

Irish Mountain Log

The magazine for hillwalkers and climbers

THE ICON

First ascent of Stac an Iolair

OIREACHTAS WALK

Mountaineering Ireland hosts annual Dáil walk

FAIR HEAD MEET

Many classic routes receive ascents

DENALI CLIMB

Irish success on Alaskan peak

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PARTICIPATION AND RISK

Readers of the Irish Mountain Log are reminded that hillwalking and climbing are activities with a danger of personal injury or death.

Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks, and be responsible for their own actions and involvement. Mountaineering Ireland publishes and promotes safety and good practice advice and through Bord Oiliúnt Sléibhe (BOS, The Irish Mountain Training Board) administers a range of training programmes for walkers and climbers.



Welcome

We have another bumper magazine with lots of news and some good features about members' mountaineering exploits around the world, from Donegal and Kerry to Denali and Kenya, plus an account of a trek to Annapurna Base Camp. Hopefully, there will be something of interest for everyone.

Concern about the future of Coillte's estate continues to grow amongst those who currently enjoy and benefit from access to that estate for recreational purposes. Recent alarming reports indicate that the government is now planning to auction the 80-year harvesting rights to the trees on Coillte's property in the hopes of raising a significant amount of capital to help balance the State's books.

The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Simon Coveney, is proposing to bring a recommendation to government during July to sell the long-term harvesting rights to 850,000 acres of the State's forests next year. Given the current global shortage of timber, the sale is expected to generate worldwide interest. Under the proposal, it appears that the State would retain ownership of the land for strategic reasons.

Minister Coveney seems confident that public access will be protected and that the amenity value of the estate will be



Concern is growing that the sale of harvesting rights to Coillte's forests will affect access to Irish uplands

preserved. However, it is difficult to see how enforceable this will be, when the concern of the new owners of the harvesting rights will clearly be to protect and recoup their significant investment.

It is important that in the coming months all recreational users of the Coillte estate continue to highlight their concerns to their elected representatives about the sale of these harvesting rights and its likely impact on their access to that estate. Certainly, for members of Mountaineering Ireland, preserving that access is essential to ensure that we continue to be able to access Ireland's upland areas for our recreational purposes.

Patrick O'Sullivan, Editor

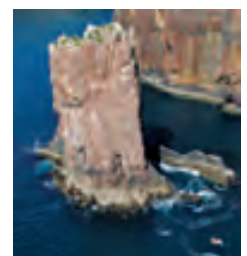


Write for the Log

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

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

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



ON THE COVER

The Icon, Stac an Iolair,
Arranmore Island, Co
Donegal.

PHOTOGRAPH BY
CAOIMHE GLEESON

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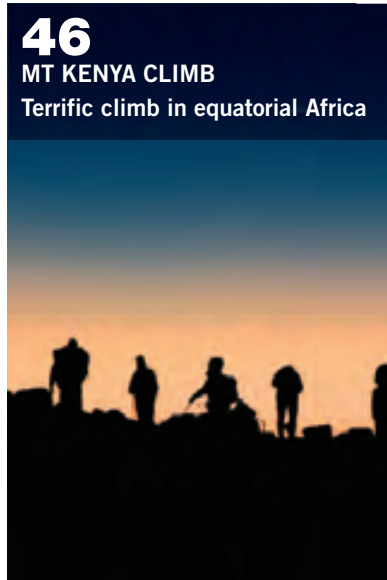
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climbers of Ireland since 1971**



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Autumn Gathering 2012

The Cooley Mountains, 19-21 October

Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Gathering 2012 will be hosted by **Crows Hillwalking Club** (some members are pictured below). The event will take place on the weekend of 19th-21st October in the Cooley Mountains area. Full details of the programme, registration and other information will be available on www.mountaineering.ie shortly.



New staff member for Dublin office

ROZANNE BELL joined Mountaineering Ireland in May as the new **Members & Training Support Administrator**, replacing Nicole Mullen, who was working as Training Administrator until April this year. We wish Nicole well in her new post as Training Officer with Camara Ireland, a charity that refurbishes computers for re-use in schools and offers IT training to the teachers.

Rozanne grew up in County Wicklow but went over to England to study at university there. Following graduation, she continued to live and work in the UK.

After working for some years variously in motor racing, sports marketing and risk assessment, she

decided in 2011 that she wanted to travel and ultimately to work in an area which she personally enjoyed. She left her job in the UK last year and spent some time back in Ireland last summer before spending a couple of months volunteering in South Africa.

Rozanne has always loved the outdoors and particularly the mountains, so she says it was an obvious choice for her to apply for the job of Member & Training Support Administrator with Mountaineering Ireland when she heard about it.

Now a few weeks into the job, Rozanne says she is enjoying getting involved in lots of different

areas of the sport through her work with Mountaineering Ireland.

She will be working with the Training Officer, Alun Richardson, on training matters and with Chief Executive Officer, Karl Boyle, on matters relating to members support ■



Rozanne Bell.



Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan TD (centre), Ursula MacPherson (President, Mountaineering Ireland) and Jimmy Barry (author, *Under Galtee Skies*) with a copy of Jimmy Barry's book during the recent Oireachtas Walk in the Galtees.

2012 Oireachtas Walk visits the Galtees

Mountaineering Ireland to host Oireachtas Walk of TDs, Senators and their staff annually

Mountaineering Ireland hosted the 2012 Oireachtas Walk on Sunday, 17th June, in the Galtee Mountains, Co Tipperary. More than thirty elected members and staff of the houses of the Oireachtas attended the event.

The group of TDs and Senators gathered in wonderful sunshine at the Aherlow House Hotel, where Aherlow Fáilte and the hotel provided refreshments and took the opportunity to give an overview of the local facilities, accommodation and community enterprise that exists in the area. Helen

Morrissey of Aherlow Fáilte expressed her delight that members of the Oireachtas had chosen the Glen of Aherlow and the Galtees for their 2012 event.

Mountaineering Ireland's President Ursula MacPherson; former Chairperson Ruairí Ó Conchúir, local Mountain Leaders Donal Bray and Maureen O'Brien; author of *Under Galtee Skies* and member of South-Eastern Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA) Jimmy Barry; and Roy Galvin (Chair) and Helen Morrissey of Aherlow Fáilte supported

Mountaineering Ireland staff on the day.

The members of the Oireachtas chose between a number of walks in the Galtees, with some taking in Lough Curra, more going to the Galtymore and others, with Minister Jimmy Deenihan setting an almighty pace, taking in Slievecusnabinnia, Galtymore, Galtymbeg and Cush.

It was the first time that Mountaineering Ireland had hosted the Oireachtas Walk and, following the success of the day, it has now been agreed to make this an annual Mountaineering Ireland and Oireachtas event. It was an opportunity for Mountaineering Ireland to build relationships with members of the Oireachtas and to focus on a number of important issues, including the future of Coillte, the Mountain Access Scheme and erosion management in the uplands.

The elected members and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas were also raising funds for their 2012 charity, Crumlin's Children's Hospital.

Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank all the volunteers, SEMRA, the local landowners, the members of Aherlow Fáilte, Aherlow House Hotel, Noel Browne Bus Hire and the many others that helped plan and support this event. **Karl Boyle, Chief Executive Officer**



Members of the Oireachtas set off on one of the Oireachtas Walks in the Galtees.

Minister Hogan launches Leave No Trace Schools in Laragh, Co Wicklow.



➔ EDUCATION

led a small working group that guided the project.

At the launch, Minister Hogan emphasised that by becoming 'Leave No Trace' Champions, primary school pupils will learn life-long lessons that will enhance their respect, appreciation and enjoyment of our countryside.

The Minister encouraged all primary schools to take up the Leave No Trace challenge and urged other organisations to affiliate to Leave No Trace and help spread the message.

Leave No Trace promotes an ethic which fits particularly well with young children. Learning alongside their teachers, they can develop an appreciation of the impact we have on the environment and learn how to make good choices to protect it ■

Leave No Trace Schools

Leave No Trace launches website for schools.

At the end of April, Environment Minister Phil Hogan launched the Leave No Trace Schools online teaching resource at St Kevin's National

School in Laragh, Co Wicklow. **LeaveNoTraceSchools.org** will help primary school teachers share the Leave No Trace message of caring for the environment with children.

This online resource was

developed by the Environmental Education Unit of An Taisce for Leave No Trace Ireland, and is funded by the Department of the Environment.

Mountaineering Ireland volunteer Vincent McAlinden

➔ INFORMATION

■ Teachers can access the new resources on the website www.leavenotracschools.org

■ Contact Cormac MacDonnell, 01 860 8823

■ Contact Beverly Pierson, +44 (0)28 9030 3938 or beverly@leavenotraceireland.org

Galtymore cross fifty years old this year

The cross was erected in the Patrician Year, 1962.

A limestone cross designed by Cork sculptor Seamus Murphy was erected on Galtymore in 1962, The Patrician Year. The story of how it was taken to the summit is an epic. The cross was driven to around 70 feet below the summit of Galtymore in a Bren Gun Carrier called the *Katie Daley* and then carried the rest of the way by five men: Tom Mullins, Robert West, John King, Tom McGrath and Jim Blake. It weighed in at three-

quarters of a tonne.

The *Katie Daley* took a route up from King's farmhouse under Knocknagalty. It took three days to get the cross up as the *Katie Daley* variously got stuck in the bog or her tracks came off en route. (Does anyone know where the *Katie Daley* is today?). Mitchelstown Creameries sponsored the making of the cross and all related works.

On Whit Sunday, June 1962, over 1,000 people climbed the mountain for a ceremony to bless the cross. Some of those in

attendance on the day were Richard Hayward, author and historian; Dr Daphne Pochin Mould, author of *The Mountains of Ireland*; and Lieutenant-Colonel Blake who started the annual Galtymore climb, which continued for many years.

Members of St Brendan's Mountaineering Club, Tralee, came all the way from Kerry, a nice drive in 1962. One newspaper reported that "the mountain was black with people." John Coughlan and Tom Fox from Boston captured the event on film. The limestone

cross was placed in a location known as Dawson's Table. The 50th anniversary was marked with walk up Galtymore on 9th June 2012, followed by a barbecue in Kings Yard, Knocknagalty. **Jimmy Barry**





FIRES IN THE UPLANDS

COILLTE TEO

Code of Practice for burning

Code of Practice on burning to improve safety in the uplands

Following a consultation period last year, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine has produced a Prescribed Burning Code of Practice in order to provide guidance to landowners who use controlled burning as a land management tool. It is intended that the Code of Practice will guide landowners in the implementation of safer, more effective use of controlled burning for land management under Irish conditions.

The full version of the Code of Practice is available on the Department's website at www.agriculture.gov.ie and provides more detailed information on the issues involved. There is also a leaflet available summarising the code.

Controlled or prescribed burning is the planned and deliberate use of fire as a land management tool. For example, in some parts of the country it has been the practice to burn off old vegetation to promote new grass growth and to improve upland grazing. In planning a safe and effective controlled burn, it is important for landowners to consider the total amount of land that needs to be burned and whether there are better

alternatives to prescribed burning. For instance, the burning of gorse (furze) can accelerate their rate of spread and seed production. In this case, mechanised clearing or chemical treatment may be more effective.

Under the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), it is illegal to burn vegetation growing on land that is not then cultivated between 1st March and 31st August in any year. Landowners found guilty of illegal burning may be subject to fines or possible imprisonment, while penalties under the Department's Support Payments for Farmers (e.g. Single Payment, Disadvantaged Areas) may also be imposed. Illegal burning activity may invalidate insurance and leave the landowner or operatives open to personal liability claims.

Safety is central to responsible prescribed burning operations. Poorly managed operations or ignorance of safety measures may lead to soil, wildlife and property damage, and possible injury or death. Before, during and after every burn, safety should be the foremost consideration ■



NEWS IN BRIEF

MINIMISE WILD FIRES IN THE OUTDOORS

Wild fires are a major hazard in the countryside and on the hills. They destroy the landscape and the wildlife in them, as well as putting lives at risk. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has issued new guidelines on preventing wild fires:

If you are a landowner:

- Follow the guidance on controlled burning to manage vegetation. Follow the codes of practice and adhere to all of the legal requirements, including those relating to the required notifications.

If you are a parent or you work with young people:

- Make sure they understand that fire can be extremely dangerous and unpredictable.
- Explain how serious the consequences are of starting a fire.
- Make sure they know it is illegal. Lighting a "wee fire" can be a *big* mistake.

If you are in the countryside:

- Put out cigarettes. Never throw cigarette ends out of cars.
- Only use barbecues in safe areas. Never leave them unattended.
- Ensure that barbecues are fully put out and cold before emptying them.
- Avoid using open fires in the countryside.
- Do not leave bottles or glass behind; sunlight shining through glass can start a fire.

If you see a countryside fire:

- Report it immediately to the Fire & Rescue Service (NI).
- Do not attempt to tackle fires that cannot be put out with a bucket of water.
- Leave the area as soon as possible.
- If you see someone setting fires, report it to the police.

Slip slidin' away

Brandon coast suffers major landslide.

Heavy rain is thought to have been responsible for the extensive landslide that occurred on the north side of Mount Brandon, Co Kerry, in the middle of June. Met Éireann reported that nearly a month's rain had fallen on 8th-9th June alone. An area of 10 acres on Mount Brandon, along the coastline, had fallen away, including the uninhabited Sás Creek between Brandon Head and Brandon Point.

In recent weeks, locals who had climbed Mount Brandon said they had noticed rockfalls and small landslides. More than half of Kerry's 684km coastline is "soft" and subject to erosion. Landslides and erosion are accelerated during high rainfall, such as occurred in Kerry in June. Fortunately, no one has been hurt in these incidents ■

Landslide at Sás Creek, Mt Brandon.



LANDSLIDE

IAN HASSELL (TRALEE MOUNTAINEERING CLUB)

NEWS IN BRIEF



COLUM CLARKE

REPORT CURLEW SIGHTINGS

As reported in *IML 99*, there has been a dramatic decline in the number of breeding Curlews in Ireland. The **Irish Red Grouse Association** is working with **BirdWatch Ireland** to gauge the Curlew population in each county, with a particular focus on counties Monaghan, Cavan and Leitrim.

The Curlew has been red-listed as a globally endangered species since 2007. Many factors have contributed to the Curlew's decline, including loss of habitat, predation, afforestation and changes in farming practices. These are similar to the reasons for the drop in Red Grouse numbers.

► Please forward any useful information or sightings (up to end of summer) to **Vincent Flannelly** at: nessa.od@hotmail.com.



ANITA DONAGHY

ALISON IRWIN



Students from Sligo Grammar School on the summit of Benbulbin, Co Sligo, in a sponsored climb for INET, the Irish-Nepalese educational charity.

FUNDRAISER

Benbulbin hike for INET

Irish-Nepalese Educational Trust fundraising event.

Monday 23rd April turned out to be a very fine day for INET, the Irish Nepalese Educational Trust. Seven-year-old Ben Graham, along with a group of Transition Year students from Sligo Grammar School, took part in a sponsored climb of the 526m Benbulbin, or Binn Ghulbain, to raise funds for INET.

Ben, a pupil at Carbury National School, has already raised money for the charity which was set up after the first successful Irish Everest Expedition in 1993.

Alison Irwin organised the charity hike and Fran Lynch of **Muddy Boots Trekking** led the group, with back-up from Fiona Gallagher, Tommy Craddock, Michael Mooney and Mary Quill.

Good weather on the day ensured success for all involved. Immediately afterwards, Alison said: "We have completed our climb of Benbulbin in aid of INET and a great day was had by all."

A jumble sale for INET was also held in Sligo on Saturday 5th May, when used clothing and footwear were recycled. The jumble sale was very successful and just over €1,300 was raised. The final tally from

these events will be known as soon as all the sponsorship money is received.

INET volunteer director Chris Avison said: "This is a fantastic effort by these young folk in Sligo. Our sincere thanks go to Alison and everyone involved, especially to the organisers and helpers on the day. All money raised will go towards providing sustainable education projects in and around Phuleli, a remote village in the lap of Mount Everest" ■

► INET is a small, entirely voluntary charity registered in Ireland. More information on www.inetireland.ie.



The campsite at Glencolmcille.

CLIMBING MEET

ALAN TEES

Glencolmcille Climbfest 2012

Several new routes put up at Skelpoonagh over the weekend.

Whilst the Baltic conditions continued into May, and a number of climbers made their beds in the comfortable hostel at Glencolmcille, most braved the cold nights and camped at the GAA grounds during Climbfest 2012, held in Glencolmcille, Co Donegal.

There were about forty tents, vans and temporary habitations of various types in the sports grounds. Those that survived the Friday night there were rewarded on the Saturday, because it was dry, mainly sunny and quite warm where sheltered from the north wind. The routes in the west-facing zawns at Skelpoonagh, therefore, saw a lot of traffic, particularly Zawn 4, where about fifteen new routes at amenable grades were put up over the course of the weekend.

There was the usual bonfire on the beach in the evening, which was great, as the wind had died down. The music was supplied by big Paul and Niall. The firewood and energy lasted until about 4:00am.

On Sunday morning, some of the participants went to Malinbeg, some went back to Skelpoonagh, some went sea kayaking and some went elsewhere.

Unfortunately, one of the climbers was injured in a fall on Sunday evening and, as he had sustained a head injury, the rescue services were called. Those of us who witnessed the evacuation were hugely impressed by the speed and professionalism of the helicopter crew and coastguards – it seemed like they were there within minutes. All of us who use the cliff and mountain environment owe them a huge debt of gratitude for the service they provide. That level of efficiency must require a huge input of effort, practice and commitment.

Fortunately, the injuries were not serious and we wish the injured climber a speedy and full recovery.

In addition to thanking the rescue services, we would like to pay tribute to the GAA club for making us so welcome and, of course, the climbers themselves, without whom the weekend would not have happened.

Next year, the Climbfest will probably be based in Cruit for climbing on Gola, Owey, Bingorms, etc. **Alan Tees**

NEWS IN BRIEF



PURE PROJECT FUNDING EXTENDED

Funding for the **Protecting Uplands and Rural Environments (PURE)** project has been extended for three more years. Announcing the extension of funding for the project, the Minister for the Environment, Phil Hogan TD, expressed his satisfaction with the progress of the project to date.

Minister Hogan said the partnership approach adopted by PURE to the problem of illegal dumping and fly-tipping in the Wicklow and Dublin uplands had enjoyed great success in keeping one of our most beautiful and most visited landscapes free of litter over the last six years.

"It is crucial that we continue to build on the progress made to date," Minister Hogan said. "The Wicklow and Dublin uplands are one of the country's most important tourist destinations and, for this reason, I am delighted to extend funding of €337,500 to the project over the three-year period 2012-2014."

This funding amounts to €100,000 per annum to support the work of the project over the three years and an additional €37,500 in 2013 to fund the purchase of a replacement vehicle for the existing PURE truck, which is used to quickly remove illegally dumped waste from south Dublin and the Wicklow uplands ■



Bill Murphy (founder member, Mountain Meitheal) and Robert Grandon (chairperson) assemble the hut in Avondale.

➔ SHELTER CONSTRUCTION

Mountain Meitheal goes west

Week-long workcamp in Mayo will celebrate the 10th anniversary of Mountain Meitheal, the mountain conservation volunteers group.

Mountain Meitheal will spend a week in Mayo in mid-July, constructing an Adirondack-type shelter on the Bangor Trail. Volunteers will camp out for the week, and the week-long workcamp will celebrate the 10th anniversary of Mountain Meitheal.

The shelter will be Mountain Meitheal's contribution to the **Wild Nephin Project**, which will deliver Ireland's first designated wilderness area. It will be sited on Coillte property, with their kind permission.

The hut design is similar to the latest huts provided on the Wicklow Way: three-sided with a raised platform, with space to sleep five to six people. The hut will have a cedar shingle roof which, when weathered, will blend in with the surroundings. There will be an iron fire-ring, a water butt and, most importantly for feedback, a visitors' book.

The hut was prefabricated in a workshop at Avondale House outside Rathdrum, Co Wicklow, then disassembled

and transported as close as possible to the site. The volunteers will carry the hut in, plank by plank, before re-assembling and finishing it. The group is also hoping to do some trail repair work in the area.

The **Bangor Trail** is one of the toughest and most remote trails in Ireland. It dates back possibly to prehistory and was definitely being used in the 16th century by cattle drovers taking their animals to market.

The trail meanders through some of the most rugged and wild land left in Ireland. Although there are some waymarks, it is not a National Waymarked Way. Visitors are advised to be prepared for

very boggy conditions, should not attempt the trail alone and should have a map and compass and the skills to use them.

