

irish mountain log

THE MAGAZINE FOR WALKERS AND CLIMBERS IN IRELAND

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Blackthorn at sunset in the Burren,
Co Clare, December 2008.
Photo: Ruairí Ó Conchúir.

Keeping the 'buzz' alive

Mountaineering Ireland is 'buzzing' as an organisation. If you attended Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering in Tollymore this October, you would have felt the buzz. I was honoured to be there, and I would like to share with you what this buzz is all about.

Elsewhere in this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*, and as highlighted in other recent issues, contributors outline elements of the buzz in the tremendous progress that Mountaineering Ireland has made in the past twelve months. The challenges Mountaineering Ireland faced in 2009 were daunting. They included the need for a complex restructuring of the organisation, and a review of the functioning of its board, its substructures and staffing.

The challenges also included meeting the increasing needs of our 10,000 plus membership, while implementing an ambitious work programme. Most importantly, they included refocusing our support to clubs and individuals, whose primary interest was hillwalking and rambling.

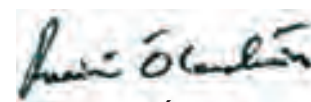
During the past twelve months, a number of significant initiatives have been set in place to better support hillwalking. These developments have included the recruitment of a Hillwalking, Access and Conservation Officer and a new Training Officer. Both of the individuals appointed are highly regarded nationally and internationally. The enhanced level of training support now available is helping to develop walking clubs throughout Ireland, while Mountaineering Ireland's commitment to access has brought about significant policy shifts.

The current global financial crisis has compounded the difficulties we faced in terms of funding our work programme. However, we are very fortunate to be the recognised National Governing Body (NGB) for all forms of mountaineering by both the Irish Sport Council and Sports Northern Ireland. We have been able to continue to develop and grow in these difficult times because of the strength of our relationship with both bodies.

Our membership and volunteer focus coupled with financial prudence, good governance and our emphasis on enhancing participation, including youth

participation, have all been strong features in maintaining Mountaineering Ireland's reputation as a leading NGB.

In this period of transition, our deeply rooted volunteer ethos continues to characterise the functioning of Mountaineering Ireland and our clubs. It is this core value that is the essence of the buzz which has been evident in our activities all year. This was crystallised at the Autumn Gathering, with scores of children and adults climbing and out on the hills, and volunteers giving of their time on path repair work and training courses. Members were laughing, dancing and enjoying the buzz. There is a real sense of positivity in all that is happening in Mountaineering Ireland. The Board is committed to keeping this buzz alive.



**Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Chairperson,
Mountaineering Ireland**



WEI COME TO...

ISSUE 96

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Copy deadline for the Spring 2011 issue of the Irish Mountain Log is Friday, February 11th, 2011.

PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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



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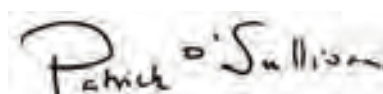
Welcome to the Winter issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. Given the time of year, we have tried to make this a bumper issue. Hopefully you will find plenty of interest in it to read during the Christmas break. Hopefully also, if we do get a white Christmas again this year, we will be able to get out on the hills to enjoy it this time, unlike last year, when many roads were blocked, such was the amount of snow that fell.

Certainly, there are lots of interesting articles in this issue, so thanks, as always, to all of our contributors for their support. Some of the articles focus on women's involvement in our sport. We also have information about a women's event that will be held in April next year in the Mourne, *Women with Altitude* – see page 8.

Mountaineering Ireland is fortunate in that there is a gender balance among its membership, with males and females being almost equally represented. However, against that balance, women seem less inclined to avail of opportunities to progress within hillwalking and climbing; this may be by choice or it perhaps reflects other limiting factors. All the more reason, then, to admire the many inspirational role models we have among Irish women who have managed to achieve success on the not so level playing field of our sport.

Margaret Tees reports on her progress towards completing her round of ascents of all the mountains in Ireland over 2,000 feet high, and there are interviews with Irish women rockclimbers, who have climbed at the highest levels. A piece is included about Brede Arkless, a female mountaineer with Irish roots, who had a significant impact on female participation in our sport in the '70s and '80s and who succeeded in climbing on some of the highest mountains around the world. She was the first woman to qualify as an International Mountain Guide. Finally, Caoimhe Gleeson reports on her exploration of western Mongolia.

I will finish here by wishing all of our readers an enjoyable Christmas and an active New Year from myself and the other members of the Editorial Team, and on behalf of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland.




Patrick O'Sullivan
Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

ON THE COVER: Croagh Patrick in winter.
Photo: Mary Beston.

THIS PAGE: View of Central Mourne from Slieve Binnian.
Photo: Helen Lawless.

News

Get all the latest news at www.mountaineering.ie

Volunteers make the difference

KARL BOYLE, CHIEF OFFICER

CLUB OFFICERS, walk leaders, hike co-ordinators, event organisers, club training officers, club environmental officers, committee members, designated drivers, external representatives, board members, contributors to the *Irish Mountain Log*, youth development leaders, Mountain Meitheal volunteers, etc, etc – **THANK YOU!**

Volunteers are the heart and soul of Mountaineering Ireland. The incredible number of volunteers who contribute in so many ways to the Mountaineering Ireland community has a truly multiplying effect on the capacity of Mountaineering Ireland.

During 2010, so many clubs have contributed to many projects and efforts, and from assisting with developments in Comhairle na Tuaithe projects, to youth development, to informing Mountaineering Ireland of local concerns, your efforts have made the difference.

The hours contributed by volunteers and the level of responsibility taken on are a testament to the commitment and loyalty they have for their clubs and fellow members. Likewise, many individual members contribute hugely to Mountaineering Ireland, and their efforts and energy are equally remarkable. This spirit of

voluntary effort will continue into the future and I would ask those who have not yet “helped out” to get involved.

Support for clubs

Mountaineering Ireland's staff are available to support clubs as they develop and grow. With this in mind, Mountaineering Ireland will be hosting a number of regional **Hillwalking Workshops** during 2011 and we will also have a **Volunteer Training Officer Workshop** in autumn 2011.

Mountaineering Ireland will be providing opportunities for clubs to send **First Aiders** on a refresher course, and a **Club Environmental Officers Workshop** will also be provided.

Details of these opportunities will be notified to clubs and will be advertised on the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie.

Youth will continue to be a key focus in the year ahead, with Mountaineering Ireland continuing to progress the partnership with Scouting Ireland and also with the Girl Guide associations.

As the Christmas period approaches, I would like to wish all Mountaineering Ireland members, and their families and friends, a happy Christmas, a peaceful New Year and may your legs take you to many peaks in 2011.

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Christmas Book Competition

We have a paperback copy of *Granite and Grit: a Walker's Guide to the Geology of the British Mountains*, by Ronald Turnbull, to give away, courtesy of the publishers, Frances Lincoln. This excellent book was reviewed as a hardback in *Irish Mountain Log* No 89 (Spring 2009) and has now been issued as a paperback at £16.99. While the rock examples described are all from Britain, they are mostly the same as those found in Ireland, and the photos are superb. To be in with a chance of winning this book, simply answer the following question: “How many issues of the *Irish Mountain Log* do members receive mailed to their home addresses each year?” Send your answer either by e-mail to info@mountaineering.ie or by post to IMI Christmas Competition, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Parkwest Business Park, Dublin 12. E-mails should have ‘Christmas Book Competition’ in the subject line. The response should include the answer, your name, address and a contact telephone number and your Mountaineering Ireland membership number. Entries must be received by 5:00pm on Friday, January 28th, 2011.



Spring Gathering and AGM

Aherlow House Hotel, Glen of Aherlow, March 4-6th 2011

The 2011 SPRING GATHERING will be an opportunity for clubs to interact and learn from other clubs' experiences. The gathering will also include Mountaineering Ireland's AGM.

The Spring Gathering will be held on the weekend of March 4-6th at the Aherlow House Hotel, Glen of Aherlow, Co Tipperary, often described as a walker's paradise as it offers a variety of low-level and mountain walks. The programme will include opportunities to participate in a variety of walks and/or a number of club-focused workshops, including:

- Club Walk Leaders Workshop led by Alun Richardson, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer
- Club Environmental Officers Workshop led by Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access and Conservation Officer
- Club First Aiders Refresher course, by volunteer David Batt, REC provider.

Saturday evening, following the Mountaineering Ireland AGM, will include a buffet ('A Hearty Galtee Platter'), some local music and, no doubt, a céilí!

Advance registration will be required and booking details will be available on www.mountaineering.ie shortly. The cost of registration will be €40, which includes the Gala Dinner on Saturday night. A full list of accommodation will be provided on the Mountaineering Ireland website and discounted prices are available from the Aherlow House Hotel.

The Club Workshops (Saturday) will be free of charge but clubs must nominate participants by 14 February 2011. Sunday's workshops do not require advance bookings and are open to all. Likewise, a Members' Forum will be held on Saturday evening and all members are welcome to attend.

Friday, March 4th

- **7:00pm** Registration.
- **8:00pm** *The Alps are for everyone!* A presentation by Alun Richardson & others.

Saturday, March 5th

- **9:30am** Variety of walks starting from Aherlow House Hotel
- **9:30am Club Workshops**
 - Club Walk Leaders Workshop
 - Environmental Officers Workshop
 - First Aid Refresher Course
- **4:30pm** Annual General Meeting
- **6:00pm** Members' Forum
- **8:00pm** Hearty Galtee Platter (buffet)

Sunday, March 6th

- **9:30am** Club Development: Recruiting new members
- **10:15am** Club Development: Getting Leaders and Club Training
- **11:00am** Tea & coffee
- **11:15am** Mountaineering Ireland Insurance explained
- **12:00 noon** Meet ends

Annual General Meeting

The 2011 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Mountaineering Ireland will be held from 4:30pm on Saturday, 5 March, 2011 in the Aherlow House Hotel, Glen of Aherlow, Co Tipperary.

The AGM is a key opportunity for members to engage with Mountaineering Ireland and be involved in its duty as a Company Limited by Guarantee to report on the previous year's activities and financial position.

Any motion for discussion at the AGM must be received by the Honorary Secretary on or before 5:00pm, 4 February, 2011. Motions may be submitted by any three full members and

should be sent to Ross Millar, Honorary Secretary, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12 or emailed to secretary@mountaineering.ie.

The Agenda for the AGM and all other associated documents will be published on our website, www.mountaineering.ie, by Friday, 11 February, 2011. Members without internet access can request a printed copy from the Mountaineering Ireland office on +353 (0) 1 625 1115.

A Members' Forum will be held on Saturday 5 March, 2011 at 6:00pm in the same venue. The Members' Forum, like the AGM, is open to all members. It provides members with an opportunity to discuss matters, including current Mountaineering Ireland policy, strategy and any other items of business. All members are encouraged to attend this forum and voice their opinions.

- **4:00pm** Meeting of Honorary and Individual Members, if required.
 - **4:30pm** Registration for AGM.
 - **5:00pm** Annual General Meeting.
- Agenda for AGM:**
1. Adoption of Standing Orders.
 2. Adoption of Minutes of last AGM.
 3. President's Address.
 4. Honorary Secretary's Report.
 5. Presentation & approval of Financial Statements.
 6. Appointment of Auditor for 2011.
 7. Election to membership of Clubs and Associated Organisations.
 8. Nomination of Representatives to other organisations.
 9. Motions.
- **6:00pm** End of AGM.

Access closure in the Blue Stacks

Mountaineering Ireland has been advised that the owners of a large commonage near Edergole, north of Lough Eske in Co Donegal, have closed their land to recreational users. As a result there is currently no access from Edergole to the nearby waterfall, to Lough Belshade, or to the area west-north-west of the Corabber River across to the white outcrop west of 626m.

Mountaineering Ireland is supporting local efforts to resolve this issue. In the meantime, the Blue Stack Way remains open, as do the western and eastern parts of the Blue Stack range, including the high point at 674m.

Wicklow flood damage

A day of intense rainfall early in September caused damage to the road, bridges and trails in the Glenmalur valley, Co Wicklow. The footbridge at the An Óige hostel was washed away and the footbridge just above the Baravore car park was washed to one side. A spokesperson for Coillte has stated that the Baravore bridge will be re-positioned and strengthened in the coming months.

Minor landslide activity at Kelly's Lough caused the Carrawaystick Brook waterfall to burst its banks, carrying boulders and debris down the mountainside. Considerable damage was caused to the Zig-Zags agreed access route, making passage difficult for a period. Following an initial clean-up by a digger, in October, Mountain Meitheal volunteers replaced steps, improved the path surface and put in a new drain to fully re-open this important route.

Coillte has recently repaired the footbridge over the Glenmacnass river, just north of Lragh, which was damaged by a flood in January 2010. This section of the Wicklow Way is now open again, sparing walkers the road-walk into Lragh.

'Women with Altitude'

Mourne Mountains, 8-10 April 2011



Avril McAllister, Foyle Hillwalking and Rambling Club, scrambling during the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering in the Mournes in October. Photo: Mitch.

THE GLASS CEILING of the corporate world may also be present in mountaineering. Although half of Mountaineering Ireland's members are women, men tend to be to the forefront in the sport. For example, we have fewer women on Mountain Leader courses, fewer on the Board of Mountaineering Ireland and fewer participating in climbing competitions, yet we know that women are capable leaders, decision-makers and climbers.

That's how the idea for **Women with Altitude** was born. Led by Sandra Kennedy, a Mountaineering Ireland board member living in Galway, an organising team is planning an event that promises fun, inspiration, skills and support for women with an involvement in hillwalking and climbing.

Women with Altitude will take place at Tollymore Outdoor Centre in the Mournes, from Friday evening to Sunday, April 8-10th, 2011. Over the weekend we will have a selection of talks and activities, all focused on the needs of women in our sport.

With this meet in mind, we have tried to present some articles about and by women in this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* that show the contribution which women can and do make to our sport.

Two days for women hillwalkers and climbers to share ideas, enjoy themselves and benefit from mutual support.

- Women with Altitude is open to girls and women of all ages and all levels of ability. We already have three generations from one family committed to participating, so put the date in your diary and keep an eye on www.WomenwithAltitude.ie for further details. Book early as numbers will be limited.

Blemishes on Brandon

Viewpoint by Mike Dixon

IN JULY, I was back in County Kerry after an eleven-year absence. The ubiquitous clouds and rain eventually cleared and I scurried over to the Dingle peninsula, eager for a return to Brandon Mountain via its magnificent East Ridge. It was just as good as I remembered, certainly taking its place alongside the best of UK arêtes.

When I was last on the East Ridge in 1999, I was surprised by the lack of crampon scratches. This summer I spotted a few and felt envious. That would have been the winter to be on the ridge, if you could have negotiated the roads to get there. My ascent in July was graced by the backdrop of the magnificent corrie and headwall and the multi-levelled lochans which adorn it, black, beautiful, unique. Winter lines aplenty cried out.

However, my mood soon became as dark as the corrie as I descended the normal route back into it. First of all there was a post with "down" written on it. Further on there was the sacrilegious sight of arrows painted on the rock, pointing the way. Arrows neither small nor discrete, and multi-coloured to add variety! Arrows all over the place! Foul oaths machine-gunned from my mouth like Father Jack. The arrows were superfluous; the path was obvious and on the sections through the rocky shelves there was a worn highway. It all made a mockery of the sign in the car park at the bottom asking you to respect the countryside!



"New Rope, old style"

Photograph by Pat Brennan

Tony Sacre (left) and Dick Harding on Cinque Ditta on Funffingerspitze, Dolomites, in 1959. The guide was Signor Demetz, who put up a number of new routes in the Dolomites in the 1930s.



I remembered the marker posts on the initial section from 1999; they were bad enough. Back then I had descended from Brandon Peak, so I'm not sure if the paint marks were in the upper corrie then. I shudder when I think of the paint perpetrators let loose on a similar setting, a Skye Cuillin corrie, for example.

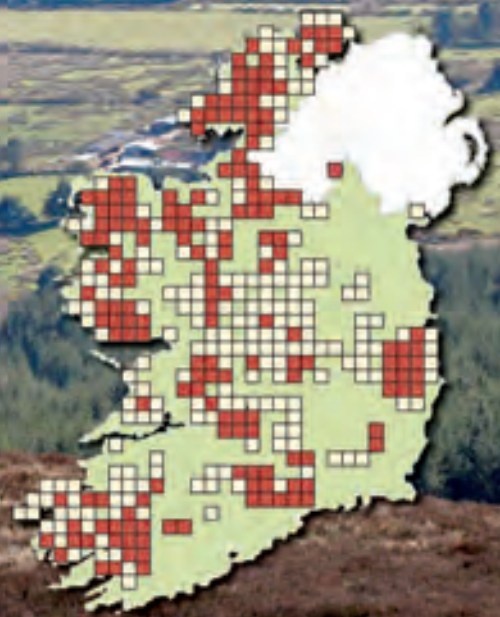
In my opinion, Brandon is a contender for Ireland's finest mountain. Everyone I know who has climbed it agrees about its special quality. Jim Perrin, Hamish

Brown and Cameron Macneish have all honoured it in written or spoken word. How can any real mountain lover be happy with these redundant daubs? Put my name down when a work party is organized to dismantle the unnecessary posts and scrub off the paint!

**Mike Dixon,
Scottish Mountaineering Club,
Inverness, Scotland**

Ireland's Red Grouse in trouble

Red Grouse.
Photo: Ben Hall
(rspb-images.com).



Map: Distribution of Red Grouse in 2006-2008 survey (red) and areas where it was recorded in previous surveys (yellow) but from where it has

■ All records in 2006-2008.
■ Older records.

Red Grouse are confined to peatlands and heaths. Their numbers have been reduced by upland afforestation and other threats.
Photo: BirdWatch Ireland.

SINÉAD CUMMINS

THE I Ou D, Gu TTu RAI call of a male Red Grouse early on a winter's morning, warning intruders on its territory to "go-back, go-back," is often followed by a flash of its red eye-comb as it flies up from its heathery perch and disappears back into the landscape it is such a part of.

Such encounters with Red Grouse have become all too rare in recent years, with many experts proclaiming that the birds have been all but lost from many peatlands that were once suitable. So, what has happened to provoke such a change in the fortunes of a species that is regarded by many as symbolic of our uplands and bogs?

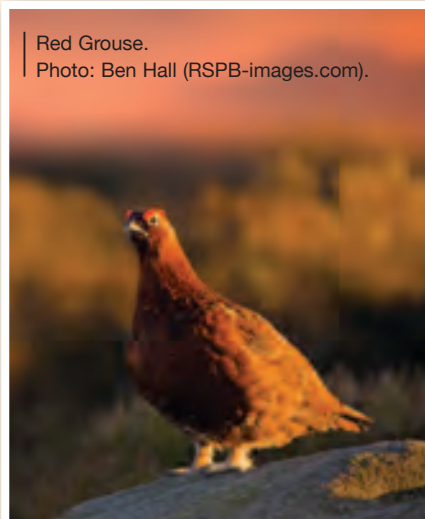
We know there have been huge changes and pressures on upland habitats in Ireland over the past 40 years or so, with many of these changes directly impacting on those peatland habitats (blanket bog, raised bog and heath) preferred by Red Grouse. Large-scale tree

planting, extraction of peat (particularly large-scale mechanical extraction), inappropriate peat burning and overgrazing by sheep and deer, have all been cited as culprits by ecologists as affecting both the quality and extent of peatlands. As a result of these concerns, the National Parks and Wildlife Service commissioned a national survey of Red

Grouse in 2006-2008 to determine the distribution and abundance of the species. BirdWatch Ireland had the task of trying to design a survey and methodology that would accurately determine their range, which we knew was extensive across all bogs and heath in the past.

Red Grouse are a ground-nesting gamebird, generally single-brooded, and therefore sensitive to disturbance. To avoid adversely affecting pairs during their breeding season, the survey period was limited to those months (December to March) prior to nesting when male territoriality and aggressiveness is at its peak. Red Grouse can be a difficult species to survey as they are quite secretive and may easily go unnoticed unless specific methods are taken to ensure detection, particularly in low-density populations. With this in mind, tape playback was employed as the primary method of detection in the national survey. It works by provoking an

Red Grouse.
Photo: Ben Hall (RSPB-images.com).



Red Grouse on Slieve Rushen, Co Fermanagh.
Photo: BirdWatch Ireland.



intruder response in any territorial males present in a survey area. A 30-second call of a male grouse is played over a loudspeaker (see photo) to elicit a response from any grouse in the area. Responses include males displaying, calling back or males/females flushing, i.e. flying away. In addition, the national survey collected records of 'casual sightings' from many sources, including from hillwalkers.

The findings of the national survey showed that the extent of Red Grouse range in the Republic of Ireland has declined by an average of 50% (see map). Losses were greater in some regions than others, reflecting the pace of change in land-use practices in these regions. The average numbers of Red Grouse were low, at just over one bird per kilometre square surveyed, although there was much variation in numbers across suitable habitats and regions. This variation reflects the underlying differences in habitat extent and habitat quality between regions. Areas with more dry heath and greater heather cover were more likely to have grouse present.

Red Grouse are naturally associated with areas with suitable habitat availability and habitat quality. The importance of this relationship was examined by the national survey which highlighted the prevalence of better heather cover and greater heather heights in areas occupied by Red Grouse, and along with other habitat data collected, showed that such areas also had fewer signs of damage from overgrazing.

How many grouse are left?

The population of Red Grouse now stands at approximately 4,200 birds (about 2,100 breeding pairs) in the Republic of Ireland. Overall, the distribution results indicate a contraction in range, particularly in some regions, to core areas or strongholds. Some of the better areas for Red Grouse include the Wicklow and Dublin Mountains, the Slieve Blooms in County Laois and the Blue Stacks in Co Donegal. Worryingly, there are only small populations left on the midland raised bogs and on hills in counties Cork and Kerry. Conservation measures in the future will need to tackle the problem of these isolated populations which are more threatened (in terms of being genetically bottlenecked and therefore less adaptable to change) with extinction, given their isolation from more robust populations.

How will grouse populations fare into the next decade?

Certain measures such as the targeted destocking of sheep in areas badly damaged from overgrazing should have a positive impact. The cessation of turf cutting in SACs (Special Areas of Conservation) will also benefit populations. Other measures to address illegal

burning practices with the implementation of correct codes of practice need to be taken. Given the detrimental effects certain land-use changes have had on populations and the precarious nature of many of those populations that remain, a targeted species action plan for Red Grouse is needed urgently, if we are to avoid any further decline.

Acknowledgments

The national survey benefited from using records acquired from many sources, including from members of Mountaineering Ireland. Although the national survey is now completed and the findings will soon be available online at www.npws.ie, BirdWatch Ireland is keen to continue to act as the depository for any new records of Red Grouse seen, so please do send in your records.

• *Sinéad Cummins is a conservation officer with BirdWatch Ireland. For more information on the grouse survey and how to submit your casual sightings, please go to BirdWatch Ireland's website, www.birdwatchireland.ie.*

The surveyors located grouse by playing the call of a male grouse through a megaphone and listening and watching for responses.
Photo: BirdWatch Ireland.





Club members on Lobawn, Co Wicklow.
Photo: Chris McLoughlin.

Out & About Hillwalking Club celebrates 20 years

MICHAEL DILLON

THE OuT & ABouT Hillwalking Club is a Dublin-based group for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends and families. It began life as the Hirschfield Outdoors Group in December 1989 but, feeling that this name was something of a mouthful, the Out & About name was adopted in the late 1990s.

From humble beginnings, with half a dozen walkers on the once-monthly Sunday hikes, the club has grown steadily. Walks now take place every Sunday of the year, with between 20 and 30 out on an average Sunday.

The majority of the membership is made up of men; the group is keen to encourage more women to come along to improve the gender balance. The club is fortunate in having a broad range of ages – from twenties to sixties. The last economic boom brought with it lots of new members from the Eu, the uS and beyond – providing the club with a cosmopolitan influx, some of whom have stayed despite the economic downturn. Numbers swell during the summer months with holiday visitors from abroad.

