

Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING



Irish successes on K2

Two summit ten years after first Irish ascent

Patagonia first ascent

All-female team climbs Avellano Tower



www.mountaineering.ie



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Autumn Gathering 2018

Clonbur, Co Galway
October 12-14th



Join us for a weekend of walking, climbing,
workshops and talks in Clonbur, Co Galway

Hosted by Galway Walking Club

Further details will be posted on www.mountaineering.ie (see also page xx??, this issue)

*The Maumturks, from the
Derryvaughan Western Way*



Welcome

Welcome! Autumn is here with a bang. There is a nip in the air and the leaves on the trees are assuming that wonderful golden-brown hue.

This has been an exciting year so far for Irish mountaineers climbing in the Greater Ranges (see our report, page 20). In Nepal, there were two more Irish ascents of Everest, bringing the total to fifty-nine since the first ascent, twenty-five years ago, by Dawson Stelfox in 1993.

The Irish Nepalese Educational Trust (INET), which was set up after that first successful expedition, continues to support schools in Nepal.

In the Karakorum, in July, Noel Hanna from Co Down and Jason Black from Co Donegal, made the second and third Irish ascents respectively of K2 (8,611m), the second highest peak on the planet and arguably the most dangerous. Ten years ago, in 2008, Ger McDonnell from Limerick made the first Irish ascent, but, sadly, he died assisting others on the descent.

Climbing K2, the 'Savage Mountain,' is certainly a very challenging endeavour. It is a more technical climb than Everest and more prone to extreme weather and subjective dangers such as avalanches. Successful ascents of K2 are very significant achievements, therefore. Our fullest congratulations to both climbers.



In the Greater Ranges and in the Alps, the effects of climate change are very evident.

In the Greater Ranges and in the Alps, the effects of climate change are very evident. Climate change is no longer a theoretical possibility, it is happening. As mountaineers, who may have been visiting these places for decades, we are all too aware of these changes. We have seen glaciers receding and the impact on the snowline, in the summer and in the winter, and on the lower ski resorts. In Sweden, the highest mountain there is shrinking because of melting snow and ice (see our report, page 15). In the Alps, ski resorts are closing and ski mountaineering is becoming more challenging (see our feature, page 50). In the Greater Ranges, the receding glaciers and rising snowlines are ever more apparent. We all need to make efforts to reduce our impact on global warming, to protect the environment we cherish and to protect the world we live in.

I hope the promised milder weather will allow us all to continue to enjoy the uplands in some comfort for a while longer.

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor



Write for the Log

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

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

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



ON THE COVER

Above the cloud, Darach Ó Murchú in the evening sun on Faha Ridge, Mount Brandon, Co Kerry.

PHOTOGRAPH
GERRY GALLIGAN

ISSUE 127

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PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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

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IRISH PATAGONIA EXPEDITION 2018

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Newsdesk

Host club sought for Gathering

Mountaineering Ireland is seeking a club, or clubs, to host the 2019 Spring Gathering next March.

By Ruth Whelan (Membership Development Officer)

Does your club have an anniversary in 2019 or another special event it wishes to celebrate? Why not host Mountaineering Ireland's **Spring Gathering 2019** and share your celebrations with like-minded hillwalkers and climbers from around the island of Ireland?

The Spring Gathering is always such an enjoyable weekend for all involved, as the host club or clubs highlight the best that their local area has to offer in terms of hillwalking and rock climbing.

Mountaineering Ireland will hold its 2019 Annual General Meeting at the Spring Gathering, along with the usual Members' Forum, an informal meeting which is also open to all members.

The Spring Gathering will be held over the weekend of 29-31st March, 2019. If your club would be interested in hosting this important weekend in the Mountaineering Ireland calendar, please contact Ruth Whelan, Membership Development Officer, by email at ruth@mountaineering.ie or phone **(01) 625 1196** ■

Club Support Meetings

By Ruth Whelan
(Membership Development Officer)

As part of Mountaineering Ireland's aim to support club committees and their officers as per our new Strategic Development Plan, we have organised four meetings in different locations around the country from September to December 2018. Our Membership Development Officer,

Training Officer and Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer will all be in attendance to cover a range of topics and respond to members' queries.

These meetings will be a great opportunity for club committees to meet Mountaineering Ireland officers and receive relevant information that will help in the running of their club. They will begin with presentations by the Mountaineering Ireland staff present. The meetings will then break up into three small discussion groups, each led by one of the Mountaineering Officers present, who will discuss topics in their particular areas of responsibility. Each meeting will close with a wrap-up session for all participants.

We would encourage all clubs to send up to four committee members or members interested in attending. If there are any specific topics you would like covered, please email ruth@mountaineering.ie.



Date	Location	Venue
5 th September	Derry	St Columb's Park House
27 th September	Sligo	The Glass House Hotel
22 nd November	Bray	The Martello Hotel
29 th November	Killarney	Killarney Plaza Hotel

Refreshments will be available from 7.00pm. The meetings will commence at 7.30pm and finish by 9.30pm ■

New National Children's Officer appointed

Gerry O'Gorman takes on key support role in Mountaineering Ireland.



**By Murrough McDonagh
(CEO, Mountaineering
Ireland)**

After many years of excellent service as the National Children's Officer, **Paul Kellagher**, who is currently also Mountaineering Ireland's Honorary President, is stepping down from the position of Children's Officer. Mountaineering Ireland wishes to express its gratitude to Paul for his years of dedicated service in that role and his commitment to best practice in the area of safeguarding the children who are engaging in our sport.

While **Gearóid 'Gerry' O'Gorman**, who has recently taken over the role of Mountaineering Ireland National Children's Officer from Paul, will have a hard act to follow, he is clearly very well qualified for the post. He is an active hillwalker, with over thirty years of experience in our sport. He started mountaineering as a scout and then joined the Wee Binnians Hillwalking Club. More recently he has joined the Hillwalkers Club.

Gerry, a native of County Down, says that he has always loved being out in the hills all over Ireland and the UK. The reward for him from this challenging sport and active lifestyle is that it has led to numerous friendships forged on the hills, and an awareness of his



Gerry O'Gorman, the new National Children's Officer

skills, strengths and limitations, which he has then been able to use in his everyday life. It has also made him very aware of the need to protect the mountain environment, which we are privileged to enjoy now, for the young people who may follow.

In his professional life, Gerry has spent over twenty-five years working with vulnerable families and young people in a variety of settings. He is looking forward to the challenges and opportunities that this role as National Children's Officer will offer to him. His experience in working with young people will enable him to offer support to clubs and individuals in the challenging area of safeguarding the children and young people who engage in our sport.

Mountaineering Ireland provides a range of mountaineering activities and opportunities to young people through participation

in our clubs, events and squads, and is committed to safeguarding those children. In line with its **Safeguarding Policies and Procedures (2015)**, Mountaineering Ireland's staff and volunteers, who are working with young people throughout the organisation, seek to create a safe environment for these young people to grow and develop.

As National Children's Officer, Gerry is looking forward to furthering his passion for the hills and for promoting outdoor activity among young people in a way which will allow them to achieve their full potential in a safe and rewarding way ■



Paul Kellagher, the former National Children's Officer, now Honorary President of Mountaineering Ireland



Members of Galway Walking Club in the Maumturk Mountains.



Autumn Gathering 2018

Clonbur, Co Galway, October 12-14th, 2018

Venue: Lynch's Fairhill House Hotel, Clonbur

Join us for a weekend of walking and climbing, talks and workshops!

This year's Autumn Gathering will be hosted by **Galway Walking Club** and centred in Clonbur, Co Galway, over the weekend of October 12-14th. It will showcase all that Galway has to offer hillwalkers and climbers.

Clonbur is situated between Lough Corrib and Lough Mask. Just two kilometres to the west is Binn Shléibhe (Mount Gable), site of a pilot Mountain Access Area. The Maamturks and Partry Mountains are close by.

The Gathering will be based in **Lynch's Fairhill House Hotel**, Clonbur, for the entire weekend. The hotel has a large dining area for the Saturday night dinner and entertainment, and a separate bar and restaurant area.

Booking

We have booked a number of rooms in the hotel for the Gathering. When you book to avail of the special rate, please let the hotel know you are

attending **Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering**.

Any unallocated rooms will be released back to the hotel, so **be sure to book early**.

On the Friday evening, there will be a registration desk at Lynch's Hotel from 6.30pm and, after a welcome from Mountaineering Ireland's President, **Paul Kellagher**, and **Tom O'Connor**, Chairperson of Galway Walking Club, it is planned to hold a **panel discussion**.

We are pleased to say that the participants in this discussion will include the Minister of State with responsibility for Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Digital Development, **Seán Kyne TD**; **Éamon Ó Cuív TD** (Galway West constituency); and **Trish Walsh**, Director of Petersburg OEC. The panel will be chaired by **Lorna Siggins**, a journalist with *The Irish Times*. The discussion will be about the role that access and outdoor

recreation can play in the future of Ireland's mountain areas.

As always, Saturday is the main day for scheduled activities during the weekend, with **walking, climbing** and an **environmental workshop** to choose from. There will be a range of walks on offer of various levels of difficulty. We limit numbers on most of these activities, so please **make your selection** at the time of booking online.

Members' Forum

The **Members' Forum** will take place in Lynch's Fairhill House Hotel at 6.30pm on the Saturday evening. We will go straight into the **dinner** and entertainment from there at 8.00pm.

Sunday morning will see a range of scheduled three-hour workshops. Again, please book your choice of workshop online, as places are limited.

We look forward to seeing you!

The Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gatherings are always very enjoyable, whatever the weather throws up. It is good to catch up with old friends and to meet like-minded walkers and climbers from around the country. The host club always does its best to make sure the activities that are organised showcase the best the area has to offer.

The Members' Forum gives everyone present an opportunity to contribute to policy-making by our National Governing Body and to raise any topics they want to.

All in all, everyone generally has a very enjoyable time at these weekend Gatherings, so why not come along? ■

AUTUMN GATHERING:

Registration details and the programme for the Autumn Gathering are posted on www.mountaineering.ie.



Lynam Lecture 2018

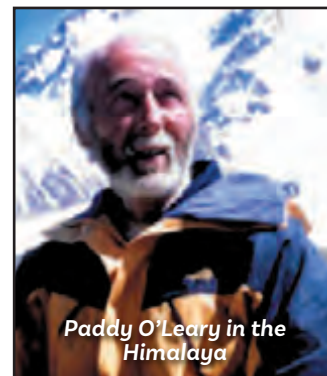
Paddy O'Leary

"People, Peaks and Places: off the beaten track"

Date: Thursday, December 6th, 2018

Venue: Chartered Accountants Ireland Lecture Hall,
47-49 Pearse Street, Dublin 2

Refreshments will be available from 7.00pm, with the lecture commencing at 7.45pm.



Paddy O'Leary in the Himalaya

The Lynam Lecture was inaugurated in 2011 in the memory of **Joss Lynam**, one of Ireland's best-known mountaineers, in recognition of his enormous achievements in hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering in Ireland and overseas over some 60 years. During his lifetime, Joss initiated numerous developments in these areas of our sport in Ireland and he was the inspiration for a number of generations of Irish mountaineers.

Joss Lynam's achievements include many mountaineering expeditions to the Greater Ranges and an outstanding voluntary contribution to adventure sports in Ireland. Joss is known to many Irish and international walking enthusiasts for his many hillwalking guidebooks. He was the editor of the *Irish*

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



Paddy O'Leary in 2015 at the launch of his book *The Way That We Climbed: A History of Irish Hillwalking, Climbing and Mountaineering*.

Mountain Log for more than 20 years. Joss continued as the Literary Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* up to the time of his death.

Since it was inaugurated, the Lynam Lecture has been delivered by leading national and international mountaineers. This year's Lynam Lecture, *"People, Peaks and Places: off the beaten track,"* will be given by **Paddy O'Leary**, Irish mountaineer and author.

Paddy O'Leary has been involved in mountaineering in one form or another for sixty-six years, setting several hillwalking records in his early years. Following the usual progression from rock climbing in Ireland and experience in the Alps, he headed for the higher ranges. Paddy was the leader of the first Irish expeditions to the Himalaya and Peru. He

gradually moved from climbing well-known peaks to exploration of less well-known mountainous areas, such as the Mountains of the Moon in Zaire, Bogda Ola in China and particularly the districts of Kinnaur and Spiti in India. Besides being the first western mountaineer to visit Kinnaur in over fifty years, he combined the crossing of many high passes with route-finding to previously unvisited peaks and attempting, occasionally successfully, to climb some of these. He has returned to Kinnaur many times and takes a particular interest in the culture of its intriguing, handsome and prosperous people.

Paddy was Director of the National Adventure Centre at Tiglin in Wicklow for twenty years and was responsible for drawing up and

implementing the syllabuses for courses leading to most of the leader and instructor qualifications, which are now so much a part of the mountaineering experience in Ireland.

He was a founding member of the Spillikin Club, the Association for Adventure Sports and the body which has become Mountaineering Ireland. Paddy is an active member of the Irish Mountaineering Club. He is also the author of *The Way That We Climbed: A History of Irish Hillwalking, Climbing and Mountaineering*, which was published by the Collins Press in 2015.

Put the date in your diary. It promises to be a very interesting and inspiring evening! ■

CHANGE OF VENUE: Please note the change of venue. This year's Lynam Lecture will be held in **Chartered Accountants Ireland Lecture Hall, 47-49 Pearse Street, Dublin 2.**



Joss Lynam pictured on a veterans mountaineering trip to Jaonli Peak in India in 1991



Paddy O'Leary in earlier days

Sports Capital Grant Funding announced

€40 million is being made available for clubs and communities to develop sports infrastructure.

By Damien O'Sullivan

On August 30th, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD, and the Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Brendan Griffin TD, announced that €40 million was being made available under a new round of the Sports Capital Programme. This programme is the Government's primary vehicle for providing support to sports clubs and communities to develop sports infrastructure around the country.

Register now

All applicants must be registered on the Department's online system. The Ministers encouraged any clubs, which are not already registered, to do so now. The guide to making an application has been published on www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie. Registrations will close at 5.00pm on Friday, October 5th, 2018.

Applications

Once registered, all applications must be made on the same website. The system will be open for applications from 9.00am on Friday, September 7th, to 5.00pm on Friday, October 19th, 2018.

As a National Governing Body, Mountaineering Ireland and several Mountaineering Ireland-affiliated clubs were successful in their applications under the Sports Capital Programme in 2017. Mountaineering Ireland clubs are again eligible to apply for funding through the Sports Capital Programme 2018.

Clubs are encouraged to consider if they would benefit from funding through the Sports Capital Programme 2018 and



Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Shane Ross TD (second from left) and Minister of State for Tourism and Sport, Brendan Griffin TD, with Angel O'Toole (left) and Evan Brazil at the launch of the Sports Capital Programme 2018 in August.

to contact Mountaineering Ireland if they need any assistance with the application.

How to register

To begin the registration process, please visit the Sports Capital Programme website, www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie. There are several key deadlines to be aware of for your application to be eligible. These are:

- The deadline for registering your organisation is October 5th, 5.00pm. A **guide** to registration is available via the Sports Capital Programme website at www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie. Just follow the link for 'Guide to Registering.'
- The deadline for submitting an application for your organisation is October 19th, 5.00pm. A **guide** to submitting an application is available via the Sports Capital Programme website, www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie.
- In advance of registering your organisation, you need to get a **Tax Registration Number** from the www.revenue.ie website.
- As part of the application you will need to submit **evidence of own funding** (you will need to provide a minimum of 5% from your own funds). You will need to provide at least one statement from a

financial institution. The statement must include the name of the club, the details of the financial institution and the closing balance of the statement.

As most Mountaineering Ireland clubs do not have any capital infrastructure, it is most likely that your application will come under the heading of '**Non-personal sports equipment.**' Examples of non-personal sports equipment would be climbing equipment, ropes, ice-axes, crampons, etc ■

ADVICE: If you need any further advice or help with your application for funding, please contact **Ruth Whelan** or **Damien O'Sullivan** at the Mountaineering Ireland office. Their contact details are:

RUTH WHELAN

Email: ruth@mountaineering.ie

Phone: **01 625 1196**

DAMIEN O'SULLIVAN

Email: damien@mountaineering.ie

Phone: **01 625 1117**.



Take part in European Week of Sport



The first **National Walking Day** for Ireland is being held during **European Week of Sport** this September. It is being coordinated by Get Ireland Walking, Sport Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland and Healthy Ireland.

By Jason King (Get Ireland Walking)

It's that time of year again; the children have returned to school, parents are happily filling their new-found free time with other activities, including walking, and Sport Ireland is once again coordinating nationally the **European Week of Sport**, which takes place from September 22nd to 30th.

A variety of different sporting and physical activity events are taking place around the country during the week, with a strong emphasis on inclusion and participation.

Get Ireland Walking is collaborating closely with Sport

Ireland, Mountaineering Ireland and Healthy Ireland to promote and coordinate a **National Walking Day** on **Sunday, September 30th**. This will be Ireland's first National Walking Day and we would encourage all groups registered with Get Ireland Walking, and indeed with Mountaineering Ireland, to participate and celebrate walking on September 30th.

We have some **backpacks stuffed with goodies** on offer for groups who register and participate, so don't forget to register your group on the Get Ireland Walking website, www.getirelandwalking.ie, and follow the instructions there to participate in the competition.



Get Ireland Walking appointment

Sarah Rossiter has recently taken on the role of **Administration Officer** with the Get Ireland Walking team. Not only does Sarah have impeccable organisational and administrative skills, but she has a passion for the promotion of physical activity and sport, which is an awesome fit for the initiative.

Sarah's role will be to provide office support to the whole team, while also supporting the Programme Manager and Programme Coordinator in their roles. Sarah will also act as a point of contact between the initiative and community volunteers and walk leaders, identifying the supports and strategies necessary to support the volunteers in their roles. Although Sarah has only been in the post a short time, she has already made a significant impact on the initiative and we wish her every success in her new role.

You can contact **Sarah Rossiter** at the Mountaineering Office in Sport HQ on **01 625 1109** or alternatively email her at info@getirelandwalking.ie. She will be delighted to answer any queries you may have.

21-Day Walking Challenge

We are challenging members of local communities to participate in the **21-Day Walking Challenge** with Healthy Ireland. Pick up your Walking Challenge Cards at your local library.

By Jason King (Get Ireland Walking)

At Get Ireland Walking we are all about developing positive walking habits. To support you to start walking more we have teamed up with our partners at **Healthy Ireland** and your **local library** to provide 21-Day Walking Challenge Cards for local people to pick up.

All of the libraries in the country will have an allocation of these cards, so please drop in, pick one up, start walking

and stay walking for all the positive health benefits that you will obtain. Be sure to let your family and friends know about this challenge.

WALKSHOPS

Get Ireland Walking will also be hosting several **WALKSHOPS** in selected libraries. Check out the website

www.getirelandwalking.ie for a list of the libraries where these WALKSHOPS will be taking place.





Woodworking in the Déise Men's Shed, Co Waterford.

Men's Sheds walking toolkit launched

The toolkit for Men's Shedders is designed to help men to help themselves.

By Emer O'Leary (Programme Coordinator, Get Ireland Walking)

September 2018 sees the launch of a toolkit for Men's Shedders to support them in establishing and maintaining regular walking groups and develop positive walking habits within the membership of their shed.

In addition to hats and high-visibility vests, sheds and shedders across the country who register with Get Ireland Walking can avail of free Walk Leader insurance, information leaflets and posters for their shed, and a manual with information on walking, tips and tricks to help them

organise themselves, and useful contacts and supports within their local area.

Get Ireland Walking is delighted to partner with the Irish Men's Sheds Association and their **Sheds for Life** programme. Get Ireland Walking will also be supporting the roll-out of the **Sheds ag Siúl** programme, which will see the delivery of walking workshops facilitated by Local Sports Partnerships and the Irish Heart Foundation. Building on the success of the Cork programme, the pilot programme will now expand to include Dublin. Watch this space!



The Woodlands for Health project

Walking in nature for added benefits

By Emer O'Leary (Programme Coordinator, Get Ireland Walking)

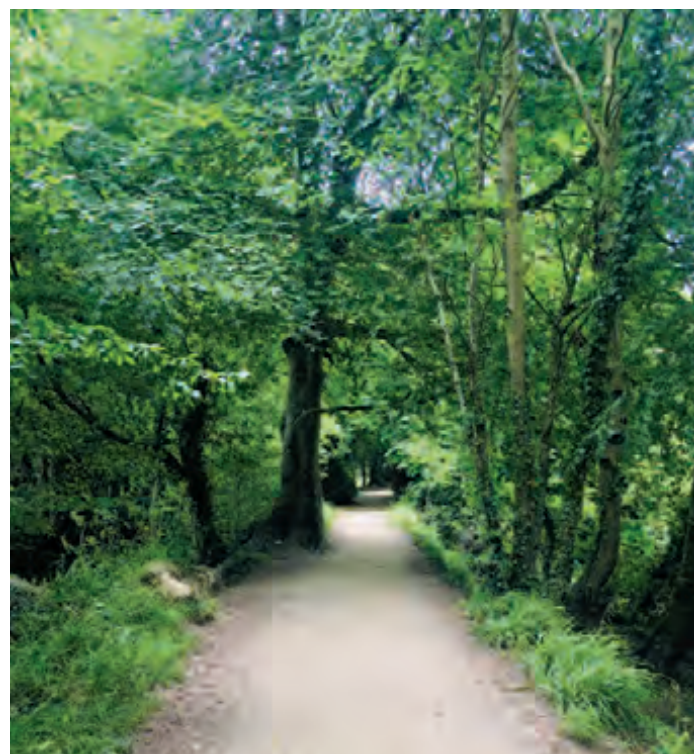
A twelve-week **Woodlands for Health** programme has started in counties **Wexford** and **Laois** and will soon be commencing in counties **Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal** and **Limerick**.

This programme, initiated by Coillte in partnership with Mental Health Ireland and Get Ireland Walking, is for people who are in the stage of mental health recovery. It provides them with the opportunity to use the natural

landscape to enhance their wellbeing, in particular as regards their social functioning, physical wellbeing and personal confidence.

We are delighted to have **Dr Tadhg McIntyre** and his colleagues at **Go Green Ex** from the University of Limerick supporting the evaluation of this programme. We aim to expand the programme to all counties over time ■

FUNDING: Woodlands for Health and the Men's Sheds Walking Programme are funded by the **Dormant Accounts Sports Inclusion Fund**.



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

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

Membership renewals

By Ruth Whelan (Membership Development Officer, Mountaineering Ireland)

As Mountaineering Ireland's Club Membership year runs from November 1st to October 31st, it is now time to start organising members' renewals again!

