal mountainsides that allowed for small farm communities to develop on the mountain slopes. These farm communities were based primarily on the rundale system where a 'baile' or group of farmhouses formed within a townland structure. The altitude to which this farming method was practiced generally depended on soil quality and the availability of peat.

Between 1770 and 1840, upland rural dwelling increased five times faster than on lowlands. The resulting population surge was utilised to grow potatoes in the labour-intensive lazybeds that are a feature of the upland landscape, particularly in the west of the country. The famines of the 1840s and the



Ruins of Famine village

resulting deaths, mass emigration and agrarian revolts meant that many of the structures were abandoned and survive in ruins on our mountain slopes today.

## FIELD BOUNDARIES, ENCLOSURES AND STRUCTURES

The townland system is thought to have emerged at the end of the Christian period or at the beginning of the Medieval period, when every county and parish was divided into units known as townlands. The discovery of important artefacts such as Bronze Age weapons and personal objects suggest these boundaries replaced earlier, important land divisions.

Townland boundaries are often natural features such as rivers and streams, but banks, ditches and walls were also used to define townlands and all are encountered on our ventures into the hills.



Pre-Famine potato ridges or lazybeds

\**Local Worlds: Early Settlement Landscapes and Upland Farming in South-West Ireland*, by William O'Brien; published by Collins Press (2010).





Boundary wall in the Burren, Co Clare

The size of an upland townland is generally larger than its lowland counterpart, reflecting the poorer land quality and subsequent poorer yield for farming.

A previous article in this series highlighted field walls and pre-bog walls identified in the Irish uplands. However, the majority of the boundaries we negotiate in the hills are 17<sup>th</sup>-century or later in date and are the result of more extensive farming and the modernisation of Irish farms that saw the removal of hedgerows and field boundaries to be replaced with posts and wire fencing.

The most impressive wall in the Irish uplands must be that in the Mourne Mountains, constructed between 1904 and 1922 to enclose the water catchment area of the Mournes.

There are numerous structures associated with agrarian development that we encounter in our approach to the uplands. We have previously highlighted huts and enclosures found on our mountain slopes that were formerly associated with the booleying tradition. However, many enclosures were also constructed or adapted to act as animal enclosures and pens from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards.



Enclosure in the Burren, Co Clare

Besides the features associated with livestock, our ventures into the hills might also bring us in contact with derelict lime kilns, corn kilns, kelp kilns, animal shelters and turf shelters.

## **SIGNAL TOWERS, MARTELLO TOWERS AND LIGHTHOUSES**

The military fort at Duncannon, Co Waterford, was constructed at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in anticipation of a Spanish Armada invasion. However, it wasn't until the aftermath of the 1798 rebellion, and in particular the Napoleonic Wars, that the threat of French invasion was considered and acted upon. The result was the construction of over eighty signal towers and fifty Martello towers around the coast.

The signal towers were generally constructed between 1800 and 1806 as defensive guardhouses for naval signal crews. They were located on coastal promontories and provided signal information about ship movements. The perilous location of these structures can be seen in the example at Ballydavid on the Dingle peninsula, Co Kerry, which was constructed in 1801. A second signal tower on the other side of the peninsula overlooks Dingle harbour. This is known as Eask Tower and it was constructed as a mariners' beacon on Carahoo Hill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **TRACKWAYS AND ROADS**

Prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, most journeys were on foot or horseback and were facilitated by a network of paths and tracks. Routes followed the line of least resistance; the main highway from east to west was along the Esker Riada, from Dublin to Galway.

Paths and tracks in the uplands were probably first used for accessing monuments and farming activities. However, it wasn't until the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries that a network of roads and lanes was developed, primarily as a result of the re-organisation of estates into single landholdings. The laneways and narrow roads spanned bridges, providing access to the uplands, just as they do today. The map of the roads of Ireland surveyed in 1777 by Taylor and Skinner provides an interesting insight to Irish roads.

## **BOGS**

There are two types of bogs defined by their location and altitude. Raised bogs are generally found in the central lowlands, while blanket bogs grow extensively in the western and northern areas where there is higher rainfall. Blanket bogs occur in elevated locations and, as such, are what we slip, slide and sink in on our adventures in the uplands.

Blanket bogs developed after a considerable period of human settlement and as such they may cover signs of previous human activity. The general inaccessibility of these bogs has prevented large-scale commercial cultivation. However, small-scale local harvesting is often still practiced today. Short lengths of stone wall on raised ground are often encountered while out walking and are a remnant of turf-drying methods still employed in some regions.



\* \* \* \* \*

This series has highlighted a sample of features of archaeological significance in the Irish uplands dating from the Neolithic period to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While the earlier periods saw activity in the form of burials, ritual monuments and limited settlement, it wasn't until the 17<sup>th</sup> century and later that the uplands were opened to intensive settlement and farming. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century famine led to a general abandonment of the higher ground, but remnants of the legacy survive in house ruins, tracks, walls, enclosures and, of course, lazybeds.

The development of a road network in the 18<sup>th</sup> century provided easier access to the mountains and facilitated upland developments for the following two hundred years. An example of these would include



Eask Tower: a 19<sup>th</sup>-century signal tower overlooking Dingle harbour, Co Kerry



Stone wall used for drying sods of peat turf in Co Kerry



#### THE AUTHOR

Martin Fitzpatrick is a professional archaeologist, an avid hillwalker and a member of Mountaineering Ireland. If you have any queries in relation to archaeological monuments in the uplands, you can contact him at [martin@archconsultancytld.com](mailto:martin@archconsultancytld.com).

the 19<sup>th</sup>-century copper mines at Allihies on the Beara peninsula; water reservoirs such as that on Turlough Hill in the Wicklow Mountains; forestry projects; mobile phone and satellite masts; and more recently the large-scale development of wind farms throughout the island's uplands.

No doubt the remnants of these developments will provide features of interest for future generations, but we must also ensure that the surviving remnants of past generations are appreciated, respected and recorded.

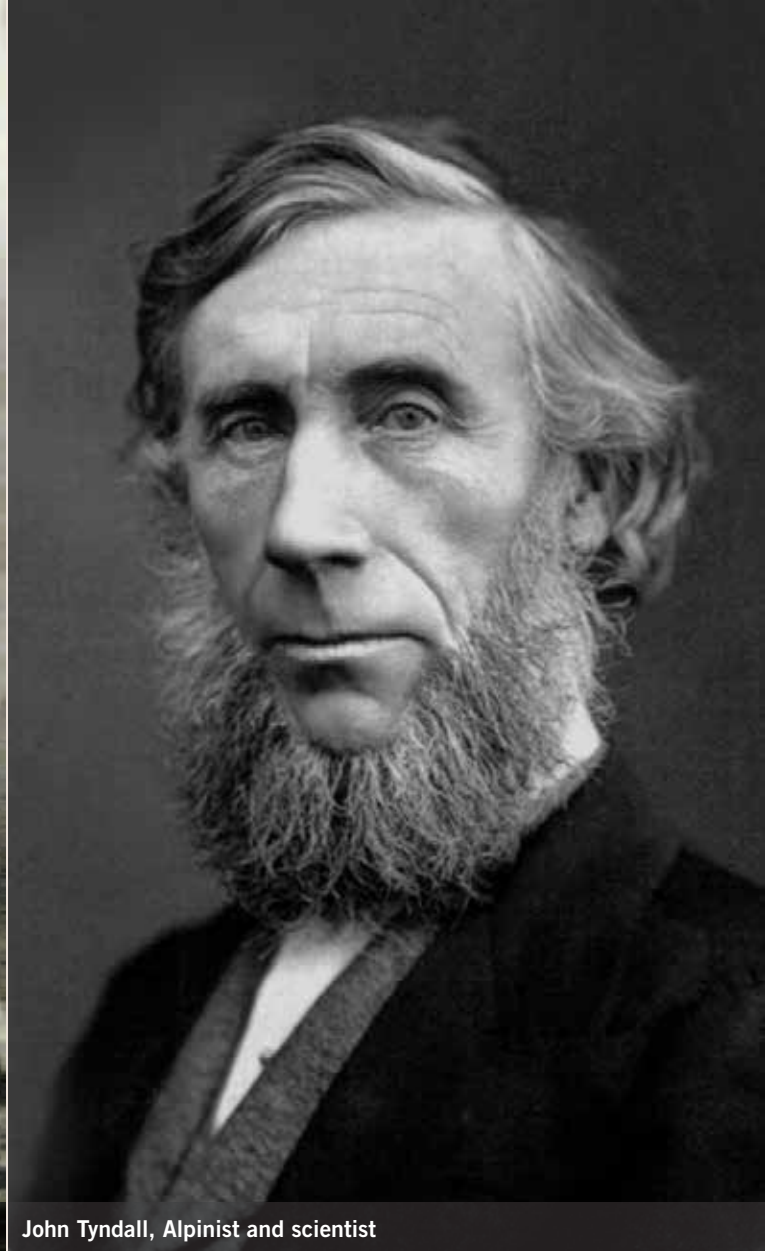
► I welcome any enquiries, photos or reports in relation to any features encountered in the Irish uplands. I can be contacted at [martin@archconsultancytld.com](mailto:martin@archconsultancytld.com) ■







Anthony Adams Reilly, Alpinist and cartographer



John Tyndall, Alpinist and scientist

# How the Irish conquered the Alps

**DECLAN O'KEEFFE** recounts how Irish Victorian Alpinists contributed to the exploration and conquest of the Alps in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

*Climb if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.”<sup>1</sup>*

**W**ith these somber words Edward Whymper, doyen of nineteenth-century Alpine mountaineers, concluded the stirring account of his exploits during the golden age of Alpine mountaineering. That golden age came to an end on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1865, with Whymper's triumphant ascent and tragic descent of the Matterhorn.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Whymper, in *Scrambles Amongst the Alps*, revised edition, Devon (1986). This book was originally published in 1871.

His great rival for that peak was John Tyndall, one of the many scientists who combined work and play in the Alps, as well as developing the techniques in the then fledgling sport of mountaineering that are still used today. Tyndall was also one of a number of Irish mountaineers who, through their involvement in the Alpine Club and exploration of untracked peaks, passes and glaciers, contributed to the growth of the new pastime in Europe and around the globe.

The history of the period and maps of the region are peppered with the names of these Irish climbers, who were significant players in the development of the new sport of alpinism and the attendant leisure industry that it spawned. They ranged from Grand National winner Charles Barrington, first to climb the Eiger; to Elizabeth Le Blond, the first Irish woman Alpinist; to Anthony Adams Reilly, cartographer of Mont Blanc; John Ball, first President of the Alpine



Club; and Lord James Bryce, Chief Secretary of Ireland and author of *Mountaineering in Far-Away Countries*.

The lives and Alpine paths of two of these Irish pioneers, Anthony Adams Reilly and John Tyndall, crossed with that of Whymper on the Matterhorn – as companion and rival respectively – and it is with these two that this article is concerned.

Edward Whymper, a wood-engraving illustrator, would-be Arctic explorer and amateur mountaineer, first visited the Alps in 1860 and was immediately smitten. In a whirlwind six years, he stormed through the range, recording many first ascents of mountains and numerous crossings of passes. Whymper was not initially impressed by the Matterhorn, which had been one of the two highest unclimbed peaks left in the Alps until the other – the Weisshorn – was claimed in 1861 by the man who would become his great rival, Professor John Tyndall from Leighlinbridge, Co Carlow.

### A love of climbing

Although born of poor parents and educated in the local national school, Tyndall proved a good student and an excellent mathematician. In 1839, he found employment in the Ordnance Survey, following this with a stint as a railway engineer before taking a Doctorate in Natural Philosophy in the University of Marburg in Germany (1850). He was subsequently made a Fellow of the Royal Society and Professor of Natural Philosophy at the Royal Institution.

