

Irish Mountain Log

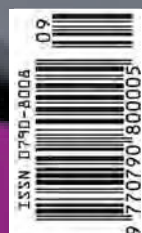
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Welcome

By the time you read this, the **Covid-19** restrictions will have almost disappeared, in relation to our sport, and it will be easy to become complacent.

However, there are still a significant number of infections being reported each day in both jurisdictions, and it is important to continue to follow the public health advice about social distancing and mask-wearing. 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 appearance of **sport climbing** as a debut sport in the Tokyo Olympics has been hugely important and successful, and we should celebrate it – *see story, page 26.* It will have huge ramifications for the future of climbing in general, with greater numbers taking it up and with more investment in the sport.

We must also celebrate some more local 'firsts.' In the news pages, we report on the successful completion of a ten-year campaign by **Fergal Hingerty** to climb all of the 1,489 summits with a 100-metre prominence on the mainland of Ireland, the first person to do so. Fergal's story is certainly inspiring – *see story, page 10.*

In addition, **Aidan Ennis** has completed what he has called the **Great Irish Trail**,



Sport climbing's debut in the Olympics bodes well for future investment in climbing

a continuous 2,229-kilometre through-hike over forty-three days, involving 42,995 metres of ascent, linking the E8, Aidan's 'East Coast Link,' the Ulster Way and the Beara-Breifne Way in one magnificent continuous hike – *see story, page 8.* Congratulations to both of these men on their wonderful achievements.

From the various articles from the past we have included in the *Irish Mountain Log* so far this year, and our use of the 50th anniversary logo, I hope all of you have realised that Mountaineering Ireland is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year! The Winter 2021 issue of the *Log* will be dedicated to celebrating this anniversary, reflecting, with invited contributors, on the past, and looking forward to the years ahead – a not to be missed issue!

"Despite the lifting of the Covid-19 restrictions, we need to continue to be safe, responsible and considerate in our uplands"

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor

ISSUE 139

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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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

Spain's Alberto Gines-Lopez competing in the Tokyo Olympics. He won the men's climbing gold medal.

PHOTOGRAPH
IFSC



Participants setting up camp in Sloan's Field in Attical for the Mourne Mountain Festival at the end of July (see story, page 10)

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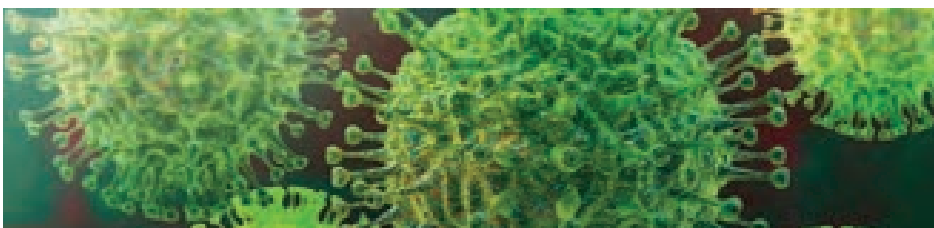
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Newsdesk



Be safe, responsible and considerate

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

While the outdoors is considered a relatively low-risk environment for the spread of Covid-19, Mountaineering Ireland continues to encourage its members to stay vigilant, to follow the current public health advice and to do all that they can to reduce the spread of the virus. The organisation's updated advice for all hillwalkers and climbers is available on its website, www.mountaineering.ie, where there are also links to other relevant sites. This advice builds on the good practice commonplace among responsible hillwalkers and climbers – checking weather forecasts, checking access arrangements, selecting routes that are appropriate for a person's fitness, skill and experience, environmental awareness, etc.

The publication of plans, by the governments in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, for the phased relaxation of restrictions, has provided high-level guidance on when and how we could return to hillwalking and climbing ■

Summary of current restrictions

	Republic of Ireland	Northern Ireland
Domestic travel	Inter-county travel is permitted	Travel within Northern Ireland is permitted
Club activity	The restriction on group size for outdoor activities was removed on September 20 th , but Mountaineering Ireland's advice remains as above – that groups should be kept small – for environmental and safety reasons.	All outdoor sport, whether organised formally by your local sports club, or informally by a group of friends, is permitted. To determine the maximum number of people permitted to attend or participate in an outdoor sporting activity or event, the organiser or operator must carry out a risk assessment. Outdoor sporting activities/events of 30 people or fewer do not need a risk assessment.
Car-pooling	Car-pooling is now permitted. If car-pooling, consider use of a pod system in which the same participants pool together for all activities.	When sharing transport, e.g. private car, when travelling to and from venues, it is important to maintain a flow of clean air through the vehicle, ideally by opening windows front and back.
Climbing walls	Climbing walls are open. From September 20 th , group activities can recommence.	Climbing walls are open
NGB course provision and leadership	Permitted	Permitted

Mountaineering Ireland asks all hillwalkers and climbers to adhere to the following points:

- **Park responsibly at all times**
- **Choose less popular locations**
- **Be considerate of the concerns of the landowners and rural communities in the locations you visit**

Ten-year mission finally accomplished

Fergal Hingerty becomes first to climb every hill and mountain with a 100-metre prominence. **Nicky Hore** reports



Fergal Hingerty on Slieve Croob (543m) in the Dromara Hills, Co Down, in 2013

days later. He has recorded all his walks with photos, distances walked and heights ascended.

Fergal naturally has a great love of the mountains and, in the last few years, has set his sights on mountains higher than the hills at home. He has climbed a number of peaks in eastern and southern Europe, and a number of country high points, including four peaks over 4,000 metres in Russia and Georgia.

He is training now for a trip to **Mount Ararat** (5,137m) in Turkey, so you might see him pop up anywhere – from the Mourne to the Beara Peninsula, or maybe just walking along the Ormond Way! ■

Fergal Hingerty, who lives in Mullingar, Co Westmeath, has become the first person to climb every hill and mountain with a 100-metre prominence on the mainland of Ireland. He completed all 1,489 tops, as listed on **Mountainviews.ie**, on July 3rd, 2021, when he reached the top of **Brickany Hill** (374m) on the Dingle Peninsula. Co Kerry.

In 2010, Fergal faced a future in a wheelchair. After a major operation on his back and, with the help of the medical staff at Cappagh Hospital in Dublin and intense physiotherapy, he started walking to rehabilitate himself. Slowly, he moved on to walking the national waymarked ways and eventually got onto the

hills and higher mountains.

On July 31st, 2011, after his surgeon gave him the go-ahead, he walked to the top of **Arderin** (527m) in the Slieve Bloom mountains.

At the start, he hiked with hillwalking clubs and other individuals, and soon built up experience of walking in all types of terrain. Despite spending time in Britain with work (during which he ticked off many peaks there, especially in Wales), and later being locked down in Mullingar during the pandemic, Fergal steadfastly continued with his mission during his spare time.

His photos on his Facebook page could show him on high, rocky peaks in Connemara one week, and sauntering over low drumlins in Monaghan a few



Fergal on his final top, Brickany Hill (374m) in County Kerry, on July 3rd

Mountaineering Ireland re-elects its president

Paul Kellagher has been elected President of Mountaineering Ireland for a second term. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports



At Mountaineering Ireland's second virtual AGM, held on March 29th, 2021, **Paul Kellagher** was re-elected unopposed for a second five-year term of office as President.

Paul Kellagher is a full-time mountaineering and climbing instructor from County Fermanagh, and he was

first elected President in March 2016.

Paul first developed a love for the mountains in his teens. Growing up in Fermanagh, Cuilcagh mountain was his nearest peak but, far from the vast numbers that visit it now, it was then a remote peak separated on all sides by a ring of untracked blanket bog.

His subsequent mountaineering experience has been one of continuous change. The **Gortatole Outdoor Learning Centre** in Florencecourt, Co Fermanagh, allowed him to rapidly stretch to wilder horizons; Sligo, Donegal, the Mournes and the jagged peaks of Torridon in the Northwest Highlands of Scotland followed in quick succession, to seed a lifelong passion. It also became a profession. As a qualified mountaineering and climbing instructor, in the last thirty years he has introduced many people to our wilder places. He continues to deliver a full range of mountaineering training courses.

Paul is married with two children, and mountaineering has become a family passion. One of his greatest pleasures

still comes from introducing young people to the mountains.

He is also a passionate believer in making our sport more accessible. Paul is a provider of an inclusive access course called **Climbing for All**. Designed to introduce other instructors to inclusive climbing, it is a great start to breaking down barriers to access.

On the theme of change, he acknowledges that there has been a massive increase in participation in outdoor recreation. Paul says that it is important that we all reach out to support these 'new faces' in our community.

It is easy to become alarmed about the environmental impact or the increasing numbers of mountain rescues, but Paul believes that Mountaineering Ireland can neither represent nor educate a community that it is not engaged with.

As we go forward to develop Mountaineering Ireland's next strategic plan, Paul looks forward to meeting lots of new people in our sport, sharing experiences and embracing change! ■

Mountaineering Ireland elects new chair

Mike Maunsell has been elected Chair of Mountaineering Ireland. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports



The new Board of Mountaineering Ireland elected **Mike Maunsell** as Chair at its first meeting after the AGM in March.

Mike Maunsell has worked in mountain environments as a

mountaineering instructor and an environmental scientist for over forty years. He has travelled and climbed extensively in many countries in Europe, Asia and North America, and most recently was in the Caucasus Mountains in Azerbaijan in 2019. He has served as a board member since 2015 and is a former Chair of Mountaineering Ireland's **Access and Conservation Committee**.

Mike is Vice-President of the Mountain Protection Commission of the **International Climbing and Mountaineering Federation (UIAA)** (the international governing body for mountaineering). He has represented the UIAA at international conferences as a speaker on sustainable development in the world's mountain regions, including at the UN World Tourism Conference in Germany in 2019.

He also represents the UIAA on the

Sports for Climate Action working group of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)**.

Mike is a graduate of the University of Ulster, University College Dublin, University of Wales and University College Perth in Scotland. He became a **Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society** in 2015.

A native of Clonmel, Co Tipperary, Mike works as a lecturer on the BSc honours degree programme in environmental science and climate at the Department of Applied Sciences and Technology in the **Technological University of the Shannon** (formerly Limerick Institute of Technology).

His research interest is mountain ecosystems and catchment management. He supervises research in mountain-based issues and he runs **Mountain Research Ireland** ■

View of Glendalough valley
from Trooperstown Hill

Walk from Laragh to Rathdrum

The Laragh to Rathdrum walk, via Trooperstown Hill, has received a significant boost with the opening of the Samuel Hayes Bridge over the Avonmore north of Rathdrum. **Isobel O'Duffy** reports

The recent opening of the new **Samuel Hayes Bridge** over the Avonmore River close to Rathdrum has created a variety of walking options.

One, in particular, which may be of interest to anyone who would like a pleasant full-day hike, is the chance to walk from Laragh to Rathdrum, mostly off-road, using existing tracks and trails – a distance of approximately 15km. This walk could be completed using the St Kevin's Bus from Dublin to Laragh and Glendalough, and the train from Rathdrum to return to the city.

Avonmore Way to Clara Vale Bridge and through the beautiful **Vale of Clara Nature Reserve**, where it mostly follows the Avonmore River. This area of native woodland, with old oak trees, has been at least partially under tree cover since the last Ice Age.

Walk to the junction at T187898, turn right, and cross the new suspension bridge. This impressive structure is named after **Samuel Hayes** (1743-1795), who was a member of parliament, a barrister, architect and planter. He was responsible for building **Avondale House** and developing the estate, and had a

major influence on the development of Irish forestry. The bridge was a collaborative effort between **Wicklow County Council, Coillte** and the **National Parks and Wildlife Service**, with funding support from the **Department of Rural and Community Development**.

Once across the bridge, the route links to the **Jubilee Loop** to end at Rathdrum, where refreshments are available before returning to Dublin on the train.

Isobel O'Duffy is a member of the Arklow and Wicklow Hillwalkers ■

Route of walk

From Laragh, walk south on the R755 for approximately 700m to a fork. Turn left, cross Ballard Bridge, and turn off at the second forest entrance on the left. This leads to a minor road. Turn left and follow the minor road to the foot of Trooperstown Hill at T156954. Turn right and ascend to the summit.

Despite its modest height of 430m, **Trooperstown Hill** provides some of the best views in the Wicklow Mountains.

From the summit, descend south-south-west for 300m to a junction and continue straight ahead (south) for 250 metres. At this junction, turn left (south-east) and follow this track as it meanders to the entrance of Ballylug Forest at T166939. Descend on forest tracks to Ballylug Bridge.

From here, the route follows the



The Samuel Hayes Bridge over the Avonmore River outside Rathdrum, Co Wicklow



Submission seeks changes to Coillte forestry model

By Helen Lawless

During July, Mountaineering Ireland sought input from members in relation to **Coillte's draft strategic plans** for its forests across the country. The responses received were largely positive in relation to the contribution that Coillte makes to outdoor recreation in Ireland.

In response to a comment from a member in Wicklow, we have asked that **rock-climbing sites** within Coillte forests be specifically acknowledged in the finished plans.

Concerns were raised by some members in relation to Coillte's **environmental management**. In our submission, Mountaineering Ireland welcomed the formation last year of **Coillte Nature**, and the changes in forest management at four locations across the country, but urged that improving ecological practice and the delivery of ecosystem services should be priorities across the entire Coillte estate.

In this time of climate and biodiversity crisis, it is essential that, as Ireland's largest public landowner, Coillte embraces its responsibility to show leadership, by demonstrating

transformational change in land management. This may require a change to Coillte's remit.

In the past, some forests were planted on blanket bog in upland areas, a practice which is now considered unsustainable as it results in the loss of carbon from peat soils and impacts on water quality. Mountaineering Ireland's submission to Coillte recommends that when forests on deep peat are felled that, instead of replanting, the focus should shift to restoration of the peatland.

The submission also seeks a change in Coillte's forest management model across its wider estate, with a progressive shift towards **continuous cover forestry**. This would create forests that are more attractive for recreation, more valuable for biodiversity, more resilient to disease, provide better protection to water, and stabilise soils, which helps prevent flooding.

➔ Mountaineering Ireland extends its thanks to those who contributed to this submission, which you can read on www.bit.ly/coillte-submission ■



Crossword results

The winner of our crossword in IML 138 was **Niamh Sheehan** from **Blackrock, Co Dublin**, who won a gift voucher from Kitlist.ie, a prize worth €200.00, from our crossword sponsor, Basecamp. The solution to the crossword is shown below. Mountaineering Ireland will post the prize to the winner.

	1	D	E	V	I	L	S	B	I	T	
6	G		D		S		A		Q		7
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	S		24	M		N		E		25	T
		26	M	O	U	N	T	E	T	N	A



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Meet participants enjoying the climbing at First Corner in Lower Cove

Mourne Mountains Climbfest

A report by **Lisa Davison-Kernan** on the Mournes climbfest, held from July 30th to August 1st

When **Mountaineering Ireland** contacted the **Belfast Climbing Club** at the start of 2021 to see if it would like to host a climbing meet in the Mourne Mountains, we were thrilled to get this opportunity to showcase the climbing available in that rugged landscape. We had been keen to show off our granite crags since the club was established in 2017. However, events had conspired against us. Then I realised that, as the club's Meets Secretary, it was probably my job to plan it! Thankfully, our President, **Jamie Roberts**, and our Cottage Secretary, **Rónán Davison-Kernan**, agreed to help organise the meet.

Our first thought for a base for the meet was the Belfast Climbing Club Cottage, aka **'Henry's Cottage.'** We then thought that the thirty or more expected campers might be a little too cosy there, in terms of social distancing. Fortunately, a local farmer, **Gerard Sloan**, was happy to let us use a field with a water supply beside it, as a campsite.

We had two great days of climbing... almost! On the Saturday (July 31st), most of us went to **Lower Cove**, where the rain kept trying to wash us off. Unfortunately, it persisted, and most of us had called it a day by 4.00pm. A contingent from the **Colmcille Climbers** ran a casual half-marathon through the mountains.

As we arrived at Lower Cove on the Saturday, along with a group from Dublin, we saw the early birds already climbing at **Second Corner (Damien O'Sullivan)** and **First Corner (Nicky Foster)** on the classics, **Gynocrat** and **First Corner**. My climbing partner **Eva Grew** and I decided to head to Second Corner and warm up on a three-pitch route called **Cumulus (VS)**. However, after the second pitch the rock was starting to feel rather damp, so we called it a day.

Kyle Stewart from Belfast Climbing Club spent a lot of time falling off **Short, Sharp, Shocked (E4, Second Corner)**, and **Shane Rispin** from Dublin tackled **Agag's Wall (HS, Third Corner)**.

We had a relaxed evening later on, that Saturday. **Alistair Miller** lit a BBQ, **Marie Woods** and **Shane Rispin** produced marshmallows; we toasted them.

On Sunday, we went up the **Trassey Valley**, making a few stops en route. The first stop was at **Spellack**, where **Forest View Buttress** was a popular climbing choice. (Nothing to do with the shortish walk-in, I'm sure!) The second stop was at the **Bearnagh slabs**, where Rónán and I, and the Colmcille Climbers, decided to spend the day. After doing two routes there, and scaring ourselves on a VS called **Peter de Bernac**, we thought that was quite enough and we headed back to Meelmore Lodge for coffee.

The group at Forest View Buttress were enjoying sunny weather and the slightly less slabby routes of that site and, although the Mournes granite is a fickle

mistress, productive times were had by all.

The meet was a success, despite the weather. I would like to thank everyone who joined us; it was wonderful to meet so many new people and share our love for Mournes climbing. I hope to see you all again in 2022! I would also like to thank the volunteers who made things possible: **Alistair Miller, Rowan Keating, Nicholas Marriott, Seamus McErlean, Robyn Scott, Eva Grew, John Lyster** and **Kyle Stewart**. I am also grateful to **Damien O'Sullivan** from **Mountaineering Ireland** for his support and for bringing the guidebooks. Finally, this meet would not have been possible without **Jamie Roberts** doing the IT work and **Rónán Davison-Kernan**, who knows a guy for everything! ■



AUTHOR:

Lisa Davison-Kernan is an engineer, climber and runner from Belfast. She is a founding member of **Belfast Climbing Club**, where she is the Meets Secretary.



Participants on Forest View Buttress, Spellack

Climbers on cliff top at Fair Head during the 2021 meet

Fair Head Meet 2021

A report by **Clare Sheridan** on the Fair Head Meet of 2021, on behalf of Dal Riada Climbing Club

The 2021 **Fair Head Meet** was always going to be different. After ten years of running the event (and bringing the cliff to international attention), **Paul Swail** was handing the organisation over to **Dal Riada Climbing Club**. Now, following last year's cancellation, the biggest gathering in the Mountaineering Ireland calendar would be run under pandemic restrictions. This involved pre-registration, limited numbers and a maze of rules – rules for indoors and outdoors, for seating and standing, for checking in and for contact tracing, and even a new ratio of people to portaloos – but **Chloe Condon** and **Neil Byrne** managed it all with aplomb.

The weather turned out to be much better than forecast, and the keenest among us got out climbing on each of the three days. When it did rain, the brand new coffee hut in the McBrides' farmyard was like a

magnet, as people collected their Lavazzas and headed to the barn for a chat. There was much chatting to be done – about climbing and bouldering, about Inis Mór, Owey island, Garron Point and Moorhill, and about the latest in the access negotiations for crag 'x', the new sport climbing venue. "See that guy over there: he was in primary school with one of the landowners!"

Right through the weekend there was an overwhelming sense that here was a community that was eager to reconnect. The strength and warmth of that community was well illustrated, as we listened to **Kyle Stewart's** moving eulogy for Fair Head regular **Davey Andrews**. Slán, Davey.

On Friday night, we had the first screening of *Calvin and Clare*, a new climbing documentary directed by climber and film-maker **Cormac Campbell**, soon

coming to a climbing wall near you! It is not for me to comment, but the film got a great response from the audience in the barn.

As people gathered at dusk on Saturday for the nightly barbecue, the weather was mild and calm, and an impressive stage was set up in the farmyard. There, from a white leather sofa, **Patrick McRedmond** and **Brendan Rodgers**, hosts of the 5.7R podcast, entertained us with their zany take on trad climbing. With wit, banter and some video evidence, they demonstrated how bizarre climbing can be and how, no, a can of baked beans won't hold your fall in Dalkey Quarry!

As always, the Prow with its array of single-pitch, three-star routes was the busiest spot

over the weekend, but when the sun came out colourful clumps of climbers spread out along the cliff and in the bouldering areas. It wasn't a year for international visitors, but there were a lot of new faces, excited to check the crag out. These included two young Dubliners who had the buzz of the meet at their heels as one tackled her first ever trad lead and the other sailed up her first E1... the first of many.

Dal Riada would like to thank the McBride family for their hospitality, and also the businesses that donated generous spot prizes; Mountaineering Ireland; and the 140 or so people who came along and made it such a great weekend.

And we have big plans for next year! ■

Evening barbecue during the meet



AUTHOR: Climber and author **Clare Sheridan** has been active on the Irish climbing scene for over fifty years and has made a number of serious ascents in the Alps, Himalayas, Andes and North America. Along with her husband, retired international mountain guide **Calvin Torrains**, she has pioneered many new routes on Irish crags, most notably at Fair Head, where they continue to develop major new lines together. She is a retired primary schoolteacher and mother of three. Her acclaimed memoir *Uncoiling the Ropes*, published in 2020 (see review, *IML* 136), is available to buy from the Mountaineering Ireland online shop





National Walking Day 2021: an overview

By Linda Sankey, Get Ireland Walking

Our plan for **National Walking Day**, which took place on Sunday, September 26th, as part of **European Week of Sport**, was to celebrate and promote the power of walking. Walking was the accessible activity that got us all through 2021. As life finds a new normal, **Get Ireland Walking** wants that new normal to include daily walking, to maintain good physical and mental health for all.

We know that 3.1 million people walked last year, and market research by Sport Ireland and IPSOS MRBI from the first quarter of 2021 showed that 76% of adults are still walking.

We had some amazing ambassadors supporting our week of walking, including Minister of State for Public Health, Well-being and National Drugs Strategy, **Frank Feighan TD**; adaptive adventurer **Nikki Bradley**; and Olympian racewalker **Olive Loughnane**. We worked with the network of **Local Sports Partnerships** to facilitate the week.

Ways to Walk Day Monday, September 20th

We began our week-long celebrations for **National Walking Day** with our **Ways to Walk Day**, which took place on Monday, September 20th. With the help of local walking groups, organisations and hillwalking clubs, we celebrated the many ways there are to walk, sharing online short 'how to' videos and explanatory content on different types of walking, from Nordic Walking to hillwalking, race-walking and use of activator poles.

We also promoted specific National Walking Days events that were to be held by participating clubs and organisations. (See getirelandwalking.ie/nationalwalkingday2021 and our social media channels and for highlights of our week.)

Community Champions Day Tuesday, September 21st

Community Champions Day acknowledged and celebrated the amazing walking and hillwalking groups who have done so much to promote the importance of being outdoors this year. We shared the stories of people who promoted walking this year –

our **#CommunityChampions** – and celebrated their achievements.