Same as last year, all clubs are able to commence renewing existing memberships and adding new members from September 1st. This is a benefit to many clubs that recruit new members in the autumn. As a result, new members can benefit from Mountaineering Ireland membership for up to 14 months in their first year of membership, e.g. from September 1st 2018 to October 31st 2019. A 10% discount is also available on Club Membership fees up to the end of November.

Updating club details

Club Secretaries are asked to ensure that they update the details of all officers currently on the committee of their club on the system, so that Mountaineering Ireland has accurate contact information for the relevant officers, including Club Environmental Officers.

Club Environmental Officers

Access to the mountains for hillwalking and climbing, and caring for the mountain environment, are key concerns for clubs and for Mountaineering Ireland. It is important that we have a point of contact in your club, such as a Club Environmental Officer, in relation to these matters.

Club Environmental Officers are not expected to be experts; being active in a club and having an interest in the environment are much more important. While Mountaineering Ireland provides suggested activities and training days for Club Environmental Officers, each club and each officer can put their own stamp on the role.

Clubs are also encouraged to make a donation to Mountaineering Ireland's **Environmental Defence Fund** to enable Mountaineering Ireland to be more effective in protecting access and the upland environment. For details see: bit.ly/2yuPreu.

Available supports and resources

To help you prepare for these renewals, please see our Club Handbook and GDPR guide. Further information is also available on the Members and Clubs pages at www.mountaineering.ie, where you will find details on members benefits and fees, and at the following link, bit.ly/2OLYzUg, for video tutorials to refresh your memory and help you manage your membership online.

Siobhan Quinn, Administration Officer in the Mountaineering Ireland office, will also be on hand to assist you in club membership renewals and in processing membership. She can be contacted at info@mountaineering.ie or on **01 625 1115** ■

FIND OUT MORE: The opposite page has details of the **benefits of membership** open to everyone who joins Mountaineering Ireland.

Hillwalkers on Benbaun (477m) in the Twelve Bens



Crossword solution

The winner of our Crossword Competition in IML 126 was **William Walsh**, from Mayfield, Co Cork. William won a pair of Merrell All Out Blaze 2 GTX shoes (pictured) from our crossword sponsor Basecamp, available in both men's and women's styles and worth €145. The solution to the crossword is shown below.

1	S			2	F			3	P			4	I			5	F			6	R
7	K	I	L	I	M	A	N	J	A	R	O										
	I		E					S		C										C	
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16	H	U						18	A	M		19	E	R	I	G	O				
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Benefits of membership

Joining Mountaineering Ireland gives a wide range of membership benefits beyond just the insurance policy, the magazine and the membership discounts.

Here are some of the benefits you can enjoy as a member of Mountaineering Ireland:

- Personalised membership card
- Dedicated professional staff to assist you on all issues relating to walking and climbing
- Quarterly members' 68-page full colour, glossy A4 magazine, *The Irish Mountain Log*, delivered to your door
- Mountaineering Ireland insurance – €13m Public Liability cover and limited Personal Accident insurance from policy developed to meet the needs of clubs and volunteers
- Access to Club Handbook to support club growth and development
- Access to BMC Travel and Activity insurance for walking and climbing trips abroad
- Eligibility for UIAA Reciprocal Rights stamp allowing members to get discounts in some Alpine huts
- 10-20% discount offered to members by an increasing list of outdoor shops and services nationwide
- Membership discounts on foreign maps, guidebooks and other hillwalking and mountaineering books ordered from the Mountaineering Ireland office or through our online shop
- Production of Irish rock climbing guidebooks, which are made available to members at discounted rates (for example, *Rock Climbing in Donegal* and *Wicklow Rock Climbing Guide*).
- Access to formal and informal training schemes for hillwalkers and climbers, including programmes leading to Mountain Training Board Ireland awards
- Access to training grants for clubs and individuals
- Access to various Mountaineering Ireland initiatives such as Women With Altitude and the Youth Alpine Initiative
- Helping the Hills initiative to address upland path erosion
- Programmes and workshops to train and support all club roles. These will be led by the Membership Development Officer and will include contributions from the Training Officer and the Hillwalking, Access and Conservation Officer
- Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter Meets in different locations each year. Open Members' Forum available at Spring and Autumn Gatherings
- Lecture Series at venues around the country
- Website (www.mountaineering.ie), Facebook page and YouTube channel, so you can stay up-to-date with news and events
- Hillwalking and climbing skills videos and environmental videos available on our website and YouTube channel
- Library of books, maps and guides, which are available on loan to members. Index can be accessed through the website
- Opportunities to contribute as a volunteer to the work of Mountaineering Ireland
- Opportunities to write for the *Irish Mountain Log*, which relies for its content on material submitted by members. Please submit your articles and photos to: iml-editor@mountaineering.ie
- Guidelines for climbing and walking leaders, skills workshops, CPD for award holders and training providers, and mentoring opportunities for award trainees
- Advice on gaining access to hills and crags
- High-quality publications on wildlife and the mountain environment
- Support for Women in Sport projects for young women (13-23 year olds)
- Support for climbing competitions: the Irish Bouldering League; Irish Lead Climbing Championship; Irish Bouldering Championship and the Youth Climbing Series
- Expedition grants and advice
- Best practice advice for organising club challenge walks and similar events
- Member-centred website, including access to your personal profile, a record of your training awards and access to a digital log to record your hillwalking and climbing activities

Mountaineering Ireland is an active voice working with members and other interested parties locally and at national level to protect Ireland's mountain areas. Securing continued access for responsible walkers and climbers is a key objective within our work.

In addition, Mountaineering Ireland is involved in regional coaching and leadership development, youth leader development, and forming partnerships with other organisations to encourage the development of an active outdoor population that is inclusive.

By renewing your Mountaineering Ireland membership, you gain a wide range of benefits, and you are increasing the strength of the national governing body for our sport, which is working on behalf of hillwalkers and climbers across the island of Ireland ■

Burren Climbing Meet

Great climbing, great talks and great craic.

By Alexander Kay

A very small contingent of climbers from North Wales travelled over to Ireland at the beginning of September, a few days prior to the 2018 Burren Climbing Meet, to sample some of Ailladie's finest routes and to have the best chance of working with the variable weather. Matt Pavitt and I enjoyed some fantastic routes on the super grippy (and super sharp!) limestone. That is a rarity in North Wales, with limestone venues such as the Orme, the Clwyd limestone areas in and around Llangollen, and some of the A55 venues, being rather polished in places.

The Ramp (E1, 5b), a classic multi-pitch adventure on the right-hand end of the Mirror Wall, proved to be a favourite route of ours, alongside Skywalker (E2, 5c) and Kleptomaniac (E3, 6a), both

fantastic single-pitch lines on the Aran Wall.

However, even with the generous precipitation at times, there were a number of other lines that still 'went,' due to the fact that the rock was either fairly sheltered in places and dried quickly or it was still arguably grippy in the rain.

Routes like Pis Fliuch (HVS, 5a), an amazing, sharp crack and corner climb, remained pretty dry, and both Jug City (VS, 4c) and Ground Control (VS, 4c) were manageable, even with water dripping down our sleeves.

The Burren Meet itself was a much smaller gathering than the annual Fair Head one and unfortunately the rain did somewhat affect play. Saturday was almost a complete wash-out, with heavy rain for most of the day, but the odd few brave souls still gave it a go, for a little while at least, until they retired



Freja Shannon on Ice Queen, E5, 6a, at Ailladie.



Matt Pavitt on Jug City, VS, 4c, at Ailladie.

to the Lahinch sauna and steam room.

More climbers showed their faces on the sunnier Sunday and Ailladie was clearly a busier place, with lots of folk trying and succeeding on a brilliant variety of routes, sharing beta and generally having a good time.

Although numbers were small, many familiar faces were seen dotted around the crag or skipping between the Doolin pubs over the course of the weekend. Calvin Torrains and Clare Sheridan, Freja Shannon, Brian Hall, Jonathan Redmond, Brian Bateson, Conor McGovern and many others were seen giving it a go in between the showers.

The well-known face of James McHaffie, a North Wales-based climber, was seen strapped to the sharp end on a number of classic high Es. Freja Shannon and James both gave thoroughly interesting talks at Hotel Doolin on the Friday and Saturday nights respectively.

Although the smaller number of folk at the meet in general

made for a quiet and chilled-out atmosphere at the crag, many still got together in the evening to swap stories, listen to traditional music and share the odd pint.

A few of Ailladie's harder routes were repeated and some fantastic attempts were made on many more - Very Big Springs (E7, 6b), Stigmata (E6, 6b), Ice Queen (E5, 6a) and Flaws in the Glass (E5, 6a), to name but a few.

On the whole, despite the weather being a little bit wetter than any climbing meet would hope for, it was fantastic to be part of the meet at Ailladie. As a Welshman visiting Ailladie for the first time, I will be highly recommending it to friends and fellow climbers.

A big thanks to **Mountaineering Ireland** and the **Dal Riada Climbing Club** for organising the meet, to **Freja Shannon** and **James McHaffie** for their talks over the weekend, and to all the climbers who persisted despite the weather and made for some good sending scenes ■

Climate change reduces height of Sweden's highest peak

Kebnekaise southern peak now just 20 centimetres higher than its twin northern peak.

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Sweden's highest peak, a glacier on the southern tip of the Kebnekaise mountain, is melting as a result of the record high Arctic temperatures this summer and is no longer the nation's tallest point. Kebnekaise, a popular tourist destination located in Sweden's far north, has two main peaks – a southern one covered by a glacier and a northern one free of ice.

Scientists, who have been measuring the peaks for many years as part of their climate change research, say that the southern peak lost four metres of snow between July 2nd and July 31st this year. This year's exceptionally hot summer has resulted in a record loss in snow and ice on the mountains.

At its latest measurement in July, the southern peak reached 2,097 metres above sea level, just 20cm higher than the northern peak's 2096.8 metres. By August the southern peak was lower than the northern peak. However, it is likely to grow again in the winter.

Last year, the difference between the two peaks was two metres. The southern glacier, whose height has been measured since 1880, has been shrinking by one metre each year in the past two decades, according to Stockholm University.

Reaching the northern peak is more difficult but, if it is the highest point in Sweden, a local Arctic mountain guide believes that people will still want to go there ■



Looking from southern peak of Kebnekaise to northern peak

Stairway to Heaven

By Kieran Alcock

Together we shared the trail for a while
Walking in step to the soundtrack of the Alps
Insects fizzing in the grass
Excited marmots, heard but often unseen
The trickle and splash of glacial streams
And occasional bell-rings of bovine onlookers

The shared experience
Of blistered feet and aching muscles
Somehow soothed by mountain friendship

Greeted by the nonchalance of resident ibex
Our eyes soaked up the majestic panoramas
Balm for the soul

Then at journey's end
We sat and watched
As the Angels of the mountain
Lit up the stairway to Heaven
On Europe's great pyramid in the sky.



View of Hornli Ridge on the Matterhorn (4,478m), between the East and North Faces. Photo: Kieran Alcock

Mountain rescue call-outs increase



Some members of Limerick Climbing Club with their club's PRO, Neil Walker, left, presenting a cheque for €750 to Mike Long of the Kerry Mountain Rescue Team in Cronin's Yard before the club set out to climb Carrauntoohil.

By Ruth Cunniffe (PRO, Mountain Rescue Ireland)

Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) has released its statistics for the first half of 2018. The eleven mountain rescue teams that are affiliated to MRI dealt with 219 incidents, sadly including fifteen fatalities, in the first six months of the year.

Any request for emergency assistance in the upland and mountainous areas on the island of Ireland is responded to by one of the mountain rescue teams that comprise MRI. These teams are made up of volunteers who are on standby 24/7/365 to respond to these requests for assistance that are tasked through the 999/112 emergency phone system.

The previous year, 2017, had been a busy year for mountain rescue in Ireland. The teams responded to 272 incidents in the twelve months, 54% of which followed an injury and 31% of which were as a result of hikers getting lost; 28% of those incidents were dealt with

in darkness. There were twelve fatalities in the twelve months. However, the figures for the first six months of 2018 show that the teams have been even busier this year, so far.

The teams of volunteers, who provide this essential emergency first-responder service, receive a state grant that covers part of the costs of providing this service. They must engage in fundraising events to cover the rest of their

expenses. There are several of these fundraising events occurring around the country in the coming months.

Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team: Run The Line

This year's Run The Line event in aid of Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team is being held on Saturday, November 10th, 2018. It will consist of two separate races

across the Dublin Mountains, a long-distance 26km route and a shorter 13km route, which will give a feel for hill-running for those not as used to this format. The location is the Glencullen Adventure Park, Dublin 18, where both routes will start and end. You can meet up there afterwards for some post-race refreshments! Registration is open at www.popupraces.ie/events/run-the-line-2018.

South Eastern Mountain Rescue Team: Long Way Round

This year's Long Way Round event in aid of South Eastern Mountain Rescue Team is being held on Saturday, November 24th, 2018. It consists of a 15km route in and around the Comeraghs at night, which is open to runners and walkers. The route covers road, track and open mountain. For more information go to www.semra.ie/longwayround.

Mayo Mountain Rescue Team

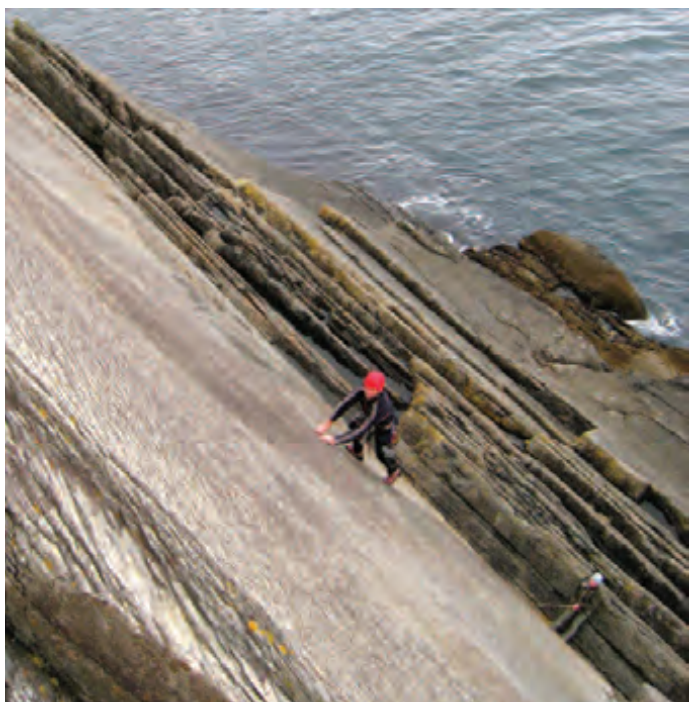
The Mayo team will hold a church gate collection in Westport on October 20-21st; and a SuperValu raffle in Westport on December 13th.

There are other events being held around the country in aid of the individual mountain rescue teams and we hope that members of Mountaineering Ireland will support these events. In addition, hillwalking and mountaineering clubs who hold Christmas events may be able to fundraise for their local mountain rescue team by holding a raffle or similar venture ■



Members of the Mayo Mountain Rescue Team on an exercise earlier this year.

Access for climbing at Old Head of Kinsale



Climbing at the Old Head of Kinsale, Co Cork.

By Helen Lawless

Mountaineering Ireland is pleased to report that an agreement has been renewed with the Commissioners of Irish Lights and the Old Head Golf Links for rock climbing on the Old Head of Kinsale, Co Cork.

Under this agreement, access is limited to Mountaineering Ireland members and is subject to approval by the Old Head Golf Links and the Commissioners of Irish Lights, who both own part of the climbing area at the Old Head.

Requests for access to climb at the Old Head must be made at least three days in advance. Requests should be sent via email to: oldheadclimbing@mountaineering.ie.

The request must include a full list of climbers wishing to climb at the Old Head and include an expected date and time of arrival.

A maximum of ten people and two vehicles are allowed per visit. The new Climbing Access Coordinator for the Old Head, **John Healy**, or **Damien O'Sullivan** in the Mountaineering Ireland office, will liaise with the Commissioners of Irish Lights and the Old Head Golf Links to confirm if access is available for your group.

An updated code of conduct for climbing at the Old Head has been agreed with both the Commissioners of Irish Lights and the Old Head Golf Links. Continuation of climbing at the Old Head depends on climbers adhering to this code of conduct.

All climbers who go to the Old Head of Kinsale share in the responsibility of ensuring that the relationship between the climbing community and the landowners at the Old Head remains positive. Climbers should particularly note that the climbing area is very close to the family home of the lighthouse keeper, and due consideration should be made to respect their privacy ■

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Nepal-Ireland Day 2018

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Nepal-Ireland Day 2018 was held at Farmleigh House in the Phoenix Park on the afternoon of Sunday, September 9th, courtesy of the Office of Public Works (OPW). After a welcome to all present and the introduction of the guests by the **President of the Nepal Ireland Society, Deepesh Man Shakya**, the celebration was then formally opened by one of the guests of honour, **Maureen O'Sullivan, TD**. Then there was a cultural programme with performances of Nepalese music and dancing.

There was also an ongoing exhibition throughout the afternoon of photographs taken by Irish tourists and mountaineers in Nepal, and various Nepalese handicrafts. Irish NGOs with projects in Nepal also had stands there, displaying their work in Nepal.

Nepal-Ireland Day is the biggest event in Ireland that celebrates the ever-growing friendship and links between Nepal and Ireland, which have been emphasised by the recent establishment of the **Nepal Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group**. The event is a showcase for Nepal's culture and heritage, and a demonstration of its potential as one of the top holiday destinations in the world. Another aim of this year's celebration was to publicise the recent declaration by the Nepalese Government that 2020 would be **Visit Nepal Year**.



The former Nepali Minister of Tourism, Kripasur Sherpa, at the event in Farmleigh.



Enjoying the Nepal-Ireland Day cultural programme at Farmleigh, from left, guest speakers Dáithí Ó Murchú, Jenny Copeland, Seamus Lawless, Noel Hanna and Dawson Stelfox.

Programme of talks

In addition to these cultural displays, there was also a programme of mountaineering talks. In this 25th anniversary year of the first Irish ascent of Everest in 1993, **Dawson Stelfox**, the first Irishman to climb the 8,848m mountain, gave an account of that first Irish ascent from the Tibetan side. He then looked back at the early expeditions to Mount Everest that eventually led to its first ascent by Hillary and Tenzing in 1953.

Dawson rounded off his talk by looking at the work of the **Irish Nepalese Educational Trust (INET)**, which was set up after the Irish 1993 ascent of Everest. INET raises money to provide educational opportunities for people living in the Solu Khumbu near Everest. The Trust has built schools in villages in the Solu Khumbu and supports the staff who work in those schools on an ongoing basis.

Dawson was followed by **Noel Hanna**, who had just returned from his successful ascent of K2 in Pakistan, the second Irish ascent after **Ger McDonnell** reached the summit ten years ago but sadly died on the descent.

Noel has also climbed Everest a record eight times now, but he focused his talk on his first ascent of Burke Khang, an unclimbed 6,942m peak on the border between Nepal and Tibet, which he felt was a more important success to him than his ascent of K2 because of being the first to climb it

rather than following in other people's footsteps.

Alison Irwin, joint Honorary Secretary of the Nepal Ireland Society, then gave a very interesting presentation of data from **Paul Devaney's** Irish Seven Summits website, www.irishsevensummits.com, about Irish ascents of the ten highest peaks in Nepal, eight of which are among the world's fourteen 8,000m peaks and the



Ireland's second ever K2 summitter, Noel Hanna, at Nepal-Ireland Day in Farmleigh.

other two of which are only a few metres short of the 8,000m mark.

After Alison, two aspiring Everest climbers, **Seamus Lawless** and **Jenny Copeland**, talked about their preparations for their attempt on the mountain next year. Their very logical and methodical approach to preparing for that climb was very impressive, as was their commitment. As part of a group of four Irish climbers (see



Jenny Copeland and Seamus Lawless giving their talk on preparing for an Everest attempt.



Ireland's first Everest summitter, Dawson Stelfox, giving his talk to the gathering in Farmleigh House on Nepal-Ireland Day.

www.irelandoneverest.com), they have been gradually building up to their attempt on Everest, from developing mountain skills in Ireland, Scotland and the Alps, to making ascents of Island Peak (6,189m) and Mera Peak (6,476m) in Nepal, to climbing Denali (6,190m), north America's highest peak.

The final presentation in what had been a very interesting and impressive programme of talks was by **Dáithí Ó Murchú**, an ultra-runner, who described the challenges of running the Everest Marathon from Base Camp and the wonders of being at altitude in the Solu

Khumbu. In what was a very inspiring and thought-provoking presentation, Dáithí rounded the day off nicely by highlighting the privilege and the joy of being in these high places and facing the challenges they present.

The talks programme was closed by **Kripasur Sherpa**, a former Minister of Tourism for the Government of Nepal, who reflected on how much the country has to offer visitors. He expressed the hope that many members of the audience would be able to visit the country in the near future, and particularly in 2020, Visit Nepal Year ■

9th UK and Ireland Banff Mountain Film Festival

By Patrick O'Sullivan

In May 2018, the renowned Banff Mountain Film Festival came to Ireland again as part of its world tour. There were two separate programmes of films, one of which was shown in Kilkenny and Galway and both of which were shown in Dublin and Cork. Both shows were certainly sell-outs in Dublin, where they were put on in the National Concert Hall.

The 'Red' programme, which I saw in the National Concert Hall, was certainly very inspiring, with seven excellent films of varying lengths about Arctic cycling, mountain biking, skating, skiing, kayaking and climbing. However, it did seem to take a very broad approach to the 'mountain film' concept.

The films showed some very impressive journeys, a solo 2,000km bicycle ride into the Canadian Arctic in winter to reach the northern-most point of the Americas being a case in point. *The Frozen North* was a self-made film of one of the more challenging sections of a solo cycle around the world by Yorkshireman **Ben Page**. It highlighted

the soul-searching that goes on when you face extreme conditions on your own.

The climbing film was no less impressive. A disabled climber, American **Maureen Beck**, who was born without her left hand, showed us what she was capable of in *Stumped*. She is currently the best one-armed female climber in the world, but she was not setting out to prove she could climb with her disability. She just loved climbing and was not going to let anything get in the way of her enjoyment of the sport, very much a can-do attitude. With some other climbers with disabilities, Maureen set out on a road-trip, picking off some impressively tough climbs en route. It was certainly a very enjoyable and inspiring film.

Another impressive film was *Into Twin Galaxies*, an account of the crossing of the world's second largest ice-cap in Greenland. The plan was to kite-ski 1,000km across the ice-cap, towing kayaks, before attempting to paddle down a river back across the ice-cap to the ocean.



