

irish mountain log

THE MAGAZINE FOR WALKERS AND CLIMBERS IN IRELAND

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The journey goes on!

The many memorable events of the past year – and the Log's 100th issue

I was running late for a sports meeting recently and, waiting on my arrival, everyone around the table was talking about Italian bond prices – it took me a moment to confirm that I was at the correct meeting!

In early January last, I remember being up in the Cooleys on one of those wonderful frosty winter days and bumping into the Crows Hillwalking Club near the summit of Slieve Foye – since then 2011 seems to have passed by at an alarming rate!

My highlights of 2011 include this type of meeting with clubs and members. In March, the **Spring Gathering** brought together many new and old clubs in the Glen of Aherlow. The hosts, Galtee Walking Club, Peaks Mountaineering Club and Ballyhoura Bears, were instrumental in it being such a positive event. For 2012, the Spring Gathering will move to the Comeragh Mountains – the Peaks Mountaineering Club has volunteered to be the host club, with Clonmel identified as the base.

The Maumturks Walking Club hosted a really lively **Autumn Gathering** in October and again their collective effort was fantastic. They fostered a real sense of camaraderie in Leenane and the weekend was blessed with some amazing weather and remarkable light on

the mountains.

One hundred issues, four editors and heading for a million copies – the journey of the *Irish Mountain Log* continues.

The next 100 issues of the *Irish Mountain Log* will no doubt continue to include a hugely diverse range of articles and features, with a focus on clubs highlighting the exceptional contribution of members; members' reports from trips and expeditions to some of the remotest places in the world; the impact of meitheals promoting sustainable outdoor recreation; youthful participants developing a passion for our sport; climbers reaching for Olympic glory; a continued growth in the participation in training schemes and awards; classic walks in Ireland – your stories for your *Log*; the possibilities are endless.

2012 will see a revitalised **Comhairle na Tuaithe**, the Countryside Council, address an agreed action plan with a greater focus on the delivery of these actions. Comhairle na Tuaithe needs to be strong and effective. Mountaineering Ireland will be making sure that this happens and, especially, that the final proposition of the pilot **Mountain Access Scheme** is well defined and that areas are identified for its roll-out.

In November, figures were released indicating a €150 million spend by hiking tourists. This, and the continued focus on

the health and well-being impact of our sport, can further enhance our push for **better infrastructure and services** for our community.

Safe and adequate parking is one of the shortcomings that needs to be addressed. In certain locations, this is an opportunity for rural communities or landowners, as highlighted by the success of **Kings Yard** (Galtees) and **Cronin's Yard** (Carrauntoohil). Funding is available from the **Rural Development Programme** for this type of initiative.

Getting back to those Italian bond prices, I can't help but reflect that we all need to keep walking and climbing and always take a moment at the top of the mountain or crag to look out at the real world – at least, that is something that will certainly yield a dividend!

**Karl Boyle, Chief Officer,
Mountaineering Ireland**



WELCOME TO...

ISSUE 100

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

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Copy deadline for the Spring 2012 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log* is Friday, 10 February 2012.

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 Oili  nt Sl  ibhe (BOS, The Irish Mountain Training Board) administers a range of training programmes for walkers and climbers.



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Of waterfalls, volcanoes and Irish monks

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Major milestone

Welcome to the Winter 2011 issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*. This is a particularly auspicious edition of the *Log*, as it is the 100th. Twenty-five years of producing a quarterly magazine for a membership organisation represents a significant amount of effort by a great number of people over many years, but it has been a labour of love for most.

Other contributors have reflected very kindly in this issue on the input of the various editors, and we would be remiss not to remember them at this time, because it is on their shoulders that those of us currently involved in producing the *Irish Mountain Log* stand.

Indeed, it would be inconsiderate not to reflect in particular on the input of Joss Lynam. He edited the first fifty issues, continued to contribute significantly until he sadly passed away at the beginning of this year, and is still fondly remembered by the editorial team. Indeed, the first Lynam Lecture was held on November 24th, 2011, in his memory. The distinguished Indian Himalayan mountaineer Harish Kapadia, who gave the lecture, also remembered Joss fondly.

From Joss, the editorial torch passed to Gay Needham and then to Chris Avison, before finding its way to my door. We have all been grateful for the support of various other people in the work of producing the *Irish Mountain Log* each quarter. However, all of us who have been privileged to edit the *Log* would point to the fact that the real strength of the *Irish Mountain Log* has always been the quality of the contributions it receives, without which there would be no *Log*. The *Log* has grown to its present full-colour glossy format on the basis of those contributions.

In issue 80, we reprinted a selection of articles from previous issues and reflected on our past, something that was easy to do when Joss was still with us, with his impressive institutional memory. In issue 100, we have chosen to highlight some of the current activities of our members, to reflect on where we are and, to a lesser degree, where we are going as an organisation.

The *Irish Mountain Log* is the membership magazine of Mountaineering Ireland, an organisation that seems to be going from strength to strength, something which I feel is reflected in the content of the *Log* and the range of activities which our clubs and individual members are now able to engage in. I hope that you will enjoy this special issue of the *Irish Mountain Log*.

On behalf of the Board and the staff of Mountaineering Ireland, I would also like to wish all of our members all the very best for the coming festive season and for an active and safe coming year.




Patrick O'Sullivan
Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

ON THE COVER: South Prison, Lugnaquilla, Co Wicklow, above the clouds, December 2010. Photo: Helen Lawless.

THIS PAGE: Slieve Snaght, Inishowen, Co Donegal. Photo: Alan Tees.

News

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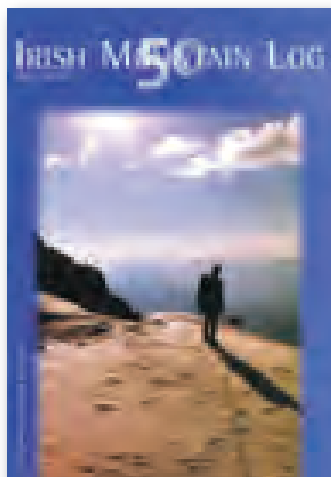
One hundredth *Mountain Log*

It has been all down to the support of contributors

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RUAIRÍ Ó CONCHÚIR

THIS EDITION of the *Irish Mountain Log* marks a very significant milestone for both the magazine and for Mountaineering Ireland. The one-hundredth edition equals 25 years of publishing the leading mountaineering magazine in Ireland and one of the best, if not the best, of any national governing body in Europe. This is a remarkable achievement and it is a great pleasure to mark this milestone by celebrating those involved in the voluntary production of the *Log*.

While looking back at the first edition (Winter 1986) some familiar names popped up: Kevin Higgins, Aidan Forde, Liam Convery, Dawson Stelfox, Clare Sheridan, Gerry O'Regan, Niall Carroll, Jean Boydell (Assistant Editor) and, of course, Joss Lynam (Editor). Some have passed on to the great climbing wall in the sky, others are still with us and still deeply involved with the sport. Many are still active with Mountaineering Ireland.

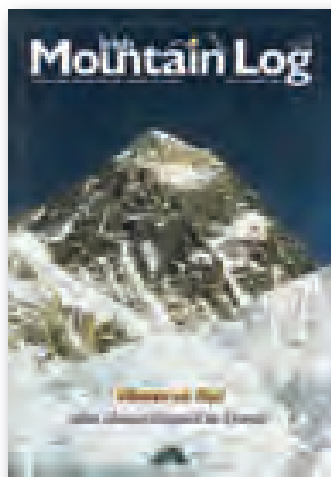
The first cover photo was of the Malanguiti Glacier in Pakistan. Is it possible that Dawson Stelfox was that young when he set off, camera in hand, climbing in Pakistan and later wrote the Karakoram article with Paula Turley for the first edition? It is hard to believe that someone like Dawson Stelfox, and others who were in the climbing party, including Margaret Tees, are still so actively involved in a voluntary capacity in every facet

of mountaineering in Ireland.

I was asked at the recent Autumn Gathering in Leenane, Co Galway, why the *Log* didn't have a 'Letters to the Editor' page. Of the many answers given, which reflected on the difficulty of running a letters page in a quarterly magazine, one was that, unlike *The Irish Times*, which has an editor and many assistant and sub-editors, who are all paid a salary, the editor of the *Irish Mountain Log* edits in a voluntary capacity – out of sheer love of and loyalty to the sport.

The *Log* has had many distinguished editors and contributors over the years, from the late Joss Lynam, who established the *Irish Mountain Log*, to the current editor,

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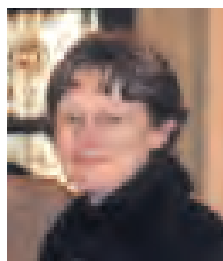
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Gay Needham
Editor IML Nos 51-58, 69



Chris Avison
Editor IML Nos 59-68



Patrick O'Sullivan
Editor IML Nos 70-100

Patrick O'Sullivan. Patrick is an outstanding editor. He keeps all contributors on the straight and narrow. He encourages articles out of you, prods you along when the article you have promised is late, re-edits it when you have gone astray, and provides the all-important reader with some exceptional material.

However, there are others behind the scenes who seldom get a word of thanks. These include Cólín MacLochlainn, Peter O'Neill, our printers GPS Colour Graphics in Belfast and, most importantly, those individuals, numbering in their thousands at this stage, who have sent news items, images and articles to us for inclusion in the *Log* down through the years, and on whose contributions the success of the *Log* is based.

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This 'giving back' is what makes the *Log* special. It is what has sustained and nurtured the *Log* over the past 25 years and it is what will help it grow and widen its readership base over the next 25 years. Just thinking about the *Log* arriving before Christmas, in its plastic wrapper, is part of the joy of Christmas and the joy of being part of the *Log*.

We have much to look forward to in Mountaineering Ireland. The first edition of the *Log* noted that it was the newsletter of the Federation of the Mountaineering Clubs of Ireland (FMCI). Mountaineering was, in many respects, in its infancy in Ireland at that stage. The past 25 years has witnessed a remarkable increase in membership from less than 20 clubs to over 150 registered clubs and a membership of almost 11,000. Thus, while the name has

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changed, the ethos governing Mountaineering Ireland has remained unaltered – a commitment to ensuring that the Irish uplands continue to provide a source of inspiration and renewal, with participation as a key priority.

Mountaineering Ireland's focus on encouragement of training, skills development and conservation of the mountain environment remain strong. The Board of Directors is a small grouping of highly committed and selfless individuals, who give back so much to the sport of mountaineering. I take this opportunity to call on others to step forward and get involved on the Board and its various substructures.

Mountaineering Ireland has also an exceptional staff ably managed by the Chief Officer, Karl Boyle, who has shown great leadership in taking the organisation forward.

We, the members of Mountaineering Ireland, should all be filled with a sense of profound pride in reflecting on what has been achieved since the first edition of the *Irish Mountain Log* in winter 1986. However, the *Log* and Mountaineering Ireland need other committed mountaineers to take up leadership roles to continue to support and encourage the responsible use and enjoyment of the Irish uplands, and to share their joy of the mountains with others through the *Log*. Long may the *Irish Mountain Log* continue to facilitate that sharing!

Ruairí Ó Conchúir,
Chairperson, Mountaineering Ireland

Course Calendar

Training Office

CPD workshops

In response to requests for further dates, the CPD workshop dates below are being organised. The minimum number of participants for a CPD workshop to run is four.

9 December 2011

MS CPD (Kerry)

27 January 2012

MS CPD (venue to be decided)

28 January 2012

MS CPD (venue to be decided)

Course dates

21-22 January 2012

Train the Trainers Workshop

17-26 February 2012

Scottish Winter Meet

17-19 March 2012

ML Assessment

24-25 March 2012

WGL Assessment

1-15 July 2012

Summer Alpine Meet

27-29 October 2012

ML Assessment

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

Corrections

IML 99

In the Slieve Carr article by Bryan McCabe in *IML 99*, the caption for the first photo should have shown the height of Slieve Carr to be 721m, not 541m.

In the article on Tyndall Mountain Club in *IML 99*, the first picture is not of the Monte Rosa: it is the Breithorn with Klein Matterhorn to the right.



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**Mountaineering
Ireland**

Autumn Gathering

Autumn gathering, Leenane, Co Galway, 14-16 October 2011

Participants on the Environmental Walk on Benbrack, Twelve Bens. Photo: Helen Lawless.

P.J. LEAVY

LAST JANUARY, the **Maumturks Walking Club** was asked to host this year's Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering, which was to be held in October. As a new club, it was a great honour to be asked to host such a big event in the hillwalking calendar. That is when all the planning started.

We had a few meetings to decide what the programme for the weekend would be and which would be the best walks to include. As most people who have walked in the area would know, we are spoilt for choice, having so many wonderful mountains within easy reach.

As a club, we are fortunate to have so many experienced walkers to call on to assist with the guiding of planned walks. Most of the leaders would be from our club but we would also be assisted by members of the **Connemara Walking Guides Association**.

With people of the standard of Michael Gibbons, one of Ireland's leading archaeologists, and Trish Walsh, manager of Petersburg OEC and someone who is very much involved in setting up of a geopark in the area, offering their help on

the weekend as guest speakers, we were well on the way to organising a very enjoyable weekend for all the other members of Mountaineering Ireland who would be attending.

The weekend started on the Friday evening with a welcome speech from Mountaineering Ireland's Chief Officer, Karl Boyle, and a welcome from our local

TD, Sean Kyne, followed by a very popular talk by Michael Gibbons.

On Saturday, we enjoyed a rare dry day for this part of the country. There were eight different walks organised for the hillwalkers and climbers attending the weekend from all around the country. From the beautiful walk along Killary Harbour to a route up Mweelrea, the



Ecologist Dave Hogan explains the properties of *Sphagnum* moss to participants on the Environmental Walk. Photo: Helen Lawless.



Looking across Killary Harbour to Mweelrea. Photo: Patrick O'Sullivan.

highest peak in Connaught, all were blessed with wonderful weather. There were also rockclimbing and scrambling events organised on the same day.

As the first walkers left for Mweelrea, they would not take our advice on sun cream, but as anyone who has walked in the area would know, you should expect all of the seasons in one day. As the walkers started to return to the hotel, all with beaming smiles, having enjoyed their walks in beautiful sunshine, some headed off for the seaweed baths and some went into the bar for pre-dinner drinks.

Following a lovely evening meal at the Leenane Hotel, the base for the weekend's activities, we had organised a social evening with music by The Brennans and the Hernon Family, and some sean-nós dancing. During the evening, there was a raffle with the proceeds being divided between the **Maam & Leenane Red Cross Ambulance Service** and the **Galway Mountain Rescue Team**.

Sunday was packed with various talks and workshops involving many locals, including basket-maker Joe Hogan, who gave a very interesting display of how to make a basket and the history behind basket-making.

Trish Walsh, manager of **Petersburg OEC**, gave a talk on the setting up of a geopark in the area.

The Maumturks Walking Club is very grateful to everyone who helped make the weekend such a great success. In particular, we would like to thank the local farmers and landowners who give us access to their land, without which we would not be able to host events like this and to enjoy the beautiful landscape of the area we work and live in.

We would also like to thank the staff at the **Leenane Hotel**, who looked after all of the participants so well.

We are grateful to Karl Boyle and the staff of Mountaineering Ireland, for their assistance in organising this weekend, and to all others who contributed to the success of the gathering.

We hope that everyone enjoyed their weekend with us and we look forward to meeting you again on the hills.



Guided walk above Killary Harbour.

- The Maumturks Walking Club organises walks every weekend, ranging from strolls along a beach to ascents of the high peaks in the area. For more information, visit the club's website, **www.maumturkswalkingclub.com**. More photos of the weekend can be viewed on the club's Facebook site, **[facebook@maumturkswalkingclub](https://www.facebook.com/maumturkswalkingclub)**.
- PJ Leavy is Treasurer and Environmental Officer of the Maumturks Walking Club ■




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Last year, I had set about looking for family/life cover – it seemed like a good idea, especially given the type of work I do. I had contacted some companies, but they were not interested in engaging once they heard my line of work. I was delighted earlier this year to see on the Mountaineering Ireland website that Summit Ireland offered a service for people like me.

I am currently making instructors aware of the excellent service that Summit Ireland provides to anyone and everyone.

Brendan Whelan (mountraining.ie)

Due to my climbing history, I was having difficulty obtaining life assurance without paying inflated premiums. I approached Summit Financial Services and they were able to appreciate my mountaineering experience and provide me with a far more competitive quote.

I would strongly recommend Summit to anyone who wishes to obtain a more informed assurance policy, suited to their future climbing or mountaineering ambitions.

Dr Chris Owen

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Spring Gathering and AGM



Hotel Minella, Clonmel, Co Tipperary, 9-11 March 2012



Walking in the Comeraghs.

THE SPRING GATHERING will build on the success of our 2011 visit to the Galtees and, with **Peaks Mountaineering Club** as hosts, we will set our sights on the **Comeragh Mountains**.

Again, this will be a gathering for all Mountaineering Ireland members and an opportunity for you to meet members from other clubs, and other parts of the country, and to learn from other clubs' experiences. The gathering will include Mountaineering Ireland's 2012 AGM.

The Spring Gathering will be held in **Hotel Minella** in Clonmel, Co Tipperary, on the weekend of 9-11 March. The programme will include opportunities to participate in a variety of walks and a number of club-focused workshops. Saturday evening, following the AGM, will include dinner, some local music and no doubt a céilí!

Advance registration will be required and booking details will be available on www.mountaineering.ie shortly. The cost of registration will be €40 (€35 online) and will include the dinner on Saturday night.

A full list of accommodation will be provided on the Mountaineering Ireland website, and discounted prices are available from Hotel Minella.

Contact: Hotel Minella, Coleville Road, Clonmel, Co Tipperary

Tel: 353 (0)52 612 2388; Fax: 353 (0)52 612 4381;

Email: frontdesk@hotelminella.ie; Website: www.hotelminella.ie

A **Members' Forum** will be held on the Saturday evening and all members are welcome to attend. We hope to see you there! A more detailed programme will be put up on www.mountaineering.ie shortly.

Programme of Events

Friday 9 March

07:00pm Registration

08:00pm Presentation (speaker to be confirmed)

Saturday 10 March

09:00am Variety of walks and climbs

09:30am Workshops

05:00pm Annual General Meeting of Mountaineering Ireland

06:30pm Members' Forum

08:00pm Gala Dinner (a Comeraghs' Platter!)

Sunday 11 March

09:30am Comeragh Mountains Forum explained

09:30am Club Development: Training, Skills & Leadership

11:00am Tea & Coffee

11:15am Club Insights: Event Planning for the Uplands

12:00pm Meet closes

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of Mountaineering Ireland will be held at 5:00pm, on Saturday, 10 March 2012, in Hotel Minella, Clonmel, Co Tipperary. The AGM is a key opportunity for members to engage with Mountaineering Ireland and to be involved in the organisation's duty, as a company limited by guarantee, to report on the previous year's activities and financial position.

Mountaineering Ireland calls on all members and member clubs to consider **nominations** for the Board of Directors. Any nomination or motion for discussion at the AGM must be received by the Honorary Secretary on or before 5:00pm, 10 February 2012.

Nominations and motions may be submitted by any three full members and should be sent to **Ross Millar**, Honorary Secretary, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Park West Business Park, Dublin 12 or emailed to secretary@mountaineering.ie.

The agenda for the AGM and all other associated documents will be published on our website, www.mountaineering.ie, by Friday, 17 February 2012. Members without internet access can request a printed copy from the Mountaineering Ireland office, on +353 (0) 1 625 1115.

A **Members' Forum** will be held on Saturday, 10 March 2012, at 6:30pm at the same venue. The Forum, like the AGM, is for all members. It provides members with an opportunity to discuss matters including current Mountaineering Ireland policy, strategy and any other items of business. All members are encouraged to attend and voice their opinions.

4:30pm Meeting of Honorary and Individual Members, if required

5:00pm Registration for AGM

5:30pm Annual General Meeting 2012

6:30pm End of AGM

AGM Agenda

1. Adoption of standing orders
2. Adoption of minutes of last AGM
3. President's address
4. Honorary Secretary's Report
5. Presentation & approval of financial statements
6. Appointment of Auditor for 2012
7. Election of Board of Directors
8. Election to membership of Clubs and Associated Organisations
9. Nomination of representatives to other organisations
10. Motions

AGM Standing Orders

- 1 The Proposer of a Motion or an amendment to it may speak for 5 minutes but not more than 5 minutes.
- 2 A Delegate speaking on a motion or an amendment to it may not speak for more than 2 minutes.
- 3 The Proposer of a Motion or an amendment to it may speak a second time for 2 minutes immediately before a vote is taken, but other Delegates may not speak a second time to the same motion.
- 4 When the Chair considers the matter has been sufficiently discussed, the Proposer may be called upon for a reply and when this has been done a vote must be taken.
- 5 A Delegate with the consent of the Chair may move "That the motion now be put." Then, when the Proposer has spoken, a vote must be taken.

Coillte upgrades trails and rolls out tree-top facility



The aerial trail at Lough Key Forest Park, Co Roscommon.
Photo: Coillte Outdoors.

DESPITE THE current difficult economic operating environment, the Coillte recreation team continues to improve and upgrade trails and recreation facilities across the country.

In the northwest, the team has completed an important upgrade on the section of the **Sligo Way** on forest lands between Union Wood and Slishwood. The trail work, undertaken with support from the Rural Recreation Division of the Department of the Environment, opens up a beautiful section of hills to the south of Sligo for shorter walks as well as enhancing the Sligo Way.

Work is also complete on a new site at **Carrigeenroe** in Roscommon where new trails, car parks and interpretative signage provide an excellent educational facility for schools in the area.

In the east, work has commenced on repairing and upgrading the **Sean Linehan Trail** in Aghrim, Co Wicklow, which was washed out by severe floods in 2009.

On the **Dublin Mountains Way**, a 500m section of new trail has been constructed linking two forest roads on the **Featherbed**

near Killakee. This site will be replanted in 2013.

With help from Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, Coillte is also working on an upgrade to the Dublin Mountains Way at the **Scalp**.

Mountain biking

Coillte is currently finishing its strategy on mountain biking in conjunction with Cycling Ireland, the Rural Recreation Division (Dept of the Environment), Fáilte Ireland and the National Trails Office, which it is hoped will lead to a more coordinated, responsible and sustainable use of Coillte's forest for this growing mountain sport.

Aerial trails

Finally, for adrenaline junkies, Coillte awarded an aerial trails (zip-lines and high-wire trails) licence to Zipit who opened the first Irish aerial trail at **Lough Key Forest Park**, Boyle, Co Roscommon, earlier this year. It is planned to roll out other aerial trails in the next few years ■

Access alert

Stoukeen Ridge and Duhallow Way

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND has been advised that the owners of a mountain area southwest of Millstreet, Co Cork, are no longer allowing access to their land. The closure affects a large area to the east of the summit of Caherbarnagh, taking in Lough Gortavehy, Coomacheo, Stoukeen and the ridge to the southeast of Stoukeen, as far as the broad saddle south of Kippagh Lough.

Mountaineering Ireland has met with the landowners involved, but unfortunately could not achieve a resolution to the issue at this time.

Walkers should also note that the Duhallow Way in the Gortavehy area has been re-routed and no longer follows the

line that is marked on Sheet 79 from the Ordnance Survey Discovery Series. This will be updated on the third edition of Sheet 79, which is due out at the end of 2011. Marker posts are in place along the revised route.



Caherbarnagh Mountain, Co Cork.

Birds of prey under threat from illegal poisoning

BIRDWATCH IRELAND

DESPITE IMPROVEMENTS in the legislation in Ireland, the illegal poisoning of birds of prey remains disturbingly common.

A recent incident highlighted a particularly sinister side to our rural culture that can no longer be tolerated. Last spring, two volunteers with BirdWatch Ireland's Raptor Conservation Project located a buzzard nest on farmland near Roscrea, Co Tipperary. They monitored the birds' progress and were delighted to see the chicks taking their first flights in July.

On 17th July, however, the BirdWatch volunteers received a call from the farmer, who had noticed the adult birds calling in distress. They rushed to the site to find three pigeons tethered near the nest and covered in a black substance. Beside the partially consumed carcass of one pigeon lay two dead juvenile buzzards. The volunteers were devastated.

The farmer was enraged. "I had absolutely no problem with these birds. They have been here for at least three years now and did nobody any harm. I did not give anyone permission to come on my land and lay down poison. Whoever did so was trespassing."

The Gardaí and National Parks and Wildlife Service were quickly notified and, under a new poisons protocol, the carcasses and poison were removed for testing. These revealed the substance to be carbofuran, a lethal and fast-acting poison illegal under Irish law. John Lusby, Raptor Conservation Officer with BirdWatch Ireland, said: "This is most disheartening. We have witnessed many poisonings, but this incident was particularly damaging and was obviously meticulously planned.

"The carbofuran could also have killed anything else that came into contact with it. There was a risk not only to wildlife but also to pets and children.

