

irish mountain log

THE MAGAZINE FOR WALKERS AND CLIMBERS IN IRELAND

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Denis Golden, Margaret Tees and Mary McGuigan on Urris, overlooking Lough Swilly, during the Culdaff Climbifest on the Inishowen peninsula, Co Donegal, at the end of April. Note the extensive fires on Knockalla Mountain and the golden sands of Portsalon beach. Photo: Gerry Galligan.

Help stamp out forest fires

fires caused unprecedented losses to forestry during an abnormally dry spring

The increase in forest and wild fires in Ireland over the past two years is a worrying trend for Coillte, other forest owners and the national Parks and wildlife service. The state forestry company reported the loss of 738 hectares (1,800 acres) of forest due to fire in 2010 but this has been exceeded in 2011, with a total loss of 833ha (2,058 acres) so far this year, the greatest damage yet recorded in one year to forest lands. This represents a loss of more than €3.5m in damaged crops alone.

Despite legislative restrictions on burning between March 1st and August 31st each year, many forest fires are caused by fire spreading from adjoining lands where landowners are availing of dry spells to burn unwanted gorse, heather and other vegetation. The highest losses occur in the months of March and April each year. As the previous year's vegetation becomes desiccated in mid to late spring, the risk of fire spreading increases and hillsides and forests are particularly

vulnerable to fire at this time. Once new green growth overtakes decayed vegetation, the risk subsides, usually by early May.

It is during this fire-risk period that people engaging in outdoor recreation activities are asked to be on the alert for signs of forest and hill fires. Any smoke or flames spotted, especially in remote areas, should immediately be reported to the fire service or to the Gardaí. Early control of forest fires is vital as they can quickly engulf whole hillsides and become almost impossible to control.

The loss of habitat, landscape quality and timber during these fires is usually catastrophic with almost total loss on all affected sites. All visitors to the countryside are requested to take particular care in the dry season with any potential source of fire in the outdoors, such as campfires or lighted cigarette butts – ideally people should desist from lighting any fires or barbecues during high-risk periods.

As the largest recreational group in upland and remote areas, hillwalkers and climbers

are well positioned to spot the threat of forest fires in those areas. With most recreational activity taking place outside normal working hours, this is especially important in supplementing the role of Coillte's operational staff who may not be working in these areas at those times.

Coillte very much appreciates the assistance it has received from recreational users of the hills and its lands, and particularly the co-operation received from Mountaineering Ireland members in recent years.

If you spot a wildfire, call 999 or 911 and ask for the Fire Service. Give the location of the fire, with a grid reference, if possible. You can help stamp out forest fires.

**d áithí de f orge,
c oillte o utdoors**



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hot rock climbing wall

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

Participation and risk

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

mountain Ireland

Anthony Toole goes climbing in Tasmania

Martin Hansard communes with nature on the highest peak in Connacht

Alun Richardson has some useful tips on buying the right pair of boots

Cormac Mac Gearailt

Fin O'Driscoll

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Fire dangers

In this issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* we highlight the destructive nature of the wildfires that have occurred increasingly, it seems, in the last few years, particularly in the drier spring months. These fires are hugely destructive to flora and fauna and to the habitats in the sometimes protected areas. Uncontrolled fires are also a threat to human habitation and to the lives of recreational outdoors users and emergency services personnel, who have to attempt to control them. All recreational users should be aware of the dangers of fire, whether from a campfire or barbeque or from something as small as a lighted cigarette butt.

As members head off on their summer vacations, wherever their travels take them, I would just ask that they consider writing about their experiences and submitting an article for publication in the *Log* so that other members can share in and perhaps benefit from those experiences.

The most important item of gear that hillwalkers and climbers will buy are boots and, in this issue of the *Log*, Mountaineering Ireland Training Officer Alun Richardson gives us the benefit of his experience, emphasising the importance of getting the right fit when purchasing new boots.

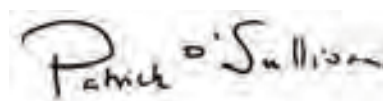
In this issue, we also resume the popular Book Reviews section that was edited for so long by Joss I ynam, RIP. Peter O'Neill has kindly agreed to take on this role.

I recently came across this quote from Sir Francis Younghusband, which it seems to me captures the essence of our sport:

"To those who have struggled with them, the mountains reveal beauties that they will not disclose to those who make no effort. That is the reward the mountains give to effort. And it is because they have so much to give, and give it so lavishly to those who will wrestle with them, that men love the mountains and go back to them again and again. The mountains reserve their choice gifts for those who stand upon their summits."

– Sir Francis Younghusband

I hope you will safely enjoy the freedom of the hills that the longer summer days give us, to experience 'the reward the mountains give to effort.'




Patrick O'Sullivan
editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

on The cover : Heather in bloom on the slopes of Djouce, Co Wicklow. Photo: Patrick O'Sullivan.

This Page: A fire warden tackles a forest fire in the Irish uplands. Photo: Coillte Teo.

News

get all the latest news at www.mountaineering.ie



Members of Skibbereen Walking Group on the descent from Mt Brandon.
Photo: Ted Cadogan.

Mountaineering Ireland grants

club training funds now available

nicole mullen

MOuNTAINEERING IRELAND has created a Club Training Fund. This fund is available to all member clubs that are engaged in, or are interested in, developing skills within their club. There is a total of €5,000 available from this fund in 2011.

how does mountaineering ireland decide who gets grant approval?

All applications will be reviewed by Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS, the Irish Mountain Training Board). Any applications that do not meet the criteria will be ruled out. Preference will be given to:

- Clubs that have not previously received a Mountaineering Ireland Training Grant;
- New clubs;
- Training that brings leadership and new skills into a club;
- Clubs with a high proportion of young members;
- Clubs with a larger number of people doing training;
- Clubs which are engaging in formal training for the first time;
- Clubs that could not otherwise afford such training.

BOS reserves the right not to award the full subsidy.

other points

- The club's Mountaineering Ireland membership fees must be paid in full.
- Applications must be on the correct form.
- The type and amount of training done must be the same as on your application.
- BOS's decision will be final.

Mountaineering Ireland places a high value on training and on the concept of self-reliance for walkers and climbers. We appreciate that cost can often be a barrier to training. Consequently, Mountaineering Ireland operates a number of grant schemes to support clubs and individuals doing formal and informal training.

BOS administers these training grants on behalf of Mountaineering Ireland. While BOS's remit does not extend to Northern Ireland, these grants are open to all Mountaineering Ireland members.

There is a limited amount of money available for each grant, so applications early in the year stand a better chance. Grants may be applied for before or after the training takes place, but will only be payable once the training is completed.

The grant scheme is mainly aimed at clubs but is also open to individual members. The grant supports participation in BOS/MI TNI schemes – Mountain Skills, Walking Group Leader, Mountain Leader, Single Pitch Award, etc. The maximum grant is €250 per club in any one year.

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**mountain
Ireland**

Club Training Officer Workshops

nicol e mUI len

MOuNTAINEERING IREI AND is committed to responding to its members' mountaineering needs. A priority that has emerged in discussions with many clubs is to ensure that all their members are trained in the hill skills necessary to safely enjoy a day in the mountains. These skills include navigation, personal equipment, informal leadership, and hazards and safety.

In response, Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS) is working toward having volunteer Club Training Officers in all Mountaineering Ireland-affiliated clubs. The role of these officers will be to liaise with the Mountaineering Ireland training office in promoting mountain training – both formal and informal – within their clubs.

As a first step toward achieving this, a number of weekend workshops are being organised throughout the country. These will be an opportunity for clubs' nominated Club Training Officers to come together with Mountaineering Ireland, discuss their clubs' training needs and work toward designing an effective training structure.

It is not the aim of these sessions to teach hill skills but to demonstrate how to pass them on to others. Participants should, therefore, have considerable prior knowledge and experience of the mountain environment. It is hoped that they will subsequently pass on the information learnt at the workshops to their fellow club members. In this way, training information can be widely disseminated among Mountaineering Ireland clubs. These weekends will also provide participants with information on Leave No Trace and formal mountain training schemes such as the Walking Group Leader, Mountain Skills, or

Mountain Leader awards.

Workshops are open to any club member who may subsequently be willing to act as a volunteer Training Officer for their club. These individuals would also act as direct links between their club and BOS, keeping BOS informed of any training needs that may arise and passing on information about future training possibilities to club members.

The programme for the weekend will consist of both indoor informal discussion sessions and outdoor practical exercises. Participants should therefore come prepared to spend some part of each day in the outdoors.

Anyone interested in attending one of these workshops and acting as their club's Training Officer, should initially get in touch with their club's chairperson or secretary. The next CTO workshop will take place on the weekend November 5th-6th, 2011. Further details and a booking form are available at www.mountaineering.ie.



Environmental Officer Workshops

helen lawless

A TOTAL OF FORTY club representatives participated in the three Mountaineering Ireland Club Environmental Officers' Workshops that took place during the spring in Tipperary, Wicklow and Donegal.

Thanks are due to the guest speakers, who included representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Mountain Meitheal, BirdWatch Ireland and the Golden Eagle Trust, as well as a number of Rural Recreation Officers.

Based on the positive feedback from participants, it is likely that a further series of workshops will be arranged for spring 2012.

In the meantime, Club Environmental Officers continue to receive email updates as well as advice and support from Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer.

If your club hasn't yet appointed an Environmental Officer, or you'd like to find out more about the role, get in touch with Helen Lawless at Mountaineering Ireland or by email at helen@mountaineering.ie.

Calendar of events

For more information about any of these events, please see the relevant section of this magazine or the events section of the website, www.mountaineering.ie.

2-17 July 2011 Summer Alpine Meet, Argentière, France.

8 September Continuing Professional Development WGI workshop, Wicklow. Theme: using a GPS.

9 September Continuing Professional Development MI A workshop, Wicklow. Theme: Boots for mountain walking.

10 September Continuing Professional Development MS workshop, Kerry.

9 October Continuing Professional Development MS workshop, Donegal.

14-16 October 2011 Autumn Gathering, hosted by Maumturks Walking Club. Leenane Hotel, Connemara, Co Galway.

12-13 November Club Training Officer Workshop (location TBA).

Log on to the Mountaineering Ireland website for booking forms and further details of these events.



Mountaineering Ireland promotes the principles of Leave No Trace

Your elected board

four officer positions will fall vacant at next agm

THE CURRENT BOARD of Mountaineering Ireland was elected at the Annual General Meeting in 2010 for a two-year term. In consequence, there were no elections at the most recent AGM, held in the Glen of Aherlow in March. Board members all serve in a voluntary capacity and are directors of Mountaineering Ireland, a company limited by guarantee.

A new board will have to be elected at the AGM in March next year. Although most of the current board members will be eligible for re-election, Alan Tees, the current President, Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Chairperson, David Batt, Honorary Treasurer and Ross Millar, Honorary Secretary, will all be stepping down from their posts, having completed two two-year terms. All have been very active and successful in their roles and will be hard acts to follow. However, it is important to renew the board and therefore members are encouraged to consider putting themselves forward for election at the AGM. Women and members with relevant skills are particularly encouraged to stand as it is important to have a gender balance and a mix of the appropriate skills on the board.



Alan Tees, President

Alan Tees has been mountaineering since the early 1970s, both at home and abroad, including on four Himalayan trips and trips to the Canadian and US Rockies, Kenya and various parts of Europe/Alps (including attendance at all recent Mountaineering Ireland Alpine Meets).

Alan was an instigator and organiser of the Glover Highland Walk and Cudaff Climbfest, being chairman of North West Mountaineering Club for three terms and founder and former president of Colmcille Climbers. He has been president of Mountaineering Ireland for three years now and is in his last year in that post. He has been a very active president, visiting many member clubs and participating in as many meets as possible.



David Batt, Honorary Treasurer

David Batt starting hillwalking as a teenager in the scouts and, whilst he has gone on to develop his own mountaineering skills at home and abroad, he has remained committed to hillwalking within scouting. David holds a Mountain Leader Award and is a Leave No Trace trainer. Professionally, David holds a number of business qualifications

and has worked in various management accounting roles. He is currently the honorary treasurer of Mountaineering Ireland.



Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Chairperson

Ruairí Ó Conchúir has been hillwalking and mountaineering for over 25 years and has a keen interest in promoting the work of Leave No Trace. He has for the last 20 years worked in agricultural management, land reform, conservation and community-based eco-tourism projects in Ireland and southern Africa. He lives in the Burren, Co Clare. Ruairí has served on the board of Mountaineering Ireland for the last five years,

initially as chairman of the Access & Conservation Committee and then as chairman of the board for the last three years. He is now in his last year in that post.



Sandra Kennedy

Sandra Kennedy has more than 10 years' experience of hillwalking, climbing and mountaineering in Ireland, Scotland and Europe and she participated in an expedition to the Himalayas last year. She is a member of the Colmcille Climbers and has been a member of the Galway Mountain Rescue Team for the last six years. She is working her way towards Mountain Leader and has

undertaken ML 1 and ML 2, although further progression is on hold until she completes the law degree she is currently working for. Professionally, Sandra is a HR specialist with 10 years' experience in private industry and her current employment is based within the HR operations team at the National University of Ireland in Galway.



Ross Millar, Honorary Secretary

Ross Millar has been a hillwalker since his teens. Because of his professional background in public sector administration and management, Ross acts as honorary secretary to the board. He is a voluntary director of Countryside Recreation Northern Ireland. He is also chairman of the Mountain Leader Training Board for Northern Ireland and of the Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN).



Ronan Lenihan

Ronan Lenihan sits on the board as the current Chair of Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe (BOS, the Irish Mountain Training Board), a sub-committee of Mountaineering Ireland. The members of BOS are volunteers who are all active mountaineers involved in some aspect of mountain training. Ronan himself is a provider of mountain training, including

Mountain Skills, WGI, ML and First Aid. He has been involved in mountaineering for many years and is also a member of Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team.



Stephen mcmullan

Stephen McMullan has been hillwalking since 1978 in Ireland, Scotland and Wales; rock-climbing since 1985 in Ireland, Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Slovenia; and bouldering in Ireland, Britain and France. He has had many adventures winter mountaineering in Scotland and Wales; waterfall ice-climbing in France and

Norway; and alpine mountaineering in the French Alps and the Andes. He is a former member of DIT Kevin Street MC and Dal Riada, with executive positions held, and a former member of Co-op Climbing Club and the IMC. He is currently an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland.

Stephen is a founding member of the Co-op bouldering training facility in Dublin and is manager of the Irish Climbing Online community website www.climbing.ie. The site also hosts the Irish Climbs Database. Stephen was Chairperson of the Irish Bouldering League series of indoor climbing competitions for two seasons. In addition, he continues to be a very active diver.

He is a computer software engineer by profession.



Jerry o'dwyer

Jerry O'Dwyer is a member of the Irish Ramblers Club and is chairman, under the Irish Sports Council, of the National Trails Advisory Committee. He has a particular interest in club development and in the greater involvement of youth in mountaineering.



Patrick o'sullivan

Patrick O'Sullivan has been involved in hillwalking and climbing since he was a teenager. His interest has taken him to mountainous areas in many different parts of the world, including the European Alps, the Southern Alps, the Himalayas and East Africa. At the same time, he has been privileged to live and work in several countries including for two years in New Zealand, five years in Nepal, five

years in Thailand and two years in Malawi. He is a doctor by profession and is Mountaineering Ireland's Medical Officer and Anti-Doping Officer. Patrick was honorary treasurer for six years and is currently the editor of the *Irish Mountain Log*.



Dawson stelfox

Dawson Stelfox has been an active walker, climber and alpinist for over thirty years, and has been a volunteer with Mountaineering Ireland and its predecessors since the early 1980s. He qualified as an international mountain guide in 1989 and has been involved in all aspects of mountain training for many years, including the then MCI's Millennium Youth Initiative, and the Alpine Meets.

In 1993, Dawson made the first Irish ascent of Everest, one of his many expeditions to the Greater Ranges. Dawson represents Mountaineering Ireland on the NI and uK Mountain Training Boards.



The Irish Mountain Log is read widely!

When they were in Delhi, India, in August 2010, the President of Mountaineering Ireland, Alan Tees, and a member of the board, Sandra Kennedy, visited the library of the Indian Mountaineering Foundation. To their surprise and delight, they found the *Irish Mountain Log* in the library, prominently displayed! The photo shows Alan and Sandra in the library, with Alan pointing to the *Log*.

Do let us know of any other far-flung locations where the *Irish Mountain Log* can be seen.

New partnership with Summit Ireland

karl boyle

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND is delighted to announce a new benefit for all hillwalkers and climbers on the island of Ireland. Summit Ireland, a partnership between Summit Financial Services, New Horizon Financial and Mountaineering Ireland, will eliminate unnecessary loadings and provide the best value in life insurance for you. For more information, please see the news release from Summit Ireland below and visit their website, www.summitireland.ie/.

summit ireland: does your activity affect your life insurance policy?

For years, many members of the hillwalking and climbing community have been unfairly penalised when taking out mortgage protection, life assurance or critical illness cover.

As it is deemed a dangerous pastime, there are situations where underwriters may consider it necessary to load an individual's life assurance premium. Therefore, you may be liable for a hike in your premium.

Failure to disclose to your insurance company that you are a hillwalker or climber may impact on your life policy cover, as, legally, your insurer may be able to void your contract whether your non-disclosure was intentional or not.

Summit Ireland is a membership benefit

service of Mountaineering Ireland. Summit Ireland has worked with underwriters to ensure that fair and transparent deals are made available, where the hillwalker or climber is seen as someone engaged in a recognised sport, with a responsible attitude to risk.

Summit Ireland assesses a risk before it is placed with an underwriter and offers a qualified price, taking into account an individual's activities at the time of enquiry, and thus saving a lot of wasted time and energy.

Make sure that you obtain cover that includes your specific activities. If you don't tell the insurance company, then they are within their rights not to pay out.

for your consideration

- For those who have already taken out policies, check that the insurance

company is aware of your activity and check that the policy covers it.

- If you are considering taking out a policy, make sure that you disclose the full extent of your activity.
- If you are about to participate in your activity abroad, then be absolutely sure that the company is aware that you will be engaging in your activity abroad also.

It's well known that all mountaineers, hillwalkers and climbers enjoy a challenge, but applying for life assurance shouldn't be another one – you've simply got better things to do with your time.

- For more information, please contact Summit Ireland at www.summitireland.ie or I ocall 0818 227 228.
- Summit Ireland is a registered trading name of New Horizon Financial in the Republic of Ireland. New Horizon Financial is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.



New car park and footbridges at Lislebane

THE MINISTER for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, officially opened the Lislebane (Lios I eadháin) car park and two footbridges crossing the Geadach and Caol Dubh rivers, providing access to the Hags Glen (Com Cailí), in the Reeks, on Monday, June 13th.

Minister Deenihan described the development as an example of the impact local landowners, community groups (especially Beaufort Community Council) and other agencies can make when working together. He emphasised the importance of this development for the local economy in attracting more people to the area.

The steel footbridges, which were made and donated by the Killarney-based

German crane company **Liebherr Ireland**, were named in honour of the late Patie O'Shea, a local Beaufort community activist, and Angela Kenny, who tragically lost her life there in 1987. Angela was a member of the Limerick Climbing Club.

As previously described in the *Irish Mountain Log* (No 94, Summer 2010), the addition of the car park and footbridges are important infrastructural additions to the Reeks, completing three of the five points of the Reeks Action Plan. These facilities also support the Carrauntoohil Mountain Access project being developed by the Rural Recreation Section, which has recently been moved to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.



The An Óige Errigal Hostel,
Dunlewy, Co Donegal.



Special offer from An Óige

so far, 2011 has been a great year for An Óige, with a new franchise hostel, **Cashel Holiday Hostel**, joining the group and a landmark 80th anniversary to boot. However, An Óige isn't resting on its laurels just yet and work is underway on a new-look website at **www.anoige.ie**.

To mark the 80th anniversary, and because An Óige has a special place in its heart for hillwalkers and climbers, the An Óige team has put together a package for Mountaineering Ireland's members which will be available from September 2011 to

March 2012. It includes an overnight stay, breakfast, packed lunch and a two-course dinner for €45 per person per night, with a further discount to €40 pppn, for all Mountaineering Ireland or An Óige members in groups of 12 or more.

The popular walking hostels at Knockree, Glendalough, Errigal, and Cong are all offering this package. The package is also available in Dún Chaoin and Killarney, Co Kerry, but only from September-October 2011 and for March 2012. The usual terms and conditions

apply. The offer can't be used in conjunction with any other offer and will, of course, be subject to availability. While this offer is based on dormitory bed prices, if there are upgrades available on the night, you will be upgraded at no additional cost.

- To book or for more information, contact An Óige on (01) 830 4555 or email groups@anoige.ie and ask for the Mountaineering Ireland Club special.

Eighty years of youth hostelling

The Youth Hostel Association of Northern Ireland (YhANI) has just published a book to commemorate the first 80 years of youth hostelling in Northern Ireland.