Mountain Meitheal, founded in 2002, operates from February to November and has workdays every two weeks. Since inaugurating an award scheme in 2006, it has contributed 12,750 volunteer hours to path maintenance and repair. It is currently working in the Wicklow Mountains National Park, repairing flood damage in Glendalough.

► For more information and a calendar of events, see www.pathsavers.org ■

New guide to developing trails

Download, or order copy.

The National Trails Office has launched a new guide to developing trails: *A Guide to the Planning and Development of Recreational Trails in Ireland*. The guide is dedicated to **Joss Lynam**, who encouraged and supported the

development of Irish trails for three decades or more.

The publication provides guidance and advice to any individual, group or organisation interested or involved in planning a recreational trail. The fact that the document is endorsed by a number of funding bodies should help ensure that newly-

created trails have long-term appeal, are in harmony with the environment, have the support of landowners, and are viable for the long term.

► The guide is available on www.irishtrails.ie or phone the National Trails Office on 01 8608800 for hard copy ■



Fairy Castle Trail upgrade

New addition to Dublin Mountains Way.

HELEN LAWLESS

Upgraded section of Fairy Castle Trail.



➔ TRAIL IMPROVEMENT

Coillte, on behalf of Dublin Mountains Partnership, has completed an upgrade of the popular walking trail leading up to the cairn on Fairy Castle. This path forms part of the Dublin Mountains Way and the Fairy Castle Loop Trail on Ticknock and Kilmashogue.

Due to the huge footfall the area receives, the path had become very badly eroded over the last fifteen years, with the damage extending up to fourteen metres in width at its widest point.

It was decided to create a 'reversal trail' using the local material on site. A reversal trail is slightly higher than the surrounding ground and is cambered so that the water can run off it.

This area gets a lot of wet weather and, to ensure that a build-up of water will not damage the trail, cross-drains

made of large rocks from the site were put in place.

A machine was used to construct the trail. This was necessary to enable the movement of these large rocks and also to construct the trail, which is compacted two to three feet deep above the previous walking surface.

As part of the trail is close to the archaeological monument at the top of Fairy Castle, a 200-metre circular bog bridge was constructed to lead around the monument. The bog bridge was placed on top of the existing route and did not require the breaking of ground, which could affect the historical site.

The ground disturbance that can be seen at present will ease when the vegetation regenerates, as can be seen with the adjoining Wicklow Way trail, which was built just two years ago.

► For more information, see www.dublinmountains.ie ■

Report Dublin & Wicklow scramblers

Dublin Mountains Initiative takes action on 'scrambler' problem.

The Dublin Mountains Initiative (DMI), in common with many other outdoor organisations, has long had concerns about the noise pollution, environmental damage and particularly the safety hazard posed by the unauthorised use of two and four-wheeled motorised vehicles in upland areas.

In the Dublin Mountains, this is of particular concern in areas used for family recreation such as Massy's Wood, Hellfire and Ticknock, where these vehicles pose a real danger. For too long there has seemed to be no solution to the problem.

The DMI, in association with its member organisations, including Mountaineering Ireland, has decided to take action on the issue. Recent meetings with representatives from An Garda Síochána have been most helpful as the Gardaí have indicated that they are very much aware of the problem and are keen

to tackle it.

There are obvious practical difficulties with catching people on quads or Moto-Cross or Enduro bikes and hence being able to enforce the bye-laws. However, the Gardaí will now be stepping up their presence in the uplands in an effort to curtail this activity. They have also said they are willing to investigate reports of illegal use of motorised vehicles on the hills.

Save this number into your phone

If you see off-road vehicles in the Wicklow Mountains, phone the **Wicklow Mountains National Park Duty Ranger** immediately on **087 980 3899**. There is a ranger on duty every weekend, and even if they can't respond at the time, all calls are logged. This helps to build a case for dealing with the problem. Save the number into your phone now.

If you witness any such usage and *are able to supply details of the registration of any van or truck used to carry the bikes or quads*, please send these, along with date, time, location and number of off-road vehicles, to the chair of DMI, **Mark d'Alton**, at markdalton1@eircom.net.

One interesting legal point to note as regards enforcement is that a car park open to the public (such as Tibbradden or Ticknock) is considered to be the public highway and hence all vehicles used in such areas must be taxed and insured.

The DMI is also aware that, in conjunction with law enforcement, alternative areas for motorised activities will need to be found. As part of the Dublin Mountains Partnership, they are actively engaged in consultation as to how this might best be done. Such a facility will only succeed with input from the motorcycling community and it would need to be balanced with the needs of other recreational users, the local community and the requirements of the law ■



An Óige at eighty

At 80 years young, a revitalised An Óige is seeking volunteers to help achieve new goals.

An Óige, the Irish Youth Hostel Association, has reached and passed its 80th year milestone and has developed a new strategy to make sure that it remains relevant in the 21st century.

While its purpose has always been about helping people (especially young people) to appreciate the Irish countryside, there is now a new emphasis on inspiring a spirit of adventure among young people.

An Óige has always provided a network of comfortable and friendly hostels – places for people to meet and socialise while travelling to some of the most beautiful areas around Ireland. However, its ambitions have now extended to, among other things, promoting and providing activities (particularly outdoor activities) for young people at its twenty-one hostels, as part of its role as a vibrant and vital charity.

Already, An Óige, in conjunction with **Provident Financial**, provides financial

aid through the “Give Us a Break” project for a number of disadvantaged youth groups and schools...but this is only the start.

An Óige currently works closely with a partner, **EcoAdventure Ireland**, in promoting outdoor adventure activities to groups in its hostels in Wicklow, Donegal and Killarney. Now, in its 81st year, the association aims to go further and is developing partnerships with sister organisations such as Mountaineering Ireland, Scouting Ireland and Cycling Ireland.

To help achieve its goals, An Óige is looking for volunteers who can play a key role in promoting and providing activities for young people, including everything from mountain leadership and other outdoor activities to ICT skills, strategic skills and hospitality and marketing acumen and any skills you may be able to offer!

► If you are willing and able to help out and awaken your spirit of adventure and community, then please contact An Óige with your details at info@anoige.ie. Everyone is welcome! ■

An Óige
Irish Youth Hostel Association



Litter pickers at the Galtee annual clean-up.

➔ GIVING BACK

Litter-picking good!

More than twenty hillwalkers from a number of local clubs joined in the annual clean-up day in the Galtees on Saturday 21st April. Working mainly in the vicinity of Cush and Lough Muskry car parks, they collected six car trailer-loads of rubbish. Afterwards, the volunteers were treated to refreshments in the Aherlow Fáilte office.

Later, some discussion about setting up a Munster branch of Mountain Meitheal resulted in the formation of a small working committee.

The following day, **Limerick Climbing Club** had a demonstration of rescue techniques from SEMRA (South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association). This involved some first-aid training, a briefing on how to

call Mountain Rescue in the event of an accident, and a look at some of the rescue team's equipment. **Fergus Flynn (Environmental Officer, Limerick Climbing Club)**

* * * * *

Members of **Blackrock Hillwalking Club** carried out a clean-up around the lower car park at Torc Waterfall, Killarney, in late April. Led by the club's Environmental Officer, Rachel Boyle, they filled several refuse sacks with plastic bottles, aluminium drink cans, glass bottles and other items.

Once the litter-pick was completed, the group headed for the top of Torc Mountain where the stunning views added to their sense of satisfaction ■



Blackrock Hillwalking Club members at Killarney clean-up.

Foyle club 'gives back' in the Mournes

Weekend of trail repair in the High Mournes.

After organising many walks over the years in the uplands throughout the north of Ireland, the Foyle Hillwalking and Rambling Club decided to try their hand at giving something back to help maintain the beautiful landscape that their members enjoy so much.

A large contingent of members from the club signed up to spend a day in the Mournes under the guidance of Emma Cunningham from the Mourne Heritage Trust.

The task was to repair an eroded path from Ben Crom Reservoir up towards Binnian saddle. Amidst spectacular scenery, Emma gave a quick talk about the tools needed for the day. Then the enthusiastic team set off with picks, spades, rakes and buckets, not quite whistling while they worked but certainly in great humour – but with a degree of doubt that they would actually achieve anything significant in a weekend.

Emma and two other Mourne Heritage Trust employees, John and Phil, were accompanied by several other (more seasoned) conservation volunteers, so with three teams working on different stretches of the track, the work on the path progressed pretty



quickly.

Avril McAllister, Club Environmental Officer, was very pleased with the support from members. "I had a great response to the suggestion that we should take part in a path repair volunteer session, and members really made a great effort on the day. There were sufficient tasks for everyone regardless of their ability or physical strength. People discovered muscles they hadn't used in years, and the team approach has helped strengthen friendships and showed a side to many of us that we don't normally see on a walk. There are even requests already to do this again next year!"

Emma Cunningham, Volunteer Coordinator with the Mourne Heritage Trust, said: "By investing some time

in path work on the Ben Crom to Binnian route, we are mitigating the environmental impacts of mountain users on this previously unmanaged route. This is important, as the route falls within an area which is designated not only as an Area of Special Scientific Interest but as a Special Area of Conservation. We are working with the landscape to implement erosion control techniques, whilst maintaining the challenge of the High Mournes and the remoteness of the experience."

She added: "The Mourne Heritage Trust welcomes both individual participants – who are interested in joining either our weekday or weekend pathwork repair teams – as well as groups, to spend a rewarding day in the hills, giving something back to the

environment we all enjoy. Voluntary donations are also welcome."

By mid-afternoon, a section of the path had taken on a recognisable shape compared to the muddy track which met the group in the morning. The path should help to make access to Binnian more sustainable whilst protecting the vegetation on either side from the destructive power of many boots trampling across it each year.

Foyle Hillwalking and Rambling Club took the opportunity to turn this into a weekend event, with accommodation booked at Tollymore Outdoor Centre. The Centre caters for groups like this and provides a high-quality base for exploring the Mournes at a very reasonable cost.

If any other groups are thinking of putting something back, Club Environmental Officer Avril McAllister can provide reassurance that it will be worthwhile and enjoyable, and Emma Cunningham from the Mourne Heritage Trust will be delighted to coordinate more events like this.

► Contact Avril McAllister at info@foylehillwalkingclub.co.uk and Emma Cunningham at emma.cunningham@mourne.co.uk ■



Killarney Kids Adventure Race 2012

Activity day for children at Aghadoe Youth Hostel.

Following the success of the Killarney Adventure Race last year, Kerry Outdoor Sports organised another similar event at the end of May this year, again with a view to getting children out and about.

The race was held in the grounds of the An Óige Hostel in Aghadoe, Killarney, Co Kerry, and featured a zip-line from Play-at-Height in Dingle, a Berg Go-Kart track from O'Sullivan Cycles in Killarney, an Obstacle Course from the Army Surplus Warehouse, and a mixture of other outdoor education-type games involving co-operation, orienteering, scavenger-hunting, water, mud, and more, and more!

The organisers were assisted by local outdoor sports instructors (and some future outdoor instructors!) and by local shops, families and friends. The day went very well. There were very few tears and no first-aid incidents.

Suppliers of Kerry Outdoor Sports very kindly donated a range of suitable outdoor



prizes, and O'Sullivan Cycles generously donated three bicycles as spot prizes.

The sun shone, families had picnics in the gardens of the hostel and the day was a resounding success. In fact, the organisers were all in bed well before the kids that night, exhausted from their efforts during the day! **Eileen Daly (Kerry Outdoor Sports)**



Success and controversy on Everest in 2012

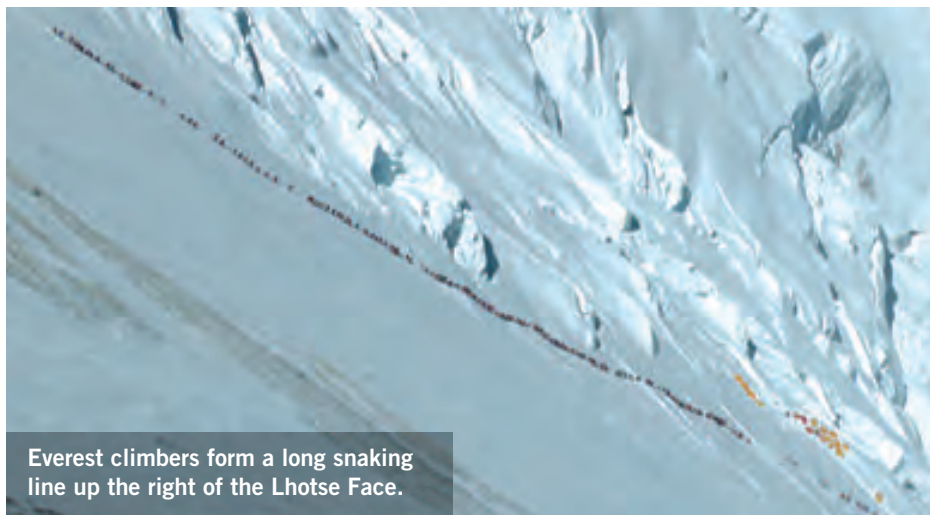
'Traffic jam' creates major hazard

There have been three further Irish successes on Everest this year. Dubliners **Cian O'Brolcháin**, a 32-year-old professional tennis coach, and **Albert Connaughton**, a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club, separately reached the summit from the Nepalese side on May 25th. The previous weekend, from the Tibetan side, Co Down mountain guide **Noel Hanna** had made his fourth ascent of the mountain.

Cian O'Brolcháin, who was raising funds for cystic fibrosis, and Albert Connaughton join the ranks of the now more than thirty Irish people who have successfully climbed Everest since Dawson Stelfox made the first Irish ascent in 1993. All of the Irish ascents so far have been in the pre-monsoon season.

Cian O'Brolcháin was a member of a **Jagged Globe** expedition. Eleven members of that expedition summited on May 25th, including five Sherpas and a guide, David Hamilton, who stood on the summit for the sixth time. Albert Connaughton was with a **Mountain Trip** commercial expedition, which had also waited for the improved weather conditions that arrived that weekend.

The two Irish summiters on May 25th were among almost 200 people who reached the summit of Everest from both Nepal and Tibet over that weekend. It is estimated that, for the season as a whole, there were almost 450 westerners and 500 Sherpas in the base camps



Everest climbers form a long snaking line up the right of the Lhotse Face.

RALF DUJMOVITS

on either side of the mountain, from which a total of 548 individuals summited.

However, there were also a number of fatalities on the South Col route which brought the estimated number of deaths on Everest this season to eleven. Warmer temperatures and low winter snowfall, possibly a reflection of climate change, were said to have increased the hazards of rockfall on the mountain, particularly on the direct route up the Lhotse Face, which has been used for over a decade.

An alternative route was established this year to the right of the Face, onto the shoulder of Nuptse, where it was safer from rockfall. This was, in fact, the route originally used in 1953, but it was also longer and more tiring than the direct route.

The deaths this season have caused controversy, with the loss of four climbers and a Sherpa in one 48-hour period during their preparation for a summit attempt. This death toll is the worst in a 48-hour period on Everest since 1996, when eight people died in two days.

There were further deaths, however, which brought the total to eleven. As mentioned, weather conditions were particularly hazardous, with experienced Sherpas

reporting the mountain was 'dry' because of the low snowfall, but there was also a high-altitude 'traffic jam' that occurred on May 26th, with climbers becoming hypothermic or frostbitten and running out of bottled oxygen as they waited to ascend or descend the Hillary Step.

Last year, Kildare-based businessman **John Delaney** (42) became the first Irishman to lose his life on the mountain when he collapsed above the Hillary Step, just below the summit.

Following the confirmation of these deaths, former Nepalese Mountaineering Association president Ang Tshering called for greater controls on attempts to climb the mountain from the south side, so that scores of climbers are not trying for the 8,848m-summit at the same time. This call was echoed by experienced mountaineer Ralf Dujmovits, attempting to climb Everest for the sixth time, whose photo of climbers queuing on the Lhotse face went viral on the internet. He made a passionate plea to the Nepalese government that they introduce stricter regulations to control the numbers of climbers on Everest and to filter out those not physically fit enough to do the climb. **Patrick O'Sullivan**

Heads up on BMC helmet campaign

The British Mountaineering Council is running a campaign throughout 2012 to raise awareness about the importance of wearing a helmet when climbing. The aim of the campaign is to challenge climbers' views on helmets and to encourage them to examine their reasons for wearing one or not.

Deciding on the risks that are personally acceptable is fundamental to participation in climbing and mountaineering. Whether to wear a helmet or not is one of those choices that only the individual can make.

The BMC's campaign aims to make that choice an informed one by



giving the latest advice and information on how helmets work and what risks they can help protect against. To read the BMC's helmet guide, log on to www.thebmc.co.uk/helmets ■

Walkers above the Hare's Gap in the Mournes.



DAVID DOYLE

TOURISM

Walkers are welcome!

Outdoor Recreation NI promotes Northern Ireland walking holidays.

Whether it's the early morning breakfasts, the offer of a flask of coffee for your day in the hills, or a place to dry your wet boots on your return, good quality accommodation can make or indeed break your walking holiday.

Recognising that accommodation for walkers means more than just a roof over your head, **Outdoor Recreation NI** has hand-picked a number of pro-active accommodation providers who are keen to provide walker-friendly packages. These accommodation options can be found on a brand-new accommodation section on the WalkNI.com website.

One of Northern Ireland's most renowned walking hostels is included in this initiative, and Mairead White MBE, Director of Cnocnafeola in Attical, believes that working together with local guides and providing some welcome added extras, specifically tailored to walkers, has set them apart from the rest of the pack.

Mairead, who in 1999 was awarded an MBE for services to community regeneration, explains: "It's the little things that matter. Hot showers; drying rooms; soft, guest slippers for tired feet; packed lunches; newspapers for your wet boots; a pick-up from the hills, if

necessary; laminated maps; and good hearty, home cooking. We try to give our guests an experience in the Mournes and not just sell a product."

Genuine welcomes and personal touches come naturally to Mairead and her staff. However, this attention to detail can also be found in a growing number of larger hotels across Northern Ireland, keen to attract walkers. One hotel which has consistently catered for visiting walkers is the popular 4-star Bushmills

Inn Hotel in County Antrim. As well as providing excellent walker-friendly facilities, the Bushmills Inn has recognised the need to develop attractive walking deals and has teamed up with Outdoor Recreation NI to offer 20% off future walking breaks on the North Coast ■

► Visit WalkNI.com to see a full list of current walker-friendly accommodation offers across Northern Ireland.





Minister for the Environment (Northern Ireland) Alex Attwood (left), Caro-Lynne Ferris and Dawson Stelfox at Belfast Castle for the launch of Outdoor Recreation NI's Operational Plan.

➔ TOURISM

Outdoor activities galore!

Outdoor Recreation NI launches new Operational Plan.

Northern Ireland's Minister for the Environment, Alex Attwood MLA, recently joined invited guests at Belfast Castle to launch Outdoor Recreation NI's (formerly CAAN) new Operational Plan for the period 2012-2015.

Outdoor Recreation NI's work over the next three years will focus on supporting partnerships; facilities; volunteering; sustaining, increasing and widening participation; and promoting outdoor recreation.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Attwood said: "Northern Ireland boasts a stunning, diverse natural landscape which provides the perfect setting for outdoor recreation. Importantly, the rich variety of outdoor activities available throughout Northern Ireland also enhances economic activity in rural areas and enables locals and visitors alike to understand and appreciate our surroundings."

He added: "I know that Outdoor Recreation NI has been very successful at forging strong partnerships, developing quality products, promoting them in innovative ways and engaging those who enjoy the outdoors. I look forward to seeing more quality facilities and opportunities for outdoor activities, from the sedate to the exhilarating, that

everyone in our community can enjoy along with our visitors."

Dr Caro-lynn Ferris, Outdoor Recreation NI's Executive Director, explained: "We have been making great strides to develop high-quality recreational facilities since 1998 and, despite the name-change, our vision remains the same.

"During the last three years, in partnership with a wide range of organisations, we developed purpose-built mountain biking trails in Blessingbourne Estate, Fivemiletown, and a network of multi-use trails at Castle Ward Demesne on the shores of Strangford Lough. In addition, three stunning coastal canoe trails were completed as was the conversion of two derelict cottages on Trannish Island, Lough Erne, and at Port Moon on the North Coast into 'bothy'-type accommodation for canoeists. We are already progressing a further eleven facility projects and hope to start several new projects during the next three years."

Guests at the launch had a chance to take part in archery, Segwaying, bushcraft or a walk up Cavehill before listening to Kate Richardson, the first Irishwoman to row the Atlantic Ocean as part of a five-woman team ■

► For more information on the Operational Plan for 2012-2015, see www.outdoorrecreationni.com.

