

Irish Mountain Log

HILLWALKING • CLIMBING • MOUNTAINEERING



Fire in the Kingdom

National park damaged

Annual Review 2020

Mountaineering Ireland's year like no other



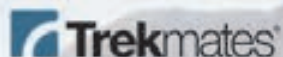


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Welcome

The country has thankfully opened up somewhat in the last month or so, allowing us all to get out on the hills and crags again. I hope you are managing to do that in as safe a way as possible?

It is easy to have become rusty during the lockdowns, and we may need to refresh some of our skills or even just get hill-fit again. We also still need to continue to follow the public health advice about social distancing and mask-wearing while the vaccinations are being rolled out. The Covid-19 variants remain a threat and are even more easily spread than the original strain. (See current advice for hillwalkers and climbers, page 5.)

The excellent cover photo by **Valerie O'Sullivan** and a piece by **Helen Lawless**, Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer (see page 56), highlight the threat that fires are to important habitats in our hills. The terrible damage to habitats caused by the fires in Killarney National Park and in the Mournes will take years to recover.

This issue includes the **Annual Review** of the work of Mountaineering Ireland in the year 2020. It was a difficult year for us all, and our sincere condolences to those who lost family or friends in that year. However, there have been some positive developments in Mountaineering



The terrible damage to habitats caused by the fires in Killarney and the Mournes will take years to recover

Ireland during the year, not the least of which has been the publication of **Irish Peaks**, with almost 5,000 copies sold now.

CEO **Murrough McDonagh** highlights the important work of the staff and volunteers who together kept our National Governing Body moving forward in that most difficult of years. They are, as Murrough says, "the many moving parts in the organisation that, working together, have produced a result that is greater than the sum of the individual efforts involved."

We need to continue to be safe, responsible and considerate in our uplands, as we learn to live in the new 'normal' going forward.

Keep safe!

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor

ISSUE 138

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

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Mountaineering Ireland Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and registered in Dublin, No 199053.

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The *Irish Mountain Log* is published by Mountaineering Ireland four times a year, in March, June, September, December. The material published in the *Log* by the voluntary editorial team and contributors must not be taken as official Mountaineering Ireland policy unless specifically stated.

Copy deadline for the Autumn 2021 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is: Friday, August 13th, 2021.

Advertising: info@mountaineering.ie

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

PARTICIPATION AND RISK

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



Write for the Log

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

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

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



ON THE COVER

Irish Air Corps helicopter tackling a fire between Shehy Mountain and the Upper Lake, Killarney, in April.

PHOTOGRAPH
VALERIE O'SULLIVAN

Georg Barry and Daithí Scollard on Mont Mallet in the Mont Blanc massif in 1959 (see story, page 46)

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Lt-Col Charles Howard-Bury

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Newsdesk



Be safe, responsible, considerate

Our latest Covid-19 advice for hillwalkers and climbers in Ireland

The easing of the restrictions on our activities in the last couple of months has been welcomed by hillwalkers and climbers on the island of Ireland. The latest relaxation of the restrictions effectively allows for a full resumption of hillwalking and climbing activities for individuals and clubs in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

Summary of current restrictions

	Republic of Ireland from June 7 th 2021	Northern Ireland from May 24 th 2021
Travel	Inter-county travel is permitted.	Travel within Northern Ireland is permitted.
Hillwalking, rock climbing	Covid-19-related restrictions on group sizes have eased. Mountaineering Ireland's longstanding advice is that group sizes should be kept small, ideally less than 10, and should not exceed 15.	Covid-19-related restrictions on group sizes have eased. Mountaineering Ireland's longstanding advice is that group sizes should be kept small, ideally less than 10, and should not exceed 15.
Climbing walls	Climbing walls are open.	Climbing walls are open.
NGB course provision and leadership	Permitted	Permitted

Choosing a location

With the large numbers of people now availing of the greater freedoms, there is a lot of pressure on the upland areas.

- Consider how popular the location is and whether there is an alternative venue.
- As people who know the mountains, choose less popular venues, which should be less busy.
- Does the venue provide you with a choice of routes, should your chosen route be too busy?
- Can you do your activity at off-peak times, such as mid-week or early in the day?
- Dogs are not welcome in most upland areas. Where dogs are permitted, keep your dog on a lead to prevent interaction with other people, and to protect wildlife and farm animals.
- Large clubs with multiple groups are encouraged to use different locations and routes.
- Take time to regain your fitness and refresh skills.

Landowners and rural communities

Please be respectful of landowners and local communities in the places where you walk and climb.

- Please respect rural residents by keeping your group size small.
- If possible, park in locations that are not close to houses.
- Plan your route to avoid passing close to homes and through farmyards.
- Places where you buy food and drink may be closed, so bring the supplies you need, but where services are open, please support them ■

AGM held online for second year in a row

Patrick O'Sullivan reports on this year's virtual AGM



Given the continued travel restrictions in place and the operational challenges being presented by the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of ensuring social distancing, etc, the **2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM)** of Mountaineering Ireland was held online via Zoom at 7.00pm on March 29th. It was chaired by the Chairperson of the Board, **Paul Barron**.

Agenda

- ◆ Adoption of Standing Orders
- ◆ Adoption of Minutes of the 2020 AGM
- ◆ President's Address
- ◆ Election to Full Membership of Aspirant Clubs
- ◆ Company Secretary's Report
- ◆ Approval of Financial Statements for 2020
- ◆ Appointment of Auditor for 2021

- ◆ Statements regarding Safeguarding and Anti-Doping
- ◆ Motions: Proposed amendments (2) to the Constitution of Mountaineering Ireland
- ◆ Elections to the Board of Mountaineering Ireland.

Thirty-one clubs were represented at the AGM by a total of fifty-five club members who, together with twelve individual members, resulted in a total attendance of sixty-seven. The clubs present were:

- ◆ Aonach ar Siúl (Nenagh Hillwalkers)
- ◆ Belfast Association of Rock Climbers and Fell Runners (BARF)
- ◆ Ballyhoura Bears Walking Club
- ◆ Ballyvaughan Fanore Walking Club
- ◆ Beanna Beola Hillwalking Club
- ◆ Blayney Ramblers
- ◆ Bootleggers Hillwalking Club
- ◆ Clonakilty Hill Walking Club

- ◆ Cork Mountaineering Club
- ◆ Cumann Siúl Cois Coiribe
- ◆ Dublin Climbers and Mountaineers
- ◆ Enniscrone Walking Club
- ◆ Galtee Walking Club
- ◆ Glencree Walkers
- ◆ Glenwalk
- ◆ Hillwalkers Club
- ◆ Irish Mountaineering Club
- ◆ Irish Ramblers Club
- ◆ Kilmacthomas Walking Club
- ◆ Na Sléibhte Hillwalking Club
- ◆ New Ross Ramblers
- ◆ North West Mountaineering Club
- ◆ Rosway Walkers
- ◆ Roving Soles
- ◆ Siúl Walking Club
- ◆ Tralee Mountaineering Club
- ◆ Tyndall Mountain Club
- ◆ Wayfarers Association
- ◆ West Clare Walking Club
- ◆ Wexford Hillwalking and Mountaineering Club
- ◆ Winders Climbing Club.

The standing orders were adopted by the meeting, as were the minutes of the previous AGM, held on June 24th, 2020. The President, **Paul Kellagher**, welcomed everyone to the AGM and presented his address. The CEO, **Murrough McDonagh**, presented the Company Secretary's Report, which demonstrated that the company had observed good governance during 2020.

The main business of the meeting was the approval by the members of the company's Audited Financial Statements for 2020, so that Mountaineering Ireland could be seen to be accountable to its members and also meet the requirements of the funding bodies and the Charities Commission. The audited accounts for the year were presented by **Imelda Buckley**, Chair of the **Finance, Audit and Risk Committee**. The accounts, which were approved by the AGM, showed that, despite the challenging financial times that Covid-19 had brought, and much financial uncertainty, Mountaineering Ireland had



**Irish Sport HQ,
National Sports Campus,
Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.
Monday, 29th March 2021.**

Welcome to Mountaineering Ireland's Annual General Meeting 2021

**Delegates Registration from 6:45 – 7:00pm
AGM Commences online at 7:00pm**

ended the year with a surplus of €44,515. This was largely due to significant income generation in December 2020 by the sales of *Irish Peaks* and reductions on some programme spends during the year. The full audited accounts can be seen on www.mountaineering.ie.

Mountaineering Ireland's statements on safeguarding and anti-doping were approved by the meeting. Two motions proposed by the Board were also approved by the AGM. The first motion proposed changes to Article 14 of the Articles of Association to allow the AGM be held up until June 30th each year, and the second proposed changes to Article 30 (c) of the Articles of Association, to

allow amendments to the terms of office for the President and ordinary board members.

The meeting then re-elected **Paul Kellagher** as President and **Mike Maunsell, Imelda Buckley, Colette Mahon, Grainne McLaughlin, Geoff Thomas** and **David Pollard** as ordinary members of the Board of Directors of the Company.

The AGM agreed to grant full membership to the following five aspirant clubs:

- ◆ Dublin Climbers and Mountaineers
- ◆ Youth Climbing Trips NI
- ◆ Roving Soles
- ◆ Cuilcagh Ramblers

- ◆ Ballyfermot Cherry Orchard Hiking Club.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland extended its thanks to the members who had participated in the AGM online and to those who had watched it live on YouTube. Thanks were also given to the staff team, who organised the logistics for Mountaineering Ireland's second virtual AGM. A special word of thanks was given to the Chair of the Board, **Paul Barron**, by the CEO, in recognition of the fact that Paul was stepping down from the Board after nine years of service, for the last five of which he had been Chair of the Board ■



Members Forum 2021

This year's Members' Forum, held online on April 21st, offered members an opportunity to discuss a range of topics

Mountaineering Ireland's annual Members' Forum was held this year on April 21st, three and a half weeks after the 2021 AGM. It was held online, via Zoom, for the second year in a row. Fifty-six members were present. The event was opened by CEO **Murrough McDonagh**, who welcomed everyone to the Forum.

The majority of questions dealt with were submitted in advance when members registered for the Forum.

The topic of Covid-19 updates and queries was led by **Ruth Whelan** and

Damien O'Sullivan, while the topic of hillwalking was led by **Ruth Whelan**, climbing by **Damien O'Sullivan**, training by **Jane Carney** and access and conservation by **Helen Lawless**.

Queries about finances were answered by **Imelda Buckley** (Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee) and by the CEO.

The Members' Forum was very positive and up-beat in manner, especially given the fact that the National Governing Body had had so much disruption to its work in the past twelve months.

The members present thanked the

Board, sub-committees and staff for their tremendous efforts over the last year, especially thanking them for the excellent communications on Covid-19 restrictions and updates, and also for the '**Zooming Round the Mountains**' online series of meets.

The Members' Forum ended with the CEO thanking everyone involved in Mountaineering Ireland for their support for the government's approach to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic across the island of Ireland. He expressed the view that better days were ahead of us ■

A special 'thank you' to Paul Barron

Paul Barron is stepping down after five years as Chair of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland

At 8.15pm on March 29th, 2021, after delivering a very successful AGM, **Paul Barron** stepped down from his service to Mountaineering Ireland, to its membership, the Board and all Mountaineering Ireland associates.

For the past nine years, Paul has been a member of the Board and he has been its Chair for the past five years.

During his tenure as Chair of the Board, Paul helped to lead Mountaineering Ireland forward to successful outcomes on a large array of issues, including improving its governance, delivering the current Strategic Plan and, more recently, providing a steady course for the Board to help guide Mountaineering Ireland through the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting global crisis.

On behalf of all involved in Mountaineering Ireland, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Paul for the dedicated service he has provided to our wonderful organisation and to wish him all the very best in the future.

Murrough McDonagh,
Chief Executive Officer



Mike Maunsell (current Chair of the Board), left, and Paul Barron, outgoing Chair

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Kitlist is Irish-owned and independent (see advertisement, page 67)



Dhana distributing supplies from INET to villagers in Phuleli

The pandemic hits a mountain paradise

Chris Avison reports on a fundraising effort for hard-hit communities in the Solu Khumbu region of Nepal

Nepal and the Himalaya are as near to heaven as any mortal mountaineer can get. That was until April and May, 2015, when two earthquakes struck this beautiful but under-developed country. As Nepal was emerging from picking up the pieces from the damage, the Covid-19 global pandemic crept in.

Last year, when most of the western world struggled in dealing with the terrible effects of the virus, Nepal, as an isolated mountainous nation, was coping quite well. That was until this year's outbreak of virulent new strains in India, which had a terrible impact on Nepal also.

An open border between the two countries enabled people from India, who may not have known they were infected, to travel into Nepal. They were seeking respite from the ravages of the pandemic in their own country. Likewise, Nepalese visited India and then returned home.

The pandemic is now raging in the central Kathmandu Valley and in the border areas. It has also spread up into the hill villages of the Solu Khumbu.

The **Irish Nepalese Educational Trust** (INET) is the small voluntary Irish charity which has been involved in school-building and education development in several villages in the lap of Mount Everest for many years now. The focus of INET's work in Nepal is always at the local level. The charity does not have the

financial resources to make a huge contribution to medical aid or equipment for hospitals. However, the Mountaineering Ireland and Alpine Club **Everest Centenary Lecture**, delivered by **Dawson Stelfox** and **Frank Nugent** on Tuesday, May 18th, 2021, included an appeal on behalf of INET to raise money towards aid for coping with the pandemic in these villages.

An extremely generous response has so far raised nearly €3,000 since Dawson and Frank's talk. INET has sent the money directly to its Nepalese co-ordinator in Solu Khumbu, to provide hand sanitisers and protective medical supplies. This has allowed more than two hundred and thirty families in Phuleli village and the

surrounding area to benefit.

There is no quick fix for Covid-19, and more supplies in rural Nepal will be essential. "Prevention is better than cure," as they say. So, if you can, please contribute to INET's small efforts to support these communities at this difficult time.

Make a donation

Find details on donating at www.inetireland.ie, or give more speedily at the Irish Nepalese Education Trust page on www.idonate.ie.

Chris Avison is Director of the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust ■



Supplies purchased by INET for distribution in Phuleli and environs

Ireland's Everest summiteers

Is it time to set up an Irish Everest Alumni group? **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports

In view of the centenary this year of the first reconnaissance expedition to Everest in 1921, which was led by Irishman **Charles Howard-Bury** from County Offaly (see article, page 12), the **Nepal Ireland Society** organised an online meeting for Ireland's Everest summiteers to see if there was any support for establishing an **Irish Everest Alumni**.

Including this year's ascents so far, there have been 71 successful Irish ascents of Everest (25 from the Tibet side and 46 from Nepal) by 55 individual climbers (46 males and nine females), 38 of whom hail from the Republic, 29 from Northern Ireland and four from the Irish diaspora.

There have been 64 other Irish attempts to climb Everest, while sadly, four Irishmen have lost their lives on the mountain.

The first Irish ascent of Everest was from Tibet by **Dawson Stelfox** (from County Antrim) in 1993.



Irish Mt Everest summiteers who joined the inaugural Ireland-Nepal Chamber of Commerce/Nepal Ireland Society Mt Everest Day 2021 online meeting.

Noel Hanna (from County Down) has now climbed Everest ten times; **Robert Smith** has summited six times; and **Pat Falvey** and **Lynne Hanna** have both summited twice, once each from both sides.

Lynne and Noel Hanna hold the world record for the first married couple to climb the mountain from both sides. Noel Hanna and Robert Smith are both mountain guides.

The Nepal Ireland Society's **Mount Everest Day 2021** meeting was held on May 29th, the date of the first ascent of Everest by **Hillary** and **Tenzing** in 1953. Fifteen Irish summiteers were able to attend this important inaugural meeting. They were as follows:

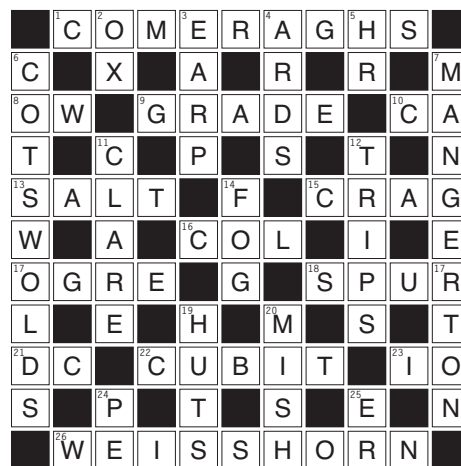
Dawson Stelfox (1993, Tibet)
 Pat Falvey (1995, Tibet; 2004, Nepal)
 Noel Hanna (2006, Tibet; nine other ascents)
 Dr Nigel Hart (2007, Nepal)
 Dr Roger McMorrow (2007, Nepal)
 Ian Taylor (2008, Nepal)
 Lynne Hanna (2009, Tibet; 2016, Nepal)
 Basil Geoghan (2011, Nepal)
 Cian O'Brolchain (2012, Nepal)
 Sean Mooney (2013, Nepal)
 Jason Black (2013, Tibet)
 Derek Mahon (2014, Tibet)
 John Burke (2017, Nepal)
 Rory McHugh (2017, Nepal)
 Jenny Copeland (2019, Nepal).

The meeting was chaired by **Alison Irwin**, General Secretary of the **Ireland-Nepal Chamber of Commerce**. **Paul Kellagher**, President of **Mountaineering Ireland**, was among the guest speakers who addressed the meeting and he congratulated the summiteers on their successes. The meeting was also addressed by **Deepesh Man Shakya**, President of the Nepal Ireland Society, who thanked the summiteers for their participation; **Paul Devaney** from Irish Seven Summits, who reviewed the statistics of the Irish ascents to date; **Dr Dhananjay Regmi**, CEO of the Nepal Tourism Board; **Lok Darsham Regmi**, HE Ambassador to the UK and Ireland; and **Sean Crowe TD**. At the meeting, it was unanimously agreed to establish an Irish Everest Alumni.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Many thanks to **Paul Devaney's** Irish Seven Summits website (www.irishsevensummits.com) for much of the data in this article ■

BASE CAMP Crossword results

The winner of our crossword in IML 137 was **Norman Miller**, of **Lifford, Co Donegal**, who won a two-person MSR Elixir 2 Tent, a prize worth €300.00, from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will contact the winner to arrange collection of his prize.



MSR Elixir 2 Tent (two-person)
€300.00

Upland bog pool in Luggala Estate

Peatland restoration in Wicklow

Work commencing at Luggala Estate and Liffey Head Bog in the Wicklow Mountains

By Helen Lawless

Mountaineering Ireland has welcomed two recent announcements of peatland restoration in the Wicklow Mountains.

Luggala Estate

An ambitious project launched by Luggala Estate's new owners marks the start of a peatland restoration programme, which aims to restore 1,300 hectares of peatlands over several years.

Peatland restoration is one of the key nature-based solutions to addressing our climate and biodiversity crises. **Professor Jane Stout** of Trinity College recently described healthy peatlands as Ireland's "trump card," as they are carbon sinks, storing ten times more carbon than forests.

Peatland restoration is more effective when carried out across a wide area, and Luggala Estate has the necessary scale. In addition to

iconic Lough Tay and the Luggala cliffs, the estate includes the mountains of Knocknacloghoge and Luggala (also known as Fancy), and the land north-west from these summits to the Military Road.

Extensive drainage, combined with grazing pressure from deer and sheep over many decades, have degraded the blanket bog, as well as the wet heath and dry heath habitats on the estate.

The Luggala restoration project will start with detailed ecological and hydrological studies, then focus on an immediate target of restoring 150 hectares of blanket bog and improving heathland management on a further 150 hectares of wet and dry heath.

Mountaineering Ireland has also welcomed the recent reiteration that Luggala Estate is open to responsible visitors respecting the estate's code of conduct. Mountaineering Ireland encourages all of its affiliated walking and climbing



Sphagnum moss

clubs to email the estate (info@luggala.com) ahead of any activities that are planned for Luggala Estate. For updates in relation to access, follow [@LuggalaAccess](https://twitter.com/LuggalaAccess) on Twitter.

Liffey Head Bog

The second peatland restoration project announced for the Wicklow Mountains is a joint venture between the **National Parks and Wildlife Service** (NPWS) and **Intel** to restore part of the Liffey Head Bog south-east of Kippure. Similar to the Luggala project, it aims to transform the blanket bog from being a source of carbon to being a carbon sink, while also improving water quality, reducing the risk of flooding and benefitting biodiversity.

The initial work is to re-wet sixty hectares of the Liffey Head Bog. The NPWS, which is providing the expertise, estimates this will increase the water storage capacity of that section of bog by between 50 and 90 million litres of water.

The magic ingredients in bog restoration are **Sphagnum mosses**, the building blocks of a healthy bog. If the growth of *Sphagnum* mosses can be re-established, it will help to keep the bog wet, as these mosses can hold up to twenty times their own weight in water.

Shane Regan, eco-hydrologist with the NPWS, says that while a hectare of 'healthy' bog, with lots of *Sphagnum*, sequesters around two tonnes of CO₂ per year, when it is drained and 'dry,' which is the current condition of most of our blanket bog, it actually emits around six tonnes of CO₂ per hectare per year.

Sphagnum mosses also filter the water and absorb and store carbon dioxide. Thousands of tiny, microscopic plants and animals live in *Sphagnum* mosses, making these small plants a massive contributor to biodiversity.