Tyndall was an excellent lecturer and published

many works of popular science as well as his book *Glaciers of the Alps* (1860). He is remembered also for ‘Tyndall’s Scattering,’ which explains why the sky appears blue. He visited the Alps in 1856 to conduct research into the movement of glaciers and it was here that his love of climbing began to gain the upper hand, although he still claimed that his primary motivation was scientific.

Tyndall was eccentric in build and in manner, and was ill-fitted for many aspects of Victorian society, but the mountains seemed to bring him to life. He relished the challenges and hardships he found there. He was on hand to investigate an accident on the Col du Géant in 1860, which claimed the lives of two Britons and foreshadowed the Matterhorn disaster. His reconstruction of the calamity testified to his twin skills as a scientist and mountaineer, as well as reinforcing his view that the new sport was replete with latent danger.

The ascent of the Weisshorn in 1861 was a considerable feather in his cap and, from its summit, he had sight of his next objective, the Matterhorn, which had already repulsed him the previous year. By the time Tyndall returned the following July (1862), ▶



### THE AUTHOR

Declan O’Keeffe is a mountaineer and historian, and the editor of the *Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society*. He has recently completed a Masters in Irish History in UCD and is currently conducting research into aspects of the history of Irish mountaineering. Declan is a former President of Mountaineering Ireland and is a member of UCD Mountaineering Club.

**‘John Tyndall’s ascent of the Weisshorn in 1861 was a considerable feather in his cap’**



A young Edward Whymper, English Alpinist



Edward Whymper in middle age





Pic Tyndall (left), on western shoulder of the Matterhorn

Whymper had already tried and failed no less than four times in three weeks.

The two men met – to their mutual surprise – and discussed the possibility of a combined attempt, but the plan foundered on the issue of who would be leader. Tyndall had assembled a strong party and set off, leaving a disconsolate Whymper to await developments, but Tyndall, too, was turned back by unexpected difficulties, allegedly close to the summit. He had had enough and declared the mountain to be inaccessible.

Although Tyndall returned to the Alps every season until the end of the decade, he made no more first ascents. Joss Lynam speculated that he seemed to have lost interest after 1862 and that his subsequent climbs were much below his abilities. He was in Zermatt in 1865 to assist in the search for Lord Francis Douglas's remains after the Matterhorn disaster, and in 1868 he gained the consolation prize of making the first traverse of the mountain.

Tyndall was a fine mountaineer and the most successful Irish Alpinist of the period, but he was fated to operate in the shadow of his rival Whymper. That he was well thought of in the mountaineering community is evident by the honorary life memberships bestowed on him by the Alpine Clubs of France, Italy and Switzerland.

By contrast, he had an uneasy relationship with the original of the species in London, where he was made a vice-president in 1861, only to resign almost immediately over a perceived slight to scientists. Ill health saw him resign his various posts in 1887 and he retired to his country house in Surrey where he died in 1893 – following the accidental administration of an overdose of chloral by his wife.

### The life of Reilly

What distinguished the tragedy on the Matterhorn was that it had taken place, not in a remote region of

## 'Anthony Adam Reilly produced an entirely original map of Mont Blanc'

the empire, but "in the middle of the world's smallest, most densely populated continent...a wilderness, which was not properly mapped until the late nineteenth century."<sup>2</sup>

A major contributor to filling in the blanks on the maps was Anthony Adams Reilly from Belmont House, near Mullingar, Co Westmeath, whose path would also cross that of Whymper's in the latter's quest for the Matterhorn.

Following his second visit to the Alps in 1862, Reilly began to realise the extent of the errors – both of omission and commission – that permeated the maps of the region. He determined to remedy the situation himself and returned to Chamonix in June of the following year to commence work. Using a combination of triangulation, photographs and panoramic drawings, he accumulated much data, which he worked on over the following winter and spring to produce an entirely original map of Mont Blanc.

Reilly's work had brought him to the attention of Whymper, who saw in him a potential companion for the Matterhorn. Reilly accepted Whymper's proposal, but only on condition that Whymper first help him to explore the areas necessary for completion of his map.

In eight days at the beginning of July (1864) the pair, accompanied by some of the most experienced guides in the region, made several new ascents and crossings while filling in the gaps on Reilly's map. Whymper was fulsome in his praise for Reilly, not knowing "which to admire most, the fidelity of [his] map, or the indefatigable industry by which the materials were accumulated from which it was constructed." He noted that it was difficult enough to traverse these mountains without also "making sketches and notes under the most adverse conditions and in the most trying situations."

Reilly's map was finally published by the Alpine Club in 1865 at a scale of 1:80,000 and prompted an immediate response from a French government incensed to be shown up by a foreigner. They commissioned the production of a 1:40,000 map and Reilly was so co-operative with the cartographers that several features in the region were named after him, including a peak and a pass. The map was published by the Alpine Club to great acclaim, but Reilly's Alpine career was already winding down and he only made two further visits, in 1869 and 1873,

<sup>2</sup>Fergus Fleming, *Killing Dragons* (London, 2000), vi.





The Weisshorn (4,505m) above the Mattertal, seen from Hannisalp above Graechen, Switzerland

Photograph: WOUDLOPER

and neither to any great effect.

Troubled by the disturbances in Ireland, he returned “to dwell amongst his own people.” In 1884, he was visited by an erstwhile climbing partner, Charles Mathews, who found him an old man at the age of 48, suffering from rheumatism. The following year, he had a stroke and died.

By contrast with the irascible Tyndall, Reilly was fondly thought of amongst his mountaineering peers and Mathews’s obituary in the *Alpine Journal* was effusive in its praise, noting that he had never heard Reilly “say anything to anyone’s disparagement or

pass an unjust judgement upon a single human being.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Tyndall and Reilly are just two of a number of Irish Victorian mountaineers whose achievements have been but quietly sung. Each made different contributions to the golden age of Alpine mountaineering in general, and to the first ascent of the Matterhorn, in particular. Tyndall, with his combative nature, spurred Whymper (literally) to greater heights, while Reilly’s gift was more to the general climbing community. Nonetheless, he too assisted Whymper on his way and, but for the cancellation of an attempt in 1864, might well have climbed the Matterhorn with him, as a result of which the subsequent course of Alpine history might have been much different and possibly a lot less dramatic.

► For more on the history of Irish Victorian mountaineers and the history of Irish mountaineering in general, see the *Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society*, which is available from Mountaineering Ireland. The fourth volume of the journal will appear in the spring of 2014 ■

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James Bryce, Chief Secretary of Ireland (1905-1907)





Looking across the Chamonix Valley to Mont Blanc

# Trekking around Mont Blanc

**EUGENE McGETTRICK** sets off on his own to attempt the Tour du Mont Blanc

**T**he Tour du Mont Blanc (henceforth TMB) is a 170km trek that goes around the Mont Blanc Massif, passing through France, Italy and Switzerland.

The route goes over several high mountain passes and takes trekkers through or above seven valleys, with a total ascent of roughly 10,000 metres. In addition, several alternative paths (known as *variantes*) allow hikers to experience more rugged and usually more scenic options for short sections of the route.

The main trekking season for the TMB runs from mid-June to the end of September (weather permitting) and during that period around 10,000 people complete the circuit each year, with July and August being the busiest months.

Refuges offer food and accommodation along the way, so trekkers can travel lightly. For trekkers who don't mind carrying the extra weight, camping facilities are also available.

I began the trek alone during the last week of June from the town of Les Houches in France, near Chamonix. By choosing late June I hoped to avoid any late snow on the higher passes and also to get a headstart on the crowds that would descend on the trail in early July.

## Day one

Rain with the possibility of afternoon thunderstorms was forecast, so after breakfast I set off and made a fast climb to the Col De Voza (1653m) in an effort to beat the rain to the pass. However, the weather stayed dry, so after reaching the col I enjoyed a relaxing saunter downhill through forests and hamlets.

Along the way, I met a solo French trekker and together we completed the last few kilometres to Les Contamines. Here, he headed off to find a campsite and I went to look for accommodation at the Club Alpin Francais refuge. Since it was still early in the season, I hadn't booked anything, and luckily a large group had cancelled, so the only other guests there were a Frenchman and an English couple from Cumbria, whom I became good friends with along the route.

## Day two

The following morning, there was a light drizzle falling, so after breakfast I donned my raingear before setting off. The trail exited Les Contamines and followed a watercourse uphill through a ravine paved with ancient slabs, which Roman armies had marched over.

The route traversed open hillsides shrouded in





Rifugio Elisabetta and the Glacier de la Lée Blanche

thick mist, so the scenery was left mainly to my imagination.

I entered a rock-field, where the paint markings and small stone cairns guided me through safely. Shortly after successfully negotiating the rock-field, I reached the Col du Bonhomme (2329m) and, a little later, the Col de la Croix du Bonhomme, which, at 2483m, would be the highest point of the day.

While I chatted to another trekker here, the mist suddenly began to dissipate. As I made the long descent to the tiny hamlet of Les Chapieux, the weather continued to improve, revealing green sloping hills all around.

### Day three

Day three began with a hike up a narrow tarmac road through the scenic Vallée de Glaciers. That day, I hiked with the couple from Cumbria, David and Gaye, whom I had met at the Club Alpin Francais in Les Contamines. The road became an uphill track that

## 'A herd of ibex appeared outside the rifugio, sending excited guests scurrying for their cameras'

continued climbing until we reached the picturesque Col de la Seigne which, at 2516m elevation, would be our gateway from France into Italy.

From there, the scenery was spectacular. Blooming wild flowers carpeted the lower slopes in a profusion of colours. Jagged, rocky peaks dropped off to the first of three valleys that stretched all the way to Switzerland, a three-day trek farther on. Towering over this Alpine panorama was western Europe's highest mountain, Mont Blanc (4807m).

A stiff wind was being funnelled through the pass, so we found a sheltered spot and ate lunch. Afterwards, we descended into Italy, passing a former customs hut, now an interpretative centre. An hour's hike through the valley brought us to our accommodation for the night, the Rifugio Elisabetta, situated on a hillside below the Glacier de la Lée Blanche. That evening, a herd of ibex appeared outside, sending excited guests scurrying for their cameras.

### Day four

The next morning, I set off again, travelling with Gaye and David for another day of glorious mountains, sunshine and wild flowers. In the afternoon, we arrived in the charming town of Courmayeur. This would be our last shopping opportunity for several days, so naturally we availed of essential supplies – such as pizza and ice cream. In the evening, we enjoyed a free Celtic music concert and, later, a tippie or two of inexpensive, but good, Italian wine.



### THE AUTHOR

Eugene McGettrick has hiked in many parts of the world, including the Southern and Northern Alps, Alaska, British Columbia and California, where he lived for several years and worked in park management. His work meant that he had to take a lot of 'busman's holidays' there!



An ibex wades through an alpenrose meadow





The scenic Col de la Seigne, our gateway from France into Italy

### Day five

The following day, a stiff climb took us above Courmayeur (and left some of us wishing the Italian wine wasn't so affordable). The trail entered some larch and juniper woodlands before reaching the open meadows. Along this stretch, Mont Blanc revealed its splendour: snow-fields, hanging glaciers and soaring rock walls filled the skyline, and in the clear mountain air western Europe's highest point stood out brilliantly in white against a cerulean sky.

In the foreground, several wild flower species, including alpenrose, harebell, clover, yarrow and gentian, coloured the sun-drenched meadows in a tapestry of blooms; it was a hiker's dreamland.