NEWS IN BRIEF



MOUNTAIN RESCUE NEEDS YOU!

Raise funds with abseils in Mourne and Wicklow

Normally, it's a case of walkers and climbers calling Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) for help, but this summer the roles are reversed – MRI teams, North and South, are asking the public to support their first ever fundraising abseils.

Two events are running in tandem on Saturday 28th July this year:

● **The MRI Dambusters Abseil 2012** will see the 30-metre Spelga Dam in the Mourne open to public abseiling for the first time.

● **The MRI RockStars Abseil 2012** takes place at Dwyer's Rock in County Wicklow. Its stunning verticality and panoramic vistas should be familiar to adrenalin junkies from all over Ireland.

The online registration for both events couldn't be simpler – see pages xx?? and xx?? in this issue of the Irish Mountain Log for more information. Please get involved in these fabulous fundraising firsts. You'll be helping teams who are always on standby to help you!



Cork Youth Climbing Club

How old is the club?

The club was started in autumn 2011 by Damien O'Sullivan and his partner, Beatriz Baselga Pascual. We did some preparatory work with Angela Carlin from Mountaineering Ireland, such as the 'Fundamentals' training day to learn about teaching climbing to young people, and we had some coaching top-ups from Coaching Ireland and on-site safety training from Alun Richardson, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer.

Where is the club based?

We train and climb at UCC's Mardyke Climbing Wall on Thursday evenings, but there's an informal group of coaches, parents and some of the older kids who usually meet there on Tuesdays as well.

How many members do you have and are parents involved as well?

We have around 30 junior members. This naturally fluctuates depending on school and holiday schedules, the odd injury or illness, and so on, but we usually have between 20-25 kids every training night.

From the start, Damien and Bea were very keen to incorporate parents' input and assistance. Several attend every week, they have passed belay training and they are well on the way to being able to act independently of the club, especially at climbing walls.

How many volunteer coaches?

We've a really good pool of about ten coaches who all have either broad climbing experience or some other expertise, such as first aid. Naturally, they are all Garda-vetted. As before, several parents keep the lines of youngsters busy, belaying and

crowd-controlling on club nights.

We are hugely fortunate to have the support of some really great climbers such as Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll, Andy Kirkpatrick and Iain Miller, all of whom have taken time to deliver coaching sessions to the youngsters.

Do you accept new members?

It's difficult to keep the door open for new members on the club nights due to safety issues, but we're always keen to talk to enthusiastic youngsters. One way we determine this is if a youngster has attended one of the Mardyke's own courses and shows aptitude. More information on membership is available on our website, www.corkyouthclimbingclub.com.

How often do you make trips to other climbing venues?

Well, last year we made a series of visits to the Play-at-Height Wall in Dingle, where there is a broader range of climbing challenges but still within an indoor environment.

Beyond that, we've held outdoor meets at the Gap of Dunloe in Kerry and at Ballykeeffe Quarry near Kilkenny, which have been well attended and involved overnight stays.



NEAL MCQUAID

Any big trips planned?

We've a series of monthly events planned for the year, also incorporating the IBL and the YCS series.

Furthermore, a small group of the older lads and a couple of

parents and coaches are heading to Siurana – a climbing area east of Barcelona, Spain – for some sport climbing at Easter. Watch this space!

Describe climbing in five words?

Excitement, adventure, commitment, companionship, self-awareness.

Describe your club's attitude or philosophy in five words?

Supportive, safety-conscious, challenging, all geared to turning out independent young climbers ■

► Neal McQuaid was in conversation with Damien O'Sullivan.



dambusters

ABSEIL • 2012



REGISTER TODAY

This is your chance to show your support for the Mountain Rescue Teams throughout Ireland who are constantly on call should you need them!

ABSEIL DATE:

Saturday 28th July 2012
(9am - 5pm)

ABSEIL LOCATION:

Spegla Dam, Mourne
Mountains, Co. Down

REGISTER ONLINE

www.eventelephant.com/dambusters
To create your fundraising page please
go to www.mycharity.ie

For further information please contact Sharon on
00353 87 259 0290 or email fundraising@mountainrescue.ie

£30
Registration fee

£100
Minimum sponsorship

www.mountainrescue.ie

SUPPORTED BY
northern ireland
water

This event is run by
Life Adventure
Company

Please note that all
participants under 18 must
be accompanied by an adult.



Registered Charity
CHY10412



Photographic Competition

Mountaineering Ireland is holding a photographic competition in conjunction with the production of its new guidebook, *Irish Peaks*. The closing date for entries is 31st August 2012 and there will be €1,000 in cash prizes. We have received many wonderful shots of Carrauntoohil and Lugnaquilla already, but we really need photos of many of the other 2,000ft peaks in Ireland that will be included in the guidebook.

FIRST PRIZE €200
RUNNERS-UP (6) €100 each
NEXT-BEST PHOTOS (8) ... €25 each

All entries will be considered for inclusion. You are required to submit

photographs of not less than 1Mb and not more than 5Mb. We would request that you retain any higher resolutions of the entries that you have, in case they are required for publication.

There is no hard and fast criteria for entries but photographs that clearly identify one of the mountains, or a feature of one of the mountains, would be appropriate.

An action photograph of someone on a ridge (for example), preferably with a substantial portion of the mountain or neighbouring mountain in the background, would also be appropriate.

Photos with individuals in the

**PRIZES
TOTAL
€1,000**

foreground (e.g. a picture of someone easily identifiable, posing with the mountain in the background) would not be appropriate.

The decision of the Mountaineering Ireland judging panel will be final. The panel will select the most impactful photographs for inclusion in the guidebook.

Entrants whose photographs are published in the guidebook will receive a complimentary copy.

All entries should be emailed to: photcomp@mountaineering.ie.

► For further details, please see www.mountaineering.ie.



Irish Peaks guidebook

Mountaineering Ireland's guide to Ireland's 2,000ft+ mountains, *Irish Peaks*, is still incomplete. We are still looking for contributions of route descriptions for some of the mountains, mostly in Wicklow.

Below, we present our fifth sample contribution, this time from Mary Conway (Clare Outdoor Club), describing her favourite approach route to The Paps, Co Kerry.

If you wish to make a contribution of a route description for the guidebook, please send your description to Margaret Tees by post to Bunagee, Culdaff, Co Donegal (tel: 086 809 8110) or

email margarettees@eircom.net. Please include an annotated photocopy of an OS map showing the route. We would also welcome any photos of the mountain in question (which will be entered automatically for the Photographic Competition, above).

We cannot guarantee that every contribution received will make it into the guidebook.

If you would like to provide a route description, please contact Margaret Tees to find out if a route description for that peak is already being prepared for the guidebook. We look forward to hearing from you.

MOUNTAINEERING IRELAND GUIDE TO IRELAND'S 2,000FT MOUNTAINS

Sample contribution No 5: The Paps (An Dá Chích Anann), Derrynasaggart Mountains, Co Kerry

Names of mountains:

The Paps (*An Dá Chích Anann*), Derrynasaggart Mountains, Co Kerry.
 (i) East Pap (*An Chioch Thoir*). (ii) West Pap (*An Chioch Thiar*).

Heights:

East Pap 694m (2,277ft); West Pap 690m (2,264ft).

Grid references:

East Pap: W 133 855; West Pap: W 125 855

Ordnance Survey (OS) sheet number:

Sheet No 79

Introduction:

The Paps, East and West, are two breast-like peaks in the Derrynasaggart Mountains close to Rathmore. They are named after Dana, the pagan goddess of fertility. The cairns atop both summits are thought to contain Neolithic burial chambers. A few kilometres to the north lies Cathair Crobh Dearg (the fort of the Red Claw). The fort is known locally as 'The City,' a modern translation of the Irish word 'Cathair,' meaning stone fort. It is believed to have been inhabited from the Bronze Age right up to recent times. While it was, in the past, a place of pagan ritual, it has since been Christianised, and Mass and Decades of the Rosary are still served there. There is an information sign at the fort and another giving details of the traditional manner of 'paying the rounds.' This route, combining The Paps and The City, is a spiritual journey in the footsteps of our Celtic forefathers.



The Paps, Co Kerry, viewed from the north.

Route description:

Take the N22 from Killarney towards Cork for about 15km. Turn left at sign for Clonkeen. After passing the church in Clonkeen, take the next road left which leads into the Clydagh Valley.

After 2.5km, there is a lay-by on the left with parking for several cars outside a fence (W 129 832). From the car, have a look to the north along the edge of the forestry before you begin to walk – this will be your descent route later in the day.

To begin your walk, follow the Clydagh Valley road along by the Clydagh River for about 1.5km. Take a track to the left at W 144 840. You are now on the old route connecting the Clydagh Valley with Rathmore.

If you happen to be there between May and August, keep an eye out for the carnivorous Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) with its sticky, yellow-green rosette of leaves and violet flowers.

Follow the track north past Lough Glannafreaghaun. At about 500m north of the lake, watch out for a 'walking man' marker post on the left at W 147 867. This well-marked trail will take you to a stile, stepping stones across the river and all the way to The City at Shrone, (W 138 882).

As you get closer, you will see the galvanised roofs of the old buildings in the fort. Note that the Duhallow Trail no longer follows the route shown on the OS map, but the trail to Shrone is well marked and is now part of the Blackwater Way which runs from Shrone to Clogheen near Clonmel, Co Tipperary.

From the fort, go through a gate to take the track heading south to Gortnagane. You will reach a fork in the track after 500m; keep left. This track is longer than shown on the OS map. It peters out at some turf banks around the 290m contour line (W 136 870). Continue south until you reach the main spur and eventually the first peak, East Pap (694m) with its impressive cairn (3hrs 30mins, 9.5km, 700m ascent).

From East Pap, head west to the col and to spot height 584m, ascend to the cairn and trig point on West Pap (690m) following 'Na Fiacla' (The Teeth), a row of sharp rocks thought to have formed a processional route between the two sacred mountains (3hrs 50mins, 10.3km, 800m ascent).

The descent from 690m follows the spur south to spot heights 622m and 562m, which is known as Rodger's Rock. From 562m, head initially SSW towards Derrymaclovade to avoid the steep ground, and then veer SE to reach the corner of the forestry (W 126 835).

The forestry east of this point has been felled. It is now just a 100minute descent to your car. The easiest terrain is along by the side of the trees.

Alternative:

You can combine both summits in a shorter walk by leaving the green road at W 143 850 to ascend East Pap via a fire-break in the forestry and completing the route as above. Total distance 7.5km with 600m of ascent. It will take about 3 hours.



Total time, distance, ascent and type of terrain:

5 hours; 13.5km; 800m ascent.

Terrain: Minor roads, tracks and heathery open mountain. Close to Shrone the ground may be quite wet.

Access advice and issues:

No known access issues. If the river north of Lough Glannafreaghaun is in spate, covering the stepping stones with the rope hand-rail, there are several suitable crossing points nearby.

Parking: good.

Contributed by:

Mary Conway, Clare Outdoor Club



Fair Head Meet 2012

The 3rd annual Fair Head Climbing Meet was hosted by Mountaineering Ireland over the weekend of June 1st-3rd.

Situated on the north coast of Northern Ireland, Fair Head (*An Bhinn Mhór*) has the reputation of being the best crag for climbing in Ireland. With a fine forecast for the weekend, this year's meet was the most successful to date, with over 150 climbers enjoying the climbing.

The dolerite cliffs at Fair Head stretch for over 5km around a headland and rise to over 100m in height, giving a mixture of steep cracked walls, corners and, in many places, sets of columns reminiscent of organ-pipes. Over four hundred routes of one to four pitches in length are recorded there. Many of these well-protected routes follow splitter cracklines requiring techniques such as hand-jamming, off-width or full-width chimneying and general all-over body squirming to make upward progress.

The event was supported by Mountaineering Ireland and organised by Paul Swail, Mountaineering Ireland's Northern Ireland Youth Development Officer, with the help of many volunteers.

A special note of thanks has to be made to Sean McBride, the farmer whose land has to be crossed to access this magnificent crag. Every year, he is welcoming, supportive and hospitable to all of the climbers. He arranges for camping in his fields, supplies firewood (and diesel, when paper doesn't light it) and enjoys the social side of the meet by joining the climbers for a beer in the evening.

The aim of the weekend is to attract and introduce climbers to this excellent but somewhat underused crag and create a friendly, vibrant and enjoyable ambience during the meet. This ambience was apparent throughout the weekend, with like-minded climbers giving route recommendations and beta on approaches.

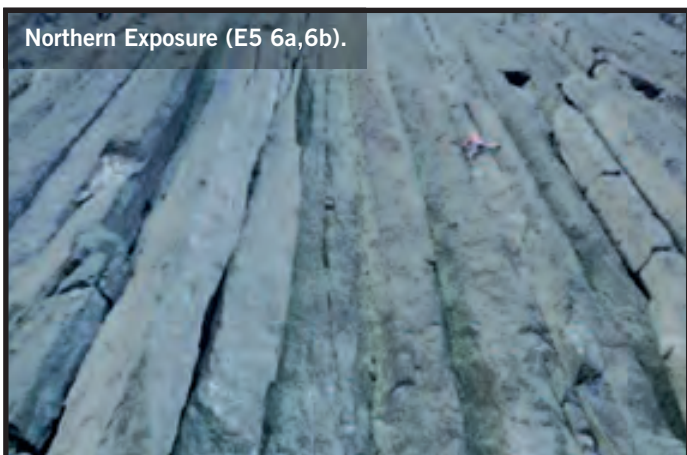
The meet takes place over the first weekend in June each year but, with the stable weather, the crag had been busy for a few weeks up to the meet. This meant all the classics were chalked and some of the harder routes half-chalked.

Mid-flight on Above and Beyond (E6 6a), a Pat Littlejohn classic.





Northern Exposure (E5 6a,6b).



BLAIR FYFFE

The evening entertainment this year was in the form of Scottish hotshot Greg Boswell, who talked about his winter antics, his goals for this year and the general psyche needed to be pushing the limits in Scottish winter climbing. As in previous years, the slideshow started a few minutes before midnight in the cowshed that the farmer Sean had kindly cleaned out for us.

The sheer number of routes being climbed over the weekend was very impressive, with parties on all of the 3-star classics.

There were also a few notable ascents over the weekend. Halloween (E4 5c, 6a) received a first ascent from the ground that included Halloween Arête (E4/5, 6b) to finish. Days later, Andy Marshall climbed the 2nd pitch, a 40m pumpy E4, into the hard and exposed arête, in one 65m pitch. Having waited nearly 20 years for an ascent, Northern Exposure (E5 6a, 6b)

slacken the line and wait until Sunday. Unfortunately, the winds increased but this didn't put off the dedicated highliners and, to the amusement of the many observing ramblers, it was sent by Nadeem Al-Khafaji in a fine effort.

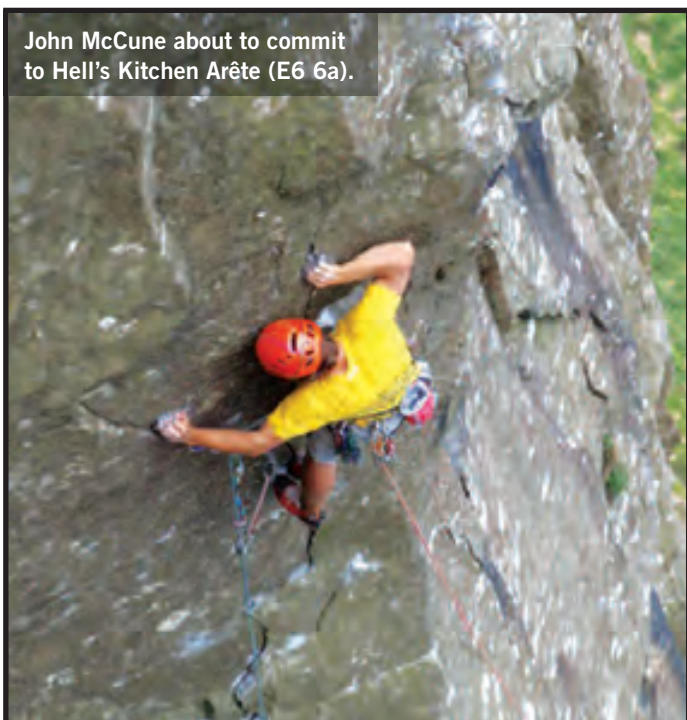
The success of this meet is down to the support shown by the local climbers, so a big 'thank you' to them. It is great that Fair Head is now

Highlining Grey Man's Path.



COLM SHANNON

John McCune about to commit to Hell's Kitchen Arête (E6 6a).



GUY SKOEN

received four ascents in two days and even had parties queuing, something that is unheard of at Fair Head! Visiting Scottish climber Iain Small onsighted Where the Grass is Greener (E7 6b), after nearly three hours of effort, along with numerous other E5s and E6s.

The meet also attracted a bunch of highliners from Britain, who set up what is tipped as the highest highline in Ireland or the UK! It was set up in the gully of the Grey Man's Path and, at over 35m, was intimidating just to look at. After a few unsuccessful attempts on the Saturday, mainly due to the wind, the highliners were forced to

becoming recognised as one of the top venues in Ireland and the UK. It seems that the secret is out as even top British climber Johnny Dawes was over battling with some of the Fair Head classics.

A big 'thank you' is due also to Mountaineering Ireland for their support and to all who were involved in the meet. We will keep our fingers crossed for good weather next year, because the rain hasn't stopped in Ireland since! ■

► For details of next year's meet, check out our website www.mountaineering.ie closer to the time.



Women with Altitude held a weekend meet in Donegal in April

‘Women with Altitude’ meet in Donegal

Three members of Westport Hillwalkers Club travelled to Gartan Outdoor Education Centre in Donegal in April to take part in the second Women With Altitude event.

We were looking forward to a long weekend of fun-packed activity with like-minded women, and what we got far exceeded our expectations. Entering Gartan, we were immediately enveloped in a special world. The centre nestles on the shore of picturesque Gartan Lough, surrounded by rugged hills and mountains, with Glenveagh National Park close by.

Friday morning started with a talk on the reintroduction of the Golden Eagle into Glenveagh National Park. It was packed with interesting information and slides of the wonderful work that Lorcan O'Toole and his colleagues do. I was excited to hear that there are also Golden Eagles present in our own Nephin Beg Mountains.

This talk was followed by a long walk in Glenveagh National Park, which was bathed in sunshine all day. We were reluctant to descend and were late as a result, missing the opportunity of home-made cakes at Glenveagh Castle and the bus back to our pick-up point, and upsetting the tight schedule!

The walk was enriched by our leader Marion's knowledge of local history of the area, the flora, which we just had to stop to look at, and the sighting of a small herd of deer. All that on the first day!

Yet more was to come with a delicious dinner and lots



The Long Hillwalk Group in Glenveagh. (Margo Chambers and Mary Mullaney, who co-wrote this piece with Sue Palmer, are on left in back row and on right in front row, respectively.)

ANNE LEONARD

more ‘Women With Altitude’ arriving. We then set off for a candlelit ramble through the woods, looking for clues on the Trail of Ogma. Thanks to the artistic skill and creativity that Carol O'Callaghan put into the design of the trail, it was a lot more than just another set of clues left in the woods.

Saturday brought another day of good weather with just a hint of rain. The range of activities on offer included scrambling, a long walk, navigations skills, an environmental walk, rock-climbing, movement skills for climbers, gorge-walking and digital photography. In the evening, we enjoyed wine and cheese followed by an inspirational slideshow by rock-climber Clare Sheridan, whose excellent photographs transported us around the world – and that was just one year's activity!

Dinner was followed by a

slideshow of the photographs taken over the weekend, with prizes from Berghaus in a variety of categories. Howls of laughter erupted, intermingled with sounds of

Mountain Rescue, an introduction to climbing, and lots of other topics as well. This was all mixed with a bit of last-minute shopping in the Great Outdoors shop, with great discounts!

Two of our trio just couldn't resist the chance to climb Errigal before returning home. They made a mad dash with several other enthusiastic women, and got a bit of a wetting, but made it back in time for the Berghaus presentation and fashion show.

This was followed by a talk on Orla Prendergast's climbing exploits in Norway and the United States – a wonderful inspiration to the budding climbers in the audience. We finished with a late lunch and then said our reluctant goodbyes.

You would really have to have been there to understand the very welcoming atmosphere that



The weekend provided a supportive environment where women could explore new challenges

appreciation, as we went through the photos.

There were a few tired-looking faces at breakfast on Sunday morning. The workshops that followed ranged from an introduction to navigation, massage for tired legs, women in



Walking in Glenveagh National Park, with Errigal in background (Sue Palmer (who wrote this article) is second from right).