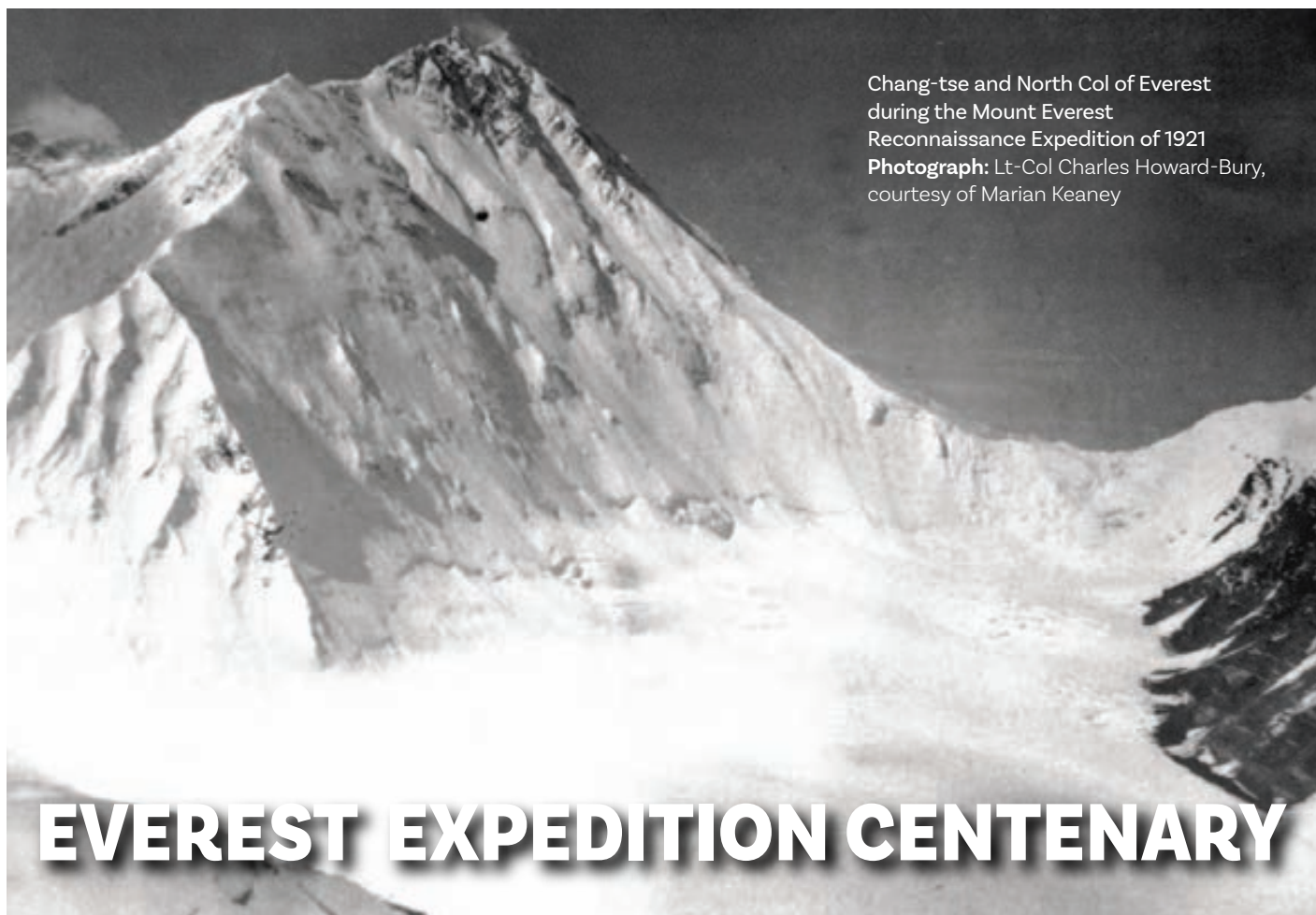
In addition to the benefits mentioned above, healthy bogs add greater colour and texture, as well as the sights and sounds of biodiversity, to the landscape, thereby enhancing our recreation experiences.

Mountaineering Ireland will engage with the promoters of both these projects to discuss how responsible recreation can co-exist with these valuable conservation initiatives ■

Mountaineering Ireland member Ciara Ryan-Gerhardt getting a feel for the Liffey Head Bog on a Mountaineering Ireland Environmental Awareness event



Eroded peat on the Liffey Head Bog in the Wicklow uplands



Chang-tse and North Col of Everest during the Mount Everest Reconnaissance Expedition of 1921
Photograph: Lt-Col Charles Howard-Bury, courtesy of Marian Keaney

EVEREST EXPEDITION CENTENARY

Celebrating the Irish involvement in the Everest Reconnaissance Expedition of 1921

By Frank Nugent

The Irishman who was chosen in 1921 to lead the first ever expedition to Mount Everest was not an experienced Alpinist or mountaineer, but he

had extensive experience in exploration and travel to remote parts of Central Asia, and a reputation for diplomacy.

Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Howard-Bury was a substantial Anglo-Irish landowner, whose ancestral home was Charleville Castle outside Tullamore, Co

Offaly. He was also a distinguished soldier, big-game hunter, plant collector, photographer, linguist, diplomat and likely a spy. Luckily for mountain historians, Howard-Bury kept meticulous records and photographs of his travelling exploits, including a 1920 diary and 1921 expedition daily reports.

In 1920, Charles Howard-Bury was requested by **Sir Francis Younghusband**, on behalf of the joint **Royal Geographic Society** and the **Alpine Club Everest Committee**, to go to Tibet to seek permission from the **Dalai Lama** for a British expedition to travel there to Everest. Being wealthy, he volunteered to go there at his own expense. His obvious skill and success in that task of determined diplomacy led to his choice as leader of a nine-man expedition, sent the following year to map and find a viable route to the top of the world.

This was a time when all the great Himalayan summits were still unclimbed and little was known about climbing at altitude. Simply finding and mapping one's way to the foot of the mountain was a challenge.

The reconnaissance expedition – jointly organised by the Royal Geographic

Society and the Alpine Club – comprised four Alpine climbers, two surveyors, a geologist and a doctor, **Alexander FR Wollaston**, who additionally acted as the expedition's naturalist and botanist, collecting many specimens en route.

Two other members of the team had Irish connections. One of the surveyors, **Major Edward Oliver Wheeler**, then employed by the Survey of India, was a member of the Alpine Club of Canada. His father, **Arthur Edward Wheeler**, was born and reared at Maddockstown, Co Kilkenny. He had emigrated to Canada, where he spent most of his life surveying and mapping the Canadian Rockies. He made many first ascents there and was a founding member of the **Alpine Club of Canada**. Oliver was also a keen climber and an expert in the Canadian system of photo-surveying, which was particularly suited to mountainous areas.

George Leigh Mallory, an English schoolteacher and the expedition's most accomplished Alpinist, also had Irish interests. These included being a friend of **Conor O'Brien**, the round-the-world yachtsman, who ran guns into Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, for the Irish Volunteers in 1916. They both climbed with the



AUTHOR: Frank Nugent is a Dublin-born mountaineer and author who has participated in five Himalayan expeditions. He was deputy leader of the first and successful **Irish Everest Expedition** in 1993, on which **Dawson Stelfox** made the first Irish ascent. He is author of *In Search of Peaks, Passes and Glaciers: Irish Alpine Pioneers* (Collins Press, Cork, 2011).

Geoffrey Winthrop Young set, meeting at his famous Pen Y Pass climbing weekends. Mallory, it seems, was sympathetic to the Irish cause and was employed by the League of Nations to report on the Irish Troubles in 1919.

The hard-working reconnaissance expedition was an unqualified success. They travelled from Darjeeling through Sikkim into Tibet, crossing the Lhakpa La pass to reach the East Rongbuk Glacier and the foot of the **North Col**, which they climbed successfully on September 22nd, reaching 23,000 feet.

Their notable achievements included: an original ¼-inch survey of 12,000 square miles of Tibet; a detailed photographic one-inch survey of 600 square miles of the environs of Mount Everest; a revision of another 4,000 square miles of existing ¼-inch mapping, mostly in Sikkim; documenting the geology of the area was also commenced; the difficulty of climbing during the monsoon season was identified; and last, but not least, the most feasible route to the summit of Everest was discovered, a route that would make Mallory, the expedition's chief scout, immortal.

On returning from the expedition, Howard-Bury co-wrote with Mallory the book **Mount Everest: The Reconnaissance 1921**. It included a report by Wollaston on

the mammals, birds and plants collected, and on the birds identified without a specimen being obtained. The plants collected included a variety of white primula, discovered during the expedition by Howard-Bury and named after him, called *Primula buryana*.

In his report on the surveying work, **Major Henry Morshead** wrote: "The surveyors all worked splendidly under difficult and trying conditions. Major Wheeler had probably the hardest time of any member of the expedition, and his success in achieving single-handed the mapping of 6,000 square miles of some of the most mountainous country in the world is sufficient proof of his determination and grit.

"It is difficult for those who have not actually had the experience to conceive the degree of mental and physical discomfort which results to the surveyor from prolonged camping at high altitudes during the monsoon, waiting for the fine day that never comes."

Sir John Hunt, leader of the first successful Everest Expedition in 1953, listed that not least among the accomplishments of the 1921 party was



Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Howard-Bury
Photograph courtesy of Marian Keaney

to establish a happy rapport with their **Sherpa-Bhotia porters** and to confirm the great contribution they could make to mountaineering in the Himalayas.

The Royal Geographical Society awarded Charles Howard-Bury their Founder's Medal. He also received gold medals from the **French Geographical Society** and the **Club Alpin Français** ■

Covid aid sent to Nepal

By Patrick O'Sullivan

A webinar entitled "Tackling Covid-19 in Nepal" was held on May 16th to highlight the desperate situation in that country with regards to the current surge in Covid-19 cases there. It was organised by the **Nepal Ireland Society** and the **Ireland-Nepal Chamber of Commerce**. The **Mt Everest Day 2021** meeting, organised by the same two organisations on May 29th, was also used to highlight the difficulties that Nepal is facing at present in terms of controlling the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. All present at both meetings had great affection for the country and the Nepalese people and pledged to attempt to promote the current needs of Nepal among their friends and acquaintances. The President of the Nepal Ireland Society, **Deepesh Man Shakya**, proposed setting up a GoFundMe web page forthwith to raise funds for Nepal, which then would be used to send essential medical equipment to Nepal to help the country fight the pandemic.

Ultimately, this turned into a good news story, as the funds raised by the Nepal Ireland Society were used to buy medical equipment to send to Nepal. However, thanks to the generosity of various other organisations and individuals, that donation was increased many times over. Together with a significant donation from **Irish Aid** and the **HSE**, all of the equipment and



Medical supplies for Nepal being loaded on transport plane

supplies were flown out in a transport plane that was paid for by the EU's **Covid-19 recovery fund**. On June 18th, just four weeks after the initial meeting, around €2 million in medical equipment and medical supplies arrived in Kathmandu from Ireland.

The equipment was donated by the **HSE, Respicare, Bon Secours Hospital (Cork), Nepal Ireland Society, Bartra Healthcare, Irish Red Cross, Air Liquide Healthcare, Home Healthcare** and the **Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny**. Many thanks to all of them for their exceptional generosity ■



Irish Peaks, Mountaineering Ireland's guide to hillwalking on Ireland's highest mountains, can now be purchased through irishpeaks.ie. *Irish Peaks* is a must-have, large-format hardback with route descriptions and a beautiful collection of images covering the hundred highest peaks on the island of Ireland. *Irish Peaks* is also now available in selected bookshops and outdoor retailers, who are listed on IrishPeaks.ie.

In his review of *Irish Peaks* in the *Irish Mountain Log* (No 135, Autumn 2020), Mike Keyes, past Chairperson of the Mountaineering Council of Ireland (now Mountaineering Ireland) says: "If you love or are even curious about Ireland's uplands and wild places, this book has to be on your shelf."



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

The recommended retail price for *Irish Peaks* is €29.95. However, there is a special **10% discount** for all Mountaineering Ireland members who order through the official online website, which means you pay €26.95 plus postage, if it has to be posted out to you. To order your discounted copy, please visit www.irishpeaks.ie.



THE MISSING PEOPLE



Excavation of a hunter-gatherer site in Mar Lodge estate, Cairngorms, Scotland, in 2015

Why didn't hunter-gatherers settle in Ireland's mountains? Archaeologist **Graeme Warren** explains

Looked at in comparison to records of human settlement in most of Europe's mountain landscapes, one thing is very distinctive about Ireland: prehistoric hunter-gatherers don't appear to have used Irish mountains very much. We have to ask, however, if that was really the case, and, if so, why might this be?

Across Europe, as the climate warmed rapidly at the end of the last Ice Age and the start of the Holocene period (11,700 years ago), hunter-gatherers quickly settled into

new landscapes. Humans, animals and plants migrated northwards. The Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) people created thriving communities and elaborate relationships with the animals, plants and spirits with which they shared their worlds. They lived successfully for thousands of years before Europe was transformed by the arrival of farming technologies and communities.

Across Europe, one of the most distinctive things about Mesolithic communities is that they used high mountain landscapes. Sites are found in the Alps, the Pyrenees and the high mountains of Norway. It is something that I research in Scotland, where with teams of students and volunteers we survey and excavate hunter-gatherer sites and potential locations in the heart of the Cairngorm mountains.

Mesolithic hunter-gatherers were present in Ireland, with strong evidence from circa 10,000 to 6,000 years ago, but there is no evidence of them in the Irish mountains. Much as I would like to, I can't take teams to excavate Mesolithic sites in the Irish mountains. Why might this be?

Most of the evidence for hunter-gatherers in mountain landscapes in Europe takes the form of stone tools. These

are hard to find in peat-covered landscapes. Perhaps the absence of evidence in the hills of Ireland is because we have not been looking properly? This is perhaps part of the answer, but, when we do find prehistoric stone tools in Irish mountains, these tend to be more recent in date. Further work is needed, and hillwalkers can contribute to this by keeping their eyes open for artefacts (for more on this, see

compared to Britain and mainland Europe.

In contrast to European regions where Mesolithic strategies focused on large game – mammalian species that lived in or moved to the mountains in summer such as red deer, reindeer and ibex – Irish hunter-gatherers were primarily focused on the resources of the wooded lowlands, rivers, lakes and coasts. Hunting in the



Mesolithic hunter-gatherers in the Cairngorms struck small blades off flint cores, like the small sample here. They then used the blades as tools.

article in IML 137, page 22), but it seems unlikely that this is just because we have not been looking.

It seems most likely that the absence of hunter-gatherer use of the Irish mountains was because of the very distinctive island ecology of Ireland. Ireland became an island – separated from Britain and the rest of Europe – about 16,000 years ago and had a restricted terrestrial mammalian fauna

mountains was not a routine part of their lifeways.

The Irish mountains were used differently by hunter-gatherers than those elsewhere in Europe. It is likely that the Irish mountains were visited, but they were not settled in the same ways as elsewhere. At least, that's our current story – all to be changed when someone finds a new site and I can take a team of people excavating there! ■



► **Professor Graeme Warren** is based in the School of Archaeology, University College, Dublin. He is a specialist in the archaeology of prehistoric hunter-gatherers in Europe. His book on the Mesolithic of Ireland, "Hunter-Gatherer Ireland" (Oxbow), will be published in 2022 (graeme.warren@ucd.ie).



Members of the club on a hillwalk in the Comeraghs

TYNDALL MOUNTAIN CLUB

The Kilkenny-based club celebrates its 40th year

Martin O'Reilly recounts the club's history – introduced by Club Secretary **Kathleen Tuite**

Tyndall Mountain Club had great plans to celebrate its 40th birthday, but the Covid-19 pandemic interfered with those plans somewhat. As a result, we paused our activities, but when the restrictions are lifted we will revisit our plans and not let this significant birthday pass without marking it in some way. The club's committee and members have been working tirelessly to stay in touch with each other throughout the pandemic, virtually and almost telepathically at times! Like most of the mountaineering clubs around Ireland, we are missing the hills and mountains, but we know they will still be there for us when the restrictions are finally lifted. We are looking forward to climbing and walking together again soon.

In the meantime, we invite you to read this short history of our club. You can also check us out on Facebook at facebook.com/tyndall.mountainclub and see our website, <http://tyndallmountainclub.blogspot.com>. If you live in the environs of Kilkenny and would like to join our club, you can email us on tyndallmtclub@gmail.com. We will provide you with more details about membership of the club and our organised walks.

I will pass you over now to **Martin O'Reilly** who, with his elegant prose and extensive knowledge of the club's history, will tell you more about our club!

Kathleen Tuite, Club Secretary



Tyndall Mountain Club could be said to owe its existence to the **Wayfarers** hiking club, of

which I was a member when I came to live in Kilkenny. After a few walks with some work colleagues, including participating in the first Blackstairs Challenge, one of the survivors, **Jerry Herlihy**, suggested setting up a

hillwalking club. We called a public meeting in the local teachers' centre and found that there were many walkers in the area with experience of walking with friends, with An Óige or with other clubs. Some even had relevant qualifications. There were certainly enough interested people present to set up a club.

We named ourselves Tyndall Mountain Club to honour **John Tyndall**, the renowned scientist and mountaineer, despite his having had the poor judgment to be born in the (admittedly beautiful) village of Leighlinbridge, outside the Kilkenny county boundary.

As the club grew, some of us did mountaineering leadership courses in Tiglin, at a time when **Paddy O'Leary** was in

charge there. Kilkenny is well located for hillwalking, with Wicklow, the Blackstairs, Slievenamon, the Comeraghs, Knockmealdowns, Galtees and

the Slieve Blooms all within reach, as well as our own beloved Brandon Hill, overlooking Graigueanamanagh. Over the years, we have got to



Members of the club on a hillwalk



Visiting Coumshingaun in the Comeraghs



On a winter walk on Mount Leinster

know these areas very well and have formed links with the neighbouring clubs, particularly the **Peaks Club** in Clonmel and the **Tullow Club** in Carlow.

While always a minority interest in the club, some members have done great work in developing their rock-climbing skills, particularly in **Ballykeefe Quarry**, west of Kilkenny city. In the early days, the quarry was a dump, but then the local community developed it into the excellent facility it is now, both for rock-climbing and as a concert venue. The local climbers then produced a **climbing guide** to the quarry.

Through club weekends away, we got to know west Cork, Kerry (particularly Cloghane), the Burren, Galway, Donegal and the Mourne, as well as Scotland, the Lake District and Snowdonia on the neighbouring island.

In addition, the acquisition of hillwalking skills empowered many of us to explore our planet's beauty spots. We have been to the Alps and the

Pyrenees, Malta and Madeira, the Tatras and the Caucasus, the Atlas Mountains and Kilimanjaro, Irish Peaks in the Purcell Mountains in Canada, Mount Tyndall in the High Sierras in California, Cotopaxi and Aconcagua in the Andes, and the Himalayas and India.

We have also enjoyed hiking on many long-distance walking routes, including the Stevenson Trail and the Cathar Way in France, the GR10 along the Pyrenees, the Tour du Mont Blanc and the many Caminos, which have seen us arriving in Santiago de Compostela from all directions.

The club has organised many centre-based holidays, particularly in the Canaries and Crete, which allow large numbers to attend. Activities

are organised to suit all levels of experience and to keep everyone well-occupied.

About fifteen years ago, some of us managed to escape from the shackles of fulltime employment and

have the staunchly Unionist John Tyndall turning in his grave! The Home Rule Club also has a fine, semi-covered outdoor area, which has proved ideal for club barbeques.

The Covid-19 restrictions over the last year or so have, of course, severely hampered our outdoor activities but, even when no hillwalking has been possible, the club committee has kept us entertained and connected with online sessions, meetings, quizzes and slideshows. Over Easter, we had a super virtual Camino, combining many short local walks and raising funds for the **South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA)**, a very worthwhile exercise.

Currently with over one hundred and twenty members, and the younger ones developing their skills with Mountain Skills 1 and 2 training, the future of the Tyndall Mountain Club looks bright for another forty years! ■



Walking in Crete

began holding walks on Wednesdays. Christened the **'Wednesday Wasters'** by Wayfarer **Nigel Somerfield**, this subgroup prospered, with sometimes up to thirty members turning up for a walk. When this happened, it necessitated dividing the group in line with Mountaineering Ireland's guidelines. More recently, members recovering from medical misadventures have been enjoying **Friday rehab walks**.

The **Home Rule Club** in Kilkenny city has become our venue for meetings, courses and slideshows, which must



Members on a walk in Tenerife



➤ **Martin O'Reilly** is a founding member of Tyndall Mountain Club.



Carol Coad on the Little Sugarloaf, Co Wickow, with the Greater Sugarloaf behind

CAROL COAD, WICKLOW'S RRO

Helen Lawless interviews Carol Coad, who works as Rural Recreation Officer for County Wicklow

■ **Carol, some readers won't be familiar with the term 'Rural Recreation Officer'. Can you tell us a bit about your role?**

A key part of the Rural Recreation Officer's (RRO's) role is to manage the **Walks Scheme**, the scheme under which landowners are paid to maintain their section of a waymarked trail. The RRO is like an independent broker representing the private landowners, while working in partnership with other organisations such as the county council or the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

■ **How did your own involvement in outdoor activities begin?**

When I was young, I didn't know anyone who was into outdoor activities. I was introduced to orienteering by a teacher in school and I loved it. I went on to do an orienteering training course with the late **Ernie Lawrence** (whose brother **Leslie** was one of the owners of **Great Outdoors**) and then to Bangor University in North Wales to study sports science. That was a brilliant experience; I got to do my Mountain Leader Award, my Single Pitch Award for climbing, plus Level 2 in kayaking. During the summers, I worked at the Scout Centre at Lough Dan.

■ **You were a participant in Mountaineering Ireland's Millennium Youth Initiative. What was that like?**

It was amazing, just amazing. There were eighteen of us in all, nine from Northern Ireland and nine from the south. The social side was incredible. In the mid-1990s, there wasn't much contact between north and south. Great friendships were made through the programme. Many of us are still in contact.

The **Millennium Youth Initiative** provided an eye-opening experience of mountaineering. It was extraordinary. We got to hike and climb in places that you read about in books. It was all due to the generosity of volunteers like **Dawson Stelfox**, **Frank Nugent**, **Orla Prendergast** and others, giving their time to pass on their love of the mountains. It gave us such a sense of achievement and adventure, and a belief in what each of us could do, on and off the mountains.