All that morning we enjoyed the views, and in the afternoon we reached the Rifugio Bonatti, named

after Walter Bonatti, the famous Italian climber from yesteryear. The rifugio has a reputation for serving up generous dinner portions, and that evening was no different. After stuffing ourselves with salad and macaroni, our thoughts turned to dessert. Instead, several large plates of meatballs, potatoes and vegetables arrived. A look of astonishment (or maybe horror) crossed some guests' faces, but the shock was overcome and the food was devoured.

### Day six

The next day, we made a steep climb to the Grand Col Ferret (2537m), which took us into Switzerland.

Along the way we had our first sighting of a marmot as it watched us with cautious curiosity. From the col, we could see all the way back to the Col de la Seigne, where we had entered Italy three days earlier.



View from the French side



Ahead of us, the scenery on the Swiss side was less dramatic, with sloping hills indented with snow-filled hollows. We dropped down the mountainside to our pre-booked accommodation, the Gîte de la Léchère.

### Day seven

The following morning, we descended to the tiny hamlet of La Fouly. The TMB then meandered through the pastoral Val Ferret, passing woodland and the enchanting villages so typical of Switzerland. After a steep climb, we arrived at our end-of-day destination: the lakeside village of Champex.

### Day eight

The next day, I set off alone on an alternative route that would take me over a high pass, the Fenêtre D'Arpette, while my Cumbrian friends stayed on the TMB, going via the Alp Bovine.

Initially, my path travelled up a scenic valley, the Val D'Arpette, and then it entered a large rock-field where the hiking became tedious because it was impossible to get into a regular stride. Before noon, I reached the Fenêtre D'Arpette (2665m), a notch between two rocky peaks. From there, I could see the nearby Trient glacier spilling dramatically out of a hillside on the left. Below me lay the head of the Vallée du Trient, a glaciated valley that breached the mountains to the northwest.

The trail continued in this direction, remaining on the ridge above the valley. I passed the Chalet du Glacier and soon arrived at the Col de La Forclaz, where Gaye and David were already relaxing at the Hotel de la Forclaz.

### Day nine

Day nine brought us to the Swiss-French border at the scenic Col de Balme (2191m). We descended the mountainside into France before climbing again to the L'Aiguillette des Posettes (2201m). From there, a downhill walk brought us to the tiny hamlet of Tré-le-Champ and our accommodation, the Gîte Auberge la Boerne, which turned out to be one of the more interesting places we stayed at during the trek. This rustic, timbered building oozed history from its centuries-old wooden beams and, upstairs, a labyrinth of rooms, some of them not much more than crawl spaces, filled every nook and cranny.

### Day ten

The next day, an uphill climb brought us to a rock wall that we scaled using a series of metal ladders and railings bolted into the rock-face. A little farther on, a side-trail beckoned us away from the main route and guided us up past two scenic lakes (Les Lacs de Cherseys) to the Refuge du Lac Blanc, where we stopped for lunch.

From there, we enjoyed spectacular views of snow-fields, hanging glaciers and jagged peaks and, almost directly across the valley, the huge channel carved out by the now-receding glacier, La Mer de Glace,



Mt Blanc, Italian side

which snaked through the mountains like a dried-up riverbed. After lunch, a downhill stroll brought us to the Refuge la Flégère, our accommodation for the night.

### Day eleven

Day eleven was the final day of our Tour du Mont Blanc trek. Initially we traversed open hillsides before climbing to the Col du Brévent (2368m). The path entered a stony basin, where we spotted our first chamois of the trip.

After climbing another ladder, we soon arrived at Le Brévent which, at 2526m, was the high point of the day. From there it was a long 1500m descent to Les Houches, where we had begun the trek eleven days earlier.

During the descent, we continued to enjoy stunning views of Mont Blanc's suspended glaciers, clinging to the mountainside above the valley. It was a fitting end to a superb trek ■





Raven, by DICK COOMBES

# The Last Hill

An original short story by Don Baldwin

**P**eeter felt strong today, just like in the old days when he was young and the mountains were new – new to him, that is – and the tracks and trails were yet to be explored; when something new beckoned to be discovered over every virgin crest and within every hidden valley.

Even the smells, which he had become so accustomed to over the years, were sharper today; the sweet scent of heather and the smell of the salty air wafting in from the sea, laced with the tang of the pine trees which were draped on the lower slopes.

Yes, Peter exulted in his trek today, the usual niggles and old ‘war wounds’ curiously absent as he climbed with ease up towards the ever ascending ridge, which stretched out above. Familiar stacks of gabbro rock silently welcomed Peter like old friends as he made his way up through the inviting cleft in the flank of the mountain. A raven called out a soft warning to his partner, which glided majestically nearby, before banking away to mob a hawk, which had strayed into his airspace. Peter threw back his head and echoed back a throaty caw, revelling in the

wildness and silent solitude of these hills, which had been with him for so many years, long before the era of Gortex and Dry-Flo, and when the emergence of a handful of army surplus stores were a godsend.

It had been the Army that had first introduced Peter to mountains, maps and compasses and the rigours of long, arduous patrols through the hills with blackened faces on winter nights. Still, it had infused him with a love for the mountains which he had taken with him when he left the Army. Even now, so many years later, he was still his own worst drill sergeant, forever driving himself up the next hill. How Anne had teased him about the trickle of military blood that still ran through his veins. It had been the source of much amusement on their hillwalks over the years, just like the laugh they had shared over the first rain-jacket he had bought her.

Peter chuckled warmly as he recalled the perplexed look on Anne’s face when he had steered her away from a boutique and into an outdoor activities shop to buy her her first hi-tech rain-jacket, as he introduced her to his beloved hills.

Anne grew to love the hills too, and they had shared a laugh often about her treasured lavender coat as they sipped hot coffee on the top of some windswept mountain.

Of course, the kids had checked their gallop a little, considered Peter warmly, as he reached the crest of the ridge and drank in the view, which was indelibly etched on his memory; the sea, the lough and the distant mountains, all overlaid with the brooding interplay of grey cloud and sunlight, so unique to the Irish landscape.

In time, the children came to the hills too, for a while at least. Those were the ‘Golden Years,’ which flew past all too quickly. They were all grown up now and busy with careers and babies of their own. One







minute you were 'Super-Dad,' the centre of their universe. Now you were lucky if you got a phone call. Still, they were happy and getting on with their lives and that's all that mattered. Anne and he still had each other, and the mountains, concluded Peter contentedly as he picked his way along the ridge, although Anne didn't come with him as often these days, not since her illness.

Peter reached the Canteen, a formidable bulk of inclined rock that offered respite from the wind. Here, he propped up his walking poles, dropped his backpack, sat and broke out his flask and sandwiches, as he had done so many times before. "Take refuge in the hills, there is still truth there," mused Peter philosophically, absorbing his primordial surroundings, as he lay back against the cold, hard rock. The mountain was his cathedral. This is where he found his god, in the wild lonely places where ravens soared over a timeless landscape, just as it was when he had first come to the mountains; and so it would be when it was his time to leave.

Peter awoke with a jolt, startled by a large raven vocally barraging him from a nearby boulder. How had he fallen asleep? And how on Earth had the evening drawn in so quickly, puzzled Peter, as he eyed the creature speculatively. "Alright, I'm awake," he responded, reassured that the brazen bird meant him no harm. "Thanks, old friend," offered Peter, shivering with the cold as the raven stared at him meaningfully, as if imparting some deep ancient message, then cawed one last time before flying off into the gathering mist.

Peter felt cold, dangerously cold; his joints ached and all the old hurts had somehow come flooding back with a vengeance, and still he had one more hill to climb. Feeling old and worn, Peter gazed despondently at the track that snaked on up the hill into the thickening mist. Vacantly he watched as a faint flicker of movement tantalisingly appeared, then disappeared as quickly in the murky distance. There it was again, that movement, the outline becoming more definite in shape, in colour. Peter stared incredulously at the person in the lavender jacket as she came clearly into view. How could he have forgotten that Anne was with him?

"Well, are you going to sit there all day, soldier?"

poked Anne humorously as she stood before him, a gusting wind tossing unruly locks of auburn hair into her youthful green eyes.

"I missed you," blurted Peter, for some ridiculous reason.

"I know," answered Anne softly, "I was near."

"You were?"

"Yes, I've been waiting for you, Peter," explained Anne simply, extending her hand. "I think it's time we pushed on. It's getting late."

"I suppose it is," conceded Peter, a deep sense of understanding finally dawning, as Anne hauled him to his feet. "Best lead on then, soldier," added Peter, noting that the evening was drawing in fast.

"Yes, Sir!" mocked Anne, snapping out her zany salute, before turning and heading on up the mist-covered track.

"Wait!" Peter called out, alarmed. "My backpack." It was so unlike him to leave anything behind. Anne turned and smiled reassuringly for a moment. "You're right, it doesn't matter," agreed Peter. Nothing else really mattered now, because they were together; they were in the mountains and they were heading home, accepted Peter peacefully, pausing to catch a glimpse of the fading sunset before following Anne up the last hill.

\* \* \* \* \*

The nurse hadn't expected to find a pulse. Secretly, she had hoped she wouldn't. The past year had seemed like the cruellest of tortures, for a once so active man to now be trapped inside his stroke-stricken body.

"I hope there's mountains there, old timer," said the nurse kindly as she respectfully laid his lifeless hand back down on the bed. "And I hope that she's there too," added the nurse affectionately, as she paused in the doorway to take a final glance at the vibrant young couple in the faded photo, sharing some private joke with a mock salute, on top of some windswept mountain ■



#### THE AUTHOR

Don Baldwin started mountaineering over thirty years ago in the Cooley and Wicklow Mountains with the Irish Defence Forces, and climbed in the mountains of South Lebanon where he served with the UN. He has been involved in mountaineering ever since and has completed several courses at Tollymore, including the Walking Group Leader scheme.







## SEEK THE FROZEN LANDS: IRISH POLAR EXPLORERS 1740-1922

By Frank Nugent

The Collins Press (2013 (revised edition)), 270pp, paperback, several pages b/w photos, ISBN 978-1-84889-182-1, €14.99 (£11.99)

First issued by The Collins Press in hardback in 2004, this important book has been revised and is now re-issued in paperback. Frank Nugent's particularly gripping book relates the stories of the many Irishmen who took part in the early exploration of the polar

regions. Some of these men would be unknown to readers but there are also men like Tom Crean, Jerome Collins and Ernest Shackleton who would be well known to most. The book is a tour de force that includes details of the Irish explorers as well as some of the administrators and backers of the many expeditions.

One of the lesser-known Irish polar explorers is Arthur Dobbs MP, a native of Carrickfergus, Co Antrim, who, by extraordinary luck, had a chance encounter with the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as a result of which Dobbs led two Admiralty ships to find a Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean in 1741-'42. A few years later he tried again, without Admiralty support, returning in 1747.

The search for the Northwest Passage resumed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Sir Edward Sabine, who was born in Dublin, took part as an astronomer in two quests for the Northwest Passage in 1818 and 1819, for the British

Admiralty.

Sadly, many of the early explorers lost their lives in the quest for the Northwest Passage, including Jerome Collins of Cork, who died in northern Siberia but whose body was recovered and buried in a cemetery overlooking the River Lee, where his monument faces north.

Another outstanding polar



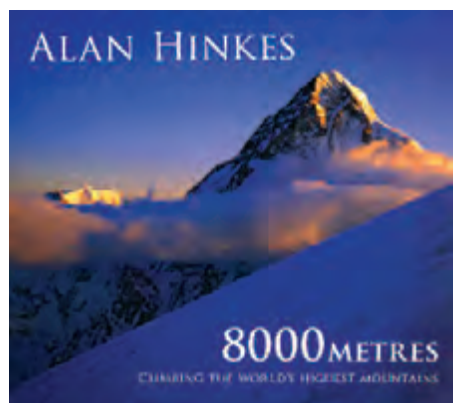
Arthur Dobbs MP: 18<sup>th</sup>-century polar explorer

explorer was Kerryman Tom Crean, who twice went to the Antarctic with Shackleton. On the second expedition, the ship was stuck fast and broken up by the pressure of ice. The crew took to the lifeboat, the *James Caird*, and rowed to Elephant Island. From there, six of the crew, including Shackleton and Crean, rowed the boat 800 miles to South Georgia, where they

had to climb over the mountains to get help for those waiting on Elephant Island. Fortunately, all were saved.