ABOVE: HELEN LAWLESS

existed in Gartan that weekend, which fostered the camaraderie of like-minded spirits that developed among the women there of all ages, from diverse backgrounds. Newcomers to the walking and climbing world mingled comfortably with the very experienced, who shared their expertise and gave encouragement selflessly. Whether you are young and energetic with a strong sports background, or someone whose family has grown and who now has time to develop their interests, or if you're anywhere in between, Women With Altitude

provides a supportive environment where you can explore new sporting challenges, hone and extend your skills, and develop your confidence, while having great fun.

We three Women With Altitude from Westport count ourselves very privileged to have been able to take part in this weekend. We certainly had an interesting, energetic but relaxing weekend away from it all. And we want to thank all of those who gave their time, knowledge and experience so selflessly. The warm, cosy feeling we experienced from the

welcoming friendliness over the weekend will not be forgotten. Thank you, Gartan, Mountaineering Ireland and all the other contributors who gave their time for us ■

► This article by Sue Palmer was co-written with Margo Chambers and Mary Mullaney. All three are members of Westport Hillwalkers Club.




FOOTNOTES

- Check out the Gallery on www.WomenWithAltitude.ie to see photographs from Women With Altitude 2012.
- **Women With Altitude 2013** will take place on April 19-21st in Co Wicklow. Some other training/activities for women may be organised.
- In the meantime, join the **e-mail list** on www.WomenWithAltitude.ie and we'll keep you in the picture.
- **Women With Altitude** is a Mountaineering Ireland initiative under the Irish Sports Council's Women in Sport Programme. Women With Altitude 2012 was organised in association with **Gartan Outdoor Education Centre** and with support from **Berghaus**.

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From Gartan to Gola with gusto

A second report from the Women with Altitude weekend in Donegal in April

We arrived at Gartan Outdoor Education Centre in Co Donegal on Thursday, April 19th. The peaceful surroundings were a stark contrast to the madness that was about to take hold.

I had heard stories from the previous year of droves of women drawn together by a mutual interest in all things mountainous, for an event called 'Women With Altitude.' This I had to see.

While I appreciate that multi-tasking is an accepted talent among the fairer sex, being presented with the programme of events for Women With Altitude 2012 was obviously going to push that skill to the max. *Friday options:* independent climbing or instructed session on Gola Island, or a session on the Golden Eagle reintroduction programme, followed by a stroll in the Derryveagh Mountains. *Saturday:* climbing in Cruit, long hillwalk, scrambling and rope work for the hills, mountain environment walk, mountain navigation for both beginners and improvers. Half-day activities included short hillwalk, beginners' climbing, digital photography, movement skills for climbers and gorge walk. Decisions, decisions!

At 8:00am on Friday morning, after a chilly night in the tent, I peeled back the zip to be greeted by blue skies and the sun in my face, very

welcome after sub-zero temperatures overnight had left the extremities a little blue. Camping was optional; very comfy accommodation was on offer at Gartan. Full Irish breakfast on board, I joined the crowds gathering outside to begin the weekend's activities. Gola Island, here I come!

After a short ferry ride to Gola Island and a 20-minute walk-in, we were greeted by the impressive granite cliffs of Gola. I experienced that familiar excitement of arriving at rock I had not yet climbed, like a child arriving at a playground, unsure of which direction to dart off and explore first.

Our group was made up of twenty women with one thing on their mind: climbing. Climbing ability ranged from the very experienced to those who had never seen a climbing harness, let alone knew how to put one on. Yet those very people who stood there looking at the harness, wondering which hole to put their feet in, were abseiling

We really have some inspirational women for whom altitude is not a problem

off a cliff within an hour or so!

Back at Gartan, we shared stories of our day. Accounts were varied but a similar tone of excitement and sense of achievement permeated



Learning the ropes.
Ropework session on Gola.

the air.

On Saturday morning at 9:00am, with another belly full of rashers and sausages, we waited outside for organised transport to bundle us off for round two. I headed for a day's climbing in Cruit; others headed off to every corner of the Derryveagh Mountains to avail of the packed itinerary.

Cruit didn't disappoint. There was an impressive line-up of instructors on hand to give advice and practical demonstrations, regardless of climbing ability. I came away from the day's events with invaluable advice on lead climbing, gear placement and anchors.

Time to let the hair down. Drinks reception followed by dinner. Entertainment during dinner was a photographic slideshow combining a photo competition of snaps taken during the day's activities. Having seen the prizes dished out by Berghaus, I will be doing a bit more snapping myself next year.

Sunday rolled around and, despite a few sore heads and weary eyes, most people

made full use of yet another packed programme. Workshops included massage, mountain rescue, Berghaus' demonstration of women's clothing, and planning and organising a walking trip to the Alps.

Homeward bound and, despite the fact that I had only been away for a weekend, it felt like it had been a week, I had packed so much in! For me, Clare Sheridan's talk provided the wow factor. Listening to her accounts of adventures home and abroad left no doubt that we really do have some inspirational women for whom altitude is not a problem.

What did I take with me from my first Women With Altitude event? A lot of new friends at the very least, inspiration to go out there and explore the heights, and, most importantly, the realisation that there are some gutsy women out there ■

► Niamh Gaffney is a freelance journalist and a member of the Irish Mountaineering Club who took up climbing just over a year ago.



Socks airing in the Solu Khumbu.

KERRY OUTDOOR SPORTS

Give it socks!

Sarah Seery of Kerry Outdoor Sports gives some advice on choosing the right socks for mountaineering.

Your feet are the most important part of your body to consider when purchasing walking gear. The human foot and ankle is a strong and complex mechanical structure containing more than 26 bones, 33 joints and more than a hundred muscles, tendons and ligaments. And there are more than 250,000 eccrine sweat glands on each of your feet, making them one of the sweatiest parts of your body!

If your feet are right, the rest of you will follow. When buying walking boots, it is equally important to *choose a very good technical sock*. This will increase the comfort of your feet with cushioning, reduce the likelihood of blisters, and wick moisture away from the skin to keep your feet warm and dry.

Hot tips

There are a number of tips to follow when buying technical socks:

Material Avoid natural fibres. Cotton is one of the worst materials to make walking socks with. It absorbs moisture and holds that moisture next to the skin. As perspiration contains salt, it is very important that your socks have a small or no cotton content because, if it rubs at all, salt will increase the pain of a blister. Cotton loses its shape when it is used and offers little or no padding.

Equally, wool absorbs and retains moisture, takes a long time to dry-out and lacks strength and resiliency. Wool has some advantages, but stick to Merino wool blends and brands, such as Smart Wool and Teko. Most brands have a

“

*If your feet are right,
the rest of you will
follow!*

merino wool choice in their range.

There are some nice bamboo blends just coming onto the market now, too: for example, the Bridgedale Bamboo Crew.

Nylon and Lycra are used in socks to retain their shape and create a snug fit.

Construction The best walking and hiking socks are knitted with synthetic, looped material to ensure that they fit

perfectly in every area of the foot. It is not unusual to see four or five different knits in one walking sock, as they vary the construction to give the best possible protection and comfort in each area of the foot, i.e. extra padding in the ball and heel of the foot, and lighter on the top of the foot for coolness.

Make sure that the toe-seams of the socks are flat-stitched; any little nubs or extra pieces of material can be very uncomfortable.

Fit Do not buy your socks too big. Extra fabric at the heel can bunch and cause hot spots.

Do not buy your socks too small, either – because if they are too tight they will bind the toes.

Ensure the sock comes high enough up your shin to provide cushioning for the height of your boot, and that the elastication at the neck of the sock is neither too loose nor too tight.

Thickness How thick your socks need to be depends on your footwear. A light, technical sock is great for a shoe or very light boot.

A medium-thickness sock works best with mid-weight boots, and a thick sock for full-weight leather or four-seasons boots.

Warmth depends on the material in the sock: a thick Coolmax sock will regulate the temperature of your feet, where even a thin or mid-weight Thermolite sock will keep your feet warm.

Longevity Most good socks will last you a long time, but with washing and wear they will give out eventually. When you notice that the elasticity is going, the cushioning is failing or holes are developing, it's time to replace them.

A quick tip: washing your socks inside out will keep them in good condition and extend their life ■



Course participants and tutors at Hare's Gap in the High Mourne.

Last Easter, **Emer O'Hagan** and **Ruairí Ó Conchúir** ran a mountaineering training programme for local schoolchildren at the Tollymore Centre, Co Down, conducted wholly through the medium of Irish.

Aclai Abú!

Bhí trí lá den chéad scoth sna laethanta saoire Cásca ag fiche is duine de pháistí Bhunscoil Bheanna Boirce, Caisleán an Mhuilinn, agus Bunscoil Mhuire agus Naomh Pádraig, Dún Pádraig, a ghlac páirt i nAclai Abú! Seo imeacht a bhí eagraithe ag Ghlór Uachtar Tíre i gcomhoibriú le Mountaineering Ireland agus é lonnaithe san Ionad Naisiúnta, an Tulaigh Mór, Contae an Dúin.

Cuireadh 'Aclai Abú!' ar an imeacht agus, ar ndóigh, bhí clár ama spleodrach, éagsúlacht ann idir dreapadóireacht, siúilóid sna sléibhte, scileanna campála, oiliúint 'Ná Fág do Rian' agus grianghrafadóireacht dhúchais. Cuireadh an imeacht ar fad ar siúl trí mheán na Gaeilge agus creidtear gurb é imeacht den bheagán atá cosuil leis a bhfuil ar fáil sa tír ar fad, Thuaidh agus Theas.

Fuair Glór Uachtar Tíre, an grúpa pobail a cuireadh i mbun i 1993 chun Gaeilge a chothú sa cheantar, deontas flaitiúil ó Fhoras na Gaeilge chun 'Aclai Abú!' a eagrú. An bun-phrionsabal a bhí ar chúl an imeachta ná nuair a cuirtear daoine in aithne le chéile trí theanga, de ghnáth leanann an caidreamh ar aghaidh tríd an teanga sin.

Bhí fonn ar Ghlór Uachtar Tíre páistí ó Bhunscoil Bheanna Boirce a mheascadh le páistí ó Bhunscoil Naomh Pádraig (Dún Pádraig), ag déanamh imeachtaí spraoimhara trí mheán na Gaeilge, ionas is go mbeidh seans acu Gaeilge a úsáid taobh amuigh den scoil. Comh maith le sin, bhí Glór Uachtar Tíre ag dúil go ndéanfaidh na páistí comhcheangal in a gcuid intinne idir Gaeilge agus áiseanna agus traenálaí ard-aicmeach, den chéad scoth.

B'í an fhoireann ghairmiúil bunas rath Aclai Abú: Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Cliona Ní Bhréartúin agus Macdara Ó Graham. Spreag siad fuinneamh bríomhar isteach sa trí lá. Dúirt an triúr acu go raibh gliondar orthu a bheith i mbun cúrsa agus iad ag baint úsáid as a gcuid Gaeilge; seo deis nach raibh ag duine acu riamh roimhe d'ainneoin na blianta ghairmiúla a chaith siad triúr san earnáil a bhaineann le gníomhaíochtaí allmuigh.

Fuair an triúr theagascóir gairmiúil cuidiú tábhachtach ó dhreapadóir agus treoraí sléibhte, Mike Smith, agus tuismitheoirí, Martina Lenaghan agus Deasmún McCabe. Ba mhaith le Glór Uachtar Tíre a bhuíochas a thabhairt do chuile duine a bhí páirteach i nAclai Abú! Imeacht ar leith a bhí ann.

Sport Forever!

A group of twenty-one schoolchildren recently participated in what is believed to be the first ever Leave No Trace and mountaineering training course conducted entirely through the medium of Irish. The three-day course, entitled Aclai Abú! – or Sport Forever! – was held at the National Outdoor Centre at Tollymore, Co Down, over the Easter school holidays. It was co-ordinated by **Glór Uachtar Tíre**, a Castletown-based community organisation that promotes the development of the Irish language throughout part of south-east Down. Glór



Tadpoles were found at Hare's Gap.

Climbing at Mountaineering Ireland's Hot Rock Climbing Wall during the Irish course at Tollymore Mountain Centre.



Uachtar Tíre means 'The Voice of the Uplands' and Uachtar Tíre, or 'Up-Lands,' was the old name for the Castlewellsan-Slieve Croobe area around the 1600s.

The participants, local schoolchildren aged between 7 and 12 years of age, were drawn from Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, Castlewellsan, and Bunscoil Mhuire agus Naomh Phádraig, Downpatrick. The programme covered a range of mountaineering activities including map reading and mountain skills, hiking, climbing, camping and orienteering. An awareness of Leave No Trace (LNT) was incorporated into all of the activities in an imaginative and informative way, ensuring that all seven principles of LNT were covered in considerable detail and practiced by the children.

The training was provided by Ruairí Ó Conchúir (Mountaineering Ireland board member and LNT Master Educator) and Clíona Ní Bhréartúin (LNT Trainer), ably assisted by Macdara Ó Graham.

On the first day, the morning sessions focused on safety. The children learnt how to prepare for and stay safe while walking in the hills. This included all elements of the first principle of Leave No Trace – *"Plan Ahead and Prepare."* The children practiced map reading and use of a compass in the grounds of Tollymore.

The highlight of the first day was the afternoon session on Mountaineering Ireland's Hot Rock Climbing Wall. Before starting out, the children were given an introduction about how to stay safe while climbing, both indoor and outdoors. Once on the climbing wall, the children showed great agility and athleticism on the various routes set. There was a great sense of achievement amongst the party, especially for those who had never climbed before.

Day two was spent entirely on the hills and the weather kindly obliged. Setting out from Tollymore, the children, with the kind support of parents Martina Lenaghan and Deasmún McCabe, followed the Trassey Track up along the Trassey River to

the Hare's Gap, considered one of the most dramatic mountain passes in the Mourne.

From there, the children climbed up along the Mourne Wall to Diamond Rocks and upwards towards Slievenaglogh. Laid out before the children was the entire High Mourne.

While out on the hills, the children got to experience the fragility of the mountain environment. The damage caused by inappropriately selected campsites and damage caused by campfires was highlighted for the children. There was a great sense of achievement on the safe return safe of all to Tollymore – the children were tired but had achieved a significant goal in the beautiful High Mourne.

The final day was focused on orienteering, camping skills and camp cooking. The children also learnt new skills to help them observe wildlife and nature in a mountain environment and they participated in a practical session about wildlife photography in the woods adjacent to Tollymore.

The three-day event ended in a prize-giving ceremony with the presentation of certificates and a wonderful celebration of fiddle music for the children and their parents. The children departed, exhausted and delighted, having made new friends from a local Gaelscoil and having spent three wonderful days exploring the outdoors. Their parents departed after giving great feedback on the event and enquiring whether it's likely to run again next year! ■

The closing show at the children's course in Tollymore.





The finalists in Youth Climbing Series 2012.

NEAL MCQUAID

Youth Climbing Series 2012

The Youth Climbing Series took place across Ireland in early 2012. It comprised two southern qualifiers, two northern qualifiers and an overall final, which took place at The Ozone in Belfast. **Neal McQuaid (Talent Development Officer) and Paul Swail (Northern Ireland Youth Development Officer)** have this report.

Round 1 (Southern): Mardyke, Cork

Thirty-five competitors (a 10% increase on last year) took part at the Mardyke Arena, in the round that kicked off the Southern Series. In a highly successful event, many of the different categories had very close results, with very inspiring performances from everyone throughout. Some of the girls' categories were quite low in turn-out, so we'll look forward to more young female stars appearing next year for a fun, amazing day out!

The highlight of this round was the super-final (after a tie in the main competition) between Sean Flynn and Luke Egan. Luke was to take the 1st prize on this occasion, but I doubt this will be the last time these young competitors push

each other to the post!

Thanks to Hillwalkers Shop in Cork for their support of the event and to the Mardyke Arena for use of the facility.

Round 2 (Southern): UCD, Dublin

Forty-seven competitors (a 2% increase on last year) took part in the second Southern round, held in UCD. In the end, there were no ties, but everyone left with a massive smile (and some tired bodies!).

As in Cork, the parents put in a fantastic amount of work to judge, chaperone, belay, etc. It is evident that, without all of this wonderful support from the parents, these events would not happen.

Thanks to Basecamp Dublin for their support of this fantastic event: their

SuperSoakers were very popular as prizes! UCD was also fantastic in allowing use of the facility.

Round 1 (Northern): Gortatole OEC, Fermanagh

Forty-seven competitors made the long journey and attended the first round of the Youth Climbing Series 2012 in Northern Ireland. This often-forgotten and isolated wall made for an exciting competition with a variety of angles and a perfectly placed viewing gallery to watch all the action. There was a great turn-out through all the categories and the route-setters did a great job, managing to have no ties! A big thanks goes out to Surf Mountain for the prizes, which went down a treat.

Round 2 (Northern): Hot Rock, Tollymore

It was brilliant to see 67 competitors get involved in the second round of the Northern

Youth Climbing Series 2012. To say that the atmosphere was electric would be an understatement: the wall was rocking! Once again, the route-setters did a great job in setting some technical routes on the featured wall and some more powerful problems on the training wall. The support from parents, volunteers and competitors was great to see, and thanks to all who turned out to make it such a successful round. The prizes were kindly supported by Jackson Sports, Belfast.

Final: Ozone, Belfast

A phenomenal 85 (32% increase) competitors turned up for the overall final at the Ozone in Belfast. As you can imagine, there were some nerves beforehand from all, but all the young competitors rose to the challenge on the day and put in amazing performances across the board. In the end, the top three competitors in each

For anyone interested in keeping up to date with the competitions, or if you know any youth climbers interested in coming along, check the information box on page 31.



category appeared, and Dawson Stelfox was on hand to give out the final prizes on the day, to rapturous applause from the crowd for all the competitors. Even the BBC was on hand during the day to record and broadcast a report on the event.

Mountaineering Ireland would like to thank Cotswold, Dave Flanagan (for the guidebooks) and Alpkit for their support on the day.

From this final, the 30 competitors finishing in the top three in each category will now go on to compete at the UK finals, which take place at the end of June at Ratho Climbing Centre in Edinburgh. Mountaineering Ireland would like to offer good luck wishes to them all. A full list of the results can be found at <http://goo.gl/xzV5B> ■

YOUNG CLIMBERS (AGED 7-12)

Interested in trying climbing?

There are two approaches to trying out climbing, indoors or outdoors. To find out about courses in introductory climbing, there are many providers around Ireland. A search on Google should highlight your local provider. Most climbing walls in the country have courses set up for people to try out rock-climbing in an indoor setting. For a list of climbing walls in Ireland, see Mountaineering Ireland's website.

Know a young person interested in competing?

If you know of anyone interested in coming along for a fun day out, the **Youth Climbing Series** run by Mountaineering Ireland??? is an excellent way for young climbers to be introduced to the community of climbers across Ireland. The emphasis of these days is primarily on having a fun experience and providing an opportunity for climbers to gather together. Expect lots of smiles and support and very little pressure! The only recommendation is that the climber understands how to tie a rope into the harness and, if in the older Youth A or B categories, an understanding of how to lead. These skills can all be learnt through your local club or providers.

Mountain rescuers wanted

The Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team, based in Roundwood Garda Station, is recruiting high-calibre individuals in autumn 2012. In the last few months, the team has increased its number of emergency response vehicles to four and welcomed twelve new members to the team. We are responding to an ever increasing number of incidents and this is an exciting and challenging time to be part of the team.

After the initial training and hands-on experience, you will be able to answer "YES" to the following questions:


- As a member of a Mountain Rescue team, will you join your team-mates in answering calls for help in the Dublin and Wicklow mountains?
- As a navigator, can you guide your team-mates across the hills in all sorts of weather?
- As a radio operator, can you communicate clearly and concisely with your team-mates and other rescue parties?
- As a rigger, can you set up simple rope systems to ensure your team-mates' safety on steep ground?
- As a party leader, can you lead a group of rescuers in a challenging and stressful emergency situation?
- As a trained first-aider, can we trust you to provide a high standard of care to badly injured casualties?
- As a colleague, will you become an active, committed and involved member of our team?

We expect you already to be familiar with the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains and to be comfortable in a mountain environment. You should also be able to navigate with confidence – we'll test your skills on the hill before selecting recruits for the training programme.

Preference will be given to applicants who have completed Mountain Skills Assessment (MSA) or MS1/MS2 training. The MSA is the minimum navigation competency requirement to be completed before being considered for full team membership. You need to be committed to the service the team provides and, ideally, you should live in the Wicklow, south Dublin or east Kildare regions. Most importantly, you need to have a good sense of humour and enjoy working in a professional, close-knit team.