"Killing buzzards is idiotic. Irish buzzards mostly feed on rabbits and rats, thereby benefiting farmers by controlling what are often agricultural pests. We need to change the mindset that views buzzards with such disdain."



Buzzard killed using poisoned pigeon in Roscrea, Co Tipperary. Photo: BirdWatch Ireland.

Alan Lauder, Chief Executive of BirdWatch Ireland, said: "This was a deliberate targeting of the buzzards. It was particularly cruel in that it used hand-reared pigeons as live bait. Laying poison to target any type of wildlife can no longer be tolerated in civilised society."

But the slaughter wasn't over. The next day, when the volunteers went back to check on the sole surviving chick, they were horrified to find yet another poisoned bird of prey, this time a sparrowhawk.

"We couldn't believe it when we noticed that more baited pigeons had been left out, in the same place, even after the Conservation Ranger and Gardaí had been out," said one volunteer.

In recent years, poison baits have been responsible for the deaths of numerous buzzards, peregrines, sparrowhawks, red kites, golden and white-tailed eagles, as well as a range of other wild bird and mammal species in Ireland.

In October 2010, after much

campaigning by BirdWatch Ireland and the Golden Eagle Trust, new laws were introduced making it illegal to use any poison to kill birds or animals, with the exception of rats and mice.

More recently, BirdWatch Ireland welcomed a new poisoning surveillance scheme, launched by the NPWS and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to monitor the threat of poisons to birds of prey.

BirdWatch Ireland has repeatedly called for action to stamp out poisoning and other wildlife crimes. "Changes to the legislation and the new surveillance scheme are steps in the right direction," said John Lusby, "but until we address the underlying issues with education and awareness programmes, and start taking wildlife crime in this country seriously, we can't expect these problems to go away."

● For more information, visit www.birdwatchireland.ie ■

'On a Wing and a Prayer'

In response to the continued threat to our raptor populations, BirdWatch Ireland has launched an appeal to help raise vital funds to fight the persecution and increase the protection, monitoring and awareness of birds of prey in Ireland. Go to www.birdwatchireland.ie and click on the appeal link for more information or to donate.

Ancient deer trap found on Blackstairs Mountain

MICK MONAHAN

WE ARE not the first to wander over our mountains. There is evidence of human activity in the mountains from thousands of years in the past. This was brought home to me when I noticed some bits of wood at the collapsing edge of a peat hag on top of Blackstairs Mountain in Co Carlow.

My curiosity was aroused as there is no evidence of trees in the peat locally and there had never been a fence there. I got down on my knees and scrabbled the turf away with my hands. Thankfully, no passer-by witnessed these acts of an apparent madman at work!

I eventually managed to uncover a substantial piece of timber with a rectangular hole in it and a number of parts. It was four feet under the surface and likely to have been there for a long time. Remembering the ancient advice to stop digging when in a hole, I took photos and covered it up.

I later informed the National Museum about my find and they said that it might be an ancient deer trap. They subsequently excavated it and confirmed their initial impression. They brought the trap off the mountain, which was not an easy job, and it has gone for conservation.

Deer traps were in use for millennia. In Ireland, some have been dated to about 1,400 years ago. They are rare enough. The unfortunate animal, which put its foot through the device, was unable to get out of it.

Why the trap was located on the top of a mountain is anyone's guess. It was suggested (humorously) that in future I find things in more convenient places!

To further annoy those who say I spoil walks by wandering around looking at stones and whatever, the Museum has a policy of rewarding finders ■



View of the ancient deer trap showing its working parts. Photo montage: National Museum.



Dr Andy Halpin, from the Irish Antiquities Division, National Museum of Ireland, examines the trap

Mountain Meitheal builds trail in North Maine Woods

BILL MURPHY

OVER THE PAST few years the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) has been involved in building new trails, campsites and shelters to open the Kathadin Iron Works Forest area in northern Maine for year-round recreation.

In September 2011, eight Mountain Meitheal volunteers headed to the North Maine Woods to construct a new trail linking the Appalachian Trail to a new backcountry campsite on Indian Pond.

We spent eight days in the woods, with five of those days building the new trail. Our trip offered us an opportunity to see trail-building in the US and to also experience this remote area of northern Maine.



Bog bridge built on site using local cedar trees.



Mountain Meitheal and Appalachian Mountain Club volunteers on the Indian Pond Trail in the North Maine Woods.

Kathadin Iron Works (and Chairback Lodge) are located about an hour's drive east of Greenville in northern Maine. We travelled from Chairback Lodge (where we spent the first two nights) on a logging road south for about 40 minutes to our canoe launch on Dam Pond.

We paddled across Dam Pond and into Indian Pond where we landed at our home for the next few days. Two extremely competent (and friendly) AMC staff members, Ariana and Beth, led us for our trip. On arrival at the proposed campsite they briefed us on the Leave No Trace approach to camping, food care (from bears) and our work for the week.

Our first task was to clear a campsite, felling and grubbing out trees to create a kitchen area and tent pads. Once we had a place to sleep we set about building the fireplace and building the trail to the proposed privy site. (With the only access across the lakes, the AMC will skid a privy and picnic table to the site across the lake when it freezes.)

The rest of the week was spent building the link trail. We felled trees, grubbed out roots, levelled rocks, built drainage and

marked the trail. In this part of Maine, bog bridges are constructed from native trees growing on-site. We constructed two sets of bog bridges, selecting and felling some Eastern Cedar to fashion the bridges – an interesting experience. We worked from 8:00am to 4:00pm, when we had time to swim or paddle and explore the lake system in search of moose.

Hiking

But it wasn't all work: we also had some time either side of our workcamp to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail (adjacent to Chairback Lodge) and Sentinel Mountain in Baxter State Park.

We spent a full day (almost 10 hours) hiking the trail using the Henderson Brook and Third Mountain Trails to create a circuit from Chairback. While on the trail we encountered ten through-hikers (hiking from end to end) on their last few days. Almost all had started last March and had about five days to go. They were in great form but craved fresh fruit.

Our final day in the north woods was spent in Baxter State Park, a 209,000-acre wilderness. We had hoped to climb

Kathadin (the Appalachian Trail terminus) but, being limited by time, we settled on climbing Sentinel, a smaller summit with magnificent views over Kathadin.

Hiking in the North Woods is tough and slow, described as “primitive with many rocks and roots,” but very rewarding. For those seeking to experience a different landscape with solitude and challenge, this part of the US is relatively easily accessed from Ireland.

The purpose of our visit was to build a trail – we completed our project, learnt new skills, made new friends and have already been invited back.

The Appalachian Mountain Club

The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) is one of North America's oldest and most venerable mountain and outdoor clubs, and was founded in 1876. Since the early part of the twentieth century it has been actively involved in trail construction and maintenance in the Appalachian range. Today, the club maintains this tradition and operates a major volunteer trail programme. The Appalachian Trail – the 2,160-mile “footpath through the wilderness” from Georgia to Maine – is also maintained almost entirely through volunteer effort. This citizen action inspired the formation and ethos of Mountain Meitheal, and our club has maintained a strong link with the trails people in the AMC for almost ten years.

North Main Woods Initiative

With over 10.6 million acres of forest (50% of the state, officially known as the “unorganised townships”) running northwest from Interstate 95, Maine has one of the largest areas of wild land in the eastern United States. In 2003, the AMC began acquiring over 66,000 acres of mountain, forest and lakes east of Greenville as part of their North Maine Woods Initiative. The AMC acquired the lands to protect important elements of this wild landscape for recreation, conservation and to demonstrate sustainable forest practices. The AMC land straddles the AT as it passes through the famous 100 Mile Wilderness – the last leg of the trail to the summit of Kathadin in Baxter State Park. The hiking over this section is tough – underfoot conditions with rock and roots – and hikers overnight in trail shelters, which are located about eight to ten miles apart ■



Lis Nielsen of the European Ramblers' Association presents Robert Grandon, Chair of Mountain Meitheal, with ERA's ECO Award in recognition of the group's services to mountain path restoration, in Glendalough in October. On left is Karl Boyle of Mountaineering Ireland.

Mountain Meitheal wins major award

MOUNTAIN MEITHEAL has won second prize in the European Ramblers' Association's ECO Awards for 2011. The president of the European Ramblers' Association (ERA), Lis Nielsen, made the presentation to Mountain Meitheal in Glendalough, Co Wicklow, on Sunday, 23 October, as they were repairing the much-used track above the Miners' Village.

Lis Nielsen congratulated Mountain Meitheal on their award and remarked that she had become aware of the increase in volunteering as she travelled around Europe in her capacity as president of ERA. On behalf of the European walking community she thanked the volunteers for their work.

In accepting the award, Robert Grandon, Chair of Mountain Meitheal, said the award was “a reflection of the great effort the volunteers give. To be recognised at European level is wonderful.” He also thanked Karl Boyle, Chief Officer of Mountaineering Ireland, who had suggested that Mountain Meitheal enter the competition in the first place.

The ERA is an organisation with 30 member countries representing 2.7 million members. Ireland is a member through Mountaineering Ireland. The award was sponsored by French energy company **Foundation GDF Suez** as part of their policy on social responsibility and the environment.

Mountain Meitheal submitted three of their Dublin Mountain projects for the competition: the boardwalk at Cruagh Wood Spur; the raised treadway in Cruagh Wood; and the raised stone-pitched treadway at Three Rock Mountain. All three were developed in partnership with the **Dublin Mountains Partnership**, and the Cruagh Wood treadway was funded by the **Irish Ramblers Club**.

The award comes at the end of a very productive year for Mountain Meitheal. The volunteers completed an upgrade of a section of the Wicklow Way at Knockree; started the Miners' Village project in Glendalough in partnership with **Wicklow Mountains National Park**; constructed an Adirondack-type shelter on the Wicklow Way at Carrickashane, funded by **Glenwalk**; and published the second edition of their handbook on trail design and construction, sponsored by **Coillte**.

Mountain Meitheal's achievements depend entirely on the commitment of volunteers and financial supporters. Newcomers are always welcome. For further

Paths to freedom

Trail repairs in the Mournes

PETER MCGOWAN

The wind in your face, a blue sky and a long and winding road stretching to the mood-enhancing wilderness that outdoor types yearn for...yes, fanciful to an extent, but the increase in hillwalking and other wilderness activities is a reality.

To enjoy these activities, you need a convenient wilderness and access to same. The unavoidable truth of increased traffic on the fragile mountain terrain is erosion, flooding and environmental change.

I started volunteering with the Mourne Heritage Trust three years ago. Having enjoyed the mountains and their mood-enhancing properties for thirty plus years, I felt it was time to give something back. Over the last year, I have been working with other volunteers on path restoration, under the direction of Ranger Dave Farnan.

Path restoration can be as little as clearing blocked drains to free trapped water or as big as the contractor-led projects. The team I work with use shovels and pick-axes, carrying the tools and moving materials and rocks found within the target area. The aim is to create a discrete, sustainable, single trail that uses natural and local materials to enhance the access for all and to prevent erosion of sensitive environments.

As some hill users are opposed to any interference with the natural environment, there is much debate around the subject of path restoration. There isn't room here to cover all the arguments. I can only say that, from a path-builder's perspective, it is encouraging how many passing path-users are grateful and full of praise for our efforts.

The weekday team I work with is a cross-section of interested parties, old codgers like myself, shift workers and others with time available. A weekend



Mourne upland path repair volunteers at work. (Peter McGowan is in the background to the left.)

team is being formed and the involvement of other groups such as youth rangers, operating during the school holidays, is great to see.

No magic formula exists for the integration of multiple uses of the outdoors and its protection and conservation. Change is an inevitable outcome of time – no environment remains static– but the speed of change can be managed until a better understanding of sensitive environments and wildlife is achieved.

So, practice your digging and give us a

call. you may be free to roam, but the paths freely wear away.

- The Mourne Heritage Trust Volunteer Upland Path Team is currently working in the Ben Crom area of the eastern Mournes. Anybody interested in helping out should contact 028 4372 4059 or mht@mourne.co.uk. See also www.activelifestyles.org.

Peter McGowan is a Volunteer Ranger and coordinator of the Mourne Heritage Trust Volunteer Upland Path Team ■

Upcoming path repair work in the Mournes

THE MOURNE HERITAGE TRUST has secured funding for a strategic review of the main path network in the Mourne Mountains. The review will consider issues such as erosion and carrying capacity in the context of the increased usage. It will also look at the associated facilities, such as car parks, and make recommendations in relation to the establishment of a sustainable network of paths in the Mournes and the resources needed to implement and maintain such a network.

Following repair work on the North Tor of Slieve Binnian in spring 2011, plans are afoot for further work to redress upland erosion by establishing sustainable trails along the most used routes in the high Mournes. This will be achievable through funding from NIEA and from other funders for work in 2012 and beyond.

Candidate sites for work include Bloody Bridge to the Mourne Wall; Glen River to Donard; Slieve Binnian's Back Castles and South Tor; and the Brandy Pad up to the saddle of Donard.

- For more information, contact the Mourne Heritage Trust, 028 4372 4059, mht@mourne.co.uk or visit www.mournelive.com ■

Mourne heights resolved

PETER WILSON

FOR SOME YEARS now walkers in the Mourne have had the frustration of not knowing the true heights of Slieve Bearnagh and Slieve Meelmore.

For **Slieve Bearnagh**, both the 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 OS maps indicate a spot height of 739m for a point where the Mourne Wall makes a right-angle turn (grid ref: 313 281), and this height is used in some published lists of Irish mountains.

However, the highest contour encircling point 739m is 720m, suggesting that 739m is either an overestimate of the height at that point or that the height is correct and the 730m contour has been omitted, perhaps for lack of space.

Whatever the true height of point 739m, it is not the highest point on Slieve Bearnagh. About 100m south of the Mourne Wall is Summit Tor (grid ref: 313 280) and this rises several metres above point 739m.

These facts were put to Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland (OSNI) and re-



Slieve Bearnagh in the Mourne with correct heights indicated. Photo: Peter Wilson.

measurement was undertaken. The result was that the height of Summit Tor (and therefore the height of Slieve Bearnagh) is 739m. The spot height on the maps had been placed in the wrong position. The ground height at the map position of 739m is 728m (see photo).

Since the early 1980s, various editions of the 1:25,000 map have given different heights for **Slieve Meelmore**. Heights of 680m, 704m and 687m have appeared at grid ref: 306 288, the place where the Mourne Wall makes an acute change of direction and has a built-in stone tower.

The 704m height on the 1990 edition provided the impetus for the Mourne Seven Sevens challenge walk – previously there were six 700m summits.

The 2009 edition of the map gives a height of 687m and this is on the west side of the wall at grid ref: 306 286, about 200m south of the tower. Summit contouring has also changed slightly, although 680m is still the highest contour.

I am grateful to Peter Downie at OSNI for the information concerning Slieve Bearnagh ■

Irish Explorers Trust reception and dinner

MIKE O'SHEA

THE IRISH EXPLORERS TRUST is holding a weekend of celebrations in January to mark the centenary of the first successful race for the South Pole by an Irish explorer (Ernest Shackleton in 1912).

A civic reception will be held in Kerry County Museum, Tralee, on Friday, 13 January, for Colonel Ronald Smith, General Robert Desjardins and others from the American embassy. The Trust will be presented with an Antarctic chart prepared by Col. Smith, who was commander of air flights within Antarctica in support of the United States Antarctic Program for over five years.

The chart has also been presented to a

number of other nations. New Zealand was presented with theirs by the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. It also featured in *National Geographic* magazine earlier this year.

On the Saturday night, a black-tie dinner dance will replicate the dinner hosted in Cardiff for the Scott expedition before they set sail for Antarctica in June 1910. The Captain Scott Society has replicated the dinner for the last 25 years.

Confirmed speakers include Clare O'Leary, the first Irishwoman to reach the South Pole, and Mark Pollock, the blind man who raced to the South Pole.

For further information, please visit the Trust's website, irishexplorerstrust.ie.

Mike O'Shea, Irish Explorers Trust ■



Capt Robert Falcon Scott

Programme

Fri 13 Jan: Civic reception, slideshow.

Sat 14 Jan: Slideshows, dinner dance.

Sun 15 Jan: Slideshows.

Errigal and Dunlewy Lough.
Photo: Peter Wilson.



More contributions sought for ‘Ascentials’

Mountaineering Ireland to publish guide to Ireland’s 2,000ft mountains

AS A TRIBUTE to the late Joss Lynam, Mountaineering Ireland has decided to publish a guide to Ireland’s peaks of 2,000 foot or higher. In the last issue of the *Log* we launched a request to Mountaineering Ireland members and clubs, with their unequalled local knowledge, to contribute descriptions of routes (free of access problems) to the summits of these mountains, the ‘Ascentials.’ Route descriptions have been rolling in – we have had more than forty offers to date – but there are 156 separate mountains and many still await a route description from you.

It is hoped that this publication will be along the lines of the very successful Scottish Munro and Corbett guides, with a high-quality photo, sketch map and factual description of each route.

We presented an example of the type of route description we need in the previous issue – Slieve Snaght – and here we publish an Errigal route description received from Peter Wilson. We would ask interested member clubs or individuals to go online at www.mountaineering.ie, look at the list of peaks and download the template for your route description. To avoid duplication, please let us know which peak you will contribute a route description for. The *Irish Mountain Log* will publish selected contributions from these route descriptions over the next few issues. Notification of your intention to describe a route and your route descriptions should be sent to: margarettees@eircom.net.

Alan Tees, President

Notification of your intention to describe a route and your route descriptions should be sent by email, or post if preferred, to:

**Margaret Tees
(Project Manager),
Bunagee, Culdaff,
Co Donegal
Tel: 086-809 8110
Email: margarettees@eircom.net**



The new guide will be dedicated to the memory of Joss Lynam (1924-2011). Photo: Colm Wright.

This example by Peter Wilson follows the template (or guide) for contributions to the Mountaineering Ireland Guide to Ireland's 2,000ft (609m) mountains:

Name of mountain (English & Irish, where possible):

Errigal Mountain (An Earagail, i.e. an oratory)

Height:

751m (2,464ft)

Grid reference:

B 928 207

Ordnance Survey (OS) sheet number:

Sheet No 1

Introduction/Setting:

Errigal is the highest and best-known mountain in Donegal. It rises cone-like north of the R251; shattered rock buttresses and white/grey quartzite screes mantle its upper slopes. From many places in north Donegal it is a very prominent landmark.

Text (with appropriate grid references)

Include Start, Summit and Return:

Start from the car park at GR B 943 197 on the R251 and follow the road northeast for a little over 1km to the start of a broad track leading north across the moor. On reaching the highest point of the track (B 951 214), strike north-northwest for 1km to reach the summit of Beaghy (395m, B 946 222), giving a spectacular aerial perspective of Altan Lough and the ruined farm at its head.

Descend south from the summit and follow the remains of a post-and-wire fence across a wide col and up the steep slopes ahead. As the gradient slackens, veer away from the fence and ascend west-northwest to reach the rock-strewn summit of Mackoght (555m, B 940 215). The long, scree-girt, northeast face of Errigal now fills the view ahead.

Descend south-southwest to the col and join a path rising southwest through rock outcrops. As the path gains height it begins to swing northwest and ascends across scree. The path joins with the direct route from the car park on the R251, together forming a very clear and steep trail to the summit ridge. From a large cairn/wind shelter, the ridge narrows and leads unerringly to what is probably the smallest and most dramatically situated summit in Ireland. A slightly lower 'twin' summit is just a few minutes' walk away, across a small dip in the ridge.

The summit has unrivalled views of the Derryveagh Mountains to the south, the coast and offshore islands to the north and west, and a bird's eye view of the plunging screes directly below.

Descend by the ascent route to where the path splits and follow the track down to the car park.

Possible alternative(s):

Up and down from the car park is the quickest and easiest alternative, but the least satisfying. A longer and more strenuous route starts from near Procklis Lough (B 936 256) and follows peat-tracks across Drumdoo to reach the foot of the north ridge. The ridge is steep and requires great care and scrambling skills. Descend from the summit to the col below Mackoght and, via Lough Nabrackbaddy and Drumdoo, return to Procklis.

Time, distance and type of terrain:

4 hours, 8km, 760m ascent. Much wet peaty ground below 400m; rock and scree abundant at higher levels.

Access advice and issues, if any:

No access issues known

Contributed by (club or individual member):

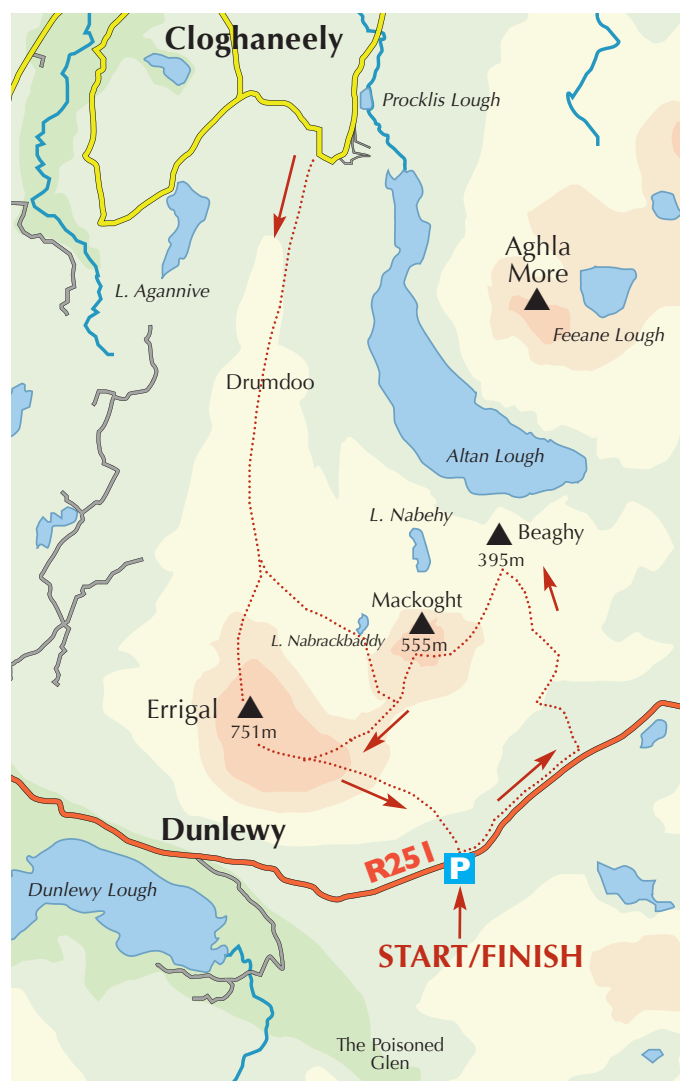
Peter and Frances Wilson

Contact details (email, please):

p.wilson@ulster.ac.uk

Graphics: please attach basic sketch map and/or a route card:

Photocopy of map with route sketched on it (see below)



Graphic of Peter Wilson's sketch map of part of OS map showing routes to summit of Errigal from Dunlewy and Cloghaneely.

Photo(s): please attach, with caption(s):

Southwest aspect of Errigal from Dunlewy

Compleating the Munros

ANNE MORRISSEY

“What is a Munro?” “How many Munros are there?” How many have you done?” How many have you left to do?” These are the sort of questions people ask me when I say I am going to Scotland again.

Well, a Munro is a mountain in Scotland that is 3000 feet in height or higher. There are currently 283 of them and, as of 10 September 2011, I have “compleated” them all, as they put it.

I climbed my first Munro in 1998 on an Irish Ramblers Club trip to Scotland. At the time, I didn’t know what a Munro was, but the organiser of the trip had planned the trip around some very remote Munros in the Knoydart region. These Munros are so remote that they can only be reached by boat or by a very long walk-in from Kinloch Hourn. We took the boat option, staying in a bothy (an unmanned cottage) and I “bagged” three Munros on that occasion.

My next trip to Scotland was the following year, when six of us from the Ramblers headed to the Killin and the Ben Lawers region. On this trip, I was becoming more aware of the vast scale of the mountains in Scotland and that there are places where all one can see is mountain after mountain, with no sign of civilisation.

On one walk during this trip, one of my fellow hikers wanted to do an extra Munro which wasn’t on the original route, and I went with him. It was only years later that side-trips like this proved to be invaluable on the way to compleating the list.

The following year, 2000, was a special year as I and a good friend of mine from the Ramblers, Patricia McGuirk, travelled to Scotland to do something special for our birthdays. That year, we climbed the nine 4000-foot mountains in Scotland, including Ben Nevis at 4409ft, the highest summit in Great Britain and Ireland.

Patricia and myself went together to Scotland again in 2002 (Glen Shiel); in 2003 (Mamores and the Grey Corries); and in 2008 (the ‘Far North’). I didn’t go to Scotland in 2001 (foot and mouth disease) or in 2004, as I still hadn’t caught ‘Munroitis’ at that time.

Hamish Brown called Munroitis an incurable disease. According to Hamish, it is a highly infectious disease that is unique to Scotland. It can be acute or chronic and, in the obsessed, can threaten life and limb. An acute episode of the disease can progress to recovery in months, but the chronic state can last a lifetime.