Many other Irish explorers are included in this interesting and informative book.

**Paddy Leahy** Retired civil engineer, has been hillwalking in Ireland and abroad for 35 years. Honorary life member of Coconuts Hill Walking Club and member of Skibbreen Walking Group (both member clubs of Mountaineering Ireland).



## 8000 METRES: CLIMBING THE WORLD'S HIGHEST MOUNTAINS

By Alan Hinkes

Cicerone (2013), 192pp, many colour photos  
ISBN: 978-1-85284-548-3, £25 (€30)

This is a lavishly-illustrated coffee-table book, an account of the expeditions undertaken by Alan Hinkes in becoming the first (and so far only) Briton to climb all of the world's 8000m peaks.

You may be aware that one of these ascents

has been disputed, that of Cho Oyu, reputedly the easiest and safest of the fourteen peaks – although 'easy' and 'safe' are very relative terms in this context. Here, you can read his own account of that ascent. Most of the party set off for the top individually, at different times. The weather changed and Alan continued alone, spending "at least an hour and a half covering every inch of ground on the summit plateau until, in the end, I was absolutely certain that I could not get any higher. There was no more uphill. I was on the highest point at 8,201m."

You either accept that account or you do not. There was no other witness. For what it may be worth, the ascent lists and web pages that I have seen, which dispute this ascent, seem to be anonymous, or else were created by persons whose names are not familiar to me.

As well as accounts of the fourteen ascents, there are fourteen interesting one-page articles covering topics including (among others): famous climbers; dealing with death; photography and filming; expedition diet; the trek in; plus one more

by landscape photographer Joe Cornish.

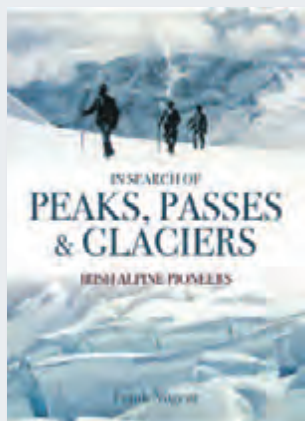
The difficulties inherent in photography at high altitude and in extreme conditions should not be underestimated, and the photographs in this book are superb, and probably a deciding factor in whether or not you will want to buy it.

Alan Hinkes provides an interesting and sometimes humorous account of his expeditions (27 attempts in all for the 14 peaks). Occasionally, he seems to have gone beyond his own principle that "No mountain is worth a life, or a finger or toe to frostbite." You can read how he retrieved the situation and returned safely on each occasion.

I was surprised, however, by the omission of any route maps for the individual peaks, particularly as Alan himself writes in the introduction that he finds maps interesting and enjoys "a good map read." The single map page shows no more than the location of the fourteen peaks.

**Peter O'Neill** Literary Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*





### PEAKS, PASSES & GLACIERS: IRISH ALPINE PIONEERS

By Frank Nugent

The Collins Press (2013), 310pp, many photos and sketches, ISBN: 978-1-84889-178-4, €29.99 (£26.99)

One consequence of the Irish War of Independence in the 1920s was that a veil was drawn over the previous ruling class and Irish members of the British forces. Ernest Shackleton and Tom Crean were airbrushed out of folk memory, as were those who fell in the Great War. So also were the early Irish Alpinists.

In this superbly researched and beautifully produced volume, Frank Nugent brings vividly to life nineteen people

who contributed significantly to the growth and development of mountaineering, not only in the Alps but also on the Greater Ranges. His book covers the lives of these personalities set against major events of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland: Catholic Emancipation, the Famine, the Land Wars, the War of Independence, and all of the tangled relations with the British Empire.

Mountaineering evolved as a sport in the century of peace after the fall of Napoleon. This was also the time of the economic rise of Britain and the growth of the railways, which gave quicker access to the Alps. However, travel was still the preserve of the rich, so the subjects of this book were virtually all from the wealthy, landed, aristocratic classes.

One such is John Ball, son of the Attorney General, who first visited the Alps in 1827 at the age of nine. Educated in St Mary's Jesuit College, Oscott, and Christ's College, Cambridge, he was later called to the Irish Bar, but he never practiced. Family wealth allowed him to follow his real interests – nature, science and botany – that led to twenty

years of travelling through the Alps.

Ball's family were Catholic and strong supporters of Daniel O'Connell. Ball had a career in politics and in 1846 was appointed an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, who oversaw the relief road works. When the Alpine Club was established in 1857, he was head-hunted to be its first President. He edited *Peaks, Passes and Glaciers*, a record of then current mountain ascents and the ancestor of this book. This publication became the *Alpine Journal* – still the premier mountain annual today. His Alpine guidebooks were the best of their time. In short, he was the Joss Lynam of the Alpine Club.

Other leading Irish Alpinists are also included such as John Tyndall, Anthony Adams Reilly and Charles Barrington. In addition, Lizzie Hawkins-Whitshed from Greystones, Co Wicklow, went to Switzerland in search of a cure for "an inherited lung disorder." She soon recovered and started a career that made her the finest lady climber of her generation, at a time when such activity was seen as unladylike.

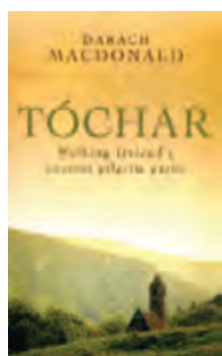
"By far the greatest mountaineer in the early part of this century," according to Professor T Graham Brown, the achievements of Valentine Ryan are also considered in some detail.

Then on to Charles Howard-Bury, leader of the first Everest expedition in 1922, and culminating with Dawson Stelfox who, in 1993, became the first Irishman to ascend Everest as well as the first Irishman and incidentally the first Briton to ascend the peak by the traditional North West Ridge, the route of all of the British attempts of the 1920s and 1930s.

Copiously illustrated with period black-and-white photographs, sketches, copies of maps and photostats of pages from original diaries, the lives of the leading Alpine guides who were engaged are also detailed in sidebars.

This is a book to savour and absorb slowly. An absolute must for 2013's Christmas stockings and the shelves of every Irish mountaineer.

**John I Murray** Member of the Irish Mountaineering Club



### TÓCHAR: WALKING IRELAND'S ANCIENT PILGRIM PATHS

By Darach MacDonald

New Island (2013), 298pp, no images or maps, ISBN: 978-1-84840-247-8, €14.99

Having walked a few of Ireland's pilgrim paths myself, I thought it would be nice to read someone else's view of them. However, this book is not exactly what I was expecting. I thought it would be written in a traditional guidebook style, but the book is definitely not a guidebook. It is more a travel account with a religious bent to it. The foreword is written by Fr Brian D'Arcy.

"Tóchar" is the Irish word for causeway. Although the writer describes his travels in a reasonably detailed way, even including the times entailed, the book is first and foremost the narrative of a pilgrim. All

the hardships, happy and sad times, and the struggles a pilgrim can encounter, are there for the reader to experience. At times humorous and airy, this is a very honest account of the writer's trials and tribulations, be they physical or spiritual, as he follows the pilgrim paths in Ireland.

The story begins with the writer's account of his stay in St Patrick's Purgatory on Station Island on Lough Derg in County Donegal. Then, describing the landscape he travels through and the people he meets, he meanders through the four corners of Ireland, from Gleann

Cholm Cille (Glencolumbkille) in Co Donegal, via Croagh Patrick and Knock, both in Co Mayo; to St Bridget's shrine in south Armagh; to Glendalough in Co Wicklow; and finally finishing with a walk along the Cosán na Naomh pilgrim path in Dingle, Co Kerry.

On the way, the book tells a human story, with the writer's last sentence being: "The path of the pilgrim is as long as life itself."

**Stephen Bender** Hillwalker and climber, member of Mountaineering Ireland and owner of Endeavour Mountaineering





# Books



## A WALK IN THE CLOUDS: FIFTY YEARS AMONG THE MOUNTAINS

By Kev Reynolds

Cicerone (2013), 207pp, 12pp b/w  
photos, ISBN 978-1-85284-726-5,  
£12.95

This is a delightful little book from a man whose name will already be familiar to many readers.

Kev Reynolds packed in his local government job at twenty-one years of age and has spent the last fifty years exploring the mountains of the world and producing guidebooks of excellent quality. Titles such as *Walking in the Alps* and *Walks and Climbs in the Pyrenees* are highly regarded and have been revised and reprinted numerous times. Indeed,

Reynolds has produced over fifty meticulously researched and detailed guidebooks, mainly published by Cicerone, a publisher synonymous with mountain guidebooks.

But this book is no guidebook; rather it is a large collection of Kev's memorable moments from his fifty-plus years of rambling around the wilderness areas of Europe and beyond. However, it mentions many of the wild areas of the world in such an inspiring way that I found myself reaching for guidebooks and maps to check out how easy it would be for me to get there.

The book is divided into seventy-five mini-chapters grouped under the headings of 'Atlas Mountains,' 'Pyrenees,' 'Alps,' 'Himalaya' and finally 'Other Places,' which is a loose collection of places including Corsica, Norway, Madeira and Peru.

The stories are quite short and in many ways each one could stand on its own as a short magazine article. Indeed, several have featured in magazines and other publications, including the *Alpine Journal*.

The book lends itself to being picked up and read for five

minutes and picked up later without having to get back in tune with the storyline. Many of the tales are quite vivid and I found Reynolds' descriptions kicked off fond memories from my own travels.

The stories are quite varied, ranging from near-misses with crevasses and being taken in by a scam in the Himalaya, to his encounters with mountain folk who willingly offered hospitality and company. His descriptions of the monotony of rainy days are more than

balanced by several of delightful sunsets and sunrises after hard days on the hills.

There are also some poignant moments, such as his attempt to assist a blind izard, a goat-like antelope. His accounts of encounters with the border security services of France and Spain in remote areas will raise a smile on your face. Overall, a delightful and inspiring read!

**Edmund Fagan** Hillwalker, scrambler, member of the Mountain Rescue services in Wicklow.

## Nire Valley River Cottage Comeragh Mountains

Gorgeous cottage  
with riverside terrace

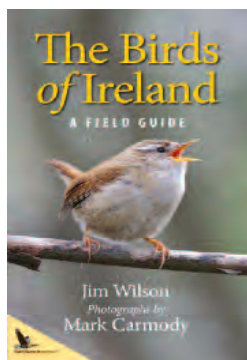
Walk in Comeragh,  
Knockmealdown &  
Galtee Ranges

Two pubs & a shop less  
than a mile away



Luxury Accommodation - Affordable Price - Walker's Paradise

<http://nirevalleyrivercottage.com>



## THE BIRDS OF IRELAND: A FIELD GUIDE

By Jim Wilson & Mark Carmody

The Collins Press (2013), 236pp,  
numerous colour photos, ISBN 978-1-  
84889-179-1, €14.99 (£13.99)

Every birdwatcher needs a good identification tool and this latest guidebook certainly fits the bill.

The guidebook differs from all those that have gone before in that it is the first photographic identification guide to the birds of Ireland. There are six to 15 images per species, showing them in various plumages and from different angles to highlight important features, making it easier to identify birds that you are likely to encounter when you are out birdwatching or simply looking at birds in your garden. In all, there are over 1,600 photographs,

representing more than 260 species.