Mental Health Day Wednesday, September 22nd

#HappyOut Mental Health Day celebrated nature and the benefits of being outside and walking in green and blue spaces.

Accessibility & Inclusivity Day Thursday, September 23rd

How accessible is Ireland to walk in? On this day we shared multi-access walks across the country, to support people with mixed abilities in participating on National Walking Day.

Walk to Work Day Friday, September 24th

On this day we asked people in workplaces, schools and colleges to walk to work, school or college. This was an opportunity for schools, colleges and workplaces to be environmentally friendly and add more activity to their travel. Our days naturally include a mix of active travel – walking, cycling and car journeys.

Hidden Gems Day Saturday, September 25th

On this day we asked our well-known supporters to share their own **#HiddenGems** and asked people via social media to share their own favourite **#HiddenGems**.

National Walking Day Sunday, September 26th

Our week of celebrations concluded with our second annual National Walking Day on Sunday, September 26th. You can find out more on getirelandwalking.ie/nationalwalkingday2021 and on our social media channels. See:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/getirelandwalking

Twitter: [@GetIreWalking](https://twitter.com/GetIreWalking)

Instagram: [instagram.com/get_ireland_walking](https://www.instagram.com/get_ireland_walking)

Also check out **#WalkforYou**, **#WalkYourArea**, **#WalkYourTown**, **#HiddenGems**, **#EWOS**, **#NWD2021**, **#WalkYourHills**, **#LeaveNoTrace**, **#OneFromTheHills**, **#HappyHiking**, **#SunSmart**, **#HappyOut**, **#NWDChampion**, **#NWD21**, **#NationalWalkingDay**, **#WalkHikeRunPushRoll** ■



Why not try Nordic Walking?



By Linda Sankey, Get Ireland Walking

Nordic Fitness Ireland supported National Walking Day and, in particular, our Ways to Walk Day. Walking is **Joanne** and **Tony Burke's** passion! **Nordic Fitness Ireland** offers a personalised and holistic service, with advice on the best walking programmes. Established in County Clare four years ago, its qualified fitness, rehabilitation and Nordic Walking instructors provide programmes to suit all levels of fitness.

Nordic Walking was originally designed as a summer training routine for cross-country skiers. It is based on using specially designed walking poles in a way that harnesses the power of the upper body to propel you forward as you walk. It is now a recognised way to turn a walk into whole-body exercise.

It can be enjoyed at many levels, from walking for health to athletic **Nordic Running**. More than ten million people globally enjoy this outdoor activity all year round, with an overall goal of achieving general physical and mental wellbeing, balance and mobility, or training for longer walks.

Joanne and Tony's programmes look at the difference between hiking, trekking, Exerstrider, stability and Nordic poles, and the benefits that each type of pole offers.

Nordic Walking combines cardiovascular exercise with a vigorous muscle work-out for your shoulders, arms, core and legs. "When you walk without poles, you activate muscles below the waist," Joanne advises. "When you add Nordic poles, you activate all of the muscles of the upper body as well. You're engaging 80 to 90% of your muscles, as opposed to 50%, providing a substantial calorie-burning benefit."

Lots of evidence confirms that Nordic Walking burns more calories than regular walking – estimates range from an increase of 18 to 67% more. Nordic Walking is also associated with reductions in depression, anxiety, chronic pain and waist circumference, and increases in endurance, muscle strength and flexibility, walking distance, cardiovascular fitness, and quality of life. Another benefit is increased stability when you use poles, because you have more ground contact points and

you're not relying on your two feet alone. Plus, Nordic Walking is fun and can be a great social activity.

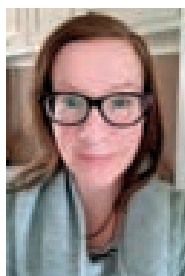
Tony also offers **Nordic Fit**, which takes Nordic Walking to the next level, including **Nordic Circuit Training, Nordic Trail Running, Advanced Hill Technique** and **Power Hiking**. These courses are advanced level training in the use of Nordic poles for trail, mountain and ultra-running, as well as power hiking.

More and more runners and walkers are using poles in mountain and trail races, many with poor technique and with pole types which constrain performance potential. Good Nordic technique improves performance and is ideal training for those wishing to complete mountain training or ultra-marathons.

Tony's own journey in walking and mountaineering, interspersed with running, was ultimately connected with becoming a strong walker. He was a climber on the first successful Irish expedition to Mount Everest in 1993. After getting hit by an avalanche in 2000 and being told he'd never walk unaided again, Tony set himself a goal of walking up Snowdon in North Wales on crutches. During his recovery, he became an expert in using walking sticks.

In 2017, Tony discovered Nordic Walking. Joanne set up Nordic Fitness Ireland, and now a wonderful community of Nordic walkers has emerged.

Have we persuaded you to try Nordic Walking? ■



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

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



Senior Branch girls from the Irish Girl Guides climb Errigal Mountain with members of the Women With Altitude "Giving Girls Confidence!" initiative

GIRL GUIDES CELEBRATE ANNIVERSARY

Irish Girl Guides celebrate their 110th anniversary

By Carol O'Brady and Anne McPartland, leaders with the Irish Girl Guides

In 1971, when the now Mountaineering Ireland was founded, the **Irish Girl Guides** turned sixty. Now, in the year of Mountaineering Ireland's fiftieth anniversary, the Irish Girl Guides are celebrating their **110th anniversary!**

Between the two organisations, there is a vast and valuable experience of the outdoors. To promote many more years of outdoor adventures and challenges for members of the Irish Girl Guides and their leaders, the two organisations have now signed a **memorandum of understanding**.



➤ **Carol O'Brady** has been a leader with the **Irish Girl Guides** for many years and is currently a member of the **Adult Training and Outdoor Committee**. She tries to get out hillwalking as often as possible and loves taking girl guides of all ages into the great outdoors.



➤ **Anne McPartland's** love of the outdoors began when she joined her local girl guiding unit in her youth. Many years later, as a leader and a qualified Outdoor Advisor with the **Irish Girl Guides**, she passes that love of outdoor adventure on to guides and other leaders.



Part of **Mountaineering Ireland's vision** is that hillwalkers and climbers will become more skilled and self-reliant. Included in the many Mountaineering Ireland mountain training schemes supporting that vision is the **Lowland Leader Award (LLA)**, an award for anyone who wishes to lead groups on day walks in lowland countryside and woodland; it is a perfect fit for all Irish Girl Guides leaders!

Back in 2013, in Laragh, Co Wicklow, a group of Irish Girl Guides leaders, including the two of us, took part in a pilot two-day LLA training course. The training was practical and it encouraged confidence in group leadership skills, walk planning, navigation, equipment and environmental awareness.

Finally, in July 2021, having had many walking adventures, the two of us undertook the LLA assessment on the Inishowen peninsula, Co Donegal, and we passed with flying colours.

Now it is the turn of other Irish Girl Guides leaders! In partnership with Mountaineering Ireland, the Irish Girl Guides are supporting their leaders on their Lowland Leader Award journey. LLA training courses have been organised for twenty-four leaders from around the country, and regional preparation walks have been planned for the coming weeks and months.

Irish Girl Guides leaders already have many of the leadership skills required, and are taking the next step by registering for the Lowland Leader Award and joining the adventure.

Ten steps to the Lowland Leader Award

- ◆ **Register:** Join Mountaineering Ireland and register for the Lowland Leader Award.
- ◆ **Organise:** Gather the equipment you'll need, including the correct boots, clothing and first-aid kit.
- ◆ **Walk:** Log ten walks in Lowland Leader terrain on your Mountaineering Ireland digital log (D-log).
- ◆ **Challenge:** Plan different walks to your usual ones – lowland trails, looped walks, way-marked trails, local, parkland, riverbank, canal bank, urban, rural walks – the list is endless!
- ◆ **Navigate:** Use an **Ordnance Survey** – www.osi.ie – map of the area, and practice using it on your walks. To help you with your navigation training, many short skills videos are available on the Training page of the Mountaineering Ireland website, www.mountaineering.ie.
- ◆ **Train:** Attend the Lowland Leader Award training session in your area. Do a sixteen-hour first-aid course. Familiarise yourself with Leave No Trace. You will learn lots of navigation skills on the training.
- ◆ **Log:** Log all your walks (at least twenty) on Mountaineering Ireland's D-Log. For some, you must demonstrate progressive leadership shadowing and assisting on walks, and include a variety of different walks and areas. Add a map of your route, learning outcomes, and photos of points of interest, flora and fauna.
- ◆ **Prepare:** Book onto an assessment. Prepare by practicing navigation, studying history, flora, fauna, and points of interest for the location.
- ◆ **Assess:** Enjoy the assessment!
- ◆ **Enjoy:** Enjoy leading walks with your group!



Carol O'Brady (left) and Anne McPartland (right) with assessor Bren Whelan in the Urris Hills on the Inishowen peninsula at the end of their Lowland Leader Award assessment

Whether you wish to take part in the Lowland Leader Award or a different award, getting outdoors will never disappoint.



Further details available from www.mountaineering.ie.

Another great way to meet like-minded women walkers is to attend a **Women with Altitude** event. Women with Altitude is a Mountaineering Ireland initiative to encourage women to take on greater challenges in mountaineering, be they personal, technical or leadership challenges. For more information, see www.womenwithaltitude.ie ■



Club committee support

Ruth Whelan provides advance notice of upcoming online support meetings for club committees

We will be running four online support meetings for clubs during the month of October. These will be focused meetings, based on key topics, and will be aimed at new and existing committee members. There will also be an opportunity to discuss other club-related matters on each evening.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ◆ 7th October 2021, 7.30pm | Committee Roles and Club AGMs |
| ◆ 14th October 2021, 7.30pm | Membership System and GDPR |
| ◆ 21st October 2021, 7.30pm | Insurance and Accident Reporting |
| ◆ 28th October 2021, 7.30pm | Attracting youths into clubs and safeguarding tips |

➔ Go to www.mountaineering.ie for more information and to register ■

Strategic Plan 2022-2025

Work has commenced on an exciting new phase of the **Strategic Development Plan** for Mountaineering Ireland for the years 2022-2025. To assist in this work, the board of Mountaineering Ireland has appointed a **working group**, which consists of both staff officers and board members, to develop the new strategic plan.

An important part of this process will be to seek input and direction from our members, partners and stakeholders, who we aim to consult over the next number of weeks. We hope that as many members as possible will engage in this process, to help shape the future direction of our organisation.

An **online survey** (promoted by email and on social media) closed on Monday, September 20th, 2021, but there will be online meetings coming up as well, to allow more members to contribute to the plan.

Please check our website – www.mountaineering.ie – for updates on progress and for information about the online meetings.

Once the plan is formulated, a **Draft Strategic Plan** for 2022-2025 will be presented to the board for approval, with the aim of launching the plan early next year ■

Mountain Meitheal North West volunteers getting wool ready for use in path building on the Leitrim Way



BACK ON THE TRAIL

Mountain Meitheal establishes new branch in north-west

By Mountain Meitheal Ireland

With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions, Mountain Meitheal volunteers have been able to get back onto the hills and trails over the summer. Mountain Meitheal always welcomes new members. However, currently, due to public health guidelines, we are unable to invite casual volunteers.

Mountain Meitheal Ireland (MMI) now has a new branch, **Mountain Meitheal North West**, which has joined the three existing branches in protecting and conserving mountain and forest areas in Ireland. Mountain Meitheal volunteers aim to counteract the pressures, which are evident on Ireland's fragile landscape, by building and maintaining trails which are sympathetic to the surrounding countryside.

Below is a report on Mountain Meitheal North West's interesting first project, along with short updates from the other Mountain Meitheal branches.

Mountain Meitheal North West

Sheep's wool used to build path

After a long wait to commence its first project, **Mountain Meitheal North West** has been trialling an unusual technique to build footpaths on hillsides, using locally sourced sheep's wool. The project forms part of ongoing upgrades along the **Leitrim Way**, Leitrim's national waymarked way, which stretches 56km from Manorhamilton to Leitrim village.

The sheep fleece is utilised as the foundation for the path, acting as a barrier between the soft peatland and the stone-surfaced trail, preventing the path from sinking into the peat - effectively "floating" the stone on the bog. The wool allows water to pass through unobstructed.

Using wool instead of the more common technique, a plastic membrane, provides a number of advantages. Wool is eco-friendly and abundantly available in our upland areas. The wool needs no treatment whatsoever, and can be taken straight off the sheep's back and used immediately in the construction of the walking trail.

While this method might seem ground-breaking, it is actually a re-awakening of an ancient engineering technique developed by the Romans for building roads over waterlogged grounds and peatlands throughout Europe. In recent years, sheep's wool has been used in upland path-building in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Mountain Meitheal North West volunteers come from Leitrim, Roscommon and Sligo.

"We are delighted to be the first Mountain Meitheal branch to use this special path-building technique, and to use it in our inaugural project on the Leitrim Way near Manorhamilton," said the group's representative, **Silvia Borbein**.

Bryan Fennell, Rural Recreation Officer for **Leitrim Development Company**, added: "Many of our national walking routes cross sensitive upland peat areas that easily become damaged by human activity.

"As we have seen from the last year, the number of people discovering Ireland's upland areas has increased immensely, and the need to protect sensitive peatlands from erosion, while still encouraging active lifestyles, is now greater than ever.

"This style of path-building will not only create robust trails fit for these sensitive environments, but will also give local farmers the opportunity to supply their wool for local projects. On this occasion, the fleece being used in the path construction has come from the very sheep that graze this hillside."

FIND OUT MORE: You can contact **Mountain Meitheal North West** by email at mountainmeithealnorthwest@gmail.com.



The different layers in the Leitrim Way path: sheep's-wool base, graded stone, and finer material for the path surface



MM Dublin Wicklow volunteers work on a stone-lined cross-drain on the Tibradden path



MM South East volunteers at work in Cooper's Wood

Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow Tibradden and St Kevin's Way

This summer, **Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow** completed a new section of family-friendly recreational trail in **Tibradden Wood**, Co Dublin, in collaboration with the **Dublin Mountains Partnership**. Starting in September 2019, the project offered the opportunity to demonstrate to the public Mountain Meitheal's sustainable trail-building techniques, including bog bridge and gravel trail construction, while also providing training to volunteers. Over 1,200 volunteer hours were invested in this valuable addition to the recreational network in the Dublin Mountains.

The Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow volunteers are now working in **Glendasan**, Co. Wicklow, repairing a short section of the **St Kevin's Way**, close to the Hero Mine, a lead and zinc mine opened in the 1820s. This hugely rewarding project is in large part a restoration and upgrade to improve water management on the existing trail, which was originally constructed by **Wicklow Mountains National Park**.

FIND OUT MORE: You can contact **Mountain Meitheal Dublin Wicklow** by email at mountainmeithealdublinwicklow@gmail.com.

Mountain Meitheal South East Path maintenance in the Galtees

Mountain Meitheal South East is delighted to be back doing path repair again. Last year, the branch had just one workday because of Covid restrictions, so this year already looks brighter, with four workdays completed so far. The branch has workdays once a month, with generally between five to 20 members out on any day. We were founded in 2013 and, to date, all of our work has been in the Galtees.

Path projects we completed have included **Saunder's Lodge**, **Lough Curra stile**, **Galtymore stile**, **Glengarra Woods** and **Galty Castle/King's Yard**.

At present, we are carrying out maintenance on our previous sites, but we have some new projects in the pipeline.

FIND OUT MORE: You can contact **Mountain Meitheal South East** by email at mountainmeithealsoutheast@gmail.com.

Mountain Meitheal West Path works in Clare and Galway

Following on from building two stiles at and above **Ben Lettery Hostel** in Connemara 2019 and 2020, **Mountain Meitheal West** received a request to construct two additional stiles to protect fences from being further damaged. We used the lockdown to engage with local farmers and build good, solid relations within the local community. Once restrictions were lifted, we managed to complete the required documentation with all of the key players, which allowed us to go ahead with the construction of two additional one-step stiles in July 2021.

With plenty of rain and intermittent heatwaves, there was explosion of briars and vegetation on loops and paths in Clare. We undertook and supported the cutting back of vegetation on the Ballyvaughan Wood Loop and on the Black Head Loop.

Over the past four years, Mountain Meitheal West has collaborated and undertaken repairs on the Black Head Loop trail, cut back overgrown vegetation on paths in Clare and Galway, repaired 500 metres of the path up Máméan to the Mass altar and stations, created cross-drains, and completed water drainage repairs.

FIND OUT MORE: You can contact **Mountain Meitheal West** by email at mountainmeithealwest@gmail.com.



Mountain Meitheal West volunteers building a stile

Get out, get dirty and give back!



"Dream walking on Dursey Island with the end in sight, on July 17th, 2021." – Aidan Ennis

THE GREAT IRISH TRAIL

Aidan Ennis completes 2,229-kilometre hike in 43 days. **Patrick O'Sullivan** reports

This report is based on notes received from Aidan Ennis during and after his hike.

Ultra-hiker **Aidan Ennis** has had a busy year! After completing the 'Mountains of the East' trek from Dublin to Waterford in May (see IML 137), he then went on to hike the 642km of the Irish section of the **E8 Walking Trail** from Dursey Island to Dublin in twelve days in June, possibly the first time this section of the E8 has been through-hiked.

Aidan then continued on to complete what he is calling the '**Great Irish Trail**', a continuous 2,229 kilometres through-hike over forty-three days, involving 42,995 metres of ascent. The hike linked the **E8**, the '**East Coast Link**' the **Ulster Way** and the **Beara-Breifne Way** in one continuous hike.

On Saturday, July 17th, 2021, he finally walked back to the remains of the old lighthouse on Dursey Head in the south-west corner of Dursey Island, in beautiful sunshine and blue skies, to complete his Great Irish Trail expedition!

On Friday, June 4th, Aidan set out from the old lighthouse in the south-west corner of **Dursey Island**, on the Bera Peninsula in west Cork, to walk the E8 to Dublin Port. That E8 hike linked the **Beara Way** from Dursey to Kenmare, the **Kerry Way** from Kenmare to Killarney, the **Dunhallow Way**, the **Blackwater/Avondhu Way**, the **East Munster Way**, the **South Leinster Way** and the **Wicklow Way**. He then walked on the riverside trails along the River Dodder to bring him to Dublin Port, completing his E8

hike in twelve days and covering 641.6km in all.

Then Aidan walked what he is calling the '**East Coast Link**'. From Dublin Port, he followed coastal paths to Clontarf and Sutton before walking the Howth Cliff Walk to Howth and then went on to Skerries, Annagassan, Newry and Rostrevor. On this part of his hike, Aidan mostly followed walkways, paths or quiet country roads. It took him three days to cover 169.4km.

He then joined the **Ulster Way** just before Newry. From Rostrevor, he followed the Ulster Way via the **Mourne Way** to Newcastle, before continuing along the coastline to Portaferry and Donaghadee on the Ards Peninsula.

From Donaghadee, the Ulster Way tracks pleasantly along the shoreline of Belfast Lough, via Bangor and Holywood, to Belfast city. From Belfast, he went over the Antrim Hills to Glenariff and



➤ **Aidan Ennis** is an ultra-long-distance hiker. For fuller biography, see feature, page xx.

Great Irish Trail route



Ballycastle, and along the **Causeway Coast** to Portrush, Portstewart and Coleraine.

The Ulster Way then takes to higher ground over the Sperrins, to Dungiven, Gortin Glen, Belleek, and finally on to the border at Belcoo. This section of the walk took him fourteen days and he covered 669.38km.

The final section of his walk took Aidan along the **Beara-Breifne Way** from Belcoo/Blacklion on the Fermanagh-Cavan border to Dursey Island, Beara, Co Cork. He followed Ireland's longest national waymarked trail through the lake regions of Roscommon and Leitrim, and along the banks of the Shannon, before reaching Portumna. Two days later, Aidan arrived in Tipperary, before walking the trails over the Ballyhoura Mountains to Newmarket. The Beara-Breifne Way then passes through Gougane Barra, Glengarriff and Castletownbere, before reaching Allihies.

For his final day, Saturday, July 17th, the weather was perfect, with warm sunshine and blue skies. Aidan walked from **Allihies** to the old lighthouse on **Dursey Head**, completing the 748.8km of this section of the hike in fourteen days. He then walked back to the Dursey Island cable-car, where his wife Emily and son Alex were waiting to help him celebrate the completion of his amazing hike, a continuous 2,229 kilometres through-hike over forty-three days.

Aidan Ennis writes:

The route of the **Great Irish Trail** came about shortly after completing the **Mountains of the East** hike from Dublin to Waterford (see *IML 137*). I had really enjoyed that hike, particularly the **Wicklow Way** section, which I joined after descending from Lugnaquilla and followed to its end point at Clonegal. This got me thinking about completing the Wicklow



Route planning map on Aidan's kitchen wall

Way as part of a continuous **E8** through-hike from Dursey Island to Dublin.

In 2012, I had previously walked the **Ulster Way** from Strangford along the coast to Newcastle and on to Newry, before finishing in Carlingford. The distance between Dublin and Newry did not look too far, three days at the most, I estimated. I had also previously walked across the **Sperrin Mountains** before joining the Ulster Way along the **Causeway Coast**, from Portrush to Ballycastle. I knew the Ulster Way joined the **Beara-Breifne Way** on the border at Belcoo/Blacklion. Suddenly, the hike was there.

I outlined the hike on a map and it was impossible for me to fold that map away again. I stuck the Michelin map of Ireland on some cardboard and hung it on the kitchen wall (see photo). On the top I wrote 'The Great Irish Trail!'

I went looking for the estimated distances of the various sections. In total, I estimated the distance to be

about 2,091km, but I knew that on the ground it was likely to be more. Once I had the distance, I divided the total by 50 kilometres to give me an indication of the number of days that would be required to complete it. Forty-two days (or six weeks) was the answer.

In the depths of the Covid-19 lockdown of October and November 2020, I started planning the route in more detail. In January 2021, I started training specifically for the hike by running daily, and completing a 25km run with my full backpack, every Saturday and Sunday, on Tramore Beach, keeping within my 5km public health limit.

I completed a gramme-by-gramme review of all my gear, ruthlessly replacing and removing gear until my backpack (which I also

replaced) was lighter than it ever had been before. This allowed me to run large sections of the trail with my backpack, and cover the distances more efficiently, day after day.

My main focus in training was to run at a steady and very relaxed pace and to keep my heart rate below certain levels. I hoped that, on the trail, this would ensure that I could maintain a consistent and efficient pace every day, without strain or risk of injury.

The biggest logistical challenges were preparing forty-three days' worth of rations, maps and energy/rehydration drink powder, and arranging them into sections for re-supply at key points, either at accommodation or at weekends, when **Emily**, my wife, and **Alex**, my son, would meet me on the trail.

To add to the logistical challenges, at the end of April it was still uncertain whether inter-county Covid-19 travel restrictions would be lifted in June, or if accommodation would be possible at key points. As a result of this uncertainty about inter-county travel and accommodation, the hike start date and schedule was rearranged to begin a week later, on June 4th.