The first hint that I was catching Munroitis came in 2005 when I went to Scotland with two friends, Doreen Lynch and Vera Kelly. We did the Munros known as the Fisherfield Six in the most dreadful rain, with rivers rising by metres before our eyes. We ended up staying overnight in a shelter 2m by 3m (and lucky to have it) as we could not cross a river to get to a bothy. yet, having bagged those six Munros, I think I was well on my way to catching the disease.



It became clear that I had definitely caught Munroitis when I headed to Skye in 2006 to take on the Black Cullins and the infamous Inn Pinn (Inaccessible Pinnacle). Accompanied by two friends, Susan McDonnell and Geraldine Grant, I had a fantastic week guided by Gerry Ackroyd and in the company of Iain Browne from Scotland and Nigel Rose from England.

Between that trip to Skye in 2006 and September 2011, I took on compleating the Munros as a project, as I realised that this was the only way to do it. The advice I got from the aforementioned Iain from Scotland and the IRC’s own Robert Garrett, who himself had compleated the Munros in 1998, was invaluable. In the end, it took 13 years and 27 trips to Scotland to compleat them all.

I have stayed in bothies, hotels, B&Bs, chalets and cottages over the years, but never actually had to camp or backpack. I have cycled and taken a boat to shorten the long walk in. I have been out in all weathers, from white-outs in January to scorching heatwaves in August. I have been attacked by midges on more than one occasion. However, most importantly of all, I have had the company of friends from Ireland who came with me on the various trips, including Susan McDonnell, who never had any intention of compleating the Munros herself, but came with me when no one else could get away.

● Anne Morrissey is a member of the Irish Ramblers Club ■

Mountaineering history journal on the way

IN 2001, Mountaineering Ireland established the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society (IM&EHS) in order to further interest in the rich history of Irish mountaineering and exploration. The society published two issues of the *Journal of the Irish Mountaineering and Exploration Historical Society*, in 2002 and 2005. These were edited by the late Joss Lynam, were well received and contained much of historical importance in the field. Plans to revive the journal are well in hand and it is hoped to produce the next issue in spring 2012, in part as a tribute to Joss.

As with its predecessors, the journal will include fresh research as well as articles published elsewhere in order that, in Joss's words, *"the IM&EHS Journal...be recognized as the best source of information on our history [and] that all important articles...be found in it."*

The next volume will cover a wide array of

topics ranging from climbing in the Poisoned Glen in Donegal to the avalanches of 1867 in Wicklow, by way of the exploits of the Irish in the Indian Himalaya, the odyssey of Sir William Francis Butler in Canada and the story of Comte Henri Russell – the man who married a mountain.

It will also include two articles by Joss – one on the early days of mountaineering clubs in Ireland, the other on Ireland's first female mountaineer, Elizabeth Le Blond.

The response to the appeal for submissions in the Spring 2011 issue of the *Log* has been very heartening and we are confident that we will have enough material for a fourth volume. We are always interested in getting new material for the journal, so if you are interested in writing an article on an appropriate subject (or already have done), please contact the editor, Declan O'Keeffe, at caldeno@gmail.com, with a brief outline of your topic ■



Comte Henri Russell: the man who 'married a mountain.' He attended Clongowes College in his youth.

New book celebrates the Galtees

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND member Jimmy Barry was joined by members of local hillwalking clubs, colleagues from the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA), family members and a wide circle of friends in the Aherlow House Hotel on Saturday 22nd October for the launch of his book *Under Galtee Skies*.



Under Galtee Skies is a pictorial journey through the Galtee Mountains. Jimmy's passion for the Galtees, and for the natural and cultural heritage of these mountains, shines through the fascinating collection of photographs. The 56-page book includes some local history, poetry, information about the Galtee lakes, place-names, flora and fauna.

The evening was a wonderful celebration of the Galtees, attended by almost 300 people who share a



Jimmy Barry speaks at the launch of his book *Under Galtee Skies*. Photo: Ruairí Ó Conchúir.

connection with these mountains and with Jimmy. The book was formally launched by Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Chair of Mountaineering Ireland. During the evening, John Dillon and Frank McMahon from the Limerick Climbing Club presented Irene Codd, Chair of SEMRA, with a donation from the Limerick club.

One of those in attendance, Con Breen, who is an active member of An Óige Hillwalkers, was in 1952 a founder member of the Galtee Climbing Club and part of a team that erected a wooden

cross on Galtymore in the Marian year of 1954.

In his speech to the gathering, Jimmy Barry highlighted that the challenge for us, as walkers, is how do we look after the fantastic resource that is the Galtees now, and into the future?

● Signed copies of *Under Galtee Skies* are available on www.mountaineering.ie and from the Mountaineering Ireland office (01 625 1115) at a reduced rate of €13 plus €2 postage ■



‘Walking the Line’ for mountain rescue

GEN WARD

On Saturday, 25 June 2011, the Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team took on their biggest fundraising and public relations project to date: ‘Walk the Line.’

We set ourselves three main goals: The first was to raise our team’s profile; the second was to ensure all those who participated came away safely from the event whilst having enjoyed their time in the mountains; and the third was to try to raise some much-needed funds to help purchase a 4x4 stretcher-capable vehicle to improve the level of pre-hospital care we could provide to those we rescue, particularly during the winter months.

As a member of the Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team for 15 years, I do like a challenge, but project-managing this event was taking me personally across a line I had never walked before. I quickly realised this was never going to be about one person; it had to be a team effort – and it certainly was. The organising of this event took a lot of time and effort, and, as volunteers who go out to search and rescue those who find themselves lost or injured in the mountains, we knew safety had to be our highest priority.

Fantastic event

So, the planning and work began. The route we chose took our 32km walk along the boundary of the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, starting at Kilbride and finishing in Marlay Park. To fit in with the summer solstice, we planned to start the walk at 9:00pm and to arrange it so that each participant would find themselves on a peak at sunrise.

This was the most fantastic event I have ever been involved with. We, as a



The ‘Walk the Line’ route from Kilbride to Marlay Park. Map courtesy of East West Mapping.

team, worked hard for months ensuring we did our best to meet all the requirements to run a successful event, which catered for the needs of all those who signed up, from the runners to the walkers, to the last group to cross the finishing line, who seemed determined to ensure that the organisers didn’t get to bed too soon! All team members and the volunteers involved walked the route as a full recce to ensure they understood what our participants were about to sign up to.

Co-operation

Our Mountain Rescue Team grew in size and strength as a result of this event. It was great to see the new working with the old, and team members working hand in hand with the many volunteers who selflessly gave of their time to guide and help out on the event.

We worked hard with all the agencies, such as the Wicklow Mountains National Park, Coillte, Leave No Trace and Marlay Park, to ensure we met all the permit

requirements, and we are proud to have organised Walk the Line in accordance with these principles.

A positive example

We held information sessions and invited Leave no Trace Ireland to give briefings at all pre-event meetings for guides, marshals and volunteers. We went through a process of describing and explaining our preparation and intentions to Mountaineering Ireland and became one of the few Challenge Walks to be promoted by Mountaineering Ireland, who had this to say about our event:

“Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team has put a lot of effort into planning Walk the Line to ensure that this event has minimal impact on a beautiful and sensitive part of the Wicklow uplands, whilst also providing a safe and enjoyable experience for participants. We believe the event is in line with



A group of 'Walk the Line' challengers.

Mountaineering Ireland's Policy on Organised Events in the Mountains and that the approach taken by DWMRT provides a positive example for other groups. We are pleased to see the efforts being made to ensure that participants are aware of their individual responsibility to the environment and also with what the team is doing to review the event and assess any impacts."

All the volunteers

The scale of our ambitious route, our determination to do it the right way and our duty of care to the 300 people we were about to spread over 32 kilometres of wild, mountainous terrain meant our team stepped its resources up to a new level to ensure the event succeeded.

Mountain Rescue is traditionally a community organisation – we live in the community we operate in, we serve the larger community of outdoor enthusiasts and we support the growing industry which supplies training and equipment to those who love the mountains. It shouldn't have been surprising that so many from these communities volunteered their support and services to facilitate this event – from retired team members to professional guides, from

bus-drivers to our main sponsor, the Great Outdoors, from friends and family to complete strangers, who offered to spend a cold night on the hill, marshalling the route.

Nonetheless, we found ourselves constantly surprised at the generosity of the many people who made this event possible, and we'd like to thank them all sincerely for their help. Without the communities that support us, we wouldn't have a purpose or the ability to do what we love to do.

The good news is that we are now well on our way to being able to purchase a 4x4 stretcher-capable vehicle, and I look forward to updating you all when we do.

Congratulations

More important than any money raised was witnessing that so many people were willing to put themselves 'on the line' for us when we needed them. Walking the Line on June 25th was always supposed to be a challenge for any participant. The mist and the bog, the darkness and the distance, all make this an event that not everyone can take on. That so many people were with us throughout the night, outside of their comfort zone and trusting us to keep them safe was touching. The disappointment on the faces of the few

when they had to cut their challenge short, the courage of those overcoming physical limitations, the craic in the groups, the speed of the runners, the exhausted joy of the many who enjoyed a well-earned breakfast in Marlay Park meant so much to team members, that we didn't need to debate about whether we're doing this again next year – we couldn't not run it!

Next year

Although the route has yet to be finalised, we are now officially launching **Walk the Line 2012** and have teamed up again with our main sponsor, the **Great Outdoors**, to launch *'Help Save a Life this Christmas and sign up to Walk the Line 2012.'* (See also advert, page 49.)

● For more information, contact us via walktheline@dwmrt.ie or log onto www.walktheline.ie. Vouchers can also be purchased in the Great Outdoors or online at www.greatoutdoors.ie.

● Gen Ward is Deputy Leader of the Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team ■



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

Banff in Kilkenny: the verdict

October filmfest hits

JACK BERGIN

THE BANFF FILM FESTIVAL came to a full house in Kilkenny in October, and what a show it was! For many, it was a night's entertainment; for many others it provided for much stimulating debate as to the whole essence of adventure. Some theorists have proposed that to adventure is to seek risk. They assert that the essential fabric of adventure has to be uncertainty of outcome, and that unless the ultimate ingredient of the activity is the possibility of death, then it is not a real 'adventure.'

Robinson proposed a risk recreation model in which adventurers seek to balance their competence with the risk inherent in the activity. An activity which is low in adventure for a highly competent individual will lead to boredom and loss of 'quality of experience,' while an activity which is high in adventure for a person low in competence will result in disaster and devastation – possibly an early death.

However, the achievement of the perfect balance between risk and competency is then defined as 'the flow experience,' and surely this is what most true adventurers strive for? No more guided trips, no more leader-led walks, no more following the well-trodden path... one heeds the words of Rousseau when he said 'abide by nature and follow the route she traces for you.'

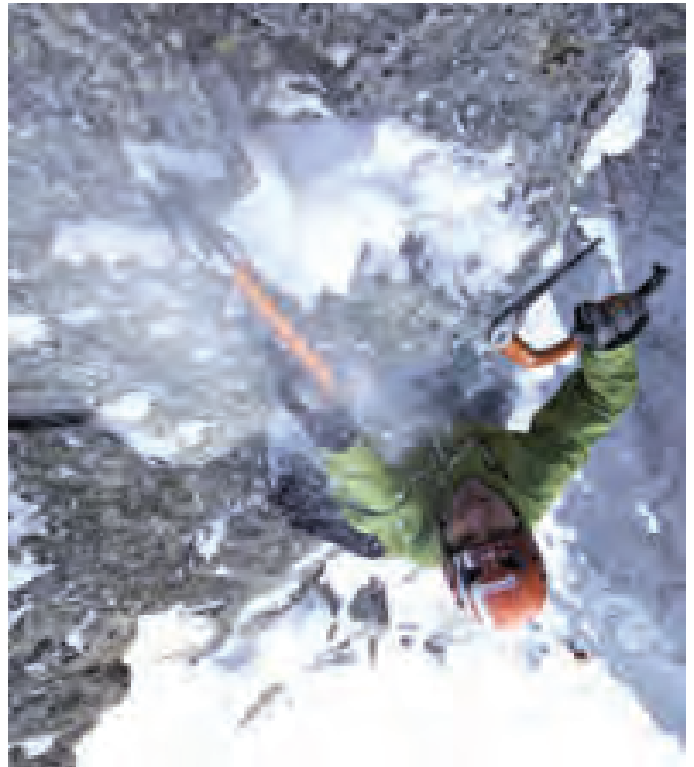
Daredevil stunts

The Kilkenny show featured seven films from the Banff festival which can be roughly grouped into categories based on the attitude of the main players and the expected outcomes.

One film (*The long way: a walk across China*) could be described as more interesting than adventurous, while a film on skiing across the seasons in Japan (*Signatures: Canvas of Snow*) may perhaps be best described as 'artistic' rather than adventurous, featuring some fantastic camera angles and wild skiing. It and a short but crazy mountain bike film (*Kranked-Revolve*) best epitomise the play aspect of the outdoors. yes, the bikers and skiers had great fun; the films would encourage some people to engage in these activities, to upskill and to dare.

However, if 'dare' is what one is after, then perhaps the shortest film of the night, *World Record Descent*, where a kayaker shoots a 186ft waterfall in a kayak, has to be up there with those vying for a Darwin Award, those "awards" given posthumously to those who volunteer to take their genes out of the gene pool by ensuring they do not live to reproduce. It is hard to find adequate words to describe the mentality of anyone who would place so much in the hands of the gods, to shoot a waterfall and hope to be spat out at the other end before his lungs give out. Credit should be given to the guy – he weighed up the odds and succeeded.

For most people I guess the three films which provoked most conversation and debate were *Alone on the Wall*, *The Swiss Machine* and *Across the Ditch*.



From "The Swiss Machine."

Heart-stopping viewing

Alone on the Wall featured the American climber Alex Honnold with some incredibly bold, gutsy and heart-stopping climbing. It really put into perspective how competent and self-assured this climber is as he solos big walls in Yosemite and in Utah with zero fall-back. Indeed, he did have his 'moment' on El Capitan when the realisation of what he was at and where he was suddenly took hold. yes, he could probably have bailed out – the helicopter carrying the cameraman could possibly have initiated a rescue – but no, Alex had a few words with himself, sorted himself out and completed his ascent with amazing calmness, control and self-assurance, a remarkable feat.

Enter *The Swiss Machine*, or Ueli Steck, and what a machine! To climb the Eiger solo in winter in 2 hours 47 minutes is a phenomenal achievement. This film, while showing most of the ascent, put a lot of it in perspective. It featured speed climbing on big walls in Yosemite, and also looked at an attempted speed solo ascent of Annapurna in the Himalaya. This ended in failure when a rock fell and split his helmet in two – a lesson for all climbers out there. He gave the impression that this was it for a while, but then went back and achieved this amazing feat on the Eiger Nordwand! This is certainly not for the faint-hearted – or for any family member not in tune with climbing, if this is what you do, as the margin for error is zero.

While most of the footage of these two films is available on YouTube, what the Banff festival did was to put it all in perspective and on the big screen. The question it must have left for many of the audience is: 'Did they over-glamourise risk?' yes, the films presented were fantastic, amazing, even bordering on the surreal, as the climbers really were on the edge. However,

another perspective on this must be considered. Perhaps the closeness with the filmmaker, in the sense that rescue was to hand if they decided to bail out, and the fact that these guys had both climbed the routes beforehand and were aware of their competencies, takes a little from the adventure of the films and perhaps leans them slightly to the side of 'play'?

In the sense of pure adventure, the film *Across the Ditch* was an amazing feat. These two young kayakers set out to kayak from Australia to New Zealand – and they succeeded. The film traces their odyssey from designing the boat, trials which necessitated flying a kayak builder from the UK to rectify stability faults, and later a serious battle with a weather system which necessitated paddling back towards Australia in an attempt to escape from a giant eddy in the Tasman Sea. To have the wherewithal to do this while acknowledging that their rations were being depleted, and that they were going to have to spend approximately 20 extra days at sea, showed amazing strength of character.

All in all, the Banff Film Festival provided a great night's entertainment and whetted the adventurous minds of many. While it is doubtful if anyone from the audience will set out to



Yes, he survived the kayak plunge: from the film "Dream Result."

replicate the feats of any on display, it is important to remember what constitutes an adventure – it is what anyone thinks it is. We can all be adventurers in our own disciplines, whether it is on Brandon Mountain, Lugnaquilla or the Alpine heights.

Compliments to all of Tyndall Mountain Club and in particular to Kevin Higgins for the organisation involved in bringing Banff to Kilkenny.

Search YouTube for a taste of most of the films on show ■

Christmas Competition

We have four excellent guidebooks to give away, courtesy of the publishers Collins Press. All four were reviewed in the last issue of the *Log* (No 99), on pages 48-49. To be in with a chance of winning one of these books, simply answer the following question: "There were three Collins Press walking guides and one tour guide reviewed in the last issue of the *Log*. Who wrote the tour guide?" Send your answer either by e-mail to info@mountaineering.ie or by post to: **Christmas Competition**, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Parkwest Business Park, Dublin 12. E-mails should have 'Christmas Competition' in the subject line. The response should include the answer, your name, address and a contact telephone number and your Mountaineering Ireland membership number. Entries must be received by 5:00pm on Friday, January 27th, 2012.



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In the Solu Khumbu

Bishopstown Hill Walkers go trekking in Nepal

Noel Power, group leader. Photo: Anne Hurley.

ANNE HURLEY

THIS WAS the thirteenth trip that Noel Power from Ballincollig had led to Nepal. In October this year, he headed off with nine of us from the Bishopstown Hill Walkers, a motley crew. Throw in a spring chicken, a few wannabe spring chickens and add the mildly chronologically challenged and you will have a picture of our group. Half of us didn't know one another before the trek, but three weeks together created a bond that we are glad to have formed.

First there was Kathmandu, rich in Hindu temples, perfumes and pongs, traffic chaos, frenetic commerce, Buddhist monasteries, the Dashain and Tihar festivals with exotic singing and dancing, the Bagmati river and attendant cremations, filth and potholes, courteous Nepalis, rickshaws, great slabs of meat for sale next door to pashmina shops, hens, goats, monkeys and the dogs, the dogs. Kathmandu is not a city for lovers of silence!

The trek proper began on Monday, 10 October, following a thrilling flight in a 17-seater plane to Lukla Airport (2800m),

home of the world's most challenging runway. The airport was renamed the Tenzing-Hillary Airport in January 2008 in honor of Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, the first climbers to reach the top of Everest in 1953. During the flight, we felt as though we were sitting with the pilot, managing his controls, and wondered if his small GPS screen was up to the job. All was well and we exited in one piece, breathing in the thinner air. We greeted our five porters, had a quick cup of coffee and set off!

What surprised and pleased me on day 1 was that a lot of the trek from Lukla to Benkar was in fact downhill towards the riverbed. We experienced the first of numerous shaky, wire-mesh bridges, seemingly just flung across the Dudh Kosi river, and became familiar with the best practice when teams of yaks were passing. These beasts of burden just plod stolidly on and it is wise not to stay on the exposed edge of the path when they are passing. I became quite adept at clinging to the mountainside at these times.

On day 3, in the Sherpa capital Namche Bazar, we took a day off to acclimatise to the altitude of 3400m.

Great, I thought, a bit of a rest, but acclimatising is work. On our 'rest' day, we hiked up 500m to a most informative museum relating to the Sherpa people. Then down again and up again to get our first clear view of Everest, Lhotse and Nuptse. Ama Dablam, which was closer to us and so looked higher, featured a lot in the photos taken.

I must mention the flowers. We admired the bell gentians, asters, dahlias and cotoneaster, and everywhere down the sides of the mountains were the flame-red leaves of poinsettia.

With each passing day on our uphill journey, we progressed through long-needed pine, rhododendron and juniper woodlands, across rocky mountainous terrain, picked our way through some landslides, marvelled at the waterfalls and were duly in awe of the turbulent whitewater in the river we were following.

How we coped

We adjusted to the more basic levels of accommodation as we got higher. The lodges are built of cut stone with thin plywood partitioning the rooms. The toilets are a story in themselves, hole-in-



The group on the summit of Gokyo Ri (5357m). Photo: Anne Hurley.

the-ground jobs that benefit from the use of a clothes peg and, ideally, wellingtons, when visiting them. The user enters at her or his own peril, supplies their own loo paper and exits at speed, only breathing then.

The one room with heating in these lodges is the dining area. A cylindrical-type tin stove is lit in the late afternoon, warms up the area efficiently and will invariably have one or two large kettles on the boil sitting on it. The fuels used are wood, kerosene and dried yak dung. The dung is collected on an ongoing basis, formed by bare hand into flat patties and pressed against the walls to dry out.

The food was quite satisfactory but the carnivores among us suffered. Dal bhat is the staple – rice, lots of it, with a lentil soup and some vegetables. The aficionados declared it quite tasty. Then there were the pizza fanatics, the garlic soup lovers, the vegetable fried rice options, the momos, which are steamed or fried stuffed dumplings, and finally the potatoes. Potatoes were offered boiled, fried, mashed or chipped, and always tasted like more.

The vegetables, which were grown in the nearby plots, were mainly onions, carrots, white turnips and cabbage. So, the Irish felt at home. However, we did miss fresh fruit and, two weeks into the trek, the conversation often lingered on the dream meal, the dream Cork restaurant and the grub we would devour when we got home again!

Night-time temperatures began to bite by day 6, when we got to Machermo (4410m). The water outside was frozen, the inside window panes were densely frosted and a good sleeping bag just wasn't enough. So, on with the extra layers of clothes, a hat and ear muffs, and the lined woolly socks. Noel ensured that we took another acclimatisation day here as high-altitude sickness is a distinct danger at this altitude for those who are not properly acclimatised. We passed

memorials to individuals who had sadly succumbed to altitude problems previously.

One has to be watchful, too, of the porters, especially if they come from the southern lowlands. Our guys were hardy chaps, took the weight in their stride, played card and board games, sang, drummed and danced, came with us on our optional afternoon excursions and gave the impression of hearty enjoyment.

Five o'clock on the morning of day 9



The Ngozumpa glacier. Photo: Anne Hurley.

saw us ready with our head torches, warm gear, Mars bars and lots of water for the final push. We had passed along the stunning azure Gokyo lakes the day before and now wanted to ascend Gokyo Ri, which is at about the same altitude as Everest Base Camp. The ice-coated boulders along the causeway were a challenge. I slipped a few times and, only for our guide, would have been quite wet indeed. The climb was hard and the thin air and pre-dawn cold didn't help. When the sun came up over the snowy peaks, the sudden deep warmth thawed our hands and feet. I could get at the Mars bar and plod on and up. 'Bistari, bistari,' as the Nepalis say, 'Slowly, slowly.'

Joy at the summit

There was great joy at the summit (17,575 ft, or 5357m). We were jubilant by any measure! All the greats – Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Makalu, Cho Oyu and Gyachung Kang – were majestically there to silence us in awe. Noel had brought

The Holly Bough along for one last photo before the race back to the base.

Having some spare days, we also side-stepped to Khumjung and Thame, Nepali villages on the traditional Tibetan trade routes. We may have waved to Tibet, but a question mark hangs over how close to the border we actually got.

A week or so later, we were back in Kathmandu again. It was the proverbial trip of a lifetime, packed with new experiences. 'yak, yak, yak' no longer solely implied a chatterbox. We saw the Sherpa children's intense concentration on their complex games with stones or bits of paper; marvelled at the skill of porters manoeuvring six or seven sheets of plywood up the steep slopes on the narrow trails; wondered why hefty rocks had to be portered, not airlifted; turned our prayer wheels, sending our hopes airborne with the prayer flags; breathed in the beauty and stored it for any dark days ahead. A constant highlight was Noel the Magician performing his disappearing red



Yaks. Photo: Anne Hurley.

handkerchief trick for the village children. For the record, we too are baffled. Where did that hanky go?

● *Bishopstown Hillwalking Club in Cork is a very active club offering graded walks every weekend and on Wednesday and Tuesday evenings during the summer months. The club also organises weekends away and trekking holidays* ■

Call to stop badger culling

Sign online petition and be in with a chance to win this oil painting

THE IRISH WILDLIFE TRUST (IWT) is calling on the Government to abandon its programme of badger culling, which was implemented as a way of controlling bovine TB in cattle.

In addition to infected cattle, badgers are thought to be the other main reservoir for bovine TB infection. It is thought that they can spread it to cattle through the scent marks they make on grass with their urine, which may be heavily infected.

The IWT claims that since 1984 approximately 115,000 badgers have been killed under licence from the Department of Agriculture, even though badgers are a protected species under the Wildlife Act. IWT research has revealed that, every night, up to 6,000 wire snares are set across Ireland by the 75 staff involved in the programme.

While badgers are known to carry bovine TB, there are other factors which may contribute to the spread of the disease, such as the movement of cattle from place to place. As the badger cull continues throughout the spring and summer months, lactating females are sometimes snared, leaving cubs to starve in the sett. To compound the problem, the conservation status of this most iconic of Irish animals is uncertain due to a lack of data on the health of the badger population.