The book includes a comprehensive 'Getting started' section, with guidance ranging from use of a notebook to when, where and how to look for birds. I particularly liked the section dealing with plumage and 'bare parts' terminology. The clarity of the labelled photographs greatly facilitates the identification of the various feathery bits, which so many aspiring birdwatchers find so daunting.

Each bird is allocated a page to itself with about three-quarters of the page consisting of photos with a succinct

descriptive text below.

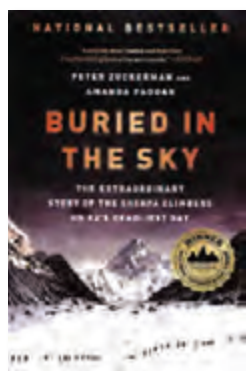
To help with visual identification, the various species groups in this guide are arranged by visual similarity and habitat preference rather than by the strict scientific order used by most other guidebooks.

The pocket size also makes the guidebook user-friendly from a hillwalker's point of view, as it can fit neatly into an inside pocket, ready to be whipped out as the need arises.

Birdwatching has just got easier!

**Des Doyle** Member of the Irish Mountaineering Club





### **BURIED IN THE SKY: THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF THE SHERPA CLIMBERS ON K2'S DEADLIEST DAY**

**By Peter Zuckerman & Amanda Padoan**

WW Norton & Company (2013), 285pp, 51pp of notes, bibliography & index, 9 maps, 16pp b/w photos, ISBN: 978-0-393-34541-4, ppbk

The subtitle says it all for me – this is certainly an extraordinary story of what occurred on that tragic day in August 2008 when eleven mountaineers, including our own Ger McDonnell, lost their lives on K2, the ‘Savage Mountain.’

The first half of the text of the book is devoted to scene-setting and sometimes seems a bit irrelevant to the main thrust of the book, which is to record the roles that the Sherpa climbers played as the tragedy unfolded. However, that is quickly forgotten as what has been established about what

happened on the mountain in those final days of triumph, as numerous climbers summited on K2, and tragedy, as they retreated in the disaster that followed, is reported in the action-packed second half of the book.

A possible confusion in the terminology is clarified early on. The term ‘Sherpa’ with a capital letter is taken to refer to the ethnic group, while the lower case ‘sherpa’ is taken as a generic term referring to high-altitude porters and climbers. In this review I will follow this convention.

The authors, Peter Zuckerman and Amanda Padoan, who are cousins, should certainly be congratulated for what they have been able to establish about what happened in the ‘death zone’ on K2 as this tragedy played out. We can all perhaps understand the difficulties they faced in establishing, at some distance in time, the events of those final days, with people from many different countries spread over this 8,000m peak in bad weather; the resultant difficulties in communication, both technical and linguistic; and the fact that many of the key players are sadly no longer with us.

The authors have established these events by interviewing

## **Publisher's offer**

Members of Mountaineering Ireland can avail of an offer from WW Norton & Company for a discount on this book, *Buried in the Sky*, by Peter Zuckerman and Amanda Padoan. To order the book at the special members' discount of 35%, go to the website link [www.wwnorton.co.uk/book.html?id=3471](http://www.wwnorton.co.uk/book.html?id=3471) and enter the code **WN254** when prompted at the checkout ■

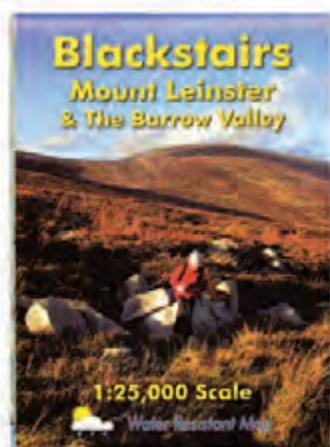
the survivors and the relatives of those who lost their lives, to access as much information as possible about what happened in those days. They have also looked at the cultural background of the various sherpas involved in the tragedy to understand and explain their actions. The account they have produced certainly appears to be consistent with what is known. It also explains in a matter-of-fact way the heroism displayed by many of the sherpa players. Having known and worked with several ethnic Sherpas over the years, I found that I could certainly recognise many of the traits described from my own experiences – the honesty, the pride in their culture and their profession, the loyalty, the fatalism and so on.

As I have said, I found the earlier chapters a little irrelevant to the main story. It also comes across as a bit

condescending as it tries to explain mountaineering terms and techniques, something that might have been better done in footnotes.

Initially, at least, the focus also often seemed to be more on the western climbers rather than the sherpas. However, in the end, the authors do seem to be focusing on the often heroic actions of the Sherpa climbers and do seem to have developed an understanding of why they did what they did. They also highlight again the bravery and altruism of Ger McDonnell, who clearly lost his life trying to save other climbers, when he could have walked on by. This is certainly a book that anyone who wants to better understand the events of those tragic days on the top of K2 and in the Bottleneck from a Sherpa perspective will want to read.

**Patrick O'Sullivan** Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*



### **BLACKSTAIRS, MOUNT LEINSTER & THE BARROW VALLEY**

**1:25,000 scale**

East West Mapping (2013)

ISBN 978-1-899815-32-6, €9.95

I am a great fan of East West Mapping, finding their information generally reliable, up-to-date and relevant to the interests of my walking group. I have all of their maps for Wicklow and I regularly scan them looking for loops, parking, refreshments, etc. I know that nowadays there is an app for all of these things, but that pre-supposes you know how to use one!

I am firmly of the view that maps will never be replaced by technology; they give a much larger picture and a whole lot of information is instantly available to you.

This map of the Blackstairs range and the Barrow River Valley is certainly a useful addition to any walker's library. It shows two counties with a great variety of walking routes. Just one small issue with this map: it is smaller and printed on both sides, unlike the 1:30,000 East West maps I have been using. I prefer the larger format sheet.

**Dairine Nuttall** Nordic Walking guide and instructor, based in County Wicklow.





# Books



## BOULDERING ESSENTIALS: THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO BOULDERING

By David Flanagan

Three Rock Books (2013), 192pp,  
many colour photos, ISBN 978-0-  
9567874-1-5, €25 (incl delivery)

Following on from his definitive bouldering guidebook to all of Ireland – *Bouldering in Ireland* (Shortspan, 2011) – Dave Flanagan has followed up with this friendly, accessible and well-informed ‘bouldering essentials’ guidebook.

Designed to cater to all, from

experienced boulderers to complete novice climbers, and to those who may climb in other disciplines (traditional, sport, etc) and are interested in trying their hand at this type of climbing, there is a wealth of information to delve into. The book also recognises both indoor and outdoor bouldering, acknowledging that there are differences in style between the two but handling them in a very well-written manner.

Covering a huge selection of topics, the book is thoughtfully spread out into well-organised sections with just the right amount of information to guide the reader forward in their learning. The book is most suitable for beginners and intermediate-experience, aspiring boulderers, but there is a range of ideas that could be the key to unlocking future areas of improvement to the more experienced boulderer also. Additionally, as bouldering is focused so much on

ADAM LONG



movement and strength, thus complementing all other areas of climbing, all climbers will find something useful in this guide.

Throughout the book, there are beautiful photographs to

tempt and inspire. Some are purely aesthetic shots of people climbing at many of the top bouldering areas around the world, but they are also put to use when describing movements and hold types.

While it is usually quite difficult to show a movement in a sequence of photographs, the author has done a good job with most of his pictures in giving a sense of what he is trying to describe with words. The result would be sufficient to assist and guide aspiring boulderers before they take the next step of using a coach. This guide is, perhaps, the perfect supplement to the author's earlier guide, the soon-to-be-reprinted *Bouldering Guidebook to Ireland*. It is highly recommended.

**Neal McQuaid** Avid climber and traveller, manager at Awesome Walls, Dublin, formerly Talent Development Officer for Mountaineering Ireland.



## GIMME KRAFT! EFFECTIVE CLIMBING TRAINING

By Patrick Matros, Ludwig  
Korb & Hannes Kuch

Café Kraft GmbH (2013), 224pp,  
colour illustrations, many photos,  
includes DVD, ISBN 978-3-00-  
042331-4, €29.90 plus postage

*Gimme Kraft!* is a bilingual (German and English) book about training for climbing. As the name will suggest to those with a little German, it's all about power.

The book describes over seventy different exercises designed to build strength and power. Ordered by the

equipment that they are performed on (bouldering wall, pull-up bar, gymnastic rings, campus board, peg board, sling-trainer, floor and mini-bars, and sloper-rails), each exercise has a text description and a four-photo sequence. The book also comes with a DVD that shows the exercises in action.

Spread through the book are brief quotes from some of the top climbers of the day. These are a little vague and often not helpful. Do we really need to be told “Power is one of the most important aspects of climbing; without power you are weak and can't do certain moves...”?

By naming the exercises and suggesting appropriate reps and sets, *Gimme Kraft!* formalises what many climbers have been doing for years. The book reflects the movement in training for climbing towards a more balanced approach. The physical act of climbing creates

massive muscle imbalances which, if left unaddressed, lead to injury. So, any sensible training programme must dedicate some time to strengthening these antagonistic muscles.

In this book, a lot of the exercises are general exercises, not that climbing-specific, but very useful to build all-round, balanced strength and to injury-proof the climber.

The A5 landscape format suits this book, which places photo sequences on one side of the spread while the accompanying text goes on the other. The layout is modern and will appeal to younger, hipster climbers.

Bilingual books can be a little cumbersome to use and navigate, but in the most part this is handled well. The real problem with this book is the translation from German to English. While it may accurately reflect the German

content, it reads horribly. Weird phrasing, lots of mergingwordsfor no reason and hyphens-every-where.

Here is an example from the introduction: “When performing a strength-training with the goal of a long-term improvement of performance (at least this is our philosophy) in a specific kind of sport, various basic principles need to be taken into consideration.”

While you nearly always know what they are trying to say, it is frustrating!

I wouldn't recommend this book to someone looking for a general text about training for climbing as the scope is a little too narrow. However, in spite of its problems, this is a good book and it will be of huge interest to the aspiring hard climber.

**David Flanagan** Guidebook writer, member of Mountaineering Ireland





## MONT BLANC: THE FINEST ROUTES

By Philippe Batoux

Vertebrate Publishing (2013), 215pp, many photos and sketches, ISBN 978-1-906148-64-5, £35 (€42)

Because of the vast number of new routes that have been opened up in the Mont Blanc Range since the late seventies, and the additional factor of climate change, Gaston Rebuffat's famous "Les 100 plus belles courses" has long been unrepresentative of what the best routes there are now, but also of what the most popular routes with climbers are.

Philippe Batoux's book is an attempt to correct this imbalance. Paradoxically, one of this book's plus points is that Batoux incorporates thirty-

seven of Rebuffat's original choices and thus retains a coherent sense of the grand tradition. However, this might be regarded by some as a negative, in that he is retreading old ground.

The book is very good at charting the changes in climbing objectives and tactics, and in the seasons during which particular routes can be done. Bold and sensible too is Batoux's decision to discard the old French adjectival grading system. This has long been rendered dysfunctional due to the application of high adjectival grades to safe rock routes. He adopts the American system of an overall adjectival Roman numeral grade of I to VI, which indicates length, the time required, seriousness, *etc*, accompanied by ratings for rock, ice, mixed, *etc*. Whether use of this system will catch on, only time will tell, but in a way he is providing a founding document of its applicability.

Overall, the selection of routes seems to be what one would expect, but the author is wise to say that it is not definitive. Routes like Divine

Providence on the Grand Pilier D'Angle (99) and the Gabarrou-Silvy on the Aiguille Sans Nom (96) now represent the apogee of achievement.