In the end, the hike was 2,229 kilometres, which Emily worked out was equivalent to walking in a straight line from Dursey Island to Mount Vesuvius in Naples, Italy. It's still hard to believe I have completed this epic hike; there is not a day I would not go back to walk again. The Great Irish Trail was a dream hike. It felt like a dream while I was on the trail and, weeks after getting home, it still does! ■

“IT'S STILL HARD TO BELIEVE I HAVE COMPLETED THIS EPIC HIKE AROUND IRELAND!”



Some members of Annascaul Walking Club arriving at the beach for seaweed foraging, complete with buckets and gas for cooking on the shore

SEAWEED FORAGING

Annascaul Walking Club hosts Nature-based Wellness Seaweed Foraging Walk

By Andy Fogarty

Annascaul Walking Club is a small, friendly club with sixty members, based in the heart of the Dingle peninsula, where majestic mountains and stunning coastlines provide excellent year-round walking.

The club embodies the adventurous spirit, the friendly humour and the co-operative nature of Annascaul's famous son, **Tom Crean**, the Antarctic explorer.

In today's busy world, it has never been more important to take time to slow down and appreciate the healing power of nature. Much research has advocated the positive effects of nature on physical and mental health. With the current Covid-19 pandemic and its negative effects on mental health, there is a



Duileasc

growing awareness of the importance of meaningful engagement with nature. Nature-based wellness events have proven to be very beneficial for participants, including having positive effects on their mental health, reducing stress, boosting the body's immune defences, increasing the sense of connection with nature and giving an increased sense of purpose and pride in the local environment.

As part of its diverse walking calendar, Annascaul Walking Club hosted a **Nature-Based Wellness Seaweed Foraging Walk** west of Dingle in July. The guided foraging walk concentrated on identifying six seaweeds, which are widely used for cooking. The six seaweeds chosen for identification were **duileasc** *Palmaria*

palmata, **pepper dulse** *Osmundea pinnatifida*, **carrageen** *Chondrus crispus*, **sea lettuce** *Ulva* species, **sleabhac** *Porphyra* species and **sea spaghetti** *Himanthalia elongata*.

There are over six hundred seaweed species in Ireland and many have culinary uses and health benefits. Seaweeds are very nutritious and are often described as superfoods, e.g. sleabhac has approximately 35% protein by weight. Our ancestors often used seaweeds such as carrageen for folk remedies.

As seaweeds occur in the tidal zone, effective seaweed foraging is governed by the tides, specifically low tides. When particularly low tides, called spring tides, occur, these are the best times to forage for seaweeds, as the lower and subtidal zones of the beach are then accessible. The term 'spring tide' refers to the 'springing forth' of the tide and should not be confused with springtime. Spring tides occur twice each lunar month throughout the year.

The best time to collect most seaweeds is between March and October. Generally, two days either side of a new moon or a full moon are the best times for seaweed foraging. One of the safety tips for seaweed foraging is to begin foraging one hour before low tide and follow the tide out. Once the time of the low tide has been reached, work back up the tidal zone, being careful to never turn your back to the sea, as rogue waves can appear suddenly.



AUTHOR: Andy Fogarty is the Environmental Officer of Annascaul Walking Club

It is also very important to wear suitable non-slip walking boots with good grips or, if the weather permits, no boots at all, as the rocks can be very slippery. It is advisable to consult the local tide tables and be very aware of the weather conditions and ambient environment. As for all walking activities, dress for the weather.

Be mindful of where you harvest seaweed, paying particular attention not to collect seaweeds near sewage outfalls, farm runoffs or from other nutrient-enriched areas.

As seaweeds are wild foods, it is important to harvest them sustainably. Generally, no more than the top one-third of the plant is harvested with a sharp scissors. The root of the seaweed, called the holdfast, should not be disturbed. Patchy harvesting of seaweeds is a prudent approach. As natural foods are very filling, a little seaweed goes a long way, so only take what you are going to use.

There are many excellent sites for the identification of Irish seaweeds available on the internet.

With some planning, walking clubs could incorporate collecting seaweed into their calendar of walks, combining a coastal walk with an hour or so of seaweed foraging. If clubs are feeling particularly adventurous, sea spaghetti soup can be made on the shore, to finish the walk with a nutritious filling soup ■



Sea spaghetti soup cooked on the shore

Recipe for sea spaghetti soup (2 litres)

- 2 large onions (diced)
- 1 thumb-sized piece of ginger (chopped finely)
- 4 cloves crushed garlic
- 4 handfuls of sea spaghetti chopped into bite-sized strips
- 1 tablespoon yellow miso paste
- 2 handfuls of harvested mixed seaweeds, consisting mainly of duileasc, sleabhac and sea lettuce. A small amount of pepper dulse adds a wonderful umami taste.

Sweat the onions, ginger and garlic in a little toasted sesame oil.
Add miso paste. Add 2 litres of water, sea spaghetti and mixed seaweeds.
Add a little carrageen, which thickens the soup.
Bring to the boil and simmer for twenty minutes.



Identifying seaweeds in the subtidal zone



Collecting seaweed from the upper shore

TIME TO ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The climate change crisis and what it means for you

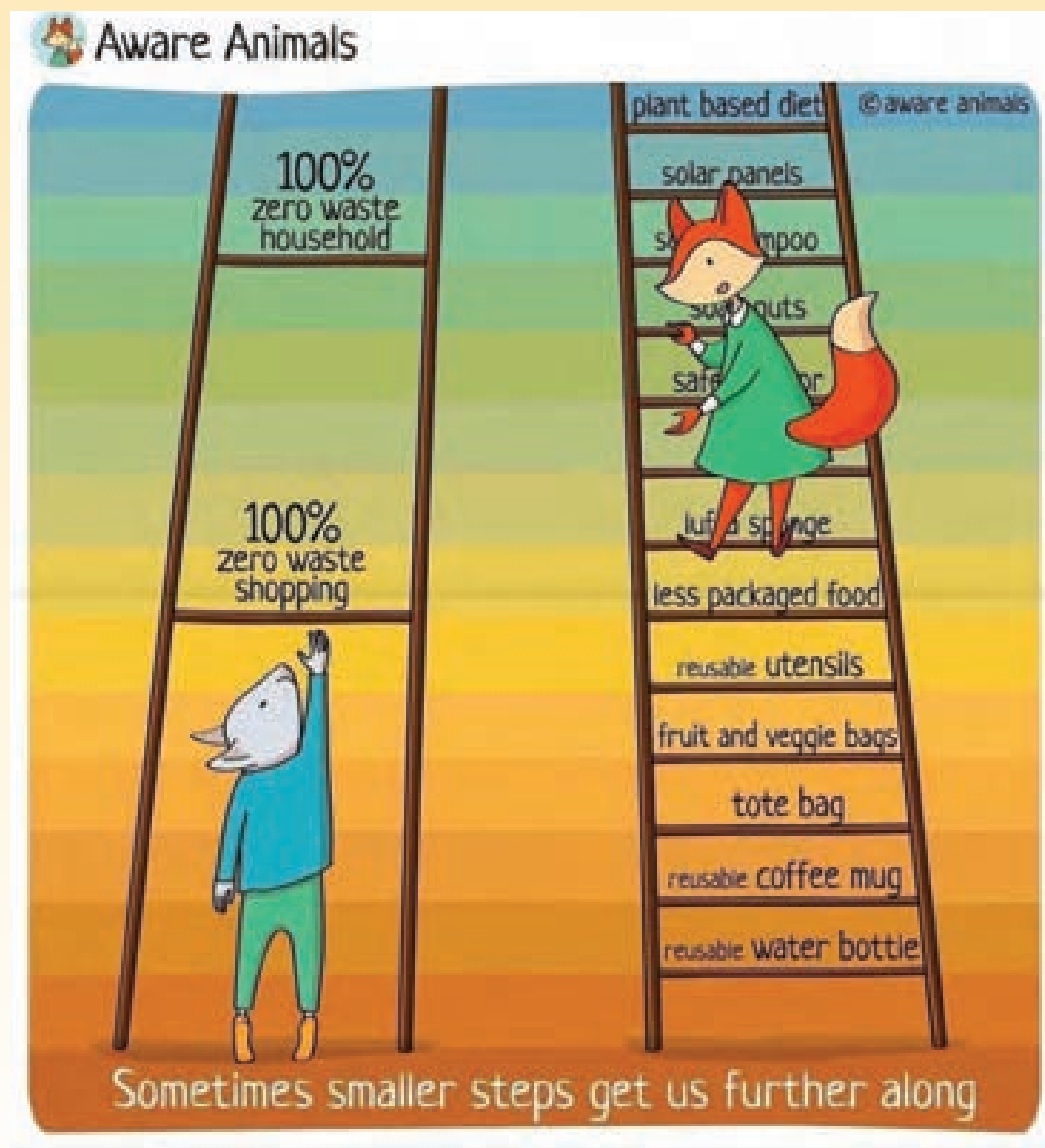
By Pamela Dagg

Climate change certainly is a hot topic at the moment, even though it was highlighted as an important issue years ago. Everyone has noticed the changes in the weather patterns, with the seasons changing and the impact that they are having on people, nature and the planet.

We humans are the only species on Earth that can identify, understand and combat climate change on our beautiful planet. We have to remember that this planet would cope just fine without humans and that, if we don't acknowledge the changes in our climate, we and future generations will not be prepared to cope with the changing environment.

The UN Secretary General, **António Guterres**, described the recent **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** (IPCC) report as a "Code Red for humanity." The time for action is now, if we want to continue to be a part of the Earth's ecosystems for future generations.

Each and every one of us will be affected by climate change, and we all have a role to play in reducing our impact on the planet, by changing our behaviours to become more



sustainable. We all need to start looking at what we can do to reduce our **carbon footprints**.

For example, coffee lovers, who need their daily fix, should use a **reusable cup**

instead of a single-use cup, which is more than likely to end up in a landfill or incinerator. The majority of coffee shops will fill a reusable cup and they often give a discount on the coffee, as it is cheaper for them too. Single-use disposable cups, even the compostable ones, have to be made, packaged, transported and disposed of. The compostable single-use cups are only compostable in commercial composters and not in your home composter.

There are many other examples of simple changes you can make in your behaviour which will reduce

your carbon footprint.

The lockdown has made more people aware that outdoor exercise is good for their physical and mental health. Many have taken up **hillwalking**, but even for short journeys locally, especially in dry weather, you should always ask yourself, do I need to go in the car or can I walk, cycle or take public transport? **Walking or cycling**, where possible, will benefit you physically and mentally, along with reducing your impact on the planet.

The same principle should apply within your home. Think about how you can live more



► **Pamela Dagg** was raised on a farm in the midlands, where her family worked with the land and the seasons. That gave her a love for nature and the environment. She is a regular hiker and works in the field of environmental protection. Pamela is also involved in climate action. The pandemic increased her awareness of the beautiful country we live in and the importance of giving back to our communities and our planet.

WHILE THE PLANET CAN SURVIVE WITHOUT US, WE CANNOT SURVIVE WITHOUT THE PLANET

sustainably at home. Look at **food wastage**, for example. Do you throw away a lot of food? If so, why? Wastage can be reduced by using a shopping list for your food, planning your meals, buying loose food products (such as fruit and vegetables), using your freezer for leftovers and buying frozen vegetables, especially if you are living alone.

Food wastage means that you are literally throwing your money in the bin, even if it is a compost bin. According to the **Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**, the average household throws out 150 kilogrammes of food each year, food which costs approximately €700. What and how much food you buy can reduce your impact on the planet and benefit your pocket.

One good place to see how much waste you are producing is to look at the contents of your **household waste bins**. Most people just throw waste into a bin, hopefully the correct bin, and forget about it. By looking at the contents of your **recycling**

bin, you will see that the amount of packaging waste that could be reduced or prevented is a lot. A useful reference website is www.mywaste.ie. It explains what should go into each bin and how to dispose of or recover your waste correctly.

There are lots of other smaller and larger things that you can do within your home, which will benefit you financially and benefit the planet: for example, **controlling the temperature in your house**. Dropping the thermostat by one degree will save you money and reduce your impact on the planet. Choosing **greener sources of power** for your house; putting on an extra layer of clothing in the house, if you are cold; **insulating your house** better; and switching off TVs, lights, etc, when not in use... these will all reduce your footprint.

Devices still use electricity when in standby mode. Ask yourself the question, "Should I switch that off at the socket rather than leave it in standby mode?" especially when you are going to bed or leaving your home. Does your TV



Native black honey bee sipping nectar from white clover. Bees are critically important pollinators of the world's major food plants

need to be on standby mode if there is no one watching it?

You save money and electricity and reduce your footprint on the planet by switching off the TV at the socket rather than leaving it on in standby mode. The same applies to kettles: having the switch on when it is not in use wastes electricity.

We need to be more considerate to the planet that we depend on, by reducing our wastage in all areas. Each step on the ladder to becoming carbon-neutral is achievable.

One of the greatest changes during the lockdown was the growth in online shopping. It was a lifesaver for some during the lockdown and, even in small rural villages in Ireland, delivery vans were, and still are, constantly dropping off online shopping to houses. However, with the easing of restrictions, we should **buy local, where possible**. This reduces the packaging of the product and its carbon footprint, and it supports the local economy. I know from personal experience that the

packaging on some of these delivered goods can be very wasteful, and it all ends up in the recycling bin or, in the case of Styrofoam, in the black bin, unless you are fortunate enough to have a **local civic amenity site** that will recycle it. If you include the returns, the carbon footprint of goods bought online gets even bigger.

We can all make changes that will improve our **sustainability**. This is critical for our survival on this planet. People all around the world are being impacted in different ways, and **the time to act is now**. So, the next time you are going on the hills, look at what you are bringing with you: are they single-use items? Ask yourself if you can use a reusable item instead, such as a water bottle, etc.

We are the guardians of this planet and we all need to work with this beautiful planet so that we can live in harmony with Mother Nature. We must never forget that, while this planet will survive without humans, **we cannot survive without the planet** ■



You can help support bees by providing plenty of flowers in your garden, particularly native wildflower species



Sean Brown on Jackie at Glendalough, Co Wicklow

YOUTH TRAD CLIMBING CAMPS

Damien O'Sullivan reports on the 2021 Youth Trad Climbing Camps held in Dalkey, Co Dublin, the Burren, Co Clare, and Glendalough, Co Wicklow



Damien O'Sullivan, Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Officer

Mountaineering Ireland has a long tradition of introducing and developing youth climbing into and through many aspects of our sport. Over the past decade or so, the increased availability of indoor climbing walls has resulted in an increase in the number of young people climbing at indoor walls. Inspired by incredible photos and movies of climbing adventures, many of these young climbers are keen to climb outdoors on real rock. These young climbers are often very proficient indoor climbers, sometimes climbing at a standard almost unimaginable to many adult climbers. The aim of the **Youth Trad Climbing Camps** is to provide opportunities for these young climbers to transfer the skills that they have developed at indoor

climbing walls to climbing outdoors on real rock.

Over the summer of 2021, Mountaineering Ireland ran three Youth Trad Climbing Camps. One took place at **Dalkey Quarry**, Co Dublin, another in the **Burren**, Co Clare, and the final camp at **Glendalough**, Co Wicklow.

The participants of the camps came mostly from the membership of Mountaineering Ireland's youth climbing clubs, such as the **Winders Climbing Club**, the **Dublin Cliffhangers Youth Climbing Club** and the **Cork Youth Climbing Club**.

All of the participants had a high degree of experience climbing indoors, were already competent belayers, were comfortable with knots and could climb very well. Some of the participants had a reasonable amount of prior rock-climbing experience.

However, there was (and probably always will be) plenty for everyone to learn, and the instructors at the camps very much worked with the individual participant's current standard and desired outcomes in mind.

The first of the series of camps took place at **Dalkey Quarry** at the end of June. The weather for the three days was less than seasonal, to say the least! On the opening morning of the camp, heavy rain forced us to take shelter in the nearby trees. Unable to climb for a few hours, we focused on some of the fundamental skills, such as equalising anchors and using prusik loops to provide extra security when abseiling.

As the weather improved over the next day and a half, we were able to get climbing and put some of the skills practiced under the trees to

good practice on the rock!

It is very rewarding to see a young climber, who first started climbing as an eight-year-old at an indoor climbing wall, develop their skills and build their interest in climbing to the point where they are placing trad climbing gear themselves, and making decisions out on rock.

The process that the instructors follow, as they help the climbers become more independent, typically begins with the climber on a top-rope, allowing them to focus on their climbing technique and adapt the skills they have developed climbing indoors, to transfer them to climbing on rock.

The next stage might see the climber being instructed on how to place climbing gear. This will typically begin as a ground-based exercise and progress to placing gear on a

route, but with the reassurance of a top-rope in place, and sometimes with the instructor working alongside them on a fixed rope, providing feedback on the quality of the gear placements. Once the instructor is satisfied that the young climber is consistently making good quality decisions on gear placements, the top-rope may come off and the climber is now lead-climbing for real.

The instructor will still stay alongside the climber to monitor the quality of gear placements, at times intervening by placing a piece of gear to supplement the climber's own, sometimes offering a few words of encouragement and, if necessary, securing the climber to their own rope.

As the climber continues to build experience and demonstrates consistent good practice, the instructor can take a step back, providing the climber with a more independent experience.

The second camp took place in mid-July on the beautiful limestone of the **Burren**. The camp in the Burren was divided into two halves: the first two days were geared towards an older, more experienced group of young climbers; the second half of the week was tailored for younger climbers.

For many of those taking part in the first two days of the camp, it was a case of refreshing skills, learned in previous years, that had become rusty due to the lockdowns. The layer of lockdown rust quickly peeled away and, in a matter of hours, the climbers were back to form, climbing well and climbing largely independently.

As fundamental skills were polished, the instructors added alternative methods and skills to allow the climbers further develop and take on a broader range of challenges.

For some of the climbers in the second half of the week, it was their first time climbing outside. The very user-friendly crag of **Ballyryan** allowed these young climbers to get to grips with intricacies of real-rock before moving across the road to the impressive sea-cliffs at **Ailladie**. The weather was co-operative for almost the entire week, allowing us to climb every day and, in doing so, allowing us the time to really build on the levels of confidence and competence among all the climbers. It is very rewarding for the instructors to see the young climbers take in the information so readily and to put it into practice safely and consistently.

The third, and final Youth Trad Climbing Camp took place in the beautiful valley of **Glendalough**. The main crag at Glendalough is an ideal venue to introduce and develop the skills needed for climbing multi-pitch routes, and routes that are generally in a more complex setting, with a longer approach and steep ground to be covered on the way to the base of routes. Many of the climbers at the Glendalough camp had plenty of prior climbing experience, both indoors and outdoors, and this camp was really an opportunity to refine existing skills, with input from the instructors.

The weather largely co-



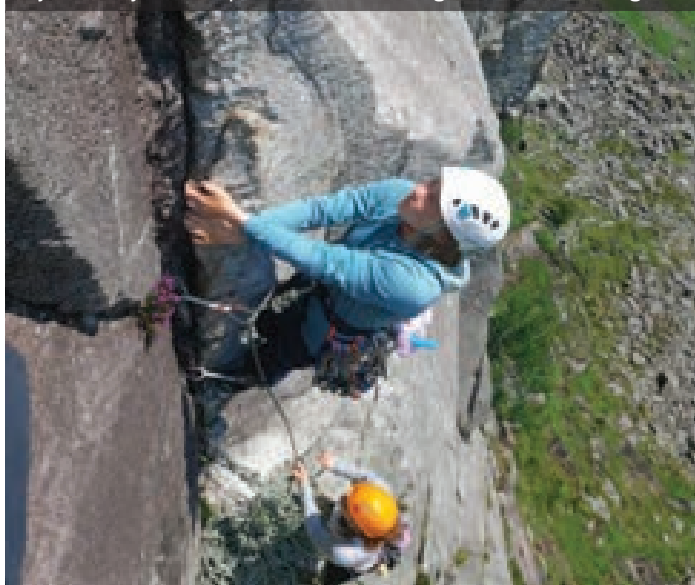
Jennifer Rafferty learning how to place gear at Ballyryan, Co Clare

operated: it stayed dry and clear, with just enough wind to keep the midges at bay. The one exception to the weather was on the Thursday, when it was just too hot to climb in the scorching heat, forcing a retreat to the shade of the **Irish Mountaineering Club's hut**. An alpine start was called for, to avoid as much of the heat as possible. The early start was not to the liking of all

the climbers (or instructors), but the plan worked well and the final day on the crag saw all of the climbing teams realising their goals.

As the final day of the series of camps ended and the climbers said their 'goodbyes,' it was an opportunity to think back on how much progress had been made over the series of camps, and even over the course of a number of years. It is a wonderful thing to witness a young person discover the sport of climbing and then go on to develop their skills to the point whereby they can competently and confidently climb a multi-pitch route independent of instruction. It certainly is not a quick or easy process, but it is very rewarding. What makes it all the better is that it does not mark an endpoint in the journey. Instead, it is like the opening of a new and wider horizon for the young climber

Rhyna Conroy on a steep section of Prelude Nightmare in Glendalough





OLYMPIC SPORT CLIMBING

Damien O'Sullivan reports on competition climbing's debut in the Tokyo Olympics

Of all climbers assembled in Tokyo, the one person who may have been the happiest and most satisfied that climbing received its Olympic debut could well have been the **International Federation of Sport Climbing's (IFSC)**

President, **Marco Sclaris**. The President and the wider IFSC staffs' drive and ambition to bring climbing to the greatest of sporting stages has been instrumental in the realisation of this goal.

The arrival of climbing at the Olympic Games in Tokyo has been the result of upwards of thirty years of effort. More recently, climbing made it to a shortlist of sports being considered for inclusion in the Olympics by the **International Olympic Committee (IOC)**. Climbing, however, did not make the cut on that occasion. Instead, judo was

Above: Slovenia's Janja Garnbret competing in the women's lead event

reinstated as an Olympic sport. A subsequent change to the IOC's rules allowed the host city to select several sports for inclusion at their iteration of the Games. The Tokyo 2020 Organising Committee proposed four sports for inclusion – **surfing, skateboarding, karate and climbing** – and on August 3rd, 2016, the IOC ratified the proposal. Climbing had finally won the golden ticket!

When the dust settled after the initial celebration of climbing's inclusion, the climbing world realised there was a catch – there were only two medal sets available for climbing: one for males and one for females. For an international federation representing three very distinct disciplines, this was a problem! Although there is a reasonable amount of cross-over between the **bouldering** and **lead** disciplines, **speed climbing** is viewed by many as a pursuit all on its own.

Although hugely popular in some parts of the world, speed climbing is often derided by 'real' climbers as being more akin to athletics than climbing. With little more than a Hobson's choice available, and with plenty of misgivings from many athletes, the 'combined format' was created. All three disciplines – speed, boulder and lead – would be competed for, and the winner would be decided based on their ranking from all three events.