80 Years of Youth Hostelling & The Story of the Mourne Wall Walk is a 48-page, soft-cover, foolscap-sized booklet compiled by Paddy McAteer, President of the Youth Hostel Association of Northern Ireland and Hostelling International Northern Ireland.

Various different authors have contributed different sections to what is an interesting anecdotal history of the development of youth hostels in Northern Ireland and of the Mourne Wall Walk. The hostels are listed by the year that they were opened.

This book is available from Hostelling International Northern Ireland (hINI), 22-32 Donegall Road, Belfast, BT12 5JN, for £3.50, if collected from there, or for £5.00 by post. To order a copy, you can call the hINI office at +44 (0)28 9032 4733.



Mullaghdrin Youth Hostel, Dromara, Co Down, circa 1931, the first hostel established by the Youth Hostel Association of Northern Ireland.



Local entrepreneur and RTE Dragons Den star Bobby Kerr launches the app at Kilkenny Castle.

Free tourist app for Kilkenny



The free smartphone app to guide tourists around one of Ireland's most popular tourist destinations, Kilkenny city and county, has been launched. The virtual guide is the brainchild of **Trail Kilkenny**, a non-profit company charged with developing leisure and tourism trails in the county.

The free app will allow the thousands of tourists who visit Kilkenny every week to find and navigate Trail Kilkenny walk, cycle, craft and food trails. Complete with download maps, the app links tourists

from one trail to another. For example, on the Walk Trail you will be directed to nearby restaurants, pubs, craftspeople and other tourism businesses.

The app includes:

- Individual guides for the Trail Kilkenny Walks, Cycle, Craft and Food Trails
- Sat nav guides to the start of the individual trails
- An introduction page with summary information about Kilkenny and sub-sections on food, craft, history, etc.
- Google Maps directions from your current location to each member of the Craft and Food Trail
- Users can zoom in on any location and see more details about Trail

Kilkenny members in that area.

Eoin Hogan, Rural Recreation officer with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP), which supports Trail Kilkenny, said: "We are very excited by the potential of the new app-guide and the partnership deal we have with everyTrail. It will connect visitors to Kilkenny with all our trails and other attractions too."

Trail Kilkenny has to date developed nine looped walking trails to full Ireland standards. Another six are scheduled to be completed later this year.

To download the free app, simply search for "Trail Kilkenny" in the app store. See also www.trailkilkenny.ie; www.everytrail.com/partner/trailkilkenny.

Part of Western Way re-routed off-road

Cathleen Ferguson, who has recently taken over from Tom Carolan as Rural Recreation officer in south Mayo, reports that the 6km section along the road from Erriff to Tawnyard has recently been re-routed off the road.

This upgrade, through the Walks scheme, has brought the quality of the route to the high standard it deserves. It now offers a more peaceful walking experience along this section of the Way on the banks of the Erriff River.

The original trail ran northeast from Aasleagh and along the

Westport/Leenane Road (N59) to Glennacally Bridge.

The new section of the Way leaves the road 3km from Leenane at the bridge near Aasleagh Falls, on the road to Louisburgh. The trail uses the well-trodden Anglers' Route along the south side of the river, through a majestic valley that separates the Sheeffry Mountains to the north and Maumtrasna to the south. The trail continues for 6km until it reaches Houston's Bridge, where it continues along the original Western Way, turning left at Tawnyard Wood.





Sustainable trails opened

This summer sees the launch of a unique network of multi-purpose, sustainable trails through Castle Ward demesne, Co Down.

A flagship project for the National Trust this year, the 35km-long sustainable trails allow walkers, runners, mountain-bikers and horse-riders to explore unique parts of this historic demesne which were previously inaccessible to the public.

The new trail network is the largest recreational project that the National Trust has ever undertaken in the UK and is set to make Castle Ward one of the best outdoor recreation venues in Northern Ireland.

The Countryside Access and Activities Network (CAAN) has been working in partnership with the National Trust, with support from the Forest Service and the British Horse Society, to develop these trails since 2003. After six months of construction work, the trails opened in June with a new car parking area and the refurbishment of the Strangford Lough

Wildlife Centre, which now acts as a trail information point.

The trails were designed by renowned trail designer Dafydd Davis MBE, who has developed sustainable off-road trails all over the world. He said that with a unique mix of rural farmland and forests, set within the stunning backdrop of Strangford Lough, Castle Ward is simply breathtaking.

It was important in the design and construction of these trails that the landscape around Castle Ward would remain largely untouched but for the sustainable trails which lead through the demesne. The trails were designed to allow visitors to enjoy the highlights of the area in a non-obtrusive manner as well as providing opportunities to explore parts of Castle Ward where there was previously no or limited access.

The trails are fully waymarked. For those who wish to seek more information on these new trails, visit www.walkni.com and/or www.cycleni.com.

● The design and construction of the trails was funded through the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Tourism Development Scheme, Down District Council, the National Trust and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe investing in rural areas programme.



Autumn Gathering to be held in Connemara

The Maumturks Walking Club will host Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering from October 14-16th, 2011. The Gathering will give Mountaineering Ireland members from around the island an opportunity to get a real taste of Connemara from the local host club.

The Gathering will commence with a presentation on Friday evening in the Lleenane hotel. There will be a range of walks and climbs on offer on the Saturday, followed by a members' forum and dinner in the Lleenane hotel in the evening.

On Sunday, a number of workshops will be held on diverse topics ranging from the local geology to club development.

Full event and booking details will be available on www.mountaineering.ie shortly. See you there!

Nore Valley Walk Bus

Similar to the Dublin Mountaineer Bus service, Kilkenny Leader Partnership has organised a bus that picks walkers up in Kilkenny city and drops them at Bennettsbridge. Walkers can then walk along the Nore Valley Walk back to Kilkenny city. For more information, contact: Eoin Hogan, Rural Recreation Officer, Kilkenny Leader Partnership, (056) 7752111.

Spring clean on the Galtees

Members of the Galtee Walking Club, Limerick Climbing Club, South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) and Ballyhoura Bears Walking Club, along with members of Aherlow Fálte, took part in a clean-up on the Galtee Mountains on 16 April. Well done to all who came along. Special thanks to Helen and Ann in the Aherlow Fálte office for the tea and scones afterwards. – (Jimmy Barry)



Reek Sunday 'national operation' gains renown

PAUL WHITING

eVeRY YeAR, the annual Reek Sunday pilgrimage is a major event for the local team, the Mayo Mountain Rescue Team. The Mayo team traditionally invites the other eleven teams from Mountain Rescue Ireland to attend and assist in caring for the 20,000 to 40,000 pilgrims who attempt the climb on the day, particularly on the upper scree slope of Croagh Patrick.

The event, which is our National operation,

is quickly getting an international reputation for demonstrating how Mountain Rescue Teams can handle multiple casualties and work in conjunction with other emergency services, such as the order of Malta, Civil Defence, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Air Corps, to name just a few.

Last year a very successful presentation was given about the Mountain Rescue involvement in the annual pilgrimage at the Ireland and UK Mountain Rescue Conference in Dublin. Following on from this, we are expecting members from no less than five UK

Mountain Rescue Teams to travel over and participate in the event this year.

We are also very excited about the recent news that a vice-president of the International Commission for Alpine Rescue (IKAR-CIA), Gebhard Barbisch, and two members of his own local team, will be joining us to witness the event at first hand. Gebhard, who is from the Austrian state of Vorarlberg, is an old friend of Mountain Rescue Ireland, having been here on two previous occasions and hosted two exchange visits for Irish Mountain Rescuers in the past.

More volunteers sought in south-east

The south eAsTeRN Mountain Rescue Association (seMRA) is recruiting new mountain rescue team members to commence training in September 2011. As part of the selection process, a full day on the hills to assess navigation skills and fitness will be organised for selected applicants.

The team is looking for hillwalkers and climbers who have good mountaineering and team-working skills and a good knowledge of the mountains of the south-east. A significant time commitment can be expected to be involved in training and call-outs.

If you have the skills and commitment to volunteer as a mountain rescue team member, email info@semra.ie to receive an application form. For further information about the team, check out www.semra.ie. The south eastern Mountain Rescue Association is an emergency 24/7/365 voluntary search and rescue team covering all the mountains in the south-east of Ireland. It is a member of Mountain Rescue Ireland.

• *Deirdre Phelan, PRO, South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association*
Tel: 086 234 9318

Mountain rescue training calendar 2011

Mountain Rescue Ireland, through its Training and Development Group, has an extensive calendar of courses planned for 2011 to assist the teams and their members in their development. The courses planned include:

- Operations Management, Co Sligo
August 27-29
- Foundation Rigging, Co Clare
October 07-09
- Managing Initial Response, Co Dublin
October 14-16
- Party Leader, Co Dublin
November 04-06

The first course of the year was a new training entitled "Human Aspects of emergency Team Leadership," which was held over the weekend of May 20-22. It was a residential course and took place in the Horse and Jockey hotel in Co Tipperary with the aim of providing senior emergency service and community leaders with leadership knowledge, skills and awareness. The course was well attended, with participants from Mountain Rescue Ireland, the Irish Cave Rescue organisation, the Irish Coast Guard and Civil Defence.

Fundraising event

Guided Summer Night Walk in aid of Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team will be held on July 23rd, starting at 8.30pm. It will start and finish at Oxfield Car Park, Carney, and the cost per person is €10.

Register online at www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie, or email heidwickham@eircom.net.

• *Paul Whiting, Development Officer, Mountain Rescue Ireland.*

For more information about Mountain Rescue in Ireland, please visit www.mountainrescue.ie

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Rosway Walkers' 32-County Summit Challenge

Club completes challenge in aid of Mountain Rescue Ireland

The seNse of AChLeVeMeNT was palpable in the Carlton shearwater hotel in Ballinasloe, Co Galway, on the night of Saturday, May 28th. The front bar was filled with members of the Rosway Walking Club, Mountain Rescue Ireland and their families and friends, all celebrating a fantastic day for the club, which had successfully completed the 32-County highest Peaks Challenge.

The Rosway Walking Club, based in Ballinasloe, got its name from combining the names of the two counties where the majority of the members came from: Roscommon and Galway.

On the day of the challenge, two-to-four-person teams from the club headed out from Ballinasloe to simultaneously climb the highest peak in each of the 32 counties. The 32-county challenge was to raise much-needed funds for Mountain Rescue Ireland.

At the crack of dawn, a text to base camp proclaimed that climbers were already at the base of Carrauntouhil and making their way to the summit. Climbers in Louth and Mayo also had early starts.

The challenge demonstrated best practice for minimising the impact on the natural environment by spreading the participants simultaneously across multiple peaks rather than concentrating them on a single peak or path, the model traditionally used for these types of fundraising challenges.

Members of the club manned base camp, which was in the foyer of the shearwater hotel. Texts and phone calls came in all day from the teams of climbers, letting base camp know when they had started, summited and were down safely from all the highest peaks.

Base camp was also the starting point for four local walks on the day, which were well supported by members of Rosway Walking Club and the public. Voluntary subscriptions could be made on the day to enter a draw for a six-month gym membership for a couple for the shearwater hotel. The base camp team raised €600 on the day. Congratulations to Iaina Carey, of Taughmaconnell, whose name was drawn for the gym membership prize.

The last of the climbers were down from Galtymore on the Limerick/Tipperary border in the late afternoon, where a new member of the club climbed a mountain for the first time, while the walkers from the historical & Archaeological society of Ballinasloe



C. Barker (Rosway Walking Club), Paul Whiting (Mountain Rescue Ireland), Noel Lohan (Rosway Walking Club) and Sean Scott (Rosway Walking Club) after their climb of Mount Leinster, Co Carlow. Photo: Willie Roache (Treasurer, Rosway Walking Club).

returned to the shearwater hotel close to 8:00pm.

It was a long day, and it needed celebrating. A social evening concluded the event in the Carlton shearwater hotel where each team was welcomed home, their photo taken and the county flag of the peak they had climbed planted on a piece of bog oak. All the county flags had been pictured at the highest peaks earlier in the day, with some climbers doing two counties.

Teams told stories of having to take off socks and boots in order to cross rivers, and other teams took great pleasure in bringing their own county flags to the peak of the mountain they were climbing. The Dublin flag appeared on Arderin, the Laois/Offaly summit, while five Roscommon natives took great delight in holding the Roscommon flag on the top of Benbaun, the highest peak in Co Galway.

Although wind was a factor on many of the mountains, one team managed to climb Mount Errigal in Donegal before making their way to the Magners League final in Limerick. The Meath climbers met 21 druids with bodhráns in hand and witnessed their tributes to the whitethorn tree.

Two was the minimum number of climbers on any mountain, but most teams had more. Credit must be given to Ballinasloe Active Retirement who got fully behind the challenge and climbed the highest peak in

Loughford. The club was also delighted that Mountain Rescue Ireland members were able to join them on many of the mountains, including the Galway and Wexford/Carlow high points, and also join in the celebrations in the hotel afterwards.

In 2009, Mountain Rescue Ireland's 12 teams responded to 296 separate incidents in which they assisted over 416 people, treated 154 of these who were injured, and recovered 10 people who had died in the outdoors and returned them to their families. This equated to over 13,642 person hours or 1,703 working days. Unfortunately, government grants, which make up the bulk of Mountain Rescue funding, have been cut by 40% over the last two years as a result of the cutbacks.

To date, the 32 County highest Peaks Challenge has raised over €4,000 for Mountain Rescue Ireland.

Thanks must be given to The shearwater hotel, Ballinasloe, The Countryman Pub in Creagh and Sheridan's stores for their sponsorship of the event.

Thanks also to the organising team who put in many hours of planning to make sure that it was a great success. Well done and thanks to everyone who participated in walks or climbs during the day.

• For more information see www.roswaywalkingclub.blog.com.



An April weekend on the Dingle peninsula

Skibbereen Walking Group tackles Mt Brandon

TED CADOGAN

WITH The ATI ANTIC to our backs, we travelled over the Kerry county bounds in April to climb Mount Brandon.

situated on the Dingle peninsula, the mountain stands at 3,123 feet (952m) and is second only to the MacGillycuddy's Reeks in terms of height. It takes its name from st Brendan, the Navigator. Before embarking on his 6th-century voyage of discovery, legend holds that st Brendan climbed the peak in AD 530 in order to see the Americas. The small white crosses lining the path to the peak, in addition to the large cross on the summit, are testament to the mountain's popularity as a pilgrimage for Catholics.

our climb took about 5½ hours to complete. every army needs a leader and we had one in the form of Paddy Leahy. Paddy led the 30-strong group who arrived in Clohane (10 miles from Dingle)

for the saturday morning climb of Mount Brandon. some made a weekend of it. Mícheál got up at 5:00am to milk a herd of cows before the journey.

Most of the ascent of Mount Brandon followed a narrow stone pathway covered with loose shingle. It reminded us of a goat's path as we travelled in single file. Along the way, some very large boulders obstructed the middle of the path; as my late mother used to say, "The rivers don't always run smooth."

on reaching the summit, we marvelled at the awesome, panoramic views of the sandy beaches, the lakes and the sea. The poet sean Dunne put it best when he wrote:

*"Before leaving, I climb the mountain.
High among sheep and bladed winds,
I add my stone to the peak's cairn
And another for you: a summit
reached."*

This truly beautiful and unspoiled place

is a gem of hidden Ireland.

The sun shone on our backs as we made the long haul down. According to Donal, one of our walkers, climbing a mountain requires three things: good boots, good weather and good company. We had all three.

That night, we wine and dined in a local restaurant. on sunday morning, we tackled the mountain in Annascaul. We started out on Butter Road, which must have been a mile long and straight as a dye. on this pleasant 2½-hour trip, we met the local walking club. Modern technology told us that the Cork, Tralee and Bandon walking groups were climbing across the water in Glenbeigh. Arriving back in Annascaul, we had refreshments in Tom Crean's pub, the south Pole Inn. Although we were tired and stiff, every moment was worthwhile.

• Ted Cadogan is a member of the Skibbereen Walking Group.

On the Ulster Way, Slabh Beagh section.
Photo: Chris Turner.



Land of change

Writer and broadcaster Christopher Somerville writes in praise of Northern Ireland's Quality Walks

CHRISTOPHER SOMERVILLE

I've been writing about Northern Ireland for the UK newspapers for the past 20 years, urging readers to come and see for themselves, and travelling over regularly to get my fill of fabulous landscape, unspoilt coast and countryside, small-town life, seamus heaney, mighty traditional sessions, salty people and the general magic and madness of the place.

As someone who loves walking, and revels in his freedom to do so on the public footpaths and open access uplands of England, Scotland and Wales, I just couldn't help but be struck by Ireland's "big problem," both north and south of the border: the almost total lack of public rights-of-way, and the consequent dearth of public footpaths on the Ordnance Survey maps.

True, there is the Ulster Way, that unwieldy, half-dead, 500-mile snake of a path with its tottering signs and swathes of boggy morasses. But what about the kind of country walk that people actually want to do? A circuit of six or seven miles through lovely countryside, chatting to

folk you meet on the way, getting a peek into local lives and a sniff of the farming year, up hill and down dale, circling back to the pub where you left the car for a nice pint and a plate of pie and mash. Nothing doing on this side of the water for a stranger who doesn't know the locals. "Ah, sure, you'll be grand, no one'll have a word to say, go ahead and welcome," said everyone. Two bulls, four intolerant

farmers with their eight fists a-shaking, several miles of barbed wire and uncountable quagmires later, I'm here to report that 'welcome' was not exactly the word I'd have chosen.

Until now, that is. All one can say about the Quality Walks developed by the Countryside Access and Amenities Network (CAAN) and its partners is: about bloody time! And thank you very much!



The Sperrins, Co Tyrone. Photo: Kenneth Allen (geograph.org.uk).

How brilliant it is to be able to find a walk of the right length and in the right place, download those maps and instructions at the stab of a keyboard, and go to the spot to find that, yes, it really is there, properly waymarked, well maintained, and laid out as the map says.

I've done quite a few now. In Fermanagh, the circuits around Castle Archdale on Lower Lough Erne and the fantastic country house of Florence Court; in Armagh, the legend-laden walk across Slieve Gullion and a saunter through the wildflower meadows around Oxford Island; in Tyrone's Sperrin hills, the haunting loop round the abandoned farming valleys of Vinegar Hill.

In County Down, the Mourne

Mountains, of course, up the hare's Gap, and along the skirts of the mountains in Tollymore Park; but also a great walk round the eccentrically wonderful gardens of Mount Stewart and a mudslide out across Strangford Lough to Chapel Island. In Belfast, three contrasting walks – the Bog Meadows, the Lagan towpath and Cave Hill. In Antrim, Ballycastle to Ballintoy along the spectacular Causeway Coast, the crashing waterfalls and forest paths in Glenariff, and two great mountains – the tiny bump of Croagh and the great big lump of Slieve Donard. And in Derry, so often overlooked by walkers, the long and beautiful strand at Benone, the tanglewood of Drumlamph and the thundering falls in Ness Wood, and the

incredible views from the peak of Carnagh.

My favourite? Oh, lordy. Okay, if I have to choose, let it be that mindblowing sunset on Strangford Lough smearing the low-tide mud with crimson and gold, the babble of Brent geese on the tideline and the Mournes outlined in furious crimson, as if a sky god had thrown open a furnace door behind them.

● Christopher Somerville has spent 25 years writing and broadcasting about country walks. His latest book, "Walking in Ireland," is a comprehensive guide to 50 of the most stunning walks on the island of Ireland. For more information, visit www.christophersomerville.co.uk.

New edition of trail construction handbook

AT THE END of MAY, Mountain Meitheal, the Wicklow and Dublin-based trail conservation group, launched a new edition of their handbook on trail design and construction, which is specifically intended for Irish conditions.

The book, written by Bill Murphy and published by Mountain Meitheal with financial support from Coillte, is a comprehensive guide to the techniques required for recreation trail planning and construction.

Speaking at the launch, David Gunning, Chief executive of Coillte, commended Mountain Meitheal on their contribution to outdoor recreation in Ireland and in Wicklow in particular. He pointed out that Mountain Meitheal has rebuilt and upgraded over 5km of upland and forest trails across Dublin and Wicklow.

Acknowledging the tribute, Robert Grandon, Chair of Mountain Meitheal, thanked Coillte for their support for the book and said that partnerships between Mountain Meitheal and organisations such as Coillte were critical to maintaining and improving our outdoor recreation infrastructure into the future.

Author Bill Murphy thanked all the Mountain Meitheal volunteers who turned out week after week and without whom the book would only be a handbook on a shelf. Murphy paid special tribute to two Mountain Meitheal members who passed away this year, noted mountaineer Joss



Pictured at the launch of the Mountain Meitheal handbook (left to right): Robert Grandon (Mountain Meitheal), David Gunning (Coillte) and Bill Murphy (Coillte).

Lynam and Aughavannagh resident Angela Sweeney, both of whom he said represented the true spirit of Mountain Meitheal.

The book is available from www.pathsavers.org.

Mountain Meitheal is an entirely volunteer-based club which works to conserve and repair upland and forest trails and to spread an awareness of sustainable recreation. They work every other weekend throughout spring,

summer and autumn and welcome new volunteers at any time.