Carol's Top Tips

- Be nice, say hi
- Remember that someone owns the land
- Pick up rubbish
- Support the businesses in upland areas
- Communication is key

It's not easy to get into mountaineering. I'm very grateful to the people who gave of their time to let us in through the door. Being part of the Millennium Youth Initiative was truly inspiring. I feel a sense of responsibility to give back, by opening the door for others, which feeds back into my role as an RRO.

■ **You started in your current role just at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, at a time when there was a huge upsurge in outdoor activity. That must have been interesting?**

Over the last year, so many people have realised the benefits of spending time outdoors, particularly in how it keeps your mental health robust. It's great to see young people going out, whether hiking or just sitting and chatting.

There have been challenges too – cars clogging up narrow roads and people leaving their rubbish behind. Having an RRO in the county provides a point of contact when issues arise. There are only thirteen RROs currently, so some counties have no RRO. In a county like Wicklow which supports so much recreation activity, it can be an incredibly busy role.

■ **Does much of your work relate to the Wicklow Way?**

Yes – it's a huge part of my job, as more than 75% of the landowners in Wicklow on

the Walks Scheme own stretches of the Wicklow Way. It's a wonderful route. Really, it's the jewel in Wicklow's crown. The Wicklow Way is managed by a committee comprising the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Coillte, myself, the Dublin Mountains Partnership and Mountain Meitheal.

There are always ongoing upgrade projects along the route, some financed through the group and some through the **Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme**. We have replaced the trailhead signage throughout the route this year and upgraded a section opposite Luggala to take the route off the road at that bad corner.

In the longer term, I see the Wicklow Way as the spine of Wicklow recreation, with villages, experiences and trails linking to it along the way.

■ Are there ways in which walkers and climbers can support your work?

One of my motivations is to make outdoor recreation work better for local people. The simplest things can make a huge difference – for instance, be nice, say hi. Without that, it can feel like an 'us and them' situation between locals and those who visit upland areas for recreation. It shouldn't be like that.

Remember that someone owns the land you're walking on – if you meet a farmer, say hello and thank them.

Pick up rubbish. There's no bin collection service in the hills. It's up to us to keep the place the way we'd like to find it.

Support the businesses in upland areas – spend a tenner every time you're out. It's a way of giving back to the places we get

so much benefit from.

Communication is key – we need to get these messages across in a way that's relevant to people.

■ Are there lessons from the Covid period?

Covid has shown that we have different tiers of users in the outdoors. Hiking has become a mainstream activity. While many of the new hikers may not be properly kitted out, they're fit, young and having a good time. We should welcome them with open arms, and encourage them to develop their skills and understanding.

We need to do that in an up-to-date and user-friendly way. For example, we've just digitised all the official trails in Wicklow and some of the more straightforward unofficial routes too. They will be shared on an app and via the **Visit Wicklow** website. It will make these routes more accessible to people.

It's not all young people. I have many friends who have come to the outdoors in the last few years and, for the first time, they feel they've found their tribe. People are recognising the physical and mental benefits of outdoor activities. The healing power of the mountains is phenomenal.

We're not on top of the unauthorised camping yet, like what we saw in Glenmalure and at Lough Dan last year. That's perhaps beyond education for an immediate effect. We need to plan properly so that responsible recreation is part of every child's education. We also need the Gardaí, landowning agencies and the local authorities to work together with local communities to tackle and prevent the destruction of our most beautiful areas.



Walkers on the Sugarloaf Way

■ You seem to have a good understanding of the community perspective on outdoor recreation?

I grew up and lived in the Glenmalure valley for many years. We are in Clara Vale now, so I can see this from different angles. The people living in locations like this have to put up with a lot. We need to support them. That's going to be particularly important this summer.

■ Is there something you've done in your time as RRO that you're really proud of?

It might seem small, but it's important. I got the contract for two new entrants into the Walks Scheme changed to include a **payment for picking up litter** – something which they should never have to do – but they do! I'm hoping this will be included as an option for other landowners on the scheme when they renew their contracts.

■ Any final thoughts?

Being a Rural Recreation Officer is the best job in the world; the outdoors means so much to so many people. There's isn't a handrail for getting into the outdoors. I'd like to change that so it's easy for more people to enjoy these opportunities.

➡ To get in touch with Carol, email ccoad@wicklowpartnership.ie or follow **Wicklow Trails** on Facebook or Instagram. Mountaineering Ireland encourages its clubs to make contact with the Rural Recreation Officer in their area. Contact details for Ireland's other Rural Recreation Officers can be found on www.bit.ly/RROnetwork.

Mountaineering Ireland recently participated in a review of the Rural Recreation Officer programme and has recommended that the programme be extended to cover all counties ■

The Wicklow Way with distant view of the Great Sugar Loaf





Dr Katie Laird (head of the Infectious Disease Research Group), **Dr Maitreyi Shivkumar** (virologist) and **Dr Lucy Owen** (postdoctoral researcher).

In this study, a human coronavirus, HCoV-OC43, was used. It is a common cause of upper respiratory tract infections in humans, but is less virulent than SARS-CoV-2, the coronavirus that has caused the current Covid-19 pandemic.

The coronavirus HCoV-OC43 was used as a model for SARS-CoV-2 to determine the stability of coronaviruses in climbing chalk powder. The presence of infectious virus on a plastic surface dusted with chalk was monitored over the course of one hour. The results indicated that the amount of infectious virus present was

factor should temper fears that chalky handholds could be vectors for the disease.”

Methodology

The researchers dusted dry plastic surfaces with different chalks (magnesium carbonate, calcium carbonate and a blend of the two) and added droplets of a live coronavirus, HCoV-OC43, which has a very similar structure and survival pattern to that of SARS-CoV2 (which causes Covid-19). Then, over the course of an hour, they recovered the virus from the surfaces at several intervals to inspect the number of infectious virus particles present.

Results

Within just one minute of the virus coming into

NEWFOUND BENEFIT OF CHALK

Chalk could be a climber's best friend during the pandemic: research shows that it prevents the spread of coronavirus on climbing holds



Written by
Damien O'Sullivan,
Climbing
Development
Officer

With indoor climbing walls reopened, climbers will be happy to know that chalk itself has been shown to prevent the spread of coronavirus on surfaces.

Research by scientists at **De Montfort University** (DMU), Leicester, has shown that the amount of infectious coronavirus present is reduced by around 99% immediately upon contact with chalky surfaces. This research, which was carried out last year, has now been peer-reviewed and the resulting paper is available at www.bit.ly/covidchalk.

At the start of the Covid-19 crisis, a number of English

climbing walls, together with the **Association of British Climbing Walls**, set up a working group to research the possible spread of the virus in climbing. They sought in particular to understand the potential impact of chalk on the spread of the virus on surfaces, as there were some concerns within the climbing community that chalk dust on the holds might act as a reservoir for the virus.

A team at De Montfort University was commissioned to undertake research to assess whether coronaviruses can survive in climbing chalk and if they remain infectious to people. The research was led by

reduced by around 99% immediately upon contact with the chalky surfaces. By comparison, the control, where there was no chalk dust, showed only a slight decline in the amount of infectious virus present in the full hour.

“These results look fantastic and show that chalk could once again be the climber's best friend,” said **Rich Emerson**, Chair of the Association of British Climbing Walls. “We hope that it will provide comfort to our customers as they return to climbing at indoor walls. We will not lessen all our other Covid-safe measures, such as regular hand sanitisation and social distancing, but this extra

contact with the chalk, the number of infectious particles in all of the samples was reduced by more than 99%.

Conclusion

Virologist **Dr Maitreyi Shivkumar** said: “Rather than just looking at whether the virus was still present in the chalk, we wanted to explore if any virus that comes into contact with chalk still poses a risk of infection. Our study suggests that chalk powder inactivates infectious virus particles and is, therefore, unlikely to harbour coronaviruses like SARS-CoV-2 or to facilitate its spread on surfaces” ■

CLIMBING DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Mountaineering Ireland has prepared guidelines for those developing new climbing areas. **Damien O'Sullivan** reports

The development of an entirely new climbing area, the significant development of an existing area or the redevelopment of places that have become overgrown is of huge benefit to the entire climbing community. It is an undertaking that will often involve a lot of time and effort. Mountaineering Ireland's **Climbing Development Guidelines** aim to inform climbers who wish to develop a climbing area. By following the information in the guidelines, the likelihood of a positive and sustainable development is more likely.

With climbing becoming ever more popular and more climbers than ever transitioning from indoor climbing walls to climbing outdoors on rock, the demands on our climbing resources have never been higher. The landowners, whom we rely on so heavily to allow access to the places we climb in, have become more cautious regarding potential litigation from people on their properties. And increasing awareness of the vital importance of conservation of flora and fauna has led to the need for climbers to reconsider some aspects of our activity.

The Climbing Development Guidelines cover these key topics:

- Research
- Occupiers' Liability Legislation
- Access
- Environment
- Climbing Ethics
- Preparing New Climbs
- Maintenance

These guidelines are a gathering of the collective knowledge and expertise of those who currently develop climbing areas as well as of practitioners in relevant legal and environmental fields. The Climbing Development Guidelines can be viewed on the Climbing section of the Mountaineering Ireland website – go to www.mountaineering.ie/climbing. Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank all the contributors to the guidelines.



Climbing at Fair Head, Co Antrim

■ If you need any help or additional advice regarding the development of a particular climbing area, please do not hesitate to contact us: **Damien O'Sullivan**, Climbing Officer, +353 (0)87 289 7181, damien@mountaineering.ie; **Helen Lawless**, Access & Conservation Officer, +353(0)86 804 6687, helen@mountaineering.ie ■

CLIMBING MEETS 2021

Meets to look forward to in the coming weeks and months. **Damien O'Sullivan** reports

Climbers have four open climbing meets to look forward to this year in the latter part of the summer and into the autumn. The four meets scheduled to take place are shown in the accompanying table.

The organisers of these meets are continuing to monitor the situation regarding the Covid-19 restrictions and the requirements for organised outdoor gatherings. The meets will only take place provided they are permitted within the then prevailing restrictions and requirements.

Due to Covid-19-related requirements for organised outdoor gatherings, it is expected that there will be caps and controls on the numbers of climbers attending the meets – pre-registration for the meets may be necessary this year.

■ For further information, please go to the Mountaineering Ireland website, or the host club's website, or social media ■

Venue	Host club	Dates
Mournes	Belfast Climbing Club	July 30 th to August 2 nd
Fair Head	Dal Riada Climbing Club	August 20 th to 22 nd
The Burren	Dal Riada Climbing Club	September 3 rd to 5 th
Wicklow	Irish Mountaineering Club	September 24 th to 26 th



Fiona Buckley belaying at the Old Head of Kinsale, Co Cork

ROUTE DATABASE OVERHAUL

In recent months, climbers may have noticed that the Route Database on the **climbing.ie** website has had an overhaul. **Dave Hunt**, founder of climbing.ie, and **Damien O’Sullivan**, Mountaineering Ireland’s Climbing Officer, delve into the depths of Irish climbing’s most definitive database



Written by Dave Hunt, founder of climbing.ie

If you like climbing in Ireland and are not already familiar with the **Route Database**, you might be missing out. The database is our most up-to-date source of information on rock climbs in Ireland.

For the past twenty-five years the database has been the ‘go to’ resource for adding new route information to, and for getting information from, on climbs all around Ireland. It is of particular use for the smaller, more esoteric crags, for which there are currently no printed guidebooks.

The database was the brainchild of the very brainy **Dave Hunt!** Dave is one of those incredibly intelligent and talented

people who excels at pretty much everything he turns his hand to. He is also one of those people who, when he gets interested in something, goes at it 110%. Sounds annoying, right? Well, it would be, except for the fact that he is also one of the nicest people that you could ever hope to meet.

One thing – the Route Database is not really a database, it is a **wiki**, just like Wikipedia. That means it is a collaborative tool that allows contributors to generate and to modify content. Essentially, a wiki is a webpage with an open-editing system.

Now, over to **Dave Hunt** to get some of the history of **climbing.ie** and the **Route Database**. – **Damien O’Sullivan**

By Dave Hunt

Back when I started climbing in 1995, there was no online resource for rock climbing in Ireland. So, an initial basic website was created. A couple of years later, the **climbing.ie** domain was set up with the blessing of the then **Mountaineering Council of Ireland**. Without that blessing, the Irish domain registrar would probably not have granted the domain, as there were strict rules around individuals having ‘ie’ domains then. From there, the picture gallery

was added, along with a mailing list for people who could discuss various relevant topics... who remembers **majordomo**?

About five years later, once the mailing list got too big for conversations, the forum software was added to the website. In the first decade of its existence, it had quite a lot of traffic, as there was no such thing then as Facebook or other social media. Some of the posts to the forum were a great source of controversy, with the bolting debate a firm favourite, which cropped up every few years. This would always generate a

very heated discussion, but it was always a lot of fun.

Another regular occurrence on the forums was when particular users (who shall remain nameless) would appear out of nowhere every few years, drop in a controversial comment, then sit back as all hell broke loose, with the ‘admins’ scrambling on how to best handle the fall-out.

Speaking of admins, there were a few changes of the guard over the years. For the first few years, I maintained the site and installed the initial versions of the various packages that made up the

site. After that, **Stephen McMullan** came on board and became the primary maintainer for several years, upgrading the software, keeping the spam-bots out and, most importantly of all, keeping a cool head when the forums were heating up. Stephen and I had many phone calls on how to best handle a particular conversation as the comments trended towards the point of meltdown.

Stephen then handed over the reins to **Iain Miller**, who has looked after the site in recent times. By the time of this hand-over, the forums

had become quiet, with Facebook now taking over the conversation role, and the wiki was pretty much running itself, even if it was still not the most user-friendly experience... but more on that later.

On the wiki side of things – by which I mean the user-editable area of the website that holds all the route information – there were a few attempts to store crag information in different formats. One attempt stands out, when **Stephen McMullan, Sé O’Hanlon** and myself, **Dave Hunt**, put in dozens of hours formatting the data to get it inserted into a database with a custom user interface for easy addition of routes and easy querying of the information. However, it was soon realised that this was a monumental task, and so the user-editable wiki was selected instead.

There were still many hours spent formatting the data – especially by Sé – and once that initial data ‘dump’ was completed it was left to individual users to add their latest new routes to the wiki themselves.

A few times in recent years, I have attempted to update the wiki to something more user-friendly, but that turned out to be quite an involved process, so each time I did not follow through to a full upgrade because of the time involved. **(Damien’s note: “What he means to say is that he was more interested in non-climbing hobbies at the time!”)**

The main issue with the climbing.ie wiki was usability. It was not the most user-friendly experience to edit the crag guides, especially if there were a lot of changes to be made. So, meetings were called between some

interested climbers around the country, and brainstorming sessions were held to see what the direction should be for the future of the climbing.ie wiki. The main theme of those discussions was usability. The solution was found in an **interactive map** plus upgrading the wiki software to something that would give what is known as WYSIWYG (‘What You See Is What You Get’).

The benefit of the map with pins was that any resource could be linked in, whether it was on climbing.ie’s wiki, one of Iain Miller’s many Donegal guides, a pdf on a Google Drive, and so on. The map could bring these all together in one place.

What we now have is a **mobile-friendly wiki** that is easy to use, and an **interactive map** that shows a huge number of climbing locations.

Back to Damien now for a run-down on further developments with the project.

* * * * *

Thanks to the Trojan work of **Dave Hunt**, many of the technical challenges with the wiki were resolved. Attention has now turned to the process of updating the actual information on the



Paul Swail climbing at Fair Head, Co Antrim

wiki. Because of the awkwardness of editing the information on the wiki, some of it had become a little outdated. But thanks to the recent changes to the wiki, the process of updating the information has become much easier.

To kickstart the process, a meeting was held with a group of climbers who were

known to have an interest in improving the availability of information on climbing for the benefit of our entire community. The real benefit of the wiki is that the information can be edited by any registered user.

If you would like to assist with the process of improving the information, simply go to **www.climbing.ie**, click on the **Route Database** tab, register as a user, and get updating.

Borrowing from Bertie, we have “**a lot done, more to do.**” The work put in over the past few months has seen a huge improvement in the usability of this excellent resource. There are numerous other improvements that could be made, and some that will be made. Some may need to wait for the return of the long, dark winter evenings, because rumour has it that Dave Hunt is back climbing again! –

Damien O’Sullivan

The climbing sites around the island of Ireland (from climbing.ie)



The Hills of Donegal

In the summer of 2019, **Adrian Gallagher** walked across the Hills of Donegal (as the county's ranges are described in song) in a series of daywalks that took him from Malin Head to Malin Beg

My younger self's interest had been in diving the depths of the sea rather than in climbing the mountain heights. Though I had hiked a little beforehand, it was only after I joined my local hillwalking club, the **Swilly Hiking Club**, in 2015 that I could properly begin to develop this activity. I had undergone treatment for prostate cancer in 2013 and, apart from the great camaraderie I found there, the club helped me to get back my physical fitness and confidence. It also allowed me to develop my mountain skills.

At the end of 2017, I retired from my own clothing manufacturing business and, by early 2019, I felt the need for a little challenge. What should I do? It had to include an element of hiking in the mountains.

Maybe I should go on the Camino de Santiago in Spain, as my hiking friends were urging? However, I felt that its routes were quite busy and I prefer the less travelled ways. Instead, I decided to start nearer home and, being a proud Donegal man, I opted for that county's iconic 'Hills of Donegal' as my kick-off.

Above: Looking across the Urris Hills to Lough Swilly

Below: Members of Swilly Hiking Club braving a summer gale on the summit of Lough Salt Mountain

This would be my 'Camino,' or perhaps I should say in Gaelic, 'Slí.' It would also serve as a preparation and a test of my capabilities to undertake a trek on the GR10 Pyrenean route in France, which I was hoping to try at a later date.

So, in the summer of 2019, in my 68th year, I found myself undertaking a unique hiking trip across the mountain ranges of my native county. In the end, it was to include over 20,000 metres of ascent, with the same amount of descent, and it would entail over 400 kilometres of walking. My plan was to begin at Malin Head in the north-east of the county and, in a continual series of daywalks, end at Malin Beg in the south-west. As far as I could ascertain, it had never been undertaken before in such a fashion.



➤ **Adrian Gallagher** joined the Letterkenny-based **Swilly Hiking Club** in 2015. Since retiring at the end of 2017, he has climbed mainland Spain's La Maroma and Tenerife's El Teide. He has also undertaken the UK's Four Peaks Challenge and a 17-day hike on the GR10 in the French Pyrenees. He recently completed Donegal's Glover Highlander Challenge, hiking from Muckish to Errigal.





Avoiding the use of roads as much as possible, it would involve linking and trekking across the main mountain ranges and peaks in the county. There would be twenty-four days of walking, which I would complete over a period of five weeks.

Malin Head is historically the starting point for north-to-south road trips that end at Mizen Head. My venture was a little shorter, but the vast majority of it was over rough terrain and so much more of a challenge.

The Donegal mountain ridges run in a generally north-east to south-west direction, but with the Bluestacks of south Donegal trending east to west. This topography decided my route of travel. It was to be something of a logistical nightmare as I had to return home each evening. I travelled alone except on three days. This allowed me to react quickly to such things as the weather, which was very changeable throughout the whole endeavour. I kept friends updated on my progress on a regular basis and also used the **BuddyBeacon** feature on my **ViewRanger** app.

Setting off from Malin Head

The first section involved four days of hiking across the magnificent Inishowen peninsula, starting at **Malin Head**. Those four days turned out to be our 'summer' that year! The clear sunny skies allowed for great views all along the north Irish coast, and even across to the Scottish mainland and the Western Isles, from peaks on the peninsula such as **Slieve Snaght**. From there, the first of many dog-legs on the trip brought me to the stunning **Urris Hills, Mamore Gap** and on to the beach at **Dunree**.

The next stage began on the other side of Lough Swilly and

Above: Panoramic view of the route of the Glover Highlander Challenge from Muckish Mountain (right) to Errigal (left)

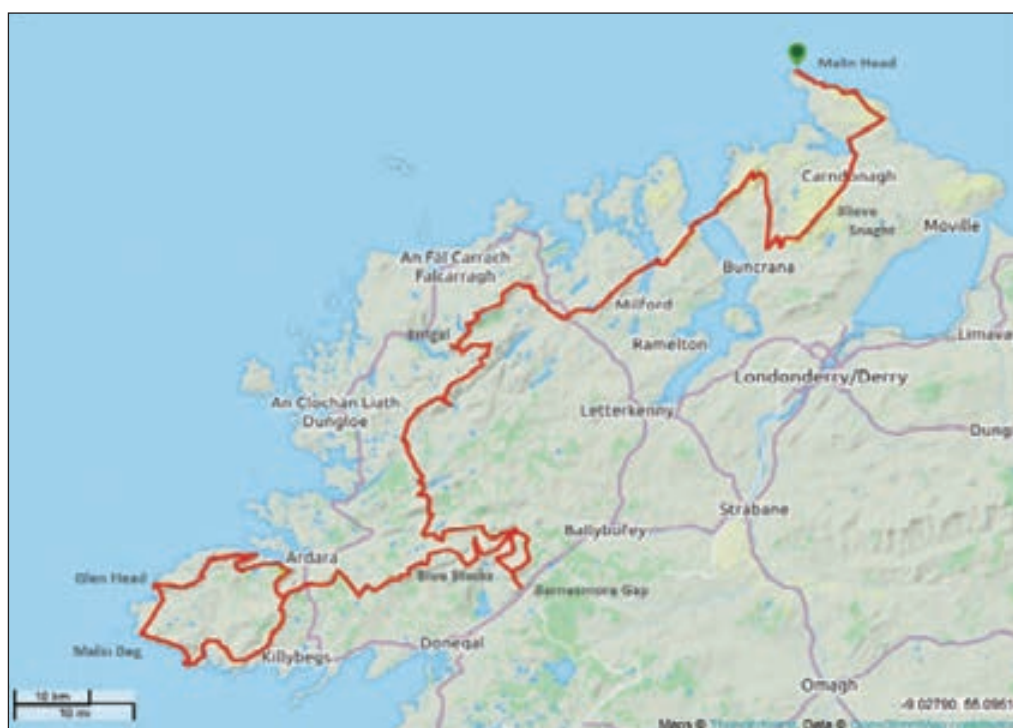
took in the **Knockalla Mountain** ridge, before a hop across Mulroy Bay had me starting a trek on a very wet and windy day that brought me to **Lough Salt Mountain**.