► **Damien O'Sullivan** is the Climbing Officer of Mountaineering Ireland



Above:
Spain's **Alberto Gines-Lopez** (the eventual gold medal winner) competing in the lead climbing event

Below:
France's **Mickaël Mawem** in action in the bouldering event

“BOULDERING, LEAD AND SPEED CLIMBING ARE SEPARATE DISCIPLINES BUT WERE TREATED AS ONE”

timely distraction for sports fans around the world, and climbing had its first outing at the ‘big’ Games.

Qualification rounds

On Tuesday, August 3rd, the twenty male climbers who had qualified to compete in the Olympics took part in the qualification round. The top eight climbers would make it to the final round, where the real battle for gold would take place.

Ahead of the competition, there was plenty of punditry as to who would do well. Austria's **Jakob Schubert**, Japan's **Tamoa Narasakai**, the Czech Republic's **Adam Ondra** and Germany's **Alex Megos** all featured prominently as pre-competition favourites. It was, however, France's **Mickaël Mawem** who stole the show, with a strong performance in both speed and lead and a stunning display in the bouldering round.

The following day, it was the turn of the female athletes to secure a top-eight ranking and a place in the final round. The pre-competition favourite, Slovenia's **Janja Garnbret**, had a less than ideal opening to what many believed was to be her almost certain path to gold. She faltered in the speed climbing round – giving the other athletes the hope that she too was just human after all. In the bouldering round, however, her nerves settled and she put on a near-flawless display, topping all four problems on her first attempt.

Fast-forward four years through a qualification process that involved world rankings, world championships, continental championships and a somewhat awkward legal case taken by the Japanese Mountaineering Association (JMA) against the IFSC, in a dispute over which athlete would compete, we arrived at Tokyo 2020.

Then Covid-19 scuppered the plans for Tokyo 2020, but fortunately, those plans eventually came to fruition, albeit a year later than initially planned.

Even in the weeks and months leading up to the Games, a level of uncertainty remained as to whether they could go ahead. **Thomas Bach**, the president of the IOC, seemed confident, adamant even, that the Games would proceed but, as we all came to realise, Covid-19 has little respect for our best-laid plans!

As we all also now know, the Tokyo Olympic Games did go ahead. Despite no spectators being able to attend, the Games provided a huge spectacle and



COMPETITION CLIMBING



The USA's **Brooke Raboutou** performed very well across the rounds to secure a place in the final, along with the two Japanese climbers, **Miho Nonaka** and **Akiyo Noguchi**. Despite a fourth-place finish in the bouldering round, a 16th in speed, and 13th in lead, Team GB's **Shauna Coxey** was outside the top eight and out of the final.

Men's final

The head-to-head format of the speed discipline in the final round certainly upped the pressure on the top eight athletes. High drama ensued, with injuries, false starts and slips playing a pivotal role in the results.

Speed specialist **Bassa Mawem** (France) was unable to compete in the final due to injury. His absence threw the door open for one of the other competitors to snatch the coveted first place, and with it just a single ranking point which, on account of the multiplication method used to calculate the overall results, was extremely important. It was Spain's **Alberto Gines-Lopez** who kept his cool to take first place and a mathematically vital single point.

Mickaël Mawem, who was so dominant in the qualification round, again proved that he was a force to be reckoned with by taking second in the bouldering round. In what was another unpredicted result, it was the USA's **Nathaniel Coleman** who took the top spot in bouldering. A fourth place in

Above left:
Nathaniel Coleman (USA)
competing in the
bouldering event

Above right (from left):
Adam Ondra of Czech Republic
and **Alberto Gines-Lopez**
competing in the
speed climbing event

speed, and a disappointing sixth in bouldering, left **Adam Ondra** with it all to do in the lead final.

The male lead final was a nail-biting affair. Despite unpredicted results in the speed and bouldering rounds, the overall results and podium positions could not be predicted until the last climber had finished his climb. It was time for the climbers to 'go deep'!

Spain's **Alberto Gines-Lopez** put in a strong performance, in what is his preferred discipline, to take fourth in lead. The USA's **Colin Duffy**, although effectively out of the running due to a false start in the speed round, marked his territory for 2028 with a



Medallists in the men's final (from left): **Nathaniel Coleman** (silver), **Alberto Gines-Lopez** (gold) and **Jakob Schubert** (bronze)

“SPEED CLIMBING WILL BE A SEPARATE COMPETITION IN THE PARIS 2024 GAMES”

very strong showing in lead. **Adam Ondra** set the high point for the round and, in doing so, set himself up for gold on a score of 24 points. That was until Austria's **Jakob Schubert** stole the show by reaching the top of the route and setting the mathematicians scrambling to work out the results.

Schubert's first in lead secured for him the bronze medal and, by pushing Ondra into second in lead, knocked him clean off the podium. Silver went to the USA's **Nathaniel Coleman**, the winner of the bouldering round, and gold to Spain's **Alberto Gines-Lopez**.

Women's final

The final round for the female athletes stayed a little closer to script. The two speed specialists **Aleksandra Mirosław** from Poland and France's **Anouck Joubert** took the top two places in the speed round, followed up by **Miho Nonaka** and **Akiyo Noguchi** in third and fourth.

The bouldering round provided us with a reminder of **Janja Garnbret's** ability to seemingly defy gravity... and route-setters! The USA's **Brooke Raboutou** put in a huge performance in the bouldering round that unfortunately was not reflected in her score; despite reaching the top hold, she was unable to secure the hold for long enough to register it as a score. Again, the two Japanese climbers took third and fourth places.

Going into the lead final, few would have bet against **Garnbret** to take gold. The other two medal places were still wide open, with likely contenders being **Miho Nonaka** and **Akiyo Noguchi** from Japan, **Brooke Raboutou** of the USA and Austria's **Jessica Pilz**.

An uncharacteristic slip from Raboutou saw her fall relatively low down, effectively ending her hopes of a podium place. Japan's Akiyo Noguchi fared much better, securing an additional nine holds past the American. **Janja Garnbret**, in a cool and confident display, showed why she is currently the world's best female competition climber, setting what would be an unmatched high point on the route, and securing first place in lead, and with it the gold medal.

Miho Nonaka climbed next; she reached one hold past Brooke Raboutou, enough to finish ahead of her overall, but with two medal places still to play for and two strong lead climbers to go, it was going to be a nervous wait for Nonaka and Noguchi.

Austria's Jessica Pilz came closest to the Slovenian's high point and, had it remained so, she would have won a bronze medal. Seo Chaehyun, the young climber from South Korea, however, passed Pilz's high point to secure second place in lead. Her performance knocked Pilz off the podium and made way for the two Japanese climbers, **Miho Nonaka** and **Akiyo Noguchi**, to take silver and bronze respectively.



Above:
Medallists in the women's final (from left): Miho Nonaka (silver), Janja Garnbret (gold), Akiyo Noguchi (bronze)

Looking ahead to Paris 2024

Competition climbing's debut at the Olympic Games was a huge success. As a sporting spectacle, it was almost unsurpassed by any other sport in the Olympics. Climbing and speed climbing grabbed the attention and imagination of a whole new host of people around the world, maybe bringing many new people into the sport.

The next Olympic Games are scheduled to take place in Paris in 2024. The Paris 2024 Olympic Committee has already nominated competition climbing as one of the sports selected by the host city. The IOC has ratified the nomination and has also provided four medal sets for the Paris Games. As a result of the increase in the number of medals, climbing at Paris 2024 will be comprised of a combined bouldering and lead competition, and a separate speed competition.

With competition climbing's place secured for 2024, the focus of the IFSC now moves to securing a place for climbing in the Los Angeles Games in 2028. The IFSC will take a two-pronged approach, firstly lobbying the IOC for a full inclusion in the Games, and secondly seeking climbing's inclusion at the 2028 Games through a nomination by the Los Angeles 2028 Committee ■

CHASING THE LEOPARD

The Welsh 3000s Challenge has captivated hillwalkers and fell runners for over a hundred years. **Aidan Ennis** tackles the route in different ways, adds his own 'Snowdon to Sea' route, and tells interesting stories linked to his journey along the way

The year before, I had realised that the bus I was travelling in passed very close to the south ridge of Snowdon. The bus, a 1969 **Leyland Leopard**, had seen many years' service in Northern Ireland. Its destination on this trip was Llandudno in Wales and the annual Vintage Transport Festival.

Built by Walter Alexander & Co (Belfast) Ltd, the bus was maliciously destroyed during disturbances in north Belfast in 1974. In total, more than 1,500 buses were destroyed during the Troubles. In 1978, the bus was rebuilt with a new body and returned to active duty. It had a new registration plate and a new driver just beginning his career with Ulsterbus.

Forty years on, in 2018, the bus whizzed past the stone walls of North Wales as it climbed up the valley to the railway station at Rhyd Dhu. The driver, who was working hard to turn the non-power steering wheel into each corner, was that very same driver from 1978, **Trevor Dixon**.

Above: Morning sunlight illuminates the mountain slopes of Llanberis Valley. This view is looking back at Crib Goch and the Snowdon range of mountains in Snowdonia, Wales

Below right: Trevor Dixon and the Leyland Leopard bus

Trevor brought the bus to a halt at the **Rhyd Dhu** train stop, a station on the narrow-gauge Welsh Highland Railway. Built in 1881, the station initially was called Snowdon, and the line was promoted to walkers as "two miles less to traverse from Snowdon station, compared to the Llanberis distance, and about 800 feet less to reach the summit."

The station was later renamed South Snowdon, and renamed again in 1934 to Rhyd Dhu. Train passenger services ceased two years later, before reopening in 2003.

I stepped off the bus at the empty railway stop and waved my goodbyes. Then it was gone, no noise, no distant engine roar. Like its big cat namesake, the



➤ **Aidan Ennis** is a long-distance ultralight hiker who has walked and climbed extensively in Ireland, Scotland, the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Nepal Himalaya. Epic hikes he has completed include the 800-km Haute Randonnée Pyrénéenne, the Chamonix to Zermatt Haute Route (200 km) and a 10-day hike on the Scottish Cape Wrath Trail (326 km), which he did with his brother, the late **Colm Ennis**. In 2019, Aidan completed the Three Peninsulas Hike in Kerry, covering a 461-km route on the Beara, Iveragh and Dingle peninsulas (see IML 133).



Leyland Leopard disappeared almost instantly into the mist. To catch up with the Leopard, I was going to have to chase it back to the historic coastal town of Conwy. I liked the image that conjured in my head – tracking a mountain **snow leopard** over the Welsh hills.

Of course, there are not many big animals left in these hills. The wild wolf disappeared over 400 years ago, and the Scottish wildcat, also known as the Highland tiger, became extinct in the 1880s. The deer have long gone too, but the genetically distinct wild **Carneddau ponies** have grazed the slopes for centuries. They even survived an order from Henry VIII to destroy all feral native ponies, because they could not carry a knight in full armour.

Another famous inhabitant of Snowdonia is the brightly coloured Snowdonia rainbow beetle, and I was very unlikely to see that.

My chosen itinerary to Conwy was by the **Welsh 3000s Challenge** route. The challenge begins at the summit of **Snowdon** and links all fifteen 3,000ft (914.4m) mountains in Wales in one continuous route.

The route traverses three distinct ranges in Snowdonia. I had previously explored all the areas individually. But as **Herbert Carr** observed in his 1925 book *The Mountains of Snowdonia*, “Strong walkers will not visit Snowdonia many times without wishing to include the Carneddts, the Glyders and Snowdon in a single expedition. It is a very fine walk and, under favourable conditions, well worth doing.”

To successfully complete the challenge, you must reach the last summit of **Foel Fras**, some 42km away, involving 3,900 metres of ascent and descent, within 24 hours.



Above:
Descending from
the summit of
Snowdon

Below:
Wild Carneddau
ponies of
Snowdonia

“THE CHALLENGE LINKS ALL FIFTEEN 3,000ft+ PEAKS IN WALES IN ONE CONTINUOUS ROUTE”

From this finish point, I was going to walk a further 20km over the mountains to reach the coast at **Conwy**. Before I could start, however, I had to climb Snowdon first. I set off into the swirling cloud.

The challenge begins

Ronald Turnbull explains the rules of a successful completion of the Welsh 3,000s in his book *The Welsh Three Thousand Foot Challenges*. They are simple rules, which could apply to any big day in the mountains: “For those who seek to walk the fifteen peaks, four commandments are carved deep into the rocks of Snowdon. Start early; Start slowly; Eat lots; Drink lots.” Ominously, he goes on to warn: “For those who break even one of these commandments, special pains and torments await in the place appointed for such punishment: that place being roughly 1,000ft above Ogwen Cottage on the slopes of Pen yr Ole Wen.”

So, with that in mind, I left the summit of **Snowdon** at 2.30pm at a right clip, with one litre of water. My plan was as simple as Ronald’s rules. From Snowdon’s summit, I would walk until it got dark on Friday, camp overnight, and start from first light on Saturday, arriving at Conwy around 6.00pm. For added pressure, I had arranged a romantic dinner with my wife **Emily** in her favourite restaurant that evening.

From the summit of **Snowdon** (3,560ft), **Garnedd Ugain** (3,559ft) is reached quickly on a pleasant downhill track. After a short descent, I climbed a rocky pinnacle and, before I knew it, I was crossing the ridge to reach the high point of **Crib Goch** (3,028ft). There are good grips and secure rock all the way along to the east summit.





“I FINISHED MY 67km ‘SNOWDON TO SEA’ ROUTE IN 28 HOURS”

plateau ahead, with good grassy sections in between. From Garnedd Uchaf I could see the last peak, just over a kilometre away. After ten minutes I had reached the broad rocky summit and solitude of **Foel Fras** (3,090ft). The challenge was complete; the time was 1.30pm, some 23 hours after starting out from Snowdon summit.

To the north, I could see the coast and, after a short break, I set off over the mountains to **Conwy**, finishing the **Snowdon to Sea** route in 28 hours. The total distance from Rhyd Dhu at the base of Snowdon to Conwy was 67km.

I had caught up with the Leopard and was in time for dinner, but was completely captivated by this extraordinary hike. Dinner had not even finished and already I was plotting a return to Snowdonia.

* * * * *

The same year, I was back on the summit of **Snowdon**; it was Friday, July 27th, 2018. My plan was to start at first light and complete the challenge as a day hike. That night on Snowdon was cold and uncomfortable, interrupted by random arrivals and bright torchlight on the top at all hours. I felt uneasy; my six-year-old son **Alex** had been upset at me heading up the mountains into the dark clouds above.

I left the summit of Snowdon at 5.30am in poor visibility, but by the time I reached **Crib Goch** the views of the valley below and ridge ahead were spectacular. A blustery southwesterly wind focused my attention as I headed to the east summit. I looked down at the **North Ridge** of Crib Goch; this time I had done my homework: I knew exactly the route that led to the valley far below.

In 1938, **Thomas Firkbank** and his wife, **Esme Cummins**, set out to break the record for the crossing of the Welsh 3000s. It was Esme who

I remember looking down the North Ridge, which drops towards the valley floor and at right angles to the main ridge. It looked narrow but doable. I was not sure how I would avoid the vast Dinas Mot cliffs below, so I kept on the main ridge, which ends at Pen y Pass. The route from here was a road-run down the valley to Nant Peris, before a long climb up **Elidir Fawr** (3,031ft).

A traverse of **Y Garn** (3,106ft) followed, just as the sun was setting, and, at 9.00pm, I set up camp at **Llyn Y Cwn**, a small lake on the broad col below Y Garn.

Next morning, I was greeted by a pale blue sky above, and a rolling sea of clouds below. The clouds appeared to wash over mountain islands, cascading over their outstretched ridges. I lingered on the summit of **Glyder Fawr** (3,284ft) to admire the breathtaking cloud inversion.

Eventually I tore myself away from this hypnotic scene to walk towards **Glyder Fach** (3,261ft), before scrambling up the mighty tower of **Tryfan** (3,011ft).

After a fast descent from Tryfan, I stopped for a coffee and a snack at the Ogwen café kiosk. I hoped to avoid Ronald's promised “special pains and torments” and, once refuelled, I set off at a steady pace up the very steep climb of **Pen yr Ole Wen** (3,284ft).

When you reach the summit of Pen yr Ole Wen, you stay high, with **Carnedd Dafydd** (3,425ft), **Yr Elen** (3,156ft), and **Carnedd Llewelyn** (3,490ft) all linked by a ridge on the skyline.

From the summit of Carnedd Llewelyn, the end is in sight, **Foel Grach** (3,202ft) and **Garnedd Uchaf** (3,038ft) all appearing on the undulating

Above:
The rock pinnacle and the start of the Crib Goch ridge

Below:
Aidan views a spectacular morning cloud inversion from the summit of Glyder Fawr (3,284ft)





“THE 3000s IS A MAGNIFICENT MOUNTAIN EXPEDITION WITH A FASCINATING HISTORY”

suggested that they should take the North Ridge off Crib Goch, saving valuable miles and time. Thomas was skeptical at first, pointing out “if the main Crib Goch was knife-edge, this is razor-edge,” but that was the route they used to break the existing record of 10 hours, 29 minutes. Thomas completed the route in eight hours, 25 minutes. Esme, who suffered a foot injury on the route, completed in an equally impressive time of nine hours, 29 minutes.

Huge media publicity followed, and Thomas went on to write a fascinating account of the record attempt in his bestselling book, *I Bought a Mountain*.

The current record (in 2018) was set in 1988 by **Colin Donnelly**, who ran it in a truly superhuman time of four hours, 19 minutes.

I started down the ‘razor-edge’ of the **North Ridge** and made good time reaching the valley below. **Elidir Fawr** and **Y Garn** followed quickly, but on reaching the **Glyders** I was hit by strong winds and freezing hail. After weeks of settled weather, the jetstream had turned rogue and was blasting straight over the Welsh hills. With only half of the route completed, I knew I was not going to finish the hike, the last section over the Carneddau being almost entirely over 3,000ft. ➤

Above:
The Ogwen Valley,
showing Llyn
Ogwen (lake) and
the Glyders and
Y Garn mountains

Right: Aidan
stands on the
rocky summit of
Foel Fras (3,091m),
his final 3,000ft
peak in the Welsh
3000s Challenge





After descending to **Ogwen**, I called it a day. It was disappointing, but a freezing gale with driving hail made the decision to stop an easy one.

Second attempt at the day hike

I studied the diary but I couldn't find a free weekend until October. "What about next weekend?" Emily suggested. I checked the weather and, three days later, we were on a very busy ferry back to Holyhead. On the Friday night of the August bank holiday weekend, I was camped below Snowdon at **Rhyd Dhu**.

A week after my previous attempt, I was on the summit of **Snowdon** again for sunrise at 5.30am, and ready to begin the route. The weather

Above: Evening sunshine from summit of Y Garn (3,106ft), looking over Pen yr Ole Wen (3,284ft) on the left and Tryfan (3,011ft)

conditions were perfect: not too hot, sunny spells, but with plentiful cloud cover and a light breeze. I stopped only once for a much-needed coffee and a refill of water at **Ogwen**, completing the route from Snowdon to **Foel Fras** in 10 hrs, 21 mins. The total distance for the day, valley to valley, was 56km.

* * * * *

Below left: Aidan on Foel Fras summit at end of Welsh 3000s Overnight hike

The hike is a magnificent mountain expedition with a fascinating history. 2019 was going to be the 100th anniversary of the first recorded crossing of the Welsh 3000s by **Eustace Thomas** in 1919. Eustace started from Foel Fras and ended on Snowdon. Before I had descended to the car park at Aber Falls, I knew exactly what my Snowdonia expedition would

Below right: Snow leopard





be in 2019. Complete the route in reverse and in Eustace's footsteps.

Relaxing later with my son, he excitedly told me he had seen a **snow leopard**. "There are no snow leopards in Wales," I told him. He clicked a few buttons on his camera, then with a big grin, he turned the screen towards me. The full frame on the screen was the unmistakable piercing eyes and spotted face of a snow leopard. Earlier that day, Alex had visited a conservation centre for endangered species, right in the foothills of Snowdonia and within sight of Foel Fras. I guess that visual image of tracking a snow leopard across the mountains of Snowdonia was not that far-fetched after all.

* * * * *

In the summer of 2019, I returned to Snowdonia for the 100th anniversary, to follow Eustace Thomas's

Above:
Aidan on summit of Snowdon after his 100th anniversary completion of Eustace Thomas's Welsh 3000s route on August 2nd, 2019

Below left: Foel Fras summit sunrise on August 2nd, 2019, at the start of the 100th anniversary hike

original route, and finished on the summit of Snowdon, ten hours and twelve minutes after leaving Foel Fras.

Earlier that year, in May, Colin Donnelly's 31-year-old record for the Welsh Three Thousands was finally broken by **Finlay Wild** who, after leaving Snowdon, reached the summit cairn of Foel Fras in a staggering time of four hours, ten minutes and forty-eight seconds.

Eustace Thomas no doubt would have been delighted that a hike he completed 100 years before was still challenging fell runners to push their limits, and inspiring many hillwalkers to take on this epic adventure across the highest mountains in Wales.

"The hills stand always as a challenge to endeavor, and perhaps that is why one is stimulated to pick up the gage they throw down." – **Thomas Firkbank**, *The Welsh Three Thousands* (1947) ■



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Wainwright's 'Coast to Coast' hike

This long-distance 'Coast to Coast' hike across the north of England from Cumbria to North Yorkshire as seen through the eyes of an American, **Dan Goldfischer**, who was accompanied by **Nicky Hore**

Why is a Yank writing about a walk across England for an Irish magazine? In 1986, I was thirty years old and I treated myself to the Chamonix-Zermatt hike in the Swiss Alps.

Among my fellow hikers was **Nick Hore** from County Monaghan. We have stayed in touch over the years, walking together when I was on business trips to Europe and during visits to Ireland.

A few years back, I came across a coffee-table book about the **Coast to Coast Walk** in England. The photos just floored me – beautiful vistas of pastures, hills, lakes and quaint villages. I vowed to go there. For my sixtieth birthday in 2016, I thought this 182-mile hike over fifteen days was a worthy present to myself. I contacted Nick and he said he was in. We agreed to do the walk unguided but using **Sherpa Expeditions** to book our accommodation and carry our main luggage in one of their vans every day. Lightening our daily loads was a good decision, as walking distances each day ranged from nine to 20 miles.



➤ **Dan Goldfischer** is from Philadelphia and has always been interested in hiking and biking. He walks in the Blue Ridge Mountains section of the Appalachians. Trips to Europe have included hiking in the Alps, the Sierra de Guadarrama in central Spain, the Loch Lomond area in Scotland, and in Ireland, where he has hiked the Beara and Dingle Ways in Kerry, and in the Mournes.

Above:
“Ennerwater, as we entered the Lake District”

In late May 2016, I flew from Philadelphia to London and took two trains to get to **St Bees** in Cumbria, our starting point on the west coast.

The Lake District

We spent five days crossing the Lake District, an outdoor lover's paradise. The walks were challenging, with some hillclimbing struggles, but the rewards were well worth it.