With gusting winds, kite-skiing is a risky means of travel. Even when they eventually found the river, they were faced with a hazardous descent in extreme conditions underneath unstable snow bridges and through rapids and waterfalls in freezing conditions.

Overall this was an enjoyable evening with some impressive films ■

EVEREST AND K2 CLIMBS

Patrick O'Sullivan reports on Irish successes in the Greater Ranges during 2018.

This has been a very successful year for Irish mountaineers in the Greater Ranges. In the 25th anniversary year of the first Irish ascent of Mount Everest, there have been two more successful ascents of that mountain in the pre-monsoon season from

Nepal.

Since that first Irish ascent by **Dawson Stelfox** from Tibet in May 1993, there have been fifty-nine ascents by forty-nine people who were resident on the island of Ireland (north and south) or who were travelling on an Irish passport but living elsewhere.

Also, in July of this year, there were two further Irish ascents of K2 from Pakistan, the first in the ten years since the first Irish ascent of the mountain in August 2008 by **Ger McDonnell**, who sadly died on the descent.

Everest ascents

At 8,848m, the summit of Mount Everest is the highest point on Earth. It was first climbed successfully by New Zealander **Edmund Hillary** and **Sherpa Tenzing Norgay** in May 1953 via the South Col route from Nepal.

Antrim-man **Dawson Stelfox** ascended it in May 1993 by the north/north-east ridge from Tibet, the first Irish ascent.

Above: Mount Everest and Lhotse from the Nepal side, left, and K2 from the south.

Below: Jason Black on the summit of Everest on May 19th 2013. He summited on K2 on July 22nd this year.

Of the Irish ascents to date, twenty-four have been made from the north, and thirty-five from the south. The two successful ascents this year were from the Nepal side, following the South Col route.

On May 16th, 2018, **Louise McEvoy** made the climb with a team from Ascent Himalayas. Louise lives in California but is originally from Swords, Co Dublin, making her the first Dublin woman to summit on Everest.

Louise first trekked to Everest Base Camp fourteen years ago and ever since then has been hoping to get a chance to climb the peak. Over the intervening years, she has climbed Kilimanjaro, Elbrus, Aconcagua and Denali. She has also successfully summited on Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and Mount Rainier.

On May 19th, three days after Louise's success on Everest, **Adrian McNulty** became the first person from Meath to climb Mount Everest, when he reached the summit via the South Col.



► **Patrick O'Sullivan** is Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*.



Adrian is an endurance athlete from Navan, where he is a member of the Bohermeen Athletics Club. He had previously completed an Ironman challenge and taken part in the Race Across America on a bicycle.

Two other Irish mountaineers attempted Everest in the pre-monsoon season this year. **Paul Greenan** from Dublin was climbing with the Jagged Globe team. He had previously tried to climb Everest in 2015 but was seriously injured in an avalanche that swept through Base Camp that year. Unfortunately, he was forced to abandon his latest attempt on Everest after he developed pneumonia.

Denis O'Brien, from Cork, also abandoned his attempt on Everest after suffering altitude-related problems.

► With thanks to **Paul Devaney** and his Irish Seven Summits website, www.irishsevensummits.com, for much of the information in this article.

K2 ascents

At a height of 8,611m, K2 is the second highest mountain in the world. It is also regarded as the most difficult and dangerous as it has claimed the lives of roughly one out of every four climbers who have reached its summit.

Ten years ago, on August 1st, 2008, Limerick-man **Ger McDonnell** completed the first Irish ascent of K2. Sadly, he lost his life on the descent, along with another ten of the eighteen mountaineers who summited that day. His tragic story was told in the book *The Summit: How Triumph Turned To Tragedy on K2's Deadliest Days*, by **Pat Falvey** and **Pemba Gyalje Sherpa**. *The Summit*, a film based on the book, was released in 2014.

Ger and the others were benighted on the descent. The following day, during the descent, Ger was assisting some Korean climbers who had fallen, and were tangled up in their ropes, when they were all hit by an avalanche.

Though slightly lower in height, K2 is a much more serious climb than Everest. It was first climbed by Italians **Lino Lacedelli** and **Achille Compagnoni** in July 1954.

In July of this year there were two Irish ascents of 'The Savage Mountain,' so called because of the difficulty of the ascent and its vulnerability to inclement weather conditions, often claiming lives.

On July 21st, **Noel Hanna** from Co Down reached the summit of K2 as part of a non-guided international expedition. There were nine other climbers in his team and they all summited. Noel left the summit at 8.00am and was safely back down at base camp by 9.00pm.

The following day, July 22nd, **Jason Black** from Donegal, who was part of an international expedition led by **Garrett Madison**, reached the summit. He descended safely to base camp in stages after his climb.

Both Irish climbers are Himalayan veterans. Jason Black climbed Everest from the Tibetan side in 2013. Noel Hanna has made an incredible eight successful ascents of the world's highest mountain. Noel and his wife **Lynne** are also the first married couple to have



Above: Noel Hanna on the summit of K2 on July 21st this year.

Below: Camp Four, below the summit of K2.

summited Everest together from both sides, from the Nepal side and from the northern Tibet side.

Noel Hanna is a qualified fitness instructor and a bodyguard. In 2010, he climbed the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on the world's seven continents.

In October of last year, Noel, with three Sherpas, made the first successful ascent of a technical peak, **Burke-Khang** (6,942m), on the Nepal-Tibet border.

Noel had made two previous, unsuccessful attempts on K2, in 2015 and 2016, years when there were no successful ascents. He says that on a mountain like K2 you are very dependent on the weather and that the upper parts of the route are very exposed: if anything falls, there is no escape. The route is also more technical than Everest.

Jason Black is an endurance athlete and an ambassador for the **Irish Red Cross**. He had also attempted to climb K2 previously, two years ago, and had decided to return this year to make another attempt, on the tenth anniversary of Ger McDonnell's death. Jason carried a jumars (rope clamp) with him, which had been given to him by Ger's mother, **Gertie McDonnell**. He also placed a plaque in Ger's memory at K2 base camp ■



ENVIRONMENT WEEKEND

Paula McHale reports on Mountaineering Ireland's annual Mountain Environment Weekend, which this year took place on Achill Island at the end of May.

This Mountaineering Ireland Mountain Environment Weekend ticked all the boxes for me – cultural heritage, biodiversity, celebrating Ireland's mountain environment, and Achill. Hiking gear and botany books packed, we arrived at St Thomas's Church, Dugort, and went through the old gates and up a tree-lined track for the first event of the weekend, a talk by **Seán Lysaght**.

Seán is a landscape writer, heritage specialist, poet and lover of eagles. He recounted the history of sea eagles and golden eagles in Mayo, where these majestic birds lived once, and he shared with us maps of past distribution of both species and photographs of their habitats. He also read poetic words from his recent book *Eagle Country* (see review in IML 126, p60). Seán whetted our appetites for the days ahead and we hoped to spot a sea eagle that had defied the odds!

Saturday, we awoke to a cuckoo calling outside our window. The day began with an introduction to the geology and landscape of Achill Island, presented by **Kevin O'Callaghan**, known to most as 'Geo.' I was transported back to college days with Geo explaining the geological eras: 'Camels Often Sit Down Carefully, Perhaps Their Joints Creak' – Cambrian, Ordovician, Silurian, Devonian, Carboniferous, Permian, Triassic,

Top: Overlooking Gubroenacoragh, north of Croaghau.

Right: Kevin 'Geo' O'Callaghan explaining the geology of Achill to participants on a walk during the weekend.

Jurassic and Cretaceous. Geo then explained that Mayo (including Achill) and Connemara are different to the rest of Ireland, with rocks dating back to the Pre-Cambrian era – before any camels had had a chance to sit down carefully!

The dominant rock in Achill is quartzite, while the quaternary deposits, the most recent material, are mainly glacial deposits with peat now on top of them.

At the deserted village at **Slievemore** we were joined by **Tom Fadian**, a local hill farmer, who shared his stories of farming on Achill. In the 1800s, farmers had small holdings and were self-sufficient. The cattle



► **Paula McHale** is a member of Clare Outdoor Club and loves nothing more than getting out in the mountains and enjoying all that nature has to offer. She works with the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme.



produced milk and, during the winter, they heated the house, as they were kept indoors. The children took the cattle to the commonage during the summer and stayed in temporary dwellings called booleys.

During the Famine, the small villages became deserted. When Tom was growing up, each June the men headed to England and they were “as familiar with the streets of London, Liverpool and Birmingham as they were with the side of Slievemore.”

The Sixties brought tourism to Achill, but now most people base themselves in Westport and only make day-trips to the island. [Note to self: stay local after a hike and support the local community!]

Tom left us with an image of a tight community, working together outdoors, and simply asked us to enjoy the mountains and our stay in Achill.

Our hike started at **Lough Acorrmoyre**. We went up the west side of the lake to **Croaghau**, 638m, turning eastwards along the cliffs and then retracing our steps back to the summit and down to **Keem Bay**, a distance of nine kilometres.

Rory Hodd painted a scene for us that when trees first populated the land after the last ice age, oaks grew at altitudes up to 400m, with birch and rowan above this level again. Approximately 6,000 years ago, humans cut down the trees to manage the land.

Geo mentioned at this point that the last remnants of the last glaciation in Ireland were in Mayo.

As we hiked, **Helen Lawless**, Mountaineering Ireland’s Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer, pointed out lots of interesting plants to us, such as the insectivorous sundew, milkwort and fir clubmoss. One Irish name for milkwort is *ceithre deirfiúiríní*, or four sisters; it is thus named because it is found in four colours – white, blue, purple and pink.

We reached **Croaghau** summit and headed east along the cliff edge, when Geo became very animated. A large area of the cliff had broken away and we could see perforation holes where the next rockslide was about to start – mass wasting in action. It was probably a mix of humans (grazing of domestic animals) and water that had caused the landslide.

Leaving the dramatic cliffs behind us, we headed back up to the summit and descended to **Keem Bay**, with the sun glistening on the Atlantic Ocean ... and the promise of ice cream.

Sunday started with two presentations. **Helen Lawless** gave a talk on the work in access and conservation being carried out by Mountaineering Ireland and local groups around the country. The Croagh Patrick initiative was provided as an example of people working together to help conserve the mountain environment – Mayo County Council is working with the local community in Murrisk, with Croagh Patrick shareholders and with other interests to develop proposals for repair and maintenance of the pilgrim path on the mountain. The Croagh Patrick stakeholders have hosted a similar group from Donegal that aims to address the problem of path erosion on Errigal.

Rory Hodd then informed us of the habitats and plants found on the Irish mountains. There are a number of specific habitats, from blanket bog to wet heath, dry heath, grassland and montane heath. Each habitat has its own mix of plants, such as the montane vegetation found on summits, which receive



Top:
Participants on the Mountain Environment Weekend in Achill.

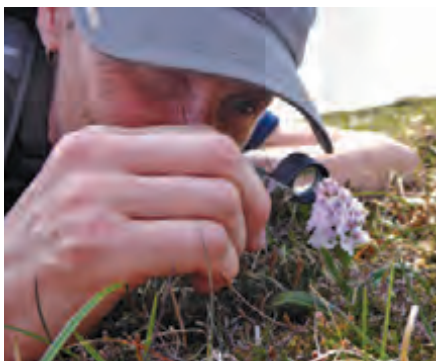
Below, clockwise from top left: Examining a spotted orchid with a hand lens; a lousewort; a common frog; a tormentil in bloom.

lots of mist and rain, allowing mosses to thrive while the exposure stops other plants from growing there.

Rory set us up nicely for day two, when we headed out to **Slievemore**. The hike started at the coast, north of Slievemore, went up to the top at 671m and descended to the deserted villages, covering eight kilometres. We went up to a cliff face, spotting orchids and pink-coloured milkworts and hounding poor Rory for names of mosses and liverworts that I couldn’t pronounce. With a hand lens and a taste for curiosity, the cliff face became our jungle. I’m sure we looked a strange sight, a row of adults, faces stuck against a leafy rock face, looking into the Lilliputian world of liverworts, a forest of tiny, filmy leaves.

Later, we munched on our lunch while Seán looked up to the top of the cliff and pointed out ravens circling where once sea eagles had soared.

Descending slowly to the deserted village, I reflected on the weekend. Together we had shared knowledge and celebrated our love of mountains and enjoyed all Achill had to offer ... its beauty, its complexity, its vulnerability and its history. I look forward to sharing gems of information with others while out on the hills. Achill, thank you for a weekend of wonderful memories ■



Upper Glenasmole valley,
source of the River Dodder.

HIKING IN GLENASMOLE

Brian Madden describes some challenging walks in the River Dodder catchment area in Upper Glenasmole, County Dublin, an area that was recently added to Wicklow Mountains National Park.

I was greatly enthused by Cólín MacLochlainn's article in the last issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* ('Wild, but close to Dublin,' IML 126, pages 24-25). When the National Parks and Wildlife Service announced with great fanfare the purchase of 5,000 acres of land near Kippure in August 2016, the newspapers told us a lot, but did not specify where the new acquisition was situated. Cólín's article clarified that for us with an accompanying map showing the boundaries.

Briefly, the new area encompasses the upper River Dodder catchment north of the line from Seefingan to Kippure, with two panhandle extensions, one on the east side of Glenasmole as far as Piperstown Hill, the other on the west side as far as Ballymorefinn Hill.

Dublin's River Dodder is quite short. It rises from a network of streams and brooks on the northern slopes of Kippure and flows twenty-two kilometres to the sea near Ringsend. It flows through the glacial valley of Glenasmole, which features in the folklore of Fionn Mac Cumhaill and the Fianna.

Glenasmole is also where the Bohernabreena Waterworks are situated, where the strongmen of Rathmines-Rathgar left a lapidary statement of Victorian building ingenuity, and witness to an early sensitivity to water charges. They decided that water from the then new Vartry scheme in Roundwood was too expensive and decided to go their own way.

The catchment area, as can be seen from the accompanying map, comprises three main tributaries: the Slade Brook,

The Dodder Gorge never fails to surprise and impress on your first visit.

Cot Brook and the Dodder itself. A map of this area by East-West Mapping clearly shows that the Cot Brook contributes the largest volume of water. However, remembering the Amazon, it is the longest tributary, not the greatest one, that keeps the river's name.

Interesting walking

There is some very interesting walking in this catchment area. There are a couple of

established tracks, such as the Old Turf Road from Glenasmole Lodge to Castlekelly Bog, and a very scenic track which descends from close to Seahan, around Ballymorefinn Hill and towards the reservoir.

Otherwise there are virtually no tracks to follow and the current footfall will be insufficient to create tracks. So, it is virgin hiking territory, but not as rugged as one might expect. In fact, the



Kippure-Seefingan ridge, viewed from Corrig Mountain.

Dodder drainage pattern, which can clearly be seen from the map, combined with the slope of the ground, ensures that no particularly boggy spots develop.

Having said that, the main hazards in the area are the crossing of streams in spate or swollen after heavy rainfall. After moderate rain, the Slade Brook and the Dodder might be crossable, but Cot Brook will be out of the question. Caution and discretion are, of course, always advised.

Dodder Gorge

The Dodder Gorge is accessible from the Featherbed road and never fails to impress and surprise on your first visit. The stretch called the 'Cataract of the Rowan Tree' in earlier East-West maps is most dramatic. The river has cut a deep passage in the soft bog and works its way downhill in leaps and bounds. It is at its most spectacular after heavy rainfall.

The gorge can be followed upstream on the right bank (that is the left bank, going up) using some deer tracks. If you persevere to the confluence with Maren's Brook, the river is no longer in a deep gorge and you can follow on the south side of Maren's Brook over to the White Road, which brings you back to the Featherbed road (see blue trace on the map).

Three streams route

Another interesting route is to traverse the whole catchment area, crossing the three main streams in the process: see the red trace on the map. Starting from about halfway along the Barnacreel ridge, head west to a crossing point on the Slade Brook, then onwards to a crossing point on Cot Brook. Take a compass bearing from here to pick up the end of the Castlekelly turf track. Follow



— Dodder Gorge Loop — Circular hike (traverse of Dodder catchment) — Other routes
— Boundary of land added to Wicklow Mountains National Park

this up to a sharp corner where it turns north-west and downhill. From this point, going a few hundred metres east will bring you to the Dodder. Care is needed here to descend to the river level and make the crossing safely. Follow the gorge downstream on the right bank until the slope upwards on your right moderates and you can hike up to the Featherbed road.

Long circular hike

For the stout of heart, a tougher, circular route can be considered. From the end of the White Road, follow the track up to Kippure summit, cross over to Seefingan (turf

hags abound here) and then descend to the halfway point on the Barnacreel ridge mentioned above. This circular route is about 16km long with 650m of ascent, but allow extra time for the fact that a lot of it is trackless.

There are plenty of other walks in Glenasmole, which are facilitated by the new national park area. Many of these will be known to walking groups,

particularly those based in Dublin. However, hike leaders will find it useful to familiarise themselves with the minutiae of the new park boundaries, because there are lots of nooks and crannies in Glenasmole which now 'belong to us.'

With thanks to Barry Dalby for use of relevant section of Dublin & North Wicklow map by EastWest Mapping ■



► **Brian Madden** is a retired chartered engineer based in Dublin. He regularly leads hikes for An Óige, the Hillwalkers Club, the Bray Strollers and an informal group known as the Third Sunday Hikers. He has also led hikes in England, Wales, Scotland and Spain. He can be contacted at maddeb@gmail.com.

THE PURE MILE PROJECT



2018 is the ninth year of the **PURE Mile**, an environmental initiative established by the **PURE (Protecting Uplands and Rural Environments) Project**, which aims to foster a greater appreciation and awareness of our countryside and roadscapes by rewarding and acknowledging local community efforts. **Ian Davis** reports.

The PURE Mile competition encourages communities and groups living in rural areas of Dublin and Wicklow to adopt a mile of road (approximately 1.6 kilometres), to keep this area free of litter and rubbish, and to research information about the local wildflowers, trees, animals, the built, social and cultural heritage and the history and folklore of the area.

Since it was established in 2010, the PURE Mile initiative has grown every year. Following the introduction of the 'Clean Up the Uplands' Award in 2017, which invites special-interest groups, scout groups, walking groups, cycling groups, businesses and organisations to adopt an upland area, over sixty groups enlisted for the 2018 PURE Mile competition.

This year, over 1,000 volunteers are collectively improving and enhancing over 200 miles of road, forest, woodland, upland amenities and mountain, with the removal of hundreds of tonnes of illegally dumped litter and waste from the Dublin and Wicklow uplands.

The PURE Mile is perfect for communities and groups who want to improve and enhance the areas they live in or recreate in. Many communities go the extra mile by repairing and painting old traditional gates, cleaning up farmlands and entrances, erecting bat and bird boxes,

Above:
Members of the Glenmalure PURE Mile group pose in front of Carrawaystick Waterfall, Glenmalure, Co Wicklow.

trimming hedges (outside of the bird-nesting season), and much more.

In PURE Miles where little physical management is required, groups focus on local research or on initiatives to increase awareness and appreciation of the Mile amongst the wider community.

A good example of the benefits of the PURE Mile initiative can be seen in the Glenmalure valley. Glenmalure is one of the most beautiful areas in County Wicklow, attracting thousands of visitors and hillwalkers. Unfortunately, the entire valley was plagued by constant illegal dumping and littering. The community was tired of waking up to find abandoned camp-sites, illegally dumped rubbish and litter on the valley floor. All agreed that some form of action was needed.

My initial meeting with the PURE Mile group was at the Glenmalure Lodge. We had arranged to walk the mile, set objectives and devise an action plan. The first Glenmalure PURE Mile begins at Drumgoff Bridge and meanders through the glacial valley, the longest one in Ireland, before finishing at the magnificent waterfall of Carrawaystick. As we journeyed down the tree-lined road, we highlighted areas where litter was visible and we recorded locations where larger items of rubbish had been dumped in the woods.

It was obvious that my companions had great knowledge and respect for the valley, educating me on the history of the Military Road, Cullen's Rock, the old barracks, the native woodland, the mining heritage and the names of the numerous townlands in the area – Drumgoff, Ballyboy, Ballinafunshoge and, further off in the distance, Cullentrach Park, Bolenaskea and Barravore.

I still had vivid memories of visiting Glenmalure when I was younger, my father telling me tales of the 1798



➤ **Ian Davis** is the PURE Project Manager. He can be contacted at info@pureproject.ie.

➤ For more information on the **PURE Project**, see www.pureproject.ie or follow the project on Facebook or Twitter (@PureProject1).

THE PURE CONCEPT IS PURE AND SIMPLE: “IT’S YOUR ENVIRONMENT, YOUR COMMUNITY, YOUR HERITAGE.”

legend Michael Dwyer, and the 16th-century rebel Fiach McHugh O’Byrne and the Battle of Glenmalure.

After our walk, a plan was agreed:

- Reduce illegal dumping;
- Reduce litter left behind by campers, hikers, day-trippers and picnickers;
- Research and document points of interest;
- Increase awareness of the importance of the valley;
- Involve everyone.

The first action was to organise one massive, Glenmalure PURE Mile Clean-Up Day. This clean-up day attracted all valley residents, young and old, as well as people from neighbouring townlands. They arrived armed with litter-pickers, bags and gloves, full of enthusiasm and energy. The entire day was spent pulling out old litter and rubbish from the valley’s hedges and ditches.

When it was all finished, the PURE truck arrived and took away all of the material that had been gathered. This coordinated effort resulted in the removal of over six tonnes of illegally dumped rubbish. Everything from pallets, tents, chairs, barbeques, bags, cans and bottles, to domestic rubbish, household rubbish, car tyres and more, were removed from the woodlands, ditches and drains of Glenmalure valley.

The next phase of the Glenmalure project was to erect PURE Mile signs. After that, the group collated information on the natural and built heritage of the area.

One thing that was crucially important to the success of the project was the monitoring of the valley for any fresh dumping. If any dumping was located it was reported to PURE and removed rapidly, to reduce the likelihood of further dumping at the site.

These actions made a huge difference to the locality. Both the people who live in the valley and those who visit and recreate there are reaping the rewards.

At the end of the year, the Glenmalure PURE Mile group produced an insightful and informative leaflet, which documents and highlights the natural and built heritage features of the valley.

The PURE Mile strengthened the community spirit in the area, with young and old working together in a shared experience. One group member commented, “We are claiming back our beautiful valley and, because of the PURE Mile, we are more aware of what we had taken for granted for so long.”

The Glenmalure valley is rich in natural, built and social heritage. But it is also worth remembering that it is a place where people live, a living valley. The people who live in Glenmalure have always welcomed visitors, campers and hillwalkers. All they ask is that those who visit and recreate there do so responsibly.