Depending on the availability of hike leaders on the day, there will usually be a split into longer and shorter walks. Most of the hikes are to the Dublin/Wicklow Mountains, with forays further afield in the

summer months to the Mourne, Cooleys, Blackstairs and Slieve Bloom mountains. A recent innovation has been the introduction of Wednesday evening hikes in summer – proving popular with those who are available to participate.

There is a team of five hike leaders, which also functions as the steering committee. The club was delighted to be accepted for membership of the then MCI in 2004. Regular contact is maintained, and joint walks organised, with our sister hiking clubs – the Cork Gay Hillwalkers and Out & About Northern Ireland.

There is a strong emphasis on socialising within the club – dinners often being organised after walks, a barbeque in summer, a Christmas party and an annual dinner. There are usually two weekends away organised each year – a fixture being the wonderful Tig Roy Centre (see www.tigroy.com) in Galbally, Co Tipperary, for some splendid Galty Mountain walking. There are also regular Saturday trips to the Mourne – so accessible from Dublin with the new M1 motorway.

Trips abroad have been organised to north Wales, the Lake District, Scotland, southern Poland, Slovakia, the French, Swiss and Italian Alps, and the Picos de Europa in Spain. An online colour newsletter is produced every two months, keeping members informed about club events.

Celebration events

The club's 20th anniversary celebrations kicked off with a birthday cake at the Christmas party in December 2009. This was followed by a photographic exhibition and supper in The Macro Community Centre, Dublin.

The Brockagh Centre in L aragh proved to be a wonderful venue for a sumptuous afternoon tea in April 2010 – gay men really do know how to bake! The Ashtown Visitor Centre in Phoenix Park was the venue for the Anniversary Dinner on a long summer evening in May. The first floor dining area, surrounding gardens and great cooking made for a most convivial night.

The highlight of the 20th anniversary celebrations was the completion of the Top 100 peaks challenge in Ireland. This took place over a six-month period with the final peak – L ugunaquilla – scaled on 26th September 2010; a fitting end to a whistle-stop tour of some less familiar mountains and ranges within Ireland. Five of our group climbed all 100 peaks, with many more completing individual peaks along the way. This may be the first occasion that the 100 peaks have been completed as a hiking club group challenge.

• More information at www.gay-hiking.org.

Club members on Mweelrea, Co Mayo.
Photo: Chris McLoughlin.



Mountain Meitheal volunteers working on stone-pitching on Three Rock Mountain, Co Dublin.
Photo: Mountain Meitheal.



Join the volunteer corps

Clubs urged to adopt Mountain Meitheal spirit

MOuNTAIN MEITHEAL, the voluntary trail repair group, recently completed a stone-pitched path on the heavily-used Fairy Castle trail on Three Rock Mountain, Co Dublin, and it has just started a project improving the tread on the Wicklow Way at Knockree, Co Wicklow. To learn more about their work, log on to www.pathsavers.org.

Mountaineering Ireland is asking club committees planning their calendar for spring 2011 to consider Mountain Meitheal's appeal for "one day in seven." Mountain Meitheal is suggesting that, for every six days we spend walking on the

hills, we should give one back in conservation.

Clubs are asked to include a workday with Mountain Meitheal or a similar organisation in their programme for the year.

By committing to a day with Mountain Meitheal, your club can give something back for all the days you enjoy in the

Mountain Meitheal urges you to 'Get Out, Get Dirty, Give Back!'

mountains. Mountain Meitheal will provide tools, expert supervision and work, and you provide the volunteers. Whatever your skill or strength, there is something for everybody. Yes, you'll get dirty, but it's fun and hugely satisfying!

While this is primarily aimed at clubs in the east coast area (as most of Meitheal's work is in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains), with sufficient notice Mountain Meitheal may be able to send a small team to other parts of the country to work with club members on specific projects. In such a situation, training and tools would be provided by Mountain Meitheal. However, the host club may need to discuss with Meitheal the

Leave No Trace DVD on sale

MOuNTAIN MEITHEAL'S Chris Avison has produced an excellent DVD for Leave No Trace Ireland about the principles of Leave No Trace. These principles were discussed in articles in the *Irish Mountain Log* earlier this year and it is important that we all adhere to them, if we want to ensure the sustainability of our sport and the environment we cherish. The 20-minute DVD, which specifically focuses on the Irish environment, is for sale and would make a nice stocking filler for outdoor enthusiasts. It would also be good to show it at club meetings/AGMs to remind everyone how we can reduce our impact on the environment.

It can be obtained by sending a cheque for €5.99 (£4.95) to cover the postal costs to Leave No Trace Ireland, c/o CAAN, The Stableyard, Barnett's Demesne, Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5PB. Cheques should be made payable to Leave No Trace Ireland. Mountain Meitheal's own website is www.pathsavers.org.



Working on stone-pitching on Three Rock Mountain.
Photo: Mountain Meitheal.

selection of the work site and ensure that approval for the work is secured in advance from the landowner and any other party affected.

Trail repair and construction is covered under the Mountaineering Ireland insurance policy, as long as no machines or power tools are involved. For more information or to arrange a date with Mountain Meitheal, contact Robert Grandon at robertgrandon@gmail.com or Shay Walsh at shaymwalsh@eircom.net.



Ger McDonnell's family collect his award

MOuNTAIN RESCuE IREI AND nominated Irish mountaineer Ger McDonnell for the International Alpine Solidarity Award, also known as the Targa d'Argento (see IMI 95, p21). The nomination was not only for his heroic efforts on K2 but for the many times he had demonstrated concern and compassion for fellow climbers.

This is the only international mountain rescue award. It was founded in 1972 in Pinzolo, Italy, by the chief of the local mountain rescue team after a very difficult rescue operation, as a way of honouring the rescuers.

There are two awards, the Targa d'Argento (Silver Plaque) and the Alba d'Oro (Gold Medal). The award is now in its 39th year and has the President of Italy as its patron. When it started, most of the recipients were from Italian rescue teams, but slowly, over time, the award has taken on a more international flavour.

Over the weekend of September 17-20, an Irish delegation travelled to Pinzolo to watch Ger's mother, Gertie McDonnell, receive the award. The delegation consisted of nine members of the McDonnell family and two MRI members, John Dowd (Kerry MRT), who climbed with Ger on Broad Peak in 2006, and Paul Whiting (MRI Development Officer), who researched and wrote the nomination.



The McDonnell family receive the Targa d'Argento gold medal in Pinzolo, Italy. Photo: Mountain Rescue Ireland.

The award ceremony started on Saturday with Mass in the local church. When the Mass finished, we were entertained in front of the town hall before progressing through the streets of the town to the square where the award ceremony took place. The Targa d'Argento was presented to the chief of the Alta Val di Fassa Mountain Rescue Team from Italy to honour four members who were killed by an avalanche during a rescue operation on December 26, 2009. Ger's

mother was then presented with a gold medal to honour Ger, and another four gold medals were presented to the relatives of Stefano Da Forno, Fabrizio Spaziani, Marco Zago and Dario De Filip who were killed when their rescue helicopter crashed on August 22, 2009, during landslides on the slopes of Monte Cristallo in Italy.

For more information on the Targa d'Argento and to read the full text of Ger's nomination, visit www.solidarietalpina.com.

Ireland and UK Mountain Rescue Conference

MEMBERS OF MRI worked with colleagues from Mountain Rescue England and Wales, and the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland to organise this bi-annual conference in Dublin this year, over the weekend of September 10-12th.

This was only the second time that the conference had been held in Ireland, the first time being in 1996. The conference was held at Dublin City University and had the theme "Mountain Rescue: Our Future Role?" Over 350 people attended with every rescue team in Ireland being represented and with delegates also coming from England, Scotland, Wales, the uS, Iceland and Hong Kong.

The conference was officially opened on the Saturday by MRI Chairperson Seamus Bradley. During Saturday, there were four parallel streams of lectures covering mountain medicine, swift-water rescue and flood rescue, computer-based search and operations tools, and search management, and case studies from overseas agencies on new organisational and equipment developments. The day finished with dinner followed by a talk by Ollie Geraghty from Mayo MRT about mountain rescue's involvement in the Reek Sunday pilgrimage.

On Sunday morning there was a series of parallel workshops on water safety, search management software, operations

management software, GPS technology, hauling systems in MR and Irish helicopters and vehicles. After lunch, everyone came together for the final lecture, titled "A Paradigm Shift," by Iyle Brotherton from Scotland, who summarised the weekend by recommending that whatever lay in store for the future of Mountain Rescue, it would be dealt with more efficiently if we developed closer ties with each other and with the other emergency services.

MRI would like to thank the staff at DCu for their assistance in making the event a great success and all the commercial exhibitors from Ireland and the uK for their great support.

International Commission for Alpine Rescue

MRI IS A member of the International Commission for Alpine Rescue (ICAR). ICAR consists of four commissions: alpine medicine, air, avalanche and terrestrial; the terrestrial commission is the one most relevant to Ireland. Each year, ICAR has an annual congress to discuss the latest developments in alpine rescue across the 33 member countries. This year's congress was hosted by the Slovakian Mountain Rescue Service in Vysoke Tatry in the High Tatras over the weekend of October 7-10. Two members of Dublin & Wicklow MRT represented MRI at the terrestrial commission.

ICAR makes recommendations for national MR bodies to consider regarding training and operations. It is through attendance at this forum that MRI has developed relationships with key players in mountain rescue around the globe and this led to recent exchanges with the Austrian and Bulgarian Mountain Rescue Services. Next year's annual congress is to be held in Are, Sweden.

For more information on ICAR, visit:

www.ikar-cisa.org



Training and Development Group

THE TRAINING AND Development Group have been busy this quarter with two regional exercises being held and two courses. The first regional exercise was held in the Galtees, hosted by the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) on August 28th and the second was hosted by Mayo MRT on Mweelrea on September 18th. The Annual Foundation Rigging course was held in Doolin in early October and a Critical Incident Stress Management course was held in Glendalough over the weekend of October 15-17.



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Slieve Donard from Cove.
Photo: Helen Lawless.



Autumn Meet

What a swell party we had

NICKY HORE

I AM IN THE Mournes every second week but it was still exciting to be heading there one Friday evening in late October to attend the Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Meet at Tollymore.

By 8:00pm there was already a crowd assembled there from all corners of Ireland. Club and individual members of Mountaineering Ireland, Board members, staff and also many youngsters, which made it a great family weekend.

The fabulously rebuilt Tollymore National Outdoor Centre proved to be an excellent base for the weekend. The new building is a large modern structure that immediately draws your eye across its undulating shape, vying with the mountain backdrop for attention.

The rain was belting down on us on the way over to Tollymore and we imagined the water washing across the steep mountainsides behind the Centre. It was lovely to get in out of the rain to a warm fire, a drop of tea and a sambo, and then to check into one of Tollymore's own *en suite* rooms.

The Belfast Association of Rockclimbers & Fellrunners (BARF) had organised a good line-up for the weekend with the theme of "Healthy Mountains,

Healthy People," and BARF frontman, Vincent McAlinden, did a great job of co-ordinating the whole event. It was a cheery Friday evening with a talk and slide presentation of breathtaking photos of the Mournes by Craig Hillier on the

large screen in the main hall, followed by lively music with local musicians and a chance to catch up with friends from all over the country.

Despite the weather, Saturday morning continued with the same energy and there was a choice of activities – walks of different lengths, scrambles, orienteering, rock-climbing, indoor climbing and, the one I picked, a path repair day with Mountain Meitheal and the Mourne Heritage Trust (MHT).

It started with a group of us, which included Mountaineering Ireland's Chief Officer, Karl Boyle, and Chairperson, Ruairí Ó Conchúir, walking in by Ott Track, with shovel or crowbar over the shoulder, to a site below Slieve Loughshannagh. Then it was down and dirty, as the gang tore into re-aligning the path, digging a soakpit and moving boulders, soil and mud until there was a properly angled, hard-surfaced path that would eventually be fit to take both the rain washing across it and the heavy fall of feet for many years.

I was put with another beginner – Elaine Canavan from Foyle Hillwalking and Ramblers Club – on one particular section. There was a quick lesson in path engineering – after the mandatory first-aid/manual handling/circle of death (don't

Rita Connell of Blayney Ramblers in the Mournes during the Autumn Meet.
Photo: Margaret Tees.





Mountain Meitheal and Mourne Heritage Trust repaired a path below Slieve Loughshannagh.

ask) talk when I wondered if Mountain Rescue would be on standby – by the MHT team and we were left to it.

Now, navvying is not a job I am skilled in, and neither was Elaine, though she did admit to being a keen gardener, but we were both very proud of the few metres of repaired path completed after a few hours with spade, rake and hand. Everyone worked very hard and had great fun too, but the satisfaction from the day boosted our energy and I think everyone had a lift to their gait returning over the Ott Track.

Then it was eatin' and drinkin' and music and dancin' for the evening and somewhere in between there were a few talks which continued on Sunday morning. Jackson Sports were there with their mobile shop; Tiso held a boot-fitting session tempting people with free socks; you could have an après-walk massage; CAAN informed us on how to access information on walking holidays in Northern Ireland; we learnt about the design and construction of the sculpture at Tollymore, which beautifully captures the adventurous spirit that can be found in the Mourne mountains; a I eave No Trace presentation focused our minds again on how we can respect our environment and, in "Sacred Summits," Dr Sam Moore enlightened us about our mountain heritage, Christian and pre-Christian, the remains of which can be seen on various summits.

That wasn't all – there was also a workshop on nutrition and hydration for mountain activities by Dr Andrea McNeilly of the university of ulster; a session on post-exercise recovery techniques by Karen Doyle and Andy McMullen (a massage sounds inviting, yet cold water

is best, but not so inviting!) and we finished with a healthy Sunday lunch.

Which reminds me to thank all of the Tollymore staff who looked after the meals, the accommodation and the all-important bar (which had to be refuelled on the Saturday night!) and the instructors. Thanks also to the BARF members and the Mountaineering Ireland members and staff, who had all obviously worked so hard to make the weekend so enjoyable.

• Nicky Hore, *Blayney Ramblers*



The remarkable new sculpture at Tollymore. Patrick O'Sullivan.

Autumn Meet Photo Competition winner

A PHOTOGRAPHIC competition was held during the Autumn Meet, with many photos received from delegates young and old. The winner was Jim Brown, whose winning photo is shown below. Jim is a founder member of BARF and is also a co-organiser of the Mourne Mountains Marathon and the Seven Sevens Challenge.



The Mourne Wall.
Photo: Jim Brown.



Young participants and their instructors on the Peace III initiative.

Youth Programme round-up 2010

PAUL SWAIL

OVERALL, THIS has been a busy year for the Mountaineering Ireland Youth Programme in Northern Ireland. We have had a programme of outdoor weekends in Ireland and the UK for young people; a Climbing for Peace project at Gortatole Climbing Wall; a climbing initiative created by young people and a school based at Ganaway Activity Centre; climbing classes for young people four nights a week at Hotrock Climbing Wall; structured climbing programmes at the Ozone Climbing Wall in Belfast; four very successful residential trips for young people; and ongoing support to young people, clubs and other youth initiatives throughout Northern Ireland.

Below is a quick round-up of what has been happening in different areas over the last year.

Hotrock Climbing Wall

Indoor rockclimbing classes have been hugely popular at Hotrock ever since they started five or six years ago. These classes have given young people the opportunity to develop their interest in climbing and to use it as a foundation to take them into the mountains and further afield. This year has been no different. With classes running in the evenings from Monday to Thursday, on average there have been 40 young people attending each evening, ranging in age from 6 to 17 years old. The local schools have also shown a real interest in the classes, with Down High School regularly attending and St Malachy's School, Castlewellan, and Shimna College, Newcastle, currently setting up after-school climbing clubs. Many of the young people attending these

classes have started climbing two or three times a week independently. It's great to see their level of enthusiasm for climbing.

Gortatole Climbing Wall

Over in Fermanagh, Mountaineering Ireland volunteers have put a lot of time and effort into developing a climbing programme for the young people on both sides of the border. The Climbing for Peace initiative has enabled young people to come together and interact in an enjoyable activity. This initiative has acted as a great catalyst to promote climbing in the area. A big thanks to all the volunteers in the area.

Paul Speight, Climbing for Peace project manager, commented: "Young people from Fermanagh and Sligo have come together to learn rockclimbing and build new cross-border and cross-community friendships.

"The Hanging Rockers Climbing Club (Fermanagh) and Sligo Young Climbers have developed an innovative programme to bring young people from all communities and both sides of the border together to learn rockclimbing. Climbing for Peace has recruited around 45 young people from communities across west Fermanagh, Sligo and Leitrim. The youngsters involved got expert tuition in rockclimbing techniques combined with peace and reconciliation training. The activity promotes trust and cooperation in a challenging and exiting environment."

So far there have been three beginners and one improvers course at the Hanging Rockers' base at Gortatole O.E.C., a weekend at Tollymore Mountain Centre, another at Gartan O.E.C., together with accredited training for the volunteer instructors at Tollymore.

These agencies, along with Mountaineering Ireland, have all been very supportive towards the project.

Both of the clubs involved are looking to continue with climbing for young people and would welcome new participants, volunteers and parents.

Ganaway Activity Centre

Ganaway is located on the Ards peninsula in north Down. A pilot schools project was started earlier this year to see if a climbing programme would be sustainable in the area. The initial interest was quite low but, with the support of a couple of Mountaineering Ireland volunteers, parents and local organisations, we currently have 35 young people climbing every Thursday. The interest has increased dramatically over the last few months and the number of participants could still rise.

What's up next year?

The Northern Ireland climbing series will kick things off at the start of the year. The first competition will be on January 22nd at the Hotrock Climbing Wall, Tollymore Mountain Centre. There will be the opportunity for 16 to 22-year-olds to take part in a youth Scottish Winter Meet and a programme of residential events similar to last year.

For more information on any of the above, check the youth section of the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie, or get in touch with me on paul.swail@mountaineering.ie.

• Paul Swail is Mountaineering Ireland's Northern Ireland Youth Development Officer.



Scottish Winter Meet

Inchree Centre, Onich, February 18-28th, 2011

MOuNTAINEERING IREI AND is basing its 2011 Winter Meet at the Inchree Centre in Onich, between Fort William and Glen Coe, in the Western Highlands of Scotland from the 18th to 28th of February 2011. Onich is a great location for accessing Ben Nevis and the Three Sisters of Glen Coe.

The Inchree Centre offers a variety of accommodation including bunk houses, hostels, chalets and B&B. There is also a restaurant and bar on site. More information at: www.inchreecentre.co.uk.

Who is it for?

All walkers and climbers are welcome, whether on one of our official instructed training courses or on a more informal 'do your own thing' basis. The ethos for the meet is to bring together like-minded people to share in days on the hills, evening talks and slide-shows and plenty of late-night discussions. Whether on a course or just coming along informally, all participants are asked to book through the Mountaineering Ireland office so that we have an idea of numbers.

What courses are on offer?

We will be running three levels of courses:

Basic Winter Skills

This is for summer hillwalkers who would like to learn basic snow skills and try winter walking for the first time.

Ratio: 1:6. Cost: €250 for 3 days with qualified and experienced instructors.

Winter Mountaineering

This is for those walkers and climbers who have done some basic winter walking and want to try something a little more challenging.

Ratio: 1:4. Cost: €300 for 3 days with qualified and experienced instructors.

Winter Climbing

This course is for those who would like to tackle routes requiring the use of an axe and hammer. Previous rockclimbing and winter experience required.

Ratio: 1:2. Minimum of 2 people required. Cost: €550.

Accommodation

Please book your accommodation early (no later than December) to avoid disappointment. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have booked accommodation.

Inchree Chalets & Bunk Rooms are located in the picturesque village of Onich, midway between the Ben Nevis and Glencoe mountain ranges (20 mins drive to Ben Nevis, 10 mins to Glencoe). The Mamore Mountains are also a 20 mins drive away. Walkers and climbers are spoiled for choice. Go to www.multimap.com for an OS map showing the location.

Set within private and naturally wooded grounds, the Inchree Centre has superb panoramic views overlooking Loch Loch and the Ardgour Mountains. Inchree is a small hamlet, conveniently situated off the A82 main road, yet secluded enough to offer peace and quiet. From the doorstep you can take walks in Glenrigh Forest, reaching the impressive Inchree Waterfalls, which drop over 100 metres in a series of steps, or take an evening stroll along the Loch Loch shoreline, taking in the marvellous sunsets.

Bookings

To book accommodation, please contact Inchree direct on +44 (0)1855 821287, or e-mail: stay@inchreecentre.co.uk, stating that you are attending the Mountaineering Ireland Winter Meet. Please do not use the booking system on their website as not all accommodation available for that week may be listed.

Ski Mountaineering and Snowshoeing Meet

Chamonix, French Alps, March 19-27th, 2011

THE MOuNTAINEERING IREI AND Ski Mountaineering and Snowshoeing Meet is aimed at skiers and walkers of all ages and skill levels. The purpose is to get people together in an Alpine area where they can snowshoe and ski-tour.

The meet is an occasion to share information, learn new skills and find ski-

touring partners and generally share in the exploration of an Alpine area. Many people return to the meet from year to year, using it as a base to take on new challenges in a new area. Others may be visiting the Alps for the first time and joining more experienced friends or taking part in one of the Mountaineering Ireland

courses that supplement the meet.

The courses are designed to introduce people to the skills needed for ski mountaineering and snowshoeing with the long-term aim of making participants capable of independent activity in Alpine areas. A natural progression is for people to participate in a course in the first few years and then return to the meet as an independent walker/climber. Further information at www.mountaineering.ie.

Summer Alpine Meet 2011

Argentière, France, July 2nd to 16th, 2011

The location for the 2011 Alpine Meet is Argentière, a small village located near the head of the Chamonix Valley, 8km from Chamonix town. It gives easy access to some of the best walking, climbing and mountaineering in the valley.

Who is the meet for?

The meet is for everyone – walkers, rock climbers and alpinists of all ages. This is a wonderful opportunity for all members, new and old, to meet old friends and make new ones, and to go walking, climbing and mountaineering in some of France's most beautiful scenery.

The meet has an important social aspect, and musicians, dancers and singers are encouraged to bring their musical instruments, legs and voices to the legendary social gatherings and parties that occur during the meet.

The overall purpose of the meet is to gather like-minded people together in an Alpine area where they can walk, boulder, rock-climb or climb snow-covered and rocky Alpine peaks. Walking and mountaineering clubs are particularly welcome to come and use the experience and knowledge of the Mountain Guides to plan their walks, while exploring the area.

The formal courses are designed to introduce you to the skills required for walking and climbing in Alpine areas but with the long-term aim of enabling you to do this independently. There are also courses for people who want to refresh or upgrade the skills learnt on previous meets. A natural progression is for people to participate in courses initially and then return to the meet in the following years as an independent walker/climber.

The qualified Mountain Guides and Walking Leaders are at the meet not only to

run training courses, but also to share information with everyone on mountain conditions and recommended routes in the area. The main emphasis of the meet is to have fun, make contact with fellow Mountaineering Ireland members, and develop skills through getting out in the mountains independently or on one of the climbing or walking courses.

Events planned for meet

- Day-walk led by Alun Richardson, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer
- Performance coaching of movement
- Lecture on Alpine mountaineering
- Lecture on climbing further afield
- Bouldering competition
- Slack-lining competition
- Barbeque, music and dancing
- Photo competition

There may well be prizes on offer for the competitions!

Courses and trips

Courses have been designed to suit all interests. If you are interested in independent walking or trekking, you can also join us on a camping-only option. Full details of all trips and courses can be found on the website www.mountaineering.ie.