The IWT has called on the Government to stop the culling immediately and invest in developing a TB vaccine for badgers instead. The Department of Agriculture has defended its badger removal programme, stating that it has contributed to an overall reduction in the incidence of TB in cattle in recent years. The Department insists the snares are humane but says that



Painting of badger family by Irish wildlife artist Morgan Gibbs.

nevertheless it is their intention to replace culling with a vaccination programme.

If you would like to support the IWT's campaign, visit www.iwt.ie, where there is an online petition and an opportunity to buy a raffle ticket for €5 to fund the campaign. Entering the raffle will give you a chance of winning a specially commissioned oil painting of a badger family from one of Ireland's top wildlife artists, Morgan Gibbs (see picture) ■

Dominic Burns

From a new generation of Irish competitive climbers

NEAL McQUAID

FOR ANYONE who has followed the trajectory of the Northern Ireland youth Climbing Team and their continued development and successes at both national and international level, Dominic Burns' name will need no introduction. For those who aren't aware, Dominic, aged 14, is now ranked 14th in the world in his age category, with most recently a 6th place finish at the **European Youth Cup for Bouldering** in Munich in September.

Following on from his recent European success, Dominic went on to compete at the **British Lead Climbing Championships** at Ratho climbing wall, Edinburgh, in mid-October. He finished 2nd in the Male youth B category and in the Male Junior Speed.

We thought we'd catch up with him for a brief interview.

(For more information, keep an eye on www.niyct.com and www.climbing.ie for the latest progress reports.)

Q Dominic, where are you based?

A Belfast.

Q At which club?

A Northern Ireland youth Climbing Team (NlyCT) and Irish Climbing Team.

Q How did you start climbing?

A I first went with my youth club in December of 2009. Then I started going on Mondays with Eddie, got Saturday lessons with the Ozone and went on Thursdays with my mum's friend. I joined the NlyCT around Easter 2010.

Q How long have you been climbing?

A Roughly two years.

Q How often do you climb or train?

A I train Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, then I do a session on Tuesdays in my house, usually consisting of finger boarding, pull-ups and half plank. On Thursdays I go to yoga at my friend's house. I'm usually away at the weekends, competing. So I have a pretty busy life trying to keep up with school and friends.

Q Favourite type of climbing?

A Bouldering, specifically in Fontainebleau.

Q Favourite memory of climbing?

A Climbing FFM Meuh, a 7c+ sport route, this Hallowe'en at St Leger in the south of France.

Q Who do you look up to in climbing?

A Eddie Cooper and Rob Hunter, because they are both amazing at climbing and have great views about the sport.

Q Where would you love to go climbing in the future?

A I'd love to go to Magic Wood in Switzerland and Ceuse in France because they both sound like amazing places to climb.

Q What do you aspire to in the future?

A I would love to be one of the top climbers in Europe or the



Dominic Burns competing at the European Youth Cup in Munich in September. He finished in 6th place.

world, and to open a lead and bouldering wall in Ireland.

Q Describe climbing in less than five words.

A Beautiful, gymnastic, strengthening and powerful.

Q Any other hobbies?

A Skateboarding, free-running and gaming.

Q Best result?

A 6th in a European bouldering round in Munich.

Q Best place you've ever been climbing?

A Either Cuvier or Buthiers in Fontainebleau, because they both have a wide variety of climbing and brilliant quality of rock.

Q Best training food for climbing?

A Bananas, pasta and water.

Q What is climbing all about to you?

A Climbing is my biggest passion in life and always comes first.

Q Who is your hero in climbing?

A Adam Ondra for being weirdly amazing; and Chris Sharma for his attitude towards climbing (I met Chris in Spain last Hallowe'en).

Q Favourite climbing area in Ireland?

A Fair Head (I haven't climbed much outside in Ireland yet).

• you can find lots of pictures on the NlyCT website: <http://niyct.com/>.

• Neal McQuaid is Talent Development Officer with Mountaineering Ireland ■



Icelandic odyssey

Of waterfalls, volcanoes and Irish monks

Frank Nugent explores Iceland's youthful terrain and its historic connections with Ireland.

Skógarfoss waterfall at the start of walk.
Photo: Frank Nugent.

I had flown over Iceland in 2004, en route to east Greenland on an expedition to the Lemon Mountains, and was impressed by its magnificent unspoilt and challenging landscape. I promised myself I'd revisit the country to walk over some of that exciting, colourful young landscape. Indeed, the landscape does not come any younger than that generated recently by the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull in 2009.

The ideal opportunity to walk there arose when Paddy Barry invited me to join his team on the yacht *Ar Shaughran* for part of the *Iomramh 2011* voyage, which was tracing the archaeological remains of Irish monks who lived at hermit sites along the coasts and islands of Scotland, the Faroe Islands and Iceland before the arrival of the Viking hordes.

I enlisted to join the crew for the Icelandic and homeward legs and planned additionally to arrive ten days before Paddy and his crew, to walk through some of Iceland's glaciated landscape. My son Ciarán volunteered to join me for this volcanic sojourn.

The walk we chose was the multi-day route from Skógar to Landmannalaugar. Skógar is very accessible by bus from Reykjavik on the island's ring road, which is

continuous around the coast of Iceland. The bus leaves the central bus station daily at 8:30am with a bus change at Hvolsvöllur and a ten-minute stop for photos at the notable Seljalandsfoss waterfall. The bus fare to Skógar was 9,000 Icelandic Kroner, or €54 approximately, and we arrived there before noon.

Skógarfoss waterfall

The walk starts up steps to the right of mighty Skógarfoss, a very impressive waterfall, the first of over twenty waterfalls which adorn the Skóga River, whose right bank you follow as it rushes violently downwards towards the sea. The scenery is so lovely you will not notice the continuous uphill nature of the climb.



The path stays high above the river when the river descends through dramatic gorges before you cross a ridge from where it flattens out at 600 metres and the river may be crossed safely at a bridge (4hrs). A way-marked road from here heads towards an A-shaped hut with a red-painted corrugated roof. The Sæluhús hut (943m) is a guardian-less wooden emergency hut with benches and chairs for cooking and some old dirty mattresses.

As it was still early June, the snow-covered terrain for about four kilometres up to the hut was covered with volcanic ash, which blackened the snow, which was soft in the evening light. However, a sharp breeze

over the snow demanded the putting on of windproof layers and gloves.

Being our first day out, carrying camping gear and food for six days, we decided to cook and stay overnight in this spectacular setting and to cross the pass in the morning. We had been up early in Reykjavik to catch the bus and it had taken us five hours of solid walking to this point with the wind now howling into our faces.

To our surprise we were to be alone, and outside it began to freeze very hard as the windchill took effect. It was close to -10°C , which was a shock to me, having brought my lightest sleeping bag. We slept on our sleeping mats inside the spacious wooden-floored hut. We cooked pasta and tuna

on our own stove and washed it down with tea and a shot of Jameson for a night cap.

Fimmvörðuháls Pass

In the morning, despite the continuous brightness of the midnight sun, the snow was frozen solid, which made the walking easier towards the summit of the Fimmvörðuháls Pass (1116m). Another hut to the left supports ski touring in summer.

The terrain was now mostly flat or downhill and the way was clearly marked with cairns and posts across snowfields although into a very strong cold wind from the north. Gradually, the terrain changed as we rounded a steaming volcanic ridge across a fault line, which descended from the smouldering summit of Eyafjallajökull just 5km to the west.

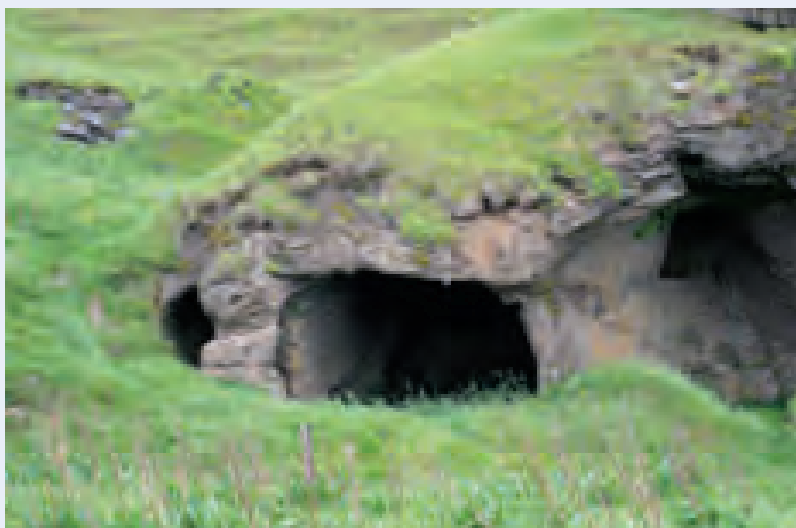
The route was freshly way-marked with bright orange poles, which weaved through undulated and crevassed layers of lava with smoking terracotta and white-coloured embers and black volcanic dust, which wafted a poisonous sulphuric smell up our frozen noses.

As we descended, we crossed layers of black dust which soon covered our clothes and shoes as we headed due north. A tricky little frozen snow arête which required respect led to the flat-topped Morinsheiði (834m) peak where we walked in places through pools of trapped water that floated on top of the frozen layers of melting snow.

We descended steeply left when we reached the small, plateau-topped end of the peak. Good tracks from here brought us down steep, grassy, water-eroded banks and ridges past stunted birch forests to a river where a newly repaired bridge led to a refuge at Basar Sæluhús. Here, we shared a bunkhouse with a group of international conservation volunteers who were making repairs to the walking route paths and bridges.

We stayed here one night, having been advised by the park staff against continuing the remainder of the Landmannalaugar trail, as many of the rivers were still unpassable and many of the supporting mountain huts were not yet opened. In any case, the bus service at the trail end would not come into operation for a fortnight, as the winter-damaged dirt roads were not yet passable for public transport.

Ciarán Nugent passing one of the many waterfalls on the Skoga River. Photo: Frank Nugent.



Caves formed in volcanic rock at Saljaland, southwest Iceland, thought to have been inhabited by Irish monks circa 800-900 AD. Photo: Frank Nugent.



Backpacking past a smouldering volcanic faultline near Eyafjallajökull. Photo: Frank Nugent.

Skafafell National Park

The warden kindly arranged a lift out for us to Hvolsvöllur, from where the next day we continued east on the ring road to Skafafell National Park. The specially sprung bus drove us down the Markarfljót river flats, through which had been carried the floods from the melted glacial ice when Eyafjallajökull erupted in 2009, washing away one of Iceland's most beautiful glacial lagoons.

In the park, we camped and completed several one-day walks within its environs of glaciers and mountains. On one of these walks we viewed the Svartifoss waterfall, which falls down over hanging basalt columns, giving it a remarkable organ-pipe effect.

Ciarán's short time being up, we returned to Reykjavik to view that fine Viking city. On my return eastwards on the now familiar ring road, I made a plan to climb Hvannadalshnukur (2119m) via its glacier route. However, my plan was aborted when rain pelted down on my tent at 5:00am and continued till mid-day with the black clouds remaining low

over the mountains. With no prospects of improved weather, I continued my bus trip eastwards around the coastal edge of the dramatic wild mountain landscape, not unlike Mweelrea and the Sheefrys, to Hofn and then to Djúpivogur.

Ar Shaughran arrived in Djúpivogur late on June 14th. The crew arriving from the Faroes comprised a Gaelic poet, a professor of Early Christian history, a celebrated box player, a local history archivist and the remarkable skipper of *Ar Shaughran*, Paddy Barry. Not surprisingly, the red carpet was laid out for such a cultured group when the town council welcomed us officially next day at the museum building.

We were then collected by two cars and brought back west along the ring road to Hali to stay at the Thorberger Interpretive Centre where we were joined by an Icelandic expert in Early Christian history. We stopped on the way to look at a number of Papar (Irish hermit monk) sites.

After a pleasant meal, Brendan Begley, Paddy and I, aided by a liberal supply of red wine, had a memorable evening playing and singing in our best tradition to the centre's guests.

Next day, June 17th, was Iceland's national day, a commemoration of their independence from Denmark. We helped celebrate it with a conference on the theme of evidence of the Irish monks in Iceland. Paddy Barry gave a verbal presentation, which described his personal experiences of meeting the Arctic peoples of Greenland, Siberia and Canada.

Jonathon Wooding, a professor from the University of Wales, told us about the Irish manuscript evidence including Dicuil (825 AD), who recorded voyages to the Faroes (c730), Iceland (c795) and St Murru (800-900 AD). It seems these Irish hermits and anchorites were looking for a paradise on Earth.

Wooding also told us about the Viking Book of Settlements in which are recorded Papar place-names after 1127. The purpose of our journey was to explore these known Papar places to look for any physical evidence. Adjacent to the centre, we were brought to visit a number of such sites recently located by the landowner following documentary evidence of their existence. It appears that the Irish monks lived peacefully in Iceland for a period of a little more than one hundred years, until the arrival of the 'heathen' Norsemen.

Island of Heimæy

The following day, we sailed from Djúpivogur to the Island of Heimæy in the Westmen Isles. 'Westmen' refers to the men from the west, the Irish monks who lived there before the Norsemen came. It was 144 miles or two days' sailing away. Here we found a Papar cross carved high on a cliff face and viewed an archaeological site of an early farm, dated 650 AD, thought likely to have been inhabited by Irish monks.

The day after that, we visited the mainland by ferry and were brought by car to Saljaland to visit two caves thought to have been hewn out of the volcanic rock for shelter by Irish monks. The walls of one had many crosses similar to the one carved on the cliff in Heimæy. The cave looked out over the sea and had a stream and well adjacent to its door which is a feature of all such anchorite settlements.

We were impressed not only by the site but by the friendliness and hospitality of the farmer on whose



land the site stands. A local TV station's filmmaker recorded our visit and Danny Sheedy, our poet from Ballyferriter at the foot of Mount Brandon, read an appropriate reading and said a couple of paidirs to mark the occasion.

Heimæy itself was the scene of a prolonged volcanic eruption in 1973 which destroyed a third of the island's homes and tripled the island's landmass. I went for a walk to Eldfjell (205m), the highest point of the volcano, with Donal De Barra, our archivist, who digitally recorded our visits to all the Papar sites. Eldfjell was still smoking and one only had to scratch down a bit to find embers hot enough to toast your sandwich. There are many other short interesting walks on the island.

Our next destination was to be St Kilda in the Outer Hebrides. However, unfavourable winds and weather forced us to make instead for Stornaway on the Isle of Harris for shelter. We then went on to Lochmaddy on North Uist and Lochboisdale on South Uist, where we walked to the remains of a hermit site on the locally named Papay Island. We were invited to an oíche cheoil at the home of a local teacher, where local Gallic singers and the Armagh piper Brian Vallely and his wife joined us in a night of Irish and Gallic music. An annual musical festival was scheduled to start with a céilidh the next day.

Weather dictated our movements as we sailed home next morning via Tory Island, stopping just long enough to

walk the length of the island to its ancient ramparts. Then, to race ahead of unfavourable winds, we motored to Inishbofin island for a couple of days' rest before finally going to anchor at Mannin Bay near Clifden.

During my watch, we rounded Achill Head at six o'clock in the morning, where I beheld in one single head-turn many of the jewels of Ireland's west coast – the cliffs of Achill, the Nephin Bogs, Clare Island, Croagh Patrick, Mweelrea, Ben Gorm, Na Beanna Beola and Inishshark and Inishbofin islands. I felt deeply privileged to experience such visibility from the sea of so many places I have walked while looking out from the mountains towards the sea. I fancied for a moment that this was a sea view familiar to Granuaile when she reigned as queen over these waters. Eat your heart out, Paul Henry!

Go raibh maith agaibh, Paddy Barry

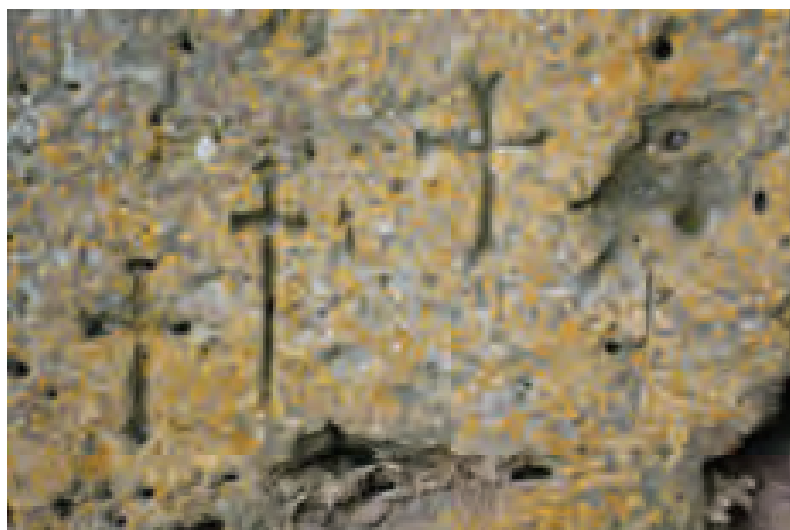
and crew, for such a culturally rich experience. I will go back to Iceland very soon, ensuring that next time it will be well into July before I start out on my excursions through its wonderful volcanoes, rivers and ice ■

Frank Nugent is an experienced Irish Alpinist who was deputy leader of the successful first Irish ascent of Everest in 1993, joint leader of the South Arís Irish Antarctic Adventure in 1997 and a crew member of *Northabout* on the first Irish navigation of the Northwest Passage in 2001. He is a former chairman of MCI 1997-2000 and author of *Seek the Frozen Lands: Irish Polar Explorers 1740-1922*. He is a founding member and current chairman of the Irish Uplands Forum.

Trekking Maps

Landmannalauger – Þórsmörk – Fjallabak 1:50,000 No 4.

Looking back towards Morinsheioi (834m). Photo: Frank Nugent.



A number of crosses typical of those carved by Irish monks at Iona, on the walls of the Saljaland caves. Photo: Frank Nugent.

Benwee Head

New route on Mayo headland

Brian Seery

Defining Mayo's Benwee Head is a bit of a challenge, judging from the logged routes on the climbing.ie database. It is already split into east and west sections and we were heading for somewhere in between. Our location on the Head was an impressive 180m cliff face which rises straight out of the Atlantic.

Route details

Name: "The Misadventures of the Nocturnal Seal."

Location: Benwee Head, Ross Port, Co Mayo.

Date: 15 September 2011.

Climbers: Brian Seery and Hugh Hennessy.

Description: The route is 220m long and was climbed on sight at a grade of EI (4a, 4c, 5a, 5a, 4c).

Ominously, the area is known locally as An Priosún because of a shipwreck that occurred there which claimed the lives of all of the crew. They could not escape because the cliff was too steep on all sides.

The cliff in question has a lovely, continuously steep face on the left-hand side as you look across from the car park. We were told about the cliff by Stephen Gallwey and decided to check it out. To our knowledge, the cliff had never been climbed before.

The approach was convenient. A fifteen-minute walk from where you can park the car beside an horrendous sculpture, which has turned into a shelter for sheep, sees you at the top. On the walk around you cannot but admire the wildness of the area. Turf is still cut by hand and the sheep live dangerously close to the cliff edge. The usual seagulls are in abundance and the odd seal can be observed popping its head out of the water.

Unfortunately, to my climbing partner Hugh Hennessy and I, it appeared we had chosen the wrong week to come to Mayo. In mid-September this year, the tail-end of Hurricane Katia was still battering the west coast, causing big seas, gale-force winds and lots of rain. Even the local seal population had felt the brunt of the storm, with us finding one washed up injured on nearby Portacloy beach.

When we arrived on the first day the wind was unrelenting, so we spent our time drinking coffee and looking at the cliff through binoculars, trying to pick obvious features. We wondered what angle things were at and, most importantly, tried to pick a line of weakness that might go quickly, if we were to get a break in the weather.

The next day, the weather improved, the winds subsided but the rain remained. Mid-afternoon, just for something to do, we headed over to the cliff-top. We stuck in an abseil stake and threw the rope down to make sure we had enough to reach the bottom and find the line of abseil if the weather improved. Hugh went over the side and had a quick look. He reappeared a few minutes later looking like a kid in a sweet shop!

Our excitement levels were now high; we both really wanted to climb the cliff. A low mist remained for the evening and with the continuing passing showers falling we were growing quite apprehensive. The forecast for the next day was for a clear spell but with heavy rain due to arrive



the following evening. We really didn't want to get stuck on the face in that.

The following morning dawned and it was raining. Luckily by 10:30 the sun was shining and the wind had died down to a mild breeze. If we were going to get a route done on the cliff, we had our window. Part of me didn't want to think about the task ahead. I've climbed big routes before and I've also escaped off big routes before, but always in the mountains; never anything quite so steep, committing and imposing. I couldn't get the thought of the impending 180m abseil out of my head and also the possibility that we might have to jumar the whole way back to the top if the weather turned or if something went wrong. After a quick breakfast of coffee, bread

and some questionable-looking tinned soup, we headed over to the cliff.

Hugh went over the edge first and a while later I followed. Suddenly my fears about the abseil melted away. It was great! The sun was shining and the rock looked amazing! All I could think was that our time with the binoculars had been wasted; the small features we had spied were huge! I will say now that learning how to cross a knot in a rope on abseil is a skill well worth learning and practicing in the safety of your home four feet off the ground. Two nervous knot crossings later (it was the first time I had ever done it) I joined Hugh at the bottom. Due to an overhang on the left, we decided to start on the right-hand side with the aim of taking

The start of the fourth pitch.
Photo: Hugh Hennessy.

Far left:
Benwee Head
showing the route
climbed.
Photo: Hugh
Hennessy.



The end of the traverse pitch.
Photo: Hugh Hennessy.

a gradual line trending leftwards, linking back to near where our abseil rope was hanging down the face. The lower pitches looked like they would be easy enough and we would be back beside our lifeline in no time. This, of course, didn't happen!

The line of weakness allowed us to go straight up from where we started. Arriving at the second belay about 100m up, we still weren't heading left towards the rope at all. The weather looked to be changing and everything around me looked pretty difficult. A quick chat with Hugh revealed that he was thinking that a big traverse of the face via the obvious lower groove was in order. It was my turn to lead and from my position on the belay I couldn't see the groove. I wasn't keen to lead on the ground that I could see and, since Hugh is the better climber and seemed confident, I suggested a switch of positions. He was happy to take the lead again. It was preying on my mind how far across the face our abseil rope was and the fact that the weather was due to change sometime soon. We could only hope it didn't change while we were on the traverse.

It is worth mentioning at this point that 60m double ropes would be quite useful, if you have them. We

had a 55m single rope and were facing four abseils to get back down if the weather changed!

Five minutes later, with the switch over done and the rope re-flaked, Hugh was ready to head off. I leaned out off the belay to get comfortable (it was impossible) and staring me in the face was the groove he had been on about! If I'm honest, I was still glad he was embarking on the traverse. As it turned out, the traverse was quite possibly one of the finest pitches I have ever climbed on. Good hand-holds, small foot-holds and fairly well protected 100m up the face with a straight fall into the crashing Atlantic below. It is definitely one of the most exhilarating pitches you'll find anywhere and, being a traverse, it provides fun for both the leader and second.

Thankfully, by the end of the traverse pitch the abseil rope was within grasping distance, if required, and I was feeling a lot happier and confident again. Gear exchange done, I headed off up the next pitch, taking a curving leftward line to below an obvious roof, the topmost of a series of three.

A little way up, a hold snapped off in my hand and my re-discovered

confidence vacated me. I then insisted on asking Hugh if I should build a belay every time I moved 5m further. He urged me on, reminding me that I needed to leave him within 50m of the top to get off in one pitch. Despite my reluctant climbing style, I eventually arrived at a good spot to belay close enough to the top to leave one pitch of climbing. The cliff had given us another memorable pitch.

Despite all my worrying about what could go wrong, it never occurred to me that we might run out of daylight. Fortunately, Hugh had learned from a previous experience and had put a head torch in his pocket that morning. With the light fading rapidly, he quickly headed off up the final pitch, finishing in the darkness. I had enough time at the belay to kick myself for not considering that we might be still out in the dark; that plus the fact that I had not one but two head torches sitting in the van!

By now, complete darkness had fallen and I could no longer make out the gear in the belay a few feet away. The wind was beginning to pick up as I scabbled my way up the final pitch, groping blindly at gear placements to remove them. The last section of wall felt great to climb, even in the dark. It had brilliant horizontal breaks and some spots of steeper climbing. We were both at the top at around 21:00, meaning it had taken us about seven hours to complete the ascent. Just after we had hauled up, coiled and packed away the 200m of rope that we had used for the abseil, the rain arrived.

We were exceptionally lucky with the weather on the day and it was a privilege to climb such a fantastic new route. We decided to call the route "The Misadventures of the Nocturnal Seal," as a tribute to our friend – the one we had found on Portacloy beach – and the fact that we finished at night.