On May 14th, Mountain Meitheal clocked their 10,000th volunteer hour since they started keeping time records in 2006. Despite a very wet day, the volunteers celebrated this milestone with tea, coffee and cakes at their current work site in Knockree. For details of upcoming Meitheal workdays, visit www.pathsavers.org.



This re-engineered section of trail in Powerscourt Deerpark, Enniskerry, Co Wicklow, provides a sustainable solution on this heavily used part of the Wicklow Way while fitting in with the landscape.

‘Coillte Outdoors’ attracts people to nature

BILL MURPHY

sPRING AND eARI Y suMMeR has been a very busy period for the Coillte Recreation Team. While the main focus has been on ensuring that trails are maintained and open for the summer ahead, there has been a considerable amount of upgrading and development work taking place across the country, despite the limited funding available.

In the east, Coillte opened its fourth mountain bike trail on behalf of the Dublin Mountains Partnership at Ticknock. Designed by Dáithí de f orge, the Coillte and National Trails o ffice trails expert, the trail offers a circuit of over 8km with over 4km of challenging single track. The trail has been a huge success and attracted over 4,000 passes in a few weeks before its opening. Work is also well advanced on developing a new mountain bike area in the s lieve Blooms.

f urther down in Wicklow, trails manager Jesper Petersen has been busy re-engineering parts of the Wicklow Way at Deerpark (above Powerscourt) and Mucklagh (Aughavannagh), constructing excellent sustainable trails that add considerably to the enjoyment and sustainability of the route.

Two important bridges in Wicklow

destroyed during last year’s storms, at Glenmalure and on st Kevin’s Way, have also been replaced.

In the southern region, trail manager Mary o ’Brien has just completed a new trail network in west l imerick at f oynes, and work is commencing on a mountain bike feasibility study in Waterford.

In the northwest, work is almost completed on upgrading the s ligo Way between union and s lishwood.

In the west, work is well on the way on a new trail network for the Burren, close to Cuilcagh, and a key component of the

Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark.

An exciting addition to Coillte’s recreation portfolio is the new aerial trails system in l ough Key f orest Park with 1.3km of treetop trails and zip lines (via ferrata aficionados, take note!).

Along with this, the team continues to roll out its permanent orienteering courses and is working on developing an adopt-a-trail programme and improving mountain access routes with Mountaineering Ireland.

● *Bill Murphy, Coillte Outdoors.*



Mountain biking. Photo: Dennymont.

Action plan for marine and sea-cliff birds

URGENT ACTIONS that are required for the protection of Irish seabirds and the marine environment were highlighted by Minister Jimmy Deenihan when he launched a multi-stakeholder plan led by Ireland's largest wildlife charity, BirdWatch Ireland. The event was attended by a number of stakeholder groups, including Mountaineering Ireland.

Peadar O'Connell, species Policy officer at BirdWatch Ireland, said: "The Minister spoke of his strong interest in birdlife and the importance of bringing together many of those with an interest in the marine environment to play their part in meeting Ireland's environmental responsibilities and securing healthy seas.

"We've been delighted to work with a large number of stakeholders in creating this plan and are very grateful for the input from Mountaineering Ireland, who we have worked closely with on developing a number of the targets in the plan."

Seabirds are recognised as indicators of the health of our seas, but there are still a lot of unknowns surrounding their ecology and conservation. The Action Plan takes a new approach to tackling the wide range of influences on our seas. It hopes to address declines in our important seabird populations through working closely with



Pictured at the launch of the BirdWatch Ireland plan (left to right): Gráinne O'Brien (BIM), Lorcán Ó Cinnéide (Federation of Irish Fishermen), Minister Jimmy Deenihan, Alan Lauder (BirdWatch Ireland), Peter Norton (Mountaineering Ireland), Peadar O'Connell (BirdWatch Ireland).

stakeholders to achieve a sustainable future for our marine environment.

The launch of the action plan for marine and sea-cliff birds is only the beginning. The true measure of success will be in getting the actions implemented and this

will take a great effort by everyone involved.

The project is partially funded by the environment fund of the Department of environment, Community & Local Government.

Learn how to 'Leave No Trace'

To understand a bit more about how we can 'Leave No Trace,' the first step is to visit www.leavenotraceireland.org. After that, you might consider doing some Leave No Trace training.

A Leave No Trace Awareness session is an information workshop incorporating a little theory as well as techniques to minimise our impact when we're enjoying the outdoors. An Awareness session is appropriate for the majority of people who want to learn more about the Leave No Trace principles. Sessions can be designed to last from one hour up to a full day.

Club/group bookings: If you would like to arrange a Leave No Trace Awareness session for your club or any other group, contact Beverley Pierson, Leave No Trace

Project officer, +44 (0)28 9030 3938 or info@leavenotraceireland.org.

Individual bookings: If you are interested in participating in a Leave No Trace Awareness session on an individual basis, book onto the following public session: Saturday, 20th August 2011, from 10:00am to 4:00pm, Kilfinane Outdoor Education Centre, Kilfinane, Co Limerick. Course fee: €50pp (includes lunch). For bookings or more information, please visit www.kilfinaneoeec.com.

Trainers' courses

More dates and venues have been set for Leave No Trace Trainers' Courses. The 16-hour-long Trainers' Course is aimed at those who wish to teach Leave No Trace and are in a position to share the message

and principles with others. Participants should have completed an Awareness session and be interested in learning more about Leave No Trace skills, ethics, background, etc.

The following Trainers' Courses have been organised for 2011:

15-16th October 2011: Ballinreeshig Nature Farm, Co Cork; €149 per person. Please visit www.willandaway.ie for more information and to book.

18-20th November 2011: Tollymore Outdoor Centre, Newcastle, Co Down; £110 per person (includes food, accommodation and transport). Please visit www.tollymore.com for more information and to book.

Fires destroy large tracts in the Mourne

Fire damage in the Mourne, looking back at Blue Lough from Binnina and Lamagan Col. Photo: Mourne Heritage Trust.

Mourne Heritage Trust has expressed its dismay at the recent spate of wildfires that occurred across the Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Trust ranger staff, who liaised closely with the fire and Rescue service at the time, witnessed the speed and ferocity of the flames as they spread in the Annalong Valley, in particular.

Matthew Bushby, Countryside services Manager with the Trust, said: "While we cannot yet fully assess the implications of the recent fires, they form by far the biggest single incidence of fire in the Mourne in recent memory. In the Annalong Valley, up to 10 square kilometres have been burnt, causing extensive damage to the heathland and the unique Mourne juniper shrub, which is very susceptible to burning. The scale of the burnt area affects insects and birds like curlew, grouse and snipe, as there are few refuges left for them across this valley now. We are talking here about extensive damage to areas that in some cases are designated as among the most important of their type of habitat in Europe, at a time when we have been developing a programme of measures to improve the condition of this important heathland. While the damage that has been done is heartbreaking, it only enhances our determination to continue to work with landowners, farmers, recreational users, the emergency services and all other relevant bodies to do what we can, within the modest resources available, to look after this important area."

Martin Carey, Chief executive of the Trust, appealed to people to be conscious of the implications of fire in open countryside. He said: "It's very easy for a fire to start and get out of control in the mountain environment – much easier than many seem to appreciate. A stray lighted cigarette or an attempt to light a campfire can cause a fire that can take off in seconds and have serious implications, as we have seen. People should be aware of the breadth of the dangers of large fires.

"On top of the environmental damage, a number of hillwalkers had very close shaves and, had the wind been blowing in a different direction, the threat to people's homes could have caused fatalities.

"There is also the economic impact,

with the threat to livestock and loss of grazing land for farmers at a time when it is already hard enough to make hill sheep-farming, which is essential to the health of the Mourne, pay.

"That's before we consider the loss of business for tourism enterprises and the cost to the public purse not only from the fire-fighting but the additional costs of water treatment in the Silent Valley Catchment that Northern Ireland Water will have to bear for months and perhaps years to come.

"Finally, people should also think, before they strike a match in the Mourne, of the danger to fire-fighters, at least one of whom was hospitalised and many more treated on-site for smoke inhalation."



Fire damage in the Mourne, looking back at Blue Lough from Binnina and Lamagan Col. Photo: Mourne Heritage Trust.

Film festival to celebrate its fifth year in 2012

The Wee ADVeNTuRe film festival (WAff) is Ireland's longest-running adventure sports film festival: it will celebrate its fifth anniversary in 2012.

every February, the WAff celebrates adventure sports from Ireland and from around the globe by screening a fantastic mix of short amateur and professional adventure films.

since 2008, the festival has shown over fifty adventure films, including ones on:

- mountaineering in remote Peru
- base-jumping in Norway
- kite-surfing on secret beaches in Mayo
- mountain-biking in Canada
- surfing the blue waters of Indonesia
- bouldering around Ireland
- kayaking down the crocodile-infested waters of the Nile.



WAff 2012 is going to be the biggest and best festival yet. As well as celebrating our fifth birthday, we are teaming up with Millets camping, Basecamp store and *Outsider* magazine to bring you a fabulous and exhilarating

film festival that will deliver the raw essence of adventure sports to you.

so, if you are interested in seeing your short adventure film on the big screen, in front of a live audience, and of being in with a chance to win one of several Wee Adventure film festival Awards, contact the festival director, John Connolly, at john@waff.ie. Your film can be up to 10 minutes long. The deadline for entries to WAff 2012 is October 31st, 2011.

• find out more about the Wee Adventure film festival at: www.waff.ie

Facebook: Wee adventure film festival dublin

Twitter: WeeAdventure_ff

YouTube: youtube.com/user/WeeAdventurefilms



• scan this QR code (a hypertext link) with your smartphone to access the festival website.

Banff Film Festival to visit Kilkenny in October

KEVIN HIGGINS

TYNDAL MoUNTAIN CLUB will host the Banff Mountain film festival for one night in The Set Theatre, Kilkenny, on Saturday, October 8th, 2011.

Attracting sell-out audiences on its tour around the globe, this is a collection of

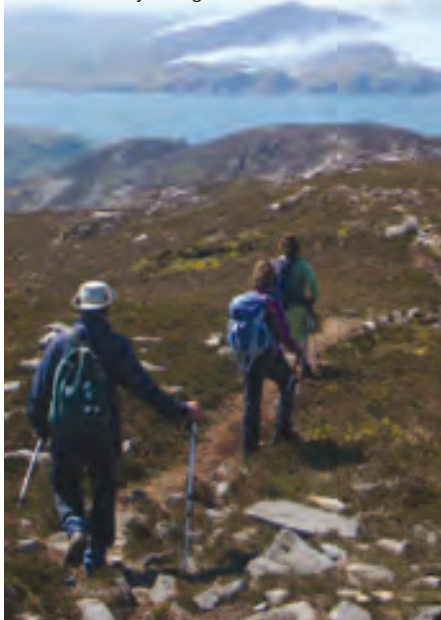
extraordinary short films from the world's most prestigious mountain film festival.

Through the big screen, you will visit remote cultures and the world's last great wild places as well as experience amazing footage of adrenaline-packed action sports such as climbing, kayaking, skiing and mountain biking.

exhilarating and thought-provoking, the 2010 Banff Mountain film festival World Tour is a must-see for mountain enthusiasts and those with a spirit of adventure. An inspiring evening with great prize giveaways.

• Kevin Higgins is a member of Tyndall Mountain Club.

Walking at Urris during Climbfest 2011.
Photo: Gerry Galligan.



Climbfest 2011 back at Culdaff

This Year, the Climbfest returned to its spiritual home at Culdaff on the north Inishowen peninsula, Co Donegal. Those who attended were rewarded with the best weather in the seven years of the Climbfest. There was a cool breeze in unsheltered areas but the sun shone throughout the weekend and participants enjoyed glorious conditions as they climbed at Dunmore, Dunowen, Malin Head, Warm Bay Point, Dungloon and Barnanmore.

In addition to the Irish contingent, there were climbers from Wales, Scotland, England, Sweden, Czech Republic, Finland, Australia and New Zealand, all of whom were hugely impressed with the climbing available. Because of concerns

about nesting birds, climbing was restricted to the right-hand crag at Dunmore. It is hoped that the current "three-year cycle," where the Climbfest is held at each of the three venues once in every three years, will also assist, although fulmars and climbers have co-existed at Dunmore since the seventies, and both are still there! As a consequence, it is likely that the Climbfest will be in Glencolmcille next year.

Thanks are due to the sponsors of the meet, Java Republic and Mountaineering Ireland; to McGrorys, who made us welcome as usual; and particularly to the landowners, without whose tolerance and goodwill the event could not have taken place. – (Alan Tees, NWMC)



Women with Altitude – a huge success

CLÍONA NÍ BHRÉARTÚÍN

IN APRIL, over seventy women came together for the first Women With Altitude weekend. It was hosted by Mountaineering Ireland in association with Gartan outdoor education Centre, and funding support came from the Irish sports Council's 'Women In sport' programme. It was held in Tollymore outdoor Centre in the Mourne and attended by girls and women of all ages from all over the country. United by their interest in mountains, walking and/or climbing, the women came together to share knowledge about their sport, gain confidence, learn new skills and have fun...and what a weekend it was! From the very start it was clear that there was an energy and an excitement in the air that couldn't be subdued.

Mountaineering is one of the rare sports that men and women can do together, but quite often women step back and let the men do the leading. This may be due to a lack of confidence or to just not wanting to challenge the greater confidence of their male companions. It was felt that a women-only meet would give the women a chance to be themselves amongst other women and not feel under pressure.

so it was that on April 8th women travelled to the Mourne, arriving from early afternoon, spirits not dampened by a major traffic jam near Newry. expectations were high as they registered and received

their fabulous goody bags, thanks to the sponsors (listed below) and the volunteers who chased up items for the goody bag.

The very first activity, night orienteering, was designed to bring participants together who didn't know each other or who had arrived on their own, to give them a chance to mix and chat, as they headed off into the woods in search of controls marked on a map.

Most of the women had never tried orienteering before and to do it at night added an extra element of excitement. Each team tried to gain the highest number of points before returning to base with a bunch of letters that had to spell out a message to gain even more points! The return of team after team of smiling red faces was a good indicator of what was to come over the weekend.

The aim of the weekend was to increase the visibility and skill of women in mountaineering, and to do it in a fun environment. The organising committee, the speakers and instructors were all female. Margaret Tees delivered a wonderful slide-show of her many walking trips abroad, and Heather Morning gave an awe-inspiring talk and slide-show on what it means to be a mountaineering instructor in Scotland. Heather's photos of Scottish ice-climbing had people talking about a possible women's winter meet in Scotland. To see these women involved in their sport at such a high level gave added confidence to the participants.

suggestions flowed as to what else women could be doing under the Women With Altitude (WWA) banner.

A little bit of tuition and encouragement can go a long way towards improving the enjoyment of a sport. This was apparent from the high level of participation in the courses on offer over the weekend, with huge interest in the navigation sessions and even more demand for the climbing courses. Activities included long and moderate hill-walks, a mountain environment walk, beginners' and improvers' navigation, scrambling, single- and multi-pitch climbing, introduction to climbing, movement skills for climbers, digital photography, neuro-linguistic programming, injury prevention and Tai Chi.

The level of participation showed that



Janette McDonald.

women were not afraid of trying new things, to up-skill and seek training for mountaineering qualifications such as Mountain skills or Mountain Leader, given the right encouragement.

The level of climbing skill among the participants was high, and indicated the need for the addition of some more advanced courses at next year's event. Particular credit is due to Gartan for the time and effort in arranging an amazing team of instructors for the weekend, most of whom worked voluntarily, generously sharing their enthusiasm and knowledge. As a novice climber, I certainly learned something from the climbing workshop that has transformed my climbing! In a survey carried out after the weekend, 100% said that they enjoyed the event and that the atmosphere was welcoming; 83% said they learned new skills; 87% said it improved their confidence; and 97% said that participants shared their knowledge.

The survey responses were full of suggestions on what to do next. When asked what other supports would help women develop their skills and progress within the sport, the comments included "more women-only weekends to really have encouragement from other women;" "more events like this;" "navigation is something women are inclined to be nervous about as men usually take the lead, so honing these skills in an all-women environment is very important."



The consensus was that the weekend was a great success and, as we were winding down on Sunday, the repeated comment overheard from those leaving their new friends was "see you next year!"

So, should we have another women's event? Well, it looks like the participants made that decision for us! Plans are already afoot for next year's gathering, which will take place in Gartan OEC, Co Donegal, from April 20-22nd, so mark it in your diaries, ladies. There's even talk of rockclimbing on Gola Island on Friday, April 20th for any who can make it.

The weekend would never have been possible without the energy of the organising team, the support of the instructors who gave of their time for free and, of course, the help of our sponsors:

Basecamp, Berghaus, Climb On! Colgate-Palmolive, Patagonia, Cotswold Outdoor, Gartan OEC, Java Republic, Mountaineering Ireland, Soak Seaweed Baths, Diageo, the 'Women In Sport' programme.

We look forward to welcoming other sponsors on board next year.

● For details of future events, keep an eye on www.WomenWithAltitude.ie or find us on Facebook to get in touch with other Women With Altitude.

● Cliona Ní Bhréartúin is a member of Glenwalk and Na Cnocadóirí and has been walking for over 25 years. She was part of the organising team for Women With Altitude 2011.

One participant's view

JACKIE CLERKIN



AT THE BEGINNING of April, I had the opportunity to sign up for a weekend of mountaineering experiences run by Mountaineering Ireland and co-hosted by Gartan outdoor education Centre. The description on the web read as follows: "A weekend to share ideas, gain confidence,

learn new skills and have fun." I went along with an open mind to Tollymore, nestled at the foot of the Mourne Mountains, and to say I was pleasantly surprised is a mild understatement.

Women With Altitude (clever name) was set up by women for women from the four corners of Ireland! No experience necessary. All you needed was to be able to breathe, have an open mind and a willingness to learn. I came away with a whole range of new skills from confidence-building tips to digital photography, Tai Chi, to belaying, orienteering and rockclimbing. I felt a mix of exhilaration and exhaustion that can only come from stepping outside your comfort zone, hard work and great fun!

The atmosphere was very relaxed. In my view it was a huge success. My only complaint – not enough hours in the day! This was about a group of women so passionate about their sport that they were willing to give their time and energy voluntarily to share their experience and pass on all the enjoyment that the mountains have to offer. I am truly grateful for that.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved in organising the weekend, all the instructors and guest speakers. I wish you all continued success and am looking forward to the next WWA event!

● Jackie Clerkin is from Donegal and now lives in Dublin. She has been hillwalking for five years and is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland.

Irish Bouldering Championships 2011

ANGELA CARLIN



The 2011 Irish Bouldering Championships took place at the Ozone Wall, Belfast, on Saturday, April 2nd.

The competition followed a similar format to last year's, with a relaxed morning qualifier in which competitors had unlimited attempts, followed by an afternoon final.

The problems were of a quite different style to last year's, with more crimping technical problems on the less steep walls. The qualifying round also served as the Junior competition and there were some very strong performances in the Juniors.

Dominic Burns topped 11 problems and a bonus in the Junior Males, to finish well ahead of Ciaran Scanlon (2nd) and Daragh O'Connor (3rd).

In the Junior females, Vanessa Woods came 1st and Niamh Hebblethwaite was 2nd.

Following the qualifiers, six men and four women proceeded to the isolation area as the final problems were set. First out in the Men's event was Andrew Colligan, recently moved up from Juniors. Andrew was followed by Dave Hunter, and then Jake Haddock was next to climb.

The next three competitors had all looked very strong in qualifying. John Redmond, a first-time IBC competitor, had topped 12 of the 14 qualifying problems. Rob Hunter and Jonny Argue (also a first-time competitor) both topped 13, with Rob also taking the bonus on the 14th problem. The Men's final was really close, with competitors all topping different problems as they found something to suit their style. Rob, Dave and Jonny all topped 2/5, with Rob and Dave also taking two bonus points each, split only by number of attempts. In the end, Jonny Argue put in a great performance on the final problem and became the 2011 winner, with two tops and three bonus points.

The Women's final surprised many, with several of the problems on the less overhanging sections and nothing on the Ozone's 'barrel' overhang. There was no room for mistakes in this category, and again it was a close finish. Katie Maxwell and Lucy Mitchell both topped three problems and got two bonuses, but Katie won on number of attempts. Veronica Lee came 3rd.

Thanks again to event sponsor **Surf Mountain** and to Rob Napier for setting the problems. It is planned that next year's competition will be moved to an earlier date, to help avoid clashes with other events. Keep an eye on www.mountaineering.ie for details.

• Angela Carlin is Coaching Development & Talent Identification Officer with Mountaineering Ireland.



Katie Maxwell, winner of Womens event, competing in the IBC at the Ozone Wall, Belfast, in April. Photo: John Miskelly.



Jonny Argue, winner of Mens event, competing in the Irish Bouldering Championships at the Ozone Wall, Belfast, in April. Photo: John Miskelly.

Climbing Spanish rock

TARA O'NEILL

Over the Easter break, a group of keen young climbers headed off to Costa Blanca in eastern Spain to sample the delights of sport climbing. Here, participant Tara O'Neill gives an account of her week.