Workshops

Following on from the popularity of last year's workshops, Mountaineering Ireland will be offering a series of half-day workshops to refresh some of the skills needed to mountaineer safely. These are not meant to replace the full courses. They will require some previous knowledge and experience. Cost €25; maximum ratio 1:8. Dates to be set at the meet. The following workshops will be held:

- Glacier-crossing and crevasse rescue
- Multi-pitch climbing techniques
- Simple rescues for rock climbs
- Movement skills for rock climbing level 1
- Movement skills for rock climbing level 2
- Moving fast in the Alps.

Private guiding

If there is a group of you, private half-day or full-day guided sessions can be booked at €160 for a half day, €275 for a full day.

Courses

The following courses are of five days' duration, commencing at 18:00 hrs on Saturday July 2nd or Saturday July 9th and will run over a six-day period with one rest day. The rest day will depend on the prevailing weather conditions.

Five-day Walking Tour

This fantastic multi-day walk will be led by an International Mountain Leader and will take you across a truly spectacular variety of terrain.

Cost €450; maximum ratio 1:8 (1:4 minimum); 3-8th July and 10-15th July.

Five-day Alpine Adventure Walking

This is designed for fit walkers who want to learn how to take on more technical Alpine walks. Such walks might require negotiating ladders, steep tracks, snow slopes, high passes and glacial terrain. You will learn to use an ice axe and basic rope work techniques. Weather permitting, an overnight stay will be made at a mountain hut. A good level of fitness and a sense of adventure are essential.

Cost €500; ratio 1:6 (1:4 minimum); 3-8th and 10-15th July.

Five-day Introduction to Alpine Mountaineering

This course aims to introduce participants to the basics of Alpine mountaineering. By the end of the week you will be familiar with how to safely travel through glaciers, rocky ridges, rock faces and steep snow slopes. Weather permitting, you will climb several Alpine peaks and spend at least one night in a mountain hut. All those booking on to this course must have a good level of fitness. Some climbing experience is helpful, but not essential.

Cost €700; ratio 1:4; 3-8th and 10-15th July.

Five-day Intermediate Alpine Mountaineering

This course is run at a ratio of 1:2 to allow participants undertake more technical routes. The aim is to improve your existing mountaineering skills, focusing on safety, efficiency and

independence in the mountains. The course will include efficient rope work, quick movement on Alpine terrain, and navigation. All participants must have experience with use of crampons and an ice-axe, and a basic knowledge of rope work. Some rock-climbing experience and a high level of fitness are essential.

Cost €800; ratio 1:2; 3-8th and 10-15th July.

Five-day Advanced Alpine Mountaineering

This course is run at a ratio of 1:2 to allow participants undertake more technical routes. It is essential that participants have previous Alpine experience and a sound knowledge of rope work and belays. Scottish winter mountaineering experience would also be an advantage. We would hope to progress onto multi-pitch climbs on rock, snow and ice at grades of AD to TD.

Cost €1,100; ratio 1:2; 3-8th and 10-15th July.

Three-day Climbing for the over-50s

An opportunity for those of us who are chronologically challenged to share some

time in the mountains together, walking, climbing and mountaineering.

Cost €300; ratio 1:4; 5-7th July and 12-14th July.

Three-day Mont Blanc Extension

An opportunity for ambitious walkers and mountaineers to climb Mont Blanc. It is an add-on to the previous courses, to ensure adequate acclimatisation.

Cost €500; ratio 1:2; 10-12th July.

How to apply

Information packs on the Summer Alpine Meet 2011 and booking forms are available for download from the website. Closing date for receipt of completed application forms and non-refundable deposits is 31st March 2011. Please contact Nicole on (+353 1) 625 1117 or email summermeet@mountaineering.ie before making any course booking or booking your flights.

If you are booking a place in the camp site only and you are not doing a course, please complete the form and send the booking deposit of €20 per person. This covers the discounted camp fees at the camp site. ■

Walking in the Vallée Blanche. Photo: Alun Richardson.

Mountain Leader Training Association

RACHAEL HINCHLIFFE

THE MOUNTAIN Leader Training Association (MLTA) was established in the UK in 2005 to provide award holders with an opportunity to develop their skills beyond the date on which they achieved their award in climbing, walking and mountaineering. Membership of MLTA is strictly voluntary, but 1,600 people currently believe it is worthwhile. It is open to Republic of Ireland holders of an SPA, MI summer or winter, MIA or MIC. If your award was gained in the Republic of Ireland you will need to supply evidence of your training and assessment and when you registered with BOS.

Continuous potential for development

Saying the words "compulsory" or "revalidation" to anyone involved in the world of mountain training may make them break out in a rash! On the other hand, the term Continuing Professional Development, or CPD, is undergoing an increase in popularity and usage, especially amongst the membership associations.

Of course, Guides and International

Mountain Leaders have had their carnet-driven compulsory CPD targets for some years. However, the realisation is spreading that this is not an elitist issue but one that affects anyone who claims to offer any special expertise in practically anything and wishes to demonstrate their ongoing competence to the wider world.

The central concern of CPD is that of lifelong learning and its application to our professional and personal lives. CPD is more than just a policy or some form of bureaucratic procedure. It is not just a set of boxes to be ticked in a mindless way. It is value-laden and embraces a number of new developments. In its most comprehensive form, it can also be a structure for planning ongoing personal development, incorporating enabling reflective practices.

In addition to promoting the philosophy behind CPD, MLTA also offers practical solutions through training workshops and resources as well as ongoing support from a like-minded community through the web and formal/informal events. Members are drawn from a wide cross-section of society and backgrounds including full-time professional instructors through to volunteer Guide, Scout

and Duke of Edinburgh leaders and members who are doing the awards for their own personal interest.

From January 2011, full members (that is, people holding one or more awards) will have to comply with new CPD requirements. A policy has been developed over a period of 12 months involving significant consultation with the membership and wider stakeholders. The underlying aims and specific terms of the policy have been subjected to such rigorous scrutiny, I am sure that government legislation does not get the same careful attention. There has been little opposition and it has been encouraging to discover that members are already doing this stuff; the policy essentially formalises the position.

We believe that we have developed a policy which is neither too onerous nor too light in touch. The requirements are both achievable and aspirational. The policy establishes a realistic target for members that will also have value for potential employers and external organisations.

• For more information about the MLTA or CPD, contact Rachael Hinchliffe, MLTA Coordinator, at rachael@mlta.co.uk.

Paul Swail attempts the funky corner of Paralyzed Power (E6, 6b).
Photo: Paul Swail Collection.

Fair Head Meet

PAUL SWAIL

MOuNTAINEERING IREI AND hosted a climbing meet at Fair Head, Co Antrim, over the weekend of 4-6 June. The meet was a massive success with over one hundred climbers attending, despite Fair Head's remoteness on the north coast. Some of the climbers who attended came from mainland uK, Italy, Spain and even further afield.

Fair Head is a massive expanse of dolerite, rising out of the sea for over 100m in places. The cliff stretches for over three miles, sporting over 400 routes. Many of the routes follow crack lines, meaning gear is necessary for protection, and the physical nature of the climbing makes it very strenuous.

I was assisted in organising the event by many volunteers, including Geoff Sommerville and Ciaran Kinney. The aim was to introduce climbers to Fair Head, and the volunteers all chipped in to supply the visitors with route beta, approach recommendations and advice re crack climbing techniques!

With quite a few people travelling down early to make the most of the weekend, there was quite a buzz around the crag come Friday evening. The meet officially kicked off with a BBQ on Friday evening, followed by plenty of conversations about routes that were being climbed and recommendations. On both Saturday and

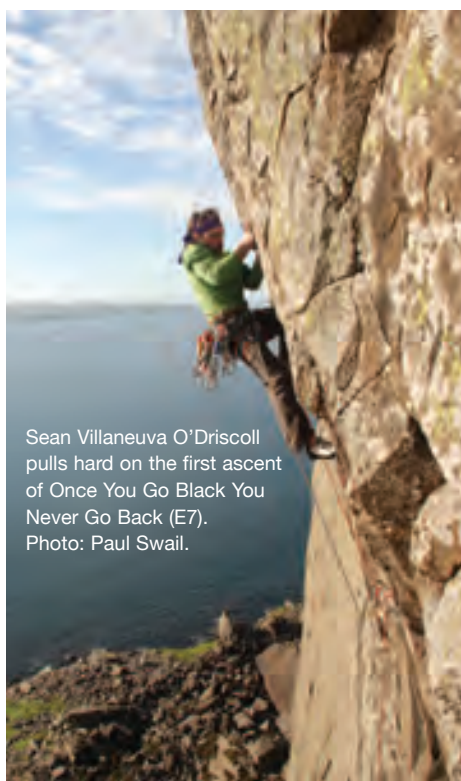
Sunday the climbers flocked to the crag and there was a real buzz along the whole crag. Walking along the top of the crag there was the sound of cow-bells (hexes), tin whistles, abseil ropes to access the more remote middle part of the crag and a generally good vibe. By the end of the weekend most of the classics were well chalked and people left smiling and satisfied!

Entertainment on the Saturday night was in the form of a screening of Irish/Belgium Sean's latest adventures on Mt Asgard (Baffin Island), *Asgard Jamming*. The local farmer, whose fields

are now the official Fair Head campsite, kindly cleaned out a huge shed for us. The venue was quite bizarre but created an amazing ambience along with a strong smell of manure and, with some great action on the big screen, the evening was enjoyed by all!

Overall, the weekend was a huge success with a great turnout and a high standard of climbing. The range of grades climbed spanned from VS to E7; not bad for a weekend's work! As for what folks got up to, well, let's just say there were climbers everywhere, with many notable ascents such as Primal Scream (E6), Paralyzed Power (E6), Talking Heads (E4), Track of the Cat (E4) and Salango (E3), and multiple ascents of The Wall of Prey (E5) and Face Value (E4). Some of the lesser climbed routes got a bit of traffic as well, such as Back to the Future 8 (E4), The Icarus Gun (E4) and X-Men (E3), and the mid-grade classics Girona (VS), Hell's Kitchen (HVS) and An Bealach Rúnda (E1), to mention just a few. One of the many highlights of the weekend was a ground-up ascent of a new route on the Rathlin Wall.

The whole weekend went very well, with lots of people getting a great introduction to what the crag has to offer. A big thanks to everyone who helped with the weekend and a special mention to the local farmer, Sean, who facilitated the event. ■



Sean Villaneuva O'Driscoll pulls hard on the first ascent of Once You Go Black You Never Go Back (E7).
Photo: Paul Swail.

Lead Climbing

National competition in Dingle

ANGELA CARLIN

THE NATIONAL LEAD CLIMBING

Competition took place at the Play-at-Height Wall in Dingle on Saturday, 16th of October. This year saw a bigger turnout of competitors than last year, and there was a great standard among the entries.

The competition began with two qualifying routes, which were demonstrated first. Scores were allocated for every hold reached by a competitor. The six highest-scoring competitors on these two routes progressed to the final.

The juniors started off with a relatively easy climb on the least overhanging section of the wall, and all entrants reached the top of their first qualifier.

The juniors' second qualifier was more challenging, but both female juniors and the majority of junior males also topped the second qualifier, leading to a larger than anticipated final, with eight competitors.

The junior final routes, however, were significantly harder and gave clear winners: **Rachel Cooper** took 1st place in Junior Female and **Vanessa Woods** took 2nd place.

In the Junior Male category the final route took on the most overhanging wall at Play-at-Height, with positive but steep climbing through the initial section and some very tricky sloping holds above.

Andrew Colligan took 1st place by the

narrowest of margins, with **Austin O'Curraín** a very close 2nd place. The 3rd place was a three-way tie between **Jamie Rankin**, **Dominic Burns** and **Eoin Acton**, whose small stature and dynamic style greatly impressed the audience.

The first qualifying route for female competitors was the junior qualifier 2. Again, all the competitors either topped, or were within a hold of the top on the first route, but found the second qualifier more challenging. Rachel Cooper (also entering seniors), was the only competitor to top the second qualifier.



Rachel Cooper.
Female junior
and senior winner.
Photo: Colin McAuliffe.

For the final routes, competitors climb in reverse order of ranking, so first out of the isolation was **Beatriz Baselga**, a first-time competitor. Bea put in a really star performance, with a really positive climbing style and a very spectacular bridge position!

None of the next five competitors were quite able to match Bea's attempt, until **Rachel Cooper**; last out of isolation because of her high ranking in the qualifiers, she made it to exactly the same hold. In another extremely close finish, Rachel won through because of her strong performance in the morning round. Third place went to **Joan Mulloy**, who reached a point just one hold behind the top two.

The men's competition also began with a relatively easy first qualifier, followed by



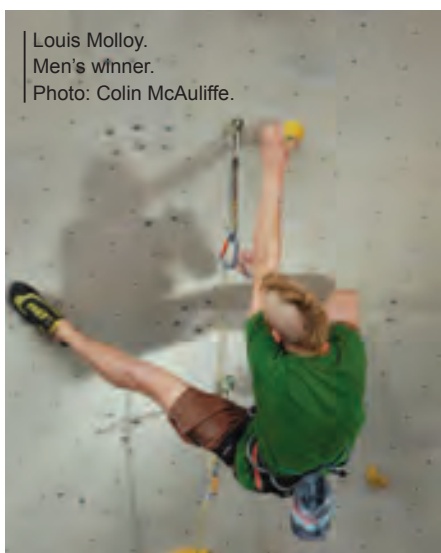
Nial McQuaid.
Men's 2nd place.
Photo: Colin McAuliffe.

one which sorted out the order for the finals. Eddie Cooper went through in the first position, having topped both routes, with a cluster of competitors in joint second: Louis Mulloy, Neal McQuaid, Andrew Colligan, Sean Marnane and Austin O'Curraín. Because the junior final route had also acted as the male qualifier 2, the junior who had scored highly on it in the morning round were given an option to complete the men's qualifier 1 and enter the men's final, so the other two male finalists, Pat Nolan and Stephen McGowan, were also joined by juniors, Jamie, Dominic and Eoin.

The men's final route tackled the middle section of the competition wall, but what the route lacked in steepness it made up for in sloping holds and dynamic moves. Louis Mulloy coped extremely well with the climbing style and put in a great performance to take 1st place. With just two holds separating the top 3 competitors, **Neal McQuaid** took 2nd and **Eddie Cooper** 3rd.

I would like to express my thanks to the following people: Cian O'Driscoll and Play-at-Height for their fantastic support again this year; route-setter Jamie Cassidy – the routes were superb again this year; Damian O'Sullivan, Matt Davis, Eamon Ó Riain, Colin McAuliffe and Rob Davies, who judged, photographed, belayed and did a million other jobs – the competition wouldn't have happened without you! Finally, thanks to **Lyon Equipment** for their generous sponsorship. ■

• Angela Carlin is Mountaineering Ireland's Coaching Development and Talent Identification Officer



Louis Molloy.
Men's winner.
Photo: Colin McAuliffe.

4 Peaks Climb in memory of an unknown friend

GERRY WALKER

I BEGAN HIKING in 1985 and there began my love and obsession with mountains. I had been born with cystic fibrosis (CF), so I was never going to break any speed or endurance records. That said, I did the Reeks Walk that year and the Lug Walk in 1986, so endurance was not the problem. Over the next decade I was very active visiting the Julian Alps, the Dolomites, the Bregalias, the Rockies and Scotland, and played an active part on the Wayfarers' committee.

From this, you might get the impression that everything was fine, but there was a downside and hiking for me did involve coughing fits and vomiting from the over-exertion.

Then things began to crumble and over the next ten years I spent more and more time in hospital or at home on intravenous antibiotics. CF was taking over my days and nights. I still went walking in the hills but I was slower and went alone, keeping in radio contact with my wife Margaret on the peaks. In May 2003, after a bad winter, I was prescribed oxygen, first to sleep with, and then to just walk. Oxygen was great for a while and I did the first oxygen-assisted ascents of Scarr and Djouce, and I spent the odd night camping in the hills with the aid of two 4kg oxygen cylinders.

In November 2003, I was assessed for a double lung transplant at the Freeman Hospital in Newcastle. The verdict was

"suitable for transplant but still too well." Now began the wait. Knowing the transplant might never happen, I was determined to continue visiting the hills at home and abroad in between the bouts of infection.

By October 2007, I was capable of walking just 200 metres in a six-minute test and my lung function was down to 25% – it was like living at over 8,000 metres. The Freeman team decided it was time for me to go on the active transplant list. After 10 months of waiting for that life-changing phone call, it finally came while I was on the shore of Lake Windermere on our nineteenth wedding anniversary. Margaret and I drove to the Freeman. Shortly after midnight we were told the lungs were suitable and the transplant would go ahead. I knew if I got onto the operating table, the stamina built up on hills over the years would pay off and I would get through the ordeal.



Gerry Walker and his wife Margaret Barron on the summit of Ben Nevis.

Twenty four hours later I was off the respirator and able to breath freely again. By the following day, I was already planning to climb Carrauntuohil, Snowdon, Ben Nevis and Scafell Pike – the highest peaks in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England – within a year of my transplant. I needed a target to get fit, to pay homage to Martin, my donor, and to raise donor awareness. With a lot of training, I achieved these milestones and successfully climbed the Four Peaks within the year (see www.4peaks4life.ie).

Since the transplant, my life has been transformed. I'm back walking regularly, I have walked in the Dolomites, the Gredos, the Rockies, and I recently completed the Glover Walk for the first time in over 15 years! None of this would have been possible without Martin, my donor.

Thanks are also due to my best friend, support and wife, Margaret Barron. If the truth be known, the last few years have placed a heavy burden on her: she has ridden a roller coaster to hell and back with me – a true friendship!



Gerry Walker and friends on summit of Carrauntuohil.

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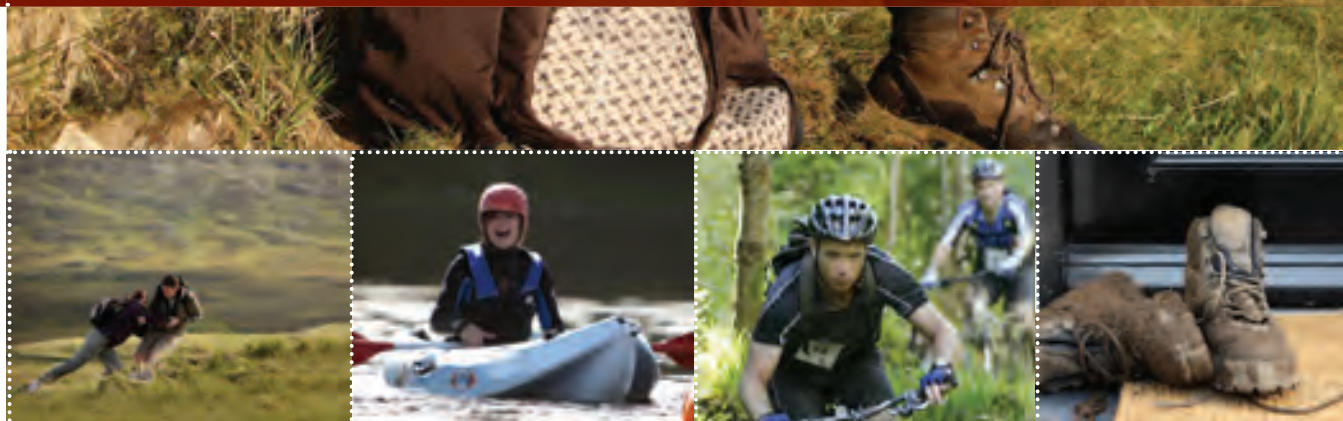
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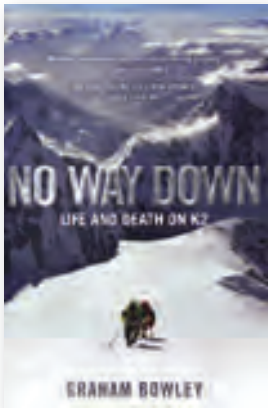
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Boardman Tasker Award 2010

The Boardman Tasker Award was established in 1983 to commemorate the lives of Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker, who were last seen alive on 17 May, 1982, attempting to traverse The Pinnacles on the unclimbed North East Ridge of Mount Everest at around 8,250m. They left two legacies, the great endeavour of their climbs on high peaks with bold, lightweight, innovative ascents of mountains which included Dunagiri, Changabang, Kongur, Everest and Kangchenjunga, and the books they had written. The Boardman Tasker Award promotes mountaineering literature through an annual award to the authors of literary works, the central theme of which concerns mountains. Below are reviews of four of the five titles that were short-listed for the 2010 award. The **winner**, announced on 19 November at the Kendal Mountain Festival by Ian Smith, chairman of the judges, was the autobiography ***Ron Fawcett: Rock Athlete***, written with Ed Douglas.



Gerry Galligan

No Way Down:

Life and Death on K2

By Graham Bowley

Viking, 253pp

16pp colour photos, endpaper map

£18.99 ISBN: 678-0-670-91842-3

This book is an account of the 2008 disaster on K2, which claimed eleven lives, including that of

Imerick man Ger McDonnell. In his introductory note, author Graham Bowley states that he “wanted to write a story that read dramatically, like fiction only real”. My first reaction on reading this was to groan, thinking ‘No – here we have a non-mountaineer, an American-based journalist, who, consciously or not, will clumsily handle the story of K2’s most recent catastrophe, distorting the events and exaggerating the unknowns for the sake of good copy or sales’. Thankfully though, I was wrong and Bowley gives a fair, balanced account of what happened that fateful August.

The author outlines the history of the mountain well and does a

good job describing the tension between teams, plus the personality types drawn to such an ambivalent prize. His treatment of the collective errors, the confusion of fixed ropes, the time-wasting, the lack of co-ordination, along with the natural hazards of weather, avalanche and serac fall, and the physical and psychological effects of high altitude climbing are well woven and unsettling. He has done his research well and the interpretation of individual accounts based on his many interviews with survivors comes across as authentic. I was particularly moved by the man-trap that is ‘the Bottleneck’ with its overhanging glacier waiting like a sword of Damocles to overwhelm the parties which, tragically, is what it did.

This book does not make pleasant reading. Yet it is a credit to the author that, unlike assessments of other mountaineering disasters – thinking of Everest 1996 where facts were publicly contested leading to the blurring of truth – Bowley doesn’t neglect to include the various opposing views, which adds to a well-rounded analytical text. And therein lies his value as an objective journalist and non-mountaineer. Other versions of the story may appear in the years ahead, but I suspect this book may remain the most veritable. Above all, it shows us, quite barely, the folly of what we do as vulnerable mortals taking on big, dangerous mountains. It teaches us an incontrovertible lesson: we play with nature at our peril.



Joss Lynam

Climbing Philosophy for

Everyone: Because It's There

Ed. Stephen E Schmid

Wiley-Blackwell, 236pp

npq ISBN: 978-1-443-3486-9

This book is one of a series studying philosophy, with subtitles ranging from the serious (Motherhood and Gardening) to the curious (College

Sex and Wine). Readers must decide for themselves where climbing fits in.

The book comprises of a very sensible Foreword by the Editor and seventeen essays in four sections. The first section broadly deals with the question ‘why?’ It dismisses Mallory’s ‘Because it’s There’, and the American Chuck Pratt’s ‘Because I am too short for basketball’. It makes several suggestions, taking us back to the Greeks and showing us the Stoic concept of ‘freedom’ has much in common with that of mountaineering, which is similarly constrained by natural conditions.

The second section is still concerned with why? I rather like the

suggestion that it is because it promotes moral virtues. This time it is Aristotle who is quoted. It is not so easy; we can only acquire them by habituation. The mean is what we must seek; he quotes the Goldilocks’s Principle – she chose a bed that fitted her, chose the porridge that was not too hot. So to make a virtue of courage may be for one mountaineer to climb Severe, for another to climb amongst the Extremes.

Other matters covered include ‘In Defense of Gratuitous Risk’, ‘Self Sufficiency’ and ‘Zen and the Art of Climbing’. (I avoided that last essay!)