Similar weather faced me when I was going from there to the **Derryveagh Mountains**, and the next day torrential rain forced me to abandon an attempt to reach **Errigal** from **Muckish** along the **Glover Highlander Challenge** route, but I did return a couple of days later to climb that iconic mountain.

It was then on to a crossing of **Glenveagh National Park**, taking in **Dooish**, before torrential rain once more caused a quick and squelchy descent off **Slieve Snaght** (yes, another one!) to **Lough Barra**.

A better day found me back at Lough Barra and climbing up onto the ridge that continued down to the village of **Doochary**. I then had to make the return walk back to Lough Barra to collect my car.

I hiked southward from Doochary to the western ➤



Route taken by Adrian Gallagher in traverse of the Hills of Donegal. Map courtesy of ViewRanger app



end of **Lough Finn** before crossing over **Aghla Mountain** to **Graffy Hill**. I was forced to undertake another long hike to **Fintown** by road and then, due to the non-availability of a taxi, I had to hitch-hike the remainder of the way back to **Doochary** to pick up my car, as the road was too dangerous for a pedestrian in the late evening, when sunset began to give way to the gloaming.

The next section took me from **Edenfinreagh** eastwards via **Croveenananta** to **Letterkillew**. A circular route brought me from there towards **Barnesmore Gap** before I headed westwards across

Above: View from the summit of Muckish to the hills of the Inishowen peninsula

Below: A friend, Danny Devlin, descending from Cronamuck with Gaugin Mountain in the background

the Bluestack Mountains to **Carnaween** and **Binbane**.

A twelve-kilometre road section brought me to **Mulmosog Mountain**, from where I crossed to **Common Mountain**, overlooking Ardara, and followed the ridge south-west towards **Kilcar**.

From there I reached the start of the famous **Slieve League** cliffs and crossed to **Malin Beg** in the extreme south-west of the county.

However, even though I had crossed the county, I felt another section of outstanding beauty needed to be included. That was the ridge running due west from **Common Mountain** and the adjacent **Glengesh**





Pass to Maghera. From there I headed south-west across **Slievetooley** to **Glen Head**. It was well worth the extra effort.

Wild and scenic country

The entire trip took me through some of the wildest and most scenic areas in the whole of Ireland. Even while I was crossing mountains, on most sections I was also able to enjoy the magnificent views of the coast and the sea. The peace and quiet was very pronounced all along the route. Apart from the many walkers I came across while climbing Errigal on a Saturday evening, I could count the number I met on the hills on one hand. The hillsides of Donegal are a wonderful resource that works for us on so many

Above: Don't step back! Adrian on top of the Slieve League cliffs with Donegal Bay behind him and, in the distance, the distinctive outline of Benbulbin in Sligo

Below: Aghla Mountain rising above Lough Finn

PROFITS FROM MY BOOK, "WILD MOUNTAIN WAY," WILL GO TO DOWN SYNDROME DONEGAL

levels, and I hope that the hills can be protected for this and future generations.

A book is on the way

Earlier this year I got a second bite of the cherry, so to speak, when I recalled this trip as a memory exercise. That allowed me to re-enjoy the experience. More than that, it got me interested in learning more about the places I had passed through. I have now assembled those memories, stories and information, together with a selection of my photographs and I intend to have them published in a book, once my present health crisis passes. Profits from the book, **Wild Mountain Way**, will go towards supporting **Down Syndrome Donegal**. See a review of my book on page 63 of this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* ■

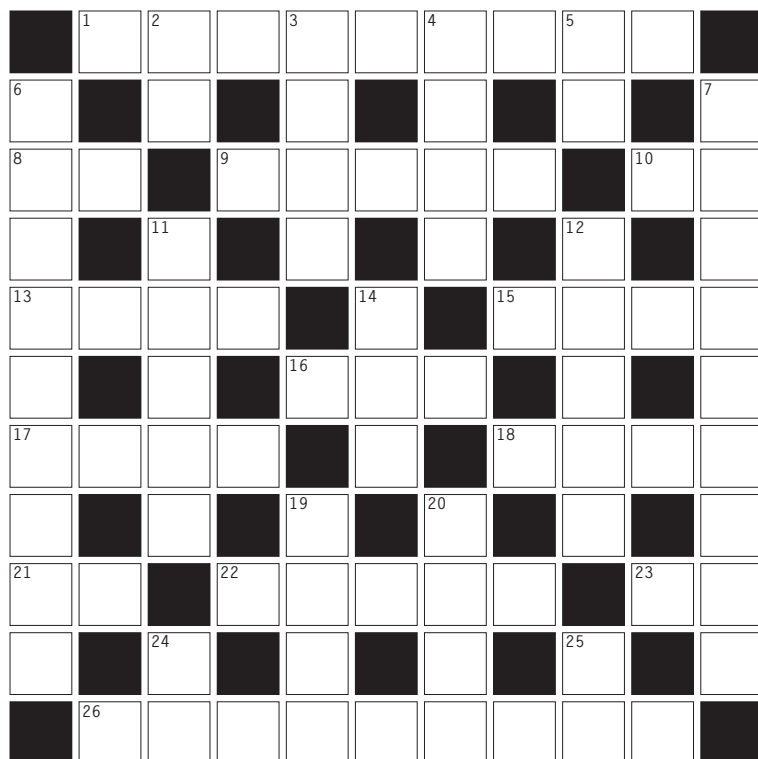


WALK STATISTICS		
Ascent (m)	Distance (km)	Duration (hrs)
21,402	433	192
Daily average over 24 days		
Ascent (m)	Distance (km)	Duration (hrs)
892	18	8



Summer Competition

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



CROSSWORD compiled by COLIN MacLOCHLAINN

Clues Across

- 1 Mountain in Tipperary with small gap in its profile, allegedly made by the devil taking a bite out of it (6,3).
- 8 Union of European states (1,1).
- 9 Cliff, headland or hill with broad, steep face, or even good-naturedly blunt or frank (5).
- 10 A name I call myself (2).
- 13 A broad valley, particularly in northern England (4).
- 15 The bank or shoulder of a dirt track, particularly one crafted for mountain biking (4).
- 16 A female deer (3).
- 17 Set of gear carried on a climb (4).
- 18 Precipitation (4).
- 21 Executive officer (1,1).
- 22 A heap of stones set up as a landmark, monument or tombstone (5).
- 23 For example (1,1).
- 26 An active volcano on the east coast of Sicily (5,4).

Clues Down

- 2 Hillary, of Everest fame, was known by what abbreviated name to family and friends? (2).
- 3 Small island, such as Fair or of Skye (4).
- 4 Secure (4).
- 5 Score derived from tests to assess intelligence (1,1).
- 6 Pinnacles or isolated rock towers frequently encountered along a ridge, or police officers, especially in France (9).
- 7 Cuilcagh straddles the boundary of Cavan and what other county? (9).
- 11 Hills in Dakota, commemorated in song (5).
- 12 To protect a roped climber from falling by controlling the movement of the rope (5).
- 14 A small pass or "saddle" between two peaks (3).
- 19 Major river draining the Lough Neagh catchment (4).
- 20 Style of climbing without unnatural aids (other than those used for protection) (4).
- 24 State of Montana, in short (2).
- 25 State abbreviation for Tennessee (2).

WIN

A gift voucher
from Kitlist.ie
worth
€200.00



How to enter

Complete this crossword correctly and be in with a chance to win a prize worth €200.00 from Basecamp Outdoor Store, Jervis Street, Dublin.



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

Cut out this page, or photocopy or scan it, and send your completed entry to The Editor, Irish Mountain Log, Mountaineering Ireland, Irish Sport HQ, National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, or by email to info@mountaineering.ie, to arrive not later than Friday, August 13th, 2021. Don't forget to include your full **name**, **address** and **membership number** with your entry as well as a **telephone number** or **email address** at where you can be contacted. The winner will be announced in the Autumn 2021 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

Competition prize

Basecamp's generous prize is a gift voucher from Kitlist.ie, a prize worth €200.00.

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**Working for
and representing
hillwalkers and
climbers**



“ Our membership numbers came in at 13,933 at the end of the 2019/2020 season, which was amazing given the year that was in it.”

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

Mountaineering Ireland

Annual Review 2020

The year 2020 will forever more be etched in our minds as a year which brought about huge change in the way that we did things, in our families, in our communities and across society. It will also be a year in which, I hope, that we have all reflected on what is important to us; things like our health, happiness, wellbeing, friends and family, and our deep respect and love for the mountains, hills, crags and walls. Of course, Covid-19 also brought huge concerns, worry and indeed great sadness and loss to many of us, and continues to do so today. I want to express my best wishes to our members who have been affected by this global pandemic and, to those who have experienced sadness and loss during the year, my sincere condolences.

Last year started as a normal, busy year for Mountaineering Ireland, with our membership growing and targeted to reach 15,000, funding secured, and programmes and plans being put into action. Then March 12th arrived and we were informed that our offices in Irish Sport HQ were closing. This was a time for extreme measures and, against the backdrop of news breaking around the world of the Covid-19 pandemic reaching new countries, we were all very concerned. I want to pay tribute at this early stage to the staff team for their commitment during a period of complete change to the way we worked and operated together.

From March onwards, we increased the communications to our members and the public, who follow us for information. As the weeks passed, we had to adapt our schedule of events. Meets and the Gathering were postponed and/or cancelled and we had to determine the most suitable way to deliver them safely in the new environment. The AGM was our first virtual event and was closely followed by an online Club and Members Support event. We also produced information videos, increased the capacity of the members e-zine and increased our online presence, with registrations for the 'Zooming Round the Mountains' series reaching over 7,300. Credit must be given to the staff team for their inputs and skills in these areas, as they delivered an excellent communications and online service.

During those early days of the global pandemic, I want to state my genuine thanks for the support afforded to me by the Board, who provided the support needed to allow us deliver operationally and to be successful. Our sub-committees were amazing in how they supported the staff and together adapted their plans and schedules to allow us to deliver online events that were received with praise by our members.

The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FARC) deserves special credit for the

work achieved in 2020. During these times, when our financial outcomes were uncertain, the support offered by the FARC and its Chairperson, Imelda Buckley, provided the Board and me with the data and direction that allowed us deliver revised budgets to meet the everchanging financial landscape.

I would also like to acknowledge my sincere thanks to Paul Barron (Chair of the Board), who was always available on the phone during 2020 and who was a huge source of strength to me, as we worked through what I can only describe as the most challenging period of my professional career.

One extremely positive event to take place in 2020 was the launch of *Irish Peaks*. I use the word 'launch', but in practice that never happened, and *Irish Peaks* never got the red-carpet opening night a book of its stature deserved. However, as I now reflect on 2020, read the messages of thanks sent by our members upon receiving *Irish Peaks*, and on the number of copies sold to date, fast approaching 5,000, I feel that *Irish Peaks* is somehow quite like Mountaineering Ireland, extremely well informed, able to adapt to sudden changes in its environment and able to have a huge impact, far greater than its actual size. I'm extremely proud to have been in the company, on occasion, of the Project Team who completed this



beautiful piece of work and to have seen at first hand their ambition and dedication to creating a special book. The Project Team were supported by many hands and, in the true spirit of 2020, when we work together, great things can be achieved.

Irish Peaks will be around for decades to come and will be enjoyed by new generations well into the future, which is in my view a true reflection of how special this book is. The Project Team comprised Margaret and Alan Tees, Helen Lawless and Michael O'Brien (Zest Creative Design). *Irish Peaks* arrived to our doors without fanfare in 2020. I now feel that it didn't need the red-carpet treatment to be a success, as it already was!

Our membership numbers came in at 13,933 at the end of the 2019/2020 season, which was amazing, as at times we were extremely concerned. This was no small achievement, and credit must go to the steadfast support of club volunteers, who continued to work with the staff team and bring in an overall membership figure quite close to the previous year's number.

Our relationships with our key partners continued to strengthen in 2020, most notably with Sport Ireland. At their request, we provided our support with the content of a national communication campaign on being safe and responsible in the outdoors.

The year 2020 saw the launch of the Arderins List of Irish Mountains by Mountaineering Ireland and MountainViews, the presentation of the 2020 Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Medal (via a video link) to Dr Clare O'Leary, the awarding of Honorary Membership to Terry O'Connor for many years of dedicated service to the climbing community, the completion of our Happy Hiking brochure and the successful sourcing of Resilience Funding from Sport Ireland to support our work in 2021, in light of the likely impact of Covid-19.

The year 2020 also saw our activity in Women In Sport continue to grow under the direction of our dedicated Women In Sport Co-ordinator, Ania Bakiewicz. Get Ireland Walking continued to build and develop its reach during the year, delivered by Linda Sankey, Communications and Administrations Officer, and Jason King, Programme Manager. Last year also saw a change in our staff when, at the end of December, Ania Bakiewicz moved on. I would like to thank Ania for her contribution to the Women In Sport programme and wish her all the best in the future.

During 2020, we also saw some changes in the Board, with Helen Donoghue and Dawson Stelfox respectively stepping down in June and December. Both Helen and Dawson continue to support the Access & Conservation and the Training Committees respectively. Three new Board members joined during 2020: Noel Caffrey in May, David Pollard (Chair of the A&C Committee) in June and Kevin O'Callaghan (Chair of the MTBI Committee) in December. I would like to thank both Helen and Dawson for their support and contribution to Mountaineering Ireland over the years and I welcome Noel, David and Kevin to their roles as Board members and sub-committee Chairs.

I want to note a special thanks to Siobhan Quinn, the first point of contact for many, for her support to our clubs and members, and for offering her expertise in supporting my activities. I also want to give my thanks to Ruth Whelan for her work in supporting hillwalkers, to Damien O'Sullivan in climbing, to Kevin Kilroy in youth and clubs across Northern Ireland, to Jane Carney in training, to Helen Lawless in access and conservation, and to Laura Griffin for delivering training administration support, vetting and communications. I also want to acknowledge the contribution provided to the FAR Committee by IFT Financial Management in providing our accountancy requirements. Thanks also to our National Children's Officer, Gerry Gorman, who works diligently behind the scenes and must be acknowledged. The support offered by both Sport Ireland and Sport NI is also very much appreciated. Thank you all very much.

I'm heartened to know that we have some amazing people working within this wonderful organisation, who will ensure that we can move on from 2020. Finally, I would like to state my sincere gratitude to all our resolute volunteers who support the work of our sub-committees and working groups, to our dedicated staff team and to the members of the Board, who all contribute to and deliver an effort far greater than the sum of its many moving parts. It is a pleasure of mine to serve and lead you, and thank you all very much for your continued support.

Murrough McDonagh
Chief Executive Officer,
Mountaineering Ireland



“ ‘Irish Peaks’ will be around for decades to come and will be enjoyed by new generations well into the future.”



Supporting and Developing Hillwalking

Return to hillwalking and climbing

2020 was a year like no other, posing lots of challenges and restrictions for us all, to the extent that even opportunities to go hillwalking were limited. Our organised lectures with Michael Fewer in March 2020 came to an abrupt halt after one showing in Galway, with the announcement of the first lockdown.

Since then, Mountaineering Ireland has continued to support hillwalkers throughout the various lockdowns, providing guidelines, support and advice. This involved engaging with a high volume of members, partners and stakeholder to develop and update guidelines throughout the pandemic.

Videos and posts for social media were developed to support messaging during the period. As our usual hillwalking events and gatherings continued to be cancelled, we had to adapt quickly to provide supports and find different opportunities to engage with our members.

Online communications

The enforced need to use online platforms to communicate posed its own challenges, but also brought a great opportunity to engage with more members. Our Members' Forum, held in June, offered members the opportunity to discuss the current situation in relation to the Covid-19 crisis, our 'Return to Sport Advice' for hillwalkers and climbers, support for clubs returning to activities, and any other, more

general issues that had arisen during the previous twelve months. Over ninety members participated, including representatives from over fifty clubs.

Additionally, four regional Club Support Meetings were held during the month of September, with representatives from over fifty clubs attending, providing members with a further opportunity to discuss concerns around the return to hillwalking. Other topics discussed included club resources and supports, how to retain and attract members, and training. Actions from the meetings included the circulation of club contact details to those in attendance, to facilitate clubs networking; clarification on our advice on Covid-19 concerns; and publication of advice for clubs on how to run AGMs online.

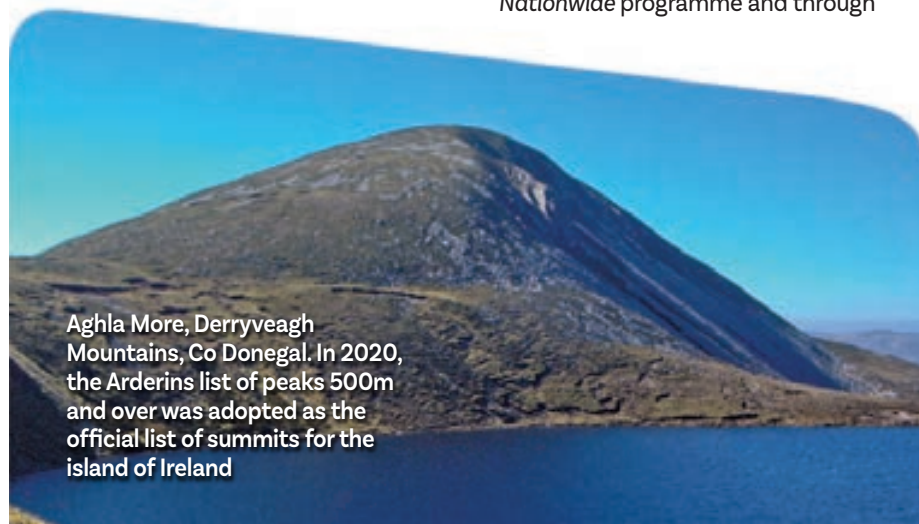
The first series of "Zooming Round the Mountains" was launched in autumn 2020. This saw a number of different talks and workshops delivered online, including

the following, specifically aimed at a hillwalking audience:

- 'I'm a hillwalking leader and trainer: ask me anything'
- Twelve Bens Adventure
- Club Committees Workshop
- An Evening with SEMRA
- Introducing Young People to the Mountains.

We would like to give special thanks to all of the speakers and volunteers who were involved in "Zooming Round the Mountains," without whom it would not have been possible to complete.

Although most engagement with members had to happen online in 2020, there were windows of opportunity to get out on the hills, particularly during the summer months. This also gave members the opportunity to get out and celebrate National Walking Day in their local areas in September, as part of European Week of Sport. The build-up to the day saw our Hillwalking Development Officer, Ruth Whelan, promote the celebration on RTE's Nationwide programme and through



Aghla More, Derryveagh Mountains, Co Donegal. In 2020, the Arderins list of peaks 500m and over was adopted as the official list of summits for the island of Ireland

promotional videos from clubs and members. We hope to build on this celebration on an annual basis and endeavour to have more and more of our members involved each year.

Arderins List

This year saw the endorsement by Mountaineering Ireland of the list of the Arderins (developed by MountainViews) as an official list of mountains in Ireland both north and south. The advantage of having an official list available on both the Mountaineering Ireland and MountainViews' websites is that it gives a wider audience direct access to a full list of Arderins nationally and also at a local level per county. Given the restrictions of the past year on travelling, getting to know your local mountains has become a much more attractive option. Maybe you will even discover a few you were not even aware of!

Lynam Lecture

Considering the restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was decided not to organise a formal presentation of the 2020 Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture and the Lynam Medal. However, it was agreed that the medal be awarded to Dr Clare O'Leary, renowned mountaineer and adventurer, on merit alone. The first Irish woman to summit on Everest (8,848m) in 2004, and the first to climb an 8,000m peak, Clare has continued to push the boundaries ever since then of what has been achieved by Irish mountaineers. Clare was duly presented with the medal in October 2020 by Mike Maunsell, Chair of Mountaineering Ireland's Lynam Lecture Working Group, in her home town of Clonmel.

Happy Hiking Campaign

Another success was the launch of the Happy Hiking Campaign, an initiative to promote safe walking in the hills and countryside. This project was initiated with the intention of refreshing and updating our Walk Safely leaflet, which was out of print. Since the production of that leaflet, however, how we circulate information has evolved and changed, particularly since the



Mike Maunsell, Chair of the Lynam Lecture Working Group, presents the 2020 Lynam Medal to leading Irish mountaineer and adventurer Dr Clare O'Leary

onset of Covid-19. Each time the restrictions were eased, there was an influx of people to the hills, so providing information on how to stay safe when hillwalking became even more important.

Happy Hiking is aimed at all users of trails and the uplands, particularly first-time users, novices and tourists. The material includes advice on planning your walk, what to bring with you, getting a weather forecast, who to call in an emergency, and so on. It is available at www.mountaineering.ie/hillwalking. The information is available digitally for sharing on other platforms and is also available in hard copy.

Club toolkit

A toolkit was developed to provide clubs with a central point for resources, available exclusively to Mountaineering Ireland clubs. Administrators can access these resources through the club database to share with their members. The toolkit has useful information on running your club, how to attract members, running club evenings and introductory walks, and how to encourage members to become walk leaders. There are also key resources such as the club handbook, GDPR for clubs, Happy Hiking and lots more.

Mapping

Two meetings were held with Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) in relation to working with them to improve their 1:25 Adventure map series with input from Mountaineering Ireland clubs. Originally it was proposed to hold workshops around the country, with OSi and Mountaineering Ireland, to get feedback from our members on how best to improve the quality of OSi maps in relation to hiking and walking. However, this was put on hold due to Covid-19. We now hope to run the workshops in 2021.