Batoux also rehabilitates a few old routes that Rebuffat did not include. In that respect, I was glad to see the inclusion of the East Face of The Grepon (45). Of the new routes, he has chosen ice and mixed routes over rock in a rough proportion of two to one, perhaps reflecting the former's greater relative revolution.

Batoux gets round the restrictiveness of the '100' by including in some entries more than one choice. Thus two great modern routes on the Brouillard Pillars slip in as one choice. The North Face of Les Droites is relegated from 99 to 85, but under that choice we get five routes.

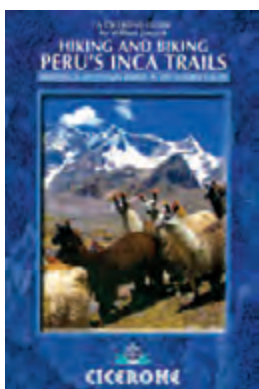
There may be an element of hopeful advocacy in a few of his selections. He states that the Traverse of Les Droites (52) only gets climbed once or twice a season. Harry O'Brien recently told me that the guardian of the Monzino Hut had told him the West Face of the Aiguille Noire

(77) hardly ever gets climbed. Still, maybe we all need reminding that they – as well as routes like the Traverses of the Aiguille Dorrees (36) and the Aiguille du Diable (58), which weren't even fashionable thirty years ago – are still classics, despite modern trends.

The photographs are of the expected high standard, but some of the text is a little repetitive and uninspiring. For a few of the routes, the description is little more than one would get from a good guidebook. The whole book, excluding route descriptions, can be read at a sitting.

Philippe Batoux has completed all of the routes described, so he is an infinitely bigger dude than any Irishman who would presume to review his book! Nevertheless, I wonder if the Traverse of the Pointe Lachenal (03) would have excited me as a young Alpinist? Would I have paid the fare up to the Midi? Also, where is the Gervasutti Pillar on the Tacul?

Ian Rea Mountaineer, alpinist and member of Mountaineering Ireland



## HIKING AND BIKING PERU'S INCA TRAILS: TREKKING AND MOUNTAIN BIKING IN THE SACRED VALLEY

By William Janacek

Cicerone (2013), 284pp, many coloured pictures and maps, ISBN 978-1-85284-631-2, £16.95 (€20)

Walkers could be forgiven for

being sceptical with a title that purports to appeal to bikers as well as hikers. Is this a guidebook for bikers that is trying to allure us as well? Whatever about its appeal to bikers, it certainly works for hikers. Of the 40 treks, 17 are dedicated walks, whereas only four are too long to travel by foot, with the other 19 possibly appealing to both activities.

All of the treks are centred within the Sacred Valley of the Incas, which is in the south of Peru, with Machu Picchu at its core. The treks vary from a half-day hike of 6km to several days over 100km.

The author lives in Peru and obviously has an in-depth knowledge of the country. He provides us with practical information on accommodation, hiring a guide or a touring

company, the terrain, food, currency and getting around. Each hike has a concise map, sometimes several maps, one for every stage. Janacek takes us from pre-planning to arrival in Peru, then all the way to the Sacred valley and off on its many trails. With this guidebook, one could confidently plan an expedition to Peru.

The trails look most interesting traversing spectacular landscapes and passing important archaeological sites. Janacek feeds us with a good insight into the Inca history and the customs of the people of Peru.

His book is devoid of information on geology and there is precious little on flora and fauna, but some might say that these are mere details to be explored on the trail.

This newest Cicerone guide (the tally is now up to 330) must compete with a host of other books on Peru and the Inca Trail, such as Trailblazers' The Inca Trail, Cusco and Machu Picchu by Alexander Stewart and Footprint Handbooks' Cusco and the Inca Trail by Box and Frankham. However, in Janacek's book, although the main sites are covered, the emphasis is on the exploration of all of the Sacred Valley, a valley where more and more Inca treasures are being discovered every year. He takes us to Choquequirao, for instance, a site only now being uncovered and every bit as spectacular as Machu Picchu.

Jim Ryan Author and guidebook writer





by **Helen Lawless**  
Access & Conservation Officer

*Helen Lawless has the beta on the latest developments in hillwalking, access and conservation*

## Threats to the hills

**F**or many of us, the quality of the environment we walk and climb in is an integral part of the enjoyment we get from our activities. Compared with Wales or Scotland, Ireland has a very limited stock of mountains and other wild lands. The character of what we have is being altered all the time, by our activities, by the activities of others and by development pressures. The resulting changes are sometimes small – the upgrading of a track, a new sign or an additional cairn on the hills – but the cumulative impact of many small changes can, over time, be significant.

In a couple of weeks in October and November, Mountaineering Ireland learned of a number of developments, each of which represented a threat to the integrity of Ireland's mountain environment. These included: proposals for a high-voltage electricity line through the southeast, in close proximity to the Comeragh and Blackstairs Mountains; yellow arrows painted on rocks in the Cooley Mountains; a four-wheel-drive event that took place in the Knockmealdowns; litter and spray-paint left after an event on Slieve Gullion; a suggestion that there should be signposts on Ireland's mountain-tops; a planning application for a windfarm in the Wicklow Mountains; new fences in place on the eastern part of the MacGillycuddy's Reeks; and the prospect of a pumped hydroelectric energy storage development at Glinsk on the north Mayo coast, which would be supported by at least 450 new wind turbines.

TERRY DUNLOP



**New vehicle track in the Blue Stack Mountains. Some of this environmental damage could have been prevented had this development been reported sooner.**

Situations like this arise from time to time, but this volume of threats in a short period brought the vulnerability of our mountain environment into focus. The Glinsk project also signals the possibility of large-scale industrialisation of Ireland's wild landscapes to serve the energy needs of the British market.

Mountaineering Ireland members contacted us about all these matters. We have followed up on each one with relevant authorities and in some cases in conjunction with members in the area. A few of these issues will involve further action in the months and year ahead.

Of the issues already visible on the ground, perhaps the worst is a new vehicle track in a remote area of the Blue Stack Mountains, approximately 3km long and rising to a height of over 500m. This was brought to our attention in October by a walker and promptly reported to authorities in the area. Donegal County Council investigated the matter as an alleged unauthorised development and work stopped within a couple of days. The National Parks & Wildlife Service provided input on the environmental damage caused to the

relatively intact blanket bog and heath habitat at the site. However, the real issue is that work on that track had been ongoing for approximately five weeks before it was reported to us. Had the work been reported sooner, some of that damage could have been prevented.

As hillwalkers and climbers, we are some of the few people who visit or even see the high and remote places where we pursue our pastime. Every one of us has a responsibility to not just take pleasure from the mountain environment, but to act as custodians for these special landscapes. This extends beyond taking care to minimise the impact of our activities. It's the time to make New Year's resolutions.

► If, during 2014, you come across anything which degrades the mountain environment, or changes the experience of walkers and climbers, please contact the Mountaineering Ireland office or email [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie). If you decide to contact somebody at local level, let us know, as the involvement of a national organisation will add weight to your concerns ■

HELEN LAWLESS



**Detail of the track cut in the Blue Stacks**





Allan Mee showing participants in the recent Club Environmental Officers' Workshop a map of Ring Ouzel nest sites in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks.

## Club Environmental Officers' Workshop in Kenmare

**Mountaineering Ireland provides support and some excellent training days for Club Environmental Officers**

Allan Mee, Project Manager for the White-tailed Eagle re-introduction project, led Mountaineering Ireland's most recent Club Environmental Officers' Workshop in Kenmare. The absence of eagles on the day was offset by a rich flow of information from Allan, who actively encouraged people to report sightings (with tag details) through [www.goldeneagle.ie](http://www.goldeneagle.ie). The best time to spot the eagles is at dusk during the winter.

The group discussed other upland bird species, particularly the Ring Ouzel, sometimes referred to as the mountain blackbird, which Allan has studied in the MacGillycuddy's Reeks over the last five years.

A century ago the Ring Ouzel was



found in almost every county but now the Reeks and Donegal appear to be the only two areas where this rare and elusive summer visitor still breeds. Its decline is believed to be due to habitat loss and predation.

► The next Club Environmental Officers' Workshop will take place in Sligo on Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>, during Mountaineering Ireland's Spring Gathering. For details, contact [helen@mountaineering.ie](mailto:helen@mountaineering.ie) ■

## Representatives to Coillte panels appointed

Mountaineering Ireland has succeeded in having representatives appointed to most of Coillte's new Social and Environmental panels, formed following a recent change in internal forest management boundaries.

The Social and Environmental panels provide a consultative forum where environmental, recreational and community organisations can provide information and discuss their interests in co-operation with Coillte management. The advice and suggestions received from the panel are considered and, where possible, incorporated into Coillte's operational and management plans.

Mountaineering Ireland sought volunteers to represent the interests of walkers and climbers on these panels and we are very grateful to the many people who came forward. Nominees for the panels were initially approved by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland and we are pleased to report that the Mountaineering Ireland members below were subsequently accepted by Coillte as panel members:

### **North West (Donegal/north Sligo/north Leitrim):**

Myles Gallagher (Mevagh Ramblers)

### **West (Mayo/west Galway/west Sligo/north Roscommon):**

Sinead Gaughan (North West Mayo Hillwalkers)

### **South East Leinster (Dublin/Wicklow/Kildare/Wexford/Carlow):**

Mick Monahan (Tullow Mountaineering Club)

### **South Central (Kilkenny/Waterford/Tipperary/south Laois/east Limerick):**

Matt Joy (Mid-Tipp Hillwalkers)

### **South Munster (Cork (excluding west Cork)/south Limerick/south Tipperary):**

Pat Lombard (Ballyhoura Bears)

### **West Munster (Kerry/west Limerick/west Cork):**

Derry O'Regan (Skibbereen Walking Group)

The panels listed above have all held their first meetings and, while the discussions were wide-ranging, Mountaineering Ireland's representatives have found the meetings to be positive and informative. You can contact the representative for your area through the Mountaineering Ireland office ([info@mountaineering.ie](mailto:info@mountaineering.ie)).

► Please note that Coillte welcomes reports of dumping, irresponsible off-road vehicle activity or anti-social behaviour by email to [pr@coillte.ie](mailto:pr@coillte.ie) ■



## **Leave No Trace: Park carefully**

Most areas where we walk and climb have limited parking space. Park carefully, so as to avoid wasting space between cars or blocking gateways. Remember that farmers work at weekends and that farm machinery and the emergency services may need a wide space to turn into a laneway or field. Car-pooling relieves pressure for parking space and saves on fuel costs.

## **Be Considerate of Others**





by Jane Carney  
Training Officer

Jane Carney has the beta on the latest developments in mountain training and skills



## Winter Meet 2014

Inchree, Onich, Scotland, February 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2014

After the superb weather we had for the 2013 Winter Meet in Scotland, we are hoping for more of the same for our 2014 Meet. The meet will be based at the Inchree Centre in Onich and geared towards both those who are looking to improve their winter skills under

instruction and those who prefer to walk and climb independently.

Our **Winter Walking Skills** course is for hillwalkers who would like to learn fundamental snow skills and develop their experience from summer to winter walking conditions.



- **10% discount on courses booked before December 31<sup>st</sup> 2013**
- **Group discounts on selected courses**
- **Youth Winter Meet for aspirant mountaineers will run as part of the main Winter Meet**

If you have already done some winter walking and want to develop your skills further in more challenging terrain, the **Winter Mountaineering Skills** course is for you.

Finally, if you would like to tackle routes requiring an ice-axe and hammer, look at our **Winter Climbing Skills** course. Previous rock-climbing and winter mountaineering experience is required for this course.