At the end of their first year, the Glenmalure PURE Mile group won the 2015 ‘Best PURE Mile’ Award. Following that, the group decided to extend their PURE Mile and, in the past three years, they have adopted the entire valley, from Drumgoff Bridge to the Glenmalure Hostel in Barravore. They have also produced leaflets for each of



Above: The Zig-zags in Glenmalure valley. The valley won the ‘Winning Back The Valley’ Award in 2017.

Below: Participants from Ballinabarney in Glenmalure celebrate their PURE Mile win in 2017.

the areas and, last year, were presented with a special prize, the ‘Winning Back The Valley’ Award.

The Glenmalure group has now adopted over eight miles of road in total, incorporating ten townlands. The combined efforts of the community have resulted in a massive reduction in illegal dumping in the valley. They have also assisted in the preservation and conservation of the Glenmalure valley’s heritage for future generations.

Like to get involved?

The PURE Mile is the perfect opportunity for communities and groups to contribute positively to their locality. It enables people to improve and enhance the place in which they live or where they recreate. Any groups, communities, individuals, schools, walking groups, cycling groups, scouts, businesses or indeed anyone who wants to get involved in next year’s PURE Mile can contact PURE at info@pureproject.ie or download an application form from www.pureproject.ie/what-we-do/the-pure-mile or write to: PURE Project, Wicklow Mountains National Park, Kilafin, Laragh, Bray, Co Wicklow. We will post you all the information you need. You can also request an application form and information pack by phoning PURE on **(0404) 45547** ■





Young climbers using drills to practice their technique.

COACHING YOUNG CLIMBERS

The climbing wall at **Activate Waterford** opened just over three years ago and from the beginning the main base of support has been children under twelve years of age. In order to engage with these children and train them as climbers, Rachel Smith set up a climbing club for them. For the vast majority of these children this was their first experience of the sport of climbing. Likewise, most of their parents had no real concept of what was truly involved. Here, **Rachel Smith** and **Catherine Feeney** describe their experience in coaching young children in climbing.

It was apparent from the start that the parents were keen to support their children in their endeavours at Activate Waterford. This enthusiastic support has continued to this day, with many parents getting involved in helping their children with their training, in preparing them for competitions and with maintaining an open line of communication with us as coaches. This loyalty from the parents has been invaluable in growing the club into what it is today.

There is no point in us as coaches quoting scientific papers as to why children

engage in sporting activities, or in this case specifically in climbing, or indeed in covering the role of the coach. These topics have been well covered in Mountaineering Ireland courses (which we highly recommend!), by bodies such as Sport Ireland, etc, and in articles by the likes of Eric Hörst, Neil Gresham and many others, most of which are readily available online.

However, from our own experience over the past three years, we have found the following elements to be paramount in running a successful children's climbing club.

- The coaches should have a genuine interest in working with children and in the personal development of those children. It is not only about improving their climbing ability.
- The coach needs to bring the enjoyment and energy to the class. Children respond better to a coach who is fun and engaging. They will recognise the passion you are bringing to the class and respond accordingly. That means there should be lots of games!
- Through the use of games, children can learn about

types of holds, climbing moves and techniques, route reading, etc. With this in mind, it is helpful to have a stockpile of corks, sticks of chalk, hula hoops, flashcards, beanbags, timers, dice, blindfolds, cones, balls, string, etc, within arm's reach.

■ The coach should encourage rather than push the children. As coaches, we still expect the children to work or to try hard and to make gains, however small.

- We are always aware of the training age of the kids versus their



Niamh Barry turning her visual impairment into her superpower!

Written by Rachel Smith and Catherine Feeney of the Activate Climbing Club in Waterford

For the 5% who do wish to compete, however, it is advisable to offer additional training in the form of classes where they can push themselves further and prepare for competitions.

use this experience to try to bring something different to our coaching methods for the children in our club. This keeps both us and the kids interested and motivated for more!

■ As coaches, we continue to try to step outside of our comfort zones. It has never been in our nature to regurgitate the same classes over and over. Within minutes of our five-day **Camp for Advanced Climbers** ending, we were wondering how we would push ourselves and the children at the next camp, and what new challenges we could undertake.

We would love to finish this article with our own personal favourite topic – ‘Things you never thought you would have to say as a climbing coach’ – but (maybe luckily) we have run out of space!

➤ **Rachel Smith** is a climber of thirty years’ experience. She has a background in management, banking and art.

■ Finally, we have actively engaged in as many opportunities as possible to participate in Mountaineering Ireland courses, as well as to learn from other coaches. We

➤ **Catherine Feeney** is ‘learning the ropes’ as a climber and a coach. She also has a background in management and as a financial advisor ■

chronological age and we coach accordingly and appropriately. However, regardless of their age we **always** warm up, mobilise, have an element of conditioning and end with a cool down.

- We are also always aware of the potential for over-training or over-climbing and we monitor the children for the first signs of any possible injury.

■ We have a class plan for each class that we teach, but as coaches our experience is that those plans need to be fluid and adaptable. If the children are not having fun or not being challenged, the class plan needs to be changed on the spot. You need to recognise what is working and be able to read your group. If you are bored, so are they!

■ At the end of each session, we find it helpful to discuss how the session went, what worked, suggest changes and adapt or discard. Your instinct will tell you if it was a good class or not.

■ We actively encourage the children to get involved in peer training and in demonstrating techniques, knots and belaying, etc, to each other. Children are natural teachers and they enjoy sharing their knowledge. We often ask them to lead parts of the session themselves.

■ In our experience, 95% of the children we coach have no interest in competing. As coaches, we get the same satisfaction from watching a young climber get to the top of the wall for the first time as watching a child step up to a podium.



Sam McGrath, always finding that extra stretch to reach the next hold.



EUROPEAN YOUTH CUP – BOULDERING

Anna de Souza reports on the 2018 European Youth Climbing Cup.

I am fourteen years old and have been climbing for four years with my squad, the **Westway**, in central London.

As I live in the UK, you might be surprised to learn that I am a member of the **Irish Youth Climbing Team**. However, I am lucky to have dual British and Irish citizenship because my mother, Nuala Mullan, is from Tyrone, where I spent much of my childhood and where we regularly visit to stay on the family farm.

Last year, after I won the **Irish Lead Climbing Championship** and **Irish Bouldering Championship** in my category, Youth C Female, I was honoured to be accepted onto the youth team to represent Ireland.

In the run-up to this year's international youth climbing season, team training intensified with sessions scheduled fortnightly in **Gravity Climbing Centre**, Dublin. The team members came together there from different parts of Ireland (and London) to prepare for the

European Youth Cup in bouldering and the **European Youth Bouldering Championship**.

Led by coaches **Terry O'Connor** and **Rob Hunter**, sessions began with a warm-up, proceeding to eight European Youth Championship-style boulder problems to be completed within a time limit, resembling the International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) format.

The coaches put us through our paces and included some strength and conditioning training, which was hard work, but fun.

For our first round of the **European Youth Cup** in bouldering in Soure, Portugal, eight of us flew to Lisbon. Following a trip to the seaside, we registered and had an early night. The competition began the next day with the youngest female category, followed by the males in the same category (Youth B).

With many of us having our first taste of international competition, we had no

expectations other than to climb our best. The problems were all powerful and dynamic, and, as the categories began to finish, many teams came together to play ball games to let off steam.

Overall, Ireland did very well,

with **Michael O'Neill** performing exceptionally well, making the finals and coming seventh.

The second round of the **European Youth Cup** bouldering championship was held in Delft in the



Jessica McGarry begins a climb.



Anna de Souza in action at the European Youth Cup.

Netherlands, a town with many canals and covered in bicycles! This time, the problems were more technical and had bigger moves, which I personally found challenging. I

learned a lot from watching the strong French and Slovenian climbers performing.

The final round of the **European Youth Cup** in bouldering competition was

held in Sofia, Bulgaria. It was good to see the now-familiar faces in the other teams. The climbing centre was astonishingly space-age, with problems defined by coloured lights behind the holds. Here, the setting was technical, crimpy and dynamic. We cooled off afterwards in the centre's rooftop swimming pool, with a panoramic view of the city of Sofia.

I also participated in a lead-climbing event in the **European Youth Cup** in Uster, outside Zürich, Switzerland, which was organised with clockwork efficiency.

The centre was enormous, double-decker on two floors with full-size climbing walls. Here, the routes were long and hard and the difference between making finals or not



Written by
Anna de Souza,
a member of the
Mountaineering Ireland
Youth Climbing Team

was sometimes just a few holds. My two routes were very technical and included many crimps. It was intense on the wall, though still very enjoyable.

By the time you read this, we will have competed in the final competition of the season, the **Championship** in Brussels. It will be another amazing experience, I'm sure. I still can't quite believe how lucky I am to have had this opportunity. It has been life-changing for me, in a way, travelling, competing at this level, meeting new people and making friends from all over Europe ■



French and Israeli team members warming up.



YOUTH BOULDERING

Tommy Myles reports on the 2018 European Youth Bouldering Championship.



Written by
Tommy Myles, a
member of Winders
Climbing Club and
the Youth Climbing
Team

At the end of August, I travelled to Brussels with the **Irish Youth Climbing Team** to compete in the European Youth Bouldering Championship. When we got there, our coaches, **Terry O'Connor, Claire Comiskey** and **Rob Hunter**, attended the briefing and registered the team for the competition.

The next day we went to the competition venue. The competition wall was positioned right under a massive stone arch beside a really impressive old museum. As I am now sixteen years old, I compete in the Male Youth A category. The climbers in my category were allowed into the warm-up area after the Female Youth A competitors had finished their warm-up. The warm-up area was actually inside the museum and boasted a great hold selection. We made up problems for about forty minutes until we were fully warmed up. Then our team got scorecards and competitors'



Tommy Myles warming up before competing at the 2018 European Youth Bouldering Championship in Brussels.

numbers from Terry.

We were allowed out to see the problems about ten minutes before we started

our qualifiers. There were two slabs, one completely made out of volumes and another using Flathold – dual-texture

holds that we were used to from our team training sessions. There was also a really crimp overhang that I liked the look of, and some more hard blocs, including a sick dyno on massive pinches at the very end of the wall.

By the Saturday afternoon, we had all competed and we chilled out in a nearby park, playing football with the locals and eating Belgian waffles. That night, we watched the Youth A and the Junior finals, which were pretty motivating. The Youth B finals were on the next morning and featured some cool moves, including a big second-generation dyno for the girls and a massive run and jump for the boys. After that, we hung out in the park again, until it was time to catch the flight back to Dublin.

Thanks to Claire, Rob and Terry for the coaching and the support throughout the trip, which was greatly appreciated by all members of the team ■

LEAD CLIMBING CHAMPIONSHIP

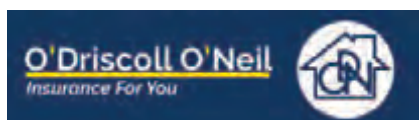
Book your place at the 2018 Irish Lead Climbing Championship, writes **Damien O'Sullivan**.

The **2018 Irish Lead Climbing Championship** will take place at Awesome Walls Dublin over the weekend of October 20-21st. Climbers in the Youth categories will compete on the Saturday. The Sunday will be the turn of the Senior climbers.

The Championship features a qualifying round of two routes, a semi-final round of one route and a final round of one route. The Championship is open to all climbers who are up for the excitement and challenge of competition climbing.

Entry to the championship is free for all spectators. The Final round is scheduled to take place at 5.30 pm.

➤ For more information and to enter online, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie ■



Sponsors of the 2018 Irish Lead Climbing Championship



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

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

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

Joss Books



Everest

1st Irish Ascent 1993

25th Anniversary

Talk by Dawson Stelfox and Frank Nugent

Friday 2nd November 7.30pm

Teacher's Club, 36 Parnell Square West, Dublin

€10 Adults €5 under 18s



All proceeds in aid of the work of the

Irish Nepalese Education Trust

In school, community and environmental projects in Nepal

Tickets available through Mountaineering Ireland website or at door

Mt Everest, seen from Tingri, a small village on the Tibetan plateau at around 4,050m above sea level. Photograph: Joe Hastings



Mountain Training Board Ireland Stakeholder Conference

10-11th November 2018

Delphi Lodge, Leenane, Co Galway



Photo: Jane Carney Training Officer

The Mountain Training Board Ireland Stakeholder Conference is for organisations, groups, clubs and individuals with an involvement in formal and informal Mountain Training of all ages and abilities. The conference is an opportunity to walk, rock climb and mountaineer with like-minded people, to hear speakers, give presentations, share and develop ideas and make plans for the future of training provision.

Please see the Mountaineering Ireland website or contact the Training Office or visit www.mountaineering.ie, phone (01) 625 1112 or email jane@mountaineering.ie

Hillwalking

Mountaineering

Rock climbing



TORY HILL: MASTER OF ALL IT SURVEYS

Vernon Buckley describes the attractions of a small Kilkenny hill with great views.

Tory Hill, Co Kilkenny (292m)

Map: Ordnance Survey Discovery Series 75

Grid reference: S 596 222

Car park grid reference: S 586 227

Unlike the neighbouring county regions to the south and east, south Kilkenny will never be renowned for craggy hills or rolling uplands. It is, in fact, a gentle place of grassy hurling fields, well-tended arable lands and sleek dairy cattle.

Tory Hill, then, appears anomalous in this smooth, outstretched panorama. Lacking only a few feet to be officially classed as a mountain, its 292-metre height dwarfs all it surrounds and dominates its hinterland like few other hills.

Roughly circular in shape, Tory Hill is traversed by a network of crushed stone tracks as well as a web of ancient earthen paths, many of which are sadly now impassable due to lack of use. Ideally suited for families or novice hillwalkers, the entire area can be

Above: Tory Hill (292m), County Kilkenny.

walked in about two hours ... that is if you can avoid becoming distracted by the superb 360-degree view from the summit.

Below: Tory Hill sign at start of walk.

The nearby village of Mullinavat [Irish: Muileann an Bhata, the Mill of the Stick] is a good centre from which to explore Tory Hill. There are several pubs in the village, some serving lunches and evening meals, a shop, a takeaway and a post office. There used to be two garages and several other local businesses, but these have succumbed to the inevitable decline. Unless we support local enterprise, we will live to regret the village's passing.

Opposite: OS map showing Tory Hill.

While in the area, the waterfall at Poulanassy

Opposite, bottom: Path near summit of Tory Hill.



➤ **Vernon Buckley** is a member of **Rathgormac Ramblers**, a small hillwalking club based in rural County Waterford. With about forty members, they mainly hike in the Comeragh, Knockmealdown and Galtee Mountains, with annual trips to walking destinations in Europe.

THERE IS A SUPERB 360-DEGREE VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT.

[Irish: Poll an Easa, Hole of the Falls] is also worth a visit, as are the Three Friars standing stones. Enquire locally for directions.

From the village of Mullinavat, take the R448 towards Waterford. Immediately on exiting the village take the first left, which may be signposted 'Trailhead.' Then, 1.2 kilometres after passing under the M9 Dublin-Waterford motorway, take the next right turn and follow it for 1.5 kilometres. The approach to Tory Hill is on your right, marked by a carved 'Sliabh Cruinn' sign (see photo). There is ample parking available 250m down the unpaved road.

There is a choice of two marked loop walks on Tory Hill, both equally splendid. The first is the **Sliabh Gréine Loop**, the second the **Fraughan Loop** [from fraughan, Irish: fraochán, meaning bilberry]. Both walks are approximately four kilometres in length. They follow forestry roads and woodland tracks through Carrickinane Woods, which bring you up to Tory Hill, which offers great views from its summit.

These two formal looped walks are marked with green and purple arrows, respectively.

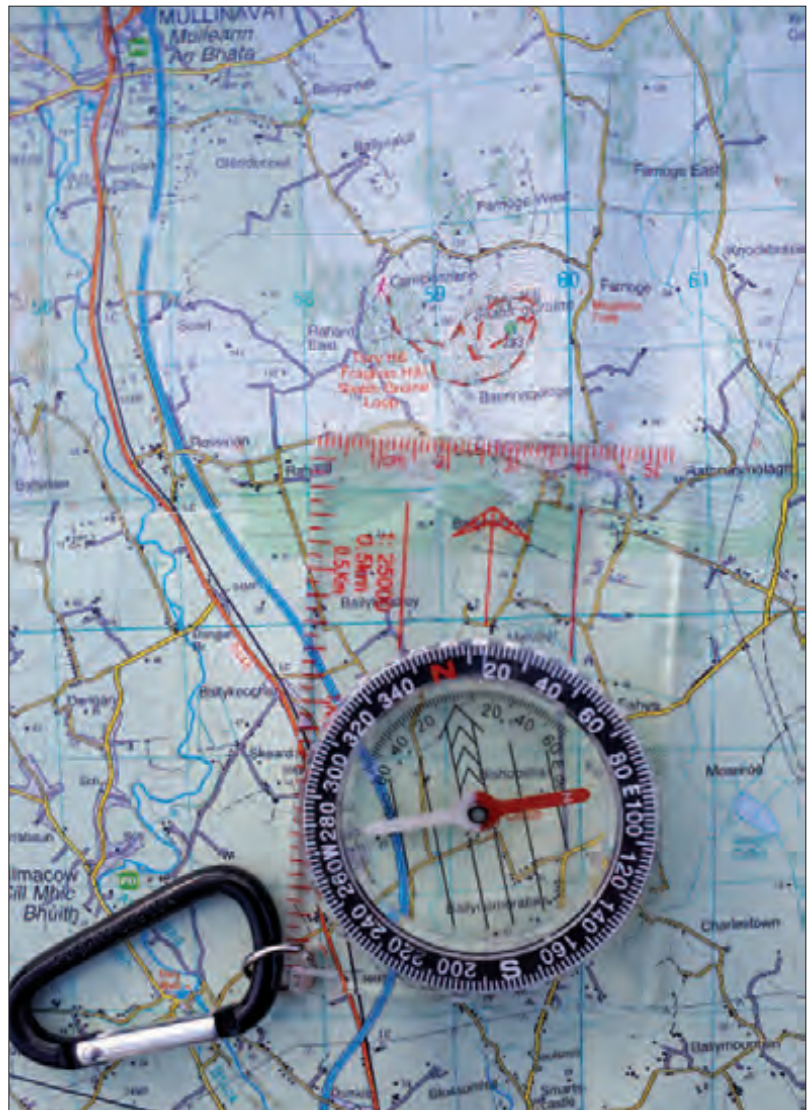
The Sliabh Gréine Loop (green route)

This route is suitable for walkers of all fitness levels, but please note that it will not take you to the summit of the hill. Starting from the car park and the helpfully-placed noticeboard, at the junction take the left fork and cross the metal barrier. Follow the commercial stone path for two kilometres, noting the intermittent green arrows. Where the purple trail veers off uphill to the left, continue straight on, to eventually arrive at a clearing marked by some large concrete foundations. These were put in place for a large communications mast, but the idea was eventually abandoned. Here you will leave the stone path, taking the trail ahead to where the green arrows direct you down the hill along a grassy track. This returns you to the roadway, where you will turn right. You are now about half a kilometre from the noticeboard.

The Fraughan Loop (purple route)

Slightly more difficult than the Sliabh Gréine Loop, this walk also begins in the car park. Cross the metal barrier marking the left fork and proceed along the commercial stone path for 2km, following the purple waymarks and ignoring all paths to left and right. The green and purple routes then diverge, so follow a steep, grassy path to the left and uphill. Here, blackberries abound in season.

After about 200m turn left, again uphill. Note that the purple arrow is unhelpfully placed after the turn-off and may lead the unwary walker astray. Ahead, you will see a large rock, and the trail swings sharply to the right. Very shortly you will notice the cross marking the summit. Beyond this, pick up the purple markers again and proceed downhill to rejoin the roadway. Turn right, and you are just over one kilometre from where you set out. ▶





From the Marian cross on the summit of Tory Hill on a clear day you can see the Comeragh Mountains to the south-west in Waterford; and you can see Brandon Hill near Graiguenamanagh to the north-east; and the River Suir and the inverted 'Y' of the toll bridge in Waterford city to the south. Beyond that again is the sea and the headland at Tramore Bay, while to the east is the solitary Slieve Coiltia above the JFK Memorial Park in County Wexford.

Pilgrim tradition

While the most recently-built stone path on Tory now defines the hill, the exposed bedrock on parts of its more ancient earthen trails is evidence of the many feet that tramped this place since times long past.

Swathes of low, purple heather and yellow gorse surround these earthen paths, leading pilgrims to the summit. The pilgrim tradition continues on the second Sunday in July each year, when **Fraughan Sunday**, also known as **Garland Sunday**, is celebrated with Mass and hymns below the cross.

Fraughans (bilberries) were believed to cure diarrhoea, dysentery, haemorrhoids and urinary problems. Mushrooms can also be gathered in season near the metal barrier at the entrance to the cleared ground, just beyond the car park.

Legends, folklore and local bandits

As is often the case, stories and legends abound concerning this ancient and anachronistic hilltop. The word 'tory' in its local context means an Irish bandit or rapparee and here refers to the outlaw **Edmund Denn**, who lived in the locality around 1688.

The Irish version of the hill's name, Sliabh gCruinn, as rendered on the OS map, is thought by some to translate as 'Hill of the Sun.' This would explain the recent origin of the loop-walk name 'Sliabh Gréine,' which actually translates as 'Hill of the Sunshine.'

In the early 1800s some early-morning hillwalkers

Above: Distant view of the Comeraghs from the summit of Tory Hill.

Below: The Marian cross on Tory Hill, County Kilkenny.

stumbled across a long-carved boulder bearing an inscription, which was believed to read 'Belli Divosi.' It was thought that this referred to a cult of Phoenician sun worshippers, and hence the place-name.

In 1851, however, it emerged that the stone had in fact been carved by a local man, a stonemason named Edmond Conic, who had carved his own name on the rock while waiting for some friends. He had reversed the last 'c' of his surname, and this, together with the fact that the inscription was being read upside down, led to the confusion.

It seems more likely, then, that the hill's name is Sliabh Cruinn, which translates as Round Hill, a name often given to hills in Ireland (think the Paps in Co Kerry, or Slievenamon, which translates as Hill of the Women, in Co Tipperary).

Many stories are told locally about Tory Hill being a place of refuge for highwaymen or rapparees. One such gentleman was **James Freney**, who lived in the mid-1700s and who buried a bag of gold coins near the top of Tory Hill. To mark the spot, he plunged his





OUR ANCESTORS SAW SOMETHING OF THE DIVINE IN THESE HIGH PLACES.

sword into the ground, with only the hilt showing. Some years later, some horsemen were hunting on Tory Hill, among them a friend of Freney's. During the hunt, his horse stumbled and fell and he noticed the sword. He later returned to the spot and dug up the gold. He left shortly afterwards for America.