Safeguarding

As per the Children's First Act 2015, anyone who has access to minors (persons under 18 years of age) in a services, coaching or training capacity must undertake a Safeguarding Level 1 Course. Mountaineering Ireland endeavours to encourage clubs to support youths to enjoy our sport. Two Safeguarding Level 1 workshops were run as a service to our members in 2020. We make this workshop available where there is a demand. All clubs with youths participating in their activities are required to conduct a risk assessment and display their Safeguarding Statement.

Mountaineering Ireland's safeguarding statement and policy can be found at www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/GardaVettinginClubs.

Hillwalking Committee

A lot of the above activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee, whose members in 2020 were: Grainne McLaughlin (Chairperson), Ruth Whelan (Secretary), Margaret Collins, Chris Evans, Veronica Kelly, Russell Mills, Declan Murphy, Louise Nolan, Marian Wallis, Roy Madden.

FIND OUT MORE

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



Supporting and Developing Climbing

What began as a news report of an outbreak of a new virus in China at the end of 2019 became the dominant factor in all of our lives throughout 2020.

Throughout 2020, Covid-19 had a significant impact on almost all aspects of our lives, and climbing was no different.

The impact of Covid-19 on climbing was evident in all areas of our sport – from the introductory climbing sessions through to expeditions and the Olympic Games.

Climbing

Despite the impact of Covid-19 and the associated restrictions, there were approximately seven months in 2020 when climbing was able to take place relatively unfettered. The first three months of the year were essentially business as normal before the full effects of the pandemic were felt, and the relaxation of the restrictions in the summer months gave us the chance to climb outside again in small groups.

able to take place in 2020. There is no doubt that these great climbing and social occasions were missed by the climbing community, but there was widespread understanding for the decisions that had to be taken by the organisers.

Youth Climbing

The Climbing Development Squad met for three out of the four scheduled training sessions in the first half of the year. The squad continues to provide an important step in the progression for many young climbers, providing them with input and feedback from experienced coaches on how to improve their climbing performance.

Meets

Despite the best efforts of the organising clubs, none of the scheduled meets was



Youth Climbing Series 2020

Results	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Female E (age 8-9)	Lucy McClune	Sieve Hoare	Duaa Rejeb
Male E (age 8-9)	Calum O'Connor	Caleb Shine	Eoin Galvin
Female D (age 10-11)	Ilmur Jonsdottir	Olivia Scott	Lilou Conroy
Male D (age 10-11)	Daniel Shine	Maty Petros	Joe Feeney
Female C (age 12-13)	Eve Buckley	Clara-Caterina Mayer	Freya O'Connor
Male C (age 12-13)	Patrick Galvin	Oliver Szelag	Sam Monedero
Female B (age 14-15)	Caelin Lenehan	Rhyna Conroy	Bonita Thurston
Male B (age 14-15)	Reuben Aiken	Daniel Creedon	Sean Brown
Female A (age 16-17)	Faith Blaney	Amy Orr	Amber Burns
Male A (age 16-17)	Dillon McLaughlin	George Lassov	Matthew Bourke

During the summer months, four youth climbing camps took place – in Dalkey, the Burren, the Mournes and on Cruit Island in Donegal. The camps attracted young climbers keen to build on the skills that they had gained through indoor climbing and keen to be able to climb outside on rock independently.

Competitions

Youth Climbing Series

The first three rounds of the Youth Climbing Series took place in January, February and March. Round Four and the Grand Final fell victim to Covid-19. With three rounds completed, enough climbing had been done to award the medals and prizes, which were sponsored by Great Outdoors and Mammut. The results for the 2020 Youth Climbing Series are listed on page xx.

Irish Bouldering League

The stalwart of the competition calendar, the Irish Bouldering League continued to attract climbers of a wide range of ages and abilities to five rounds of competitions. The overall winners of each of the competition categories received prizes thanks to the sponsorship of Rab. The winners are listed below.

Irish Lead Climbing Championship, Irish Bouldering Championship

Unfortunately, neither the Irish Lead Climbing Championship nor the Irish Bouldering Championship could be held in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Developing a new competition schedule

Working together, Mountaineering Ireland, the BMC and Climb Scotland have



developed a plan to reorganise the entire competition climbing schedule for the UK and Ireland. 2021 should see the introduction of the new schedule. That schedule will see the national lead and bouldering championships taking place in the first half of the year, ahead of the international competitions. The Youth Climbing Series will then take place in the second half of the year.

Youth Climbing Team

Rob Hunter took over the role of coach for the Youth Climbing Team. Training sessions for the members of the Youth Climbing Team were hampered due to Covid-19 restrictions, but nonetheless took place in person, when possible, and as online training sessions, when necessary.

The Youth Climbing Team was unable to attend international climbing competitions due to Covid-19-related travel restrictions.

The former coach of the Youth Climbing Team, Terry O'Connor, was awarded an Honorary Membership by Mountaineering Ireland at the AGM. This

was in recognition of Terry's invaluable input into the development of youth climbing.

Climbing Committee

The Climbing Committee continued to meet throughout 2020, initially at in-person meetings, but moving to online meetings in March. The committee played a key role in the preparation of the Covid-19 advice for climbers as we returned to activity after the first lockdown.

The committee also worked to finalise the Climbing Development Guidelines, which aim to assist climbers in the development of new climbing areas.

The Mountaineering Ireland Climbing Committee members are: Geoff Thomas (Chairperson), John Healy, John Harrison, Peter Wood, Ricky Bell, Kelley O'Reilly-Smith, Chloe Condron, Damien O'Sullivan (Secretary).

Irish Bouldering League 2020			
Results	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Senior Male (age over 18)	Michael O'Neill	Ciaran Scanlon	Mark Scanlon
Senior Female (age over 18)	Nina Zhoie	Sarah Hoare	Anna Weidmann
Masters Male (age over 45)	Ricky Young	Tom O'Neill	Viv Van Der Holst
Masters Female (age over 45)	Caroline Murray	Lynn Crampton	Mari Gleeson
Male Youth A (age 16-17)	Sean O'Connor	Jude McInerney	Cillian Jennings
Female Youth A (age 16-17)	Jessica McGarry	Ella Brown	
Male Youth B (age 14-15)	Eoin McLoughlin	George Lassov	Joshua Hoare
Female Youth B (age 14-15)	Rhyna Conroy	Sarah O'Mahony	Faith Blaney

FIND OUT MORE

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



Training and Skills



Mountaineering Ireland's strategic objective is to promote mountain training and skills development. It aims:

- to realise the potential of the new Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI)
- to promote a range of courses, awards and training pathways and to support informal training to meet the needs of hillwalkers and climbers
- to support our training providers in ensuring training awards and courses offered are of the highest standard
- to be a reliable source of advice and information in relation to safety and good practice in mountaineering.

Mountain Training Board Ireland

In 2020, Mountain Training Board Ireland's usual provision of quality-assured, internationally-recognised mountain training awards and schemes, delivered by qualified and experienced trainers who had undergone regular moderation and met CPD requirements, was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Training Office moved to an online provision of selected offerings for members and the wider participant audience. The first quarter events and the international Winter Meet went ahead, with the Summer Alpine Meet

being postponed, along with all other face-to-face events.

Online versions of the skills workshops, Club Training Officer workshops and provider meetings took place, with a suite of recordings being made, which can be accessed on the Mountaineering Ireland website and YouTube channel.

MTBI is in the unique position of providing and developing both formal and informal training and it consults with stakeholders to review current provision and determine the way forward.

We promote self-reliance and inspire participation and adventure through skills development, thus facilitating enjoyment and safety.

Despite the many restrictions of 2020, it was a year of innovation, producing blended learning opportunities and fresh ideas on training delivery and meeting management. It resulted in fewer emissions, less fuel and resource

consumption, and better participation and attendance at meetings. We hope to continue this efficient way of operating into the future.

Training for clubs

Club officer meetings, presentations, webinars and workshops were appreciated by over 2,000 participants and supported in-club training, brought like-minded people together to share ideas, inspired training plans and promoted clubs and encouraged new members and participants. Thank you to the numerous volunteers involved.

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

Skills series and training resources

Online resources increased to now include the Winter Skills Series, Map Skill Series, Youth Skills Series and Poor visibility webinar. Participant engagement with the existing and new skills videos was high, with over 55,000 views for one of the skills videos alone.



There are a number of presentations, the members' library and training literature to help participants up-skill and refresh. These can be found on mountaineering.ie, in the training downloads section, and are beneficial to clubs, individuals, candidates and providers.

Training Providers

An increase in training providers covering the island of Ireland has increased provision and diversity of courses. Providers have been updated and inducted in the new and revised climbing awards. Candidate numbers continued to grow during the year, despite the restrictions of the pandemic.

Whilst training and assessments were prevented for a number of months, providers continued to work extremely hard to meet the demand for courses. The new cohort of participants are seeking skills training and leadership training to support their newfound interest in the outdoors.

Annual provider workshops support high training standards and are delivered by the Training Officer. The benefits of gathering providers together are many and allow for updates; sharing of learnings; development of skills and techniques; discussion of syllabi, teaching and instruction methods; and induction for revised awards.

Continued professional development (CPD) events are essential to not only meet association and training board requirements, but also to feed the desire for knowledge and to appeal to the enquiring mind.

Links with Other Organisations

Mountain Training UK and Ireland

The DLOG system, which runs in parallel with the Mountain Training UK and Ireland Candidate Management System,

continued to evolve and increase functionality for our organisation. Communication between the two systems allows for transparency within the home nation's training boards and transferability for candidates of UK and Ireland shared awards.

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

The Mountain Training Walking Scheme review is ongoing and focusing on leadership and camping elements.

The collaborative work between all the training boards across the UK and Ireland has maintained the consistent momentum essential to developing the existing awards and to add new schemes and awards to the suite of shared awards already on offer.

Sport Ireland Coaching

Mountaineering Ireland has four awards on the Sport Ireland Coaching Adventure Sports Framework and one award on the Sport Ireland Coaching Framework. Work continued throughout 2020.

Registrations	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Award						
Mountain Leader Award	94	98	76	124	87	85
Hill & Moorland Leader	2	2	6	20	26	10
Lowland Leader Award	45	88	77	71	75	74
Expedition Module	-	-	48	71	75	74
Rock Climbing Instructor (Single Pitch Award)	69	122	142	116	95	85
Rock Climbing Development Instructor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	0
Multi Pitch Award	7	3	2	10	2	5
Climbing Wall Instructor	28	34	53	77	97	41
Abseil Module	-	-	-	-	-	41
Climbing Wall Development Instructor	6	7	2	36	17	4
Level 1 Climbing Coach	9	18	2	23	16	0
Indoor Climbing Assistant	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19
Mountain Skills Registration	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	574*	862*
Rock Skills Registration	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	56*	38*
Mountain Skills Participation	1,236	1,187	1,089	1,120	712	871
Rock Skills Participation	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	43	16
Total Registrations + MS Participants	1,496	1,559	1,497	1,668	1,246	1,325
Total registrations only	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,121	1,338
FUNDamentals	112	73	90	192	-	-

*Not included in the total



FIND OUT MORE

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



Improving Access and Protecting the Mountain Environment

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

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



Covid-19 brought both these objectives into focus. While on one level it was fantastic to see more people discovering the beauty of Ireland's outdoors, pressure of numbers and poor behaviour by a minority caused visitor management issues at popular locations – in relation to parking, and littering, as well as impacts on local residents and the natural environment.

Throughout 2020, Mountaineering Ireland was actively engaged with local members, individual landowners and other organisations, in developing and communicating good practice advice to support responsible enjoyment of the outdoors.



Improving Access

Most of the land in Ireland's uplands and coastal areas is privately owned, either individually, or jointly as commonage. In most places public enjoyment of this land is possible, mainly due to the goodwill and tolerance of private landowners. In contrast with developed and managed trails, most access for hillwalking and climbing is not underpinned by any formal agreement with the landowners. The upsurge in outdoor recreation activities during Covid-19 has exerted greater pressure on this largely unmanaged situation. In addition to working to protect access at local level, Mountaineering Ireland is engaged with this issue at national level.

Comhairle na Tuaithe

Comhairle na Tuaithe was established by the Department of Rural and Community Development to advise the Minister on the sustainable development of outdoor recreation. It includes representatives from farming organisations, recreational

users and state bodies with a responsibility or interest in the countryside.

Mountaineering Ireland has been a member of Comhairle na Tuaithe since its inception in 2004.

In 2020, Comhairle na Tuaithe commenced work on the development of a new National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, which will provide an overarching framework to support the growth and development of Ireland's outdoor recreation sector. Mountaineering Ireland co-chairs the working group for this key project.

Towards the end of the year it was agreed that Comhairle na Tuaithe would establish a new Sustainable Upland Recreation sub-group, to review Comhairle's Mountain Access Programme and facilitate its expansion to other areas. The Mountain Access Project was introduced to provide clarity regarding recreational access, based on the voluntary agreement of landowners in a defined mountain area.

Mountaineering Ireland maintained pressure in 2020 for an insurance or indemnity arrangement promised for the two pilot Mountain Access Areas – the MacGillycuddy Reeks and Binn Shléibhe near Clonbur, Co Galway – and it seems progress is being made.

Review of access in Northern Ireland

Mountaineering Ireland continued to input to the review of Northern Ireland's access legislation, led by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. Along with other members of the National Outdoor Recreation Forum, Mountaineering Ireland is proposing the introduction of an Outdoor Recreation Bill for Northern Ireland, to provide a comprehensive legislative framework to support the continued development of outdoor recreation. Submissions have been made setting out how the proposed bill would address the concerns of landowners and improve the quality of people's recreation experiences.

Active at national and local level

Recreational access in Ireland is an evolving situation. Mountaineering Ireland is an active player in discussions, north and south. Mountaineering Ireland's input to national-level discussions on access is strengthened by knowledge of local issues



and by solutions being found at local level. Local and national action must continue to support each other as we actively consider options for managing recreational activity and securing access for the decades ahead.

Mountain Environment

Ireland's mountains inspire, shape and enrich the recreation experiences enjoyed by hillwalkers and climbers. The character of the mountain environment is being altered all the time by changes in land use, including changes associated with recreation activity. Mountaineering Ireland's vision for the future of Ireland's mountains, agreed by members in 2017, is that Ireland's mountain landscapes will be valued and protected as environmental, cultural and recreational assets.

Helping the Hills

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

Mountaineering Ireland started the Helping the Hills initiative in 2012 to raise awareness of upland path erosion and to highlight the need for skills and investment in this area (see www.helpingthehills.ie). Since then, Mountaineering Ireland has participated in a number of initiatives to address upland path erosion. Considerable progress was made in 2020, with funding being allocated by the Department of Rural and Community Development, to address erosion at both Croagh Patrick and Errigal. Path work also continued in the Mournes and at Cuilcagh, where significant visitor management issues were experienced in spring and summer.

In autumn 2020, Mountaineering Ireland assisted the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders



Group in the recruitment of an experienced upland path manager and a team of four trainees to implement a plan for sustainable access and habitat restoration on Croagh Patrick. It is intended that the Croagh Patrick project will become a hub for the sharing of experiences and skills in upland path construction, thereby benefitting other upland areas.

Upland management

In spring 2020, Mountaineering Ireland engaged with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) following fires in the Wicklow Mountains, the Blackstairs and the Comeraghs. Mountaineering Ireland also liaised with the NPWS, the Mourne Heritage Trust and local members regarding damage to upland habitats caused by off-road vehicle activity in the Mournes, Wicklow Mountains, Galtees and the Blackstairs.

Mountaineering Ireland responded to a draft Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland, and also contributed to a Green Recovery Plan published by the RSPB, both seeking recognition of the host of ecosystem services provided by healthy upland environments, including the mitigation of climate change and supporting human well-being.

In July, following consultation with local clubs, Mountaineering Ireland made a submission in response to a planning application for developments at Connemara National Park, emphasising the need for a management plan for the park. In October, Mountaineering Ireland responded to an application for a windfarm at Gruggandoo in the western Mournes. Mountaineering Ireland's involvement helped to change the debate around this application, highlighting the shortcomings in the developer's landscape and visual impact assessment and questioning the appropriateness of an industrial development in a protected landscape.

The submissions mentioned above can be found on Mountaineering Ireland's website: see www.bit.ly/MIsubmissions.

Collective Effort

All this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee. In June 2020 we had a change of Committee Chairperson, with David Pollard taking over from Helen Donoghue, who is remaining as a committee member. The other committee members in 2020 were: Jack Bergin (resigned November); Noel Caffrey; Fíona Gallagher; Ursula MacPherson; Vincent McAlinden; Aine McGirl; Orla Prendergast and Helen Lawless (Secretary).

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



FIND OUT MORE

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

Club Development Programme Northern Ireland, Get Climbing Initiative and Women In Sport

The Club Development Programme in Northern Ireland has continued to grow since it was launched in May 2017. It supports youth climbing clubs, adult climbing clubs and hillwalking clubs in the North, as part of a focused development strategy delivered by Mountaineering Ireland and supported by Sport NI. The fourth and final year of this programme came to its natural end on March 31st, 2021. Its aim was to support and develop all Mountaineering Ireland clubs in Northern Ireland. In 2020, the programme was delivered by Kevin Kilroy, our Youth Development Officer, who was based at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre in County Down.

The year 2020 saw much progress made within the programme, with support provided to twelve hillwalking clubs and six youth/climbing clubs, with three new clubs aiming to join the programme. However, Covid-19 caused serious disruptions, particularly in working with new club volunteers, and it is intended to have further engagement with all of these club as things open up again in 2021. The support being offered to date has varied on a club-by-club basis, covering everything from workshops on injury prevention, to route-setting and climbing wall maintenance courses, to traditional rock climbing and hillwalking skills courses.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere thanks Sport NI and to everyone who played an active role during 2020 in

helping to develop the club support programme for Northern Ireland.

Get Climbing

The Get Climbing programme is focused on engaging with hard-to-reach youth population groups through climbing and hillwalking activities, as per the funding conditions of Sport Ireland under the Dormant Account Funding (DAF) scheme.

The year 2020 saw eight-week blocks of programmes being offered, where those participating learned the basics of climbing so that they could operate independently on climbing walls. Participants worked through the National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme (NICAS) syllabus, with the aim of achieving NICAS Level 1. This is an entry-level award aimed at novices that recognises their ability to climb safely under supervision.

A total of 243 climbing opportunities were delivered to participants during the year. When the climbing walls were closed and travel restrictions put in place, a series of fourteen free online classes and six Female Master Classes were offered as support to Get Climbing participants. Mountaineering Ireland greatly appreciates the support offered from Sport Ireland to Get Climbing.

Women In Sport

The year 2020 saw advancements in the reach and impact of the Women In Sport (WIS) initiative. The initiative covers four key pillars, as per the Sport Ireland objectives: Coaching and Officiating, Active Participation, Leadership and Governance, and Visibility.

Last year, Ania Bakiewicz was hired as the WIS Co-ordinator. Some of the developments in the initiative included Mountaineering Ireland's support for the 20x20 National Campaign, research into a strategy for female participation, updating of WIS content on our website, increased online presence on Facebook and Instagram, and support for the Women With Altitude working group. A new event, the 'Women Rock Festival,' focused on women rock climbing, was scheduled for June in the Burren, with



fifty-six participants due to attend. It had to be cancelled due to Covid-19.

Notable successes during 2020 were the Women Hillwalking, Women Rock Climbing and Women Trail Running events held during the European Week of Sport, September 23-30th, 2020, which saw 140 women participate in these activities. Twenty-four skills sessions were delivered by fifteen female skills providers across twelve counties in nineteen different locations.

The online Female Master Classes were very well received by those attending. Aimed at promoting and increasing the visibility of women in our sport, influential and accomplished Irish women, who have shaped the modern Irish mountaineering scene, were interviewed online. A series of online webinars and classes was also delivered, resulting in another busy year for the Women In Sport programme. Mountaineering Ireland greatly appreciated the support received from Sport Ireland under the DAF scheme in delivering the WIS initiative.



FIND OUT MORE

For more information contact
Mountaineering Ireland on
info@mountaineering.ie



The early days

An account, written by **Joey Glover**, of a club meet in Donegal in May 1955, in which members of North West Mountaineering Club and the Irish Mountaineering Club took on Slieve League and the Sturral

Introduction

By Alan Tees

It had been thought that North West Mountaineering Club's original two logbooks from 1955 and 1956 had been lost in a bomb blast in Coleraine during the Troubles, but they subsequently turned up. Here is an account of a joint **North West Mountaineering Club and Irish Mountaineering Club** (presumably Belfast section) weekend meet at Glencolumbkille, Co Donegal, from 27th to 29th of May, 1955. The generally light-hearted and carefree account of activities that were both adventurous and explorative, in a period before everything could be found in a guidebook, is a refreshing window into our not-too-distant past.

Anyone who, like myself, wonders what a Utilicon is should Google 'Ford Thames Utilicon.' Imagine what the west Donegal roads would have been like in the fifties and the time it would have taken to get there in such a vehicle!

What follows is a transcription from a beautifully handwritten account by **Joey Glover** in the logbook about a club meet in Donegal on Slieve League and the Sturral.

Above:
Some members
of North West
Mountaineering
Club and the Irish
Mountaineering
Club on Slieve
League during the
joint club meet in
west Donegal in
May 1955

Donegal Meet, May 1955

8th Meet

Slieve League and the Sturral, Co Donegal
27th, 28th, 29th May, 1955

[Leaders]

27th:

John Whittow

28th, 29th:

Climbers. Joey Glover

29th:

Non-climbers. Desmond Johnston

Present were:

27th, 28th, 29th:

Boyd Jack

27th, 28th:

John Whittow

28th only:

Jack Brockhill, Edgar Bigger

28th, 29th:

Joey Glover, Denis Helliwell, Desmond Johnston, Denis Hodgkinson, Elisabeth Scotson, Annabelle Forbes, Audrey Perry

IMC members:

27th, 28th, 29th:

Phil Gribbon, Margot

28th, 29th:

Charlie Boyd, John Carruthers, Rosemary Turner, Molly Crawford, Reggie Taylor

Four cars, a Ford Utilicon car and one motorbike were used.