The route is 220m and goes at around E1 due to the commitment involved, with the pitches probably being 4a (50m), 4c (50m), 5a (40m), 5a (40m) and 4c (40m).

It was great to find such brilliant climbing at such a reasonable grade. The route is a great adventure and well worth a go ■

Brian Seery is a member of UCD Mountaineering Club and has been climbing for nearly five years. His favourite crag is Fair Head.

Mike Thomas nears the end
of the Traverse of the Gods.
Photo: Paddy Cave.

NORTH FACE

Earlier this year, Paddy Cave and his climbing partner Mike Thomas attempted to climb the Heckmair Route on the North Face of the Eiger. Here he reports on their climb and the impressive feel of its history that they got.

It was about 4:00am on April 16th when my partner and I started up the Heckmair Route on the North Face of the Eiger. I was climbing with Mike Thomas, a friend from the Lakes who I had climbed with many times before in the Lakes and Scotland. We had also climbed together in the Alps and in the Himalayas.



The body of Toni Kurz hangs suspended in mid-air on the Eiger in the historic tragedy of July 1936, when a total of four climbers lost their lives.

As a result of TV documentaries and many books on the subject, we probably knew more about the climbs on the Eiger than any other that we'd not actually climbed. The history of the mountain and the many great stories of climbs on its North Face were part of what drew us to it as the biggest and most notorious north face in the Alps.

The Eiger (3970m, 13025ft) is situated in Switzerland in the Bernese Alps. It is not clear how the Eiger got its name, which translates as 'Ogre.' It is the easternmost peak of a ridge that extends across the Mönch ('Monk') to the Jungfrau ('Virgin,' 4158m). The first ascent was made by **Charles Barrington**, an Irishman, who climbed the West Flank in August 1858, accompanied by two Swiss guides.

Climbing steadily but slowed by snow that had fallen a few days earlier, we gradually gained height. We worked our way towards the large rock wall of the Rote Flüh. Somewhere below it was the first real feature of the route, the **Difficult Crack**. A couple of slightly harder traverses brought us to the bottom of the Crack, and for the first time we

knew we were in the right spot. It seemed obvious, through binoculars from below, where it would be, but that didn't allow for the huge scale of the rock bands. The Wet Cave Bivouac can also act as a point of reference on the lower part of the face but it is often snowed in, as it was when we were there.

Historic tragedy

After climbing the Difficult Crack (V/6), we moved towards what must be one of the most famous pitches in the world, the **Hinterstoisser Traverse**. This was where one of the most tragic of the Eiger dramas unfolded. On July 18th, 1936, four climbers started out to attempt to make the first ascent on the unclimbed North Face. With the telescopes of Kleine Scheidegg fixed on them, they moved quickly and convincingly, making good progress up the lower part of the face. It was on the first icefield that things started to go wrong when one of the four was hit by a rock. They continued on but at the third icefield made the decision to retreat. They now had to reverse the massive traverse across the second ice field and then climb down the Ice Hose just to get back to where the rock had injured one of their party. This they did successfully but then a second blow struck.

One member of the team was Andreas Hinterstoisser, one of the leading European rock climbers of the era. On the way up, he had expertly led a desperate unprotected traverse across a key section of slabs connecting the line of retreat back to the Difficult Crack pitch. He had used a technique known as tension traversing to cross the slabs. He had placed a piton high above them and doubled a rope through it. Using this, he had partially swung and partially climbed across the slabs. Once across, he belayed and brought the others over safely.

Fatal error

It was at this point that the team made a fatal error when they pulled the doubled rope out of the piton, thus cutting off their line of retreat. They planned on going up, not down.

A series of misadventures then took place as the four attempted to retreat directly down overhanging rock. An avalanche hit them, dragging them off the ledge they were on. Areal, who had temporarily untied, was swept away and the others were left hanging there. One was suffocated by the rope and another died due to the injuries he sustained during the fall. Only one of them, Toni Kurz, survived.

A railway sector-guard had already made contact with the four prior to the avalanche via the Stollenjoch, a tunnel window which opens onto the North Wall. He had shouted to them and they had replied that all was well, despite what was happening. The guard had gone to put the tea on for the climbers for when they made it to the window, two extremes within shouting distance of each other. In fact, the Eigerwand station is not far beyond the tunnel. It has windows looking out onto the Face where tourists can almost touch it, whilst wrapped up warmly and drinking hot tea, an inch of glass separating them from its reality.

The sector-guard returned but this time he got no reply and then he heard Toni shouting, "Help, all the others are dead."

The alarm went out and guides from Wengen arrived to try and rescue Toni. He could not be reached and, having got a karabiner jammed against a knot in the rope, he was left hanging in space only metres from the rescue party. Bad weather kept the rescue party off the Face for the night. They managed to get out of the tunnel window the following day to find a badly frostbitten Toni just hanging onto life. Shortly after that he slipped away, saying "I'm finished."

“Despite its name, Death Bivouac is probably the best place to overnight on the Heckmair route. Sitting with my legs hanging over the edge, it felt surreal.”



Another tragedy

As we moved across what is now known as the **Hinterstoisser Traverse**, it was hard not to feel the history of the place and the presence of the climbers who had struggled to survive there. We had the benefit of an *in situ* rope, which now hangs across the pitch, easing its passage in ascent and retreat. Whilst moving across the traverse, you can spot the odd old peg above, any one of which could be the peg used for the original tension traverse, a quiet reminder that, despite our moving well, things can change fairly rapidly.

Moving onto the first icefield, you quickly gain height to above the huge rock wall of the Rote Flüh. Another key ice pitch known as the **Ice Hose** (IV/4) allows access to the second icefield. The ice was good and gave what must be one of the best positioned pitches of the grade I've been on. Crossing the second icefield involves traversing leftwards for a few hundred metres to a steep step known as the **Flat Iron**. Soon after this is the

Death Bivouac. Despite its name, earned in reference to the outcome of another Eiger epic, it is probably the best place to bivouac on the Heckmair route.

Death Bivouac

The Death Bivouac ledge was the spot where the body of one of the first pair of climbers to make a serious attempt at the first ascent of the face in 1935 was last spotted. The two were Sedlmayer and Mehringer. The pair had vanished from the gaze of the telescopes into the cloud. After days of severely cold and bad weather, the Face cleared but the pair did not emerge. Only pitons were later found on the ledge, marking their high point. However, an adventurous pilot called Udet had earlier flown close enough to the Face to see a single body on the ledge at the time.

Sitting at Death Bivouac, with my legs hanging off the ledge and holding the Jetboil stove to try and warm the gas canister, it felt surreal. This was not just because we were on a ledge halfway up the Eiger or because I'd

read so much about this ledge, but also because it was hard to imagine the struggle for life that had taken place where we sat.

We had climbed all day in great weather, slowed only by having to break trail through the areas of freshly accumulated snow, and now we were just about to be consumed by a rising temperature inversion. Despite losing visibility, the weather was not at all threatening. The inversion was a daily occurrence and everything felt calm. A texted weather update backed up our confidence in the high pressure that had a firm grip on most of Europe. Things have really changed. Not only could we get an accurate forecast before the climb, but we could get an update while on the Face. Sedlmayer and Mehringer must have sat here wondering when the weather would ease and if it would ease in time to let them off the Face.

The rope paid out around the corner as Mike led off across the third icefield towards the **Ramp**. A quick switch and I was leading. Mike moved when the rope came tight and soon we were at the top of the Ramp. Here

Mike Thomas on the Traverse of the Gods.
Photo: Paddy Cave.



Paddy Cave starting the Hinterstoisser Traverse.
Photo: Mike Thomas.

we encountered a couple of more tricky pitches. First the **Waterfall Chimney** and then the **Ice Bulge**. A short traverse led us into the Waterfall Chimney. We had come slightly high and had to climb down to the start of the Chimney.

Mayer accident

Looking down, I remembered the story of Adolf Mayer, a young Austrian climber who attempted the first solo of the face in 1961. He was closely watched as he moved with confidence up the route. He bivied at Death Bivouac before moving up the Ramp.

The spectators had noticed a change in the climber as he moved on what was his second day on the face, and it was at that point, where we were now, on the traverse to the Waterfall Chimney, that he had made a mistake and fallen almost 4000 feet.

The spot became known as the **Silver Trench**. However, this could only be seen by those in the other world below us, as it was named after the way the late afternoon sun highlighted the ice on the traverse, although to the climber it did not stand out as a feature of the face whilst climbing it.

The **Waterfall Chimney** (VI/6) gave a steep pitch followed by the problematic **Ice Bulge**. We used a slight tension on this after realising the bulge itself was going to be tricky and the wall to its left was featureless. I do remember the Welsh soloist Eric Jones talking about 'marble-smooth'

rock on this pitch.

Then it was on to another key pitch, the **Brittle Ledges**. This rubble-strewn traverse is technically easy but as it is without a single trustworthy hold, it is the key to the upper face.

The exposure increases as you move across to the **Brittle Crack** (VI/6), where the rock dramatically improves and offers gear and good holds just in the nick of time.

Pulling around the top of this pitch with some wild exposure, you land onto the famous **Traverse of the Gods** and, in the words of the speed soloist Ueli Steck, 'Now you're really into it!' Indeed, it feels at this stage that the way out is up. Retreating from here downwards would be a bit epic.

The traverse brings you back onto the open Face and really lets you appreciate the full drama of that massive amphitheatre of rock and ice. Looking across the Face westwards gives a great view of the **Geneva Pillar**. The big detached monolith hanging out from the top is easy to pick out. This is where base jumpers exit from.

Traverse of the Gods

The **Traverse of the Gods** (III) is not technically that hard but it was almost certainly one of the most serious pitches on the route under the conditions we climbed it in. Our only experience of rock-fall took place here. Mike shouted to me 'I'll start moving. There's some rock coming

down.' He took two steps and 'thud,' a limestone cannonball smashed the steps in the snow beside him. The exposure goes through the roof the further along the pitch you climb, and the gear gets worse. The rock is not really helpful or positive. However, it was definitely a no-fall zone, as the protection was poor and we were down to one very old peg and a shallow cam placed on two units, only half in contact with rock.

Drinking water off some running ice was very refreshing to my dehydrated mouth. However, in my head I was analysing what the less than freezing conditions might mean, as I took my first swing at the ice slopes of the **White Spider**.

The White Spider was made famous by Heinrich Harrer's book of the same name in which he described the first successful ascent of the Eiger's North Face in July 1938. In fact, it was very kind to us. A ceasefire seemed to be in place and the infamous rock bombardment never came. In fact, it was a very relaxing place really, the only area of less steep terrain in the upper face and drawing us on to its upper edge. In bad weather it would be another matter, though; a funnel for rocks and avalanches with a massive drop off its lower edge.

Indeed, this had been the scene of many more dramas. I had a memory of climbing warm rock on the West Face of the Naranjo de Bulnes in the Picos (in Asturias, Spain) at this point. The memory was due to the climbers who had found the first route up the massive wall of the Naranjo, two Spaniards who must have been at the top of their game when putting up the intricate Rabada-Navarro Route. Their success there no doubt spurred them on to attempt the Eiger the very next year. After four nights on the Face in terrible weather, the two were overcome by exposure and died somewhere in the Spider.

It was hard to imagine this tragedy as we moved up the blunt crest in the Spider's centre. Everything was quiet and it really seemed as though the Eiger was in a good mood. The Spider was a place with an atmosphere, a hanging snow-field suspended amongst steep walls. It would be a wild place to be at the wrong time as everything coming down the upper part of the North Face would funnel through that 30m gap before taking off into space.

Quartz Crack

We moved up to the **Quartz Crack** (VI/6?). The evening sun's red glow had faded and, moving up the gully system from the top of the Spider, we climbed quickly into the dark. Now the only view was the small pool of white light put out by our torches. As always, climbing by torch was very relaxing and we moved along, only considering the next few feet.

The Quartz Crack is a hard bit of climbing. It is easier without a rucksack as you can squeeze into the back of it. In reality, if it were in Scotland and didn't have the odd bit of tat to pull on, it might come in at about VI/7. We had climbed Stirling Bomber (V/7) during the winter and thought that it was much like that in character, except harder and bolder, especially if you were not carrying big gear or the crack was icy.

A traverse took us across to the **Corti Bivouac**, the way marked by old bits of fixed line. We decided to make a stop here rather than push on for the top, a good choice in retrospect as there were still a couple of intricate pitches to climb, the **Exit Chimneys**. After a quick hack at the snow on the **Bivouac Ledge**, we realised it was going to be a cramped and sloping sleep, so we clipped into the two bolts behind and, with everything else clipped in, got some sleep.

The sloping snow ledge, which had narrowed due to snow being cut away to melt for drinking water, combined with the bivouac bag, meant we were effectively hanging in harnesses throughout the night. Waking up with numb legs, we had an amazing panoramic view for breakfast. A quick drink and we set off.

Exit Chimneys

The **Exit Chimneys** gave some climbing with fairly long run-outs and some tricky bridging low down. Pulling out of this left only the exit slopes, where all the fresh snow had now burnt off. Some fairly hard but easy angled ice led to the summit ridge.

Pulling onto the **summit ridge** and looking down the South Face was a great moment. For the first time, it hit me: we had just climbed the North Face of the Eiger! It was surreal being able to relate everything we had seen

to the countless stories we had read. Also, it was clear that we had been incredibly lucky with the weather.

A final short section of narrow snow crest took us to the summit. Looking around, all the high peaks of the area stood out, bright white against the cobalt blue sky. The neighbouring peaks of the Mönch and the Jungfrau looked great, though for sure it was the Eiger's summit that I wanted to be standing on.

Full snow cover on the Western Flank made the descent a fast 1½-hour glissade to the Eigerletscher station.

Returning home and seeing the panoramic photo of the Eiger on the wall was a really satisfying moment. It had been an Alpine trip where

everything seemed to come together: no weather-dodging or Plan B; no warm-up routes. Just one focus, to climb the Face. Job done! ■

Paddy Cave is a freelance Mountain Instructor from Newtownards, Co Down. He lives in the English Lake District and is interested in all aspects of climbing, mountaineering and the outdoor environment. He now runs Mountain Circles, working as a mountain guide.

On the Exit Slopes.
Photo:
Paddy Cave.





Breaking new ground

Irish/British Singekang Exploratory Expedition

Sandra Kennedy joins Alan Tees's team for a bid on Singekang (6008m) in Spiti, India.

Alan Tees, Sandra Kennedy, George Carleton and Martin Bonar at the summit of Snacht Kang (5500m).
Photo: Sandra Kennedy collection.

Participating in a mountaineering trip to the Himalayas was a long-held ambition of mine. As chance would have it, Alan Tees (President of Mountaineering Ireland and Expedition Leader) was pulling a team together for what became known as the Irish/British Singekang Exploratory Expedition.

Typical of Alan's inclusive style, this wasn't by select invitation but was open to his mountaineering friends and acquaintances who fancied an exciting mountaineering challenge and an opportunity to live the dream.

The assembled team comprised Alan

and myself, George Carleton, Martin Bonar, Dr Jeremy Edwards (UK) and Andrew Tees. The objective of the expedition was to penetrate the unexplored Singekang valley in Spiti, India, and permission was obtained to make an attempt on **Singekang (Lion Peak, 6008m)**, an unclimbed mountain situated at the head of the valley. The expedition would be facilitated by **Adventuremania** headed by Anindya Mukherjee (aka Raja), Thendup Sherpa and a small team of porters and cooks.

Surprisingly, the first hurdle of our trip was the difficulty that some of the team members experienced in obtaining the required visas. One member of the team, through no fault of his own, only secured his visa the day before the flight to Delhi – talk about living on the edge!

After spending a few days in Delhi, we travelled for 16 hours on an overnight bus to Manali, experiencing all the wondrous sights of Indian road travel on the way – overtaking elephants being one of them for me.

After a night in Manali, we drove by jeep through the Rohtang La (3978m),

a mountain pass notorious for its snowfalls, traffic jams, landslides and frighteningly narrow width in places.

At the pass, we were caught for hours in a massive traffic jam as we watched a few truck drivers attempting to unfreeze their fuel lines and tanks by lighting fires underneath them. An almost carnival atmosphere prevailed amongst those who came out for a look, with smiling ladies in their colourful saris walking in the snow and a makeshift tent doing a roaring trade in teas, eggs and chapattis. Eventually, the fires did the trick and we were able to continue on our way to Kaza.

Acclimatising

The group spent two days acclimatising in Kaza while Raja sorted out the logistics for the final stage of the road journey. The climax of our time in Kaza was a visit to the Ki Tibetan Buddhist monastery and, in the morning before we left, the team was privileged to take part in a puja at the new Kaza monastery, where we received a blessing from the Lama for

our expedition.

Our journey continued east in the **Himachal Pradesh** region towards Poh, crossing the Spiti River to Pomrang where arrangements had been made with a kind and friendly local family who allowed us to establish our campsite in their back garden.

Trekking in to Base Camp

Next day, carrying heavy backpacks, we followed the remnants of an old trail up the river valley, negotiating three difficult river crossings on the way to establish our Base Camp. I had to applaud the ingenuity of Thendup and his team when I saw the makeshift bridges they had built to enable our safe and dry passage over the fast-flowing sections of the freezing rivers. After three journeys up and down, lugging our backpacks, we were finally able to move up to our Base Camp.

Advanced Base Camp

Beyond the Base Camp was unknown territory. After various sorties to establish the route ahead, we followed Thendup's route up a steep, loose gully to bring us onto more level thorny ground and then followed open land and steep scree slopes towards Advanced Base Camp at 4200m.

The landscape was mostly arid and shale-covered. However, the sheer majesty and scale of the surrounding mountains was simply breathtaking and provided a beautiful distraction from the heavy pack-lugging, as we also followed this route up and down three times before we were finally able to establish our Advanced Base Camp.

We fell into a daily routine as we hiked up and down the route to establish the camps. The day started at 6:00am with morning tea, breakfast at 7:00am, and the pack-lugging to the next camp started at around 8:00am.

We set off at different paces, some moving fast, others more slowly, though most of the time we were usually within eyesight of each other, if not walking together in pairs. Packed lunches were consumed when we reached the next camp, before returning again to a welcome cup of hot diluted orange from the porters. In the afternoon, the temperatures

usually plummeted at 3:00pm when the sun left the valley and there was the dash to put on down jackets and light a fire, when wood was available. Dinner was at 7:00pm and we all looked forward to this, given that the cook, Indra, was quite simply a genius in his makeshift kitchen, preparing the most tasty and wholesome dinners.

The next stage of the route to our High Camp at 4800m was dubbed 'The Gorge from Hell' – 4-5 hours of purgatory carrying a heavy backpack over rocks or wet scree. I regarded this as my Sisyphus moment and tried hard not to think that tomorrow I would have to do it all again.

High Camp

After a rest day at High Camp, our big peak day was upon us. With crampons on, we set off by torchlight at 3:00am following the Sherpas towards our objective, **Singekang Peak**. The temperatures were brutally cold and I had some anxious moments as I began to wonder whether I had the endurance to keep putting one foot in front of the other as we ascended the snow slopes in the dark. The arrival of daylight was most welcome and seemed to reinvigorate me.

From High Camp we made a long traverse south around Singekang's subsidiary north-western peak, before turning sharply east into a sheltered snowy bowl. Ahead lay a steep and rather intimidating slope covered in loose scree. While Jeremy, George and Andrew followed on the heels of the Sherpas, Alan and I followed behind, ascending the steep scree section on a fixed rope to reach a **col at 5400m**.

On looking at the obstacles on the route ahead – steep snow slopes and gendarmed, corniced ridges – and given our state of acclimatisation, both Alan and I decided that our summit attempt would stop there.

We were content to laze in the sun for the first time that day. Personally, I found the last section of the scree slope physically very tiring and I was struggling to keep moving at a suitable pace.

Fair play to the three lads, though, as they carried on until eventually they abseiled off at around **5600m**, when their progress was halted by unconsolidated snow, low temperatures and steep ice towers.

Highs and lows

Returning to the High Camp, I was disappointed that we hadn't reached the peak. However, once the aches and tiredness of the day had gone, I

Singekang, in the middle of the picture. Taken from Snacht Kang. Photo: Sandra Kennedy





Sandra Kennedy on the way to High Camp for the Snacht Kang peak, with Manirang in the distance.

Photo: Alan Tees.

was able to look at the bigger picture and acknowledge to myself the tremendous sense of achievement that I felt. The team had elected to climb a peak via a valley that no-one else had been through, and being the first mountaineers to explore this remote Spiti valley was one of the main attractions for us.

The unknown factors – what to expect with the terrain, the choice of the routes to follow and the obstacles that we would face on the way – all led to an enormously exciting challenge for us.

On a personal level, I have to admit that I did harbour a concern as to whether I would have the physical

and mental endurance to hold my own within this group of men. I needn't have worried, though, and thankfully our group operated as a team. Being the sole female in the group became irrelevant, although I did on occasions miss the banter of the lassies I climb with.

A summit success

After a day's rest at Advanced Base Camp, the team was keen to attempt another peak near ABC. With Thendup Sherpa leading the way, we established another High Camp at 4800m on a snow platform. The next day, we successfully summited on a peak which we named **Snacht Kang**

(5500m).

The route was interesting, with several traverses to avoid obstacles and one fixed rope to climb a short steep gully. We traversed around a corner to the final spur, which looked easy but actually turned out to be hard work as we waded through deep snow-drifts which collapsed underfoot. At the summit, the views were absolutely breathtaking and we were enormously pleased with our achievement in reaching this peak.

Exploration of the valley also identified other potential objectives for future excursions to this area. To the north, we were able to photograph an elegant rocky pinnacle (Peak 5796m), which lay directly across from Snacht Kang. On the south side of the valley we identified Peaks 6091m and 5882m, which form part of the ridge connecting Singekang with Snacht Kang.

New experiences

As well as realising a mountaineering goal, this trip for me was also a wonderful introduction to India. There wasn't a single moment in the travelling that I didn't enjoy and I'm glad that I was able to just experience India as I found it and not judge it through the filter of western standards. The towns we passed through, the sights we saw and the people we met, including the experience of the last few days we spent in Shimla – an old town connected to the time of the British Raj in India – will all remain as fond memories. I don't believe I'm quite finished with the Himalayas and hopefully I will return in the not too distant future.

Finally, I would like to give an enormous 'thank you' on behalf of the group to **Alan Tees**, the Expedition Leader, for all his hard work in putting this trip together and to **Anindya Mukherjee** and his team from **Adventuremania**, whose planning and logistical skills were simply brilliant ■

From left: Dr Jeremy Edwards, George Carleton, Martin Bonar, Alan Tees, Sandra Kennedy and Raja in the mess tent, ready to tuck into the cake.
Photo: Andrew Tees.



Sandra Kennedy has been involved in hillwalking, scrambling and climbing in Ireland, Scotland and Europe for many years. She is a member of NUIG Mountaineering Club and is working towards completing her Mountain Leader Training. Sandra is a member of the Board of Mountaineering Ireland and a committee member of Women With Altitude.

Himalyan trek

Crossing the Tashi Lapsa pass

Tom Fox reports on his trek over the Tashi Lapsa pass in the Nepal Himalaya.

The Tashi Lapsa (5755m) is a traditional Sherpa pass from Rolwaling to the Solu Khumbu. It is relatively easy for Sherpas, mountaineers and experienced trekkers to cross but, with long trekking days, rough terrain on glaciers, high altitude and being prone to rockfall on the Khumbu side, it is a serious undertaking.

On arrival in Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport at 10:00am, I discovered my bag had not been transferred at Delhi airport. The afternoon was spent revisiting the airport in the hope that it would be on

one of the two other flights that day. To my delight, it arrived at 4:00pm.

Next morning, after our guides Steve Stout and Paul Moores had checked that everyone's gear was up to scratch, we sorted the big boots, ice axes and crampons into separate bags before our long drive by bus. We travelled on the Amiko highway, which links Kathmandu to Lhasa. At Lomosangu, we turned east onto the Swiss-built road that leads to Jiri.

It was an exciting drive, crossing several passes. The road travels along high ridges which give tremendous views of the valleys and mountains. At Charikot, we turned off for Dolakha village at 1650m, where our Sherpas had begun erecting our tents.

The following day, we set off walking. We dropped down steeply through picturesque villages to the banks of the Tamba Kosi (Iron River) and then crossed several suspension bridges to reach Singati (950m). Gauri Sankar (7134m) was like a beacon leading us towards the high mountains.