If you feel you fit the bill, please log onto our website to express your interest and to complete a preliminary online application form. You will then be invited along to our open night in early October, which will also be advertised via Facebook and the team website. Successful applicants will be invited on a hill assessment day in October prior to being considered for entry into our twelve-month training programme. For more information, please visit our website at www.dwmrt.ie. To see more about what we do, look for us on YouTube or Facebook.





Ascent of the Icon

IAIN MILLER tackles an unclimbed sea stack off Donegal

It was 8:00am on a stormy, wet Saturday morning. The 60-knot southwest winds were screaming through the ether as we pounded up, over and through the 20-foot white horses. We were one nautical mile west of Arranmore Island, off the western seaboard of County Donegal, travelling at 40 knots in a 250 horse-power rib. Our destination was the unclimbed Tormore Island, Ireland's highest sea stack.

STAC AN IOLAR IS A 40-METRE SEA STACK IN THE CENTRE OF AN AMPHITHEATRE OF 70- TO 100-METRE SEA CLIFFS.

As we rounded the southwest tip of Arranmore, I caught a fleeting glimpse of a striking anomaly in the distant sea-cliff architecture. It was a perfect straight line, standing proud against the rocky backdrop. With another almighty crash into Neptune's rage, we were semi-submerged and the vision was gone.

Several months later, I paid a visit to Arranmore Island to investigate my sighting. It was then that, standing on the cliff tops overlooking the anomaly, I realised the full extent of what I had previously glimpsed, and I hatched a cunning plan.

Stac an Iolar (The Eagle's Stack) is an immaculate 40-metre sea stack standing in the centre of an amphitheatre of outrageous 70- to 100-metre sea

cliffs. The amphitheatre faces southwest and catches all of the prevailing southwest sea motion, which funnels into it, making it a kaleidoscope of white-watered nautical rage, which surrounds the approach to and base of the stack.

This was my first of many visits to the cliff tops overlooking this stack, and every visit confirmed what I already knew: that an ascent of this bad boy was going to be emotional.

Over the next eighteen months, I patiently waited for the planets to align, to provide the correct nautical conditions, and to find suitably adventurous and foolhardy companions for an ascent of this outstanding sea stack.

The prior planning for an undertaking of this nature involves an almost fanatical amount of research into the topography of the seabed surrounding the area. In this case it involved visiting the amphitheatre at all stages of the tide and in all sea conditions. Our research allowed us to make a map of the predicted channels of calmer water, thus ensuring a maximum factor of safety and allowing our most excellent adventure to commence.

When the planets were correctly aligned, I made the call in the form of a text message, which simply said: "The Icon is on, can you play?"

D-DAY

Once more, I found myself standing on the sea cliffs overlooking Stac an Iolar. With me were noble brothers Steven "Jock" Read and Paul Brennan, and our cliff top voyeurs were noble sister Caoimhe Gleeson and Oscar the dog. The sky was blue, the sea was calm. Conditions were perfect and the sense of anticipation was heightened by full body rushes of endorphins, seasoned with a healthy smattering of primal fear. ▶



Gully of the Gods.



THE AUTHOR

Iain Miller is a Mountain Leader based in Co Donegal. He specialises in leading adventure climbs, notably on sea stacks and sea cliffs. For more details, visit his website www.uniqueascent.ie.

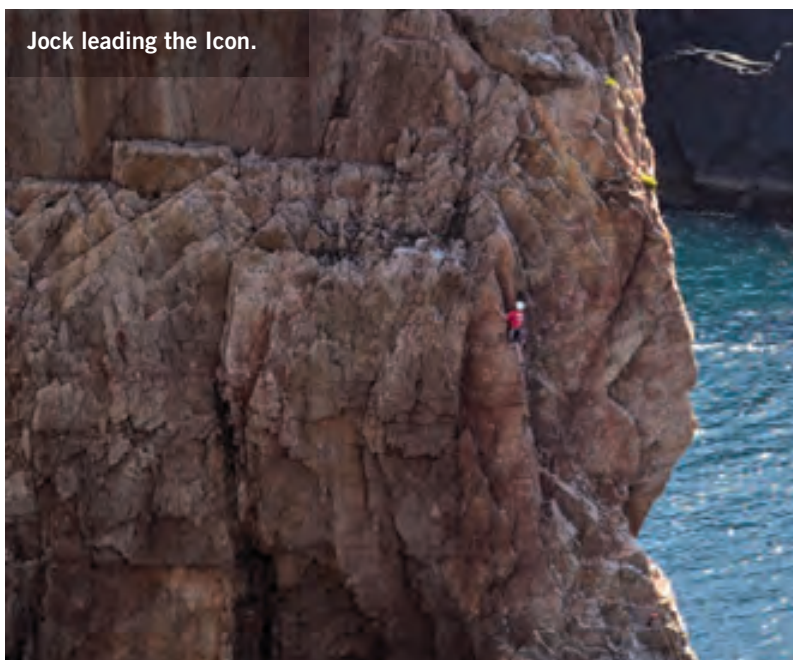
Iain and Jock about to descend the Gully of the Gods.



Gearing up on the Icon.



Jock leading the Icon.



Our descent to sea level involved a rocky scramble down the Gully of the Gods, an outstandingly beautiful and atmospheric fissure running the full 100-metre cliff height at the back of the amphitheatre surrounding the stack.

We carefully descended the gully, each carrying a monster load of climbing equipment and our nautical transport, the ever faithful Lidl inflatable dinghy. At the base of the gully, a short vertical section had to be down-climbed and then we arrived on the storm beach at the entrance to Shambala.

Our situation was quite surreal, surrounded by the outrageous, overhanging 100-metre sea cliffs, clear blue skies, flat calm sea and an almost overpowering sense of being truly alive.

We inflated the mighty vessel and made several journeys out to the stack, transporting ourselves and all our toys onto the large, tidal platform at its base. Once we were established on the stack, Jock and Paul arranged our climbing equipment while I paddled out to sea to view our proposed route on the seaward face. It looked hard and mildly terrifying.

“How does it look?” came the cry from the stack.

“Suitably tetchy” was the only answer I could muster.

A short sea-level traverse from our platform was made to gain the base of the seaward face, a belay constructed and then Jock led off up the gently overhanging groove above.

Paul and myself stood in silence as Jock inched his way up the rock above us. After 30 minutes of steep strenuous climbing, Jock pulled out of the overhanging groove onto a terrifyingly exposed ledge approximately 20 metres above us.

“Looks easy from here up!” came the cry from our vertical hero above.

SUMMIT

Jock then made a move out of sight of us as he continued to inch his way to the summit. For the next hour we paid the rope out inch by inch as rocks rained down into the sea from our climber above. After an hour and we had not paid out any rope for almost 20 minutes and there was a tug on the rope and an almighty scream! Jock was on the summit. Caoimhe, our cliff-top photographer, cheered, Oscar barked, and Jock rigged a summit belay.

At this juncture, Paul and I pondered Brother Read’s perhaps ill-chosen words, “Looks easy from here,” as the ropes were taken in and Paul commenced climbing up the groove and out of sight. This left me alone at the base of the stack for what seemed like another eternity – until there was another shout from the summit and cheer from the cliff-tops: Paul was on the summit.

AND THEN IT WAS MY TURN

My rope went tight and I began to climb. As I commenced up the initial overhanging groove, the sense of commitment and exposure grew as I wobbled up the steep rock above me.

At the top of the groove, an excellent jug and finger jam allowed me to pull onto the exposed ledge at the halfway point of the route. From this lofty perch it



On the summit of the Icon.

became very apparent that the vertical rock above had the geological make-up of broken eggshells and this led to an overhanging body-jamming crack to the summit. As I climbed up the eggshells, I was extremely thankful for the rope to Jock on the summit. The protection Jock had placed on his lead on this section was at best illusionary and a fall by Jock at this point would have been huge and almost certainly fatal. It was an outstanding lead deep into the realms of chaos by Brother Read.

At the top of the eggshells, a very exposed and precarious move allowed me to jam myself almost inside the overhung off-width crack leading to the summit. The final three metres of the route followed an overhanging 10-inch wide crack with a truly sickening sense of exposure as there was nothing around but big air.

I managed to climb this wide crack as if I was riding a galloping donkey: not pretty to watch but highly effective.

Pulling onto the skinny exposed summit of this previously unclimbed iconic sea stack was a truly surreal moment. All around us was the outstandingly

beautiful sea-battered landscape, a shimmering blue sea and a clear blue Caribbean sky. The sheer vertical walls of the amphitheatre surrounding us now revealed many more possibilities for further vertical pleasure in a truly mind-blowing location.

While I had been climbing, Paul had rigged an abseil and so, one by one, we abseiled the forty-metre vertical wall of the east face of Stac an Iolar, back down to our awaiting vessel.

All that was left to do now was to paddle back to our storm beach, ascend The Gully of the Gods to the cliff top and allow the après-climb festivities to commence ■

THE FINAL THREE METRES FOLLOWED A NARROW CRACK WITH SICKENING EXPOSURE. THERE WAS NOTHING AROUND BUT BIG AIR.

These three climbers disdained the easy way and went Up The Cliffs Of Carrantuohill

IN the late Summer of 1946 because he would be considered a the north-east face appeared to their two hundred feet. However, they took on an even more for the angle of ascent had become

This article, written by **J.D. HEGARTY**, was published in *The Irish Independent* in 1948. It gives a fascinating picture of the joy of exploring and climbing in the Reeks over 60 years ago. That same pleasure is reflected in a contemporary piece, *Ode to Carrantuohill* by **THÉRÈSE KEVILLE**, which demonstrates that it's still possible to experience the joy of exploration in the Reeks.

In the late Summer of 1946 two keen young mountaineers stood in the Hag's Glen (McGillicuddy Reeks) and gazed up at the frowning and awe-inspiring north-east face of Ireland's highest mountain – Carrantuohill.

Harry and myself had climbed every high mountain in Ireland except those of the Reeks, and had considered no one of them more than a half day of strenuous walking.

But as we looked up at those sheer rock walls we felt that strenuous walking would not suffice to scale these giants which would assuredly call for a different type of effort than that required on any previous climb. However, we could see the Devil's Ladder about a mile away in the south and knew that the mountain was safely climbed from there although the route was steep and strenuous. We continued to gaze on that frowning north-east wall and each of us knew that the other was considering if it could be climbed.

THE GUIDE GOES HOME

An old local inhabitant, who had insisted on accompanying us thus far as guide, here broke into our reveries and said we should push on to the

Devil's Ladder. I enquired from him if we could not climb the north-east face. His look in reply was expressive of the opinion that I must be either insane or very ignorant of mountain country. Having obviously accepted the latter diagnosis, he not only informed us that it wasn't done but that it never had been done. More intrigued than ever now, we continued to examine the face of the cliff until I finally voiced the view that it might be possible for us to do it then and there.

At this point our guide, who had by now lost all belief in our sanity, started to desert us, muttering that if people wanted to do these extraordinary things it was no affair of his, and that he would go away because he would be considered a party to the wild-cat venture.

DEFEAT AND DESCENT

We approached the base of cliff and started to climb. The angle of ascent was here about 60 degrees, but it soon changed to seventy or seventy-five. It was our intention to climb up a large crack we had seen in the rock face which extended up some 500 feet, and after a short while we reached the bottom of this crack. Here we found that what appeared previously, and at

The article as it appeared in *The Irish Independent* in 1948.



a distance as a crack about three feet wide, was in reality a deep fissure some twenty feet wide and some thirty feet deep. With our ardour a little shaken we started up the fissure which soon presented obstacle after obstacle, such as perpendicular rock formations, wet and slimy from water trickling from above. Finally we came up against a fifteen foot overhang, and try as we might, this we were unable to pass.

It was now too late to go up by the orthodox route, so that we had nothing to do but descend to the Hag's Glen again and return to our car some four miles away.

This defeat rankled, and both of us decided that we would not go to the top of Carrantuohill by any other route than the north-east cliff face, if we were never to climb it. We were not in a position to think of a further attack on Carrantuohill until June 1948. My brother Joe had arranged to spend portion of his holidays with us mainly to join in the attempt. Joe is a keen climber and a great physical culture enthusiast.

VIEWING THE TASK

While we considered the ascent would be accomplished without the use of climbing gear, such as ropes or irons, we agreed that one hundred feet of rope would be a safety measure we could not dispense with.

One small axe and a few home-made iron spikes completed the equipment. The day selected was fine. We each carried a ruck sack containing grub, camera, binoculars, etc., and, having donned heavy boots, set off through the Hag's Glen towards our objective, the base of which we reached at 1.30 p.m.

As we approached Carrantuohill the north-east face appeared to have taken on an even more forbidding appearance than on our previous visit. It seemed to frown on our projected effort. We cached our heavy boots and some other food at the foot of the cliffs, and donned canvas shoes, boots being of no use on the rock surface. We then considered the face of the cliff very intently, using the binoculars, which were of very high-power. While judgment of height, distance up a mountain side is terribly deceptive (as we know to our cost on many previous occasions), and although the peak of Carrantuohill appeared to be only five hundred or six hundred feet over our heads, the ordnance survey map which was spread out before us told us that where we were standing was some one thousand feet above sea level and, therefore, that the summit of Carrantuohill was approximately two thousand five hundred feet higher still. ►



On the summit.



North-east face of Carrauntoohil from the Gaddagh River.

JOERG MARRETSCH

THE FIRST OBSTACLE

Having had some light refreshment, 2.20 p.m. found us at the cliff base - all roped together, Joe leading, myself fifty feet of rope behind, and Harry taking up the rear a further fifty feet from me. We started up a giant fissure as on the last occasion. All went well for about three hundred feet through which the angle of ascent was not more than fifty from the horizontal, but then Joe came up against a wall of fairly sheer rock which extended right across the fissure. The wall was some fifteen feet high. Joe could see no immediate chance of surmounting the obstacle, and waited until I arrived for dual consideration of the problem.

I was unable to offer any help except that we might try a traverse of the rock face outside the crevasse. This Joe started to do, but did not get far before he found himself up against two hundred feet of rock not far out of the perpendicular. Meanwhile Harry, who had been sitting down during Joe's and my consultation, had come up and, making a frontal attack on the 15 feet of rock which had stopped us, climbed over it. It was a very nice bit of work and we felt much encouraged. Harry made his rope fast and we duly joined him above. He continued in the lead and we made fairly good progress for a further two hundred feet. However, the angle of ascent had become appreciably steeper, and the presence of

loose rock made us each very careful and not a little anxious.

SLIMY WET ROCK

If a rock of any size should be upset or displaced by either the first or second man it would be extremely difficult for those following to escape disaster, as the course of the stone's fall would necessarily be confined to the bottom of the fissure through which we were all climbing. It was at this point that we met what seemed at first to be a certain full stop. A twenty-five foot wall of rock as much the same type as the first one, though an overhang in this case, lay right across the fissure. Over this twenty-five foot wall water dripped, with the result that the walls and the sides of the fissure were covered with wet, green slimy vegetation. While Harry was giving the obstacle a good look over I notice a small crack extending up through the rocky side of the fissure. I found that I was able to get my hand and arm up to my elbow into this crack.

I started to work up under the overhang, using any pieces of jutting out rocks for footholds. Half way up my knapsack on my back got jammed against a piece of rock overhanging me, and I had to step back on to a small ledge, where I deposited the knapsack. I started again, and after another few minutes, through which I cannot say I felt very comfortable, I was able to haul myself over the impeding wall.

This obstacle set us thinking. We had decided before starting that no unnecessary risks would be taken and here was something that might well be included in that category. Assuming that we could go no further, how was I to get down again? Certainly not without using the rope, and the danger of losing

IT LOOKED AS IF EVERY STEP WOULD BRING DOWN A VERITABLE SEA OF ROCK TO ENVELOP US AND SWEEP US TO DISASTER TWO THOUSAND FEET BELOW

the rope which would be required again further down. I could not see Harry and Joe below me as they were hidden by the overhang, but we were able to discuss the matter easily. As far as I could see above me the going looked favourable enough.

I LOSE MY LUNCH

However, the two decided that no additional risk would be incurred by their coming up to where I was, as two could certainly be lowered again to the same place by one above, leaving the position as before.

It was here that I lost my lunch. When half way up the overhang, Harry came on the rucksack which I had placed on the ledge, and on Joe's advice he tied it to a rope and Joe started to haul it up. Something went astray, however, as I soon heard a faint crash, the rucksack having swayed against the cliff and smashed a fine flask of tea which was inside. Those who have done a big climb on a warm day will appreciate the "cross" this was, and I began to feel thirsty already from the very thought of it.

The going, while still as stiff as ever, was now much easier, as the rock was rough and solid, giving plenty of good holds for hands and feet. We continued up a further one thousand feet or so with Joe again leading, and then Harry took over the lead again. After another hundred feet or so, and just when the mountain was beginning to flatten out a little and we felt we were nearing the top, we ran into a veritable sea of loose stones.

OVER THE STONES

They were packed so deep and close together that no portion of the underlying rock was visible in any direction. It was a really exciting experience to start climbing over them, and one commenced to do so with his heart in his mouth. The result of an avalanche at that height and on top of a huge cliff did not bear contemplation, and everything considered, it appeared as if we went from the frying pan into the fire. A little consultation was indicated before further progress could be made, and we sat down to discuss the new situation.

It was an experience I would not care to repeat, though possibly the risk of avalanche was not so great as we thought. But it certainly looked to us as if every step would bring down a veritable sea of rock to envelop us and sweep us to disaster two thousand feet below.

We pushed gingerly forward, and slow travel made this part of the climb very slow. In fact, I began to think that the mountain had no top when suddenly the sun (which had been on the opposite side of the mountain during the climb) burst into my face, and I was on the summit. I turned round and shouted to the others, who were not far below me, and in a few minutes (at 4.30 p.m.) we all stood around a little white flat which marked the highest point. It was with deep feelings of achievement that we looked around at the panorama of Kerry beauty spread below us.

We did not feel like descending by the same route, so we went down by the Devil's Ladder, arriving at our "Base Camp" at 8 p.m. ■

Ode to Carrantuohill

An ascent in October 2011

Carrantuohill is amazing, a beast in the heart of the MacGillycuddy Reeks, the highest peak in Ireland, and set within the magnificent and majestic mountains of Kerry.

Carrantuohill is beautiful, daunting and difficult. It is black, bleak and rugged. Its isolation and intrigue draws people in their multitudes to scale its heights.

It is heaven and hell.... It has The Hag's Teeth, The Devil's Ladder, The Howling Ridge, The Hag's Glen, Brother O'Shea's Gully, and The Heavenly Gates. Kerry has Carrantuohill, and Carrantuohill has it all.

We came from Ballyboden St Enda's, Siúltóirí Buadain, to take on this Mighty Giant, and we did.

We trekked, climbed, traversed, scrambled and scaled its gullies, cols, slopes and ridges. Sheer determination, courage and grit drove us, and excitement and adrenalin carried us through the final ascent.

Our path took us from Cronin's Yard through the Hag's Glen, up O'Shea's Gully to the Summit. Conor, our trusted leader, instilled in us the belief and the confidence that carried us through the day and Paddy, our friend from Blarney, ensured the safety of our footsteps.

We celebrated our ascent with a rousing rendition of Molly Malone'in honour of Sam Maguire and our Dublin Heroes.

We raised the blue and navy in the name of Dublin, 2011 All Ireland Champions, our own Michael Darragh McAuley and our club, Ballyboden St Enda's. The Flag was flying high in the Kingdom of Kerry.

On the Summit, our bodies welcomed much-needed sustenance and the respite for our weary legs. Our cameras recorded our elation.

We parked that elation on the Summit as we turned into the mist, to face a very difficult descent. Intense focus and concentration was necessary for a safe return to base.

Every step and footing was carefully manoeuvred and we dared not risk a glance at the sheer drop of the cliffs below us.

We did pause as we passed through The Heavenly Gates to view and absorb the vista of the day, the deep blue mountain lakes of Lough Gouragh (the Lake of the Goat) and Lough Callee (Hag's Lake), a little bit of heaven within the heart of the Hag's Glen.

After five and a half hours on the mountain, our arrival at Cronin's Yard released in us a huge sense of achievement, and an awareness of the strength and courage we had within us, to brave the elements and difficulties of our climb on Carrantuohill.

What a day, with a fantastic group of people. What an experience we shared together. What a mountain we had climbed.

Kerry, we salute you, so aptly called 'The Kingdom.' You truly do own the King of the Massifs, Carrantuohill.

– Thérèse Keville, Siúltóirí Buadain



South face of Annapurna I at dawn.

Ten-day trek to Annapurna Sanctuary

DECLAN ALCOCK takes a trek in the Himalayas.