Below: Dan and Nicky ready for the off at St Bees on the Irish Sea





“ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE HIKE, WE PASSED THROUGH THE HEART OF THE LAKE DISTRICT”

The first day at **St Bees** was a beauty, weatherwise and otherwise. We started out by the **Irish Sea**, picking up pebbles we would deposit on the other side of the country.

The initial path went up through gorgeous headlands, with sheep on one side and seagulls on the other. At cliff's edge, we took in the sights, sounds and powerful smells of hundreds of seabirds' nests.

Past a lighthouse, we turned inland and saw the large hills of the Lake District off in the distance. We lunched near a monument to **Alfred Wainwright**

Above: “Nick on Lining Crag as we headed towards Greenup Edge Pass in the Lake District”

Below: Map of the Coast to Coast route, a 182-mile hike across the north of England, passing through the Lake District, the Pennines, the Yorkshire Dales and the North York Moors

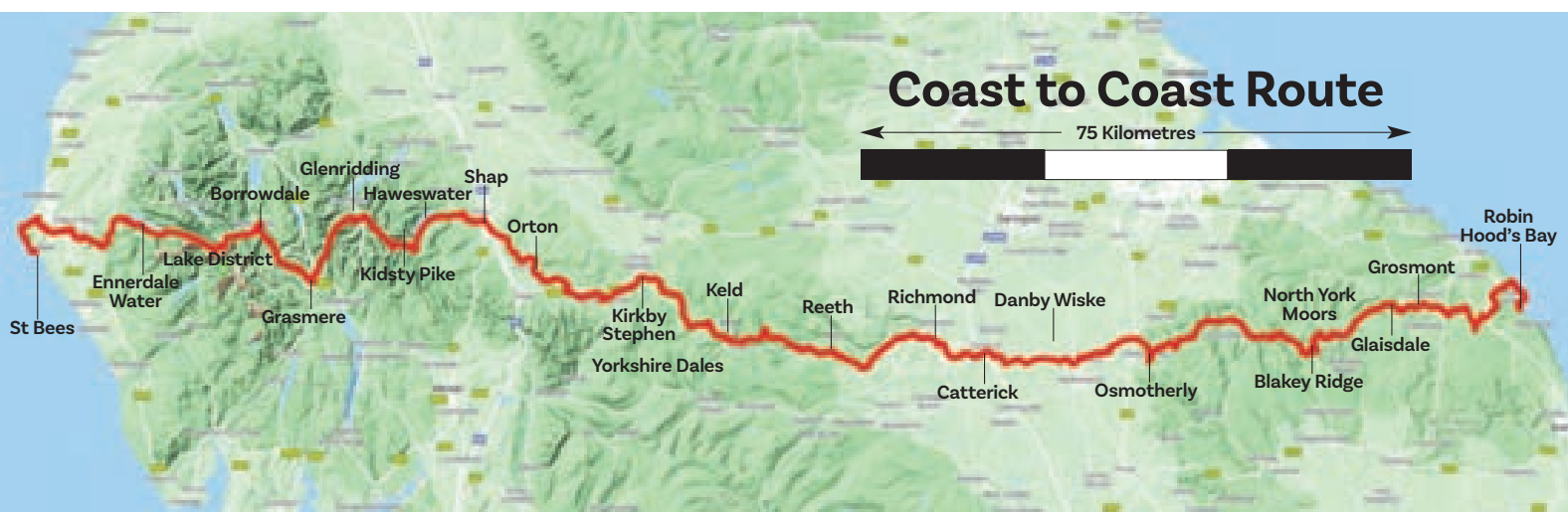
(1907-1991), the British trail guide author who first laid out the Coast to Coast (C2C) walk.

Our one climb of the day was **Dent Hill**, a bit of a slog in the hot sun. Soon after our first lake view – of **Ennerdale Water** – we arrived at our lovely B&B in **Ennerdale Bridge**, near the lake. Evening meals and breakfasts meant socialising with trekkers from all over the world. You meet the same folks on the path each day, making this a companionable walk.

The next day began with an easy trek alongside the lake, and then along a forest road. Eventually we entered a glacier-created valley, where we had lunch at the **Black Sail Youth Hostel**, which claims to be the most isolated hostel in Britain.

There was only one way out of the valley: up a 1,000-foot climb. Our path down was along a disused quarry tramway, past an old slate mine.

We passed through the very photogenic little village of **Seatoller** in **Borrowdale**, not far from the ➤



LONG-DISTANCE HIKING



rainiest spot in England. Hah, no rain that day! Our B&B was in a 400-year-old building.

The next day we passed through the heart of the Lake District. This day's walk was shorter, but strenuous, and the climb to **Greenup Edge Pass**, at 2,000 feet, was a challenge. The guidebook says to 'aim for three fence posts and a cairn close together,' but we crossed a broad meadow with few landmarks. We never found those fence posts, and compass navigation was necessary.

The weather was wonderful and we opted for the high route to the village of **Grasmere**, going over crag after crag, each with more outstanding views than the previous. The last one, **Helm Crag**, had an amazing 360-degree vista overlooking **Lake Grasmere**, the village and surrounding peaks. There are a number of things to see and do in Grasmere, such as visiting poet **William Wordsworth's** cottage and its beautiful gardens.

The following morning brought more sunshine and blue skies. First job was to climb to 2,000 feet onto open fell land and a pretty little lake called **Grisedale Tarn**. We took the valley down, the direct route bringing us to our destination, **Patterdale**, at the early hour of 3.00pm; nice for a good rest, a cold beer and a chat in the **White Lion Inn** with other walkers.

Well-rested, we left early to tackle the final day in the Lakes. **Kidsty Pike**, at 2,500 feet the highest spot on the route, was our goal. A thick, drizzly mist at the highest elevations meant compass work was needed to find the right path (signage for the

Above:
Overlooking Lake Grasmere, seen from Helm Crag in the Lake District

Below:
Smardale Bridge over Smardale Beck in Cumbria

The Yorkshire Dales

Our first day in the Dales started with a 20-miler, the longest day of the walk. When your guidebook says this would be a 'recovery day' from the hilly Lake District, don't believe it. Not only was it not flat, but the day became very hot. However, the walk was mostly a pleasant stroll through the very rural countryside of the fells, with nothing in sight but heather that wouldn't bloom for a month yet, and lots of sheep.

That day featured crossing the photogenic **Smardale Bridge** over **Scandal Beck**. On the climb out of that valley, we viewed a beautiful long, arched railroad viaduct.

Many cow pastures and stiles over countless stone walls took us to **Kirkby Stephen**, a town

C2C trail in the Lakes is almost non-existent).

Coming down off Kidsty Pike featured a few hands-on rock scrambles, which Nick went down like a mountain goat and I, well, not so much. At the bottom was **Haweswater**, the reservoir for Manchester – a good spot for lunch.

A walk along the reservoir took us out of the Lake District and on to **Shap**, through lowland farms, woods and alongside streams in which black-and-white belted cows cooled off. I couldn't get enough of the surreal fields full of buttercups.



much bigger than anything prior to this on the walk. We joined other Coast to Coast walkers for supper at a local restaurant.

Day 7 brought two landmark achievements: we crossed the **Pennines**, the spine of England, and made it to the halfway point, distance-wise. Crossing the well-named **River Eden**, we climbed to the mysterious **Nine Standards**, gigantic stone cairns marking the pass.

Another landmark occurrence was the first appearance of rain, in the form of several showers that were nothing more than a slight inconvenience. The overwhelmingly dry weather of late allowed us to pass easily through the normally boggy area beyond the climb.

After lunch, sitting on a log at a set of grouse butts (stone enclosures from which hunters shoot grouse), it was more pastures, walls and stiles. We soon arrived in the tiny village of **Keld**, our day's destination.

The next morning was a return to good weather. After strolling through historic Keld and passing several forces (waterfalls), it was more cows, sheep and buttercups, following the bucolic lower route.

Then, heading into the high moors beyond **Gunnerside**, we actually lost the path. We kept going in the correct direction, finally arriving in **Reeth**, a lively tourist town. I found a sports store, where I purchased new insoles for my boots, much-needed by this point.

The path led to a section that was an easy, relatively flat stroll in the valley of the **River Swale**. The day's highlight was our destination, **Richmond**, an 800-year-old market town presided over by castle ruins. You could walk all the way to the top of the



Above:
Gunnerside in
the Swale Valley,
Yorkshire Dales

Below left:
Walkers heading
into the Dales
through meadows
filled with
buttercups

Below right:
Two of the Nine
Standards on the
border between
Cumbria and
Yorkshire

“KIDSTY PIKE IN THE LAKE DISTRICT, AT 2,500 FEET, WAS THE HIGHEST POINT ON THE ROUTE”

castle for a fine view of the town. Richmond was big enough to sport a variety of restaurants and, once again, we met up with some other trekkers for supper.

North Yorkshire

The next day was probably my least favourite of the whole walk, as a good part of it consisted of flat and hot road-walking past gigantic commercial farm





Fat Betty, but there were no sightings of the North Sea. We saw nothing but fog.

Eventually the path took us off the moors, and out of the fog, for lunch in the pretty hamlet of **Glaisdale**. Our final trek to **Egton Bridge** was on a very pleasant but muddy path along the **River Esk**.

On the last day, the clouds blew away and left us in glorious sunshine. We passed **Grosmont**, home of a fabulous railroad museum, and, at the top of the hill out of town, we finally saw our C2C goal: the North Sea.

The remaining miles to the coast were a microcosm of the walk as a whole, as we walked through many pastures, attractive villages, muddy riverside jaunts and some very

fields growing cereal grasses. The **Vale of Mowbray** looks more like the US Midwest than northern England.

It was more enjoyable walking alongside the River Swale, and we visited a village, **Bolton-on-Swale**, that had someone buried in its church graveyard who allegedly lived 169 years.

Eventually all roads went downhill into **Danby Wiske**, a hamlet consisting mostly of the **White Swan** pub and hotel, where we stayed. It was decked out with Union Jacks to celebrate the 90th birthday of Queen Elizabeth II.

Following on, it was easier walking, mostly on roads by more industrial-sized farms. The going was a bit hillier here as we skirted the **Cleveland Hills**, but nothing horrible. The lowlight of the day was having to dash across four lanes of highway on the A19 motorway. Our home for the night was in picturesque **Osmotherley**, a little bit off the trail.

With four days' walking left, we were on the home stretch. Contrary to the guidebook, the first day in the **North York Moors** was very much up-and-down topography. The going alternated between pretty woods and misty high moors. It was so foggy that we couldn't see the glorious views our guidebook raved about. Fortunately, the trail was wide and made of smooth stones, so the going was easy.

After lunch, the climbs and descents became very noticeable on our thighs and lungs. Our B&B was two miles from the path, but fortunately the innkeeper collected us at **Clay Bank Top**.

He dropped us back to the trail the following morning, where slab steps helped us navigate the steeper stretches – the amount of work to build those steps must have been amazing. The good trail conditions made it possible to reach the **Lion Inn** at **Blakey Ridge** in good time, and we capped the day by eating supper at a large table with fellow trekkers, who we had met over the previous few days. Just two more challenging days to go!

The next morning brought fog so thick that we could barely see the parking lot. We were glad to get off the road and up onto the moors. We missed all the great views, though we did find the landmark rock

Above: “A rare C2C sign on the North Yorkshire moors, where our guidebook stated walkers needed a good sense of direction or some luck”

Below: Dan Goldfischer casts his St Bees pebble into the sea at Robin Hood's Bay

boggy, difficult-to-navigate moorland.

Finally, the path ended as it began – on top of cliffs high above the crashing waves of the sea, and adjacent to a sheep pasture. Soon, we entered the bustling tourist town of **Robin Hood's Bay** and headed down to the stony beach. We both dipped our boots in the water and chucked our pebbles into the **North Sea**.

We had done it! We had completed the Coast to Coast; we had walked across a country!

That called for a cold beer at the appropriately named **Wainwright's Bar**. We signed the register book, flipping back to see the names of people we had walked with earlier.

Then it was back across the pond, after the best birthday gift to myself ever ■

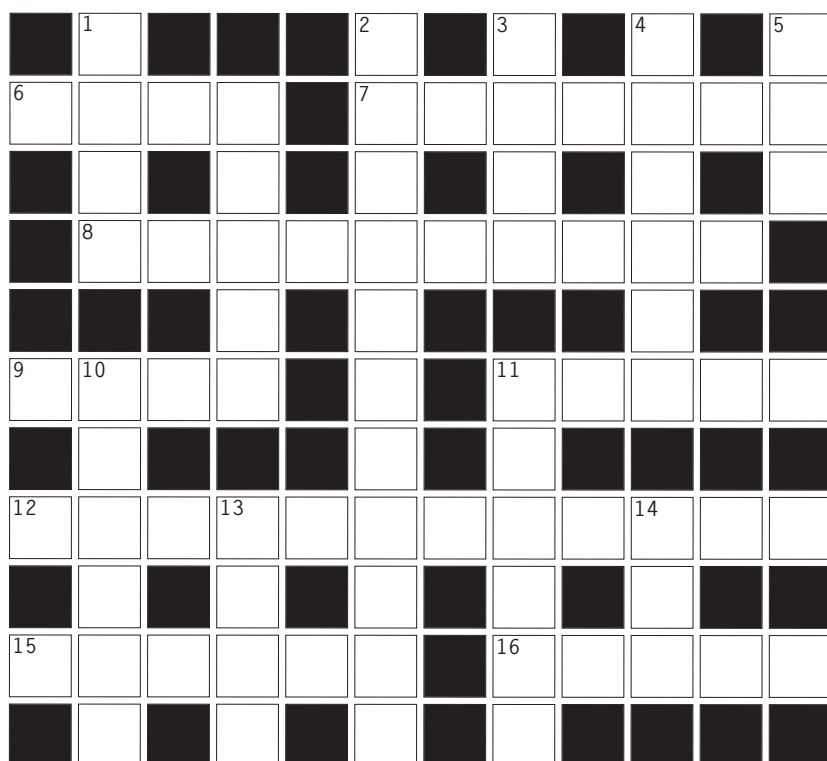




Autumn Competition

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

- 6 Equipment carried to aid climbing (4).
- 7 Last Slieve in the Mourne Seven Summits (7).
- 8 Mountaineering Ireland's summer gathering in the Alps (6,4).
- 9 The four top cards (4).
- 11 Another word for river catchment (5).
- 12 Highest mountain in Greece (5,7).
- 15 Piece of coloured cloth said to enrage bull (3,3).
- 16 Below (5).

Clues Down

- 1 Climbing jargon that designates information about a climb (4).
- 2 Highly popular tourist and climbing site in the Wicklow Mountains (11).
- 3 Islamic leader who may provide religious guidance (4).
- 4 To go out of or leave a place (6).
- 5 Small insect with mild sting found in 'hills' (3).
- 10 County Monaghan town where boxer Barry McGuigan was born and reared (6).
- 11 Shallow, wooded swamps often associated with the south-eastern United States (6).
- 13 One of the Three Sisters rivers (4).
- 14 Bouldering mat to crash on (3)



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Trollheimen Triangle

Frances and **Peter Wilson** describe their walk through the Norwegian mountains of Trollheimen

The land of the leprechauns has much in common with the home of the trolls, when it comes to myths and folk tales, but it was for the mountains that we visited the latter area. Numerous ski tours in Norway had aroused in us a curiosity to see the landscape without its winter garb, and we have now summer-walked several of our winter ski-trips. Our conclusion: it is much easier on skis.

The bus from **Oppdal** dropped us in **Olbu**, at the end of a dusty 11km track to **Gjevilvasshytta** (see photo, below right), and we were quietly confident that a friendly Norwegian would understand that two heavily-laden walkers with thumbs stuck out were trying to scrounge a lift. Either they weren't friendly or they didn't understand the purpose of the upturned thumbs, and so it was some three hours later that we swapped the stifling afternoon heat and dust of the track for the cool interior of the hut.

We immediately declared the next day to be one of rest. In our defence, we should explain that, on preceding days, we had walked to **Reinheim Hut**,

Above: View along Gjevilvatnet from Gjevilvasshytta

Below: Gjevilvasshytta – the original part of the hut dates from 1790

ascended **Snøhetta** (2,286m), and then walked out to **Kongsvoll Station**, from where we had taken the mid-day train to **Oppdal**.

The rest day entailed a boat trip to the head of the lake (**Gjevilvatnet**; see photo, above), a swim (for one of us) and a very short stroll along the track to **Vassendsetra** for tea and waffles.

We had come to **Trollheimen** in order to walk the region's most popular route – the **Trollheimen Triangle** – from Gjevilvasshytta to Trollheimshytta to Jøldalshytta, and back to Gjevilvasshytta, a straightforward route on waymarked paths linking mountain huts, although we planned to add some peaks if the weather allowed.



► **Frances and Peter Wilson** live in Portstewart and are members of Bannside Rambling Club.





Setting off on the Triangle

Refreshed after our rest, we departed **Gjevilvasshytta** at 8.50am and began ascending through open stands of birch and pine above the cascades of **Gravbekken**. The volume of water was of some concern to us, because we had to cross the river farther upstream, and the map was not showing a bridge. At the designated fording point, we deemed it too dangerous to risk, so we continued towards the outflow from **Blåhøtjønna**, where we found the river to be shallower and divided into several channels.

After regaining the waymarked route, we climbed to a higher valley, noted for its arctic-alpine flora, in particular **mountain avens** (*Dryas octopetala*), with long-lasting snowfields across which previous walkers had stamped the trail. From here on, we spent much of the day in cloud.

At the col of **Riarskaret**, we opted to take the alternative path over the summit of **Riaren** (1,365m), rather than descend the steep snow slopes to Fossådalsvatnet, and rejoin the route on Mellomfjellet. It wasn't until we had traversed the length of this hill and started to descend that we were once more treated to a view. A long and steep descent took us to the valley pinewoods, whose floors were bright with the white, black and green of **dwarf cornel** (*Cornus suecica*) (see photo, right), and, at 4.40pm, we arrived at **Trollheimshytta** (see photo, next page). With a much-improved weather forecast for the days ahead, we booked in for a two-night stay.

Ascent of Snota

One of the attractions of Trollheimshytta is the opportunity it provides for an ascent of **Snota** (1,669m) – the highest of the nearby peaks (see photo, next page). Several others at the hut were also planning an ascent, so we would not be alone on the mountain.

We were away first at 8.30am, with much blueness overhead. The pine-scented woodland trail led us

Below: Dwarf cornel (*Cornus suecica*) in the woods near Trollheimshytta

across the valley and then up steeply to **Aksla**, where we emerged from the trees onto an undulating and lake-studded plateau.

Beyond **Bossvatnet**, the path steepened again and, beside the cascades of a snow-melt river, we stopped for a drink and some biscuits. Below us on the path we spotted several figures – the others from the hut, who were slowly gaining on us. At the top of this slope, at about 1,000m, the vegetation all but disappeared, and from here on it was boulders, rock-slabs and snowfields.

For a while, the summit disappeared from view, as the path dipped below buttresses and rose across the head of a small corrie. ➤





The final snowfield (actually the head of a small glacier) overlapped the summit ridge, so there was no bergschrund problem to overcome, just a final kilometre of boulders to the substantial summit cairn with its weatherproof metal box containing the visitors' book (see photo, opposite page).

Lunch had never been more welcome and, with the map spread before us, we made a stab at the unpronounceable names of the surrounding peaks, many of which are only accessible to those prepared to camp.

Others began to arrive, so we vacated the 'top table' and began to reverse the ascent route. Cloud had started to build in the west, but we managed to re-cross the boulders, rock-slabs and snowfields before the rain came on and forced us into our waterproofs.

Above: Snota (1,669m) from Aksla

Below: Trollheimshytta

As often happens, the rain quickly passed over and the waterproofs dried as we walked. We stopped by the cascades again to finish the last of our food, and then crossed the plateau, descended to the pinewoods and returned to the hut just after 5.00pm.

Earlier in the year, we had been on **Snaefell** in the Isle of Man, we had now added **Snøhetta** and **Snota**, and later we would be on **Slieve Snaght** in the Derryveaghs in Donegal – all mountains of the snow.

Ascent of Geithøtta

Three routes to **Jøldalshytta** are available to walkers tackling the Trollheimen Triangle. We opted for the intermediate one over **Geithøtta** (1,325m) and departed **Trollheimshytta** in glorious sunshine.

However, we paid a heavy price, because it was steeply up from the moment we started. Initially the woods provided shade, but once above the tree-line the heat of the sun was relentless, and it still wasn't mid-morning. We heard the roar of the **Slettåa waterfalls** long before seeing them and eventually, at a corner of the path, we were provided with a tremendous full-frontal view.

As we reached the crest of the ridge, we were overtaken by a younger couple from the hut, who explained that their haste was because they intended to skip the customary overnight at Jøldalshytta and head on for Gjevilvasshytta – two days in one. They explained they were Swiss fell-runners and the route was just an 'average outing' for them.

We settled down for our sandwiches beside the summit cairn on **Geithøtta**, with views across the depths of **Svartådalen** to **Trollhøtta** (see photo, opposite page). With the 'hard work' part of the day over, we sauntered along the broad summit ridge, gradually losing height and meeting several walkers reversing our route. Above the head of **Svartådalen**, we caught up with the Swiss couple. A twisted ankle was being heavily strapped, and then they were off





again – a mere sprain wasn’t going to spoil their plans. On reaching the valley floor, we joined a broad, sandy track that rose imperceptibly to cross the watershed and led unerringly to the **Jøldalshytta** hut.

The final leg

After the previous two days of sunshine, the last stage of our triangular tour was depressingly damp. We reversed the final kilometre of the day before and then turned south for the long, gradual ascent to the watershed above Gjevilvasshytta.

Above: Trollhøtta (1,616m) from near the summit of Geithøtta

Below: Frances signs the visitors’ book at the summit of Snota

“AT THE SUMMIT OF SNOTA, LUNCH HAD NEVER BEEN MORE WELCOME”

Near the minor summit of **Skrikhøa**, we huddled behind a huge erratic boulder for coffee and biscuits. The cloud was down, it was wet and we were slowly cooking inside our waterproofs.

We disturbed a herd of **reindeer** as we traversed the broad slopes of **Kjølen**, and caused them to run ahead of us, until a group of north-bound walkers forced them to turn and gallop back towards us.

We were glad to see the sturdy bridge over the broad **Minnilla River**, and then it was up again across the flanks of **Falkangerhøa** to the small, circular lake of **Høghøtjønnna**, where we paused to eat our sandwiches.

In Norwegian huts, you pay for the sandwich bread, usually 12 Kr (roughly €2) a slice. The filling is free and you can put in as much as you want to. Needless to say, most people do so, with the consequence that it takes a little longer than usual to eat a Norwegian sandwich.

The descent to **Gjevilvasshytta** was initially through scrubby birch woodland, and the worn path, with numerous exposed and slimy roots, made it slow going. The birch gave way to pine and easier conditions underfoot, and it was mid-afternoon when we reached and checked in at the hut.