Friday, May 27th, 1955

The Sturral

An advance party consisting of **John Whittow** and **Boyd Jack** went by car to Glencolumbkille in the afternoon of 27th and camped on the beach near Glen Head. In the evening,



despite heavy rain and gusty wind, they got to grips with the **Sturrall**. A great deal of the rock on the ridge top was loose and rotten and, at one point, John nearly came unstuck when a handhold came away.

Boyd Jack successfully trod the ridge, surmounted both the gendarmes and reached the foot of the final pinnacle (which is, in fact, the summit). Here, a vertical and smooth wall of mossy rock is the “mauvais pas” [difficult bit]. It is about 15’ high and leads directly to the summit. John Whittow, firmly belayed, brought up Boyd in the first ascent of this face.

Above: The Sturrall ridge today

Below: A page (the last page) from the handwritten account in the logbook

with three tardy members of the IMC (**Rosemary, Molly, Reggie**) and the ladies of the NWMC (**Elisabeth, Annabelle and Audrey**). The three IMC members finally arrived, went to Bunglass, and subsequently went along the cliff top to the summit cairn of **Slieve League**, via One Man’s Path.

Jack and Desmond were complete martyrs in their attempted “liaison,” as a result of which they never went further than Awark More, eventually returning to the hotel at Malinmore to meet the “three ladies.” ➤

Saturday, May 28th, 1955

After a night under canvas (rather wet and uncomfortable), these two drove to Carrick on the following morning to meet the main party, who arrived from Derry after labouring under the Herculean task of attempting to rendezvous with divers people at even more divers places!

Unfortunately, it was found impossible to approach the Fin Claddagh beach at the foot of Slieve League by boat, owing to a heavy groundswell. The majority of the party, now led by **Joey Glover (John, Boyd, Denis Helliwell, Denis Hodgkinson, Edgar, Charlie, John Carruthers, Phil and Margot)**, went ahead to **Awark More** at Bunglass.

Jack Brockhill and **Desmond Johnston** remained at the Slieve League Hotel, Carrick, to make contact

(roped from below) made the second ascent of this face (the 1st lead without a top-rope), afterwards bringing up Boyd, Charlie & Phil. It seemed that most of the Meet were finally assembled on the summit of the 3rd pinnacle. An attempt was made to reach the sea down the western arete but was uncompleted. After some more scrambling the party returned to Glencolumbkille. On the road back to Derry that evening the journey was full of life & incident, the most notable feature being Dennis Helliwell's attempt (while driving! Utilicon) to make a first ascent of a Raphoe gundam.
J.B.W.
J.B.G.
D.A.R.J.

THE EARLY DAYS



The weather was dry but dull, with mist drifting on the summit, and very moderate visibility. The ten in the leading party now split into two groups, and subsequently it almost became a case of 'every man for himself!' ("What about the lady?" - Editor's query.)

Denis Helliwell and **John Whittow** decided to have a shot at climbing up the steep, rocky gully just to the west of the **Eagle's Nest** precipice and had to descend to the beach to do so. After 100' or so, the climb became impracticable due to a waterfall, so they returned to the cliff top - via the beach. [Ed. Note, the gully would probably "go" once the waterfall pitch had been climbed. This latter would be best tackled without boots or plimsolls!]

They subsequently walked along to the summit of **Slieve League** and joined the main party at One Man's Path as they were returning to Bunglass.

Meanwhile, **Joey [Glover]** had set a stiff pace over the top of the **Eagle's Nest** and on a long traverse along the slopes of **Slieve League**. First, Boyd Jack, who was suffering from a wrenched ankle, was missed (he returned to One Man's Path and remained there with Margot!) and later Denis Hodgkinson, also climbed back up to One Man's Path.

Following a route already reconnoitred by him, **Joey** led **Edgar** across a gully above **Fin Claddagh** ("Pebble Beach"), and, some 1,000'

Above:
View from the Slieve League ridge to Bunglass headland and, inset, a raven on Slieve League

Below:
Members of the NWMC, probably a decade later

above the beach, they dumped their rucksacks.

A very loose, sticky and sometimes exposed route now led them down to the beach, but the three IMC members following behind did not cross the gully and found a much shorter and cleaner way down.

After spending a short time on the beach, the five started the climb to the top. Joey and Edgar, having to return for their rucksacks, were committed to the same route as their descent, and they enviously watched the other three climb by an almost perfect route on the other side of the gully.





Joey, despite a splitting headache, and Edgar scrambled on to the top, where they joined Denis Helliwell, by now waiting alone in the clouds (very angelic?). The three IMC chaps arrived and these six were the last to leave Slieve League – returning direct to the car.

Phil rejoined Margot, and the remainder sped on to Malinmore Hotel, where the rest of the Meet had now assembled, including the latecomers, **Elisabeth**, **Annabelle** and **Audrey**.

Sunday, May 29th, 1955

After spending the night at Malinmore – in the hotel, and some in tents – a short excursion was made to Malinbeg beach. Meanwhile John, Jack and Edgar had departed for Derry.

The serious business of the third day now began as a large but very scattered party set out to tackle the **Sturral**. For most of the journey the climbers and non-climbers proceeded together as far as the neck joining the Sturral to the mainland. Then the non-climbers (**Elisabeth**, **Annabelle**, **Audrey**, **Molly**), led by **Desmond**, continued along the cliff top towards Port, descending gradually to about 500’.

After a four-mile walk over semi-dried bog (a novel and no doubt enlightening experience for the English members of the party), a halt was made for second lunch at the First Lough. Thence they continued over the summit of **Croaghnacullion** (1,230’) and made their way over the almost vertical (?) descents on the south slopes to the Glencolumbkille Road. Here, contact was made with the Utilicon which arrived (by sheer coincidence!) at the right point and five minutes ahead of schedule.

The Sturral party had meanwhile been making good progress in excellent weather conditions (sunshine, no wind). First, Joey made an attempt to get down to the beach but gave up as he felt it was worth neither the risk nor the effort.

Dennis Helliwell and **Boyd** set off along the summit ridge, followed by **Denis Hodgkinson**, **Charlie**, **John Carruthers** and **Rosemary**. After encountering the 2nd

Gendarme (scene of John Whittow’s slip on Friday), several turned back and rejoined Joey on the “mainland,” afterwards traversing easily along the North side of the Sturral (below the ridge) and ascending the third and final pinnacle from the west.

The “summit ridge” party had now reached the final 15’ rock face on the final pinnacle, and **Dennis Helliwell** (roped from below) made the second ascent of this face (the 1st lead without a top-rope), afterwards bringing up **Boyd**, **Charlie** and **Phil**.

It seemed that most of the Meet were finally assembled on the summit of the 3rd pinnacle. An attempt was made to reach the sea down the western arête, but was uncompleted. After some

more scrambling, the party returned to Glencolumbkille.

On the road back to Derry that evening the journey was full of life and incident, the most notable feature being Dennis Helliwell’s attempt (whilst driving the Utilicon) to make a first ascent of a Raphoe gendarme.

J.B.W. [John Whittow]

J.B.G. [Joey Glover]

D.A.R.J. [Desmond Johnston]

Above: The upper cliffs of Slieve League

Below: Ford Thames Utilicon in the 1950s





Alpinism without Gore-Tex, fleece or GPS

Peter Healy recounts his Alpine exploits during the 1950s to writer **Michael Fewer**

Not so very long ago, but before the days of Gore-Tex, fleeces, mobile phones, GPS, modern maps and guidebooks, a few very ordinary young Irish hillwalkers were attracted to mountains beyond our shores. They had little money and only their annual two weeks' holidays, but they were keen to tackle some real climbs. One of them was **Peter Healy**, who died in 2016 at the age of 96. Boastful was the last thing Peter was, but I was fortunate to persuade him to share some memories of his adventures in the Alps in the 1950s.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, it was normal for climbers visiting the Alps to hire a guide. Guides were expensive, however, and unaffordable

Above:
Aiguille du Moine and the Mer de Glace in a photograph taken by Peter Healy in the 1950s

Right: Crossing the Glacier du Dome in the summer of 1959



➤ An architect by profession, **Michael Fewer** has enjoyed hillwalking in Ireland and other parts of Europe for many years. He began writing about walking and the environment in 1988. Since then, he has had thirteen books, including guides to Ireland's way-marked trails, and over 300 magazine articles published about his walking experiences at home and abroad. For further information, see www.michaelfewer.com.

for the increasing number of ordinary enthusiasts who began to arrive in the Alps from the 1920s onwards. While the prestigious *Alpine Journal* was reporting in 1931 that ‘a wave of recklessness is spreading through the Alps,’ guideless climbing increased. As new routes were found and guidebooks began to appear, it became the norm.

Peter told me that he and his friends enjoyed hillwalking and climbing in Ireland. Their most adventurous outings were carrying out compass-guided night walks in the Wicklow Mountains. It was their hunger for adventure that took them to the Alps. They had little experience of real climbing and, looking back, he regarded most of the climbs they made in those early days in the Alps as completely foolhardy. He himself did solo climbs of 4,000-metre peaks without taking proper precautions, which, looking back, he felt was pure recklessness.

They knew little about snow and ice, how to avoid the danger of avalanches or how to recognise at a glance an area prone to crevasses. They gaily ventured into dangers that they were completely unaware of. Peter said that in those days everybody wanted to go to the Alps and, by the 1950s, most of his hillwalking and climbing friends had just about enough money to do so.

Peter’s first visit to the Alps was in the summer of 1950. He travelled on his own, with his bike, and crossed one Alpine pass a day, which he said was about all he could manage.

The following year, he took the train, got out at Lucerne and walked south into the Alps. In 1952, he traversed the Dolomites on foot, again alone. He told me that he enjoyed being on his own. He would have an itinerary laid out and didn’t want other people interfering with his plans.



Above: The climb onto the Dôme du Goûter. Nowadays this route is always busy in summer

Below: Peter Healy’s approach route to Mont Blanc in 1959. The large glacier at the bottom is the Glacier du Miage

PETER CLIMBED IN THE ALPS WITHOUT CRAMPONS: IT WAS MADNESS, HE SAYS, BUT HE LOVED IT

In 1953, Peter returned to the Alps, this time with **Paddy Walsh**. However, Paddy had just got engaged and wasn’t prepared to, as Peter described it, “risk his life,” so he pulled out. Peter then met up with two other Irishmen, **Noel Brown** and **Charlie McCormack**, and, with them, he did his first real climbing. He recalled that he had an ice-axe but climbed without crampons. It was madness, he insisted, but he loved it.

One winter evening, a decade ago, Peter took me through a **Mont Blanc expedition** that took place in the summer of 1959, with the help of an ancient slide projector and the dramatic slides he had taken. His companions on this expedition were **Liam Smith, Paddy O’Leary, Sam Payne, Daithí Scollard, George Barry** and **Uinseann MacEoin**. They travelled by boat and train to get to Paris and then got a train to the Alps. The journey took a full two days and they had little sleep along the way. The only guidebook they had was the 1951 Vallot Guide *La Chaîne du Mont Blanc* (Peter still had his copy). Suitable maps were very scarce and were, as he described, “miserable maps, with no proper contours or anything.”

In the first week of August 1959, Peter and his companions reached the Aosta Valley on the Italian side of Mont Blanc and, leaving civilisation behind, climbed steeply up the 7km-long **Glacier du Miage**, hugging the rugged edge between the ice and the bare rock. Peter was at pains to assure me the route they took was the easy one – if, I wonder, there was such a thing. The plan was to get to the **Refuge Gonella** before nightfall. To do this involved a climb of over 600 metres up the glacier, a traverse of the glacier and then a further ascent of 400 metres to the refuge. Today, it is necessary to book a bunk in Gonella, which now provides accommodation for sixty climbers. In those days, even in summertime, there weren’t as many climbers about and they arrived to find the refuge empty.





The following morning, with Daithí Scollard in the lead, they moved onwards and upwards. They climbed the **Glacier du Dome**, which Peter remembered as quite spectacular, and headed to the **Col de Bionnassay** at 4,000m, with the Aiguilles Grises to the west.

Many of the routes commonly used today in the Alps were pioneered in the nineteenth century with local guides. The route Peter and his friends were following, using their meagre map, had first been used in 1890 as a descent route by a group of climbers that included **Ambrogio Ratti**, the future **Pope Pius XI**.

Their next goal beyond the Col de Bionnassay was **Dôme du Goûter**, an almost flat, ice-covered summit which, at 4,304m, is the third highest in the Mont Blanc range. Here, they joined the route that **Paccard** and **Balmat**, the first men to climb Mont Blanc, took in 1786. Paccard and Balmat had ascended from the Chamonix side and, in summertime today, this route

Above:
On the Bosses

Below left:
George Barry
on the Bosses

Below right:
The last few
metres to the
summit of Mont
Blanc

is very busy. From Peter's remarkable photographs, however, it can be seen that the Irish group was alone on the Dôme on that day in 1959.

Peter said that visibility was good and, from the Dôme, the route ahead was clear, meandering over the Bosses towards the top of Europe, Mont Blanc, now only two kilometres away. On the way they passed the **Refuge Bivouac Vallot** (4,362m), which Peter remembers as a place to be avoided on account of the toilets being never emptied!

He and his companions negotiated some spectacular snow cornices and edges on their way over the **Bosses**. Then they were on the "fabulous" whale-back ridge, steep, narrow and seriously exposed in places, that leads up to the summit of **Mont Blanc** (4,809m). Today, there can be queues here, going up and down, but in 1959 there was no one else to be seen.

They did not delay on the summit. Peter said it was hard to catch your breath at that height and they were hoping to get down to Chamonix the same day. The route down was steep, 3,400 metres of descent over seven kilometres, mainly on glaciers. With nearly 900 metres still to descend, they had to bivouac at an old cable-car station at La Para, so Chamonix was not reached until the following morning.

In the rest of their holiday, they traversed the spectacular **Arête de Rochefort** and crossed the **Col du Géant**. **Paddy O'Leary** and **Sam Payne** climbed the 4,013m **Dent du Géant**, first conquered in 1882 and which the Alpinist **AF Mummery** said was "absolutely inaccessible by fair means." The two Irishmen spurned the easy route and instead climbed it by the most difficult, eastern face. It took them so long they were benighted on the top and, when they didn't return, Peter and his other friends were convinced they had been killed. The pair survived the ordeal, however, meeting on their way down the following morning the rescue party that their companions had arranged. They were suffering from frostbite and had to retire from the trip.





Left: George Barry on summit of Mont Blanc

Right: Liam Smith on the Arête de Rochefort

Below left: George Barry and Daithí Scollard on the Arête de Rochefort

Below right: Barry and Scollard facing the Dent du Géant



Peter admitted they had some frightening moments on their trip. Once he was swept off a ledge by a snow avalanche, but he was roped and was swung upside-down across a gully before coming to a crashing grounding on the far side. It was extremely painful and he thought for a moment he had broken his back, but he was able to continue climbing for the rest of the trip.

Many years later, when he was in his seventies, Peter had a fall from a ladder. When he had an X-ray, he was told that all was well but that they had found a very old fracture in one of his vertebrae!

“Alpine climbing; I think it’s a mug’s game, to be quite honest,” was his summing up, “but I enjoyed every minute of it.”

He did his last climb of Mont Blanc when he was seventy-seven years of age ■



It has always been the challenge!

Emma Hickey tells the story of her journey in mountaineering

The first time I went up any real hill was about ten years ago, taking on **Slieve Donard**. It was a foreign world to me. I was an ex All-Ireland competitive Irish dancer; what was I doing dragging myself up the side of a mountain?

I couldn't have been more of a novice, even if I had wanted to be. However, I was instantly addicted. This new world had just opened itself up to me and I instantly felt at home. The views from the summits, the fresh air, the amazing people I met on the trail, the whole energy of it all – I loved every bit of it.

The one thing that I embraced more than anything else was the challenge; the challenge of turning a 5ft 1" ex-Irish dancer into a mountain climber seemed to engulf me!

Above: Training in the Mournes

Below right: Learning to navigate in the hills

Soon after this I was regularly hiking all over Ireland and taking on all sorts of endurance walks, including the **Mourne Seven Sevens** and a winter hike, the **Art O'Neill Challenge**.



➤ **Emma Hickey** lives near the Dublin Mountains. She has an MBA and has worked in the recruitment industry for a long time. She has been active in the outdoors for the last twelve years and has been focusing on developing her mountaineering skills for the last ten years.



I WAS CONSTANTLY CHALLENGING MYSELF TO SEE HOW FAR I COULD GO WITH THIS NEW HOBBY

After one such challenge, I couldn't climb the stairs at home and had to sleep on the sofa; it was hilarious, but I loved it.

I continued to push myself, gaining experience anywhere I could. Every weekend, I was enrolling on a navigation course or improving my climbing skills with the wonderful climbing community we have here in Ireland. There wasn't an empty weekend, and I was constantly challenging myself to see how far I could go with this insane, exciting new hobby.

The next goal was to improve my climbing skills, so I upped my game over the next few years, doing various climbing courses in the mountains of Kerry, Scotland and the Alps. Though quite often feeling terrifyingly out of my depth, I kept pushing myself and learning, working on building my confidence, adding to my knowledge, gaining experience with every upward step. I was constantly as happy as I was terrified, which my brother informed me was the perfect mix for my adventures.

Armed with my newly acquired skills and confidence, my dreams took me to the world stage – to Nepal, to the Alps, back again to the Himalayas and finally to the snow-white plains of Alaska. Each of these challenges brought its own difficulties, but they also all brought their own very distinctive rewards,

Above: Hiking in the Wicklow Mountains

Below right: Hiking in Glendalough

which greatly outweighed the negatives.

On my very first trekking trip to Nepal in 2012, I headed to **Everest Base Camp** (5,364m) and, like everyone else on the trek, I was blown away by the sheer scale of everything there. However, while others around me struggled in a variety of ways,



TEN YEARS CLIMBING



climb and that, once I was mentally focused and strong enough, my body would take me all the way to the summit.

Having to climb over bottomless crevasses on metal ladders, roped together, with crampons on, while carrying a full pack in the dark and climbing the near-vertical ice-wall to the summit ridge were all things I had trained for and was ready for.

The altitude and how it affected me was something altogether new to me and was easily the biggest challenge of the climb. This is where you have to trust in your preparation and how your journey to get you there stands to you. In my

I felt right at home. The local people were so friendly and I learned so much from the Sherpas I was hiking with. Breathing methods, pacing myself and staying calm, I absorbed everything, knowing that I would return soon.

The following year, I set my eyes on climbing **Mont Blanc** (4,809m) with a **Jagged Globe** group. However, the weather didn't play ball and we didn't reach the summit. After spending a week around the majestic town of Arolla in Switzerland, upgrading our skills on rope work and crevasse rescue and working on our acclimatisation to altitude, we were eager to test ourselves. So, our guide took us to climb the **Cosmiques Ridge** on the Aiguille du Midi.

The **Aiguille du Midi** (3,842m) is a popular tourist destination, the top of which can be accessed by cable car. However, this particular climb will forever stay with me, as I was so far outside my comfort zone. I must have appeared capable, climbing up the ridge to finally come into sight of the viewing tower. I was greeted by a host of tourists taking pictures in amazement, as we made our way up the mountain.

Being as stubborn as I am, I was soon back for another go at Mont Blanc. We were denied an attempt at the summit by the weather again, but I embraced any other opportunity that came my way. We made our way to the Italian Alps and successfully summited the highest mountain in Italy, the **Gran Paradiso** (4,061m). After that, I felt as mentally and physically on top of my climbing game as I had ever done and I knew what the next step was: the Himalayas awaited!

In 2017, I set off with **Ian Taylor Trekking** to climb **Island Peak (Imja Tse)**, all 6,189m of her. I felt instantly comfortable being back in Nepal. I loved the people and the energy of the place, which makes you forget the treacherous challenges ahead. I had planned and played this climb out a thousand times in my head, over and over again, with my team of friends and family at home. I knew I was physically able for the

Above: Crossing a ladder during Island Peak climb

Below: Climbing Gran Paradiso

mind, I knew I was able to do it. I just had to focus and believe in myself. Finally, on October 23rd, 2017, I stood on top of **Island Peak** (6,189m), exhausted beyond words, but there I was!

After overcoming what had been the toughest yet most rewarding challenge of my life so far, I



DENALI WAS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE I HAD EVER TAKEN ON

found myself getting involved in the **'Ireland on Everest'** team project. I had three excited team mates, including two other wonderful climbing ladies, **Jenny ('Jen') Copeland** and **Suzanne Stroker** and, of course, the wonderful **Seamus ('Shay') Lawless**. Our goal was to push a team of everyday individuals, with very real lives outside of the mountaineering world, towards the summit of Mount Everest.

(Jenny and Shay achieved that goal when they summited on **Everest** (8,849m) on May 16th, 2019, but sadly, Shay died in an accident on the descent. Rest in peace, Shay.)

While we did a lot of our training and preparation together, our timelines became very different. My journey, after some much-needed rest and financial juggling, took me to **Denali** in Alaska in June 2019. This was something new again to me, something very different to what I had done before. Everyone on my team on that occasion was male and over six feet tall. There I was, half the size of the sledge I had to pull, while carrying a rucksack that was almost half my body weight. I loved it! I was standing up and proving myself again. This was where I belonged.

Denali was the greatest challenge I had ever taken on and, despite not making the summit, I had without any shadow of a doubt proved myself worthy of being there. The experience only added to everything I had already done and it cemented my



Above: Pulling a sledge on the Denali climb in Alaska

Below: Posing in front of Denali, the highest peak in the United States

desire to continue to push and challenge myself further. Who knows where this will take me, but I know I'm going there without fear or regret.

You should never see it as any sort of failure or setback not reaching a summit. It is all about how you approach something, how you set yourself against the challenge. This is all part of the love affair we have with the mountains. Just stay focused and stay the course. Enjoy every step you take. As for the summits, they will always be there, so just enjoy your journey!