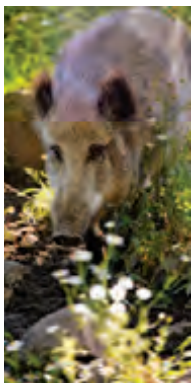
Another tall tale about Tory Hill concerns a great black hound seen near the hill, which became known as Bushy Tail, because it resembled a local dog with a long tail. One night, two men were returning home, having spent the day hunting, when they saw the giant dog standing in their path. One of the men, named Walsh, ran at it, but the dog just glared at him with two hellish eyes. Walsh was knocked to the ground by the glare. The dog then ran off to the gates of an old churchyard, whereupon he appeared to dematerialise through the gates. Other local people also reported seeing the dog.

There is some reliable evidence that this ancient hilltop was once a place of human sacrifice to the Celtic god Lugh. A townland at the base of the hill bears the name **Fahee** [Irish: Faiche, a gathering place or green]. In Neolithic times, people used to assemble there to play music and games on Lugh's feast day and they would then proceed to the summit to offer human sacrifice to their god. Later, this practice was discontinued and an offering of food was left instead.

In more modern times, 1994, a battle took place for the soul of this ancient place of worship. A telecommunications company wanted to install a Multipoint Microwave Distribution System (MMDS) from a 90-metre metal mast just below the cross on the hill. This was to be part of a nationwide system to

Above: The valley of the River Suir as seen from the summit of Tory Hill.

Below: Wild boar: roaming wild recently on Tory Hill but now extirpated.



offer various television channels to Irish audiences. After a sustained campaign by locals, the plan was abandoned and Tory Hill once again became a place of quiet contemplation. All that remains of this today is the concrete base where the mast was to stand.

Further evidence of very early human habitation can be found in the court tomb at **Farnogue** [Irish: Fearnóg, meaning the alder tree] on the eastern slope of the hill. This is the only court tomb in County Kilkenny and may date from 1500 BC.

More recently, some interest has been shown in the vernacular wrought-iron gates of the area. These were forged by blacksmiths in times past and are beautiful, functional pieces of craftwork, fast disappearing from the landscape in favour of the ubiquitous and uninviting steel gates. Several examples of these sturdy and charming pieces can be seen on Tory Hill, particularly on the eastern side.

Beware of the wild boar!

In 2013, a family of wild boars was discovered living on Tory Hill. A debate ensued locally as to whether they should be left in peace – wild boar was once native to Ireland – or removed as being dangerous to hillwalkers, especially children. Generally only seen at night and unlikely to be dangerous unless provoked, the boars were eventually tracked down and shot.

Our ancestors spoke to their gods from the summits of hills. They saw something of the divine, something outside themselves in these high places, and they drew strength from this. They knew something that we do not seem to know and their relationship with high places was different to ours. Recent campaigns against windmills and pylons show that modern generations, too, can understand and respect these uplands and draw sustenance from them.

Tory Hill on a crisp autumn or winter morning, as the sun feels its way over the horizon ... go for it! ■



A NEWBIE AT THE ALPINE MEET



Caroline Kirrane took part in the annual Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet for the first time this year. Held in the Val di Mello in the Lombardy region of northern Italy, it offered all kinds of climbing, walking and training opportunities and, as she reports here, it was hugely enjoyable.

Val di Mello is the largest natural reserve in the Lombardy region of northern Italy, situated about 130 kilometres from Milan. It has become famous over the last fifteen years as the location of the Melloblocco bouldering competition. However, a week there at the Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meet in July proved there is much more to Val di Mello than just the bouldering.

From extensive traditional climbing to roadside sport-climbing crags, from Alpine hikes to glacier traverses, Val di Mello has everything that a mountaineer could want.

I have to admit at this point that I'm not a mountaineer. I've been climbing indoors for about three years but had never climbed outdoors until I

Above: Trish Kane on Bocchetta di Medaccio, overlooking Val di Mello.

Below: Val di Mello.

attended a **Women with Altitude** annual meet. This is a weekend that is organised by Mountaineering Ireland each year with the aim of bringing together women who share a love of the mountains, to give them a chance to develop their mountaineering skills and confidence. It was 'job well done' in my case because, not only did I enjoy my first outdoor



➤ **Caroline Kirrane** teaches finance in Trinity College Dublin and the Irish Management Institute. She started indoor climbing four years ago and just this year has started climbing outdoors with sport climbing and trad routes. She also loves skiing.

EVEN AS A NEWCOMER TO OUTDOOR CLIMBING, I WAS ABLE TO REALLY ENJOY ALL THAT THE MEET OFFERED.

climbing experience immensely, I left the weekend determined to attend Mountaineering Ireland's Alpine Meet in Val di Mello, which was to be held just two months later.

Even as a complete newcomer to mountaineering and outdoor climbing, I was able to really enjoy the Alpine Meet. It takes place in different locations each year over two weeks in early July, so it offers scheduling flexibility and you can enjoy the comings and goings of different groups.

Most people come to the meet in already-formed pairs or groups, but the atmosphere is very convivial and you feel part of a larger group. Credit has to be given to Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer, **Jane Carney**, for this as she goes out of her way to make you feel welcome on arrival and to coordinate activities and evening meals for the group where possible – no mean feat with almost forty attendees over the two weeks.

We arrived in Bergamo airport late on the Saturday evening, before the start of the second week of the meet. We had already decided to stay local that night, to avoid having to pitch our tent in darkness. This turned out to be fortuitous, as disaster struck in Bergamo airport when our car rental fell through. The next morning, we were relieved to learn that for the princely sum of €15 we could get easily from Bergamo to the campsite.

Continental Europe really shines when it comes to public transport. The campsite provided all the essentials: amazing views of the surrounding valley, hot showers and a transfer bus that ran every ten minutes to the town.

Sport climbing

The Monday and Tuesday of our trip were spent sampling the sport climbing in the area. The large crag of Sasso di Remenno, just a kilometre or two from the village, was a focal point for the sport climbers on the meet. It was lovely to set out together in the morning and climb as a group of six or ten people, and then to separate out in the afternoon to pursue our own projects on different crags.

This was my first time sport climbing, and it was a very interesting experience. It is far less stressful for a newbie than traditional climbing, and much more accessible, as there's less gear required. However, it was a bit humbling to finally be on real rock and realise that you have to take a huge dip in grade relative to indoor climbing. I regularly lead climb 6b/6c in Awesome Walls in Dublin, but the highest grade I managed over this trip was 5a. I was delighted with myself to have bottom-roped a 6a+ on the first climbing day of the trip... but I peaked early!

We had signed up for a three-day Alpine skills course, which took care of the schedule for Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The course involved seconding a



Above: Sport climbing at Sasso di Remenno.

Below: Una Gethins, left, and Karol Murray practice self-arrest on the Predarossa Glacier.

multi-pitch trad climb, leading a single-pitch trad climb, sport climbing, a hike to the Ponti Hut and an Alpine start there the next morning with a glacier hike.

I enjoyed the three-day course enormously, even though it was terrifying and exhausting at times. Our guide, Max, was friendly and knowledgeable, and we got a real introduction to the skills needed to travel safely in the Alps. ➤





Trad multi-pitch climbing

It will be quite a while before I forget the trad multi-pitch climb we undertook on the first morning of the course. Max led each of the five pitches and we seconded. It was a completely alien experience to have three people hanging out of slings over a hundred metres up in the air. For an experienced climber, I'm sure this is nothing to get breathless about but, for a newcomer, it was hard to avoid thoughts of what would happen should these flimsy-looking slings decide to give up the ghost.

Even indoor climbers are aware that the mental aspect can be as important to your climbing as the physical aspect, but this is amplified high up on a multi-pitch route. I had a couple of freak-outs while climbing difficult sections of the route, but what fun and what a relief it was to get to the top!

The descent was a lot quicker and easier, with two long abseils and a short, shady, roped-up scramble in the middle. A pleasant reward for all the work it took to get up there.

For these kinds of adventure activities, I usually judge how much trouble I'm in by how long it takes me to go from being absolutely terrified to wanting to go again. In this case, by the time I got to the bottom of the first abseil, I was ready to repeat the experience.

We spent that afternoon learning about trad gear placement and leading an easy trad route. This was only the second trad route I had ever led, and the fact that I was also on a top rope didn't seem to make it any less scary. However, the sense of achievement at the top was hard to beat.

Hike to mountain hut

After a couple of gentle sport-climbing routes the next morning, and then a hearty lunch, we headed off for the hike to the Ponti Hut in the late afternoon of Thursday. This trip to the hut had been described as a 'relatively easy' two-hour hike. The first lesson of the

Above: Una Gethins, Peter McElhinney and Karol Murray on the walk-in to the Ponti Hut in the Valle di Predarossa.

Below: Following a mountain track on a glacial moraine below Monte Disgrazia (3,678m).

trip for me, as a beginner, was that for any activity with the word 'Alpine' attached, the reported difficulty of the activity has to be increased by several degrees. The hike took me two and a half hours, which doesn't sound too bad until you realise that, for a ten-hour hike, my pace would stretch it to almost thirteen hours. Given that speed is prized in alpinism, I was not a prize alpinist!

The Ponti Hut, or Rifugio Ponti, at an altitude of 2,559m, was surprisingly warm and comfortable and the food was great. The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly. We chatted with other Mountaineering Ireland members, who were on a hut-to-hut hike, and also with a group of Italian friends, who had spent a few days in the mountains.

An early night was on the agenda, since we had an Alpine start the next morning – up at 5.00am and out for 5.30am. This sounded awful... but it actually wasn't. It was fun waking up in the dark and there was a quiet camaraderie to wolfing down breakfast, packing up and heading off together just as light was breaking.





Glacier hike

We were hoping to climb a 'small' peak of just over 3,400m but, in the end, we hiked up to the glacier, peered into a few crevasses and hiked back to the hut. Second lesson of the trip: don't borrow boots for an Alpine hike. A kind fellow-climber had sent some Compeed gel plasters to the campsite for me, and I was extremely grateful. Thanks are due again to Max who carried my pack the last few hundred metres as I hobbled my way down to the car park.

Climate change

After descending from our glacier hike on Friday morning, I stopped to chat to two older Italian men who had climbed a nearby peak, Monte Disgrazia (3,678m), in the Bregaglia range thirty years ago. It was easier then, they claimed, because the glacier was a lot bigger; another sad, living tale of the impact of climate change.

I chatted with our guide Max about skiing adventures. I had spent some time in Chamonix earlier in the year and had skied a famous back-country route, the Vallée Blanche. Max told me that he does not think that he will bother to teach his kids to ski, as he thinks that global warming will make skiing a dying sport.

That evening at dinner, we heard about the adventures of the rest of the group, who had been doing various fun and interesting things. Many were eager to hear how our first Alpine experience had gone. At one enquiry, I just sighed deeply and was immediately met with "I know, it's hill fitness, it takes a long time to build up. Your first one is always hard. Don't beat yourself up." Isn't it funny how a stranger can sometimes know just precisely the right thing to say to a newbie?

I was lucky enough to stay around Lake Como after the meet for a few days, and my other half joined me. I convinced him to take a detour to a great crag in Erba, just a ten-minute scramble from the roadside. The rock was limestone there and it made a nice change from

Above: The group preparing to cross the Predarossa Glacier. Cima di Corna Rossa (3,180m) is in the background.

Below: On the final section of the Monte Disgrazia (3,678m) climb.

'IT WAS EASIER TO CLIMB MONTE DISGRAZIA (3,678m) THIRTY YEARS AGO. THE GLACIER WAS BIGGER THEN.'

the granite of the Val di Mello crags. Yet again, though, the climbing was sublime; great views over Lake Como, with routes well-signposted and bolted in such a fashion as to lessen a beginner's nerves.

On our return to Ireland, we called in to the Dublin Climbing Centre, where I struck up a conversation with one of the instructors about Val di Mello. He had been there numerous times and waxed lyrical about the higher mountain crags and their trad climbing routes. As if I needed any more reasons to get practicing my gear placement and start booking my next trip! ■



EXPEDITION TO PATAGONIA

Freja Shannon reports on the Irish Patagonia Expedition in January 2018, when she and two climbing friends tackled a previously unclimbed rock face in the Avellano Valley.

didn't have the courage to look up. My heart was beating rapidly and I was in a confused state of exhaustion, excitement and anticipation all at once. I didn't want to see the mountains I had obsessed over for months in the flesh, in the same way that you might resist meeting your childhood hero in person, to make sure they did not disappoint you. When I finally did let my eyes nervously wander up to what was right in front of me, I was far from disappointed.

This internal conflict occurred on January 7th, 2018, after almost a week of bush-whacking in the rain through a Chilean jungle in the middle of nowhere in northern Patagonia. We were on day five, shuttle four

Above: Avenali Tower, left, and the Tooth, right, in the Avellano Towers.

Below: Summit selfie after completing their route on the Tooth (left to right): Freja Shannon, Michelle O'Loughlin, Sasha Doyle.

and probably at our very last straw.

As a group of able climbers, we saw ourselves as a suitable team to go on a climbing expedition (please note that we had had no previous expedition experience) to probably the most remote valley that we could find in northern Patagonia, called Avellano Valley, literally meaning 'hazel valley.'

Sasha Doyle had been pottering around the Peak District since she was young; **Michelle O'Loughlin** is a strong Irish trad climber; and I have been living and climbing in the Alps for the past couple of years.

We wanted to explore the climbing possibilities on the valley's majestic granite towers, the Avellano Towers. Despite being almost entirely unmapped, which we learned the consequences of very harshly

➤ **Freja Shannon**, 21, is half-Irish and half-Swedish and grew up on the west coast of Ireland in the heart of the Burren, five minutes from the famous Mirror Wall. Though always urged to spend time in the outdoors as a child, she only started climbing when she moved to the French Alps at the age of 18. She has been based there since then, working as little as possible in order to climb as much as possible, be it Alpine or rock, and pursuing her dream of becoming a mountain guide.

➤ **Sasha Doyle**, 28, lives in Sheffield and works as a senior developer at Venture Trust in Scotland.

➤ **Michelle O'Loughlin**, 30, is based in Belfast. She has a PhD in psychology and is currently working with rope access.



THERE WAS NOTHING BUT WILDERNESS AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE.

during our approach, a handful of other climbers had visited the area before and a couple of routes had already been established. We pored over the photos and snippets of information that those climbers had kindly sent us and we decided we just had to go there and challenge ourselves.

We set off by bus with our seven bags packed with food, endless (or so we thought) snacks and chocolate, ropes, stoves, clothes, biodegradable loo rolls and everything else we could think of, from Coyhaique, a small town in the Aysén Region of southern Chile. We were heading for Bahía Murta, where we would begin our journey into the wilderness.

Into the wilderness

Upon arrival in this even smaller community, we were greeted by **Joaquin Reyes**, who had promised to carry our stuff into the valley on his horses. He was a local gaucho, who the hostel owner in Coyhaique had put us in touch with through his cousin Orlando, who knew someone, who knew someone, who lived in the village nearby. Much like Ireland...!

We were adopted by Joaquin and his family while waiting for the rain to stop. We spent a couple of days eating delicious home-cooked food and helping out on their farm. Locals from the village regularly visited to see what the fuss was all about, as word had spread of these 'tres gringas' living at the Reyes' household.

Eventually, the rain subsided and it was time to go. Joaquin, his wife Olga and their son packed up the horses for us and off we went. As we didn't have a proper map, only a last-minute Google Maps print-out from Coyhaique, Joaquin agreed to bring us as far as he could on the vague cattle trail alongside the river.

After a few hours of walking through the forest, we were halted by a very fast-flowing river; far too dangerous for the horses to cross. We said goodbye to Joaquin and Olga with tears in our eyes, as the realisation of being entirely on our own sank in. I have never felt quite so alone.

The long, arduous and wet approach began. It took us five days to navigate through this forest, cross rivers and shuttle loads of equipment to where we thought our base camp should be beneath the towers. At times, it seemed hopeless: our bags were more than half our bodyweights and we were marching through a soggy forest with no map and no actual idea where to go, apart from supposedly coming to a 'waterfall at the end of the valley,' where we were then to climb up a 'steep bank on the right' and pop out on top of the plateau. When we finally did reach the plateau, the doubts and tears of the previous days were wiped clean, and we experienced nothing but excitement for the rest of the trip.



Above: Joaquin Reyes loading up one of the pack horses in preparation for the team's trek to the uplands.

Below: Freja Shannon.

After hanging out at base camp for a couple of days, recovering and sleeping as much as possible, a weather window popped up and we just had to go. We had studied the Avellano Towers from afar with binoculars and knew exactly what we wanted to try first: a striking, lightning-bolt crack system on the South Face of the Tooth.

We quickly packed up our base camp by the lakes and moved it a couple of hours closer to the towers. Once we set up our camp on a little snow patch, I had to pinch myself several times. This was exactly what I had wanted and imagined: melting snow for water and nothing but wilderness and mountains as far as the eye could see. Snowy peaks in the background opening up a world of unexplored possibilities.

The following morning, we had an Alpine start and headed off towards our route. After an hour of scrambling we reached a steep wall and racked up. "Might as well start here," we said to ourselves.

I guess the best thing about new routing is that you don't have any tricky route-finding to do, which I'm ►





WE WAITED, FATIGUED AND HUNGRY, FOR OUR GAUCHO TO RETURN TO COLLECT US.

often teased for not being very talented at. It suited me just fine to choose a line of weakness and just go until I could go no more.

The sun slowly wakened the world and once again I could see the vast landscape around us. Once or twice a condor flew by, as if almost to keep a look out for these three wild-eyed and adrenaline-hungry climbers. For some reason I didn't feel any fear that day. I thought 'siege'-ing a rock face that no one had set foot on before, with every objective danger staring you in the face, in an area where no helicopter is going to rescue you, where the only help you have is your first-aid kit and you have to trust your partners more than ever, would be terrifying. Turns out it was actually a gloriously sunny day with few or no major obstacles.

First ascent

We made the first ascent of the South Face of The Tooth via a 3-400m route, around about E2.5c, which we named 'Route Canal' (hilarious, I know). The rock itself was impeccable granite, loose in places but nothing unexpected.

We experienced some very Patagonian winds on the summit, which added quite a bit of spice! From the top we abseiled and down-climbed the previously climbed North Ridge. After an easy walk

Above: Michelle O'Loughlin coming up towards the top of our route on the Tooth.

Right: Sasha Doyle making her way up the south face of the Tooth.

Below: Michelle O'Loughlin and Freja Shannon descending back to first base camp. The expedition camped between the two lakes for the first few days.

across the snow, we got back to our base camp late that evening. We celebrated with more chocolate and freeze-dried meal number 17.

The couple of weeks that followed were not as successful as that day. We sat out Patagonian storms, cramped in a two-man tent for days on a rotation to sit up straight. When the weather did calm down, we attempted a route leading up to the skyline in the valley past the col where we were camped, but to no avail due to bad weather and an exhausted team.

We eventually ran out of food and were down to a couple of squares of chocolate a day along with one freeze-dried meal each. We figured it was time to go home, all of us more than satisfied with what we had experienced. I, for one, would not exchange those three weeks for anything in the world.

Our satellite phone had malfunctioned halfway through the trip and we had used our last chance to text our gaucho to meet us at the cattle pen at around midday on January 26th to collect us and our stuff.



Having no idea whether he had received our message or not, we sat in the scorching heat under a tree in the forest and waited, fatigued and hungry, praying that he would show up. Our hopes slowly faded as the day dragged on and we began gathering up the energy to keep going.

Suddenly, the bushes rattled and out popped Joaquin and Olga, smiling from ear to ear, with a couple of horses. We jumped out of surprise, and what followed was tears of joy and relief. Olga had made us more home-cooked food and brought us beer and tuna. We shared the food and drink in the sun before eventually walking back with all strength regained.

Once we got back to the Reyes' farm, the celebrations commenced and some of the locals even came to join the party. Joaquin did not stop



Above: Advance base camp beneath the Avellano Towers. The expedition stayed here for two weeks.

Below: Sasha Doyle seconding a stunning traverse pitch, probably the crux, on the team's route up the Tooth.

smiling and Olga told us that he had gone to sleep every night wondering about his 'tres gringas.' We showed them photos and video clips of our adventure. They laughed and shook their heads at these three girls that had showed up on their doorstep and caused such a commotion.

When I tell people about the trip, I get them to imagine the length of a metre and then I say the climbing takes up about 2cm of importance and the rest is consumed by the whole experience, from stepping off the plane in Santiago to walking back through the doors of the Reyes household and absolutely everything else I experienced in between.

The physical and mental challenges I faced on this trip were invaluable and have nothing but improved me as a mountaineer, climber and

person. They have taught me to dig deeper than I thought was possible and to just try that little bit harder. The experience has inspired me that anything is indeed possible, if you just have the determination within you. It will forever be a cherished memory and the very spark of many adventures yet to come.

SPONSORS: The Irish Patagonia Expedition 2018 was generously supported by **Mountaineering Ireland, DMM Climbing, Base Camp Food, Nairn's Oatcakes, British Mountaineering Council, Mount Everest Foundation, Austrian Alpine Club and Swedish Alpine Council.**

AWARDS: The expedition won the **Julie Tullis Memorial Award** and the **Alison Chadwick Memorial Award** for female exploratory mountaineering ■



Route description

Rock face: Route Canal, 320m, E2 5b, 9 pitches – The Tooth South Face, Avellano Towers, Northern Patagonia.

First ascent: Freja Shannon, Michelle O'Loughlin, Sasha Doyle, January 2018.

The climb: The approach takes about an hour, scrambling up the loose West Ridge until the ridge steepens, then traversing rightwards over broken ground onto the South Face.

The first pitch follows a very obvious steep wall that brings you out onto the South Face proper. From here, continue up a corner to a steep splitter crack, probably the best pitch! At the belay above this, when it is not possible to continue upwards, traverse 15m right to the middle of the face.

From there, easily follow a straight crack system trending slightly leftwards, with some stunning climbing, until you join the west ridge.

Reached summit by two pitches of easy climbing. From the top, we abseiled and down-climbed the previously climbed North Ridge and walked easily across the snow back to our base camp.

THE EASIEST 6,000m PEAK

A Rough Guide to Stok Kangri

Seán Cryan goes backpacking in Ladakh in northern India and, inspired by *The Rough Guide to India*, decides to climb Stok Kangri, a mountain over 6,000 metres high.