On Monday, April 25th, an enthusiastic group of young climbers met at Tollymore Mountain Centre to embark on a much-awaited trip to the Costa Blanca, Spain. Armed with a packet of Haribo and an inspirational guidebook, we left Ireland behind and, three hours later, stepped off the plane in Alicante. An hour's drive by hire car took us to our accommodation in the village of Finestrat, our base for the next seven days.

An expedition to the supermarket the next morning provided chocolate pâtisseries for breakfast before we headed out to sellas for our first touch of Spanish rock. For the majority of the group, this was their first experience of sport climbing.

After leading the initial few routes, we were choosing our own and pushing our grades higher and higher. We were encountering countless skittering lizards and, for some of us more than others, the terrifying squish of a spider's web as we sunk our fingers into the deep pockets on the way.

With nearly all of us determined to wear shorts all week, a little Spanish rain didn't put us off! A shower in Guadalest stopped us for no more than a couple of hours and we enjoyed the break, wandering along the touristy lanes and climbing the hill to the castle and viewpoint perched high above the village. This afforded spectacular views of the mountainsides and a stereotypical blue lagoon. From here we also discovered you had a fantastic view of the 'Sector Everest' below, just up from where we had been climbing before the rain.

When it had dried up enough to return to climbing, there were some impressive moves shown off to the tourists (who we knew were watching us from above!).

A morning at Sierra de Toix (whose pronunciation varied considerably) added a new word to our vocabulary. An exciting line of bolts leading through a series of caves on a cliff face high above Benidorm had been given an equally exciting name and we were introduced to the 'Gufelwufel,' the topic of discussion, jokes and even videos over the next few days.

In the evenings, those of us who weren't delighting the group with our impressive cooking skills were usually found falling from the slack line with the elegance of an elephant. It was quickly learnt that flip-flops were not the best choice of footwear when landing on gravel and that a face-first dive to the ground would receive more laughter than sympathy – we did check the person in question was okay first, of course!

Thank you to Paul Swail and Eddie Hawkins, who made it such a great week, and to the parents, who kindly shuttled us to and from the airport at both respectable and not so respectable times of day.



Ben Rooney high up on a 6a+. Photo: Paul Swail.



The competitors from the Cork round of the Youth Climbing Series 2011. Photograph: Paul Swail.

Youth Climbing Series 2011

PAUL SWAIL

The Youth Climbing Series (YCs) is a series of fun climbing competitions specifically intended for young people, with an emphasis on enjoyment. This year, more than one hundred participants entered the five rounds around Ireland.

This was the first year that the YCs was split into two qualifying rounds in the North and two qualifying rounds in the south, with an all-Ireland final. This was because of the high level of interest from young people throughout the island and was possible only because of the assistance and support received from parents, coaches and climbing clubs. The change in format meant that all competitors had to compete in one round in a region (North or south), if they wanted to rank at the final in Belfast and have a chance to go on to compete in the YCs finals in Wolverhampton.

Round 1, North

The first round was held on January 22nd at the Hotrock Climbing Wall in the refurbished Tollymore Mountain Centre. With 64 competitors, the atmosphere was electric. For many young people, this was

their first taste of competition climbing, so the routes were set with progression in mind, starting out easy and gradually getting more difficult the further the competitor got.

The YCs is broken into three age groups: 8-10, 11-13 and 14-16 years. Boys and girls also compete separately. In the 8-10 girls division, Madelyn Calvert took 1st place with Miriam Woods a few points behind her in 2nd and Molly Graham 3rd. With only 2 competitors in the 8-10 boys division, Michael Cervenka and Saul Harper battled it out, with Michael taking the honours on the day.

In the 11-13 girls division, Victoria Colligan cruised to a 1st place victory with Victoria Watterson in 2nd place and Anna Nelson, competing in her first competition, finishing in a very respectable 3rd place.

With 14 entering the 11-13 boys category, competition was fierce and quite nail-biting right until the end. By the end of the competition, only 3rd place had been settled, with the top two competitors joint first on points. Saul Calvert and Ciaran Curran – who are climbing partners and friends – had been neck and neck for the whole competition with none of the problems able to separate them. This meant only one thing, a super final! Both

lads had one attempt at an even harder route, the pinks up the prow! On the day, Saul had that little bit more gas and snatched first place from Ciaran, with Martin Cervenka in 3rd.

Vanessa Woods was the clear winner in the 14-16 girls, with Niamh Hebblewaite taking 2nd on countback and Rachel Hodgson 3rd.

The boys 14-16 proved to be the busiest of the whole competition, with 25 entering! Dominic Burns climbed solidly throughout and set a precedent for the rest of the competitions by taking 1st place by nearly 10 points over Eoin Acton, who eyeballed the finishing hold on the final route but just ran out of gas, taking 2nd with Jamie Ranking 3rd.

Round 2, North

Gortatole Outdoor Education Centre was host for the second round, which took place on February 5th. This impressive and often-forgotten wall offers a variety of angles, overhangs and arches for the competitors to battle their way through. Even with its remote setting many parents made the 2 to 3-hour journey, showing the level of commitment they have to their kids!

In the 8-10 girls division, positions were

reversed, with Miriam Woods taking 1st and Madelyn Calvert having to settle for 2nd and local girl Aoife McIlain taking 3rd place.

Michael Cervenka saw off all the competitors in the 8-10 boys category to take a well-deserved 1st place.

In the 11-13 girls, 1st, 2nd and 3rd places all remained unchanged, but in the boys Ciaran Curran got his own back on Saul Harper, outreaching him on the final route. Saul took 2nd place, with Kenny Thornton giving it all he had to take a well-deserved 3rd place.

With some last-minute changes to a few routes in both categories, Vanessa Woods ran away with the girls 14-16 category, setting her up nicely for the final. Kate Monaghan took 2nd and Catlin Miskelly 3rd.

The boys 14-16 division came down to the very last route. The top three all managed to top out the last route, meaning it went to countback. In the end, the order hadn't changed from the previous round, with Dominic Burns 1st, Eoin Acton 2nd and Jamie Ranking 3rd.

A big 'thank you' to the route-setters, Eddie Hawkins, Joe Walls and Angela Carlin. The days of preparation and effort really pay off, when the kids all leave satisfied and with big smiles! A huge thanks to all the volunteers who supported the events on the day, from judges to chaperones (too many to name) – your support is greatly appreciated! Local shops also supported the competitions greatly, with **Cotswold Outdoors** sponsoring the prizes at the Hotrock round and **Jackson Sports** at the Gortatole round. Thanks also to **Gortatole** and **Hotrock** for the use of their facilities!

Round 1, South

The first ever round of the YCs to take place in the Republic of Ireland was held at the Mardyke Arena in Cork on January 29th. The round had 31 competitors, with all age categories well represented. For most of the climbers it was their first experience of competition. The atmosphere was great, with a very enthusiastic and supportive audience filling the area around the wall.

In the 8-10 girls, locals Hannah D'Aughton and Meggan Corbett took 1st and 2nd place in a very close finish, which had to be decided by countback. Aoife McIlain of the Winder's Club (Dublin) came 3rd.

In the 8-10 boys, Daragh Hoare put in a fantastic performance and cruised into 1st place. Sean Ryan and Daniel Flynn took 2nd and 3rd place respectively.

In the 11-13 girls, competition was again



Cranking hard in Cork. Photo: Paul Swail.

extremely close: Ellie Lawrence came 1st and Julia Cussen 2nd in countback, after both had achieved full points in the competition. Sarah Hoare came 3rd, while her brother Sean completed the family's success, coming 1st in the boys with maximum points. This set the tone for Sean's YCs performances, with full points in all the rounds he entered. Matthew

Sheehan and Jack Flynn came 2nd and 3rd.

In the 14-16s, the standard was really high – all the route setters' concerns that the final route might be too hard proved to be unfounded! Niamh Hebblethwaite climbed strongly, taking 1st place, with Sophie Farnan and Jenny O'Connell in 2nd and 3rd.

In the boys, Ciaran Scanlon gave a very



Vicky Waterson in Round 2 (North) of the YCS at Gortatole Outdoor Education Centre, Florencecourt, Co Fermanagh. Photo: Paul Swail.

strong performance in the bouldering to come 3rd but Daragh o'Connor made up the points on the routes to take 2nd. David Cussen didn't drop a single point and smiled all the way to the chains of the final route.

We owe a huge 'thank you' to **The Mardyke Arena** and **Cork Sports Partnership** for their support, as well as to the huge volunteer team involved. A special mention goes to Damien and Bea for all their hard work.

Round 2, South

A few weeks later, the YCs's second southern Round took place at uCD. It was a bigger turn-out and, following so many strong performances in Cork, a harder competition. As competition hotted up, eddie had a busy time tweaking the finishing moves to make them harder!

In the 8-10s, the girls 1, 2 and 3 remained unchanged. Daragh h oare again took 1st in the boys, but this time 2nd went to Peter Mch ugh and 3rd to Cormac D'Aughton.

11-13 boys was again won by sean h oare, with Jack o'shea and Aengus McGill in 2nd and 3rd.

In the girls, the competition grew intense. The top three all had full points after the bouldering, but the routes gave a clear result. ellie l awrence took 1st by one point, Julia Cussen came 2nd and Victoria Colligan 3rd.

In the 14-16s, Niamh h ebblethwaite had another clear victory, Kate Monaghan came

2nd and sophie f arnan 3rd.

The boys competition was joined by northerners eoin Acton, Jamie Ranking and Dominic Burns, who had been cleaning up in the Northern rounds. uCD was no different: eoin and Dominic were still on full points following the bouldering, but Dominic took 1st by topping the final route. Jamie made up the points he had dropped in the bouldering to come 2nd, while eoin took 3rd.

Again, there was terrific volunteer help at the round, especially from Terry and h oward, as well as fantastic support from **Basecamp**, who provided the prizes.

The Final

The final was held at the o zone in Belfast on March 12th. This was to be the decider, with the top three in each category on the day qualifying for the final in Wolverhampton. With 65 competitors from all over Ireland the stakes were high and so were the nerves. o nly one way to sort this out, a mass warm-up on a tennis court!

Miriam Woods was a runaway winner in the 8-10 girls, with h anna D'Aughton 2nd and Aoife Mclain 3rd. In the 8-10 boys, s ol harper beat off strong competition from Darragh h oare, who took 2nd, and Michal Cervenka, who took 3rd.

With competitors from the North and south mixing, it made for a great spectacle. In the end, the 11-13 girls competition was a tie for first place between Victoria Colligan and Julia Cussens. A climb-off was the only way to separate them. Victoria had a little

bit left in the tank, taking first in a thrilling finale. Julia took 2nd and Victoria Watterson took 3rd.

With the absence of saul Calvert, the 11-13 boys was left wide open. sean h oare from the south took a comfortable 1st place with Carson Carnduff putting in one of the best performances of the competition to take 2nd and Ciaran Curran taking 3rd spot.

It was no surprise when Vanessa Woods was the comfortable winner in the 14-16 girls, climbing extremely well through all of the competitions, with 2nd place going to Niamh h ebblethwaite and 3rd to Rachel h odgson.

In the boys, Dominic Burns kept his winning streak going to take 1st place, closely followed by Jamie Rankin in 2nd and eoin Acton, who took 3rd.

Congratulations to all of the competitors who took part. Mountaineering Ireland would like to congratulate the eighteen competitors who qualified and competed in the YCs uK & Ireland f inals in Wolverhampton at the end of June.

Tiso's Belfast kindly sponsored the final event and also made sure no competitors left empty-handed as everyone received a goodie bag! A big 'thank you' to the route-setters, Angela, Ricky and eddie, as well as to all of the volunteers. We look forward to next year's YCs knowing it will be bigger again and just as successful!

• *Paul Swail is Youth Development Officer with Mountaineering Ireland.*

Scottish Winter Trip

Nevis Range, March 2011



Participants on the approach to the Stob Coire Nan Lochan horseshoe. Photo: Paul Swail.

Mountaineering Ireland's Youth Development Officer, Paul Swail, took a group of young people to Scotland for some winter skills training and climbing in March. They were lucky with the weather, as the pictures on the Mountaineering Ireland Facebook fanpage shows! Here, Paul reports on the week's activities.



The week started with the team getting to know the instructors – Jonny Parr and Ronnie Smith – and sorting out their kit for the week. The team then looked at the weather forecast and made plans for the week ahead.

The first day began with a thigh-busting walk into Ben Nevis via the North Face trail. It was intended to look at the snow pack on the Ben and highlight the importance of avalanche awareness. Corrie Linn was an ideal venue for this, just below the impressive Observatory ridge. Jonny Parr also did a short session on walking in crampons and using an ice axe.

The next day, Ronnie took two of the lads climbing and Jonny took the rest to Stob Coire Nan Lochan. The buzz that evening was amazing: Ronnie had made a successful ascent of the SW ridge on the Douglas Boulder (IV,5) while Jonny led

a brilliant day around the Stob Coire horseshoe via the east and West ridges. Jonny's group also looked at bucket seats and ice axe braking.

Thursday was a truly memorable day out with a successful ascent of the L edge route on Ben Nevis by all. This day involved the use of harnesses, ropes, ice axes and front-pointing cramponing techniques. The exposure was second to none and there was a great sense of satisfaction once everyone had reached the summit of the Ben.

Towards the end of the week most of the guys were pretty tired, so a shorter day was planned to finish off looking at

the skills and techniques needed to move safely in a winter environment. It was planned to do this on Aonach Mor, but due to high winds the plan was changed and the skills were practiced in the picturesque valley of Glen Nevis.

Overall, it was a very successful week, with the entire group getting hooked on Scottish winter walking and climbing. The team, which consisted of students from Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, Waterford Institute of Technology and a few students from Belfast, went out with the goal of obtaining an introduction to Scottish winter conditions and all came back having achieved this and with a hunger and passion for more.

A massive 'thank you' to Ronnie Smith and Jonny Parr, who looked after the group so well, as well as to Tollymore Mountain Centre for their support with equipment and transport. Next year will no doubt be more of the same!



! The team on the summit of Ben Nevis. Photo: Paul Swail.

Nepal Tourism Year

This year, Nepal is celebrating Tourism Year 2011. The official launch was held in January at the National stadium in Kathmandu. It is hoped that Nepal Tourism Year 2011 will be a very important force in helping Nepal develop its infrastructure and policies so that visitors from around the world may have a more fulfilling and memorable experience in Nepal, not only in 2011 but into the future.

Free peak permits for some Nepal peaks

The Nepalese government has announced that it will issue free Peak Permits for all of the open Peaks in the Mid West and far West regions of Nepal to mountaineering expeditions there until 16 July 2014.

Eco Everest Expedition

The eco everest expedition 2011 headed up to Mt everest in the pre-monsoon season. This expedition gathers waste from the slopes of Mt everest and brings it down off the mountain. since 2008, the eco everest expeditions have collected more than 12,000kg of rubbish from the mountain. The expedition has also recovered and provided dignified burials for the bodies of four climbers who had lost their lives on the mountain..

50th anniversary of Khumjung School

Khumjung school, the first school built by sir edmund h illary in the solu Khumbu region of Nepal, celebrated its 50th anniversary in May. following his successful first ascent of everest in the solu Khumbu with Tenzing in 1953, h illary worked to improve the education and well-being of the people living in that region. In his lifetime, h illary built thirty schools, two hospitals, thirteen health clinics and two airstrips, and made countless other contributions to improve the lives of the people there, who are some of the poorest in the world.



Ireland's youngest ever Everest climber, Mark Quinn, at Base Camp.
Photo: Mark Quinn collection.

Irish success on Mt Everest

A 26-Year-old D Imerick man, Mark Quinn, has succeeded in his attempt to become the youngest Irish person to climb Mount everest. he was part of an international group which summited everest on May 21st via the North Col.

The team descended safely to their Base Camp in Tibet and Mark returned to Ireland in early June. he was attempting to raise €29,035 – or €1 for every foot of

Mt everest – for a local I merick charity, the shane Geoghegan Trust. This I merick-based charity was set up after Garryowen rugby player shane Geoghegan was shot dead in a case of mistaken identity. The charity raises funds for youth programmes in I merick city.

for further information on Mark's fundraiser, visit his website, www.highaltitudeireland.org.

Irishman rescued from Mt McKinley

JeReMIAh o'su I IVAN from Cork was evacuated from 19,500 feet on Mount McKinley in a dramatic helicopter rescue on May 12th, matching the highest ever previous helicopter rescue in North America.

The 40 year-old from Ballinhassig in Cork was subsequently hospitalised with a broken leg and severe frostbite but was said to have been recovering well.

At 20,320 feet, Mount McKinley is the highest peak in North America. The four-man team Jeremiah was part of had apparently fallen while descending from the summit ridge. Conditions on the mountain at the time of their descent were described as brutal, with winds gusting up to 70 mph.

A 38-year-old swiss climber, Beat Niederer, who was also part of Jeremiah's team, had apparently died earlier on the mountain from unknown causes at around 18,000 feet. his body was recovered by

helicopter later on May 12th. Niederer's death was the first this year on the mountain, but in the following two weeks there were three more deaths of climbers in two separate accidents at about 18,000 feet while descending from Denali Pass to high Camp.



Mount McKinley, North America.

Bagging an Abel

Cradle Mountain

Anthony Toole goes climbing in Tasmania

We had been in Tasmania little more than two hours when Alan, an active member of the Hobart Walking Club, suggested a trip to the top of the 1,270-metre-high Mount Wellington, the mountain that dominates all views of Hobart. This proved easier than it sounded, as it is possible to drive up a twisting though well-surfaced road, through dense eucalypt forest, to within 100 metres of the summit.

A strong, warm wind blew across the plateau and made standing on the twin summit boulders, that rose marginally higher than the constructed concrete platform, something of a precarious balancing act. All around, the eucalypts of the lower slopes had given way to a variety of ground-hugging alpiners that, from a distance, resembled heathers.

To the west, the land dipped gently across the swamp of Dead Island, before rising to Thark Ridge, Mt Connection and Collins Bonnet. Eastward, the slope fell away sharply to give an extensive view over Hobart city and its harbour. The previous evening, the two leading yachts in the Sydney-Hobart race had arrived, and now more boats could be seen entering the mouth of the River Derwent.

On the way down, we stopped at The Springs car park and walked the woodland track for about a kilometre to the Sphinx Rock, a sandstone crag that looked down through The Stags, the bleached skeletons of trees burned during a forest fire in 1967. Above us stood the Organ Pipes, a tall dolerite

crag that rose to just below the summit.

From the car park, walkers could choose the Pinnacle Track toward the summit. Higher up, this splits into two. The right fork runs beneath and to the east of the Organ Pipes, while the left takes a steeper line, south and west of the crag, to the top.

Like the other high mountains in Tasmania, Mt Wellington is an Abel, which is the Tasmanian equivalent of

Cradle Mountain from Dove Lake. Photo: Anthony Toole.

Below: A Bennett's wallaby. Photo: Anthony Toole.





Hobart from summit
of Mount Wellington.
Photo: Anthony
Toole.

Below:
Ranger's Hut.
Photo: Anthony
Toole.

a Munro. To qualify as an Abel, the mountain must be at least 1,100 metres high, with a minimum surrounding drop of 150 metres.

Volume 1 of *The Abels* guidebook, edited by Bill Wilkinson, was published in 1994 and follows an almost identical structure and layout

to the Scottish Mountaineering Club Munro guidebook. However, it is yet to make a reprint, and Volume 2 is not even planned. The latter would be a major undertaking, as it would cover the south-west corner, which makes up one-third of the island, nearly all of which is covered by

dense, pristine and trackless wilderness – a challenge to a genuine explorer.

Among the Abels are some familiar names. The second highest peak, at 1,573 metres, is Legges Tor, which is in the Ben Lomond National Park. To the north of this is the 1,367-metre Ben Nevis, east of which is Mt Saddleback.

On the day following our drive up Wellington, we visited Mt Field National Park to the north-west of Hobart. The day was extremely hot and not conducive to strenuous walking, so we followed shaded tracks on short circuits to Russell Falls and through the tallest flowering trees in the world, second in height only to the non-flowering Californian redwoods.

In the afternoon, we continued up the rubble road to the stunningly beautiful Lake Dobson. The footpath, part wooden boardwalk, part rough track, led around the lake, through pencil pines and pandanus, past a few scattered refuge huts, one owned by the Hobart Walking Club.

Alan, who hails from Edinburgh, told us that Tasmanian winters compare with mild winters in





Scotland, with snow falling on the higher tops. Indeed, on the skyline above us, we could see the tow-lines of a ski centre.

It was now time to tackle some serious hillwalking, and over the next few days, we made our way by camper van, and with a few scenic detours, to Cradle Valley. We arrived in late afternoon, to catch the sharp, slanting sunlight emphasising the ripples of Dove Lake and the cracks and gullies of the dolerite crags that guarded the upper reaches of Tasmania's iconic peak, Cradle Mountain.

At 1,545 metres, this is the fifth highest of the Abels, but is so uniquely beautiful of profile and ambience that it is the one everybody wants to climb.