➤ To follow Emma's journey, find her on Instagram at [emma_outdoors_1](#) ■





Participants in a Women With Altitude event in 2019

Hillwalking grades

The Hillwalking Committee has devised a grading system for walks, from easy to challenging



Written by
Ruth Whelan,
Hillwalking
Development
Officer

Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee has identified a need for a standardised system of grades for hillwalking, to provide a national benchmark for anyone who is selecting routes for club walks, gatherings, events, group walks, etc. (**Note: Distance alone is not a reliable measure of the level of difficulty.**) The grading system described below is the outcome of the committee's discussions. It is now up on the hillwalking section of the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie, and is also available in the **toolkit** for clubs.

Easy

May be signposted trails but will still require some basic navigation skills and some hillwalking experience. Mainly on easily identifiable paths, with good conditions underfoot. Can include open countryside with some rough ground and moderate ascents. **Examples:** Spinc walk in Glendalough; Diamond Hill in Connemara National Park. **Time:** 2-5 hours. **Height gain:** 250-500m. **Distance:** 5-12km.

Moderate

Hillwalking experience and navigational skills in difficult weather conditions are required. Can include more informal paths, rougher, boggy and more uneven terrain, with the possibility of rocky, moderately steep ground. **Examples:** Derrybawn and Mullacor Loop in Wicklow; Slieve Binnian in

the Mourne. **Time:** 5-7 hours. **Height gain:** 500-800m. **Distance:** 10-15km.

Difficult

Good hillwalking experience with capable and proven navigational skills in all weather conditions required. Underfoot conditions could be rough and uneven, with the possibility of prolonged rocky and steep sections and mountain terrain without clear paths. An ability to deal with mountain hazards, steep ground and scree is essential.

Examples: Carrauntoohil, Mweelrea, Lugnaquilla. **Time:** 6-8 hours. **Height gain:** 800-1,000m. **Distance:** 12-20km.

Strenuous

A good level of fitness, hillwalking experience and proven navigational skills in all weather conditions are essential requirements, as is an ability to deal with complex mountain terrain – open moorland, mountain plateaux, rocks and cliffs without clear paths. There may be some exposure and a need for some basic scrambling skills. Route-finding challenging, so close attention to navigation is key. **Examples:** Eastern Reeks ridge; Coomloughra Horseshoe in the McGillicuddy Reeks. **Time:** 8-10 hours. **Height gain:** 1,000-1,500m. **Distance:** 12-25km.

Distance: 12-25km.

Challenging

A high level of fitness, hillwalking experience and proven navigational skills in all weather

conditions are essential requirements. Extended walking in mountainous and often remote terrain, with the possibility of exposure, and may involve steep ascents and descents with some extended scrambling. Potential navigation difficulties, so hillwalkers should have confidence in their ability to navigate in all weather conditions, including at night. Fitness, stamina and experience at walking and leading at a strenuous level is a basic requirement.

Examples: Muckish-Errigal ridge in Donegal; Maumturks traverse in Connemara. **Time:** 8-14 hours. **Height gain:** 1,500m+. **Distance:** 20-30km+.

Note: The above grades are all based on the assumption that the route can be completed in reasonable weather conditions. Adverse weather and changes in ground conditions may increase the risk and grade of the walk substantially. Time, height gain and distance should be taken into consideration collectively when selecting a route for a particular grade.

All the above grades exclude hiking in full winter conditions, where very low temperatures and substantial snow and ice may be encountered. In these conditions crampons and an ice-axe may be required, along with the skills and experience necessary to use them safely ■

Support programmes to look out for this summer and autumn

■ Club leadership

We have identified significant concerns about a lack of **walk leaders** in our clubs. This has been compounded by the Covid-19 restrictions, which have meant a greater number of walk leaders being required due to the smaller group sizes recommended: group sizes should ideally not exceed ten, but certainly no more than fifteen.

Additionally, confidence amongst current walk leaders needs to be addressed to ensure they are happy to continue to lead walks after the lengthy period of inactivity for clubs over the last number of months.

We also believe there is a need to provide **informal training**. We aim to run programmes around the country throughout the summer months, specifically for our clubs, with the following aims:

- To increase the number of leaders available in hillwalking clubs
- To support clubs in encouraging more members to step up and lead walks.

■ Support for families to get out on the hills independently

There has been a large increase in the number of hillwalking families on the hills with varying levels of skills and experience. As there are very few hillwalking clubs that take in under-18s to walk with them, we feel there is a need to help support the families who are going out on the hills independently. The main objectives are:

- To provide access to information and training for parents of families to ensure they are safe on the hills (adults only).
- To provide informal training to parents of families, giving them the key information and basic skills they need to keep themselves and their families safe on the hills.
- To provide them with Happy Hiking information and direct them towards further training possibilities such as Mountain Skills training.

These programmes will be coordinated by our **Hillwalking Development Officer**, who will communicate directly with all hillwalking clubs and members with further details in terms of dates, locations and programme details. Information will be put up on our website as it becomes available ■



Club resources

There is now a **toolkit** of resources available exclusively to our clubs. Administrators can access these resources through the club database to share with all their members.

There is lots of useful information on running your club, how to attract new members, tips on running club evenings and introductory walks, and how to encourage walk leaders.

There are also key resources such as the club handbook, GDPR for clubs, Happy Hiking advice and lots more ■

2021 recipient of the Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award announced

Noel Hanna will be this year's recipient of the **Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Award**. The lecture will be held on December 9th, 2021. Further details will be announced closer to the date, when it will be clearer what restrictions, if any, will be in place on holding lectures like this ■



Noel Hanna

Women With Altitude

Due to the continued uncertainties of the Covid pandemic, we have been unable to run **Women With Altitude** in the usual manner this year. The good news is that we will be running a suite of programmes throughout the **HER Outdoors** week between the 9th and 15th of August. These programmes will be run in different locations around the country, so keep the dates free and keep an eye out on our website for details ■



Save this date!

Get out on the hills and join us this September for National Walking Day – Sunday, September 26th, 2021

We want everyone in Ireland to participate in **National Walking Day** this year, to both celebrate and promote the power of walking.

We encourage all hillwalkers and clubs to get out on the day and explore the uplands in a safe, responsible way. This might be an opportunity also to introduce new walkers to your club by hosting a walk.

Let's put this date in everybody's calendars. And let's all go walking on the day!

#WalkForYou #WalkYourArea #WalkYourHills #HiddenGems
#BeActive #NationalWalkingDay2021 #NWD2021



Devastating fires in Killarney National Park and the Mournes



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Access &
Conservation
Officer

Enforcement and long-term planning needed to prevent further hill fires

Hillwalkers and climbers across the island of Ireland were appalled to see the devastation of cherished landscapes in **Killarney National Park** and the **Mournes** in late April. Both of these iconic natural resources are central to the tourism offerings of their respective regions.

In Killarney, it is estimated that 2,500-3,000 hectares were burnt, including a substantial area of the terrestrial habitats within Killarney National Park. The fire in the Mournes, which mainly affected Millstone Mountain, Thomas' Mountain and the lower slopes of Slieve Donard, covered more than 200 hectares, approximately one-third of the land owned by the **National Trust** in the Mournes.

During March and April there were also smaller fires in many other upland areas.

Multiple impacts of illegal burning

These uncontrolled fires destroy much of the attraction for hillwalkers and climbers – the beauty of the landscape, and the sights and sounds of nature. In addition to the loss of habitats and wildlife – including nesting birds, pollinators and small mammals – fires like this result in air pollution, they affect water quality and there is damage to soil structure. Burnt landscapes release carbon into the atmosphere instead of capturing it, thus exacerbating the effects of climate change. Recovery will take many years and what comes back afterwards won't have the diversity of the habitats that have been burned.

Responding to the situation, Mountaineering Ireland President **Paul Kellagher** said: "On behalf of Mountaineering Ireland, I want to express our sincere thanks to the many people who have battled these fires, on rugged terrain and in terrifying conditions, and to the many others who have supported those on the frontline. The sad thing is that these fires should not be happening. The risk to human life, the loss of habitat and the damage to scenic landscapes is all unnecessary."



Eagle's Nest, Upper Lake, Killarney, on fire in April. **Photograph:** Valerie O'Sullivan

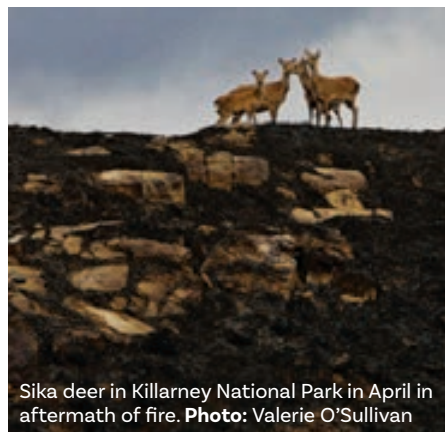
Although the exact cause of these fires is still to be determined, upland habitat fires do not occur naturally in Ireland. It is thought that the fire in the Mournes was started deliberately and that it may have been linked to land clearance. A Garda Síochána investigation in relation to the Killarney fire is still ongoing. It is welcome that both the Minister of State for the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, **Malcolm Noonan TD**, and Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland, **Edwin Poots MLA**, have BOTH expressed their determination to

ensure people are held accountable for the illegal burning of habitats. Mountaineering Ireland also welcomes the recent joint commitment by Northern Ireland ministers to take forward a recovery plan for the Mournes (see www.bit.ly/mournes-plan).

New policy approach needed for the uplands

Most of Ireland's mountains and upland areas are privately-owned, either by individuals or jointly as commonage. Mountaineering Ireland's vision is that Ireland's mountain landscapes will be valued and protected as environmental, cultural and recreational assets. The realisation of this vision requires a different policy approach, matched with resources.

By playing to the natural strengths of upland areas, we can enhance ecosystem services such as carbon storage, water supply, livestock grazing, flood attenuation, biodiversity and recreation opportunities, for the benefit of all of our population. With support for integrated land-use management, there could be a new, valuable role for upland farmers in improving the ability of Ireland's uplands



Sika deer in Killarney National Park in April in aftermath of fire. **Photo:** Valerie O'Sullivan

RESPECT

Responsible Enjoyment of Special Places with Empathy, Care and Trust

Help protect access

Some people living in upland and coastal areas were overwhelmed by visitor numbers last summer. The poor behaviour of a minority of people damaged the goodwill that we all depend on for access to the hills and crags.

As we return to the mountains following the Covid lockdown, you can help improve the perception of walkers and climbers by engaging with the people you meet in rural areas.

In relation to access, it's better to

ask, rather than to assume.

Checking if access is permitted on your intended route will generally get a positive response. It also helps to build trust with the host communities in the places where we walk and climb.

Mountaineering Ireland appeals to all walkers and climbers to respect farm animals and breeding wildlife by not taking dogs onto the hills. When parking, take care not to block access for local residents, large farm vehicles or the



Photograph: Helen Lawless

emergency services.

If you come across any situation where you think access has changed, please email helen@mountaineering.ie.



Fire on the slopes of Slieve Donard in April. Photo: Marc Vinas, National Trust

to deliver these vital ecological services.

Mountaineering Ireland is actively involved in many upland stakeholder groups across the island, each working towards the sustainable management of their area, in partnership with the people who live, work and recreate there. We have good working models, which need to be further developed and properly resourced, within the framework of a long-term plan for the uplands.

Enabling NPWS to be effective

Mountaineering Ireland welcomes Minister Noonan's recent announcement of the recruitment of fifty additional Conservation Rangers to work with the **National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)**. They will provide additional resources to assist in responding to habitat fires and, more importantly, to help prevent damage such as has occurred this year to Ireland's natural environment. However, this represents a small part of the resources required by the NPWS to be

effective in its role to protect Ireland's natural heritage – our habitats and wildlife.

Earlier this year, Minister Noonan commissioned a **review** of the remit, status and funding of the NPWS, to examine how NPWS can be more effective in delivering on its mandate. Mountaineering Ireland made a brief written submission to this important review and later met with one of those leading the review. Chief amongst our recommendations is that the NPWS should be established as an **independent agency**, outside of a Government department. It should have the authority, resources, staffing and legislative power to protect designated habitats and be an advocate for Ireland's natural heritage, whilst also facilitating quality outdoor recreation experiences on its own land. To read Mountaineering Ireland's response, go to www.bit.ly/NPWSreview.

Fundraising appeal for the Mournes

The National Trust has launched a fundraising appeal dedicated to the Mournes, to help support the restoration of this fragile landscape and bring back vital habitats for wildlife. To donate, go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk/appeal/the-mournes-fires-appeal ■



News for members

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



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

Summer Alpine Meet 2021 postponed

The 2021 Alpine Meet, planned for **Saas Grund, Switzerland**, in July, has again been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. We now plan to move this event to 2022. UIAA International Youth opportunities available in 2021-2022 – please contact the Training Office for details (jane@mountaineering.ie) ■

News for clubs

■ Many clubs now walk in smaller groups and require more leaders. The **Lowland Leader Award** is an entry-level award that provides excellent leadership training. It would be accessible to club members and is designed for tracks and trails in the lowlands. Other walking awards are available for **Hill and Moorland** and for **Mountain Terrain**.

■ **Personal proficiency** is another way to up the skill level in a group. Being able to **navigate** enables exploration and adventure in unfamiliar and new areas, something we have all experienced while combing our immediate locality during the tightest periods of the lockdown.

■ Please continue to share the **AdventureSmart message** about the three questions to ask yourself before venturing out on the hills with those less experienced than yourself in the outdoors. Ask yourself these three questions before you set off:

- Do I have the right **GEAR**?
- Do I know what the **WEATHER** will be like?
- Am I confident I have the **KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS** for the day? ■

Skills videos

During the last year, eleven new skills videos have been produced and uploaded to the training pages of our website. These offer three skills series – **Winter Skills**, **Map Skills** and **Youth Skills**. You will also find a webinar on **Poor Visibility Navigation**.

These items have had a combined viewing total of over 2,000 views in the 6-8 months they have been live on the website. Our ten short **instructional videos** have had combined viewing totals of over 133,300 views ■

News for participants, leaders and instructors

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, the latest cohort of outdoor participants is extending its roaming radius from tracks and trails in the lowlands to the foothills, crags and mountains. Your continued enjoyment and safety depends on having the appropriate skills for hillwalking, trekking or rock climbing. The training course calendar is bursting with personal proficiency courses for **Mountain Skills** and **Rock Skills**. These courses enable participants via practical sessions and give access to the fundamental knowledge we need to enjoy our activity safely and become self-sufficient.

Prospective leaders and instructors, previously restricted from pursuing their training and assessment pathways, can now access walking and climbing award courses, such as the **Lowland Leader**, **Mountain Leader**, **Climbing Wall Instructor** and **Rock Climbing Instructor** courses.

Holding a qualification to lead or instruct allows membership of an association and access to its benefits, such as professional insurance to enable individuals to set up in business, working as leaders and instructors in the outdoors ■



An image from the skills video on taking and using bearings

News for providers

■ Insurance provision for award holders and providers

Professional insurance provision continues to be in place for providers and holders of Mountain Training Awards. Members of the three mountain training associations – the Mountain Training Association (MTA), the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) and the British Association of International Mountain Leaders (BAIML) – can continue to purchase professional insurance cover to enable them to run their businesses.

The provision negotiated by the associations for the UK and Republic of Ireland is both comprehensive and very competitive. There are extras available to cover some secondary activities, such as multi-pitch climbing for Multi-pitch Award holders, first-aid provision, gorge walking, and employee insurance options also. Please contact the Training Office for further details as required.

■ Returning to work

Providers have been permitted to return to course delivery in the last few weeks, as the lockdown restrictions were eased. A huge thank you to the ninety plus trainers who have continued to demonstrate professionalism and adaptability during the last fifteen months.

Providers have embraced the use of online platforms, made reasonable adjustments to provision, while maintaining their high standard of course delivery. Further training will take place to facilitate the move to an improved reporting and registration system.

Now that trainers are returning to work, I would again remind trainers to be on high alert for the effects of the extended absence. Continue to double-check, verbalise safety checks and risk-assess with Covid-19 as an additional factor. As trainers, we are experienced in dynamic risk assessment, decision-making and creative delivery, so we are well placed to adapt to a new way of working.

■ Please check your **Safeguarding Certificates** for renewal dates. Online renewal is possible.

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

Training

■ Training grant applications

The January-June 2021 training grant applications have been reviewed. We are now receiving applications for the June-December 2021 period. Thank you for your applications for up to €250 to support your training activity needs.

■ Club Training Officers online workshops

Club officers will be receiving invitations to attend online club training sessions, to support, develop and refresh their club skills. See 2021 calendar on this page for dates.

■ Be Covid-safe

Please see the **Mountaineering Ireland Covid-19 guidance** for a safe return to activity. Updates will be posted on the website as the situation develops.

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

Key dates 2021

- 26th June Online MTUKI Meeting
- 4-18th July Summer Alpine Meet: postponed until 2022
- July/Aug (TBC) Train the Trainer (contact the Training Office)
- 30th Jul - 2nd Aug Mournes Climbing Meet
- 9-15th August Women with Altitude: 'Women in The Outdoors' Week
- 20-22nd August Fair Head Climbing Meet
- 3-5th Sept Burren Climbing Meet
- 8th & 22nd Sept Online Training Meetings
- 10th September Online Providers Workshop
- 13th September Online MTBI Meeting
- 19th September Skills/CPD Workshops: Teaching Navigation, Scrambling and Rock Climbing, Wicklow
- 24-26th Sept Wicklow Climbing Meet
- 3rd & 10th Oct Online Club Training Officers Workshops, 7-8.30pm
- 19th October Online Winter Meet Information Evening
- 29th Oct - 1st Nov Mountain Leader Assessment venue TBC
- 13th November Online MTUKI Meeting
- 27-28th Nov Train the Trainer
- 29th November Online MTBI Meeting (year-end Training Grant review)
- 3rd December Online Senior Providers Workshop

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

Updates for locations will be based on government guidance. Online options will be used as alternatives where appropriate. Events will only run if permitted by the then current government guidance.



Stay safe out there!

xxxxx. Photo: xxxxx

HOW TO USE AUTO BELAYS

Climbing instructor **Alastair Othen** describes how to use, and avoid accidents on, auto-belays

My first encounter with an auto-belay was at the Royal Air Force's No 1 Parachute Training School in Brize Norton, West Oxfordshire, as I exited a mock-up of a Hercules military transport aircraft. It was terrifying! There was a brief stomach-churning moment of freefall before the device took action. I still remember it to this day.

Auto-belays are pretty common on climbing walls

now and are frequently seen on mobile climbing towers. This article is not a technical one but rather is aimed at those who have children or peers who want to use auto-belays, or indeed those who find themselves in the position of instructing on their use as part of their work.

The first port of call for the use of the devices is the reception desk at the climbing wall you are visiting, which will direct you to the rules and procedures they have for the use of auto-belays.

Many walls have notices and

colour-coded areas to help in the use of the belays, as well as a **test fall-line**. This line is probably one of the best things there is for new users to gain confidence before committing to the full length of a route and having to 'just let go.'

Auto-belays also have a minimum and maximum **user weight**, so seek advice at your wall as to what this is.

Helmet or no helmet?

So, ground up, what's the score? Firstly, helmet or no helmet? In simple terms – generally no helmet. The reason for this is that the auto-belay relies on it being weighted for it to operate. If someone descending the wall snags their helmet on a hold, then the auto-belay will be unweighted and the climber's weight will be taken by the helmet or, more importantly, the helmet strap, which could cause panic and a strangulation hazard.

That said, some walls insist on helmets but route-set to avoid the snag hazard.

While we're on snag hazards, let's talk other dangly things!

Tuck hoods away, remove jewellery, tuck long laces away, clean your harness so that there is nothing hanging off it, and generally ensure that there isn't anything else that could snag during your descent.

Clipping in

The other issue is being clipped in. A large number of near-misses are due to people just climbing without clipping in. Luckily, this has been reduced by systems such as a large piece of tarpaulin covering the wall with the auto-belay clipped into it, which you have to then unclip, lower the mat (or similar) and then clip into before climbing.

The next stage is clipping in, which is normally done straight into the belay loop (or as per the harness manufacturer's instructions) with a screw-gate crab or, more commonly, an auto-locking crab. Some systems require a separate harness and clipping-in system (see picture, opposite) to be worn when using auto-belays.

Nagging doubts

Once this is done, you are



➤ **AUTHOR** *Alastair Othen holds the Mountaineering & Climbing Instructor (MCI), the Winter Mountain Leader (WML) and paddlesports awards, and is a member of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI). He lives in Oswestry on the Welsh Borders and has just become a fulltime freelance instructor after twenty-two years of teaching outdoor pursuits and leading a Combined Cadet Force. His work has taken him all around the UK, as well as abroad on various expeditions, such as canoeing in Canada, ice-climbing and sea-kayaking in Norway and climbing in Yosemite.*

MY FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH AN AUTO-BELAY WAS TERRIFYING!

good to go, but there may still be nagging doubts about the gravity acting on you and about the lump of metal the tape you're attached to is disappearing into. This is where two key concepts come into play:

■ **The test fall**, as mentioned above. Climbing up a short way (say, 2-3 metres) and then putting your weight on the auto-belay to feel its effects is confidence-building; ask my daughter!

■ For the speed ascensionist, avoid climbing faster than the tape is being taken in by the auto-belay, or you may share the same freefall experience that I mentioned in my opening paragraph. Obviously,

the lower down you are, the less likely you are to suffer this freefall.

In simple terms, climb smoothly and the auto-belay will have time to keep up with you. To be fair, it's pretty difficult to go faster than the tape of a 'true blue' auto-belay. My daughter and I tried to do this several times, to no avail. So, if you can do this, there is probably a fault which should be reported to the wall staff.

Follow the line of the tape

Now that you are climbing and allowing the auto-belay to keep up, make sure you follow the line of the tape. Deviating your route to either side could (just like top roping) result in a pendulum-like motion but



without any braking, so that as you swing back and forth you also start descending. Let's just not do that!