I had arrived at the town of Leh in the Ladakh region of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. I was backpacking through India and had taken two months off to see as many touristy sights as humanly possible. I was new to the idea of backpacking, as all my previous holidays had been spent climbing, but I was curious about this form of travel and I wanted to give it a go.

Ladakh, 'land of high passes,' is one of the most sparsely populated regions in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in northern India. It is a high, arid plateau situated around the upper Indus valley. Its culture is closely related to that of Tibet and the population are mainly Buddhist.

Leh, the regional capital with a population of circa 30,000, is at an altitude of about 3,500m. It is

Above: Stok Kangri (6,121m) in Ladakh seen from the walk-in to base camp.

Below: Leh, capital of Ladakh, looking towards the palace, left, and the monastery.

connected by 434 kilometres of road to Srinagar in Kashmir, but that road is only open from May to October; otherwise you have to fly there. This impressive road crosses three passes, the 3,505m Zoji-la, the 3,700m Namika-la and the 41,00m Fotu-la, before passing the spectacular monastery at Lamayuru and dropping into the Indus Valley, which it follows to Leh.



➤ **Seán Cryan** has been hiking, climbing and mountaineering with the Irish Mountaineering Club and Scouting Ireland from a young age. He holds the SPA and MLA awards, and is in the process of completing a Mountain Skills Provider programme.





After nearly a week travelling north, I had passed through the Himalayan foothills and then through the Great Himalayan Range and the Zaskar Range, until I came to Leh, the last major town before Pakistani-controlled Kashmir and the Karakoram Range.

Following the established protocol that I was now becoming accustomed to, I sat down with a cup of

Above: Thikse Monastery in Ladakh.

Below: Location of Ladakh in northern India.

chai (tea) and flicked open my copy of *The Rough Guide to India* to see what temples and gompas (monasteries) it had in store for me over the next few days.

What I read in the trekking section both horrified me and intrigued me: 'Stok Kangri (6,120m), visible from most of Leh, is reputed to be the easiest peak



I WAS PART OF IT. PART OF THE STILLNESS AND PART OF THE VASTNESS OF THE HIMALAYA.

The local accommodation

It also offered the benefit of homestays. This was a relatively new initiative in the region, where families of local villages along the trek provide accommodation, an evening meal, breakfast and a packed lunch. This makes trekking in the region far more accessible, as otherwise you would have to pack everything going in and out, which would require ponies and ponymen, adding a new layer of complication and costs.

The evening meal was usually rice, vegetables and dal (stewed lentils) and plenty of it. It was washed down with chai (tea) or butter tea. Breakfast was a bit more limited, consisting of chapatti (bread) and jam. Lunch was the standard boiled egg, boiled potato, chapatti, a small bar of chocolate and a carton of fruit juice.

Being a growing lad, this was hopelessly insufficient for the day and I would usually eat my lunch shortly after breakfast and spend the afternoon staving off the hunger pangs until dinner. I vowed not to make the same rookie mistake on the next trek.

Returning to the food heaven of Leh and after eating western food for a solid three days (and making sure I had extra food provisions packed), I was ready for the Markha valley trek, a more serious and committing trek of seven days and six nights through the roadless valley. It took me over the Ganda La Pass at 4,870m, which gave access to the Markha valley itself. I then went along the valley floor, steadily increasing in height until I camped at Nimaling (4,730m) four days later. The Gongmaru La, a pass at 5,130m, then had to be tackled to exit the valley. I developed a strategy to cope with the altitude of

above 6,000m in the world ... with a non-technical final climb ... if you've got *Trekking in Ladakh* in your rucksack, it's straightforward to walk it independently.'

How could *The Rough Guide* be so flippant in encouraging backpackers to climb this mountain? After all, 6,000m is still 6,000m in any language. There was no option: this had to be investigated; this peak had to be climbed.

Conscious that I hadn't packed for climbing, I made a quick inventory of the gear I had that was also climbing gear. I had a head torch, a base layer, a micro-fleece, a down jacket, an outer shell and a hat. Not a bad start. I reckoned I would need to source a sleeping bag, ground mat, ice axe, crampons and, oh yes, a pair of boots. Leh was full of gear shops, but buying all that equipment was out of the question. Leh was also full of trekking agencies, so I decided to try my luck there. It paid off. As it turned out, it was pretty easy to find trekking agencies that were prepared to rent you any equipment that was needed.

So that was equipment sorted. I now considered myself a climber.

The first acclimatisation trek I set out on was from a village called Likir, heading to Timismosgan, five days away. It was a leisurely trek with a moderate increase in height from the valley floor at 3,500m to the highest point at the Lago-la, at 3,830m.

Above:
Knife-edge ridge visible from route to summit of Stok Kangri.

Right:
Fellow climber working his way up Stok Kangri.



walking slowly but keeping going, which worked well.

The weather in the region was predictably dry, with a hot sun during the day and with cold nights. The Ladakh region is north of the Great Himalayan Range, which takes all the monsoon rains, leaving the area to the north dry while the rest of India and Nepal copes with torrential rains.

It was time to climb

I had now been in the shadow of Stok Kangri for three weeks and it was time I addressed the issue. The climb would take four days. The first day was a 10-hour walk-in to a standing base camp at 5,000m. For a small fee, I could stay in a preplaced tent, rent a sleeping bag and a ground mat and purchase my meals and snacks at a tea-tent.

The summit attempt would begin at midnight the next day, so I had time to recce the start of the route, which was over a steep spur, then along its ridge to meet a lateral glacial moraine. I would then have to traverse the glacier itself, but I left that until summit day.

It was the traverse of the glacier that I was not so confident about. Different topos gave conflicting routes across the glacier, and the assurances I had been given by various trekking agencies confirming that it was not necessary to rope up while crossing did not seem so reassuring now as I looked down on it.

By 2.00am on the morning of the summit attempt I had made my way to the edge of the glacier, hoping for some divine inspiration. Thankfully, there were lights in the darkness, climbers fumbling around on the edge of the glacier trying to secure crampons. Other parties emerged from the darkness too and now the route seemed busy. I was a little more settled when I saw that other climbers were unroped as well. I followed their line across the glacier, carefully checking each step with the point of my axe first before committing my full weight. After 40 minutes of nerve-racking progress I reached the moraine on the far side.

Above me there was a 30-degree snow slope that had to be climbed to gain the summit ridge. It was soul-destroying, energy-sapping work, but it was safe and the rising sun gave me a second wind.

Reaching the ridge was a relief, but this was quickly shattered when I looked along the route. The ridge was steep, exposed and airy. Moving along the ridge meant negotiating short rock steps and delicately thin ice ledges, which slipped off into the void beneath. I even noticed myself front-pointing and using the pick of my axe at one stage. Concentration was now the name of the game and it needed to be maintained for the two hours it took to reach the summit.

Thankfully, most novice climbers on the mountain were wise enough to ignore the advice of *The Rough Guide* and had hired the services of a local guide for the climb, but some still found it more of a challenge than they had bargained for and caused hold-ups at bottlenecks.

On reaching the summit, I knew I was standing on a giant. I was surrounded by the greats: the Zaskar Range, the Great Himalayan Range and the



Above: Seán Cryan on summit of Stok Kangri.

Below: Other climbers enjoying the view from the summit.



Karakoram Range in the far north. All just hanging out. And I was part of it. Part of the stillness and part of the vastness.

The thin air gave a clear definition to even the furthest peaks and all that could be done was to stand and stare. I was on top of my Everest, my K2, the highest I would ever climb, and I was content with that.

After a few minutes I came back to reality, re-adjusted my thinking and reminded myself that at 6,120m I was at extreme altitude and I needed to get down.

Returning back down the ridge, the narrow ice ledges pointed down at an angle that hadn't seemed as severe on the way up. There were moments when I would have liked to have had the confidence of a rope but I ignored those thoughts and kept moving slowly.

I reached the glacier crossing at 8.30am. At this point I was too exhausted to care about its dangers and I ploughed straight across it, casually stopping to drink some meltwater on the way. I reached base camp by 10.00am where I flaked out in the tea tent and didn't move much further for the rest of the day. I postponed the walk-out until the following day. After all, I was on holidays.

Back in Leh, a ceremonious returning of my rented plastics, crampons and ice axe marked the return to my life as a backpacker. I had three weeks left, so, as per protocol, I had a cup of chai and flicked open *The Rough Guide* ■

SKI TOURING & CLIMATE CHANGE

Áine Sills provides an introduction to ski touring, from the gear you will need to the pains and aches, the thrills and spills you will experience, and worries that skiing is under threat from climate change.

There is something to be said for pleasure that is gained through pain. Ski touring is certainly that. While it is physically and mentally challenging, the rewards are great. The gentle rhythmic motion of shuffling skis and planting poles, the crunch of snow underfoot, the snow-covered mountain scenery and the clean, pure air mixed with the fresh smell of pine sate the senses. It is an intense experience of nature, which is hard to beat.

Ski touring, or backcountry skiing, is skiing away from the manicured slopes of ski resorts, when you have to use your own power to get up the hill. No lifts means fewer people and lower costs, but the decision-making, risk and responsibility – where you go and what you ski on – is up to you.

The sport has gained in popularity in recent years as people seek purer experiences of nature, more physically challenging days out and better snow. Gear has also become lighter and easier to use, meaning uphill ascents are less taxing, thus conserving energy for the downhill sections.

Above: Skier heading for a summit in the municipality of Maria Alm am Steinernen Meer in the state of Salzburg, Austria.

Below: Fresh powder in Bad Gastein, Austria.

My first ski tour

My first ski tour was seven winters ago in the Bavarian Alps, near Schliersee. A relatively easy tour was chosen, 600m in elevation gain, with a gentle slope and a cosy-looking wooden hut at the bottom of the hill where we could end the tour with a celebratory drink.

As we unpacked our gear, the snow continued to fall and visibility was poor. We attached 'skins' – adhesive-backed pieces of fabric – to the underside of our skis from tip to tail. Skins have tiny fibres which point rearward to prevent you sliding backwards while allowing you to glide forwards.

We strapped on our boots and skis and set off.



➤ *Áine Sills has lived in Munich for the last five years and has come to enjoy ski touring immensely in that time. Climate change is a reality in the Alps and it is a hot topic for discussion there.*





Above: Ski descent, Kleiner Gilfert (2,388m), Hochfügen, Austria.

Below: On the way up.

THE PLEASURE IS AS MUCH IN THE ASCENT AS IN THE OBVIOUS THRILL OF THE DESCENT.

undertaking your first ski tour, you should do a course to acquaint yourself with the risks and responsibility involved. The avalanche danger is real and training helps you to recognise how the weather influences the snow-pack and what signs to look for when on tour. You will learn about snow science, beacon search-and-find, probe use and shovel technique, all basic skills which every member of a group should have if they are to be effective in an avalanche situation. ►

It wasn't long before pain started to appear in various parts of my body. The boots and skis were heavy, and a burning pain developed in my leg muscles. I struggled, particularly when it came to changing direction on the slope, especially on steep snow, where I had to do a kick-turn, which required a fair amount of balance and flexibility. While the others managed these kick-turns with astounding economy of movement, I stumbled and fell, cursing my bulky skis and boots. I could feel blisters forming on my heels as they were rubbed raw with every step. I felt sick, and the white-out around me offered a stark contrast to the blackout I was about to experience. I fainted.

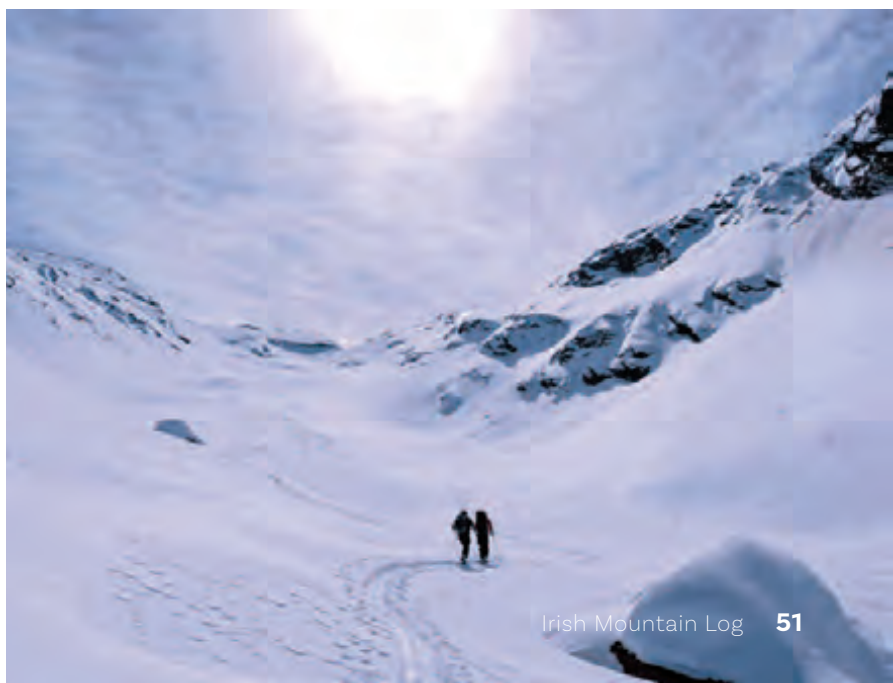
A friend came from behind and offered me something to eat, as well as the supportive words that the first tour is always the worst as you have to find your own rhythm and strategy. I trudged onwards until I reached the rest of the group and the point from which we would descend the slope.

The human capacity to forget physical pain is an astonishing thing. As the snow continued to fall, we set off down the slope. While my skiing skills were left wanting and I took my fair share of tumbles, the brief moments where I floated through the fresh snow were priceless. It was a happy finish to what had been a gruelling day.

Great sense of achievement

Since then I have been on many ski tours and there has been a massive learning curve. The pleasure I get now is as much in the ascent as in the obvious thrill of the descent. There is also a great sense of achievement of meeting the physical challenge and of losing yourself in a meditative daze, thanks to the rhythmic motion of shuffling skis and poles.

In general, it is recommended that before





times sunny with blue skies; always raw, pure and simple. It allows you the chance to connect with nature at a basic level in a respectful and environmentally-friendly way, something which cannot be said for many ski resorts.

Impacts of climate change

As climate change has reduced annual snowfall, particularly in lower-lying areas, the possibilities for backcountry skiing and even on-piste skiing at established ski resorts have been affected, with less predictable snow, a higher snowline in winter and shorter ski seasons. The changes which are taking place in the Alps due to climate change are clear to see now: extreme weather patterns, disappearing glaciers, thawing permafrost and less snow. Ski resorts have invested heavily in producing artificial snow and are also increasing their involvement in activities outside of the ski season. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Paris in November 2015 drew a clear conclusion: we can't stop climate change, but we can lessen the impact it will have. We all need to recognise this as a priority and do what we can to reduce climate change.

The changes which are taking place in the Alps due to climate change are clear to see now: extreme weather patterns, disappearing glaciers, thawing permafrost and less snow. The Environmental Agency of the United Nations expects that by the year 2050 the altitude for reliable snow at ski resorts will increase to between 1,500m and 1,800m. The very existence of lower-lying ski resorts is under threat and various methods are being employed to combat the prophecy of reduced snow. About 60% of all Austrian ski pistes are equipped with snow cannons. These artificial snow-making systems demand an abundance of water and energy, which has a detrimental effect on the surrounding environment, ecological systems and landscape. The snow cannons are also dependent on the weather and offer no guarantee of snow when temperatures rise.

Alpine regions, which have for so long depended on winter tourism to generate income and jobs in their areas, need to face the reality that their chances of survival in the face of climate change will not be

DUE TO CLIMATE CHANGE GLACIERS ARE DISAPPEARING, PERMAFROST IS THAWING AND THERE IS LESS SNOW.

You need to have experience, knowledge and skills to assess risks, dangers and your own abilities correctly. Therefore, hiring a mountain guide is also a recommended option, particularly if you have little experience of the mountains in winter.

As with any endurance sport, physical fitness is an important factor when preparing for a tour. Ski touring is physically demanding and therefore you should make sure you are in good condition before going on tour. Stamina and strength are required, and can be built up and improved on with regular training in advance, e.g., cycling, jogging, etc. It is important that you are exposed to continual low physical stress for increasingly longer periods of time in order to improve your basic endurance.

Suitable and well-maintained equipment is also important. The equipment for ski touring is extensive and should include the following:

- Touring skis fitted with a touring binding (allowing you to lift your heel during the ascent)
- Touring ski boots
- Ski skins made of mohair or synthetic fibre
- Safety set (avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe)
- Multi-layered clothing and weather protection wear
- Sunscreen and sunglasses
- First-aid kit
- Map of the area
- Insurance.

Backcountry skiing has allowed me the privilege of enjoying the mountains at their best: sometimes cloudy with an ice-cold wind blowing and at other

Above: Checking conditions, Ehrwald, Austria.

Below: A perfect day in the Bavarian Voralpen, Germany.





strengthened by investing huge amounts of money in artificial snow systems, but instead will contribute to that which they are fighting against.

In order to stay competitive, CIPRA, the International Alpine Protection Commission, has strongly advised that lower-lying Alpine regions develop a wider programme of sustainable activities for visitors, which showcase the natural beauty and unique assets of their areas. The Commission also advises that lower-lying Alpine regions adjust to climate change by focusing more on summer season activities such as hiking, biking, wellness and spa holidays.

The 'Bergsteigerdorf' (Mountaineering Village) initiative is an implementation project of the Alpine Convention. Started by the Austrian Alpine Association and now involving collaboration with Alpine Associations in Germany, South Tyrol, Slovenia and Italy, the initiative aims to preserve the local culture and environment while also promoting sustainable, environmentally-friendly tourism in the Alps. The initiative puts emphasis on communal responsibility, as well as on the environmentally-aware and responsible conduct of guests when visiting the region. Strict criteria in relation to nature and landscape conservation, visual impact and image, mobility and traffic, the management of forest and Alpine pastures, and the village's tourism concept must be fulfilled before a village is awarded the Bergsteigerdorf seal.

The Alps will continue to draw tourists and, as privileged visitors to these areas of astounding natural beauty, we need also to consider how we can contribute to the stemming of climate change through our own individual actions. It is also about sustaining livelihoods for mountain communities, as well as conserving these mountains for future generations.

The search for possibilities which support sustainable

Above: On tour in Tyrol, winter 2018.

Below: On tour in the Ehrwald region, Austria.

and environmentally-friendly trips must become a central theme for all of us who seek either refuge, recuperation or adventure in the mountains and hills. It is a task which will enrich our view and appreciation of these places, while also one which will force us to question and change the comfortable habits which we have grown fond of.

If you are interested in finding out more on this topic, www.saveoursnow.com is a website dedicated to providing impartial information on how global warming is affecting our planet's snowfall, ski resorts, glaciers and polar areas, as well as what the ski resorts are doing and what you can do to reduce their climate impact.

More detailed information on the Bergsteigerdorf initiative can be found on the official website:

<https://eng.bergsteigerdoerfer.org> ■





Access: an evolving situation

Access was a key focus of Mountaineering Ireland's work over summer 2018.



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Hillwalking, Access
& Conservation
Officer



Early in July several 'private property' signs were erected along the roadside overlooking Luggala Estate in Co Wicklow.

Mountaineering Ireland is actively working to improve and secure access for hillwalkers and climbers. Mountaineering Ireland acknowledges and appreciates that in the majority of hill and coastal locations public enjoyment of privately-owned land is available, mainly due to the goodwill and tolerance of the landowners rather than access being based on any formal arrangement. In some places landowners are inconvenienced as a result of allowing access (e.g., gateways blocked by parked cars, reduced privacy, and sheep scattered by dogs). Increasing participation in outdoor recreation activities, while on many levels a very positive development, is exerting greater pressure on this largely unmanaged situation. In addition to factors that affect

Mountaineering Ireland's policy on access

The policy of Mountaineering Ireland is that we are actively seeking reasonable access for responsible users. Our aim is to have:

- open, unrestricted access on foot across hills, mountains and coastal areas, where there are either minimal or no active farming practices apart from rough grazing;
- a network of paths allowing for access to the above areas, which could be permissive paths, leased paths or public rights of way.

The objective in relation to access in Mountaineering Ireland's new strategic plan is to strive for improved and assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers.

landowners and local residents, this pressure is clearly visible through the impact of increased footfall on our fragile upland environment.

Improved management of recreational activity in Ireland has the potential to make life better for everybody. This will require political support and

strategically-directed investment, at national level and locally. As hillwalkers and climbers, we have a role in making a sustainable future for Ireland's upland areas. Our recreation experiences come with responsibilities attached – to engage with landowners, contribute to the local economy, care for the natural environment and to take responsibility for our own actions on the hills and crags.

Mountain Access Project

Comhairle na Tuaithe's pilot Mountain Access Project, first

proposed in 2009, appears to have all the characteristics required to give certainty of access for recreational users in upland areas. It is based on a voluntary agreement with landowners in a defined area (e.g., a mountain range) and includes measures to manage recreational activity so as to alleviate inconvenience for landowners and local residents.

The project is being trialled in two areas, Binn Shléibhe near Clonbur, Co Galway, and the MacGillycuddy Reeks in Co Kerry. In 2018, Mountaineering Ireland has stepped up its pressure on the Department of Rural and Community Development to advance this project, in particular to complete a long-promised indemnity arrangement for landowners in **Mountain Access Areas**.

Three members of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee made a study visit to the MacGillycuddy Reeks in early August to meet with representatives of the **Reeks Forum** to discuss the pilot Mountain Access Project. It is

ACCESS ISSUES: Responsible behaviour and engagement with landowners will do a lot to prevent difficulty arising in relation to access. However, if you become aware of a problem or sensitivity in relation to access, please make Mountaineering Ireland aware of this by contacting **Helen Lawless** on 01 625 1115, or at helen@mountaineering.ie. As well as providing advice to members on access, having up-to-date information from across the country enables Mountaineering Ireland to be more effective in its work on behalf of hillwalkers and climbers at national level.

clear that the patience of the Forum members is running out and that the indemnity arrangement needs to be in place before the end of 2018. The Forum Chairperson, Stewart Stephens, expressed his view that agreed access can work in the Reeks, but that it requires sustained resources for path repair work and other activities.

As this year's Mountaineering Ireland **Autumn Gathering** takes place in Clonbur, Co Galway, very close to the second pilot Mountain Access Area, this model of agreed access will be discussed and highlighted over the weekend. The Gathering will open with a panel discussion on the Friday evening (October 12th) about the role that outdoor recreation can play in the future sustainability of rural areas. Local TDs – Éamon Ó Cuív and Minister of State with responsibility for Natural Resources, Community Affairs and Digital Development, Seán Kyne – have agreed to participate, and journalist Lorna Siggins will chair the discussions. In the months ahead, it should become clearer if the Mountain Access Project can deliver certainty of access in Ireland's mountain areas.