The third section discusses ethics, under the rather corny heading of ‘Cutting the Rope’. It brings in Nietzsche and John Stuart Mill to help in avoiding any decisions on the use of pegs, on “hold manufacturing” and on free soloing. It also attempts to decide how many stones make a heap (aka a cairn) about which there would be varied opinions amongst Mountaineering Ireland clubs. The fourth section is mixed and includes ‘What is a climbing grade anyway’ and ‘The Beauty of a Climb.’ Most of the essays were written by Americans; the quotations they choose are American and will be unfamiliar to most Irish readers. This is mildly annoying and it sometimes blunts the validity of an example.

In this review I could only pick out a few obviously interesting points. If you have even a slightly philosophic mind, you will enjoy reading this book, though you will need to devote several evenings to it.



Patrick O'Sullivan

Unjustified Risk?

The Story of British Climbing

By Simon Thompson

Cicerone, 388pp incl appendices
20pp b/w photos, 4pp col photos
£20.00 ISBN 978 1 85284 627 5

The subtitle of this book appears ambitious. To write a complete history of British climbing in a single

book is a significant undertaking. To do it, an author would have to rationalise the numerous and often seemingly disparate developments that have occurred in British climbing over the years since they supposedly first invented the sport. The author, Simon Thompson, addresses this challenge well, seemingly covering the complete history of British mountaineering from the guided early ascents of Alpine peaks up to the present day's unguided alpine-style ascents of the Himalayan giants in a comprehensive and empathetic way, and linking the developments in the sport to social and economic changes along the way. While Thompson is not a well-known climber, he clearly understands climbing and climbers, and this comes through in his impressive history.

The author rationalises the history in two ways. Firstly, by dividing the history into several apparently significant and coherent time periods: an exploratory phase before 1854; the Golden Years for alpinism, when British climbers led the way from 1854-1865; then

1865-1914, years in which rockclimbing developed on British crags and Britons started exploring the mountains beyond the Alps; 1914-1939, years in which the sport opened up and became more egalitarian; 1939-1970, years in which the standards of rockclimbing again took a leap forward and the sport was popularised; and finally after 1970, when ethics and style came under increasing scrutiny. Certainly, in the Golden Years of alpinism, the British contribution cannot be denied when all but eight of the first ascents of 39 major alpine peaks were made by British parties. This period culminated with Whymper's ascent in 1865 of the Matterhorn, with the subsequent loss of life.

Secondly, Thompson attempts to differentiate between what he feels are the main rationales for climbing, the aesthetic and the heroic, a division which does seem a little artificial at times. He comes back to it at the end when he tries to explain why we climb, something he feels goes beyond Mallory's 'Because it is there,' but to me this division does still seem to be arbitrary. At a lesser level he also highlights the development of professionalism in the sport as the antithesis of its amateur origins and as something that culminates in the commercialism of today, with people being dragged up Everest.

It seems to me that in this book the author has certainly met the challenge that he set himself, that of producing a comprehensive history of British climbing. However, this does make some of the earlier chapters hard going, as they are very full of facts, which does not allow for fast reading, if you want to get the full benefit of this detailed history. Certainly the later chapters, the contents of which the reader is more likely to be familiar with, are easier to read. It is nonetheless overall a fascinating account of the development of our sport in Britain.



Stephen McGowan

Ron Fawcett: Rock Athlete

Autobiography with Ed Douglas
Vertebrate Publishing, 240pp
24pp colour photos
£20.00 ISBN:978-1-906148-17-1

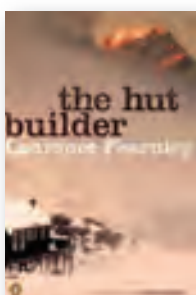
An inspirational climber from an inspirational time, Rock Athlete gives a down to earth, unembellished account of the rise of one of Britain's

best climbers. Ron Fawcett entered the scene at an exciting time, as existing aid routes began to fall to free-climbers. The accounts of Ron's ascents of such classics as Lord Of The Flies give great insights into what it was like pushing standards at that time. The book also covers a time of great flux in the climbing scene as aid succumbed to free climbing, climbing styles and ethics changed,

and trad climbing began to compete with bolts. The account of this golden age is unbiased and really gives a good insight into these important years for the new generation.

What I really enjoyed about this biography was its honesty. Ron appears to have no problems pointing out his indiscretions of infidelity and petty theft, and his other flaws on and off the rock. You really feel you get to know him as a person rather than a persona throughout the book.

It's interesting to compare this book with Jerry Moffat's biography, Revelations, and in particular, how they both handled the spotlight. Jerry seemed to court the spotlight while Ron only accepted it, as just an unfortunate side-effect of trying to do what he loved. While Jerry's book is inspiring, it does read very much like an account of routes, projects and injuries, while what I take away from Rock Athlete is a better knowledge of Ron Fawcett as a person. I think this biography has outdone Revelations and Ed Douglas as co-writer has done tremendous work in getting the story while still having the language and style of the book appear to be true to Ron.



The Hut Builder

By Laurence Fearnley
Penguin New Zealand
npq ISBN: 978-0-14-320506-7

This novel is set in the mountains of New Zealand and includes an account of the building of an early hut on Mount Cook and climbing with Edmund Hillary, an ingenious mix of fact and fiction.

Club in Clare requires new members and walk leaders

Clooney Quin Hillwalking Club in County Clare wants to recruit new members and is particularly interested in increasing its panel of walk leaders. The walk leader's task involves leading a club walk about once every eight weeks on either a Saturday or a Sunday. The club holds an organized walk every two weeks which generally alternates between short local walks and longer walks in other areas. For more information contact the Club Secretary, Frances, at: clooneyquinhillwalkingclub@gmail.com or phone 087 254 7910.

Kinder Scout trespass to be commemorated

A landmark moment in the struggle to gain access to the hills in England was the 1932 organised trespass on Kinder Scout, when ramblers took to the Derbyshire peak in defiance of local landowners. It is now planned to build a heritage centre in Hayfield, where the trespass started from.

The trespass ended in a fight with local gamekeepers and spells in prison for some of the participants. It is widely credited with paving the way for laws that would enable people in England to have access to open land, most notably the Countryside and Rights of Way Act in 2000.

Culdaff Climbfest 2011

Climbfeſt 2011 is back in Culdaſſ on Mayday Bank Holiday, as usual! Despite recent camping and access difficulties, reported elsewhere, due to weekend visitors' antisocial behaviour, access to Brasil Rock will be re-opened and campers will be welcome at the usual spot behind Bunagee pier.

Even better, Mountaineering Ireland members are allowed to camp in this area, year round. You may be asked to show your membership card. Climbers have earned their good reputation, so please don't lose it: leave the place the way you found it, or better; and be nice to the locals.



Minister Hanafin visits Dalkey Quarry

THE MINISTER for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Mary Hanafin, is pictured above on a guided tour of Dalkey Quarry, Co Dublin, on October 29th with Mountaineering Ireland's Chief Officer, Karl Boyle (left), and Les Moore, the parks superintendent of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council (right). The Minister was briefed on the importance of the quarry for rockclimbing and on a new partnership between Mountaineering Ireland and the Council to improve the recreational value of the quarry, which lies in her Dáil constituency.

Earlier in the year, the Council had caused some damage to climbs in the quarry during routine maintenance works. The rock faces are now protected with help and advice from Mountaineering Ireland, which recently provided a training day at the quarry for Council staff. Dalkey Quarry is one of Ireland's most popular rockclimbing venues and is a particularly useful site for training young climbers.

Minister Hanafin complimented Mountaineering Ireland and the Council on their work at the quarry. As Minister for Sport, she was also pleased to hear of the progress being made by Mountaineering Ireland's Girls Outside project in Kerry, and of plans for a women's event in 2011.

News from the Greater Ranges

Everest update

In 2010, 513 climbers reached the summit of Everest (8,848m), including three Irish climbers. That is not the record number of ascents for one year – more than 600 succeeded in 2007. The total number of ascents to date, since Ed Hillary and Tensing Norgay first stood on the summit in May 1953, is 5,070 by 3,431 people – many have climbed Everest more than once, especially Sherpas. Two-thirds of the ascents have been in the last 15 years. Apa Sherpa from Nepal has climbed Everest twenty times. The youngest climber to summit on Everest so far is American Jordan

Romero, at the age of 13. However, a Nepalese boy is already planning to attempt the climb in the pre-monsoon season next year, when he will be 10 years old.

Correction: In IMI 95, we reported that the three successful ascents by Irish climbers this year brought the total number of Irish ascents to 19 by 18 individual climbers. In fact, two Irish climbers have summited twice, Pat Falvey and Noel Hanna, so the number of Irish summiteers is actually 17.

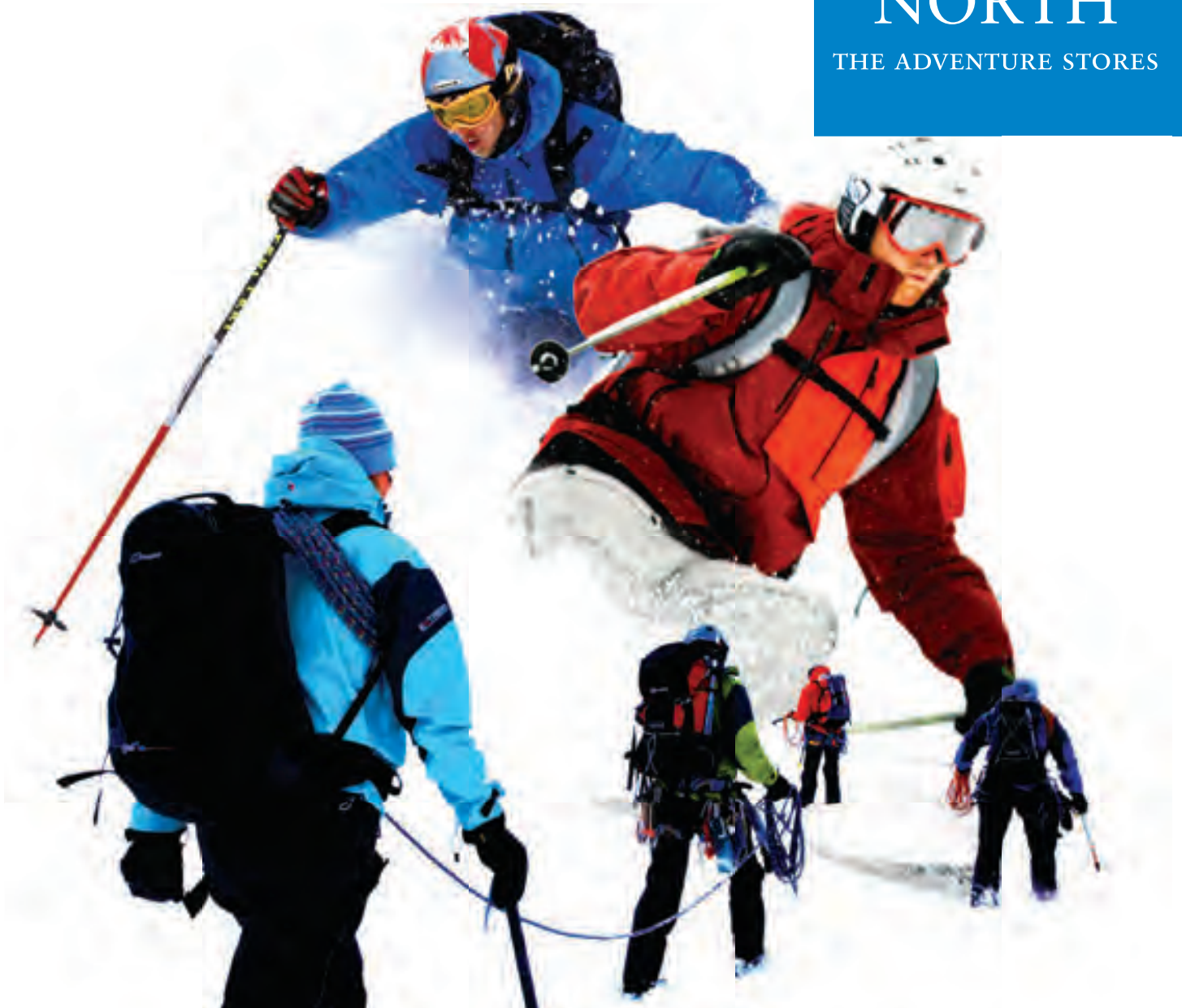
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Hillwalking in winter

Top tips from Alun Richardson on choosing the right gear and keeping warming

Winter walking is wonderful on a cold, clear day with firm snow underfoot.

Photo: Alun Richardson.

Remember last winter? Well, it is on its way here again! The sun is lower on the horizon and the temperature is dropping. From autumn through winter and into spring, the battle between the warmer moist air from the south and the colder, drier air from the north produces the storms that bring snow to the Irish hills.

On a cold clear day, with firm snow, winter walking is possibly safer than summer walking, because the bogs are frozen and stone-fall is less. The problem with winter is that it can all change from a winter wonderland to a maelstrom of gale-force winds, blizzards, zero visibility and numbing cold in just a few hours.

Hillwalking during the winter is wonderful, but it can also be miserable if you are not prepared. The secret to enjoying winter walking is to pay

attention to the simple things. Stay dry at all costs, even if it means moving more slowly. Walk cool and, whenever you stop, stay warm! This is even more important for those that have more body fat because they have a slower metabolism and a slower circulation, and, therefore, they warm up more slowly and cool down faster. A slower metabolism also means there is less heat generated by the body to dry out base layers.

Keep your fuel tank full

Staying warm is down to more than your clothing as it is also affected by your energy levels. Eat a hearty breakfast, and snack every 30 minutes. Slow-burning carbohydrates like grain bars and honey sandwiches are best. Give up smoking, drink less caffeine and take in plenty of fluids because dehydration causes the capillaries in the fingers to shut down. Carry a Thermos flask and, to make it go further, fill your mug with snow and melt it with the warm drink. Remember, it is the energy content of the drink that keeps you warm, not the temperature of the liquid.

Keep your body warm

A base layer and mid-layer fleece with a waterproof over the top are usually enough to keep warm when walking, but vary the layers to reduce sweating.

Carry a spare base layer and change when the one you are wearing is damp. Fleece tops are hard to beat for warmth, but take care using the fashionable 'soft shell' fleeces as they take longer to dry and do not provide as much insulation.

Carry extra warm clothing for when you stop moving and put an extra layer on before you are really cold. Make sure there is enough room under your waterproof jacket to add a layer or two, but they should not be too loose; cold air exchanges easily with the warm air inside. Cuffs and openings must be easy to adjust with gloves on. A large hood is essential to pull over the top of your fleece hat, and all the zip toggles must have tags large enough to grab hold of with gloves on. Legs radiate less heat and they sweat less, so good, well-fitting trousers are important. You can wear long johns underneath a thinner pair

of trousers.

If you are climbing, instead of removing your waterproof jacket simply layer on top with a synthetic insulated jacket (belay jacket) such as the ME Trango.

Keep your hands warm

Keep your core warm and your hands dry (don't put wet hands into dry gloves). Your wrist has the third highest heat loss of the body. Try this test: put your hands in the air and if your wrists are exposed from under your clothes, make some fleece wrist-overs. Carry a waterproof shell glove or mitt and lots of thick fleece gloves. Change them whenever they are wet and your hands are cold (a new pair for every pitch when climbing). Avoid gloves with a floating liner because they are difficult to get on and off. Carry a pair of fleece mitts that are easily accessible for when it is really cold. Attach all gloves to your wrist with keeper cords.

Thin gloves are not much use as they can make your hands colder. The addition of a thin layer of insulation increases the surface area of your hand, and therefore heat loss through radiation, until a thickness of about a ¼ inch is reached.

Do not grip your ski poles or ice-axe handle too tightly, and keep 'hand warmer' packets handy for putting in gloves or in your boots. Do not blow on your fingers or into your gloves; it will only make them damp. Instead, place them on the back of your neck for a few moments.

Keep your head warm

You do not lose heat any faster through your head than through any other exposed part of your body – it's just that it is exposed more. Wear a fleece hat or balaclava and use a fleece neck gaiter or a fleece jacket with a hood to cover your neck and prevent heat loss when you are standing still.

Look after your feet

Your feet have no muscle bulk and it is much easier to keep them warm than to warm them up from cold. Don't scrimp on leg protection: wear gaiters and put your feet into warm dry boots, even if it means changing your socks during the day. Foot powder with aluminium hydroxide can help to reduce perspiration.

Choosing an ice axe for winter walking

Ski poles (with baskets) are better than an ice axe on easy angled ground where the consequence of a slip is not dangerous. However, an ice axe will act as a walking stick, as a self-belay in the event of a slip occurring, and as a brake, if a slip turns into a slide. You can use it to cut steps, bucket seats, snow bollards, large steps for resting or organising equipment, pits for checking snow profiles and emergency shelters, and it can act as a buried axe belay. It is used for climbing ice, hard snow, frozen turf or even rock. No other piece of winter equipment – and the skill to use it – is more important than an ice axe.

No single design of axe performs all of the above well. An axe that is a convenient length for walking is awkward to climb with, and a pick set at a shallow angle for efficient self-arrest will not perform so well when climbing. How an axe feels is important – if it is not a comfortable fit in your hand with a nice swing, then there will be little incentive to have it ready to use. Make sure the shaft is small enough for you to grip it with gloves on.

The answer to ice axe length is simple – the steeper the slope and the more proficient you are on crampons, the shorter your axe can be. It also depends on the length of your arms – 60 to 70 centimetres is a good place to start. Longer axes get in the way if the slope becomes steep, but are the best for walking on easier angled slopes.

Walking axes are usually straight, but gently curved models have a better swing and do not compromise their ability to be plunged into the snow, although on slopes less than 60 degrees they have no real advantage.

The head of the axe should be a one-piece construction, with a gentle curve. If the curve of the head is too flat, it is unstable when self-arresting and climbing. If it is too steep, it will snatch and can be wrenched out of the hand. The adze should be a good size, slightly scooped and at an angle that continues the curve from the pick.

Get rid of your axe leashes

Experienced winter walkers don't use a leash because they are a hindrance when changing your axe from hand to hand. However, if



A good walking axe like this DMM Cirque can also be a good general mountaineering axe in its shorter forms.



A shorter axe like the DMM Raptor Ice Axe is a good general mountaineering and Alpine axe.



Lightweight flexible walking crampons are good on lower angle snow.



Descending in crampons on lower angle snow.



Edging in crampons on steeper snow and ice.

dropping your axe is a real possibility, and subsequent retrieval would be difficult, use a leash. Attach it to the head with a lark's foot knot to make it easy to take off again. Do not wrap the leash around the head because it compromises your ability to hold the axe. Leashes that slide up and down the axe on a metal runner should be avoided because they put the leash close to your crampons when not in use.

Choosing boots and crampons

A well-fitting pair of boots with room for your toes to wriggle in are essential for warmth. Boots suitable for winter use will be stiffer and have a sharp edge to the sole for kicking into hard snow. Any boot that can be bent more than half an inch or so when standing on the front edge will be unsuitable for use with any type of crampon and will not perform well in snow without a crampon.

Crampons and boots make an integral unit and using the wrong type of crampon on the wrong type of boot can break them or make them fall off.

When buying crampons, always

take your boots with you to the shop and fit the crampons in the store. Manufacturers' crampons are all slightly different – some suit narrower boots, some suit boots with a thicker sole, and some won't fit boots with too much of a 'rocker' (curved section of the sole). For those of you with narrow feet, avoid crampons that have a wide spread between the front points and think about how long the points are – they may be too long!

Crampons come in three broad designs:

- **Lightweight, flexible walking crampons with simple straps.** Most commonly 10 point. They are light, simple and a good choice for low angle snow.
- **Articulated or flexible step-in crampons attached with a heel clip and toe strap.** Most commonly 12 point. They give the best balance between ease of attachment, walking comfort and climbing performance. They are a good choice for general mountaineering and even low to mid-grade climbs.
- **Stiff crampons attached with a**

“Anti-balling plates are essential to prevent the build-up of snow on the underside of crampons, especially in wet snow conditions. The traditional remedy is to tap your crampons with your ice axe, but this is awkward, time-consuming and distracting.”

heel clip and toe bail.

These usually have 12 or more points. They are the best for pure ice climbing, but a pain for general mountaineering/walking.

The front points of the crampons should stick out by 25-35mm. Front points that are drooped with a second row that are angled forward are more suited to ice climbing. The angled second points reduce calf strain by resting against the ice. Downward-facing second points facilitate a more ergonomic walking motion.

Horizontal front points are more versatile and work better for general-purpose use than vertical ones.

Tips for fitting and using crampons

- The sole of your boot should match the shape of the crampon, with no large gaps.
- A correctly adjusted crampon should remain attached to the boot with the straps and clips undone.
- Use a crampon bag, not rubber ends.
- Trim the straps to a sensible length – long, dangling straps can get caught.
- Check before use: ensure all boots and screws are tight, that straps are not cut or damaged and that there are no cracks in the linking bar or crampon itself.
- Carry some plastic ties, a strap, some cord and a small nut and bolt to repair crampons. ■

Alun Richardson is Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer.



Below:
Front-pointing
on steep ice.



A personal odyssey

Margaret Tees is close to completing her Irish 2000ers

Margaret Tees on
Coomcallee
summit, Iveragh,
Co Kerry.
Photo: Margaret
Tees Collection.

So, yes, I find that I have now climbed nearly all of the 2000ft separate mountains in Ireland. I have been asked 'How did this come about?' Well, all I can say is that it was not intentional; that is, until recently, when I did a quick revision with my little Claude Wall book,* which contains a revised Vandeleur-Lynam list of all of the 2000ft mountains of Ireland, with their associated tops.

Enthusiasing my husband, Alan, with the project, we discovered that, with only one or two exceptions, we both had the same unvisited summits and that they were mostly in Cork and Kerry – which is not surprising as we both have always lived in the North. Similarly, we are both looking back on a lifetime of hillwalking in Ireland!

My initiation came, I suppose, with the usual round of tourist mountains, embarked upon with small children, on fine days, in school holidays. Destinations such as Slieve Donard,

Errigal, Muckish and the Great Sugarloaf were soon dandered across, followed by the likes of Mweelrea, Croagh Patrick and Carrauntoohil – as their little legs grew longer!

More progress was made, though, on my part, on joining the North West Mountaineering Club in 1981. Within ten years I had (obviously) walked extensively in Donegal, and also Sligo, courtesy of Sligo MC and Michael Mulligan in particular, who over many years has sustained the special link between the two clubs.

Looking back, I note that I joined many of the NW Easter trips, (in those days this used to be the first big outing

of the year), which in turn took me to the three other corners of Ireland, often with one or other of my daughters in tow. The Comeraghs, Knockmealdowns and Galtees were visited in '82, then the Reeks and Brandon in '83. As part of a team of eight, I did all the Irish Munros in one mad 24 hours in June '84, and in '85 I did the Maumturks Walk for the first time. The Nephin Bogs and Achill Island were destinations in '86, after the Easter trip to Galloway, where I had my first taste of Scotland. I also did my first Long Distance Trail that year (and have continued to do one most years since). The following year a

Right:
On Coumlocha
summit in the
Comeraghs,
Co Waterford.
Photo: Margaret Tees
Collection.



* *Mountaineering in Ireland* by Claude W. Wall, published by the Federation of Mountaineering Clubs of Ireland, 1976.

more adventurous club trip went to Lochaber, where I climbed my first Scottish Munro (that's another story!) and did the prerequisite climb up the big 'Ben.'