So, you've clipped in, you've done your test fall and you've climbed straight up. Now, after reaching the top, it's time to come down.

Step 1. Check your landing zone. Because there is no belayer, there may be people standing at the bottom of your route. A lot of walls have different coloured matting to stop this for both auto-belays and for overhanging, lead wall and landing zones... but check anyway.

Step 2. The choice is yours. You can either simply let go and let gravity do its thing (although not too much, if the auto-belay is doing its job). Or you can let yourself go back on straight arms, spread your feet and then let go. Either way you will get a touch of freefall, which my daughter tells me puts her heart in her throat every time!

Finally, it is really important that you make sure to keep hold of the crab after you unclip, and clip it back into the required point when not in use, be this a mat or a specified bolt hanger.

A sure way to get noticed is to let go of the crab and then watch it fly upwards rapidly. If this happens, the next move is a slow look towards the reception desk, from where it is pretty much guaranteed you'll receive a long, hard stare. Everyone else in the wall will also be staring as the tape noisily rattles to a stop in the auto-belay.

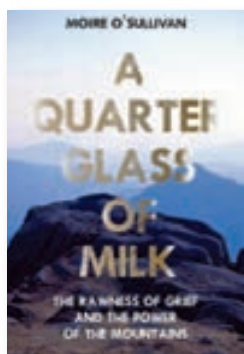
If no one notices, then it is important you let the wall staff know straight away. The most common accident or near-miss at climbing walls is from people simply neglecting to clip in.

This article first appeared on www.mountain-training.org, website of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) ■





Coping with a devastating loss by mountain running



A QUARTER GLASS OF MILK: THE RAWNESS OF GRIEF AND THE POWER OF THE MOUNTAINS

By Moire O'Sullivan

O'Brien Press (2021), 272pp, €14.99, ISBN 978-1-788492-27-0

This is the fourth book by mountain runner and adventure racer **Moire O'Sullivan**. It documents a year in her life following the sudden

and unexpected death of her husband, **Pete**. She writes so clearly and honestly from the get-go that, as a reader, you are immediately drawn into her experience of dealing with such a devastating loss and coping with the grief, while raising two young boys and finding ways to make the most of her life as it then stood.

As friends and the mountain community rallied around Moire in the aftermath of Pete's death, she embarked on setting up her own business, 'Happy Out Adventures,' and completing her Mountain Leader training in the Mourne Mountains. She quickly learnt that engaging in the training process was a great way to deal with her grief, making her slow down in the mountains. She got to know those mountains more intimately,

after many years of hurtling through them at racing speed, and it soon became a therapy that brought her much comfort.

If you know the Mournes at all, you will enjoy Moire's descriptions of route-planning and the trails there, coupled with her honest feelings about the realities of being responsible for others in the hills, the trials of night navigation and dealing with hazards and the unpredictable mountain weather.

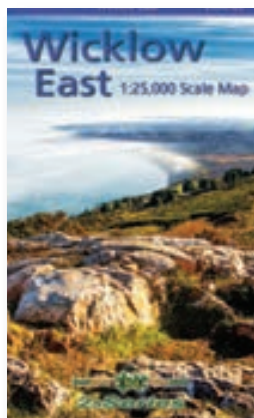
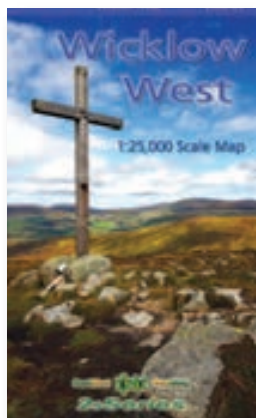
In the latter half of the book, Moire writes about wanting to do something to commemorate the first anniversary of her husband's death in a way that felt meaningful to her. She embarked on a winter **Denis Rankin Round**, a gruelling

five-stage, 39-peak run that must be completed within 24 hours. When Moire decided to take on this mammoth challenge, no woman on the island of Ireland had completed a winter round. As she commenced training, the mountain community supported her efforts. She tells of the rigorous training and thought processes accompanying the attempt.

This is a beautiful and humbling read, showing how nature can play an incredible role in supporting wellbeing and mental health. It will undoubtedly prove helpful to anyone who is suffering with their own depression or grief.

Kelly Hargie Member of Mountaineering Ireland; writes about her own adventures in the mountains at everytreasure.blog

New Dublin and Wicklow maps from EastWest Mapping



DUBLIN MOUNTAINS WICKLOW WEST WICKLOW EAST

EastWest Mapping (2021), New Dublin and Wicklow 1:25,000 maps from EastWest

Three new 1:25,000 scale maps have recently been published by EastWest Mapping for the **Dublin Mountains**, **Wicklow West** and **Wicklow East** areas. With the similar scale maps for

Lugnaquilla & Glendalough, **Wicklow South** and **Wicklow South East**, this completes a welcome series of higher scale hiking maps for the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains.

The increased detail in this series of maps will certainly be welcomed by hikers in this area. **Barry Dalby**, from East West Mapping, says that five years of work have gone into researching and completing this excellent series of maps.

They have 5-metre contour intervals, greater topographic detail and an overhaul of minor placenames.

Barry has to be commended for the detailed work that has obviously gone into producing these maps. Even though I am not a Gaelgeor, I find

seeing the origins of the current names very interesting.

The three most recent maps cover important mountain areas. The *Dublin Mountains* sheet covers the area south of Dublin city, the Sally Gap area and south to Djouce in Wicklow. *Wicklow East* covers the coast from Bray to Wicklow and inland to Djouce, Roundwood and Laragh; and *Wicklow West* covers from Blessington south to Donard

and eastwards to also cover Djouce, Roundwood and Laragh. Key day-trip hiking areas are, therefore, often covered by the one sheet.

The level of detail in these maps is very impressive. It certainly makes following the various trails easier on the map, especially for those of us whose eyesight might not be as sharp as it was before. I enjoyed revisiting places on these maps where I have had some route-finding difficulties in the past and seeing more clearly the routes I should have taken!

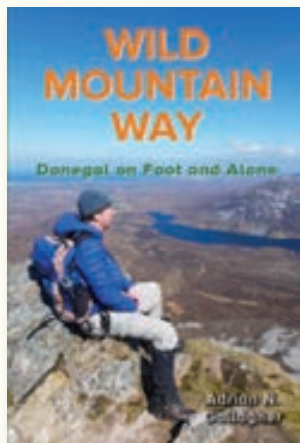
Congratulations to Barry Dalby on completing this excellent set of maps, which will be very helpful for hikers in these areas. They can be purchased individually or in a set through the EastWest Mapping website, eastwestmapping.ie.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*

A 23-stage hike across 400km of Donegal hills and raising funds for charity in the process



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



WILD MOUNTAIN WAY: DONEGAL ON FOOT AND ALONE

By Adrian N Gallagher

Wild Mountain Way Books (2021), 176pp, numerous coloured photos of the route throughout, and numerous maps of the route, €14.95 (ppbk), ISBN: 978-1-8384084-0-4

This is a very personal and detailed account of a 400km hike across County Donegal from Malin Head to Glen Head, taking in many of the hills en route. The 23-stage hike was undertaken as a series of day-hikes, which the then 67-year-old author,

Adrian Gallagher, mostly did on his own in the May and June of 2019, returning home in the evenings.

After a brief introduction, the book is divided into 23 sections, each covering one of the stages of the hike, a page listing the impressive statistics of what was achieved each day, and some after-thoughts.

Each stage has a simple map of the day's hike and numerous colour photos. Some are a bit dark, but they are generally good, and many show views of Donegal that would not be familiar to many.

Adrian talks about how the book started as a memory exercise, to revisit his hike, as he didn't keep a record of his hike as he went along. It seems to have been a successful exercise, as there is certainly a lot of detail included about each day's hike but also about the history of the places he passed through as well.

The book is in English but he manages to bring a lot of Irish language into the text as

he explains the names of the summits and places of interest that he crossed.

While the weather was good to start with, it rapidly deteriorated, with often poor visibility, making crossing the sometimes trackless terrain, including the boggy areas and rocky summits, challenging. Adrian describes those challenges well and I particularly enjoyed his descriptions of his days on Muckish and Errigal. He is also very sensitive that the land he is crossing belongs to someone else and he goes out of his way often to avoid crossing any fences that he comes across.

Adrian is a member of **Swilly Hiking Club** and of Mountaineering Ireland, and he kindly attributes the idea for his 'Donegal Camino' to an article he read in the *Irish Mountain Log* about hiking three peninsulas in Kerry. If they can do it in Kerry, why not in Donegal, he thought?

During his hike, Adrian meets very few other hillwalkers, except when he is

on Errigal. At the end of his hike, he concludes: "This journey across County Donegal would be difficult to equal, never mind beat, for the freedom, solitude and peace that I experienced"

This is certainly a great book to read, if you want to find out more about the upland areas of Donegal. You will also be supporting a good cause, as all profits from the book are to go to the charity **Downs Syndrome Donegal**. The book can be purchased from the *Donegal People* website, donegalpeople.com, or from various outlets in Donegal, which are listed on the website.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*



Members of Swilly Hiking Club (of which Adrian Gallagher is a member) in Glenveagh National Park, Co Donegal, with Muckish in the background



An entertaining autobiography from a climber of note



STRUCTURED CHAOS: THE UNUSUAL LIFE OF A CLIMBER

By Victor Saunders

Vertebrate Publishing (2021), 192pp, £19.20, ISBN 978-1-912560-66-0

This is a fascinating read from start to finish. The amount of detail **Victor Saunders** retains about his climbs after many years is amazing. His recall of all those who he climbed with and the locations is

remarkable. I can recall the notable climbs I have done, but only in general terms.

He was obviously a good climbing companion, in good and bad times. His witty writing shows his good-humoured character. He entices the reader to remember their own first notable climb and climbing partner, and the associated memories.

Victor describes the 'devil may care' attitude of a beginner well, when no climb seems impossible. This book concentrates on his beginner years, starting in the Avon Gorge, progressing through Scottish climbs to the Alps, Himalayas and Karakoram. His introduction to climbing seemed to involve surviving on basic food, fortified by beer,

and using very basic equipment.

He progressed from being an absolute beginner to becoming the Alpine guide he is now, based in Chamonix. He has had a varied life, with a public school education and then as a sailor, an architect, a climber and finally as an Alpine guide. This book brings you through all those phases and some of the big climbs he participated in.

Risk is always in his mind and he tells how he managed to minimise the risks. Victor writes of how climbing partners drift apart for various reasons but always seem to get back together for one last adventure. He got together with **Mick Fowler** after many years, when they were both in their 60s, to take on Sersank in the Indian Himalayas. Together

they overcame all of the difficulties to achieve their goal.

Saunders' description of the near-catastrophe on Saser Kangri massif with **Andy Perkins** in 2013 shows how narrow the line between safety and death on mountains can be. His K2 expedition, with the subsequent fatalities, makes grim reading. Climbers having to leave their friends to die or else all might die is made very real. Victor's unselfish help in rescuing the survivors shows the kind of person he is. His acknowledgment of the odds on further fatalities probably saved his life, as he admits.

An insightful climbing book that is well worth the read.

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

Reprints of works by the late Boardman and Tasker



THE SHINING MOUNTAIN: THE FIRST ASCENT OF THE WEST WALL OF CHANGABANG

By Peter Boardman

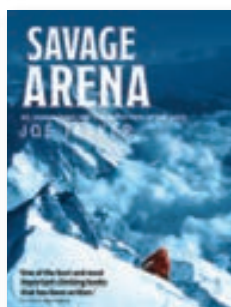
Vertebrate Publishing (2021 reprint), £9.99, ISBN 978-1-83981-053-4

SAVAGE ARENA: K2, CHANGABANG AND THE NORTH FACE OF THE EIGER

By Joe Tasker

Vertebrate Publishing (2021 reprint), 336pp, £9.99, ISBN 978-1-83981-056-5

Peter Boardman and **Joe Tasker**, close friends and climbing partners, disappeared high on the North East Ridge of Everest in 1982. They left a



legacy of hard, futuristic routes, mostly climbed on shoestring budgets in small groups or as a pair, as well as some absorbing books, including these two. Both of these books

are now available as reprints from Vertebrate Publishing after a long absence.

Boardman's *The Shining Mountain* covers their first expedition together. Describing his successful trip to Everest in 1975 as a 'bloody bore,' the sublime west wall of Changabang was a deliberately different challenge – so difficult that the views of other climbers ranged from 'preposterous' to 'not a married man's route.'

Boardman talks frankly about the sheer danger and drudgery of Himalayan

climbing: abseiling off flexing pitons, miserable nights high on the wall and hours spent melting snow for a tiny mouthful of warm tea. Even when the summit is reached, it is barely celebrated and any sensation of success is dulled by the looming fear of the descent.

He is also gracious about his partner, praising his climbing skills and sense of compassion. At base camp, they learn of the deaths of four American climbers nearby and it is Joe who takes the lead in finding and burying the bodies and comforting the widow of one of the men.

Tasker takes a different tack with *Savage Arena*, an anthology of seven expeditions including a winter ascent of the Eiger's North Face, a near-fatal descent from Dunagiri and two unsuccessful attempts on K2, as well as the Changabang climb.

Tasker writes every bit as brilliantly about life 'off the mountain' as he does about climbing. There is the story of Joe and Pete prepping for Changabang by spending the night in hammocks in a Salford cold store. In Kabul, Joe sells a pint of blood for £5 to help pay for the journey home, after his van gives up the ghost.

After their disappearance, family and friends created the annual **Boardman Tasker Award** for outstanding mountain literature. The very first judges used *The Shining Mountain* and *Savage Arena* as benchmarks and, finding that no other entries that year could compete, opted not to nominate a winner. Anyone who reads these books (or the authors' other works) is likely to understand the judges' decision.

James Butler A Mountaineering Ireland member, hillwalker and runner based near Ballymena

Highlands hillwalker goes searching for wildlife in winter



WILD WINTER: IN SEARCH OF NATURE IN SCOTLAND'S MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE

By John D Burns

Vertebrate Publishing (2021), £9.99, ISBN 978-1-839810-05-3

Author **John D Burns**, who has walked and climbed in the Highlands of Scotland for many years, sets out to

rediscover the remote places and the wildlife in the darkest and stormiest months.

The book opens with a well-crafted description of predawn and dawn in a glen, a scene soon transformed by roaring stags in the rut. A good start!

Thinking John Burns could be a natural successor to such writers about wild Scotland as **Mike Tomkies** and **Gavin Maxwell**, I read on. However, going further into the book, I found that, instead of being brought through the Highlands to see Scottish wildlife, more and more I was taken on a quest to seek out and spend nights in isolated bothies. The more private they were, the more fulfilling they appeared to be for the author. Much of the time he was accompanied by a hapless travelling

companion, a device travel writers use to give their work a lighter touch. Then Covid-19 stalked the land and the author had time to reflect.

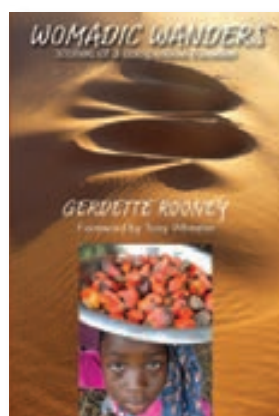
The central theme of the book is that the Highlands are not a wild and pristine landscape but a land altered and managed for a handful of people for their own purposes, which are largely to shoot birds and mammals. There are a few enlightened landowners who are trying out the concept of rewilding (Glen Feshie in the Cairngorms is the example given), something that gives the author hope for the future of the mountains.

If you want to see the wildlife in Scotland, you go in spring or summer, and preferably in May, when the glens are oozing fresh greenery and are alive

with birdsong. Winter is a bleak time up there. To make this a standard-length paperback, when there is not much to be seen, the author employs padding. He drops conversations into the text and uses over a page to describe buying a candle in a shop, for instance. However, it is a well-written book and the prose flows easily at a gentle pace. It is also a light book to take when you are confined to a bothy in bad weather or travelling, to learn something about the challenges facing the wildlife of the mountains of Scotland at this point in time.

Denis Cullen A member of the Comeragh Mountaineering Club and an experienced backpacking mountaineer, who has walked across Scotland several times and through many other wild mountain places

Adventures of an Irish distance hiker in places near and far



WOMADIC WANDERS: STORIES OF A COMPULSIVE TRAVELLER

By Gerdette Rooney

Gerdette Rooney (2020), 222pp, 20pp b&w images, £15.99 (ppbk), ISBN 13: 978-0-648990-63-5

This self-published travel book is a collection of short stories about the many adventures that the author has had. Gerdette Rooney is

originally from Monaghan but has travelled widely and has worked as a radiographer in many different countries. She now lives in Sydney, Australia.

As a preview to this interesting book, we published a shortened version of one of Gerdette's more local stories in the Winter 2020 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. "Kicking with Both Feet" was an account of her continuous seven-week hike on the Ulster Way in 2002. Impressive though that account was, most of her other backpacking trips took her much further afield.

An early trip during school holidays in the 1970s takes Gerdette to Kleine Scheidegg, below the Eiger, where she works as a waitress. Subsequent trips take her to more exotic places, including

such diverse destinations as Soweto, Baghdad, Indonesia, Tibet and Cuba. The visit to Tibet in 1987 highlights her adventurous spirit when she hikes, essentially on her own, up to the Rongbuk Monastery and then on to Everest Base Camp. While this is not a mountaineering book, there is certainly a lot that will be of interest to mountaineers in it, even if only from a now historical perspective.

In 2006, Gerdette was part of the support group that went with Pat Falvey's **Beyond Endurance Expedition** to South Georgia. The expedition crossed South Georgia, following in Shackleton's footsteps.

Other trips took her to the Sahara, Mali and several other countries in Africa, as well as the Amazon, the

Caribbean, Haiti and many other countries. Her travels are exploratory in nature and always undertaken with an adventurous spirit.

This book is very readable and has lots of interesting details about Gerdette's travels over the years. She also introduces us to many of the locals she feels lucky to have met on those trips, people who have frequently been the highlights of her travels.

► *Womadic Wanders* can be purchased online or by emailing Gerdette Rooney at gerdette28@gmail.com or it can be requested in any bookshop. The Monaghan branch library is organising an **online author's talk** with Gerdette in early September.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*

Litter may be for life

You would not believe how long litter lasts in the hills, writes **Robert Grandon**

Brendan Roche and Aisling Kennedy's articles in the Spring 2021 issue of the *Irish Mountain*

Log (IML 137, pages 14-15) highlighted the continuing problem of litter in the uplands and our responsibility as mountain users to address this matter. However, litter that is carelessly abandoned in our upland areas may not just be an eyesore in the here and now: it can remain in the environment for many years to come.

I remember a couple of occasions in the mountains when I have encountered long-discarded litter. On both occasions I was out with the **Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow** volunteer path repair crew.

In 2010, when we were moving a large boulder to help stone-pitch and repair a section of the **Dublin Mountain Way** and **Fairy Castle** trail, we found a 1980s vintage soft-drink can that had been left all those years before in a space underneath the rock.

On another occasion, three of us were repairing a collapsed section of the stone work around the trig point on **Lugnaquilla**, at the end of December 2016. We came across lots of sweet wrappers, which had been concealed over the years under the stones that had fallen off the trig point.

This all just goes to show that litter that is secreted away in our wild places may persist there for decades. Any litter that we create in the outdoors should be put in our pockets and taken home for responsible disposal.

Robert Grandon is the Chair of Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow ■



Fairy Castle trail, Dublin Mountains

Are you taking one from the hills?

By **Helen Lawless**

One From The Hills is Mountaineering Ireland's challenge to all walkers and climbers to remove one item of rubbish every time they go out on the hills.

With more people enjoying the outdoors, littering has become more visible, in forests, close to water, around car parks and on popular hills. By adopting and spreading the message of **One From The Hills**, we're showing our care for the places where we walk and climb.

Who can argue that they couldn't pick up one can or one chocolate wrapper? Carrying a small, spare bag with you makes it easier and

safer to pick up litter and take it home for proper disposal (and if possible, for recycling).

Many Mountaineering Ireland members have been removing litter from the hills and crags for years, on an individual basis and through

organised club clean-ups. Our aim with **One From The Hills** is to build on that by expanding the community of people taking action to protect Ireland's natural environment.

Please practice and promote **#OneFromTheHills**.

Helen Lawless is Mountaineering Ireland's Access & Conservation Officer ■



Lugnaquilla summit, Wicklow Mountains



KITLIST

Kitlist.ie is an exciting new group buying website, brought to you by Basecamp Dublin.

Kitlist's mission is to simplify the buying process for groups of all sizes. Groups will have great discounts on products for buying together as a group.

Kitlist.ie aims to make group buying easier for everyone such as Hiking clubs, OEC's and Adventure Centers, Local Authorities, Mountain Rescue and Sea Rescue, Schools, Garda and Defense forces, Camino and Expeditions

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Women in the Outdoors week

Calling all Women With Altitude! This year we are celebrating a full week dedicated to **HER Outdoors** from the 9th to 15th August 2021.

For one year only, our Women With Altitude team is coming to a county near you! The theme this year is all about building your confidence on the hills and crags. There will be activities for those who are new to our sport, to help increase their confidence and provide them with key skills required to be safe on the hills and crags, and for those more experienced who would like to develop their skills even more.

Each course will be run by a qualified instructor. The



type of courses that will be on offer will be on navigation, scrambling, rock climbing, mountain environment and more.

This is a great opportunity for all women interested in hillwalking and climbing to link in with peers and instructors in their area and develop their skills.

Join us from 9th to 15th August to celebrate women in the outdoors – come on your own or bring a friend. So keep the date, and keep an eye out on

www.mountaineering.ie
for more details, or contact
ruth@mountaineering.ie
for more information.

#WomenwithAltitude
#HERoutdoors
#Mountaineeringireland



For more information visit
www.mountaineering.ie
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