Whether you are interested in one of our courses or simply want the opportunity of walking and climbing in the stunning Scottish mountains, please go to the events pages of the Mountaineering Ireland website [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) or contact the Training Office on (01) 625 1115 for more details ■

ALUN RICHARDSON



## Snowsports Week 2014

Gastein Valley, Austria – with Topflight

We are very excited about our first Snowsports Week, to be held from March 15-22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014 in the Gastein Valley in Austria with support from **Topflight**. The Gastein Valley area, in the Hohe Tauern National Park, is an ideal base for a huge range of activities. Not only does it boast one of the largest ski areas in Austria (Ski Amadee), but there is an impressive network of winter hiking trails and snowshoeing trails there too.

This is the perfect opportunity to make the transition from pisted to off-piste skiing with one of the local guides. This opens up the entire ski terrain to you and will give you a great taste for ski

touring and mountaineering. *Equally, why not try something completely new and discover the snowshoe trails?* The whole package includes flights, transfers and 4-star half-board accommodation in the pretty village of Bad Hofgastein.

This trip is ideal for groups and individuals, skiers and non-skiers. See the Events section of the Mountaineering Ireland website for full details and prices. Also, for those who couldn't make the recent information evening on the Winter Meet and Snowsports Week, please visit the News section of the website to see the recorded streaming from the night ■







## Alpine Meet

Ailefroide, July 6<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2014

After one of our most successful Summer Alpine Meets in 2010, we are returning to Ailefroide in Écrins National Park, France, for the 2014 Summer Alpine Meet. The meet's highlights will include a long-distance, hut-to-hut walk and instructional courses to help improve your mountaineering and climbing skills.

As always, the Summer Alpine Meet is a great opportunity to come and explore the area independently but still enjoy the famous Mountaineering Ireland BBQ and all the fun! ■

## Mountain Training Conference

Tollymore, Co Down, November 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2013

Mountaineering Ireland held the first Mountain Training Conference in Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, Newcastle, Co Down, at the end of November.

The conference provided a unique opportunity to bring together BOS providers from all over the country, mountain training providers from Northern Ireland, local library boards, Outdoor Education Centre representatives and also those involved in training in the club environment.

With so many perspectives on

training in the mountains, the Thursday afternoon debates were lively and ultimately provided everyone involved with plenty of food for thought.

There were several workshops on Friday morning covering topics such as 'The Business of Mountain Training' and 'Movement Skills.'

A big thank you to Tollymore for hosting a great conference and to all who came – we hope you went away knowing more than before and looking forward to the next Mountain Training Conference! ■



## Awards updates

### Two new awards

Mountaineering Ireland has successfully launched two new Awards in 2013: the **Climbing Wall Award** (CWA) and the **Lowland Leader Award** (LLA). The CWA got off to a good start, with the first courses being held in July. Over thirty candidates are currently registered on this award, with most of these already having completed training and now moving on to assessment.

Providers of the Lowland Leader Award are trained and ready to deliver this award around the country. Course dates for the LLA are now up on our website.

Candidates who have already completed the full ML or WGL training are automatically exempt from the LLA training course and can register for the Lowland Leader Scheme and then present for assessment after meeting the relevant requirements.

We aim to introduce the **Climbing Wall Leader Award** (CWLA) in 2014.

### Changes to the ML

There have been two significant changes to the Mountain Leaders syllabus in 2013:

- Ropes are no longer included in river crossings.
- Now removed from the syllabus: the Thompson knot and the lowering of group members. (Assistance in the ascent or descent of a rock step remains and the group member to be attached by a waist loop.)

■ **Congrats!** to **Maurice O'Halloran, Sandra Kennedy** and **Cormac Lynch** who passed their Mountain Leader Assessment in October 2013 ■

■ **All clubs, please note** Please give details of your Training Officer(s) when updating your club profile. We will be using the online database increasingly to send relevant information to those coordinating or delivering training within clubs. If you would like this information to go to more than one person in your club, just let us know by emailing details to [training@mountaineering.ie](mailto:training@mountaineering.ie).

■ **Training tips** Since, the well-attended Club Training Officers Meet in the Burren in November, a collection of training tips and ideas have been compiled for use by clubs and their members. This collection and other documents are available on the website, [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) ■





by Kieran Creevy

# ΒΕΤΑ

Kieran Creevy has the beta on gear for hillwalkers and climbers

## Winter camping

Winter conditions in our cities are never enjoyable as roads clog up, trams and buses get cancelled, and paths become skating rinks. It would be the height of folly to walk down a main street even in a pair of Grivel G12s! However, once temperatures drop and snow falls on high ground, those same crampons get sharpened, bulky belay jackets get stuffed into our rucksacks and we once again contemplate spending a night on the snow in the Reeks, Maumturks, Mournes....

## Shelter

Even during harsh winters like in recent years, it's rare to find enough snow depth to dig a snow cave in Ireland. Therefore, if you're thinking of camping out on the hills, you'll need to carry your own shelter. Here are two options, one a virtual bombproof fortress, the other a light and fast option with enough strength to withstand winter camping, in a sheltered location, on the Irish hills.



### MSR Hubba HP

[www.mountainsafetyresearch.com](http://www.mountainsafetyresearch.com)  
1.7kg, €360

The Hubba model has, and has had, a few iterations (Hubba Hubba, Mutha Hubba, HP) and it's the HP version that would be of most interest for the Irish user who wants to go camp on the hills here in winter, or is looking for a lightweight solo tent that doesn't feel claustrophobic.

#### Pros

■ Light yet strong. A total weight of under 2kg means you'll have both the space and weight limit to pack more food into your overnight rucksack. This lightness also makes the Hubba HP a great choice for foreign trips. Security restrictions aside, you could pack this as a carry-on item.

■ Easy to set up. Like the Trango above, the Hubba HP can be staked out prior to erection. The one linked pole design enables this tent to be set up by one person in less than five minutes.

■ Space, both storage and sleeping. Having one sizeable porch in a solo tent is a godsend; two is like having jam on both sides of your bread. The second porch doesn't have an external zip on the fly, but you can slide a pack underneath. This porch is accessible from the inner tent via a short zip. Both porches are easily big enough to accommodate a 70-litre pack.

#### Cons

■ Not designed for heavy snowfall



### Mountain Hardwear Trango 2

[www.mountainhardwear.com](http://www.mountainhardwear.com)  
4.1kg, €660

The Trango has been one of the 'go-to' expedition tents for over a decade now, and with good reason.

#### Pros

■ Thanks to the clip system used to secure the poles, the Trango can be set up in a howling gale without fear of it blowing away, as you can peg down the inner. This one feature has been invaluable on numerous winter trips.

■ Loads of space. It's possible to sleep three people in relative comfort in the Trango 2. Many times, two-person tents seem to be designed for two people with no gear, or for two sleeping on their sides.

■ Plenty of storage inside the tent. On a multi-day trip, organisation is important, and with ten large internal pockets, this will not be a problem.

■ Bright colour. This might not seem important, but try sleeping in a dark blue

tent for a week and you'll soon regret that decision. The apricot-and-grey colour scheme of the Trango can make even a drizzly Scottish winter morning look brighter – important if you're going to get out of bed in time to climb the route you scoped the day before!

■ Strength. I've spent in excess of two hundred nights in this tent, including some in full-on storm conditions, where the walls of the tent were being pushed onto my face. In all of this time, the Trango has yet to pop a stitch, leak or break.

#### Cons

■ Weight; at 4.1kg (including everything, measured on post office scales) it's heavier than a few other double-skin winter tents on the market.

■ Price; €660 is a lot of cash for a tent by any measure, but when a cheap tent breaks at 3,000m and it's minus 20°C....

**Ideal for** ■ Expeditions, alpine winter climbing, multi-day mountain trips





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- Mountain Skills
- Mountain Leader Training
- Lowland Leader Award

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## EXTREME IRELAND ADVENTURE TRIPS 2014

### THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

Norway & The Arctic Circle

2014



#### Date:

17th February 2014 for 6 nights

#### Location:

Oslo & The Arctic Circle, Kirkenes.

#### Includes:

Husky Safari, Ice-Fishing, King Crab Safari.  
All Meals & Accommodation and Snowmobiling.  
Airport transfers included. (flights not included).  
€1295.00 More details upon request.

### SNOWSHOEING ADVENTURE

in the French Alps

2014



#### Date:

9th February 2014 for 6 nights

#### Location:

Sixt-Fer-a-Cheval in the French Alps.

#### Details:

Snowshoeing, Qualified IML guide.  
All snowshoeing kit provided by Extreme Ireland.  
Airport transfers included. (flights not included).  
€995.00 More details upon request.

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## Sleeping warm

If you ever spend a night shivering in a thin sleeping bag while your tent-mate slumbers peacefully in a much warmer one, you will vow never to repeat the experience again. Even though it's nearly 20 years ago, I still remember the night-camp of my ML2, as the temp dropped to -8°C and I had only brought a light, 3-season bag. Moral of the story, pack a warmer bag than you think you'll need; you can always vent heat, but that heat is almost impossible to gain.

-  **Thermarest Altair Sleeping Bag**
-  **Neo Air All Season Mattress**

[www.thermarest.com](http://www.thermarest.com)

€420 (Altair -18°C Bag)

€160 (Neo Air Mattress)

Thermarest properly entered the sleeping bag market earlier this year, having had their link systems (mattress plus down/synthetic blanket) on shelves for a few years. The new bags are designed to work with their mattresses, using two stretchy bands on the base of the sleeping bags. The main idea behind the link is to redistribute the down from the bottom of the bag (where it's habitually compressed when we lie down) to the top and sides (70%, 30%, respectively).



### Pros

■ *It works.* Linked, the bag and mattress work beautifully. If you've ever slid off your mattress in the middle of the night and woken up lying face-down on a damp tent floor, then this will ensure that doesn't happen again.

■ *Comfort.* If you have yet to try a Neo Air mattress, then you're missing out on a night of dreamless slumber. It's the most comfortable mat by far I've ever used, and for the previous fifteen years I'd been using a standard Thermarest.

■ The Altair has a *great shape*, enabling one to move inside the bag without feeling like you're having to heat up too much space. The bag/mat link also means you could prop yourself up on a rock (assuming you're camping somewhere sunny and dry!) while having a mattress under and behind you.



### Cons

■ Even though I was testing a pre-production sample, I felt the Altair was missing a neck baffle – very important on a -18°C bag. This issue has been rectified on the production model.

■ *Temp rating.* I didn't think the Altair was warm enough for the -18°C tag. When I looked inside the bag, I noticed the EN comfort and limit ratings were -5°C and -11°C respectively, a much better reflection of performance.



*Underside view of mattress linked to sleeping bag with two stretchy bands attached to base of bag*



# Winter mountaineering clothing

During warmer weather, we layer according to the **base, insulation, waterproof** principle. Unfortunately, this method is inefficient and impractical in winter, and doubly so for winter mountaineering.

Instead, you should look at adopting a **base, light insulation/soft-shell, waterproof, heavy insulation** style for Ireland, Scotland and other maritime climates, and a **base,**

**windproof and water-resistant soft-shell, heavy insulation, lightweight waterproof** in the bag style for drier continental climates.

Here, then, is an idea of an Irish and Scottish system. I've deliberately chosen synthetic insulation layers instead of down due to our damp weather and the fact that snow here and in the UK is significantly wetter than on the continent.

## The North Face Thermoball Jacket

[www.thenorthface.ie](http://www.thenorthface.ie)

€190

In a recent review on a well-known US gear website, the tester thoroughly soaked the Thermoball jacket in an icy stream, prior to donning it for a hike, to see if it lived up to its claims. My test, in comparison, will sound a little wussy, but nevertheless, here goes.

### Pros

■ **Warm when wet.** I wore the Thermoball over a light base layer while out on the hills in squally conditions (in the sake of honesty, I carried a spare mid-layer and shell as back-up) and though the jacket did eventually 'wet-out,' it still stayed warm.