By this stage in the '80s, the Glover Highlander was in full swing and was attracting walkers from all parts of Ireland which included many members from the big Dublin clubs, the IRC, the IMC and the Wayfarers in particular. The NW made many friends and contacts during this period, and these remain to this day. Margaret Hermon and Barbara Lennon are sadly not with us anymore, but it was through them that I got to know Wicklow, and managed to 'pass myself' on quite a few Grade 11 hikes with the IRC! I never managed to get down to do the Lug Walk, but I did do the Blackstairs Walk, The Galtee Walk, the Mourne Wall Walk and, on several occasions, the Maumturks Walk, which is a bit easier to reach from Donegal. Thus you could say that I achieved a fairly comprehensive sweep of the main mountain ranges in Ireland.

Then I got onto another carousel. On representing the NW at an MCI AGM in 1992, I found myself elected to the Executive Committee. I was assured by 'friends' who nominated me that I would have a great time and make lots more friends...which, I have to admit, is exactly what happened.

Executive meetings were invariably incorporated into the annual October Weekend (now called the Autumn Meet) which the NW had hosted in Donegal in '92, so I knew how enjoyable they could be. During the '90s, these yearly events took me to West Cork in '93 (Cork MC), Dingle in '94 (Tralee MC), Dungarvan in '95 (Com MC), Portrush (BARF) in '96, Westport in '97 (IRC), Glendalough in '98 (IMC) and the Burren in '99 (Clare OC). During the early 2000s, I attended the meets in the Mourne (BARF), Clifden (Beanna Beola HC) and Mullaghmore (Sligo MC), thereby completing an entire circuit of the whole country in just over a decade.

The clubs which host these weekends organise great walks in their area, so you get to see the best of Ireland's mountains, and in great company; it's another way of making friends and contacts!

After the Tralee event, the TMC invited the NW down for St Patrick's weekend in 1996, which was a great success and has led to continuing contact, particularly through Phil



O'Mahony and Majella Diskin, who are regular attenders at Mountaineering Ireland events. As is Máire Ní Mhurchú from Cork MC, whom I also bumped into earlier this year, on a windy col in the Comeraghs!

So is it any wonder that at this stage of my life I have only seventeen summits (or so) left to complete! These last few I'm going to savour and, as they are in Kerry, it's not going to happen overnight anyway.

And then what? I don't think I'll live long enough to do the complete list of 600m mountains, which is a more recent, metric listing based on the older and less accurate V-L list. I might nibble at it, though (but I haven't told Alan this yet!), starting with the separate mountains below 609m and above 600m. Then I might just check out those other mountains over 600m, on the new Arderins List

(summits with a prominence of 30m) which might not be that many...and so it goes on, hopefully! Providing, of course, the health holds out and I can continue to dodge increasing 'Granny'-related duties!

Acknowledgements to Simon Stuart and his site, www.mountainviews.ie, for comprehensive information on all of Ireland's mountains and their listings. My own version of the 157 summits can be found on the North West Mountaineering Club website at www.nwmc.ie. ■

Margaret Tees has walked in Ireland, the UK, the Alps, Himalayas and North America. She has completed many of the long-distance walks in the UK and summited all of the Scottish Munros. She is a former Honorary Secretary of the MCI, a member of the North West MC, Colmcille Climbers and Blaney Ramblers. Originally from Co Antrim, she lives in Donegal with her husband Alan, the current President of Mountaineering Ireland.

On Carrauntoohil with North West Mountaineering Club in 1985. Margaret Tees is seated in the centre, with her back to the pillar.

Climbing with Tralee MC in 1996. Margaret is third from right.



Exploring western Mongolia

Caoimhe Gleeson braves wolves, frosts and raging torrents in western Mongolia, the Land of Eternal Sky

Kharkhiraa and
Turgen peaks.
Photo: Caoimhe
Gleeson.

Mongolia is not a place for the casual walker, never mind the casual tourist. It is a country almost the size of western Europe, with a population of only 2.6 million, about one million of whom live in the capital, Ulaanbaatar.

Given the vastness of the country, which includes the Gobi Desert, it has only 5,406 kilometres of 'official' roads, only 1,640km of which are tarred, so a trip of less than 100km can take up to a day to complete, depending on the weather and the condition of the vehicle.

When I was planning a trekking trip at the end of an eight-week stint of voluntary work in Mongolia last summer, I decided to leave nothing to chance and opt for the reliability of an organised tour. After much research I chose Mongolian Expeditions, a

Mongolian-led and owned company which specialises in trekking and mountaineering trips to western Mongolia, an area which is home to numerous glaciers and snow-capped, 4,000m+ peaks.

The trip began in Ulaanbaatar, a confident capital city which does not prepare the newly arrived tourist for the utter vastness that lies beyond the city boundaries and continues all the way to Chinese and Russian borders. After a couple of days of briefings, touristy events, luxurious hotels, functioning toilets and tasty food, we, Team Kharkhiraa-Turgen Peaks, set off with a big map and a satellite phone on a little plane to the sparsely populated mountainous terrain of western Mongolia.

After landing in gale-force winds on a sandy runway, surrounded by camels, yaks and dusty fields, we were greeted by our trekking guide, our cook and our driver. The driver's task was to drop us off at the beginning of the trek and collect us at the end of the trek in a creaky, grey Russian van renowned for its reliability in the most treacherous of driving conditions.

Team Kharkhiraa-Turgen Peaks (KTP) consisted of a Swede, two

Canadians and me. The other team members had recently arrived on Mongolian soil and didn't have any preparation for the authentic Mongolian experience which was about to unfold.

Our itinerary for the next twelve days was to trek through the mountain pass between Mount Kharkhiraa (4,037m) and Mount Turgen (3,965m), situated in the province of Uvs in the northwest of Mongolia. The plan was to walk an average of 25km per day over the twelve days, assisted by a camel caravan which would carry food, tents and water and which would be led by two local horsemen who were familiar with the terrain.

On our first night in the Tenug Valley, we were woken by noises akin to those of the dark riders from *The Lord of the Rings*. Blood-curdling screams encircled our flimsy tents, screams that rose to a crescendo until human voices joined in the cacophony of sounds. Then an eerie silence descended, intermittently peppered with petrified whimpering. When daylight broke, I unzipped the tent to discover a field of carnage, with gutted goats and sheep lying all around after being savaged in the night by a pack of

wolves less than 100 metres from our camp.

After a sombre breakfast and the militaristic packing of the camels, we headed off for the foothills of the Kharkhiraa-Turgen Mountain Pass. We set out on gently rising semi-desert terrain which followed the luscious Tenug river valley. The walking was easy and very pleasant as we started to make our way up to the higher mountain passes. We were now walking at just above 1,600 metres. Our itinerary was suddenly changed because the first low mountain pass was considered to be too difficult for the camels, which were heavily laden with food and water for the twelve-day trip. Instead, we would contour around the mountain while crossing 'gentle' mountain streams to get to our destination for the night.

These 'gentle' mountain streams turned out to be raging white-water torrents and the only means of crossing these thunderous masses of water was on horseback. Having never been in white water or on a horse in my life, my earlier ease with the gentle terrain was catapulted into orbit. The first river fording was relatively uneventful, save for the fact that Mongolian horses are similar in size to large donkeys which necessitated me putting my feet on the horse's back while crossing in order to keep them dry.

Having recovered from the anxiety generated by the first crossing, minutes later we were instructed that we had to make another white-water legs-raised crossing. This time, my horse was led by the main horseman, alias Captain Horseman, who was distracted by the rapids and

accidentally let go of the lead of my horse mid-crossing. In a swift attempt to rescue the horse's lead, the horseman swung out too far and pulled himself, his horse and the guide, who was bare-back on his horse, into the angry, freezing water. I watched in horror as he was pulled away by the current with his horse and our guide on top of him. Quickly, he fought against the violence of the water and hauled himself, his horse

and the guide out of the water like an apparition in time to catch my horse, which had now lost its footing in the rapids. This kind of crossing was to become a daily staple on the trip.

Over the next few days of wailing wolves and white water with only ourselves for company, our pace accelerated and we were averaging 30km per day on the gradually rising rugged and arid terrain. We eventually reached the start of the rise up to the mountain pass between Kharkhiraa and Turgen peaks, which were now in spectacular view as we trekked. After a very wet morning, the first since setting off six days previously, we waited for a break in cloud and opted for a small diversion to see some glacial lakes at the foot of the closest glacier, before making the journey over the main pass.

Caoimhe with Turgen Mountain in the background. Photo: Caoimhe Gleeson collection.

Below left: Kharkhiraa Mountain and Pass. Photo: Caoimhe Gleeson.



"We were woken by blood-curdling screams akin to those of the dark riders in The Lord of the Rings"

Camels just before setting off.
Photo: Caoimhe Gleeson.



"Hungry wild animals were waiting to prey on us as night fell..."

The camel caravan, horsemen and one of the Canadians, who could no longer walk owing to some horrendous blisters, set off in the direction of the pass, while the remainder of Team KTP led by the guide headed off in the direction of the lakes, which were now encircled by heavy dark clouds. Hours later, having viewed what turned out to be only some small glacial puddles, we found ourselves huddled on a 60-degree slope under a rock, trying to shelter from a raging snow-storm which had enveloped the mountains. The Swede, who had lost one of his walking shoes the previous day, was struggling to feel his feet in his wellies (his spare footwear) and realised that his 'North Fake' purchases from Beijing were treating him to an unwanted cold shower down his back. Our guide remained stoic and quiet as we contemplated what was to become of us in this hostile environment, with hungry wild animals waiting to prey on us as night fell.

As a further hour passed, I clutched the rosary beads given to me by a young child from home before I had left for Mongolia. The light was getting dimmer and dimmer, and the snow was beginning to form drifts. We were arguing with each other about what our guide should do when, in the midst of our panicked chatter, our guide reluctantly admitted that the map was with the camel caravan. As we were heading for complete mutiny on the mountain, I spotted the vague shadow of a horse walking towards us on the steep slope. It was our young horseman led by his horse. He had been looking for us for hours and had spotted my red jacket from the river valley 500 metres below. He quickly ordered us to follow him as the camel caravan had been waiting for far too long and was now marooned right in the middle of the mountain pass in a snow-storm. We raced behind him as he and his horse sped off into the pea soup created by the thickening snow.

A further hour later, we saw the smiling faces of Captain Horseman and the cook. The Canadian, who had been relegated to horse-riding on account of his feet, was doubled over on the ground beside his horse. It transpired that he was now hypothermic and barely coherent. In an attempt to prevent him from deteriorating further, I took off my outer layers and asked the Swede to help the Canadian strip off all of his dripping wet clothes. We rapidly dried him off and dressed him in my clothes and

Descending the Black Goat Pass.
Photo: Caoimhe Gleeson.



Crossing the Kharkhiraa River.
Photo: Caoimhe Gleeson.



whatever other clothes the others could donate. We then shoved him in towards the belly of a sitting camel while the cook, now realising something was amiss, poured hot soup into his mouth. The horsemen and guide looked on incredulously. The Canadian slowly regained some energy and colour and agreed to walk on, assisted by us, to help get his circulation moving again.

We reached an elevation of 3,100 metres, where we bedded down for the night. Later that night, after hours of heavy snow and screaming winds, the temperature plummeted to minus 10°C, freezing my sleeping bag, my hair and my eye-lashes. I kept reminding myself I was on the easy mountain trekking tour and not on the mountaineering tour, as I fluttered my eye-lids in an attempt to free them from the frost. My whole body was now frozen, even though I had six layers of everything on everywhere. I rooted in my wet and frozen rucksack and pulled every remaining stitch of clothes into the sleeping bag in the hope that it would generate some heat. Buried deep in the heart of the sleeping bag to stop the biting air doing any more damage to my face, I eventually drifted off from sheer exhaustion.

The next day, the guide and Captain Horseman headed off into the white, windy horizon to determine the terrain for the Black Goat Valley mountain pass, crossing which would entail a 1,000m descent on a 45-degree slope covered in snow with the inexperienced pack animals. They gave us no indication when they would be back or if we were holding camp in this location for the day. Almost 20 hours later they reappeared looking like they had been dragged through the belly of the mountain by their hair. All they could mumble was that it was much better for us and them that we had stayed put that day.

The following morning, we awoke to a total thaw and quickly packed up so we could get through the final



mountain pass and descend into the relative calm of the warm, wolf-filled Black Goat Valley. The sun beamed down on us – and thankfully had melted most of the snow drifts – as we each slowly navigated a pack animal 1,000 metres down the far side of the vertiginous pass. Once down in the valley, we only had wolves, hawks, eagles, armed illegal hunters and white water to contend with, and could relax knowing that weather conditions would be much more predictable at that altitude.

A few more days and nights of authentic Mongolian adventures ensued but by now we were starting to build up the Khan resistance that is inherent in all Mongolians, who survive the toughest, most extreme weather and physical conditions every year. Humbled by the power of the untamed environs that we had been able to experience for such a brief time, we arrived safely back in Ulaanbaatar thinner, fitter and with a firm resolve to return. ■

Caoimhe Gleeson is a hillwalker and rockclimber and a member of Mountaineering Ireland and of Hanging Rockers Climbing Club. She spent 10 weeks in Mongolia in the summer of 2010 working as a volunteer English teacher in the Gobi Desert and in the capital Ulaanbaatar before travelling to western Mongolia.

Camel caravan in the Tenuug valley. Photo: Caoimhe Gleeson.

Travel information

Getting there

There are no direct flights to Mongolia from Europe, but there are the following options:

Air France: Dublin-Paris-Beijing-Ulaanbaatar

Aeroflot: Dublin-Moscow-Ulaanbaatar

Lufthansa: Dublin-Frankfurt-Seoul-Ulaanbaatar.

Who to go with

For a trekking trip with a difference in a land locked in a different time, see Mongolian Expeditions at: www.mongolian-expeditions.com.

When to go

Mongolian Expeditions support treks and mountaineering trips between June and September. They will also tailor trips for small groups and individuals outside of these dates.

Voluntary work

If you are interested in volunteering in organic gardening or teaching English for a while before heading to western Mongolia for the mountains, see www.jampaling.com or www.asralmongolia.org.

“Once down in the valley we only had wolves, hawks, eagles, armed illegal hunters and white water to contend with, and so could relax...”

Leading female Irish climbers

Ailish Grennan profiles some inspiring female climbers past and present

Jane Gallwey
bivouacs on
steep rock in
Yosemite.

The increasing exposure of long-distance walking routes, rock-climbing and mountaineering in the media, and the growing popularity of indoor climbing walls have meant that mountaineering has become a much more accessible sport. However, whereas the increase in active climbers began decades ago, it is really only in the past ten years that a significant female presence can be seen among those climbers. Girls are now holding their own against the boys on the climbing walls and on the crags and the number of women who are pushing themselves grade-wise is steadily increasing. Here we profile some of the women who have made their mark on the Irish climbing scene. Their ability to inspire others lies mainly in their willingness to push themselves and in their absolute love of climbing.

Brede Arkless

Brede Arkless had a significant impact internationally on the rise of female participation in mountain activities during the 1970s and '80s. Born to Irish parents in Manchester in 1939, she started to rockclimb at the age of 15 and went on to climb and guide in Britain, the Alps, New Zealand and the Greater Ranges. She was the first woman and the first Irish person – not just the first Irish woman – to qualify as an International Mountain Guide with the Union Internationale des Associations des Guides de Montagne (UIAGM).

In the mid 1970s, Brede, along with Jill Lawrence, began running all-women climbing courses in north Wales. This was featured in a 1985 television documentary, *Northern Echoes*, and is noted as a benchmark in changing attitudes towards women in the climbing and mountaineering world.

She took part in a number of all-women's expeditions to the Himalayas, her first being to the Padar Himalaya in 1970. Then, in 1979, she returned to the Himalayas to attempt Bakhor Das. In 1989, she took part in yet another women-only expedition to the Karakoram peak of Gasherbrum II.

Brede moved from Wales to New Zealand in 1990 and guided clients there for many years, leading numerous expeditions, including 22 to the summit of Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain at 3,754 metres (12,316 ft).

At the age of 60, she attempted Everest, and unfortunately, close to the summit at 8,500m she suffered from severe altitude sickness and had to turn back. All this she did while raising eight children!

Brede lived life to the full and acted as an inspiration to female climbers and mountaineers around the world. Despite being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, Brede continued to guide until the age of 65. She died on March 18, 2006, aged 66.

Clare Sheridan

Clare Sheridan is probably the most well known and well regarded Irish female climber. In fact, when people were asked to be included in this article, they all agreed, as long as Clare was in it first!

Clare was first introduced to climbing in 1971 when she joined UCD Mountaineering Club. Since then, she has been to the fore of climbing in Ireland and has put up more new routes around Ireland than any other female.

What was the climbing scene like when you started? Has it changed much since?

Until I went out with UCD, I had never seen anyone climb before, not on TV or in person. The club started just a few years before I joined. There was no exposure for climbing like there is now and there was no female presence in climbing at all.

In some ways it has changed and in some ways it has not. There are a huge number of women now climbing indoors and sport climbing, but there still are not a lot of women trad leading, at least not in the middle or harder range.



Clare Sheridan climbing in the French Alps.

Is there anything you feel could be done to help change this?

Women's meets. There have been some women's meets before. I think it would be good to continue them. We don't have a big range of climbs in Ireland with mid grades, though. Once you go to the Burren or Fair Head it's hard and there's no easy solution to that.

Women-only courses for women to learn to lead, or to learn to lead at a higher level, are another thing. If there was a structured approach with a lot of experienced help at hand and a mentor to bring people up longer routes to see how it felt, it might get more women to the bigger crags like Fair Head.

Women and girls have a big thing with taking risks. It's not as easy for women to take risks as it is for men. Sometimes an extra bit of support is needed to tackle places like Fair Head. For leading, I think women or girls need that extra bit of support to bridge the gap.



rockclimbing

Was there anyone who you feel was an inspiration?

There were no role models in Ireland at that time and I wasn't aware of the British scene, so no, I wasn't inspired by anyone.

What has been one of your favourite moments?

That's a hard question. Getting to the top of the Bonatti Pillar on the Dru in Chamonix.

What is your best personal achievement?

Getting to the top of a number of E4s on Mirror Wall. It's very demanding, steep climbing. Also getting to the top of a new route on Fair Head. I get more of a kick out of new routing.

What appeals to you most about climbing?

The movement and the rightness of it all. Out of any sport that I've tried, climbing was the one that felt most right.

Brede Arkless leading Freebird, Castell Helen, Gogarth, north Wales. Photo: Jim Perrin.

Jane Gallwey

Jane has been climbing since she was 10, when her dad would take her to the Burren and tie her to a bag of rocks for belay duty. She didn't start leading until the age of 18, when she went alone to Pembroke for the summer. Since then, she has been climbing pretty much non-stop and is always planning the next big trip. She has only been lead-climbing for four years but already has a number of adventurous trips under her belt. So far, she has travelled with the Hot Rock bus around Africa, been new routing in Morocco, gone on a crack climbing road trip through America, organised a big trip to Oman and been big wall climbing in Yosemite.



Jane Gallwey
on a climb.

Below:
Orla
Prendergast
on a climb.

What appeals to you about big wall and aid climbing?

I really like the exposure, and with aid climbing you can get to places that I'd never be good enough to free climb to. I also like the mental puzzle aspect of it, working out what sort of piece will fit where. A two-hour lead can feel like twenty minutes, because you're so absorbed in what you're doing. The way you can be up really high, but with all your usual comforts, is nice too. There's nothing like waking up in the middle of this huge face and having fresh morning coffee while you dangle your feet over the edge.

What would you consider to be your best achievement?

Climbing my first big wall this summer. I used to turn into a nervous wreck on 4-pitch climbs, so it was great to be totally happy 10 pitches up a steep wall.



Is there anyone who you feel is an inspiration?

Internationally, Silvia Vidal. The idea of spending 22 days on a remote wall solo, putting up a really hard new route, it's just mindblowing. She's in the same category as Lynn Hill, not just "impressive for a girl" but just plain "impressive."

Closer to home, I'm inspired by Clare Sheridan, Orla Prendergast and Joan Flanagan for still showing up all of us young 'uns every time I see them at the cliffs. Also, my deadly climbing partners Maevie Lynsky and Eva Veres, for dragging me out climbing even when I'm feeling lazy and unmotivated.

Orla Prendergast

Orla Prendergast teaches Outdoor Education and Leisure in GMIT, Castlebar. She is MIA, SWML and IML qualified and (though too modest to admit it) is one of the most experienced female climbers in Ireland.

What made you pursue a career in the outdoors?

You get to do something you love, in beautiful surroundings, with like-minded people. I mainly enjoy it because of the people I meet and work with. Every one wants to be there and is excited to be involved.

What has been your most memorable expedition?

A trip to Greenland – and also a trip to Norway. It was



Orla
Prendergast
on a climb in
Seattle,
Washington.

amazing in Greenland to have 24 hours of sunlight. The climbing and the scenery were amazing. There is so much to do, with lots of long granite routes, which I enjoy.

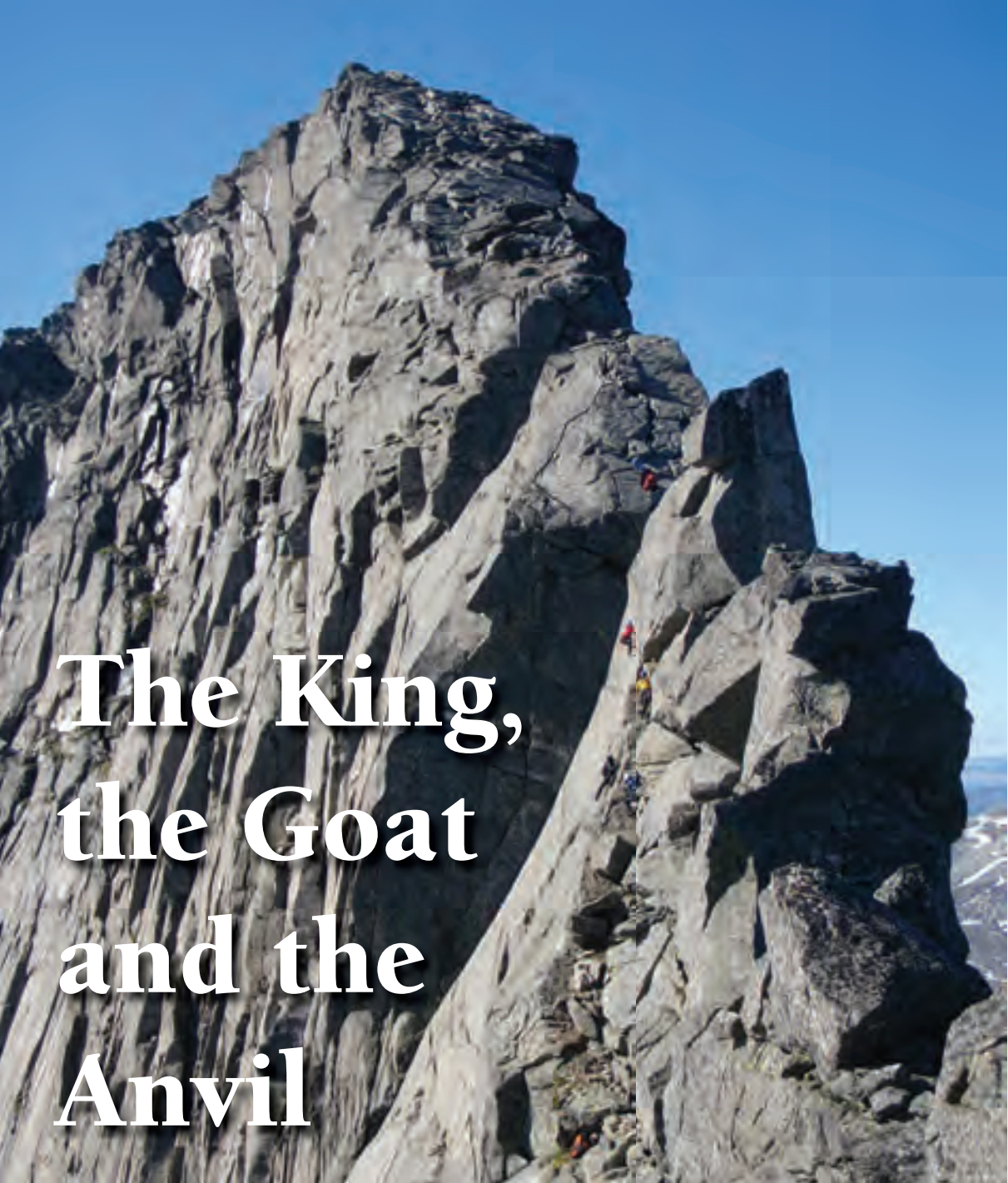
Do you feel anything could be done to up the female presence in the Irish climbing scene?