The following morning dawned cloudy, with a cool breeze. We took the free shuttle bus that ran every twenty minutes from the National Park Visitor Centre to Dove Lake, and signed our names and our intended walk into the book in the bus shelter.

This is obligatory, as is signing out on completion of the walk. Though Cradle Valley does have a tourist infrastructure, it is minimal, and it stands on the edge of a genuine wilderness.

We followed the track that wandered generally westward through scrub and around the northern tips of Lake Lilla and Wombat Pool, before turning south and climbing more steeply past Wombat Peak onto the eastern rim of the crag-enclosed Crater Lake. Here, we joined the Overland Trail, the 74-kilometre long-distance walk that links the Visitor Centre of Cradle Valley with that of Lake St Clair. This took us uphill again to Marion's Lookout, a vantage point at 1,223 metres overlooking Dove Lake. The track undulated from here for two kilometres in a south-west to south direction across open land, much of it boggy, to the two-storey emergency shelter of Kitchen Hut, where we parted company with the Overland Trail.

Our route from here started gently enough, up the concave northern face of Cradle Mountain, but as it steepened, at around the 1,350-metre contour, the terrain changed abruptly into that of a boulder field. The trekking sticks that I had used up to here became a hindrance, so I hid them behind a recognisable boulder and carried on upward, using hands as much as feet.

The scramble continued for around 150 metres, up, over and around the

Respite between boulder fields.
Photo: Anthony Toole.

Below: Anthony and Brendan Toole on the summit of Cradle Mountain.
Photo: Brendan Toole.

“Cradle Mountain (1,545m) is so uniquely beautiful of profile and ambience that it is the Abel that everybody wants to climb.”





Start of the Face Track.
Photo: Anthony Toole.

Far right: Descent to Ranger's Hut. Track to Hansen's Peak lies beyond.
Photo: Anthony Toole.

huge rocks, passing between tall pillars, some of which lay as to create natural windows framing views of the lower slopes. What we initially thought might be the summit proved to be a mere interruption, a brief pause, which led over more boulders, down and across a craggy gap to an even steeper scramble, which brought us eventually to the highest point, three-and-a-half hours after leaving Dove Lake. Unfortunately, we were robbed of the view by the cap of cloud that persistently hung around the top 100 metres of the mountain. This view would have extended south across the Overland Trail past the spectacular, but more recondite Mt Ossa, highest of the Abels.

After lunch, we retraced our steps down the boulder field, which was almost as problematic as its ascent. Arriving just above Kitchen Hut we decided to take what looked like quite an easy track that led horizontally eastward across the northern face of

the mountain.

It began easily enough, then changed into an arduous, up-and-down scramble through shrubs, the roots of which often reached across the path to create an insecure footing. After a kilometre of this, which seemed much longer, we descended to Ranger's Hut, an extremely pretty refuge at the side of a small tarn, then crossed a pleasant, level section to a group of equally pretty tarns, called Twisted Lakes.

Choosing the more direct of the two tracks we were now offered, we followed the slow drag up over the 1,185-metre Hanson's Peak. Another rough descent followed to a col at the western end of Lake Hanson. A few spots of rain threatened, from the clouds that piled up across the far side of Dove Lake, but these failed to develop into anything significant, as we made our way down the final slope above the eastern shore.

About 100 metres from the car

park, we saw a Bennett's wallaby standing bolt upright, posing for a woman to take its photograph, but as we tried to do the same, it resumed its nibbling of the grass, oblivious of our presence.

The rain caught us just as we reached the car park and signed off the route. The whole walk had taken us seven-and-a-half hours, slightly more than half of which had been occupied by the descent. It had been a very tough day, but certainly a highly enjoyable and memorable one.

There are only 155 mountains in Tasmania that can claim the status of Abels, yet the inaccessible nature of many, if not most of them, would make their ascents far more difficult than those of Scotland's 284 Munros. And a person attempting the feat would need to draw on the reserves of the true adventurer before heading off, in many cases, into what remains one of the world's last great wildernesses ■

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“The inaccessible nature of most of the 155 Abels would make their ascents far more difficult than those of Scotland's 284 Munros.”



General information

Getting there

There are no international flights into Tasmania. However, there are daily flights with Qantas, Virgin Blue and Jetstar to Hobart and Launceston from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane. See the websites www.quantas.com.au, www.virginblue.com.au and www.jetstar.com.au.

Getting around

Cars can be hired (Avis, Budget, Hertz) at Hobart Airport. We hired a Britz camper van for a week. Other equally good hire companies are Apollo and Maui. There are powered campsites at Cradle Valley and throughout the State. Tassielink coaches, one each day, leave Hobart for Launceston, and (again one each day, except Sunday) from Launceston to Cradle Mountain. See www.tigerline.com.au.

National parks

Entry fees apply to all of Tasmania's national parks. Passes can be bought online or at any national park visitor centre for \$24/vehicle/day or \$12/person/day. An eight-week pass to all national parks can be bought for \$60/vehicle or \$30/person. See www.parks.tas.gov.au.

Further information

Insight Guides: Tasmania – an excellent, beautifully illustrated guide to the whole state. Also contains a removable touring map.
The Abels Vol 1, Bill Wilkinson (ed), Tasmanian Outdoors Collection (1994), ISBN: 0646216910. An excellent walking guidebook, but not easy to obtain. Covers all the Abels with the exception of those in the south-west corner.



Mweelrea

The 'Ridged Peak'

Martin Hansard communes with nature on the highest peak in Connacht

Mweelrea,
Co Mayo.
Photo:
Karl Boyle.

I felt I was ready for Mweelrea and I couldn't put the challenge off any longer! I'm a stickler for tradition and Connaught's highest peak had been on my New Year's resolution list and was yet to be struck off. As the clocks were set back and the days were drawing shorter, the opportunities for a successful climb were decreasing. It was time to bite the bullet and "go west, young man."

Being a proponent of the outdoor ethics code of Leave No Trace, I tend to adhere fastidiously to its first and most important principle, "Plan and Prepare," and even more so when embarking on a solo climb. So with that in mind I paid special attention to

the weather forecast. It was important to wait for a clear bright day to take full advantage of the nine hours of daylight that mid-November offers. I knew the views would be my great reward but foremost on my mind was to avoid low cloud and rain. At last the window of opportunity presented itself, with a lull in the low-pressure frontal activity, which determined my departure date for Mweelrea.

Leenane Hotel overlooking the shores of Killary Harbour was the base for my expedition. Only a twenty-minute drive from the Mweelrea mountain range, its perfect scenic location gave me the peace of mind of the guaranteed early start that I needed. With check-list checked and route card left at reception, an act of mountaineering good practice that hopefully I will never become arrogant enough to scoff at, I settled in for an early night.

The Atlantic sky was paling as I drove along Killary Harbour, a sea-filled U-shaped valley that is one of the few examples of a fjord that we have in Ireland. The water was still

and glasslike apart from the gentle waves that lapped on the shoreline. From Doo Lough, the start and finish point of my chosen route, I could clearly make out the dramatic jagged cliff walls of the Coum Dubh corrie. With my daypack on my back and my gaiters securely strapped on, I set forth across the saturated grassy bogland towards Coum Dubh. Compared to the Wicklow terrain with its gentler slopes and the forest paths that make access to the open mountain easier, the conditions under foot in Mayo are much steeper and tougher. The energy-sapping routine of walking on raised saturated sods takes getting used to and slows progress, and that's before any steep ascents are attempted.

Using the Sruthancullinmore stream as a handrail, I made a speedy ascent into Coum Dubh corrie. As I climbed higher, it struck me that the land-bridge below that separated Doo Lough from its smaller sister Glencullin had obviously been formed as a result of the contents of the side of the mountain being gouged out and deposited there during the ice

and peri-glacial eras, when massive natural forces were at play. The interesting landscape left behind is not unlike the geology in Glendalough, where the side of the mountain at Poulanass waterfall subsided and caused the glacial lake in Glendalough to become two.

For someone like me, going through my mountain leader consolidation period, the complex terrain in the corrie was a delight. The boggy grassland gave way to broken ground where the boulders of sandstone and grit-stone protruding from the slopes were a testament to how old the actual geology was. I was in fact walking on what once was a shallow seabed 500 million years ago, when Ireland was situated thousands of miles further south.

As I progressed, I had to negotiate loose boulder fields and scree. Before I finally made the flatter ground of the ridge, I also had to overcome several short but challenging scrambles.

The view from my vantage point above the canyon took me to a higher plane, spiritually. Doo Lough, dark and still, gave perfect contrast and perspective to the boldness of the Sheeffry range in the middle distance. I could also clearly make out Croagh Patrick over thirty kilometres due north, like a majestic centurion guarding Clew Bay and the low pasture lands of Westport and beyond. Swinging around to face the southwest, Mweelrea stood, sitting beneath its misty veil, dark and stubborn in its shadowy solitude. Its 800-metre-high body of stone creating a microclimate of its own, with the vigorous air uplift sending swirling fog and mist rolling across the col like dry ice.

My route to the 814m top was now laid out before me. Firstly, I had to ascend to the cairn at 750m spot height, where I broke for lunch. From there I followed the ridge down to the col, using three smaller marker cairns to guide me along the ridge and away from the steeply falling slope to the south. During the respite of this period of descent, I began to muse about the name Mweelrea. What was its origin, I wondered? What did it mean? As is usually the case when Irish place-names are anglicised, the meaning gets lost or confused in translation and the re-interpretation may have two or more meanings. Mweelrea is the phonetic spelling of the Gaelic words *Maol Reidh*, which



simply translated mean 'bald summit finish.' *Maol* is the Gaelic word for 'rounded summit' but interestingly the word can also mean 'ridge' and, because I was walking on a ridged peak, it didn't take a lot to convince me that the latter was the more probable meaning of Mweelrea. With the Mweelrea riddle solved and the terrain beginning to rise again, I focused on the job at hand once more.

After avoiding the odd bog pool on the col, I began my 170m ascent to the summit. The terrain was steep but quite manageable, and soon I found myself looking down the sheer slopes of the southern ridge into the expanse below. My destination was tantalisingly close. The steep, undulating wavelength form of the Twelve Pins and the Maumturk range

framed my views to the south. To the west, the pale blue Atlantic rippled and farther west, past Inishturk and the other scattered islands, the ominous wall of cloud, the vanguard of the cyclonic low, was heading in my direction.

The feeling is always the same for me when the goal is within reach. It is a moment of clarity, all doubts are vanquished, and sweetness and strength fill my inner being. The intensity of the feeling has a direct correlation to the challenge that has been overcome.

As I approached the petite cairn on Maol Reidh's summit, I let out a joyful victory call to let Mother Earth know I was there, on her ridged peak ■

• **Martin Hansard is the proprietor of Lugnaquilla House Hostel.**

Cairn on Lugmore Ridge.
Photo: Martin Hansard.

Below:
Boulder field on Coum Dubh.
Photo: Martin Hansard.



Which boot?

Getting a good fit

Alun Richardson has some useful tips on buying the right pair of boots

Pair of Tecnica hillwalking boots.
Photo: Patrick O'Sullivan.

There is a massive choice of walking boots available and that can make buying a new pair of boots a bit of a nightmare. However, in April I had the pleasure of visiting Ambrose Flynn at 53 Degrees North's Blanchardstown branch where I learnt what different boots are designed for and how best to fit them.

My first question to Ambrose was, "Which boots are best for mountain walking in Ireland?" Ambrose replied with another question, "Well, it depends on the style of walking you want to do and the experience you have of walking." I was a little confused by why experience made a difference, but Ambrose made a very good point that buying a solid, non-flexible mountain boot as a novice may put you off hillwalking.

A good pair of approach shoes or soft fabric boots is fine for treks on simple tracks and trails, but more rugged terrain requires a sturdier mountain-walking boot, especially in poor weather.

Ambrose also pointed out to me that some of the most popular off-trail mountain walks in Ireland are covered in peaty soil, which due to its acidic nature can compromise the stitching in fabric boots (albeit slowly over a few years).

Ambrose described a good hillwalking boot as well-constructed, water-resistant, with an aggressive tread pattern, a medium level of ankle support and, most importantly, a good resistance of the sole to twisting. To test this, grab the boot at the heel and toe and try to twist in opposite directions. If it twists easily, then ankle support will be reduced in difficult terrain.

So, are fabric boots better? Fabric boots are lighter and can dry faster, but do take care selecting a model because cheaper ones often provide little ankle support and have poor lateral stiffness, making it difficult to get a good grip on wet, grassy slopes.

A good quality pair of leather

boots, looked after with a 'waterproofing' agent, is still the most popular choice for serious mountain walkers, but fabric boots are improving rapidly. Gore-tex boots are still the forerunner with regards to waterproofing but other brands, such as Columbia's 'Onmi-Tec waterproof membrane' are encroaching upon Gore's dominance. It is difficult to find a single boot that will be perfect for everything and serious walkers may have two or more pairs. Below are some examples that Ambrose gave me:

- **For general walking and trekking** – the Scarpa Tera, Lowa Renegade and Brasher Supalite are good examples of suitable boots.

- **Exploring ridges and rough terrain** – a slightly stiffened model is recommended to provide support and comfort on complex terrain, such as the Brasher Chamba or the Lowa Sterling.

- **Winter walking** – a heavier insulated stiffer boot is best for winter conditions, such as the Lowa Mountain Expert GTX or the Scarpa Jorasses Pro GTX. If required, the appropriate Grivel crampon combination is available.

How to walk

Pace A common mistake is to walk too fast – take your time and enjoy it. If you can't talk when you walk, and you can't keep going for a few hours, then it's too fast. Start slowly, keep an even pace and have something in reserve in case you need to speed up. Try to walk for at least an hour before stopping for your first rest.

The Rest Step Straighten your rear leg in between every step so that it is supported by bone, not muscle, and relax the muscles of the forward leg. This momentary rest refreshes the muscle and, because you will perform it thousands of times, its effect over hours of ascent is beneficial. Synchronise your breathing with each step.

Downhill Tighten your laces, bend your knees, place each foot lightly, don't totally straighten your leg. Use the thigh muscles to absorb the impact, not your knees; keep a measured and pace and zigzag to shift the strain.

Boulder slopes Stand in the gap between the stones rather than on the top, to avoid slipping.

• Trekking on Kilimanjaro –

if you are starting with no walking experience, then a more flexible boot is advisable, such as the Berghaus Ridge or the Lowa Khumbu.

Whichever boot you eventually decide on, Ambrose stressed that getting a good fit is the most important part as, without a good fit, the boot can't perform properly. I was surprised to find that there is no uniformity in boot sizes across manufacturers. Maybe it's time they made a standard-sized foot out of metal and all manufacturers had to use it to designate size?

A rough test of fit is to put the boot on unlaced. Push your foot forwards until your toes hit the front; you should then be able to squeeze a finger down the back of the heel. This means that, when they are laced, you will have about a 1cm space at the front of the boot. Next, lace the boots properly while standing up to weight the foot, but don't lace them too tightly over the arch;

the foot is very sensitive to pressure. A good fit can also be helped by creating tension in different parts of the boot by tying a knot at any stage in the lacing and then continuing to the top.

A good fit is one where there is no pressure on your toes and you can wiggle them, there is no side-to-side movement of the foot, and your heel does not lift.

For a more supportive fit, volume reducers can be inserted into the boot. 53 Degrees North have a 14-day returns policy on boots to give you plenty of time at home to try them on for longer. It's also advisable to wear a loaded rucksack when fitting boots and simulate uphill and downhill walking, because this will alter the shape of your foot.

Ambrose also talked me through how boots can be modified for people who have a foot size difference between left and right feet. Orthotic foot beds, volume adjusters and stretching can all make your boot more comfortable and ease painful rub points. Superfeet are the première in-soles, providing warmth, extra spring and arch support. They will help to prevent long-term foot, leg

Ambrose Flynn in the Blanchardstown store of 53 Degrees North.

Competition

To win a 53 Degrees North voucher worth €150 redeemable against a pair of boots from any of the company's stores, answer the following questions:

- 1 How did Vibram get its name?
- 2 What does Berghaus mean?
- 3 Where does 53 Degrees North get its name from?

Send your answers to: Boots Competition, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12. Entries must be received not later than 31st July 2011. All correct entries will be entered in a draw for the voucher.



Pronation

There are 26 bones in each foot. How these move in relation to each other when walking has a major effect on comfort, balance, posture and long-term foot health.

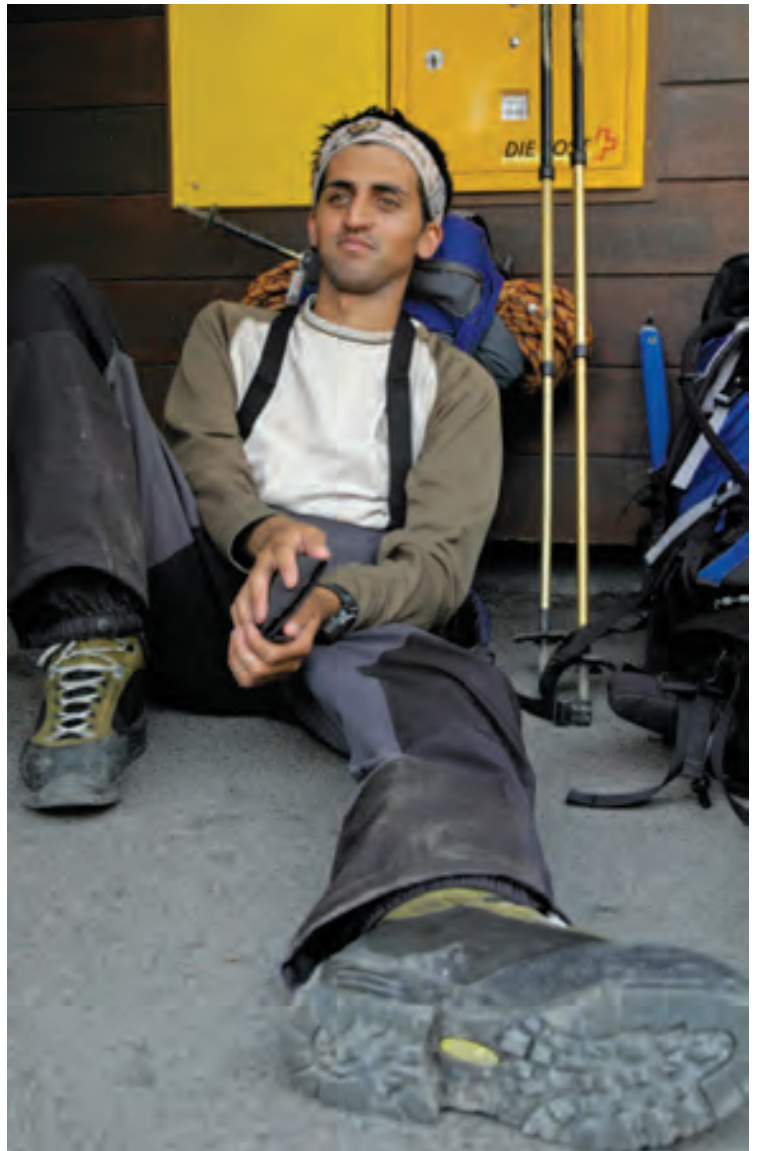
Check how you walk by looking at the soles of an old pair of shoes. If the wear is centralised to the ball of the foot and a small portion of the heel, you have a normal amount of foot movement. If you over-pronate, there will be wear patterns along the inside edges, while under-pronation results in wear along the outer edges. Some pronation is normal in walking as the foot settles on the ground, but when this type of movement becomes excessive, it can generate pain.

Over-pronation (flat foot) is when there is too much movement of the foot. It causes you to walk on other parts of your foot, and is a common cause of pain at the heel and throughout the lower extremities.

Under-pronation (supination) occurs when the foot rolls outwards at the ankle. If under- or over-pronation goes uncorrected, it can also lead to posture and back problems.

Blisters

If your boots fit, you have laced them correctly, you wear good socks and you look after your feet, you should never get blisters. If you feel a hot spot, act immediately. Pop or not pop? Always pop, but do it neatly. Use a sterilised needle and pop a couple of holes in the blister, press it flat and apply a small square of gauze to pad it. Tape it down with duck tape because it sticks and has a slippery surface. Plasters and zinc oxide fall off and make a sticky mess when you perspire.



and back problems. If you have your own in-soles, take them along with you. The Blanchardstown branch of 53 Degrees North has a pressure pad to assess arch support and the Carrickmines branch has a gait analysis machine. Ambrose also showed me a quick method for assessing how I walked by examining my normal shoes, and he found that I was over-pronating.

A well-fitting, comfortable boot is, however, due as much to the socks you use as to the model you choose. Socks should be snug with a smooth knit, good shape and elasticity, and made of wool or synthetic fibres to draw moisture away. I like to wear a thin sock and a thicker one to help avoid blisters, but Ambrose pointed out that it does depend on the environment you are walking in. For example, lighter, more breathable socks may be better for the heat of the Camino.