Although ending on a damp and dreary note, the best weather had come along for the days we wanted, and had given us a chance to see the home of the trolls at its best. It was just bad (or good) luck that we didn’t meet one of them! ■





The Stairway to Heaven Loop

Rachy Sinnamon takes on the most dangerous hiking trail in the United Arab Emirates

Dubai, one-way! Sitting in Dublin airport, I reflected on the trip ahead of me. This would be the last bit of Irish sod I would touch for a while.

Eight hours' flying time and two hours' driving time later, I stood in the grounds of my new home and place of work in **Dibba Al-Fujairah**, the second largest city in the emirate of **Fujairah**, one of the seven emirates that make up the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE). I was surrounded by wadis, knife-edge mountains and the beautiful azure waters of the Arabian Sea.

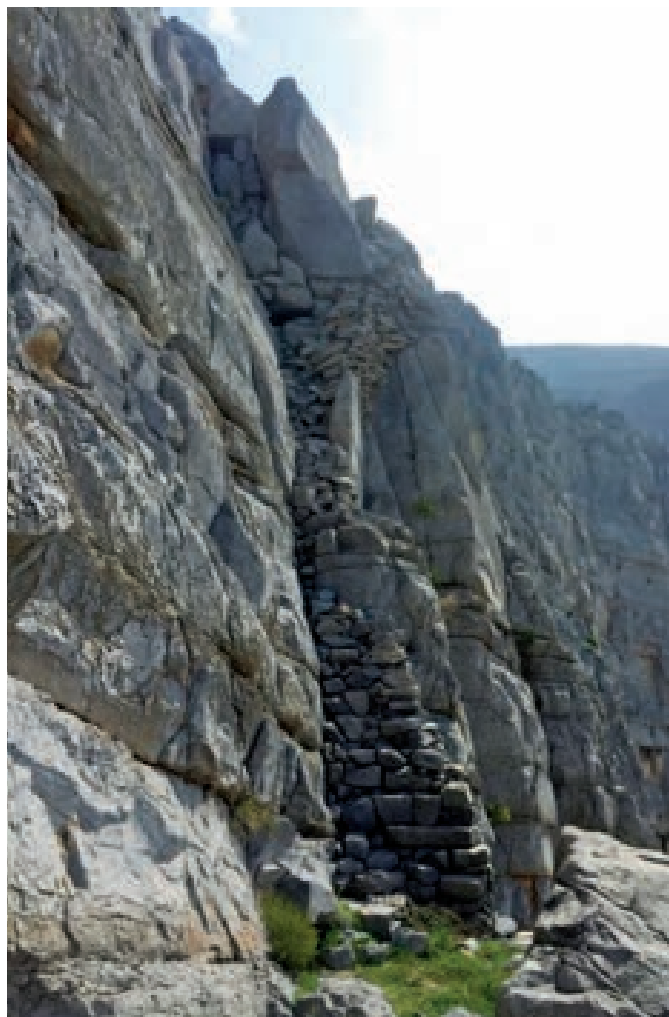
Fast-forward to the outbreak of Covid-19. Work ceased, and I was effectively unemployed. Do I go home and join the toilet-roll panic-buying movement, or do I stay? It was a no-brainer: stay and adventure!



➤ **Rachy Sinnamon** is a qualified instructor working in the outdoor industry, offering skills training and adventures in hiking, climbing and biking. She is also a keen kayaker and adventure racer. Her travels have taken her around Ireland, Scotland, Wales, the UAE, Sri Lanka, Gozo and many other places.

Above: "High above the wadi, having found and negotiated the fork in the trail and passed the scramble and scree path. Panorama shot!"

Right: "The stairs of the Stairway, much like Ireland's dry-stone walls. Some were quite subtle, some were false positives. Cairns were reasonably reliable markers. Some tough sections have been worked around, as I witnessed watching local guides. I stuck to the traditional route description"





“MY EYES STRUGGLED TO ADJUST TO THE ENORMITY OF IT ALL!”

I hopped over large boulders, bound for a steep scree slope. There was an easy right line that had evolved over the years, but I wanted more challenge and fun. I scrambled up the stacked boulders and loose rock to emerge at a large feature, a house-sized boulder with a huge, body-jam crack down the middle. This would be a clear marker, visible all the way up the Stairway, as well as from the other side on the route down.

As I continued upwards, the gradient never really eased. I looked for my next feature, an acacia tree, where the scree slope ended and the ascent really began. There was now a vertical wall between me and the top, dotted with ledges and stone-stacked stairs. I was already sweating buckets. I was carrying some snacks, but I had zero appetite (normal for me, to be fair) but I stayed on top of my hydration. I was thoroughly enjoying myself. ➤

I leafed through a book about the UAE and my eye caught ‘*Stairway to Heaven Loop: the UAE's most dangerous hike, described as ‘a via ferrata... minus the ferrata.’* Talk about a red rag to a bull!

Cross-referencing a few sources, I found out that the Stairway to Heaven Loop was a 19km hike with 2,000m of ascent, and lots of exposure, and that it took up to twelve hours to complete.

Interestingly, no records exist in the UAE of serious mountaineering before 1997, though descriptions of the Stairway route date back to 1986. The Stairway is situated in the northernmost mountains of the **Al Hajar range** on the Musandam peninsula, locally called **Ru'us al-Jibal** (Heads of the Mountains).

I arranged a lift to my start point, over two hours away. A bumpy track through **Wadi Ghalilah** ended at a goat farm, marking the start of the deep winding **Wadi Litibah**, where my Stairway adventure truly began.

I excitedly clipped on my pack and set off with a spring in my step. “See you at around 4.00pm, Tariq! I’ll call you on the way down,” I said to my driver. It was just after 9.00am and the heat was picking up. It would be at its hottest between 11.00am and 2.00pm, when I’d be fully exposed to the sun.

As I wound my way through the wadi, my eyes struggled to adjust to the enormity of it all. The geology was unique. Sedimentary rocks, mostly limestone and sandstone, intricate and delicate, surrounded me. Underfoot, I noticed the blackened, polished stones – evidence of others’ footsteps. As I gained height, the wadi riverbed fell away deeply below me. Frightening to think how much water would blast through there in a flash flood.

As I reached the back of the wadi, the path ended abruptly. Left: the authentic Stairway route. Right: the gentle tourist route. Of course, I went left. Wouldn’t be much of a story if I had gone right!



CROATIA



HIKING/WALKING PACKAGES 2022

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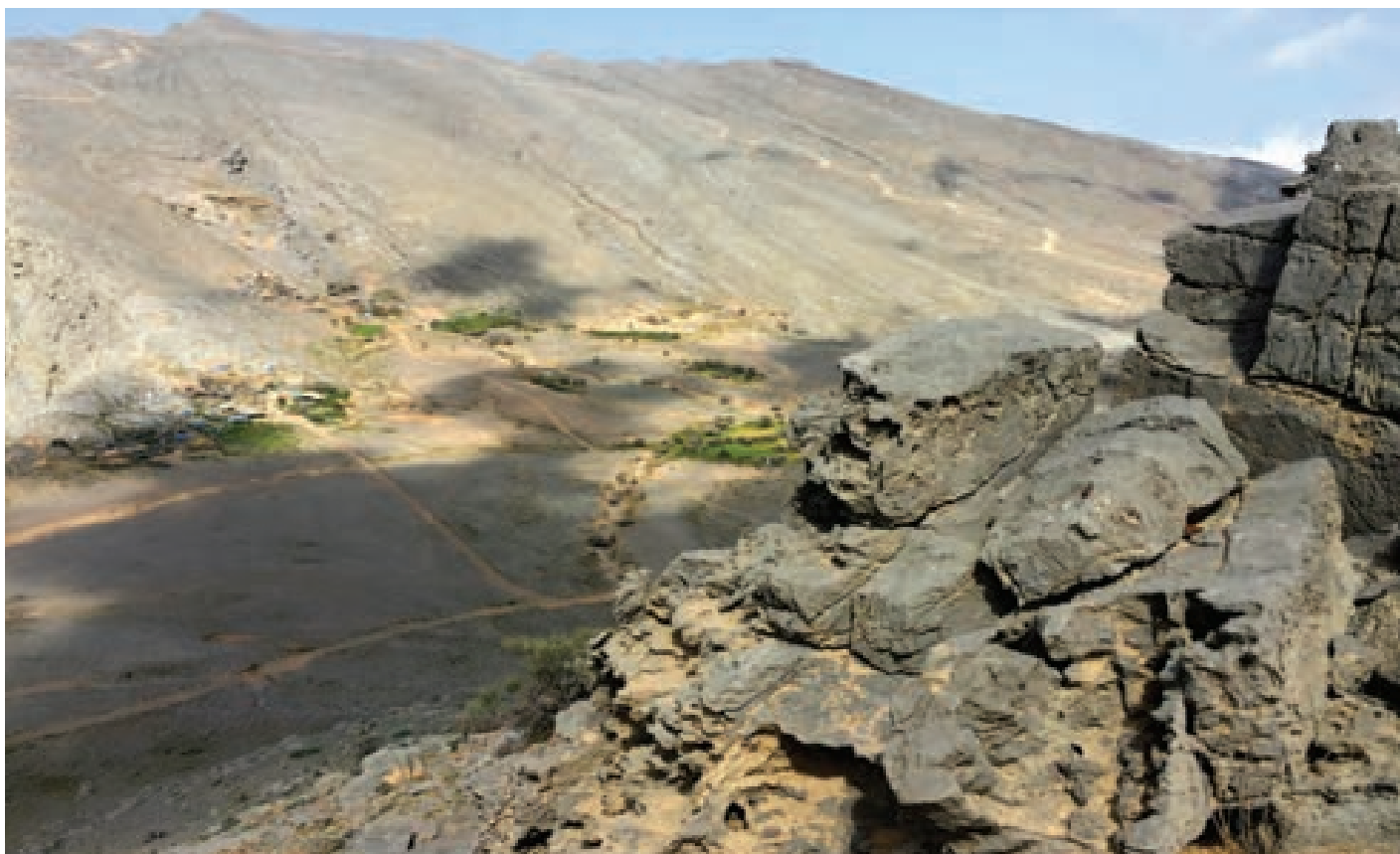
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The clouds cast surreal shadows over the vast, taupe landscape. I felt so small and completely alone. The stones of the stairways were stacked like drystone walls and held together by gravity alone. The footsteps over the years had marked them black and they were becoming polished. The route has claimed fatalities in the past, and getting caught out in rain would be treacherous.

Intertwined with the stairs were exposed ledges to traverse. At times, there were easier line choices, but I felt comfortable with the traditional route, created by Shihuh tribesmen centuries ago.

The **Shihuh** were known for their agriculture, semi-nomadic ways and structural engineering, living high in the rugged **Hajar Mountains** in the UAE and Oman in the winter, and along the coast in summer. I imagined them hiking up this route in kanduras and sandals. Impressive.

The top came upon me sooner than I expected. I thought the horizon line was another ledge but, as my head rose above the parapet, I was greeted by a huge plateau. A goat farm stood alone, isolated. I took in the dramatic landscape with a huge smile on my face. I felt completely in a moment of reflection. I enjoy that feeling. Only an hour and a half had passed, but I was already close to 1,300m. There was still a way to go, and here I was, technically illegally, in Oman. Best not to hang about for too long...

Crossing the plateau, I reached the base of the final peak, with four false summits stretching about 700m above me. Halfway up, in the strong sun, I finally stopped for a sit-down and a snack. Though not hungry, I needed energy. Though I hate bananas, I ate a banana. I sat on the copper and iron ore limestone and took in the view.

Above: "Having topped out at the top of the Stairway and crossed the farm, I was onto the next summit"

Below: "I've hit the final summit and am on the border between the UAE and Oman. Need to negotiate how to get to the top of the Woh Village Hike to descend"

I finally reached the summit of **Wadi Litibah** and a post which marked the division between the UAE and Oman. I now had two options: follow the track through a few small villages, or traverse and test my navigation. I went for the traverse, which was dotted with deep gorges and riverbeds. Maintaining height was tricky. My first riverbed wasn't too bad, an eighty-metre descent and about twenty metres wide. The second gorge was huge. I spotted a path on the other side; between was a steep, long scramble down, and then a hike along the bottom of the gorge, which was covered in large boulders. When filled with water, I thought it would be a heck of a whitewater paddle... except for the end, where it exited sharply into thin air...

The track I was on passed across rectangular ledges lined and divided up by low, drystone walls. Exposed plastic pipes were evidence of a water system.



“I WENT FOR THE TRAVERSE, WHICH WAS DOTTED WITH DEEP GORGES AND RIVERBEDS”

Soon, I was greeted by the farm I had seen from the top of the Stairway, and beautiful, luscious green grass. Reggae music pumped out of the small dwelling, breaking the silence I'd been surrounded by the whole day.

I downclimbed a section to join the path and stairs, which was a bit dodgy and went on for a good twenty metres. At the bottom, I was confused why this was so bold and difficult... until I clocked the nice flight of stairs gracing the mountain just metres away, which I had completely missed.

The stairs fell away into a loose gravel path and I could see the blank vertical wall in the distance that I had come up. It looked like you would need a rope or wings to ascend it. The scree slope looked impossibly steep and I couldn't really identify the stairs from this distance. It almost felt like a secret. Some adventure.

By this stage, I was doing great with my time. Five hours, with a good hour-and-a-half descent, at least... and then I had to get back to the dam in **Wadi Ghalilah**, which was a couple of kilometres further on.

I could relax my route-finding brain now and enjoy the descent. I paused at the viewpoints on the way down, where tables and seats had been carved out of blocks. Tranquil, yet dramatic.

There was enough change in the descent to keep things interesting. Patches of green land, rocky outcrops for a more daring view, gorges and a large round pool, which looked appealing but was full of stagnant water. Pity.

I returned to the fork where my decision to turn left had been made earlier that day, and continued back along the wadi. Still as epic as when I walked in. I made it back to the goat farm six and a half hours after I'd left.

The hike to the dam was going to be the hardest, but at least there were mountains and the spotting of old climbing routes along the way to entertain me.



Above: “Hard to get your eyes around this: the boulders look like pebbles. The green patch is around the size of a football field and a brave distance away!”

As I arrived at the dam, a white 4x4 pulled in. Tariq hopped out of the car with a huge smile, pleased to see me... or pleased I was alive... or a bit of both. I showed him my route vaguely, with a pointed finger. He looked at me in disbelief, then smiled. Parched, we stopped at a garage for a celebratory drink of date milk.

One week later, who knew I'd be guiding three people up the Stairway to Heaven Loop Trail?! ■



Left: “The last gorge I crossed, easily 100m high. The mouth opens straight off the cliffs, over 1,000m up. You do not want to be in this if there's a downpour!”

Right: “The low ceiling on the ‘tourist’ descent. The stagnant pool looks inviting... but best avoided!”





Mir Samir

Ulster Expedition to Afghanistan 1971

Philip Mannus describes an audacious expedition by Irish mountaineers to the Hindu Kush region in north-east Afghanistan, fifty years ago, the same year FMCI, the forerunner to Mountaineering Ireland, was founded

This article outlines an Irish expedition to **Mir Samir** (19,058ft, 5,809m), a peak in the **Hindu Kush, Afghanistan**, in July 1971. The expedition put up two new routes on the mountain, the **Western Couloir** route and the **South West Face** route.

I learnt about this remarkable expedition from **Denis Thurley**, whose father, **Eric H Thurley**, was the founder of the **Slievador Climbing Club** in the Mourne Mountains, of which I was a member many years ago.

Eric was responsible for the travel arrangements to Afghanistan, but was not a member of the expedition.

Above:
Some members of the expedition team arriving home at Aldergrove Airport, Belfast

Ulster Afghanistan Expedition 1971

Patron: The Rt Hon Lord John Hunt

Leader: Bert Slader

Members of the Expedition Party (in alphabetical order*):

John Anderson	Yvonne Hamilton (Miss)
Willie Annett	Teddy Hawkins
Victor Bateman	Philip Holmes
Ben Beattie	Aileen Bull (Miss)
Ricky Bell	John Irwin
Philip Blake	Dick Jones
David Campbell	Frances Jones (Miss)
Alex Crawford	John McSorley
Ffiona Crawford (Mrs)	Trevor Mitten
Jim Cunningham	Walter Morrow
Michael Curran	Robina Prenton (Miss)
Joe Eakin	Joe Rotherham
Norman Eccles	Bert Slader
Brian Gibson	Walter Thompson
Carol Gilmour (Miss)	Carole Watson (Mrs)
Colin Greene	Sam Webb
Pat Hamilton (Miss)	Noel Wright

*The names are as they were presented in the full expedition report



➤ **Philip Mannus** is from Co Down and has mountaineered extensively over the last forty years. He has climbed Kilimanjaro, Mount Kenya, the Matterhorn and many other peaks in Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Europe. Philip is a member of Mountaineering Ireland and of the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team. He is also a member of the Mountain Training Association and holds the Summer Mountain Leader Award and the Single- and Multi-Pitch Rock Climbing Instructors Awards. He runs **Wild Irish Walks** (www.wildirishwalks.co.uk).



Base camp at 14,000 feet

Mir Samir is situated on the east side of the **Panjshir Gorge**, about 150 kilometres north of **Jalalabad** in north-eastern Afghanistan. The summit was first attempted in 1956 by the explorer **Eric Newby** and the diplomat **Hugh Carless**, despite a local tradition that it was unclimbable. They were unsuccessful in their attempt to reach the main peak... and the tradition continued. The climb was described in Eric Newby's book, *A Short Walk in the Hindu Kush*.

The mountain was finally climbed on July 24th, 1959, by a small German expedition led by husband and wife team **Harald** and **Bobby Biller**, along with two companions.

In 1970, Irish climbers set their sights on climbing the mountain, and a management team was formed with **Bert Slader** (now deceased) appointed as expedition team leader.

Under Bert, there were four teams, headed respectively by **John Anderson**, **Alex Crawford**, **Frances Jones** and **Sam Webb**. **Lord John Hunt**, leader of the first successful Everest Expedition in 1953, kindly accepted the team's invitation to take up the position of patron. Bert later wrote an account of the expedition in his book *Footsteps in the Hindu Kush*, printed by Quest Books (NI) in 1994.

On July 4th, 1971, the thirty-four-member team flew into **Kabul**, where they received great assistance from the Director General of the **Tourist Organisation**, who saw to it that they had the services of a local interpreter, **Ajub**.

Four days later, they boarded a bus from Kabul. On arrival in **Peshawar**, where they were to collect their food supplies, they found that some of their gear and supplies hadn't arrived, and there was no sign that it



Above:
Mir Samir
(5,809m)

Below:
Route into Mir Samir (photo taken on the 1971 expedition)

would arrive any time soon. With the help of Ajub, they managed to acquire replacements and so were able to continue.

They travelled to **Charikar**, and then onto **Dash-I Rewat**, where they began their journey on foot, using pack ponies for transporting the equipment. During this stage of the expedition, they had problems with the porters, who were very slow. They consequently had to pay them off and employ new porters at **Parian** in the **Pashir Gorge**.

The team reached their base camp area on July 13th and immediately set about establishing the camp. The climbing team, led by **John Anderson**, consisted of six other members: **Dick Jones**, **Norman Eccles** (since deceased), **John Irwin**, **Phil Blake**, **Mick Curran** and **Trevor Mitten**.

The base camp was situated at about 14,000 feet in the **Samir Valley** on the west side of **Mir Samir**. When they arrived, John Anderson, John Irwin and Phil Blake all felt unwell, and Trevor Mitten had sustained what became a recurring knee injury, all of which reduced their initial confidence. John Anderson stated that he felt the mountain was laughing at them. ➤



Evening radio call to base from camp at 15,000 feet

HISTORY

On the day after they arrived, July 14th, two climbing teams left early to tackle a small unnamed peak of approximately 16,000ft behind base camp. **Team 1** was **Mick Curran** and **Phil Blake**, and **Team 2** was **John Anderson**, **John Irwin** and **Dick Jones**. They completed two new routes on the unnamed peak, and noted that the summit gave fantastic views of the west face of Mir Samir.

Over the course of the next few days, various teams did further reconnaissance of the area to identify possible new routes on Mir Samir. They moved supplies up about 1,500 feet, to a place where they set up their high camp.

On July 19th, Trevor, Mick and Phil did a recce by climbing up the valley to the south of high camp. This revealed a new insight into the view they had had of the west face of the mountain. A massive couloir on the righthand side of the west face appeared to split the face in two, all the way to the summit. And so the summit bid was on, and they would attempt it the very next day.

Western Couloir route

On July 20th, two teams departed for Mir Samir, slogging up to a high bivi site on the south-west ridge. The first team, comprising **Phil Blake**, **Mick Curran** and **Trevor Mitten**, left early, as they were the fittest and had been selected to make the summit bid. They were followed later by **Bert Slader** and **Dick Jones**.

That night, they all bivied on a tiny ledge. Phil Blake recalls: "We had a reasonably comfortable night. However, no one spoke. Everyone was thinking about the next day, and about success."

By 3.10am, the summit team of Phil, Mick and Trevor were gathering their gear together for the final push.

Mick recalls that it was just after 5.00am when they reached the bottom of the couloir, after a long,

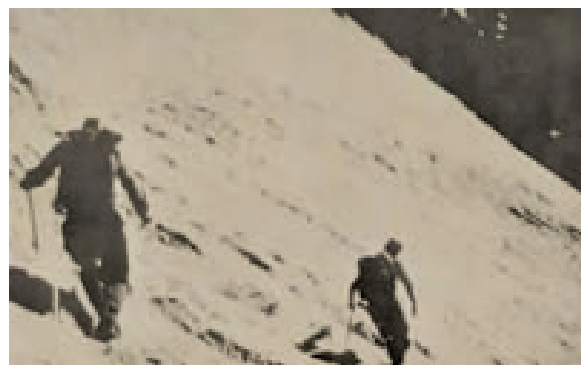


Above: Teddy Hawkins (centre), Walter Morrow (right) and Brian Gibson on the expedition in July 1971

snow-covered traverse. The couloir soared above them for 2,000 feet and then went out of sight.

After five hours, most of which was spent front-pointing in very exposed terrain, they had come close to the top of the couloir and were feeling the altitude. They then ascended a short, vertical ice-step and emerged into the harsh Himalayan sun.

Below left: Team member Ben Beattie looking over Kabul from Legation Hill during the 1971 expedition



Descending from the bivouac on the expedition's ascent of the Western Couloir of Mir Samir

Below right: Victor Bateman, the oldest member of the team, with the youngest

Trevor led the next pitch to a small ledge on the south-west flank. This was followed by a pitch of grotty rock, which led to a huge block, and then on through boulders and ice-steps to the final snow slope.





Climbing the second new route on Mir Samir

They lined up just below the peak and summited together at 1.15pm.

They left the summit at 2.20pm and descended quickly to the bivy site. They arrived back in base camp the following day.

South West Face route

On July 26th, a second attempt to climb Mir Samir was made via a route on the South West Face.