Women's meets might help to entice more women to become active in climbing. I always get a lot of support from men when I climb with them, but it would be nice to climb more with women. Sometimes women need, and can offer, a bit of extra support and encouragement.

Who would you view as being an inspiration?

Clare Sheridan, she is the Irish female climber. Herself and Calvin Torrans are inspirations because of their constant activity in climbing, their willingness to help people and to share knowledge. They also manage to do this without being condescending. They are genuinely interested in the sport and in helping it grow. ■

Ailish Grennan is from Ballinlough, Co Roscommon, and climbs with the DCU Rock Climbing Club.



The King, the Goat and the Anvil

The expedition party climbs the Vagakallen.

The Inst Mountaineering Club celebrated their college's bicentenary with an expedition to Arctic Norway. Andrew Chisholm (17) introduces some reports on the trip's highlights.

The Royal Belfast Academical Institution, colloquially known as the 'Inst,' was founded in 1810 and was 200 years old this year.

During the bicentenary celebrations, the Inst Mountaineering Club was also celebrating its first 35 years. The club's members had an ambition to undertake a big expedition and to experience a world-class climbing area at first hand. So we decided that a trip to Arctic Norway would be ideal.

Arctic Norway offered not only incredible mountaineering but also some insight into the Norwegian culture and way of life. The mountains are sparsely populated compared with the Alps and there is a full range of walking, rockclimbing and alpine mountaineering on offer.

The team consisted of twelve pupils ranging in age from 14 to 17, two teachers and two former pupils, all keen mountaineers. We had a number of great training weekends in the Mourne and in Donegal, learning the skills we would need in Norway. An advance party of four travelled out overland with food and equipment to keep costs to a minimum, with the main group flying from Dublin to Oslo and on to Bodo on July 1st.

The first week was spent in the Lofoten Islands, with their dramatic mountains rising directly out of the sea and the midnight sun giving twenty-four hours of daylight. We



Above: On the knife-edge ridge of Vagakallen.

Below: James McLaughlin on Pitch 2 of The Goat.



climbed five peaks, including the striking Vagakallen, named after a legendary king, and completed four long rock-climbs, including the famous Goat. We then crossed back to the Norwegian mainland, just south of Narvik, to climb the stunning tower of Stetind, the Anvil, Norway's national mountain. Finally, we drove south the length of Norway to the Jotenheimen, to climb the snowy Galdhoppigen, Norway's highest peak, before returning to Oslo and heading home.

Vagakallen

By Dawson Stelfox (52)

Our first attempt at this prominent peak fizzled out in deep wet, trackless undergrowth, in thick mist. We retreated to the coast and had a great afternoon on 'Rock and Roll Ridge,' a long rock ridge just above the road and the sea, bathed in sun. As the evening wore on, the dramatic summit of Vagakallen emerged from the cloud, its famous Westpilleren shining in the midnight sun. We decided not to let the mountain beat us and to go back the next day.

The good visibility the next morning helped our progress, though it was not until the descent that we found the real path, which was on the opposite side of the valley from that shown in the guidebook. A steep scramble up to a col, a long traverse to below the summit tower and then a deep gully led up to the final ridge. Easy progress was barred by a short knife-edge ridge with long drops to either side, so we got the ropes out and a variety of techniques were used to get across. The brave balanced along the knife edge saying "Look, no hands!" Most of us traversed with hands on the ridge, feet skating about on the slab below, searching for little edges; whilst some, who shall be nameless here, opted for the 'au cheval' technique, shuffling across securely at some cost to their trousers. Once past this section, the way to the summit was clear – steep scrambling up to a blocky summit, and soon all

16 of us were relaxing on the top, staggered by the dramatic contrast between sea and mountains and the grandeur of Lofoten stretching north and south into the distance.

The Goat

By James McLaughlin (14)

Before leaving the Lofoten Islands we decided that we had to try the famous jump between the summit pinnacles – the horns – of The Goat, a 60m rock tower looming over Lofoten's capital, Svolvær.

It was a less than perfect day as there was a light breeze and a cloudy sky, threatening rain, but it was our last chance before we had to leave the island. As we approached the famous pinnacle we were all looking out to see what we had to jump. The guidebook said that a bit of rock had fallen off the 'landing' horn so that it was now a lot further and harder, but from the ground we convinced ourselves it looked easy – just a step!

We roped up and climbed in three pitches to the top of the tower. Dawson went first and belayed on the top of the landing horn, so when it came to my turn I had to jump down and across to him. As I balanced on top of the higher pinnacle I looked down and immediately wished I hadn't, as the town graveyard was directly below!

I'll admit that I was a bit scared, but climbing is all about being in control and managing the risks, and I knew the rope would hold me if I fell. I made a short countdown and jumped for my life, landing neatly on the other side – I had done it!

As I got ready for the long abseil off the top I looked back at what I had done and had a sense of pride and a warm glow, as I fought off the cold wind and coped with the exposure. It was one of the best experiences of my life and I would do it again tomorrow just to recapture the thrill of the moment.

Stetind (The Anvil)

By Peter Brangam (15)

On the second week of the trip we went to climb Stetind, which means 'The Anvil,' a towering spire of granite with a flat top, 1,390m above sea level. It was our most ambitious climb of the whole trip as there was no easy way to the summit.

The 5:30am wake-up call was far



from appreciated and the view from Tysfjord filled us with awe, seeing the size and steepness of the mountain. The trail started gently enough through birch forest, but the presence of the 700m-high cliffs on the south face was daunting. It got steeper as we got out of the forest, so we stopped for a short break at an icy lake at around 500m.

The next part of the climb was a steep scramble up to the fore-summit at 1,310m, the last part being in a thick mist that had come down around us, obscuring the dramatic summit ridge. Despite the weather, ten of us decided to press on as the forecast was good. It may have only been less than a hundred metres above us, but we knew from the guidebook that the summit was still hours away and the difficulties were

only starting. The route first brought us down a rock ridge to a small exposed ledge at the top of the south face and the start of the infamous hand traverse. Graded about 'Hard Severe,' it felt much harder with a 700m sweeping granite cliff below you and *no* footholds whatsoever! We simply had to traverse using only our hands in a crack.

After this, the rest of the ridge was easier, but spectacular, and the weather gradually cleared, so we reached the summit in bright sunshine, looking straight down 1,390m to the lush blue Tysfjord below. The route down was similar except, to get off the ridge, we had an exposed 25m abseil, again over a 700m drop! Back up to the fore-summit and then a long slide down easy snow-fields helped speed up the



descent, but it was still another three hours before we were back at the road, looking up again at the soaring summit of Stetind, wondering how we ever got up there. It is a memory I will never forget. ■

The Stetind from Tysfjord.

Left: Peter Brangam on the crux hand traverse on Stetind.

The Inst Mountaineering Club Expedition to Arctic Norway took place from July 1st to July 18th, 2010, and the party consisted of James McLaughlin, Michael O'Neill, Aaron Stelfox, Mark Stewart, Robbie Alexander, Peter Brangam, Aaron McCausland, Adam Meek, Andrew Bell, Johnny Bell, Kwok Wing Ho and Andrew Chisholm, with Bob Meek, Philip Cupples, Scott Guiler and Dawson Stelfox.



Climbing Mont Blanc

A tale of two separate attempts on Europe's highest peak

Climbers crossing the zig-zags on the Dôme du Goûter, Mont Blanc.
Photo: Lance Quin.

As the highest peak in western Europe at 4,810m, Mont Blanc has always attracted climbers since the first successful ascent by Jacques Balmat and Dr Michel Paccard on August 8th, 1786, an ascent which marked the birth of modern mountaineering. The first woman to reach the summit was Marie Paradis in 1808. In two reports of recent ascents on the following pages, the authors give their impressions of ascending the Goûter Route.

Mont Blanc adventure

By Martin McCormack

When it comes to adventure, it seems that there are now few places or challenges that have not been tackled. Climbers are constantly looking for new first ascents or more direct or challenging routes. However, it seems the further you push the limits in search of adventure, the greater the danger that it will involve. Mountaineering Ireland would frown on any article that belittled the importance of safety awareness in climbing, yet it is acknowledged that when we step into the outdoors to pursue our passion, part of the attraction is being exposed to the unknown, where there is a degree of danger. Indeed, part of the thrill of climbing is overcoming the danger it presents by using your wits and skill,

while staying safe.

This year, a friend of mine, Lance xxxx??. and I planned to climb Mont Blanc to celebrate Lance's 50th birthday. I had been there once before in 1994, when we were average rock climbers and very fit hikers, but with zero alpine experience. June that year was very wet and we never even set foot on Mont Blanc, as the mountain was basically out of bounds due to heavy snow and the risk of avalanches. We settled for rock climbing in the valley and lived to climb another day.

Sixteen years later, my ice axe had a few extra scratches on it from use, but not a lot. I'd been on a Scottish winter mountaineering training week and had been guided up Toubkal in the Atlas Mountains, but most of my snow and ice experience had been in Ireland and the UK, at a low level, really. Various people who I knew had



succeeded in summiting Mont Blanc with or without the help of guides, gave great advice. We checked out guides, as the safety concerns presented the main reason to consider engaging the services of a guide. However, if we went with a guide, we worried that we would have a nagging doubt that we had not really climbed it ourselves. At some stage, a child has to take those first shaky steps on their own on the way to walking independently and at some point we, with limited experience and some

training, had to consider if we could climb Mont Blanc by ourselves, without a guide. We also thought we would be more flexible, if we were not tied into the schedule of a guide, thereby allowing us to wait for a good weather window and increasing our chances of success. To be taking on the adventure by ourselves and working out the options was exciting, and we decided to go for it.

We chose to go in the first week of September for the simple reason that the mountain would not be as

crowded as in the summer months, making it more likely that there would be room to stay in the mountain refuges. We chose to ascend via the Goûter Route, having examined the other routes and weighed the risks they presented against our skill level. This is called the “normal” route and is the route by which most people reach the summit. It is not technical and avoids the many crevasses and sharp ridges that other routes present.

The two most difficult aspects of the Goûter Route are the Grand Couloir and the Bosses Ridge. The Grand Couloir didn't particularly worry us. What frightened us more was the Bosses Ridge. We had seen pictures of seracs and a knife-edge ridge and were scared that, if we had a fall, we would not be able to stop ourselves or to protect each other. In the end, this fear kept us safe, as we took great care to go slowly and carefully, every step of the way. We also agreed beforehand that, if this ridge looked too steep, we might not venture onto it at all and would admit that we were too inexperienced for the mountain. However, we would have to wait till we were there to make that call.

We arrived in Chamonix on September 1st and the following day took the Aiguille du Midi cable car straight up to 3,842 metres for an acclimatization hike. The scariest part of this was leaving the cable-car station via a very narrow snow ridge. We were not used to this steep snow,

Mont Blanc:
the Goûter route.
Photo:
Lance Quin.



Left: Descending
the narrow snow
slope from the
Aiguille du Midi
cable car station.
Photo:
Martin
McCormack.



The route up Mt Blanc du Tacul for Martin's acclimatisation hike. Photo: Martin McCormack.

which sloped off into oblivion, and we roped up and walked like grannies as we inched our way out of the station and onto the ridge. The altitude was immediately noticeable as I was even breathing heavily while just putting on my crampons. Our six-hour hike over to Mont Blanc du Tacul and back was exhausting. However, it proved to be the most tiring day of our trip and it showed us that acclimatization was vital. We used this hike to gain confidence on steep hard snow and to find out what we were comfortable with.

The following day, we headed up to the Tête Rousse refuge (3,167m), but we slept in Chamonix that night, following a 'climb high, sleep low' acclimatization routine. That night I

worried about the Bosses Ridge, after our encounter with the steep snow ridge on the way out of the Midi cable-car station, and wondered if we would make it at all. We were still prepared to abandon the climb if it looked too dangerous.

The next day, we hiked up to the Tête Rousse refuge and were encouraged by folks who were coming down from Mont Blanc and who told us that the Bosses Ridge was not half as difficult as the snow ridge leaving the Midi station that we had walked on the day before. Encouraged, we ate heartily in the refuge to a great sunset and bedded down early enough for an almost sleepless night, where noises from all sorts of sources seem to be never ending.

Next morning, we headed up to the Goûter hut (3,867m), crossing the infamous Grande Couloir. Rockfalls are the danger there, and we just watched and waited for a safe few seconds needed to run across the wide gully to the safety of the buttress and the track up the steep slope. If a rock does come from high up, it will come fast, especially if the Couloir is full of hard snow. We were lucky as there was no snow at all in the gully or on the buttress up to the Goûter hut. This was one of the advantages of going late in the season, when most of last winter's snow had melted off, and the traverse of the gully and the subsequent ascent were relatively safe and much easier than expected.

We were at the Goûter hut by 11:30am after three great hours. We had a favourable weather forecast for two days, so we decided we would stay somewhere at the Goûter hut and try for Mont Blanc on the following day, September 5th. This gave us almost a full day to rest at altitude and acclimatize a little more. We also ventured above the Goûter hut part of the way up our intended route to about 4,000m, where we examined the tracks leading to the mountain. We watched other climbers zigzag up and down different paths and chose the least steep route for ourselves, being ever cautious. This assessment of the route by day was invaluable the next morning, when ascending in the dark.

We hung about the Goûter for the rest of the day, trying to sleep in the sun. After dinner that night, without warning, you just had to grab a piece of floor or the top of a table to sleep on, as there were about 30 to 40 people sleeping in the dining room who had not managed to book a bed for the night. We were thankful we were allowed to stay. The camaraderie was great fun really, but again it was a night with virtually no sleep. Anyway we had to be up at 2:30am to go for the summit.

When we got up, we put on our various layers, harnesses and other bits and headed out with butterflies in our stomachs. We chomped up from the hut on the crunchy snow by torchlight along the route we had sussed out the day before. The route ahead was lit up like a road at night, with spots of light from other climbers heading up towards the top. It was comforting to know that others were on the same route.

We took our time and went slowly, but with excitement. Occasionally fitter groups passed us. We crossed the Dôme du Goûter in the dark and got to the Vallot hut as dawn began to break. We had some drink and half a bar of chocolate but really my stomach was not in the mood for food. Then we came to the Bosses Ridge and it was steep but, with the number of people going up in the last few days, a good trench had been cut along the crest of the ridge and it was wide enough to plod along without having to stand on the steep slopes.

Occasionally we had to step aside as groups passed up or down. The trail sneaked up over large seracs, keeping sufficiently away from the edge for safety. We just had to hope and pray that this was safe, and trust the judgement of the hundreds of others who had passed this way in the last few days. Once or twice we stepped over some crevasses, but our confidence was increasing and we were hopeful of success.

We puffed and panted all the way up. At about one hundred metres from the summit, we noticed that the wind was curling some ghostly-looking clouds across the top. The wind was not too bad but was it a sign of a change in the weather? For a few seconds, we thought it might be wise



to descend but guides and others were still ascending, so we continued. We were slow, taking two steps, a pause and then another two steps, panting all the way.

We reached the summit after five hours and it was an emotional experience to finally be there. We hadn't really thought that we could do

it but here we were on the summit, in beautiful sunshine, with a fantastic panorama, and in the company of a friend who was willing to attempt to go with you to a place beyond your combined experience. It was a great moment.

Our descent was understandably much easier and was made with a bubbling confidence. We had taken our time ascending to ensure that we still had energy and our wits about us on the descent. We were experienced enough to know that more accidents occur while descending than on the ascent, so we kept plenty in reserve.

After we had passed down the Bosses Ridge uneventfully, we were happy enough to relax at last and to look back up at where we had been just a few hours previously, a place that previously daunted us. We were delighted with our achievement, and we had a certain amount of pride in the fact that we had faced our fears with caution and had overcome them step by step.

On the way down, we observed many guides with their clients, noting their equipment, technique and fitness. We realised that we had been very fortunate with our chance to ascend the mountain. It emphasised to us that, if conditions on the mountain had been anything other than the perfect conditions we had experienced, then for the sake of safety and with our experience, we could not have ventured to such a

Lance Quin on the Bosses Ridge with the Dôme du Goûter behind. Photo: Martin McCormack.

Martin McCormack beside a crevasse on Mt Blanc du Tacul. Photo: Lance Quin.





Martin McCormack (left) and Lance Quin on the summit.
Photo: Martin McCormack Collection.
Below:
Gran Paradiso.
Photo:
John Gale.

height without the experience of a guide to assist us. In the end, it was a matter of judgment for us, weighing up the challenges against our strengths and knowing our limits, always erring on the side of caution, so as to live to hike on another fine day in the mountains. ■

Martin McCormack is from Dublin and has been hiking and climbing for about 30 years, in Ireland, the UK and Europe from the Tatras to the Atlas. Martin is a founding member of the Irish Christian Hillwalking Club, www.irishchristianhillwalkingclub.com.

Success on Mont Blanc

By PJ Howell

Mont Blanc, standing at 4,810 metres, the highest point in the Alps, has been climbed by relatively few Wayfarers. The stories of those who had attempted it suggested the need for guides, unless one had rock-climbing and alpine experience, and the need for good fortune with weather and the altitude for successful summiting.

So, John Gale's proposal last December of a trip to Mont Blanc this September was discussed eagerly among club members, with nine eventually undertaking the adventure: John Gale, Pat Harraghy, Eileen Reilly, Kevin Coakley, Cliona McCarthy, Gerry Griffin, Maria Duffy, PJ Howell and Pauline McCarthy, who unfortunately, due to a foot injury, could not participate in the climbing but did so in the fun. We set out on September 4th and were joined a week later by Gerri Skehan. Our base was St Gervais Les Bains, a charming Alpine town without the touristy feel of nearby Chamonix.

Our plan was to build up our walking legs, acquire some alpine skills and spend some time at altitude before undertaking Mont Blanc on September 12th and 13th. We started with a five-hour, 1,200m climb on Mont Jolly (2,525m) from which we retreated to Chamonix for shopping and sightseeing, and to watch the



Hurling Final in the Munster Bar. Our next day was a seven-hour, 1,200m ascent to the Refuge Du Col de la Croix de Bonhomme (2,433m), after which we kitted ourselves out with hired boots, crampons, ice-axes and harnesses in St Gervais, where a most trusting proprietor allowed us to take the gear with no deposits or credit card imprints, just our honest faces!

Bad weather gave us an enforced rest day after which we met our two training guides who took us through the Mont Blanc tunnel to La Palud in Italy from where we ascended by ski-lift to Pointe Hellbronner (3,462m), for ice training and altitude acclimatization. After a night in the Refugio Torino, with all eight of us cramped into one room, we took a cable car across the spectacular Vallée Blanche to the Aiguille du Midi (3,842m).

Next day we were back through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Italy to climb Gran Paradiso (4,061m) our first venture above 4,000m and considered to be good acclimatization for the Mont Blanc climb. A two-hour climb brought us to the very well appointed Refugio Victor Emmanuel where the food and wine were so good and inexpensive that Gerry was considering it for a romantic getaway! We set off for the summit at 5:00am by head-torch and after a fantastic day's walking over glaciers and rocks we got back to the cars after 11 hours. The day's highlight was the spectacular feat of Italian cuisine which Pauline with a little help from Gerri had ready for us on our return.

After a final rest day we set off with our five guides for Mont Blanc, taking the ski-lift from Les Houches to Bellevue and the Tramway du Mont Blanc to the end of the line at Mont Lachat (2,115m) – only about 2,700m from the top!

We were following the Goûter Route, which is the least technical route and, after a seven-hour outing, which included running the gauntlet of falling rocks in the Grand Couloir and a steep scramble using fixed ropes, we reached the Goûter hut, which had more basic facilities than we had previously experienced. A few hours rest/sleep/snoring had us up for breakfast at 3:00am, after which we set out, alongside dozens more, through a combination of hard-packed and very soft snow towards the summit. We had five guides for eight climbers and I was fortunate to have a guide to myself.

As we plodded upwards through

the snow, the wind rose and all of the other guides decided to take shelter at the Vallot Bivouac (4,362m), approximately two hours from the summit. My guide, Joe, and I were behind and, not realising that the others were inside the shelter, we stopped for a short break outside it before pressing onwards. Sometime later, Joe considered turning back because of the wind but, although the wind was now quite strong, it was constant and not gusting. As we were able to maintain our track on the Bosses Ridge, we kept going and reached the summit at 8:30am, where I played a short version of *The Mountain Top Reel* on a tin whistle wearing gloves.

Pat Harraghy and Gerry Griffin summited shortly after me and were down in time to catch the last train back to St Gervais. Maria Duffy and Kevin Coakley were further behind and, having summited, encountered a white-out during their descent which delayed them further. They were picked up by Pauline walking towards Les Houches at 10:00pm, a 19-hour day. John Gale, Eileen Reilly and Cliona McCarthy all climbed above the Vallot Bivouac but a combination of altitude sickness, tiredness and cold prevented them from reaching the summit.

Notwithstanding the fact that we did not all succeed in reaching the summit, we all thoroughly enjoyed the

trip and learned a lot from the experience. We had great walking and plenty of fun. A special thanks to John Gale, who organised accommodation, booked restaurants, arranged and liaised daily with the guides, took a million photos, and was calm and good-humoured through it all. ■

PJ Howell is a member of the Wayfarers' Club.

The Wayfarers group on Gran Paradiso.
Photo:
John Gale.



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Taj Mahal – (Yann)

Written in stone

What the mountains can tell us

**Bernie Lafferty
and Peter Wilson
conclude their
informative series on
the geology and
geomorphology of
the Irish mountain
landscape.**

IRELAND'S PERIGLACIAL PRESENT

The Irish uplands provide many opportunities to observe the intimate and often subtle links between their frost-related features and the changes in the climate that occur at both the seasonal and longer timescales.

As the climate warmed at the end of the last glacial phase, shrinking ice masses revealed a harsh, inhospitable landscape thought to be akin to current high latitude environments in Scandinavia and Canada. Permafrost and intense frost action in this Irish tundra echoed the cold, dry climate that prevailed and gave rise to a range of impressive periglacial landforms that persist in the uplands today. Some

of these features including tors, talus, protalus ramparts and blockfields were described in an earlier article in this series in IML 93, pp40-43.

Climate has continued to fluctuate throughout the last 12,000 years; nevertheless these changes have been much less extreme than those that occurred at the end of the glacial period. Today, frost action processes are generally restricted to winter months and give rise to much smaller-scale and more delicate features that are best seen in the hills.

Although extreme and prolonged cold no longer occurs, it does generally become considerably colder the higher you go on the hills, with the temperature falling by approximately 1°C for each 150m of ascent. The present winter (December-February) mean temperature is about +6°C at sea level and, therefore, is

around +2°C at 600m, +1°C at 750m and 0°C at 900m. Consequently, seasonal frosts are common in the mountains and, combined with the strong winds and high levels of precipitation, the uplands experience what has been termed a maritime periglacial regime.

The features associated with shallow ground freezing include *frost-heaved ground*, *patterned ground* and *ploughing boulders*. Local factors such as variations in rock type, altitude, vegetation cover, aspect and gradient control which features develop and where they can develop. For example, slope aspect distorts freeze/thaw dynamics, with south-facing slopes freezing later and thawing earlier than north-facing slopes.