• **Breaking boots in** – if the boots are fitted correctly, then it is unlikely

that you will need to ‘break them in.’ However, high performance mountain walking boots are less soft and supple than trail boots and may require some getting used to by doing progressively longer walks. I would not recommend using new boots for the first time on a long trek.

• **Care of boots** – if your boots get wet, clean them and stuff them loosely with newspaper. Then leave them to dry in a warm, but not hot, place. Apply conditioner to repel water a few days before it is needed, to allow it to soak in, but avoid too much treatment as it can soften the leather too much. Don’t use Vaseline as it makes the boot 100% waterproof.

• **Looking after your feet** – wash your feet daily and use moisturiser to keep them soft. A pumice stone will remove any hard skin or you could try the new fad of putting your feet in a bath with exotic fish that eat the decaying skin from your feet! Air your feet regularly and use powders or

antiperspirant to keep them dry and to reduce the chance of blisters. Cut your nails by following the contour of the nail, so that the nail corner is visible. If you cut the nail too short, the nail corner can grow into the skin and end up as a painful ingrowing toe-nail.

Finally, as a shop owner in a previous life and now the Training Officer for Mountaineering Ireland, I am always amazed at how many people buy boots online. The internet may be the cheaper option, but when it comes to your feet it is a huge risk, so support your local shops and don’t use them merely as a service to find the correct size ■

• *I would like to thank Ambrose Flynn for his excellent advice and 53 Degrees North for supplying a voucher as a prize, which can be redeemed against a pair of boots.*

Alun Richardson is Mountaineering Ireland’s Training Officer.

The Broken Mountain Challenge

Cormac Mac Gearailt

Talk of monasteries, broken mountains, the crucifixion of Christ and pirates is enough to make one apprehensive. The 150m of the most exposed sea cliff I have ever seen should, therefore, really not have surprised me at all.

The Montagna Spaccata (Broken Mountain) at the monastery of Gaeta in the Lazio region of central Italy is said to have split at the very moment when Christ died on the cross. An earthquake was the chosen vehicle for this destruction. What is left is an amazing monastery, a chapel nestled in a mid-cliff perch and a secluded cove used as a hideaway by pirates in the past.

Climbing this cliff was to be our 'project of the day' – in reality, the 'project of the year' for me! The Croce del Sud – the Southern Cross – was our chosen route. I don't climb as much as I'd like to anymore, but I was going to try this one anyway. I had seen the climb before and had climbed another route on this cliff a few years before, but yet I was unprepared for the gut-wrenching exposure that we were about to subject ourselves to.

An early Monday morning start to avoid sharing the route led to a businesslike approach as we got started.

"Yes, this is the abseil point."

"You sure? We don't want to have to swim around!"

"Yes, this is it."

"OK, I'll head down first," I said.

I hadn't done much rockclimbing lately and I wasn't going to be able to contribute much of the leading – so I decided I could scout out the abseil and absorb the



first bit of early morning exposure for the team. It was the least I could do!

Christian, a Swiss-Italian resident, has been climbing 'hot rock' – single-pitch sport climbs – like the clappers for the past few years. 8b or 8c is his grade; I can't remember – does it really matter? It's like comparing a bicycle to a car (me being the bicycle – in need of oil). I'm not really up to this standard of climb anymore. Do I deserve to even get a chance? Well, with a designated leader looking for a willing accomplice, the chance was offered and accepted, although I wouldn't be able to do it cleanly; I was honest enough to admit that to myself. 'Hmmm, a moral quandary. Should I allow myself this luxury?' I thought privately. 'Okay, a present from me to myself,' I thought. I've wanted to do this climb for years and my skills and the opportunity haven't quite coincided as I'd have liked.

Cormac Mac Gearailt at belay 3.
Photo: Cormac Mac Gearailt collection.



morning fishermen in their boats.

Pitch 3 started from a hanging belay and the grade eased (that's welcome!); as we climbed on, the fatigue increased (not so welcome). All along for me, the climb was overshadowed by the final 6b+ on the 4th pitch. Brief moments of relaxation were stolen before it loomed again in my mind. Would this 6b+ spoil it all? Was my enjoyment only a prelude to a nightmare, a nightmare in the hot sun? I arrived at the belay at pitch 4 and I'm still enjoying myself. Being in a place almost no (normal?) person will ever get to, the drama, the achievement...and more yet to come.

Okay, now is the real work. Christian, my climbing partner who spends the day at the sharp end, leads up. No problem there, but that's not necessarily a good sign for me. So he has passed the hard bit; now it's my turn. Clip out, leave one anchor in, check ropes, taut, put on backpack, look around, think of reasons to delay, none come to mind, shout 'climbing!', wait for response, none forthcoming. I call again. And again. "I'll be okay, I've done this all before," I reassure myself. I clip out of the last anchor and leave the relative comfort of the hanging belay.

Up I go and immediately it is overhanging. Too much for me, I know, but I keep trying. A small cheat on an extender and I'm past it. Good progress. Up and up. Okay, finally I see the looming overhang. It whispers '6b+' softly in my ear. "At least try," I tell myself. I do and get as far as I can without cheating. Okay, 125m of a 150m climb done in not too shameful a style, but now comes the shame. And so much of it...hands on extenders, slings in bolts, foot in sling, stepping up, resting on bolts. Aid-climbing? It's worse – it's neither proper aid-climbing nor free-climbing!

The next bolt is too far. I can't reach. Good God! I can't think about

Too bad. It's now or never!

Eager to move along after multiple abseils to the base of the cliff, we despatch Pitch 1 nicely and settle onto the Spiderman ledge. The game is afoot, as Holmes might say. Apart from an hour of practice the evening before, it's my first rock climb for a year and a half. Oh, did I pull on a bolt on the first pitch? Perhaps I did, I can't quite remember.

So, Pitch 2 starts. Beautiful views of the Gulf of Gaeta and a hot autumn sun greet us each time we weave to the south side of the arête. And what an arête it is; pure, vertical, soaring and relentless. The only time the route wasn't vertical in 125m was when it was overhanging. Not a soul to be seen either, except for the early



“The only time the route isn't vertical in 125 metres is when it is overhanging. And then I see the overhang. It whispers '6b+' softly in my ear. 'At least try,' I tell myself.”

the yawning abyss below me. I hear the surf. I imagine myself swimming with my girlfriend at the beach. I sing to myself. I examine a minute crystal in the rock. I try deep breathing. I focus on the progress and try to keep my universe to a 1m radius around me. Every inch upwards counts. Move a foot, a metre and the climb looks different. "It will end," I tell myself. It has before. I make progress. So slow. One hour of work, of engineering, of cheating. On this pitch, for me cheating doesn't make it easy, it just makes it possible.

Then I am over the crux and back on land or at least a ledge the size of a man's fist. It feels as big as a picnic table. I rest, breathe, rest, and enjoy the sun on my face. I thank God I have the health to do this. I was scared but, yes, I still love climbing!

The route eases and eventually I pull over the top. Christian congratulates me. Secretly, I congratulate myself. "I'd say it was quite lonely down there," he says to me. Yes, it was, but it was also an experience, one I will remember as long as I live. I feel a pang of regret that I didn't do the climb cleanly, that somehow I was disrespectful to the climb or the sport. That's only right, I think. It should feel less good, but it still feels great! ■

Cormac Mac Gearailt tries to climb as much as he can but mostly gets diverted by other adventure sports. He makes a couple of winter visits to Scotland most years. He cut his teeth with the Wexford Hillwalkers Club and currently lives in Wexford.

Notes

150m French 6a, 6a+, 5c, 6b+. Croce del Sud, Gaeta, Campania.

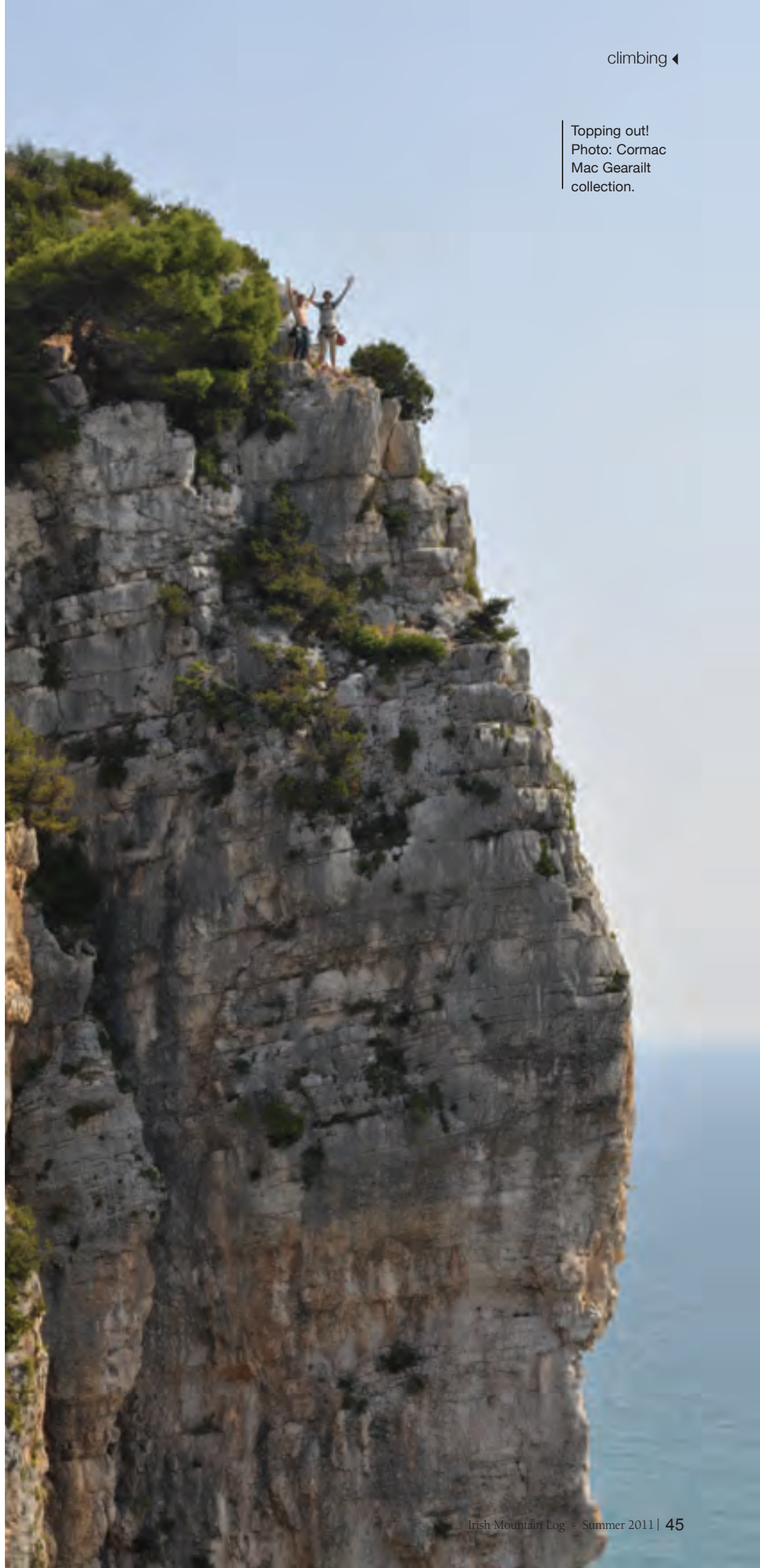
Access is through the Monastery of the 'Santuario della Montagna Spaccata.'

Opening hours can be erratic. A short walk up and thereafter abseil down from the top of the promontory.

Nearest Airport Naples.

Nearest train Formia. Car is best for easy access. Plenty of other climbs in area, e.g. Sperlonga.

Topping out!
Photo: Cormac
Mac Gearailt
collection.



Aconcagua

Mountain of Death

Fin O'Driscoll

West face of Aconcagua overlooking Plaza de Mulas base camp. Photo: Fin O'Driscoll.

When they were preparing to climb Aconcagua in February this year, the climbers in base camp were not to know that La Niña would cause the worst storms there in ten years, resulting in a record number of fatalities on the mountain. Fin O'Driscoll reports on his attempt to climb the highest peak in the Andes.

Aconcagua (6,962m) is the highest mountain in the world outside of the Himalayan range and is the second highest of the seven summits next to Mount Everest (8,848m). Since 1926, 148 climbers have died on the mountain. Six people had already died in the current climbing season, including four in mid-February when I was acclimatising and preparing for a

summit attempt with a group of twelve other climbers.

Aconcagua, "the stone sentinel," is close to the border with Chile, 200km west of Mendoza. It stands over 1,500 metres higher than any neighbouring peak and is prone to severe and unpredictable weather, including violent high-altitude winds with regular chill-factor temperatures of as low as -50°C.

Arriving in Mendoza in early February, I joined the team for a guided three-week expedition with local company **Aymara**. The group included nine Europeans and four Argentinians, all experienced high-altitude mountaineers. Aconcagua is not classified as a technical climb but the high altitude and weather make for a formidable challenge, resulting in an average summit success rate of only 40%. The first two weeks of the trip would include a long 40km trek to base camp followed by acclimatisation on nearby peaks over 5,000m. A 200km bus ride from the comfortable hotel in Mendoza to the tiny village of Puente del Inca (2,850m) near the Chilean border was the start of this acclimatisation process.

The traditional visit to the

Cementero Andanista at the entrance to the park to see the graves and memorials to the climbers who have perished on the mountain was a sobering experience and testament to the significant challenge ahead. A three-day hike up the Horcones valley into the bustling base camp at Plaza de Mulas (4,350m) included a detour to Plaza Francia at the foot of the awesome South Face of the mountain. The local muleteers (Arreiros) went ahead with the mule train, each animal carrying 60kg of equipment, food and supplies.

Acclimatisation is vital to improving the chances of success on Aconcagua, and adhering to the mantra 'climb high, sleep low' allows the body to adjust to the reduced oxygen levels. We climbed to the summit of neighbouring peaks Cerro Bonete (5,100m) and Cerro Catedral (5,400m) which overlook base camp and this provided an opportunity for the professional guides to see how the group performed. Three people experienced altitude-related problems and did not progress to the climb on Aconcagua itself, one suffering from a pulmonary oedema and two from blood pressure-related problems. They

were evacuated by helicopter to Puente del Inca and went back to Mendoza for medical treatment.

At base camp, the start of the assault on the summit was delayed by one day due to a severe storm. Two climbers from other groups had, in fact, already perished close to the summit. Australian Bob Huggins suffered from a cerebral oedema and died of hypothermia before he could be rescued and a German climber, Karl Heinz Bar, died following a fall above Camp Berlin. News of these tragedies filtered down to base camp and our group set off gingerly when the weather had cleared.

A half-day climb to Camp Canada (4,900m) with an overnigher in our two-man tents was followed by a quick ascent to Camp Nido de Condores (5,350m) the next day. The weather was perfect for climbing with cloudless blue skies and strong glaring sunshine. The going was slow and we used crampons to trudge through the 40cm of fresh snow, but the calm conditions allowed for an uneventful climb to the final camp, Camp Berlin (5,900m), the following day.

The next morning, I set off with the group for the summit at 05:00 in the pre-dawn darkness and we progressed steadily up to the abandoned Independencia shelter at 6,400m. The bodies of the two climbers were still at the shelter waiting to be brought down by a rescue team and as we set off from this tragic scene we noticed

the infamous lens-shaped cloud, El Hongo, forming over the summit ridges, a sign that another severe storm was imminent. Despite being only five hours from the summit, the guides made the decision to return to Camp Berlin, a difficult but correct judgment call as two more climbers perished on the upper slopes. Polish climber Liezec Bomark went missing from his group in the white-out that day and Czech climber Thomas Fedelec died from pulmonary oedema in his tent the next day. Bomark's body was eventually found over two weeks later on March 1st.

The air temperature back at Camp Berlin was -20°C but the wind resulted in a chill factor of -40°C and after waiting for several hours it was decided to head back to the safety of base camp. The extreme weather during the 2011 season was due to La Niña, a coupled ocean-atmosphere phenomenon which is the counterpart of the better known El Niño. This phenomenon had been responsible for severe flooding in Queensland, landslides near Rio de Janeiro and category 5 tropical cyclones in the previous months, and was playing havoc with mountain weather patterns in the Andes. The two other fatalities that had occurred earlier in the season were a Spanish climber, Ana Guerra, and an American climber, John Watcher, who had both perished on the mountain in the severe weather conditions.

In an attempt to reduce the number of fatalities in recent years, the Aconcagua National Park authorities have provided a full-time helicopter to evacuate sick climbers, compulsory medical checks at base camp and an increased park permit entrance fee of \$700 to provide for better emergency huts on the main climbing routes. The fulltime doctors at base camp measure the saturated oxygen levels in the blood, pulse rates and blood pressures of climbers there. If any of these key measurements are outside certain limits, the climbers are instructed to return to the park entrance, a 36km eight-minute ride to safety by helicopter. On average, three people are evacuated every day during the three-month climbing season and this free service has saved countless lives since it was introduced in 2002.

We left base camp the next day as the storm raged overhead and after the long trek out returned to our hotel in Mendoza, lucky to be safe and well. Mendoza is a charming city in the centre of Argentina's wine-producing region with a warm summer temperature of 28°C that was a far cry from the freezing conditions high in the Aconcagua Principal Cordillera range. We were disappointed not to make the summit but, on reflection, realised the extent of the severe weather and the resulting toll on our fellow climbers' lives over the previous week. The average success rate on Aconcagua for the 2011 season was an

Fin O'Driscoll (far left) with his group, resting at Camp Canada (4,900m). Photo: Fin O'Driscoll collection.





Fin O'Driscoll at Plaza Francia (4,200m) with Aconcagua South Face behind him. Photo: Fin O'Driscoll collection.

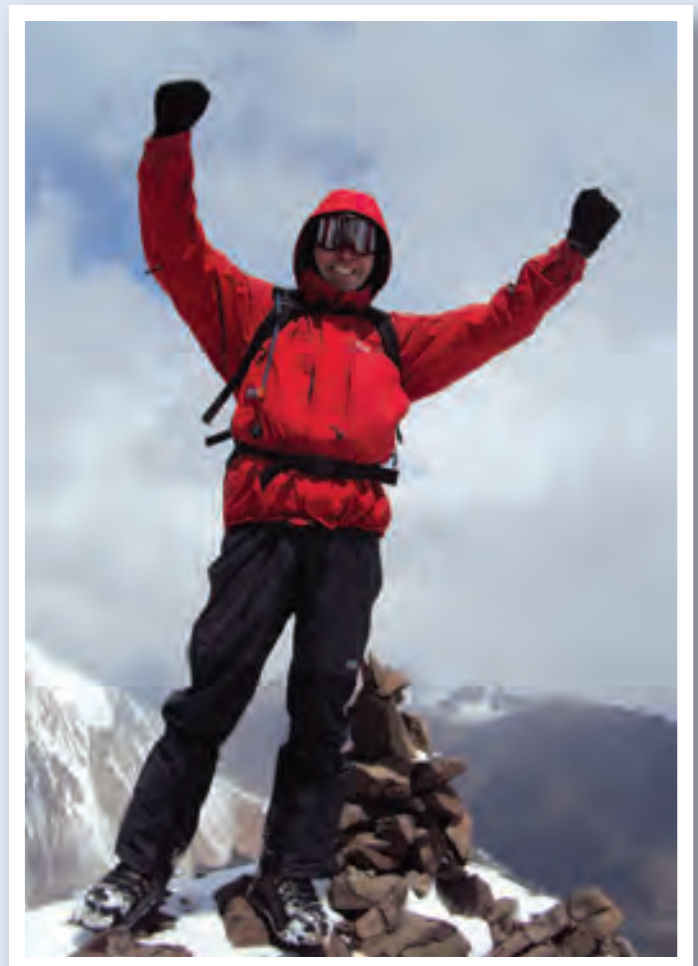
Below right: Fin O'Driscoll at the summit of Cerro Bonete (5,100m), an acclimatisation peak beside Aconcagua. Photo: Fin O'Driscoll collection.

abnormally low 25%.

Mendoza is a leafy city, bustling with tourists and surrounded by many Bodegas offering wine-tasting tours featuring the now famous Malbec grape. It is in a desert location, but is irrigated by the melting snow from the Andes to the west. Mendoza was completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1861 and the whole region is prone to seismic events with recent major quakes in Valparaíso and Santiago in neighbouring Chile.

The wilderness and savage beauty of Aconcagua National Park was a fantastic experience and the severe weather over the three weeks resulted in frequent close sightings of the majestic condors as they took shelter from the storms, a rare treat as there is no vegetation or animal life above base camp. I have now returned safely to my family in County Kildare but plan to return to Aconcagua as I have yet to conquer 'The Stone Sentinel,' weather permitting ■

Fin O'Driscoll has been on several mountaineering expeditions and has summited on Mount Elbrus (5,650m) in Russia, Kilimanjaro (5,895m) in Tanzania, Chuckung Ri (5,400m) in Nepal and several Alpine peaks, including Mont Blanc (4,808m). He has trekked extensively in the Atlas Mountains and to Everest Base Camp in Tibet.