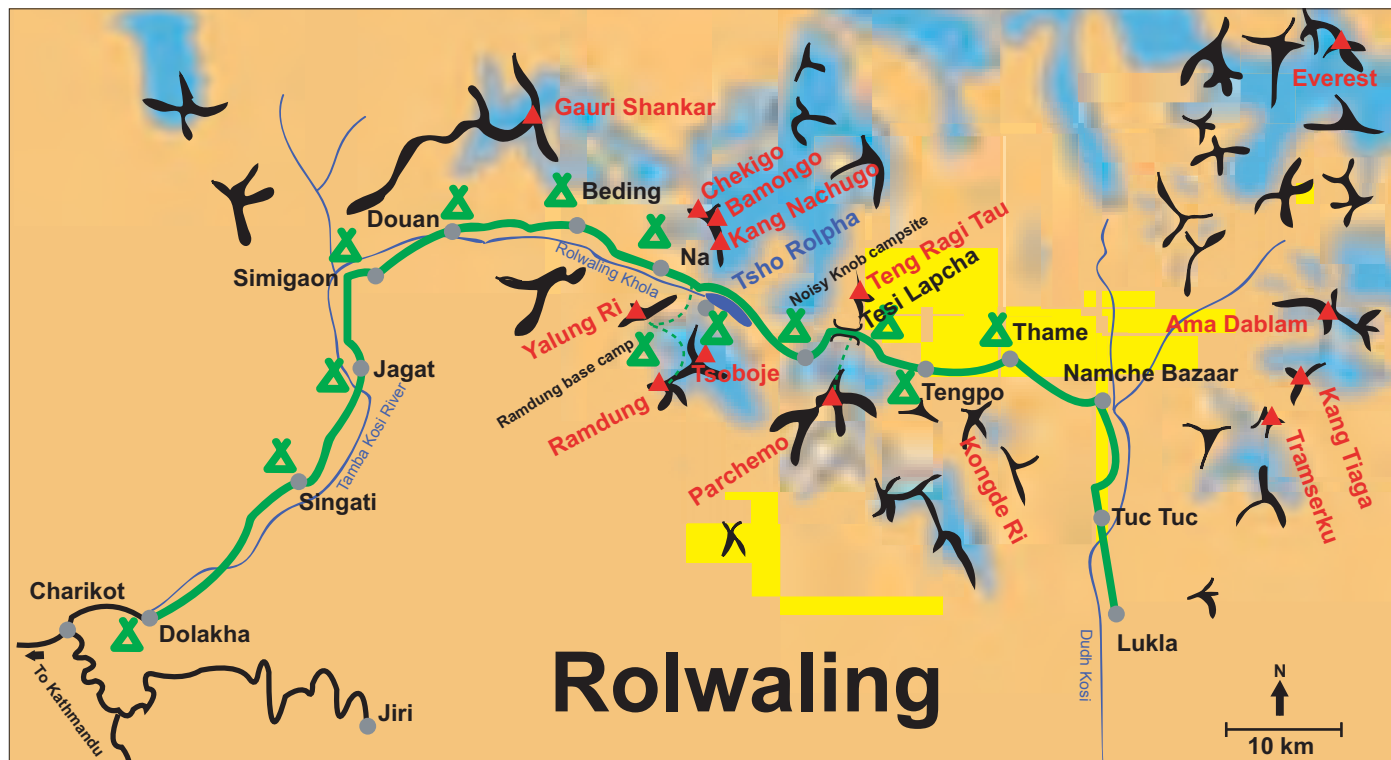
Narrow suspension bridges and an absence of roads suitable for vehicular traffic mean that everything has to be

carried, either on the backs of animals or humans. It's a fact of life here, and children start from an early age to carry small loads. We came across three women lugging a huge metal pipe along the trail.

Nima and Pasang brought us the bed tea the next morning at 6:30am, followed by a bowl of hot washing water each. A breakfast of porridge, eggs and pancakes in the mess tent set us up for the day's trek to Jagat (1150m). That evening we were asked by the locals if they could come and do an exhibition of local dancing and singing. Half the village turned up and kept us entertained for an hour. There was a hidden agenda behind all this and a collection plate was produced for a local venture to which we all felt compelled to contribute.

A hot and humid day's trekking took us to Simigaon, at 1996m, where we camped near the gompa (monastery). Next day, we contoured into the Rolwaling gorge through the forest, which gave us shade all day on our way to Douan, at 2802m. Mount Chekigo (6257m) dominated the view, as it did the next day when we trekked along a narrow valley to

Leaving base camp for high camp on Ramdung.
Photo: Tom Fox.



Route map.

Beding, at 3694m.

The village of Beding is perched on a steep hillside and we spent two nights camping there to aid our acclimatization. We dined in a tea-house nearby, owned by Dorje, who has been on several Everest expeditions. Sherpas and porters from Beding frequently participate in high-altitude trips. As they live at such a high altitude they adapt very quickly

Below:
Gauri Shankar was like a beacon leading us towards the high mountains.
Photo: Tom Fox.

as they go higher.

The weather closed in while we were in Beding, concealing the mountains from us. We visited the gumpa to get a blessing for our trip from the Lama. Wandering through the village, I noticed the absence of young children. I was informed that they go to school in Kathmandu as none is available locally. In addition, many of the young people prefer to go to Kathmandu rather than put up with the hard life at home, farming and portering. Several houses had fallen into disrepair due to lack of use.

Na, at 4183m, our campsite for the next two nights, is a seasonal village. In summer, it is occupied when the animals are driven up there to graze on the rich grass. Now many of the little stone houses were empty and locked. Slowly the sun broke through and it was like a wonderland, with a dusting of snow on the branches and stone walls. The high mountains with their snow-fluted ridges were finally appearing – Bamongo (6400m) and Tsoboje (6689m).

We dined in a trekking lodge, aptly named the Gauri Sankar hotel. We spent a morning doing some rope practice, ascending and descending a slope with jumars, and learning how not to lose our belay plates while abseiling past knots.

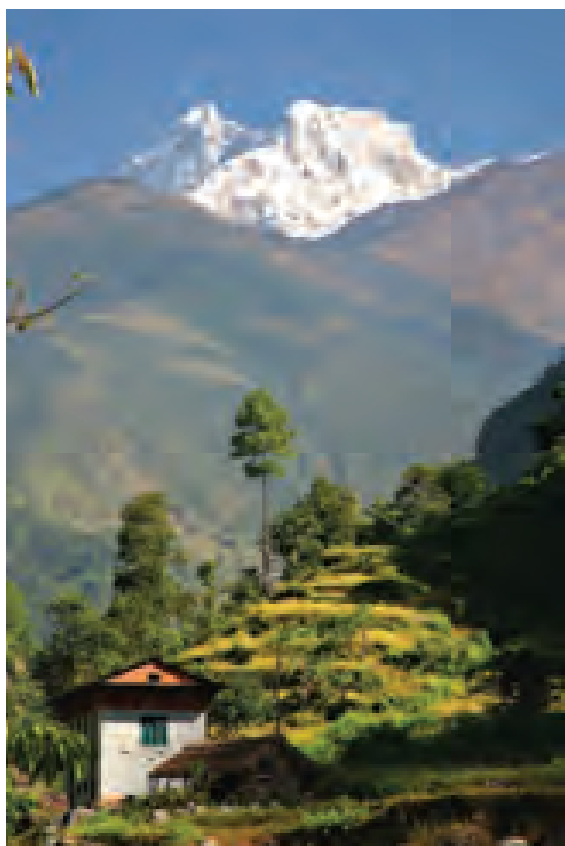
Four hours' trekking took us to Ramdung base camp, at 5040m, a superb setting with a 360° panorama, where we would spend four nights. Yalung Ri (5650m) was the next day's

objective.

A 3:00am start saw us at the base of the glacier at dawn. Dawa and Nima had ropes fixed on the steep slope on the snout of the glacier. We traversed across the glacier to the summit slope as the sun came up. I ran out of steam here and waited 300m below the summit, while the others made it to the top. Not my day!

During a rest day, some members of our group made plans for an ascent of Ramdung (5925m). This involved going to a high camp at 5350m the night before. Some of us accompanied them to 5200m, where they had to rope up, and then watched as they headed onto the glacier. After an early start, they found themselves ploughing through deep snow and battling against a strong wind. The deep snow and a yawning crevasse below the summit brought their attempt to a stop. The journey back was as difficult, as the wind had filled in their tracks. A very weary bunch of climbers eventually made their way back into camp. While they were on Ramdung, we dined in the cook tent and watched the cook, Pemba, prepare our meal on one kerosene burner. Rice, dal (lentils), potatoes, vegetables and soup were all cooked and kept warm using one burner at 5040m!

It was a cold place at night and we were glad to descend down to the main valley, where we met the others who had gone down earlier to acclimatize. We continued to a large glacial lake, Tsho Rolpa, at 4540m,





which is held in by an unconsolidated glacial moraine, which will eventually give way. Our campsite, on the other side of moraine, was well below the level of the lake!

After trekking along the lateral moraine for two hours, going steeply up and then down, the trail pushed us onto the Trakarding glacier. The glacier was covered in rocks frozen into the ice and was rough going. It was uphill and down dale for four hours to the Noisy Knob campsite at 4980m, a rough spot, all boulders, which made pitching the tents very difficult. There was no place for the mess tent, so the food was brought around to each tent, all three courses!

We started in the dark and fumbled our way over boulders to the rock face at the base of Drolumbau glacier. A short roped traverse on rock brought us onto the glacier. We trekked uphill and down dale on the glacier until we reached its side, which was easier going on snow and ice to the base of the Tashi Lapsa (5755m). I struggled in the heat all the way to the top of the pass.

After the compulsory group photo and some great photos looking towards the Chinese border, we donned helmets for the dash to camp.

The campsite at 5700m was situated on ledges at the base of a huge rock face on Tengi Ragi Tau (6943m), just below the pass on Khumbu side. Rockfall is frequent here but, once the undercut ledges are reached, it is relatively safe. The pitches for the tents were barely big enough and the boulders did not make for comfortable camping. The cook tent was on a ledge higher up. Water was a good distance away. Staying there more than one night was not an option. Space being at a premium, there was no place to gather for meals, so meals were again delivered to the tents.

Some of the party were up at 2:00am the next morning for their ascent of Parchemo (6187m). It involved going back up to the pass and climbing a steep snow and ice slope to summit. I watched as the sun came up at 6:00am to see the black figures in the distance making their way towards the top.

During the day, we got ready for our descent to the next campsite and made a quick exit from the ledges, watching out for rockfall. The descent was complicated by a steep and difficult drop in the glacier on the Khumbu side. It involved getting off

the glacier and traversing a ledge to the east, underneath Tengi Ragi Tau, to a steep rocky couloir. All this is particularly exposed to stonefall, so it is best done as early as possible. Pemba, our cook, already had this section roped for us. He had done it before returning to get our breakfast ready for us!

Back onto the glacier again and a few boulder fields later saw us on the path to Tengpo, at 4230m. Kangtega (6685m), Thamserku (6623m) and Ama Dablam (6812m) dominated the view down the valley. It was great to be off the glacier and to camp in a field, with the luxury of a trekking lodge nearby to relax in. The ridge of Kongde Ri (6187m) made a dramatic backdrop to our campsite.

A beautiful atmospheric morning didn't last for long. We trekked into the fog as we approached Thame, at 3820m. After a visit to the gompa, we headed to Namche Bazaar, at 3440m, the trekking capital of the Khumbu. We stayed in the Sona Lodge, which offered beds, a dining room with a stove and the first shower in three weeks. Mind you, you can keep yourself relatively clean with the daily bowl of washing water and the odd dip in a cold river. We took two days

Parchemo (6273m) with the Tashi Lapsa (5755m) to its right.
Photo: Tom Fox.



Trekking down the Thame valley with Kangtega (6685m) and Thamserku (6608m) in the distance.
Photo: Tom Fox.

Below:

to trek to Lukla, stopping at Tuc Tuc overnight. The cloudy weather persisted, obliterating what should have been spectacular views as we arrived into Lukla, at 2860m.

The airstrip at Lukla had been cloud-bound for four days and quite a backlog of passengers had built up. It is a five-day walkout to Jiri, which is a

seven-hour bus ride from Kathmandu. It is not an option for most people after a long trek. The Twin Otter aircraft, which fly in and out of Lukla carrying c20 passengers, do not have radar and only fly when visibility is good. The airstrip is cut into the side of a mountain, and landing and takeoff are spectacular on the short runway. Its location has given it the title of the most dangerous airport in the world, a recent television programme reported. I wonder how they would have rated it twenty-five years ago, when I landed there. The runway was still just a field!

A backlog of 300-400 people had built up. Small helicopters carrying seven passengers made the odd foray below the cloud. Our flights were booked for the next day and, if we missed them due to cloud, then we would go to the back of the queue. In the end, it was cloudy and we did miss our turn! We settled into the Buddha Lodge and that night gave our porters, cooks and Sherpas their tips, well earned I might add.

We spent another two nights in Lukla before the weather finally started to clear. We were not at the top of the list but some managed to get on helicopters and I got a flight to Kathmandu. The negotiations done by Pasang Sherpa and Sham, the lodge operator, were paramount in our

escape from Lukla. We were definitely not at the top of the list that morning, but that is Nepal for you. It is a bit like Ireland – it depends on who you talk to!

Having missed my flight home to Cork two days earlier, the afternoon was spent buying new flights for late the same night. Thank goodness for the BMC insurance, which covered the cost.

Crossing the Tashi Lapsa was a spectacular mountain trek. I would rate it a mountaineers' trek, due to its length and the rough terrain for the days on either side of the pass. Ice axe, double plastic boots, crampons, helmet, harness and ropes may all be needed for the trek and you need to know how to use them. The summits were alpine peaks as opposed to trekking peaks – Yalung Ri (F/PD), Ramdung (PD), Parchemo (PD+) – and that is if conditions are good. Due to the difficult terrain, it is not an over-frequented trekking route and you get the feeling of being away from it all on the Rolwaling side. After 22 days, I was glad to see the end of the trek and to start planning the next one! ■

Tom Fox is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland from Dingle. He undertook the trek in October-November 2010.



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Cold camping

Tina Ennis goes winter camping on some Irish summits

On top of Errigal.
Photo:
Tina Ennis.

Sitting in the car, unable to see the top of Errigal, I asked myself ‘Do I really want to do this?’

Rain and cold outside, dry and warm inside. Maybe just listen to the news before setting off. Wait, what’s the weather forecast?

It’s just too easy to stay; the challenge is to push yourself outside of this comfort zone. So, out we hop; full waterproofs donned, loaded backpacks hefted onto shoulders and off we go. It’s not so bad, and we settle into the slow familiar pace of trekking with full overnight kits.

From the Errigal car park we follow a mucky trail upwards along the stream and then veer off towards Mackoght. Traversing around its shoulder, we pass up an ideal camping spot, just because it’s too soon. On around and, close to Lough Nabrackbaddy, we find a heather oasis within the rock and boulder fields. It’s a bit uneven but will have to do for our campsite and it is below the snowline. We pitch tent while a golden eagle circles below snow-laden clouds.

Leaving camp, we head up the mountaineering route on the north shoulder of Errigal Mountain. Straight up the scree-covered slope as it slips disconcertingly away underfoot. There is a bit of track but this gives way to larger rocks and boulders. Perhaps the path continues but we are now walking on rocky ground covered with light snow.

This is an in-between world; there is thick mist above and below. Visibility allows a hint of the steep gully we are traversing and the view upwards vanishes mysteriously just beyond reach. It’s a scramble from here on up and it would be too tricky now to go back down this route. Upwards and to the right there is a naturally formed rectangular window in the rock. This is our cue; go straight up from where we are. I find it very tricky and the nerves are getting the better of me. I do like being scared though – so I am loving this! As soon as I get past the troublesome spot I wonder what the fuss was about. A little more scrambling and we pop out onto the summit-bound north-west ridge with a fresh wind on our faces.

On top of Errigal it feels like it could be anywhere, especially as we

can see nothing around but white cloud and snow. How exhilarating to be here, it’s fantastic!

We catch the well-worn south-east track down, quickly losing height, veering off to the left to nip over the shoulder of Mackoght.

Back to camp and our now traditional pasta and chorizo dinner is prepared and eaten under canvas as the snow comes down. Hot chocolate and cake and then it’s off to sleep...well, as much as possible in the cold.

We wake early to a snow-covered tent and are in the midst of a blizzard. Tea and flapjacks for breakfast, break camp with painfully cold fingers and make our escape. This has been a mini-adventure and, though an uncomfortably cold night, I do feel a real sense of achievement and life.

* * * * *

The memories of cold quickly diminish once back home and we brew up some more ideas. Next time, how about waking up on St Patrick’s morning on top of Lugnaquilla, the highest summit in Leinster?

A fiery orange sunset gave way to an almost full moon and a starry sky.

With dinner already eaten this meant a lighter kit and so I carry extra clothes for another cold night ahead. The hike from Fenton's to the top of Lugnaquilla is so peaceful and relaxing.

The summit is a huge plateau and an ideal camp-site. Picking a spot, we set up the tent just as the temperature plummets, icing the tent with a thin layer of frost together with wind-chill beckoning a -4°C ambience. Inside for a cuppa and some cake before putting in the headphones and settling down to sleep. Despite the additional layers, a space blanket and survival bag I am still very cold all night long and sleep very little. I listen enviously to the snores of sleep beside me – but morning does arrive and I have survived!

I had envisioned waking up looking out at a sunrise to sea from our easterly-facing front door but poking our heads out we can hardly see through the freezing fog to Percy's Table which is less than 100m away. It's hard to get up as, however cold it is inside, it's going to be freezing work taking down the tent in this weather. Once packed, we set off and quickly

warm up on the way down. Just as we head off the summit at about 7:20am, two hikers appear towards the top, no doubt hoping to be the first on top this St Patrick's Day – sorry for you!

Another great winter break, with a real sense of escape, and all without having to travel too far. ■

Tina Ennis is a legal executive and a member of the Wayfarers, the Irish

Mountaineering Club and Mountaineering Ireland. She has been hillwalking in Ireland for many years with her husband, Niall Ennis. They have walked on some of the long-distance paths (Grande Routes) on the continent, including the GR 10, which they completed in 2009, the GR 20, which they completed this year, and the GR 5.

On the summit of Lugnaquilla.
Photo: Tina Ennis.

Below:
Errigal, Mackoght and Beaghy.
Photo: Peter Wilson.



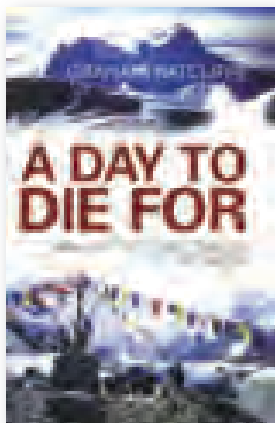
Books

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



A fresh look at Everest's worst tragedy

Peter O'Neill



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illustrations, maps and sketches
£11.99
ISBN: 978-1-84596-638-6

The disaster on Everest on the night of May 10th-11th 1996, when guides Scott Fischer and Rob Hall and six of their clients died, has been covered in a number of books,

Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* being perhaps the best known. So what new light can this new book cast on the disaster?

Graham Ratcliffe is the first British climber to ascend Everest twice, by northern and southern routes. He was on the South Col that fateful night, sheltering, unaware of the developing disaster. Since then, he has been haunted for years by feelings of guilt that he and his team could have saved lives. In coming to terms with these feelings and purging those demons, he has questioned whether the tragedy could have been averted. He has investigated the weather

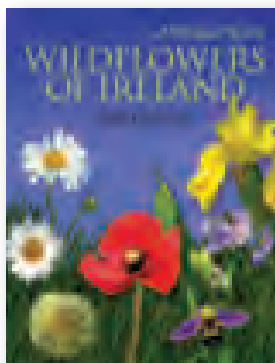
forecasts which were available to Fischer and Hall before their summit attempts.

Detailed high-altitude reports and forecasts, tailored for climbers, were prepared daily for the IMAX expedition and for the Danish climbers by the UK Met Office and Danish Meteorological Institute, and shared between teams. The prognosis for May 10th was not good and led the Danes to schedule their attempt for May 12th. Did these forecasts reach Fischer and Hall, passed through their base camp managers? Such forecasts, which in retrospect proved to have been remarkably accurate, were something new in Everest climbing. If the forecasts reached Fischer and Hall, did they have the expertise to interpret them? Did the pressure to bring weaker clients to the summit cloud the judgement of the two guides, knowing that postponement of the summit attempt would probably lead to abandonment of that attempt? Unfortunately, the two people who could have answered these questions died on the South Col. We can never now know. Graham Ratcliffe's interpretation is based on circumstantial evidence. To find out how he believes Fischer and Scott interpreted the forecasts and made their decisions, you will need to read the book.

If you have read *Into Thin Air*, you will probably want to read this book too. It might have been better if it had been two shorter books, one recounting Graham Ratcliffe's career, the other dealing with the disaster. However, the account of his major climbs does serve to establish beyond doubt that this is no armchair critic commenting on the tragedy, but this is established at excessive length for those readers primarily interested in that tragedy ■

Ireland's wild flowers photographed and described

Cóilín MacLochlainn



**Wildflowers of Ireland:
A Personal Record**

By Zoë Devlin
The Collins Press, 424pp
Colour photos throughout
and many small maps
€30.00
ISBN: 978 184 889 1265

Zoë Devlin's passion for wild flowers began in Glenmalur, Co Wicklow, where, as a child, she was shown a wild orchid by a botanist relative, Dr Kathleen Lynn. Enchanted, she was

soon looking for new species everywhere. In time, she began to photograph them and some years ago set up a website, **wildflowersofireland.net**, to show her work. Now she has put all this into print in a beautiful, large-format, glossy book.

Anyone who has spent any time listing birds or other wildlife will relate instantly to Devlin's accounts of her wildflower discoveries, the 'personal record' of the book's title. For example, one of her rarest finds was of Kerry lily, in Co Kerry in 1978, before she owned a camera. Thirty years later, her daughter Petra refound it in the same location and led her to it so that she could take her photograph.

Her pictures are not just beautiful but technically perfect: an extraordinary amount of work has gone into obtaining the shots.

The book includes a most useful introduction to Irish flowers, their habitats, their history and biology. This is the potentially difficult 'science bit' but Devlin makes it a highly captivating read.

The bulk of her book is devoted to the species accounts: she has recorded most of Ireland's 600 or so wildflower species, and each comes with a description, photos, a distribution map, the months of the year it can be seen, and biological and historical notes. She has also trawled Irish and English folklore, poetry and the Irish botanical literature for other relevant information.

One minor quibble: the jacket design, by Artmark, is too bright and vulgar and clearly the work of someone unfamiliar with the subtlety of wild flowers; but don't let that put you off buying this very fine work ■

British Antarctic explorers and their scientific endeavours

Frank Nugent



An Empire of Ice: Scott, Shackleton and the Heroic Age of Antarctic Science

By Edward Larson
Yale University Press, 326pp
Many colour expedition maps, charts and diagrams, plus centerfold of 24 historic b&w photos
€29.99
ISBN: 978-0-3000-15408-5

Larson evaluates the scientific achievements and outputs of British Antarctic explorers since Captain Cook, particularly looking at the

scope and quality of the output of the Scott and Shackleton led expeditions of the heroic age.

Larson, a professor of history and Pulitzer Prize-winner in that discipline, takes a positive retrospective look at the sacrifice and efforts of many individuals who applied themselves to systematic gathering of magnetic data and the collection of geological, botanical, ornithological and natural scientific specimens.

Many histories of this era ignore the fact that the British motivation for its Antarctic enterprises were essentially scientific, exploratory and geopolitical, with reaching the South Pole considered as a secondary, if spectacular, public sideshow. They often focus on the so-called 'race for the Pole.' It was never a race. Scott's programme

and intentions were public knowledge when he left England. His multiple objectives were given to him by a committee of the Royal Geographical Society influenced largely by its manipulative president, Clement Markham, an ex-navy man who had adopted Scott as his protégé. Scott's programme included fact-finding, specimen-collecting and mapping east and west of their base as well as south. Reaching the South Pole was to be a sideshow. The expedition expected to be alone on the continent for two years to complete their exploration and scientific programme.

Amundsen only sought the Pole; his mission was simply to dash to the Pole ahead of the British, whose plans and methods he knew. His plan was to start for the Pole before Scott, to take a shorter route and be well prepared and efficient in the delivery of this goal. Scott is portrayed as a heroic bungler who was shown up by a more efficient and ruthless rival. Larson provides a more complete picture and shares many anecdotes and stories which illustrate what these historic and heroic expeditions were really all about.

The fact that Scott committed so much of the expedition's resources to the scientific programme is highlighted. He risked letting naturalist Edward Wilson – his first-choice companion for the polar party – travel in the Antarctic midwinter darkness to investigate the emperor penguin rookery at Cape Crozier. This example validates the point. The culmination of Discovery, Nimrod and Terra Nova expeditions' scientific findings can be summed up by the geological and fossil evidence that plant and animal life existed and that Antarctica was once part of an immense southern super-continent. That their heroic work represents the precursors of the current era in Antarctic science is self-evident.