Frost-heaved ground

Frost heave results when ice forms



Photo 1:
Block of needle ice
removed from the
soil. It takes its
name from the
pronounced vertical
structure – like a
bundle of needles
stuck together.
Photo: Peter Wilson.



beneath the soil surface as freezing sets in. The ice grows vertically toward the surface, in the direction of heat loss. Frost heave requires a water supply to keep feeding the growing ice crystals. As the water freezes it expands 9% by volume and ice crystal growth will continue as long as a source of free water is available. Free water can migrate through the soil by capillary action (akin to wicking) as far as 6m in certain frost-susceptible soils.

Silts or silty clays are amongst the soils most susceptible to heaving. The small particle size encourages the flow of water by capillary action, the effect that induces flow against gravity, through its pores, and needle ice develops (**Photo 1**).

As well as being an interesting phenomenon in itself and restricted to just a few months of the year, frost heave as an active upland process has implications for overall slope stability. As the ice pushes soil particles apart it reduces interparticle friction so that thawed soils are less cohesive (**Photo 2**). Research shows that, in areas where seasonal frosts are common, processes related to soil freezing contribute to up to 85% of soil erosion. During periods of heavy rainfall, water may find it easier to carry away material from paths that have undergone repeated episodes of

frost heave. If left unchecked this can lead to serious erosion and gully development over a period of years.

Patterned ground

Probably the most distinctive type of active periglacial landform in the uplands is patterned ground, although this has only been recorded on a few hills. As with the relict sorted patterns described in a previous article, the active forms are characterised by the clear separation of coarse and fine debris. The most apparent difference between relict and active sorted patterns is that the latter are of considerably smaller dimensions and comprise smaller rock fragments. Active circles and polygons rarely exceed 30-40cm in diameter, and stripe widths are usually less than 50cm. Sediment sorting, although a complex and not fully understood process, has been attributed both to needle ice development and differential frost heave.

Pattern geometry changes as slope gradient changes. On relatively flat surfaces and slopes of less than 5°, sorted patterns tend to be circular or polygonal in form (**Photo 4**).

As slope gradient increases, gravity has a greater influence and the features become increasingly elongated and eventually grade into stripe patterns (**Photo 3**).

Circular and polygonal patterns are less common than stripes but in each type of pattern the coarser fragments occupy shallow troughs and the finer particles are slightly elevated above the troughs. This relationship is best seen in winter when the ground freezes; in summer the distinction is less clear because the actions of wind, rain and animals (including passing walkers) tend to destroy the patterns. However, the patterns reform with the next winter frosts.

The regularity of form is attributed to buoyancy forces and convective circulation induced by variations in soil density and/or water temperature during thawing. As the process of ice growth and thaw is repeated, sediment resettlement is accompanied by relocation under the influence of gravity. When conditions are favourable, frost creep and sliding during thaw can facilitate quite rapid downslope transport. Although not recorded in Irish hills, monitoring of downslope movement in the Lake District reported sediment relocation of more than 1.0m in one winter. This rate is considerable and comparable to the most rapid recorded in any periglacial environment.

Ploughing boulders

Ploughing boulders are surface boulders that move downslope faster

Photo 2:
Needle ice
exposed in a
stony footpath.
Crunchy walking
when this stuff
forms.
Photo: Peter
Wilson.



Photo 3:
Sorted patterned
ground (striped
variety) in the
Comeragh
Mountains.
Survey pole (1
metre long) for
scale.
Photo: Peter
Wilson.

than the surrounding soil. They are probably the most impressive manifestation of contemporary solifluction – the slow downslope movement of saturated hillslope debris in a periglacial environment. Boulder movement is indicated by a linear depression or furrow on their upslope side and a 'bow wave' of turf or soil on their downslope side (**Photo**

5). In some instances the boulder has pushed up low ridges of soil on the flanks the furrow.

Differential movement between the boulders and the surrounding soil is a consequence of the boulders' greater thermal conductivity or temperature-transferring efficiency. As the ground freezes, the freezing plane passes through boulders, more rapidly

resulting in soil water being drawn towards the base of the boulder where it freezes and forms a thin lens of ice.

When thawing sets in, the greater thermal conductivity of the boulders causes the ice lenses to melt before the ground in front of the boulders has had time to thaw. As a consequence the soil below the boulders is saturated and the water has nowhere to go. When the ground in front of the boulders thaws, the trapped water escapes and the boulders slip forward a little. By this mechanism boulders move slowly downslope and bulldoze the soil in front of them into a mound. After ploughing their way downslope for many years, some boulders may have come to a halt because they are no longer able to overcome the resistance of a large mound of ploughed-up soil.

A number of factors, including slope gradient, boulder size, soil characteristics and number of freeze-thaw cycles, influence boulder movement. The rate at which ploughing boulders move in Ireland is not known but some measurements are available for boulders on several English and Scottish mountains. These measurements reveal that boulders can move downslope by up to 6-7cm per year. This is of course a crude approximation because not all boulders move at the same rate and in mild winters boulders may not move at all. Nevertheless, when considered



Photo 4:
Sorted patterned
ground (circular
variety) in the
Comeragh
Mountains.
Trowel for scale.
Photo: Peter
Wilson.



along with the length of an individual furrow, these figures shed valuable light on the length of time and conditions involved in boulder transport by freezing and thawing.

* * * * *

The features described above indicate that frost action continues to affect the mountains at the present time, albeit on a rather restricted scale. In recent decades, winters have become somewhat milder and wetter, and although temperature still falls to below freezing at all levels, the current warming trend may eventually put an end to that. As the frequency of frost activity declines, so the prominence of active frost-related features in the uplands will also decline and the features described above will become even rarer than they are at present.

Alternatively, these features could become more abundant in the upland landscape. There is still great uncertainty as to how climate change will effect temperate latitudes and a sudden switch to colder conditions is not impossible. The sudden onset of a Big Freeze is not unusual in the geological record and paradoxically such events have followed on from periods of global warming. On two occasions, at 12,900 and 8,200 years

ago, huge floods in north-west Canada caused by melting ice sheets poured freshwater into the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, diluting the salinity and disrupting the Gulf Stream. This effectively shut down the climate regulator that brings warmer, milder conditions northward from the Equator to the north-eastern Atlantic. The effect of such disruption would be like taking Ireland today and moving it up to Svalbard, Norway's northernmost Arctic group of islands, which include Spitsbergen. Some researchers have suggested that the melting of the Greenland ice sheet could have a similar effect. The prolonged cold spell of last winter gave us a very small taster of this potential reality.

* * * * *

In this series of articles, we have tried to show that there are several facets to the uplands that relate to their long-term and short-term evolution, and that hill-walkers are well positioned to be able to recognise changes brought about by natural processes which have occurred in the past and current changes that are being brought about by climate and human activities. The landscape is a mosaic of landforms, each with its own history and relationship to

adjacent features. With careful observation a fascinating landscape story can be teased out and it will be recognised that the physical landscape is a dynamic rather static one. A fuller appreciation of natural landscape change also provides us with a greater ability to challenge the growing number of activities that threaten to desecrate the upland environment, its survival and our enjoyment of it. ■

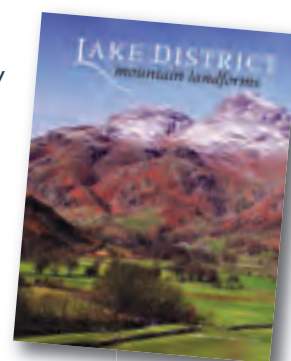
Bernie Lafferty is an independent environmental systems specialist working in the northwest region.

Peter Wilson is a lecturer in Environmental Science at the University of Ulster, Coleraine, and a member of Mountaineering Ireland.

Photo 5: Several ploughing boulders on Slieve Donard (the scale bar is 30cm in length). The boulders are moving slowly downslope (towards the camera) and have created shallow depressions behind them and ploughed up a mound of soil in front. Photo: Peter Wilson.

New book

Peter Wilson has recently published a book, *Lake District Mountain Landforms*, which looks at the geology of the English Lake District. This book will be reviewed in a future *Mountain Log*.





Access&Conservation

The latest news from Helen Lawless, Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer



Helen Lawless

Information required on off-road vehicle activity

AT A RECENT meeting with Minister Mary White, Mountaineering Ireland thanked the Minister for her work with Minister Gormley in introducing new regulations to ban off-road vehicles from certain areas. The actions required to implement the regulations were discussed in detail, as was the need to extend this protection to other upland areas.

Members are asked to contact Helen Lawless (helen@mountaineering.ie) if they have seen evidence of off-road vehicle activity in any upland area not covered by the new regulations. The information gathered will form part of a submission to the Department seeking to apply the regulations to additional areas. The thirteen areas already covered are Special Areas for Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and are as follows:

- The Raven SAC, Wexford
- Blackstairs Mountains SAC, Wexford/Carlow
- Wicklow Mountains SAC, Wicklow/Dublin
- Kilpatrick Sandhills SAC, Wexford
- Cahore Dunes Polder SAC, Cahore Marshes SPA, Wexford
- Slieve Blooms SAC, SPA, Louth/Offaly
- Carlingford Mountain, Louth
- Ballyness Bay SAC, Donegal
- Gweedore Bay Islands SAC, Donegal
- Castlemaine Harbour SAC, SPA (including Inch Strand) Kerry
- Galtee Mountains SAC, Limerick/Tipperary
- Slieve Bearnagh SAC, Clare
- Slieve Aughty SPA, Galway/Clare.

Access scheme piloted in two areas in the west

From discussions with our members, the major frustration regarding access to the Irish hills and countryside is not a lack of access, as this is generally available, but a lack of certainty as to where one can and can't go. **Helen Lawless reports**

Comhairle na Tuaithe's Mountain Access Scheme, currently being piloted on Binn Shléibhe (also known as Mount Gable) in Co Galway and Carrauntoohil, Co Kerry, may provide a solution to this problem.

The Mountain Access Scheme sets out to manage recreational enjoyment of mountain areas in a way that minimises inconvenience for landowners and local residents. It does this by agreeing access with the landowners on the mountain, indemnifying the landowners, producing a map showing designated access points, and providing parking and any infrastructure required to sustain recreational use. This means that use of the area can be promoted with clarity and confidence.

The Mountain Access Scheme is a different proposition to a waymarked walking route. The scheme should not involve the development or marking of trails on the mountain, other than where trail repair or construction is required to avoid environmental damage. As these

are mountain areas, recreational users are expected to be appropriately skilled and equipped to look after themselves.

In the last couple of months Karl Boyle, Chief Officer of Mountaineering Ireland, and I have visited the two pilot areas to meet with the local Rural Recreation Officers, landowners and Mountaineering Ireland club representatives. These meetings have provided a direct insight into local concerns, an opportunity to explain the concept of the Mountain Access Scheme and a chance to see the proposed Mountain Access Points.

Binn Shléibhe area

Following a review of the Binn Shléibhe Mountain Access Area, an extremely positive meeting was held with Trish Walsh, Manager of Petersburg OEC, and Tom Holleran, local landowner and farmers' liaison officer for the Mountain Access Scheme. This meeting highlighted again the need for landowners to have better information regarding occupiers' liability,

Karl Boyle (Mountaineering Ireland), Eamonn Bodkin (Gleninagh), James O'Neill (Glencraff) and Tom Fitzgerald (Rural Recreation Officer) pictured in Gleninagh, Co Galway. Photo: Helen Lawless.



| Carrauntoohil and Loch Gabhrach.



the concern about people bringing dogs on the mountains, a request for walkers to talk to landowners and not shy away, and that overall mutual respect is required.

The visit to the west also provided an opportunity to meet with a couple of landowners in the Maumturks and the Twelve Bens, including Eamonn Bodkin in Gleninagh and James O'Neill, a landowner in Glencraff and member of the Maumturks Walking Club. James is currently completing the Marine & Countryside Guides course at Petersburg OEC and plans to go on to do his Mountain Leader Award and lead groups on the mountains. Through these meetings, Mountaineering Ireland communicated the needs and values of our members, resulting in improved understanding between landowners and hillwalkers.

Carrauntoohil area

At Carrauntoohil, after enjoying the facilities in Cronin's Yard, we did a short walk with John Cronin and Maria Farmer, the Rural Recreation Officer (RRO) working with South Kerry Development Partnership to view the new footbridges in the Hag's Glen. Later, Maria arranged a meeting with landowners on Carrauntoohil and in the Hag's Glen, where concerns were voiced about dogs in the mountains, parking and commercial activity. As in Co Galway, the Carrauntoohil landowners emphasised the importance of dialogue and praised the work of the RRO in their area.

We also met with representatives of local Mountaineering Ireland clubs – Killarney Mountaineering Club, Lough Laine Mountaineering Club, Tralee Mountaineering Club and Sléibhteoirí Óga Chiarraí – and with Kerry Mountain Rescue, to discuss the Mountain Access Scheme and other matters, including erosion on Carrauntoohil.

Erosion on Carrauntoohil

While reviewing the Carrauntoohil Mountain Access Area, the opportunity was taken to look at the condition of the Devil's Ladder and Bóthar na Gíge, the zig-zag route to the east of the Ladder. As some of the material at the top of the Devil's Ladder has been washed down, this route is currently in a better state than it was a year or two ago. However, Bóthar na Gíge has become very eroded in a short space of time.

The Devil's Ladder is the obvious and natural line up Carrauntoohil, and for over a hundred years it has been the traditional tourist route. On other highest mountains, e.g. Ben Nevis and Scafell Pike, path work has been carried out to provide a robust and relatively safe route up the mountain, which can carry the bulk of walkers.

In 2003, Mountain Meitheal examined the Devil's Ladder and, in a written feasibility study, made recommendations for how the route could be defined, repaired and stabilised to allow for sustainable use into the future. Mountain Meitheal carried out the study bearing in mind that their primary interest is in trail conservation and sustainability, balanced with the need to maintain a challenge and a sense of wilderness for users. The Mountain Meitheal report (available on www.mountaineering.ie and from the Mountaineering Ireland office) provides an indication of the rationale, the context, the costs (at 2003 prices) and the approach to dealing with this sensitive route.

Possible dilemma

The Devil's Ladder raises a possible dilemma for members. The ethos of our sport requires that we choose appropriate objectives and take personal responsibility for managing the risks, and that we seek to

improve our skills, rather than doing anything to make a mountain easier or safer. The last decade has seen a steep growth in the number of walkers and climbers scaling Ireland's highest peak, by a variety of routes, some of which are now so badly eroded that intervention may be necessary to minimise further damage to the mountain.

Following Mountaineering Ireland's recent meeting with the landowners on Carrauntoohil, it is clear that they would now be happy to see the Ladder repaired if funding was available. So, the questions are:

- Should remedial work be carried out on the Devil's Ladder?
- Should measures be taken to reduce erosion on other popular routes such as Brother O'Shea's Gully, the Heavenly Gates and Bóthar na Gíge?
- Aside from remedial work, are there other ways we can take responsibility for the impact of our activities on Carrauntoohil?

Clubs and individual members who have seen the changes on these routes are asked to consider these questions and contact the Mountaineering Ireland office or email helen@mountaineering.ie with their views, before 31st January 2011, so that a position paper can be prepared for circulation prior to the AGM in March.

Recommendations made

Mountaineering Ireland has provided detailed feedback and recommendations on the Mountain Access scheme to the Rural Recreation Section (RRS) of the Department of Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs and will continue to support the RRS in the development and roll-out of the scheme.

During October, Mountaineering Ireland discussed the scheme with Minister Mary White, a junior minister in the same Department and herself a hillwalker. Minister White expressed her support for the scheme and we asked her to emphasise how it differed from waymarked ways.

Mountaineering Ireland's recommendation to the October meeting of Comhairle na Tuaithe, that Comhairle prepare and publish simple, objective information regarding land ownership, access to the countryside and occupiers' liability, was generally accepted and Mountaineering Ireland is looking forward to contributing to this in the coming months.



Training news presented by Training Officer Alun Richardson

Provider workshops discuss some issues



ALUN RICHARDSON

I AM NOT infrequently asked what I do, and the answer is not short, but here goes... moderation, CPD, MI TuK meetings, the adventure framework, new syllabi, old syllabi reviews, BOS meetings, new scout awards, enquiries, disputes, organising assessment dates, organising the meets, *Mountain Log* articles... the list goes on.

I don't do all that alone but with the help of Karl, Nicole, Helen, una, Terry and the rest of the Mountaineering Ireland staff. There are also the many volunteers that I work with to keep the ship of mountain training on the correct tack and, Oh boy, there are many winds trying to push it off course. The goal posts move on a regular basis, but the good news is that we have a team capable of steering the ship through difficult times.

But enough of clichés and bad metaphors: all Mountaineering Ireland members and BOS providers can play a part in mountain training by discussing issues with me and generally giving opinions and feedback... so talk to me.

Provider renewals

By the end of 2011 many providers will have to renew their providership. To do this, they must have run at least one complete course during their providership and have attended a CPD (Continuing Professional Development) workshop every three years. There is going to be a rush next year, so book early to avoid a course being cancelled or too full.



Confidence roping.
Photo: MLTA.

Single-Pitch Award CPD workshop

On September 20th, some BOS providers met for a Single-Pitch Award CPD workshop. Concern was expressed that, due to low levels of experience and because candidates were not necessarily committed climbers, standards were not being maintained a few years down the line. As training officer I pointed out that assessments were only a snapshot of a candidate at a particular time and that it was up to the candidates (or their employers) to ensure their skills remained current. I would like to hear from SPA holders and anyone with concerns relating to this matter.

Rescues

The workshop also examined rescues. What should we assess? What is realistic? What really happens? Some examples of scenarios that do happen were:

- Climber traversing off route
- Stuck climber – psychological and

really stuck

- Rope trapped in a crack when being lowered
- Climber unclipping/untying from the rope
- Bottom belayer getting his shirt caught in the belay device

Assessment

The providers present were of the opinion that a 'live' group was necessary to adequately assess candidates. The 'live' group should ideally comprise three or more people, but the assessor must ensure that the group's presence does not interfere with the assessment process. As the Course Director has overall responsibility, they should have the clients' names, contact details and medical conditions. It may be better to divide the 'live' day into a morning session with a group and then swop over with another assessor, so as to allow time to adequately examine aspects of the syllabus that do not require a group.

MLA/WGL CPD workshop

On September 21st, I ran an ML A/WGL CPD workshop. Helen Lawless led a stimulating debate about the role of access and conservation, what we should teach, how we should teach, where we should teach it and what level of knowledge and understanding at assessment do we expect?

The teaching of access and conservation should not be about remembering facts but about:

- Access and land ownership
- understanding of the mountain environment
- Principles of Leave No Trace

However, there was a feeling from the group that candidates were coming through the scheme with a weak knowledge and understanding of environmental issues. To improve this, the providers asked for resources to back up their teaching. Two areas were emphasised:

- Case studies of good and poor access-and-conservation issues
- Legal cases and duty of care and legal liability issues.

Steep ground

The workshop also looked at our responsibilities when taking groups onto steep ground. Are there areas to avoid? How can we find out about these areas?

Through a lecture and discussion the group examined assessing skills: what and how do we assess? What techniques are available? What makes someone a good assessor?

At the recent BOS meeting I was asked to remind MSA assessors that the steep ground part of the assessment is an integral part of the assessment and anyone not able to cope with the steep ground should be failed or deferred. To give you a reference for the standard, BOS felt that people should be able to cross the Beenkeragh ridge to Carrauntuohil.

Provider's insurance

The agreement that providers have signed requires that they hold current and appropriate insurance, as follows: "The Provider shall at their own expense obtain and maintain with an insurance company acceptable to BOS, public liability and such other insurance as may be specified from time to time by BOS and in such minimum sums and conforming to such policy limits and provisions as BOS may from time to time require."

'Public Liability' and 'Professional Indemnity' insurance indemnifies the policyholder against loss/circumstances incurred as a result of their negligent act, negligent error or negligent omission in carrying out the policyholder's business. If the provider employs anyone, they must have 'employers' liability.' This is often overlooked by providers that bring in other providers to act as director or run courses for them.

BOS guidance and advice

It has recently been brought to my attention that www.adventuresports.ie has guidance from BOS about "Minimum requirements for Centre operations: Instructors and organisations bringing groups into the hills on a commercial or training basis."

This guidance is now out of date and it is up to outdoor centres to create their own H&S procedure, risk assessments and operating procedures.

BOS does, however, give guidance and advice on the running of the courses it administers.

Contact

If you have any comments or feedback, or have an idea but are not sure how to get it off the ground, contact the Training Officer, Alun Richardson, at alun@mountaineering.ie, or on 01 625 1117.

Courses Calendar 2011

Train the Trainers Workshop

15th-16th January 2011

Scottish Winter Meet

18th-28th February 2011

Ski Mountaineering Meet

19th-27th March 2011

Assessment courses

Mountain Leader assessment

15th-17th April 2011

Walking Group Leader assessment

29th April to 1st May 2011

Summer Alpine Meet

2nd-16th July 2011

Green tip

Gaiters protect the environment

WEARING GAITERS while walking makes it easier to walk on wet or muddy paths, thereby preventing damage to path margins and the widening of eroded paths.

Small changes to our behaviour, like wearing gaiters, keeping to durable or trampled ground whenever we can, and walking in single file on narrow paths, will help reduce the impact of our activities on the natural environment.

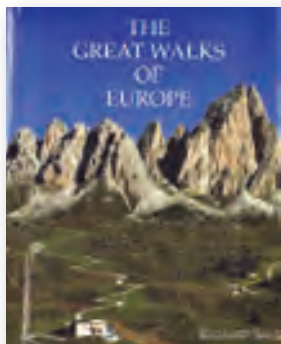
While it may not be pleasant to walk in the mud, by doing so you will be helping to prevent path widening and the worsening of erosion. If you're not already a convert, add gaiters to your Christmas list!

Books

Literary Editor Joss Lynam presents reviews of some recent publications.

Pick of the best walking routes in Europe

Sean Rothery



The Great Walks of Europe

By Richard Sale
Frances I incoln, 256pp
Very many large colour photos
& maps
£25.00 ISBN: 978-07112-2855-9

How could you write about the great walks of Europe in one volume? It would be impossible. However, in this wonderful, sumptuous book Richard Sale has given us his selection of just two

dozen of his favourites...and what a feast!

In a refreshing twist to the usual table of contents, he has split his list in two, with each long-distance trail followed by a single-day walk.

Many of the long walks are famous and obviously had to be included, but the day walks are possibly less well known but equally seductive. The initial stunning photo of the Samaria Gorge in Crete would certainly tempt a visit. I also enjoyed the author's tongue-in-cheek remark that a fall into the valley from the rocky ridge of the Château de Peyrepertuse "would undoubtedly be fatal!"

Ireland is well served, with one long-distance route, the Kerry Way, and a single day walk, Diamond Hill. The Esknamucky Valley with an arbutus tree in full blossom must surely boost that region's claim to

have some of the best walks in Europe. With the links proposed to the Sheep's Head Way, the Beara Way and the Dingle Way, Kerry and Cork are certainly showing the rest of the country how to do it.

Some of my own favourites are here, particularly the GR20 that traverses the high country of the island of Corsica. The author mentions the possibility of bivouacing on the trail. When I did this route in 1980 we only stayed one night in a refuge as sleeping out under the stars was such a huge pleasure. The Alpine section of the GR5 is rightly praised and it is appropriate that the wonderful TMB, circuit of Mont Blanc, is included as an addendum.

The final long-distance walk described is, for me at least, a revelation. This is the Kungsleden in northern Sweden. Most of this route is above the Arctic Circle and the photos show a true wilderness of astonishing and stark beauty. Richard Sale mentions that the author of the definitive guide to the route, Claes Grundsten, recommends that the walk be undertaken north-south so the sun warms the face. An adventure up here in the land of the midnight sun would be an antidote to the creeping and insidious exploitation of the Alps with new roads, the ski industry and the demands of electricity generation.