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Books

Literary Editor Peter O'Neill presents reviews of some recent publications



Full of sense of place and history

Bill Hannon



Rambling round Ireland

By Peter Lynch
The Liffey Press (2010), 300pp
60 colour photos
IsBN: 978-1-905785-91-9
€17.95

Peter Lynch has produced a fascinating book. It is full of a sense of place and of history. It has knowledgeable commentary on wildlife and local traditions, on architecture and geology, and on their interactions with communities and individuals.

The walk was interrupted by family, social and professional commitments, so that it took thirteen years to complete. He was accompanied for much of the walk by one or other of his three 'walking buddies.' Sadly, in a poignant coincidence, I attended the funeral of one of these buddies, Mark Draper, before I saw this book or realised the connection.

The walk begins at the Martello Tower at Sandycove, Dublin, with a brilliant evocation of the opening scene of *Ulysses*, and thereafter Ireland's writers and poets are never far away.

The sub-title of the book is *A Commodious Vicus of Recirculation* – a quote from the opening lines of *Finnegans Wake*. This sets the tone, which is leisurely, with time for stopping and observing, for explorations and adventures. "There is something of interest at every turn," he says. Climbers will be interested to come across two complementary references to Elizabeth Healy's *Literary Tour of Ireland* – a beautiful book.

It was a revelation to learn of the range and antiquity of the castles, monasteries, friaries and "fortified houses" scattered about the countryside. Sometimes signs of the remote past are juxtaposed with these. Coming down from Knocknarea and following The Sligo Way, the author relates: "The impressive isolated mound of Knocknashee appeared ahead. A fortified Bronze Age hilltop township was discovered here as recently as 1988 by the OPW during a survey of Sligo. It is among the most significant archaeological discoveries in Europe in recent decades. A deserted trail sloped gently down through the forested area to the village of Collooney. ... Not far on was Tullaghan hill, also known as Hawk's Rock, an inspiration for Yeats' symbolic play *At the Hawk's Well* about Cuchulainn's search for wisdom." These shifts in time from era to era keep the imagination lively.

Peaks don't figure much in these rambles, though he did climb "The Devil's Mother" to savour the view of Killary Harbour and the Mweelrea. As life and "love is in the valleys," the author focused there and on remote habitation and people.

It seems that abandoned railways exist all over the country. Some are legendary. There was the unique engineering achievement of the Monorail from Listowel to Ballybunion and, of course, the West Clare Railway. Some abandoned lines have potential for walking and cycling paths and should be preserved from unprincipled opportunists. The line from Collooney to Claremorris (closed in 1975) was mostly clear but the author had to climb numerous barbed wire fences. Towards Collooney, some buildings had been erected on the line. "I cannot believe," he wrote, "that planning permission for these was granted."

So, altogether a great read. It is also a reminder of many rewarding walks, which one can enjoy again with fresh insight, and to me of the many places in our country which I have not yet explored. When I get around to these rambles, I will definitely have Peter Lynch's book in my hand.

4th map in series



Wicklow East 1:30,000 Detailed Map

By Barry and Clive Dalby
eastWest Mapping (2011)
IsBN: 978-1-899815-29-6
€9.95 inc VAT at 13.5%

The final sheet in the series of four maps covering the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains. See the Autumn 2010 issue for a detailed review of the previous two sheets, Wicklow Mountains West and Lugganquilla and Glendalough, covering also the common features of the series, including the less usual 1:30,000 scale. These maps are available

from larger bookshops and outdoor shops. They're also available from www.eastwestmapping.ie, with an additional charge for p&p. The full set of four maps can be ordered from that website for €35 incl. p&p.

Handbook on trail-making



The Mountain Meitheal Handbook of Trail Design and Construction

By Bill Murphy
Mountain Meitheal (2011)
96pp
IsBN: 978-0-9568452-0-7
€15 incl. p&p; available through the website www.pathsavers.org

This is a revised edition of the handbook that was originally reviewed in the spring 2007 issue.

Stunning new guide to bouldering in Ireland

Adam Coburn



Bouldering in Ireland

By David f lanagan
David f lanagan, 256pp
Many photos and sketches
Is BN: 978-0-9567874-0-8
€15 (plus €3 p&p)

Bouldering in Ireland follows on from the excellent website

theshortspan.com (also put together by the author, David f lanagan) to provide rock-climbers with a comprehensive guide to bouldering throughout the island.

The guide is broken down into the four provinces and, from there,

into the individual bouldering areas. There are detailed directions to each area (although a good road map or sat nav is essential in many cases) and maps overviewing the parking, the walk-in and the boulders themselves. excellent topos and photos bring you all the established problems in each area.

Descriptions of the rock type, seasonal weather conditions and tidal considerations (where needed) will give you a good idea of what you're getting in for in each area. There's also a handy breakdown of the number and difficulty of the problems in each area.

serious boulderers will have to check websites and forums for new problems and variations. Climbing.ie is widely used, and theshortspan.com has updates and a list of new problems. There'll always be a hidden nook or cranny that only locals know about, too.

unless you know Irish boulders like the back of your hand, *Bouldering in Ireland* is as essential to boulderers as a mat, a chalk bag and a good toothbrush. It is available direct from theshortspan.com and from all good outdoor shops.

What to expect if you're climbing the Matterhorn

Michael Scott



The Matterhorn: The Most Dangerous Mountain: A Live Adventure

By steffen Kjaer
Alpine Avenue Books (Denmark), 199pp
17 full-page colour photos, locational map and route drawing on inside cover
Is BN: 978-87-994118-0-1
No price quoted

Do we need another Matterhorn book? f or the knowledgeable and already-proficient alpinist, perhaps not, but this book gives a detailed and pleasantly illustrated account of one self-guided partnership's experience of and preparation for the Matterhorn.

The book details the climb by two Danish climbers, steffen Kjaer and Brian Jorgensen, competent and reasonably experienced, for whom an ascent of the Matterhorn will be a significant achievement.

At times, it seems an overlong account more suited to a club website. The mundane details of predictably unpredictable weather and route-finding difficulties seem all too familiar. h owever, this perhaps is a rather jaundiced view from one who has turned back on three occasions without reaching the summit.

Interspersed throughout are, amongst others, an account of the first successful and tragic ascent, snippets from guides' experiences and a letter by Roosevelt detailing his climb. The most successful inserts are the copies of entries from the visitors' book in The North Wall Bar. These provide concise and thought-provoking counterpoints to the rather verbose descriptions of the main text. f or someone keen to do the Matterhorn and, perhaps, with no readily available expertise to turn to, this book gives a good account of what to expect.

The Matterhorn is a serious undertaking requiring good mountain fitness and stamina, sufficient acclimatisation, an acute sense of mountain safety, and good mountaineering and rock-climbing skills. hopefully, the book will not put off those with the requisite experience, but perhaps focus the mind of someone who regards it as an easy jaunt. some criticism: from my own experience, route-finding is a difficulty but, if the party is on the right route, loose rock should not be a problem.

Notebook for walkers



Wainwright Long Distance Walker's Notebook

f rances l incoln (2011), 152pp
Is BN: 978-0-7112-3191-7, £9.99 paperback

A notebook in the style of the *Wainwright Pictorial Guides*, illustrated throughout with Alfred Wainwright's pen and ink drawings. one hundred pages to record whatever z wish – but heed the admonition: “Try to keep your entries neat, please, or the whole book will look untidy.” Plus a section to record walk summaries, good places to stay overnight, to stop, rest, eat and drink, and people you meet on the way, and a small section for “useful information.

Peak District geology guide



RockTrails Peak District

By Paul Gannon
Pesda Press (2011), 218pp
Is BN: 978-1-906095-24-6
£14.95

A third volume in the hillwalker's Guide to the Geology and scenery series, joining the guides to l akeland (reviewed summer 2007) and s nowdonia (reviewed Autumn 2007).

Outstanding guide to climbs in Lochaber area of Scotland

Iain Miller



Winter Climbs: Ben Nevis and Glen Coe

By Mike Pescod
Cicerone, 382pp
57 colour illustrations
and 89 b/w topos
IsBN: 978 1 85284 620 6
£16.95

The Lochaber area of Scotland contains the most concentrated amount of top quality winter climbing in Britain. The area from Beinn u dlaidh at the western end of the Rannoch Moor, travelling west

through Glen Coe and then North over the Mamores, to the Nevis range of mountains is a true world-class winter (and summer) climbing venue. This guidebook takes a huge selection (over 900) of the best climbs and, in a marriage of many generations of local knowledge combined with modern computer technology, produces an excellent, easy-to-use guide for everyone, from the local f ort William expert to the occasional Irish visitor.

The first 32 pages of the book provide a very brief introduction to

the area, covering everything from the winter-climbing history of the area, weather and avalanche awareness, access rights and climbing ethics right through to local amenities and accommodation. Alas, this short section tries to cover the ground of the many existing books on each topic. A list of recommended further reading would add greatly to this section for the occasional winter visitor.

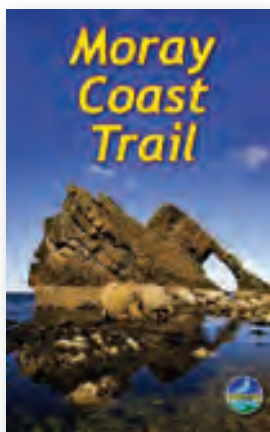
However, we will forgive this minor shortcoming as the rest of the book is an outstanding guide to the area. Kicking off on the mighty North faces of Ben Nevis and ending on the cascades of Beinn u dlaidh, the reader is effortlessly guided through a balanced selection of climbs of all grades in all areas. All grades of climbs are well represented, from many superb Grade I snow gullies to the futuristic Grade XII Anubis.

The lay-out allows the reader to easily locate each climb on the corresponding photo topo, and each photo topo is located on master topos of the main areas or on the corresponding Ordnance Survey maps at the beginning of each new chapter. The photo topos are excellent and are very well thought-out, as they were taken when the crags were wearing their best winter clothes, thus allowing the first-time visitor to easily locate the object of their desires.

Simply put, this is an excellent, well laid-out and very easy to use guidebook which I would highly recommend to anyone intending to visit Lochaber for winter shenanigans. The wealth of routes described will allow the reader a lifetime of winter visits to Lochaber and to experience the very best of Scottish winter climbing.

Excellent guide to waymarked ways in north-east Scotland

Donal Finn



Moray Coast Trail with Dava Way and Moray Way

By Sandra Bardwell
Rucksack Readers, 64pp
Numerous colour photos and sketch maps
IsBN: 978-1-89841-40-9
£10.99

This walking guide is a delight for any rambler or walker. The guide comprehensively describes two way-marked walks in the north-east of Scotland: the Moray Coast Trail and Dava Way, while giving a brief overview of a third way-marked trail,

the Speyside Way. All three routes constitute the Moray Way.

A varied compilation of attractive photographs give the reader a sense of what the two main trails offer. Moreover, clear and detailed maps at different scales give an overview of each of these trails, as well as detailed information on each section of the trail. The guide is produced as a compact, A5-sized, spiral top-bound booklet.

The Moray Coast Trail runs 70km alongside Moray firth, commencing at f orres (east of Inverness) and finishing in the easterly fishing village of Cullen. Normally undertaken over three or four days, the guide describes in detail the route, which encompasses a combination of beach walking, coastal paths, quiet roads and old

railways. Along the way, the reader is treated to descriptions of coves, beaches, offshore skerries, as well as historical and geological notes, thereby keeping the interested walker engaged.

The second trail, the Dava Way, runs north from Grantown-on-Spey to f orres, following a disused railroad for 38km. It traverses mostly a downhill route toward the sea through mountains and farmland as well as Dava moor. Finally, the guide briefly introduces the Speyside Way (66km) between Cullen and Grantown-on-Spey, which links the Moray Coastal Trail and the Dava Way. All three routes together constitute the Moray Way, thereby inviting the possibility of a splendid 153km walk, a complete circuit which can be walked in six to nine days.

Readers who find the guide useful may also be interested to know that Rucksack Readers publishes other guides on various way-marked ways, including a number of Irish ways.



Covesea, on the Moray coast.
Photo: Des Colhoun/geograph.org.uk.

Wonderful photographic tour of Ireland's high places

Patrick O'Sullivan



From High Places: A Journey Through Ireland's Great Mountains

By Adrian Hendroff

The History Press Ireland, 240pp

Numerous landscape views, many

full-page colour illustrations

ISBN: 978 1 84588 989 0

€18.00 paperback

Adrian Hendroff's first book is a smorgasbord of wonderful images on a background of empathetic text that is partly descriptive, partly historical and partly literary.

Adrian is 'one of our own,' being a member of Mountaineering Ireland, and he was in fact first published in the *Irish Mountain Log* and has subsequently had

articles published in a range of other magazines. Those magazine articles have already highlighted his literary talents while also demonstrating his photographic skills: his excellent photographs so often show somewhat different views of well-known mountain vistas.

At the same time, Adrian is also an experienced mountaineer – he has the Mountain Leader award and has visited all of the 268 Irish summits over 600m included in the Vandeleur-Lynam list. Hence, he is well-qualified to write about our great mountains.

This mixture of experience and talent means that Adrian is well-placed to take the reader on a tour of Ireland's high places. He does this in a clockwise fashion, starting in the west with 'Jewels of Connemara' and finishing in the south-west with the 'Peaks of the Reeks.' Usefully, each chapter has a map of the area being focused on.

As you might expect if you are familiar with the articles Adrian has written, his photographs are remarkable. They are mainly landscapes and are frequently full-page, and they show the mountains at their most magnificent through the different seasons. The photographs will warm the hearts of mountain-lovers everywhere and also inspire experienced mountaineers to move beyond areas that they are familiar with, to attempt to get some of these views themselves.

The book also takes the reader on a

literary tour of the country, with many quotations from Ireland's literary giants, including fittingly our own President Alan Tees's tribute to Joey Glover. He also quotes whimsically from other great outdoors people such as John Muir:

"I only went out for a walk, and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in." –

John Muir, 1913, in LM Wolfe (ed), *John Muir, John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir, 1938*

The foreword is by Joss Lynam, one of the last pieces written by the great man before his sad demise earlier this year. It sets the scene well, leading seamlessly into the text that follows from Adrian. Joss also assisted in selecting the images that were finally included in the book. Joss reflects on his own introduction to the Irish uplands, including his first climb at the age of six on Knocknaree in Sligo, where his ashes were scattered, and comments in particular on the excellence of many of the photographs, commenting that a winter view of Lugnaquilla 'could easily be a painting.'

It is appropriate to close this review of an impressive mountain book with those words from the master, a book I would commend to anyone who is interested in finding out more about Ireland's 'great mountains.'

Ten good rambling routes on the island of Malta

Donal Finn



Malta: 10 Great Walks

By Emmet McMahon & Jonathan Henwood

Gutenberg Press, 96pp

Numerous colour photos and

Google Earth satellite maps

ISBN: 978-99932-08-69-5

€5.00

Although Malta is not an island of soaring mountains or deep valleys, its highest point being a mere 253m above sea level, this does not preclude many opportunities for

rambling or walking through the main island or its companions, Comino and Gozo.

This guidebook is geared towards holiday-makers who like rambling, particularly those who subscribe to the perspective that the path rather than the destination is the goal.

The guide describes eight walks on Malta and one walk on each of Comino and Gozo. The walks vary from coastal trails to urban walks to rural ways in their nature, so all tastes are catered for in the compendium. Each walk is of moderate length, taking about three to four hours to complete. Moreover, the authors give detailed instructions of public transport to and from the walks as well as describing in detail features of historical or other interest along each walk.

Each walk is accompanied by a Google satellite map which shows clearly the walk as well as other prominent features along the way. Options are also included, should walkers wish to shorten or lengthen their forays.

The book is attractively collated and includes a preamble giving a concise overview of Maltese history, geology and wildlife, as well as engendering an appreciation of cultural and environmental issues. To top all of this off, the book has the endorsement of the Ramblers' Association of Malta.

The book is highly recommended for any holiday-maker who wishes to explore beyond the obvious tourist attractions on Malta. It will suit those who relish an early-morning or late-evening walk, whilst possibly taking in the more routine tourist attractions during the course of the day.



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

All around the blooming heather



Helen Lawless

The sight of heather-cloaked hills over the summer can awaken us to the beauty and wonder of nature. Heather is one of the larger and more visible plants on our hills. While there is one dominant species, ling, it is only one of three heather species that commonly occur on the Irish mountains. **Helen Lawless reports**

This article describes the key characteristics of the three main species – ling, bell heather and cross-leaved heath – and provides some background information on each. It does not cover the rarer species of heather, which are found only in the west of Ireland. Our three common heather species are native and evergreen.

Bell heather and cross-leaved heath flower from June to September, with the more plentiful ling flowering later, normally July to October. They are all woody shrubs, growing from 20cm up to 1m tall. As all gardeners will know, they are particularly suited to acidic, peaty soils and are, therefore, found principally on blanket bog, wet heath and dry heath, habitats which are common on the hills.

Ling Fraoch Mór *Calluna vulgaris*

Ling is by far the most widespread and abundant of our heathers and, perhaps because of this, some people and books refer to it simply as 'heather.' It can be distinguished from the other common heathers by its leaves, which are overlapping and appear to cling to the stem. Ling's pale purple flowers grow in a loose spike on the upper part of the plant's woody stems. Its flowers are not bell-shaped – they are smaller and prettier than those of bell heather and cross-leaved heath – so it is worth the effort of looking closely. Occasionally you may come across ling with white flowers; this is believed to bring good luck.

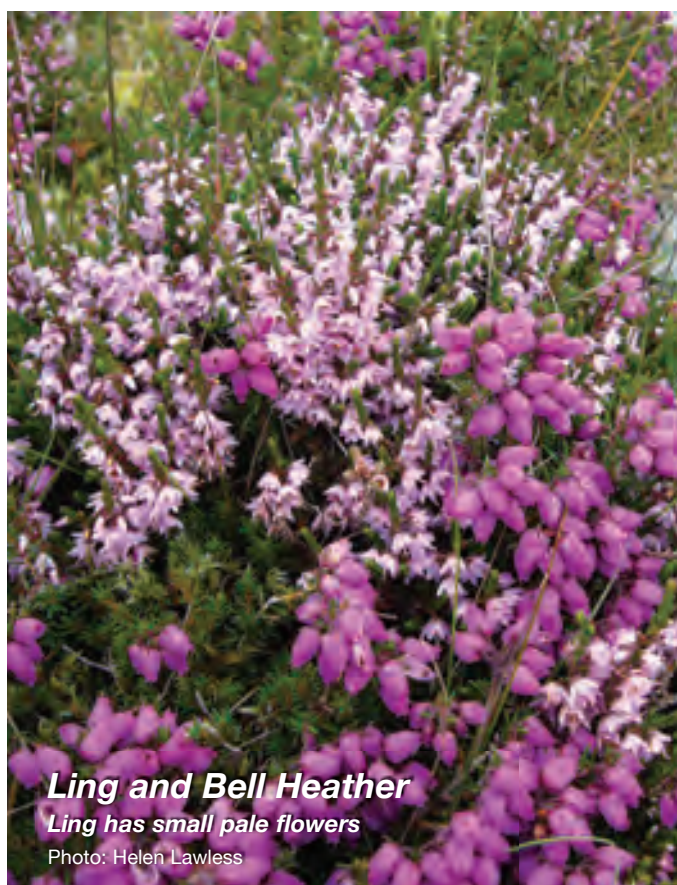
If left to mature, ling heather can live for around 30 years. The name ling is derived from the Anglo-saxon *lig*, meaning 'fire,' and recalls the importance of heather in early times as fuel.¹ It's not surprising, then, that mountain wildfires can burn so vigorously, as seen earlier this year and during the spring of 2010.

The origin of ling's generic name, *Calluna*, also relates to its usefulness, as it comes from a Greek word meaning 'to brush.' Stems of heather were often tied together to make brushes and brooms.¹ Heather was also used for thatching and as bedding and stems were woven into baskets, samples of which can be seen in the County Life Museum near Castlebar, Co Mayo.

Bell Heather Fraoch Cloíneach *Erica cinerea*

Bell heather is the classic heather species, which brings magnificent purple patches to drier hillsides. It is particularly characteristic of the Mourne, but will be easily found among the ling heather and gorse on most hills. The vivid purple bell-shaped flowers grow in groups along the plant's wiry stems.

On bell heather, the individual leaves are easy to see and grow in



Ling and Bell Heather

Ling has small pale flowers

Photo: Helen Lawless

sets of three, with tufts of shorter leaves where the three longer leaves join the stem. The leaves are dark green, and narrow to cope with extended dry periods, from winter frosts and summer drought. This is a feature heathers share with other plants such as gorse. As bell heather prefers drier soils it is often found on steeper slopes, dry banks, tussocks, rocks and other well-drained areas.

Cross-leaved Heath Fraoch Naoscaí *Erica tetralix*

The plump, bell-shaped pink flowers of cross-leaved heath hang in a bunch at the top of the stem. Its leaves are also easy to distinguish. In contrast to bell heather, they grow in sets of four, hence the name 'cross-leaved heath.' The leaves are narrow and grey-green in colour.