This is an easy, interesting and great read of a difficult topic ■

An Irish author's favourite areas in Ireland

Patrick O'Sullivan



Michael Fewer's Ireland: People, Places, Walking and Wildlife

By Michael Fewer
Ashfield Press, 288pp
Numerous colour illustrations including many full-page photos and route sketches
€25.00
ISBN: 978-1-901658-81-1

I understand this is Michael Fewer's sixteenth book. In it, he has allowed himself the luxury of focusing on

some of his favourite parts of Ireland. The book does not pretend to be a comprehensive walking guide to Ireland or even to the selected areas. Given that Michael has been writing about walking on the island of Ireland for more than two decades, this has to be a fascinating book, and it doesn't disappoint.

Fewer starts in his most favourite area, the Dingle Peninsula, which he writes about in warm and familiar terms, describing the history, people, and flora and fauna of the areas he walks through.

We learn about Cuchulainn's vagaries and the aeroplanes that

crashed into Mount Brandon, while the main features of the walks he undertakes are described in such warm terms to ensure that any active reader will be enticed to explore the area for him or herself. However, the book is intended as much for the armchair mountaineer and, as such, it seems to me to be very successful.

Fewer then takes us to the Burren, where he describes the attractions of the limestone scenery as well as of the culture and the architecture.

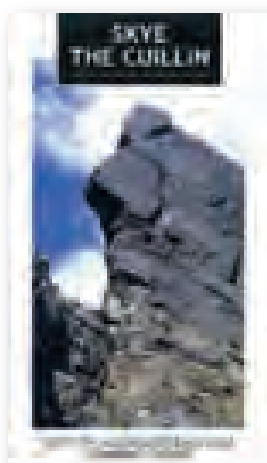
He then passes to the joys of Connemara and Mayo, where in addition to understandable favourites such as Mweelrea, he also includes an ascent of Croagh Patrick. Surprisingly, he says that, until recently, he had never climbed it. He takes us up the pilgrim's route, while filling us in on the historical significance of the Reek. Despite its significance and popularity, given the state of the route on the upper section, it is difficult to see this as a favourite walk when there are so many others to choose from.

In this book of favourite areas, Fewer crosses the country to walk in Dublin and Wicklow, before going north to Donegal and finishing off in Waterford.

This is a fascinating and very readable book which I think will encourage all but the most armchair-bound of readers to actually go out and explore the areas described for themselves. However, it does not pretend to be a comprehensive walking guide and, indeed, the walks are only a part of the attractions described in the areas visited ■

Excellent guide to a superb climbing area on Skye

Sé O'Hanlon



Skye: The Cuillin: Scottish Mountaineering Club Climbers' Guide

By Mike Lates

Scottish Mountaineering Club,
324pp

Many colour photos and topos;
seven b&w illustrations, maps
and sketches

£25

ISBN: 978-1-907233-13-5

Although this guide covers almost 800 routes, it is not cluttered and the page headers and tabs on the margin make it very easy to use and to find any particular location.

A welcome feature is the ribbon marker, which means that the climber can easily re-find the page they are using at any time. The photo topos are very clear and show that a lot of time was invested

in getting the light just right in each location. With fifty-five topos facing every point of the compass, this is no mean feat.

The cover is sturdily laminated and should hold everything together for a long time. Page width is the same as traditional Irish guides but the height is about 5cm greater and this makes for a slimmer but very handy book.

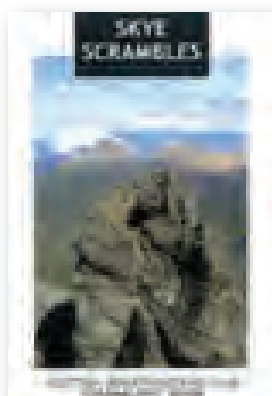
If there was to be a minor quibble, it is that the margins in the gutter are a bit narrow, and holding the book wide open to get to the end or beginning of a line may shorten the life of the binding.

In the Cuillins, there are many mountaineering routes from 100m to 400m but also a good number of shorter climbs. Because of the scale of the routes, many of the descriptions in this guide are quite short by our standards, aiming to concentrate on key features that can be used to follow the recorded route. This means that climbers need to use their experience to make important route-finding decisions and are not taken by the hand. This applies also to the topos. Routes generally do not criss-cross and are more widely spaced than in Ireland, so the topos are less detailed than in an Irish crag guide.

In addition to the normal rock routes, the guide includes winter routes and a must-have section on the Cuillin Ridge Traverse. In summary, an excellent guide to a superb area ■

This guide to Skye scrambles is a model of clarity

Sé O'Hanlon



Skye Scrambles: Scrambles, Easy Climbs and Walks on the Isle of Skye

By Noel Williams

Scottish Mountaineering Club, 397pp

Many colour and b&w illustrations, maps and sketches

£25

ISBN: 978-0-907521-99-0

Physically, this guide is identical to the Cuillins

climbing guide (above) except that the page height is shorter. Design features are as in the climbing guide, so this is a very user-friendly book.

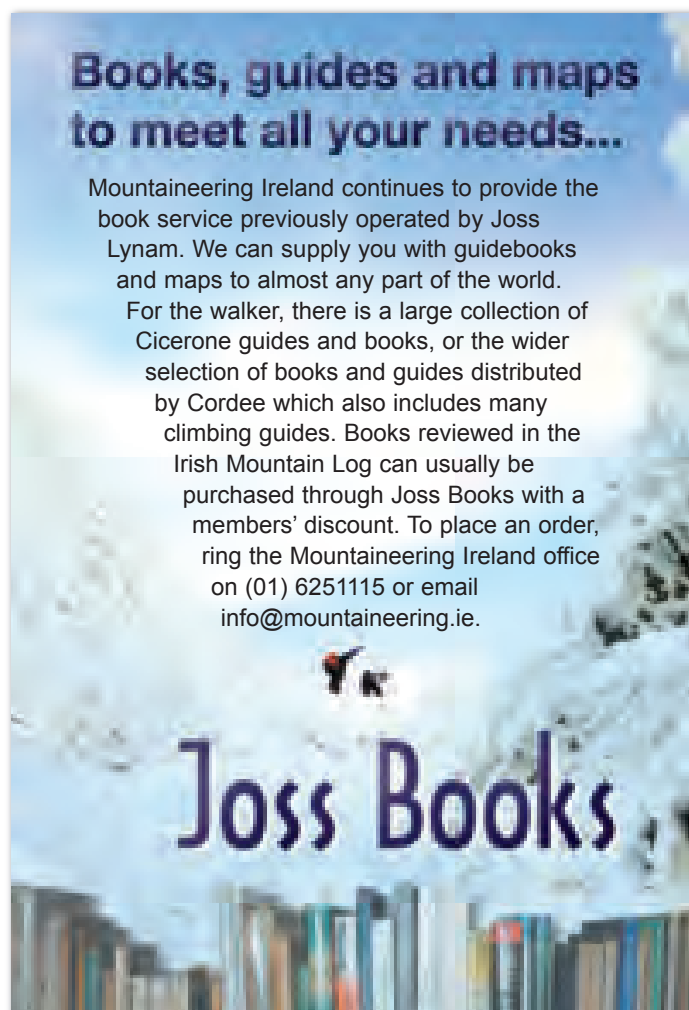
Two-hundred-and-one scrambling routes in almost every corner of the island, including the Cuillin Ridge Traverse, are listed. Descriptions are very comprehensive and clear.

Hand-drawn illustrations of routes and wildlife are works of art. They are beautiful in themselves and convey information clearly. Accompanying maps are models of clarity. Family photos are nicely picked out with a drop-shadow, which greatly enhances them ■

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

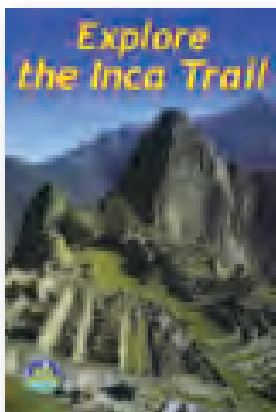
Mountaineering Ireland continues to provide the book service previously operated by Joss Lynam. We can supply you with guidebooks and maps to almost any part of the world.

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.



The various long-distance walks to Machu Picchu

Peter O'Neill



Explore the Inca Trail

Fully revised third edition

By Jacquetta Megarry & Roy Davies

Rucksack Readers (2011), 64pp

Many colour illustrations; colour

maps of Classic, Mollepata and

shortest trails; and Machu

Picchu site plan

£10.99

ISBN: 978-1-898481-46-1

An update to another very useful volume in the Rucksack Readers series, which now covers twenty-two long-distance walks in Britain,

Ireland and worldwide. This volume covers not just the four-day Classic Trail, but also two- and seven-day variations, all finishing at Machu Picchu.

The format of these guides is A5, top spiral-bound and waterproof, with fold-out maps. Unlike most guides to long-distance walks closer to home, the altitude reached during the walk (4200m for the Classic

Trail, 5000m for the longer variation, and a 'mere' 2700m for the short variation) demands inclusion of information on altitude effects, acute mountain sickness, its prevention and management, and drugs such as diamox, alongside the more usual advice on topics such as training, food and drink, equipment and packing. Small details are remembered. For example, to use your walking poles, these must be fitted with rubber tips to protect the stones. All sections of the guide seem relevant and useful, with no material added as padding.

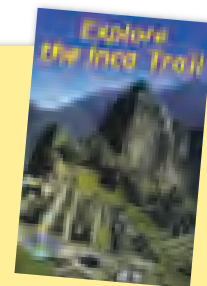
The guide includes a short and interesting introduction to Peru, its recent history, geography, tourism, wildlife, the Inca civilisation and Machu Picchu, and some suggestions for other visits and activities, for acclimatisation, as most people will want to do more than simply arrive, walk the Inca Trail and leave. As this section cannot serve as more than an enticing introduction to these topics, a useful further reading list is included. Stage descriptions are short, to the point, and attractively illustrated.

The five pages devoted to Machu Picchu cannot alone suffice for those who wish to explore the site, but it would have been a mistake to depart from the lean format of this series to extend this in an attempt to replace a guide chosen to meet the needs of the individual user.

An attractive guide which should tempt more people to consider this walk ■

Joss Books Competition

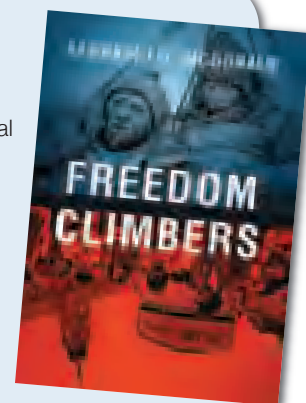
We have five copies of this guidebook, *Explore the Inca Trail* by Jacquetta Megarry & Roy Davies, to give away, courtesy of the publishers, Rucksack Readers (www.rucksacks.com). To be in with a chance of winning a copy, simply answer the following question: "In which country is Machu Picchu located?" Send your answer by e-mail to info@mountaineering.ie or by post to: **Joss Books Competition**, Mountaineering Ireland, Sport HQ, 13 Joyce Way, Parkwest Business Park, Dublin 12. E-mails should have 'Joss Books Competition' in the subject line. The response should include the answer, your name, address and a contact telephone number and your Mountaineering Ireland membership number. Entries must be received by 5:00pm on Friday, January 27th, 2012.



Winner of Boardman Tasker Prize 2011

The winner of this year's Boardman Tasker Prize for Mountain Literature was announced at the Kendal Mountain Festival in the South Lakeland District of Cumbria, England, in November. The Boardman Tasker Prize is an annual prize of £3,000 awarded by the Boardman Tasker Charitable Trust to an author or authors for 'an original work which has made an outstanding contribution to mountain literature.' It was established in the memory of Peter Boardman and Joe Tasker who died on the northeast ridge of Mount Everest in 1982. It can be awarded for a piece of fiction or non-fiction, poetry or drama, although the work must have been written in (or translated into) English.

There were 23 entries this year, including Adrian Hendroff's first book, *From High Places: A Journey Through Ireland's Great Mountains*. The books were all of a high standard and covered a range of subjects that included biography, fiction, historical material, travel accounts and spiritual journeys. The judges, Barry Imeson (Chair), Bernard Newman and Lindsay Griffin, shortlisted five books: *Desert Towers*, by Steve 'Crusher' Bartlett, published by Sharp End Publishing – a history of climbing on the sandstone pillars of the Colorado plateau; *Murder in the Hindu Kush*, by Tim Hannigan, published by The History Press – the story of George Hayward's impressive explorations in the Western Himalaya and the conflicting stories surrounding his murder in the Hindu Kush; *Freedom Climbers*, by Bernadette McDonald, published by Rocky Mountain Books – the story of how Polish climbers emerged after the Second World War and the rigours of the Russian occupation to dominate high-altitude climbing; *The Sound of Gravity*, by Joe Simpson, published by Jonathan Cape – a novel about life, loss and redemption in the high Alps; and *Shadow of the Matterhorn*, by Ian Smith, published by Carreg Ltd – a biography charting Edward Whymper's journey from apprentice engraver to celebrated mountaineer and explorer. In the end, the judges awarded the 2011 Boardman Tasker Prize to Bernadette McDonald for *Freedom Climbers*, her book about Polish climbers. We hope to review the shortlisted books that have not already been reviewed in the *Irish Mountain Log* in a forthcoming issue.





Access & Conservation

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

Giving something back



Helen Lawless

supermarket nearest to where you're staying? If you don't know what your shopping options are, enquire with your accommodation provider or check the internet. When you get there, make an effort to pick up everyday items like milk and chocolate in smaller shops, and buy your fuel locally. Go for a drink or coffee after your walk or climb, and support the pubs in and around the mountains. Without our business they may not remain open.

Is there somebody in the area who is knowledgeable on the heritage features in the mountains, and would they do a talk for your group? Ask if there's anywhere in the area that you can get a meal. There may not be, but if we keep asking, that may eventually change.

A recent study by the Welsh Economy Research Unit estimated that, in 2009, there were 28 million walking-related trips to the Welsh countryside and coast. Expenditure associated with these walking and hillwalking trips was around £632m (direct spending). The study showed that the employment impact that might be associated with walking activities in Wales in 2009 was the equivalent of 11,980 full-time jobs.*

We don't have the numbers here that they have in Wales (e.g. 430,258 walked up Snowdon in 2010), or the infrastructure necessary to sustain that degree of activity, but we have a lot of rural communities struggling against the closure of small businesses and emigration. Many of those communities are starting to think about how recreational activity could contribute to the future of their area.

Groups like the **Mourne Heritage Trust** and the **Wicklow Uplands Council** have been active since the late 1990s in bringing together the different interests in their respective areas to work together. Elsewhere in this issue you can read more about their current projects. Over the last couple of years,

Over the Christmas break, many of us will escape to the mountains, perhaps travelling with our club or a group of friends to another part of the country. Many factors influence the decisions about where we go and the type of accommodation we use. Mountaineering Ireland encourages members to use accommodation and other services in or as close as possible to the areas where they go walking or climbing. In this way, we can make a positive impact by directing our spending to the upland areas we rely on for our activities.

While it might be convenient to do your shopping in a big supermarket the night before you travel, what about doing that shopping in the



Glenmalur Lodge, Co Wicklow. Hostelries everywhere in the Irish uplands value your custom. Photo: Patrick O'Sullivan.

Mountaineering Ireland has become aware of groups being formed in other upland areas, with different objectives and structures, but almost always looking at how they can bring more tourists, and particularly walkers, to their area, and how they can get them to stay there.

New mountain forum groups

For example, there are new mountain forum groups in the **Comeraghs**, the **Galtees** and the **Knockmealdowns**, community-based initiatives in the **Burren** and the **Slieve Aughty** hills, and groups working towards geopark status in a number of areas including **Joyce Country**, **south Kerry** and the **Cooley-Gullion-Mourne** area.

While there is typically an economic agenda, all these initiatives are centred on the natural resources of Ireland's uplands. The key to sustainable management of our upland areas is ensuring a balance between economic, social and environmental considerations.

Mountaineering Ireland members are already contributing to some of these groups. If you become aware of a new group being formed in an area that you or your club uses regularly, find out a bit more about it. Even if you don't live in the immediate area, you represent a 'community of interest'.

Community groups across the country are discussing how they can attract walkers to their area; you could use your experience at home and abroad to help one of those groups better understand the needs of walkers. You will get benefits from it too; you will get to know some of the people who farm the hills, learn about the history of the area and feel more a part of the community, rather than just a user of the area.

Mountaineering Ireland is very happy to provide advice and information to members who are interested in getting involved with initiatives in upland areas and we're keen to get your feedback so that we can share good ideas and lessons learnt.

Ireland's uplands represent a very significant natural asset, which must be protected but have the potential, through sensitive management, to deliver considerable benefit in terms of economic, environmental and social well-being. As walkers and climbers, we have an integral and positive role to play in ensuring a sustainable future for Ireland's upland areas.

* **Bryan, et al (2011).** *The Economic Impact of Walking and Hillwalking in Wales*. Published by Welsh Economy Research Unit, Cardiff University. Available online at <http://www.thebmc.co.uk/News.aspx?id=4366>.

Green Tip



Clean your boots

As you get to the end of a day out, wipe your boots on grass, or rinse them off in a stream or puddle. That way, when you bring welcome business to pubs, shops and accommodation providers, you won't be bringing unwelcome muck with you.

By making sure that we clean our boots (including the soles) when we move from one area to another, we also reduce the risk of transporting seeds or insects. This helps prevent the spread of invasive species that threaten our native plants, animals and habitats.

So, remember to clean your boots. It's good for your boots, too! ■

Uncontrolled dogs a worry for sheep farmers

DUE TO an increase in sheep-worrying by dogs, the Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners' Association has asked hillwalkers who see dogs loose on the hills to report this to the Gardaí or to the Association. By law, dogs must be kept under effective control in the countryside.

Photos or video clips of dogs worrying sheep would also be useful and should be sent by email to info@wicklowsheep.ie, with details of the date and location.

While most people are aware that dogs can kill and maim sheep, the presence of dogs on the hills can affect flocks in other ways also. For instance, when sheep run to get away from dogs, they may get caught in briars or fall into holes, resulting in injury or even death. Sheep-worrying in the winter months means ewes may not come into season or it can cause them to abort their lambs.

Farmers acknowledge that most dog owners are responsible and keep their dogs on leads. However, poor behaviour by a minority means that dogs are not welcome on the hills across most of Ireland. Mountaineering Ireland reiterates its appeal to walkers not to take dogs onto the hills, at any time of year and in any part of the country, other than with the landowner's permission to do so.



German shepherd on leash. Photo: www.mycountryside.org.uk.



The view from King's Yard, Knocknagalty, Co Tipperary. Photo: Helen Lawless.

Meet the hill farmers: **Stephen Ryan & Bridget King**

Helen Lawless continues her series of interviews with hill farmers. Here, she meets Stephen Ryan and Bridget King who are providing facilities for walkers at their farm at Knocknagalty on the south side of Galtymore, Co Tipperary.

Have you always lived in Knocknagalty?

Bridget: I'm the fourth generation of Kings on this farm. At one time there were seven houses in Knocknagalty, but since the 1960s there's only been one family living in the townland.

Have there been any other notable changes in the area?

Bridget: In the past a lot of people would have worked in the forestry around here, but now Coillte have very few people working on the ground. Things like fences and gates aren't as well maintained; that affects farmers as sheep can stray into the forest. The farmers around here arrange between themselves to repair the fences. There are more walkers too, in Galty Castle Wood and going up the mountains. The Attychraan loop walk is drawing more people in and there are plans to develop two more loops.

What type of farm do you have?

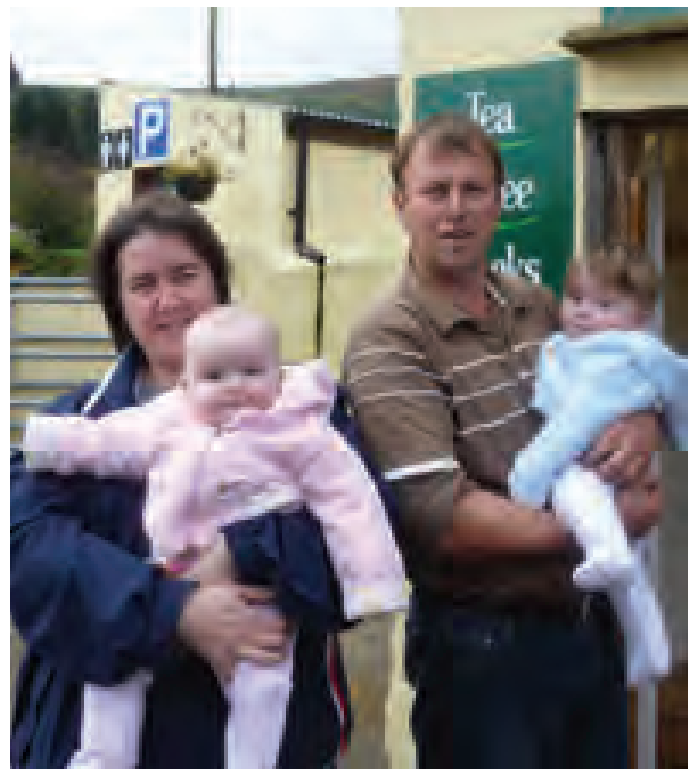
Stephen: We're mainly hill sheep farmers; we keep some cattle, but they don't go on the mountain. We have fields around the farm and then grazing on Knocknagalty mountain and in the Glounreagh valley. Our sheep are on the hills all year round; they come down three times: for shearing; for dipping; and in November to go with the ram. The ewes lamb on the hill in April each year.

Stephen, you're not from a farming background. How have you adapted?

Stephen: I did a course in Mallow for a couple of years, but I've learnt more from the mistakes I've made. For example, I spent nearly a full day once gathering sheep off the mountain. I had them almost down to the sheep pens when the two dogs I had with me got tired and gave up. The sheep got away on me. I had a third dog I hadn't taken up the hill; I could hear him barking in the shed. If I'd had the third dog, and kept him fresh, it would have saved a lot of time.

What would you like to see for the farm in the future?

Stephen: There needs to be encouragement for people to put sheep on the hill. There are fewer farmers, and smaller flocks since decoupling. In places, the heather has got thick and long; the sheep won't eat that. We're farming within guidelines as the



Bridget and Stephen Ryan with their twins, Emma and John. Photo: Helen Lawless.

mountain is a Special Area of Conservation and a Natural Heritage Area. We were in the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS), but that's gone. This is a way of life that you'd hope to pass on, but there needs to be a subsidy for sheep, or some other support for hill farming to be viable.

You're offering parking and other facilities here for walkers. How did that come about?

Bridget: We've always had walkers coming through here; they would have parked below in the forest. Some of them would get lost and over the years we've helped them out. We read about John and Esther Cronin of Cronin's yard in the *Irish Farmers Journal*. We called down in February 2008 to see what they were doing. They have Carrauntoohil above them, and we have

Galtymore. That made our minds up, and we opened the May bank holiday of 2008. This was always King's, so we called it King's yard.

We have a few areas for parking, so we can accommodate about 40 cars – it's €2 for parking – and we have an indoor seating area with hot and cold drinks machines, that we call the coffee shop. We have a toilet and shower, a field for campers and a campers' kitchen. The lane above the farm takes you out onto the open mountain. We've done four seasons now, it's going great and people seem very happy with it. We're getting a lot of repeat business and very good feedback.

Were there any particular challenges you encountered in setting up King's Yard?

Stephen: We had no major challenges. We based it on what the Cronins started with. They gave us some advice and helped us source the vending machines. We didn't draw down any LEADER or Fáilte Ireland funding. Our only setback was that South Tipperary County Council wouldn't give us permission to erect a sign where you come off the main road in Skeheenarinky. Luckily, there are two roads in and the other one is in Co Limerick!

I noticed you have information in the coffee shop about the crosses on Galtymore.

Bridget: The first cross was erected on Galtymore in 1933, then a timber cross was put up in 1954. The third cross was a limestone cross erected in 1962; they brought it up from here on an army vehicle called 'The Katie Daley.' Five men, including my uncle John King, carried it the last section up to the summit. The base of the cross is still there.*

We're having a charity walk to Galtymore on Whit Sunday 2012 in celebration of the 50th anniversary, to raise funds for the South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association and the Brú Columbanus Centre in Cork.

Do you do any walking yourselves?

Stephen: Most of what I do would be as part of my farm work, but I have climbed Carrauntoohil three or four times.

Bridget: I've done a bit and I'd like to get back to it. We had twins earlier this year; John and Emma are nine months old, so our hands are quite full these days.

There's a new Galtee Mountain Forum. Are you involved in that?

Bridget: I'm on the Steering Committee, but unfortunately I haven't been able to make all the meetings as they're during the day. The group is hoping to market the Galtees as an entity, as this area straddles three counties it needs a coordinated effort. The forum was set up by Ballyhoura Development and South Tipperary Development Company.

Do you have any final comments?

Bridget: We welcome all walkers; it's great to see people coming and going. It was always quiet here, but since we opened King's yard we see a lot more people and we're getting to know many of them.

● For more information on Kings' yard, visit <http://kingsyard.wordpress.com>.

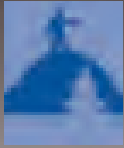
* For more information, see Jimmy Barry's article on the crosses of Galtymore in *Irish Mountain Log* No 89, Spring 2009 ■



Hillwalkers set off from King's Yard, Knocknagalty.
Photo: Helen Lawless.