Steep stone steps were a real knee-cruncher during the ten days of trekking.

Having grown up in Wicklow, I've always enjoyed the mountains and dreamed of someday seeing the Himalaya at first hand. Last year, I had the opportunity to visit Nepal for five months with my partner Sophie Mahood and, among other travels, we trekked to the Annapurna Sanctuary; this was one of the highlights.

The Annapurna range dominates the skyline to the north of Pokhara. In the heart of the range is the glacial basin of the Annapurna Sanctuary. Used as the base camp for the 1970 British ascent of the south face of Annapurna I, it is situated at 4,130m and surrounded by a panorama of peaks including Machhapuchhre, Annapurna I, Annapurna South and Hiunchuli. It is this view which draws an influx of trekkers each year and turns the route into a highway, particularly in October-November and March-May.

Having been in Nepal over winter with hardly a tourist in sight, and wanting to escape the acrid air of

Kathmandu, I decided to start the trek in mid-February before the spring migration arrived. My original start date was postponed by two weeks due to a bout of the infamous Kathmandu cough, and so, on March 2nd, I finally set off.

After an eight-hour bus journey from Kathmandu, I arrived at the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP) office in Pokhara in time to get the required permits for the trek. These are 2,000 rupees (€20) for the ACAP permit and \$20 for a TIMS (Trekking Information Management System) card. After a quick run around to get some last-minute provisions, I was ready for an early start the next day.

STEPPING INTO THE ZONE

The trek starts at Phedi, a collection of shacks a twenty-minute and 500-rupee (€5) taxi-drive from Pokhara. Phedi in Nepali means "foot of the hill" and straight away it was into the steep stone steps, a feature of the Annapurna Conservation Area which became real knee-crunchers over the next ten days.

As with the Annapurna Circuit, the Sanctuary trek is slowly being encroached upon by the expanding road network and local guides predict that it will eventually be reduced to six days. Indeed, the first day, to Tolka (1,810m) along the east side of the Modi Khola valley, is fairly built-up, with settlements at regular intervals along the trail.

THE TERRACES OF MODI KHOLA

My intention was to get up before dawn each day to enjoy sunrise, and it was only on the morning of day two, with the peaks of the Annapurna range bathed in golden light, that I felt I was heading into the mountains proper.

The morning of day two was a nice walk along the east wall of the valley, past terraced fields (see photo, below), lush vegetation and the occasional farmer ploughing his patch using a buffalo. The sun was shining and, apart from a few people, it was very peaceful.

About three hours in, I descended to the river far below and crossed to Naya Pul on a swaying suspension bridge. After a quick lunch stop, the evening was a long, steep climb of about 800m to Chhomrong (2,210m) on a narrow track.

The weather can change so quickly here, and it was during this climb that the thunder, lightning and hailstones started. I eventually found a rocky outcrop and had a brew but soon, realising it wasn't going to get any dryer, I continued on and reached Chhomrong soaked.

TRAILS UNDER REPAIR

Day three looked threatening, with dark clouds up ahead, and it started with a long descent to the Chhomrong Khola in the shadow of Annapurna South and Hiunchuli, followed by a steep trail to Sinuwa through rhododendron forests for the next few hours. The views back towards Naya Pul were amazing.

Beyond Sinuwa the trail is narrow and can be slippery as the area receives a lot of rain, providing the perfect environment for bamboo forests. Over-enthusiastic groups can make it dangerous as they power through, trekking poles flailing in all directions. The first few days are probably comparable to climbing Lugnaquilla from the Glen of Imaal side twice a day. I continued for an hour after the aptly named Bamboo and spent the night in Doban (2,540m).

When I passed through, sections of the trail which are prone to damage during the winter from monsoon rains and landslides were being repaired by workmen who live in temporary encampments in the forest. The workmanship was superb, with stone paving being hand-cut from the surrounding valley, and for the few tips they receive from tourists it is well worth it. While I personally prefer natural trails, this work can help prevent environmental damage, ►



THE AUTHOR

Declan Alcock is an engineer and photographer based in Dublin. He has trekked in Latin America, North Africa and Asia. He spent five months in Nepal and is currently exhibiting photos from this and other trips. His photos can be seen at www.wix.com/declanalcock/photography.

THE FIRST FEW DAYS WERE COMPARABLE TO CLIMBING LUGNAQUILLA TWICE A DAY FROM THE GLEN OF IMAAL SIDE



The Modi Khola valley near Landruk.



The approach to Deorali from near Hinkos Cave.

as can be witnessed on Lug any winter's day when it turns into a bog underfoot.

NEPALI HOSPITALITY

A lot of lodges on the upper reaches are either owned or operated by lodge owners from Chhomrong and there appears to be a certain monopoly. Locals have told me that guides will not recommend, or will actively discourage, trekkers from staying in smaller, family-run places. I found that by stopping either before or after the recommended stops I could avoid the crowds and experience the genuine Nepali hospitality and humour which the people are famous for. Because they get so little business, the few rupees spent makes a difference and it is nice to start a cold morning sitting beside a traditional clay stove in the

kitchen, spicy masala tea in hand. As I had brought some supplies and a gas stove, I wasn't fully reliant on the lodges, but after a seven-hour slog the local rice and lentil dish of Dal Bhat goes down well.

APPROACH TO DEORALI

The entrance to the sanctuary is a narrow opening between Hiunchuli and Machhapuchhre, located at Deorali (3,100m). The two most dangerous sections of the trek are the approach to Deorali on day four, where the first sprinkling of snow began to appear on the ground, and the walk from Deorali to Machhapuchhre base camp (MBC) at 3,700m on day five.

For these sections, I got moving early when everything was still frozen up. The trail is narrow and vegetation scarce, as the landscape becomes more barren. Just before Hinkos Cave, a large rocky overhang used as a staging point for climbing expeditions before the advent of trekking lodges, there is a large avalanche chute to cross and there is another between the cave and Deorali which contained tons of snow. The clouds closed in quickly here and within a few minutes visibility was down to a few metres, but I was close enough to my stop for the night to continue.

MACHHAPUCHHRE BASE CAMP

Leaving Deorali early on day five, I took the detour to the east side of the valley to avoid the worst avalanche danger. This section is called 'Avalanche Alley' for a reason: when I went back a month later the west side was littered with the remains of several huge avalanches and, though it's an easier route and you will see porters scurrying along over the mounds of snow, it is not to be recommended. As the peaks are not visible over the steep valley walls, there is little or no warning of an avalanche until it thunders into the valley.



Approach to Machhapuchhre Base Camp.

All photographs by: DECLAN ALCOCK

The detour crosses the Modi Khola on a narrow metal bridge and then proceeds up the valley through small birch trees and boulders, and it can be hard to follow. The snow actually helped here as I could follow the footprints of those who left earlier, although it made the walking slow and tiring.

It can be easy to miss the crossing back to the west side of the river between the boulders, and immediately after crossing over and scurrying up the river bank there are some more avalanche chutes before reaching Machhapuchhre base camp (MBC), which by now had a metre of snow.

The view of Machhapuchhre from the base camp is stunning and I spent a night there to acclimatise and soak up the scenery. It was nice to have a short day after the slog of the previous days to recharge and I spent most of it sitting in the sun, spellbound by the vista. Of course, the afternoon clouds roll in, but they usually disperse again in time for sunset.

From here to Annapurna base camp (ABC) at 4,130m was a 2.5-hour trudge through deep snow alongside the glacial moraine, though, as a group with porters set off before me, at least I didn't have to break trail. I set off in the freezing dawn, but once the sun rose above the peaks at about 9:00am it was necessary to stop and de-layer. The glare from the snow was intense and burnt very easily, and at this point the altitude was making the walking slow, but each stop meant I could enjoy the view, so I was in no hurry.

ANNAPURNA BASE CAMP

So many trekkers seem to arrive at ABC and, after a short look around, disappear back down the mountain. However, after spending six days getting there, I wanted to make the most of it. The view is sublime, with Annapurna South towering over base camp to the west, the legendary peak of Annapurna I rising above the South Annapurna Glacier, and the majestic peak of Machhapuchhre holding court to the east. The entire sanctuary is sacred to the Gurung people who inhabit the area and it was believed to be the home of several deities, from Hinduism, Buddhism and older animistic gods, while Machhapuchhre was believed to be the home of Shiva. It's not difficult to imagine why. The clouds merging and parting every few seconds, the sound of rockfall and the thunder of distant landslides and hidden avalanches make this a magical place and worth spending a night, as you also get to see the south face of Annapurna I being illuminated by the rising sun.

It was a freezing, uncomfortable night with a fitful sleep but to temper the cold I boiled up some water, filled two water bottles and stuffed them in my sleeping bag. This had the added advantage of providing clean drinking water for the following morning. There is a poignant memorial to the west of base camp to several climbers lost on Annapurna, including Anatholi Bourkeev, and it's a reminder that even for the most accomplished climbers, the mountains can be unforgiving.

On the way out, I followed the same route in reverse for two days, stopping at Doban and Jhinu



View of Machhapuchhre from Annapurna Base Camp.

Dhanda, and then took the turn for Sauli Bazar just before Naya Pul, rather than the more popular Ghandruk to Poon Hill route. This little trail is an easy walk which is used more by locals, and it was a perfect way to relax, consider the events of the previous days and feel the temperature rise as I descended.

A night stopped across the valley from the beehives which cling to the cliffs provided one of my fondest memories of the trek. Sitting at the trailside with not another soul to be seen, listening to the evening symphony of thousands of birds trying to out-sing each other engulfing the valley, it was a rare moment of solitude on an otherwise busy trail ■

Climb on Mt Kenya



Mt Kenya with its twin peaks Nelion (5,188m) (left) and Batian (5,199m) with the Diamond Couloir between them.

ALUN RICHARDSON climbs Africa's second-highest peak.

Twenty-five years ago, I read *No Picnic on Mount Kenya* by Felice Benuzzi. It described how, in 1943, three crazy Italians, Felice, Dr Giovanni Balletto and Enzo Barsotti, broke out of a British POW camp, and using a drawing of Mount Kenya on a rusty Oxo cube tin as a topo, tried to climb it. Remarkably, after their trip they broke back into the POW camp, handed themselves in and were rewarded with twenty-eight days' solitary confinement as a punishment! There was no glory in their ascent, no posturing, nothing like that. Felice was a mountaineer who wanted to ascend the mountain simply because he loved to climb.

The book was a seminal read for me and contributed to my enduring philosophy of "climb because you want to, leave your ego at home and let others do the shouting, if it impresses them."

The book conjured up images of snow-capped volcanoes, elephants, giraffes and jungles, so early last year I visited Kenya to try to climb Mount Kenya and to see for myself if the images were real.

I was excited when I arrived at Nairobi airport and stepped into a country that palaeontologists called 'the cradle of humanity' after the remains of mankind's earliest ancestors were discovered in the Rift Valley. I was expecting heat, and lots of it, because Kenya sits on the equator with the Indian Ocean to its south-east and Somalia to the north.

The capital, Nairobi, is a typical mad, and sometimes bad, busy, dusty African city, and we didn't linger there for very long. We were soon bouncing along a very dusty road to Naromoru Town at 2,400m and the Naromoru Gate, the entrance to the Mount Kenya National Park. The Naromoru route

All photographs by: ALUN RICHARDSON

is the fastest and therefore also the most popular route onto the mountain. This, however, has its drawbacks and Mount Kenya has the highest incidence of altitude-related pulmonary oedema worldwide, hosting 50% of the world's cases!

After the ubiquitous third-world officialdom and delay, entrance passes were given out and we began our journey to the second highest mountain in Africa. Kilimanjaro is the highest, but, for a climber, Mount Kenya is eminently more challenging.

We walked through dense woodland with an amazing variety of trees towering around us. Bright orchids and flowering creepers hung from their branches. The sounds of animals rang out through the foliage but, much to our disgust, they were too shy to reveal themselves. A few afternoon rain showers caught us as we got closer to the Met Station camp at 3,050m, but the beautiful setting and the mischievous Sykes' monkeys with their criminal tendencies lifted our spirits. Afternoon storms are typical on Mount Kenya and they explain why the mountain is so important to the local agriculture on its foothills, which depends on its water supplies.

The next day, we rose early and walked through a zone of giant heather into lobelia and ground cabbage. The Naromoru route crosses the legendary Vertical Bog, a steep quagmire of wet moorland that is extremely taxing and unpleasant after rain. We were lucky and passed over it with hardly a squelch. Behind us, the plains of Africa were opening up and we could see across to the rolling Aberdare Mountain range.

UP THE TELEKI VALLEY

Soon after, the weirdly-shaped, 20-foot-high giant groundsel dwarfed us as we entered the Teleki valley. The air became thinner and the weird vegetation more sparse, but stupendous views of Mount Kenya and its twin summits, Batian (5,199m) and Nelion (5,188m), appeared before us. The summits are named after Maasai chieftains, Mbatian, a Maasai medicine man, and Nelieng, his brother. The lower

Rock hyraxes were plentiful in Mount Kenya National Park.



trekking peak, Point Lenana (4,985m), was named after one of his sons.

The track ascended gently along the Teleki valley, following a river for a few more hours to Mackinder's Camp at 4,200m. Rock hyrax sat on boulders watching us watching them and green malachite sunbirds flitted amongst the vegetation. I had developed a mild headache, probably brought on by not drinking enough, but it soon disappeared after some water, ibuprofen and paracetamol.

MACKINDER'S CAMP

Mount Kenya and the surrounding area are formed from the hard plug of an ancient volcano, the crater having long since been eroded away. From the camp, we could study the ancient volcanic rock that has been sculpted into amazing gullies, ridges and walls by the action of ice and wind. It rises steeply on all sides, some 450m above the glaciers and scree slopes. The infamous Diamond Couloir still contained a thin ribbon of ice but not enough to be climbable at this time of the year. The twin summits are separated by the aptly named Gates of Mist, a 50m-deep gash that has to be crossed to reach the true summit.

As the sun dropped, so did the temperature. It still amazes me that even though the sun warms the planet most effectively at the equator, it is cold at

The Naromoru route ascends the legendary Vertical Bog.





Nelion and Batian with Point John to right, looming over Hut Tarn.

night and there is snow and ice on the peaks. It is also said that climbing at altitude is more difficult on the equator because the rising air means lower air pressure and, therefore, even fewer oxygen molecules to suck in.

HUT TARN

The next day, we acclimatised by walking to the beautiful Hut Tarn at 4,300m, where we bouldered in the thin air and lay down on a granite beach to watch the shapes of the mountain change as the shadows flitted across the hillsides. We were also able to see the next day's trek, a long scree slope that led to a short ridge and the next camp. It looked hard work

but, like many slopes viewed straight on, it was much less steep when we actually ascended it.

The following day, we pitched the tents across from the face we had come to climb, had lunch and then trekked to Point Lenana. We wore crampons for some of the ascent but the snow could have been avoided by staying on the ridge. Unfortunately, ascending late in the day meant that Mount Kenya was shrouded in cloud and we didn't see the sunset on it. If Point Lenana is your target, it is best to leave well before sunrise and catch the morning glow of the rising sun on Mount Kenya.

After a good night's sleep, we left camp at 6:00am to climb the first five or six pitches and stash some



All photographs by: ALUN RICHARDSON

High Camp below Mt Kenya.

gear part of the way up. It took us one hour and fifteen minutes to descend to the glacier, cross it and reach the base of the climb. The first pitch led onto a massive ledge and then the route trended diagonally leftwards. Don't climb too high up the gully but, instead, when it starts to become difficult, look for a line that traverses rightwards and occasionally steps down along a series of unlikely exposed ledges.

We climbed past Mackinder's Chimney and ascended a steep wall at about HS grade. After this, the route rose rightwards until we could see the rest of the face. If you have found the best line, you will reach an obvious ledge system that crosses the wall. It is well worth spending some time here to locate the abseil bolts, marked in red, just in case you descend in the dark.

In total, we climbed eight pitches that day and, at the abseil point, left duvets, stoves, food and, importantly, some water because, higher up, it can be difficult to find snow to melt. If you go lightweight, it is possible to climb the route, up and down, in a very long day. However, we wanted to fully experience the mountain and to sleep on the top of Nelion to watch the sunset and the sunrise.

I got back to camp, impressed by the first ascensionists of Mount Kenya: Halford Mackinder, C Ollier, and J Brocherel. In 1899, they ascended Nelion as far as South Ridge, traversed onto the Diamond Glacier and then summited Batian via the Gates of Mist. In 1929, Eric Shipton and Percy Wyn Harris made the first ascent of Nelion via what is now the Normal Route. They descended into the Gates of Mist and then climbed Batian, thus making the second ascent of Mount Kenya.

The following morning we left at 6:15am, got to the base of the route just as the sun was hitting the face and climbed rapidly along familiar ground to our stashed gear. The route beyond our high point was easy and there are many variations that all lead to an obvious crossing point on the ridge. Just below the crossing point, we found the first hut, but it is now a sorry mess of mangled aluminium and, in my opinion, it should be removed, along with the summit hut.

After the first hut, the route descends a little and traverses onto the dark side of the mountain. The rocks and gullies now become snow-covered and icy, and are reminiscent of Scottish winter climbing. I picked my way up rock and ice to the base of the hardest pitches, a steep wall with thin cracks and bulges. With heavy rucksacks and thinning air, it felt about VS, so to save our backs we hauled our rucksacks for one pitch.

The route now wanders up to the ridge and crosses a difficult, exposed and bottomless icy gully. The climbing then becomes a little easier, but it saves a sting in its tail with a bulging chimney that, if you end up facing the wrong way, can be a bit of a fight.

SUMMIT OF NELION

The summit of Nelion has an aluminium hut perched precariously with room for a maximum of five people! I hated it and cannot understand what possessed somebody to think it was a good idea to



carry the metal up the mountain to construct a hut on the top. Surely, we no longer need to downgrade the challenges of our wild places? With modern bivvy equipment, the summit hut is unsightly and unnecessary.

We cooked a meal and watched the sun descend very rapidly past the African horizon. One minute there was daylight and the next total darkness! I slept outside, but the rest of the team crammed inside the hut. I lay watching the stars and the Milky Way spreading across the night sky and slipped into a deep sleep, after the day's exertions. ▶





On the summit of Batian (5,199m).



THE AUTHOR

Alun Richardson is an IFMGA guide and the Training Officer for Mountaineering Ireland. He was leading an expedition for Jagged Globe.

SUMMIT OF BATIAN

We got up at first light and left by 7:30am to reach the eleven metres higher summit of Batian. The descent into and the traverse across the Gate of Mists should not be underestimated. We encountered Scottish grade 2 conditions, but only the lead climber really needs an ice axe. We abseiled into the gap from a tangle of old slings on the pinnacle just down from the summit of Nelion, but I would probably recommend climbing down the right-hand side and leaving a fixed rope in place to make ascending the ice and snow slope quicker.

After reaching the summit, we got back to Nelion at 12:30pm, packed and started descending. Abseil after abseil led us through thickening cloud, snow, sleet, hail and rain, and gradually back to the glacier. It was a very tired team that reached camp later that evening.

The next day, we packed up our camp and traversed around the mountain. We crossed a few small cols, joined the Sirimon Route and descended to the beautiful Shipton's Camp on the north side of the mountain. The Sirimon Route is the least used of the three main routes that give access to Mount Kenya and is a contrast to the south side, with more vegetation, birds and monkeys.

Our last day was a long trek through impressive yellowwood forests in the lower reaches to a camp just outside the Sirimon gate of the park. It was hot and sunny and I failed to drink enough, ending up dehydrated and irritable. However, I soon recovered my composure after a few cold beers! A troop of baboons provided the evening's entertainment as we sat around a campfire and toasted our success.

Early the following morning, zebra visited a nearby waterhole and gave us our only glimpse of an iconic African animal.

Soon after, we bid farewell to our helpers, crammed into our Land Rover and sped off down the dusty road. Two punctures later we stopped at Nanyuki town where the POW camp that the Italians had escaped from was situated. It looked very different from the book. After that, it was back to Nairobi and our flight home.

In 1997, UNESCO named Mount Kenya a World Heritage Site – and I can see why. It is a barren yet beautiful volcanic landscape, sculpted by the elements over millions of years. I didn't see snow-capped volcanoes, elephants, giraffes or jungles, but I did have an experience that exceeded even the visions created by Felice Benuzzi's book ■

Descending on the Sirimon Route.



All photographs by: ALUN RICHARDSON

The ridge to the summit of Denali (6,194m).

Ascent of Denali

LAR FANT tackles North America's highest mountain

Lar Fant returned to Denali, North America's highest mountain at 6,194m (20,320ft), in May of last year to make another attempt to climb it following an unsuccessful bid in May 2009.