Cross-leaved heath plants tend to be smaller than ling and bell heather and are often scattered rather than growing in profusion. Cross-leaved heath favours wetter ground. It is typically found at the edge of bogs and in damp hollows between tussocks.



Bell Heather

With bell-like flowers

Photo: Helen Lawless



Lousewort
(Helen Lawless)



Cross-leaved Heath

With leaves in whorls of four forming a cross shape

Photo: Helen Lawless

Bell heather and cross-leaved heath are closely related and easily confused; bell heather's preference for drier ground is a useful distinguishing factor. On cross-leaved heath, the flowers are only at the top of the stem and they are usually larger and paler than those of bell heather. Closer examination will reveal tiny hairs on the stems and leaves of cross-leaved heath; bell heather is hairless.

The original worldwide web

John Muir, the Scottish-born naturalist and author who founded the Sierra Club in the United States, was one of the first to articulate the interconnectedness that maintains balance in the natural world, as expressed in the following quote:

*'When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe'*

– John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)

As with all other living things, heathers don't exist in isolation. For instance, red grouse are heavily reliant on heather, requiring a patchwork of old heather for nesting and nutritious young heather shoots for food. A recent national survey of red grouse showed a decline in numbers and a contraction in the range of this species. Contributory factors include habitat loss due to peat-cutting, afforestation and conversion to pasture, along with the detrimental effects of overgrazing and inappropriate burning practices.

The uplands remain a stronghold for red grouse, particularly the Wicklow and Dublin Mountains, the Slieve Blooms in Co. Laois and the Blue Stackers in Co. Donegal.² A research project on Boleybrack Mountain, Co. Leitrim, has worked to improve the habitat for grouse.

Heather is also an important source of food for moths and other insects. Amongst the moths, the northern egg moth is one of the largest and more interesting. Its brown, furry caterpillars (up to 65mm long) are often seen on ling through summer and autumn, taking two seasons of feeding to reach their full size.³

Similarly, heather is a valuable food source for bees. The bees gather nectar from ling and bell heather, which in turn makes tasty and much sought-after heather honey. You may notice tiny holes in bell heather flowers; these have been drilled by bees to extract the nectar.

Heathers also have relationships with other plants. Lousewort, for

example, is a semi-parasitic plant that attaches to the roots of host plants (often heathers) to compensate for the poor supply of nutrients in its bog and heath habitats.⁴

Hopefully, this introduction to our three main heather species will add to your enjoyment of the floral display that graces our hills over the summer. Perhaps you will even pause to figure out which species is which. Heathers play a major role in the biodiversity of Ireland's uplands, but there's a supporting cast of plants, birds and other creatures waiting to be discovered too. Enjoy it all!

• Thanks to Dr Mary Tubridy for comments on a draft of this article.

1. Reader's Digest Field Guide to the Wild Flowers of Britain
2. Irish Mountain Log No 96 (Winter 2010)
3. The Natural History of Ulster
4. Flora Hibernica

Green Tip



Pack your bag

Most of us agree that litter is unsightly and takes from the beauty of our hills and countryside. Research has shown that the presence of litter attracts more litter. Therefore, if we can keep our hills clean, there is a better chance they will stay that way.

Packing a small plastic bag in your rucksack makes it much easier to take home litter that you come across, including messy items like banana peel and tea bags. Next time you're out, instead of getting annoyed at the sight of litter, do something positive by taking it away. Go on – pack your bag now!



TrainingLog

Training news presented by Training Officer Alun Richardson and Nicole Mullen

See you out there!



ALUN RICHARDSON

shock, horror! Rain in Ireland! My 100% record for not being in the Irish hills when it rained has gone. It occurred on the Maumturks as I moderated a new provider of Mountain Leader Training. There is, however, a new record – the rain only lasted a few hours and the sun came out. Therefore, every time I have been out on the Irish hills the sun has shone!

I have also lectured at the Irish Mountaineering Club, helped out at the Intervarsity Indoor Climbing competition, attended the Adventure Conference at Tollymore and Mountaineering Ireland's AGM and spring Gathering, climbed cliffs at Glendalough, given talks and sat behind a desk far too much!

Finally... as I write this, the sun is shining, my skis and ice axes are stowed away, my walking boots are proofed, my rock boots are cleaned. I am ready for a summer exploring the hills and crags of Ireland, so, see you out there!

Since the last Log, one of Mountaineering Ireland's most experienced providers and a member of BoS, Calvin Torrans, unfortunately fell from a climb in the Mournes and broke both his ankles. We all wish him a speedy recovery.

Proposal for a Day Walk Leaders award

The aim is to create an award that is fit for the purpose of the vast majority of leaders' aspirations. It is basically an MI without the expedition element and its remit will be as for the MI. The MI will, however, still be the gold standard award and to camp in wild places with a group, work on the Day Walk Leaders courses' training or

assessments, MI or WGI, or to be a provider of the Ms, you will still need the full MI. However, the award will clarify the situation regarding terrain that can be encountered by a walks leader on a day hike. So again, any feedback, views, questions, ideas, etc, please fire away – it is not set in stone.

Proposal for a Rock Climbing Skills award

The starting point for many

aspiring hillwalkers and climbers is to join a Mountaineering Ireland club and gain experience from their peers. The Mountaineering Ireland board and BoS are made up of passionate walkers and climbers who would fight tooth and nail to support this approach. Likewise, awards or qualifications should never become a requirement to go climbing or walking on the mountains of Ireland, or in the rest of the world, for that matter.

However, Mountaineering Ireland does help its network of clubs to provide advice and to deliver quality training to its members through workshops, lectures, the *Irish Mountain Log*, meets, Club Training officers, its popular Mountain skills courses and possibly in the future through a Rock skills course.

The feedback on the proposed Rock Climbing skills

scheme has been, on the whole, very positive. It is, but I would like feedback from as many people as possible to get a balanced view, so if you have a view or want to contribute to the courses, then please send me an email.

Changes to the MLA leadership requirements from March 31st 2011

This applies to everyone who has registered from April 1st 2011 on:

"Candidates are required to show evidence of leading at least six different walks with a variety of groups (a group is four or more people). The walks should fulfil the following: be in at least two separate mountain areas of Ireland or the UK; involve leadership and navigational judgments; and the majority must be with people and/or groups with whom the trainee is unfamiliar."

Photo: Alun Richardson.



Changes to the WGL requirements from March 31st 2011

This applies to everyone who has registered from April 1st 2011 on:

6. Consolidation period

6.1. For all but the most experienced candidates the consolidation period should be 12 months. Experienced candidates can apply to BoS to shorten this period.

6.2. Prior to attending a WGI the candidates must organise a day hillwalking trip for a group (in consultation with an MI holder acceptable to the candidate's WGI Training Provider). Gain experience progressively of leading parties over varied routes in Ireland, which must include at least three days' leadership experience. Spend a further three days assisting one or more WGIs, MIs or higher award holders. This is in addition to the personal experience outlined above.

6.3. Prior to attending an assessment course, candidates must have completed an absolute minimum of 40 personal hillwalking days in three separate areas and in relevant terrain (20 gained post training).

Renewal of Provider status

There is a new three-year 'Provider Agreement.' To apply for renewal you must have run at least one of each of the courses you provide, be active in the outdoors and have attended a CPD relevant to the course(s) you provide.

CPD is an important part of BoS, fulfilling our obligations to the walking and climbing community that use our awards, and it is our way of updating providers. BoS has tried to facilitate CPD in many ways and has announced the dates for CPD (see page xx??). If we can help in any way, then please get in contact.

The Adventure Framework

This framework classifies and identifies instructor capacities at various stages of the instructor pathway. It also adapts the 'National Coaching Development Programme' coaching capacities and adapts these to the instructing environment of the hills, cliffs and mountains of Ireland.



| Photo: Alun Richardson.

A process for the development of those instructors who train the instructors (providers of MI, MPA, sPA and WGI) has been agreed. To become a provider of sPA, MI A, WGI and MPA there is, however, an additional training course that is designed to develop the knowledge, skills and experience of Mountaineering Ireland providers to the same standards as coaches in other adventure sports and across other sports. Attendance on this course is mandatory for providers of sPA, WGI, MI and MPA. It will take place on the 5th, 6th and 7th of September 2011. The cost of this course is covered by Mountaineering Ireland and will count as the CPD for the next provider agreement period. Book now!

The Adventure Conference at Tollymore, 3-4 March 2011

I had the honour of attending the second Adventure Conference at Tollymore. It was aimed at instructors, leaders and coaches in the field of adventure activities and focused on how to maintain enthusiasm and performance within the various disciplines. It gave me the opportunity to talk with people in other disciplines, to see how they were coping and what was affecting them. Topics included how to look after your body, how to maintain your enthusiasm and passion for outdoor sports, how to balance work in the outdoors and family life, and how outdoor adventure sports have been a significant economic driver for an area.

Professor Peter Higgins delivered the keynote address on why he believes so

passionately in the value of outdoor education and recreation. The after-dinner speaker was Leo Dickinson who presented his most recent film and talked about his lifetime of adventure sports film-making. It was well attended and I managed to get some of the speakers to write pieces for the next issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*, so keep your eyes peeled for those.

Registering for a training course

If you are registering or planning on registering for a training scheme such as MI, WGI, sPA or MPA:

- You must be a Mountaineering Ireland member and include your membership number on the form
- If you are not a Mountaineering Ireland member, you can join on the same registration form
- You must register before the training course
- If you register after you have completed the training course, you only have 30 days to register. After this 30-day leeway period your training will be invalidated
- Once your registration form is received in the office it will be a two-week wait for the logbook to be sent to you.

Contact

If you have any questions about registering for a training scheme, please contact the training office on (01) 625 1117 or nicole@mountaineering.ie.

Passing your ML

The secret to becoming a Mountain Leader

ALUN RICHARDSON

"Going to the right place at the right time with the right people is all that matters. What one does is purely incidental."

– Colin Kirkus

Watching the clouds part as if they were a pair of curtains, to reveal the distant vista, or seeing the sun disappear over the distant horizon and, to be honest, the excitement of navigating through the mist, are what drive me to explore the hills and mountains of Ireland. However, some of my most memorable and rewarding trips have not been with my peers but while leading and introducing groups of people to the joys of hillwalking, expanding their horizons or helping them to learn.

Mountaineering Ireland designed the Mountain Leader award in the 1970s to improve not only safety, but also the quality of the experiences hillwalkers receive from a leader. The award has grown in stature and reputation to the point that many refer to it as the 'Gold standard' for those who lead others and teach navigation skills to novices in the mountains of Ireland.

Gaining the ML award is not a walk in the park, but it is more than achievable by anyone who loves hillwalking in rugged terrain. During your assessment you will be asked to demonstrate your skill, knowledge and understanding of issues related to the leading of groups in the hills and mountains – issues such as navigation, leadership, weather, the mountain environment and emergency procedures, which it is important that anyone leading others understand well.

| Photo: Alun Richardson.



You will be given opportunities to lead sections of a journey and to be led by your fellow candidates. The assessors will endeavour to create as many opportunities as possible for you to demonstrate your competence over the course of the assessment. It is important that you use these opportunities so that the assessors can gain a complete picture of your ability.

As Training officer for Mountaineering Ireland, I meet a lot of candidates on ML assessments, so here is some advice for those of you who are already on the scheme and preparing for an assessment:

Find a mentor Talk to someone who has been through the scheme recently and can help to mentor or encourage you when your enthusiasm wanes and the going gets tough. If you can't find a mentor, then think about going on a

refresher course before the assessment, especially if the rope work and steep ground elements are not your forte.

Don't treat it lightly The award is an all-Ireland leadership award, accepted in the UK and ratified in Europe by the UIAA, so take it seriously, because the assessors will!

Think like a leader It is a leadership award, not a personal navigation award, so come with a leader's head on. Gain leadership experience with people that you don't know and with a variety of ages and abilities. A leader is not simply someone who can navigate a group around the hills, but is a role model for others, able to enthuse them about the landscape, the environment and the wildlife encountered. A leader should be able to safely lead others in difficult terrain and cope in a crisis to prevent an epic turning into a disaster.



Ask the question 'What if...?' From the moment you wake up to the moment you finish your assessment you should ask yourself 'What if...?' What if someone forgets something? What if my map blows away? What if the weather changes? What if someone slips?

Don't underestimate the importance of a good logbook Your logbook is the first thing that an assessor will encounter and it reflects your attitude towards the MI award. Assessors have to read many logbooks before an assessment, so make sure that it is complete and easily readable. If you are unsure, contact the Training office, but remember, if you are having doubts about your logbook experiences, then it is likely that the assessor will also have doubts.

The solution is not always to call Mountain Rescue We should enter the hills ready to be self-sufficient, even as leaders. Some incidents will always require the help of a mountain rescue team, but ask yourself is it absolutely necessary or appropriate to call out a voluntary service when you could solve the problem yourself?

Enjoy yourself Gaining the experience or 'Quality hill Days' to be able to sit the assessment is not a chore if you are a keen hillwalker, but what is a 'quality walk'? That is a bit like asking about a healthy diet – we all know what it is but, whatever way one attempts to put it down in writing, it is interpreted differently by each person. Basically, it means a good hard day in the 'wilder mountains' of Ireland, for someone of MI standard fitness, with ascents of big peaks that require stamina, commitment, navigation, etc. Anyone who is a serious walker will know what that is like, just like everyone knows what a healthy diet really is. However, there are experiences we have in the hills that may make a shorter day a 'Quality hill Day,' such as turning back from a peak because of poor weather and having to navigate in difficult terrain to get down safely. Because it is an all-Ireland award, make sure you have walked in a variety of the major mountainous areas of Ireland such as Kerry, Connemara, Donegal and the Mournes.

Spend some time under canvas Wild camping is an essential element of the MI scheme and those that have little experience of camping far from the road seem to struggle. Go and spend a few nights away from it all, so you feel totally



| Photo: Alun Richardson.

comfortable sorting yourself out to camp when it is dark, wet and windy!

Buy some good waterproofs Don't practice navigation solely in good weather. It is important that you make the effort to go out in the dark and in mist to develop your skills. The MI navigation element is preparing you for the rare times that you will be late coming down in the darkness and rain, with a cold wet group trailing behind you. Your navigation skills then need to be second nature.

Be passionate You are not expected to be an expert on environmental matters, plants, animals, geology, history, folklore, weather, etc, but you are expected to be able to talk enthusiastically to a group about these subjects with a basic understanding. For example, if you don't know what cirrus clouds are or what a front is, and how they relate to the weather forecast, then you will need to read more books. If the instruction to "give some quality advice to a novice on hillwalking equipment" leaves you speechless, then visit more outdoor shops and investigate what gear is available.

Sweat a bit You must come fit enough to walk with a loaded rucksack for at least six to eight hours a day and still be able to act as a leader and look after people on steep ground. If you are not adequately fit, the assessment will be stressful for you.

Confidence is the key If you come well prepared, with a good logbook and all

the prerequisites ticked, the assessment should be a breeze, maybe even enjoyable! Candidates that usually struggle on assessment come with the bare minimum of experience and poor background knowledge; their logbooks are poorly filled in, their fitness is poor and their leadership experience is minimal. When it says 'minimum in the handbook it means just that; good candidates usually have much more.

Contact

If you have any questions about the scheme, please contact the Training Officer, Alun Richardson, at alun@mountaineering.ie or by phone on (01) 625 1117.

Important Notice

Overdue library books

If anyone has any outstanding books from the Mountaineering Ireland library, can you please return them as soon as possible. There are some books that are overdue and need to be returned. If you have any queries about the library, borrowing a book or returning a book, please contact Nicole at nicole@mountaineering.ie.



5 Minute Interview

Ronan Lenihan

Ronan Lenihan is the current chairman of Bord oiliúint sléibhe (BoS), the Irish Mountain Training Board, a member of the board of Mountaineering Ireland and a provider of Mountain skills, Mountain skills Assessment, WGI training and MI training. He also imports Blizzard bags.

What did you do last holiday?

Walked and climbed in Scotland.

Where is your next holiday to be?

Russia.

If you could climb any mountain, what would it be?

Mount Foraker in Alaska.

Why do you love walking in the Irish hills?

It is where I started out and because I can still find places to be on my own.

Where is your favourite place to walk in Ireland?

West Cork.

Where is your favourite place outside of Ireland?

North-west Scotland.

What is your favourite piece of outdoor equipment?

Paramo Rain Gear and the Blizzard Bag.

What is your favourite hill food?

Half lapjack.

Have you ever been lost?

Yes, in most places.

Have you ever been scared in the mountains?

Yes, in Wicklow every time I see Mountain Rescue Training! (Ronan sits on the Mountain Rescue Committee.)

What does adventure mean to you?

Not knowing how the day is going to end.

Water bottle or bladder system?

Water bottle.

Frosties or muesli?

Half frosties.

Beer or Lager?

Beer.

Who do you most admire in the outdoor world?

Pat Falvey.

Who has inspired you most in the outdoor world?

Calvin Torrans.

What is the greatest threat to walking and climbing in Ireland?

Irresponsible hill users.

In an interview with Alun Richardson



Outdoor workshop on Leave No Trace.
Photo: Aodhnait Carroll.

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

Mountaineering Ireland continues to provide the book service previously operated by Joss Lynam. We can supply you with guidebooks and maps to almost any part of the world. For the walker, there is a large collection of Cicerone guides and books, or the wider selection of books and guides distributed by Cordee which also includes many climbing guides. Books reviewed in the Irish Mountain Log can usually be purchased through Joss Books with a members' discount. To place an order, ring the Mountaineering Ireland office on (01) 6251115 or email info@mountaineering.ie.

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Irishman dies near summit of Everest

John Delaney (1970-2011)

John Delaney from Kilcock, Co Kildare, died on May 21st, 2011, while attempting to reach the summit of Everest (8,850m). He was 41 years of age and was the first Irishman to die on the world's highest mountain.

It is understood that John collapsed less than 50 metres from the summit as he was climbing via the south Col route from Nepal. His body was left on Everest because the team he was with felt it would be too dangerous to attempt to bring it back down to Base Camp.

Tragically, also, the climber died without knowing that his wife Orla had given birth

to a baby girl four days before. The couple also have two young sons.

John had been mountaineering for several years and was attempting to conquer Everest after a failed bid five years ago. He was part of a team of eighteen, including one American and six Russian climbers, eight Sherpas and two other guides. They left their top camp at 8,300 metres the night before the accident in their bid to reach the summit.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere condolences to John's family and friends on their loss.

May he rest in peace.



John Delaney, born 1970; died May 21st, 2011

Swiss climbing legend dies on Grünhorn

Erhard Loretan (1959-2011)

Erhard Loretan, a Swiss mountain guide and the third climber to reach the summits of all of the world's 8,000-metre peaks, died in a climbing accident in April of this year at the age of 52.

Loretan was born in 1959. He trained initially as a cabinet-maker and then as a mountain guide. He completed his ascents of all fourteen 8,000m peaks at the age of 36, having started in 1982 with Nanga Parbat. Thirteen years later, in 1995, he climbed the last one, Kangchenjunga, becoming only the third person to do so after Italian Reinhold Messner and the Polish mountaineer Jerry Kukuczka.

Loretan was known to favour quick, lightweight expeditions that minimised the time in which he would be exposed to danger and, in 1986, he made a revolutionary ascent of Mount Everest with Jean Troillet in only 43 hours. Climbing by night and without the use of supplementary oxygen, the pair took one of the most direct routes, climbing the north face via the Japanese couloir at its foot and the Hornbein couloir at the top.

In addition to his Everest ascent, Loretan's impressive accomplishments included a traverse of the Annapurna range in 1984, an ascent of the difficult south-west face of Cho Oyu in 27 hours, in 1990, and, a few days later, the ascent and descent of the south face of Shishapangma's central peak in 22 hours. In the winter of 1989, Loretan climbed 13 north faces between the



Eiger and Doldenhorn in the Bernese Oberland with André Georges, in only 13 days.

In 1994, Loretan made a solo climb of the previously unnamed highest peak in Antarctica. It was subsequently named Mount Loretan in his honour by climbing enthusiasts. Loretan repeated the feat the following year.

As a climber, Loretan apparently possessed remarkable mental strength and the skill to assess critical situations. Often, in adverse circumstances, he would turn back just in time, even when within sight of the summit.

Erhard Loretan was awarded the King Albert Medal of Merit in 1996 for his distinguished contribution to mountaineering.

In 2003, Loretan was convicted of the manslaughter of his seven-month-old son, after having shaken him for a short period of time to stop him crying in late 2001. He was given a four-month suspended sentence. Publicity about the case raised awareness of the danger of shaking children because of their weaker neck muscles.

Loretan died while leading a client up the summit ridge of the Grünhorn, in the Bernese Alps. The pair had skied up part-way, then roped up for the final ascent. They fell from about 3,800m on the 4,043m peak. Loretan died at the scene and his 38-year-old client was flown to a hospital in a serious condition.

May he rest in peace.

Erhard Loretan, born April 28th, 1959; died April 28th, 2011



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