Kings Yard
Knocknagalty
... In the heart of the Galtees

Kings Yard, Knocknagalty, Kilbehenny, Co Limerick
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Training news presented by Training Officer Alun Richardson and Nicole Mullen

See you out there!



"Climb, if you will, but remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end." – In **Scrambles Amongst the Alps**, by Edward Whymper (1860)

IT'S THAT TIME of the year when we look back at what the year just past has given us. For me, the successes have been tinged with sadness: not only did I lose my father, but I also lost three close friends in climbing accidents that all could have been avoided.

With the approaching winter season, we are all sharpening our axes and looking forward to getting to grips with the fickle medium of snow and ice. For 2012, I would like to ask everyone to think about Edward Whymper's words and remember that a momentary lack of thought can so easily end a wonderful life. Take care of yourself and look after each other.

But less of sadness – 2011 has been a great year for the Training Office with a super winter meet in Glencoe, a ski meet in Chamonix and a very successful Alpine meet in Argentière, at which over 80 people attended each week.

It was also great to see so many people at the Autumn Meet; we had a great scrambling workshop and the céilidh was crazy!

The numbers of people doing the whole range of Bord Oiliúnt Sléibhe (BOS) awards is continuing to rise, and they culminated in twenty people getting their Mountain Leader (ML) awards this year. Well done to everyone who passed a BOS assessment during 2011.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New year!

Looking forward to 2012

I am looking forward to 2012 and the challenges it will bring. In the coming year, Mountaineering Ireland and Bord Oiliúnt Sléibhe (BOS) will be trying to improve what we offer clubs, instructors and providers, so keep your eyes peeled for news about Single-Pitch Award, Walking Group Leader and ML holders workshops.

Watch out also for a Train the Trainers workshop at Tollymore, and for Providers workshops on disability and assessing skills.

If you have any training requirements, then please contact the office to see what help we can give.

Promotional days, promotional videos

In the coming year, we will also have Mountaineering Ireland promotional days to enlighten more people about the joys of hillwalking and climbing.

Mountaineering Ireland, in conjunction with Tollymore and Berghaus, is also working on a series of short video clips looking at all aspects of hillwalking and climbing. The release of these is planned for next spring.

Provider handbook, provider agreement

Another success for the Training Office has been the finishing of the *Provider Handbook* and *Provider Agreement*. Thanks to all of you who contributed with comments and corrections to numerous drafts.

Those of you renewing your provider status should note that the only significant change is that Garda vetting is now required, but read the document carefully. It is not possible to list every minor change.



Winter climbing in Scotland. Photo: Alun Richardson.

Summer Alpine Meet 2012

The 2012 Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet will be taking place from 30th June to 15th July, based in Val Di Masino in the beautiful Italian Bregaglia Alps. you can fly from Dublin to Milan and then take a two-hour drive or a bus or train journey to the area. The Val di Mello is a short distance away and there is a wealth of superb walking, bouldering, climbing and alpinism – all on the doorstep.

Keep your eyes peeled for more information on the website and in the next *Log*.



Monte Disgrazia in the Italian Bregaglia Alps.

Continuous Professional Development workshops

Our Continuous Professional Development (CPD) workshops for training providers have been well attended – thanks to all of you who contributed to them.

BOS realises that its courses are a small part of your otherwise busy lives, but to ensure that we are all taken seriously by those looking in on the outdoor world, auditing, moderation and CPD are very important. Mountaineering Ireland is lucky to be ahead of the field in this regard.

Outdoor award system

My thanks must go to all providers from Mountain Skills (MS) to ML: without you, there would not be an outdoor award system in Ireland that so many people rely on from clubs to outdoor centres, from parents to disadvantaged youngsters.

Next year we may (and it is definitely a 'may') see the development of some new awards with the 'Lowland Walks Leader' award and the ML having a 'Day Walk Leader' element. Watch this space!

Tutor Trainers

Our work with Coaching Ireland has moved forward this year with nine of our providers being trained as 'Tutor Trainers' and our awards being aligned with the 'Adventure Sport Framework.' This will not affect your work on the ground, but hopefully the extra training our providers are receiving will start to filter down to the 'grass roots' over the next few years.

Matching UK standards

BOS's moves towards becoming a voting member of the Mountain Leader Training Boards of the UK is moving forwards and a visit by John Cousins from the UKMLT has confirmed that our MLA, WGL and SPA holders are trained and assessed at an equivalent standard to the UK. Well done to all trainers and assessors from MS to ML for maintaining high standards of

training that are reflected in John Cousins's complimentary comments.

One change that may interest a few people is that the valuable and excellent 'Train the Trainers' course is now open to anyone that has an SPA, WGL and/or ML. Those using it as a stepping stone to MS providership should note that you still can't apply to be a provider until you have held your ML, and been actively using it, for over a year.

The next 'Train the Trainers' course is being held at Tollymore on 21-22 January 2012. The opening of the course to SPA, WGL and ML holders will undoubtedly improve the teaching of hillwalking and rockclimbing skills in Ireland.

And finally, my thanks....

There are a number of people I should single out from the myriad that have helped me this year. Nicole Mullen in the Training Office for being the organised one; Dave Gaughran for his continuing work on training providers on the 'Train The Trainers' course and for his work on the 'Club Training Officers' workshops; and Bren Whelan and Clive Roberts for giving me so much positive feedback during the year and keeping me on my toes.

Thanks also to Karl, Helen, Una and Terry for being such wonderful and supportive work colleagues and sounding boards for my ideas and thoughts.

My final thanks go to all the volunteers on the Mountaineering Ireland Board, to BOS and to the walking and climbing clubs that make it even more enjoyable to be on the hill ■

Contact

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

Scottish Winter Meet

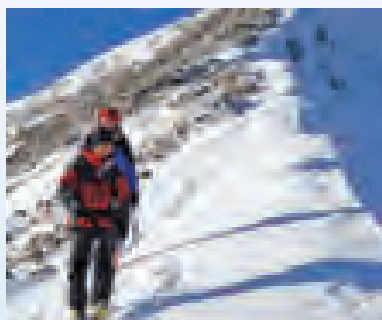
Fri 17 February - Sun 26 February 2012

Where is it?



Mountaineering Ireland will again be basing the Scottish Winter Meet at the Inchree Centre in Onich, between Fort William and Glencoe in the Western Highlands of Scotland. This is a great location for Ben Nevis and the Three Sisters of Glencoe. Inchree Centre offers a variety of accommodation including bunk houses, hostels, chalets and B+B. There is also a restaurant and bar on site; check out www.inchreecentre.co.uk.

Who is it for?



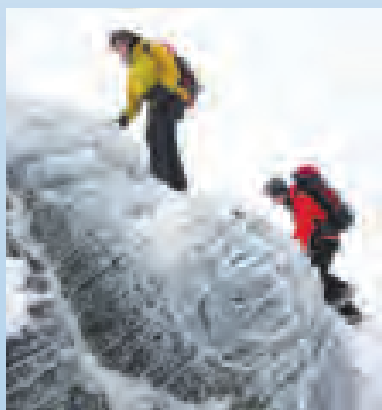
Similar to the massively successful 2011 Mountaineering Ireland Summer Alpine Meet, all walkers and climbers are encouraged to participate, whether on one of the instructor-led training courses or on a more informal "do your own thing" basis. We hope to bring together like-minded people to share in the experiences of days on the hills, evening talks and slide-shows and plenty of late night discussions!

Whether on a course or just coming along informally, all participants are asked to book through the Mountaineering Ireland office. Last year, we had a few disappointed people who booked very late and couldn't get accommodation or missed out on one of the courses because they were full, so this year could you let us know before Christmas if you are coming on the meet?

What training courses are available?

- **Basic Winter Skills**
 - Self-catering.
 - Ratio 1:6 for summer hillwalkers who would like to learn basic snow skills and try winter walking for the first time.
 - Cost: €250 for 3 days (price for instruction only).
- **Winter Mountaineering**
 - Self-catering.
 - Ratio 1:4 for those walkers and climbers who have done some basic winter walking and want to try something a little more challenging.
 - Cost: €275 for 3 days (price for instruction only).
- **Winter Climbing**
 - Self-catering.
 - Ratio 1:2 for those who would like to tackle routes requiring the use of an axe and hammer. Previous rock-climbing and winter experience is required.
 - Cost: €450 for 3 days (price for instruction only).

What to do next?



Book your place on the meet by visiting www.mountaineering.ie. Information pack and booking form can be found on the website under 'Training and Safety' and 'Meets'. Alternatively, contact Nicole at Mountaineering Ireland on (01) 625 1117. To book on the meet costs only €10.00 (included in course prices, if you book onto a course).

Book early! There is a 20% price reduction for booking (with deposit) before 21st December 2011.

Course dates

- **19-21 February:**
 - Basic Winter Skills
 - Winter Mountaineering
 - Winter Climbing
- **23-25 February:**
 - Basic Winter Skills
 - Winter Mountaineering
 - Winter Climbing



5 Minute Interview

Neal McQuaid

Neal McQuaid is Talent Development Officer with Mountaineering Ireland.

Interview by Alun Richardson

Neal, what did you do last holiday?

Rock-climbed in the southern Pyrenees.

Where is your next holiday to be?

Sport-climbing in Spain over Christmas.

If you could climb any rock route, what would it be?

Any route in Yosemite or Biographie in Ceuse – I may as well dream!

Why do you love walking in the Irish hills?

It's a bad day to ask, because it's pouring with rain!

Where is your favourite place to walk or climb in Ireland?

Burren for climbing, Kerry for walking.

Where is your favourite place outside of Ireland?

Ceuse in France for climbing, Nepal for walking.

What is your favourite piece of outdoor equipment?

My FiveTen Quantum rock boots.

What is your favourite hill food?

French baguette.

Have you ever been lost or stuck on a route?

yes, off-route on a Welsh multi-pitch climb a few years ago, but I have a good radar when hillwalking and have not been lost...yet!

Have you ever been scared in the mountains or when rock-climbing?

In the Alps, when I took my eye off the ball and my belay disintegrated. I was saved by the ropes getting caught on some small edges.

What does adventure mean to you?

Being somewhere different with a group of friends.

Water bottle or bladder system?

Used to be bladder but is now bottle.

Chocolate or grain bar?

I should say grain bar, but it's probably chocolate.

Beer or Lager?

Lager.

Who inspires you most in the outdoor world?

Currently an American called Joe Kinder for his enthusiasm for travelling and climbing.

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

People not giving anything back to the sport ■

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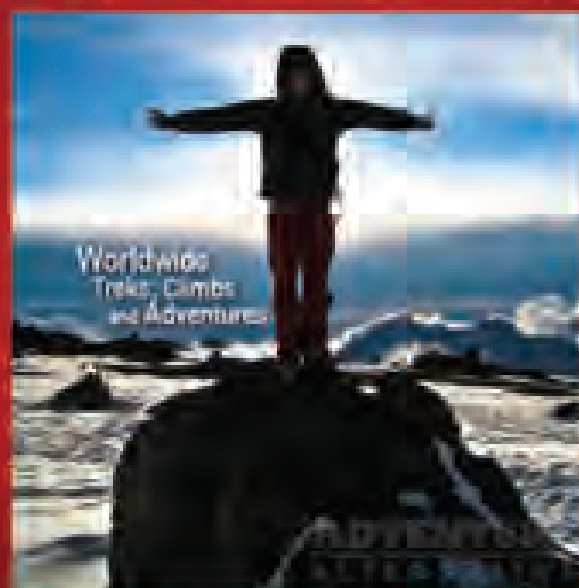
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'One of the greatest of all time'

Walter Bonatti (1930-2011)

PATRICK O'SULLIVAN



WALTER BONATTI, one of the world's greatest mountaineers, died in Rome on September 13th, 2011, aged 81, having been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer shortly before.

Much of the success of his climbing career was overshadowed by the controversy that developed following the Italian first ascent of K2. This was only resolved in recent years when one of the main protagonists published a truthful account of the events leading to the successful summit bid, which showed that Bonatti had been telling the truth and had made a significant contribution to that success.

Bonatti was born in 1930 in Bergamo to working-class parents but his climbing ability made him famous by his early 20s,



Bonatti on summit of Gasherbrum IV in 1958.

despite the difficulties of life in post-war Italy. His climbs on the Grand Capucin and the Petit Dru were landmarks in the development of Alpine climbing, and his first ascent of Gasherbrum IV in the Karakoram in 1958 with Carlo Mauri was regarded as a significant achievement in Himalayan climbing. Chris Bonington said: "He was among the greatest of all time, without a shadow of a doubt."

By 19, Bonatti had made several significant ascents and new routes in the Bregaglia and the Dolomites. He then shot to relative fame with the third ascent of the West Face of the Aiguille Noire de Peuterey and a very early repeat of the Walker Spur on the Grandes Jorasses.



In Askole during the K2 expedition in 1954.

He made several first ascents in the Mont Blanc Massif which are legendary: the East Face of the Grand Capucin; Red Pillar of Brouillard; East Face of the Petites Jorasses; Whympers Spur on the Grandes Jorasses; East Face of the Grand Pilier d'Angle; first winter ascent of the Walker Spur; first winter ascent of the Sentinel Rouge and first solo ascent of the Major on the Brenva Face; and, of course, the now demised South West Pillar of the Petit Dru, which became known as the Bonatti Pillar.

Further afield, he made first ascents of the difficult Rondoy North in Peru; Cerro Adela and other peaks in Patagonia; and Gasherbrum IV (7,925m) in the Himalayas.

Despite these successes, Bonatti's climbing career was always overshadowed by controversy. In two of his most famous climbs, the 1954 K2 expedition and the



Karen Dunbar

1961 tragedy on the Central Pillar of Freney, he did not reach the summit but he did demonstrate a legendary ability to survive. Both of these climbs were followed by bitter controversy.

Bonatti always refuted the official reports of the events surrounding the successful Italian first ascent of K2 in 1954. In the final push for the summit, Bonatti's job was to deliver oxygen equipment for his fellow climbers, Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli, to use in their summit bid. Despite being only 24, he was undoubtedly the strongest climber on the expedition and it appears that his companions were anxious that he should not share in their glory, so they set their top camp higher than agreed.

Bonatti and the Hunza porter, Amir Mahdi, who was with him, could not find the camp and had to leave the oxygen at their high point and descend. However, by

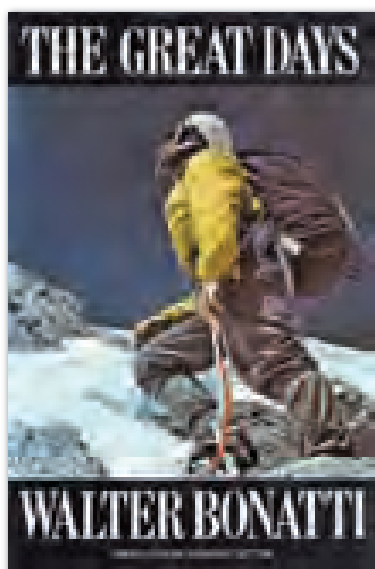


Bonatti made the first ascent of Gasherbrum IV (7925m) in the Himalayas in 1958.

then it was too late and Bonatti and Mahdi were forced to spend a night in the open at 8100m without a tent or sleeping bags in bitter conditions. As a consequence, Mahdi lost all his fingers and toes to frostbite, and almost his life when he became delirious during the night and tried to throw himself off the mountain.

After their successful climb, Compagnoni and Lacedelli countered Bonatti's outrage by accusing him of using some of the oxygen, leaving them insufficient for their summit day. Bonatti spent the rest of his life trying to clear his name and he was finally exonerated when Lacedelli confirmed his version of events after Compagnoni's death in a book which was translated into English as *K2: The Price of Conquest*.

Bonatti was a very ethical climber, preferring not to climb a route rather than



using aid. He coped with the bitterness of the 1954 K2 ascent by climbing a new route on the Petit Dru the following year. The climb, called the Bonatti Pillar, collapsed in 2005 in a huge rockfall. From then on, as he wrote in his autobiography, *The Great Days*, "I was devoted heart and soul to rock faces, to overhangs, to the intimate joy of trying to overcome my own weakness in a struggle that committed me to the very limits of the possible."

In 1961, Bonatti and his two Italian companions joined forces with four French climbers to attempt the unclimbed Central Pillar of Frêney. Near the top, they were caught in a ferocious electric storm, which lasted several days. On the retreat, only three of the climbers survived, thanks to Bonatti's leadership, for which he was

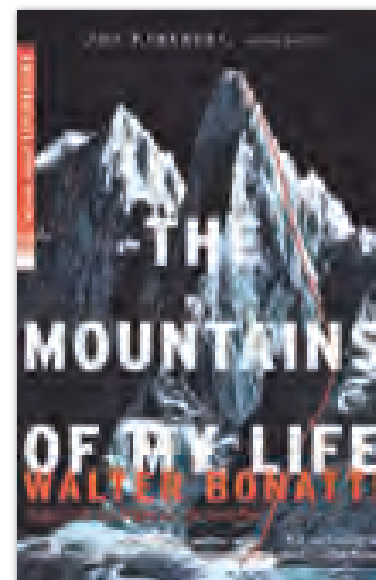
awarded the Légion d'honneur.

His farewell to the world of high-standard alpinism took place in the winter of 1965 when he soloed a previously tried direttissima on the North Face of the Matterhorn, a demanding climb that has rarely been repeated.

From that time on Bonatti travelled the world as a photo-journalist, producing countless articles and writing a number of books. His autobiographies, *On the Heights* and *The Great Days*, became essential reading for budding alpinists. However, it appears that the translations of these books from the original Italian was not accurate and did not present Bonatti's account of the K2 climb as he intended. Australian surgeon Robert Marshall took up the baton and continued the detective work, teaching himself Italian in order to communicate with Bonatti. Marshall eventually authored in 2001 *The Mountains of My Life* which gave a more accurate translation of the original texts and then, in 2009, *K2: Lies and Treachery*, which examined the different accounts of the ascent of K2 and highlighted the fact that, although they claimed not to have used oxygen on the summit, one of the summit photos showed Lacedelli wearing an oxygen mask.

Finally, in 2009, the Italian Alpine Club published *K2: Un Storia Finita*, officially correcting all details of the first ascent.

Walter Bonatti remained active



throughout his life and would not infrequently climb a mountain. In his mid-70s, when he was still going for daily runs, he ascended Mont Blanc by the Innominate Ridge.

In 2009, he was presented in Courmayeur with the first Career Piolet d'Or and, in 2010, Bonatti was back on the same stage to congratulate Reinhold Messner, who was awarded the second.

Messner later said: "*Bonatti was one of the greatest mountaineers in history, the last traditional climber and very strong in every discipline; but above all he was a beautiful person, tolerant and loving.*"

May he rest in peace. ■

Alan Blackshaw's Irish connections

MOST READERS of the *Log* are probably unaware that Alan Blackshaw, whose obituary appeared in *IML* 99, was a friend of the late Joss Lynam and of myself, Paddy O'Leary. We were together on a Himalayan trip in 1989 which was jointly led by Mike Banks and Joss.

Alan, Mike and myself spent four days storm-bound in a tent, pitched askew because of a missing pole, on a ridge-crest at Jaonli in the Garwhal Himal. Alan was acutely ill with amoebic dysentery and was forced to make frequent trips outside to relieve himself. Because of his position near the door he had charge of the stove, the task of collecting snow, of cooking, and of carefully dumping full urine bottles passed on to him from where we lay roped up in our sleeping bags. Uncomplainingly, he endured his condition, nightly alarms as we expected to be blown off the mountain, and the constant fear of retreat down slopes which were alive with avalanches. He was seriously weakened when we finally reached the glacier and he displayed remarkable grit during the two days it took us to reach base camp.

Alan was modest about his achievements as a climber, skier, author and administrator, and was unobtrusive in the way he helped the rest of us in our expedition tasks. One gets to know someone very well under such circumstances and I grew to like him unreservedly. For some time I availed of his hospitality in his apartment at Le Tour but gradually lost touch until we exchanged letters and phone calls subsequent to Joss' death. May he rest in peace.

Paddy O'Leary

Everester who made first ascent of Kangchenjunga

George Band (1929-2011)

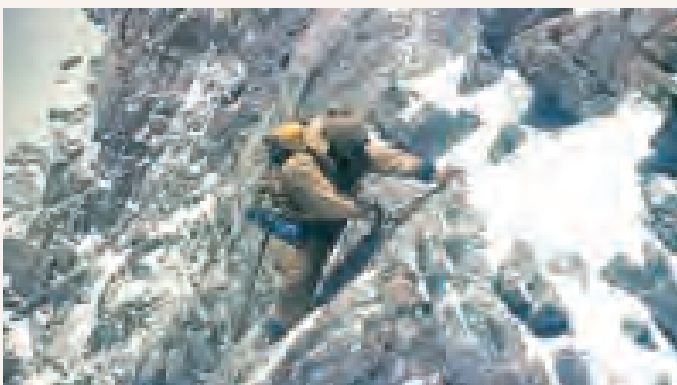


George Band takes in the view on the way to the summit of Snowdon, north Wales, in 2003. He was the youngest member of the 1953 expedition to Everest. **Photograph:** Peter Dench/In Pictures/Corbis.

GEORGE BAND, a former President of the BMC and of the Alpine Club, died from cancer on August 26th, 2011, aged 82. He was a member of the Everest expedition that made the first ascent in 1953, and two years later he made the first ascent of Kangchenjunga.

Band was born in Taiwan and attended Cambridge University, where he studied geology and was President of the University Mountaineering Club. He then studied petroleum engineering at London University. After completing his studies, he worked as a petroleum engineer in oil and gas exploration in a long career that took him all over the world.

Band was the youngest climber on the 1953 Everest expedition on which Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the summit (8848m). In 1954, he was part of an unsuccessful Cambridge University team that attempted to climb Rakaposhi (7788m) in the Karakorum in Pakistan. Band later told the story in his first book, *Road to Rakaposhi*, the preface for which he wrote in 1955 while on Kangchenjunga (8586m) with an expedition led by Charles



George Band climbing on Kangchenjunga in 1955.

Evans. He made the first ascent of that mountain, the third highest in the world, with Joe Brown. Subsequently, he took part in expeditions to the Alps, the Caucasus, Peru and the Karakoram.

On the Everest expedition, Band spent a week in the hazardous Khumbu Icefall establishing the route through it, opening the way into the Western Cwm. His high point was escorting a group of Sherpas to Camp VII at 7300m.

The ascent of Kangchenjunga was via the 3000m yalung Face. The team experienced poor weather but eventually Band and Brown pitched their tent at 8200m. The following day was fine and they set off for the summit. They came to a rock wall shortly before the top. This was irresistible to Brown, who increased the flow of oxygen from his bottle and climbed the highest rock pitch ever attempted. Band followed and there, some 20ft away and 5ft higher, was the summit snow cone. Out of respect for local beliefs, they did not stand on the summit snow cone.

In 1957, Band began a career in the oil industry, serving in positions of increasing responsibility over 26 years in seven different countries. In 1983, he returned to the UK to become Director General of the UK Offshore Operators' Association. He also took on the Presidency of the Alpine Club from 1987 to 1990.

After retiring, Band spent more time climbing and trekking, as well as talking about his experiences and writing. In 2003, to mark the Everest Jubilee, he wrote *Everest: 50 Years on Top of the World*, and this was followed in 2007 by *Summit: 150 Years of the Alpine Club*, in celebration of the founding of the world's oldest mountaineering club in 1857. In 2009, George was awarded an OBE for services to mountaineering and to charity.

George Band was President of the BMC from 1996 to 1999, and in 2011 he was appointed a Patron of the BMC. He was also variously over the years Chairman of the Mount Everest Foundation and of the Himalayan Trust.

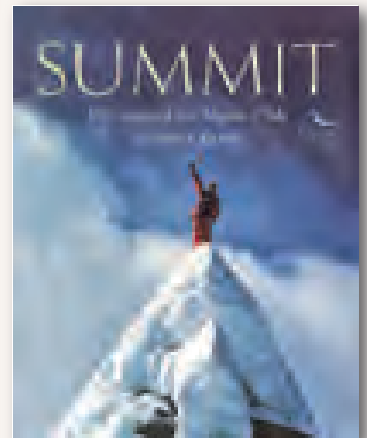
He remained active in mountaineering throughout his long life. When the Alpine Club celebrated its 150th anniversary in Zermatt in 2007, Band joined other attendees in a mass ascent of the Breithorn, (4164m). He had climbed this in 1963 via the tricky younggrat, during the club's centenary celebrations. He reached the summit again fifty years later at the age of 78, albeit by the easier standard route, but still testimony to his enduring enthusiasm for mountaineering.

The Board of Mountaineering Ireland offer their sincere condolences to George Band's family and friends, including our colleagues in the BMC.

May he rest in peace.

Patrick O'Sullivan

George Band, born 2 February 1929; died 26 August 2011



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