My first attempt on Denali, 'The High One,' was in May 2009 when, having reached High Camp at 17,200 feet, we had to very reluctantly retreat from the mountain due to extreme bad weather. Although I picked up a little frostbite and frost nip on that occasion, I was determined to return to Denali, and I dreamt of reaching the summit at my next attempt.

Denali is a brutal test, both physically and mentally. Physically, you have to endure Arctic conditions from the minute you land on the Kahiltna Glacier. You also have to be prepared to endure this for three weeks, the usual length of time it takes to climb and descend this mountain. In addition, you have to be able to carry 25 kilos in your backpack while at the same time being able to haul a further 20-25 kilos on a sled, which is attached to you.

Finally, you have to be able to put up your own tent, often in extreme cold and ferocious winds, and then be prepared to build snow walls in order to protect your tent overnight from the storms that can ravage Denali. These storms can last from as little as a few hours to as long as a week.

Mentally, you have to be prepared to handle the constant threat of falls into huge crevasses. Just for good measure, because of Denali's latitude, the lack

of oxygen there is equivalent to that found climbing at 7,000 metres in the Himalayas!

PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTEMPT

On the morning of May 17th, 2011, I flew onto the Kahiltna Glacier in order to start my second attempt to climb Denali. The first day can be one of the hardest, as you have to carry and haul all the gear to Camp 1 at 7,800 feet. This is a long, hard day, and it can be a brutal welcome to Denali.

Thereafter, we began a system of 'carries and moves.' Essentially what this means is that some days we would carry some of our gear up the mountain. We would bury this deep in the snow and then return to our previous, lower camp to sleep. This is the 'climb high, sleep low' principle and it greatly assists you to acclimatise and get used to the increasing altitude. The following day, you then move up to a higher camp with an active rest day, after which you go down the mountain to pick up the gear you had previously buried. This process is repeated a number of times as you gradually make your way up the mountain.

At the 11,000ft camp, we encountered some poor weather and were delayed for an extra two days there, due to some very strong winds. Only for the efforts of three of the team in managing to grab



THE AUTHOR

Lar Fant is originally from Fermoy, Co Cork. He is an individual member of Mountaineering Ireland and had previously climbed Kilimanjaro, Elbrus and Aconcagua before attempting Denali for the second time in May 2011.



Lar Fant after his 2009 attempt on Denali, with frostbite injuries sustained on that climb.

hold of our kitchen tent, it would have been blown off the mountain.

The serious climbing begins after the 11,000ft camp. It is also when you move into an arena with huge peaks all around you and begin to understand fully the challenge that you have set yourself. We moved up from the 11,000ft camp to the 14,200ft camp without too much difficulty.

The view of Denali from 14,200ft is stunning, but it can also be daunting, as you have a view of the fixed lines above you, 2,000 feet of very steep ground and blue ice, which you must ascend in order to gain the West Buttress ridge and the way to the summit.

The weather was kind to us again and we made our way up to High Camp at 17,200ft without any problems, although some of the team felt the effects of the effort of a long day and the increased altitude.

Two days before arriving into High Camp, we had



The climbers negotiate Windy Corner.

heard of an accident just above it when a roped team of four had fallen almost 1,000 feet, resulting in the death of two of them and serious injuries to the other two climbers. On our arrival in the camp at 17,200ft, we watched a helicopter come in and collect the bodies of the dead climbers. They had fallen on their descent of the infamous Autobahn, a long stretch of mountain that climbers have to traverse. Most accidents on Denali happen on this stretch, particularly when climbers are descending. The death of the two climbers meant that we approached the Autobahn with a certain amount of caution and fear.

THE LONGEST DAY

We rested for a day at High Camp and then, at 8:00am on Monday, May 30th, we began our summit attempt of Denali. It was to prove a very long day. Many teams and individuals were trying to summit, as the weather forecast was poor for the following few days. With so much activity on the mountain and also with one or two of our own team requiring additional time, we did not reach the summit ridge until after 5:00pm.

I had read about it and had seen pictures of the summit ridge, but nothing prepares you for when you actually see it with your own eyes. It is a fantastic knife-edge snow ridge with huge drops on either side. It can either scare you or excite you. For me, it was the realisation of my dreams of the past two years, having been denied a shot at the summit two years previously.

I gazed at the ridge and just wanted to move along it so as to reach the summit of North America, a mountain that only a few short years ago I would never have been physically able to even attempt.

Then our guide informed us that she thought that we would have to go down as the wind was getting too strong. I could not believe what I was hearing! Here I was, in great health and great form, having no difficulty with the altitude, and now it looked as though once again I was going to be denied the summit, even though it was under an hour away!

After ten minutes of silence, and with the wind having eased a little, our guide said that we were going to go for it! Her announcement was met with huge shouts of approval, and off we went along the ridge. What followed was the most amazing hour of my life. The ridge is truly knife-edge and in parts you cannot put your two feet side by side on it, it is that narrow!

UTTER JOY

The whole team was fit, energetic and, most importantly, composed and focused, as we made our way to the summit of North America. Both my brain and my body were totally alive as I took the last few steps, fully realising what I was doing and achieving. The experience is hard to capture in words. The views were hard to believe as I saw the world beneath me and the curvature of the horizon way out in front of me. It was with an amazing sense of joy and happiness that I finally stood on the summit of Denali. It was by far the hardest and most challenging

of my climbs to date, but also by far my best experience.

After the obligatory photos and enduring temperatures of minus 27° Celsius, we started our long descent back to High Camp. Again, we met with a number of delays, due to the number of other teams on the mountain. We finally reached the top of the Autobahn and had a view of the camp at 17,200ft. With care, I led out and stepped out onto the Autobahn, ensuring that I was on the right track and then clipping into the running belay. Although mostly narrow and steep, this year the Autobahn was fairly well provided with steps, for the most part. However, care was still needed. Finally, at about 2:00am, we reached our tents at High Camp, delighted and thrilled at our successful summit bid and safe descent.

We rested until about midday and then proceeded to pack up everything before descending to the 14,200ft camp, where we took the decision to eat and rest for four hours before rising at 2:30am to start the descent to the airstrip on the Kahiltna Glacier at 7,200ft. All was going well until just after the 7,800ft camp, when we encountered a glacier that had changed utterly since our ascent two weeks previously.

While we were on the mountain, the weather had been unusually good to us and temperatures had increased steadily. This, combined with the fact that this year Denali had not received as much snow as in recent years, meant that the snow bridges were very weak. We endured hours and hours of crossing crevasses, where you were completely unsure of where to put your next step. We had one serious crevasse fall, when one of the team fell about fifteen feet and got wedged in a crevasse. Eventually, we hauled him out and, luckily, he had suffered only minor scratches and bruises, although he was very cold after spending 45 minutes in the crevasse.



Lar Fant on summit of Denali.

High Camp at 17,200 feet with view of the Autobahn.



All photographs by: LAR FANT

We slowly continued our journey to Base Camp and had a few other punch-throughs, but no major falls. Finally, we reached the base of Heart Break Hill and began our pull into Base Camp. A day that should have taken just 6-8 hours had turned into 12½ hours due to the delays with all the crevasses.

Visibility at Base Camp was very poor, so we set up our tents and got some well deserved rest. The following day, the weather had improved a little and finally, at around 2:00pm, the planes could land. We departed Denali for the little village of Talkeetna where the pints of beer, burgers and steaks were downed with great relish.

This was truly a great trip and I am thrilled to have been able to go back to Denali. Yes, reaching the summit was hugely important to me, but also the team had a great amount of fun, and being on Denali is a special experience in itself, with or without the summit.

Back in Ireland, only a few weeks after Denali, I was already thinking of what next. Everest is a dream and I just have to arrange the time, the finance and the sponsors – but I know that dreams can come true! ■



Summer 2012



Ger McDonnell on the summit of K2 in August 2008.



security of the fixed ropes and so dug in for a cold vigil.

Descending at first light the next morning, they discovered two Koreans and one Nepali trapped in a tight web of tangled fixed ropes, semi-conscious and unable to move. Gerard and the Italian Marco Confortola, even in their weakened state, stopped to help but as they struggled with a complex rescue, the hours drifted past. Eventually, Marco was spent and concluded he had no choice but to carry on down.

It was from Marco's initial account that the report of Ger climbing back up and subsequently falling emerged. From the fuller and more detailed accounts, it is now clear that Gerard, far from being confused, was still attempting a rescue of the trapped climbers. Against all the odds, he succeeded in what is a remarkable display of ability, determination and compassion, the full and complex story of which is clearly, and without hype or exaggeration, recounted through the survivors' accounts. Having achieved this and being able to re-start his own descent, that Gerard should then be killed by another serac fall is the core of the tragedy.

It is all too tempting in these circumstances, from the clarity of sea level, to pass judgement on decisions made and actions taken. Gerard had the folly of that measured when he wrote "When you weren't there, you don't know – only the mountain knows the full story."

The full story thus will never be known, but Damien and Gerard's family have succeeded in drawing together the threads of the remarkable life of a man of great character who died, as he had lived, generous to those around him and with adventure burning in his soul.

Dawson Stelfox Mountaineer, Everest summiter and member of Board of Mountaineering Ireland.

A short but remarkable life

Record is set straight on the circumstances of the climber's death

aftermath of Ger's death and interviewing the survivors of what was one of the worst tragedies on a mountain that has seen more than enough death. Drawing on these direct sources and Ger's own writings from K2 and previous expeditions, Damien has written a direct and compelling tribute to Ger. In doing so, he has skilfully avoided the many pitfalls for non-mountaineers who attempt to describe and explain the complexities of mountaineering and the entanglement of motivations that drive people to high and dangerous places. His chosen device of separating those fateful days on K2 with accounts of Gerard's life and other expeditions creates a somewhat disjointed story, but it succeeds in building a picture of the character and charisma of a remarkable life.

First reports from the mountain seemed to indicate that Gerard, confused by prolonged exposure to extreme altitude and after a cold bivouac not far below the summit, had been last seen climbing back up the mountain again, seemingly

disorientated and out of his mind. Sadly, history shows that such a scenario is entirely plausible and there is no discredit in it – the mind and body are not capable of withstanding oxygen starvation for very long. However, to those who knew Ger, such behaviour seemed so out of character that they were convinced there must be some other explanation. As so it proved to be when the story was painstakingly put together from the survivors' accounts and a series of photographs that recorded the positions of the climbers on the upper slopes of the mountain, as those who had been benighted after reaching the summit late the previous evening struggled to descend to the relative safety of Camp 4.

It appears that serac falls on the evening of August 1st had swept away the ropes that had been fixed across the difficult traverse from the summit slopes to the narrow snow gully known as the 'Bottleneck.' Descending in the dark, Ger and his two companions recognised the futility of attempting this difficult traverse without the



THE TIME HAS COME: GER McDONNELL: HIS LIFE AND HIS DEATH ON K2

By Damien O'Brien

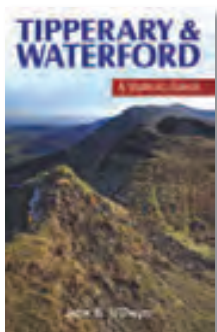
Collins Press (2012), 194pp, many photographs, one b&w map, ISBN 978-1-84889-143-2, €17.99

Written by his brother-in-law Damien O'Brien, this book is a powerful testament to the vitality and quality of Gerard McDonnell's all-too-brief life. Through the family's eyes, the book cuts through the inevitable mists of confusion and contradiction that accompany complex incidents at high altitude and sets the record straight as to the manner and circumstances of Ger's death on K2 in August 2008.

The author researched for this biography by travelling to Pakistan in the immediate



Books



TIPPERARY & WATERFORD: A WALKING GUIDE

By John G O'Dwyer

Collins Press (April 2012), 160pp,
maps, colour photographs
ISBN 978-184889-14-49, €14.99

This is a delightful book. It describes twenty-three walks ranging from leisurely rambles to testing mountain hikes in Tipperary and Waterford. Although the main hills in the area are well covered, it is not intended as a comprehensive guide to every mountain in the two counties. Many of the routes included have not been previously described in other guidebooks.

There are some guidebooks

that seem like instruction manuals: park here, walk there, etc. John G's book is much more than that. As well as providing the required practical information, the book contains plenty of snippets of local history and colour. This is an enjoyable read even if you never manage to follow the routes described.

The book is lavishly illustrated with high-quality photographs. A map is included for each route. While these will be adequate for the lower walks, more detailed maps will be required for the higher mountains. The author repeats the standard advice that all walkers should carry a map and compass. He then comments that this advice is about as useful as a lighthouse in a desert if you can't use them to navigate.

Tipperary is a big county and with the addition of Waterford the book is attempting to cover a very wide area. In fairness to John G, he does deal with all the main ranges of hills, while most of the existing guidebooks only



Knockfallia summit cairn with
Knockmealdown Mountain in the distance.

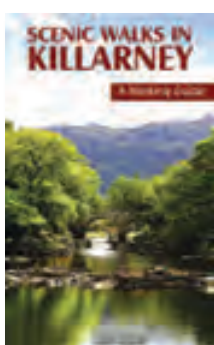
JOHN G O'DWYER

cover the largest mountains in the area. The author describes a good selection of well-thought-out routes in the main ranges, but also includes some less obvious areas such as the Slieve Felim and Arra Mountains. The purist might wonder how a walk in Portumna, Co Galway, found its

way into the book, but that is a minor quibble.

In summary, this is a well-written and beautifully presented guide which will be a fine addition to any hillwalking enthusiast's collection.

Aidan Dillon Hillwalker,
Mountainviews.ie member and
member of Nenagh Hillwalking Club.



SCENIC WALKS IN KILLARNEY: A WALKING GUIDE

By Jim Ryan

Collins Press, 88pp, numerous colour
photographs, sketch maps
ISBN-13 978-1-84889-14-63, €9.99

This is a compact guide which focuses on low-level trail walks (1-5km) in and around the Killarney area. A number of longer valley circuits (5-13km) within 10km of Killarney are also included.

The walks vary in duration from about one hour to a day, and from flat forest trails to more adventurous undertakings such as the Mangerton or the Hag's Glen circuits.

Detailed descriptions of the walks are given, including how to get to the walks, and historical and cultural notes, as well as comprehensive descriptions of the walks themselves. Good sketch maps are given but in all cases it is assumed that the walker will rely on marked trails, tracks and small roads.

This is a delightful publication and highly recommended for ramblers, families or anyone who wants a walk without the need to venture onto the open, higher terrain of the bigger mountains.



WEST OF IRELAND WALKS: CLARE, GALWAY, MAYO

By Kevin Corcoran

The O'Brien Press (2012), 189pp,
numerous line drawings
ISBN 978-1-84717-287-7, €9.99 (£8.99)

This guide is an updated version of the 2008 edition. It was originally published in 1993 and covers fourteen selected walks in counties Clare, Galway and Mayo in some detail. It has a particular focus on the flora and fauna that you are likely to encounter, something that the author is particularly expert on.

It has to be said that, in appearance, this edition is identical to the 2008 version and the updating is by way of small amendments to the text rather than any major changes to the guide.

Patrick O'Sullivan Editor, *Irish Mountain Log*

Donal Finn is a hillwalker and Chairperson of An Oige's Hillwalkers Club.

MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS WAY

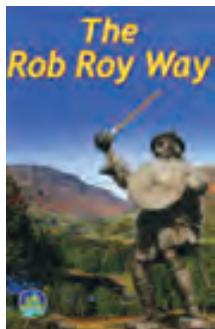
By Paul Prescott

Rucksack Readers, 64pp, numerous colour photos, near-'OS-quality' maps
ISBN-13 978-1-898481-48-5, £10.99

ROB ROY WAY

By Jacquetta Megarry with Rennie McQwan

Rucksack Readers, 64pp, numerous colour photos, near-'OS-quality' maps
ISBN-13 978-1-898481-47-8, £10.99



Following a previous review of a similar guide entitled the *Moray Coastal Trail* (*Irish Mountain Log* No 98, Summer 2011), two further guides, also published by Rucksack Readers, are now available for two long-distance, low-level Scottish walks. Both walks traverse the Central Uplands.

The Rob Roy Way, a relatively low-level (with one exception of the high point of 565m) way-marked way, traverses southwest to northeast from Drymen in Stirling to Pitlochry (124km, 5-7 days).

The more challenging Mary Queen of Scots Way (172km, 6-10 days, not way-marked) follows a coast-to-coast route west to east from the Atlantic sea-loch village of Arrochar to St Andrews on the North Sea.

The Mary Queen of Scots Way guide is a new guide in the Rucksack Readers series, the route having only recently been established. The Rob Roy Way guide is a new edition, which brings the route description up to date, since the route was waymarked in 2012. Both guides are a compact A5-size with waterproof paper and are comprehensively illustrated with numerous attractive photographs. Clear, detailed (Scale 1:110,000) fold-over maps allow the reader to easily see both of the complete walks in good detail. Detailed sections maps are also included where necessary. Comprehensive side-observations on historical points, flora, fauna, folklore, etc, are also included.

These guides are highly recommended for walkers who like to combine their walking with cultural, scientific and historical insights.

Donal Finn is a hillwalker and Chairperson of An Oige's Hillwalkers Club.

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Fórum Cnoch na hÉireann

Promoting sustainable management of the Uplands
A sprangann fíochail iomparthana ar na hArd Talha

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- Hillfarmer, hillwalker or rockclimber
- Landowner in a mountain area, or live or work in a mountain area
- Environmentalist, birdwatcher or nature lover
- Cyclist or canoeist or other recreational user
- Involved in tourism in a mountain area
- Interested in the countryside
- Involved in research on any of these topics

If you identify with one or more of above, do you believe it is desirable that people who live, work and recreate in Ireland's uplands should be able to meet to discuss constructively how these areas can best be managed? Would you be prepared to attend a maximum of four two-hour meetings per annum and contribute to one local or national project or event? If your answer is YES, then consider joining the Irish Uplands Forum.

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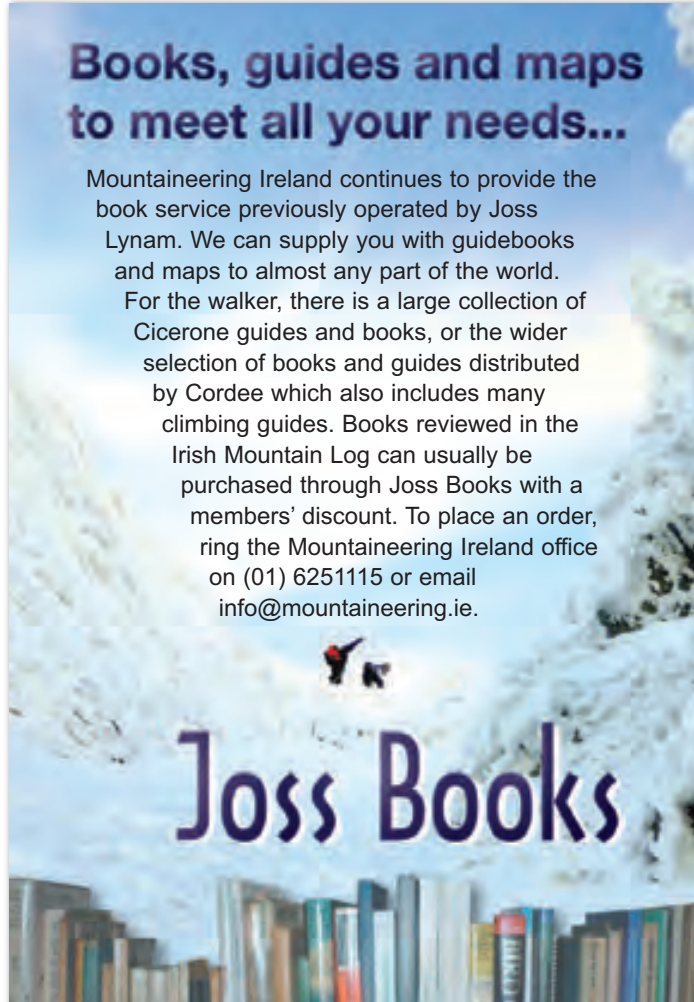
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Collette Mahon at Innertkirchen
in Switzerland.

5 minute interview

Collette Mahon – climber

Collette is the newest member of BOS (Bord Oiliúint Sléibhe). She is a club representative, a provider of Mountain Skills and a recently retired teacher.

What did you do for your last holiday?

A long weekend in the sun in Fuengirola, Spain.

Where is your next holiday to be?

Dolomites – and Mountaineering Ireland's Alpine Meet.

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

The Matterhorn sounds interesting!

Why do you love walking in the Irish hills?

It's easy to get away from tracks and trails.