John Anderson, Dick Jones and Trevor Mitten set out in darkness from the high camp. The initial climbing was uneventful, although it was sustained and vertical and the altitude took its toll, as it had done on the first climb. They struggled on a grade-5 pitch, which offered little protection.

A further forty feet of climbing on another arête brought them to a near-featureless wall... and their hearts sank. They had been climbing for nine hours by then. Following a recce to the left and right, they saw a solution. If they abseiled sixty feet and

Above:
The two new routes sketched out on Mir Samir for the full report on the 1971 expedition

Below:
Makeshift shelters

pendulumed right to gain momentum, they could swing left onto a crack, which might hold the key to the climb. They had their hearts in their mouths as they abseiled off a nut above a 3,000-foot vertical face, but eventually they all sighed with relief when they made it to the safety of the crack.

They followed the crack up for two hours and eventually their efforts were rewarded when they all stood at the top of the **South West Face** after eleven hours of sustained rock climbing.

They could see the summit, but agreed to bivi for a second night and make the final push in the morning. They huddled together for warmth, as they had no sleeping bags, and settled down for the night.

They summited the next day, having climbed for a further eight hours. Although the climbing had been much easier than on the previous day, they were all exhausted from the altitude and found no real enjoyment in summiting. Their fatigue, together with nineteen hours of sustained climbing, had taken its toll.

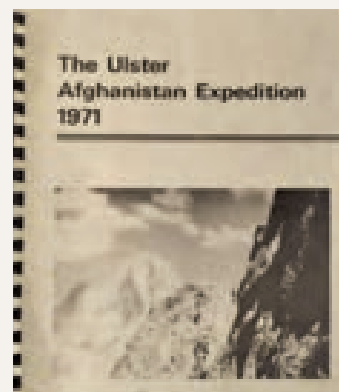
They took a few notes, screamed obscenities in the direction of base camp and descended towards the couloir.

The descent was not an easy one: the temperature had risen, and they were subjected to a large rockfall about halfway down.

On July 29th, the team packed up all of their equipment and began the journey back to Dash-I Rewat on foot. They were met by their transport there, and they eventually travelled to the airport and flew back to Ireland.

Huge achievement

Fifty years later, we can reflect, as modern mountaineers, on this trip, with admiration at the skill and courage of those who participated in the climb. They ventured into a remote and rarely-visited area without much of the safety equipment or the communications safety net that we would rely on today. Their contribution to Irish mountaineering is commendable and inspirational to us all ■



Full report compiled by the team upon their return



Hillwalking



Participants on a Women With Altitude navigation skills event in Mayo during HER Outdoors week

Hillwalking news and reports on programmes and events run by Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Development Officer, Ruth Whelan

Hill skills events prove popular



Written by
Ruth Whelan,
Hillwalking
Development
Officer

Over the summer, Mountaineering Ireland ran a number of programmes and events **specifically for women**. These programmes were run in conjunction with Local Sports Partnerships – **Shed to Summit** and **She Summits**. They were intended to provide participants with a safe environment in which to practice important skills and to make sure that their experiences on the hills were safe, positive and fun, and that their confidence and ability to be independent on the hills grew. Here is a summary of some of the activities that took place across the country during the summer.

■ Shed to Summit, Wicklow

The **Shed to Summit** programme was run in partnership with **Wicklow Sports Partnership** and Blessington's **Women's Shed**. Each participant was given three initial half-day experiences, and two additional training days, to provide them with key skills to be able to hike self-sufficiently within certain terrain in their local area, around the hills of Blessington.

There were two groups, each led by a qualified mountain instructor – either **Aodhnait Carroll** or **Colette Mahon**, who were there to share their knowledge and experience and impart informal learnings throughout the programme.

A total of 12 participants took part, with various levels of experience – from those who were starting out to those who wanted to learn more hillwalking skills.

■ She Summits

She Summits started in Kilkenny in July and finished during the **HER Outdoors** week, in partnership with **Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership**. This programme followed the same format as the **Shed to Summit**. Ten more female participants embraced the hills with instructor **Maureen O'Brien** over a five-week period. Participants started with small loops in Castlemorris Wood and progressed from trails to hills over the weeks, finishing up hiking on Mount Leinster.

* * * * *

The overall feedback from the participants in all three groups was exceedingly positive. The opportunity to broaden their horizons and explore the uplands in their local area in a safe environment was widely appreciated. Although it was challenging at times, the format of the programmes allowed gradual progression from the half-days on trails to full skills days in the hills, which was a big step up for some but an overwhelming achievement for all.

As always, the weather conditions were changeable, but this was useful in helping the participants realise just how

Participants on the environmental walk in Wicklow during HER Outdoors week



challenging the weather can make a walk in the hills. It also highlighted the need to prepare for every eventuality and to always be prepared to change your route or turn back.

The sense of achievement in the groups was immense, and having the security of an instructor there to provide them with really important and useful information helped build their confidence to be able to continue their adventures.

The aim of the programmes was achieved, with the majority of participants feeling equipped to explore the uplands more, with some of them aiming to progress to mountain skills. Hopefully we will see them continue to go hillwalking for years to come!

The success of these programmes has seen interest from other Local Sports Partnerships, who intend to run similar programmes in partnership with Mountaineering Ireland in the future... so watch this space!

■ Women With Altitude

Although the **Women With Altitude** event could not go ahead due to Covid-19 restrictions, we sent out our enthusiastic team of instructors to different counties to provide women with the opportunity to expand their hillwalking and climbing experience and skills throughout the week of **HER Outdoors**.

HER Outdoors week was the first of its kind in Ireland and was a great opportunity for all females to escape to the outdoors and to try something new. Over eighteen activities were organised during the week.

The week got off to a great start, with scrambling in the Comeragh Mountains and some climbing taster sessions in Dalkey, Co Dublin. Throughout the week, groups of women were introduced to navigation skills in Mayo, Wicklow, Sligo, Leitrim and Tipperary. Some of the more experienced navigators were taught a few new skills in Cork, Mayo and Galway. Those in Wicklow were lucky enough to learn about the natural environment of the Wicklow Mountains, taking in the beautiful landscape and features such as wild flowers and the geology of the rocks.

The weather was up to its usual tricks, which unfortunately saw two climbing sessions in Co Down cancelled. However, it did not stop our soaked hikers from smiling. Overall, approximately 130 women took part, including many who were excited to continue their upland journeys on hills and crags. Once again, lots were keen to progress their skills to the next level.



Colette Mahon (far right) leads participants on a Shed to Summit training event in Wicklow

A big thank you to all our wonderful Women With Altitude instructors who took part in activities throughout the week, including **Colette Mahon, Helen Lawless, Jane Carney, Georgia MacMillan, Rachy Sinnamon, Maureen O'Brien, Aodhnait Carroll, Julie Reeves, Deirdre Cunningham, Michelle Casey and Michelle Hughes**. It was evident from all the positive participant feedback that these women are not only outstanding instructors but also positive role models for all participants to be inspired by and encouraged to take on greater challenges, be they personal, technical or leadership challenges.

A special thank you to **Rita Connell, Colette Mahon and Maïke Jurgen** for their support in running this event.

■ Clubs programme

As mentioned in the Summer 2021 issue of the Log, our **Club Leadership Programme** had an overwhelming response from over 65 of our clubs, who

were interested in putting their club leaders forward for an opportunity to attend a skills day with a qualified trainer, who would tailor the day to their needs. Over 435 club leaders are now booked in to complete this programme.

If you applied but have yet to make contact with your trainer, please contact them to arrange a suitable date, or contact ruth@mountaineering.ie if you no longer require the space.

■ Hiking skills for parents

At time of writing, eighteen activities were set up across the country to deliver training specifically aimed at parents who take their children onto the hills. The main objective of this programme is to provide informal training for parents, to give them the basic skills required to keep themselves and their families safe on the hills. It is anticipated that, by the end of the programme, up to 144 families will have participated in this training ■

HAPPY HIKING

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Do you have a friend who wants to start hiking? Our Happy Hiking programme will give them all the information they need to get started and stay safe!



Access & Conservation



Martin Keating, Chairperson of Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group, with the Path Manager, Matt McConway, looking at the path on the cone at Croagh Patrick. The path is made by clearing loose stones from a two-metre-wide line, gathering stones from the mountain to create the path, and carefully positioning every stone so that it is solid and so that it works with its neighbouring stones to provide a stable footing. The path is made up of shallow and higher steps, designed to suit people of different abilities and to blend into the landscape. The path is strengthened by revetments on either side.

Progress at Croagh Patrick

Work underway to address path erosion



Written by
Helen Lawless,
Access &
Conservation
Officer

Work to repair the erosion along the pilgrim path at **Croagh Patrick** recommenced in May with the easing of the Covid-19 restrictions. The team of four trainees working on the mountain, led by experienced upland path builder **Matt McConway**, is doing a super job. Some work has been done lower down but, in the longer days of summer, their main focus has been on the steep upper section of the mountain known as the cone.

The path work on the cone is a complex process, using a bespoke stone-pitching technique, with all the work being done by hand. The skill and effort required to complete every single metre is phenomenal. The path offers a stable footing and blends into the landscape, providing a solution that protects the mountain from continuing erosion, without the intrusion of an obviously constructed path.

On other sections of the route the focus is on stabilising eroding slopes, reducing path braiding and directing the flow of water off the path. All this work is being done with the aim of healing the erosion scar on Croagh Patrick, and protecting Ireland's holy mountain from the impact of high visitor numbers by making a sustainable path along the Pilgrim Route.

If you're climbing Croagh Patrick and

the team is on the mountain, pause to have a word with them, they would welcome your feedback. Don't expect the path to be finished – the work on Croagh Patrick is expected to continue for at least another eighteen months.

In addition to protecting Croagh Patrick's environment, landscape and heritage, it is intended that this project will become a hub for sharing skills and knowledge regarding the management

of upland path erosion. The team hosted the **National Trust's Mourne Rangers** for a week in August, the start of a series of 'workshop' experiences to share good practices about mountain path repairs.

► The **Croagh Patrick Sustainable Access and Habitat Restoration Project** is an initiative of the **Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group**, funded by the **Department of Rural and Community Development** and **Mayo County Council** ■



Close-up image showing the structure of the path on the cone at Croagh Patrick



Some of the participants in the Women With Altitude Environmental Walk on Knocknacloghoge: Annija Lace, Helen O'Reilly, Ann McPartland, Carol O'Brady and Valeria Arenas



Farm Manager Michael Keegan speaking with the Women With Altitude group at Luggala Estate

‘Women With Altitude’ walk at Luggala

As part of Mountaineering Ireland’s **Women With Altitude week** in August, I led an enthusiastic group of women on an environmental walk at **Luggala Estate** in the Wicklow Mountains. Even though there was rain at times, it didn’t dampen the spirits of the eight participants, who were delighted to briefly meet with Luggala Farm Manager **Michael Keegan** and to hear about the conservation work being undertaken on the estate, before heading towards Knocknacloghoge’s rocky summit.

The group, which included club walkers, girl guide leaders and a couple of people who are relatively new to hiking, soaked up information about the history of Luggala Estate, appreciating the beauty of the place and spotting small details in the landscape – everything from frogs and flowers to ferns.

➡ The day concluded with a group commitment to the **3Cs** – to **Connect** with nature, **Care** for nature, and **Communicate** the importance of our natural environment ■

Outdoor Recreation Strategy being developed

Mountaineering Ireland playing a key role

Some readers will be amongst the 2,000+ people (and organisations) who responded to a public consultation process in June to feed into the development of a new **National Outdoor Recreation Strategy** for Ireland. The high level of interest in this consultation may reflect increased participation in outdoor activities such as hiking, cycling, paddlesports and wild swimming, and a greater awareness of the benefits that these and other outdoor recreation activities provide.

The themes that have emerged from analysis of the consultation responses include:

- Leadership, coordination and funding;
- Planning and environment;
- Communications, education and promotion;
- Participation and inclusion;
- Land access.

The National Outdoor Recreation Strategy is being developed through a collaborative process, led by **Comhairle na Tuaithe**, the national advisory body on outdoor recreation, in conjunction with the **Department of Rural and Community Development**. It is intended that this strategy will provide a vision and an overarching framework for the growth and development of outdoor recreation in Ireland, creating a shared approach for the many strategies, programmes, agencies and elements in Ireland’s outdoor recreation sector.

The **Strategy Working Group** is chaired by **Daithi de Forge**, Coillte’s Head of Recreation, with myself from Mountaineering Ireland as vice-chair. In addition to strengthening relationships with other organisations that have an interest in outdoor recreation, our involvement in this strategy represents a significant opportunity for Mountaineering Ireland to seek

support for hillwalking and climbing, as well as improvements in access and protection of the mountain environment.

Work on the strategy is currently at an intense stage, with a series of sub-groups focused on developing and proposing actions under the headings listed above. This will be followed by negotiations with the various bodies that could have a role in the delivery of these actions, with the Department of Rural and Community Development leading the discussions with other departments.

The second phase of public consultation on the draft strategy should take place early in 2022, after which the finished strategy will go before Cabinet for approval as Government policy ■

New Sperrins Partnership

A new partnership has been formed by the four local councils that have responsibility for parts of the **Sperrin Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** (AONB), to preserve, enhance and manage the natural, built and cultural heritage of the Sperrins area.

The creation of the **Sperrins Partnership** is a follow-up to a conference held in 2017 to consider how the potential of the Sperrins area could be achieved. A Project Officer has been appointed, and a new website has been created – www.sperrinspartnershipproject.com.

Mountaineering Ireland has requested a meeting with the Project Officer, along with representatives from local walking groups, to learn a bit more about the plans of the Sperrins Partnership, and to communicate our key concerns and hopes in relation to the future of the Sperrins ■



Training

News for members

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



Written by
Jane Carney,
Training Officer

Meets: two to look forward to!

The Winter Meet: Onich, Scotland, 12th to 19th of February 2022

The Alpine Meet: Saas Grund, Switzerland, 3rd to 17th of July, 2022

News for members, candidates, providers

■ **Strategic Development Plan for Mountaineering Ireland (2022-2025):** we will be consulting with stakeholders via surveys, online meetings, the e-zine and phone calls over the coming weeks. Have your say!

■ **Club Training Officers Online Workshops,** 3rd and 10th of October, 7.00-8.30pm. Club officers will be receiving invitations to attend these online club training sessions, to support, develop and refresh their training skills.

■ Please see the **Covid-19 guidance** for the safe return to activity: updates on the website.



■ **Train the Trainers, blended learning version.** The first blended learning version of the Train the Trainers course was run over three weeks in August. We delivered four blocks online via the Zoom platform and finished with a full day on the hill and at the crag. It was a new experience to deliver this course in this style and much learning was taken from it.

We are planning to run a second course imminently and we have a list of candidates to whom we will be sending the October course dates. If you are interested in becoming a trainer of the **Mountain Skills** or **Rock Skills** Personal Proficiency Schemes, and you hold the **Mountain Leader Award** or the **Rock Climbing Instructor (SPA) Award**, please contact the Training Office to be added to the list ■

Thank you to providers

Providers are now returning to course delivery as lockdown restrictions ease. A continued 'Thank you!' to the 90-plus trainers on their professionalism, adaptability and ingenuity during the last eighteen months. Providers have embraced blended learning and made reasonable adjustments to quality course provision. Further training will take place to facilitate the move to an improved reporting and registration system ■

News for participants, leaders and instructors

During the pandemic, the growth in the number of people participating in outdoor activities resulted in a proportionally similar increase in the number of call-outs received by the **Mountain Rescue** and **Lifboat voluntary services**. Whilst it is natural to want to take on greater challenges in the outdoors, doing so brings with it a personal responsibility to increase our skills level and inform ourselves on how to manage the greater risk safely. Progressing safely requires knowledge of: mountain and/or rock-climbing skills, equipment, weather ■

Skills training

The training course calendar is now bursting with personal proficiency skills course offerings for **Mountain Skills** and **Rock Skills**. These courses are designed to educate in the fundamental skills progression towards self-sufficiency.

Skills resources on the website can refresh faded knowledge. Presentations and videos can be watched and rewatched, pausing or repeating to give time to absorb or try the task set.

We have many qualified leaders and instructors, who can also train or guide you in the mountains or on the crags. Why not take on a **Walking Leader** training course or **Climbing Instructor** course? Holding a qualification to lead or instruct allows membership of an association and its benefits, such as professional insurance to enable individuals to set up in business, working as leaders and instructors in the outdoors.

■ 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 is 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 all experienced while combing our immediate locality during the tightest periods of the lockdown ■

■ Thank you for continuing to share the **AdventureSmart message** and its three questions with those less experienced than yourselves in the outdoors:

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

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

Now that trainers are returning to work, I would again remind trainers to be on high alert for the effects of this 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** and **First Aid Certificates** for renewal dates.

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

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 135,930 views ■



Participants on the blended Train the Trainers course at Hen Mountain

Photographs: Jane Carney

Key dates 2021-2022

- 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
- 12-19th February The Mountaineering Ireland Winter Meet, Onich, Scotland
- 3-17th July The Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meet, Saas Grund, Switzerland

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.



Gougane Barra, Co Cork

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 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 ■

Stay safe out there!

CLIMBING SAFELY

Part 1: Descending safely

In the first of a new series on climbing safely, mountaineer and big-wall climber **Andy Kirkpatrick** has some expert tips on descending safely

We live in a low-risk, safety-obsessed world, one in which risky play is no longer viewed as noble or worthy – a key to reliance and fortitude – but more often than not as just anti-social and foolhardy.

The failure to recognise this new reality, and the impact of accidents, the intervention of emergency services and the attention of the press, could well lead to curbs on climbers and mountaineers in the years to come. These could well be the types of restrictions that most of us are trying to escape from in the first place – to climb over the safety barrier; to run, carefully, with scissors; believing that, without the risk, there is no play.

Perhaps I'm being a bit hyperbolic and we won't see a day in which you're asked by the health and safety gestapo to show your climbing licence in Dalkey Quarry. Nevertheless, I think it's important that we understand where the wind is blowing.

In such a world, it is vital that members of the climbing community adopt a professional mindset when it comes to their safety, and leave behind some of the 'flying-by-the-seat-of-your-pants' attitudes. Such an approach involves adopting, practising and demonstrating safe techniques, in order to have our house in order.

This is especially true for a generation of young climbers who have transitioned from climbing-wall parties to becoming gym rats; and then from gym rats to proto-trad climbers; people who neither know how to tie a clove-hitch nor how to crap in the woods.

“IT IS VITAL THAT CLIMBERS ADOPT A PROFESSIONAL MINDSET WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR SAFETY”



Vanessa Kirkpatrick rappelling down from an attempt on the Grand Traverse of Mount Kenya



➤ **AUTHOR** *Andy Kirkpatrick is a mountaineer, author and motivational speaker, who lives in Barna, Co Galway. He is a big wall climber and has climbed Yosemite's El Capitan more than thirty times, including five solo ascents, as well as completing many other significant ascents in the Alps, Patagonia, Alaska and Antarctica.*

To that end, the aim of this and subsequent articles in this series is to help us think about what Irish climbing standards should be, and what we can learn, adopt and adapt to make that risky play a little more play and a lot less risk.

Safe descents

As 80% of climbing accidents happen on the way down, let's begin with safe descents. Here are six ironclad laws worth adopting as part of our climbing standards.

■ Back-up

Always use a **Prusik back-up**, be your rappel one pitch or twenty. This will not only save your life if you lose contact with the control strands, but will also give you a second chance if you fail to clip into your descender correctly.

Use a 5mm or 6mm Prusik, tying an autoblock. My personal favourite is a Prusik cord, rather than a loop, which is a single strand of cord approximately 70cm long once you've tied two clip loops into each end. (You should carry both a **Prusik cord** and a **Prusik loop** on your harness.) Clip this into your leg loop below your device, or extend your device and clip your back-up into your belay loop.

■ Close the system

Always close the system, which, when rappelling, means either tying a knot into the end of each rope, ideally a directional figure-eight (don't tie the ropes together, as they'll tangle), which both stops you rapping off the end of your rope and also gives you something to clip into in an emergency (like rappelling to the end of your rope).

If you're unsure where you're heading, or if it's windy, then clip the ends into your harness.

■ LAPAR protocol

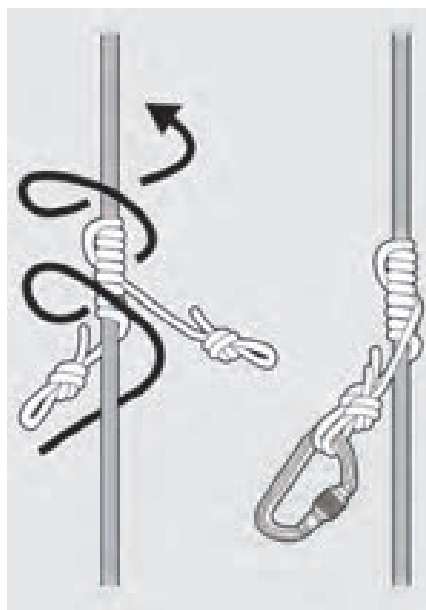
Always employ the **LAPAR protocol** when rappelling off your own anchors or when using dubious fixed ones. LAPAR stands for the **Last Person At Risk**, which means the first climber down is always protected by an unweighted back-up anchor, which is then removed by the last climber, now they have established that the primary anchor is good. Such an approach is a lifesaver on any forced retreat.

■ Knots

Join your ropes together with either an **offset overhand bend** (or **Euro Death Knot**) or – if you can't bring yourself to trust such a knot – then the **Gibbs Knot**, which is simply an offset overhand bend that **includes a double pass**.

Yes, there are many other knots, but these two are the best and can be tied easily in the dark and with your hands behind your back!

“WHEN IT COMES TO RISKY PLAY, OUR EGOS ARE WITHOUT DOUBT THE THING WE SHOULD KEEP MOST IN CHECK”



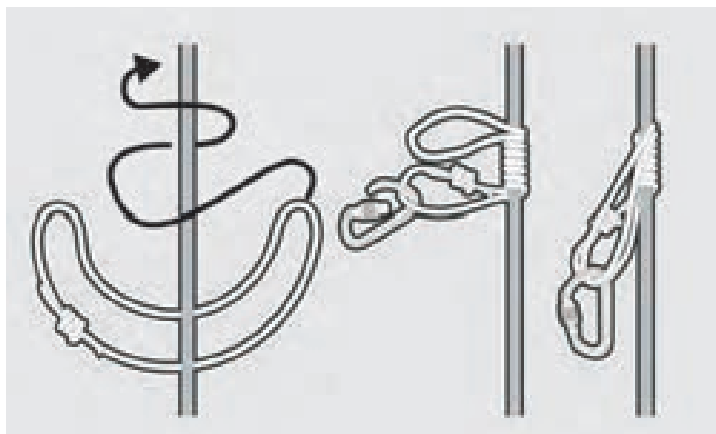
Autoblock tied with 'hitch cord'

■ Beyond cool

When a young climber, about to rappel down Glendalough, is laughed at by an old hand, when the young climber begins to wrap their back-up around the rope and the old hand tells the young climber not to bother, this is not a demonstration of experience versus inexperience, but only of ego.