After the squalls had passed, it took about two hours to dry almost completely. Back at the car, I tried wringing to see if any moisture was left in the shell, lining or insulation, and all I got was a few drips. Impressive.

### Cons

■ None



## Mountain Hardwear Seraction Jacket

[www.mountainhardwear.com](http://www.mountainhardwear.com)

€460

Designed in conjunction with athlete Tim Emmet, the Seraction jacket is squarely aimed at the ice climber and winter mountaineer.

### Pros

■ **Flexibility and cut.** The best I've ever encountered in a jacket. I've used a previous Mountain Hardwear jacket (Ice Man) extensively over the past six years and thought it was flexible enough to do yoga

stretches while wearing it. The Seraction improves on this significantly; hardly surprising given that Tim Emmet is a world-class ice climber and, at the elite level, you can't be hampered by a 'suit of armour' waterproof. The jacket is long enough to cover your kidneys – important in winter.

■ **Breathability.** The Dry Q Élite membrane used in this jacket breathes from the moment you put it on. No more worrying about having to be hot and sweaty before you start venting moisture.

■ Enough *pockets* to do the job, not overly zippy.

■ Simple, effective, storm-proof *hood*.

### Cons

■ The price!



## Patagonia Das Parka

[www.patagonia.com](http://www.patagonia.com)

€299

Well, if it's good enough for Steve House to wear on numerous ascents, despite the fact that, as a brand ambassador, he has the pick of Patagonia gear, including high-end down belay parkas, it's probably safe to say it's good enough for winter use in Ireland, Scotland and further afield.

### Pros

■ **Very water-resistant** shell fabric; dried off in minutes after a shower.

■ **Packs pretty small** for a heavy synthetic belay parka.

■ **Inner pockets** are big enough to hold 1-litre water-bottles, food, or for drying gloves.

■ **Huge hood** accommodates a helmet.

■ **Insulation** stays warm when wet. There was no sign at all that the insulation had soaked up any moisture when I was caught out in a rain shower.

### Cons

■ None





## Water and food

In winter conditions, your body requires more calories to stay warm. Now, if you're spending the day lounging around in a well-insulated house, that becomes unnecessary; hence the reason many of us put on weight during the winter. Camping, hiking and climbing in winter, however, is a different story. You

will need to carry more food, and this in turn will require more water – to aid digestion, hydration and to cook with. You could carry the water with you or, if lucky, just melt the snow (avoiding, obviously, the dreaded 'yellow snow').

### MSR Reactor 1L Stove

[www.cascadedesigns.com](http://www.cascadedesigns.com)

€160

175g (not including gas canister)

Finally, a Reactor stove designed for solo trips. The original stove was perfect for a team of two, at 1.6 litres in size, but a little bulky to pack.

#### Pros

- *Fast.* One litre of water boiled in 110 seconds (tested outdoors: 400m, +10°C, 30kph wind).
- *Wide enough* to be able to cook porridge without burning.
- *Less weight.* Redesign of the heat exchanger means the 1-litre model is almost half the weight of the 1.6-litre version.

#### Cons

- It's about €50 more expensive than its closest competitor. Personally, I think it's worth the extra cost.



Stove ready to use



X-ray view of closed stove

## Kerry Outdoor Sports opens Killarney store

Watched by almost 100 people, Joe Simpson, author of *Touching the Void*, cuts the rope to open Kerry Outdoor Sports' new shop in Killarney on August 31<sup>st</sup>.

Pictured (left to right): Richard Morrison; Tim Long; owners of Kerry Outdoor Sports Sarah Seery, Eileen Daly and Aoife Smith; Mike O'Shea; Joe Simpson; Simon O'Shea.

Kerry Outdoor Sports may be the only female-owned outdoor shop in Europe.





# Tour du Mont Blanc

The iconic Tour du Mont Blanc walking trail is the most popular long-distance walk in Europe



Les Grandes Jorasses

Everyone has heard of Mont Blanc, and anyone with more than a passing interest in mountains will know of its stunning scenery. However, Mont Blanc is more than just the highest mountain in Europe west of the Caucasus. It is, in fact, a complete mountain range. This explains why its summit is the ultimate objective for mountaineers from all over the world and why the Tour du Mont Blanc (TMB) is the most popular long-distance walk in Europe.

The iconic Tour du Mont Blanc walking trail passes through three countries offering three diverse experiences – the Italian slopes with their large rock faces; the Swiss slopes with their soft valleys; and the French glacial slopes. Depending on the precise route taken, there are ten or eleven passes to cross as the tour progresses from one valley to the next. Each of these passes enjoys unforgettable views, and each valley has its own individual character.

The 'official' route of the TMB has changed over the years and many alternatives or '*variantes*' now exist to the standard route. **One Foot Abroad** is one of the companies that offers this tour, and the route they have

chosen allows participants to carry as little as possible. There is no need for a bivouac tent, stove or pans, so you can hike in comfort with just a day-pack. The altitude on this route ranges from 1,164m (Argentière) to 2,671m (Fenêtre d'Arpette). The paths are well-marked, in general, and should not cause any trouble for hikers with a reasonable level of fitness.

It is possible to do the route between June and September, although in June there may still be snow on the high passes. Some of the refuges and camp sites may also not be open in June, although the route will be quieter at this time of year.

Chamonix is not actually on the route, but most people end up here at the beginning or end of their trip as it is the

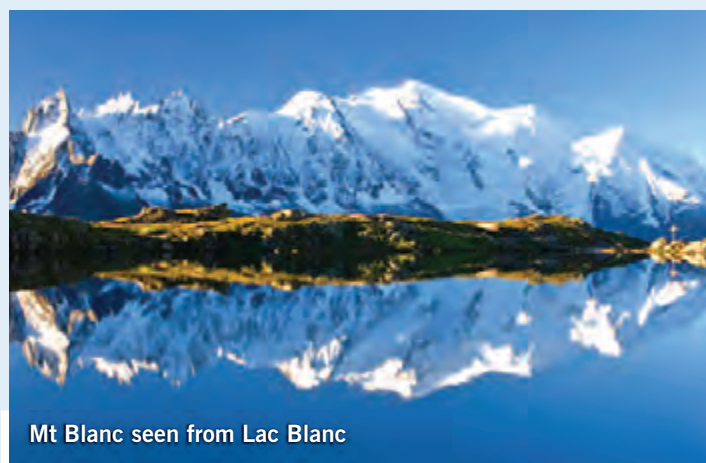
*"Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains. They crowned him long ago on a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds, with a diadem of snow."* – **Lord Byron**

largest and most well-known town in the valley. There is a huge array of accommodation, outdoor shops and restaurants here, so it is a good place to kit up before heading out, or for relaxing in after a trip.

It is recommended that you book your accommodation on the route in advance yourself, or through a specialised company, whether you wish to stay in Alpine refuges, in shared dorms or in comfortable hotels. Refuges are definitely a distinct experience and they are also the cheapest option. Using

The TMB is extremely well-signposted, so doing the walk self-guided with the help of detailed maps is certainly possible. However, a guided trip allows you to complete the Tour du Mont Blanc in one week and in the company of fellow-walkers, with an experienced English-speaking mountain guide.

Finally, but not for the faint-hearted, the ultimate challenge is to summit Mont Blanc and stand on the roof of western Europe at 4,810m (15,871ft). To climb Mont Blanc from Chamonix, One



Mt Blanc seen from Lac Blanc

them, you stay high up in the mountains and share hearty meals with your fellow guests in the evenings. However, you may prefer to stay in hotels, which are the highest possible standard of accommodation around Mont Blanc.

Foot Abroad recommends the route beginning from the Aiguille du Midi and passing over Mont Blanc du Tacul (4,248m) and Mont Maudit (4,465m).

Following the Tour du Mont Blanc reveals some of the most exquisite mountain scenery and landscapes of all. The first walking tour around Mont Blanc took place in 1767, when Horace Benedict de Saussure and friends set out from Chamonix. German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer recounts an anecdote where "Saussure is reported to have seen so large a moon, when it rose over Mont Blanc, that he did not recognise it and fainted with terror." ■



Solo walker on Mt Blanc route





Photograph: Czech Mountaineering Federation



# Zdeněk Hrubý

Czech climbing legend dies in climbing accident



Zdeněk Hrubý, President of the Czech Mountaineering Federation, fell to his death in August 2013 while attempting a new route via the southwest face of Gasherbrum I (Hidden Peak) with his companion, Marek Holeček.

Zdeněk Hrubý loved the high mountains and was one of the most successful

mountaineers in the Czech Republic in the last few decades. He climbed eight 8,000-metre peaks between 1994 and 2012, his most recent success being on Nanga Parbat via the Kinshofer route last year.

His successful 8,000-metre peak ascents were Cho Oyu in 1994; Gasherbrum I (Hidden Peak) and Gasherbrum II (Hidden Peak) in 1997; Lhotse in 1999; Shisha Pangma in 2004; Broad Peak in 2007; Dhaulagiri in 2008; and Nanga Parbat in 2012.

Hrubý's last outstanding climb was a new route via the northwest pillar on Talung (7,349m) in the Himalaya in May 2013. He made this ascent with his friend and frequent climbing companion of recent years, Marek Holeček.

Hrubý always thought his

most successful climb was his 2008 ascent of Dhaulagiri with Radek Jaroš, because they were able to save the lives of two other mountaineers. For that selfless act, they were awarded the **Czech Club Fair Play** prize and the **European Fair Play Movement** prize.

Besides his passion for mountaineering, Hrubý was a

family man with two children and had a successful career in government and as an economist. He was elected President of the Czech Mountaineering Federation twice.

**Patrick O'Sullivan**

*Zdeněk Hrubý: born 9 August, 1956; died August, 2013 ■*



Zdeněk Hrubý with climbing companion Marek Holeček



# Snowsports Week 2014

Join Mountaineering Ireland for its first  
Snowsports Week, Gastein Valley,  
Austria, March 15<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2014

Bad Hofgastein at night

- Return flights from Dublin, Cork, Belfast; transfers
- 4-star, full-board accommodation
- Free local beer, wine and soft drinks
- Ideal location for snow-shoeing and winter hiking
- 1-day ski guiding
- Perfect opportunity to try ski touring for first time
- 1-day ski touring guiding
- Party night – welcome drinks & live music
- Free entry to Wellness Oasis & Spa with pool

Ideal for groups or individuals, our Snowsports Week is for everyone who loves the mountains and snow! Whether you're a beginner, a seasoned skier or even a non-skier, there are plenty of activities for everyone. Cost: €859 for Mountaineering Ireland members, €889 for non-members.

Carving group with ski instructor in Gastein Valley

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## Winter Meet 2014

Inchree Centre, Onich,  
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February 16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> 2014

### Courses:

Winter Walking Skills

€260 per person

Winter Mountaineering Skills

€310 per person

Winter Climbing Skills

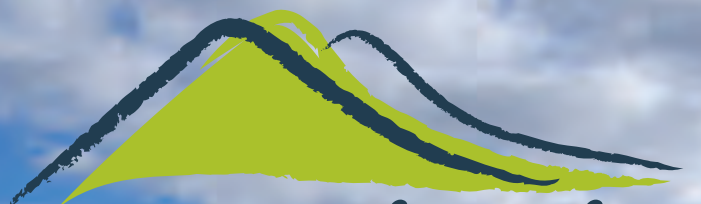
€470 per person



All prices are for instruction only; accommodation and meals are in addition.  
10% discount on above prices for all bookings made before December 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.  
20% group discount on selected courses for aspirant mountaineers (18-24 yrs) and Mountaineering Ireland members. More information on [www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie) or contact Rozanne on (01) 625 1112.

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