Where is your favourite place to walk in Ireland?

The Wexford coast – and the Comeragh Mountains.

Where is your favourite place outside of Ireland?

North Wales.

What is your favourite piece of outdoor equipment?

My Rab Photon jacket.

What is your favourite hill food?

Cheese and ham sandwiches and dark chocolate.

Have you ever been lost?

Yes, in Heathrow Airport en route to an Alpine Meet.

Have you ever been scared in the mountains?

Yes, whenever there have been crevasses around.

What does adventure mean to you?

Pushing outside my comfort zone, a little. Too much and it becomes traumatic!

Water bottle or bladder system?

Water bottle.

Frosties or muesli?

Muesli.

Beer or lager?

Lager.

Who do you most admire in the outdoor world?

Pauline Lyrll – who bought her first harness and helmet, aged 62 – and all the inspirational female instructors I have met along the way who push the boundaries for women.

Who has inspired you most in the outdoor world?

The members of Comeragh Walking Club, who helped me in my early days.

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

Too many people creating tracks and trails.

Collette Mahon was talking to Alun Richardson.

Photograph: Greg Kenny (Peaks Club).



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Helen Lawless has the beta on the latest developments in hillwalking, access and conservation.

'Helping the Hills' conference

Mountaineering Ireland is hosting a two-day conference on the management of upland path erosion at Glendalough, Co Wicklow, on Thursday 13th and Friday 14th of September, 2012.

Many of Ireland's mountains are suffering from the effects of erosion, whether through natural processes or recreational use, or indeed a combination of these. As most mountain areas have a high conservation value this is a cause for concern.

Given the continued growth in the number of recreational users on our hills, there is need for a broader knowledge base amongst land managers, event organisers and the recreation community as to how to manage erosion effectively and the most appropriate techniques to use.

Helping the Hills will bring together a number of high-profile speakers from Britain and Ireland to share lessons from their experience in recreation and erosion management. The event will also include site visits to look at erosion and path work that has been carried out in the Wicklow Mountains.

► The full programme for *Helping the Hills* will be available on www.mountaineering.ie before the end of July 2012 ■



Access Report Form

We are asking all Mountaineering Ireland members to report any difficulties they have experienced in gaining access to the hills or crags in Ireland. Information is being sought on both the recent one-off incidents and any ongoing situations that you are aware of.

An accurate and up-to-date picture of the situation on the ground, right across the island, will enable Mountaineering Ireland to be more effective in securing improved access to hills, mountains, crags and coastal areas. You can report any relevant incidents or situations using the **Access Report Form** in the Downloads page of the Access and Conservation section of our website, www.mountaineering.ie.

Information about access is available on request from Mountaineering Ireland to members who are making trips to areas they are not familiar with. Contacting a Mountaineering Ireland club in the area is another good way of checking the local access situation ■



Ecologist Faith Wilson (left) helps Club Environmental Officers get to grips with the ecology of the uplands.

HELEN LAWLESS

Mountain Environment Day

Early in June, a group of Club Environmental Officers joined ecologist Faith Wilson and Helen Lawless for a practical introduction to the different habitats and species found in the Wicklow Mountains.

After a brief indoor session at Kippure Estate, the group looked at woodland habitat in the Coronation Plantation, followed by blanket bog and heathland near Kippure. With the benefit of good weather, it was easy to take in tales of insectivorous bog plants, browse through field guides and examine grouse droppings. Some of the group even got a glimpse of a lizard.

Mountaineering Ireland is encouraging all affiliated clubs to appoint a Club Environmental Officer, who can help to raise environmental awareness within their club. Mountaineering Ireland will be arranging further Club Environmental Officer workshops in the autumn. Club Environmental Officers don't need to be experts: they just need to be enthusiastic about protecting the upland environment we all enjoy.

► If you would like to know more about the role of Club Environmental Officer, contact Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking, Access & Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless, at helen@mountaineering.ie or by phoning the Mountaineering Ireland office at 01 6251115 ■



Erosion scar on Croagh Patrick.

Path assessment on Croagh Patrick

Mountaineering Ireland recently facilitated an assessment of erosion on the pilgrim route up Croagh Patrick in Co Mayo, by Elfyn Jones from the British Mountaineering Council. Elfyn previously worked with the National Trust and was involved in upland footpath management in Snowdonia for many years.

The visit was arranged in conjunction with Murrisk Development Association, following a request from Fáilte Ireland.

To gain an understanding of Croagh Patrick's cultural significance and current concerns about usage of the mountain, Elfyn first met with a large group of local stakeholders. While there is a lack of definite information, it is estimated that as many as 200,000 people climb Croagh Patrick each year, with up to 30,000 participating in the annual Reek Sunday pilgrimage at the end of July.

The site visit itself showed considerable erosion below the saddle and on the steepest section of the cone, but without baseline information it is difficult to know the rate at which erosion is progressing.

Elfyn was accompanied on the mountain by Mary Walsh and Sarah Ingham from the Mayo Mountain Rescue Team; Cathleen Fergus (Rural Recreation Officer with South Mayo Development Company); Orla Prendergast (GMIT); and Helen Lawless from Mountaineering Ireland.

A short report will be prepared with recommendations which will concentrate on erosion management but also consider some wider visitor management issues. Elfyn Jones will be one of the speakers at Mountaineering Ireland's *Helping the Hills* conference in Glendalough in September 2012 ■



Upland erosion experts on site visit to Croagh Patrick (left to right): Mary Walsh, Sarah Ingham, Orla Prendergast, Cathleen Fergus, Elfyn Jones.

Photographs by: HELEN LAWLESS



Alun Richardson has the beta on the latest developments in mountain training.

"Insanity is doing the same thing, over and over again, but expecting different results." – **Albert Einstein**

A friend asked me once how to get fit. I told him that the best way was not to get unfit in the first place. However, staying fit is easier said than done! Injuries may occur, especially as you get older, and they may prevent you from staying fit while you recover, or there may be other life events which distract you from your activity and stop you staying fit.

A recent operation on my shoulder to sew my supraspinator tendon back on has highlighted for me the importance of understanding how to train appropriately, how to look after your body and treat it well, and how to stay fit.

It has also highlighted for me how poorly most people train – some don't do enough, some do too much, and most train inappropriately, creating long-term muscle imbalances and a legacy that will come back to bite them in later life – just like it did to me.

If you want to be walking or climbing into old age or, as one Irish climber put it on Facebook, *"until I can no longer remember my name,"* then you need to examine how to balance the pulling and the pushing muscles and how to strengthen vulnerable areas like your shoulders, knees and lower back.

So, the top tip from the training office this issue is to get some good advice on how to correct the muscle imbalances that walking and climbing can cause, and how to strengthen those areas of the body that take the most punishment. Do it now and don't wait until you are older to realise the problems inadequate or poor training can cause.

Enjoy staying fit!

Alun Richardson is the Training Officer with Mountaineering Ireland.

Workshops cancelled

In the last issue, I wrote that *"being involved with mountain training is exciting for me because the systems of training constantly need to adapt to the participants and to the changing perceptions of a society that wants leaders and instructors to be trained and 'qualified'."* But it can also be frustrating...

The series of Mountaineering Ireland-subsidised workshops designed to upskill Club Training Officers (CTOs) and Mountaineering Ireland members in scrambling, GPS and climbing movement have fallen foul of the late booking syndrome. The training office had a mad rush of bookings a few days before the courses – but it was too late.

We simply can't operate like that. We will organise them again in the autumn (see dates in Training Calendar, next page) but, if you want to be sure they run, then you must book onto them *well in advance*.

They are designed so that one or two more experienced club members from each club can attend, ask questions, discuss issues and practice techniques around walking, scrambling and climbing, and then return to their clubs with good information to pass on ■

Lowland & Trail Walking Leader scheme

The Lowland and Trail Walking Leader (LTWL) scheme has been developed in conjunction with a number of stakeholders, including Fáilte Ireland and the Irish Heart Foundation, and should be available by the end of 2012. During September, BOS will be training a few very active providers to pilot the scheme ■

Two interesting statistics

"Over 350,000 visitors to Ireland participate in outdoor sports, and the figure is increasing."

"Over 3,000 full- or part-time instructors work in this sector, complemented by 10-20,000 voluntary leaders, instructors, tutors and guides."

Source: Irish Sports Council 2006

Two bites at assessment cherry

If you have been deferred for part of an assessment, you will be required to return for re-assessment no sooner than three months from the date of your deferral. If you still fail to reach the required standard, you will be expected to return again for re-assessment *but failure at this point will require you to re-sit the whole assessment again and may require you to take further training* ■



Climbing Wall Award (CWA)

A team of BOS providers recently took part in a course to learn how to run the CWA award and the Climbing Wall Leader (CWL) award. Run by Steve Long of MLTUK, the course brought providers up to date with the requirements for delivering this award. There is a larger component of teaching movement skills, and the minimum standard of leading for providers before running the course is 6a.

The training office is busy producing the paperwork, guidelines and syllabus and, as soon as we have done that, the award will be announced and providers given permission to run courses ■

Urgently needed: Mountain Leader questions

The Training Office is revamping the Mountain Leader exam and requires suitable exam questions. Please send your suggestions to:
alun@mountaineering.ie



Practicing rope techniques before climb on Mt Kenya.

Review of Single Pitch, Mountain Leader and Walking Group Leader schemes

The Training Office is to review the Single Pitch Award (SPA), Mountain Leader (ML) and Walking Group Leader (WGL) schemes. To ensure this encompasses everyone's views, the Training Officer, Alun Richardson, and the Member & Training Support Administrator, Rozanne Bell, are to visit Kerry, Connemara, Donegal and Wicklow to hold meetings with providers, holders of the awards and anyone with a constructive opinion on the awards. The morning of each meeting will look at the SPA and the new Lowland and Trail Walking Leader (LTWL) schemes, and the afternoon will look at the ML and WGL Schemes.

If you are interested in attending one of these meetings, you should contact the office to register in advance. *If nobody registers, we will not travel and your views may be missed.* Alternatively, you can email your opinions to: alun@mountaineering.ie. The meetings will be held on:

12 th November – Kerry	16 th November – Donegal
14 th November – Connemara	19 th November – Dublin

Accreditation of outdoor activity businesses

An Accreditation Steering Committee (ASC) was set up in February with representatives from all of the national governing bodies that make up the Adventure Framework.

The aim of this new committee is to examine the options available for accreditation of adventure sports in Ireland. The committee has sought the views of a wide range of stakeholders and agencies.

The ASC agreed that there was an urgent need for accreditation of Adventure Activity providers and that this should be industry-led. The following principles – that should apply to any accreditation system in Ireland – were agreed:

- The system should not be non-statutory.
- A Code of Practice alone will not benefit providers and inspection, and accreditation should form part of any accreditation system.
- An accreditation system should recognise, value and endorse relevant NGB standards.
- The accreditation system should encompass all providers on the island of Ireland.
- Accreditation should be based on standards of safety rather than quality.

The committee recommended that Ireland should implement "Adventure Mark" using existing structures established for Northern Ireland with input from the Republic. The committee has forwarded a proposal to the relevant government department for consideration ■



Training Calendar

It is important to book onto these courses well in advance, if you want to attend!

CLUB WORKSHOPS (€30)

These workshops are for club members and Club Training Officers. Book a month in advance for 50% discount.

- **Workshop on using GPS**
Connemara 16th September
- **Scrambling**
Wicklow 1st October
Donegal or Galway 2nd October
- **Club Training Officers Two-Day Workshop (€60)**
Wicklow 2nd & 4th November

BOS COURSE DATES:

- **Movement Workshop for SPA holders and aspiring CWA providers**
Gravity Wall, Dublin 15th August (free)
- **MIA Workshops** 8th-9th September
- **WGL Assessment** 28th-30th September (€350)
- **ML Assessment** 27th-29th October (€350)
- **Open Skills Workshop** (TBA)
- **CWA Workshop** (TBA) (€50)
(minimum 4 people)
- **MS CPD Workshop** 24th or 25th August (€50)
(minimum 4 people)
- **ML/WGL Workshop** 20th October (€50)
- **SPA/ML/WGL Reviews (all free):**
Cappanalea, Co Kerry – 12th November
Petersburg OEC, Connemara – 14th November
Gartan OEC, Co Donegal – 16th November
Brockagh Centre, Co Dublin – 19th November



PADDY RODGERS

SLIEVENAGARRAGH

Helen Lawless interviews Paddy Rodgers who farms in the Bloody Bridge area of the Mourne Mountains, close to Slieve Donard.

What type of farm do you have?

It's a rough hillfarm. We have sheep on the mountain in summer and winter. The ewes are lambed indoors and then we put them back on the mountain. We have shared grazing on Slievenagarragh, which is on your left as you go up the Bloody Bridge quarry track.

Has farming changed much in your time?

Farming as a whole has changed. You need to keep more records, you have to tag all your sheep and you need documentation for moving stock. The main part of it is the same – you put your sheep on the mountain.

There's a lot of 'neighbouring' here still, people helping each other out. My father is eighty. He used to go up the mountain on his horse, Jack. Jack has retired and my father now goes up on a quad to check on the sheep.

In some areas, there's been a fall in the number of farmers grazing the hills. Has that happened here?

Most of the farmers in the Mournes are still actively grazing the hills. Hill farming is bred into you; these farmers would keep sheep, even if they got no money for them. Hill farming is hard; you get 10p extra per kilo for Mourne lamb, but you can't fatten sheep on the hills. We get a Less Favoured Areas payment because of the lower productivity on hill land. That money goes on feeding the sheep over the winter, because you have no grass on the hills till March. I'm a chef by trade, so I do a bit of work as a chef and I shear sheep for other farmers. Those things help keep the farm business going. A lot of farmers in the Mournes have work outside of farming.

You've mentioned that you're a Trustee and a grazer. Can you explain that?

I suppose things are a bit more structured in the Mournes. Outside of the



Most of the farmers in the Mournes are still actively grazing the hills.



Paddy Rodgers, Mourne hillfarmer.

Mourne Wall, nearly all of the open mountain land in the Mournes is privately owned. (The land within the Mourne Wall belongs to Northern Ireland Water, and the mountain land either side of the Glen River belongs to the National Trust.) The land outside the Mourne Wall is divided into fourteen different grazing areas. Each of these areas is owned by a Trust, with a number of Trustees who manage the land on behalf of the grazers. I'm a Trustee for Slievenagarragh. Once you go above the Bog Quarry, it's different Trustees. That's part of the Spence's Mountain area. I'm a grazer on the Spence's Mountain land. The two run into each other.

The Bog Quarry, is that what's marked on the map as Crannoge Quarry?

Yes, we always called it the Bog Quarry,

after the Bog of Donard. My grandfather and my father worked in the quarry, but that was before my time. They were smithies; they used to cut stone in shacks around the quarry. You can see the marks on some of the stones up there from the 'plug and feathers' method they used to split the stones. The smithies made a line of holes and then drove a steel plug between two thin pieces of steel (the feathers) into each hole. Bit by bit, that would split the stone.

Would you see a lot of people going up the Bloody Bridge track?

Yes, there's a lot more interest in fitness and a lot more people out walking. You can tell the experienced walkers; they're prepared for a change in the weather. Everything can change in a minute here when the fog rolls in from the sea. You



View of Mourne Wall and the Bog of Donard.



Plug and feather marks on split granite slab.

get a lot of day-trippers, without the right clothing, parking across gates, taking dogs up the hill and then letting them off the lead. Dogs are an issue with sheep on the mountain. We'd prefer to see people sticking to the paths, too; where people walk on the edge of the path or in a parallel line, you can end up with a wide area of damaged land.

Campers were a problem for us but John McEvoy, the Ranger with the Mourne Heritage Trust, is keeping that under control now. When fences got trampled down, the Mourne Heritage Trust fixed them and they put up signs to keep people on the right track.

One wet day, I saw a leader coming down with a group of schoolchildren; John McEvoy was there and he asked the group to use the path down to Bloody Bridge. The leader ignored him and took the children down through land where there were sheep lambing and cattle calving. Then the group had to walk back on the road to the car park.

Most people are quite pleasant and would take advice, but it only takes one person with a bad attitude to ruin it for everybody.

Do you do any walking yourself?

I used to do some fell-running. I did some of the races and the Mourne Seven Sevens, and a bit of orienteering too.

Do you have any final comments?

Have respect for the people who own the land; the mountains are not a playground, it's somebody's livelihood. Treat them like you'd treat your own garden. They might be bigger, but it's somebody's land. Some people would walk by a farmer with their head in the air. That's not right. If you're nice, he'll be nice back ■

David Chippendale

Untimely death of Dingle Hillwalking Club stalwart and organiser

It was with sadness and deep shock that members of Cumann Sléibhteoireachta Chorca Dhuibhne (Dingle Hillwalking Club) learnt of the tragic and untimely death in March this year of David Chippendale at the age of 49. David was the club's Public Relations Officer and a former Club Secretary.

David came from Lancaster and had made a career for himself researching the London property market, something he continued to do after settling in Dingle in June 2001. He immersed himself in the local community in Dingle and was involved in a number of community initiatives in west Kerry, most notably as a member of Dingle Hillwalking Club and as a board member of the Dingle Film Festival and of Scoil Cill Mhic a'Domhnaigh.

With Dingle Hillwalking Club, David was the driving force for the organisation of Mountaineering Ireland's Autumn Meet when it was held in Dingle in 2009, and he played a major role in organising the inaugural Castlegregory Walking Festival last year.

He was a man of charm, intelligence, generosity, kindness and efficiency, and he excelled at welcoming new members to the club. He was also responsible for introducing the text alert for club members, which is now the main means of notifying club members of walk details each weekend.

David was an unconventional free spirit and the glint in his eye as he offered a swig of whiskey from his hip flask on top of Mount Brandon each New Year's Day will be greatly missed.

The enthusiasm that David had for hillwalking, the outdoors and, indeed, for all that he was involved in comes through in reports that he wrote about various club walks, such as the one quoted below:

"Dingle Hillwalking Club Christmas Walk and Lunch, December 2008. Beach Walk: Sandy Bay-Kilshannig Point-Cutteen-Corralougha Strand-Sandy Bay

For our Christmas Walk and Lunch we returned to the "Other Side" for one of the most rewarding days of 2008. The weather was clement, the blue sky scudded with cloud from a northerly wind that kept the air cool and fresh. We walked on sand, pebbles, grass, turf and earth beside the sea, benign in Tralee Bay, bellicose in Brandon Bay.

We were blessed in the spirit of Christmas with guests. The day also blew in a visitor from Japan whom I thought I would have to mind for the weekend but it turned out he was mates with Andy Irvine, the world-famous musician. Touché! He had had a great time with Andy the night before. Struggled with the puddles, though. He is analysing the conflicts between



NOEL O'NEILL

recreational users of land and landowners, on a three-year PhD at Trinity College Dublin. Interesting stuff in which Ireland lags on best practice but where, if communication opened up, we could be the world leader. Consider the resource we have on our doorstep. This man was from Kyoto (yes, world heritage place, Kyoto) but he was in awe of the grandeur of snow-bound Brandon above the sleety, slate grey of Brandon Bay. And who would not be? In thrall to the interests of ownership [sic], we sell our land short – and I say this as a foreigner who loves this land."

Sadly, David took his own life while suffering from depression.

Club members formed a guard of honour at David's funeral, and donations in his memory have been made to Kerry Mountain Rescue. The Dingle Hillwalking Club has submitted a walk dedicated to David for Mountaineering Ireland's forthcoming book, *Peaks of Ireland*.

Ní bheidh a leithéid arís ann. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

Dingle Hillwalking Club

David Chippendale, born 11th July 1962, died 7th March 2012.

► The Board of Mountaineering Ireland offer their sincere condolences to David's family and friends. May he rest in peace ■



David Chippendale goes down Sás Creek with members of Dingle Hillwalking Club.

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Contact us to book your place and for more information about these spectacular trips. Early booking is advised as places are limited.

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IRELAND**



REGISTER TODAY

€35
Registration fee

€100
Minimum sponsorship

For further information please contact Sharon on 00353 87 259 0290 or email fundraising@mountainrescue.ie

This is your chance to show your support for the Mountain Rescue Teams throughout Ireland who are constantly on call should you need them!

ABSEIL DATE:

Saturday 28th July 2012
(9am - 5pm)

ABSEIL LOCATION:

Dwyers Rock, Wicklow Mountains, Co. Wicklow

REGISTER ONLINE

www.eventelephant.com/rockstars

To create your fundraising page please go to www.mycharity.ie

www.mountainrescue.ie



Registered Charity
CHY10412

This event is run by
Adventure.ie

Please note that all participants under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

(Location is subject to permit')