At best, such an attitude demonstrates a lack of care and respect, and, at worst, it could kill someone.

So, when it comes to risky play, our egos are without doubt the thing we should keep most in check ■

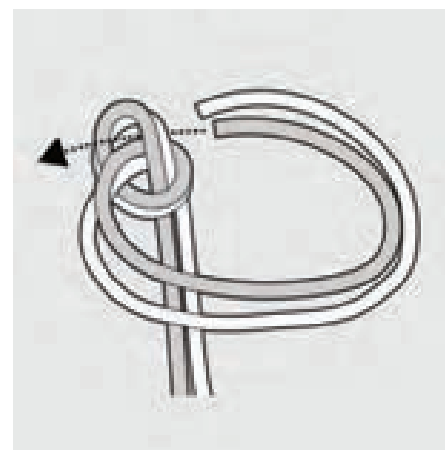


Autoblock tied with cord loop

■ Don't be a Scrooge

Don't die of stinginess! This comes down to the fact that it's always better to sacrifice a piece of gear, like a nut or even a cam, rather than a life, especially when you consider it won't be you bearing the long-term cost.

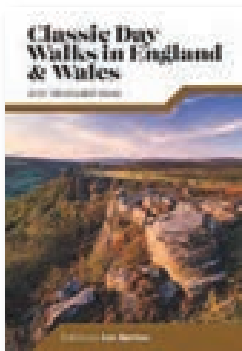
If you're forced to back off a climb, make that act a demonstration of your skill and competency rather than the opposite. Irish climbing has a lot going for it, but the quality of its fixed anchors, slings, pitons, etc, is not one of them.



Double-pass turns an offset overhand bend into a Gibbs Knot



Twenty great day walks in the hills of England and Wales



CLASSIC DAY WALKS IN ENGLAND AND WALES: 20 OF THE UK'S BEST WALKS

Edited by Jon Barton

Vertebrate Publishing (2021), 134pp, many colour photos & maps, £14.95, ISBN 978-1-839810-69-5

The twenty walks described in this pocket-sized guidebook are scattered the length and breadth of England, from Northumberland, near the

border with Scotland, to Lizard Point, at the very southern tip of Cornwall, with four in Wales included for good measure.

A favourite walk from each of the nineteen *Day Walks* guidebooks, published by Vertebrate Press, has been selected by the authors, with an extra one from the *Day Walks in Northumberland* guidebook thrown in.

The terrain covered in the walks varies from low-lying coastal paths, to pleasant pastures and rugged mountain tops, so there is something here for all tastes.

Each walk comes with an outline of the route covered, including notes on points of interest, historical and topographical. A section of the relevant OS map is included, along with some very enticing photographs. There is also a

detailed description of the route, with lots of easy-to-follow information, so even those who don't like map-reading should have no difficulty in finding their way!

In addition, the information provided for each route includes the starting point, with a grid reference, the approximate length of the walk, the time taken to complete it, the amount of ascent and possible refreshment opportunities.

This is a lovely little guidebook. However, I think the broad scope of the areas covered would make it of



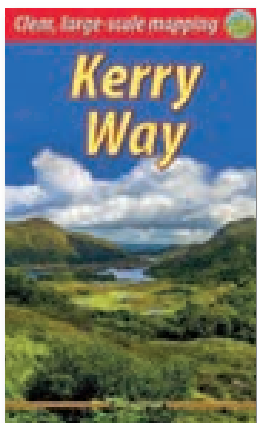
Lizard Point, Cornwall

limited value to anyone living outside of the UK.

On the other hand, browsing through the selection might entice the reader to purchase one of the definitive guidebooks and to explore that particular area.

Gerry Moss Hillwalker, rock climber and mountaineer. Member of the Irish Mountaineering Club

Revised guide to popular waymarked way in Kerry



KERRY WAY

By Sandra Bardwell & John G O'Dwyer

Rucksack Readers (2021, 3rd edition), 130 x 220mm, 88pp, 100 colour photos, €15.99, ISBN 978-1-913817-01-5

The **Kerry Way** is one of Ireland's longest national waymarked ways, running in a 210km loop, which starts and finishes in Killarney and

takes about nine days to walk.

The third edition of this detailed Rucksack Readers guidebook to the route is a fully revised edition. The authors are the experienced guidebook writer **Sandra Bardwell** and the well-known columnist and broadcaster **John G O'Dwyer**, who knows the Kerry Way very well and rewalked much of it this year.

Updates to guidebooks are important and there have been many changes on the Kerry Way since it was established in 1985 by **Laune Mountaineering Club** and **An Taisce**, and even since the last edition of this guide.

The first almost twenty pages provide background information to help you plan the hike. The next sixty pages go through each of the nine sections of the Way in some detail, including providing 1:45,000 maps for the whole



Section of map from the guide, showing the excellent detail provided

hike. Those maps and the step-by-step route description in this excellent guide, particularly with the updates, should certainly be sufficient to allow anyone to

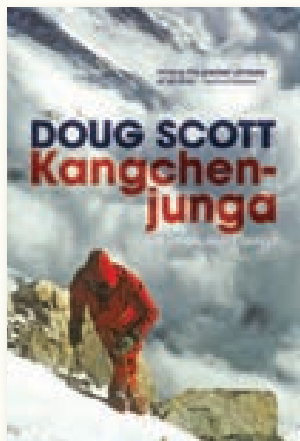
complete the Kerry Way in one go or, given its length, to break it into separate stages.

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

History of attempts on world's third highest peak including the author's attempts and success



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



KANGCHENJUNGA: THE HIMALAYAN GIANT

By **Doug Scott** (his last book, published posthumously)
Vertebrate Publishing (2021), 273pp, 34
colour photos, four b/w photos,
four maps, €24.00,
ISBN 978-1-7912560-19-6

I found this a very difficult book to read. It is not the usual description of all the different aspects of climbing a mountain. **Kangchenjunga** (8,586m) is the third highest mountain in the world. It is situated in the north-east of India, on the border between Sikkim and Nepal, and this book is really about the entire region where it is located.

Part 1 is a history of the whole region, with descriptions of the flora and fauna, and very detailed descriptions of the culture, religion and life-styles. The amount of detail is fascinating. Where and when did Doug obtain the information? The research must have taken many hours.

Part 2 tells the reader about the initial endeavours to explore the region. Many of these early expeditions were more interested in scientific research, collecting plants and obtaining meteorological observations to justify the expenses involved. You are left with the question of how the

earliest explorers got to and around the areas in question with no maps, just the local knowledge of the geography passed down through the generations by those living there?

Part 3 describes the experiences of the early mountaineers, who attempted to climb Kangchenjunga. We see national interest and competition coming into play. The idea of the British Empire wanting to stake a claim to this mountain takes centre stage.

In Part 4, we get a better feel for the real efforts to be first to climb Kangchenjunga. Expeditions are more organised, and better-planned and led. The British climbers **Douglas Freshfield** and **Alister Crowley** are regarded as the first serious climbers to attempt the mountain. Names we are familiar with as mountaineers now come to the fore.

It is only in the final two chapters (15 and 16) that we get an insight into the real hardships of climbing Kangchenjunga. Doug's description of his ascent in

1979 without oxygen will have you taking every step with him and his companions.

The photos, old and new, give the reader a feel for what the book sets out to portray. The insistence of local authorities that the summit was sacred and should not be set foot on has been upheld by all those who have got within touching distance of the top. Kangchenjunga is considered by many eminent mountaineers to be a most dangerous 8,000m peak to climb. This is borne out by the fact that it was only first climbed in 1955 by **Joe Brown** and **George Band** on an expedition led by **Charles Evans**, and it then took twenty years until there was a second ascent.

Doug's ascent in 1979, the third, is described in great detail. The toll it took on the team's health is quite apparent from his comments. They undertook the challenge with minimal Sherpa support, no radio communications and no great expense for equipment or food. Having been defeated on their first summit bid, they still made a second attempt,

despite the horrendous weather conditions they encountered. The risks they took in the face of numerous avalanches, hurricane winds and freezing conditions were beyond what might be considered acceptable, in my opinion. Evans describes the crux ice-wall on his attempt as being "more difficult and dangerous than the Khumbu Icefall on Everest." In deference to the Sikkimese beliefs, they also stopped short of the summit.

This last book by Doug Scott is certainly well-researched and full of information about the various ascents of Kangchenjunga, which is possibly the hardest 8,000m peak to climb.

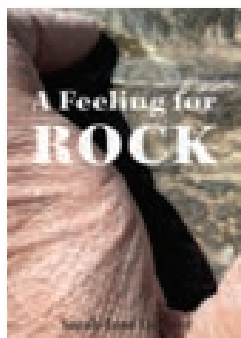
Denis Reidy An experienced mountaineer who has climbed in the Alps, Himalayas and Andes



Kangchenjunga



An exploration of the aesthetics and ethics of climbing



A FEELING FOR ROCK

By Sarah-Jane Dobner

Self-published, www.dobdobdob.co.uk (2021), 260pp, 22pp b/w photos, £13.99 (including UK postage), £19.99 (including European postage), ISBN 978-1-838400-41-5

This self-published book is a collection of essays, interviews, photographs and technical tips, with poetry and cartoons, exploring the author's connections with rock, routes and landscape, and a climbing life. The result, free of the constraints of a publishing house editor, is a book which probably has something of interest for every potential reader, as well as other material of lesser or even of no interest whatsoever.

The only potential reader, I would suggest, who should

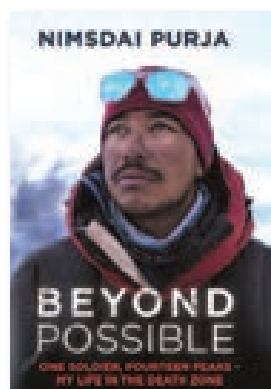
definitely avoid this book is the reader for whom a glossary of climbing terms is included. Unless that reader has a specific interest, such as poetry or the ethical issues relating to climbing, which are discussed, then that reader is likely to be disappointed, with or without the glossary of climbing terms.

Sarah-Jane's writing style, poetry and cartoons were less to my taste than they may be for others. However, the essays venturing into her personal philosophy, into gender and into ethical issues

raise issues worthy of consideration: should we, for example, impose English route names on first ascents abroad? Or should we monopolise crag development and guidebook writing, claiming all the key lines in areas with as yet no active, native climbing scene, before that nascent climbing community has had time to develop, rather than encouraging the birth or development of that local scene?

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

Completing the fourteen highest peaks in record time



BEYOND POSSIBLE: ONE SOLDIER, FOURTEEN PEAKS – MY LIFE IN THE DEATH ZONE

By Nimsdai Purja

Hodder & Stoughton (2020), 305pp, 16pp colour photos, €24.00, ISBN 978-1-529312-24-9

"I was the strongest climber by far; I carried the experience and the capability to function in extreme temperatures and, as an élite operator, I certainly possessed enough resilience to nail the mission. Plus, I trailblazed like a badass. Who else could they rely on?"

If you don't like this style of writing, you should probably give this book by Nimsdai ('Nims') Purja a wide berth. I haven't just singled out that quote. Some version of it

appears every few pages and 'trailblazing' and 'badass' seem to be the most commonly used words, alongside tortured military metaphors and jargon, self-praising anecdotes and stories with no insight.

That lack of insight surfaces in the story of his now-infamous photo of climbers queuing below the Hillary Step on Everest (see photo, right).

Nimsdai ignores the fact that he is decrying the crowds there, while using the project of climbing all of the fourteen 8,000m peaks in the shortest time to promote his guiding company and the fact that some of his ascents included paying clients to finance the project.

Nimsdai Purja served as a Gurkha in the British army and was also a member of the élite Special Boat Service there, before focusing on mountaineering.

Besides the literary failings, the mountaineering picture painted in this book is unappealing. It is one of



Traffic jam below Everest's Hillary Step

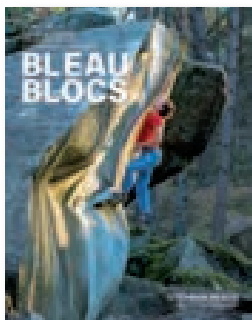
increasing commercialisation that has gone beyond increasing accessibility and into decreasing standards, with the use of supplementary oxygen at every stage, the use of fixed ropes, the resulting crowds and the attendant damage to the mountains.

Lowering the record for climbing the fourteen 8,000m mountains from over seven years to less than seven months is certainly an impressive achievement in determination, logistics and athleticism. All credit to the author for it, but the style that underpins the whole project is

not a particularly appealing one, in my opinion. The mountains aren't climbed, enjoyed or respected, and there is no process of self-discovery, and no exploration of new routes. Summits are "nailed" or compared to military operations, which involved "kicking in doors and taking down bad guys." The whole project is kept on schedule by using helicopters between base camps, at times, taking it even further away from pure alpinism.

Kevin Duffy A rock climber and mountaineer

Guide to Fontainebleau's finest boulder problems



BLEAU BLOCS: 100 OF THE FINEST BOULDER PROBLEMS IN THE FONTAINEBLEAU FOREST

By Stéphan Denys

(translated by Natalie Berry)

Vertebrate Publishing (2021), (first

published in 2020 in French), 224pp, many pages of colour photos, £25.00, ISBN 978-1-839810-49-7

Lacking a volunteer to review this book, I'll confine myself to the publisher's description (below), adding only that I have always found a locally written guidebook preferable. Invariably, little details seem to be missed, however frequently the anglophone writer has visited the area in question.

* * * * *

Bleau Blocs: 100 of the finest boulder problems in the

Fontainebleau forest is a visual celebration of this unique and vast bouldering venue.

Stéphan Denys is the eye of the Fontainebleau forest. Having spent nearly forty years as a photographer and climber roaming every inch of the rocky landscape, he has developed a special bond with these sandstone giants and their unique shapes: sometimes round and bumpy, sometimes sharp and angular, but always fascinating.

His photos span a range of eras and are accompanied by texts that expand on the context and characteristics of

each boulder problem.

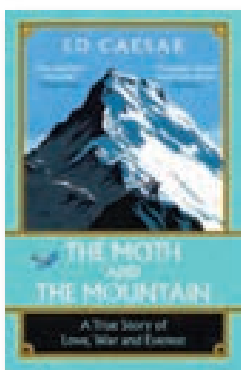
Included also is a preface by **Olivier Lebreton**.

The 100 striking problems chosen are listed by sector: the National Forest, the Trois Pignons, Larchant and Nemours, followed by Buthiers and l'Essonne. Through this selection, the author shares his vision of bouldering in Fontainebleau and invites us to consider the boulders more deeply, from all their angles.

An inspiring book for all climbers, whatever their level!

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

2021 Boardman Tasker Award shortlist announced



By Patrick O'Sullivan

The **Boardman Tasker Award for Mountain Literature** attracted a substantial number of entries again this year, forty-one in all. The judges, **David Canning** (Chair), **Natalie Berry** and **Marni Jackson**, selected six books for this year's shortlist. The award ceremony will be held online at the **Kendal Mountain Festival**, from 7.00 to 9.00pm on Saturday, November 20th, 2021. The shortlisted books are:

The Moth and the Mountain: A True Story of Love, War and Everest

By Ed Caesar (Viking, an imprint of Penguin Random House)

This account of Maurice Wilson's attempt to fly to and climb Mount Everest is a fitting tribute to his amazing journey.

Himalaya: A Human History

By Ed Douglas (Penguin Random House)

This book explores the human history of the Himalaya and how the mountains have shaped the people.



Signs of Life: To the Ends of the World with a Doctor

By Stephen Fabes (Profile books: Pursuit Books)

An account of the author's journeys around the world on a bicycle, and the people he met along the way.

Never Leave the Dog Behind

By Helen Mort (Vertebrate Publishing)

This book explores the bonds that exists between people, their dogs and the mountains.

To Live: Fighting for Life on the Killer Mountain

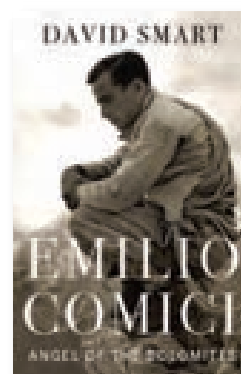
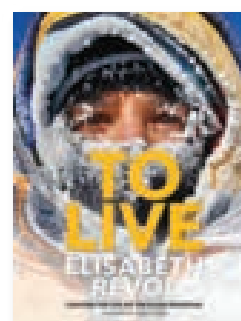
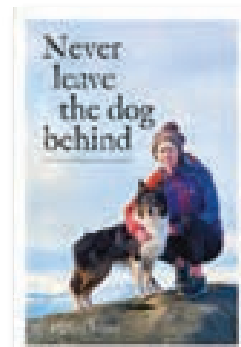
By Élisabeth Revol (Vertebrate Publishing)

An account of Elisabeth Revol's survival in winter on Nanga Parbat, and of the survivor's guilt she experienced (see review, IML 136, page 63).

Emilio Comici: Angel of the Dolomites

By David Smart (Rocky Mountain Books)

A biography of one of Italy's foremost climbers, Emilio Comici, who put up some of the first big wall climbs and developed new climbing techniques.



The Last Word

Eddie Gaffney

Remembering Eddie Gaffney twenty-five years on

This year's August bank holiday weekend marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the passing of **Eddie Gaffney**, who sadly died in 1996 in a climbing accident in the Italian Alps at the age of 53.

Eddie was one of the pioneers of Irish rock-climbing in the 1960s. He was also a remarkable all-rounder – a rock-climber, hill-runner, hillwalking record-breaker, alpinist, marathon runner and orienteer, to mention the areas where some of his achievements lay.

Many *Irish Mountain Log* readers will have fond memories of Eddie during what was a great era for Irish climbing and mountaineering, to which Eddie contributed from the 1960s until his death.



'A classic photo taken by Gerry Moore in Glendalough in the 1960s with Eddie Gaffney pictured centre. Gerry Cairns is on far right. The others were visitors at the time

Much of the following is from a tribute written by **Frank Nugent** at the time of Eddie's death. Thank you also to **Paddy O'Leary**, author of *The Way That We Climbed*, for his assistance. Paddy describes Eddie in his book as a "live-wired activist of the 1960s and 1970s, record-breaker of the Hart's and Lug Walks, route pioneer in Glendalough and Donegal, and an old friend."

Frank wrote: "Eddie Gaffney, in alpine boots, flashing up 'Speir Bhean' and 'Sarcophagus,' two routes in Glendalough, in 1966, are my first and abiding memories of this energetic and irrepressible rock-climber."

Eddie started his climbing career with the **Irish Mountaineering Club (IMC)** in around 1960, after having already joined **An Óige** at a very young age. Much of his early climbing was done in the company of **Pat Higgins, Emmet Goulding** and **Gerry**

Moore in Glendalough, where new routes '**Celia**' (named after his future wife) and '**Jackie**' in Glendalough first bore Eddie's bootmarks in the early 1960s. Both are superb VS routes. Eddie also climbed with **Paddy O'Leary** on '**Symbol**' in Glenveagh, Co Donegal, with Eddie leading the crux pitch and Paddy leading the other pitches, and, of course, on '**Gaffney's Climb**' at Lough Barra, Co Donegal.

He partnered **Emmet Goulding** in 1963 to climb the **Dru** north face in Chamonix, going straight from the train station to the bivouac site after a 48-hour journey from Dublin by sea and train. This was a golden period in Irish Alpine climbing, as Emmet added this Pierre Allain classic to his

previous climbs of the **Bonatti Pillar** and the west face of the **Dru**.

In 1994, Eddie soloed the **Marmolata** in the Dolomites, the **Grossglockner** in Austria, and the **Matterhorn** from Zermatt.

A record-breaker on the Hart's and Lug Walks, Eddie held the fastest recorded time of 17 hours, 39 mins with **Niall Rice** for **Hart's Walk**

(September 24th, 1976), breaking their own previous best

time of 19 hours, 50 mins for the 69 miles from Terenure to Lugnaquilla and back.

Eddie married **Celia** in 1967 and was less active in climbing while they reared their five children. During this time, he took up squash and quickly progressed to A-level. He also started to run with **Liffey Valley AC** in Islandbridge, Dublin, completing nearly forty marathons and half-marathons, including nine **Dublin City Marathons** and the **Boston** and **Berlin Marathons**. His best time for the distance was two hours and 51 minutes.

Early retirement was on the cards for Eddie and, when choosing a location for a mobile home in 1990 with his retirement plan in mind, the location of course had to be in close proximity to a mountain range. The Comeraghs, Co Waterford, became Eddie's new playground at weekends. Eddie's wife Celia and his eldest daughter

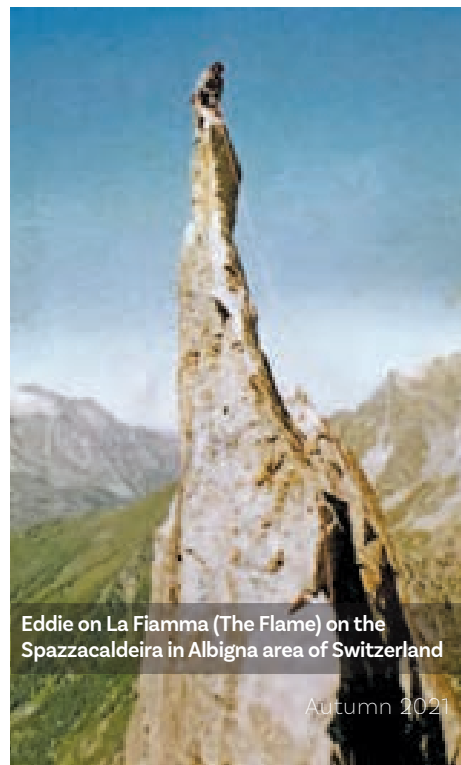


Eddie pictured in the Dolomites

still live in this area.

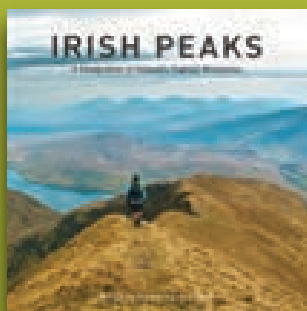
In the late 1980s, Eddie started to travel to the Alps for summer holidays with his family and friends, climbing and walking. It was on one of these trips that he tragically fell and died on August 4th, 1996, while descending on **Monte Disgrazia** (3,678m) in the Bregaglia range of the Italian Alps.

Andrea Gaffney



Eddie on La Fiamma (The Flame) on the Spazzacaldera in Albigna area of Switzerland

Autumn 2021



Irish Peaks, Mountaineering Ireland's new hillwalking guidebook, is now available for purchase through Mountaineering Ireland's website. It is a must-have, large format hardback with route descriptions and a beautiful collection of images covering the hundred highest peaks on the island of Ireland. The book can be ordered at: www.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.

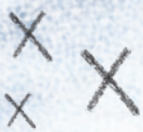




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