Luggala Estate

Early in July, the erection of 'private property' signage at Luggala Estate in Co Wicklow prompted fears that a sale of this iconic property might be imminent, which could result in a change to the long tradition of public access on the estate's mountain lands. While clearly purchase by the State cannot be the solution to every situation where access is under threat, Luggala is at the heart of the Wicklow Mountains and surrounded on three sides by Wicklow Mountains National Park.

Mountaineering Ireland wrote to Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan TD, urging the State to purchase the mountain lands of Luggala Estate (which include the mountains of Luggala and



Helen Donoghue, Chairperson of Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee, with committee member Vincent McAlinden at Lough Gouragh in the MacGillycuddy Reeks.

Knocknacloghoge, the cliffs at Luggala and the popular route from the Pier Gates down to Lough Dan). Mountaineering Ireland is currently awaiting a meeting with Minister Madigan and has written to local TDs and other relevant Ministers seeking their support.

Mountaineering Ireland has supported an **online petition** set up by a concerned individual in Wicklow and is urging hillwalkers and climbers to sign the petition. Those with concerns about future access to Luggala are also urged to write to, or visit, their elected representatives, asking for their support for the State to purchase the mountain lands at Luggala. The situation at Luggala should also be helpful in bringing the vulnerability of recreational access in Ireland into focus.

Northern Ireland

In 2017, a review of Northern Ireland's existing access legislation was initiated, prompting fresh thinking on what legislative framework is required to support the continued development of Northern Ireland's outdoor recreation sector. In response to the review, Mountaineering Ireland contributed to a

proposal from the National Outdoor Recreation Forum for the development of an **outdoor recreation bill** for Northern Ireland.

The proposal is based on providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities for this and future generations, in a way that achieves a balance between the common good, the rights of landowners and protection of the natural environment.

During summer 2018,

Mountaineering Ireland prepared a second written submission, highlighting the value and potential of the proposed outdoor recreation bill. While the realisation of such a bill may be years away, the work done over the last year should promote debate about what is needed for the future.

Exploring options

Other recent work in relation to access includes proposals from Mountaineering Ireland for amendment to the **Occupiers' Liability Act** in light of the Wicklow Way case (Wall v National Parks and Wildlife Service), and discussions about the potential for recreational access to be incorporated in future farm payment schemes.

Recreational access in Ireland, north and south, is an evolving situation. The growth in participation in outdoor recreation activity looks set to continue, bringing benefits to health and well-being, and to the rural economy, but also escalating challenges.

Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Committee is actively considering options for managing recreational activity and securing access for the decades ahead. If you would like to contribute to this process please get in touch ■

Working in the outdoors?

Many landowners have raised concerns with Mountaineering Ireland about people leading groups on privately-owned land, for payment, without the landowner's permission. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that a landowner could feel they were being taken for granted.

Those who work commercially in the provision of outdoor recreation activities have an added responsibility to ensure that a positive relationship exists with the owners of the land they are using, and to avoid any burden or nuisance on the landowners.

Through positive relationships with landowners, and a concerted effort to support local businesses, there is scope for the whole community to benefit from recreation activity in an upland area. Where that relationship breaks down, access could be withdrawn, with adverse impact for all hillwalkers and climbers and for the local area.

Note: Mountaineering Ireland does not support any additional charges on outdoor activity providers other than those that the State demands in taxation and by way of any future national regulation of activity providers.



Training

Recent and upcoming events

Brief reports on training events of note run by the Training Office



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

Upcoming events

MTBI Training Stakeholder Conference

■ Delphi, Co Galway, November 10-11th, 2018

Club Training Officers' Weekend Workshop

■ Galway, November 16-18th, 2018

Regional Club Officers' Meetings

■ Derry, September 5th, 2018 (17 members from 8 clubs)

■ Sligo, September 27th, 2018

■ Bray, November 22nd, 2018

■ Killarney, November 29th, 2018

■ **Skills Workshops** continue to be offered to our members over two weekends annually. These workshops are ideal for enhancing your skills and knowledge, which can be brought back to share with your club or to apply to your personal mountaineering adventures.

■ Please see the *National Guidelines for Climbing and Walking Leaders* and the *Good Practice Guidelines for Hillwalkers*, available on the Training pages of our website (go to 'Training Downloads').

Please contact the Training Officer, Jane Carney, for further details. Tel: 01 625 1112.

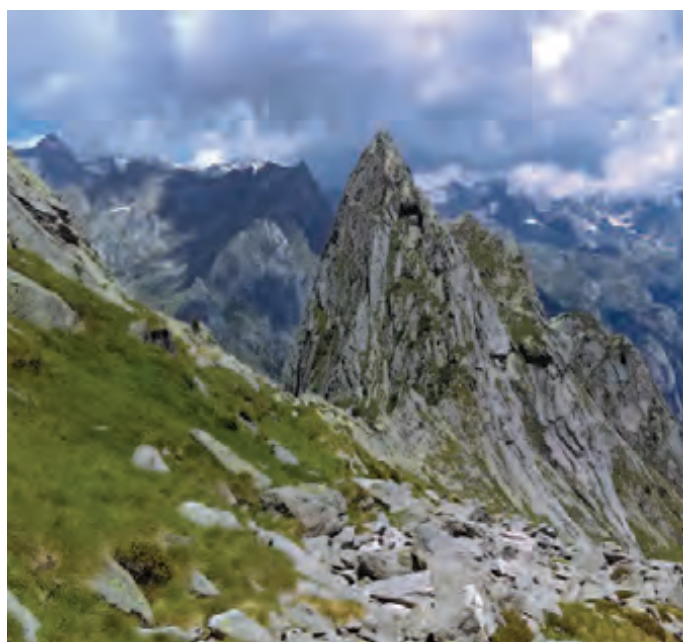
News for members

■ We would like to remind Club Officers of our forthcoming **Club Training Officers' Weekend Workshop** and our **Regional Club Officers' Meetings**.

Following the successful Training Officers Workshops in 2016 and 2017, Mountaineering Ireland has scheduled a series of Regional Club Officers' Meetings around the country. Please visit the Mountaineering Ireland website www.mountaineering.ie for details of the meeting in your area.

■ Congratulations to the ten successful recipients of **MTBI Training Grants** for the first six months of 2018.

■ We encourage all members to utilise the **Digital Logbook** to record their activity in the mountains, valleys and crags. Images and files can be uploaded, thus enhancing your log entries. It also serves as a guidebook, with dropdown boxes offering the climbs or mountains in an area. If you have been to an area not on the dropdown, add it with the custom location function.



La Punta Fiorelli (2,391m), above Val di Mello, northern Italy.



Alpine Meet 2018

2018 saw the annual Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meet return to Italy with its guaranteed fine coffee, excellent cuisine and superb walking, climbing and mountaineering. We were based in Val di Mello, Lombardy, in northern Italy, from July 7th to 21st.

Fabulous hill-running and traditional multi-pitch routes made it an especially good venue for those returning from injury.

Read more about this year's meet, skillfully described by a first-time participant, **Caroline Kirrane**, on pages 38-41.

We are open to recommendations and suggestions for next year's venue, with returns to Chamonix or Ailefroide already on the list of possibilities ■



Training on the Predarossa Glacier at the Alpine Meet



New skills being put to use on a climb of Mt Disgrazia during the Alpine Meet.

News for providers

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

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

■ Dates for **CPD opportunities** are shown on the 2018-19 calendar.

■ Providers are again reminded to start populating **course reports** early to flag any issues pre-course, such as candidates with lapsed memberships, those not registered and those using the wrong email or membership number.

■ Colleges and outdoor courses are asked to submit **manual registrations** well ahead of any courses ■

Changes to rock climbing module on instructor training courses

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

Mountaineering Ireland has four modules within the QQI listings: (1) Level 5 Mountain Skills; (2) Level 4 Rock Skills; (3) Level 5 Single-Pitch Award Training; and (4) Level 6 Single-Pitch Award Assessment.

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

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

Please contact the Training Office to discuss the transitional arrangements for candidates and the course requirements for trainers and those managing outdoor course provision ■

Key dates 2018

- 5-7th October MTUK Meeting, Plas Y Brenin
- 12-14th October Autumn Gathering, Clonbur, Co Galway
- 2-5th November Mountain Leader Assessment
- 10-11th Nov MTBI Training Stakeholders Conference, Delphi, Co Galway
- 16-18th Nov Club Training Officers Workshop, Galway
- 22nd Nov Regional Club Officers Meeting, Bray, Co Wicklow
- 24-25th Nov Train the Trainers, Wicklow
- 28th Nov Winter Meet Lecture, Basecamp, Dublin, 7pm
- 29th Nov Regional Club Officers Meeting, Killarney, Co Kerry
- 3rd December MTBI Training Meeting
- 6th December Lynam Lecture, Chartered Accountants Ireland, Pearse Street, Dublin (**NEW VENUE**)
- 7th December Senior Providers Workshop Wicklow

Key dates 2019

- 30th January MTBI Training Meeting
- 2-3rd February Club Training Officers' Workshop
- 17-23rd Feb Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- March Spring Gathering (date and venue TBC)
- 8-11th March Mountain Leader Assessment (venue TBC)
- 23-29th March Ski Meet (venue TBC)
- 10th April Summer Alpine Meet Information Evening, Basecamp, Dublin
- 15th May Skills Workshop: Navigation, Wicklow
- 15th May Skills Workshop: Scrambling, Wicklow
- 15th May Skills Workshop: Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 16th May Skills Workshop: Navigation, Wicklow
- 16th May Skills Workshop: Scrambling, Wicklow
- 16th May Skills Workshop: Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 24th May Summer Alpine Meet Preparation Workshop, Wicklow
- 1-2nd June Fair Head Climbing Meet
- 6-20th July Summer Alpine Meet (venue TBC)

Please book early! Please see the website, www.mountaineering.ie, for further details or contact the Training Officer, Jane Carney, on +353 1 625 1112.

Stay safe out there!

Maths for the Mountains

No 1. MAGNETIC VARIATION. In the first of a new series on navigation training, Mountaineering Ireland Training Officer **Jane Carney** explains the meaning of magnetic variation and how to calculate it.

Introducing the 'maths' elements on a navigation course can create a glazing-over effect among the participants. Candidates often refer to their poor school experiences and assume they still cannot do maths. The great thing about maths for the mountains is that it is functional and serves a purpose, i.e. yes, you will use it and yes, you can do it!

There are a number of maths-based topics in navigation such as magnetic variation, pacing, timing, taking bearings, measuring distance and map scales. In this first in a series of 'Maths for the Mountains' articles we will look at the 'how' and the 'what' to teach for magnetic variation.

The latest Mountain Skills Providers Workshop, which took place in September, also delved into the how and the what to teach about magnetic variation. There are a range of solutions, from just googling it for your area, to working it out from the information provided on the map (Figure 1).

Our level of comfort with and understanding of a subject will affect the way we teach it. Therefore, if we have a superficial knowledge, we may in turn give a superficial explanation. This may suit some candidates, who go away knowing how to carry out the task but then may struggle to apply it in different situations.

Understanding a topic thoroughly makes it more likely that the trainer can select the key points while keeping to the fundamental principle of using less words well.

A bit of background: the foundations

Magnetic variation accounts for/bridges the gap between Grid North (from the gridded map) and Magnetic North (from the Earth's magnetic force). Quite simply, the Earth is round and the map is a straight, square-gridded representation. Therefore, if we measure a grid bearing from our map, we must then convert it to a magnetic bearing, so that it will align with the magnetic force of the Earth, the one that affects the

compass needle. However, the Earth's magnetic force changes inconsistently, i.e. the variation is not a fixed constant. Therefore, as navigators, it is important to understand this principle and apply it when measuring, adjusting and walking on bearings.

Taking a bearing and adjusting for magnetic variation

- Simply take a grid bearing from A to B on your map. (See Mountaineering Ireland's website, 'Taking a Bearing' skills video.)
- Work out the magnetic variation from the information box on your map.
- Increase the grid bearing by that amount, thus producing a magnetic bearing.

Grid bearing + magnetic variation = magnetic bearing

Working out magnetic variation from the box on your map

(Note: each map has unique details)

Look at the Irish national grid section on your particular map (Fig 1). Take the following details:

- The year of the map: 2009
- Annual decrease: 10.12'
- The variation at the centre of the map for that year: 5 degrees 52'
- The number of years since the map was made: 9 (2018)



➤ Jane Carney is the Mountaineering Ireland Training Officer.



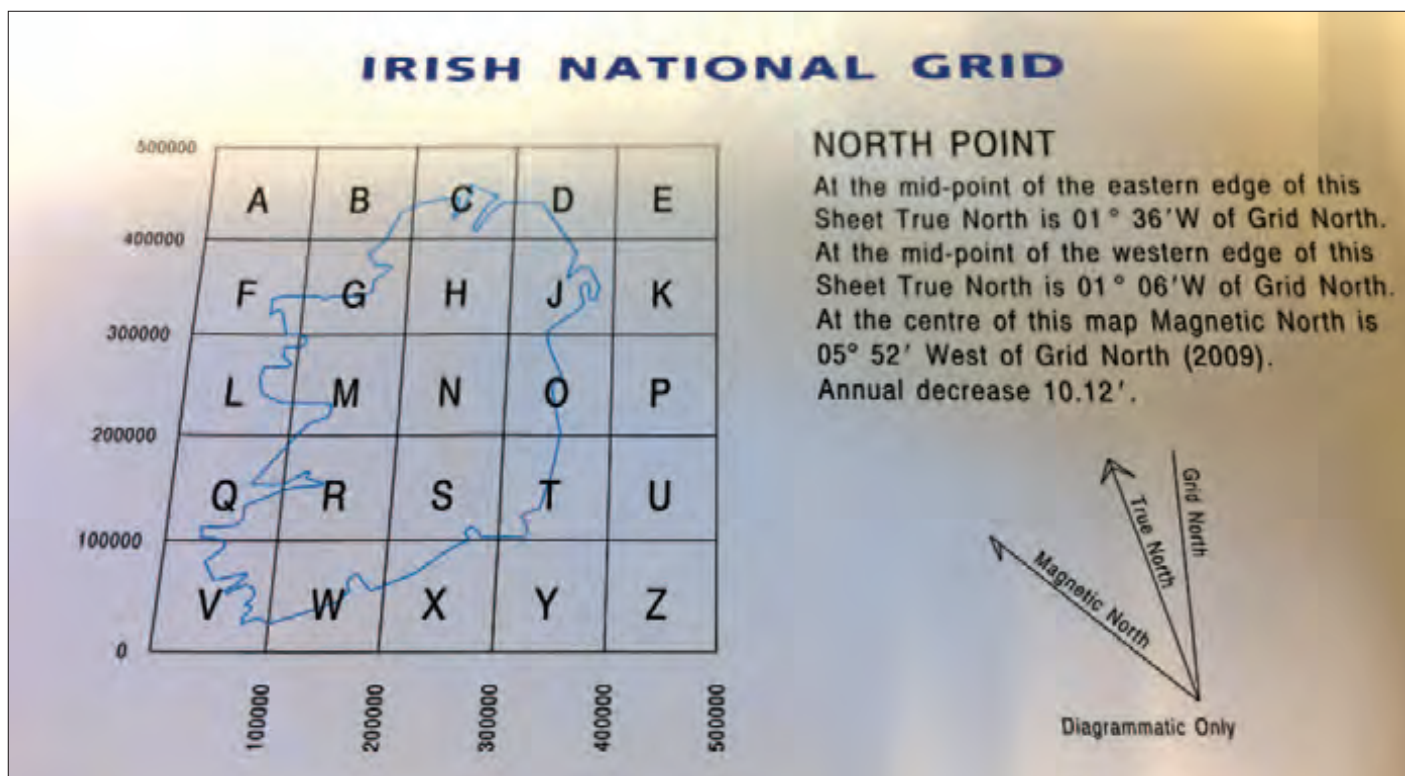


Figure 1.

Simply:

9 years x 10 minutes = 90 minutes or 1 degree 30 minutes

5 degrees 52' - 1 degree 30 minutes = 4 degrees 22 minutes

Grid bearing + Magnetic Variation = Magnetic Bearing

Long hand:

The variation in 2009 was 5 degrees 52 minutes.

Therefore, in 2009, I would have added 5 degrees 52 minutes (rounded up to 6 degrees) to my grid bearing.

In subsequent years would go as follows, with each year the variation decreasing by 10.12 minutes (which I have rounded down to 10 minutes) as follows:

2010	5 degrees 42	(Rounded up to 6)
2011	5 degrees 32	(Rounded up to 6)
2012	5 degrees 22	(Rounded down to 5)
2013	5 degrees 12	(Rounded down to 5)
2014	5 degrees 02	(Rounded down to 5)
2015	4 degrees 52	(Rounded up to 5)
2016	4 degrees 42	(Rounded up to 5)
2017	4 degrees 32	(Rounded up to 5)
2018	4 degrees 22	(Rounded down to 4)

Note: It is okay to round up or down to the nearest minute for the annual decrease and nearest degree for the variation. There are 60 seconds in a minute and 60 minutes in a degree and we can only measure degrees on our compass.

Therefore in 2017, **for the specific map used**, the magnetic variation was 5 degrees and in 2018 it is 4 degrees.

Question

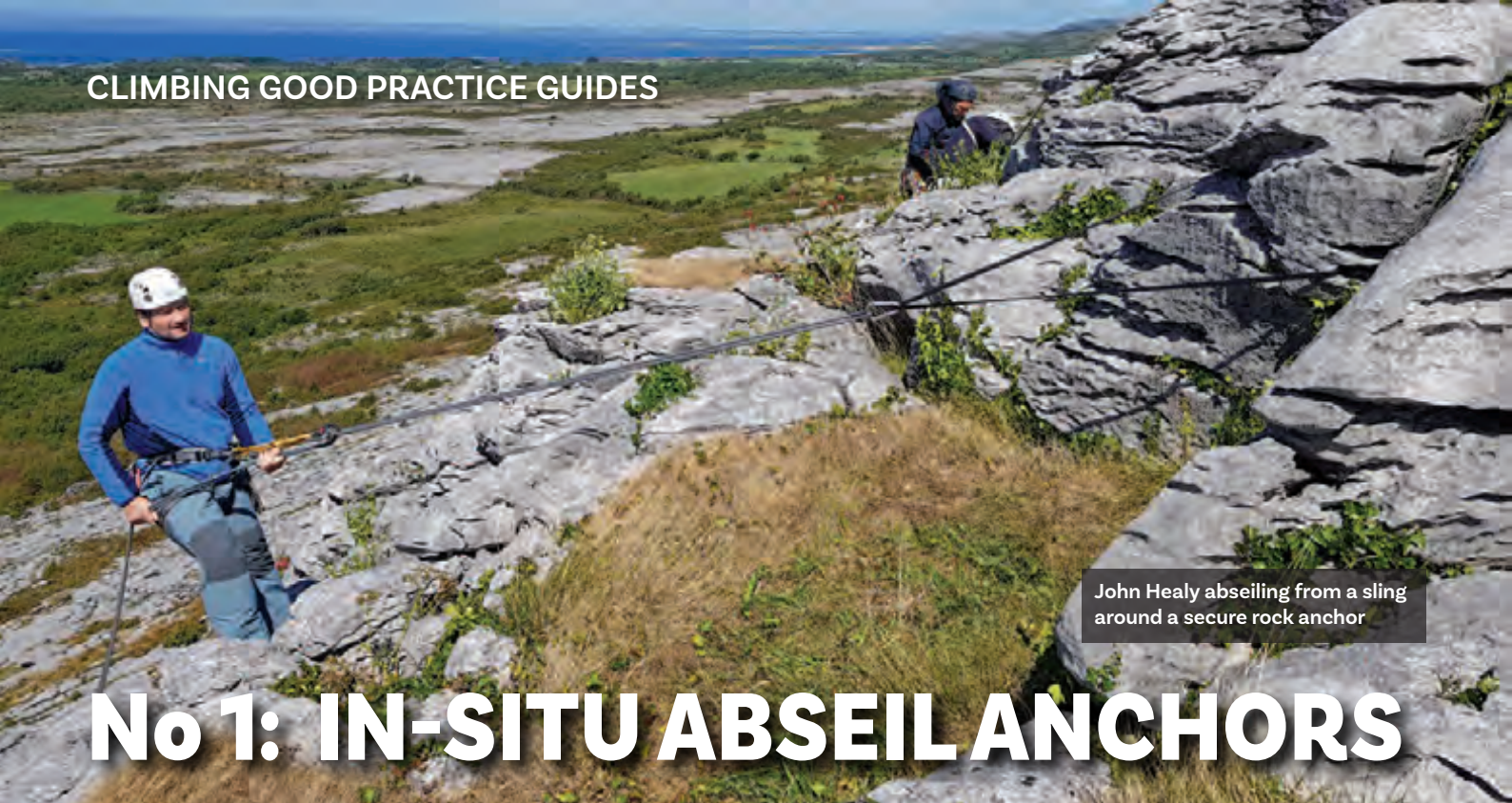
I received a query on this subject from one of our members, who asked, 'I am working out a route in an unfamiliar area, where the visibility is bad. When I looked at the magnetic variation for that OSi sheet, it said

variation at the centre of the map is 5 degrees 52' and at the eastern edge it is 1 degree 06'. We are walking on the eastern edge of the sheet, so do we really only use 1 degree 06' for the magnetic variation?'

Answer: The variation at the centre of the map is what you should use, 5 degrees 52'.

In summary, for accurate navigation, we need to understand how to work out the magnetic variation and how to apply it to our bearings on the hill. We need to work out the variation for each area we go to from the map of that area and repeat this every year. The rate of annual decrease means that the magnetic variation is reducing by approximately 10 minutes a year or 1 degree every 6 years. Therefore the variation is tending towards 0 degrees for the next 24 years! ■





John Healy abseiling from a sling around a secure rock anchor

No 1: IN-SITU ABSEIL ANCHORS

In the first in a series of Climbing Good Practice Guides, Mountaineering Instructor **John Healy** outlines his advice for using in-situ abseil anchors.

It is becoming increasingly the norm for climbers to use abseiling as a tool to access or descend from climbs rather than walking or scrambling to the base of climbs. This in turn has led to a greater number of in-situ abseil anchors at the tops of cliffs and climbs. It is important that climbers carefully consider when, where and how to install and use such anchors.