The book, wisely, does not attempt to provide definitive guides to each walk but condenses essential information towards detailed guidebooks and maps at the end of each selection. The hundreds of quite superb photographs are the real joy of this work, not just of the mountains but also the close-up shots of plants, birds, animals and butterflies of each region.

This must be the perfect Christmas gift.

A Cairngorms mountaineering history

Declan Craig



The Cairngorms: 100 Years of Mountaineering

By Greg Strange
Scottish Mountaineering Trust,
400pp
Very numerous colour & b/w photos
npq ISBN: 978-1-907-233-11-1

Having reviewed and been delighted with *Ben Nevis: Britain's Highest Mountain*, I looked forward to its companion volume on the Cairngorms and I have not been disappointed by this excellent

publication from the SMT. *The Cairngorms* is published in the same style and layout as the Ben Nevis edition and they sit well together on the bookshelf. It runs to some 400 pages and is amply filled with both black-and-white and some colour photographs of the tigers of the past involved in their mighty adventures and of the mountains

and crags where they forged reputations for boldness and ingenuity in solving the climbing problems facing them.

As in the Ben Nevis volume, the history of mountaineering in the Cairngorms is treated on a decade-by-decade basis, with the major characters and their achievements being brought to life by the author. Strangely, though, the body of the work ends in 1993 with only a postscript to barely outline events since then. The impression given is that with the awarding of national park status in 2003, the development of the funicular railway, the Ptarmigan Restaurant, ski centres, etc, the glory days of mountaineering in the Cairngorms have come to an end. Of course, those who have followed the adventures of the likes of Mick Fowler, Andy Kirkpatrick and other modern tigers will know differently.

While similar in appearance and with the same depth of historical knowledge as its companion Ben Nevis volume, I found the writing style of Greg Strange more relaxed and reading his work certainly a little less like study and therefore perhaps it is just a little more enjoyable on a cool evening as winter draws near and thoughts turn to axes and crampons awaiting retrieval from the store.

This publication from SMT is highly recommended and should join its companion volume on your bookshelf.

Pocket guide to selection of classic routes in north Wales

Liam Convery & Joss Lynam



North Wales Classics Pokketz: Selected Routes in the Mountains of North Wales

By Jack Geldard

Rockfax, 208pp

Numerous colour photos and diagrams

£16.95 ISBN: 978-1-873341-17-9

This is a departure from the usual Rockfax format. It is truly a "pocket book," being 14.7 x 110.5cm in size and weighing a mere 200gms (compare with the other Rockfax

guide reviewed in this issue which weighs 800gms and measures 21 x 15cm for about 500 routes). The usual colour diagrams cover 75 Mod to Severe, 120 HS to HVS, 94 E1 to E3 and 46 Winter climbs at Tremadog, Cwm Silyn, I lanberis Pass, Cloggy, I liwedd, Ogwen (the Tryfan routes are hidden under this title), Carneddau, Betws y Coed and Winter venues.

Each venue has clear guidance to the relevant crags. The maps, with eight route symbols and eight crag symbols to play with, are appropriate and even provide GPS co-ordinates for parking places. Descent guidance is explicit and the grading display page was excellent. Shops, walls, guides, pubs and cafés are listed (Pete's Eats is even pictured). The disclaimer on page 6 that "the descriptions within this guide are recorded for historical reasons only and no reliance should be placed on the accuracy of the description" is a little odd. Acknowledgment is given to the Climbers' Club for the publication of guides which cover all the climbs in this book and many more.

All routes are fully described and marked (including pitches) on the excellent photographs. The best routes or areas on each crag, such as Nea, Grooved Arête and Idwal Slabs, are repeated in boxes.

As the Foreword states, many of the routes documented in this book are historically significant, major milestones in British rock climbing and deserve to be recorded in this attractive format. These climbs are nearer to Dubliners than to Londoners and if you haven't climbed there, take advantage of this new guide and go there, whether you climb at V.Diff or E3. And if you are a veteran, it is worth having this book to keep old memories alive.

This is a delightful little book – and it sure packs a punch!

Hillwalking near Naples and a little-known part of Spain

Joss Lynam



Walking on the Amalfi Coast

By Gillian Price

Cicerone, 172pp

Numerous colour photos, sketch maps

£12.95 ISBN: 978-1-85284-591-9

Mountain Walking in Southern Catalunya

By Philip and Vivien Freakley

Cicerone, 183pp

Numerous colour photos and simple sketch maps

£12.95 ISBN: 978-1-85284-582-7

Amalfi – where's that? Where has Gillian Price got to now? And Southern Catalunya – are there mountains there too?

What they have in common is that they are almost unknown to Irish climbers and yet each has, I find from these guides, thirty (and probably more) marked paths, most in mountainous terrain and climates preferable to our own.

Before you search for an atlas, let me drop a few names which will be

more familiar – Naples, Sorrento, Capri – those towers of rock on the cover of the Amalfi guide are on Capri. The walks are never far from the coast, but may rise to 500m or so in superb scenery. Access to

the starts of walks is always by bus. The climate is suitable all year round, but accommodation (though not the walks) is full in summer.

For the walks in the Southern Catalunya, find Taragona, then Tortosa; behind it is the El Ports range, where most of the walks are. They are rough limestone hills, highest summit 1,442m. The walks range from 50 mins to around five hours, and though well-marked, look quite rough from the photographs. You need a car to get to the starts. The authors recommend October to May for a visit. They warn of the Tramontana wind, but it can be avoided on low-level walks.

Winner at Banff 2010

The Stonemasters: California Rock Climbers in the Seventies by John Long and Dean Fidelman (Stonemaster Press, 2009) won the Grand Prize and the Best Book Mountaineering History categories at Banff this year. In the early 1970s, a particularly talented group of young climbers started showing up at Southern California's crags, the San Gabriels, Joshua Tree and Tahquitz. The Stonemasters, as they called themselves, established countless new routes in a pure, bold, and visionary style. Their story is told in personal anecdotes supported by archival photos.



Ireland's Antarctic explorers: their individual biographies

Frank Nugent



Great Endeavour: Ireland's Antarctic Explorers

By Michael Smith
Collins Press (Cork), 250pp
Many colour and b/w photos and maps
€29.99 ISBN 978-1-84889-023-7

Michael Smith and the Collins Press have produced yet another worthwhile addition to Irish polar biography. Included are the

following: Edward Bransfield, who charted the South Shetland Islands and made the first recorded sighting of the last discovered continent in 1820; Francis Crozier, who commanded HMS *Terror* and accompanied James Clarke Ross in the discovery of the Antarctic Ice Shelf in 1841; Sir Ernest Shackleton, who first served as an officer to Scott on *Discovery* and went on to organise and lead three British Antarctic expeditions (*Nimrod*, *Endurance* and *Quest*) till his death in South Georgia in 1922; Tom Crean who served with distinction with both Scott (*Discovery* and *Terra Nova*) and Shackleton (*Endurance*) on three expeditions; Robert Forde, Patrick Keohane and Mortimer McCarthy, who all served on Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition; and McCarthy's brother Timothy, who served on Shackleton's *Endurance* voyage and accompanied Shackleton and

Crean in the *James Caird* rescue voyage.

Smith is a champion of the lower-ranked men such as Crean, Keohane and Forde who man-hauled sledges in the British tradition. This book is a new vehicle to tell their stories as individual biographies. This results in some contextual repetition for the reader. Smith also describes the more recent Irish Antarctic exploits, including the 1997 *South Aris* expedition; Mike Barry's trek to the South Pole in 2004; and also Pat Falvey, Clare O'Leary, Shaun Menzies and Jonathon Bradshaw's repeat of that journey in 2008 as well as the expedition of Mark Pollock, the first blind Irishman to reach the South Pole by foot in 2009. The book records the huge contribution Cork and Kerry have made and continue to make to Antarctic exploration.

Smith has produced another very readable book. There is much new information about the background, post-expedition lives, graves, monuments and medallic record of the explorers, particularly Keohane and Forde, and includes many previously unpublished photographs and artefacts. A feature of this book is the quality and clarity of its excellent maps, which support each chapter of the narrative. The book opens with a chronology of Irish Antarctic events which, curiously, does not include the 1997 *South Aris* expedition. This first ever, totally Irish-organised and executed Antarctic expedition was the first to raise public awareness of our neglected Antarctic explorers through its public lectures and television documentaries. Smith's biography of Tom Crean – *Unsung Hero* – followed in 2000 and this latest book continues to expand that worthy goal.

A local history of West Cork with stunning photographs

Bill Gregor



West Cork: A Place Apart

By Jo Kerrigan (text) & Richard Mills (photos)
The O'Brien Press, 160pp
Many colour photos, 5 b/w maps
Stg£24.99 h/back
ISBN: 978-1-84717-166-5

This is not just another compact coffee-table-style book for visitors to take home from holidays. The book is a goldmine of information on place names and the character, vibrancy

and history of each locality as we journey westwards into the rugged landscape of West Cork.

West Cork: A Place Apart captures the atmosphere and wonderful variety of countryside and coastal scenery in Ireland's south-west region but also draws the reader into wanting to seek out the by-roads and places to be discovered. Jo Kerrigan's lyrical text is a delight to read, enlightening history of area with local anecdote and a pride and enthusiasm for a beautiful and unique region that begins

westwards of Kinsale and south of the River Lee.

We explore villages, castles and cottage but always with an eye on the history and happenings of place and their people ... a bustle of industry and energy at Kilcrea Castle and nearby Friary as daily life would have been ... at lakeside Gougane Barra the story of *The Tailor and Ansty* ... at Crookhaven and the Mizen Head we hear of shipwreck and smuggling as well as Marconi and today's visitor centre and whale-watching. There is a love and sensitivity of people and place, both authors being locally resident, along with scholarship and research that enlivens the impression of a wild and wonderful landscape. Clear location maps and a place-name index of pages are useful aids.

Richard Mills' wildlife and landscape photos are renowned in many publications and here each page pictures the ever-changing light and colour of our countryside and closely complements and enriches the narrative. The larger format pages allow greater impact and detail in his well chosen and atmospheric pictures, capturing the warm light of early morning mists rising over still lakeside ... the footpath from long ago revealed snaking through a summer cornfield ... sunlight on a swan down feather caught on yellow ragwort. Along the rugged West Cork coastline from Galley Head to Allihies his photos vividly reveal the majesty and colour of nature's force sculpting cliff and inlet into a wonderland for us to visit and explore. A book to buy for yourself and then a guide to holidays ahead.

Pocket guide to rock-climbs in England's West Country

Barry Watts



West Country Climbs

By Mark Glaister
Rockfax, 424pp
Colour route throughout
£24.95 ISBN: 978-1-873341-37-7

The Rockfax team have done it again with this rock-climbing guidebook to the best climbs in the West Country of England! *West Country Climbs* is a select area guide to the most varied region of climbing in England. I was expecting Cornwall, Devon and Dartmoor to

appear but it was an added bonus that Swanage, Portland, the Avon Gorge and Lundy have been squeezed in too.

The book's best asset (like most Rockfax publications) is its clear, concise, illustrated layout allowing the climber to identify and follow climbs and descents – this is not always an easy job given the size and complexity of some of the sea cliffs included – the pages are colour-coded on the margins to ensure easy access to relevant chapters, and approach maps are clear also. There is a comprehensive representation of grades and climbing styles included ranging from sport climbs in Portland and Somerset to the outcrops of Dartmoor and, moving west, to the multi-pitch sea-cliff trinity of Sennen, Bosigran and Chair I adder in Cornwall. Each climb has the usual symbol layout and each crag has a grade breakdown to boot. The only thing I could fault was that the logistical information is a bit scant but then the guide covers so many crags that this just isn't a runner. Size-wise, it's A5 but it's a bit too bulky to carry on climbs.

The Irish climber will find regular flight connections from Dublin to the West Country and this book can form the basis of a great road trip throughout the region which is also noted for its mild, favourable climate.

Very useful guide to trekking in Chile's Torres del Paine

Frank Nugent



Torres del Paine: Trekking in Chile's Premier National Park

By Rudolf Abraham
Cicerone, 186pp
12 maps, many colour photos
& useful tables
£15.00 ISBN: 978-1-85284-593-3

This particularly useful trekking guide includes excellent route maps and all the information needed to plan a trek around the Towers of Paine in the Chilean Andes. It also includes a

section on trekking in the neighbouring Los Glaciares National Park in Argentina. A trek in the vicinity of Cerro Torre and Cerro Fitzroy will complement any visit to Torres del Paine and, indeed, a visit to both parks is recommended if you choose to travel to this spectacular and remote end of South America.

The guide contains concise history, climate, geography, geology, culture, wildlife, travel, accommodation and visitor information on the park, Santiago and the gateway towns of Puerto Natales and Punta Arenas as well as useful Chilean Spanish language words and phrases. When Paddy Barry and I trekked in this area in 2008, we carried separate guides to both national parks, which are a mere 25km apart as the crow flies. This is a useful guide to a mountain area where those competent of looking after themselves on Irish hills with good lightweight camping gear can be assured of a relatively cheap trek in the spectacular Patagonian Andes.

Excellent guide to nine-day walking route through Mallorca

Paul Donnelly



Trekking Through Mallorca: GR221: The Dripstone Route

By Paddy Dillon
Cicerone, 170pp
19 sketch maps and numerous colour photos
£12.95 ISBN: 978-1-85284-495-0

This is the latest walking guidebook by Paddy Dillon. He has already published 20 Cicerone guides plus a completely updated and expanded version of the classic Cicerone *Walking in Mallorca* guide in 2006.

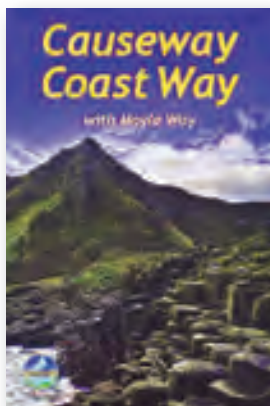
The present guide covers the long-distance GR221 route; a 9-day 142km linear trek from south to

north among the Sierra de Tramuntana, Mallorca's main range. The guide includes six alternatives or variants and one extension. The guide follows the usual Cicerone format with full-day-section descriptions, including sketch maps. However, it has a card (and not the usual plastic) cover. In addition the guide covers such relevant items as: transport; accommodation; an overview of the island's history and environment; wildlife; flora; language; and useful contacts. The author uses a palm-top computer to write his descriptions as he walks and this gives an extra immediacy and accuracy to this guide.

The GR221 pops in and out of a series of attractive little mountain villages, as well as visiting a couple of fine towns, often following old mule paths. The villages generally provide good accommodation, have bars/restaurants and shops. Bus services allow walkers to join or leave the route almost anywhere. Note that as yet the southerly sections may not have full signposting/waymarking. The best detailed maps for the route is the Editorial Alpina 1:25,000 series with three sheets covering the full itinerary.

Causeway Coast, Moyle Way and Rathlin: all in one guide

Cóilín MacLochlainn



Causeway Coast Way with Moyle Way

By Eoin Reilly
Rucksack Readers, 64pp
Numerous colour photos, maps & sketches
£10.99 (€13.50)
ISBN: 978-1-898481-37-9

I clamber over the basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway, marvelling at the hexagons. My eyes are drawn to the next headland where a layer of red rock is sandwiched in the cliff.

What could that be? I leaf through

the guidebook and, ah, there it is. It was formed when lava flowed across the Antrim plateau, baking earth that had accumulated over a long time and turning it to laterite.

The guidebook had passed my test! Beautifully designed, spiral-bound and roadmap-sized, it is full of great photos, maps and all the

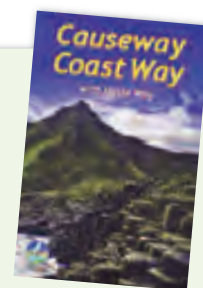
information you could need for walking the Causeway Coast Way to Ballycastle, and the Moyle Way from there to Waterfoot (or in reverse order, as the guide recommends). It also takes in Rathlin Island.

I am surprised to find that the famous sites of the north Antrim coast are all close together, from Dunluce Castle to the Causeway, Bushmills Distillery, Carrick-a-Rede Rope Bridge, Rathlin and Fair Head. The planning authorities must pull no punches here for there is not a single blot on this wild and beautiful landscape.

The rare geology of the Causeway earned it World Heritage Site status and turned six miles of coast into a Mecca for tourists. But you'd have to wonder if it happened the other way round, with the tourism paving the way. Many parts of Ireland are equally magical and could use some Causeway-style promotion.

The Moyle Way is almost entirely off-road and differs in character, being all mountain and forest, a highlight being Glenariff Forest Park. As with the Coast Way, every twist and turn is described in the guide. There is much detail on the wildlife and history, though the birdlife is oversold – a not unusual fault of guidebooks.

Eoin Reilly, who wrote this guide and took most of the photographs, was pictures editor of the *Mountain Log* for a few years. I let's hope he's kept busy producing guides to this standard for other heritage trails.



Joss Book Competition

We have five copies of the above guidebook, *Causeway Coast Way with Moyle Way* by Eoin Reilly, to give away, courtesy of the publishers, Rucksack Readers (www.rucksacs.com). To be in with a chance of winning a copy, simply answer the following question: "In what Northern Ireland county is the Giant's Causeway located?" Send your answer either by e-mail to info@mountaineering.ie or by post to: **Joss Book**

Competition, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Parkwest Business Park, Dublin 12. E-mails should have 'Joss Book Competition' in the subject line. The response should include the answer, your name, address and a contact telephone number and your Mountaineering Ireland membership number. Entries must be received by 5:00pm on Friday, January 28th, 2011.

Autobiography from female English climber and adventurer

Joss Lynam



Itching to Climb

By Barbara James
Matador, 204pp
6pp colour plates, approx,
16pp b/w pics in text
£8.99 ISBN: 978-1-848760-2-02

The author has had such an eventful life that it is difficult to cover it in a short review.

To start with, she had to overcome eczema and allergies for artificial materials and horses to become a climber and instructor – note the book's title again!

Her school PE teacher took her on a course at Plas y Brenin, which opened up a lifelong enthusiasm for the hills. While in teacher training in Liverpool, she managed to get to Wales for more courses

and in a couple of years became Assistant Warden at the Towers Outdoor Pursuit Centre where Harold Drasdo was Warden. All this was in the late 1950s when women instructors were scarce in England.

At this time she met Ron James with whom she climbed in Wales and the Alps, and whom she married. They had a very good climbing life together, but he fell for one of the ladies on a course he was running and divorced Barbara (his second divorce).

Barbara then got a job as the only female and the only civilian instructor training young soldiers at Folkestone. This produced some anomalous situations. She wasn't allowed in the Officers' Mess and, on the second of two trips she organized to St Kilda, she wasn't allowed on the LC [landing craft] carrying her students!

After retirement she made a post-war trip to the Falkland Isles and, in her fiftieth year, took lessons in flying, gaining her pilot's licence after 10½ hours flying.

Her mother, to whom she was very close, died in 1990. She took a holiday in Tenerife, loved it and has spent very active winters there ever since, with the resulting adventures that take up the rest of the book. It's a great read!

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Mountain Rescue volunteers wanted



The Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team are recruiting new members. We've a long history going back to the An Óige MRT in the 1960s and we celebrated our 25th anniversary in 2009. The team launched the first mountain rescue base in Wicklow in 2008, in Roundwood Garda Station. We work primarily in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains but also assist MRTs in other parts of Ireland.

The team is seeking enthusiastic individuals who are interested in working as part of a team to achieve high standards of casualty care in the mountains. We are looking for people with a strong interest in mountaineering activities, specifically with a hillwalking/climbing background. Good navigation and hill skills are required as well as the commitment to participate in regular training and callouts. The team provides a varied and interesting internal training programme with opportunities to attend specialised external training courses in mountain rescue techniques.

If you are living in Wicklow, south Dublin or surrounding areas and are interested in becoming a mountain rescue volunteer, please e-mail recruitment@dwmrt.ie before the 31st of January to express your interest and to receive an application form. An information evening will be organised in January for prospective new members. New member selection and assessment will commence in February.



For more information, visit our website www.dwmrt.ie.

Books, guides and maps to meet your Christmas gift requirements...

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

Italian climbing legend

Lino Lacedelli

LINO LACEDELLI, the Italian mountaineer who made the first ascent of K2 with Achille Compagnoni, died on November 20, 2009. He was 83 years old.

The first ascent of K2 (8611m) on July 31, 1954, was followed by decades of dispute as a result of the conflicting accounts that were produced of the final ascent.

Lacedelli was born in Cortina in 1925 and lived there all of his life. His climbing career began when as a young teenager he followed a mountain guide up a local summit. He soon came under the tutelage of one of the best rockclimbers in the Dolomites at that time and, in 1946, he was accepted into the prestigious Cortina Squirrels climbing club. He became known for fast ascents of difficult routes, including a first ascent with Guido Lorenzi of the southwest face of Cima Scotoni, at the time one of the hardest rock climbs in the Alps, and the first one-day ascent of the Solda Route on the southwest face of the Marmolada di Penia also with Lorenzi. In 1951, he achieved international recognition by completing the second ascent of the east face of the Grand Capucin in the Mont Blanc massif with Bibi Ghendina in 18 hours, just weeks after the four-day first ascent. He was an obvious choice for the 1954 Italian K2 expedition.

In 1954, a year after Charles Houston's unsuccessful American attempt on K2's Abruzzi Ridge, Ardito Desio led an Italian team to Pakistan to attempt the mountain. The two lead climbers, Lino Lacedelli and Achille Compagnoni, set up their top camp at about 8100m in what Lacedelli later said was an illogical spot. They then requested that additional oxygen be brought up for their summit bid. Walter Bonatti and his companion, the legendary Hunza porter, Amir Mahdi, were well positioned lower down to do this. The year before, Mahdi had carried an exhausted Hermann Buhl off Nanga Parbat. Bonatti was an ambitious 24-year-old member of the expedition. However,

the high camp was further away than Bonatti and Mahdi had expected and night fell before they reached it. Bonatti and Mahdi survived a bivouac at 8100m, but the Pakistani lost half of each foot to frostbite.

Back at home in Italy, Compagnoni accused Bonatti of trying to sabotage their summit push and steal the top for himself, saying that he and Lacedelli did not have enough oxygen to reach the summit because Bonatti used it. Bonatti, who subsequently made the first ascent of Gasherbrum IV in 1958, was ostracised from the climbing community and in 1965 gave up mountaineering.

In 1995, Bonatti published *The Mountains of My Life*, an autobiography with stories about the expedition of 1954, in which he gave proof of his innocence, which included a photograph of Lacedelli and Compagnoni wearing oxygen masks on the summit, which he suggested they would not have done if they had run out of oxygen as they claimed.

Fifty years after the 1954 K2 expedition, a very old Lino Lacedelli, who had remained silent all this time, couldn't face taking the truth to his grave and, in his



2004 book *K2: The Price of Conquest*, he revealed the events of the night on K2 and the subsequent cover-up, changing the course of mountaineering history. Lacedelli's book made it clear that Bonatti's version of events was correct.

Despite losing a thumb on K2, Lacedelli returned from that expedition to high-standard rock climbing in the Dolomites, establishing many more new routes at a similar level to the Cima Scotoni climb. These included the southwest face of Punta Giovannini, whose 400 metres of overhanging friable rock needed 385 pitons and took four days to climb. He also participated in 163 mountain rescues.

In 2004, at the age of 79, Lacedelli returned to K2 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first ascent and to pay his respects to Mario Puchoz, who had died of altitude sickness on the 1954 expedition.

On this return to the mountain that had made his name, he said: "The mountains have that aura of beauty that needs no words. You look around and see all that God has created, and this is the most beautiful thing that can happen to you."

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

Lino Lacedelli, mountaineer, born 1925; died November 20th, 2009

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