When to use an in-situ anchor

While it may seem the easier option, abseiling has some inherent risks. The first question to ask before setting up an abseil should be: 'Is it necessary to abseil?' Often it is possible to descend by walking or scrambling, and it is important to consider all of the options. At the top of the Upper Cliffs in Dalkey, Co Dublin, rather than abseil, a few minutes' walk on a path will see you back at the bottom, but from the top of the Needle at Dunsheen Head, Co Kerry, abseiling (or downclimbing!) will be your only choice.

There are many areas where the choice is

less clear-cut. The walk down may be considerably longer or involve the risk of scrambling or downclimbing on exposed terrain.

Whatever the situation, it appears that more and more climbers are choosing the seemingly more convenient option of abseiling. However, you should take a moment to consider the pros and cons of all the options before committing to an abseil.

Where to use an abseil anchor

The most common in-situ abseil anchors are trees and large rocks, which slings or a length of rope – abseil 'tat' – can be placed around. Obviously, the choice of anchor is vital to the safety of the abseil. With trees, it is important that the climber checks that the tree is large enough. A minimum diameter of 150mm is suggested and the tree should be firmly rooted to the ground.

If using freestanding boulders, they need to be large with absolutely no possibility of the boulder moving or the abseil tat sliding off. Rock spikes and chock stones should be checked to confirm that they are part of the bedrock or solidly imbedded in the ground or between much larger rocks. Checking such anchors requires a great deal of judgment, and novices should seek the advice of experienced climbers or instructors.

Climbers should also consider whether the non-climbing public has access to the cliff-top. In-situ anchors, particularly if not maintained well, will seem unsightly and even be considered litter by non-climbers. They shouldn't be installed adjacent to paths or public areas unless absolutely necessary. Remember, if it's that easy to access, then it's probably easy to walk down or you should remove your abseil anchor when you finish climbing.



Abseil set-up



➤ **John Healy** is a Mountaineering Instructor and Climbing Coach, who works throughout Ireland. He is a member of the Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Committee and is the Training Officer for Cork Climbing Club.



Old frayed anchor

How to make and use an in-situ anchor

Once the need for an in-situ anchor has been established and a suitable tree or rock feature found, then abseil tat with a carabiner, maillon or abseil ring should be used. Abseiling directly from trees is to be avoided, as pulling the rope down damages the tree trunk and will ultimately lead to the death of the tree.

Abseiling directly from rock spikes or chock stones will damage your rope or will lead to the rope getting jammed.

Abseiling from tat or slings without threading the rope through a carabiner or maillon will lead to damage to the slings when pulling down the rope.

The best commonly available material for use as abseil tat is climbing rope itself. A length of static or thick, single dynamic rope doubled around a tree or rock spike and fitted with a locking carabiner or maillon makes an excellent anchor with a low cost and reasonable lifespan.

Before thinking of installing bolted anchors, carefully consider the local climbing ethics, the Mountaineering Ireland Bolting Policy and possible negative implications for climbing access. If you arrive at an in-situ anchor, before you use it you should fully inspect every element of the anchor. Do not simply trust it because others have used it before you.

Ask yourself these questions:

- **The rock or tree:** Is it solid?
- **The abseil tat:** Does it have a maillon or carabiner? If not, the tat may have been damaged by others pulling down their ropes, so don't use it. Fully inspect the full

length of the abseil tat to look for physical damage to the outside or soft spots in the core, if it is a rope. Pay particular attention to where the tat goes over edges or is hidden from view. If there is any doubt, then back up or replace the tat.

If possible, remove any damaged tat to avoid the anchor becoming a mess of old rope and slings. Where wire has been used as tat, you should check the full length of the wire, looking for fraying or signs of corrosion. Be particularly wary of wire covered in a plastic sheath as it could be hiding damage due to corrosion, if the wire has been in situ for a long period. If there is any doubt, back the anchor up with your own gear or choose an alternative descent.

■ **The carabiner, maillon or ring:** Check that there is one installed and then check it for signs of wear and tear. On frequently used anchors, there can be considerable wear on the metal and it should be inspected and replaced if necessary.

■ Once you have decided that all aspects of the anchor are safe to use, thread your ropes through the carabiner or maillon and ensure that the ropes reach the bottom or at least the next abseil point, if it's a multi-pitch scenario.

■ You should abseil with a back-up such as a prussik knot and check that the ropes will pull down smoothly before the second climber begins to arrange an abseil. If you are unsure about abseiling with a back-up prussik, then you should seek advice from a qualified instructor.

And finally, a word on pitons

All too often climbers are happy to automatically trust pitons that they find on routes, at belays or at abseil stations. The



An old frayed anchor on a rock pinnacle



John Healy abseiling

safety of pitons is hugely dependent on the skill of the person placing them and are subject to weakening by corrosion over time. Ask yourself if you know who placed them or how old they are. We rarely do. Never blindly trust them; always inspect them before use. Check for looseness of the piton. Is there any cracking or damage to the rock? Are signs of corrosion present? Be prepared to back them up or not use them at all, if there is any doubt ■

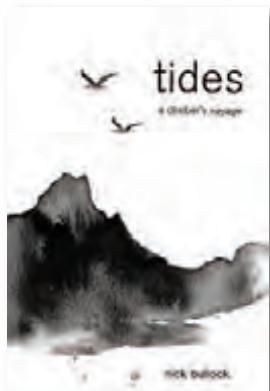
Quick reference guide

Use of in-situ anchors

- Is it really necessary to abseil? What are the alternatives?
- Check that the abseil anchor points – rock, tree, pitons, maillons, carabiners, etc – are in good condition and solid
- Check that the full length of the abseil anchor's 'tat' is in good condition
- Check that your abseil rope reaches the bottom or the next abseil point
- Check that your harness and abseil device are set up correctly
- Abseil with a back-up device, e.g., a prussik knot
- Check everything again!



A searingly honest account of highly challenging climbs



TIDES: A CLIMBER'S VOYAGE

By Nick Bullock

Vertebrate Publishing (2018), 259pp, many b&w photos, £24.00 (hdbk), ISBN 978-1-911342-53-3

This book chronicles Nick Bullock's twenty-two year climbing career, describing the highs and lows of what began as a hobby and then became a profession.

Bullock is one of the UK's leading climbers, having climbed hundreds of routes in

the UK and the Alps, and made numerous first ascents all over the world. He won the 2017 Piolet d'Or for making the first ascent of the North Buttress on Nyainqentangla South East in Tibet with Paul Ramsden. The book abounds with names which will be familiar to the climbing fraternity, such as Kalaka in India, Huantsan Sur in the Andes and the Droites in the French Alps. There are also many black-and-white photographs of the author in action.

Bullock's descriptions of these climbs will resonate with mountaineers. They sometimes include a lot of climbing jargon, but the stories are sufficiently interspersed with personal anecdote and musings on life to make them interesting for those of us who travel without ropes as well.

Tides definitely kept me turning its pages. It is well written, searingly honest and



Nyainqentangla South East

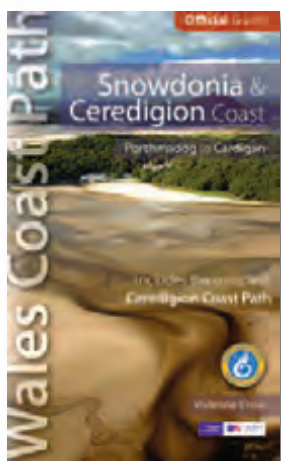
very atmospheric. Bullock perpetually questions his motives in climbing in often dangerous conditions when so many of his friends have died in similar situations. It is interesting to follow his train of thought as he matures as a climber and as a man. The title of the book refers to the author's relationship with climbing: one minute he is full of enthusiasm and the next filled with self-doubt. It also refers to the frequent recollections of his youth, his career in the prison service and his failed relationships, as these

flash before him while he is perched on some precarious ledge on a freezing Scottish mountain or elsewhere.

This book will appeal particularly to climbers, but it also has a more general appeal as the personal story of a human being doing what he feels compelled to do, despite the cost. Nevertheless, there is desperation and sadness in many of the pages and a gritty harshness, which makes *Tides* anything but a 'feel-good' read.

Pamela Harbison Member of Tredagh Trekkers Hillwalking Club

Detailed guide to fourth section of Wales Coast Path



WALES COAST PATH: SNOWDONIA & CEREDIGION COAST: PORTHMADOG TO CARDIGAN

By Vivienne Crow

Northern Eye Books (2017), 192pp, £12.99, ISBN 978-1-908632-25-8

This little book is the fourth in a series of seven. It describes 220km of the 1,400km-long Wales Coast Path, which runs from Chester to Chepstow.

After 57 pages of general information, the guide describes the section of the path between Portmadog and Cardigan as eleven separate day-long hikes, ranging from 14km to 29km. There are exact coordinates for each start and finish, and the book lists break points, interesting features both natural and man-made, accommodation options and public transport information.

While the Wales Coast Path is well way-marked and shown clearly on the OS

maps (1:50,000 and 1:25,000), the author gives fairly detailed turn-by-turn descriptions anyway: 'The path is not always obvious, as the sand, blown off the dunes, obscures it in places. Soon after a sharp bend to the right, take a narrower track to the left...' and so on. The path sometimes follows main roads for a bit, but it is mostly off-road. About 5% is really, really coastal and only passable at low tide!

This is a very colourful book, with a map or photos on almost every page. The maps are essentially OS 1:50,000 with nice detail, and the photos and text give lots of historical data and information about

interesting side-trips to grand mansions, preserved steam railways and the like.

For walkers, this guide is a much better buy than the superficially similar Insight Guide to Snowdonia and North Wales. However, for similar money, Cicerone offers a 350-page guide that covers all 1,400km of the Wales Coast Path and which is smaller and scarcely any heavier. Crucially for me, as I plan a family trip with young children, only the Cicerone guide shows the height gain for each section. That's a decider for me.

Paul Walsh A member of Glenwalk Hillwalking Club since 2004 and currently the club's walks coordinator

Memories of late Swiss speed climber



Ueli Steck: My Life in Climbing

By Ueli Steck with Karin Steinbach

Mountaineers Books (2018), 219pp, \$21.95, ISBN 978-1-68051-132-1

This thoughtful, slim book tells the stories of five landmarks in Ueli Steck's* life: the turmoil of what could be described as the Everest riots of 2013; his solo ascent of the south face of Annapurna; his attempt on

Shishapangma with his wife Nicole, which turned into a tragedy involving another team on the mountain; his ascent of the eighty-two summits over 4,000m in the Alps, while travelling between them only on foot or by bicycle; and his speed climbing records on the North Face of the Eiger.

None of these stories are as simple and uncomplicated as this summary might make them seem. All of them contain accounts of background stories and of levels of preparation and training of both body and mind that would be lifetime achievements for us mere mortals. The standards of preparation he set for himself are fitted to the nature of the trials to which he intended to subject himself. The matter-of-fact way he recounts details of

heights gained in short times on training exercises makes his application seem almost normal and makes the activities of the rest of us seem akin to lying-on in bed every morning.

We should not fall into this trap. Ueli marks out a road for each of us to follow. He is the person who earned ten talents with his master's ten talents. We should be aware that, no matter how few talents our master has given us, we should apply ourselves to make the best of the materials available in ourselves and live as small tigers rather than as big sheep.

This is not just a book about one man and his achievements. Threaded through it is the love story of Ueli and his wife Nicole. She is not an invisible person in this story and their life together is woven into the texture of the book.

Ueli Steck's main sponsor was EFC Private Banking. Other sponsors were air-lux Windows, Vibram, SsangYong Motors and Karpos (sports



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

Buy now

This is the book we recommend most highly from our autumn 2018 reviews

clothing manufacturers). Suppliers were Scarpa, Permamed (pharma), MSR, Suunto, New Rock (online retail), Leki and Julbo. This list of names makes one wonder what subtle, unspoken pressures they exerted on the great athlete who was Ueli Steck. One might feel that he was a person of such moral fibre that they could not influence his judgment in choosing his objectives, but yet the question must hang in the air. However, having asked that question, it is only fair to say that this book shows only a man focused on the deed and not worried by such commercial pressures.

Sé O'Hanlon Relict mountaineer and member of the Irish Mountaineering Club

Competition winners



WW Norton & Company, publishers of David Roberts' book, *Limits of the Known*, kindly offered three copies of this hardback book as prizes for the competition in the Summer 2018 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. The closing date for entries was July 27th, 2018. The competition question was: What was the name of the first book David Roberts wrote, which is still in print, about his 1965 first ascent of the West Face of Mount Huntington in Alaska? The correct answer is: *The Mountain of My Fear* (1969).

Winners

The three winners are:

Margaret O'Connor, Thurles

Tom Rea, Galway

Gerry Galligan, Newtownmountkennedy

Each received a copy of *Limits of the Known* from WW Norton & Company. **Congratulations to all three!**

25% discount offer

If you would like to purchase a copy of the book *Limits of the Known*, it can be ordered, postage free, from the WW Norton website, www.wwnorton.co.uk, or via this link: <https://goo.gl/BTK2dc>.

WW Norton & Company are offering a 25% discount to all readers of the *Irish Mountain Log*, if you use the code **WN548** when ordering. This code will remain valid until February 28th, 2019.



Valuable guide to taking care of climbing injuries



CLIMBING INJURIES SOLVED

By Dr Lisa Erikson

Cordee (2015), 215pp, colour photos and diagrams, £29.95 (€33.36), ISBN 978-0-692-29664-6

Dr Lisa Erikson is a sports chiropractor working in Boulder, Colorado, in the US. She is an avid sportsperson involved in not only climbing but also in skiing, cycling and running.

Her book concentrates mainly on upper limb injuries – a major challenge for climbers. It is well laid out with plentiful diagrams, photos, case studies and explanations of how injuries occur. It is readable, when you are focused on getting advice, but it is not an easy night-time read.

The author first discusses how climbing movement can stress the anatomy and how

stiffness and over-mobility can cause additional problems. She then lays out appropriate self-care and prevention strategies and gives guidelines on when professional help should be sought.

Finger tendon pulley injuries, elbow tendon inflammation and shoulder rotator cuff injuries are all covered very well, allowing readers to develop an understanding of how these injuries occur and the steps that can be taken to prevent their recurrence and to promote recovery.

The chapters on recovery and self-care applications will

be of particular interest to the climbing community and beyond. Icing, taping, stretching and self-massage are described in detail with diagrams to explain the best approaches.

Dr Erikson's deep interest in her subject and the lessons she has learnt from treating climbers over years make this book a valuable addition to the bookshelves of anyone treating climbing injuries or of climbers looking for well-researched methods to improve their rehabilitation after injuries.

Dr John Duignan General practitioner, climber and member of the Irish Mountaineering Club

Popular routes for cyclists in Kerry and south Leinster



CYCLING KERRY: GREAT ROAD ROUTES

By Donnacha Clifford & David Elton

The Collins Press (2017), 152pp, €14.99, ISBN 978-1-84889-307-8

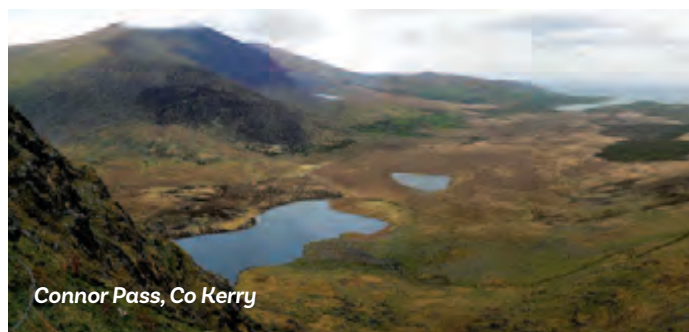
CYCLING SOUTH LEINSTER: GREAT ROAD ROUTES

By Turlough O'Brien

The Collins Press (2017), 144pp, €14.99, ISBN 978-1-84889-305-4

These are two further cycling guides in the excellent series published by the Collins Press. Both come with attractive maps and photos, together with a quick-reference route table showing distance, order of difficulty and expected time for each trip. The estimated times for the Kerry routes are based on an average speed of 23km/hour, which seems a bit fast for an ageing rider like myself.

Both guides are labours of love and one need read no further than Turlough O'Brien's introduction to his



Connor Pass, Co Kerry

CÉSAR GONZÁLEZ

South Leinster guide to get a feel for his love of cycling. I particularly liked his quote from Ernest Hemingway about the contours of the country being best learnt by riding a bicycle – purist hillwalkers, who eschew the tarmac, please take note!

Both guides feature approximately thirty routes each, ranging from the very easy and flat, to the tough and mountainous, from the lesser known back roads of the Timahoe Loop, to the dramatic heights of Mount Leinster and the Connor Pass.

Each circuit is prefaced by a highlights section followed by a detailed route description, including good places to eat.

These guides are attractive both for the cyclist generally familiar with the area (Leinster, in my case) and for the visitor.

On my next trip to Kerry, I will certainly check out some of the intriguingly named (and lesser known) routes such as 'The Butter Road' and 'The Dan Paddy Andy Figure of Eight' – who could resist?!

Des Doyle A failed racing cyclist from the 1960s and a life member of the Irish Mountaineering Club

Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature 2018

Shortlist of book titles announced.

By Patrick O'Sullivan

Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker were last seen on May 17th, 1982, attempting to traverse the Pinnacles on the unclimbed North-East Ridge of Mount Everest, at around 8,250 metres. Their deaths marked the end of a remarkable era in British mountaineering.

Peter and Joe left two legacies. One was their great endeavour – their climbs on high peaks with bold, lightweight, innovative methods, which included Dunagiri, Changabang, Kongur, Everest and Kangchenjunga.

Their second and more lasting achievement was the books they wrote and left behind. This literary legacy lives on through the Boardman Tasker Prize for Mountain Literature, established in their memory by family and friends in 1983.

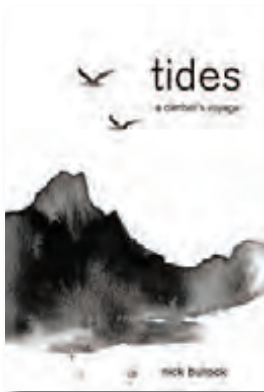
The Boardman Tasker Charitable Trust celebrates their legacy by awarding an annual Award for Mountain Literature and a Lifetime Achievement Award. The Award for Mountain Literature is given to the author or authors of the best literary work, whether fiction, non-fiction, drama or poetry, the central theme of which is concerned with the mountain environment.

There were 38 entries this year and the judges selected seven books for the shortlist, which was announced on August 29th. The judges this year are Peter Gillman (Chair), Roger Hubank and Kate Moorehead.

The shortlisted book titles are shown alongside.

The winner of the Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature 2018 will be announced at the Boardman Tasker Shortlisted Authors event at the Kendal Mountain Festival on Friday, November 16th, 2018.

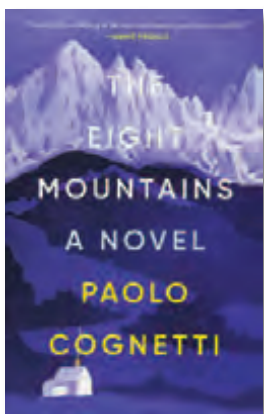
The shortlisted books are:



Tides: A Climber's Voyage

By Nick Bullock
Vertebrate Publishing

A fascinating memoir by a very active climber, which provides an insight into extreme climbing over the past thirty years. See our review, page 62.



The Eight Mountains

By Paolo Cognetti
Harvill Secker

A novel by an Italian author that describes an intriguing friendship between a mountain cow herder and a city boy from Milan over thirty years in the Dolomites.



Kinder Scout: The People's Mountain

By Ed Douglas and John Beatty
Vertebrate Publishing

A celebration of

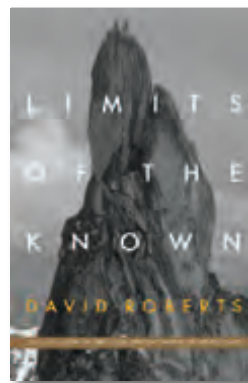
Kinder Scout presented by two British mountain writers and photographers.



The Flying Mountain

By Christoph Ransmayr
Seagull Books

A work of fiction told in blank verse by an Austrian author. It follows two brothers from south-west Ireland on their quest for an unnamed Tibetan mountain.



Limits of the Known

By David Roberts
WW Norton & Sons

An examination of the motivations of mountaineers and other explorers, related by a veteran American author

and climber. See our review in IML 126, page 61.



The Ogre: Biography of a Mountain and the Dramatic Story of the First Ascent

By Doug Scott
Vertebrate Publishing

An account of the author's epic accident and rescue on the Ogre in the

Karakorum in 1977, together with a history of the exploration of the mountain. See our review in IML 126, page 62.



Honouring High Places: The Mountain Life of Junko Tabei

By Junko Tabei and Helen Y Rolfe
Rocky Mountain Books

A biography of the life of the first woman to climb both

Mount Everest and the Seven Summits. See our Last Word column in IML 120, page 66.

The Last Word



John Quinn walking in the Vosges Mountains in eastern France

John Quinn

Hillwalker and popular walk leader



John Quinn in the Vosges Mountains

John Quinn from Castlebar, Co Mayo, sadly died on May 12th, 2018, in an unfortunate accident while hiking in the Vosges mountains in Alsace, France. John was leading a group of eight walkers on a two-day hike when he lost his footing and fell to his death. He was 59 years old.

The local mountain rescue service, Peloton de Gendarmerie de Montagne Hohrod, was called immediately and recovered John's body within an hour of his fall. John was buried in Castlebar. He was an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland.

John was originally from Waterford city, but had lived for many years in Castlebar with his family, his wife Mary and their three children. One of his sons, Nicholas, swam in the 2016 Olympics. He and his wife moved to Strasbourg in 2011, where he worked for the Council of Europe.

He was a much-liked and active member of the Irish and wider expat communities in Strasbourg. He was a member of Ciorcal Comhrá, an Irish language-speaking group, and of writing groups and a hiking group there. He was a respected walk leader for the hiking group.

John was a very active and popular walk leader in Strasbourg, where he organised weekly hikes. His warm personality and inclusivity meant that the hiking

group was always growing and getting new members. He retained his contacts with Castlebar as well and always returned to lead walks there in the annual Castlebar International Four Days' Walks, which he had participated in for thirty years. This year's walking festival, the 51st, which took place from June 28th to July 1st, was dedicated to his memory.

Always a very safety-conscious walker, John took great care preparing for his hikes, taking his responsibilities as a walk leader very seriously. He was very aware of the importance of the services provided by the mountain rescue teams.

With that in mind, John's family raised money in his memory, half of which was donated to Peloton de Gendarmerie de Montagne Hohrod in France and half of which went to the Mayo Mountain Rescue Team. John's wife, Mary, presented a cheque for €4,800 to the Mayo team.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to John's family and friends on this tragic accident.

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

John Quinn: born 1958; died May 12th 2018

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